

PROVEN PR STRATEGIES TO KICKSTART YOUR BRAND



STRATEGY 4: VIRTUAL EVENTS KEY POINTS + CASE STUDY

by
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2x Winner: Boutique PR Consultancy of the Year
National PRIA Golden Target Awards 2019
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Strategy 4: Virtual Events

The pandemic has **dramatically changed how brands and businesses host live events**, with **physical events** such as product launches, live demonstrations and interviews **coming to a standstill**.

With physical events being cancelled over the past few months, many brands have had to **rethink how they can interact and create genuine engagement with their audience, shifting from in real life interactions to virtual ones**.

In line with this, social trends have also shifted, with people wanting to spend more time with their loved ones in light of previously being isolated for long periods of time, so going back to physical events even when they are available, won't be everybody's top priority.

So, with this in mind, **how do you reach your audiences despite all of these obstacles?**



1. Adapting to the times

Many brands have had to adapt quickly in order to navigate their way through these obstacles, coming up with clever and creative ways to drive engagement in a virtual space, allowing **customers to interact with them and their brand**, without the need of leaving one's home.

On the flipside, virtual events have provided brands an **opportunity to connect with an even wider audience, with the limitations of distance, budget, space and time zones no longer being an issue**.

Some examples of this adaptation include: offering webinars to educate, share opinions or learnings, virtual meet and greets to connect people, online demonstrations to showcase products or services to Zoom calls to interact with customers. These innovative ways of connecting have shaped the way we interact with one another, changing the landscape of events and how we run them going forward.



2. The future of physical and virtual events in a post-pandemic world

Post-pandemic, events will definitely continue to evolve long into the future because people have gotten used to having access to world-class events from the comfort of their own home.

There will still be a place for live physical events in the future, but virtual events will also have a relevant place, with the ability to reach wider audiences without a myriad restrictions.

Continuing to push creative boundaries and encouraging your brand/staff/business partners to keep thinking of ways to **engage your audience in meaningful ways** that are virtual, yet still sales focused will remain paramount.

Virtual Events:



3. Keeping sales in mind

Keeping sales in mind is always the top priority, **assessing from a brand perspective whether physical or virtual events actually have a good ROI**. You can do this by measuring website traffic or sales, to identify where your brand sits going forward, whether it's more profitable to return to hosting physical events or remaining virtual (or even potentially offering both). At present, it's really **important more than ever to keep virtual events top of mind when you are in the planning stages**.

Key Takeaways:



1. Adapting to the times

- Moving to virtual events can provide brands new ways of interacting with customers, giving them alternative opportunities to experience your products or services
- By adapting physical events to virtual events, you have the opportunity to attract a wider audience, removing the limitation of venue space, costs, distance, or time zones



2. Physical events vs virtual events

- Virtual events allow customers to interact with your brand from the comfort of their own home
- Push boundaries to keep producing creative solutions in order to retain the interest of customers from an online perspective
- There will be a place for both physical and virtual events in the future, so don't assume virtual is a temporary placeholder for all physical events



3. Keep sales in mind

- Use key metrics to measure success of virtual events to understand whether it provides a strong ROI vs physical events; whether one performs better than the other, or whether a mix of the two will provide more opportunities for your brand



Contact Sharon, Director & Founder, Agent99

Questions? Comments? If you would like to know more about Agent99 & how we can help you and your business, get in touch today!



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Case Study: Westward Whiskey

Agent99's client, Westward Whiskey has been working with us on a huge product launch that was initially planned for May. It **originally included bringing the head distiller to Australia all the way from Portland**, which is where their distillery is to do a **national tour in Australia to meet media and consumers**. The pandemic obviously threw a spanner in the works and we couldn't go ahead with the launch, at least in the planned format.

Within the space of a few weeks, the **national tour was turned into a completely virtual event, with attendees who RSVP'd receiving whiskey samples posted to their door**, so they could interact with the head distiller, as well as fellow attendees and enjoy the whiskey together, yet in the comfort of their own home.

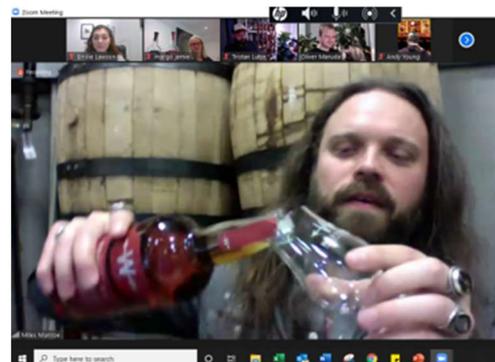
The virtual launch event was attended by 135 people. We initially worked out a percentage of bottles we aimed to sell to attendees from the physical events, but how would selling during a virtual event fare? We far exceeded that KPI during the virtual event mode. Post event, we did the math and it turns out **we spent one-fifth of the cost on the virtual event that we had planned for the physical event**, and far exceeded our expectations in terms of sales too. A win-win for all.

So, it goes to show that you can still hit and exceed those KPIs at a fraction of the cost by doing virtual events, which is another example why it's so important that these continue long into the future.

In fact, through this event in this instance, **it actually drove so many sales that Australia became the leading region outside of their home country in the US.**

Key takeaways:

- It's possible for live events to go virtual
- Think creatively on how to make a virtual event more interactive, whether it's through engagement with other attendees, or providing samples of product to create a more tangible experience
- Sales can still be achieved via virtual events
- Virtual events allow you to reach more people, at a fraction of the budget of a physical event



Case Study: Zen Imports

Zen imports is another one of our long-term clients. They distribute a number of iconic brands such as Fjällräven, Leatherman tools, Klean Kanteen and Ledlenser.

These products are all number-one sellers in their own outdoor product categories. Zen Imports have a large sales team, who up until recently were **visiting retailers physically to present new products that were soon to be released**. This was a standard method of showcasing product lines, given their wide range and diversity. **This process has been quite time consuming for both parties, factoring in availability, travel to and from retailers, etc.** It was quite stressful when meetings would be cancelled at the last minute, or issues unexpectedly arose that were at times inevitable.

Social distancing and travel restrictions put an end to all of that, which then forced Zen Imports to evolve and rethink their sales strategy. Their **solution was an initiative called Zen Stream, which featured a salesperson or global brand spokesperson, who would speak to retailers via Zoom, showcasing new products and fielding any live questions during the call. Not only did this allow retailers to make live enquiries, but it also allowed retailers who couldn't attend the live call to engage with the content in their own time.**

One recent Zen Stream call featured the Founder of Leatherman tools, Tim Leatherman talking to all of the retailers, which was really special. the team received fantastic feedback.

Initially, there was some apprehension as meetings of this nature had traditionally been face-to-face, and there wasn't a benchmark of what the uptake would be. However, **the first session saw over 60 retailers involved. This would have equated to weeks in terms of meeting with each of the retailers personally.** This example provides another compelling demonstration of why virtual events will continue long into the future: **ultimately, it is more convenient for and the company and retailers alike.**



Key takeaways:

- Virtual events allow you to reach more people, or to reach people at a time that is more suitable to them i.e. 'events on demand'
- Virtual events can save time on travel, effort and cost
- Virtual events provide a platform for people to interact with others, and share an experience as a group