

How to create a great event in 2021*

Create a great virtual or physical conference, employee engagement event or brand activation in 2021 with our nine tips.

*Yes we mean even in this strange 2021 kind of Covid limbo world.





Multi Award-Winning Creative Production Agency

Delivering employee engagement with
virtual & live-events. Innovative and
inspired live & virtual brand activations.



Recipient of
10 awards at



fuelhq.ie

Introduction

A passionate event professionals is always ready to adapt, this past 18 months has put that to the test and extended well beyond just event professionals. Myself and Jamie are so proud of how our team have reacted and enhanced our service offering to create some amazing events and a lifetime of memories that we will continue to cherish including the award-winning All Together Gathering with PayPal, Connected Christmas with AIB and Dalkey Book Festival featuring Matt Damon and U2's the Edge.

Impactful activations certainly haven't gone away, now is a better time than ever to do some good and/or stand out from the crowd for taking that important step back into the real world. In partnership with Teneo, we created an award winning activation for Focus Ireland to highlight the emergency accommodation crisis. This was featured across the national media including RTÉ news. We also developed an award-winning experiential activation with Dundrum Town Centre bringing Christmas to life. Both of these activations were conceived with a flexible plan that could adapt to restrictions and delivered the best possible results for our clients.

As 2021 progresses, we can see the most exciting phase is just about to come. There is no doubt the way we host events, employee engagement campaigns and brand activations will continue to look different from 2019. The layer of tech that has been adapted has propelled the user experience forward and we are ready to deliver the best and most innovative solutions to suit your objectives.

It is really important to maximise the experience for your attendees, customers and general users. In this eBook, we'll break down the ways to structure a great event, giving you all you need to know about planning in the world we live in right now. Plus, our great team at Fuel will give you 9 quick tips they swear by.

If you'd like to join clients such as Google, Facebook, PayPal and AIB working with Fuel, we would love to discuss with you the possibilities for virtual, physical or hybrid events in 2021.

We can give you a virtual tour of what your event could look like using our custom built platform or drop in for a cuppa to Studio 11 on Camden Street.



Brian McDermott
Director, Fuel



Jamie Deasy
Director, Fuel



[Michael D Higgins at **Dalkey Book Festival** \(Virtual event hosted on Vstage platform\)](#)



[PayPal "All Together Gathering" End of Year Global Party \(Virtual event\)](#)

Start by setting SMART goals

Goals are a crucial early step toward hosting a successful event, productive conference, or creating an awesome brand activation. A good set of goals will help inspire you and your team to work toward a common outcome and should provide a clear sense of purpose as to why you're all working so hard.

However, some goals are more helpful than others. We like the SMART goal principle.

If you've never heard of them, SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. These goals are usually tied to a specific number, such as the amount of money raised by your event, or number of people signed up to attend your conference. The goal should also come with a deadline.

Select your goals thoughtfully because they will impact everything as you proceed with planning. Think about what you hope to accomplish with your project, and ways you can track it using specific, measurable criteria.



Pro-Tip

If you're struggling to come up with an initial goal, have a look back on previous events or brand activations that you managed. You can build a SMART goal based on the performance and results you saw in the past - taking into account any changes to your objectives, products or services, and adjusting for any other environmental factors : Covid 19 for example.

Jonathan Woods
Project Director, Fuel



Take the planning phase seriously

Your detailed plan should come after the big-picture goal setting because everything you do after setting your big goals should trickle down from that initial vision.

Once you have listed out your goals, you can begin putting those goals into a step-by-step plan that will guide you and your team toward achieving those objectives. Plans can obviously change as you move forward, but having a basic outline of tasks to accomplish will help you get started without getting overwhelmed.

This is also the time when you should start pulling together a realistic budget, with a bit of overspending factored in. A budget not only keeps you fiscally responsible, but it also keeps your event within the appropriate size and scope. If you begin thinking too big, you can easily become overwhelmed, but a budget is a solid way to reel your team in and focus on doing a smaller set of tasks well.



Pro-Tip

To help keep the planning process organized, consider adopting a few digital tools for you and your team. You could use digital tools such as Asana, Monday.com or Trello to manage your tasks and keep your team on the same page.

Nikki Tunney
Account Director, Fuel



THE BANQUET



Tesco Finest Banquet

Always keep your target audience in mind

Focus on your audience and what medium, content and platform will be the best fit for them. There's no point in creating an event that you'll love, but your audience doesn't find helpful or accessible.

Start by identifying your target audience by common interests, demographic criteria, and job titles, etc. As you go about planning your event, keep this type of person in mind when making decisions.

For example, pay attention to who the industry leaders are in your targeted audience's profession and what topics they're interested in. This way of thinking will help you decide which sessions to offer at a conference, who to book as a keynote speaker, and what topics are most relatable to those in the industry.

Having a clear understanding of your target audience also makes it easier to communicate the purpose of your event to others. So, if you're looking for a keynote speaker, you can tell them about the audience and why they'd be interested in hearing them speak.

Some event organizers fall into the trap of chasing the most popular names in the industry, despite the fact that there may be other, more interesting individuals or topics that people would benefit from.



Pro-Tip

Check out industry publications and social media accounts to get ideas about niche speakers and topics so you can provide a unique experience and keep your speaker fees reasonable. Check out our post about great brand activations for more great inspiration [here](#).

Laura Nugent
Senior Event Producer, Fuel





Matt Damon interviewed by David McWilliams at **Dalkey Book Festival**

Measure your success with metrics

Whatever can be measured, can be managed. As you're creating your goals, think about what sorts of data you could collect to ensure you are meeting those goals. While attendance numbers can give you a good idea of how popular an event is, further data such as engagement rates and interactions will give you a better insight into the overall success of your event.

For example, if you wanted to create a successful networking event, you may consider tracking how many attendees connected with new people during the event. Many companies are interested in engaging with remote workers located around the world, so they may want to measure engagement rates during the event.

But, how do we get this type of data?

One common method for evaluating an event are "smile sheets" that are handed out after a session or interaction, according to [Harvard Business Review](#). It's essentially a short survey about their satisfaction with the experience. You can even have people rate the interaction on a scale of one to five, so you can have easy data points to record for future reference.

At Fuel, we built our own platform that measures engagement success and interactivity at events. The platform gives in-depth feedback including drop-off rates, types of interactions, poll results, and more.



Pro-Tip

Set up a metrics tracking plan early on in the planning process. Be sure your team understands what metrics you will be tracking and how they can access the data. Also, have a plan for updating metrics and appoint a person to manage it during the event.

Rebecca Lawlor
Account Director, Fuel



The Wow Factor

You can help generate a wow factor for a brand by connecting the experience to emotion. There are 8 primary emotions; anger, anticipation, joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness and disgust. Each one of these emotions are experienced throughout a normal day, even if it is for a split second.

Creating opportunities to connect with your event attendee around an emotion such as joy, trust and surprise sounds challenging but is achievable.

Whether your objectives are to improve the level of employee engagement, to increase trust in a brand, or to ensure the return of an audience to your festival year-on-year, creating opportunities to connect on an emotional level is well worth the effort!

At Fuel we always strive to create an opportunity for an emotional response to our events, broadcasts and brand activations. Emotions connect people to brands in a lasting way; they allow brands to resonate with our internal value systems, and in doing so help to build a great sense of connection and trust.



Pro-Tip

Using empathy and putting yourself in the attendees shoes helps you to understand your audience and deliver emotive experiences that will resonate. How would I enjoy the experience? What would I want to experience? How would I feel in response to this experience? By walking in your attendee or customers shoes, and considering the context of their experience, you can truly deliver emotion, connection and results.

Sorcha O'Reilly
Project Director, Fuel





Platform

Choosing an online platform is much like choosing a physical event space in that there is no 'one size fits all' solution. From event size, duration and content, it is important to pick a virtual event space that compliments your programme.

If networking and idea-sharing are important to your event, you will want to look at a platform that has good quality breakout rooms, gamification or interactive features. On the other hand, for top-down programming, there are lots of good options that offer broadcast-quality streaming.

You want to choose a virtual event space that is right for your brand, each platform offers a different level of branding, ranging from a simple logo to customisable 3D event spaces, the most important thing is that it is clean, easy to navigate and your event looks unique.

The team at Fuel have spent a lot of time researching platforms and are well placed to guide you through the best space for your event. Fuel have also developed our own state of the art platform throughout the last two years that can be completely customisable to our client's needs, this allows us to work closely with you to develop a truly unique event.

We have experience running online events of all sizes; from small company updates that require that extra spark to 10,000 person global employee engagement events.



Pro-Tip

Setting out clearly what you aim to achieve from your online meeting, conference or event, and having a good understanding of your programme early will allow you to find a platform that makes your event pop!

Neal Donnelly
Senior Account Manager, Fuel



Content

As a conference organiser your role is ever evolving in the current climate. It is now more focused on being a content creator or producer. The role now goes beyond the booking of the speaker.

Like Netflix, a vlogger or a media channel, you must create stories and engaging content that will keep your audience on the hook. There are a number of key content points to consider when creating fully virtual or hybrid events.

Should you integrate pre-recorded and live content? Using pre-recorded content will relieve some of the pressure on the event day as you will know you have a certain amount of content that is already edited and ready to go. This could be coupled with live content enabling you to have a bit of breathing room on the day itself.

Another consideration is your audience, is the content too long to keep their attention or too short to communicate your key narrative, is it interactive to keep them involved and engaged and finally is the medium you are delivering it on one which they will be receptive to?



Pro-Tip

You could conduct a piece of research during your event through a survey and deliver the results as an email or blog content post event to attendees. We did this by surveying attendees for their attitudes towards events in 2021 light of covid at our Fuel the Future event.

Bettine McMahon
Creative Director, Fuel





Cadbury Creme Egg Café (in partnership with Fleishman Hillard)

Immersive Events

An immersive experience is characterized by deep absorption or immersion in something (such as an activity or a real or artificial environment).

Immersive events are often the combination of technology and real life activities but don't be constrained by this thinking as they are not always. The roaring football fan or weeping tennis spectator watching their heroes certainly doesn't need technology to be fully immersed.

Immersive technology has been introduced recently for art exhibitions such as Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience. This features a one of a kind Virtual Reality interactive exhibit, which guides you on a ten-minute journey through "A day in the life of the Artist."

It's important to consider a couple of factors when building your immersive brand experience. These include your budget, brand values but predominantly your audience when building your immersive experience. What is likely to absorb and enmesh their attention most?



Pro-Tip

You can use limitations to your advantage. A smaller budget or quirks in the event space don't always need to be a hindrance and in some cases you can use limitations to your advantage; e.g event entrance is hard to find or well hidden, it could become a speak-easy style secret entrance. Event space tight at a foodie event? Turn the live kitchen into a 'chef's table' style space.

Emma Leddy
Creative Production Manager, Fuel





Google Summer Party "Through The Looking Glass"

Gamification

Gamification is the use of game-like features in your event to drive engagement through participation or competition. It can be an invaluable tool for your online event and a great way to build on the overall user experience. Virtual events can struggle when it comes to interactive participation, but gamification helps to motivate participants to get involved throughout the event. Create a leaderboard and watch people compete in real time, seeing others interact will encourage the rest of the participants to get involved.

It is important to set up gamification to compliment your event and not as a stand alone feature. Quite simply, if you want to encourage attendees to visit certain areas then give points for entering that area; likewise, if you want to drive comments in the chat or for answering a poll then they should have a high point value. Want to create some atmosphere during the event? Use gamification like 'Tap To Clap' and let the participants show their support for the speakers and their content.

Pro-Tip

Reward the players! Choose a prize (or prizes) that work for your budget to encourage participation with the gamification element of your event. Don't forget, if you have built your gamification to drive your meeting objectives, then, the more people taking part the more successful your event will be as a whole.

Neal Donnelly
Senior Account Manager, Fuel



FUEL