



# VIRTUAL EVENT

Strategy and Execution

A Practitioner's Guide

cvent

# INTRODUCTION

If you're like most organizations, your current event program is almost unrecognizable from the one you ushered in at the start of 2020. The global pandemic has - temporarily at least - shuttered most in-person events, forcing planners and marketers to scramble for new ways to connect with prospects and customers.

Faced with an urgent need and few choices, many organizations reflexively "pivoted to virtual." And, while virtual events have been around a long time, the rush to repackage in-person events into virtual events has been an experiment for most. This experimentation, while messy, should be applauded. The past several months has seen great innovation and learning as organizations of all kinds feel their way into the possibilities, and limitations, of virtual events.

But the reality is that merely cramming all elements of an in-person event into a virtual wrapper will likely fail. Often, this failure starts at the strategy level, as the rush to go virtual short-circuits essential questions about the goals of the event and how those goals are achieved virtually.

Even if the strategy is clear, executing the logistical and technical elements of virtual events often requires skills and inter-team discipline that may not have been needed for an in-person event. Finally, while many execution elements of virtual events are the same as in-person (think promotion and registration), creating and capturing attendee engagement in a virtual setting often requires rethinking your programming and your technology.

**In this ebook, we'll explore how to overcome these challenges by breaking virtual events into two parts.**

## PART ONE FOCUSES ON STRATEGY

As you look at your event program, how do you decide which events can be taken virtual? Perhaps more importantly, what aspects of those events can be taken virtual? This requires a thoughtful evaluation of the event's purpose and goals.

For example, if an event's goal is to drive immediate revenue, will that be possible in a virtual context where charging for the event may be difficult? If the goal is lead generation and pipeline acceleration, what does that mean for your engagement and data capture strategy? Answering these questions means the Planning, Marketing, and Digital teams need to collaborate more closely than ever.

## PART TWO FOCUSES ON EXECUTION

Once you've committed to a virtual event, start with a clear view of the experience you want to deliver. What does your content experience need to look like to attract and engage attendees? How will virtual attendees network with your teams and one another? If your virtual event has sponsors, how will you deliver value and ROI? And most of all, how will you capture the engagement data from your virtual event? A broad, integrated view is essential here. You'll want to combine attendee data from your virtual events with similar data from all your other events, and indeed your other marketing channels, to get a full picture of attendee interest.



**If these questions sound familiar, they should.**

You are likely used to thinking through all of these for your in-person events. But, finding the right answers for a virtual event will help guide you through critical questions about the experience you can deliver, the technologies necessary to deliver that experience, and how you'll drive value and measure success.

**LET'S GET STARTED.**

# CONTENTS

## PART 1

### Virtual Event STRATEGY

- Start with the Why
- What Were the KPIs or Goals of the Event?
- Can Your Original Goals and KPIs Be Met Virtually?
- Don't Be Afraid to Experiment
- Use a Tiering System to Classify Your Events
- Virtual Event Options
- Understanding Your Budget
- Planner, Meet Marketer. Marketer, Meet Planner
- A Full Program View - Proving ROI and Event Success

## PART 2

### Virtual Event EXECUTION

- Bring the Right Mindset
- Bring the Right Skillset
- Pre-Event Execution
- Virtual Event Engagement: The Holy Grail
- The Content Experience
- Event Duration and Agenda
- Session Selection and Engagement
- Networking and Building Connections
- Sponsorship Experience
- Data and Analytics
- The Virtual Tech Landscape

# PART 1

## Virtual Event STRATEGY

Your in-person events are likely gone for now. It's time to look at all your events and decide which events can and should go virtual. It's important you begin forming this event strategy early in the planning process. Strategy creation often requires letting go of pre-conceived notions of what each event was supposed to be, breaking each event down to its essential goals, and then assessing whether and how those goals can be accomplished in the virtual new medium.

### START WITH THE WHY

Each one of your events (should) exist for a reason. We don't simply gather to gather. When your organization decided to invest in putting on an event, or attending one, it did so with a distinct purpose in mind. Clarifying each event's purpose is fundamental to building a virtual event strategy. So start by stripping down your event to the essentials.





## WHAT WERE THE KPI's OR GOALS OF THE EVENT?

Go back to your event plan and pull out the original goals of the event. Didn't have a clear goal? Create one now. You can't hope to build a successful virtual event without well-defined event goals and KPIs. For each event, you need to start by understanding the original purpose of your event in terms of business goals and attendee goals.

## WHAT WERE THE BUSINESS GOALS OF THE EVENT?

- Brand Awareness / Lead generation
- Immediate Revenue
- Product Adoption and lifetime value
- Customer appreciation / loyalty
- Membership growth

## WHAT WERE THE ATTENDEE GOALS OF THE EVENT?

- Networking
- Learning / Training
- Entertainment / Celebration

These goals, the value to the organization and the value for the attendee may be different, but equally important. They will dictate the structure of your event and the technology you choose if you decide that a virtual event is the right option.

## CAN YOUR ORIGINAL GOALS AND KPIs BE MET VIRTUALLY?

Once you've settled on your goals, ask yourself, "Can the goals you identified be met virtually?" If so, how might they have to change?

The process of taking one step back to take two steps forward can be rewarding and eye-opening. What are the key elements needed to meet your event purpose? If the purpose of your event was training, then can attendees learn in a virtual environment rather than an in-person one? If training was given by one speaker with little interaction, the switch to virtual will be easy. What if the purpose of your event was networking?

The medium has changed, but with virtual breakout sessions, you might still be able to fulfill the event purpose. Scale the event down to its essence. Take the most important thing you were trying to do or achieve and double down on it. Event strategy requires looking at your total event program and building events that serve a purpose. Don't view your events in isolation, especially as you transition to virtual events.





## DON'T BE AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT

Everyone wants to pivot quickly by taking what they planned to do in-person and making a 1:1 translation to virtual. But virtual events that are direct translations of an in-person event are unlikely to succeed.

The types of event and attendee behavior expected are very different, and thus require adaptation. Right now, even the top companies are starting small and learning best practices as they go, experimenting to understand the best ways to drive engagement, and whether and how that engagement ultimately drives business.

Your recurring in-person events might have been copied from a model year after year, but this is a reason to see what change could look like. Try something new using available virtual event technology. While some technology and features are new, the data and analytics you capture are largely the same. You'll be able to track what does and doesn't work and improve upon every event.



## USE A TIERING SYSTEM TO CLASSIFY YOUR EVENTS

As you look to pivot in-person events to virtual where it makes sense, it's helpful to classify your events using a three-tiered system. By tiering your events, you can wrap your arms around your total event program and understand what virtual event technology capabilities will be needed.



### TIER ONE

Highly complex, multi-day, multi-session, conference-type events that require the most planning

**Ex: Conference**



### TIER TWO

Moderately complex, moderate level of effort

**Ex: Virtual Trade Show**



### TIER THREE

Least complex, lower level of effort required, repeatable

**Ex: Webinar**



## VIRTUAL EVENT OPTIONS

From a few hours to a few days, virtual events come in many shapes and forms, though they are less varied than in-person events. As you create your virtual event strategy, review the event types below and identify which options make the most sense for your individual events and your event program as a whole.

Event Type	Complexity	Examples/Definition	Objective in Order of Importance	Technology
External Virtual Conference	Tier 1	Multi-day conference hosted online that includes sales product demos, solution sessions, industry trends/thought leadership, product training/adoption	Lead/Demand Generation; Adoption/ Retention; Awareness; Relationships	Reg, Abstract, Mobile Event App, Appointments, Onsite Engagement, Attendee Tracking, Survey, Video Platform
Internal Virtual Conference	Tier 1	Multi-day internal conference to educate employees	Strategy/Alignment; Retention/ Morale; Talent Acquisition/ Development; Incentive-Quota-based	Reg, Mobile Event App, Onsite, Attendee Tracking, Survey, Video Platform
Online Demo or Product Seminar	Tier 2	1-3 hours, educational product demo	Brand/Market Awareness; Lead/Demand Generation	Reg, Mobile Event App, Survey, Video Platform
Webinar Series	Tier 2	Multi-session, Multi-day or Multi-week series	Brand/Market Awareness; Lead/Demand Generation; Relationships	Reg, Mobile Event App, Survey, Video Platform
Virtual Networking Event	Tier 2	An informal virtual meetup that could be a mix and meet or a happy hour	Relationships; Lead/Demand Generation	Reg, Mobile Event App, Appts, Survey, Video Platform

## VIRTUAL EVENT OPTIONS (CONTINUED)

Event Type	Complexity	Examples/Definition	Objective in Order of Importance	Technology
Virtual Trade Show	Tier 2	Pre-set appointments to host meetings regarding group business needs	Lead/Demand Generation; Awareness; Relationships	Event Marketing and Management Platform, Video Platform
Management/ Leadership	Tier 1	Single-day/Multi-day; Town Halls	Strategy/Alignment	Reg, Survey, Video Platform
Incentive & Recognition	Tier 1	Leadership Retreats, Offsites & Ad-hoc programs, Sales Business Leaders Retreat	Incentive/Quota-Based; Retention/Morale	Reg, Survey, Video Platform
Employee Appreciation/ Morale	Tier 2	Half-day, Awards Ceremony, Incentive Outings	Retention/Morale	Reg, Survey, Video Platform
Webinar	Tier 3	3 hour, One-time webinar	Brand/Market Awareness; Lead/Demand Generation; Relationships	Reg, Mobile Event App, Survey, Video Platform
Virtual Training & Certification	Tier 3	1-3 hour educational session, can be multiple days	Adoption/Retention; Relationships; Brand/Market Awareness; Lead/Demand Generation	Reg, Mobile Event App, Survey, Video Platform
Internal Training/ Education	Tier 3	1-3 hours, Company Parties, Happy Hours, Holiday Events	Talent Acquisition/Development	Video Platform

# REMEMBER

As you look at your events and make the switch to virtual, don't be afraid to start over, despite the amount of planning that has already been done.

**EXECUTE > UNEXECUTE > RE-EXECUTE**



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR BUDGET

A strategy you can't afford to pursue is no strategy at all. So before you make decisions about the type of virtual event you want to create, you need to understand the resources you have available. The budget at your disposal may vary, depending on whether you're rethinking an in-person event that already had costs associated to it or you're planning an event from scratch. Virtual events rely heavily on technology.

The options available to you are reliant on the amount you can spend. As you look at all of the events you have over the next year, allocate your budget accordingly. Once you know your budget, you can begin to plan your events within your monetary constraints.

## PLANNER, MEET MARKETER. MARKETER, MEET PLANNER

Executing your virtual strategy will likely require new team members and skill sets. Planners and marketers have their own set of unique skills. The switch to virtual events requires a new focus on both planning and marketing. Already, marketing, which is used to running webinar programs, is a warehouse of marketing and virtual event tech. Planners should lean-in to marketing in part for strategy, but even more so, to exploit the marketing tech stack and learn from marketing best practices in pre-existing virtual events.



## When it comes to event marketing and event planning, which describes your organization?

### The Power Couple

Clearly defined teams for planning and event marketing, strong capabilities on both teams, alignment with other stakeholders, alignment for metrics and KPIs.

### The Connector

No defined event marketing team, the planning team wants to drive alignment and form alliances with teams in marketing.

### Triple Threat

One person that does it all.

Marketers and planners need to work hand-in-hand to make the most of their event program. If your team doesn't have a designated planner or marketer, now is the time to pick up new skills. Marketers are no strangers to strategy. They think in terms of goals and KPIs from the start. On the flip side, planners are detail-driven and focused on execution. The idea of starting with a simple event goal makes sense to marketers, where planners can get bogged down in the millions of virtual event execution details. In the strategy stages, lean on your fellow marketers, or your marketing skillset.



## A FULL PROGRAM VIEW - PROVING ROI AND EVENT SUCCESS

A full program view is about ensuring that your virtual events are measured and managed alongside your in-person events, so you have one source of truth into all your event spend and performance. By managing virtual and in-person events using the same systems, planners can compare the success of events across the same metrics. Your event marketing and management platform will capture the same information at every stage of the event, except for onsite. But, with a virtual event provider, you can track similar metrics, like viewing time, session attendance, and more.

### New Benchmarks from In-Person to Virtual

- Session attendance > Virtual session attendance
- Time in session > Time watching session

## HOW CVENT MOVED CUSTOMER SUCCESS GROUPS VIRTUAL

### WHAT DID WE TAKE VIRTUAL:

Customer Success Groups (CSG's), a free half-day seminar across various cities, that allow Cvent customers to network, learn industry trends, and hear about Cvent products.

### HOW WE DID IT:

Leveraged data already living in Cvent, to pull a registration list and target registrants with an updated email invitation for the switch to virtual.

Broke down the event into its original purpose of networking, education, and discussion and decided to streamline the content to a one-hour experience, with forty-five minutes allotted for content and another fifteen for Q&A.

### WHAT WE USED:

- **Cvent Marketing and Management Platform:** Email marketing, retargeting, virtual registration
- **CrowdCompass mobile app:** Automated reminder emails leading up to the event, live polling and Q&A, screen sharing, in-app networking opportunities, contact sharing, access additional resources, post-event survey

### THE RESULTS:

In one month's turnaround time, Cvent saw 1500 registrations across four sessions as of early May, when they typically see 350 attendees across thirty global sessions. The teams continue to rely on event technology to streamline data flow and ensure a seamless attendee experience.



# PART 2

## Virtual Event EXECUTION



Now comes the hard work. Don't panic. As we'll see, many of the execution fundamentals that served you well for in-person events still apply. But virtual events have some important differences. With the physical environment gone, the virtual equivalent of the "onsite experience" needs to be re-thought. Agendas and content delivery might need to be adjusted for new audiences to keep attendees engaged in a more-distracted virtual environment. Enabling attendee networking with sponsors, sales teams, and even each other also must be re-examined.

This is where your hard work on strategy starts to pay off. Obviously, delivering these experiences virtually has budget and technology implications. But approached with a clear understanding of the goals and the organizational value the virtual event needs to deliver, these decisions become more manageable. So, before we jump into execution logistics and technology selection, let's start with the mindset and skillset needed to help ensure your virtual event is a success for all involved.



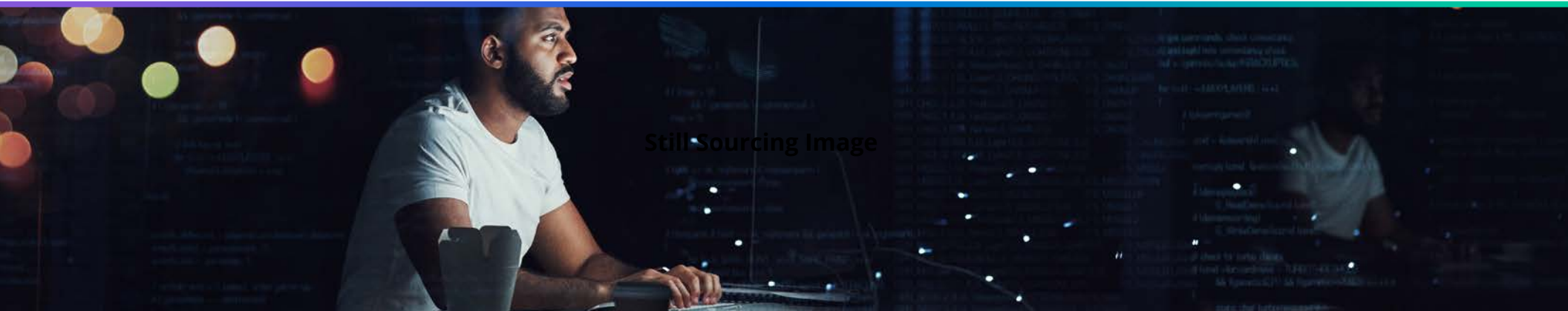
## BRING THE RIGHT MINDSET

**First**, some tough love. If you are taking a previously in-person event virtual, you may need to let your vision of that in-person event die. Mourn its loss and move on. For starters, your virtual audience may be different. Without the commitment of a registration fee, a multi-day day hotel stay, and plane fare, you may attract a far broader and different audience than attended your in-person event. Perhaps your virtual attendees are less familiar with you and your offerings. Perhaps they are more senior in title or, conversely, more junior in title. Open yourself to the possibility that your content and overall experience may need to change to reflect this new reality.

**Second**, resist the impulse to take all of the in-person event's content blocks and make them virtual. The hundreds of sessions, hands-on training, interactive exhibits, networking happy hours, and legendary last-night parties that were hallmarks of your in-person event may not work in a virtual setting. Look critically at each element of the event. Is this

content block necessary to achieve the goals of the event? Can it be executed virtually? If so, at what cost?

**Finally**, and perhaps most importantly, make sure you are as rigorous about capturing attendee data (firmographic, demographic, and activity data) from your virtual events as you are with your in-person events. Virtual events shouldn't be executed as a stand-alone instance. They, like the rest of your events, are a valuable touchpoint in the prospect and customer journey. As such, they should be working in conjunction with your other events – and the rest of your marketing mix – to better understand your attendees so you can take the next best action. This mindset is critical, as it informs the systems and technologies your virtual event will use to capture data and integrate it with your Marketing Tech stack and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems.



## BRING THE RIGHT SKILLSET

Your execution team had muscle memory built by years of executing in-person events. But virtual events likely require some rethinking of traditional workflows and handoffs, and even the teams involved. For starters, the traditional “run-of-show” becomes much more comprehensive. Planners who are familiar with complex general session production plans like the back of their hands may be positioned to take on the role of a traditional production company in a virtual context, queuing up the next session, video, or interstitial through a self-service module. Additionally, as virtual events become more common, digital and marketing operations skills are increasingly needed to onboard new technologies and manage key integrations that allow data to flow. Critically evaluating your different program needs may also expose that some of your traditional in-person programs may have legs

of their own to exist outside of the event completely. Keep in mind the less competing programming, likely, the better.

Just like your new mindset, embrace these new skillsets. With every virtual event, your own personal skillset will expand as you’re forced to view your events in a different light. Don’t be afraid to bring these new teams in to reimagine your normal checklists and processes and adapt as you go. Document everything, discover what skills you don’t have and learn them or find someone who has them, and be flexible. Another benefit is that, in many ways, virtual events are breaking down traditional functional silos. As Planners, Marketers, Digital teams, and IT work more closely together, there will be inevitable benefits for the rest of your event program.



## PRE-EVENT EXECUTION

### I've Seen This Movie Before

Earlier in this eBook, we told you not to panic; that many of the execution fundamentals for a virtual event are the same as the in-person events you may be used to running. Whether the event is in-person or virtual, all events need attendees, and that means marketing and promotion.

### *Event Marketing*

Most planners and marketers are on familiar ground here. The basics of segmenting and targeting your audience with personalized messaging still apply. In many cases, virtual events allow you to cast a wider net, targeting segments and

titles that previously were beyond your reach due to the cost and/or time commitment of an in-person event. Some studies suggest virtual event attendee counts are 2x-4x or more of their in-person counterparts. For example, virtual events can be an effective way to attract more prospects that don't know you or your offerings. They can also attract more senior-level titles who can spend a few hours with you, but not a few days. Now is not the time to be timid. Be aggressive with your attendance goals, and put the systems and channels in place to reach them.

Broad, multi-channel marketing, including email, social, and inbound activities, are all in play. Organizations with sales teams can leverage them to call in to high-value prospects and existing customers to generate interest.

## REMINDER

Keep in mind that, while it may be easier to drive up registration numbers for virtual events, you'll need to work harder to get them to actually attend the event when the day comes. Go back to basics, with automated registration, thank you's, timely reminders, even day-of calls to important prospects and customers to drive attendance.



## Event Website

Reaching potential attendees and building interest is one thing. But just like in-person events, converting that interest into virtual event registrations is a critical next step. Again, marketers and planners are on familiar ground. Like in-person events, you'll need a branded, professional-looking event website to communicate the value proposition of your virtual event. Here, prospective attendees can explore important event information such as agendas, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors, and FAQs.

Your event website is the front door to your virtual event. It's largely here where the conversion happens as each attendee explores what's in it for them. Don't underpower the implementation effort.

## YOUR EVENT WEBSITE SHOULD INCLUDE

- Company or event branding
- Time and date
- Event purpose and slogan
- Cost of the event
- Registration
- Agenda and speaker information
- FAQ page
- Guide to attending a virtual event
- Contact information





## Event Registration

It seems basic, and in some cases, it is. You'll need a registration tool for your virtual event, so you know "who" and "how many." As we discussed in the "mindset" section, there's more to registration than meets the eye...for any event, including your virtual events. The ability to offer custom registration paths and personalized registration selections to each attendee type will help drive registrations. Pre-event questions can help you better understand attendee expectations and interests. If you plan to charge a fee for your virtual event, you'll need to be able to process payments. But remember, the registration process captures very valuable attendee data, including attendee name, organization, email, title, attendee preferences, and answers to pre-registration questions. All of this data helps you better understand your attendees, their organizations, and even their interests. Walling off your virtual event data from the rest of your marketing and sales systems of truth obscures the full picture of attendee interest, making it harder for your market-facing teams to follow up effectively and efficiently.

## VIRTUAL EVENT ENGAGEMENT: THE HOLY GRAIL

With the familiar pre-event activities behind you, it's time to focus on the virtual event itself. For many planners and marketers, this can be new ground. In-person events can rely on physical proximity and face-to-face interaction to gain and hold attendee attention. However, for virtual events, keeping and holding your attendees' interest is harder. The level of commitment to attend is lower, and distractions are everywhere.

Just as there is no one-size-fits-all approach for an engaging in-person onsite experience, there is no "right or wrong" virtual experience. However, there are four key components of a virtual event experience that need special attention. The components themselves will look familiar, but that's where the similarities stop. Executing these areas well can mean the difference between a virtual event that truly delivers value to attendees and sponsors and keeps them engaged, and one that doesn't.

1. The Virtual Content Experience
2. Networking and Building Connections
3. The Virtual Sponsor Experience
4. Data and Analytics for Your Virtual Event

Let's take each component in turn



## THE CONTENT EXPERIENCE

Content is king. It's king for an in-person event, and it's king for your virtual events. Arguably, great content is even more important in a virtual setting. Without the ambiance of a beautiful location, great food and drinks, and the dynamism of in-person interactions, your content carries much of the weight of delivering a great event experience. Indeed, for many virtual events, the content **IS** the event.

### *Event Duration and Agenda*

Your agenda length, both the length of time and the breadth of sessions held over that time, requires careful consideration. There has been a lot of experimentation in these early days as to the optimal duration of a virtual event. A few organizations have taken content from a 3-day in-person event and stretched that content delivery over 2 weeks, hosting sessions for a few hours each day. Most, however, are shortening the duration of a virtual event and condensing the agenda, reflecting a "less is more" mentality when it comes to maximizing engagement in a virtual environment. In general, abide by the 50% guideline. However long your in-person session or agenda was scheduled to be, cut total programming in half.

## WHEN PLANNING THE AGENDA, CONSIDER:

- **Time Zone:** Where are your attendees? Will the agenda be personalized to reflect their time zone?
- **Regional Differences:** What platforms are allowed in what countries? Does your messaging tool work everywhere? Can attendees access sessions from their location?
- **Technological Capabilities:** How savvy are your attendees? For those with less virtual experience, should you provide additional assistance and help desk resources?





## *Session Selection and Engagement*

Increasingly, virtual events have multiple sessions and even multiple tracks to ensure they are engaging disparate audiences. Just like an in-person event, attendees benefit from a guided experience that helps them explore and find the content they want. In these situations, a “home base” for your virtual event content gives your attendees a central place to explore and select sessions, find speakers, and create personalized agendas. When attendees have the information they need nicely organized in one central location, they are more likely to return and remain engaged.

When the time comes, this same home base acts as a sort of engagement hub for your virtual sessions. First, it provides a familiar jumping-off point to their virtual session, so when it’s time for a live session to begin, or to watch a pre-recorded session, it’s easily and intuitively accessed. Moreover, attendees can engage with the content right from within that same environment, leveraging interactive functionality like live Q&A, polling, and even feedback surveys for that session.



## FOR EACH SESSION, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

### **Session Length:**

No more than 2 hours a session but consider shorter sessions with varied content.

### **Session Format:**

Panel, webinar, keynote, news-style broadcast, executive presentation, ted-style talk, video, late-night show, etc.

### **Audience Interaction:**

Will the audience be able to be seen on video, ask questions verbally, or ask questions over chat?

### **Type of Content:**

Thought-leadership, research-based, client insight, product, or service training.

### **Live vs. Pre-recorded:**

More can go wrong with a live session, but it provides a feeling of community and increased engagement.

### **Streaming vs. On-demand:**

On-demand is a great option for smaller sessions and offers a break for attendees, as they can choose their own watch schedule.

### **Talking Head vs. On-screen Presentation:**

What is the best viewing format for the content? Take into consideration the benefit of visual aids based on the content type.

### **Visual vs. Audio Only:**

Sessions don't have to be the same – you could do an audio-only podcast style discussion or presentation that utilizes only visuals.

### **Interactive vs. One-way Communication:**

For a keynote, you probably don't want the audience to be able to interact with the speaker, but for smaller sessions, interaction can engage attendees.

## NETWORKING AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS

After great content comes connection building. The physical proximity of in-person events allows attendees to create their own community for the duration of the event. How do you deliver those connections virtually? At in-person events, networking often happens organically, based on who is sitting next to who and the introductions made on the trade show floor. Virtual events require a structured and strategic approach, with networking built into the agenda in advance in the form of breakouts, virtual appointments, and more. Just because you're not sitting across the table from an attendee or speaking to them at a physical booth doesn't mean you can't leverage your virtual event to make that connection.

There are three different types of connections to consider when building a community experience:

- **Sales Networking with Attendees**
- **Attendees Networking with Attendees**
- **Sponsors or Exhibitors Networking with Attendees**



**First**, let's talk about sales networking with attendees. You've been conducting virtual one-on-one meetings for years, certainly for the past few months as onsite visits aren't practical. Apply those same principles to your virtual event. With appointment scheduling tools, sales can set up meetings with attendees before the event, taking a valuable spot on their agenda early.

**Next**, you need to consider attendees networking with attendees. Your mobile event app will be critical for these connections. Using messaging tools and the event feed, attendees can connect with other attendees. By scheduling happy hours, breakouts, and one-on-ones, you further encourage networking.

**Last but not least**, you need to provide networking opportunities for sponsors and exhibitors networking with

attendees. Exhibitors, other attendees, and even your sales teams can review the registration list for the virtual event and make appointments the old-fashioned way, by sending an email with a Zoom link.

You'll likely get more and better engagement if you make it easy and seamless to schedule an appointment from within the virtual experience itself. Remember the virtual home base we talked about before? That central place where attendees can organize and have access to important information about the event, sessions, attendees, and more? This home base, coupled with a mobile event app, is the key to building connections and community. It is a great place to include an appointment scheduler that allows attendees to explore and connect with exhibitors and other attendees while content and connections are relevant and top of mind.



## SPONSORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Perhaps no other area of virtual events has caused as much head-scratching as delivering sponsor ROI. In the absence of traditional on-site branding and lead scanning opportunities, planners and sponsors alike continue to experiment with how to best deliver the brand awareness and lead flow.

While the experimentation continues, several best practices are emerging, many taken from in-person events, but modified slightly to fit a virtual reality. Virtual events still offer many opportunities for sponsor brand awareness. For example, sponsors can continue to be featured prominently on the virtual event website. The post-registration virtual home base discussed previously provides additional real estate to promote featured sponsors and can even be extended to provide sponsors their own pages to allow them to feature content. Even within the content experience itself, sponsors can underwrite full content tracks or individual sessions.



The lead generation challenge at virtual events is real. Let's face it; nothing really compares with face-to-face to establish a quick relationship with someone and potentially qualify them as a lead. But with a bit of planning and the right technology, it's still possible to deliver virtual lead flow to sponsors. With the right technology, sponsors can establish "virtual booths" within an event, allowing them to host one-to-one or one-to-many appointments. Sponsors retain full control over branding and content, and leads can be gathered through appointment setting, or qualifying "virtual walk-ins." As discussed above, planners can devote web pages for each sponsor and include "contact me" links that allow interested attendees to raise their hands and request a conversation. And finally, the concept of a sponsored session is alive and well in a virtual context. Again, the right technology can allow an organization to sponsor a session and receive the attendee list for that session in real-time.

## SPONSORSHIP OFFERINGS

- Sponsored sessions
- Email marketing opportunities
- Sponsored posts on the activity feed
- Logo placement on the event website
- Virtual trade show booth
- Survey question during registration
- Log-in screen
- Check-in branding
- Session background branding
- Splash pages
- Banner ads
- Video ads
- Sponsored listings, highlighted exhibitors, and highlight on agenda
- Sponsored virtual happy hours
- Surveys & interactive polling
- Gamification
- Push notifications
- Branded swag mailed to attendees
- Virtual office or 'drop-in' hours with sales reps

## DATA AND ANALYTICS

Just like in-person events, with the right engagement strategy, your virtual events can deliver a ton of valuable data. As virtual attendees register, attend sessions, engage in live Q&A and polling, attend appointments, or provide feedback, they are giving you data that can help you drive revenue. In addition, you'll want to understand how attendees interacted with sponsors.

As you look to execute your virtual event, you'll want to be deliberate about your data capture strategy and the technology that can power it. This is the critical step in assessing the success of your event and maximizing its value.

### THREE TYPES OF DATA TO CAPTURE AT VIRTUAL EVENTS

**1. Event Data:** This is basic data that describes the event itself. Event type, cost, date, location, registration counts, etc. are examples of event data. Capturing event data for your virtual events allows you to compare the virtual event's performance with virtual events, as well as its in-person counterparts.

**2. Profile Data:** Profile data is attendee-level firmographic and demographic data that describes the attendee and his/her organization. Name, address, email, title, organization name, even number of employees, are examples of profile data. Usually captured during the registration process, profile data can help build new prospect profiles

or complete existing ones. Either way, you'll know your attendees much better as a result.

**3. Engagement Data:** Engagement data is very dynamic. It's captured as a result of attendee interactions with and responses to the event's sessions, other content, sponsors and exhibitors, even other attendees. Session registration, session attendance and duration, appointments scheduled, and feedback submitted are examples of engagement data. Engagement data is particularly valuable in helping your sales and marketing teams better understand attendee interests and be able to follow up more effectively.

You'll want to look for technology partners that can help you not only drive virtual engagement but also capture the data that results from each of those touchpoints and integrate it with your key systems. The real value of virtual event data is realized only when integrated with your Customer/Association Management Systems and Marketing Automation Systems.

This critical last mile allows your virtual event data to be combined with what you already know about your attendees, so your sales and marketing teams can follow up on the complete picture of interest.

## THE VIRTUAL TECH LANDSCAPE

Taking your event virtual often means adding new technologies into the mix. The first question on most planners' minds is how are attendees going to access, consume, and interact with your event's content...and each other? What does that experience look like? How interactive will it be?

There are many different types of solutions and providers out there, and sorting through it all can be a little bit overwhelming. Ultimately, the answer lies in the experience you want to deliver. How important is high production quality? Do you just need one-to-many "broadcast" capability or is interactivity more important? Do you have complex transitions or "virtual run of shows" that require trained professionals, or will a simple, self-service platform do?



## THE VIRTUAL TECH LANDSCAPE

There is no one-size-fits-all answer, but we've created this short guide to help you better understand your options and ask the right questions.

Solution Type	How it Works	Most Common Use-Cases	Providers
Video Streaming	Video streaming platforms allow you to share videos on demand or stream them live. They also allow you to set whether your content can be publicly available for anyone to view, or available only to a select group of people. Two-way engagement is typically limited to 1-way comments as the key benefits lie in the ease of setting up the video, the quality of the stream, the ability to scale to very large audiences, and the advanced production capabilities.	Viewing Video Content Sharing Video Content	Vimeo YouTube Facebook LinkedIn Brightcove
Video Conferencing	This solution is best where interactivity is necessary and the audience size is less than 50-100 people. There usually isn't a formal presenter-attendee designation, and presenter-mode can be easily switched from one attendee to the other. All participants can have video and/or audio enabled to increase engagement and collaboration. There is often a chat option where attendees can engage with each other and the presenter/s. The limitations of this solution become apparent when you have a very large number of participants. One example is when one or more participants are not muted, and you get background noise that is disruptive to the session. Another example is when you have multiple participants speaking at once and it becomes hard to manage the conversation. Additionally, all providers have a limit to how many participants you can have in a video conferencing session and they require you to upgrade or switch over to another solution.	Video Conferencing Internal Meetings Client Meetings Sales Meetings Breakout Rooms	Zoom, Webex GoToMeeting Adobe Connect Microsoft Teams



## THE VIRTUAL TECH LANDSCAPE (CONTINUED)

Solution Type	How it Works	Most Common Use-Cases	Providers
Webinars	<p>This experience is ideal when you have one or more speakers or a panel presenting to a larger audience. The session can be entirely live, entirely recorded, or a hybrid of the two where the content portion is recorded and the Q&amp;A is live. Usually the audience audio is not enabled, and they can submit questions via various types audience response features like chat, Q&amp;A, or polling. These solutions are generally user-friendly for presenters but have limited production capabilities that make it difficult for planners to customize the attendee experience and make it more engaging.</p>	<p>Webinars Thought-Leadership Content Best Practice Sessions Company-Wide Announcements Town Halls</p>	<p>Zoom Webex GoToWebinar Adobe Connect On24 WebinarJam Livestorm</p>
Virtual Conferencing	<p>Traditionally, providers in this space have taken a 3D, fully immersive approach that is intended to replicate the in-person experience virtually. Due to the complexity of building such experiences, tech requirements at the receiving end, and an inconsistent user experience, newer solutions have fully embraced the digital nature of the platforms and don't try to create that 3D simulation. These newer solutions still include support for multiple sessions, multiple content tracks, attendee networking, sponsor activation, and much more, but the format is more similar to a web experience. Just like with an in-person event, these immersive experiences often have pre-set "live" hours where attendees can explore the event and engage with exhibitors outside of just official sessions.</p>	<p>Conferences Career Fairs Job Fairs Trade Shows</p>	<p>Cvent Intrado 6Connex vFairs</p>

# VIRTUAL EVENT

## VIRTUAL EVENT STRATEGY AND EXECUTION THAT **WORKS FOR YOU**

Virtual events have increased in popularity due to necessity but will be a key event type in your total event program from now on. With clear objectives in mind and a willingness to experiment, virtual events can meet organizational needs on a larger scale than the typical in-person events. Now is the time to be creative, look to what others in the industry are doing, and try new approaches. It's time to learn new skills, lean on other departments, and embrace new technology. Execution may seem daunting, but, with time, virtual events will become as second nature as in-person events. In the end, you'll be left with yet another way to engage attendees and meet your goals.

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Cvent is a leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider with more than 4,000 employees and 30,000 customers worldwide. The comprehensive Cvent event marketing and management platform offers software solutions to event professionals and marketers for online event registration, venue selection, and attendee engagement, helping to automate and simplify the entire event management process and maximize the impact of in-person, virtual, and hybrid events. Cvent's supplier and venue solutions help hotels and venues win more group and corporate travel business enabling them to service their customers directly, efficiently and profitably. Cvent solutions optimize the entire event management value chain and have empowered clients around the world to manage millions of meetings and events. For more information, please visit [www.cvent.com](http://www.cvent.com) or connect with us on social media.



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