

Freeman⁷

Your guide to getting started with hybrid events

How to determine if hybrid is right for you

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Hybrid events are a hot topic as marketers and organizers look to return to in-person events. They offer the best of both event worlds — a face-to-face experience for a highly targeted audience, coupled with an engaging virtual event to increase reach and content exploration.

If you're excited about the idea of hybrid for your organization, you know all that already. So your next question might be...how do you get started? What steps should you take to ensure success?

Our advice? Don't jump into the details until you've done your homework.

Like any other format, a hybrid event isn't a silver bullet or cure-all — it's a tool that works best when it makes strategic sense for your audience, your sponsors, and your goals. Take a thoughtful, informed approach to determine if hybrid is a good fit before setting your event strategy.

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Hybrid still a mystery?
Our quick primer can help!

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Making the most of this workbook

You'll need to consider the **factors** — purpose, audience, sponsorships, safety, resources, and risks — that determine whether hybrid is the right fit for your event.

To help you analyze how hybrid might match your needs and goals, we've created this interactive workbook with questions and factors to consider.

Once you've gone through these exercises and determined the true value proposition of your potential event, you can apply these learnings straight to your strategy planning and get your (hybrid) show on the road.

Let's get started!



Setting your purpose: What value will your event offer both audiences?

When you're considering hybrid, a solid foundation is a must-have as you build your strategy.

It may seem overly simplified, but you need to start with the basics:

What are your organization's goals for this event?

What do you want people to get out of it?

Who are the audiences?

What's each audience's level of interest? Are they curious learners or key decision-makers?

Combining content and media to create unique experiences can help deliver value for each audience.

But keep in mind that your value proposition should shape content and delivery for both environments in ways that make sense — if you position your event as a hot property for networking but have no way for at-home attendees to interact with attendees in both formats, the value is lost.



Since the key to true learning is doing, which value proposition works for your audiences?

Use this space to brainstorm — what can your event offer that fulfills their most important needs?

Think along these lines:

- Connecting with a like-minded community
- Building brand awareness and engagement
- Generating solid leads that help them meet goals
- Expanding their minds with learning opportunities
- Meeting more qualified buyers

Attendees: What are they looking for?

The success of a hybrid approach depends heavily on the audience's goals, needs, desires, and concerns. It's important to determine the right mix to address audience needs, particularly in COVID and post-COVID times.



Consider questions like:

Who are your core influencers or top prospects?

Where are they located?

Are they willing to attend in person?

What are the key challenges or goals that are leading them to your event?

What kind of experiences do attendees expect from your event to overcome challenges or reach those goals?

The key to maximizing interaction and retention is to deliver the right level and amount of content

However — and this is important — don't assume you can come up with these answers yourself. During this time of major change, all bets are off. The opinions and comfort levels of your audiences are likely different from previous years. It's more important than ever to learn what their preferences and concerns are now.

Sponsorships: What are they looking for?

One thing from the pre-COVID days still holds true: where there's a space, there's a sponsorship opportunity. That's still true for hybrid events. They can offer something for every sponsor, no matter their goals.



For sponsors looking to drive leads and close sales, an in-person sponsorship offering is a must to get them in front of key decision-makers who can make things happen.

For sponsors wanting to boost their brand, virtual sponsorships can be a great way for them to gain big reach. Think programming, videos, live streams, the virtual platform, digital marketing, social media, etc



Sponsorships can also be tailored to offer engaging and immersive opportunities at home and in the physical event space. More bang for the buck! Start with what your sponsors want to accomplish and how you can deliver with both sets of audiences.

Making sponsors part of your planning process benefits you, the sponsor, and the attendee. These answers will help drive your sponsorship ideas:

What are your goals for sponsoring this event?

What are you hoping to get in exchange for your sponsorship?

What sponsorship benefits are most important to you?

Which audience is the most important for you to reach?

Safety: How can you create a safe environment?

From contactless registration and physical distancing to masks and hand sanitizer stations, you will need to design your event to not just be safe, but also to make your in-person audience feel secure. Start by selecting a venue that has health and safety protocols in place.



Think about your venue choices:

What does the venue already have in place for health and safety?

What else do you need to take care of from a safety standpoint?

Audience needs are a big driver of health and safety. You should know as much as possible about your audience's challenges, concerns, and health and safety business considerations. Check in with the people you want to attend in-person.



Ask them these questions to help you decide if a hybrid approach is the right play:

Would you consider attending an in-person experience?

What safety measures would need to be in place to make you feel comfortable?

Do you currently have any national or employer-based travel restrictions?

Would you get the most value out of virtual or in-person?

What concerns do you have that we can help answer?

Our health and safety resources can help guide you through the process of creating a safe event from start to finish, with handy checklists, communications plans, and more.

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This is also a great time to consider your content approach, as there will be some people who may still prefer to stay home due to safety reasons, travel restrictions, or other challenges.



What content at your event would need to be in-person, and what could be translated online as well?

In-Person Only Content

In-Person + Online Content

If you find that the majority of your content won't easily make the jump online, a hybrid event may not be the right approach.

Resources: Do you have enough?

Planning a hybrid event flexes muscles your organization may not have in-house. Take a critical look at your internal resources and uncover where there are gaps in skills, bandwidth, and experience. Focus on what really matters to help you prioritize your resources, time, and people as wisely as possible.

Start by brainstorming big — the sky is the limit, and you never know what creative way you might find to fill the gaps!

What ways could you offset the costs of additional bells and whistles?

What can you eliminate or simply offer in a static or on-demand medium to free up funds for more high-impact elements?

Are there partners who can supplement your team?

When it comes to content, think through what your audiences absolutely need, and then dream up a few things from your wish list. This gives you a better idea of your must-haves versus nice-to-haves to help you prioritize in the right ways.



What are the top three things my sponsors need to have?

What three additional things would surprise my sponsors and add more value to their experience?

What are the top three things my attendees need to have?

What three additional things would surprise and delight attendees, making their experience more memorable?

Make sure to determine all your needs up front, rather than later in the planning process, in order to determine if a hybrid event is the right course of action for your audiences.



Risks: How can you mitigate risks?

Flexibility and adaptability will be everything this year.

That being said, some organizations may be wary of investing time or effort into hybrid events, preferring to start small and see how things go. Other organizations are ready to take a risk to innovate, knowing they'll make some mistakes but also learn along the way.

Knowing your organization's culture and tolerance for risk will help you decide whether you're better off taking a tiny step at a time — or a giant leap all at once.

No matter what, always ground your recommendations in terms of what creates the most value for your audience.

What kind of risk is my team comfortable with?

What kind of risk is my leadership comfortable with?

What are the top three reasons hybrid will provide more value than just an in-person event or just a virtual event?

What are the top three challenges my organization faces when investing in hybrid?



A hybrid event may be a great fit for your organization and your audiences.

But it's important to take this thoughtful approach before you jump into the details to ensure hybrid truly meets your needs and will help you best reach your goals.

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Ready to make hybrid a hit? We can help!

Get in touch with our team today to schedule a hybrid event workshop.

Let's get started!

