

SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO DESIGN SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EVENTS

"The world of online and live experiences are going to continue to merge and to morph more seamlessly together. The human experience, whether it is on a non-digital platform or on a live platform, is still the critical factor."

- Kim Myhre, CEO and Managing Partner Experience Designed

1. CONTENT & GOAL SETTING

Panelists during The Hague Convention Bureau's first hybrid webinar agreed that when planning a hybrid or digital event, your content is key to its success.

How you conceive it, present it, and collect data on it, will do the most to maximize attendance, revenue, and deliver ROI to attendees and sponsors.

Define your Audience

- Who do I want to reach?
- Where can I find them?
- Where are they from? (Time zones)
- What format should I use to communicate with them?
- How do I keep them engaged?



Define your Objectives and Key Results

- Why are you doing it? What is the main purpose?
- What are your business objectives for creating a hybrid event? What do you want your audience to get out of it?
- What makes your event different? Why should people attend? Refine your unique positioning.

Narrow down your Audience

- Who may be interested and what will motivate them to attend?
- Your virtual event marketing plan needs to define each segment from your target audience in order to market to them in a relevant and personalised manner.

Based on the above, decide on the set-up, topic and the speakers. This part is crucial and depends on your Objectives and Key Results.



"Delegates will be really interested in attending an event if the content is outstanding."

– Guillem Torres, Executive Director, Professional Congress Organizer, Torres Pardo SL



"If you focus on getting quality content and the right speakers, I think people will be willing to participate in a virtual event even at a higher registration fee. The reason hundreds of millions of people watch YouTube each day is because of the content. Good content will provide more value and attract more delegates."

– Frank Yang, Director, Marketing & Business Development at KINTEX

2. EVENT MARKETING & PROMOTION

Just like with any other type of event, you want to promote your digital or hybrid one in the most timely and effective way possible. It is your content marketing tool, so treat it with care.

Pre-Event:

- Create an event landing page on your website while making sure everything is on brand.
- Make it easy to sign-up. For registration there are a variety of easy solutions with an “add to calendar” option.
- Leverage the power of video to enhance your event marketing plan.
- Make the event easy to share.
- Plan your posts in advance, but do not rely on social media solely. Use a newsletter to send out invitations and reminders to your subscriber's base, making sure that they opted in to receive communications from you for similar events or initiatives.
- Track and measure conversions from event sign-ups using website traffic data from Google Analytics.
- Use email reminders. Send a reminder email the day before and the morning of your event with a strong Call-To-Action for participants to join online.
- Encourage sharing. Make sure to mention event specific hashtags at the beginning of the event and encourage delegates to use them during discussions.

During Event:

- Encourage debate. Use live survey tools like Slido for real-time online polling as participants love this. It can also feed into discussions and really create a buzz. Be ready to share the results right away on social media.

Post-Event:

- Make the recording available. Send the recorded video of the event right away to all registered participants and include it on your website or YouTube channel for those who were not able to join.
- Share post-event slides and research. Make sure to ask the speakers in advance if they agree for the presentations to be public or if they have a special version for public dissemination.
- Remember to leverage the buzz of the day and re-package valuable content. Create short post-event highlight videos with the main takeaways. Compile key insights & quotes from the event on your channels, to drive traffic and to continue the discussion online.
- Keep improving. Send a satisfaction survey to participants right after the event in your thank you email.

Tip from The Hague:

Here is a useful webinar recap template from **The Hague Convention Bureau**.



3. EVENT DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

The next strategies involve production, which may depend on the technology and resources you have.

Event Design & Platform Selection

What kind of interaction do you want on the day? How many attendees & where are they from? What about budget? What will be the setup (presentation, meeting, panel discussion)? This can define the best platform for you. How will you create an experience focused on engagement? Prep your speakers to include the remote audience with polls, Q&A, or even just by welcoming and addressing them.

Tip from The Hague:

Audacity is a great free software to record the audio directly from your microphone.

Set Time Aside for a Dry Run

- There's nothing worse than bad sound and image when watching a virtual event, so it's essential to test your speaker's connection as soon as they are confirmed on the programme.
- If they don't have good video and audio equipment, set aside some budget to send them an HD webcam and PC headset as a gift in advance of the event.
- Have a Plan B, in case the connection with panellists or speaker does not work.
- Also make sure that you have set up a dry run with your panel a few days before to make sure that they are fully briefed on the topic of the session and introduced to each other before the event.



Tip from The Hague:

All platforms such as Zoom have great poll & Q&A functions to interact with your audience. Is your meeting hybrid? Use for example Slido to give your live audience a voice as well.



Hire a Producer and a Moderator

- A producer is an expert in the technical platform. This person monitors chat windows for issues, chooses which screens are shared when with the audience, launches polls, moves groups into breakout rooms, and deals with technical problems and queries.
- A moderator adds structure to the event by acting as the emcee, explaining housekeeping, introducing speakers, calling on people, moving questions along, making every call to action clear, and announcing breaks.
- Ensuring you have these people do focus on these aspects will allow the panellists to do their job – presenting to the audience.

Tip from The Hague:

Speakers using their laptop often look on their screen instead of in the webcam. Remember a webinar/hybrid event is all about presenting so look directly in the camera to have eye contact with your audience!



Registration & Data

- Make sure the company that you are working with can create a simple registration that tracks the data that is necessary to your event and analytics, in addition to tracking behaviour throughout the event.
- This type of intelligence can give you a great overview of how the event went, regardless of what the evaluations say. Examples of data to track include: time in show, dropout rates, returning visitors, presentations watched, most popular presentations and Q&A.



Tech is your friend

- Make sure you are visible, which might mean adjusting where your lights are placed so you're not poorly lit. Place the webcam on eye level.
- If possible make use of a good microphone.

Tip from The Hague:

You might use professional lights, but your speakers will probably be broadcasting from their home or office. Day light is your best friend here so always face daylight directly.

Plan Your Shots to Create a Dynamic Video Experience

- Good video events include a variety of visual elements, including close-ups of presenters, wide-angle views, and slideshows. Think like a cinematographer and make a plan in advance.
- Planning for a variety of shots gives audience members an appealing array of visual elements to focus on and keeps them engaged.



Teamwork

Your team is critical to your success. Your AV provider and streaming partner should have several conversations in advance to ensure the right equipment is ordered, the right bandwidth is there, and the all electrical and set up is planned well in advance.

Adjust and improve. Track everything and review results on a weekly basis so that you can adapt and constantly improve your virtual & hybrid event marketing efforts.



Physical Space Requirements

- The visual element of virtual and hybrid events is an important part of the whole experience. Make sure that the studio has depth, so add some plants or decoration.
- When broadcasting the event, the camera will be zooming in and out and capturing the background. As a result, the venue will be a part of the virtual viewer experience no matter what.

When it comes to hybrid events, it is important to choose the venue that ticks the boxes of both an online event producer, as well as an event planner. Their requirements for the venue will most likely be different.

**Do you have questions about organizing webinars,
hybrid events or are you looking for a great venue in
The Hague to host your hybrid event?**

**Get in touch with us via
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