

A photograph of a woman with short, light-colored hair singing passionately into a black microphone. She is wearing a purple t-shirt with a colorful graphic that includes the word 'LOVE' and a blue skirt. In the background, another woman is visible, slightly out of focus. The entire image is set against a bright yellow background.

Classy

The 2022

Fundraising Event Experience Report

2022 Is a Critical Point of Evolution for Fundraising Events

Events are not returning to a pre-pandemic state. Moving forward, successful fundraising events will need to meet the increased expectations of donors who've attended events virtually and in person over the last two years. This need to offer a meaningful experience on both a physical and remote level, while seemingly challenging, creates a unique opportunity to nurture and strengthen supporter relationships that extend beyond the event.



Legacy Youth Leadership

Let's Get Clear on the New World of Fundraising Events

The event space experienced constant change between 2020 and 2021, **leaving fundraising leaders and event organizers with questions about the future, such as:**

- How do we confidently create an event experience that compels a broader group of attendees to get involved?
- How can we better understand how people want to attend events in 2022 and beyond?
- Which safety measures will people look for before they register?
- Will a virtual component increase attendance and fundraising potential?
- Should our focus be on high-tech experiences or simplicity and safety?
- How does one event spark long-lasting donor relationships?

To answer these questions, Classy conducted a third-party survey of over 1,000 fundraising event attendees in the U.S. in February 2022. The result is a report that helps you redefine your fundraising event experience based on first-hand attendee sentiment and insights. You'll walk away with solid data to support today's decision-making and a fresh take on the next era of events.

Events Drive Donations and Build Donor Relationships

As attendee preferences evolve, your organization can stand apart by putting those preferences into action. Fundraising events connect you with the people who make your mission possible and provide a huge opportunity for supporters to take action. Both virtual and in-person events show high potential to influence donations and future engagement.

Let's dive further into what attendees are looking for in their event experiences.

Over 92%

of both virtual and in-person fundraising event attendees **are likely to donate in addition to any registration or participation costs** during the event.

Over 40%

of both virtual and in-person fundraising event attendees **are likely to donate over \$100 at the event.**

91%

of fundraising event attendees **are likely to take further action with a nonprofit after a positive fundraising experience.**



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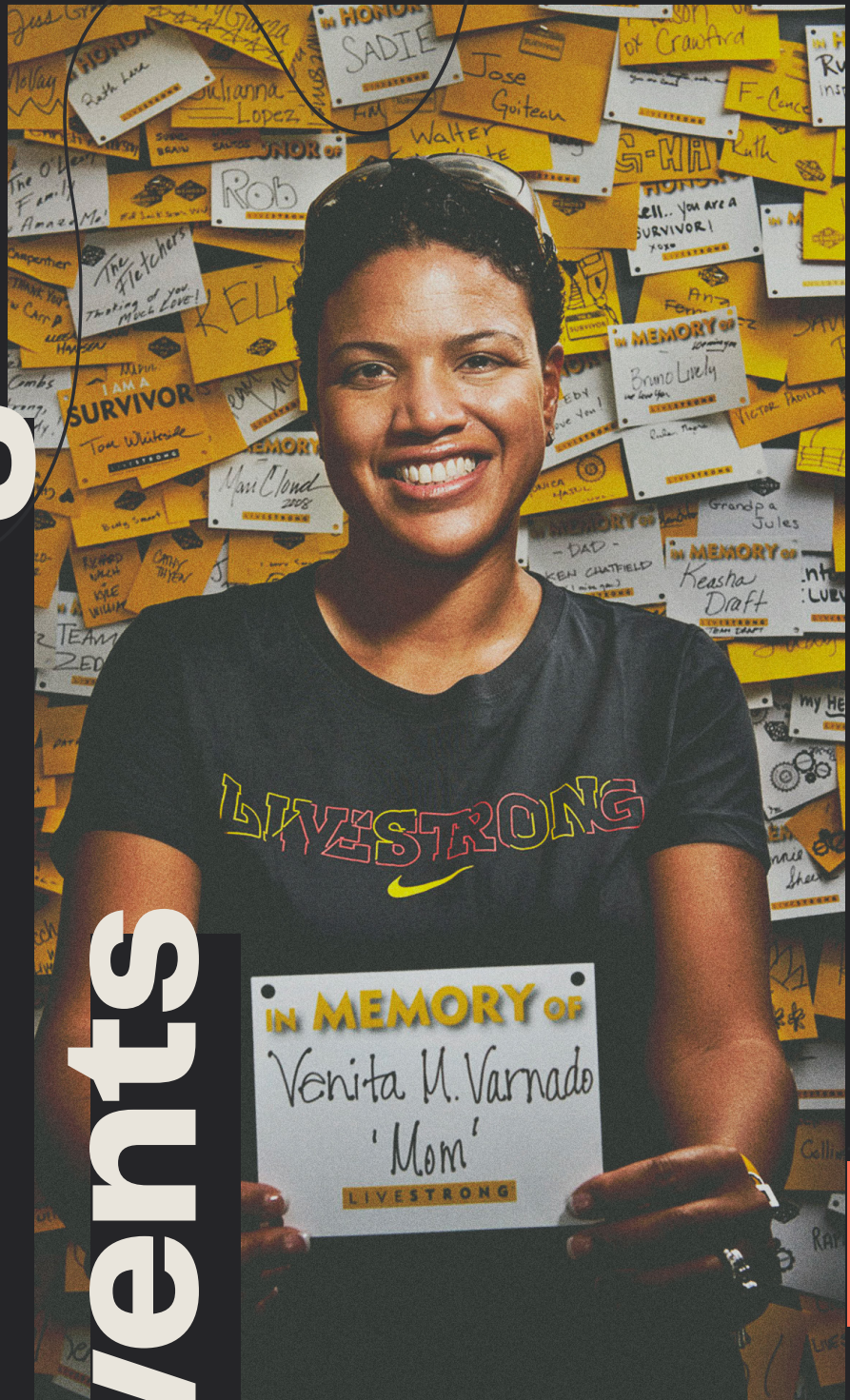
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The State of Fundraising Events



Livestrong

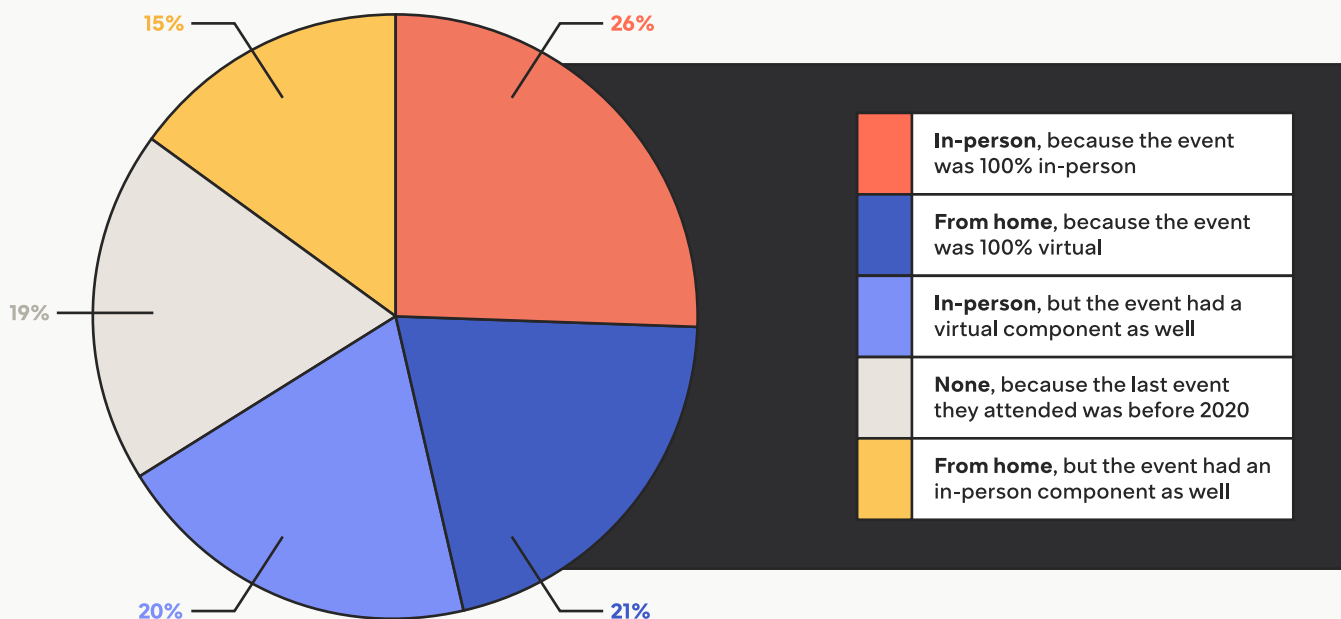
Classy

2022: Key Learnings From Two Years of a Pandemic

It's the year of delighting attendees like never before by exceeding their expectations with a thoughtful event experience. That means welcoming back those who long for deeper engagement with your organization and reassuring those who seek a safe event environment. Stronger donor relationships are the result, which lead to further donations and advocacy for your organization's mission well past the event.

How Have People Attended Fundraising Events So Far?

The following responses best reflect how our 1,000 respondents attended fundraising events between January 2020 and February 2022.



In-Person or Virtual? Give Attendees the Choice

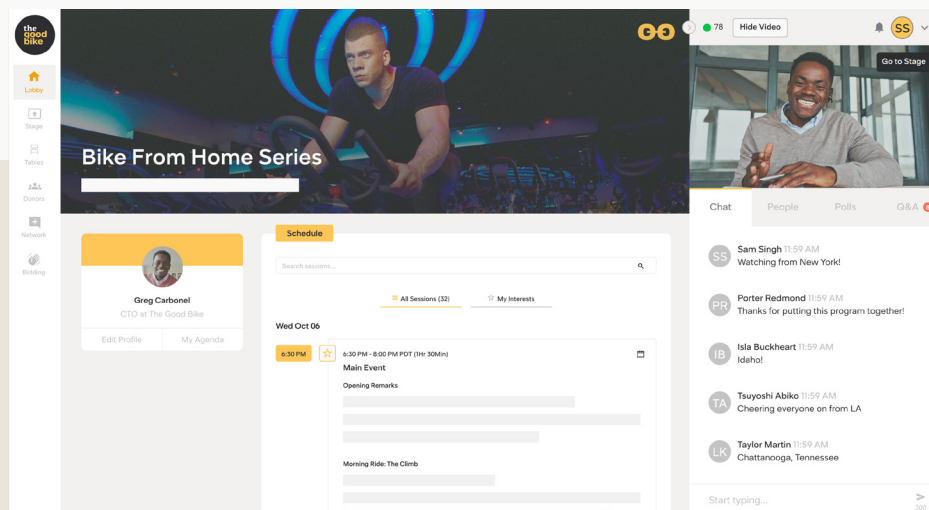
The Flexibility of Multiple Attendance Options Attracts Supporters

Thirty-five percent of respondents attended fundraising events that gave them the option to participate in-person or virtually. Events that are strictly in-person or 100% virtual could deter a significant group of attendees who value the opportunity to choose.

Below, you'll see why events that offer more attendance options appeal to our survey respondents. Ultimately, the preferences come down to location, safety, and the ability to choose.

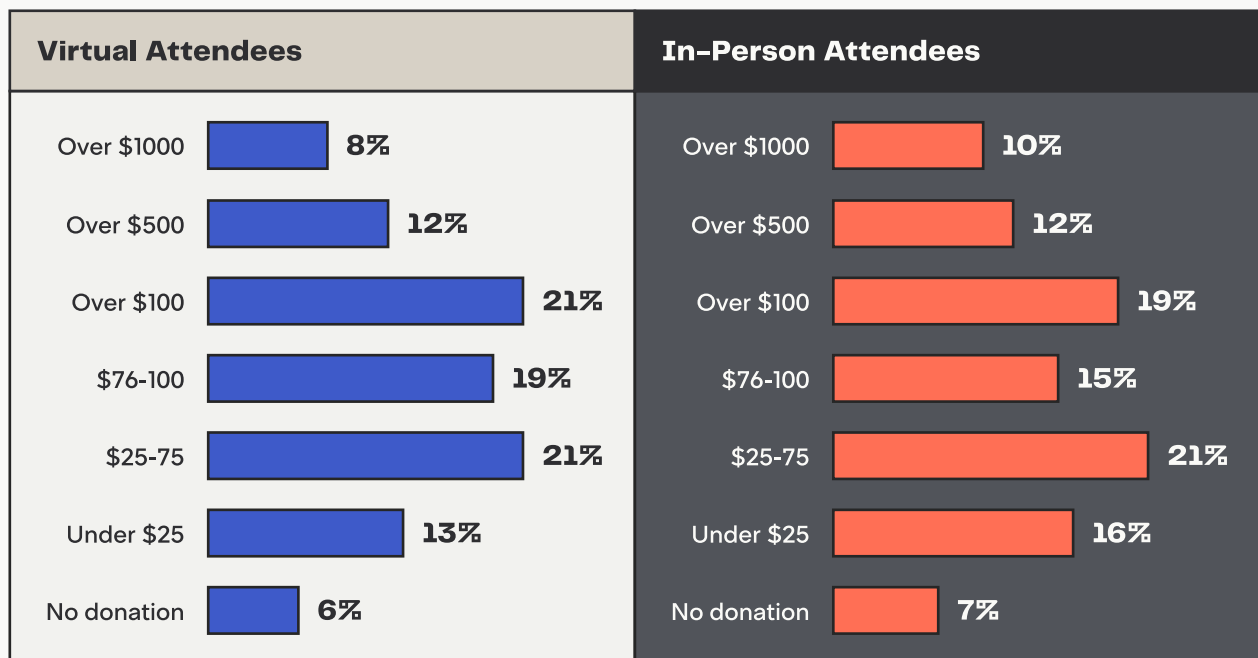
Attendee motivations to select events with both virtual and in-person options:

1. They want the ability to choose how they prefer to attend
2. Virtual components make them feel more comfortable
3. They can attend events they wouldn't have otherwise
4. There is more flexibility around the location from which they attend
5. Virtual components extend the value of the in-person experience



Donation Activity Breakdown

We asked how likely attendees are to make donations during an event in addition to registration costs. Regardless of how people attend, the sentiment to give is there. We also see that 41% of donations on either side are likely to be above \$100 which speaks to the power of an excellent experience and a thoughtful donation appeal.



Defining the 2022 Event Experience



African Community Education

Photo by Rose Wine Photography

To create an event experience that resonates among in-person and virtual attendees, it takes a deep understanding of what motivates each group to register for an event, attend, and take actions that further their relationships to a cause.

Today's attendees have higher expectations of how nonprofits will engage and connect with them irrespective of physical location. Attendees want to be part of events that feel custom-crafted to them, based on a specific goal they can feel connected to and support, whether they decide to attend in-person or from home.



Give Kids the World

Virtual vs. In-Person Experience Breakdown

Overall Attendee Satisfaction Rating

When we asked virtual and in-person attendees separately how they would rate their overall event experience, the following is how they responded.

96%

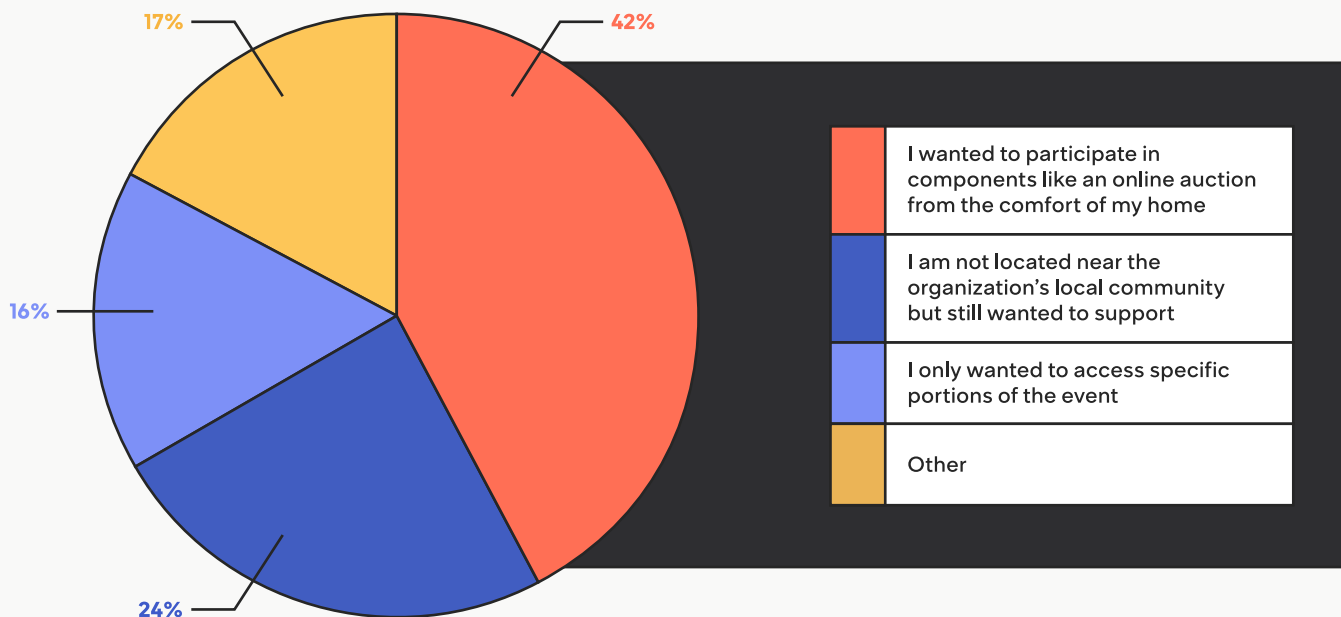
of virtual attendees say good or excellent

87%

of in-person attendees say good or excellent

While in-person events offer the human-to-human connection you can't easily replicate through a screen, organizations shouldn't discount virtual components. Thoughtful virtual experiences earned the highest satisfaction ratings.

Here's exactly why attendees chose an event with a virtual component:



Comparing Attendee Preferences and Deterrents

Below, we break down what virtual and in-person attendees cite as the drivers for either an excellent or poor event experience. There are similarities across the board in what virtual and in-person attendees are looking for, but the slight differences highlight areas of opportunity to tailor and elevate each event format for a meaningful, customized experience.

Top Drivers of an Excellent Attendee Experience	
Virtual Attendees	In-Person Attendees
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Enjoyable and simple to navigate 2 Easy registration 3 Thoughtful and relevant content 4 Access to content on mobile 5 Engagement through polls, breakout rooms, and networking with attendees 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Thoughtful and relevant content 2 Easy event check-in 3 Simple event registration 4 Feeling like part of a community and networking 5 Clear pre-event communication
Top Drivers of a Poor Attendee Experience	
Virtual Attendees	In-Person Attendees
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Trouble registering online 2 Unclear value of donations or participation in the organization's mission 3 No mobile app 4 Lack of communication between registration and event 5 No engagement with other attendees 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Too many requirements to attend in the wake of the pandemic 2 Safety precautions weren't handled correctly 3 Not a good format for networking 4 Unclear value of donations or participation on the organization's mission 5 No option for preferred payment

Break Down Attendance Barriers for All

In addition to your efforts to provide an excellent experience, focus on removing barriers to attendance. Below are the top factors that attendees say would stop them from attending a fundraising event in the future, along with actions you can take to enhance your donor relationships.

The top 4 reasons all attendees would not attend a fundraising event in the future:

1

The event's cost is too high

Consider lowering ticket prices and leaning on day-of giving through auctions, paddle raises, text-to-donate, and merchandise. Ask your [event platform](#) if it's built to host these aspects for both in-person and virtual guests.

2

The purpose is unclear

Make your event's goal and how it results in support for a specific program, initiative, or resource allocation clear from the start. Use language that makes attendees feel like part of the solution.

3

The event promotion feels robotic and not genuine

Segment your registration list by first-time, return, major, or [recurring donors](#) to make every touchpoint more authentic and personalized. Promote exciting updates like speakers, auction items, sessions, and performances to showcase the value in attending.

4

It doesn't feel safe due to a lack of COVID-19 restrictions

Set expectations for how you're handling safety concerns in-person, and include an [online venue](#) for those who aren't comfortable returning in person. It never hurts to poll your audience on how you can strike a good balance.

Future Attendance: Preferred Event Types

Fundraising event attendees share similar sentiments about the event types they want to attend, regardless of a virtual or in-person format. Here's the breakdown of which event types attendees are most likely to attend in the future.

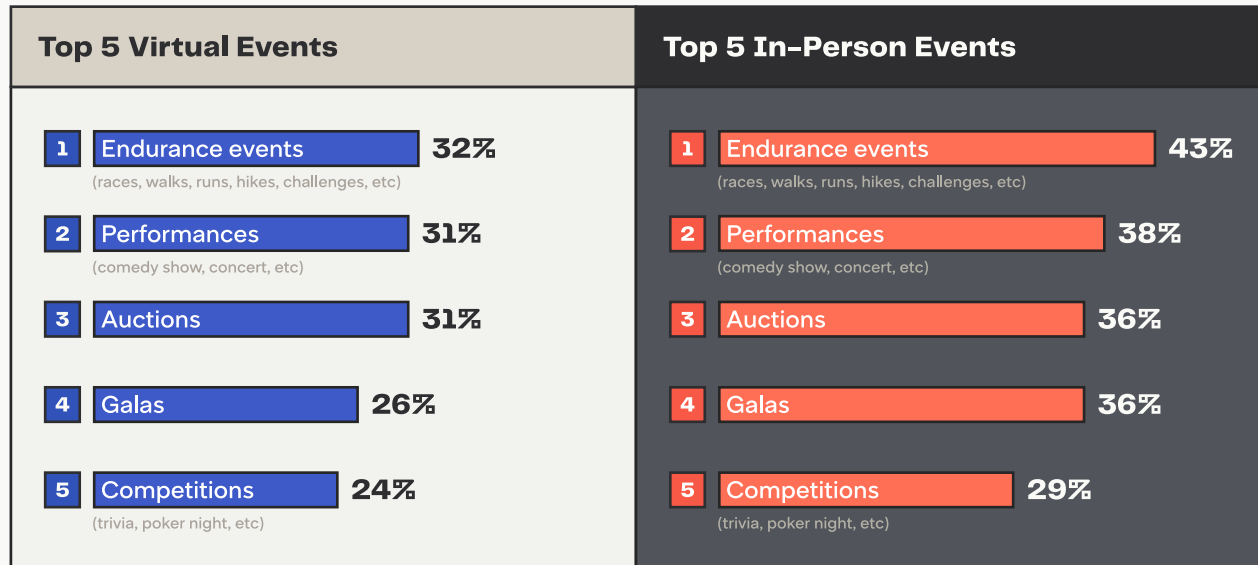


Photo By Rose Wine Photography

ACE

The Lasting Impact






Give Kids the World

Classy

Excellent event experiences have a long-lasting impact.

At the heart of any fundraising initiative is the goal to capture the passion of new supporters and nurture loyal donors to take impactful actions.

If attendees feel heard, catered to, and appreciated, they can become lifelong advocates of your cause. Donors who had an excellent event experience are more likely to take the following actions.

Actions of a Satisfied Attendee	Impactful Action for Your Nonprofit
 <p>51% Attend future fundraising events held by the organization</p>	<p>Promote future events in your follow-up communications to entice repeat attendance. Receive additional donations from each return attendee who strengthens their desire to support your cause with each event.</p>
 <p>44% Look for more ways to support the organization that hosted the event</p>	<p>Show each attendee how their attendance or donation impacted the goal of your event. From there, tie in clear opportunities to expand that support through recurring donations or a major gift. According to our <i>State of Modern Philanthropy</i> report, the average recurring donation on Classy is \$131 and lasts for an average of 13 months.</p>
 <p>33% Fundraise on behalf of the organization</p>	<p>Give past and future event attendees the tools to easily advocate for your cause within their own networks. Use DIY fundraising pages that allow supporters to fundraise based on a personal tie or occasion like their birthday. On average, 4 out of 5 donations to an individual fundraising page are new donors to the organization. <i>The State of Modern Philanthropy</i> 2021 found that each individual fundraising page brings in an average \$22,026 in donations on Classy.</p>

Excellent Event Experience in Action

To better understand the impact of including virtual and live components within your fundraising event, take a look at the nonprofit organization below.

[African Community Education \(ACE\)](#) transformed their annual gala into a flexible hybrid event using Classy Live, an event experience platform. During the 2021 giving season, ACE gathered in-person attendees safely while simultaneously bringing the entire experience to a virtual audience, ensuring that virtual attendees had an immersive experience like never before.



We want to engage folks with as many ways to support us as possible. Classy Live lets you do that in a way your donors respond to.

Tim O'Neil
Marketing & Fundraising Manager
at ACE

3x

ACE Gala
Revenue Triples

'19

\$60,000

'20

\$67,500

'21

\$204,700



In 2021, the Classy Live online venue gave ACE's in-person and virtual attendees access to:

- An agenda with searchable sessions and calendar blocks
- Livestreamed video and music performances
- The ability to make direct donations and buy merchandise
- Sponsor, speaker, and partner features
- An authentic African goods raffle
- Real-time donation progress meter
- A simple self-checkout process

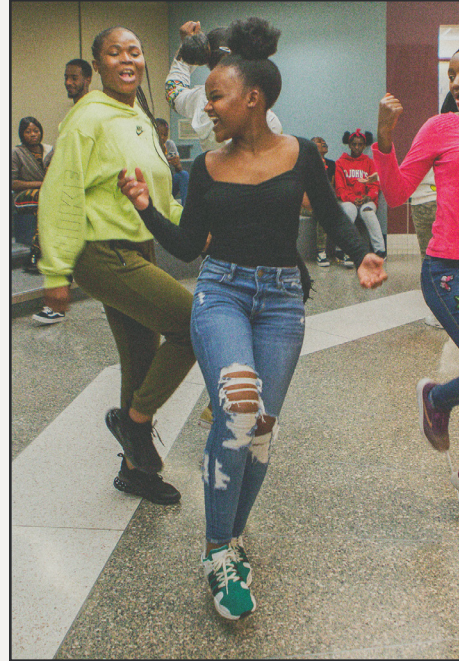


Photo By Rose Wine Photography

ACE

Get Started With the Right platform



Lustgarten

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What To Look For in a Virtual Event Platform

When you're looking into a virtual event platform to host both in-person and online guests simultaneously, there are a few key areas to prioritize.

The goal is to bridge gaps in a virtual, in-person, or hybrid event experience with consistency and meaningful engagement at every step. Technology can help you build that connected experience with a single place for all attendees to interact and take action for your cause.

A Seamless Registration Experience

- ☐ Worldwide event venue
- ☐ Multiple ticket variations and pricing
- ☐ Discount codes
- ☐ Simple navigation
- ☐ Registration tracking
- ☐ Self check out

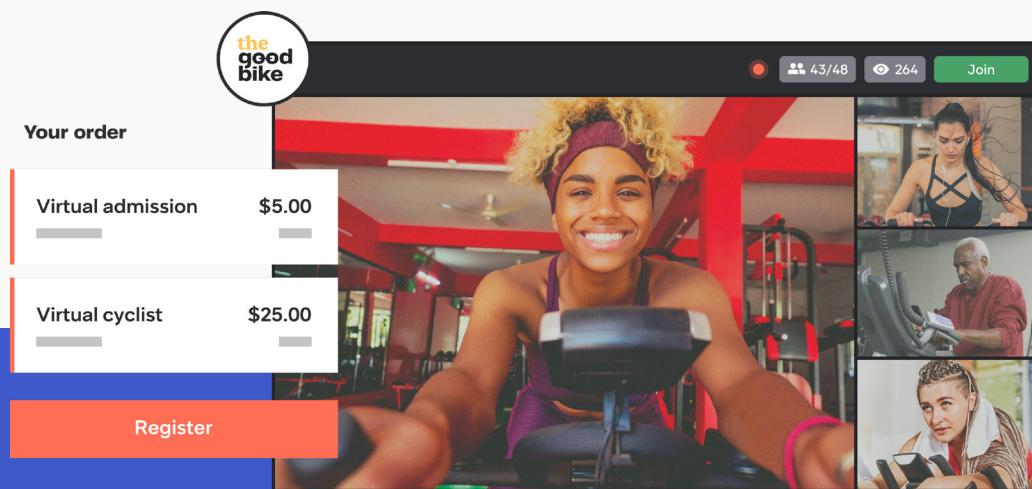
Attendee Connection and Engagement

- ☐ Email and text messaging to share updates
- ☐ Native and embedded live streaming
- ☐ Virtual tables, breakout rooms, and networking
- ☐ Polls and chat
- ☐ Table and seating management

Opportunities to Maximize Fundraising Revenue

- ☐ Live leaderboards and campaign progress
- ☐ Auctions, paddle raise, and mobile bidding
- ☐ Donation notifications
- ☐ Text-to-donate

Classy helps you take action on every aspect of an excellent fundraising event experience. From a seamless registration experience, to the day-of-event platform that drives attendee engagement and fundraising revenue. With our newest addition to the platform, [Classy Live](#), you can host an event that allows virtual and in-person participants to engage with your cause no matter their location.



Grow your event

Delight in-person and virtual attendees with a platform built to deliver memorable experiences.

[See Classy Live in Action](#)



About Classy

Classy is a giving platform that enables nonprofits to connect supporters with the causes they care about. We believe giving should be easy, so we created a solution for online fundraising that creates great experiences for supporters. Through technology, we empower nonprofits to unlock the generosity of their supporters and help them advance their missions.

About the Data

Conducted in February 2022, this survey polled 1,000 individuals who attended fundraising events, primarily between 2020 and 2022. The survey was sourced and fielded using the Pollfish Survey Platform.