

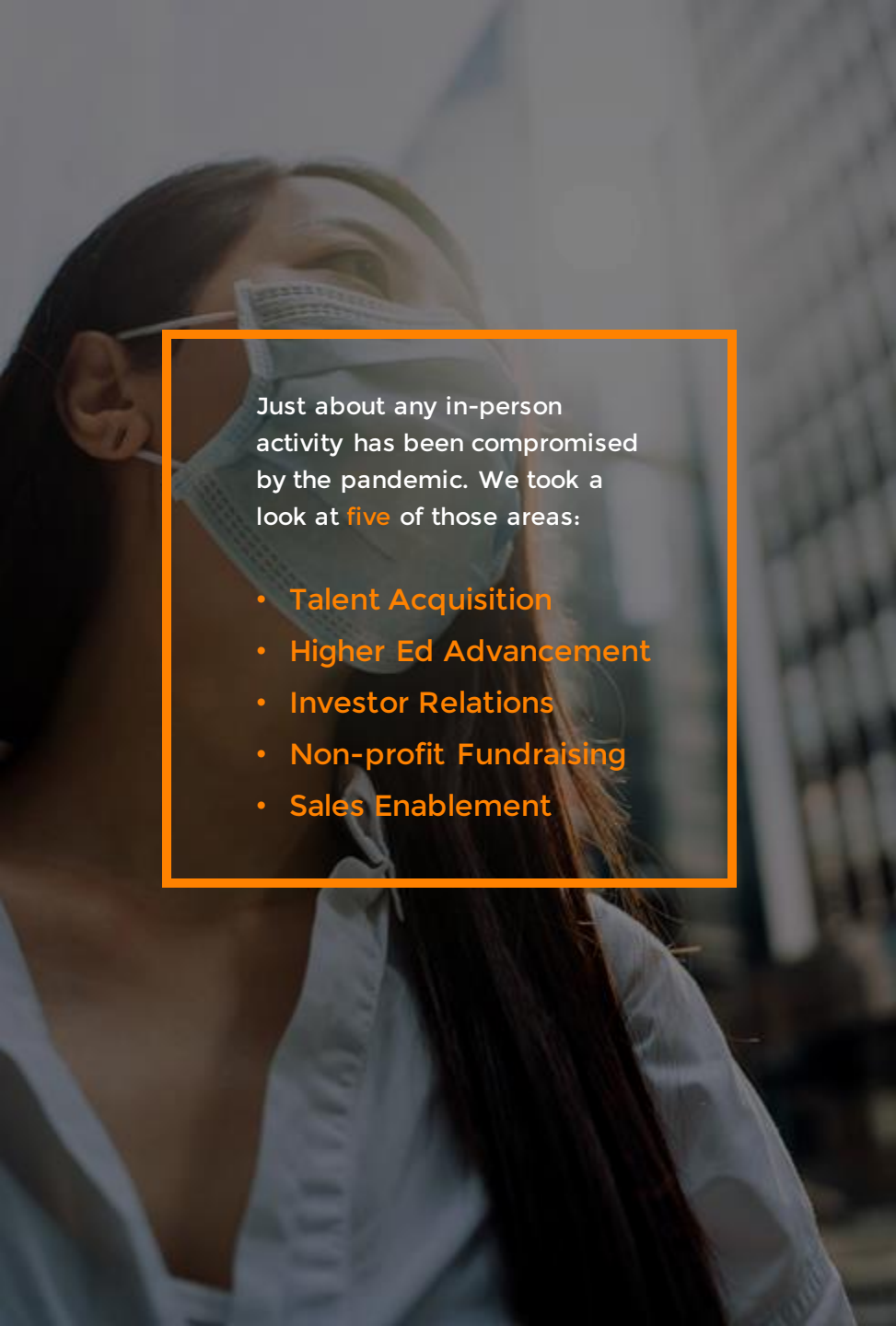
VIRTUAL EVENTS:

***They're not
just for
conferences
anymore.***



Major events shifting to virtual have grabbed the headlines from tech user conferences to political national conventions.

But these high-profile gatherings aren't the only face-to-face meetings disrupted by the pandemic.



Just about any in-person activity has been compromised by the pandemic. We took a look at **five** of those areas:

- **Talent Acquisition**
- **Higher Ed Advancement**
- **Investor Relations**
- **Non-profit Fundraising**
- **Sales Enablement**

There are opportunities for every type of enterprise to not only reimagine these events online but make them outstanding in their own right.

Going virtual doesn't have to be limited to a one-time encounter or live. The format depends on your objectives, content, and audience preferences. For each area, we provide thought starters, but every organization is different. This is intended to begin a conversation we at Cramer would be glad to continue anytime.

Talent Acquisition

An in-person interview does more than vet a candidate. A big part of the meeting is to expose the recruit to the company culture. But how does that translate online? This takes on added importance when recruiting for a remote workforce. Whatever online experience these candidates have will reflect on the work experience they can expect. Companies are looking for new ways to leverage the virtual world to communicate the heart of their brand to employees.

As companies incorporate virtual approaches to recruiting, there is a tendency to do it on a tactical level, like those video interviews. But a true virtual recruitment strategy involves looking at the entire online experience. That requires a combination of planning, creative, and technology. Ideally, when candidates “visit” a company online, their experience is choreographed to introduce the company in the most meaningful ways, to gain information from them, to share content in the most engaging way, and to communicate the corporate culture. In many ways, it becomes a personal event.

Companies are looking for new ways to leverage the virtual world to communicate the heart of their brand to employees.

A virtual event with prerecorded content, simulative Q&A, and networking can be effective for candidates at every stage. Candidates early in the consideration stages can be given access to a deeper dive into relevant content. Virtual interviews can take place within the platform, allowing the interviewer to refer to corporate information including videos from employees or demonstrations. Candidates can also explore content and ask questions in real-time, which can be an enlightening for both recruit and recruiter.

Whatever path a company chooses, recruitment and onboarding can become more fulfilling experiences by embracing the possibilities within a virtual engagement. Going all-in with a great online experience doesn't exclude in-person. When that's possible (as we all hope it will be again), it's an enhancement. But when companies like Twitter tell employees they can work from home “forever,” it's a good indication that virtual is here to stay in a very real way.



HIGHER ED ADVANCEMENT

Higher education is accustomed to taking the long-view. But right now, institutions across the country are facing unprecedented change that must be addressed immediately. Among these challenges are how to sustain advancement efforts and maintain a sense of community among alumni.

Nearly 45% of higher education institutions project double-digit declines in fundraising revenue for fiscal 2021. A growing number project a decline of 30% or more. Clearly institutions of every size must move quickly to rethink how they connect with alumni in a sustainable way. The obvious first step is replacing big-ticket galas. Other types of non-profits are have already gone this route to great success.

For example, Martha's Vineyard Community Services raised money with an online auction hosted by a famous seasonal resident, comedian and late-night TV host Seth Meyers.

Colleges and universities can enlist well-known alumni in a similar way, along with entertainment by current students (recorded virtually of course). The key factor is the quality of the broadcast. At Cramer we have the technology to take in multiple video feeds and broadcast them for a seamless experience. We also add the kind of graphic design and production values that audiences have come to expect from a sophisticated program. Beyond these one-time engagements, smaller events can help raise money and build intimate connections. Universities like Stanford and Penn tap into their deep well of professors and student talent to offer a diverse roster of discussions, networking, and lectures to keep alumni engaged.

Connecting all these online efforts is important to maintaining the community spirit that is so vital to fundraising.

The National Investor Relations Institute offered thoughts on the kinds of companies that would benefit from an effective virtual investor day strategy including:

- Companies with low valuations partly due to misunderstood or complex stories.
- Companies in industries that have complex stories – technology, healthcare, biotech and multi-segment businesses.
- Companies with outreach programs strongly focused on attracting new investors.

INVESTOR RELATIONS

Investor and analyst days are critical for companies. Investors are looking for information, and the pandemic has just magnified the need for communication. More than half (of corporate IR and counselor respondents reported an increase in investor/analyst requests for calls/meetings with C-suite executives, as compared with the same period in 2019.

While “what” is being communicated is critical, “how” it is being broadcast matters as well. As IR Magazine noted, “In order to build trust, your virtual investor event cannot just be a conference call or a one-way presentation. People need to see executives in action and investors in particular want to see ‘the whites of their eyes.’ In order to project confidence, stability, and calm – all the qualities you want to see the company you’re investing money in – the broadcast must be bullet-proof. Cramer’s Broadcast Center is equipped to take in and switch between multiple remote presenters, create unique layered graphics to enhance presentations, and execute to exacting security and compliance standards, all with redundant system to ensure a seamless production.

Since virtual events have become common across all sectors, audience expectations for production values and engagement have gone up. Investors are no different. Since the quality of the broadcast is a reflection of the host company, it is critical to make the virtual investor day a brand-worthy experience.



NON-PROFIT FUNDRAISING

“The thrill of the destination is what gets them through.”

In an article for The Chronicle for Philanthropy, fundraising expert Joan Garry likened the donor journey to a vacation car ride with kids: “The thrill of the destination is what gets them through.” Being able to deeply connect donors to an organization’s mission is key. That’s where the tools of a virtual event can be very effective.

Video is powerful both in its storytelling potential and its accessibility. Try pairing a well-produced video about the work an organization is doing with content submitted by its constituents. This ensures that the key points are made while adding in a degree of spontaneity.

Holding a virtual gala can actually feel more intimate than in-person. For instance, a live Q&A with a high-profile supporter brings that person directly into a donor’s home with a real one-to-one feeling. The online event is also a chance to give donors a platform to express their support. It’s easy to turn the “stage” over virtually and let donors take the spotlight for a short time.

Non-profits can take a cue from PBS fundraising by presenting exclusive entertainment or access to speakers interspersed with a call to donate. It’s also possible to give donors access to recorded segments that they can in turn share to encourage community donations. Incorporating networking or times to socialize are other ways to connect the community and rally them.

Choosing a partner to coordinate the production and manage the platform is an investment many organizations find worthwhile. It ensures a smooth experience for donors and allows organizers to focus on the relationships being nurtured.

Sales Enablement

Sales teams thrive on the connection of a face-to-face meeting. It's the foundation of a personal relationship and the time spent together was invaluable. But in today's environment when these meetings are not possible, reps are looking for effective ways to pivot. Challenges range from the tactical "How do I give a demo?" to the fundamental "How do I grab and retain a customer's attention?" Existing outlets like email, virtual event and conferencing platforms, and social and owned-digital channels can all be leveraged. The challenge? Every company will be using the same channels.

Breakthrough moments depend on valued content and engaging delivery. There are two kinds of content that create real value: new information or a new perspective. If you don't have a new offering, service, or data, or you want to reinforce what has already been shared, you can offer a new perspective. For instance, you can look at a problem from a different vantage point, such as a user's perspective instead of a technician's view or putting a solution within the context of a range of options. Developing a targeted content strategy that aligns with business objectives allows the sales team to sustain interactions in a way that's meaningful to both the customer and the company.

It's worth noting that for companies that depend on Executive Briefing Centers, the loss of those in-person meetings is particularly acute. According to a recent study by the Association of Briefing Program Managers, 79% of

In today's environment when in-person meetings are not possible, reps are looking for effective ways to pivot.

customers said their briefing center meeting increased their purchase amount. For those organizations, a virtual, invitation-only virtual event can be an effective alternative. Customers early in the consideration stages can be given access to a deeper dive into relevant content. Personal meetings can take place within the platform, allowing the sales rep to refer to corporate information including videos from experts or demonstrations. Customers can also explore content and ask questions in real-time, which can be an enlightening for both the sales and marketing teams. The event can even become an evergreen destination.

Across all channels, highly visual formats like video, animation, and infographics are proven to increase engagement. By consistently providing relevant information, sales reps can boost confidence and reduce skepticism among customers.



Have a challenge? Let's talk.

This is the moment where experience matters. For more than 35 years we've been creating events and content that capture the heart, engage the mind, and grow loyalty. It's why Cramer is the agency brands trust when it matters most.

Let's reimagine your next event. Call **Pat Martin** at 781-278-2300 or email theteam@cramer.com to get the conversation started. And be sure to visit cramer.com for more insights.

781.278.2300 | cramer.com

