

Hybrid & Virtual Event Production: Elevating the Experience; By Mariana Fernandes, August 4, 2020

It's already been established that virtual and hybrid events are standard. 2020 saw the majority of planners avidly consuming educational content on the topic, reading every article under the sun about virtual audience engagement, sponsorships, speakers, and more.

But how much attention was actually paid to the virtual event production aspect?

We already talked about the importance of storytelling. How detrimental a low level of excellence is to the success of your event. And how the notion that a platform alone is enough to create an engaging and exquisite experience akin to that of an in-person event is dangerous.

Because if we are looking to engage with our audience, we must keep our standards high. Let's take a look at what exactly a production company do for you, and why should you bother hiring one.

What It Was vs What It Is

At its core, production encompasses the coordination, capture, and delivery of content. In a world where in-person events were the norm, this meant that we, as a production company, worked closely with our clients to design a riveting environment that would amount to the final experience.

Our team would then sketch the path necessary to achieve the goals inherent to the event by coordinating all the moving parts of production (cameras, lighting, video, audio, etc.) to bring that vision to life. Along the way, we'd work in lock-step with our clients to pull together all the various elements involved in the event (scripting, video, slides, entertainment needs, etc.), facilitate rehearsals, and then run the show.

Moving Towards Virtual Event Production

Virtual events and, by extension, the virtual component of hybrid events, doesn't imply the termination of production needs. On the contrary – production is what differentiates the professional and polished from the amateurish and mundane. Without the in-person aspect to counterbalance inefficient content, production becomes even more important.

But what does virtual event production look like?

Well, the same variables apply, only in a different context. Just as planners are changing up how they bring people together, we, as a production company, are mixing up how we capture and deliver content. We share what the possibilities are and help you to think strategically about what that could look like in a digital space. Whether it's arranging for studio time with a pared-down team of engineers to capture content live, or pre-record and edit later, we know what it takes to elevate a talking head and convert that into a visually engaging broadcast. We consider everything from the type of cameras and lighting needed, to the bandwidth required to ensure we are delivering quality content for your event.

We are eager to share ideas around enhancements you can add, and different approaches you can take to stage your speakers, so they look their best. Whether it's having speakers present in front of a green screen, utilizing LED panels so we can immerse them in a branded digital environment, or incorporating cutting edge technology that enables us to add layers of augmented reality to what would otherwise be a mundane slide show presentation, we make it our mission to create the perfect equation that leads to the desired result.

Marrying Strategy & Tech Know-How

With every event, regardless of whether it's virtual, hybrid, or in-person, strategy comes first. A virtual event production team will put you on the right path to cement the purpose and main goals of the experience, and will then harness that knowledge as a guide to find, create, and bring together all the elements that make your event exceptional.

There are several ways you can choose to partner with a virtual event production company.

These include:

1. A management solution:

- a. They help you strategize and reimagine all that is possible in a digital form, take care of the production elements and marrying them in the right way by capturing and delivering broadcast-quality content, and look for a tailored set of integrated virtual tools that work as the online gathering place for your event. It's essentially a solution that puts all the weight and responsibility of finding the technical components to work together seamlessly on their shoulders.

2. Bring your own platform/virtual tools:

- a. If you already found a platform or other virtual tools that you're comfortable with and want to bring to your event, a virtual event production team can integrate those elements for you and provide the production services to deliver professional content.

3. Strategy only:

- a. Assuming you already have a production partner and a set of virtual tools for your event but still want some guidance on the ins and outs of transitioning to the digital space, the event strategists can be your creative collaborators. They will help you envision how the whole experience could look digitally.

4. Anything in between:

- a. Each event is unique, and so is each client. A virtual event production team will listen to your needs, concerns, and desires, and come up with the right tailored solution for you.

Virtual Event Production: Behind the Scenes

If you're still a bit confused as to what you can expect by working closely with a virtual event production company, don't worry! As experts in the field who've been there and done that, we're more than happy to let you peek into the brave new world of virtual event production. In a very succinct manner, here's what the whole shebang would look like as a timeline:

Pre-production Kick-Off!

Meet the team leads of the production company, review the scope and goals of the event, and discuss the path forward.

Exciting times because this is the official steppingstone to creating an unforgettable experience!

3 Months: What to expect:

- 1) Exhibitor/sponsors onboarding materials - 2) Pre-production timeline

What you will need:

- Branding & media assets, detailed program agenda

Behind the scenes:

- Technical production elements coordination
 - (this includes remote studio and remote capture needs)
- Begin framing out platform and integrations - Develop supporting production paperwork

2 Months: What to expect:

- Exhibitor/sponsor onboarding sessions
- Event website and session graphic content initial review
- Speaker rehearsals scheduling

What you will need:

- Session outlines and speaker information

Behind the scenes:

- Configure and test the platform functionality - Populate platform with provided media
- Refine supporting production paperwork

1 Month: Event Site Goes Live!

What to expect:

- Review the event website and session graphic content for sign-off
- Production and logistical paperwork

What you will need:

- Confirmed registration numbers

Behind the Scenes:

- Pre-recorded content recordings begin - Refine supporting production paperwork
- Speaker prep calls

2 Weeks: Tie-Down Meeting: What to expect:

Behind the Scenes:

- Pre-recorded content capture sessions
- Fine-tune supporting production paperwork
- Speaker Rehearsals

1 Week: What to expect:

- Check-in Meetings as needed

What you will need:

- Final scripts, presentation, and media

Behind the Scenes:

- Technical rehearsals and final quality control tests
- Speaker rehearsals

EVENT WEEK – Showtime! What to expect:

- Daily check-ins as desired
- Smooth production process
- Session stats and analytics

Behind the Scenes:

- The technical team runs the show

Post Event: What to expect:

- Post-event debrief

Virtual Event Production: Conclusions

As you can see, virtual event production goes far beyond than just locking down a platform.

We mentioned this before when discussing the importance of storytelling, but it's worth repeating – with all the amazing tools and digital resources we have at our disposal, it's time to come to terms with the fact that we have to do better.

Sitting attendees in front of a Zoom call for three hours is not enough to deliver an exciting experience.

And audiences will remember whether their expectations were met, which means this goes far beyond a single event.

So, learn how to make good use of the technology available, expand your budget, and partner with the best!

Thanks for sharing your words and expertise, Will Curran and Endless Events.

Dawn Donahue, VVEM, DES, CCTP

CEO

Go Golf Events Management Inc

www.gogolfevents.com

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dawn@gogolfevents.com 604-628-9547