



# The 5-Stage Model for Hybrid Learning

What It Is,  
How It Works, and  
Why We Need It





## An Introduction to Hybrid Learning

It's helpful to start with a definition.

### What is hybrid learning?

In simple terms, it's the **live delivery of learning in both virtual and in-person environments**. In a hybrid session, you can deliver learning to, say, eight people in the room with you and another 15 online (or any other number combination). Everyone is sharing a learning experience, but joining from different places.

While it may feel like a new concept, hybrid learning has been in place in a variety of organizations for years. For example, it's always been particularly useful for geographically disparate workforces. However, the importance and inevitability of hybrid everywhere became incredibly clear during mass remote working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Hybrid wasn't caused by the pandemic, but it has been accelerated by it.

The future of work is hybrid. So, too, is the future of learning.

This ebook is here to help you navigate this future. I'll introduce you to our model of hybrid learning, including practical tips for designing, prepping, and facilitating hybrid sessions. Then I'll help you to understand why it's both important and inevitable, and look ahead to what the future of hybrid learning may look like.

# Contents

04 The Case for Hybrid Learning

---

05 The Mindset Shift for Hybrid Learning

---

06 Model of Hybrid Learning

---

07 **PART 1:** Design

---

11 **PART 2:** Develop

---

16 **PART 3:** Technology & Tools

---

20 **PART 4:** Facilitate & Produce

---

23 **PART 5:** Execute & Revise

---

## The Case for Hybrid Learning

**Here's a common misconception about hybrid learning programs: if some people are learning in person and some are online, then it's easy to just plan for one and then the other. They may be online at the same time but the activities will be different, right?**

No, not really.

Hybrid learning is all about blending those two experiences together. The experience should be of the same quality for all learners, regardless of where they're learning from. For example, usually, learners who are physically present get to see the facilitator/expert talking the most clearly. If instead, you use a video of the expert explaining a concept, then everyone has the same experience of the expert and content. More tips like this later.

Deliberately designing a hybrid style of learning merges virtual and in-person delivery through technology. Learners joining virtually aren't just joining in at a distance. If you adjust the learning style and experience for everyone involved, you create a more inclusive and accessible environment where everyone, regardless of their ability or desire to attend in person, can experience learning the same way.

More workplaces, and higher ed institutions, are taking a hybrid approach to work. With more fully remote recruits, geographically dispersed teams, and a higher uptake of optional remote working, it's important that our facilitation skills can keep up. Adapting to hybrid learning can also reduce your training costs as you can save on the need to pull everyone into one place across states and countries, venue hire, and manage other geographical logistics.

In order to pull this off, here's some help adjusting your mindset!

## The Mindset Shift for Hybrid Learning

**In order to design effective hybrid learning, you need to move away from the online or in-person dichotomy. Regardless of where the majority of your learners are (in person or virtual), you need to shift your focus in order to create worthwhile learning experiences for everyone involved.**

The key is to think about delivering a shared experience versus separate experiences based on your location. And actually, it's going to look a lot like planning for virtual learning. This may come as a surprise but hear me out...

People often have virtual experiences while they're physically next to each other. They may share funny photos with a friend who's sitting right next to them, watch videos together on a phone, tablet, or laptop, or send each other digital content while they're in the same room. Communicating and engaging in virtual content while being physically together is nothing new. It's a part of how people make meaning together in the modern, hyperconnected world.

To succeed at hybrid learning, you'll be planning a lot of virtual

delivery of content—but where the mindset shift really comes in is how you tie this all together. How can you use technology to not only reach those attending virtually but level the playing field for every person attending? How can you maintain the spontaneity of collaborating in person with the practical benefits of virtual learning tools?

Ultimately, the key is in meticulous planning and rehearsing. Hybrid learning requires not just facilitation, but choreography. More on that later!

This shift will help you approach learning in a new, evolved way. And I'm here to help you get started.

I've created a model for hybrid learning to help clear some of these things up. This model can help you create a hybrid learning program, whether a transformation of something existing or from the ground up. It covers everything from planning to execution and comes in four key overlapping parts.

Let's take a closer look.

# Model of Hybrid Learning

Following this model will enable you to design effective and engaging learning for a hybrid training environment. Creating and facilitating hybrid learning may seem daunting so, with such careful planning needed, we wanted to give you a helping hand.

As you can see, the model is split into four key areas, with a fifth overall for executing and revising in a continuous cycle.

The important thing to remember is that each part of the model overlaps and the process isn't linear. The diagram above hopefully clarifies that they are all interconnected and cannot simply be considered as separate sections to be completed in a specific order.

With that said, I'm going to explain each component in more detail, with some clarity on how these sections overlap. For example, the tools and tech you choose will be influenced by what your facilitator is used to as much as what will enable you to achieve your session goals.

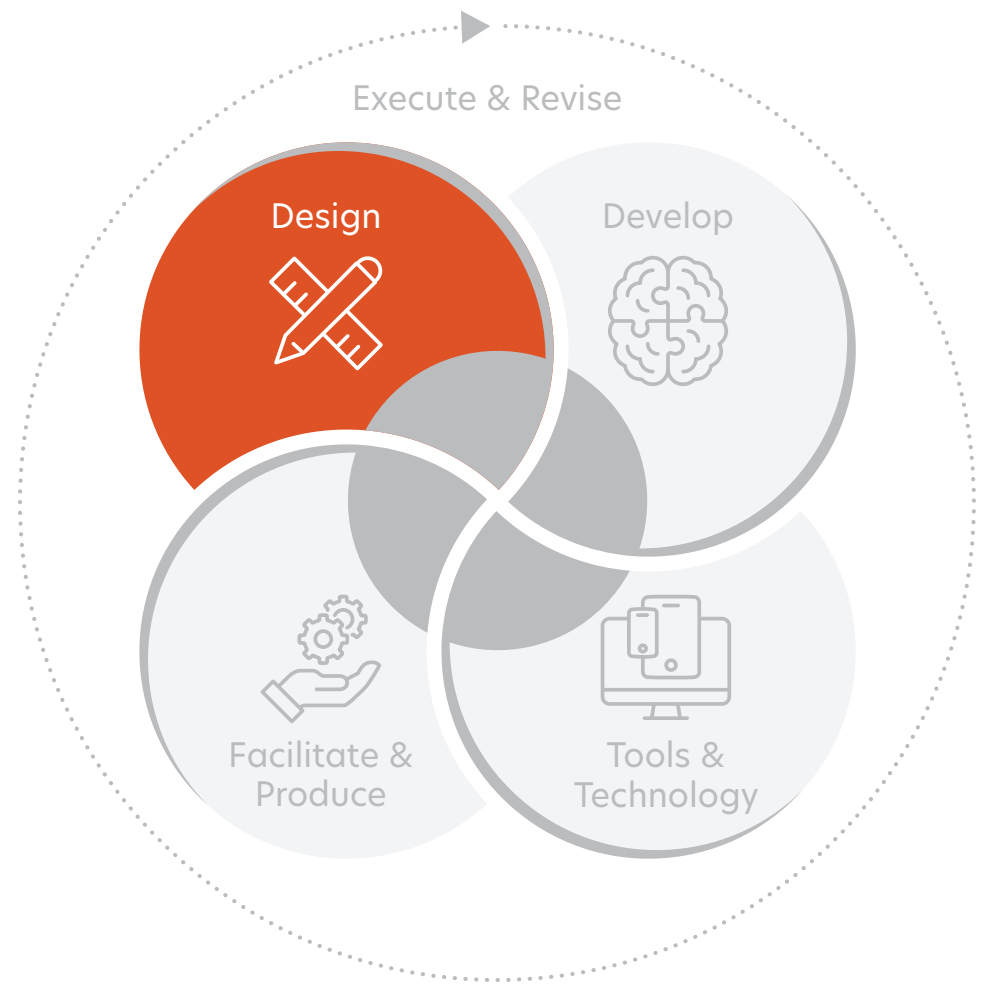


## Part 1: Design

As explained in part one, the primary goal of hybrid learning is to create a consistent experience for all learners; no one loses quality due to their location. As well as a central part in your decision-making around tools and tech, this consistency needs to be the primary focus of your learning design.

I'll say it a whole lot (if you haven't already noticed): your key to success is to think about creating a shared experience, not tagging on extras to compensate for someone who is joining online. While you may use tools and tech designed with virtual engagement in mind, the activities you choose need to enable in-person and virtual learners to come together to meet your learning objectives.

Remember: a live session that works well in person could easily fall flat when delivered virtually, so it's critical to consider the whole picture and everyone's experiences.



## Focusing on an Equal, Shared Experience

Hybrid learning's goal of using technology to create a shared experience is absolutely paramount to your design of a hybrid program. In a live session, you would typically have a facilitator or SME (subject matter expert) delivering some of the content in a talk to learners in the same room. If you follow this methodology in a hybrid setting, the virtual learners become second-class.

---

### **Idea:** Content For a Shared Experience

A good way to translate this into something all learners in this hybrid environment can experience simultaneously is to create a video, microlearn, or animation. Everyone watches it separately, wherever they are, and you then facilitate a discussion about it afterward.

This way, everyone has experienced the content in the same way and can talk about it. Additionally, each learner can adjust their settings, including volume and closed captioning, to suit their needs.



## Choreographing the Shared Experience

When it comes to designing collaborative learning, it's important to go where the light shines brightest. In other words, it's important to consider the tools learners are already using in everyday life and how people already communicate. People often work best together in small groups and integrating different perspectives into each group will allow for the greatest collaboration to happen.

---

### Idea: Organizing Groups

When you're designing group activities in a hybrid setting, it's important to make sure every group has people attending virtually and people attending in person. This helps to ensure everyone feels integrated and equal within the session, rather than siloed.

Once you have your learners in their small groups, you could, for example, get them to work together in a Google Doc and form an opinion statement on something like "safety as a part of our culture" or "how can we track social media influencers and make product decisions". Shared documents are commonplace in many workplaces and offer a great opportunity to collaborate in real-time with tangible results.

## Designing Across All Learning Domains: Think, Feel, Do

When you're designing any learning, it's important to tap into all three domains. This is done not just through the content but also the means of delivery and the fluidity of the session.

The cognitive domain (what people think) comes from knowledge and meaning-making. Collaboration also plays into this, as well as brainstorming and problem-solving in pairs or groups.

The affective domain (how people feel) can be factored in through a deliberate leveling of the playing field, ensuring experiences are shared, and working together on various tasks.

The psychomotor domain (what people do) comes from action sets and getting people to practice their new skills. Take practicing applying the right amount of torque to use a new wrench as an example. Learners can record themselves using the wrench and upload it to a shared drive or Learning Experience Platform (LXP). This can then be followed by a discussion among breakout groups or myriad other activities.

## Using a 40/20/40 Model

Beyond the design considerations outlined above, when it comes to designing the session itself thinking of it through a 40/20/40 model can be really helpful.

The breakdown I recommend as a starting point is:

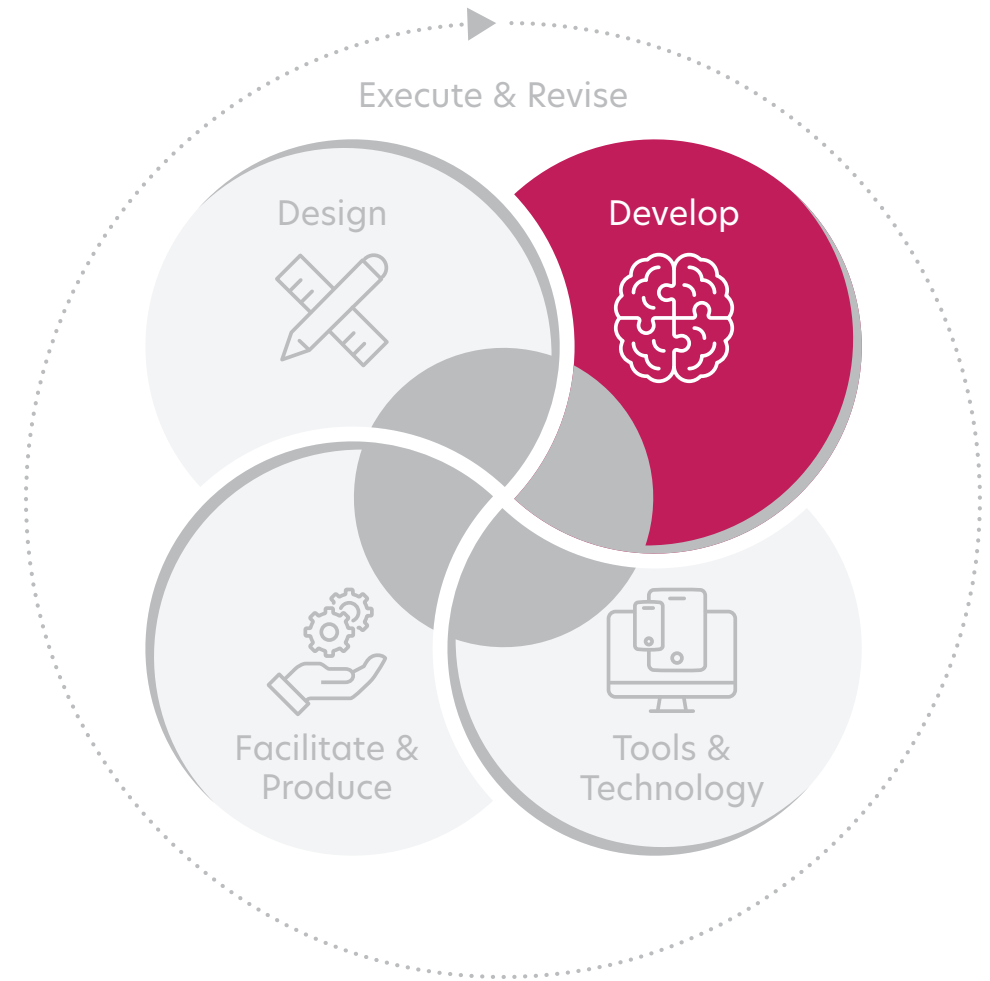
- 40% group collaboration (in the session)
- 20% getting content "uploaded" into participants/knowledge conveyance (in the session)
- 40% individual work (in the session)

This will be contextual based on a number of factors including the in-person/virtual split and subject matter. But it should be a conscious design decision upfront.

## Part 2: Develop

Once you've figured out the learning design and planned outcomes, it's time to focus on planning. This stage ties in very closely with both design and facilitation, as we'll be looking at the logistics of how to make your design a reality.

The key here is about planning the experience as much as you're planning the learning content or topics.



## Presenting the Content

This really comes in two parts. In the last section, we looked at ways to present the information, but what about who's presenting it? When we were delivering live learning in a physical classroom environment and everyone was in the same space, we could fall back on "this person knows a lot, so they can speak in front of an audience".

Whether you would previously put an SME in front of a group and make them the facilitator or simply have them as a special guest within the learning, that approach won't really work in a hybrid learning environment.

I'll get more into the logistical side in part 4 when we look at facilitation. But for now, consider the fact that facilitating hybrid learning has much more complex requirements. If those in the room get to watch and listen to an expert speaker in the same room as them, but people joining virtually get live video footage that is subject to internet connections, we're not giving everyone the same experience.

Instead, consider creating simple talking head videos ahead of time. These can be done with professional equipment, but it's more acceptable than ever to just record yourself (or a separate SME) through a phone or laptop camera. In some cases, the lowered production value and added authenticity can even help.

### Resource: 13 Tips for Filming Videos From Home

Whether all of your learners are working from home or you need to create something at short notice, we can help. From editing tips, to lighting and angles, our tips can help you create great-looking learning videos at home-without breaking the bank.

[Read the article](#)

## Creating Plan B for EVERYTHING

This really comes in two parts. In the last section, we looked at ways to present the information. One of the most crucial parts of planning a hybrid learning experience is to have a Plan B for everything. For each activity, the transitions, the technology, the communication, everything. As some of your learners are joining virtually and a lot of the collaboration will be happening in online spaces, you need to prepare for technical issues.

But tech problems are just one side of the story.

Each hybrid session you run will likely have a different mix of in-person and online participants, which will need a slightly different plan of action for your activities. This also means that every session will likely throw something new your way.

Therefore, it's important to have a Plan B in case a particular activity or mode of learning simply doesn't work in one or both of the learning environments. Not all in-person learning activities translate well online and vice versa. That particular group may also simply not vibe with the particular mode of learning you had planned.

In short, for each activity, I recommend creating two plans for each activity.

### Idea: Reimagining Scenarios

What is conferencing technology fails?  
Do we have a second scheduling option?  
Do we continue through old-fashioned telephones? Could we sort out a WhatsApp Group?

What if the collaboration software stops working? What if too many people in attendance overloads the system and slows it down? Maybe, we could default to a less fancy option like a Google Doc?

## Preparing for Flexibility

Beyond Plan A and Plan B, there are a number of reasons you may need to adapt what you have planned. While it's vital to have a thorough plan, as we explored above, contingency is a vital part of the planning process.

The group you're working with may have a greater or lesser understanding of a particular concept than expected. Therefore, this topic may require more or less time dedicated to it. Adapting on the fly like this is manageable during a solely in-person training session. However, in a hybrid learning environment, it requires a lot more forethought.

---

### Idea: Banking Time

You may have scheduled in 15 minutes for a new topic. When planning the session, it's worth penning in 30 minutes. Also, you should plan for the possibility of removing it completely or going back to it later in the session.

When it comes to timings, you should realistically plan for things to take longer than you would first expect to ensure you can cover all of the essential elements in enough detail within your timeframe.

## Onboarding Your Learners

Hybrid learning will likely be a new experience for your learners. Whether they have participated in live online learning before or not, it's always best practice to prepare them ahead of the session.

---

### Idea: Preparing Your Learners

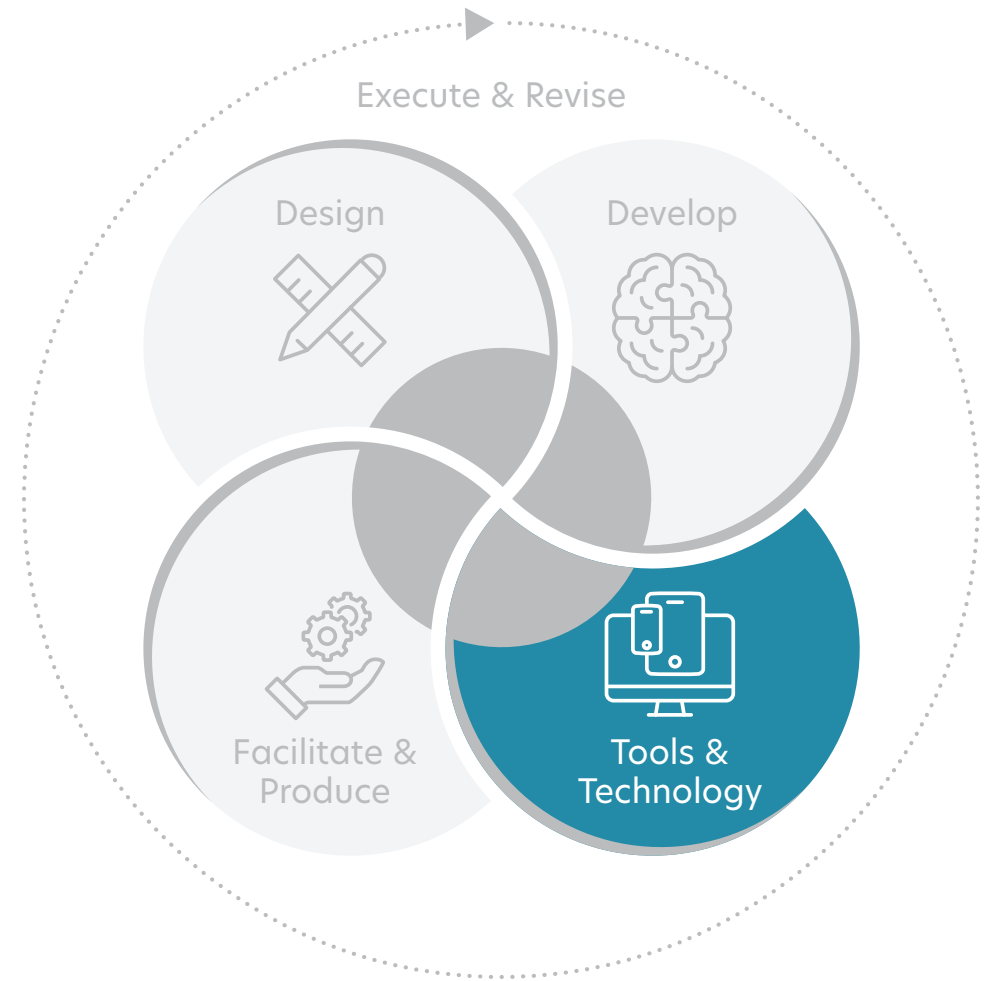
Communicate instructions for audio and video setup. Make sure they bring their laptops. Point them to relevant resources to help them get online. Send a quick video on how to use various tools to ensure proper access is available at the start of the session—you don't want to lose a big chunk of time to set up at the start of the session.

It's also worth pointing your learners in the direction of someone who can help if they're facing technical issues before or during the session. In a hybrid learning environment, this will likely be a producer or designated tech support rather than the facilitator, as they will already have enough on their hands.



## Part 3: Technology & Tools

The first part of the model focuses on choosing the right tools and technology for the job. Before you can design, plan, or facilitate the session, you need to understand what you want to achieve and which tools can help you get there.





## Tools That Enable Creative Design

There are tools that will enable creative learning design, rather than leaving you to think of a hybrid learning situation as limiting. One of the best things to come out of the last few years is the breadth of tech and tools available on the market—at a huge range of price points with a whole bunch of functionalities.

The tools we use are constantly evolving. From simple Q&A, polls, and breakout rooms to user-generated videos, virtual whiteboards, and other collaborative tools, we've never been in such a capable position to make hybrid learning work.

Here are some collaborative tools to consider in your hybrid learning design:

- Virtual whiteboards and collaboration tools (like Jamboard, Miro, or MURAL)
- Shared documents (in Google Drive, SharePoint, etc.)
- Group chats (in WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Slack, etc.)
- Kanban boards (like Trello, Monday.com, Asana, etc.)
- Quizzing or interactive apps (like Kahoot!)

## Translating Live In-Person to Live Online (And Combining the Two!)

Just about any learning that you create for in-person training can now be translated into the virtual world thanks to the tools and technologies that have been developed and have thrived in recent years. Especially as remote working and geographically dispersed workforces have become more common.

At the bare minimum, you will need to factor in technology-enabled versions of things that seem common practice in a live learning environment. By using technology, you can level the playing field and bring all participants, live or in person, into the same activities with the same access.

Using technology in this way also applies to the learners present in the classroom. For example, external webcams and mics are essential for picking up contributions in the room so they can be easily shared in real-time with those joining virtually. Additionally, large screens should be present throughout the room to give in-person attendees the same multi-screen experience those learning remotely could have at home.

Similarly, in-room learners will (depending on the workshop design) need to be able to contribute to shared online activities - so will need to have laptops, tablets, or phones with them.

Choosing the right technology will allow you to combine the best of both worlds in a hybrid learning setting.

### Idea: Reimagining Q&A for Hybrid Learning

Use a question submission tool. All learners, virtual or in person, can then ask questions through this tool. The facilitator reads it aloud so everyone can hear (and pastes it into a chat) and gives their answer. They then allow for natural, open conversation to follow. This follow-up could also take place in a collaborative tool like Jamboard or Miro.

## Communicating in Real-Time

Real-time communication is absolutely vital to the success of hybrid learning. This means that there must be tools in place for learners to submit questions in a way that will be seen or read instantly by the facilitator and, if appropriate, discussed with the group. This is another way to ensure that all attendees are on equal footing. It's also important to have someone in addition to the main facilitator present to ensure all virtually submitted questions are answered in a timely way.

In the same way that students in a classroom can learn from the teacher's answer to their classmate's question, these questions present opportunities for everyone in the physical and virtual room(s) to learn from each other.

## It's Not Just About Your Tech

There has previously been some resistance—be it in grade school, higher ed, or in the workplace—to allow learners to bring their own technology into the room. However, when it comes to hybrid learning, this is vital!

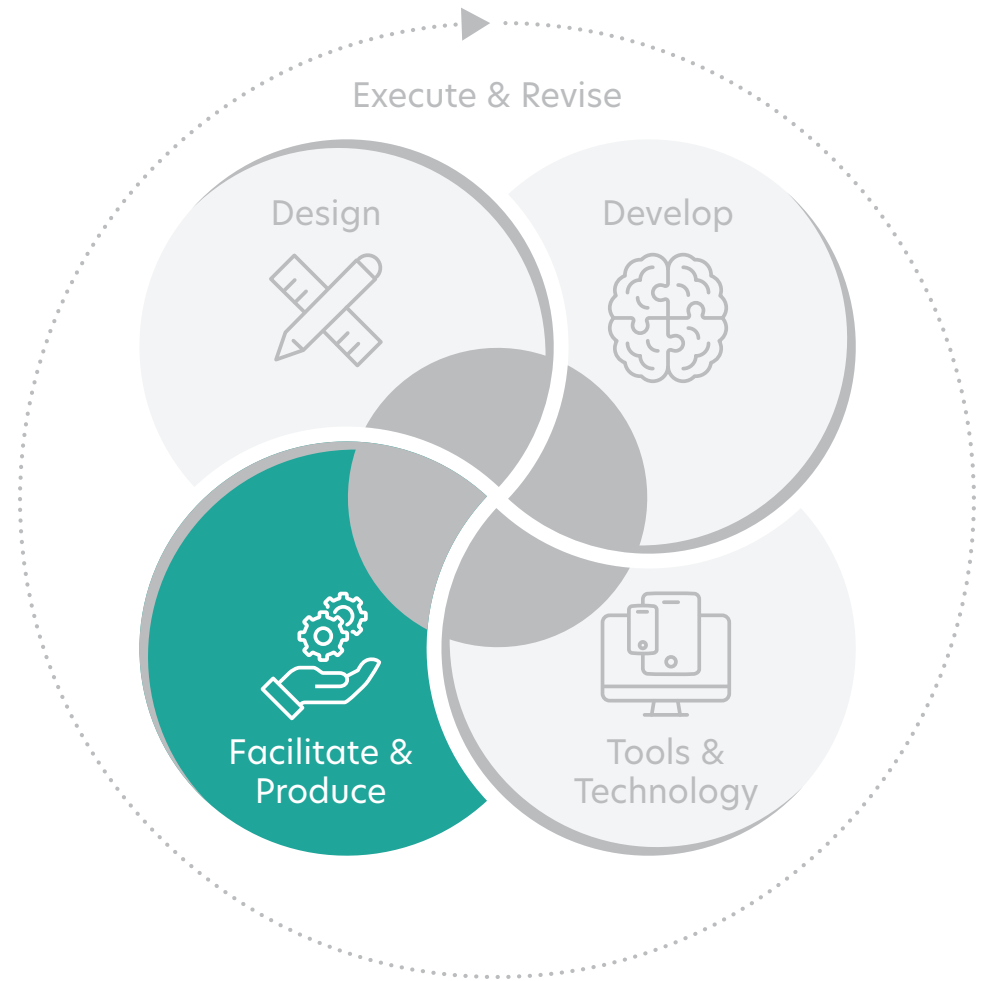
If you take away only one thing from this ebook, let it be this: hybrid learning will only work if you allow and actively encourage all your learners to bring their own laptops (and phones and tablets) into the session.

Everyone needs to participate via the technology they're already familiar with. This will immediately remove barriers to access and make it so much easier for everyone, regardless of location, to access the tools you're asking them to use.

## Part 4: Facilitate & Produce

In the world of hybrid learning, facilitation is a whole new role. Live speakers and subject matter experts are now guest experts who need facilitation and production support. It's not really fair to ask them to be experts on all of the software, facilitation skills, and choreography needed. In fact, as we discussed in the previous section, having live speakers in the room can actually produce an unequal experience for those attending virtually.

So what is enough? And how can we approach facilitation for more complex requirements?



## Introducing the Producer

Chances are, if you've engaged in virtual workshops or webinars, you will be familiar with the role and importance of a producer. However, for anyone coming from a mostly face-to-face or early in their live online journey, I cannot impress enough the importance of having a producer on hand.

The producer is there to handle transitions, activity set up, tech support, sound, and videos. Their job is to ensure everything is ready to go before the session begins as well as be on hand to handle any issues that may pop up during facilitation. They essentially act as a stage manager would at a theater: working behind the scenes, alongside established cues to change screens, switch apps, and logistically manage group activities in a virtual space.

The producer can also help to keep up with questions or comments coming in virtually to ensure that those joining virtually are heard and don't lose the spontaneity and connection that is so key to live learning.

## A New Type of Facilitator

As well as working alongside a producer, hybrid learning requires an entirely new type of facilitator. That's not to say you can't use the same facilitators you had when managing face-to-face sessions. You absolutely can. In fact, it may prove beneficial to do so. But first, you need to upskill your facilitators.

Your facilitators will need support and development to help them adapt to the new reality of hybrid training. A producer could be a good person to do this as they can assist with the context of the digital requirements for this type of learning.

The biggest shift for facilitators is requiring a broader set of skills across one session. Facilitating group conversations is still critical, as is engaging with people online. The thing is, with hybrid learning you have to be able to do both consistently. On top of all of this, you need to have a constant awareness of how the design of each activity (and the Plan B mentioned earlier) impacts the learners in each space.

## Technical Choreography

I talked earlier about the importance of planning, run-throughs, Plan Bs, and flexibility. Facilitating hybrid learning requires a considerable amount of technical choreography. And yes, you would ideally have a producer on board to handle the logistical aspects of that. However, it's important that the facilitator and producer work together to build the most effective learning for a hybrid environment.

This means that even though your facilitators may not be the ones pressing the buttons and managing tech support, they need to have an in-depth understanding of how all of the pieces fit together—and what it would take to adapt an activity at the last minute.

Critically, ensure you make time for a technical dress rehearsal. And possibly more than one. You need a chance to run through Plan A and Plan B for each scenario so it's clear to both the facilitator and the producer how you're planning to transition between activities and what to do if you hit a bump in the road.



## Part 5 (Ongoing): Execute & Revise

**This is possibly the most important part of hybrid learning and it needs to be ongoing. You've got the tech in place, you've designed and planned the session, you have the facilitator and producer together, and everything is in place. All that's left to do is run the session, right?**

Well, actually that's really just the start!

### Measuring and Assessing the Session

Once the session is over, it's important to assess how it went. As a facilitator, you're going to make mistakes and learn as you go about what works and what doesn't. It's so important to pay attention to this so you can continuously improve the sessions and the hybrid learning experience.

Ideally, back in the design and planning stages, you had a Plan B in place in case things went wrong. Did you need to use it? Did it work? There's nothing wrong with trying again or restarting things. In fact, I encourage you to keep trying. Perfection is the enemy of progress. You need to embrace the chaos and learn from these experiences as you go.

### Resource: Learning Measurement

Learning measurement and understanding its impact in a business context can feel daunting and complicated. So we've pulled together a comprehensive set of resources from our own archives, our sister company Watershed, and some external sources to help get you going.

[Read the definitive guide](#)

## Understanding Ways of Learning

A key part of assessing and revising these sessions is measurement. However, it's important to understand that visual active participation cannot be your key measure of engagement. It is not a valid measure.

This is true not only of hybrid learning but also of any learning featuring virtual participants. Ultimately, people learn differently. Some, for example, like to take time to process the content or discussion points before contributing themselves.

To help you understand different types of learners, we created virtual learning archetypes.





## The Virtual Learning Archetypes

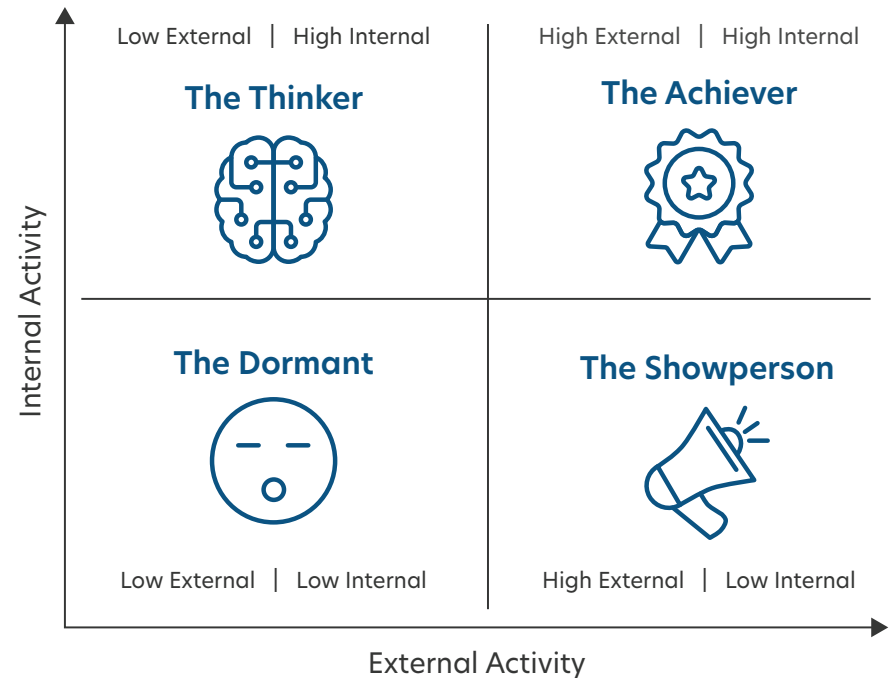
This isn't a catch-all, and it's important to understand that individual learners may switch between archetypes within a single session.

Adapting the design and delivery of your hybrid sessions with these in mind can considerably increase engagement levels with your learning content. It can be hard to measure engagement in these environments, but planning your learning to accommodate for these archetypes can be a great starting point.

Understanding what engagement looks like to each of them is key to understanding how to accommodate these archetypes. In any virtual environment, you will find internal and external engagement with your content. Internal doesn't present clearly and often involves mulling over concepts and quietly considering the content. External engagement includes asking questions and actively contributing to discussions or collaborative activities.

### Understanding the Learning Archetypes

If you want to understand the four archetypes more clearly, as well as the types of engagement in a virtual environment, [watch our on-demand webinar](#).



## The Future of Hybrid Learning

So far, we've talked about where hybrid learning is at now. Hybrid, as a way of teaching and learning, is here to stay and the possibilities for its future are so exciting.

As augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) gain more traction in learning and development, the opportunities to interact with each other from different locations only increase. Imagine a hybrid session conducted through VR, with headsets shipped to anyone attending remotely.

The future of hybrid is full of potential and incredibly exciting possibilities. And we believe it's an inevitability for learning. It was happening before we were pushed into mass remote working, and hybrid working is only increasing in popularity.

A hybrid world of work needs a hybrid way of learning, and I really hope this guide and our model can help you on your way.

## Create or Improve Your Hybrid Learning Program

If you don't know where to start or simply need some pointers, get in touch with one of our learning designers or consultants today to get your hybrid learning program where it needs to be.

[Get in touch!](#)



GP Strategies Corporation is one of the world's leading talent transformation providers. By delivering award-winning learning and development solutions, we help organizations transform through their people and achieve meaningful change. GP Strategies has delivered our innovative consulting, learning services, and talent technology solutions to over 6,000 organizations globally.

Our extensive network of expert learning specialists, combined with our transformation focus and custom solutions, deliver superior business results. Whether your initiative requires developing the skills of your talent, the implementation and adoption of learning technologies, or refining critical processes, GP Strategies is a transformation partner you can trust.

[gpstrategies.com](https://gpstrategies.com) | [info@gpstrategies.com](mailto:info@gpstrategies.com)

Part of Learning Technologies Group plc *ltg*