

# LAB REPORT

*AN IRON LIGHT LABS PRODUCT*

## Elevating Your Virtual Events

**BY BRAUM KATZ**

03 INTRODUCTION

04 3 TIPS FOR YOUR EVENTS

05 TIP 1: USE COMPELLING, PRE RECORDED VIDEO CONTENT AS PART OF YOUR EVENT

06 TIP 2: HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS RESPOND TO A WRITING PROMPT

07 TIP 3: INVITE YOUR AUDIENCE INTO THE CONVERSATION, AND GET THAT CONVERSATION GOING WITH FACILITATORS

08 CONCLUSION

09 JOIN THE DISCUSSION

09 ABOUT US



**BRAUM KATZ**  
CEO AT BONSAI  
TECHNOLOGY CO.



# Introduction

In the year 2020, the word *Zoom* joined the ranks of *Kleenex*, *Xerox*, and *Google*. What was once a mundane video conferencing tool has come to represent a way of being together that has transformed everything from book clubs to board meetings to yoga classes.

*"THE KEY TO KEEPING YOUR VIRTUAL EVENTS ENGAGING IS TO CREATE SHARED, INTERACTIVE, AND COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCES."*

When in-person meetings and conferences were canceled en masse as a result of COVID-19, organizations had to get creative with how to reach their audiences. As a result, we now live in an era where the concept of a “virtual event” is completely mainstream.

While it is safe to say that in-person events will make a strong comeback as the pandemic recedes, the “Zoomification” of our lives is likely to persist for many years to come. Of course, virtual events will never replace traditional in-person events. However, we believe that the two formats (in-person and virtual), serve different purposes, and will coexist harmoniously. Organizations can continue to leverage the power of virtual events to reach their audience more regularly and affordably than ever before.

Like any format of communication, virtual events have the potential to become stale. Organizations that find ways to keep their virtual events spicy—engaging, professional, and participatory—will reap a far greater ROI.

So with that said, here are three techniques for creating shared, interactive, and collaborative experiences within the framework of a virtual event.



**BRAUM KATZ**  
**CEO AT BONSAI TECHNOLOGY CO.**

# 3 Tips for Your Events

## ELEVATING YOUR VIRTUAL EVENTS



1

**PRE-RECORDED VIDEO  
CONTENT**



2

**WRITING PROMPTS**



3

**FACILITATE  
CONVERSATION**

# 1 USE COMPELLING, PRE-RECORDED VIDEO CONTENT AS PART OF YOUR EVENT



Most people love watching compelling video content. Who doesn't love well-produced content, with great acting or interesting animations?

We have found that screening video clips as part of a virtual event generates a ton of conversation and engagement, and keeps people interested.

There is a reason why "going to the movies" is such a popular outing among friends. Watching a film together is a shared experience, and one that sparks conversation and reflection.

A well-produced video clip will generate an emotional response in an audience that is stronger and longer lasting than just about any "talking head" speaker.

Some events we have done at Iron Light Labs have actually revolved around conversations about video content. In these events, we will show a short documentary, or clips of a movie, and have our speakers reflect about what they (and the rest of the audience) have just seen.

With this approach, the speakers and the audiences together have a shared experience (watching the video). As a result, everyone in the audience is starting from the same place, and this fosters a collaborative, social atmosphere.

## 2 HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS RESPOND TO A WRITING PROMPT



In your standard virtual event, you have speakers give presentations and then the audience ask questions. This is all fine and good, but we have found that by flipping the script and asking the audience to respond to a question, we are able to generate great levels of audience engagement.

Before an event, think about some question or theme that you think would interest the audience. It works best if you have a concrete prompt to ask your audience. Then, once you have it, you either create a slide, or better yet a video, that contains the writing prompt and a countdown clock. Then, at some point during the event, you let the audience know that you are going to be asking them a question, and that everyone should spend two minutes writing down their answer. You then put up on screen the writing prompt. For those two minutes, you play soothing music while the countdown clock ticks.

You may be thinking that the idea of having “dead air” during a live event is anxiety-inducing. This is why we recommend the music and a countdown clock, but most importantly, having the writing prompt on screen the entire time; these elements give people assurances that the stream is still moving. It may sound counterintuitive, but actually giving people this quiet time to reflect is essential.

Then, after the two minutes are up, you invite the audience to share their answers either in the chat, or live on camera.

You will be amazed at how excited your audience will be when you ask them a question. Many people love the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings on interesting questions. By employing this technique, you are in a sense inviting your audience to be part of the panel.

# 3 INVITE YOUR AUDIENCE INTO THE CONVERSATION, AND GET THAT CONVERSATION GOING WITH FACILITATORS



Getting your audience actively involved in a conversation is a great way to elevate the vibe and energy of your virtual event.

Depending on the virtual event platform, there are many ways to allow the audience to participate: via chat, via voice, or via video.

The route that you decide to take will vary considerably based on your unique circumstances. In smaller groups of acquaintances, it may be appropriate to allow audience members to come on camera. For larger events, you may not be comfortable bringing audience members on camera, but may invite them to turn on their microphones and speak. The lowest risk way of inviting participation is via your chosen platform's chat feature.

In order to get conversations going, consider using a writing prompt as described in Tip 2 above. Otherwise, simply be deliberate in asking questions of your audience during the event, and be explicit that you want to see their thoughts in the chat. Use clear calls to action like "let me know in the chat..." or "use the raise hand function if you have any thoughts about..."

Whichever method you choose, the key is to actively encourage participation. Many times, you will find that your chat is highly active right from the start. Other times, you may have a shy audience.

One method to help activate conversation is to appoint one or more people to be facilitators. Facilitators are individuals who are given the explicit task of participating in the conversation as an audience member. Whether that be someone from your organization's staff, or an audience member that you know well, the key is to task them with participating in the conversation. The facilitator should aim to be as active as possible whenever you ask for audience participation. Having facilitators in the audience will get the energy up fast, and oftentimes this is what it takes to turn a shy audience into a chatty audience.

While audience members may be shy to at first participate, that shyness tends to dissipate once other audience members start to contribute to the conversation. By making sure you have facilitators "break the ice," you increase the likelihood of engaging your entire audience.

## CONCLUSION

---



It has never been easier or more affordable for organizations to engage new and existing audiences. For better or worse, the pandemic has acclimated audiences to online events. There is a massive opportunity in the current era to create more regular and meaningful connections with audiences via online events. However, as “Zoom fatigue” sets in, it is more important than ever to differentiate yourself by keeping your virtual events “spicy.” By creating engaging events, you will keep your audience coming back. So have fun, and do all you can to assure your audience is having fun as well.

# Join the Discussion

Master these topics for your organization with upcoming in-depth Lab Reports. Every topic will include a download with detailed steps, case studies and a virtual training lab.

[VISIT OTHER LAB REPORTS HERE](#)

## ABOUT



# IRON LIGHT LABS

Iron Light Labs is an award-winning nonprofit focused on R&D for social impact. The nonprofit is called “Labs” because it experiments, innovates and tests to discover the best way to drive change. Iron Light Labs is building a future where storytellers leap out of their echo chambers, creators partner with effective messengers, changemakers experiment with emerging media, and everyone measures what matters.

## ABOUT

# Braum Katz

Braum Katz is a broadcast engineer and camera systems engineer based in Rockville, Maryland. Braum’s video capture and streaming solutions have been used by Ford Motor Company, National Geographic, Nokia, Home Depot, Ryot, Highways England, GE, and The Rockettes. Braum’s work as a broadcast engineer has also given him ample opportunity to build wide expertise in streaming services best practices.