

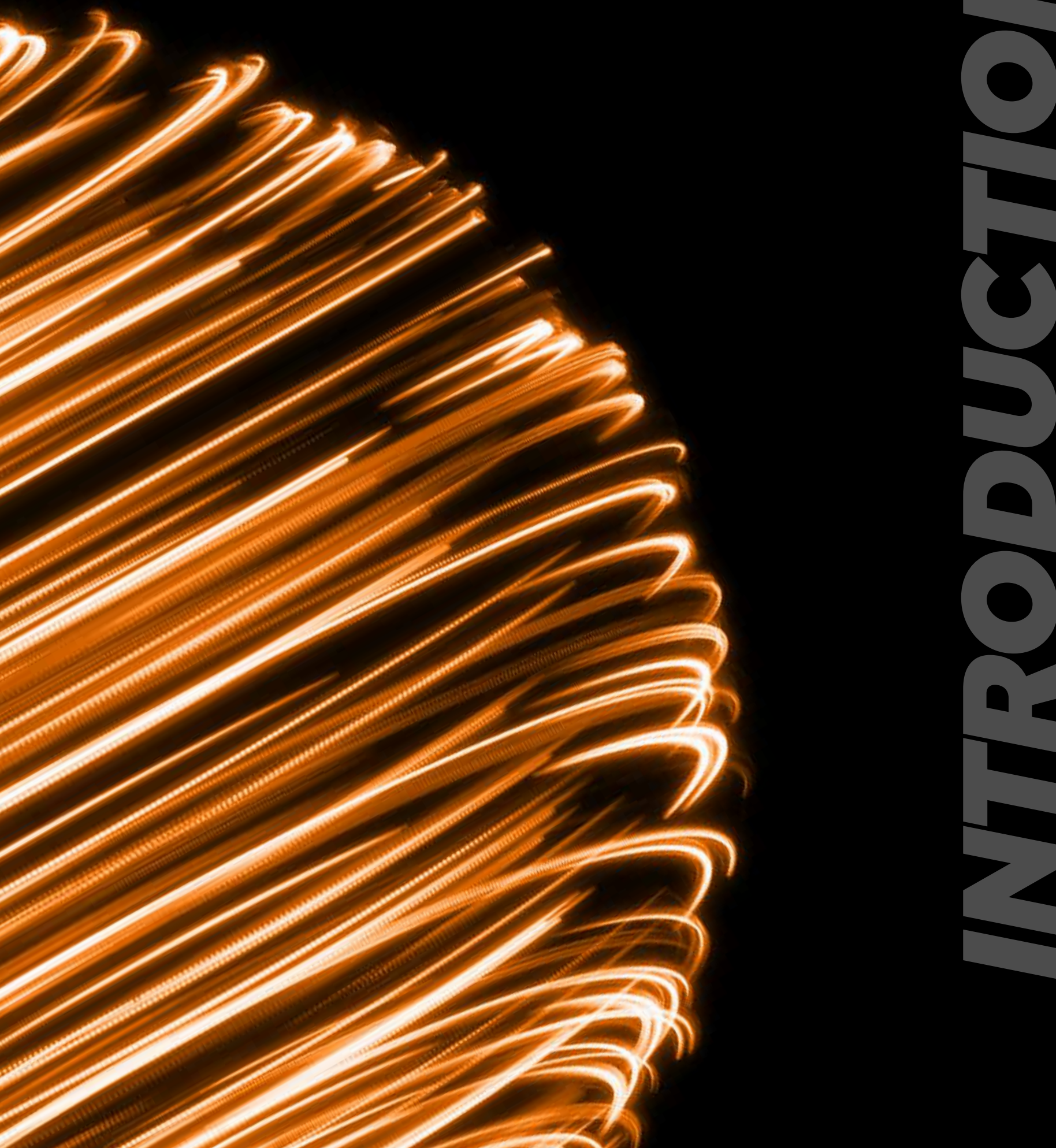


# ***HYBRID EVENTS EXPLAINED***

*A guide to producing  
hybrid events that  
engage audiences  
and drive business*

**CRAMER**





**LET'S START  
WITH WHAT A  
HYBRID EVENT  
IS NOT.**

**IT IS NOT A COMPROMISE.**

**IT IS NOT A BUZZWORD.**

**IT IS NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT.**

**AND IT CERTAINLY  
IS NOT GOING AWAY.**



The hybrid event may be one of the most valuable and enduring developments to come out of the pandemic.

The concept of having an online and in-person audience has been around for a while. But often it wasn't a well-conceived experience – more like a live-streaming exercise. Now that we understand better how to create a great online experience to complement the power of an in-person event, creating an event that caters to both audiences makes sense.

## **BENEFITS OF THIS BLENDED APPROACH INCLUDE:**

### **BROADENING THE AUDIENCE**

When you remove the barriers of travel and time commitment, you open a world of possibilities. Audience demographics and geographic reach broaden. Accessibility challenges can be overcome. And the same advantages apply to your speakers.

### **DRIVING ATTENDANCE FOR FUTURE IN-PERSON EVENTS**

This is the time to access prospects that wouldn't commit, customers that were too busy, students that couldn't afford the expense. Show them the value of your program and create enough FOMO that they need to be there next year.

### **MAKING MORE CONNECTIONS**

It's a fact that when someone goes to an event, they stick with who they already know or came with 80% of the time. Including virtual allows attendees to expand their own reach, based on interests, industries, peer groups and more.

### **STAYING NIMBLE**

Can we all agree that life is unpredictable? Having the flexibility to pivot from in-person to online is an important piece of insurance in an uncertain world. A hybrid approach allows your team to be flexible.

So how do you jump into hybrid? We've broken it down into three stages – Plan, Engage, Extend. Each builds up the other to create a framework for success.

PLAN

***WE SAID AT THE  
START THAT  
HYBRID IS NOT  
A BUZZWORD.***

*However, it is a new one  
for the event industry.*

## **The different ‘flavors’ of hybrid impact everything from your technology to your agenda.**

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Hybrid’s basic meaning is an event with dual in-person/virtual audiences.

Here are some options:

### **1. VIRTUAL FIRST**

In a virtual first hybrid event model, your primary goal is to produce the best experience for your online attendees. There is a single source of content generation, for example, all your speakers are presenting from the same studio, but the content delivery is aimed at the virtual audience. There may be a small in-person audience, but the goal for this model is increased reach and extended engagement.

Virtual first is the easiest type of hybrid event to plan. It allows for maximum versatility. No matter if there is a storm, a problem at a venue, or a pandemic- the show can still go on. Additionally, the online first model provides the opportunity for people to consume the content in small groups or on their own time, making events more accessible and convenient. It is what many companies are doing now, and it has been working well.

### **2. HUB AND SPOKE**

For a hub and spoke hybrid event production model you have multiple sources of content generation that are aggregated into a single program, and then, sent out in a broadcast to multiple locations. These places can be viewing parties or local offices. It seamlessly combines the high-production value and reach of virtual first approach with the interactivity and human connection of an in-person first approach.

This model is our favorite as the industry experiments and transitions into combining the best of both experiences. Rather than putting 1,000 people together in 1 room, you can put a few people together in a lot of places. With a hub and spoke hybrid production model be careful not to overcomplicate the matrix of connections and technology behind it. When done well, this could be the most cost-effective way to provide a valuable experience for a large audience.

### **3. IN -PERSON FIRST**

We have all done it, we all know it works. For the in-person first hybrid event production model, your primary focus is the onsite experience for attendees. You build out the on-site experience and plan to webcast out the content from some or all of the event sessions. Keep in mind, your audience’s expectation of what a webcast is has changed, so that experience must be more robust now.

While the on-site attendee experience is your focus, we need to start thinking about little factors such as “how is the opening video going to play at home?” or “does this venue have strong and reliable internet connection?”. Therefore, production capabilities are going to be super important in executing a successful event. No falling back on what you used to do!

### **4. FULL IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL**

Full in-person and full virtual is the hybrid event model for people that want to produce an event with the best of both virtual and on-site experiences. This model gives the greatest opportunity for content. You can provide exclusive content for both the on-site and virtual attendees. Then everyone can explore that content on-demand and at their own convenience after the program.





**To decide the right format for your event, start here:**

*Who are you trying to reach (priority audiences)?*

*Why is this event important to business goals?*

*What will the audience gain?*



**Also consider this:**

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**LOGISTICS**

The size and location of your audience matters. For instance, a hybrid event presents natural advantages when trying to reach a global audience. Does the entire audience need to do things “hands-on.”? Or can that experience be unique to a select group of in-person attendees?

**AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS**

Their willingness to travel, their preference for in-person networking, their comfort level with technology – these insights go into creating a persona that helps inform the hybrid experience. When it comes to audience, don’t forget to evaluate who YOU want to see in-person. Hybrid presents a great opportunity to prioritize your audience, bringing high-value clients on-site for an up-leveled experience you wouldn’t be able to extend to everyone.

Planning a hybrid event involves many of the same steps any other type of event would. At Cramer, we bring our clients through our **PRISM** methodology to define the event's

**Purpose** (the business drivers),

**Relevance** (where it fits into the attendee's life), and

**Identity** (what makes this event unique). That leads to the development of the event

**Strategy** (guiding vision and principles) and

**Map** (experience and execution plan).

So, when planning, pay attention to these keys to success:

#### STRATEGY

- Message/Theme
- Identify keynotes and presenters able to support that message
- Desired experiences by audience segment (leads to who will be invited to attend in-person)
- Extended communications plan
- Agenda
- Attendee journey

#### PRODUCTION

- Venue & platform selection
- Production partnerships
- Broadcast capabilities
- Technology considerations
- Essential team
- Safety protocols

#### CREATIVE

- What vibe/feeling do you want to create
- Brand continuity
- Content formats
  - PowerPoint
  - Video
  - Graphics
  - Animation
  - Music
- Speaker preparation

#### SCHEDULING

- Plan virtual and in-person in parallel
- Consider the audience time zones
- Best practices on length of event





***CONTENT IS WHERE  
IT ALL BEGINS.***



## **At Cramer, we talk about content as currency. It is what you offer your audience in exchange for their time and attention.**

With a foundation of meaningful content, you can in turn create engagement – those interactions that stimulate the senses, tug at the heart, and excite the mind. Engagement can be enhanced in several ways. Taking a page out of the television playbook, various formats and devices, such as cliff hangers and an episodic approach, can heighten interest.

### **TECHNOLOGY IS AN ENABLER.**

It reduces the friction in interactions, raises production values, surprises and delights, and amplifies the experience. Everything from polling apps to virtual reality can enhance the interaction between your audience and your brand, but be sure to identify a clear strategy, or else it quickly loses its impact. Remember interaction does not equal engagement.

### **ENTERTAINMENT ISN'T JUST A "NICE-TO-HAVE."**

It's a powerful way to engage your audience emotionally. In the attendee journey, it also provides a moment to recharge, which is important to both online and on-site audiences.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR HYBRID NETWORKING.**

There is no doubt that networking is best in person, especially the casual encounters that can only happen on-site. However, a purposeful approach can benefit both sides of the hybrid event and offers an opportunity to bring the two audiences together. Connecting a member of the virtual audience with an on-site attendee works very well because conversations can happen anywhere. This sort of matchmaking opens possibilities for meeting a broader variety of people. It's an enriching approach that takes advantage of the unique character of a hybrid event.

Hybrid presents three paths to engagement: online, on-site, and shared.

Creating moments of engagement that cannot happen virtually validates an attendee's choice to travel and devote time to the event. Engagement online has its own cadence because of distractions and screen fatigue. Shared engagement is a matter of presence – bringing the two audiences together through video, chat, and interaction. Emcees and hosts provide continuity for both audiences and can play a key role in facilitating online/on-site interchanges. This shared engagement is a new frontier but may prove to be the most rewarding aspect of producing hybrid events.



EXTEND

***THE DAYS OF A  
STAND-ALONE  
EVENT ARE GONE.***



## ***An event is a pillar in a continuing relationship with your audience.***

Hybrid is well positioned to engage beyond the day of the event. Here are five ways to extend the value of your content to extend engagement with your audience.

### **AMORTIZE**

First, plan a timeline for how your content can be leveraged. Do you have a strategic plan on how to make sure people will continue talking about your hybrid event 6 or 12 months down the line? Make sure to ask the questions of:

**WHO:** Who is your target audience?

**WHAT:** What are your key messages and topics that resonate with them?

**WHERE:** Where is your audience consuming information? Where do you need to build touchpoints?

**HOW:** How will you share the content? What format will that take?

### **ATOMIZE**

Look at your content and decide how you can split it up. How can you share the same information in different formats? Use the event content as your “hero asset” and repurpose the information in quote graphics, podcasts, blog posts, quick video snippets, or any other media format to simplify topics and share them in digestible pieces. Make sure your content is fit for the channels you targeted in your amortization strategy. This will keep the discussion going and give your followers a second chance to see and understand your content. During this process, make sure to release content that can stand alone, and brand your work so you always get the credit you deserve.

### **AGGREGATE**

The opposite of atomization, this creates a one-stop shop to help consumers find everything they are looking for at once. Aggregation helps give an overview of everything from an event to ensure that the audience members get all the information they need. It also helps share the content of the event with people that may not have been able to attend. Aggregate all your key messages into a case study, an eBook, or even a “yearbook” that goes over events and insights from the past year.

### **CONGREGATE**

Leverage your platform or create a unique site for all audience members to come together and discuss the topics of the event. This is more than just an on-demand depository. Create a community that engages with and challenges each other, letting discussions of the event’s topics continue post-production. Establishing this community during the event sparks excitement and gives attendees a chance to consider what they might want to discuss with others.

### **COLLABORATE**

Invite the community to interact with your content. You can simply start with polls on social media, and you can drive the discussion to your congregation platform to further collaborate. Send a follow-up survey and publish the results. Start asking questions and responding to the ideas of others on the congregation webpage. This virtual collaboration creates an opportunity for in-person regroups to discuss the concepts that have been shared on the platform, and to build real relationships with your most engaged audience members.



## **FINAL THOUGHT**

Hybrid gives us a chance to reimagine events. We are inventing the genre, taking the best of virtual and in-person experiences to create a versatile and effective new model. Instead of focusing on “getting back” to face-to-face events, we can focus on what makes sense for the business and the audience. Sometimes meeting in person is the best choice. Sometimes it’s not. The point is we have options now.

***In fact, we may want to stop calling these hybrid events. A better moniker might be flexible. That’s what’s most exciting about this approach to bringing audiences together, and why hybrid is here to stay.***

**CRAMER**

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

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