

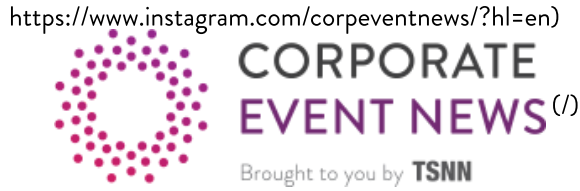
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# REFRAME YOUR REGISTRATION STRATEGY WHEN SHIFTING IN-PERSON EVENTS TO VIRTUAL

September 11, 2020

Kelsey Ogletree (/blog-author-node/kelsey-ogletree)

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uring the 2020 CEMA Summit (<http://www.corporateeventnews.com/news/cema-summit-2020-sets-record-attendance-allowing-non-members-access-first-time>), held virtually in July, Darcy Gabriele, a strategic account executive with Eventcore (<https://www.eventcore.com/>), gave a fascinating presentation on why it's not a simple switch to move from in-person to virtual events — on many levels, but specifically when it comes to registration.

When framing up your event strategy before opening registration, you first have to know your “why” and be able to articulate why your event exists. “It’s not a good reason to host a virtual event just because your in-person event can no longer happen,” said Gabriele, who previously built an all-virtual conference for corporate women, worked for a digital events company and now helps corporate events with data collection.

Next, she suggested building out tools to support your why: essentially using your existing mar-tech stack to build out a 360-degree attendee profile. Information like name, email, company, ticket type, ticket price, lead source, registration date, role, geographic location, session registration, networking questions, etc. should all be flowing into your CRM and event management/marketing automation software, depending on how your company is structured.

But, you don’t want to collect that all right away. A key part of converting in-person events to digital is to flip the registration model. For physical events, people are willing to spend more time on registration, and the design process is different — because by the time they get to the registration page on your website, they’ve likely already made the decision to register, Gabriele said. Maybe they’ve attended in the past and already have it in the budget, and have considered the cost of attendance from both a money and time perspective. There’s also a security and privacy tradeoff, said Gabriele. They’re willing to give you more information about themselves in exchange that while they’re on-site, you’re going to keep them safe — that’s part of society, she adds.

Virtual events are an entirely different ballgame. Many virtual events are free, for one; and a potential attendee’s decision to register is often spontaneous. You have to capitalize on that spontaneity, making it as simple and easy as possible so you don’t lose them in this stage, said Gabriele.

She cited an example of an event by a company called Drift (<https://www.drift.com/>) that managed this process well: They had a bot on their website handle the entire registration process. It was a little pop-up that said, “Hey, I’m Drift! Do you want to register?” If the person responded yes, the bot said “Great, what’s your email?” — and that was it. “I was very impressed because it took 5 seconds, I got the confirmation email, and I could click to view sessions and add to my calendar,” Gabriele said. For a free event, this simplified process was very important, she added.

When you’re thinking about registration for a virtual event, you must do the most important thing upfront: Get them to pay for it. Typically, in-person event registrations ask many questions upfront before an attendee gets to the payment page. But you must flip this model for virtual, asking minimal questions before they pay. “Then from there, you can get them to share more data and engage in a bigger way,” said Gabriele — for instance, creating those 360-degree attendee profiles to better understand your audience and what they’re looking for, before, during and after the event.

*How are you handling registration for virtual events? Do these tips resonate with you? Let us know in the comments.*

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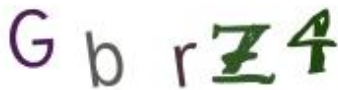
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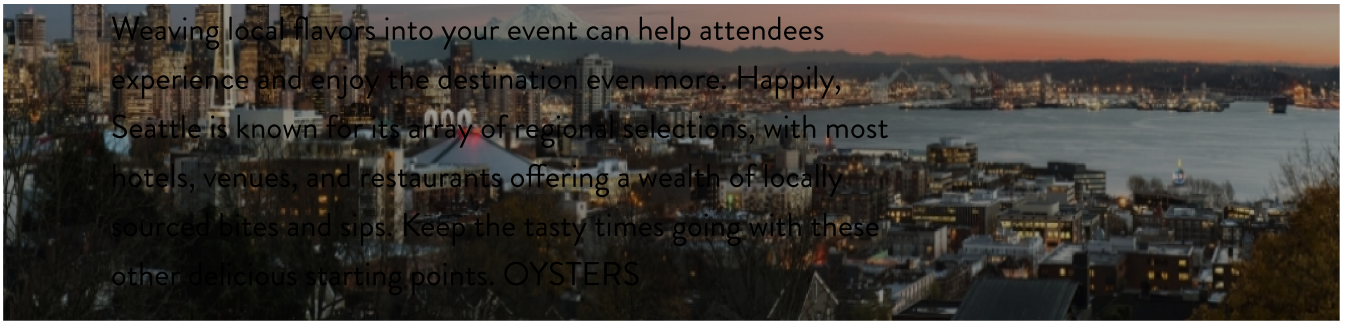
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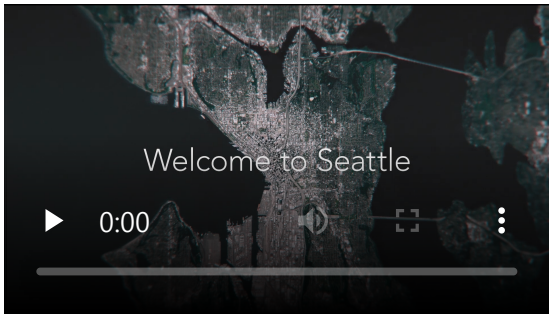
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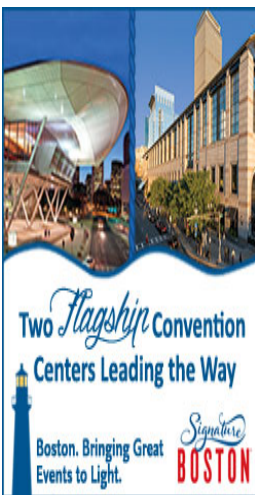
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