Post-pandemic Pivot:
Engaging Virtual Events for Local Media Audiences

RevLab
The RevLab will experiment with innovative ways to fund local news, model best practices that we hope will benefit the entire ecosystem, and mentor and coach dozens of our would-be peers.

T-Squared: We're creating our first-ever local news revenue and training lab, Dec. 2019
Hello!

Rodney Gibbs
Executive Director

Agnes Varnum
Deputy Director
EVENTS BEFORE
Podcast tapings  
Festivals  
Trivia nights  
Hackathons  
Symposia  
Happy hour chats
3 simple goals

- Develop new audiences
- Create content
- Drive revenue
Events attract new audiences

- Uniquely local
- Magnets for people passionate about that topic
- Attracts people who may not know your brand
- Introduce your brand on your terms
Events are live journalism

- Events separate us from our peers
- Started with a simple formula, optimized for business audience, then branched out
- Open, free & on the record

Tribune’s first event – January 2010
Events drive revenue

- We produce ~50 events/year, all but one are free
- 18% of our annual revenue
- Revenue from corporate underwriters, foundations, new members
EVENTS AFTER
T-Squared: We’re pausing our in-person events, but we’ll be back soon. For now, we're going virtual.

Fears about the coronavirus, real and existential, have resulted in many cancellations of crowded gatherings. Under the circumstances, and until things change, this is the prudent thing to do.
Audience

Opportunities

● Pandemic traffic bump
● Need for info on health, housing, education, etc.
● Anxiety & isolation / need to connect
MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS
SCALAWAG
Rent Strikes & Beyond: Understanding eviction laws in the South

This is the first in a two-part report from Scalawag's recent webinar, "Housing Security in the South during COVID-19." Part two goes into solutions that work in the South.

Eviction rates and landlord laws

While homeowners are afforded a few more protections—for instance, the process of foreclosure happens over the course of months rather than in a matter of weeks or days in the case of eviction—the COVID-19 crisis illuminates the more precarious housing realities facing many renters.
SOLIDARITY OVER DISTANCE

STRATEGIES FOR SOUTHERN WORKERS AMID COVID-19 CRISIS

WEDNESDAY, 3/25, 6:30 PM - 8 PM EST

RSVP: bit.ly/workersincrisis

WEBINAR
TOOLS
TRAINING
HEALING

SCALAWAG

Photo: "NC Raise Up/ Fight for $15"

SOLIDARITY OVER DISTANCE

HOUSING SECURITY IN THE SOUTH DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

WEDNESDAY, 4/1, 6:30 PM - 8 PM EST

RSVP: bit.ly/housingsecurity

WEBINAR
TOOLS
TRAINING
HEALING

SCALAWAG

Photo Courtesy of Housing Justice League Atlanta
QUARTZ
HOW TO KEEP COLLABORATING
Watch: Quartz’s workshop on how to collaborate remotely

July 23, 2020

By Heather Landy
Editor of Quartz at Work
Normalcy tends to be at the forefront of everyone’s desires, but how can that be attempted (& protected from resurgences) sans vaccine? Convalescent plasma?
Christian Science Monitor

Subscriber-only events with reporters
Chemical & Engineering News

Zoom networking events with celebrity chemists
INCREASING GEOGRAPHICAL REACH
Center for Cooperative Media Summit

- 4x typical registration
- 25 countries represented
International Symposium on Online Journalism

- 134 countries represented
- 4x typical registration
ACCELERATING INNOVATION
Online News Association

- 2 summer conferences
- Big fall conference
- Iterating openly in prep for 3,000-person conference

ONNA20 will be everywhere, all at once!

Due to the challenging conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we're moving ONA20 to a virtual environment; it will be held Oct. 1 - 16, 2020. Registration opens summer 2020.
Splice

- Expanding global reach
- Transparent about production and technology it’s testing

Splice Beta Online.

Splice Beta is your online festival to celebrate media startups in Asia.

We had to cancel Beta in Chiang Mai because, well, Covid. But we still believe a healthy media ecosystem needs forward-looking, diverse media startups. Splice Beta 2020 is their stage. Come celebrate with us online throughout the month of September.
New Players

- New start-ups emerging to enhance online event experience
- Zoom, Blue Jeans, etc. also quickly updating
EASIER TO NAB BIGGER NAMES
TribFest

- Annual ideas fest
- In 2019, 8,000+ in-person participants over three days.
- In 2020, pivoted entirely virtual and will run the over month of September
- Ticketed and free sessions

- Anthony Fauci
- Hillary Clinton
- Jeb Bush
- Gloria Steinem
- Marco Rubio
- Jake Tapper
- Nikole Hannah-Jones
The Texas Tribune Festival
Sept. 1–30, 2020
A VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE
The 19th

- Launched with Summit this week
- Marks the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage
- Diverse slate of newsmaking women Free to attend

- Melinda Gates
- Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex
- Meryl Streep
- Kamala Harris
- The Go-Gos
Welcome to The 19th Represents

A century ago, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution made voting, our country’s most fundamental mode of civic participation, a right regardless of gender. But this watershed moment in our democracy excluded millions of women, including women of color, from the ballot box for generations.
7. These tools allow small local newsrooms to punch way, way, way above their weight classes. Could never get that best-selling author from your hometown to an in-person event? Want to talk to an out-of-town expert live with readers? Zoom bridges the gap.
LOWER COSTS & LESS LEAD TIME
Jay Allred
Richland Source

15 events in 3 weeks!

- 517 unique registrants
- 438 not members
- 45,500 views on FB Live
- Half-dozen new members
EVENTS BOOTCAMP
Meet the coaches

Tanya Erlach  Rhonda Nolen  Peter Lamb
Events Bootcamp objectives and flow

Participants will learn to:

- Develop strategies for producing virtual and in-person events, including audience growth and revenue.
- Integrate core concepts of event planning, production and assessment into a comprehensive event plan.
- Understand how to turn an event plan into a series of tasks and action items for successful execution.

**Week 1:** News events: The ways we bring people together

**Week 2:** Live journalism: talent and topics

**Week 3:** Knowing your audience

**Week 4:** Leveraging partnerships

**Week 5:** Revenue planning

**Week 6:** Under the hood

**Week 7:** Putting your plan into action

**Week 8:** Present your event plan

**Bringing together format + talent**

**Audience-building + involving stakeholders**

**Revenue + production planning**

**Post-event assessment + ROI**

Participant event plan + skills and templates
Meet the cohort

- Advocate Media - Dallas
- The Beacon
- Block Club Chicago
- CalMatters
- Canopy Atlanta
- Detour Media
- Houston Defender Network
- Invisible Institute
- The Markup
- Maynard Institute for Journalism Education
- NOWCastSA
- Prism
- Project Q Atlanta
- Spotlight PA
Connect with RevLab

- Join our mailing list at revenue.lab.org
- Email us at revlab@texastribune.org
- Texas Tribune events: texastribune.org/events
  festival.texastribune.org
Event Considerations

**Multimedia**
Will speakers need to prepare a presentation? How will you introduce your speakers? Pre-roll videos from your sponsors?

**Community**
Is there a networking opportunity? Will there be audience Q&A? Can you add a social component to build community? What does the social media conversation look like?
• Tribune events pre-pandemic
• Pivoting post-pandemic
• RevLab workshops
• What we’ve learned & resources

This deck: bit.ly/mixer_revlab
Events are live journalism

- Extension of the editorial mission
- Open to the public
- On-the-record
- No pay-for-play by sponsors
Selecting speakers

- Brainstorming - Start early!
- Consult with your journalists, staffers and colleagues
- Make a long list of candidates
- Select dynamic speakers with good stage presence
- Ask that long-shot
- Consider a range of speakers
- Be creative
The editorial in editorial events

- Breaking news!
- Video
- Podcast
- Live-Tweeting or other live social coverage
- Longform analysis
Speakers are your best ambassadors

- Talk about your organization’s mission.
- Run a well-produced event and commit yourself to the speaker’s positive experience.
- Follow up with a thank you note and small gift.

Cultivate repeat speakers!
Keys to good partnerships

Outline what you need and what you’ll provide in writing.

Uphold your end of the bargain and go above and beyond.

Communicate with and involve your partners.

Express gratitude and be ready to return the favor.
TribFest attendance

- On UT campus 2011 - 2017
- Moved to downtown Austin in 2018
- “Open Congress” added free programming in 2018
The Texas Tribune Festival

Sept. 1-30
A virtual experience

BUY TICKETS

#TribFest20

festival.texastribune.org
How a local newsroom quickly (and boldly) pivoted to online events with Richland Source

Despite having no previous experience producing online events, Richland Source produced 15 online community conversations in three weeks. Jay Allred, president of Source Media Properties, shared how he produced the series so quickly, the tools used and lessons learned along the way.

Hosting virtual town hall meetings with WBUR, Boston's NPR affiliate

WBUR pivoted to host a series of audience-focused online events, including town halls and behind-the-scenes discussions with its reporters covering the pandemic. Amy Macdonald, WBUR's director of community engagement, and Alex Schneps, the events and programming manager of CitySpace, WBUR's in-house events space, shared their lessons.

Producing Solutions-oriented virtual events with Scalawag

Scalawag embraced virtual events when the pandemic hit to offer its readers helpful, timely resources. Through a series of online workshops, it connected its users with movement organizers in housing, law and employment, as well as grew its membership through thoughtful follow-up with event attendees.
RICHLAND SOURCE
Cooking and gardening during the Coronavirus shutdown

By Jay Allred, Publisher  Apr 10, 2020

Facts over fear: That's been our guiding light as the Source Media team works to navigate the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid hundreds of questions every week, we saw themes emerge.
Run of show

CORONAVIRUS IN TEXAS
DATE | TIME

INDEX:

- EVENT STAFF
- SUPPORT STAFF
- EVENT PARTICIPANTS
- URLs
- MEDIA PARTNERS
- LIVE RUN-OF-SHOW

EVENT STAFF
*will not be responsive 60 min prior through the end of the event. All comms to go through Jessica.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>LIVE RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Weaver</td>
<td>Executive producer; field all last-minute inquiries/requests, live full staff comms, graphics change calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Ray de Leon</td>
<td>Engineer; monitor all video/audio feeds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moderator tips

Virtual Event Set Tips & Best Practices

Use the following guidelines to prepare for an upcoming virtual event, live media hit, virtual happy hour, etc. Questions? Reach out to Jessica Weaver, Jacob Villanueva or Natalie Choate.

GATHER YOUR EQUIPMENT
You can make a high-quality set with what you have at home. If you are on-camera for the Tribune frequently, we’ll be in touch about some additional equipment for your set. To get started, you’ll need:

- Laptop with a camera (most new machines have high-quality camera, but make sure it is clean and functional)
- Headphones with a mic (this is mandatory—computer-only audio will not suffice). Wired headphones preferred. If you don’t have, reach out to the events team ASAP. If you are using wireless headphones, make sure they are fully charged and double-check that your bluetooth is turned off for other nearby devices and that they are successfully paired before the interview begins.
- Adjustable lighting
- Computer charger (video calls are taxing on your computer battery, so make sure you have a constant power source while live)

FINALIZING YOUR SET
Three important aspects of your set to think about:

- LIGHTING: You want to make sure you are well-lit, but in a way that doesn’t cause glare or shadow in the shot. To help mitigate this, try placing a lamp or turning on an overhead light behind your laptop, facing toward your camera. For Washed in Light, be sure to vary your lighting and adjust as the event progresses.
- GOVERN THE ROOM: Ensure your background is clear and unobtrusive. Remove any items that may slightly draw attention away from your face.
- CONNECTED: Make sure you are connected to a stable internet connection to prevent any unexpected中断s. Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties.

revlab@texastribune.org
VIRTUAL EVENT PREP TIPS

We’re honored to have you on as a guest for our upcoming virtual event!

We all know that adjusting to this “new normal” has its challenges—virtual interviews included. In order to help you prepare and feel confident in your at-home setup, we wanted to share this quick list of tips for looking and sounding your best:

CAMERA SETUP

- Make sure that your laptop camera (or other webcam) is at a height that is eye-level with you. This will likely mean raising your computer height significantly with a stack of books, a stand or even a tripod if you have one available, and will help avoid camera shots looking directly up your nostrils.
- Next, check to make sure your camera lens is clean for the best possible picture.
- It’s also helpful to make sure that the device you plan to use for the event is fully charged and plugged into a nearby outlet.
Lessons learned so far in going virtual

1. Best production is solid pre-production
2. Good Solid “B” Work Sets the Table for future “A+” work
3. Technology is easy part. You have content. Use it!
4. Don’t try to recreate IRL events
5. Repackage content
6. Have a producer
Tip Sheets

Getting Started with Virtual Events

Tribune Run of Show

Tribune Moderator Tip Sheet

Tribune Guest Tip Sheet