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Digital Events 101
Welcome
- Welcome to Peace is Loud's Digital Events Guide! We hope this guide will offer some insight, tips, and resources for planning digital events. Best practices continue evolving at rapid speed, so please note that the information in this guide is current as of the time of writing (June 2021).

What is it?
- A digital event is an occasion for people to come together at the same time and place online. A digital event can include webinars, trainings, lectures, screenings, Q&As, interviews, protests, and discussions, among many other things!
- **A film exists as a tool whether there are social distancing restrictions in place or not - the ability to gather will not limit the film's power.**

When do we need it?
- Many types of barriers exist that impede people from physically assembling:
    - Geographic barriers
    - Lack of access for people with disabilities
    - Times of crisis (such as a health crisis like COVID-19, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, et al) - *community and connection is crucial in times of isolation.*

The upside of virtual events
- We may tend to think that physical events are more powerful than virtual ones, but **there are many advantages to hosting digital events**:
    - Overcome physical barriers
    - Bring together communities that otherwise would not be able to congregate
    - Increase event audience capacity and reach
    - Offer communal support in times of crisis
    - Usually more affordable than large scale live events
    - Usually more accessible for people with disabilities
    - Very measurable (you are able to easily compile data on engagement)
    - Extend the life of your event by easily recording and sharing it and/or by encouraging online discussion or actions afterwards
    - Sustainability squared! Online events have a smaller carbon footprint and they can easily be recorded and saved for future use or repurposing

What do you need to host or join a digital event?
- Personal device (computer, phone, tablet, etc. Note - a lot of platforms require the "host" to use a laptop or desktop)
- Webcam (if the event calls for it)
- Access to internet (note: if internet access is not available, you may seek out civic spaces such as public libraries or community centers)
- Patience! Some audiences are not used to virtual events, so we all need to help folks learn how to participate.

How to Host A Digital Event or Screening
Event format
- The most successful events combine different components to promote engagement and sustain attention, like a film screening and live chat followed by a Q&A.
    - Format ideas
        - Watch a film or webinar and live chat simultaneously
        - Watch a film separately or collectively, followed by a live Q&A with special guests (such as the filmmaker, film subjects, or issue area experts) or a panel discussion
        - Watch films separately or collectively, and then host a web-based moderated open discussion
        - Host a discussion with breakout groups/sessions for more intimate conversations on specific topics

Digital event platforms
- **We encourage you to visit Looky Looky Pictures' [Virtual Screening Guide & Directory](), which is a terrific resource and actively updated!**

- Peace is Loud has used the following platforms for different types of events:
    - **Zoom** allows you to host video and teleconferences and live virtual events. Our team has used this for panel discussions, screenings, trainings, and meetings. Zoom is very user friendly and free for discussions for up to 100 participants and up to 40 minutes in length: There is a paid upgraded version that allows for longer discussions and screen/content sharing - Zoom offers a 30 day free trial. **Insider tip:** Use Zoom's advanced video feature to stream any films. It is best to download the film locally and play the downloaded version instead of streaming it. The free version does have a time limit, so you may not be able to include a full screening.
    - **Indee** is a private screening platform for individual viewings. While it is not free, it is very cost effective for impact campaigns and a very secure platform overall. Our team has used this for campaigns that required private digital links be sent to screening hosts.
    - **Facebook Live** allows you to broadcast real-time video on the platform and works well for interviews, Q&A's, or panel discussions.

Grassroots screenings campaigns

- At the core, the most important thing to do is **ask yourself what is the goal of the event or screening? What are the desired outcomes?** This will dictate whether…
    - A screening experience should be collective or individual
    - Tickets should be free or not
    - Event should include a Q&A component or not
    - Screening and Q&A should be separate events
    - Film should have a special premiere event online or just be available for streaming
- You might consider hosting a special premiere online, followed by a streaming window.
- Campaigns can co-host screenings with nonprofits that already have virtual event infrastructure.
- Theaters at times offer in-person and virtual screenings - streaming partnerships with distributors can offer films another way to have the "theatrical" experience" (also filmmakers should consider revenue splits with online platforms/outlets, sidestepping third party distributors).

Recommendations
- **The goal of virtual events is to capture the power and essence of physical events - make it intimate, engaging, and as true to your individual/organizational self as possible!**
- *Logistics*
    - Let audiences know ahead of time different ways they can submit questions - email, Twitter, Facebook, etc

- Check all equipment and platforms ahead of your event (a few times even!)
- When sharing footage, keep in mind that people will have different internet access - at times it may be best to make content downloadable and offer pre-recorded videos instead of livestreams.
- Delegate roles for different team members (producer to help talent, tech person to oversee event backend, chat moderator, etc), and hold a separate group chat on WhatsApp or Signal for these point people to connect throughout the event.
- Before the event, always do a run-through, encourage participants to wear headphones with a microphone, and double check internet access.

- ***Engagement***
  - When planning your event, consider separating the screening from a discussion, offering flexibility to attendees.
  - We recommend keeping live virtual events at around the hour mark. If more time is needed, you can have more than one over a couple of days.
  - When announcing and promoting your event, make sure to communicate how the entire event experience will flow. Will people co-watch a movie or watch separately? When and how will the group be convening for a discussion? A detailed timeline can be helpful!
  - Confirm a moderator for open discussions or panels, and incorporate diverse and community voices into your discussions.
  - Remember that group chats/comment features can be made active or not. You and your partners will know best when you should turn off the chat or comments, so feel free to use your judgment.
  - For events where childcare is required for attendees, consider hosting a parallel "child-care zoom" to entertain attendees' children.
  - Make sure to follow up - it's a great opportunity to further engage audiences with a call to action and/or to measure the success of your event with a poll or feedback request form. You can follow up via an e-blast, text message, or social media. Have your follow up note prepared and ready to go, including the event recording link (with password), with all approvals from participants already confirmed ahead of time.

- ***Accessibility***
  - Share discussion materials (guides/questions/background) ahead of time.
  - Hire ASL interpreters
  - Incorporate captioning (Peace is Loud has worked with CaptionAccess)

Additional Resources
Digital events resources
- [Surveillance Self-Defense](#)
- [Zoom how-to](#)
- [Working During Covid-19: How to be good at video meetings](#)
- [StoryCorps App](#)

- [Gallus Events - How to engage an online audience](#)