Successfully pivoting to virtual events during times of crisis

During unprecedented times of crisis, organisations must quickly adapt their in-person event strategy to suit new challenges. This may include the option to transition their meetings and events to a virtual format. While there are many variables to consider when evaluating the pivot to virtual, the right technology solutions can streamline work flows and maximise attendee impact.

Using Event Technology to Face an Unprecedented Crisis

This was the recent case for a large Financial Services organisation. “In mid-March, when the Coronavirus pandemic hit, we suddenly saw a lot of events on our event calendar evaporating,” notes Vicky Huang, Senior Meeting Technology Advisor.

**Event Information**

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<thead>
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<th>Details</th>
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She explains that the organisation already used Cvent as their “one-stop centralised platform with the flexibility to plug into third party tools.” Those included integrations with their CRM and Eloqua marketing automation tool, as well as the TalkPoint webcasting system.

With these integrations in mind, the events team decided to move a select number of existing meetings online. Vicky was tasked with quickly pivoting the registration process to suit the new virtual format, all in a matter of days. Eighty-eight invitees had already registered using Cvent’s Event Marketing and Management tool for the in-person event. “So we had to think what to do next,” says Vicky. “We thought, should we send out a new event invitation on a different platform? Does that mean going to the webcast team to create a new website?” Ultimately, they realised the answer was already at their fingertips. She explains, “We happened to have the TalkPoint integration in place with Cvent, so that made the decision easy.”

**Successfully Pivoting to Virtual Events**

In a matter of hours, Vicky updated the Cvent registration website with new webcast details. “This integration allowed the events team to utilise the existing registrations they had already captured for the in-person event,” says Vicky. Reminder emails were sent through Cvent to the existing registrants to notify them of the switch.

to live stream. Attendees simply needed to revisit their personalised Cvent registration confirmation page and click “Access Webcast” to join the virtual event. This eliminated the need to fill out a second registration form on TalkPoint and ensured a seamless user experience. The team could also easily limit access to only registered attendees to ensure the privacy of their attendees.

Seeing the opportunity to market the event to a wider audience, the team wanted to target prospects and no-response invites. They quickly deployed an email invitation with the new virtual offering using the integrated Eloqua platform.

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- Vicky Huang, Senior Meeting Technology Advisor
Incredibly, they captured 300 additional registrations in just one week. Twenty-four hours before the event, a webcast reminder email with login details was automatically deployed from Cvent to the almost 400 registrants. Over 200 attendees ultimately joined the virtual event, nearly three times the attendance they originally expected. Attendees also received an automated post-event email with recordings and additional content offerings to extend the attendee journey. “It really comes down to the TalkPoint integration with Cvent that’s already in place,” insists Vicky. “The business got ahead of the game, they secured their audience when people cannot attend in-person, and they kept the momentum going.”

By pivoting to virtual in the face of changing circumstances, the team was able to secure the success of their event while expanding their marketing reach. The organisation’s branding requirements were already configured in Cvent, ensuring a consistent brand experience for users. In optimising their existing MarTech capabilities, they also avoided the higher venue cost and booking rush already underway for the second half of 2020. Most importantly, they ensured all processes and data lived in one central location within the Cvent platform. There was no need for dual attendee lists, registration processes, or systems of record. They were able to sync webcast attendance into the Cvent registration report, saving valuable time and effort without the need to reconcile attendee lists across different platforms.

The Evolution of Meetings and Events

Following the success of their virtual event, Vicky was able to template the process for easy turnaround. It now takes less than one day to launch a webinar registration in Cvent. “Once the template is set up, it takes one hour to build this website and provide the text link to the event planner,” she says. Once testing is complete, the marketer can easily configure emails for invites and event reminders within Cvent. The success of this process has proven to be a reliable alternative to in-person events, minimising man-hours and maximising performance. “Within the last two weeks, the client enabled six new webinars. We had 2,000 clients registered to the webcast events as a result, and this is ongoing. We have new webinars scheduled from now through May to June,” says Vicky.
While weathering a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic certainly requires the implementation of a variety of strategies to ensure the safety of attendees and viability of the business, maximising program impact means empowering meetings and events with new avenues for success. By adding an additional virtual offering to their events portfolio, Vicky and the team foresee powerful new opportunities within the organisation.

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- Vicky Huang, Senior Meeting Technology Advisor

“This is literally transforming the way we build out registration websites,” Vicky insists. “Hybrid registration websites will be the new normal. Event registration websites in Cvent will not only cater to the in-person event, but there is always going to be an easy set up for another option you can use to capture webcast attendees.”

During times of crisis, Vicky recommends relying on digital tools whenever possible to support your event needs. She says, “People are looking for advice online, so if you can capture their time to attend your event and deliver the best content, it’s cost effective and efficient because you’re reaching out to a much a larger attendee pool.” With simple integrations and a comprehensive platform in place, pivoting to virtual events can be a seamless process that creates remarkably powerful online attendee experiences.