



# Connected everywhere

## etm's Future Event Strategy

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Never has there been a more important time to review your future event strategy.

### Physical, digital, hybrid?

There has been a lot of talk about when physical events may start up again – what guarantees can be given over COVID-19 and vaccination solutions?

Will attendees be willing to attend business events in the same way as before the pandemic? Are hybrid events the answer? What does hybrid really mean in practice, and how should it impact our planning? →

We've addressed this and more in our white paper and provided a glimpse into the events we believe will need to be produced in the future.

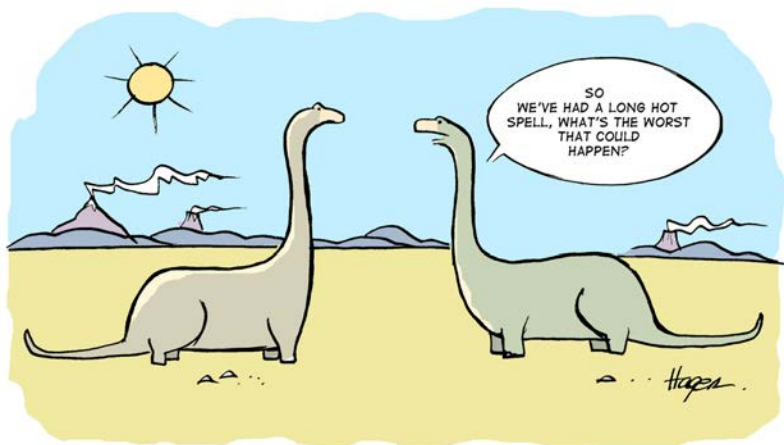
Factors outside our control have brought about a massive change in our industry, as we have had to deftly pivot from physical events to virtual. Fortunately, digital technology has enabled this change and given us a glimpse into a world of events which we believe will forever be a part of the new norm. We don't see this as a blip. Consider how digital transformation has impacted so many other sectors and marketplaces – think of album sales as just one example.

We are living through times of fundamental evolution in our sector, which is both exciting and challenging.

*"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change." - Charles Darwin*

One thing's for sure, the events we plan in future will never be the same. Some refer to this direction as hybrid, or blended, but we think it is much more than that.

We are referring to this new strategy as **connected everywhere**. Connected and interconnected. We believe the fusion between physical and digital event experiences will accelerate and those that grasp this will see amazing opportunities.



## ***“The fusion between physical and digital event experiences will accelerate”***

**There are many factors that are driving this change:**

### **Choice**

The genie is somewhat out of the bottle. Attendees now realise they have a choice. Not just whether to attend or not, but whether to attend live and in the flesh, live digitally or on demand at a time of their convenience. And that decision may vary according to the occasion. Sometimes delegates will want to attend your 3-day event in Barcelona. Other times, they may prefer or need to join digitally, and in our competitive landscape we have to allow for that choice.

### **Travel**

Corporate policies are rapidly changing. Even before the pandemic we witnessed many organisations bringing in temporary travel bans for specific purposes. We need a **connected everywhere** approach to create a unique experience for both physical and digital attendees.

### **Permissions**

Gaining permission to attend a physical event can be difficult. Whilst some managers understand the benefit of training, learning and motivation, others can feel that extended time away from doing the day job and the associated costs is not necessarily a priority. Our future strategy means we need to include a solution for everyone, regardless of how willing the organization is.

### **Time**

One of the biggest benefits we have witnessed this year is the ability for attendees to visit a greater number of events as it obviously takes much less time to participate digitally. The very people you want to attend are likely to be the most time poor. It's therefore vital to ensure connection to the event is appropriate on each occasion according to the time they have.

## Value

Events are a significant investment, and executives are demanding value as never before. In order to achieve this there needs to be a greater understanding of the personas required to physically attend. These are likely to be the most important contacts where value, in terms of opportunity, is worth the investment. The hard truth is that others may need to be offered a digital only experience, thereby ensuring best value is achieved for the organization.

## Budget

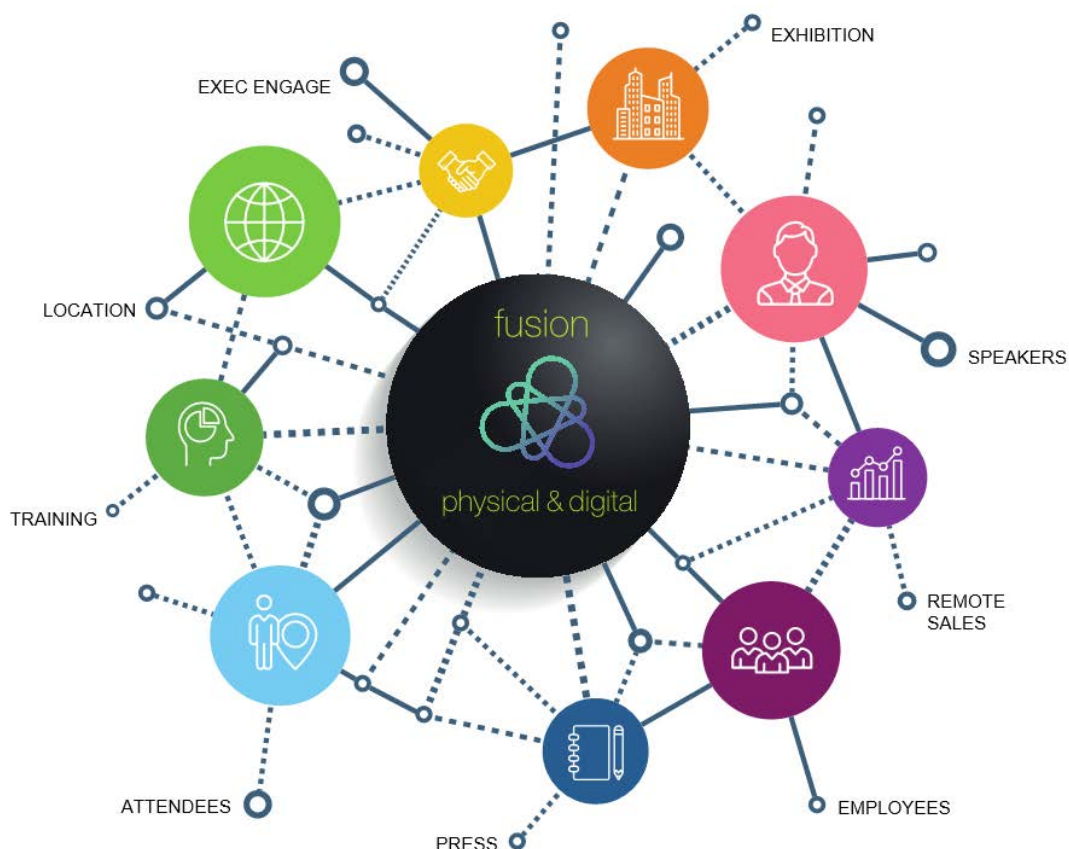
Budget approval to attend a physical event can be difficult to get signed off. Ticket price, travel, accommodation and subsistence costs all add up. Throughout the last year we have seen organisations experience the benefit of sending several delegates to a digital event rather than one attending physically. Our future event strategy needs to accommodate all scenarios.

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Of course, **all** these factors are examples and there may be others more relevant to your specific sector. But the principle in play here is that we need to adapt and apply new thinking to our event planning.

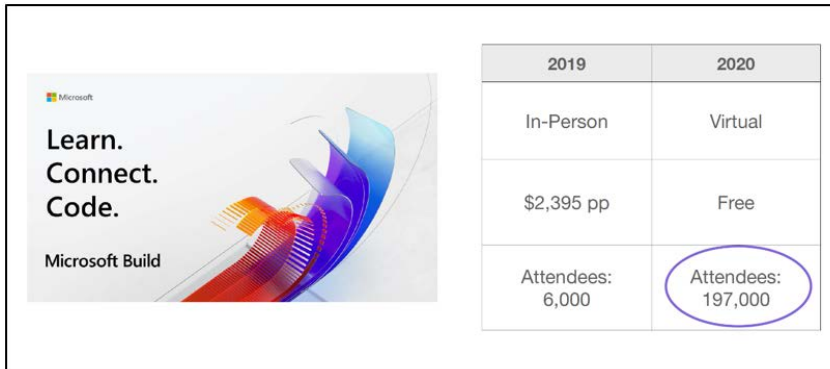
At the heart of our **connected everywhere** strategy is an understanding of accelerating the fusion between physical and digital experiences and the upside opportunities this can bring to drive greater value and effectiveness from every major event project both pre, during and post-event.

Let's consider some real examples of how the **connected everywhere** approach could work:





**Attendees:** Certain brands have seen a dramatic increase in reach this year by pivoting to a pure play digital experience. As organisers we have the opportunity to increase reach in a cost-effective way by targeting the correct invite to a specific persona type.



"50% of our attendees had never come to a VMWorld. It was a really wonderful way to allow people who, often due to budget constraints, would never have been able to come - whether their job is not 100% based on VMWare products, so justifying the in-person cost of attending is hard or they are currently exploring what VMWare has to offer - so I think digital is always going to be that tool."

Allison Crooker - Director of Event Content, VMWorld



**Training:** Training, hands on labs, enablement, certification etc. are often important conference elements. And "learnings" are usually one of the key decision factors in attending. They are also an important KPI for the organiser. However, there can be a disconnect between the number of seats offered in the physical venue, with the investment required in terms of hardware set up, and the demand for places. This dynamic is changed when fusing both experiences. Training activities can be off-site or co-located, physical and/or digital thereby offering all attendees equal opportunities to learn – upscaling training is now a reality.



**On-site location:** Many organisations have a control room, a factory, a data centre, a showroom etc. Usually these impressive assets are not incorporated as part of a physical event because of obvious logistical reasons. With a **connected everywhere** strategy it becomes a simple and cost-effective solution to bring live demonstrations right into the heart of the event for ALL attendees.



**Exec exchange:** Here's an example: The CEO may be presenting a keynote in Paris. The regional team in Stockholm may be running their own half day meeting for key customers. A **connected everywhere** strategy allows the opportunity to bring that CEO presentation right into the heart of the meeting through a digital event platform, followed by a live discussion between the two.





**Exhibition:** Attracting sponsors and exhibitors to a conference is a challenge, and in a competitive environment they are looking for ways to amplify their message and gain more opportunities to promote products and services. A **connected everywhere** approach provides just that. Not only the physical face-to-face encounters, but also the vast range of meetings that can be arranged with the digital audience through a typical 'Who's Here' module. Exhibitors have the potential to lower their costs by reducing the number of sales people at the physical event, and allowing others to connect digitally from their office location. Product experts can be brought into a meeting without them ever leaving their office, resulting in a breadth of opportunity that's impossible to match in a pure play physical event. Inevitably, most events have a packed agenda and the time allowed for exhibitors and sponsors to speak in sessions is often squeezed out. With new thinking and planning, this content can be made available digitally - for live and on demand activity providing great additional value and increased revenue for organisers. **The combined opportunities of a connected everywhere strategy is extremely compelling for conference exhibitions.**



**Speakers:** No longer do we have to plan for every speaker to be present at the event venue. Now we can bring a range of guest speakers, celebrities, executives and experts remotely to your event, increasing the talent that can be called upon. Some speakers will of course be there in person. Others may be brought in remotely as part of the digital platform. Costs are slashed and the talent pool is broadened ensuring the conference becomes even more attractive to attendees. Consider using this talent for generating bespoke content for digital only attendees. Traditional broadcasters are masters at providing unique experiences for those viewing the event remotely rather than physically.





**Remote Sales:** It is not always possible or desirable to bring every salesperson to the physical event. Some will be there, others may not, but by fusing the physical and digital experiences it enables sales teams to join the event remotely, set up meetings and actively be a part of the event without being there in person.



**Employees:** Regrettably it is commonplace that not all internal employees are able to attend. We often have the CEO on stage with an impressive production rehearsed and ready to go. But inevitably the costs do not allow for a large number of employees to attend in person. And besides, things need to keep functioning back at the ranch. Imagine for a moment how motivating it could be for employees to digitally attend the CEO's keynote address either at their desk or as part of a town hall gathering. A **connected everywhere** strategy can make this become a reality.



**Press:** It's increasingly difficult to persuade the relevant press to attend an event. They are overwhelmed by offers and simply do not have the time to attend every event they are invited to. Consider the benefits of having some press attend physically, whilst planning for others to be invited to an exclusive digital experience, meaning they can cover the conference story without leaving their desks.

Of course, all of these are just examples of a **connected everywhere** strategy. Some may be more relevant for you than others. But the principle remains: in order to maximise opportunities, the future strategy of events needs to adapt and change. The current pandemic has escalated our understanding of what can be produced from a true fusion of physical and digital experiences.

It requires event planning to be at a completely different level and for us to re-imagine relevant content from the ground up to embrace the opportunities that will make this new approach successful. Our own planning workshops are driven by objectives and personas in order to design in the correct event experience regardless of how the attendees choose to connect with the event.

**etm productions is a team of directors, creatives, writers, producers and managers. We are ready to help with live, hybrid or virtual events.**