



IMEX Group is an industry leading company that is expert in bringing world class leaders in the meetings and events sector together. IMEX runs the two largest global events for the meeting and incentive travel industry, and the events are hosted annually in Frankfurt and Las Vegas. 15,000 people attend both shows, representing over 100 countries. IMEX hosts 3,500 exhibitors that include national tourist offices, hotel groups, cruise lines, tech providers, etc. This essentially comprises the entire supply chain for the global events industry. Their education programme consists of 250 seminars per show to satisfy the needs of their delegates. However, the heart of the event is the trade show, where they have 70,000 business appointments made between the buyers and exhibitors. In 2020, the IMEX Group had to cancel their spring Frankfurt event due to the global pandemic, and instead decided to give back to the industry by hosting a virtual free event.

95% mobile app
adoption rate

1,500 individual
appointments

12,500 seats filled
across sessions

The Issue

Carina Bauer, CEO of IMEX group, and her team planned to host their IMEX Frankfurt event live in May. However, the growing pandemic upended their plans, as it did for most of the world. They needed to quickly assess their upcoming strategy to readjust for the changes ahead. By mid-March, they had to announce the cancellation of IMEX in Frankfurt. Carina notes, "Covid-19 had a devastating impact, not just on IMEX Frankfurt but also the whole ecosystem that supports a show like IMEX both in Frankfurt and around the world... it had an impact right across the industry."

The IMEX team wanted to give back and do something for the industry in this time of need. They assessed the elements they would usually include at one of their shows, ultimately identifying which portions they could pivot to virtual in just six weeks. "We looked at everything that we do at IMEX; wellbeing, educational content, networking, 1:1 business appointment," Carina explains. "We broke those apart and thought about how we can deliver these online in a way that was unique to IMEX and could bring a little joy to

people while they sit in lockdown. Those were our guiding principles."

In order to deliver on the event, the IMEX team needed a comprehensive strategy. "We broke the show apart, looked at all those individual elements, and we split the teams into groups to investigate the different elements of it, such as the tech platform, running the educational sessions, and things like the IMEX run and the networking elements." The rapidity of the turnaround meant this strategic approach could best serve the needs of the internal teams as well as the attendees. She adds, "This was the best way to do it at the speed in which we needed to deliver it. From conception to delivery was about six weeks.'

They utilised an effective combination of Cvent's registration tool, the CrowdCompass mobile app, and an integration to 6Connex for their virtual environment. This was all connected to their 3D virtual Planet IMEX island that they created as a central hub for information on all aspects of the wider event. Everything needed to be seamless, including the intricate branding details from the birds chirping in their 3D virtual island to the colour association of their rooms.

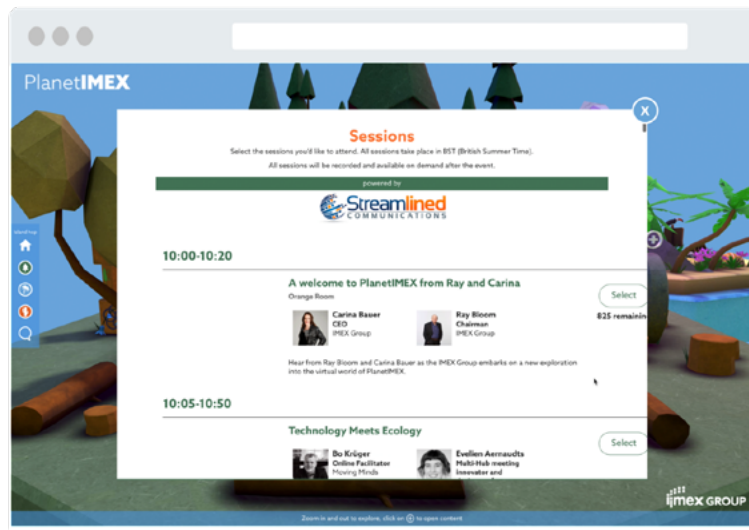


The Process

There was a learning curve for everyone involved as this was an unprecedented transition for an event of this size. Carina and her team onboarded Cvent, noting that the close partnership served the team well. “We worked with Cvent right from the beginning of the process,” she says. They quickly understood what the successful execution of this project required, and what it would mean for the rest of the events industry as other MICE leaders navigate through similar territories. They knew that the combination of Cvent’s centralised platform and an efficiently assembled team were going to be key in making this a success. The IMEX team used the Cvent’s Event Builder services to design a website and registration flow that was on-brand and easy for attendees to build their agenda’s within. They used the CrowdCompass App build service to ensure the same consistency in look and feel, and to give their attendees

more interactive elements with the usage of Live Polling, Q&A, and connecting with other attendees within the app on the day of the event. They also built their virtual environment within 6Connex for attendees to access the Zoom webinar broadcasting service on the day. With this strong suite of technology in place, things were off to a solid start.

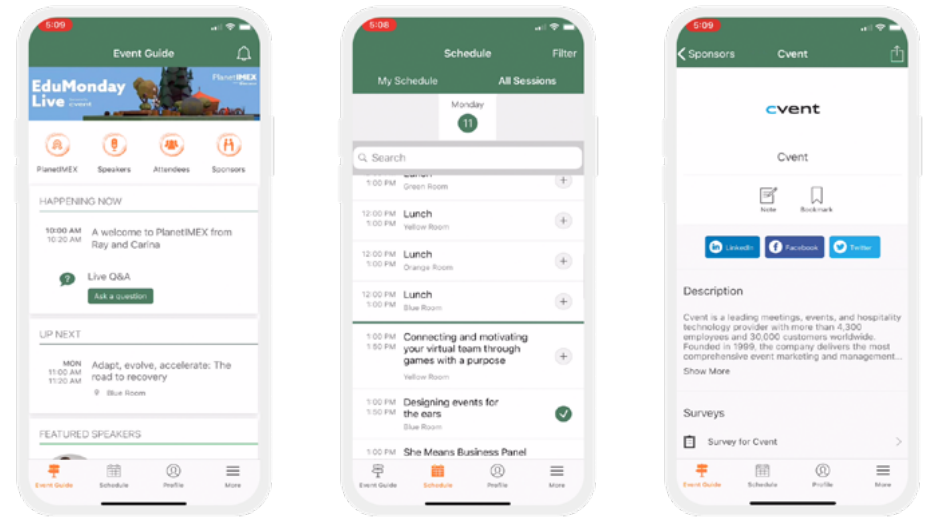
With a central goal of supporting the industry and fostering valuable connections, Carina’s team carefully considered the event structure. “We wanted to bring some of the elements from IMEX and bring those to the industry, and really that was about driving connections and community and a bit of joy,” says Carina. The three areas they chose to focus on were education, networking and community. PlanetIMEX consisted of three islands: a beach-themed community island, a forest-inspired education island and a networking island characterised by canyons, mountains and valleys. The main day of the event was EduMonday Live, which was open to the whole industry and provided attendees with tons of educational content. They also had a specialist education day that consisted of three tracks aimed at associations, corporations and agencies. Each contained their own specialist track. The tracks were three hours long each, with networking and social events built in, panel sessions and keynote speakers. This took a lot of coordinating, with the event requiring multiple registration types, event apps and networking capabilities. They also had to keep their audience engaged. The IMEX team worked close with Cvent to figure out the best steps to roll this out.



Seamless Experience for Attendees

The integration between all the tech solutions created a seamless experience for attendees, which was a key requirement for IMEX. They wanted to ensure attendees wouldn't face any roadblocks or complications in the virtual environment as they moved through registration to the virtual event space and into the event app. Carina explains, "In the registration process, you chose say you wanted to go to session A, B and C, and when you were in the CrowdCompass app those sessions were automatically saved into your schedule. You could directly click on them and access the Zoom environment." They also used the Cvent Mobile app to enable interaction between presenters and attendees at sessions. "We also used the CrowdCompass app for the interactive element, so you could also chat with other attendees in the session, and access polls and Q&A via the app," Carina adds. They could use their phone to access the app, which gave attendees a second screen to contribute to sessions and interact with other attendees and speakers. "Having that second screen was valuable. They could view their session on their computer screen and have their second screen on their mobile open for the networking element, and they could ask questions to speakers."

Carina and team worked with Cvent and Cvent's partner, 6Connex, to create the full virtual experience that enabled a seamless flow of data between systems. "Through Cvent's partner network we utilised the 6Connex system,

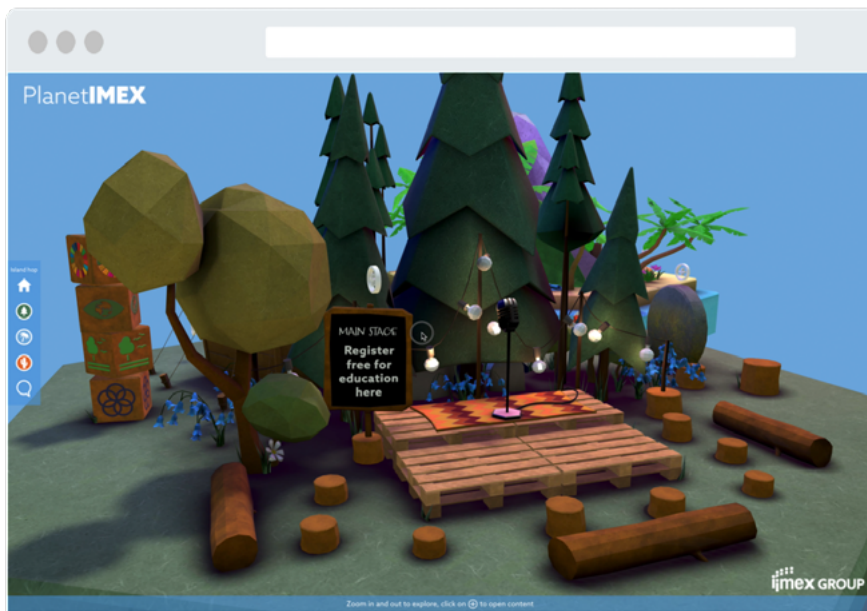


and Cvent's registration data was able to be passed through to the 6Connex system where we created the virtual environment," Carina says. This automated process allowed attendees to easily access the virtual event with a secure and efficient user experience. "If you registered for EduMonday live, for example, you were sent a link," Carina adds. "You would click that link and were brought straight through to the virtual environment, and then through that you could access all the educational Panel sessions that we had put on for EduMonday Live."

They were also able to gather valuable data through these integrated systems, as Carina notes. She says, "Through that system we were able to get very rich data about what people did, where they went, what they saw and how long they were on the system." This gave IMEX detailed event insights that would be valuable for future events.

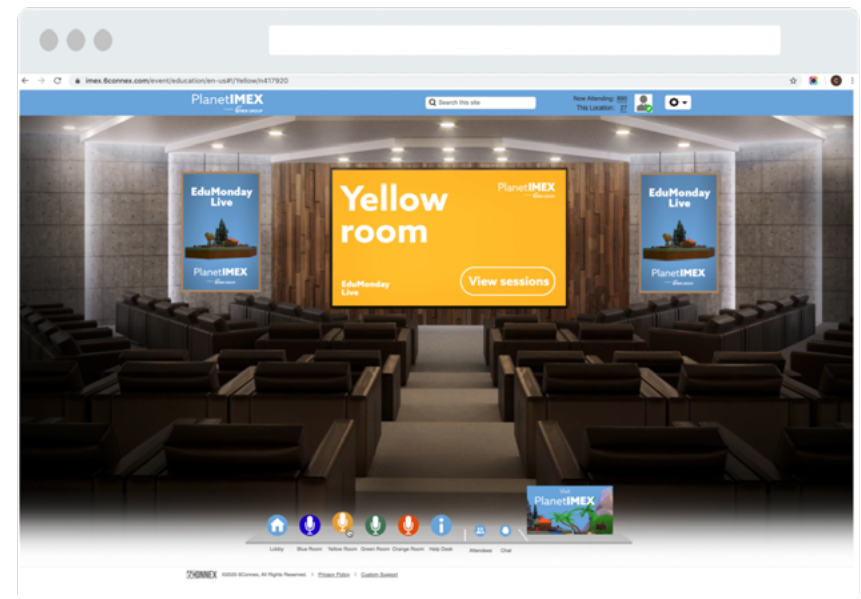
PlanetIMEX

The PlanetIMEX programme consisted of 45 sessions, strategically aimed at addressing the current situation and what it means for the future of the even industry. They brought in 44 world-class speakers and moderators to host thought leadership discussions, engaging seminars, and networking sessions. IMEX knew that it would be a challenge to keep people engaged in a virtual environment



where people are prone to more distractions. To increase interaction within all those sessions, they marketed the CrowdCompass app at strategic times so that people could participate more effectively. "At the beginning of every session the moderator would mention the app. We really pushed people to use the app for the networking,

Q&A and polling," Carina says. This resulted in a 95% app adoption rate amongst the event's participants. Thanks to the marketing efforts of the team, the messaging really hit home for delegates as they knew this would be one of the main sources of communication. There were over 9,000 user contributions including social media shares and in-app networking, over 42,000 overall engagement points like bookmarking speakers and viewing sponsor pages, and a total of 38,000 minutes open for the EduMonday Live app.



On the day of EduMonday Live, IMEX solicited a superstar crew of their own internal staff, project managers from Streamlined Communications, and a few of Cvent's broadcasting experts to ensure a smooth run. With the help of the integration, the data collected in Cvent flowed into the virtual environment used for Zoom viewings to create

a seamless and secure journey for the attendees. Behind the scenes, speakers and moderators were coordinated as the team orchestrated the transitions from zoom session to zoom session. Attendees were equipped with detailed joining instructions and reminders to easily navigate through the virtual environment, and IMEX was able to see the synchrony of the systems in real time. “We had nearly 6,000 people register for EduMonday with almost 50% of them attend. Half of those people were brand new to IMEX, so that in itself was really important to us,” says Carina. “We were engaging with people that hadn’t been to a show before and bringing them into our world. So we were really pleased with that.” Carina explains that, of those who attended the event and joined multiple sessions, “Across the 45 sessions, 12,500 seats were filled.” They have also seen high website visit rates before, during and after the event. Where “25,000 unique people have accessed PlanetIMEX, their dwell time was between four and seven minutes which is very high for online,” Carina notes.

Carina emphasizes that what truly aided in this pivot within such a short timeframe were the teams that were there to support each other. Everyone involved understood the benefit to the attendees, organisers, and the overall industry, devoting hours on the weekends and even the U.K. bank holiday to ensure its success. It paid off as this event set the standards for the resilience of the events industry as the IMEX Group conquered the challenge of successfully flipping this monumental event.

Carina and team were very pleased with the results and feedback from the event. She notes, “Feedback has been phenomenal in terms of the engagement on the sessions, social activities, the IMEX run, and the 1,500 individual appointments that were made. All of those things have been great successes.”

The Future

Carina is confident that the future for in-person events are bright after the global pandemic subsides. “I have no doubt at all living through this experience that, when people do go back to live events, I think they are going to really enjoy them at a very deep and emotional level as well,” she insists. They will also appreciate the value of live events at a deeper level than ever before. Carina surmises, “I know that when people go back to live events, they will remember why it is that live events are so important and why it is more effective for doing business.”

Products used

CrowdCompass Mobile App
Event Management



cvent

Cvent is the global meeting, event, travel, and hospitality technology leader.

Cvent provides easy-to-use, integrated technology solutions to maximise the impact of meetings and events of all sizes. We help organisations plan and market events, execute onsite, engage audiences, and measure and analyse results.

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