Best Practices for Hosting
a Virtual Event

Many online virtual meeting/event platforms are video-first unified communications and a great alternative to hosting an in-person event because you can connect speakers, sponsors, panelists and attendees — and replicate much of the face-to-face interaction — anywhere and on any device.

Here are best practices for creating an impactful, world-class virtual event experience digitally.

Hosting tips

The event host sets the tone for the event. Practice and preparation beforehand will ensure your audience has the very best experience. Here are a couple of pro tips to ensure you have a successful digital event:

- Hardwire your internet connection: This will help you avoid any issues with an unstable Wi-Fi connection, which can affect your audio quality and the overall attendee experience.
- Test the audio before your webinar begins: This will ensure your speakers and mic are working properly before the live event begins.
- Minimize background noise: Try to host your event in a quiet place. If you must be in a loud environment, using a headset with a mic often reduces background noise compared with your computer's built-in microphone. In fact, a headset is a general best practice for higher-quality audio than other built-in options.
- Dress to impress: You'll be on video, so be sure to wear business attire. We recommend solid colors as opposed to garments with patterns. Be mindful of any accessories or jewelry if you are expressive with your hands as the noise and movement can be quite distracting.
- Set proper expectations: Create a clear webinar title and description for the content that will be delivered. Make sure you deliver on the content that was promised in the promotions leading up to the digital event.
- Start on time: We recommend you start your event 5 minutes early to allow your attendees to join before the content kicks off. The host should let attendees know when the event will begin and if the content will be recorded and shared afterward.
- Secure a technology team: It is important that you focus on hosting and you have a team running the platform, monitoring speakers and attendees for tech issues, watching for hands raised, etc.
- Contingency plan: No event is ever perfect. Be prepared for what happens if a speaker is sick, loses connection or the slides don't work.

Engaging your audience

One of the main benefits of an in-person event is the interaction. Online events also can offer an informative and interactive experience while you enjoy the comfort of your home or office.
It's important to put just as much effort into the online experience as you would for an in-person event.

Here are a few tips to help you maximize engagement:
- Set the tone: Welcome attendees as they join the event. Start with an icebreaker question and ask attendees to send in their answers in the chat. "Where is everyone joining from today?" "What are you looking forward to hearing/learning about?" Call out some of the answers you hear and share your own response with the audience.
- Utilize Q&A: Designate panelists or other hosts to help answer questions that come in during the event. We recommend you encourage attendees to ask questions throughout the session. This gives you a chance to collect questions as you go and decide whether to answer them live or wait until the end. There's nothing worse than dead air, so prepare a few questions in advance in case you need to fill the gap.
- Polling is key: If you have a built-in polling feature, create 3 to 4 polling questions that can be set up before the event. This is a great opportunity to gauge what information your audience is interested in, their level of expertise and their current understanding or opinions on the content you are sharing. You can also use a third party like Kahoot or Mentimeter.
- Ask for feedback: Include a post-event survey to collect feedback on the presenters, content and audience satisfaction. All you need is the URL for your favorite survey tool. Some platforms launch the survey automatically as attendees leave the event. If not, you can include it in a follow up email.

Broaden your reach

Have you thought about going bigger with your digital event? When the content is set, your speakers are prepped and ready, it's time to go live.

Check if your platform has a feature to broadcast across social channels with Facebook Live, Facebook Workplace, or YouTube Live, as well as a custom livestream integration.