THE FUTURE OF VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EVENTS HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN

IAPCO Member: CPO HANSER SERVICE, Germany

Sebastian Bernt
CTO, CPO HANSER SERVICE

Since March 2020, the world of events has faced, and continues to face, dramatic changes. Sebastian Bernt, CTO of CPO HANSER SERVICE, commented: "It is still uncertain whether we are making the next big step in the events industry or if we need to talk about disruptive changes that leave some of us behind. Disruption has already started, as big tech companies and providers of congress management software enter the market as full-service providers for virtual events, in direct competition with PCOs – some of them are already addressing smaller hybrid events."

As a PCO and digital solutions provider, the CPO Group has been observing the current changes in the market and technology closely and, having gathered a huge wealth of information, are now in a position to draw our first conclusions.

Phase 1. Handmade has charm and drives learning, but it is neither professional nor cheap

A lot of software solutions for registration, abstract and programme management, video conferences and webinars, virtual exhibitions, live-stream and on-demand video are available on the market. Connecting and managing them requires a lot of work – and money.

Phase 2. Reduce manual work, increase professionalism

After diving deep into the details of these platforms and solutions it is crucial to agree on favourites. This second phase is mainly characterised by the full integration of all elements and the automation of processes within and between software components, e.g. setting up, starting and stopping live-stream and on-demand video events, as well as webinar sessions, automated through the programme management software or set up as single sign-on solutions.

Phase 3. Create automated, learning businesses

Integrated solutions provide tons of gold – the gold of our times: data. Collecting data from all involved sub-systems, connecting it, mapping it and reducing it to meaningful figures will be key for successful, automated and learning businesses. Data gives insight, not only into event participants' needs and preferences, but also into their behaviour and interests. This allows the creation of successful cross-selling, up-selling and follow-up business models.

As a conclusion, our focus on technology as a business driver is constantly growing and a PCO needs to be willing and experienced to successfully apply and take advantage of the numerous possibilities of modern online technologies.