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How to Run a Great Hybrid AGM

Over the past two years, the way condominium corporations across Ontario hold their governance meetings has changed. Whether it be AGMs, SGMs, or turnover meetings, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the way condominiums meet and perform other governance procedures. Public health measures, restrictions on in-person gatherings, and dreaded lockdowns have almost made in-person meetings obsolete, forcing condo corporations across the province to transition to virtual meetings and electronic voting to execute these essential meetings.

And while initially met with speculation, many corporations have since recognized the upside of using technology for their governance meetings. However, optimism around a return to pre-pandemic normalcy in the coming months has led to many wondering what governance meetings will look

like in the future, with many pointing to hybrid meetings. An appealing option to many and often viewed as a best of both world solution, hybrid meetings can be complex and have their unique set of challenges that must be considered. With that said, here are a few tips for running a successful hybrid AGM.

What is a Hybrid AGM?

A hybrid Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an Annual General Meeting where attendees can participate in-person or electronically. A hybrid Annual General Meetings format mirrors that of an in-person or virtual Annual General Meeting.

It all Begins with Tracking Attendance

Accurately tracking meeting attendance is not only required to determine whether or not a quorum has been

achieved at your meeting. Knowing who exactly is in attendance at your meeting is a crucial step to ensuring the integrity of voting results and preventing fraudulent activities, and becomes even more critical and significantly more challenging when holding your AGM in a hybrid format.

While many Property Managers and board members may initially think that they can easily track attendance manually, getting an accurate tabulation for your hybrid meeting can be challenging, especially for meetings with a few hundred or more attendees. Not to mention, manually answering questions about how many voters are present online vs in-person or determining whether an attendee has already submitted a proxy vote is a challenging task. That's why Property Managers and board members should always utilize a dynamic virtual meeting platform that can automatically



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track the registration and appropriately rename virtual attendees, answer voter eligibility questions, and overall streamline the attendance process. Using a platform with a capable feature set will significantly reduce the risk of inaccurate attendance tabulations and duplicate entries and actively prevent fraudulent behaviour that can jeopardize the integrity of their meeting and results.

Accurate Voting Results are a Must

Ensuring the accuracy of voting results is crucial to your AGM's success. Without a dynamic voting platform that can accommodate your corporation's unique voting requirements, Property Managers and board members will manually need to find answers to important questions, like; Who has submitted a proxy or advance ballot prior to the meeting? Is this owner eligible to vote on this matter? What is the weight of the ballot(s) submitted by each voter? And other various questions to ensure the accuracy of results.

Correctly answering these questions is imperative to the success of your meeting. And without having in-person and virtual attendees cast their ballots through a voting platform that can answer these questions automatically, finding the answers to these crucial questions becomes a daunting, time-consuming task that is prone to errors. That is why using a secure electronic voting platform with a feature set that can accommodate the dynamic nature and unique voting requirements of your meeting is integral to its success.

In-Person and Virtual Attendees Should Have the Same Meeting Experience

When planning a hybrid AGM, ensuring that all attendees have a positive meeting experience should be a top priority. Whether joining in-person or through virtual means, all attendees should have a seamless experience where they have an equal opportunity to ask questions and participate in elections and other meeting activities. And while having virtual attendees join your meeting via standalone webinar software might

appear adequate, their lacking feature set makes it wholly insufficient for a majority of AGMs.

That is why meeting organizers should always utilize a virtual meeting platform with a feature set that allows virtual attendees to view the meeting, ask questions, cast ballots, and actively participate in other activities, just like those attending in person.

Technical Difficulties Need to be Resolved Quickly

During this time of remote work and virtual gatherings, technical difficulties are something a vast majority of us have struggled with from time to time. And while frustrating when they arise, failing to resolve technical

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issues quickly can be catastrophic to the success of your hybrid AGM.

The last thing any condominium wants is unresolved or persistent technical issues throughout their meeting. These issues can negatively impact the experience for virtual attendees, but they can hinder the ability to execute activities such as conducting an election. That is why Property Managers and board members should always opt to use reliable platforms and ensure they have the necessary personnel and resources readily available to solve any technical issues quickly if they arise.

Good AV is Imperative to any Hybrid Meeting

Last but not least, one of the most important components of any hybrid meeting is audiovisual (AV). And while simply live-streaming your in-person meeting through the webcam of your strategically placed laptop might seem sufficient, an inadequate AV setup can negatively impact the experience of both in-person and virtual attendees significantly.

To ensure their hybrid AGM runs smoothly, meeting organizers should

have a good idea of how many people they will be hosting in-person and virtually. Do you have appropriate AV hardware? Otherwise, it is better to work with a trusted AV provider to make sure both in-person and virtual attendees have access to a meeting environment where:

- Virtual attendees have access to a secure, high-quality video stream
- In-person and virtual attendees are provided with clear audio
- Meeting minutes account for both in-person and virtual attendee conversations.

All in all, it's understandable why many Property Managers and board members are interested in hybrid meetings. And while appealing, it's

important to remember that hybrid meetings have their own unique set of challenges, just like in-person and virtual meetings that must be considered. However, with the right solutions and adequate planning, they can be a viable option for any condominium corporation looking to provide their owner's flexibility at their upcoming AGM. And while we believe virtual meetings will continue to be the preferred method of meeting for a majority of board members and owners alike, by following these tips conducting your AGM in a hybrid meeting format should be a breeze. ■

Ben Zelikovitz is a Co-Founder of GetQuorum, an industry-leading provider of virtual meeting, electronic proxy, voting, and notice distribution services. Since 2016, Ben and the GetQuorum team have helped 1000s of Condominiums and HOAs across North America achieve quorum, pass bylaws, reduce cost and conduct successful AGMs. GetQuorum is the proud recipient of the 2020 ACMO Associate of the Year. getquorum.com