

Best Practices for Planning a Virtual Event



An Unprecedented Time for Events

As we continue to navigate the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, events all over the world, of all scales, have been canceled – concerts and movie festivals, tech conferences and parades, sporting events and competitions. Like so many other facets of our lives, many of these events have moved online.

This has forced us all to rethink our fundamental understanding of events. Live events are all about connection, be it breakout groups, teamwork, or rousing keynote speeches – people feed off the energy in the room. In contrast, virtual events are about content and engagement – their success is predicated upon the power of what's on the screen. A virtual event can't simply be a livestream of the original event without any tweaks; the content must be dynamic. Everything from speakers' backgrounds to the quality of the presentation materials matters.

It may sound tough, but it's easier than you think to pull off an effective virtual event. At [Glow Global](#), we've already produced more than 20 virtual events during the pandemic, and we've pulled together some of our best practices to ensure that your next event goes off without a hitch.

Virtual Events = Global Exposure

With physical events, turnout is limited to attendees who live in the vicinity or who can afford to travel to the venue. Virtual events, on the other hand, are open to anyone with an internet connection. This means your event – and by extension, your brand – can reach a much wider audience than anything you could host in-person. Where you may have only targeted local residents in the past, now you can rope in attendees from Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond.

That being said, there are some important steps to take to ensure flawless execution.

Designing the Event Canvas



When it comes to designing your event experience, think of yourself as a TV producer. You need to keep attendees engaged, because your virtual event will be competing with other distractions on the screen (e.g., texts, open web browser windows, etc.). This means you need to:

- Keep the content short and digestible.
- Give the event a narrative arc, with small surprises and transitions throughout.
- Remember the small details, like muting all attendees automatically, encouraging speakers to use strong backgrounds and reduce noise, and the different time zones of the speakers and attendees.
- Think about policies – if this is a meeting, do you need to establish quorum to start? What's your no-show policy for attendees who skip the event?
- Give people the space to engage and connect, through Q&A sessions, polling, and live chats where attendees can answer questions from the moderator.

Brand Consistency



Stay true to your mission. Before, during, and after your virtual event, everything you publish – landing pages, content, backdrops, logos, colors – should connect to your branding guidelines. Additionally, your message should align with your company's values and goals. Don't just host any event to stay visible; make sure it's connected to a higher purpose.

Event Length



You don't want to replicate a typical 8-hour conference day. The best events last approximately an hour, with 45 minutes for the main presentations and 15 minutes for the Q&A session. It's possible to push runtime to 2 hours, but as more and more people return to work around the country, this will be harder to pull off.

Livestream vs. prerecorded

Live videos get 10x more engagement than recorded videos, and they provide a space for attendees to get in on the action.

Whether you choose to livestream or prerecord your event is dependent upon the type of event you're hosting. For a webinar, where information is being presented and interaction isn't critical, prerecorded videos give you a chance to make sure everything is perfect. But if you want speakers or your moderator to engage your audience, livestream is the way to go.

For the best of both worlds, you could prerecord your event presentation to ensure flawless execution. After, you could join the live chat to answer questions from attendees. This gives you an opportunity to present your material exactly as intended while still engaging your audience.

Platforms to use

There is a plethora of options for virtual events – Zoom, GoToWebinar, Socio, Hopin, and CommPartners, to name a few. No two platforms are the same, and each one will provide unique benefits based on your needs. To find the one that's right for you, contact **Glow Global Events**, describe your event, and we'll make the best recommendation

Focus on quality

Again, hosting a virtual event is like producing a TV show. You need to pull several elements together and ensure they each run smoothly. This takes a lot of technical know-how and preparation. If your event is executed poorly, it could disappoint attendees, damage your brand, and, worse, be captured and shared online. Invest the time to get it right – your virtual event is just as important as a live event.

Obtain a license to use royalty-free music



Music plays a critical role in most events, and you'll want to use a dynamic soundtrack to keep viewers engaged and signal transitions throughout the program. However, if you use copyrighted music without the proper permissions, you wade into murky legal territory and open yourself up to a range of negative outcomes, from cease and desist letters to lawsuits. To avoid this, it's crucial that you purchase a license to use royalty-free music during your event. A few of our favorite music licensing services include Royalty Free Music, Purple Planet, and Soundstripe.

Get signed audio/video release forms from speakers and talent



Your event will be hosted online and likely shared across the web once it's done. A signed release form gives you copyright protection, so you can share this content widely without facing any kind of copyright liability. In your release form's language, it should be clear that you're only sharing the content to promote the event, not for any type of commercial gain.

Schedule rehearsals



Virtual events seem deceptively easy, but don't be fooled. Set high expectations for execution and schedule rehearsals to make sure everything works seamlessly. Some things to test during rehearsals are:

- Audio integration: Will the audio choices you've made work well (e.g., phone audio vs. VoIP)?
- Speaker's audio quality: Is their audio source clear and reliable? If possible, encourage them to use the same equipment that you're using to ensure compatibility.
- Equipment testing: Make sure everyone involved understands and feels comfortable using the required technology.
- Slide preparation: Click through all slides to ensure they're uploaded correctly, accurate, and in the right order.
- Attendance: Does everyone know how to access the event?
- Run of Show: Confirm the flow of the event and verify details and preparation for any demonstrations or setups.
- Backgrounds: Verify that all hosts, speakers, and moderators are using strong backdrops.
- Emergency plans: Walk everyone through procedures in case of a technical malfunction.

Pre-Event Engagement

Before event day, you want to spread the word across at least six touchpoints, including multiple social media platforms and promotional tools. To maximize attendance, you have to broaden your reach and keep your event front of mind.

During Q&A - always announce who submitted each question

By sharing the name of attendees who've submitted questions, you make everyone feel included. You also show that attendees can play an active role in the discussion. The chance to interact and get specific needs addressed in real-time keeps people actively engaged with the event.

Use redeemable gift cards and coupons in your virtual giftbag

Use redeemable gift cards and coupons in your virtual giftbag. Since virtual events are shorter and more fleeting than live events, virtual giftbags give you a way to make an impact long after your event is over. But gift cards and coupons also give you valuable data on attendees that you can use to book sponsors for future events. You can also use the data to customize gifts and messaging for attendees in future communication.

Have the CEO welcome attendees

The presence of the CEO, or another high-level executive, gives the event an official stamp and lets attendees know that this is a legitimate, professional, sanctioned presentation.

Use a moderator

A moderator helps keep the event organized and on schedule. He or she can keep the conversation moving and ensure that event guests and speakers answer questions from the audience in an orderly manner.

Focus on production quality

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To move your event online or plan your next virtual event, contact Glow Global Events today at hello@glowglobalevents.com