

# How to bring your awards ceremony online

A DEDICATED GUIDE ON BRINGING YOUR AWARDS ONLINE



## 2020 is fast becoming the year event organisers embraced virtual events.

When it comes to awards, emulating the “real-deal” online is incredibly tricky. In many ways, awards ceremonies are unique in that they build long lasting human connections on a much deeper level. Often very formal in format but somehow more personal, awards are a celebration for teams and individuals, the perfect opportunity to entertain clients and build team moral.

This guide is designed with awards organisers in mind, to help traverse the digital event landscape. Our aim is to share our knowledge and experience at **Eveccio** not only as an event software supplier, but also as a business which is built on **our love for events**.

Whether you are looking to replace a cancelled event due to COVID-19 or looking to supplement your brand with a digital awards ceremony for the future, we hope you find the information included in this guide useful.

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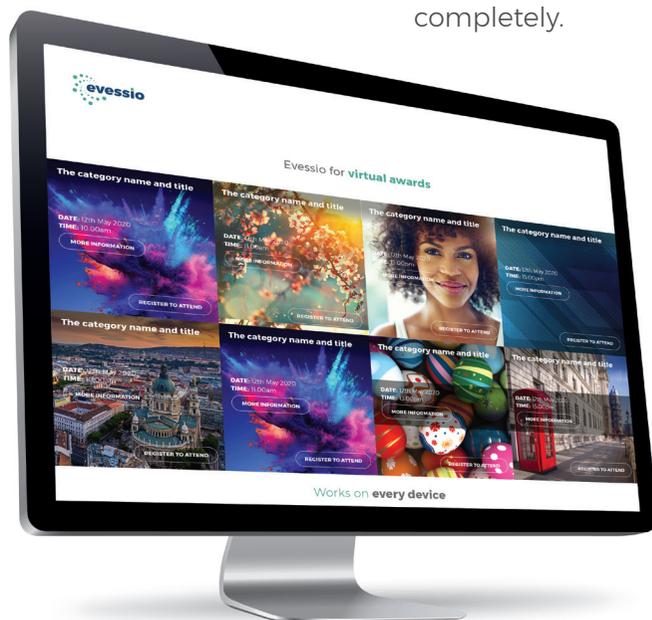
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## Is having an online awards ceremony right for your brand?

For many events and publishing businesses, taking their event ceremonies into the virtual space has been on the agenda for a number of years and yet, they haven't found the right way to enter the digital market.

Much of the process is already online. From event launch and ticketing for attendees, to online submissions and now with awards specific event technology solutions, the judging and voting procedures. All these pre-event steps are very much established within the digital environment and have been for some time.



## The Virtual Awards Presentation

Despite the desire to take the next step in digital awards and create a virtual event awards ceremony, careful consideration must be undertaken when deciding whether a digital event experience is even suitable for your brand and business. Does it really need to be a live event or could you move to an off-line event instead? Would your specific audience be keen to watch a live stream of the winner(s)? Moving to off-line doesn't mean that you still can't load a video of the host and a thank you or appreciation video message from the winners. During this time of enforced non-gathering, maybe it's just important to your brand to keep the momentum going by having the awards but just removing the in-person or live element completely.

## The Virtual Awards Presentation

- > Reaching a wider global audience.
- > Reducing travel and waste make a digital ceremony far greener.
- > Data-led value for sponsors (see page 8 for more details on sponsorship opportunities)
- > Create a new unique experience particularly for those who have legacy brands and who are looking to inject something fresh into their portfolios.
- > Immediately useful digital takeaways for winners – e.g. winners reveal could be a packaged video clip which the winner can use for marketing.



### Saving Money – at what cost?

There is a perception that going virtual can save a large amount of budget as physical overheads such as venue, catering, entertainment, travel is not needed. Whilst this is true, there is also a potential reduction in the more traditional commercial revenue opportunities. Tickets for tables will of course be massively reduced if not completely eradicated, sales teams will need to get creative to offer innovative commercial opportunities to cover the investment and remain profitable.

As with all award ceremonies, it is the quality of the experience and the overall feeling of celebration that must be created. Unlike conferences and exhibitions which rely on engagement through learning and networking, awards are unique in that they bring people together in competition and in celebration – something which is challenging to honour in a digital environment.

Not all awards are as formal as black tie, however if you work in an industry that is accustomed to a formal ceremony, you'll need to deliver an experience that meets the expectations of your audience. To do this you'll need a seamless, engaging digital experience which is exciting with the feeling of exclusivity.

As with the live event, your digital awards format will be based on the audience you're looking to attract. Senior level executives may be more inclined to watch particular categories rather than one long continuous ceremony.



## Choosing your event technology partner

Firstly, using a technology platform like Zoom is not going to solve all your needs. Technologies like Zoom are solely used to replace your physical venue. As with your in-person events you still need; a website, registration page, ticket payment processing, speaker profiles, judge profiles, awards nominations, judging processes etc. So, you may need to speak with multiple platform vendors to piece together a complete solution.

As with any supplier vetting, you'll need to put together a detailed brief including an overview of your audience and industry. If this is your first time running an event completely online you'll need to select a supplier which has experience in running similar digital events and you can trust to deliver the best attendee experience.

**Your technology partner selection should take into to consideration four key points:**



### 1. What is your event presentation style?

More than any other event formats, awards ceremonies are generally known for their slick, professional style. You'll need to ensure the technology, its design, user experience (UX) meets your audience expectations from the moment the user lands on your website, how they submit entries, the judging process through the ceremony itself.

For the event, how do you envisage the presentation experience? Will the ceremony be entirely live or will it be a mix of pre-recorded videos and live? Will it be one continuous event over several hours or will the audience be able to solely watch one category? Decisions around the event format will depend on your audiences and will have an impact on software required.

*Select your technology supplier with the same consideration as you would your event venue.*



## Choosing your event technology partner - continued



### 2. What is your event team's skillset?

Be realistic in your teams' technical abilities. Technical glitches can be a real turnoff for audiences, judges, entrants and sponsors.

It maybe that you need to select a full-service technology specialist who can be on-hand to ensure the ceremony goes off without a hitch. This may cost more in the short-term but will create a positive memorable experience which attendees will want to return to.



### 3. Creating a seamless experience

Does one software solution provide you with all your requirements from website to ceremony or will you need to piece together a variety of providers? A seamless experience for your virtual attendees is the key to looking professional. Is it a technology that your audience have likely used before i.e. Zoom or will it require pre-event software downloads from your attendees?



### 4. Hardware availability

What equipment does your team have available? Events that are run by teams that are fully based at home require a significant amount of internet bandwidth and benefit from the use of hardware such as microphones. There are suppliers available who can deliver hardware to selected locations for speakers and hosts.

#### We recommend selecting a supplier with three essential capabilities:

- > Cloud recording
- > Easy and simple controls for the attendees
- > Event registration and attendee management

## What technologies are out there?

**zoom**

**Zoom** - A globally known video conferencing and webinar tool available to use online or via the Zoom app.



**Crowdcast** - Live video platform for webinars.



**GoToMeetings** - A globally known video conferencing and webinar tool available to use online.



**Restream.io** - Restream allows you to stream your event live across more than 30 social platforms simultaneously.



**Switchboard.live** - Live stream to your audience across event imaginable platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Periscope, Twitch, YouTube. Easy to use to stream to all providers.



**ecamm.com/mac/ecammlive** - The all-in-one livestreaming production platform for Mac.



### Planning for your awards

Virtual events should be approached with the same thorough strategy and planning as any other event. For awards this will include pre-event sales and marketing strategies, operations delivery and content creation and scheduling.

#### The success of your event will rely on the implementation of:

- > Multichannel promotional strategy.
- > Engaged sponsors, partners, and host.
- > Knowledgeable and respected judges.
- > Carefully constructed script and event timeline.
- > Delegate specific responsibilities and duties to your team - particularly on the technical side.
- > Bringing in additional expertise where needed.

We highly recommend running a dress rehearsal of any live elements within your event presentation so everyone taking part is comfortable with the delivery.

Make sure there is a “wet-weather” plan in place which covers some of the typical issues such as – should as speakers internet connection gets interrupted or a pre-recording isn't available.

*As with any event, the devil is in the detail*

We highly recommend running a dress rehearsal of any live elements within your event presentation so everyone taking part is comfortable with the delivery.



## Finding the right host

### Master of Digital Ceremonies

Selecting the right awards host for your digital event is vital. As with any awards ceremony, an exceptional presenter cannot only attract an audience to attend but can also keep them engaged throughout.

It's not just about catering for the taste of your audience. You'll need to find a presenter who will also have the confidence to take control and ensure proceedings run smoothly in an online environment.

If you are working on an event which is moving online due to a cancellation and had already booked a presenter, review your contract and ask your presenter whether they would consider presenting online. Remember audiences are now used to digesting content through their laptops and phones and there is always the option to pre-record their after-dinner presentation.



## Creating commercial value

### Creating real value for sponsors

One significant benefit of a digital event is the data insight available for commercial sponsors and partners. Virtual awards ceremonies offer a wealth of new and innovative commercial opportunities combined with some reimaged traditional sponsorships but some may depend on the limitations of your technology supplier.

You'll also need to look for commercial partners whose objectives fit with your event format. If you're looking to open your awards ceremony to a global audience for example, you'll want a sponsor who is looking for an international audience and find value in a mass audience.

### Ideas for valuable sponsorship deliverables for a virtual awards ceremony:

#### Brand Awareness

- > Logos on awards backdrop
- > Branding on pre and post event communications and event website
- > Short digital adverts played during the awards (we highly recommend keeping these to under 20 seconds)
- > Social media promotional activity

#### Data

- > Opportunity to email attendees
- > Data of attendees (in-line with data protection laws and guidelines)
- > Geolocational data of attendees
- > Attendee engagement data during the event
- > Ask the audience industry questions during the event

#### Engagement

- > Pre-recorded interviews played during the ceremony and available post event Interviews are a fantastic way to get thoughts, feedback and insight from judges and sponsors – Think about pre-recording them so they can be accessed after the event and used in your post awards marketing campaign or next year's pre-event campaign.
- > Short digital adverts played during the awards (we highly recommend keeping these to under 20 seconds)
- > Present the award on the night (highly recommend pre-recording these wherever possible).
- > Run quizzes and virtual games during the event sponsored by the partner keeping the audience engaged and providing more branding and data opportunities for the sponsor.

**Entering into this new format allows your team to get creative and increasingly more targeted with advertising, promotion and branding throughout your event. Plus, these new opportunities will open your brand up to new potential sponsors brands who may have previously not wanted to be involved.**



## Engaging virtual awards attendees

### Making your winners feel special

How do you recreate that feeling when a winner hears their name read out from the host at the podium? That buzz of navigating the tables and audience to make their way to the stage to receive their award?

Whilst winning isn't everything, it is important for your awards to retain a significance and meaning in the digital environment. The experience should be one that gives the winners pride and compels other attendees to attain in the future.

### Make winning special:

- > Schedule a trophy to be sent to your winner the morning after the awards ceremony. Think about creating a winner book to share via your social and email to your database after the event.
- > Instantly send a digital prize to them via email on the announcement of their name.
- > Interview the winner live and give them the exposure their winner deserves.
- > Send post event promotional logos and banners for them to feature on their website and promote to their social networks.

### Keeping your audience engaged - Think differently

The biggest challenge will be to keep your audience engaged for the duration of the event, particularly those awards which are running as one long continuous ceremony.

A dynamic host in combination with a few fun and creative ideas strategically placed throughout the ceremony will keep your attendees tuned in.

- > Create an air of mystery by emailing an exclusive golden ticket to your attendees. With so many invitations to webinars and virtual conferences, make sure your invitation stands out and looks aesthetically pleasing.
- > Generate online polls and voting systems. Gamification can work incredibly well at keeping online audiences engaged - can your audience guess the winner? Award prizes available for those who have guessed the most correctly.
  - > Music is an extremely powerful tool and can really set the tone for the ceremony. What, when and how are you going to maximise music to help engage your audience and design the right atmosphere?
  - > Create your own unique cocktail and mocktail menu and send the recipe to the attendees in advance.
  - > Charity involvement - Silent audience for guests to bid on during the event.



## Creating commercial value - continued

### Everyone's a winner - Feedback opportunities for shortlisted nominees

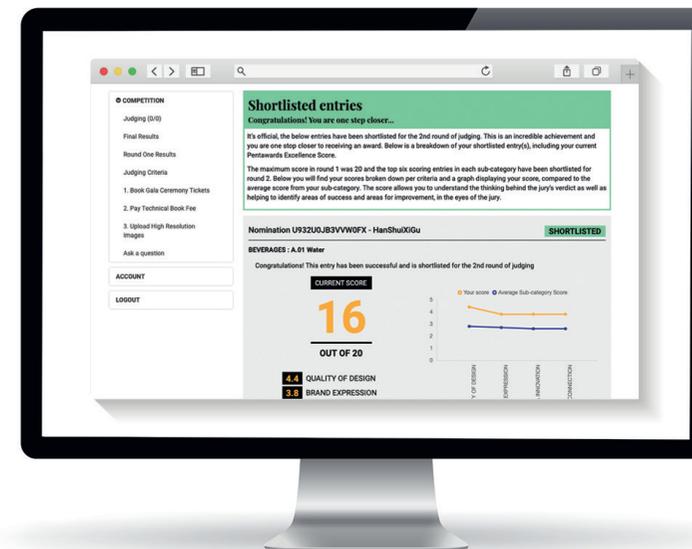
Entering awards is often incredibly time consuming. For those that are not fortunate enough to win, feedback from the judges on their entry is often welcomed and appreciated.

It is a challenge that many of our clients face both in the live event and virtually and so at Eversio, we've developed a new opportunity in our back office for clients to access commentary from judges.

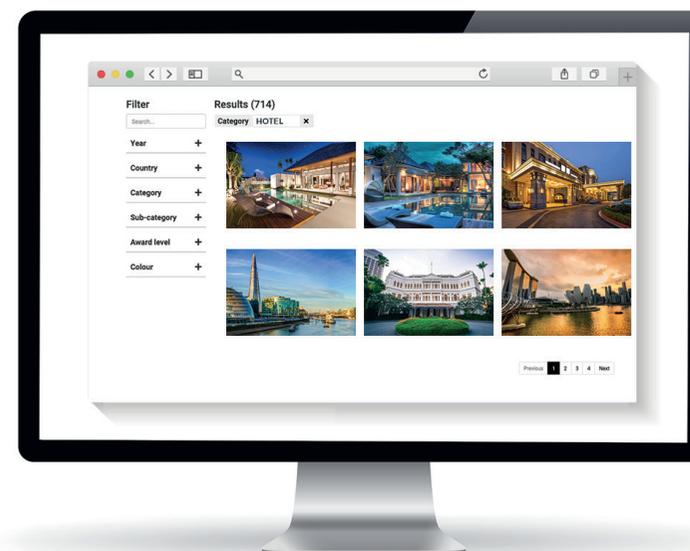
Being transparent about your judging process not only validates your event but also gives kudos to the judges and their decision-making. By providing this feedback, nominees will also be able to enhance their future entries - upscaling the quality of future submissions and ultimately providing value to those who have invested time in entering the awards.



## Entrant feedback



## Winner results



## YOU'RE VIRTUALLY THERE



We hope you've found this guide useful. If you would like to discuss any of these contents in more detail contact a member of the Evessio team on [hello@evessio.com](mailto:hello@evessio.com) and we'll be happy to help.

### This guide was brought to you by Evessio - Software built exclusively for the events industry

Evessio is a software platform that hosts, manages and runs awards, conferences and exhibitions. Evessio delivers all the functionality required to run these type of events in one environment.

We turn great ideas into software for the events industry.

Trusted by Clarion Events, EMAP, Easyfairs, Dennis Publishing, PPA, MA Exhibitions, William Reed and many more.