

Case Study of 1st Virtual – Digital Conference for First West Credit Union

Recorded by Roger Haskett, Engagement Expert, Emcee Extraordinaire

I want to talk about a case study, a successful case study. Let's go over some of the details.

This was the first virtual conference for this organization, First West Credit Union. They were pulling together three hundred of their top leaders from around B.C. to have this first virtual conference. They decided to go ahead with a virtual conference with only a little bit of lead time, a month, month and a half or so. So there was a real issue with time.

They had decided there was no choice: they were going ahead with Microsoft Team's Live. This is far more of a broadcast platform.

It really limited engagement and it was going to be over three days for three and a half hours each day during the weekdays when these leaders were already busy doing their normal work. We had to figure out a way of making it engaging enough that they wanted to be there and that their normal workload would be elbowed to the side while they were here in the conference.

They decided, which was actually a really good decision by Rare Affairs, which is the event company that was brought in to help manage it, they decided to bring in an app that they would use to help drive engagement, which is a great idea.

But it provided its own challenges because it was an app that was mostly on your phone and which would be a sideways platform to the Microsoft Teams live. So there would be at least two platforms competing for attention and competing for not just the participants attention, but for our attention, the organizers, as well.

So these were the sort of the things that we had to deal with.

And the results are, I'm super happy to say, amazing. Engagement Unlimited has done a number of virtual/digital conferences now in the last seven to eight months. This was probably number 10 or 11. And all of them have been massively successful, which is great and wonderful and makes me and us feel extremely good and makes our clients extremely happy. Many of our clients have booked us now repeatedly for their next and their next digital/virtual conferences, summits, whatever.

So from that point of view, digital is going extremely well. But what happened on this one is worth talking about, because what happened and what we're used to now hearing is people saying:

- “this was **so engaging**... you're killing it.”
- “this is this is my first virtual conference and **I can't believe how amazing it is.**”
- “You are the glue”

We were brought in not only to help with the organizing and the thoughts around how to make it successful, but I was brought in specifically to be the emcee.

I heard a number of times from the organizers and from various participants that having an engaging emcee, someone who can meld the technology with the participants, someone who can keep the energy alive, even though it's a digital environment - remember, people are sitting behind flat screens in their home offices, all over B.C. - in spite of that, we managed to keep it electrifying, engaging, energizing, so that people not only were getting tremendous value out of it, but they wanted to be there and they wanted to come back the next day to be there, too, and the third day to be there, too.

So how do we do that?

We did it by focusing on engagement. We did it by thinking through what the technology could do and then figuring out how we could add engagement around and in the places where the technology was really creating disengagement - a broadcast platform is not the best platform to create engagement. It doesn't lead to active participation. It doesn't lead to people feeling actively involved, which is absolutely important, essential, key... if you want to have people feel that they want to be there, if you want to have people say in the midst of it, at the end of it:

- “I can't believe how valuable this was.”
- “I can't believe how helpful this was.”
- “I can't believe how connecting this was. I feel I'm connected to people far more.”

So, the moral of the story is if you are planning your first, second or third virtual experience, whether that's a one day, three day or whatever, like three hours, two hours, one, whatever, think about bringing in engagement experts, people like us, Engagement Unlimited, who can help you not only strategize around the format and the systems that you're using and the technology you're using, but who can also be the energy that pulls people into this digital experience and has people say over and over again: “how amazing it was, how engaging it was, how successful it was,” and has the clients saying, “oh my goodness, we're never going to not do it this way again or not use you again.”

Have sponsors say, “Well, we'd like to know if you can be here for the next one because we don't want to do it again without this, without this engagement energy, without this electrifying connection that you seem to be able to make.”

And we are able to make that because we are very uniquely positioned to be a virtual/digital expert. I myself have had twenty-seven years of being an actor on TV and film, which has given me all sorts of experience how to make this through-the-camera-experience come alive.

And more than that, for twenty-nine years I've had a company that thinks about how to create engagement in the hardest moments, in the moments where most people give up and throw up their hands and say, well, I guess this is the best we could do. We are able to come in and say, no, there is a lot more we can do. As a matter of fact, it's not just a lot more we can do.

We can take this from OK or pretty good or getting pretty good to...

“This is **exceptional**. This is **remarkable**. This is **inspiring**. This is **amazing**.”

We are not happy until we hear those words. We keep working to figure out how to make it work for you and for your clients and for the participants so that everyone at the end is going, “Wow, I can't wait for the next one.”

Wouldn't you like that?

So please reach out to us here at Engagement Unlimited. You can get to us also from RogerHaskett.com. We'd love to chat with you about how to make your digital -- virtual events so powerful, so full of engagement that the value exists.

And the reason to put a conference on becomes very clear because connection, bonding & engagement, because energy & electrifying, relevant content is important right now. It's always important, but it's especially important as we move into this digital world more and more and as more and more of us realize: this is our future, at least for the next while.

I'm Roger Haskett, talking to people in a pandemic. Thanks so much.

Testimonial from Sherryl Parsons, President / Event Manager, Rare Affairs

"It's always a pleasure to work with Roger Haskett and the team at Engagement Unlimited. From the start of any project we work on, Roger takes the time to listen and understand my client's organization, purpose, culture and event goals.

"He's able to provide excellent ideas around engagement and delivery of key messaging during the design phase of the event. Recently Roger helped my team with a 3 day virtual event with 300 attendees. Like with in person conferences and events, his energy was contagious and he kept the conversations flowing from start to finish. Between sessions he injected fun with dance and stretch breaks to get attendees moving.

*"I was skeptical in my belief about how much energy could be achieved in a virtual environment and **I was blown away by the end result.***

"The coaching and assistance he offered each presenter in those moments when he came into the virtual green room and helped us count them down to live alleviated anxiety and uncertainty. Presenters expressed how grateful they were for his ability to know when to offer a positive cue or jump in to assist with something.

"His ability to drive the Q&A portion following each presenter ensured the conversation never ended early, only on time each and every time.

"Having a professional speaker as an emcee ensured that he was able to weave the close of one day into the opening of another creating continuity and bringing so many meaningful and thought provoking conversations to the forefront.

"Roger was really the glue that held all the pieces of this virtual event together in a fun, meaningful and engaging way. He didn't miss a beat."