Hybrid Events: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a hybrid event?

Hybrid events combine virtual and in-person platforms to provide a comprehensive event experience for attendees to attend in-person, virtually, or both. A hybrid event does not mean recording live presentations during an in-person event and distributing the recordings online later.

How is a hybrid event different from a virtual event?

Hybrid events have in-person components that virtual events do not provide.

What are the benefits of hosting a hybrid event?

Hybrid events provide an opportunity to create a more inclusive and comprehensive program to participants regardless of location. Hybrid events allow participants to attend an event without travelling or requesting time away from professional and personal responsibilities.

What are the challenges of hosting a hybrid event?

Hybrid events are difficult to host because they require advanced technical equipment to bridge the gap between in-person and virtual participants, as well as increased planning and preparation from program hosts to ensure cohesiveness between virtual and in-person participants, content, and program delivery.

A rule of thumb for planning hybrid events is remembering that it requires planning and financing two separate but connected events: one event in-person and one event online. Connecting the online platform, virtual attendees and in-person components is challenging and when not done well, can leave virtual attendees feeling excluded, undervalued, and disconnected.

How do you ensure virtual attendees don't feel excluded?

While many of this will be specific to the event, some general tips include:

- Have all virtual participants submit questions through an online chat forum and require all in-person participants to write their questions out and submit to a moderator. Moderators can then read all questions from the chat forum and physical submissions.
- Utilize virtual break out rooms to create small groups outside of the main virtual room when requiring in-person attendees to complete small group work.

How do you organize networking opportunities with hybrid events?

While many of this will be specific to the event, some general tips include:

- Consider using interactive online platforms such as kudos boards or trivia to allow both in-person and virtual participants to take part in networking opportunities.
- Brainstorm potential networking group opportunities and include registration options in the event registration to schedule small breakout groups for networking opportunities for virtual and in-person participants to meet at pre-scheduled times during the program agenda.

What technology is required for hosting a hybrid event?

Hybrid events require at least:

- One presentation computer for in-person speakers to share their presentation.
- One logistical computer to connect to the virtual video conference platform (Zoom, Teams, etc.).
- Surround sound, house sound, or speakers connected to the logistical computer so that in-person attendees can hear from virtual participants.
- Microphones connected to the logistical computer so that virtual attendees can hear from in-person participants throughout the room/facility space.
- Projection screens connected to the presentation computer so that in-person attendees can see speaker presentations.
- Virtual video conferencing platform. Both the presentation computer and the logistical computer should be in the "virtual room". The presentation computer should always have its microphone/audio and sound turned off or muted.
- Dedicated hard-wired/ethernet Internet line or unlimited Internet bandwidth for secure and reliable Internet connection.
- For higher attendance in-person sessions or interactive sessions, a high-definition interactive camera is recommended to allow online participants the opportunity to see the in-person speakers and participants.

Is live simultaneous translation available for hybrid events?

- Simultaneous translation is available for hybrid events that utilize Zoom video conferencing. Translators must be secured separately outside of Zoom. Zoom provides the separate virtual "channels" so participants can see the presentation from the English-speaking virtual room, but will hear the designated translator once they select which language that they would like to hear the presentation in.
- Participants utilizing simultaneous translation will be required to have a mobile device, cell phone or tablet with the Zoom applications installed to join the live translation channel. It is highly recommended that participants join the audio channel using personal headphones connected to their mobile device of choice.

Where can I find additional resources?

MSU Extension's Organizational Development website provides several resources for developing online and in-person programs. Please visit https://www.canr.msu.edu/od/ for additional information. Please reach out to Gwyn Shelle and Luke Reese or MSU Extension ANR Event Services for consultation regarding your specific event needs.

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