



# The Association of National Advertisers

## Company

Association of  
National Advertisers

## Industry

Media &  
Advertising

## Location

New York,  
NY USA

## Event Type

Hybrid

## Challenges

- > Navigating the shift from in-person to virtual conferences.
- > Using data and insight to iterate and create engagement for future events.

## Solutions

- > ANA utilised the Grip platform to ensure more networking and engagement was high as they moved from in-person to virtual events.

## Founded in 1910, The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) is the U.S. advertising industry's oldest and largest trade association.

Before the global pandemic struck, ANA was holding around 70 events a year. Grip began working with them in 2020 as the in-person event industry crumbled, and to date, Grip has supported 17 ANA events.

Always looking to better their previous event, here's how the ANA has adapted to the changing events landscape.



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**Kristen McDonough**  
Sr. Vice President of Conferences at ANA

## Where is the ANA today?

For an organisation that runs 70-plus conferences a year, the effects of the pandemic were huge. Many of their events were large in-person events, with C-Suite speakers from a number of Fortune 100 companies. But with in person conferences off the table, the ANA had to look elsewhere. Despite having done some live streaming before, the ANA needed to take virtual events to another level. The team at Grip created a robust virtual event offering for the ANA, which supported their needs then and now.

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**Kristen McDonough**  
*Sr. Vice President of Conferences at ANA*

## A need for networking event technology

“In the past, our strategy was to live stream some of the events if they were oversubscribed, for example. But there was no opportunity for those people watching to network or interact, and that was something people began asking for,” said Kristen McDonough, Senior Vice President of Conferences at ANA.

“As the global pandemic hit, the need to connect people was accelerated. And when we started working with Grip, they were able to act as the ‘Ballroom’ for our events. They enabled people to connect and be interactive.”

The ANA needed to include networking in their virtual events, and Grip provided that. Taking the time early on to show the ANA how to make small changes to the set-up has given them the power to use the Grip platform comfortably.

## First event scepticism

The ANA Advertising Financial Management Conference in 2020 was the first event Grip partnered with the ANA.

Improved networking and interaction were the focus areas, as well as showcasing the sponsors. “The key takeaway for us was that it worked,” said Kristen. “And we really didn’t know if it would, because previous virtual platforms had under-delivered for us. Our relationship with Grip has really grown, and they understand what we’re trying to achieve.”

The event was a success, and the Grip platform was rated highly by attendees. The conference team at ANA took a lot of notes about what worked and what didn’t.

This feedback allowed Grip to work through their findings with them and made changes to the platform so that future events could run even better.

# Accelerating the attendee experience further

For the most part, the data from ANA's conferences suggested that attendees' behavior was relatively consistent. However, insight did start to demonstrate some industry nuances which helped planning for future events. For example, their 2020 Masters of B2B Marketing event drove the highest percentage (83%) of interested connection requests. For some attendees, it's all about networking, but for others, it's a work in progress.

"Understanding how we can incentivise attendees to visit exhibitor booths is an ongoing project for us. We've learned that you can have the booths and exhibitors in place, but you can't make people go to them. You have to provide a reason or incentive," explained Kristen.

## Measuring success and achieving goals

Kristen and her team have a real focus on KPIs and set stretch goals for each event. When an event finishes, there is little downtime before the next event, but they continue to make improvements and ask 'how can the event be better next time.'

Attendees are asked to rate ANA events on a 4-point scale with questions focusing on the overall experience, content, food, venue, and other important topics. With the current focus on virtual events, attendees are now also asked to rate the Grip platform instead of the food and venue.

"A 3.2 out of 4 is where we would want to be, and Grip has consistently rated higher, so we feel really good about working with Grip," says Kristen. "Grip gives us the option to continue with a hybrid events package, and I just can't see us moving away from them in the future."

Networking and event interaction for virtual or hybrid events remains a priority. The ANA's B2B Marketing Conference in 2021 saw the highest conversion of meetings requested at 74%. But we know that Kristen and her team will want to improve on that, and at Grip, we're ready to support them.

## Case Study Overview

### Results

- 17 virtual events run on the Grip platform in 2020
- Achieving at least 3.2 out of 4 on the ANA 4-point scale
- Conferences achieving up to 74% of converted meeting requests



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