

Episode 022: Phases Of A Summit - How To Prevent A Summit Disaster

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Dr. Mark T. Wade: Hey, summit hosts. Dr. Mark T. Wade here, founder of Virtual Summits Software and your host on the Virtual Summit Podcasts. I have somebody, I am a very excited to introduce you to today. A good friend of mine, Jaime Slutzky here on the Virtual Summit Podcast with us and she is going to be bringing some incredible insights. Jaime, first off, just thank you so much for, for taking the time out of your schedule to be here with us today.

Jaime Slutzky: Thank you for having me. Mark, this is going to be so much fun and you know that I absolutely love talking virtual summits so let's get to it.

Dr. Mark: Yes, Jaime loves summits and I love summits so we can rattle off about this for hours, but we're going to keep this concise and deep. Uh, Jaime and I were just chatting before we get into, got started here. Uh, and we got some amazing information and insight to deliver you. Jaime's got such an incredible wealth of experience in summits as a consultant for virtual summit, she has the Virtual Summit Tech website. She also operates the tech of business. So from a technical aspect of marketing aspect of promotion aspect, I mean essentially every aspect, Jaime, you got nailed down. And I know personally because I've, I've been there with you, I've watched you, I've seen you operate, you crush it for your clients. So I'm really excited to dive into your knowledge. But before we do that, why don't you just tell our audience just a little bit more about you and where they can find you.

Jaime: Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you for that glowing, you know, intro. Um, so yes, as Mark said, I am Jaime Slutzky. I am the host of the Tech of Business podcast and my business operates under that name. You could definitely find me over at virtual summit tech because I am a technology consultant. I am a virtual technology officer for your business. And my entire mission and vision for this business is to help you deliver your online promises. And in this context I'm talking about actual delivery of your summit. That's what I love to help my clients with. That's where I excel. I, I'm one of those people who can get into the nitty gritty, understand all the tech so that my clients can focus on their marketing efforts and focus on their content and the experience that their guests and that their visitors and that their summit attendees truly want for a, from that summit so that the outcome matches the expectations.

Dr. Mark: Yeah, and I want to jump in here and clarify for all those listeners. You may have stumbled across some summit consultants in the past which are more like VAs maybe that will help you kind of put some stuff together or give you some advice, you know. But Jaime, unlike that, she is actually a true expert in this niche in this industry. She also, she comes with a coding background so she actually can create a completely customizable experience. I know us over at Virtual Summits Software, she's who we recommend to our clients when they're looking for a completely customized virtual summit. She's our go to and you're going to find her on our list of recommended consultants to everything we're going to talk about in this episode, including links to Jaime to some of the, uh, her resources, her materials, how to get in touch with her if

you're looking to bring on or to work with Jaime is going to be over at our show notes at podcast.virtualsummits.com because I definitely recommend having a conversation with her.

Dr. Mark: Uh, Jaime, I think we should like, we should jump into it and I, and what I wanted start, uh, by, I want to start off by kind of painting the picture for our summit hosts that are listening here. Um, and I, and it's a little bit of a ramp but summit hosts stick with me because we're going to give you such great insight on how to overcome this, how to change this. And Jaime is gonna tell you how you can get the most successful aspect out of your summit. And so as a, as the creator and founder of Virtual Summits Software, one of the, one of the probably biggest pet peeves I have, and I'm going to paint this picture here Jaime, you're going to talk to us how we can overcome that is is people deciding kind of last minute that they want to do a summit or even if it's not last minute, they wait or they procrastinate and then kind of last minute they decide I'm going to try and rush this all together, get my summit out in a matter of weeks or maybe even just a month or whatnot.

Dr. Mark: And there ends up being all of these complications and a lot more stress that is added. Now, what I'd like you to talk about here Jaime, is like are there some phases that we can understand with summits and what should a summit host be considering time-wise and kind of what's that look like?

Jaime: That is kind of one of my big things that I like to help, um, hosts actually figure out. Uh, there are definitely phases. The phase that most people think about is the launch phase. The launch phase, and I wanted to go there first because your launch phase is actually when people are watching your summit. Prior to that is your marketing phase. That's when you're letting the public know that you've created, past tense, created this amazing product that they're going to get to see. Prior to that is your content creation phase, which hairs with your affiliate build out phase. You want to have your content that is actually being delivered on the summit as well as everything that your affiliates and your referral partners and your sponsors and everybody is going to need created in its entirety in that content phase. And prior to the content phase is the envisioning the entrepreneur phase. It's the I want to do this, what it's going to look like, how I want it to create. And so we have these phases that do not overlap. You cannot effectively work in your marketing and promotion phase if you're still creating content. You cannot effectively launch your summit if you don't have enough time invested in that marketing phase. So, and then you know, absolutely, there are always going to be new ideas. But yeah, my job as the consultant, as the implementer of the technology is to cut my clients off on the envisioning and the entrepreneur phase so that we're only dealing with execution.

Jaime: So remember, I guess that's probably the biggest thing is when you are in that content phase and you're creating and you're interviewing people and you're creating audio versions of your videos and you're creating transcripts and you're creating bonuses and you're creating your emails, we got to cut that off before you start promotion. Yes, there are always things that come up, you know, if you all of a sudden decide, I want to send an extra email out in my prelaunch phase. So this is during marketing. You will have five emails set up between the time that people, um, sign up and the actual launch

and you realize, you know what, I want to have a sixth email in there because I want to drop a sponsor link. Sure, that makes sense. But in that phase, it's not, Oh, I want to create a, a gamification campaign. I want to have people promote this product. You don't want to start that in marketing. You want to have thought that one through back in the envisioning in the big picture phase before you start creating content.

Dr. Mark: That is such a great layout of this, of the phases of a summit. I hope you guys are taking notes on that because that's a super important, to know also. So you can plan for it. So I want to go through, I want to go even deeper in this, Jaime, I want to, I want to talk about two aspects of this. Um, I'm going to want to know the timeframes on that, but before we get the timeframes, let's go into why is it a problem? Why, why is that a problem when I go, Hey, I know the summit is a week from now, but I want to change up the campaign and throw a game of occasion campaign. Like what happens?

Jaime: Uh, well, the short answer is, is that the consultants, the virtual assistants, the marketing team, you've got in place, everybody who you've got in place has a roadmap. And if all of a sudden you want to throw something new in, it throws everything else that is on deck into a little bit of chaos and a little bit of flux. It also means that you're not going to be able to give everything that is still to come, including this new idea, 100% of the effort that is required in order for it to be successful. I'd rather see a summit host said, you know what, my marketing isn't going quite as well as I was hoping it to do to decide, you know what, I'm going to relaunch the summit in three months and do it as an entire game of vacation process rather than throw that in at the last minute.

Dr. Mark: That's a, it's a such great information and I would also even reiterate and go, uh, go a little bit further than that because what ends up happening is not only are you not able, not only does it put the team into chaos, but I think although like the summit hosts may think that it's going to increase the success of the summit. What it actually does is it decreases or at least puts it in as a potential to decrease the overall success of the summit because you start opening yourself up for problems and risks and things like that. Right?

Jaime: Absolutely. I mean as soon as you add a new piece of technology, yes, I'm a technology consultant and I know this stuff back. It's in forwards, but there's, if you don't add it with enough time to test it and to, to play around with it, then you're just adding in another variable that you don't need. Running a summit is stressful. It is a high intensity activity. Most summit hosts, I know get sick at the tail end of their summit. I know for myself personally, I book a massage a week after a summit concludes because I know that there is that stress level. So why put it on yourself? Think about all of these amazing ideas at the outset. And that's something that I do with my clients is I come up with all of these different things that they may want to consider. Um, you know, whether it's, you know, gamification or affiliate contests or things like that, or simply like putting together the metrics that you want to hit. Putting that stuff together at the early, early stages makes it easier that you know that you're not going to be innovating at the last minute.

Dr. Mark: So true. And I know like Jaime, you've been doing this for a while and you've had so much success in your space that, I mean you can be a little bit critical of these summits because you've seen massive success. So, but I, I want to highlight that even when what you would consider maybe is not as successful for most other summit hosts is still usually a golden success. So I want to give that out there, give you some props on that. And let's look what are some of the timeframes. So this is important for the summit hosts. Like what timeframes should they be expecting? How far out when to switch?

Jaime: Yeah, well what I actually recommend is a 12 to 16 week run time. So 12 to 16 weeks before your launch date is when you are ought to start thinking about your summit. And then I kind of back into that. So once you pick that, then we go to, okay, how long is your summit? It's two days, it's five days, it's 10 days. Whatever your summit is, that's day zero. The launch day is day zero. So then it goes forward from there. And then your marketing phase is three weeks prior to launch date. Even if it's a soft marketing in the first week is a lot of times people ramp up their marketing efforts within the summit. You're soft, you're thinking three weeks. So now we're at nine weeks. Let's just say if we're doing a 12 week cycle, we've got nine weeks that we are focused on the envisioning the big picture stuff and the content. I would say that six weeks of that. So the next six, so the first three weeks are your big ideas and your entrepreneurial stuff and your outreach and things like that. And then you've got six weeks of content development including all of your emails, all of your videos, all of your, all of your, everything is in that is in about a six week period, which is three weeks after you started thinking about the summit and uh, and three weeks before the summit goes live so that you can focus entirely on your marketing.

Dr. Mark: Way to lay that picture out there for us. Now you all know the summit hosts out there listening, you know exactly what timeframe to be doing this. Also, I would probably say, um, the timeframe laid out is, is with a consultant or somebody like that who knows the insights, can give you guidance and help you and make sure you're staying, staying on point and in on the timeline.

Jaime: And you know, with respect to the timeline, I actually have a worksheet inside my Virtual Summit Foundation workbook, which I will definitely give you a link for and a discount code of course for anybody who is listening, I would love for you guys to pick that one up. Um, but what I have in there is if you, sometimes you say, Oh, I want to run a summit. And then you kind of say, Oh, I think you'll run this date. And it's actually a formula to help you figure out if the date that you're picking is realistic because you know that there is something called life outside of work. And some, there are some periods of time that are not great for marketing. You know, like August, August is a terrible time for marketing. So running a virtual summit the first week after labor day is not the best time because you haven't had enough time to do proper marketing.

Jaime: That's just an example. And then also, you know, thinking about major holidays are people buying at this point in time, those kinds of things. You want to factor those into the timeframe that you're putting in. That's why I say 12 to 16 weeks. Um, and it also depends on how many hours do you have to invest in each phase. If you are running a successful business that takes 30, 40, 50 hours a week, how many hours do you actually have to invest in this summit so that it has the success that you want it to?

Dr. Mark: Jaime, you're giving me so many ideas of things I want to, I want to ask you about. So, um, first off, what are, what's your favorite dates? What are your favorite periods to run summits?

Jaime: My favorite periods to run summits are from the last week of January through the second week of May. And then the last week of September through the second week of November. So they're pretty long ranges, but basically mid-May through Labor Day is out and then a week prior to Thanksgiving, approximately through January is out.

Dr. Mark: Okay, perfect. I've got those written down. So now we all know when not to be running our summits. Hopefully you guys are taking notes over here. Um, so I wanna circle back to the marketing aspects. So you gave a pretty specific timeframe on when to start the marketing. So I know some of our summit hosts are like, well why wouldn't I start marketing earlier than that? And I agree with you, I believe there's a set window that you should be marketing and probably not needed before that. But I'd love to get your advice on why you shouldn't be marketing 6, 8, 12 weeks out.

Jaime: That is such a good question. I don't think that marketing your summit that far out is beneficial because people like things online in real time. People are impatient. So what I'm not saying is hit your cold audience exactly three weeks out and just blast them. What I'm saying is introduce the summit three weeks prior. So if your marketing efforts are needing a warm audience, start warming campaigns, start other things that warm people up to who you are and what your business is all about before that, but don't mention your summit. So if you are a brand new business owner, then people need to get to know you. Or if you are doing a summit for the first time, people need to get to know you and your business so that they can feel like when they, when the summit shows up on their newsfeed, they aren't like, who is this person?

Jaime: Why are they spamming me that you want them to know who you are. But people like instant gratification when it comes to being online. Unlike live events, like when you want to go to a live event, you want to have time to plan and you want to know where you're going to eat and what you're going, you know what else you're going to do in that city. When it comes to a virtual summit, we're talking about people sitting in front of their computer consuming your content and they don't, they just need a little bit of time to move their schedule around. They don't need us quite as extensive amount of time and no babysitting.

Dr. Mark: I love that. That's so good to know, and I agree with you on that too. I actually see from the summits we run in my, in, in our own businesses, it's kinda like a hockey stick curve. The closer it gets to the summit, the higher up the conversions go. Just because people are wanting that right now. It's right there. A lot of times you know, your audience or attendees will be like, Oh, that's great. I want to watch that. And they'll go to like make a note of it but then they get interrupted by their kids or a phone call or something like that. So I love that. That's great information. Let's keep going a little bit in this more in the marketing aspect because I know this is a common question and concern for some of those. So you have the benefit and the view vantage point of running summits for other people. What are some of the things you're seeing or at least one thing you're seeing that's really working right now and what's something that's not?

Jaime: You know, it's funny cause I try and stay as far away from the marketing side of things, but what I definitely see is video ads are doing a whole lot more and again those warm audiences, retargeting campaigns. I mean you hear about it everywhere, but yeah, if someone comes to your website and they take no action, then that or the person you want to retarget because they've already heard of you. I think that that is probably one of the big things. Another thing that I have seen that works pretty well is making sure that if someone is signing up for the summit, okay, that they don't sign up on day one and don't hear from you until the day the summit goes. Live. Nurture sequences are vital. Warming people up to what to expect. The, I heard this statistic not that long ago that you will get the highest open rate on the very first email communication you ever send it to someone because they're asking for it.

Jaime: They have entered their email into a form field and they are asking for something. Don't let that email go to waste. Don't just say, Hey, you're in period, end of sentence. And then ghost them until you're ready to promote the summit or send them the summit information. Use that email to invite them to your community, to reply back with what they're most interested in. And when you get that response back saying what they're most excited about forward that onto your marketing department because they are 100% in the throws of, of uh, of marketing. And that may be part of what they can bring into the marketing table. Because even though I said that your content creation phase is over before marketing the marketing department and it's going to continue to test and test and test and do and innovate and move things around. So if you do have feedback from people in your audience that belongs over in the marketing people, it doesn't mean you're restructuring how the summit's being put together. It just is all about that front end.

Dr. Mark: So true. So true with that, Jaime, I want to talk expectations now because we have a lot of summit hosts that are listening in that they've heard numbers. A lot of times they can be fallacy, you know, exaggerated numbers, but they will know, they've also heard summits are dead, which I think me and you agree is completely false. So can you give them, give our summit hosts that are listening in right now? What are some examples of typical results, you know, whether it's Legion and income and what are maybe a couple of strategies they could do to go on to the higher end of that spectrum.

Jaime: You know, um, with respect to numbers, a lot of the lead gen side of it, I am not entirely familiar with because again, I don't work in that marketing side. What I do see is that, okay, when your landing page is on point and it resonates, you can get upwards of 50% opt in. Okay. Like I've seen super high opt-ins for summits. That being said, on average 25% opens on your summit emails. So if you're saying that you want to have a vanity metric, I'm just going to use a vanity metric of a hundred a thousand people signed up for your summit, then work backwards and say that conservatively, that means that you need 400,000 people to hit your site to get a 25% instead of, um, instead of a 50%. Okay. So then of that hundred thousand people who made it on your list, 25 let's say, let's go again, go conservative. Say 10,000 people consume your content and then when you sell something on your summit, we all know that it's like 2% of the people are going to buy, well 2% of 10,000 people.

Jaime: Is that a number for you? Is that what you want to see? Is that going to hit all of your other goals? Yes. No. Is it going to way exceed them? You know, let's, let's go down to someone who wants to sell 20 seats. Two a conference. Okay, 20 seats. Let's say that you get 2% conversion. How many people do you need to have see that in order to get 20 seats filled? Now I'm making myself do math and I'm just like, I have a degree in computer science and I'm like, I'm not even doing this math properly, but that from Twitter, if you want to feel 20 seats then you need to have it. I was into people actually com and consume, I think, did I do that math right? Okay. So you have to have a thousand people see your content and get exposed to that offer.

Jaime: And if we're saying that 25% of people actually open that email, then we're now at 4,000 people registered. I have 4,000 people registered, then we're looking at somewhere around 20,000 page views of your, of your summit. So it goes to that. So there's so many variables when it comes to the, to the numbers, but being as conservative as possible, knowing that what you want to sell. On the flip side, what is your goal on the outside? Like I don't care honestly and truly do not care what your summit does as long as it leads you toward the goal of why you're running your summit.

Dr. Mark: That's, and that's so point on, right? Like, and I see this as a mistake often with summit hosts is all they think about is their summit after the summit ends. They actually don't even have anything else to drive their audience to. In that case, a lot of times the audience goes cold and then it was like, what was the actual point? You should have the follow up, but these numbers you just threw out. This is so great Jaime. Now all you summit hosts listening at home right now know exactly how to calculate backwards to get the results you're looking for. And I would say even play a little bit more conservatively so that you're, that you're actually pleasantly surprised versus maybe a little bit disappointed. Well, you mentioned gamification.

Dr. Mark: I want to circle back to this. So that's like that's something I've got circled right here in my notes. Gamification. It sounds cool and I think it's extremely impactful and powerful. Can you talk about what that means and what are some ways that some hosts can do that?

Jaime: Yeah, so in a nutshell, gamification means that you provide rewards of some kind, two people for taking action. So you could do gamification that has nothing to do with affiliate marketing or getting the word out. It could just be who is the person who attended my summit took the most action inside this summit. So then it would be tracking, like I could probably track that right inside active campaign, which is the email marketing provider that I generally use for summits. I know Mark probably has a couple others that he's thinks about that are good as well, but I can track site level so I can actually see um, that you actually, that you went and saw this session and I can actually, I can actually see that. Or it could be just based on clicks. So that could be different ways of gamifying and then providing rewards for the people who are attending.

Jaime: The most common way that I see gamification used is in the promotion side of things. And we've all seen this with [inaudible], King Sumo for example, where you can go and share it on Facebook. You get one point, share it on Twitter, you get one point, follow me on Instagram, you get one point. Shared via email. This is your unique signup link for

every person who signs up with your link, you get six points, and then it gets all tallied together. And at that point, whoever comes out on top wins 30 minute consultation wins, an iPad, wins a whatever. Let me just tell you, winning an iPad or given that kind of thing away is going to ruin the potential for your gamification to be successful because you're going to have the wrong people in there. Yeah. When you tie the prizes of your game of vacation back to your business, back to your core values, right back to your sponsors. Okay. Let's say that you've got sponsors on your summit and you tie one of the prizes to something that only somebody who really would be a good person to take up that sponsor's offer or your offer.

Jaime: Then you're going to have the truest level of gamification. You're not going to have people just sharing willy nilly and at trying to win an iPad

Dr. Mark: Yeah, that's such great information that I really appreciate that. Jaime. Now I'm going to ask you a question that's probably on every single summit host mine right now is like what exactly does a summit consultant do? And like what are they going to do for me? And let's probably even more importantly clarify what are they not going to do?

Jaime: Yes, no, I really appreciate that because I will not, will not, will not do direct outreach to your potential, uh, speakers. Um, that's not my job. My job is really just help you to bounce the ideas like, so if you have a list of potential speakers, go ahead and bounce that off of me. Help me. Let me help you figure out if these people are the right people to be inviting. I want you as the summit host to do the direct outreach. There is a far more success when you actually do the outreach yourself, but once you have done the outreach, then it's time to pass that person on to your team, quote unquote, your team may be just me. It may be your VA, me, marketing team and 14 other people, but once you've got the yes, then it's time to introduce them to the people that they're going to be working with and we can set up there.

Jaime: There are times when they're going to be interviewing work and make sure that we get the high res image of this person. We can do all of the nitty gritty. That's the role of your consultant and your team. Your role is the face of this summit. It is the openness and it's creating the culture. So when it comes to hiring a consultant, know that your best money that you spend on the consultant is on them supporting you, making you look as good as possible. If you hire someone off of whatever site you hire them off of and they say, yeah, I'm going to create all of your copy and I am going to do all of your outreach. They're not going to be having your face, your vision and your brand at the forefront because they don't know that. The only person who knows that is you and if you have an operating officer or other people within the, within your business, you guys are the ones who need to be doing that side of things and bringing on your consultants to support you because our expertise, my expertise is getting your summit vision onto the screen and into people's inboxes and so that they can consume your content and buy whatever you have next.

Dr. Mark: Yeah, and I agree and I even want to go even a step further with this because what I personally believe and as do I believe most of us in, is you get what you pay for. So if somebody say, Oh yeah, for \$500 I'll do everything for you, most likely will one, it's probably going to be a disaster. But even if they did provide you, like what they said

they'd provide you is probably all templated like exact copy of the last summit they just did, which is not going to resonate to your, to your specific audience. So it's definitely better to get like completely customized something that's direct, you know, that can be crafted around your image, your brand, your thoughts, your vision. Like you were just saying Jaime. So I really, I really appreciate that and that's important for our audience, our summit hosts to know, like if you're thinking about going with a consultant, which I highly recommend, especially if you've never done a summit before, like get, you need insight, you need somebody kind of helping you to guide you.

Dr. Mark: But understand there are things that they're going to do and there's things they're not going to do. And I always recommend Jaime, that they have that conversation up front before anything signed. I think that's exactly what you recommend as well.

Jaime: Yes. For sure.

Dr. Mark: So as we wrap this episode up, which I feel like I could just, we could keep chatting like forever. I really don't want it to end, but I do. I want to respect your time. One of the, one of the last few questions is like, what's a tool that you just couldn't do your summit without? What's something you just love other than ActiveCampaign, which we've talked about. Like what's another tool you love?

Jaime: That is such a funny question because I build all of my summits on WordPress, um, because it is so flexible. I can use certain plugins to do certain things. Um, I actually use a page builder even though, you know, pure total developers are like, no, we have to build everything from scratch. Now I use a page builder because there's so much replication. There's so much replication. Every page needs to look the same. Using a page builder, that's probably my, what my, my secret sauce is. Um, I personally use BeaverBuilder. That is the one that I like to use and I use an add on in there, um, to just augment how it works. But definitely I, that's where I'm finding that that's really a requirement. I've had people come to me asking if I can use a different system and at this point I want to truly provide my clients exactly what they need. And in order to do that, I don't want there to be constraints against that with the systems that we choose. So that's why I use WordPress.

Dr. Mark: Absolutely. And we'll put links to all of these tools and resources that Jaime's been talking about, including her foundation workbook in the show notes over at podcast.virtualsummits.com. Jaime, this has been such an amazing episode. I thank you so much for taking the time out of your schedule. You know, I always love chatting with you, especially tech and business summit. Um, as we wrap this up, did you have any kind of final piece of advice that you'd like to share with our, our audience?

Jaime: Well, yes, absolutely. If you're thinking about doing a summit brainstorm, just let your brain go to town. Just write down a whole bunch of things that you're thinking about for this summit and just get it on paper because you cannot start a major project like a summit without having something concrete to start from.

Dr. Mark: Such great insight. Thank you. From the virtual summit tech, the tech of business, the tech queen herself. Jaime Slutzky, thank you so much for, for being on our episode today.

Jaime: Thank you, Mark for having me.

Dr. Mark: All right, summit hosts. Thank you for listening and we'll see you on the next episode.

Dr. Mark: Now, I want to end this episode by saying to all the summit hosts listening right now, I believe in you and you can do this. Summits are by far one of the most powerful ways to quickly grow your list, launch your platform, make more money, and most importantly make an impact in the world. Even if you're just getting started. So don't get caught up in analysis paralysis because the world needs to hear your message, and there are people who are waiting for you to help them just get started because imperfect action is always better than no action. Thank you and see you on the next episode.