

# How to Plan and Execute a Virtual Conference



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Online learning and virtual events have seen a recent growth in popularity and attendees are increasingly looking for a virtual conference option. To help facilitate this shift from in-person events to interactive and engaging virtual conferences, we've outlined the virtual software solutions you'll need and guidance on how to implement these solutions to take your event online.

*Lets discuss some of the keys for delivering the same, great in-person experience online.*



## PLANNING A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

### Engage your audience with the right content and the right interactivity

Consider if there has been historically popular content that people like to attend on-site and your top performers in terms of session topics. If this content is popular in-person, it is sure to still be popular for your online attendees so make sure to have this available. This goes for your speakers as well. If a particular speaker did really well or is highly rated, make sure to include their content as well.

If you are looking for new content to offer, include some hot topics from your industry that attendees will find valuable and informative. Timely, relevant topics are typically well-attended on-site and this content can easily be translated for the virtual format.



## Provide attendee interaction

Interactivity and engagement are crucial to captivating your online audience. It can be a little lonely to sit there on your computer at your office or at home vs going to an in-person conference, so you want to make sure you are considering ways to engage your attendees and giving them the opportunity to engage with one another to make it a less lonely experience.

Here are some ideas to keep attendees active and engaged:

- **Checkpoints** – Use checkpoints throughout sessions to engage your audience and track attendance
- **Quizzes** – Periodically quiz your attendees to see how they are absorbing information.
- **Live Q&A** – Incorporate questions and answers so attendees can interact with speakers in real-time
- **Attendee Chat** – Virtual attendees appreciate opportunities to connect with one another and a chat. Enable the live chat feature during sessions so they can share insights and swap ideas.
- **Interactive Polling** – Engage attendees and create a sense of community through interactive polling
- **Surveys** – Collect feedback on the virtual experience and gets attendees involved with surveys
- **Virtual breakout discussions** – Encourage collaboration and leverage the chat feature for virtual breakout sessions, networking or knowledge sharing
- **Community Forum** – Incorporate forums and chat rooms to extend the experience after the live session



## Offer content variety for attendees through customizable experiences

Just like your in-person event, your virtual conference should offer one or multiple tracks to attendees or sessions can be broken out by theme. You want to provide people with options so they can pick and choose what particular track or theme they want to attend. If there is a particular topic someone is interested in, offering an organized variety of sessions makes it easy for attendees to choose those items.

Your virtual conference programming should be reflective of the learner's interests. Be sure you are taking attendee interests into account and other data to figure out what will play well online and what people will want to see. With an online conference you have the luxury of picking and choosing what you want to broadcast.

## How to incorporate sponsors and exhibitors with your online event

We all know that without sponsors and exhibitors, your in-person events would be difficult to finance. With a virtual conference, you can offer a variety of sponsorship levels at different price points to generate revenue. An all-day or multi-day virtual event, with online learners, offers hours of great exposure to sponsors.



Here are some innovative ways to incorporate your sponsors and exhibitors during your virtual event.

- **Sponsor announcements** – Allow industry partners to sponsor sessions and provide a one-minute sponsor announcement at the beginning of each session. This can include a visual image or quick demo of their product for the benefit of online viewers.
- **Brand the live session window** – Use a custom-branded viewer for virtual sessions that has the capability to incorporate custom logos, coloring, and CSS to highlight your brand better or display a sponsor section.
- **Add a sponsored tab** – Incorporate a custom tab in your session viewer that has text, videos, or downloadable content about a sponsor or exhibitor.
- **Spotlight interviews or vendor demos** – Pre-recorded spotlight interviews or vendor demos with your sponsors and exhibitors can be and played during breaks in sessions.
- **Networking or Breakout Sessions** – Allow industry partners to moderate or sponsor breakout sessions on a certain topic. Sponsoring a virtual networking hour offers great exposure for companies as well.
- **Recorded Commercials** – Capitalize on the time attendees may spend waiting to join a session with pre-recorded commercials or rotating slides from sponsors and exhibitors to display.
- **Virtual Exhibit Hall** – Give your attendees a place to learn more about important products and services with an online exhibit hall. Virtual exhibitors can host online booths and be available for live chats with attendees during pre-set hall hours.

*Now that we've covered the keys to delivering a great online session experience for your virtual event, let's discuss the software solutions that can make it happen.*



# VIRTUAL EVENT SOFTWARE AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Virtual Conference Sessions

Taking your event online means bringing all the sessions and content online too. Our virtual conference session software is the solution you need to livestream or broadcast your event online while giving attendees a great, interactive experience. You can create rich and engaging virtual events with this innovative solution with many features including:

- **Branded learning portal** – The learning portal can be customized to your event and your brand
- **Modern attendee viewing experience** – Attendees will find a modern, mobile-responsive viewing experience that they can interact with
- **Interactivity tools** – Q&A, group chat, real-time polling surveys, and quizzes can be used to engage attendees, encourage them to interact with each other and monitor learner participation
- **Continuing Education & Certification** – Manage continuing education requirements and deliver certification based on your unique requirements

## Digital Networking

Attendees come to an event not only for learning and content, but also to network with their peers and meet new people. Set up your virtual event to intentionally facilitate and create great networking opportunities that will bring value to attendees.

Event organizers can designate networking booths that connect attendees with each other to chat and discuss certain topics of interest. Attendees will be matched with each other to grow their professional networks or discuss a specific topic. These networking chats will also appear in the attendees' post event dashboard, which can include LinkedIn information of the people they connected with. This is a great way to mirror the networking component of a live event.



Be sure to select a moderator for these live chats that can share thought-provoking questions and keep the conversation going. The moderator can also notify attendees how to post their contact information digitally if they want to connect after the event and then close out the chat by thanking everyone for attending.

## Virtual Exhibit Hall

Attendees of in-person events are often looking to connect with vendors to learn more about products and services that will help them do their jobs better. However, just because your event is online, doesn't mean you can't offer this same opportunity.

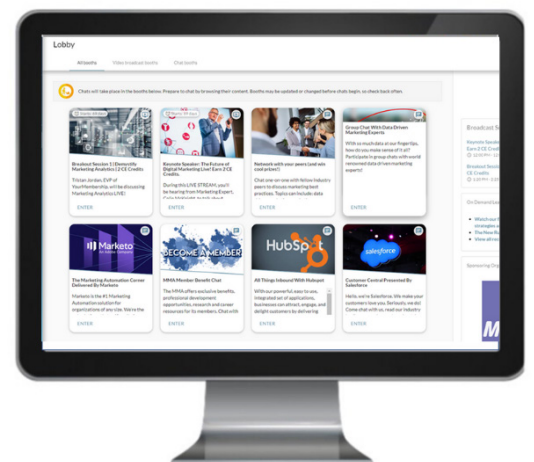
Enable attendees to connect with important service and product providers in your industry with a virtual exhibit hall.

First, invite attendees to visit the virtual exhibit hall lobby. This can be done from one of the live conference sessions or from an email communication.

### EXHIBIT HALL LOBBY

When event attendees register for the event, and enter the event online, they'll be presented with an easy to navigate lobby – a sample of which is what you see here with the made up association “Marketing Managers of America”. The lobby houses all of the information they need to have a great event.

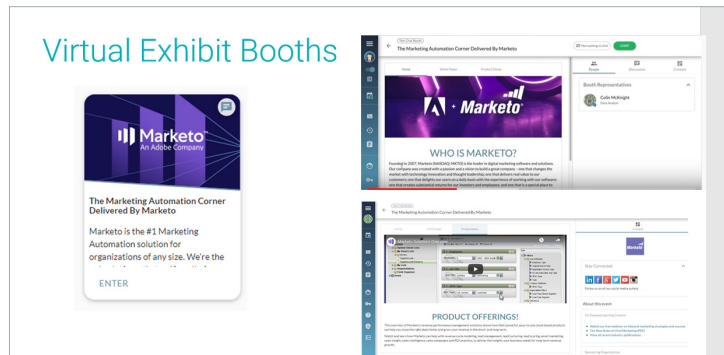
They can enter each booth, simply by clicking the affiliated “Enter” button. The key here is that the experience is as easy to navigate as familiar sites they use every day, like LinkedIn. There is virtually no learning curve. Attendees determine what booths or sessions they want to enter, and away they go.





## PRESENTATION BOOTHS

Attendees that enter a presentation booth will find details about the presentation, uploaded content, and a clock counting down to when the presentation will begin. The presenter can share their webcam, or their screen, and multiple presenters can be included in a single presentation. Once the presentation has gone live, attendees can participate in a live group chat that can be moderated or left to attendees.



## VIRTUAL EXHIBIT BOOTHS

From the lobby, attendees can also choose to enter virtual exhibit booths just like they would on a tradeshow floor at an in-person event. Once inside, they can explore sales materials, video demonstrations, whitepapers, and more, all of which can be uploaded as part of the exhibitor's booth.

## LIVE CHAT WITH EXHIBITORS

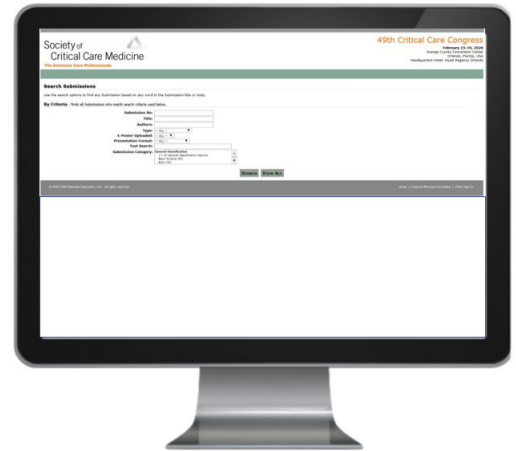
Virtual exhibit booths also provide attendees the option to live chat with a company representative that is staffing the event remotely. Attendees and exhibitors are entered into timed, 1:1 chats together as the timer counts backwards for a specified amount of time to help keep things moving. The attendee and the exhibitor will see critical information about each other's profiles as they chat, so the exhibitor can understand for example, what the attendee's role is and what type of solutions they are responsible for, right from the outset of their discussion.

After their chat completes, attendees can write down private notes, rate the chat, share information about the chat and who they spoke with, with their colleagues, and more. After the event, representatives and attendees each receive a link to a private dashboard with every one of their chats, notes and ratings neatly organized, including full transcripts of every chat.

## Virtual Posters

Virtual posters are a revolutionary solution to bring the in-person poster session online. Using our Virtual Poster solution, attendees can access posters, listen to author presentations and download more information. Authors and presenters have access to upload and manage their virtual posters and contents at any time. Features of the Virtual Poster software solution include:

- **24/7 Access to Virtual Posters** – Attendees can access all posters from any device during and after the event with the ability to search by author, specific text, abstract number or category
- **Audio Presentations** – Presenters and authors have the ability to add audio and video components to their presentations to create more compelling content
- **Interactive Experience** – Attendees and viewers can set up discussion times with presenters to dive deeper into the topic while presenters can provide PDF downloads and other takeaways for attendees to access
- **Reporting and Tracking** – Organizers will be able to track sessions and downloading with robust reporting tools



## Mobile Communications

Now more than ever it's important to remain in contact with your members and attendees and keep engaging with them beyond your event. With our year-round engagement app, Mobile 365™, you can stay in touch with your members and delegates virtually all throughout the year.

The Mobile 365™ platform combines your events and all of your other needs in one user-friendly mobile app, providing sustained and continuous engagement 365 days a year.



This mobile app solution can be configured specifically for your organization with various modules that can be turned on or off including:

- **Community Forum** – Members can discuss hot topics and access the Member Directory where they can search for colleagues and connect easily
- **Push Notifications and Targeted Messaging** – Get your member’s attention quickly with targeted messaging and push notifications
- **Closed Group Committee Forums** – A section specifically for closed group committee forums where you can manage committees and give them a secure place to communicate and share documents
- **Publication Hub** – A publication hub for publishing newsletters and digital magazines making document and news distribution easy and efficient
- **Event App Functionality** – Host and manage multiple event apps from within the Mobile 365 app

Whether it’s to help your members connect with each other, engage on hot topics, get committee work done, generate revenue, or communicate more effectively than email allows, Mobile 365™ has you covered. It’s the best app for your association because it’s a perfect member engagement tool.

## **VIRTUAL CONFERENCE SOFTWARE SOLUTION CHECKLIST**

If you are looking to take your in-person event online or host a virtual conference, be sure to include the software solutions in this checklist:

- ✓ Virtual Conference Sessions
- ✓ Digital Networking
- ✓ Virtual Exhibit Hall
- ✓ Virtual Posters
- ✓ Mobile Communications

To learn more about our Virtual Conference Solutions visit us at [eventtechsoftware.com/virtualconference](https://eventtechsoftware.com/virtualconference) or email us at [eventtechgroup@communitybrands.com](mailto:eventtechgroup@communitybrands.com).