



•GTR™

Ultimate Virtual Event Guide

Events are hard, we make them simple.



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Refreshing Your Virtual Event Planning and Production

Our guide to getting it all done.



What stands out in your first year of virtual events?

Was it trading boarding passes for zoom links?
Or booking a hard-to-get keynote speaker who is happier to speak at home than to travel?

Since the end of 2020, you've had time to reflect on what did and did not work for your virtual events. In this digital world, it feels that changes are made immediately, but we wanted to offer you some time to regroup.

In this guide to refreshing your virtual event process and production, we have tools, ideas, and ways to reframe your challenges into opportunities.

In this section, we'll share:

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Let's hop in!



PART ONE

The Challenges of Virtual Events

(AND – MOST IMPORTANTLY – HOW TO SOLVE THEM)

Lights, camera, action! If you ever wanted a career in movies, virtual event production is pretty close. Your speakers, exhibitors, and panelists are the stars. And the event planner? You are the director and producer, leading everyone to put on a show to engage and satisfy attendees. No pressure, right?

You'll also need a seasoned and experienced crew – some folks behind the scenes keeping

the event platform humming. That's why we talked to Jen, Brad, and Trish: just a few of our experienced event specialists here at GTR™.

They've helped more companies in more industries than they can count on their hands and toes. With all this experience under their belts, they've identified the biggest challenges of taking your event virtual and exactly how to solve them.



Challenge #1: Virtual event attendees aren't engaging with my event all day

In-person events often have long, back-to-back days, buffered by 15-minute transitions, the excitement of switching up a meeting room, hitting up the snack table during a break, or chatting with a colleague. We find that virtual event novices take their existing in-person event and put it all online without altering their schedule. But imagine sitting at a computer for ten straight hours! Virtual event attendees need “white space” between sessions to absorb content, stretch, and grab a coffee.

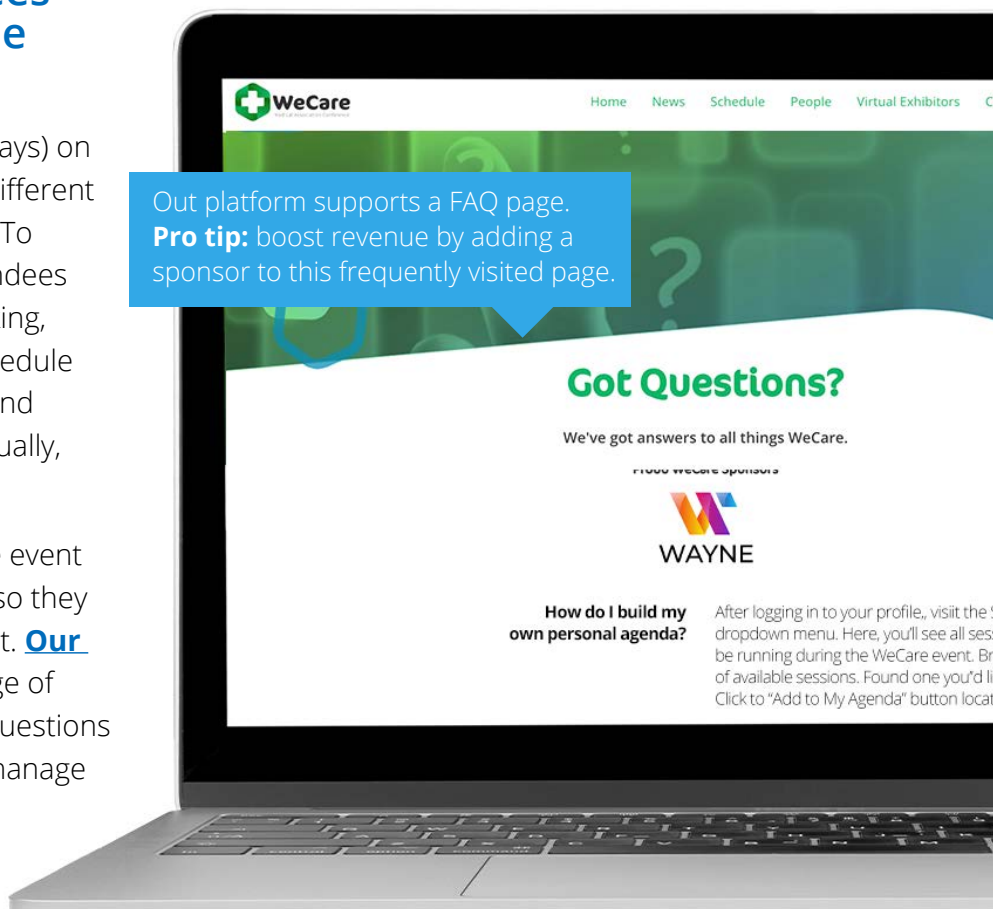
Our Tip: Event planners see higher event engagement when organizers are willing to shorten the day, reduce content, cut session time, and make content available on-demand so people can watch later.

Challenge #2: My attendees don't know how to use the virtual event platform

Even though we've all spent hours (or days) on Zoom, going to a virtual event is quite different – and many attendees don't know that. To get the most out of your platform, attendees should tap into capabilities like networking, small group breakouts, and custom schedule creation. The more familiar attendees and speakers are with what they can do virtually, the more successful your event will be.

Our Tip: Give attendees access to the event website up to a week before the event so they can get used to the platform and format. [Our virtual event platform](#) includes a page of FAQs that address the most common questions users ask. Plus, during your event, we manage an inbox that receives live questions to troubleshoot the platform so you can focus on what you do best.

Our platform supports a FAQ page.
Pro tip: boost revenue by adding a sponsor to this frequently visited page.

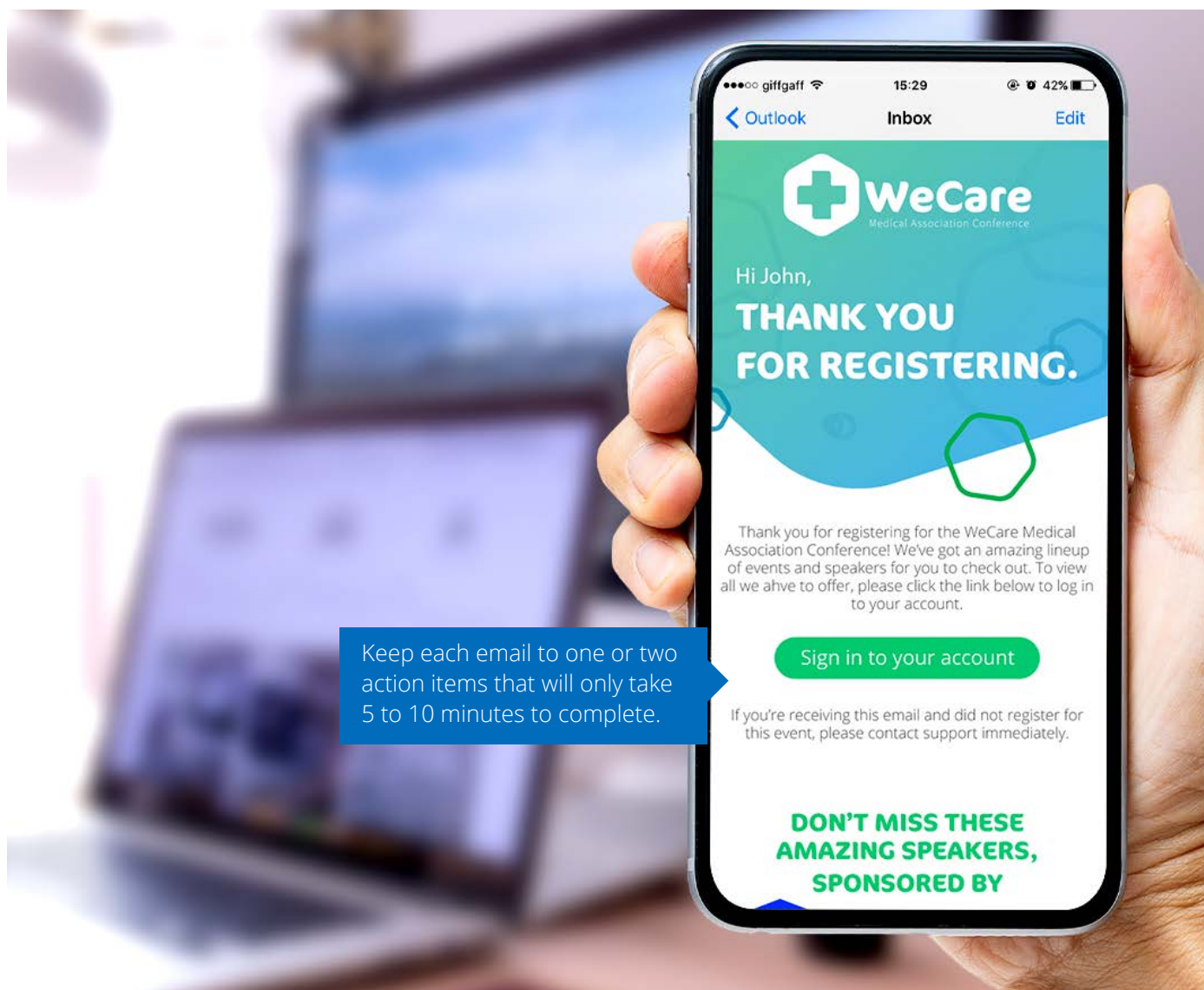


Challenge #3: I feel out of touch with my attendees

With in-person events, there are tons of logistics to help your attendees manage: flights, hotels, printing a name badge, the list goes on. Just because your event is virtual doesn't mean your attendees won't need your help. In fact, they might need it more than ever!

Our Tip: Communicate frequently. Keep in touch with your audience before, during, and after your virtual event. Specifically, please encourage them to fill out profiles, set up one-on-one meetings, and create their custom schedules on the event platform. We recommend communicating this with your attendees through clear, concise emails. How do you keep information flowing without overloading your attendees? Keep each email to one or two action items that will only take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

And don't forget about communicating after the event! When we hold in-person events, striking or tearing down an event was a milestone that meant the event was over. Don't consider your event over until you send and schedule a few follow-up emails to make sure people know content is still available if you're offering it on-demand and how people can continue to connect with the event.





Challenge #4: Uh oh...I think I'm overwhelming my attendees with communication!

Ok, it's a balance!

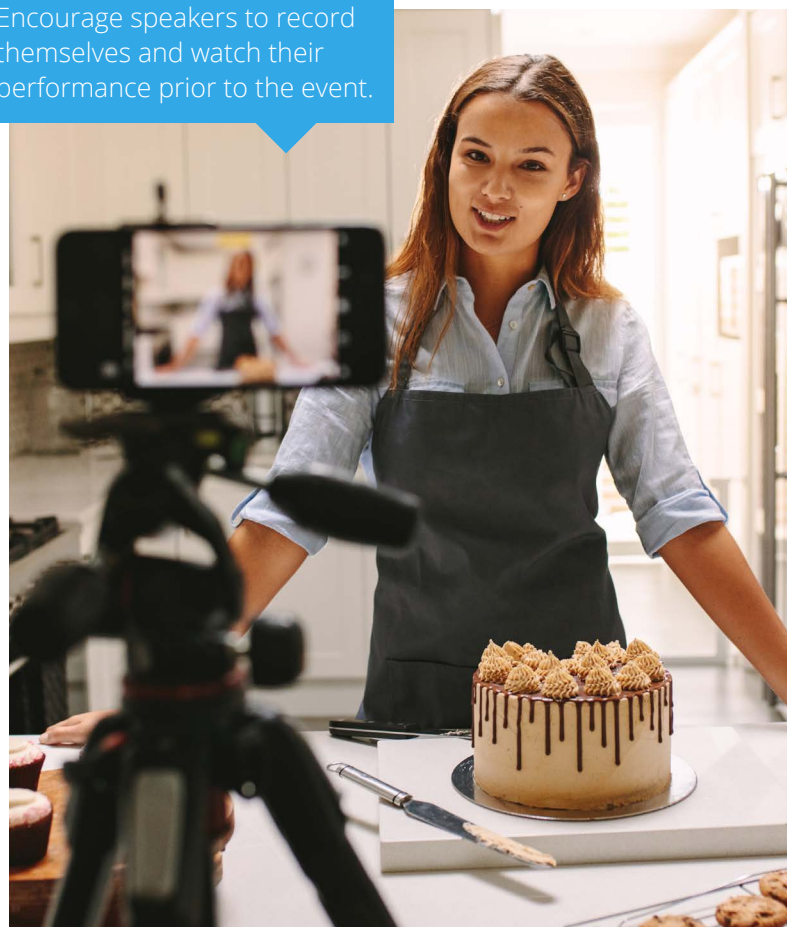
Our Tip: If you can, make generous use of video. Use quick and simple videos to help guide speakers, exhibitors, moderators, and attendees. Our experts say that the most successful events they have seen occurred when the client team created three-minute videos with straightforward tips on what to do and expect. These videos can be recorded right on zoom and don't have to be heavily edited or produced. This is also a great way to involve a well-known event MC that won't participate as much in the online format or a popular board member.

Challenge #5: I'm just not sure what to expect on the big day

Is this your first virtual event? Working with a group of speakers who seem shaky with technology? We've seen it all!

Our Tip: Dress rehearsals aren't just for in-person events. Plan to run your dress rehearsals a week out from the big day: we'd love to help you write a checklist with items to check, such as sound, live translation, lighting, screen share, and all the details that will make an event run smoothly. Encourage speakers to set up a Zoom account and record themselves to watch their performance and tweak what they need. Run through panel sessions with the moderator to get the right flow. Practicing pays enormous dividends because you can troubleshoot before you go live.

Encourage speakers to record themselves and watch their performance prior to the event.





PART TWO

Managing the Planning Process

OUR ULTIMATE VIRTUAL EVENT TIMELINE

Sometimes it feels like however early you begin your planning, there's still a time crunch a few days before the kickoff of your big event. Deadlines are missed, a speaker backs out, and you forgot to send that one confirmation email to attendees. With 25 years of experience helping event planners pull off in-person and virtual events, we've truly seen it all.

So, in the spirit of sharing some industry secrets, we've created a timeline for your next virtual event. Think of it as your ultimate virtual event planning checklist! Whether you are planning the tenth anniversary of your event, or piloting something new this year, optimize your planning process. Future you will thank you!



1 Year Out: Save the date

Time to start your event: set the date and determine how many days your event will last. Not your first time running this event? Analyze last year's data. Trying something new? Look at other events branding, marketing, schedule, speakers, and sponsors to benchmark against.

Many events have an advisory panel or event committee behind them. Consider combining your brainpower with experts who can help you organize the event.



6 Months Out: Kickoff with your partner

Time to find an event technology partner and schedule your kickoff call. Look for a partner that offers you real-person support and troubleshooting, along with an intuitive platform that your users will love. Ok, we're a little biased but, [here is our recommendation!](#)

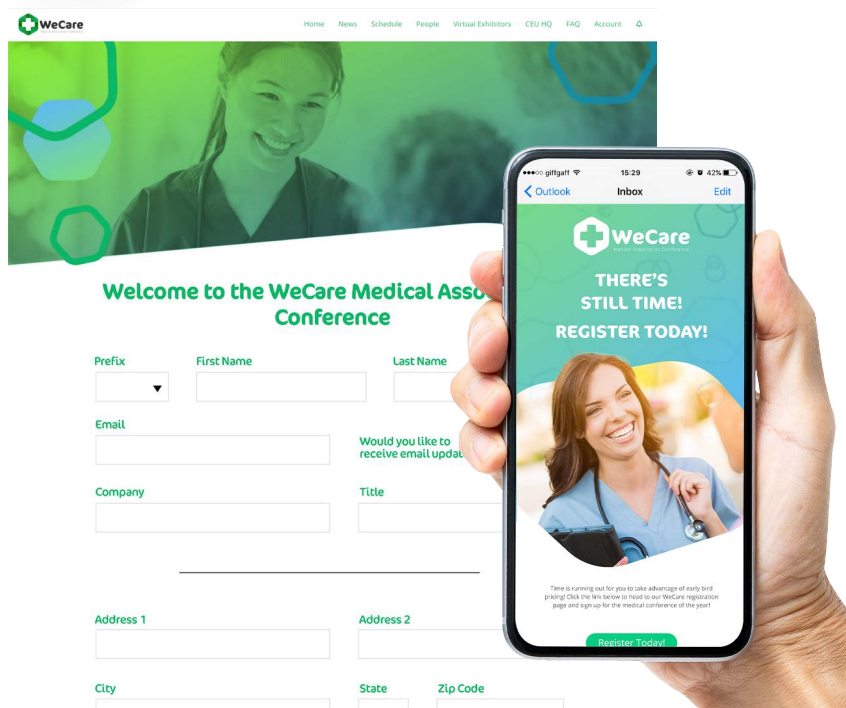


4 Months Out: Start promoting

Contact and book your speakers! Do this far in advance so you can advertise them as part of your event promotion.

Speaking of promotion, now is a great time to start creating your marketing material. Make sure your event's graphics have a cohesive brand look and feel. Don't have a marketing team on-hand? Platforms like [Canva](#) are helpful for the DIY graphic designer. Plan out the next few months of social media and email marketing now, so you're not scrambling for content later. Use platforms like [Mailchimp](#) and [Sprout Social](#) to schedule these in advance.

Create a cohesive looking brand to use across your marketing material and right in your event platform.





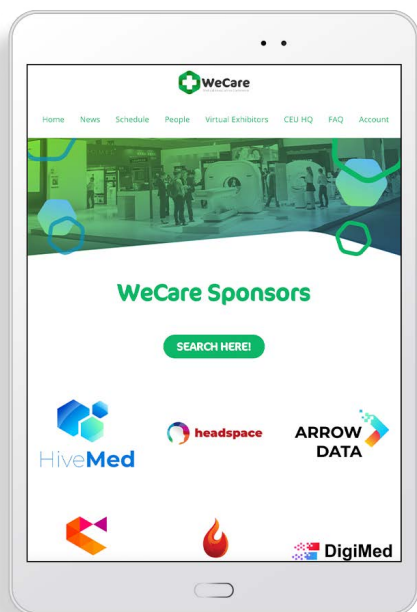
3 Months Out: Spread the word

Write your event press release and spread the word! Keep a running list of your industry press, and find publications with event calendars to join.



2 Months Out: Set an agenda

Solidify your event's agenda by planning out sessions and speakers. Remember to leave time in the schedule for small group break-outs, fun social sessions (like a virtual cocktail party), or time for attendees to meet one-on-one after a busy virtual tradeshow.



Now that you have your agenda set, monetize your sponsorship packages by identifying where to advertise gold-level sponsors. **Not sure how to organize sponsorships for a virtual event? [Grab our Virtual Event Sponsorship Guide.](#)**

Once you've developed your sponsorship packages – go get 'em! If you are coming up short on industry-specific sponsors, use your event's audience for which sponsors to source. For example, if your event is based around climate change, try targeting sponsors who have eco-conscious values that will resonate with your attendees. Still stuck? Use online tools like [SponEasy](#) or [Sponsor My Event](#).

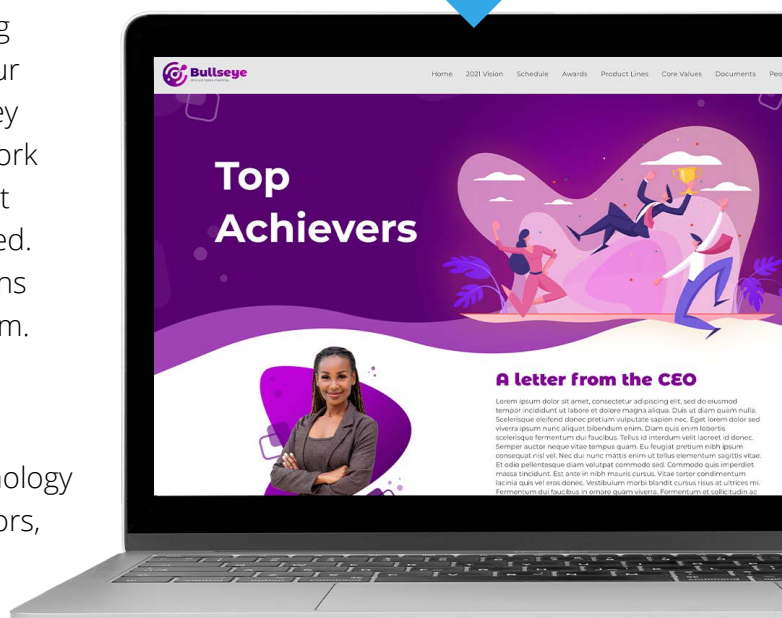


1 Month Out: Get your tech in order

Platform development. Just like securing a ballroom for a conference, getting your virtual event platform just right is the key to a smooth virtual event. At GTR, we work with our clients from kickoff to get event platforms built, customized, and polished. Now is a great time for any final additions and tweaks to your virtual event platform.

Send speakers expectations with information on how to set up any technology or pre-recordings. If you have moderators, remind them to get their discussion guides written for their panelists.

Get your unique virtual event platform built, customized and polished





3 Weeks Out: Go full-price

Every event is different, but if you've been offering early-bird pricing, now is the time to end it and go into full-priced registration mode. Without the need for travel, virtual event attendees are more likely to register at the last minute.



2 Weeks Out: Check-in with speakers

Remind your panel moderators to share their questions with panelists, so they are prepared for a healthy conversation. Check-in with event speakers, sponsors, and vendors. Now is the time to communicate with event attendees as well. Send teasers via email to let them know they are top of mind.

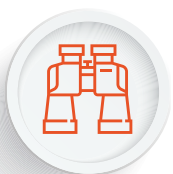


1 Week Out: Dress rehearsals

Schedule mini dress rehearsals for your speakers. Take 15 to 30 minutes to orient the speaker and test tech. If your event technology partner is as cool as we are (wink, wink), they will do a lot of the troubleshooting here!

Encourage your attendees to upload their information, schedule meetings, and organize their agenda before the event for a more productive experience. If you have a complex virtual event with tons of sessions, break-outs, a tradeshow, or more, give your attendees a sneak peek at how to use your virtual event platform. Sundance Film Festival made [a video](#) to help their attendees navigate the switch from in-person to virtual this year.





Day Of: Monitor!

Enjoy your event – but don't relax just yet! Take this time to monitor what's going on and use the flexibility of virtual events to your advantage. You might want to consider....

- Send attendees daily recap emails
- Follow up with speakers who crushed their session
- Document which sessions had low attendance
- Plan an encore session if an audience had a lot of questions



After: Evaluate & analyze

Run a full evaluation of your virtual event. Target attendees and speakers with a survey. Select a few attendees and call them to get feedback while offering an incentive like free registration for next year. With their permission, collect quotes to use in next year's marketing.



On the back end, use the power of your virtual platform to gather some important data points:

- Number of Attendees
- Social Media Reach
- Leads Captured
- Clicks on Sponsored Ads & Logos
- Tradeshow Booths Visited
- Presentation Downloads
- Attendee Engagement
- Survey Results
- Downloads after the Event Ends

How to Plan Your Virtual Event

GET YOUR TIMING RIGHT BY KEEPING THIS CHEAT SHEET HANDY

1 Year Out

Save the date! Determine your event length, analyze last year's event, gather inspiration from competitors, and build an advisory committee (if needed).



6 Months Out

Time to find an event technology partner and schedule your kickoff call.



4 Months Out

Book your speakers, create your marketing material and schedule emails and social media posts



3 Months Out

Write your event press and spread the word!



2 Months Out:

Set an agenda and find your sponsors



1 Month Out

Check in with your technology partner to put the finishing touches on your virtual event platform



3 Weeks Out

Switch from early bird pricing to full price registration



1 Week Out

Run "dress rehearsals" with speakers to test tech. Encourage attendees to upload their info to the virtual event platform



2 Weeks Out

Check in with your speakers and start communicating with event attendees who have registered



The Day Of!

Take this time to monitor what's going on, and use the flexibility of virtual events to your advantage.



After Your Event

Run a full evaluation of your virtual event. Survey attendees and speakers, and refer back to your virtual platform to gather data for next year.





PART THREE

The Value of Virtual Event Production

WHEN (AND HOW) TO STEP UP YOUR EVENT'S WOW FACTOR

When the world went virtual, we were all equal on webcams: from CEO to intern, all you had to do was find the best lighting in the house, set up, and dial in.

You may have noticed the technological shifts happening as we settled into our new virtual environments. It started when your coworker found a video background that made it look like they were dialing in from the beach. Then, you noticed ring light reflections in speakers' glasses. Even better, you may have heard differences when people donned their kid's gaming headset.

More and more, virtual events are upping their production levels with lighting, better video quality, intro and outro music, translations, on-screen graphics, even chyrons. These additional features help an event feel polished, cohesive from beginning to end and tend to decrease the likelihood of accidental bloopers getting out in front of your audience.

With the right tools and hacks, you can often boost your event's production value yourself. But bringing in a dedicated audio/visual production company will exponentially increase the quality of your event and take these technical challenges off your plate.

How do you determine the level of production value needed for your virtual event? Start with outlining your goals, audience, budget, and timeline. Consider these questions as you brainstorm:

- Is this a premier or one-of-a-kind event for your audience?
- Are you charging a premium price for attendees?
- Are you launching products that may require special staging, lighting, or demonstrations?
- Do you plan on reselling content to other target markets?
- Do you have an audience that requires multi-language or ASL translation?
- How many timezones are attendees dialing in from?

Once you've determined your production plan, make sure that your organization is on board. Whether you're going to improve production value yourself or plan to work with an audio-visual company, it'll require time and money and should always align with desired outcomes.

If you decide that stepping up your event's production value is for you, here are our hot tips:

Select the right technology platform

Don't bother investing time and money in audio-visual production if you can't stream it out to your audience correctly. Putting on a virtual event with a high production value is a team effort based on strong technology. Select a virtual event platform that is flexible and robust, has experience in virtual and live events, believes in collaboration, and offers a high level of personalized support. Your virtual event planning partner will likely be able to give you tips or connect you with highly regarded audio/visual partners.



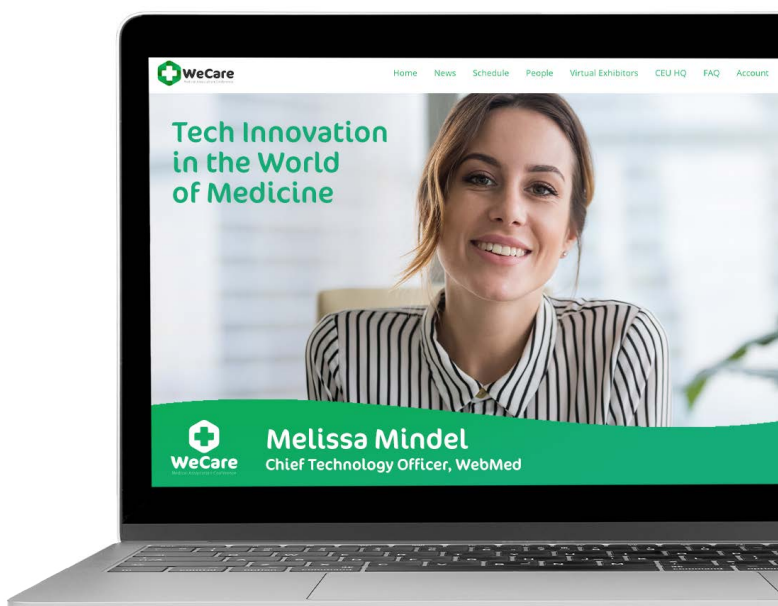
Trying to go low-budget? Send a little help to your speakers

For as little as \$150 a pop, send a kit to your MVP speakers (keynotes, masters of ceremonies, CEO, etc.) to help them go to the next level. Ring lights, webcams, and headphones can help video production look Rodeo Drive on a TJ Maxx budget. Create consistency by designing a virtual background for speakers' videos, so we see more of your event branding and less of their personal offices.



Bringing in the big guns? Find the right audio-visual production company

Think about the expectations you mapped out in your plan: if you're ready to offload this aspect of event production, bring in a professional audio/visual production company. These experts will likely be a substantial part of your virtual event budget, depending on what you need. Like your event technology partner, you'll want a flexible, collaborative company that's a team player. They should have experience with virtual events, a list of studios to film in, a graphics department for any post-production flair, and a vast understanding of technological requirements.



Focus on content delivery

Production decisions can be affected by how you plan on distributing content: live-streaming, recorded, on-demand, or combinations of all three. For on-demand delivery, audio-visual companies use post-production tools to enhance the live capture of video in order to make it different from the original. They can add chyrons, graphics, and closed captioning. Organizations that resell event content to increase their post-event revenue streams often customize the content to specific audiences.



Consider hosting your hybrid event at a recording studio that will accommodate your in-person audience, while also supporting professional audio and visual recording for your remote attendees.

Can you film on-location?

As events and venues start to open back up, [hybrid events](#) will become more popular. You may open your event to a small number of attendees, but broadcast out to a much larger virtual audience. Your A/V needs will be two-fold: in-person recording and live broadcasting. A recording studio may be the best place to pull this off, where a video production company is already set up to accommodate a live audience and recording equipment.

Don't get so focused on visuals that you forget audio

As we get used to higher quality virtual events, we have become more sensitive to sound quality. A quality control broadcast audio engineer can help ensure that your program sounds great and solve any problems during an event.

Plan, practice, repeat

The more sophisticated the production, the more time you generally need for planning, rehearsals, and any pre-recording. It's also essential to bring your audio-visual resource early in the planning cycle. Invite them to planning meetings with the event technology company several months out, so you are all on the same page with technological requirements.



2

Monetizing Virtual Events

Creative ways to build your revenue



Creating Value in the Virtual Event Space

We know that event profitability is on your mind – a poll* conducted in June of 2020 found many event professionals struggling to pivot into profitability with only 25% in the black. However, the same study reported that 7% exceeded their original expectations based on in-person events.

Whether you're the lead event planner for your organization or the chair of an event planning committee, you're wrestling with the ultimate question: how do I make money with my virtual event? Now that you have at least one year of experience pivoting your events from in-person to virtual, you can start tackling ways to boost revenue during your events.

There are three areas where you can immediately improve your event's bottom line:

In this section, we'll review:

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Using Content to Boost Revenue.....	30

*EventMB Research June 2020



PART ONE

Monetizing Event Registration

We know that event registration is the tried and true way of earning event revenue. It has also become one of the biggest sticking points for event organizing committees around the globe.

With what we've learned over the past year, let's review **10 ways to earn revenue through event registration:**

1. Add Perks to Registration

Look for opportunities to motivate attendees to sign up or spread the word. Boost your registration by offering sponsored gift cards, discounts for the first 100 registrants, free VIP upgrades, group or BOGO pricing, etc. And don't forget about the referrals! Every attendee has hundreds, if not thousands, of active social media connections. Reward socially-active attendees with an incentive when they help you spread the word.



2. Conference Preview Sessions

A teaser campaign can earn extra revenue and hype registration. Organize a conference preview webinar, or a series with speakers from your conference. Whether you charge a registration fee for this preview, discount the conference passes, or offer it for free to gain awareness, don't forget to collect viewers' contact information so you can follow up with them after the preview to further promote your conference.

3. Attract New Attendees

Hosting your event in the digital ecosystem provides you with an ocean of potential new attendees. Virtual events are a low-pressure way for curious participants to learn about your organization or industry. Don't be afraid to think outside the typical box here. Reach out to colleagues in related industries, adjacent professions, government segments, and even professors or students studying topics in your industry. Every new attendee grows your bottom line now and in the future.

4. Custom Event Registration

Your event likely has members and non-members, attendees and speakers, staff and VIPs. Different data needs to be collected for each one of these attendee types – whether it's answering separate questions or charging different fee structures. Regardless, this is why it's important to have a flexible registration platform. GTR™ Register allows you to manage multiple registration types through different pricing levels, custom forms, payment processing, and gathering data through reports and analytics.

Welcome to the WeCare Medical Association Conference

Prefix First Name Last Name

Email Would you like to receive email updates? ☒

Company Title

Address 1 Address 2

City State Zip Code

Phone Number

Register

5. Single-Session or Single-Day Passes

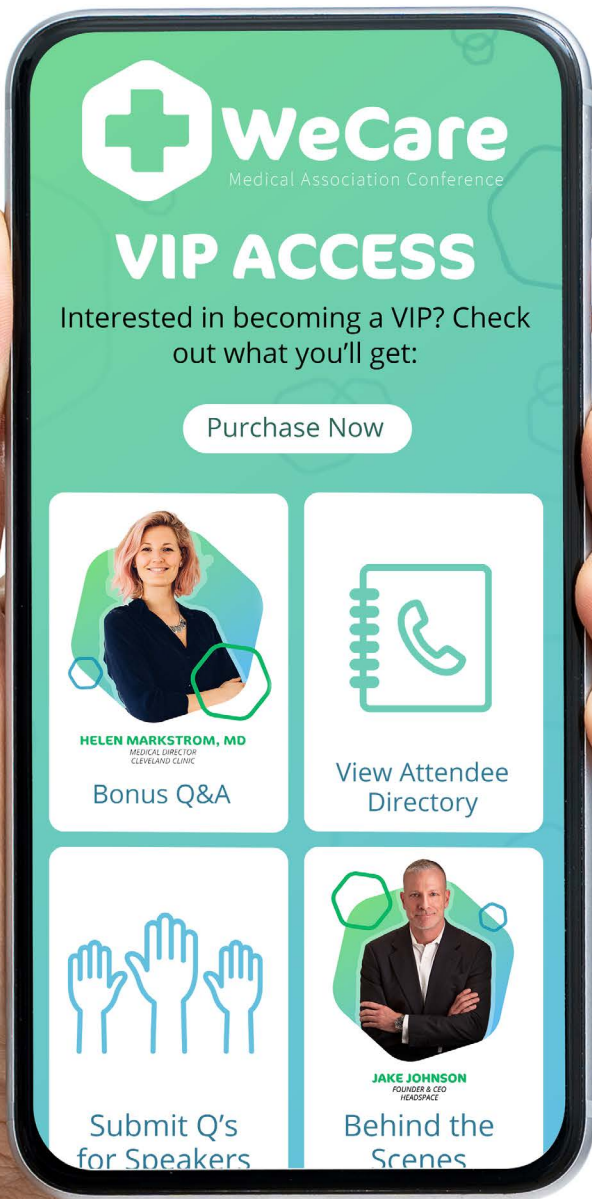
This tip comes straight from the in-person event world, where multi-day conventions often have a single-session or one-day pass option. This easily translates to virtual events too! Along with a one-day pass, consider offering a “view-only” pass (versus the standard, fully interactive option) to give attendees the choice of tiered access levels. This is a great way to increase your overall attendance and revenue.

6. Access to Content, Speakers, and Recordings

Virtual events allow for recorded content in ways that make in-person events jealous! With the ability to record sessions easily, conferences can live on well past the end of their closing remarks. Have a keynote speaker presenting groundbreaking research? Hosting the premier tradeshow of your industry? Set up a specific registration type or charge à la carte for session transcripts, attendee contact information, or even permission to take part in a live Q&A. As you’ll see with VIP registration, access to content can be a huge selling point for your higher end tiers.

7. VIP Registration

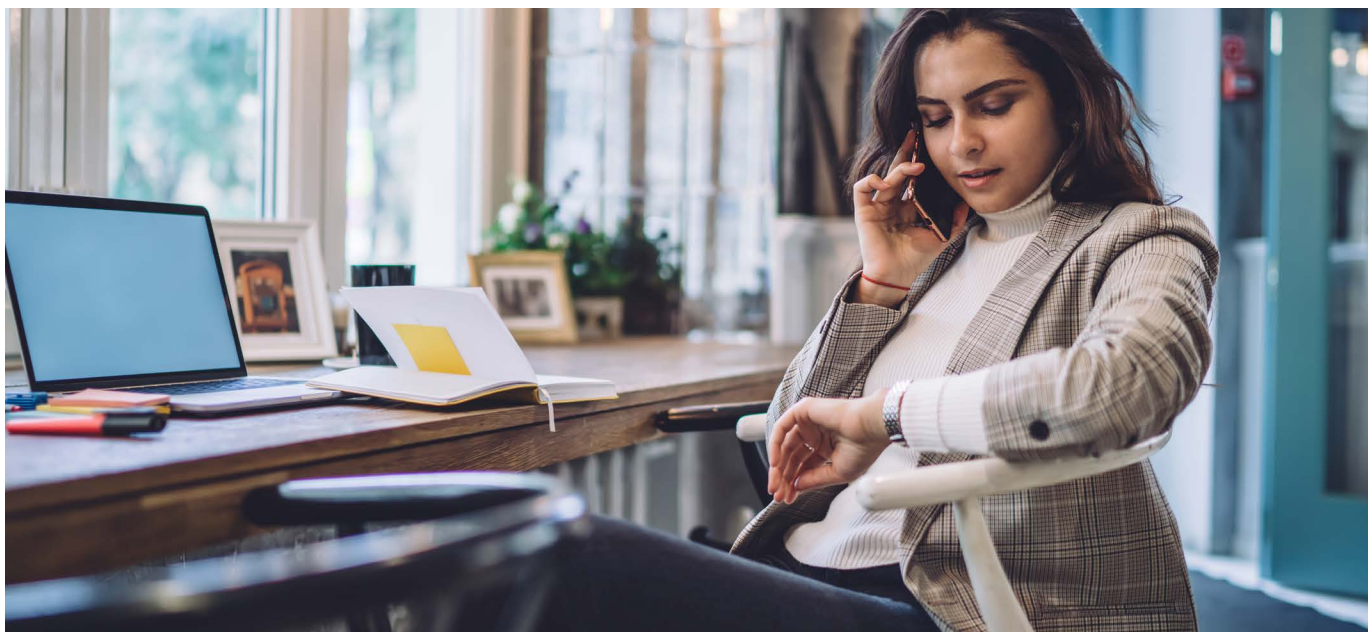
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8. Early Bird Registration

Early bird registration has always created a sense of urgency. Available at a discounted rate and for a limited time, this price tier is sure to get your deal savvy, prospective attendee chirping. Early Bird registration can be promoted across all channels, but be sure to include an email blast as an “insider scoop” for past attendees. (Pro Tip: You can increase your revenue even more by extending early-bird pricing to VIP registration.)



9. Last Minute Registration

An interesting result of the shift to virtual events is an increase in last-minute sales. Don't turn off your registration the day of the event, because attendees might still be signing up right as a session is about to begin! You can adjust your registration prices up or down, just make sure that you are clear on how your pricing will change across all of your marketing.



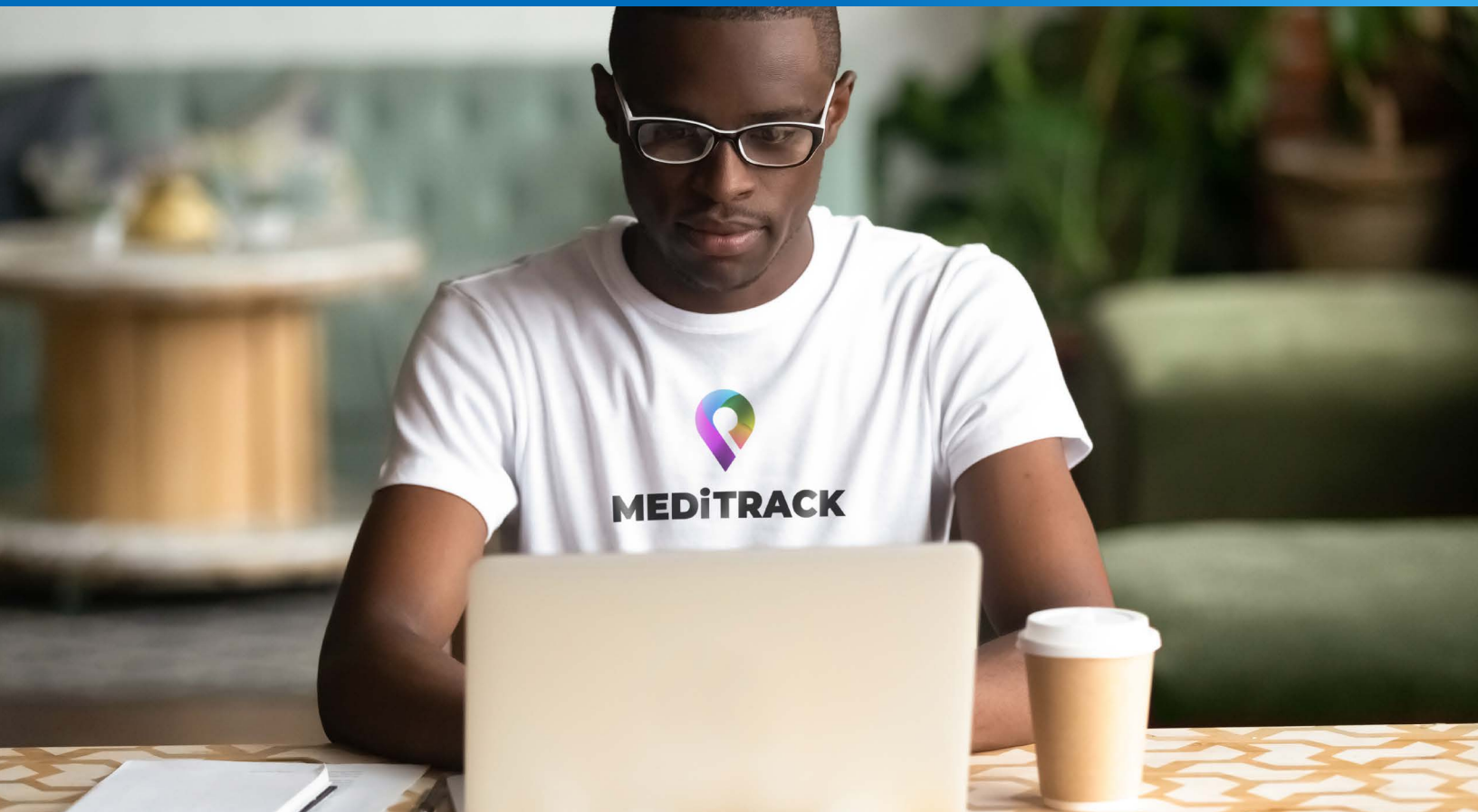
10. Sell Merch

Build excitement by adding event merchandise for attendees to purchase before your event. Avoid overestimating how much inventory you need by using a dropshipping service: attendees can order online (set up your orders via an e-commerce platform like [Shopify](#)) and the merch will be directly shipped to them, cutting you out of the process. Services like [Printful](#) are perfect for custom, on-demand merch. This is a great option for recurring events, like an annual association conference. Create an online store with branded merchandise that association members can buy specifically for the event or just to show support year round.

Event Merchandise Examples (keep in mind size and weight, as everything will be shipped!):

- Wearables: T-shirts, hoodies, hats, masks
- Usables: Keyrings, mugs, notebooks
- Well-designed mementos: an event poster, sticker or patch

Dropshipping services are perfect for fulfilling custom merch on-demand and getting it right to the homes of attendees.



PART TWO

Earning Revenue Through Sponsorships

In an industry where everything feels like it has changed, event sponsorships feel like they've changed the most. Finding the most compelling package to present to a sponsor (and then booking them) seems to be one of the most stressful parts of virtual event planning today.

You aren't alone. Let's review some of the ways you're probably like most event planners:

- Your event sponsorship package grids changed two or three times by December 2020

- You wrote and rewrote and rewrote again a major sponsor solicitation 15 to 20 times before sending it
- You were pleasantly surprised when sponsors signed on to a unique package that didn't exist in an in-person event

With our experience helping planners host 200+ virtual events since the beginning of COVID-19, we've uncovered new opportunities to monetize sponsorships that aren't possible or obvious for in-person events.

Virtual Event Sponsorship Packages with Muscle

Even though events are now virtual, best practices haven't changed when it comes to signing sponsors: book your sponsors early in the planning process. Offer a mix of marketing, speaking, exclusive, and SWAG opportunities to get in front of attendees at the event. Make it easy for sponsors to reach out to attendees after the event is done.

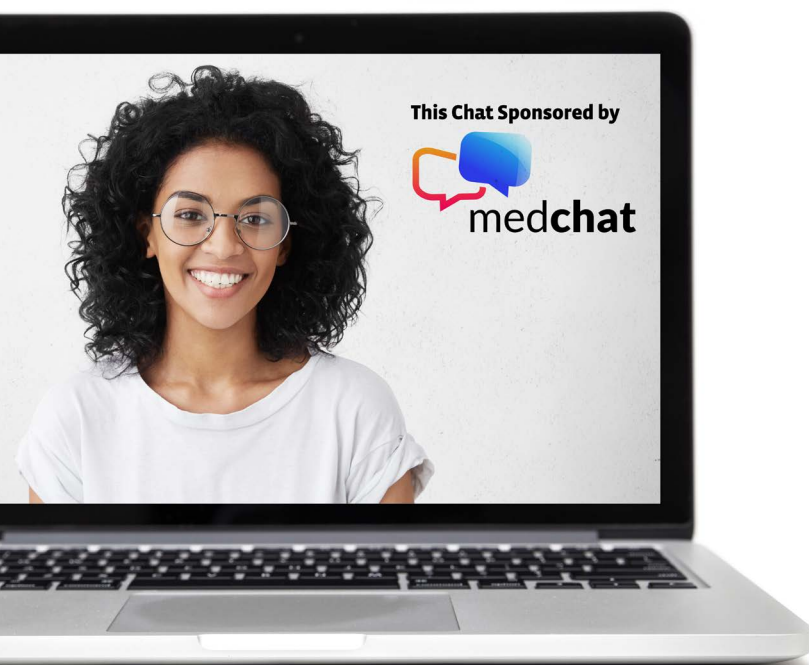
And just like in-person events, we suggest building your sponsorship packages with tiers, starting with the most basic and going all the way to the most exclusive. Check out a sample sponsorship tier by downloading our [Virtual Event Sponsorship Guide](#).

Let's review different opportunities to get in front of attendees so you can build your custom sponsorship packages!

Broadcasting Your Sponsors

Imagine being a sponsor at the event and seeing your brand featured in a custom video background for the keynote speaker, throughout the virtual event platform in banner ads, and at an interactive tradeshow booth.

This is all possible on our virtual event platform. Add banner ads throughout, or put sponsor brands on the event homepage, virtual tradeshow hall, and even the log-in page.



Thought Leadership for Sponsors

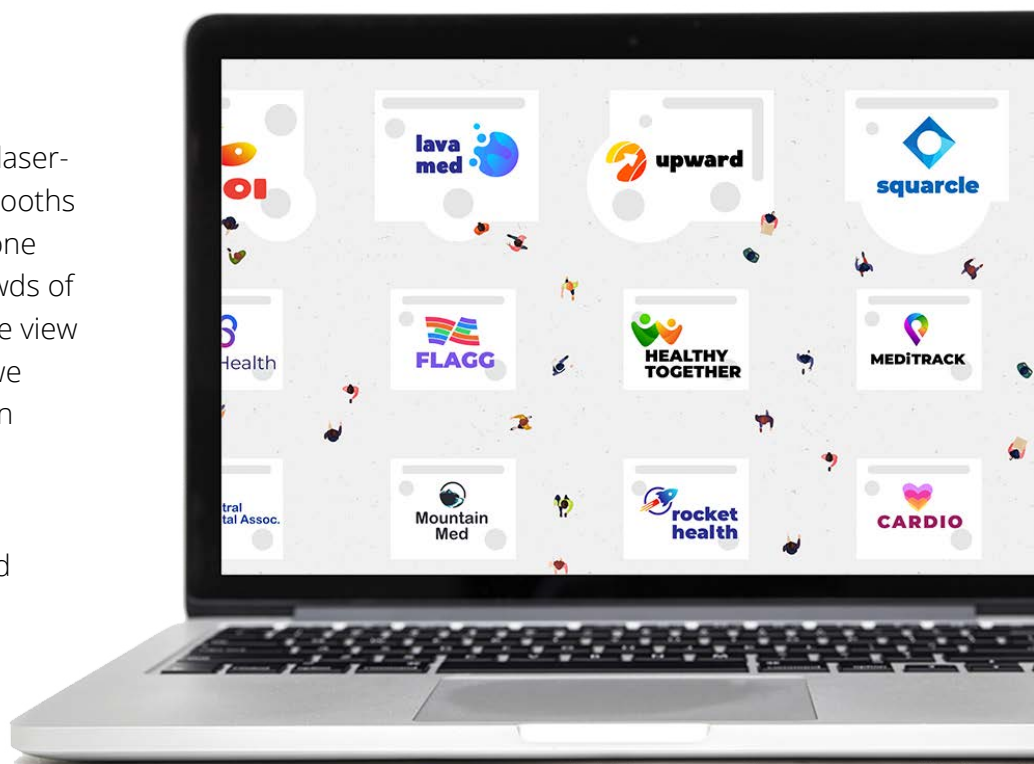
Sponsors can also get in front of attendees by introducing keynotes or speakers. These introductions can easily be recorded and uploaded before the live session. If the sponsor is supporting many sessions, encourage them to reach out to multiple team members to record introductions so that attendees don't see the same one over and over again.

You can also offer conversations facilitated by representatives from your sponsor. These sponsored sessions can be added to the conference agenda so all attendees can see them or be positioned as a bonus for higher-level registration types.

Skip the Walking with Virtual Tradeshows

Virtual tradeshows allow attendees laser-focused visits to virtual tradeshow booths and the ability to schedule one-on-one meetings (all while avoiding the crowds of a convention center!) Get a birds-eye view of who is in the room – something we could only dream about as in-person conference attendees.

Sponsors can have premium placement, larger virtual booths, and other features that get them more exposure in the “room.”

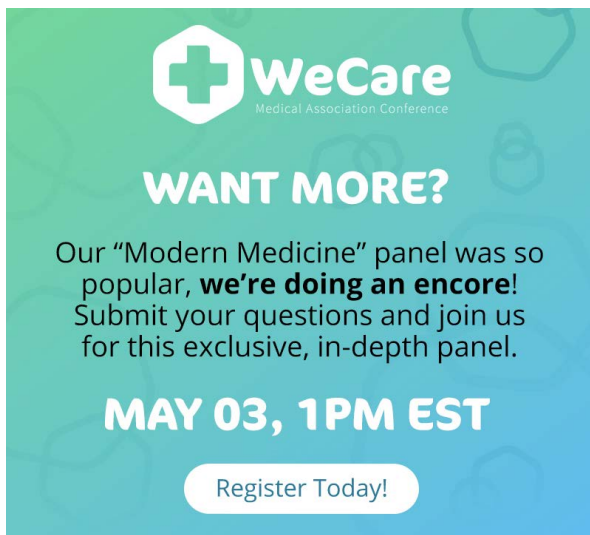


Unique Exclusive Opportunities

This is where event planners shine: brainstorming unique sponsorship opportunities. Think about ways your attendees get excited as a community. Are they passionate about a t-shirt design competition? Do alumni groups have receptions at night? Think about how you can incorporate sponsors into these conference traditions to keep them alive in a virtual event.

Some ideas we have?

- Sponsored push notifications
- Having one event sponsor “take-over” the event (priced accordingly)
- Sponsored SWAG gift boxes sent to attendees



Event Debrief

In your event evaluations, you may find that attendees still are hungry for information. If you weren't able to address a specific need during the event, no problem! Sign on a sponsor for a webinar or virtual workshop illuminating a topic that was raised in evaluations, discussions, or break-out groups. Sponsorship for an event on a popular topic could be very valuable, especially if the audience is extremely targeted.

Learning for Next Time

Remember one of your first assignments as an event planning intern – counting attendees? That's automated in virtual events! Our platforms are built to measure, and can provide sponsors with rich customer data. This information leads to better opportunities for premium relationship building over time.

Next year when you update that sponsorship grid, use data to make informed decisions and prove ROI to sponsors. Here are just a few metrics you can measure:

- Number of attendees
- Social media reach
- Leads captured
- Clicks on sponsored ads & logos
- Tradeshow booths visited
- Presentation downloads
- Attendee engagement
- Survey results
- Downloads after the event ends





PART THREE

Using Content to Boost Revenue

Do you remember how much work it used to take to record a keynote speaker? We remember attending conferences that felt like a full TV studio and others where interns recorded from a camera on a tripod. And how many times were those conference recordings left on an SD card somewhere and never uploaded?

Virtual events have made one thing a whole lot simpler: recording and sharing conference

content! With a simple click of a button, everything from a webinar to a full conference can be recorded, uploaded and available to attendees.

How can your virtual event content help you exceed your event projections? We have a few ideas...



Before Your Event:

Exclusive Preview Content

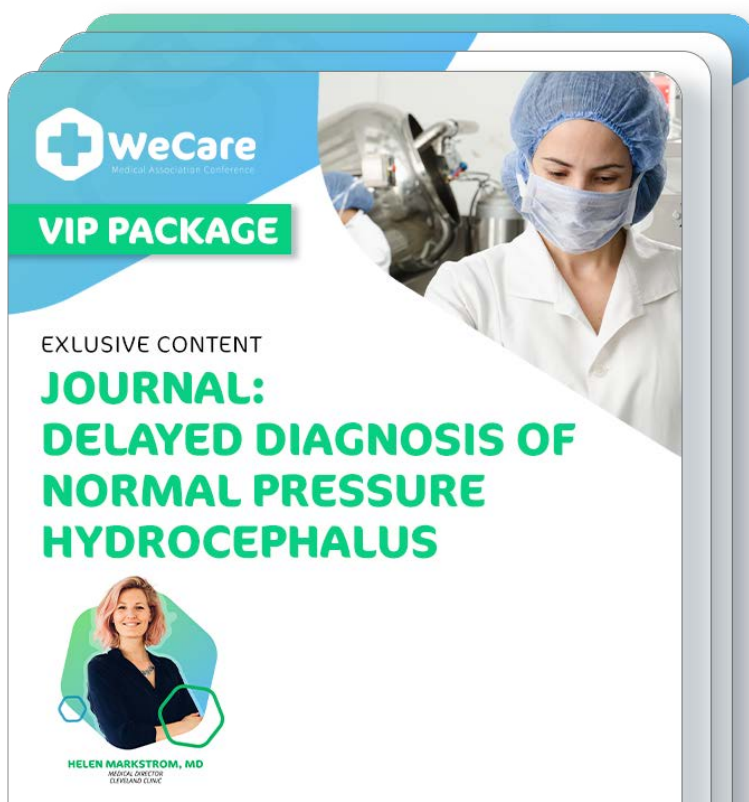
Getting people to commit early (aside from early-bird registration) is always a challenge for event planners. Consider using content to help you get a steady stream of registrations earlier. With a conference pass, you can grant access to preview webinars or a signed copy of a keynote speaker's book. Conference attendees will get a jump start on thinking about the annual conference topic, making conversations and interactions at the conference even more meaningful to them.

Turn Your Content into SWAG

Swag is such an essential part of the event experience due to its ability to extend the life of the event long after it's over. Virtual event swag is no different: In addition to sponsored gift cards and branded merch, it's a good practice to bundle exclusive content in with your swag. Think about what content sponsors or speakers could add to physical or virtual swag bags: Access to a journal article? Webinar to explain a new publicly-available data set? Offer special content packages to VIP attendees to help get those high level registration types sold out quick.

Sell Subscriptions

Can you apply a subscription model to virtual events this year? Subscriptions are typically seen as a pricing strategy, but we're thinking of their opportunity to create a community attracted to exclusive content. Traditionally, subscribers have had exclusive or early access to events, getting them closer to the top players in the field. By organizing your slate of events early in the year, you can create a pricing structure to maximize subscribers. Give your subscribers exclusive perks like special events or a newsletter.



During Your Event:

On-Demand Recordings

Scheduling issues can make it impossible for everyone to see every segment of an event live. A great way to further monetize your content during your event and after is to offer these segments on demand. Charge for a self-serve portal where attendees access conference content or download it.

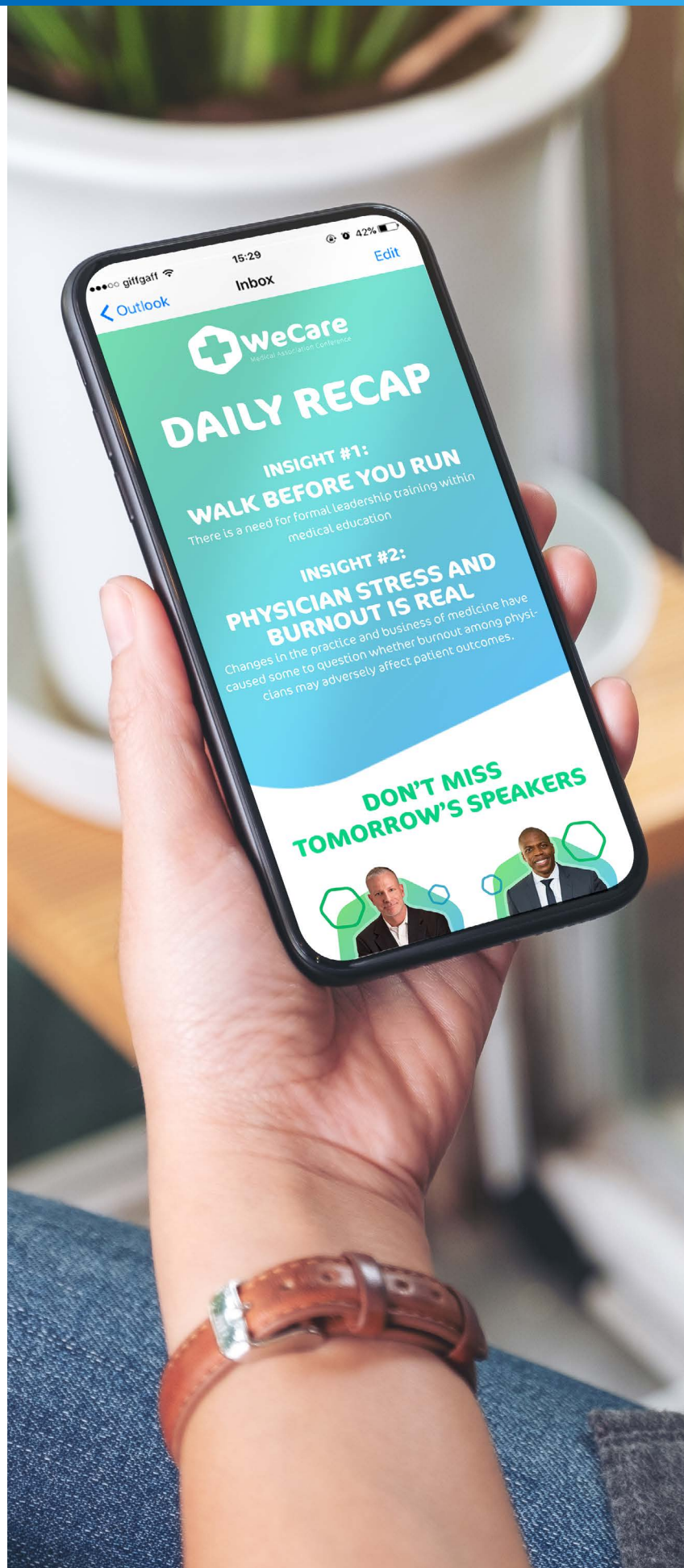
Daily Recap Emails

Attendees hop on, hop off, and watch sessions on their own time – it's a natural behavior at a virtual event. Keep attendees engaged by sending an organizer-compiled daily recap email that hits their inbox at the end of each day. Give them a flavor of what they may have missed and what to expect tomorrow. Email recaps can be a great opportunity for sponsors and a great use of your emcee's voice - especially when they aren't getting the face time like they are used to at an in-person event.

After Your Event:

Make Content On Demand

Now is the time to make sure all those recordings of your live event are uploaded and available to your attendees who paid for access. Use our virtual event platform after your event is completed: attendees will be able to access content, reach out to a conference representative, contact a favorite sponsor, or revisit the directory. Be sure to remind attendees of these benefits with a simple email.





Build a Community

Using content to bring people together throughout the year can help foster a sense of community. In some ways, your conference can be the kickoff of a great community of like-minded people! Consider hosting monthly webinars and exclusive events. Facilitate small group chats between members with similar interests throughout the year. This will also help get the word out about registration for your next conference.

Repurposing Content for Paid Products

Many topics can be covered at conferences and webinars that are of interest to others outside of the intended field. A resourceful planner can further monetize that content by bundling the recordings with transcripts and turning them into stand alone informational products. These can then be sold to your attendees or completely outside your membership.

We believe that recording and sharing conference content is one aspect of virtual events that will stick when we pivot back to in-person. Good practices around the monetization of your digital content will be a major revenue generator for the foreseeable future.



③

Virtual Event Sponsorship Guide

Monetize your next virtual event.



What This Section Covers

- Creating Value in the Virtual Event Space.....36
- Sponsorship Opportunities.....37
- Creating Sponsorship Packages.....43
- Measuring Sponsor Data.....44



Creating Value in the Virtual Event Space

Our virtual event platform provides your sponsors with valuable exposure. This guide will help you develop the perfect sponsorship packages to monetize your next virtual event.

What you're able to offer sponsors for in-person events is not much different. As you create your sponsorship packages, consider what you would offer sponsors at an in-person event, and their goals. Virtual events don't require a complete departure from what you normally offer.

Recognize your event's sponsors by creating sponsorship tiers and opportunities for recognition. Work with your sponsors to understand what needs are important to them and acknowledge those needs through our customizable virtual event platform.

Create custom benefit packages and brand awareness initiatives through thoughtful efforts like banner ad visibility, ad space placements, verbal recognition during live sessions, custom branded zoom backgrounds, and premium session time slots.

Sponsorship Opportunities

When integrating sponsorships into the virtual world, our platform is flexible enough to allow for almost endless options. In the following pages, we'll illustrate just how to execute a handful of ideas:

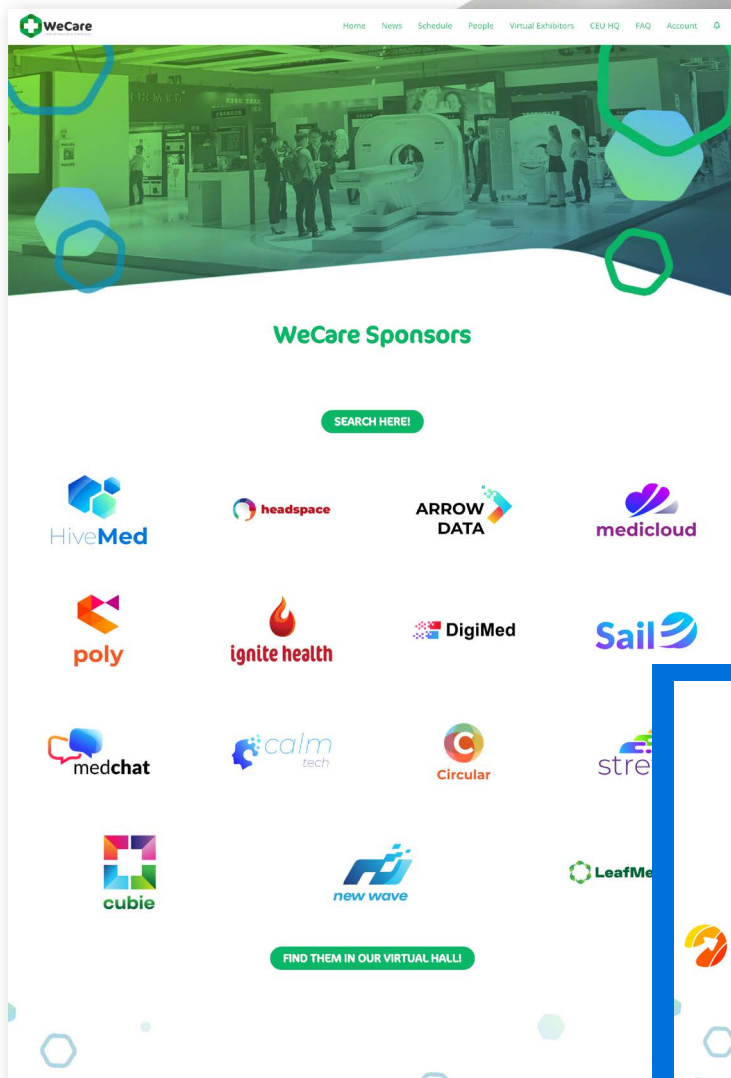
- Event Homepage
- Banner Ads
- Sponsored Sessions
- Exclusive Gamification Sponsors
- Sponsored Conversations
- Sponsored Notifications & Messages
- Sponsored Log-In
- Custom Video Backgrounds
- Virtual Tradeshow
- Virtual Tradeshow Booth
- Prizes & Swag



Sponsorships Opportunities

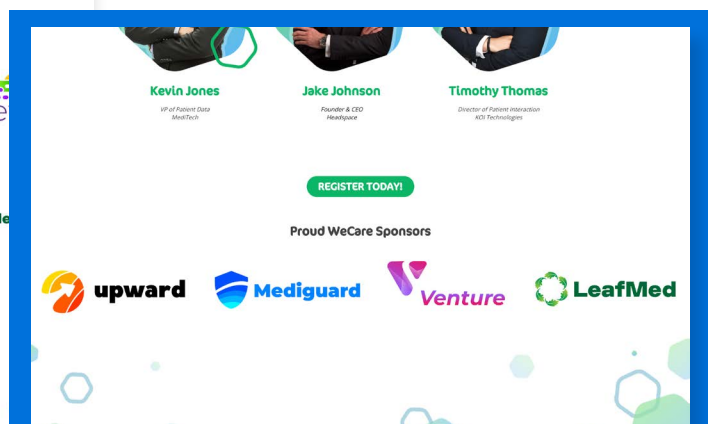
Event Homepage

- Add premium sponsor placements on the event homepage and allow attendees to flip through sponsors.
- Homepage placements provide brand awareness and showcase sponsors for every attendee to see.



Banner Ads

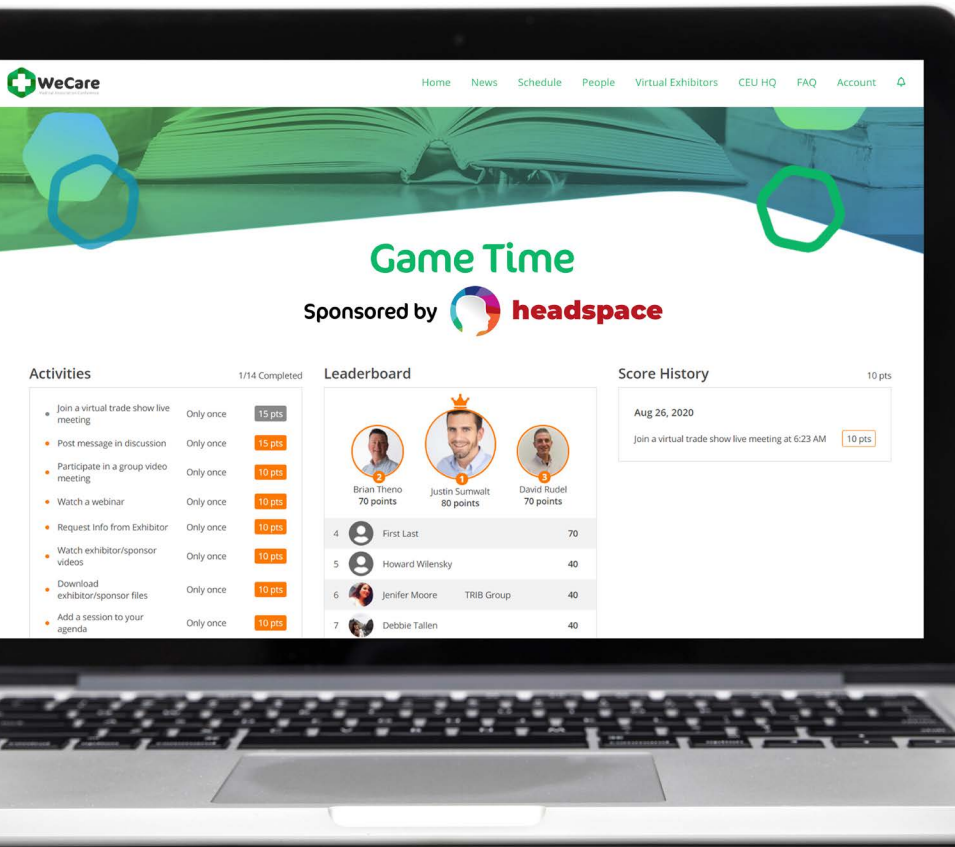
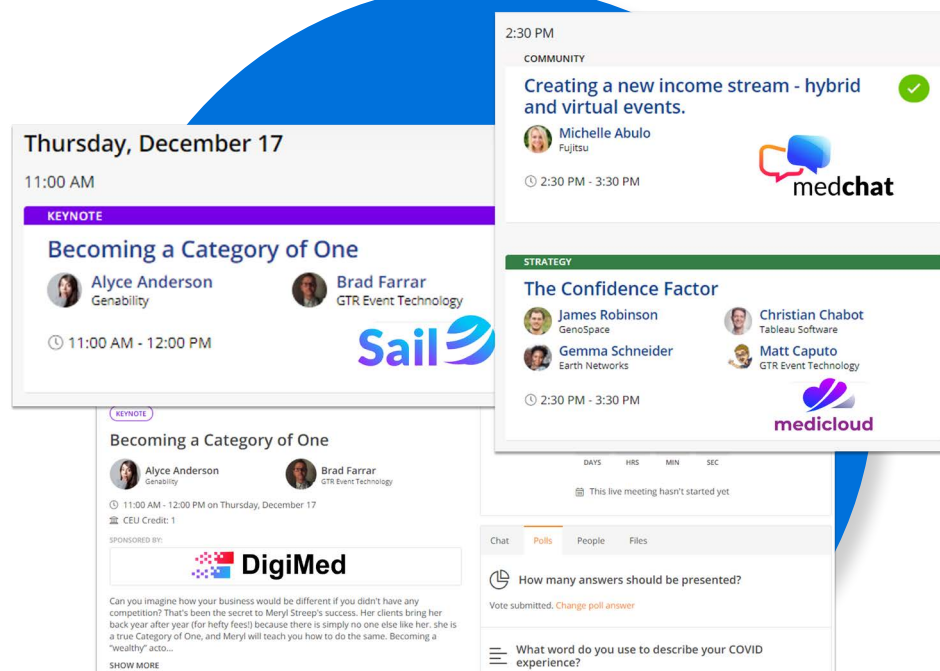
- Showcase sponsors on a dedicated page.
- Links to their website, virtual booth, or dedicated page within the event.



Sponsorships Opportunities

Sponsored Sessions

- Sponsored sessions provide a premium ad placement before, during, and after live or on-demand sessions.
- They also appear on agendas.
- Add a link to lead the user who clicks to a specific page (external or internal).



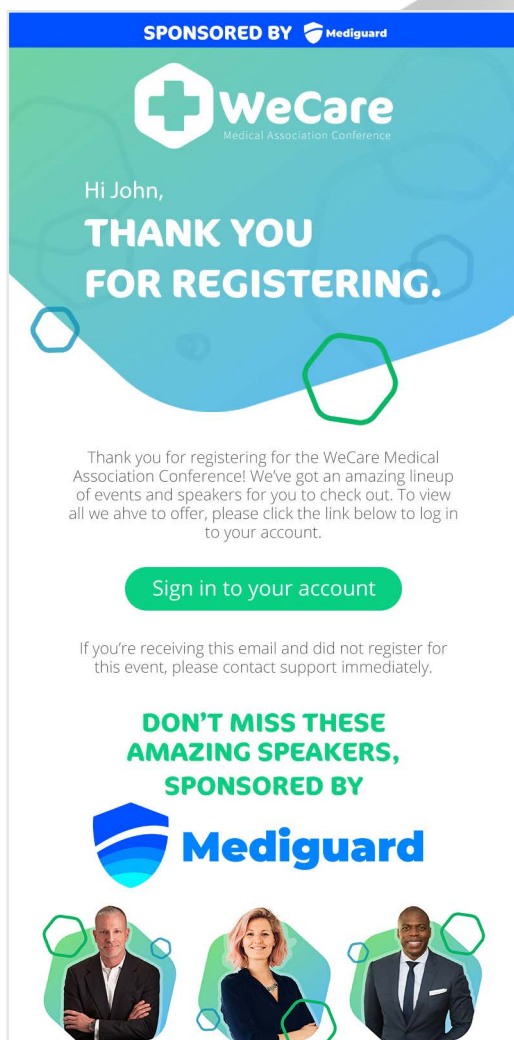
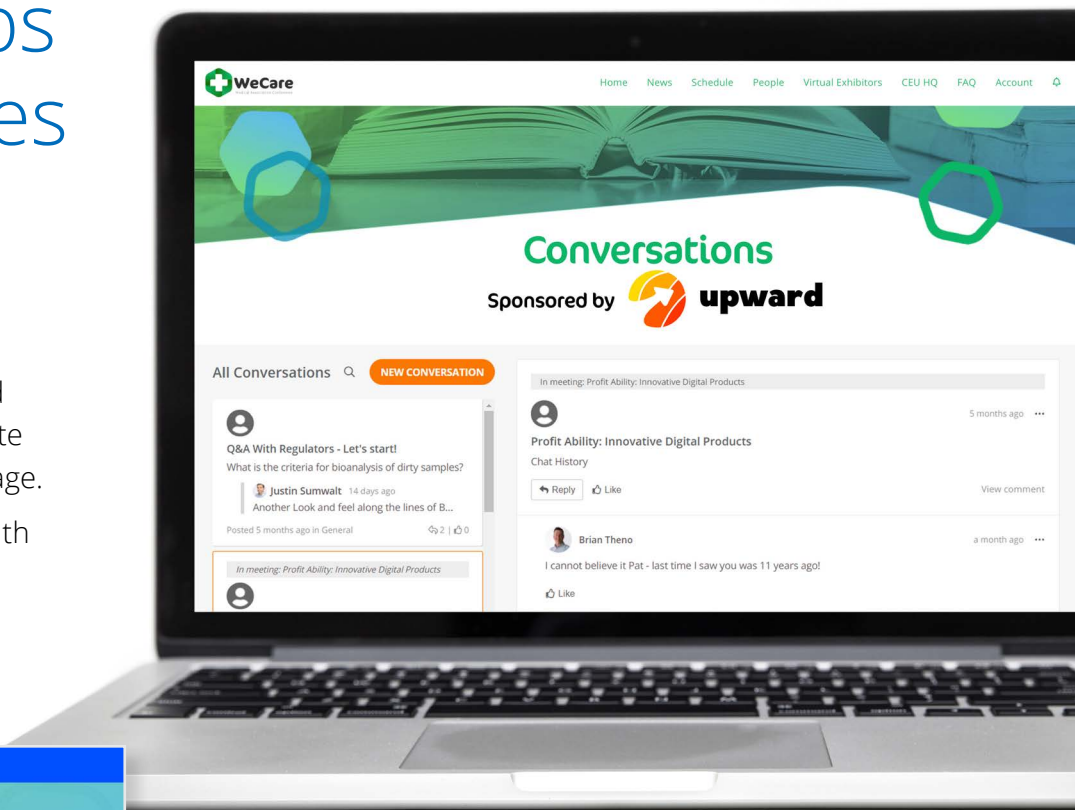
Exclusive Gamification Sponsor

- Encourage sponsors to buy "ad space" within your event website such as on the gamification page.

Sponsorships Opportunities

Sponsored Conversations

- Encourage sponsors to buy “ad space” within your event website such as on the conversation page.
- Add more than one sponsor with a rotating banner.



Sponsored Notifications & Messages

- Send sponsored messages, including pre-scheduled e-blasts to attendees and link them to a sponsor's landing page.
- Offer targeted messaging and push notifications.

Sponsored Log-In

- Sponsor branding placed around the event log-in.

Sponsorships Opportunities

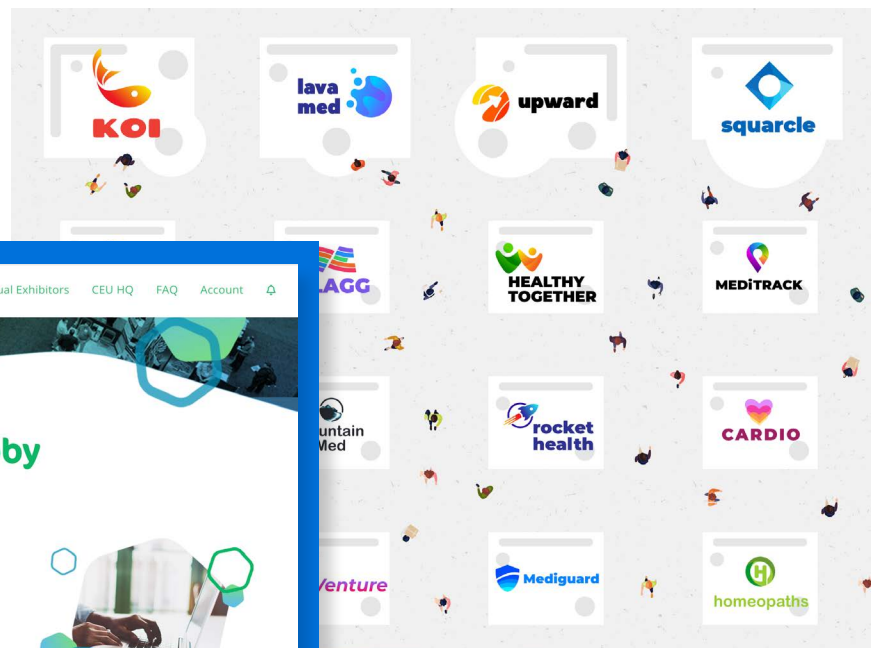
Custom Video Backgrounds

- Offer custom branded video backgrounds for your speakers and sponsors. This creates continuity throughout the event and ensures that sponsors are being recognized.
- Add sponsor logos, messaging, and contact information to the background.



Virtual Tradeshow

- A familiar visual for attendees.
- Logos link to Virtual Tradeshow Booths.



Sponsorships Opportunities

Virtual Tradeshow Booth

- Sponsors & Exhibitors can represent their organization through their own Virtual Tradeshow Booth.
- They can customize their booth by adding content such as photos and videos, and by offering unique information to attendees about their organization.
- Booth hosts can interact with attendees through virtual meetings or calls in real-time.



Prizes & Swag

- Incentivize attendees to engage with your event.
- Send prizes such as gift cards, free appointments, or swag for those attendees that top the leaderboard.

Creating Sponsorship Packages

While many event planners are charging the same amount for sponsorship opportunities, we've found a virtual event is 20% less than you charged for in-person.

Make your first package very basic. Perhaps name recognition only on a tiered sponsor page or tradeshow exhibit. From there you can add any of the items in our "List of sponsorable items" or create your own!



Sample Sponsorship Packages

Sponsorship Tier	Dedicated Sponsor Page	Exclusive Ad Placement	Custom Zoom Background	Premium Logo Placement	Virtual Tradeshow Booth	Basic Logo Placement
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link in event navigation • Hosted roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored notifications & messages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event footer/header • Sponsored sessions • Sponsor page placement • Sponsored SWAG/prizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your own exhibitor page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logo in virtual tradeshow
Gold	●	●	●	●	●	●
Silver			●	●	●	●
Bronze					●	●



Measuring Sponsor Data

Need metrics to support sponsor return-on-investment? Virtual events can easily measure aspects that can be challenging for in-person events.

By offering sponsors a report after the event with data measured on the platform, you are showing them their event sponsorship ROI. Plus, by measuring what happened at your event, you are building baseline metrics to sell future virtual event sponsorship packages.

We suggest showing the following data to sponsors to prove their impact:

- Number of Attendees
- Social Media Reach
- Leads Captured
- Clicks on Sponsored Ads & Logos
- Brand Awareness
- Attendee Engagement
- Survey Results



4

Optimizing Your Virtual Events

Keep your attendees on their toes while they're still behind their screens.



You've officially had a front-row seat in the virtual event renaissance.

By planning and attending events during COVID-19, you've witnessed technological and organizational innovations. By producing events yourself, you may have engineered solutions for your attendees you never dreamed of before 2020.

As planners start hosting in-person attendees again, there is plenty to prepare for at venues. But virtual events won't be going away any time soon: so how do you keep virtual event attendees engaged?

This guide has some of the most creative ideas to energize your virtual event audiences. Learn what's new and what's keeping your attendees on their toes while they're still behind their computer screens.

In this guide, we'll share:

5 Tips to Create an Engaging Virtual Event.....	47
Adding Gamification to Your Virtual Event.....	50
The League of Remarkable Virtual Events.....	54
Tips & Tricks for Event Evaluation & Surveys.....	59

Ready to jump into the exciting world of energizing your virtual event audience?



PART ONE

Create Engaging Virtual Events with these 5 Tips

George Harrison once claimed: “The Beatles saved the world from boredom.” Is it possible to save attendees from boredom at virtual events? All you need is...engagement!

As a 2020 Markletic survey pointed out, **“49% of marketers say that audience engagement is the biggest contributing factor to having a successful virtual event.”** How do you help your attendees go from being passive listeners to active participants? Let's make some music by brainstorming ways to boost your virtual event engagement.

1.

Get to Know Your Attendees

Get to know your guests as much as possible: job title, key interests, and any objectives for the event are all relevant. [Event Registration](#) is perfect for these custom, personalized questions. Do your homework ahead of time by pre-polling attendees to learn even more about what they want to get out of this event, helping you frame content to make it as relevant as possible for them.

2.

Plan Interactive Activities

Encourage the use of the chat function to provide real-time feedback to speakers about what is happening in the chat. Use live polling at the event to engage your audience and provide instant feedback to your attendees. Bring in live entertainment like music, cooking demonstrations, sketch artists, or magicians that add fun. We're also fans of shipping a SWAG box ahead of time to give attendees tangible objects to use during their virtual event. We love the dual purpose of [this box NASCAR sent](#) to their annual B2B conference attendees.

[Here are a few more virtual event mailer ideas.](#)

3.

Make Attendees Feel Welcome

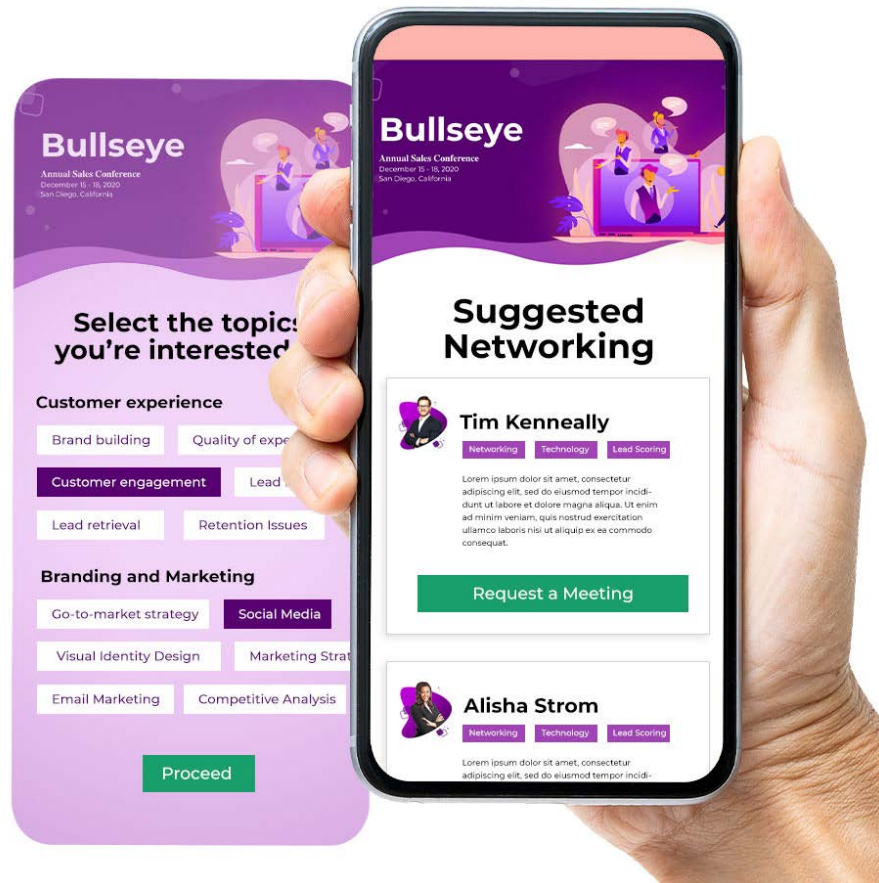
It starts before they even walk through the virtual door. Keep your guests informed on what to expect through email. Engage in a dialogue to find out their expectations via social media. Solve any logistical issues they are worried about ahead of time by creating a robust FAQ page. We'll be behind the scenes in a virtual "green room" to immediately answer any support questions attendees send during your event.



4.

AI Matchmaking: Digitally Build Those Human Connections

Sure, the world of dating apps and Netflix recommendations have capitalized off AI matchmaking, but why wouldn't networking at an event be any other way? Our virtual platform can use data gleaned through polls to get attendees in the right place with the right people. By defining goals and relevant interests, AI matchmaking will slim the vast networking pool down to a manageable size of people, offering more compatible connections for your attendees. You can also use this technology to suggest the most important sessions for guests to attend or vendors to visit at a virtual tradeshow.



5.

Buffer Time is the New Happy Hour

We find event planners don't give enough buffer time in their virtual event agendas to allow for organic conversations. Remember to bake in time for attendees to digitally network and get up from their computers to stretch! Leave enough time that someone could schedule a meeting with a vendor or attendee. For conversations that go into the next session, we suggest offering content on-demand after the event so attendees don't feel chained to their desks.

Using the power of a virtual platform to give your attendees personalized attention, custom suggestions, and flexible scheduling will only help boost engagement. **Don't forget to mine for data after your event so you can keep evolving and improving!**



PART TWO

How to Add Gamification to Your Virtual Event

Do you know the number one reason why people like to play games? They make you happy. (Yep, that's what the research says.) And a happy event attendee = an engaged attendee, meaning better participation, more positive event reviews, and a higher ROI resulting in bigger sponsorships year after year.

So what is event gamification? It's the process of adding game-like elements to an event with the end goal of driving attendee engagement and satisfaction. Your event gamification could include competitions, point systems, rewards, prizes, quizzes... the options are endless!

Where do I start?

When you apply gamification to your event, your platform becomes the universe to play. Just like any game world, there are boundaries and rules. Start by thinking about your event:

- What do you want to accomplish with the game?
 - Is it an icebreaker? Are you trying to strengthen an already close-knit team or help strangers network?
 - Who is attending your event (e.g., attendees, sponsors, exhibitors)?
 - What are the demographics of your audiences?
 - What insights do you have about their behavior, likes, or dislikes?
 - Are they tech-savvy or virtual platform amateurs?
-

Event Gamification Examples

Let your creativity run wild and match the game to what you want your attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors to achieve. Here's our brainstorm:



BREAK THE ICE

- If you've got a large crowd, use [breakout rooms](#) to get people together in small groups where they can't be shy!
- Ask attendees to share a favorite (hobby, book, food, travel destination, celebrity, etc.) in the chat.
- Play "Two Truths and a Lie" – a game where session attendees provide two facts and one fib, and the crowd votes to determine what's false. Bonus: if you integrate polling in your event, this is a great way to introduce this tool to attendees!
- Tailor a trivia quiz with questions around your event or conference's theme. This will help attendees identify what they do and don't already know about the conference topic. Make the polling anonymous but public so folks can see they're not the only one with some learning to do!

ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT WITH A TREASURE HUNT

- Incorporate clues in your content that can be collected when attendees go to different sessions. What was the keynote speaker's opening joke about? What's the secret ingredient in the cooking demo? What's the virtual background behind the motivational speaker?
- Reward punctuality with a clue that goes out right when the session starts.
- Encourage attendee feedback by encouraging people to fill out a survey or poll as part of the treasure hunt
- Reward attendees for posting on social media. Give bonus points for tagging the speaker, wearing event SWAG, or using the right hashtag.
- Don't forget the prize! Reward those who complete their scavenger hunt – it could be a social media shoutout, a delivery box of SWAG, a gift card, or a 5 minute one-on-one with the keynote speaker.

REWARD INTERACTION WITH EXHIBITORS

- Award points when an attendee engages with exhibitors. Give points for checking in or raise the ante if they engage in a conversation. More points = cooler prizes, better networking opportunities, or a delivery of vendor SWAG.
- Encourage exhibitors to add gaming into their own virtual exhibition spaces. Maybe a competition between users to test a virtual product? Asking trivia questions when a person visits their virtual booth?

KEEP ATTENDEES GUESSING WITH QUICK PRIZES THROUGHOUT THE EVENT

- For answering a pop quiz question
- For the best question asked during a session.
- For most questions posted during a Q&A.
- For the most shared social post.



Gamification Rules

- Provide clear instructions, so attendees know how to play.
- Promote the games before and during the event through email, social media, and on the event platform itself.
- Tease the prizes and rewards they'll get for playing ahead of time.
- Make the prizes fun and worthwhile, and tie them to the theme of your event. If they're physical prizes, make sure you plan the time and budget for mailing them to the winners.
- Celebrate the winners at the event and afterward. When you send follow-ups to attendees, make sure to mention your event's gamification champs.





PART THREE

The League of Remarkable Virtual Events

GET INSPIRED BY THE GREATS!

In the event planning grind, it's difficult to see the forest through the trees. When your checklist has a checklist, it's hard to walk away from the work to get inspired.

Despite 2020 event planning uncertainty, this last year was also one of the most innovative and productive years for event production. Constraints caused event planners to push themselves to the next level.

Take some “you” time today and look at these best-in-class virtual events from the last twelve months to get inspired. You may learn how to make a [better cup of coffee](#) or even [break into comics](#)!



Best Practice: Resolve FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL COMIC-CON AT HOME

It's the festival that people spend their whole life saving for to get a chance to attend. What if your dream event was suddenly online?

San Diego's Comic-Con did just that by making their 2020 conference entirely digital. What's better? Panels were recorded so people can jump on and watch them for free!

Most people may chase Twitter hashtags during non-COVID years to hear news on various sci-fi fandoms. If you attended Comic-Con at Home, you learned about the vast universe of educational panels that help fans become professionals.

TAKEAWAY: Assume that you have fans! What can you offer them to make them feel like they aren't missing from being in person. Whether it is exclusive content or content they can access on their own time, you are giving them a chance to be part of the community even if they have never been able to attend your in-person event.



Best Practice: Hybrid Event Innovation

TOMORROWLAND

People from around the world usually descend on Tomorrowland, a summertime music festival held in Belgium. With COVID-19, monumental music festivals had to adjust, and Tomorrowland stayed true to form and went straight to the future.

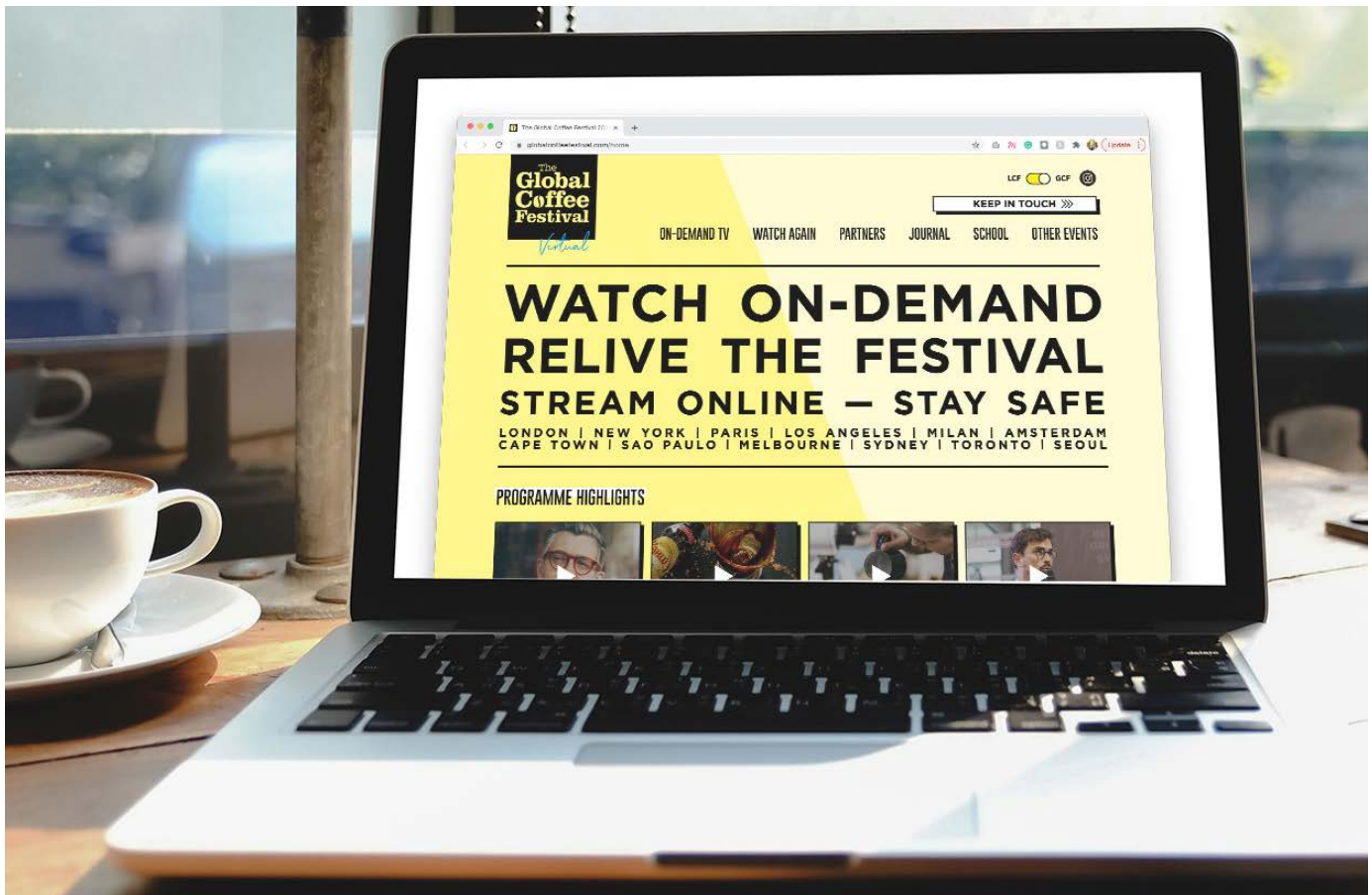
This year, crowds descended on [Tomorrowland Around the World](#). Organizers created a hybrid digital world with inspiration from video game design to design a unique and memorable experience.

The technological “peek behind the curtain” included sharing that 60 artists pre-recorded their sets in front of green screens. That allowed programmers to put these videos into the digital stages that they animated.

The outcome? An augmented reality concert venue with stages that defy reality and crowds that could fill several hundred football stadiums. This digital creation can help get your creative juices flowing on how to bring together the digital world and the real one.

Tomorrowland’s organizers thought outside of the box and gleaned inspiration from the video game universe. For you, what other industries or environments are in your life, and how can they help you plan your event?

TAKEAWAY: You can borrow ideas from other creative industries to inspire your event. Augmented reality helps bring people together, so can you scale the ideas from Tomorrowland around the world to your events like offering shared zoom backgrounds or hybrid stages?



Best Practice: Bring the Virtual Audience There

GLOBAL COFFEE FESTIVAL

The taste, the smell, the sounds of coffee. Coffee is a beverage that can make or break the day. What better way to learn about coffee than at an event?

This year, the Global Coffee Festival went virtual. For the budding coffee shop owner, you had panels suited to your needs like discussions around “Localism, Opportunity, Success” or product demos. Sessions on “Home Rituals” helped people brew better coffee at home. A “Home Barista Masterclass” helped people learn more about what it takes to be a professional.

For people in need of their coffee shop fix, the Global Coffee Festival brought their virtual audience places. They toured “Coffee Cities” on every continent but Antarctica and showed us their coffee scenes.

And for the competitive coffee audience, baristas competed in Showtime Barista Events, including a “Global Plant-Based Latte Art Throwdown.”

TAKEAWAY: Do you have an opportunity to take your audience somewhere? With Hybrid Events becoming more of an opportunity, could you have groups of people in different cities and go on-site? That way you can bring people to more remarkable places.



Best Practice: Exclusivity

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

How do people in Hollywood know it's winter? By going to the Sundance Film Festival, of course. With Sundance going online this year, the festival had a chance to beam into people's homes, and they did it in style.

What makes events extraordinary is the exclusivity that you gain from attending. Film festivals usually have premiere content, and Sundance had several new movies released for the first time at the online festival.

Sundance also had a limited number of tickets for each screening. Just like in-person events, movies may be sold out. That didn't mean that small miracles didn't happen. Just like standing in line for the waitlist, emails were sent when more seats were available for screenings. Instead of counting who was ahead of you in line, you bought tickets on the website.

Every screening included a Q&A, live or recorded. The first time a movie aired, there were live Q&As, and the audience members could ask filmmakers panel questions. Movie replays included recorded Q&As so that if you missed it the first time or couldn't get a ticket, you still could listen to what happened. Precisely what you go to the festival for in the first place.

TAKEAWAY: Exclusivity still counts even if you are online. Participants love free content, but they'll appreciate miracles as well.



PART FOUR

Tips and Tricks for Event Evaluation & Surveys

GATHER INSIGHTS FROM YOUR ATTENDEES

Remember going to a movie in a movie theater? When the film finished, you'd be gathering your coat or cleaning up your popcorn and soda, and then BAM, the director puts in another bonus scene.

Who doesn't love a bonus scene?

Evaluations are your event's bonus scene. (Ok, we're biased because we love analytics and metrics, but there is nothing wrong about being optimistic!). Evaluations help you:

- Gather insights from your participants
- Collect information for future planning
- Understand who attends your events and why

In this article, get the most out of your evaluations and learn about the surveys - one of the most popular tools to gather your participants' information. And since we love this part of event planning, we offer tips on closing the feedback loop to help response rates and share insights to decision-makers.

Evaluation vs. Surveys

There may be some ambiguity between what to call information gathering after an event. **Evaluation** is the entire process of gathering feedback and insight from people. **Surveys** are one tool to get that feedback. You can use other tools, like interviews, focus groups, or metrics from your event technology platform.

How about an analogy? Evaluation is like travel, and surveys are a mode of transportation. Just like there are many ways to get from point A to point B, there are many ways to gather your participants' insights.



Why are surveys so popular?

Back to our traveling analogy, surveys are airplanes. They get us to our destination faster. With online data collection methods, we could be watching data roll in real-time to see what people think about our events.

Because they are so popular, often, planners will call the last step of an event “doing a survey” rather than evaluation. The focus is getting it done and crossing off a list.

But it’s not just about fielding or sending a survey to attendees. This step is incomplete until you have looked at and evaluated the data. What were you trying to achieve at this event? Who attended this event? What do they want to see next time?

Organizations have different data reporting requirements, but you are one step ahead for next year’s planning as long as you analyze and share findings with your team.

Closing the feedback loop

Having attendees take your surveys could feel very challenging. It's as if they don't like surveys. Giving up at this point would be the wrong thing to do.

Yes, people get asked to take a **ton** of surveys. The flip side? People love to share what they think about a product. Look at the [reviews for Granulated Sugar](#). A product as ordinary as sugar has received thousands of reviews on Amazon!

How do we make your event as popular as sugar?

CLOSE THE FEEDBACK LOOP: Plan on sending a follow-up email with your attendees with information you learned from them. With a deadline for you to analyze your data, you'll probably do it. It's a great way to show you care and that you listened to your audience.

SHORT AND OFTEN: With GTR's survey module, we can program a quick 1 or 2 question survey for the end of every session. Prioritize these questions wisely. Do you need to know if the speakers work or if the content works? Then ask that. Leave an open-ended box just in case someone wants to share more.

INCENTIVIZE: Giving someone something in return may entice them to take part. Also, think about the person who was going to fill out the survey anyway. Isn't it nice to give them something too?



Bonus Scene: Plan beyond the survey

When events in-person again, think about ways to open up to other modes of evaluation to supplement your surveys.

TESTIMONIAL BOOTHS: Set up a recording device in a private but notable nook. Have it staffed by someone who would benefit from hearing feedback - like someone from your research and evaluation team or a board member! Attendees leaving their review could sign a release so that if you needed their commentary for grant applications, you'd have their permission.

In the meantime, virtually: Design a tab in your event technology platform with contact information for people to email or message you with their feedback.

LISTENING SQUAD: Designate staff with a sticker or ribbon on their badge to be part of the listening squad. Encourage participants to talk to these people when they have feedback about the event. Pro-tip: Give your attendees clear directions on what kinds of feedback (big ideas vs. logistics issues) to share with your listening squad!

In the meantime, virtually: Designate someone on your team to be the listening squad. With a chat box or video chat, you can simulate the same experience as online.



An Experienced Team, Trusted by Industry Leaders

Now that you're inspired to energize your virtual events and bring digital elements into your hybrid events, are you ready to partner with an event technology company that can help you put your new plans into motion?

GTR Event Technology has powered 12,000+ events since being founded in 1995. We're a team of experts in event operations, technology, and planning. Give us a call, and we can talk about planning your next virtual, hybrid, or in-person event.

Get started at gtrnow.com



EA COLLECTIVE

