

CASE STUDY

Virgin Hyperloop Livestreams Historic First Passenger Test

As Virgin Hyperloop prepared to run the first manned test of its hyperloop transportation system, the company knew it had to do something special to mark the occasion. Hyperloop technology promises to revolutionize passenger and cargo transportation by delivering low-cost, energy-efficient intercity travel via pods moving at extremely high speed through vacuum tubes. The test was a significant step towards achieving this goal. However, COVID-19 restrictions prevented Virgin Hyperloop from inviting team members and other guests to view the test in person. So, the company turned to BlueJeans Events for help with creating a COVID-safe experience.

“In the past, we’ve brought our employees out to the Nevada test site for viewings and had a big party,” explains Dawn Armstrong, Virgin Hyperloop’s Vice President, Information Technology. Due to the pandemic, that employee experience wasn’t possible this year. “We came up with the idea of creating a drive-in theater experience so that employees could still be there with us and see the event. We had popcorn, movie snacks, cartoons and trivia games. We were able to deliver that same excitement for our employees and their families but in their vehicles, socially distanced...It was the best of both worlds.”

International investors and other stakeholders who couldn’t attend the drive-in event were able to watch the BlueJeans livestream remotely, via a link.

Working Together to Solve Complex Problems Simply

Virgin Hyperloop was already using BlueJeans Meetings and BlueJeans Events throughout the organization, but this was the first time it had used the Events platform to livestream on this scale. Broadcast quality



Industry: Transportation

Challenges: COVID-19 restrictions meant Virgin Hyperloop needed a virtual alternative to showcase the first-ever manned test for investors, employees, and the media.

Solutions: Virgin Hyperloop used BlueJeans Events to livestream the test for guests watching at a COVID-safe event and remotely.

Results: Virgin Hyperloop’s IT team successfully streamed the historic tests for employees watching on a drive-in theater screen at the test site, as well as employees, their families at home, and investors watching remotely. Realtime connections averaged approximately 325 connections.

The livestream received excellent feedback from guests and other stakeholders and resulted in positive media coverage.

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– ALEX MARQUISE, SENIOR DESKTOP ADMINISTRATOR AT VIRGIN HYPERLOOP

was critical for the livestream so BlueJeans Events was an obvious choice. BlueJeans’ video upload feature means it can show videos at a much higher frame rate than can be achieved by screen-sharing options used on other platforms. This means the video quality is far superior. Virgin Hyperloop first needed to set up a point-to-point link between the test site and the location of the drive-in screen.

“There’s no internet in the desert,” explains Armstrong. “So that’s how we got the live feed out there. We literally ran an HDMI cable two miles from a laptop at the test site to the big screen, wirelessly.” Using several fixed and mobile cameras for filming, Virgin Hyperloop’s information technology team used Open Broadcaster Software to combine the video feeds into a single stream. BlueJeans’ video pinning and layout features allowed them to preconfigure the layout of the feeds and switch seamlessly from one feed to another.

A member of BlueJeans’ technical team was on hand to answer questions and provide advice before and on the test day. “BlueJeans’ technical support was simply awesome when we were running our big event. I was

very impressed with how quick they were to respond and how thorough they were with some of our more complex questions. They gave us confidence to run our event well,” says Alex Marquise, Senior Desktop Administrator at Virgin Hyperloop.

“We wanted to put on the best show humanly possible,” says Dawn Armstrong. “And I think we did a good job of that, given the environment we were working in.” A second test, run on the following day, was also livestreamed for investors who had been unable to take part in the first event.

Reducing Reliance on Third-party Contractors

With the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 set to continue into 2021, BlueJeans makes it simple for companies to run engaging, immersive events in a virtual or hybrid setting. The platform is so easy to use that Virgin Hyperloop didn’t need the help of a third-party production company. This helps to keep costs low and puts complete control over the look and feel of events into the hands of the event organizers.

“I can’t even imagine, frankly, the expense if we’d had a production company come in and do the same sort of livestreamed event,” says Dawn Armstrong. Having worked through the challenges of the first livestream, Dawn Armstrong says that holding a similar event in the future is a “no-brainer” and plans to use BlueJeans when they reach their next company milestone.

Smoothing Out Everyday Communication Challenges

Virgin Hyperloop also uses BlueJeans for its everyday communication needs. Team members around the globe use it for everything from internal catchups to meetings with investors. The company also uses it to host its board meetings. With board members joining meetings from a variety of international locations, and often without a good internet connection, being able to monitor users’ internet performance via the administration portal is a useful feature.

“We’re able to send them a screenshot and suggest that they join the next meeting using a premium calling number,” says Dawn Armstrong. “The premium calling numbers are vital for us. We use them all the time.” Ultimately, Virgin Hyperloop is pleased to call BlueJeans a trusted partner. “I’m grateful for their support during our history-making milestone of the first manned Hyperloop flight,” Dawn Armstrong says. “With BlueJeans technical assistance, it went off without a hitch.”

ABOUT VIRGIN HYPERLOOP

Virgin Hyperloop is the only company in the world to have successfully tested hyperloop technology at scale. Virgin’s Hyperloop pods use passive magnetic levitation—the same technology used in bullet trains—to propel them through a tunnel. Low air pressure in these tunnels reduces drag, meaning that only a relatively small amount of power is needed to achieve speeds of up to 760 miles per hour. This new form of transport promises to be faster, safer, cheaper, and more sustainable than existing modes. Virgin Hyperloop plans to make hyperloop technology available within the next few years.