



Proving the value of the events channel through virtual ideation

630%

increase in registrations

20%

increase in lead generation

10

new deals closed

Gerber Technology: Leading the Industry

Gerber Technology delivers integrated software and hardware solutions to customers in the aerospace, furniture, fashion & apparel, transportation, technical textiles, and sign & graphics industries. They serve over 100 Fortune 500 companies in 134 countries. Gerber's events program is heavily focused on industry trade shows as well as hosted events like their annual user conference, ideation.

At the onset of the global health crisis, all trade shows and events effectively stopped. With this key channel for lead generation heavily affected, Aimee Heuschkel, Director of Marketing Creative Services, knew Gerber needed to pivot their planned hosted events to virtual to help maintain their sales pipeline.

Their user conference, ideation, is designed to showcase Gerber's products and technology while providing training across various solutions. At the same time, Gerber's marketing team wanted to highlight relevant company initiatives for the market, like their shift to PPE production at the start of COVID-19. "As a leader in this industry, we usually put on this event in-person for about 300 people," explains Aimee. "They participate in sessions to learn what's coming from Gerber and enjoy hands-on experience with our software. It's where we would launch our latest and greatest innovations and demonstrate that to our customer base." The week-long event has been an industry staple in some capacity for more than a decade.



Though Gerber managed a number of Zoom-enabled webinars during the first months of the pandemic, Aimee's team knew they needed a cohesive platform experience to support their ambitious conference goals. They decided to ultimately leverage the all-in-one Cvent Attendee Hub® for ideation 2020 in November.

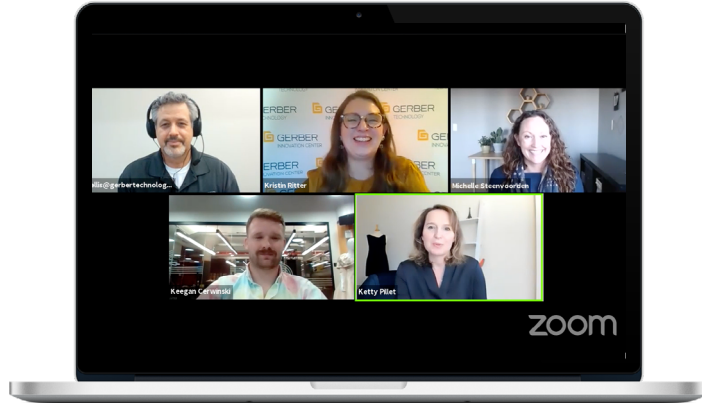
Powering ideation 2020 with Cvent

The initial kickoff in September meant lead time for the event was just a matter of weeks. As this was Gerber's biggest product marketing event, the marketing team saw value in the technology investment from a user experience standpoint. "We had disconnected experiences with Zoom, with multiple links being sent out individually to attendees and the like," explains Aimee. "We wanted a truly connected experience for our attendees through the virtual platform."

Her team's goals were to further drive lead generation through a virtual environment and prove the value of the events as

a key channel for maintaining an active sales pipeline. As the event is largely run by her department, the expectations were high. “This is usually the biggest marketing event our department takes on,” Aimee notes.

To execute the event in such a short timeline, Aimee’s team needed a dedicated technology partner with always-on support. They partnered with Cvent’s Virtual Event 360 professional services team for full support from the initial kickoff to final post-event reporting. The dedicated Cvent team helped set up and configure the virtual event, including managing session creation. They also supported Gerber’s team through video management, sponsor and exhibitor management, moderator training, and reporting.



Expanding Gerber’s Marketing Reach through the Virtual Environment

Aimee notes ideation is usually a live in-person event held in North America. As such, this can affect audience makeup. “This

typically limits the number of people who can attend, and we usually did 99% of our sessions in English, even though we’re a global company,” she explains. In 2020, her team was able to take ideation truly global for the first time thanks to the capabilities of virtual events. They were also able to grow the conference focus from one industry (fashion) to include other major industries like furniture, transportation, and sign & graphics.

The global nature of the event also allowed the marketing team to target invitees beyond their typical personas. “I think one of the challenges with our in-person event was always the cost to the company to send people and the return on that investment, so most of the people before were users rather than decision makers,” explains Aimee. From a business perspective, the virtual opportunity gave Gerber the means to reach more influential decision makers than ever. Because of this shift in audience makeup, they expanded the conference scope and messaging. “Opening up registration globally for the virtual event made it much less of a user conference and more of a technology conference,” Aimee says.

“It’s worth mentioning the holistic experience with the Attendee Hub platform...It’s about feeling like you’re connected inside of an environment, and that made the biggest difference.”

- Aimee Heuschkel, Director of Marketing Creative Services



Importantly, any valuable attendee insights generated from the vastly expanded virtual event flowed seamlessly between the Cvent Event Management system and the Attendee Hub platform. This eliminated the need for dual attendee lists or data synchronization on the backend. It also allowed Aimee's team to feed attendee data directly into Salesforce for post-event campaigns.

Creating a Truly Global Experience with the Attendee Hub

The three-day event included 78 sessions featuring a mix of live and pre-recorded content across seven different

languages for attendees from 90 countries. Aimee's team wanted the event to give the impression of being live to help drive engagement. However, there were initial questions around the value of pre-recording the content versus presenting live. It was a logistical challenge her team had to carefully consider. "Helping others understand that pre-recording would allow us to do so much more with the content was a key focus," she explains. Gerber worked with a third-party AV company to manage the entirety of their session recording, allowing them to enhance session content with dynamic visuals and graphics. It also guaranteed flawless video execution and the higher production value overall. Aimee notes that ultimately, the end goals would be better served by pre-recording content. "We knew that experience on the front end would feel the way we want it to, which is a live event," she adds.

The concurrent sessions ran across several tracks including fashion & apparel, furniture, transportation, PPE, and sign & graphics. They featured 58 different speakers across keynotes, industry panels, roundtables, product demonstrations, and an Executive Forum. Social events like happy hours encouraged a sense of community and provided networking opportunities across the global audience. "I think that made a big difference, adding experiences like that within the virtual environment where people can interact," Aimee insists. "The attendees really liked experiencing that interaction, especially with our guest speakers who are somewhat celebrities within the industry."

The department leveraged the Cvent Video Player for

embedded livestream sessions, as well as Cvent Video Conferencing with a Zoom integration for collaborative sessions. Live Q&A functionality allowed attendees to engage directly with the content as well as one another across global regions. To foster a sense of community, attendees could even upvote their favorite questions to keep important topics top of mind. Aimee's team moderated Q&A through the backend with dedicated training from their Cvent support resources. To encourage interactivity, they also hosted a small number of live, collaborative Q&A sessions dedicated to answering attendee questions in real time. Those questions were then available via on-demand reports to foster deeper insights into attendee interests for post-event follow up.

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- Aimee Heuschkel, Director of Marketing Creative Services

The event also included approximately 15 different sponsors and exhibitors. The marketing team created a number of opportunities to ensure high visibility with the virtual attendees. This included featured promotions on the home page, dedicated sponsor and exhibitor pages with filterable lists, sponsored sessions, and more. They could also leverage



virtual booths through collaborative video conferencing to connect “face-to-face” with attendees. On dedicated pages, they could display company and booth staff details, highlight content, and share relevant links. With the expanded audience of decision makers, sponsors and exhibitors were able to capitalize on opportunities with qualified buyers.

Showcasing the Impact of Virtual Events on the Sales Pipeline

Ultimately, the global reach of ideation proved incredibly successful from a marketing standpoint. “I do think from a global business perspective, being a virtual event -- especially in this time --allowed us to have a much broader reach,” says Aimee. The event tracked 2,195 registrants, an astounding 630% increase from their typical in-person attendance. “We reached more countries than we’ve ever been able to before and we also reached more decision makers because of the content and our ability to plan ahead,” Aimee adds.

With digital touchpoint tracking and on-demand reporting, Aimee was able to prove the value of the virtual event in helping to power the sales pipeline during an unprecedented year for the business. They saw 823 new leads, an increase of 20% in lead generation, and closed 10 new deals. The event generated a significant amount of revenue and cost 80% less than the typical in-person event.

Aimee’s team found the feedback to be overwhelmingly positive both for the event itself and the virtual platform. “It’s

worth mentioning the holistic experience with the Attendee Hub platform, and how we had almost zero conversations around technical questions or navigating the platform from attendees,” she says. Creating an engaging, truly seamless user experience had been a top priority for their marketing team from the start. It was a goal they feel they more than delivered on with Cvent. She adds, “That was a huge testament to the platform once you’re inside it, and on the backend we appreciated it because it always felt live. It’s about feeling like you’re connected inside of an environment, and that made the biggest difference.”

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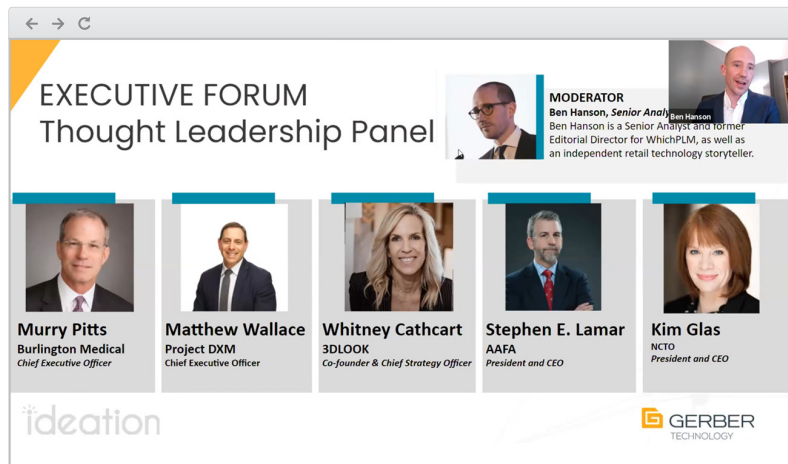
- Aimee Heuschkel, Director of Marketing Creative Services

Expanding the Future of Event Marketing at Gerber Technology

Most importantly, Aimee and her team were able to host a world-class event during an incredibly uncertain time for the industry while continuing to propel their business forward. “The biggest win was that the platform experience was easy

and intuitive, content was delivered as it should have been, and the interaction people had was important,” Aimee insists.

She says that content was key from a marketing perspective. Adjusting content to fit a shorter time frame, focusing on high-quality video production, and ensuring ample speaker preparation were vital. Having content available on-demand after the close of each session gave attendees the ability to further engage with the brand. This, in turn, fostered additional touchpoints for lead generation from the marketing side. “The experience alone was worth the cost, creating that singular experience for our users,” she says.



Importantly, Gerber’s marketing team bolstered their position as an industry leader by maintaining momentum through the virtual conference. They also proved the power of virtual events to help drive the business. “We looked like rock stars,” Aimee says. “Not only was it easy for our leadership to be a part of everything, but they were able to experience the day of

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With the success of ideation 2020, Aimee and her team are now setting their sights on the future. She’s looking forward to the prospect of hybrid events to combine valuable face-to-face interactions with the expanded reach of virtual. “Hybrid means your reach is so much bigger, and hybrid is the future and a great opportunity,” she says. In fact, her team is looking to build on the success of ideation 2020 by scaling their events program from one annual hosted conference to potential quarterly events. As everyone works towards understanding the opportunities available with hybrid events, Aimee looks forward to leading the industry with Gerber Technology. “Everyone wants to get back to that having that in-person connection, but if you’re not jumping on that hybrid bandwagon you’ll be missing out,” Aimee advises.



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