

Building Internal Adoption for Enterprise Virtual Events

White Paper

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For years, physical events and tradeshows have been an important platform for reaching customers. But, with rising costs, shrinking budgets, and the shift towards interactive social engagement—from simple awareness and interaction to true brand building engagement marketing—organizations are under increased pressure to find new ways to maximize every dollar while engaging global audiences. As a result, many enterprise corporations are either using or evaluating virtual event marketing platforms. Uniting the best of advanced social networking application functionality and interactive Internet technologies, virtual events cost-effectively provide a measurable alternative or additional marketing channel that accelerates reach and global presence to connect to new market segments in a way that improves the bottom line. They're proving a unique strategy for delivering innovative, high response branded experiences that maximize return on investment and in many cases generate a profit.



Oracle Accelerate Experts Live Events

While enterprise marketers are under pressure to make the most of traditional tradeshow resources, virtual technology solutions are starting to be used beyond events for virtual knowledge centers, thought leadership portals, and business collaboration. Innovators like Cisco, HP, IBM, Intel, Microsoft and Oracle are beginning to harness the power of virtual technology platforms for innovative and engaging marketing communications. These platforms are becoming preferred tools for leaders in a broad range of diverse industries beyond technology, such as education, healthcare, training, life sciences, pharma, legal, and even government. Global giants such as DuPont, Procter & Gamble, and Kaiser Permanente are



reaching and influencing current and next generation customers through next generation virtual experience media. Regardless of your industry, it's likely a major portion of the next market or audience you're tasked to reach will be comfortable with this kind of innovative communication.

Yet, despite increasing validation from global companies and audiences who participate in virtual events, this technology can be challenging for enterprises to adopt as part of their communication arsenal. This white paper presents strategies and suggestions to help enterprise marketers build consideration and adoption of virtual technology as an alternative or additional marketing event tool. Here are ways you can help your organization "make the leap" and realize the potential and value of virtual events.

Hybrid Events

I've always done physical events. How do I introduce virtual event technology into my organization? How do I get management to see firsthand the value of this technology?

Hybrid events are becoming a proven strategy for building acceptance and introductory adoption of virtual event marketing in enterprises of all kinds.

An important new element in the evolution of event marketing, hybrid events are physical shows and conferences augmented with virtual technology. They fuse the most compelling elements of onscreen, in-person, and online dynamics to create an extended and truly enhanced customer experience. Event managers are discovering they're also valuable for virtual technology introduction and adoption throughout their company. For a skeptical executive team, a hybrid event can be an excellent precursor to a virtual-only event experience.

There are two types of hybrid events for accommodating diverse customer geographies —concurrent and inclusive. A concurrent hybrid event is a physical show launched in tandem with an online virtual counterpart that can be accessed anywhere in the world. Those unable to physically attend a show can explore a virtual 3D spatial environment from their home or office and interact with exhibitors and other attendees as well as access and download content. Those at the

Types of Hybrid Events		
Hybrid Event	Description	Benefits
<i>Concurrent</i>	A concurrent hybrid event is a physical show launched in tandem with an online virtual counterpart that can be accessed anywhere in the world.	Hyper-efficient distribution and sharing assets; extended reach; increased attendance and engagement; elevated measurement and tracking; and a long-term platform all attendees can access for additional information and follow-up.
<i>Inclusive</i>	Inclusive hybrid events feature key virtual event elements integrated within an anchored physical environment such as an Executive Briefing Center. This event is ideal for introducing first time participants to virtual event experiences.	Educating, engaging, and motivating globally distributed teams in real time and rallying enthusiasm through virtual engagement tools such as contests, games, and leader board challenges.

physical event can view, download, and forward content accessible in the virtual environment from booth kiosks and displays as well as personal laptops and mobile devices. In concurrent hybrid events, both virtual and physical attendees can share information in real time and participate in live chats, presentations, and webinars. Virtual technology can safely store and distribute all event assets from a central location and archived content can be made available on-demand, around the clock, for weeks and months after the physical event. This kind of hybrid event yields some compelling benefits—hyper-efficient distribution and sharing assets; extended reach; increased attendance and engagement; elevated measurement and tracking; and a long-term platform all attendees can access for additional information and follow-up. A concurrent hybrid event extends the life of a show and redefines traditional performance levels of exposure, cost, and value.



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Inclusive hybrid events feature key virtual elements integrated within an anchored physical environment such as an Executive Briefing Center, corporate sales facility, or an event-specific “command center” headquarters. In this type of event, live and on-demand virtual executive presence and presentations, webinars, videos, and product demos expand and extend physical environments, deliver strategic information, maximize and sales resources. For enterprises such as Cisco and HP, inclusive hybrid events have proven extremely effective for educating, engaging, and motivating globally distributed teams in real time and rallying enthusiasm through virtual engagement tools such as contests, games, and leader board challenges. This model is ideal for introducing first time participants to virtual event experiences.

Both event types enable cost effective reach, efficient information delivery, and higher overall attendance. For many enterprises, they’re an excellent way of building comfort and internal adoption for virtual marketing technology. As with any new marketing technology, it’s important to establish a learning curve for event administrators, exhibit staff, and external partners. If you’re in the early stages of considering or using virtual technology, we recommend avoiding the pressure to begin with a major high-profile event. Instead, begin with a hybrid event or a smaller virtual conference with the scale and audience that can be comfortably managed. Then, consider moving to an executive-level virtual event that more widely demonstrates the power of this important new technology for marketing. This will help ensure success when the new platform is rolled out.



Comparing Cost

I know what I need to budget for sponsorships or participation in physical events because I do them on a recurring basis. How does the cost of a virtual event compare to a physical event?

A simple way to evaluate virtual technology is through a basic ROI comparison to physical events. In every category, virtual technology marketing solutions compare favorably to physical events and can provide distinct financial advantages.

From floor space, exhibit storage, transportation, build out, and shipping to union-dictated costs for drayage, set-up, carpet and pad, electrical, directory listings, even plant rental, the cost of physical shows continues to increase. And in assessing event costs, a major expense is often not taken into account—travel, lodging, rentals, meals, and time out of office for staff and executives. While productivity lost is more difficult to gauge than other tangible expenses, the impact on the bottom line is no less real.

By comparison, virtual events don't require travel, staff out of office, or union-based services. Digital exhibits and content require a fraction of the time, expense, and resources of their physical counterparts. And the difference in engagement dynamics between the two formats continues to shrink. From anywhere in the world, virtual event attendees and exhibitors dialogue in real time, participate in one-to-one and group chat, exchange V-cards, and use new on-the-fly translation tools to interact in different languages.

In terms of sponsorship costs, many enterprise hosts offer tiered sponsorship packages that cover all event development and promotion costs. Growing awareness and adoption of virtual events in all industries is making sponsor acquisition easier. With planning and a solid strategy, your investment in this important new marketing channel should be neither excessive nor risky. In a wide array of industries, enterprise marketers are not only recouping their virtual event investment but also generating incremental margin for future marketing efforts.



Virtual Event Plaza



One-to-One Chat



Real-time Chat Translation



vCard Request

Despite obvious differences in format, virtual event sponsorships can be priced comparatively to those offered in physical events. Work with a virtual event provider to determine approximate costs for an exhibit size and format, number of desired attendees and live support staff, accessibility and length (live days versus on demand days), and a budget range for promotion, acquisition, and sponsorship. A detailed comparison of virtual and physical events will help internal management gauge costs and opportunities for efficiency.

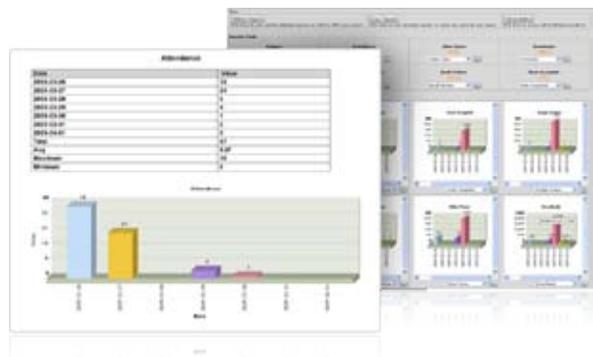
Demonstrating ROI

How do I demonstrate tangible return on my virtual event investment?

Virtual events make it easy to show tangible return for every dollar invested.

A key element of accurately assessing ROI is the ability to measure effectively. For years, event marketers have tried to quantify physical tradeshow performance with varying degrees of success. Virtual events, on the other hand, deliver unparalleled measurement and tracking capability with detailed analysis on attendee conduct and preferences—from time spent in the event and booth, to who they interacted with, to each piece of content they looked at and for how long.

The breadth and depth virtual event technology can provide on the behavior of visitors at both a group and individual level is both impressive and accurate. Combined with profile data, behavioral analytics can provide invaluable market insight that can shrink the buying cycle. Virtual marketing metrics remove subjectivity, qualifiers, and opinion from the process of determining what your customers want and how they act. This makes it easier to determine true event ROI. Educate your peers on the unique level of insight and tangible performance return digital event analytics can deliver.



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Low Organizational Impact

Our company is already working with a web conferencing provider like WebEx. Do I need to re-train everyone on something new?

Virtual event technology can be integrated into other enterprise applications with little disruption to the organization or your current communication toolset.

All enterprises use platforms that enable and elevate communications between customers, partners, and employees. Web and teleconferencing, instant messaging, and webinars are common and pervasive. An evolutionary extension of these solutions, virtual technology is easy to integrate and deploy in enterprise events marketing organizations. For customers and attendees, participating in a virtual event is intuitive and easy and requires no special training, special downloads, plug-ins, or proprietary technology. For event managers and administrators building an event, designing exhibits, and uploading content, the platform is equally intuitive and requires no technical skill or knowledge. Other than a training session to familiarize the event team with the capabilities of the platform, the impact of virtual event technology on the organization is minimal.

Creating Excitement

How do I create excitement in my organization for virtual events?

The ability to deliver experiences that are both innovative and relevant makes it easy to create internal buzz for virtual events.

Increasingly, virtual marketing is viewed as evidence of an innovative and forward-thinking organization. Enterprises such as Cisco are creating internal excitement and rewarding virtual event participation. In 2009, the company generated excitement at its first virtual



In 2009, Cisco generated excitement at its first virtual Strategic Leadership Offsite.

Why Hybrid Events?

Here are just a few benefits of planning a hybrid event:

- Tangible ROI capabilities
- Low organizational impact
- Ability to generate company-wide excitement

Strategic Leadership Offsite—an annual legacy physical conference for thousands of its senior executives around the world—through contests, recognition rewards, and direct interactions with the highest levels of the company.

Attendees who participated in informative activities and engaged with the broadest amount of virtual content qualified for a one-on-one lunch with CEO John Chambers. A special leader board tracked the real time progress of participants during the event and helped generate buzz throughout the organization. As a result, the first virtual version of this important global conference was a resounding success. While direct C-level involvement is not required for a virtual event, Cisco SLO demonstrates the across-the-enterprise excitement these events can generate throughout a large enterprise.

To create excitement in your organization, consider how your audiences' needs can be addressed by this innovative platform. Whether it's exploring a unique dimensional environment; connecting with colleagues and engaging customers around the world; interacting directly with senior executives; viewing presentations and accessing new information; or team building through group challenges, and games, virtual events enable participation in something that's both innovative and relevant.

Once your virtual event strategy is set, don't be afraid to heighten expectations and share what's going to happen with the entire company. Gather feedback for future refinement and don't forget to merchandise results and responses after the event is over. By making virtual event communications an internal marquee activity, it's easy to generate buzz at all levels of your organization.

Through a combination of information, education, and awareness, you can accelerate the consideration of virtual event technology in your enterprise. Consider a hybrid event; compare costs to physical events, and merchandise virtual technology's tangible ROI capability, its low organizational impact, and its unique ability to generate company-wide excitement. These are just a few of the ways to advance evaluation and preference for this powerful event marketing platform.

Virtual Technology Marketing Solutions

Virtual technology is being used for more than virtual events and tradeshow. Below are some exciting applications for this innovative technology in supporting our marketing.

- Product Launches & Demonstrations
- Press and Analyst Briefings
- Developer Conferences
- Training Programs & Seminars
- Internal Communications, Conferences, and Meetings
- Sales Conferences
- Job Fairs
- Knowledge Centers
- Thought Leadership