

UN TETHERED 2021

# THE FUTURE OF MARKETING CHAPTER



## BIG IDEAS

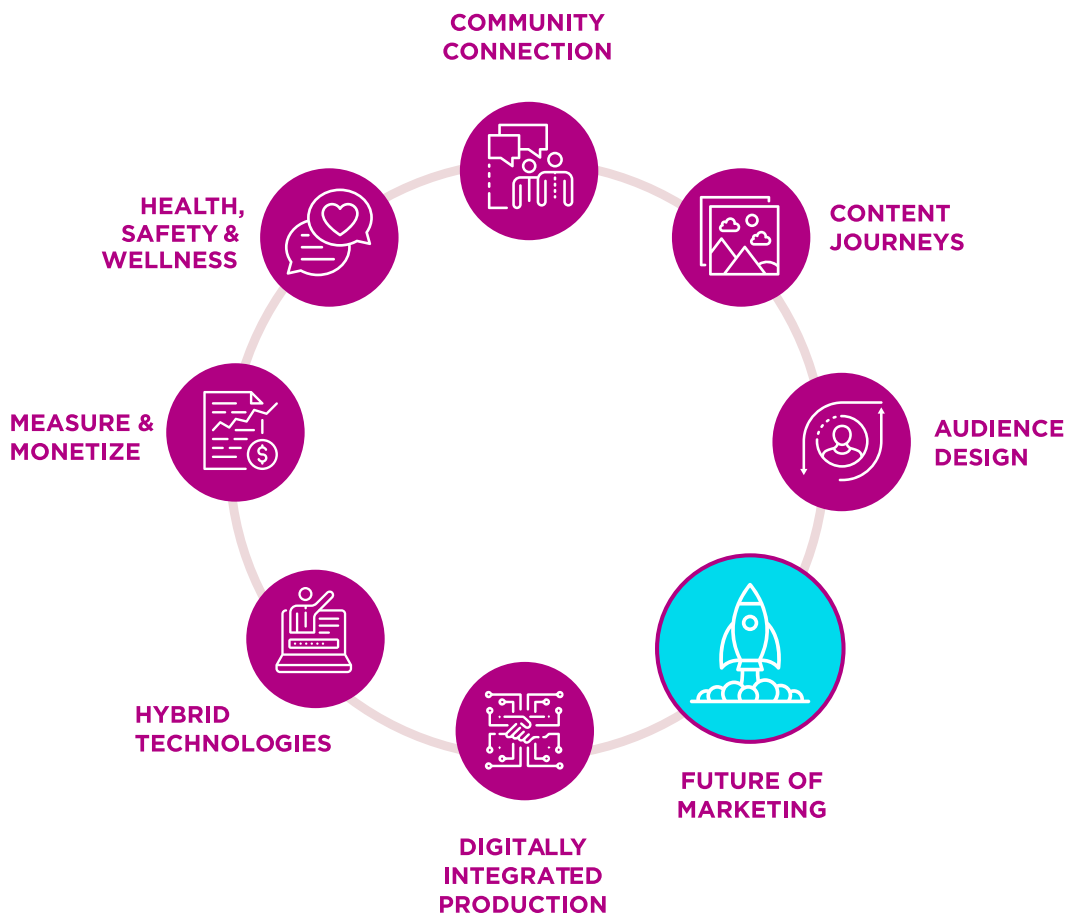
It's a brave new world of event marketing out there. We have more data, more apps, and more tools at our disposal than ever. We also have more things to do, since we're now producing in-person, virtual, and hybrid events at the same time. So, yeah, this ain't your father's or your mother's event marketing.

Where is event marketing headed? And how can you take advantage of all the resources without getting overwhelmed?

In this chapter, we curate the best of the ideas generated by our Future of Marketing Circle. We look at how to get more out of your event marketing. And how to deliver more value to sponsors, partners, and, most importantly, attendees.

Start with the mind-blown moments section. There, you'll find new ways to think about old problems. And old tricks to use on new problems. We follow that up with a tactical ideas section. This offers specific tricks and tips that you can try at your next event.

As with previous chapters, feel free to enjoy your favorite libation as you consume the content.




## MIND BLOWN MOMENTS

**In a New York Minute.** You don't have to be from New York to see how the pace of change is going faster than you can say "Taxi!" In our Twitter and social-media-dominated world, we think we can do our jobs while watching "Real Wives" and monitoring our Instagram accounts. Our attention spans are short and getting shorter. Moving to virtual events, we've gotten used to multi-tasking while monitoring the action online. (Yes, your participants are probably texting, checking email, and bingeing "Ted Lasso" simultaneously.) So, think about how that will affect how you host in-person shows. Will it mean quicker, more-dynamic sessions? More interactivity? More digital engagement? More pizzazz?

**These booths are made for talking.** No diss to all you sales reps out there, but, given the chance to speak with the founder of your company, whom do you think your event-goers would choose? Uh-huh. Going virtual has opened up who can staff the exhibit booth—including the CEO or some other big wheel at the company. Attendees can talk, chat, or message with the founder, pick his or her brain, ask questions about the product, founding story, and so on. Very different things from what a salesperson can provide. Think of it as a competitive advantage: If your booth is hosted by your boss, while your competitor's booth is hosted by your peer, it gives your company an edge.





**Where everybody knows your name.** Cue the theme to “Cheers.” As Norm, Cliff, and Frasier showed, we’re social creatures. Most of us like hanging with people we know. So, when it comes to programming your event, think about going small instead of going big. Break down your attendees into smaller subgroups so people can get to know each other. Create cohorts of people—both in-person and virtual attendees—who move through the event together, get comfortable with each other, and dive into more challenging discussions and topics (see next item). Plan special debriefs after sessions or post-event to keep people connected and engaged—maybe over a pint or two. Grouping attendees based on similar interests or goals for attending the event can help build a sense of community. And it can lead to better networking—a perennially important criterion for attending an event. The idea is to focus on being a community that happens to have events—instead of sponsoring events that happen to have communities.


**Back to school.** Even if some of us would rather forget our high school days, we might remember with some fondness that one bastion of bonhomie—the homeroom. (Cue the theme from “Welcome Back, Kotter.”) So borrow it for your next event: Create a homeroom pod for attendees.

The Sweathogs, a.k.a. homies, can be a sub-group of attendees picked to represent common interests or to ensure a diversity of viewpoints, perspectives, and backgrounds. The individuals—whether in-person or virtual—meet one another at the event start. They periodically check in with each other throughout the event. And they get together at the end to trade notes and stories. (And decide which person most resembles Vinnie Barbarino.)

It’s a great way to nudge introverts who might shy from reaching out. And it helps most people form bonds with others outside their small circle of acquaintances.

One of our workshopppers even suggested homerooms as a perk of sponsorship. Say, for example, the sponsor or partner “adopts” the pod. As long as the sponsors avoid any overt marketing, sales, or self-promotion, connecting a homeroom pod with a sponsor can generate valuable synergies, ideas, and feedback.

**Better Beta testers.** In-person event expectations are pretty much set in stone. When an event happens in the flesh-and-blood, sponsors know exactly what they want, and they aren’t usually willing to try new things. Not so with virtual events. Online, sponsors and attendees are more open to testing out new technology. If the app falls short of expectations or flops, asking for forgiveness is easier to pull off in the virtual world than in the face-to-face environment.



## TACTICS TO TEST

### CHALLENGE 1: HOW DO WE CREATE FOMO?

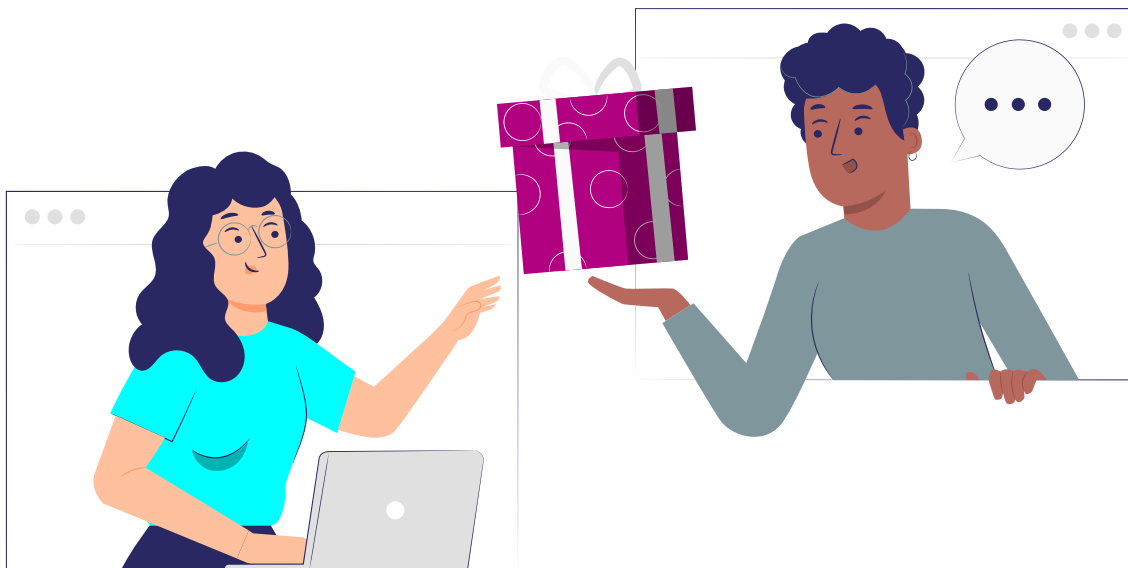
Okay, we're being a little playful here. Fear of missing out, or FOMO, can be a negative side-effect of social media, keeping users glued to their smartphones and apps. (Something the dark lords of social media platforms understood all too well.) But in a lighter, more positive mode, it's okay to create incentives that people just don't want to miss. So use FOMO to your advantage.

#### EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Who doesn't like special gifts? Juice early registration by offering a gift to those who sign up by a deadline. In that gift, include instructions to access particular pages on the virtual event platform or to post to social media to earn gamification points—or just to show their excitement for the event.

#### MAKE IT SPECIAL

Create excitement for participation by programming special VIP events and sessions that are open only to attendees who meet criteria of your choosing. Maybe it's an incentive to people who register early. Or you could create tiered packages, with exclusive sessions for higher-tiered tickets. Another idea: Allow early registrants to get exclusive access to an in-person "tour guide" who can show the attendee around the site (also a great sponsorship opportunity).





## CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO WE CREATE VALUE FOR SPONSORS?

Sponsors want value for their sponsorship investment. And value translates to leads. But not just any leads. They want qualified leads. Next, we explore ways to provide more qualified leads—and demonstrate your value to your sponsors.

### SIFTING FOR GOLD

- Sponsors see attendees as potential customers. But every event includes subsets of attendees with different interests and goals. So how do you eliminate the less-than-qualified prospects and connect sponsors with the best possible prospects? You pre-screen them.
- Use pre-event registration questions that signal the attendee's intent. Or use artificial intelligence tools to track what the attendee is clicking on in the virtual event to provide recommendations on speakers and sessions. This allows you to personalize the attendee experience by creating routes and tracks that uniquely match what that attendee is looking for—their “why”—at the event.
- Looked at from the sponsor's perspective, you're gathering more qualified prospects in one place and at one time. Call this marketing efficiency or, maybe, prospect density. Rather than having to sift the gold from the gravel, so to speak, you're bringing the gold directly to the sponsor. Another way to look at it: You (together with your event platform) are acting as the “opportunity concierge.”
- Oh, and don't forget to ask your sponsors about what they're trying to achieve with their sponsorship. Their answers will help you to provide better sponsorship opportunities. And it allows you to match them with specific features in the virtual platform.



## CHALLENGE 3: HOW DO WE MEASURE EVENT SUCCESS NOW?

In the age of big data, we have so many ways to collect, organize, analyze, and draw conclusions from data. That's great for marketers. But it's also gotten more complex. It's not a matter of getting the most bodies through the gates (or the portal) anymore. Today, it's about measuring both in-person and virtual/hybrid events. And it's about drilling down beyond the obvious numbers to analyze how well you've really engaged with the audience.

### DIFFERENT ANIMALS

- Trying to re-create the same experience in a virtual event that an attendee will have in an in-person event? Don't. Not only is it impossible. It's just not productive. In fact, there should a difference, since each type of event yields different benefits.
- Keep virtual events and in-person events separate in your key performance indicators (KPIs). It's important to keep track of both engagements. Take more time than before to figure out what you're truly trying to measure at each and why. What will that information get you at the end of the day? What does success mean for your organization? What's does it mean for the sponsor?
- Create and track attendee touchpoints throughout the event. How long did attendees stay for a session? Did they use the chat? What topics and sessions were they engaged with the most? Having answers to these questions provides a more in-depth profile of an attendee than simply a list of registrants.
- Think about the difference between return on investment (ROI) versus return on engagement (ROE). ROI is about cash flow and numbers: Did I break even? Get enough leads to make more sales? This tends to be what upper management cares about. ROE measures the return on relationships built during the event: How often are we seeing X company or the same people? Did we speak to people who were genuinely interested in us/our product or did they just want the gamification.



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Thank you to our Future of Marketing Circle Partner Hubb!



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