

# Association of Government Accountants Case Study

## An Events Expert Shares Advice for How to Succeed in an Ever-Changing Business Climate



The year 2020 saw the word "unprecedented" thrown around a lot, and rightly so. In the transition to virtual, associations had to be clever and resourceful when it came events. While it's still unclear when we can return to in-person gatherings, there are ways to approach event planning now that ensure social engagement and avoid Zoom fatigue.

Jerome Bruce, Director of Meetings and Exhibits for the Association of Government Accountants, shared how his organization continues to adapt to ever-changing norms. "The tone that we want to project to our members is, 'We're still here,'" Bruce said. "That we represent government financial management, that we are continuing education. The AGA still offers educational courses and virtual conferences, they're just in a digital format now."

Following are Bruce's tips for how to strategically plan events while things are still virtual, with an in-person version on the not-too-distant horizon.

### Analyze Your Recent Data

Last year was all about quickly learning how to transform in-person gatherings into virtual. Now, associations have a year of data to inform their decision-making for future events.

Bruce said that associations have an opportunity to do analysis as well as strategic planning and marketing based on 2020's experience, focusing on metrics and key performance indicators. Bruce, who characterized himself as a "data guy," said he crunched the numbers on how many people attended last year's events, the most popular sessions, and which attendees participated in those sessions.



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*Director of Meetings and Exhibits,  
Association of Government Accountants*

## Retaining Exhibitor Revenue with a Virtual Exhibit Hall

Associations can use their data to develop creative ways to keep members engaged. For example, the AGA leverages session recordings throughout the year, sending members portions of videos from its conference.

Data can also help planners get ahead of potential roadblocks. For instance, analysis might suggest that people are hesitant to attend virtual events for fear of sitting at their screens too long. To combat screen weariness, the AGA gamified its virtual events, including creating a visually appealing attendee player screen and allowing attendees to earn points for joining a session, visiting a booth, chatting with attendees, or engaging on social media. A leaderboard displayed the points, enhancing virtual engagement

## Select the Right Tech Platforms

When it came to pivoting to an all-virtual setting, Bruce emphasized the importance of choosing a platform that serves your association best. "Having that tech platform that can help you manage your event efficiently and effectively and will give you data at the end, that's key. All that costs some money, but you have to invest."

The AGA is a long-term partner of Personify, using its A2Z Events solution for conference modules, the exhibit floor plan, speaker management, and event app, among other tools. "When the pandemic happened, we just sat down with them and presented all the different options we had for us," Bruce said. "Turns out that Personify has a virtual solution to all."

## Keep an Eye on the Post-Pandemic Future

Even with vaccines being rolled out, there is still uncertainty about access. That's why AGA events will be held virtually in Spring 2021. The organization will continue to plan for digital events, with an emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness for attendees.

"We know now the virtual is a band-aid, a temporary thing right now," Bruce said. "We need to keep the value of face-to-face current and sustainable, so we have a balancing act. We don't want people to get too engrossed with virtual that they won't be excited about face-to-face events. 2021 is an opportunity and challenge for us for sure to make sure that face-to-face doesn't die."

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