

Episode 159: How An In Person Event Went Virtual And Did Better Than Ever!

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Dr. Mark T. Wade: Hey there summit hosts. Dr. Mark T. Wade here, founder of Virtual Summits Software and your host on the Virtual Summit Podcast. We are in for an absolute treat today. We are fortunate to have legendary Bari and Blue with us from Sage Event Management. They are great friends of mine and they absolutely crush it at in person events. Well now because of the recent scenarios, they've had to do a different type of event and these are virtual events, live virtual events, and I wanted them to come on and share some of their knowledge and insights on what they most recently done and how they've absolutely crushed it with their most recent virtual event and they have more coming. So this isn't going to be exactly a virtual summit, but maybe it will open your mind to the types of events you can do as well as take some of this incredible gems and apply those to your virtual summit. So let's jump into it with them right now. All right, now we are so fortunate to have legendary Bari with us from Sage Events, and Bari, I know we're going to jump into some of these goodies that we just talked about, but before we do, I'd love for you to give the audience just a little bit more information about yourself.

Bari Baumgardner: Yeah. Excellent. Well first of all, thank you Mark for having me. I so appreciate it. And I am the founder of Sage Event Management. I run Sage with my husband Blue. And what's interesting about our business, we've been in this space for 16 years now, which is hard to believe. And we work with some big names that you'll probably recognize. Dean Graziosi and Tony Robbins and Jeff Walker and Lisa Sasevich and uh, Ryan Levesque, Stu McLaren, I mean, you know, et cetera. But knowledge brokers, speakers, authors, influencers are generally our market. And so for the last 16 years we've been running live events and live events generally have met in person events. And at Sage we do about 30 in person events a year. And so some of them are 500 people, some of them are 5,000 and up, some of them are domestic US, some of them are overseas and we use the same approach to all of them. But the big pivot as you can probably guess lately is taking a live event and going virtual. And so the way we've been thinking about it, Mark, is that they're all live events. It's just one is offline meeting in person and one is online, meaning virtual. But this pivot admittedly has been within the last 30 days. Prior to that, it was all in person, but within the last 30 days, massive, massive shift as I'm sure you can imagine, to taking them online, AKA virtual.

Dr. Mark: Well, and you've done a phenomenal job already. You've jumped in there and that's what we're going to be talking about is some of the amazing work that you've already crafted. Taking some of, taking that massive amount of experience in the in person event world and then crafting this kind of bridge between in-person and virtual, almost creating a whole new type of experience. So I'm really excited to dig into that and I totally feel you. I used to always call like my Facebook's as my live event and now it's like, well we have to clarify in-person, virtual and then are, is it live or recorded so.

Bari: Well, and I think you're really hitting on something huge right now as virtual as being bandied around a lot right now. And so it becomes what is a virtual event? And so in the new virtual economy, I think it's really an experience economy. So when it comes to a virtual economy, you know, one of the big questions becomes, is a virtual event of

Facebook live? Is it a podcast? Is it a teleseminar? Is it a webinar? And I think, which are really hitting on, for us, when we say virtual event, we're talking about an online event. It's a three day live event, just like we would do a live in person event. We've really haven't changed the structure and the strategy there. So compression of time and that kind of thing that we can talk about. But in general it's the same thing, but the experience is different.

Bari: And what we've kind of landed on at Sage is about 80% of the event is exactly the same. 20% is different. And I'm defining the 20% that's different as touch and tech. The tech has to be different and the touch points have to be different. 80% the same, 20% is different. And if you really focus on those little micro nuances of touch and tack, that's really where the experience gets in. And that's what defines it as not being a teleseminar, a webinar or a tele summit. Not to put those down. They're amazing. Like we all use them, we need them. But it's not the same as a three day virtual event.

Dr. Mark: Well what you've done is you've elevated or you know, you've elevated what is the norm. And honestly I have thought the virtual event world, you know, primarily virtual summits have needed to evolve for a long time. That's one of our, you know, our missions is to evolve virtual summits and you've done just that. Um, you've actually kind of create a whole new class of virtual events. And I'd love to dive into now this, this first one cause we're going to talk some about some of the specific and tech that you use and how just amazing it was. Um, let's, let's talk about this most recent event and we'll talk about the upcoming one a little bit later, but tell us what this was, how it kinda changed what it was originally and what it became and, and give us the overview of it.

Bari: Absolutely. Well, first of all, I agree with you that the, the virtual component probably needed to evolve, but also that in person events needed to evolve. You know, we've been in a fat happy economy for a while now and it allows you, I mean I think we're always doing micro innovations but allows you a certain amount of laziness right now. Not anymore. Right now you have to be fast on your feet and willing to pivot. The two most overused phrases pivot in the new normal. But that is the world we're living in right now. So this is an interesting example. The last one we did, we had two weeks to shift it from being an in person live event to being a virtual live event. Two weeks. What it would have been was an in person event for 300 people in Indianapolis. What it became was a 1200 person event virtually in our studios in Charlotte, North Carolina, which we'll show you in just a little bit, but that pivot is really fascinating, right?

Bari: Because we would have served 300 people and we always talk sales to service at Sage. How many people can we serve? And of course if you serve them well, it becomes easy to sell them. We focus on enrollment events, but sales is service. So how can we serve 300 people? Wow. What if we were to serve 1200 people and 300 people that would have been domestic US versus 1200 that were totally global. So that was an awesome expansion of a purpose driven payday, which is how we think of a live event because we got to have bigger impact and we got to make more money. And let's talk about that for just a second because this will tie into the tech and the touch based on some things we did that I'm going to share with you. Not only did we have more people register, but we had 1,023 check-in.

Bari: Literally check in. We made them register for the event pre event and we made them check in for the event just like you would for an in person event. So out of 1200 registered, 1,023 checked in. Day one, 900 people showed up, doors opening, starting on time, 900 people. Then day two we had 800 and day three we had 700 now those numbers show a decline and that's normal. Even in an in person event, like if we had a thousand person in person event, we'd see something similar. But what was amazing to us for virtual event experience is we kept the crowd, 700 of them, for three full days, and here's the really cool part. We made more, we grossed more at that virtual event than we would have at the live event. 120,000 more than we would have. So more people served, more people impacted, more money made.

Bari: And here's the really fun part. We restructured the offer to do something we've never done before. That allowed an awesome beta test of something we'd been thinking about for a while. We made them all pay in full. So by the end of the event we were at completely made whole. So 120,000 more gross paid in full by the end of the event. And the net was huge because our expenses were what lower because of virtual event costs less than an in person event. So less liability, less risk, more impact, more service and ultimately more sales. So for me, that's win, win, win. Like that's, that's the trifecta we can get.

Dr. Mark: I mean like I don't see any negative to that. So I want to circle back to a couple of things you said so we can clarify it for some of the listeners. Um, you said enrollment events, so can you clarify the difference between like what that means, the enrollment event and maybe just a normal virtual summit?

Bari: Yeah. Thank you. I mean we think of events in two ways. Engagement events or enrollment events. Engagement events are there to get content, connection and community and that's important, but they're not actually trying to sell anything. It might be a corporate event or a trade association event might be a mastermind. What we think of as a fulfillment event, something that you've sold and now you're fulfilling, group coaching program, mastermind, those are all about engagement. What we think of as an enrollment event is an event that's making a high ticket offer. Generally we are selling something and generally it's going to be a mastermind, a group coaching program, some type of coaching service or ongoing support service to help people get there further, faster. We think of it as cutting a check for speed and so Sage specializes in enrollment events, 30 events a year. All of them, with the exception of I think two or three are focused on enrollment. And so for us, we're always looking at how can we serve, how many people can we impact? That's the purpose piece. And then ultimately too, how many can we sell, how many can we enroll? And here's the key there for your audience is the enrollment is sales, but it's also service. And that we know people will use the tools and get further, faster and easier if they have accountability, community and enhanced opportunity. And that's generally what we're selling and enhanced offer or in an enrollment event.

Dr. Mark: Yeah. And I just have to give you guys a shout out over there. You Bari and Blue, who's sitting back in the back running the tech right now as we're talking.

Bari: Shout out to my husband on the tech. He's back in there.

Dr. Mark: Two of my favorite people here. I've had the pleasure of speaking at a couple of the events you've run in. It's just the in person events were phenomenal, some of the best well-run and just most fun to participate in types of events. So I was amazed to see you carry over much of that same professionalism and quality to this virtual event. So before we jump forward with that, I want to go into the check-in cause you, you mentioned the check-in and so people are going like, wait a check-in. What do you mean? What'd you, how'd you do a check-in? So walk us through that process.

Bari: Absolutely. Thank you. So that gets into basically a combination of touch and tech. So as we started over those two weeks of preparing for this event, talking about how do we really redefine a virtual event experience and online experience and have it not feel like a live stream or like a webinar or a tele summit, how could it be different? We thought, you know, if it were in person, we would allow someone to walk into our ballroom who had not registered. So why would, meaning actually come to the registration desk and gotten a badge and checked in? So let's say we have 1,200 registered pre event. We had 1,023 checked in. What we meant by check-in is we held a virtual registration and for two days we had, you know, a dashboard. They would click on the dashboard and they would essentially be taken to a Zoom room that had our team in it. And we had eight different team members and they were ready and waiting and I have to tell you, this is what defined it from the beginning.

Bari: The number of people that are like, Whoa, I was expecting a person, I'm in my pajamas, you know, or my hair's not done. They weren't expecting that and that was the goal, like this is different. We wanted them to feel different. What also was awesome about it from a touch perspective is we actually got to spend more time with each person than we would have an in person registration in person. You do focus on service, but there's a little bit of a line and a next, next, next mentality here. We actually spent time with them. We welcomed them. If a couple showed up in the room at the same time. We made a point to introduce them to each other. Where are you from? Where are you from and got that community started at the registration stage. We went through how do you mute and unmute?

Bari: How do you raise your hand? It's important to have your cameras on. The host is going to be able to see you. We went through all those details and they were like, Oh thank you. I really didn't know that I needed to do that. What was awesome about it was it gave us a sense of how many people were going to show up. It gave us a sense of engagement. How engaged were they? Why were they excited? Were they just kind of, okay, I'll check this out or were they super excited? It turned out they were super excited and it gave us the ability to get through all the tech so that when we did doors opening on day one and we literally did have a door opening, a virtual door opening at the event starts at 10:00 AM, we open doors at 9:30 and guess what?

Bari: We had half the audience. We had 500 people show up and the first five minutes of door opening. And that allowed our emcee to interact with them, to network with them, to play some games with them, to award some gifts with them, to get them to interact with each other. So by the time the host started at 10 o'clock, not only do we have an on time start with 900 people, but we had a super engaged audience who had been warmed up and now they are super ready for that host to come on. And you know, I

want to show you a quick visual cause this is an example of, Oh no, I think, Blue can you show the image? So what you're seeing hopefully is an image of a little girl and she's standing in front of a door and you'll see a door hanger that says: "Sssshhh, I'm learning in here.", in a FedEx box.

Bari: Part of the touch was every registrant got a FedEx box that had swag and part of the swag was that door hanger that said, Hey, I'm busy in here. We know that parents are homeschooling right now. We know they have kids at home and spouses at home and dogs at home and llamas at home and they're running a zoo at home. You know, like they've got a lot going on. So basically, how could we cut through the clutter and redefine this virtual event experience? Things like the door hanger, this little girl's outside her mom's like she were supposed to be quiet and you know that that box had a journal. It had a pen, it had a discount coupon with a code on it. They could use for discounts that weekend. It had, um, uh, some do not open envelopes that had our offers in them do not open until instructed. Um, it had all kinds of fun stuff and I think with more time we probably would have put even more swag in it. But again, our goal was reciprocity, warm them up, get them excited and get them to show up. So that was touch. And then the registration married with tech led to us having, I think, an extraordinarily high show up, right, because we were redefining the expectation of what they were going to experience.

Dr. Mark: Wow. Okay. So this is amazing. So just to clarify, this was sent to them that you mailed a kind of a, a swag bag if you will. That came, we've got, um, for those that are listening to this on the podcast, I'm going to put screen captures in the show notes so you can check that out. Um, that was hilarious. I love that. The little girl there. Um, okay. So now you've touched on several other points that we're going to just keep diving into. Um, just to clarify, there was an emcee on this just like there would be at a, at a real, at an in person event. Correct?

Bari: Absolutely. And I personally really recommend that we had, we didn't know higher ID J but we had one of our favorite DJ friends put together some DJ loops of some really awesome music that would get people energized. So the combination of playing the DJ loops and listen, you could have a DJ. I think we're thinking about doing that in a couple of weeks. But you know, I think the key is having some music, keep the energy up. But the emcee was my husband Blue because he really understood the tech. And this was an experiment. And this gets to the next cool piece with the emcee. I think you're seeing, hold on, I want to show like basically what you're seeing on your screen now is we had eight different screens that could allow us to show Zoom meetings. And so each of those screens you're seeing with people in them right now the host is talking to a speaker, but when Blue was the DJ or Blue was the emcee, he was actually seeing all eight screens.

Bari: Each screen was a Zoom meeting. So we could see up to 200 people, um, in a meeting we could see up to I think four to 600 at a time. So what it allowed him to do as the emcee is walk up and to the screen, which you're seeing right now. Go Jane, this is Blue saying, Jane, I love your backdrop. Let's put Jane on the big screen. Jane, where are you calling in from? So what that was the equivalent of in the touch space is if you were onstage and you said, Jane, will you come to the mic? And we wanted to try and

replicate that because once the audience saw that we could see them, they started showing up. They had screens on, they were excited, they started changing their backdrops. They start doing things to get noticed. We made them clap, we made them do high fives.

Bari: We made them do thumbs up. Like we kept them engaged constantly. We had them dancing at their desk or standing up. We gave away gifts. Here you're seeing Blue is the emcee and um, one of the team members, uh, Tana, this is one of the client team members and we had a raffle. That box you saw, the welcome had a raffle ticket glue dotted to it. So everybody had a raffle ticket. The internationals, we just took their names and put them into a, um, a bowl. But basically everyone had the opportunity. You had to be present to win if we called your number and we gave away some awesome swag and obviously we had to mail it to them, but some awesome swag. We gave away Amazon gift cards. I think we did about \$3,000 and a hundred dollar gift cards. But what was the purpose of that?

Bari: It just kept them engaged and excited and showing up and wondering what was next and we kept changing the game plan for how that would work. What I love about the studio that we've started calling Zoomzilla, um, we call it Zoomzilla because it marries together. We can do, what you're seeing right now is the control panel for Zoomzilla we have a full AV team. We have more tech and the studio than we do at a normal in person event. And that is to allow the house to have a 360 degree interactivity to really be able to see the audience, to have the audience see each other, and to have them see the host. And as a host, listen, I hope we're fairly compelling right now, but I know if I were standing up on a stage, I'd be more compelling than when I'm sitting at my desk.

Bari: And so again, if you think about virtual experience, however your audience might apply it, five people, 50 people, 500 people, 5,000 people, a mastermind to a virtual event, you have to think about how can you engage. One of the things Mark, that I thought was most important isn't just how the audience felt. It was how the host felt. Would the host feel like they were speaking to a room? Would they have the energy of speaking to a room? Most of our hosts, believe it or not, live to be on stage. They love the spotlight. And so how do you turn the spotlight on and have them really feel that? And part of the solution was tech, that tech and that touch married together.

Dr. Mark: I mean, you bring up such amazing points here and again, just for anybody on the podcast, check out the show notes over at podcast.virtualsummits.com/159. We've got images of everything, uh, very sharing with us. I've done this in the last month, right? I've had a, you know, I've done virtual summits which are typically prerecorded, but then I've done a virtual mastermind and a virtual workshop, which we're live. And if as a host it's draining because you're talking to a screen and you don't feel the energy back that you normally do when you're in a room full of people. So this I could see as an incredible way for a host to actually feel some of that energy and professionalism. I mean, that is just incredible that setup that you have there. So I can, I can imagine from a mindset standpoint for the host, it's like this isn't just a Zoom meeting or a Zoom call, like this is an actual event. And so they bring their best, which then translates over into the audience.

Bari: That included doing some fun things like I think we're going to show you, I have a reception shot, I don't know Blue, we'll have to pull that up for me, but one of the things that we were supposed to do was a reception. It was a cocktail reception, so we're like, let's not kill that. That's an awesome opportunity for networking and connection and high touch community. So said, bring your favorite cocktails, whatever your beverage of choice is. We set up a cocktail station, you can tell this is last minute because we have a solo cup, not a proper cup, but what ended up happening was the end of the day we weren't sure we had some international crowds. This is like the middle of the night, their time, but we basically poured a cocktail and we just opened it up for an ask me anything session and everyone started showing up with their favorite cocktails and they were clinking glasses and doing virtual, you know, cheers.

Bari: And we answered questions. It ended up going for like 90 minutes. We had to shut it down after 90 minutes so that we could get the host some rest. But again, I just want to stretch your thinking that registration is possible and receptions are possible and giveaways are possible and swag is possible. All of these things can be re constructed, re-imagined in a virtual environment and breakouts, networking. So this was an interesting one. Sage is a big fan at our in person events of having a crescent round because we think people can network better. So for your audience, this is a round table that is set up with all the chairs facing the stage. So we only set half the table, only the half facing the stage. So we generally have six to eight people at a table and we love it because it inspires networking and community.

Bari: We can say, all right everybody go around your table and share how you would answer this question, go around the table and share where you're from, go around the table and share what you're most excited about. So we were like, how can we create that in a virtual space? Well through the magic of Zoomzilla and weaving all of these breakout rooms together, we were able to have 90 individual breakouts at the same time. So these are meeting rooms that we've broken in randomized into breakouts. And so every time we'd have an exercise like that, we'd send them into breakout, the same size as a table six people and have them go around the virtual table and talk about what they'd learned or talk about the exercise or do a share or help each other work through a question. So that was part of how we continued to build that high touch community aspect. And we had them begging for more, like every break they got a question we sent them, you know, we had a break, you can't go in the hallway, right? How do you create a virtual hallway? We did it by sending them into breakouts with networking exercises. So the feedback that we got was they actually had more in person interaction and deeper connections through the virtual event than they ever have at a live event, which is a pretty awesome outcome.

Dr. Mark: I mean it's an incredible outcome and this is exactly the evolution of virtual events. This is, this gets me extremely excited because there was already this kind of decline of engagement, uh, show up, you know, and it was happening. Everybody was seeing it, we were seeing it and it just, we had to these virtual events. And this am in my opinion, is one of the perfect examples of how that evolution process is happening in rapid speed. Like overnight almost. So let's, I want to, I want to dig into a couple of other items that you had talked about that I think are extremely important. For example, you said show up. So you had a, many of the people showing up at the start and remaining throughout

it. Um, you touched on one or two things, but can you, what, what do you think was the primary way that you got people to show up at the start and stay throughout?

Bari: Yeah, I think one of the keys was setting the expectation beforehand, then reiterating it at registration and then with the door opening and then with the networking and then with the host interaction, the giveaways, we add a gamification too, by the way. So every time they took an action that we wanted them to take, we rewarded them with automatic points. And I think that is a key. If you're going to go the gamification route, it has to be rewarding actions that you want and it has to be automatic. Otherwise you're creating a nightmare for your team. So we gamified, if you showed up to tech check, you got a point when you finish tech check, you got points. If you showed up for door opening, you got points every session you attended, you got points and the points max set four sessions cause that's how many we had a day.

Bari: But they started, I mean literally at registration, we had not even explained gamification or the fact that we were going to have a leaderboard. We had not told them that, but they got little notations. You've checked in, congratulations, you got three points, you showed up for this, you got three points. They start going into the Facebook group and saying, you guys, you get points for doing the stuff, you got to go register, check it out. So they were recruiting each other to register and essentially the points, we didn't tell them where the points were hidden, a little bit like an Easter egg hunt. They had to figure it out and it really increased the engagement that we wanted and got them showing up. And it evolved over the course of the event. So the host could literally say, you know, guys, I'd like to give away a gift right now.

Bari: I'm gonna give away \$100 gift card. Who's number 79 on the leaderboard. 79 is Bob Tucker. Bob, you went to tumbler team, make sure we send Bob a tumbler. So those kinds of things got them engaged in getting more points. Of course, in order to get more points, you had to show up and to show up, you had to fully participate. You couldn't check out. You can kind of be on your phone. You never knew when we were going to have a networking exercise, we were going to be forced into a breakout. You never knew where we'd be giving something away. And I think those kinds of things are probably should be, you know, listen, I think these are lessons we'll take to live events, live in person events and we get back to that. But for sure in a virtual space, I think you really need to ramp up the engagement and the creativity because they need to be firing on all cylinders and you need to tell them things like turn off your notifications, turn off, you know, the TV turn, you know, close the door, be in a room where nobody else is so that you have them fully present. And then you as the host, I mean our hosts are pretty good at this. I think to survive in this space you have to, but certainly virtual event requires you to be hyper engaged with your audience.

Dr. Mark: That's so true. I want to, I want to like see the overview. If you could walk us through what was the schedule of events? Yeah. When you said it was three days, I kind of just quickly walk us through how you, how you ran that.

Bari: Yeah, it's a great question. I'm happy to share an agenda with you too, but I think an interesting one of our hallucinations was that what you might be able to do and an in person event, which is a 12 hour day and we're known for that, it's age. You start early,

you go late. We like to, we're not Tony Robbins late, we don't go until two in the morning, but, but we're generally a 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM kind of crowd, but our hallucination was 12 hours at your home office was a lot to ask and so we did compress the hours.

Bari: We ended up making it a 10 to 6x day and we chose that time because we felt like most times zones, it wasn't too early for the West coast to start at 7:00 AM it wasn't too late for our European contingent. You know, we kind of had to factor in different time zones, but we, um, settled on 10 to 6. That worked really well. It was interesting. On day two, we're supposed to end at 6 and we were ending with a Q and A session and we were featuring our coaches because we were selling coaching. And so we were featuring our coaches just like we went in person event and they were asking for more time. We ended up going 90 minutes over because they kept asking for more and we're like, let's give it to them. So that day we ended up going until 7:30 and it was an offer day just like it would be in person.

Bari: Um, and then of course we ended with the reception that we talked about. And then on day three we ended at, I think day three was 10 to 4:30. We ended a little bit earlier. But here's an interesting thing that we added to the schedule. You know, if you think about a 10 to 6 day, it's essentially four modules with a 30 minute break in the morning, 30 minute break in the afternoon and we settled on a 90 minute lunch break. The reason 90 minutes worked was 40 minutes was networking. We said grab your food and we told them in advance you're going to have an active lunch, have food ready, grab your food and we're giving you a networking exercise and we're sending you into breakout rooms. At the end of that 40 minutes, it's going to dump you back into the general session so that you can go visit our exhibitors.

Bari: On our dashboard we had an exhibit or directory, we had virtual booths and when they clicked on that directory they got points. When they clicked on an exhibitor, they got points. The exhibitors submitted multiple choice questions. When they answered them correctly, they got points. So encourage them to go to the exhibitors and we set the exhibitors up in breakout rooms and essentially traded at like an ask me anything session and I think you have to set it up properly. And by the way, this works in person too, you know you have to set your exhibitors up properly. We said this is a group of curated resources that we know, like and trust that we use in our business to build our business. You are going to need them to build a successful business. You've got legal, you've got accounting, you've got software. It was all the big heavies in this industry.

Bari: This is your opportunity to ask them anything you want, anything. And if you're not sure what to ask them, pop into a breakout room because you're going to hear the question asked you didn't even know you needed to ask. What ended up happening after the first networking session, they asked for more and after the first exhibitor networking session they asked for more. So we added some additional exhibit time, which I've never done at an in person event. And at the end of the event, day three, we were ending at 4:30 and at lunch people said we need more time with the exhibitors. So we went to the exhibitors and said, would you be willing to stay open for an extra hour? Now if you think of an in person event, I think we do a good job managing sponsorship and exhibits and creating an experience. But this I will tell you at an in person event, the exhibitors

are usually half out the door before the hours are over and the attendees have started to wander by and pretend they don't exist.

Bari: At this virtual event, an hour after the event had ended, we still had a hundred people in the exhibitor rooms talking with the exhibitors. So the feedback we got from them was this was the best exhibit experience we've ever had, not just virtually like ever, because the engagement was deeper because they were showing up and having real conversations. I think a little bit of it, even though they could see each other was it was easier to go into a breakout room and have that conversation than it is to walk into someone's booth. So I think it actually, we were, we were able to create a kind of intimacy and safety with the exhibitors that allowed them to go a little deeper. The questions inspired that, the game of vacation inspired that and they all work together to create a better experience that, I hate to admit it, a better experience than we have generally at our in person events for our sponsors and our attendees.

Bari: So you know, that's a microcosm of the schedule. But you know, I think to kind of think through how to virtualize your live event, your in person event essentially is to think through your time zones. Like who's your audience? What time zones do you need to serve? What's realistic for your crowd? And meet them where they are. I mean are, do you have an audience of moms? They have for sure have kids at home. You may have to think about that with your hours. They're going to probably have to feed the kids in addition to feeding themselves at the lunch break. So I think you do have to very much think about who your audience is, but compress the hours. Um, and know it's interesting, the 90 minute modules we didn't change. We typically do a 90 minute content session and we did that here too, but we worked hard to engage them and to offer Q and A time and then to send them into, probably did a little bit more sending them into breakouts than we normally would. And we're about to test that. Or at our event a week, we're actually going to take a different approach. If we have time, I'll tell you about it.

Dr. Mark: Well see, I like that as well because a couple of the things when you're doing breakouts virtually, you don't have to wait for everybody to stand up, walk over so you can save a little time on that. And again, it keeps them engaged in interacting. So I love this. I mean this is phenomenal information. I wanna before we, um, talk about the next event coming up, which I'm excited to hear about and can't wait to attend as well. Um, I want to circle back to the offer. So you talked about, I mean this was an amazing, um, you know, success from the financial aspect. How like what do you think the, what did you maybe do different or what do you think contributed to the success of the offer and being able to collect the cash that you did?

Bari: That's a great question. So, you know, it's interesting. This host is very, very comfortable doing webinars and he sells really well on webinars. In fact, and he would be fine with me saying this, he said it multiple times themselves. He sells better in a webinar than he does an in person event. He's one of my few hosts who actually doesn't love being on stage. He kind of does it as a means to an end and that's what made him a great experiment. The first go round cause we kind of felt like if he could do it and it worked, then anybody could do it. Cause most of our hosts do love being in that environment. But with the hallucination we had is what if people don't show up and stay the whole

time? And if your whole event is predicated on a through line in order to get to the offer and they haven't been with us, then the offer is going to fall flat.

Bari: So we took an approach that we don't normally take it in person events. I don't like offer fatigue. So I'm kind of an all roads lead to one primary offer gal. You know, we preach that all the time. One all roads lead to one offer. But here, because we weren't sure how this audience would react, we actually had four offers. One was made on day one, 297 super low ticket. One was made the morning of day two. It was actually our highest ticket offer, 3,000. One was made the afternoon of day two, 797 so fairly low ticket. And then one was made at the end, which was \$2,000 and if you add all that up, they would spend somewhere around 6,000 \$6,500 and they had a discount code that would allow them to apply the code. They could enter it in and it would take \$100 off midway through.

Bari: We're like, you know what, you can use the code twice so they could take \$200 off. And so, you know, we started to see really good responses on that first offer, that 297 we saw really good responses on 3,000 we had set goals for every offer and we exceeded all of them. And then what we started to hear is the audience is like, but we're a little like an offer fatigue. Like it feels like there's been a lot of offers. So our re-pitch, which at Sage is always the morning of day three. The re-pitch was, if it feels like we're pitching you a lot, we are. We have designed unprecedented offers that we've never done before that we'll never do again. They were each designed for where you are right now based on COVID-19. We're not expecting you to buy all of them. We assume that you won't, but we want to make sure you have the opportunity to buy the one thing you need.

Bari: And by the way, if you need all of them, it's very affordable. You could do all of it for 6,000 and the value is more like 36,000 so it expires when you leave this event, when you leave discount coupon expires and these offers expire and you'll never see them again. So there was definite scarcity and I think that led to the high returns that we had. There was transparency. We acknowledged offer fatigue, we gave them the discount coupon, which was kind of burning a hole in their pocket. That was interesting to watch. I mean in an hour after the event at close we saw people pinging our virtual help desk saying, is it too late? He's like your product claim that offer. Having said that, we did keep our audience the whole time, which is what led to that offer fatigue. And so for our next event that we're doing next week, we're doing a high ticket offer.

Bari: We haven't really changed the host offer. It's the normal high ticket. It is the only offer we're making. All roads lead to that offer and it will be made in its normal day to afternoon spot with the re-pitch the next morning. So we'll be able to see how that one performs. But you know, my, my, now that I know what I do, I would go back to recommending if you must do anything on day one, super low ticket. On day two, only make your primary offer your high ticket offer. On day three, do your re-pitch. And if you really feel compelled to, you can do a sweeper offer on day three after the re-pitch is closed, your primary offer has closed as long as it's live ticket, like 1997 or below. That's our in-person model and we'll absolutely be testing that out next week with our virtual audience.

- Dr. Mark: Well, let's, uh, let's, let's talk about this, this next event. Let's give us an overview of what it is and maybe lessons learned from this that you're implementing or are using in this the next event.
- Bari: Yeah, it's interesting. So this event would have the event next week would have been a thousand in person. It looks like it may be 3,000 virtually so massive. You know, we're seeing a three to four X increase.
- Dr. Mark: And to clarify, because a lot of our listeners are used to free events. This is not a free event.
- Bari: Yeah. So that's a great question. So the event that we did a couple of weeks ago that we've been talking about that you could only go if you were a member of their programs. So that was the, that was the foundation and it was free because of that. Each of those people had paid at least 2000 on something that year, which was what allowed them to have the ticket to the program. And it's interesting, a lot of hosts are making this decision. The last one did. And the next one is. The real live in person event was postponed to 2021 what took its place on the same date is a different event. It's a virtual in person event. And I think that's an interesting distinction. We're not trying to deliver the in person event they were promised. We're actually delivering a new event experience that's calibrated for what they're going through right now.
- Bari: So I think that's an important distinction. And then at the event that we did a couple of weeks ago, the VIP package that they paid for allowed them recording. So another interesting part about touch and tack and keeping people is you could not watch it on replay. It was not recorded and the only way to get the recording was to be a VIP. And even then you don't get it for 60 days. Now between you and I, we delivered it in two weeks, but we didn't want them to know that because we didn't want them skipping it. So that was the only way to get the recording. The event that we're about to do is actually a tiered ticket type. Everyone is paying to come and it's anywhere from a \$97 ticket to a \$997 ticket. And we're seeing those kinds of numbers. So if you're thinking people won't pay for a virtual event, again, stretch your thinking on an experience and just like you would at in-person bundling the VIP packages. Now, what are the upsells that they most want and need right now? What's a realistic price point for them to pay? And know that with VIP programs, that's your best buyers paying you to tell you, Hey, over here I'm your best buyer. I like to pay for special stuff. I like to pay for access, I like to pay for content and community. And so we love that. Uh, you know, we always say our best buyers come out of our VIP upgrade. So strongly recommend that.
- Dr. Mark: And, and so like moving into this event, what is like, what is the structure? Is it, uh, like the other one? Like tell us a little bit more about the actual event coming up.
- Bari: Yeah, it's interesting. So this event will be 11 to 6. So ours are slightly different. Um, on day one and day two are, sorry, day one and day three is 11 to 6. On day two we have a really unique opportunity. I don't think Pete would mind me sharing this. It's Pete Vargas Advance your Reach. Um, the event is called, it would have been called Reach Live. That event is postponed to next year. This is called A360. Advanced 360 Interactive. So A360i. So 360 Interactive is that studio we've been talking about. And on night two

we have something called speak off, which is going to have a huge virtual audience. We'll actually be livestreaming that and that's where 10 finalists are competing to win digital stages. And so it's a pretty awesome competition. We have over a hundred meeting planner judges, judging speakers in the industry. The things that you can win as a final lesson as a winner are pretty amazing.

Bari: And so that night we'll go a little bit later because of that speak off and all roads lead to one primary high ticket offers. So you know, the interesting thing about um, Advanced 360 Interactive is that it will have um, no exhibitors. We're not doing exhibitors there, but it'll have a coaching zone and we're actually going to have 20 coaches who are going to be doing strategy sessions. So if you were thinking, if you have seen Sage events or industry events where there's a coaching zone, which is intended for both engagement and enrollment, it's for those of you listening, it's, if you haven't seen it, it's offering a 15 minute strategy session with the coach. The way we look at it is it's every bit as much engagement as it is enrollment. Our primary job with the strategy session is engagement and problem solving. Our secondary is enrollment. If you'd like more of that, you can join us in this program. And so with the strategy sessions, 20 different coaches and individual Zoom rooms and we're running them over five days. So during the three day event and then for several days after. And again that's part of touch and tech and what's possible. We will actually have more strategy sessions than we ever would have at an in person event because we're extending the virtual component, which we're finding people are really open to.

Dr. Mark: This has just been absolutely incredible. I mean, we could talk about this for hours because we both geek out over this stuff, but we're going to have to wrap this up here. I do want to say one thing really quickly and then I would love to get your kind of final thoughts. Um, one of the things I love about what you're doing and, and I heard this from a good friend of mine, Simon Bowen who says, and I think you're, you're exhibiting this, you're living this is you're not actually pivoting, you're positioning, you've taken all the experience and knowledge and wisdom that you've had in being successful in a space and you're just essentially positioning that in this new kind of industry and able to offer this, uh, this wisdom and success. So I love it. I, I don't like to even think of it as a pivot because you're not actually changing. You're just using that information in this kind of direction. So congrats to you and Blue for everything you're doing and it's always fun and inspiring to watch, watch you guys work in the, the pictures that come out as well. So, um, Bari, I'd love for you to kind of wrap us up with any kind of final, uh, thoughts, pieces of wisdom that you'd like to share with the audience.

Bari: Yeah, thank you. Well, again, thank you for all those kudos. I so appreciate it. It's always fun spending time with you. So thank you for the opportunity and you know, I think one thing to take away from this, it kind of goes into what you just said from the positioning perspective in the pivot, is that a lot of questions we're getting right now is will this replace in person events? And I really think what we're talking about is a virtual economy is an experience economy, but events are always about experience, right? And that's why if you think about it, there are live events and it's just a matter of whether it's online or offline, virtual or in person. Ultimately what you're trying to do as a speaker, author, influencer, knowledge broker, is to connect with your community and to create

an extraordinary experience that makes them want more from you, that positions you as the authority.

Bari: Both of those sales events do that. What I see happening is we start to emerge from this. Whenever that might be is that will be an and not an or. I think you'll see more and more hosts see what the advantages are of a virtual live event and say, you know what? I love my in person live event. It serves this purpose and I love the idea of also having a virtual live event. It serves this purpose. I don't see them running parallel. I think the engagement is too hard to try and do both at the same time. Too hard for the host, too hard for the team. I mean I may be challenged on that as we do this more, but what I'm seeing right now is virtual actually requires more work, more team, more engagement to really create that experience we're talking about. But if you're able to run one in the spring and one in the fall or multiples a year, depending on your model, think of the extraordinary impact on your purpose driven payday. You have more purpose, you have more impact, you have more of a ripple effect, and you certainly have the opportunity for bigger paydays. So that's what's most exciting to me right now is I think this is a opportunity that we're kind of being forced into not to be opportunistic, but to deliver better service, which ultimately for you as the host will deliver more sales.

Dr. Mark: So true. And this is evolving and we have to evolve. This is absolutely phenomenal. I can't thank you enough, Bari and Blue over there. Love my homie Blue.

Bari: Shout out to Blue.

Dr. Mark: Um, you two are amazing. Love what you do. We're going to link to all of the resources you've stated already as well as how they can get in touch with you. Um, I'll actually, why don't we go ahead and share that with some of the best ways that they can get in touch with you. Where are you hanging out on social, et cetera. Yeah.

Bari: So I mean, you can find us on Facebook and Instagram for sure. Um, we do a podcast every Thursday. That is a free give. It's not an opt in or we don't sell anything. It's purely just sharing more strategies on what's happening with these virtual events. Um, this Thursday, I don't know, every Thursday we interview different people, so interview each other, interview different people, and then the end of May, May 29th through the 31st we're actually hosting our own virtual event on how to do virtual events. So if you're interested in that, you'll certainly be seeing more about that on our Facebook page.

Dr. Mark: Love it. Thank you so much again, Bari.

Bari: Thank you, Mark.

Dr. Mark: All right, and thank you all you summit hosts for tuning in to Bari and I. I'm Dr. Mark T. Wade, your host here on the Virtual Summit Podcast. Don't forget to check out all of the amazing goodies that Bari just shared with us over in the show notes at podcast.virtualsummits.com/159 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, 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.