Abstract

This document contains key items and best practices for hosting a successful blended event. We will also look at the areas of:

- Initial planning
- Pre-configuring attendees
- Using an event moderator
- Creating content
- Training presenters
- Setting up the conference room
- Practicing
- Additional Resources

Introduction

One of the key ways in which Elluminate Live! is used is for virtual or blended (online/onsite) events, like workshops, seminars, and conferences. Hosting events online allows you to reach hundreds of participants simultaneously—across your organization or around the world. Moreover, all sessions can be recorded allowing you to share the presentation with others after the event.

There are various scenarios when examining the concept of hosting blended events.

- Imagine hosting an event for an onsite audience with a remote presenter. Elluminate allows you to easily bring in keynote presenters who otherwise would not have been able to travel for the event due to time or costs.

- Imagine hosting a blended event with both an onsite and online audience and remote and onsite presenters and panelists. This allows users across the globe to participate in a conference, expanding the geographical reach of your event.

Elluminate has a tremendous amount of experience with hosting blended events. Your remote attendees will feel like they are truly part of the event—without expensive, time-consuming, and inconvenient travel. Some examples of customers that have hosted blended events are shown below.
The photos below show a blended conference held in Denmark using Elluminate Live! (Our thanks to Dr. Derrick Cogburn at Syracuse University for sharing this.)

In the images below you’ll see how Elluminate Live! was used.

- The onsite participants were able to see the online interaction.
- The presentations were loaded onto the whiteboard and projected to both audiences.
- The Closed Captioning feature was used for translations for both the onsite and online audience.
The photos below show the ALT-C 2007 Conference held in Nottingham, England from September 4–6. Photos taken by Mark Gregory at Photoshy.

In the images below you’ll see how Elluminate Live! was used.

- Participants onsite were encouraged to log into the session.
- The onsite participants were able to see a full view of the chat window. This allowed them to see the questions, comments and interaction between the online attendees.
- The presentation was loaded into the Elluminate Live! session for the online audience. As the onsite presenter advanced through their slides, the Elluminate event moderator advanced the slides for the online audience.
- An onsite event moderator seated on the stage was able to relay questions from the remote audience to the onsite host.
Initial Planning

There are several areas to consider as you begin to plan your event.

The Agenda
Identify which sessions you wish to host online. Remember that you want to offer the online audience an equivalent experience, so select presentations that will work well online such as keynote presentations, panel discussions, case study presentations. Sessions that have interactivity such as small group discussions can be hosted online but will require effort to ensure that the activities are choreographed for the online audience. Ensure presenters are aware that their sessions will be hosted online.

As you plan the schedule, if you are hosting multiple sessions, schedule at least ten minutes between sessions to allow users to transition between sessions and to load new content. Also, during the conference allow time for the online attendees to network by setting up open rooms where participants can meet.

Ideally the sessions should be hosted from the same physical room. This allows you to set up the necessary hardware, including A/V, in one room without having to move equipment in between sessions. It also allows you to have one event moderator managing the event in the room.

Marketing and Registration
Determine how you wish to market the event and capture registrations. How many online attendees will you have? Will you charge for the online attendance?

Determine who will schedule the Elluminate Live! sessions. If you are an existing customer, you are able to schedule the sessions in your admin account to run at the appropriate date/time. Or if you are using Elluminate’s Event Hosting service, Elluminate will set up the sessions for you. Provide the necessary information that users will need to join the session via email, website, or both. See http://www.elluminate.com/ecc2007/ and http://www.elluminate.com/smartgrowth/ as examples. Note that the buttons were links to the live sessions before and during the conference. After the conference, we posted links to the recordings and updated the buttons to indicated they were for the recording.

When you set up the event, it can be as easy as generating a link that users will click on to enter the event. Here are two examples.

- Send out an invitation to a distribution list with details about the session and a link to an agenda page. This provides an open invitation to those users who wish to join.
- Use Elluminate’s registration system or a third-party system (with eCommerce if needed) so you can track how many people and who will attend the event. Once users register, send a customized email with the detailed instructions on how to attend.

Audio/Visual Requirements
This is a critical piece for the success of your event. If the event is hosted in a large room at a conference center or hotel, be sure to engage their A/V team. For example, if you want the onsite audience to ask questions verbally and be heard by all in the onsite room, you’ll need to have an external microphone and speakers.
Internet Requirements
It is very important that the Elluminate Event moderator, responsible for broadcasting the sessions online and interacting with the online audience, have a wired Internet connection. This ensures their interaction with the online audience and onsite presentation is continuous and not dependent on the stability of a wireless Internet connection.

Also, it is important to see if there is wireless Internet connectivity available to the onsite participants. This will allow onsite attendees to log into the Elluminate Live! sessions and interact with the online attendees. If wireless Internet is available to the onsite attendees, ensure that it is capable of managing the load with a high volume of participants.

Engaging Online and Onsite Attendees
Think about how an ideal environment will be created for both online and/or onsite users and how users will interact with each other in a blended environment. Consider the following questions.

• Where are the presenters located? Are they all onsite or online or a combination?

• What will be the session etiquette that you define? For example, will participants be able to ask questions throughout the session, or will questions only be taken during a certain period? Will you take questions verbally, just through chat for the online attendees, or both? For large scale events, taking questions verbally many not be possible with time constraints.

• In particular, do you want the online group to be able to ask questions verbally during presentations? If so, it is important to set up the audio so that they can be heard by the onsite audience. Or will you have the online participants type their questions and have the event moderator repeat them to the onsite group?

• Do you want the onsite group to be able to ask questions verbally during presentations? If so, will you have microphones distributed throughout the onsite audience so that when they ask a question, they can be heard by the online audience? Or will you have presenter repeat the question for the online group?

• For blended events, will you allow onsite participants to log into the Elluminate sessions to interact with the online audience?

• For the onsite group, will you project the Elluminate Live! session with the presentation loaded on the whiteboard, or will you project the presentation in its original format?
Pre-Configuring Attendees

Encourage users to pre-configure their computers prior to their first session using the First Time Users section on Elluminate’s Support Page at http://www.elluminate.com/support/. This will ensure they have the required software and have tested their audio.

Optionally, have a check-in session for new participants prior to the first online session to ensure the participants are ready from a technical standpoint. Set up a time, for example an hour or two, when new participants can drop into an Elluminate Live! session to have someone walk them through accessing the event, check their audio, and review the interface. In this way, new participants will attend your first session prepared to engage, rather than be apprehensive over the new technology.

Send out an email laying out exactly what you expect of your participants. For example, this might include pre-configuration information, time of check in sessions, and installation of any plug-ins required by your content. It should also include the exact time the session is scheduled to begin, how to access the session, and any pre-work that needs to be done. Include a reminder in any communication you have with your participants – a message repeated is less likely to be ignored. Below is an example of text that could be sent as an email or posted on a webpage to encourage participants to pre-configure.

Thank you for participating in the conference!

As you prepare for the online sessions in Elluminate Live!, we wanted to ensure you have all of the resources that you need so that you are successfully up and running for your first session. Below is the information that you need to for a great experience with Elluminate.

Step 1: Getting Ready
- Ensure that you are at the computer on which you will attend your session and that it is connected to the Internet.
- Ensure your computer satisfies the minimum system requirements listed on http://www.elluminate.com/support/min_requirements.jsp.
- Ensure that you have a microphone and speakers to take full advantage of the audio capabilities during the session.
- Ensure that you are an administrator on your computer and can install software. If you are unsure, please contact your system administrator.

Step 2: Installing the Required Software
Approximately 24 hours prior to your first session, go to http://www.elluminate.com/support and follow the instructions in the First Time Users section. This page checks if you have Java Web Start installed. If not, follow the online instructions.

The installation of Java Web Start is a one-time process that you will not need to repeat. The download can take up to 40 minutes on a 28.8K modem (less if your Internet connection speed is faster). Allow sufficient time to complete the download and installation before your first session.

Next, click on join the Configuration Room to test your connection and configure your audio.
Step 3: Getting Help
If you encounter any problems along the way, please feel free to visit our Technical Support Portal at http://www.elluminate.com/support-portal/ where you can search our knowledge base for a solution, or contact our help desk by phone or by submitting a ticket online.

Step 4: Learning More About Elluminate
Go to http://www.elluminate.com/support and the First Time Users section to find more information about Elluminate, including a recorded introduction, an online, and a quick reference guide. These resources ensure that you are able to interact using the basic features in your first session.

Step 5: Getting Your Own vRoom
If you would like to have your own virtual room to practice or use outside of your event, go to http://www.elluminate.com/vRoom and sign up for your own free Elluminate vRoom for up to three participants!
Using an Event Moderator

We recommend that you have an onsite event moderator in the session who will:

- Interact with the A/V team or set up the required hardware to ensure the audio is configured and tested prior to the first session
- Set up the video camera (if desired)
- Log into the session as the moderator. The event moderator will have the complete set of links for all sessions including moderator access.
- Load the presentations and any additional content into Elluminate Live!
- Broadcast the audio to the online participants
- Remember to start the recorder
- Facilitate the online interaction by navigating through slides, playing multimedia, etc. (mimicking the onsite presenter). This will allow the main presenter(s) to focus on delivering the content.
- Interact with the online audience to ensure they are engaged with the content and monitor the chat conversations.
- Assist with troubleshooting technical questions.
Creating Presentation Content

Work with each presenter ahead of time to better understand their content. Are they just using slides? Will they be showing websites or multimedia files? Will they have small group activities for the onsite and/or online groups?

There are several ways to incorporate content into the Elluminate Live! session, including application sharing, multimedia, quizzes/surveys, Web Tour, video, and whiteboard. Content displayed on the whiteboard can be loaded from a variety of sources, including Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, OpenOffice/StarOffice presentations, Portable Document Format (PDF) files, Portable Network Graphics (PNG) files, and other image files.

Note that all presentations loaded into the whiteboard are loaded onto a separate screen as a background, and the title from each slide will appear as the screen name. Therefore all transitions, build, links to URLs/media files will be lost.

Additional best practices for creating content include:

- Design content and create presentations to include interactivity and variety to engage all types of learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.).
- Make sure the content you create is easy to see. Keep background templates simple so that they don't distract from the content you want to share. It's usually a good idea to avoid gradient colors in the background.
- Use a font type and size that is easy to read. In Elluminate Live!, usually no smaller than a 12 point standard font such as Arial, Verdana, or Times New Roman.
- Use visuals whenever possible especially for complex processes or procedures.
- Avoid slide after slide of bulleted lists. Transform bulleted lists into graphical representations, lists of questions, polls, quizzes or even games.

As you work with the presenters on their content, be aware of these additional best practices.

- Create a checklist of content and an agenda of each online and onsite presentation so that you are aware of the key interactivity and content points in the session.
- For the onsite audience, remember that you can project the Elluminate Live! interface or project the presentation in its original format. If you decide the project the original presentation, the onsite event moderator is responsible for mimicking the same content for the online audience. They will need to prepare by loading the necessary multimedia files and creating and assigning users to breakout rooms as needed.
- For blended events, activities that are conducted with the physical audience, such as small group activities, will need to be replicated for the online audience by the event moderator.
- The event Moderator should have a Flash drive ready should the presenter have made any last minute changes to the content. The presentation can be easily transferred and loaded into the session.
Training for Presenters

Prior to the event, provide training for the online presenters to ensure they are comfortable with the technology and can use the features of Elluminate Live! are used to their maximum potential. You can also take the onsite presenters through an overview of Elluminate so they understand what the online audience will experience and can keep them in mind during the event. For example, the onsite speaker can alert the event moderator to documents that can be file transferred or multimedia to be played to include the online audience as much as possible.

For free moderator training, visit http://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/event/schedule?etn=training&eef=1. Encourage your presenters to attend the sessions titled Getting Started With Elluminate Live! For Moderators and Next Steps with Elluminate Live! for Moderators to learn the basics of moderating a session: communication, navigation, and collaboration. Documentation, including user guides and recorded training sessions for moderators, is available at http://www.elluminate.com/support/docs/8.0/moderator.jsp.

The onsite presenters simply use the presentation software the content was originally created in. Remember that the session can be set up so that the onsite event moderator logs in on a separate compute to load the same presentation and then mimics the slide movements of the presenter.
Setting Up the Conference Room

To configure a conference room for a blended event with Elluminate requires the following equipment.

- A laptop or desktop system running Elluminate Live!
- Direct Internet connection rather than a wireless connection
- LCD projector to display the session in the conference room
- Video camera (including DV camera) and tripod
- Additional equipment and cables such as Flash drives, Firewire cables, Ethernet cable, extension cords, etc.

For larger rooms with a house sound system:

- Cables from the conference center A/V to hook directly into the house sound system - fully grounded, balanced grounded line system. The mixer board will be used to connect the house sound in the conference room to the Elluminate laptop/desktop. The conference or hotel facility will work with you to provide this equipment.
- Additional microphones can also be set up in the conference room allowing participants to come up to a microphone to ask questions to be heard by both the online and onsite group.
- 3.5mm jack to connect the audio from the mixer board into the computer. Once in Elluminate Live! you can configure this as the audio input device. It will either be recognized as an external microphone or Line In as the source and must be tested.

For smaller rooms without access to the house sound system:

- Wireless microphone for the presenters or a multidirectional microphone. In this case, remind the presenter to stay near the microphone and within range of the video camera.
- For events held in conference rooms with a speaker panel, we recommend that you use an echo cancellation microphone. At Elluminate, we have successfully used products by ClearOne and Phoenix Audio. Specifically, we recently tested the Phoenix Audio Duet Executive. See http://www.phnxaudio.com for more information. Multiple units can be linked together for coverage of a larger conference room.
- External speakers so that an online presenter or online audience’s questions can be heard.

For troubleshooting audio issues:

- If there is noise with the house sound system, the electricity provided to the room might be “dirty,” and you may need a grounding plug. The A/V team will be able to assist you with this.
- If there is noise in the smaller room:
  - Make sure the right source is selected in the PC. You might actually be using the internal microphone rather than the external line-in. In this case, you are picking up the ambient sound from the room, not the line plugged into the PC, so the quality will be low.
  - The microphone at the source might need to be higher quality. Try a lavalier microphone rather than a hand-held or a desk microphone. Make sure the person doesn’t have an item of clothing, such as a necktie, rubbing on top of the microphone.
The figure below displays the required hardware elements for a blended conference.

Detailed examples are provided towards the end of the document.
Conducting a Dry Run

Just as participants should prepare their systems for Elluminate Live!, Event Moderators should prepare and test the content to be shown during a session in advance. Hold a dry run of the session during which you may:

- Ensure that the whiteboard slides load and display correctly
- Work out the timing and execution of any polls, quizzes, interactions or breakout room activities
- Pre-configure audio and display settings
- Make your presenters comfortable in the environment
- Check if the conference or hotel facility is available a day before the event to test out the audio and lighting. Or arrive early (1.5 - 2 hours) before the first session begins. Set up the laptop and video camera, confirm that audio is working correctly.

After the Event

Post the recording links on the website. Send a thank you note to all presenters and include information on where they can access the recordings from.

Additional Services

Additional services, including technical support, customized training sessions, Elluminate event moderators, and phone bridging services, are available for an additional cost. Please contact your account manager or sales@elluminate.com for more information.
Audio Setup Examples

Auditorium

Goals:

- Presenter or onsite audience member can speak to auditorium over amplified speakers
- Presenter or onsite audience member can speak to online participants
- Online participants can speak to onsite audience over amplified speakers
- (OPTIONAL) Interactive whiteboard can be used to add “handwritten ink” to whiteboard, optionally control the session, and simultaneously be projected to a second, much larger screen for the audience

Figures 5.
Large Auditorium Setup

A – House speakers so that audience can hear locally amplified presenter and any online participants who are granted the Elluminate Mic

B – Large format video project that comes directly from main Elluminate computer or (optionally) from video splitter that shares the signal with the Interactive whiteboard

C – (Optional) Interactive whiteboard and projector that can be used to control the Elluminate session and/or add hand-drawn ink and notes to the Elluminate session

D – USB connection from main Elluminate computer to the Interactive Whiteboard
E – VGA video out from the main Elluminate computer to the main auditorium projector (or optionally to the splitter that will then go to the Interactive whiteboard AND the auditorium projector)

F – House audio from the mixer board that collects all presenter and auditorium microphones and sends them to the main Elluminate computer as mic or line input (depending on what the computer sound adapter is capable of)

G – Audio output from the main Elluminate computer to the mixer board. This will allow any online participants who are recognized and granted the microphone to speak to the entire auditorium and will allow any media files played through the main Elluminate computer to be heard by the onsite audience.

H – The house A/V team will have a location where all video and audio cables go to and the audio mixer board is located

I – One or more fixed microphones to pick up audience questions OR one or more wireless microphones that are handled by “runners” to ensure that audience question or comments are heard by rest of onsite audience and sent to the online participants through the main Elluminate computer

J – The main presenter podium. Depending on the physical setup and presenter needs, the main presenter can present alone from the main Elluminate computer or from a separate podium assisted by a presenter helper who runs the Elluminate session.

Notes:

- Receive help from the house A/V team to achieve this setup
- Test and setup system a few hours ahead of time
- Use Elluminate in “1 simultaneous speaker” mode to avoid VoIP feedback loops UNLESS
  - There is echo cancellation hardware in the auditorium such as sold by Wideband Solutions
  - And you can ensure that remote sites are all using headphones or have echo cancelling microphones.
Small classroom where 3 to 15 people share a single computer

Goals:
- Presenter or onsite audience member can speak to online audience
- No onsite amplification needed; All attendees can hear onsite presenter with no amplified speakers

Figures 6.
Small classroom or conference room setup

A – Main Elluminate computer
B – One (or optionally more ‘linked together) “Duet” or other echo cancelling microphone / speaker setups
C – Participants around the main table covered by the echo cancelling microphone / speaker setups
D – VGA connection to projector in room
A “small classroom or conference audio kit” where you do not know up front what you will encounter

Goals:

- You don’t know the equipment you are going to need at a professional conference, you only know that the presenter will have a computer and a projector. You have no idea of their audio capabilities

- You want onsite amplification, you want to be able to have the onsite audience send audio to the online participants, and you want the online participants to hear the presenter and questions from the onsite audience

Note:

- With this setup you will be prepared to locally amplify to a small conference room as well as receive any audio and input from any Windows XP or Mac OS X computer. Be sure to bring a wide range of adapter cables and jacks. NOTE: XLR cables and jacks can’t be bought at Radio Shack – you’ll need to contact a local professional audio/video supply center, like those that support musicians.

Figures 7.
Be prepared for anything conference and small room setup

A or B – Radio Shack 900Mhz wireless handheld microphone OR wireless handheld audio link transmitter that you plug your own small microphone into (Or more expensive equivalent, for example, from Shure audio). Be sure to test that microphone that plugs into transmitter is at proper level to transmit and that you always have fresh batteries! The audio is sent to C.
C – Radio Shack 900Mhz wireless microphone receiver (or equivalent, for example, from Shure audio). This sends audio from onsite microphone to D using XLR jacks and cable.

D – Whirlwhind Mic splitter IMP 1x2. Takes microphone audio and splits it to go to both the computer and to amplified speaker.

E – Anchor AN-130 mini amplified speaker (or equivalent). Receives input to 1/8” jack from Splitter D with an XLR to 1/8” cable

F – The Mobile Audio PRE USB audio adapter (or equivalent) acts as an alternate “audio card” for any computer. This allows any professional or consumer audio input and output type to connect as well as control input and output levels prior to the audio getting to or from the computer. Microphone input comes from the splitter D via XLR jack to 1/8” microphone input into the Mobile PRE USB.

**Note:** In Elluminate Audio Setup Wizard, be sure to choose the Mobile PRE USB for audio input and output and NOT the computer’s built-in audio card.

G – Audio output from the computer now comes from the Mobile Audio PRE USB audio system and goes to the amplifies speakers through a stereo 1/8” jack to stereo RCA jack cable.