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How to Attract Sponsors to Virtual Events and Beyond?

As events pivot online and many, many have been postponed or cancelled, we need to convince sponsors to support new event formats and also to explore longer-term sponsorship opportunities. Once we can make sure that sponsors make the connections that they need then we should be in a position to ensure that our clients have funds to deliver best-in-class meetings and to continue to flourish in the future.

INCON is a partnership of Conference and Association Management Companies with offices in 170 destinations world-wide. Now more than ever, we are striving to be innovative and meet our client's needs. Whether live or in person, it is more important than ever to bring people together.

Our Partner, AIM Group International recently conducted research on sponsorship of virtual events. The [study](#) confirms that **80% of corporate sponsors are interested in investing in virtual events** but they want to see more interaction during the meetings. The study also confirmed that **99.5%** of sponsors want **content available on demand** after the congress, ensuring greater availability for participants and greater visibility for sponsors.

Jurriaen Sleijster, INCON Board member and COO of MCI recently remarked *"we are witnessing a lot of **loyalty** between clients and sponsors. Sponsors don't want to see a strong annual conference or an association fail, as long as you can guarantee **tangible ROI**, companies are more than willing to support conferences as they move online."*

So how do we meet this demand.

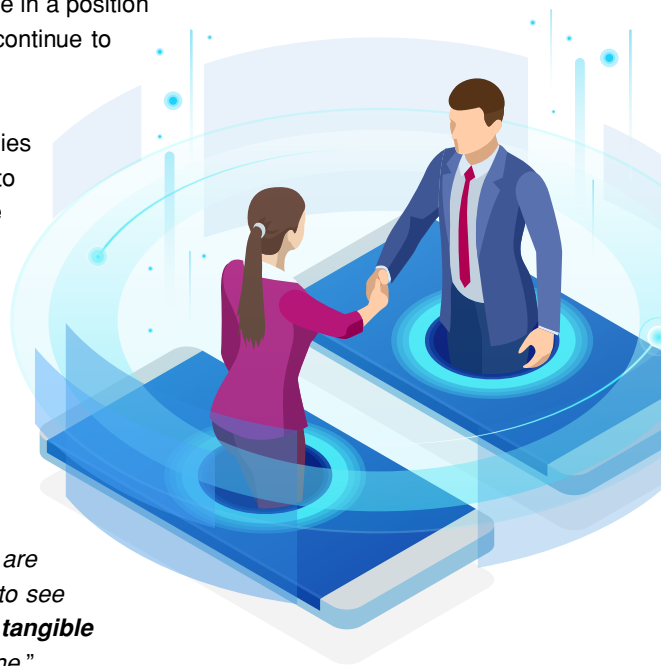
During IMEX's recent virtual education [planetimex](#), there was an insightful webinar by [Ville Vanhala](#) on sponsorship of virtual events. Ville, co-founder of [Brella](#) which is a leading **event networking platform**. Now that's a company that you need to know during a crisis like this. He explained that virtual events provide the opportunity to have more meaningful conversations. In other words, virtual events are a great opportunity for sponsors to meet with existing and potential customers.

Nicole Walker, CEO of Arinex, our Partner company in Australia has this advice to share: *"Apart from brand positioning, many **sponsors look for ways to position themselves as thought leaders** to a captive audience at an event. Just like a physical event, opportunities can be created during virtual events for sponsors to interact with the audience through facilitated workshops, panel discussions, hosted roundtable discussions and welcome addresses."* Nicole also offers some insights on the [pricing model for sponsors](#).

As stressed by Carol McGury, INCON Co-Chair and EVP at Association Management leader SmithBucklin, *"We need to find **unique ways for sponsors to engage with clients throughout the year** not necessarily just for a virtual conference. Technology is not going to provide magic answers. Every client and sponsor is different so we need to look at each situation with new eyes and new ideas"*.

A recent [case study](#) from our Partner MCI describes some truly excellent ways to attract, engage and retain key audiences - 365 days a year. An **online community platform** like this could be the backbone of a successful virtual event and offers an incredible sponsorship opportunity for the conference and beyond.

We can also share some learnings from JCS, our partner in Japan which takes a closer look at using **interactive, virtual and augmented reality formats**. You can read the full article in the [INCON COVID 19 resource page](#).



Tips to maximise sponsor ROI

Here is a snapshot of tips to maximise sponsor ROI of virtual and online events

- To drive attendees and the relevant attendees invest heavily in **event promotion**. Personalize and tailor campaigns using digital marketing tools and or AI.
- Leverage **social media** for promotion but also to acknowledge and thank sponsors.
- Embrace the **technology** which ensures higher conversion rates and high quality **online experience**.
- Leverage technology and apps to develop **engaging meeting formats**, using polls, chat, breakout rooms, annotation, white boards, virtual exhibition areas etc.
- Explore different platforms. Be brave and consider **3D, virtual and augmented reality formats**.
- Offer new ways for **sponsor branding** including: ticketing; event app; pop up banners during or between sessions; video ads; polls; waiting rooms; welcome, closing thank you addresses; VIP gatherings; branded gifts delivered before or after the event etc. There are many more ideas in this [article](#).
- Invest in immersive, **realistic and fun layouts** and backdrops that can be branded.
- Ensure that sponsors have access to more **touchpoints to collect qualified leads**.
- **Track and provide robust data**, before, during and after the meeting.
- Make sure that **conference content is available on demand** for at least a year or more ensuring greater visibility for sponsors.
- Once an event has wrapped up, **automate event follow-up** to maximize sponsor ROI.

Virtual meetings can never replace the benefits of face-to-face environments but by working with the right set of tools and with an open mind we can still make this a unique and beneficial experience for our clients and event sponsors. We should also take this opportunity to look beyond the virtual event to identify additional sponsorship opportunities for our clients.

INCON has compiled a list of articles and tips from our Partner companies that might be helpful when creating events and conferences during COVID-19. It is a stressful time to be working on events, we hope these articles can make your life a little bit easier. You will find the series here: www.incon-pco.com/covid19

This article is a series of expert articles brought to you by INCON.

To consult other articles please go to: <http://www.incon-pco.com/expert-articles.html> and for more COVID-19 articles here: www.incon-pco.com/covid19

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