

TOP 5 WAYS

TO ENGAGE YOUR DONORS IN A VIRTUAL EVENT



Nonprofits were forced to virtually engage their supporters in both 2020 and 2021. And the need to engage donors virtually will continue.

Whether it's a live-streamed gala, a pre-recorded event, or a series of on-demand videos sent out during an email campaign, keeping donors engaged so that they tune in and donate is even more important in the virtual world. It takes creativity and dedication to connect with your donors in an online space.

GFS Events has created over **50 virtual events** and each one has looked and felt unique because we designed every event with the nonprofit and their specific donors in mind. On the next page are our top five tips for engaging your donors in a virtual event.

I. PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR CONNECTION

Your donors want to connect with others. Whether they socialize via a live Zoom call or over YouTube chat during the event, it will make all the difference in how they will feel about the event and ultimately about you and your organization.

There are numerous ways we have helped our clients connect with their donors. We have worked with platforms that allow conversations in separate **virtual “tables”** where people can go from one virtual table to another and talk to others. We have also hosted short **happy hours** where individuals and groups can join and share in a virtual toast.

Finally, we have encouraged conversation and connection via the chat feature during a live streamed event where the Emcee engaged with people using the chat box while a set group of volunteers responded to comments in the chat.



2. CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL AND ENRICHING PROGRAM

Remember that connection is more powerful than content so what you share during your event should go beyond reframing stories that donors can find on your website or social media platforms.

We recommend inviting **active participation** at your event.

For example, if you are a senior center and offer exercise classes, you could conduct an exercise or yoga class virtually so that participants can share in the experience. If you are a visual or performing arts organization, having a short performance that people can view and enjoy can bring that connection back to each donor.



3. CREATE A MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCE

With a virtual event, your eyes and ears are important but activating another sense can create a more engaging experience for your donor. Try engaging **taste and touch** which can add an additional level of fun and engagement.

Partner with a local chef, restaurant or caterer to design and deliver appetizer or dinner boxes for your attendees to enjoy while they watch your program. If attendees are all receiving a bottle of wine, then have your Emcee **raise a glass of wine** so that you can all “toast” together.

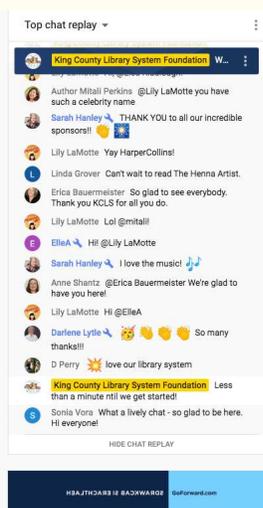
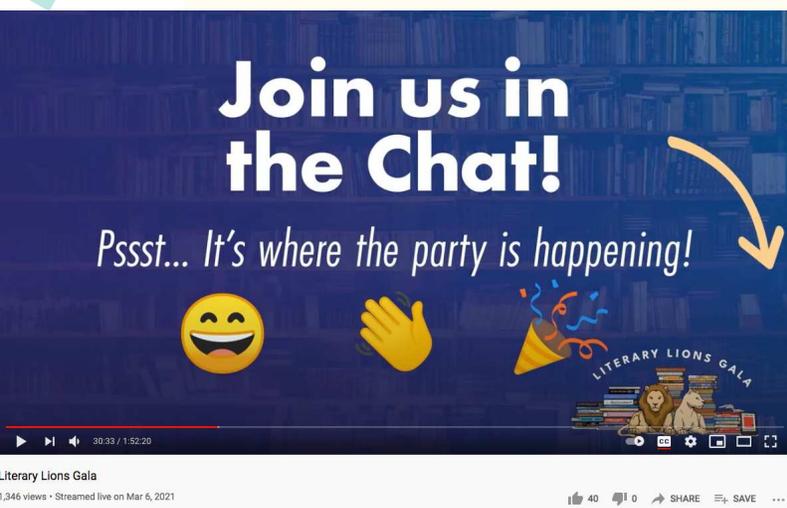
You can also **host a cooking or chef experience** where attendees receive a sample cooking or cocktail kit and create or cook the items together while watching. These examples allow your donors to feel like they are part of the experience and keep them engaged.



4. ALLOW YOUR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP YOU

Recruit volunteers, board members, and community members to help spread the word for your virtual event. Not only will this engage your volunteers, it will **increase the diversity of perspectives** in the virtual event, and ensure that supporters are strengthening their relationship with your organization and not just with one individual.

If you are providing meals or gala boxes for your event, recruit your volunteers to make deliveries. Board members make outstanding **delivery people** who can also personally thank each donor and spread goodwill and gratitude as they make deliveries. Other volunteer opportunities can include helping in the virtual event itself as a “chat cheerleader.” A **chat cheerleader** encourages and shares gratitude in the chat box during a virtual event. This increases donor engagement as volunteers who know your donors are thanking them and providing additional support outside of you and your staff.



5. SEND A RECORDING AND FOLLOW UP

Remember that no matter how engaging you are in a virtual world, **distractions are unavoidable** for your attendees. After all, people are working remotely, many with their kids around, pets to take care of, and the list goes on. Life happens and people can and may be distracted during your event.

That is the beauty of a virtual event. You can **record it and replay it** even after it is over. Make sure to offer the content from your virtual event after it takes place. Remind your event participants about the need at hand.

Follow up helps solidify the success of your virtual event. Many of our virtual events receive up to 20% of their donations post-event, this is a very different approach from the in-person world. Connect post-event with your donors, volunteers and your board members to **thank them** for tuning in and to share the virtual event with those that could not “attend.”





Interested in collaborating on your next event? Let's connect!

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our awesome team

