Virtual Event Guide for Students

This document offers guidance when beginning to plan a virtual event and highlights important steps to consider during the planning process. Note, this is a very high-level planning resource and will help if you are questioning where to begin. SLICE is happy to help with any of your event planning needs! To meet with a staff member please complete this form.

Steps to consider when planning a virtual event:

Step 1: Develop virtual strategy and guiding principles for your event, then build out event proposal. Items to consider:

  • Goals
    o Important to identify the goal of the event, especially when moving an in-person event online or creating a new virtual opportunity. This will help determine the best steps to take moving forward
  • Audience
    o Can broaden your audience since there are no space limitations (think globally!) Or focus on a more selective, intimate audience to create higher level of engagement
  • Content
    o How is it relevant and timely? Relate to COVID-19 or current climate? o Will it bring value/meaning to attendees? Meant to educate and engage? Or more of a networking/social opportunity?
    o How is it unique to CMU?
    o Can you bring CMU to your audience?
  • Date and time
    o For example, 12-1 p.m. EST is a typical choice, however, consider your audience. Will there be international attendees? Could content be delivered asynchronously?
  • Format
    o Webinar, meeting or conference
    o Town hall, panel discussion, open forum, etc.
    o Live or pre-recorded
    o Length of program – typical attention span of 10 minutes before sharp decline, so consider adding elements to keep audience fully engaged
  • Engagement Plan – how will you engage attendees?
    o Call to action
    o Q&A
    o Polling
    o Gaming or trivia/“did you know”
    o Are there ways to bring the event to your audience?
  • Outline budget (if using virtual platform, working with Media Services or sending mailer ahead of time, etc.)
Step 2: Build virtual team
  • Outline roles
    o Virtual stage manager – event lead
    o Support for stage manager (optional but recommended, if possible)
    o Slide runner (optional but recommended, if possible)
    o IT support – i.e. Media Services (where relevant)
    o Emcee and/or moderator, depending on format
    o Engagement manager (where relevant)
    o Speakers/panelists
    o Speaker coach (optional but recommended, if possible)
    o Marketing team
  • Set up rehearsals and prepare speakers (when relevant)

Step 3: Craft communication plan
  • Build invite list
    o Tease out elements and build in call to action
    o Email invitations, personalized outreach, reminders, website, social media, etc.
      • Think about best date/time to send emails and post to social media
      • Consider working with other teams to cross-promote, as it makes sense
      • Perhaps send pre-event survey to gauge interest and promote enthusiasm/awareness
  • Follow-up plans
  • Record and send out and/or post on website
  • Post-event email (consider two versions for those that attended and those who registered, but didn’t attend); could include:
    o Event highlights
    o Resources discussed during event
    o Brief survey
    o Recordings
    o Promote upcoming events
    o Ways to stay connected

Step 4: Post-event debrief - analyze data collected to report overall metrics and help build next engagement
  • Registrants vs attendees
  • Average time attendees spent in event (aka attendance rate)
  • Engagement using polls and/or Q&A
  • Target audience demographics
    o How many people? From where?
    o Consider expanding to include # of potential org members, first-time event attendees, college/school representation, etc.
  • Social media metrics
  • Email analytics (open rates, click through rates, etc., best performing for date/time)
  • Post event survey results (along with email/anecdotal/Q&A feedback)