



# Why you should run digital events

Ebook



## Hello, and thank you for downloading the latest ebook from the Clarity Stack Sales Academy.

In recent years we've worked with some of the biggest companies in the world and understand the challenges associated with not only lead generation, but converting those leads into pitch opportunities and, ultimately, new business through the door on either one-off or long-term contracts.

That is why we've put our heads together and compiled this particular ebook, which is designed to help you host a virtual event. Having grown in popularity over the course of the pandemic, digital events are a great way of finding a new audience and engaging people interested in your brand or services.

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## The benefits of digital events

It's only in the last few years that digital events have come to prominence, with many favouring the traditional in-person shows and exhibits, but now the tide is starting to turn towards a digital-first approach.

With in-person events unable to go ahead during the COVID-19 global pandemic, businesses were forced to adapt yet again, and instead of simply postponing or cancelling their plans they put measures in place that enabled them to stage the potentially lucrative event online and invite an even wider audience than they may have had originally.

Digital events enable companies to connect and engage with audiences from right around the world, sending out invitations and enabling interested parties to buy tickets for the online event that may not have had the option to travel and attend in person. This means that they can expand their own reach overseas like they may never have done before, and enables the reputation of the business to grow into new territories thanks to social media promotion, word-of-mouth and paid digital advertising.





### Cost-saving benefits

There are also cost-saving benefits associated with hosting a digital event. Not only are you saving on the costs of hiring a venue and the physical promotional materials that come with such an event (including banners, hand-outs and social events), businesses can use their own equipment and venue to host the event or have pre-recorded footage sent in, ready for editing and playing at a set time during the main event.



### CRM integrations

When hosting a digital event you can also leverage features that enable you to interact with attendees, and put relevant content in front of your target audience. For instance, CRM integrations help you follow up with leads brought in through the event far faster than collecting business cards and entering details into a spreadsheet. This means you can move quickly through the sales cycle while they remember your event and platform or services.



### Greater user experience

On top of this, many even believe that the digital format makes for a far greater user experience with some even feeling that the freedom to put headphones in at work and tuning in to the event - while continuing with their daily duties - makes it far more time efficient and webinars have suddenly risen to the top of many marketing plans and strategies as a result.

**It could be the case that digital industry events and webinars become the new highlights of the year. They have the potential to replace in-person shows that require people to travel from around the country, downing tools and paying money for hotels and public transport, and instead spending only on digital tickets that allow people to tune in live or catch-up in their own time.**

In a study undertaken and published by Event Manager Blog in March 2021, the data revealed that...

More than **70%** of those who have organised a virtual event said that the majority of their events will be **hybrid** when they return to work on a full-time basis.

This would incorporate both in-person and virtual components to enable them to build on their successes with a virtual approach, while continuing to engage on a face-to-face basis where possible. In the same study, **13% said all of their events would be virtual.**

## How to prepare and plan for your event

Before you can start promoting your event it's vitally important that you do your preparation.

You need to have it completely **clear in your mind** exactly what you want to achieve and who is going to be involved in the process so that you can plan for all possibilities and make contingency plans.

At the planning stage your first thought should always be about your **target audience** - who is it, and why should they attend? Understanding your target audience will help you with planning out the whole event, tailoring the content - and the speakers - to the audience to maximise their engagement. You can then start to think about putting together more detailed day plans and schedules nearer the event so that people can choose the day that is most relevant to them if you're running over more than one day, or an afternoon slot as opposed to the morning.

You want to make sure that every audience member feels catered to, and that your **event differs** in some way to all of the other virtual events around. If there is a similar event to yours, run by another business, then look for a USP that will encourage people to register to attend yours. This could be through a virtual networking event, perhaps you are involving more guest speakers rather than relying solely on in-house contributors, and the option for interaction throughout through live chat.

Once you have your target audience in mind and an idea about how you want the event to run, start thinking about **when** you're going to host it and how much **time** you need for planning - then add a bit extra! The last thing you want to do is leave yourself with too little time to prepare, promote and run the event as this will result in negative press and do more harm than good to your reputation.



### Planning

For large, multi-day events with a number of sessions it is recommended that you allow for at least 12-weeks (3 months) of planning time so that you can get your house in order, test and start promoting.



### Support

Think about what support you're going to need in terms of tech and the all-important finances. While you will be saving money holding a virtual event as opposed to a live in-person event, you'll still need a budget for resources and social media promotion as well as the equipment to record and run your event.



### Budget

You will also need a budget for your attendees as some will still send out merchandise related to the event including stationery and gifts, plus any fees you will pay your guest speakers and any lighting or cameras you need to hire.



### Resources

From a tech perspective you will need to have plenty of time and resources allocated so that you can test and fix any problems in the run up to and coverage of the event, putting contingency plans in place should anything go wrong.



### Tech

Always include the tech team in your planning meetings so that they can flag any potential issues before it's too late!

## How to structure your day(s)

As it's a virtual event you also want to keep things short and snappy to keep your audience engaged, especially if they're listening in while at work.

### 1 Quick sessions

A good rule of thumb is to keep all sessions to between 30 and 45 minutes, allowing people to take in and digest plenty of information and also to ask any questions. If you go over this time you risk people getting fidgety or distracted.

### 2 Plan breaks

Plan breaks for between the sessions, enabling you to resolve any tech issues that may have arisen, to bring in new live speakers to avoid communication problems and so that your attendees can have comfort breaks.

### 3 Short days

It's also worth considering short days if you're running an event over two or more days. While you might run from 9 until 5 in person with the aim of having a social event afterwards, a virtual event might run between 11 and 3 allowing people to complete their work alongside the event.

### 4 Follow-the-sun

You may also wish to consider what are known as "follow-the-sun" agendas for audience members around the world. If you're looking to involve a global audience, factor this in to your planning so that you can have contributors (and tech support) on-hand even when your own national audience have gone.



## Promoting your virtual event

With everything in place to host the best virtual event your sector has ever seen, you want to make sure that people attend!



### Website registration page

The best place to start is with a registration page on your website, or by creating a dedicated website specifically for your event where people can find as much information as possible. By giving them key details including the purpose of the digital event, key speakers, a provisional agenda and perhaps even a promotional video you can build up engagement and get people signed-up early so you can start thinking about your agenda and whether you need to add any additional days or speaker slots.



### Email marketing campaigns

You should then look at creating email marketing campaigns or paid social media advertisements, driving traffic to the registration page or the event mini-site. By assigning some budget to these campaigns you can engage your mailing list or followers so that they are aware of the event and the opportunity to sign up, and you may even include a discount code in the email for those who have worked with you before to thank them for their loyalty.



### Additional promotion

Any additional promotion you can do, such as digital PR or newsletters to your subscribers will also be beneficial in building up engagement and ensuring that your event is well attended, even by those who may not have heard of you before the planning phase.

