EATA 1949

EASTERN **ATHLETIC TRAINERS'** ASSOCIATION

Driving member engagement through
the Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub®

3X
revenue increase

40%
increase in registrations

1,967
virtual attendees

The Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association (EATA) is the largest area association for athletic trainers, comprised of two districts within the National Athletic Trainers' Association. EATA is a nonprofit organization with over 8,000 members. Their goal is to provide educational opportunities for their members, scholarships for athletic training students, and to help fund research. For their four-day Annual Meeting & Clinical Symposium, the organization typically hosts around 1,400 athletic trainers onsite for a variety of training workshops, education sessions, keynotes, an awards program, and social events.

Finding an All-In-One Solution With the Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub

Michael Goldenberg is the volunteer webmaster for EATA, serving as a full-time faculty member while simultaneously managing technology administration for the EATA conference. With several years' experience using Cvent's Event Marketing and Management solution, Michael is an adept technologist who understood the breadth of platform needs when challenged with moving the annual conference to virtual in the midst of the global health crisis.

Michael knew a successful V-EATA Convention in January 2021 would require a comprehensive virtual platform that could easily integrate with their existing Cvent registration tools. They also needed the virtual platform to be intuitive and easily navigable for their members. As EATA also managed continuing education credits through their annual conference, they needed to make sure the platform could meet the requirements of their board certification. With these criteria in mind, EATA decided to host their annual conference through Cvent's Virtual Attendee Hub® solution.

With over 50 different virtual sessions spread across four days, each day's session mix consisted of both pre-recorded and livestream content. For livestream keynotes and other general sessions, EATA used the embedded Cvent Video Player. For workshops and other interactive content like the student quiz bowl, Michael used the Cvent Video Conferencing tool with
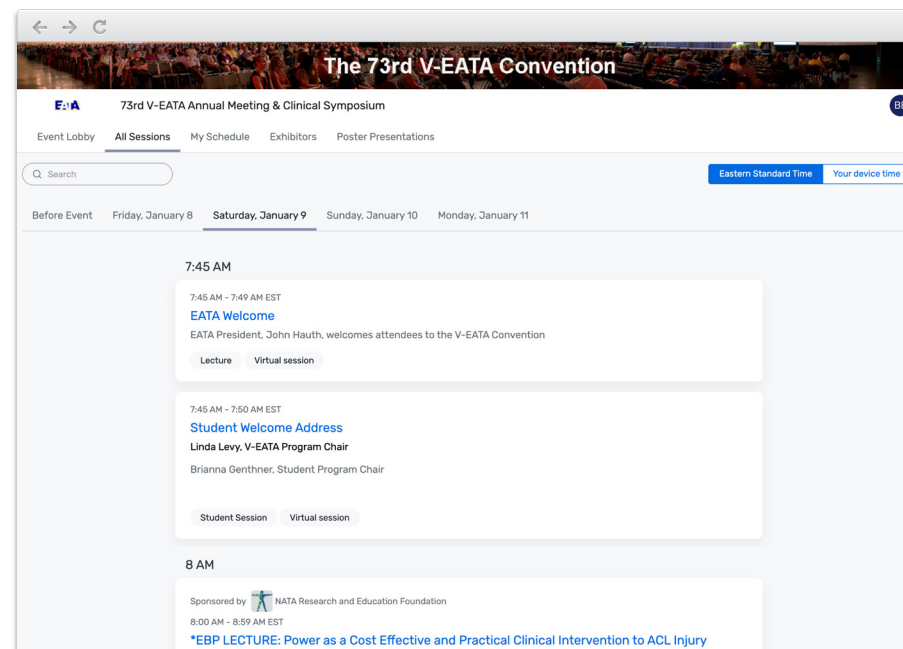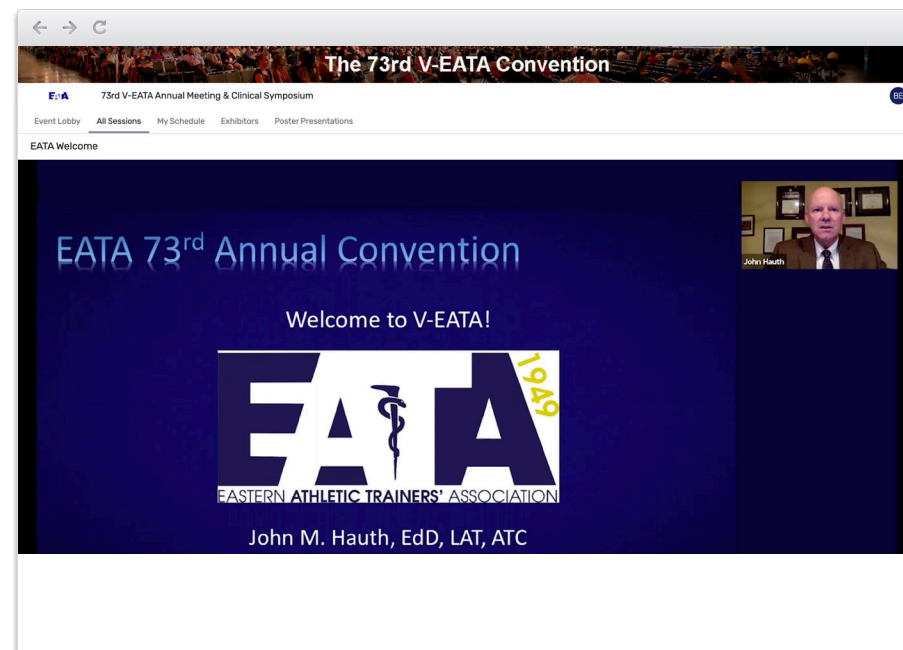
integrated Zoom functionality. This gave presenters the ability to interact directly with the attendees in real-time.

They also used the live Q&A functionality within the Virtual Attendee Hub to foster attendee engagement within sessions. Attendees could upvote favorite questions to keep the most pressing topics top of mind. In order to create a more seamless user experience, EATA then hosted dedicated Q&A sessions for each education presentation. Here, presenters could answer attendees' questions live while Michael's team moderated the Q&A from the backend.

Creating an Easily Navigable User Experience

Within the fully-branded Virtual Attendee Hub lobby, attendees could easily navigate the list of available sessions on the "All Sessions" tab. They could filter sessions by time and category, as well as search for specific sessions by title. Attendees could then select sessions to join, thereby creating a personalized agenda within the "My Sessions" tab. They could easily add sessions to their integrated calendar and view featured sessions directly within the home page.

As Cvent was already the de facto registration tool for EATA's annual conference, all registration and attendee data flowed easily between the Event Management tool and the Virtual Attendee Hub. Moreover, Michael was able to coalesce all attendee data in a single source of truth for tracking and awarding CEU credits. Attendees could access the required assessment directly from the home page. These assessments were created using the Survey tool within Cvent, easily facilitating automated scoring and on-demand reporting in the backend. Combined session tracking and assessment scores allowed EATA to meet board requirements for awarding CEU credits to attendees.

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In working closely with his Cvent team, Michael was able to configure the Virtual Attendee Hub to suit poster presentations, a longtime staple of education conferences. They created a "Poster Presentations" tab which featured three different categories, each containing dozens of PDFs for easy viewing and download. These were designated as filterable case studies, critically appraised topics, and experimental information. With digital engagement tracking, EATA could track clicks, downloads, and views for easy reporting.

Providing Value for Sponsors and Exhibitors

Attendees could also easily explore sponsor and exhibitor profiles under the "Exhibitors" tab within the lobby. With over 20 sponsors for the virtual event, sponsors could choose their preferred package with options like virtual booths, featured spots within the hub, sponsored sessions, and so on. As a value add, all exhibitors were allowed to sponsor one session automatically. "One of the things we really liked was the exhibitor management system," notes Michael. "Our sponsors had an easy time using it, putting in the information that they needed to, and then their information and logos would show up in the virtual hub and it made our sponsors really happy." Exhibitors could also purchase video promotions that would play for a dedicated amount of time prior to the start of each session. EATA was also able to feature sponsor logos and virtual backgrounds during the live Q&A sessions. This gave sponsors direct visibility in front of thousands of virtual attendees.

Michael could further tailor the virtual booth packages thanks to the opportunities of the digital space. With the goal of offering a more dynamic booth experience, his team included options for direct contact buttons, collaborative Zoom rooms for interactive meetings, featured documents,

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Proving Virtual Event ROI with On-Demand Reporting

In reviewing the event performance, one measurement of success was the overall seamless nature of the event for the attendees. With a majority of survey responses showing positive feedback for the event as a whole, Michael considers this a win for the organization. "A lot of the surveys that came back indicated people really enjoyed this virtual event," he says, adding that 98% of attendees rated the conference as "good to excellent" in the post-event survey. Michael even notes one attendee wrote, "Though I was skeptical of how this would work, I am very pleased with the format of the virtual conference. The schedule was easy to follow and it was very well planned." He adds that only a small handful of users contacted his team for tech support on the day of the event, indicating a relatively seamless user experience overall. This was in no small part due to Michael's foresight in creating a "test" user experience for all registrants prior to the start of the

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event, wherein they could ensure their browser worked properly and troubleshoot any issues before the start of the event.

Michael was ultimately able to help prove the success of EATA's first virtual conference through on-demand reporting in Cvent. EATA tracked 1,967 virtual registrations, a roughly 40% increase from their average in-person attendance and a record number of attendees overall. Even with the lower cost of virtual registrations and free attendance for students, the extended reach helped triple their revenue when compared to previous in-person events. In addition, EATA gained 50 new members from student attendees, a significant metric of success for the association. Importantly, content will be available on-demand for up to 90 days following the close of the event, allowing for further engagement with attendees.
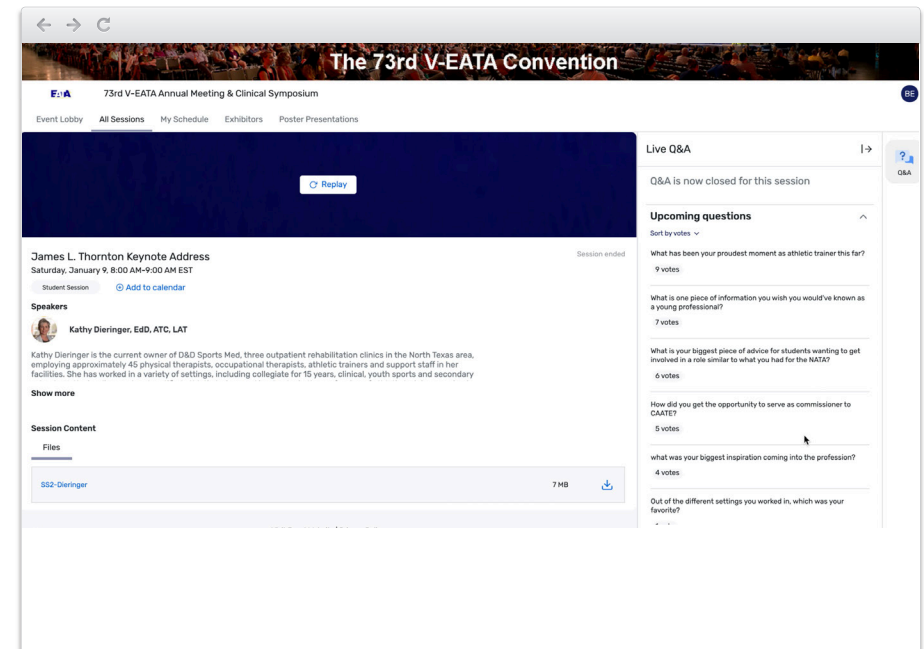
Flex as the New Frontier

In meeting an important milestone, Michael migrated the event to Cvent's New Standard Registration (Flex) tool for the first time. As a technologist, Michael was comfortable in Cvent's Classic registration and could configure the HTML code on the backend as needed. He was initially hesitant to move to Flex, imagining the drag-and-drop site designer might limit his customization capabilities when compared to what he could build with code. Instead, he found the tool to be more powerful than expected. "I was impressed with how many modifications I could make and how I could really specify different things with Flex," he explains.

Michael could easily modify registration paths within the Event Management system to add additional tracks for pending members and configure other admission items with ease. He says, "I was actually surprised how easy it was, as there was a lot of functionality in there that transferred over from Classic." He notes that while there was a learning curve, his comfort level with Classic gave him the ability to dive into Flex without issue. "To be honest with you, it was a great experience and I probably wouldn't go back to Classic if you paid me," he says with a laugh.

Training for the Digital Age

Though his Flex training was largely hands-on, Michael has also relied on Cvent's training and certification program to improve his skills. Having been a multi-year Cvent user, he felt comfortable taking the basic Event Management course on-demand and following soon after with the advanced course. Michael not only strengthened his existing knowledge, but soon discovered new skills and capabilities he hadn't previously known about in Cvent. He was even able to adapt some of these existing features for EATA's program, such as the Housing and Travel management feature. "I would have never really realized everything you can do in Cvent unless I took the certifications," he says. He notes that as a technologist, becoming Cvent Certified can help elevate his overall skillset. "To help me be the best programmer I can for my organization, I would highly recommend all the event certifications that are offered now," he says. Michael notes that he recently registered for the Virtual Attendee Hub training course and Virtual Events certification as well.

Fostering Member Connections
for the Future of EATA

Michael's passion for technology and his position as webmaster mean he is helping to shape EATA's overall technology strategy. "What I would advise someone in my shoes is, build your virtual hub and your event management system with Cvent," he says. One of the benefits lies in having dedicated support at your fingertips. "If you enjoy using technology, Cvent has a great support staff," he explains. "I must say I will rank them as one of the best support staff I've ever worked with over the years, so don't be afraid to soak up as much as you can and ask questions."

With a 72-year history, EATA's conferences remain not only a primary revenue driver for the organization, but also an important means of helping regional members connect with one another. This was especially vital during the isolation of the global pandemic, which directly affected the daily reality of athletic trainers across the nation. "This virtual conference really helped lift our association up," Michael says.

As a result, EATA is looking forward to the return of in-person experiences in the future while still weighing virtual options as the global health crisis continues to evolve and change. "I love using Cvent, and the Virtual Attendee Hub was a lot of fun to use," Michael insists. "The event management system was fantastic, and with the virtual hub it all came together, so I can't wait to see what happens in the future."