

# A business case for a hybrid event strategy

An event professionals guide to promoting digital / hybrid events to the senior leadership team

JLLive

Creative Experiences Shaped by Technology

# Introduction

Live Events are about creating shared experiences and making an impact on the audience, regardless of whether the event is held in-person, digitally or as a mix of the two (hybrid).

As we forge ahead, it is time for event organisers to harness the incredible opportunities that a polished, creative digital campaign can provide – placing the event at the heart of their campaign with the blockbuster production it deserves.

JLLive is a creative event production company born from the world of television. As a result of this unique heritage, our team is perfectly placed to bring events to life, both physically and on the small screen (be that via a television, laptop, tablet or even smart phone), and support our clients in delivering campaigns with maximum effect. Our experience shows the extent to which a professionally curated hybrid/digital event will breathe excitement and passion into the brand.

This guide is intended to empower corporate event organisers with key information to help sell-in the idea of hybrid and digital events for future campaigns. It is intended to enable businesses to harness the digital experience and create some truly meaningful and memorable moments for their internal teams and external clients.

**Phil McMichael, Managing Director, JLLive**



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# Why Events?

As every professional knows, when selling an idea, such as a quality hybrid/digital events into your business strategy, it is important to focus on the benefits. Whilst we know sustainability and accessibility are key drivers for many businesses, it's important to give as much context as possible to senior leaders who are perhaps a little more reluctant to invest in both the digital and physical elements of their events for the longer term.

## Internationally accessible

Digital events offer opportunities beyond a client's traditional audience, often attracting attendees from further afield who might otherwise have missed out. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that international travel will be slow to return, so astute event organisers should ensure a hybrid element is included in their plans.

In addition, a report in 2020 by the management consultants McKinseys, *Reimagining marketing in the next normal*, found that in terms of commerce, consumers vaulted five years in the adoption of digital in just eight weeks, with significant cohorts of consumers experiencing digital for the first time.

This is solid evidence that event attendees expect to use digital in their everyday lives. They are comfortable engaging with the concept of a virtual event and the barrier of digital adoption has now been removed.

## Brand personality

Unquestionably one of the key benefits of an event for clients is creating awareness and raising the profile of their brand, something a well-executed digital event will do. The company values, key messages and stories can shine through and be brought to life with the CEO positioned as the leading star – far more engaging than talking through a few PowerPoint slides.

# Why Events?

## Longevity

The beauty of incorporating a digital element into an event is that the life of the campaign can be so much longer – it exists beyond a single one-off conference, congress or trade show. There are multiple opportunities for engagement and building brand awareness before, during, and after the event.

On-demand is another trend likely to continue, as delegates unable to attend the live event will be able to watch the sessions at their convenience, without compromising on the quality of content or their ability to engage.

A simple example includes 'mini-clips' of content which can be created for social media channels, further content for the website or sales collateral and beyond.

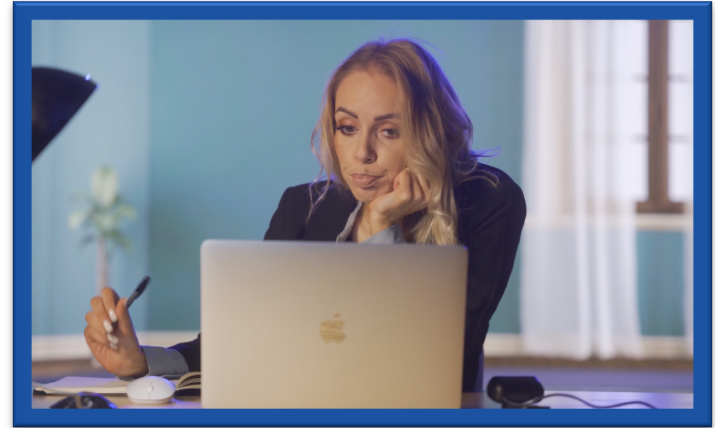
## The time is NOW

In part due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of digital marketing has accelerated and is now coming into its own: its importance has never been greater than it is NOW. Marketing teams who understand the value of incorporating a polished online (or digital) event into their campaign will also be onto a winning formula. Anchoring a digital campaign with an event will bring returns far greater than a simple banner advert ever could.

As sustainability becomes the most significant concern for event organisers and delegates alike, the option to attend without incurring a large carbon footprint will increase in attractiveness and brands that offer this choice will be rewarded.

# Justifying the “Expense”

‘Zoom gloom’ is real and whilst video conferencing blunders give social media audiences five-minutes of entertainment, they are not how you want your brand or event to be remembered. Under-selling the value of your event production and going for a free, easily accessible platform with your keynote speaker delivering content from their bedroom is not the level of quality you want audiences to experience from your brand. Your audience is more sophisticated now, It has moved beyond the pivot – make sure your brand does too!



## Inspirational production

While a digital event is undoubtedly received and experienced differently to a live event, it is still very much possible to create something very special and deliver a truly memorable experience. A digital event produced the right way, has the ability to bring people together for a shared experience. Remember the energy we all felt watching Danny Boyle’s ‘Opening Ceremony’ to kick off the London 2012 Olympics? The large majority of viewers watched the event on their television screens, not in the stadium, yet the buzz of coming together and the thrill of experiencing this ‘marquee moment’ was the same for both spectators in the stands and the audience at home.

Similarly, some of the most powerful and inspiring speakers at a TedX event can be enjoyed live and then by audiences again and again across YouTube, Netflix and on Ted’s own website. Simon Sinek’s session ‘*How great leaders inspire action*’ has been watched over 53 million times on YouTube alone.

# Justifying the “Expense”

## LIGHTS

Many events invest an inordinate amount of time and resource into making sure their content is tailored to their audiences and yet will simply record the live content from the back of the room to be watched online at a later date. Respectfully speaking, that’s not something you’ve ever seen with BBC Sports Personality of the Year!

Live events are of course very different to televised events and organisers need to ensure the production, technical and content elements of an event all work together in perfect synergy – the key components should be carefully thought through and fine-tuned by creatives, designers and producers.

## CAMERA

Lighting, sound, set design and even audience placement (if you have a mix of live and digital) all require fine tuning. At a live event, attendees tend to be fully immersed in the room so their eyes are not drawn to any specific area as they would be on the small screen. And if the keynote speaker’s lighting on a presentation isn’t just so, it can make it harder to see on a laptop, something that would be less noticeable at a live event.

## ACTION

Creating the right atmosphere through vision and sound is crucial. For example, if it is a day into evening production, the presenter may change their outfit over the course of the event depending on the tone of the content from formal to more relaxed attire, and the lights may become more party-like as the event goes on.

These are small but impactful details that require experience, expertise and knowledge but can really make an impact on the longevity of your event campaign.

# Dealing with Barriers

Many of our events professional clients face the same internal barriers when seeking investment and budgets for their live and/or digital event strategies.

Here we tackle four of the most common objections event professionals encounter when implementing new strategies within their business.

## “We don’t have the budgets for virtual”

Unsurprisingly, the most common objection event professionals face when looking to secure funds for any new project comes down to cost. Organisers who are familiar with the “we don’t have budget for virtual” response, can often overcome this hurdle by discussing ‘digital campaign budgets’ instead – an approach that could result in a very different reaction and the door more likely to open.

According to the *ICE Benchmarking Research* (in association with CVENT, Autumn 2020) while 74% of corporate event planners say delivering more virtual/hybrid events will be the top challenge facing event professionals in the next three years, 67% of corporate event planners indicate their technology budgets are now increasing.

If you’re looking for additional event budget, there may be opportunities to partner with other teams or departments within your business who recognise the benefits that high-level content and engagement with your event will provide, such as digital marketing.



# Dealing with Barriers

## “Can we still obtain crucial data?”

Another enormous advantage of hosting a digital event is the amount of data that can be generated, far more than at a live event.

Organisers can track the number of attendees and their level of engagement throughout the event, responding in real time to fluctuating levels of attentiveness.

Sales teams can also engage in far more efficient business development activity with the help of the technology. And brands can use digital events to generate greater awareness in a number of innovative ways, such as having links to their websites and a representative to respond to any queries during the course of the event.



## “We don’t have the resource”

Sourcing an experienced supplier will be vital in helping plan a digital event and anticipating all eventualities from the outset. You will want to source a team who have expertise in both the live and digital worlds to help you navigate any potential challenges.

## “It’s not right for our business”

As with live events, digital experiences can be as flexible as the organiser wants it to be and tailored to each individual client whatever their needs. For example, you may only want to feature a handful of 20-minute digital segments alongside other campaigns or host an enormous annual event for thousands of employees across multiple time zones. Versatility is the key.

It is also worth re-emphasising the increased adoption of digital platforms and the changing expectations of audiences who want to experience events on their own terms.

# Case Study / Volkswagen RBC2020

## The brief:

JLLive worked with the Volkswagen Group to deliver the two-day 2020 Retailer Business Conference, an event intended to celebrate and showcase a new generation of electric vehicles, with a focus on climate change and digitalisation.

## The creative idea:

A concept was developed based on the staging and formats used in popular TV programmes blending together Top Gear and the Graham Norton Show. The innovative 'televisual' format allowed informality to be blurred into a more conversational style event, permitting new and more complex messages to be delivered in a relaxed and intimate way.

The concept was brought to life across three content zones, surrounded by audiences seated on swivelling chairs allowing them to re-direct their attention to different zones or one of the repeater screens. The show was on multiple cameras and re-broadcast live onto these screens, creating a film of the highlights from the event for on-demand viewings by those who weren't able to attend in person.

Three large LED screens displayed vibrant imagery to reflect the new brand, as well as films to break up the conversation and summarise key points in visual forms.

## The outcome

The live broadcast event was delivered, simultaneously engaging both the live and 'small screen' (digital) audiences, using technological expertise from a different sector (TV and film) in a fresh way.

The event was rated 'excellent / good' by 92% of delegates.

From Volkswagen: "You know you've created something special when delegates are enthusiastically sharing updates on social media live from the event!"

# Speaking Easy

JLLive's background in the world of television and film not only means our team know their way around the studio floor, but we employ some of the best creatives there are to support you in educating, exciting and engaging your audience.

We want to make sure you are empowered when speaking to your new suppliers and creative producers, so here is our essential jargon buster:

**Call sheet:** A very important document. The call sheet is made by the production team and includes start times, end times, what's being shot, emergency contacts, maps and transport arrangements, it may even include parking instructions. If in doubt, read the call sheet!

**Chroma-key:** Similar to greenscreen, chroma-key is the process of filming a person in front of a blank screen and adding images behind it to give the impression they are elsewhere. This is commonly used in news reports.

**DV director:** Digital video director. A DV director is a role that sits between AP and producer/director. Often a DV director is a self-shooter and normally works on location alone (or with a runner) filming the VT elements or the 'pick-up' parts of a show (additional parts the main producer/director couldn't get).

**FM:** Floor manager. Floor managers work in studio shows and they are the person between the director and the crew on the studio floor. They listen to the director and producer (who are in the gallery) and make sure everything on the floor is going to plan.

**Gaffer:** The gaffer resides in the lighting department and is the head electrician on set.

**Log:** This is a document listing all the recorded footage and words said in a programme. Logs, written by the logger, make the editing process much easier. Edit producers can read through the logs, find all the juicy moments and ignore the boring bits. Often loggers use specialist software packages such as FORscene, Cinergy and CAT DV, and they also need to be a quick and accurate transcriber.

**PM:** The production manager manages the production budgets, funding, staffing and health and safety. They're probably one of the most multi-skilled people on the production as they need to understand both the creative and technical aspects of production.

**Runner:** The entry-level job on any production. Runners are vital to every team, with duties ranging from lunch runs, general office admin, helping on location, contributing ideas, collecting props, oh, and making tea!

**Self-shooter:** Someone working in editorial who also shoots content and occasionally edits. Hiring a self-shooter is a good way for productions to save money as it's essentially two jobs in one!

**TX:** Transmission. You'll often hear someone ask, "What's the TX date?" This just means the day something is being broadcast.

**VT:** Video tape. This term now refers to a pre-recorded report or insert which is placed within a programme.

# Creative Experiences Shaped by Technology

JLLive's background in the world of television and film not only means our team know their way around the studio floor, but we are some of the best creatives out there to support you in educating, exciting and engaging your audience.

JLLive's offering is targeted at agencies working with large corporates who need creative technical expertise to help deliver brand communications professionally. We focus on live and hybrid event attendees and view-on-demand audiences.

Contact the team today on [team@jl-live.com](mailto:team@jl-live.com)

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