Digital Tool Kit

Contents

A note about this toolkit.

Since the COVID 19 pandemic, society has seen unprecedented change which is set to continue over the coming years. In response to this change this handbook has been put together taking into account that the future voice of local communities lies not only in face to face settings but also in the designing and use of digital systems that put people and the communities they serve first, allowing them to collaborate giving both voice and power in a digital future.

Throughout the pandemic it has become evident that there are a plethora of systems available for communities to use designed with a vastly different requirements, this of course means that communities have to prioritise where they should best spend their time and potentially funding searching for systems designed to meet their needs. For example replacing phone, postal surveys with intuitive technology to communicate within a community means that interaction with a community can be transformed, allowing a freer flow of ideas and a better understanding of what really matters to a local community.

This handbook will allow you to quickly reference some digital tools that are out there to help you collect and capture community views and opinions, and we hope it will be a useful resource for resident groups, community and voluntary organisations as well as for public bodies and commercial partners who care about public engagement and involvement and who are looking at the digital approaches to engagement.
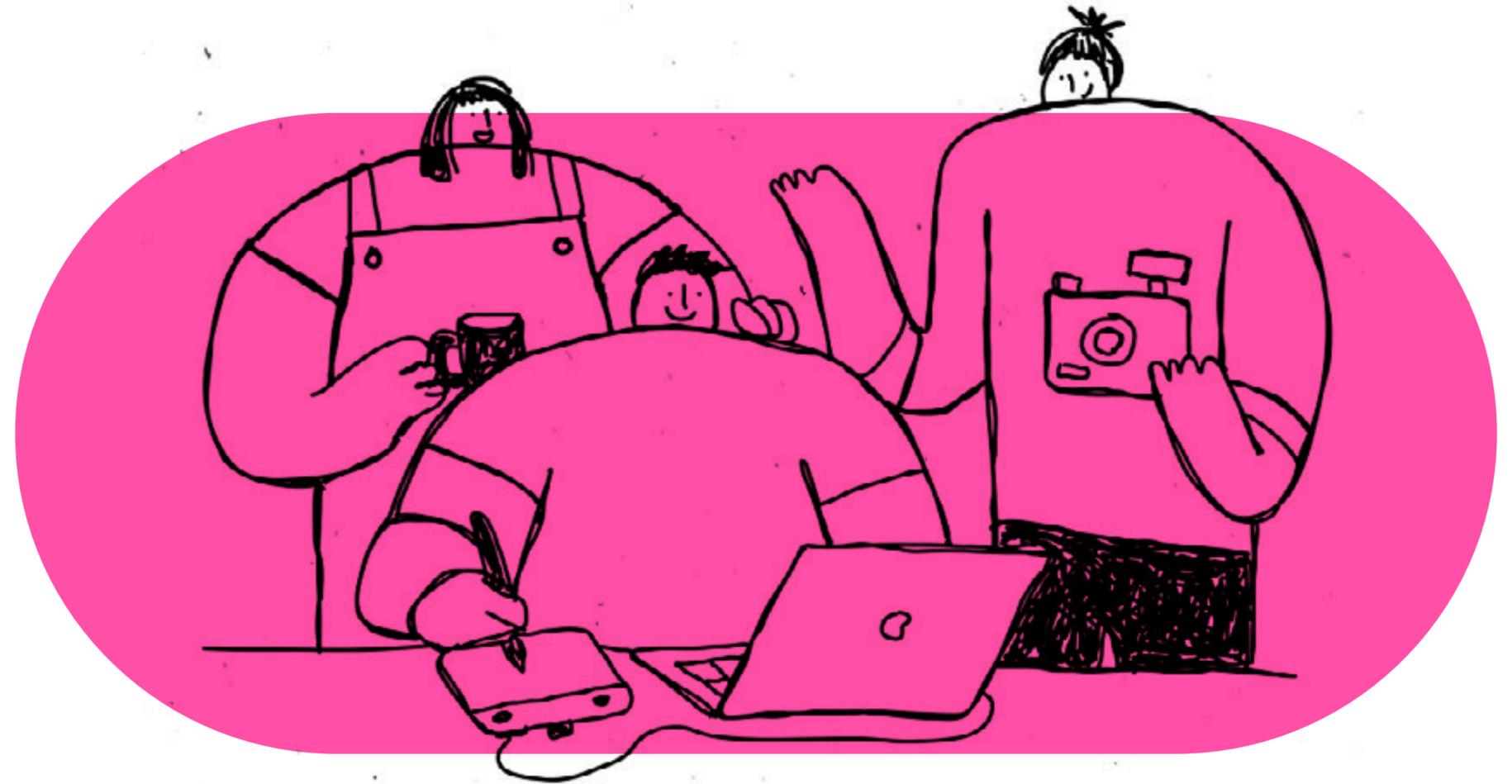
Head to In the past, Creative Rural Communities developed a successful Community Mapping Toolkit in a physical format, this is still available to download and print here:

What about hard to reach communities?

There will always be pockets within communities that don't have access to digital services. One way forward may be to utilise the growing numbers of **volunteer groups** that have sprung up as a result of the pandemic, **providing support** to people that otherwise would have been left stranded. We hope this toolkit provides these groups with ideas and tools to **reach there diverse communities**.
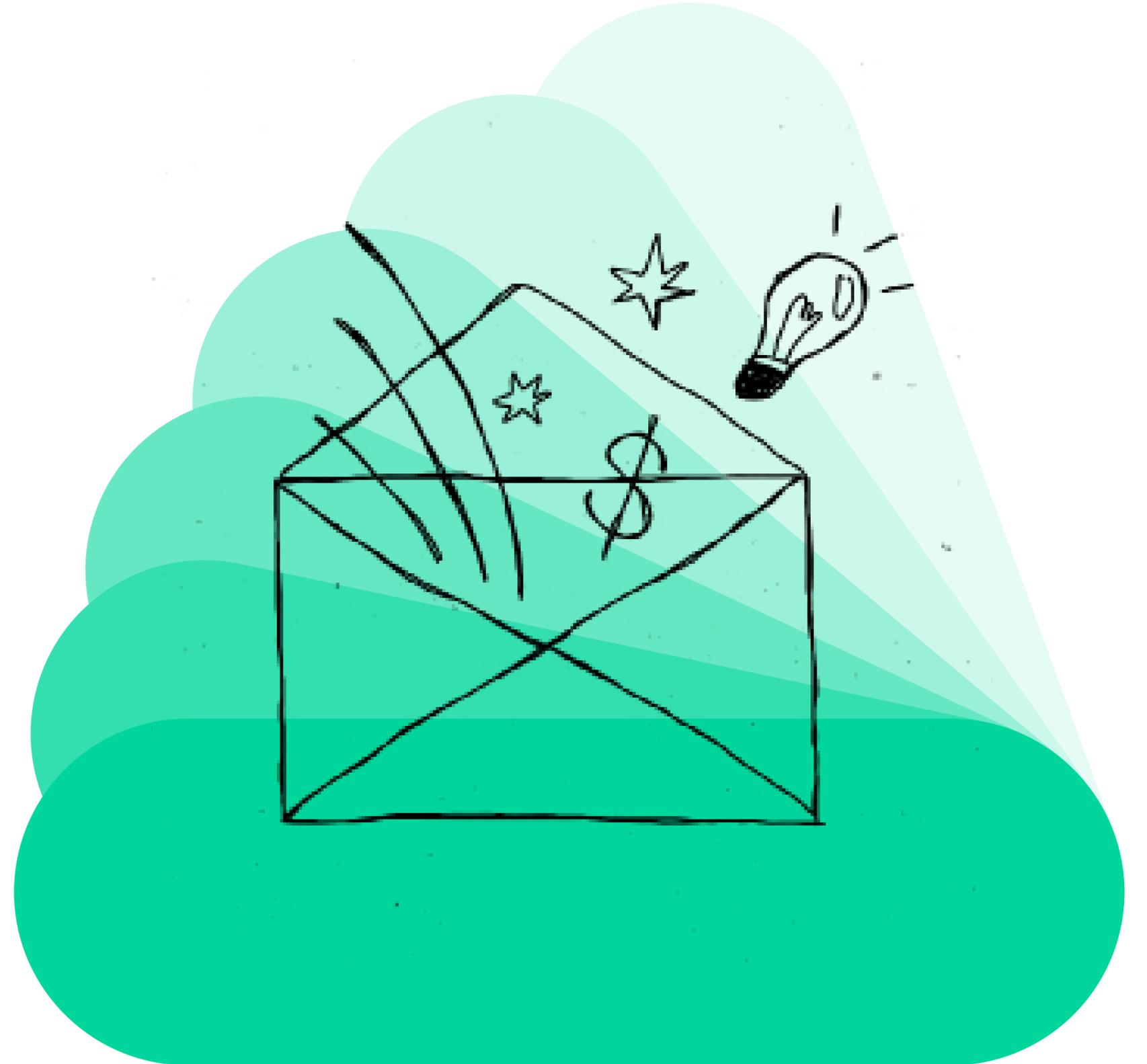
Vale Table
Loan Scheme

Having access to the right **technical equipment** can be a huge stumbling block. If you do you know somebody who is digitally excluded and they would like to take the first steps towards getting online this scheme could be ideal. In partnership with **Newydd Housing Association** and **Digital Communities Wales**, Vale of Glamorgan libraries now offer tablet computers for loan to library members.

The first scheme of its kind in Wales, and offers those who do not have access to digital equipment the opportunity to take the first steps towards getting online with a free loan of one of an iPads. All the tablets come pre-loaded with 4G data. This means that users do not need their own internet connection in order to access websites and online services with the devices. The tablets also come with a selection of apps, hand-picked by our own specialist staff to help users get up and running as quickly and easily as possible.

If you or someone you know would be interested in using this service, please contact your local library branch to arrange a loan.
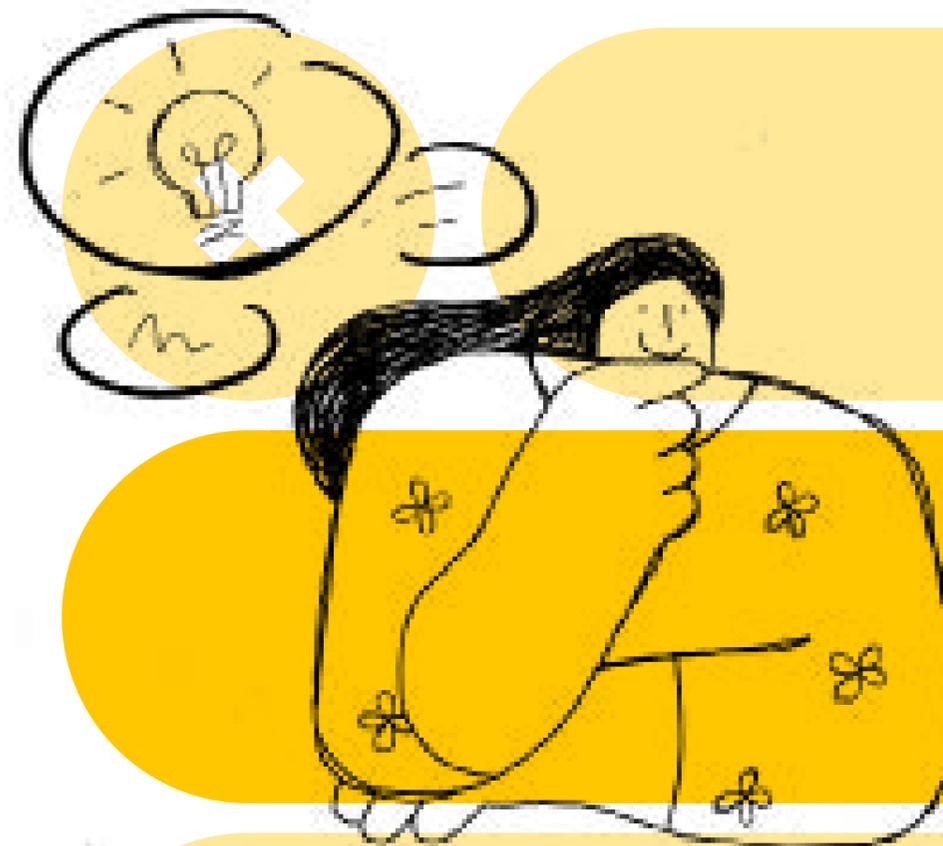
What is a Digital Toolkit?

This digital engagement toolkit is aimed at **assisting community groups** to work together to get the most out of the plethora of online resources that are currently available to use, all **low-cost and with potential high impact** depending on application.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council want to continue to work with its communities in mapping the individual, community and institutional assets in their localities, understanding that communities will now be looking to use digital tools as way to bring people together alongside meeting in person or when you can't meet at all. In fact, we have learnt that digital tools used confidently can make things easier and remove barriers to participation.

Using this toolkit in conjunction with our existing Community Mapping Toolkit, we hope will provide our communities with the right tools to make asset mapping meaningful and sustainable ensuring it leads to constructive use for its communities. Ultimately giving our communities a better understanding of local assets and community priorities; all valuable knowledge that can be used as evidence as part of funding proposals or for local consultations and community planning.
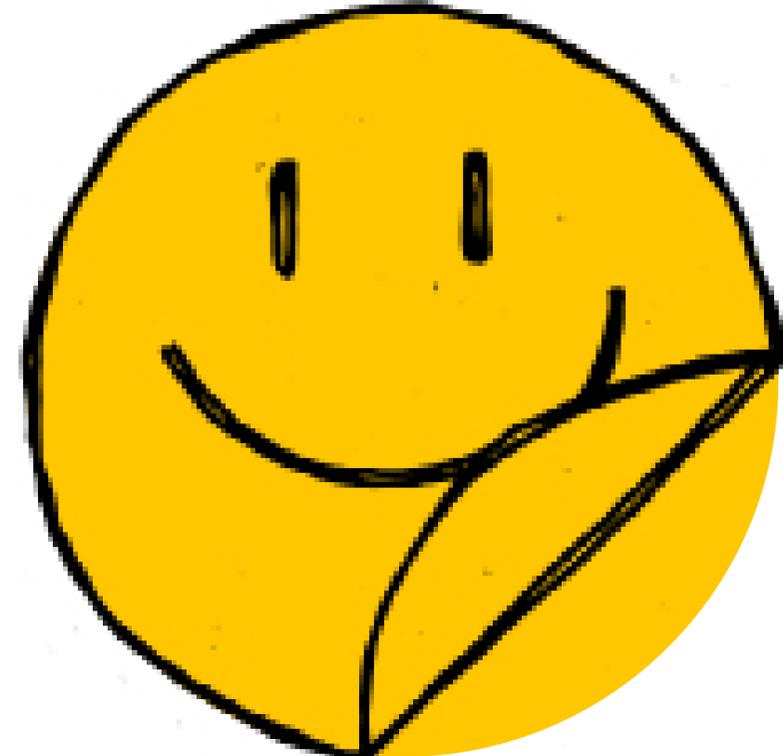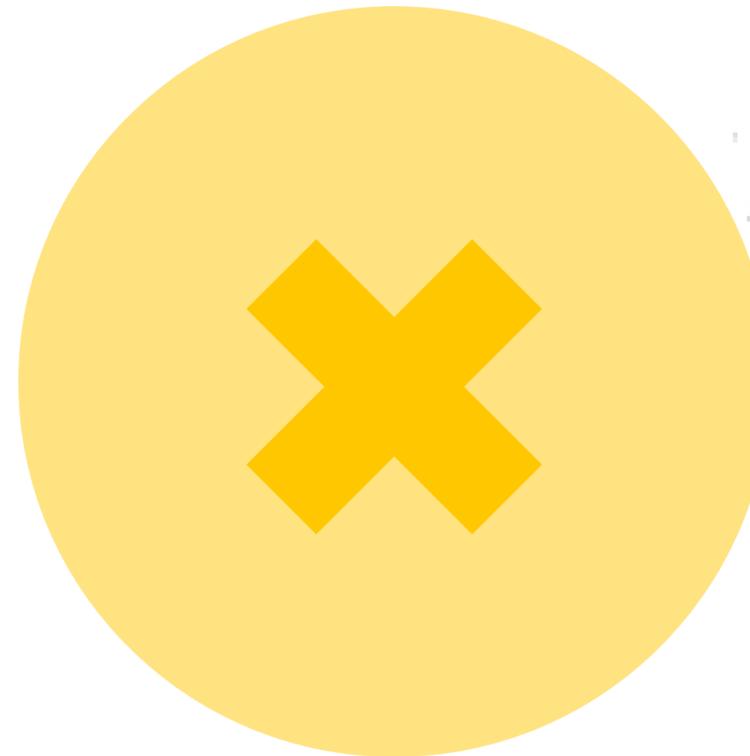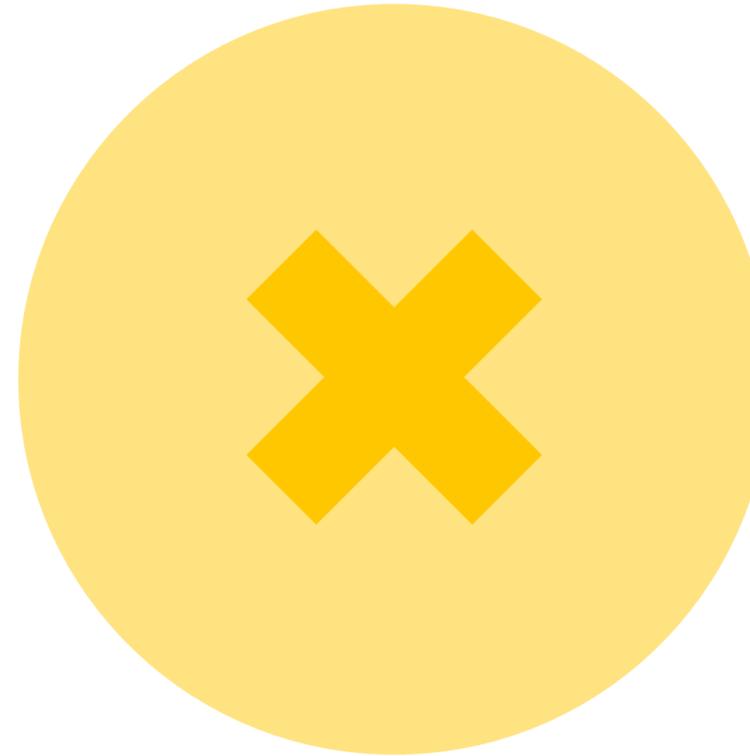
The Different Systems / Platforms

The Basics

Google Drive

Google Drive has a host of useful tools that are very similar to what you would find in Microsoft Office the only difference is **it is free and very simple to use**. In your Google Drive you can make word documents, spreadsheets, presentations and surveys and easily share them with others so they can view or contribute. This is because **it updates in real time** so multiple people can edit a document at once saving time and duplication of effort.
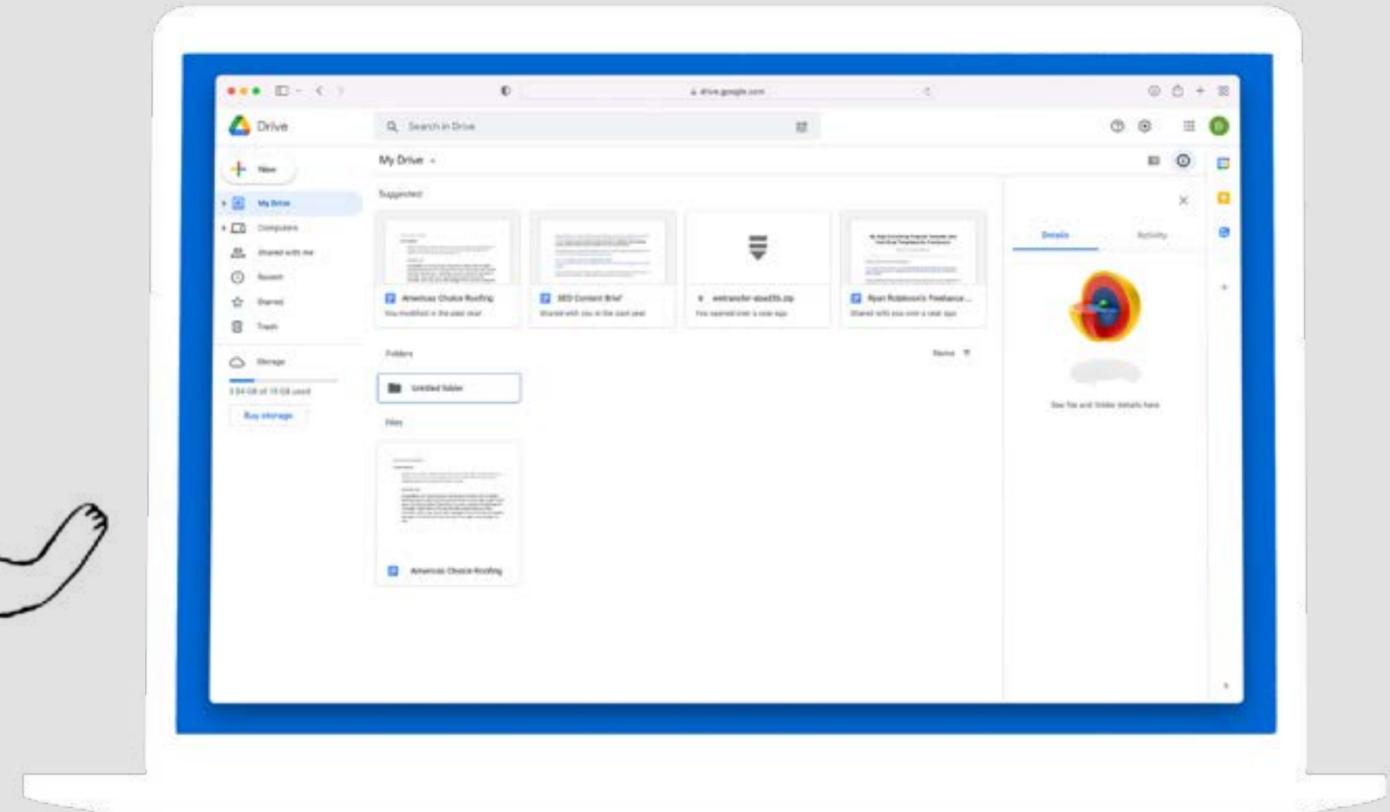
It is reliable and incredibly easy to get started with and will allow you to **start collaborating with others** in your local area.

Key Tip   You will need an internet connection to work on the most recent version of a document shared or not if you haven't already downloaded to your device.

Head to   https://drive.google.com enter your email, create a password and off you go.

WeTransfer

Is a digital tool you can use to **send large files** to anyone in your community and is free to use to send files that are sized up to **2GB**. Most emails only allow 50KB this means you can use WeTransfer to send larger files like photos or videos and keep the size and quality. Using **WeTransfer is very simple** - enter your email address, the recipient's email address, upload the file and hit send – that's it!

Key Tip   WeTransfer only keeps your upload available for 7 days. After which they expire and are removed from their servers so make sure whomever is receiving the files knows to download in time.

Head to   WeTransfer - Send Large Files & Share Photos Online - Up to 2GB Free and start sharing your content today.
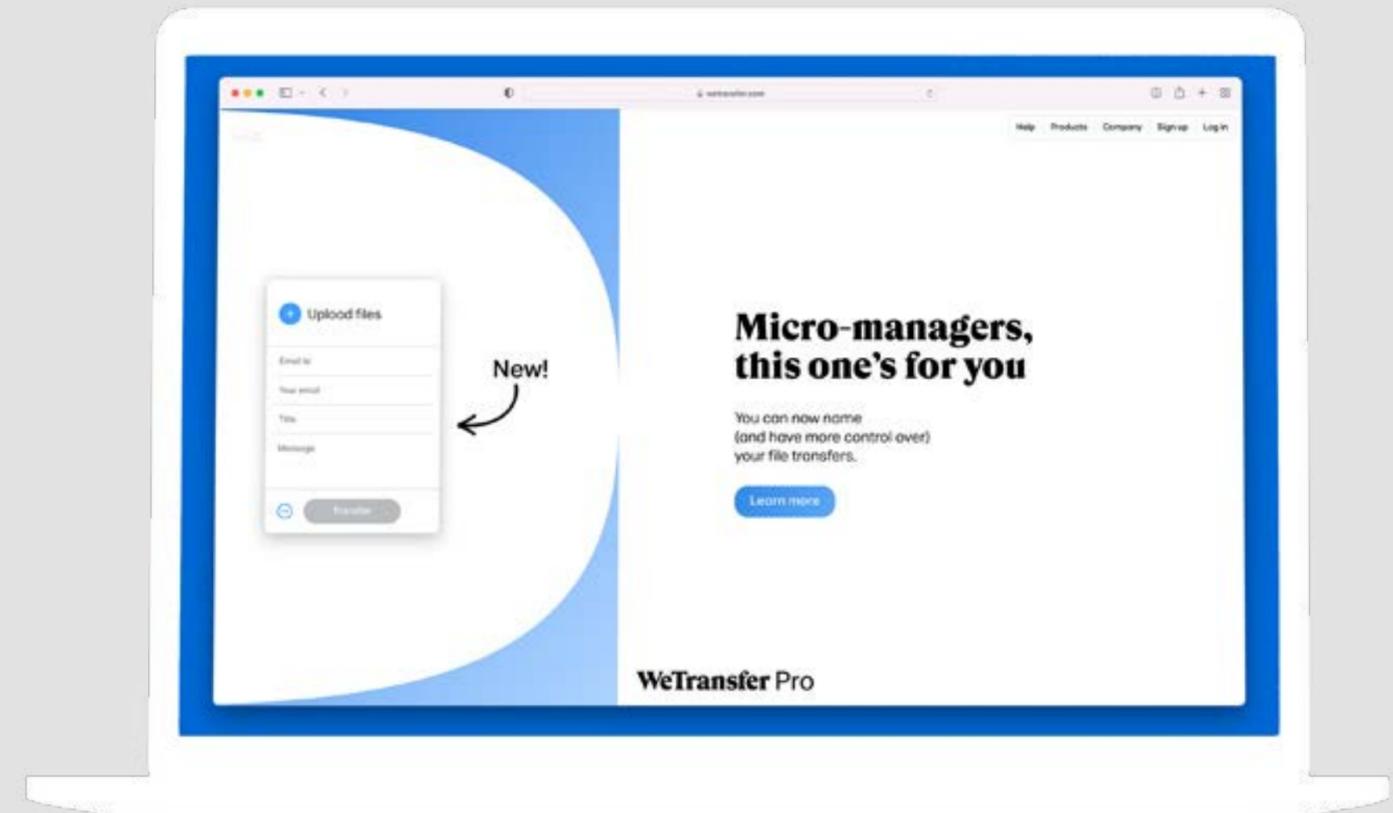
Zoom & Microsoft Office Teams

Zoom and Teams are **free platforms** for running video call meetings. As you may have experienced during the lockdown in 2020, Zoom and Microsoft Teams share a number of the same core collaboration features, from high quality video conferencing to phone calls, text chat and group messaging. When it comes to the in-meeting experience, both offer useful options such as custom and blurred backgrounds, a variety of viewing modes, breakout rooms and text chat. **Users can also share their screen during presentations**, making it easier for audience members to follow along. Zoom and Teams allow meetings to be recorded, which means people unable to attend can catch up on anything they missed. Since the start of the pandemic, both have also introduced important accessibility features, such as live captions and transcription features.
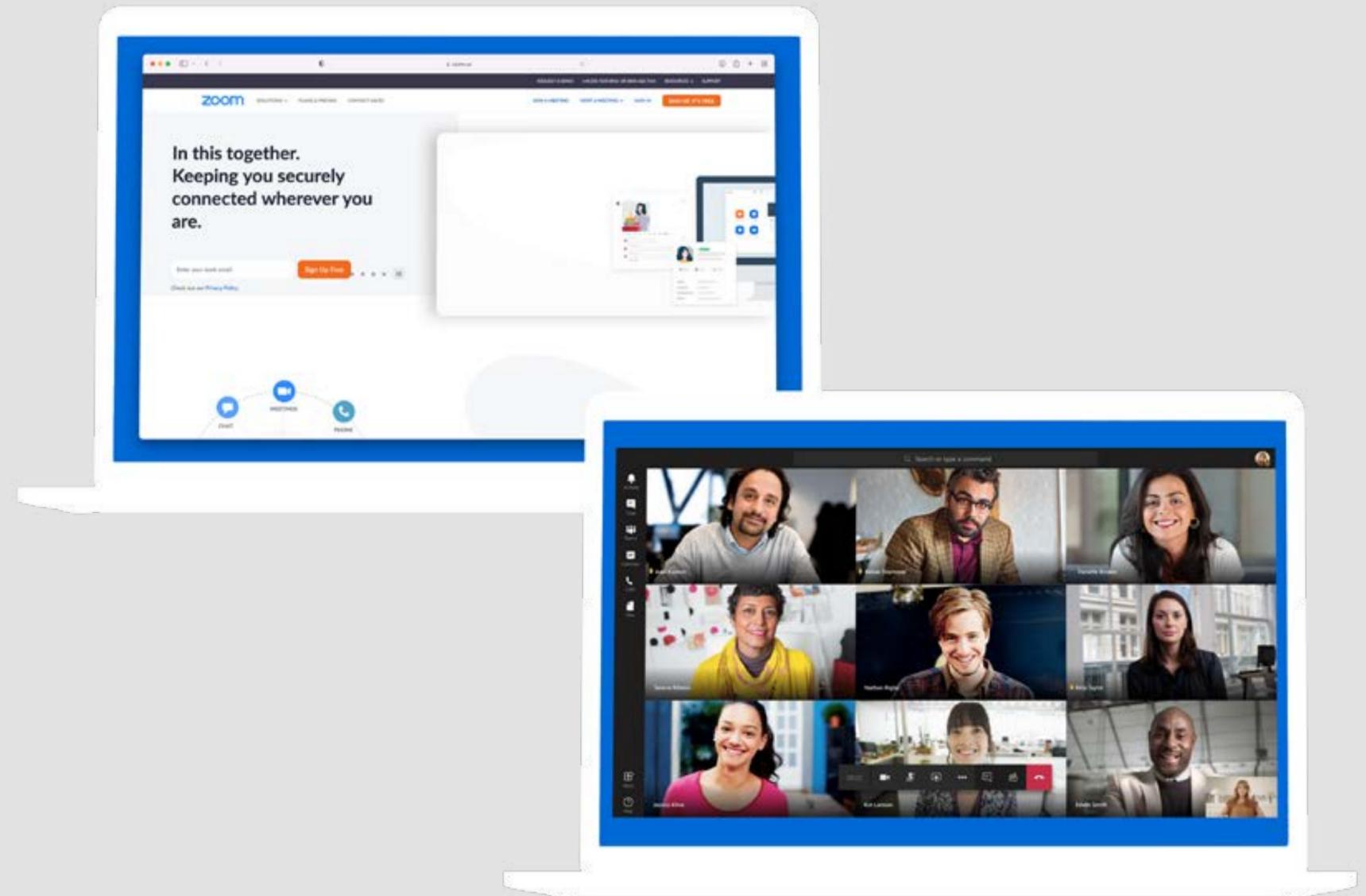
Key Tip
Use of these two systems often comes down to personal choice, the only key difference is that Teams is integrated with the wider 365 services that Microsoft offer.

Head to
www.zoom.com or www. Microsoft Teams Sign-In Page | Teams Login and test to see which one you prefer to use.

Slack

If you can send a text you can use Slack! **Slack is a digital messenger application** that brings your community / volunteers/ team together and is as easy to use as a text! The main difference is that you can **create a host of different channels for topics of discussion**, share documents and folders and search through all of the different conversations very easily. It is a perfect tool to use if you are communicating with large groups in your community on a host of different topics.

Key Tip   If you sign up to the free function it only keeps records and files for so long so keep an eye on anything urgent you want to store. You can also video call one person on the free function.

Head to   Slack is where the future works you can sign up with a google account or your email.
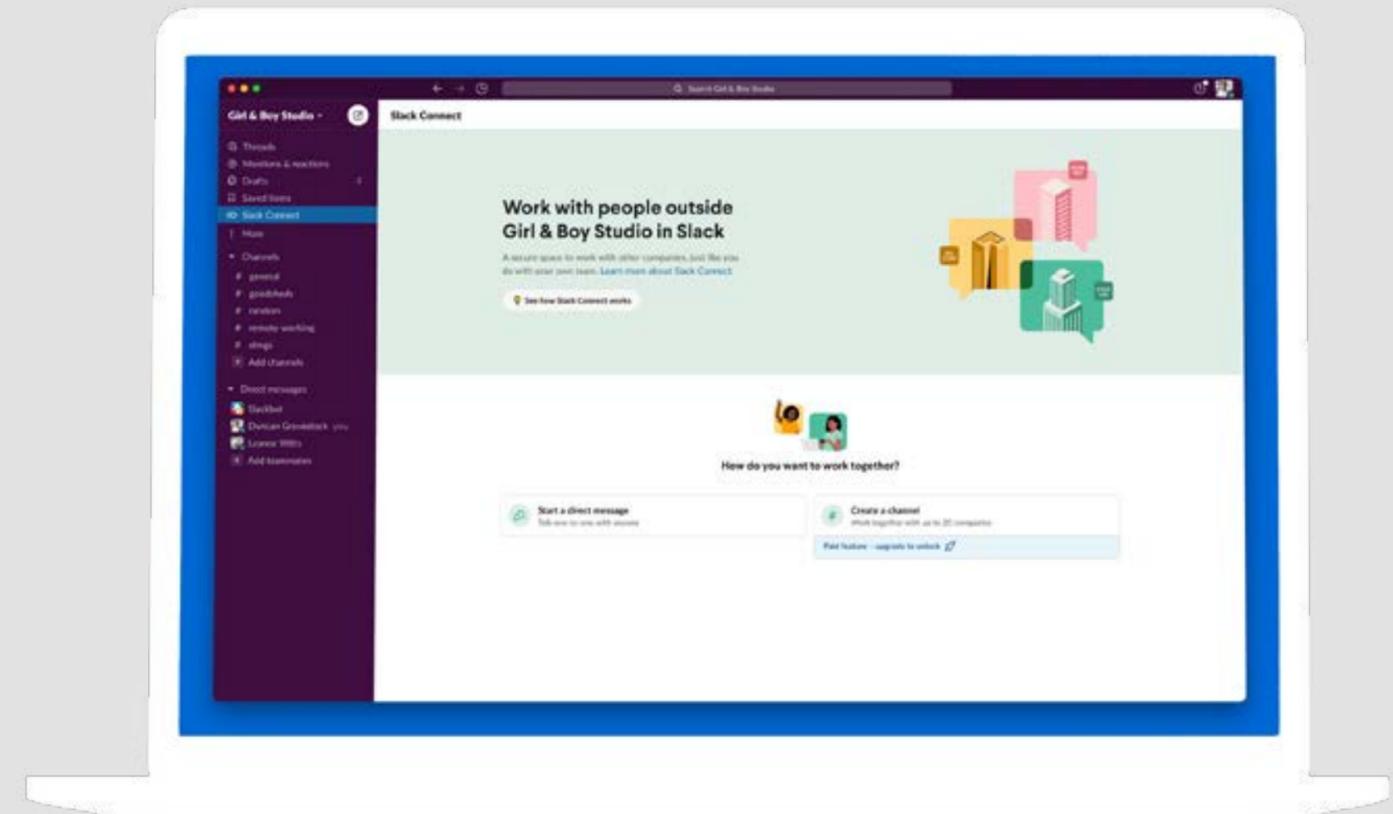
Zoom & Microsoft Teams or Teams Live & Facebook Live

Both Zoom and Microsoft Teams are platforms for running video call meetings are very user-friendly and popular when planning and hosting an online meeting. Both of these tools are easy to set up and use if you are planning to hold a meeting, conference or event, in the Lockdown of 2020/2021 a plethora of events moved to these platforms to ensure community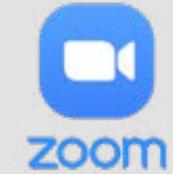's felt cohesive, some of these events ranged from coffee mornings to yoga classes or crafts sessions.   You can also use these tools to host consultations or conferences and both allow you to set up breakout sessions – *both have the capacity to book up to 50 people per online break out room…. Remember though you might need 50 people to facilitate and manage the groups in each room!

Key Tip

Both are free although Zoom can have up to 100 participants whereas Teams can have up to 300. Remember to look at your settings in these platform links to disable screen sharing to just yourself or a select few. This ensures you manage the content and privacy of the session. Also if you are planning to record your meeting make sure you ask at the start of the meeting to ensure you have all the permissions.

Head to

Schedule a meeting in Teams (microsoft.com) or Video Conferencing, Cloud Phone, Webinars, Chat, Virtual Events | Zoom Both have a host of tips and advice on how to use their systems.

What happens if your planned event is going to have bigger numbers… i.e. 1000 to 20,000? There are a host of platforms out there but some might come at a cost...

Teams Live

Teams Live is free to use and a very popular option which lets you host an online event for up to 10,000. Most attendees can "view only" but you can allow comments if you wish, by setting up a Q & A box. With live events you can have multiple presenters who can share audio, webcams and their own screens to present content.

Key Tip

If you are thinking of hosting an event at scale and online, ensure your settings are carefully set up on Microsoft Teams Live so that only relevant speakers have access and that no unknown third party can't tamper with your event. Also, with events of this scale you need to think about your camera quality and audio equipment, would a HD camera be an investment? Poor quality transmission can effect viewer engagement and it is important to still consider the event experience of a participant when planning an online event.

Facebook Live

Facebook live is a very easy platform to use you can "Go Live" at any time from a personal or business profile. It is a very easy platform to use and hosts a huge amount of features such as video streaming, filters, hash tagging and live commentary. You can also monitor your engagement with followers, feedback and general data post the event.

Key Tip

Unlike all the other online tools you cannot stop malicious content being posted live stream and in the comments…. Overall it is very successful tool and is very easy to interact with an audience

Head to

Live-stream an event on Facebook | Facebook Business Help Centre and our case study on page XXX

The Different Systems / Platforms

More engagement

Canva

If you are looking to engage your community using some **graphic design then Canva is a game changer**! Allowing you to create attractive, exciting and professional graphic designs from the comfort of your own home. It is free tool to use and anyone looking to create social media post, posters, newsletters or any other engaging visual content should head there to see what it can offer you.

Canva is very simple and intuitive to use, with drag and drop images, different fonts and stock images for you to draw from as well as the function to upload your own images too. It also has a host of different templates for you to use or get inspiration from if you're a novice or not very confident with design.

Key Tip   You can also create GIFs and short videos and we would recommend you watch some of the YouTube tutorials available to get a feel of how you can make this digital tool work for you.

Head to   Home - Canva sign up with your email account and start designing your own engaging content for free!
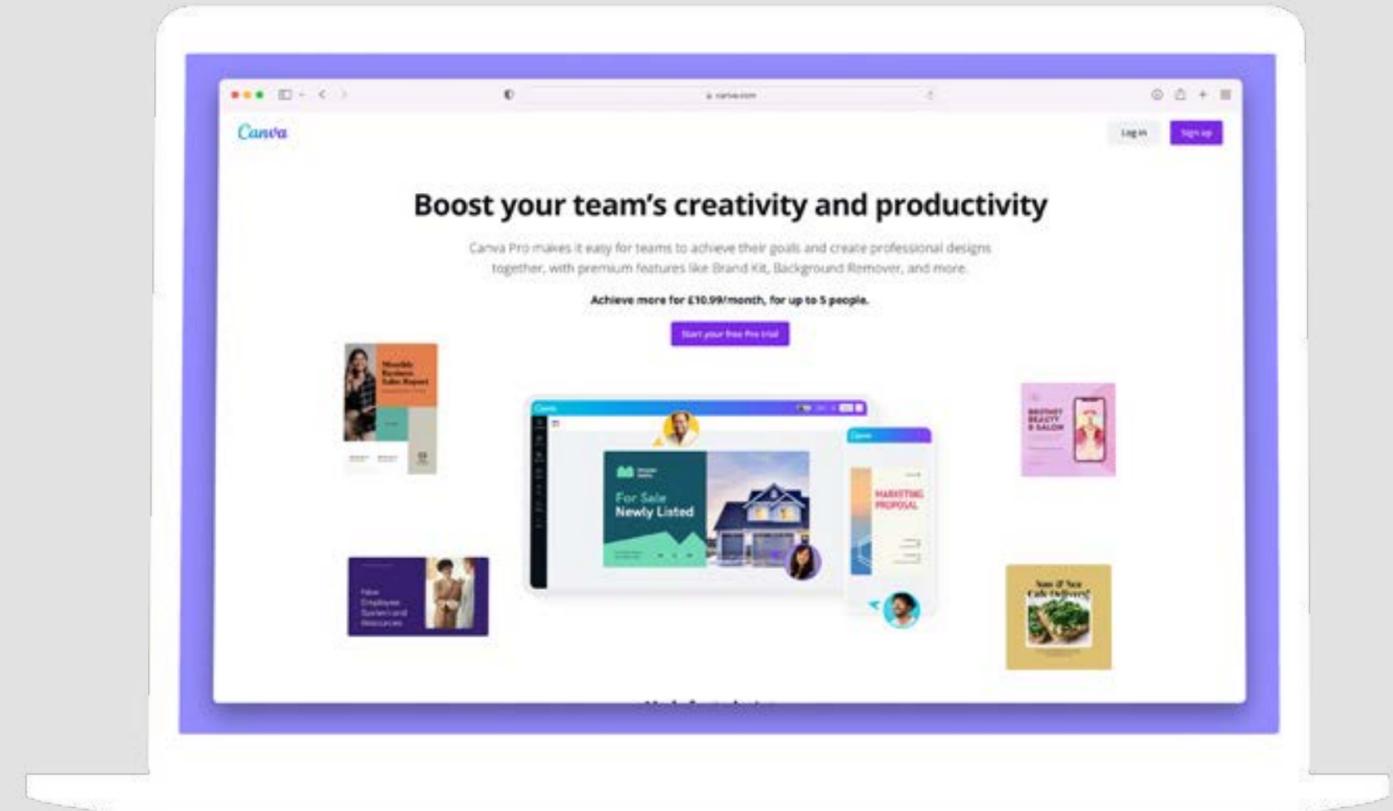
Padlet

This is an unbelievably easy tool to use and it's free! **Essentially an online white board that can be turned into a mood board**, take open notes, build ideas and brainstorm anything you can think of! It makes collaboration activities easy to manage and interactive as you can add text, photos, links, videos and other media.

You can also change the settings on any individual Padlet so it is can be closed and or open to comment or take reactions. You can set your Padlet so that others can collaborate and share with others enabling them to add their own content in their own time.

Key Tip

If you are holding a meeting or consultation you can take notes on Padlet during a live session it is very easy to navigate and really adds to a conversation and audience participation. The 'post it' note feature, and the ease of moving these around, should add to your confidence and creatively – making it one of our top engaging and easy tools for you to trial.

Head to

Our Case Study on page XXX and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3P5QySmLeU which is a great tutorial on how to get the most out of this tool.
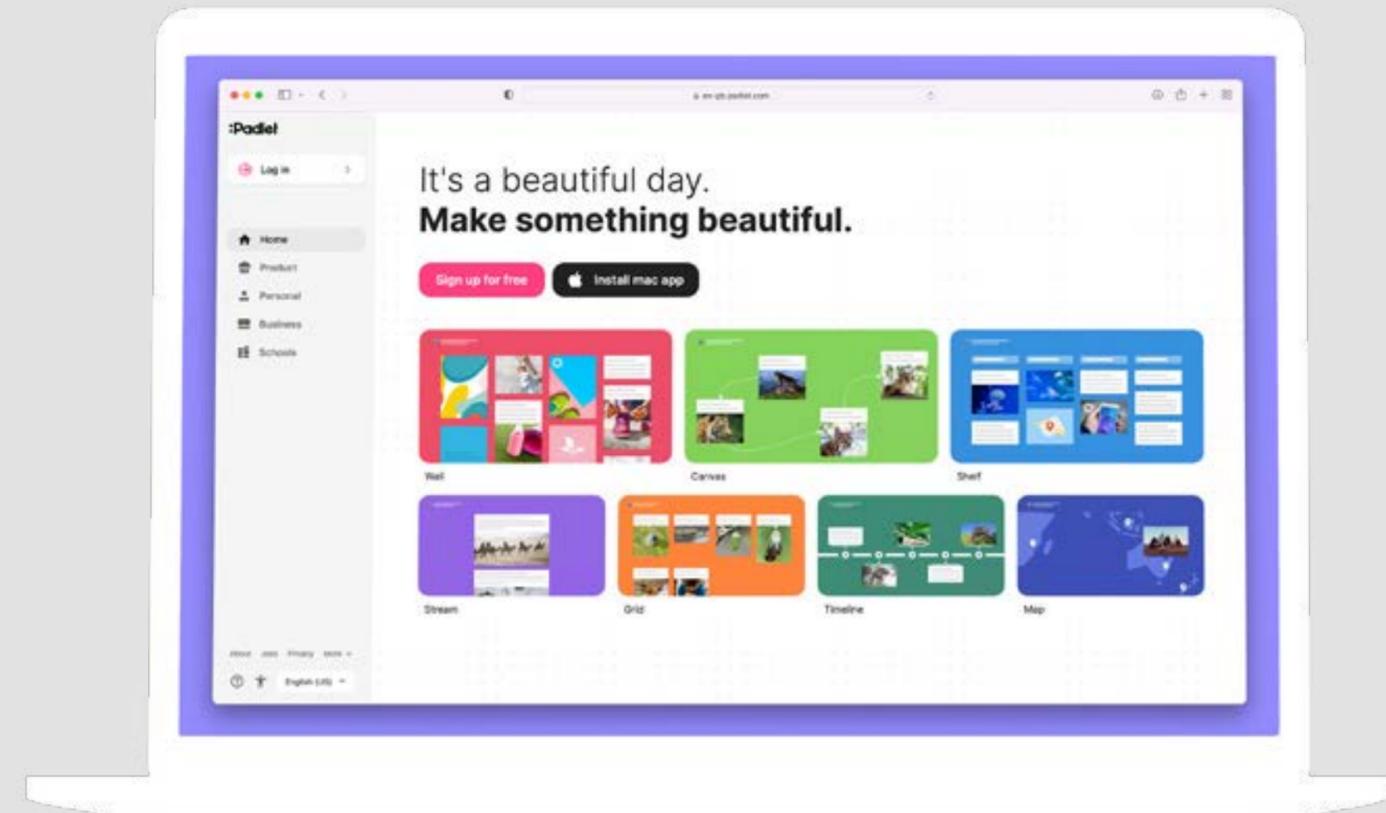
Mentimeter

Mentimeter is an online polling **tool that can be used to present live polls, quizzes and word clouds**. You can use Mentimeter' templates or create your own presentations to go alongside polls or quizzes using the online editor; this means that any questions, polls, and quizzes you do can have slides, images, and gifs to create fun and engaging content.

All the polls are anonymous and once completed participants will be able to **visualise their responses in colourful and fun images**, if you use this feature!

Once your Mentimeter presentation is over, you will be able to share and export your results for further analysis and even compare data over time to measure the progress of your audience.

Key Tip   With any poll be specific in your questions and try not to make it too long - Good questions to ask are: How did you feel about today's meeting? Give me three words about what you think about this plan? With any survey you do, try and engage the audience so they don't switch off before you get the information you really need so think carefully about the design you can use for your poll.

Head to   Free Presentation & Icebreaker Templates - Mentimeter I would suggest you look at the templates and think about your audience if you are doing a poll. Try and make the most of the visual elements they offer to make the most out of your poll.
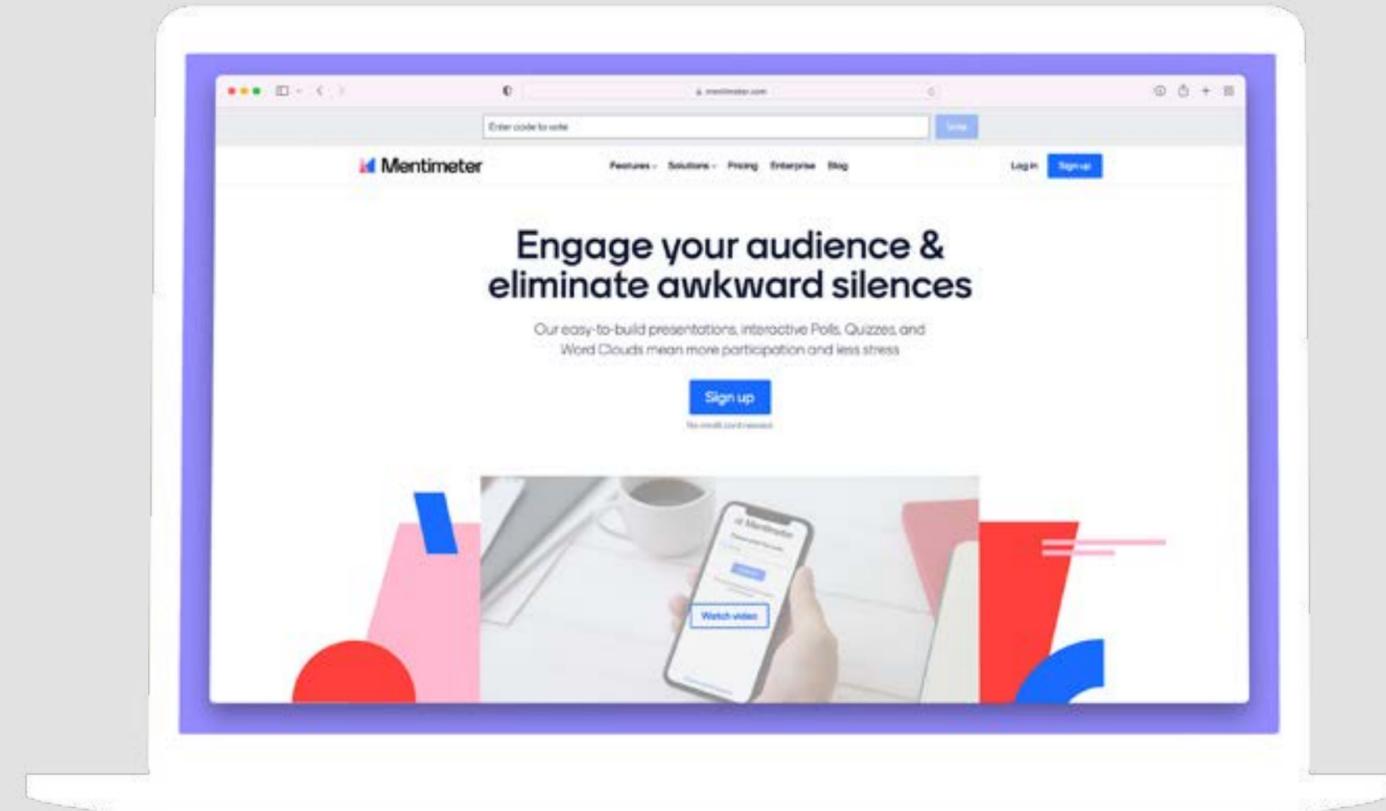
Doodle Poll

Doodle

Doodle Poll is a very straightforward, easy-to-use **scheduling tool** that helps organise meeting times with multiple people. Simply create a Doodle poll with suggested times to meet then add the names of everyone invited and ask them to fill out the poll and **you will immediately find the best time for everyone to meet**.

Key Tip
This is a Google tool so you can sync the agreed meeting time with your calendar on Google.

Head to
Productivity Tutorial - Using Doodle for easy group scheduling - YouTube A short tutorial but Doodle Poll is very intuitive and easy to use.
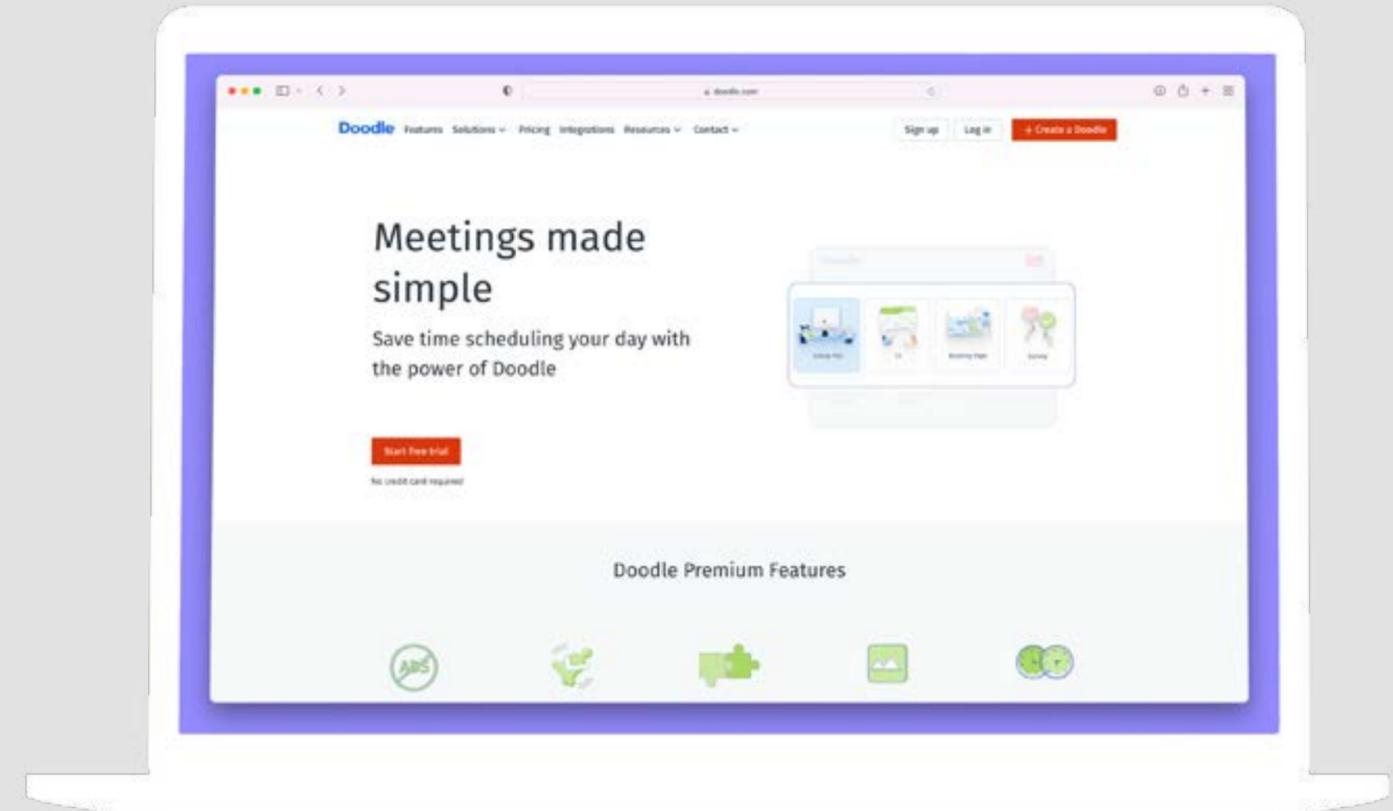
Trello

Trello is an engaging free project management tool that is not too dissimilar to Padlet as it takes the **form of a visual pin-board**. On the pin board you can add tasks for a specific project to yourself and share with others setting out a to-do list. This collaborative feature allows you specifically delegate and see how others are getting on with their tasks. Think the following sentence is confusing for someone who hasn't looked at the tool yet, might be worth simplifying or leaving out? The key difference from Padlet is that on this tool you can add multiple layers to a pin board but you cannot delegate task – whereas on Trello, you can only create one board per title i.e. a Board for invoice deadline and then you would need to create a different board for Marketing deadlines etc.

Key Tip

One excellent feature is that you can link specific tasks to a calendar so that it integrates with your google calendar so you can project plan ahead and set deadlines etc.

Head to

Manage Your Team's Projects From Anywhere | Trello
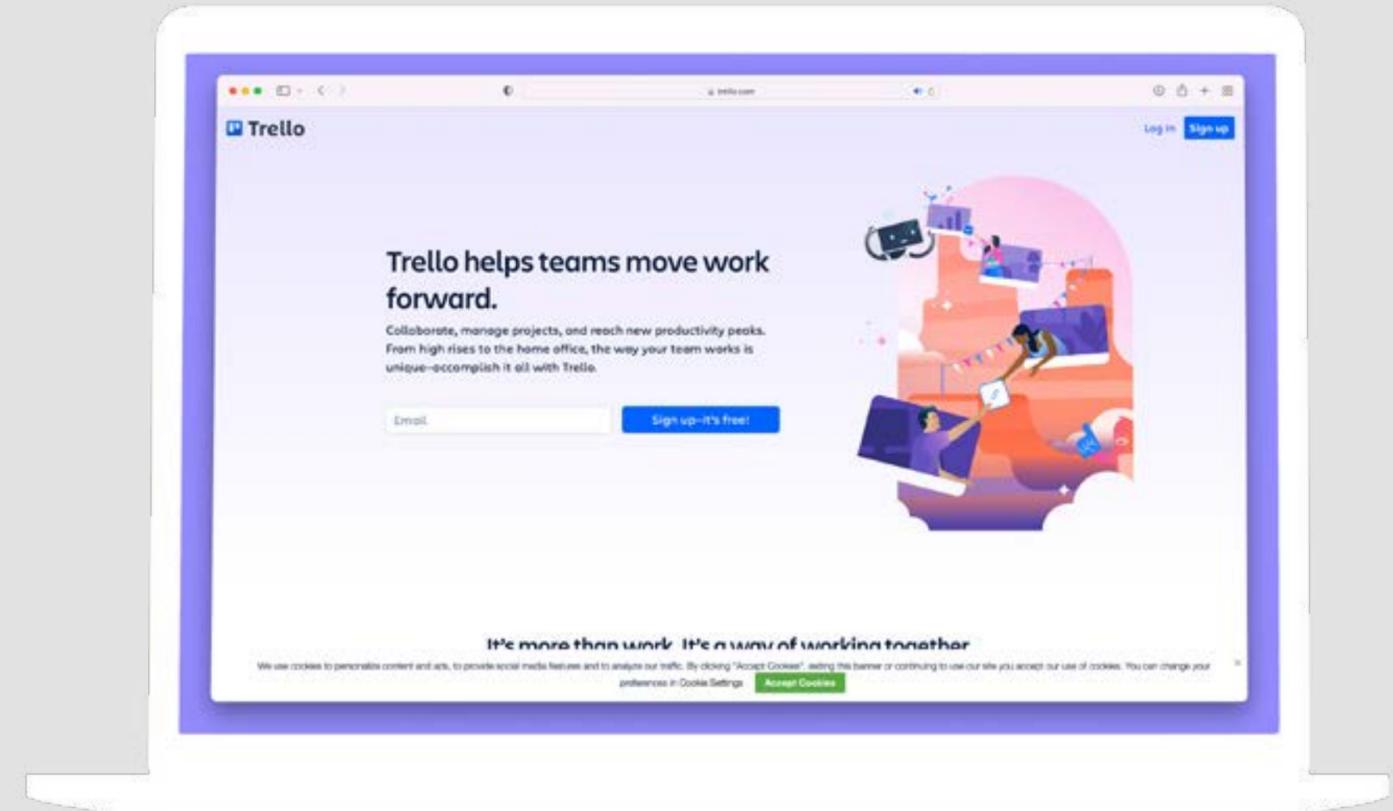
Miro

If you cannot **meet all your consultees in one room** and need to do engagement online or a mix of off/online then head to Miro. It really is very responsive, interactive, visual and **very easy to master**! If you look at back at our community engagement toolkit with ideas such as 'Head and Heart' and group exercises such as "Mind Mapping" but you need to do these exercises online...then this platform gets you there!

This is a collaborative tool to be used when presenting and working with a group or going live with the board and build ideas as the event goes on. You can draw on Miro, create slide shows, use post it notes alongside presentations, you can also edit simultaneously and allow sharing with others to do this. It also allows you to pull in pictures and videos from Vimeo and also has video and audio recording. It is a multi-tool which you can use to suit depending on your event and you audience needs

Key Tip
Have a good play on this tool, the plain? Main? dashboard and tool bars can be initially intimidating and because it can deliver so much it can be overwhelming, however, have a play around on it, it really is very easy to use and is one of our top platforms because it delivers so much! Miro is free to use, however it is limited on the number of editable boards, the number of team members whom can edit and the settings around sharing the content of a board.

Head to   Miro Support & Help Center
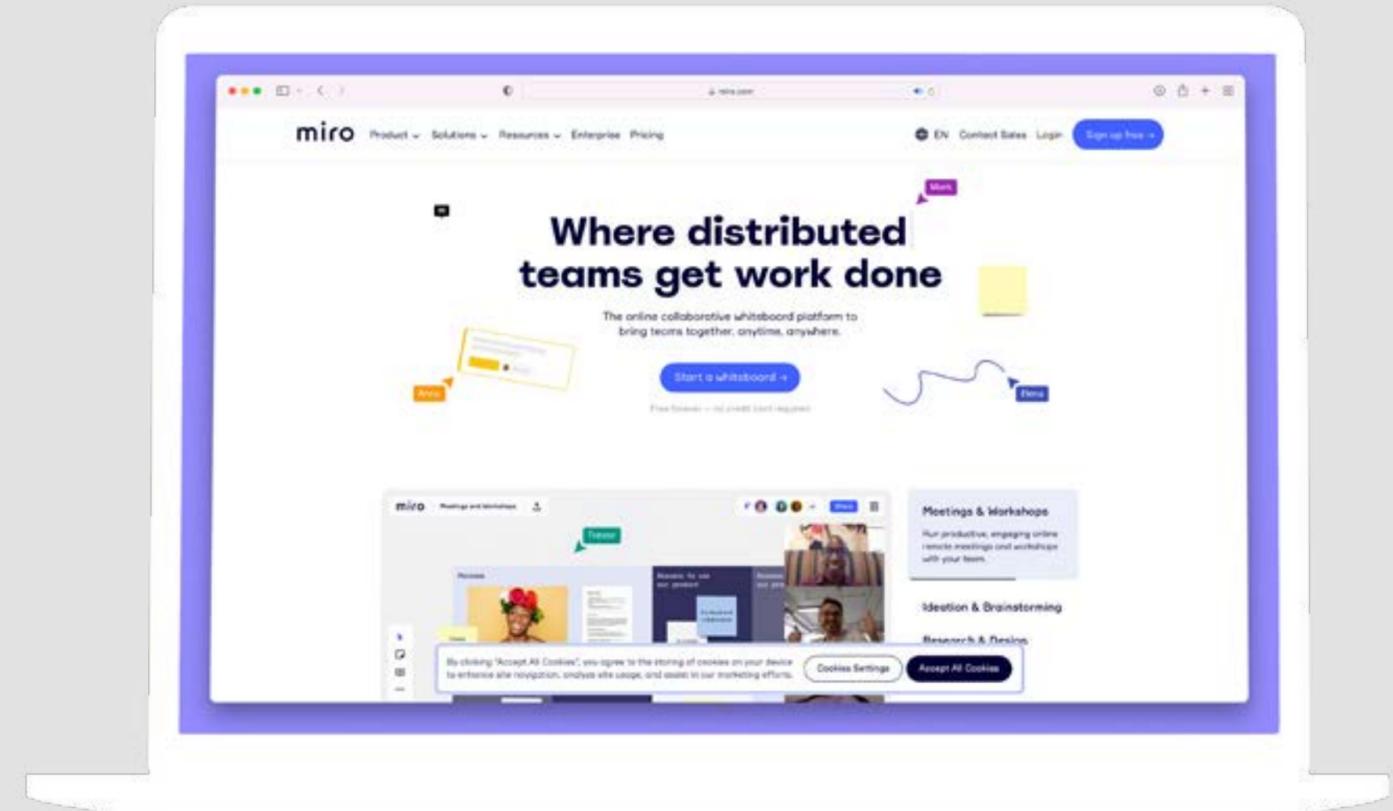
The Different Systems / Platforms

Monitor your Engagment

Survey Monkey

Is the UK's most popular sites to **carry out surveys**, it has a free version that can be downloaded as an app or accessed through the Survey Monkey website.

It really is incredibly easy to set up and **enables users to send out polls of any description**, either a tick box or sentence response survey and analyse the results received, which we should add are also anonymous. It can be very useful tool for you to ask big questions in your local area and community, this could be from finding out what residents really think about community events, projects or consultations on developments. The results giving you a true picture of what the community thinks.

Key Tip   There are a huge variety of free templates and backgrounds available for you to use and customise any survey as you wish. Use a background that is in keeping with your theme and keep the questions as direct and to the point as you possibly can, don't forget to keep it short so people don't lose interest– as a rule of thumb a survey should take no longer than 15 minutes.

Head to   Survey Monkey it also has an active YouTube channel with support available
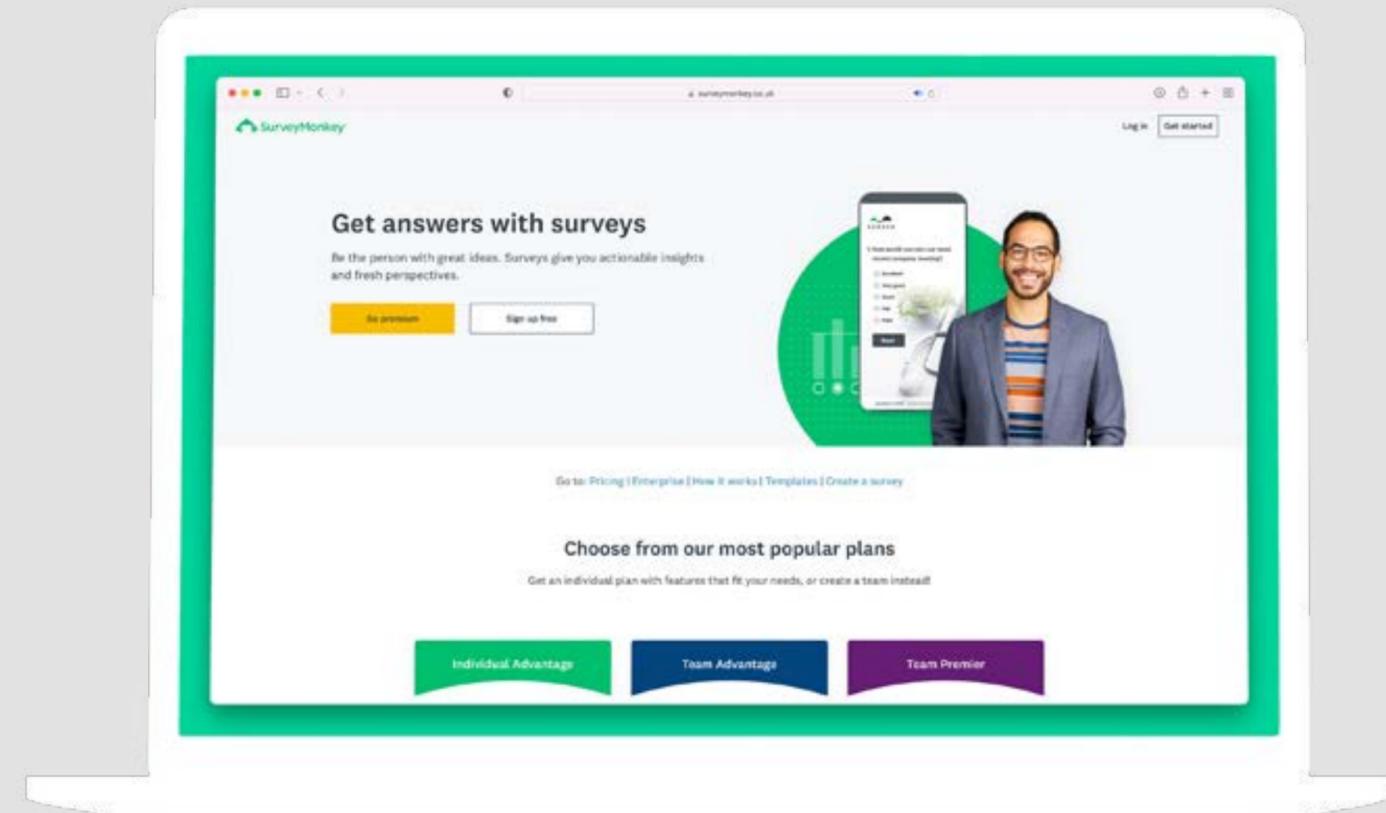
Mailchimp

Mailchimp is a perfect tool to use if you are looking to **engage with a large group, community or business** using a newsletter format. This tool has very accessible analytics, such as number of clicks on your newsletter i.e. has it been received and opened, how many of the links have been clicked through and the time spent on reading your newsletter.

It is free to use for up to 2000 subscribers and has a host of templates that can be adapted to your content, you can add pictures, surveys, links even video content – anything you could possible want to engage your audience with your newsletter.

Key Tip
Be careful when editing content and adding pictures into your newsletter – often the spacing and fonts can change. Send a test email to yourself to check you are happy with the layout and format. Watch the following tutorial to understand how to use this tool to its full potential.

Head to
The Mailchimp You Tube channel to get the most out of how this sometimes complex system works. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZKYiiQP57I
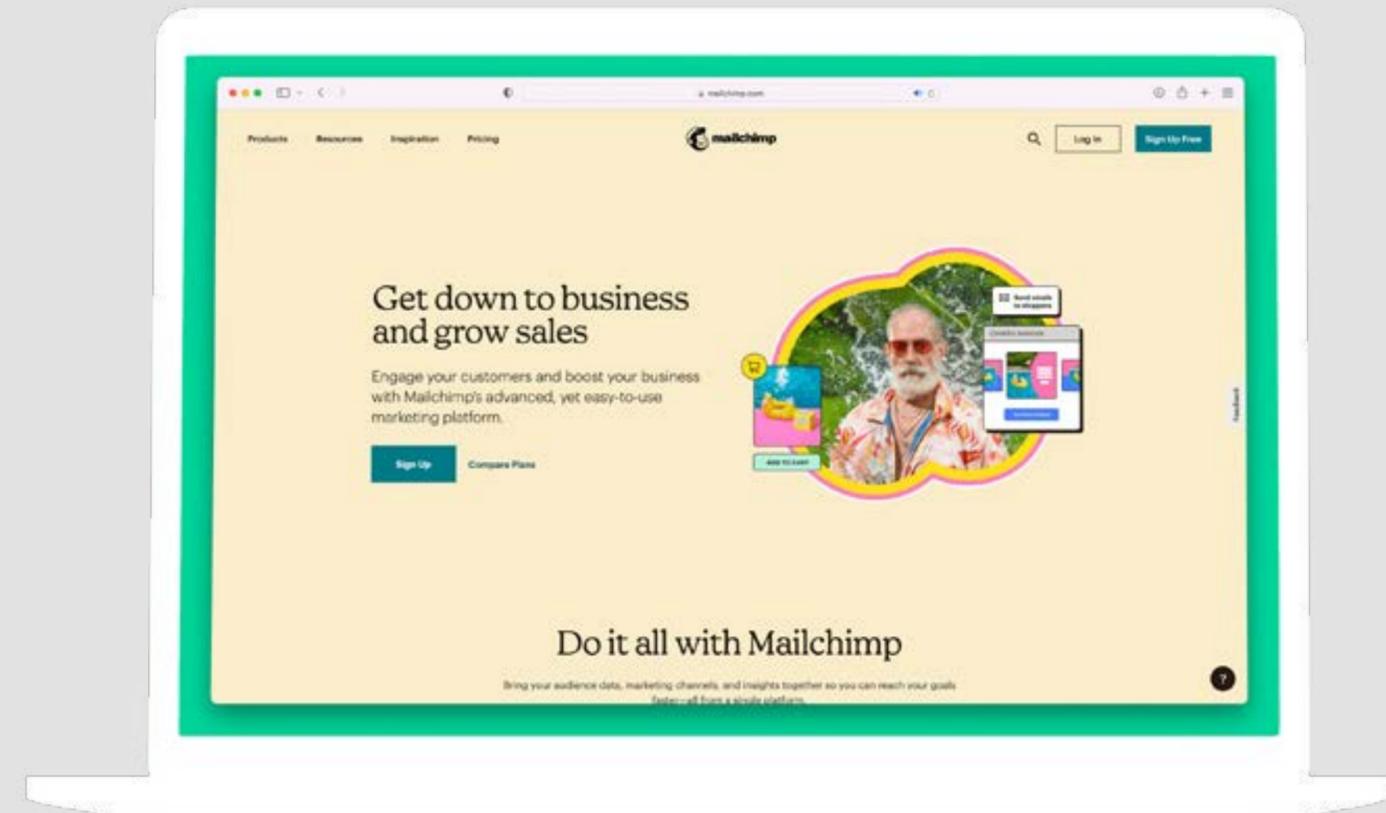
Buffer & Hootsuite

These are both **social media management tools** and will help you manage your accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linked in and Pinterest. As a tool these both help you to grow your followers across all these platforms, either selling products, targeting and boosting your content to your audience as well as monitor your engagement. The key feature of both is that it allows you to schedule your posts all in one place. *Please note the free accounts on both will only let you work across three social media platforms and will limit the number of posts you can make in a day.

What is the difference? It was hard to tell but Hootsuite dashboard is more focused on the analytics of posts and really does allow you to view this and the content you have on your social media platforms in one place. Buffer's dash board is focused more on content creation and is very easy to use uploading stories and content in once place that will be shared across the different platforms.
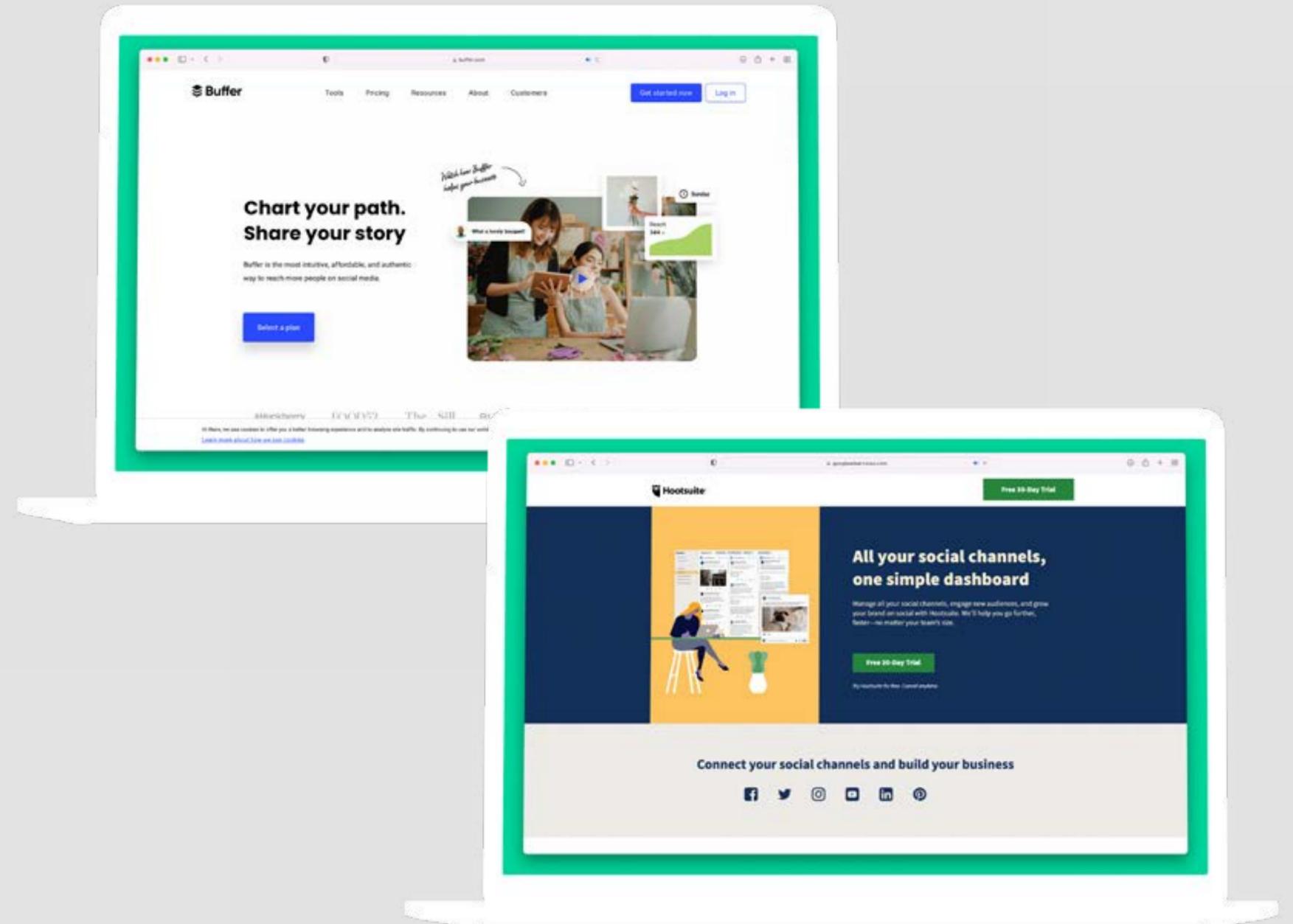
Key Tip
If you are only starting to manage your social media content I would lean towards using Buffer as it is easy to get going straight away and not be to overwhelmed by analytics. But with a lot of the tools often playing around and using it yourself will decide whether it is right for you.

Head to
How to Use Buffer Publish for Social Media Teams: The Complete Guide which is a comprehensive blog on how Buffer can work for you. Social Media Resources and Learning Materials - Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard - Hootsuite Likewise Hootsuite has a host of resources that advise on how to use this tool and to make the most of all the social media platforms out on the market at present.

A Note on Measuring Your Engagement

Social media engagement comes in varying forms from "Likes" to "Shares", "Comments", "Reply's" and "Retweets" to name but a few. This engagement is the easiest way to measure whether your content is resonating with your audience.

A Note on the Timing of Your Engagement

Don't be like the "White Rabbit" in Alice in Wonderland! Timing is key to getting any social media content or newsletters out there to make sure you are catching your audience at the right time of day and day of the week whilst still retaining your authenticity. There are a host of websites that offer guidance on the best times for you to post content and in what frequency, too much of anything is not a good thing after all!

Key Tip

If you plan to use social media to engage with your community using apps such as Facebook and Instagram for example these are accessed by different demographics at different times and days of the week. Make sure your check you are posting at the best times to ensure you are getting the best engagement you can out of these platforms.

Event: Steering Group Meeting Digital Venues.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council have been working with a number of different Community halls and venues over during 2021 with regards to developing digital capabilities in the venues they manage. A steering group was established over the course of this project and the first meeting was held on Microsoft Teams.

As a pilot test the officer used 'Padlet' to structure the agenda and subsequent flow of the meeting. Using the tab feature on Padlet they were able to highlight the different elements of the meeting in a structured order. As the meeting progressed various notes were taken live in the relevant tabs with the steering group adding comments as well as creating new tabs as ideas arose.

Using 'Padlet' the steering group in effect could see the minutes being taken, live, but could also see the growing themes that were coming from various stakeholders and they were able to identify and input there thoughts. The immediate visual element of Padlet brought the group together and made the meeting cohesive.

The feedback from attendees at event was particularly positive as everyone was able to openly consider the agenda items as they were shared on the screen and add to the growing conversation that was being annotated. The 'Scribe' leading this particularly event advised that Padlet was very easy to set up and use and was considerably effective with regards to garnering involvement and voice from the stakeholders at the meeting. In particular they added that the ability to add pictures and links assisted the events natural flow and considering everyone was meeting for the first time it helped break the ice and bring the group together quite quickly.

Event: Vale of Glamorgan Community Development

The Creative Rural Communities team held an online event using "Zoom" but also used "Miro" to explore the future of urban and rural community development in the Vale of Glamorgan in the advent of the end of EU funding.

With over 30 attending the event, the use of plenary's and break out rooms was used with each room broken down into 10 people per room to ensure all voices were heard. Each of these break out rooms had a facilitator whom managed the session and a "Scribe" whom made notes and Miro to capture the conversation using the post-it notes feature as well as arrows and shapes to measure the room's opinion on certain topics as well as the dot voting function.

With this particular event there were two provocations and then a break out room following on to discuss, each time going back to the Miro Board. But the layout of the board was not constrained to one frame and one break out room session and the scribers and break out room facilitators could move along the boards to follow the sessions so the audience could visualize the full development of the conversations as the event progressed. A further noticeable benefit of using Miro for this event was the ability to ensure that all voices were heard at the event and documented using the 'note feature' this very much ensured that it was not a case of, 'The loudest persons in the room' overshadowing others' thoughts and opinions.

One of the scribers feedback on Miro was on the simplicity of the two toolbars, the one at left and one on the bottom. The left toolbar lets you add shapes, text, stickie's, arrows, tables, and other elements. The bottom toolbar allows you to move into presentation mode, start a video call, run a timer, access the board history etc. and as long as you remember that you are good to go to use the board very effectively. The use of Miro for this event was particularly effective as post event the facilitators were able to review the board and the notes and easily documents the thoughts, subsequent ideas that came from the different break out rooms. Often with events held in person it's hard to document everything, but with the use of Miro for this event it was not the case which proved invaluable for the final report.

Event: Vale Food Collective

At the start of the Pandemic in 2020 Vale Food Collective were in the process of arranging their first local food festival. With the advent of lockdown the team quickly had to pivot to online looking at resources such as Zoom, Team and Facebook live. Their aim from the festival was simple, to engage local people in local food and when considering going online they didn't want the event to suddenly become 'Passive' they wanted engagement from the audience, they wanted to shape discussion and for them to have an experience.

With this in mind after looking at quite a few systems the event planners decided on both Facebook Live and Zoom. Using both of these tools they were either able to do 'Bespoke' cook along events on Zoom with a limited audience as well as stream videos and cook along live and group discussions that had been pre-recorded 'live' on Facebook.

Audience numbers ranged up to 1000 and we asked the team there top five tips for planning such an event and using these tools:

1) Get your visual content up and running as early as possible to build interest in your event. Even with online events you need to build audience momentum so start early with building your marketing collateral

2) Even with planning an event online you need to be perpetually planning and building relationships with contacts and ensure they are comfortable with either, Facebook or Zoom or whatever digital tool you plan to use and that they are prepared and comfortable to manage and resolve a situation if the IT / Wi-Fi lets them down!

3) Make the most of the chat function in in Facebook live, it really does bring an event to life with the questions being asked by the audience. Remember to plan to have someone reviewing the questions and answering them if the host is busy presenting to ensure the audience is engaged with the online experience.

4) Even with pre-recorded video content you can be creative and make it interactive by keeping the hosts dialogue open and engaging ownership from the participants in what they are doing at home; i.e. in a pre-recorded cook along.

5) With anything online don't try to control the flow of the event too much and listen to the audience to ensure they are engaged and not overly prescribed too. If you don't listen you run the risk of your audience becoming passive and leaving your event early which is still very noticeable when it's online!

Conclusion

The effects of COVID -19 has meant that communities have to adapt and interact with each other using digital tools and systems to adapt to a new normal. This has been echoed across Government, Business, Music & Sports Events that needed to migrate online to keep in touch with its audience.

One of the key benefits of a lot of the digital tools highlighted in this kit, is that they are free and easy to use and have a host of supporting videos to guide you in getting the most out of them. They also enable you to carry out an engagement or consultation that is no longer locked to a single location and they can be accessed directly in offices, homes, gardens, globally.

Digital tools and events may not suit what you are looking to achieve but one of the key benefits you will also find is that digital events are easier to look at the results and feedback. Online you have a captive audience where you can send out polls during or after your presentation or use the chat window to gauge interaction. All of this information is saved in written form and can be viewed, analysed and used after the event.

It might feel daunting at the start but whatever your choice of digital tool is, enjoy getting used to it, navigate all the features and make the most of digital engagement.