



When In-Person  
isn't an Option,  
**Remote Solutions**  
for your **Next Meeting**

「*projection*」

**W**e understand that our clients – and meeting professionals across the industry – are up against some really big challenges right now. As the coronavirus and COVID-19 continue to spread across the U.S., you are having to take a hard look at whether to proceed with, cancel, or rethink your meeting(s).

To help as you weigh the many considerations hanging in the balance, we've pulled together this guide with information about going virtual – from assessing your needs and identifying existing infrastructure to delivering a high-quality remote experience.

### **Getting started: What kind of event are you planning?**

While it may sound obvious, what kind of meeting you are planning will determine the virtual event you need to design and how much time you need to prepare. Or, if your association/organization is in a place (or decides) to cancel the event, you may want to make the educational content that would have been shared at the event available to your attendees on demand.

So, to get started, identify into which category you fall:

- On-demand educational content – collect and share
- Single-room event
- Multiple-room event
- Fully-immersive event with custom user interface (Note: The above options can also fit into this category; it's not stand-alone, but important to consider whether this is the kind of experience you want or need to deliver to your audience)



# On-Demand Educational Content

Even when we're not in a global pandemic that is shutting meetings down, audiences – including members of associations – are hungry for content that's relevant, valuable and useful. Many associations collect content from their live events and make it available online after attendees are back in their respective locations, whether that's behind a paywall or on a public channel, like YouTube.

We are currently working with many organizations that are facing the cancellation of their meeting, but feel it's critical to make available the valuable content that is a main reason members attend their meeting. To get started, ask that your presenters record themselves delivering their presentation (our director of computer services, Simon Tuck, offers specifics on how to do this here: [How to Create a Cross Platform Narrated Version of Your Presentation](#)). Once you have that content, you can publish it to all the relevant channels, such as YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, or your existing LMS where your members will be able to digest it on their schedule.

# Single-Room Event

If you have a smaller event, you have more options available and will need less time to execute. For this size event, you were likely planning to deliver all presentations and content in a single room. This environment can be replicated in a virtual environment, using a tool like Zoom or Go-to-Meeting, often in a matter of days or weeks.

For the best experience, we recommend having an environment somewhere – e.g., a studio – where you and your AV team can manage the content attendees will see. In addition to the presentations themselves, you will need videos (e.g., sponsor “commercials”) and images that will play between presentations. You want to be strategic when choosing that content so you can leverage it to keep attendees’ attention and improve the overall experience, just like you would for an in-person event.

## ***The flow***

When it comes to the agenda, the content and flow are just as critical and require just as much focus as your in-person meeting. That said, it needs to be different than an in-person agenda. Since every meeting is unique, and you need to work closely and in depth with your team to determine a flow that’s best suited for your audience, below are a few considerations and best practices to get you started:

- Keep sessions under an hour, including time for Q & As
- Build in breaks between sessions, ideally 5-10 minutes
- Plan the content that’s most important for the beginning of the day
- End the agenda with a high-profile speaker or high-value session, and promote throughout the day to encourage people to come back (or stay)
- If attendees will be receiving CME credits for your event, consider putting the code up on the screen at the end of each session to increase the chance people watch and participate until the end
- Schedule sessions based on your attendees’ time zones
- Send the agenda to attendees in advance – as much as possible – so they can plan their day(s) around the sessions in which they’re most interested

## Single-Room Event cont.



### ***Presenter Preparations***

As always with technology, you want to plan for the unforeseen circumstances. We recommend that for any virtual session, presenters record themselves in advance delivering their presentation. That way, if connection issues arise, your team has the content you can play with little or no disruption for the attendee. You can find a “how to” [here](#).

### ***Moving Forward***

If you are thinking about moving forward with this approach – or even just considering it – the best place to start is through an audit and discussion. First, as an internal team, go through the checklist at the end of this guide to identify what you have, what you need, and key considerations you need to be making. Once your team has that information together, connect with your AV and production partners.

Those discussions should focus in on feasibility, what changing course looks like and requires, a working timeline, roles and responsibilities, and communication planning (e.g., for presenters).

Once the decision is made, it’s all hands-on deck to change course and ensure a successful and flawless virtual event.

# Multiple-Room Event

As the number of attendees and presenters increases, the requirements necessary to execute a virtual event do too. With multiple tracks and breakouts happening at the same time, you need to design an experience that is easy-to-navigate, engaging, and seamless (especially from a connectivity standpoint). Because each event is unique, you are more than likely going to need a solution that can be customized, or at least flexible enough to contract and/or expand based on your specific meeting.

One idea for executing this format: Consider having a single-track live virtual event that you kick off with a big general session/keynote, like you would at your in-person event. When it's time to break out into smaller meetings, you can direct attendees to pre-recorded talks, allowing them to consume the content that's right for them. After an hour or two, you can re-convene at the mainstage for another live session or two.

## Sample Schedule

8am-10am	Keynote/opening session with panel discussion and main speaker
10am-11:30am	Pre-recorded content becomes available as breakouts/track rooms
11:30am-12pm	Live Q&A with presenters
12pm	Afternoon Keynote

## The Flow

Like the meeting format above, the content and flow are just as critical and require just as much focus as your in-person meeting. With a larger meeting, you are likely looking at an event that spans multiple days, and therefore want to design an agenda that engages attendees for extended periods of time. That means anchoring your event with high-interest, high-value content so people participate at the beginning and stick around for the end. It requires breaks between sessions, built-in interaction opportunities with presenters and other attendees (e.g., chat and Q&A opportunities), and possibly access to sponsors and exhibitors (if that's something you want and/or need to carry over to the virtual event).

Note: If Q&A will be a part of your event, we recommend a moderated system with a staff member who can pre-filter the questions going to the panel and limit duplication or unwanted topics.

"Consider ways to inject some energy into the virtual experience through videos and music, whether that's during sessions or between them (or both)," says Joe Faulder, Director of Creative and Strategy. "In addition, consider ways you can offer content that is of interest to different segments of your audience over the entire course of the event to keep them engaged and coming back (and not just coming for one session on one day and not returning)."

# Fully-Immersive Virtual Environment

The next-level virtual event is where you re-create the in-person experience as closely as possible – with a registration booth, an exhibit hall, a general session, multiple breakout rooms, and networking space and opportunities in an all-in-one platform. Of course, this requires a more comprehensive and robust tool and timeline to execute (in general, think 3-6 months), but can closely mirror the experience your attendees have when they attend your event live.

# How To Deliver A High-Quality Virtual Experience

Zoom offers some **great insight** for engaging your audience in a virtual environment:

- \* **Set the tone:** Welcome attendees as they join the webinar or meeting. Start with an icebreaker question and ask attendees to send in their answers in the chat.
- \* **Enable Q&A:** Designate panelists or other hosts to help answer questions that come in during the event. (There's nothing worse than dead air, so prepare a few questions in advance in case you need to fill the gap.)
- \* **Polling is key:** Create 3 to 4 polling questions that can be set up before the event.
- \* **Ask for feedback:** Collect feedback on the presenters, content, and audience satisfaction.
- \* **Reactions:** Find ways to get audience reactions in real time. For example, some tools, like Zoom, allow participants to send a thumbs up or clapping hands to communicate their excitement without interrupting the presentation.

## Moving Forward: A Checklist

There are a wide range of technological tools we can leverage to take an in-person event to a virtual one and/or collect and publish on-demand content. Nailing down some of the following details can catapult the process of moving your meeting online, and give you a solid foundation on which to have a conversation with your AV and technology team.

### Keep in mind

- *A live virtual event requires a team effort to make it a success. You will need to rely on people in a remote location or locations to manage the user experience from first to last cue.*
- *With a virtual event, you may not be in the same location as the technical team managing the actual flow, so you need to make sure you have an open communication channel with the vendor so you actively manage any variance in the schedule.*

- Are you flexible on the date/time, or does the virtual event have to coincide with the already-set in-person meeting?
- Does your organization have a corporate subscription to a service like Zoom or Go-to-meeting?
- Will you have a physical location from which presenters can/will be presenting, or will they all be virtual?
- Do you want attendees to be able to interact with presenters?
- Do you want attendees to be able to interact/network with each other?
- Will you have to incorporate sponsorships into the virtual event?
- How many time zones will you have tuning in?
- Do you plan to use the event's content after the event (e.g., on a YouTube page)?
- Do attendees receive CME credits for attending your event?
- How much time between now and your event?
- Do you have an existing LMS (Learning Management System)?

This guide is just that – a starting point to help your meeting team outline options and identify next steps so you can have productive discussions with your extended teams. Of course, the sooner you pull together the necessary information and make a decision, the sooner you can move towards the right virtual solution for your event.

**For more information about Projection:**

**Check us out:** [projection.com](https://projection.com)

**Follow us:** [@ProjectionInc](https://twitter.com/ProjectionInc)

**Contact us:** [info@projection.com](mailto:info@projection.com)