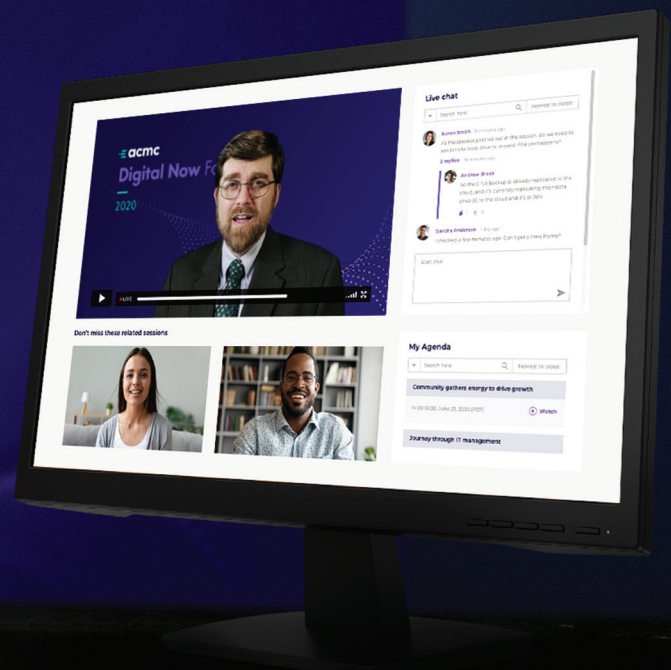# Virtual Event Toolkit

How to take your events online

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Shifting your events to the digital space can help you quickly adapt to changing conditions and audience preferences. Virtual meetings, events, and conferences can help you reach a larger audience, engage people no matter where they're physically located, build loyalty, and ultimately have a positive effect on your bottom line.

If you're not sure how to make the move to an online event, this guide will help you break down the process into manageable phases. We'll also point out some resources you likely already have available to support your online transition efforts.

RIGHT NOW — GETTING STARTED

Chances are, transitioning an in-person event to something hosted online is easier than you think. Much of what you need to get started, you probably already have.

- Do you have a compelling pitch for your event and your company, and do you have an engaging story to tell?
- Do you have a good idea of who your most promising prospects are?
- Do you have some great content to share that can move these prospects toward a purchase decision?
- Do you have a place or places online where your audience can experience your story (such as social media channels or discussion boards)?
- Do you already have a platform or a strategy in place for how your company holds online events?

Whether you already have one, some, or even none of these items already available, getting the word out and in front of your key audiences in a non-traditional way is easier than you think, especially in a time where non-traditional and disruptive is the new norm.

Note that we said "key" audiences here. One thing to keep in mind is that, just like any other communication activity, you want to keep your event topic and promotion strategic and targeted. If your target audience is too broad, you'll have a hard time staying relevant to any one specific audience segment. Remember, the more you try to talk to everyone, the less likely you are to be heard by anyone.

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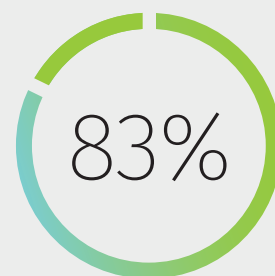
Meeting planners requiring more virtual event platforms.*

Source: Pulse Survey
Northstar Meetings Group
user survey | May 6, 2020

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR VIRTUAL EVENT PLANNING

Do's	Don'ts
Do determine the core messages of what and how you need to communicate with your audiences. Focus on what you MUST achieve versus what might be nice-to-have features.	**Don't** start out by overthinking: You don't need to build your ideal virtual event right off the bat, or you risk over-scoping while you're still learning. Get some initial experience and meet your immediate needs to present to your key audiences.
Do make sure your content is "snackable" (i.e., brief and engaging) given the nature of attention spans and memorability in an online world.	**Don't** do a lift-and-shift of existing content without considering its suitability for an online presentation format.
Do have support staff available to take advantage of the key features of enhanced digital events. The best run events require support to manage the presenters, content, and delivery.	**Don't** expect that your speakers can sign on to your platform just a few minutes in advance of your broadcast and wing it.
Do present "sticky" information that can create ongoing subscribers and attendees given the on-demand nature and lack of geographic restrictions in the digital space.	**Don't** think of your event content as a one-and-done offering.

THE PATH TO ONLINE EVENT TRANSFORMATION

When planning out how to shift, grow, or change your event experience approach, there are several steps to consider in light of your immediate challenges as well as your long-term goals.

1 The strategy and story
What separates your event from other events?

2 The broadcast environment
How will your team of experts engage with the event?

3 The delivery
How will you host and deliver your event?

4 The community
Who are you inviting and how will you engage them?

5 The performance
How will you measure the event's success?

DEFINING DIFFERENT ONLINE EVENT TYPES

Virtual meetings, webinar platforms, collaboration platforms, and virtual event platforms are different things with different advantages and limitations depending on your needs:

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Virtual meetings combine voice, chat, webcam, and screen-sharing between multiple participants. Unless you specifically choose otherwise, all participants have a chance to speak, share their screen, and otherwise contribute to the discussion. There is generally a limit to the number of attendees, which varies by platform. Some common tools for virtual meetings include Zoom, Skype, and GoToMeeting.

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Webinar platforms provide a more one-directional method of communication. These are used mainly for lecture-style presentations with varying degrees of audience participation. These usually have a cap on the number of presenters who can speak but generally allow for more attendees than a virtual meeting can host. Some webinar platform examples are GoToWebinar, ClickMeeting, Webex, and WebinarJam.

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Collaboration platforms are more feature-rich and ideal for groups and teams needing to share structured workspaces, detailed threaded discussions, and file management as well as deliver virtual meetings. These tools tend to be gated within an organization, with limited ability to include outside participants. These are tools like Microsoft Teams and Slack.

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Virtual event platforms are solutions optimized to deliver a more engaging and connected experience throughout all potential touchpoints in the audience journey. They provide a hybrid approach with unique integrated features bridging live-streaming, video-on-demand, chat and forums, social integration, asset management, and calendaring.

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WHAT'S NEXT — MOVING FORWARD AND BEYOND

Whether you're looking for a temporary or permanent transition to a digital-first event strategy, and regardless of what industry you're in, every business will need to and should evaluate longer-term solutions to stay connected with customers. The scale and scope of what you need can vary significantly.

Here are some considerations you'll need to decide on as part of a longer-term event strategy:

- What successes and lessons learned from previous events can feed into future event planning?
- How can the content created for your digital events be captured, repurposed, and shared (streaming or recorded video presentations, downloadable event resources, attendee feedback, etc.)?

- Where can you build a community for your followers and support 365-day, ongoing conversations?
- How will you integrate the necessary marketing and sales automation tools to deliver long-term event ROI?

By evolving your event strategy, you're taking critical steps to advance your overall marketing and sales strategy. This level of step-change can bring significant benefits to your brand through broadened awareness and greater though-leadership and influence, ultimately driving sales and accelerating conversions.

LET US HELP

We hope this Virtual Event Toolkit helps to guide your approach and planning for your next event. We'd love to talk about your needs and goals, and how Adcetera can help you meet them. Contact us directly to get started: email hello@adcetera.com or call our Houston office: 713.522.8006.