

FIVE things to consider when creating virtual events



Dawn Martin

VP, Meetings & Shows
BI WORLDWIDE

Corporate events have always played a key role in delivering business strategies. But how do you make a powerful impact when a live event isn't possible?

From sales incentives to inspirational experiences, celebratory award dinners and content-driven conferences, we can never dismiss the powerful impact of live events. And while there have been many debates in recent years about the role of technology in our daily lives, one thing is very clear in a time when live events can't be held – technology gives us options.

You may not be able to whisk your top performers away to a bucket-list destination but you can still reward them. You may not be able to host an annual awards dinner but you can still recognize them. And you may not be able to host a conference in a traditional venue but you can still deliver powerful content in an online format.

The goal is the same: **emotionally engage your audience, provide a memorable experience and deliver a clear message.** While the approach and experience may be a little different, the impact can remain.

Here are five things to consider when creating virtual events:

one
1

What is the purpose of your event?

What do you want your event to achieve? Do you have key messages you want to share effectively? Are there key learnings you'd like your audience to walk away with? Do you want to open up a discussion and collaboration on future strategies? Just as in a live setting, keeping the purpose at the centre of your virtual event design will ensure you meet your strategic goals.

two
2

Who is your audience?

Do you want to engage a group of hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands? What do you want them to experience? Communication and format design is critical when you are engaging audiences from afar. Have your attendees register for the event as they would any other. Keep communications constant, creative and informative. This may be the first time many people are experiencing a virtual event so knowledge is comfort and creativity helps in reinforcing key messages both before and after it takes place.

three
3

How do you want to reach them?

Do you want to pre-record content or run a live show? Or a combination? How many presenters will you have? What about a host? What media can you use to share your messages? With the right preparation and planning, you can deliver your content in just about any way you'd like. Host breakout sessions or panel discussions no matter where your presenters are located. Introduce a game show competition or celebrate



FIVE things to consider when creating virtual events



four
4

achievements with a live message feed. Having short, distinct parts to your event will keep energy and engagement levels high.

Who can help you make this happen?

There are four major elements to a virtual event: the “show,” which is content, creative, design; the “feed,” which is event production; the “pipeline,” or conduit to get the feed into the “platform”. The platform is equivalent to the venue in a live event – where the general sessions, breakouts, awards, etc. are housed. It’s what the audience ultimately watches when they view the event on their device.



Make sure you have all of these four elements covered. If you’re hiring an external partner, do your research. Most agencies do not have all four, so you may need to work with several agencies to produce a full event.

five
5

How can you make your virtual event exciting and engaging?

Just as with live events, polls can be run during presentations, live comment sections can be used and gamification components can be added to surprise and delight. You can also adapt live meeting technologies to work virtually – add interactive backgrounds and motion graphics, personalize greetings and agendas, create a virtual hub for people to congregate in during “check-in” and “coffee breaks” or include live stream performances of DJs or bands. If you are recognizing performance, think about pre- or post-event rewards to send to winners.

As with any other event, a virtual experience can be as simple or spectacular as you’d like. A virtual event is a great way to communicate when a live event is simply not possible. No matter what the circumstance may be, virtual events can be powerful and effective if you keep your audience and purpose in mind.