

Case Study

The Institute of Translation and Interpreting Electronic AGM October 2018



Uplifting governance

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The Background

The Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) is the only UK-based independent, professional membership association for practicing translators, interpreters and language services businesses. The Institute was founded over 30 years ago and with over 3,000 members, both in the UK and internationally, it is seen as a significant resource within the industry.

The Situation

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of ITI has always been a key date in the Company's governance calendar, with members voting on resolutions, discussing relevant topics and participating in lively Q&A sessions. However, as with many organisations, ITI was seeing a continuing decline in attendance at their AGM, exacerbated by the fact that many of its membership are located outside the UK. There have even been concerns in the past about the ability to reach a meeting quorum.

Summary of Objectives

- To gain more involvement from members regarding the future strategic direction of the organisation.
- Improve AGM Membership engagement.

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- Encourage a healthy democracy.
- Members to be involved wherever they are geographically.
- Reduce volunteer hesitancy around taking up governance roles.

The Solution

We recognised that a change was needed at ITI to re-engage with its membership and increase AGM attendance numbers. Working closely with ITI CEO, Paul Wilson, we recommended implementing an electronic AGM – a modern and flexible approach for 2018 that would not be location restrictive.

The Process

We began with researching providers of the technology and understanding the options available.

We then presented the below 3 options to the ITI Board:

1. A fully electronic audio only meeting with no single physical location;
2. An electronic meeting with just selected members of the Board present in one location and all members joining electronically; or
3. A hybrid meeting combining a physical meeting with the facility for electronic attendance.

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Meeting types two and three can either be in front of a camera that is webcasting or audio only. Slides can be shown at all types of meeting.

Having gained an understanding of how the various options would work, we then carried out a review of ITI's governing documents. At the AGM in October 2017, a large majority of ITI's membership voted in favour of changing the company's Articles of Association to allow future General Meetings to be held electronically (in any form) while still preserving the possibility of holding physical or hybrid meetings.

The next step was to find a partner to make it happen, and our research led us to Lumi. They have worked internationally with many well-known organisations and businesses, both large and small, and we felt confident that they would provide a safe pair of hands.

For their first electronic General Meeting, the ITI Board chose option two above with selected members of the Board and ourselves present at their offices and with other members of the Board attending remotely. We then provided a detailed timetable of necessary actions and events leading up to the holding of the first electronic meeting.

When sending out the Notice of Meeting, we added user friendly instructions on how members could register and participate in the virtual meeting. We also spent a lot of time developing a comprehensive and clear meeting script for presentation by the Chair of ITI. We felt this was really important to keep the meeting flowing, and to give the members confidence in the format.

We also made sure that we asked several times for questions from members ahead of the meeting and had ITI staff manning the

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phones in the hours before the meeting to ensure that anyone who had an issue with logging in to the meeting had all the help they needed.

The question and answer section of the meeting went well with members raising queries to the CEO and Chair of ITI who were both at the ITI offices for the meeting.

Bridgehouse Consultant, Jacqueline McNally, attended the meeting and provided solid company secretarial support to ensure smooth running of the event. Lumi provided technical support with one of their representatives present at the office.

Confidence grew as the meeting went on, and it was identified that speaking clearly, not rushing and having excellent audio facilities were really important.

The Outcome and Benefits Seen

- There was a 300% increase in the number of attendees at the October 2018 AGM and many more overseas members were able to join the meeting, providing a broader demographic of attendees.
- The costs, in terms of time and money, of holding a physical meeting were decreased.
- Meeting paperwork was considerably reduced as was the time in its preparation.

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- Member perception was improved through efficient use of modern technology.
- Real-time management reporting with a customised instant voting results screen.
- Time Saving – members and Board.
- Reduction of carbon footprint through less travel, less paperwork.

Next Steps

For future meetings, ITI will consider improving the visual presentation of the meeting either through the use of slides and/or webcasting and will also be considering giving its members the opportunity to pre-vote online through the Lumi platform in advance of the meeting.

At Bridgehouse we recommend and support the importance for an organisation to meet members face to face, and a “Meet the Board” session has been added to the agenda of the ITI bi-annual conference, to enable members to engage directly with the Board.

“It’s great for our members to see that the ITI are at the forefront of technology, and the feedback we had after the meeting was really very positive.”

Quote from Paul Wilson, CEO of ITI

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