

Virtual Event Best Practices for International Audiences

As we have pivoted from in-person to virtual events over the past few months, we have a great opportunity to expand our audience for programming globally. It is more important than ever to engage international alumni, families as well as students who are studying remote with virtual programming to keep them connected to CMU. When planning any virtual event, you should consider CMU's global audience as part of the event strategy and what works best for this audience. This document is to be used as a guide when planning a virtual event with a global reach.

CMU's International Alumni

- The CMU Alumni Association is comprised of 12% internationally based alumni.
- Here are the top three countries with international alumni:
 - Greater China, that includes Hong Kong and Taiwan – 3,300
 - India – 2,100
 - South Korea – 1,300
- In 2019, the student population was 56% US and 44% international.
- Many international audiences connected to Carnegie Mellon identify with individual regions and feel more valued if they're addressed by their own unique geographies.
 - For example, East Asia, South Asia, SE Asia, ASEAN region, or Asia-Pacific region.
 - Another example is that at times, Taiwan and Hong Kong prefer their own unique identities. But when they are added to other networks from the mainland China, those in Taiwan and Hong Kong are okay to be referred to as Greater China.

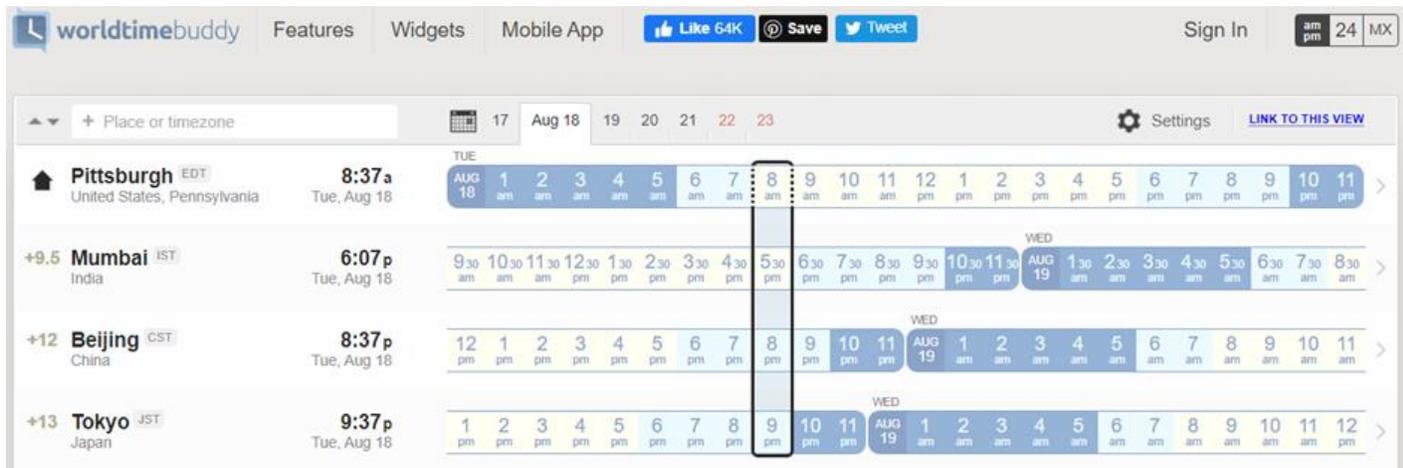
Event Timing

The timing of a virtual event is vital in order to reach a global audience and you need to be mindful of timing as part of your event strategy.

- A good time frame that would be inclusive to many international constituents would be to begin at 8:30 or 9:00 AM EST. This option gives regions the ability to join either in the afternoons or early evenings.
 - 8:30 AM EST will be 8:30 PM in Greater China and Singapore, 9:30PM in Japan and South Korea, 6:00 PM in India, 3:30 PM in Turkey, 1:30 PM in London and 3:30 PM in Qatar.
 - Many international countries do not have separate "summer" or "winter" timings (no daylight savings time in many countries).
 - European countries that have daylight savings time do not typically run in line with the U.S. daylight saving calendar: for example, London is typically 5 hours ahead of ET but can be 4 or 6 hours ahead depending on daylight savings.
 - We recommend using [this website](#) to assess the time difference for your primary audience based on the date of your event.
- We've found the best days to host virtual events for Asia-Pacific countries are Thursdays and Fridays. For this region, audiences have young families, and therefore weekend events do not work well, especially Sundays as those are reserved for families to spend time together.
- However, for the Middle East/Levant region, their work week is Sunday – Thursday. Fridays are reserved for families and prayer.

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- You should consider recording the session at your originally scheduled time, and then post it online or send it out for international audiences. We've found this to be very successful as a follow-up communication to continue the conversation and expand the event footprint.
- See image below that illustrates time zone differences (note, this time difference is during Daylight Savings Time and that in the winter, the international times are one hour later):



Event Content

The content of virtual programs is very important as you can focus on a variety of topics for a larger audience. Here are a few tips on content that international audiences prefer.

- International audiences tend to be interested in more content-based opportunities such as panel-discussions and talks by experts and faculty. Ones that enable active engagement with an audience Q&A are more valued than those where the audience can only listen.
- Cocktail or open-networking sessions do not tend to work as well for this audience.
- We realize that interests vary and topics that can bring in different audiences are important. Asia Pacific audiences are open to content that is reflective in nature, like humanities and arts, but their preference is for content that is more applied within their specified area. Artificial intelligence and robotics are always very popular topics for this group, as is business and analytics trend.
- There are also emerging international social and economic issues which are top of mind for many including macro-economic and microeconomic issues as well as social issues related to inequality and post-COVID recovery.
- Approximately 43% of know European alumni and parents are located in the United Kingdom, where Tepper alumni account for approximately 50% of the alumni population. Tepper faculty and related topics thus appeal strongly to this group.
- More than 70% of European alumni hold degrees from CIT, SCS, and Tepper, which should be considered when programming for these regions.
- Faculty discourse should not be limited to faculty from those specific regions.
- International alumni are very interested in cross pollination between schools and colleges so not as strongly identified with their school as with the university.

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Communication

Communications vary globally, and therefore must be top-of-mind and part of your program strategy when sending any type of communication to attendees.

- Communication for Asia Pacific audiences is best done through social media channels, such as [WhatsApp](#) for Singapore and India, and [LINE](#) for Taiwan.
- International networks also use LinkedIn channels, which would be a great place to post invitations for specific audiences.
 - LinkedIn paid InMail has proven to be particularly effective for international countries, as it enables us to communicate with alumni whom we may not know are in the region.
- If you're sending a Zoom link, Advancement Communications and Marketing can attach the Zoom Link to emails, which are usually sent in the evenings between 6 -10 pm EST to international audiences.
- It is best not to only promote events with international audiences via email, but to take advantage of the various social media used by international constituents. Also a reminder that parents are often invited and involved in international events and programs, as they are an active and involved group.

Internet Restrictions

Internet access differs between various countries. Practices that are legal in one country could be off-limits in others, here are some limitations to consider when engaging international audiences.

- Google and Gmail do not work in China.
- The registration website through CMU's Alumni Community is impossible to set up in China as a VPN is deemed illegal in China, which is needed in order to access this website.
- Linvio registrations are also prohibited in China due to its connection to the Alumni Community website.
- Close monitoring of the possible WeChat ban from the US should be reviewed as well.
- Always ensure that platforms for the event and registrations links work in Greater China for any events that may include that region.
- Linvio event payments can only be taken in USD, so conversions should be considered when setting up registration pages and communications.

If you are looking to promote your event to international audiences, please reach out to [Mimi Fairman](#) or [Roy Aguiar](#) for more information or any questions.