



# Virtual vs Face-to-Face Events

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Over the last two years, everything has moved online. Our commutes to offices have been replaced with working from home computers; dining out has been replaced with Uber Eats orders or at-home meal boxes; and even in the world of events – an industry grounded in bringing people together – has had to transition online too. From hosting virtual meetings, cooking with famous chefs, attending galas... the list can go on and on. But despite the progression we've made working and celebrating virtually, nothing replaces face-to-face interactions.

Don't get me wrong, virtual events have served us well and allowed us to continue to conduct business while keeping us safe during the pandemic. It is unprecedented how much more we can do online today compared to the past. Imagine just 20 years ago what we would have done. I guess picked up the phone if it was not internet based, but I know for certain we wouldn't be able to host productive meetings. In these last two years alone, the growth has been expediential. We've seen this with the rise of online platforms like Zoom, and the ability to market to and host attendees across cities, countries, and time zones.

But despite these advancements, face-to-face meetings offer richer exchanges. For example, you can keep an audience more engaged because having conversations face-to-face allows for a more fluid and dynamic exchange of ideas and collaboration. In general, people communicate not just with words but using hand gestures, movement, facial expressions, etc. I know I can convey myself more clearly and accurately in person than online; I am more passionate and animated about what I am speaking about, thus I am more engaging to those I am speaking with.

However, if you can keep attendees engaged on an online format, virtual events do have the advantage of convenience. Although many event professionals faced a learning curve at the dawn of virtual events, from an attendee's perspective, virtual events can offer a lot more flexibility and cost-saving. This provides value to the individual attending as the online format can get rid of stresses like transportation, accommodation, and personal responsibilities (like finding a babysitter for a three-day conference). And like any hospitality professional knows, providing value is crucial for the vitality of your business.


But despite the convenience, it's hard to replicate a physical feeling virtually. In person events are an experience, and just two years ago they were the norm, but now we will certainly appreciate them more. There is nothing quite like physically walking into an event, seeing its set up abound with possibilities, and inevitably getting excited for what the event has to offer and what is to come. Oh, and the food and beverage you can have! (We have had many advancements with online platforms to look like an event but smell and taste cannot be replaced!)

Virtual events should be looked at as a compliment – rather than replacement of – in-person events. Independent from the many pros and cons of virtual events, these past few months have made event planners aware of the significantly overlooked opportunities that a virtual component can bring to an in-person event and helped consider how we can make them work together. If one thing is for certain, event professionals' creativity, drive and willingness to learn, adapt, and pivot have been at an all time high during this time.

More likely than not, several future events will take place in a hybrid format; that is, a combination of a face-to-face and virtual event. That said, it is certain that face-to-face events cannot and will not be replaced. For many, the lack of face-to-face events over these last two years have made people crave attending events more than ever. But in the same realm, the rise of working virtually has been embraced by many. Hybrid events are the perfect medium for both types of people. Through fulfilling the need for physical interaction for some, and the convenience of participating from home for others, it is an event trend here to stay.

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## About the author:

 Angela Zaltsman, CMP, is Principal of A to Z Event Management. A to Z delivers complete event management services for corporate clients who desire the finest in service, quality and venues. From start to finish, the company offers fresh, creative design, strict budgeting and precise management of each and every event. Zaltsman is a career event planner with more than 17 years of experience serving discriminating clientele in the restaurant, catering and meeting planning industries.

This entry was posted in **Event Operations, Virtual Events** and tagged in **A to Z Event Management, Angela Zaltsman, client interactions, hybrid events, virtual**.

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