# BOOK REVIEW

## TRANSITIONING TO VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EVENTS HOW TO CREATE, ADAPT, AND MARKET AN ENGAGING ONLINE EXPERIENCE

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## OVERVIEW

Traditional "physical events" would often come to mind immediately when people think of modes of event. Apart from the aforementioned event type, "virtual events" extensively took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Hybrid events" combine the advantages of actual and virtual events, thereby providing attendees with immersive experiences (Piccioni, 2023). At present, virtual and hybrid events appeal to professional global marketers. These innovative event experiences possibly attract global event audiences with lower costs and without the limitations of geography (Lekgau and Tichaawa, 2022), as well as being greener and markedly more sustainable based on the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) framework. These characteristics enable stakeholders to comprehend how organizations manage risks and opportunities in the presence of sustainability-related issues (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). This book provides explanations on organizing virtual and hybrid events and analyzes the myths related to event issues that people hear, hold, or believe in but which are not based on facts. Moreover, the book presents extensive and innovative guidance for private and public institutions in addressing existing issues in tourism and event management. The book likewise aims to turn unforeseen difficulties into new opportunities in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period by using numerous actual case studies with practical recommendations.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ben Chodor is characterized as intensely focused and passionate about technology. He is also considered as one of the world's pioneers in the fields of digital media and enterprise communications. Chodor's achievements include being president of the company Intrado Digital Media, an international leader in virtual events and streaming; cofounder and CEO of Happtique, and founder and CEO of Stream57, which were among the first firms to succeed in streaming and virtual events. Gabriella Cyranski collaborates with clients of Intrado Digital to develop strategies related to virtual events. Moreover, she serves as executive producer of

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hybrid event television broadcasts that are globally syndicated. She has over 20 years of extensive experience in designing, managing, and executing a variety of physical, hybrid, and virtual event programs.

**REVIEW**

The authors provide readers with guidance on the process of launching virtual or hybrid events through presentations of detailed practical skills, specifically by utilizing a list of examples or content inventory case studies. To illustrate, creating virtual events is not merely moving the same contents online. Accordingly, a critical aspect is learning the process of immediately leveraging virtual solutions for effective in-person online events. The optimal length or timing of events, audience engagement tips, gamification, videography best practices, and monetization through sponsorships, are aspects that organizations must consider. Meanwhile, organizations can host successful hybrid events reaching a wide audience by establishing goals, opting to use technology, organizing content, and engaging participants. Given the remarkable proficiency of the authors in this industry, marketing practitioners and academics will significantly benefit from their constructive recommendations. This book's other strength is that the authors efficiently direct readers from the basic concepts of virtual or hybrid event management to its complex operations, such a content flow, enabling readers to easily track and comprehend the underlying principles and practices of event management. Moreover, the book adroitly presents the action plans of virtual or hybrid event examples using actual charts, tables, and worksheets; these materials can be used as references and are not provided in other books. Lastly, the book not only contributes to an improved understanding of the significance of establishing virtual or hybrid events, but also clarifies the following myths or misconceptions related to virtual events, which may serve as obstacles to the progress of a holistic event planning.

***Myth #1: My virtual event or hybrid event will cannibalize my physical event attendance***
***Reality:*** Organizations that merely provide a choice for attending physical events clearly ignore numerous potential attendees who would be deprived of the opportunity to experience the contents or mingle with the other attendees. Accordingly, these organizations will miss out on the prospect of expanding their influence to global audiences.

***Myth #2: It can't be monetized, and I'll lose my sponsor and attendee revenue streams***
***Reality:*** Organizations will be provided with the choice to collect the attendees' registration fees by presenting exceptional virtual events platforms. In addition, several customizable elements can be monetized for the benefit of exhibitors and sponsors. Throughout the event experience, such an undertaking could present visibility, thought leadership opportunities, and custom messaging. Monetization of these elements is possible if they can be customized.

***Myth #3: It's not interactive; people will just be watching presentations***
***Reality:*** Participants are presented with the option to immerse in live polls during sessions through the virtual environment. Speakers use the poll results as bases to change course throughout the presentation to considerably emphasize on aspects of topics that those attending want to discuss. Moreover, speakers can maximize live video chats and Q&A sessions.

***Myth #4: People won't stay as long for a virtual session as they would for an in-person session***
***Reality:*** Leaving actual face-to-face sessions or not attending meetings is just as easy as leaving virtual events. Arguably, numerous diversions are present during actual meetings, which are

mostly held in locations with good weather and environment and that provide many leisure activities. When the audiences at events leave virtual events, they can easily return to these activities.

***Myth #5: I'll only get limited reporting***
***Reality:*** Organizations' choices of virtual event platforms must have the ability to present them with sufficient marketing data. The objectives are to build a lead scoring model, for sponsors to gain information on the visitors of their booths and on the downloaded data, and for organizations' executive management to gain confidence that the type of audience they intended to invite were present in reality.

## CONCLUSION

Evidently, this book has an appeal to readers interested in comprehending the transformation from physical events to virtual events or in deciding whether to conduct hybrid events, particularly when addressing 21st century challenges. The book is worth reading, especially by business leaders, policy makers, academics, or even students, owing to advancements in video, audio, and integrated communication technologies that could be used in various virtual or hybrid events. To illustrate, the book will benefit marketing practitioners intending to start a cutting-edge event, and private and public institutions wanting to achieve sustainable event management. Moreover, the book is appropriate for academics as a supplementary reading for business students, particularly in tourism- and event-related fields. Lastly, the book may not completely meet the needs of researchers seeking in-depth investigation of past research findings within the tourism and event management domain, but I enthusiastically recommend this book as a must-read material.

**Main contents are extracted from "Transitioning to Virtual and Hybrid Events: How to Create, Adapt, and Market an Engaging Online Experience", by Ben Chodor and Gabriella Cyranski (John Wiley & Sons, 2021)**

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