

2021-22

# Today's Trade Shows

Integrating In-person & Interactive Virtual Elements into a Year-long Marketing Plan



Incorporating virtual elements into in-person events is just a first step into the new world of trade shows. Innovation breeds excitement and momentum. However, the chemistry of today's trade show lives in instability: the good, the presence of more serious buyers; the bad, lower attendance; and the ugly, last minute date changes and cancellations. Is there a new direction? Yes! Follow our playbook.



## Can you endure another year without an in-person engagement or a virtual encounter?

Today, returning to the trade show floor is only one component of the new world of marketing a product or service. The old school of trade show floor exhibiting was a cut and paste endeavor show after show. On occasion there was a new product to highlight, other times an experiential experience to move attendees through your front door, sometimes a speaker/expert, a celebrity for autographs, or a demonstration. Those ideas are still viable.

**However today you must think about clients that cannot travel to the show venue or shows that are abruptly cancelled.**

## What is a hybrid trade show environment?

A hybrid trade show is not all face to face and it's not all online. More so it portions key elements of a successful presentation by combining a live face to face event with a virtual online component. It offers the option to bring online viewers together with the face-to-face attendees. And most importantly, it is a new innovation of trade shows.

AVE/E (Absolute Virtual Environments / Experiences), along with AE (Absolute Exhibits) fully integrates a custom built rental exhibit with virtual elements so that attendees are a part of the in-person experience. Then we add multiple voice interactions with those same clients in public and private settings.

## Is this the new trade show world going forward?

In June 2020 all eyes were on the fall shows and slowly but surely they cancelled. Then January 2021 was the benchmark and that slowly drifted away. A very few shows took place in the spring of this year and quite a number of drastically size-reduced shows are moving forward this fall.

However, with the pandemic still in full swing, vaccination-takers declining, and foreign travel falling to the wayside it makes no sense not to have a Plan B and maybe a Plan C or D in your pocket. It seems that no one is in control so every company must rely on their best judgement. If they choose to go to their trade show then a much more well thought plan must accompany them.



**Trade Shows Bring Too Much to the Party to Die...**  
Stopping the world of trade shows is not an option. Adapting to a new way of trade shows is the only way forward. It has happened and hybrid trade shows are taking over as the best way

#### **BENEFITS**

**4 Day, 30 x 30 Custom Exhibit Rental + services + Travel Team expenses of flights, taxis, hotels, food = \$200,000 / 4 days = \$50,000 a day**

**30 Day Add-on for AVE/E - integrated invitations and registration, website links, sound integration, and analyzation reports daily = \$100,000**

**\$100,000 + \$200,000 = \$300,000/30 days + \$10,000 a day & 26 more days of opportunity!**

forward to accommodate all trade show options. Everyone stopped exhibiting together and still there was business. Those that ignore coming trade shows will fall back in the pack ... the benefits of exhibiting far outweigh any other form of product/service marketing.

**Industry trade show participation drives sales in three ways:**

- **Continued sales to existing customers**
- **Sales to new buyers dissatisfied with their current providers**
- **Buyers attracted to a new offering.**

**"Hybrid trade shows are taking over as the best way forward to accommodate all trade show options."**

## **Value is the Answer**

For many good sales programs, the booth on the trade show floor is only a part of the consummate trade show experience. Personal meetings with existing clients are essential to relationships. Face to-face connections, making eye contact and interpreting body language allows one to see how actions align with words and enhances your credibility. How to add-in the non-traveling clients and prospects? AVE/E allows personal meetings, face-to-face connections, eye contact, et al. Is it better than in-person? No - but certainly the next best thing. It makes the prospect or client special as you carve time from your schedules to meet and possibly meet again and again - you have at least 30 days!

A trade show is a buyers paradise and an exhibitors dream. Presenting your best exhibiting appearance will attract potential clients to look your way. And you can and will do that but you will also be able to meet before or after the trade show in your own private world.

On the trade show floor you are hopefully inundated with buyers - how to give each one of them a fair amount of time? Calendared meetings are great until the primo-buyer that you have been working on shows in your exhibit space unannounced with purchase orders hanging out of his pocket. However you juggle this situation your exhibit with virtual elements is working for you. Your innovative, technology savvy display and meetings on the show floor are your best advocate. Add buyers offsite into your private meeting, set-up a calendared meeting for next week with a quick look now and an opportunity to send all literature and collateral for next week's meeting.

A highlighted product or service might just stop someone in their tracks. Picking up new business is vital. Use your industry press to work potential clients. This is a whole new avenue and you will have the most exciting exhibit on the show floor to capture press attention. Sell to the on-siters and market to the off-siters for potential sales in a week or two. The best of both worlds. Don't wrap yourself in 4 days - give yourself breathing room to create the best possible sales throughout a month!

## **We are your Thought Partner**

Our platform becomes a dynamic knowledge sharing portal to educate, train and empower your clients. This is a hybrid approach with prerecorded content, live presentations, and interactive bilateral communication.

Through our current multi-industry experiences we can suggest marketing techniques to keep clients engaged and within your exhibit space.



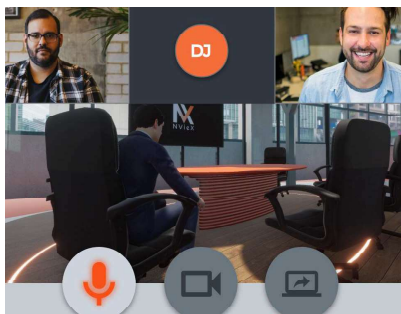
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# "Are hybrid exhibits the new normal? Reaching a broader audience is never a bad thing."

Hybrid exhibits are the answer to staying in the game. New normal? With a hybrid trade show, you can run a parallel in-person show with a virtual one as well. The traveler that must come long distances or may not be allowed into our borders will be grateful that they can still take part in a trade show even if they can't be there in person.

Additionally, take into consideration the lack of monetary resources companies will have as a result of the pandemic. Budgets will be overhauled and departments will have staffing shortages. The virtual exhibit will reach that audience.

Reaching a broader audience is never a bad thing. The next generation of attendees have already expressed interest in shorter meetings, content at their fingertips and endorsements to rely on. We have to think differently no matter what. Don't freeze with change, flow with it.



## Hybrid Trade Show Success Keys

*Maintaining the interest of both those that are in person and those sitting at home is crucial to the success of the trade show. Keep all physical attendees and virtual attendees engaged by using a number of key elements when planning a hybrid trade show. The hybrid trade show needs to include interactive moments which will help encourage both sides to maintain involvement. If you have a break out option in the face-to-face presentation then an option for breakout room(s) needs to be made for those attending virtually.*

**Live chats** can help people interact with those attending and also creates an opportunity for people to share information, which can offer a stepping stone for further communication. Sometimes just typing a few words in response to a question can create the confidence the attendee needs to open up.

**Post schedules** as well as texted or emailed reminders to all attendees. Trade show floors as well as virtual platforms are an easy place to get lost – so key reminders of speakers, presentations, and demonstrations will keep everyone in order. Your traditional exhibit design may not work as you attempt to include your offsite attendees. Large viewing screens and walk-up kiosks will need to be on scene and also on screen. Think of television talk shows that bring audiences in through video screens.

**Virtual streaming** and how the event is streamed is imperative for the success of the event. Having someone dedicated to this aspect is imperative to a successful link between those attending and those attending virtually. Using one exhibit builder that also incorporates virtual aspects is imperative.

**Marketing hybrid trade shows** needs to include both sides of the hybrid event. The option for virtual attendees creates a broader and more extensive audience for the trade show. Multi-channel activities need to suit the virtual attendee and those in person. **What will the speaker schedule look like and what will be the take away for both attendees?** Two or three periods throughout the day – always being mindful of time zones – is enough time to all come together. The rest of the time can be handled as one on one time by appointments in the space or through virtual chatting.

**Staffing for hybrid trade show** must be organized to have staff that cater for those face to face but also make sure there is staff available for those who are attending virtually. The team that supports the trade show can make sure both face to face and virtual meet in the middle and become one event.

**Time zones** cannot be forgotten either for the attendees and the conference times! It probably is not going to be a perfect schedule for everyone but be mindful of capturing the key speakers to make sure they are at times that suit the majority of the attendees. There are other options to alleviate some of the problems with incongruent time zones by offering on-demand viewing after a presentation.

*The one commonality amongst us is that we still have to try and operate business as usual to stay afloat. When your business thrives on trade show connections and activation's, how do you continue to make that happen? Do not fall victim and paralyze your action plan. Explore options and take one or two additional steps - success may be your reward.*

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## Trade Show Cancelled? Time to Pivot

*The abrupt end to your face-to-face trade show cannot be the end to your marketing plan or sales outreach. People are still buying products and services and while business travel has stopped in some instances – trucks are still moving across the country as well as trains and ships – and we are still manufacturing, growing, assembling, and meeting the needs of our populations.*

*Pivot! You do not need a virtual platform through your association. You just need to reinvite your clients and the prospects you have collected over the past two years and invite them to your event. This can be a one day extravaganza with speakers, demonstrations, product unveils followed by 29 more days of selling time on your virtual trade show floor. All is not lost.*

cruise by 300 exhibits in one sit down session at a computer. Additionally attendees get distracted and cannot follow too many in booth schedules.

**Use your current exhibit design.** With foresight virtual elements have already been added into your design so that offsite clients can have a face-to-face experience. Kiosks, videos, speakers, demos, product walls, and private meetings are all accommodated through AVE/E. The significance of our audio capabilities can not be overlooked - this is the key difference between our platform and those of others.

**Create a compelling multichannel digital experience.** Example - digital content developed to project onto the back wall of an exhibition hall was used as engaging backdrops for online sessions. Never close the doors. Clients can access your digital content and wander your exhibit floor even when you are sleeping. Or create a schedule so that one team member has overnight duty each day.

**Show duration can be maximized.** Private meetings in your exhibit can happen three weeks after your initial show day. Individualized exposures such as customer only seminars, prospect demonstrations, face-to-face meetings can all be held in your virtual environment. Try a conversational format with multiple people talking to each other. A variety of speakers makes for more engaging discussion.



## Use your Cancelled Trade Show as a Springboard!

Did you hear that? That was the implosion of your in-person trade show event. Safety first – your association has pulled the plug. Can you easily accelerate your shift to a virtual model? How fast and nimble are you? Has your current exhibit builder already integrated virtual elements into your in-person trade show design? Have you already got the bones in place, just flesh out the script.

**Necessity is the mother of invention - by changing your game plan you have created a new way to reformat future marketing to be far more inclusive.** Executing a strong game plan can allow you to shift your in-person event. Think of it this way: your rewritten event playbook is now a modern and forward-looking and one your customers can adapt to. You are at the forefront of client engagement.

**It does not matter whether your trade show is going virtual or not!** You will have your own platform on your own website, and invite your own clients and prospects that you have collected at previous trade shows. Virtual trade shows with a massive amount of exhibitors do not get exhibitors the attention they are seeking. It is hard to visit or even

Always communicate directly with clients about your pivot. Many are in the same situation and will understand your decision and appreciate that a trade show cancellation will not stop your momentum.

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# Absolute Virtual is a True Bi-Lateral Audio/Video Platform

Providing immediate agility and responsiveness to a current situation while offering forward-thinking solutions for future trade show exhibits, events, and experiences. We relate to our clients as partners that we will not allow to fail.

If the last two years has taught us anything as marketers, it was the importance of being agile. Seemingly overnight, many of our exhibit clients were forced to make major decisions regarding the future of their operations and at the top of their list throughout most industries, marketing budgets took a major strike.

Face facts, all we know about the future of trade shows, conferences, and meetings is that they are the backbone of virtually every industry and will be back in some idiom. In the meantime, we have all read the reports or spoken to attendees and the trade show virtual environments provided by show organizers and associations have not been a replacement in any manner for the attendees much less the exhibitors.

Standing alone, creating your own trade show event experience, even feeding off your association's in-person event can and should be your answer. No - it is not the same as before. Actually it is better. Given the competitiveness in the business world and the need for a technologically driven business environment for a tech-savvy generation, being a part of any industry without collaborative technology is an extremely risky move. Companies, health, entertainment, fashion, and business sectors all need a virtual presence to accompany the physical one. Adding a key digital element can move a company into the high-tech world. This is not a cookie-cutter solution. Waiting out the current situation is not the answer. Incorporating technology into marketing plans today will propel you through this crisis and allow you to move forward without hesitation when everyone can be together once again.

## ENGAGE ATTENDEES IN THE ULTIMATE EXHIBIT EXPERIENCE

Bi-Lateral Communication  
Traffic & Event Analytics  
Exclusivity & Privacy  
Personalised Avatars  
Live Presentations  
Audience Participation  
Virtual Meeting Areas  
Demonstrations  
Video Content  
Control the On/Off Switch  
Metrics Dashboard

## THE NEXT LEVEL IN REAL TIME COMMUNICATION

Speakers that communicate with the audience not just to the audience

Webinars with real audience participation

Private appointments in meeting rooms

Walking clients through product showrooms



*This is just another reminder that nothing stays the same and that the future always brings a new normal. Integrate technology now and remove the stumbling blocks at the next gate.*

Sign-up for a Demo at  
[www.AbsoluteExhibits.com/Virtual](http://www.AbsoluteExhibits.com/Virtual)  
or call +1 888-760-6555