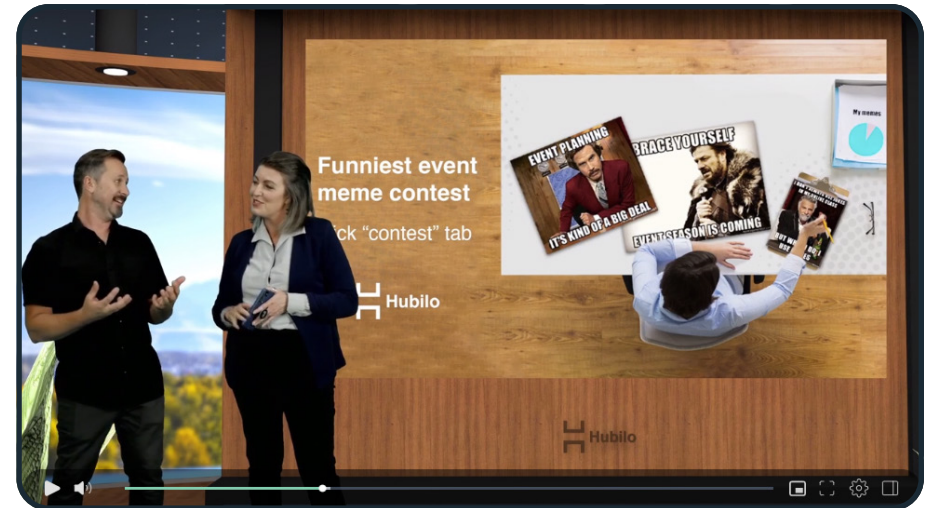


AN EVENT PLANNER'S GUIDE TO SETTING UP A VIRTUAL STAGE



Introduction



Have you ever wondered how to go from this to this?

The year 2020 saw many landmark changes.

We saw a new wardrobe addition (read: mask), entire countries shut down, and everything that could be virtualized from doctor's visits to events did so practically overnight.

This radical shift has left marketing managers, event planners, and exhibition heads scrambling to keep up. The disruption, however, hasn't stopped brands from adopting innovative technologies and achieving goals that were once considered impossible.



This is just the beginning though. Event organizers are still trying to find answers to some of the most pressing questions. Questions like:

How do I deliver immersive experiences to my virtual audience?

Which create even more questions like:



Do I need a virtual stage?



How do I set up an experiential virtual stage?



How do I deliver movie-like experiences at my virtual events?



What is the bare minimum I need to set up a virtual stage?



What all do I need for virtual event production?



This e-book answers all these questions and gives you an inside look at delivering immersive virtual experiences. You'll learn:



Why you should invest in a virtual stage at your next event



Which tools can help you activate next-gen virtual experiences



How to choose a reliable event production partner



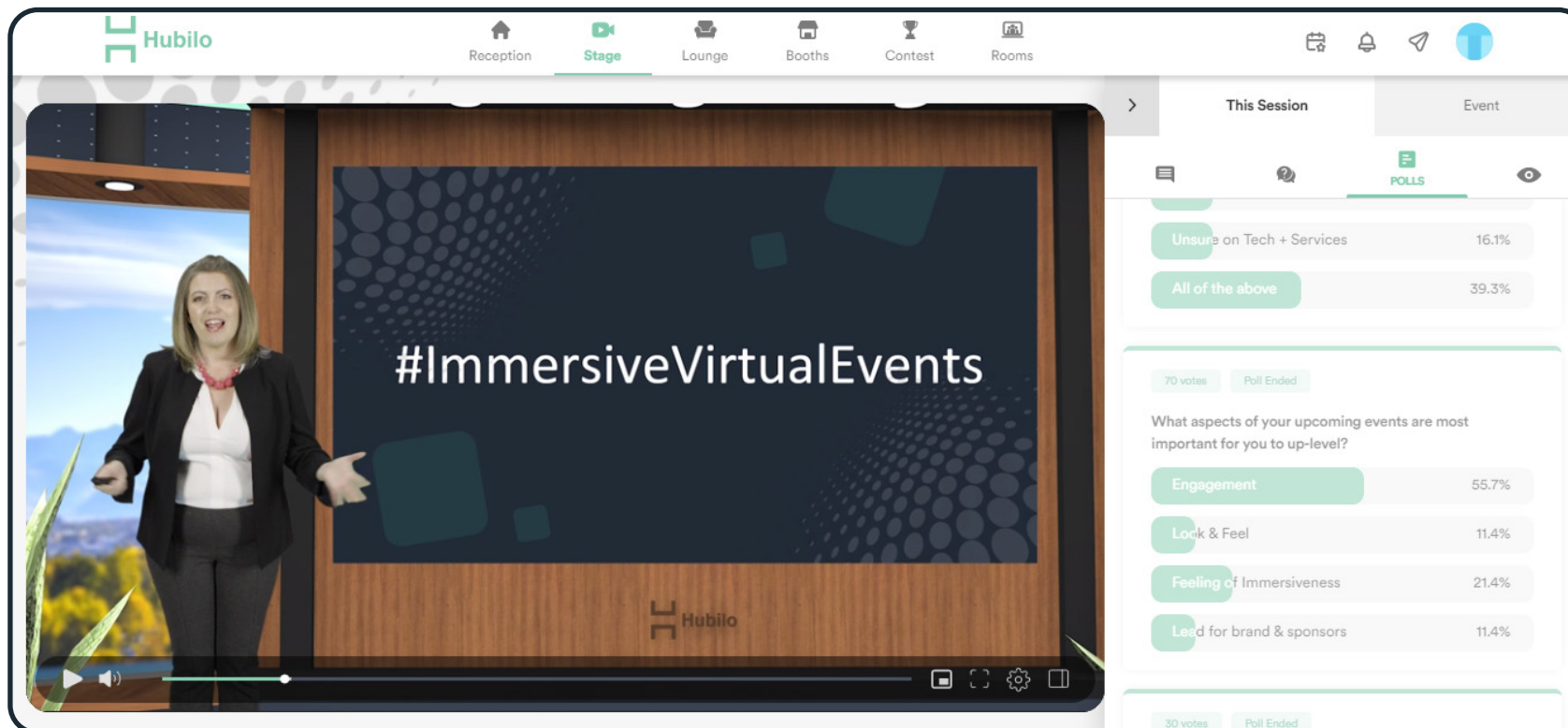
Questions to ask production studios before you partner with them



Ways to optimize your virtual stage budget and plan for assured success

What is a virtual stage

Simply put, a virtual stage is a place where your audience sees what's going on at your event. Your virtual stage can have a zoomed-in view or a zoomed-out view. The zoomed-in view is your video stream to the audience. It is also the primary line of communication with the audience. The zoomed-out view is the broader view that includes the Chat window, Q&A, Polls, and more such elements from the complete virtual experience package. Combined, these views create immersive virtual experiences for your audience.



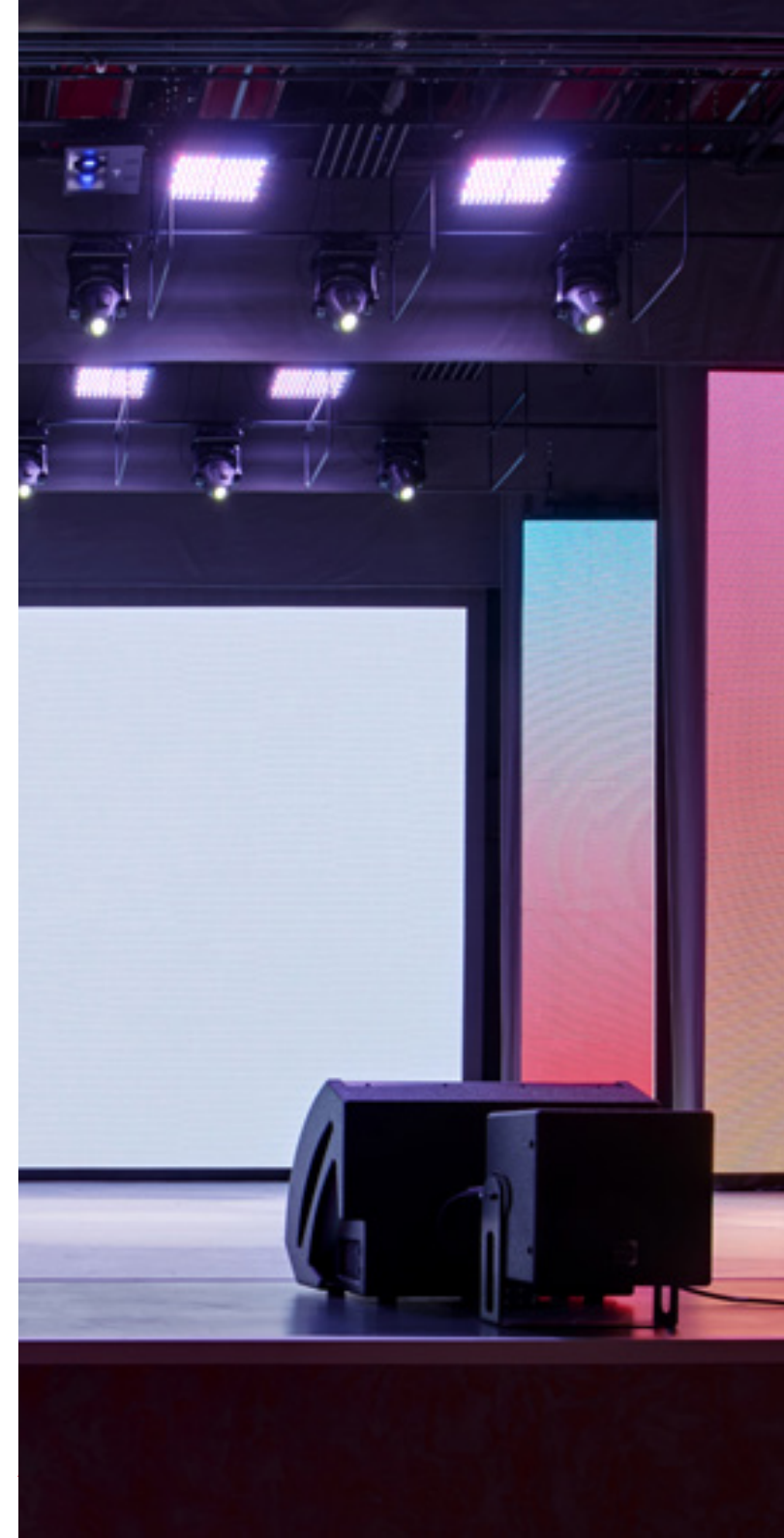
The need for a virtual stage

Uniform Experience

Global brands require their client-facing staff to be dressed in uniforms. You can always expect the same dining experience at global franchises. Airlines follow the same script, laced with branding nuances, while communicating with customers on the flight.

By maintaining consistency of experience, you familiarize your audience with the brand.

The same concept applies to virtual events as well. In addition to weaving a consistent storyline, virtual stages also serve as a great way to keep the audience engaged through relevant visual backgrounds. The Salesforce World Tour Sydney is a perfect example of delivering a uniform experience through a virtual stage. At this event, they used backgrounds that highlighted elements synonymous with Sydney.



Reinforce Branding & Messaging

Here are three facts about visual communication that are hard to ignore.



The human brain can process images 60,000 times faster than text.



People remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, and 50% of what they see and hear.



People remember 10% of what they hear after three days. In contrast, they remember 65% if the same information is paired with a visual.

In short, visual aids are an effective way to reinforce brand messaging. And what better way to do it than with a virtual stage.

Some ways to reinforce branding and messaging without interfering with your session content are:



Design the virtual stage to highlight elements of your event theme.



Display speaker presentations in the background.



Make sure presentations are made using brand templates.



Use branding elements such as logo, tagline, and color scheme in the virtual stage design.



Support Presenters

Virtual stages are a valuable asset for presenters and speakers as well. Here are some ways a virtual stage can empower presenters at your next event:



Speakers no longer have to switch between speaking to the audience and changing their slides.



You can provide your speakers with a teleprompter to ensure they never have to look away from the camera.



The audience can now view the presenter and presentation deck in the same view instead of compromising with one minimized screen.



By using suitable lighting, framing, and camera angles, you can ensure your presenters look and feel their best.

Making sure your speakers are taken care of can help them deliver an effective and memorable presentation. Wasn't that the objective to begin with?

Highlight Sponsors

In the same way that you use virtual stages to highlight your own brand, you can also do the same for sponsors and exhibitors.

Here are a few ways to do this:



Highlight sponsors and exhibitors in the video highlights at the start of the event and in between sessions.

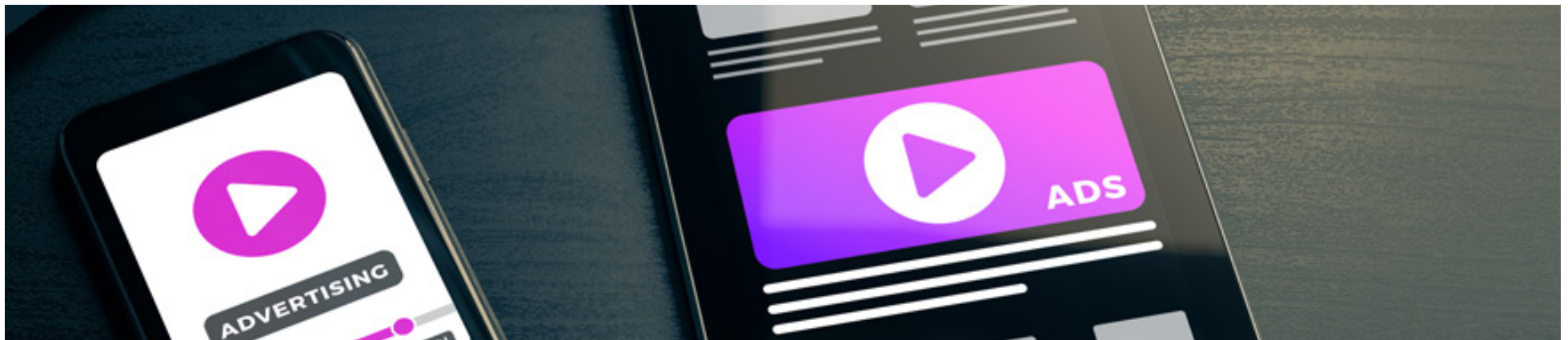


Design your stage to display sponsor and exhibitor logos in one section.



If a sponsor or exhibitor is also a presenter, encourage them to use their branded slides.

Branding opportunities such as these not only help sponsors and exhibitors achieve their lead and visibility objectives but also keep them interested in your future events. Isn't that the dream?



Things you will need

Before you get started with setting up a virtual event stage, outline what you want it to look like.

Knowing your audience and what you want them to experience will be crucial in delivering a magical experience.

It'll also help you identify the resources needed to pull off your vision for the event.

The next step as you unlock the black box of event production is to get a view of the minimum viable setup you will need to set up a virtual stage. Let's take a look.





Equipment



Fast Internet Connection

This is a must. You're sending data as a live stream and you don't want anything to go wrong while doing that. If you can, choose an ethernet connection so you won't have to worry about wireless congestion.



Computing Power

You're sending lots of data back and forth in real-time. Select systems that can handle this need for computing without crashing. The general rule of thumb is to use equipment that is no more than five years old.



Teleprompter

One of the best things you can have for your presenters is a teleprompter with their script on it. With this, they can stay focused on their audience instead of looking at notes or other screens.



Green Screen

A green screen gives you the option to choose from different backgrounds behind the speaker. The background can consist of images, videos, speaker presentations, and interactive elements like poll results.



Lighting

This goes without saying, lighting and grip are an important part of any virtual event. This includes lights, fixtures, and components required to ensure that the stage is well lit up.



Talent Reference Monitor

A talent reference monitor allows presenters to see themselves and the audience's interactions at the event. By providing your presenters with this, you can help them be part of the show.



2 Cameras (HD or 4K)

You will need at least two cameras at the studio. The more cameras you have the more options and angles you will be able to provide to your audience in the live stream.



Sound Stage

Poor sound quality makes it difficult to get viewers engaged and is likely to ruin their experience. Rent a sound stage (studio) that is soundproof and can guarantee superior sound quality.



Switcher

You'll need a switcher that can go between the cameras and do switching on the fly

People



Producer

This is the person who manages the A to Z of your event production. They have a clearly outlined schedule with them and they make sure everyone is at the right place at the right time.



Camera Operator

This is the person who will be at the camera and if anything changes will make adjustments in real-time ensuring you don't lose the stream. They're also the ones checking if the batteries are charged and if all related equipment is working properly.



Teleprompter Operator

The teleprompter operator transcribes scripts or recordings onto special screens that are used to prompt presenters to remember what they are to say.



Hair & Makeup Artist

Your event may be a pre-recorded or a live virtual event. Either way, you want to make sure that your presenters look and feel good. With a hair and makeup artist, you'll have this covered.



Audio Engineer

An audio engineer plays a critical role in relaying the audio from your studio to the live audience. This is a key role as poor quality sound makes audience engagement challenging.



Technical Event Manager

A technical event manager is someone who is hands-on with the computer/laptop. They work with the broadcasting software that allows you to present live and switch between different streams and camera angles.



Grip

A grip is responsible for setting up all the lighting and camera equipment at the studio and is in charge of all the mechanical fittings involved.

Virtual Event Platform

At any virtual event, holding everything together is your virtual event platform. It's a crucial piece of the virtual event puzzle, and your choice of platform will influence the outcome. Ensure you make this choice wisely. Here are a few questions to ask when selecting a virtual event platform:



Engagement

- Is the platform intuitive to use for all stakeholders?
- Does the platform provide an interactive chat option during sessions?
- Is there an in-built section for polls, Q&A, and notifications?
- Does the platform have a networking lounge, exhibitor booths, and rooms with audio and video support?
- Can registrants log in and engage before the event to network with other logged-in participants?
- Are gamification and contests supported?



Data & Analytics

- Are attendee insights like event registrations, attendees logged in, and attendees engaging in the event feed available in the platform dashboard?
- What metrics can be tracked to gauge speaker popularity?
- Is it possible to measure networking lounge engagement?
- Are session-specific metrics available? Which are these metrics?
- Is it possible to track potential leads/inquiries at exhibitor booths and in virtual rooms?
- What metrics can exhibitors and sponsors track?

Designated Support

- Does the platform offer a designated support team?
- Is the support team available in your time zone?
- Will the support team be available during the event?
- Is the support inclusive of pre-event and post-event requirements like platform onboarding, sponsor onboarding, and data retrieval after the event?
- Will in-person support be available in case of a hybrid event?
- Is support available on call, email, and chat at all times?

Pro tip:

Go for a platform that comes with amazing customer support to ensure you get instant help whenever you need it. Believe us, it is possible.

Hubilo's designated customer success team resolves queries instantly. And we don't mean that you just get a support email address or a phone number. You have a person at your event with you the whole time, to help address any issues.





Selecting a studio partner

Why should you partner with a production studio

“Do what you do best, and outsource the rest.”
- Peter Druker

Outsourcing is a popular choice for organizations for many reasons.

- It gives them access to top-of-the-line capabilities.
- It frees up internal resources.
- It helps companies focus on their core business requirements.
- They can scale up for skill sets they lack in-house.
- Since it requires no fixed investments, it is cost-effective.
- They can keep up with their competitors who are also outsourcing.

You should outsource your event production needs to a reliable studio partner. This is not to say you can't manage this in-house. You can. It's just that you'll need to invest a lot into equipment, people, studio space, and more. It could also lead you to deviate from your original goal. These are overheads that are easy to avoid.

Instead, partner up to create experiences and value.

How to select the best studio partner

Following are the three things you should look for while outsourcing event production:

Creativity

“Creativity is just connecting things.”
- Steve Jobs

Look for a studio partner who can bring creative ideas to the table. Creativity in this case isn't limited to unique stage designs. You'll need a studio partner who can do more with less. Someone who is aware of lesser-known ways to engage virtual audiences. And you'll need someone who can innovate with technology to connect global audiences.

Questions to ask potential studio partners:

- What are your recommendations for speakers being in full-body or waist-up view?
- Do I have an option to use different backgrounds for a virtual or physical set?
- Can you accommodate displaying real-time data? Example: Live polling
- What are your thoughts on using pre-recorded content, if needed?





Collaboration

“No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.”
- H.E. Luccock

A virtual event can accommodate global speakers and audiences at a fraction of the cost of an in-person event. However, this has its own challenges. Every place has its own cultural differences. Having a team that understands cultural nuances is a must while planning global virtual events. Also, planning a virtual event requires working across teams, organizations, and time zones. So it's important to identify a studio with a global network of talent and partners.

Questions to ask potential studio partners:

- Can you accommodate speakers from various locations at the same time?
- Do you have experience working with speakers from different countries and cultures?
- How will you ensure there are no execution gaps when working with other studios at locations you don't have a setup at?
- Do you take up events that are beyond your time zone?

Experience & Knowledge

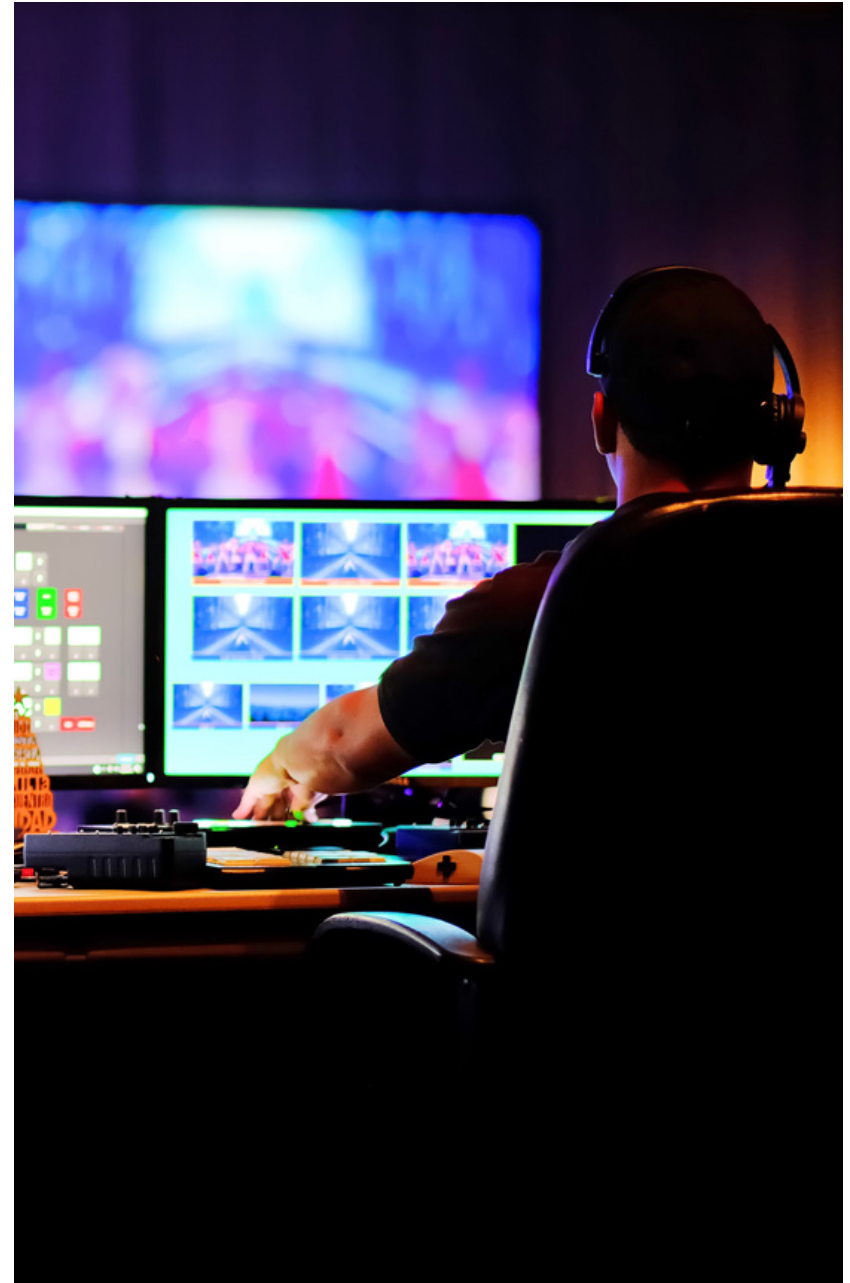
“Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced.”

- John Keats

Evidence of experience will be crucial while selecting a studio partner. An understanding of streaming technology, managing technical hurdles, and the ability to provide cinema-centric production are some of the things you want to look out for.

Questions to ask potential studio partners:

- Are there previous examples of your creative approach that you can share with us?
- How did you achieve those executions?
- What is your technical understanding of streaming events?
- What is your experience executing cinema-centric production in real-time including hardware and software experience?
- How stable is your connection to power and the internet?
- Do you have backup systems/plans in the event of an outage?
- What is your experience working with event platforms when it comes to live-streaming?
- What is the reliability of your equipment for live green screen production?
- What is the status of your streaming hardware? (Hardware should be less than years old on average.)



Planning your way to success

“Success is the residue of planning.” - Benjamin Franklin

Now that you're ready to plan an event, here are some things you must consider before you dive into execution mode. These things will impact your budget, schedule, studio size, and equipment you bring to the table. Maximize your budget and create immersive virtual experiences by understanding these factors.

Talent Framing

It is important to consider if you would be shooting full-body or waist up. Both of these present different challenges. For example, a full-body shot will require a larger studio with a floor that is green. You'll also need more lighting and audio equipment. A waist-up shot, on the other hand, leaves you with lesser space in the background to experiment with creative ideas.

Talent Count

Having many people on the stage at the same time presents its own set of challenges. You'll need to rent a larger sound stage, you'll require more lighting, and more audio equipment to support the talent count. It is therefore important to consider this when planning for your event.



Type of Stage

You want to think about the type of stage you want. Will it be a virtual stage (with green background) or a traditional stage (with actual props).

Both are great, both provide different experiences. A virtual stage is a better choice for many reasons. For one it is more cost-effective. It allows you to experiment with different backgrounds. Also, you can bring together people from across the globe and put them together on the same stage. Seeing speakers from different locations standing next to each other on the screen is an incredible experience.

Studio Hands

For a larger production more hands on deck is the preferred approach. Don't cut back on studio hands to save money if you want to go big. It will do more harm than good to your event outcome.

Pre-recorded content

Don't shy away from using pre-recorded content. It allows event organizers to deliver richer experiences by spending time on elements such as 3D animation, script, and more.



**Pro tip:**

Choose a platform that allows for dry runs to ensure you identify and solve any obvious problems early on.

We believe in testing, testing, and more testing. Every event organized with the Hubilo event platform is accompanied by a dry run and a designated support team.

Dry Runs

It is critical to test, test, and test again. Dry runs are the place where your presenters might be meeting each other for the first time. So give them ample time for introductions. Help them understand the workflows and figure out what works and what doesn't. This will add to your production budget. But it is worth it from the point of view of contingency planning.

Delivering cinematic experiences depends on four basic elements - light, audio, visuals, and experience. When your audience sees the stage, it has to result in a positive feeling for them. It's important they focus on presentations rather than any audio or visual interferences. Your audience should get a sense of participation rather than mere spectatorship. You can achieve this with planning, thorough execution, and the right mix of resources.

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.

Visit hubilo.com to learn more.

[Book a demo](#)

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