



How to Host a Successful Hybrid Event in the New Era | Seven Key Strategies for Event Planners

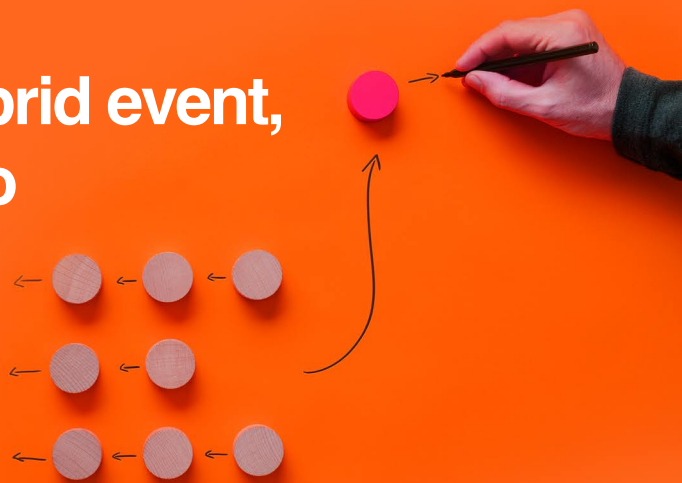


When the pandemic hit, some were quick to predict the demise of the traditional event. While this may have been an overreaction since people will always want to socialize and attend live events, digital (or virtual,) events have nevertheless come to the fore.



This development has led event planners to envision both worlds' best and think about staging hybrid events. Hybrid events allow people to attend in person and digitally. To effectively host this event, planners need to take a different approach to ensure that the hybrid event is as successful as possible.

If you're looking to host a hybrid event, leverage these seven steps to set yourself up for success.



Seven Key Steps For Successful Hybrid Events

1.

Preparation | From Goal Setting to Budgets and Understanding Audience Needs

Before you begin planning your event, you need to understand your objectives. Your entire planning process should revolve around your ultimate goal. For example, you may want to build camaraderie, improve customer satisfaction, generate revenue, or (often) blend these objectives. However, don't lose sight of your mission while you plan all the other elements.



As you design your budget, take into account elements that may be unique to the hybrid experience. You need to include your digital event platform, streaming services, video production, and a good broadband connection, for example.



Above all else, you need to realize that while this may be essentially one event “on the ground,” you will need to create two separate experiences. This requires a delicate balance. You want to engage all of your attendees without favoring one audience over the other.



2.

Building Expectation | Early Interaction Helps Preparation

Hybrid events offer flexibility and allow your attendees to choose their form of participation. Tell your prospects that you will be running a hybrid (rather than a traditional) event, and give them as much information as possible ahead of time.



For example, share details about the agenda and daily schedule. This information will allow people to plan and decide whether they will attend in person or virtually.



This type of preparation can help you tailor your content and plan the best approach for your remote group of attendees.

Remember, while this type of event will undoubtedly foster a shared experience, you may need to create separate content and deliverables for your digital audience.



3.

Crafting the Experience | Tailoring Your Approach

When organizing an “in-person” event, you try to ensure that you do not waste a moment from the time that your attendees arrive until the time that they leave. For example, during a lull between two sessions, you may direct the live attendees to a breakout room to encourage networking and close interaction. It would be best if you recreated this sense of belonging, continuity, and even urgency among your remote attendees too.

Craft the online experience carefully. Set up a chat facility so that those at home can interact with each other and leverage a virtual MC to navigate attendees through breaks.



Additionally, encourage online attendees to interact by voting, filling in polls, or answering pointed questions related to the content. Solicit feedback and engage with your virtual audience as often as you do with your live audience.

While you may make a lot of your served content downloadable for those who cannot attend in person, think about sending a box of goodies to their home address in advance of the event. If you intend to give an item to your live attendees to spur conversation or as a crucial part of your deliverables, think about sending this out in the mail as well. Build some more anticipation with a “not to be opened until the event” label..



Always acknowledge your digital (or virtual) attendees and do not treat them as an afterthought. You need to emphasize this point at every stage of your planning, as it can be easy to get carried away with the excitement or ambiance in the room. Don't forget about the rest of your audience behind that tiny video camera lens.

4.

Scheduling | Timing Is Everything

Your live audience will likely be captive. They expect you to guide them and will, by and large, stay engaged and stick to the schedule. However, you cannot expect your virtual audience to behave the same way. While they may be enthusiastic and desire to engage, they may not consider your content essential due to other distractions from their live environment.

Remember, most of your attendees may be watching their event from home, and there may be other family members around. You will need to be aware of this and keep your schedule as snappy as possible. Generally speaking, you will want to shorten the hybrid part of your program, with more focused sessions designed to keep the attention level up.

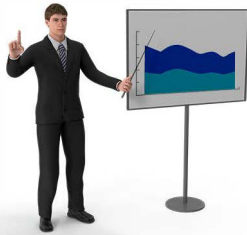


Schedule the meat of your activity during traditional working hours. For example, while you may well be able to start your live event with a breakfast meeting and run into “peak hour” in the evening, you are not likely to capture or retain your hybrid audience during those times. Consequently, reserve those early and late sessions at the main event for networking or traditional meals.

5.

Beware the Content Trap | One Type Doesn't Fit All

When thinking about your content message, focus on the mode of delivery. In particular, you may need to craft a different experience for your digital attendees during some parts of the event. For example, a 2-hour live presentation may work well in person.



But, that may be too long for digital attendees to watch from home. To create a unique experience, consider breaking the 2-hour session into 4, 30-minute sessions for digital attendees with breaks in between. You can even create custom visuals for digital attendees to diversify what they see on screen.

A keynote speaker can deliver their message to both live and remote audiences effectively - especially with creative camera work at your end. However, your digital attendees may feel lost and may drift away if you try to include them in some form of breakout networking session.



During this part of your event, consider delivering an entirely different content style to your remote people. Bring in a subject matter expert to talk directly to this audience and use your chat and interactive tools to foster engagement among your at-home audience.

In addition, ensure that all of your crucial content is recorded and is made available on demand. Some of your digital attendees may encounter distractions or may be simply unable to attend at the given hour. You must ensure that they do not miss out and can access the material later at their convenience.

6.

Masters of Ceremony | Control & Conquer

You will need at least two people to act as masters of the ceremony. They'll need to coordinate well and be flexible to make adjustments on the fly.



This element can be difficult to coordinate, as you will need to moderate both your on-site and at-home audience independently. But, with a clear agenda and strong communication channels, you can keep things moving along smoothly.

If you need to make any changes to the agenda, update both masters of the ceremony to ensure both are on the same page. In addition, ask both of these individuals to solicit feedback from their part of the audience. This will help you tailor delivery for the rest of the event and can be valuable intelligence for the future.

7.

The Best Use Of Technology | Making it Easier

Although the concept of the hybrid event is still relatively new, technology has been developed to help you succeed as an event organizer. Companies like eShow can provide professional tools, web-based solutions, and advice to help manage the hybrid event from start to finish

These tools and solutions are available under one umbrella, including the Virtual Event Management platform, which can help with many elements, from attendee registration to certification management. The platform can handle live sessions, on demand delivery, interactive polls, video chats, and more with no maximum cap on attendees. The system can also gather valuable data to help you with post-event analysis and future planning.





Conclusion - Crafting Your Masterpiece

Hybrid events are here to stay. To make the most of them, you need to take a different approach throughout the planning process to keep your attendees engaged no matter where they are. Take advantage of the services provided by eShow to make your job a lot easier and to receive valuable, post-event intelligence to make the next job even more successful. When you pay attention to the details and remember these seven key steps, you will ensure that all of your event attendees have a memorable time.

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