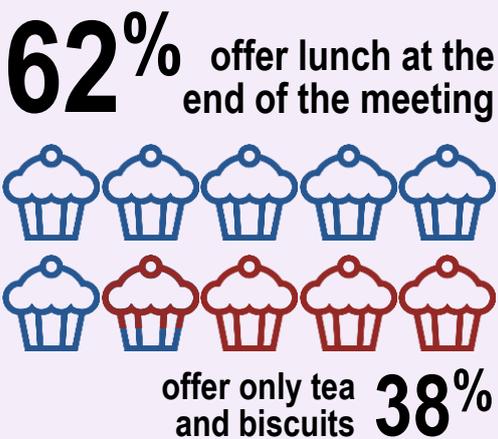
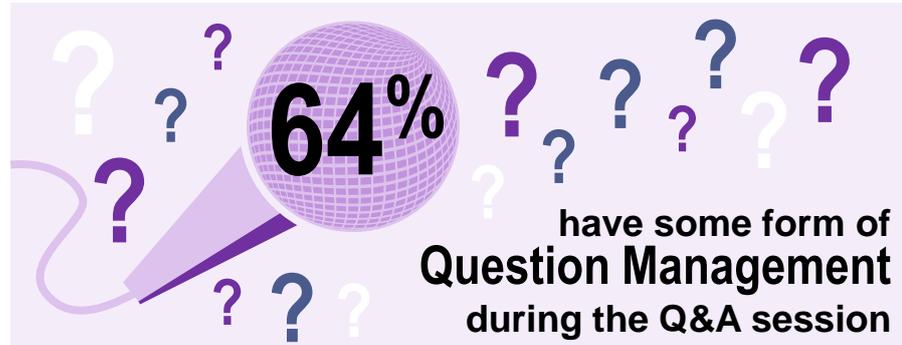
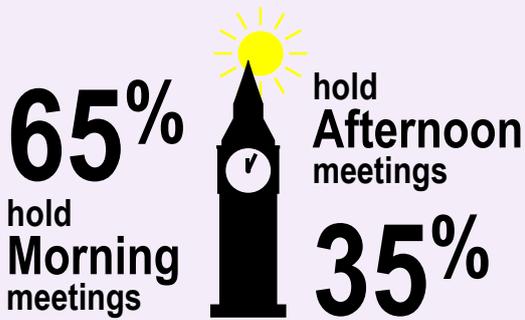


AGM Trends

from our FTSE100 AGM clients:



Morning Vs Afternoon Meetings

In the over 20 years that Aspect has been running AGMs, the 70/30 split between morning and afternoon meetings has remained relatively consistent.

In general, morning meetings have maintained their popularity for three key reasons:

1. They don't tie staff up for the whole day.
2. Lunch becomes a natural way to end the meeting.
3. The AGM can be just one part of a choreographed day of meetings for the Board, which typically commences with the AGM.

Having said that, afternoon meetings also offer benefits both in terms of time and cost efficiencies. Afternoon meetings are typically shorter as people want to be away before the rush hour starts. From a budgeting point of view, you only need to hire the room out for the one day.

Question Management

As we've all become more tech savvy and aware of its benefits, there has been greater acceptance to transforming the AGM. Recently we've seen steady growth in the number of clients embracing a question management system. And for good reason.

Providing the ability to gather questions prior to the AGM, question management systems deliver real value in terms of preparing the Board, increasing the quality of the shareholder experience and creating measurable time efficiencies.

There are many different techniques from fully digital and online systems through to paper-based systems – we find that each client has their own preferred way that works for them.

Whatever the approach, using a question management system helps support the message the Chairman is giving, and it gives the Board time to prepare for every question and answer with greater confidence.

It also gives Chairman the opportunity to group similar questions prior to the meeting and cut those that are more appropriate for the different experts available on the day. One client was able to halve the number of questions asked during the meeting in this way. It ensures the meeting comes to a close quicker and reduces the amount of admin following the meeting as all questions will already have been allocated.

Paper Vs Electronic Voting

As a counterpoint to the question management system discussed earlier, electronic voting continues to be driven by paper. While electronic voting can cut down on the amount of work on the day, voting technologies carry a certain amount of risk and so paper is likely something that is here to stay for a while.

They also come at a cost. So, while more people are using electronic voting than ever before, we are seeing a trend back towards paper based because of the simplicity of it.

Webcasting

Webcasting is another technology driven area of the AGM where we are seeing steady growth. Hybrid AGMs, are likely to become more prevalent as companies need to reach a larger and more disparate audience. Webcasting offers a good first step on this journey to hybridity.

There are also many benefits to a webcast. Because anyone can access the stream, they offer an ability to influence the market in a positive way, whether it's enabling people to join the meeting who otherwise wouldn't be able to take part, reaching the institutional shareholders who rarely make the journey as well as those influencing the buying and selling of shares, or being able to involve employees in the experience.

There are signs that the way people buy shares is changing. Buyers are typically using a middle man and a webcast is a good way of engaging with fund managers, who's decisions would otherwise be driven by what they see in the news media and their own sources of insight.

Lunch Vs Tea & Biscuits

The number of companies who offer lunch continues to increase. As mentioned before, serving food is a good way of drawing the meeting to a close and is typically something that shareholders who don't get a meal are requesting.

It's a nice way to finish, providing an opportunity to chat with the Board and other experts in a more informal setting. A word of advice.

Lunch doesn't have to be fancy. In fact, the simpler the better. It can literally be a cheese sandwich on white bread. The more complicated the lunch, the more you open yourself up to complaints about the menu.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions provide an excellent format for both building brand advocacy and dealing with hot topics.

An exhibition gives you the opportunity to explain why a particular decision has been made in greater depth, which has been proven to increase interest or diffuse negative sentiment prior to the meeting.

Pre-AGM Shareholder Engagement Programme

We've seen the trend for pre-AGM engagement programmes increase over the last 2 years as more companies recognise the importance of meeting with shareholders and getting their views outside of the core meeting.

These meetings are both formal and informal. Some clients invite shareholders into the office for a chat over coffee, while others have an official programme of activities. Both work well. In terms of benefits they provide a number of useful functions.

They're an excellent opportunity for helping to diffuse the frustrations of difficult shareholders who you know are going to exert a negative influence on the day. Meeting with them prior to the event and taking an authentic interest in their views inevitably takes the wind out their sails and in many cases, transforms them into advocates.

They also offer a good way of canvassing the issues that are going to come up at the AGM, preparing an approach for dealing with them and reducing the number of questions asked.