



GLOBAL HYBRID EVENTS

Report by VOQIN[⚡]



/ THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HAPPENING

A new world has emerged. The changes of circumstances forced humankind to form a **hybrid state of mind**. In other words, we live in a reality in which “getting together” has become normal, even from a considerable physical distance. Once more, we overcame apparently insuperable challenges; we learnt how to get the best out of extremely demanding situations; we created new behaviours which focus on unlimited accessibility; and we reinforced the infrastructure of a world in which technology has become the tool that allows us to improve and enhance physical experiences.

In this context, the **event industry** also entered a new era. During the pandemic, the market never ceased to surprise its audiences with creativity, technology, and solutions that **kept people close to each other and constantly engaged**.

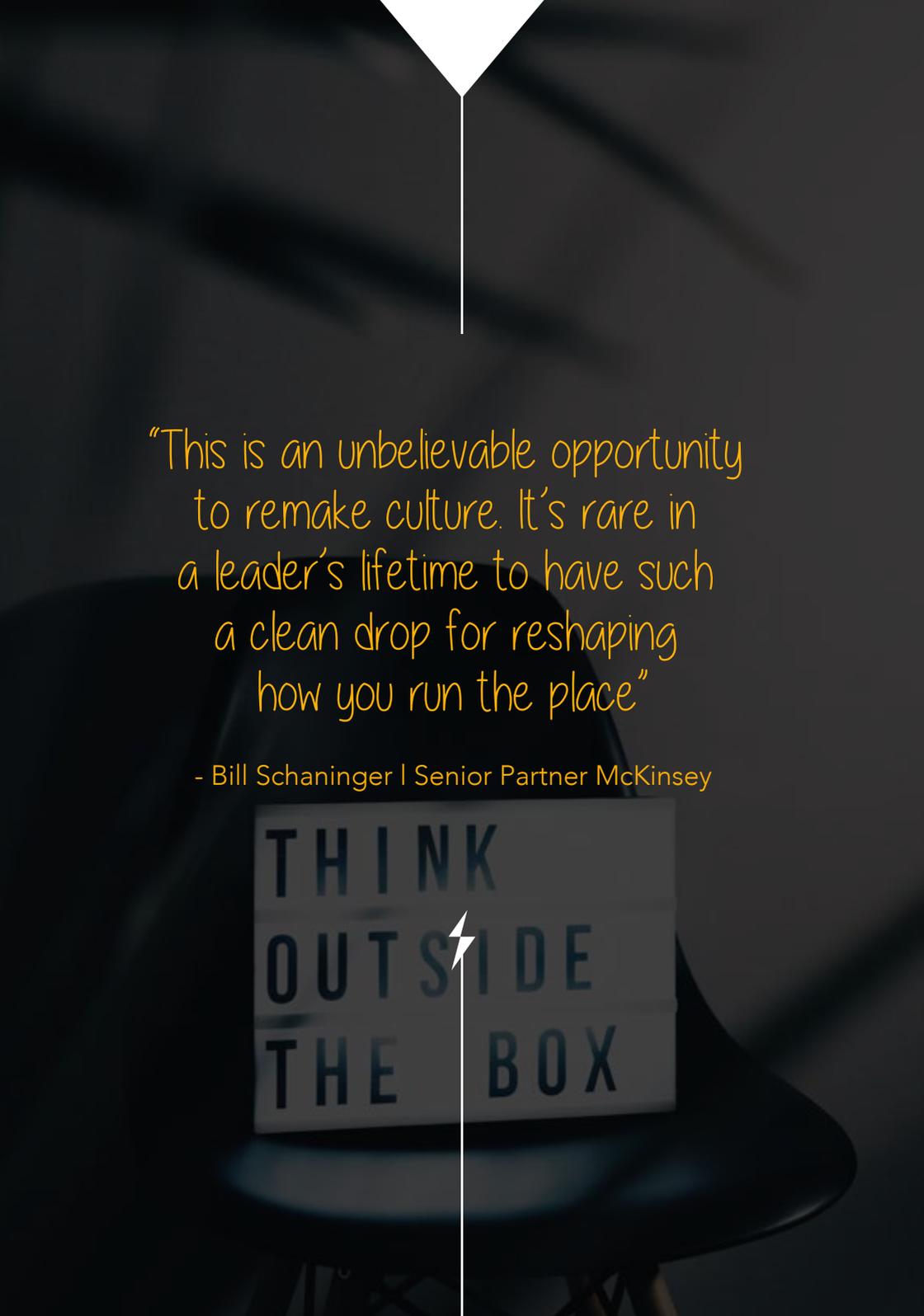


INTRODUCTION

By being an emotiotech, VOQIN' is aware that what was once separated between real and virtual, or offline and online, is today hybrid and interconnected. We set off on an expedition to uncover **the secrets of the hybrid world**, in all its aspects. The first discovery we made was that hybrid options allow a plethora of situations, a portfolio of opportunities, and a variety of possibilities that can turn any event into a fully emotional experience.

Hybrid events are becoming the norm, but our mission will always reside in **bringing people together** in a connected and engaging way, by developing solutions that **provoke meaningful emotions** for the audience.





*“This is an unbelievable opportunity
to remake culture. It’s rare in
a leader’s lifetime to have such
a clean drop for reshaping
how you run the place”*

- Bill Schaninger | Senior Partner McKinsey

THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX

/ WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

It is no news that the world as we know it changed forever. Beliefs, limits, structures, habits, all have been stretched, reshaped, and adapted to new standards. The pace of the digital transformation in all areas of business and society has been faster than ever before, and this brought all countries to **higher levels of adaptability.**

At VOQIN', we believe that the concept of a hybrid reality will soon spread to any kind of tasks, actions, or events that we execute.

At VOQIN' we believe that **the future is the present,** and it is **extremely interconnected.**



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ GLOBALIZATION IS ABOUT BEING REMOTE

Since the 20th Century, the term “globalization” has been used to define a process of internationalization and integration of worldviews, products, ideas, cultures, people, and economies.

In 2020 – the year of the pandemic, remote working made us rethink the way we operate, work, and consume. Today, according to a survey conducted by Microsoft, **73% of employees aspire to flexible remote work options**, and **66% of business owners** are considering redesigning physical spaces to better **accommodate hybrid work models**¹.

A horizontal yellow line spans the width of the page. Two black circles are placed on this line. The left circle contains the white text '73%'. Below this circle is the text 'of employees aspire to flexible remote work options'. The right circle contains the white text '66%'. Below this circle is the text 'of business owners are considering redesigning physical spaces'.

of employees aspire
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WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

In the mid-2010s, the term **digital nomadism** became recognized to describe a form of highly itinerant type of digital work. This trend emerged as more stable networks were improved and after main IT companies started accepting remote working arrangements for software developers².

Digital nomads used to be remote workers, mainly in the IT industry, who travelled to different locations, often worked in coffee shops, co-working spaces, or public libraries, relying on devices with wireless internet capabilities like smartphones and mobile hotspots to do their work wherever they want³. Thanks to the accelerated digital transformation that occurred in the past months, today any kind of remote worker can aspire and is demanding more flexibility in their work location and hours.

In February of 2021, the **Portuguese island of Madeira** launched a new program to boost the tourism sector. Thanks to a partnership between Start Up Madeira and Madeira Regional Government, Madeira Tourism Bureau launched the "**Digital Nomad Village**", a project that will attract digital nomads and remote workers from all over the world. More than 4.000 digital nomads from 90 different countries already sent their applications to go and work from the brand-new infrastructure of co-working living, staying between one and six months while enjoying one of the best places on the island to work remotely⁴.

WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ AWAKING EMOTIONS WILL MAKE US FEEL HUMAN AGAIN.

According to a 2020 Report conducted by Buffer⁵, the **biggest challenges for remote workers** worldwide are collaboration, communication, loneliness and not being able to unplug.

It took a pandemic to remind us that our **emotions are what make us feel human**. During the past months, psychologists worldwide registered increasing concerns for the consequences of social isolation, which also led many people to feel a sensation of “lack of meaning in life” during the pandemic. People have involuntarily found themselves having fewer close connections and, after enduring several lockdowns, might find it challenging to rebuild their networks⁶.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

Provoking emotions and promoting a sense of belonging is now vital to make people feel like humans again. According to Yuko Nippoda, a psychotherapist and spokesperson for the UK Council for Psychotherapy, if people continue to feel stressed in the “outside world”, they will possibly and eventually start detaching from that “world”. In his words:

“Once they experience this detachment, it might be difficult for them to come out into the world and socialize with others”.⁷





WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

The quick thriving of **TikTok** shows how connection and sense of belonging are important for humankind. Reports have suggested that TikTok can have positive effects on **mental health** as we all search for things to do during the coronavirus pandemic, as creating and posting content can have a positive effect on mental wellbeing. Besides, the routine element that Tik Tok “demands” can be good for the **engagement between people**: having something to work on, dancing, doing fitness challenges in a positive and light way, contribute to improving our days⁸.

Dr. Pamela B. Rutledge, the Director of the Media Psychology Research Center and Faculty in the media psychology program at Fielding Graduate University, claims that TikTok can contribute to a positive experience, especially during social isolation, if the content shared is⁹:

- ▶ Light-hearted
- ▶ Created and enjoyed to socially connect
- ▶ Promoting a sense of belonging
- ▶ Aiming at creating and collaborating with others to produce entertaining content



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ TECHNOLOGY IS AN ALLY FOR EVERY PURPOSE.

As the proverb says: “necessity is the mother of invention” and technology is the number one ally amidst physical restrictions.

Technology is accelerating the world transformation in many aspects of our daily life (we can’t be more excited about it!), and it will continue evolving to equip organizations and companies with the right tools for the transition to a hybrid reality.

It is incredible to think that the computers we use today are still not comparable to human intelligence.

In the hybrid future, this reality can potentially change, as people will **cooperate closely with Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and disruptive technology in many aspects and sectors of their lives. In the future, technology will naturally evolve in ways that will allow humankind to explore and enjoy our natural aspirations, **leaving more robotic skills to the machines**¹⁰.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ HYBRID INTELLIGENCE AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE

We will witness new forms of cooperation between AI and humans, which will allow us to **achieve better results while learning from each other.**

AI will continue its evolution towards the hybrid reality, taking advantage of its best features, like processing information and merging them with unparalleled human abilities, such as creativity or abstract thinking. It will eventually turn into a **hybrid intelligence**, freeing people from tasks that will be performed by technology and enabling them to focus on the areas in which the human touch can't be replaced or replicated¹¹.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ USING IOT AS A MANAGER

During the pandemic, the evolution of the Internet of Things (IoT) was exponential. Today, this technology can **perform essential tasks for our day-to-day activities**, such as counting the number of people in a building, limiting the occupancy of a space, identifying which desks need sanitization based on the frequency of use, managing public health etc.

In the future, we will **use IoT to maximize human capabilities** by having it manage mundane tasks¹².

Neil Sahota, during a keynote session at a YPO event earlier in 2021, revealed to the audience how the healthcare system worldwide is one of the industries that still have a long way to go when it comes to using technology¹³. On the other hand, China showed the world how they apply AI to fight some forms of cancer, as the diagnosis is proved to be faster and more accurate when led by Artificial Intelligence. **A human doctor, on average, fails a diagnosis 1 in 7 times**, while an **AI doctor only fails 1 in 1000 diagnoses**¹⁴.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ PURPOSE IS LEADING THE WAY

The past months created an interesting opportunity for people to think about **what truly matters** for them. In other words, this period made people **find purpose**¹⁵.

We can say that, in a way, the pandemic forced us to choose purpose over consumerism. The pursuit of purpose has become one of the pillars of the new hybrid world for both consumers and organizations. Applied to business, the main benefits that were registered are: improving client retention, people motivation, satisfaction, engagement, and productivity¹⁶.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

/ CONVENIENCE IS HERE TO RULE

The pandemic has nudged offline businesses into offering more convenient deals to survive. Take-away, pick-up, and drop-off have all become normal features for businesses that might have never considered such services in the past.

According to a survey conducted by Forbes, **25.5% of respondents listed convenience as the deciding factor** when it comes to choosing where they spend their money. The future challenges for organizations will be how they will implement new processes, improve current ones, and maintain their relevance in the hybrid world in the long term¹⁷.

In-store experiences will have an important role when it comes to “measure the temperature” of the relationship between brands and consumers. In the future, going to an offline shop needs to become a phenomenal experience for consumers, in order to endure the online relationship. According to Forbes, **90% of respondents** said that they would be **likely to return to a business where they had a positive in-person experience**¹⁸.





WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

“Experiences” are not always regarded with the right importance. However, in the future, businesses should start considering the “in-person experience” as a unique way to conquer the consumers’ hearts.

Businesses are always on the lookout for innovation with the aim of offering increasingly pleasant experiences to consumers in all sectors, whether they are in the online or offline world. It is the case of the first native cloud real estate company, that works in a hybrid format in different parts of the world, bringing to the market a new concept of space. eXp Realty offers solutions, training, and digital spaces for interaction with its realtor, while tenants can enjoy the services wherever they are during the entire purchase or sale journey. The company already has 46 thousand registered professionals, spread across the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Mexico, France, Portugal, India, Australia, South Africa, and Brazil¹⁹.



/ DATA IS IN EVERYTHING

Data is the “new fuel” and one of the key factors that will allow the transition to a hybrid world. The traditional analytics techniques that rely heavily on large amounts of historical data are already obsolete²⁰.

Data and analytics teams are pivoting from traditional AI techniques relying on “big” data to a class of analytics that requires less, or “smaller” and more varied data. The latest data and analytics trends will help brands, organizations, and society to **deal with change and transform uncertainties into opportunities**²¹.

According to Gartner²², each of the data & analytics trends fit under one of these **three main pillars**:

1

Promoting the acceleration of data exchange and analytics, thanks to innovations in AI that allow more diverse data sources and more agile integrations between different systems.

2

Operationalizing business value and accelerate capabilities to anticipate, adapt, and react through more effective XOps; **generating more assertive decision-making skills** based on data and analysis as intrinsic parts of the business.

3

Relating flexibly to new data and insights to empower people and services, creating an even larger and engaged audience



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

“Data is one of the most powerful weapons that we have in the fight against crime, and our digital policing platform will help us make the most of this asset²³.”

— Deputy Chief Greg Preston, Edmonton Police Service

Transforming digital evidence management and analysis will improve citizen safety and quality of life. Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is building Canada’s first enterprise digital policing platform.



WHO ARE YOU, HYBRID WORLD?

With the purpose of offering new ways to manage and analyze a wealth of data from across its operations and thanks to their ability to dig deeper into police data, the EPS hopes to discover hidden leads, solve cases faster and improve officer efficiency, effectiveness, and safety.

The results:

Teams can make decisions faster and perform their investigative tasks more assertively thanks to data access.

Digital evidence can reveal clues that were previously hidden, helping to solve more cases and arrest more criminals.

Officers are more secure while working in the field thanks to intelligence services that are updated in real-time.

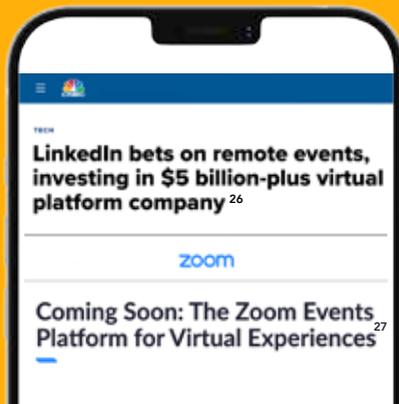
THE EVENT INDUSTRY

/ DIGITAL EVENTS ARE ALREADY MAINSTREAM

From birthday parties to conferences, virtual events have probably reached their peak in 2020 due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic. One year later, the world is slowly transitioning to less strict rules, but the number of digital event attendees is still growing.

A report from Allied Market Research in 2021, indicated that **in 2019 the global events industry** was valued at **\$ 1.1 trillion** and is estimated to **reach \$ 1.5 billion by 2028²⁴**.

Another study published by Grand View Research in July 2020, shows that the size of the **global virtual event market** was **\$ 78 billion in 2019** and that **by 2027²⁵** it is expected to **reach \$ 404 billion**.





/ BEYOND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

It is not a secret that technology is already rewriting the present and future of the event industry.

Nowadays, hundreds of digital event solutions are available on the market. The **global virtual event platform market** size is currently valued at \$ 10.4 billion and is **expected to reach \$ 18.9 billion in 2026²⁸**. Necessity drove evolution, exciting technologies are emerging, and the future of the events is promising.

Event platforms aren't a novelty anymore, and the focus now should be on **mastering engagement techniques, improving customer experience**, and being prepared to address new requirements. It is crucial to deliver an **excellent user interface (UI)** with sessions easy to find and high-quality content to make any virtual event meaningful for those who attend it.



/ IS IT TIME TO GO BACK TO THE "OLD NORMAL"?

Virtual events changed the industry's landscape, but the experience would have been more fulfilling for some events if it had been in person. According to a research conducted by Zoom²⁹, in 2021, post-pandemic convenience will dictate the type of event people will attend for audiences of at least 10 different countries: respondents from Brazil (59%) and the USA (52%) are more likely to attend a mix of virtual and in-person events; in the United Kingdom, 39% of people are likely to attend events in both options, but most of them would still prefer in-person events only (56%)³⁰.





THE EVENT INDUSTRY

With COVID restrictions easing up in many countries, the hope of going back to a “normal” life revives and **in-person events are coming back shyly**. However, there are still a lot of uncertainties around the matter, as **health & safety issues are still a priority**. So, while the industry is preparing its next move, some precautions will need to be taken.

Measures expected³¹

- ▶ 77% capacity to accommodate social distancing
- ▶ 52% Disinfection protocols
- ▶ 59% Flexible cancelation and attrition terms
- ▶ Others: require proof of COVID-19 vaccine, conduct rapid tests on-site, Covid-19 negative test.



THE EVENT INDUSTRY

/ THE HYBRID FUTURE

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONVENIENCE

More than 50% of event specialists are already planning or intend to organize hybrid events in the near future³².

Today, the right question to ask it is not when the event will take place, but **which is the right format** for it. Studying the type of event and audience profile will determine the best structure and format, either virtual, in-person or hybrid. A trade show might need an in-person networking session, but a seminar might reach more people in the virtual format.

/ THE BEST OF VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES

ALL CHANNELS TO ALL AUDIENCES.



Planning a successful hybrid meeting is more than setting up a venue or a live streaming. It is equivalent to designing two different events and working on the connection and interaction between both.



Customer experience will be the turning point to differentiate a successful hybrid event from an unsuccessful one. The audience response to a virtual meeting can be different from what we are used to and translating the perks of a face-to-face meeting for the virtual audience is not an easy task. To plan a hybrid event that is engaging and entertaining it is essential to guarantee the same standards, experiences, and access for the audience in all channels, both physical and digital.



Engagement remains one of the biggest challenges, but there are techniques and tools to help with that: live surveys and polling, Q&A, gamification, social media integration, etc. However, we can't forget that meaningful content with great storytelling is the key to get participants' attention and drive engagement into all channels.



Data-driven decisions will improve the quality and profitability of events. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a game-changing integration for a deeper and smarter use of data. It enables planners to track and monitor the event in real-time and use analytics to create a winning strategy.

Hybrid events can be more **sustainable and inclusive** because of their flexibility. Long-haul travels can be avoided, reducing the carbon footprint, and people outside urban areas and from different backgrounds will be able to join important meetings and events through digital channels.



/ WHAT'S NEXT? HYBRID EVENTS WILL BE THE NORM

In 2021, it is clear that virtual and physical realities can **interact and integrate** with one another. With the majority of the event organizers choosing to work on virtual platforms (out of necessity or convenience), an exciting hybrid future is slowly emerging.

Here are some numbers:

Only in Europe the investment in technology increased from 9% in 2019 to 26% in 2020 (AMEX)³³

35% of virtual and hybrid events will opt for a full-service agency, that can provide speaker training, pre-recorded interviews, virtual studio space, and post-event edited sessions on-demand (AMEX, 2020)³⁴

50,7% of executives think that in the future all live events will also have a virtual dimension (Marketing Charts, 2020)³⁵



Furthermore, we can expect the integration of newer technologies, such as 5G, Facial Recognition, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). **The perception of virtual and in-person will diminish**, allowing the attendees to enjoy an overall experience from anywhere³⁶



5G

5G

It's closer than everyone imagines, but the advantages of this technology will only be visible in the next decade. It will reduce delay problems in event streaming and will allow futuristic additions, like holograms.



FACIAL RECOGNITION

Even though it is still a controversial subject, this technology can facilitate the attendee accreditation phase (no badges or signing papers) and even assist with managing attendees' dietary restrictions.



VIRTUAL REALITY

With this technology, event organizers will be able to create a myriad of settings: real-world scenarios and futuristic environments; 3D holograms for speakers; new product demonstrations; VR activities like physical exercises; and much more. The sky is the limit!



AUGMENTED REALITY

The perfect tool to add digital elements to a live event simply by using the camera on a smartphone, this technology enables virtual attendees to have a very similar experience as the public attending a live event in person.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Learning and simulating the capabilities of human intelligence, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can perform complex tasks in an automated way. It helps deliver more value to event attendees, improving access to real-time data and responding in a more personalized way.



OTT PLATFORM

Over-the-top (OTT) platforms offer media services directly to viewers via the Internet and allow users to watch content on-demand. For business organizations, this can be a great tool to provide employees with lectures, live recordings, training sessions, among other content that can be shared within the teams to be consumed whenever the workload allows it.



/ WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW WORLD?

A hybrid event could be anything, from a global live streaming concert to a physical congress with cool digital add-ons. The founder of AMR International and co-author of "Reinventing live", Denzil Rankine, defines hybrid as **"live plus a digital extension"**³⁶.

While live-streaming of an in-person event might seem daunting to many producers – like producing two events at once, some others are specialising in this business. It's time to leave our old-school thinking behind. "A lot of venues are creating in-house studios. We would advise hotels to have audio-video facilities available. I think it's the future," Rankine completes³⁷.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW WORLD?

According to a research among the event professional community conducted by EventMB in 2021³⁸, **71% of event planners are likely to continue using digital strategies** to maintain the connection with their audience even after the return of physical events. Besides, **67% agree that hybrid is the future of events.**

Hybrid events ease flexibility and reach in virtual events, allowing a very similar level of connection and engagement of in-person options.

/ We must say that... the future is hybrid

In a blink of an eye, **safety overcame productivity**. In a recent survey by Cushman & Wakefield and CoreNet Global³⁹, data show that hybrid models are likely to more than double in the next few years – and this transition is already happening.

Flexibility, transparency, and innovation in businesses that already run operations in both physical and digital environments led to an increase of efficiency, collaboration, and productivity.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW WORLD?

/ What have we learned from the digital boom in 2020?

- ▶ The **“user experience”** is now what determines the success in any kinds of events.
- ▶ The **hybrid context** will lead the way in the new world.
- ▶ New **event platforms** will arise, but only the organisations that have the endurance, and the “know-how of the market” will produce successful events.
- ▶ Hybrid events are only possible for agencies who have a **global penetration of the event’s industry.**



CONCLUSION

/ WHY IS VOQIN' BUYING INTO THE HYBRID GAME?

VOQIN', a global agency present in 4 countries with a track record of over 3500 international events, was founded in 2002 with the primary objective of **connecting brands and people** through memorable storytelling and all the emotions it conveys. VOQIN' heritage is built on 18 years of experience in creating, planning, and delivering live events, but we adapted to the reality of the digital world way before 2020.

Our international teams have a solid experience and the right know-how to design, plan and create outstanding projects, as well as the appropriate capabilities and knowledge to address areas, such as branding, creative strategy, digital communication, content creation, and live, digital & hybrid event operations, allowing us to **deliver 360° communication campaigns anywhere in the world.**



CONCLUSION

Today, VOQIN' is stronger, sharper, and wiser, and we face the hybrid world as an opportunity to embrace new challenges and keep engaging audiences through emotions – but guided by backable data analysis.

Technology and digital mindset are part of our DNA. So instead of adapting to an increasingly virtual world, VOQIN' has grown alongside it.

We are an **EmotionTech**, and our methodology comes from science and research. In 2019, with the collaboration of the neuroscientist Tiago Marques, VOQIN' developed the "**Emotional Tracking**": a unique method that turned our creative processes into a seamless technique to design and program emotional responses through data analysis and memorable experiences documentation. Emotions are real, biological reactions within our bodies. Yet, this process can be hacked into producing intentional responses. This way, we can eliminate noise and connect brands with their audience.



CONCLUSION

At the beginning of 2020, we created **EMEX (EMotional EXperiences)** from a bold and visionary business vision of blending emotion and technology dynamically. An EmotionTech is not digital, B2B or B2C. It is **H2H (Human-to-Human)**. This is the technology that provokes positive emotions in people, online, offline, or both, in a hybrid environment⁴⁰. In May 2021, we launched EMEX 3.0, a more interactive, engaging, responsive, and customisable version of our platform, which allowed us to deliver over 80 successful events over the past year.

Our solid experience and thorough data research allow us to say that **the rise of the hybrid event industry has already begun**, and it will keep on growing. Many more platforms will emerge, and live events will not be just physical anymore. Hybrid event organisers will need proper tools, skills, know-how, field experience of the physical context, and a global presence. Being just “event planners” will not be enough; event professionals will quickly become experts in all the areas needed to transform an event into an unforgettable experience.

Do you dare to join us in this exciting new journey?





SOURCES

- 1 - <https://bit.ly/3l8g8AK>
- 2 - <https://bit.ly/3j1oWpc>
- 3 - <https://bit.ly/2Wne0dY>
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