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Breaking Down Hybrid Events

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Pharma Forum is “the largest, most influential annual forum dedicated to uniting life sciences.”

Whether you’re in pharma or not, the hottest topics at this year’s conference were relevant to anyone who produces events of any kind, particularly virtual and hybrid.

ADM was there in one of the most highly anticipated and attended panel discussions, where our own Chief Creative Officer, Russell Reich, spoke on How to Hybrid.

We’ve recapped the top takeaways, and here they are:

WHAT’S A HYBRID EVENT?

What it’s not:

Just a live event with a broadcast component. Yeah, if you put a camera on general session and broadcast out that feed you’ll have a hybrid event, strictly speaking. But if you produce an event just using that definition your results will be lacking because the definition is so incomplete.

What a hybrid event really is:

Any event with multiple audiences addressed through multiple media types.

What’s a media type?

It’s an art form.

Your in-person staged events are applications of the art form of live theater.

Your virtual events leverage the art form of broadcast television. Correction: Interactive, participatory television.

With hybrid, you’re mashing these two art forms together. And that’s rarely been done before.

TAKEAWAY:

Hybrid is complex. And you’ll still need to meet your goals for all audience types. Best approach is to integrate your production partners to decrease media type conflict.

What should a hybrid event cost?

More than an in-person or virtual meeting alone because you've always got that added component that makes it a hybrid.

But it should cost less than doing both types of the same event separately because there are economies of scale, such as shared content and production management (if you can avoid separate event partners to produce the separate parts).

One and half times the cost of the same event done strictly in-person is a good budget rule-of-thumb.

Are there offsets to those costs?

Yes. You're probably not flying, lodging and feeding as many people in-person. That's big savings.

Plus, the marginal cost of adding another virtual audience member is minimal. If there's any value to what you're doing, event-wise, exposing more people to it should mean better ROI. So open up the tent and invite more to participate.

TAKEAWAY:

Hybrid shouldn't mean focusing on the higher cost. Focus on objectives, opportunities, democratization of participation, increased ROI ...

How can I better manage the complexity of hybrid events?

Visualize the complexity. You're less likely to miss something or neglect an audience when their needs are visible.

ADM is pioneering a experience map visualization for hybrid meetings, a kind of musical score with notes indicating how to best conduct your multiple audiences through multiple media types.

So you'll see where the audiences' needs are—and you can then address them.

What's the biggest mistake hybrid event planners make?

Focusing on the in-person audience at the expense of the virtual audience.

It's a natural tendency. Fight it.

A live audience doesn't need as much of your focus or continual programming. Leave them alone and you know what they'll do? Turn to each other and talk. Collaborate. Solve problems. Build relationships. Everything you want them to be doing. Everything you brought them together for in the first place.

But if you neglect the virtual audience, good luck competing with the Four Great Forces of the Lockdown: the bathroom, the kids, the email, and the box of donuts. Hard to get them back once you've lost them.

TAKEAWAY:

Think of your hybrid meeting as primarily a broadcast event with a live component, not the other way around.