

**Society of Government Meeting
Professionals**

Leveraging the Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub®
for a successful hybrid event.

15

in-person attendees

35

virtual attendees

1

centralized hub for
hybrid experiences

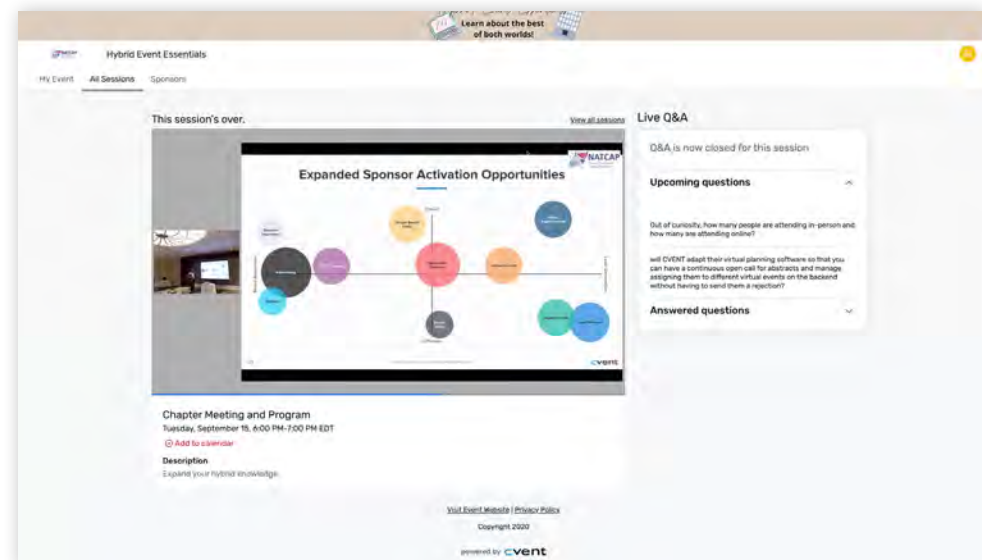
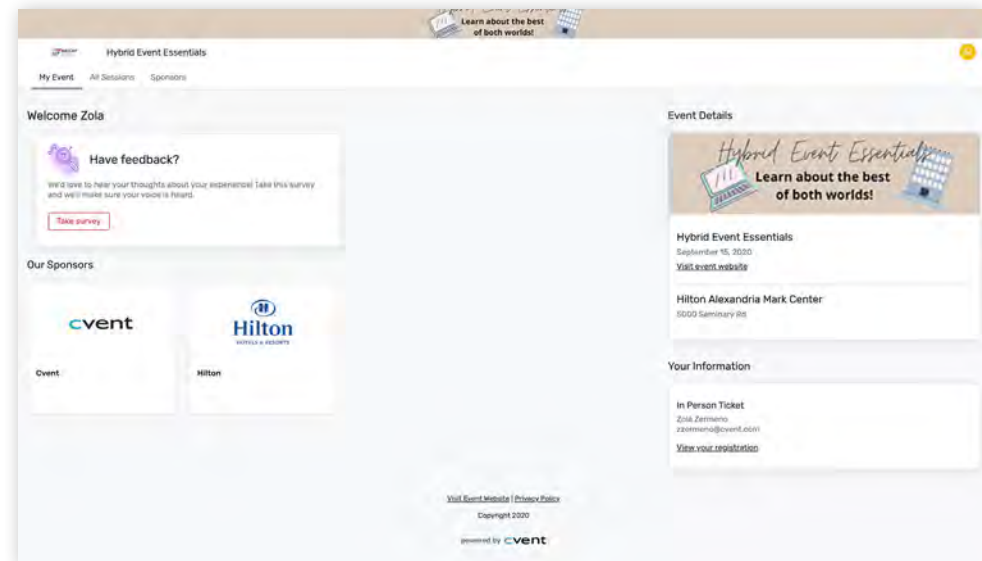
When the meetings and events industry halted all in-person events during the first few months of the global health crisis, the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) was in the midst of planning their education programming for the year. Nicole Roames, First Vice President of the National Capital Chapter, and her colleague Melissa Woodruff, President, quickly pivoted to virtual where they could.

Experiencing the Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub

With the focus of the event centered on hybrid events trends and best practices, Nicole and Melissa were excited to have attendees take part in both the in-person and virtual experience. Inside the Virtual Attendee Hub, Nicole was able to run a livestream for the one-hour education session through the embedded video player. “The Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub was seamless and super easy to use,” says Nicole, who is also certified as a Digital Event Strategist. They included a dedicated event overview page with key information, session page with embedded links to both the education and networking sessions, and a sponsor section.

Nicole and Melissa partnered with Cvent’s production services team to manage the event build and execution. Nicole says it was a valuable partnership in helping to navigate not only the hybrid event itself, but in implementing hybrid event best practices. “Without assistance from Cvent, we would not have been able to pull this off,” she says. “Any time I had a question, the professional services team was right there to help guide us through it and build out our best looking program.”

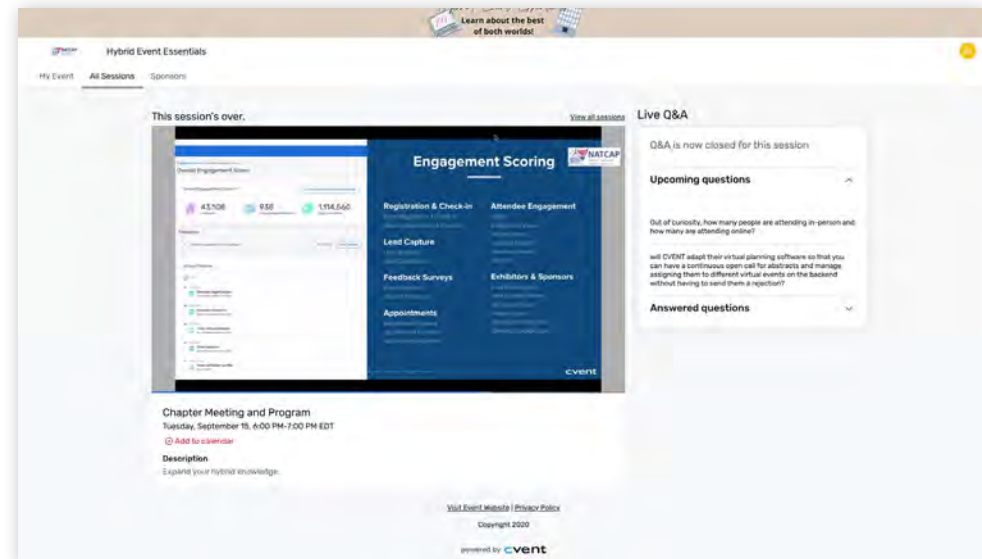
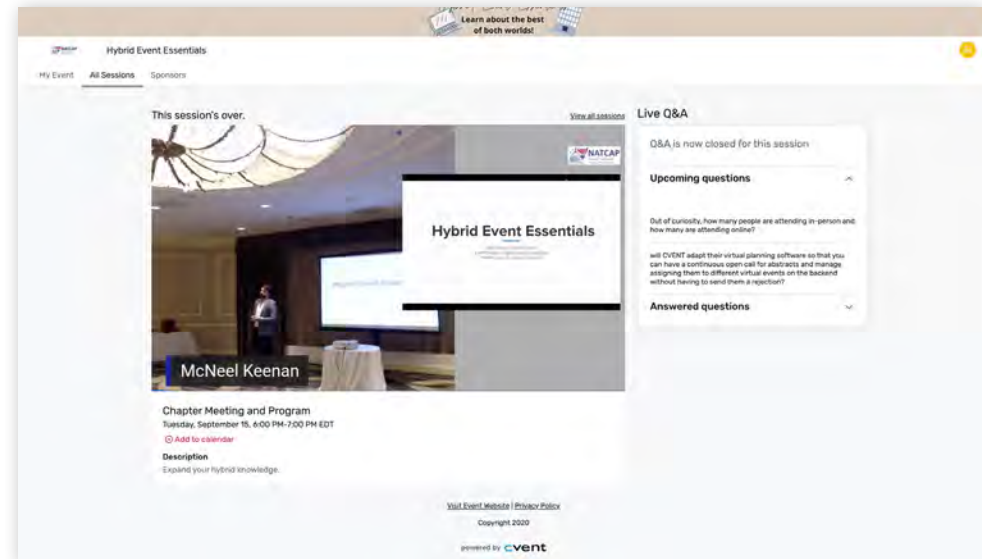
In fact, Nicole walked away with key lessons learned that she is eager to pass onto fellow event managers. She advises event managers to ensure both the in-person and virtual audio are secured correctly, and says it’s important to make sure you understand the venue’s AV capabilities thoroughly. It’s also important to account for the unique viewing experiences, as a slight delay in the livestream acts as a safeguard for the in-person to virtual viewing experience.



Hybrid Events: One Event, Two Experiences™

In shifting to the mindset of a digital producer, it's vital to account for the fact that a hybrid event is one event with two simultaneous experiences. While these two experiences are unique in their own right, they are not entirely divergent. To not isolate the remote audience, it's important to find ways to connect the two groups across shared experiences. The solution for SGMP lay in the Cvent mobile event app. Users were able to submit questions to the dedicated Q&A feature within the app, with both virtual attendees and in-person attendees viewing the questions in real-time. "All of the questions were in one place, so we didn't have to delineate between our in-person audience's questions and those from our at-home audience," Nicole explains. Attendees were then able to upvote questions to keep them top-of-mind for the presenter. She says this shared experience allowed her two attendee groups to feel more connected across the digital divide. "They were all able to mesh through the Q&A as a part of the education session," she adds.

After the education session, in-person attendees were able to safely socialize on the patio while virtual attendees took advantage of virtual networking opportunities within the Virtual Attendee Hub. With easily navigable experiences centered directly within the hub, they were able to access the virtual networking session with a single click. Nicole and Melissa also used the integrated registration data to automate their post-event surveys. "We got some great feedback," says Nicole. "People really appreciated the effort we put in to have a hybrid event and to showcase the difference between the two experiences."



Nicole explains having a centralized system to facilitate the entire event process, from registration to virtual attendance and post-event survey, was key to SGMP's hybrid event success. "Running your registration and everything through a centralized system is important for follow-up especially," Nicole says. She notes that utilizing the centralized tool across both the in-person and virtual experience not only automated what could have been cumbersome manual processes, but gave her the ability to target her attendees with integrated marketing functionality to help drive engagement and additional registrations. "The Event Management system is really crucial, especially when you're doing a hybrid event, because it keeps all the data in one place," she insists.

With this level of automation, Nicole also appreciated the customization capabilities found within the integrated Cvent tools. "With other tools, I don't have control over what my emails look like beyond adding my logo and editing a few things," she says. "To get attendees to then register for our next event, my emails, my surveys, and my registration data is all in the same place and I can control it completely." Moreover, they were able to customize their virtual hub to be fully branded and tailored to their specific requirements. "The events page was branded with both SGMP and the 'Hybrid Event Essentials,' which was the title of our program," she says. "We were able to put our own logo, our own splash page, and our own branding on everything, which was fantastic."

Within the hub, Melissa and Nicole also highlighted a small selection of sponsors on the dedicated sponsors page. These beautifully-designed pages were easy to navigate, with organization overviews, contact information, and one-click email functionality allowing attendees to directly contact the listed sponsor via email.

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We were amazingly lucky to use the new Cvent contactless check-in and badge printing solution. Attendees could come in with their phone and scan the QR code to have their badge printed automatically. It was incredible.

- Nicole Roames, First Vice President of the National Capital Chapter



Planning the Future of Hybrid Events

The in-person and virtual options provided distinct, yet equally valuable, experiences for SGMP's attendees. As a result, Nicole and Melissa decided the appropriate fee structure was to charge a small amount for both experiences. While the nuances of navigating fee structures for hybrid events is by no means clear cut, Nicole explains they wanted to support their industry partners with the small charge. "Hotels are really hurting and the industry is experiencing a crunch right now," she insists. "Suppliers are taking the brunt of it." The value-add of both experiences ultimately led to the decision to charge a small fee where the burden could be shared between attendees and suppliers. "Because we were offering similar experiences both in-person and online, and because we were offering the education credit and networking, we decided to charge the same amount for both experiences."

With a successful hybrid event completed, Nicole and Melissa are now looking to replicate the experience as soon as they can. "I really think hybrid is going to be the way of the future, as many still have travel restrictions but there also many people who want to get out and meet," says Nicole. In fact, she was recently certified in Cvent's Virtual Events certification and plans to take the associated Hybrid Events training course and certification before the end of the year. "The training was great, and so much of what they talked about lined up with my Digital Event Strategist training," she says. "It covers everything to do with virtual events and then goes into great detail on how to use the tool for virtual events." She adds that small, local meetings with a hybrid component will likely be the path forward as the industry looks to meet once again in person. Nicole explains, "I think small meetings are the way we come back. We have to think hybrid to keep our numbers small and local, but that will get us in the door for getting back to in-person events."

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Cvent is the global meeting, event, travel, and hospitality technology leader.

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