

# Am I Ready? Competencies and Skill Sets Needed for Virtual Conference Hosts<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This is the third publication in the *Don't Fake It, Make It!* Series about virtual conferences and meetings. Implementing a virtual conference or meeting can be a challenging task. Much is different when comparing virtual to face to face, such as the effects of teaching, audience motivators, and technology (Frisch & Greene, 2020). Fifty-three percent of event planners say they don't have the necessary skills or experience to host an online event (Eventsforce, 2020). Whether hiring staff or recruiting colleagues to assemble a team, it is necessary to ensure your team is built based on the specific competency needs (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) for hosting a virtual conference or meeting.

## What is a team profile?

Every member brings their individual competencies to a team; collectively, this is deemed the "team's profile" (Mathieu et al., 2014). In order to reach the expected outcomes of your virtual event, you need to ensure all the right pieces are present, and one of the most important pieces is the right team. Building a complete team, based on the identified needs of the team, is essential to the event's success. For instance, a football team can't win a game without a quarterback, nor can a baseball game be played without an umpire. Not only do the quarterback and umpire have specific roles in their respective sport, but they each bring specific competencies (skills) to help their games

be successful. Building a complete team means planning out all the team roles (Beckhard, 1972) and required skills (Biddle, 1986) needed to complete the task(s).

## Competencies Needed for the Virtual Team's Profile

All teams, whether virtual or face to face, should understand what everyone brings to the table. Leaders building a team should first identify the competencies needed for their team's success (the team profile). A competency is "a set of observable performance dimensions, including individual knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as collective team, process, and organizational capabilities, that are linked to high performance, and provide the organization with sustainable competitive advantage" (Athey & Orth, 1999, p. 216). A complete virtual team profile means that each member adds competency-value to the overall team, thereby making it complete.

The virtual team profile consists of seven competency areas: (a) teaching instruction, (b) communication, (c) online technology, (d) program planning, (e) program design and implementation, (f) program evaluation, and (g) event management. Each competency area describes skill sets needed to complete the virtual team profile (see Table 1).

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## Final Considerations

While you need someone skilled in every competency area in Table 1, this doesn't necessarily have to be seven different people. You may have people who can cover more than one competency area. When building your team, consider all of the skill sets needed before the event planning begins. You need time to build a cohesive team. Even if you have all worked together before, start by discussing competencies and skill sets and clarifying everyone's role. When everyone starts working on the event from this approach, everyone will be clear on their role in the later stages of the event process.

## Conclusion

In summary, building a virtual team through the competency approach means you begin your planning with the skill sets of your team in mind. Your complete virtual event team profile will have all the necessary skill sets to reach your event objectives, keeping in mind that a team member may have more than one skill set. If you take the time to plan for all the competency areas, your event's objectives will have a high likelihood of success.

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## Appendix: Articles in This Series

1. Don't Fake It, Make It! Thriving in Virtual Conferences and Meetings
2. Applying Learning Theory to Virtual Conference Spaces
3. Am I Ready? Competencies and Skill Sets Needed for Virtual Conference Hosts
4. Technology and Tools for Virtual Hosts
5. Let's Do This Right: Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Conferences
6. Host with the Most: Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Meetings

7. Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Webinars

8. Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Events and Fairs

9. Best Practices for Attending Virtual Events

Table 1. The Virtual Team's Profile

Competency Area	Competency Skill Sets
Teaching instruction	Instructional design, objective setting, measurement, teaching methods (Telg, 2018).
Communication	Verbal communication, written communication, concise and clear writing, developing aesthetically pleasing design (Leal et al., 2020).
Online technology	Understanding of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, platform knowledge and experience, social media monitoring experience, technical troubleshooting, audio, video, editing (Stofer, 2018; Ramirez, 2020).
Program planning	Locating preexisting information, identifying needs, setting priorities and goals, identifying the target audience (Boone et al., 2002; Seevers et al., 1997).
Program design and implementation	Developing content, selecting a virtual delivery method, identifying resources and materials, creating a timeline (Boone et al., 2002; Seevers et al., 1997).
Program evaluation	Quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques, creating an evaluation instrument, monitoring virtual conference activities, analyzing and interpreting evaluation data, communicating evaluation information to stakeholders (Harder, 2015; Seevers et al., 1997).
Event management	Responsiveness, proactivity, organization, speaker management, attention to detail (Eventsforce, 2020; Frisch & Greene, 2020; Ramirez, 2020).