

UN TETHERED 2021

BIG IDEAS BOOK

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 notified



IT ALL STARTED WITH UNTETHERED

The seeds of this book were planted in 2020. As the pandemic upended the event industry, we came together for a three-day virtual gathering—the Untethered summit—to tap into the power of our shared strength.

Then in 2021, Untethered harnessed the collective brain and heart power of our connected communities. During a two-day virtual Design-a-Thon, we gathered once more. This time, we split into facilitated groups to talk about nine different topics, or Circles. After the Design-a-Thon, participants shared the ideas they tested in their events and the insights from their circles through two post-event follow-up meetings.

Out of those Circles and meetings comes the exciting content that forms this new idea book.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

For ease of use, we've sorted the content into two sections: mind-blown moments and tactical ideas.

Start with the mind-blown moments section. There, you'll find new ways to think about old problems. And old tricks to use on new problems. We recommend you read one, and then take a moment to let it simmer before reading on. If you want, you can adopt a thinker pose for maximum effect.

The Ideas section offers actionable tactics that you can test out at your next event. These are best consumed after your second cup of Joe while listening to Drake or some classic AC/DC. Sharpen a pencil and roll up your sleeves, as you can start applying them right away.

THIS IS JUST THE START

This process will shape the design of a full hybrid event. Partners will host a live/satellite location, combined with virtual, to prove out our playbook and provide a tactical, data-driven final playbook that empowers and engages the event industry like never before. More on that soon.

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!

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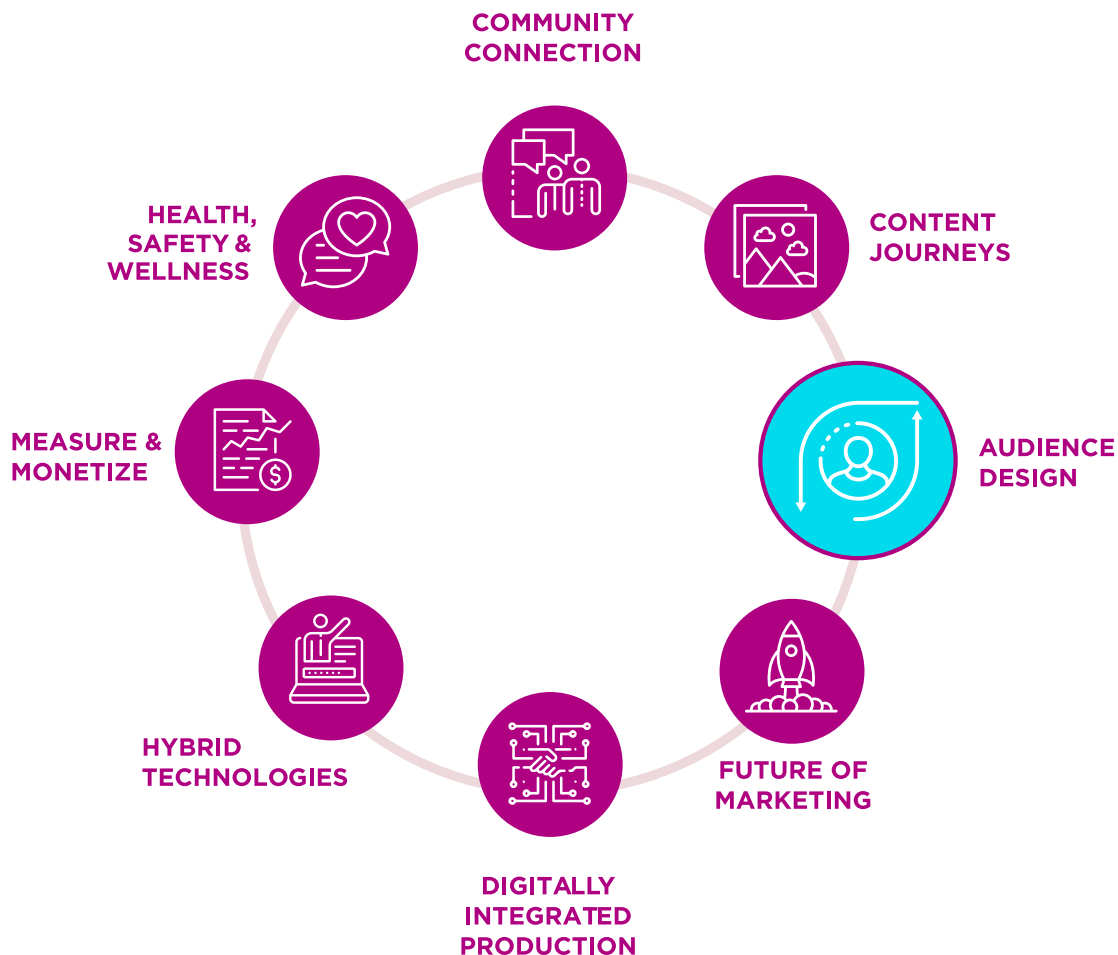
THE AUDIENCE DESIGN CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

The topic of this chapter is absolutely fundamental to good event planning. All the keynotes, breakouts, and activities in the world won't matter much unless we first understand our audiences. Then we can build our events around who they are, what they care about, and what they want. In event planning parlance, this is called audience design.

Our workshopers have put on hundreds of events over the years, including hybrid and online events. So they had lots of thoughts on how we can create events that truly match our audiences' wants, needs, and tastes. We've sorted through all the great tips and tricks, highlighting the best of them for you here.



MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

We're driven by our emotions. Our egos insist our logical, right-brained way of thinking is always in command. But, truth is, we're driven by our emotions a lot more than we'd like to admit. (Come on now, you didn't buy that fancy red sports car because it gets good mileage!) So take a tip from the behavioral scientists and consumer-goods marketers: Appeal to the emotions of your audience. They may think they're all business, but deep down, they're human beings with bodies, minds, hearts, and souls. Tap into that. Engage your audience with positive emotion, and you can make a big, memorable, and long-lasting impact.

A nudge, a push, a shove. Some attendees need an extra push to engage. Others want to be left alone. Everyone's a little different. Vive la difference! The key is to design a diversity of experiences and ways to access those experiences. For example, try creating some informal events as well as building in informal elements into events. This can make people feel more comfortable about opening up, sharing, and networking.

Everyone is an artist. Remember when you were a kid and you were proud of your drawings or Lego creations? Human beings have a biological drive to create and show off. We like making stuff. So give folks opportunities to create things they can hold in their hands, walk around, and have others admire. It's a super engagement tool.



Competition is key. Another human drive you can tap into is our zest for competition. There's a reason people are drawn to contests, games, and races. Competition gets our hearts racing, our bodies moving, and our minds focusing. Which makes it a great way to get people engaged.

Listen to the customer. Product marketers are big on audience surveys, focus groups, and customer research. Why? Because they know that the secret of selling starts with understanding the needs and wants of the customer. They have a term for this: voice of the customer, or VOC. Inject the VOC more richly into the full cycle of your event-building process, from pre-event to post-event. And likely, your attendees will voice their pleasure with their experience.

A guy walks into a bar. One of the toughest acts in show business is working as a stand-up comedian. Even the best of them have stories about bombing in front of an audience. One trick, they'll say, is to learn to read the audience and be willing to adjust your act on the fly. Take a cue from the stand-ups: Find small ways to adjust what you're saying in response to audience participation. Don't be afraid to shift your content or delivery with your audience.



TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND OUR AUDIENCES?

Funny thing about us humans: We want to be understood. There's nothing more annoying than getting pitches from salespeople who know absolutely nothing about you, right? I mean, do your homework, buddy! So the first step in creating an engaging and personalized experience for your audience is to—drumroll please—know your audience! Do they prefer small group workshopping? Big keynotes with bursts of fire and lights? Networking over tapas and margaritas? So just how do you figure this out? Good question! Learning the likes and dislikes of your audiences is easier said than done, especially when you're working on a tight timeline. Here are some tactics you can use to decipher the personas of your attendees.

FOCUS POCUS

- Not to get all Mad Men about this, but even Don Draper conducted focus groups to figure out how to sell Lucky Strikes, Chevies, or John Deere tractors. Get representative attendees in a room and probe. (It's also fun in a weird voyeuristic way to sit behind the one-way glass and watch.) Focus groups give qualitative, not quantitative information. So you may get insights you won't get on a survey.
- By virtue of their agreeing to join your focus group, participants already have a bigger stake in the outcome of your event. So give them special recognition. This can be a special beta-tester badge on their profile, an exclusive tchotchke, or even a facilitator role.



THE NUMBERS GAME

- Surveys are a good way to collect data about your audiences. This is the quantitative side of research. Surveys provide an easier way to analyze the numbers. They're also a bit more reliable than focus groups, which can be swayed by vocal or opinionated participants. If 75 percent of respondents say they prefer keynotes over workshops, you can be pretty sure that keynotes are a good bet.
- Keep your surveys short. People are okay with giving you a few minutes of their time, but don't push it.
- Make surveys a part of the registration process. That way, you'll capture nearly everyone's preferences, not just those of the most outspoken group.

READ THE TEA LEAVES

- The great thing about data is all the ways you can crunch and analyze it. Look at past attendee data to get a better understanding of previous attendees' experience with the product or company. That can be helpful in extrapolating to the new event.
- Social media can give great (and sometimes brutally honest) insights into what people really think. Analyze social media to see what attendees are saying about the event, the organization, or the industry, and to gauge what they are interested in. Just take the feedback with a grain of salt: The complainers tend to take to social media more than the complementors.



CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT?

With the move to digital and hybrid, attending an event is possible for a host of new folks: People who previously couldn't afford the time and money it took to travel to an in-person event. People with rigorous dietary or mobility restrictions. Or people who simply don't like crowds. But it's not all sunshine and flowers. With a greater diversity of attendees, it's imperative to create a more inclusive environment. There's a lot that goes into creating a digital or hybrid experience that makes your audience feel included and welcome. Here are some of the tactics our workshopers came up with.

CONDUCT ACCESSIBILITY AUDITS

- You wouldn't make it difficult for people with disabilities to get around your in-person event. Likewise, you need to design your online event for easy access for all. This is especially critical during live events. Accessibility audits evaluate how easy (or not) it is for people to navigate and interact on the website or platform. Keeping track of accessibility for past events helps prevent issues from recurring in the future.

HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?

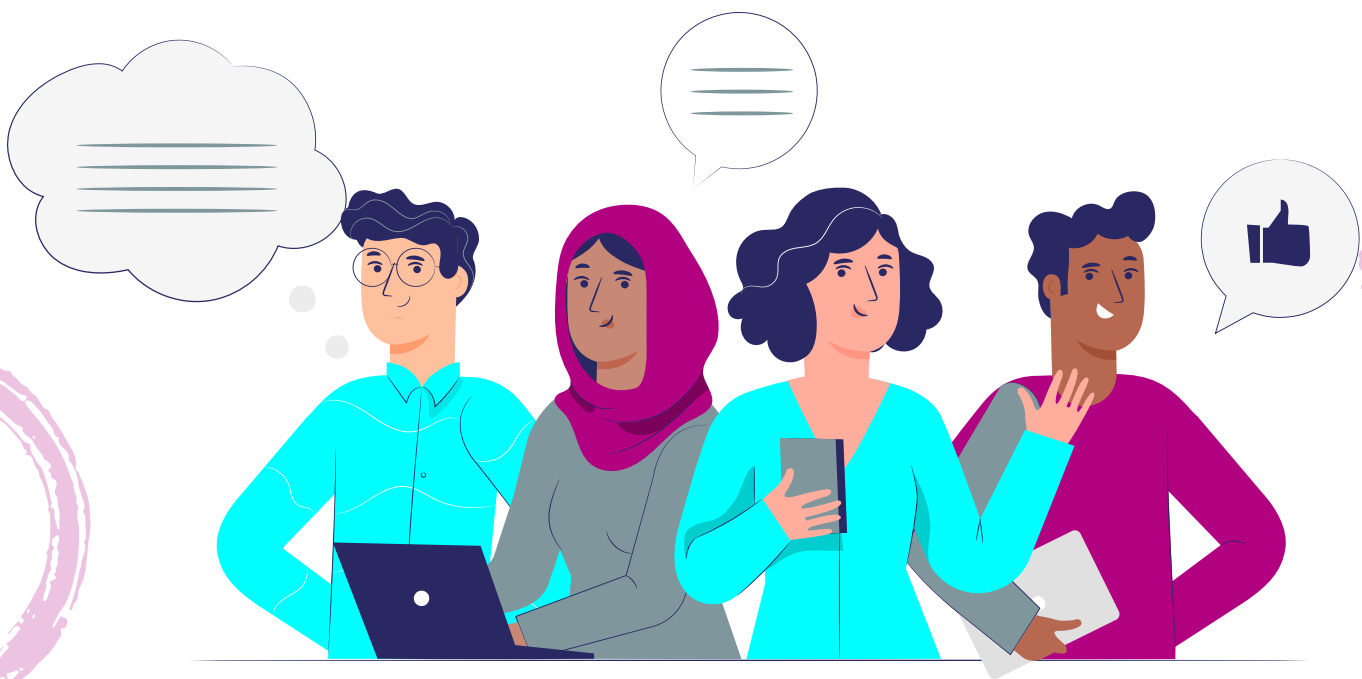
- Just as you wouldn't throw up barriers to people with disabilities, you wouldn't make navigating your digital event the equivalent of a tourist trying to get from Penn Station to Times Square in New York. (Trust us, everyone has a different answer.) User experience, or UX, is about evaluating what it's like for someone to use a product or, in your case, to interact with and get around your online event platform. What's the journey like? How easy and efficiently can people move about? Start with good UX design from the beginning. Then get beta testers involved to test drive. Gather their feedback on what works, what doesn't, and how to improve.



- Create a pop-up tutorial or a series of mini videos that guide your attendees through the platform.
- You can also add pop-up notifications that bring your audience to where they need to be, when they need to be there. Too bad they don't have that in New York!

LEND AN EXTRA HAND

- Think of your non-English speakers. And those with hearing impairments. Provide language translation for those who prefer to engage in their native tongue. You can gauge which languages will be represented in your registration survey. If you're not able to translate every session, at least consider providing translation for keynote sessions. For the hearing impaired, provide closed captioning. But keep in mind also that having an interpreter or signer can help convey the emotion of the speaker.
- One workshopper suggested a cool idea for those who get fidgety or antsy. Consider distributing sensory kits (e.g., Playdoh, fidget spinners) that allow attendees to feel, touch, and keep their hands busy. These little doo-dads give people an activity to redirect all that anxious energy. (And, since they're remote, their fidgeting won't likely bother their neighbors). Something as simple as a knot-tying kit or doodle pad and pen could help the more uptight among your attendees pull through the event.



CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE CREATE MEANINGFUL ATTENDEE CONNECTIONS?

Events are all about bringing people together, being a part of something larger than ourselves. In the coolest events, we can work as a group to unravel the knottiest problems—something that would have been impossible on our own. But creating this powerful connection has always been a challenge for planners. Now that we're planning hybrid events with two distinct audiences, this has become even tougher. Here are some strategies our workshopers dreamed up to help you foster meaningful connections at your event.

BEAM ME UP, SCOTTY!

- Create a 3D environment/space station lounge for your remote audience with virtual reality headsets to meet and greet. At your connection station, provide VR headsets to your in-person audience to meet their digital counterparts.
- Knock down the digital divide between your online and in-person attendees. At the physical location, create connection stations with computer tablets where in-person attendees can join in on Zoom meetings and other virtual gatherings to connect with online attendees.

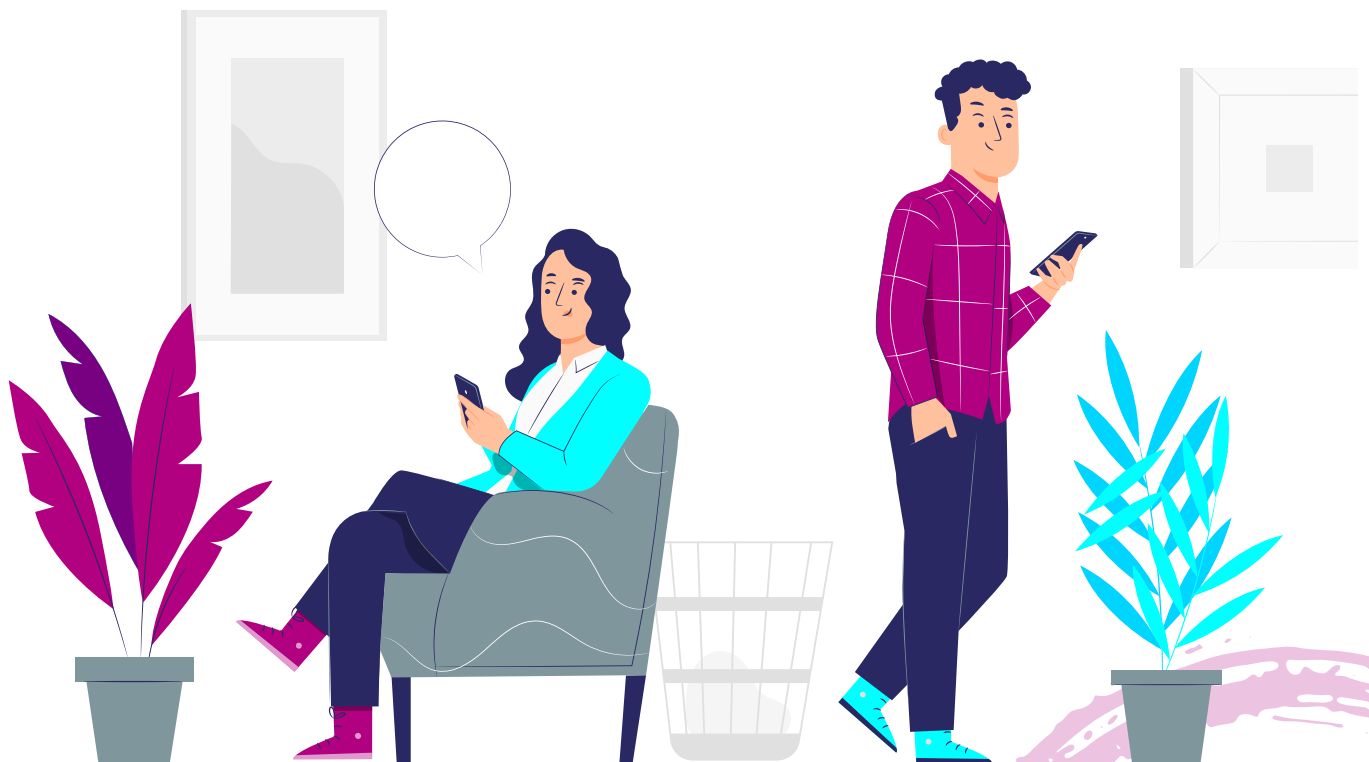


GET SYNCHED

- Equal access for all! Regardless of whether they visit in-person or virtually, all attendees should be able to ask questions and participate in polls in the same way. A true hybrid event is when everyone experiences activities, sessions, and other goings-on together at the same time.
- For the in-person audience, put the session chat up on the screen. That way, they can see the digital audience's real-time participation. And make sure they can participate as well on their phone.
- For those who might find the running chat distracting, create separate rooms. Or put the chat roll on the far end of the screen or out of sight of that audience.

MATCHMAKER, MAKE ME A MATCH

- Offer a “pairing” system during the pre-event that matches virtual and onsite attendees. That way, they can share their journeys or learnings with each other. As much as we try to make the two ways of experiencing equivalent, their experiences will differ somewhat. So this allows partners to help each other catch up on anything they may have missed on the other side of the digital curtain.



FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

Here's a big shout-out to everyone who participated and contributed in the Design-a-thon. In particular, thanks to our incredible, insightful facilitators. Thank you for sharing your ideas. And thank you for devoting your time to train and run these workshops.



Thank you to our Audience Design Facilitators!

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Curtis Haley, Beyond Consulting LLC

Stephanie Siemens, Iron Horse

Amelie Bahlsen, Storycraft Lab

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Thank you to our Audience & Design Circle Partner Storycraft Lab!



LOVE THESE IDEAS?

Join the UNTETHERED movement for more ideas, inspiration, and innovation! Go to untethered.events to learn more.

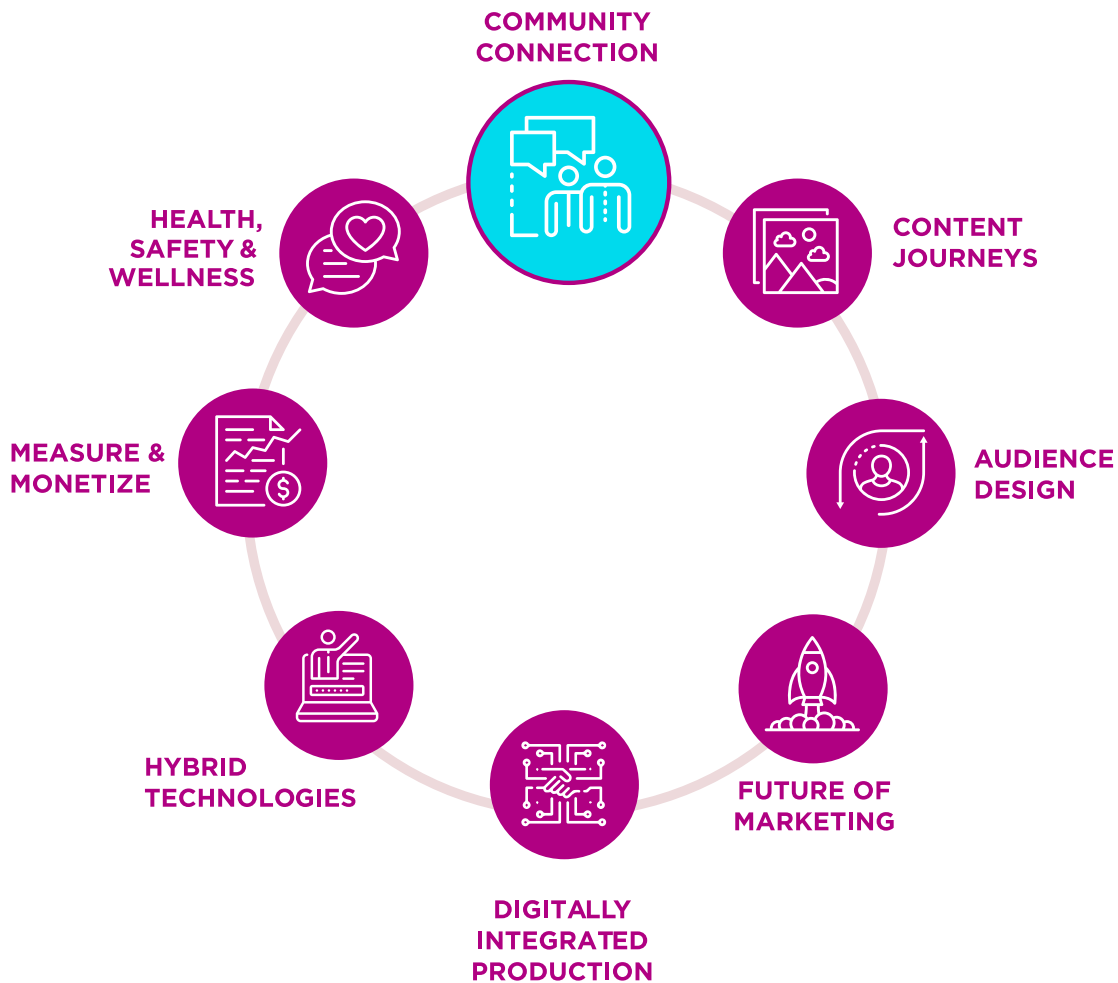
UN TETHERED 2021

THE COMMUNITY CONNECTION CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

In the events-management business, we're all about community. So folks in the Community Connections circle workshops had plenty to offer on how to build community, how to get people engaged, and how to keep relationships going long after the final session. We separated the wheat from the chaff and collected the best of them here for you.



MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

Think community. The event is more than one moment in time: It's part of a process of building community that can stay engaged for years to come. When you refocus your lens on community building, you extend the lifecycle of your event into a continuum of touchpoints. That's great news for the sales funnel!

Virtually connected. When you focus on building community, you realize that your attendees are connected with you—and not just during the event. With your new mindset, you find they're plugged in digitally before, during, and after. In a way, technology turns us all into virtual attendees. Even while attending an event in-person, we're still connected digitally in our hotel rooms, in hallways, at restaurants and watering holes—even (can you spare a square?) in the restroom.

People are more open to connecting virtually. You know how it goes at in-person events: People like to hang with their own peeps. That sometimes makes it harder to network for the 25 to 40 percent of the population who are introverts. But virtual connection removes a lot of those barriers. It helps you meet new people without the awkward social dances and back-in-middle-school cliques. We've also found that there's less small talk. People dive right into the heart of the matter.



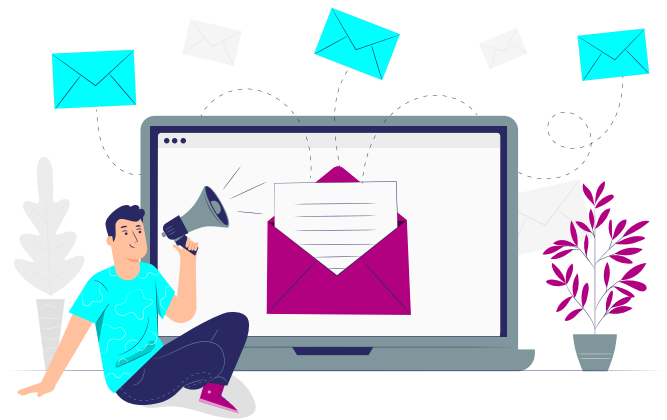
The world is full of inspiration. Just look at the Super Bowl. It's a great model for community connection at events. Think about how fans gather at sports taverns to cheer for their team. Likewise, your sponsors and influencers can act like the local pub (sans the IPAs and margaritas), gathering people with common interests in micro events. And, by creating some kind of competition, it's amazing how people will tune in.

Something happened on the way to the event. The pandemic forced us into virtual mode. It also changed events forever by showing the power of massive lead gen and associated data. For many, the default is now the virtual experience, not the in-person event. We'll likely never return to the old way of doing things.

Communities design the event experience. Now that events have blown up, all the norms are out the window. So don't guess what people want. Ask. Then use their input to design your events.

Personalization creates community. Sure, it's great to have hundreds of hours and web pages full of content. But people only want to consume what interests them. So, during registration, allow folks to select their interests. Then set up content journeys mapped to different personas. Like magic, attendees will meet like-minded people in their sessions and connect. Take advantage of these pop-up communities with special-access sessions or follow-up events.

Community is as valuable as content. Take a simu-live session. The chat box often provides as much helpful information as the presenter. Plus, it gives those sessions a level of energy and pizzazz that rivals even the best of live sessions. So look for ways to bring your community to your content.



TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1:

HOW CAN WE CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AT OUR EVENT?

There's a difference between attending and participating. The former tends to be passive, while the latter tends to be active. Being active means being engaged. And being engaged means you feel part of something bigger than yourself. You feel part of a community. And that's the gold of event management.

START EARLY

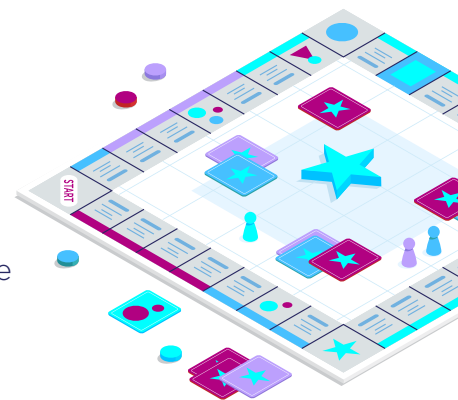
- A lot of excitement comes from anticipating what's going to happen at the event. Tap into this early enthusiasm. Create pre-event networking or meet-up opportunities for your community to connect. (In-person attendees really crave this extra time to connect.) This can include virtual networking sessions through apps like twine, online collaboration games, group discussions with an influencer, and local wine-and-dine experiences. Include sponsors, too—just make sure they know the rules of engagement (no hard-selling). Sponsors also can enhance the experience by bringing in cool games and entertainment that your budget can't handle.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

- All work and no play? Cindy Lauper reminded us that girls (and boys) just want to have fun. So get some games going, themed to your event. Divide your audience into teams, with influencers or sponsors acting as team leads. Use Easter egg-style hunts or other types of gamification. Create team leaderboards to promote engagement. You can even start before the event: Have people vote on a social activity or some other engaging experience.

LET THE INFLUENCERS INFLUENCE

- Influencers can create a buzz just by showing up. Attendees want to know where they're going and what they're saying. And guess what? Influencers love the attention. So give it to them. Publish your influencers' journeys. Let attendees know what sessions they'll join (both virtual and in-person). Try having a roving reporter interview them between sessions. Make it interactive. Field questions from event-goers. Have the reporter ask influencers for a response and then publish the Q&A.



CHALLENGE 2: HOW CAN WE KEEP THE COMMUNITY GOING AFTER THE EVENT?

Remember what we said above about events being just part of the process of community building? Okay, so what do you do long after the final session closes and the sponsors give away their last tchotchke? Here are some ways to build the momentum and keep it going.



BIGGER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

- Don't sweat the big events. Instead create a slew of micro events. Bring back a popular speaker to workshop their idea. Create a networking session for segments of your audience. Focus on consistent delivery of content and networking. Follow community-driven formats that allow participants to take charge.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- If they can't come to the mountain, bring the mountain to them. Bring the event or sessions to the people that missed it live. You know the sizzling and relevant content that attendees just shouldn't miss, right? So make sure they see it. Send reminders with links to the targeted group. Don't be shy about reminding people—they're busy and may have missed your previous reminder. Just don't overdo it. Twice is nice, four's a bore.

SPEAKERS AND SPONSORS AND INFLUENCERS—OH MY!

- Take advantage of the key individuals who are invested in engaging with your audience. Sponsors, speakers, and influencers are part of your community, and they'd love to be more involved in it. They've got relevant content? Leverage it. They've got cool experiences and games? Share it. They've got sexy tech? Use it—and get more mileage from your budget. Dream up events and community forums with your speakers, sponsors, and influencers. Get them invested in your event, and their followers will be more likely to become your followers as well.

THE GREAT DEBATE

- Want to start a brainstorm? Develop a juicy question or challenge from your event and pose it to your audience on social media. With a single social post, you can stir up few weeks of interaction and involve tons of people. Plus, it positions you as a thought leader.

CHALLENGE 3: CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE CREATE AN INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE?

When it comes to formatting and programming events, vive la difference! What works for me doesn't necessarily work for you. While we share many like interests, we're all over the map in terms of our preferences for how we like to meet, engage, interact, and consume content. The key is to create inclusive experiences that meet the needs of a diverse audience.

AVOID THE THREE-RING CIRCUS

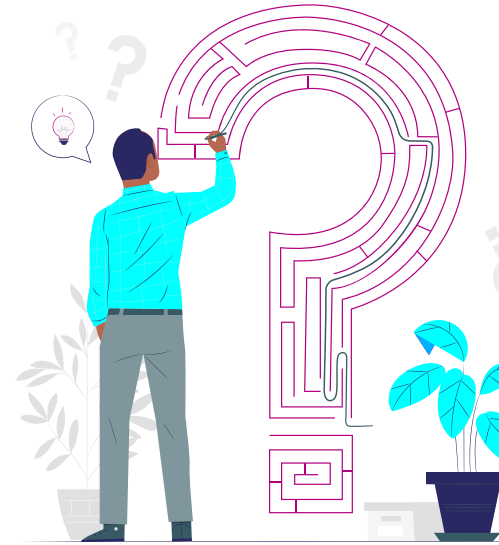
- Unless you plan on joining the circus soon, leave the juggling to the professional multi-taskers. If you try to do everything at the same time, a few items might crash to the floor—including yourself. To avoid flopping, make it easier by holding the digital and in-person experiences on different timelines. Then give your 100% to each audience.
- Budget tighter than that friend who does a disappearing act whenever it's their turn to pick up the tab? Try recording the in-person experience first. Then bring it to the virtual participants later.

YOU DO YOU

- Next time you're at a bar, watch how people interact. Some like to sit across from each other and make eye contact. Others like sitting next to each other and watching the human parade. Similarly, people like to engage with your content differently. Some prefer to listen on headphones while walking, some like sitting in person right across the table, some like to sit at their desktop but with their video disabled. You get the picture. So, provide a variety of experiences: clubhouse-inspired sessions, speed networking, small-group discussions, and so on.

YOU WANT MUSTARD ON THAT?

- There's a sure-fire way to give people content in the way they want: Ask them. Poll your community and audience in advance on how they prefer to engage with your event. Just make sure your planning team draws from a diverse set of opinions. People have different learning and engagement styles: Some are auditory, some visual. Some like plenary sessions; others like small breakout sessions. Once you gauge your audience's preferences, align your content and event to their wants and needs.



FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

We want to give a huge thank you to everyone that participated and contributed in the Design-a-thon. In particular, we want to thank our fabulous facilitators. Not only did they share their ideas, but they also devoted their time to train and run these workshops.



Thank you to our Community Connection Circle Facilitators!

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Rachel Stephan, snöball

Rae Malcham, Hubb

Sophie Ahmed, VEI

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THE CONTENT JOURNEYS CHAPTER

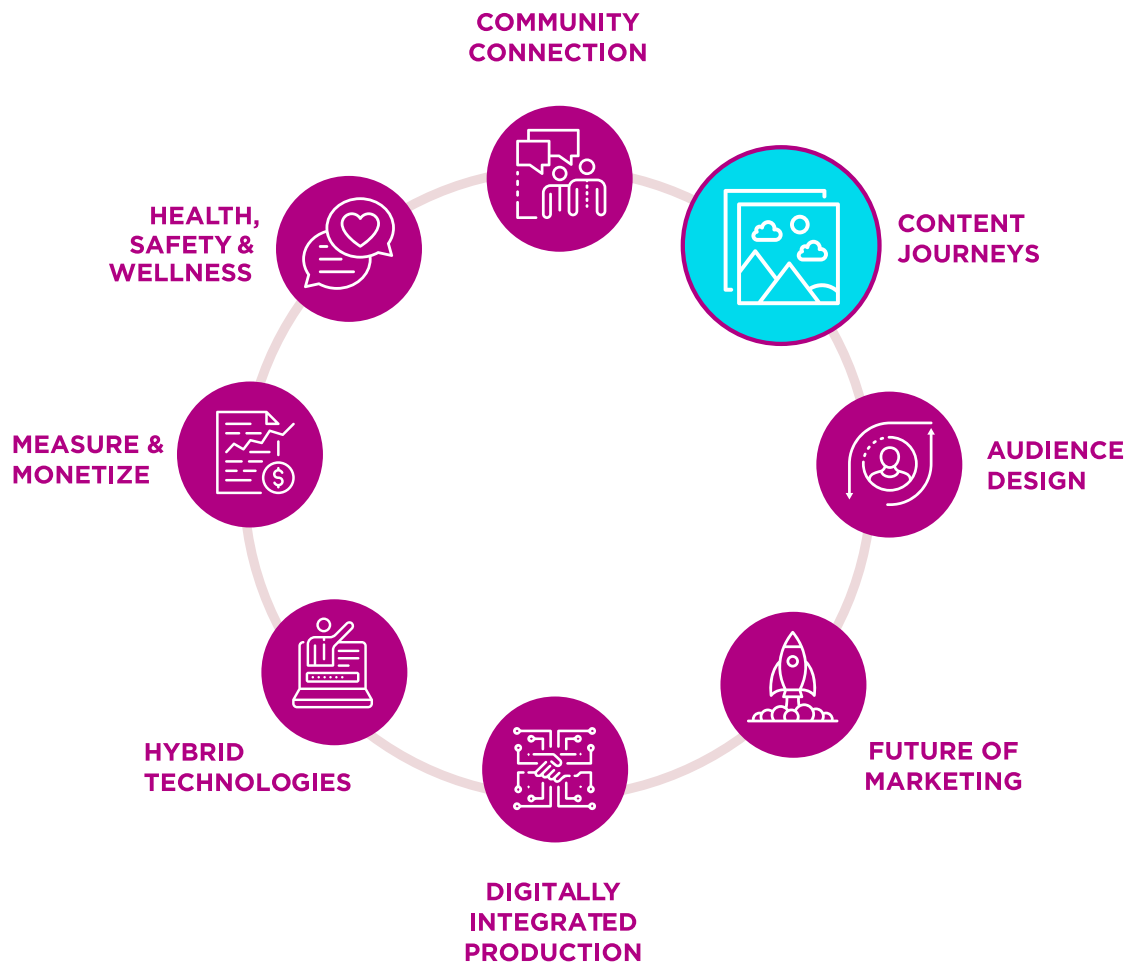


BIG IDEAS

Think of a content journey as a progression from beginning to end. What are attendees thinking, seeing, feeling, and doing at the start of the event? How does that change over the course of the event and become something even greater? How does that continue after the event?

The content journey circle focused on how to create an end-to-end content plan across all touchpoints. And they expanded the notion of content. It's not just about education or knowledge transfer. It's also about relationships: meeting other people, collaborating, growing together.

The circle looked at how to customize content journeys with engaging, accessible, and inclusive content geared to different learning styles. They explored personalized pathways, attendee engagement, content connections, and insights for inclusion.




MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

The FOMO factor. You've been to the live events where there are so many sessions happening at the same time, your head spins. Unless you've figured out a way to be in two (or three) places at the same time, it's tough to settle on a session. And once you do, admit it, how many of you park yourself near the door just in case you want to exit early? Fear of missing out is a real thing. But for online and hybrid events, FOMO is less of a factor. Attendees can always watch later on demand. That makes it easier for event managers to create a full program.

It's not the platform. It's the experience. You have to start with the goal. What are you trying to accomplish? An event for 3,000 people doesn't need a high level of personalization. On the other hand, an event for your top 300 clients around the globe? You better make it high-value to each and every person. If you do, they'll spend what it takes, even in a virtual environment.

Curate and customize experiences. We all have different learning styles. By discovering how your attendees prefer to gather, process, and analyze information, you can tailor experiences to fit. Some people like joining interactive sessions or participating in collective gatherings to solve problems. Some like sessions that happen outside the breakout room, such as walk-and-talks. Some like connecting with others or the thrill of spontaneity and the unexpected. Others are community-focused. The more you know your audience, the better you can customize sessions that appeal to them.



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Get outside the box. The sky's the limit in terms of creativity. Our content journey circle described some fascinating examples of out-of-the-box thinking. Like a “midnight kitchen raid” at a hotel, where attendees get a text inviting them down to the hotel kitchen. Attendees can open the refrigerators and pick something for waiting chefs to cook, or choose from a special buffet. Another example: a “gorilla gardening flash mob.” A late-night text goes out inviting people to plant a garden in a pre-selected neighborhood. The group is advised to wear grungy clothes and shoes. Supplied with tools and plants, the group boards a bus and goes to work. In the morning, residents awake to find a beautiful new garden.

Get physical. In the digital space, we engage our brains. But what about our bodies? Try some activities that get people moving. For example, take breaks in which you have an expert teach attendees some new hands-on trick. One group, for example, had a coffee barista demonstrate how to make cute foam designs on top of lattes and cappuccinos. An added benefit: The physical break re-energizes the brain for engaging in more content.

Case in point. As humans, we love stories. Combine our love of story with experience, and you get the case study. Our circle talked about their own experiences with this. After a while, people want to go beyond theories and abstractions. They want pictures, floor plans, examples of what works, and what doesn't. When presenting case studies, allow for participation through a Q&A session or other engagement. Encourage tough questions. Go for the deep dive.

Remind me never to do that. We pay attention to disaster stories. And we remember them. It's not so much a case of *schadenfreude* as it is our aversion to pain. If we can avoid heartache and heartburn by learning how one of our peers messed up, that's valuable content. Especially when a well-known and admired colleague lets you see what's behind the curtain. Members of the content journey circle said that sessions in which presenters lay bare their pain points and challenges garner the highest ratings and most positive feedback.

This ain't no Talking Heads. Leave the talking heads to that rockin' band of the '70s and '80s. It's long past time to retire the one-way lecture. Sure, there's an hour and place to hear from the subject-matter experts and great masters. But not in our virtual and hybrid world of events. The watchwords for our world are inclusion, engagement, and interaction.

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TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS IN HYBRID?

A good way to open up people for sharing is to start with some icebreakers. Let people get to know a little more about each other personally. Of course, it's one thing to meet and get to know people in person. It's another to do it in a virtual setting. But it can be done. Our circle participants brainstormed a bunch of techniques and shared some of their own experiences.

GET SOCIAL

- Leverage social media to see what attendees share in common before and during the event. Make it easy to access their social media profiles on LinkedIn and Facebook. Social media sites like LinkedIn tend to be very business-centric, though; so you usually don't discover interesting facts about people's families and lives outside of work. Try other warmups, like having people share details about their favorite hobbies and pastimes. Getting to know someone, even in this small way, can help build relationships.

BREAK THE ICE

- A fun, yet powerful exercise is to gather a small group of four or five people who don't know each other. Ask them to find four or five things they share in common. It could be anything: favorite foods, sports teams, colleges, pets, vacation spots, TV shows, actors, podcasts, music, musicians. The list goes on. Sharing these little favorites can help people to feel more comfortable with each other—and get them in the frame of mind to contribute.

THE POWER OF AI

- Artificial intelligence tools can help match people with similar preferences and interests. Let's say the AI tracks attendees' choices at the event—where they go, what they do, what sessions they attend, what they click on, what they write. The tool can analyze that data and then introduce that person to, say, 10 other like-minded individuals.

SCAVENGER HUNT

- Warm up attendees before the event by sending them activity kits. They're given fun things to do, like scavenger hunts, on different days of the event. Then they're encouraged to post their activities for points and a chance to win prizes. The prizes can be photogenic doodads, like cute pet bling, that inspire people to share pictures, comments, and likes.

CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE BREAK FREE FROM THE SLIDE?

Save the slide show for your vacation pics. Thank goodness we've moved past the days of the text-laden PowerPoint presentation. At least, we hope everyone has gotten the memo. If the medium is the message, what does the bullet-point-heavy slide show say about us? Free yourself from the tyranny of the text-only outline slide!

THINK IMAGERY

- Most of us remember pictures better than we do words. Err on the side of images in your presentations—whether that's a photograph, an illustration, or an infographic. Treat your images as ways to punctuate your presentation—not as ways to drive it.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

- We're more likely to engage with content if it triggers our emotions. Choose your images carefully to elicit a feeling, whether that's happiness, joy, sadness, disgust—even anger. Social scientists and novelists know that, to really reach someone, you've got to tug at their heartstrings. When we feel empathy, we are much more persuadable and open to change.

PALETTE CLEANSER

- Another small way to give attendees a break and prevent information overload: Insert a restful photo, music, or video as a sort of palette cleanser. Give it five or 10 minutes before moving on to presenting more content.

PECHAKUCHA

- PechaKucha® is a fast-paced storytelling approach in which a presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each. It's all about show, don't tell.



CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE INJECT MORE ENGAGEMENT INTO HYBRID?

What differentiates a virtual, digital experience from, say, a YouTube video? In the latter, we passively consume content. That's fine when you want to sit back on the sofa and chill. In the former, we actively engage our brains. That's why we're moving away from the straightforward, stand-up-at-the-podium-and-lecture format at our events. Today's virtual and hybrid events are all about engagement and interactivity.

INSTANT EXPERTS

- Here's a creative way to create a panel on the spot. Pick a topic, say, virtual events. Then ask people to line up virtually and sort themselves along a range of knowledge, from most knowledgeable to least. The top three most-informed people then become the panel of experts. It's a great way to leverage the brainpower in the room (and save on the cost of paid panelists).

TURN THE TABLES

- We spend a lot of time trying to intuit what our audiences want to hear. A sure-fire way to do it? Ask them directly. Instead of delivering a well-meaning presentation that may miss the mark, conduct an ask-me-anything question-answer session. You may be delighted to learn that people want to hear more about what you'd planned to discuss. Or you may be surprised to go in a completely different direction.



ENGAGE YOUR PEERS

- There's so much collective intelligence at our events. A good way to tap into it? Share it. A variation on the informal Q&A session, this approach works if you have attendees willing to share a problem or a success. One content-journey circle participant tried this at an event by soliciting ideas during registration. Did someone have a challenge they wanted input to help solve? Or was someone willing to share a success with a unique issue and get additional input? These turned into fun, high-value discussions.

JUMPSTART THE CONVERSATION

- Use “micro-keynotes” at the start of a session as a basis for discussion. Then use that content as a catalyst for conversation in breakout roundtables, either in-person or digitally.

ROUND ROBIN

- This approach employs a combination of the pre-set topic and the open-ended conversation. The twist here is to start with a pre-determined number of topics. Assign each topic to a separate “table” (real or virtual). Then go round-robin, limiting the number of participants at any one table to four or fewer. (More than four can break the talk into two separate conversations.) Set a time limit. When the alarm sounds, people can move on to a new table.

HACK IT

- A fun approach to collective problem-solving is the hackathon. Set a clear goal or problem to solve. Then invite participants to brainstorm solutions. One content journeys circle member ran a hackathon to drum up fundraising ideas for a local non-profit. But the tool can be used to develop any number of solutions on a range of challenges.

BREAK IT UP

- If you have a long session with a subject matter expert, look for ways to break the session into smaller chunks. Every 12 to 15 minutes or so, stop the presentation. Run an activity that engages the brain or body in a different way. This pause refreshes energy. And it gives participants an opportunity to digest the content up to that point.

CHALLENGE 4: HOW DO WE ENSURE DIVERSITY IN CONTENT AND SPEAKERS?

Your digital event is essentially your brand. So make sure your event sends the right message about what you stand for. If diversity and inclusion form part of your values, make them a part of your content strategy and speaker representation. The days of all-male panels (panels) and other gender-, ethnicity-, and identity-exclusive (non)representative groups are—or should be—over. Diversity means a mix not only of identities but also perspectives.

START SMALL

- If you have subject matter experts with little public speaking experience, giving them the choice to pre-record presentations feels less daunting than presenting live. This opens up an untapped pool of talent and showcases the presenting firm's thought leadership. It also builds confidence in subject matter experts to continue presenting—eventually going live.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

- Start an internal speaker's bureau. Recruit speakers, then provide resources and training throughout the year. You could even start a Toastmaster's group to give practice opportunities. A speaker's bureau allows you to build capability, bring in authentic new voices, and then plug into an enthusiastic, confident, and diverse pool of talent when speaking opportunities arise.

PANEL CHANNEL

- Introduce potential speakers by first having them join panels. The panel is a good first step toward presenting. There's less pressure to deliver formal remarks. But it's still an opportunity to get in front of an audience and build confidence.



CHALLENGE 5: HOW DO WE MAXIMIZE THE INTERACTION BETWEEN IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL ATTENDEES?

It's probably not fair to those who pay more to attend an in-person event to have the same experience as someone who pays less for the virtual version. So it's important to recognize them as separate experiences. Still, how do you encourage interaction between and among these audiences?

EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE

- Instead of treating the event as a one-shot deal, extend it throughout the year. While you may treat the in-person and virtual experiences separately, after the event you can host combined virtual events for both audiences.

PEN PALS

- Create pen pals, perhaps groups of two, three, or more, who agree to stay in touch after the event. This can be done via email, a Facebook private forum, What'sApp, or another social media channel. It's a great way to share problems, challenges, and resources and to solicit ideas and solutions.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Ever had the experience of really enjoying a digital event and engaging in a spirited chat? When the meeting's over, the chat ends. Bummer! But wouldn't it be great to keep the energy going? Establish an online community forum that lives beyond the event. It's a way to create always-engaged fans.



FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

A big thank you to all who participated and contributed in the Design-a-thon. Special thanks go to our intrepid facilitators for their ideas and commitment. We couldn't have done it without you!

Thank you to our Content Journeys Circle Facilitators!



Alisha Wenc, C200

Allison Crooker, VMware

Crystal Shipps, MPI

Deanna Schuler, Steady Course LLC

Evan Casey, MPI

Jamie Timperley, Dynamic Events

Jessie States, MPI

Jherica Rhodes, MPI

Julie Lynch, F5

Ken Roden, HighSpot

Kerri Garbis, Ovation

Michael Kophs, Microsoft

Nancy Snowden/Lori Pugh Marcum, MPI

Naomi Clare Crellin, Storycraft Lab

Thank you to our Content Journeys Circle Partner Dynamic Events!



LOVE THESE IDEAS?

Head on over to untethered.events for more ideas, inspiration,
and innovation!

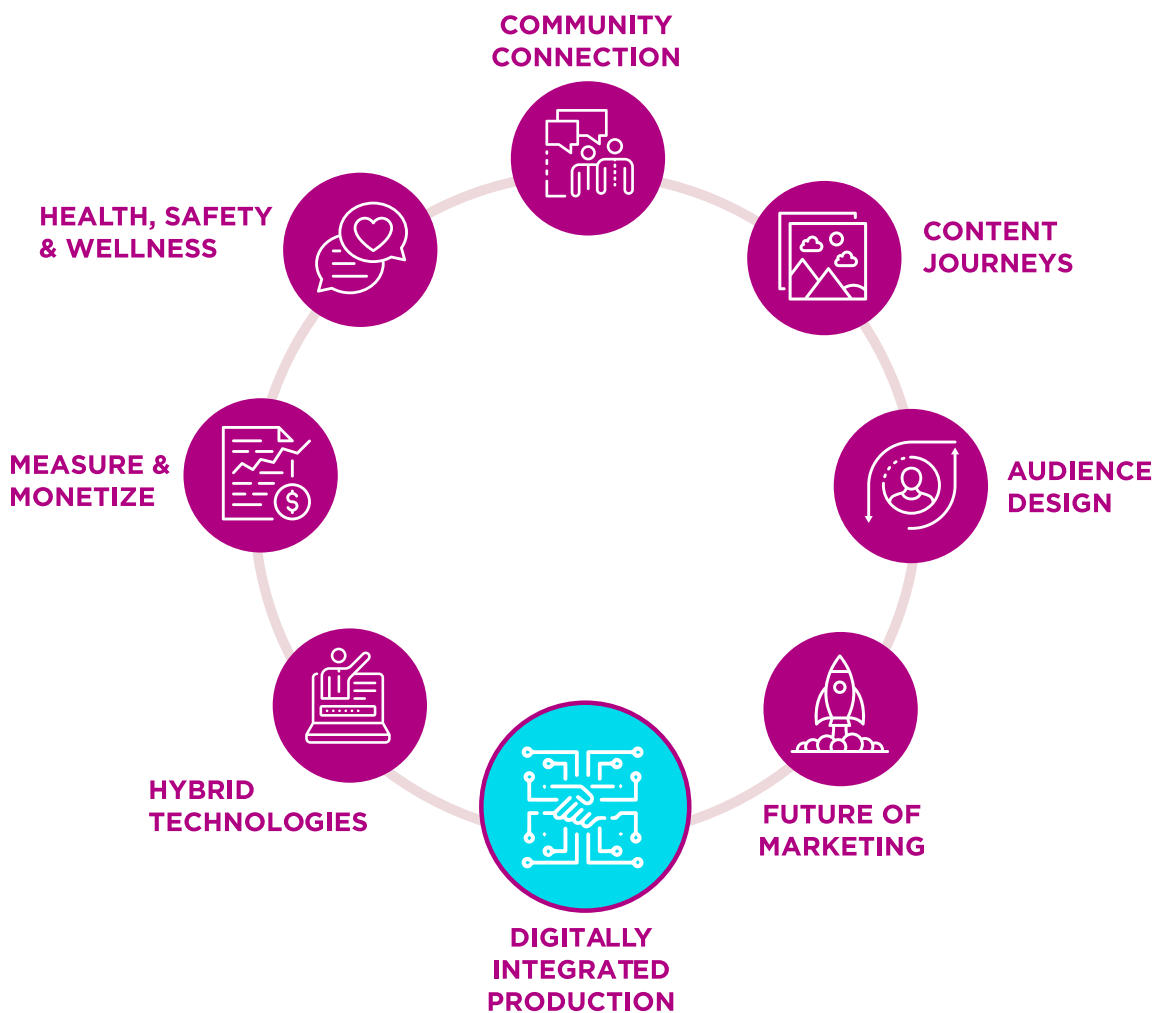
UN TETHERED 2021

THE DIGITALLY INTEGRATED PRODUCTION CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

There were a *ton* of great ideas that came out of the Digital Production workshops. Some may have marked the start of the robot apocalypse, but hey, that's just the sign of a good brainstorm. We took all the ideas into the studio and captured the best of the bunch for you here.



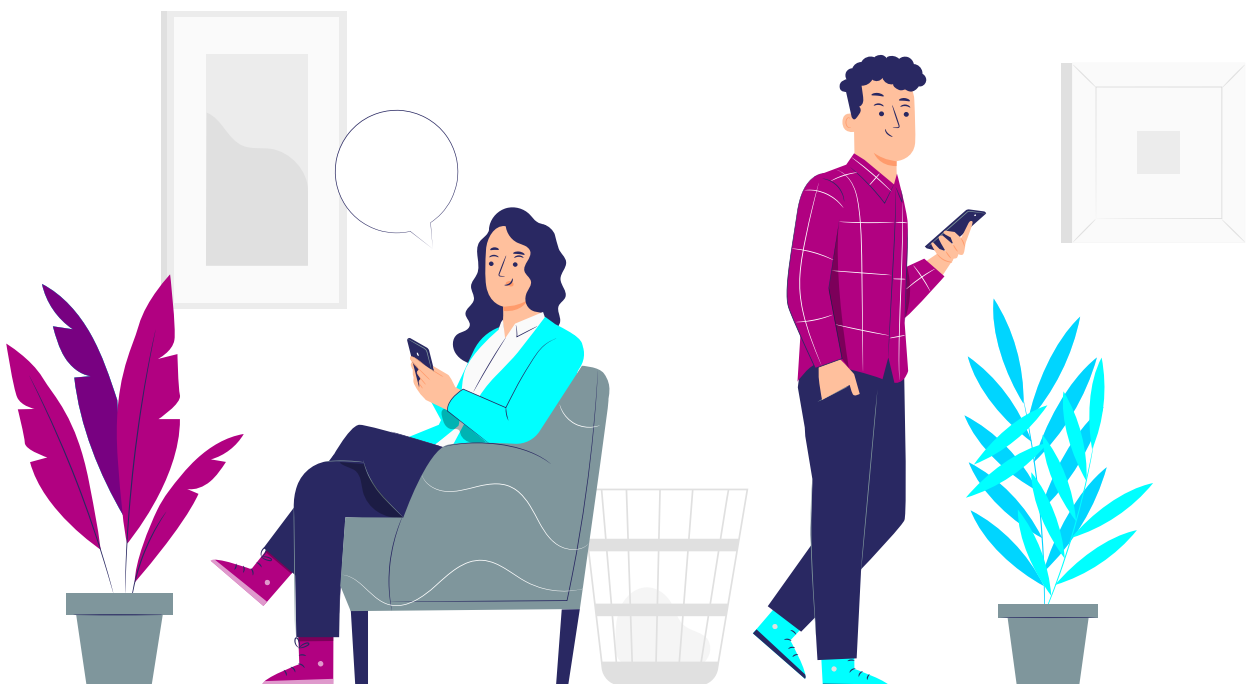
MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

Experimentation is cool. We used to only pick one or two new ideas to test out, but events were blown up and now we can innovate on everything. Attendees want to experiment with you, so grab your lab coat and start making things explode!

In-person and remote audiences consume content differently. A lively chat is a sign of an engaging digital session. But can you imagine if the audience in a ballroom just started chatting with each other?!? Rather than trying to create the same experience, let's focus on the unique value that each format provides and put our effort there.



In-person attendees are also digital attendees. Every moment before they walk into your venue and every moment after they leave, the in-person audience experiences your event digitally. Even during the event, when they're in the lobby, their hotel room, or even in the bathroom, they're experiencing your event digitally. We're not saying to start putting TVs in the stalls, but let's expand the way we think of events beyond the walls of our venue.



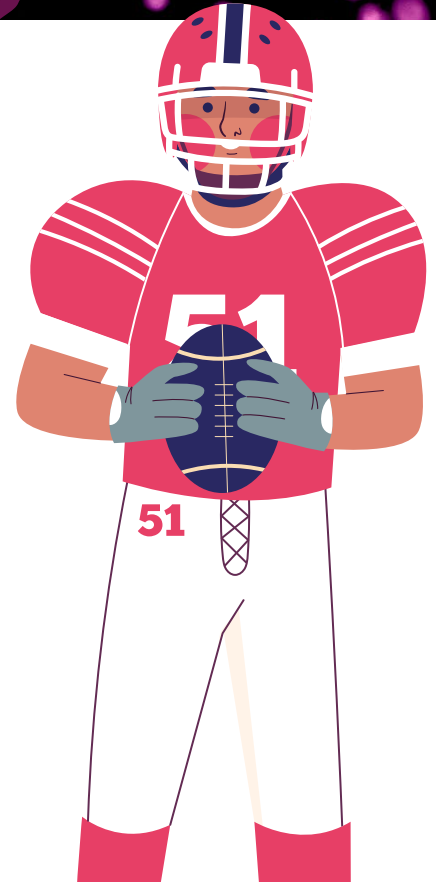
The world is full of inspiration to produce a hybrid event.

Look at the Super Bowl. It's not just wings, beer, and football, but a hybrid event with an in-person audience at the stadium, a remote one of viewers at home, and remote satellites at every local bar. So the next time you grab a drink, you're really just "researching."

Nothing's perfect, so give yourself a break. As planners, especially as producers, we obsess over everything to make sure it works perfectly. But even the Golden Globes had someone come on muted. And if they're the gold standard, then we should give ourselves a break when our internet breaks or something else doesn't go as planned.

The event lifecycle has expanded. We no longer limit our events to the convention center. Planners have successfully created series of mini-events that highlight their best speakers, bring back the most popular topics, or unique networking opportunities.

Not everything has to be live streamed. Unless the content has a moment of big impact like an awards gala or product launch, consider recording it instead. You can add lower thirds, more branding, and increase the overall production quality, all while saving yourself some money.



TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE CONNECT OUR AUDIENCES?

“Hybrid events are really two events,” is something we’ve all heard. But that doesn’t mean they have to be two separate experiences. Our group of brainstormers had plenty of ideas on how to shed the barriers and get close and personal.

GET A GUIDE

- Have an emcee act as the host for your digital attendees and guide them through the event experience. The emcee can interview the most popular onsite speakers, show off the best exhibits, and provide a compelling storyline for your event. Heck, stick a GoPro on them as they walk the halls of your event.

YOU ARE HERE

- Give your audience the sense that they are part of something larger by creating an interactive map that shows where everyone is tuning in from. For your onsite audience, give them access to your digital attendees through a common chat or tech like a Pando Wall that shows the faces of your digital attendees.

BREAK IT UP

- Break your audience into smaller groups based on interests or tracks and beam your keynote to them. They can discuss and react in real time in a more intimate setting. You can even beam in digital attendees on a large screen or robot. Just make sure that the only beaming the robot is doing is the streaming sort.



CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE CREATE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES?

There's a reason people fly across the world to attend an event. And that's show bacon. But also, because of those impactful and meaningful moments, like that crunch on the first bite of show bacon. Okay, maybe we're a tad bit hungry and running out of steam. But our brainstormers sure weren't. Dishing out ideas left and right, here's what they had to say.

MORE ISN'T ALWAYS MERRIER

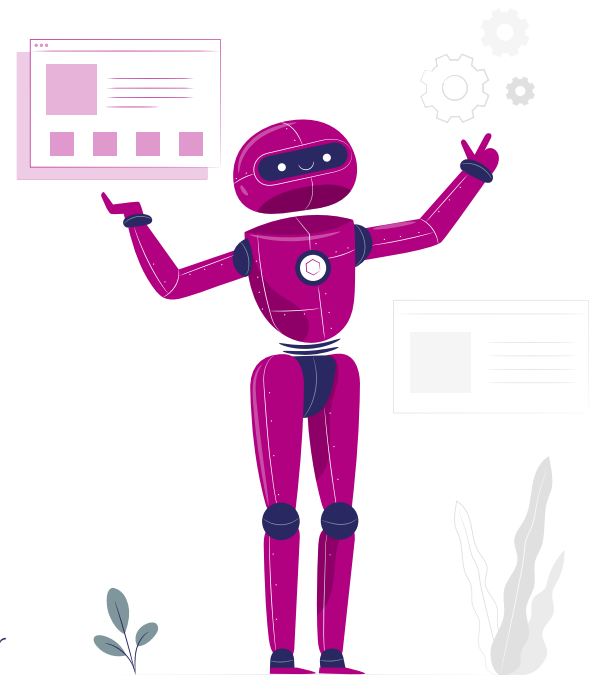
- Don't connect every experience. There is a best way to present content in each format, and they often are not the same. If you're throwing a happy hour, host one for the onsite audience and one for the digital audience. No one wants to drink alone at a computer and watch people have fun together at a bar. At least we hope not.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

- To create memorable experiences, you need high production value. Lower thirds, HD video, great lighting, reliable internet, you get the gist. A production studio has all of those things and more. Use it to record all of your on-demand sessions, or to beam your keynote to those friendly robots. High quality production will not only create a more engaging video experience, but also it will improve its shelf-life.

POST-GAME REPORT

- Not every session or speaker slaps. For those where you need to be slapped awake, create a highlight reel and add commentary over it. Just like a sports post-game report, have your emcee or experts weigh in. You can do this for your most popular sessions as well and even spin it up into a follow up event. You can even use it to help with time zone differences, interviewing the speaker later in the day.



CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE MANAGE PRODUCTION RISK?

There's a reason event planning is consistently ranked among the top 5 most stressful jobs. We manage a million moving parts that all have to come together like a symphony. We're basically Beethoven minus the funny wig. And with hybrid events, it only seems like things have become even more complicated. Here's the top tips from our group on how to reduce and manage those moving parts.

RECORD IT

- Livestreams are risky and expensive. For a cost-effective hybrid event, you can record your onsite event, add a layer of production, and then provide it to your virtual audience a few days later. It's important to use the production techniques we discussed so you don't treat your virtual audience as second-class attendees.



I WANNA GO FAST

- Internet bandwidth was a problem even before the pandemic. Now onsite attendees are hosting zoom calls and streaming video. Not to mention you may have several livestreams going as well. For some venues and cities, the infrastructure is simply not there and won't be for a while. But in the meantime, try to have a dedicated outbound network and a minimum internet upload speed of 30-50 mbps.

LISTEN UP

- Did your venue throttle the internet, or maybe someone left the camera's lens cap on? The good news is you can provide audio-only sessions. Not only do some people prefer audio-only (look at the success of Clubhouse), but it is less expensive to produce. Just make sure that your audience knows it is an audio-only session.

FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

Kudos go to everyone who participated in and contributed to the Design-a-thon. But our indefatigable facilitators deserve particular mention. You not shared your ideas; you shared your time to train and run these workshops. Thank you!



Thank you to our Digitally Integrated Production Circle Facilitators!

Bill Callison, Big Rock Productions

Dan Noake, Hammerton Barca

Danny Maldonado, Fulcra Events

Hilary Laney, Evia

James Monrean, Evia

Jennifer Kingen Kush, Kingen Kush Solutions

Justin Martinez, Tech Oregon

Kim Lawrence, The Line Collective

Laurel Miller, Seamless Events

Lynn Edwards, Proper Planning

Thank you to our Digitally Integrated Production Circle Partner Evia!



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UN TETHERED 2021

THE FUTURE OF MARKETING CHAPTER

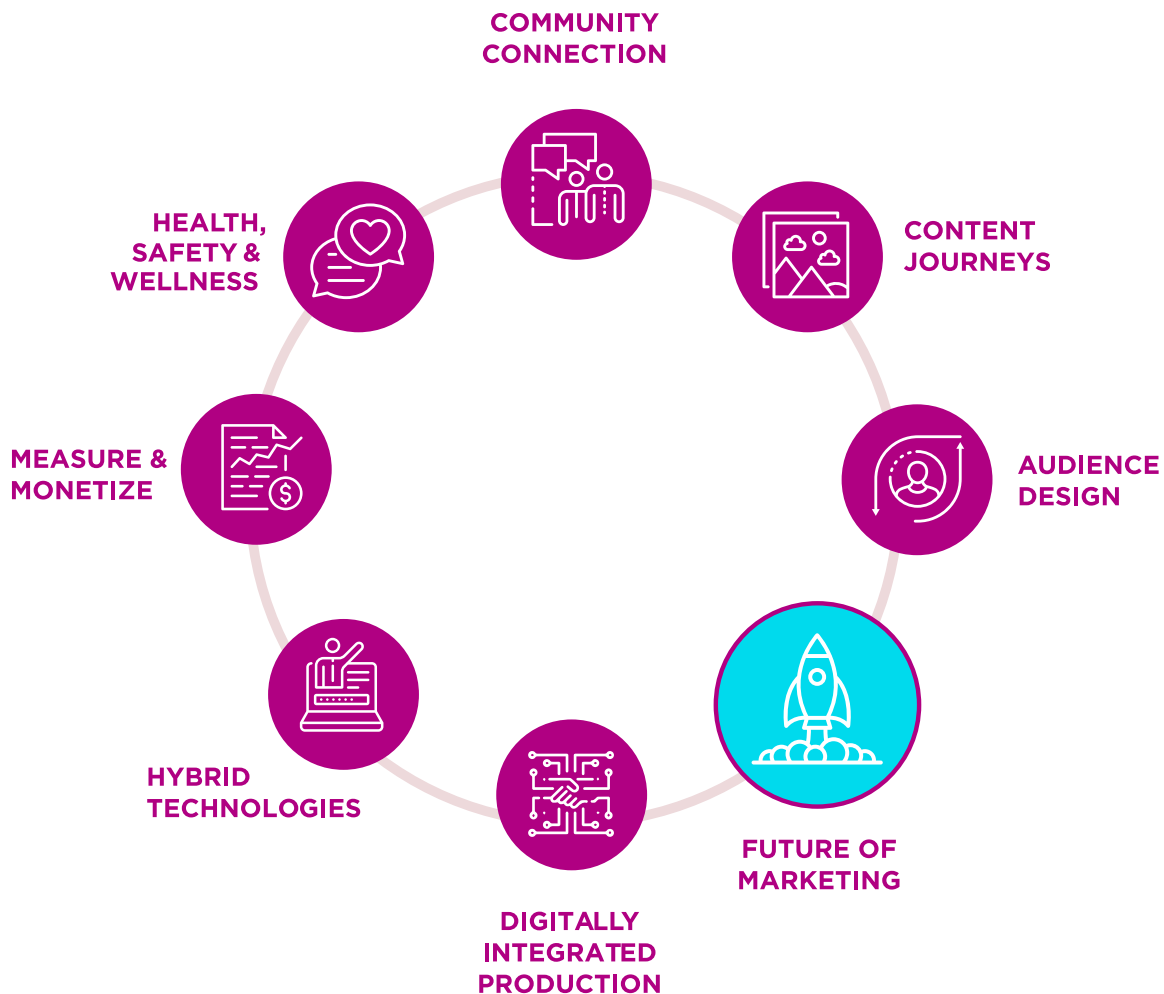


BIG IDEAS

It's a brave new world of event marketing out there. We have more data, more apps, and more tools at our disposal than ever. We also have more things to do, since we're now producing in-person, virtual, and hybrid events at the same time. So, yeah, this ain't your father's or your mother's event marketing.

Where is event marketing headed? And how can you take advantage of all the resources without getting overwhelmed?

In this chapter, we curate the best of the ideas generated by our Future of Marketing Circle. We look at how to get more out of your event marketing. And how to deliver more value to sponsors, partners, and, most importantly, attendees.



MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

In a New York Minute. You don't have to be from New York to see how the pace of change is going faster than you can say "Taxi!" In our Twitter and social-media-dominated world, we think we can do our jobs while watching "Real Wives" and monitoring our Instagram accounts. Our attention spans are short and getting shorter. Moving to virtual events, we've gotten used to multi-tasking while monitoring the action online. (Yes, your participants are probably texting, checking email, and bingeing "Ted Lasso" simultaneously.) So, think about how that will affect how you host in-person shows. Will it mean quicker, more-dynamic sessions? More interactivity? More digital engagement? More pizzazz?

These booths are made for talking. No diss to all you sales reps out there, but, given the chance to speak with the founder of your company, whom do you think your event-goers would choose? Uh-huh. Going virtual has opened up who can staff the exhibit booth—including the CEO or some other big wheel at the company. Attendees can talk, chat, or message with the founder, pick his or her brain, ask questions about the product, founding story, and so on. Very different things from what a salesperson can provide. Think of it as a competitive advantage: If your booth is hosted by your boss, while your competitor's booth is hosted by your peer, it gives your company an edge.



Where everybody knows your name. Cue the theme to “Cheers.” As Norm, Cliff, and Frasier showed, we’re social creatures. Most of us like hanging with people we know. So, when it comes to programming your event, think about going small instead of going big. Break down your attendees into smaller subgroups so people can get to know each other. Create cohorts of people—both in-person and virtual attendees—who move through the event together, get comfortable with each other, and dive into more challenging discussions and topics (see next item). Plan special debriefs after sessions or post-event to keep people connected and engaged—maybe over a pint or two. Grouping attendees based on similar interests or goals for attending the event can help build a sense of community. And it can lead to better networking—a perennially important criterion for attending an event. The idea is to focus on being a community that happens to have events—instead of sponsoring events that happen to have communities.

Back to school. Even if some of us would rather forget our high school days, we might remember with some fondness that one bastion of bonhomie—the homeroom. (Cue the theme from “Welcome Back, Kotter.”) So borrow it for your next event: Create a homeroom pod for attendees.

The Sweathogs, a.k.a. homies, can be a sub-group of attendees picked to represent common interests or to ensure a diversity of viewpoints, perspectives, and backgrounds. The individuals—whether in-person or virtual—meet one another at the event start. They periodically check in with each other throughout the event. And they get together at the end to trade notes and stories. (And decide which person most resembles Vinnie Barbarino.)

It’s a great way to nudge introverts who might shy from reaching out. And it helps most people form bonds with others outside their small circle of acquaintances.

One of our workshopers even suggested homerooms as a perk of sponsorship. Say, for example, the sponsor or partner “adopts” the pod. As long as the sponsors avoid any overt marketing, sales, or self-promotion, connecting a homeroom pod with a sponsor can generate valuable synergies, ideas, and feedback.

Better Beta testers. In-person event expectations are pretty much set in stone. When an event happens in the flesh-and-blood, sponsors know exactly what they want, and they aren’t usually willing to try new things. Not so with virtual events. Online, sponsors and attendees are more open to testing out new technology. If the app falls short of expectations or flops, asking for forgiveness is easier to pull off in the virtual world than in the face-to-face environment.

TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE CREATE FOMO?

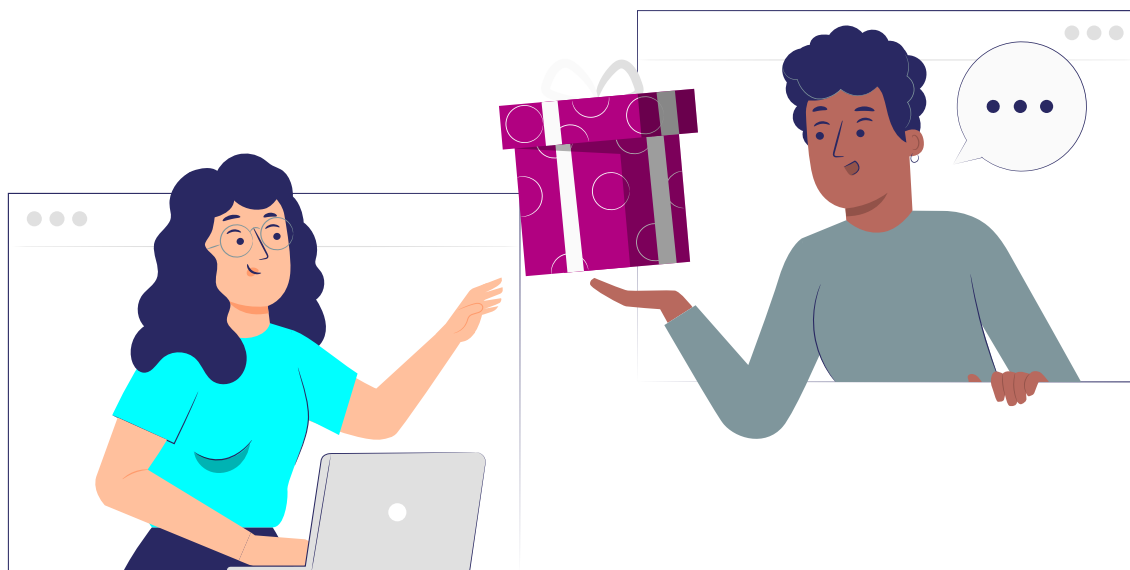
Okay, we're being a little playful here. Fear of missing out, or FOMO, can be a negative side-effect of social media, keeping users glued to their smartphones and apps. (Something the dark lords of social media platforms understood all too well.) But in a lighter, more positive mode, it's okay to create incentives that people just don't want to miss. So use FOMO to your advantage.

EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Who doesn't like special gifts? Juice early registration by offering a gift to those who sign up by a deadline. In that gift, include instructions to access particular pages on the virtual event platform or to post to social media to earn gamification points—or just to show their excitement for the event.

MAKE IT SPECIAL

Create excitement for participation by programming special VIP events and sessions that are open only to attendees who meet criteria of your choosing. Maybe it's an incentive to people who register early. Or you could create tiered packages, with exclusive sessions for higher-tiered tickets. Another idea: Allow early registrants to get exclusive access to an in-person "tour guide" who can show the attendee around the site (also a great sponsorship opportunity).



CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE CREATE VALUE FOR SPONSORS?

Sponsors want value for their sponsorship investment. And value translates to leads. But not just any leads. They want qualified leads. Next, we explore ways to provide more qualified leads—and demonstrate *your* value to your sponsors.

SIFTING FOR GOLD

- Sponsors see attendees as potential customers. But every event includes subsets of attendees with different interests and goals. So how do you eliminate the less-than-qualified prospects and connect sponsors with the best possible prospects? You pre-screen them.
- Use pre-event registration questions that signal the attendee's intent. Or use artificial intelligence tools to track what the attendee is clicking on in the virtual event to provide recommendations on speakers and sessions. This allows you to personalize the attendee experience by creating routes and tracks that uniquely match what that attendee is looking for—their “why”—at the event.
- Looked at from the sponsor's perspective, you're gathering more qualified prospects in one place and at one time. Call this marketing efficiency or, maybe, prospect density. Rather than having to sift the gold from the gravel, so to speak, you're bringing the gold directly to the sponsor. Another way to look at it: You (together with your event platform) are acting as the “opportunity concierge.”
- • Oh, and don't forget to ask your sponsors about what they're trying to achieve with their sponsorship. Their answers will help you to provide better sponsorship opportunities. And it allows you to match them with specific features in the virtual platform. It also demonstrates that you speak the sponsor's language and understand their needs.



CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE MEASURE EVENT SUCCESS NOW?

In the age of big data, we have so many ways to collect, organize, analyze, and draw conclusions from data. That's great for marketers. But it's also gotten more complex. It's not a matter of getting the most bodies through the gates (or the portal) anymore. Today, it's about measuring both in-person and virtual/hybrid events. And it's about drilling down beyond the obvious numbers to analyze how well you've really engaged with the audience.

DIFFERENT ANIMALS

- Trying to re-create the same experience in a virtual event that an attendee will have in an in-person event? Don't. Not only is it impossible. It's just not productive. In fact, there should a difference, since each type of event yields different benefits.
- Keep virtual events and in-person events separate in your key performance indicators (KPIs). It's important to keep track of both engagements. Take more time than before to figure out what you're truly trying to measure at each and why. What will that information get you at the end of the day? What does success mean for your organization? What's does it mean for the sponsor?
- Create and track attendee touchpoints throughout the event. How long did attendees stay for a session? Did they use the chat? What topics and sessions were they engaged with the most? Having answers to these questions provides a more in-depth profile of an attendee than simply a list of registrants.
- Think about the difference between return on investment (ROI) versus return on engagement (ROE). ROI is about cash flow and numbers: Did I break even? Get enough leads to make more sales? This tends to be what upper management cares about. ROE measures the return on relationships built during the event: How often are we seeing X company or the same people? Did we speak to people who were genuinely interested in us/our product or did they just want the gamification points? Maybe not as much hard-number crunchable as ROI—but equally valuable.



FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

Many, many thanks to everyone who took part in and contributed to the Design-a-thon. We'd especially like to call attention to our fearless facilitators. Thanks for your time, your commitment, and your invaluable—and sometimes off-the-wall—ideas!



Thank you to our Future of Marketing Circle Facilitators!

Amanda Solon, Epicor
Gail Orfanos, Freelance
John Carey, Hubb
Kim Gishler, CEMA
Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, Nifty
Method Marketing
Lisa Peyton, Hubb

Lizzy Rudge, Eventcore
Marlys Arnold, Freelance
Melissa Biele, Freelance
Melissa Osborne, Amazon
Navin Chand, New Moon Ideas
Olivia Scott, Omerge Alliances
Raime Merriman, Hubb

Thank you to our Future of Marketing Circle Partner Hubb!



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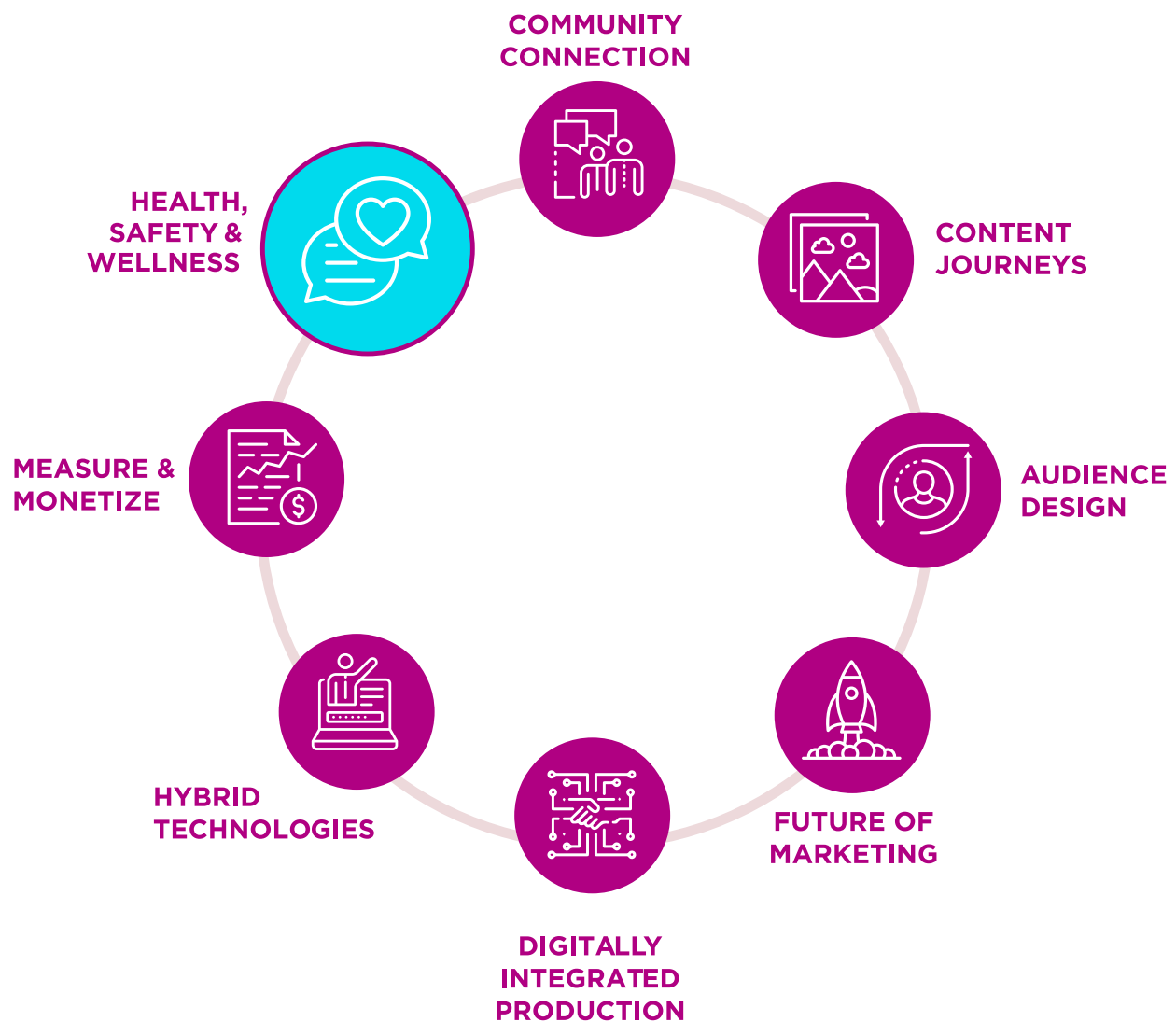
UN TETHERED 2021

THE HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLNESS CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

It seems that nobody likes talking about safety—until we start talking about safety. Wow! Folks in the Health, Safety & Wellness circle workshops got fired up on the finer points of creating healthy environments, communicating to attendees, and dealing with skeptics, naysayers, and resisters. We combed through all the ideas and curated the best of them for you here.



MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

People first. Safety always! Okay, we're not working with live ammunition or dismantling Dr. Evil's latest threat to the world as we know it. But still. Let's keep it safe, people! Safety should be the number-one priority. The best way to do it: Create a safety culture. Rather than making safety a separate thing, bake it into everything you do.



Safety is sexy. Safety is no longer the red-headed stepchild that people would rather just ignore. As our helmet-wearing friends in the construction trades and motorcycle gangs can attest, safety is sexy. It's expected, too, and people want to know what you are doing to keep it that way. Make it fun with things like color-coded masks that identify tracks, core interests, or other community-building elements.

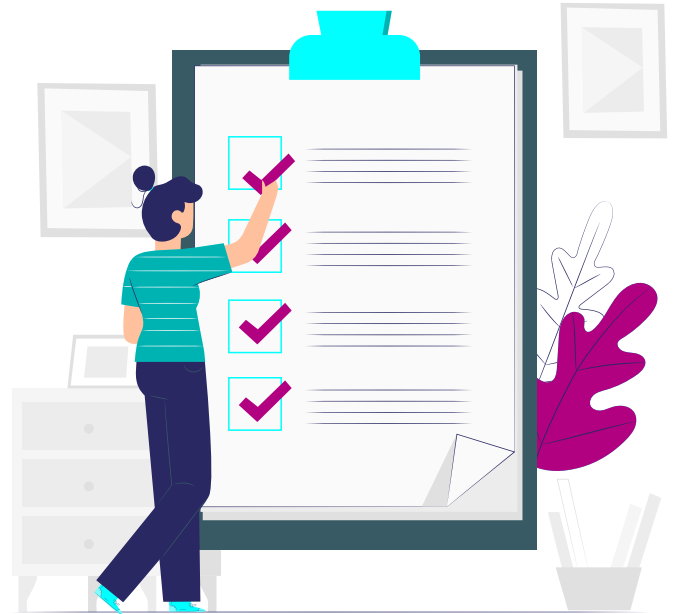
Get a slice of safety. We live in the real world where s!@# can happen. So no space can ever be 100% guaranteed safe. Think of your safety plan like several slices of Swiss cheese (Jarlsberg will do in a pinch.) Let's say proof of vaccination is one layer of cheese, and masking indoors is another. Each layer of protection can have holes, but as long as those holes don't line up, then you have a solid plan. Would you like mustard on that?



The COVID-19 safety officer is a full-time job. Whether you call it a COVID compliance officer, COVID safety officer, or pandemic compliance officer, those are all standalone roles on a production team. Don't combine their duties with other production responsibilities.

Stick to the plan. Communicate your expectations. Then stand firm on those expectations. If you fall asleep at the switch and let some things slip by, things could get ugly fast. Your firm's and your own rep are on the line. So stay vigilant.

Safety is an opportunity. When the spotlight is on, it's time to shine. When your event goes well, the afterglow of a successful conference not only feels good, but it lights up new opportunities. By hosting an event that serves as a model for others, you position your organization as a thought leader and prospect for future business. Be sure your stakeholders understand that.



TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS SAFE?

Our grandparents were big on the benefits of fresh air and hygiene. Turns out that their folk wisdom is back in vogue. As people begin to come together indoors again, they may be skeptical, tentative, and even a touch fearful. Your job is to ease their worried minds by taking steps to make their safety paramount.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

- The pandemic introduced us to the weird world of aerosols, droplets, and the startling images of what comes out of stage actors' and singers' open mouths. Translated: You want to exchange old, stuffy air with the fresh, outside stuff as often as possible. The ideal is about every 20 minutes. But once every hour is acceptable. Draw in fresh air from outside, and vent stale air back outside.



NO VAX, NO MASK, NO GO.

- As anyone who works in retail can attest, it's no fun having to turn away someone who refuses to wear a mask. But your responsibility to the health of the group makes this a no-brainer. Make proof of vaccination, negative test, or agreement to wear a mask 100% of the time a part of the registration process. If people don't agree to the rules, they can't register. Case closed.

WHERE YOU BEEN SO LONG?

- Look at the film and television world. On the shooting set, people collaborate closely. So everyone on set wears a contact tracing detector on a lanyard. The device records when you've been within six feet of another person for more than 10 minutes at a time—the threshold for possible exposure. That makes tracing a lot easier.

CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE TO OUR AUDIENCE AROUND SAFETY?

It's not like we expect to be told in advance of all the safety checks the engineers do (we hope) for the buildings we enter and the bridges we cross. We just put our trust in our systems (which, tragically, sometimes fail.) But with COVID-19, yeah, we want to know we're entering a safe environment before we step inside. That's where you come in.

COMMUNICATE FORWARD

- So much of what we fear is based on simply being uneducated, under-informed, or misinformed about the threat. Counter that fear by being proactive. Rather than waiting for the inevitable questions that can arise over safety, anticipate their concerns. We call this communicating forward. Also, allow for questions. Your registrants may have questions that you didn't even think of. Let the conversation roll and have people share their concerns.

LOOK TO THE SKIES

- Who says safety videos have to be dull? Just look at those famous pre-flight safety videos from the likes of Virgin America, Qantas, and Air New Zealand. As those airlines illustrated, you can turn something as dull as how to buckle a seatbelt into something glitzy and entertaining. Get your sponsors, experts, and VIPs involved. Bonus: You can even use it as part of your marketing effort.

CROWD-SOURCED CROWD CONTROL

- In the events business, we love a good crowd. But there can be times when we'd like to distribute the crowd more evenly. Rather than trying to shepherd people yourself, try a high-tech fix that empowers event-goers to self-monitor congestion. These apps allow audience members to communicate with each other about how many people are in each space, ballroom, or breakout room. And they can be paired with RFID tracking on badges. If the app sees a session is too crowded for comfort, attendees can check out another one, visit an expo booth, network, or try a breakout room.



CHALLENGE 3:

HOW DO WE CONFRONT STAKEHOLDERS WHO ARE RESISTANT TO ADDITIONAL SAFETY MEASURES?

We live in an era rife with mistrust of authority. If it sometimes feels as if you're the parents of surly teenagers, take heart. Our brainstormers shared some of their secrets for turning the hecklers from the peanut gallery into enthusiastic endorsers of your safety protocols. It's all about getting people to take ownership of their actions.

CHANGE THE FRAME

- Few of us like being told what to do unless we ask for it ourselves. So when you notice the heels digging in and wallets snapping shut when the topic turns to safety, turn the tables. Give them the opportunity to be a thought leader when it comes to producing a thoughtful, safely executed event. Suddenly, the clouds will open and angel choirs will sing as the resisters turn into enthusiastic compliers. Okay, maybe not quite so dramatic. But you get the idea.

THE 80-20 RULE

- And if you run into concerns about the extra costs for health and safety? Talk about how it helps them scale their revenue. Let them know how putting a stake in the ground with safety is sexy, fun, and appealing to ticket buyers. Don't worry about the 20 percent of people who don't want masks and don't care about safety. Focus on the 80 percent who do. You'll have much better talking points and a better framework for discussion.

PLAY WHAT IF

- Still getting pushback? Start a conversation with the skeptics. Look them straight in the face and say, "If you were attending the event, tell me what you would want to know and what would you need to feel safe?" This usually works like a charm. When you reverse roles and put the question to them, you'd be surprised at how fast the skeptics transform from naysayers to problem-solvers.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- At the end of the day, you have one thing that you will carry with you your entire life. And that is your reputation. Reputation takes decades to build and seconds to wreck. Invest in protecting your name by making sure that you are doing everything you can to keep people safe.

FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

So many people contributed the success of the Design-a-thon, and we're grateful to them all. We especially want to thank our dynamic and energetic facilitators for your time, commitment, and superb ideas.



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Bryan Huneycutt, HuneyBadger
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Michael Clarke, Marriot

Nancy Shaffer, Live Events Coalition

Sarah Bondar, The Charles Group

Thank you to our Health, Safety & Wellness Circle Partner
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Join us at the Fall UNTETHERED event for more ideas, inspiration, and innovation! Go to untethered.events to learn more.

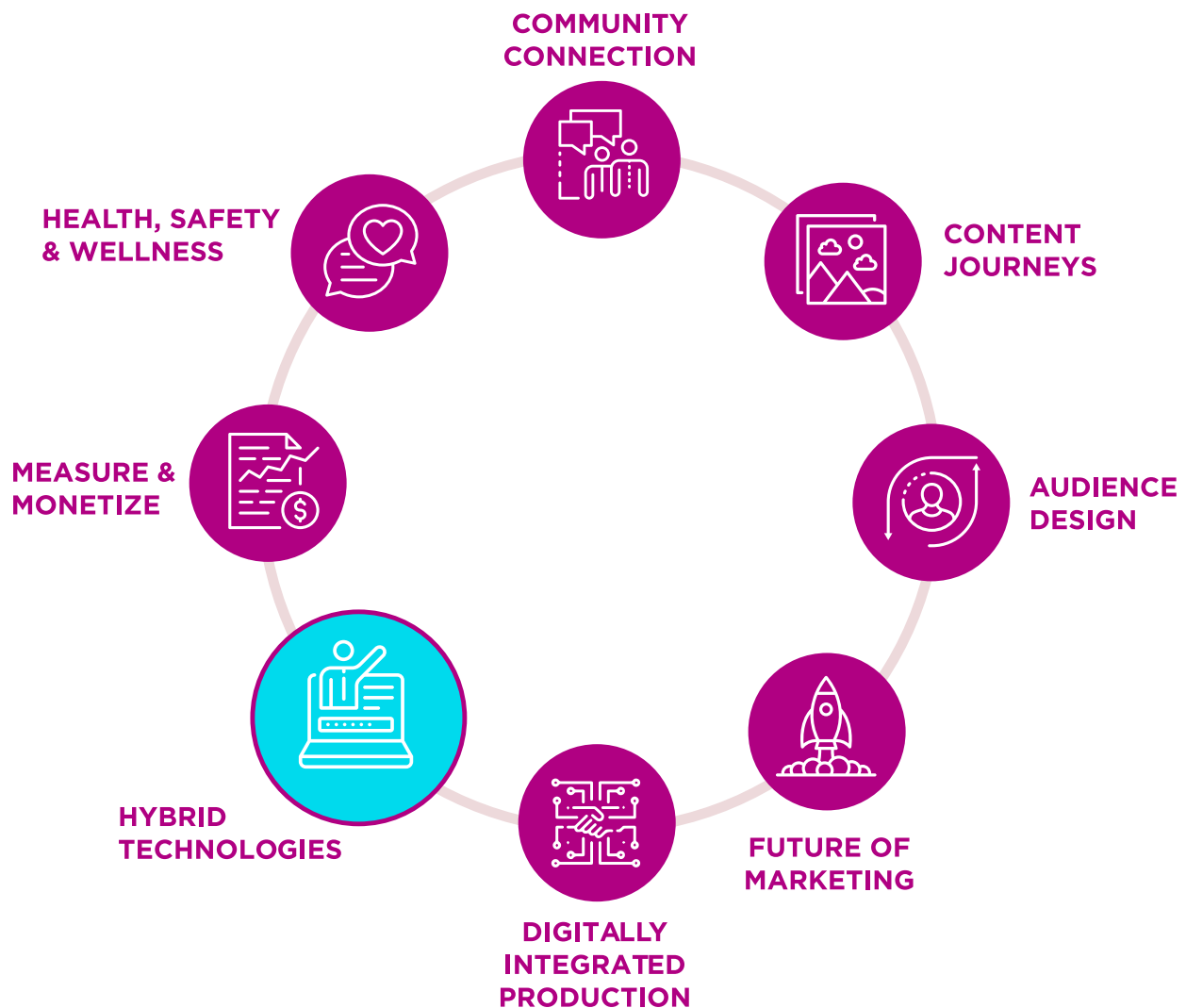
UN TETHERED 2021

THE HYBRID TECHNOLOGY CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

During the pandemic our mindsets shifted to virtual. But technology hasn't exactly caught up. (Believe us, the geniuses are working on it.) For the foreseeable future, though, it looks like all events will feature both in-person and virtual components. That doesn't mean each type of experience can't be equally fun and fulfilling. Remember, the power of events is in connecting people. And our group of brainstormers had plenty of lightning and thunder for how to bring the two audiences together using technology.



MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

Content that is valuable to us doesn't tire us out. We stop feeling fatigued when the content is authentic, meaningful, and something we really care about. Then we are all in. We can spend hours watching ESPN or our favorite show but hop off after 5 minutes of a webinar.

People come and go more freely than before. Our social batteries are smaller and we're more likely to take breaks or simply leave sessions that we don't find value in. This is especially true for the digital audience, where all it takes is a click to walk out the door.

Inclusive design is essential to a successful event. Hybrid technology allows us to reach more people in the way that works best for them. Not only does this create a more engaging event, but it means we can expand our business reach and drive value.



People are voyeuristic. We love to watch others react to things — to experience something through another’s eyes. It’s part of why Clubhouse is so successful. And we can take advantage of that with influencers, roving reporters, or other ways for our audience to experience the event through another person.

We’re more willing to connect with new people online than in-person. When we’re in-person we naturally go to the table with the people we know and don’t interact much with others. But digitally, we don’t have those social expectations and can dive right into meaningful conversations with a completely new person.



Parity of experience is a myth. Just because you throw a networking happy hour for both your in-person and digital audience, doesn’t mean their experiences are the same. And that’s not your fault. Certain experiences work better in certain formats. There can be incredible experiences in virtual and amazing experiences in-person, and they don’t have to be the same.

Tech can be humanizing. It can elevate people and promote engagement with them. Look at how twitter gives people a blue check or how meetup adds personable tags. We can do the same with our audiences. It can be as simple as replacing the standard bio info with their personal interests. Or you could add a gamification element, rewarding people that deeply engage with special tags on their profile.

Tech is the great equalizer. It used to be that only the giant companies had the best events, and no one could compete because of their budgets. Now with the right tech and strategy, you can throw an even better event than them.

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTE EXPLORATION?

It's not like everybody at live events was always engaged, right? But keeping virtual guests tuned in presents new challenges. (Trips to the refrigerator and the laundry room come to mind.) We have to go beyond the one-way imparting of information and create interaction. So our group dreamed up the following ideas:

SCAVENGER HUNTS

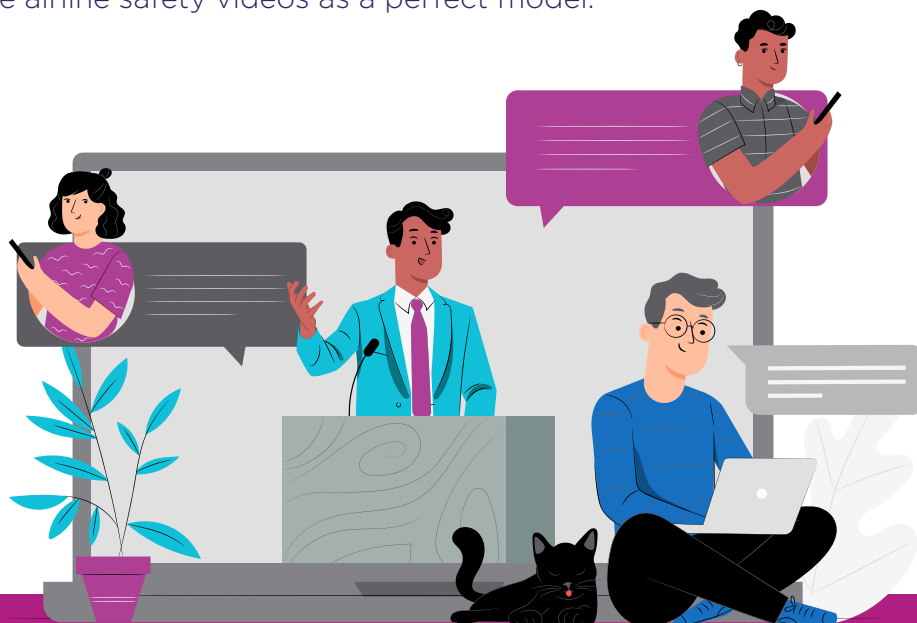
- Try enhancing a kitty/puppy scavenger hunt with augmented reality. By layering information on top of real-world objects, AR lets in-person attendees use their smart phones to “find” lost pets that are hiding in plain sight. An AR-juiced scavenger hunts fosters movement, engagement, learning, and teamwork between onsite and offsite attendees. It also encourages online sharing on social media.

GET SOME BETAS

- During the registration process incentivize people to apply to be beta testers. You'll pave the way for greater acceptance and success with the larger audience. You'll also be creating a core group of enthusiasts and evangelists.

TEACH 'EM HOW TO FISH

- Include tutorials when attendees log in. Make the tutorials fun and exciting. You can include influencers, sponsors, or celebrity cameos. Think about your favorite airline safety videos as a perfect model.



CHALLENGE 2: HOW TO BEST CONNECT REMOTE AND IN-PERSON AUDIENCES?

During the pandemic our mindsets shifted to virtual. But technology hasn't exactly caught up. (Believe us, the geniuses are working on it.) For the foreseeable future, though, it looks like all events will feature both in-person and virtual components. That doesn't mean each type of experience can't be equally fun and fulfilling. Remember, the power of events is in connecting people. And our group of brainstormers had plenty of lightning and thunder for how to bring the two audiences together.

GIVE BACK

- Get virtual and onsite groups working together on a campaign that gives back to the community. The main point is to allow participation—and even competition—across the digital divide.

DOWN DOG

- Hybridize wellness sessions. Remember walks or yoga sessions at live events? No reason folks can't join in remotely.

GO FOR A HEISMAN

- Use the Super Bowl as a model for your hybrid event. There's an onsite audience at the stadium, a remote audience watching it from home, and satellite locations at bars and pubs.

CHALLENGE 3: HOW TO OVERCOME TECHNOLOGY FATIGUE?

You know the look and the feeling because you've had it yourself: eyes glazing over, brain shutting down. Here are some ideas to keep it fresh and real.

KEEP IT SMALL

- Humans are built to read people's faces—but when you're looking at a mosaic of 50 to 100 people, it's hard to see who's nodding their heads versus who's nodding asleep. It's harder still to decode a sparkle in the eye or a wrinkle of the brow. So make sure you're doing everything in your power to let people see and hear each other in smaller groups.

BE PLAYFUL

- If you're giving away prizes as part of a gamified experience, consider an experience rather than a bauble or thing. It can be a one-on-one session with a top executive or influencer. It can be a mentorship experience. It can be membership in a team. Get creative!

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- Creating content that is meaningful to your audience can go a long way toward making attendees feel invested in your event. In their profile, have your attendees add personal interests or fun taglines and then recommend connections based on their interests.



FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

We want to give a huge thank you to everyone that participated and contributed in the Design-a-thon. In particular, we want to thank our incredible Facilitators. Not only did they share their ideas, but they also devoted their time to train and run these workshops.



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Thank you to our Hybrid Circle Partner Hubb!



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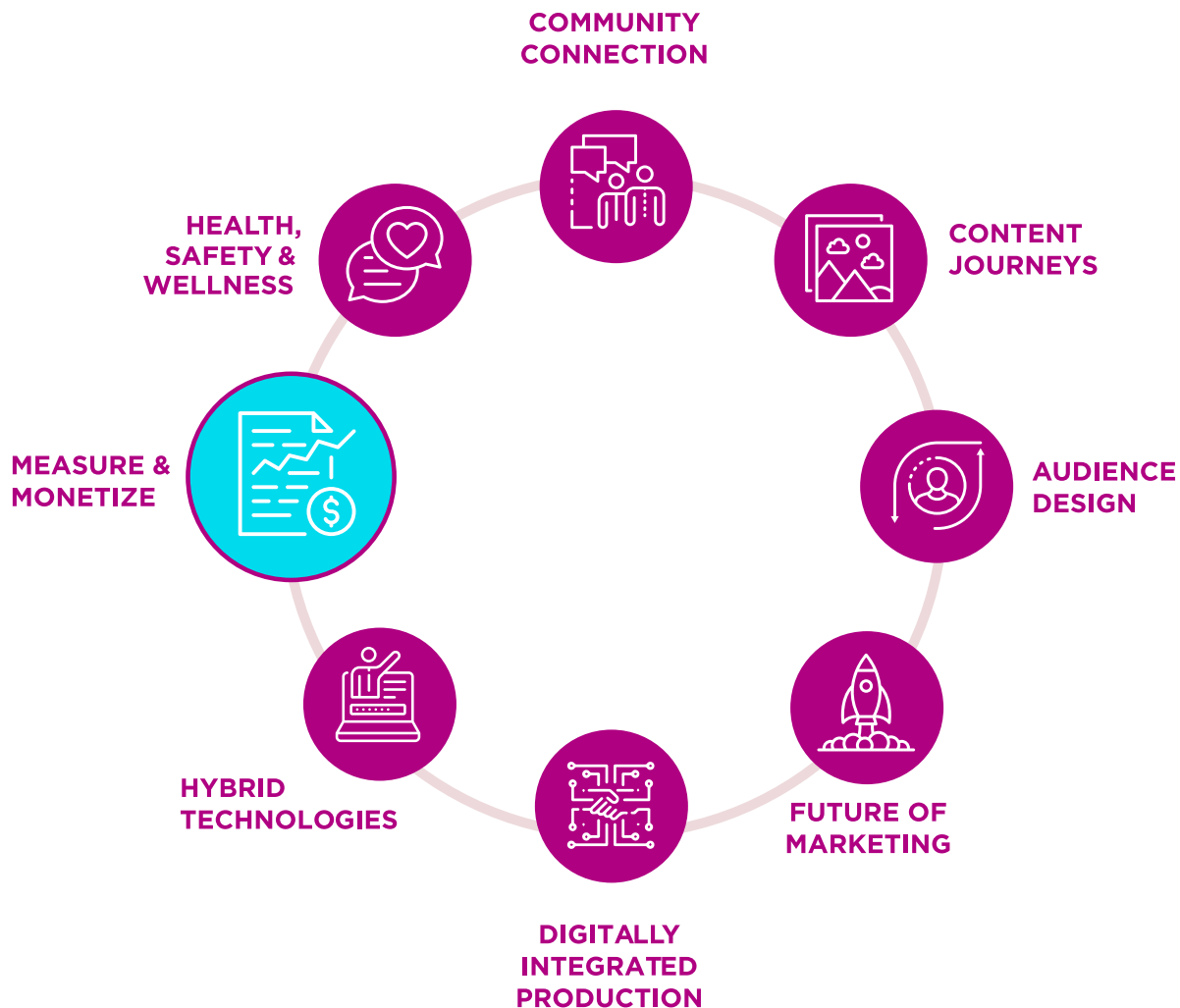
MEASURE AND MONETIZE CHAPTER



BIG IDEAS

Now we're getting down to what really counts—literally. We're talking number crunching, data sleuthing, and revenue raising here. Remember the song from Cabaret, "Money"? As in, "money makes the world go 'round." These days, you can add data to what spins the globe. So it's not surprising that our Measure and Monetize group had lots to say on the subject of what and how and why to measure.

Of course, it's not just for the sake of collecting information. Now that we're in a digital and hybrid-event world, we've got a host of tools that allow us to sift for gold in all that data gravel. Speaking of which, we've done a bunch of sifting ourselves, collecting the best nuggets of advice here on what to measure—and how to turn that data into dollars.

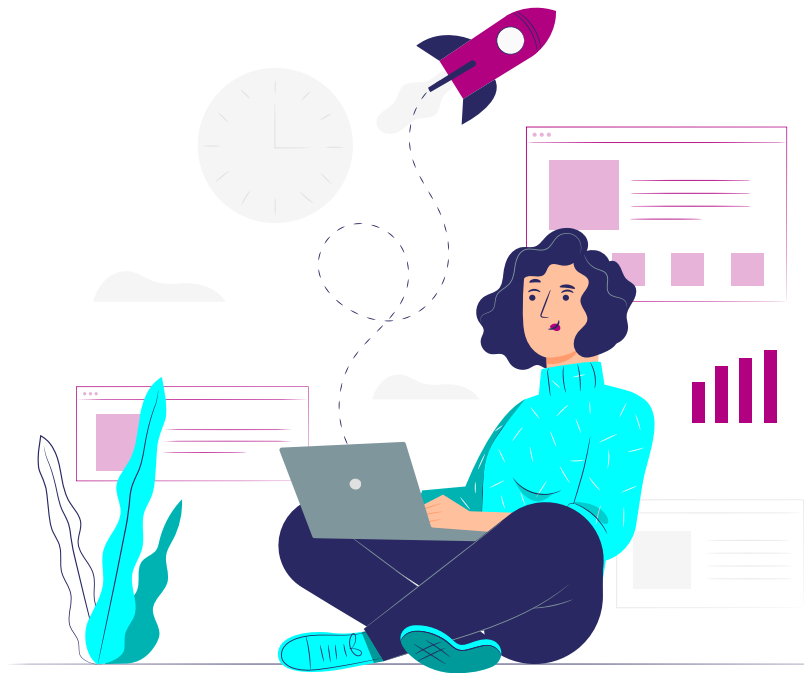


MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

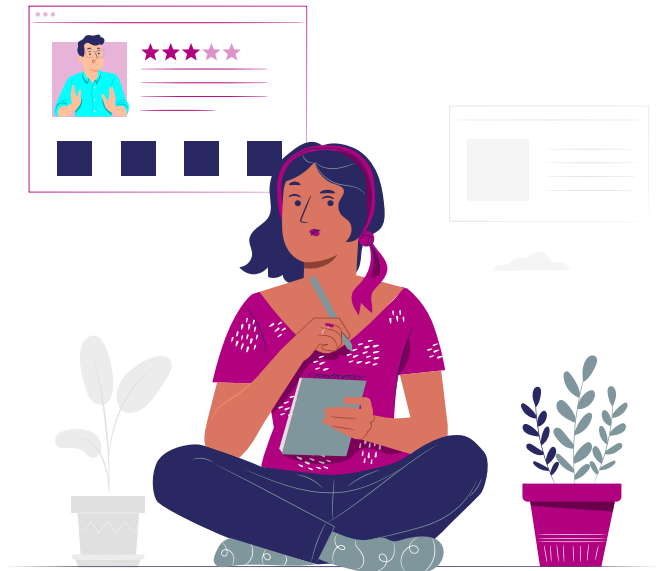
The good news: You are likely to see an uptick in revenue from greater attendance of your virtual event. And the not-so good news: Your sponsors will have to work harder to get clicks and leads. But, hey, no one said this would be easy. So take heart. Armed with the knowledge of what works well and less well for virtual events, you can deliver a fabulous experience for your attendees—and maybe even enlarge your market.

Expanding the pie. Want proof that virtual events are not the poor relation to in-person events? The numbers don't lie. How about 10 percent? That's the percentage of revenue growth that our friends in the Measure and Monetize workshops say they've achieved by going virtual. Turns out that there's been an untapped market of potential attendees who, whether for logistical or personal reasons, haven't clicked with showing up in the flesh. But, given the chance to attend virtually, these same people are all in. It's a virtually new market for events.

Come in to my (virtual) booth. We humans are curious sorts. We're attracted to sparkly, shiny, sensual, or just plain interesting stuff. That's why sponsors and exhibitors put so much effort and resources into their booths. Take away the physical exhibit, and sponsors are left with fewer ways to hook you with their sleek display, catchy pitch, or cool tchotchke. It's not like we just walk into a virtual booth. We've got to click in before ever engaging with staff. We can pop into and out of an online session without ever sharing information or engaging with sponsors. Yes, we're seeing an increase in attendance and revenue. But our workshop brainstormers report that sponsors are seeing half or fewer visitors than at in-person events. All this means that sponsors have to work that much harder to pull people in and get interactions in the virtual world.



You can still be picky. It's okay to be selective when it comes to choosing sponsors. At the end of the day, event planners are creating an experience for attendees. If the content from sponsors doesn't interest or benefit attendees, why bother? It's a waste of sponsor space. It's a waste of sponsor budget. And it's a waste of time for attendees. Make sure you choose sponsors who are a good match for your event's goals, program, and audience. And give attendees a way to rate the value of sponsors. That's valuable feedback for you and for your sponsors.



Guide attendees to the Play-Doh. Ever thrown a party for five-year-olds? You might be able to learn something for your event. One of our workshopers did. At first she worried she had to plan what the kids would do. Then her partner gave her sage advice: "They're five. Just give them the Play-doh." It worked out great. The kids were content for an hour without adult guidance, intervention, or control. The lesson for us event planners? Carve out the time for attendees to go to the sponsor booth. Make space for them to network or connect. Let go of your Type-A event planner instinct to control every aspect of the attendee experience. Whatever your goal, attendees will do it naturally if you create the right environment.



TACTICS TO TEST

CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE PROVIDE VALUE FOR SPONSORS?

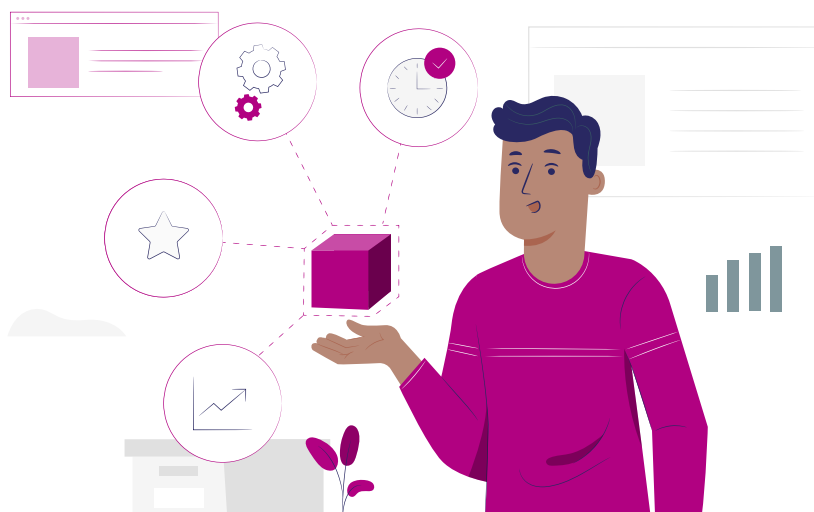
Talking to a group of strangers? If you're wise, you'd start by asking them about themselves: Who are they? What do they care about? (Hint: People like to talk about themselves.) Same goes for sponsors and attendees. The more that your sponsors know about attendees, the better they'll be able to deliver something of value. Oh, and by the way, that's how you give your sponsors greater value.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

- As with relationships, experiences, and good food, it's the quality of the leads you supply to your partners that matters, not the quantity. When it comes to who's registering for your event, make sure you're separating the wheat from the chaff. Start by clearly identifying your target audience. Build the program around what they want. Then market smartly. At registration, consider a pre-approval screening device to ensure your attendee list is highly qualified.

BEYOND THE BOOTH

- Your sponsors want to start and build relationships with potential customers. That means quality leads. So make their sponsorship worthwhile. Online booth space should be the *minimum* you give sponsors. Encourage sponsors to do more than just put up a booth. (This also gets them to buy higher-tiered sponsorships.) Give them more ways to connect with attendees. Provide more thought leadership, speaking, and content opportunities. Allow them to create different content at the event.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

- You know the feeling: A (shoddy) salesperson tries to sell you something you don't need. They know nothing about you—your tastes, your budget, your interests. Feels yucky, right? But you're no shoddy salesperson! Learn more about your attendees.
- How to gather that data? Create surveys or other questions that can reveal what attendees are looking for. Use your registration process to field questions about what motivates them. Create real-time polling to give sponsors a chance to focus their time on a particular topic during a session conversation.
- Share that information (within legal guidelines and with their permission) with your sponsors. They'll know better what topics attendees want to hear about the most. For example, science-based attendees are probably looking for data and presentation formats rather than more discussion. Meanwhile, take a group that is interested in new learning strategies and different methods of teaching. They might want a more collaborative approach, say, in breakout rooms.
- The data aren't always crystal clear. You may not get 100 percent agreement on priorities—or even a majority opinion. So sponsors might have to tailor their approach, for example, to the top 30 percent of respondents.



CHALLENGE 2:

HOW DO WE FOSTER ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN SPONSORS AND ATTENDEES?

This is where you play matchmaker: connecting sponsors and attendees. The more interaction and engagement between them, the more likely you'll bask in the glow of their approval. After all, it's obvious that sponsors want to engage with attendees. But it's also true that attendees are open to connecting with sponsors. It just has to be the right sponsors—those that truly have something of value to offer.

CREATE FOMO MOMENTS

- Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a powerful motivator. We don't like when the other guy seems to be having all the fun or getting the cool free stuff. Tap into this rule of human nature. For example, a sponsor could send out event announcements in the form of a gift box. Inside the box is a document with a barcode or QR code. By scanning the code, they're taken to the event website or a calendar invitation. Not only do attendees get information about the event and have their own mini experience. They also learn more about the event partners and sponsors ahead of time. Bonus: People usually start posting pics of the gifts on social media. That only serves to rev up the FOMO engine further, getting more people to want in on the freebies.

CONNECT ATTENDEES WITH SPONSORS

- Here's an idea that sponsors will love: Create special opportunities for attendees to visit sponsors. One idea is to open the expo area a week early just for visiting with sponsors. That feels like a special perk for attendees. And it's a value-add for sponsors.
- Another idea is to program a "sponsor preview." For each sub-category of specialists, curate a list of, say, 10 hand-picked exhibitors whose services match the needs of that group. (You can have subject-matter experts pick the exhibitors, keeping you free of any perceived conflicts-of-interest.) Then set up an invitation-only pitch session. Sponsors should focus on solutions versus products.

- For an example of a pitch session, let's say you have an event for the higher-education market. A subgroup of attendees is higher-ed marketers. Match those marketers with sponsors and exhibitors who offer services targeted to their group. Exhibitors have seven minutes to talk about their solutions. Attendees can ask questions, and they can book a demo if they want to learn more.
- Video-record the sessions. Then make them available for others to watch later.
- It's a win-win: Attendees get an opportunity to discover services that help them do their jobs. And sponsors learn more about prospects, potentially converting them into leads.

BUILD RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommend sessions to people with similar problems, issues, or interests. Essentially, you're segmenting the audience based on their mutual concerns. This can boost attendance by making people feel like the sessions are customized for them. Bonus: Recommending sessions pre-event drives engagement. Extra bonus: Use tracking data to make real-time recommendations for further engagement. It's like saying, "We see you're hanging out here or watching this video. Here's something related that you may find valuable." Or, "I noticed you attended this session. I've got some ideas on how to solve your (x problem). Would you like to chat?" The key here is using data wisely to make sure you're targeting the right people with a real solution.



CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO YOU MEASURE EVENT SUCCESS?

Going virtual means you can capture and sift through a ton of data. What's most popular? What's least popular? Where are people gravitating? What content elicits the most interaction and feedback? The days of guessing what people want is over. With sophisticated yet simple data gathering and analysis tools readily available, it's easier than ever to measure the success of your event.

START WITH 'WHY?' AND 'WHAT?'

- Every event is successful for different reasons. So how do you measure success? Start with your "why?" and "what?" Why are you putting on this event? What are you looking to gain? What are sponsors looking to gain? The answers to those questions will help you choose what to measure.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO MEASURE

- What is the data that you want? What are your objectives? How do you identify those data points to ensure that you're collecting and reporting exactly what's needed? Focus like a fisher going after a prized salmon. You'd use a pole and line, not a giant net that scoops up everything in its path. Don't make sponsors have to comb through all the shells, sand, and starfish. That's a waste of time and resources. Providing too much data is at least as detrimental, if not more so, as not providing the right metrics or the right analytics.
- That doesn't mean you can't collect more data. Just don't dump it all at the feet of the sponsors. For your own analysis, you can err on the side of more data, not less, since you're fishing in uncharted territory and it's all so new. You can build baseline metrics now, learning what works and what doesn't work for hybrid. As you gain more experience, you can see which data are best and which don't mean much.



SHADES OF GRAY

- Success doesn't have to be a binary yes or no, black or white. You can have shades of gray. You can win in some areas, lose in others. In your post-mortem, just make sure that you provide a fair, but balanced, appraisal of what worked, what missed the mark, and what needed improvement.

FACILITATORS AND PARTNERS

Virtual hugs, kisses, and bouquets to everyone who made the Design-a-thon a roaring success. We love you! And we're uber-grateful to our dogged facilitators. Wow, guys, you really demonstrated the power of brainstorming and collaboration. Nice work!



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Thank you to our Measure & Monetize Circle Partner eventcore!



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