

## Virtual Event Tips

Designing virtual events requires the same care and attention as planning in-person events . . . and then some. Get started by watching this short video on [leading meaningful virtual gatherings](#) by Priya Parker, author of *The Art of Gathering*. After watch the video, check out some additional tips from Spirit & Place.

- **Design with intention**

What do you want to accomplish with your virtual event and what kind of experience do you want to create? Consider the following.

- **Platform Options.** What does a Zoom Meeting vs. Webinar allow? Is livestreaming an option? Which platform best serves your audience and the creates the experience you want?
- **Pre-Event Engagement.** Can you build community by providing a video, poem, artwork, or other material for attendees to engage with prior to your event? Can they share their reactions on social media or during the event via chat features?
- **Welcome.** Use a PPT slide deck, with music if possible, for people to look at as they wait for the event to begin. Have clear opening remarks that signal the start of the event, establish the event flow and structure, provide tech and/or accessibility tips for attendees, and invite participation.
  - **Accessibility!** Use clear language, large fonts, and high color contrast in your PPT.
- **Interaction.** What sort of interactive tools does your virtual platform have? (Chat, Q&A, Shared Screens, etc.) How might you use these tools to engage attendees?

- **Communication**

All events begin with the invitation. Keep it simple and easy for attendees to participate.

- **Event Description.** Your event description should clearly state the event is virtual and provide insights on what attendees can expect. For example, will the event be live, on-demand, or both?
- **Confirmation Message.** After registering, attendees should receive a message explaining how and when they can login.
- **Reminders.** Send at least two reminders with the login link. We recommend 48 hours and again 2-6 hours prior to the event. Reiterate what attendees should expect.
- **Immediate Follow-up.** Before attendees leave the virtual event, drop a survey in the chat! Send the link out again via email within an hour of the event's conclusion.
- **Follow-up.** Within a day or two of the event, send attendees a link to its recording (if applicable) and a survey (yes, again!). If the recording will only be available for a limited time, share when it will come down.

- **Prep Work**

Engage your planning team, speakers, and other talent early in the process.

- **Shared Vision & Understanding.** Make sure everyone understands why this event is happening and what its goals are. Solicit feedback on the event flow and how to make the event as engaging as possible. If your speakers have been doing this a lot, they will likely have some great tips!
  - **Build Rapport.** If hosting a panel or moderated discussion, get everyone together a week or two in advance for a conversation to build rapport. (This is advice stand for in-person events too!)
  - **Test the Tech.** Speakers should login 30-60 minutes early to re-acquaint, check their internet connections, and adjust light and sound.
  - **Prep Attendees.** Use your confirmation email(s) and opening remarks to reiterate to attendees what they should expect during the event and how they may participate.
- **Hosting Tips**

As the event creator, it is your job to ensure your speakers and attendees are made to feel welcome and have the tools they need to have a successful gathering.

    - **Names.** Use people's first names as much as possible and encourage others to do so.
    - **Welcome Exercise.** Create an icebreaker (respond live or via chat) and/or centering exercises at the beginning of your event.
    - **Tech Tips.** Remind attendees of basic virtual functions like how to control their view, pin a speaker or ASL interpreter, adjust sound, etc.
    - **Community Agreement.** If using breakout rooms, consider sharing with attendees a set of community agreements to help guide small group conversations.