

FOUR ESSENTIAL KEYS

To Making Hybrid Team Building Events a Success



CLEAR GOALS



TECHNOLOGY



LOGISTICS



PROVIDER

Four Essential Keys to Success with Hybrid Team Building Events

Introduction

As economies re-open from the global pandemic and the events industry emerges from lockdown, three trends are clear:

- Virtual events, while no longer the only option, are here to stay. According to recent [research from EventMB](#), 69% of planners say they will continue with increased use of virtual gatherings after in-person events return, with the biggest drivers being increased attendance/reach and significantly lower overhead costs.
- As live events resume, there will be a higher bar for creating experiences that justify the time and cost of attending.
- Hybrid events will be increasingly popular. Nearly [three-quarters of participants](#) believe events should have a virtual component going forward, and [76](#) to [79%](#) of planners say they expect to run at least one hybrid event in the next 12 months.



The biggest challenge for virtual events has been [figuring out how to engage](#) a remote audience. The biggest challenge in producing hybrid events is making both sets of participants, those attending in-person and those online, feel actively engaged.

That's particularly the case for team building programs, where engagement – rather than education or presenting information—is the core reason for the event.

But it's not an insurmountable challenge by any means. This ebook details four key strategies to help maximize engagement for both virtual and live participants at hybrid events, whether they are focused solely on team building or are broader events with a team building component.

Three Scenarios for Hybrid Events

Before getting into those four strategies, it's important to note three different situations in which hybrid team building events can occur, and the considerations that apply in each case.



Dedicated Hybrid Team Building Event

This is the simplest scenario: you are organizing a stand-alone team building event, lasting anywhere from 90 minutes to a full day, with live attendees in one location and remote attendees participating virtually. Your team building program provider should be able to deliver the technology and expertise to create a hybrid event customized to your needs.

Hybrid Session Within a Live Event

This is only a slight variation on the stand-alone hybrid team building event described above. In this case, a group of employees gathered for a day-long (or days-long) in-person meeting is joined for one segment of time with a collection of remote employees for a team building program.

For example, all headquarters employees may be attending a day-long meeting featuring multiple presentations. During one 90-minute span in the afternoon, they participate in a hybrid team building exercise with remote employees in different regions. This is similar to a stand-alone program, except the hybrid team building is one component within a larger live event.

Team Building Program Within a Totally Hybrid Event

This is the most complex scenario: the organization is running a day(s)-long hybrid event, with one group of employees gathered in one place live and remote employees in various locations participating virtually.

For example, a company is launching a new product. The engineering and marketing groups are explaining the features and benefits live to an in-person group of employees plus remote sales people online located across the country. Near the close of the event, a team building program provider hosts a trivia game (custom developed with the engineering and marketing teams) to test everyone's knowledge of the new product, with prizes for high scores.

In this scenario, it's vital to identify a team building program provider that's technology savvy and can develop a plan to work with the company's chosen technology, keeping in mind this may limit some features compared to a stand-alone hybrid program.

Four Vital Considerations for Optimizing Hybrid Event Engagement

The ability to network face-to-face and ask questions directly of presenters or facilitators is what makes in-person events valuable and compelling. It's challenging to mimic that experience online, though virtual event technology has certainly advanced remarkably since just 2019.

But it's even more challenging to manage engagement in a hybrid environment, where you are trying to optimize a shared experience for both in-person and virtual attendees. While it's impossible to provide the *same* experience to both groups, it's very possible to deliver an experience that both sets of participants find *engaging and valuable*. Here are four keys to making that happen.

1. Match Your Choice of Team Building Program Provider to the Scale of Your Event

It's relatively easy to facilitate team building programs for small groups of a few dozen (or fewer) employees, whether those are in person, virtual, or hybrid. Almost any team building company can manage small events, and some even specialize in working with smaller groups.



But if you are planning a large hybrid team building event, involving 100 or more participants, it's vital to choose a partner who can make big events run smoothly. To find the right vendor, there are two key questions to ask:

Do they have the experience? Carefully evaluate the provider's track record. What is the largest event they've facilitated? How many events of your size have they done? Check their online reviews. Are they coming from recognizable companies, are there a lot of them, and are they positive?

Can they produce a solid plan? As you discuss your vision and goals with a hybrid team building program provider, their response and plans should inspire a feeling of confidence - not concern. Make sure you understand the details of the plan and feel positive about the experience your team will have. The right program provider should be able to answer all of your questions, explain details clearly, and address any apprehensions you may have.

2. Get the Right Technology

There are three key technology areas to keep in mind when organizing a hybrid team building event. Any program provider should be strong on at least one; the best deliver in all three areas.



Event app: This is the most visible technology component to your participants, so it's vital to get an app that will effectively engage both your in-person and virtual guests. Look for an app that offers your group a variety of live, hybrid, and virtual activity options including each team's ability to take pictures and video clips in real time, and have immediate access to them.

Integration: Look for a technology-savvy provider that can work with key technology you already have in place. A few key capabilities to ask about are the ability to work with popular virtual event platforms like Zoom; the ability to export data (such as game scores) as well as import it (such as rewards); and capability to easily download photos and video clips taken in the app.

Client portal: Though your attendees won't see this, it's one of the most important technology components for your team. Hybrid team building programs have many moving parts: dates, times, locations, people, and activities. Trying to manage everything using emails and phone calls is exhausting and error-prone.

Ask your provider about the features of their client portal. It should enable you to track contracts, facilitators, key contacts, payments, and logistics in a single system, saving you time and frustration.

A screenshot of a client portal dashboard. The top navigation bar includes: Overview (selected), Location, Weather, Shipping, Documents, Payment, FAQs, and Contacts. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Event Details:** Title "Bike Build Donation® with iPad®", "Events starts in: 140d 1h 20m 18s", "Start Time: 12:00pm End Time: 2:30pm", "Contract Number: 00000-7817", "Event Date: 02-25-2020", "Number of Participants: 500". A circular progress indicator shows "50% complete".
- Venue Address:** "ABC GMC - Disney Springs Walking Bridge, Orlando, FL 32830". Below is a Google Map showing the location.
- Contacts:** A list of five contacts with profile pictures and "CONTACT" buttons: Roy Charette (SALES REPRESENTATIVE), Jen Amato (CONTRACT MANAGER), Sandy Ehrhardt (OWNERS SPECIALIST), Mychelle Corbett (PROGRAM MANAGER), and Jen Ciesluk (PRODUCTION MANAGER).
- Status Indicators:** Four icons with labels: "Payment PAID" (green), "Facilitator NOT ASSIGNED" (orange), "Contract CONTRACT SIGNED" (green), and "Shipping NOT DELIVERED" (orange).
- Weather:** "Today 10/8/2019", "81°", "High 87°", "Low 73°", "humidity 80", "wind 5 mph ENE".

SIDEBAR:

Using an Event App for a Hybrid Bike Build Donation®



The SmartHunts® event app ([SmartHunts.com](https://www.SmartHunts.com)) offers numerous games and team building activities, and includes a wide array of features.

One type of event is a hybrid Bike Build Donation® program. Live teams of employees assemble bicycles to donate to a local charity, while collaborating with remote team members.

In this example, an in-person team is taking a selfie with their remote teammates who appear on the iPad screen on the tripod behind them. Cameras around the room broadcast the event to all remote participants, who interact with their in-house team to gain points by answering trivia game questions and competing in fun team challenges.

During this hybrid team building event, remote participants join their in-person teams via the Zoom/SmartHunts App integration, and play along using the app on their phones and Zoom on their computers. Each in-person team has two iPads: one for playing the game, and the other to see and interact with their remote teammates.

3. Nail the Logistics

If your event involves building or assembling physical items including bicycles, wheelchairs, guitars, care packs and other donation items in a hybrid Charitable CSR event, it's vital to get the right inventory and equipment to the right place at the right time.

Ask your team building event partner about:

- their experience and track record in this area;
- challenges they have faced and how they have overcome them;
- their plan for getting inventory delivered to your event;
- their policies and requirements;
- and most importantly; do they have the inventory in stock?

Global supply chains are still recovering from pandemic-induced shutdowns and delays. Don't risk letting supply chain and delivery snafus impact your event.

4. Establish Clear Goals



"Team building" is a broad term, encompassing events that can achieve a range of goals from improving collaboration to professional development to giving back to the community. The very first step in organizing your hybrid team building event should be articulating your "why"—what is the purpose of the activity, and what objectives do you want to achieve?

Your team building program partner should be able to provide guidance, ideas, and recommendations in this area, as well as asking smart questions.

According to the Association of Destination Management Executives International (ADMEI) Handbook, here are 17 of the most common objectives for different types of team building events:

1. **Communication** - promoting effective techniques for information sharing
2. **Collaboration** - working together and celebrating as a team
3. **Connection** - bonding as a team
4. **Having fun and enjoying each other's company** - creating a more enjoyable workplace
5. **New hires and re-organization** - integrating individuals into an organization
6. **Motivating a team** - delivering activities that excite and energize

7. **Diversity and inclusion** – fostering understanding of how the unique traits of each individual factor into a team’s composition
8. **New strategy or company direction** – getting aligned with company goals
9. **Learn more about themselves** – and learn more about others!
10. **Celebrate recent achievements** – providing recognition and appreciation
11. **Enhance trust and respect** - developing relationships built on the foundation of common goals and good intentions
12. **Team-building pillars** – directing hands-on exploration of what constitutes a high-functioning team. Using activities and challenges to promote team efficiency and support
13. **Goal setting** - developing a **Shared Vision and Role Clarification**
14. **Promoting accountability** - effective planning and follow through
15. **Strategies for dealing with team conflict** – analyzing individual and team barriers to being more productive
16. **Stress management techniques** – assisting in developing a positive work climate
17. **Problem solving** - completing challenging tasks within specific rules and guidelines, often with limited resources

Starting the process with the end goal in mind will help you ask your team building partner the right questions, and help them recommend or customize a program that will deliver true value to your organization.



What to Look for in a Team Building Program Provider

Organizing and producing a successful hybrid team building event requires you to not only address the four vital considerations above, but also bring together the right vendor partners to help you make it happen.

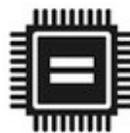
Depending on the duration and design of your event, suppliers may include a venue, catering, sound and lighting, and a virtual event platform. But regardless, and most importantly, it will include your team building program provider. Here are some of the key questions to ask yourself and your team to make sure you choose a partner aligned with your organization and objectives:



Does the vendor understand your goals? Do they ask intelligent, thought-provoking questions and provide value-added recommendations? Almost every provider in this space can talk a good game. The best are also excellent listeners.



Are they appropriate for the size of your event? You don't need an enterprise-level provider for a couple of dozen (or fewer) attendees. But for large events, with hundreds or even thousands of participants, make sure your vendor has the staff, the experience, and the knowledge to manage that scale—particularly when the complexity of the hybrid format is added to the mix.



Are they tech savvy? What do they bring to the table? Zoom is fine as one component of your hybrid event, but look for a vendor that augments standard tools with their own value-added technology.



Are they easy to work with? Responsive? Do they offer client tools? Producing an event is stressful. Producing a hybrid event is even more so, since you have two distinct audiences to worry about. Your program partner should provide a process and tools (like a full-featured client portal) that alleviates your stress rather than adding to it.



Can they provide multiple relevant references? What do clients say about them? Check into the quality, quantity, and recency of their online reviews.



Are they “plugged in” with industry affiliations? You can tell a lot about a vendor by the company they keep. The best team building program providers are not just members but actively participate with leading associations like Meeting Planners International (MPI) and ADMEI, in areas like knowledge sharing and content creation.



What does their pricing look like? Keep in mind that cost should be only a qualifier, not a deciding factor. Price is often a reflection of quality, but it also reflects scale. Choose a vendor that provides value for the size of event you are planning.



What is their level of expertise in team building? Evaluate prospective providers based on their level of professionalism, range of programs, current client list and the quality and experience of their facilitators.



Are they innovative? Do they offer anything unique? Bike builds and trivia games are popular, and for good reasons. If you’re looking for that type of program, then your key questions will be around the ability of your partner to deliver an event that will be engaging for both your in-person and online participants, at the scale you need. But if you want to venture beyond typical activities, look for a vendor that has developed unique programs along with supporting technology.

Summary:

The “Closing Session”

Meeting and event planners have struggled throughout the pandemic with trying to mimic the engagement quality of live gatherings in their virtual events. As virus concerns subside and economies reopen, it's clear that hybrid events will play a larger role going forward. These create even greater challenges for planners, as they struggle to optimize the experience for both in-person and virtual attendees who are interacting with each other.

Team building programs can be delivered in a hybrid environment either as standalone activities or as one component of larger gatherings. Planners in these situations need to consider four key elements: scale, technology, logistics, and objectives.

To select the ideal team building program partner, planners should ask questions not only about goals, scale, and tech, but also responsiveness, client service, customer ratings and reviews, industry affiliations, expertise, and innovation.

By working with the right provider, planners can produce hybrid team building events that meet the challenge of providing both in-person and online audiences with an enjoyable, productive, and engaging experience.

About Best Corporate Events

[Best Corporate Events](#) (BEST) is the highest-rated team event company in America. They deliver Live, Hybrid, and Virtual events featuring their proprietary event apps. BEST offers time-saving client portal technology, experienced facilitators, and unique trademarked programs. They deliver Team Building activities, Charitable CSR events, Corporate Entertainment, Game Shows, Training Sessions, and Professional Development workshops that can scale from small to very large groups. Corporate Meeting and Event Planners, Destination Management Companies (DMCs), Meeting and Incentive companies (M&Is), and M&E Planning companies use BEST to provide fun team events for their employees and clients.

