



MEETINGS & EVENTS



8 Key Considerations To Create Engaging Virtual And Hybrid Meetings And Events Experiences

Whilst nothing compares to face-to-face interaction, virtual and hybrid meetings and events are an effective way to reach a broad audience and maximize your investment - At the same time, they provide a platform to engage, inform, and inspire attendees.

Whether this is with employees, customers, partners or an industry in general, it is important to include virtual and hybrid into your long-term strategy.

Whilst these types of events certainly aren't a new concept, companies are having to quickly adapt to give their audience as great of an experience as a face-to-face meeting or event through live streamed or on-demand content.

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Virtual And Hybrid Meetings And Events Formats

When considering your meeting or event format, your goals, budget, and timeline will help determine which will work best.

It is important to think about the type of meeting or event you are planning and if it is suitable to be delivered in a virtual or hybrid environment. Most meetings and events can be designed or adapted but there are some high touch events that are less suitable like incentive travel and retreats, which would ideally be face-to-face.

Virtual only events require the least effort and time as there is less interaction. Hybrid meetings require more coordination and AV support. And hybrid multi hub meetings require the most resources as there are more variables to consider.

A virtual meeting is a good option when you want to inform, educate, engage or inspire. In contrast, face-to-face only meetings may be better if the meeting sponsor or planner wants to discuss sensitive issues and view the attendees' body language or reactions, build team camaraderie at the beginning of a project, or manage multiple cultural norms with some countries that may not be receptive to virtual meetings.

VIRTUAL ONLY

All attendees tune in virtually

Examples: Investor calls, trainings and seminars



HYBRID

Some attendees in person, others attend virtually

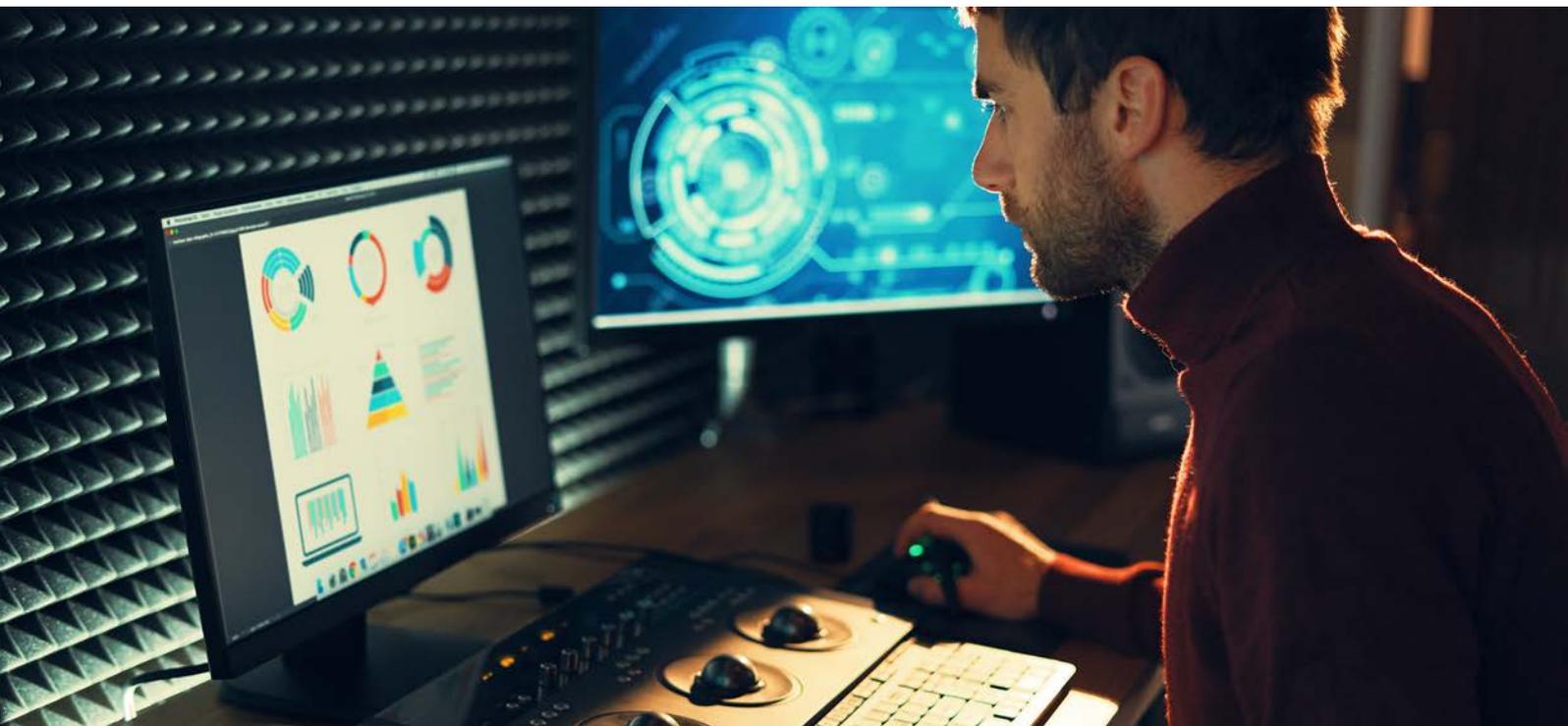
Examples: Conferences, user or client meetings



HYBRID MULTI "HUB"

Attendees gather face-to-face in geographically dispersed venues that are connected by technology

Examples: Town halls, international conferences



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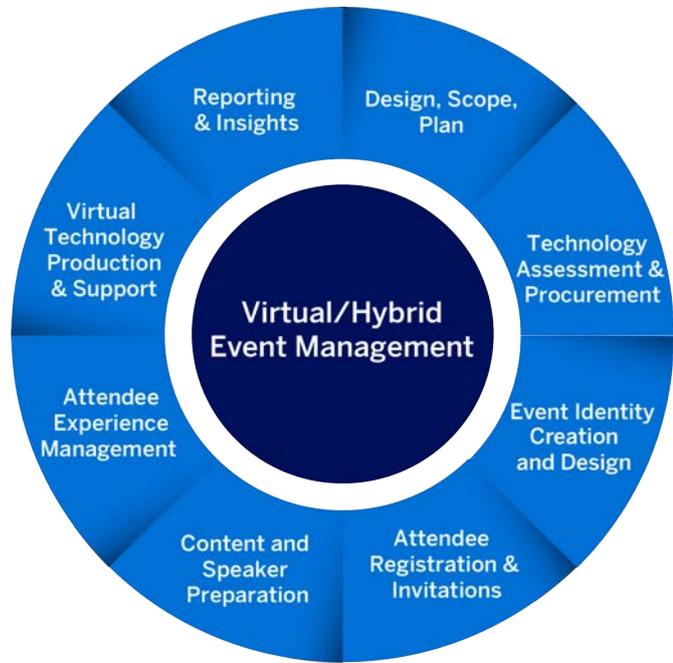
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8 Key Considerations

So how can you move your physical meeting or event to a digital version? Just like planning a face-to-face meeting, virtual meetings and events design requires thoughtful consideration.

All the creativity that meeting planners bring to face-to-face meetings and events can be repackaged in a virtual environment, albeit, in different ways.

Here are the 8 event components we recommend you should consider within the end-to-end lifecycle of the meeting or event, to create engaging experiences for your virtual attendees.



1. PROGRAM DESIGN, SCOPE, AND PLAN

the right meeting experience that is in line with your goals, meetings policies, and compliance processes.

2. CONDUCT TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND PROCUREMENT

to determine solutions needed to achieve your goals.

3. CREATE YOUR EVENT IDENTITY AND DESIGN

that is in line with your strategy, which can then be applied to all supporting content and communications.

4. CREATE ATTENDEE REGISTRATION AND INVITATIONS

to maximize and track attendance whilst giving your audience a far greater digital experience.

5. ENSURE CONTENT AND SPEAKER PREPARATION

with script consultation well in advance for seamless execution and delivery.

6. ENSURE VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTION AND SUPPORT

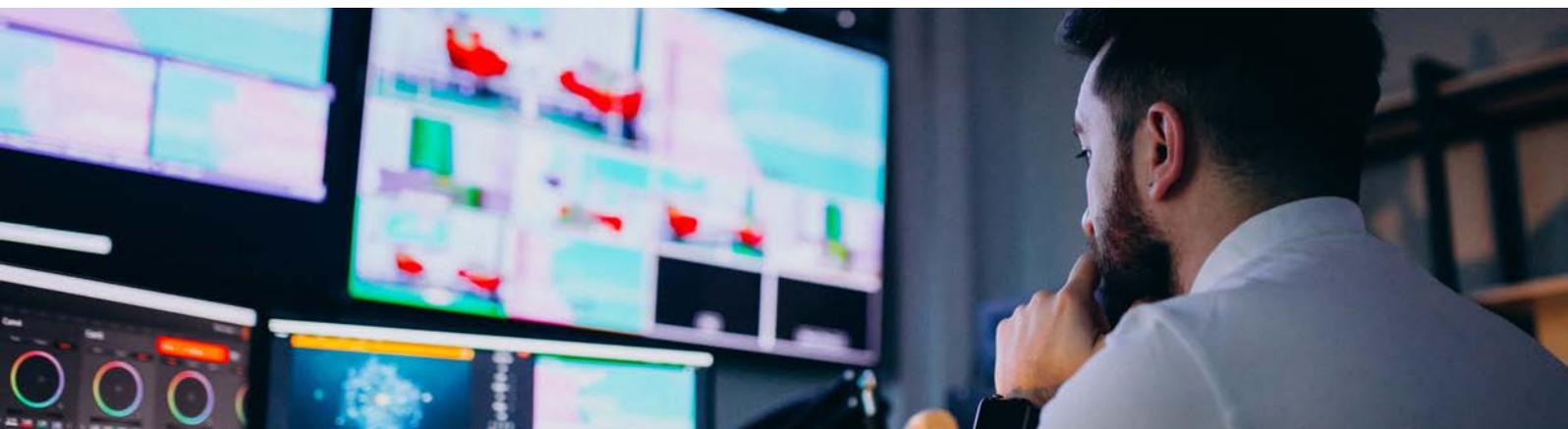
to prevent and manage A/V challenges so you and your teams can stay focused on the objectives of the event.

7. MANAGE THE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

to make your virtual/hybrid event as convenient, engaging, and personalized as possible.

8. MAXIMIZE RESULTS

by following up with your audience - and use reporting and insights to drive continuous program improvements.



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PROGRAM DESIGN, SCOPE AND PLAN

Firstly, you should design, scope, and plan the right meeting experience that is in line with your goals, meetings policies, and compliance processes.

Identify Your Objectives, Expected Outcomes And Measures Of Success

Proving a return on investment is just as important for a virtual or hybrid meeting as it is for in-person ones. Before planning the meeting, identify the expected outcomes and measurements that will prove that the meeting achieved its goals.

You must ask yourself what do you want to achieve? What behaviours do you expect after the event? Take time to think through the audience personas. What key learnings do you want them to take away and how does this translate to a virtual meeting or event?

Determine Your Budget

Determining your budget will help you understand what you will be able to achieve based on your vision. The more complex your event program, generally, the greater the cost. This will help you make important decisions early on in terms of expectations.

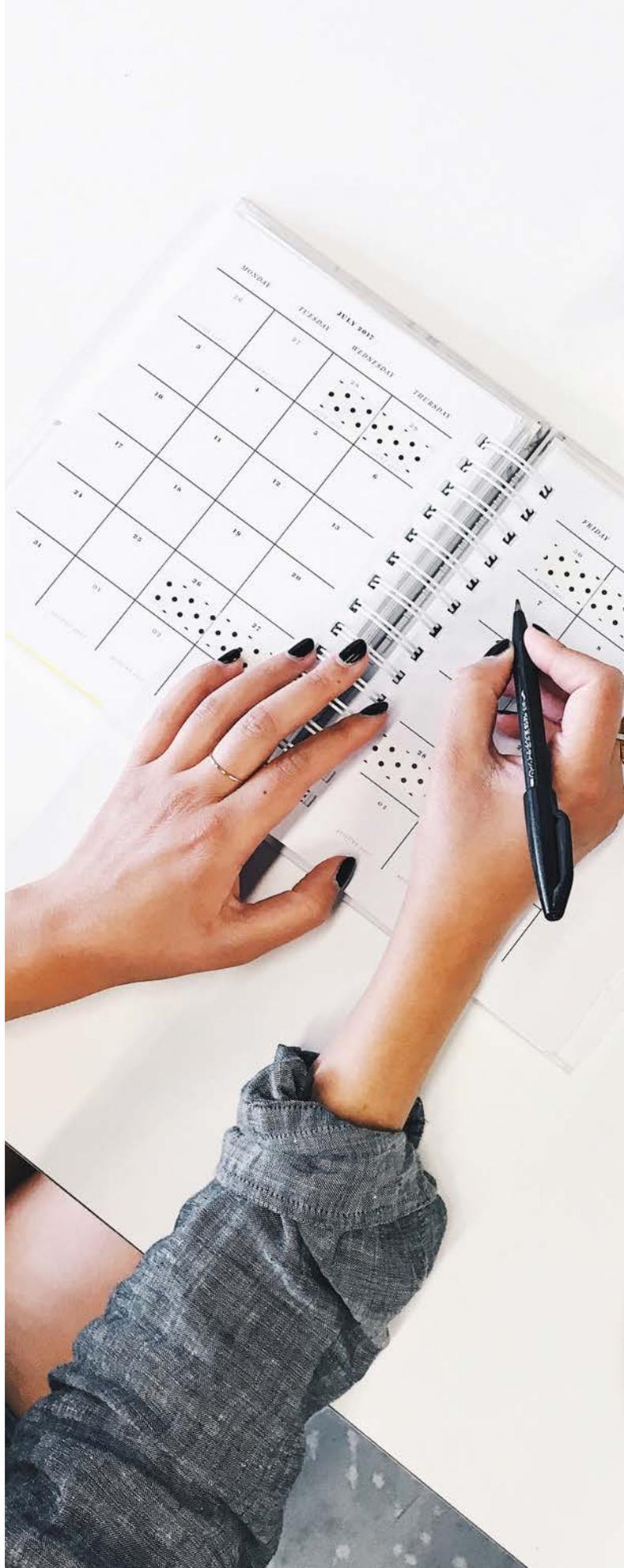
Create Content Strategy

A meeting's content and messaging are always the most important component regardless of in-person or virtual events. Think through these questions for your event: Why is this content important? Why does it matter? Is the content timely? Consider if your event program should include multiple agenda items or components. You must have a clear content strategy outlined based on the full event program and allow adequate time to build this!

Be Decisive With Your Event Format

The type of event and content will help inform the format of each of your sessions. Determine if it will be delivered as an informal fireside chat, a 1-1 interview, a solo presenter, a panel session or a live streamed conference stage set-up? The format may also determine how you engage your audience and how you treat the content, so being decisive early on means a more successful outcome.

Determine how long the event will be based on the relevance of the content to the audience. Knowing your audience will be key here - for example, if these are employees, you might be able to capture their attention for a longer period of time. Either way, for events with a full program, over multiple days, you should include



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break-out sessions and opportunities to step away from the computer.

If you introduce a live studio set up for the plenary host and keynote, this can also create a high production value experience.

Identify Speaker(s)

Since virtual meetings are usually less expensive than in-person ones, you might be able to invest more in phenomenal speakers. With any format you chose, it is important that your speakers are engaging to capture and retain the interest of the audience, as you won't have all the bells and whistles of a live event with staging, sound effects or visuals etc

Schedule Your Event

Make sure you schedule your event at a suitable time for your target audience taking into consideration the different time zones. You should allow adequate time for content development and preparation according to your event programme.

TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND PROCUREMENT

Technology assessment and procurement is a critical component of this process to determine solutions needed to achieve your goals. You can either use existing technology or deploy new solutions aligned with your meeting goals and budget.

Choose The Right Platform For Your Requirements

There are a wealth of platforms that can host virtual and hybrid meetings. It's important to select a platform that is aligned with your goals. Some platforms offer an expansive feature list that might be unnecessary if your meeting's goal is to educate and measure your attendee's comprehension. Alternately, if your goal is to inspire and deliver an unforgettable experience, you'll want to make sure the platform and services can enable that wow factor. Some platforms can support content such as videos better than others, so do your research or work with an agency to carefully evaluate your options before deploying a platform that may not have all the components or way more than you require.

Your content, timeline, network infrastructure, and budget all play into your choice.

Bandwidth and internet connectivity are critical - so make sure you conduct testing to avoid technical glitches and have a contingency plan in case of any issues!

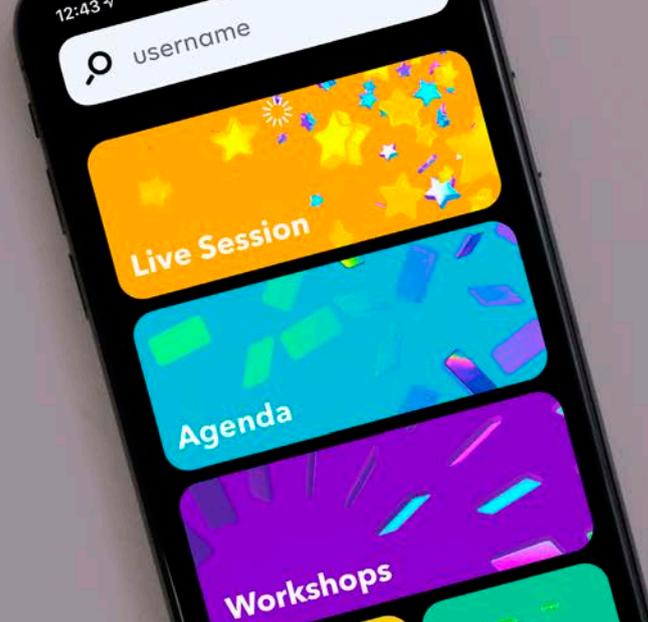
Determine If Live-Stream Or On-Demand

Decide whether you will live-stream or create on-demand content. Live streamed or on-demand content create two entirely different experiences. On-demand allows for the audience to consume the content at a time that fits with their busy schedule but limits engagement. Live streaming, on the other hand, can create greater engagement with viewers not wanting to miss content, but doesn't allow for post-production enhancements.



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EVENT IDENTITY AND DESIGN

Create an event identity that is in line with your strategy and apply to all supporting content and communications.

Get Creative With A Theme And Visual Identity

As with an in-person event, we recommend creating a theme and visual identity that is in line with your strategy. You can then apply the event identity across all supporting content and communications from your pre-event marketing, content within the event and any post event follow up or material shared.

Virtual and hybrid meetings don't have to mean an overload of PowerPoint - assess where you can be more creative with your content. From weaving in videos and music to impactful graphic design, there are various ways to make the digital event more visually appealing.

Consider that some portion of your audience may be viewing your event on mobile devices so graphics also need to be adapted for this format. Think about your slide content with limited text, and use clear, large graphics. If you are using animations, confirm that the webcast platform you are using can accommodate them.

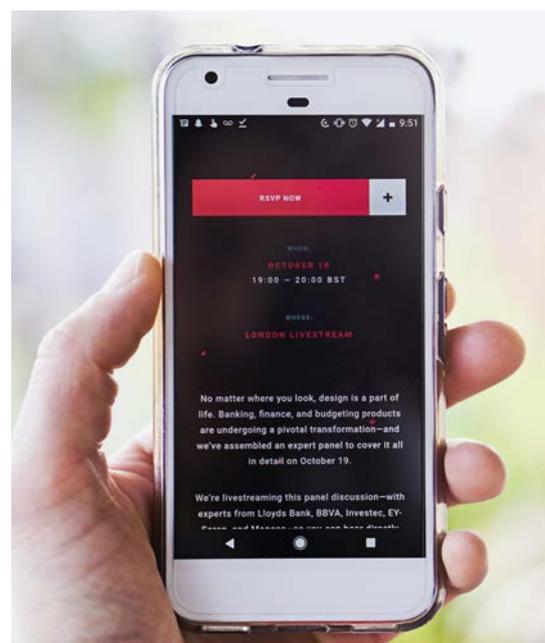
ATTENDEE REGISTRATION AND COMMUNICATION

Establish the journey the attendee will experience throughout the lifecycle of the event and determine touchpoints.

Map The Attendees Journey Across All Touchpoints

Think about the attendee journey throughout the lifecycle of the event and determine touchpoints. There should be no difference in this process than if it were a live event. Analyse what would have made your audience excited about attending the event and work out how this can be replicated virtually.

By mapping out every channel throughout the journey to engage with the audience, whether this is through marketing of the event, to building the event website or managing the invitation and registration process, you'll be able to maximise and track attendance whilst giving your audience a far greater digital experience.



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CONTENT AND SPEAKER PREPARATION

Ensure content and speaker prep for seamless execution and delivery.

Create Engaging Content And Prepare Speakers

Ensure your content is created and speakers are fully prepped at least three weeks in advance for seamless execution and delivery.

We suggest script management and slide content support prior to the event, for your speakers to rehearse and ensure they are comfortable presenting in a virtual environment.

It is important to know your content - like with any event, you are likely to receive questions which you will need to be prepared to answer!

VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTION AND SUPPORT

Ensure technical support to prevent and manage A/V challenges so you and your teams can stay focused on the content.

Ensure Technical Knowledge And Delivery

It is important to assign someone to provide technical support for the event to prevent and manage A/V challenges, so you and your teams can stay focused on the objectives of the event.

I'm sure we've all sat on video conferences where there have been multiple tech glitches. Not only does it make for a less engaging experience, it can also unsettle and distract the presenters. Whilst some technical glitches can't be overcome, by having multiple run-throughs prior to the meeting or event will help iron out any possible issues. Assess where tech issues may happen, for example, videos not playing, participants not on mute, polls not functioning, and build in back-up solutions for overcoming them.

Have Multiple Run-Throughs

At least a week before the event, schedule a training with your speaker(s) on the platform to review controls for slide transitions and monitoring incoming questions. We also recommend discussing day-of logistics such as dial-in information for the speaker line and making sure the speaker uses secure audio platform. If you're hosting a live video stream, consider a dry-run so your speaker can get acclimatized to the environment.

Thirty minutes before your start time, make sure all speakers are dialled into the conference call line and sound clear. There is no such thing as too many reminders about muting/unmuting instructions, silencing phones, and closing out email and instant messaging platforms.

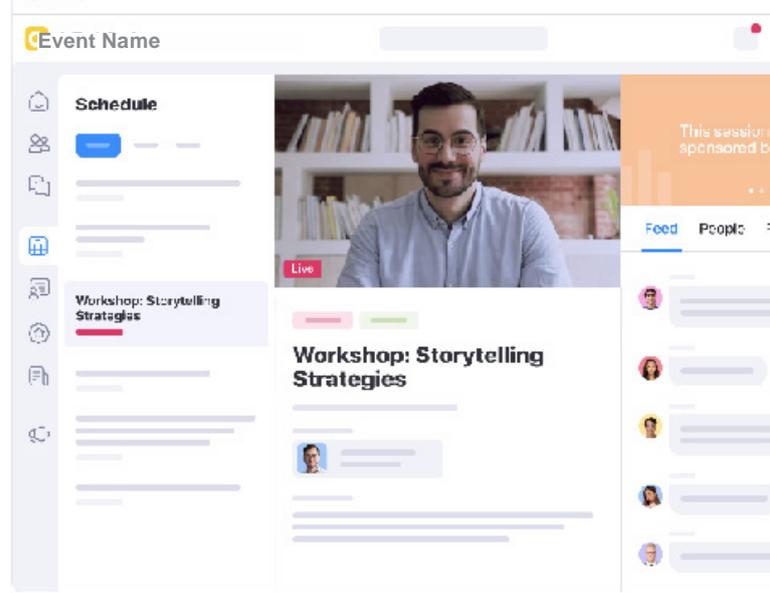
Define Clear Roles and Responsibilities

What's important, is that there are clear roles and responsibilities for managing the technology, speaking, slides, polls, gamification etc so people can remain focussed on their role and not be distracted.



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ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

Manage the attendee experience to make your virtual event as convenient, engaging, and personalized as possible.

Encourage Audience Participation And Engagement

It is important to manage the attendee experience to make your event as convenient, engaging, and personalized as possible. To make sure your message is communicated effectively and to minimise audience distraction, it is best practice to create opportunities for engagement. It is important to engage quickly at the beginning of the event as well as keeping them engaged throughout, so you don't lose people early on.

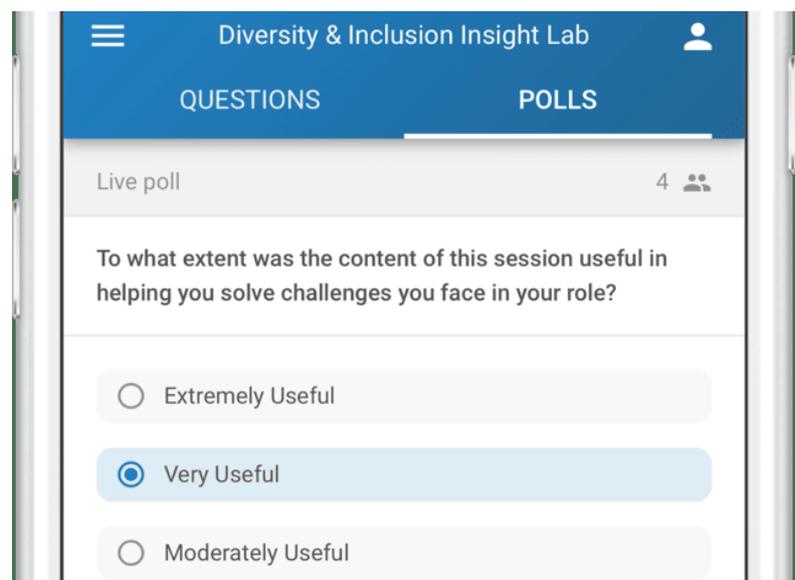
Encourage audiences to use the live chat function, submit emojis, take part in polls, and add in elements of gamification where appropriate. You may also need simultaneous translation dependent upon the language barriers and requirements

No matter the event format, mobile event apps can be a great engagement tool as many attendees are already distracted by their mobile devices. You can even distribute conference packs with gifts, food and drink and other interactive items to drive engagement throughout the program.

It is important to think about how to add the human touch to virtual meetings by consciously creating an interactive environment where attendees can participate and hear from other attendees as they would at a live event.

Solicit Feedback As A Way To Make Improvements

Poll questions are not only effective in keeping your audience engaged, but they can also give you valuable real-time feedback. We also recommend creating a survey which offers similar benefits to a poll, where you can collect valuable insight from your audience. By delivering the survey within the webcast player you'll see a greater response rate than alternatives that need to be emailed separately after the event. Keep your survey brief and only include questions with actionable responses.



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MAXIMIZING RESULTS

Follow up with your audience. Measure and communicate the value of your events and incorporate attendee feedback into your program for continuous improvement.

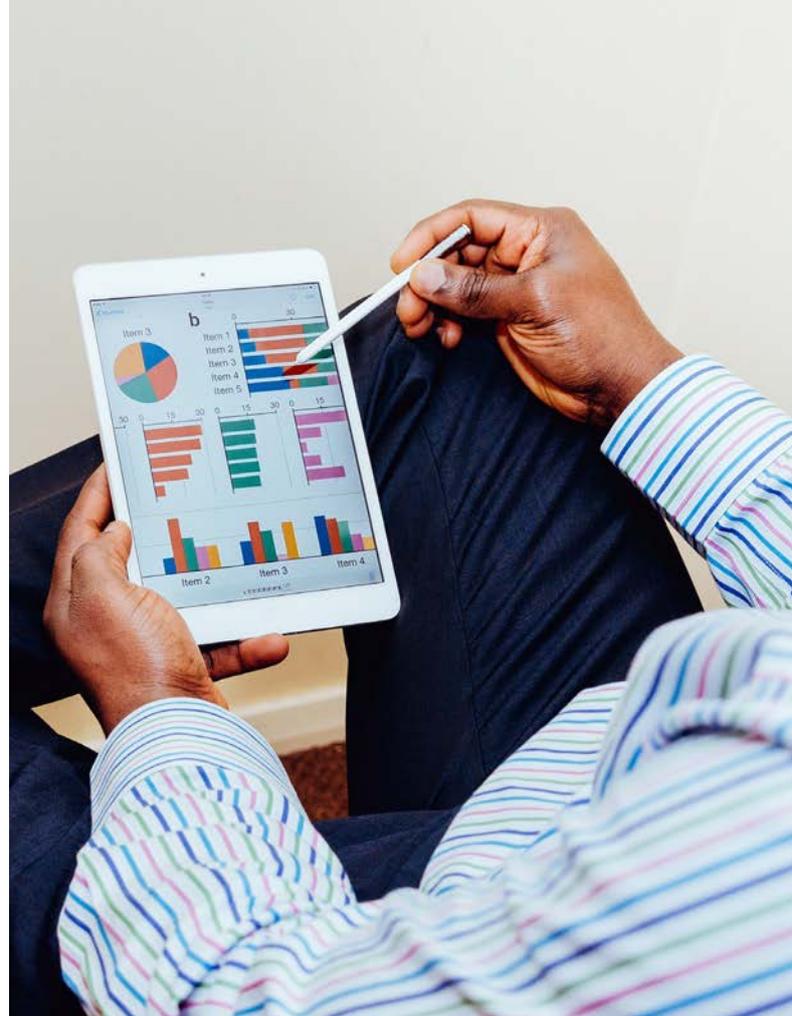
Stay Connected With Your Audience

We recommend deploying follow-up emails as soon as possible after the event, ideally within two days, while the content is still fresh in the minds of your audience.

You can also use this opportunity to distribute a recording to your wider target audience and promote more aggressively. Continue to spread the word and you'll pick up many more on demand attendees.

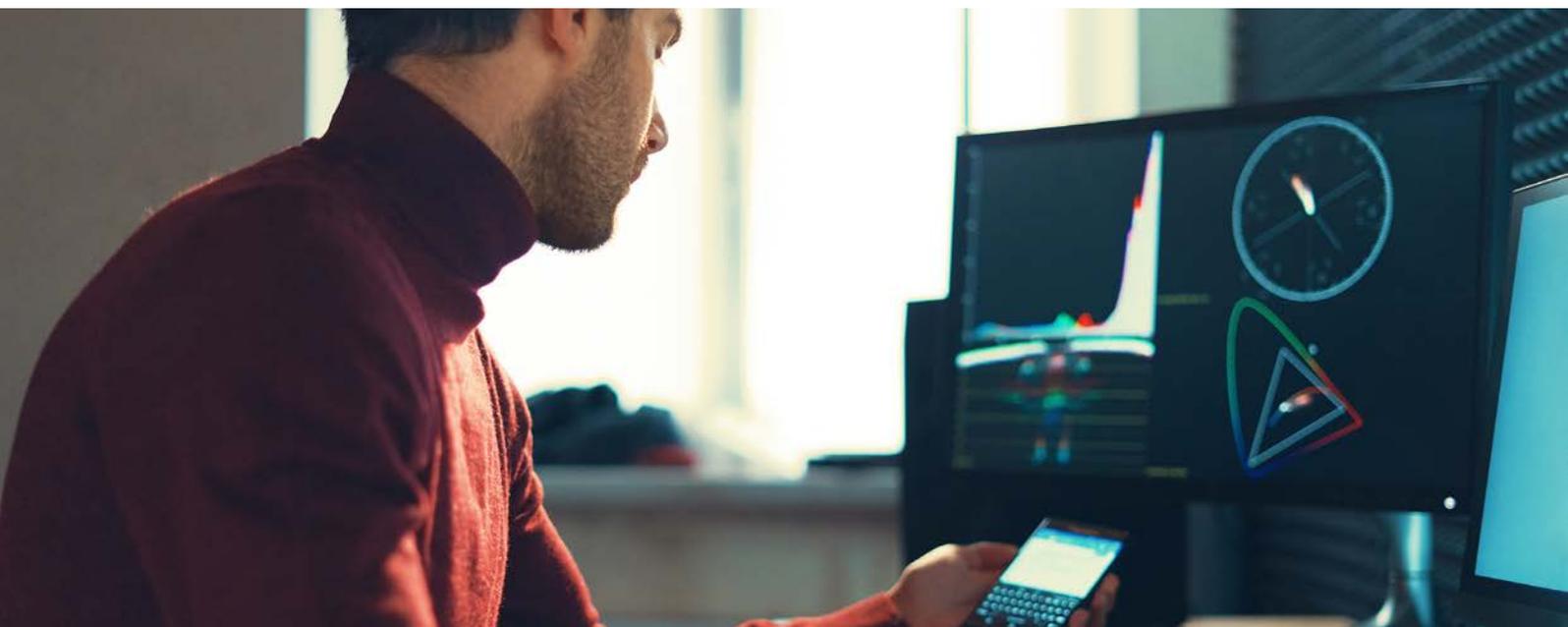
Analyze Reporting And Gain Insights

You have a lot of data at your fingertips—where do you start? Review your registration-to-attendee ratio and then review reports from your polls, surveys, and inbound questions to see how well viewers were engaged. Use the reporting and insights to help you measure and communicate the value of your virtual events and incorporate attendee feedback into your program for continuous improvement.



Summary

It is important to think about virtual or hybrid meetings and events as you would any live event. Technology is an integral part but certainly not the only consideration. Combining expert knowledge, creativity, and technology, will help you create a truly integrated and engaging experience for your virtual and hybrid attendees.



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How Can We Help?

At American Express Meetings & Events, we design experiences that matter by helping to engage, inform and inspire your attendees wherever they are.

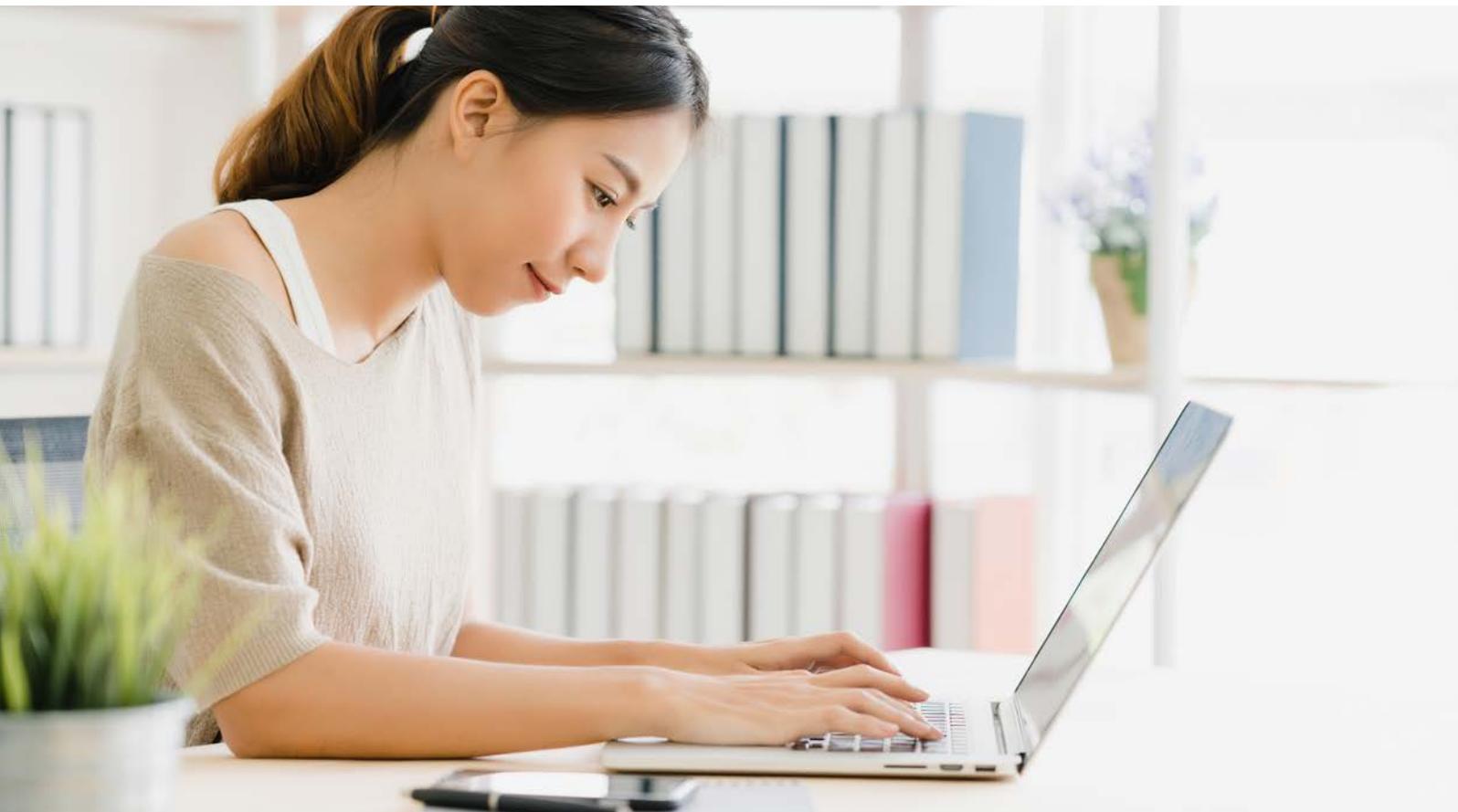
We have the team, technology expertise, and supplier network to help you achieve your virtual and hybrid meetings and events goals utilizing proven methodology along the way. We will consult with you across every component of the end-to-end meetings and events lifecycle, then manage your program to ensure a seamless experience for your attendees with immediate and lasting impact.

Flexible service offering and solutions

We can help transform your single meeting or event, or entire program to a more digital or hybrid solution as part of your short or long-term strategy. By combining expert knowledge, creativity, and technology, we will help you create a truly integrated and engaging experience through the following services:

- **Program design, scope and plan**
- **Technology assessment and procurement**
- **Event identity and design**
- **Attendee registration and invitations**
- **Content and speaker preparation**
- **Virtual production and support**
- **Attendee experience**
- **Reporting and insights**

To find out how we can help transform your meetings and events into virtual and hybrid experiences, please contact one of our team.



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