

ONLINE

What are Digital Events?

We live in a global society influenced heavily by technology. New digital alternatives are constantly emerging to improve our communication, problem solving, knowledge exchange and interaction processes. This has made it possible to organize events and exhibitions digitally within an exclusive virtual context or through a “hybrid” approach that mixes live in-person experiences with a complementary online presence.

The traditional concepts of how we interact and relate with each other are constantly evolving thanks to technology. However, it’s important to consider digital interaction is forged by and directed towards humans and thus, it involves emotions. As online event organizers, empathizing with audiences set behind a screen, can have a huge influence on the experience you want to create for everyone.

How to decide when is suitable to go online?

As a few examples, you may be interested on organizing your event online if you want to expand your regional audience’s boundaries, or if you want to enhance the experience by adding the use of a particular tool or software. In some cases, especially in the game and art industries, the main theme of some events may revolve around digital media such as the internet, or immersive technology, either due to the nature of the works or creations involved, or simply because face-to-face interaction is not really necessary for their appropriate display. Other reasons of going online can be the impossibility of your audience to gather physically, wanting an environmentally effective way to bring thousands of attendees to an event from around the globe, keeping a low budget or not really needing to cover the infrastructure, logistics and general organization demands set around a physical venue.

How to find the right online platforms?

It depends on how you are planning your audience’s interaction within your event experience. There are some popular text, voice and video chat alternatives like [Discord](#), [Zoom](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitch](#), [Google Meet](#) or even some social networks as [Instagram](#). Some of these can also provide screen sharing, community moderation, multimedia posts, attendee registration and live streaming functionalities while other platforms like [Facebook](#), [Eventbrite](#), [Meetup](#), [Google Forms](#) or [Typeform](#) can also help with the registration or ticketing processes.

Depending on the activities you are planning into your event’s schedule, there might just be a wide variety of platforms available if you search through the internet. And it’s completely valid to choose on using a set of different platforms depending on what you intend to do. So, for example, it’s possible to have your event’s opening or “kick-off” through a Twitch live stream and after that keeping the main interaction with your audience through Discord for the rest of the activities.

Things to consider when creating one:

Be flexible

Encourage self-care. Don't expect anyone to be in front of a screen twenty-four hours a day throughout the duration of your event. Apply best practices to work online, specially understanding that long periods of screen time may cause eye strain, fatigue, headaches or distract your audience. Event formats like Game Jams often delimit wide "free time" spaces in the schedule to hydrate, stretch, sleep, go for a walk, eat or go to the bathroom. While events like exhibitions often set time periods during which the selected works can be virtually visited and the hours within the audience can expect the curators and organizers to be online for guiding, monitoring, answering questions or engaging with them.

Consider that any planned activity can be categorized as "*Synchronous*" if they require all your audience to be connected simultaneously at a particular moment to participate in it, or "*Asynchronous*" if it's alright for them to connect whenever they can, without altering its experience. Keeping a balanced set of Sync and Async activities may create the flexibility your audience needs to enjoy your online event to the fullest.

Use interactive spaces

There are a set of alternative emerging or existing platforms used creatively in online events that help emulate physical interactions within virtual worlds or internet spaces. Some are based on avatar interactions within already existing multiplayer online games like [Imvu](#), [Animal Crossing](#), [Habbo Hotel](#) and more. While other platforms provide full immersion through Virtual Reality as [VR Chat](#), [AltspaceVR](#) or [TerraVirtua](#). Other great examples of how these kind of spaces have been implemented in online events independently and diversely are the [A MAZE / 2020-2021 Berlin Festival](#) and the [CTM Festival of 2021](#), Andy Baio's [Skittish](#), the ones in [Emily M. Reed's Low Tech Webring](#), Xin Xin's [Togethernet](#), Em Lazer-Walker's [Roguelike Celebration](#), Molleindustria's [Like Like The Online Museum of Multiplayer Art](#), Niall Moody's [Biome Collective Online Gallery](#), Game on! El arte en juego & Women in Games Argentina's [Pase y Cierre la Puerta](#) and more.

Think about the tech-infrastructure

Consider the size of your event and the technical limitations the online platforms may have, is there any maximum user cap? If it's the case, what software may be needed to play the selected games? Do you need a domain or hosting service to run them? Can the server deal with the bandwidth, streaming or download capacity if it gets crowded? Does it include enough accessibility options for your audience? Is it available on different languages? Does it have any regional limitation or require any specific hardware? Is the platform free? If not, you may include the cost to your budget, identifying the benefits of paid plans that you may take advantage of. Finally, it's important to conduct tests of each platform before the opening day of your event.

Be prepared

Depending on the format, digital events can demand more coordination, monitoring and attention from organizers, so it's recommended to have an organizer team to share responsibility and take turns, volunteering or collaboration can be an option and depending on your team size you may also want to define an attendant limit. You can also define a risk assessment plan, an internal schedule and a clear set of roles for your team, one of these can be the role of "Technical support" that may help, manage or guide your audience through the experience and the use of the platforms of your event.

Communicate

Keep a private communication channel with your team, be aware and collectively inform any noticed concern or issue during the event and try to solve it together. Remember interactions create complexity and this applies to online events as well. Before the start of your event, inform the schedule of your event to your audience, mention if any specific requirements may be needed to run the platforms, or if a microphone or camera will be needed.

Get creative and have fun!

Having fun needs to be the most important thing of your event, and there are less restraints in a digital spaces to do so thanks to technology. You can plan surprises for your audiences through your schedule. The previously mentioned interactive spaces are also an attractive gamified alternatives for having online ice breakers or breakout rooms, socializing or engaging in a fun and creative way. With previous consent, you could also ask for pet pics, selfies or have any other social group dynamic or interaction. Don't underestimate any opportunity to network and have fun with your audience.

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