

Meeting asynchronously with mailing lists

Mallory Knodel, CDT (presenter)
Karel Novotný, APC

Purpose

Time. It's relative and shit. -- Einstein

Meetings before the pandemic had acceptable space (all in one place) and time constraints (over one week). Since our meetings now have enormously different space constraints (in every place), we should consider adjusting our time constraints.

The time constraint for meeting -- to get work done as a group -- is completely arbitrary.

Asynchronous communications offers new possibilities.

Abstract

For when we can't meet in person, when there's interim work to be done, or just because the task calls for it, an asynchronous text-based meeting can sometimes be perfectly productive and useful. Given how much the IETF uses email already this document aims to create additional guidance for co-chairs and meeting facilitators who might want to host a meeting asynchronously with mailing lists. Drawing from decades of facilitation experience in global networks, the document also treats unique considerations for facilitators that are introduced by this meeting methodology.

Table of contents

1. Introduction: Why
2. How
 - a. Before
 - b. During
 - c. After
3. Considerations
4. Annexes and examples

How: Before, during and after

These sections offer specific guidance based on experiences in hosting large, asynchronous meetings with people in multiple languages and across continents for the membership network of the Association for Progressive Communications.

Some highlights:

1. People will ask over and over for details of the meeting logistics.
2. A solid agenda with defined outcomes, is mission critical.
3. Leverage the mailing list software wisely, eg one thread per agenda item.
4. Make it enjoyable for humans.
5. Reporting meaningful notes is a heroic effort for text-only meetings.

Considerations

Like needing extra time to curate a succinct meeting report from lots of text, there are additional considerations for these kinds of meetings that are introduced by the asynchronous characteristic:

1. Defining participation
2. Translation and accessibility
3. Netiquette and participant instructions
4. Compliance

List discussion so far

1. Some considerations are superfluous
2. Need additional examples
3. ...

Planned updates

1. Nits and copyediting
2. Remove compliance sub-section
3. Elaborate examples in the annex
4. ...

Calls for help

1. One or two examples like APC's from which to draw BPs and add to the annex.
2. Any RG/WG interested in trying this out, please let us know and we can help and/or monitor for feedback that could land in this draft.

Thanks! Issues! PRs!

<https://github.com/IRTF-HRPC/drafts/blob/master/draft-shmoo-async.md>