








## FROM THE BALLROOM TO THE ZOOM ROOM: HOW TO PIVOT FROM A LIVE EVENT TO VIRTUAL—AND SUCCEED

We have all been affected by the Coronavirus crisis; and as a result, we have had to pivot how we live, how we work, how we parent, and so much more. When it comes to live meetings, we must pivot as well. The question is: How do you pivot from a live event to virtual and succeed? What do you need to consider when taking your event from the ballroom to the virtual room?

During this panel discussion, you will learn:

- What works with virtual meetings and what does not
- Content is king - adjusting the content for the remote viewer
- The hardware and software essentials necessary for virtual
- Delivering a virtual experience that engages and inspires the audience
- Key tips and best practices whether you are the organizer, the presenter, or the attendee
- The hybrid meeting and why virtual should always be considered as an element

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  **All roads lead to your objective:** Just like a live event, every choice should support what you are trying to accomplish. Knowing your objective still comes first.
-  **Technology is a tool, not the end game:** While incredibly important to successful execution, technology supports the objective so define your objectives before selecting a technology.
-  **Relevant content fundamental to engaging attendees:** You have to be delivering content that people need or want. Tools to create an interactive dynamic can heighten engagement too, but quality, on-point content is the ante into the game.
-  **Timing is everything:** The lure of the internet is close at hand so the length of sessions and pace of change, need to be respectively shorter and faster to keep attendees engaged.
-  **Coach your speakers:** You can help your speakers make the transition by giving them guidelines that help to prepare for the medium. Be clear about how you'd like them to use the medium.

### EXTEND THE LEARNING

Ask your team to watch the video of the session (at right). Invite them to build a list of questions they would have asked and hold a discussion around those questions as a team.



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# OUR PANELISTS

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**Moderator: [Sally Allen](#)**  
Co-Creator / Executive Producer  
The Water Coolers



**[Michael Judeh](#)**  
Senior Director, AV Technology,  
Convenga



**[Chris Chambers](#)**  
CEO  
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**[McNeel Keenan](#)**  
Vice President of Product  
Management  
Cvent



**[Bill Jones](#)**  
Senior Vice President  
General Manager, Events  
The Channel Co.



**[Julie Starr](#)**  
Director, Learning and Development  
Convenga

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Before and during the session, participants shared their questions. Our panelists agreed to answer questions that could not be addressed during the session and those answers follow here, along with the audience polls we took during the session.

### SCHEDULE

**What would you recommend in terms of time limits? Can attendees handle 7-8 hours of content online? Max attention span per topic/webinar & breaks?**

**Julie:** I would recommend capping virtual sessions at 90 minutes with 15-minute breaks between each session. You'll probably max out at about 6 hours of content, 3 hours in the morning, an extended meal period, and 3 hours in the afternoon.

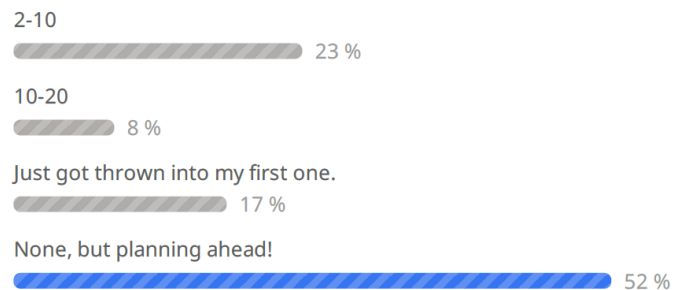
**Should we limit the number of attendees & offer more live sessions and if so, how many people & how many offerings? (international org with multiple time zones).**

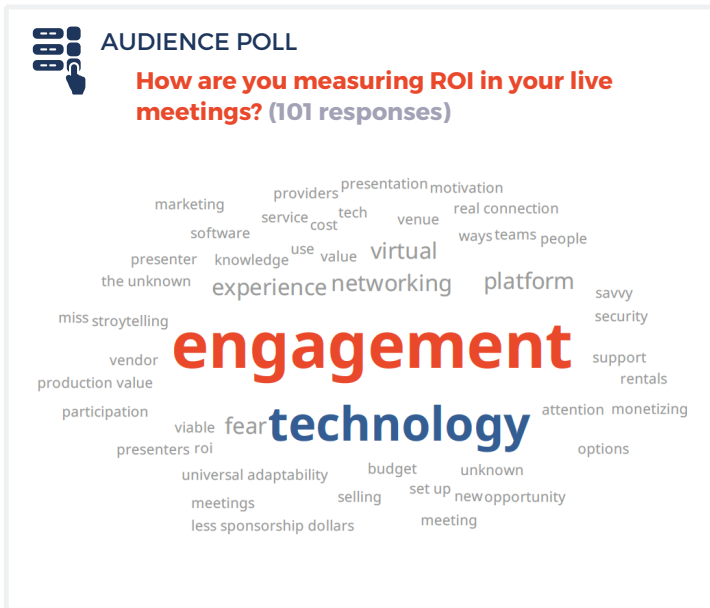
**Julie:** Start with your content, what is the objective of your session? If it is more informational with one or two presenters sharing out and limited interaction between the speaker and the audience (like a Town Hall) I wouldn't worry about limiting the number of participants. This is even a type of session you could record and share if it is tricky getting multiple time zones on the line. If your session is meant to be more collaborative (like a training) you may consider an attendee cap and offering multiple sessions. Personally, when I facilitate a workshop my ideal participant count is between 12 - 16 people.



### AUDIENCE POLL

**How many virtual events have you planned?**  
127 responses)





## SPEAKERS

**How can we help speakers who are used to a live stage be better in virtual events and will Julie (Starr) share her speaker guidelines?**

**Julie:** Yes, we plan to post the Presenter Checklist on Convene's blog: [convene.com/catalyst](https://convene.com/catalyst).

**Chris:** Rehearsal, rehearsal, rehearsal will always help presenters be more comfortable. Sending them a care kit in advance is a great way to settle them...this has been very successful for our presenters.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

**What types of interactive entertainment are best suited for a virtual environment?**

**Chris:** First you should decide if you want active or passive entertainment. Active entertainment is when you want the

attendees to be involved in the entertainment element. Trivia games are easy plug ins and can get everyone excited and teaming. You can even use polling apps to achieve this. Passive entertainment is something that the attendees would watch but not engage with. Music and live performances are the best. Remember, bring something custom and exclusive to the table for your attendees. Short custom shows can be developed and shot for playback if you don't want to go live. Stand Up comedy is a huge hit and that can be done 100% virtual AND live; and for the low-cost version, a great DJ can bring some cool live music mixes to your virtual meeting. This is done with simple technology plug ins.

**How do you make it more entertaining?**

**Chris:** Bring your audience original content. Curate something that has never before been seen. This is absolutely the best way to bring the best entertainment. It's all about exclusivity.

**What platform is best for music collaborations with no latency?**

**Michael:** This is hard because of latency and getting everyone in sync but but Jammr seems to be the one most people use.

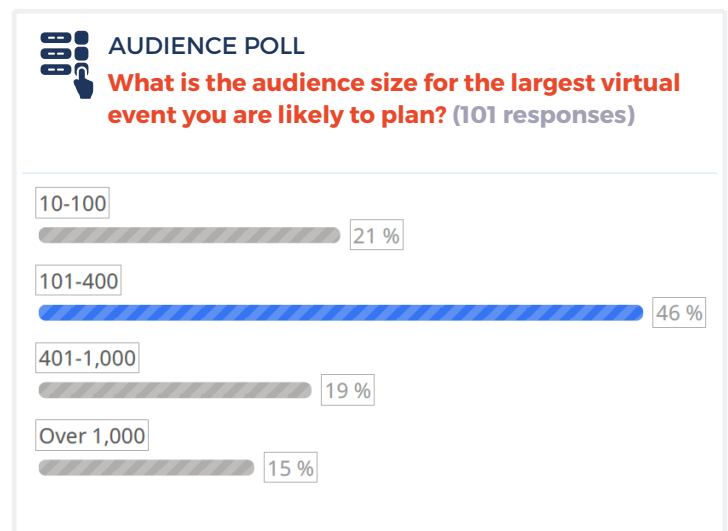
**Chris:** Instagram live is great and low cost. The best with zero latency and 100% quality is using a custom CDN. They will offer you a dedicated server and insure the zero frame rate delay. This is how we produce all of our virtual concerts.

## TECHNOLOGY

**If your client needs to have confidential discussions, is virtual realistic for these types of meetings?**

**Michael:** Yes, as long as we are safely practicing privacy rules. Don't openly distribute links, ensure the event is password protected, or utilize platforms that use unique links for each attendee.

**Chris:** Use a private CDN and make sure you have a double authentication method for the password creation. Using the same password for all attendees will likely lead to security breaches. We always insure privacy by giving every attendee their own password. This can be done during your registration process. Provide them with day of chat or phone support to thwart any technical difficulties.



## TECHNOLOGY (cont.)

### How do you go virtual events with breakout rooms? Separate registration process?

**Michael:** Yes or embed the links to the breakout rooms inside the platform or event site that will bring users to that “room.”

### Is there specific bandwidth that needs to be allocated at each live location involved in virtual event?

**Michael:** Let's say presenters would be streaming/videoing from home office, would standard business grade WIFI be sufficient? – Yes in theory but will depend on how much traffic there is on that network. If everyone is home streaming content or downloading/uploading large files it might tax the bandwidth.

**Chris:** I would always use a dedicated IP address for you're your outbound broadcast presenters just to make sure. The IT group in that building should be able to maintain QOS so that you have uninterrupted service.

### What technology is necessary to bring a virtual meeting alive that looks professional?

**Michael:** Quality camera, lighting (there are kits for streamers), and a quality microphone.

**Chris:** Adding to this I would make sure you have a professional graphics package. Your standard PPT slides won't cut it. Layer in logos, scrolls and lower thirds to make it look and feel professional.

### There are many web conference / webinar / virtual meeting software platforms on the landscape and available for planners. Which is the BEST? (Related questions: can you share pros and cons of the major players, provide a list of technologies, and one person was hoping for a free tech that integrates with Zoom/WebEx for more/better interaction).

**Michael:** Here's a short list of streaming services for the non-power user to be able to learn and spin up themselves: Zoom Webinar, Intrado, Crowdcast and On-24. All of these are fairly turn key with little to no learning curve. They do not cover really large scale event and conference and will support your webinar/casting functions.

**Sally:** The Association of Computing Machinery just released a [Virtual Conferences: A Guide To Best Practices](#). In the technology section, they include a comprehensive, detailed comparison of technology tools for virtual conferences along with pros and cons ([here's a link to the comparison](#), although the entire doc is really worth looking at).

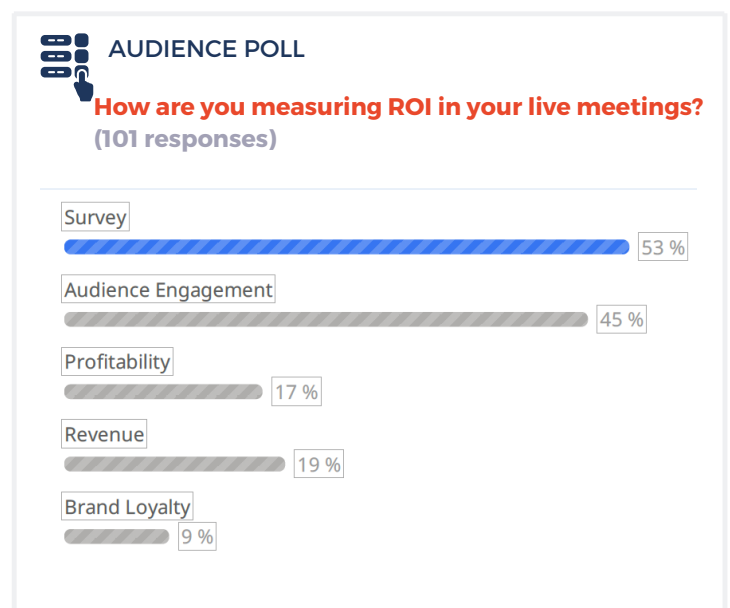
## FINANCIAL MODEL

### How will room minimums change when you need more space for less people?

**Bill:** I am guessing that this question is regarding planners that are moving from live to virtual and would be reducing the space at their live event venues? My opinion is that venues will work with you to the best they can with allowing you to use the space that works for your program and keep social distancing intact.

### Costs and analysis of moving to a hybrid format or digital? What's the P&L look like for a virtual event vs. a live event with consideration given to all variables like sponsorship revenues. Etc.

**Bill:** Based on the current size of your F2F event, this should take your overall costs down substantially.



**Bill (cont.):** Here are the key areas that you would pay for in a virtual event:

- Platform Costs – depending on size, platforms could run from 10K to 100K. All depends on the size and scope of the event.
- Video costs (if taking from a live event and producing live stream/Hybrid model)
- Editing Costs - finishing touches on video for virtual event. Lower thirds, backdrop, templates.
- Marketing – registration model, nurturing, scheduling
- Digital – social media & creative costs
- Speakers – payment to outside speakers for their time and presentation.
- Giveaway – to keep audience engaged.

Costs that would come out of the F2F budgets when moving virtual:

- Rooms
- F&B
- Travel
- T&E
- Photography
- On Site Reg
- MPOs
- Printed literature
- Signage
- Meter Boards
- Branding
- Décor
- Connectivity, ETC.

Sponsorship Opportunities in Virtual:

- Plenty of Screen Real Estate to sell
- Virtual Keynotes, Quick Fores, Ted-type content to sell
- Virtual Boardrooms & Round Tables
- Virtual Booths – collection of assets, whitepapers, video, case study

Pricing for the above sponsorships would be based on the cost structure of the platform and other costs associated with delivering the event.

Build your P&L from the cost side first and then create the sponsorships based on the margin your organization has asked you to deliver within you full business P&L.

**How to make the live participation in a virtual event worth paying for and still have value for others to watch the recording for free later?**

**Chris:** Why would you offer the records for free after? This is a great way to garner subscription dollars. Break up your records per segment and charge a little for each one. OR if you must give them away for free after you have to provide your live audience with something exclusive. Keep some content just for the live audience. OR if you just wait and provide a TIME GAP. This is something we do. The live event is a paid event. Don't release it for free until time has passed. We use 2 months as a guide. This will force someone who really wants your timely content now to pay. If it's not that important to them they can wait the 3 months to see it for free.