

The Virtual Event Playbook

Your Step-by-Step Guide
to Virtual Events



There is no need to iterate the value of meetings and events –throughout time they are what has allowed humans to come together, share, meet, discuss, achieve, acknowledge and enable progress in one way or another.

The way humans are able to meet and have event experiences has now changed, and with that change has come many challenges and opportunities. You'll learn the fundamentals of Virtual Events, get step-by-step guidance to take your events virtual and get insight into the multitude of opportunities that await us in this new realm.

Let's go!

**Expect change.
Analyze the landscape.
Take the opportunities.
Stop being the chess piece;
become the player.**

It's your move.

Tony Robbins



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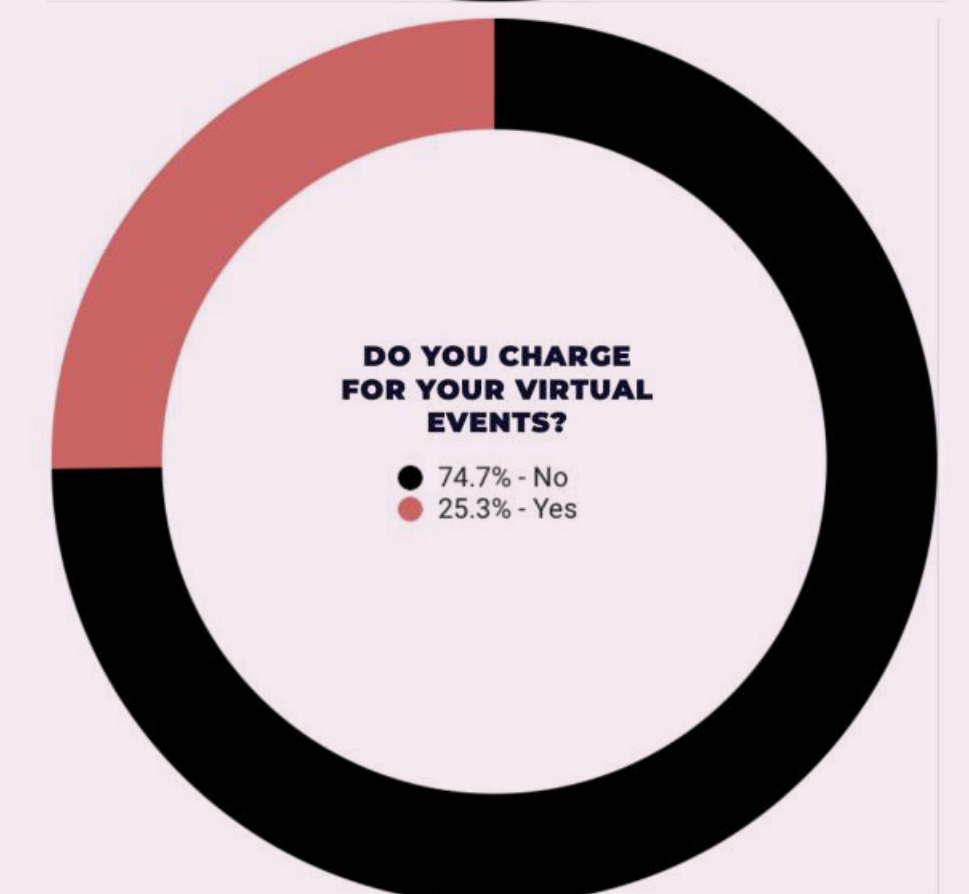
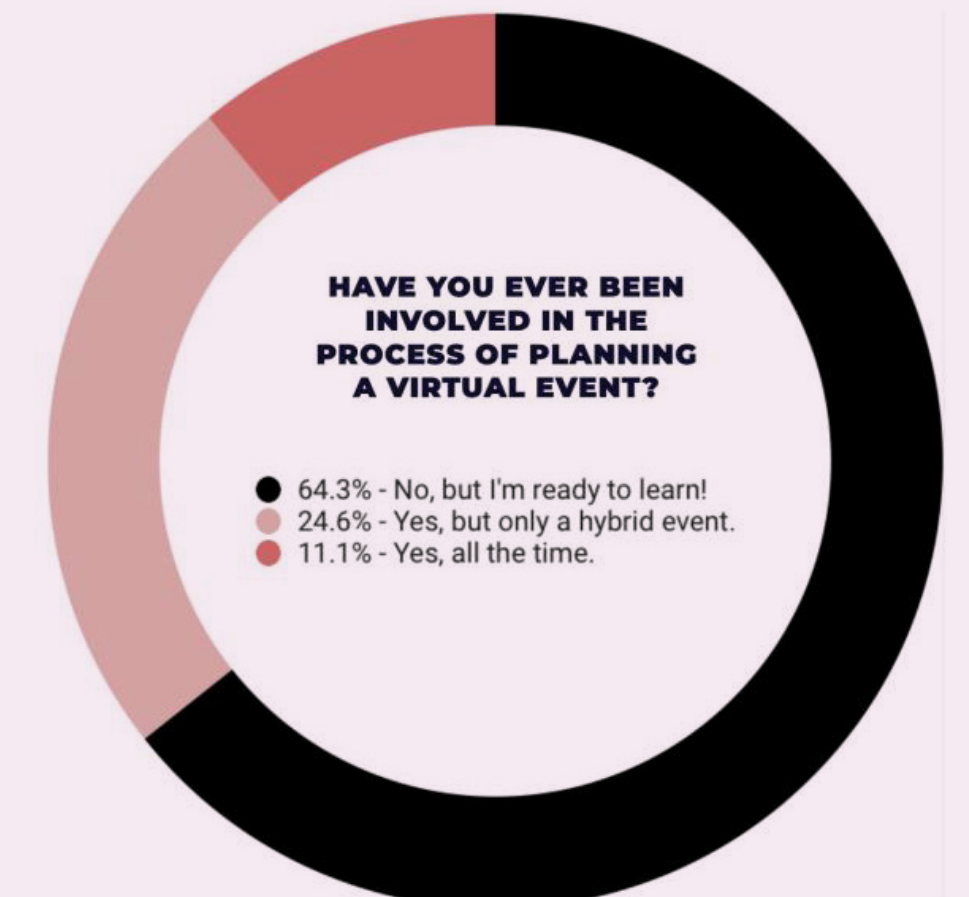
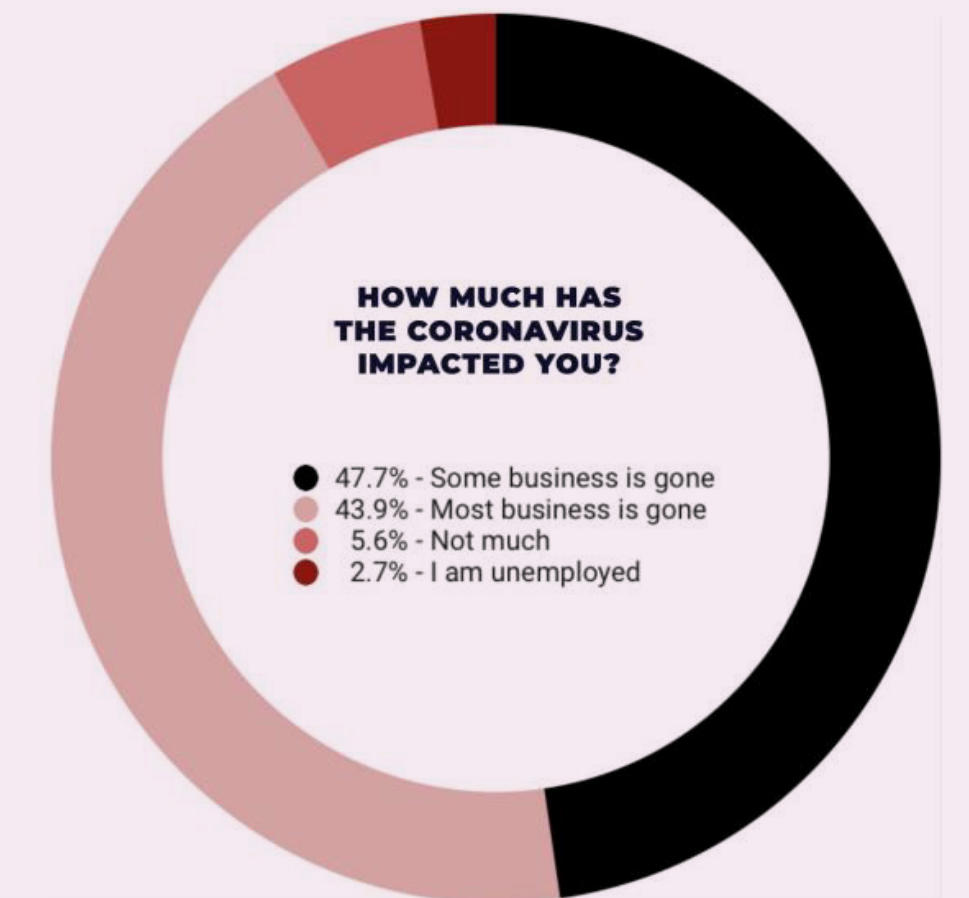
Step-by-step to your Virtual Event Success

1. Identifying the objective of the event
2. Considering format, structure, length & interactivity
3. Creating your Digital RSVP Process
4. Marketing your event
5. Sorting your technicalities
(Speakers, exhibitors, documents etc)
6. Feedback, analytics & gaining momentum

Interesting Stats

In a survey Flock conducted at a SAACI (South African Association for the Conference Industry) in February 2020, we managed to get some very interesting data on how some of the events industry were feeling about events, technology and what will make their events stand out. Just 6 weeks later and the entire events industry completely changed. Here were some of the questions and results from back then, and some questions from a survey after the Corona Virus had hit:

- **How many planners currently use technology at their events?**
81% said they do, and the other 19% will now we doing just that.
- **Do you think events and conferences will be relevant in 20 years?**
The answer was a resounding 83% yes but the event landscape has completely changed since.
- **How will your use of technology change this year?**
91% said there would be an increase of tech use (and they were VERY right).
- **Which trend will be easiest adopted in 2020?**
Experience creation (36%), Sustainable events (28%) and Technology (28%).



Get to know your consumers

What are virtual events, the different types, and why they'll always be needed.

Virtual Events are any events or gatherings that are done completely online. We believe the future consists of Hybrid Events –a merging of traditional, in-person events, with a much stronger online component than ever before.

This brings with it a multitude of opportunities, for example, more sponsorship spaces and more ticket sales because of a global audience reach. Imagine being able to attend an exhibition in San Francisco when you are based in South Africa, and have a similar experience to being there in-person –never before has that been possible and so easy to do.

The Virtual Events follow similar structures to traditional events where:

- There is an audience
- They are marketed to and invited to the event, with confirmations and reminders professionally branded and sent
- There is an event “production” completely online with speaker sessions, interactivity, information sharing with documents, and then
- There are event analytics and feedback to look at and improve on



Webinars usually just have speaking and engagement functions, and **Virtual Conferences** will generally have other components such as Virtual Exhibition Booths and specific networking aspects. **Hybrid Events** are then when an event has a strong online and in person component (which can often increase audience reach & ticket sales massively).

Events can largely be simplified to one of these 4 purposes regardless of how it is held:

- 1) Sharing information and learnings (Conferences, seminars, training, workshops, sales conferences)
- 2) Product or brand showcase (Product launches, activations)
- 3) Networking (External or internal business events)
- 4) An event experience (Music festivals, entertainment, comedy)

Events as an industry is changing drastically, but to think that events will no longer exist will be to deny the intrinsic human need to connect and that can never be completely eliminated. There are many opportunities in this unexplored landscape and its up to us to explore them together.

VIRTUAL EVENT TYPES:

- Webinars
- Virtual Conferences, Summits & Exhibitions
- Hybrid Events

Virtual Events Building Blocks

Identify the end goal to ensure the content, structure and other aspects of the event all achieve that goal. Also identify a typical profile of an attendee this helps ensure content is relevant, that your attendees are kept engaged (with activities/features suited to them) and that the focus remains on the attendees experience.

Online access means that a challenge could be retaining the attention of your guests. Shorter sessions, sharp and valuable content, engaging speakers, interactivity, and (sponsored) breaks and networking sessions will be the answer here. Provide briefs for speakers to follow, ensure slides are well designed and talks are lively, and keep it short and varied.

With technology available today, it's so much easier to keep track of everything from the Marketing Analytics through to Feedback Results. Examples of some analytics are impressions and views on marketing & advertising, click through's, no. of event registrations, actual attendance numbers, numbers of those who engaged in activities, survey completion etc.) which are all vital to keep track of.

Aims & attendee profiles

Event marketing

Event structure & content

Engagement & interactivity

Event marketing will always be what brings in more attendees, so ensure your messaging speaks to the right attendee insights, the channels you use are selected strategically, and your design material is eye catching, professionally branded from the first contact point, to the invites, to the event itself.

Analytics

Following from the previous point on keeping attendees attention with good content is the next point on creating engagement and interactivity. Interactive sessions with quizzes, physical tasks or online group activities can help to keep attention, especially if there are incentives attached and there are tons of creative ideas coming up for engagement activities that are Virtual Event friendly.

Event technology you need

1) EVENT WEBSITE

This is the focus point for all your event conversions so its important for it to be slick, full of relevant and catchy content, and a place for people to RSVP and even be asked some questions for your event data collection.

2) EVENT REGISTRATION AND TICKETING

Event registration software can provide direct access to the event or can prompt attendees to buy tickets to gain access through ticket sales platforms depending on the type of event you are creating.

3) COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Emails –Invites, Confirmations, Reminders, SMS, WhatsApp, Social Media, Push Notifications, Mobile App –all the tools you’ll need to easily notify your attendees.



4) LIVE STREAMING, WEBINAR, VIDEO, VIRTUAL EXHIBITION CAPABILITIES

You'll need a way to stream the live sessions and recordings, this is the platform that hosts the entire online experience during the event.

5) ENGAGEMENT AND NETWORKING PLATFORM

This may be integrated in the above platforms, but its important to mention it specifically as some events are solely based around networking and connecting.

This platform may be in your mobile app or in the online platform being used for live streaming, webinars or virtual exhibitions.

6) MOBILE APP WITH SURVEY CAPABILITIES

A tough aspect of virtual events is having everything feeling consolidated, like you are at an event. With a mobile app, this is made easier because attendees have one place to go to for all communication from organisers, all other attendees, social aspects around the event, links they need to access, documents to fill in or to download –as opposed to everything being in various emails sent to clients. Mobile apps are also great for additional sponsorship opportunities.

Preparing your attendees

The success of the event depends largely on the attendees experience, and its important to let attendees know how to engage, what to expect, and to do it in a way that gets them excited to be a part of the event as opposed to a long list of rules and guidelines with access codes and multiple registrations at different stages. Make use of mobile as a platform to communicate (through push notifications, Whatsapp or SMS), use email, or a simpler option may be a mobile app so it keeps all event content consolidated.

Manage expectations for the event (as online & virtual events are also new for many attendees) so you may have to let attendees know, for example, that bandwidth may be an issue but reassure them that the on-demand video will be available afterwards (for free or for a price).

- Let attendees know the benefits of attending the event, the benefits of buying a ticket, and encourage sharing in their networks.
- When it comes time for the event, make sure there are reminders set up so attendees don't miss the event, and that there are easy to follow guides.
- All events will use different software with various access rules so make it easy for guests to get into your event by giving them everything in one place.
- An event app works well for that, especially if you'd like one place to send documents, have updates and notifications, social feed and links to webpages and other resources.

Step-by-step to your Virtual Event Success

Over the next few pages we've provided a guide on the steps to create a new virtual event or take an existing event online.

1. IDENTIFYING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE EVENT – There are generally going to be one of four purposes to events you're holding, 1. Information Sharing events (Sales kick-offs, conferences, seminars, workshops, classes etc), 2. Product Showcase & Brand events, 3. Networking Events, 4. Event Experiences.

2. CONSIDERING FORMAT, STRUCTURE AND LENGTH – Attention spans are very short, with breaks needed every 30-45 minutes especially in webinars. Working with the structure and format of your event will be important to add value to your attendees whilst ensuring they are fully engaged, and that the flow makes attendees feel comfortable.

Interactivity as often as possible is encouraged –so live polls, live Q&A's, music breaks or even treasure hunts will be welcome to keep things exciting. At Flock, we engineer the virtual event experience with planners to bring excitement to each virtual event we have a part in.

PLANNING QUESTIONS:

Will content be live, pre-recorded, or a mix of the two?

Will you alert the audience beforehand on what to do in case of connectivity issues?

How long will you tell your speakers to prepare for?

3. CREATING YOUR DIGITAL RSVP PROCESS – This is made easy by platforms like ours who provide all the tools for creating a professionally branded event website for RSVP's, emails for the entire RSVP process, and reports that collate all information simply. Think about the user journey from the first time they see an ad or communication about your event, ensure they have a link to the event website either in an emailer or elsewhere, and the automated RSVP process with emails will do the rest.

4. MARKETING YOUR EVENT – we could write an entire ebook on this topic! As a matter of fact, we have, and if you [join our waiting list](#) for it, you will be first to receive it once its launched!

Though to give you an overview, you'd probably start off with the more popular channels for your target market like sending email invites or mobile marketing, and then go onto social to widen your audience, and Google ads. Marketing the mobile app download to anticipate the event will also be good to do here.



5. SORTING YOUR TECHNICALITIES (SPEAKERS, EXHIBITORS, DOCUMENTS ETC) – Event planners will always have to work with many moving parts to put events together, whether it is online or in-person, so much goes in to perfecting the event experience and part of it will be ensuring that the technicalities for delivery are going to be perfect. Ensure you have briefed your speakers and asked if they will do a pre-recorded or live session. Ensure you have all information from exhibitors that you need to populate the virtual event booths, and that you have all documents for sessions so your attendees aren't left waiting. Technicalities for all the interactivity, activity breaks and networking breaks will also have to be catered for.

6. FEEDBACK, ANALYTICS & GAINING MOMENTUM – Collecting feedback from attendees can happen at registration phase, during the event with the interactive elements like live polls and Q&A, as well as at the end of the event through the mobile app survey, or one that's prompted at the end of the event live stream. It's always important to get insights from the research, use that to improve on the event next time, and even to create a wait list for the next event and start gaining momentum for an ongoing series.



Tips & Tricks

Some things only come from experience with doing virtual events, and seeing what works and what could have worked better. Here are some tips we've picked up so far.

- 1)** Prepare speakers before hand, and ask them to place their cameras slightly above where they will be sitting, so that it's a more flattering view. This will also help them with feeling confident. Either that or get a professional AV team to record you at a studio.
- 2)** Create a Virtual Event Checklist that's unique to your event (we've created one for you on the next page).
- 3)** Extending reach of Live Stream to as many social platforms as possible (or a small part of the event at least) LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and more.
- 4)** Delivering a goody bag, wines for tasting ahead of time to attendees.
- 5)** Having music played at the opening or during intermissions makes the event feel a bit more vibey.
- 6)** Have a physical game people can play in your interactive moments between sessions or at the start of networking break.

**“Opportunity
is everywhere.
The key is to
develop the
vision to
see it.”**

Anonymous



Virtual event checklist

EVENT TECH

- ☐ Digital RSVP & Ticketing
- ☐ Live Stream Platform
- ☐ Event Website
- ☐ Mobile App
- ☐ Interactive software
- ☐ Goodie Bags

POST

- ☐ Plan for next time
- ☐ Keep communicating
- ☐ Build up database
- ☐ Sponsorships
- ☐ PR

PLANNING

- ☐ Monetize
- ☐ Budget finalising
- ☐ Do rehearsal
- ☐ Bandwidth requirements
- ☐ Briefing to speakers

MARKETING

- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Paid Digital Ads
- ☐ Emailers

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Maintain throughout
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Email
- ☐ SMS
- ☐ Live Polling
- ☐ Q&A
- ☐ VR Experiences

ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Activities
- ☐ Networking Breaks
- ☐ Ice breakers
- ☐ Quizzes

What's Next

- Unfortunately this may not be the only time we have to resort to entirely virtual events, and we will need to think about what we'll do when this happens again, what can we do to prepare? What is the next step from here?
- Think 5 years ahead on where we are at now to try see what the future has in-store and how you could prepare for the changes.
- Be flexible with business and offerings, and understand what your customer needs as those needs change.
- We believe what's next is an eventing landscape with endless possibilities for extended audience reach, sponsorship opportunities, impactful creativity and incredible experiences for attendees. There are no limits to the worlds that can be created for attendees and we are thrilled to be a part of it with you.

Need event tech like you've read all about? Get in touch to chat about RSVP Management, Event Websites, Networking Events, Virtual Reality, Feedback and Analytics, Attendee Engagement and much more in the world of Virtual Events.



www.flockplatform.com

