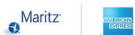MPI

How-to Guide:
The Strategic Value of Virtual Meetings and Events

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INTRODUCTION

This is not a how-to-make-a-super-awesome-virtual-event guide. It's a manual designed to help you establish and implement processes for managing a virtual event portfolio in your organization.

This document helps corporate meeting professionals create organizational capabilities for strategically managing virtual meetings. It details considerations, challenges and best practices. Adapt the tools and tips herein to best fit the unique attributes of your organization.

Note: Your organization should already have some familiarity and experience with virtual events. If not, then you need to become familiar with virtual events, first.

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SECTION 1:
GETTING STARTED

There isn't just one strategy for incorporating virtual meetings into your meetings portfolio. But most organizations begin adopting virtual meetings organically.

Unlike face-to-face meetings, virtual events require more initial setup, but can be replicated and scaled much more efficiently over time. The ability to duplicate meeting environments and repurpose content adds life and extends the reach of your message.

How do you start a virtual meetings program?
There are five key questions to consider as you begin to add this capability into your organization:
(1) What is your strategy?
(2) What services should (or can) you offer?
(3) What virtual formats will you consider?
(4) How will you measure the success of your programs?
(5) What resources do you have or need to succeed?

Which organizations are candidates for virtual meetings?
Most companies adopt virtual meetings for internal and external meetings. Internal virtual meetings address internal communications, human resources and training and development. External virtual meetings are mostly marketing and sales related, driven by the geographic scope of the business and the industry in which it competes.

Organizations with multiple offices across multiple time zones are more active users of virtual meetings than their peers. Technology allows them to overcome time differences and capture rich content (video, audio) that can be repurposed and reused on demand.

What are the key steps to setting up a virtual meetings program?
When crafting and implementing a virtual meetings strategy, there are a number of initial activities that need to be done.
- Agree on an organizational definition for "virtual meetings."
- Identify an internal champion to support the initiative.
- Develop a virtual meetings policy.
- Determine what types of meetings can go "virtual" and what types of meetings need to remain face-to-face.
- Define the services that your meetings organization will offer.
- Identify the virtual meeting formats that your organization will support.
- Establish sourcing agreements.

- Develop your budget and related business case.
- Determine the staff and additional resources required to support your program.
- Develop a plan to market virtual meetings to your internal clients.
- Develop training for new internal clients, staff and delegates on the virtual environment.
- Develop metrics to measure the success of your programs.

What costs should your business case target?
Inevitably, you will need to develop a plan and business case for leadership that shows that virtual meetings improve business performance and reduce costs (a positive return on investment). Here are some costs to consider including in your business case.
- Travel budget. Your virtual meetings don't require hotel room nights, meeting space and/or airline tickets and ground transportation.
- A reduction in conference call expenses. Audio conference calls can be expensive, and here, Web conferencing can create significant savings. Talk to purchasing to see what the savings could be for your organization.
- A reduction in meetings budget. Again, talk to purchasing about potential savings.
- A reduction in out-of-office time. You can increase productivity by reducing staff out of office time.
- An increase in staff quality of life. Virtual meetings give employees freedom to attend remotely and reduce travel stress.
- Carbon Footprint. Virtual events lessen carbon emissions through reduced travel.

SECTION 2:
ESTABLISHING A STRATEGY

Your strategy for executing a virtual meetings program begins with a business case for implementing virtual meetings in your organization.

Step 1. Understanding the current environment

Before considering solutions, assess the baseline. Answer questions based on your current environment and then conduct the same exercise on your "future" environment. This helps you identify your needs. **SEE SIDEBAR 1**

Step 2. Establishing the future vision

Envision a future with no limits on your ability to implement a virtual event plan. Describe the ideal situation from each stakeholder's perspective for a clear idea of how to proceed and streamline your efforts. **SEE SIDEBAR 2**

Step 3 - Eliciting leadership support

Find a senior executive to champion your business case as a sponsor/coach. Look for a champion who can do the following.

- Take ownership of the business case
- Endorse the program
- Lead by example by using virtual meetings
- Set organizational standards around the virtual meetings program
- Provide funds to support the successful delivery of the first prototype programs

Step 4. Conducting a gap analysis

Identify the gap between your current situation and where you want to be in terms of the following.

- People (skills, knowledge, training, team)
- Process (working method, standards, user adoption, customer service, costs, metrics, evaluation)
- Technology (sourcing, standards, security, user access, design, user interface)

Next, look at different approaches to achieving your future vision. After you select an approach, follow these next steps.

- Create a common definition for "virtual meetings" in the organization
- Identify meeting formats that would be part of the successful mix (Section 3)
- Define the scope of services to deliver (Section 4)
- Identify your resource needs (Section 5)
- Develop a measurement system (Section 6)

ASK YOURSELF...

Do you have a system to qualify internal meeting requests? (Is it part of the travel or the meetings requests?)

Does your company have standard tools selected for any of the virtual event formats (web conferencing, video conferencing)?

Does your company have supplier agreements with any virtual event format providers?
- Check with purchasing and IT.
- Teleconferencing providers may offer virtual event services as well.

Do you have customer service capabilities for virtual meetings? (Think: support desk for users and organizers/meeting owners.)

Is there a process to decide what meeting format and system to use?

Do you have access to staff with knowledge of virtual events and the capacity to handle them? Can you dedicate them to virtual events? (Consider technical skills or acumen.)

Do you have access to an instructional designer (Learning & Development) to create (or consult on) virtual meetings content?

Do your meeting participants/managers have the experience/skills to facilitate virtual meetings in various formats?

ENVISION THE FUTURE

What does an ideal situation look like from the perspective of ...

Employee
Senior Executive
Client
Internal Project teams
External collaboration teams
Information Technology
Learning & Development team
Meeting Department

QUICK TIP

Identify all the stakeholders and hold a brainstorm meeting to "dream-up" a future scenario that would be the ideal for implementing virtual and live events in your organization.

IBM Virtual Event Welcome Center

Browse events by:
- Geography
- Solution
- Industry
- ⭐ All Events and Briefing Centers

Search for Events →

CASE STUDY:

At IBM, Virtual Meetings have taken on a life of its own. Within the marketing function, led by the director of events and endorsed by the vice president of marketing, a new team set up a center of excellence to cluster the knowledge and learning around the optimal design and execution of virtual meetings.

Known as the IBM Virtual Events Center, this new global corporate service is quickly gaining traction and being marketed internally to deliver aggregated knowledge around executing virtual events that create business value.

Launched in 2010 it scaled from 77 to 225 events in 2011 across the globe in an integrated virtual platform reaping measurable business results. Core objectives were to provide a consistent experience for potential clients across all business units and create a systematic way to cross sell.

Due to the 2009 economic downturn, many clients and staff were prevented from traveling to live events. In a short period of time, many different people turned to virtual solutions and learned by trial and error. The objective of creating conversations with clients at these events to progress them through the sales pipeline was hampered by an inconsistent brand and user experience across the various platforms.

A central initiative was championed. A platform was procured and licensed through a central investment, a dedicated team was trained. An internal orientation event was created to simulate a client event experience. All functionalities were demonstrated and explained. Instructions and a process was created on "how to" create high quality virtual events using the internal IBM Virtual Event Center.

Standardized metrics were created to measure success and the Virtual Event Center's data was integrated into the customer relationship database. This allowed the sales teams to identify potential clients to monitor sales figures correlated to the event participation data. The Virtual Event Center became a year-round platform built once, used multiple times to create a campus-like environment for multiple events in multiple spaces.

Lessons learned:
- Show the business need and get endorsement from a senior executive willing to lead by example.
- Co-create a business case.
- Encourage a centralized approach.
- Invest once in a high-quality solution and team to kick start the process.
- Show proof of delivery and demonstrate success early on.
- Create a year-round platform and "plug and play" with individual events.
- Customize and brand the experience.
- Put careful thought and attention to content development and marketing.
- Measure the success metrics and make the process scalable.

SECTION 3:
VIRTUAL MEETINGS FORMATS & OPTIONS

There are eight different formats, or categories, of technology for virtual meetings. You need to review each and determine which technology works best for your organization.

What are the criteria for choosing a format?

Timing Considerations

- Duration of the event
- Self-paced progress or real-time progress
- Timing of message
- Lead time
- Team/participant geography
- Ability to repurpose content

Audience Considerations

- Audience location, languages, preferences and desired behavioral changes
- Level of messaging detail
- Interaction requirements
- Access to the meeting environment
- Access to equipment
- People/interpersonal learning
- Decision making authority to participate/travel
- Level of user adoption

Content Considerations

- Type of content and desired learning format (attitude, skill, knowledge, interpersonal)
- Security considerations
- Facilitation/speaker skills
- Ability to repurpose the content

Format Assessment

Tools	In-person meeting	Audio conference	Video/Tele-presence	Webinar	Webcast	2-D/3-D
Visual/video cues	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Presentation data	Yes	No	Sometimes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collaboration Environment	High	Low	High	Low	Low	High
Ease of use	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Lead time	High	Instant	Low	Medium	High	High
Equipment cost	None	Low	High	Low	Medium	High
Network cost	None	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
End-user PC requirements	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	High
Other expenses	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Small meeting (up to 5)	Excellent fit	Good fit	Excellent fit	Good fit	Good fit	Medium fit
Medium meeting (up to 25)	Excellent fit	Good fit	Medium fit	Good fit	Good fit	Good fit
Large meeting (greater than 25)	Excellent fit	Poor fit	Poor fit	Good fit	Excellent fit	Excellent fit

Based on the criteria, begin a selection process for the best forms and formats. Level 1 technologies can be used based on a scheduling system as part of daily workflow.

Who are the vendors?

The diversity, quality and affordability of virtual event systems have evolved quickly. There are multiple solutions and vendors providing competitive services and most provide added-value support.

But the availability of formal education avenues in virtual meetings is limited. Leverage relationships with your vendors for education. Visit industry trade shows, attend demo events and read about recent developments on blogs and websites. A number of vendors produce research and white papers, which provide guidance often based on case studies.

And virtual technology interfaces keep getting easier and easier, and are as popular as do-it-yourself solutions. From Web conferencing tools to 3-D immersive environments, vendors are making an effort to make interfaces more intuitive. Here are some common providers utilized by respondents to MPI's virtual event research.

Web Conferencing

Vendor	Product	Highlights
Adobe	Adobe Connect 8	• Save notes as RTF files that can be emailed to participants • Custom pods and multiple break-out rooms, each with private VoIP or telephone conference call
Cisco	Webex Meeting Center	• Built-in collaboration tools such as real-time annotation and white-boarding • High-quality video for multiple webcams • Available for iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, Android
Citrix	GoTo Meeting	• HD video conferencing • Meeting attendance reports available at the end
Microsoft	Live Meeting	• Scalable up to 1,250 people • Web-based, no downloads required • Transfer files and share multiple software applications

Webcasting

Vendor	Product	Highlights
InterCall, formerly Stream 57	InterCall Streaming	• Post-event tests and surveys can be custom branded and results are included in program reports • Carbon cost-savings calculator based on number of attendees and locations • Multi-video presentation for sessions with multiple speakers in different locations • Sudio and audio controls for speakers
INXPO	XPOCAST	• Built-in collaboration tools such as real-time annotation and white-boarding • High-quality video for multiple webcams • Available for iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, Android
ON24	Webcasting Platform 10	• HD video conferencing • Meeting attendance reports available at the end
Sonic Foundry	Mediasite 6	• Live or on-demand streaming to iPad, iPhone, iPod, Blackberry or Android using HTML5 and H.264 • Indexed slide text, transcript captioning and presentation metadata (to search words or phrases) • Search engine optimization for public Mediasite content • Web-friendly, resizable mini-player for embedding Mediasite content in tight spaces on blogs and web pages

Video/Telepresence

Vendor	Product	Highlights
BrightCom	Lumina Telepresence	• Scalable up to 12 people • Real-time video quality adjustments to fit width needs • Multi-camera technology, gaze corrected for natural eye-to-eye contact • Built-in touch screen panels for control
Cisco	Cisco Telepresence T1 and T3	• Touch collaboration screen • Standards-compliant technology • Ceiling-mounted studio lighting module with an optional immersive room package
Polycom	Polycom Halo Collaboration Studio	• Incorporates Polycom's private Halo Video • Exchange Network • Share materials from a laptop or the HD overhead camera • HD collaboration screen • Sound absorbing wall coverings, fully-duplexed spatial audio with echo cancellation and graphic eye lighting control system
Teleris	Teleris VirtualLive	• Scalable up to four HD 65" displays and up to 16 people • Accurate eye contact through patented vectoring technology • Facilities package option for same look and feel across all rooms

Ask the right questions[1]

1. What is your process with first-time virtual event customers? How will you help me understand what I need to know?

2. Would you provide three references from customers that are similar to my organization?

3. Can you provide me with a handbook outlining the steps necessary for planning an event like mine?

4. Would you provide a typical timeline and list of milestones for my event that I should be aware of?

5. Is audio, video or video-only best for my presentation?

6. What tips do you have for designing a virtual presentation in terms of length, use of slides, polling?

7. How many events are your event directors in charge of at any one time?

8. How can we ensure that delegates can navigate through the virtual event? Can you map this out in advance?

9. How can you help my speakers successfully address a virtual audience?

10. Can you provide me with a list of chat functionalities available for my virtual event (text one-to-one or many-to-many, group chat, video)?

11. How do you provide for social media integration?

12. Is there a way to integrate with CRM systems? If so, which ones?

13. What types of data can I capture at my virtual event?

14. Do you have industry-specific statistics that I can compare my event statistics with?

15. Who are the team members who'll help me with my virtual event? Please define their roles and responsibilities.

[1] Based on desk research and inspired by a series of blog posts by Cece Solomon

2-D/3-D Immersive Worlds

Vendor	Product	Highlights
INXPO	VX Platform	• Event type templates of the most commonly used virtual events, such as a virtual trade event or virtual booth • Built on HTML 5 (compatible with iPad, Android and iPhone) • Global CMS (content management system), a virtual library that allows for material re-use from past events • Engaging with visitors by text chat, video chat, business card exchange, blogs, message forums, group chats and social media
UBM Studios	UBM Studios	• Wizard-based event-building and booth-building tools • In-event concierges to help initiate conversations and encourage interactions • Integration with third-party applications such as registration, CRM, Web 2.0 and social media • Capability for exporting reports
Unisfair	Virtual Engagement Platform v.9	• Engagement Index, which ranks leads based on the level of activity and interest of each attendee • Navigation supported in 16 languages • Live chat translated in 50 languages • WYSIWYG interface and real-time changes • Gallery of high-resolution templates with imagery of real-world venues

⊙ BEST PRACTICE

IBM Virtual Events Center uses "semi-live" formats where webinar and webcast content is disseminated live at first and then repurposed in subsequent sessions. IBM uses the term "semi-live" to describe live question and answer sessions. Recorded content followed by live questions and answers is programmed at regular intervals after the live event to reach a broader audience. Approximately 50 percent of the targeted audience usually participates on the live event day and the other half chooses to watch this on demand and participate in live Q&A sessions.

SCOPE OF SERVICE

SETTNG UP A VIRTUAL MEETINGS POLICY

Consider adapting your face-to-face meeting policy to include a section on virtual meetings, adding policy points around these five areas.

- Service level
- Business objectives
- Virtual meeting format alternatives
- Size or budget considerations
- Any time restrictions

For more information on determining your virtual

DETERMINING SERVICE LEVEL

Step 1: Determine which of the virtual meeting formats you should use. First, find out what existing virtual meeting tools your company already has (so you can consider resources already in place). Determine if these tools meet your internal client's needs. If not, prepare an RFP to fill the gap.

Step 2: Ensure that you have the resources to support the event. The tools you choose will determine if you need to add staff, hire contractors or partner with other vendors. Evaluate the tools that your team will be managing and see if you have staff and budget to support them.

UNDERSTANDING THE TYPES OF MEETING THAT WORK BEST VIRTUALLY

Use this table or a similar one to advise your clients on the best meeting format for their needs. It will help you determine which meetings are most appropriate for virtual formats.

Choosing Virtual Over Face-to-Face

Meeting Purpose	Face-to-Face	Virtual	Notes
Networking	✔		Most virtual platforms have limited networking capabilities
Sensitive Issues (personnel, business, other)	✔		These issues are best handled in person
Incentives	✔		
Celebrations	✔		
Client-Facing Meetings	✔		In the research, the strength of this response depended on the industry in which the respondent worked
Collaborative Team Building	✔		Simulation workshop exercises must be done face-to-face
Company Updates		✔	One-way presentations can be done on corporate TV, webcast or other formats
New Product Updates		✔	
Internal Meetings		✔	
Updates for Field Sales or Regional Offices		✔	
Individual Project Meetings		✔	
Supporting Daily Meetings		✔	
Staff Meetings		✔	
Recruiting		X	

CASE STUDY:

One of IKEA's core values is cost consciousness, but the home furnishings giant was seeing its-travel costs jump 20 percent each year. So, in 2008, Torbjorn Erling, IKEA's event and travel manager, launched Meeting the IKEA Way. Its slogan: "Meet more and travel less." The purpose of the initiative was to lower travel costs by 50 percent in relation to sales, improve the work-life balance of meetings staff and decrease the company's carbon dioxide output by 25 percent. Since that time:

- IKEA has seen a $40 million (30 percent) drop in travel costs, a reduced carbon output of 30,000 tons in 2009 (from 45,500 tons in 2007) and an improved work-life balance.
- Employees can now choose the most appropriate way to meet, and because of their renewed focus on costs, they are keener to use virtual meetings technology.
- During its management shift, IKEA pointed out the positive benefits of virtual meetings: efficiency, work-life balance and environmental impact.

Options for virtual meetings

Based on research by Debi Scholar and **http://www.teplus.net**.

Complexity	Format	Description
1	Video conference or telepresence	User-friendly video conferencing technologies such as GoToMeeting, Skype and Webex make up the most common types of virtual meetings. Usually limited to 25 or fewer participants, these meetings require little setup time. Some consider teleconferences and instant messaging as additional options in this category.
1	Conference call	
1	Online meeting	
2	Webcast	Because these types of virtual meetings may include more than 25 participants and a more sophisticated functionality, they require the expertise of a consultant or vendor. These events can require days to a few weeks for proper organization. Technological support is necessary for content delivery and strong connectivity. A virtual meeting planner provides project management communications, social media marketing, content development, rehearsals and reporting. A virtual meeting specialist, may be an internal or external resource.
2	Webinar	
3	Virtual Tradeshow	This complex level of virtual event requires a lot of expertise. A virtual meeting planner works with a virtual event production coordinator and an experienced team provided by the technology supplier to deliver such experiences as a virtual tradeshow, job fair, expo or symposium. Some of these events may feature 3-D immersive experiences and require months to produce.
3	3-D Virtual World	
3	Hybrid Meeting	

QUICK TIP

Organizations that see a quick take up of the use of teleconference or telepresence may find that the available time slots are not adequate to keep up with internal demand. Have a schedule and policy in place to make the scheduling work for those that count on the availability of the technology. This implies that managing the facilities needs to be included in the planning of the technologies made available.

SECTION 5:
RESOURCES

How do departments collaborate internally to successfully deliver virtual meetings?

Each stakeholder's role will depend on the following.

1. Company size
2. Program maturity
3. Type of meeting (internal or external)

WHAT SKILLS SHOULD THE MEETINGS TEAM HAVE?

Traditional meeting planning skills are certainly necessary to create virtual meetings; however, a general familiarity with online marketing and technology is also needed. As you plan for more virtual meetings, you may want to consider seeking out new staff members who possess many or all of the following skills.

- Event planning
- Online marketing
- HTML
- Digital-user interface
- Customer services (ability to explain tech in user-friendly terms)
- Organizational (ability to plan many meetings at once)
- Flexibility

Typical Division of Roles

Department	Functions
Meetings & Events	• Owns the business case • Drives internal user adoption • Runs virtual meetings • Advises internal clients on best formats for achieving goals • Acts as trusted advisor to meeting requestors • Advises internal clients on the meeting selection • Manages the meetings process (sets objectives, sources, executes, measures)
Information Technology	• Manages sourcing • Audits (and manages) to ensure infrastructure supports virtual technology solutions • Offers help desk end user support role for applications • Provides internal technology expertise • Sources the digital technology in cooperation with purchasing • Manages the technology infrastructure
Procurement	• Works together with IT on sourcing
Internal Communications	• Creates content and messaging
Learning & Development	• Creates content • Advises the meetings department on good digital content • Can provide instructional design support • Can provide e-learning support • May share in the use of the digital platform and resources
Marketing	• Creates content
Human Resources	• Creates content

SECTION 6:
MEASUREMENT

Establishing a measurement system

Virtual meetings provide tools for measuring delegate behavior that face-to-face meetings lack, because everything that happens in the platform is recorded. But, measurements can be taken in other ways that don't require the use of virtual tools. For a virtual meeting held to educate delegates, measurement can be the increase in learning. In this case, learning can be measured by conducting a post-meeting test.

Costs

To make a proper assessment of the ROI of your virtual meeting, tabulate all the costs involved in the production and execution of the meeting. Not all these costs will be applicable to every meeting format.

- Technology (virtual meeting platform, streaming and Internet connection)
- Video and graphics production
- Content development
- Studio décor
- External consultant (individual or agency)
- Speaker/facilitator/virtual emcee
- Staff time (including time spent on planning, execution and evaluation)
- Administrative
- Marketing/promotion

Inputs

Inputs are hard numbers that can be easily obtained from the virtual technology tool. Most tools offer real-time data and downloadable reports.

- Number of registered attendees
- Demographics of attendees
- Number of live attendees
- Number of attendees who viewed the event on demand
- Length of event
- Length of time each attendee spent at the virtual meeting
- Number of exhibitor booths
- Number of presentations offered and materials downloaded
- Number of complaints
- Number of tech failures
- Number of locations visited and the average per attendee

Engagement

Tracking engagement is key to knowing the event's effectiveness. It's useful to know if participants are active or just passively listening. Most virtual technology tools provide these metrics automatically. GoToMeeting rates each attendee's interest level, which is based on attentiveness during the session, attendance length and the level of interaction.

- Number of questions asked and the average per attendee
- Number of conversations in chat rooms
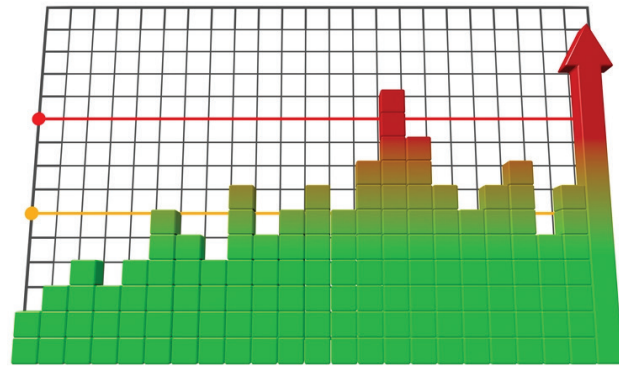
- Number of business cards exchanged
- Number of interactions between participants
- Number of interactions with social media
- Number of hashtag mentions in social media
- Number of attendees who answered polls

Attendee satisfaction

The satisfaction of participants with the content and the experience of a virtual meeting can be measured with polls and surveys. Use five-point scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and statements such as "This meeting is relevant to my current work." Ask about the following.

- Relevance of = content
- Quality of = speaker/facilitator
- Appropriate means of delivery
- Ease of use

Learning

Virtual meetings are suitable for information sharing and internal training. Measuring to what extent participants learned new information or skills is important to determining the value of the event. Consider the following.

- The degree to which new information was acquired (pre- and post-event tests)
- The degree to which new skills were learned (role-playing)
- The number of new contacts

Effectiveness

There are many ways to measure effectiveness, depending on your objectives and capabilities. Some of these measurements can be calculated immediately after the meeting is finished, while others may come through follow-up questionnaires administered two or three months later. The key is starting small, with metrics you feel comfortable with.

- Percent of target vs. actual attendees
- Conversion ratio (number registered to number attended)
- Ratio of repeat attendees to new attendees
- Percent time in sessions vs. total content time
- Number of requests for follow-up meetings
- Number of leads generated
- Degree of application of new skills or information
- Cost per person to deliver the event
- ROI

SECTION 7:
KEY SUCCESS FACTORS & ROADBLOCKS

Keys to success

1. Elicit leadership support. Leadership support is critical to success. Senior management should lead by example by using virtual meetings, endorsing the program and helping set organizational standards around the virtual meetings program.

2. Provide an internal support team. It is equally important to have people on your internal operations team to support your virtual meetings program. In some cases, these individuals help manage the virtual meetings process from the initial request through performance measurement. In other cases, they are consultants that help you choose between face-to-face and virtual and select a virtual platform.

3. Understand your business case for virtual meetings. Try to create early victories for your meetings program. Have a pilot project or customer base that you can use as a starting point to gain widespread organizational support.

4. Listen to feedback from internal clients. Conduct interviews and satisfaction surveys with internal clients and virtual meeting attendees and build up the findings. These insights will help you adapt processes and services to appeal to a larger client group.

5. Create snappy content. In virtual meetings, attendees don't have long attention spans for bad content. Don't try to replicate a live event; strive for neat and concise content for your virtual meeting. Virtual meetings should be leveraged for education, live meetings for networking.

Five roadblocks to overcome

1. Poor user adoption. Poor user adoption is not uncommon when implementing a virtual meetings program, especially among the less tech-savvy. To overcome this hurdle 1) offer mini-training on the virtual environment, 2) provide help desk support and 3) market the benefits of the virtual program to attendees through other internal channels to set their expecta-

tions in advance.

2. Undefined strategy owner. More often than not, several stakeholders are involved in the strategy. While this has some benefits, it can be challenging when it comes to driving user adoption and allocating funding. Clearly identify the department that owns the strategy.

3. Technology limitations at remote sites. Organizations with several offices, stores or field sales reps need to consider the network bandwidth and PC limitations of each location. Spend time testing the technology in advance and ask IT to help you.

4. Negative technology experiences. When attendees have a bad technology experience they sometimes discard the entire process. Start small and build a pattern of success with small, easy victories to convert skeptics.

5. High volatility of the virtual technology market. Because it is a new industry, working with vendors can turn into a challenge. Mergers and acquisitions are common, which means long-term relationships with virtual technology vendors may be difficult to achieve. On top of this, the lack of standards in services and costs makes the RFP processes lengthy. Keep up-to-date with

SECTION 8:
USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

Vendor review/comparison
http://www.webconferencing-test.com/
en/webconference_home3.html

Video telecommunication services/product brands
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_
video_telecommunication_services_and_
product_brands

Blogs
T&E Plus
Debi Scholar
www.teplus.net

The Virtual Buzz
Cece Salomon-Lee, Donna Sanford
http://thevirtualbuzz.com

It's All Virtual
Dennis Shiao
http://allvirtual.me

Virtual Events Hub
Ike Singh
www.virtualeventshub.com

Telepresence
Cisco
www.cisco.com

Tandberg
www.tandberg.com/index5.jsp

Telepresence versus video conferencing
http://www.ehow.com/info_12145125_
telepresence-vs-video-conferencing.html

Virtual Event Vendors
6Connex
Virtual events
www.6connex.com

Expos2
Virtual events
www.expos2.com

Imaste
Virtual events
www.imaste-ips.com

INXPO
Virtual event platform
www.inxpo.com

On24
Webcasting, virtual platforms
www.on24.com

Social27
Virtual event platform
http://social27.com

Sonic Foundry
Webcasting, platform, content capture
www.sonicfoundry.com

Stream57/Intercall
www.stream57.com (webcasting)
www.intercall.com (phone and online
conferencing)

Tolomi
Virtual events
www.tolomi.com

Ubivent
Virtual events
http://web.ubivent.com

UBM studios
Online events, websites, communications
www.ubmstudios.com

Virtual Edge Institute
Information, education about virtual events
www.virtualedgeinstitute.com

virtualevents365
Virtual events
www.virtualevents365.com

Virtual Team Building
PlayTime Inc.
Team Building
www.playtimeinc.com

Maxvantage is a strategic alliance between Maritz Travel and American Express Business Travel that leverages the collective experience and capabilities of these leaders to drive return on meeting investment and experience, offering a center of excellence for strategic meetings management needs. It delivers a comprehensive SMM offering with end-to-end servicing, including expert sourcing, registration and planning services designed to reduce risk and optimize spend. Visit http://corp.americanexpress.com/gcs/travel/maxvantagemeetings.

TNOC | The New Objective Collective brings ideas to life using live and digital communications. TNOC was first established in March 2009 in The Netherlands to provide innovative community management and Professional Conference Organizer (PCO) services for live, hybrid and digital events. Collective contributors use modern collaboration techniques to provide objective-based services. The projects are managed in online collaboration spaces, enabling geographically dispersed teams and their supply chains from around the globe, each with a distinct niche specialty, to collaborate. Whenever possible, the collective uses open source methodologies and innovative collaboration partnerships to consult and deliver on live- and digital-event experiences for corporations, associations and open source communities.

The Authors

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Fryatt has a background in journalism and communications and more than 20 years' experience in the event industry as the co-owner of U.S.-based Icon Presentations audiovisual company. An avid meeting industry blogger, social media consultant and former community manager for Engage365.org, Fryatt also has extensive experience leading virtual discussions, creating and distributing content online and studying and participating in virtual-event experiences.

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Digital global nomad Ruud Janssen CMM, is an online collaboration and bespoke new media specialist for events as well as speaker and trainer. With a solid background in professional conference organizing and hospitality marketing, he has a curiosity and appetite for slow-food and fast media. Living in Basel, Switzerland he's the founder of TNOC.ch, an unconventional marketing collective specializing in crafting live, hybrid and virtual experiences for international membership-based organizations. He is also the founder and curator of TEDx events and co-founder of Event Camp Europe.

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As workforce development fellow at the University of Derby, John brings academic perspective to the project. The university makes a virtual events simulator, the eAPL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) process and a body of research available to the team. John is also a course director for the Chartered Institute of Marketing and a guest lecturer on events management programs at universities in the U.K. and Germany. His articles on face-to-face communication have appeared in more than 50 magazines, and he is a regular columnist in a number of MICE magazines.

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Smith is a thought leader, speaker and award-winning innovator on event technology. In 2011, *BizBash Magazine* named him one of the most innovative people in the event industry. In 2010, Smith co-founded Event Camp Twin Cities, an innovation lab for events that rewrote the rules for attendee engagement in hybrid events. Smith judges the annual EIBTM Worldwide Event Technology Watch Awards in Barcelona, Spain.

Interactive Meeting Technology, LLC is an event technology consultancy, which creates digital interactive experiences that transform attendees into active participants. It helps clients develop a strategy around their digital initiatives. Then, it brings their vision to life. The company works across Web, mobile, social, digital signage and hybrid meetings.

The Meeting Support Institute is an association for companies and individuals with products or services on the content side of meetings, offering a wide range of tools from art to technology, AV to facilitation, knowledge to science. Its goal is to help meeting professionals design the content side of meetings and events. The institute informs and educates about available tools in the market via its knowledge base, presentations, dinners and conference. Here, suppliers meet each other and their clients.

The University of Derby Corporate is the corporate training and development division of the University of Derby. The school works with a wide variety of organizations to deliver work-based learning programs and accredited qualifications that improve key capabilities, such as service, innovation, leadership and problem-solving.

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About the MPI Foundation

The MPI Foundation is committed to bringing vision and prosperity to the global meeting and event community by investing in results-oriented initiatives that shape the future and bring success to the meetings and events community. For more information, visit www.mpifoundation.org.

About MPI

Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the meeting and event industry's largest and most vibrant global community, helps it's members thrive by providing human connections to knowledge and ideas, relationships and marketplaces. MPI membership is comprised of more than 23,000 members belonging to 71 chapters and clubs worldwide. For additional information, visit www.mpiweb.org.

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