ii Handshake

Handshake's Guide to Hosting Virtual Recruiting Events

Virtual events are a great way to augment your existing early talent strategy, allowing you to extend your reach while lowering travel-related costs.

With virtual events, employers are able to engage with students from all backgrounds, disciplines, and interests, regardless of where they go to school. Ultimately, virtual events are an impactful way for students to connect with the fabric of your brand: they give prospects the opportunity to ask live questions, see offices, and interact with employees in the field and in real time.

Handshake Premium enables employers to post virtual events in the same way you can post on-campus and off-campus events. To get started, visit our support center for step-by-step instructions on how to create a virtual event on Handshake.

To help you recruit remarkable talent for your next virtual event, read on for best practices on creating and hosting engaging virtual events.

Before the event:

When it comes to virtual events, one size does not fit all. There are many types of virtual events you can host depending on your needs. Before your next event, make sure you conduct research into how you're going to host this event, the type of event that'll be most effective, and your event's content and promotional plan.

1. Plan your event & promotional plan

Set a goal
What's the desired outcome of your virtual event(s)? Is it to spread awareness, drive applicants, or both? Thinking through this process will help determine your content, speakers, promotional plan, and follow up.

Find a host
Consider who will provide the most insight to your target audience or Segments—for students, a full panel of senior managers may not be as relatable as a panel of recently graduated alumni.

Plan your promotion
Personalization matters! Try tailoring your first virtual event to a specific role or category. That will help you narrow down your target audience and content to the specific needs of your talent segments.

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2. Types of virtual events

Office tour
- If your office is open, highlight what a day in the life of an intern or new college grad would be like. If your office is currently closed, share any videos you might have on YouTube that showcase everyday life.
- Show the fun aspects that make being in your office exciting and rewarding (tip: these should be pre-recorded so that there aren't any issues with content or employee consent).

AMA (Ask Me Anything)
- Host this session with a recruiter or hiring manager as well as a moderator.
- Allow students to ask questions about the interview process, hiring timelines, employer perks, culture, mentorship, career growth, and overall company sentiment. Come prepared with a list of FAQs to help get the conversation started.

Employee panel
- Feature recent grads or alumni—students like to hear from people who are like them and have been through a similar journey. Have a moderator prepare some pre-canned questions about their journey from college to career, experience at the organization, and why they are most proud about their work. This will help stem a series of questions from students that the panel can answer.

ERGs (Employee Resource Groups)
- Leverage internal ERGs to show future students how the company is committed to creating an inclusive workplace where each individual has a community to lean on.

3. Identify your livestream platform

Once you've decided on the type of virtual event you'll be hosting, your next step is to decide on a livestream platform of choice. Handshake does not offer lives-treaming, but we do have space for you to post your external event or webinar link.

Many of our employer partners leverage platforms such as WebEx, GotoMeeting, YouTube Live, Google Hangouts, Zoom, Facebook LIve, and Instagram TV. If you're just getting started, consider piloting your virtual event on free platforms like Facebook Live or Instagram TV.

4. Invite your priority segments

Source your attendees
Use Segments & Campaigns to proactively message students prior to your virtual events to invite them to RSVP. Make sure to share what they'll learn, gain, and walk away with by attending this session.

Remember, marketing experts predict that 40% of those who RSVP drop off, meaning only 60% of your RSVPs will actually show up. To get 50 attendees, for example, aim for 85 RSVPs.

Be specific and personal in your outreach
Students want to hear why they're a fit and why you're reaching out.

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General tips and best practices

Scheduling considerations
- Schedule your event at a time that doesn't conflict with class schedules so you can maximize your attendees.
- Tuesdays through Thursdays are the best days of the week to host a virtual event. If you are inviting students from around the country, consider hosting your event during a convenient time across time zones.
  - Events should be a maximum of 45 minutes for content, followed by 15 minutes of QA to keep students alert and engaged.

Reporting ROI
- Set goals for how many attendees you'd like at your first virtual event, then use that as a benchmark to gauge success and traction on future events.
- Treat your first few virtual events as an experiment! It may take one or two to find the best content and structure that works for your target audience.

Other considerations
- Keep your events authentic—the less scripted the better. Students want to hear from current employees in a personalized and casual way. Displaying comradery and community with panels or office tours is a great way to recruit Gen Z authentically.
- Like with any virtual event or webinar, there will be a drop off from RSVP to attendee. Marketing experts advise preparing for a 40% drop off.

During the event:

Test audio and video
Have a fellow employee login as an attendee about 20 minutes before your event to test your audio and video quality.

Track who attends
Virtual event attendees are leads just like students who stop by in-person at your career fair booth. Make sure you track who shows up! Here are a few ways you can do this:
- Leverage Handshake's Event Check-In Kiosk
  - Share an automatically generated virtual QR code for attendees to scan at the beginning of your event. Your attendees will then show up as "checked-in" on your Handshake dashboard.
- Check to see if your livestream platform allows for attendee downloads. Many livestream platforms let you download a CSV file so you can track the names and emails of those who attended.

Monitor chat questions
Chat questions—just like live questions—are a great indicator of a candidate's interest. Make sure there is a moderator alongside your host or co-hosts to help facilitate the conversation.

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After an event:

Follow up with your attendees and absentees
- Use Handshake's Event Attendee Page to follow up with attendees en masse.
- Consider tying your call to action (i.e. what you want talent to do after your event) in with your post-event follow up. We recommend sending separate follow ups to attendees and no shows.
- For attendees, we recommend a follow up message recapping content and sharing your call to action, like a link to apply to an open job.
- For folks who couldn't attend, we recommend sending a follow up message with 'sorry we missed you' messaging, and sharing your main call to action.

Track virtual event attendees all the way to hire
If you direct candidates to apply to a job, make sure you're including a source code so you can track candidates from RSVP to attendee to hire. Tracking attendees through your hiring funnel is a great way to demonstrate the potential success of your first virtual event to leadership, especially if this is your first event.

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We hope you found this best practice guide useful. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your Account Team with any additional questions or suggestions on how we can help you host a memorable virtual event.

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