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# Virtual Event Strategies for 2021

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Virtual events are not going away in 2021 – in fact hybrid events (a combination of in-person and virtual) are likely here to stay. In 2020 we saw nonprofits pivot to virtual events; in 2021 we will see nonprofits hone their virtual event offerings. If you are looking to make the most impact with your virtual event this year or looking for ideas on what kind of virtual event to offer, this article was written with you in mind.

## **Virtual Event Strategies – How to Translate Your Event Virtual**

Moving your in-person events to digital channels can be a jarring experience. How do you translate a walk, run, or ride into a successful virtual event? The first and potentially hardest step is not viewing the event as a replication, but a *reinvention*. Going

virtual (or hybrid) provides you the chance to broaden your engagement because you are not necessarily tied to a specific location or time.

***Your key question in planning for your virtual event is how do we recreate the experience of social interaction and bring our mission to life virtually?***

Let's say you have an annual fundraising walk. How can this translate into a virtual event? Does a "virtual walk" mean that everyone has to be walking in their separate spaces? Not necessarily. In fact, you might not need to have groups of people walking together at all!

You could turn your walk-a-thon into a scavenger hunt where families walk together, and they find items along the way. They could post their stories and pictures to Instagram and Facebook as they go, using the hashtags you provide. This way, families and individuals can walk in a their own way (that is, there's no designated start and end point) yet the virtual experience allows them to share their experience with others *socially* while introducing their friends via social networks to your *mission*.

Another example is an art museum that used to host a gala among their exhibits instead chose to hold a virtual gala where families shared original art from their children. This kind of virtual engagement was creative, it sparked real conversations, and raised money!

The shift to virtual events is your organization's chance (and challenge) to get creative and re-think how you can intersect the power of social life with your mission. Embrace the differences of the digital spaces you're using rather than trying to fit these digital

spaces into how you used to plan peer-to-peer events.

## **What Kinds of Virtual Events Are There?**

Nearly a year into events going virtual, you have likely participated (and hosted) several yourself. You know what you hate (endless talking heads on Zoom) and you know what you love (engagement). Great, so how do you take that and create an inspiring virtual event? Maybe you've hit a mental road block because you blocked out all of 2020. Here's a super quick run-down of events that can be successfully implemented in the virtual space:

- Galas
- Walk/Run/Bikes
- Trivia
- Treasure Hunts
- Intimate major donor gatherings
- Use of breakout rooms, shared packages with themed activities, and an energizing MC
- Art Show + Tells
- Bingo
- Dance Parties (bring your favorite DJ)
- Fitness Classes
- Concerts

## **Virtual Peer-to-Peer Successes**

Many organizations hosted successful peer-to-peer events in

2020. One that stands out is [AIDS Lifecycle](#)'s. [AIDS/Lifecycle](#) launched [TogetherRide](#) – a new virtual event envisioned for both fans of their longstanding bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles, as well as supporters who want to participate from around the world. This event has a 9–month duration with riders able to log miles and participate from across the country over a long period of time. Not only does this allow you to engage people supportive of your cause from a larger footprint, it also provides your supporters flexibility in how and when they participate. Some of our favorite aspects:

- Choosing the collective goal of riding 1.2 million miles for the 1.2 million people in the US living with HIV
- Thoughtful events like “Indoor Cycling”, Team Captain Forums, and mission education like “Global Outlook on HIV/AIDS Under the Biden Administration”
- Participant Guide: it’s thorough, but not too bogged down in the weeds. We really love their visual layout and clear messaging here.