



# The Importance of Event Measurement Beyond the Global Pandemic

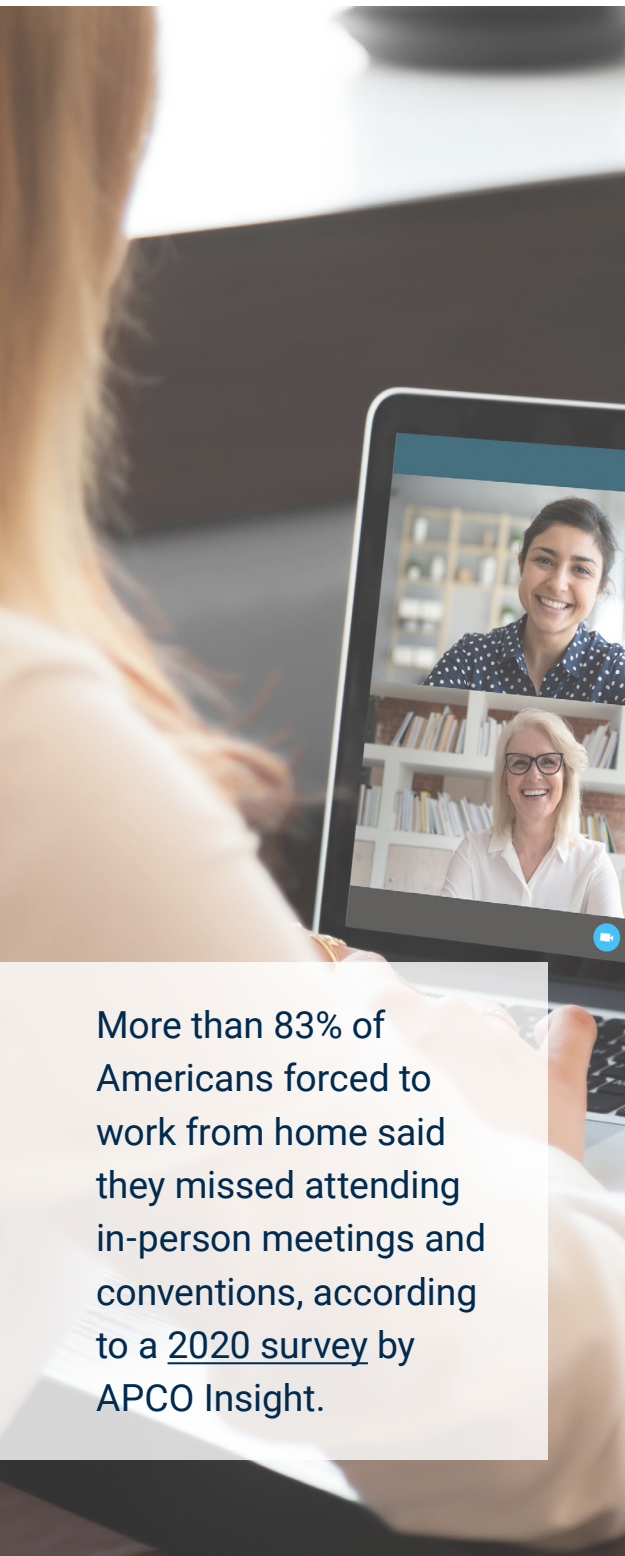
*A Guide to Creating Maximum ROI for In-Person, Hybrid and Virtual Events*

Nearly a year into a global pandemic, with in-person events still largely on pause, professionals in the meetings industry are wrapping their arms around what the future of gatherings will look like. As many companies develop variations on virtual events to continue to drive ROI for their stakeholders, others are already looking ahead to hybrid, contemplating the ideal mix of virtual and in-person events.

No matter how much you've fine-tuned your virtual event strategy over the past year, there's strong sentiment that in-person events — or at least, certain components of those — will come back, as soon as it's proven safe to do so.



# A Guide to Creating Maximum ROI for In-Person, Hybrid and Virtual Events



More than 83% of Americans forced to work from home said they missed attending in-person meetings and conventions, according to a [2020 survey](#) by APCO Insight.

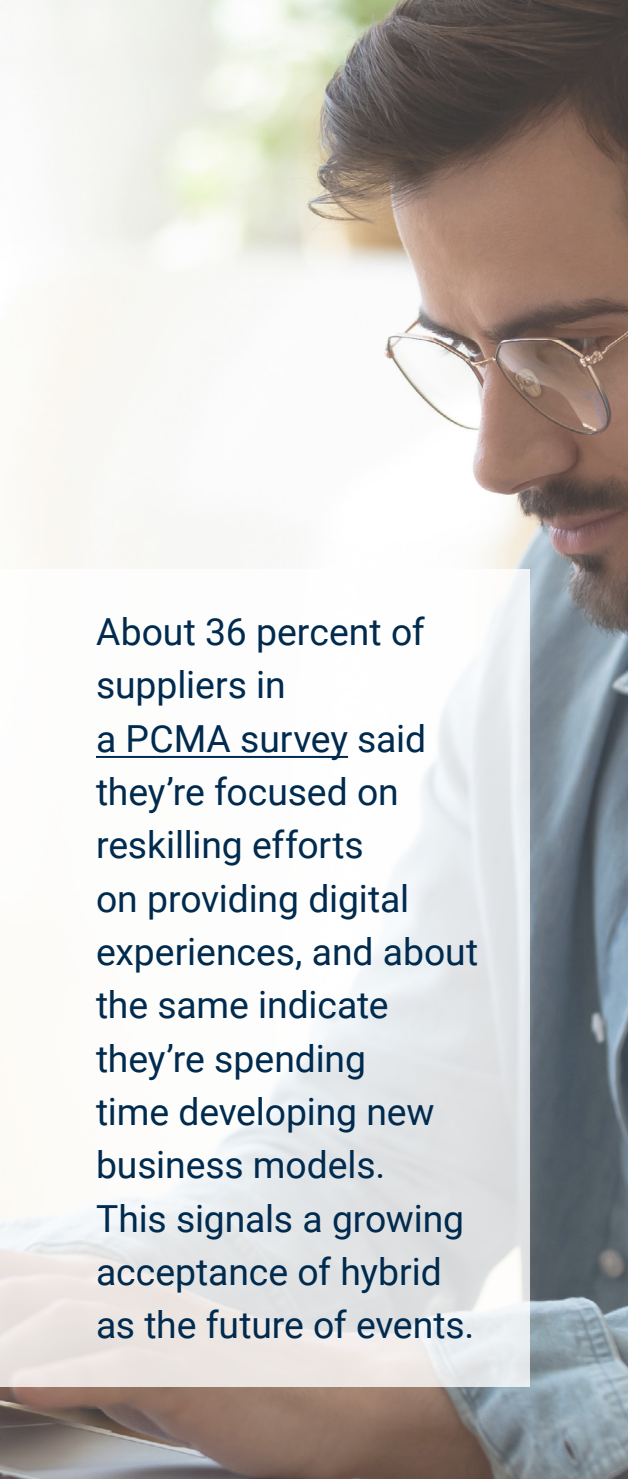
The big takeaway from hosting virtual events the past year, however, is that they are here to stay. For one, if general exposure — or going global — is one of your goals, virtual events allow you to reach an exponentially greater audience than you would for an on-site event. Furthermore, we know that post-pandemic, decision-makers will scrutinize travel and events even more closely than in the past, especially as we've all witnessed the work that's been accomplished through meeting virtually.

From a measurement perspective, you must understand to what degree your virtual events can drive ROI compared to in-person events. To do this, it's imperative to develop more touchpoints with your audience to determine exactly where their heads are.

According to a [Covid-19 Recovery Dashboard survey](#) conducted by PCMA in mid-December 2020 — the same week the first vaccinations were distributed — 11 percent more suppliers and planners reported feeling hopeful about the industry's recovery compared to the previous month. Sixty-six percent of planners said the approval of the vaccines had changed their thinking about what might be possible for events, and 10 percent of planners said they'd either initiated booking space or reserved space as a result.



# The Many Definitions of Hybrid



About 36 percent of suppliers in a PCMA survey said they're focused on reskilling efforts on providing digital experiences, and about the same indicate they're spending time developing new business models. This signals a growing acceptance of hybrid as the future of events.

**Very simply, a hybrid event is one with both in-person and digital components. The structure can take various forms depending on the overall strategy and needs of different audiences.**

Perhaps for one company, it's a conference with in-person watch parties of 50-100 people tied to a larger core broadcast they watch together, with additional live components such as a shared meal or networking reception. For another, it might be groups of self-contained regional meetings that connect through digital platforms — akin to a simultaneous road show. A third type may encompass a large meeting where those who want to can attend in person while others join virtually from their home offices.

Each of these separate hybrid models require different levels of investment, both from a cost and time perspective. No matter what hybrid looks like to your company, measurement will become even more critical post-pandemic. You must continually test, measure and revise to determine what form your hybrid event will take and how it will work so your company can support the funding for the design.

Event professionals have always had to justify meetings and events to stakeholders. Now, it's more nuanced and complex. After getting over the sticker shock that can come with virtual events, it's time to evaluate the numerous tools to design events that meet the needs of all audiences. Don't forget about sponsors! Understand what will make the event successful for them and align objectives and metrics accordingly.



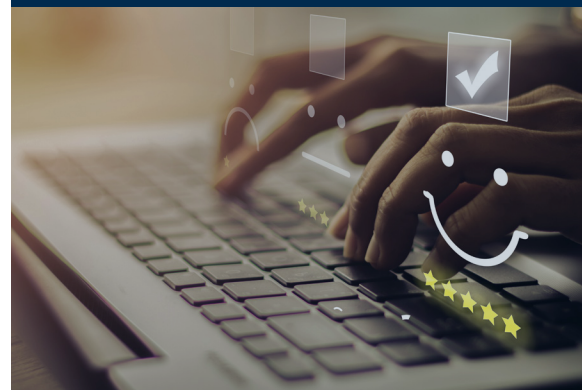


# Virtual and Hybrid Bring a Refined Focus to Metrics and Reporting: Before Event

**BEFORE YOUR EVENT:** Pre-event surveys and research have never been so important. Before the pandemic, few of our clients would invest in gathering data before their event took place. As we shift to hybrid models and/or consider going back to in-person events, however, it's critical to determine how your attendees are feeling about travel (and being in the same room as many other people, for that matter). You must truly know and understand your audience before determining how hybrid you can go.

We put this pre-event survey concept into practice at One10 for our own employees in planning for our return to the office. We asked our team members questions such as how they felt about coming back to the office, how important various aspects were in making their decision about whether to come back — i.e., mask wearing, taking temperatures, social distancing — and their willingness to travel for work. Examining the results city by location, we noticed regional differences in comfort levels depending on what was happening in their communities. Additionally, we had to consider how workstyles had changed over the past year and take into account the delicate balance of professional and home life that most employees are now juggling. All of these factors are a part of our decision-making process for our return-to-office plan. You can use the same process to prepare for the return of in-person events.

According to a survey of mid- to senior-level marketers conducted by Bizzabo in 2019, 37 percent of respondents primarily measure attendee engagement and satisfaction as a KPI for event success. Yet more than half of those same respondents say they have trouble showing event ROI to key decision-makers. Pre-pandemic, 95 percent of respondents said they believed in-person events have a major impact on achieving business goals.



# Virtual and Hybrid Bring a Refined Focus to Metrics and Reporting: During Event

**DURING YOUR EVENT:** Technology — via mobile apps as part of an in-person experience or via the platform as part of a virtual experience — also affords ample opportunities to collect valuable data throughout the event. Properly designed interactions can deepen the overall event evaluation by offering insight such as: During what points of the event was engagement the highest? Lowest? What were the immediate reactions to messaging? Did that change as the event progressed? How? Why? You can take full advantage opportunities during an event to collect more data about your audience.

After a client's recent virtual conference, sponsors expressed disappointment they didn't get to speak with attendees in the same way they'd been accustomed to at in-person events. Then we shared data from the meeting platform including a list of attendees who had checked into their virtual booth and were interested in learning more. This completely changed the sponsors' perspective. In reality, the event had generated more actionable leads than past in-person events. The takeaway? Measurement can really change how people think of events.



# Virtual and Hybrid Bring a Refined Focus to Metrics and Reporting: After Event

**AFTER:** The post-event survey is equally significant. Through asking questions to your attendees after the event concludes — whether that's virtually, hybrid or in-person — you gain valuable data to shape future events. You can also use post-event survey data in your marketing. If you can gather feedback from attendees saying an in-person event was well organized, clean, enforced mask wearing, etc., then those comments can encourage others to be comfortable with future events. The key takeaway is the power of data. That is truly what can change peoples' views about the success of events.

Consider the old days where post-event surveys were filled out by hand and we'd have rooms filled with boxes of data that may have never been utilized, if you didn't make the time for data entry. Now, with so much technology at our fingertips giving us the power to collect more data than ever before, the pre- and post-event research must be part of your overall event design. Now and into the foreseeable future, we will need to use both pre- and post-event data to design events for efficiency, effectiveness, and attendance.

Looking across event types, including meetings, conferences, recognition events and incentive travel, make sure to account for all of your audience segments, as measurement will be different for each. This needs nuance.

- If one audience is OK with all the elements of their event virtual, you know that event can probably remain virtual.
- If there's another event that's heavily centered around an element that the audience is not satisfied with virtually, you can determine where to invest in hybrid or in-person experiences for them.

According to the 2020 Incentive Travel Industry Index, international travel isn't expected to fully return until 2025. However, domestic and regional travel will recover more quickly as we start to see containment of Covid-19. In the Index, 83 percent of buyers report senior management and other stakeholders remain committed to incentive travel but expect it will need to change to reduce risk. Only 12 percent of respondents think post-Covid incentive travel will be very similar to pre-Covid times, while 23 percent say it will be fundamentally changed, and 65 percent expect it to be moderately different.



# Measuring Hybrid Events: Rethink Audience Segmentation

There's no proven formula for hybrid events. Companies around the world are still experimenting to determine what works — and there will never be only one model that is proven effective for all. You need to approach every event knowing that the format, as well as your measurement tactics, will differ.

Events have always had different segments of attendees: customers, vendors, sponsors, media, analysts, you name it. In addition to those segments, you now also have two broader audience types — in-person and virtual attendees. When you're planning pre- and post-event surveys, you must customize the questions based by segment and type to accurately analyze your event ROI.

For example:

- How engaging was the in-person experience? Or, how engaging was the virtual experience?
- How easy was it to navigate the event and feel comfortable in the physical space? Or, how easy was it to navigate the virtual event platform and feel comfortable using it?



According to a 2020 survey of event marketers conducted by Bizzabo, nearly all (97%) respondents said they expect more hybrid events in 2021 than ever before. Yet 3 in 4 say they've never hosted a hybrid event.



# Measuring Hybrid Events: Impact & Optimization

One10 has a proprietary process for measuring event objectives and relationship strength with an event's audience. There are three important pieces to consider:

- **Event Impact:** It starts with establishing a baseline measurement prior to your event through a survey of attendees, as this enables you to observe improvement and areas to be addressed. Pre- and post-event measurement is the only way to understand the full impact of the event on business objectives and the relationship.
- **Event Optimization:** The next step involves pinpointing the relevance and impact of select elements of an event. For example, did the keynote speaker make a measurable impact? Did the virtual event platform add value? What communications channels were most effective? This analysis will reveal what parts of the event experience contribute the most to the overall objectives of the event — as well as point out the elements that detract. Rank each element of the event experience among others for importance and the likely impact on future business outcomes that drive ROI.
- **Portfolio Optimization:** Now, it's time to allocate your event marketing budget by drilling down what events have the biggest impact on your desired business outcomes. This analysis could optimize a particular type of event across your organization or be broadened to optimize a portfolio of marketing programs with a particular set of customers. (Think answering questions such as: Are we selecting the correct sponsorship opportunities? Are these sponsorships driving desired business outcomes? Should the investment in sponsored events be increased to improve business results?) Especially during this Covid era, it's critical to conduct this analysis to address whether your organization should be putting more budget toward virtual or hybrid events at different scales, or a mix.



## Measuring Event Effectiveness

At One10, we use a proprietary analytical tool called the Relationship Strength Index (rsX<sup>SM</sup>) to evaluate the impact that any given marketing initiative — including events and the elements within them, such as keynote speakers, regional breakouts, networking, entertainment and so forth — has on your relationship with your audience. This tool, based on a 12-question survey to measure trust, alignment, and commitment, also measures the degree to which improved relationships lead to better business outcomes. The average response has proven better at predicting business outcomes than brand satisfaction surveys or Net Promoter Scores, especially when it comes to evaluating event elements and providing guidance for future events based on those outcomes. To learn more about how One10 can implement rsX<sup>SM</sup> to help you determine your events' effectiveness, [contact us](#) today.





# Measuring Hybrid Events: Audience Perspectives



When you're planning a hybrid event, there are many factors to take into consideration for varying types of attendees. Here are some points to think about:

- If Person A is experiencing every element of the event in person, will Person B experience all the same elements, but virtually?
- Will there be parts of the event that are shared — such as an awards ceremony — but certain aspects of this ceremony available only in person (i.e., a post-ceremony networking event) or only available virtually (congratulating winners through private messages)?
- What about people watching on-demand, if you're offering that component? In what ways will the experience satisfy what they're looking for, and what features could you create to add to their experience?



# Measuring Hybrid Events: What's Missing Matters

In measuring the effectiveness of your event design, it's as important to ask not only about an attendee's experiences, but his or her thoughts on not experiencing something as well. Think about the example of watching a championship game. It's great to be there live, in person, experiencing the action — but you miss another big component, the television ads. If you're watching it live on TV, you see the ads but miss the excitement of the crowd and the field. And if you're watching a replay (i.e., the on-demand audience), you're seeing the same game and ads but missing the thrill of watching with the rest of the world — and you already know the outcome before it ends.

This is what's so complicated about hybrid events. It's a mix-and-match game as you ask yourself what your event objectives are, what the quality of each experience type will be and what your audience can tolerate. Being mindful of what you're going to measure, how you measure it and how you report that back in a meaningful way will be key to planning successful hybrid events of the future.



## Designing Effective Questions

A typical event survey will include a variety of multiple-choice questions asking attendees to rate something on a scale of 1 to 10, or “very unlikely” to “very likely.” There’s still a place for these queries, but there’s now also a greater opportunity for the open-ended question. Sometimes, when you include open-ended questions, you’ll see those blank spaces used as a dumping ground for complaints about an event. But you may be surprised at the responses when posing more open-ended questions. Maybe there’s something you didn’t think to ask, but your audience is going to tell you when given the chance. You can also utilize keyword extraction and sentiment analysis tools to accurately summarize the data from open-ended questions, such as pulling out phrases to create word clouds or determining whether the feedback skews positive, negative or somewhere in the middle. The bottom line? Don’t be afraid to open up a metaphorical can of worms with open-ended questions in event surveys. There’s a great chance you’ll gain valuable data that will help you to adjust and refine future events.





# Building your strategy for growth

When it comes to program measurement, the only way you can get strong insights is to not be afraid to ask — and to not be afraid of the feedback you'll get. If you're simply putting out surveys to earn a pat on the back and give your higher-ups positive feedback, you're not really digging deep to accurately measure the results of your event. Remember, if you're used to a high approval rating on events and that number is dipping right now, that's not a bad thing; people (including your attendees) are still adjusting to the new normal. Instead of being scared of dropping ratings, mine your data to discover why they're dropping. You'll get better, faster when you have the measurement to guide your event design.

One10 has experts ready to help you determine how to measure your virtual, hybrid and in-person events to create maximum ROI and bring greater impact to your business. [Learn more](#) about how we can partner with you here.



[www.one10marketing.com](http://www.one10marketing.com)



[info@one10marketing.com](mailto:info@one10marketing.com)



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