

American Academy of Optometry Case Study

How AAO made the quick shift from in-person event to virtual experience with Personify's virtual event solutions



Founded in 1922, the American Academy of Optometry (AAO) provides ongoing education, supports innovative research, and disseminates knowledge to advance optometric practice and improve patient care. As one of their core programs, the Academy's annual meeting offers a wide array of clinically relevant continuing education courses and cutting-edge research in the clinical and vision sciences.

The Challenge

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AAO was prompted to re-imagine the annual Academy meeting in the months leading up to the October 2020 event. After surveying members and partners about their preferences and expectations for the upcoming event, AAO made the decision to transform the annual meeting into a fully virtual experience, Academy At Home, which would include both the education and exhibit hall components of the event.

In their search for a virtual event solution, AAO was looking for a secure, user-friendly platform that would work alongside existing technologies to provide a seamless experience for attendees and exhibitors. They selected Personify's virtual events solution because of the simplicity of the platform and the ability to facilitate meaningful interactions between partners, exhibitors, and attendees.



The A2Z team is always great to work with. They gave us all the tools we needed, explained everything really well and gave us much-needed confidence in the exhibits component of our first virtual event, even with a very short timeframe.

ADRIENNE WILHOITE-CAMACHO
American Academy of Optometry

Unexpected Benefits of Going Virtual

- Though AAO was conservative in their goals for their first ever virtual event, Academy At Home was among the top five most attended annual meetings, exceeding their attendance goal by 60%. Additionally, according to AAO's post-meeting survey, 97.5% of surveyed attendees were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the Academy at Home virtual experience.
- Moving to a virtual format allowed the Academy to reach a larger international audience than in past years, expanding international reach from 15 countries to more than 50 countries.
- AAO extended the length of the event from the traditional three-day event to a two-week digital experience, which more than doubled the number of available continuing education (CE) credits attendees could earn. Because of the flexibility of the agenda, AAO saw a 29% increase in CE hours consumed per attendee compared to their 2019 annual meeting.

Retaining Exhibitor Revenue with a Virtual Exhibit Hall

Exhibitors and sponsoring industry partners have historically played a significant role in the success of the Academy's annual meeting. Despite the uncertainty around the value of digital experiences versus face-to-face interactions, AAO was able to retain more than 50% of their expected in-person exhibitors, exceeding their conservative estimates for the virtual event by 30% with the help of A2Z's virtual engagement tools like appointment scheduling, digital booth profiles and comprehensive exhibitor education. Exhibitors also found tremendous value in the attendee and visibility metrics captured within the A2Z platform, including who visited their virtual booth and how attendees engaged with their content.

Highlights



AAO saw a 29% increase in CE hours consumed per attendee compared to their 2019 annual meeting.



Exceeded their attendance goal by 60%



Retained more than 50% of their expected in-person exhibitors, exceeding their conservative estimates for the virtual event by 30%



Exhibitors received 17% more exposure for their products and services

About Personify's Virtual Events Solutions

With deep experience in delivering in-person, virtual and hybrid experiences, Personify A2Z Events captivates attendees, delights exhibitors and grows your events regardless of format. Powered by trusted Personify solutions, Virtual Conference brings your conference experience online, with the digital tools you need to streamline conference planning and execution, promote and facilitate networking and drive engagement among attendees, speakers and sponsors. In addition to our Virtual Conference platform, we offer a proven, powerful solution to facilitate matchmaking and virtual appointment scheduling between exhibitors and attendees. Finally, we provide targeted digital marketing services through our world-class Digital Engagement Team to promote attendee engagement both pre-show and during the show, resulting in increased participation and ROI for both attendees and exhibitors/sponsors.



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