



Best Practices Maximising ROI from Virtual Events

Introduction

We've seen in the last 2 months an unprecedented increase in businesses running online web-conferences and events. When we talk with our customers, we've found that many are struggling with how to generate best value from their events in a number of areas. These include; event registration and onboarding, preparing speakers, managing the production and creating on-demand content.

In response to this, we have put together some best practices that will hopefully help you to get the most out of your virtual events and deliver a superior viewing experience to your audience.

Pre-production Tips

It is important that anyone featured in the video is as well presented as possible. These things may not be noticed consciously, but if something is wrong, then it does get picked up by the audience.

Create a Home Studio

It's likely that the presenters are situated in their home office so think of it as their 'home studio', at least for the duration of their presentation. This video and the points listed below will help guide you to achieving the best visual and audio results:

- How to use natural light effectively
 - Avoid sitting so the window is behind you as you will likely be over exposed and appear dark to the audience. Conversely, sitting directly in front of the window will have the effect of distorting your background.
 - Move slightly away from the window or use blinds to control the brightness.
- Comfort & Lighting
 - Ensure the presenter is sitting on a comfortable chair and ideally one that is height adjustable.
 - The light source should be located behind the computer above the screen, ideally slightly to the left or right, so not directly facing the presenter.
- What's behind you?
 - Keep the background simple, maybe a picture or plant, and don't sit too close to the wall behind you, allow some distance to add perspective.
- Camera set-up
 - Try and adjust your height and the computer/camera height so that you are roughly at eye level with the camera. You should roughly fit (framed) within two-thirds of the screen with a third gap at the top.
- Audio is critical
 - We've all suffered through trying to have a phone conversation with a poor connection. It's very frustrating. Likewise, poor audio will irritate your audience and likely cause many viewers to drop off, and so make sure you have a good quality microphone.
 - Next, test it out using the inbuilt testing software or with a colleague or friend.

- A headset with adjustable mic often works best as you can comfortably adjust the distance from your mouth. Try and purchase one with noise cancellation as this will help cut out unwanted background noise.

Slides and video assets

Prepare your slides and practice how you will use them to explain your subject. Have any videos ready to go with the URL's to those pages or links to YouTube videos set up in your browser. You want to avoid 'scrambling' around for your content on a live event.

Online Event Management & Production

Think about your online event like a real event: you want everybody to feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible while making sure your audience feels engaged. This requires structuring your events differently to real world events, making sure the agenda is even more concise and using the right messaging and multi-channel marketing for your events.

Here a few tips to make your online event a success:

- What's the goal of the event?
 - Decide which form of online event is suitable for your objectives. Is it for customer engagement and marketing or an internal communication? Either way you want to produce something of real value for the audience.
 - If it's a marketing event you want to ensure it results in some form of measurable success and lead to new clients down the line.
 - If it's an internal event, for example, about the restructuring of your organisation, encourage feedback from the audience via Q&A. Perhaps have them submit questions in advance.
 - When choosing the event format aim for a highly informative topic and invite well-respected thought leaders to participate, or for an internal communication, more of a townhall style may better suit your purpose.
- Pick the right tools for the job
 - Choose a streaming platform that provides the features you need for your event.
 - Also consider an event scheduling and registration service such as Eventbrite, Billeto, or Meetup for onboarding and managing registrations
- Publishing your event
 - Create engaging landing pages for your events that highlight the key topics and include speaker profiles.
 - Make sure that the links to your actual online events software are correct and that you do not point by accident to the wrong online event. Many of the online event management platforms had to swiftly adapt to a world where now the majority of events are online. As a consequence, there are still no reliable integrations available and 'syncing links' is still a manual process.
 - Keep in mind that you need to observe GDPR rules when collecting user data that may be used later for marketing purposes.
 - In addition to regular email marketing, use multi-channel marketing to get people to your event. Leverage a combination of LinkedIn, Eventbrite, Twitter, Slack and WhatsApp marketing.
- Speakers & Moderator Preparation
 - Brief your speakers to be even more concise than at real world events.

- Think of your online event like a radio programme. When have you ever listened with attention to somebody doing even a 5-minute monologue on the radio?
- Make sure you have your moderation and the agenda planned out with timings.
- Have a moderator who can interject when speakers go 'off-piste'.
- Make sure you have a prep call with participants well in advance.
- Make a timetable, concise agenda and speaking guide.
- If you're using Zoom enable 'practice mode' so your panellists, or co-presenters can tune in before the actual event starts (at least 20 minutes before) so you can fix last minute tech problems.
- Keep it flowing
 - Make sure to keep your online event interactive. Use the tools provided by Zoom (and others) for audience interaction and in regular intervals pass on their questions, or highlight them, to your panellists.
 - Depending on the size of event you might consider having two moderators: one who manages the actual speakers and keeps the discussion on track and another in the background filtering and answering chat questions as they come in.
 - Depending on the format of the event you can also organise breakout sessions in what is termed 'breakout rooms'. Split speakers off to host these breakout sessions that relate to different topics.
 - With the event goals in mind, think about event follow up in advance. Immediate follow up can be an audience poll at the end of your event which creates immediate engagement.

Post-production

Consider how your audience will be split between a live audience and on-demand. If you have customers or people in other time zones, they may prefer to watch the recorded version. Also, live viewers may want to share the content with colleagues.

Here are a few tips to consider when editing you event video:

- Less is More
 - Look to cut it down to a more digestible length and use chapters to segment the content so the viewer can easily find the topic of interest to them (see interactive).
- Highlights video
 - Create a short video of 2-3 minutes to include soundbites from different speakers. Use this on social media and marketing campaigns to help promote the content and future events.
- Title Cards
 - Use 'title cards' which tells the audience what the subject is about. These can be used to break up the different sections.
- Stings
 - Use an animated version of your company logo with a short audio clip. This helps to brand your content and make you look more professional.
- Branded background
 - Frame the presenter within a background that fits the style and purpose of your message. Create something unique that works as a 'border' around the video frame.

Deliver an intuitive viewing experience with Interactive Video

- Easy Navigation
 - Think from the viewers perspective. They don't want to wade through a long video so break it down into chapters of the topics covered. Create a chapter menu so they can navigate quickly to that section.
- What do they think?
 - Ask their opinion on a subject with built-in questions and capture the data to know more about your audience and to help develop future content.
- Who are you?
 - Add details of the presenters that are clickable – for example, key speakers, LinkedIn profile and email address. It's like a digital business card - we call this a Vidicard.
- Captions
 - Auto generated captions are essential for audio 'off' mode which is often the default setting. Some platforms offer searchable captions so you can navigate to a topic from entering a key word.
- Sign them up!
 - Insert a link to your next event or have them sign up 'in-video'.

Measure and learn from your viewing data to increase ROI

- Analytics
 - Utilise a hosting platform that will provide deep dive analytics. For example, see which sections of the event people are watching and re-watching to understand what the hot topics are.
- Turn views into leads
 - Track individual viewers' engagement so you can see who watched your videos, for how long and which sections. Your business development team can then use this as a call-to action.
- Leverage your tools
 - Integration with email platforms, CRM's and marketing automation tools will help to turn views into sales opportunities. For example, a viewer watches a video about one of your products, automatically send them the next in the series or related content.
- Boost SEO
 - When embedding video on your website, make sure you have injected metadata to boost SEO
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 - If you are looking to monetize your content, make sure you can integrate a paywall with your video hosting platform
- Build a relationship with your audience
 - If you are running regular events, consider creating a Netflix style 'Channel' to publish your videos with one easy embed directly to your website. Keep your subscribers up to date with all your latest content.