Virtual Event Platforms

COMPARISON REPORT

Meeting
NERD

Introduction

Post coronavirus more and more companies are scrambling to go virtual. Virtual events have been around for a long time before covid19 and they will continue to grow when this is all over. Virtual events make impossible events possible, reduce the costs to deliver your content, and allow you to continue to connect your attendees with each other using sophisticated digital networking solutions.

Virtual events are great, but there are a lot of options out there. Meeting Nerd set out to find the right solution for an upcoming event and quickly realized the search can be overwhelming. We were looking for specific functionality we believe to be key to delivering an elegant virtual experience. In an effort to simplify the search for others in a similar situation, we have summarized our findings here.

Defining Virtual Events

When we say virtual events, we mean complex experiences that deliver dynamic content to a remote audience. Events like conferences with multiple tracks, concurrent sessions, and a networking aspect; internal offsites with training, development, networking or team building objectives, and even trade shows or job fairs.

When we say virtual events we are not talking about webinars or short, standalone workshops. There are many webinar platforms that can create a wonderful user and speaker experience for shorter, single session, content focused sessions. We have not included any webinar platforms in this report.

Functionality

Must Have

Basic Webinar Functions
Every webinar platform provides for the basics for a virtual event: speaker video, presentation, session recording, Q&A, chat box, and polling. All of these are requirements for a virtual event and on our must-have list. We also wanted to see reactions and feedback for speakers in the form of easy to digest emojis or similar, visual feedback.

Concurrent Sessions

The ability to host concurrent sessions on the platform is required to host breakouts. Most conferences host some form of breakout session so this is non-negotiable. Hosting concurrent sessions on the same platform prevents organizers from having to pick and choose which content to deliver and provides attendees with options.

Expo

The virtual expo function creates sponsorship opportunities for your events and provides additional value for your attendees. With this function, organizers can create a virtual trade-show floor with various vendor booths. These range in complexity but some even allow you to create custom floor plans and 3D interfaces. The booths can host media and downloadable resources, virtual fish bowls, or even staff representatives for one on one conversations via video chat. The expo function adds value for organizers and attendees by creating the opportunity for sponsorship and networking with potential partners.

Turnkey Event Management

I was looking for a solution that would act as our event management platform, accept payments, and communication with confirmed attendees all within the platform. Keeping attendee data on one platform makes running reports and reviewing data much simpler than pulling information from different systems.

Video Networking

One of the biggest challenges of a virtual event is finding a way to provide connection between attendees. Networking is usually one of the top reasons attendees choose to attend an event. By providing a virtual solution that allows you to see someone face to face, you give your attendees both content and connection.

Bonus Functions

Game Layer

In-app games or even games anchored IRL are wonderful ways to drive attendee engagement. Same thing goes for virtual events. Being able to assign points values to activities within the platform allows organizers to drive desired behaviors, excite and inspire their guests.

CRM and Marketing Automation Integration

Integrating with your CRM allows you to tie event participation to your attendee's record and engagement history - very helpful in marketing analytics. Marketing Automation integration with platforms like Marketo, MailChimp, or Pardot allows you to use your existing email templates and communicate on platform without sacrificing your branding.

Networking Matchmaking

Taking networking online creates an opportunity to optimize the whole process. Matchmaking helps attendees meet with others that align to their interests and goals.

How to use this Report

We have done the initial research and review of these platforms. Use this report as a jumping off point for your own search. Read it to familiarize yourself with the virtual event landscape. Once you have your shortlist, further investigate each platform. Participate in demos and test your use case thoroughly.

The Platforms

We researched multiple platforms, attended demos, spoke to representatives and tested the backend wherever possible. Here is our full report on the findings.

[6Connex](#)

6Connex is a powerhouse platform supporting large-scale events with 25k+ attendees. As an organizer, I feel very comfortable working with a platform that has such impressive case studies under their belt. Although we weren't able to get a demo, we digested every video, data sheet, and piece of content available on their website. Getting a demo right now is difficult with many platforms. Virtual platforms are being bombarded with requests for support on events that are pivoting to virtual with very little notice. I do know that they are triaging responses and if you have an immediate need they will likely be able to get to you quickly.

This platform is best suited for complex conferences with concurrent sessions, large numbers of attendees (10k+), and an event team that can support the development and roll out of the technology.

All in the Loop

All in the Loop provides both a web based and native app experience. This platform pairs well with your existing event management system for ticketing and registration or you can use theirs built in solution. The look and feel is highly customizable and the entire platform can be white labeled, a wonderful branding opportunity for event hosts.

In addition to all the basic functionality we were looking for, All in the loop takes video networking to the next level with group meetings. This is a fantastic feature bringing zoom like functionality to networking calls native to the platform. If you meet someone at an event hosted with All in the Loop, you can invite colleagues or connections who might also benefit from the conversation. Host group meetings with up to 10 people.

At about $5k for each event, All in the Loop is a bargain and a good looking one at that!

INXPO

INXPO is an indomitable platform for virtual experiences bringing a highly customizable interface, all the bells and whistles, plus delightful bonuses. INXPO elevates nearly every function we were looking for. One of our favorites? Their lower thirds function. Adding a lower third to live speaker video ensures your audience knows exactly who is talking and what they do. This platform allows you to create a virtual lobby; a 3D mockup of a physical space you can populate with photos of your actual team members, sponsors, and attendees.

INXPO's support is also a big differentiator. You will get dedicated helpdesk support for the length of your event. As an event producer, you can rest assured that your attendees will get professional support should they experience any technical issues.

INXPO's solutions are elegant and bespoke to your use case. Expect the price point to match.

MyConnector by Universum

MyConnector gives organizers incredible flexibility, the ability to create spectacular virtual experiences for your attendees and sponsors, at approachable rates. MyConnector has almost all the big functions we were looking for. A couple of missing pieces in their turnkey solution? Native video streaming and video chat between attendees.

For now, you can integrate your webinar service such as Zoom or GoToMeeting for content streaming. The geniuses at Universum are working on developing one to one video networking

for attendees. While they build it out they can customize a solution with a bit more investment on your side at the moment.

Their ingenuity and ability to code and create basically anything you want make this platform a scrappy solution for limited event budgets. At less than €5 per registration, this is by far the most cost effective, complete solution.

O2O

O2O has all the major functionality we wanted plus a few bonuses. Not only does the platform provide AI supported matchmaking between attendees, it also matches attendees with sponsors. This provides additional value for both attendees and partners; your guests will only meet with people who align with their interests.

O2O also gives you the ability to brand almost everything on the platform creating additional sponsorship and revenue opportunities. My favorite bonus function: O2O integrates with WhatsApp and text messaging allowing you to send reminders to your attendees via text.

There is a small setup fee for the account then a low per registration cost. Some functions require an additional fee (polling for example) but it won't break the bank.

Run the World

Run the World is a fairly new platform that is woman founded, woman owned, and woman run in silicon valley. This was enough for us to get excited about it! It is a very simple interface, compatible on mobile and desktop devices, and has a lot of exciting functionality. Their business model provides organizers with a no-risk option with no upfront costs to get started. Run the World instead takes a commission of ticket sales (25%). The rate is significantly higher than other ticket processing fees, but zero fees up front + the tool make it unique.

We loved two things about this platform: the simplicity of their event sites and their happy hour session type. Run the World's event sites are not very customizable, but the design is user friendly and forces organizers to be concise in their copy.

The happy hour session type is a very cool, chatroulette inspired networking session. Attendees are automatically matched with another person every 5 minutes. This allows for your guests to meet a lot of new people in a different way.

Run the World provides a lot to be excited about but they may be experiencing unprecedented demand that may affect the success of an event. I would certainly recommend them for future events, but unless you already have established an account and have a good relationship with them, maybe hold off until post coronavirus.

Run the World is best for organizers that have a very organized event agenda, are testing new messaging, or are hosting their event virtually for the first time and need a platform to use as a low risk trial.

VFairs

VFairs is a robust, customizable, and configurable platform. VFairs allows you to design 3D environments your attendees can enter including building 3D mockups of your office, lobby, event space, or similar environment. Some customizations are considered *configurations* and are included in the basic pricing.

For example, you can build out your 3D event space. Included in this is a crowd of people milling about the lobby or making their way to the entrance. As part of your custom configuration, you can then specify the makeup of this crowd of people from gender to clothing.

Choose from several engaging add-ons to your event: a 3D expo floor, engaging 3D booths, welcome videos when you enter the lobby, an in-event scavenger hunt, and even programming in multiple languages. These little additions help organizers provide memorable differentiators for your attendees.

Vfairs pricing is approachable with discounts for multiple event licenses. Basic pricing includes all the major functionality. It is kept low because special functions are kept as add-ons. VFairs provides top notch customer service, project management, and day of tech support. Events start at $9,950 and go up from there with additional events or add-on capabilities.

Conclusion

The world has been forced to shift the event paradigm overnight. When getting to the root of why we host events; to facilitate training, teach a skill, connect with each other; the tools exist to achieve all of these outcomes in a virtual environment. We applaud every event organizer, host, and sponsor who have risen to the occasion to learn a new skill, get out of their comfort zone, and show up for their audiences. With virtual event platforms the possibilities are endless.

One day, very soon, we will be able to combine our live, in-person events with virtual experiences that provide more value for our attendees, sponsors, and help us deliver our message to a broader audience.