HYBRID EVENTS
A SHORT INTRO-DUCTION

A NEW AGENDA

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work and socialize – and the event industry is one of the most challenged industries.

MeetDenmark has developed "Hybrid events - a short introduction," to accommodate the challenges and utilize the opportunities ahead, and it contains a general approach for hybrid meetings. The introduction offers several explanations, observations and considerations that one is exposed to the first time one becomes acquainted with the hybrid meeting format.

The introduction is primarily intended to be a brief introduction for those unacquainted with the hybrid meeting format, who might want a quick overview in terms of what it is and what thoughts and considerations are reasonable.

In continuation of the introduction, MeetDenmark has developed and offered a range of more detailed and practical tools available to those who are going to plan and execute a hybrid event. These tools create an overview of the relevant aspects of planning, executing and evaluating hybrid meetings.

1.
INTRODUCTION TO THE HYBRID FORMAT

2.
INTRODUCTION OF HYBRID ELEMENTS

NEW OPPORTUNITIES ARISE IN THE FUSION OF THE PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL EVENT

The need for the digital transformation of the event industry has been accelerated by COVID-19. The experience of travelling and participating in events is now fundamentally changed. Even though many organizations and participants already have digitalized their events, it is important to note that 'live' event formats cannot simply be copied online – the content and involvement must be reconceptualized.

Instead of a 'copy and replace' approach, organizations and participants must instead navigate inside this new critical area of both physical and virtual aspects. This must be done innovatively a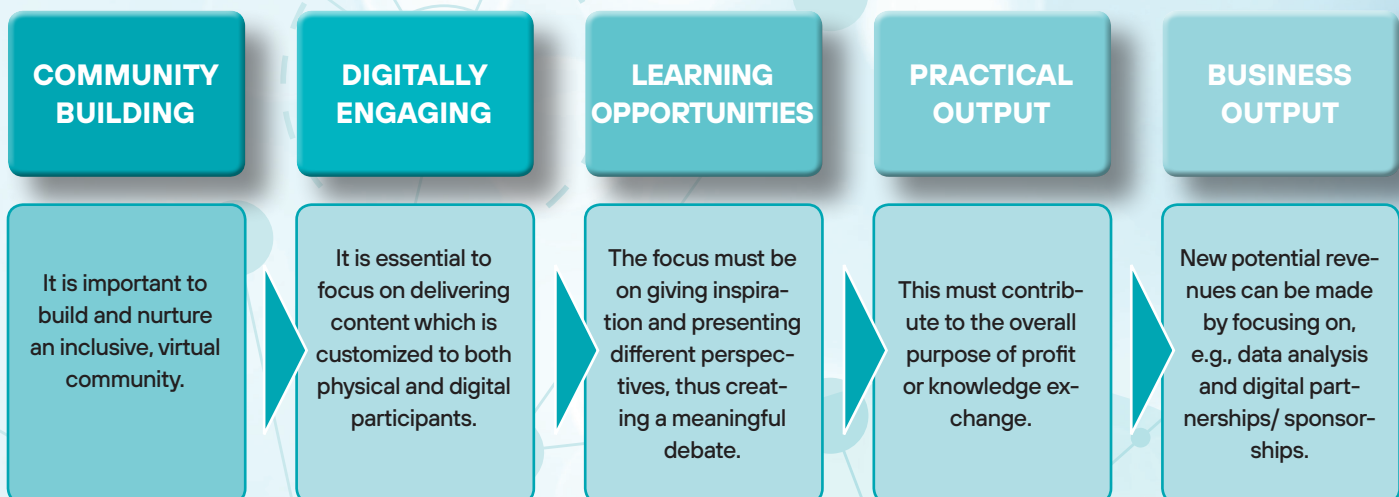nd with a focus on improving and prolonging live events. Hybrid events are not only a one-time experience but may include an online community, which continues to interact after the actual event has concluded and thus becomes a strictly virtual phenomenon. Hybrid events are a meeting platform that can expand and increase the value of live interactions.

When the physical and virtual experiences are conceived of together in an efficient manner, the event itself might potentially be more engaging. The synergy between the two formats is exactly the key point for a successful hybrid event.

A HYBRID EVENT IS AN EVENT WHERE SOME PARTICIPANTS ARE CONNECTED DIGITALLY, WHILE OTHERS ARE PHYSICALLY PRESENT, SO AN EVENT THAT OFFER THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

PHYSICAL EVENT   **HYBRID EVENT**   **VIRTUAL EVENT**

5 SIGNIFICANT DIMENSIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN TRYING TO EXECUTE THE HYBRID FORMAT SUCCESSFULLY

COMMUNITY BUILDING	DIGITALLY ENGAGING	LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	PRACTICAL OUTPUT	BUSINESS OUTPUT
It is important to build and nurture an inclusive, virtual community.	It is essential to focus on delivering content which is customized to both physical and digital participants.	The focus must be on giving inspiration and presenting different perspectives, thus creating a meaningful debate.	This must contribute to the overall purpose of profit or knowledge exchange.	New potential revenues can be made by focusing on, e.g., data analysis and digital partnerships/ sponsorships.

PROS OF CHOOSING THE HYBRID FORMAT

OPPORTUNITY TO PROLONG THE LONGEVITY OF THE EVENT

In a hybrid model, the virtual content can continuously create value after the termination of the physical event. For instance, videos and session recordings can be posted online and can hence be accessed on demand.

OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND THE RANGE OF THE EVENT

The implementation of a virtual dimension can increase the range of the event. Hybrid events deal with the challenge of a limited, physical space by providing participants with the opportunity of attending virtually instead.

OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THE INVESTMENT RETURNS

With an increased range of the event, it may be possible to increase the returns of the initial investment. The combination of physical and virtual attendance can potentially increase the revenues from the event since the per-participant cost is reduced..

OPPORTUNITY FOR MORE PARTICIPANTS' CONTROL AND INCREASED DATA ACCESS

Virtual elements and functions provides a more flexible participants' control and additional data access. After signing up for the event, participants may interact and engage with the digital environment surrounding the event.

ADDITIONAL PROS AND CONS OF HYBRID EVENTS

PARTICIPANTS

The key to success is ensuring that the participants have a good experience through combining the physical and virtual elements with high quality.

CHALLENGES:
Without the energy of a physical experience, it may be challenging to properly engage the online participants.

Bridging the gap between physically attending participants and virtually attending participants.

OPPORTUNITIES:
The virtual functions facilitate unique ways of participants' involvement.

Virtual involvement is cheaper and more efficient for participants – virtual participants may log in and can instantly interact with the content.

Eradicate queuing! Thousands of people will be able to participate simultaneously, without worrying about long queues.

The participants will continuously experience value through their access to the virtual content - even after the event.

SPEAKERS

Virtual components must ensure the experience of online participation is focused – this is attained not only by livestreaming the physical event.

CHALLENGES:
Ensuring that the speaker's internet connection is reliable so that the technology does not fail while livestreaming.

Prepare a backup plan if the speaker cannot participate due to unforeseen circumstances.

Ensuring that the content and the duration of presentations is balanced and adjusted for both physical and virtual participants.

OPPORTUNITIES:
External speakers provide the opportunity of overcoming geographical barriers, which potentially gives a wider array of speakers.

Speakers are more cost-efficient since travel and accommodation expenses are reduced, while the knowledge and expertise they bring to the table is retained.

SPONSORS

Hybrid events can significantly increase the opportunities for brand exposure for sponsors, due to the increased range of the event. Sponsors are now present both physically and virtually.

CHALLENGES:
Some sponsors prefer the physical meetup for lead generation; hence it may be challenging to attract sponsors to events with a higher count of virtual participants.

OPPORTUNITIES:
The digital dimension provides sponsors with the opportunity of measuring their brand's effect and interaction with greater precision through increased data access.

Lead generation can be simplified through the scanning of the participants' event pass or ID key when a person accesses a certain website or a virtual stand, and customer leads can thus be registered automatically.

Sponsors can create online rooms that establish a direct connection to participants.

CONTENT IS CRUCIAL – THE VIRTUAL AUDIENCE, IN PARTICULAR, MUST STAY ENGAGED

MAKE THE CONTENT INTERESTING

Create catchy content through excerpts or video introductions. This will contribute to the participants' continuous involvement during the event.

Use exciting advertising panels and media walls with a variety of content and virtual backgrounds to support your hosts and speakers, focusing on keeping the participants' attention fixed to their screens.

Incorporate and utilize interactive content such as polls, making sessions more engaging and providing new common insights in real time.

The virtual participants' interest and involvement is difficult to maintain. Therefore, content must be organized with sessions that ideally only last 20-30 minutes. Some exceptions can be made, however, such as main speakers.

THE CONTENT MUST BE ENTERTAINING

Incorporate and utilize experiences to create a kind of theater or movie experience. 'Wow moments' are crucial for live events.

The content must accommodate the participants, their demography and reasons for participation. The content must be snappy and prominent to ensure participant retention – for instance, like a Netflix special.

Make sure you identify the right kind of movie content for different parts of the event. For instance, live sessions should be used for creating operant and memorable experiences.

The appeal of a hybrid event is the creation of a decentralized community, where both participants and speakers can cooperate and cocreate. Using virtual rooms and groups that persist after the event, can create a community spirit and additional value for both participants and sponsors.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1

START WITH THE 5 W'S

1. **Why:** Learning, knowledge sharing, dissemination of knowledge, networking, sales.
2. **Who**: Target groups; elderly, young people, digital, physical, exhibitors, speakers, researchers, students.
3. **What**: Subjects, messages – what is the output?
4. **Where**: Which physical and virtual venues?
5. **When**: Time of the year, time of the day, time spent on each session, etc.

2

THE CONFIGURATION OF A PROGRAM

1. Organize the program according to the target groups and their geography to accommodate, e.g., time zones.
2. The recommended duration is 4-6 hours of content a day, with short breaks in between, where each session does not exceed an hour's duration.
3. Integrate the program with the right technology to create a full experience both physically and digitally.
   - Make the sessions more interactive by ensuring frequent use of interactive tools.
   - Adjust the agendas so that participants may choose their own combinations of sessions, networks, group chats, virtual visits at exhibitors and sponsors, even between the participants themselves.

3

THOUGHTS AND CHOICE OF TECHNOLOGY, DATA AND CYBERSECURITY

1. Choose virtual event platform.
   - Evaluate user-friendliness, navigation, built-in tools (e.g., chat, live Q&A), focusing on the digital dimension's customer experience.
   - Ensure that the real-time support meets the requirements of the participants during the event.
2. Choose production tool for live video.
   - This can be produced internally or be outsourced.
3. Choose livestreaming tool.
   - Ensure that livestreaming is accessible to your audience (e.g., can the audience from specific countries encounter restrictions on some of the popular livestreaming platforms?)
4. Ensure reliable and secure Wi-Fi connection for physical participants and the livestreaming channel.

HOW TO GET STARTED

4 ENSURING COMMUNITY BUILDING, INTEGRATION AND INVOLVEMENT

1. Involve participants through tools such as chats, polls, Q&A's and quizzes.
2. Gamify the event through active strategies such as rewards for most active participants, polls regarding the best questions and acknowledge the winners.
3. Combine the physical and virtual community.
   - Confirm and acknowledge the online participants as a part of the physical event.
   - Ensure that live polls, Q&A's and quizzes are available for both virtual and physical participants.
   - Consider a virtual presenter who acts as the voice of the online participants.
   - Consider a chat room that is available to both online and physical participants.
   - Consider a one-on-one video call option and chat opportunities amongst the participants.

5 SET UP KPIs, ANALYSES AND MEASUREMENTS TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE EVENT

1. Make sure you follow up and measure the scope of the online activities and involvement:
   - Demography of the participants.
   - Their time consumption and purpose.
   - Their participation in specific conversations.
   - Number of downloads of specific materials.
   - Number of visits to virtual stands of exhibitors.
2. Ensure that the event platform provides relevant reports of the KPIs and the insights that are important for the event.

6 CHOICE AND CONTROL OF PROVIDER AND VENUE

1. Identify the solution providers – physical venues, AV production companies, providers of event platforms and – in some cases – telecommunications and broadband providers.
2. Room design (hotels, congress centers). Consider layout, lighting, online and physical participant interaction.
3. Please notice that hybrid locations, such as recording studios, are fully integrable with all relevant technology.
4. Align the communication of the project team with the internal team (IT, operations, catering, providers, etc.)
5. Plan tests of technology and integrations.
6. Incorporate health regulations, protocols, emergency procedures for the maintenance of health and sanitary standards.