



THE **NEW** PLAYBOOK FOR EVENT DESIGN.

How RDC, HIMSS, & Cvent Reimagined an Attendee-Centric Experience

WE ARE AT THE EPICENTER OF THE MOST SEISMIC SHIFT THE EVENT INDUSTRY WILL EVER FACE.

Definitions of event success have changed. Audiences are attending 70% fewer events annually. There are more choices than ever. Success and survival are now directly linked.

But for The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Conference & Exhibition (HIMSS) the big question became - what does survival look like and how do we future proof success?



THE CHALLENGE

As an established brand with a rich history of membership engagement, the pause of 2020 opened the floodgates of opportunity for HIMSS. To redefine experience, engage audiences in new ways, enrich sponsors, and empower the creativity of their team became a new north star and thrilling new challenge. One they enlisted RDC to solve.

As a member association committed to transforming healthcare, the annual HIMSS Global Health Conference & Exhibition is the cornerstone of its membership connection, education, and influence for healthcare professionals globally.

HIMSS needed to not only serve the needs of their 100,000+ membership community but also maintain revenue streams and set themselves up for future success as an organization.

“Our strategy today will help shape the future of our events,” said HIMSS Vice President, Events, Peggy Diab. “The events landscape is changing. Events today are different than how they were two years ago. We have to rethink our approach to how we design our in-person and digital experience.”

So began the hard, strategic work of designing a digitally enabled experience that would complement the large-scale HIMSS Conference & Exhibition that would drive over 6,000 virtual registrants and garner record content engagement.



A FEW NUMBERS FOR OUR LEFT-BRAINERS:

With significant size and scale, the scope of the HIMSS Conference & Exhibition created significant experience design considerations and opportunities.



595,000
net sq. ft. of
exhibition space



248
product
categories



42,000
attendees



100
new product
showcases



1,328
exhibitors



27
pre conference
sessions



362
exhibit floor
sessions



4
keynotes

THE SOLUTION

“There were two critical components to developing an influential and effective strategy for the new HIMSS event design: relevant data and actionable customer insights,” shared RDC Founder and Experience Advisor, Robyn Duda.

“With an event this robust, there are many goals to achieve including both short and long-term audience and revenue growth, content development and realignment, integration of sponsorship partners and cohesion of tech and data that are additive to the experience and scalable. So, we focused on two main goals. First, design and implement an integrated experience strategy made up of a cohesive set of movements. Second, follow a framework I developed that aligns every moving part into one cohesive, integrated experience. I call this framework The Anatomy of Experience.”

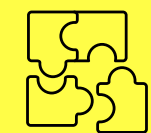
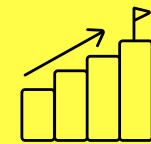
You can view the complete strategy developed by RDC [here](#).

**THERE WERE TWO CRITICAL COMPONENTS TO DEVELOPING
AN INFLUENTIAL AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR THE NEW
HIMSS EVENT DESIGN: RELEVANT DATA AND ACTIONABLE
CUSTOMER INSIGHTS**



THE IMPLEMENTATION

Because the devil is truly in the details with event design, here's a step by step walk through of the Anatomy of Experience and how HIMSS, RDC and Cvent used it to navigate a complex content, tech, marketing, and design landscape, while Cvent wove together the entire digital journey.



THE ANATOMY OF EXPERIENCE: THE FIVE PILLARS





PILLAR 1

NAVIGATION

GOALS:

- **UX:** Ease of the consumer experience both online and offline is more than a map.
- **Flow:** Transitions between content must feel seamless to the user.

EXECUTION:

With a significant technical build out, two things were clear: the online experience had to be intuitive and easy to navigate as well as attractive, as it's the only immersion point audiences have. This can be easier said than done when building a custom solution.

“You are dealing with API's, SSO, writing code, integration reg systems, and more, so it's easy to get caught up in the back end around data and integrations. These are important, but there's much more to consider: does the product look great? Is it user friendly? So, we implemented a key role that we called The Event Quarterback. This role knew exactly what everyone at Cvent was doing. They saw the big picture. They looked at today's plays and all the way down the field. They knew the details. They made sure nothing broke. The amount that came out of this role was incredible,” Cvent, Regional Vice President, Rob Hamlin.

From building custom road maps, to understanding the power of a first impression, to providing direct training, the focus on navigation was detailed—tying to the bigger picture that digital is a long-range investment—and this annualized content strategy is paving the way for how audiences will consume content now and in the future.





PILLAR 2

RELEVANCE

GOALS:

- **Satisfy & Exceed:** Develop a deep understanding of attendees and their needs.
- **Differentiate:** Have a clear competitive advantage over competition.
- **Authentic:** Follow a mission to achieve your purpose.

EXECUTION:

HIMSS and RDC put forward a clear ethos to keep the event relevant through defining the goal: to design a high-value and engaging hybrid solution for both virtual and in-person. Additionally, they outlined the mission: to reform the global healthcare and wellness ecosystem in order to realize the full health potential of every human everywhere.

1. The experience needs to be designed for how attendees want to consume now and in the future (no more disjointed events or quarterly thinking).
2. The content needs to be more valuable than what can be found on the internet if we want attendees to pay and show up.
3. The customer journey has to make sense for each of the personas, thus event professionals become curators, not aggregators, of content. Creating moments that are connected vs random acts of content is key.
4. The technology needs to be aligned with a true tech partner who will understand change is hard and wants to make the digital journey as intuitive and natural as possible.





PILLAR 3

PERSONALIZATION

GOALS:

- **Design:** Everyone can't consume everything and doesn't want to consume everything.
- **Curate:** Ask the right question to create customized programs for everything



EXECUTION:

After a robust vetting process, HIMSS selected Cvent as the tech partner and virtual event platform which was the beginning of a critical point of collaboration.

“Our partnership with HIMSS was outstanding, and that became an important backbone to success because the solution was so complex. With a robust tech stack, multiple technical teams, reg and data integrations, having clear communication allowed us to stay focused on the attendee journey. It was critically important that even though we were solving for the curation of attendee data through multiple platforms, everything was smooth, integrated, and aggregated in a way that was usable and made complete sense,” said Cvent Regional Vice President, Rob Hamlin.

To put all of this smart digital and data foundation into work, HIMSS created customized education pods for a tight and curated onsite experience and developed 90-minute digital content segments that were designed to entertain and educate individual personas in TV-like broadcasts – as opposed to days filled with hour-long sessions by track. These segments were anchor-hosted and included keynotes, fireside chats, panel discussions, and industry highlights, all wrapped together.

“We didn't want to end up with a media catalog environment. We wanted to develop content wrapped around experience. We curated strong content, and allowed the attendees to design their own digital journey,” HIMSS Vice President of Events, Peggy Diab, shared.

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PILLAR 4

CONNECTION

GOALS:

- **Community:** Networking is not enough.
- **Connection:** Create meaningful moments of human connection to leave an imprint.
- **Relationship:** Build community with similar needs and missions.

EXECUTION:

“Building real engagement digitally is a challenge we are all tasked with. And, likewise, evolving how we ensure people connect in-person has shifted. Putting this connection at the forefront means we find experiential and content-based ways to say “yes” to the right audiences, make them feel at home, and design programming they don’t have to search for but that we put front and center – a la Netflix and YouTube recommendations. Working with HIMSS and Cvent, we put connection in the driver’s seat and that was woven through the entire design experience,” Robyn Duda, Founder of RDC explained.

To develop an environment that enabled meaningful connection, HIMSS invested in digital production design, custom staging, and professional anchors to guide the experience. These anchors would read live questions, interact with attendees, and answer tweets on-air, bringing personal names to the forefront as opposed to leaving networking and connection solely as the responsibility of attendees.

“We are proud of the new experience we delivered to our audience. We now have a foundation to build on. Content is king, and the experience is just as important,” shared HIMSS Vice President, Events, Peggy Diab.





PILLAR 5

ENGAGEMENT

GOALS:

- **Customer Journey:** Enable a 365 strategy.
- **Life Cycle:** Focus on pre-, during, and post-connection to the brand.
- **Modernize:** Execute pull marketing instead of push.



EXECUTION:

The shelf life of digital has changed the game. While in-person events can still remain moment-in-time experiences, the virtual additions and brand relationship-building that now happens year-round is a tremendous opportunity and also a challenge. To keep and hold audience attention means content, timing, messaging, and production need to be at the forefront of all planning.

“Attention spans have shortened, experience is crucial, and if we can’t get our content across in 20-30 minutes, then our message will get lost. To address these design criteria, we invested in a production agency experienced in producing television and movies,” HIMSS Vice President of Events, Peggy Diab outlined.

HIMSS was able to secure new speakers with fresh, diverse voices given the new focus on digital programming and 365 virtual engagement. These new panels gave rise to opportunities for audience expansion globally with over 20 countries tuning in for pre-event coverage and streaming the on demand packages post-event. HIMSS also provided the digital program to anyone attending in person, given the virtual programming was a launch, as a way to think long term and train audiences to consume content in new ways (a considerable takeaway for any organizer thinking you need to steer audiences only to the often more lucrative in-person experience).

With each on demand promotion post-show, views increased, extending the audience journey. As Peggy Diab shared, “Digital doesn’t end when the show ends. We can continually serve up content that evolves our industry and solves our members' problems.”

THE CHALLENGE

Event design has forever changed. Digital moments now complement in-person experiences.

Audiences' expectations stem from the real-time engagement and customization that consumer brands offer.

The lift for event teams can feel like both a sprint and a marathon.

HIMSS was able to create raving fans, de-risk 2021 revenue and create a foundation for incoming three-year revenue streams derived from both community and events. Their members felt connected, event audiences felt seen and heard, and audience KPI's increased.

The Anatomy of Experience framework founded by RDC is an actionable path to relevancy. It's a playbook that's rooted in principles that will pull you out of the exhausting quarterly sprint and put your expertise back in the driver's seat with the right north star and guiding principles. It provides the framework for breaking down legacy event strategies and building them back into an offline and online free flow of information that thrills customers.

