Planning your Virtual Congress Tips

Platform Provider

- ✓ Work with a platform provider that can give you direct service for most if not all services that you need (avoid mediators unless it is your professional congress organizer, PCO).
- ✓ Choose a platform provider that can integrate your existing systems, such as registration, CRM, abstract submission and programme management.
- ✓ Find a platform provider that work with a specialist in human behaviour to better understand how you could improve your audience's experience.
- ✓ Ensure a good user experience, preferably with 3D graphics, with intuitive browsing capabilities. The platform must be easy to use and have a clear user guide.
- ✓ Make sure that your provider has a back-up plan for the internet, electricity back-up generators and servers back up in different locations.

Scientific Programme

- ✓ I recommend having most sessions pre-recorded, including keynote live sessions, as plan B in case a speaker has a bad internet connection, or a speaker cancels in the last minute.
- ✓ It may be worth considering subtitles or simultaneous translation if this factor will significantly increase your attendance.
- ✓ Have live Q&A after each session and have your speakers be present at them.
- ✓ Run Q&A longer than in your physical events. The live discussion is a very important component and a great way to engage with your remote audience.
- ✓ Include the Q&A discussion within the session recording after the session ends (for on demand).
- ✓ Allow delegates to ask questions even after the session ended. This is beneficial for people from different time zones.
- ✓ Keep the duration of your sessions the same as in your physical meetings but shorten the presentation times and extend the time dedicated to Q&A's.

- ✓ Schedule the most attractive live sessions in the morning and afternoon so that delegates from different time zones can enjoy part of your live happenings.
- ✓ Centralise the more educational sessions to the middle of the day.
- ✓ Break the presentations into shorter modules dealing with different questions.
- ✓ Provide your delegates with clear learning outcomes to keep them focused in front of their screen.

Faculty

- ✓ Run rehearsals for speakers to try the system before any live presentation, debate and live Q&A.
- ✓ Prepare guidelines for your chairs and speakers about how to build their sessions and prepare their presentations. Remember to explain them that there are different timings in virtual settings.
- ✓ Follow in real-time how many delegates attend each session and let your chairs and speakers know the numbers in their respective sessions.

Engagement and user experience

- ✓ Consider controversies, hands-on and practical sessions and open call for submission of session or topic proposals.
- ✓ Engage your delegates with networking and interactive features. You can use gamification, chats, meetings, and product theatres.
- ✓ Organise one on one meetings or small sessions with experts in virtual session rooms, hands-on demonstrations of techniques, and live discussion with poster presenters or with peers with similar research interest.
- ✓ Be creative and give your delegates the feeling of togetherness and networking. You can mail your delegates registration kits and goodies.
- ✓ Comply with GDPR and ask your registrants whether they consent to share their profile information with other participants.
- ✓ Create tools, such as short video tutorials, to teach your delegates how to take advantage and maximize their congress experience.