

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL EVENTS & VIDEO CONFERENCING



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In this book, Skyline has compiled 18 blog posts originally published in Skyline E-Tips (formerly Skyline Trade Show Tips). The posts combine valuable tips and trends about virtual trade shows, video conferencing, promotions and giveaways, engagement, lead management and much more.

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## ABOUT SKYLINE EXHIBITS

Skyline Exhibits is North America's leading designer, builder and service provider of portable and custom modular exhibits. We also offer workplace solutions to help make your office environment safer. To learn more about how Skyline can help your company, visit our website at [skyline.com](https://skyline.com) or visit the Skyline E-TIPS blog at [skyline-etips.com](https://skyline-etips.com).



# **TIPS FOR VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS AND EVENTS**





### 3 REASONS WHY VIRTUAL EVENTS ARE A MUST DURING SOCIAL DISTANCING

By Briquelle Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

In a time of uncertainty for organizations due to COVID-19, it's important to focus on the things we can control. While large, in-person gatherings are not acceptable at this time, your trade shows or other large events have likely been postponed or canceled. Although these circumstances halting all large events are only temporary, don't get stuck thinking that your networking efforts should come to a halt for the time being as well. You can still be interactive with your network on a large scale through virtual events!

Here are three big reasons why your organization should continue its interactive marketing efforts through virtual event marketing:



#### 1. SHOWS YOUR NETWORK THAT SERVING THEM IS STILL A TOP PRIORITY

During this time of needing to change your exhibiting plans, you still have customers, clients, donors, partners, etc. who rely on you. There's no better way to show your loyalty to them than by staying dedicated and consistent, even when facing many tribulations.

Finding ways to adapt and adjust during this worldwide pandemic will portray your business's strength and its thought-leadership in the industry. If you had put countless hours into planning your now canceled trade show, don't let that effort go to waste. Pull together a team that is able to condense the information you had planned to share at your event. Compile this information and strategize the best way to turn it into a virtual event, whether that be a live webinar, hosting a Q&A, demonstrating a new product, or all of the above.

Let your network know that despite these unforeseen circumstances, you still want to connect with them. Promote this live event on your website, social media, email distribution; any way you can alert those who were planning to attend your canceled trade show.

Letting your network know that it's important for you to touch base and continue growing your relationship with them will make them feel important. It won't just make a difference to them, but it will make a difference for your business as well. This is especially true because other exhibitors who would have been on the same show floor as you may not be taking these extra steps. For you, this could mean additional exposure and attention from a condensed audience seeking exactly what you have to offer.

#### 2. KEEPS YOUR BRAND RELEVANT AND TOP OF MIND

As Coronavirus seems to be at the base of every conversation lately, it's becoming hard for some businesses to stay relevant in consumers' minds. While some organizations may be putting their marketing efforts on the back burner at this time, that doesn't have to mean yours too. There will indeed come an end to this pandemic and business will have to go on. So, it's important to stay in the minds of those with buying power.

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With so many people having extra downtime, take this opportunity to fill that time for them with a virtual event! While it's impossible to truly replace face-to-face connections at trade shows, virtual events can still aid in keeping your brand top of mind. Sure, you can continue posting to your social media pages, sending emails, etc., but these quick tactics are bound to get lost or forgotten in the mix of the coronavirus conversation.

If you want your organization's marketing efforts to be memorable and if you want your efforts to be worth your time, do something worth your networks' time. A virtual event doesn't have to be overly time-consuming for its attendees, but it can definitely be more useful than a quick caption in a social media post.

Not only will your virtual event be memorable, but it will also allow you to be more interactive with your audience. Even though you won't be getting that valuable in-person interaction, letting online attendees ask questions or make comments in real-time is still a better alternative to your canceled trade show than doing nothing at all.

When you have the attention of qualified buyers at your virtual event, you'll be able to speak to them more personally, more in-depth, and more effectively. All of these things will lead to keeping your brand at the top of their mind.

### **3. HELPS YOU STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR NETWORK AND GROW A NEW NETWORK**

It's extremely important that you keep in touch with your network. Staying connected ensures that everyone is on the same page and brings everyone up to date. Big clients want to know that your company is sturdy and is still in their best interest moving forward – pivoting quickly and adapting with a virtual event is a good indicator of that. If there was a new product that attendees were expecting to see demonstrated for the first time in your exhibit, then they'll be intrigued to still see it demonstrated for the first time live at your virtual event. Whatever it may be that you were hoping to share at your trade show, people will still be excited to learn in an online event, as long as you keep them engaged.

If trade shows are a consistent and yearly marketing tactic for your organization, then you likely reach a wide audience each year. But, have you ever thought about the audience that you're not reaching? By taking your trade show marketing efforts virtual, you could be reaching a new online audience across the world. This audience may be the perfect prospect, but due to travel expenses, they would typically not be able to attend your trade show. Now, with a virtual event, you can share with this audience the same information and experience that you provide your current audience.

Not only can virtual events keep your brand at the forefront of buyers' minds and help your network stay connected, for the time being, they can also show your sponsors, buyers, and prospects that it's still your top priority to serve them even when times get hard.

*In her experience at Skyline's corporate office in St. Paul, Minnesota, Briquelle Neyens immersed herself in trade show research and the ins and outs of exhibit sales firsthand. She also engaged with Skyline's wide-array of products and services from an insider's perspective. Her blogs portray her expertise on what it takes to be a successful trade show marketer. She enjoys generating information that will help all trade show marketers in their decisions to become successful on the trade show floor.*



### 3 ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR A MORE INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL EVENT

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

If you rely on trade show marketing as a high priority method of engaging with your audience, COVID-19 might have you struggling to find an alternative for the time being. You may be considering virtual events but are questioning their effectiveness. After all, trade shows are meant to ignite and grow face-to-face connections for your brand. How are you supposed to create connections in an online space?

While virtual events are a whole new ballgame, we believe they have some potential to be the next best thing for your business. If you're dealing with a trade show cancellation, here are a few ways to bounce back and create an interactive online event.

With "interactive" being the key ingredient here, let's get started.



#### 1. SEND YOUR AUDIENCE MEMBERS SOMETHING PHYSICAL.

At trade shows, exhibitors often utilize freebies to entice attendees to step into their booth. They hand out branded items to grow awareness of their business. Consider sending a gift to your audience as an alternative! Sending something to your audience before your virtual event is a great way to create a connection with them before your event even starts. Not to mention that doing so will make your brand much more memorable.

Offering a gift is also a great incentive for getting people to want to RSVP. When you ask your virtual attendees to RSVP, let them know that they can also receive a freebie once they've completed your form.

#### 2. OFFER A SPECIAL DISCOUNT.

One way that exhibitors aim to be interactive at trade shows is to offer a deal that attendees can only get by visiting their booths. Create a similar incentive when promoting your virtual event to your audience. Let them know that if they attend, they'll be eligible for a discount that they won't want to miss out on.

Discounts and special deals create a sense of urgency for prospects. If they know that your offer won't last long, this fear of missing out on a great deal will help them make their purchase decision more quickly and in your favor.

You can also make your discount offers more engaging and interesting by drawing the name of one lucky virtual attendee. Let your audience know that those who attend from start to finish will be eligible for a chance to win an even greater discount.

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Another way to make your virtual event more interactive around your discount offer is by incorporating social media. For example, you could tell your audience that tweeting with your hashtag or sharing a post on Facebook will knock off an additional percentage for them.

If you can do anything that makes your audience take action and get excited is a good start!

### 3. GIVE LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS.

Trade shows are all about letting attendees see products in action. Key decision makers want to ensure that they're making the best purchase decision for them and their company.

This brings us to our last piece of advice for making your virtual event more interactive. Rather than pre-recording a video to share during your live event, instead, do a live demonstration. This transparency will be noticed and highly appreciated by your audience! The number one reason attendees come to trade shows is to see and experience new products, so it's important to make them feel like they're truly experiencing it in the moment.

This allows for questions and comments to come in and be answered on the spot during your demonstration. Your audience will feel much more connected!

Remember that prospects can look up information on your product and read all the specs and details at any time. What they want from your virtual event is something they can't get from doing their own research. Product demonstration videos are a great asset for your website, but a live demonstration during your virtual event is going to be far more engaging.

Finding ways to stay interactive with your audience during this pandemic will be a key factor in your success when coming out on the other side. Whatever methods you're using to stay engaged with your network at this time, Skyline Exhibits is here to assist you! We can't wait until we are back at a place of normalcy and look forward to helping you succeed in your future trade shows.

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## 6 WAYS TO CREATE FOMO WITH YOUR NEXT VIRTUAL EVENT

By Heather Bundgaard, Skyline Tradetec

In our current world, virtual events are the reigning King. Don't get me wrong, I love face-to-face events, and they will come back in a BIG way. However, right now we need to hone-in on what's working.

The next time you hold a virtual event, try using one of these techniques to create fear of missing out (FOMO) to keep your attendees engaged.

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1. 20 Tips in 20 Minutes – So much content in so little time. Do you think anyone is going to book a conference call during this session? Not a chance.
  - Make it even more interesting by switching up the presenters. (I.e. Four people present five tips each.)
  - Make sure each presenter has good energy. If your presenters are monotone and lack voice inflection, you can guarantee your audience will zone out.
2. Live Performances with Live Requests – This is a fun interactive element during your lunch break or during your pre-show happy hour (the night before your event).
  - Have you ever been to a dueling piano bar? Your guests enter requests while the musicians change songs at a drop of a dime.
  - Partner with local bands to help support struggling musicians.
3. Don't Record Your Event – I know I'm going to get backlash on this, as this is a double-edge sword. However, you must admit that it creates FOMO.
  - By distributing the recording of your event, you create a laissez-faire effect. Your guests know he/she can miss the event and possibly replay it later.
  - If this freaks you out too much, then put a time frame to how long the recording will be available, only record SOME of the session, or only provide the deck post-event.
  - If you don't record your event, it's important to let your guests know ahead of time, with a few reminders, such as:
    - On your registration page.
    - In your opening ceremony.
    - Prior to each session.
4. Meet and Greet (but Better) – Create a one-of-a-kind opportunity with a popular person-of-interest, such as an author, athlete, actor, musician, or professional speaker. The virtual world loses some intimacy when compared to in-person events, but this allows guests an opportunity to be seen and heard in an almost one-on-one atmosphere.
  - Duration can be up to an hour, which makes it better than most Meet and Greets where you normally only get a 5 second quick photo with the celebrity.
  - Your celebrity would answer live questions, while a person on your team acts as the moderator in the virtual room.
  - Limit the attendees according to the amount shown on one page of your video conferencing platform, so it's engaging and personal.
5. Involve the Family – Most business professionals work hard to keep their background calm and others in the house quiet to avoid distractions during video meetings. The more important the meeting, the more stressful this is to do. Why not let your hair down and involve all family members?
  - Make a chart where all distractions earn points: i.e. 5 points for an animal, 10 points for each kid who appears on the screen, 25 points if a delivery person rings the doorbell, etc.

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- Create a scavenger hunt around a specific theme. The moderator is the only one who knows what's on the list, so it's spontaneous for everyone else on video. For example, the moderator announces that each kid has 5 minutes to go and put on a sports branded article of clothing and come back to the camera to show the group. Points are awarded in order of appearance: 10 kids play, the first kid back gets 10 points, second kid back gets 9 points, etc.
  - Send a themed "Swag Bag" prior to this event so everyone in the house can start to get excited days earlier. For a camping theme, include ingredients to make smores, an LED lantern, or a pair of insulated mugs with fun phrases on them.
6. Make it Fun, Intimate, and Educational – This is the secret formula for cherished memories.
- Limit the number of attendees and show the countdown of how many "tickets" are left to "sell."
  - Make sure your content is crystal clear and that attendees at all levels (beginner, intermediate, and expert) learn something by the end.
  - Your instructor needs to have good presentation skills, enunciates well, has a sense of humor, is not quiet, smiles, feels genuine, and has good voice inflection

For example: Recently, we held a virtual semi-small wine tasting event for one of our clients. Prior to the event we sent one bottle of red wine and one bottle of white wine, along with some items that would pair well with them. On the day of the event, we had a highly educated sommelier lead the "class" and people were able to ask questions via the chat bar.

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## WHY VIRTUAL AND WHY NOW? I'LL GIVE YOU 15 REASONS WHY.

By Heather Bundgaard, Skyline Tradetec

You may be apprehensive about moving your canceled trade show to the virtual space, but if you want to succeed and break through the current economy, you'll need to get out of your comfort zone. And, quite honestly, your biggest competitor is already doing it.

The good news is that once face-to-face trade shows are back up and running, the time and money you spent will not be wasted. In fact, that time and money will be well invested. Moving forward, all trade shows will include a virtual component, so your resources and efforts will be utilized multiple times.



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While there's no replacement for face-to-face trade shows, virtual events can be beneficial in several ways.

- **You call the shots:** Obviously, you still need to launch new products, train your team, and engage potential buyers. Virtual events put you in the driver's seat so you can unveil your new product(s) on your own terms and on your own schedule.
- **Digital marketing budgets are still going strong:** Your trade show budget may have been cut, but digital marketing is in high demand. Consumers are on their computers and handheld devices more than ever. If you haven't already, now is the time to pivot your marketing strategy and increase your digital presence.
- **Longer runways:** The money you spend now can be amortized over a longer period of time. When trade shows come back, you'll re-purpose this content as your pre-, at-, and post-show marketing campaign.
- **Dream it and achieve it:** Get the trade show booth of your dreams. For the cost of a 10×10 booth, you can now get the digital island booth of your dreams. Plus, there aren't any show hall restrictions or structural rules and regulations since its all-digital.
- **Design changes are quick and easy:** Re-purposing your 3D environment is as easy as changing up the theme, graphics, and messaging. Each virtual event you host can look different while staying on brand.
- **Spread the wealth:** If there are multiple divisions within your company, distribute costs equally. Use the content from one event, make minor changes, and launch each division's tailored event.
- **Get sponsors:** Sponsorship possibilities are just as extensive in the virtual world. Reach out to sponsors who were participating at your trade show and offer them the new digital opportunities.
- **Cost savings:** Since you aren't paying for shipping, drayage, I&D, airfare, hotel, etc. the funds you "dog-eared" for your trade show now allows you to hold a virtual event of your own.
- **Metrics / analytics:** At trade shows, you only obtain the information your guest allows through registration and lead capture. Alternately, in the virtual world, reporting and analytics track every move an attendee makes. You know how they got to your event, where they went, what they did, with whom they chatted, what they tweeted, which videos they watched, etc. PLUS, after the event you can send your targeted marketing campaign according to your user's interests.
- **Extend the party:** Trade shows last anywhere from two-to-six days, but you can keep your virtual event open as long as you like. Adding new content will keep them coming back.
- **Networking made easy:** Some people are more social online as they can hide behind their keyboard. Attendees can now create their own online profiles, interact in event-wide group chats, and engage in value-packed conversations with other participants. Additionally, electronic business cards can be swapped with just a keystroke.



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- **Guest speakers:** Guest speakers are a fraction of the cost as they don't have to travel and can participate from the comfort of their home office.
- **Global reach:** Virtual events allow you to have a longer reach by connecting with prospects across the globe.
- **Eco-friendly:** You can feel good about the fact that virtual events help to reduce your company's carbon footprint.
- **Keep them engaged:** Add an app to your event for a completely immersive experience.

If you decided that a virtual event is right for you, keep in mind that a successful launch takes 8-12 weeks of planning.

## VIRTUAL EVENTS: ARE THEY RIGHT FOR YOU?

By Heather Bundgaard, Skyline Tradetec

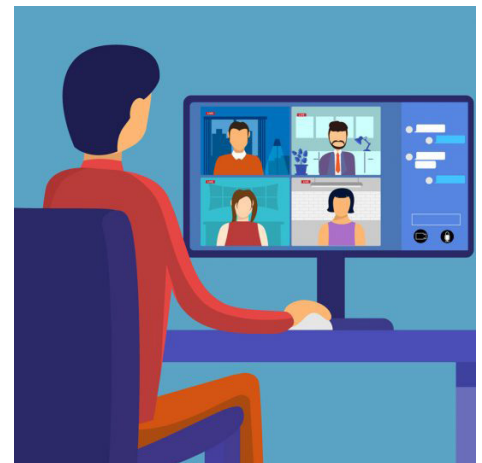
"If a virtual event falls flat on its face in a forest, does it matter what platform it was on?"

I wish I could recall where I heard that quote. I've been learning about the virtual event world for about two years now. But I remember laughing, because it's so true.

If no one attends, remembers, learns from, buys from, is impacted by your virtual event, then does it really matter which platform it was hosted on?

Let's first dive into what a virtual event is, because many have (incorrectly) classified them as a Zoom meeting (or whatever platform is comparable). A virtual event is so much more. Some examples include:

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Trade Shows                  | • Internal Training / Workshops |
| • Leadership Summits           | • Certification Programs        |
| • Sales Conferences            | • Roadshows                     |
| • User Events                  | • Webinars                      |
| • Fundraising Events           | • Product Launches              |
| • Job Fairs                    | • Employee Appreciation Events  |
| • Sales and Marketing Meetings | • Continuous Education Events   |
| • Vendor Events                | • Award Ceremonies              |



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As you can see from the list, any gathering of people that involves an exchange of information can be done virtually. However, why would you want to?

Next, let's dive into some reasons people hold a virtual event and what they accomplish. A virtual event:

- Enhances product knowledge
- Offers entertainment
- Increases ROI
- Promotes brand awareness
- Encourages networking
- Magnifies lead generation
- Reaches new audiences
- Tracks serious buyers' interests
- Builds brand loyalty
- Fosters collaboration
- Boosts sales
- Distributes critical information
- Accelerates the buying cycle



Works in conjunction with your current CRM, so you can build future marketing initiatives with live data. If any of the reasons I mentioned above is listed in your marketing plan, then a virtual event is right for you. But, be warned: virtual events don't mean less work. Delivering a wildly successful event still takes effort and attention to detail. You want your guests to get the most out of their time. You want them to be fully engaged and glad they showed up.

*Heather Bundgaard is a Custom Virtual Event and Trade Show Display Account Manager at Skyline TradeTec, located in Lombard, Illinois. Her marketing career started over 25 years ago with a focus on trade show planning and execution. Heather's current role allows her to work with various companies and industries on their custom virtual and physical trade show needs: from design, to implementation, to post-event analyzing, to asset management. Heather strives to provide supreme customer experience in order to relieve her clients of stress and wasted time.*

## BREAKING DOWN THE BENEFITS OF IN-PERSON VS VIRTUAL TRADE SHOW REACH

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

While it's a fact that business relationships, experiences, and interactions cannot be duplicated on a digital level, we as a networking industry have begun filling this face-to-face void with virtual trade shows and events. Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, which may only be for a short period of time (because trade shows will be back), virtual events are currently the next best option. And they do have some advantages to them. While these advantages don't always equate to or outweigh the benefits of in-person trade shows, they're worth addressing. Why? Because those who decide to take a break from trade shows altogether will fall behind as others take this opportunity to pivot and make the most of the cards we've all been dealt.



### TRADE SHOW REACH

There are many topics to discuss when considering the advantages and disadvantages of in-person vs virtual trade shows. Today, we're discussing the advantages that come with reaching audiences through these very different types of trade shows and exhibit marketing options.

### MANY DIFFERENT FACTORS PLAY IN

Reaching a specific audience size in a certain context can be meaningful to different businesses in different ways. For example, it will be much more valuable for a mom and pop shop to generate brand awareness by reaching hundreds of qualified buyers than it will for an already largely known corporation. Therefore, to compare the potential reach between in-person and virtual trade shows in one vague statement by saying that one has 'more' reach than the other would be an overgeneralization. Quality of reach truly depends on the goals of the business who is exhibiting, the trade shows they attend, and the industry they compete in.

### BENEFITS OF IN-PERSON TRADE SHOW REACH

Depending on the size of the shows your business attends, you could be reaching hundreds to thousands of potential buyers, most of which are likely to be qualified buyers. This makes reaching these attendees all the more valuable.

One of the largest benefits in terms of who your business is able to 'reach' at a live, in-person trade show is that buyers can only go to so many trade shows each year. It's often true that attendees who visit trade shows only attend 1-3 trade shows a year. According to Spingo, "45% of attendees visit only one exhibition per year." This means that if you are exhibiting at major events, the attendees who are there are only considering you and the other exhibitors at that show.

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This reach is incredibly valuable if you are able to stand out to buyers because Spingo also found that 77% of executive decision-makers find at least one new supplier at each show they attend. Take that one step further into the future and think of who will be traveling and attending trade shows in-person when they pick back up again. Instead of sending 5-10 team members to “check out what’s new” at any given trade show, it will likely be a much more targeted group of 1-3 key decision makers in attendance at these shows. Talk about having the ability to have conversations with the right people!

This goes to show that the investment that goes into exhibiting at trade shows can produce a favorable ROI. Creating a successful trade show outcome will take a solid marketing plan to ensure that you’re doing all you can to stand out on the show floor. Here are some of our best tips to be popular in the trade show world, along with some other great tips about capturing attention on the show floor. Exhibiting face-to-face allows you to have the most influential experience for your buyers. Telling your brand’s story with an experience, making personal connections, and showing them that you are the best solution to their problem are just a few benefits of reaching your audience in-person.

On the other hand, if your business is attending only very small shows that don’t see a large number of attendees, your reach could be expanded by adding a virtual trade show to your marketing plan. However, while virtual trade shows may present the opportunity for a ‘larger reach,’ that doesn’t always mean that it will be as high of quality.

Being able to interact with such highly qualified buyers through trade shows is one of the most valuable parts of your in-person reach.

In-person reach is great for businesses who are:

- Already well known in the industry (and are looking to connect with prospects on a deeper level)
- Looking to create real connections and business relationships (since it’s much easier to build trust face-to-face)
- Wanting to create memorable real-life experiences (that digital marketing can’t quite portray) to make their brand stand out from the crowd
- Aiming to really grow their ROI

### **BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL TRADE SHOW REACH**

When you take your exhibit online to the world of virtual trade shows, the possibilities for whom you’re able to reach are endless. However, this doesn’t mean that because you can reach a further away audience, that your reach will expand as much as you’d hope.

It truly depends on your pre-show marketing to determine if your reach will go beyond what it has in the past. For the smaller businesses who exhibit at in-person trade shows geared toward a smaller, more local crowd, expanding their reach could be a great possibility if the show organizers do a good job of digitally promoting the event. On the other hand, if these exhibitors were to target the same audience, they always have who typically would attend the trade shows that they exhibit at, then they may see a similar reach on a virtual level.

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This is why if you're planning on expanding your audience reach by exhibiting virtually, you'll have to take additional steps to reach those audiences who may not yet know you. This could mean expanding your pre-show marketing budget. Some may think, 'Since we're doing a virtual trade show, we don't have to pay for a booth space or other exhibit expenses, so we'll be able to cut these costs entirely.' When in reality, some of the money that you're saving on shipping, drayage, travel, etc. should be put into your pre-show promotional budget to produce similar results to your past shows.

Overall, virtual trade shows have a reach advantage when it comes to reaching more people. This is because a venue can only hold so many attendees, but the possibilities for reaching people all over the world are endless when a virtual event is considered. Also, in-person trade shows can only last so many days, often 2-6 days on average. However, virtual trade shows can last as long as you'd like them to. This gives you more opportunity to continue reaching a wider audience, even if it's not all at once.

Just remember that more doesn't always equate to better. And keep in mind that trade shows have been built on creating genuine human connections, something that virtual trade shows just aren't capable of.

Having the opportunity to level up and grow awareness through virtual exhibiting could be the lift a small business needs to help them grow. Once that growth starts, from there, investing in a quality exhibit could be the next best step to start really creating those necessary in-person connections that will help propel the business forward.

Virtual reach is great for businesses who are:

- Hoping to promote themselves and share more of what they do to a larger number of people (cast a larger net)
- Trying to increase brand awareness
- Wanting to touch a larger audience without having to travel or invest in bigger shows

All in all, in-person trade show reach is more valuable for creating connections, building relationships, creating experiences, and increasing ROI, even if it means you're reaching fewer people. Virtual trade show reach is more valuable when it comes to goals of potentially reaching a larger amount of people, getting your name out, and starting to share what your business can do.

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## 8 TIPS FOR A HIGHLY ENGAGING VIRTUAL EVENT

By Heather Bundgaard, Skyline Tradetec

Worrying is so last month. Making things happen is so this month! The virtual event world may be confusing and overwhelming for some, but never fear.

If you have a vision, amazing content, and a trusted event partner who knows virtual, you are ready to get started!

### GET PEOPLE EXCITED PRIOR TO THE EVENT!

**1. Promote Your event:** You wouldn't have a wedding without sending invites, would you? Same goes for the virtual world. Use a variety of techniques to build excitement:

- Create a fun promo video targeting your audience on social media.
- Post social media clips teasing who the keynote speakers are.
- Tease out more and more information as the event draws closer.
- Use direct mail, email, paid placements, network groups on LinkedIn, etc.
- Don't forget to utilize the "champions" on your team, to extend to their social or professional networks too.

**2. Send a Swag Bag:** Send a gift bag to each registered guest prior to the event with all the essentials, such as:

- Resistance Bands (for pre-taped/live morning exercise session)
- Starbucks Gift Card (for your guest to grab a beverage prior to the start of the event)
- BINGO cards (for live BINGO later in the day)
- A book (written by the keynote speaker)
- "5-Steps to Success" postcard: showing how to get the most out of the event
- Beverages: coffee/tea/wine/beer
- Memorable gift item: non-spill mug, pen, notebook, t-shirt, etc.
- Food: granola bar, gum, nuts, candy, chips, etc.
- Postcard thanking/acknowledging any sponsors.

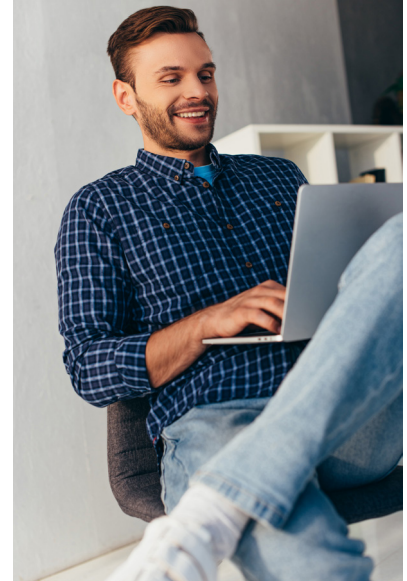
**PRO TIP:** During registration, ask your guests if they require gluten-free or allergy-friendly snacks and accommodate accordingly.



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**3. Make it Fun:** Chances are, your guests will have a competitive side, and, if not, everyone likes to win free “stuff.” Once someone registers, send them the link to the “pre-event” platform with a few tasks.

- For every task they accomplish, they get points.
- The points will accumulate throughout the event to be redeemed in the “Prize Room.”
- Keep your gamification fun, yet professional, easy to navigate, and include various difficulty levels.
- Familiarizing your guests with the platform prior to the event will:
  - » ensure your guest will be comfortable on “game day”
  - » extend your “1-day event”
  - » enhance brand recognition



**4. Tie in a Charity:** Not every company (or individual) is hurting financially during this time. Let those who are more fortunate help those who aren't.

- Charity ideas: Food pantries, No Kid Hungry, St. Jude, Restaurant Workers Community Foundation, etc. How do donate:
  - » The event donates \$5.00 to the winning charity for each registrant. At registration, include a pull-down list of 5-7 charities for guests to vote on.
  - » Add an open donation link (or links) on the registration page to donate any denomination. Most people have charities near-and-dear to their hearts and may want to donate more
  - » Instead of guests earning prizes in the “Prize Room,” have “Points” equal real cash (dollars/quarters/dimes = depending on how quickly points add up). List 5-7 charities in the “prize room” for people to donate their winnings/points to.

**PRO TIP 2:** In the “Prize Room,” allow people to donate to various charities instead of just one, in case they want to spread donations across multiple charities.

**5. Pre-Party:** Extend your event by throwing a “pre-party” the night before. This helps build excitement, relationships, and memories surrounding your event.

- Live Music: Hire a highly sought-after musician/group. You can also hire an up-and-coming artist (like someone from The Voice). Make this engaging by letting your guests type in song requests. The timing of this event would be after most people eat dinner.
- Happy Hour: Have various small (~10 people) breakout video chat rooms with pre-determined topics posted to each room, where people can join the intimate conversation and get to know each other before the start of the event. A moderator would be in each room to help facilitate the flow and keep the content moving and people engaged.

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**6. Graphics:** Resolution is key to clarity with your audience.

- When printing: Pixelated graphics make you look unprofessional and lazy. Take time to find the best fitting image with the right amount of resolution.
- In the virtual world: You'll want your guests to be as immersed in your event as possible. Try using some of the following:
  - » 3D Trade show booths (with hotspots for sponsors)
  - » 3D Presentation rooms
  - » Realistic characters in the "welcome lobby," instead of low-quality characters.

**PRO TIP:** If your sponsor has a physical trade show booth, use the actual 3D model to help tie in brand recognition.

**7. Tech Check, 1-2, 1-2:** Be sure to test all equipment, technology, media content, and connections multiple times so the experience is not jeopardized.

- Nothing is more frustrating than experiencing a "choppy" presentation, the sound cuts out, or you have to wait for something to "buffer."
- Have additional fail-safes in place such as: alternate internet sources, power generators, and the ability to shuffle the agenda
- Talk through contingency plans for scenarios with all your IT, media content, and marketing teams, as well as any keynote speakers. If needed, the entire operation can pivot quickly without much disruption to your audience.

**8. Reduce Screen Fatigue:** The uniqueness of your platform will keep your audience engaged.

- If you use a free, or common, meeting platform, you risk losing people's attention due to burnout or boredom, from the likelihood they've been looking at the same program for other meetings or online events. It won't feel like a "new" experience and won't hold their attention.
- People are naturally curious, and discovering the "unknown" keeps curiosity up, which keeps the brain stimulated and happy.

No matter what, your **CONTENT** is the star of the show. But in this day-and-age, your attendees will need help keeping their attention and energy level up.

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## 6.5 ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUES VIRTUAL EVENT LEADERS NEED TO MASTER

By Heather Bundgaard, Skyline Tradetec

It's tough keeping an audience engaged during virtual events. Here's how to do it right.

Previously, we discussed what you need to do PRIOR to your Virtual Event in order to keep the enthusiasm high. The following tips will KEEP your audience engaged and excited through the duration of your event.

### KEEP ATTENDEES ENGAGED DURING YOUR EVENT.

1. **Set Them Up for Success:** Post obviously located tabs on your welcome page to help guests navigate easily throughout their experience. Tabs such as:

- “Start Here” tab: Create a step-by-step list on how guests can get the most out of their experience. i.e.
- Step 1: Create Your Profile. Click this link to get started.
- Step 2: Earn Points. Complete these 3 tasks to start earning points.
- Step 3: Start Networking...
- “FAQ” tab: with content such as, how does XYZ work, “How to reset my password,” “Will I get a copy of the presentations I attend?,” “How long will this event stay open?,” etc.
- “Live Support” tab: people need access to immediate live support that is offline from the “main” event conversations. Encourage those items to go to a different channel, and have staff dedicated to handling these, etc.

2. **Keep it Short (and on Schedule!):** Be sure to keep your sessions as short and concise as possible and include a bio-break about every 2 hours.

- Keep sessions to about 20-30 minutes.
- A keynote speaker can be 60 minutes, IF their content allows.

**PRO TIP:** During breaks make sure your moderator/host keeps everyone updated on when the next session will start, i.e. “...we will be starting our next session in 10 minutes...”



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### 3. Networking: Help your guests get connected to the right people.

- One of the features we provide our clients, starts matching people as soon as the attendee registers. Our analytical tools scrape user-entered data to help guide professional matching, and will alert the parties why they should connect. Give attendees points for each connection, so there is incentive for them to fill out the requested data.
- Block out a short period of time prior to the opening ceremony for people to network via small break out room (much like a live face-to-face event).
- Host a photo wall – ask people to post a picture of themselves on the photo wall: a) with the background indicating where they are from, b) wearing an article of clothing representing their favorite sports team, c) with your product.

### 4. Prizes: “Must be present to win.”

- Once the attendee’s name is called as the winner, give your attendee 2 minutes to privately chat the administrator. Otherwise, another name is called.
- This keeps people actively engaged.

**EXTEND YOUR EVENT FOR THOSE WHO STILL WANT MORE:** Some of your guests may still be hungry for more interaction and/or content. Keep in mind, most people have personal obligations to tend to after working hours. So, if your main program ends after normal business hours, you’ll need to provide something highly engaging for your after-event extras. For example:

### 5. Happy Hour BINGO: BINGO is one of the easiest games, and everyone knows how to play.

- You’ll need a super engaging host who can keep the audience laughing and having fun
- The BINGO cards should be sent in the “swag bag” upon registering
- The winner is the first person who chats they have BINGO and provides proof privately with the on-line moderator

### 6. “Personal” Q&A’s with a Keynote Speaker: Host a private 30-minute video call where your keynote speaker takes live questions.

- Assign one of your staff members as the virtual room moderator
- Limit to 10 people so it’s engaging and personal

**PRO TIP:** Host more than one of these sessions. The virtual world loses some intimacy when compared to in-person events. By holding a few of these exclusive sessions, your guests have a fabulous opportunity to be seen and heard in an almost 1-on-1 atmosphere with a highly sought-after speaker.

### 6.5. “Personal” Q&A’s with an Author: Same idea as 6, but this time, book an intimate video Q&A with a popular author related to your event or industry.

**PRO TIP:** Ask your author to sign a few copies of their book and send them to the attendees of this small group session. Every time they look at the book, they will think of your event.

I know most of you are new to the virtual world and thinking of ways to keep your audience engaged is daunting.



## HOW TO CONTINUE BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS

By Briquelle Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

One of the sole reasons why face-to-face marketing, trade show exhibiting, networking, cross country meetings, etc. are still predominant in such a digitally focused time, is because of the value of relationships.

When the 'face-to-face' portion of trade shows was stripped away due to COVID-19, we were left to begin navigating virtual trade shows as our only option for the time being. This left many of us thinking, "Maybe we can still continue sharing good information, increasing sales, and growing brand awareness with virtual trade shows, but how do we continue building strong relationships through a screen?"



Virtual trade shows are great for gaining new leads and reaching prospects that may not have the availability to attend your in-person shows, but they aren't the greatest at cultivating relationships. While it's not impossible to continue building relationships through virtual trade shows, it's definitely not as easy as it is to engage with a person one-on-one at an event.

Here are a few differences between these two marketing tactics.

### **BENEFITS OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AT IN-PERSON TRADE SHOWS**

Human Connection = Relationship = Likeability = SaleTrade shows offer attendees more than just a free branded water bottle, a look at a new product, or insight on new trends. They offer a sense of human connection, one that buyers are able to build with the people who are a part of the brands they want to invest in.

Having the opportunity to speak to someone, build common ground, and create trust allows for personal relationships to grow very quickly. Strong relationships lead to greater 'likeability' and familiarity, and hey, we usually side with the people and brands that we like, right? When it comes to persuasive methods of communication, face-to-face takes the cake. This is especially true when a prospect is engaging with a brand for the first time. Having the ability to start your relationship strong will set you off on the right foot.

### **NO FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION = SLOWER RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

Let's compare friendship to a business relationship. If you come across a person's profile online and they seem very interesting, friendly, and maybe someone you would enjoy being around, you might look a little deeper to see if your first impression is correct. You can do as much reading, scrolling, and clicking as you want, but without interacting with that person face-to-face, it's going to be more difficult to connect on a personal or relationship level.

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Similar to this idea, a prospect can get a good gauge of your brand by researching and clicking through your website and social media pages. However, if you aren't able to speak to someone who is interested in your business face-to-face, it takes more effort to build a relationship. And while it's possible to build trust virtually, it will take much more time and persistence than if you were to speak in person.

An in-person trade show lets your trade show staff take the reins of the conversation, build an organic connection with interested prospects, and help them understand why your business is their best solution. Building strong relationships like this will set you up for success now and in the future. Those who form a genuine connection with your business at a trade show may be sold right off the bat, leading to the sales you're aiming for. And even if there are prospects who are not yet ready to make any decisions, you'll still have that personal connection under your belt when it does come time for them to make a decision.

### **BENEFITS OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AT VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS**

Since taking a break from exhibiting altogether would put us behind the curve of our fellow industry members, virtual trade shows have become our next best option.

While it's hard to replicate an in-person interaction, an alternative for building relationships online is through video chats. Opening up this option within your virtual event could be a game-changer for starting a dialogue with interested prospects!

As mentioned earlier, a first-time interaction that is in-person rather than virtual can put your brand miles ahead of others that have not had that same human interaction. However, if a relationship has already been established from past trade shows with some of your prospects, then a virtual trade show is a great way to continue building on that relationship and keeping it from falling stagnant.

Another benefit of offering a video chat option during your virtual event is that there are many people who feel more comfortable behind a screen than chatting in person. This means that your virtual trade show could allow you to engage with people who otherwise may not want to spend time talking at an in-person event.

Don't be too quick to assume that all hope for creating relationships through virtual trade shows is thrown out the window – a warm smile and a friendly tone can still be felt on a video chat. Face-to-face connections are irreplaceable, but don't give up hope on your potential for keeping your client and prospect relationships going during this time!

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## LEAD GENERATION FROM VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS IS IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

Did you know that about 72% of exhibitors participate in trade shows to generate new leads? Whichever method is used to collect lead information, whether it's taking business cards, using badge scanners, filling out paper forms, or other unique tools, leads are a driving factor in the trade show world.

With most attendees coming to see and learn what's new, 81% of them have buying authority. With so much potential to interact with and win over buyers, the value of a trade show is quite powerful if a business has a strong plan for lead generation and well thought out follow-ups. For a few breakthrough tips on following



up with your leads, we've got you covered here. Today, we're discussing the benefits that come from lead generation through virtual trade shows.

Lead generation is one of the strongest assets of a virtual trade show. We in the trade show industry understand the true power of face-to-face interactions, and it's clear to us that virtual trade shows can never truly replace them. But while virtual trade shows don't offer quite the same experiences, they still offer some beneficial marketing opportunities for businesses. One of these strongpoints is lead generation. It's possibly the greatest asset that comes from exhibiting virtually.

Why is virtual so great for lead gen?

### OPPORTUNITY FOR QUICKER CONVERSIONS

When you have the attention of a prospect who is already in their work environment (whatever that may be right now) and likely sitting right at their computer, your chance for a conversion increases. When it comes to having the perfect opportunity to nurture a lead and turn them into a buyer, virtual trade shows have quite an advantage.

As a virtual attendee engages and learns about your business, you have the chance to immediately turn them into a buyer if you play your cards right. Let's compare this type of quick conversion to an in-person trade show where a trade show attendee visit your booth space – as well as a list of other exhibitors throughout the day – and then has a gap of time where they are traveling back to their hotel, home, and back into their office space. If you didn't provide the attendee with a stellar booth experience, this gap could allow for some of the emotions they may have been feeling while at your exhibit to wear off. In this timeframe, you as the exhibitor are responsible for promptly following up with your leads to ensure you keep them interested (something that many exhibitors fail to do).

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With virtual trade shows, you have the opportunity to provide value to your prospects through digital marketing options such as live webinars, interactive booths, and live chats. The chance to swiftly convert them to a buyer on the spot is a valuable opportunity. So long as you keep their attention during these digital marketing initiatives, this type of lead-nurturing environment could be a fast-track opportunity to close the deal with interested attendees.

### **GATHER INFORMATION FROM EVERY ATTENDEE**

Beyond the benefit of a possible quick transition to turn prospects to purchasers, virtual trade shows are also great for potentially gathering information from every single one of your attendees. Before an attendee even begins engaging with your online exhibit, you should have access to their sign-up information. We say should because every show organizer is a little bit different. As an exhibitor at a virtual trade show, make sure that you are speaking with the show organizer beforehand and asking the right questions so you know what information/analytics from attendees will be provided both before the virtual show – and during the actual virtual expo hall hours. Also be sure to ask if you will have the ability to customize your virtual exhibit – or better yet – use your own external link to be sure you really stand out! This is especially important if the organizer isn't providing analytics data on who "visited" your booth space because if you can utilize your own link, you will also be able to utilize outside analytics as well.

If someone at an in-person trade show doesn't feel compelled enough to enter your booth space, or does – but doesn't leave their information, that doesn't mean that you can't slowly convert them into a buyer through your traditional marketing efforts. However, unlike these instances of missed opportunities at an in-person trade show, with virtual exhibiting, you still potentially will get the information of the people who don't attend your online event – if your show organizer provides it. Knowing that they took interest in the first place still gives you a good start at engaging them in strategic ways.

### **GAIN MUCH MORE IN-DEPTH INSIGHT ON LEADS**

At an in-person trade show, you should be training your team do their best to gauge the interaction, interest, and quality of each lead – including "rating" them on a pre-defined scale that you provide. However, this takes a good strategy and additional time on their end, and since you have the human element involved – it may not be 100% accurate depending on how different booth staffers are using your rating system.

So long as the proper analytics are being provided to you, through a virtual trade show, you can begin to better understand each prospect by seeing which elements they clicked on, how long they stayed for certain content, what they said in online chats with members of your team, etc. This information is extremely beneficial when aiming to understand the intentions and quality of each virtual attendee as an individual. This makes follow-ups more customizable to the specific needs of each person, and also gives insight into trends of your entire list of trade show attendees.

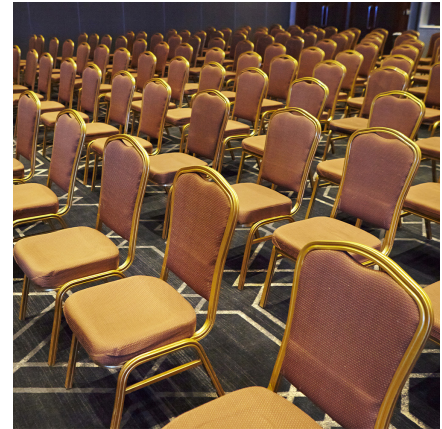
The extensive access to quality lead information that exhibitors can gain through virtual trade shows is beneficial to reaching potential buyers. While you don't have all the same benefits of interacting face-to-face at virtual trade shows, the insight(s) you obtain on your virtual attendees can prove to be a very valuable asset. Remember that this all relies on being very clear with the show organizer on what will be provided to you as an exhibitor at a virtual show – which will ultimately determine if you are able to get the ROI you are looking for in the virtual trade show world.

## HOW TO FILL THE MARKETING VOID OF YOUR CANCELED TRADE SHOW

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

With canceled trade shows come lost opportunities. For many businesses, trade shows are one of their main sources of revenue. According to Jobs in Marketing, “Trade shows are the second-largest source of B2B revenue in the US,” which goes to reiterate the profound impact that canceled trade shows are having on businesses all over the country.

If your business has had a canceled trade show, you may be in the same boat as many who are struggling to find ways to make up for those marketing efforts using other channels.



Here are a few ways for you to redirect your marketing endeavors to ensure that your marketing dollars are able to bridge this gap until trade shows are back in action:

### VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS

This is a strategy that we won't spend too much time on, as it's an approach that many businesses have already been starting to include. You can find some great tips to create an engaging virtual event here and learn about why virtual trade shows are a good substitution for in-person trade shows for the time being here and here. Overall, you can't go wrong by pivoting to continue making your network a top priority and staying interactive with them.

### INCORPORATE VIDEOS ON YOUR WEBSITE, SOCIAL AND VIRTUAL EVENTS.

In a digital world, buyers appreciate having the chance to experience products up-close and personal. With trade shows being canceled, videos are a suitable runner-up for these types of product experiences. Although videos won't allow your prospects to touch and use your product firsthand for the full effect, they'll be much more engaged with a video than they will with an image and written description of a product.

Videos are also an engaging technique to help your audience get to know your brand a little better. Since trade shows are an amazing tool for growing brand recognition, continuing these efforts of growing awareness around your brand through videos is a great option right now. Many businesses are finding ways to incorporate fun and entertaining videos in their social media content.

Ensure you are creating quality videos that hook viewers in from the moment they start. Allow for detailed previews of your products in action, share relevant and on-brand content, and provide video testimonials from happy customers if possible. These videos can be added to your website, shared on your social media, and even potentially included in any virtual exhibiting you do!

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Don't be afraid to create evergreen content (content that won't get outdated regardless of the season or recent news topics) that works for you on multiple platforms.

### **USE 3D PRODUCT TECHNOLOGY ON YOUR WEBSITE.**

If applicable to your business, 3D product models can also be advantageous to utilize in your digital marketing efforts. When it comes down to deciding between your products and another company's, prospects may go with whoever has the most information they can obtain without ever having to reach out directly to a single salesperson. Having an abundance of valuable information for prospects will make their online search for the perfect solution much easier when they aren't searching high and low for answers to their questions.

When your product is completely laid out on the table, it shows transparency and helps potential buyers understand exactly what they're getting if they choose your product/service.

### **PROVIDE AS MANY WAYS AS POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO GET IN TOUCH AND FIND ANSWERS.**

If you haven't already, optimize your website for your prospective buyers by making it extremely simple to get in touch with someone should they have any questions. Make your business's phone number and email easy to see on each page. You can also create contact forms that prospects can easily fill out with their information and question(s) – just be sure that someone is reaching out to answer their questions quickly when you receive these types of inquiries. If you have a separate customer service line, be sure that's clearly called out. Also – if you have the resources, consider incorporating live chat options to instantly “chat” with prospects right on your website.

It's important to make it easy for interested buyers to get in touch with someone from your company within seconds of forming their question, or you run the risk of losing them to a competitor. Easy access to communication is a great way to ensure that you're engaging with prospects as you would at a trade show when you're able to speak with them one-on-one. Be sure that whoever has the responsibility of answering calls, emails or live chats is extremely personable and experienced in customer service as this will play a key role in driving the likeability and trust of your brand.

Making a FAQ page is another great way to make sure that prospects are getting their questions answered. If you've exhibited in the past, compile a list of the common questions that you recall receiving about your products/services at past trade shows and ensure you answer them thoroughly on your FAQ page. Chances are if you have heard the question asked more than once, others will have the same question as well. If prospects can find it on your FAQ page without even having to reach out, you are one step ahead of your competition!

### **FIND WAYS TO CONTINUE INVESTING IN MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS.**

If you're like the average company in the US that spends around 32% of its marketing budget on exhibits and events, then you're likely wondering how to compensate for the loss of your canceled trade show with those marketing dollars.

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Our best answer? It's worth investing it into the things that make the most sense for your company's goals. If virtual trade shows are a tactic that you believe can continue spreading awareness of your company as you did through your past trade shows, then make sure you are continuing to make a presence at trade show virtually!

If you believe that your website traffic reflects well on your completed sales and you think you could be doing a better job of converting potential buyers, then put more focus into your website right now! Videos and 3D product technology are always something that can be outsourced if your business doesn't have the right tools internally.

Just remember that investing in these small things, for the time being, will most likely keep you far under your initial marketing budget when you had planned to execute an exhibit marketing plan. Continuing to invest in digital marketing is the best way to keep showing up for your audience until in-person trade shows can resume.

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## HOW VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS CAN PREPARE FIRST-TIME EXHIBITORS FOR THE REAL THING

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

Has your business never exhibited at a face-to-face trade show before? Had you thought about exhibiting, but then restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic shut down those plans? Been thinking about exhibiting at a trade show but not sure when things will be "back to normal"? Wondering if there's a way to start preparing for when in-person trade shows do finally get back into full-swing? We recommend trying out a virtual trade show to prepare you.

If you've never planned for or executed an exhibit marketing plan for your business, then you likely can only imagine all that goes into the pre-show, live show, and the post-show planning. Even from minimal research, you probably concluded that it's a long list, and you're right!

From planning how your physical exhibit will be designed and the experience that you want attendees to have, selecting the right trade show floor booth staffers to get the job done, deciding how you want to capture leads, picking the right messaging to reflect your brand and goals, executing a speedy follow-up plan with the leads you obtain, and promoting the entire event from the beginning stages of your planning to the end of the show – you can see there's quite a bit that goes into successfully exhibiting at a trade show. As this obviously isn't the whole list, we can assure you that there are many boxes to be checked when it comes to planning and executing a trade show. You can find a complete timeline and checklist here if you're interested.



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What we have recently found is that if you've never experienced all that goes into it, doing a virtual event first can eliminate some of the heavy-lifting that you'll experience when you finally do pull the trigger on exhibiting at an in-person trade show. How you ask?

Virtual trade shows can help you figure out messaging and content that works before investing in a real exhibit.

One very time-consuming piece of the puzzle that we mentioned above is messaging. Figuring out exactly what you want to tell your prospective buyers can be tricky to narrow down. There are plenty of ways you can go about sharing a single message, so finding out what method resonates best with your audience can be done through virtual exhibiting.

Check with the show organizer first to ensure they will be providing you proper analytics to track attendee engagement at your virtual show. If so, you could do A/B testing with different types of content. Here are a few examples:

- You could offer two different webinars with different topics and messaging types.
- Let your audience choose between the two, or track which one they gravitate toward first to gain some useful insight on which topic is more appealing to them.
- You can compare which presentation attendees viewed the longest and if more people viewed an entire presentation more often than the other.
- You can gauge how often certain questions were asked so you can prepare your trade show team to answer those types of questions when you execute your first in-person trade show.
- You could even test responsiveness to different keynote speakers. (Don't forget to include a bio and a list of prominent industry affiliations.)
- Perhaps your target audience prefers to hear from the CEO of the company rather than an outside spokesperson, or maybe vice versa.

Understanding your viewing and engagement statistics from your virtual trade show can help you determine what's working well and what isn't resonating as much so that you can fine-tune content in the future!

If the messaging you choose dictates the way you want your exhibit to look, this could also save you time and money in the future as well. Before purchasing graphics, it will be helpful to know what resonates the most with your target audience.

Virtual trade shows can give your trade show team a lot of practice and preparation to speak fluently at your in-person exhibit.

You never really know what a trade show attendee is going to ask your booth staffers until they ask it. Sure, you can role play and prepare them for the common questions that you often receive and the types of questions that you already have listed on your FAQ page, but there are always those questions that you may not be prepared for. A virtual trade show is a great way to prepare for those questions that might catch your trade show team off guard.

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If you do plan on executing an in-person trade show exhibit in the future, then delegating your expected trade show team to be involved in live chat options and Q&A sessions will help them start feeling comfortable in this type of atmosphere. They'll gain a lot of insight on answering questions on the spot as well as lots of practice for fine-tuning their pitches and wording.

Virtual trade shows can help you nail down a successful follow-up plan.

Following up with your audience is a step that many exhibitors tend to forego, although it's one of the most important since so much time and money is spent to make those initial connections! Don't make the same mistake of throwing away these valuable connections that you make at your virtual and in-person trade shows.

Reaching out to your audience is an important next step to seal the deal on sales and keep them engaged after your event. Even if they aren't quite ready to make a purchase after your event is over, it's still valuable to stay in touch and continue offering them value until they are ready to make that purchase. You could send them a post-event survey with an incentive for completing it (perhaps to be entered in a prize drawing), you could offer them additional value such as an eBook, or let them know about your next event with a link to sign up for it.

These are some of our best tips for following up with your trade show leads — in a nutshell:

- Qualify your leads by understanding where they are in the buying process.
- Reach out as soon as you can to make sure they don't end up searching elsewhere.
- Be consistent in contacting them for the first few weeks after your trade show to stay top of mind.
- Tailor your follow-up content to cater to them specifically, rather than simply adding them to your newsletter email list.

There's quite a bit of thought required to plan and execute a successful trade show, so while in-person trade shows are on the back burner and slowly re-opening, consider a virtual trade show!

You'll be able to start understanding your audience a little better, figure out messaging that resonates best, help your trade show team prepare, and begin to understand the follow-up process and what methods work best when doing so. When you are ready to hit the gas pedal on your first in-person trade show, you'll already have so many things checked off your list to get you started, and Skyline Exhibits will be there to help you through the rest. We offer exhibit management, exhibit design, installation and dismantle, and asset management programs, all while ensuring that your trade show runs smoothly.

best, help your trade show team prepare, and begin to understand the follow-up process and what methods work best when doing so. When you are ready to hit the gas pedal on your first in-person trade show, you'll already have so many things checked off your list to get you started, and Skyline Exhibits will be there to help you through the rest. We offer exhibit management, exhibit design, installation and dismantle, and asset management programs, all while ensuring that your trade show runs smoothly.

## NOT EVERY VIRTUAL EVENT IS THE SAME

By Valerie Kliskey, Skyline Greater LA

About 85% of trade shows have pivoted to virtual. The rest have been cancelled or re-scheduled. Just because the show has become an online event, doesn't mean that it will be well attended or effective. On the flip side, some digital events have been quite successful, such as United Fresh Live. What does this mean for you, the exhibitor?

It means that you must do your own homework to understand what the investment is and what you will receive in exchange for your investment. Then based on this information, decide if it is worth your time.

Ask the right questions to show management to better understand exactly what is being offered to every online exhibitor.

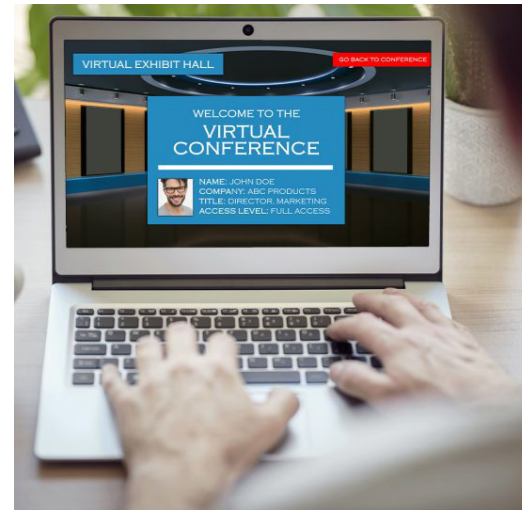
Just as everything in our world continues to evolve during the pandemic, technology continues to improve, production companies are becoming more experienced managing these events, and attendees are realizing that online events are the current solution to learn what is new in their industries since no events will likely happen until Q3 2021.

If you want to accomplish something at the online event that your show management is not offering, ASK. Do you want to redirect the links from your virtual exhibit to a more robust virtual exhibit that you partner hosts? Do you want to have an online ad on the event website that also links externally? Is there a sponsorship opportunity idea that you'd like to have? How about being included in the pre-show emails? Make a list of what is important to you and pose these questions to show management to see how they respond.

Perhaps the show won't allow you to have the elements that you want. Then what do you do?

- Option 1 – You can wait until live events return (maybe Q3 of 2021)
- Option 2 – You can make the best of the virtual event that your show management is offering
- Option 3 – You can create your own virtual event, inviting your own attendees, promoting it with your own team, calendar invites, email marketing, and social media

There ARE options. And there is no right way to do anything right now. But are your current marketing efforts providing you the return you need? There are several companies that are willing to partner with you to help educate you and help you decide what makes sense for your company — your brand. Be sure not to judge every virtual event because of feedback you've heard about a different event. Treat each online event individually, do your homework, then promote the heck out of it if you decide to move forward. If you drive traffic to your online event, you ultimately drive awareness and business to your brand. So be sure that you promote EVERY event that you decide to participate in to help it be successful.



## YOUR VIRTUAL SPACE – “DESIGN WITH THE UX IN MIND”

By Doug Noftall, Skyline Entourage

Those of us in the trade show exhibit design business like to think of ourselves as rather creative, so when we sit down to design a virtual exhibit we want you (the client) to think we're just the Picasso's of the online space, blowing you away with some cool concepts you've never seen before. We want to give you something you can put out there and unconventionally display your products and services, impressing your prospects, customers, co-workers (especially the boss), and making your competitors jealous over your “cool” virtual exhibit. BUT, if we design to impress you (and ourselves) but fail to effectively reach the attendee, we've both missed the mark.



So, when we sit to design with you, apart from what is your ultimate goal for exhibiting, our list of questions will be something like:

1. What impression of your company (product, service, culture, lifestyle, etc.) do you want your attendee to leave your space with?
2. If you could create some type of interactive experience with your audience, what would that look like? Try to walk us through your vision? Talk to us about your dreams as if you wanted your attendees to be inside your branded videogame or movie or anything else for that matter.
3. Who are the ideal attendees (company target market, demographic, culture, age group, gender, lifestyle, type of buyer, etc) that you're trying to attract into your space, and what would you want to tell them and why? What do you want to learn or hear from them?
4. What is the clear, compelling messages that you want to communicate with them so that they remember you when they want to buy your product or service?
5. How much time can you realistically engage (live online) with your visitor(s) and what alternative interactive experiences can you provide the attendees (if they must wait for you and your staff to become available). Remember that in a virtual event, just like live events, there are limited resources that have that can prohibit you from serving all interested visitors). Do you have enough resources to serve everyone?
6. What company/branding/capability assets do you currently own that could be used to showcase your offerings?
7. Would you want to showcase your manufacturing capabilities? Distribution network? Service network?
8. What information would you want to gather and collect from visitors that choose to not engage with you live, but still visited your online space. After they leave, how to plan on reconnecting with them?

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The answers to these and other related questions will all go toward determining the final design, which in our creative world can really be anything as there are very little spatial, engineering, and logistical constraints. The virtual exhibit can be a whole new online marketing experience but the messages you want to convey to that audience are still very important.

Finally, the best designs are those that can fit a variety of needs and environments. While we once looked at spaces like 20×20 for instance, considering the ability to reconfigure the architecture to an inline 10×20 or 10×10, we can now think of your online virtual exhibit as an online selling tool that can be open for business 24/7. Your sales staff will love to have a virtual tool that they can bring anywhere at any time. You can also divide up assets build in to use in other marketing mediums.

These are some of the fundamental questions to consider before we turn on the computer and start a rendering. So, next time you're thinking about exhibiting at a virtual event, ask us to "build you a pretty damn impressive online experience" and be ready for some probing questions. The answers will serve us both well as we "begin with the user experience in mind."

*The president of Skyline Entourage in Montreal, Quebec, Doug Nofall is an experienced marketing enthusiast who has a passion to drive business. He loves challenges, design trends, and unique perspectives. He is also a family man and active member of the community, and loves to play hockey, baseball & hike mountains.*



# **TIPS FOR LIVE STREAMING & VIDEO CONFERENCING**





## 8 TIPS FOR LIVE STREAMING

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

Has COVID-19 resulted in canceled and postponed trade shows for your organization? If so, you're probably coming up with a plan to stay in touch with your network and keep your marketing efforts going. While your trade show marketing may be on the back burner, we want to help you continue to succeed.

One tactic that you might be considering is taking your interactive marketing effort online. Although in-person marketing is irreplaceable, many organizations have found the next best thing at this time to be virtual events.



If virtual events are uncharted territory for you, you're probably in the same boat as a lot of other organizations leaning on this trade show marketing substitution. Live streaming can be overwhelming, especially when you're planning to do it on a high scale. Having the attention of prospects, clients, and other viewers all at once can be a great interaction tool – just make sure you're well prepared so nothing goes wrong!

Here are our top 8 live streaming tips for those who are beginning to lean on virtual events at this time!

### 1. FIGURE OUT HOW YOU'RE GOING TO PROMOTE IT

If you're hosting a virtual event, you'll have potential access to a global audience. The possibilities are endless for how many viewers you can reach. A good start is to reach out to your email lists and share your event link, giving them an option to RSVP.

Depending on your audience type, you'll also want to find other platforms to promote your virtual event. Don't forget to promote it on your social media and website too!

### 2. DO A TEST RUN

Doing a test run ensures that your equipment is all functioning correctly and that you won't run into any problems when you go live. You can never be too prepared when it comes to live streaming since you really only get one shot!

Even if you do go through a trial run, equipment can fail when the real time comes. If something fails, then your entire event could go dark. Be sure to have backup gear such as cables and monitors.

Test out your upload speed to ensure bandwidth availability. If you don't have consistent upload bandwidth, your live stream may not be available to view for your audience.

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Test out the acoustics and find any way possible to minimize room noise. If your audience can't hear you, how are you supposed to have a successful online event? Testing acoustics and your audio settings beforehand will make sure you're good to go and sound crystal clear to your audience.

### **3. MONITOR YOUR STREAM**

This is an easy thing to do, but also an easy tip to overlook. Monitoring your stream from an external display will allow you to see what your audience is seeing in real-time.

You could even task a team member with viewing and engaging your virtual event through an external display. This way, if audio syncing seems off or a frame isn't viewing correctly, they will notice instantly and can alert you to get the problem resolved as soon as possible. This valuable perspective will be an added safety net to make sure things are running as planned throughout your event.

### **4. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE CAMERA**

This tip is extremely important for fostering a connection with your audience. You, or whoever is hosting, should be looking into the camera rather than at the monitor.

Your eyes need to be looking into the camera so that viewers can look back into your eyes as well. Eye contact allows people to feel more connected! If you are spending most of your time looking at yourself on the monitor, viewers may feel disengaged. There are lots of distractors to take your audiences' attention away from you, don't let a lack of eye contact be one of them!

### **5. RESPOND TO COMMENTS THROUGHOUT THE EVENT**

Responding to a comment live rather than waiting to respond to comments at the end of your event brings so much more value to your audience. Why? Because for someone to feel as though they are talking to you in real-time, makes them feel important. Making your audience feel heard and see that their thoughts and feelings matter will keep them on your side when faced with other options in your same industry. It creates brand loyalty!

Speaking in real-time also makes audience members feel a connection because that's how real conversations work. When you ask a question or make a comment face-to-face or over the phone, the person you're speaking to responds directly after. Boosting engagement during your event will keep your audience interested!

### **6. USE A PROFESSIONAL BACKDROP**

No matter where you're working amidst the COVID-19 social distancing efforts, be sure to have a professional backdrop. This means, if you're working from home, some type of branded background would be sufficient to keep your live streaming efforts looking professional.

A branded banner stand would be a great option if this is the route you decide to take. Banner stands are lightweight, cost-effective and easily set up. Be sure that the lighting looks natural and overhead lighting isn't too harsh.

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## 7. STREAM TO MORE THAN JUST ONE PLATFORM

Don't feel constricted to just one live streaming platform! Using additional platforms such as Facebook Live and YouTube is an easy and effective way to reach more viewers. Just remember that additional encoding puts more stress on your processor. Be sure that if you do this, you are using a powerful encoder for multi-streaming.

When promoting your event, make sure your audience knows that they have different options to stream. This way, if they're more familiar with using one over the other, they'll be more likely to interact and engage throughout your virtual event!

## 8. DECIDE THE BEST WAY TO CAPTURE LEADS

As a B2B marketer, lead generation is likely one of your top priorities. Be sure to find ways to gain information about your online event attendees.

One interesting idea could be offering a link to a chat room or a number to call directly after your virtual event comes to an end. This way, those high-quality prospects who are interested in learning more or talking next steps won't have to wait to get an email from you and speak down the road. Speaking to prospects right after the show while information is fresh in their minds is a great way to seal the deal.

Transforming your trade show marketing efforts into a virtual event can feel like a whirlwind. Hopefully these live streaming tips can help you come prepared and have a successful online event!

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## USING VIDEO CONFERENCING FOR TRADE SHOWS

By Sebastien Robillard, Skyline Entourage

As we are all staying home trying to flatten the curve during the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of people and companies also must work on their learning curve to get up to par with video conferencing and web meetings. A lot of us have been using it for years and this was just a transition from physical meetings to virtual ones. But what others are realizing is that a lot of meetings could have been done this way before and it will be here to stay once the confinement is over.

I personally use different platforms: Microsoft Teams for internal meetings, Cisco WebEx for webinars and client meetings, Zoom for my weekly meet-up with friends, Facebook Messenger for family talks, House Party for random meetings with friends, and, of course, FaceTime for one-on-one with close family and friends. It doesn't really matter what you use, the common denominator is that we're all using it and the fear of technology will be gone by the time we get back to business.



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So how can you use video conferencing in your trade show program?

### **KEEP YOUR EXPERTS AT THE OFFICE**

I've been suggesting for clients to do this for years, but now that video conferencing will be part of the norm it will be easier to integrate into your program. How often do you bring the expert to the show in case specific questions arise? Unless they are answering questions non-stop, let them do what they are good at from the office. Set-up a station in your exhibit space (iPad, tablet, laptop computer) and contact them on a "need-to" basis. Let them know they will be on-call during the duration of the trade show. Not only will this help you save a few dollars on your trade show budget, but it will also avoid the cost and trouble of them not being in the office.

### **FOLLOWING-UP**

The traditional way of following up is by phone and email, but couldn't it be better via a web meeting instead? Set yourself up to keep consistent branding for that meeting so that the prospect will not only recognize your face, but also your company. Using web meetings combined with having a link to your calendar to let prospects choose the date and time should help you with your follow-ups. In my point of view, it's harder NOT to pay attention when you're on camera.

### **REACH THE ONES WHO COULDN'T MAKE IT**

If there were prospects that you invited to the trade show, but couldn't make it to your booth, set-up a webinar or online presentation using some pictures and video footage from the event to show them what they missed. There are no set rules on how you should (or could) use web meeting software or video conferencing apps in your exhibit program. This is a great way to communicate with clients and bring your trade show experience to new heights. Just make sure your staff has the proper training and support they need to make it happen.

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## **TIPS FOR NEWLY REMOTE WORKERS WITH KIDS**

By Briquelle Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

As many businesses are forced to close their doors temporarily, they are keeping their employees hard at work from home. Many employees are now faced with their same daily expectations from a completely new setting.

Not only does this stir things up for you because you're not used to working in such a relaxed environment, but you also may have children who are home during the day. Whether your kids are teens who are used to being home alone, or younger children whose daycare or school has been closed, having kids in the house while working becomes a whole new obstacle.



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If this is you, or if someone you know is new to the work from home life with the kids, keep reading for yourself or share these useful tips with them!

### **TIPS TO KEEP YOUR KIDS BUSY WHILE WORKING FROM HOME**

In this new and unfamiliar work setting, you may be feeling like you're starting to get into the groove of working from home. Maybe you've created a perfect little workspace that's clean and inspiring. Maybe you've figured out the best way to go about your daily phone meetings and meet your deadlines. These are great things to nail down!

However, if you feel like you're still struggling with staying on task throughout the day because of your kids being home with you, here are some ideas to keep them occupied!

### **DELEGATE CHORES**

You might feel the need to do loads of laundry in between phone meetings or clean the kitchen because the dirty dishes from the night before haven't been put away. Maybe you feel guilty that these things aren't getting done since you're just a few rooms away. If household chores are distractions that are preventing you from focusing on your work, try delegating these chores to your older children – and potentially rewarding them for doing so.

### **GET CRAFTY!**

If you're distancing yourselves from older relatives during this time, grandparents always love seeing that you're thinking of them. Ask the kids to make them something to send each week. For example, they could write letters to them, draw or color them a picture, or do an art project to mail them.

### **PUT A SIGN ON YOUR DOOR**

The night before, take a couple of minutes to write a list of answers to your kids' frequently asked questions that they come to you with during your workday. You could write what's for dinner that night if that's always something they're usually wondering or what chores or activities they could do if they come to you saying they're bored.

### **CREATE A SCHEDULE THAT CARVES OUT TIME TO SPEND WITH THEM**

Rather than spending the entire day at your desk or taking a couple of minutes here and there to interact with your kids, try delegating a certain time of day to come out and spend time with them. We all know children thrive on routine, so whether this is over lunch or a separate designated playtime with your younger children, it gives them something to look forward to each day – a time you can give them your full attention.

### **MAKE SURE THEY'RE STAYING UP TO DATE ON THEIR ASSIGNMENTS**

If your kids' schooling has been pushed home as well, make sure they're aware that they need to finish any assignments before they can access the tv, games, etc. Have a designated quiet time for them to be in their rooms working or studying or reading if they don't have any schoolwork to do.

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## CREATE BIG PROJECTS FOR THEM THAT THEY ACTUALLY ENJOY

Finding big projects that are time-consuming will keep your kids occupied and quiet during the day. This will depend on your children's age, but you could buy them a giant puzzle or give them a DIY project that takes some time to finish.

## MAKE SURE THEY'RE STILL GETTING OUTSIDE

Vitamin D is important as ever right now to keep your kids healthy and happy. Find ways for them to spend time outside safely, whether it's shooting hoops in the driveway or playing games in the backyard.

## INVEST IN SOME FUN APPS

You might feel reluctant to allow your kids to have hours of screen time during the day, but circumstances are a little different these days. It's understandable that if they're not able to go see their friends and do the things they normally do, that time-consuming apps could be good ways to prevent them from getting bored. There are plenty of educational apps out there as well – just because it's on a screen doesn't mean they can't be learning too!

## SEE IF YOUR KIDS HAVE AN INTEREST IN AUDIO BOOKS

If your kids love reading, they might love audio books. Audible is a great place to find books for all ages and offers great deals. Even if your kids can't read yet, they can start appreciating the art of storytelling and gain an interest in reading.

## FIND GREAT PODCASTS FOR YOUR KIDS

If you don't want to invest in audio books, podcasts are another great option. There are plenty of kid-friendly podcasts that can entertain your kiddos for hours! Here are 25 of the best kid podcasts to get you started.

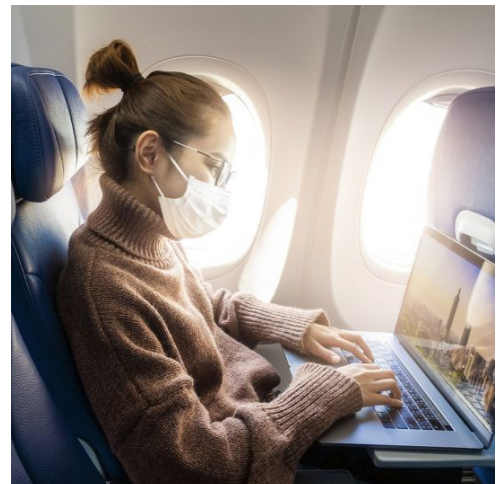
Hopefully implementing some of these tips makes your workdays a little less hectic, a little more peaceful, and a lot more productive!

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## COMPANIES SHOW THE IMPORTANCE OF IN-PERSON MARKETING WITH CROSS-COUNTRY MEETINGS

By Briquella Neyens, Skyline Exhibits

There's no denying that companies have been struggling to figure out how to make virtual exhibits a successful replacement of real, in-person trade shows. The hard truth is that these companies likely won't find a parallel solution. The reason for that is because in-person marketing is irreplaceable. A loss of exposure to a large, condensed audience of people with buying power and the inability to create real experiences surrounding brands are only a couple of the downfalls of losing the opportunity to exhibit and interact with attendees at trade shows.





We could go on and on about the benefits of in-person marketing. We list three big reasons why it's so effective here, where we discuss interactive relationship building, instant feedback benefits, and the ability to generate a special kind of interest through real experiences, rather than digital experiences.

While in-person trade show marketing has been an important marketing tactic that businesses have been temporarily stripped of, companies are making it clear that face-to-face meetings are still a priority for them when doing business.

CEOs whose trade shows have been canceled or postponed have lately been traveling across the country to meet with key decision-makers in their industry. Through this face-to-face meeting alternative, it's evident that in-person connections are being missed. So, while trade shows are still down for the count, businesses are making it possible to see their buyers in other ways for the time being.

One example of this comes from a company that makes it clear that in-person marketing is a key aspect of their success. The software development company, Genvid, had planned to exhibit at Gamers Developers Conference in San Francisco. The company had planned several announcements regarding their games at this trade show. Genvid would have been able to reach thousands of game programmers, game designers, business and marketing professionals, producers, studio managers, virtual artists, sound engineers, virtual augmented reality creators, and sponsors, all in one place.

However, since the show was postponed, the company's CEO, Jacob Navok, who had planned a keynote address, a round table discussion, and a party, decided that it was still important to visit with some of the major companies who had planned to attend the show.

Since the company does not have the capacity to hold virtual events that effectively portray their software, he felt that it would be a waste of time. So rather than creating a virtual exhibit, Novak spent a week flying to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle to meet with companies, according to ABC News. He also repackaged his keynote address for interviews with journalists in the industry.

While he is doing the most that he can with the situation at hand, he will still not be able to meet with the majority of guests that he otherwise would have welcomed into his booth. He and thousands of other exhibitors across the country and the world are losing out on this important interactive business aspect.

Navok said, "It will suffice, but it cannot replace that in-person presentation and the ability to meet the people that randomly happen across your product. It's a big week of announcements. We are still going to do it. We are going to have to — but that in-person momentum is not going to be there," according to ABC News.

As we in the trade show industry know, face-to-face connections with a massive audience of pre-qualified prospects are irreplaceable. If businesses want to continue creating brand experiences, building trust, and growing on a large scale, trade shows are what we need to circle back to. This gives us confidence that when it's safe, trade shows will be back in action, and the world will be trading as it once had.

