

Virtually Speaking – Tips for Planning An Online Event

Allie Levy, CMP, Senior Manager, Meetings & Exhibits, AAPA
Cindy Stickles, CEM, Director, Conference & Exhibits, AAPA

Disclosures

We are both AAPA Staff members.

Learning Objectives

- At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:
 1. Identify three virtual meeting planning trends
 2. Review the steps needed to plan a virtual meeting
 3. Develop strategies for executing a virtual meeting

PIVOT

“A change in strategy without a change in vision.” ~ Eric Ries

Virtual Meeting Planning Trends

- This is not a replica of your in-person event
- Connections are just as important as content in a virtual environment
- Virtual and hybrid solutions are the future of events.



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

- Purpose/Goals and the Initial Planning
 - Get input from all stakeholders – leadership, relevant departments and BOD
 - Create your vision – determine what is important for you and the organization
 - Create your budget
 - Keep stakeholders informed throughout
 - Survey members



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting



• Platform

- You want to select a known and trusted company
- Determine whether you need a self-service or a full-service solution and will you need production help?
- Ask for demos, and more demos
- Verify your streaming and bandwidth requirements
- Will you need registration functionality?
- Track engagement using analytics data provided by the platform
- Consider your integration needs

Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting



• Platform

- Make sure you know what level of support you will get from your vendor
- Do you plan to use the platform for future events?
- Have your vendor provide all your costs up front
- Is the solution scalable?
- Make sure you deliver a high-quality and user-friendly experience and design
- ***It MUST be more than Zoom!***

Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

- Content
 - Lectures
 - Discussions
 - Workshops
- Content Delivery
 - Livestream
 - Pre-recorded with live Q&A (simulive)
 - Pre-recorded on demand
 - Use an MC or moderator
 - Will your content be enduring?



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

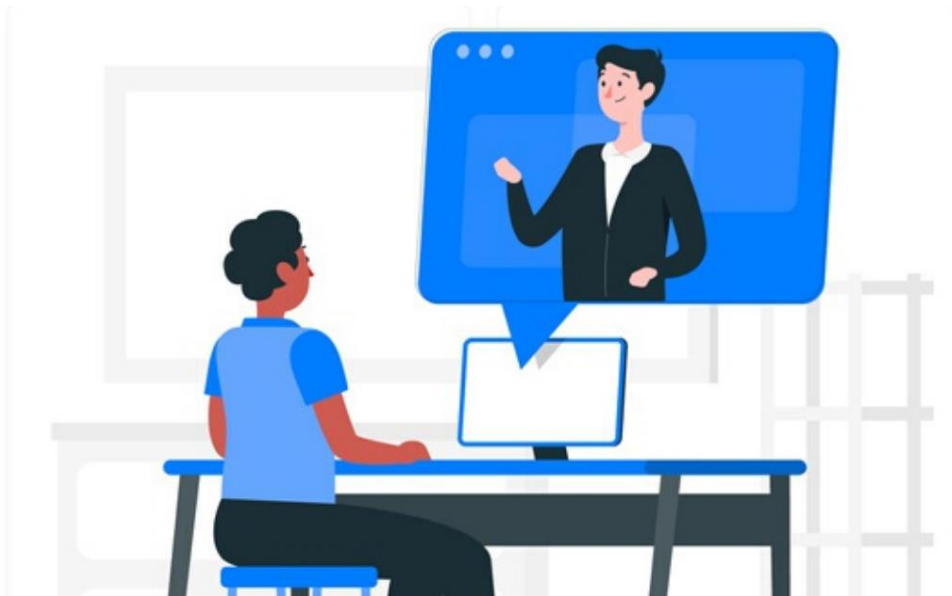
- Engagement
 - Plan for engagement
 - Chat, Q&A and polling
 - Breakout sessions
 - Gamification
 - Social media
 - Happy hours
 - Notifications/alerts
 - Use a networking and matchmaking tool
 - Have attendees create a profile
 - Matchmaking is a science, recommending connections with other attendees or exhibitors



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

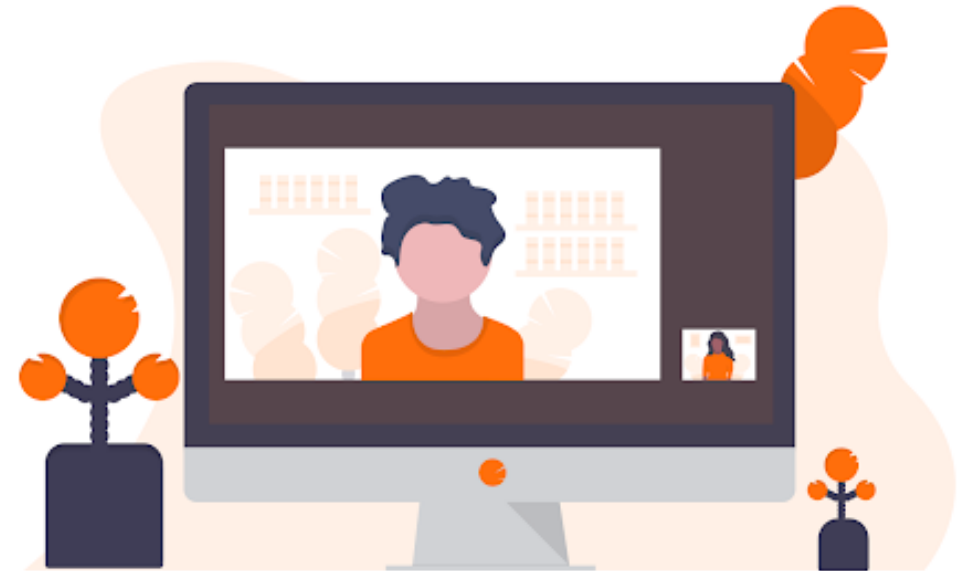
○ Speakers

- Invite dynamic and engaging speakers who know their content
- Live vs pre-recorded vs simulive
- Provide detailed instructions and training
- If your speakers are being pre-recorded build in plenty of time for editing and testing
 - Record using Zoom and Power Point

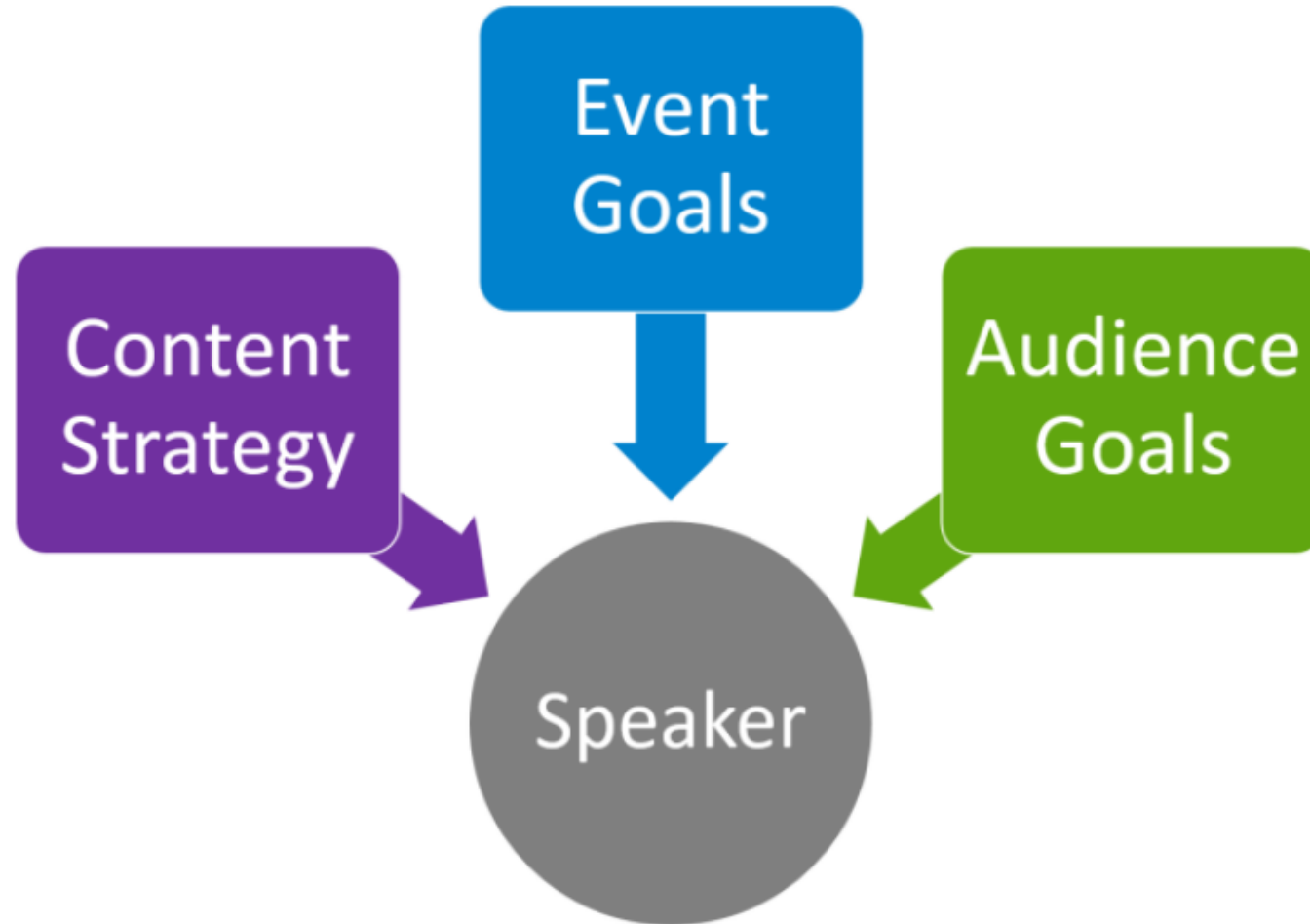


Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

- Speaker tips
 - If on webcam..
 - Advise to have webcam at eye level
 - Make sure you have good lighting
 - Do not wear anything distracting
 - Keep your background simple
 - Audio
 - Set-up in a quiet place with no background noise
 - Take time and speak slowly
 - If presenting live, reminder on the timing and have them keep a timer nearby



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting

- Sponsors can provide added value as well as additional revenue
 - Sponsor meal delivery through Grub Hub or Uber Eats
 - Sponsored sessions
 - Provide sponsored virtual swag
 - Sponsor an engaging networking event or happy hour

- Exhibitors
 - Use multiple tiers, like silver, gold and platinum
 - Exhibitor profiles should be robust and include
 - Handouts and videos
 - Video chat/Networking/Matchmaking
 - Gamification



Steps to Plan a Virtual Meeting



- Post Conference Survey/Evaluations
 - It is important to get feedback from your attendees, so you know what worked and didn't work
 - This is necessary for planning future virtual conferences
 - Send it out on the last day of conference so it is fresh in their minds.
 - Have evaluations for each session so you can determine how the speaker was and if you want to invite them back for another conference

Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting



- Research

- Check out what other organizations are doing.
- Register to attend some other virtual conferences to get ideas
- Continue to read articles and go on free webinars to hear what is working for people and to stay on top of the trends

Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting

- Timing

- Start planning well in advance
- Determine event dates
- Attendees' location and thinking through the various time zones.
- Open registration no later than 4-6 months prior to the event dates
- Create milestones and deadlines (*this includes working with vendor on their deadlines*)



Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting

| Weeks Out | 2021 |
|------------------|-------------|
| 12 Weeks | 9 |
| 10 Weeks | 23 |
| 8 Weeks | 40 |
| 6 Weeks | 52 |
| 4 Weeks | 72 |
| 2 Weeks | 120 |
| 0 Week | 219 |
| FINAL | 282 |



Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting

- Value

- What sets your virtual experience apart from others?
- Can you make your content enduring?
- What is included in registration?



Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting

- Promotion

- Don't forget to promote the engagement opportunities
- Provide Incentives where you can
- Include Orientation Videos
- Don't skimp on reminders and communication



- Support/Staffing

- Moderators for Q&A and chat
- Tech support
- Customer support
- Sufficient Staffing



Strategies to Execute a Virtual Meeting


- Take risks!
 - You won't know if something works until you try it.



Meeting Profs When Asked About the Last Event They Planned



It's been 84 years...

 @connectmeetings

Take Home Points

- Trends are constantly changing but virtual is here to stay.
- Choosing the right partners will help ensure success.
- Plan early and think through the entire attendee experience when you plan.
Put yourself in the attendee's shoes (or slippers)!
- You will continue to learn and adjust throughout the planning process and as you run each new virtual event.

References

- PCMA Digital Event Strategist Course
 - <https://www.pcma.org/products/des/>

- PCMA Convening Leaders
 - DEI – The Future is Hybrid

Questions?

Contact us at meetings@aapa.org.

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