



CRAMER

REFLECTING ON 2020

***KEY INSIGHTS
FROM THE MOST
UNPREDICTABLE YEAR***

2020 was challenging for everyone, and especially so for those of us who work in the live events industry.

But with all the disruption came opportunity. Our industry was transformed almost overnight—forcing innovation and technology to advance at a breakneck pace—and ultimately yielding many new and exciting ways to connect people.

It was a whirlwind year, and we wanted to close it out by highlighting some of our most crucial learnings, like: what makes for a successful virtual event? How can you optimize content marketing to find your brand voice and engage new audiences across multiple channels? Will live events ever go back to being how they were?

But COVID-19 wasn't the only story of the year. Racial inequality and injustice were brought painfully to the forefront. Inspired by the difficult but important conversations that were taking place on the national stage, we reflected on our own morals and realized we had to work harder to make diversity, inclusion and representation a priority within our industry.

2020 has been a wild ride; bumpy at times but always informative. We're entering the new year smarter and more prepared for the future than ever before. We hope you find our learnings useful as you gear up for 2021.

6 Virtual Event Essentials

And Why the Platform is Only One of Them

In an in-person event, it takes strategy, creativity, technology, and experts to turn an empty ballroom into an experience. The same goes for a virtual event.

The difference? The venue is the platform and the experience is a broadcast.

01

UX DESIGN

There are two ways to look at a virtual event... as a broadcast or TV show and as a web experience. As soon as attendees sign on, they are entering your event. How they navigate and experience the site is critical to their engagement and the event's success.

02

AGENDA & SHOW FLOW

Virtual events have a different rhythm and pace than in-person. Attendee screen time has its limits and the event is competing with a lot for the audience's attention. So like a good TV show, it has to have peaks and ebbs to engage (but not exhaust) viewers.

03

PLATFORM SELECTION

There are dozens of platforms available with capabilities that vary widely in terms of scalability, flexibility, interactivity, security, and cost. While Cramer is platform-agnostic, we have lots of experience with these technologies and help our clients choose the one best suited to their objectives. Factors to consider include audience size, global reach, and number of remote speakers.



04

BROADCAST STUDIO

While we've seen a lot of video shot from living rooms and basements in the last couple of months, that's obviously not ideal. As restrictions lift, you should move your broadcast to a [state-of-the-art studio](#), worthy of a professional TV program. And now more than ever, you'll want to broadcast from a studio that's designed for social distancing, cleanliness, and safety protocols.

05

EXPERIENCED CREW

Professional equipment and the experienced crew that know how to operate it are the backbone of a seamless broadcast production. There's no room for error on a live broadcast. That crew includes a director, camera operators, and audio engineers. But there are many more professionals behind your favorite news show, like writers, graphic designers, animators, IT technicians. At Cramer, we have [all the experts](#) under one roof.

06

BROADCAST HUB

Our broadcast hub team can take in multiple remote presenters at one time and quickly transition between them or pivot if a presenter has issues. Through the hub we add branded graphic layers, music, and animation to create an experience that looks and feels quite different than a conventional video call.

It's amazing how quickly virtual events have become the norm in this new normal. And have come with a new set of virtual event essentials. The means may be changing but the end goals are the same – an exceptional attendee experience that moves business objectives forward. But now that the novelty has worn off, audiences are expecting more (Zoom just isn't cutting it anymore).

The bar is being raised and it's essential that companies keep up.

Content Marketing

Where Should You Start?

EVERYTHING IS HAPPENING ONLINE NOW, YOU KNOW THAT.

Your customers are online, you know that too. Your brand needs to have a strong online presence, you know! But, how do you earn and maintain the attention of your target audience?

It's been a hot topic at the leading industry conferences from Content Marketing Institute's ["Content Marketing Conference"](#) to HubSpot's recent ["INBOUND 2020"](#).

A quick scan of the agendas reveals that digital marketing means different things to different people. BUT, one theme runs true throughout and that is your content needs to 'binge-worthy'.

We've leaned on TV broadcasts to set the example for virtual events, and now we must also lean on the entertainment experts for our content too. Thanks to Netflix, our world has come to expect content that captivates the mind and leaves you wanting more.

So, where do you start?

Blockbuster Marketing. Jon Lombardo, Global Lead B2B Institute at LinkedIn, introduced this concept in a session at INBOUND 2020. The idea is to take what the entertainment giants do best, monetize your creativity, and apply it to your marketing strategies.

To do so, all of your content should follow a franchise-like style. Think Baby Yoda. Disney uses the same piece of creative, the character, and recycles it over and over. There is the show on Disney+. There are the toys. There are the memes. Just one piece of creative grows Disney's brand awareness and grows its revenue in multiple channels.



To do this start by [defining your brand voice](#). What is authentically you? From there, you need to build out a consistent distinctiveness. ***What will your brand look and feel like?***

A strong B2B example is Salesforce.

The brand has a strong visual foundation that they use consistently across every platform. No matter what the content is, you know instantly that it comes from Salesforce. While the style might be too whimsical for many companies, it is a lesson in seriously excellent branding.

Once you have identified your 'franchise' from look and feel to tone and voice, you are ready for the next step. Look to build big recurring content, a yearly round-up, a trends report, or an event. Then it's time to atomize. Turn your report into an eBook. Use the data to inform a webinar. Break the content into smaller pieces and produce a series of blogs. Be creative and be resourceful.

To break through the noise and earn the attention of your clients and prospects, make your content 'binge-worthy' by building it into a franchise. Where to start? Start with your brand identity.

The New Normal for Events

Diversity at INBOUND 2020

With INBOUND 2020, HubSpot is helping define what a new normal should feel like for events—and we're not talking about their move to a virtual event setting.

From the inclusive language used in their registration process to the wide range of representation they had in a star-studded speaker line-up, it was clear that this year's INBOUND team was actively focused on diversity and inclusion.

HubSpot's commitment to inclusivity was clear right out of the gate. Offering alternatives to traditional gender

designations on the registration form has been gaining in popularity recently, but INBOUND took things a step further by also asking attendees to disclose their pronouns (he/she/her/they). While publicly sharing such preferences is the norm in many settings, it signals an important evolution in the corporate events world.

INBOUND's dedication to inclusivity went beyond the attendee experience; it extended to speaker representation as well. And, as pointed out in this [EventMB article](#) by Keneisha Williams, such a move is important because, "Diversity is not just about representation, it's about allowing everyone to benefit from the richness in knowledge and experience that comes from different perspectives." The INBOUND

team's commitment to representation on their stages showed their dedication to ensuring their audience received a stronger experience by showcasing diverse thinking and brilliance across industries. (A sentiment [shared here at Cramer.](#))

INBOUND provided a platform for people like [Ty Heath](#), Global Lead, The B2B Institute @ LinkedIn and author of "Marketers of Tomorrow: A Step by Step Toolkit for Inbound Marketing" to share her expertise and perspective. We should be seeing this more often where black professionals are speaking to their expertise and experience beyond the topic of diversity. The line-up included speakers that all audience members could identify with, which left an impact.

Overall, INBOUND stands out as a strong example where we hope the events industry is heading. Thank you to HubSpot for acknowledging the need for change and helping to set those wheels in motion. To those of you looking to build your next event, we urge you to follow HubSpot's lead and actively look for ways to make all your attendees feel supported and represented.

A photograph of a stage with several spotlights. Two spotlights are turned on, casting a warm orange glow across the dark stage floor. The other spotlights are off, appearing as dark circles with some internal detail.

Why the Future Is Hybrid Events

(And Why It's Going to Be Great)

HYBRID IS AN INTERESTING WORD.

How much did we use it ten years ago? Then electric hit the scene and suddenly everyone was talking about hybrid vehicles. Electric AND gas. The best of both worlds.

No need to say what has recently hit the event scene. We all live it every day. But because of that, there's a new hybrid to talk about **Virtual** AND **live** events.

As we move forward, we are going to be taking the best of virtual and combining it with the power of live to create a new standard. Hybrid Events.

At Cramer, we've been **producing** hybrid events for years, but they have not been the norm. Many companies worried that a virtual experience would cannibalize the live event (it doesn't). So, we can tell you with confidence that hybrid events are effective.

We've all been hearing that events will never be the same. True. Events are evolving, which means they're changing to be best suited to the environment.

***Let's look at it as an
opportunity, not a loss.***

HERE'S HOW

Greater audience reach

Attendance at a live event is limited by time and distance. A hybrid event lifts those barriers. It's available across the globe and with a shorter time commitment.

More intimate gatherings

The live events will be smaller. But that's ok! It's easier to personalize the experience and make connections among attendees.

Impressive ROI

While most 2020 virtual events have been free, that doesn't have to be the case moving forward. You can charge for virtual access, albeit at a lower rate than in-person. This increases the potential attendee pool and the bottom-line.

More diverse speakers

Hybrid events expand not just the audience base, but speakers too. [Virtual appearances](#) can be made from a different city or even continent, and they're generally less expensive.

Extended Engagement

Establishing an online base for your event makes continued engagement easier. Attendees from the live event can join in for additional information, and everyone can opt in for continued communications.



How can Cramer help?

We've been using broadcast technology and virtual event platforms for years. We're well versed in the strengths and weakness of every possible technology, and can use that knowledge to help you pick the option that will best help you meet your objectives. But a good virtual event is about so much more than picking the right technology. You also need the right content, strategy, and production elements to make your event stand out from the crowd.

We have full creative, strategy, and production teams dedicated to every element of a great event... and are ready to put them to work for you.

Have a project in mind? [Let's chat.](#)

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