



The Ultimate Guide to Hybrid Events

Use this strategy guide to get the best tips and takeaways for hosting a successful hybrid event.



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What Is a Hybrid Event?	4
Won't a Virtual Event Compete With the Onsite Event?	8
4 Brand-Building Benefits of Hybrid Events	9
What It's Like to Experience a Hybrid Event	10
9-Point Hybrid Event Checklist	14
Hybrid is Here	15

Introduction

In 2020, the events industry transformed overnight to virtual, but conversations about the future are already happening now. Event leaders are already considering the long-term impact of COVID-19 and how the future of events must adapt to how their attendees experience the world. Many events will remain successfully virtual. Others will return to gathering in-person at physical venues. But most events will be both. Most events will be hybrid.

In fact, in a recent survey by [Freeman Data Solutions](#), 78% of 20,491 brand marketers surveyed agree that moving forward, in-person events will pivot to hybrid models.

So what do hybrid events look like? Even more, what do *world-class* hybrid events look like? This whitepaper not only outlines tips and best practices from hybrid event experts but also provides the strategies and tools for today's event organizers to get started with everything they need to plan and execute a successful hybrid event.



Hybrid events reshape what it means to be at an event, as attendees can now have the same experience onsite or virtually. They make it so that an audience you normally couldn't reach becomes easily reachable, and we're seeing organizations around the world from New Zealand to Germany discover what it means to unlock an entirely new audience for their existing events.



Franz-Joseph Schrepf

Head of Partnerships at Hopin

What Is a Hybrid Event?

The first generation of online events simply translated the physical stage into a streaming experience for online attendees. While this has served as a valuable stopgap in the move to more accessible digital media, it's not a true event experience.

Hybrid events use community-enabled technology to actually re-create the onsite event virtually, with all of the opportunities, experiences, and benefits of the in-person event.

The events industry began offline by design, and had been slowly testing out a virtual component over the last ten years. The success of hybrid events since the beginning of 2020 tells me that events will never be exclusively offline again. It's simply better for everyone – the attendee, the sponsor, the speaker, and the organizer – which is why we are convinced the future of the world is hybrid.



David Aubespín

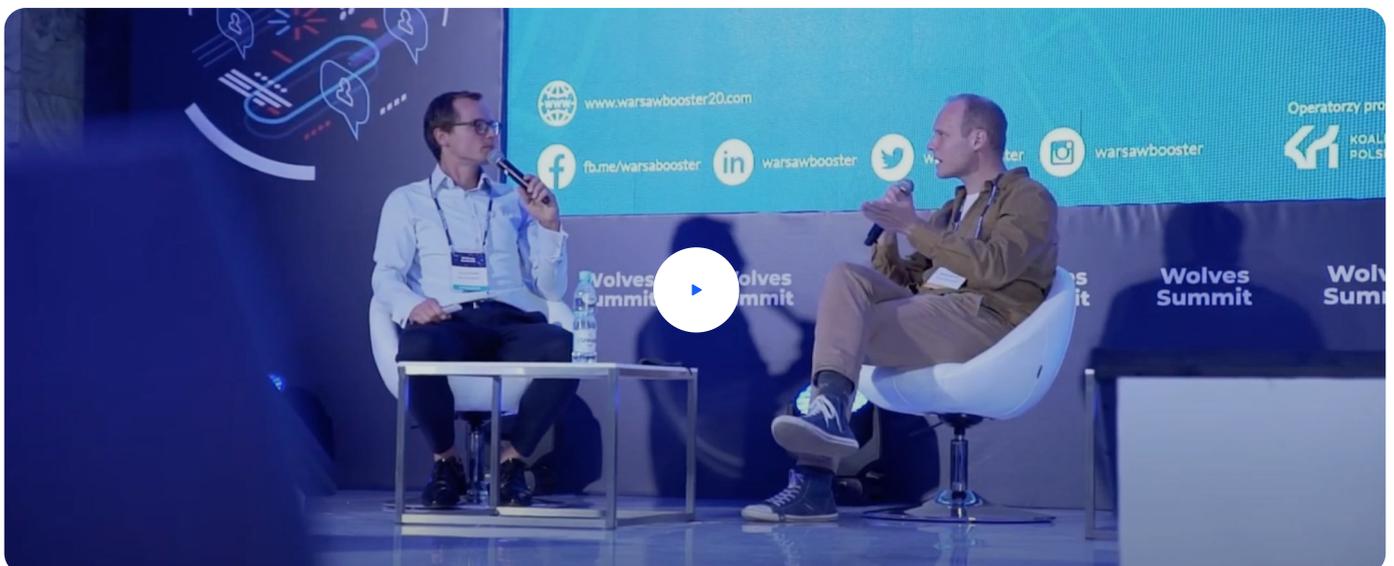
Head of Hybrid at Hopin

Hopin seamlessly connects onsite and virtual participants, providing a similar experience to each kind of attendee. Attendees can now attend events they might never have been able to attend in-person, increasing the range of the people, messages, products, and philosophies featured in the event by an order of magnitude.



Enrico Dressler

Managing Director at SmartEvents



Hopin customer Wolves Summit hosted a hybrid event in October with over 300 attendees gathering in-person and social distancing, while over 800 participants attended virtually via Hopin.

There were both virtual and onsite speakers who presented content simultaneously. One of the highlights of the event was the 1:1 matchmaking between startups and investors.

Wolves Summit has hosted over 20 events on Hopin, totaling 19,947 participants from 80 countries who've connected in 33,726 one-on-one meetings.

From this one event, Wolves Summit booked six more hybrid events that it will be hosting for clients on Hopin.

Traditionally, our Poland-based event attracts delegates from the central eastern european region. Since moving to a hybrid model, we've had speakers from Singapore to San Francisco and attendees from New Zealand and China. We've literally expanded our reach into a truly global audience in about three months, which would have taken us 6 years pre-COVID or purely as a physical event.



Michael Chaffe

Vice President, Wolves Summit

One best practice for hybrid connection is Hopin's Networking feature. Event organizers can customize how attendees engage with each other, facilitating open and targeted networking between virtual and onsite attendees. To do this, organizers can set the matchmaking to the following combinations in the Networking tab of their event dashboard:

Virtual + Virtual

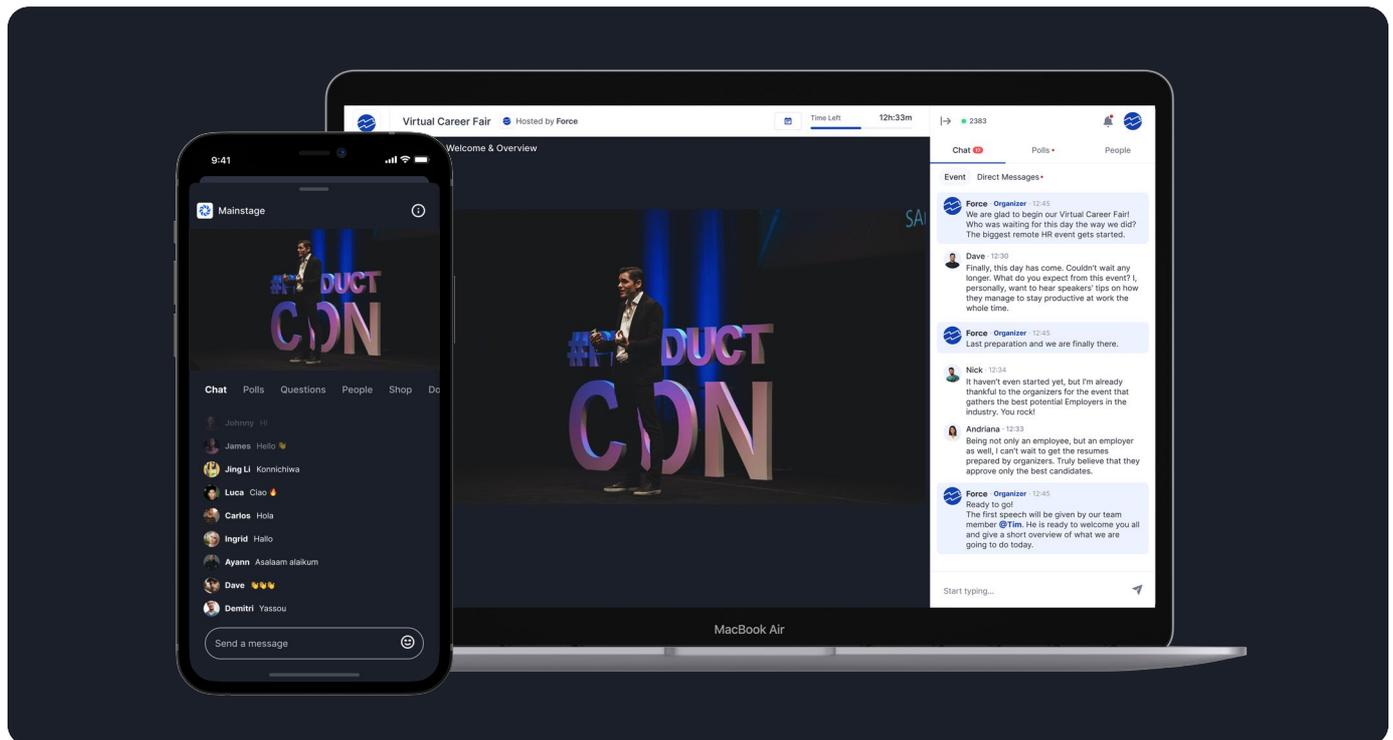
Virtual + Onsite

Onsite + Onsite

Onsite + Virtual

[Select Tickets]

This combination of in-person and virtual events is essential for companies navigating the push and pull between all-online and all-virtual events – hybrid events offer a flexible middle ground between the two that maximizes the benefits of both.



While event organizers new to hybrid events might worry that creating a hybrid event will double their workload or dilute the value of a longstanding onsite tradition, in reality that is not the case. A hybrid event simply takes the onsite event and enhances it with a comprehensive virtual experience that extends your event's legacy.

With Hopin, we're able to reach geographies and emerging tech ecosystems we weren't able to reach before, which opens us up to have meet-ups and pitch offs in locations that are not feasible for us to travel to for whatever reason.

Not only that, but the amount of information and the data that we get from the platform is critical. It helps us learn how to get better, and how to make better connections between our attendees. Physical and in-person events will come back for TechCrunch, but everything moving forward will have this virtual layer on it.



Joey Hinson

Director of Operations at TechCrunch

Note: The **first ever virtual TechCrunch Disrupt** took place on the Hopin Platform in September 2020.

This expansion into a virtual experience ends up benefiting everyone involved in the conference:

- ✓ Organizers and sponsors can reach a significantly larger, **more engaged** audience
- ✓ Attendees have more options in people to meet, content to learn, and even events they can attend
- ✓ Speakers can expand their reach and fit more engagements into their schedules

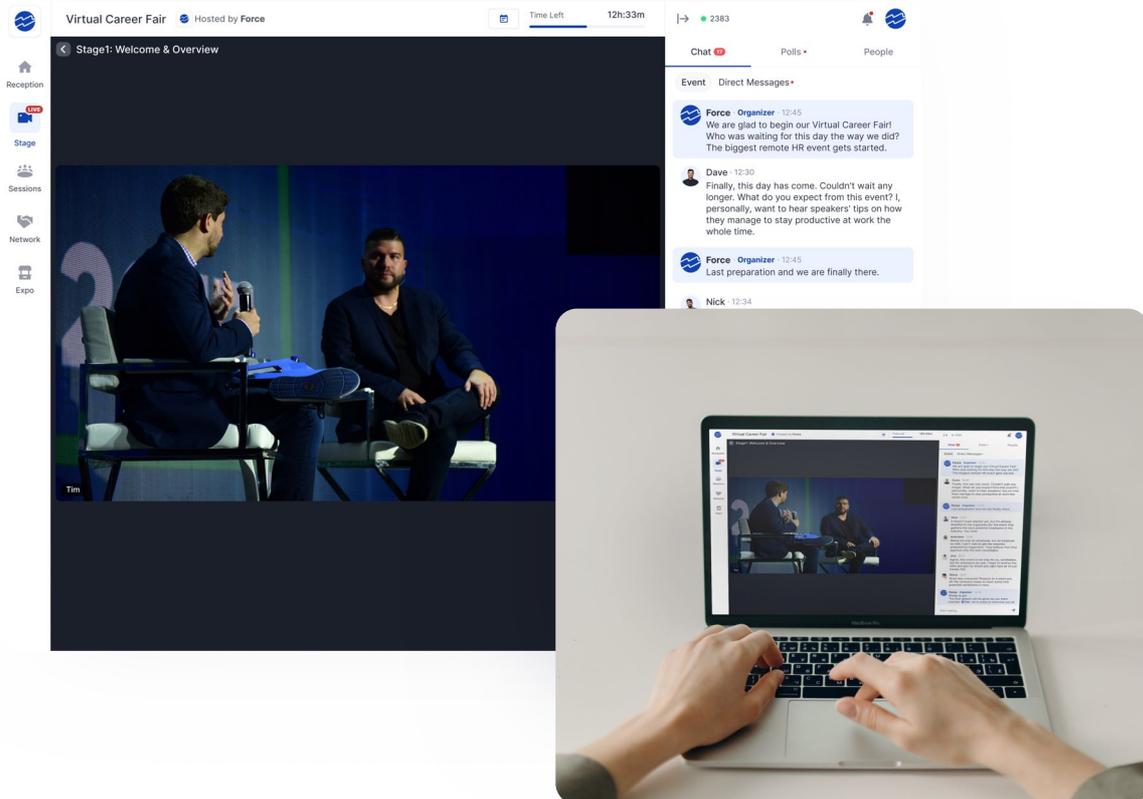
In fact, one event sponsor who regularly sponsored a physical annual event in San Francisco every year found they were able to capture almost nine times the number of qualified leads in a virtual event.

Hybrid events remove limits. They remove limits from the event itself, enabling tens of thousands of people to experience a speaker or presentation. They remove limits from the attendees, who can now participate in conferences regardless of time or location. And they remove limits from sponsors, speakers, and organizers, who can access a virtually unlimited global audience.



Johnny Boufarhat

Founder and CEO of Hopin



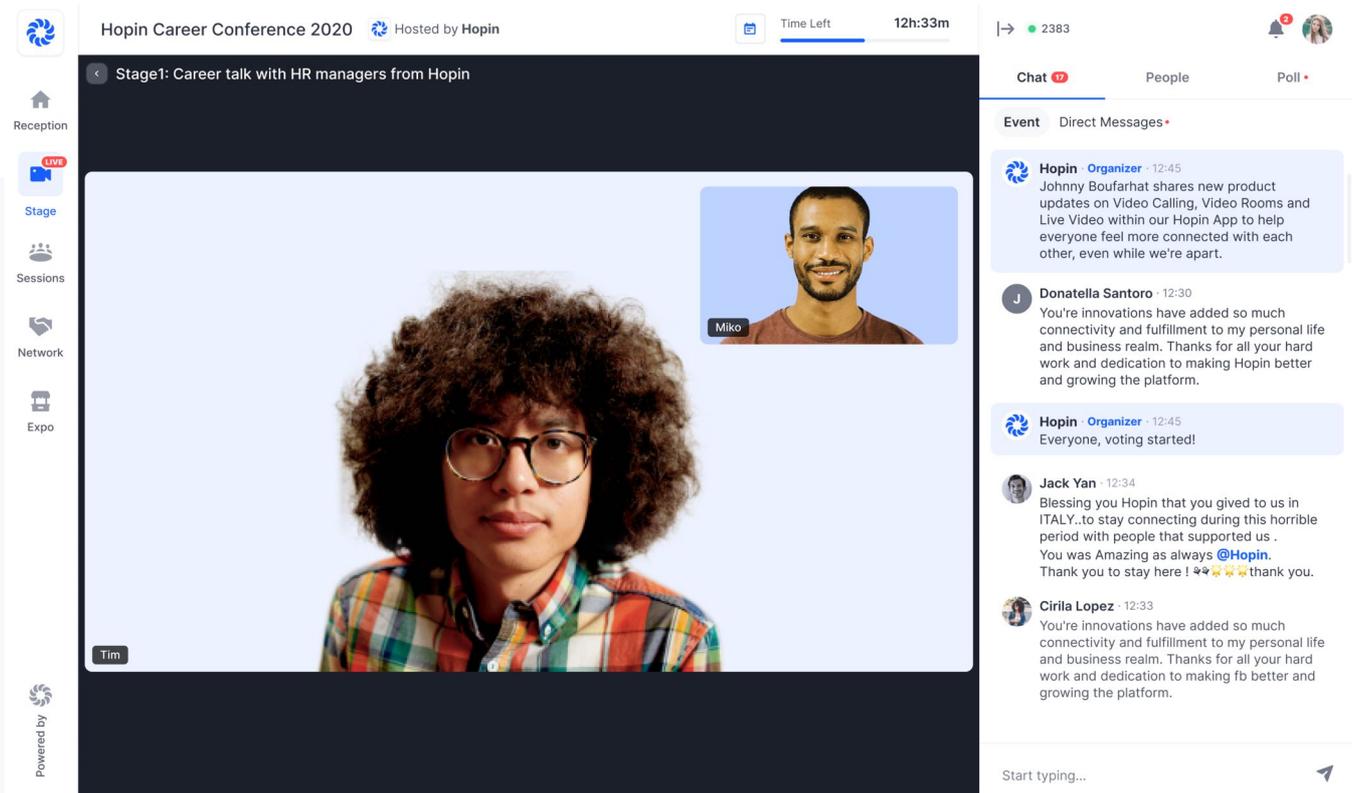
Won't a Virtual Event Compete With the Onsite Event?

For some event organizers, creating a hybrid event feels counter-intuitive – why create a virtual event that competes with your onsite event? But rather than competing, a hybrid experience supplements an onsite event and widens the potential audience, providing opportunities for meaningful engagement that could not be done with a physical or virtual event alone.

Event organizers that might otherwise be limited to 1,000 or 10,000 attendees because of geographic location and venue size find they can easily accommodate and capture the interest of 5-10x that audience size virtually – and event sponsors are able to amplify their visibility to a global digital audience.

What about ticket sales? If you're concerned your virtual event might cannibalize revenue from your in-person event, here are some strategies that have worked for Hopin organizers:

- ✓ **Advertise at the same price.** Let attendees choose how they want to attend your event and use the same price to communicate that the value they'll receive is the same.
- ✓ **Campaign for local attendees.** Segment your promotions by location, making tickets to the physical event only available to your local city, while offering international attendees the virtual event tickets.
- ✓ **Set timed sales periods.** Sell onsite tickets until they're sold out, then offer online tickets.
- ✓ **Create bonuses for either onsite or online attendees.** Offer VIP interaction or upgrades for attendees that travel to the event or that buy a higher value virtual ticket.



A view of a live Hopin event

4 Brand-Building Benefits of Hybrid Events

In the case of hybrid events, bringing a true live event experience into a virtual format removes the limits and inconveniences that have prevented attendees from fully participating in these events.

Here are four of the most important long-term outcomes of a world where **hybrid events are the new normal**:



Inclusivity

Minority populations such as women and people of color often have less flexibility to travel and attend events in person, whether it's from **financial limitations, personal and family life limitations**, or even the risk of **increased violence when travelling**. And when we consider the diversity of speakers and experts, **the problems only compound**.

Hybrid events come with a default to inclusivity, allowing populations that otherwise might face disproportionate barriers to attendance or accepting speaking engagements to participate in the full experience.

During the course of a hybrid event, a sponsor could be represented by employees from 20 different countries, not to mention multiple speakers from multiple departments.



Michael Chaffe
Vice President of Wolves Summit



Accessibility

While venues in the United States are subject to the Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Act, it's not always possible to make every part of an onsite event accessible to every person who wishes to attend. As a result, individuals with disabilities have often been forced to opt-out of the inconvenience of traveling and the potential discomforts of an onsite event.

Hybrid events open up a world of information and community to individuals with disabilities, introducing as much as **15% of the global population** to opportunities that before now were quite literally not accessible.

Hybrid events make it possible to accommodate people who are otherwise limited by transportation, finances, physical limitations, or life circumstances, which infinitely increases the potential footprint of the event and the organizations associated with it.



Brian Asher
Customer Success Account Manager at Hopin



Sustainability

Many speakers and conference attendees today have committed to lowering their carbon footprint. But because sustainability efforts often take the form of limiting personal travel and not encouraging mass travel on behalf of others, it can be challenging for brands, speakers, and individuals to participate in a traditional onsite conference.

Hybrid events allow conference attendees to make informed choices about where and when they travel. When a conference takes place nearby where sustainable and low-impact travel is possible, they can attend in-person. And when a conference takes place outside a safe traveling distance, they can participate fully without missing anything.

* Indicates Hopin

PRO FEATURE



Convenience and Flexibility

The profile of the modern event attendee no longer resembles the single or breadwinning individual with the resources and time to travel long distances to attend conferences in person. Instead, **the modern worker is increasingly younger**, and far more interested in work-life balance and building a healthy, professional career **around their own schedule and travel preferences**.

Hybrid events perfectly cater to this modern attendee persona, providing unprecedented convenience and flexibility in how they attend events. Whether an attendee wants to attend the full event in person, attend some days in person and some virtually, or entirely virtually, it remains valuable for everyone.

Smart people are also busy people – they don't always want to be on a plane traveling to and from an event. While a certain kind of person will always want to attend face-to-face, there's another kind of person who's completely bought into the benefit of having options.



Carlene Martin
Event Management Specialist at Paxable

What Hybrid Events Are Like for Organizers

As more event organizers explore the potential of hybrid events, it will be increasingly important to understand how the pieces of the puzzle fit together to form a new, immersive event experience.

Here's a 360 look at the hybrid event experience when using a platform like Hopin:



Organizer

Organizers can learn more in [Hopin's User Manual](#)

Before Event

- ✓ Organize your team into a project management tool with digital to-do lists
- ✓ Assign separate tasks to prepare for the onsite event and the virtual event
- ✓ Provide "coach kits" for attendees, speakers, and sponsors to guide them through how your unique event experience works

Networking

- ✓ Set up the rules for attendees to network with each other on and off the Hopin platform
- ✓ Identify appropriate breaks in the schedule to encourage participation in networking

During Event

- ✓ Assign teams to areas of the event, such as Stages, Sessions, Chat, Registration, Expo, etc.
- ✓ Broadcast onsite and virtual speaker presentation to all attendees
- ✓ Communicate with your team to coordinate the run of show
- ✓ Identify and segment attendees who will be present physically and who will attend virtually so guests can know what to expect when they network with each other

After Event

- ✓ Send feedback survey to attendees, segmenting onsite and virtual participants
- ✓ Share event recordings as a bonus or package them into an alternative product

It's an incredible point of value for event organizers that hybrid events build on the onsite event to reach large numbers of people who can view the content online. Your presentations and booths don't have to exist only in mind and memory – now you can record those session experiences and send content home with attendees that will last for a very long time.



Brian Asher

Customer Success Account Manager at Hopin

What Hybrid Events Are Like for Attendees



Attendee

Attendees can learn more in the [Hopin Attendee Experience Video](#)

Before Event

- ✓ Purchase a ticket with your preferred level of access (onsite or virtual)
- ✓ Stay tuned for emails updates about sessions and speakers
- ✓ Read or watch walkthrough instructions on how to get the most out of the event, whether you're online or onsite

Networking

- ✓ Dive into the Hopin match-making feature, which can pair you with event attendees online and off
- ✓ Chat without interrupting speakers onsite
- ✓ Use your personal device to network with event attendees online and off

During Event

- ✓ Look out for your conference agenda and swag onsite via email, or [inside your virtual venue](#)
- ✓ Participate in the onsite reception or in a specific online room
- ✓ Experience intimate, virtual fireside chats for close-ups with both onsite or virtual speakers and panels
- ✓ Attend a session in person knowing you can access another session at the same time by replay later

After Event

- ✓ Make your opinion known by providing your feedback in an online survey
- ✓ Anticipate personalized follow up based on how you engaged in the event
- ✓ Check event materials to find out if you'll have access to event recordings

Hybrid events empower all attendees to participate in the event fully, regardless of how comfortable they are speaking up or what language barriers are in place, which increases the quality and the diversity of the Q&A sessions, networking, and the event itself.



David Aubespain

Head of Hybrid at Hopin

Tickets Free

Explorer Free
 Conference-only pass

Student \$10.00
 Conference and workshops pass exclusively for students

Pathways—Extended Early Bird Pricing \$99.00
 Conference and workshops pass; early bird pricing is extended to December 31. (After early bird, Pathways ticket pricing is \$199.)

What Hybrid Events Are Like for Speakers



Speaker

Speakers can learn more in the [Hopin Speaker Tutorial](#)

Before Event

- ✓ Confirm if you'll speak virtual or onsite, on the main stage or side stage
- ✓ Take a tour of the venue in person or through a video walkthrough and get familiar with where you're speaking
- ✓ Decide if you want to be "semi-live" and stream a pre-recorded video into the event, which can allow you to better manage your speaking schedule

Networking

- ✓ Take a break from the in-person networking and jump into the Hopin networking room to match with an attendee for a set amount of time
- ✓ Spend time with other speakers backstage or in a speakers-only "green room"
- ✓ Respond to direct messages at the event and, if interested, accept video call invitations from guests

During Event

- ✓ Present onsite as normal and have your content broadcasted to virtual attendees
- ✓ Remember to address both your onsite audience and your virtual audience
- ✓ Interact with your audience and answer questions using the interactive chat feature
- ✓ Poll your virtual listeners during your talk to enhance engagement and learn more about them in real-time

After Event

- ✓ Leverage the professional video footage of presentation for future use
- ✓ Make the most of the event's global exposure by reaching out to new fans and followers who engaged with your content online while attending the event

One of the most wonderful things about Hopin is that it immediately expands an event's capacity for diverse speakers and large numbers of attendees. A traditional event might be capped at 1200 for the size of the venue, or limited to the International speakers it can attract because of the travel and cost to get there. But with a hybrid event, there's almost no limit to the talent you can attract and the number of people who can participate.



Carlene Martin

Event Management Specialist at Paxable



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Rudolph Mayfield
Software Engineer

[in](#) [t](#) [@](#) [+](#)

What Hybrid Events Are Like for Sponsors



Sponsor

Sponsors can learn more in the [Hopin Vendor Tutorial](#)

Before Event

- ✓ Explore hundreds of ways to brand and add targeted messaging to the design of the virtual and onsite event
- ✓ Make your logo a GIF on the event landing page to attract more attention
- ✓ Work with the event organizer to do a practice run-through of your virtual booth to understand the full capabilities
- ✓ Add a computer or two to your onsite booth so that your team can check messages and interact with virtual visitors in between onsite visitors
- ✓ Bonus: [Download our free guide to six-figure online sponsorships](#)

Networking

- ✓ Invite attendees to your booth by dropping the URL in chat — a shortened hashtag link will appear and send traffic to your booth in one click
- ✓ Share your team's schedule of when the booth will be live to receive guests and provide demos and answer questions
- ✓ Brainstorm raffles and virtual swag for attendees who interact, refer your booth or take you up on your call to action

During Event

- ✓ Be available to event attendees with a dual exposition experience – one booth onsite and one booth accessible online with live or pre-recorded video content
- ✓ Explore the interactive elements of your booth to capture valuable data online and offline, enabling more personalized follow-up campaigns
- ✓ Consider staffing your virtual booth with a diverse array of employee representatives

After Event

- ✓ Send personal follow-ups based on detailed lead data
- ✓ Capture insights about your audience from other event data such as poll results, demographics, participation rates, and attendee movement

Hybrid events welcome more possibilities for event sponsors presenting virtually, as potential customers are just a small step away from visiting the website, engaging with product placements, and gathering more information via social media. The alternative is an onsite-only exhibition booth where you have to convince a potential customer to take the extra step to engage with digital marketing elements.



Enrico Dressler

Managing Director at SmartEvents

9-Point Hybrid Event Checklist for Event Professionals

Here are the top ten most important considerations you'll want to take into account as you transform your onsite event or virtual event into a hybrid event:

- 1 Create a plan to facilitate intentional attendee networking opportunities in the 2-3 weeks leading up to the event.
- 2 Identify virtual equivalents of onsite events you'd like to include and assign responsibilities out to your team.
- 3 Work with a graphic designer to organize visual co-branding onsite and in the Hopin platform, and to highlight the best spots for for video or picture selfies of onsite attendees.
- 4 Connect with a video production team to gather the right technical equipment and create a plan to record and stream content from onsite to virtual and virtual to onsite (i.e., on TVs).
- 5 Identify which speakers will appear onsite and which will present virtually, factoring in that virtual speaking engagements may have an impact on speaker fees and unlock very high profile speakers.
- 6 Select opportunities to highlight online attendees throughout the onsite event, such as real-time analytics updates or merging onsite and virtual participation with tools like Kahoot and Slido.
- 7 Use a tool like Loom to create video walkthroughs of how your hybrid event will work, like these examples from [AGG 2020](#), [#celebrate Online](#), and [Chicago AMA](#).
- 8 Schedule 30-60 minutes of open networking and exploration before kickoff to give your audience an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the event, introduce themselves, and build excitement before your welcome keynote on Stage.
- 9 Create a helpful [holding screen](#) to display when nothing is streaming on the stage, which might include instructions, reminders, sponsored shout-outs, and more.

My advice for hybrid event organizers is to try to merge the online and offline worlds as much as humanly and logistically possible. At Wolves Summit, we made sure that our partners with physical booths and expo guests also had a Hopin booth. This allowed sponsors to have one of their team stationed at the physical booth alongside a virtual counterpart who could speak with people both online and in-person, and provided maximum engagement for all of the attendees, booth partners, and sponsors.



Michael Chaffe

Vice President at Wolves Summit

Hybrid is here.

If you remember one idea from this whitepaper, let it be this: New technology powers new forms of events. This means there is an enormous opportunity for the pioneers of hybrid events. As the current environment continues to have its effect on the events industry, there is a world of innovation ready and waiting. It's already happening. At Hopin, we see it every day. New styles, strategies, and techniques across all types of events. The way people interact—in-person, virtually, and everything in between — is changing.

At Hopin, we're building for hybrid. We're excited to introduce products and features specifically for hybrid events. We can't give away specifics yet but get ready to see events that are more accessible, more engaging, and more sustainable for everyone — both online and offline.

With a hybrid approach, more people are able to attend and interact in the way that's best for them. This flexibility is key. We're focused on crafting a seamless experience where the value is the equal for all attendees — virtual or in-person.

"The future of events" gets mentioned a lot, but to truly understand the future of events you need to first understand the future of attendees. This is where Hopin is pouring engineering resources into.

Hybrid creates a world without limits. It's an event format that invites attendees, speakers, sponsors to freely engage with concepts, communities, and conferences at global scale. As we move forward and innovate in this space together with our organizers, there is a lot to uncover and learn. But our mission remains the same. Better connections for a better planet.

Only as the world becomes safer will in-person events return. It will be slow. It will take time. Potentially years. Until then, events are getting scheduled and organizers are offering both online and an offline version for all attendees to feel comfortable. This is the new reality of events. And it's already happening now. Hybrid is here. Are you ready for it?



Get in touch.

Let's discuss what Hopin can do for you.



The events platform.

Trusted by top global organizations, Hopin enables event planners to delight their attendees, speakers, and sponsors with an interactive and engaging virtual venue tailored for their events.

Contact us

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