Episode 120: How A Live Streaming Summit Created a one of a kind experience.
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Speaker: Raymond Sidney-Smith

Dr. Mark T. Wade: Hey, summit hosts Dr. Mark T. Wade here, founder of Virtual Summits Software and your host on the Virtual Summit Podcast and we are in for a treat. Today's episode is going to be legendary. I mean we, I'm like so excited to dive into some of this information that we're going to be talking about. We're going to be, we're going to be sorting through a summit that is probably, I'm going to go ahead and say it, one of the probably most revolutionary kinds of summits that has been run and we are lucky to have legendary Raymond Sidney-Smith with us here today. Raymond, how are you doing?

Raymond Sidney-Smith: I'm doing really well. Thanks for having me, Mark.

Dr. Mark: Absolutely. I am so excited to go through the Productivity Summit because it was hosted in a way, in a variety of ways with a ton of intention, a ton of thoughtfulness, and obviously a lot of productivity posted into it. And we're going to have some fun sorting through this. So pull out your pen, pull out your paper, get ready to take notes because this is going to be a doozy. All right, Raymond, before we jump into all the specifics in the little delicious summit gems we're going to be getting into, I would love for you to just take a moment and let our summit hosts note just a little bit more about yourself.

Raymond: Sure. So I am your perennial productivity geek. I have been and enjoyed, uh, productivity materials since I took a psychology course in college. I've been reading productivity books and, uh, predominantly self-help, uh, you know, for the better part of 25, maybe 30 years. And I realized in that psychology class that there was this whole other class of material that was connected to, um, maybe a little bit more science and a little less, uh, let's say woo woo, things. And so, um, I, I became this, um, uh, really, um, ardent, uh, advocate of, uh, connecting productivity to science. And so time, team, energy, you know, task project, you name the types of management that fall underneath performance management for individuals and, and, and teams. And I got really excited about it and I've been in interested in involved in that ever since. And so I've launched a couple of podcasts and I've written on this on the subject and yeah, so, so that's, that's really my background. It was really just being in the productivity space and having made contact with many productivity experts over the years, productivity experts, as well as professional organizers. And so after about 20 years of thinking about it, I thought, well, why not do something that brings those people that I know and trust together, uh, to educate my audience and potentially an audience outside of my own.

Dr. Mark: I love it. Lot of a lot of experience, a lot of wisdom there. And we've taken that wisdom and experience and you've applied it to a virtual summit, which was an incredible feat. I've actually heard quite a bit about this summit from a variety of people that participated in it. So I'm really excited to start going through it now. What I'd like you to start with where I'm at is how, like why did you decide to run a summit? Like how did that even come up? Like what was going on? Take us back to the moment of why and kind of how that came into conception.

1

Raymond: Sure. I originally archetyped the summit as a live event where I would bring everybody together and I actually had a friend of mine who's a project manager sit down with me and map out this event and we realized the budget would have cost us somewhere in the 2 million to $3 million mark. It would have cost us quite a bit of money and as some historical context. When I, when I did this, the idea was that it would be a onetime event that it would be something that brought together the community so that they would be able to meet hands with each other. They would network as, as colleagues and help galvanize a community that is not necessarily always interacting with one another. They kind of work in a silo. If you're a productivity expert in one particular methodology, if you teach one particular community, say if you are teaching, uh, teachers about productivity or if you are teaching in business or if you're a professional organizer and you're helping organize homes and offices, you don't really interact that often.

Raymond: I wanted to bring them all together. And after I looked at the budget, you know, the eye bulge happened and uh, and I thought, I'm not, I'm willing to pay for an amount that was not it. So then we looked at sponsors and all kinds of other things and it just wasn't the right time for me, wasn't right the right way. And lo and behold, um, that was five years ago, more than more than five years ago, six years ago now. And then about two years ago, I realized that technology was finally coming into its own and I was waiting to see which technologies would come about. And, uh, by day I teach technology to small businesses, uh, through the small business development center programs and, uh, which is a part of the SBA. And, uh, and so since I have a lot of experience in technology, I was just really interested to see which technologies work and make it happen. And then, you know, roughly about a year ago, I saw all the technology coming into place and I thought, okay, I know the technology can do this. Let's do this as a live remote conference and that's where the idea came from, which was to do a live event that was a fully like going to a real in person event. How do we take all those pieces and put them into a digital virtual space where both speakers and conferees participants got the experience coming to a live conference.

Dr. Mark: I love this and I, and I feel honestly like this is even more relevant now and probably moving forward, uh, to evolve and continually make the connection aspect even more. We talk like we talk a lot on this podcast and other forms about engagement and in getting how to engage with the audience. I love how, like one of your top priorities or thoughts with this was you were taking in mind the speakers to how do we help the speakers engage? So what, what was like maybe the thing, like what, what did you have in your mind when you're like, I'm going to create this live event and I want it to mimic a live event. It's going to be virtual, but what were you hoping, for example, that the speakers and or the attendees were actually going to get out of it?

Raymond: Sure. I wanted speakers to get leads. I wanted them to be able to meet hands with people who would hire them. Uh, again, you know, as I, as I maybe said or didn't say, so far as I don't have a vested economic interest in this space. I have a, I have a vested personal interest in this space. And so my goal was to be able to help these people who I think are brilliant in their worlds. And I wanted to be able to put them in front of people who could be able to potentially hire them, grow their audience so that they could have a greater marketing, uh, footprint and, uh, and to showcase their work. And so that was for the speakers. I also wanted them to work with one another. I think it's really

important for them to collaborate. And, um, I'm really proud and honored that many of them have actually connected and interviewed each other on, on their own podcasts.

Raymond: They've started collaborative work. Uh, you know, and so that's the kind of thing where I can say, now you know, so-and-so, and so and so have been on the summit together. I've known you both for years, but now I have a reason to connect you. And you know what? If you guys want to go work with one another, this is the opportunity. This is the chance where I know that you're really techie and I know that you're really principled in the science space. Let's connect those two pieces and go do something brilliant. Go do something really awesome for your audience, and that's, that was the hope is that they would be able to, to really, uh, work with one another, generate leads, grow their platform, and ultimately get something good out of it. Um, the other side was a little bit of kind of kind of professional development in the sense that many of these speakers have not spoken in front of an audience before or they needed to up their skills.

Raymond: And so I needed to, uh, let them, uh, you know, develop in that sense. And so I as a, so again, like I said, I do, I do a lot of workshops, seminars and trainings. And so my job as a professional presenter, uh, gives me, uh, an insight into how to get and convey information to people. And so I thought, well, I could just do some quick coaching sessions with some of these folks to get them up and running. You know, I can run through their presentations with them and that will help level them up in that way as well. So this is a little bit of professional development and again, I, I've known many of the speakers on the summit for so many years that I, I knew them and wanted to help them in that way.

Dr. Mark: And that, I mean that is just incredible there. And, but you'll also, with the live aspect, or at least the aspect that we're going to be talking about here shortly, we're allowing them an actual opportunity to, like you were saying shake hands. It wasn't just like a, here, let me put you in touch with this person via email. So now before we get into that route there and we start breaking that down, I'd like now like you decided to run this summit, you're going to do it. Technology's coming. You've got this vision in your mind. Like what, how did you get started? Like did you take it all on by yourself? Did you start getting help? Like how, like how did you get this thing going? This is a big idea, a big vision.

Raymond: Yeah, sure. So my general MO is control freakism, which is to take all control and do it all myself. And I knew that this was as a big enough project that I couldn't do that, that I really needed help from others. And so I solicited a team of productivity coaches and consultants that I had known in the space and professional organizers, uh, and technologists and I asked them to join and I was very lucky in the sense that every person I asked to be a part of the core team to really help make it happen, jumped on board. The predominant amount of work did fall to myself. Um, you know, that's just the reality of it. As a, as a host, uh, you should recognize that the buck stops at you, your, your faces on everything as being the front person to it.

Raymond: But, uh, I, I couldn't have done it without, uh, really the, the, the main folks who really helped me. And, um, I had kind of a second in command. Augusto Pinaud who's a productivity coach. And Augusto really helped make sure that I could execute a lot of

the things that I couldn't do without a second set of hands. And, uh, and so the way in which designed it all was to have a, you know, a master project management board, which we use Trello for. And I could talk about that if you'd like, but the point was, was that it allowed all of the, uh, all of the, um, speaker ah, uh, managers, people, the people who were managing the speakers to be able to see where we were in the state of moving, moving forward, progress in certain things.

Raymond: And, uh, and so I had to kind of classes of, of roles, kind of those who are on the implementation side, uh, which was basically myself and Augusto. And then on the, on the days of, um, all of the speakers were actually put in touch with session leaders. And so those session leaders were the people who are managing the technology on behalf of the seminar presenters. So if you go to a live conference, you will frequently have a session leader. They'll come in and introduce the speaker, handle Q and A for them, that kind of thing. Well, same thing applied in the live remote conference space for productivity summit. They were the ones who set up the uh, the Zoom rooms as a Zoom webinar space environment for them to be able to come into, they handle technology issues snafoos and they were the ones who introduced and then ultimately led the Q and A for the speakers.

Raymond: Uh, we, we took a unique approach to the Q and A as well, which was to disconnect the speakers from the audience just a little bit so that the session leader was the one in control of the Q and A and it was just one appropriate for a number of our speakers because again, they, uh, I got a sense from a lot of the speakers. They were nervous about speaking to a large live audience. You know, if you, if you have 200 to a thousand people in a room, um, it's the first time you've, you've probably spoken to an audience of that size. And it was just a little bit unnerving for some of them. So to have a distance between them where the session leader was conveying the questions, uh, was, was kind of the easiest mode for us. And so that was really, um, that was really how we, how we did it. We, I , I chose to how there was ultimately seven of us and I, I was, I was really lucky. I mean, I, I can't, I can't really say it much more than that, but I, I asked those people and they all stepped up to the plate in, uh, in ways that I, I really am so appreciative of, cause we did hit a couple of, uh, of difficulties in the live event and everybody really shined in their abilities.

Dr. Mark: Well, and I'm, I'm excited to dive into some of those hiccups here in just a second. Um, first like kind of a follow up question to this, when you did set up, like when you asked this team to come on board and you split it into implementation and kind of session leaders, were there any other kind of responsibilities that you had in there? And if so, can you kind of like say like, here's the different responsibilities I had and I had different people doing it just so we can understand the complexity that was going on with the people that you had come on board and help.

Raymond: Sure. So the session leaders whole responsibility was to just show up on the days of uh, and uh, and, and, and perform. So, so I can set that aside for a moment on the implementation side, uh, myself and, Augusto, our roles really covered all the other hats and we had enough lead time to do everything that we had planned for the first time out. And so, uh, we gave ourselves, um, at that point we had I think four or five months and I had mapped out all of the tasks that needed to be accomplished. So I just reversed

4

the plan, you know, calendar to everything, right? So if I, if I knew that the summit was going to happen on October 4th and 5th, uh, I wanted to make sure that everything needs to be done backwards in, uh, in time to be able to make ourselves get to that point, including all the marketing and advertising and so on and so forth.

Raymond: The, the, the goal for us was to outline our various responsibilities between us. And so Augusto ended up taking on all of the roles of being, uh, the speaker liaison. And so he interacted with all the speakers once again, since I knew almost everyone, I was the one who made the first email out to them and said, Hey, are you interested in doing this thing? I know it's a little unique. You're going to have to show up live, perform live and Q and A live. And uh, this is what I'm, what I'm thinking about. I created a template email and tailored it to each presenter. I think that's really important when you are inviting speakers is that they don't feel like they are a number. And so I really tried to make sure that all of my emails were, were tailored in that way. I also, uh, let them know that they would only be receiving three emails from me once they became a speaker.

Raymond: And I, again, this is just a productivity thing, but it's the fact that you don't want to get countless emails about things going along the way. And of the 49 speakers, I think one, uh, gave the constructive criticism that the, that there was not enough communication. Uh, but all of my emails, not, it wasn't that there wasn't enough communication was that the emails were long, they were dense. But I felt as though however you structure it, letting people know upfront what they should expect. If it's four emails, five emails, 10 emails, let them know upfront this is how many emails you're going to get them on the course on the way to the summit so that they're prepared. One to know to receive it, uh, and, and to look out for just in case it ends up in spam and that kind of thing.

Raymond: Cause some, some of our speakers, the email address, you know, emails when email messages went into spam and that kind of thing. And that ended up causing some hiccups. Uh, we've cleared it up but I mean, cause we followed up by phone and that kind of thing. But, uh, anyway, so the, the goal for us was to, uh, as speaker liaison, it's getting head shots and bios and all kinds of other things. And once we get to the things I'll do better next time. I'll tell you both the problems we experienced with that. But the, uh, on my side it was really making sure we had the infrastructure of the website and all of the payment functionality and registration functionality and all of those things really worked out as well as the technology infrastructure for the day of the summit. And I was working with a number of different platforms to connect those pieces together. And so I spent most of my time really on the timeline making sure that those pieces could be put together and ultimately choosing whether or not to have features of a live conference in the live remote conference because I could or couldn't connect those pieces together. And then writing all the content, uh, placing all the content, ultimately setting up once the bios and the head shots were sent to us, then I needed to, uh, you know, you have the graphic design done and getting all the pieces together in the summit space. So

Raymond: I think in the future I will definitely do a better job of, of highlighting different roles for different things. I just didn't do that this time out cause I was planning to do everything. And I think in the future I will certainly parse those out a little bit better. Yeah. Because I think that ultimately you're just have a better engine. I think that we did a really great

job of getting to game day without a hiccup. But I, I think that if we had parsed apart the roles a little bit better, we would've had a little bit smoother of a ride getting, getting there. Uh, you know, I, I think that I, I think I was the weakest link because I was always the one on task to do X or Y to get something moving forward and I think that that could be done better in the future.

Dr. Mark: Excellent. Yeah. Well we're going to get into the how to do things differently here shortly. What I'd like to do now is to dive into like take us into that first session or, or in the first day and walk us through what that looked like. You, you have this live stream and you've got multiple viewers, you got session leaders, you got speakers. Kind of walk us through that process and the different technologies you use to make all of this happen kind of live as far as how you hosted the speakers and, and the, the, and who you had where and what was going on. Like the lettuce. Walk us through those details so we can see that in action.

Raymond: Sure. I'll, I'll start with the infrastructure. The infrastructure ended up being fairly unique. I run a small community, a digital community called Personal Productivity Club and it sits on a platform called Mighty Networks. And I had spoken to the CEO, uh, Gina Bianchini about the idea of hosting a summit within the platform. She loved the idea. And so I touched base with her team and started to figure out how we can make all the pieces fit in there. One of the missing elements within the platform is live streaming. It doesn't have a live streaming component yet. And so think of Mighty Networks as kind of Facebook in a box. You can just, you know, launch a mighty network and you have a Facebook like entity, uh, but a little bit more modern, uh, not as feature dense so you don't get overwhelmed with being able to like send money to your friend kind of nonsense.

Raymond: Uh, and so I really like Mighty Networks. I love its feel, uh, the iPad, the iOS and Android apps are very competent. The iPad OS app needs some work, but they'll get there. And so, but what the functions it had for the summit was that it allowed you to be able to create a profile where you can put a photo, you could put a little bit of information about yourself, you could private message with one another, you could have an all member chat where everybody could, could chat separately. And in my case, instead of having it as a, as an event in the system I created as its own, uh, in Mighty Networks, you have something called groups. I created a group, we call them channels inside of my particular Mighty Network. And so, uh, we had a channel which was the productivity summit channel.

Raymond: So everyone who joined the summit basically joined the channel and it was a private secret channel inside of the network. So nobody in the, in the current channel would be, you know, overwhelmed or deluged with thousands of messages. And then inside of that space you can create pages. And so each of the pages actually, uh, re represented a track. So we had four tracks over the two days and so 45 live presentations and ultimately four or five other, uh, uh, prerecorded sessions, uh, that were presentations that were just kind of extras. You know, they were things that speakers were like, you know what, I'm doing this presentation, but this is overflow. So here it goes to presentation to add into the bonus track. And so the, the goal was to be able to, um, have everything really live inside that space. The only point that we couldn't have in

6

there was that what we really wanted to do, what I've really, really loved to do was to be able to embed YouTube live directly into each page, inside of each track.

Raymond: Uh, so think of the track is just really a webpage. And going down the line, you'd have each of the speakers in each of the uh, uh, in each track with their time, right? So 9:00 AM this speaker, 10:00 AM this speaker and so and so forth. And you'd see the embedded piece. What I really wanted was people to be able to chat live with this, with the presentation right above it, just like you would on YouTube. Now you can do that on WordPress, which is how we ran our website. But we couldn't do it in Mighty Networks, Mighty Networks just disallows the ability for us to embed that YouTube live comment function. So we had to instead have people click on a link and get popped out to YouTube in to do that. Now the good part about that was that it ultimately allowed us to be able to have everybody who attended the conference only have two different tabs.

Raymond: The personal productivity club productivity summit space and YouTube. So they only ever needed to toggle between the two. So best of a bad scenario, uh, not being able to embed it directly inside the platform. And, uh, and, and it worked out just fine. I think everybody, um, w was fine with it anyway. So that was how we did it. Now on the back end, uh, because what I wanted to be able to do was to have people pull up presentations and uh, come into an environment where they didn't have to worry about logins and usernames and whatever. All of the speakers were just given a Zoom webinar link. And so session leaders ran from Zoom webinar and we actually streamed it to YouTube live. So every session had a YouTube live event. It turns out that YouTube live for those who don't know, can have as many YouTube live streams set up as they as they want.

Raymond: So in one account, one YouTube account, I was able to create all of the events. So all 45 events were set up in YouTube live. Uh, so we had four concurrent at any given time, right up to four concurrent at any given time. And we were able to then have all of the session leaders added as YouTube channel managers so that they would be able to manage any one of the sessions at any given time. Um, I created a master document that had all the Zoom links, all of the YouTube links, all the YouTube, a live stream management dashboard links. And so the session leaders were basically empowered with all the information we had for Zoom webinar accounts. Uh, so each track represented a different webinar. And, uh, so a session leader had to log into the appropriate account, which would then give them the right webinar that helped also control someone not accidentally jumping into the wrong room.

Raymond: Right. Cause that's a log in and log out of the account in order to do so. And so, uh, people show up for the summit now and they, uh, in essence would come to the tracks. They would review which sessions they wanted to, uh, you know, attend live. Uh, and then they would in essence click on the link. There were session placards for every link. They'd be taken over to YouTube live. And then they would be, they would see a placard, which was the same placard that was in the, the, the community event, uh, the, the conference event page. So it gave them a little visual cue that they were in the right place and, uh, and then they could chat with each other. They could, they could totally, you know, engage with each other that way. And, uh, to start off the summit, I decided to do kind of a plenary opening remarks.

Raymond: So I just introduced everybody to the summit and walk them through the platform, let people know how to use the system and that kind of thing. And, uh, and then I let everybody to the first sessions, uh, people would then jump back into the, uh, productivity summit platform into the, into the summit platform. Uh, they would, uh, you know, click on, like I said, click on one of the tracks to see what they wanted to watch. They'd click on that and then they would, uh, go in and see it. And so the session leader would kick off the session. Uh, this also provided a redundancy and recording because we had Zoom webinar recording a clean internal recording without any of the comments. Uh, we didn't want anybody's names or that kind of thing for privacy purposes pushed into the system. Uh, so, so they were separated in that sense.

Raymond: And then the, uh, YouTube live was also DVRing the recordings. So that was, uh, doing that. And then we had in essence, two different ones. Ultimately we wanted to use the Zoom recording cause that would've been the cleanest in the high definition version of it. But we had a circumstance where someone didn't record quite well and we use the YouTube live one, thankfully, to be able to give us a clean recording. And it was fine. The video in YouTube superimposes you know, the Zoom logo and some other nonsense, but who cares about that? We got the, we got the, the, the crux of it. Actually, I hosted a, a panel discussion. So we had, uh, uh, let's say three main events during the summit over the course of the two days we had, uh, in essence two keynotes, which I didn't really plan, but I ended up giving a keynote.

Raymond: And then we had, uh, Demir Bentley who gave us a wonderful keynote on Saturday. So the October 5th, um, but on October 4th, I hosted a panel discussion called the future of tech of productivity technology. And I brought in the, uh, the chief product officer of Evernote, uh, the CEOs of multiple different, uh, productivity technologies, Nozbe, Fancy Hands, which is a virtual assistant service and you're just like a bunch of, of folks that I had known in the industry who would really give us that future site of where productivity technology is going. And the recording I thought I was doing in Zoom webinar was supposed to be the six up. Cause I had five panelists and myself, excuse me. And, and so I'm looking in Zoom and I see six up, I get to the recording and it actually did speaker view. So it was toggling back and forth between each individual image.

Raymond: YouTube on the other hand, put the six up. So we ultimately use the, the YouTube version because it was the better version. So, uh, and I also, thankfully in Zoom webinar you can automatically record the audio tracks and just as like a pro tip for anybody, for those of us who are runners or we have commutes and we want to be able to uh, purchase, uh, uh, a summit license to listen to them on the go. The audio tracks are really, really helpful and we got a lot of people who requested that before the summit happened that it was just an easy add on. So one of the things that when people purchase a summit access pass, now they get the videos and they get the audio tracks so they could just toss it onto their phone and listen on the go.

Dr. Mark: Wow. There's a lot of moving pieces there and I agree. Like the, the audio downloads is an amazing way to add even more value to like the all access pass. So you have a lot of moving pieces here. You've got the, uh, the session leader that's there kind of getting

the speaker ready, bringing them on, having it and then it's going the session leaders also doing the Q and. A. So talk us through one mishap that happened during this.

Raymond: Oh, sure. Uh, so I, I can, I'm going to give you two really, really brief ones. One is we started off and none of the session leaders, so I had walked all the session leaders through how the technology would happen cause they, you know, it was like a 21 point checklist of how to start a start the session. It was a lot of technology that had to go into place. And so it was probably for some of them first time connecting Zoom webinar to YouTube live, all of those kinds of things. And it was all set up but there was still some, some things you needed to know like which buttons to press first, where to go, that kind of thing. And you had to help the speaker with some technology. And so, uh, our first sessions were a little bit of a nightmare because a while I set it up so that I wouldn't be leading any sessions.

Raymond: I would be leading as few sessions as possible, but the ones that I was going to be presenting or, or leading myself, I wanted to keep myself capable of handling email traffic. We got, you know, just tons and tons of email. So I wanted to stay in the background. Well that first four, right? Cause I ended up opening remarks and that first four, it was like meltdown city. You know, there was this like, you know, people didn't know how to do X and Y and, and that kinda thing. And um, and so another little pro tip, we created a Telegram, uh, uh, group and uh, which is a chat application, a chat software, uh, that, that is really flexible. It's open source, it's free. And so all of the session leaders and all of the speakers were in their own separate ones. So I was able to talk to all the session leaders in a heartbeat, and I was able to then message any of the speakers who were Oh, who were in the chat at that time for their sessions.

Raymond: So that helped us really communicate with folks when they couldn't connect something was going on. And uh, and so that first, that first set of sessions, it was a little, little rocky. Everybody was kind of getting their, their sea legs. And what I really, as I said at the top, I was so lucky that everybody just stayed calm. And we were like, okay, this isn't working. Let's work. Let's try this. And let's look. And lo and behold, the first sessions went through. And then by the time we got into the second set of sessions, everybody was just rocking and rolling. You know, everything just started to flow. And I feel like the first day was really, really tough. I mean, I slept well. Uh, the second day I thought it was a cakewalk. It was like everything worked so well. So just recognize that once you've done it, the each day subsequent becomes a little bit easier, uh, in a live remote environment.

Dr. Mark: Well, and so one of the biggest fears and potential, you know, points for failure of running a live summit and why it's like those who pull it off, it's such an amazing feat is a speaker no-show. Did we have any scenarios like this?

Raymond: Yeah, so that's number two. Number two is that we had confirmed with all of our speakers multiple times the time, date, location, uh, as a global summit, we had speakers who are dialing in from multiple different time zones in multiple different countries. And so we had structured the entire summit. Again, we're talking four speakers at any given time over the course of two days. And we had a full schedule from basically nine to five. So you had people dialing in from like every time zone at every

time of the day. Right. And that was just, it was very complex to get the whole schedule together.

Raymond: So, you know, we had to time people on the West coast to be a little bit later in the day. People who are in Europe to be a little bit earlier in the day so that they didn't have to do, uh, any, uh, staying up too late to be able to speak. And one of our speakers we were not hearing from then we heard from. And then all of a sudden we got to the day of and there was a no show. Uh, what I had done in preparation of Productivity Summit was to have backup speakers. I actually had five speakers prepared to PR to literally present at a moment's notice on any given day of the summit. Uh, and so the benefit to them was that I had them prerecord their sessions so that they had a presentation that, because you know, if they're not presenting live, they have a very low chance of being watched.

Raymond: And so I wanted to make sure that they got into the, the summit in every way possible. So they actually got their presentations put into the, we had a conference, what we call the virtual swag bag, but just similar to going to a real conference, there was, there was a swag bag where digital goods were being good given to the attendees. So all the participants got the virtual swag bag. It included eBooks that folks had written. It included a additional video and audio. It included worksheets and other kinds of all kinds of fun things, uh, licenses to software that people might have given away and just all those kinds of things. And so we put their presentations into the virtual swag bag so that people would be able to take those with them, dissimilar to any of the other, you know, sessions which were recorded and being sold.

Raymond: But the, the once who were stand-ins were given the additional benefit of basically being given to all of the, the, the seminar attendees, uh, so that the conference attendees so that they were able to get the additional benefit. Anyway. So, uh, the, the backup speakers were all, all given a day where they had to be prepared to present. And, and step in at any given moment. And so that happened once. I mean, I can't, I can't be more thankful that out of 49 presenters, uh, the, the, the four or five backup speakers, I guess that's 50. Um, but you know, of all of the presenters, everybody showed up on time and presented, but one right. And so Catherine Avery shout out to Catherine. She was our backup speaker. She stepped in and she presented better in her live presentation than she did in her recorded one. She just was stellar.

Raymond: I called her and I said, we, we're, we're a, we're a game time. You know, this has happened. Can you, and she literally just like stepped in and she just went live. And, uh, it took us maybe five or 10 minutes and we told the audience, Hey everybody, we got a little snafu. Uh, we've got to change a plans. If you want to go watch another presentation, feel free to go do that. Uh, but we're going to have, uh, Catherine come in and substitute. And everybody was so great about it, you know, the audience was fine and she presented and it was, it was spectacular. But there was the heart drop moment when we, we recognized, okay, this person's just not showing up. What do we do? You know, what do we do? And then we thought, you know what, just like an astronaut, you rest back on the manual. What's the operating manual say? And we had had written down exactly what to do and uh, as maybe some of you might recognize by now I'm a little bit anal retentive. So, uh, so I just had a lot of documentation that I had written for

everything that needed to happen. And so that was just one of those things like if this happens, these are the five steps, let's do it. And we, we rested back on that. And uh, we were fine. We, we literally didn't miss a single session.

Dr. Mark: That is incredible. I love that. Like the how like thoroughly you've thought that through to even have backup speakers ready to go. This is just incredible. It's one of the reasons I've been so excited to pick through the Productivity Summit. We're going to have to wrap up this episode here, but before we do, I would love for you to give us maybe one or two really quick ways or things that you would do differently on the next one that you end up running.

Raymond: Sure. So one of the big problems that attendees had was they didn't know which sessions to go to. They didn't really have a master view of all of this. Uh, something that we didn't talk about was that we actually had an exhibit hall where exhibitors were actually in their virtual booths, uh, capable of receiving participants and talking to them live. And we had giveaways based on all of that and that kind of thing. Well, one of the important things that I wanted to make sure speakers had was visibility within the summit platform and that required them to go into the track, uh, you know, pages and review the, the, we had this, the, the bio, not the bios, but the, the links to the speakers information along with descriptions of each of the sessions. So it was really important for me to make sure that all of that was there, but people still had struggled with just navigating the different pages.

Raymond: And so on the second day I actually opened up a Google sheet, which was my calendar of all of the sessions with their direct links. So, so that all of a sudden everybody just loved it because they were able to look at all the titles of the sessions and jump directly to the links in, in a future summit. I will have to figure out a better way of displaying the content while still forcing people to see what they need to see. I think what I would do is actually linked directly to the track, to the section where the descriptions are so the people could see the links to the session lead, the session speakers information as well as the speakers, a session description and so on and so forth. Cause some of them gave away offers and giveaways and that kind of thing inside of there as well.

Raymond: And I just, I think that that would be the thing that I would do better because participants really struggled with knowing where to go at times. And so I think that's one of those things that I will do better along with, as I said at the top, just identifying roles, who's doing what and it all not being me. I could have leaned on everyone else a little bit more. I was glad that I had the help. And, uh, and, and all of them have, have committed to doing it again next year or now this year. Uh, and, and that's a testament to them being, you know, upstanding awesome citizens of productivity. And, uh, but at the same time I could do better of giving them more responsibility and empowering them to do those things that I think they're very capable of doing.

Dr. Mark: Oh, man. Raymond, this has been so good. We could keep talking. We could be digging through this probably for another several hours. Um, and maybe you'll release some of those documents of all of the, you know, showing all of those checklists and things you've had. We can put those over in the show notes. I know I've had a blast hearing this and there's even so much more we could have gone through like the, your exhibit

hall that you just talked about, the digital interactive room you've had. Um, this is just an amazing event and we'll have to bring it back on after you do the second one. But before we head out here, I know everybody's going, well, Mark, I need some more productivity in my life. I want to watch the next summit and I just want to hang out with Raymond. So what's the best way for them to get in touch with you? Where are you hanging out at?

Raymond: Sure. So if you want to learn more about Productivity Summit, you can just go to productivitysummit.org and I have a website called twominuterule.com. It's, it plays on the uh, David Allen, uh, productivity methodology, getting things done, GTD. And he talks about the two minute rule. So if you just go to twominuterule.com, you can find all of the content that I produce and links to everything that I do. And so feel free to find me there. I am frequently on Twitter. That is my, that's my jam. So if you find me @rsidneysmith. And so Sidney is S I D N E Y, @rsidneysmith. And so, uh, you'll find me tweeting there all the time so feel free to follow me there and I'll be happy to respond.

Dr. Mark: Well, Raymond, thank you so much for taking this time out of your schedule to be with us, sharing us. This information has been an absolute blast.

Raymond: Thanks so much for having me, Mark.

Dr. Mark: And thank you all you summit hosts for hanging out with Raymond and I am Dr. Mark T. Wade, your host here on the Virtual Summit Podcast, and just remember your message matters. So go out and make an impact in the world. Don't forget to go check out all of these amazing gems, links to all these goodies that Raymond's given us an access to him over in the show notes at podcast.virtualsummits.com/120 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.