EMPOWERING WOMEN
FOR DIGITAL & REMOTE HR CAREERS

MODULE 2 · COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION · LESSON 2.2

Virtual meetings and facilitation

Most online meetings fail before anyone joins the call. This lesson is about the half hour before, and the five minutes after.



1.5 training hours · Building the basics · RemoteHeR

WHAT THIS LESSON COVERS

Six things, in order

- Purpose, agenda and outcome — no meeting without all three
- Preparing: invitations, pre-reads, accessibility, and who genuinely needs to be there
- Facilitating: opening, turn-taking, managing dominance and managing silence
- Recovering when the technology fails mid-process
- Closing and following up: decisions, owners, dates, and the written record
- The four kinds of HR meeting, and how each one differs



Every meeting you call spends other people's time.

You cannot fix meetings for a whole organisation. You can fix every meeting you personally call.

In HR you call a lot of them: consultations, briefings, interviews, one-to-ones. Being the person whose meetings are short and decisive is a reputation built one invitation at a time.



A meeting without a stated outcome is a status update with extra steps.

If you cannot finish the sentence "by the end of this call we will have decided", you do not need a call. Write it down instead and give people their hour back.

THE THREE THINGS

Purpose, agenda, outcome

Every invitation you send should carry all three. Missing any one of them and people arrive unsure why they are there.

- Purpose — why this call exists, in one sentence.
- Agenda — what will be covered, with rough timings.
- Outcome — what will exist afterwards that does not exist now.



PREPARING

The half hour before the call

Who genuinely needs to be there

Everyone invited must have something to contribute or a decision to make. Anyone else gets the notes.

Pre-reads, sent early enough

Send them a day ahead and say how long they take. Reading a document aloud on the call wastes everyone's time equally.

A time that does not exclude

Check working patterns and time zones first. The person who cannot attend at 09:00 is not less committed; they have a school run.

Accessibility, before not after

Captions on. Say whether cameras are expected. Agenda in text, not in an image. None of it costs anything done first.

CAMERAS

On, off, or your choice

⚠ Cameras on, always

- Excludes anyone with a poor connection
- Puts people sharing a room, or a kitchen, on display
- Adds real fatigue across a day of calls
- Disadvantages anyone self-conscious about appearance
- Rarely improves the decision being made

Say what you expect

- "Cameras welcome, not required" in the invitation
- Cameras on for the first two minutes, then optional
- Cameras on for difficult conversations, where you need faces
- Cameras off for briefings, where nobody needs them
- Whatever you choose, decide it before, not during

THE INVITATION

What people actually receive

⚠ Unhelpful

- "Catch-up" with no agenda and no outcome
- Sent at 08:50 for a 09:00 call
- Nine people, two of whom will speak
- A 60-minute slot because the calendar defaults to it
- No joining link, or a link to last week's room

Usable

- A subject line that names the decision to be made
- Sent with the pre-read, at least a day ahead
- Four people, each with a reason to be there
- 25 or 50 minutes, so people can reach the next thing
- The link, the agenda and the outcome in the invitation body

FACILITATING

Running the call

1. **Open by restating the outcome**

   Thirty seconds. What we are deciding, how long we have, and how we will decide. It orients latecomers and stops the meeting drifting.

2. **Go round deliberately, at least once**

   Name people rather than asking who wants to speak. The people who need an invitation to speak are exactly the ones you want to hear.

3. **Manage dominance without embarrassing anyone**

   "Thank you — I want to hear from Ana before we come back to that." Redirect to a person, not away from a person.

4. **Close by reading back the decision**

   Say what was decided, who owns it, and by when. If nobody can name those three, the meeting has not finished.

TURN-TAKING

Four ways to get everyone in

Round robin, by name

Go through everyone in a set order for one question. Slow, but nothing else reliably reaches the quiet third of the group.

Chat first, then voice

Ask everyone to type an answer before anyone speaks. It stops the fastest talker setting the frame for the whole discussion.

Breakout rooms of three

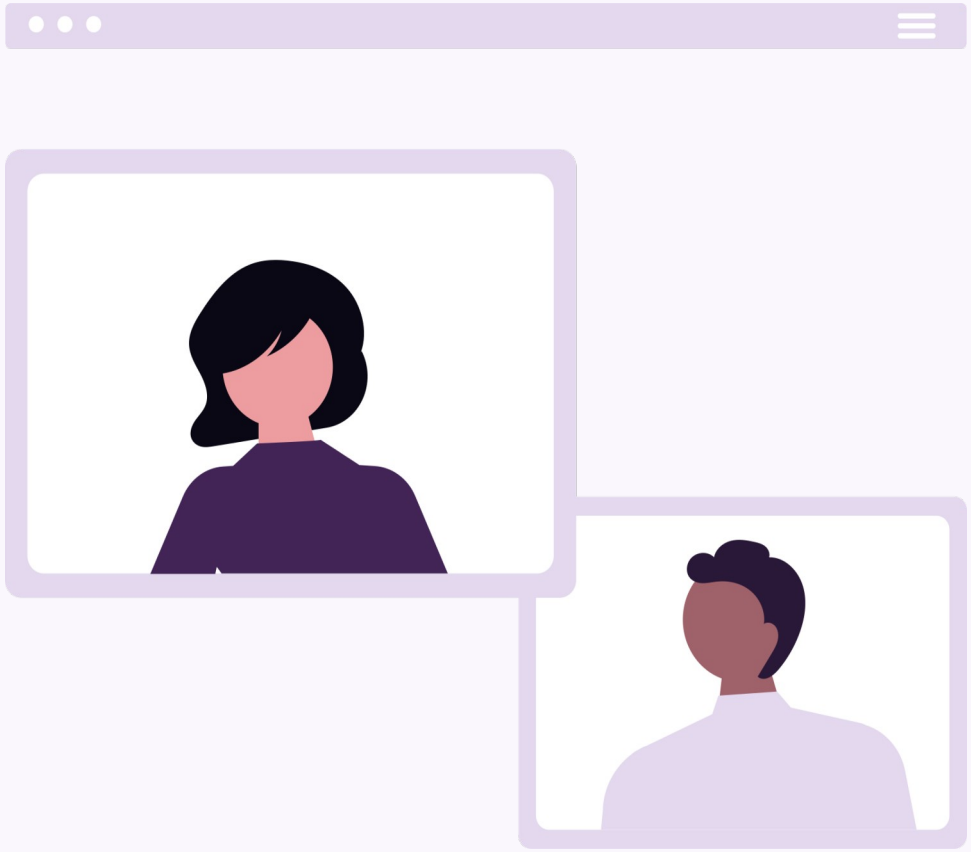
People who will not speak to twelve will speak to two. Bring one point back from each room.

Anonymous poll

For anything where the honest answer is uncomfortable. Mentimeter or the built-in poll — then discuss the result, not who said what.

Silence on a call is usually thinking, not agreement.

Ask a question and count to seven before filling the gap. On video the pause feels twice as long to the facilitator as it does to everyone else.



ACCESSIBILITY

Four things that cost nothing

1. **Turn live captions on by default**

   They help deaf and hard-of-hearing participants, anyone in a noisy home, and every person working in their second language.

2. **Say your name before you speak**

   For the first few meetings of a new group, and always when someone is joining by audio only.

3. **Describe what is on the screen**

   "This chart shows absence rising in the last quarter." Never rely on people seeing what you are pointing at.

4. **Send the material in text**

   An agenda inside an image cannot be read by a screen reader, translated, or searched later.

WHEN IT GOES WRONG

Recovering from a technical failure

Say what is happening

"I have lost audio, give me thirty seconds." Silence makes people think the call has ended. Narrating the problem keeps the room together.

Have a fallback ready

A dial-in number, a second device, or a phone. Decide the fallback before the meeting, not while nine people watch you panic.

Hand over rather than stop

If you are facilitating, name someone to continue. A meeting that pauses for its facilitator loses ten minutes; one that continues loses none.

Do not restart the discussion

When you return, summarise what you missed rather than asking people to repeat it. You are the one who dropped out, not them.

IN PRACTICE

The shared screen freezes

You are ten minutes into a consultation with eleven people. Your screen share freezes, then your audio drops. When you reconnect ninety seconds later, two people have left and the rest are silent.

What good looks like

- Say what happened in one sentence and move on. Do not spend three minutes apologising — that costs more than the outage did.
- Ask someone who stayed to summarise the ninety seconds, rather than asking eleven people to repeat themselves.
- Drop the screen share. Talk through the remaining points instead; the deck was never the meeting.
- Message the two who left afterwards with the decision, so they are not the only people out of the loop.

FOUR KINDS

Not all HR meetings are the same

Briefing

You have information; they need it. Short, cameras optional, questions at the end, notes afterwards. Often should have been a written message.

Consultation

You have a proposal; you need reactions. Longer, small group, cameras on, and genuinely open — a consultation with the answer already decided is noticed immediately.

Interview

Structured, scored, and the same for every candidate. Module 4 builds one properly. The facilitation skill here is keeping to the structure.

Difficult conversation

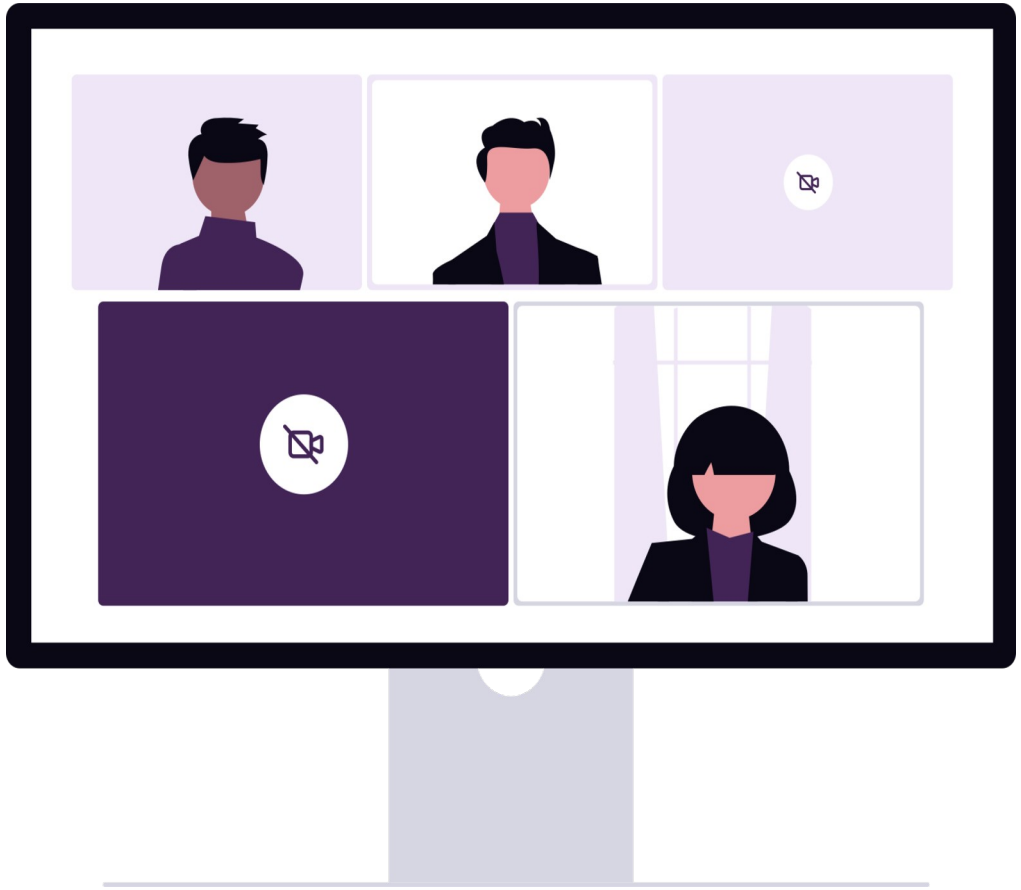
One person, no recording, no audience, and time afterwards to follow up in writing. Module 5 covers these in depth.

CHOOSING THE SHAPE

Match the meeting to the job

The commonest facilitation mistake is not poor technique. It is running one kind of meeting when the situation needed another.

- A briefing run as a consultation raises expectations you cannot meet.
- A consultation run as a briefing tells people their view was never wanted.
- A difficult conversation run with an audience is not a conversation.



IN PRACTICE

One person has said nothing for forty minutes

You are consulting a team of eight about a change to the shift pattern. Two managers have dominated. Piotr, who works the shift in question, has been on mute with his camera off since the start.

What good looks like

- Do not put him on the spot with "Piotr, you have been quiet" — that is a spotlight, not an invitation.
- Ask a question aimed at his knowledge: "Piotr, you work this pattern — what would change for you on a Friday?"
- If he still does not answer, offer another route: a written comment after the call, or five minutes one to one.
- Afterwards, notice whether the meeting was designed so that only managers could speak.

Recording changes what people are willing to say.

Tell people before the call, not as it starts. Never record a difficult conversation or a consultation where someone may disclose something personal.



AFTERWARDS

The five minutes that matter

1. **Post the decision in the channel**

   One short message: what was decided, who owns it, by when. Not the transcript, not the recording — the decision.

2. **Name the owners explicitly**

   "Someone will look into it" means nobody will. A name and a date, or it is not an action.

3. **Send the recording only if it helps**

   Recordings are rarely watched and always discoverable. For a consultation, notes serve people better and carry less risk.

Tools you will see used

Zoom and Teams

Breakout rooms, recording and live captions — all on free tiers.

Miro

A shared board for consultation sessions where people add ideas at once.

Mentimeter

Anonymous polls. Useful when honest answers are unlikely out loud.

Doodle

Finding a time across patterns without twelve emails.

Free tiers are enough for everything in this lesson.

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN

Prepare the meeting

Plan a real HR consultation meeting end to end

You are given the situation. Produce the invitation, the agenda with timings, the pre-read note and the follow-up. The agenda and the follow-up are the start of your written communication pack.

It feeds into

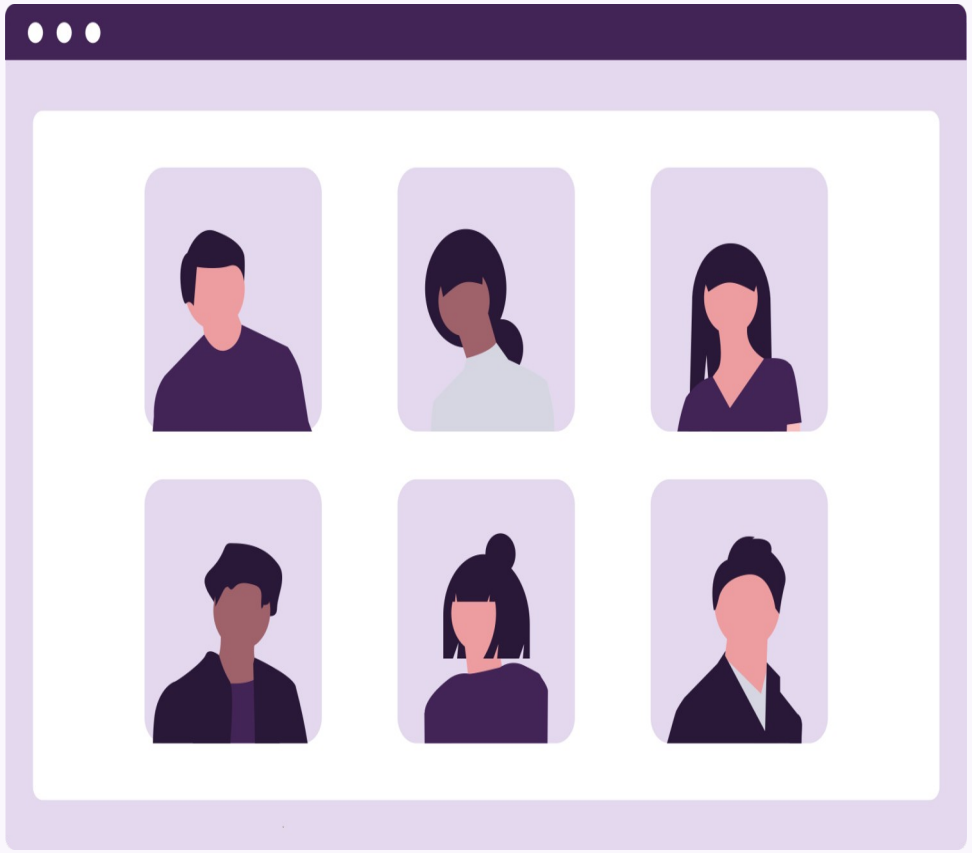
Your written communication pack: the agenda with its invitation, and the follow-up message.

No mark

Your tutor reads it and replies in writing. Activities carry no mark: only the module test and the artefact have a result.

Practise this one on your own, out loud.

Read your agenda aloud and time it. If it does not fit the slot you booked, the agenda is telling you what to cut — and it is far cheaper to find out now than in the meeting.



RECAP

Before you move on

- If you cannot say what will be decided, do not hold the meeting. Write it instead.
- Purpose, agenda and outcome go in the invitation — with the pre-read, a day ahead.
- Open by restating the outcome, go round by name, redirect towards people rather than away from them.
- Count to seven before filling a silence. It feels twice as long to you as to everyone else.
- Post the decision, the owner and the date within five minutes of finishing.

Next: take the knowledge check. It is never graded, you have unlimited attempts, and every option comes with feedback.

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Lesson 2.2 complete

Do the preparation activity and the knowledge check.
Keep the agenda: it is the first piece of your written communication pack.

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