

Become a hybrid event expert: Your guide to planning events

Everything you need to know to host successful hybrid events.

Brought to you by Webex Events, formerly Socio.

In this ebook, you will learn the benefits of taking a hybrid approach to events, including ways to enable virtual and in-person engagement and guidance to help you develop the right approach for your business.

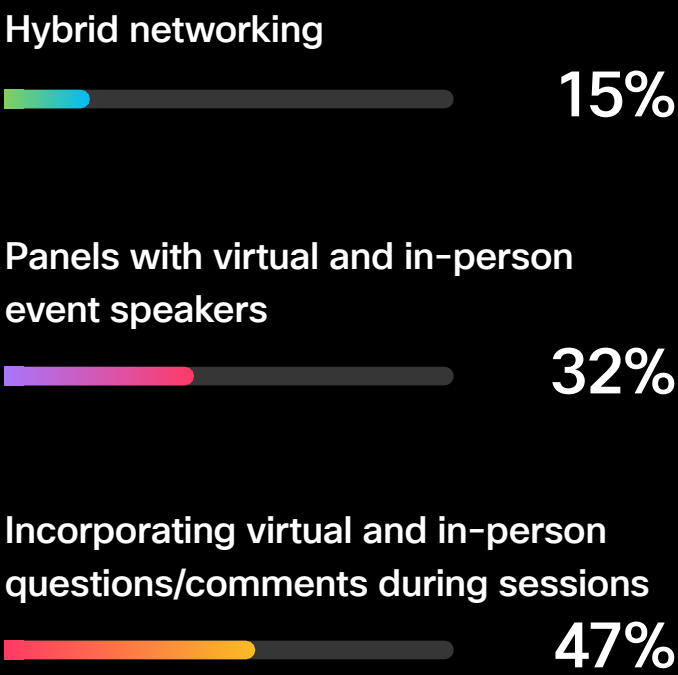
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Hybrid events

- A/V and production
- Breakout rooms
- In-person audience
- Networking
- Polls
- Q&A
- Venue
- Virtual audience
- Virtual platform

What do you think is the most impactful aspect of a hybrid event attendee experience?



At a time when many people shifted to remote work and digital reliance became more prevalent than ever, the world of marketing and event planning also had to adapt to the new reality. Instead of cancelling events, many planners quickly pivoted all their energy into mastering the art of virtual events.

Virtual events helped organizers keep attendees safe, engage a broader audience, dramatically reduce event costs, and learn more about attendee behaviors through rich data.

Looking ahead, many marketing and event professionals are already planning their next year of events – including resources, budgeting, event format, attendee experiences, and more. With some uncertainty about returning to in-person events, planners are looking to hybrid formats to bring together the best of both virtual

and in-person experiences. While hybrid events have become a popular event format as of late, they're not entirely new to the events industry.

In fact, you might have attended an in-person event that was live-streamed to a remote audience, allowing them to engage with the event content without being present onsite. Hybrid events have evolved over the years and now offer much more engaging event experiences for both in-person and remote audiences.

Advanced technology has enabled event planners to go beyond simply streaming an event to a remote audience. Now, remote attendees can be fully immersed in the live event and make connections with virtual and in-person attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors.

Hybrid events



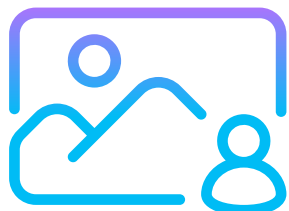
In-person and
virtual events

+



Opportunities for all
attendees to interact

+



Some kind of live
component

=



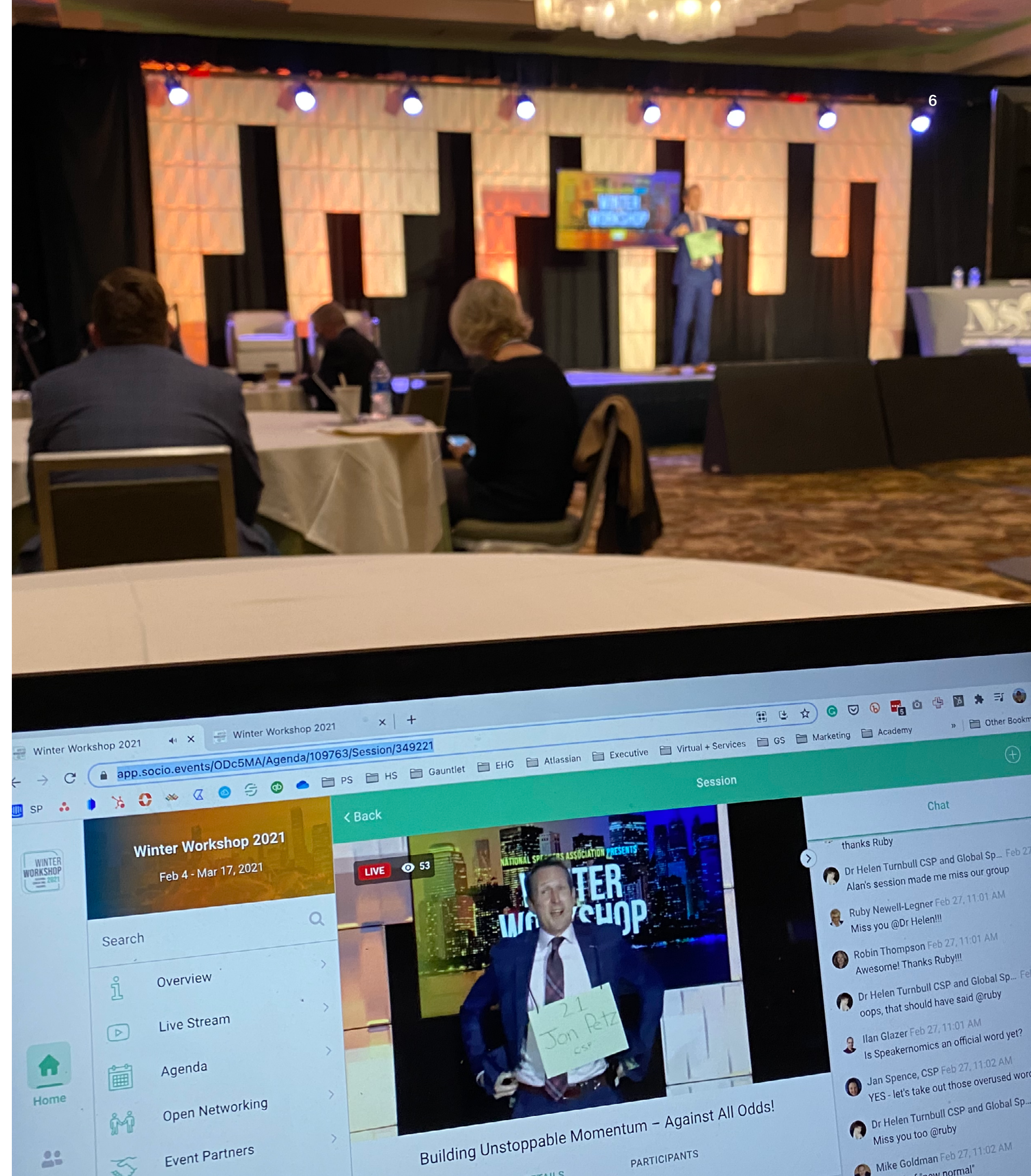
Hybrid Events

What is the definition of a hybrid event?

A hybrid event brings together virtual and in-person audiences so that they can seamlessly interact with other attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors whether they're front and center at the venue or tuning in from home.

A hybrid event includes three primary components:

- In-person and virtual elements. For example, a hybrid event's in-person attendees could attend onsite at a venue while remote attendees would attend from a virtual event platform.
- Opportunities for all attendees to interact. Whether virtual or in-person, all attendees should be able to easily participate in sessions, network with peers, and choose the best format based on their needs.
- Real time engagement. While a hybrid event can include pre-recorded content, there should be some element of the event that is happening live. A common concern among event organizers is how to keep remote attendees engaged during a hybrid event. The key to success is leveraging a virtual event platform that allows both online and in-person attendees to seamlessly connect using video, chat, games, and polls to create an engaging experience for both in-person and remote audience.



What are the benefits?

A hybrid event combines the best elements of virtual and in-person events, bringing them together for one cohesive event experience.

For example, In-person events provide a unique opportunity to foster in-person connection between attendees, while virtual events allow event organizers to expand their reach beyond a venue or physical space to a global audience.

Benefits of hybrid events include:

Audience reach

A hybrid event allows event organizers to reach a much larger audience than they would for an in-person only event. Attendees can join your event from anywhere, sometimes at any time, without needing to pay for the travel and lodging costs to associated with attending in-person.

Revenue

In addition to virtual and in-person ticket sales, you can also increase your event’s revenue through hybrid sponsorship opportunities. Just as some attendees can’t attend in-person, the same goes for sponsors and exhibitors who might prefer to have a remote presence at your event.

Cost

By nature, virtual events are less expensive to execute and attend than in-person events when you have the right tools. When it comes to a hybrid event, you don’t need to invest in expanding physical venue space when you can instead add a virtual component to reach even more attendees.

Inclusivity

The virtual element of your hybrid event opens up opportunities for people who might have health or resource barriers that prevent them from attending in-person. By reaching a broader audience for attendees, presenters,

and sponsors, a hybrid event can incorporate a diverse set of perspectives which enriches content and makes your event even more inclusive.

Attendee engagement

For any hybrid event, it’s essential that event organizers harness the power of virtual event software that serves as a true connector between all audiences. Remote and in-person attendees should be equipped with technology that allows them to seamlessly interact with each other via the virtual event platform.

Event data

Gathering event data is key to understanding what worked well, what can be improved, and what insights can be shared with event sponsors. An effective virtual event platform should be built with robust [event data and analytics](#), showing attendee engagement information, sponsor metrics and insights, and networking activity.

Benefits of hybrid events:

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Revenue

Cost

Inclusivity

Attendee engagement

Event data

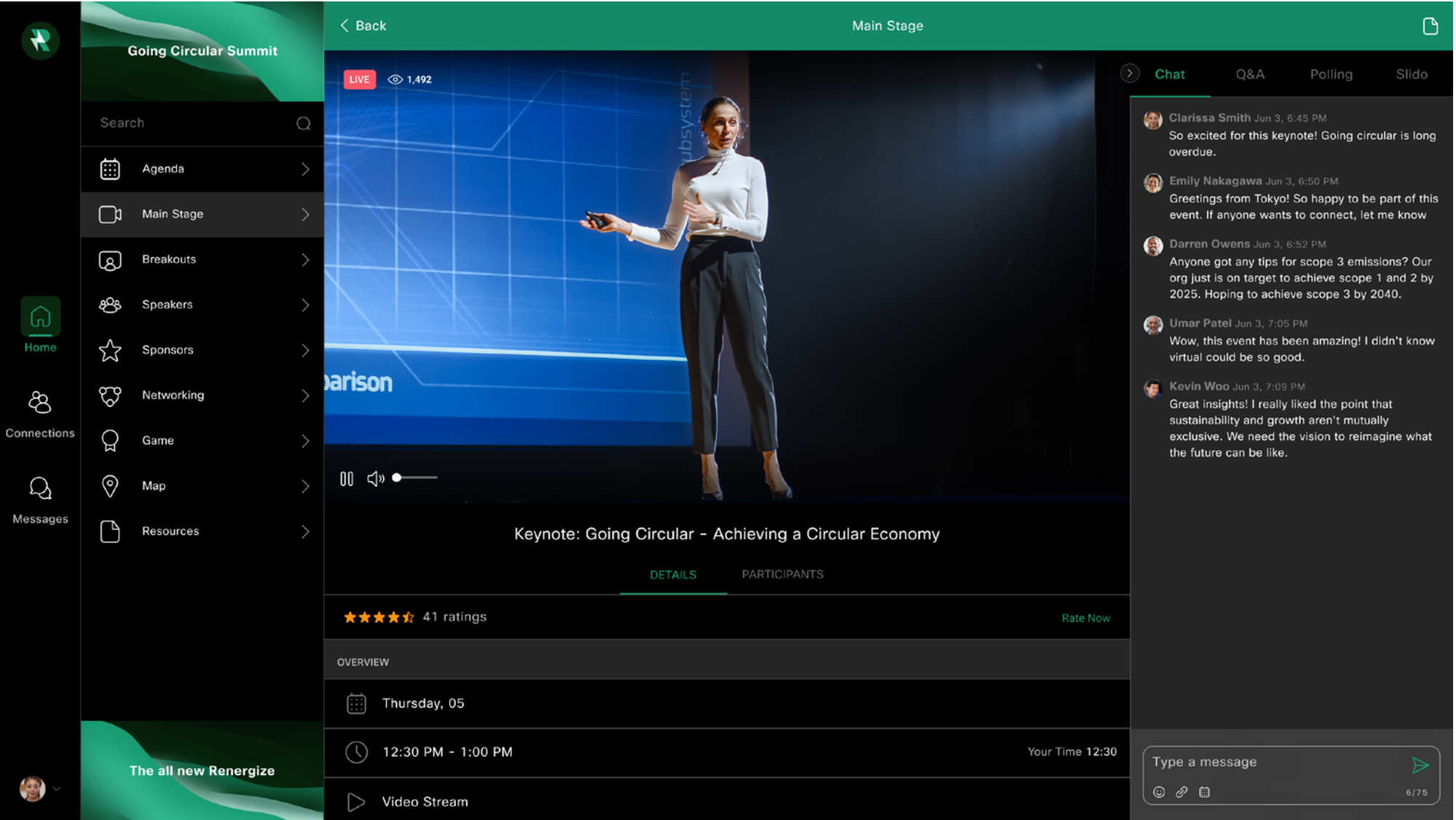
What do they look like?

Hybrid events can look different depending on your vision and style, but all hybrid events should have a common goal: optimizing the event experience for both in-person and remote audiences. The key to bringing attendees is an end-to-end event platform that allows the two audiences to have the full event experience regardless of location.

Hybrid events unlock numerous benefits for event planners, attendees, and sponsors alike. With the right hybrid event platform, event organizers can successfully bridge the gap between in-person and virtual experiences to create a seamless attendee experience from beginning to end.

While the hybrid event model is integral to the future of events, this doesn’t necessarily mean that the hybrid model is a one size fits all. Along with that, you need to know what tools will set you up for success.

High quality production elements, in-depth post-event metrics, seamless tech integrations, and advanced planning options such as branded registration and segmented ticketing help virtual attendees feel truly immersed in the event and allow event organizers to provide increased value for attendees and sponsors.



When planning your next event, consider these options for the most common hybrid events formats:

Trade shows

After a tradeshow, exhibitors are ready to start their post-event follow-ups with prospects and customers. When equipped with a robust hybrid event platform, event planners can provide exhibitors with real-time analytics and reporting, including proactive, detailed, and actionable insights into their attendee interactions during the event.

Conferences

The right hybrid event platform keeps conference attendees networking and sponsors top of mind. Customize your event with ticketing options, sponsorship, and gamification. Digital signage promotes sponsor visibility and communicates consistent event branding. Advanced interactive networking and community building capabilities seamlessly connect virtual and in-person audiences before, during and after the event.

Global town halls

Global town halls are at their best when they accomplish two critical tasks: seamlessly connecting leadership and the broader company and serving as an extension of a company's brand. A hybrid event platform enables planners to do both by providing limitless engagement opportunities and customizable event options to create an event space that reflects your company and its unique culture.

While hybrid events present their own unique challenges, with some creativity and the right event platform in place, you can enjoy end-to-end event management that promotes continuous engagement and drives better results every time.

Sales kick-offs

A successful hybrid sales kick-off engages virtual and in-person team members every step of the way. Hybrid event technology provides endless opportunities for more frequent interactions, including touchpoints for networking, thought leadership, and custom content after the event ends.

How to plan and host your next hybrid event

Before you get started with your hybrid event, you need to have a plan of action. These key elements will help serve as a guidepost as you start getting into the details of your hybrid event.

Develop your hybrid event's theme and vision.

Put yourself in the shoes of your remote and in-person attendees. What key takeaways will they gain? What types of content will attendees benefit from? How will you differentiate your event? Why would an attendee be interested in attending your event? Remember to consider these questions from both the in-person and remote attendee perspective.

Establish roles and responsibilities.

You likely have a team in place to help you pull off your amazing hybrid event. In your plan, identify who will be responsible for each aspect. Make sure that everyone on your team is aligned and clear on what aspects of your event they are managing.

Create relevant content.

As you develop content for your event, remember to factor in that you're developing content for both your remote and in-person audiences. Think through what kind of content will translate best to both attendee groups. Consider whether there are parts of the event when you will need to play recorded content for your remote attendees while your in-person audience engages in another activity.

Launch a detailed hybrid event plan.

Of course, part of your event requires that you create an actual event plan. Details such as session information, presenter bios, event timing, safety measures for in-person attendees, and ways to engage your remote audience should all be included in your event plan.

Enlist dynamic speakers.

Having dynamic speakers that bring energy and excitement to your event will make all the difference in keeping your audiences engaged. Take time to find speakers who are willing to engage with both audiences throughout their presentations.

Identify sponsors.

Your sponsors play a major role in the success of your hybrid event. Not only can they can provide additional resources such as technology or giveaways, they can also help elevate your event by sponsoring experiences that promote engagement and networking.

Once you're finished planning your event, it's time to kick things off!

Here are some tips for how to successfully host a hybrid event:

Choose a robust virtual event platform.

Your event's virtual event platform will play a major role in keeping your remote and in-person attendees connected and engaged. Some features to consider for your virtual event platform include: chat [functionality](#), [gamification](#), and [1:1 video rooms](#).

Keep attendees informed and up-to-date.

When hosting any kind of event, communication is always key. Every step of the way, keep your hybrid audiences informed on where they can find event-related information within the event platform, how to stay connected to other attendees using your platform's networking capabilities, and who they can go to for any questions.

Test out both the live event AV and your event platform.

Since your AV partner might not have all of their equipment on-site until the day of or the day before, consider asking them to broadcast from their office with their team "acting" as the in-person emcees and/or speakers to see how their AV will interface with Socio's event platform. This will help your presenters feel more comfortable ahead of their presentation and give you peace of mind going into the event.

Are you gearing up to host a hybrid event? Check out this [blog](#) on everything you need to know to effortlessly plan immersive [hybrid events](#) that draw sponsors and delight attendees!

Practice, practice, practice.

Hybrid events are new for event organizers, attendees, presenters, and sponsors. Set aside time to rehearse before the start of your event. For an event with a lot of moving parts, we suggest doing a walk-through using all the tech you intend to use at least a week prior.

Embracing a hybrid strategy

Hybrid events present opportunities for organizers, attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors alike.

What's the next step in your hybrid event journey? Identifying a powerful, scalable, and secure virtual event platform to engage a remote audience and bridge the gap between your hybrid audiences should top the list!

Meet Webex Events (formerly Socio), an end-to-end event management SaaS platform for powering in-person, virtual, and hybrid events.

With Webex Events, you can create a unique, branded experience for attendees, optimized specifically for a hybrid audience. From event registration to attendee engagement, sponsorship, and post-event follow-up, Webex Events has everything you need to create a truly unified event experience.

Discover how we can take your hybrid event to the next level. [Schedule a personalized demo today.](#)



Real life use cases

The National Speakers Association (NSA) hosted a successful hybrid event using the Webex Events Platform. The NSA team leveraged the gamification tool, Social Wall feature, session chat, and so much more to [drive engagement](#) amongst their hybrid audience.

Without an event platform to bridge the gap between both audiences, remote attendees can feel left out or bored and quickly disengage from the event.

NSA worked tirelessly to ensure this didn't happen by providing their hybrid audiences with multiple opportunities to make connections.

Are you looking for more hybrid event inspiration? Check out our [Top 5 Hybrid events of 2021](#).

