

Virtual Event Sponsorship

Challenge yourself to create the most curated and innovative virtual event sponsorship program

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“We’ve got to be better. We’ve got to come up with more exciting and inspirational ways to engage attendees and sponsors through this virtual medium. That’s our opportunity.”

————— Toby Daniels, CEO and Founder of Social Media Week



Introduction

The events world is in a moment of radical transformation. In the wake of social distancing, virtual events have become the new normal. In fact, in our recent Event Outlook Report, the majority (**90%**) of event marketers surveyed plan to invest more in virtual events in 2020. As a result, event marketers are asked to think creatively, make decisions fluidly and quickly, and lead with empathy to navigate uncharted territory.

As events migrate into the virtual space new challenges and opportunities lay ahead. The majority (**80%**) of event marketers said that attendee engagement and satisfaction are the most important KPIs for measuring virtual success. When looking at virtual sponsorships—this opens a brand new frontier of strategic thinking. Virtual offerings must deliver ways for sponsors to connect with attendees in meaningful ways, provide meaningful value, and relevant benchmarks or key performance indicators to help sponsors understand their investments.

We should approach virtual event sponsorships as iterative and collaborative experiments. There is no one-size-fits-all virtual event and thus there are infinite ways to design and approach sponsors and broader partnerships.



Why Virtual Event Sponsorships

In early May, Bizzabo launched **(Almost) IN-PERSON**, our first virtual event, and saw a **615%** increase in our registration goals. For event marketers and sponsors looking to drive lead generation, customer retention, revenue—virtual events can broaden reach and help attract a larger audience.

“Worth checking out Bizzabo’s virtual event, (Almost) IN-PERSON. Even for one session, even if you aren’t in the industry, this is truly as close to an in-person experience as you can get from your home office.”

Emily Olsen, Executive Producer at Arrow Event Management

Earlier this year, Outreach, a SaaS company based in Seattle, had to pivot an in-person event to virtual. Sponsorships are a core part of their event and marketing strategy. Once they made the decision to go virtual, Outreach immediately reached out to their sponsors to let them know they would be pivoting to virtual and asked how they wanted to proceed. Many out of their 50 confirmed sponsors wanted to work together to find a new way to use sponsorship dollars.

“I think that it’s really important to be open and honest with your sponsors, and your production company, and your vendors, and everybody, because we’re literally all in the same boat here, and it’s uncharted territory.”

Melissa Westendorf, Events at Outreach



Around the same time, Social Media Week made the decision to transform their two flagship conferences to ongoing virtual series. The event was rebranded as #SMWONE. They came to their sponsors with a clear message: We want you to come with us on this journey, and we want to be able to prove to you that we can deliver as much if not more value than we would have done as part of the in-person offering.

The team redesigned their sponsorship proposal with new and more relevant sponsorship packages that included a whole new set of deliverables. To communicate these changes, the team reached out to each sponsor, shared the value of their new offering, and on top of that offered a full refund if the new KPIs weren't achieved.

“It’s been a good experience. The key learning for us is in refactoring all of the sponsorship deliverables, we had to start with a blank sheet of paper and say, ‘How do we deliver the same value but through a fundamentally different experience?’”

Toby Daniels, CEO and Founder at Social Media Week

Real and lasting transformation doesn't happen by accident. It can't be dictated or prescribed. To build an effective virtual sponsorship program starts by recognizing that there's no one answer.

This workbook will challenge you to take your sponsorship program into your own hands. If you're looking for answers to be handed to you in this ebook, you may want to stop reading here. This book does provide some actionable tips, communications templates, and best practices based on real-world examples from event marketers but, ultimately, this workbook is for those who are looking for the tools to create their own answers.



Leverage your innate creativity, deepen your relationships, and listen to your sponsors in order to make the most effective, curated, and innovative program that suits your goals.

The next few sections of the workbook offers tools, inspiration, and exercises to help you build, iterate, and refine your sponsorship program. Examine your current sponsorship program with a SWOT analysis, review best practices on sponsorship communications, discover different sponsorship activities and their value, and reflect on the most important aspects of your events and sponsorship program so you can blaze your own trail.



SWOT Analysis

First, you and your team will work together to identify the current state of your sponsorship program with a SWOT analysis. SWOT is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It can be a valuable tool for identifying all the internal and external factors as you refine your sponsorship strategy. We'll define each area of investigation so you and your team can get a broader picture of the current state of your sponsorship program.



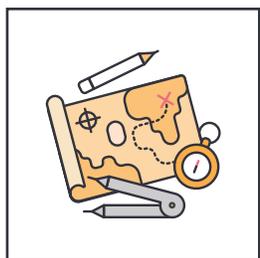
Strengths

Strengths refers to the internal resources that help you create a successful sponsorship strategy. This can include the advantages, resources, tools, unique differentiators, and audience you already have to help forward your goal.



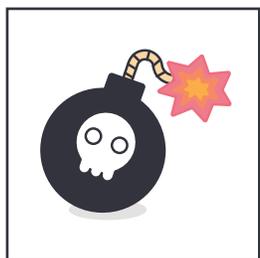
Weaknesses

Weaknesses are internal areas that may be preventing you from achieving sponsorship success. This can include areas that you already know need your attention, things that are not working in your current strategy, tech limitations, resource limitations, or audience limitations.



Opportunities

Opportunities are the external factors that can be part of your advantage. Consider what your competitors are not doing with their sponsorship programs, new trends that would be relevant to your sponsorship program, or other areas of interest that your sponsors have.



Threats

Threats are external factors that put you at a disadvantage. Think about what your competitors are doing with their sponsorship strategy that is similar to your strategy, what your competitors may be doing better, as well as the market conditions that prevent you from achieving your goals.

Let's get started! Create a table similar to the one below. In each quadrant, use the definitions of strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats to quickly draw up a few important points.

Feeling stuck? Don't worry! We've included a few questions in the bullets to help guide the conversation.



Virtual Event Sponsorship SWOT Analysis

Question Recommendations

Strengths:

- What's currently working in our sponsorship program?
- What makes our sponsorship program unique?
- What makes our event offering unique?
- What's our greatest sponsorship achievement to date?

Weaknesses:

- What isn't currently working with our sponsorship program?
- What makes our sponsorship program less attractive?
- What feedback have we gotten from sponsors that are areas for improvement?
- What internal obstacles are hindering our program or slowing progress?

Opportunities:

- What sponsor feedback can we take action on?
- In what ways can our organization shift our sponsorship strategy during a challenging time?
- Is there an industry need that we can take action on?

Threats:

- What negative patterns are we seeing in sponsorship programs as a whole?
- What are our competitors doing well that we are currently not addressing?
- What changes in our industry should we be concerned about?



Workbook Exercise

What are your first reactions to producing a Virtual Event Sponsorship SWOT analysis?

Which area of your SWOT analysis do you plan to tackle first?

Which area of your SWOT was the most challenging for you to complete?



Communicating with Virtual Sponsors

With in-person sponsorships, communication is important. With virtual event sponsorship—a new domain with a great deal of unexplored potential—aligning with your sponsors is essential. In this section, we will identify a few best practices when connecting and communicating with virtual sponsors. We'll also review example templates that you can use for your sponsorship outreach and why they are effective.

6 Questions to Ask When Connecting with Virtual Event Sponsors

How are you doing?

- 1 It's a simple question, but profoundly important. During a time of constant change and unprecedented crisis, it's important to check-in with sponsors to understand what's going on throughout their business.

Available to hop on a call to talk through this more?

- 2 As things shift, it's important to keep a high touch sponsorship relationship. Invest in the time to speak to each individual sponsor stakeholder to answer questions, share updates, and ultimately surface solutions.

What would you like to get out of a virtual event sponsorship?

- 3 It's important to understand in your sponsors own words what they're hoping to gain from a virtual event sponsorship. Once you've identified your sponsors goals, you can then dive into a deeper conversation around the benefits of what opportunities you can create together.



What are some key performance indicators that you're using to measure the value of your sponsorship?

4

Once you have an understanding of your sponsor's goals, you'll want to discuss the metrics that will be used to measure the achievement of these goals. This could be around meetings set, leads generated, impressions, session registrations, or something different. Be open to what your sponsors share and apply their feedback to help create more impactful packages for your partners.

What challenges have you faced with past sponsorship opportunities?

5

This question helps you get visibility into some underlying challenges your sponsor has faced in the past. It's a great opportunity to share how you two can work towards building a better partnership.

How can we make you successful?

6

At the end of the day, your sponsors are looking for events and campaigns that will help them meaningfully connect with the right audience at the right time. Listening to how they hope to work with you will strengthen your relationship long term.



5 Guidelines For Effective Email Communication with Virtual Sponsors

We've established questions that you can ask. This section focuses on the other side of the coin regarding email communications. Inboxes can be especially noisy and cluttered. Use these 5 guidelines to help cut through the noise and amplify your message.

1. Exercise honesty and empathy in your communications. We're currently facing uncertain times and virtual sponsors recognize that things can change in an instant. It's important to be transparent with potential sponsors to build a foundation of trust and keep healthy lines of communication open.

2. Prioritize personalization in your emails. Start with a personalized note about your sponsor and their business or a meaningful update about your current offerings. Personalization is critical as sponsors skim through an inbox of virtual partnership outreach. Rather than sending templated emails, put in the extra work to show why you think a virtual sponsorship will benefit them.

3. Get them excited. Pinpoint the areas that are most important to your virtual sponsors and position your offerings around that.

4. Highlight other sponsors who will be joining your event. Peer validation is a great way to persuade new virtual sponsors to come onboard. In addition, highlighting virtual sponsorship logos allows prospective virtual sponsors to see other brands that are participating in your event.

5. Communicate next steps. Always provide next steps for virtual sponsors in your emails to keep conversations flowing and set up expectations throughout the process. This provides your sponsors with a better experience and earns you trust.



Examples of Virtual Sponsorship Outreach

While guidelines for email practices can help determine what to say, it can be difficult to put into practice. Below, we've included two examples of virtual sponsorship outreach to help you jumpstart the creative email writing process. Check out how WISE (Women in Sales Everywhere) and Event Tech Live used different strategies to hook sponsors and get them excited.

WISE (Women In Sales Everywhere)

WISE (Women in Sales Everywhere) is a networking and professional development brand that works to raise the next generation of female sales leaders. The organizers of this San Francisco based team connects members online and offline to career resources, mentors, events to help them grow.

WISE recently made updates to their sponsorship offering and reached out to partners. In this email, their team gave background information surrounding the changes and requested individual meetings to discuss those updates.



Hope you've been doing well and your new virtual platform offering is being well-received.

In light of the impact of COVID and after feedback from the community the last few months, we're excited to announce that we are launching a Direct-to-Consumer offering in tandem with updates to our existing B2B sponsorship.

Coming into 2020, WISE was largely focused on in person events. Given the continued uncertainty about how long cities will be maintaining social distancing practices, we will be hosting the rest of our previously scheduled 2020 events digitally.

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We understand that digital events offer different value than our previous in-person panel events. Our goal is that the new Direct-to-Consumer model coupled with updates to our B2B sponsorship including a WISE job board, formalized mentorship matching, and new leadership development opportunities will allow us to offer a more holistic solution for the entire WISE community.

I'm scheduling individual meetings throughout July with all existing sponsors to explain the sponsorship updates and new Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) model before we launch to the public in August.

Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to speaking!

In this example, WISE emails partners to give full transparency on recent updates and opportunities regarding virtual sponsorships. They show their dedication and commitment to partners by offering a 1:1 meeting—a chance to align on goals, offer feedback, and ultimately maximize the value of the partnership. They also mention at the very beginning that they hope this sponsor's latest product release is well-received, which touches lightly on our personalization best practices.



Event Tech Live

Event Tech Live plans to pivot to a worldwide virtual-hybrid event at the end of 2020. They have over 100+ exhibitors committed to join the event.

In an email, the team laid out the full scope of the changes and described why virtual exhibitors can find great value in participating using quotes and displaying an impressive amount of partner logos.

Like the industry it represents, Event Tech Live (ETL) can't sit still. This year's show will marry five Coronavirus-proof virtual days to the traditional two physical, the latter incorporating COVID-19 surety steps overseen by A.C.T. (National) health & safety consultants.

Joining organisers/exhibitors/visitors' ETL experience to an expanded virtual platform – the show introduced a hybrid arm last year – means the 2020 model will deliver more content, more engagement and more business value, through meetings in person and online, across a full working week.

Mark Maydon, director at visitor tracking specialist Crowd Connected, said: "We have always seen Event Tech Live as the pioneering show. We were delighted to hear that Adam and the team are going to create a fully-fledged, multi-dimensional week.

"We already licence our software to customers across the globe, so it is great news that we will be able to tap into ETL and Event Industry News' collective audiences and connect with key buyers around the world."

Abi Cannons, global innovation success manager for Reed Exhibitions, said: "Having attended Event Tech Live as an independent visitor, a supplier and now as a buyer with my role at Reed Exhibitions, a hybrid ETL always made sense to me.

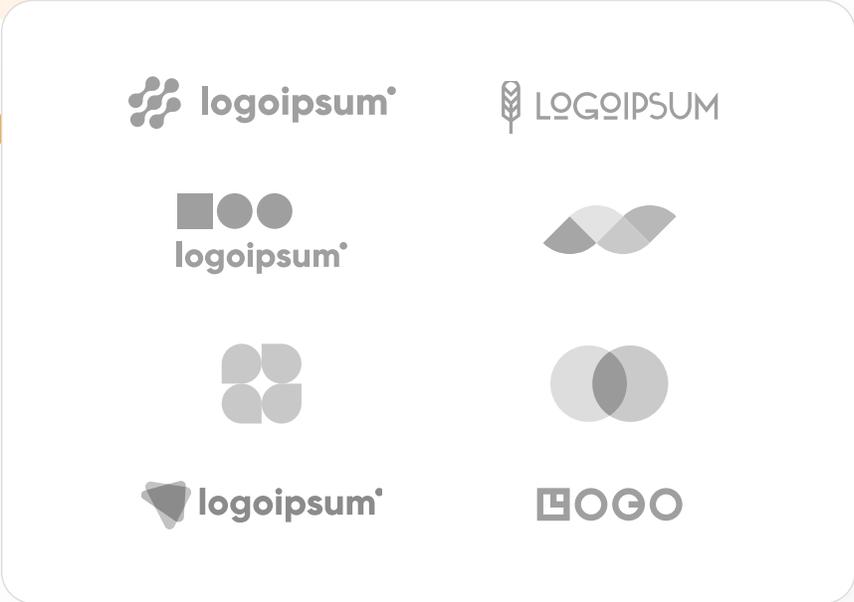
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“Reed Exhibitions is an international organiser so some of our regional teams who should be at the event just can’t get there, physically. Introducing this extended ETL journey provides our global team with a workable opportunity to engage with the industry, with the educational content and with suppliers/exhibitors they are interested in.”

Away from Coronavirus, while Event Tech Live gets a great audience from 40+ countries, feedback highlights the fact that, over the years, significant numbers of potential visitors have been unable to physically make the date. Through their evolved offering in 2020 organisers will be able to bring the show to those people as well as providing even more value for buyers and suppliers, wherever they are based.

 community_of_contributors_LOGOS



This example stresses the benefits of Event Tech Live’s upcoming in-person and virtual event with supporting quotes from previous partners, concrete stats about the event audience, and where sponsors can find value. At the end of the email, Event Tech Live includes logos from current sponsors giving better visibility on the community of contributors that participate in the event.



Delivering Value to Sponsors

Designing valuable event experiences starts with understanding the event goals and objectives. For your sponsors, this means laying out the benefits of your virtual event in clear and meaningful messaging. Communicating the value of your event allows your sponsors to understand why they should commit to the investment.

As you draft the value propositions for your virtual event sponsors, consider the three main pillars below—brand recognition, audience insights, and audience engagement—to help educate sponsors on the impact of their activities and investments

Brand Awareness

Virtual events allow sponsors to leverage their brand power and reach a highly engaged and targeted audience. To deliver value to sponsors, prompt opportunities to showcase their brand through sponsor pages, splash screens, in-app notifications, and email campaigns.

Virtual events have broken down the physical barriers of in-person venues to allow for a larger, global audience. You can also extend the reach of your virtual event and your sponsorship agreement by making sessions from your event available on-demand.

Audience Insights

One of the best advantages to virtual events is that data around attendees provide greater insights that will prove more valuable to your sponsors. This can include event registrant and event attendee lists, but it also provides ways to capture session registrations and attendees, view times, favorite speakers and sessions, Q&A participants, and more. Deeper levels of attendee insights will help sponsors maximize their time at events and help curate future experiences.



Audience Engagement

Whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid—the value of an event comes from building meaningful connections. Your virtual sponsors will be eager to find the best ways to connect, communicate, and impact attendees through various activities. Sponsorship pages, virtual booths, sponsored Q&As, sessions, speakers, and happy hours are just a few ways that your virtual sponsors can connect with highly engaged attendees.



Workbook Exercise

Now that you’ve reviewed the general value pillars for virtual sponsors, it’s your turn. Complete the table below by crafting your own messaging based on the specific value propositions to virtual sponsors.

We’ve included a few recommended questions for each value proposition so you can hit the ground running.

Value Propositions

Value Messaging

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <p>Brand Awareness</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What opportunities do your virtual sponsors have to showcase their brand? ▪ Do you have a dedicated page for virtual sponsors to market their offering? ▪ Do you have a virtual event mobile app? ▪ Are there virtual event email campaigns that can include sponsor logos? |
| <p>Audience Insights</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What technology solution are you using to host your virtual event? ▪ Will you be able to export the event registrant and attendee list? ▪ Will you be able to view information at both the account-level and the contact-level? ▪ Will you be able to surface insights from attendees based on how they interact with your virtual event? |



Audience Engagement

- What activities or solutions will you provide to help sponsors reach their target audience?
- How can sponsors amplify their message to the greater virtual event audience?
- Are there options to help sponsors capture a wider audience of people after the virtual event is over?

“The key to partnerships is to think about it as a win-win for both parties, and a big win for your community.”

Vasil Azarov, Founder at Growth Marketing Conference



Value Proposition Messaging

Now It's Your Turn. Draft your messaging for each value proposition in the box below.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| <p>Brand Awareness</p> | <hr/> |
| <p>Audience Insights</p> | <hr/> |
| <p>Audience Engagement</p> | <hr/> |

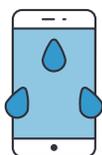


Virtual Event Sponsorship Ideas

Now that you've identified areas to improve your virtual sponsorship program, revisited virtual communication best practices, and identified the main areas of sponsorship value, it's time to brainstorm virtual event sponsorship ideas and packages.

To help you through the creative process, we've bucketed virtual event sponsorship ideas based on the three business outcomes we discussed above: Brand Awareness, Audience Insights, and Audience Engagement. Check out some of the ideas and discover how you can create engaging experiences for your virtual sponsors!

Brand Awareness



Splash Screens

Splash screens in your mobile event app offers a great branding opportunity for sponsors.



Virtual Sponsorship Pages

Virtual Sponsorship Pages are in many cases the bare minimum for a sponsor's presence at a virtual event. These profile pages—often embedded into the event website and/or event mobile app provide more information about who sponsors are and how attendees can connect with them.



Pre-Roll Advertising and Commercials

Maximize sponsor exposure with video branding opportunities like pre-roll advertising or commercials. This works during an in-person event but is especially effective when the whole event takes place on a screen.



Virtual Exhibitor Booths

In the context of a virtual event, a virtual exhibitor booth functions as a one-to-one or one-to-few virtual meeting. They provide sponsors with a place to connect with attendees, provide product demos, or host sponsored games.

Audience Insights



Lead Capture and Registration Insights

Virtual Sponsors will find a lot of immediate value from insights on event registrant and attendee information. In addition, sponsors can request custom registration questions to capture deeper analytics relevant to their audience.



Session Engagement

Understanding who registered and attended a sponsored session will be very valuable for virtual sponsors who put in the time to set up a panel discussion, fireside chat, or even a low-key happy hour with attendees.



Topic Engagement

Virtual sponsors will get a lot of value by understanding what topics, subjects, or event tracks are most relevant to the attending audience.



Speaker Engagement

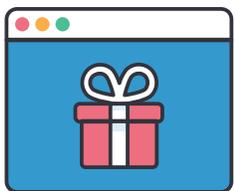
For virtual sponsors who are particularly interested in delivering thought leadership content, they will find a lot of value in understanding which speakers are the most popular at a virtual event.

Audience Engagement



In-app Notifications

In-app Notifications offer a direct link to sponsor offerings. This can be a helpful indicator of attendee interests and a way to capture leads. In addition, it allows for more sponsor impressions.



Giveaways

Gamification is another way to get attendees to engage with event sponsors. You can incentivize attendee behavior in return for raffles, prize giveaways, swag, or donations to organizations in need—all thanks to the support of a sponsor.



Sponsored Sessions and Speaking Slots

Speaker slots give sponsors the chance to participate in pressing discussions and topics that are relevant to attendees, providing an organic opportunity for engagement.



Sponsored Happy Hours

Virtual Happy Hours are a fun way for sponsors to connect with a select group of attendees in a low key and informal format. Ideas for happy hours include: moderated discussion, sponsored beverage delivery, having sponsors included in a dedicated happy hour.



Workbook Exercise

1. What goals are your sponsors looking to drive at your event?

2. With the above goal in mind develop a sponsorship package that includes five ideas from above or ideas of your own.

“We’re seeing that the events are still the primary driver of marketing results. Events touch almost every single opportunity that progresses and ultimately closes.”

Colleen Bisconti, VP of Global Conferences and Events, IBM



Blazing Forward with Your Virtual Event Sponsorship Program

One of the most exciting things about building out virtual event sponsorship programs is that the field is so new. When carving out new virtual event sponsorships, embrace crazy ideas, listen to feedback from your virtual sponsors, and approach the “virtual drawing board” again and again with an open mind. A solutions-oriented mindset starts with taking those first few steps in uncharted territory.

As in-person events slowly recover, we expect new event experiences—both in-person and virtual—to happen in tandem. We’re excited to see how you work to build an experience that resonates with your attendees and helps drive outcomes for your virtual sponsors in the next generation of event experiences.

“When I started at Cisco 13 years ago, I struggled with the word, ‘Vendor.’ We made the shift to supplier-partners. It’s something that has made a difference in how our suppliers come to the table. They know they are really part of the team.”

Heather Henderson Thomas, Senior Manager of Events at Cisco

INTRODUCING BIZZABO'S NEW PARTNERS PORTAL

The world's only event success software just got better by helping your sponsors help themselves.

Request Demo



InnovExpo 2020

HOME

TASKS

RESOURCES

MY SESSIONS

TEAM

STAFF REGISTRATION



Good morning, Rodney Pearson

70 / 96 of your tasks are completed.

8

Team members

SEE ALL TASKS

REGISTER YOUR STAFF

INVITE TEAM MEMBER

General content

Innov Expol 2020 Exhibitor Resource Center

Welcome to the Innov Expol 2020.

This site serves as an online resource for all sponsors. You will use it to learn more about upcoming deliverables and upload items to be collected or reviewed by InnovExpo. Please take a moment to review this site as it is important to your success at Innov Expol 2020.

In this portal you will find important deadlines and indicates tasks required to take full advantage of your participation. Please note the deadline for submission.

Remember to return to the ERC frequently in the weeks leading up to Innov Expol 2020. Should you have any questions, or require assistance using the ERC, do not hesitate to contact sponsorsuccess@saastrinc.com.

My Sessions

150 Apps to Grow Your Business: A Grand Tour of HubSpot's Platform Ecosystem

Wed, June 5, 3:30 PM - 4:40 PM (1 Hour, 10 Min)

West, Level 3, Juniper 3, Aria Resort Las Vegas

Brian Reed, Callie Morton

Tasks (15)

Overdue 1

Declined 3

In Progress 2

Submitted 1