



Executing Hybrid Events

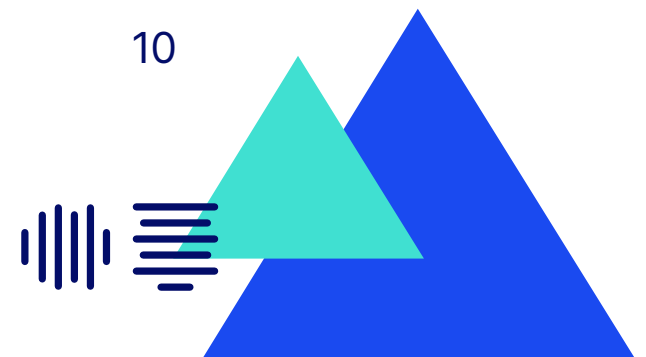
Best practices & expert advice from

Kaltura & Bizzabo leaders



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Introduction

Many professionals still remain apprehensive about attending live conferences and business networking events. This reality and the uncertainties of today's post-pandemic world have created opportunities for business leaders to consider and execute hybrid-style events.

34% of event organizers said they [expect to invest more](#) in hybrid events, while 32% of enterprise organizations said their global events team will primarily host hybrid events going forward. Hybrid events combine a live in-person and virtual online component to offer attendees choice and flexibility. Additionally, hybrid events enable companies to reach and engage with larger audiences and gain deeper insights into attendees with more data at their disposal. [63% of companies](#) with 2,000 to 5,000 employees and 71% of companies with 5,000+ employees indicate that they're now including hybrid events in their portfolios.

Event and video experts, Chad Blaise, VP of Growth, Bizzabo and Charlotte Copeman, Director of Tech, Kaltura joined Verbit live to provide best practices and advice for professionals and businesses executing hybrid events. Incorporating the below tips will help to effectively engage attendees and create events that align with business goals.

Contributors



Chad Blaise
VP of Growth, Bizzabo



Charlotte Copeman
Director of Tech, Kaltura

How to Make Your Content More Engaging

“Don’t just put flat video content out there and hope people will come.”



Charlotte Copeman
Director of Tech, Kaltura

Finding ways to engage not only in-person attendees, but virtual attendees can be tricky. Create content that maintains your audience’s attention by being thoughtful about how you engage them and ensure that it aligns with their own goals.

“Don’t just put flat video content out there and hope people will come,” Copeman said. Event producers should consider the following tactics:

Pre-event: Gather pre-event insights when developing the content by having attendees submit questions and topics to be addressed while they register or the week leading up to the event. When they contribute to the content, it will help them to feel more connected to the event and know what’s covered will pertain to their needs and interests. They’ll also be more likely to attend live.

During the event: Include interactive video experiences, quizzes and polls to keep attendees leaning into your events, not watching passively. Open the chat to allow them to riff off of each other and what the speakers are saying, as well as consider opening breakout rooms on more specific topics so they can network with like-minded peers and focus in, especially when conferences are larger and cover a plethora of diverse topics.

Post-event: Your content shouldn’t end when your event ends. Keep content alive and continue to refresh it, adding resources for attendees that were mentioned to your website, pushing out the on-demand video of the sessions so attendees can rewatch or go back to what they may have missed and consider creating different types of content post-event. eBooks with key insights, snackable social videos of important soundbites and briefs with a synopsis of what was discussed can all be created and sent to attendees after to continue engagement post-event.

Enlist Experienced Partners

“Both Chad and I agree that platform stability should be your absolute number one on the checklist.”



Charlotte Copeman

Director of Tech, Kaltura

“It takes a village to put on an event,” Copeman said. Depending on the size of the event, it may make sense to select partners that can help you with livestreaming, with onsite engagement, with interactive event elements and more. With so many factors to consider, especially when hybrid, partners can help to take your design, content, agenda, planning and delivery of the event to the next level.

When looking for partners, arguably the most important element to consider is the data they can provide to you. Effective partners should offer you live analytics and post-event data to gain insights on individual attendees, how your different sessions performed, what engaged attendees the most and more so that you can follow up with them effectively.

Additionally, more tech savvy event partners will help you facilitate ways for event attendees to choose their own adventure. Aim to utilize providers with technology platforms that power attendee flexibility. Understanding what your attendees’ goals are and aligning those with your own goals for the event, will help you determine how to craft an event with key partners that meets all of these needs smoothly.

“Both Chad and I agree that platform stability should be your absolute number one on the checklist,” Copeman said. “All the bells and whistles, and I know everyone’s interested in the stickiness and making it fun and lean-forward experience, but if you haven’t got a stable platform and the video goes down or the audio goes down or folks can’t get into the registration, then that’s pretty much the end of your event, regardless of what happens behind the wall.”



How to Facilitate More Engaging Networking Opportunities

Copeman continued that most providers offer features like live chats and Q&A, but it's important to push them to see what else they can offer you.

“What about content creation? Can your presenters create and upload the content using the same platform or do you have to have other tools? You have to think about that both from a planning and training and budget perspective,” she said.

Attendees miss interacting with others and event producers need to find ways to recreate the excitement of events both virtually and in-person. [81% of event organizers](#) say that networking capabilities are a key contributor to audience satisfaction of hybrid events. This reality is especially important when considering that some of your attendees will be remote. 39% of virtual hybrid event attendees said they did not feel included in the event, with 72% stating they believe there is more value in attending in person.

“Where does the fun happen? Where’s the social? Where’s the networking? Where is the yoga class? Where is the cocktail making class? Where are the round tables?” Copeman said.



Finding ways to engage virtual and in-person attendees so that they both feel a part of the experience and can effectively network with each other is key. Delivering exciting ways to facilitate networking activities that accompany the main stage sessions is key to standout events and will make for return attendees. Event producers should consider their target attendees, their desired outcomes and how they can utilize technology to facilitate the most effective and engaging networking for the event.

Instead of having attendees communicate with one another separately through text or WhatsApp, encourage them to use an event app, which includes an interactive chat feature. An event mobile app becomes an important connector for hybrid events specifically, allowing for virtual and in-person audiences to engage with each other. Apps also allow organizers to send push notifications to seed and prompt networking and connections, as well as arrange 'speed dating networking' among attendees. These apps can also help to facilitate breakout room discussions seamlessly that involve both in-person and virtual attendees.

Additionally, encourage networking before the event even takes place. Event organizers can consider pushing out question prompts to attendees so they can begin to chat with each other prior to the event. They can also send virtual attendees gift boxes with a beverage for the happy hour so they can feel a part of the in-person pre-event cocktail event. Begin to facilitate networking prior to best engage both sets of attendees and bridge those watching virtually into the physical experience.

Ensure All Attendees Can Participate with Equity

“This is why Bizzabo has rebuilt their platform through the lens of accessibility and has leveraged partners such as Verbit to accelerate that journey.”



Chad Blaise

VP of Growth, Bizzabo

With engagement being top of mind, event producers should also consider different ways that attendees engage and offer them choice in how they watch and participate in the content. To make for an inclusive event environment, event producers must consider how attendees who are navigating disabilities can participate with equity. How are you ensuring those with hearing or vision loss, learning disabilities and ADHD among other disabilities can effectively participate?

“For us, it’s about thinking about how we rebuild our platform through the lens of accessibility, and then two, how we leverage partners who help accelerate that journey that we’re taking to make our platform more accessible in an accelerated fashion to allow us to appropriately check the boxes for such a critical component of the audience attending, both virtually and in-person,” Copeman said.

Both Bizzabo and Kaltura are investing in making their platforms more accessible to help their partners produce inclusive events.

“There’s so many different reasons for us to celebrate how the world is evolving in a good way around inclusivity,” Blaise said. “This is why Bizzabo has rebuilt their platform through the lens of accessibility and has leveraged partners such as Verbit to accelerate that journey.”



Through its partnership with Verbit, Kaltura has also invested in accessibility technology where every single piece of content created on the Kaltura platform has automatic machine transcriptions. There is also a service called Kaltura REACH that enables users to take a transcription and then translate it into any language to help international attendees engage more effectively. Copeman notes that “for both your in-person and your virtual event, it’s important to leave nobody behind.”

“Accessibility is huge at Kaltura, and it’s huge for me as well because I have epilepsy,” Copeman shared. “For me, it’s super-important. There are days when I happily sit and focus on a piece of content that I’m watching and there are other days where I would like to read at the same time because it will help me to digest. For me also, one of the side effects of epilepsy is my short-term memory isn’t amazing. It sinks in better for me if I’m reading at the same time as I’m watching because I’m extremely focused. So there are lots of reasons why it’s super-important to make your content accessible. Not just for folks like me, but everyone that that often works for.”

Verbit is working with Kaltura and Bizzabo to provide [captioning](#) and [transcription technologies](#) that are helping to meet the needs of event attendees and content consumers with disabilities, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. These solutions are also able to translate content into multiple languages to ensure wider audience reach. Copeman noted that “the services that Verbit are offering have so many different wide use cases, but actually some are game-changing.” Since many individuals are unintentionally overlooked at events, Verbit can help to offer a solution to give you peace of mind and help ensure your hybrid events can support the needs of live, in-person attendees and those watching via livestreaming.

Measure Event Success with Key Benchmarks

“If you can grab all of these analytics and push them into your marketing automation platform, that’s the holy grail of what you want out of your event to be able to effectively maximize your investment.”



Chad Blaise

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Most event producers see ROI from hybrid events seven months after the event has passed. To determine if your hybrid event is successful, begin by focusing on your attrition rates. People tend to think about attrition through the lens of traditional events. However, in the new hybrid space, there is a higher drop-off for virtual events. Considering attendance duration metrics can also help you to determine how engaging or effective your content is and if it’s resonating with your target audience. Offering sessions of different lengths, including more short and consumable content scenarios for hybrid events to account for different audience needs, schedules and availability, can make a difference.

Additionally, look at integrating your marketing automation platform so that you can get a clear picture of your attendees. Being able to integrate analytics is key, as it highlights what worked and what didn’t work to help you to create successful hybrid events in the future. Specifically, analytics help you to answer such questions as “What was the path that attendees clicked through?” “Did they use the chat?” “How many events did they attend?” “How long did the attendees stay?” “How did they engage with your content, if at all?” “What interactive elements did they take part in?” As noted by Blaise, “if you can grab all of these analytics and push them into your marketing automation platform, that’s the holy grail of what you want out of your event to be able to effectively maximize your investment.” These metrics will help to inform your follow ups with attendees who may likely be your next purchasers or clients.

Key Takeaways



Hybrid events present business leaders with a plethora of exciting opportunities when done right! There is a period of testing and trying to see what works and what resonates with your target audience, so allow yourself to play around with the different virtual and in-person possibilities, as well as ways to fuse the engagement of both audiences together.

Finally, ensuring your meeting ADA, FCC and additional guidelines in crafting inclusive events is critical. Verbit's captioning, audio description, [translation and transcription](#) technologies can help you to create more engaging content that is accessible to all attendees.



[Click here](#) to learn more about Verbit's solutions and how they can widen the footprint and impact of your hybrid event through greater audience reach.