Why businesses should get onboard with online conferencing

Previously, online conferencing has not been highly valued and often utilised as a last resort. Classroom-based learning was seen as the gold standard as it provides a sense of tangibility. Besides sitting in a venue and listening to a presenter, delegates receive printed learning material and other branded goodies. In addition, they have ability to network with other like-minded colleagues. And, in the case of longer conferences, some might see it as an opportunity for a company-paid "holiday" to a fancy hotel.

Photo by Anna Shvets from Pexels

The Covid-19 pandemic that has swept the world has brought the eventing and conferencing industry to its knees. Even as lockdown regulations relax, allowing small group gatherings, many people and companies are likely to avoid conferences and events and their associated potential risk of infection, opting to continue practising social distancing. This means that in order to ensure their sustainability, trainers and conference organisers have had to find a way to migrate their businesses online to ensure that delegates get the value out of the event as though they were physically in attendance.

The benefits of going online

There are many benefits of hosting online conferences. "The biggest one of these," says Jonathan Goldberg: labour law expert and joint-CEO of Global Business Solutions, "is the cost factor. Delegates benefit as they do not have to incur travel and accommodation expenses while organisers save on costs such as venue hire, catering, printing of learning materials as well as branded merchandise, and can offer more competitive ticket prices."

Online conferences create greater opportunities for accessibility too

Global Business Solutions joint-CEO and Employment Equity champion, Thembi Chagonda, says, "Without worries about venue location, size, facilities, and accessibility for those with disabilities, delegates can benefit from attendance in the comfort of their own surroundings which contributes to transformation." The ability to "screen" the session to a group of people in a boardroom, for example, also provides opportunities, without additional costs, to empower more people in the business who all gain the benefits of learning from the presenter, aiding in achieving employment equity goals, especially at a time when cost concerns are high.

The ability for online conferencing delegates to post all their questions in a recorded way, and to have these answered by the presenter, provides an advantage to traditional in-person events where logistics limit the possibility of broad individual engagement between speaker and audience members. And many online conferences have the added advantage of sharing, with all delegates after the event, the Frequently Asked Questions and their answers to build on their learning opportunities.

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