

NACCHO 360: Building a Powerful Virtual Experience in 30 Days



Switching from an in-person event to a virtual event is not simply transferring it to an online platform.



To be successful online, events must completely deconstruct their in-person experiences and build a virtual experience from the ground up. Sound time consuming? Definitely. Impossible? No. Partnering with a team of experts that understand how to bring value to attendees online can streamline the whole process.

With an in-person event planned for July 7–9, 2020 and no sign of COVID-19 pandemic subsiding in a way that made it safe to proceed, NACCHO 360 made the critical decision to go virtual. Planning partners, Conference Managers and Sponsorship Boost, stepped in and delivered a virtual event that brought benefits to all stakeholders in just 30 days.

The NACCHO 360 Virtual Event

Attendees tuned in for five days of educational content through on-demand sessions and live plenary sessions, town halls and workshops. They could also tour the virtual exhibit hall to learn more about the resources available to them as they would at an in-person event.

Each sponsor received a virtual booth where they could showcase their educational content. The platform remained available to their target audience for 60 days after the live virtual event before it migrated to NACCHO University for extended visibility. The booth consisted of a logo wall (essentially their own mini-website) where they could add a 1,000-word description, a 3-minute video, three pdf links and website buttons for attendees to explore.

The virtual event was not only educational – attendees had the opportunity to attend two sponsored networking events. “Wake Up” was held on the first morning and gave

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attendees the opportunity to put themselves in an energetic frame of mind as the conference got underway. Attendees at the networking event set intentions and enjoyed a live, interactive experience. On the second day, “Wind Down” was a sponsored happy-hour style experience where attendees had the opportunity to engage in a robust dialogue around the topic of jobs lost and created in the public health industry due to the pandemic.

Challenge

NACCHO 360: Raising the Reach of Public Health is typically an in-person event designed where local health department staff, partners, and funders share the latest research, ideas, strategies and innovations across public health focus areas and a Public Health Informatics Conference that explores local health department information technology infrastructure and public health surveillance. However, when COVID-19 hit the United States, show organizers realized they would have to go virtual quickly. They leaned on their logistics and sponsorship partners, Conference Managers and Sponsorship Boost to help them reimagine their event in order to create a virtual experience that would provide value to their audience of public health officials who were already very busy helping their communities fight the pandemic, in just 30 days.

Strategy

Conference Managers and Sponsorship Boost worked quickly to bring together many different pieces to create a virtual experience that appealed to attendees and exhibitors and sponsors.

Selecting the Right Platform

Often, show organizers considering virtual must educate themselves on the technology options available. Conference Managers handles this effort for its clients. It researched several platform options and ultimately used Cadmium CD for NACCHO 360, choosing the platform because its speaker management system is easy to use and has a clean, modern design. It used Cadmium’s systems for abstract collection, abstract reviews, scheduling and speaker management.

In addition to these features, in this instance using this platform sped up the transition to virtual because all of NACCHO’s data was already within Cadmium.

“In the end it came down to the fact that NACCHO and its speakers are familiar with Cadmium and we believed it would deliver the best meeting within the limited time we had to plan,” said Maeve Carey, meetings and speaker manager at Conference Managers.



**Conference Managers and
Sponsorship Boost know
virtual technology**

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Preparing Speakers

Once the technology is in place, it is critical to ensure that the speakers know how to best use it to maximize the attendee experience.

Conference Managers oversaw typical speaker management, such as completing speaker profiles, confirming session details, uploading presentations and scheduling in addition to working in other new virtual meeting features available within the system, including:

- Pre-recording presentations for on-demand viewing as well as live streaming select keynote sessions.
- Recording audio within the platform over presentation slides
- Remote Audience Response System Q&A— which allows audience participants to submit a question on each pre-recorded session that automatically alerts the speakers in the session and allows them to respond back within their account.



Conference Managers delivered NACCHO 360 speakers:

- **Step-by-Step Instructions**
- **Best Practices for Remote Presenting**
- **Rehearsals with Live Presenters**

Finally, Conference Managers communicated NACCHO's vision of its virtual meeting, along with step-by-step instructions for how to upload presentations and record quality audio and video to the speakers. It provided them with other resources including best practices for remote presenting and held rehearsals with live presenters.

Driving Sponsorship Sales

Attendees are not the only stakeholders who need a positive experience with a virtual event. Sponsors ability to conduct business is essential. With only three weeks to work with, Sponsorship Boost created a new prospectus that reimaged the sponsorship and exhibit experience and then worked very closely with exhibitors to help them understand the concept and its benefits in order to sell sponsorships.

The new opportunities gave sponsors a space to house their education content with visibility over a much longer period of time than available at a typical in-person event. The new platform they established is a continuous space to share content.

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It also created two virtual networking events, “Wake Up” and “Wind Down”, to give sponsors an opportunity to engage with attendees and take ownership of the experience.

Given that sponsors are used to the deliverables they get from an in-person experience, it’s understandable that it might take most a moment to find their footing in this new experience, which is why Sponsorship Boost’s role as an educator on this new medium was so important. They supplied sponsors with information about how their virtual booth would function and deliver their messages.

Results

The virtual event was a success for all stakeholders. NACCHO 360 attracted nearly 600 registrants, which was significant given how busy the attendees were during the peak of the pandemic.

“Pivoting from an in-person to a virtual meeting for local public health professional in the middle of a pandemic was no small feat. With the help of Conference Managers and Sponsorship Boost, we were able to successfully make this transition in 30 days.”

— **Sara Black, Senior Advisor for Programs, NACCHO**



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Sponsorship sales gave NACCHO 360 the financial support it needed this year rather than dealing with the drawbacks of sponsors rolling over their funds to next year. And for sponsors, the event will continue to bring returns over time as the platform remained open for 60 days and then the content migrated to NACCHO University.

What works in person doesn’t translate to online in a straight line. Working with the joint team from Conference Managers and Sponsorship Boost helps event organizers think through innovative ways they can achieve their event goals in the digital world. Because of their extensive event experience and commitment to their clients, the team can accelerate the process of reimagining in-person events seeking to add a virtual element or go completely online.

