

Create a successful virtual event

From content strategy to logistics,
how to convert existing events into
virtual solutions - and why going virtual
means a more sustainable future.



Virtual events

Marketers are facing a unique challenge in the coming months, as major brands decide to cancel in-person events, conferences and gatherings.

The prospect of scheduling gaps, delayed information-sharing and missed networking opportunities has resulted in pressure on marketing teams to convert existing events into virtual solutions.

While virtual events are already widely used, the popular webinar for example, the challenge now is to quickly discover, devise and implement new formats that deliver high-value event experiences.

In this playbook, we examine what it takes to create a successful virtual event that delivers on attendee expectations and provides an exceptional, inclusive experience.

There are four types of virtual events at a company's disposal which can be used to meet social and physical environment needs, including:

1. Live virtual

Every part of the event is conducted online in real-time

2. Semi-live

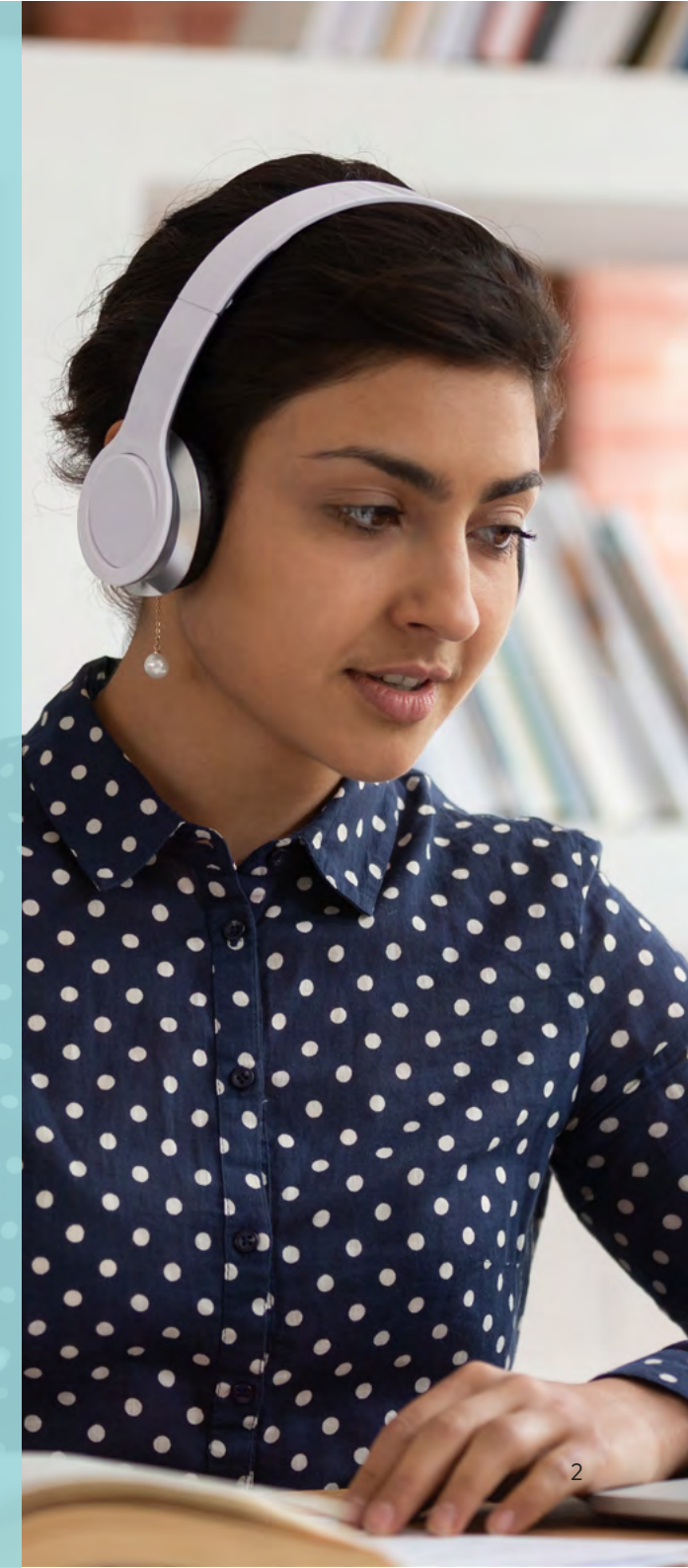
Pre-recorded with live Q&A / panel onsite or other online features

3. On-demand

On-demand – all aspects of the event are pre-recorded

4. Onsite stream

Onsite stream – used in global real-world events to include those who can't attend in person



Benefits of a virtual event

Although the reasons for moving from a physical event to a virtual event may be due in part to recent health events, going digital has multi-faceted benefits that organisations can explore to their fullest potential, for now and for a sustainable future.

Reduced attendee travel ultimately results in a reduced carbon footprint, as well as minimising time spent away from work and home. Complex visa issues are removed, and it is an apt vehicle for creating an equal platform of participation; from accessibility to inclusion by removing physical barriers and increasing content formats that aid visual or hearing impairment. Content packages and downloadable transcripts reduce notetaking to ensure an equal and continual flow of information for participants, essential for stakeholders, shareholders, employees, investors and customers.

The complementary digital opportunities, such as online polls, can provide accurate measures of how engaging topics are and map out a framework for future events or content marketing plans.

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Event logistics

Planning a virtual event is not as straightforward as simply stitching together a selection of webinars and pre-filmed or animated topics.

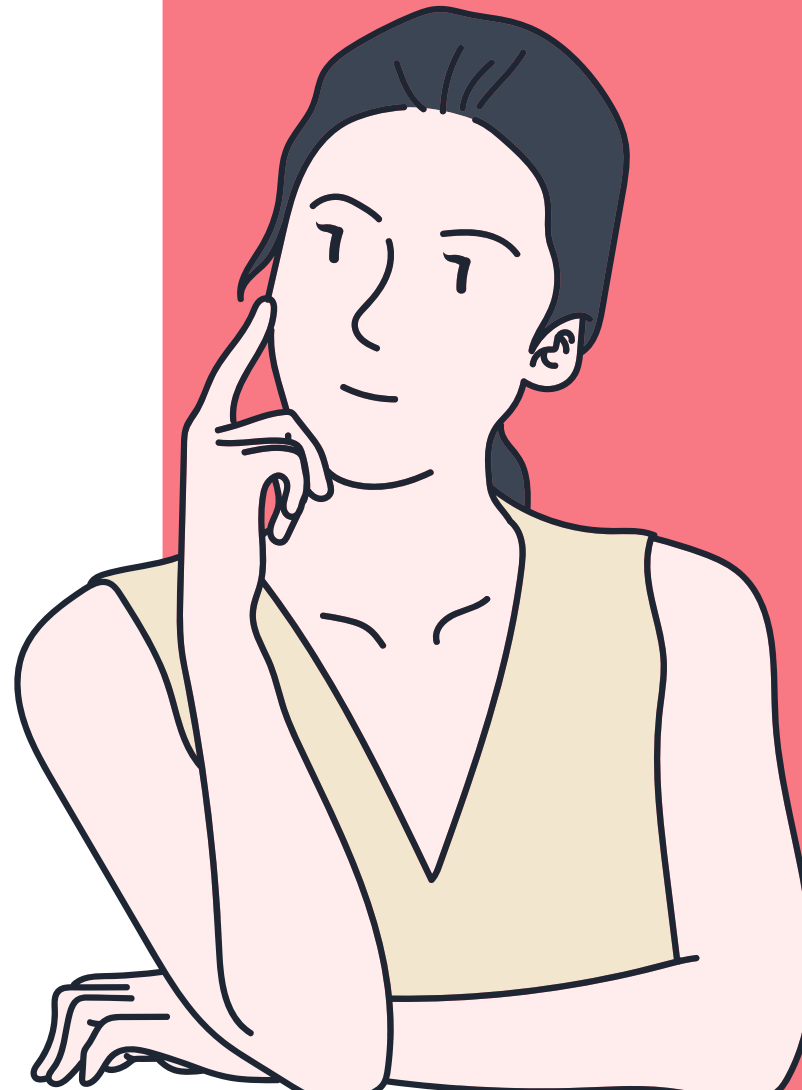
To bring it to a professional level that delights and inspires attendees, you must plan with online participation in mind. The event should reflect the interactive nature of a conference and work hard to replicate and improve the elements that attendees consider a 'must-do', such as networking with like-minded people.

Think about the size of your audience and potential invite list – this will impact any decisions around which platform, provider or even server you dedicate to running the event. Ask yourself, does this provide the bandwidth we need for 10 attendees, never mind 1000? Should the event be scaled back and run across a series of days?

Consider a platform or provider that can also host a range of content, tools and interactive facilities where needed, or draw together a marketing plan on how to activate and distribute content post-event.

Pull together a team that can take charge of the individual elements, as a virtual event can take more planning than first anticipated. This could include setting up a help desk for attendees to resolve technical queries and access issues.

'...you must plan with online participation in mind.'



Content logistics

The major output of any event, meeting or conference is content – it's the topic of your panels, it's the substance of your conclusions, it's a tangible asset and director of thought leadership for the next quarter, half or year ahead.

Key questions to consider:

1. What do you want your participants to do, feel or learn at the event?
2. How do you envision an objective-setting session to inform your content decisions and event plans?
3. Who are your audience and what are their distinct information needs?
4. What can you offer that will sell your event as a must-attend function, and are there added extras that no other company can deliver for your audience segment?

B2B and B2C events have different requirements and should be formatted and shaped accordingly. Businesses and their representatives who rely on your information and content to make important buying decisions will have a greater need for exact detail.

The communications and content with your actual event contributors are also paramount – they can include briefing packs for speakers and panellists at the event. To inform and refine your external content decisions, the use of pre-event surveys and polls is useful to direct collateral and the event schedule.

It's also important to build word-of-mouth for open registration; an appropriate segmentation strategy and targeted messaging to build 'buzz' with potential attendees and capture the must-attend reasons across email and social.

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Communication points that should stay top of mind for every mind

Clarify why your event is virtual and the immediate benefits for attendees, as well as what value the event will deliver. Anyone who registers should know why it's important they attend, what they will take away from it and how it can be used in their life or work.

Think about the kinds of content that will lift the agenda into a must-register event and don't forget your exhibitors and sponsors – they may need a separate journey and content strategy that can fully address their needs.

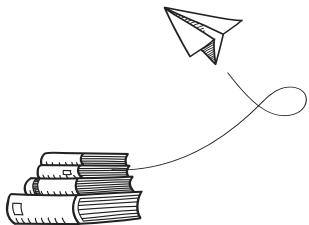
And finally, in the lead-up to the event, it's essential to produce 'how-to' guides that will answer the questions of attendees and contributors. This could be how to join the event, how to access the help-desk, who to contact in case of a query and even guides on the best ways to network online.



The best way to start exploring how we can really help you is to have a conversation.

If you need strategy, logistics and content production for your virtual event, talk to Editions Financial about how we can build you a support package.

If you'd like an informal discussion with one of our content strategists, simply give us a call on **0203 911 7530** or email Tony.Dickson@editionsfinancial.com and we can schedule a call.



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