

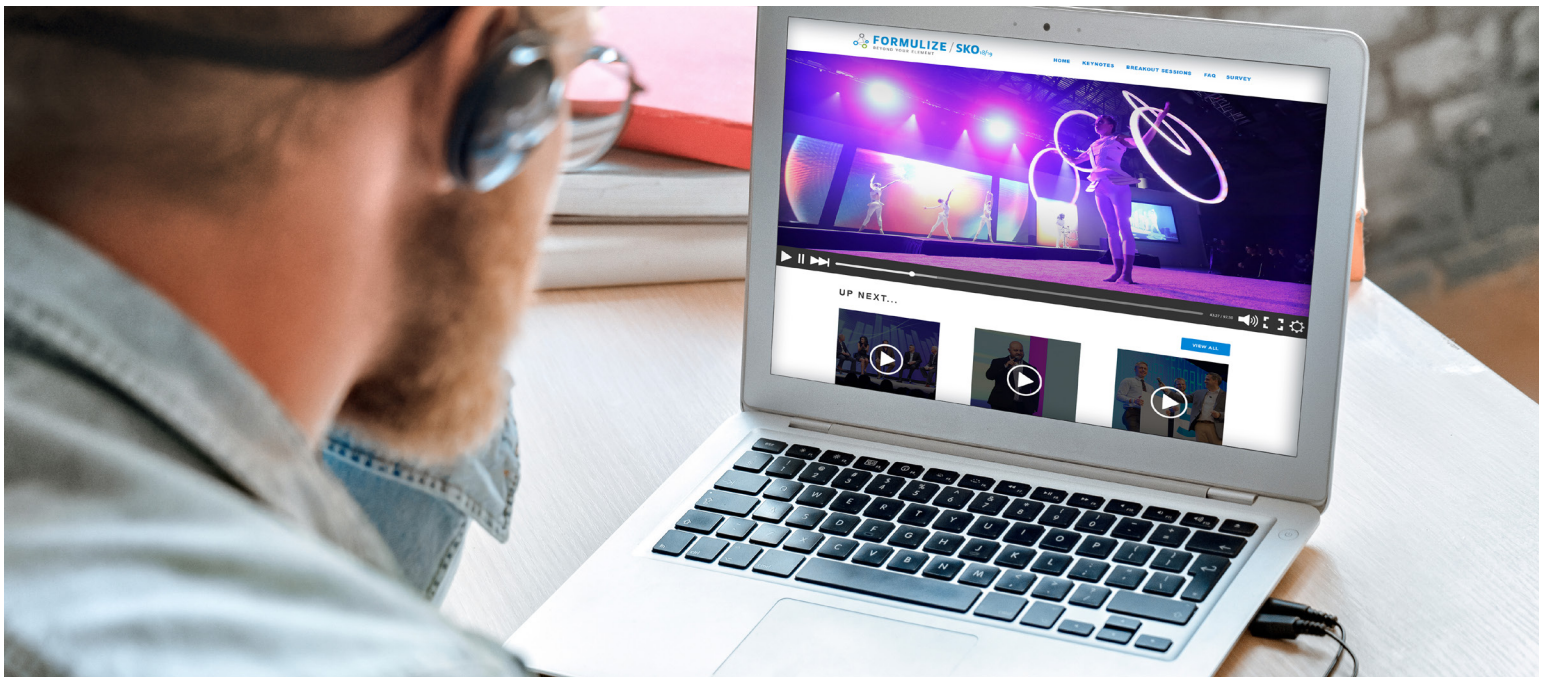
Measuring the Success Of Your Virtual Event: 4 Considerations Not to Neglect

As your event strategy evolves, demonstrating the success of your event is more important than ever. Whether it is face to face, virtual or a mix of both, don't lose sight of these key items when planning your next event.

When it comes to your total event program, virtual events can be added to the mix of events you host, events you sponsor and your internal events. Your event program has critical goals and objectives. When it comes to achieving them, your event program should be looking forward. How you gather like-minded people together can be done in a variety of ways.

For now, virtual events will become the norm to meet event program objectives as organizations reconcile with the impact of COVID-19 on events. But as you plan your long-term event strategy, consider virtual events not only as a replacement of live events, but as a new tool in the mix to enhance your entire program based on your objectives.

Planning virtual events requires the same care and attention—you need to effectively promote the event, engage your attendees, create memorable moments and prove event success.



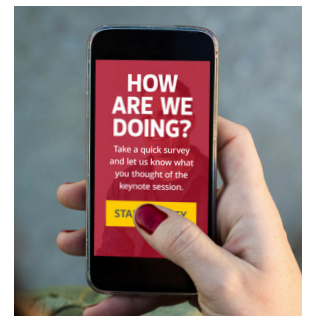
Beware the Allure of Virtual: Attendance Does Not Mean Engagement

Virtual events offer exceptional marketing intelligence, as hard data can be straight forward and easily captured with platforms. But engagement remains the ideal measure of a successful event. Just like an in-person event, it's important to put yourself in your attendees' shoes and understand their desired experience and objectives for attending. Developing a program full of fast-paced and relevant content presented by dynamic speakers is a good starting point to keep people engaged.

Attendees are active participants in your event. Ensure that every minute is accounted for and the virtual audience never witnesses dead air.

Presenters and moderators should remind and encourage their virtual audiences to get involved throughout the course of the event. Go a step further by adding dedicated content and interactive activities to help the virtual audience feel like they are truly a part of the event.

How do you know if your engagement tactics are working? Some common ways to measure virtual engagement include polling during the event, Q&A, viewing time, exit surveys and mentions on social channels. You can take it a step further and score these activities to inform your lead generation strategy.



Ready to Launch: 4 Considerations for Collecting Meaningful Data

Just like the in-person events you're used to, your goals, objectives and message should inform the type of virtual event strategy you'll put together. The building blocks are the same—the tools in your toolbox may simply need to be applied differently.



To measure success, you need meaningful data. (The data is there. And if it's not there, you're using the wrong tool.) And this data should align with your KPIs.

The good and the bad news is that virtual event platforms can provide an overwhelming amount of data. With so much rich data coming in it can be easy to lose sight of some very important considerations: specifically, an influx of audiences that don't fit your typical attendee, a lack of intangible information, superficial data that demands a critical eye and maintaining an iterative strategy.



1

The Floodgates Are Open

Physical venues have a limit to the number of people allowed in. Virtual events make it much easier to scale, meaning you can expand your reach and promote brand awareness. But bigger audiences don't always mean better success. Are all of these people at the same stage of their buying cycle? Probably not. They might be in earlier stages of the funnel. (Or even competitors.) Marketers and planners need to consider this when determining the content, and make sure attendee segments are connected to the most appropriate content at your event. When mapping your journey, include how to engage with these new attendees. Or, if you want to keep your event focused on targeted segments, reconsider how your pre-event communications can support this strategy.

2

"Water Cooler" Connections

What was effortlessly understood is now extremely difficult to gather: those intangibles and the constant feedback loop. Knowing the vibe of a room and gauging body language is not possible through screens. How can you understand real-time reaction? Is the session resonating with attendees as designed? Creative and careful planning at the beginning can allow you to make sure you are getting this important perspective, and that your needs are aligned with chosen technology. Something as simple as monitoring and engaging participants in a chat box can give insight into real-time attendee reactions. More sophisticated platforms can report in-depth viewing metrics and interaction with content.

3

Be a Skeptic

The nice thing about everyone using the same web-based meeting platform is nearly every attendee action can be easily tracked and analyzed automatically. You know detailed demographics, which sessions they attended, even how long they attended and questions they asked. It is incredibly rich marketing data that can then be used to improve event strategy and inform lead nurturing programs.

However, this influx of data can have a lot of unknowns. When you can, seek confirmatory data and develop different ways to explore the conventional wisdom. The age-old axiom, “if something looks too good to be true, it probably is” remains true with surface-level data.

For example, if your attendance grew exponentially by moving to a virtual venue, did the attendees fit the right profile for who your event was targeting? The truer data story of your event might need two numbers—one as the overall count of attendees, and one as the count of target attendees. (Or showing event impact as a percentage of attendees that led to a sale.)

Make sure important engagement data results hold up to a deeper look and, if they do not, get the full explanation. (Keep in mind, though, that you can’t just question the positive.) Dig as deeply into the data as you can, and make sure the data can be trusted and you understand not just the data but the real-life processes that produced them.

These points aside, don’t be consumed by analysis paralysis. When the time comes to make a decision, do so. See what happens and adapt.

4

Keep Learning Cyclical

Strategic event planning is an iterative process and a strategic plan is a living document that continues to evolve through time. The key is to collect as much information as possible to understand what works and what doesn’t to build on in the future—as well as maintaining communication with the audience from beginning to end.

The data you collect will help you tell the engagement story and track it back to overall goals. It can also help inform future event strategy by identifying problems or patterns unique to certain areas and/or personas.

Content can be personalized for those groups to address unique pain points and opportunities. Ask different questions to fill in the gaps. By knowing who attended which sessions, the popularity of specific tracks, sessions and keynotes, as well as any complaints, you can better create personalized experiences at events with a deeper understanding of what each audience segment enjoys.

Get Creative Telling Your Event Engagement Story!

We’ve always said the event needs to continue beyond the final remarks and teardown. Engagement is key—and ongoing engagement is better. When adding more virtual elements into your event strategy, not only are you continuing to gain the best information to inform your direction, you have more in your toolbox to drive the ongoing engagement that will propel your business forward. Learn how to fill in the gaps, ask different questions in different ways and help continue telling the engagement story to track it back to your overall goals.