When Online & Real Worlds Collide: 4 quick tips for hybrid events.

As the world has grappled with the effects of the pandemic, the ability to meet online became essential. For many, the sudden imposition of lock-down forced an immediate need to innovate that has seen a hand in hand rapid evolution of software and the ways it is implemented. Whereas the instruction to isolate came almost overnight, the move to open-up again has been more gradual with a lot of us choosing on a case-by-case basis whether a virtual or physical meeting would be more suitable.

For those responsible for organising meetings the old constraints of time, place, content etc are now further complicated by the decision to go virtual or real world. Indeed, there is now an expectation that there will be a choice to attend in person or via the web. So, how do you ensure a consistent experience in an event where participants can both be in the same room and spread across the globe? How do you deliver a successful conference in this hybrid environment?

Below are 4 quick tips ranging from the small to the large:

One online – All online

For small meetings of less than a dozen people switching the meeting to entirely online provides a coherent experience. Inevitably face to face meetings of this size create informal interactions such as catching up on office news which can be invisible to those joining virtually leading to a feeling of disconnection. Consider having everyone join from their computer.

Feedback in the same way

In larger meetings, balance the real world and online experience by getting all participants to use one specific method for commenting or raising questions. This could be Twitter or WhatsApp and there are also online services dedicated to enhancing this type of collaboration. Put someone in charge of monitoring those questions and break off regularly to respond which helps enliven the process and drives engagement.

An online presence in the room

It is not uncommon to have a few dozen people in the room but many more viewing online. A large second display can show the virtual audience's live camera, profile photos, avatars or just a wall of comments. Emojis and other methods of measuring reaction are helpful in blending the online and physical event.

Plan 2 events

Have two differing agendas for live and online which slot together. It is easy to think that you create your agenda and just add cameras however, a person in the venue will concentrate for several hours but it is difficult to sustain that level of focus via a screen. Break your agenda into smaller chunks for online and add the opportunity to watch at alternative times via recording or a similar online only session. Provide the virtual participant with other contextual material and consider engaging someone as an anchor who can act as a guide to the conference and become the virtual audience's eyes and ears. The more you can do to enrich the virtual experience the better the mix of the online and real world.

All these tips are easy to implement with Stand-Up the online meetings software that is a step beyond the one size fits all approach of other platforms.