

2020: A critical year for transformation to virtual trade shows

BY LOUIS BOSWELL

For years now, millions of deals have been struck on the floors of international trade shows. The physical trade shows provide the human touch to the technologies exhibited by small, medium-sized and large organisations.

However, the novel coronavirus has clipped the wings of iron birds plying the shy and forced trade shows to shut and move online quickly ... thus giving rise to a new wave of virtual trade shows and events. Ruben Castano, CEO of 6Connex, a virtual events platform, recorded a 1,000% increase in virtual events on its platform since the start of Covid-19.

Post-Covid new normal: Hybrid trade events

As borders remain closed during Covid-19, virtual events can become the post-Covid new normal. AVIA has embraced this opportunity and have hosted webinars series such as our *Coping with COVID Series*, featuring news presenters from across Asia-Pacific sharing their thoughts and insights on what they are witnessing as journalists as well as how their own jobs and lives have been transformed.

We have also conducted a series of industry-focused webinars, looking at how privacy laws and regulations are being updated around the region. In addition, we have held our first major virtual conferences, Piracy over the Top Summit and The OTT Virtual Summit, with much success and record numbers of delegates.

It is clear, however, that virtual events are different from physical ones and we are at an early stage of learning how to maximise them, both as organisers and delegates. Behaviours of the industry players are changing and will continue to do so as long as physical events remain off-limits.

Virtual conferences and seminars have worked well to help us through this crisis, and have allowed us opportunities to continue engaging with the industry. When that day ends, we forecast that many of the habits that we have since picked up will continue to be rele-

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Measurement of success for virtual events

A direct measure of success then would be the new leads you could receive from a virtual event, with new contacts that you would not have been able to meet in the physical world.

As both speakers and delegates can join the events from all corners of the world without worrying about travel and diary of conflict, virtual events allow trade show organisers to maximise their potential reach. They also provide innovation with the on-demand features and virtual exhibition rooms for them to visit and find out more about new products and services, at their own leisure. This in turn allows the exhibitors the opportunity to reach out to new potential clients who may not otherwise have participated in the physical event.

In consideration of the evolution of trade shows, there are two stages we dive into – a semi-Covid world and then a post-Covid world. However, it is inevitable that the structure of events will have to change in a semi-Covid environment where we begin to re-engage physically. A lot more processes which will help in contact tracing will need to be put in place, in addition to the health and safety regulations.

Post-event parties will also need to be reviewed in light of this. I believe this will give event organisers a lot of food for thought, to come up with creative ways for us to socialise effectively while still observing mandated



guidelines to keep us all well and safe.

Hybrid events will also become the new normal, as travel restrictions will remain for some considerable time between borders. This will provide delegates with the option of coming in person as well as attending virtually should there be travel restrictions or health concerns. It will be fascinating to see how human behaviour changes (or not) in a fully post-Covid world – but technology will continue to play a much bigger role in conferences than it did before.

AVIA continues to support the growth of media industry

The fundamental challenges of transforming our industry have not been altered by the pandemic, but it has accelerated the urgency of dealing with them. There has been much talk about consumers watching more video than ever before, but that has also led to increase in piracy.

Despite that, we are seeing more success than ever in curbing this tide, particularly in countries like Indonesia which have developed strong site-blocking regimes and increasing consumer awareness across the region of the negative impact of piracy.

At the same time, a mood for regulatory change seems to be developing in some markets with regard to streaming video services. We are engaging with governments, on behalf of our industry, to discuss what regulations make sense and will encourage growth and investment in local economies, and not stifle innovation and entrepreneurship.

In a world of Internet-delivered content, maybe it is also time to look at the relevance of the laws that cover broadcast today. Furthermore, advertising has been hit hard by Covid-19, and yet it remains, together with subscriptions, one of only two viable means of monetisation.

We are bringing premium content providers together to boost the recognition and prospects of ad-supported streaming video services, and differentiate them from social and user-generated content. **APB+**

Louis Boswell is CEO of Asia Video Industry Association.

VIEW
FROM THE
TOP

APB+ PANELLISTS



Stan Moote
CTO
IABM



Andrew Anderson
Head of Broadcast
Operations
Seven Network
(Operations) Ltd



Michael Cronk
Chairman
Alliance for IP Media
Solutions (AIMS)



Graham Stephens
CTO
Media City
Development, Malaysia



Goh Kim Soon
Senior Vice-President
Broadcast Engineering
Mediacorp



Shad Hashmi
Vice-President,
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Global Markets & Operations,
BBC Worldwide Asia-