

How EventsCase and COVID Made Edinburgh TV Festival More Important than Ever

The Edinburgh TV Festival is one of the most prestigious media events in the UK. After COVID-19 forced changes to its usual in-person format, the organisers worked diligently with EventsCase to migrate its core features to a new digital experience.

About Edinburgh TV Festival

Established in 1976, the Edinburgh TV festival is one of the biggest and most anticipated dates in the UK TV industry calendar. Known for its learning opportunities, cutting-edge content and keynote address (the Mactaggart Lecture), the event is a respected source of insight, with past speakers include Sir David Attenborough, Louis Theroux, Hugh Grant and Ricky Gervais.

On top of shedding light on the major issues facing TV professionals, the festival also helps attendees build new contacts through a series of networking features. These benefit everyone from seasoned pros looking for distributors, broadcasters and producers, to young professionals after their first big break.

Format: Virtual event
Attendance: 2,900 registrations
Industry: Television

At a glance

Engaged attendees through a customised app and website with **50+ sessions**

Pivoted from a **physical** to a **digital** event within **6 weeks**

Offered **face-to-face** networking opportunities through a suite of digital tools

88% of sessions sponsored
20% more than previous year

increase of **56%** in overall attendees

Requirement

In 2019, the festival collaborated with EventsCase to design a mobile app that supplemented the attendee experience. The 2020 edition was set to bring a host of new features out to the event's audience and sponsors. But when the pandemic caused a blanket ban on large-scale gatherings in the UK, the organisers had to completely reimagine their experience and format.

Launch parties and drinks receptions were placed firmly on the sidelines as the attention shifted to ways of delivering some of the festival's main features on a digital platform.

The organisers' basic requirement was for an event app and website that allowed attendees to enjoy a full programme of content on their chosen device. Building engagement is the most commonly cited challenge among virtual event organisers, so the platform needed to have some way of promoting discussion and debate, which would replicate some of the buzz that festival-goers had come to expect. Away from the agenda, the technology had to provide a channel for attendees to communicate with one another and build the contacts to justify their involvement.

Some of the more unique considerations were around the design, user experience and visibility for sponsors like YouTube and Freeview, highlighting the need for a customised, fully branded experience.

After months of research, the organisers named EventsCase as their solution of choice. Work began on the platform from mid-July, leaving just over a month before the official start date of August 24, 2020.

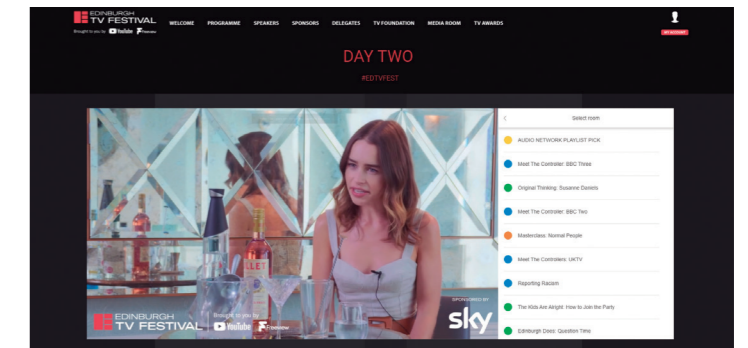
Solution

The 45th Edinburgh TV Festival marked the first time attendees could not sample the action from a physical venue. Despite this, over 2,900 attendees registered for a pass – slightly above the expected level of attendance, which signalled the need for top-level opinion regarding the industry's response to COVID-19. EventsCase repaid their faith with an online platform that checked every requirement to deliver the same benefits around learning, inspiration and connectivity.

The use of a carefully considered design and bespoke font provided a seamless transition between the festival's regular website and its event portal. Through a link-based system, the organisers were able to load over 50 live and pre-recorded sessions onto the event programme - activated when their time arrived - complete with a title, synopsis, and any logos for sponsors that were taking part.

Vimeo was selected as the media-hosting solution, while the use of Slido - positioned tightly on the right of the viewing panel to present an all-in-one feel - helped viewers interact with sessions from speakers including Emilia Clarke, Jameela Jamil and Kay Burley via polls and Q&As. All sessions were made viewable on-demand even after the event's official close date of August 27, giving attendees complete freedom of their viewing experience.

For virtual networking, a unique 'Delegates' module presented a range of options for attendees to converse with like-minded professionals and discuss potential solutions to the issues created by



COVID-19. Users could search by name, interests and industry to find the right personnel, with options for scheduling a meeting in advance or instant communication with those who were online and available. The use of a video call function was pivotal to the networking experience, helping to break down geographical boundaries by presenting the chance of talking face-to-face.

An additional benefit came from EventsCase's built-in analytics, which compiled individual lists for the most popular sessions, speakers, sponsors and attendees, based on page views and the number of times they were favoured. These helped to identify areas of success over the 2020 event, but could be of greater value in the planning of future editions.

Results

EventsCase was honoured to play its part in a milestone year for the Edinburgh TV Festival. Both teams navigated a long list of challenges on their way to bringing the industry together at a time when they couldn't have been further apart. The story encapsulates the approach of leading event organisers in 2020, who have managed to adapt and refine their experiences with great effect.

As well as being lauded by the attendees and organisers, EventsCase has created new possibilities for the festival's return in 2021. Equipped with the knowledge and experience of running virtual events, the organisers now have the option of expanding their geographical reach, audience and influence through a hybrid format.

Delegate quotes

"It was stimulating and made me feel connected to the industry in these isolating times."

"The Festival was fascinating and fantastically produced. I felt connected even via my laptop screen."

"Even in a virtual environment, there is still a buzz"

Testimonial

"Every year in August the TV Industry gather in Edinburgh for 3 days to celebrate creativity, set the conversation for the next year, network and have fun. Recreating that energy and that buzz online was a challenge. EventsCase worked with us to create a space which felt unique - when you logged in, you were fully immersed into the Festival."

"The team were easy to work with, collaborative and worked to ensure they understood what we were aiming to achieve."

"It's been an absolute pleasure working with the team and we are excited to work with them further and see how we can utilise these new digital learnings into future events."

Mindy Juss, Digital Production & Marketing Manager