

EMPOWERED BY CHANGE

PIVOTING TO VIRTUAL EVENTS

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MARKETING AGENCY



INTRODUCTION

In 2020 and beyond, event planning strategies will be categorized in one of two ways: before the Coronavirus pandemic and after it.

Despite a globally collective desire for things to return to “normal,” we have to acknowledge our current environment and the challenge that faces in-person events and leverage alternate best practices.

The experiences we create cannot be confined to one specific time and place any longer. Rather, we need to arm ourselves and our teams with the tools to create experiences that are expansive, enduring and as resilient as we will all be.

Virtual events are not a new concept, but they are an increasingly valuable option; and with the right strategy and partner/platform, they allow us to deliver the one thing we all need in a time like this: **connection**.

And while we cannot underestimate the timeless value of face-to-face events, or our longing to connect with others for all occasions, it is important to be prepared for anything. After all, that’s what planners do.

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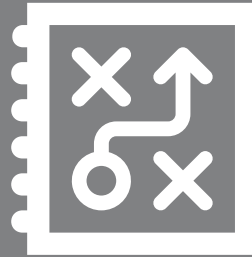


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SECTION I



WHAT IS
A VIRTUAL
EVENT?



DIFFERENT
TYPES OF VIRTUAL
EVENTS



CHOOSING THE
RIGHT EVENT FOR
YOUR AUDIENCE

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL EVENT?



vir·tu·al e·vent

/ˈvərCH(oʊ)əl/ + /əˈvent/

noun

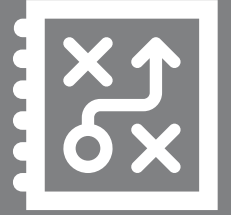
An event that takes place either completely or partially online; this style of event is executed through the aid of **webinars**, **livestreams**, **webcasts** or a combination of all three.

For **webinars** or **livestreams**, audiences can expect a more collaborative experience, in which they are able to interact and engage with presenters.

Alternatively, a **webcast** is similar to your standard TV broadcast, with more of a one-to-many approach meant to inform or communicate on a wider scale.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



As is the case with live events, there are many different styles of virtual events to choose from.

Here, we'll examine the **five** most commonly produced virtual events.

**VIRTUAL
CONFERENCES**

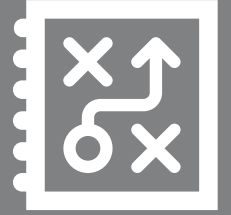
**VIRTUAL
TRADESHOWS**

**INTERNAL
HYBRID
EVENTS**

**EXTERNAL
HYBRID
EVENTS**

**WEBINARS /
LIVE STREAMS**

DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



VIRTUAL CONFERENCES

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Similar to a traditional in-person conference but held exclusively or partially online
- Features a series of presentations, meetings and workshops that can be as engaging and informative as you need
- Highly interactive through the use of on-demand polling, live chats, and interactive Q&A sessions

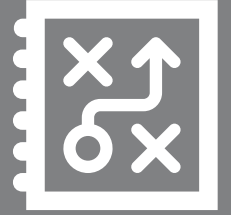
GREAT FOR

- Including thought leaders, celebrity speakers, or leaders from within your organization
- Creating sponsorship opportunities
- Generating revenue



Image Source: [Link](#)

DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



VIRTUAL TRADESHOWS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

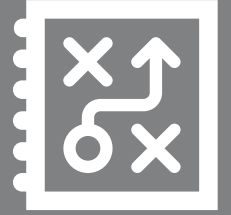
- Can be like an in-person tradeshow but held exclusively or partially online
- Exhibitors can create a virtual branded booth to showcase products/services
- Exhibitors can be available to chat live or provide content for download
- Can be executed as a stand-alone online event or complement a live event as a digital/virtual component

GREAT FOR

- Generating new leads
- Offering rich content including marketing collateral, thought leadership, videos, sell sheets etc.
- Increasing brand awareness



DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



INTERNAL HYBRID EVENTS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Similar to Town Hall or Sales Kick-Off events, or even departmental meetings such as training or team announcements
- Typically one main source for information vs. multiple sessions and presentations to choose from
- Can be delivered via a live broadcast or on-demand

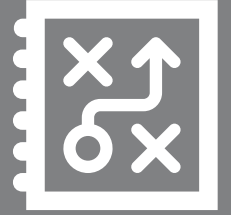
GREAT FOR

- Broadcasting key messages or important updates to one group at the same time across different regions/time zones
- Pairing with internal live events such as providing F&B, décor, signage, and other items prior to, or immediately following, the presentation



Image Source: [Link](#)

DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



EXTERNAL HYBRID EVENTS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A combination of components from both traditional live events and virtual events
- Typically seen among large scale user/industry conferences
- Features content for in-person attendees as any traditional conference or event would, while also creating virtual or online options for audiences attending remotely
- Higher levels of video production and technology are typically required to ensure a similar experience for all

GREAT FOR

- Providing access to customers and prospects globally who may want to attend remotely, often at a reduced registration fee
- Wider overall reach

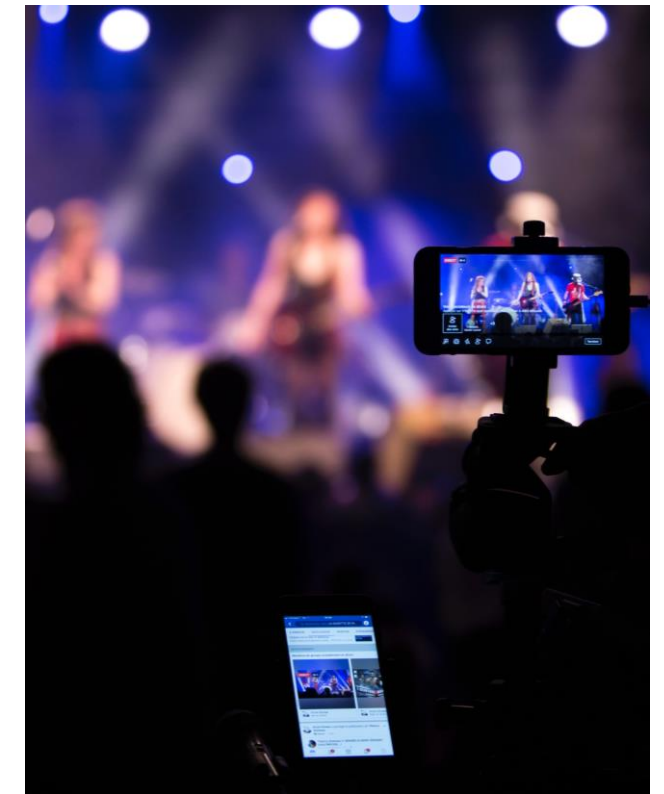
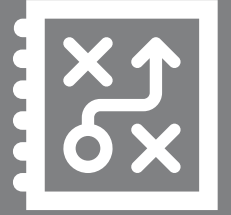


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DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS



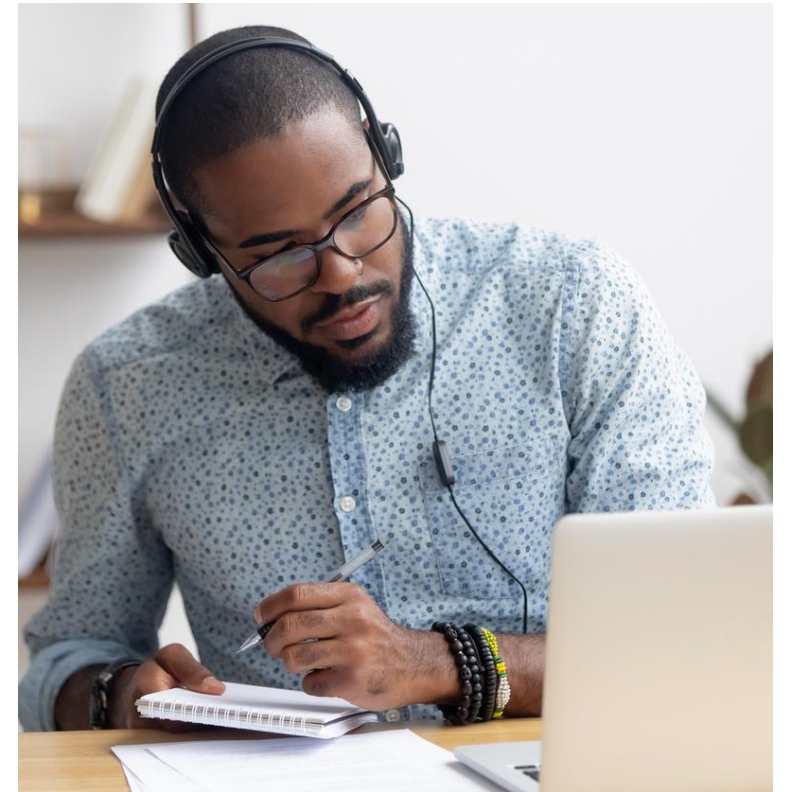
WEBINARS + LIVESTREAMS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Can be executed on a much smaller scale than a virtual conference or external/internal hybrid event
- Attendees can join from around the globe and interact with your presenters and speakers through live chat, or tools such as Q&A and polling
- Can be made available for free or for a nominal fee (depending on your goals or business best practices)
- Content can be made available post event on-demand so that future audiences can gain access

GREAT FOR

- Variety of budgets
- Can scale for smaller to larger audiences
- Archiving content for on demand access



CHOOSING THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCE



Deciding which style of virtual event to pursue depends on a number of things, including but not limited to your **goals**, your **content**, and of course, your **audience**.

Depending on the size and scale of your virtual event, it might be difficult to have a clear idea of exactly who will be tuning in. With this in mind, it's worth considering different learning styles and how individuals process information. Additionally, take some time to think about some of the practical ways your presentations and presenters can adapt to best share their content.

There are **four** main styles of learning:

VISUAL

AUDITORY

READING/WRITING

KINESTHETIC

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCE



VISUAL

- Visual learners will benefit from visual aids which can include:

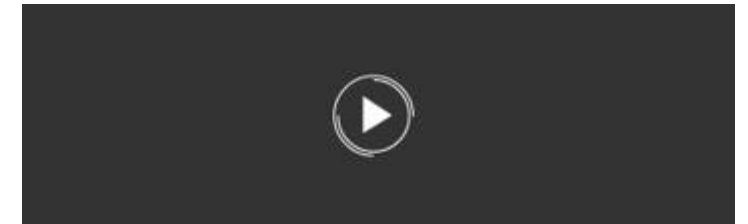
IMAGES



DIAGRAMS



VIDEOS



- Less is more when it comes to copy/text on slides
- When collaborating with your speakers and presenters, encourage them to highlight key details and include visuals as much as possible

Image Source: [Images Link](#) / [Diagrams Link](#) / [Videos Link](#)

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCE



AUDITORY

- An auditory learner is probably best suited for a virtual event because presentations and lectures are the most effective way for them to receive information
- If you're planning on making your content available on-demand post-event, consider providing access to an on-demand video as well as an audio-only option for these learners



CHOOSING THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCE



READING & WRITING

- These learners process information through the written word or taking notes
- If you are leading a webinar or online workshop, consider taking advantage of online whiteboard tools and encourage attendees to take notes, or provide them with the slides and notes before or after the event
- You may want to consider slowing down the pace of the presentation to pause on certain slides that have more content, so these learners have time to review
- Attendees can also interact with one another leveraging the chat tools



CHOOSING THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCE



KINESTHETIC

- Your most tactile learners are known as kinesthetic learners - this might seem difficult to cater to online, but there are some options
- Provide 3D renderings or virtual environments for users to explore
- Request interaction through a physical activity, perhaps guiding the audience through a warm-up exercise before launching into the content or asking them to submit a video response during/after the presentation



SECTION II



HOSTING A
VIRTUAL VS.
IN-PERSON
EVENT



GETTING
STARTED

HOSTING A VIRTUAL VS. IN-PERSON EVENT



ATTRIBUTE	VIRTUAL EVENTS	IN-PERSON EVENTS
COST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall a lower cost option• Food and beverage, travel, and many venue-related expenses are just some examples of costs that can be eliminated• However, the technology available for events of this nature can range from very cost effective to very cost intensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically more costly depending on size and complexity• In addition to standard expenses, you may also need to consider items such as swag/gifting and additional onsite support staff• However, one can never underestimate the value of face to face connection.
SCALABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual events are not confined to a specific place and time• Content can be evergreen and made available online for as long as desired and therefore can be shared at a quicker rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger events and conferences are more difficult to scale quickly and cost effectively• Based on year over year growth, different venues can accommodate a growing audience• Great option if you want to limit attendance to a certain group/attendee

HOSTING A VIRTUAL VS. IN-PERSON EVENT



ATTRIBUTE	VIRTUAL EVENTS	IN-PERSON EVENTS
SUSTAINABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No travel required• No printing or branding which reduces paper and material waste• No food waste• Reduced overall carbon footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The average conference generates approximately 4lbs of waste per person• There are many ways to host sustainable green meetings to consider• Help to support cities/destinations, and industries such as travel and hospitality
ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendee distraction can play a role in virtual events• Guests own multiple devices and have competing priorities• If no fees attached, lack of impetus to attend – can increase rate of no-shows	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically a cost associated with attending therefore more people likely to attend• Guests have to plan ahead and often have to make travel and hotel arrangements• Reduced risk of losing your audience to external distractions when gathered in the same space

HOSTING A VIRTUAL VS. IN-PERSON EVENT



ATTRIBUTE	VIRTUAL EVENTS	IN-PERSON EVENTS
FLEXIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar to in-person events, there is a date and official start and end time• Ability to scale the size of the audience and open additional capacity as needed• Content can be consumed during or post-event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A confirmed place, date and time is required for all live events• Limited availability/capacity• Attendees can build their own schedule and attend what is valuable to them
DATA + ANALYTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most virtual event platforms have built-in tools to capture key data and analytics• Depending on the tool, the analytics can be robust or simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registration, session tracking and RFID technology have enabled live events to capture far more data than ever before• This is typically an additional expense

HOSTING A VIRTUAL VS. IN-PERSON EVENT



ATTRIBUTE	VIRTUAL EVENTS	IN-PERSON EVENTS
MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar to what might be employed for a traditional event – likely requires ample planning and potentially a multi-channel approach• Typically a shorter runway	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often requires many months of multi-channel marketing tactics• Added benefit of promoting a destination, social experience or series of special keynotes that can be a driver for many attendees to register
ROI + MEASUREMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically a lower cost per lead• For the best ROI, platform provider should include tracking for registration, views, downloads, etc.• Ensure that the platform selected integrates or aligns with current CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great for sales and customer success teams to build relationships and forge connections• Great networking opportunities that add value for attendees• Ability to track attendance and have teams follow up post-event

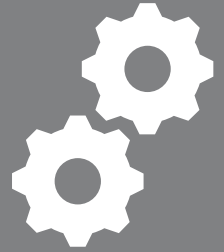
HOSTING A VIRTUAL VS. IN-PERSON EVENT



ATTRIBUTE	VIRTUAL EVENTS	IN-PERSON EVENTS
QUALITY CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Planners have greater control over the quality of the content producedTechnology is not always reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many more vendors/partners to manage such as venues, food/beverage, entertainers, speakers, etc.Must be prepared to handle issues that come up onsite and have back-up plans as needed
ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Considerations need to be made to accommodate those who will be accessing your contentThis can include closed captioning and sign language for live streams, translation services, or described video	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Along with closed captioning and sign language support, physical accessibility is very importantDiversity and inclusion is also important – consider offering gender neutral restrooms, as an example

GETTING STARTED

DETERMINE (OR RE-EVALUATE) YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



A virtual event has its own unique set of advantages compared to its more traditional counterpart. Leverage those advantages by taking a look at your goals through a new lens. Here are some **key considerations**:

REVENUE OR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- If revenue is the main goal, consider a paywall to gate specific content
- Provide sponsorship opportunities through online advertising or sponsored sessions
- Offer online training or certifications
- If thought leadership is the primary objective, there will likely be less barriers to guest entry - consider working with third parties to host your content to manage costs and reach larger and/or net new audiences

LEAD GENERATION

- Tailor content according to buyer personas and your sales funnel
- Enable registration as you would for live events with an opt-in to receive additional content post-event
- Ensure your registration forms are capturing the right information that aligns with criteria setup within your CRM system
- Put metrics at the forefront of your vendor selection (more details in Section III)

ENGAGEMENT

- As noted previously, distraction plays a major role in online events
- Carefully consider the length of each session, particularly ones with limited or no audience interaction
- Determine how long information will be available online post-event and if session slides or recordings will be available for download

GETTING STARTED

LEAD WITH CONTENT



Just because your mode of delivery has changed, that doesn't mean your content has to – at least not completely.

To determine the best method of delivery for your content, you need to consider what you want to communicate and how you want your virtual audience to experience it.

Don't just think about **what** you share, but **how** you share, and from **whom**.



GETTING STARTED

LEAD WITH CONTENT



Here are some **considerations**:

CONTENT TYPE

- Decide which content is better suited for a keynote or breakout session and which would be better suited for a workshop or lab
- Your technology should work to deliver your specific needs (ex. a keynote may be suitable for a webcast or live stream, while a workshop might be better suited for an interactive webinar)

SPEAKERS VS. FACILITATORS

- Identify who is best suited as a speaker and who would succeed as a facilitator
- You may find a richer pool of speakers as virtual events offer more anonymity and control over the presentation delivery, which is a comfort to those who may have a fear of public speaking
- Train your presenters to ensure they are familiar with the technology and can handle the multi-tasking involved with presenting content online

SECURITY

- If your data is sensitive, you will want to ensure that you choose a platform partner with strict security protocols. More on this in Section III.

LONGEVITY

- Decide at the onset what you would like to do with your content post-event
- Consider making it available to a wider audience to access or break it up into sections and use it for various drip marketing content campaigns

GETTING STARTED

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



By now you're well aware of the far reaches of a virtual event.

By removing barriers such as travel and calendar availability (assuming you allow your content to be made available over a period of time), the flood gates are truly opened to a wider audience.

Remember, however, that a diverse audience requires diverse solutions when it comes to accessing your content.



GETTING STARTED

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



Here are some **considerations**:

- Determine if you will need some or all of your content translated to more than one language - no one expects you to cater to everyone, but consider your demographic
- Cater to audiences with varying abilities by offering closed captioning or sign language interpreters to communicate the content. The need for these services can be addressed during the event registration process.
- Remember that some audience members may choose your virtual offering for its reduced cost - with this in mind, make sure you deliver on a platform that requires little from the end-user (i.e. no additional purchases or complicated downloads)
- If there is a revenue goal or sponsorship driving your accessibility methods, consider offering passes or codes for a portion of your audience to access more easily
- Engagement, Engagement, Engagement!
 - It can't be overstated that a virtual keynote or presentation will be subject to far more distractions than in-person
 - Integrate opportunities to interact with your audience by offering live-polling, Q&As, and event gamification
 - You could even go as far as to providing pre-work so attendees come engaged and ready to contribute depending on the size of the group.

SECTION III



CONSIDERATIONS
FOR SELECTING
A PLATFORM



TOP PLATFORMS
AND HOW THEY
COMPARE

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING A PLATFORM



DATA & ANALYTICS

- One of the most critical advantages to a virtual event is its inherent ability to capture data and analytics
- Not all platforms capture the same level of detail so you will want to determine what is important to you and seek out the best platform for your needs
- Consider measurements such as: attendance, views, average watch times, Q&A/polling engagement

SECURITY

- If your event covers sensitive material that you do not want shared with the larger public, it's important to get a deep understanding of the security features of your platform partner
- Ask to see a review of their security measures and engage your InfoSec team for a stringent review
- Ask probing questions about your platform's knowledge and understanding surrounding global privacy and security protocols

ACCESSIBILITY

- As discussed, keep in mind the varying needs and abilities of your audience
- For large scale events, opt to partner with platforms that can offer things like closed-captions, transcripts or provide alternate methods for delivering your content

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING A PLATFORM



USER EXPERIENCE (U/X) & DESIGN

- Choose platforms that are intuitive and easy-to-use
- Part of the thrill of taking your events online is removing barriers, not creating them
- Ensure you understand or get training on how the platform works so you can guide your audience accordingly

COST



- While your overall event budget will be lower, the costs required for platform licensing or equipment can vary a great deal
- Be clear about your budget parameters and prioritize tools accordingly
- Remember that while you will be saving on traditional expenses (e.g. food & beverage, travel, venue staff) you do not want to skimp on the technology, as this can greatly impact your overall attendee experience

INTEGRATIONS

- A major deciding factor for you may be how well a platform integrates with your existing software suite (e.g. your CRM or marketing automation platform)
- Your sales teams will also benefit from this integration as it will assist with invitations and follow up
- Be sure to inquire about which integrations are included with your license and which are not, as well as the platform's ability to build custom integrations if needed



TOP PLATFORMS AND HOW THEY COMPARE



PLATFORM	KEY FEATURES	LIMITATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create virtual environments for social networking, training, town hall meetings (100+ templates)• Offers over 16 different types of games for engagement and up to 25 different reports for attendee tracking• Allows access to over 10K simultaneous users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More of a complex platform and may not be intuitive to all users• Requires a more detailed level of onboarding/training for some users• May be cost prohibitive (but offers a free trial period to determine if it's the right solution for you)
 vFAIRS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers solutions for conferences, trade shows, trainings, job fairs, and more• Fully customizable console for increased branding• Email marketing and social media integrated for an all-in-one solution• Rich U/X and a high-quality interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer reviews have noted issues with uploading high-resolution content• Customer reviews have also noted limited chat features that could be improved• May be cost prohibitive (currently a free trial option is not available)



TOP PLATFORMS AND HOW THEY COMPARE



PLATFORM	KEY FEATURES	LIMITATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built-in collaboration tools such as real-time annotation and white-boarding• High-quality video for multiple webcams• Works well on Windows, Mac, smartphones, tablets• Support up to 3,000 attendees in a single event with up to 1,000 on video	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited viewing and sharing for users using Internet Explorer• Switching between desktop and web application is not seamless• Host and panelists MUST use the desktop application
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 100 interactive video participants• Plans range from 100 to 10,000 view-only attendees• Offers live broadcasting and on-demand viewing• Audience engagement trackers in place including polling and Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be cost prohibitive to some users• Video quality is greatly impaired depending on your internet connection, which may be difficult to contain, depending on how you're using the tool

TOP PLATFORMS AND HOW THEY COMPARE



PLATFORM	KEY FEATURES	LIMITATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customizable pages for better branding abilities• No download required for attendees• Live video streaming and shareable content for up to 500 attendees per event• Great engagement tools including CTA buttons, polls, Q&A, and downloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited chat functions for presenters and attendees• Recorded video does not replay any marketing activities that took place during the event (e.g. handouts, polls, etc.) so users will miss out on that content
 Microsoft Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live or on-demand video streaming for up to 10,000 viewers• Share content from your desktop or webcam, professional cameras, multiple content sources• Moderated attendee Q&A or open dialog across all participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Events are only viewable to users within the same organization• Maximum length of a live event is 4 hours• Limited closed captioning support

SECTION IV



MARKETING
YOUR VIRTUAL
EVENT



MEASURING
SUCCESS



VIRTUAL
EVENT
CHECKLIST

MARKETING YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT



As with live events, there is no one way or set road-map to marketing a virtual event.

However, as an online experience, there are some **key tactics** you'll want to keep in mind when building out a marketing and promotional strategy for your virtual event.

KEYWORD SEARCH

Enable tried-and-true SEO tactics to keep your event searchable and near the top of the page across all major search engines.

EMAIL MARKETING

Build a calendar with specific and varied touch points to promote and remind your audience about your event.

LANDING PAGE OR MICROSITE

Just because you don't need a venue, doesn't mean you don't need a destination. Ensure that there is a clear landing page on your website where attendees can register or see updates to content and/or future events.

TIME YOUR OUTREACH

Some marketers have found that most registrants confirm 2-3 weeks before the event. Even if you buffer with an extra week or two, you'll want to ensure your premium content drops closer to your live date to improve attendance.

TEASE CONTENT

Announce big name speakers or highly-anticipated workshops in advance so attendees have something to look forward to and can block off time in their calendars.

MEASURING SUCCESS



It is critical to understand exactly what analytics your platform provider captures and how the data translates. Once you're satisfied with the metrics being captured, you can use this data to tailor future events.

HOW YOUR ANALYTICS CAN INFORM YOUR NEXT EVENT:

- What is the average watch time for your videos? Should future videos be longer or shorter?
- What type of content generates the most views? Keynotes? Workshops and labs? Interactive webinars? What could you be doing more or less of?
- Which region is the majority of your audience from? Could future content and examples better reflect their experience and environment?
- How did attendees hear about your event? Could your marketing resources be re-directed to reach a wider audience?

VIRTUAL EVENT CHECKLIST



Now that you know the different styles of virtual events, and the platforms that support them, you're ready to get started. We've created a **checklist** below to act as a guide to help kick-start your virtual event planning.

1 >

BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY ALIGNED WITH YOUR GOALS

What are your targets?

What do you want people to take away?

Who should/will attend?

2 >

CHOOSE THE BEST VIRTUAL PLATFORM FOR YOUR EVENT

3 >

DON'T SKIMP ON TECHNOLOGY

Create high-quality videos, animation, and graphics to make your virtual event as sharp as your live events

4 >

CREATE AN INTERACTIVE AND ENGAGING AGENDA

Make sure it's complete with a story and script to limit the distraction for your remote attendees

5 >

SPREAD OUT YOUR CONTENT

Use your video and audio content to produce rich social media posts to market your event

VIRTUAL EVENT CHECKLIST



6 >

**KEEP DIVERSITY,
EQUITY, AND
INCLUSION AT THE
FOREFRONT OF
YOUR PLANNING**

7 >

**DON'T FORGET
ABOUT METRICS**

8 >

**ENGAGE
SPONSORS**

Highlight the unique opportunities available to them when it comes to virtual events

9 >

**BRING IN THE
EXPERTS**

Third-party planners and production teams are well-versed in the world of virtual events - leverage their expertise (and discounts)

10 >

**HOST A
SUCCESSFUL
EXPERIENCE FOR
ALL**



SUMMARY

It is clear that virtual events provide us with a huge opportunity to stay connected, allowing us to continue to share content and thought leadership with our audiences anywhere, anytime.

With the continuing evolution of technology, how we plan and host virtual events will also continue to change.

This document was intended as a starting point for many who have never hosted a virtual event and are looking for ways to transition a cancelled or postponed live event to the digital space.

If you have questions on the content included or need support transitioning to a virtual event, please contact us at info@lomaagency.com and we would be happy to set up a complimentary session to get you started.

For more great content, please follow us on:

@loma_agency



#lomaagency

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