

## Virtual Events Q&A:

*Boost online sales and orders for a year-round customer connection.*

### Q. What are live online events?

A. A livestream combines real-time video creation, sharing and viewing to connect businesses and customers. Typically, events are live broadcast ('streamed') via social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, etc.) Event recordings can automatically save to social media channels for future viewing and re-sharing. These are typically low-cost to produce.

### Q. What level of sophistication is needed to host a live event?

A. With minimal high-tech tools, such as a smart phone, Internet, and social media accounts, you can host a live event. A tripod and lapel or boom microphone can provide better stability to record images and capture audio.

### Q. What are some helpful tips for organizing a live event?

A. The most important parts are to set goals and create a plan. An e-commerce website or online order form, a product shipping or pickup option, and social media are also important.

### Some creative tips:

- ✓ Feature your own products! Tell viewers about the story behind them: what ingredients are used, how are they sourced, and how is the product made? Share a memorable anecdote to catch viewers' interest and make a sale.
- ✓ Make a curated box of products from your farm (and others) that use themes to target different customers. Some examples:
  - Artisan food gift baskets—breakfast, appetizers, comfort foods, DIY kits
  - Feature a variety of products from different regional businesses
  - Sampler boxes and gifts (e.g., birthdays, anniversary, thinking of you, etc.)
- ✓ Anticipate and answer needs: Can you offer shipping, or pick-up or delivery options?

### Other considerations:

- ✓ A professional, attractive setup is important. This includes lighting, backdrops and product close-ups.
- ✓ A voiceover (like a podcast recording), and previously captured images can showcase products for sale and still provide a personal touch.
- ✓ Don't host an hours-long event. Use a call to action and encourage visitors to shop at any time by clicking designated links (tabs, channels, catalog albums, order form etc.).
- ✓ Before the event, create buzz with a mini campaign: Will there be a new product release? Is there an exclusive shopping cart discount code? Is there a special occasion?



## Example of Virtual Pop-up Live Events:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/VAM-Artisan-Market-110087490656081/>

### Q. How can I tell my story?

A. You need to attract and retain viewer attention within the first 10-30 seconds. Create a script and share facts and sincere information about your business. Farmers have the unique opportunity to educate viewers about the story and quality of their products.

### Some examples of storytelling from other Maine agricultural businesses:

<https://extension.umaine.edu/growing-maine/>

### Q. How can I find an audience? How can I get people to show up?

A. Important steps help you find an audience and connect:

- ✓ Know your audience—do advance research (i.e., who are your shoppers and when are they typically online?).
- ✓ Plan pre-event promotions, including advance notices (social media posts, events, newsletters). Use referrals and testimonials; ask for social media shares by customers who already champion your business.

### Q. What if nobody 'shows up'?

A. It's possible no one will show up. That is the nature of direct sales. The value of online events is that you can be ready for whenever people do show up. Your recording helps you reach a wider audience at any time.

### Real Maine Promotions:

Need help promoting your Maine agricultural events or farm products?

Tag us with #RealMaine, or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GetRealMaine>

Email [DACFRealMaine@Maine.gov](mailto:DACFRealMaine@Maine.gov)



## Virtual Tours Q&A:

*Promote your business and expand your Internet marketing with virtual tours*

### Q. What is a virtual tour?

A. A virtual tour creates business tours via the Internet. Like in-person tours, you can provide a behind-the-scenes look, answer common questions, and provide educational information. There are many ways to offer virtual tours. They range from a low-key tour captured via a smartphone and published using social media to very sophisticated, such as Virtual Reality (VR) programming, which offers 2-Dimensional and 3-Dimensional viewer experiences. VR experiences use specialized computer applications, enhanced through mobile devices, headsets or goggles.

### Q. What are some helpful tips for organizing a virtual tour?

A. Write a script and outline points of interest, unique facts, and important places. You will need a camera/smartphone to capture still images, or record videos. Consider an auxiliary microphone if you will record audio and image at the same time. You might consider a 360-degree lens camera to take pictures, which are stitched together for a more immersive experience.

### Some creative tips:

- ✓ Poll the audience: what do they want to know more about? Plan your tour to answer their questions. Solicit advance questions or use live events to receive questions.
- ✓ Create a map of places of interest on your farm. For example, invite viewers to ‘walk’ through your day, or the process of growing and processing farm products.
- ✓ Consider seasonal tours—showcase what happens each season.
- ✓ Keep initial segments brief—2 minutes or less. You can compile them on social media to create longer segments.

### View some examples of virtual tours:

<https://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/bicentennialmsa.html>

Resources used: Audacity for recordings, ThingLink for application, 360-degree lens for photography. Viewable via Internet browser and lower cost headsets.

<https://www.agclassroom.org/student/tours.cfm>

### Real Maine Promotions:

Need help promoting your Maine agricultural events or farm products?

Tag us with #RealMaine, or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GetRealMaine>

Email [DACFRealMaine@Maine.gov](mailto:DACFRealMaine@Maine.gov)

*Tips for Virtual Events & Tours Version 1.0 2020 Created June, 2020*

