Taking Events Online
Hello!

We know a lot of people are exploring taking their events online. So we created this playbook as a guide to navigate available Google resources and to share some principles on how to think experientially about your digital event.
Here’s the thing ...

This guide is

- Tips and tricks to think about how events should change if they are digital only
- Some basic info on Google tools that can help
- Some basic guidance on content and comms

This guide is not

- A how-to manual for producing a digital event
- Set in stone
- A complete formula for every event
- Inclusive of all events and experiences
Here’s what we’ll be covering
Consider why users are attending your event. Prioritize key content and takeaways. Choose the platform or channel that best suits your event’s needs for distribution.
Design and layout can make a huge difference in creating a set that feels inviting and informative, and — most importantly — makes your content sing.
Consider interactivity and engagement in every content-making decision. Simply live streaming your originally planned event may not make the best online experience.
Considerations are different when planning an event online.
Let’s get started
Approach
First choose which type of content is right for your event.
Online event approach

There are many digital content options, each with their own pros and cons. It’s important to start by picking the one that’s best for your event.

Real Time or True Live

Events are directly broadcast, or "live streamed," as they are happening, without opportunity for editing.

Rebroadcast or Live Playback

Events are recorded, minimally edited, and broadcast at a later time, but they may appear to be happening in real time.

Prerecorded

Events are captured, edited, and shared for viewing later. This type of content can be premiered or made available online to view at any time via video on demand (VOD). Content can be made to appear live, even if it’s not, offering more flexibility.
Brevity is your friend

Consider things from a viewer’s perspective.
Viewing an event at home — no matter which approach you take — won’t be the same experience as viewing it live and in person. The more concise and direct your content can be, the better.

General timing guidance for an event with multiple components:

- Keep keynotes to 30 minutes or less.
- Don’t ask anyone to tune in for more than 3 hours, max.
- Keep Q&As to 20 minutes or less.
- Keep breakouts or deep dives to 10 to 20 minutes.
Is there a contingency plan for slower streaming? Varying Wi-Fi speeds should also be considered when creating online content. Can users dial in or watch later? Consider post-event wrap-up materials that let viewers revisit key highlights. That could mean creating a playlist for viewers to watch later.

Example of post-event playlists

This year’s event season was Relive the magic now! Subscribe to Google Developers →
https://goo.gl/developers
Platforms
So you’ve got your content approach. Now it’s time to choose the platform that will make it sing.
Hangouts Meet

Works well for team meetings or workshops where direct interactivity is required.

Can support real-time broadcast for up to 250 viewers, but make sure to test for bandwidth limitations beforehand.

Be mindful of audience management.

Facilitating conversation and turn-taking requires extra consideration virtually compared to in person.
Hangouts Meet
Live Stream

Works well for real-time, one-way streams.

Supports real-time broadcast of up to 100,000. Viewers and speakers can be in multiple locations. The one-way stream means viewers won’t interrupt as they come and go, but any interactivity would need to happen on a different platform.

Keep in mind, all viewers must be on the same G Suite account.

All participants are required to have the same corporate account, so this is likely best for internal events.

Learn more
Platforms ➝ Tools of the trade

YouTube Live Stream

Works well for large reach, external events.

Supports broadcast and engagements with chat, subscribe, and comments. It’s best used for truly live content and live playback content.

Be mindful of customizations before going live.

Graphics, sound, and customizations must be included prior to streaming.
YouTube Premieres

Lets viewers experience new content together.

It’s great for turning the release of prerecorded content into an “event” without the ephemeral nature of real-time content.

Keep in mind branding opportunities on- and off-platform.

This tool lives on the YouTube platform, so if you wanted to brand the space around the video, you would need a custom website in which to embed it.
YouTube Channel

Works well for video on demand (VOD).

Also a great place to host content after any live events.

Example of ways to use YouTube channel and features:

- Pretaped YouTube Video
- YouTube Playlists
- Dedicated Event YouTube Channels

Learn more
Design + Setup
Going online means bringing your company design & branding into a digital space.
Look & feel

Consult your brand’s design guidelines when thinking of building your set or establishing graphics. It is important to remain consistent in your approach to physical and digital design.
Graphic identity

A consistent graphic identity that matches the mood and tone of your event can keep the narrative and theme of your event cohesive. Graphic identity examples:

- A consistent color palette
- A thematic set
- Pop-ups and titles

For example, Google branding
The power of motion

Eye-catching design in broadcast packages and motion templates can make content stand out, and be more engaging and ownable to the brand.

Here’s how YouTube Music used a motion template to tie footage from New Year’s Eve back to the brand.
Consider what works for your brand

At Google, we start with a simple set, then build from white to bring content center stage and make graphics and presenters pop.
Design + Setup ➝ Tactics

Optimize for mobile

Smartphones are now the primary device chosen globally to watch online video. Whatever your setup, design with a smaller screen in mind.
Scrappy sets

Even a modest setup can feel professional. This series was shot with four Pixels, a white cyc (or seamless backdrop), and a sound and lighting person. The entire production fits in a hotel room.

Tips:

- Where possible, ask on-screen presenters to wear solid colors.
- Ensure lighting is set up for all skin tones to be accurately represented.
Fun on set

Small touches like plants, fun props, and custom backdrops can make a simple setup less sterile. And why stop at a white cyc? Try switching up the location if a different environment helps tell your story.

Being unabashedly scrappy with your set can add charm.
Presentation delivery

If you can’t have an audience, having your speaker interact with the crew or person behind the camera is a great way to add a sense of levity and humanity.

In this video, the presenter chats with someone off camera.

Example video from Think with Google
Interactivity + Engagement
Now think about how to keep viewers interested throughout your online event.
If you’re going to go live, give viewers a reason to tune in live. Being part of a real-time conversation makes events exciting and engaging. The following tactics can help up the engagement factor.

- Q&As
- Chat functionality
- Social media shout-outs
- Real-time competitions
- Gamification
Use inclusive practices to help people fully experience your event. Consider the following:

- Avoid strictly visual, noncontextual language, like “over here in this area.” Not all viewers can see slides or videos.
- In meetings, think about multisensory cues for turn-taking.
- Use real-time closed captions if available on your platform, and/or get a remote sign language interpreter.
- Learn more about Hangouts Meet Accessibility and YouTube Live Captions.
Maintain interest and attention with visually interesting interstitials that break up the content using:

- Typography and titles
- Graphics and animations
- Photos and videos
When setting up an engaging and inclusive event, it’s important to establish participation ground rules up front for Q&As, demos, and breakouts, so your audience knows how and when to chime in.

**For example:**

- Direct participants on where and how to ask questions.
- Let participants know at the event’s start if there will be a live, structured Q&A at the end.
If you need to be super scrappy, own it. A video chat interview can make for an impactful and authentic film with simple add-ons, such as:

- Name and title overlays
- Colorful GVC backdrops
- Playful graphics
- Realistic UI representation

Here’s an example using playful graphics
An interactive game is a fun way for people to interact with each other remotely and an opportunity to entertain idle viewers before your live stream starts.

At Google I/O 2018, we created World Draw,* an interactive game where viewers in the amphitheater joined remote viewers to draw a world together.

Example video from Think with Google, where the featured presenter interacts off-camera.
FAQs
Whew! That was a lot. But don’t worry, there are more resources that can help.
What should I say if an event is changing course?

Attendee comms:

- One of the most important elements in adapting to change is clear, concise communication.
- Be transparent.
- Communicate regularly, but don’t overdo it.
- Set up a comms channel for questions.
How can I promote my event?

Before the event

- Post staggered reminders counting down to your event. Consider user behavior depending on the platform you’re using. For example:
  - **Social handles:** Post about your event often, but don’t overdo it.
  - **E-mail:** After an initial invitation, aim for one or two reminder emails max, one 48 hours prior and one on the day of the event.

- Share your streaming link with your attendees 48 hours prior to going live. Anything earlier than that is likely to be lost or forgotten.

- Create easily shareable visual assets (for example, a video trailer or poster) to post on your social media accounts.

During the event

- Create highlight clips during the event while it’s still live to promote across different channels, like your social media handles.

- If this is an external event, create an official hashtag for the event to promote across networks, track, and engage.

After the event

Post an archive of the live event soon after completion. Create a video on demand playlist so attendees (and others) can rewatch and share out content.
What are the legal considerations?

Don’t forget to reconsider your legal process if you are broadcasting to a wider audience.

Clearances

Music or other third-party content (like clips, photos, logos, video, etc.) used for your event must be cleared for all of the uses where your content will air for however long you’ll be using the content.
Thanks!