



Creating community impact through the COVID-19 vaccine rollout with Cvent Appointments

120,000

COVID-19 vaccines administered using Cvent Appointments

1,100%

increase in clinics enabled using Cvent Appointments

470,000

registrations across 3,300+ events with Cvent

Walmart

As the largest retailer in the world, Walmart hosts hundreds of events annually to educate, strategize, network, and share culture while updating business-critical information internally for associates and externally for customers. Heather Lopez, Project Manager for Event Solutions, works closely with a team of dedicated event professionals to execute successful meetings and events across the Walmart brand fostering key relationships and successes across the business. Heather's team manages hundreds of events per year for internal associates, stakeholders, and suppliers. "With our events program, we support the leadership and the strategies for the field, the stores, and the clubs across the business," she explains.

Navigating through a Global Crisis with Cvent

Walmart has partnered with Cvent for over 15 years to help manage their total event program. "We have a great partnership with Cvent," says Heather. "Cvent is our primary registration tool for virtual, hybrid, and in-person meetings, and is our one-stop shop for registration." In that time, Walmart has relied on Cvent's Event Marketing and Management platform to process almost 470,000 registrations and create over 3,300 events. Heather notes that Cvent's integrated solutions allow her team to capture key information in a single source of truth, including attendee details, travel information, and hotel bookings. "We can then communicate that back out to those attendees, making it easy to participate in any meeting or event," she adds.

When the global health crisis began, Walmart's associates and local communities were directly impacted. Heather explains, "We have over 2.3 million associates globally, including roughly 1.6 million in the United States alone. And the first thing that came to mind was, how do we help our communities? How do we keep our associates safe? And how do we ensure our customers are able to still get the things that they need safely?" Seeing the direct impact of the pandemic on the communities around the country made prioritizing their health and safety paramount. Walmart initially partnered with the federal government to manage COVID-19 testing sites at various facilities and parking lots around the country.



When the COVID-19 vaccine was first rolled out in late 2019, the Walmart Events Solutions team was asked to help support mass vaccine distribution. “It became apparent early on that we would need to step up not only for our associates, but for our communities as well and be at the forefront of the vaccination rollout,” Heather adds.

Creating a Turnkey Scheduling Solution with Cvent Appointments

The Events Solutions team partnered with their internal Health & Wellness division, who worked closely with Federal and State representatives, the CDC, and the FDA to gain the ability to vaccinate in offsite clinic locations and inside Walmart facilities. They were able to first vaccinate associates and other frontline workers, as well as select community members. The team was then challenged to help manage mass scheduling for the broader vaccine rollout. “The Health and Wellness team came to us on a Wednesday afternoon and said the CDC had started sending phase one of the vaccines to some stores and clubs, but they didn’t have a tool to register or track them,” Heather explains. “They were doing it all with pen and paper manually, so we had to figure out a way to add a digital aspect to it.” With the sensitive nature of vaccine distribution and the tight timelines for using viable vaccines, the CDC asked for the first vaccination sites to be operational by the following Monday. This left them days to find and implement an automated technology solution to manage scheduling.

Heather’s team soon discovered the state-level vaccine scheduling system would not be able to accommodate mass scheduling requirements. As a result, they turned to their longtime Cvent team. With just days to configure a digital solution, they initially proposed using a basic registration system to manage vaccine appointments. However, the Events Solutions team realized the communities they were supporting didn’t always have access to email and phone numbers. “I got a hold of our Cvent team and we sat down to figure out what we could do,” says Heather.

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— Heather Lopez, Project Manager for Event Solutions



Working closely with Cvent, Heather and her team chose to leverage Cvent's integrated Event Management and Appointments solutions. They worked quickly to implement the solution for the first round of vaccines that needed to be distributed in a matter of days. "We were able to stand up the Appointments solution within 24 hours, fully tested, and then were able to roll it out," Heather says. With this turnkey solution in place, Walmart could begin quickly and efficiently registering community members and managing vaccination appointments directly within Cvent.

Ensuring Flexible Vaccine Scheduling through Event Technology

The flexibility of the Appointments solution meant attendee groups could be defined by unique rules and parameters for visibility and permissions. Not only were they able to configure the solution to account for multiple appointments and mandated waiting periods per appointment, but Heather's team also had to account for the number of staff per location, the number of vaccines available per day, and how each physical space would be configured. For example, a drive through vaccination site could have several lanes operating simultaneously. Additionally, appointments could be available only between certain times and with only a limited number of vials each day.

As vaccine vials would expire or lose their efficacy after a certain time period, these many different variables were crucial to maintaining strict scheduling requirements through the Appointments tool. Predefined time slots and locations meant the Event Solutions team could manage varying capacities as needed. "We set up most of our location sites where we'd run them in a 72-hour cycle and do five to six vaccinations per five-minute increment," Heather explains. "We used the Appointments tool to make sure we could input that information to schedule those customers every five minutes."



They also created a centralized portal for pharmacists and onsite clinical staff to find and print appointment calendars and reports, replacing what would have been an entirely manual process subject to human error.

By automating the scheduling process, Walmart was able to reallocate staff resources to support a call center for their communities. Here, community members who may not have had access to computers or email addresses could call and schedule their appointments. The call center staff could easily book slots within the Appointments tool on behalf of those community members, and then have those appointments be automatically confirmed. If it wasn't for the Cvent tools we had, this would have been a manual process completed with paper and pencil, or may not have happened at all, thereby putting more Americans at risk," Heather explains. Moreover, they were able to take the scheduling tool out to their communities where needed. "We partnered with local charity organizations and had a lot of our community partners going door to door in those communities, with their iPads and their phones, being able to use the Cvent scheduling tool to set up these appointments right there," Heather adds. For those who scheduled appointments themselves, all appointments could be added to their personal calendars for ease of use.

Tracking Community Impact through Cvent Reporting

With the vaccine rollout central to helping successfully navigate the global health crisis, tracking vaccination rates across the country on a state and federal level was critical. Using Cvent Appointment's reporting functionality, the Walmart team tracked tens of thousands of vaccination appointments at community clinics. They also partnered with state-level teachers associations, the NBA, and the WNBA to provide vaccines for educators, players, staff, and families."Using the Appointments solution, we stood up more than 100 community clinics servicing 120,000 vaccines across the United States," says Heather.

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WALMART

With these integrated solutions in place, Walmart was able to rapidly expand their program as vaccines became more readily available. As noted, the initial six clinic pilot program expanded to more than 100 clinics and counting, increasing the number of clinics enabled by more than 1,100%. “The Cvent scheduling process has been seamless and the patients are able to arrive at a clinic location, enter the building or simply drive through, and complete their vaccination process within 20-25 minutes with the mandatory waiting period,” says Heather. She adds that their Health and Wellness partners are immensely appreciative of the turnkey solution.

Heather found the support of her Cvent team invaluable throughout the process. “Our reps have been amazing and are always available to us,” she insists. She was particularly impressed by the willingness of the Cvent team to work with Walmart and expand the solution’s capabilities to suit this critical need. “We learned the tool hadn’t been used previously for such a large quantity of scheduling, so they worked hand in hand with us along with the build team and the engineers to push the tool further,” she adds. The rapid implementation of the solution was an unexpected success, especially in light of the truncated timeline. Heather explains, “We didn’t know when we launched on that Monday if it was going to work past the initial 6,600 vaccines that we needed to get done in the first round, but it went so well we were able to add more and more until we partnered with almost every state in the United States.”

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Empowering the Future of Walmart's Total Event Program

Heather notes that helping to solve for the daunting challenges of the vaccine rollout was a humbling experience. She recalls, "With the challenges of the pandemic, the event management industry and the hospitality industry didn't know what was next. That's our passion and when it all shuts down and we were no longer able to fulfill that role, it was unbelievably difficult." She adds that the ingenuity of event professionals in forging new paths forward was truly inspiring. Personally, she says, impacting the lives of Walmart community members and associates was the biggest reward. "To be able to help our Health and Wellness team from the event management side, and to do not only what I love to do but do it for the betterment of the community, made it all worth it," she says.

Considering next steps for the industry, Heather sees immense value in using event technology to power one's total event program. "We're finding a good balance between virtual and in-person events, so I think we'll see hybrid meetings going forward," she offers. Having helped manage Walmart's events program through the crisis, Heather advises other event professionals to use technology to stay relevant as the events landscape changes.

She explains, "Thinking in terms of a company aspect, every meeting we have moving forward will have a virtual option. That being said, we're looking forward to coming back safely to in-person events. We want to also support our production partners and help build those relationships that we already have with the client to instill trust with our production partners."

By underscoring the value of trusted relationships, Heather cites the longstanding partnership between Walmart and Cvent. She says, "Reggie Aggarwal has been there for us from day one, and I feel Reggie and all of the Cvent leadership team value Walmart. We definitely have a seat at the table for feedback and we value that." As she looks forward to continuing the vaccination program with her team and expanding Walmart's total event program, she knows Cvent will continue to be a trusted partner.



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

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