

Reimagining Events

Hybrid and Virtual

SUMMARY

Exploring the questions to consider when planning your online event, and looking at the short, medium and long term opportunities of delivering your event through a virtual or blended hybrid system.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Looking at hybrid and virtual events is more than just determining how to put your event or festival online while it can't happen in person. The move to online delivery offers the chance to openly and honestly look at your event, both before it takes place, and through post event evaluation.

Once you have revisited what the core event message and objectives are, you can put together engaging programming. You can also choose an online platform that meets your event needs, while being reactive during the ongoing times of uncertainty.

The result is that this will bring long-term benefits to your event, whether it goes back to being fully with in-person audiences, or retains an online element.

CHECKLIST

1. Fluidity

In every step of your event planning, while we are all hoping for the best, plan a contingency for the worst. Fluidity to move the event fully online as a back-up will offer you, and your audience, peace of mind.

2. Event Format

Many events are asking 'How can I run my event online in its normal format?', but the question perhaps should be 'should I still be running the same event in the same format?' Lots of events are organised because they have happened in the same way for years. Take this time when the world has been turned on its head to give your event a shake-up – you may make long-term improvements.

3. Post Event Evaluation

Post event evaluation can be essential to how you approach event planning, marketing, pricing and programming for the following year. Many online platforms build in interactive audience feedback, which is supplied to you as detailed, GDPR-managed, data. It is useful for providers to show you an example of how this is displayed.

4. Platform Choice

There is a wide range of platforms available, so it's worth defining a brief based on your event objectives and budget. Be very clear, in writing, that the brief may change, and get a full picture of what additional charges would look like, and what the platform is and is not capable of. The last thing you want is to have a great event that your platform can't deliver, or that your event budget won't allow.

5. Event Production

Event organisers often have the opportunity to work direct with a platform or have this element delivered via a Technical Production Company. Again, after a challenging year, this will be influenced by budget; however many Production Companies will consider this, and are looking to forge a long-term relationship, and create future opportunities.

6. Programming

When watching content online, our attention span is very different from being part of a live audience. Programming must consider this, keeping people engaged, through well-produced visual and audience interaction. Your post event data from your platform should detail audience drop off, so it's worth checking that they can provide this.

7. Pre Recording

Pre recording material offers a number of benefits:

- Visual variety - as different locations can be utilised
- Production quality - as it will offer your technical team time to get the next live section ready
- You will most likely reduce your costs by playing a 'video' rather than need an additional live stream.

8. Scalability

When planning which platform to use, ensure it is scalable. We have seen that the landscape of restrictions can change rapidly, so being able to move more towards virtual from hybrid, and vice versa, will be a real benefit.

9. Increased Accessibility

Stay mindful of the benefit of increased accessibility provided by your event being shown online. While the in-person elements are absent, a large number of people who for various reasons could not or would not have attended previously can now do so. A secondary element of this is that these people could really engage with your event, leading to a widely expanded live audience, with associated tourism benefits, in the future.

10. Content Opportunities

Production, branding and edit work means that online content is also a superb showcase tool, both for your event and for Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. Utilise websites, networks and social media channels to share your content as widely as you can, building a foundation for the success of future events. Provide content to Tourism NI who may be able to use it to further showcase your event and Northern Ireland destination as a vibrant event destination. Look on [TNI.com](https://tni.com) for how to get involved, or email the Digital Team at digital@tourismni.com

USEFUL LINKS

Sign up to Tourism NI industry news and events at <https://tourismni.com>

Keep abreast of Tourism NI Insights and Intelligence at <https://www.tourismni.com/industry-insights>

Check out TNI support resources including links to events-specific webinars at:

<https://www.tourismni.com/build-your-business/events-webinars>

Events Unit contact email: EventsUnit@tourismni.com