



What Is a Hybrid Fundraising Event?

The Basics



INTRODUCTION

Hybrid events are a unique way to offer an inclusive experience that allows participants to come together in person or join remotely if they're not comfortable or are not physically nearby. While there is a certain learning curve when it comes to including a virtual component to an event, the benefits far outweigh any challenges. Once you learn how to make the most of your hybrid format, you'll be hosting engaging events in no time!

In this guide, we'll share why hybrid events are here to stay and how you can host an amazing event that gets all of your supporters excited to attend.





Why Hybrid Events Will Remain Relevant

Over the past few years, [virtual events](#) became not only a convenient option but a necessity. When the option to meet face-to-face was no longer available, we all adapted. Eventually, as public health initiatives took place and people began feeling ready to gather in person, hybrid events arose.

Now, with more and more people being both willing and able to gather in person, you might assume that hybrid and even virtual events are on their way out. But, according to a [survey](#) done by etc.venues in the US and UK, **73 percent of event planners now think hybrid events will continue to be more common in the future.**

Events are not the only thing that has largely shifted to virtual or hybrid over the last few years. Many companies now accommodate more remote and hybrid work schedules, which has given people the freedom and the expectation that they can live their lives and work from anywhere without sacrificing the things they love, like the nonprofits they support back home. Because of this, even when health concerns and personal comfort level are not factors in how you plan an event, the physical locations and availability of your supporters may still be an important consideration.

Overall, there are many benefits of hybrid events, including that they:

- **Allow for wider participation.** Even supporters who are sick, concerned about health risks, or simply away on a trip or visiting family can still participate.
- **Can be more convenient.** For global, nation-wide, or regional organizations, your supporters may not always be able to travel to your conferences and events. Allowing for virtual participation helps some participants to forego travel time, which can increase attendance overall.
- **Can reduce costs.** If some of your participants are attending virtually, you may be able to use a smaller venue, order fewer refreshments, or save on material expenses in other ways.
- **Allow for more creativity.** Many in-person events follow the same format. Hybrid events allow for additional creativity as you explore unique formats and activities to engage all participants.

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- **Can increase the chance of getting a highly-coveted speaker or performer.** If you've ever tried to book a highly-requested speaker, you know how hard it can be with their busy travel schedules. Allowing them to perform or speak remotely can greatly increase the chances of them finding the time in their schedule.
- **Are more accessible.** Some physical events exclude differently-abled people. Having a virtual component to your event can allow you to include more people in new ways.
- **Enable more data tracking.** Because participants are using digital formats instead of pen-and-paper, you'll be able to collect and store data more easily.

While many of your supporters will likely be thrilled to get back to gathering in person, continuing to host hybrid events ensures that you can include all of your supporters, regardless of their location, ability, health, or level of comfort. In the same way that you would make your website accessible for all people, a hybrid format is a way to do that with your events!



How to Host a Hybrid Event

Even though hybrid events are a great way to engage more supporters, they do come with their own unique challenges. While it often lowers some costs for actually hosting the in-person portion of the event, it may require an initial investment to ensure that you have the proper technical equipment and software to give your supporters the best experience. It also requires additional strategy and planning to ensure that it's equally engaging for all participants and that your [fundraising plan](#) is adapted to this format of the event.

You'll have to solve some of these challenges, but they shouldn't deter you from hosting hybrid events. To make sure you have all the steps and tips you need to tackle any hurdle, we've outlined the essential steps for before, during, and after your hybrid event.



Before

Most of these steps will be concerned with preparation and planning so that everything goes smoothly on the day of your event.

1. **Plan out the in-person and virtual components for the event.** It's a good idea to get as detailed as possible and determine how you will integrate them so that everyone interacts. Consider livestreaming, having a screen displaying posts in a Facebook Group, a fundraising thermometer, or other interactive elements.
2. **Identify any technology gaps.** This could be physical equipment like screens, cameras, or microphones. It could also be [software](#) like Text-to-Give, mobile bidding, online checkout, etc. If you're using pre-recorded videos of clients, volunteers, leadership, or donor testimonials, you'll need software (and enough time) to record and edit those before your event.
3. **Create a [marketing plan](#) to promote your event.** First and foremost, create a landing page with clear instructions for both components of the event and an easy sign-up. Promote it on social media and in your regular member communications, like email newsletters.

If you're having hosts, guest speakers, or including pre-recorded video segments as part of your event, you'll need to properly prepare for those ahead of time. For in-person speakers, make sure you create scripts for them to follow and do at least one practice walk-through.

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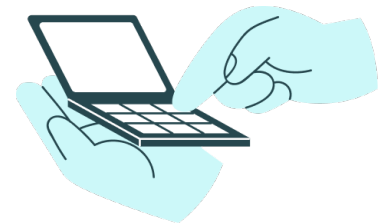




Once you've completed these steps to the highest standards, you'll be more than prepared to host an unforgettable hybrid event for your supporters.

During

We recommend having one person who is in charge of moderating chats, comments, posts, etc. from virtual participants. This will ensure that your virtual participants have an opportunity to participate and don't get forgotten during the hustle and bustle of the event. This way, participants can have their questions answered, their comments can be shared with the in-person group, and you can shout them out for their donations as they come in. This person can also post your org's Text-to-Give number in the chat with trigger words to donate to the cause or bid on auction items that are being featured in the livestream, as well as give time reminders for how long bidding is still open.



You should also encourage online and in-person participants to post in your event Facebook Group using your social media hashtag or to interact with whatever other digital spaces you create for attendees. This creates an opportunity for in-person and virtual attendees to interact with each other's photos, comments, and updates even if they're not all physically together. If you decide to display your Facebook group on a screen, it's also a great way to have a live feed of all participants' activity.

After

At the completion of your successful event, there are a few steps you'll want to take to keep the momentum going and encourage donors to participate again in the future:

- Send out a survey to all participants to gauge their level of satisfaction with their experience.
- Send out thank-yous to all attendees and to all donors.
- Post photos, videos, and highlights from your event to your social media channels, including resharing posts from both virtual and in-person attendees.
- Share a recap of your event in your next newsletter.
- Ship out any auction items that were purchased, if [hybrid auction software](#) was used as part of the hybrid event.

Bonus tip: If any participants shared particularly positive responses in your survey, get their permission to include a quote from them in your recap. This is a great way to organically increase [donor engagement](#). Everyone gets excited to see their name in a newsletter or to have their post reshared!

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3 Types of Hybrid Events to Host

Auction

You're likely familiar with in-person [auctions](#) and perhaps even attended or hosted a virtual auction over the past few years! Hybrid auctions combine some of the best features of virtual auctions, like digital catalogs and mobile bidding, with the socialization and community of in-person auctions.

To successfully host a hybrid auction, you'll want to invest in excellent [virtual auction software](#) that allows you to build beautiful digital catalogs of your auction items for participants to view before and during the auction. As part of your planning process, you'll need to gather all of the items and upload the data, descriptions, and photos to your auction software.

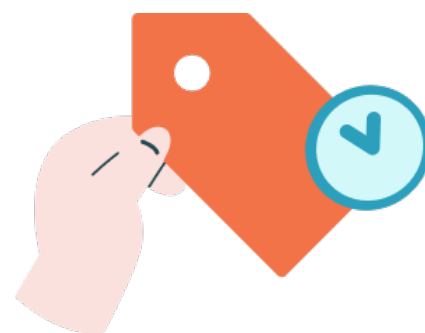
The right software will also enable your guests to bid directly from their mobile devices. Once they've bid, they'll be notified if they won and then be taken to an easy and convenient check-out right on their phone.

Whether all of your attendees are in-person or some are joining virtually, these virtual auction features can't be beat. They add a new level of convenience to any auction event that your attendees will love.

Peer-to-Peer Fundraiser

These types of fundraisers already come in many shapes and sizes. From fun runs to bike-a-thons, knit-a-thons, walk-a-thons, and even more, there's no shortage of ideas when it comes to [peer-to-peer fundraisers](#). That's why it's such a great event to make hybrid.

With a traditional peer-to-peer fundraiser like a fun run, your participants would all gather at the same location and at the same time. When you create a hybrid version of your event, you can allow supporters to participate from wherever they are. Whether they're walking a certain amount of miles in their neighborhood or knitting a certain number of scarves, participants will track their progress, check in virtually, and post updates in a Facebook group to connect with and motivate each other.



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Creating an event Facebook group is one of the most crucial components of a successful hybrid peer-to-peer fundraiser. Without a place to communicate, connect, share updates, and motivate each other, participants won't get that same sense of community and connection that they do with in-person events. Add participants to your Facebook group in advance of your event and begin posting a few weeks before the event to get the ball rolling. Ask questions, share updates, and encourage participant posts.

Viewing Party/Show

Hosting a viewing party for a highly anticipated new movie, speaker, musical act, or even doing a hybrid drive-in movie, can be a great way to bring together families in your community while fundraising.

Once you have a venue to host the in-person portion of your event, you can [sell tickets](#) for in-person attendance and tickets to virtually watch the show through livestream. Depending on the type of viewing/show you are hosting, you could also arrange a Q&A or other discussion at the end to allow in-person and virtual attendees to engage with one another.

If you're hosting watch parties at different houses, you can send out VIP goodie basket) to the watch location hosts. For example, your gift basket could include a bottle of wine, chips and salsa, a handmade bowl, and a personal thank you note

Lastly, on top of ticket sales, you could sell concessions like popcorn and candy at your in-person event to really give people the show-attendance experience! For people attending virtually, they can sign up for an [upgraded ticket](#) type that includes a concession package with popcorn, candy, and drinks that you can send to their homes in advance of the event.



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Best Practices for Hosting Hybrid Events

Provide clear descriptions and details about your event.

It's crucial that you make sure your supporters understand that this is a hybrid event and how to attend both in person or virtually. Especially if you haven't hosted a hybrid event before, it's important to give supporters an idea of what to expect so that they are intrigued and not confused.

On your event landing page, clearly explain how both versions of the event will work and how participants should sign up as an in-person or virtual attendee. It can also be a great idea to include detailed instructions with their [ticket](#) so that the information is readily available to them, even after they leave your landing page.

Make it easy to sign up for both the in-person and virtual components.

As we mentioned, it's important for supporters to understand what they're signing up for. The last thing you want is a ton of people showing up to your in-person event when they all signed up as virtual attendees. Clearly outline the sign-up process for in-person and virtual attendees or provide separate pages.

You can even text donors a sign-up form for the type of attendance they've chosen through SMS if your organization uses nonprofit text messaging as a method of [donor outreach](#). This can give your donors an easy way to have their questions answered. It's also a quick and simple way to stay in touch with attendees leading up to your event.



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Use text-to-give for easy, contactless donations.

[Text-to-give](#) allows for virtual and in-person participants to donate at the same time and in the same way, while also decreasing contact between individuals. You can easily share the shortcode that donors have to text and then your participants will be able to donate at any time during your event without even leaving their seats!

To make [mobile giving](#) more engaging, you can showcase a fundraising thermometer that tallies up your incoming donations. You can also consider shouting out participants who donate, especially the virtual attendees, in order to include them more in your event.

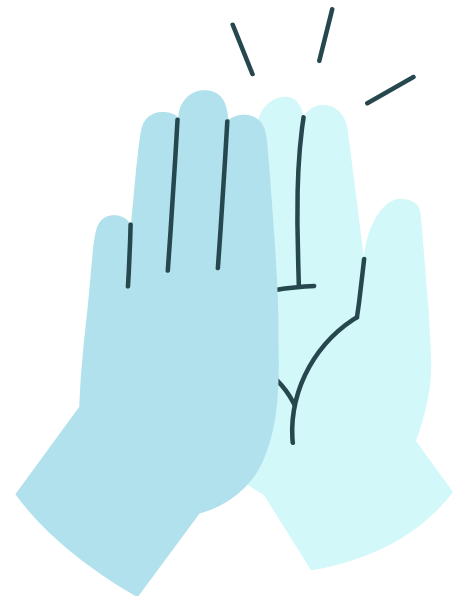
Merge the in-person and virtual experience.

While several ways to include virtual attendees in your event have been mentioned, there is really no limit to what you can do with a little creativity. A few of our go-to ideas for engaging all participants include:

- Livestream the speaker, show, or other entertainment.
- Use a [fundraising thermometer](#) that can be accessed online.
- Display posts in your event Facebook group.
- Host a Q&A for virtual and in-person attendees.
- Shout out virtual attendee donations.

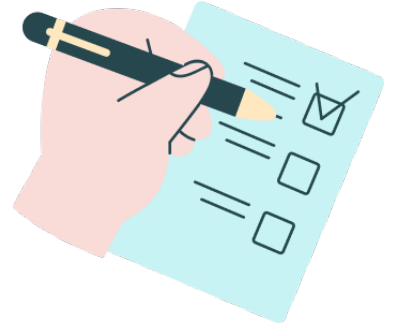
The more hybrid events you host, the more your team will get a sense of what your supporters enjoy. You can get even more creative than this and host an incredible hybrid experience for all of your supporters!

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Hybrid Event Checklist

Ready to host your hybrid event? Use this checklist to ensure your event is a hit!



Event management software



Event page with clear descriptions



Plan for integrating virtual and in-person attendees



Streaming software and technology



Marketing and social media plan



Text-to-give and/or mobile bidding capabilities



Facebook group, social media hashtag or other interactive digital space for during the event



Conclusion

Hybrid events, when done correctly, are a fantastic way to combine the best of both worlds and give all of your supporters the chance to attend and participate. Whether you need virtual auction software, text-to-give capabilities, ticketing, or marketing resources, Snowball has all the tools to help you host an amazing hybrid event. Don't forget to use the essential checklist we've included, in addition to all our tips, to successfully plan a hybrid event that leaves your supporters buzzing!



Get a Personalized Tour

Snowball Fundraising is the all-in-one fundraising platform that makes it easy for your nonprofit to start fundraising today. Stay in the know with guides, articles, news, and tips to help your nonprofit thrive in today's fundraising space.

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