

# ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL HYBRID EVENT FROM A TO Z



events arose.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the global MICE industry. Live events - the core part of the business until before the crisis - were no longer possible. However, the industry reacted and showed creativity. Within a few weeks, virtual formats and platforms were created that enabled encounters in digital space and included the elements of live event marketing - the hybrid

Now, 18 months after the start of the pandemic and at a time when personal encounters are again possible on a larger scale, a variety of questions arise. How much 'digital' will the future of the MICE industry be? **Will hybrid events - as a combination of online and offline elements - be the norm in the future?** And how to successfully organize such an event?

In this context, the IMEX Group, a well-known organizer of events, decided to get to the bottom of these developments and to publish a whitepaper called "Step by step towards a successful hybrid event".

## Set Your Goals

Every event needs an objective. In the planning of hybrid events, goal setting is crucial. First, you must define what should be achieved with the event. This will give you information about which digital tools you should integrate and which interactions between the participants are the focus.

Moreover, check whether there are differently relevant participants and where your participants are. This will help you define the number of live and digital attendees you will have.

Finally, opt to check the digital affinity of your participants. Before a hybrid event, it is essential to check which tools the target group is already familiar with, and which tools may need a little more introduction.

## Event Location

It is not enough to equip a live location with individual cameras. You need a studio or the possibility of setting up a studio in the live location, which does not lose its effect like a stage for the participants on site.

Another important point is flexibility. The change between live, hybrid and digital should work effortlessly in the location to be able to react flexibly.

You must also not forget to plan more time for rehearsals, since hybrid events require, even more than live events, a smooth technical process - otherwise you can lose some of the participants.

While it sounds simple, you should never forget to secure a Wi-Fi connection for the participants. Also, check whether it is possible to change backgrounds or use different settings. This helps the digital participants to be spatially involved inside and can delimit different formats.

## The Importance of Technology

Choosing the right platform for online participants is like choosing the on-site location. The platform connects offline and online and determines the degree of interaction. The choice should therefore be carefully considered.

The toolkit of your event should support your defined goals. Depending on the goal, the tools may need other functions to reinforce the core issues.

It should be noted that the tools link on-site and offline participants with one another and can cooperate. There are now also tools that help organizers measure the level of satisfaction both online and offline.

Furthermore, you can't forget doing a quality check on-site to guarantee image sharpness, good lighting, creating the right context but also securing that the sound system is working perfectly.

Finally, while it sounds obvious, make maximum use of your tools to guarantee the best possible experience for all the participants.

## **Partners and Staff**

The number of people required varies depending on the size of the event and the planning time. However, some competencies and roles should be reflected in your hybrid event - regardless of the size.

You will most definitely need a project manager, ideally one with digital experience in the portfolio. A web and content producer is also a must. This role develops relevant topics, formats and is responsible for the production of the entire event content.

Moreover, a tool and registration specialist should be part of your team. He or she controls the digital tools to enable live and digital networking and collaboration in addition to technical troubleshooting for speakers and participants.

Marketing your hybrid event is essential and it must be planned well in advance. Marketing works hand in hand with the web and content producers and is responsible for providing feedback from the participants

Finally, no event can work without a moderator. Here not only the skills of classic event moderation are required, but also the ability to inspire the digital participants.

In addition to event moderation, you also need bridge moderators who, for example, moderate a chat or questions from digital participants in the Q&A.

## **How to Guarantee Interaction**

If you want to convey information to your participants, you must make the content available to them beforehand. Also, it could be useful to ask them questions, answer their questions as well as create the opportunity for topic participation.

While networking at hybrid events is difficult, it is not impossible. You must encourage participants to use digital networking tools during live events, involve digital participants into the program with contributions or presentations. It could also be useful to create dedicated networking or meeting times in your agenda.

If your goal is to create something during an event, there are several ways to achieve this. You can try to integrate a visual tool with which you can follow the development of results live.

Moreover, you can mix live and digital participants into groups, create space at the live event so that these groups can come together, and you should show some appreciation for the results obtained, e.g. by presenting the result in an (online) gallery.

## **Creating Exciting Content**

The content is responsible for the entire program. Accordingly, the program must be designed to be surprising and interesting for all participants in your hybrid event.

The attention span is significantly shorter for online participants. Therefore, content should tend to be shorter. Present the content of the event in bites and, ideally, never over 30 minutes.

It also helps to link the program to a story. A story leads the participants through the event and, in the best case, creates tension. With the Hero's Journey method, such a story can be developed together in the content team.

Tools now offer a whole range of options for involving participants offline and online. Surveys, challenges, polls, digital whiteboards and Q & As are only a small part of what is possible.

With an event app, visitors can also yaw interactively on site. The keyword here is gamification. Set common goals that should be achieved during the event or a challenge between the participants.

In addition, short breaks can be used to call for joint exercise (such as yoga) and thus to involve both online and offline participants.

## **Measuring Success**

How do I know if my hybrid event was successful? In the best-case scenario, this question should not be asked after the event, but should be included in the planning and strategy.

The set goal of the event should be linked to the success measurement of your event. In other words: **If you have determined that the main goal of your event is "networking", then you should make sure to set yourself goals in this area.**

A structured method of setting event goals is the Event ROI method. Goals are set within a causality chain to find out the return on investment of the individual event.

Basic aspects that should not be missing when measuring the success of an event are the following: number of registrations, number of participants, number of networking users, number of contacts made, the average duration of participation, engagement, and the Net Promoter Score (recommendation rate of the participants).

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