

# Scaling the SAPPHIRE NOW Experience

## *Tips for How You Can Implement Similar Ideas*

Note: This is a supplement to the full SAPPHIRE NOW case study. To get the most out of this content, we recommend you read the full study first.



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THE LEADER IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COLLABORATION & ENGAGEMENT

Mary Boone  
President, Boone Associates  
35 Pratt Street, Suite 104  
Essex, CT 06426  
Main office: 860-767-1675  
[info@maryboone.com](mailto:info@maryboone.com)



**H**ybrid events connect a broad range of stakeholders. Spend time designing the experience for satellite and virtual participants. Too often, content is streamed one way with limited interaction. Skype and video streaming can accomplish some of the same types of connectivity on a smaller scale. Even simple audio connections can still have an impact.



**T**he results and ROI justified the investment in customized content sharing and "wow"

factor. The use of broadcast studios and programming created the kind of radical connectivity that was a major design objective for the event. But not every video has to be broadcast quality or available in real time to another event. Run pre-recorded shows on video monitors and use prosumer video cameras and YouTube to broadcast content to physical and virtual participants.



**T**hink about your meeting objectives and design. Scale down the video wall by using

smaller, interactive screens and applications, but first determine if you'll achieve the results you want for the investment you can make.



**A**s events become increasingly international (due in many cases to technology), it's

important to recognize cultural similarities and differences in both content and logistics. Assign a staff member to handle language diversity, and to design presentation content with sensitivity to culture.



**S**horter speeches are a growing trend. It's critical to get executives to understand the value

of shorter speeches and to enlist the help of respected executives to make the case. Show an effective TED talk to presenters and explain why lengthy speeches with dense PowerPoint slides just don't work anymore.



**T**hink "outside the room" when broadcasting content. While shorter speeches are great in

terms of holding peoples' attention, you can share details and comprehensive content through additional outlets.



**C**onsider a hybrid model to extend the availability of experts. Skype in an expert or stream a conversation to a virtual group and give online participants a feedback channel to ask questions.



**I**t's difficult to attract high-level people to events, but tailored, relevant and exciting programs can coax c-level execs out of the office. Co-located VIP events take advantage of sunk costs and leverage the availability of c-level executives. Scale the experience down during an event with recreational experiences or breakfasts, where key VIPs can enjoy personalized education.



**E**cosystem partners at SAPPHIRE NOW were cast as experts and advisors engaged in dialogue. Their involvement in microforums, presentations and other activities created opportunities for them to really share their expertise rather than simply demonstrate products and services. This same concept can apply to vendors in a trade-show environment.



**K**eeep the audience in mind and design for its specific needs instead of taking a technology-driven approach. Design an experience that parallels the face-to-face exchange, but has unique qualities. Provide something as simple as audio and video podcasts or live audio streaming. High-relevance content is the most important driver of the success of a virtual platform.



**B**y dedicating resources to engage the online audience, the SAPPHIRE NOW team created noteworthy attention—which led to the event's status as a trending topic on Twitter. To save money, reduce the number of ambassadors or use journalism and film students to do the work. The big expense here comes from editing and posting.



**T**he SAP communications team acted as proactive journalists instead of press release generators. The real cost of this type of coverage relates more to editing and processing information, not the actual capture of news itself. Scale the size of the team, and focus on critical content for efficient and cost-effective capture.



**L**ighting and sound are critical to the participant experience. Weigh the value of the hospitality aspects of a meeting when making decisions about lighting and sound investments.



**C**reate a series of goals for social media, even if you end up changing them over the course of the event. Time and resources are key drivers of success. Devote the necessary hours and human resources to social media. If you don't have the staff to commit, then use part-time or contract help to make certain you achieve your goals. Experiment with a range of social media to find out what your particular virtual audience prefers.



**B**rainstorm what specific groups of people need to intersect, and consider designating an area at your conference that makes it easy for them to find each other. Connect people with their peers who aren't there. Outfit a "Meet Our Customers" room with Skype kiosks where external customers or experts can be accessed.



**E**mbrace a key concept: integration of press as participants, not observers. The media designed their own experiences and spoke with formerly unavailable experts. Provide a special area near the action, and give journalists as many resources as possible. And remember: The press can be a source of content, too.



**A** standalone event will have much less impact than an event that is tied to a communications continuum. SAP not only ties the SAPPHIRE NOW event to other events, but also to its sales activities. If holding a series of events is too expensive, consider other forms of communication. Virtual activities can make an event part of a year-long continuum. Consider a series of webinars, conference calls or threaded discussions (or a combination) that lead up to and follow a main conference.

## **Additional Resources**

View the official case study website [here](#).

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### About the Editor: Jessie States



Jessie States, editor of the meeting industry for MPI, edits and writes white papers and case studies. She is also an award-winning writer for MPI magazine One+. [jstates@mpiweb.com](mailto:jstates@mpiweb.com)

### About the Author: Mary Boone



Mary Boone conducted the research and wrote this case study. She is the founder of *MaryBoone.com*, president of Boone Associates and a leading authority on high performance collaboration and engagement. Her work as a keynote speaker, educator, thought leader and published author has received widespread acclaim. Among those quoting from and praising Mary's work are Tom Peters, *The New York Times*, *National Public Radio*, *CNN*, *The Financial Times*, *Chief Executive Magazine*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *CNBC*, *Information Week*, *CIO Magazine*, and *Industry Week*. The *Harvard Business Review* article she co-authored with David Snowden entitled "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making" won the Emerald Citation Award in 2011 which is awarded to the top 50 articles from the top 300 management publications worldwide that have proven impact since their publication date, and in 2008, they won an Academy of Management award for the same article. Mary's books include *Managing Inter@ctively: Executing Strategy, Improving Communication and Creating a Knowledge-Sharing Culture*. (McGraw-Hill) and *The Information Edge* (co-authored with N. Dean Meyer, Dow Jones). Another of her books, *Leadership and the Computer* (Prima Publishing), was selected as "required reading" for Congress by Newt Gingrich when he was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.