

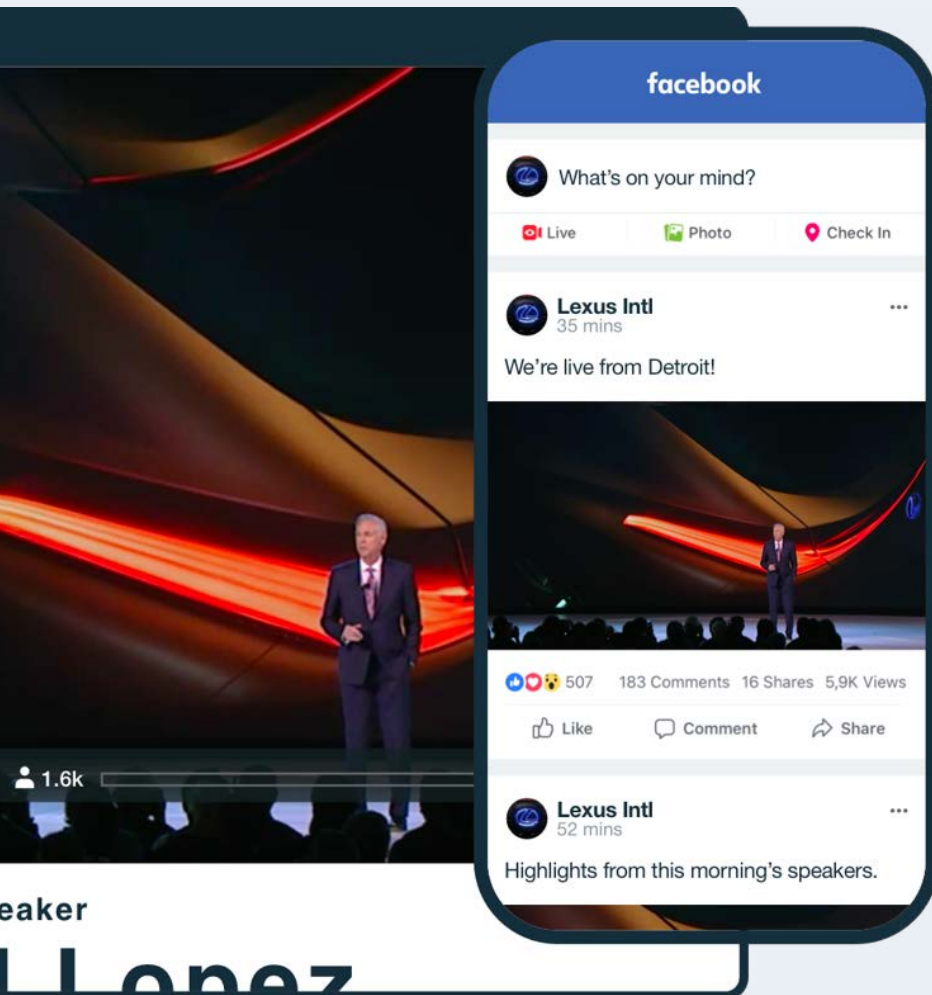
The Guide to Planning and Hosting Virtual Events



The Future of Events is Virtual

This year, we are learning that graduations can be just as special when live streamed, learning can happen from the living room floor with a laptop and some instruments, and events that were supposed to include live networking, keynote speakers, and breakout sessions are pivoting to incredible online events.

This guide will review the different types of virtual events, how to be the virtual host with the most, audio visual requirements and gear, budget, and promoting your virtual event. We also put together a checklist so you can make sure your online event is a success.



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Types of Virtual Events

“**Virtual events**” is an umbrella category that spans events like virtual conferences, live streamed events, and pre recorded events or educational opportunities. Virtual events can take the place of in-person events or be planned exclusively for online participation.

Virtual Conferences

Virtual conferences are a way to educate your audience, bring in new leads, and convert leads into customers. You can provide informational content alongside product or service updates and announcements, since you are the ones hosting the event. These industry-oriented **virtual events** offer lots of partner opportunities and chances to team up with thought leaders and other keynote speakers. Since conferences are industry events, they also give individuals the space to network and meet others in their field, which can easily be offered in a virtual format.

VIRTUAL CONFERENCES INCLUDE:

Panels

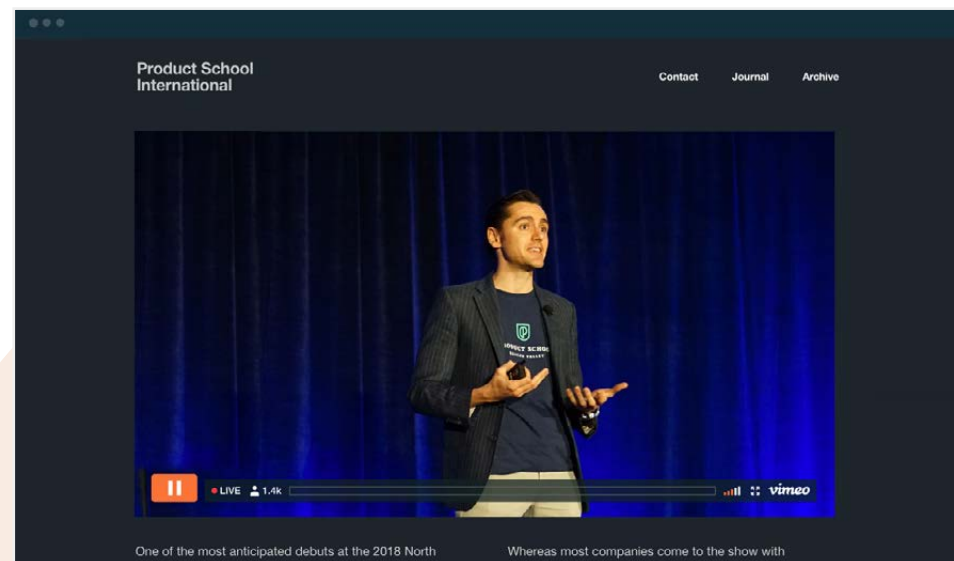
Microsites with speakers or recorded sessions

Live conferences with breakout sessions

Summits or industry conferences

Training sessions

Networking opportunities



Live Streamed Events vs Pre Recorded Events

Virtual events can be offered as live events that are either recorded or only available during the live viewing, or as pre recorded events available via a gated platform, requiring login or payment for access. Live streamed virtual events offer exclusivity or confidentiality for things like an album release event, a concert, or something you wouldn't want viewed outside of the live viewing window. Pre recorded events available for a longer amount of time offer flexibility and are best for busy audiences that may want to spread their learning and viewing out and self pace.

When hosting a live event online, consider:

Where will I host my event online?

Will it be available after the live event ends?

When and how can we test the streaming platform?

How will my attendees network and collaborate?

• LIVE

LIVE STREAMED VIRTUAL EVENTS

Live streamed virtual events include live panels, live keynote addresses, and other live events like performances. When **planning an online live event**, it's important to recreate live experiences like mingling and networking and meet and greets in the online space. Test your equipment and make sure all attendees have access to the schedule and networking opportunities ahead of the live stream. Incorporate social media into your strategy and always have a plan B in your back pocket. Live events don't have to be customer or public-facing, try hosting your company's next large meeting, like a **virtual all-hands meeting**, with live event technology.



PRE RECORDED VIRTUAL EVENTS

Depending on your resources and audience, a live event may not be feasible or geared to your industry. Let's say you are the only event marketer on your team— you may not be able to produce and execute a live event on your own. Pre recorded virtual events include keynote speeches, seminars, and interactive and engaging content that can be consumed by your attendees on their own time. You can even offer pre recorded content and include breakout conversations on Slack or other online platforms so viewers can collaborate and network at a time that is convenient for them. These online events are inclusive and open to everyone, no matter their time zone or physical location.

Hosting Virtual Events

As the **host of a virtual event**, it's your job to make sure everyone can access the content, collaborate and network, and participate in all your event has to offer. Here are a few tips for hosting virtual events, both live and pre recorded.

Make sure you have a sufficient wifi connection.

Consider how you will field questions, either live or asynchronously.

Think about where your event will be hosted, how people will access your content, and whether you'll charge for registration or require pre-registration.

If your live event was canceled, here's how you can **quickly pivot to a virtual event.**

Virtual Event Audio Visual Requirements + Gear

Virtual events can take place at multiple locations, at a professional stage or sound stage, or from the homes of presenters around the world. The most important factors when planning for the audio visual or AV requirements for a virtual event are sound quality and video quality. Make sure your presenters have good wifi connection, a high quality web camera, and a backup plan in case any technology fails in the moment.

When live streaming from home, here's some gear you may want to consider. Depending on your audience size and resources, your equipment may vary from personal webcam and laptop and \$50 ring light to a full multiple monitor setup with a wireless remote and other professional accessories. No matter what, with the right planning and setup, your live stream can be successful.

Gear for **live streaming events from home:**

A portable studio like the HD550

Wireless remote

A monitor (or several)

A recorder like the AJA Ki Pro Recorder

An external USB webcam

A secure internet connection

Laptops

For those new to live streaming virtual events, check out Vimeo's 5-lesson masterclass, **Live Streaming 101: Capturing Audio and Visual**. You'll learn what gear you'll need, how to set up audio and lighting, and how to capture the best stream for your viewers.

Planning Your Virtual Event Budget

When **planning the budget for your live streamed event** or pre recorded virtual conference, you'll need to plan for supporting your viewers throughout the experience to ensure everyone is able to connect and view the stream. This budget extends to areas like backup wifi, paying to conduct a test, and more.

Hardware

You may need to use an encoder to stream your event, or your live streaming platform might have one built-in. You will need a camera or computer with a camera, and may need a lighting kit or ring light.

LIGHTING

From beginner items like a ring light, natural light, or a simple light reflector to advanced items like the Aputure 300 d II with mini dome diffuser.

CAMERAS

Beginners can get by with just a phone camera but larger scale events will require a more robust camera like the Sony PXW-Z90.

AUDIO

Try the Yeti Nano USB microphone to start, then upgrade to the Shure SM7B.

ENCODER

For live streamed events, you can use the encoder built in to platforms like Facebook Live, or use a separate encoder like the Livestream Studio HD550. Encoders convert live streamed video into a stream that people can watch on phones or laptops.



Software

You can decide between consumer and professional grade streaming services. Free consumer live streaming platforms like Facebook Live are best for smaller operations since they have limited support. Larger live streaming platforms like Vimeo offer support, security, and an ad-free experience for your viewers.

WHEN CHOOSING YOUR STREAMING SERVICE, THINK ABOUT:

Streaming quality

Privacy

Engaging with your audience

Accessibility (live and on-demand captions)

Content management and ability to watch live events after the recording

Customization and branding

Analytics

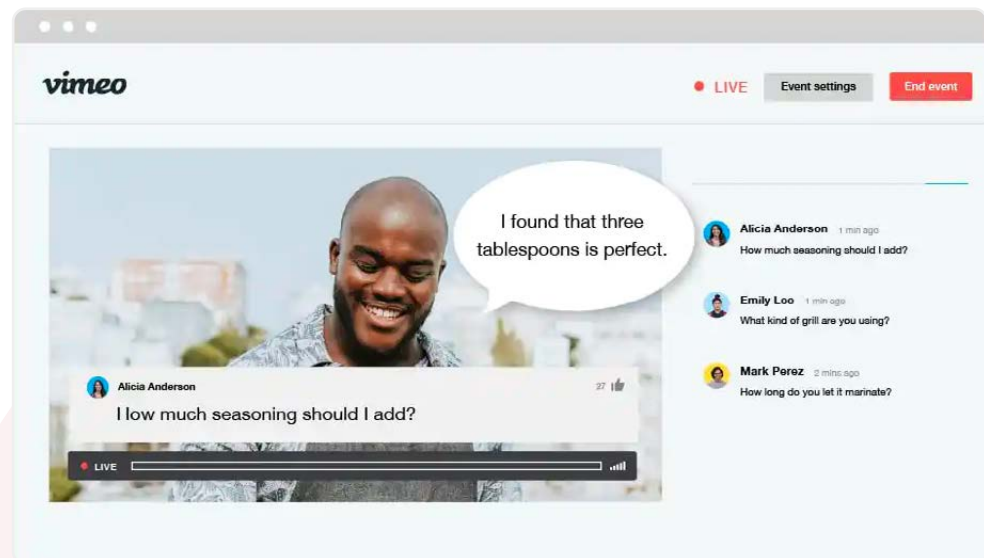
Distribution

Other **virtual event software options** include: Hopin, Whova, and Run The World.

If you're live streaming your virtual event using social media like LinkedIn Live, Facebook Live, YouTube Live, or Twitter, check out **Vimeo's Guide to Live Streaming on Social Media**.

Support

This might be someone for your own team or an industry consultant to make sure your event goes smoothly. No matter your event size, make sure you have a dedicated individual to field questions and concerns before, during, and after the virtual event.



Virtual Event Best Practices

When hosting a virtual event, there are special considerations to make sure your guests can get the most out of what you're offering. Remember that attendees are taking time out of their busy lives and putting work on hold to dial in to your content. They want to engage, connect, and learn.

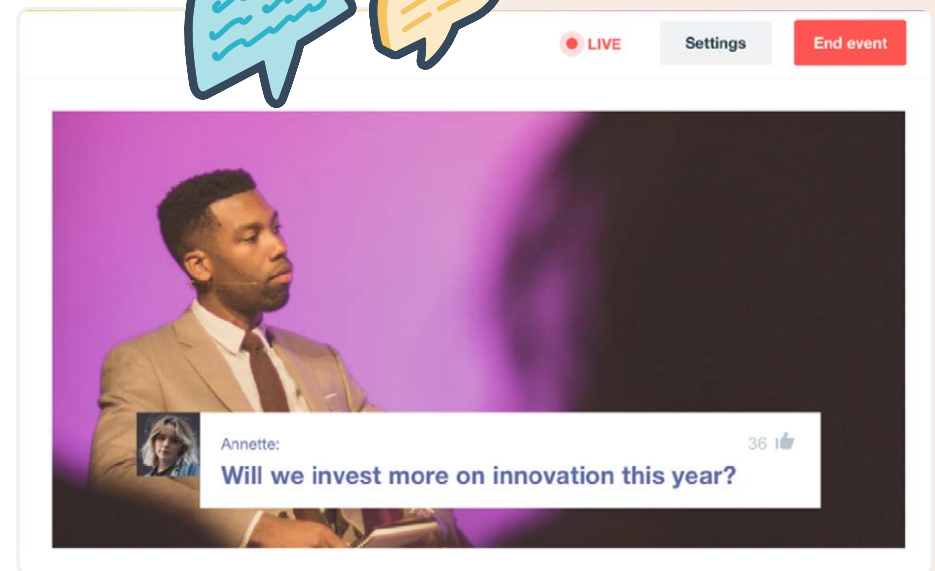
Create engagement opportunities during sessions

Use live polls and quizzes to interact with the audience

For live streamed virtual events, offer live Q&A sessions

Offer breakout rooms and networking opportunities, both available with video conferencing software

Include a place for event-goers to chat online before, during, and after the event



Examples of Companies Hosting Great Virtual Events

Many companies, including HubSpot, have hosted virtual events like **Inbound Sales Day** in the past. With this expertise, it wasn't a huge jump to pivot traditionally in-person events like **INBOUND** to be completely immersive online experiences.

INBOUND

HubSpot's INBOUND event includes time zone friendly live sessions, on-demand content that can be viewed at your own pace, and audio-only sessions to give your eyes a break from the screen.

Venture Café

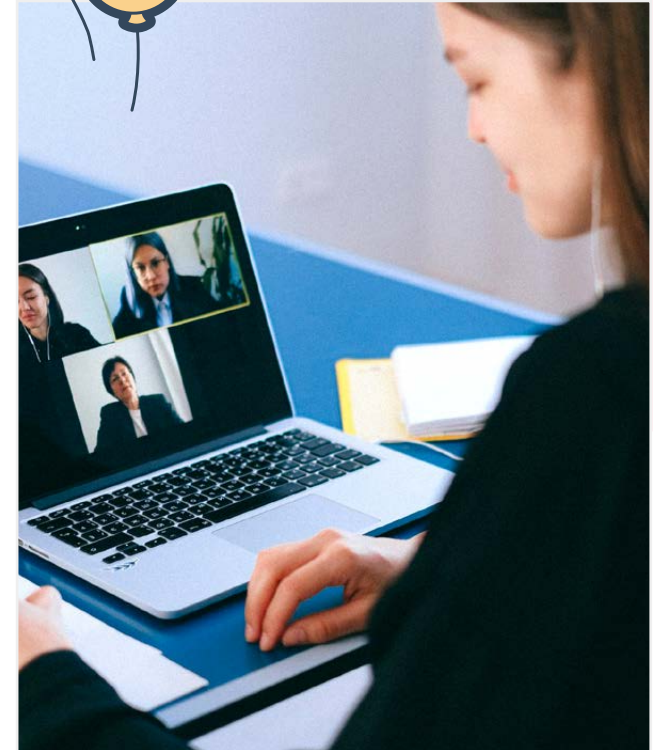
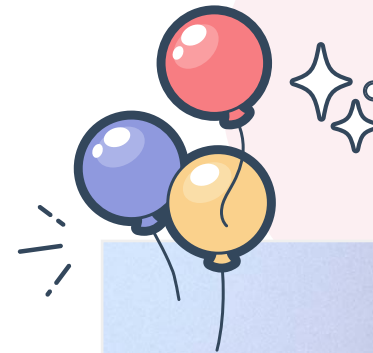
This Cambridge-based organization has offered a space for networking and office hours for entrepreneurs and other professionals. They transitioned their in-person networking to a virtual event and have had 4,000 virtual attendees.

MozCon

MozCon, a traditionally in-person experience, was online this year and offered virtual networking at multiple times throughout the day to give various time zones the chance to connect. This virtual event connected search engine optimization experts, agencies, content marketers, and others.

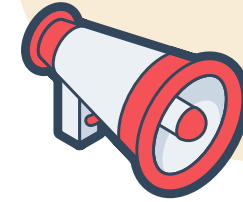
SaaStr Annual Conference

SaaStr Annual is the largest global SaaS conference with 50,000 attendees. Their virtual edition included digital 1:1 networking opportunities, AMAs, and mentoring sessions, all online. The recordings from the event are all available online to the public.



Promoting Your Virtual Event

When **promoting your virtual event or conference**, make sure to give your audience a clear picture of what they can expect. Your viewers' time and money are valuable so they will want to know everything they can expect to get out of their registration.



Set expectations for what attendees will experience.

Make sure it's clear if your content is live or pre-recorded, how long they will have access to the content, whether they will be able to ask questions, if there are breakout sessions or networking opportunities, and if they will have access to any exclusive content or materials.

Co brand your event, offer partnerships and vendors, and work with influencers in your industry.

Reach out to fellow industry organizations and partner up to reach their audience. Set the expectation up front if registrants can expect to hear from both brands.

Event marketers recommend recreating engaging experiences in the virtual space

and considering your strategies right from the beginning of event planning.

Enable and encourage speakers and employees to promote your event.

Provide branded social templates and messaging for the event to make it as easy as possible for others to share and promote.

Use social media to promote your event and to facilitate networking among attendees.

Using a hashtag for your event makes it easy for attendees to engage in the conversation and find others. You can also offer a Slack group or Facebook group for event-goers to network and start threads of smaller groups.

Virtual Event Checklist

BEFORE THE EVENT

- ✓ Plan if your event will be live or pre recorded.
- ✓ Gather speakers and content, including comarketing partners.
- ✓ Plan your agenda.
- ✓ Outline your budget, including hardware, software, and support.
- ✓ Choose your equipment, tools, and event planning team.

DURING THE EVENT

- ✓ Offer attendee support and troubleshooting.
- ✓ Monitor your social media and interact with event-goers online.
- ✓ Stream your event using adequate lighting and streaming quality.
- ✓ Interact with attendees and create breakout sessions and networking opportunities.

AFTER THE EVENT

- ✓ Make your recording available for a certain amount of time or indefinitely to registrants.
- ✓ Continue conversations on Slack, Facebook, Twitter, or other online networking sites.
- ✓ Gather feedback from event-goers.
- ✓ Encourage your speakers and employees to share the event even after it's over.



INBOUND2020

Looking to level up your professional career?

Register for INBOUND to access free educational content from global business leaders like Bob Iger (CEO of Disney), Alicia Garza (Principal at Black Futures Lab), Sandy Carter (VP of Amazon Web Services, Sasan Goodarzi (CEO of Intuit), and more.

[Register Now](#)