



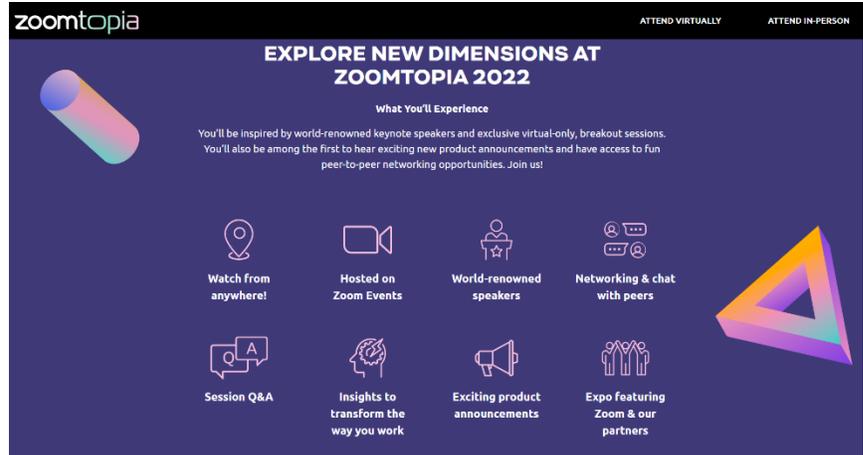
Case Study: Zoom Demonstrates a Successful Hybrid Event at its Own Zoomtopia Conference

Background

Zoom has been hosting its Zoomtopia annual event since 2017. Traditionally, it was an in-person event, with the expected keynotes, announcements, sessions, and other event elements. Zoomtopia however, was notable for being a particularly fun event to attend, with great live music, games, and food.

When the pandemic hit, Zoomtopia went virtual. Zoom was fortunately able to leverage its video platform to create a unique and successful virtual event in 2020 and 2021, maintaining the fun energy and spirit of Zoomtopia. Despite the success of these events, everyone was still looking forward to flying to San Jose to be “back” at Zoomtopia.

In 2022, Zoom was committed to making Zoomtopia a true hybrid experience, rather than simply going back to their traditional physical event model. In this case study, we will look at why hybrid is so important, why it has been so hard, and what Zoom did differently at Zoomtopia 2022 to create a better hybrid experience for both remote, and in person, attendees.



PROBLEM

Hybrid is a Struggle



The pandemic has changed the way we think about business travel. It used to be all or nothing. Either you flew out to attend a show, or you missed it entirely. Now we've learned that we can get some value out of a well-run virtual event. This changes the game. There're only so many events we can attend in person every year, but we can virtually attend pretty much every event that interests us.

Now that we are back to attending events in person, we want the best of both worlds. We want a hybrid event. This means, ideally, that virtual and in-person attendees share nearly the same event experience. Unfortunately, that has not been an easy puzzle to solve. Many attempts at hybrid suffer from issues such as:

- Remote attendees have trouble navigating event webpages, as well as finding and connecting to sessions
- Remote attendees can't participate in any part of the event, they can just watch.
- There's no way for remote attendees and in-person attendees to interact with each other.
- There's no way for remote attendees to interact with other remote attendees

At the end of the day, remote and in-person attendees should feel like they attended the same event together and had a similar experience. It's crucial that we get hybrid right, not just to meet today's business expectations, but to accommodate those who can't travel and fight the inherent ableism of requiring travel for business.

Solution

Using Zoom Events with Best Practices

Zoom, through a combination of using the Zoom Events platform, along with a set of best practices designed to increase interactivity, hosted a successful hybrid event at Zoomtopia 2022.

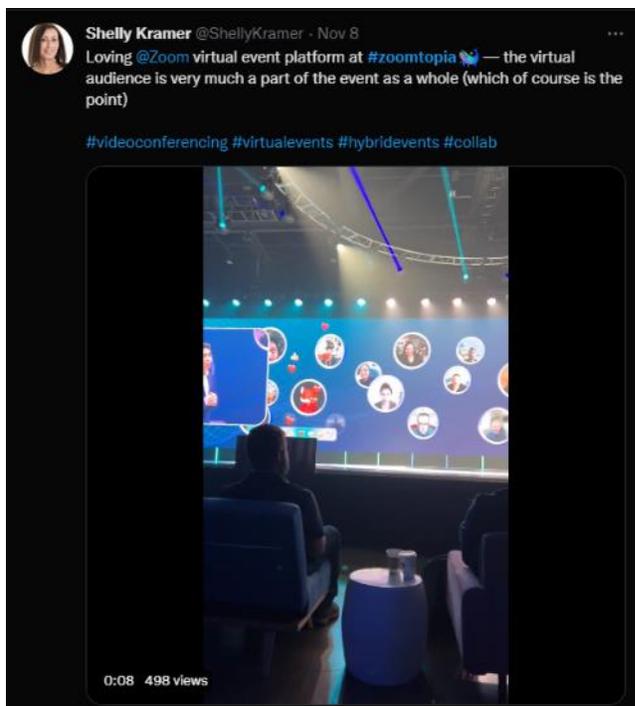
Zoom Events immediately solves the problem of remote attendees accessing their sessions with its simple and intuitive experience. Remote attendees have a "lobby" view providing easy access to all concurrent sessions as well as information on upcoming sessions.



In fact, remote attendees may have an advantage over in-person attendees, as it is extremely easy to click around and bounce between different sessions without having to walk from one hall to another.

Zoom Events has many design elements and features that help it to provide a great virtual experience. What truly made Zoomtopia 2022 a great hybrid event was the best practices put into place by Zoom's event team to best leverage the Zoom Events platform. These practices included:

- Hosts generally took questions only from the chat app.
 - This gave in-person attendees a reason to join the chat, increasing interactivity with remote attendees
 - It is far easier for hosts/moderators to manage incoming questions this way (rather than having a virtual and in-person question queue).
 - Virtual attendees were on an equal footing with in-person attendees in terms of session participation, which was a nice change.
- Zoom put remote attendees up on screen behind in-person speakers.
 - It was just simply fun for everyone.
 - Remote attendees loved seeing themselves on screen, every time a new one popped up, they would start smiling.
 - In-person attendees just seemed to love this. It was a good feeling to know that a larger community was participating in the event.
 - It encouraged interactivity in chat, and even on social media.
- Chat emojis were shown on screen behind the speakers.
 - This is a great way for everyone (remote and in-person) to digitally applaud a speaker without disrupting a speech. It provides constant attendee feedback throughout a session.
 - It was simply fun. Everyone seemed to love it. No one found it distracting.
- Speakers were trained to bring attention to, and encourage using, these features.
 - Speakers having fun with the remote attendees on screen, or encouraging “emoji spam”, brought attention to the hybrid experience and fostered more interactivity.



Results

A New Standard for Hybrid Events

At Zoomtopia 2022 a new standard was set for hybrid events. While the big story was Zoom announcing a tidal wave of new features and services, the success of their hybrid efforts was noted by both in-person and remote attendees. The buzz at the event itself, and on social media both during and after the show, was that Zoom seems to have figured out the hybrid puzzle.

Some remote attendees even had “Zoomtopia Viewing Parties” where they met in person to share food, drinks, and banter while virtually attending via Zoom Events. That seems like a winning idea, as you get to attend the event and have some face-to-face time with colleagues without having to get on an airplane.

It’s true that remote attendees missed out on seeing Nelly perform in-person and they didn’t get to taste any of the amazing food. But everyone got to enjoy Alex Bornstein’s jokes, and more importantly, everyone got to interact with each other while getting all the information they needed from the event.

