How to Move to a Virtual Event (Part 2)

Remote Virtual or Studio Virtual?

With the COVID-19 Virus Shelter in Place ongoing, we have two basic streaming methods to choose from: Remote Virtual or Studio Virtual Events. As the shelter in place ban lifts, there will be more options will become available.

What is the different between a Remote Virtual Event and Studio Virtual Event? With all the new software platforms, it is possible to host a virtual event remotely. This means presenters and viewers will rely on their home internet service provider and computer for streaming. This method is preferred since there is ZERO human contact. A technical support team and director all communicate remotely with no in-person contact. It is a very effective option right now. The downside, most presenters do not have access to high quality lighting, web cameras or USB microphones and the production quality will be lacking in the final presentation.

The Studio Virtual Event is where presenters come to a video or internet studio to present during the live stream. Besides professional AV staff, the studio has high quality cameras, lighting and audio equipment on-site. This is a preferred method for several reasons. For one, you have very limited human contact while working in a controlled studio environment. Two, production and internet quality are much higher resulting in a professional quality stream. Finally, content control, in a studio you can pre-record parts of the live stream. Once recorded you have the option to switch between live and pre-recorded presentations giving your team control of the stream.

Choose a Streaming Software Strategy

In our previous newsletter "Moving your In-Person Event to a Virtual Event", we described how you should choose a streaming strategy. Once you have decided on your streaming strategy, you then need to choose an appropriate software platform. Will you use one or several platforms linked together to create the viewing experience? It all depends on the quality of broadcast you wish to put out there to represent your company.

Here are some questions to consider:
- Is the purpose to info, education, entertain, network or interact?
- How much audience engagement or participation do you want to offer?
- What software platforms offer free viewing opportunities? And which offer 2-way interactive or audio engagement opportunities?

Every event has a different purpose for its live stream. Let's outline a few examples and some suggestions on software utilization:

Concert with Large Viewing Audience - use FaceBook Live, Youtube.com or any number of software social platforms out there. This method is most common and very easy to use. If an artist or band wants to hold a concert a large presenters but with little audience engagement, then use FaceBook Live or Youtube.com. Using this method is easy, most of the people know how to navigate the site and it's mostly free. The downside of this method, no revenue is generated. Not the best business model but great to raise awareness and enjoy free concerts!

Virtual Conference with General Session and Breakout Rooms - first ask yourself, how much audience participation do you want during the virtual event? In most cases, clients want very interactive breakout rooms while only needing Q&A capability in the general session. For this scenario, we would use a hybrid streaming design utilizing several software platforms at once. For example, we could use ZOOM, WebEx or GoToMeetings along with Vimeo. Conference meeting software like ZOOM allows for individual conferencing or 2-way communication between the presenter and viewers. Since this is highly interactive, we would create breakout rooms using a conferencing software allowing for the presenter and viewers equal speaking opportunity. Then, we would serve that conferring software to a large viewing platform like Vimeo or Skychurchtv.com. The benefit of using this hybrid method creates high audience engagement along with large viewing audience opportunity.

On-Line School or Classroom Presentations - digital learning or digital classrooms is best done with the Teachable.com software platform. When dealing with digital learning classrooms, generally presenters will need to show numerous documents while speaking. More importantly, they need a way to record, navigate, archive and view all the documents and presentations during the live stream for each classroom. Teachable.com offers a great way to host, stream, record and navigate all the items needed for the student.

Networking or Chat Rooms – when creating a large chat room, it is best if left to the big guys... like FaceBook Group, LinkedIn, or Google Hangouts. This is a cost-effective way to have a large group with text chat and audio chat during your meeting. The key to making it successful is pulling it into your event software platform. Using Vimeo works well for this format allowing you to create brand recognition and host it under the umbrella of your meeting. This helps the viewers feel like they are part of the meeting without paying for a

chat room. Adding a Chat room to your virtual event creates the opportunity for viewers to network, view and share new information between each other.

Drive Through Funeral - depending on viewership size and number of speakers during the event, using Youtube.com works very well. You can create a landing page and create a public link or url making it user friendly. The public link makes it easy for the older generation to just click and go. They do not have to deal with downloading an app, setting up username and passwords and most importantly, we can make the link private. It does not have to be viewed to the general public.

Choose your audience and consider the experience you want to give them. A live stream focused on giving people the same experience remotely as they would have at a professional event is going to be much different from a live stream that simply acts as a way to spread your brand's message by showing potential customers what's happening during a specific conference session.

You always want to put your best foot forward, so to speak. That is best done by utilizing AV professionals who have better equipment, understand sound lighting, marrying numerous technologies and platforms and producing events to give you the best broadcast possible. There are numerous levels of involvement available to help you bring your digital event to life.
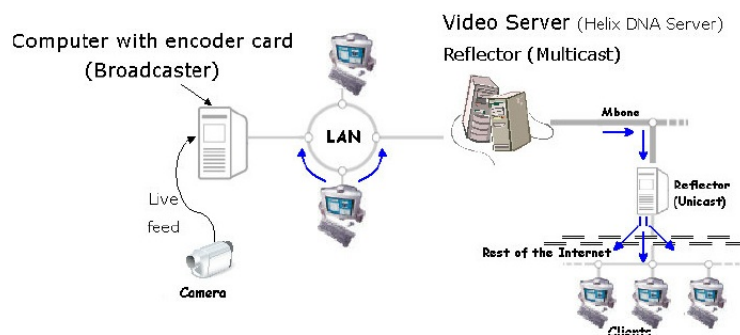
Technical Parts of a Live Stream

In part 1 of this series, we outlined the 5 non-technical parts of a live stream event. In part 2, we are going to outline the technical parts of a live stream. Every live stream has five components that work together to create an effective remote event. When creating your live stream strategy, take all of these components into account. Skipping over one of these can hurt your stream, both technically and strategically.

- Choose A Software Platform - there are many great software platforms out there, You need to choose the one that can provide the experience you want all around. You need to be able to link this platform to the other services and software included in your production.

- Creating the URL and Hosting (Private or Public) . Just like we have a mailing address and email address, the first thing you must create URL link. This link contains all the information needed to direct each computer or viewer to the proper viewing platform.

- Creating the Landing Page - after the url is created, you should design a "landing page" for the viewers. The landing page sets the look and tone of your streaming event. Take your time or have a skilled designers create a, professional looking and inviting page. This is the general portal and page the viewers see before the streaming portion begins. The landing page offers a great opportunity for branding, pay per view, chat options, company logos and many other items. Don't take this opportunity

for exposure lightly.

- Internet Connectivity and Bandwidth Design - no matter which streaming software you chose; internet bandwidth is very important. Real Eyes uses several methods to ensure bandwidth is strong and consistent at all times. For virtual events, we combine our Xfinity Business Class internet and Cradlepoint along with Hotspot to "bond" multiple internet streams together. This is an effective method because it creates large amounts of bandwidth with solid backup.

- Practice, Practice, Practice - streaming an event is not easy! It takes time and a lot of planning and practice to ensure you have everything ready to go. This is where your Technical Director, Video Director, Audio, IT team and Presenters all come together. Once the main URL links are tested, the last item is to PRACTICE several days before the event. Depending on the number of viewers, you will need to have everyone sign on and test. This a great time review audio and video quality. If there are issues with either, you have time and can find ways to solve them.

- Connecting Them All Together - now that you have figured out a URL, a landing page and connected all the software platforms, it is time to test the links. This is where your production team will again come together to test. This process can be confusing at a minimum. Utilizing an experienced production team will help you navigate this process more easily and effectively.

Currently, everyone is looking for the "right" software platform to make their virtual event happen and there plenty to choose from. With the right team and platform knowledge you can have a successful digital event. Using multiple platforms to fit your needs is key. Call Real Eyes if you need help with your upcoming virtual event.

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