

A person with curly hair, seen from the back and side, is addressing a large crowd at night. They are wearing a denim shirt and have their right arm extended towards the audience. The crowd is blurred, with many people holding up their phones to take pictures, creating a bokeh effect of bright light spots. The overall atmosphere is one of a high-energy event or conference.

A guide to enterprise town hall meetings

Town hall meeting

A town hall meeting, otherwise known as an “all hands” meeting, is the gathering of an organization’s employees. Typically led by the CEO or another senior executive, the purpose of a town hall may be to deliver specific news, respond to a crisis, or just to provide a regular forum for communication between management and employees.

Aside from delivering news and information to a large audience, town hall meetings can foster a greater sense of community within an organization. Additionally, regular communication with employees makes them more comfortable with the level of information they are receiving, building trust and improving morale.

Challenges

These assignments are typically given to the corporate communications team, which is responsible for creating the meeting content and implementing event logistics. What happens next is a complex series of decisions, including the decision to have a live in-person meeting, a large-scale teleconference, an online virtual meeting or a “hybrid” event that combines elements of them all.

Given the need to reach large groups in multiple locations simultaneously and the desire for rich media content (streaming video), virtual online meetings are rapidly becoming the favored method for holding a town hall. Technology, in the form of virtual environments and webcasting, has alleviated the necessity of traditional in-person meetings and can save organizations time and money.

The CEO or other senior execs often request town hall meetings, and the top-down directive is usually to **‘just get it done’**.

Assuming that the choice is made to go with a virtual meeting or a hybrid meeting — usually a live meeting held at corporate headquarters that is transmitted virtually to field and international offices — the challenges can be numerous. Technical and operational issues abound when deciding to conduct an online town hall, and all merit careful consideration.



Reaching large, global audiences in a scalable way



Offering rich media (streaming video) and moderated interactive services (such as polling and live chat)



Making the event easy for meeting planners and end users



Working with corporate IT and managing security



Delivering a consistent message



Providing global reach and related services (translation and localization)

How to reach large global audiences in a scalable way

Many organizations have a large and geographically dispersed employee base, and reaching them with a town hall address requires an online meeting platform that can scale to many thousands of users simultaneously.

Many web conferencing tools will “break” when scaled past 500 users, and they aren’t designed specifically to deliver rich media content – so organizations need a platform and set of tools that can scale and reach the audience efficiently, as well as provide audience metrics and viewership data.

Make the event easy for meeting planners and end users

Many corporate communications departments don’t have expertise in implementing online events; as a result, they need project planning and management assistance when developing their online town hall. Similarly, virtual town hall meetings need to be easy for end users to register for and attend, and end users should be able to access meetings on a variety of devices, including mobile devices and tablets, such as the iPad.

Offering rich media and moderated interactive services

We live in a video age, and the expectation of CEOs is that they will be able to reach their audience with a video broadcast – something that engages their audience and promotes a connection between parties. Audio-only conference calls don’t offer the level of engagement that immersive online experiences provide, and moderated interactive services such as polling, Q&A, chat and screen sharing are helpful ways to personalize and enhance the online town hall experience.

Given the correct platform, virtual town hall meetings can also include online breakout sessions, provide chat rooms hosted by “experts” and enable participant brainstorming/feedback sessions.

Working with corporate IT and managing cyber security

When a virtual town hall meeting is being planned, one of the first steps is working with the IT department to determine if streaming video is achievable on the company’s network. In many cases, in-house networks cannot support streaming video, and the IT department cannot dedicate the staff or resources to implement webcasting.

So, planners of town hall meetings must look to outsource and find solutions that won’t constrain network resources and provide secure access to the meeting, preventing unauthorized viewers from seeing the broadcast.

Delivering a consistent message

Consistency in delivering a message via a scripted town hall needs to be achieved in two ways – first, by creating

a corporate look and feel that is supported by thoughtful content, and, second, by delivering that content in a way that means all users have access to high-quality audio and video.

Providing global reach and related services

Not only is a reliable platform needed, but the platform must also have “follow the sun” capabilities to support multiple time zones. Additional considerations include the need for a localized user interface and country/region-specific language and pre-event communication.

Scale to reach large global audiences

Look for an enterprise-class platform that can deliver rich media content to thousands of users simultaneously, with a redundant architecture that is specifically designed to deliver formal, polished events in a reliable manner. It is a necessity for town hall meetings to reach the entire employee base.

Make the event easy for meeting planners and users

Seek a partner that understands online events and has experience in producing town hall meetings. An expert partner should help your organization at every stage, from planning to implementation and operations, providing an essentially turnkey infrastructure for delivery of meeting content. Reporting on attendance and other metrics should be available as well. Meetings should be easy for end users to register for and attend, no matter what sort of device

(desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone) they are using to view the town hall. Platforms that don’t require software installation will increase end user participation and eliminate the burden on IT.

Offer rich media services

Leading virtual solutions help deliver professional and polished events that showcase the speaker’s content. Look for a service that offers multiple levels of video integration, including signal capture from existing corporate TV studios and telepresence locations, as well as the ability to broadcast from multiple presenter webcams.

Staging a town hall meeting requires a comprehensive plan and an online events partner which can help you deliver.

Because they are high profile events, they require specific technology solutions to ensure success.

The search for a solution

Maximize interactivity and engagement

Moderated interactive services such as Q&A, polling and screen sharing help create a more immersive experience. In addition, new “widgets” are now available that enable a variety of applications and capabilities, including virtual focus group-like feedback, sub-group breakout sessions and chat rooms hosted by subject matter experts. Where appropriate, social media integration can also increase audience engagement while enabling meeting organizers to control the amount and content of the feedback.

Work with IT and manage cyber security

Most IT departments aren’t set up to provide streaming/rich media services to a large audience, from both a support and network capacity perspective. Look for outsourced solution partners that can deliver the event on their own network and collaborate with your IT team to ensure a streamlined event performance, as well as security and controlled access to meeting content.

Deliver a consistent message

Look for a partner which can offer a platform that allows delivery of a consistent message, from look and feel, including corporate branding, to a high-quality audio and video experience during the meeting.

Provide global reach and related services

Look for a platform provider that gives the ability to deliver an event to multiple time zones around the world and reach key geographies during their business day. Leading online event providers deliver language and localization services, offering everything from pre-meeting communications in native languages to event user interfaces tailored by geography, enabling global organizations to effectively communicate with overseas personnel.

Results & examples

Internal communications professionals should leverage the strengths and capabilities of a global delivery partner which meets the unique technical challenges posed by these events

Important considerations include using a proven technology platform, with well tested methods and processes to support video communication directed at employees in their offices around the globe.



Case #1

**2,900 employees
routinely access
regularly scheduled
town hall meetings**

A large agribusiness and food company illustrates the value and benefits of outsourcing virtual town hall meetings. Needing to reach close to 3,000 geographically distributed employees on a regular basis, this company attempted to stream corporate communications information using its own internal IT team. Early indications were positive, but the burden of producing content and encoding and distributing it on the internal network created a resource drain on IT.

The company selected a leading virtual events platform provider for delivery of its town halls. They eliminated the IT resource drain and are saving time and reducing costs, with no adverse effect on critical systems or their network.

A corporate-wide 'change program' caused a global pharmaceutical company to develop a solution for reaching all employees simultaneously and in real time. Also required were the ability to offer a live Q&A with senior management and the ability to easily update content on a timely basis.

The company determined that webcasting was the best solution for live internal communications. Saving time and money but also reducing travel and printing, the program has added green benefits. The program organizers have concluded that only a virtual town hall solution offers timeliness, high impact and global reach.



Case #2

**They developed a
series of town hall
meeting, reaching
employees at 12
sites in 8 countries**

Choosing the right virtual events platform for a town hall meeting can deliver meaningful benefits to corporate communications departments.

The right platform, combined with high-quality content, empowers your organization to reap the benefits of an effectively delivered message with a consistent, repeatable and trusted approach to reaching the employee base. Valuable tools for the communications professional should include a complete suite of interactive components, including slides, screen sharing, moderated Q&A, polls, surveys and social media integration tools where appropriate. By leveraging a virtual events platform, town halls can also be used to facilitate e-learning for partner enablement, internal training and certification.

In terms of "must haves" for virtual town halls, corporate communications teams should look for the following elements:



**An experienced
events partner**



**A scalable and reliable
meetings platform**



**Security and
access control**



**Interactivity and rich
media capabilities**



**Ease of use and
implementation**

About Cloud Communications and NTT Ltd.

Cloud Communications is a division of NTT Ltd. Focused on delivering smart communication to enable intelligent workspaces, our mission is to provide world-class cloud communication solutions that enable dynamic collaboration interactions for improved workforce efficiency, productivity and engagement. We specialize in unified communications, cloud voice and digital events, delivering tailored end-to-end consulting, value realization services and change management to empower businesses and enable their digital workplace transformation.

NTT Ltd. is a leading, global technology services company. To help our clients achieve their digital transformation goals, we use our global capabilities, expertise, and full-stack technology services delivered through our integrated services platform. As their long-term strategic partner, we help them enhance customer and employee experience, transform their cloud strategy, modernize their networks and strengthen their cybersecurity. And across their transformation priorities, we automate their business processes and IT, drawing insights and analytics from their core business data. As a global ICT provider, we employ more than 50,000 people across 57 countries, trading in 73 countries and delivering services in over 200 countries and regions.

Visit us at hello.global.ntt

