PLANNING AND PRODUCING YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

A lot has changed for everyone since the beginning of 2020, including your nonprofit. The pace and breadth of the 'new' adoptions and adaptations of how you work, where you work, and with what tools, makes it feel like you have been thrust into a technological squall. And the vision and plans for your events with you!

Suddenly, you cannot gather in person and all of your events are on the line. But you have no clue as to where to start- what is video conferencing, how do I get a speaker in the screen, how do we get people registered, what happens to fundraising, what are all the moving parts? We know it all feels overwhelming, like you want to throw in the towel. But we're here to tell you – *you can do this*! You can re-envision and produce your *In-Person Event* (IPE) into a virtual experience.

After hosting our own [twenty-five workshop full day conference](#) - with breakout rooms, lunch delivery, entertainment, and more - we just couldn't keep all the cool stuff we learned to ourselves. Sharing is Caring! So, we produced this guide to help you understand the components and things to address as you take your event online. We also give you directions.

Now let me set expectations right up front. Virtual events do not save you time or money over your IPE. In many cases it will be as expensive, if not a tad more expensive, to start hosting your gatherings online. But we believe the outcomes that bring you admiration, the outputs of return on investment, and the ongoing engagement you draw from a virtual event is worth the investment.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

The first thing you must do in planning for your Virtual Event is to abandon all expectations that you will be recreating your IPE into a virtual format.

Shifting an event from IPE to Virtual is not a one-to-one correlation. Any attempts to recreate the _exact same_ activities of the IPE in a virtual gathering leaves the program flat and uninspiring for your participants. _Long hours before a video screen watching televised and recorded presentations will never compare to the vibrant and interactive nature of an IPE._ Additionally, in producing your virtual event, you must take into account an understanding and integration of the" fourth" wall of the medium - the video screen as a barrier between you and your audience. The development of a meaningful virtual experience for your participants must be designed to break down that fourth wall, allowing them to participate in the online action as they would at your IPE. Many organizations fall short in this area and their events suffer in registration numbers, participant satisfaction, and sponsor trust.

Fortunately, there are numerous ways to break that fourth wall and recreate the opportunities that inspire participants to want to join in, meeting their expectations for relevant and purposeful interactions, and leveraging the advantage of the expansive benefits of virtual – brand awareness and participation from an audience without geographic or mobility boundaries.

The development of your virtual event has three phases:

1. **Concept Design**
2. **Construction and Production**
3. **Communications and Marketing**

Let's break these three phases down into tangible and actionable components to be considered and accomplished.

CONCEPT DESIGN

In planning and hosting a virtual event, the most informative and effective place to start is in Concept Design. Concept Design is an early phase of your virtual event planning process. It is the starting point at which the broad outlines of function and form of your event are articulated. It includes the design of content, technology, software, audience interactions and experiences, processes, paths of communications and marketing strategies.

By exploring the viewpoint and the requirements of each of your audience participants – registrants, speakers, sponsors, hosts, tech support, and more – your production team will be assured that the time and resources invested into building your virtual event results in a seamless and satisfying experience for all. Ultimately that is the goal in reaching your events desired outcomes.

Concept Design also helps to frame the remainder of your decision making: Do we purchase a webspace for registration and pre-event marketing or do we have one tailor-built for our needs? Which video conference platform to use? Will a video conference producer be needed for our event or do we have the technological know-how and tools to self-produce? Should our event use a series of re-recorded video presentations or do we need live presentations, or maybe a combination of both? These questions, along with decisions on audience development; sales, marketing and communication needs; sponsor brand awareness; donor and fundraising needs; speaker needs, and more- will all be fleshed out during your Concept Design. An important component of this phase is decisions on accessibility needs for event participants: closed caption, alt text, font colors, and other accommodations.

The process of Concept Design requires participation from everyone in the organization who might have a role or influence in producing the virtual event: Technology, Fund Development, Program, Marketing, Communications, and others. The total time devoted to the Concept Design sessions can be as little as 2-3 hours or as in depth as 7-9 hours. This phase should not be rushed. In total, it could take up to a month to complete, depending on the complexity of your event.

During the Concept Design session, your team will also process through the design of the wireframe for the virtual event, considering real time and virtual needs of participants; establishing imperatives for event space design and tech development, reviewing requirements for conferencing software production, as well participant engagement.

A Concept Design process agenda would look something like this:

Phase 1: Empathize to understand participants.

Understanding the motivations of the participants (more than one audience type) is the initial step. You will step into the participants' shoes and think about what motivates them. Also, what challenges exist in their participation from IPE to virtual.

Phase 2: Define the challenge.

You will identify and narrow down the broader design challenge of participant engagement at the virtual event into more specifics. You might create challenge statements as a group and then suggest "how might we..." questions.

Phase 3: Ideation

Ideation Part A: Generate ideas and potential solutions.

Reviewing the challenges and "How might we ..." questions, generate ideas and potential solutions that would meet the needs of your participants and your organization.

Ideation Part B: Participant journey mapping.

Based on the various and most viable solutions, compile a timeline of the participant's participation actions. Explore needs and pain-points for each step in the participant journey.

Phase 4: Prototype and test ideas.

Turn the steps from the participant journey maps into specific solutions.

Wrap up: Putting into action.

Establish project plan imperatives and responsible parties, to put solution(s) and the design/development of your virtual event into action.

CONSTRUCTION and PRODUCTION

Construction of your virtual event includes using all of the outputs from the Concept Design session as a guiding tool in translating IPE activities to virtual activities, while Production of the virtual event includes preparation for and day of direction of the messaging, content and technical presentation of the event.

CONSTRUCTION:

Virtual event space design and development is a new challenge for event planners. Your participants are trained to attend an IPE event in a facility, a space, a place to *enter and be*. Simply providing them with a link in an email to a Video Conference will be insufficient. It is not inspiring, it does nothing to communicate the value and worth of your event, and it will inhibit your community from wanting to be involved.

- Your event must have a web specific space in the virtual realm from the very first announcement of its date and time. The web-space must clearly articulate the value and worth of the event, along with an area for participant engagement -- registrations, communications, information, and instructions. Your virtual event site should be built in a way that it can be used to promote, sell, and host the virtual event all from that location.

- Components of the event site web-space should include registrations (including e-commerce setup and management, registrant communications and access); attendee assistance needs such as technical support for the video conferencing link; preconference networking activities for cultivating prospective participants and adding anticipation and value to your event; sponsor and speaker visibility and outreach opportunities to your community; fundraising for all stages of the virtual event (pre, day of, and post); donor stewardship and recognition pre, post, and during event; and post-conference engagement.

- The web-space for your virtual event should also have the capabilities to measure and evaluate all participant data and analytics in one reporting system- how many people clicked on your "register here" link, how many converted to a registration, etc.

If this sounds immense for your event, do not worry, there are vendors that have turnkey sites with these components. If that route is too expensive for your budget, a simple subdomain webpage built onto your organizations existing website could be produced for a third of the price of turn key packages. A subdomain also allows you the freedom to maintain the web-space for your virtual event and re-use it for other virtual activities. We favor a WordPress subdomain, assuming your website is built on WordPress. Shopify can also be a quick and easy web-space for your virtual event, with the benefit of being preloaded for payment processing and marketing/communications. Eventbrite can serve as a subdomain easily as well. Additionally, some CRM software with website capabilities, such as REACH, can be easily developed into an event space. Before buying into the costly packaged virtual event tools, investigate a less expensive, more tailored option. We built our web-space for our 25-workshop virtual event as a subdomain to our corporate page, using WordPress [RISE: Forging Opportunity from Disruption.](#)

Video conference software, capabilities, and setup: While ZOOM is the household name in video conferencing, there are plenty of others that might suit your purposes. In addition to ZOOM, look into Go-to-Webinar; Microsoft Teams, and others. Even Google Meets can serve as a video conference tool for simple events.

The video conference software you choose must meet the needs you defined in your Concept Design session:

- The ease of use of the tool by participants, by hosts, by speakers, guests, donors, sponsors.
- Accurate projections, specifications, and selection of software purchases, upgrades, and needs for the event is also critical, i.e. the number of meeting user licenses available in the account, level of licenses, number of meeting attendees and user licenses, as well as cloud recording licenses.
- The correct setup for your specific event requirements, without overinvesting in the software. Also ensure that you have access for all necessary hosts, speakers, and participants, and that you have the ability to function successfully within the software for day-of activities recordings, and more.

- The consideration and selection of the software includes identifying and authorizing an individual on your team to be lead developer in setting up the software well in advance, developing training tools for event presenters and hosts, and trouble-shooting day of technical issues.

- Registration and Payment Processing tools: For organizations already setup to accept payments online, many times you can use your existing payment processing tools. You should ensure that it integrates with your registration software for the web-space crated for your virtual event as well as your CRM. Stripe, Paypal, and WooCommerce are all good options.

- Communications tools: Full CRM's can be an excellent tool for communicating with your participant audience. If you do not have a communication tool, try to find a web-space design software for your virtual event, such as Shopify, that offer built in communications tools. Although not as seamless, as a last resort you can export registered attendee contact data and use a freestanding option such as MailChimp and Constant Contact to manage communications.

- Finally, but maybe most importantly, is the assessment and management of your organization's broadband and server size capacity to manage load issues for day participation. This is best done by your existing IT vendor or professional. They may direct you to forgo WiFi broadband connections and hardwire directly into your router. Check early on with your IT specialists to ensure you are taking this into consideration in your Concept Design sessions.

PRODUCTION:

The most important part of your virtual event experience is not only the smooth operations of the technical needs, but the ability to "curate" the virtual experience in a way that helps bring out the value of the content, ensuring that the solutions developed by your team during the Concept Design phase are accurately and efficiently integrated into the overall event -- from web-space development, to software selections and set-up, to technical production, market development, communications content and schedule, and participant relations. This all begins with the identification of an **Event Producer** to project manage your event development, both technical and content, as well as coordinate and oversee day-of technical production for the event presentation. In some cases, if you are buying a prepackaged hosting platform for your event, it may come with an Event Producer. Be sure to get details on what that producer's role and deliverables will be before you sign the contract. In other cases, you can hire an outside partner like our firm Harvest to be the Event Producer for your virtual experience. In either case, be certain everyone is on board with the expectations of production and the division of responsibilities.

The event producer will plan for, schedule, facilitate, and coordinate the production of schedules, content, technical design, and deliverables of all the partners in congruently - from pre-event development onto the day-of event, through the post-event round up and closing. This includes defining, outlining and administering the management of roles, responsibilities, deliverables, scheduling, and communications with *speakers, sponsors, registrants, pre-registrants, vendors, guests, financial, technical, and IT specialists, publicity and communications, as well as marketing personnel*.

The event producer should work with the organizations marketing, IT, program, and fund development team to prepare for and facilitate the smooth execution of the event, identifying unique opportunities to enhance the content, integrating identified concept design outputs, establishing and following milestones, supporting responsible parties, establishing and adhering to timelines, costs, and pre-requisite needs. The event producer should also develop a master architecture of the run of show for the day, ensuring that all of the production components necessary for smooth execution of the virtual event are on time, supporting and leveraging each other, and building momentum toward final product.

Who should be the Event Producer if you are not hiring on? This could be a staff member or a volunteer with expertise. The person who is placed as the event producer should have both project management skills and a working familiarity with technical tools being deployed for your event.

In addition to an Event Producer, you will need to prepare and identify for:

- The selection and training of event 'Hosts' to manage rooms within the video conferencing software before and during your event. Your hosts will guide and manage your presenter's rooms for them, allowing the presenter to focus solely on their presentation and on the participants engagement, questions, or topic understanding.
- The set up and training of hosts, presenters, and all involved in day-of production of your virtual event -- creating a master plan for the use of the software for the day; creating and assigning separate meeting rooms (or webinar rooms) with specifications on each rooms' size, access, etc. Creating, monitoring, and documenting separate logins and access for each host in each room. Developing and hosting pre-conference trainings for hosts, for speakers, and for other participants (vendors, sponsors, guests etc.); documenting training guidelines, schedule matrix, and other critical day-of criteria.
- Identifying and planning for a technical support person for the day-of virtual event production. This should be a dedicated person who can assist participants accessing the event early, experiencing software glitches, or having questions on video and audio quality. The technical support person should be assigned full day presence for event set up, checking for last minute changes, bugs, and login connections for hosts, speakers, etc., as well as general troubleshooting.
- A communications production person responsible for capturing and preparing in a pre-recording, some or all of the speaker presentations; securing and uploading video and document materials for the day of event production; creating snippets of video and topic materials for distribution to prospective participants and registered participants leading up to the event, to generate

excitement and encourage day of attendance; and ensuring the pre-recorded videos align with the graphics and brand development of the look and feel of your event.

COMMUNICATIONS and MARKETING

The purpose of your marketing and communications strategy for your virtual event is to generate brand and event awareness, drive network sharing among prospective participants, generate registrants, communicate updates and key information with participants and presenters, build energy and excitement about day of attendance among those registered, increase fundraising, and expand sponsor visibility and reach. Virtual event marketing and communications is a continuum of tactics beginning pre-event, through day-of event, and into post-event wrap up.

Using the concept design outputs from your session revealing the 'participants journey', illustrate how marketing and communication can drive bigger and more active participation from registrants, speakers, sponsors, and others:

- A schedule of cross posted messages and visual aids on social media platforms, targeted at your database audience and look-alike audiences developed in the platforms.
- Pre-event livestream interviews, watch parties, and graphics on presenters, topics, and participants across your social media platforms.
- A special pre- and post-social media private networking community for participants to interact with presenters and topic experts.
- Fundraising awareness and engagement leading up to the event, including storytelling, tracking of contributions, and challenges.
- A series of private pre-event scheduled 'talk backs' in a video conferencing meeting exclusively for registrants with unique guest appearances
- Updated, live, announcement of participants and donors on event site and social media.

- Pre-event interviews with legacy media outlets, such as with radio, print and television reporters, on unique and outstanding points of interest from your presenters, experts, and event topics.

Day-of and during event, the following might be considered:

- Exclusive extended access for event "stars"- unique guest access, exclusive insight reporting shared in private networking rooms, or personal introduction to key participants through a matchmaking tool.
- Community engagement during the event, through social posting on the conference website and your social media platforms.
- Fundraising goals and progress reported during event.
- Coupons and offer from Uber eats (or local restaurant?) for lunch or dinner delivery to participants as a group.
- Unique playtime opportunities- Lunchtime and Recess breakout rooms! Meditation, yoga lessons, musician performances or lessons, trivia games, poetry slams, storytelling, knitting lessons, and more. Have fun with this!
- Post event networking rooms by area of interest with guest speakers (a great way to target and cultivate for donor interest) or hosted by sponsors sharing specific tools and techniques.

When planning for communications and marketing, take into consideration the following:

- The development and management of an overall marketing schedule to account for and oversee: social media, email broadcasts to your CRM, public relations opportunities, and other pre-event communications and engagement of the targeted demographic.
- Developing an easy to use PR package, to distribute to your sponsors, participant groups, presenters, and volunteers, leveraging their networks to achieve a broader reach of target market. We often include special discount

codes for use by each partner in encouraging registration from their community.

- Unified and clear messaging on the event. Do not broadcast more than three specific messages on your event. Three key take aways is sufficient and will ensure clarity on your purpose, driving up engagement. Try to stay focused on **WHY** this event is important to your organization (and it's not to replace the funding you're losing from not doing an IPE!); **WHAT** impact you have had- or that this event will have- on your mission; and **HOW** it will add value to the participants lives (this may be different for your different audiences).

- Developing and implementing a communications schedule (with messaging and tools) for informing, directing, and serving guests, speakers, and sponsors, as well as executing for publicity through radio and television broadcasts leading up to and post event.

- Designing a branded broadcast template, that complements your organization mission and style. Use this branded template for all of your virtual event specific broadcasted communications and social media posts throughout the pre-event, day of event, and post event schedule. By linking your announcements visually with a branded heading, you will train your audience to notice your updates, increasing their engagement and participation.

- If your event relies on acquiring new participants not already in your sphere of influence, then structuring SEO schedule with keywords and metadata on the web-space for your event, backlinking to other sites and publications for increased traffic, and building a campaign in paid ads in social media and Google.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Let's be honest -- nonprofits are not known to be early adopters of technology and new ideas! I know this to be true because I was a nonprofit executive for twenty-five years. Getting nonprofit organizations to think and adapt technologically has been a focus of many good and valuable membership groups and industry associations for a decade at least!

But, if there is a silver lining from the impact the pandemic has had on our sector, it is that we have been driven to adapt to new ways of working together to achieve our goals and continue to support our communities. Virtual events are one of those new ways.

Do we miss being together? Absolutely! Give me a table of friends at a luncheon or a networking group at a seminar any day. Extroverts like me have really suffered this year!

But I must say, and I know I am not alone, being able to get work done from a comfortable space in my home or alone in my office, learning and participating with experts and creative people online, without the hassle of travel and parking, and not having to wear my best suit everyday has become agreeable and effective.

Your organizations community feels the same and have come to embrace the idea of attending virtual events. All they ask is that your virtual event not be boring - that, unlike a broadcast production, your event is authentic and not scripted; and that, unlike watching television, your event engages them in fun and inspiring ways as a participant.

We think this guide is a start for developing a unique, smoothly executed virtual event that your community will want to join. Remember, your virtual event is more than just moving your IPE into a virtual realm. And you won't end up spending any less money or time on your virtual event over your IPE event. In many cases it will be as expensive to host because of startup costs building your web-space, zoom trainings, and preparing production tools and your team. However, adopting a virtual event strategy for the long term will help to lower those costs, which is why we encourage you to make this a permanent and frequent activity in your community's shared experiences. We assure you that the outcomes,

outputs, and the ongoing engagement you can draw from a virtual event is worth the investment.

If you would like to chat further with specific questions, or would like to hear how Harvest can help you plan and produce your next event, feel free to email us at: roots@harvestdevelopmentgrp.com.

We will get right back to you and find a time to chat about your specific obstacle and ideas, steering you toward your successful event!

Cheers!

Sondra Lintelmann-Dellaripa
President, Harvest Development Group
Founder, BLOSSOM: eLearning for Serious Do-Gooders

FAQ's on Virtual Events

TIMING and PLANNING

For **small** virtual events, most people need between 3-6 weeks to promote the event successfully. If this is our first event, plan to add three additional weeks to this timeline. Rome wasn't built in a day.

For **large** virtual conferences, 65% of event organizers need more than 6 weeks to promote the event and drive the desired registrations. Harvest hosted our first big event (25 workshops, lunch time breakout rooms for fun activities, and post event networking rooms) for 100 people and developed it in 8 weeks. I. Do. Not. Recommend. This!!!! We did it, and did it well by the survey feedback, *but it drained us*. We all took a two-week vacation after that. If this is your first time doing a large virtual conference, I encourage you **to do it**, but give yourself a good six months of planning and preparation.

41% of event organizers use Zoom for their small virtual events, followed by Microsoft Teams, which is used by 29% of marketers. We used ZOOM. We love ZOOM. But please find what works for you. One size does not fit all.

33.7% of event organizers say that the average cost per virtual event attendee for their event was between $500 - $1000. The average cost per attendee for a large virtual conference is slightly higher, $1000 - $1500. For our large conference, we were able to come in at almost half the low end of that range- $712 per attendee. BUT we have a full staff for technology development- coding, designing, and developing our virtual event web-space, an on-staff Zoom producer, and we have an engaged community of workshop speakers eager to participate, and a client community eager to hear from us. This is how we kept our costs down low.

67% of virtual events use external presenters. We had to turn people away from speaking at our conference. To vet the speaker candidates, we set up an application form in Survey Monkey requiring details on the topic, examples of what they would be handing out and how they would be working with the participants, as well as a video clip of them presenting if available, and other information such as headshots and bios. This way we could organize it all in one place. I just couldn't envision having 50 applications with attachments coming through our email, so this process was a life saver!

65% of event organizers stated that they solicited and accepted sponsorships for their event. Our key sponsor came in very late, within two weeks of our event, which forced us to scramble to get them coverage. As we worked with our sponsors in delivering on value for their investment, here is what we learned sponsors want most: Brand

awareness on all visuals, links to their page, a place in the virtual event to talk and/or to interact with the participants, a list of emails of participants and a post event glow (with a thank you all around for their sponsorship).

The average sponsorship package for a virtual event costs $8,456. Our Sponsorship, because it was an unproven event, started at $2,500. Our largest sponsorship was $5,000. You may have really good relationships with your sponsors, who have already adapted and adopted to the value proposition of virtual events. You may see a higher return on your sponsorship solicitation's.

PROMOTIONS and COMMUNICATIONS

81% of virtual event organizers use social media to drive registrations. Our social media calendar was created, posts drafted and scheduled within the first week of planning, after all the components of the agenda and day were finalized. We also filled in with videos from the guests and speakers, livestreams, and a pre event free webinar.

76% of marketers say that email is the single most effective way to drive registrations. We broadcast to our base weekly leading up to the event and then everyday on the week of the event. We also broadcast to the registrants- we knew that if they didn't actually show up for the event (selecting instead to wait for the recording) then our sponsors and speakers would be disappointed and our brand would suffer. We encouraged registrants to attend the event live by incentivizing their participation with freebies.

The one thing that speakers, guests, and sponsors desire the most: Details well in advance and often, on their role, 'how to's' and when. Good intentional and consistent communications. We made sure that each of these groups heard from us at least weekly with meaningful messages and helpful insight, as then daily in the week leading up to the event.

Making use of your speakers and sponsors network as a broadening of your reach is the one thing that can expand promotional returns. Make it easy for these partners to share your event and encourage participation from their own communities by creating and sharing a promotions package that includes the event messaging, logos, links, and a discount code for their network.

CHALLENGES and SUCCESS FACTORS

Audience engagement is the largest challenge when it comes to virtual events- how to make the participants sitting behind their screens starting at your presenters feel like they are connected. The next biggest challenge is interaction- how to encourage and drive participation involvement in your event. We speak of these two challenges in terms of the idea of breaking down that "fourth wall"- that screen that exists between you and your people as you share and host your event. One good way to break that fourth wall is by not using pre-recorded video presentations in your event. Having your speakers and topic experts live onscreen, speaking in real-time and answering live questions is the single most important thing you can do to make that fourth wall evaporate. Yes, it's a bit riskier, they may forget their place, their presentation tools might not work, or they may receive questions that were not expected. But the virtual space for this type of interaction is more forgiving, more authentic, and more malleable to forgive and absolve such glitches. The real impact of hosting the event as a live production is worth the risk.

Speaking of glitches, 38% of event organizers say they run into technical problems when hosting virtual events. The biggest annoyance of virtual events is an unreliable broadband connection. The second-largest frustration comes from bad microphones. There are some ways you can mitigate these potential problems - increase your broadband before the event, hardwire your WIFI into the event designated computer, turn off all other WIFI draining services, and make sure your room hosts and speakers are well trained in advance. Don't try anything fancy in your presentations and production that you've never done before- video embeds in slide decks, background music, etc. Keep it simple if this is your first time. Also, purchase a good microphone for your event.

The average percentage of registrants who do not show for a virtual event is 35%. This is slightly higher than in-person events. This could be your biggest risk for fundraising! People not present cannot donate. Be sure to incentivize your registrants to show up. Promise a 'community' for your participants to engage in during your virtual event, not just a show. Prepare to deliver a recording of the event afterward, but do not promise it to registrants beforehand, especially if your event will be for fundraising solicitations.

80% of people join virtual events for educational purposes. So, focus on developing educational components your audience will value and marketing the educational value of your event to increase registrations. The next biggest reported reason for joining virtual events is networking. Networking in your event can be done pre event through special video meetings for registrants and post event in meetings rooms and/or breakout rooms. All networking should have a facilitated focus, so prepare these

meetings by interest area or topics, creating magnets for people to join based on the perceived value and worthiness of the topic or interest area.

Attendee satisfaction is considered a success factor by 85% of event organizer. To maximize your investment into virtual events, to adapt and adopt new technologies that your community already embraces and finds valuable, and to break down geographic and mobility barriers to more participants, you are building and hosting this event for the future. Surveys of your audience showing high satisfaction is an important building block to the success of repeating your performance next time. A satisfied audience means more sponsors, more engaged donors and community members, more repeat attendance at your future events. It also reflects well on your brand and highlights your success in managing complex issues toward achieving your objectives in other areas, which donors do care about in considering investing in your organization.

So how do you get that feedback? Well, 90% of virtual event organizers use surveys to measure attendee satisfaction. Our survey link was in the chat at the end of each workshop in our large virtual event. Make your survey invite compelling and prominent; make the survey itself easy to fill out- five questions maximum.

Virtual Events do not save you money. Let me say that again- **Virtual Events are not a means to host a gathering on a budget**. In fact, 55% of virtual event organizers plan to invest more in virtual events next year (2021). If you are jumping into the pool be prepared to swim! But be sure the rewards are commensurate with the costs, which is something you are exploring in your concept design sessions.

According to organizers, the majority of their budget per virtual event was spent on the virtual conference hosting platform. Whether you are buying a turn key package for video conferencing ($2,500 to $20,000), which includes a producer plan or an actual producer along with the technological tools; or you are building your own ($2,500-$10,000), which involves creating your web-space domain, connecting a video conferencing tool and e-commerce platform, using your own communications software, and producing the event yourself - buying or building a hosting platform with its' affiliated software will be a big part of your budget.

65.9% of event organizers make their virtual events available on-demand after the fact. Please consider doing this, but don't announce it during your promotions! You want people there on the day of the event. Send them an email after with a surprise link and the recording. And let them share- they look good by your generosity and you get broader network exposure for next time!

Stats courtesy of Markletic Event Research May 2020