

Virtual Conference. Reach more with less.

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Contents

3

A Brief History and Introduction

4

Virtual Conference Reach More with Less

5

Step 1: Planning Your Virtual Conference

6

Step 2: Choosing What to Broadcast

7

Step 3: Coordination of events



A Brief History & Introduction to Virtual Conferences



You probably had to do this recently, maybe a few months ago or possibly last week:

- Looked up a conference online
- Bought an overpriced plane ticket, fought the traffic and got sick from being on a plane
- Ate poorly, didn't exercise and had too many cocktails
- Slept in a stuffy hotel room and wore the same outfit more than once
- Got to see the outside of the hotel once for 5 minutes to take an emergency phone call from your spouse about something that happened at home



The site of these empty conference seats might be making you cringe. I know I do. Does anyone really want to attend a conference?

Yes there is ALOT of worthwhile information that is shared at this type of event. Yes these types of events have been going on in the business world FOREVER. In fact there are entire industries built around conferences.

What if you could bring all of the information shared at this conference right to the learner in the comfort of their own home or office, on demand.

What if you could expand your conference reach indefinitely? Therefore having more attendees and more revenue?



You mean I can get all this info without having to travel?

Yes you can, and it is pretty easy to do.

Whether you are a conference attendee or a conference planner, virtual elements of conferences or trade shows need to be highly considered but not as an afterthought.

It is very easy to see the advantages as a conference attendee, but what about the conference planners? They need to make money too right?

Conferences and trade shows are some companies entire revenue source. They design, plan and deliver these conferences which in turn draw a lot of attendees and a lot of revue. You might be asking yourself, "If I do this virtually, will I be losing revenue?"

No. You are not taking away from your base clientele. If your conference is something of high value, people will still attend. But by adding on a virtual element, you will be capturing a couple new audiences.

Your new audiences will most likely be:

- people that just could not attend based on priorities.
- people who are geographically too far away.
- people who do not have a lot of travel budget.
- new people who have never attended your conference in the past.
- people who just want bits and pieces of the information being shared.

Step 1: Planning your Virtual Conference



Don't plan your virtual conference as an add on, plan it as a part of the show.

You shouldn't bring in the elements of streaming your virtual conference as an afterthought, here is why:

1. New money

By treating your conference as a pay per view event, you will be drawing in new sources of revenue. It is up to you to predetermine what content will stream, and how much you can or should be charging for these elements.

2. Value Add

Sometimes you are just trying to add overall value to your membership base. This can be accomplished by streaming bits and pieces of a conference that will increase the overall offering.

Giving some free content will also serve as commercial activity for your brand.

3. Sponsorship

Who says that you shouldn't offer up advertising for your virtual conference? It takes a while for sponsors to make decisions on what content they will sponsor. Be creative.

4. Stickiness

For a live conference, it is over when the doors close. Why would you not want to increase your "stickiness" into the next month or the next year?

5. We really should have filmed this

Live, recorded or a mix of both. It is important to consider what will be done with the content you recorded. Oh wait, you forgot to record. Don't make that mistake.

6. Recreate the trade show floor

This one can be tough to imagine. Think about being able to watch a video demonstration, take a quiz and then book a virtual meeting with a company representative to talk to you live. It is a very targeted way to attend a conference.

Step 2: Choosing what to broadcast



A lot of broadcasting, I think, is doing a tremendous amount of preparation and trying to act like, 'Oh, this thought is just occurring to me right now' - and speaking sincerely. Ira Glass

This is a really tough question to answer. Is it an all or none type of approach? By making the content available online live, am I risking my live audience?

Only you can figure out exactly what to broadcast, when to broadcast it and what to charge. It really is dependent upon your organization and audience.

In our experience, most companies choose to start their Virtual Conference journey as a value add for the first year or two. This means that they pick a couple of sessions, such as the opening session or an award ceremony to start. They broadcast them live, or make them available after the event is over. This is seen as a value add by the members of the organization.

Once the companies realize the potential they begin to expand their coverage. With this they also begin to work off of content bundles and tiered pricing.

Usually the planners of large conferences also set a live attendee threshold. Before they stream any content, they have a target goal of live attendees. This mitigates the risk of losing live attendance and opens up a new marketplace in remote attendees.

Step 3: Coordinating the event

It takes a team of people to make it happen.

The organization itself, meeting planners, production companies, streaming companies and also your attendees.

Choosing the right people for the job can be hard.

Here are our recommendations:

- Work with a company that understands your goals.
- Don't be pressured into streaming your entire conference all at once.
- Never bite off more than you can chew.
- Realize that it takes quite a bit of infrastructure to create an effective virtual conference.
- Be wary of companies that tell you it will be really easy and really cheap, although it should not be enormously expensive either.
- Be open to ideas on what to stream, as well as different pricing models.
- Devise an advertising sales plan. Think of trade show vendors and others that will pay for ad placement on your content.
- Work deliberately. It is not an all or nothing approach. Customize a plan that works for your company.
- Be aware of all the costs, but understand how this can elevate your conferences offerings.

