

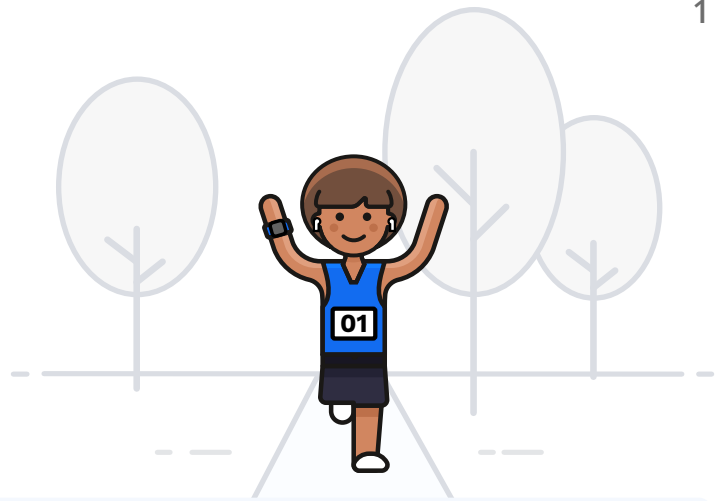


# A Guide to Helping Your Virtual Event Stand Out



# Introduction

Actionable & concrete ideas  
to help your event stand out



**VIRTUAL RACES** first entered the event space when organizers realized participants wanted to engage with their events from afar. At the time, it seemed that virtual participation might be a powerful industry trend. That idea faded, only to come back even stronger in 2019 with big brands and franchises carrying out virtual events.

Now that we're in 2020, facing the many challenges presented by COVID-19, virtual events are more relevant than ever. We believe virtual events are a great way to continue offering value and engagement opportunities to your participants, which is why we recently released our virtual event toolkit to help you organize a virtual event on Race Roster. Additionally, we collaborated with the ASICS Runkeeper™ app to

help you offer your participants a streamlined run tracking and result submission process. Now that you're equipped with the tools you need, our next step is to help you execute a unique and engaging virtual experience.

This guide will help you plan a virtual event that stands out from the crowd. We're bringing you fully formed ideas, thought starters, and various themes to help power your events and your brainstorming sessions. Either way, try to bring your participants a virtual event that doesn't just check a box, but something that gives them an unforgettable experience and gets them sharing online. If you have questions about executing or tweaking any of these ideas, please don't hesitate to resource us!

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**Without physical limitations, a virtual event lets you lean into ideas that might be harder to execute for an in-person event**

# What to expect in this guide



**Planning** - In some ways, planning a virtual event is similar to planning an in-person running event. Factors such as budget, staff, and resources shape the design and goals of your event. Virtual events allow you to stretch beyond those limitations in ways that in-person events do not, extending the opportunity to think, act, and market your event creatively.



**Experience** - Virtual events break all of the molds that might normally constrain your event planning - date, timing, course, etc. - and allow event organizers to think outside the box to create a unique experience for their participants. It's how you lean in to these components that will make your event rise to the top.



**Ideas** - This guide should serve as a list of ideas AND an idea generator. Nothing kicks off a good brainstorming session like some solid thought-starters, so you can either take these ideas and apply them directly, or use them as a starting point to generate even more ideas for your event. In either case, we want to help you think and act creatively when it comes to hosting your virtual event!



**Make your  
virtual event**

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**stand out**

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# Make your virtual event stand out

**JUST LIKE IN-PERSON EVENTS**, your virtual event needs to be unique to get noticed. Virtual events are growing in popularity more and more each day, and you need to give runners a reason to choose your event over all of the others.

How do you do that? The vast majority of virtual events position themselves as digital versions of a traditional in-person event. Participants sign-up online, receive a bib and other swag in the mail, run a certain

time or distance, and upload their results to a leaderboard.

The beauty of a virtual event is that it offers the perfect opportunity to think outside of these constraints when designing your event. Date, time, course, award categories, themes, and distance are all flexible in the digital sphere. Without physical limitations, a virtual event lets you lean into ideas that might be harder to execute for an in-person event.



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# Get creative with your theme



**PARTICIPANTS WANT MORE** out of their virtual events than just a reason to earn some swag (although they like swag too). Give them an experience that connects them to your brand and to each other, virtually. How about a 'Furry Friends Run' with bonus points for runners who post with pets or a 'Stroller Run' with time equalizers given based on the weight of the kids onboard? How about an event that doubles as a scavenger hunt in which runners have a set amount of time to find items on the list – such as a town monument or sign from a local sponsor? Virtual races offer the perfect opportunity to help participants spice up their running while also helping to

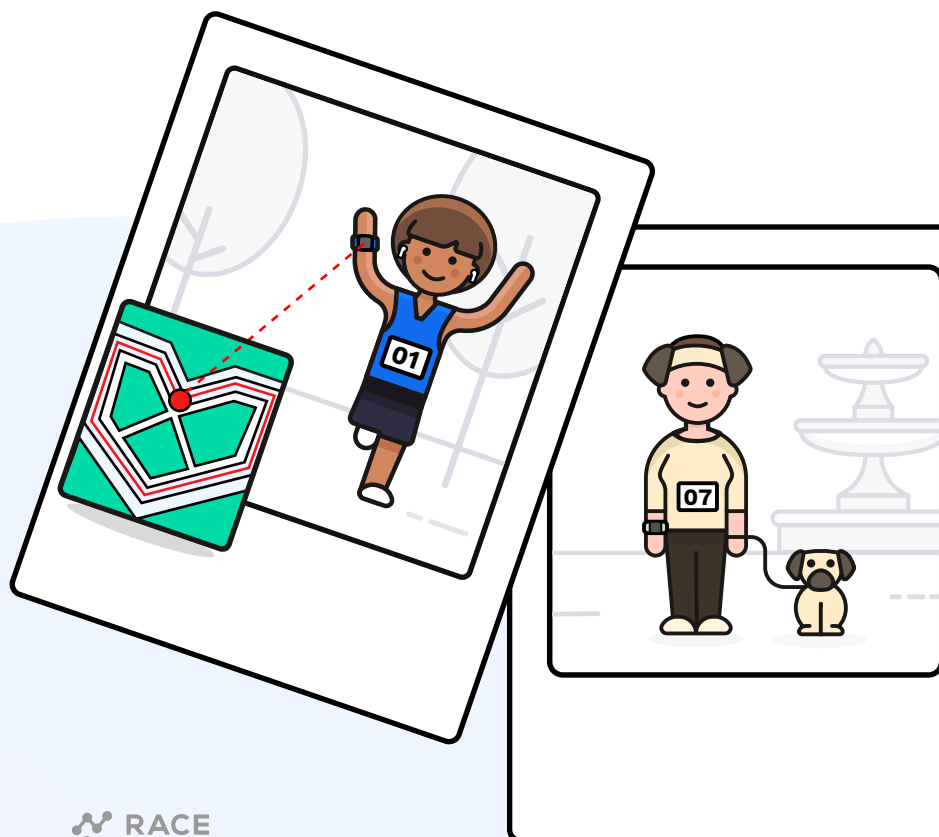
celebrate the things they value about everyday life.

You can also add some personality to your event by creating a mascot or character for participants to see and connect with online. Whether it's a cute plush animal sporting a miniature version of your event t-shirt, or a digital drawing or cartoon character, having a mascot creates a ton of social sharing and engagement opportunities for your event, the runners, and your sponsors. This is a very low-lift, high-reward move and will definitely make your event stand out from the crowd!

## 2

## Create non-traditional awards

**GET CREATIVE WHEN** it comes to award categories. Sure, some participants race for time (and we have tools for that), but participants also love awards for best selfie, most creative photo taken from their smart watch (a watchie?), earliest (or latest) event start, creative event course maps logged on the ASICS Runkeeper™ app, themed costumes, coordinated pet costumes - be as creative as you'd like! Have fun with award categories that give all of your participants a chance to shine.





## 3 Go the distance

**Unique distances** - Another way to make your virtual event stand out from the crowd is to consider unique distances. Go beyond the standard 5K, 10K, and Half Marathon distances and explore distances that lend themselves to your audience and the environment we are in. For example, ignite competitive spirit with a one mile race.



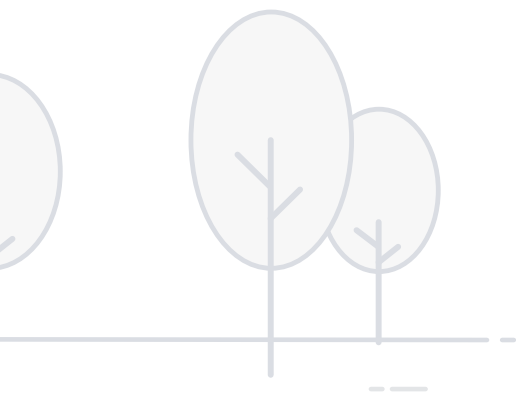
**Points of interest** - Launch a challenge that gets participants to run the distance around your county or state or a key geographical feature of local or national interest. For example, a virtual race set over the course of one month could challenge participants to run 112 miles (the length of the Virginia coastline) or 53 miles (the distance across Lake Erie.)



**Creative dates** - Dates make another interesting race distance category. Try a 16.25 mile distance to commemorate the year New York City was founded. Challenge runners to run 7 miles for seven days in a virtual race that ends on July 7. Encourage your runners to run their age in miles/kilometers in a week.



**Make it exciting** - Without the need to adhere to a pre-planned course, virtual events let participants stretch their legs in their neighbourhood, at their own time, pace, or with a unique reason “why” they’re running.



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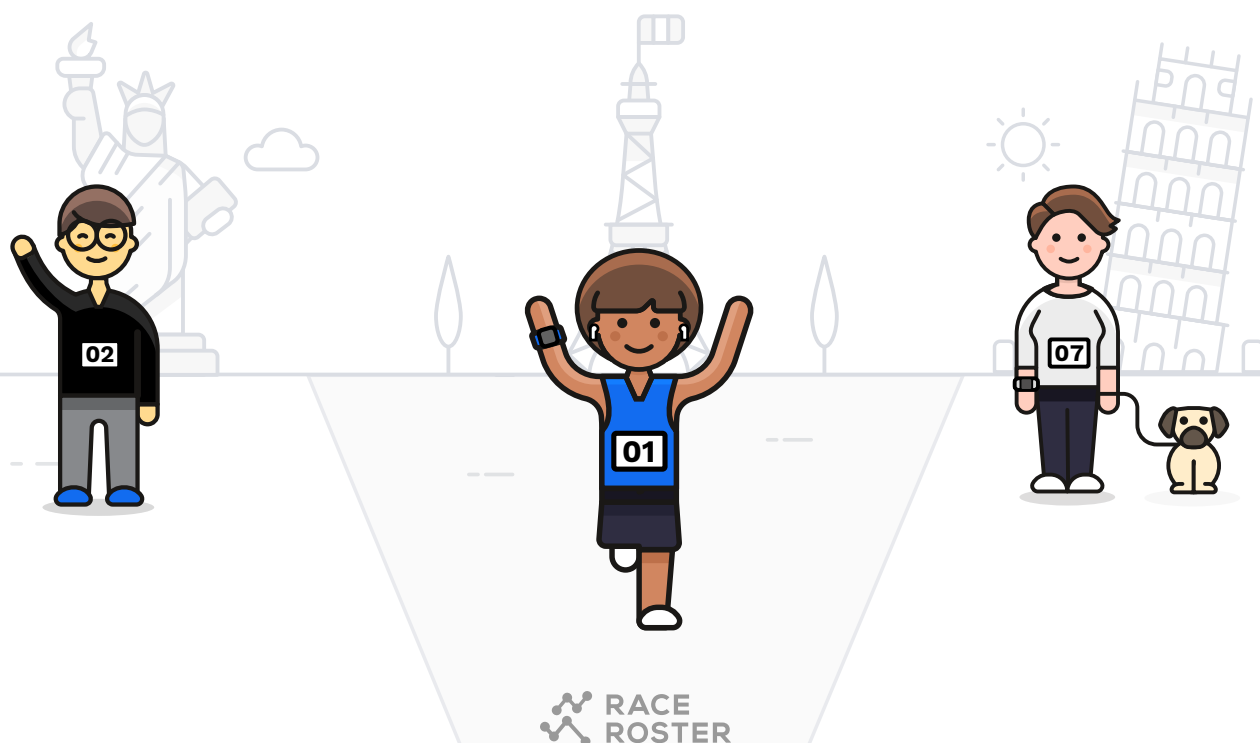
## Bring on the team fun

**QUARANTINES, SELF-ISOLATION,** and shelter-in-place orders mean that runners are craving connection and community. They miss their running friends, their weekly meetups, and their race weekend getaways. Virtual events that offer a team component fill this need by giving runners a way to share the experience with their running friends. It's also an opportunity for you to incentivize group registrations.

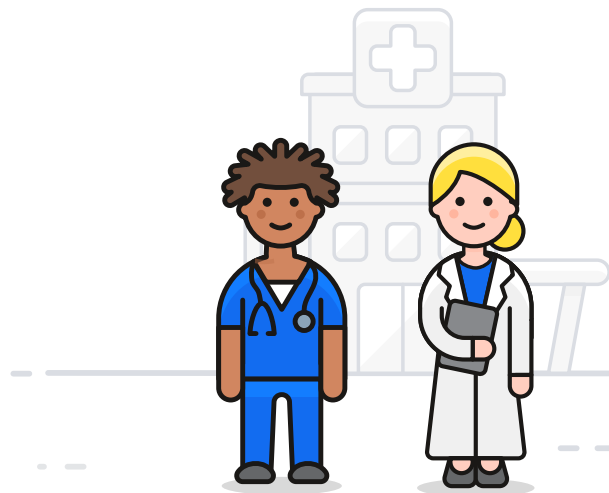
Runners can tally their miles together as a team to tackle a large mileage goal,

such as the 2,802 miles across the U.S. or 1,000 miles in one month. Or how about a virtual relay race where runners 'tag' each other on social media to complete the next leg of the run? There are a ton of social sharing and video opportunities with this kind of activation, so definitely encourage runners to bring their followers, friends, and colleagues along for the run!

Inspire runners to motivate each other with team elements that enrich their virtual experience.



## 5 Make it meaningful



**MANY RUNNERS ARE** looking for ways to add meaning to their miles. Many of your events already include charitable components, so be sure to consider how that translates to your virtual experience. Virtual events that double as fundraisers — particularly for fundraising organizations or causes that are applicable to the current state of the world — give runners a greater sense of purpose. Participants can run in support of a first responder or healthcare worker, a friend or family member afflicted by the virus, or in solidarity with

their local community and small business.

‘Support’ doesn’t have to be monetary. You could also run in ‘Recognition of’ or ‘Thanks to’ a medical professional or first responder, highlighting that person’s dedication and publicly praising their actions and sacrifices. If you would like to raise funds, activate our donation and fundraising tools, you’ll be pleasantly surprised at how much you can generate passively as participants sign up.

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**Give runners a greater sense of purpose.**

# **Fabulous**

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# **finish lines**

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# Fabulous finish lines

**ONE OF THE TOUGHEST** challenges that virtual events face is that they don't provide the same opportunity for runners to physically come together and celebrate their accomplishments. Virtual participants miss that finish line selfie, the post-race medal, the beer, the post-race party pic, and more. Fortunately, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and even TikTok provide more ways for runners to celebrate their virtual event achievements with the running community than ever before.



# 1 Get digital

**GIVE YOUR PARTICIPANTS** the tools they need to share their post-race finish line medal pic. Offer a digital asset such as an Instagram frame, badge, or tiara for participants to add to their posts on Instagram or Instagram Stories. Through the Race Roster virtual results platform, your finishers can download their branded certificates to share.

It's no secret that participants love to share their post-race stories. Make sure they have the assets they need to celebrate their success with their virtual running communities.



## FUN FACT

During this unique time, virtual runners have been setting up crafty finish lines in their doorway at home, or having their family members hold up tape for them to cross. Encourage creative finish line moments!

## 2

## Go LIVE



**MAKE USE OF** Instagram or Facebook Live to conduct a warm-up, celebrate finishers, announce award group winners, or deliver special shout outs for participants with the best medal photo. Consider incorporating a special guest to drive more views to your broadcasted celebrations – and again,

physical limitations no longer apply, so get creative with the special guests you invite! Not only is this fun for your participants, but also for all runners who are at home right now and craving any and all running content and entertainment.

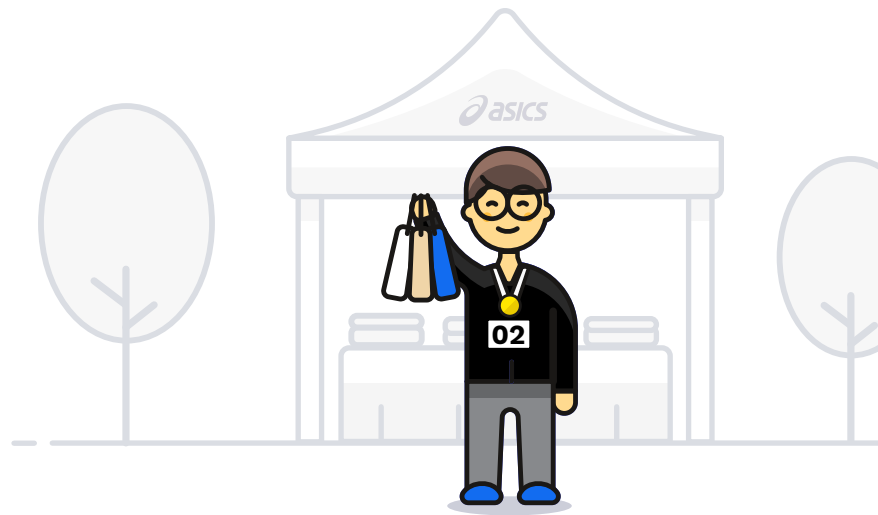


**ADDITIONALLY**, these resources are a great way to incorporate sponsors into the mix and provide more value for their sponsorship dollars. More on ways to do that in the following pages.

## 3

## Postponed finish line party

**YOUR PARTICIPANTS**, sponsors, and everyone else who was involved in your event don't have to miss out on all the in-person finish line fun if you really don't want them to. Much like many newlywed couples who will still be hosting a reception with their friends and family – just at a later date – you can simply postpone your finish line party! Those group photos can still be taken, physical awards can still be distributed, and participants can still get all those celebration goodies!





# **Activate**

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# **sponsors**

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# Activate sponsors digitally & virtually

**SPEAKING OF SPONSORS** — without an expo and post-race finish area activations, what do races have to offer sponsors in terms of engagement and value?



# 1 Activate sponsors

Once again, it's time to get creative and 'think outside the shirt' to give sponsors the most bang for their buck. Here are a few concepts to consider:



**Digital celebration** - Incorporate sponsors into the digital assets (frames, badges, crowns, etc.) provided to runners to celebrate their training and race while incorporating your key sponsors. They can also be integrated into Instagram Live post-race celebrations (see details on **page 14**)



**Training posts** - Milestone badges that can be shared throughout the training journey are a great way to bring sponsors into the virtual experience and keep runners engaged.



**Unique event challenges** - Give sponsors the opportunity to promote and name unique distances or challenges within the virtual event and offer a special award to participants who post a pic with the branded digital badge.



**Training challenge** - By sponsoring daily/weekly fitness challenges, sponsors can ride the digital wave while helping to keep runners engaged by adding their logos to your digital collateral.



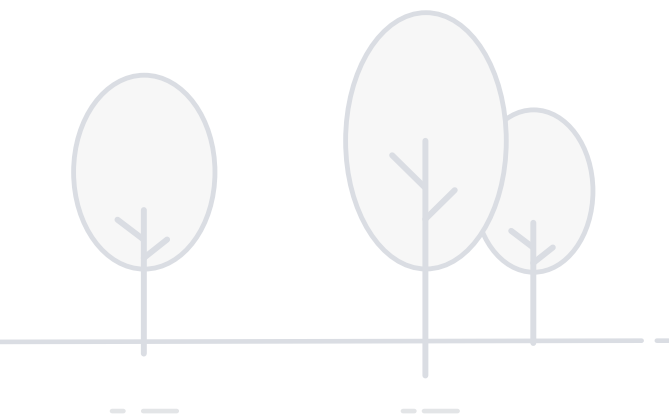


**Virtual sampling** - Sponsors that might normally use race expos to get their products in front of consumers can include sponsors sampled within your goodie bag or offer a unique digital shopping code using our third party codes tool. You can then encourage participants to share swag-bag “unboxing” videos on social to increase the content value for sponsors and the experience for runners.



**Customized branded results page -**

Using Race Roster’s results tool, you can customize your results page to highlight your sponsors in a high-traffic area your participants will visit to submit their virtual results and view their finisher certificates. Highlight your sponsors with a custom background image and add an engaging banner, directing them to your sponsor’s website. Leverage this space to offer discount codes and other incentives to connect your participants with the sponsors you work with. Reach out to us if you’d like to learn more about this!



**Keep your  
community**

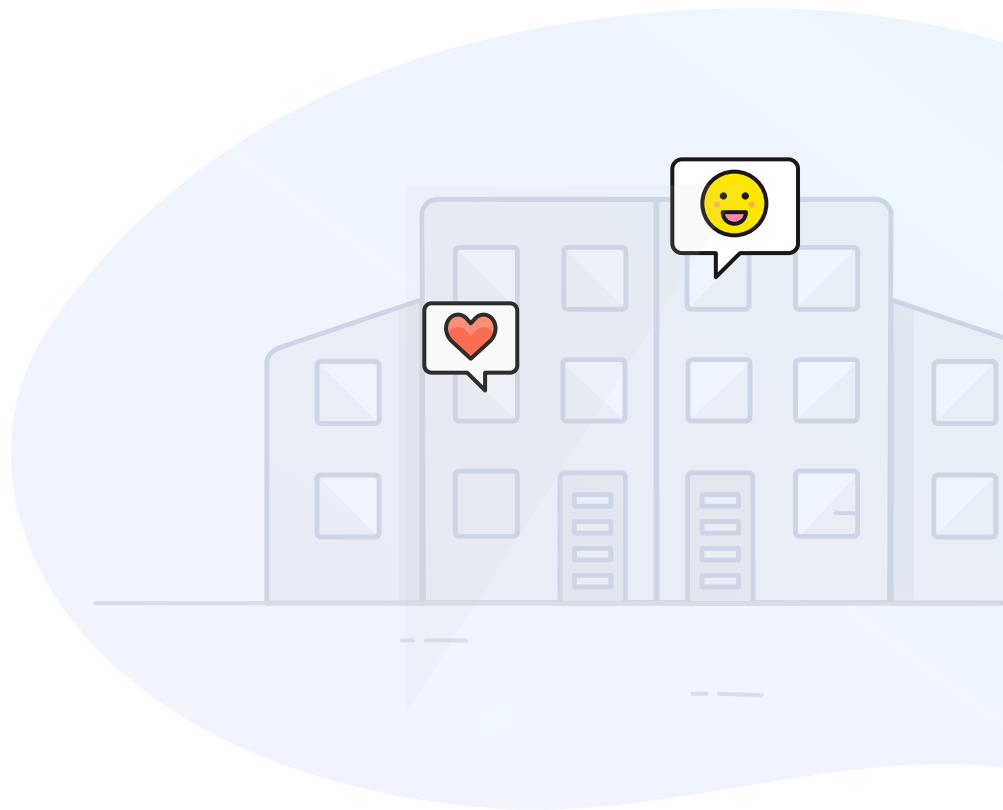
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**engaged**

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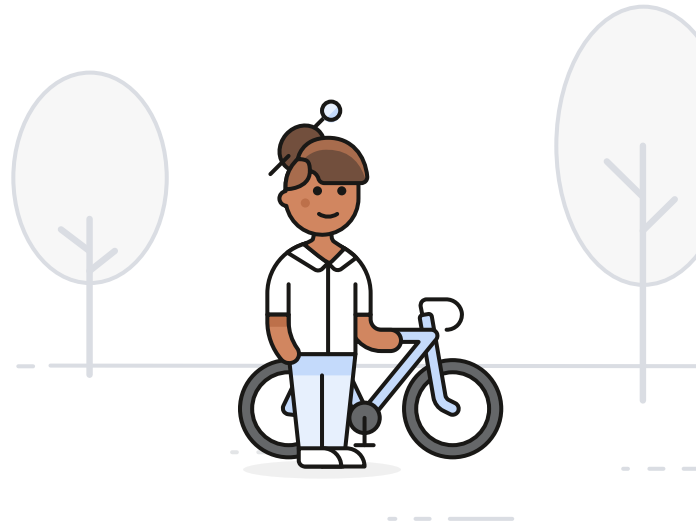
# Keep your community engaged

For in-person and virtual events, it's a more rewarding experience for both participants and event organizers when participants feel connected to the event and share their journey along the way. Give participants an opportunity to share every aspect of your race, from registration and training to completion. Here are a few ideas to keep you connected with your runners even when you won't see them in-person at the event.



# 1 Share the journey

**SOCIAL MEDIA PROMPTS** are a good start and a great way to help participants stay connected to the event and to each other during training. This can come to life a few ways:



**SHARE** daily or weekly social posts that give your runners a call-to-action (CTA) to post about their training. Schedule a live warm-up, and make sure they know when to sign on.

**ASK** participants to share their favorite running related GIF in response to a weekly question such as — Why did you become a runner? When did you become a runner? What's your favorite place to run? Do you prefer speedwork or long runs?

**LEAD!** Nominate someone or several people from your event staff to participate and lead the way in training, while creating content along with your virtual event program.

**POST** race-specific info that encourages participant responses such as a countdown to the virtual event, trivia program for the last week of registration, or fun hints about post-event prizes.

Don't forget to lead by example AND engage with your participants. Doing so helps you share your event's authentic voice with other runners and widen the reach of your running community.

## 2 Challenge & incentives

**RUNNERS LOVE** to share their training stories online, but they love it even more when their posts give them a chance to score a sweet prize. Ideas for challenges and incentives include:



**INCENTIVIZE** followers to share an aspect about their training - such as the song on their playlist that really gets them pumped up and then pull these songs together into a customized Spotify playlist.



**ENCOURAGE** followers to give a shout-out to their running bestie with a contest for free swag or an entry to next year's race.



**CHALLENGE** runners to share pics of their favorite running routes or the ASICS Runkeeper™ app maps that spell out their one-word mantra or depict a fun image. This is another great opportunity to hand out awards for clever content that is both engaging and entertaining.



**...they love it even more when their posts give them a chance to score a sweet prize.**



## 3

## Custom branded finisher certificates



Participants are proud of their accomplishments and are excited to share them with their friends and family. Custom branded finisher certificates are a great way to equip your participants with shareable material AND increase visibility for your brand (and sponsors)!

Customize your finisher certificate to reflect your brand colors, include your

event logo, and add the logos of the sponsors you work with. (See the sponsorship section on **page 18** for more information on why this matters).

Whether it's a shiny new race medal or a sweet finisher certificate, runners love to showcase their accomplishments online.

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**...equip your participants with shareable material AND increase visibility for your brand (and sponsors)!**



**If you have any questions,  
we'd love to chat!**

**Email us at [demo@raceroster.com](mailto:demo@raceroster.com)**

Hopefully you found this guide informative, entertaining, and most of all inspiring! We know how difficult it is to generate new ideas, especially amidst all the industry craziness we're facing and will continue to face. Connecting runners to your brand is more important now than ever. If you have questions or would like support in pulling some of these ideas off - please let us know!

