cue

Ensuring educational impact with virtual event technology.

1	**750**	**200,000**
week turnaround for virtual conference	additional registrations gained in one week	points of engagement in mobile app

CUE is an education non-profit with twenty-two affiliates serving 26,000 members across California and Nevada. The organisation focuses on developing best practices to support student learning with an emphasis on educational technology. CUE first partnered with Cvent in early 2019. While they manage a host of events, CUE planned to engage the full Cvent platform for the first time at their largest annual conference in Palm Springs for over 4,000 attendees.

Enabling a Quick Pivot to Virtual Events

During the Fall of 2019, Cue began using Cvent's Event Marketing and Management, Abstract Management, Onsite Engagement, and CrowdCompass solutions across smaller events. Danny Silva, Director of Technology Integration,

had successfully implemented the entire Cvent platform to streamline backend processes for the organisation's Spring 2020 conference. Two weeks before the conference, a global health crisis erupted. "We started seeing this problem on the horizon, the Coronavirus, and we decided about a week out that we were going to flip the switch and move to a virtual event," explains Danny. With an incredibly tight timeline, pivoting to virtual was a tall order for the technology team. The normally three-day event would need to be stretched into a two-week virtual experience. With little time and a clear need to maximise organisational workflows, they knew relying on the centralised platform to secure real-time data would be key.

Danny's team quickly built a virtual attendee registration pathway to accommodate their
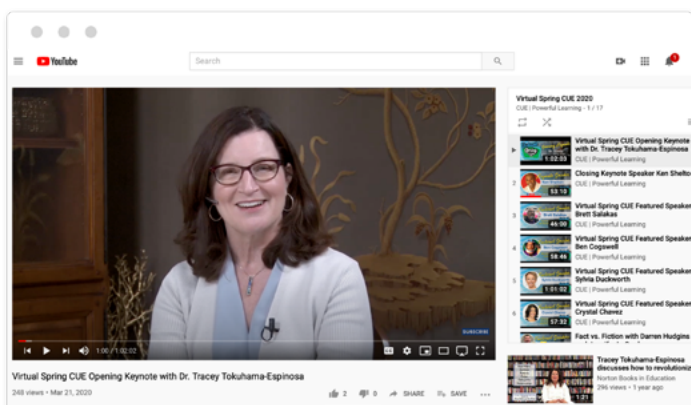
virtual attendees. This not only streamlined the registration data flow between Cvent and their Zoom integration, but ensured that data remained housed in a central location. They opened certain aspects of the conference to the public, including the keynote sessions hosted on Facebook Live. Adjusting registration pricing and opening the conference to the public attracted an additional 750 registrants in just one week. They continued to gain registrations across the duration of the event.

Danny notes the virtual option helped support attendees who could not have otherwise attended due to COVID-19 and other mitigating factors. "We work with educators and not all of them can foot the bill, or their districts don't have enough to send their people to a face-to-face event in Palm Springs," Danny explains. His team made the strategic decision to move a large portion of their 350 planned sessions to the virtual platform, ultimately hosting over 200 online sessions via Zoom. With the move to virtual, registrants could attend about three times as many sessions as they would have during the original three-day conference. CUE's team recorded a majority of the session content, offering attendees post-event access to the packaged content to drive them further down the funnel.

Powering Online Engagement with Mobile Event Apps

To increase engagement with session content, Danny's team relied the CrowdCompass mobile event app. "We were already using CrowdCompass for our event," says Danny. "When we made the switch to Zoom, we put a snippet with the Zoom meeting link at the top of the description in the mobile app. People could then join directly from the mobile app or the website." By enabling one-click attendance through the mobile app, CUE ensured higher engagement and a seamless user experience. Danny admires that the functionality of the app bridged both mobile and laptop users. "The one thing we love about CrowdCompass is there is also a web version of the app, " he says. "If people want to be at home watching on the laptop instead of the mobile device, they had that option. It made it easy for people to just click the link and get into sessions." With a feature-rich mobile experience, Danny's team measured an impressive 200,000 points of engagement across 5,400 users during the event. They tracked 1,200 users on the web version of the app, specifically.

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To ensure duty of care and maintain the necessary privacy of their online attendees, CUE relied on CrowdCompass. They switched both the web and mobile version of the app to a private event, thereby protecting the digital privacy of their attendees. To troubleshoot any login issues, the CUE team updated a standing email with the new virtual event link; they then used Cvent data tags to personalise the attendee email address and existing confirmation number for a smooth login experience.

Using Flex for Member Election Cost Savings

CUE also traditionally launches their board election process during the Spring Conference. As a nonprofit, all 26,000 members receive the right to vote for their board. Relying on a third party platform built specifically for elections, they found the cost to be problematic. Danny decided to create an affordable solution using the tools already in his tech stack. "We decided to use the flexibility and power of events in Flex to create an election platform in Cvent," he explains. Using the language management feature, his team flipped standard language into election language. They swapped out "vote" for "registration," "candidates" for "sessions," and used the confirmation page as a record of a member's vote.

Using the functionality of Flex, Danny streamlined the email process to facilitate member voting. "We built those emails in Cvent and sent them to our members, so they're able to click on the link and it prepopulates their information for us already. That's one less step to worry about," he says. Members received one email, which accounted for their one vote. By keeping the voting invitation-only, they protected the anonymity of the election process. Using advanced logic, voters could select up to three candidates out of five choices. They also locked down Cvent permissions to their core committee, ensuring only essential CUE staff could view the results to ensure voter privacy. Perhaps most importantly, the Flex voting platform saved the cost of a pricey third-party system. Danny notes, "We were already using the event management platform for our registration goals. Simply bringing that over in the long run was a much more cost-effective solution, saving us the $4,000 third-party platform we could have used."
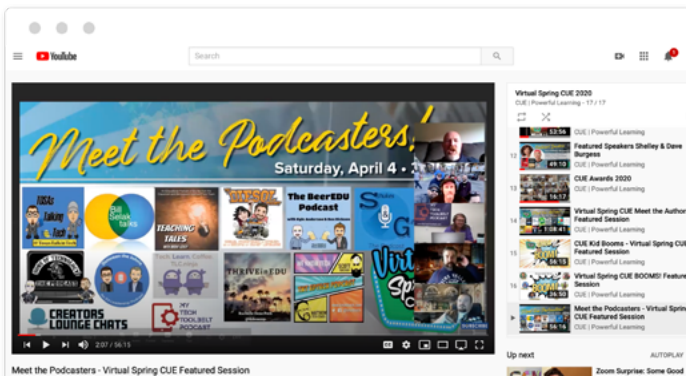

Creating Exhibitor Impact with a Virtual Exhibit Hall

Another key concern of the move to virtual was CUE's traditional exhibit hall, which had been built through Cvent. Danny explains, "We sold Corporate Rooms and sessions. We also had a learning theatre in our exhibit hall that allowed us to sell sessions by the hour. We also sold time slots on our schedule so exhibitors could host in-person or in-booth sessions." Faced with

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the challenge of quickly moving the exhibitor hall to the virtual space, Danny's team worried about buy-in from sponsors and exhibitors. They partnered with a gamification company that allowed attendees complete tasks to earn points, interact with exhibitors, and provide feedback. While exhibitors were initially hesitant, Danny explains they quickly saw the benefit of the virtual experience. "Once the event started moving forward and exhibitors could see how successful the event was as far as attendees using the virtual exhibit hall, they really started jumping in and wanted to be part of it," he explains. They tracked over 1,000 attendees within the virtual exhibit hall and made it public to increase exposure to their 26,000 members. They plan to keep the virtual exhibit hall open throughout the month as an extended value add for exhibitors.
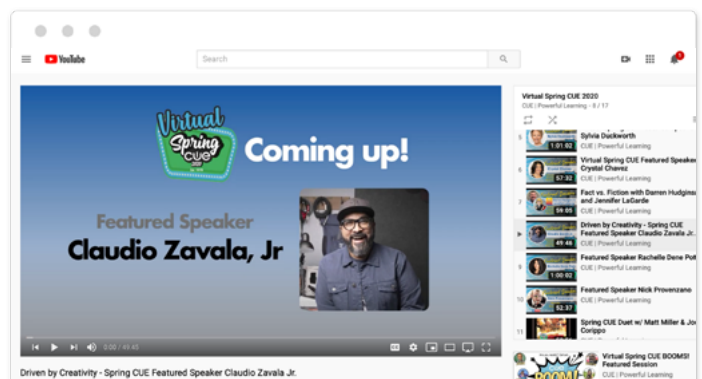
Looking at the Future of Events at CUE

For the nonprofit, Danny explains that the move to virtual wasn't just the right option - it was the only one. He explains, "If we weren't able to move to a virtual conference, it could have been basically organisation-ending for us. We would have taken a huge financial hit as our national conference is a huge part of our yearly revenue." By pivoting to virtual, they retained many of the benefits of an in-person conference while reducing spend and ensuring a valuable attendee experience. "With the flip to virtual, we were able to retain those monies that had come in already and also give value to our virtual conference for our attendees, as well as exhibitors," he adds.
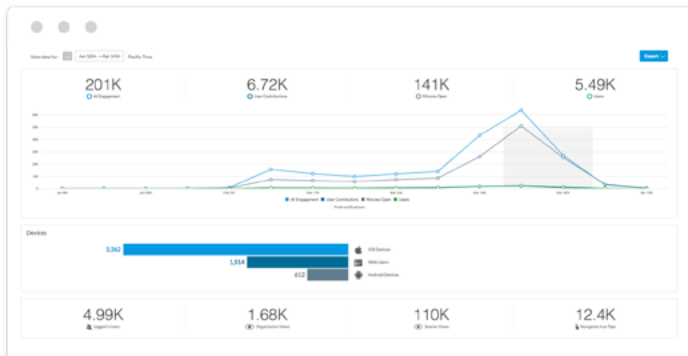
Proud of his team's hard work in pulling off a virtual experience in just one week, Danny stresses that the most important impact of their conference wasn't monetary. "We are affecting the lives and education of thousands of students, and being able to move to virtual instead of cancelling actually does help them," he says. It also increased their audience reach, attendance, and proved to be a success with their board members. They are following suit with a 300-person event in just thirty days. Because of the processes they had already implemented in Cvent for their Spring Conference, the next event will only take a few days to set up and execute.

Danny says the future of meetings and events at CUE holds several options. For their Fall event featuring over 1,500 attendees, his team is now invested in virtual as a key tool in their event portfolio. "We're hoping that things are going to be more back to normal and we'll be able to have a face-to-face event, but we're going to add the caveat of having a hybrid option," explains Danny. They plan to record sessions and provide post-event virtual content packages, as well as create multiple attendee pathways for in-person and virtual registrations.

During times of crisis, Danny advises other technology and event managers to leverage the tools already at their disposal. With these tools in place, he foresees a future of hybrid events across the industry.

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