



Physical, virtual or hybrid?

Which event form suits your event best?

All advantages and tips at a glance to make successful choice for your business event

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Physical Events	
Business event at a physical location? These are the 5 advantages.	4
5 top tips for successfully planning a physical event	6
Virtual Events	
7 advantages of virtual events. Now and in the future	8
12 expert tips for your virtual event	10
Hybrid Events	
Hybrid events. These are the 5 biggest bonuses	13
7 do's & don'ts for the success of your hybrid event	15



Goals, budget, audience preferences, reach and sustainability. It all plays a role in choosing the **right event form**.

Physical, virtual or hybrid? Which form is the best choice for planning your business event?

We at Faber Audiovisuals are happy to help you with that. Within your deadline, budget and with the maximum experience for your visitors. As a leading company in the audiovisual sector, we provide services, people, equipment and solutions for live, hybrid and online events.

With this paper, we'd like to get you started. First of all, by showing you the concept and the advantages of each format. We will also share key points to further increase your chances of a successful event.

Physical is preferred

For this white paper, we collected information from clients and experts in the sector. The trend is to organise physical events (again) in abundance. At the same time, the need for the virtual and hybrid format is growing. Goals, budget, audience preferences, reach and sustainability play a role in the choice.

Series of several small events

The lesson of the corona period is that large one-and-done events are less effective than a cyclical approach. With large, less frequent events, the danger is that all the attention is focused on a peak moment - only to disappear from view for the rest of the year. More and smaller events make the visitor feel part of a unique, meaningful event. With more focus and attention on the individual.

Online offers serious advantages

Another conclusion of the recent period: the public is no longer satisfied with simple streaming. Future digital events will almost always be live and offer an on-demand component.

Engagement

Successful events are well-thought-out, well-designed experiences. With the experience of your audience as a starting point. Engagement can only be expected if you develop a separate strategy for both the physically present and the virtual audience. Participants want to be able to interact - offline or online - with speakers and with each other. They want to experience the connection with each other. To be emotionally triggered. Whatever form your event eventually takes, the challenge is to bring back FOMO. Events where visitors want to be there no matter what.



The advantages of a business event at a physical location

Well-organised events at a physical location are focused on the participant's experience. They stimulate all the senses. And they facilitate 'coffee machine moments': unplanned, low-threshold encounters that result in valuable conversations.

Be there or be square

In order to be physically present at an event, participants have to overcome all kinds of obstacles: time (travel), costs, traffic jams, weather conditions, arranging babysitting, and so on. For that reason alone, people expect a lot from your event. Increasingly, physical events will aim for high production quality. If you achieve the expected level, you have come full circle: the higher the quality, the greater the desire to be there. Be there or be square.

Being at a live event in person stimulates sight, hearing, touch - and if you use catering - taste and smell. Combining all of that in your concept is a powerful trigger for engagement. The more engagement, the better the experience and the greater the customer satisfaction. Another advantage of being able to use your senses: participants enjoy being able to pick up on non-verbal communication. Being able to see body language easily lowers the threshold for interaction.

Maintaining attention

When you send a message, you often forget how briefly people can listen to it with full attention. No matter how much interest and motivation they have. Behind the screen it seems even even more difficult to maintain focus. Physical events therefore contribute to improving the duration and degree of attention.

At events for stakeholders, shareholders or employees, it is also a good idea to offer the management a stage. Literally. Leaders make themselves approachable. Even better: a physical, live speech by the leaders creates focus. Increase trust. And motivate.

From functional to spontaneous communication

Online communication is often rigid, goal-oriented and efficient. As a result, you miss out on casual contact that starts with a chat and ends with a great plan. This exchange is easier if you meet in the same space or if you or looking up. A business event at a physical location offers the advantage that you can shift the focus of the communication. From primarily functional and online to spontaneous, informal and social, in the place where people meet in person.



5 top tips for the successful planning of a physical event

What do experts consider to be the key points for organising a successful event on location? We list five of them:

1

Focus on one goal

You have a good reason for organising the event you are planning. Write down that reason in no more than 15 words. Don't make it too big: in addition to that central goal, you may choose two sub-goals. Also define what exactly you consider a success. It helps if you formulate your objective as smartly as possible.

2

Gain insight into the entire customer journey

Successful events begin long before the event and end not on the day itself but with the follow-up afterwards. That is why it pays to look at the whole customer journey: before, during and after. What do participants expect? What wishes and pain points are there? You can of course send evaluations to the participants afterwards. Another tip is to survey people beforehand.

3

Use a special app

Using a special app for your business event is becoming more and more common. It is an attractive way for organisers and participants to communicate with each other. You can also use it to offer additional (or exclusive) content. Moreover, it helps to gain insight into the customer journey. Combine the data you generate with the surveys and evaluations. Indispensable information when planning your next event.

4 Challenge the visitor. Ensure less speaking time. And more variety.

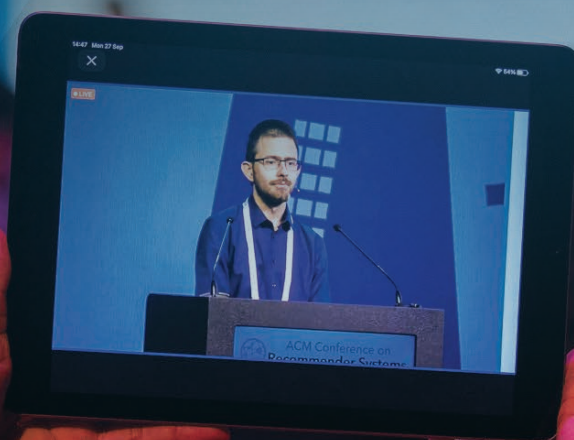
The large, successful events of recent years encourage participants to think, learn and share. And this in all kinds of - playful - forms. Think of gamification. Or a design sprint or hackathon. Or an interactive workshop. The trend before the pandemic was to put fewer people on the podium and instead to let visitors get actively involved. The shift could sometimes be as much as 80% time for workshops or other activities and only 20% time for speakers.

5 Choose professional support

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in a professionally organised business event. Think of light, sound, cameras and direction via the cloud to make speakers audible and visible for everyone. Do you want to place this content on the website afterwards?

Then it is also worth considering hiring professionals to edit the content for the website. Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality are also becoming more common. The trick is to use these kinds of techniques not as a gimmick, but to add value to the experience of the visitor. If you succeed, you are one step closer to providing an experience that participants will appreciate and remember.

*What do participants expect?
What wishes and pain points are there?*



Virtual Events.

The plus points, now and in the future

Still, virtual offers specific advantages for business events that other formats cannot match. The most important of these are your reach and accessibility. With physical events, it is the location that determines the maximum size of your audience. When you organise an online event, there is no maximum. (In all fairness, of course: each platform has a technical limit). Moreover, virtual events encourage participation by people who cannot or do not want to travel.

Focus

More than in events where the visitor is physically present, virtual events allow the participant to keep his full focus on the content. Behind the screen, the participant feels as if he or she is one-on-one with the speaker. Moreover, the speaker is often in close-up view. Messages seem to penetrate better in an online setting. This is an advantage, particularly for complex subjects, as these messages are more difficult to communicate in a physical format.

Less time and less preparation required

Another plus is that virtual events require less lead time and preparation. The experience of our clients is that planning physical events is about twice as time-consuming as preparing virtual events. This is mainly due to arranging a (desirable) location, logistics, catering and security. There is also a greater chance that sought-after speakers can attend. A virtual event costs speakers less time and effort. Also, if you have less time to book them, you have a chance that they will agree.

Reuse of content

Virtual events can be made available afterwards and on-demand. That is not only pleasant for the people who were not there at the time of the broadcast. For those who attended the event live, it can also have added value to watch it again.

Preserving, archiving and accessing the content of a digital event is simple. This way, you immediately have valuable building blocks for your content calendar and social media. Moreover, you can use the content for white papers and the like. In this way, you re-use the content for lead generation, for example. Those who want to see the content leave their business details behind: data you can use to generate targeted follow-ups



Collecting, integrating and applying data

Another advantage is that virtual events allow you to collect good data. This data helps you to better tune (future) events to the wishes and pain points of your visitors. Integration of this data provides the sales teams with better leads. And collecting data from online events is relatively simple: just a matter of choosing the most suitable software platform.

Smaller footprint

Finally, compared to the physical form, with your online event you contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A virtual event therefore has an advantage if it is important for your brand or message to commit to sustainability. And what company or organisation doesn't have this in mind these days?

2 expert tips for your **virtual event**

As we have previously established, engagement is the critical success factor for organising your business event. If you are planning a virtual event, this is even more true.

But how do you do that, maximise engagement? Here are 12 tips from experts:



1

Make clear in advance what the audience can expect

You have a good reason for organising the event you are planning. Write down that reason in no more than 15 words. Don't make it too big: in addition to that central goal, you may choose two sub-goals. Also define what exactly you consider a success. It helps if you formulate your objective as smartly as possible.

2

Personalize

Offer participants the chance to choose sessions and times themselves. Make suggestions based on what you know in advance about the different visitor segments. Also split the e-mail communication into these segments. This way, you can get people excited about your event individually with news, teasers and content that is specifically of interest to that segment.

3

Create specific spaces where people can meet - as a group or as individuals

Provide spaces where online participants can meet and socialise. This is important for informal discussions and relaxation. But also for networking or to go deeper into specific subjects. Participants need to be able to come together in rooms. But also to be able to meet one-on-one.

4

Give it a 'real' feel

Innovative solutions such as the virtual venue give the online visitor the natural experience of a physical location. Think for example of a reception lobby, network rooms and so on. You can have a virtual venue fully customised. Or - more economically - choose a ready-made template.

5

Shorter sessions

No matter how benevolent your audience is, it is well known that staying focused for a long time is difficult. This is even more true online. Keep your sessions short and sweet: preferably less than 30 minutes, including the Q&A.

6

Make it interactive

Live chat, polls, Q&As, gamification, a virtual stage, a wall on which you stream online participants, integration of social media, breakout rooms, virtual (exhibition) stands. All resources that enhance the feeling of engagement.

7

Think about entertainment

In physical events, entertainment is considered indispensable. Online, it is often the first item to go to waste in order to balance the budget. But after all the focus on the screen, entertainment is a welcome refreshment. Think of a DJ, a musical act or a comedian.





Invest in quality and innovation

8

The virtual format requires less investment in time, money and effort than a physical format. This is also a pitfall. A one-dimensional Zoom webinar, virtual conference or group discussion will no longer satisfy your audience. Work with professional partners who can offer added value with surprising, high-quality and innovative concepts, solutions and techniques to increase engagement.

Content is king. The power of storytelling. And personas

9

Good content holds the attention. Excellent content creates dialogue and engagement. Research shows that the audience adopts content faster if it triggers an emotional response. So wrap facts, data and your message in a story. Including plot, main characters, tension curve, tone-of-voice, etc. People are programmed to recognise stories and appreciate their content. You can also work with personas. This helps to offer relevant content per segment.

Reward live participation

10

With virtual events, the temptation for the audience to watch the content afterwards is certainly present. Nothing wrong with that. However, for the dynamics and interaction it is desirable that a good part of your visitors participates live. Therefore, think about rewards that stimulate live participation. Like content that is only available at the moment itself, and not on-demand.

Also provide good on-demand content

11

By offering content online afterwards, you increase its reach. One-to-one uploads are unattractive. That is why it is important to edit the content. Think for example of breaking it down into highlights or themes. Add notes. Consider subtitles for viewers who do not want sound. And consider offering the content in the form of a (edited) podcast for people who want to listen to it on the go, for example.

Integrate analytics

12

As part of the marketing strategy, events can provide plenty of valuable data. The tools available for virtual events are also useful in the hybrid format. Data integration gives you leads that your sales team can use to start active conversations. Before, during and after the event.

Hybrid events: combining the benefits of physical and online

In our definition, 'hybrid events' are events that include each of the following:

- » An online audience with a component of physical presence
- » The possibility for virtual and physical visitors to interact with the content, speakers and each other
- » A live component

Well designed and executed, they offer the best of both worlds. All the advantages of physical with all the advantages of virtual. The best hybrid events create one unique experience that exceeds all expectations. Planning a hybrid event is not simply about organising a live event with an overlapping online component. It is about integrating those two different experiences to create one interactive experience.

Added value is achieved when the physically present audience can benefit from the participation of the (large) online group. And vice versa. This unique experience is mainly achieved with a connected hybrid, also known as a multi-hub. In that case, you tie several physical and virtual locations together. Including speakers and audience at the venue and the participants online.





Scaling up. And lowering barriers

Planning a hybrid event is not simply about organising a live event with an overlapping online component. It is about integrating those two different experiences to create one interactive experience. Added value is achieved when the physical audience can benefit from the participation of the (large) online group. And vice versa. This unique experience is mainly achieved with a connected hybrid, also known as multi-hub. In that case, you tie several physical and virtual locations together. Including speakers and audience at the venue and the participants online.

Connected hybrid in practice

What connected hybrid is exactly, we can make clear with the help of an example. Imagine an event where a speaker at a physical location in Leeuwarden enters into conversation with a speaker at a physical location in Utrecht. People from the physical audience in Amsterdam and The Hague ask questions, just like participants at home. The questioner at home can be seen on a large LED screen at the physical location. And meanwhile, the moderators - one live on stage in Maastricht, the other live on stage in Rotterdam - steer the whole thing in the right direction.

Analytics

The digital domain of course lends itself perfectly to gathering better insights about your visitors. And especially: what they want, what they don't want and where the pain lies. Software for hybrid events is focusing more and more on facilitating the collection of data. The analytics you generate not only give you valuable input for your next event. You can also use that data to generate leads and to fill any follow-ups.

7 do's & don'ts for the success of your **hybrid event**

Planning a business hybrid event has great potential for success.
The following 6 do's and 1 don't from experts will increase your chances:

DO Connect the whole audience with each other, physically and virtually

The most successful are hybrid events where the audience is one. Regardless of whether they are physically present or online. The development of the technical possibilities for that connection have come at a rapid pace during the pandemic. Think of the use of apps that make a link between participants on location and at home. Even more innovative are solutions where online participants can be seen on LED walls at the physical location. Speakers, visitors who are physically present and the virtual audience can thus effortlessly interact

with each other throughout the event. To ensure a similar experience online and offline, you can use polls, Q&As or, for example, a pub quiz. By integrating all these possibilities, you also avoid a don't. Namely: that being physically present is the 'real' experience - while the online audience gets to watch. Namely: that being physically present is the 'real' experience - while the online audience can watch.

DO Make the physical and virtual environment one experience

You choose the physical location with care. You provide tasteful furnishings, good lighting. Everything synchronised with your brand or with your house style. It is important to integrate that same look-and-feel towards your virtual audience. Virtual Event Platforms offer more and more flexibility in this respect.

DO Provides specific benefits for the physical and virtual public

What makes hybrid events especially attractive is the possibility of offering specific experiences to the two groups of participants. For the physical audience, it is the personal interaction and being able to enjoy the catering and location live. But you can also offer unique benefits to the online audience. The most important of these is that the home audience is in charge of its own time. Let them choose which parts of the programme they want to attend. And reward participants with extra content that can only be seen online.

DO

Keep it short and sweet

Even an engaged audience can only keep its attention on the speaker for a relatively short time. This applies just as much to the audience on location as to the audience at home. You can, for example, replace the message of one long presentation by cutting it up into shorter sessions. Preferably with several speakers. As a rule of thumb, experts say: a maximum of 30 minutes per session, including questions from the audience.

DO

Provide variety

Variety helps to engage the audience with your content. Polls, quizzes, Q&As and surveys are forms that have proved their worth in practice. Using them also makes it more attractive for the speakers and moderators. And that in turn translates to more dynamics and interaction. With greater engagement as a result.

DO

Commit to the quality of AV technology. Including AR and VR

Quality makes the difference. Professional video registration, lighting, sound and cloud direction offer added value to the physically present audience. For online viewers, they are indispensable. Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality techniques offer more and more possibilities for offering special experiences. Consider also the use of professionals for editing video material to be put online after the event.

DON'T

Forget the entertainment

However you look at it, research and experience show that entertainment helps to boost ratings. It can be attractive to provide a conceptual link between the performer and (the theme of) your event. But the most important thing is that the audience has the opportunity to relax.



Samenvatting

Terug naar fysiek, op locatie. De evenementenbranche en onze opdrachtgevers zien dat als de voorkeur voor zakelijke evenementen. Tegelijk blijft de markt voor virtuele en hybride events groeien. Doelstellingen, budget, de wensen van bezoekers, bereik en duurzaamheid zullen steeds vaker de keuze voor een van de drie formats bepalen. Beter gezegd, organisatoren zullen per specifieke situatie kijken welke vorm de beste oplossing biedt. De trend zal zijn: minder grootschalige, éénmalige evenementen. En juist meer en kleinere events door het jaar heen. Zo ontstaat een samenhangende cyclus van offline en online ervaringen.

Voor welke vorm je als organisator ook kiest, engagement zal de kritische succesfactor blijven. Offline én online. Goed ontworpen evenementen. En met de beleving van je publiek als uitgangspunt. Uitdagen en activeren van deelnemers helpt. Dus: minder tijd voor sprekers. En meer voor het zelf doen via gamification, in workshops, hackathons en design sprints. Daarnaast is het de kunst ruimte te creëren voor de behoefte die mensen hebben aan informeel en sociaal contact.

Om een goed beeld te hebben van wat de wensen en ongemakken van bezoekers zijn, is het verstandig om de customer journey in beeld te brengen. Het verzamelen van data en toepassen van analytics helpen daarbij. Online is die mogelijkheid in de meeste platforms ingebouwd. Bij live events zullen apps vaker worden ingezet.

In elk format rekent de bezoeker op de kwaliteit van de ervaring. Professionele partners kunnen je event ondersteunen via productie, digitale en AV-techniek, aankleding – of als moderator of spreker.

Bronnen

Als basis voor deze paper hebben we gesproken met onze opdrachtgevers en contacten. Daarnaast hebben we online onder andere de volgende bronnen geraadpleegd: Inc, The Drum, Eventbrite, Bizzabo, Amex, Forbes, Socio, Cvent, Socialtables, Eventleadershipinstitute en Eventmanagerblog.

Over Faber Audiovisuals

Zoek je een oplossing op het hoogste niveau voor je fysieke, virtuele of hybride event? Wil je de grootste impact bij je zakelijke evenement, stream, corporate event, lancering van je product, presentatie, key note, themadag, congres, beurs of personeelsbijeenkomst? Wil je bovendien kunnen profiteren van de visuele mogelijkheden en marketingtools van de online wereld? Je bent welkom! We helpen het je graag waarmaken. Binnen je deadline. Binnen je budget. En met de maximale beleving voor zowel je online als offline publiek.

FABER
AUDIOVISUALS
NEP Live Events

Vragen?
Neem gerust contact met ons op.

Tel : +31 (0)88 322 3700
email : info@faber-av.com

www.faber-av.com

Faber Audiovisuals BV
De Wissel 3a
9076 PT, St. Annaparochie
The Netherlands

Fotocredits:
Nathan Reinds,
Nico Alsemgeest