

A VIRTUAL EVENTS GUIDE



WHAT'S INSIDE

DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES	03
PLANNING YOUR SHOW	04
TECHNOLOGY	05
SPONSORS	06
ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE	07
FUND-A-NEED	08
AUCTIONS	09
YOUR WINNING TEAM	10
SUMMARY	11

DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES



Set realistic expectations

What is the purpose of this event? Is it to replace a major fundraising gala, is it an investor briefing, is it an occasion to bring together your agency's 'family' and celebrate your staff and volunteers, or to spotlight mission-specific service to your clients?

Consider staff time, & ROI (Return on Investment)

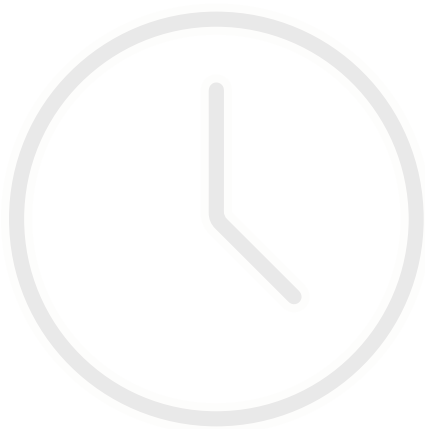
Know your capabilities. Who has the skills you need in-house? Otherwise you need to consider your options based on your budget. This is where hiring tech savvy virtual event help is vital to your success. Remember, you're saving money on a venue rental so you can use that to secure top tech talent.

Engage significant stakeholders early

Who is your principal audience? Make sure that the technology you're using fits their skills and interests and build the program plan around engaging them.



PLANNING YOUR SHOW



Timing is everything

You've got **30 minutes** for an investor briefing or **60 minutes** (max) for a fundraising gala. Remember, this is on-screen action. The formula that you used for years for your Annual Gala that ran for two hours just won't work here. Think about all of the messages and talking points you want to convey and make sure as you create the show plan, they're embedded.

Variety is critical

Use pre-recorded speakers, a video or two, client stories, testimonials, historic photos, talking kids and whatever live-action that fits your show plan and what you can comfortably support (fund-a-need, Q&A, un-muted group chat, etc.).

Watch the tempo

When you're ready for a rehearsal run-through, watch the tempo and flow. You may be rolling along with an exciting, high energy event and suddenly everything collapses because a slow talking, pensive board member comes on camera. Keep the show moving consistently.

Keep a pre-show short

If you're running a pre-show while the audience is coming on-board, keep it short and crisp; **DON'T** run through your pre-show lineup twice.

TECHNOLOGY



Choose your platform

- Research user-friendly **platforms and mobile apps**.
- Sign-up and **attend other events** to evaluate their platforms. Watch webinars hosted by companies offering their services to help you create a successful virtual event.
- Hire a **trusted tech pro** from the get-go if you don't have someone in-house with these skills.
- **DO A DRY RUN OF YOUR SHOW AT LEAST TWICE** with a live audience. Make sure people can log-in from different devices, that they don't get kicked out mid-way thru your show, and that the sound is clear and consistent.

Research your hosting site

There are lots of options available for hosting your event, streaming videos, managing a fund-a-need and auctions. Search what you need on-line and you will find lots of options to look at.

NEED HELP?

Nonprofit Fundraising
Blogs and Tutorial
Resources:

[CharityDynamics.com](https://www.charitydynamics.com)

[DonorDrive.com](https://www.donor-drive.com)

[Networkforgood.com](https://www.networkforgood.com)

[DonorPerfect.com](https://www.donorperfect.com)

Blog: [Are you Tech Ready to Host a Virtual Fundraising Event?](#)

SPONSORS

Virtual is a new world for many sponsors

They are still figuring out what works for them and their advertising dollars in this new virtual environment.

Engage them early in the planning

Give them time to decide how they want to participate.

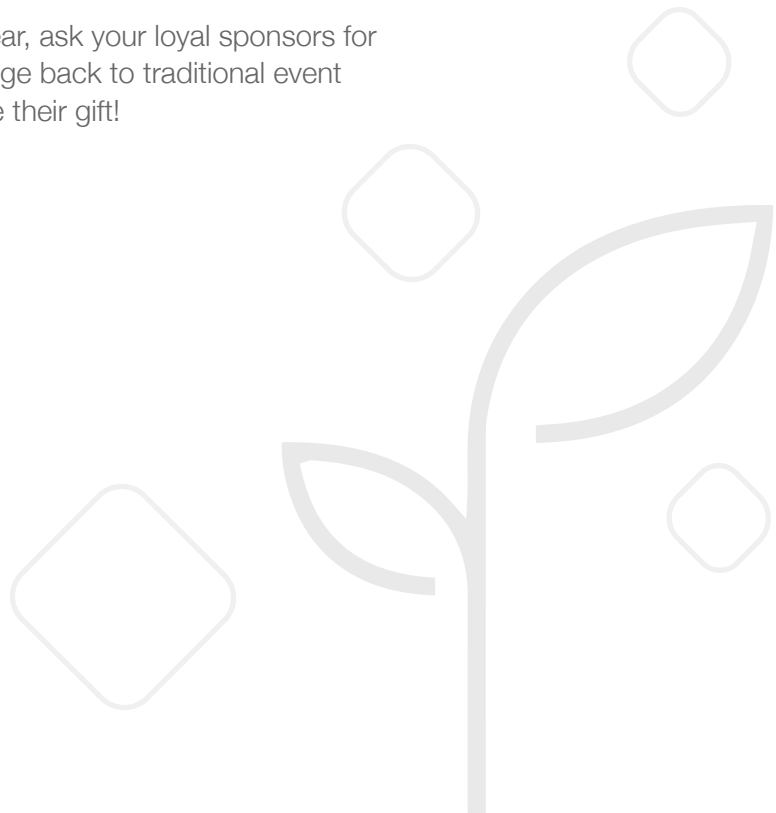
Be creative in recognition

The virtual environment provides you with the chance to offer them **something special**. For instance:

- Highlighting them in a short video sharing why they are supporting your organization's mission through this event.
- Listing them in an electronic program sent to all participants with links to their website and/or special event offers.
- More sophisticated events offer a Partner Alley, in which sponsors can chat with your participants in your event.

Ask for outright donations

If you are not doing a VE this year, ask your loyal sponsors for **outright donations** with a bridge back to traditional event sponsorship in 2021. Don't lose their gift!



ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE



Invite them early to get on their calendar (lots of competition)

Electronic announcements followed by standard save the date reminders are essential.

Make it easy to register

The fewer key strokes it takes to get into your show, the more participants you'll secure.

Provide help with tech issues

Provide participants with a convenient and responsive source of tech help directly from your registration site so they have a user-friendly experience.

Encourage fun!

Offer a best hat or costume competition in which participants get to vote. Gamification and badges in peer-to-peer events are motivating and popular.

Mix pre-recorded and live

People can be uncomfortable in front of a camera, so **pre-record** all that you can, do multiple takes and edit in advance. For your pre-recorded speakers, **change it up**, be creative, use different camera angles, backgrounds, lighting. **Script your speakers** but encourage them to make it their own so it's sincere and natural, avoid (at all costs) looking down and reading.

Heartfelt mission-focused messages and personal stories

You only have a few minutes to move people so make each minute precious.

Keep it short, sweet and flowing

No one individual on-camera for more than 3 minutes. Keep it moving.

FUND-A-NEED



Include a fund-a-need

If a fund-a-need was successful in past (live) shows and your constituents enjoy and expect one, you should consider including one in your show.

Secure pre-event lead or match gifts to ensure success

Just as you did when the fund-a-need was live, reach out to your prime prospects and secure that big gift that will set the bar for fund-a-need giving. Set it as a match. Can't find someone to make a new gift at the level you need—ask one of your major donors to make their **annual gift** as the 'headliner' for the fund-a-need.

Use on-screen, high energy talent to manage the fund-a-need

It doesn't have to be a celebrity, but you need someone who can keep the momentum moving and can work with the off-screen tech-boss to present the giving totals as they come in.

Inspirational mission video

Just as you did in live galas, a powerful client video to set the stage for the fund-a-need is a proven ingredient for success. The piece should be 2 minutes or less, well edited and pack your mission in an emotional punch.

Use chat rooms to build energy and inspire giving

Chat rooms are a feature of many virtual platforms, so use them to build energy and inspire giving amongst your participants. Users "chat" through **text messages**. A **chat room host** responds to messages, thanks donors and sponsors in real time.

AUCTIONS

Consider the ROI of an auction carefully before you commit

If you are operating with limited staff and don't have a robust volunteer team to help right now, you might reconsider offering an auction. They take a lot of work and require a sophisticated technology structure (which you can purchase).

In these times, look for outdoor, local experiences

Remember, by law, donors of auction prizes cannot enforce an expiration date, though they can include restrictions on use.

Open bidding in advance and continue silent auction after the event

Successful silent auctions open in advance of the main event and stay open for a week or so afterward.

Encourage auction link sharing

Use social media and your ambassadors to share the auction link with their friends and communities.



YOUR WINNING TEAM



Roles with an (*) are essential for a successful production

The others are optional depending on the type of event and your budget. Take a cold, sober, realistic assessment of the talent, experience and bandwidth of your staff when considering these positions. If you don't have it in-house (no matter how much someone wants to convince you otherwise), hire the best talent you can afford—you'll be glad you did.

Event captain (*)

Key decision-maker, the boss, final arbiter on all decisions, manages the production calendar.

Host/MC (*)

The on camera “glue” who weaves all the various components together seamlessly with a running monologue. Manages the tempo and builds enthusiasm and sparkle.

Tech boss (*)

Responsible for managing your virtual platform, coordinating all live aspects of the show, ensuring an easy and fluid registration portal and smooth log-into the show.

On-camera leader/agency spokesperson (*), your executive director, and/or board chair sincerely and passionately articulate your organization's mission and client impact.

Pro videographer (*)

Shoots and edits all of the creative components; close coordination with the tech boss to produce the final package.

Auctioneer/ Fund-a-Need manager

Social media “friends” in charge of your online campaign

Chat room hosts

Q&A/participation manager

SUMMARY



✓ Plan and rehearse!

- The more moving parts in your show, the more opportunities for disaster and the more testing and rehearsal you should do. DO NOT leave your rehearsal dry-runs until the last minute. Leave plenty of ‘slack’ time in your production calendar to edit, add and tweak—it will make the difference between a clunker and a seamless gem.
- Record as much as possible in advance.
- Don’t be afraid to ask colleagues who have run auctions or done audience participation for their advice and experience.
- Make sure you test all your equipment, including that of your key speakers in their locations, just in case there are problems with connectivity, background noise, and recording variability.
- For any live segments—practice them off-camera and then on-camera to make sure that they are tight and transition well.

✓ Get an impartial, experienced and balanced critique

- Don’t just run your rehearsal for your team or staff. Find an objective crowd who have participated in lots of these shows, as well as a few who are trying to participate for the first time. Is it accessible and friendly to the novice?
- At PRG have seen lots of VEs—the good and the bad, and we’d be happy to critique a rough cut of your show.

✓ Incorporate virtual events into your annual campaign plans

Virtual Events can be a centerpiece of your stakeholder communications, donor stewardship and client services as well as your fundraising campaign.

✓ Plan one-on-one conversations with your donors

Planning this event is a perfect opportunity to engage your donors, ask their advice and suggestions, feature them and show how much you appreciate them. You may discover additional gifts or even a planned gift opportunity.

✓ Follow-up with your major donors

Just as the true success of a live event is often determined by what you do before and after, following up with those who attended your VE—as well as those who didn’t respond, will open the door to significant stewardship and gift conversations.

✓ Build around your clients

They are your bottom line. Feature their stories, especially if youngsters are involved. Err on the side of too-many rather than not enough client exposure.

WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST WITH YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT PLANNING!



ABOUT PRG

We work across the mission spectrum, helping organizations increase community impact through effective fundraising campaigns. We partner with organizations across sectors to create successful fundraising campaigns. With your mission and impact at the center of our work, we perform market analysis, develop sound strategies and effective messaging, and inspire strong leadership.

partnershipresourcesgroup.com
info@partnershipresourcesgroup.com
(415) 485-6265