

8 TYPES OF EVENTS YOU CAN ORGANIZE TO BOOST YOUR ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Table of Content

Introduction	05
Mission Awareness	02
Awareness Events	03
Charitable Events	05
Member Acquisition	07
Meet-and-greets	08
Open Events	10
Membership Drive Event	12
Member Retention	14
Expert Discussions	15
Focussed Events	17
Training Events and Workshops	19
Finding The Right Fit	21
Conclusion	23
Appendix	24
ABOUT HUBILO	25

Introduction

Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.

In a world dictated by mine and yours, this quote by Helen Keller accurately sums up what Associations can do for the community. Even so, growing Association memberships is always a work in progress. And it's a difficult one at that.

Some Associations struggle with low membership numbers. Some see an initial boost followed by sluggish growth. And a few others experience plateaued memberships on account of their own success. Irrespective, attracting and retaining members remains an important goal. And presents its own set of challenges.

Through this e-book, you'll

- Get access to a comprehensive list of events to boost Association memberships.
- Understand a psychology-based strategy to grow memberships.
- Find out how to strengthen your membership growth efforts with the latest event technology.
- Learn what type of events you should organize to create brand awareness, acquire new members, and retain existing members.

“ Gear up to familiarize yourself and put into action practical insights on the psychology of events across all formats - be it hybrid, virtual, or in-person.”





Challenge: Mission Awareness

“Over a quarter of Associations said that lack of awareness of their mission is one of their biggest external challenges to growing memberships^[1].”

1. Awareness Events

Understanding the psychology

The **mere exposure effect**^[2] (aka the familiarity principle) states that humans develop a preference for people or things that they're familiar with.

Exposing your Association to the right audiences will make you familiar with them. In time, your audience will grow to prefer your Association, resulting in more members. Familiarity begets popularity.

This however only gets your foot in the door. Getting this audience to stay requires more effort.





Making the most of event technology

Use event technology to reach a global network of potential members with minimal investment. Organize more hybrid and virtual events to attract members from outside your home city.

5 events to plan in this category

- Sponsor an in-person or virtual event
- Give a talk at another organization with a relevant audience
- Invest in a booth at a complementing fair or festival
- Participate in panel discussions hosted by other leading Associations
- Plan events on specific days or dates. For example, if you're an Engineering Association then plan an event on world engineering day.

2. Charitable Events

Understanding the psychology

The **halo effect**^[3] is a cognitive bias in which our impression of a person, company, or brand in one area influences our opinion or our feelings in other areas as well.

A charity event is an effective way to make a positive impression on your prospective members. Besides, it is an excellent way to create awareness about your Association.

A charitable event also helps boost your employee morale while serving the community to create a positive impact. Isn't this the win-win situation we're always looking for?





Making the most of event technology

A virtual event is a low-budget approach to organizing a charity event. Also, it is a low-commitment option, so more people are likely to participate. You can generate more value from this event by inviting sponsors and exhibitors to the event. They can be hosted using features like Rooms, Booths, and sponsored Lounges.

5 events to plan in this category

- Walkathon or marathon
- Beach or community clean-up drive
- Ticketed virtual gaming competition
- Sale of products hand-crafted by an underprivileged community
- A ticketed entertainment show

Challenge:

Member Acquisition

In 2020, 47% of Associations reported a decline in total memberships^[4].



3. Meet-and-greets

Understanding the psychology

Social proof^[5] is the idea that people will conform in order to be liked by, similar to, or accepted by the influencer (or society).

Several people may be aware of your Association and interested in what you offer. But not convinced enough to sign up for a membership. By bringing them together with existing members, you can give them the social validation they need to join. A meet-and-greet event is a perfect way to do this.

It is a good idea to use the FOMO^[6] (fear of missing out) to your advantage when hosting events for people known to your members. When people know that others they know are also members of your Association, they are more likely to join.





Making the most of event technology

Personal connections are central to meet-and-greets. Use a virtual event platform that can provide this experience. You can do this using features like Chats, 1-1 Meetings, and Rooms - all of which have audio and video capabilities. Such personalization is not possible using basic meeting software.

5 events to plan in this category

- A virtual magic show, comedy show, or any other fun activity
- Event for special interest groups
- Meeting in strategic public locations like a park or square
- A free luncheon for prospective members with existing members or an influencer
- Meeting at a coffee shop with members

4. Open Events

Understanding the psychology

Positive expectations influence positive behavior. The **Pygmalion effect**^[7] is an explanation of this phenomenon and can be seen in action at an open event.

At an open event, non-members are given the same privileges as members, free of cost. This gives prospective members a taste of what it is like to be a member. The psychological principles at play here are - the Pygmalion effect and loss aversion^[8].

Show your audience the growth potential if they became members. By doing this you'll be activating the Pygmalion effect. Use success stories of existing members to set up expectations and influence positive behavior.



Seal the deal with the loss aversion principle. Make a limited period offer that's hard to refuse. For example, a discount on the membership fees, added bonuses, or access to premium events. By appealing to people's risk-averse nature you can influence them to join your Association.



Making the most of event technology

An open event organized virtually eliminates the need to travel. This makes it easier for prospective members to participate from across locations. Use features like 1-1 Meetings, Chats, and Lounges to drive engagement and provide prospective members with information.

5 events to plan in this category

- High-value events that provide exposure to industry bigwigs
- Networking events like award shows
- Educational seminar or workshop that gives access to premium information
- An event where members showcase their innovations and work
- An event that could present business opportunities to potential members

5. Membership Drive Event

Understanding the psychology

The **simplicity principle**^[9], is the idea that simpler explanations of observations should be preferred to more complex ones.

In his Ted Talk^[10], George Whitesides talks about three things that are imperative to simplicity - predictability, accessibility, and the potential to serve as a building block.

By organizing an explicit membership drive you can achieve all these three aspects. Predictability in knowing exactly what attendees will be signing up for. Accessibility through both virtual and in-person formats. And laying the foundation by giving attendees information that will help them decide on membership.



This type of event can be especially useful when it is organized for a relevant audience. For example, an Association like the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) can host a membership event at an engineering college. This will drive both participation and memberships.



Making the most of event technology

Ensure your attendees are able to get the most out of the event by organizing speed meetings. Use virtual event platform features such as Matchmaking, 1-1 video Meetings, Rooms, and Lounge to achieve this.

5 events to plan in this category

- Membership drive is the only type of event to plan in this category. Where you organize this event and how you choose your audience is open for exploration.

Challenge:

Member Retention

In 2020, 45% of Associations reported declines in member renewals^[11].



6. Expert Discussions

Understanding the psychology

Reciprocity_[12] is one of the oldest social norms known to humans. Giving people something of value before asking for anything, makes them want to return the favor.

Gong, a revenue intelligence platform, demonstrates this principle well with its free content. Their content is a good mix of sales and marketing-focused content. And not restricted to revenue intelligence. The content offers enough value for prospects to consider their product first at the time of consideration. That's the power of reciprocity at play.

Replicate this principle, by sharing free educational content with members beyond the scope of what you have promised. Besides, give them opportunities to engage with industry leaders. The more reputable the speaker, the more valuable is the interaction. Creating tangible value makes members more likely to renew their memberships and refer friends.





Making the most of event technology

Use a virtual event platform to plan conversations with global experts. With this, you can also reduce expenses on food, travel, and accommodation, and use the savings to improve the digital experience.

5 events to plan in this category

- Panel discussions that answer the industry's most pressing questions
- Live Q&A with attendees
- Knowledge sharing events with industry experts
- Exclusive chat rooms for high-potential prospects with industry experts
- Events that showcase compelling growth stories and industry innovations

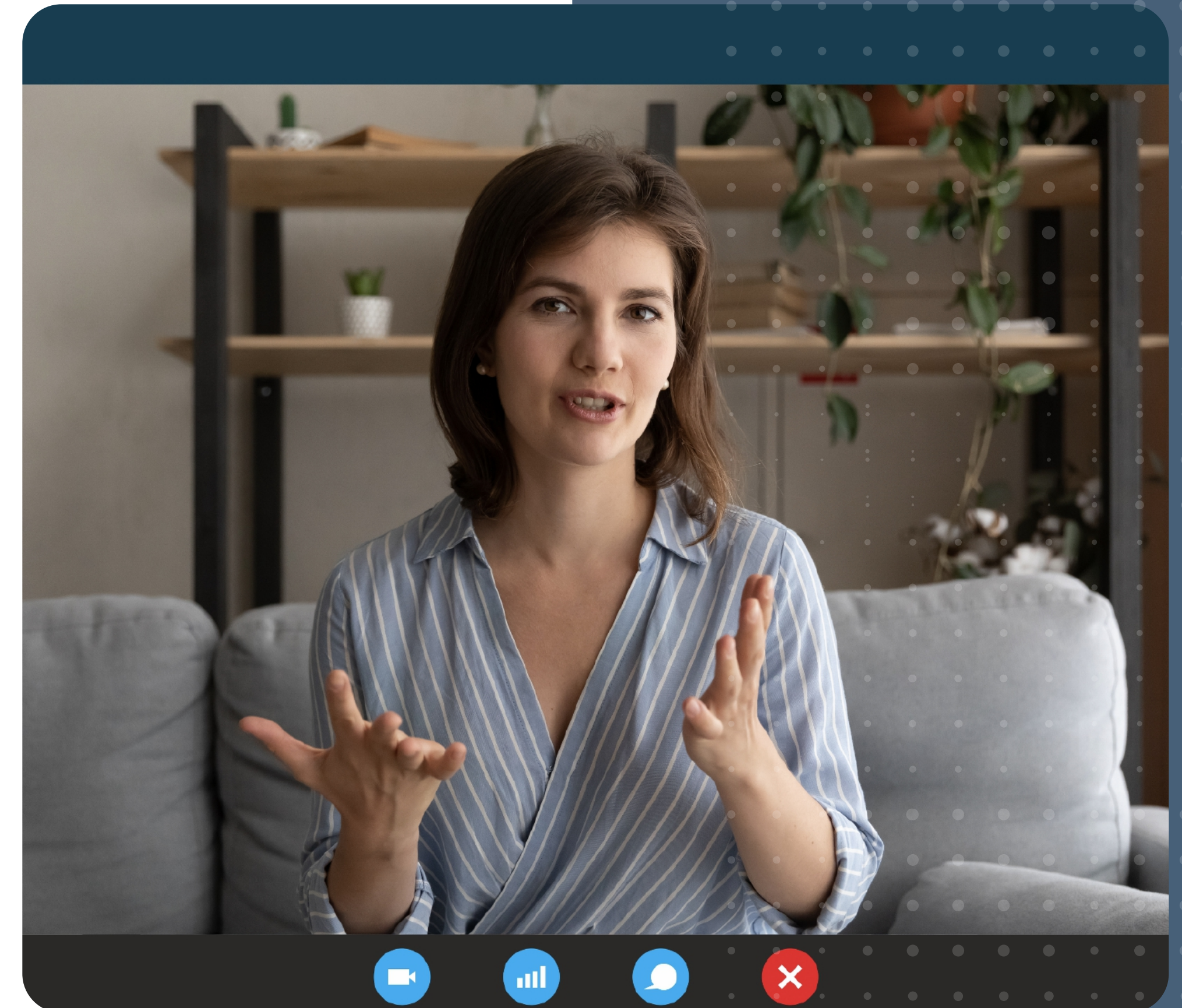
7. Focussed Events

Understanding the psychology

The **paradox of choice**^[13] states that people feel stressed about making decisions when presented with many options.

As a result, they are either unable to make a choice or make a choice and later suffer from buyer's remorse. This is a theory you can apply to retain existing members as well.

A large-scale conference with dozens of speakers is a classic example of the paradox of choice. Focussed events are the exact opposite. It is a controlled environment. Here participants can decide on their membership without being inundated with many options.



Does that mean all we've discussed so far doesn't hold water? Not at all. Large-scale events are for when you want to expand your reach. Focussed events on the other hand can be used to convince and retain members you are already invested in. If you're unsure about where to start, use data to start with regions that have seen a recent slump in membership renewals and growth.

Making the most of event technology

Focussed events are best done in person. But a virtual format may suit well for some events too. When hosting an in-person event, use technology like QR code scanners to increase registration, track attendance, and get insights for future improvements.

5 events to plan in this category

- Regional chapter mixer event with a specific agenda
- Knowledge sharing event with existing members and industry professionals
- Gathering to meet and discuss trends and challenges facing business opportunities
- Event to showcase local artwork, handicraft, or any other relevant product
- Focussed events at third-party venues. Example colleges, companies, or institutions with a relevant audience

8. Training Events and Workshops

Understanding the psychology

When you conduct training and workshops for free or at nominal charges, you activate several social behaviors at once. The first is the mere exposure effect. The second is the sense of reciprocity. And the third is loss aversion. That's not it though. There's one more social behavior you can initiate at such events.

The **commitment and consistency** principle states that people will do as much as possible to appear consistent about their words and actions.

This principle can be best explained using the example of Uber Suggest^[15], an SEO tool. Its creators begin by disseminating free, high-value content on SEO, followed by a free product trial. Once the users have discovered the product value, they are asked to commit to a lifetime subscription.



Using bite-sized commitments, the makers of the tool have influenced consumers to remain consistent in their behavior, leading to a final purchase.

In the same way, regular training and workshops can promote renewals.



Making the most of event technology

Creating educational content needs a broadcasting medium. You would also need a way to encourage discussions between the trainer and attendees. And lastly, you need to account for 1-1 discussions the participants may want to have. A virtual event platform enables all this and more. Besides the hassle of managing dynamics like venue and travel are eliminated.

5 events to plan in this category

- Basic workshops on relevant subjects
- Hands-on training of technical processes
- Niche software or machine training workshops
- Mental health workshops
- Training session with an industry expert

Finding The Right Fit

There isn't a right or wrong way to choose an event to boost Association membership. But you can make an informed decision by considering certain guiding parameters, to produce the desired results.

Questions you should ask yourself before deciding on an event type:

- Is my Association well known locally?
- Is my Association well known globally?
- Is my primary objective to build trust with my target audience?
- What is my maximum budget?
- What is my target for new memberships?
- If new memberships have plateaued recently, is it at an overall level or at a regional level?

In addition to these questions, here are a few suggestions that can get the ball rolling for you.



01. New to Association memberships

As a relatively new Association, you may want to focus on these three things - increasing awareness, building trust, and getting the maximum ROI from your event budget.

Sounds relatable? If yes, then the following are the four types of events you want to host.

- Awareness events
- Expert discussions
- Training events and workshops
- Membership drive events

02. Initial growth followed by plateaued membership

If you're at this stage, you need to expand geographically, leverage the trust built with existing members, and continue to provide value to your community. And these five types of events are likely to help you achieve your goals.

- Awareness events
- Meet-and-greets
- Open events
- Charitable events
- Training events and workshops

03. Large Associations witnessing growth saturation

Lastly, for all the well-established Associations out there - we feel your pain. You've done all you could, you have built a name for yourself, and you continue to create value. What next? Focus on insights from the data you've collected so far to decide on regions you want to expand globally and event types.

Based on past experiences with clients, we recommend these five types of events.

- Awareness events
- Meet-and-greets
- Open events
- Charitable events
- Localized events

Conclusion

Events as we've known them before 2020 have changed. The industry has witnessed several radical shifts in how we plan and execute events. So while you choose the type of event to host, also keep a keen eye on how to execute it. Event technology has become a non-negotiable for today's events and embracing it early on will ensure long-term success.



Appendix



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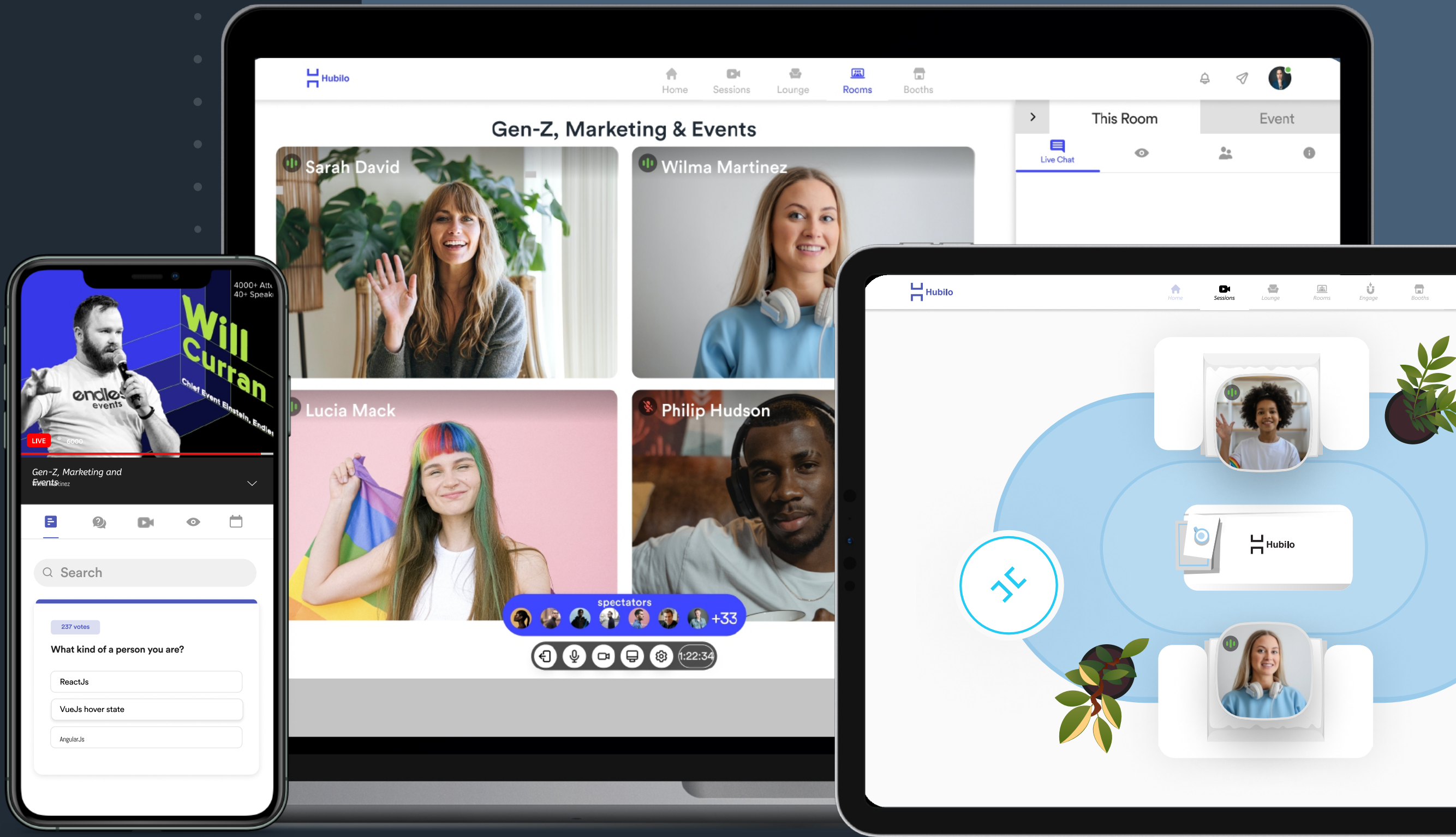
ABOUT HUBILO

Hubilo is the only all-in-one hybrid event platform built to drive engagement - and we do this with the industry's largest suite of engagement and gamification features.

Engagement on your fully branded event, backed by your designated full-time customer success team, ensures every event run on the Hubilo platform executes perfectly every time. All the enterprise security, integrations, and analytics you need - with the engagement and white-glove support you want.

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