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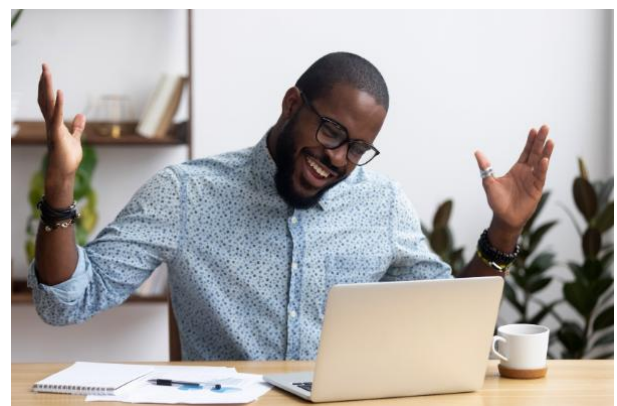
UNDERSTANDING “HYBRID” AS WE REASSESS THE FUTURE OF THE EVENTS INDUSTRY

With all of the uncertainty surrounding the current pandemic and society’s common goal to keep the spreading of the virus from getting any worse, the events industry will be taking a “hybrid” approach by offering a shared attendance by both in person and online audiences.

The goal is to offer the best of both worlds while recognizing current regulations and the financial impact the COVID-19 virus has had on the global economy.

By taking this stance, event planners offer audiences a choice between physically attending an event, or virtually viewing an event and both have their pros and cons. For instance, event planners can reach a broader audience as capacity restraints are minimized along with less overhead expenses as travel, large rent for venue overhead, and food and drink expenses can be reduced when going virtual. Not to mention, the added ability for those members who are suffering financially or who physically cannot attend an event an opportunity to do so from the comfort of their own homes. Likewise, a hybrid approach offers the other segment of attendees the flexibility to attend in-person if their social distancing comfort levels allow and they feel the best way to gain important information from the event is through physical attendance which also presents an opportunity for mingling with both presenters and colleagues.

There is no denying the world is a different place than it was 6 months ago. So, focusing solely on offering just live events or just virtual means giving up an opportunity to explore the best of what both have to offer and ignoring the limitations of each. Being part of this new learning curve has given businesses a chance to review whether travel and in person meetings have really been necessary or whether the funds could have been used elsewhere within the organization. Hopefully, management teams and event planners have taken these past few months as an opportunity to make necessary changes throughout the organization to accommodate financial and budgetary restraints given the new set of challenges throughout the workplace.



Going forward, it is clear technology will be playing a bigger role. Budgets will have to include working with knowledgeable production companies who have the expertise and experience required to supplement live performances with on-line high-speed tech services and advanced AV equipment. Most importantly on-line attendees will need to feel they are as much a part of the experience as if they attended in person so finding the proper balance will weigh heavily on the successful outcome of your event.

It is obvious that all of us will have different comfort levels as to how we will approach travel and social distancing when decreased government restrictions ensue, but none of us has a crystal ball. Therefore, given the current level of uncertainty, a hybrid scenario to event planning will more than likely be the norm for the remainder of '20 and most of 2021. As such, it will be beneficial for event planners to pay close attention to the number of attendees from both groups and whether they see any cross over. Discovering ways for promoting audience engagement and looking for ideas on how both live and on-line audiences can connect throughout the performance will be key. By paying attention to the analytics attached to the event, planners will have the added advantage for making necessary adjustments to improve results in the future regardless if those events will be live, virtual, or hybrid.