

Episode 182: What to consider when adding live streaming into your summit.

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Dr. Mark T. Wade

Hey, summit hosts, Dr. Mark T. Wade here, founder of Virtual Summits Some software and your host here on the Virtual Summit Podcast. We are in for an absolute treat in this episode. Uh, we've got the incredible Stephan Dohrn with us. He is going to blow some minds today when it comes to interaction and creating safe spaces in experiences inside of your virtual summits. Now, before we jump into that, I just want to say Stephan, thank you so much for being here with us today. I'd love for you to take a quick moment and tell our summit hosts just a little bit more about yourself.

Stephan Dohrn:

Thanks Mark for having me. Great to be on the show. Um, about myself. So I'm a, I'm the cofounder of a, uh, of a small consulting training firm called Radical Inclusion. Um, we focus mainly on training around online facilitation and remote leadership. Um, so we support remote, uh, teams in, you know, in their development, especially when they're newly created or when there's trouble in them. We do a lot of online facilitation for, for larger group gathering. So I'd say, um, 40 plus participants, some, some what you would call summits as well, that are, that are bigger. And, uh, and then a lot of training for, uh, for consultants and, um, and facilitators and trainers who want to take their presence, uh, formats online.

Dr. Mark:

Well, I mean, that is a hot topic right now. I think we've got lots of people doing that. We've got lots of hosts right now that are tuning in that are probably in that very same situation, looking to move more into the virtual space, through a virtual summit of virtual events. So let's kinda dive in, let's just dive right into it. I want to talk about how do we facilitate, how do we create, well, actually let's start off with, what's one of the biggest problems you're seeing happening right now for people who are in the virtual space, who are trying to create a virtual event of some sort. What are some of the, what is one of the biggest challenges or problems you're seeing?

Stephan:

Um, when I look at the, the events I'm participating and when I hear, uh, what organizers and facilitators tell me, it's really this, the social piece. So how you create social closeness in, in the virtual space. Um, and it's something that doesn't come natural because, you know, communication just changes. It's tool-based, we don't see so much of our posture and if we pay attention, if we have video, we only always see one, one person at a time. We don't really sort of see the crowd as a, as a big, as a big group. We, we don't really know how to feel the energy of the group. So, so it just changes a lot how we interact with a group, not just in a verbal content sense, but in a, in sort of a, more of a group dynamics, how do I manage the group dynamics type of sense? And so I think that's the biggest challenge that I hear people talk about.

Dr. Mark:

Yeah, no, I've seen that, uh, quite a bit. We're seeing that actually in all kinds of spaces, I mean, everything we've, they call it ZoomZilla, right? Like we're all on Zoom now, which is great because people are open to it. They understand it, they expect it and they accept it. But now we kind of have to rise to the, to the new set of skills, to the new aspects of that. So with that means said, and that

challenge of now trying to create closeness, if you will, or the fact that there's the lack of, because we're in to this virtual only space, what are some things that you're implementing? What are some things that you're seeing work to help kind of overcome those challenges?

Stephan:

I think, well, I would, I would summarize it, I think in three, three things. So one is, you know, communication, as I've said, communication is tool based. So it's really about looking at what's what, what are the technical, the digital tools that I'm using? Um, how do I want to use them? So not just thinking about, um, then I'm going to do a presentation, then I'm going to do small groups, but really thinking through how that, how does that flow for the participants? So almost like you're doing, uh, uh, the, uh, the client journey for a, for a marketing thing, right? So then they're going to have this and then they're going to work with that. So really think it through and then think about, are my participants actually ready to do that? So we've just done a few, um, a few conferences or bigger workshops on MS Teams. And we are using a, for those, for those particular instances, we use different channels in Teams as, as spaces to do group work.

Stephan:

So you have to ask yourself, how do people get there? Do they know to click out of the, of the meeting window to get back into the team space? Does the organizer know they have to invite everybody into the team space so people can access the thing? Do they know how to start the call in a channel? How do you guide that? So all that kind of discussion I think the first thing is because if people feel lost in technology, they're not going to feel, you know, like exploring relationships with other people. They're just going to be lost. They can't concentrate on the content and they can't, they can't create social closeness. So that would be the first thing. Um, the second one I would say I would subsume in actually creating social closeness and that, and it happens for me. There's two ways. One is look at formality versus informality.

Stephan:

So what works really what's really hard is if you have very formal processes with very strict, you know, his excellency so-and-so is now speaking. And you know, the more of those sort of, um, traditional very, uh, you have the, the, the high CEO coming in and he has to have a special place, et cetera. It creates huge distance between the regular employees. They're not, they're not going to speak up in a, in a, you know, talk to a, on a, on a camera to another hundred people to ask a question. Um, if, if there's that kind of, uh, of an atmosphere that kind of, uh, distance created by, by formality. So what you want to do is you want to work with, with the, the VIP is in the meetings. So they actually relax more that they know it, you know, to really take it, take it in a, with a relaxed tone to maybe use storytelling, show that a vulnerability from themselves.

Stephan:

And the same goes for the facilitator. You know, like if you're more of a host of a dinner party than you are of a, of, of a formal meeting and for a lot of companies and public events, that's a real problem. I think it's not a big problem in the, in the, in remote work, uh, uh, crowd they're used to dealing with each other like that. But when you move into these, into these summits where you have a lot of business, people who are used to hierarchy who are used to this kind of atmosphere, it, it becomes really, really troublesome. And then the second one, uh, intimacy. So really try and do a lot through, through small interactions of small groups. Um, and small, I really mean less than 10 people, if you can.

So even 20, you know, if you have a conference of 200 people and you say, let's do 10 groups, that's 20 people in a group.

Stephan:

They're not going to be able to have an intimate conversation online. Um, they probably don't even in a presence meeting. So you, you want to find ways to reducing it really, to, to very small groups, um, and, and intersperse them between. So one of the, an example might be what we've done recently with the leadership conferences that we created, what we called a travel groups, where, um, they basically formed the, for the conference and they met to do technical check-in. So we had them go through a technical guide where they had to test all the things they would need to do in the conference, just four people together. And then we have to say, because they were already set up to meet. So we used them to have, at each day, they, they came together to do a reflection. So before we did the closing, every day, we gave them half an hour to just get together and discuss, how was my day?

Stephan:

What did I learn? What was good? What are my questions? And then we went, come, came back together as a big group and started the closing. Um, so that worked beautifully. They were even in the end, everybody was saying, I'm going to miss my travel group and stuff like that. So, uh, so that was cool. Um, and then I said three, right? So the third one has, I would call attention and energy management. So really looking at what's the pace that I'm using. Am I switching up things often enough? Um, people already in presence meeting, they tend to, they tend to, um, go away mentally when, you know, you go over a certain amount of time and it's not that interesting to them. Some people say it's 10 minutes. Some people say it's 20 minutes, but it's definitely not an hour. You know, an hour presentation is just a killer, even present in presence in online.

Stephan:

It's even worse because there's my email. And there's so many other interesting things in that, in that box that I'm looking at, that I'm just going to lose people immediately. So you really try and do, you don't have to present only 10 minutes slots, but maybe work with a partner and change things up. So, so that every 10 minutes somebody else speaks or ask your audience a question and have them respond on the chat or, you know, have them, you know, put in smileys about, you know, where's your energy at. Um, um, yeah, that would be some examples that you can, that you can just shake things up. Um, and then what I said earlier with small groups that also really helps to change the pace. Whenever you go into groups, energies just goes up because people starting to get active, right. So, so you have to play with these elements to make sure that they're, they're, they're, um, they're engaged mentally.

Stephan:

And then, uh, the other thing that we found really useful is to do enough breaks and to do breaks where you have people move. So, you know, do stretching, have them dance. If that's the, if that's something that's appropriate in your context, have them do. Um, we had a conference where a participant actually offered laughing yoga. So we did five minutes of laughing yoga. Everybody loved it. Um, uh, you can do so many things in on camera together, right. And if people feel awkward, they're just switch off the camera and, you know, do things together anyway. So, so I think those would be the three things that I would focus on technology, getting things really right so people feel comfortable with it. Social closeness in terms of, uh, informality and intimacy and then energy and attention management. So it's about pace and it's about getting people moving.

Dr. Mark:

This is, this is just great. I want to definitely dive into these a little bit deeper and just to share, like I agree with you, and we're just wrapping up our summit Summit Talks, um, which historically in the virtual summit space, you know, virtual summits are primarily prerecorded. Um, but with the evolution of what's going on in the virtual events space, virtual summits need to evolve as well. So we've been incorporating live stream components. And I just want to agree with what you're saying here, keeping it, I'm naturally just a little more goofy or my personality is to relate a little bit more versus...

Stephan:

It helped so much online.

Dr. Mark:

It does. And, and I, I want to kind of, man, there's so many of these, I want to jump into, let's start with the presentation. I agree with you, we're competing, not just with their attention span, but with the fact that they literally have everything in front of them that they would rather be doing for the most part, or at least pulled into doing, then, then, you know, listening to a presentation.

Stephan:

And now that they're at home, you also compete with their kids coming in and with the fridge. Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Dr. Mark:

I liked how you talked about the flow, um, at the very beginning of our conversation here and about taking breaks. So actually I've got a deeper question I'm going to go into, but the first question I want to ask is when it comes to breaks, I know from my own personal experience, as well as other summit hosts, one of the fear of giving breaks is that you won't get them back. So what are, what are your thoughts on how to give breaks? And maybe even overcoming that fear, if you're doing a live streaming component and actually let me set the precedence here for all of our summit hosts, listening into this. You should have live streaming components to your summit, even if it's just a live Q and A wrap up at the end of the day. So take this information that Stephan's giving us right now and apply this to your virtual summit. Even it doesn't necessarily mean you have to do a fully live stream virtual summit, although a lot of people are now considering that, but pull this knowledge that he's giving us, it's how you can incorporate into your summit. So Stephan, let's start with breaks, give us a more, under a better understanding of that. What is okay, what's too much. And how do, how do we make sure we don't lose our audience?

Stephan:

So I think first of all, if you have an exciting event, you're not going to lose people because of half an hour break or 15 minute break, right? So I think that's the baseline. If, if you have really boring talks, they're going to leave anyway. You know, if you do a break or not. So I, I don't, I wouldn't think that I wouldn't say that it's actually an issue to losing people. Um, you obviously don't want to lose if you've built up some energy and some momentum and people are really into it, you don't want to lose that. So that, that I can, I can concede that you might want to pay attention to that. On the other hand, there's a lot of over pacing happening so that, you know, people go too far and then people are really starting to be overwhelmed by the amount of information they get by, um, paying attention all that time.

Stephan:

Is it is, it is, it costs a lot of energy and it is exhausting. Um, so yeah, so, so I think that's, that's more, the question is how do I, how do I find the right balance so I can keep, uh, the, the energy, the good energy that I'm creating with my content? Um, I would say there's two things I think you can do. One is you, you, you, you should look at, you know, what are the likely time zones that I have. So to, to make sure that you don't want the bulk of my people is now on, on lunchtime. So I need to give them probably a bigger break because they're going to want to eat. And if I don't give it to them, they're going to leave and go eat anyway. And they might not come back. So, you know, there's also the pro of, of keeping people by giving them a proper break when, when it's about the time that they need it.

Stephan:

Um, and that, the second thing that I would say is you can always offer people sort of other spaces where they can mingle. So you could say, for example, we have these two or three small rooms open. If you don't feel like a break and you want to just mingle and get to know people hop into those into those, there can be a topic, or they can be just open, open networking, whatever. Um, some of these, some of these newer tools, uh, that are, that are popping up these online conference tools, they have that built in, right? So you can, you can actually chat with, with other individuals. You can even see their profiles and you can, you can agree to network in a break or, or not. Um, the other thing is if you're mixing live and, and recorded content, you can also make it in a way that some recorded content might people might be able to catch it at different points of time.

Stephan:

So then they can find, you know, I'm going to watch this now because I want to have a break later, for example. Right. Um, so, so you can also play with that, that giving them more of a, of an agency about around this. Um, and then I think that brings me to the, to the final point that I, that I, that kinda came up as you were starting to ask. The question is, I think we have to let go of the thought that we can control what the exact experience is that our audience has. And we have to concede that they are created, that we have to help them create their own experience. So it's really a lot about, about giving them the opportunity to self-organize in a way that works for them.

Dr. Mark:

That is, so that is so true there. You're talking to a control freak over here, so you can't tell them. Um, so I wanna, I want to circle back now to the presentation aspect. Um, and I've heard a variety of different people talking about like, just like you said, different time limits, different time effects and how to keep people engaged. I liked your position or your comment about, you know, it doesn't necessarily mean you only have 10 minutes and then 10 minutes, but you can change maybe the flow, the pace or what's happening. Um, I'd love for you to kind of walk us through what is, you know, from a, from a, you know, a summit host perspective. I do have content. I do have things that I want to give a get across to my audience. So what are some, some alternative ways of presenting this that is both effective from keeping attention, uh, entertaining, creating experience as well as still getting the information across.

Stephan:

So I think one of the things, you know, this sort of sometimes less is more, this that you, that you see, how can I segment or segment my presentation, ways that they get, you know, edible junk chunks, um, and not, you know, a big sandwich that is weight there with that. I can't even hold in my hands to, to bite into it. Um, the other, the other things that come to mind is you can work with visualization, uh,

very well. So, so visual images, it's always good when you try and access sort of people's emotional reaction. And with visualization, you can, you can do that. So, you know, uh, there, there are certain images that we see and we immediately remember, we immediately have memories, um, I'm, I'm German. So for example, the fall of the wall in Berlin, if you show me that image, I, I was 14.

Stephan:

So I remember I, yeah, that, that was that time and this and that happened, um, on, uh, you know, in a, on a more negative one. If you show somebody 911 pictures, they'll immediately know where they were, what they did, et cetera. Um, and you can use that. Not obviously you wouldn't probably use those extreme examples, whether positive or negative, but you can use those things. I think that's why Lolcats are. So, uh, so, uh, so successful, right? Because it just talks to people emotionally. Um, if visualization can also help you understand more complicated concepts, um, you know, like, uh, uh, buying a furniture from Ikea, if they would write the instruction on a, on a four, on one page, you wouldn't know how to build this thing. Right. Um, but when you see it marked up, it's, it's pretty obvious how it, how it works.

Stephan:

So visualization would be one thing. Um, the second thing that I find really works well is storytelling. When you tell a story, as opposed to these are the three points that I want you to know, but you, you, you tell them these are the three points and here's a story for point 1. And here's the story for point 2. And here's a story for point 3. People listen differently. They're much more engaged. It talks to them in a different way. You can even see how sometimes people's, people's way of looking changes. They just engage differently. And finally, I would say, um, engage them, right? Ask questions in the chat, for example, um, you can do things like, um, Mentimeter or, or other of these tools where you, what you ask them questions that you can visualize the answers to. I don't do, you know, Mentimeter? So Mentimeter is a polling tool where people answer on their phones.

Stephan:

So you basically give them, uh, you, you share the, the, your main screen on a screen sharing, and then you, and then on top, it says the URL they have to go to and a code they have to go to so they can answer your questions. And then you might ask, um, you know, do you prefer A, B or C? And then you can, you can have different visualizations where, where you can start see an image, evolve, how your 200 or 300 people are responding to that particular question and you and the audience get to see, Oh, okay. There's 500 people. There's 500 people in the room and 400 love B. I wouldn't have expected that. Right. And then you can talk about that, for example, as part of your talk. Um, so, you know, try and engage, make them do stuff, but not by saying, if anybody has a question right in the chat and nobody's gonna write anything, or it's always the same people that write something, but ask them concretely what you want from them and how to do it.

Stephan:

Right. Um, so those are the, so those are the things that come to mind to spice up a presentation. Um, generally I would say a lot of presentations that I see, they are standard presentations that people did at some point, and then they don't really redo them for the specific audience they're talking to. And then you'll have things like, Oh yeah, this one is not relevant for you. Let's jump to slide 10. Uh, and then, and then they lose their, the track of thought because it's not what, how they usually present. And, you know, so really you need to prepare also, and you just think about what's the audience that I'm talking

to, what do they need? What's the message that I really want to come across. And what are the 10 messages, you know, this kind of one-on-ones of presentation. Somehow we seem to forget when we move from, you know, I'm preparing for a Ted talk. I think about all these things I'm preparing for an online summit, I'll just record something. And maybe you need to help your, the, the speakers, uh, you know, to, to do that better also. Give them more concrete, um, concrete instructions on how to, how to prepare, um, how to split things up, how to make things more visual, et cetera.

Dr. Mark:

I think that's a great point there. One, uh, I love what you said, right there is like, you know, needing to prepare it. Um, actually do some preparation. Unfortunately we have to say that, but it is true, you know, they, they need to do that and also giving your speakers advice or guidance, like, especially right now, um, shape shaping how you want that summit to be, I think is important. Giving the guidance, as you were just saying, Stephan to your speakers. Now I want to go into the small group aspects because I do love, uh, I do really think that this is important. I've seen it in the, the experiences I've run both on my virtual masterminds, but also in my summits when we do, um, you know, live streaming components, putting people into breakouts, definitely increases interaction. I always get worried. I'm always like, man, man, they're not going to have anything to talk about or, you know.

Stephan:

They always have.

Dr. Mark:

So talk us through some of the things that we like, maybe just a couple of things that come to mind or a couple of strategies you use, uh, that are good when putting attendees or putting your groups into small groups, things they can work on, things they can do.

Stephan:

So I think the first thing is that a lot of times we underestimate how much, uh, we need to process information. Most of us need to talk to somebody else. It's not just a, I hear it. I internalize it. And then I know whatever the message was that this person wanted to give me. So small group interaction really helps people to process the information that they've just heard. So if they've heard a half hour presentation and you then give them 15 or 20 minutes to talk in a smaller group, it can be just about, you know, what, what stood out for you. What's it can just be questions that help them recall what was said and discuss that with, with other people. And they'll be happy and they'll have a lot to talk about. Um, and the two things that I think you need to really think about when you do groups in an online space is, and that really depends on the tool.

Stephan:

Um, how do you get people the instructions that you're giving them? Because in a lot of, in a lot of space, like if you do, if you're using Zoom, for example, and you send them in breakout groups, they come into the breakout room with nothing, right? So at the very least you have to tell them, take a screenshot of these instructions, or of this main question and take it with you. So you remember what you're supposed to talk about, um, in a, in a, in another way you could do, if you have a conference website, you could, you could sort of put in a link and say, here are the instructions, just go on that link and you'll see, you know, what you're supposed to do in the group. And you can, you can even give

them a more, a more structured process of saying, you know, take 10 minutes to do an introductory round of everybody says who they are then, you know, agree on, um, whoever takes notes, if you want, if you want notes out the meeting out of the, out of the discussion.

Stephan:

Um, and then somebody who's going to watch the time. So you're not all surprised when I went to hold you all back. Um, and then here's the question that the main question that you're going to discuss or explore whatever. So that's the first thing. How do you give them the instruction, not just beforehand, but actually in, in the group, they're going to have most of them not going to know what they're supposed to do. And then the second thing is what are you doing with what's coming out of the groups? So how are you getting what you, what happens in the groups back into your main group, main room? And there might be instances where you're doing really small exchanges that are more of a networking type where you don't really need to take it out, but when you're having content interaction on a presentation or, or on a, on a topical question, people will expect that they're going to share it afterwards.

Stephan:

And you want to avoid the typical sharing out group type thing that we have in a lot of presence meetings, it's just boring, right? When, when you don't have 10 groups and then every group gets five minutes to talk us through the main points. And by the second or third group, you already start to have doubles, but they insist in telling you everything that they did and they're in their groups. Um, so one of the things that we've done a few times is to use some white boarding tool. Um, I really liked to use Padlet for that. And, uh, I used that a couple of times, uh, but it could be, you know, Mural or Miro or whatever the tool is, where you prepare, um, a place where they can put the, you know, the gems of the discussion, like they have space to put three things, for example.

Stephan:

Um, and then, and then you tell them in the instruction. So five minutes before the end, at this time, you go there, you agree on the three main things and place them there. And then as a whole group, you can go to that place and you can look at it, you know, together, give people five minutes to read through it, to have a look. And then you, as the moderator or the presenter can pick out the few things that they find interesting. And either riff off of them again and do some more talking or, you know, ask questions back to the audience or whatever the next step is that you want to take, but then they get to share and you don't have that sort of half hour. Now we're listening to group five and now we're listening to group six.

Dr. Mark:

Yeah, we definitely, I mean, I can just imagine right now that that happens in real life in person and just like nails on a chalkboard once it's virtual, it's like, we do not have to sit through this.

Stephan:

You'll lose people basically. I mean, virtual, what happens is not people are frustrated for a little bit and then they're gone.

Dr. Mark:

And even if they're there, they're just on their phone or they're doing something like that. So I love that. Now.

Stephan:
Or day dreaming.

Dr. Mark:
Did you say day drinking or day dreaming?

Stephan:
Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming.

Dr. Mark:
Day drinking. Exactly.

Stephan:
They will want to do that. Yeah.

Dr. Mark:
Oh man. Stephan, this has been incredible. We're going to be wrapping up here shortly before we do. I know, uh, everybody's sitting there going Mark. How can I, how can I get in touch with Stephan? Where's he at? How do I get more of him in my life? So why don't you let everybody know where you're hanging out and the best way to get in touch with you?

Stephan:
So I'm pretty active on LinkedIn. Uh, I mean, uh, publish, not as consistently, as regularly as I want to, but if you want to follow some of the stuff that I'm writing about, uh, that's a good place. Um, just search for my name. I, I don't think there's anybody else or otherwise it's S-D-O-H-R-N is my username. And then, um, for the, the work I do, Radical Inclusion, so it's <https://www.radical-inclusion.com>, um, is where you find me and, and, uh, my partners.

Dr. Mark:
Excellent. Excellent. Make sure you go hit up Stephan and let him know how much you enjoyed this episode. Uh, I'm going to let you leave us with some final parting pieces of wisdom for our summit hosts who are out there trying to put on an excellent virtual summit. Stephan, what would you leave them with?

Stephan:
Well, first of all, saying that, I think it's awesome that everybody's jumping on this and that there's so much experimentation going on as well. And you know, I can tell you whatever I want to, but in the end you just have to have to try it out and experiment. It's, it's really amazing what you can do. The tools are evolving as well. So, so every, every month there's something new that you can try out. So I really

encourage people to, to just jump and try things. Get a bunch of five or 10 people together and try things out and see how it works. And then invite 10 more to try it again. And eventually you have a hundred or 200, uh, that are, that are in your, in your summit. Um, and, and that's also, you know what we've talked, we didn't really talk about safe space at all. We started off with, let's talk about safe space. Um, but what we share shared what I shared with you, what we talked about is really all around. Making people feel comfortable, that they can contribute in the best way possible, because when we don't feel comfortable, when we feel sort of reserved, et cetera, we are very likely checking out. Um, and so make people comfortable. Be a good host like you would in your birthday party.

Dr. Mark:

Such great advice right there. Stephan, thank you so much for being here with us today.

Stephan:

Thanks a lot. I really enjoyed it.

Dr. Mark:

Thank you summit hosts for hanging out with Stephan and I. I'm Dr. Mark T. Wade, your host here on the Virtual Summit Podcast. Remember your message matters. So go out there and make an impact in the world 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.