



## 7 Steps to Hosting Successful Virtual Events

By Cheryl Whitman

Virtual Events are here to stay. Don't miss out on this easy and effective way to interact with patients and grow the aesthetic practice.

The global pandemic has turned business upside down. With the need to social distance and avoid crowds, people are working from home, traveling less, shopping online more, and finding ways to adapt. Aesthetic medical practices must also find ways to adapt if they are to survive and thrive in today's topsy-turvy climate. Finding ways to connect with patients remotely is key and one way to do this is through virtual events.

A virtual event is any live-streamed interactive experience. It can be an online conference, a class or instructional event, a demonstration or workshop, or a party. Events can be private, such as a provider/patient consultation, or they can be open to an invited group.

Among the reasons to hold a virtual event:

- Physicians can remotely connect with patients.
- Patients can attend from the comfort of their home.
- Presenters can participate from anywhere, no travel required.
- They are less expensive than in-person events.
- Virtual events allow for social distancing and avoid large gatherings.
- They are a great way to grow community awareness of the practice.
- Virtual events can be fun and exciting for patients and staff.
- They offer a way to connect with potential patients and close sales.

How to Host a Virtual Event

The good news is, hosting a virtual event is easy. Simply follow these 7 steps to virtual event success:

1. Create a Plan

Decide on a topic for the event. It's best to limit it to a single topic or theme. The event should be interactive to keep patients engaged, and it should be short, a maximum of 40 to 45 minutes.

Identify your target audience and decide on the best time of day and day of the week to reach them. Make sure it is far enough out to allow time to publicize it.

Think about hosting an event that benefits a local charity. Consider including a virtual challenge to help raise money for the charity. This is a great way to create community awareness of both your practice and the charity.

## 2. Identify Software/Technical Attributes and Test

Notably, many virtual meeting software platforms have free options, including Zoom, Instagram, FB Live, Webex, and Gotomeeting.

Do a test run using the software of choice with a few team members to work out any glitches before the event takes place. On the day of the event, make sure to test the software/systems ahead of the event kickoff so any technical hiccups can be corrected beforehand. Consider practicing with a live save-the-date video.

Have your tech support person available during the event to handle any unexpected problems with the software. Some may need help logging in.

Another option is to pre-record the event, then simply be available by phone when the event goes "live" to answer questions.

## 3. Identify Event Host, Presenters, Program

Program content is determined by the type of event you're hosting. Develop an outline or script if you are presenting a new procedure. Allow time for patients to ask questions. Have a staff member available during the event to keep track of time so you stay on schedule and are able to cover all of the information you wish to present. Use slides or other visual aids to keep the event interesting for your audience.

Your goal is to educate your patients about new products/services and call them to action. Offer discounts if they purchase the featured product/service within 24 hours of the virtual event.

## 4. Find Sponsors and Community Partners

Regardless of size, a successful virtual event is one that is fun and engages your audience.

Hold a drawing from the list of registered attendees for gift certificates or gift bags.

Seasonal themes can help make an event memorable and interesting. Consider filming the virtual event from an area within your practice. Decorate it accordingly if appropriate for the type of event you're hosting.

Do a combined in-person and on-line event by having staff members or even some invited participants in the filming area during the event. Set a fun colorful stage in your practice or tent in the parking lot.

## 5. Publicize/Promote

Market the event to your internal database of patients first. Have interested attendees RSVP in advance to be eligible for the drawings (which will provide feedback on participant numbers and warm leads for relevant products/services). Encourage registered attendees to invite a friend to register.

Promote the event well in advance of the date through a practice e-newsletter, eblasts, Facebook Live, and social media. Send out local press releases, especially if this is a local charity fundraising event. Write a blog about the event, including details about the theme and charity, if applicable. Include information on the event topic, presenters, interactivity, and prizes, and set up auto-reminders to go out to registered attendees.

#### 6. Record and Archive the Virtual Event

By archiving the event, it is available to other potential patients and will keep “selling” for you without additional effort. Send out a SurveyMonkey survey to participants following the event to find out what they liked about it and for suggestions on what you can do better next time.

#### 7. Final Tips

Assign a staff member to manage the virtual event from start to finish.

To conform to HIPPA requirements, put a statement on the registration page that this is a public event open to the community and that by registering for it, participants understand and agree to this.

Start small. More elaborate events are appropriate as you gain confidence and experience.

Always set a goal for the event and share it with your staff, whether it's to sell a certain dollar volume of product/services or to book a specific number of new patients.

As with any event, not everyone that registers will attend. Expect about a 30% attendance rate. Don't despair, plan to follow up by email or phone with the non-attendees. You can let them know the event was recorded so they can view it later and encourage them to book an appointment or try a new product.

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