A *splash* + *vimeo* Resource

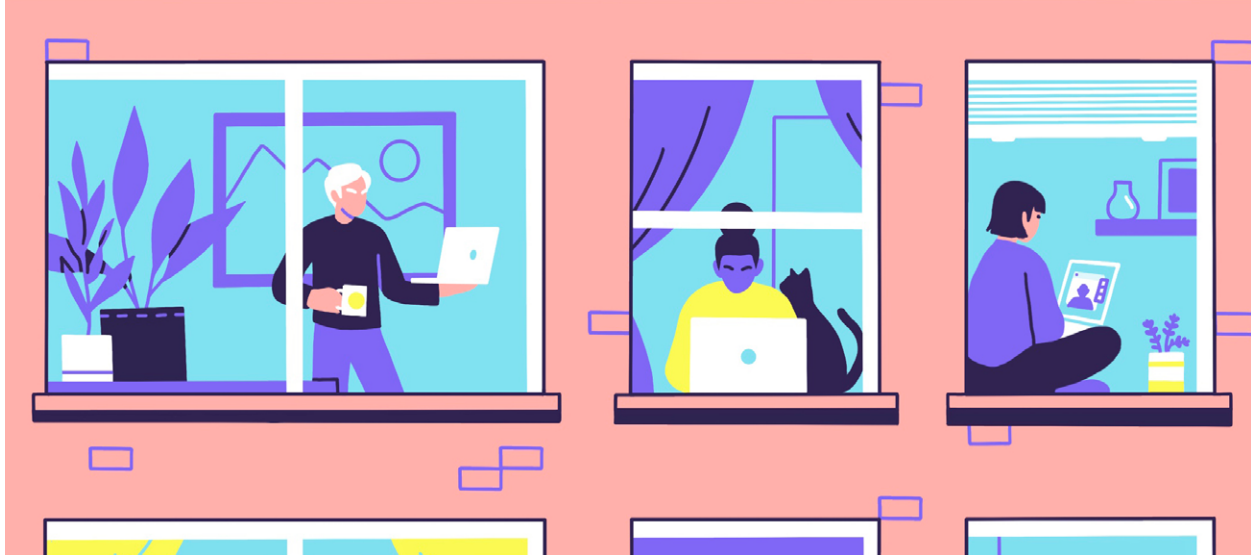# Virtual Events Handbook

What's in this guide

The growing importance of virtual events

Virtual events are becoming more valuable than ever before because they are scalable, flexible, and fast to market, execute, and measure. This means marketing teams can host more virtual events, reach more of the right people, and experience better ROI — all without requiring more resources or time.

The teams at Vimeo and Splash have joined forces to bring you a comprehensive guide on all things virtual events. From content strategy to demand gen, to technical gear and live streaming workflows, this guide will equip you with everything you need to know to start building a robust and scalable virtual event strategy.

Why pivot to virtual events? We've found event marketers make the the shift because they:

Are inexpensive and boost ROI.

Compared to live events, **hosting virtual events is much less expensive**. In many instances, you're automatically eliminating the need for a physical venue, food and beverage, printed materials, and more. All of these mean huge savings for your company, and when you spend less money, you increase your event ROI.

Expand your reach.

We've seen customers increase their reach 50x by simulcasting a virtual event stream to social channels like LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. **Live streaming helps you reach people who can't attend in-person** for various reasons, including health concerns.
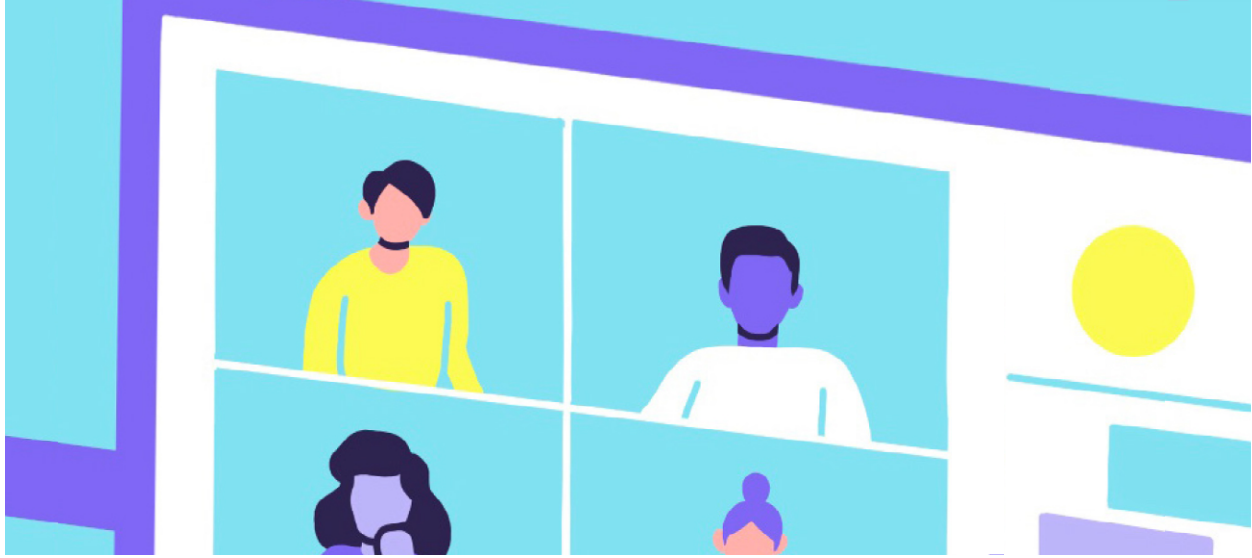
Reduce your risk.

Marketers know better than anyone else that things outside our control — like a natural disaster or global pandemic — can force quick pivots or event cancellations. Hosting a virtual event amidst changing government or travel restrictions doesn't necessarily mean having to change plans.

Democratize your event experience.

Virtual events are not only cost-effective for event marketers, **but they're far more affordable for attendees, too**. For those who don't have the financial means to pay for pricey registration or travel fees, a virtual event is a low-cost alternative that can be just as effective.

Extend the shelf life of your content.

With virtual events, your content doesn't lose value once it's over. Especially with video-based virtual events, your **live streamed sessions can live on as a branded, searchable experience that can continue to drive engagement.**

Support green efforts.

Corporate sustainability isn't just a temporary campaign or buzzword anymore — it's a permanent movement that's expected of companies. **Virtual events help companies minimize their carbon footprint** by eliminating materials and activities that often come with live events: production and shipping needs, staff and attendee travel, and even the single-use plastics used at most events.

See what we mean? There are plenty of reasons to explore virtual events for your business, but in order to do them well, you'll need a plan. Here's how to get started.

How to build a virtual event strategy

In a world of fast-moving business priorities and unpredictable change, event marketers must be able to pivot their strategies fast. Things outside our control throw us curve balls all the time, whether it's a new competitor strategy, changing consumer trends, or a health crisis.

How to effectively translate in-person events, online

When extenuating circumstances prevail, event marketers may be tempted to take their live events and convert them play-by-play to a virtual experience. But the number-one rule to effectively make this transition: **Don't assume your live event will succeed as-is in a** virtual event format.

The content you prepared for your live event will not likely resonate in a virtual environment. It's much more difficult to keep your audience actively engaged when they're behind computer screens. This means the 45-minute keynote you originally planned won't cut it. To keep your audience on the edge of their seats, opt for short snippets of content

with plenty of visuals and interactive opportunities.

This also means you need to rethink how you empower audience interactions. If you were at an in-person event, perhaps you'd ask them to greet their neighbor, raise their hand if they were using a product feature, or stand up if it was their first time visiting the host city.

Replicating these exact same prompts won't work in a virtual setting, but you can still create an interactive environment. Here are three suggestions for driving interactions at every stage of your virtual event.

1. **Before your virtual event, encourage connections through technology.**

   Tie a Slack channel to your virtual event and promote joining the channel in your pre-event communications. As a moderator, stay engaged in that channel (say hello and start conversations) to ensure genuine interactions are happening. When the event happens, your attendees will already know each other. It'll be like they're bumping into each other in the hallway or at the open bar.

2. **During your virtual event, use frequent polls or quizzes.**

   As an event marketer, polls and quizzes give you more presentation content and let you gather attendee data at the same time. But most importantly, they keep your audience engaged, especially when you gamify them.

3. **After your event, play matchmaker.**

   People attend events to learn something new, which also means connecting with like-minded individuals. After your event, think about those who raised the most questions or expressed the most excitement. Look for similarities between those guests (like company size, industry, and job role), and when you've identified some, make an introduction via a simple, concise email.

   This tactic is a manual lift, so it might not be feasible for every event. But if you can create one relationship between your guests that might not have existed before, it's a win.

Now that you've thought through how to shift your content to a virtual setting, it's time to think about what that virtual setting will look like.

> "We started off thinking big-picture with our live streaming strategy. Now, we can be more nimble and flexible in our approach. I think we're just scratching the surface on what the possibilities are."
>
> **Jamed Falik**
> Visual Design Team Lead, IFPRI

Live broadcasting vs. video conferencing

"Live streaming" is such a broad term, it can be hard to figure out the best solution given the vast number of options available. One question many people ask us at Vimeo is, *What is the difference between live broadcasting and video conferencing?* How do live broadcasting platforms like YouTube or Facebook differ from video conferencing platforms like Zoom and WebEx?

While there's no one-size-fits-all answer or approach, we can lend some guidance with three essential questions that should inform your decision:

Who are you trying to reach?

Defining your audience is priority number one, and will influence the following questions, too.

How do you need to reach them?

Do you need secure access? Simulcasting to social media? Embedded on your own site?

How will your audience interact?

Engagement fosters a closer sense of belonging during a virtual event.

Based on your answers to these questions, this checklist offers a snapshot of high-level differences between the two to help you determine if one is better suited to your needs.

• LIVE

Live broadcasting

- Optimized for one-to-many delivery

- Offers improved visuals

- Better storage, sharing, and management

- Better and more reliable at scale

- Text-based interactivity

- Heightened security

Video conferencing

- Optimized for one-to-one video interaction

- Does not scale to large audiences

- Can be tricky to access and secure

- Limited quality outputs

- Not built for long-term storing or sharing

Of course, your needs may be a hybrid of both. In those instances, it's important to find a video solution that has the flexibility and technical power to accommodate unique workflows and setups. Fortunately, there are many options available, and this live streaming budgeting guide can lend even more insight.

> "Live streaming creates a sense of inclusion and connection that's difficult to replicate through other forms of communication."
>
> **Audrey Plaskacz**
> Global Director of Internal Communications and Engagement, Lululemon

Goal setting

With your strategy and streaming platform in place, it's time to set your goals. Without them, there's no way to effectively determine if your events are working or not.

That said, don't let the importance of these goals overwhelm you. Think about virtual event goal-setting like you would for any other event. And to that end, let's review some common event goals.

Increasing brand awareness isn't necessarily about closing a deal right then and there, but rather making your company, product, people, and mission recognizable to your audience. The tricky part: Measuring brand awareness isn't always easy because it's somewhat subjective. After your virtual event, review any channels that may show you've increased exposure to your brand, such as social media and website traffic or engagement.

Increasing thought leadership means building your reputation as experts who can educate, influence, and inspire others in the industry. However, a few metrics you can use might be social media and website traffic, external website referrals (backlinks), and media mentions.

Generating new demand means you're increasing the size of your marketing database with people who are highly engaged in the topic you're presenting. Virtual events are a

great way to generate demand, and — the best part — it's really easy to measure. Some metrics to focus on include how many people registered (honing in on the number of net-new leads), how many of those moved on as a sales-qualified lead, and the overall cost per lead.

Improving customer retention and loyalty is equally important — if not more so — than bringing in new customers. Customer-only events are opportunities for you to show them your support and get feedback on what's working (and what's not). After your virtual event, answer questions like: Who attended? Which ones are still customers after three months, six months, or a year? Were there at-risk customers who attended and are now in good standing? How much revenue did you generate from attendees who expanded their accounts?

Impacting revenue goals is, at the end of the day, what you're likely looking to achieve. Even if your immediate goal was to build brand awareness, generate new demand, or something else, those ultimately should translate into more sales. To determine success, it's important to track your virtual event attendees from the moment they register to the moment they become a customer. To make this easy, use a virtual event platform that integrates fully with your marketing tech stack.

Distribution

Understanding your target audience for a virtual event is essential to an informed distribution strategy. "Choosing where to live stream depends on how your audience watches video online and who you want to be able to see your stream," says Tom Gott, Senior Manager of Live Production at Vimeo. "Your live stream can be embedded on your website, shared via social media, and/or viewed directly on a live streaming platform."

If your virtual event goals are focused on reach, impressions, and share of voice, then a public event streamed to multiple platforms or websites may be the right choice. **Many live streaming platforms offer simulcasting tools** to help you broadcast to multiple destinations without using any additional bandwidth. For gated virtual events that require registration, **embedding your stream on a dedicated page**, like a Splash event page, may be a better solution.

Planning and promotion

While event marketers have scrambled to transition their live programs to virtual ones, many are focused on finding and mastering the best virtual event solution. That's critical for running a virtual event program, but there are other priorities that require just as much attention.

It's no secret that today's virtual event space is incredibly overcrowded. The last thing you want to do is get lost among the competition and miss out on these opportunities to reach your target audience. The secret to standing out in this saturated space: Make virtual event planning and promotion a top priority.

Promotion

Event marketers are working at lightning speed these days. In fact, many are simply sending a link to the out-of-the-box registration form that comes with whatever virtual event platform they choose. Sound familiar? We know you have to move fast, but it's time to stop and reevaluate.

To stand out from the crowd, **your virtual events need quality event promotions** that drive registration and attendance. This is about more than just not using the basic registration link. An event's design is often a customer or prospect's first impression of both your event and the brand, so it's about creating eye-catching, on-brand event promotions.

Although every virtual event program differs, these five promotional assets are ones we always recommend for every virtual event.

Building a **branded, informative event page** is one of the most important things you can do to successfully promote your virtual event. It's the single place that houses all of your event details, from date and time to agenda and required links. By keeping your event page branded, you help ensure a consistent theme across all promotional touchpoints.

Your **initial email invitation** will likely be your audience's very first impression, so think about what you want that impression to be. One thing you absolutely must include in this email is the WIIFM (What's In It For Me) factor, or an explanation of why your audience should attend the event. Is the topic particularly timely or impactful? Are you planning to divulge insider secrets that'll help them do their jobs at 200% efficiency? Tell them what they'll get out of it.

To drive even more registrations, **send a follow-up email invitation** several days to a week later (depending on how much lead time you have). The key to a successful second invitation is email segmentation. Don't send the same version of this email to your entire marketing database. Segment your list into different categories and tailor the messages accordingly. For example, the subject line and message may be different for those who opened your first email invitation but didn't register versus those who never even opened the first email invitation.

Promoting your event on social media is practically a given these days, and should be done before, during, and after your virtual event. This can draw in people who already follow you, their followers, and new prospects — but poorly designed or off-brand social images can turn potential attendees off. To make these most effective, spend time creating social share image templates that are properly sized for each channel. (Plus, templates can be quickly updated for new events, so you never have to start from scratch.)

Promoting your event isn't only about getting people to register. It's also about ensuring those who registered actually attend, which is why a **personal reminder email** is so important. Send this email either the day of or the day before the event, and create a personalized email experience to increase the chances your registrants will attend. Send it from an actual person, make sure that person's name and email are populated in the sender field and email signoff, and include an invitation to reply with any questions.

These simple tactics can give a solid boost to your promotion strategy, increasing your attendees and, subsequently, opportunities to engage them during your stream.

Audience engagement

Who says virtual events can't cultivate a sense of human interaction? Developing strategies to foster authentic engagement between those on your virtual event, and those watching it, is essential. "We're finding that a real driver of success is to have the viewers engage with the on-screen talent in an intimate way, so our viewers feel like a VIP," says Will Steinberg, Co-President at Zinc Agency, a New York-based agency specializing in events for brands like Google, Microsoft, and American Express.

Using your usual slide deck isn't enough when you want to host an engaging virtual event.

Your audience needs something to look at that captures and keeps their attention. **Pull in as many visual examples as you can to support the presentation**, and try not to keep one visual up for more than five minutes.

What's more, leveraging tools like **live chat and polls** are a great way to capture the attention of your audience and bring them into the conversation. Rather than using third-party tools to survey viewers or facilitate conversation, creating a single destination with your stream, chat, and engagement tools already built in makes for a streamlined viewing experience.

Test everything (and test it again)

When it comes to live streaming: Test everything, and leave enough time to do it.

Internet connectivity is priority #1: Use a dedicated, reliable internet connection, preferably via Ethernet rather than wifi. A good benchmark is to have twice as much upload speed available as the bitrate you want to stream at. Websites like Speedtest.net are handy for figuring out your upload speed.

Do a dry run of the event whenever possible. This is an opportunity for your on-screen talent to practice their talking points, but you can also test your equipment workflows, audio/video quality, and internet.

Execution: Lights, camera, live stream

What does it take to put on a great live event? While some might say magic and elbow grease (can't argue with either of those), live streaming equipment is pretty crucial too. Fortunately, you don't have to break the bank to get a solid setup. Here are some gear recommendations from the Vimeo team, based on different budgets, to help you get started.

Light sources

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
$ $ $	$ $ $	$ $ $
The sun	Neewer ring light kits	Aputure 300 d II with mini dome diffuser
A light reflector or bounce	GVM 560AS LED 3-Panel Kit	
Ring light		
Aputure MC		

Cameras

Beginner $ $ $	Intermediate $ $ $	Advanced $ $ $
Your phone	Canon XA15	Sony PMW-300K1 or PMW-X320
DJI Osmo Action	Canon XF100	Sony PXW-Z90
GoPro Hero	Panasonic LUMIX GH4	Sony PXW-FS5
Logitech C930e	Sony A7 II	

Audio

Beginner $ $ $	Intermediate $ $ $	Advanced $ $ $
Shure MV88 digital stereo condenser mic	Rode Procaster	Shure SM7B
Rode VideoMic		RodeCaster Pro audio mixer
Topaz DeNoise AI audio software		
Yeti Nano USB mic		

Professional-grade encoding gear

If you're well-versed in live production, you might have your lighting, audio, and camera gear already set. In that case, you may be ready to add a professional encoding kit to your streaming setup.

An encoder is a piece of hardware or software used to convert a live feed or pre-recorded video so that it is viewable over the internet via computers and mobile devices. Here's what Vimeo's live production has in their encoding kit to produce hundreds of live events around the world every year.

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
$ $ $	$ $ $	$ $ $
AJA HD10AMA audio embedder	AJA HD5DA HD-SDI distribution amplifier	Livestream Studio HD550
	Datavideo DAC70 up/down/ cross converter	NETGEAR GS105 5-port network switch
		BNC, Cat 6, and HD-SDI cables

> "Based on the feedback from our customers, I don't think live streaming is going to go away anytime soon, even when large gatherings are permitted again. It's another outlet that businesses can use to bring people together from all around the world to experience a unique piece of interactive content."

Will Steinberg
Co-President, The Zinc Agency
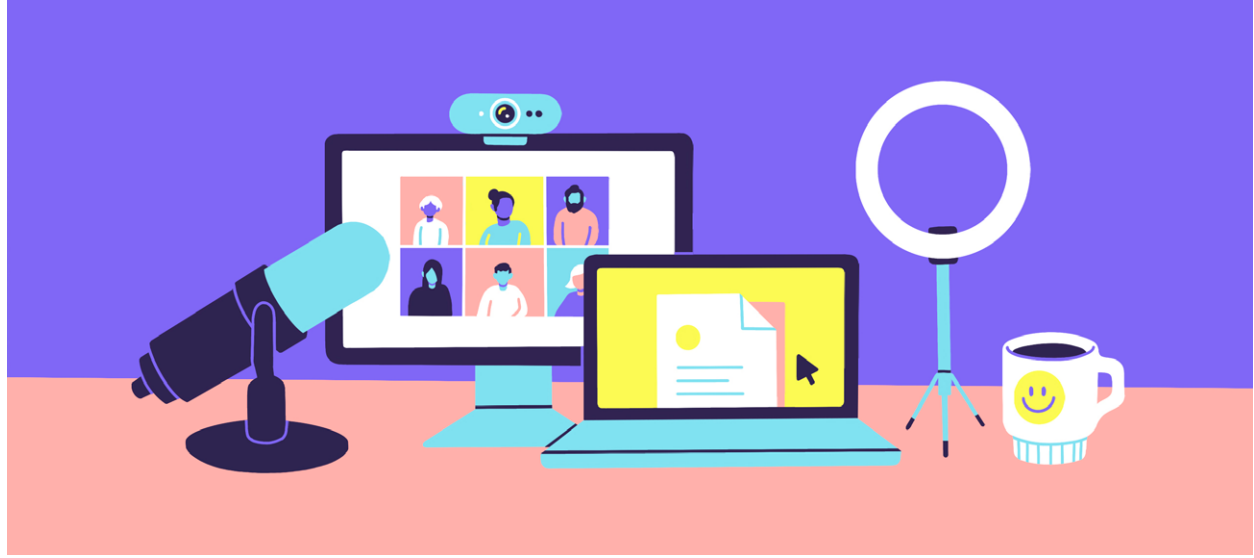
Tips to live stream from home

Producing a polished, professional live stream is a big task in and of itself. But now, businesses have the added challenge of creating and configuring a remote streaming studio setup at home — with possible spotty residential internet connections and little ones scampering around.

Here are three tips we've learned from speaking with businesses that have produced successful virtual events from home:

Upgrade your residential bandwidth to the highest available.

Ask family members or roommates to stay offline during your live stream.

Use your cell phone's hotspot as a worst-case scenario backup.

"Live video is the best way to get your point across to as many people as possible. It's much more of a two-way, interactive form of media."

Michael Weinstein
Video Studio Lead, Deloitte Global

Learn More

Streamline your virtual event with Splash and Vimeo

Vimeo and Splash are excited to launch a cross-platform integration that provides a fully branded, end-to-end virtual event solution for businesses of all shapes and sizes. When you need to build a virtual event strategy at scale, complete with registration, unique viewing links, and analytics, Vimeo and Splash can make it happen. Available for Splash paid plans, Vimeo Enterprise, and Vimeo Premium customers.

About Splash

Splash powers the new era of event marketing by helping companies scale their live, virtual, and hybrid event programs. With features like branded event pages, customized registration forms, and powerful integrations, you're empowered to build on-brand, measurable, and compliant event programs. Explore the future of event marketing with Splash at www.splashthat.com.

About Vimeo

Vimeo is the world's leading professional video platform and community. With over 175 million members across more than 150 countries, we help anyone grow their business by making it easy to create and market high-quality, impactful videos. Vimeo is headquartered in New York City with offices around the world, and is an operating business of IAC. Learn more at www.vimeo.com/enterprise.