

Hybrid Event Planning Quickstart Guide:

Five Ways to Create an Amazing Dual Experience

INTERACTIVE PDF



Overview

The first step in event management is to clearly understand the goals and objectives of the meeting or event. This remains constant despite the selected delivery method of in-person, virtual or hybrid. The more complex the attendee journey becomes, such as in the instance of multiple audiences in the case of a hybrid event, the more critical this first step in the event management process becomes.

As a result, the various attendee journeys become the backbone of the planning. With a variety of content delivery methods, various engagement strategies, and overlapping audience types, planners must REIMAGINE the event management approach with everything from event design and sourcing to communications, stakeholder considerations, and financial aspects.



Event Design



Stakeholders



Sourcing



Communications



Financial

Bonus: Management Tips!



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REIMAGINE Event Design by first understanding that a hybrid event is more than an in-person and virtual meeting mashed together.

Two Attendee Paths:

The paths of the in-person and virtual attendee, as well as the in-person and virtual speakers, and how they align is the backbone of hybrid event management.

Top Considerations:

1. The path of the virtual attendee and the path of the in-person attendee need to align cohesively to create one synergistic event.
2. The format and structure of each component of the hybrid event may not need to be identical in terms of number of days or hours per day.
3. The in-person component will look different than what was typical in the recent past due to social distancing, health and safety protocols, COVID-19 testing, travel restrictions and other factors.



Best Practices:

- Diagram the experience for the dual attendee and speaker paths. Consider the interactive experience, depending on the location of the speaker and audience (both in-person, both virtual or one of each).
- Design agendas with visual coding and a clear outline of what the attendee will experience in their participation format.
- Consider engagement, entertainment, meals, and gifting to enhance the experience for both the virtual and in-person attendees.
- Outline and budget accordingly for both the digital and in-person technology requirements.



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Early stakeholder clarity and support will enhance the hybrid event strategy. While many factors tend to evolve over the course of the planning process, clearly identifying a path becomes imperative to success.

The top priorities and role of the event stakeholders and executives has evolved.

Top Stakeholder Considerations:

1. Consider how the hybrid strategy aligns with and supports the goals and objectives of the event.
2. Meeting and corporate policies and may need to be updated to address hybrid events.
3. Emergency preparedness planning is more critical than before.
4. Understand the budgetary differences between virtual and in-person events.

Best Practices:

- Seek professional advice to re-evaluate corporate policies as it relates to reimagined events moving forward.
- Engage internal stakeholders and consultants to revise meeting policies as needed.
- Update emergency preparedness plans before you begin to provide event managers insight on elements to consider in execution.



Sourcing



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REIMAGINE sourcing by encouraging critical event management decisions well in advance.

More Than Logistics:

At first glance, it may appear the greatest adjustment in reimagining events lies within the way event managers plan and execute. While it is true there are enormous shifts in how event planners approach logistics, the largest adaptation is how buyers and event managers will need to engage to source a hybrid event.

Top Considerations:

1. Event managers and buyers must change the way they have sourced in the past with numerous decisions regarding the logistics of the program and agenda confirmed well in advance.
2. Consider multiple in-person event locations versus one central venue to address travel and health and safety concerns.
3. Local rules and regulations are constantly changing.



Best Practices:

- Decide on virtual vs. in-person components before sourcing the in-person venue(s).
- Assign responsibility to a lead to understand and stay on top of local regulations.
- Develop a new sourcing discovery process that addresses the objectives, revenue goals, success metrics, mix of attendees, program agenda, event flow, technology, and experiential engagement.
- Work closely with the hotel and venue partners, as many properties are making changes and increasing in-house capabilities to adjust to the growing virtual and hybrid event requirements.



Communications



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REIMAGINE communications by placing an increased focus on strategic event marketing for your hybrid events.

More Targeted, Less Fluff

In the past, events were familiar to attendees. There was a certain level of understanding the attendee had going into a conference, sales or leadership meeting, product launch or training event. That is not the case any longer. What to expect at events moving forward comes with a level of uncertainty for attendees, sponsors, and stakeholders. Clear, concise, and authoritative communications will be needed to alleviate that uncertainty.

Top Considerations:

1. Attendees have a lot more questions and don't know what they don't know about events moving forward.
2. There will be many more segmented audiences based on their attendee journey and participation type.
3. How to incorporate a multimedia strategy and leverage multiple distribution channels.

Best Practices:

- Start with a well-defined, segmented communication strategy and plan.
- Send communications early and often; focus on a consistent message.
- Clearly outline digital vs. physical expectations and elements and how they will support and engage with each other.
- Incorporate the attendee journey into the messaging, including, but not limited to the following:
 - Website/virtual platforms
 - Invitations and registrations
 - Teasers and promotional communications
 - Reminders/instructions/links to content
 - Post-event access to content, surveys and follow-ups
 - In-person attendees' code of conduct (screenings, seating, spacing, masks, etc.)
 - Speaker & presenter communication, training, and rehearsals
 - Creative design and video productions/storage/on-demand content



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REIMAGINE financial considerations by allowing the inherent value of face-to-face meetings and the leverage value of virtual to drive the overall value and need to invest in hybrid events.

Budget Variances:

Cost increases may include: Technology support, production, increased bandwidth, supplying PPE. Stakeholders may see increases in hotel/venue F&B per person to cover increased staff needed, room rental based on the space needed for health and safety protocols.

Cost decreases may include: Travel (air, expense reimbursements), overnight rooms, and hotel/venue F&B overall with potentially fewer people on-site.

Budget reallocations may include: “On-site” staff as planners may need fewer people at the venue, but will need to be reallocated to support the virtual participants.

Top Considerations:

1. Hybrid isn't necessarily less expensive; it's just allocating the investment differently.
2. You can't put a price tag on the face-to-face experience.
3. Exhibitors and sponsors are looking for expanded and different ways to reach both sets of attendees.

Best Practices:

1. **Don't skimp on the virtual attendees!** Think of sporting events – the in-person and the virtual (TV) audiences have different experiences, but both are valuable to the sponsors.
2. Invest in pre-recorded content to maximize the critical material that needs to be covered live.
3. If the event has exhibitors/sponsors, look at both the virtual and in-person opportunities to drive revenue and return for their investment.



Bonus - Management Tips



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REIMAGINE program management by understanding that basic assumptions may no longer hold true and the way event planning is evolving.

If event managers are going to reimagine events starting with hybrid, then the tools, templates, timelines, planning workbooks, SOPs and budget templates will in turn need to be reimaged. This is an opportunity to not simply look at these tools as tactical but as a consultative toolbox to lead event stakeholder conversation.

Top Considerations:

1. This isn't planning one event – it is two separate but overlapping events.
2. Goals and objectives are the top priority. Building a successful event starts with being able to articulate WHY it is important.
3. The attendee is at the center of everything – whether they are participating in-person or virtually.

Best Practices:

- Start early.
- Create a comprehensive run-of-show that outlines the program for both attendee types.
- Involve all the relevant parties in creating a cohesive communication plan – not only the stakeholders but the hotel/venue, production company, ground transportation and any other vendors critical to the success of the program.



Resources

This is an opportunity to not simply look at these tools as tactical but as a consultative toolbox to lead event stakeholder conversations.

Additional Resources:

- [Hybrid Events: Unique Attendee Experiences](#)
- [10 Considerations for Sourcing Hybrid Events in 2021](#)
- [Virtual Meeting & Hybrid Event Production](#)
- [Virtual Meetings & Hybrid Event Management](#)
- [Gifting Programs a Hot Topic for Hybrid Meetings](#)
- [Event Health, Safety & Emergency Planning](#)

Looking for some Hand-On Assistance?

For more information about managing a hybrid event, use cases or best practices, call Meetings & Incentives Worldwide directly at (262) 835-3553 and ask to speak to an event management pro.

Already an M&IW Client?

Contact your dedicated program manager to learn how to leverage the latest technology at your next hybrid event.

