

HOW WE DID IT 2021

TIPS AND
BEST
PRACTICES
FOR DIGITAL
& HYBRID
EVENTS



TOLERANCA

**How We Did It 2021
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FOR DIGITAL & HYBRID
EVENTS**

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THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Hybrid events are a prominent stage on the road to transforming events

The meetings industry is extraordinarily resilient. The current crisis marks the third in my career. Firstly, as I started in the industry in the middle of the nineties, they announced the downfall of events. After that, the economic crisis struck in 2008, which shook the foundations of our industry. The current crisis is intense predominantly due to the boosted digitalisation of the meetings industry. If we embrace change, the industry will emerge stronger than ever.

Most changes that have occurred in the aftermath of the corona crisis are not entirely new solutions, given that we have known such solutions for some time, yet we have only started intensively utilising them during this period. Not least, digitalisation can substantially boost the reach of an event.

Hybrid cars are, so they say, the best of the old petrol world and the new electrified, sustainable world. We can make a similar conclusion for hybrid events that are a logical response to the current situation of the world of events. Their number is persistently growing as they enable, in accordance with the epidemiological situation in countries and regions, a part of the audience to meet in person while others tune in online.

Organising hybrid events is challenging. Choosing suitable content is far more important than selecting technology because hybrid events connect two focus groups (live and online) with vastly distinct needs. Often, they are wholly confused with the concept of online streaming, although streaming does play an integral role regarding hybrid events. Undoubtedly, the key challenge regarding hybrid events is intertwining two audiences that expect two-way communication and interaction. In this field, countless innovations are happening.

Smaller Zoom meetings, which we have gotten accustomed to during the crisis, are not demanding to organise. There are a plethora of tools and platforms available for various purposes. When diving into a professional organisation, however, rich experience and know-how is a prerequisite. One of the main issues is the integration of services and tools. Therefore, we have started using the term DCO (Digital Conference Organiser), denoting an agency that encompasses specialised know-how in organising all types of online, hybrid and virtual events.

During the corona crisis, numerous event organisers pondered whether or not to jump on the train of event digitalisation. The answer is simple - the world will roll by us if we do not. There is no way we can stop it anymore. We can, nonetheless, board it and try to comprehend and get acquainted with the proportions of this momentous new age.

We are living in a time of a digital event renaissance that will, similarly to the first renaissance half a millennium ago, profoundly alter our actions on an individual and social basis. That is why we have, as the year comes to a close, gathered some of our recommendations and thoughts into a guide that will help you organise future events.

Above all, we wish you successful events and satisfied attendees in 2022!



— Gorazd Čad

Meeting planner, founder and director of the marketing and event agency Toleranca Marketing

LJUBLJANA MANIFESTO

About smart, agile and responsible events of the future

Conventa Crossover is the central think-tank of the meetings industry in New Europe. For the past 6 years, it has been encouraging the development of the creative industries, bringing together key stakeholders and confronting them with the challenges of the modern world.

The 6th Conventa Crossover conference will provide an opportunity to officially coordinate and signing the **Ljubljana Manifesto**. A document that will define a new role for the meetings industry after the coronavirus crisis. It will bring together new ideas and perspectives on what events of the future will look like. The declaration is a step towards strengthening international cooperation, education and public awareness in the meetings industry. It aims to encourage key stakeholders to develop new business models and to change how they do business.

The points mentioned in the document are summaries of the key findings of research that we have conducted on a sample of more than 7,500 meeting planners during the coronavirus crisis. The document is a working draft that will be finalised live at the Conventa Crossover conference in Ljubljana on 27 August 2021.

The fundamental question of the manifesto is **How can one organise successful events that future generations will be proud of?**

We are preparing the manifesto on the premise that the meetings industry is a CREATIVE INDUSTRY at its core. It encompasses everything from the music and the broader cultural industries to design and marketing.

The meetings industry, like other creative industries, carries great social power and responsibility. Events are not only and exclusively an economic impact generator, creating revenue, stimulating investment and opening up new job opportunities. They also foster the development of new technologies and science, connect international leaders with local experts and promote the development of local companies and professionals.

Smart, green and responsible events will be based on the following points:

(Please rank them in order of importance; if you disagree with a suggestion, please cross it out):

— **Focus on the participant:** We respect and enthral our participants in order to meet their expectations. In this way, we build communities, which are a prerequisite for successful events.

— **No compromise when it comes to content:** As event organisers, we know how to create and tell great stories. Excellent content is the foundation and essence of what we do.

— **Agile responses to change:** We continuously and swiftly adapt and improve our events while learning from our mistakes. Hybrid events have proven to be the best solution for bridging the gap between live and online audiences, while also being more environmentally friendly.

— **Excellence and measurable quality:** Events enable objective technical and subjective functional measurability. We know how to measure quality and to build robust ROI analytics

— **Responsibility to the environment:** Before organising an event, we always consider whether the positive impacts of the event will outweigh the harmful ones. It is our responsibility to organise future events with the smallest possible environmental footprint.

— **Creating exceptional 365/24 experiences:** We know how to transform events into 365/24 experiences. In this way, our events are an important strategic tool for modern corporate and community marketing. Our primary goal is to create exceptional experiences for our attendees.

— **360° communication approach:** We organise events using all the communication channels available today and used by the participants in our events.

— **Dialogue:** Through events, we promote interdisciplinary, intergenerational and intercultural dialogue. In this way, we have a significant impact on solving pressing social problems. Dialogue is more important than tools and platforms for communication.

— **Simplicity:** We can transform your story into an event based on simple, clean, minimalist and sincere ideas with plenty of added value. Creativity at events is never an end in itself.

— **A culture of transparency:** We organise events in a transparent and open-source way. We build trust between clients and agencies and foster quality cooperation with partners.

— **Digital competences:** Digital technologies are an opportunity for us to improve the quality and interactivity of events. The technological, economic and communication aspects of digitalising events are a key to creating tailor-made events for participants.

— **Data at the heart of modern events:** We use data to analyse performance (analytics), discover new opportunities (mining) and dynamically adapt events (personalisation). We use data to develop bold new projects.

— **Outside the comfort zone:** We create events where the participant experience is digitalised and tailored to the needs of both live and online audiences. We don't run away from the digital reality and we adapt to it successfully.

— **Interdependence:** When organising events, we are aware of interdependence and reciprocity. Every decision and action has an impact on others, especially our partners and subcontractors.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT HYBRID EVENT MODEL?

The most common types of hybrid events

Over the past couple of months, not a day has gone by without clients asking what type of hybrid event they should organise. With so many different options available, there is also confusion and ambiguity, most often due to lack of experience and sometimes a flood of different information online. Google is dominated by advice from video-conferencing platform providers or technical support providers. Of course, you can't do without them, but there is still a lot to consider in order for your hybrid event to succeed. The key challenge is integrating different features into a well-functioning and efficient hybrid event model.

So, which hybrid model do you choose? This, as always, depends on the answer to the question WHY? Why are we organising the event in the first place, what change do we want to achieve and how will we bring value to the participants? Participants are the heart of the event and their active involvement should be supported by the chosen hybrid model.

The first question you need to answer is whether you will treat the live and online audience equally. The question seems logical and simple, but in practice, this is not always the case. If you are organising a high-level political meeting, the online audience will not interest you too much and a simple video livestream will suffice. However, if you are preparing a product presentation, interaction with all participants is crucial for reaching the end result – selling a product.

In short, answering your WHY should be the first step you take. In practice, this is often done by preparing a detailed brief of the event. It's best to prepare it together with the client, or if you are the client, together with the event agency. This way, you will avoid unnecessary mistakes and unexpected expenses.

Possibilities for organising hybrid events are plentiful. To make it easier to understand, we have combined them into three packages according to their complexity. Individual elements in different packages can be combined to form a comprehensive hybrid experience.

Undemanding hybrid event

Option 1	Live (in person)	Digital
Participant activity	Passive listening	Passive listening
Duration	Up to 90 minutes	Up to 90 minutes
Variety of programmes	Monotonous	Monotonous
Formats	Press conferences, seminars, simple lectures etc.	Press conferences, seminars, simple lectures etc.
Technical quality	Classic presentation with video live-stream	Video live-stream on online platform or social media
Functional quality	Simple event organisation	Simple event live-streaming
Organisation costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space • Multimedia equipment and sound system • Catering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PTZ HD camera • Streaming platforms: YouTube Live, Vimeo, Facebook live

Solution: A simple live video broadcast of the event, when there is no need for active participant engagement. The most basic technical equipment is used, which does not require a professional team. It is a hybrid event that you can carry out yourself without the support of a DCO agency (DCO - Digital Conference Organizer)

Semi-demanding hybrid event

Option 2	Live (in person)	Digital
Participant activity	Active listening and commenting	Active listening and commenting
Duration	Multi-hour or full-day program	Multi-hour or full-day program
Variety of programmes	Plenary sessions, sections, workshops, panel discussions, interactive breaks	Plenary sessions, sections, workshops, panel discussions, interactive breaks
Formats	Conferences, congresses, professional symposiums, award ceremonies ...	Conferences, congresses, professional symposiums, award ceremonies ...
Technical quality	Classic conference with various formats of presentations, breaks and working lunches and round tables	Watching the conference through video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Webex etc.
Functional quality	Semi demanding live event organisation	Semi demanding use of video conferencing platforms
Organisation costs	Multiple rooms according to the programme, multimedia equipment and sound system, catering, live event moderator, detailed event scenario, graphic equipment of the event ...	Min. 2 professional cameras, video stream directing, technical team (cameraman, director, zoom operator), simple video conferencing platform (e.g. Zoom), web moderator
<p>Solution: A semi-demanding hybrid event allows for greater interaction between online and live audiences. Much depends on the functionality of the video conferencing platform. It is extremely important to choose a package that will support all your requirements (the premium version of Zoom offers many additional features). We recommend that you organise this type of event in cooperation with a professional event organiser (DCO agency). This will save you a lot of time and energy.</p>		

Demanding hybrid event

Option 3	Live (in person)	Digital
Participant activity	Active participation and problem solving	Active participation and problem solving
Duration	Full-day or multi-day program	Full-day or multi-day program
Variety of programmes	Complex programme with workshops, live voting, discussions / round tables, competitions, prize draws ...	Complex programme with workshops, live voting, discussions / round tables, competitions, prize draws ...
Formats	Demanding professional congresses, corporate events, government meetings, product presentations ...	Demanding professional congresses, corporate events, government meetings, product presentations ...
Technical quality	An interactive event that actively engages both live and online participants	The event takes place via a personalised online event platform that enables matchmaking and connects both audiences
Functional quality	Very demanding live event organisation	Very demanding use of a personalised online event platform
Organisation costs	Multiple rooms according to the programme, multimedia equipment and sound system, catering, professional live event moderator, web application for participants (app), LED screen, ambient lighting, stage equipment, detailed event scenario, activation of participants, Comment Wall, integration of social networks ...	4 professional cameras, live stream directing, professional image mixing, technical team (cameraman, director, Zoom operator, sound and light master), professional video conferencing platform (e.g. Hopin, Clickmeeting, Confiva, or upgraded version Zoom), tool for voting (Slido), web moderator, activation of participants, video on demand, integration of social networks.
<p>Solution: A professionally organised hybrid event successfully bridges the gap between online and live participation, enabling a balanced cooperation. It also offers the possibility to integrate pre-agreed networking, live voting or in-depth analysis of the event. There are also many new possibilities in the field of monetisation of such events. To carry out such an event, you definitely need the support of a DCO agency.</p>		

Above all, we mustn't forget how important the role of the moderator is in hybrid events. An experienced, non-biased moderator is invaluable. The moderator keeps the conversation going, makes sure all participants are contributing equally, regardless of their formal power, directs the group to a certain goal, provides quality visualisation of the process, and sums up conclusions. We recommend that you start working with your moderator in the early stages of event planning.

It should be borne in mind that successful hybrid events are the result of a clearly delineated structure and content. Therefore, the preparation of a detailed scenario is also extremely important. In our experience, this part of event preparation is the beginning of a good hybrid experience.

Hybrid cars are said to have taken the best from the old petrol and new electrified and sustainable world. We can come to the same conclusion when it comes to hybrid events, which are the most logical response to the current situation in the world of events. Their number is steadily growing, as they allow part of the audience to meet live in accordance with the epidemiological situation in that country and region, and part to attend online. Hybrid events are often confused with online streaming (live video streaming). Yes, it is certainly an important part of every hybrid event, but the goal is to connect two different audiences with two-way communication and interactivity.

The organisation of such events is demanding. More important than technology is the choice of appropriate content, as it involves connecting two target groups (live and online) with completely different needs.



HOW TO ORGANISE INCLUSIVE, ENGAGING AND DEMOCRATIC HYBRID AND DIGITAL EVENTS

Overview of tools, techniques and practical tips for satisfied attendees

Inclusive and collaborative event organising has been thrilling and accompanying me for the past fifteen years. We have tested numerous methods and techniques in this area and described them comprehensively in the Power to the Meetings book. The chapter Co-creation delves into this topic, and you can get a preview at the following link:

<https://kongres-magazine.eu/2020/09/co-creation-activate-your-participants/>

Several years ago, I wrote that events should become a space of co-creation and finding solutions together. Classic conferences do not enable co-creation, and thus countless methods, techniques and processes for event organising based on mutual respect, collective intelligence and co-creation came to be. The foundation of such events is active cooperation that can awaken individual and collective potentials. We refer to it as co-creation.

I am often asked by colleagues whether such findings are still true today. The corona crisis has made a tremendous contribution to digitalising events; however, it is questionable whether it has benefited organising events inclusively.

Before delving into concrete answers, I have listed a few intriguing questions that we will try to answer.

- 1. Are pre-recorded events still events or just a cinema screening?**
- 2. Do hybrid events successfully connect and activate both the online and live audience?**
- 3. Are webinars equally effective as live lectures?**
- 4. How can we add the human touch to digital events?**

First and foremost, digitalisation has several positive effects we should not overlook. Above all, it has beneficial effects on the environment. However, it is challenging to state whether we can ensure equal inclusiveness of attendees online.

Instead of one-way “ex-cathedra” lectures where listeners are more or less passive recipients of information, as event organisers, we strive to create a relaxed and stimulative environment in the digital world. A setting where all participants can cooperate, contribute and build on their extensive experience.

Therefore, the key to the concept is creating an open space where the event moderator and the attendees become co-creators. The approach gives us an opportunity to take away new outlooks, alternative solutions, different understanding and perhaps even new solutions to problems.

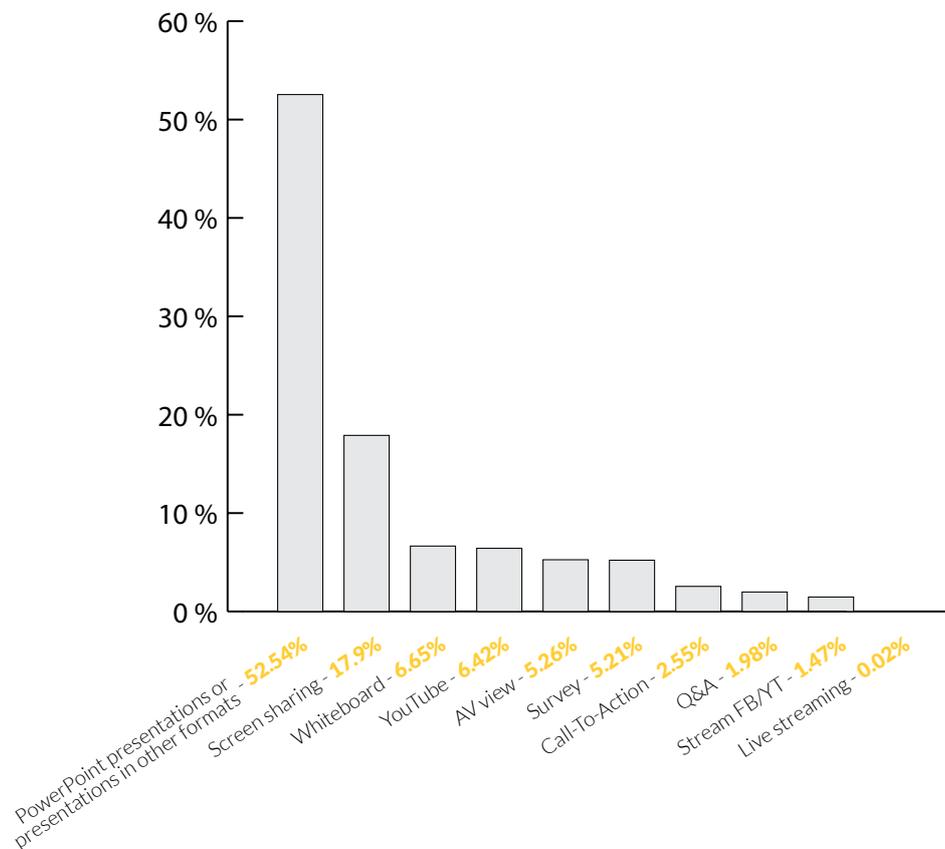
Even when it comes to digital and hybrid events, the moderator’s role is imperative. An expert neutral moderator is priceless. The moderator finds the event’s common denominator, ensures all participants give equal contributions (regardless of formal power) and guides the team to the final objective whilst visualising the process and drawing conclusions.

Methods and techniques of co-creation in digital and hybrid events are suitable when we wish to awaken the sleeping wisdom of participants in the following areas:

- Problem-solving
- Strengthening creativity
- Innovation seeking

ATTENTION: The attendees' focus can be problematic. Based on 2.3 million executed events, the platform Click Meeting, which we have used for several events ourselves, found that the average time people spent attending a webinar is 40 minutes. Online meetings, similarly, kept their attendees in the event room for an average of 35 minutes.

The time we have for digital events is thus strikingly limited. The analysis showed what individual speakers used on the platform in reality. The results were unexpected, as most of them based their presentation on PowerPoint presentations and sharing their screens. Only a handful of them exploited the immense functionalities the platform offers. Let's take a look at the statistics:



Today, there are dozens of techniques and tools that cater to the various needs and work styles of attendees. Unfortunately, only a few of them are being used. That is why we have selected some recommendations from our experience. Professional moderators of digital events have even more aces up their sleeves. As always, we recommend the best in the business – Masters in Moderation: www.mastersinmoderation.com.

1. Selecting a videoconferencing platform

In my opinion, everything starts by selecting a video conferencing platform. The best platforms offer a whole series of tools for organising inclusive events. As said before, there is no one-size-fits-all platform. After 2020, the omnipresent Zoom might be the closest, though.

2. Presentation

Much has already been said about this. To repeat once again – listing boring data will drive your participants to hybrid or digital delirium. Try avoiding that with professional and prompt speaker preparation, and the online audience will be immensely grateful in return. To successfully do so, much effort is needed, and equally important, crystal clear instructions. The presentation should be visually attractive and designed smartly.

As far as I am concerned, music is a must-have and an inspirational part of classic and online meetings. Music is a universal language that can make a world of difference.

3. Surveys (Polls)

The pioneers of event surveys, Slido, have elevated this part of events to rocket science. Our simple advice is to raise the rhythm of short webinars with polls every 10 to 15 minutes. Thus, a simple one hour webinar should include two to three surveys. Better yet, you can intertwine the surveys with the results of surveys carried out on a bigger scale and compare the results. The attendees will find this valuable, and you will keep their attention longer.

4. Icebreakers

Their purpose is blunt: to relax the attendees ahead of or amid an event. In essence, icebreakers are short content interventions that raise vibrations and keep suspension till the end of the event. They can be simple activities such as an attendee seeking the most eccentric object in a room and sharing it with the others.

5. Fire questions

These are simple questions that the moderator asks the online public. A typical temperature-raising question is: how do you feel on a scale from 1 to 10? Such questions can effectively connect the audience. A similar question would also be: do you prefer the Mediterranean or the Adriatic Sea?

6. Virtual quiz

Several applications enable fun virtual quizzes in real-time. Their value will, of course, depend on the selected questions. If it is an expert event in question, this should not be a problem. Do not overlook the different knowledge levels of participants.

7. Virtual whiteboard

Numerous video conferencing platforms offer the possibility of using a whiteboard. An intriguing idea correlating to the whiteboard is to invite attendees to draw their mood on it given proper instructions. You can draw freely on the board, whilst hiring a professional illustrator to simultaneously write down conclusions of the conference is a great idea.

8. Group photos

The list of virtual icebreakers would not be complete without a group photo! Taking a group photo can be just as fun in video chat as in real life. Moreover, you can retake the group photo by making gestures, bringing your pets and being creative each time.

9. Online escape rooms

Providers of escape rooms have developed excellent solutions in the virtual and digital world. If the event's time allows, escape rooms can be intriguing solutions. A wide array of choices can be found at: <https://www.escapelive.co.uk/>.

10. Breakout rooms

This segment is an integral part of any serious video conferencing platform. Breakout rooms enable several cooperative activities and are thus an integral tool for active cooperation. Although you will not be able to do most of it online, the majority can be executed with a bit of effort and great moderators.

All tech freaks can use the following innovative smart tools:

Slido is always the first pick for demanding surveys, polls and much more

Mural is an excellent tool for virtual brainstorming

Miro is a whiteboard on steroids

Kumospace is a chat space where you can invite your mates to a virtual pub

Topia is made for virtual cooperation for groups

Therefore, there is a sea of solutions and no excuses for boring online events. I believe the answer to the question of whether pre-recorded events are still events or just cinema screenings is clear. Even pre-recorded content can be a part of the story, provided it is smartly integrated into the event. I prefer to watch feature films and documentaries, however, on Netflix or in the cinema. The essence of events is, in my opinion, to exchange thoughts, cooperate and all of the aforementioned.

HOW TO CHOOSE A VENUE FOR HYBRID EVENTS

And what questions you should ask...

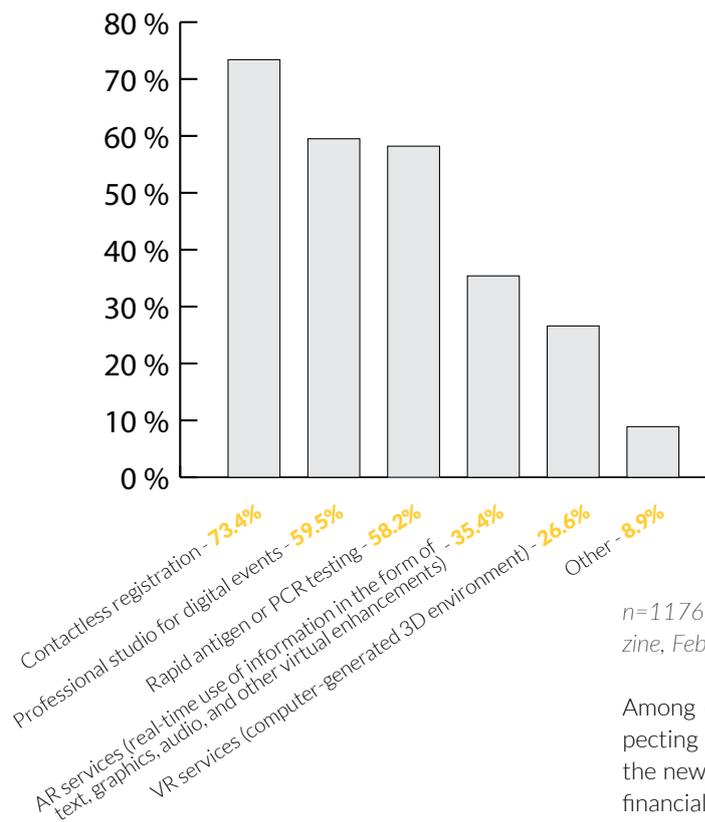
As a rule of thumb, meeting planners should look for venues that understand the needs and requirements of specific types of events and have practical experience and references in relation to hosting them. Due to social distancing restrictions, digital and hybrid events are probably here to stay for the foreseeable future. The second option, hybrid events, are the most complex, so it's extremely important to choose the right or, as we call it, the **smart venue**.

In our experience, there are two types of venues:

1. Venues anxiously awaiting the end of the crisis and wanting to remain specialised in live events, leaving the implementation of digital and hybrid events to external partners.
2. Venues that took advantage of the corona crisis for a business turnaround and offer comprehensive support, including their own online event studios, top-notch technical support, and in-house innovations.

What suits you as a meeting planner or client depends on the complexity of the event. Choosing a venue where they are familiar with the new digital reality of events is certainly a big advantage.

When we asked European meeting planners in February about what they expect from venues, we received the following answers:



n=1176 meeting planners, Source: Kongres Magazine, February 2021

Among other things, they also mentioned expecting greater flexibility and adaptability to the new situation in terms of contracts and the financial terms of leases.

In Europe, venues that tick all the boxes mentioned above are few and far between. Why? Well, that's a good question for venue management teams. Latecomers and slow followers will certainly have to adapt to the new situation as soon as possible.

Demand for ultra-technological venues that, in addition to everything mentioned above, also provide things like a 5G connection, a broadcast studio, and 2D and 3D animation is increasing. Hopefully, the supply of such venues will follow the same curve. In our opinion, finding a venue that covers most of the points is still better than carrying out a digital event in your home office.

Due to the uncertainty of the situation, we've put together some questions that you should ask venues in order to check first-hand if they're a suitable location for your hybrid event.

The first deciding factor is definitely the size of the space. Can the venue even provide you with enough space in accordance with national health and safety recommendations? Never force your head through a wall if the location meets all other criteria but does not match the required capacity. That is not the location you should choose.

The rule is simple: for the estimated number of hybrid participants, you need at least 70% more space than before the corona crisis.

In addition, we recommend that you ask the following questions:

1. What is the bandwidth of your wireless connection?

Bandwidth is the amount of data that can be transmitted (uploaded) or received (downloaded) per second measured in Megabits per second. The minimum standard we expect for hybrid events is at least 50 Mbps. However, we recommend that you download the program www.speedtest.net and check for yourself what the actual speed is at the venue. More is better!

2. What version of Zoom will you use for a hybrid event with 50 live participants and 500 online participants?

For a professional event, the venue should have a Zoom webinar licence. If they only have the free version for Zoom meetings, you will face quite a few problems with implementation. And not just with the number of participants allowed, but with many other things that the basic version of Zoom does not support. This also applies to other video-conferencing platforms.

3. Do you have your own broadcasting studio for online and hybrid events?

A digital event studio is a big advantage. However, ask for references for hybrid events previously carried out. Check their portfolio and confirm who will take care of your event. A vetted technical team is the key to success. The team needs to bring together different profiles of multimedia professionals, especially professionals who have mastered programs such as vMix and different video-conferencing platforms.

4. What kind of cameras can you provide?

Check to see if the venue can provide professional cameras with a resolution of at least 1080p. If they offer you ordinary PTZ cameras, that's a red flag, as the transmission quality will probably be the same as video surveillance in your own house. In addition, you need at least two cameras for an engaging livestream.

5. Is your system open to different video conferencing platforms?

Serious venues provide open source switching to various video conferencing platforms such as Facebook Live, LinkedIn Live, Vimeo, and others. If they offer only one option, this could potentially produce a lot of problems and additional costs at your end.

6. Do you have an LED screen as a background?

An LED wall can greatly enhance the visual appearance of your event. This is especially true for hybrid events, where you conjure up a superb atmosphere for participants on both sides. For hybrid events, this is a great added value as it allows for animations and works really professionally.

7. Do you provide 2D and 3D animation for events?

Next-generation video animations allow you to show product operation, animation of living beings, and other realistic animations. These are among the key elements of modern hybrid events. Check to see if the venue provides the appropriate software.

8. What equipment do you provide for streaming video and image mixing?

Most studios provide professional video management software. vMix is the industry standard, but other solutions are of course available, including 3D animation software and various tools for interacting with the participants.

9. How much does post-production of videos cost and how fast can you do it?

A professional team will edit and cut your videos that you can later use to promote or sell content through your channels. They should be able to implement graphic and music elements, jingles, and everything we understand as professional content production.

10. Do you provide replacement of stage elements free of charge?

Being able to quickly change the scenography is extremely important. This is usually included in the rental fee, but do check in advance. If you are charged for every small stage alteration, you will end up with a massive headache. Venues that provide easy access for delivery of larger stage elements or even cars are at an immediate advantage.

11. Is a rehearsal for testing out the idea possible? How much does it cost?

The best venues are aware of the importance of a rehearsal, which should be included in the rental fee. Check if the venue has included a rehearsal in the contract and negotiate a good deal. Without a rehearsal, it will be hard to take your hybrid event from average to unforgettable. Find a venue where the extras don't cost extra.

12. Do they have a plotted layout of the halls in accordance with new COVID-19 restrictions?

Hybrid events require a lot of space. In addition to 70% more space for the event itself, there is often a space dedicated to the production team and directors, and a lounge for VIP speakers. The venue should provide you with a floor plan with clearly presented capacities for the studio, participants, directing, catering, and back office.

13. What about data security and analytics?

Does the venue take care of the protection of personal data in accordance with GDPR legislation? Can they prepare an in-depth analysis of post-event results? Is the venue secured against hacker attacks and how? This is especially important at events where information and content labelled as a trade secret are exchanged.

14. Are there any hidden costs connected to cancellation?

This part is really important, especially in current times. When enquiring about costs, it is important that you are aware of the different payment options and deadlines. Request accurate information for Plan A, B, or C. The venue must give you a thorough explanation of the fine print in the contracts. Insist on it.

15. Do you provide contactless catering?

Ask the venue if they have experience with contactless catering. Request a proper presentation of the solutions and certificates proving that it really is contactless catering.

Additionally, ask if the venue has **appropriate certification for organising safe and healthy events**. In Slovenia, this certificate is issued by the **Slovenian Convention Bureau**.

+ Extra Tip

If the venue's team looks at you like you've just arrived from planet Mars when presented with the idea of organising a hybrid event, that's an immediate red flag. One year has passed since the start of this pandemic and there should be no more excuses when it comes to organising digital events. That is why competent and professional people at the venue, who know the ins and outs

of digital events, are a crucial piece of the puzzle. If you are good at reading people, the first impression will probably be the right one. Before you come to the first meeting or venue inspection, do your homework, so you're prepared to ask the right questions. If you don't receive the same level of enthusiasm or affection about your idea from the other end, calmly walk away, visit the next location, and start again.

Of course, all the classic advantages of choosing a venue also apply to hybrid events, especially easy accessibility, the possibility of free parking, and much more.

You can find more details about organising digital and hybrid events at:

<https://kongres-magazine.eu/2020/10/how-we-organised-our-first-hybrid-event/>

<https://kongres-magazine.eu/2020/12/live-online-virtual-hybrid-events-high-tech-or-high-touch/>



BEHIND THE SCENES OF HYBRID EVENTS

Or how to avoid online zombies

Let me clarify the dilemma of hybrid events using a specific example. Today, I watched a video stream of an important event that I had been invited to. It was advertised everywhere as a hybrid event. They made a bold claim on their YouTube channel, where they broadcast the event itself. It took place live with a limited number of attendees and in the form of a simple YouTube streaming.

I once wrote that hybrid events merge the best of both worlds – live and digital. At the same time, it connects both audiences via a variety of tools. Communication usually takes place over serious video-conferencing platforms that enable interaction, gamification and much more. At today's event, however, I had the feeling that I was a second or third-tier attendee – a kind of online zombie. All the attention was placed on the politicians who sat in the front rows in person. Zero interaction, one-way communication and outright boredom. If one-way communication was the goal of the event, they certainly succeeded. Around 50 slides of statistic data in 20 minutes is unmanageable even for the best speaker.

Therefore, I gently recommend all event organisers consulting professionals before executing a hybrid event. If not, it might be best to state that you will host a live event with a video broadcast online. That way, expectations are lowered accordingly, and any misunderstandings are out of the question.

Above all, I suggest that you spend a day or two in the heart of the production of hybrid events. I have been a part of the hybrid event production several times, which helped me comprehend how it all works and what advice I can give clients. I learned the most about hybrid events, though, from the legendary Peter Kastelic, the pioneer of streaming and the father of online video streaming. Peter is an excellent instructor, who, together with his coworkers, has guided us through the murky waters of demanding hybrid events. Find out more about Peter's services here: www.vzivo.si.

Inspecting the venue

Before we delve into detailed recommendations, we should note the importance of a thorough inspection of the venue prior to the event. First of all, one should check the internet connection on-site. It can sometimes be much slower than promised. With apps such as Speedtest, you will be able to quickly review the actual state of affairs. The second complication can occur with the streaming space. The rule of thumb is at least 15m² or, in other words, quite some space. Consider where you will place all members of the team and their switchers, monitors and laptops. Also, think about how you will separate the team from the attendees with a paravan. Only a handful of venues provide smart solutions for this. The technical space also needs to be connecting all video, audio and internet connections. I strongly recommend sending the venue detailed specifications with all your demands and devise a backup plan in advance. Perhaps you should also prepare a roll of fibre optics.

Why do we need a rehearsal?

Simply because a hybrid event is a technically demanding production. You certainly will not be able to test all systems an hour before the event, as too many things can go wrong. Thus, we insist on hosting a rehearsal at least a day before the event. Even though that results in additional costs, I would never organise a hybrid event without a guarantee that everything will be ready to go at least six to four hours before the event. This should become the minimum for planning an event. A rehearsal will also allow you to eliminate any mistakes of online speakers. The most common mistake is a web camera turned towards the light, making the image appear awful both live and

online. Moreover, you will do a soundcheck at the rehearsal. Albeit attendees might forgive you for a bad image, they will not forgive you for bad sound.

LAN or wi-fi

Needless to say, there will always be those who uncompromisingly trust wireless networks. A LAN or local network works on the principle of ethernet and is a much more stable and faster option – a connection needed by digital and hybrid events. A wireless network is less stable, and its quality depends on the number of participants at the event and natural and constructional impediments. If the quality of the network goes down, so does the quality of your event. The answer is, therefore, clear and one-sided. The key machines at an event need to be connected to a LAN network. Alternatively, ensure your own closed WLAN. It is a must to double-check the quality of the cables that can make a world of difference. Likewise, the 5G network may bring about a huge change and will end the described dilemma.

How many staff members?

The number of staff revolves around the difficulty level of the event. We have already written about the various types of hybrid events (find out more here: Types of hybrid events). For the simplest one, you will need at least five experts. Keep in mind the live audience that needs to be catered to by at least one multimedia technician and a VJ who is the intermediary between both audiences. For the online audience, you require a producer of the hybrid event, a cameraman and someone to manage the videoconferencing system. If the event is highly demanding, the team can quickly amount to 10 or more technicians. Therefore, do not fall for stories about a simple solution with one technician. In our experience, that is mission impossible.

What have we learned from our mistakes?

We have selected additional practical tips and recommendations that will be of great help when organising hybrid events.

- **1.** Check what services your videoconferencing licence actually enables you. Remember that videoconferencing systems, including Zoom, are not free. A free Zoom licence for hybrid events is not enough. The cost depends on the number of participants and type of event – meeting or webinar.
- **2.** Open event links on time, and make sure to send them to attendees at least two to three days before the event. Even though all online systems send messages automatically, we recommend doing something more. You can send the invitation via one of the desktop calendars, which is a simple and reliable method, especially if you set a time reminder for participants.
- **3.** Make a list of all phone numbers of speakers and key personas who are going to tune in online. You never know what can go wrong, and perhaps a phone call will be the only solution. Moreover, prepare detailed technical instructions. I usually present the guidelines to speakers at an online meeting at least a week before the event.
- **4.** Never forget a linking presentation that will be managed by the VJ. Leave the design to professionals if you desire to leave a lasting impression on the attendees. Think of the screen as a digital stage that must appear intriguing and at least as good as a real stage.
- **5.** Acquire presentations and videos from all speakers in advance. Even if speakers share their screens, you have to have the presentations as a backup. If anything occurs, you can jump in and execute the event without disturbances.
- **6.** Speakers should sign into Zoom or other videoconferencing systems with their real name and surname. It is often the case that they sign in with another name, which the technicians cannot recognise and which is not on the programme. Consequently, confusion can follow, and even errors in the programme can occur.
- **7.** Ensure that there is no noise or buzzing within the event hall, particularly in the technical area. If you delve into an event in a rush, you can quickly find yourself forgetting to mute all electronic devices. That also goes for computers, where you should mute all reminders and other notifications.

8. It is imperative that you find a moderator for the live audience and a moderator for the online audience. Hybrid events simply cannot function without one of each. The online moderator will connect both audiences, moderate questions and much more, thus playing a crucial role in differentiating a good event from an average one.

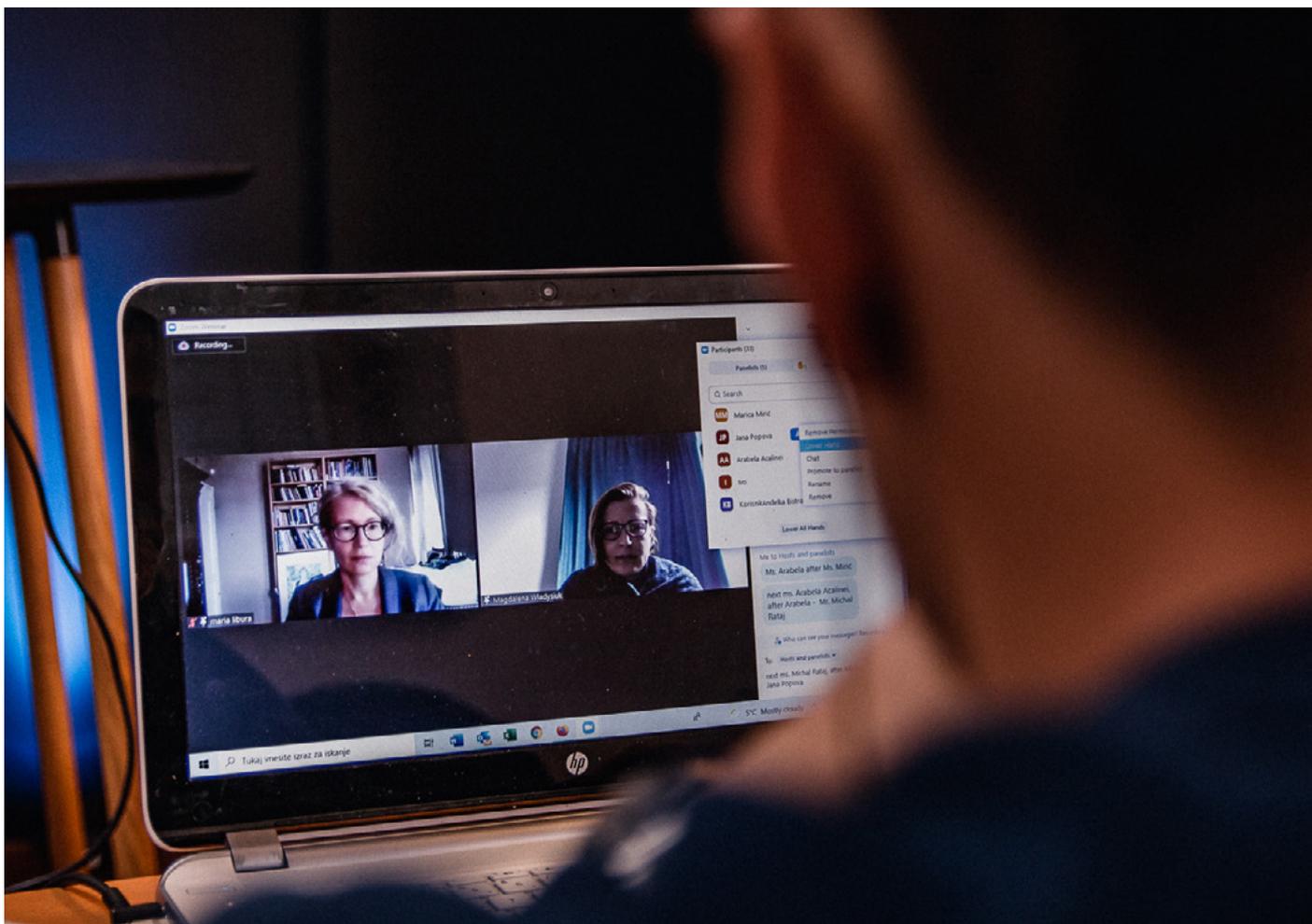
9. When production starts, democracy is over. There should only be one leader who will give precise instructions to the entire team. They are the hybrid event producer, who plays a role similar to a stage manager in a theatre.

10. Never forget a precisely prepared scenario that should encompass and include both audiences. We have already written about how to write engaging scripts for hybrid events. You can read more here.

All of the above is only a tiny portion of a long control list that we, as organisers, developed for our purposes. You must consider all the details beforehand. With demanding events, every detail has its consequences. An event's complexity increases when adding simultaneous translation services, more concurrent segments, complex angles with multiple cameras, playing with numerous stages and whatnot.

Hence, we advise our clients according to the KISS principle (Keep it Simple and Stupid) that has proved efficient. More importantly, do not go crazy with the length of the programme. An online audience has a very short concentration span. According to our research, they can only stay focused for two to three content segments lasting an hour and a half in one day. Anything longer than that will drastically reduce the number of online attendees. Never forget plan A and plan B, and sometimes plan C. When it comes to hybrid events, we must foresee what could go wrong.

In any case, you should not forget the most important element. Choosing the right content is far more important than technology, as organisers of hybrid events must intertwine two focus groups (live and online) with completely different needs. Attendees from both worlds expect two-way communication and interactivity. Innovation has become associated with this segment.



FRESH IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT DIGITAL EVENT

The “less is more” rule certainly applies to digital events

The formula for successful digital events has been mentioned on numerous occasions. In my opinion, the formula goes like this:

content + engagement + data + video quality = successful digital event

However, my colleagues ask me numerous questions related to organising digital events every day. Apparently, the gap between theory and applied practice is immense. Otherwise, anyone could organise any type of digital event with the minimum of help from Uncle Google. The reality, on the other hand, is learning from mistakes. Or as we like to put it, better to learn from someone else's mistakes than your own.

We have gathered some of the brightest ideas and recommendations to help you organise your next big digital event (online, hybrid or virtual). These tips all derive from our practical experience in organising digital events in the past few months.

Most importantly, we need to understand why someone attends a digital event. As Kongres Magazine's latest research shows, the key reasons are:

- **The content**
- **Networking opportunities**
- **High-profile speakers**
- **New business opportunities**

Perhaps even more fascinating are the reasons why some do not attend digital events:

- **Boring content**
- **Too busy**
- **Too many invitations**
- **Tired of attending digital events**

The above-mentioned reasons demonstrate why we should pay attention to every detail when organising digital events. As has been stressed numerous times already, a good digital event cannot be executed without a professional congress organiser (PCO) or a professional digital conference organiser (DCO).

The list below comprises practical realisations and mistakes, from which we have all learned.

Kiss

Throughout the entire corona crisis year, it was evident that we were fleeing from content and events we do not understand. Thus, certain aspects of digital events need to be simplified. Above all else, practice has shown that complicated programme design needs to be avoided. A complicated programme can result in you losing half of your participants. The “less is more” rule certainly applies to digital events.

Structure and event length

First and foremost, information for organisers regarding the length of an event needs to be emphasised. According to Kongres Magazine's research, the ideal days for events are Tuesday,

Thursday and Friday. Based on the opinion of organisers, the best times for events are:

45.1%	10 a.m. – noon
20.6%	3 p.m. – 5 p.m.
16.7%	1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
8.8%	5 p.m. – 7 p.m.
6.9%	7 a.m. – 10 a.m.
2.0%	noon – 1 p.m.

Based on practical experience, we have also concluded what the optimal timings of digital events are:

Timing of online events

20'	maximum length of keynote presentations
10–20'	optimal length of breaks
15'	maximum length for an online chat
60'	maximum length of a webinar
90'	maximum length of session with open discussion
45'	optimal length of a webinar
3–5 hrs/day	maximal length of entire-day online events

Event intro

Analysis has shown that we lose most of the participants in the first five minutes. We must ensure a good start and properly warm up the audience. Everyone in the waiting room will be delighted if they are greeted by pleasant music. Moreover, videos are more than welcome. The first minutes are crucial, and if we fail to prepare a positive surprise, we might see unwelcome outcomes. Although participants will be at the event, they will probably be painting their nails or paying more attention to their house pets than to the event. The solutions are dramatic statistics, anecdotes, personal stories or experiences. In short, anything that would make you interested in an event.

Length of presentations

The old Pecha Kucha format 20 x 20

We conducted an analysis of the attention span of participants. In the ClickMeeting system, we closely monitored how long participants were actively following the presentation. The old Pecha Kucha format proved optimal, as participants on average follow a maximum of twenty slides for a maximum of ten minutes. After ten minutes, their concentration drops rapidly. Hence, you should adapt the length of your event and individual content segments accordingly.

Presentation management

Probably the most common and trivial situation which often gets complicated is sharing a presentation. Each video conference system is a story of its own. In our experience, almost every other speaker wishes to control their own presentation. I politely recommend that you check this before the event at the rehearsal. By doing so, you will prevent any unwanted surprises on the day of the event. Most importantly, never ever give the event host status to a speaker. If you do that, it can quickly lead to disaster and the end of an event. In our experience, almost every video conference system enables control of this area of a digital event.

One-way communication

Such communication simply needs to end, as it leads to catastrophic digital events. Digital events are not a TV broadcast. Participants hate being treated as if they are passive viewers; they expect conversations and active conversion. You have to decide what type of event you are organising. Even a broadcast or stream is acceptable if it suits the needs of your participants. Otherwise, there are several tools to establish two-way communication. Furthermore, a professional online moderator, working in unison with the technical moderator, is the path to success. These are the key characteristics of a good digital event.

Ten-minute rule: Digital events are not a TV broadcast. There should be something interesting happening for the participants every ten minutes.

Participant engagement

For starters, my suggestion is to seriously and responsibly use all the services video conferencing systems offer. Most commonly, these are chat, whiteboard, survey, Q&A, and call to action, as well as other forms of engagement that include your participants in an event. Even more effective are breakout rooms, which offer excellent cooperation between participants. Nevertheless, we should not be excessive with their timing. Five minutes is the magic number for digital events. We have learned another rule through event organisation. Every ten minutes, something intriguing needs to occur for the participants. Some advocate the five-minute rule, but in our experience, having interaction every ten minutes will suffice. Hence, we recommend preparing a scenario where you foresee all of this.

Disturbing echo

Echo is perhaps the most awful and unwanted situation that can occur. In our experience, participants should be provided with clear instructions on what can cause echo. This happens most often when multiple people are speaking in a webinar room and at least one of them is using loudspeakers in their hardware configuration. The simplest antidote is to mute all participants, although you can also write down a few helpful rules. The echo effect most often occurs when there are two event participants in the same room. It is recommendable to use only the video conferencing system and shut down all applications using sound during the event. These include TVs and other digital devices.

Follow-up

Another rule is of the utmost importance. Participants should be provided with promised presentations and videos as soon as possible. The best video conference systems have this option built-in, and with only a few clicks, you can send a presentation, videos or a confirmation of attendance. In this field, marketing automation has magical effects. If you forget about the follow-up, your event participants will be quick to forget about you.



HOW TO ATTRACT CROWDS TO YOUR DIGITAL EVENTS

Make sure to have quick, simple and user-friendly marketing

Experience has shown that the biggest problem when attracting participants to digital events is one-way communication. Event marketing has to be based on conversation and focused dialogue. Humans are social beings and are unable to survive on their own, although they might think they have everything under control. We have gathered a few practical tips for attracting participants to your next digital event.

When advertising digital events, your first concern should be to ensure everything is based on information, effectiveness and knowing participants. The world of events is digital, and virtually anything can be measured and adapted. Here are a few practical steps for successful marketing.

1. Simplify event registration

A complicated registration system is a major impediment that will make the majority of potential participants reconsider their decision. Make sure to have a quick, simple and user-friendly registration system. The KISS principle is the heart of the story; therefore, do not over-complicate. Only request information that is necessary. You can also automate registration messages and use them as part of the marketing.

2. Start with the website

Regardless of all social media platforms and mobile applications, in our opinion, a website is still the centrepiece of marketing. The question remains whether your website supports marketing and event sales. Our task is to ensure that participants find your event quickly and register for the event without complications. User experience is crucial, as it can either thrill us or disappoint us to the extent of not attending. On top of that, never forget quality SEO optimisation and always offer interesting content.

3. Build an interesting story of the event

As we have heard on numerous occasions, stories fuel digital marketing. Participants most often attend events because we solve one of their problems there. Therefore, they should be in the spotlight. At the same time, the content needs to be unified and connected. Stories can be easily created from the many questions posed by participants. Moreover, stories can be fuelled by speakers' profiles, trends, market changes and various solutions to problems. Make sure that every content segment is tailored to different digital channels and create a content plan for the event.

Analysis of effective articles has shown that short articles work best. Their average length is around 450 words or 2400 characters. The content should always be suitably visually prepared.

The title is immensely important and can boost your story. The rule of thumb is six words maximum.

4. Design visual elements for social networks

Without visual elements, it is difficult to attract attention on social media platforms. You must adapt them according to individual platform standards. A great example of paying attention to detail: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-image-sizes-guide/>.

Graphic design is crucial, and we sincerely recommend reading the following article on branding:

FOMO - Fear of missing out

The feeling or fear of missing out on something is an important weapon in the arsenal of marketing psychology. It is favoured amongst event organisers, and we will discuss it in detail in the future.

<https://kongres-magazine.eu/2019/11/seeing-is-believing-having-a-good-brand-amplifies-your-event-idea/>.

5. Create an event on social media

Indeed, a simple and free process, yet often overlooked. You can create an event on Facebook, which was the first platform to offer this possibility. If you refresh your content weekly, Facebook can become the main resource for event registration. What is more, you can improve your website traffic with targeted marketing that is relatively effective. Likewise, LinkedIn offers the option to establish an event in a similar fashion. Twitter and Instagram, on the other hand, demand more proactive marketing, as, an individual post is active for an average of only about 20 minutes.

6. Promote your event through social media

Social media platforms and content marketing have become the winning duo lately. Through social media, you will share content that increases awareness of your event. On top of that, social media platforms and their viral potential are proof that your event is credible and trustworthy. Credibility through social media can be achieved by using various content marketing tools, posting informative articles, webinars, demo videos, good practice cases or white papers. However, it goes without saying that you need sufficient followers for marketing to work.

7. Video invitation

Such a form of invitation functions as an incredible boost. We are sure that convincing speakers into recording a video about the event can pose a challenge. Nevertheless, it is one of the most effective ways of spreading awareness and worth a try. Even a 30-second video suffices, as long as it is based on your positive energy and explaining the real reasons why participants should attend. Your video stories can then be shared by your speakers. Usually, videos significantly increase the reach of an event.

Only a small percentage of original stories deserve our attention. We have concentrated our focus on those we find useful or entertaining. Through content marketing, we offer stories relevant to our clients.

8. Direct e-marketing

E-newsletters work if the “open rate” is higher than 15%. If it falls below this, we should consider what we are doing wrong, and why we are not more successful. Above all, a database is the foundation of everything. Our advice is to have a professional CRM system and to upgrade your database every day. Potential participants can be found on LinkedIn, via news you follow or by following your business partners. The opportunities are waiting just around the first corner of social media.

9. Influencers

Yes, influential marketing and events are almost inseparable. If the concept of influencers works, then it is certainly in regard to digital events. Participants trust influencers more than they trust advertisements. An influencer’s recommendation can be crucial; however, they need to have a respectable public reputation. When choosing influencers, the ethical aspect of marketing is of utmost importance. Additionally, “walk the talk” should be the criteria when choosing a suitable influencer. This form of marketing is extremely effective with generations that no longer follow classic media platforms and find anything relevant to them on YouTube and Google.

10. #Hashtags

Hashtags are the single most overlooked method of marketing. They are immensely effective, although we must understand how they function. You can either join popular hashtag trends or develop your own. The rule of thumb is to make the hashtag clear, easy to recall and as short as possible. Websites such as <http://best-hashtags.com/> can be of great help.

There is undoubtedly a sea of other methods, which we will talk about in the future. Among them is event co-hosting, which is cooperation with one of your strategic partners that can significantly increase the reach of your campaign. It is arguably one of the simplest methods.

In the event that you are left with sufficient resources, you can always invest it into advertising via Google or social media platforms. There are endless possibilities that, in our experience, bring concrete results. In the same breath, it is good to know that Google search processes 40,000 search phrases every second, which strongly increases your opportunities with smart advertising.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ONLINE AND LIVE AUDIENCES

How to bring equal satisfaction for online and live attendees with your hybrid event?

This is probably the most important question when organising hybrid events. The first thing that comes to mind is the word **PHYGITAL**, which is actually just another word for hybrid events. The formula is simple:

physical + digital = phygital

Translated into the language of hybrid events, we combine a live event with video-conferencing systems and applications into a memorable interactive experience for attendees.

This is the main task and challenge for all of us who organise hybrid events. As the hybrid model is new for both organisers and clients, we face many questions and dilemmas along the way. Nevertheless, experience provides most of the answers. We have therefore compiled practical experience from our events into ten points to help us bridge the gap between the two types of very different participants.

The first and basic prerequisite for both audiences is top-quality and interactive content. Without it, everything that follows will not succeed. In fact, content drives most of the points below.

1. Choosing the right video-conferencing platform

When it comes to choosing video-conferencing platforms, there is no single solution that will fit all your needs. There is almost always something missing, and it often comes with high additional costs. Hybrid conferencing can be very complex, so it's important to choose a solution that also works as a conferencing app and supports your specific requirements, such as speed dating and the like, but also allows you to brand the event appropriately.

2. Video quality

Quality is important when it comes to online video streaming, and this is especially true for the quality of the audio. Online participants will never forgive us for poor sound. The expected standard today is HD quality (min. 1080p) and attractive framing that will keep the online audience connected. Bad lighting, image loss due to a poor internet connection, background noise and similar errors will quickly drive online audiences away from your event.

3. Live chat

Live chat is now one of the basic features of any serious video-conferencing platform. It is often enhanced with a Q&A function that publicly highlights key questions from participants. Of course, this feature should be accessible to both the online and the live audience. This is most easily solved via a mobile event application. Consider the integration of solutions such as Slack, Google Chat, etc.

4. Hybrid Wall

The once popular projection of Twitter comments on Twitter Walls is now being replaced by projection on a Hybrid Wall. Chatroom activity, poll results or notes are highlighted on the screen through different interfaces. There are many possibilities, from very simple solutions to complex programs that allow the integration of different communications related to an event. For example, walls.io, tagboard.com, everwall.com, ...

5. VOD (Video on demand) and presentations

When attendees of a physical event are on a coffee break or working lunch, the online audience

also needs to be offered a relevant experience. There are several options, but most of the time we offer them content on demand that we record in advance. We can also play around with pre-sending “gadgets”, perhaps coffee mugs, desserts, etc. This is also an area that allows you to monetise and actively engage your sponsors.

6. Matchmaking

Facilitating online meetings is another way of connecting the two audiences. There are many variations, ranging from simple chat rooms to complex systems for setting up video meetings in advance. Such functionality is increasingly becoming a standard that participants expect in a package, along with integration into various online calendars.

7. Conference rooms

Most video-conferencing systems allow the opening of virtual conference rooms. Within the rooms you can connect online and live audiences. Conference rooms were pioneered by Zoom and are now offered by most platforms. They have the advantage of being a very good substitute for coffee chats at live events and are a simple form of networking. Participants should not be left to their own devices; each group should have a moderator and a topic to discuss.

8. Connecting via social networks

One of the simplest techniques to connect two communities is through social networks. For this purpose, you need to support the event with the appropriate keywords. From experience, a social media moderator is also needed to encourage quality communication between participants. In practice, it has been shown that the principle of less is more should be followed when selecting social networks.

9. Surveys, questionnaires, voting

Surveys, votes and online questionnaires are welcome facilitators of interaction. We use Slido at our events, which has proven to be a very reliable and robust system. It is very easy to integrate into different platforms and is now an integral part of Zoom. In our experience, for this type of activation, you must have a web moderator with specific moderation skills.

10. Gamification

Prize draws and raffles are an extension of simple questionnaires and surveys. In our experience, simple games that are also integrated into the mobile app are the most effective. This way, all participants will have access to the game. There are many options, ranging from virtual escape rooms and virtual treasure hunts to simple raffles or wheels of fortune. There are many providers of such games e.g. Loquiz, Pointgram, Socialpoint, etc.

In addition to what we've mentioned above, it is also important to check the venue, and be sure to test everything in advance. We recommend that you test your hybrid system on a small group of participants. Plan A and B, and even C, are extremely important in the case of hybrid events.

Most importantly, you should thoroughly immerse yourself in the experience of both groups of participants and look for points of contact. The more you understand the target group, the more successful your event will be. A practical test of success will be seen in the reactions of the participants. When they convert from passive listeners to active participants, you are on the right track. In hybrid events, you can also back this up with in-depth analytical data.

And don't forget to record your event! If you've produced top-notch content, attendees will re-visit content from your event throughout the year.

HOW TO SAFELY ORGANISE HYBRID EVENTS

Case study #safeConventa

Conventa was the last great international B2B event before the corona crisis and the first to take place after a year-long hibernation of the meetings industry. The organisers were forced to postpone the event from January until August and connect it with the Conventa Crossover festival. Due to the corona situation, we decided to execute the event in hybrid form.

After a long period of standstill, Ljubljana welcomed foreign participants from 24 countries. That increased our worries regarding the safe and healthy organisational aspect of the event. Under no circumstances did we wish to find ourselves in a situation where one of the participants fell ill at the event. We took such a great responsibility very seriously and prepared a detailed plan for managing the corona situation. The event was envisaged as a pilot project and a good practice case that would encourage event organisers to organise such events. The key finding of all pilot projects carried out in Europe is that the additional risk of infection at an event where rules are adhered to is less than one per cent. We successfully proved that in practice. Below, we present a series of restrictions that we implemented and several practical recommendations.

97.2% of exhibitors and 97.1% of hosted buyers responded affirmatively to the question: Do you think that safety measures at Conventa 2021 were enough for preventing the spread of Sars-Cov-2? For event organisers, this is the best confirmation of a job well done.

Basic principles for attending the event

According to recommendations, we set the recovered-vaccinated-tested (RVT) principle as the prerequisite for attending.

In practice, this meant ensuring the following restrictions:

1. **Certificate of vaccination or having recovered from COVID, which participants proved by showing their European vaccination passport.**
2. **Rapid antigen test upon arrival for all others**
3. **Quarantine in case of having a positive test on-site**
4. **Strict adherence to the rules of “Safe and Healthy Meetings & Events” standards, published by the Slovenian Convention Bureau.**

To attend, attendees had to ensure the following:

- **certificate of vaccination in digital or printed form**
- **At the time of the event, to enter Slovenia, the following vaccines were valid: BioNTech/Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Sinopharm. The regulations meant that one was considered officially “vaccinated” from the twenty-second day after having received the first dose. The vaccination lasts for 90 days from the date of vaccination.**
- **proof of having recovered from COVID (only participants, whose certificate had not been older than six months, were allowed to attend)**
- **a negative COVID test (in line with the RVT principle, unvaccinated attendees had to show their PCR test that must not have been more than 72 hours old or a negative rapid antigen test that was not more than 48 hours old. The tests had to be issued by an official health institution.)**

For individuals who entered Slovenia from countries on the orange or red list, the rule at the time meant that anyone with a European digital certificate or digital COVID certificate from a third party could enter the country without having to undergo quarantine.

The structure of participants regarding entry requirements for attending Conventa 2021:

- R (recovered) percentage: 2%
- V (vaccinated) percentage: 12%
- T (tested) percentage: 86%

*Out of all attendees, there were 7% of PCR tests and 5% of rapid antigen tests

Additional measures for ensuring safety

To ensure the safety of participants, we prepared a plan of action. We based the plan on the findings from the pilot projects that took place in the Netherlands and was organised by Fieldlab in cooperation with TU Delft. At the same time, we adhered to the current guidelines issued by the National Institute of Public Health. Thus, a control list came to be, one which I thoroughly recommend to every organiser until the end of the crisis. No one wants to find themselves in a situation where their event records an infected attendee. Therefore, we recommend you implement the following ten restrictions when organising larger and hybrid events.

1. Safety complementation to the registration process

Alongside classic registration, all participants should, prior to attending, fill out an online form intended exclusively for ensuring their health and safety. That way, event organisers can plan the organisation of testing. With the help of the acquired information, we ensured quick contactless registration. The challenge we faced was that the government application for verifying COVID certificates was unavailable during the event. That is why gathering information beforehand proved to be greatly useful. We recommend all organisers do the same.

2. Rapid antigen testing on-site

We had to ensure testing with rapid antigen and PCR tests for attendees who did not have a vaccination certificate or a European vaccination passport. In our case, testing was carried out by professional staff who measured the temperature of participants in accordance with the recommendations of the National Institute of Public Health. Considering that the majority of attendees had been vaccinated, we executed on-site testing for only 40 participants.

3. Vulnerable groups and self-isolation

The process of safe registration and the rapid antigen tests enabled us to prevent infected individuals from attending. In case the health of a participant were to worsen, we would have been obliged to provide a self-isolation space, in cooperation with the medical staff. That space was ensured together with the help of the venue's team. Fortunately, we did not have to resort to it.

4. Limiting the size of groups

When transporting participants, it is crucial to limit the number of passengers whilst ensuring an adequate safety distance following the government restrictions. That meant a substantial rise in the costs of attendee transport. At the event itself, it is wise to prevent the forming of a larger group of participants by advocating a smart system of stands and the overall layout. In practice, for an event such as Conventa, much space is needed, as evident below.

5. Event logistics

The logistics were specifically tailored and followed the simple logic that all spaces should be 50% larger. That enabled us to ensure a safe distance of 1.5 metres. According to standard DIN 15906, the net surface per participant was:

	Before the crisis	Currently
Theatre setting	1.2 m ² per participant	1.8 m ² per participant
Classroom setting	1.6 m ² per participant	2.4 m ² per participant
U setting	1.8 m ² per participant	2.7 m ² per participant

6. Airing and using outdoor spaces

Special attention was placed on airing and ensuring quality air. Air quality needs to be measured constantly and communicated with the attendees. You can also ask the venue for special filters. Our cooperation with the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre in this field was a textbook example of a great partnership. As the event took place during the summer, we executed the focal social part of the event outdoors in the Ljubljana Castle courtyard.

7. Catering

We suggest that you ensure contactless catering for attendees. Where possible, try to organise all events outdoors. At Conventa, we arranged the tables, chairs, exhibition stands and equipment so that social distancing was ensured throughout. We are particularly proud of our partners who made sure this part of the programme was bulletproof.

8. Personal protection and hygiene

Disinfectants have become a prerequisite at all events. The same goes for instructions regarding personal protection and hygiene. Regarding face masks, we recommend following up-to-date instructions from national institutes for public health. During our event, the rule was that business event attendees who demonstrated proof of vaccination, testing or recovery could move without masks in closed spaces.

9. Participant behaviour

The behaviour of attendees should be regulated with clear instructions that need to be highlighted at every step. Our recommendation is to create an infographic comprising clear instructions for all attendee groups. Clear communication should also be advocated by all partners and associates. Above all, it is crucial to mark the direction of the participants' movement.

10. The SMART organisation of Conventa

When organising the event, we strictly adhered to the guidelines published in the "Safe and Healthy Meetings & Events" certificate. We strived to raise the bar of event organising and execute the pilot project as a good practice case, thus intensively qualifying all key project stakeholders for safe and healthy project execution.

Recommendations for other event organisers

The whole process of ensuring safety was holistically documented. Moreover, attendees' responses were comprehensively analysed. The aforementioned recommendations do work in practice. We also took a few additional measures for improving the entire process. Thus, everything we did was in accordance with the current restrictions in Slovenia that were imposed when the pandemic situation deteriorated.

The attendees greatly praised the on-site testing, the verification of COVID certificates and the restrictions we implemented at the event. However, they were self-critical regarding the behaviour of participants. As the event gathered attendees from 24 countries, each brought with them specific cultural conventions regarding corona behaviour. As organisers, we can balance between a radical and liberal outlook exclusively through honest and transparent communication.

In any case, the "Safe and Healthy Meetings & Events" standards, prepared by the Slovenian Convention Bureau in cooperation with the National Institute of Public Health, proved to be highly successful. We demonstrated that event organisers have been responsible and working in accordance with the guidelines of experts ever since the corona crisis started. Undoubtedly, events organised in such a manner are among the safest places.

HOW TO WRITE ENGAGING SCRIPTS FOR DIGITAL EVENTS

Can you afford to organise an event without context or clear narrative?

You are most likely familiar with the following paradigm. A good film can be filmed based on a good script, yet with a bad script that is virtually impossible. Likewise, digital events cannot be based on a poor scenario. Unfortunately, there are no schools for scriptwriting, and most of the best screenwriters learned the craft themselves. The fundamental prerequisite is to have an idea of what you wish to write about and what kind of message you want to get across. Knowing the topic is the pillar of writing any script.

The corona crisis has shown that the scenario for digital events is truly decisive. In fact, a scenario is the story we want the event to tell. It is manifested in photographs, dialogue, description of acts and the necessary technical details.

Perhaps the most important part is the awareness of what the scenario's outcome will be. Moreover, the final goal needs to be clearly defined. Much like with film scenarios, you must decide who will be the protagonist and who will play the supporting roles. If the main character represents a brand, then in order to provide a good scenario, the writer must be familiar with the morals and values of the client or brand, as well as with the transformation they wish to achieve with the event.

We will present a step-by-step guide to writing a scenario and showcase the essential parts of writing a good one.

Dramatic event structure

Here, we must draw inspiration from the classic three-act structure. The first act is usually the exposition that includes the inciting incident, whereas in the second act the story includes the confrontation. The final act features the story's climax, followed by a resolution. In the third act, the spectator usually experiences a catharsis. Such an over-simplified structure can also be used for events. Practice has shown that further plot twists in the form of confrontations and other interactive formats are equally effective.

One page of a scenario equals five minutes of an event

An old Hollywood paradigm is that one page of a scenario equals one minute of film. In events, this rule can be extended to five minutes. It all sounds rational and has been tested in practice; however, it all depends on your focus group. In any case, you should watch your timing when it comes to digital events. It is of the utmost importance, as you cannot redo your event in the same way that you can reshoot a scene in film production. There is no classic "cut" and no second try. Thus, precision is crucial.

An event's scenario has to include conflict. Without conflict, there is no event; so, ensure drama, encourage different opinions among guests and set off strong emotions.

A storyboard rocks

If your budget allows it, having a storyboard can be extremely useful when creating events. As the name suggests, it serves as a platform for drawing any scene of an event. It is an excellent tool for thrilling event clients. A picture says more than a thousand words, which also applies for digital events. It will help you to coordinate your project vision with all key stakeholders and create a fabula.

Classic scenario or synopsis

When organising digital events, keep in mind that the scenario needs to include both what is going to happen at the studio and online. I distinguish the so-called synopsis or brief and the actual scenario. The former is a summary of the event's main ideas, whereas the latter is comprehensive and serves as the final technical disposition of the event. Our recommendation is to write it precisely, as it is often used as the plan for the technical team. It goes without saying that it needs to include precise and professional instructions.

Writing the scenario

Once you start writing, keep in mind that you are telling a story, one that is narrated by the moderator and told through expert lectures, musical equipment, presentations, sound effects and music. The biggest challenge is how to pack everything into a matrix that everyone involved in the project will understand. A good scenario includes all elements, dispersed throughout individual scenes. To illustrate, I often say that one scene is one moderator's note. There is no prescribed scenario form. Hence, our suggestion is to tailor your matrix to your needs.

Dialogues or monologues

In my opinion, monologues exclude dialogues. Therefore, boring monologues that take the form of introductory speeches should be shortened. Moderators and everyone involved need to be provided with intelligent dialogues that will spice up your event. Although it takes know-how and testing, you will get better and develop your skills with every scenario. Do not overlook the fact that digital events are also a virtual experience. Above all, dialogue writing is among the most creative phases of writing that require the writer to visualise the event.

Test your text at the rehearsal

In my experience, the text needs to be preened at least a few times with both the moderator and others involved. A rehearsal is also a must when it comes to demanding events. Rehearsing will give you a chance to see how the text works in a real situation. Our recommendation is to host the rehearsal a day before the event to give the technicians the opportunity to coordinate and prepare themselves. An interesting dilemma, on the other hand, is whether a rehearsal is needed for smaller, so-called Zoom online events. In our experience, it certainly is, particularly if you are hosting numerous participants.

Do not forget about post-production

No one wants a poorly made video recording of the event. Thus, you need to establish concrete ideas for post-event video montage in your scenario for a digital event. In the digital world, producing video on demand has become a regular practice. It is a part of post-event marketing, which should be considered beforehand. Post-production includes everything from the format to the video's graphic and sound equipment. In addition, the video needs to be equipped with a suitable "call to action" and should be used as a tool for additional marketing.

Why do we even need a scenario for a digital event?

The simplest answer is that without a scenario, an event is similar to a ship without its captain. Can you afford to organise an event without context or clear narrative?

Most common mistakes

The most commonly made mistake is event length. As we have emphasised on numerous occasions, the maximum concentration of a participant at a digital event is an hour. In addition, the rule of thumb is that every ten minutes something should occur that is interesting for the audience. There have also been several complications with unclear instructions given to the camera crew regarding the angles, transitions and cuts. Consequently, the video of the event was terrible.

The golden rule when it comes to digital events is to keep it short. Furthermore, the language should be understandable to the focus group. No screenwriter was born a screenwriter, and you will hardly learn the art of writing scenarios from reading books. What does work, though, is hard work, learning and writing.

HOW TO ORGANISE SUSTAINABLE EVENTS STEP BY STEP

Case study #GreenConventa

According to official data by the MeetGreen Association, an average event attendee creates **176,67 kilograms** of carbon footprint per day. For instance, an event attended by 1,000 participants, lasting three days, amounts to **530 tonnes** of carbon footprint, equivalent to 1,233 oil barrels. Transport is to blame for more than 70 per cent of the carbon footprint, as reported by the Association. You can read more at the following link: <https://meetgreen.com/>.

We are well aware of these facts when organising the Conventa tradeshow. Since its inception, Conventa has strived to change the behaviour of all regional event organisers. That is why, in 2009, when environmental topics were still obscure, we set the foundations of Conventa's green concept. The concept was named **Conventa 4R** and was advocated throughout the years regardless of the changes in the market. We set a goal to complete activities that will result in a 70 per cent decrease of our event's emissions by 2030. To achieve our goal, our approach was continuous, as we acknowledged that we depend on our environment and project partners.

After nearly fifteen years, environmental conditions have worsened to the point when there can be no excuses. Changes have become so swift that a radical turnover is needed. A change is, not least of all, needed because of the younger generations, who are much more aware of climate change. **Decarbonisation must become the focal topic** of event organisers, whilst organising events should become interchangeable. We are, above all, concerned about those event organisers who are indifferent towards the environment regardless of the main message the corona crisis has sent. Such carelessness was on display when Europe's meetings industry lifted restrictions and restarted. Moreover, there have been cases of green scams. Needless to say, the public was quick to form its opinion.

Undoubtedly, it is crucial to understand the omnipresent socio-economic impacts of events that can, on their own, neutralise negative environmental effects. To illustrate, I should mention the return of employees in the industry after the corona crisis and the knowledge exchange taking place at events, resulting in new vaccines and the like. That brings us to the simple conclusion that the quality of events is far more valuable than the quantity. New indices that we should consider are the index of happiness, the human development index (HDI), and an array of various ecological indices.

Conventa 4R Rethink/Reduce/Reuse/Recycle

It all starts with long-term planning. After that, a transition is not that hard. In our case, we based our methodology on the 4R model i.e. Rethink/Reduce/Reuse/Recycle.

As organisers of Conventa, we focus on and address several areas to achieve the final goal of reducing our event's CO2 footprint.

1. Inclusiveness and partnership: Conventa is only able to achieve set goals together with its partners. The project currently includes 18 partners. Together with them, we define the activities and indicators of success. The project's network of partners is key to the overall success and sustainable management.

— **2. Think globally, act regionally:** We focus on the region of New Europe, a positive factor from a sustainable aspect. Above all, we prioritise local expertise, providers and services. In practice, we strive to encourage the local economy, preserve our heritage and perpetually develop our region's know-how.

— **3. 4R:** From the preliminary plan to the execution, Conventa takes sustainable decisions, thus contributing to waste reduction. Conventa prioritises products with a high content of recycled materials whilst striving to reuse materials. The concept is explained extensively below.

All three segments help us promote sustainable concepts and empower the public based on arguments and hard facts. New partnerships are being strengthened and built every year. This year, we have been encouraging electric mobility and the establishment of quick charging stations for electric cars at the event.

Conventa's practical measures

All practical actions focus on what is best for the environment and society. In the same breath, these measures do not cancel out the multiplicative effects of the event, which we have been measuring meticulously since its inception.

The restrictions listed below are based on the cornerstone of Conventa, 4R and the project "Čista zmaga", prepared by Umanotera, the Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development, for sports events. The model has been specifically tailored to Conventa to help us self-evaluate our efforts of minimising harmful impacts on the environment. The grading criteria enable a general overview of success in various areas. With the help of the aforementioned criteria, we have developed our own system of constant improvement. An overview of the aspects and effects in the most important areas is given below.

1. Mobility and transport

The event takes place in accordance with the principles of sustainable mobility. We encourage all attendees to arrive at the event by train, bus or car with co-passengers. Concerning air connections, the most problematic part, we try to ensure flights with few or zero layovers. Furthermore, we advocate car sharing. A vital role is played by transfer management, where we have been cooperating with GoOpti for several years. We tend to avoid individual transfers. All of the above has had a positive impact on the environment while reducing the costs of organising.

Effects of the measure: The number of hosted buyers and exhibitors arriving at the event by sustainable transportation is growing substantially. This year, 30.10% of hosted buyers and 16.7% of exhibitors arrived sustainably (train, public transport, Go.Opti). Five years ago, the percentage was a mere 5 per cent.

2. Communication

Even before 2020, we had resolved to completely digitalise our communication. We are aware that even with digital communication, we leave a CO2 footprint; however, it is much smaller compared to the combination of printed and digital marketing and communication we used at the start of Conventa. We were among the first organisers to offer a mobile application for the event. Throughout the years, we have been striving to make our community aware of the necessity of sustainable transformation. Our mission was awarded at the IBTM tradeshow in 2010.

Effects of the measure: In 2021, Conventa became an 80% free-of-paper event. We are firm believers that our approach has had a positive impact on other event organisers and, more importantly, all event partners who have embraced this measure.

3. Ordering goods and services

When buying goods and services, we follow the simple logic of trusting our local suppliers. That goes for food, drinks and other service providers, including IT solutions. We are proud that Conventa is a showcase of local know-how and solutions in event organising. We avoid buying any plastic products, and when that is not possible, recycled products are our alternative.

Effects of the measure: When organising Conventa, we rely on the principle of double-checking whether we need a particular service before purchasing. Healthy and environment-friendly products are favoured, whilst gastronomy services go hand in hand with local and seasonal cuisine. Experience has shown that our approach actually reduces costs.

4. Venues where Conventa takes place

When choosing event venues, we place special attention on the distance between individual venues. A huge advantage of Ljubljana is that factually all locations are within walking or cycling distance. Therefore, public transport is a great solution. In the future, venues have a long way to go regarding effective energy usage, as they are predominantly energy unoptimised and wasteful buildings.

Effects of the measure: The selected venues significantly shortened the attendees' travelling and enabled easy mobility due to public transport. In recent years Conventa has implemented a simple measure named Park&Ride at Ljubljana Exhibition and Congress Centre that became an instant hit.

5. Food and drinks

Conventa's partners are the best Slovenian catering providers, who swear by promoting healthy food and encourage transparent and rightful partnership with suppliers. We are immensely proud of our 13-year cooperation with them. Local, seasonal and healthy has become the silver lining of Conventa. We have never differentiated between exhibitors and hosted buyers when it comes to culinary services. Moreover, we have always ordered food in adequate amounts.

Effects of the measure: We are especially proud of our local-inspired cuisine. In the future, though, we have a way to go with respect to waste food and drink management. In the coming years, we plan on ensuring that any leftover food goes to volunteers, humanitarian organisations or shelters.

6. Waste

Following the event, we identified waste and defined the measures to reduce it. Above all, we are pleased that we recycled exhibitors' badges and other direct waste. That would not be possible without the continued support of the Ljubljana Exhibition and Congress Centre that has developed its own policy and control of waste management. An integral part of the measure are instructions regarding sorting, also a crucial part of the project's communication aspect.

Effects of the measure: In our opinion, we have upped the ante on waste reduction culture. The latter was achieved by extensive communication ahead of, during and following the event. In 2022, we plan on implementing additional measures focused on changing and measuring the amount of waste.

7. Social responsibility

All key stakeholders are constantly informed and included in sustainable activities. One of our most renowned projects is the Conventa Future Leaders Forum. For the past decade, we have been, in cooperation with IMEX, encouraging young talents to step through the door of the meetings industry. Likewise, countless volunteers cooperating at Conventa get an insight into the key industry's stakeholders. They are given opportunities to find a job in our industry.

Effects of the measure: Numerous young talents have continued their professional path in the meetings industry. We ourselves have employed two colleagues who decided to venture into the waters of the meetings industry after attending the Conventa Future Leaders Forum.

When it comes to energy and water supply, we can influence our providers indirectly, considering that we rely on venues, catering providers and suppliers. We see our role primarily in spreading awareness, as we cannot measure energy consumption without the cooperation of our partners. For 2022, we will set clear goals regarding expected energy efficiency. All partners will be encouraged to use energy from renewable sources.

Perhaps the most recognisable sustainable element of Conventa are the famous **wooden boxes** that make up Conventa's stands. They are made from Slovenian wood and have been recycled since their inception. The flooring, used only once in many events, has been sustainably used for several years in a row at Conventa. The concept has, in a way, become a trademark of Conventa.

We are sincere believers that our activities contribute to reducing greenhouse gasses. At the same time, they help us reduce costs of organisation and continuously raise our project's reputation. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go. Out of 243 criteria points that we set to achieve this year, we completed 128 criteria points or 52,7 per cent. Thus, much work is needed in the future to achieve our goals. Yet, we are ready for a radicalisation of environmental approaches that will compensate for the effects on the environment based on measured CO2 footprint.

WRC – HYBRID EVENT EVOLUTION

What can meeting planners learn from WRC (World Rally Championship)?

Over the past couple of weeks, I've read several articles about what we can learn from the Netflix business model – an on-demand streaming service tailored to the viewer's needs and preferences. The business idea arose from a shortage of quality television programmes, too often interrupted by long commercials. Can you still imagine waiting a whole week to watch your favourite TV series? Wouldn't it be better to just binge the entire season in a few days?

Of course, streaming service providers like Netflix are not alone. There are countless good practice examples in sport as well. As a fan of high-octane sports, I recently delved into the WRC – World Rally Championship business model, from which we can really learn a lot. If you did not know, WRC's marketing department is run by the Munich-based company WRC Promoter GmbH, which is a joint venture of **Red Bull Media House** and **KW 25**. In the opinion of many (and me included), Red Bull is by far the largest event organiser in the world – making this “behind the scenes” article even more interesting.

When the Red Bull Media House is involved, it's usually the real deal. The guys at Red Bull have mastered their craft and I often present their events as good practice cases. The name “media house” alone says a lot. It points in the direction modern events are heading – shifting from a one-time happening to a full-blown media production house. Not only sports events, but all events. There is also a lot to learn from their e-sports portfolio, where they have been active since 2008. This field is a real treasure trove of ideas for marketing and monetising events. Red Bull is a storyteller, arguably one of the best in the world.

When it comes to the World Rally Championship, there is another organisation that plays a crucial role. The FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) is the world's leading motorsport governing body, bringing together 245 organisations from 146 countries. Its most prominent role is in the licensing and sanctioning of Formula One and WRC, which has been taking place in its current format since 1973. Their role is primarily focused on quality and ensuring high organisation standards.

The WRC as we know it today is actually a textbook example of a HYBRID EVENT.

This was already the case before the corona crisis. It seems that WRC organisers figured out the benefits of hybrid long before the pandemic struck. For at least a decade, their audience has been made up of both live spectators and an online audience. The number of fans attending the 2020 season of the World Rally Championship exceeded 4 million, while 140 million watched the event online. Crazy! (WRC Factbook, Season 2020).

In nearly 50 years of the rally's existence, we have seen numerous practical solutions trickle down into our world of classical event planning. I've compiled a list of 15 things that meeting planners can learn from the FIA World Rally Championship in the hope of helping you create better events after the corona crisis.

No compromises when it comes to content

When it comes to content, WRC does not deviate from its high production standards. Top-notch technical support, drivers and organisation are the foundations of the story that has been attracting crowds for 48 years. On the other hand, digitalisation has allowed millions of rally fans from around the world to watch their premium content.

What can we learn from this? As meeting planners, we need to learn how to create and tell captivating stories. We mustn't compromise in this field, as the result is often catastrophic.

Who owns the content?

This is especially important in the current age of digital events. If you don't own the content, you won't be able to monetise it. Monetising content is the key to financially sustainable events. WRC is also very meticulous and precise when it comes to protecting intellectual property rights.

What can we learn from this? Having standards in place for handling intellectual property at events is vital. Otherwise, you will not have the right to monetise a single piece of content from a lecturer speaking at your event.

Anywhere & Anytime

This has long been a well-known Red Bull paradigm, successfully implemented at WRC as well. The global reach of the 2020 season? 836 million TV viewers, a social media community of 4.1 million fans, 140 million online video views and 1.4 billion online impressions. The numbers don't lie.

What can we learn from this? Today, even local events can be globalised. However, you can only do this provided you have enough content at your disposal to "feed" all communication channels throughout the year.

360-degree approach

WRC uses all communication channels available today. They address their fans holistically and the result is exceptional brand recognition. Using individual tools, the rapid growth of video content has been noticeable, especially of late. In 2019, they created 9,860 hours of video content.

What can we learn from this? In terms of communication, it pays to think more broadly, developing all channels where our fans are present. In the case of WRC, well-developed communication channels are also the result of having an excellent content management team as part of the organisation team.

Digital activation

WRC communication is based on personalised content – this is the foundation for all other forms of activation taking place through social networks and their YouTube channel. The package also includes a mobile app, the WRC Game and WRC + (live streaming channel). From my experience, everything works extremely well and is wonderfully integrated with the WRC brand.

What can we learn from this? Figuring out how to activate event participants through their computer screens has been keeping us busy throughout this pandemic. Digital activation is something that will separate the best from the average meeting planners. It seems as if we are turning into integrators of content.

Influencers – Heroes

It's clear who the real WRC influencers are. They are the masters of speed, who you quickly fall in love with because of the extraordinary stories they tell. The way WRC presents its drivers can be considered the premier league of influencer marketing. For the duration of the rally season, the drivers are not just drivers, they are mega influencers.

What can we learn from this? There are influential people in every professional field. They are often niche micro influencers and it's up to the meeting planner to include them in the story of the event. I believe this will be one of the key ingredients of successful events in the future.

Build your own media

WRC has developed a plethora of privately owned media outlets with incredible reach. This is fully in line with the business philosophy of Red Bull Media House. The key components are WRC TV, WRC Digital and their communication anchor – the www.wrc.com website. Relationships with other media outlets, which number over 1,300, connected via the Media Room, also play an extremely important role.

What can we learn from this? If your event is entirely dependent on other media outlets, chances are the results will not be as good. If your event takes place every year, consider developing your own media outlet that will help you build a fan base and improve the ROI of the event. However, this is an area that requires completely new knowledge.

All year around

By definition, an event is a one-time thing. WRC could not be further from this definition, as it takes place throughout the entire year. In addition to the 12 rallies, eSports events, promotional events and a range of other activities take place in parallel through the various WRC platforms.

What can we learn from this? Events should be transformed into 365/24 experiences. Think about how powerful a communication platform could become in the future.

Event Rights

WRC has a clear, detailed system for managing event rights in the fields of advertising and event activations. Handling the public use of their corporate identity, photos, licensed products and content has been coordinated down to the last detail. So have all the details regarding the event hosts, official WRC accommodation providers and tourist destination promotion.

What can we learn from this? A precise system regarding event rights is the key to a successful sponsorship story that goes beyond classic sponsorship packages. We need to consider how this approach can be used in the organisation of conferences, congresses and other events.

Licensing

Royalties from licensing the WRC brand generate a lot of revenue. A great example is the WRC Playstation game, as well a range of other products and services that use their logo.

What can we learn from this? Licensing rights may not be sold for every event. But it's definitely worth considering if you are organising larger events that have a wide base of followers.

Live Stream

WRC Live Stream has become the standard during the corona crisis. They have taken the live stream to another level, turning it into so much more than just a TV broadcast. This is especially important because of the inaccessibility of some of the WRC stages. With the WRC + platform, the race is accessible 24/7 anytime, anywhere, through a robust system provided by Tata Communications.

What can we learn from this? Event streaming has become the norm you need to ensure during the pandemic, albeit in its simplest form. At the same time, it is one of the most effective monetisation tools.

Monetisation – WRC+ All Live

The key to successful monetisation is microbilling, effectively carried out through the WRC + platform. It's a great example of an anchoring marketing model that provides fans access to enriched content through annual and monthly subscriptions. These include HD Content, Live Maps, and video content that other viewers do not have access to.

What can we learn from this? Meeting planners have an abundance of options when it comes to monetisation. Still, we need to make sure that all the elements we want to monetise create added value for our audience. This is another area where the future of the meetings industry will be created.

Merchandising

Part of the revenue is also tied to the selling of merchandising such as t-shirts, hats and other licensed products at the events, as well as online through the WRC shop. Buying merch seems almost mandatory among fans and has become kind of a status symbol.

What can we learn from this? Selling fan products at major events is often overlooked. It seems too complicated, but if we look at the WRC model, this can be elegantly incorporated, even for a scientific congress.

Happenings & Hospitality

Selling different packages to visit the WRC is an established practice. Their shop includes a variety of packages, from a one-day race visit to premium experiences, like the co-drive package or VIP status. They also provide special zones where you can get closer to your heroes. It's a textbook example of a well-crafted hospitality model.

What can we learn from this? Most successful meeting planners have mastered this part of the event experience, but the secret lies in the smart integration of packages and knowing the needs of the participants.

Fans

WRC was watched live by over 4 million spectators before the pandemic, along with 11 million digital followers. The rally has an extremely loyal audience, spending EUR 55 on average at each rally (WRC Factbook 2020). Among the fans, 69% are men, and 47% are in the age group of 16 to 34 years.

What can we learn from this? The conclusion is quite simple. The wider your fan base, the easier it will be to organise your event. So start building a database and create a community around your event.



POWER TO THE MEETINGS METHODOLOGY

The methodology for creating memorable events since 2009

“Power to the Meetings” is a concept that advocates quality events and greater responsibility towards participants, the environment and ourselves. It is not merely a way of organising events, but a way of life.

The concept focuses on having an agile approach to event participants. Together with clients, we strive to find an answer to the question WHY? By doing so, we effectively tailor events to the needs and wishes of participants and clients.

Since the very beginning, we have been using a combination of various methodologies. Crucial among them is design thinking and scrum, as well as classic project management. By implementing such techniques in practice, we have achieved flexibility and strongly increased the creative side of our events.

The Power to the Meetings mindset - The principles of the methodology

1. Content

Good stories remain the secret and essence of events. The best are simple, clear and sincere, and because they speak to the heart and soul, their basic story must grab the participants at first glance. Such stories are those that separate meetings logistics experts from meeting architects. The first are adherents of the beaten tracks, while the others are looking to create something new, passionate and exciting.

2. The participants' journey

In this phase, we come up with the concept for the participants' experience. Step by step, we guide participants through all the experiences that are written down in the form of a script. In it, we also include the user experience with regard to communication. Finally, we test the scenario on a group of test participants.

3. Branding

Branding is the tool for the construction of event visibility by using the name, image and symbols as a kind of fingerprint of the desired identity. It is a part of existence as it is understood or decoded by the participants, and it represents an important part of the event's development. The result of a carefully planned branding is the reputation as a clear measurement for the event's brand and image.

4. Rhythm

With rhythm, we gather the different parts of the event and place them into a meaningful chronology. Instead of tones, we use programme segments with greater and lesser attention of participants. People react instinctively to rhythm, so thinking about the rhythm of the event is one of the elementary duties of the organiser.

5. Creative set up

You need to support an appropriate environment to start the debate among participants. Speakers are mostly the motivators and provocateurs. Different venue setups like “open space”, “open fishbowl” or “word café” will all instantly improve communication and set it on a higher level, compared to the traditional classroom setup. In collaboration with the architects, we visualise our experiences and prepare them for implementation.

6. Speaker management

As organisers, we have to make sure the speakers are informed and prepared. At the forefront is not only the transfer of knowledge and experiences but also the importance of speakers. This includes their interaction with participants. Depending on what we want to achieve, we advise the use of different programme formats (Pecha Kucha, TEDx, elevator pitch,...) Having an appropriate moderator who will connect the programme segments is equally crucial for the event's success.

7. Co-creation

We learn the most when we do it ourselves. In our opinion, a precondition for the active involvement of the participants is to use the method of experiential learning. Before that, we have to explore and get to know the participants' needs and wishes. This stage of the process requires careful planning, starting with the content that, through different methods (workshops, hand zone) and technical devices, we bring closer to the participants (Sli.do).

8. Authenticity

'Genuine' is all that is authentic. We all love to hear and create unique experiences that are nothing but authentic and nicely spiced up nostalgic stories. Authentic cuisine, music, special historical sites and cultural history are at the core of every successful event, from incentives to big congresses. Participants like to return to nature, get to know the authentic way of life, feel real feelings, smell original smells and experience special venues.

9. Green thinking

Our agency is the author of recommendations for organising green meetings, which are used as standard-bearers by the Slovenian Convention Bureau. We urge clients to plan, execute and evaluate sustainable measures together. Sustainable measures are implemented in the choice of venue, transport of participants, the culinary offer for participants, communication, materials and the technical execution of the event.

10. ROI

Participation in an event is under the microscope, marketing budgets are shrinking, and directors require maximum ROI. That which cannot be measured cannot be managed. So how do we do it? We carry out targeted surveys among stakeholders to regularly check the satisfaction of key stakeholders.

Having participants in mind, it all starts with clear goals and expectations. If there are no goals, it is easy to say everything went well. Setting goals is a must, as only this way can you truly measure what has been achieved. Generating a feeling of quality is also an important part of ensuring high profitability.

Focus on participants

We can count attendance, whereas closeness can only be felt.

1. Participant satisfaction

We respect participants and make them happy.

2. Extraordinary experience

We make wishes come true.

3. Excellence

We strive for measurable quality.

Constant change

Changes are recurring.

4. Responding to changes

Events are constantly adapted and improved.

5. Rapid testing

We test new ideas and consequently reduce risk.

6. Quick learning

We learn from mistakes.

Team action

Anything is possible with the right team.

7. Team work

We create with motivated teams, as work is based on trust.

8. Simplicity

Reducing unnecessary work

9. Fast project cycles

Simultaneously coordinating several activities

Social responsibility

10. Environment responsibility

Sustainable development

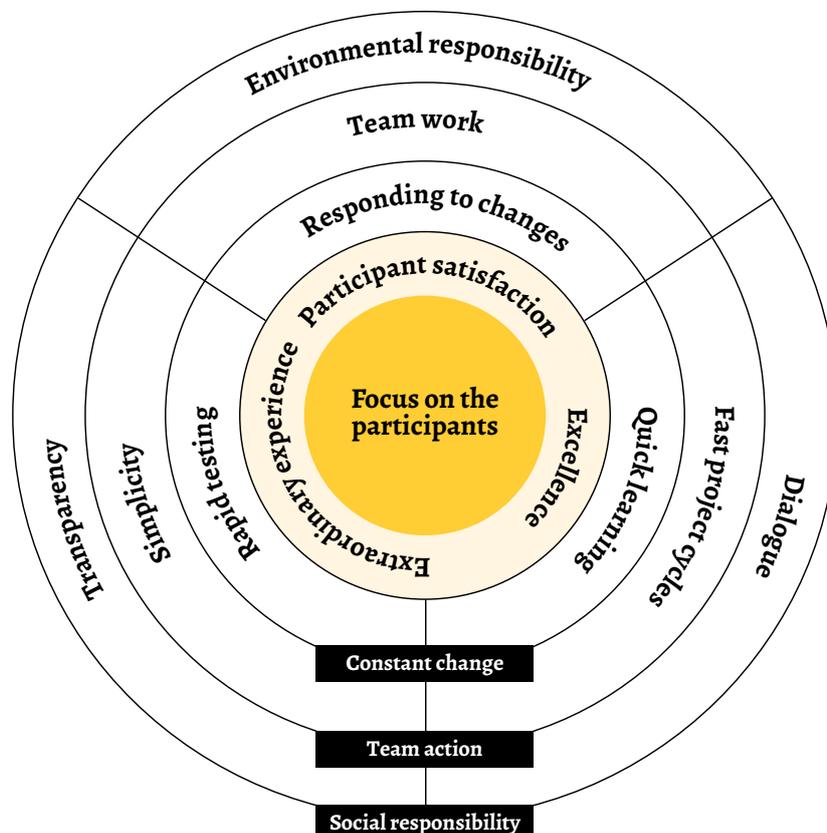
11. Transparency

We build relations on transparency.

12. Dialogue

Encouraging the path from communication to dialogue.

Our methodology offers a framework inside of which we can implement several processes and techniques. The primary composition consists of 10 segments that have proven effective even in the transitional phase to digital events (online, hybrid and virtual).



Above: The Power to the Meetings mindset - the principles on which we base our methodology

The secret ingredient for energy: ROCK'N'ROLL

Successful event organisers know how important it is to organise an event with love and positive energy. You need to know how to create the flow of energy between the organisers and participants, the speakers and the audience, the sponsors and the crowd. The event venue has to have a flow as well, like rock festivals or large airports. Above all, to create good energy we have to check the three basic event elements. First is the element of surprise. Some call it a 'first impression'. The second element is communication, that is before, during and after the event, transmitting the energy all the way up to the heights of modern hybrid communication of social media. Thirdly, and lastly, is the element of an effective dramaturgy, which includes the ambience of the venue, design of the stage, lighting and, for the true congress rockers, also great rock riffs, or, in other words: each event must have its own colour and sound.

The book explains the concept in detail and is complemented by numerous practical recommendations and best practice examples.

Power to the Meetings!



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE - HYBRID EVENTS

The first Slovenian DCO (Digital Conference Organiser) Agency

A transformation in event organising is unfolding before our eyes. Alongside live events that are currently restricted, our agency has developed hybrid and online formats. They are a logical answer to the current state of the world of events. Such formats enable, in accordance with the epidemiological situation in countries and regions, a part of the audience to meet in person while others tune in online.

We are one of the first DCO (Digital Conference Organiser) agencies in Slovenia, who have successfully executed over 50 webinars and online conferences, including the exceptionally demanding hybrid event Conventa Crossover.

We support:

- Hybrid events
- Online events
- Multi-hub events
- Webinars

What do we provide?

End-to-end integration of services, crucial for successfully organising hybrid and online events. They are included in the holistic 360-hybrid meetings approach.

360-HYBRID MEETINGS by Toleranca Marketing

— **MEETING design**

Creative event design with the help of attendee-focused tools and techniques of design thinking.

— **CONTENT management**

Development of content adapted to the needs of both the live and online audience, connected into an effective scenario (storyboard).

— **COMMUNITY building**

Preparing interactive content and various tools for participant activation, thus building a community and database of event participants.

— **SOCIAL MEDIA management**

Establishing and optimising the recognisability of an event on social media platforms with activation and smart marketing.

— **SPEAKERS coaching**

Preparing all speakers to effectively use all tools to their advantage and guide them on how to tune into an event flawlessly and professionally.

— **REGISTRATION management**

Care-free online participant registration with optimisation of accreditation on-site by over-viewing attendance.

— **STREAMING service**

Online video streaming of an event to the selected online platform with one or more cameras and programme equipment for switching that includes integration into the most popular streaming platforms.

— **DIGITAL EVENT platform**

Ensuring a live stream platform most suitable for your event. We enable an array of options such as Confiva, YouTube, FB live, Vimeo Livestream, a designated website or completely personalised solutions that offer the possibility of communicating with attendees directly.

— **ON DEMAND production**

Fast and effective production of pre-recorded lectures, encompassing an automated presentation of the speaker with video and graphical equipment. We enable commercialised monetisation of lectures following the event.

— **LIVE production**

At the event, we ensure superb acoustics, lighting and visuals whilst bridging the gap between live and online attendees.

— **ONLINE engagement**

Moderation of quizzes, preparing surveys, prize draws and other forms of gamification.

— **EVENT analysis**

Report on the event's reach and communication before, amid and after the event, both for the live and online part.

What is a DCO?

A specialised agency for organising events that connects various expert profiles with the ultimate goal of merging the digital and real world. Our team comprises experts with over 20 years of experience in organising live events and young professionals with digital know-how.

The FUTURE of events will stay hybrid!

Give us a call, and we will help you organise your next event.

Our team of experts



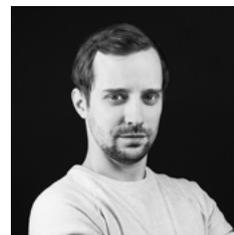
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NEED HELP ORGANISING YOUR NEXT EVENT?

Let us help you!

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**Toleranca Marketing - Live & Digital Events
and Marketing Agency**

www.toleranca.eu



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