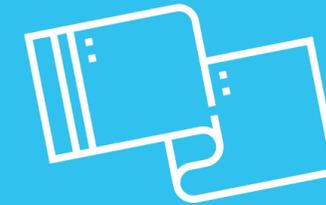
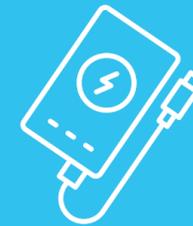
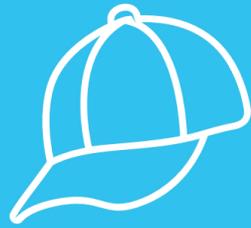
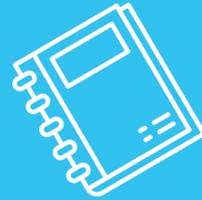
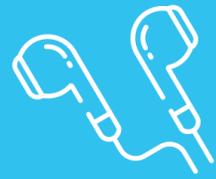


# Pocket Guide To Virtual Event Engagement



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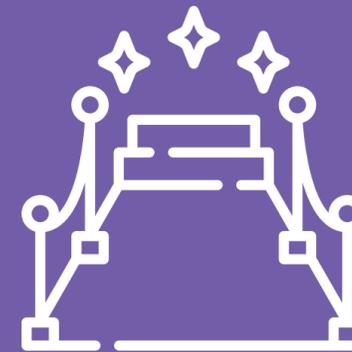
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# Virtual Events Are Here To Stay

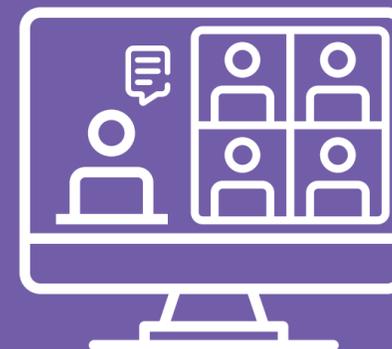
The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 has fundamentally changed the events industry. In the United States, over **85%** of in-person events planned for the year had to be cancelled or postponed due to social distancing regulations.

But just because we can't meet in-person doesn't mean we stop needing sales kickoffs, conferences, team-retreats, trade shows, happy hours, board meetings and all of the other events that drive our businesses forward. The show must go on!

Luckily, virtual events have as many upsides as they do challenges. For example, virtual events allow for more attendees, have a much lower barrier to attendance (no need to travel), and are way cheaper to produce. These are just some of the reasons why one report found that **97%** of event marketers plan to continue using virtual and hybrid events in 2021.



**85%**  
In-person Events  
Cancelled



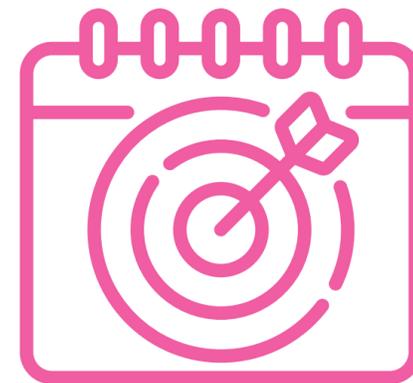
**97%**  
Virtual & Hybrid  
Events Planned

In order to fully take advantage of these shifts towards virtual events, your organization will need to follow best practices to maximize engagement for event attendees. This guide represents the distillation of everything we've learned from our customers about how they are creating the best virtual events possible.



## Benefits

- Easier to host larger audiences
- Increased flexibility when it comes to scheduling
- Typically cheaper to produce
- Fewer barriers to sales and revenue
- Can use premade content effectively



## Challenges

- Fewer opportunities to network
- Lack of Excitement in Virtual Space
- Impossible to Recreate In-person Connection
- Reliant on Technology Cooperating
- Screen Fatigue

# The Virtual Event Villains

There are a handful of unique obstacles that will hinder engagement with your virtual event if you're not careful. An all-online affair means you are bound to run up against more than a few of these virtual event villains:



## Scheduling Issues

The good news is that digital events can be accessed by anyone around the world. The bad news is that your virtual audience could be in completely opposite time zones.



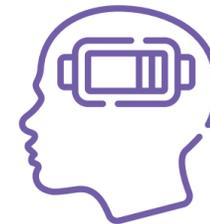
## Lack of Networking

In-person events are full of small chances to meet and build relationships with other folks in your industry - but there's no snack table at a virtual event!



## Technology Snafus

A great virtual event will require your tech to fire on all cylinders. Nothing kills people's attention quite like a lagging livestream or sudden dropped video chat!



## Digital Fatigue

It's no secret - people are pretty tired of sitting in front of computers all day long. Without a strategy to combat that simple fact, your event could simply be ignored in favor of a walk outside or a nap.

# A Virtual Event Checklist To Stay Organized



## Before the event:

### Define

Ask yourself, what are you after with your event? You'll require a slightly different strategy for pursuing revenue, generating leads, boosting team morale or something else entirely.

### Schedule

Find a time that works for your digital audience, no matter where they are

### Create

Make the content you'll be using to supplement live events and activities



## During the event:

### Connect

Make sure speakers / live events will patch through with no issues

### Host

Find a way to move seamlessly between live-streamed events, virtual activities and pre-recorded content

### Troubleshoot

Have a plan to sort out the most-likely-to-happen technical problems



## After the event:

### Follow-up

Reach out to attendees to keep them engaged!

### Analyze

Pour over data to figure out what worked, and what could be done better the next time around

# 8 Ideas To Boost Your Virtual Event Engagement

1

**Break up live streaming events (speakers, meetings etc) with content made before hand**

Make the live streaming less monotonous, and gives hosts a break

Can be as simple as a youtube video, or as complex as expensively-produced videos

2

**Use a host or team of hosts to move your audience move through different events and activities**

Invest in their set up to provide a studio feel. They will help keep things timely and address technical issues with some professionalism

3

**Find creative social activities that go beyond virtual happy hours**

Provide networking opportunities with fun activities like trivia competitions, speed-networking and random chat session pair-offs.

4

**Use gamification to boost, monitor and analyze patterns of engagement**

Turn participation into a friendly competition, and watch people start to rack up points left and right. Use the data to design smarter events in the future



5

**Hire virtual entertainment to make your event fun**

Virtual yoga, guided meditation sessions, and cooking classes are among the most popular events to blow off some steam

6

**Don't overwhelm your audience with too much screen time**

Avoid digital fatigue by breaking up your event into shorter sessions over a longer period of time

7

**Use great swag to create physical touchpoints between attendees**

Whether it's a single hat or fully interactive box of goodies, give everyone something physical that connects them to your event

8

**Stagger live events so that more people can attend them**

For wide global audiences, use a mix of accessible content and democratically scheduled events to offer more opportunities for engagement

# Virtual Events. Real Connections.

If you're willing to get a little bit creative, thoughtful swag can offer a meaningful physical connection between your virtual event and its attendees. The right item at the right moment can make all the difference in getting people engaged, and delivering on the goals of your virtual event.

## You can use swag...



### To start some pre-event buzz that gets attendees excited:

- **Swag Idea:** Use the [swag giveaways](#) feature to let registered attendees choose a themed gift a few weeks before your event.

[Get Started](#)



### To create meaningful interactive experiences that enhance in-event engagement:

- **Example:** Send an [interactive swag box](#) chocked full of items your participants can use throughout the virtual event. Add a [selfie light](#), a [notebook](#) and a [hat](#) to get started!



### After your event to facilitate impactful follow-up:

- **Reward:** If you've gamified your event, send prizes to top performers to reward their engagement. Small gifts are a nice way to build long-term relationships and remember your brand after the event is over.

# More Inspiration And Ideas

Looking for more information and inspiration on how to create great virtual events? Here are a few more resources that might help. Be sure to check out our blog section [all about virtual event ideas](#).

You can read all about...

- Using gamification to boost engagement
- How to create the ultimate virtual sales kickoff event
- Examples of our favorite virtual event ideas from 2020
- Tips on hosting a great virtual corporate holiday party
- Creative ways to use swag in virtual events
- Virtual happy hour ideas
- Ideas for meaningful virtual event follow-up
- Alternative virtual events in lieu of virtual happy hours
- Humanizing virtual events with a physical connection

# Conclusion

Thanks for checking out our handy guide to virtual event engagement. Hopefully you learned how to make your next event a home run.

If you have any questions about how we can help you cover your swag needs, be sure to reach out to [customer@swag.com](mailto:customer@swag.com).



# Thanks!

If you need any help creating your unique swag, please contact us and we'd be happy to help!

[SWAG.COM](https://www.swag.com)



345 7th Ave, unit 501 NY, NY 10001



[customer@swag.com](mailto:customer@swag.com)



718-878-4442