



Digital Event Strategist

Lesson 4: Building the Digital Environment

LEARNER OUTCOMES:

- **Develop** a project plan and timeline for your digital event to share with internal and external teams.
- **Build** a plan for the format(s) of your session delivery.
- **Categorize** the interactivity tools that will be most useful to your participants.

Presented by
Kaila Bongiovanni

FROM STRATEGY TO TACTICAL APPLICATION

Presented by Loren Benavente, DES Online Meeting Planner, EDUCAUSE

Interview with Amanda Marijanovic, Founder and Chief Creative Office, INNERACTION

Loren is an online meeting planner who produces a robust portfolio of digital events with a very small but mighty team of only three.

To get started on a new event, this is what you will need:

- Developing a detailed project plan and timeline.
 - Include due dates, task, and task owners. Include a column for when the task was completed.
- Defining project management structure and internal collaborators.

With a small internal team, how should you determine what can be handled in-house and when it's time to outsource?

To help decide, for example, ask "Is there someone that can do it better, will this save me time, and will it benefit the end user?" If the answer is YES to all three, feel comfortable pitching the idea our outsourcing to a third-party vendor.

- Justify the time and money to going to take to get that third-party onboard.

What is considered to be an ideal vendor team for your digital event?

1. Platform contact.
2. Audio provider contact, if speaking about hybrid events.
3. Webcast provider lead.
4. Room A/V lead.
5. On-site hotel/convention center lead.
6. Internet lead.

But what is this all going to cost? What is your advice for working with your key partners in producing a digital event that's on time and on budget?

- Assure your key partners that you've done your research and you've come up with the best budget scenario.
- Comparative analysis – determine the average cost/price in the industry and in your community.
- Negotiate – don't be afraid to ask about bundled deals and discounts, even free trials. Seek out corporate/in-kind sponsorship.
- Track everything – this will help you identify places where you can cut costs in the future.

What are some of your tips for navigating through the backend of registration management such as planning and testing?

- Establish a registration process/platform that test it early!

- If using a third party vendor, make sure their system integrate with your won event management system so you can continue to add your members' profiles and build those metrics.

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BUILDING OUT THE ENVIRONMENT

Presented by Kaila Bongiovanni

When you think about the environment for a hybrid or stand-alone digital event, what do you think about?

1. The **console/wrapper** - the website or frame
2. The **video stream** - live or recorded content streaming within the framework of the console

How do you create the ideal environment?

- Whether a stand-alone or hybrid event there are two environments to think about:
 1. The video/stream environment
 2. The console/wrapper of the video
- What is my environment going to look like? Think about budget and costs.
 - Virtual events/hybrid or standalone/on demand can run from \$100-200K and up.
- Think about your branding - not too much, think of the wrapper and video going together.
 - For example: If hybrid is streaming live - think about stage/background on stage - if there is a big branding presence, might not need that repeated in your wrapper.
 - Color scheme: blues and greens are more corporate. Purple is more fun. Base your color scheme and branding on your theme/audience.
- Interactivity in the wrapper - polling, chat, bios, etc. to engage audience with livestreaming events.

What video environment will you use to disseminate your content? Connecting your user experience to the environment.

- Interview
- Skype
- Product demo
- Panel
- Hybrid
- Individual presentation

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INTERACTIVITY OPTIONS

Choose your interactive options for engagement in live programming. Consider building out your console with some or all of following:

- Live chat
 - Active vs. passive experiences
 - Ensure experts are on the other end of the chat – SMEs, thought leaders, etc.
- Polling
 - Is anonymous
 - Enables quick engagement
 - Ensures audience is with you and following along
 - For three hour event, do a poll every 30 minutes or before every new session, as a bookend at the end of a session
 - For a one-hour event, every 10-15 minutes, depending on content
- Twitter

- Alternative to live chat if your platform doesn't have that feature built in
- Socializes the goings on of your event
- Great pre/post tool
 - Pre - use it to announce speakers
 - During - what's the conversation - allow audience to talk with you
 - Post - follow-up sharing of materials, speaker Q&A after session
- Agenda
 - Allows audience to participate and engage with content they really want to hear
- Bios
 - Give speakers and thought leaders more credibility
 - Link to LinkedIn
- Survey
 - Use post-event, participants can take the survey any time
 - Ask questions about satisfaction, overall impression, learning, content
- Social share
 - One click to share via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn
 - Have prepopulated message for quick pushes
- Call to Action/Documents for Download
 - What's the next thing you want your attendee to do?



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SPEAKER LOGISTICS

Presented by Kaila Bongiovanni

Interview with Anne Walker, Executive Producer, MS Studios

Event Hosts

When should you use a host?

- For longer events.
- Complex events with many sessions that need to be sutured together.
- When you want to engage the audience from their perspective.

A Host Can:

- Facilitate the content flow, help less experienced speakers feel at ease and engage in conversation, rather than a stiff presentation.
- Stand in for the audience, asking the questions the audience has, and even speaking directly to the audience. This is particularly important with online events, where the experience is often more passive than an in-person experience.

If you decide to use a host, should they be professional talent or someone from within your industry or company? Decide who you want representing your company.

- If it's more important for the event to look polished and add entertainment value, then a professional host who excels at being on camera is the way to go - you can train them on key messaging.
- If you want to be thought leader in the space and need someone who really knows the business or the company, you might want to look inside your organization for someone who is good on camera.

Speaker & Content Logistics

Develop your request to speakers to include everything you need up front; make sure and make all your asks: including time needed, social needs, if they are willing to do live Q&A.

- Start thinking of your content first and early, have a short list of presenters, and develop a content review cycle. Get buy-in from all stakeholders as soon as possible.
- Make formal requests to your top speakers that are organized and complete. Make all requests upfront so they know what they're getting into.
 - How much time are you asking from them?
 - Outline preparation requirements (briefing calls, rehearsals, etc)
 - What is the topic?
 - Ask if they promote your event through their social media channels
 - Are they comfortable taking live Q&A?

Preparing your Speakers

- Two weeks before the event: Set up a pre-interview to gather information, stories, and examples, from the speakers. This is an opportunity to listen to the speaker for specificity.
 - Coach for what works well online - specific, vivid stories. Concrete real-life examples, short sentences. Segments that last no more than 15-20 minutes (ideal).
 - Discuss visual assets/aids - a prop, video or graphics that help illustrate their point. These create memorable moments and illustrate rather than describe. "Show me, don't tell me" is your motto when creating online content.
 - Think about their take-away. What do they want the audience to remember and go do at the end of their presentation?
 - By the end of that interview, you should have a set of co-scripted interview questions and the main beats of the presentation.
- One week before the event: 2nd pre-interview to further refine the presentation. Have the speaker walk through the speech, format or interview as though they were on stage. Give notes and make sure the beginning and end of the presentation is as strong as possible.

- Offer wardrobe tips - usually business casual, simple clothing, jewel-tone colors, no dangling/noisy jewelry.
- Recommendations for what is going to look good and sound on camera - coach them to communicate in the best way to make them look like pros.
- Rehearsal on stage, day before the event: This is a chance for the speaker to physically embody their presentation and the surrounding. It is also a chance for them to get used to the microphone, the earpiece, looking into camera, and ignoring the camera!

ENGAGING SPONSOR PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION

Interview with Jennifer Kingen Kush and Dave Sclanders

What are some of your goals for partnership and sponsorship within digital events?

- Raise awareness for destination.
- Aligned value of technology and innovation.
- Support industry education to help push the industry forward and help meeting professionals gain the skills to design and produce digital events.
- Demonstrate thought leadership.

From a sponsorship perspective, what is the most exciting element of participating in the digital event space?

- The ability to actively engage with the audience.
- The extended reach to connect with professionals globally.
- The rich metrics capabilities to demonstrate ROI.

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What would be your advice on ways to engage and support sponsors from a partner perspective?

- Don't be afraid, be seen as an innovator.
- Open your mind.
- Learning opportunities for both conference planners and sponsors.
- Instantaneous responses.

3 Best Practices to extend to your digital event sponsor to enhance their experience and ROI for your events.

1. Conduct a VIP walk-thru of environment pre-event for the sponsor:
 - Highlight the recognition/branding areas (*be sure to get approvals during the build out process to ensure expectations are met*)
 - Give them a sneak peak of the online environment, walk them through the user's experience and demonstrate how to best navigate the platform
 - Share an overview of the program, highlighting key sessions, and provide recommendations of the special ones not to miss
 - Provide projected audience demographics; how many people, where are they coming from, who they are, etc.
2. Share best practices for engaging with audience during the event:
 - Create a message board in the sponsor's online space [booth]; encourage attendees to visit them and share a special note of thanks on their message wall
 - Identify the sponsor's participating team members prior to the event.
 - Encourage the sponsor to engage in the online chat as an active participant; they should optimally have an opinion/insight/example of the topic under discussion in addition to networking with friendly banter. It creates a very approachable and personable presence with the attendees.
 - Be sure to advise the hybrid moderators, who from the sponsor[s] will be participating and request they perform special shoutouts welcoming and thanking them publicly for their support while encouraging the attendees to do the same.
3. Make sure you share your event stats with your sponsors. It's important they know the ROI for the exposure and engagement with your audience.

DAY OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE EVENT LEAD

Presented by Kaila Bongiovanni, Senior Digital Marketing Manager, Microsoft

Regardless of the scale of event you're producing, regardless of your budget, the role of the event lead during a livestream event is the same.

T Minus One Day

- Monitor registration number.
 - Do you need to amp up your staffing? How does expected turnout impact your last minute staffing considerations? i.e., more staff for live chatting and social media conversations.
 - 1 expert for every 300 attendees.
 - Must be able to answer attendee questions quickly enough.
 - Use your average conversion rate to make assumptions of how many registered will actually attend to guide your staffing needs.
 - Will your technology support an influx of additional last-minute attendees?

Day Of

- Have very crisp and understand the role and responsibilities for day of.

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- Have your trained dream team in place and in a command center room/online bridge together (min. 30 mins before event starts).
 - At Microsoft for hybrid events, that includes:
 - Event lead to run full team, execution and questions.
 - Platform management or platform SME to address technical issues.
 - In-person.
 - Point person with onsite production.
 - Social lead(s) for proactive and reactive postings during live event.
 - SMEs for chat room, live polling, social media.

The team that's in your command center will be dependent on what type of platform you're using and what type of event you are producing and the scale of the event (length/#attendees, level of interactivity).

- The more interactivity you have, the more staff you need to man them



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