

# How MemberClicks Used MC | LMS to Increase Virtual Event Registration and Generate Unplanned Revenue

## At a glance

<p><b>Organization name</b> MemberClicks</p>	<p><b>Type</b> Technology Provider</p>	<p><b>Solution(s) used</b> MC   LMS</p>
<p><b>Industry</b></p>  <p><b>Associations and Chambers</b></p>		<p><b>Team Size</b></p>  <p><b>5</b></p>
<p><b>Challenge</b></p> <p>With the cancellation of its three-day, in-person conference, MemberClicks identified an opportunity to create an affordable, high-value, daylong virtual educational experience called MC Thrive using its own learning management system product, MC   LMS.</p>		<p><b>Solution</b></p> <p>MemberClicks used MC   LMS as the backbone of a one-day education experience which hosted 400 attendees, generated nearly \$14,000 of unplanned revenue, and connected handfuls of prospects with the 10 event sponsors.</p>



**Isn't it shocking how plans can change seemingly in the blink of an eye? With the challenges that 2020 has experienced thanks to a global pandemic, we have all had to learn to consider new approaches to, well, nearly everything.**

Believe it or not, MemberClicks was not safeguarded from the challenges that came along with cities and communities being locked down, and events being cancelled en masse. In April 2020, we had grand plans for an amazing MC LIVE!, our annual 3-day conference and community for association and chamber professionals in Atlanta. It was shaping up to be a wonderful event with tons of thought-provoking education, hands-on product training, and one-of-a-kind networking opportunities that MemberClicks is known for facilitating.

Then COVID-19 hit and escalated, forcing MemberClicks to postpone MC LIVE! 2020. Quickly thereafter, there was a burgeoning need in the association and chamber communities for virtual education focused on leading members and stakeholders out of crisis. Out of this realization came MC Thrive, a virtual education experience on May 7, designed to prepare attendees for what's next.

"We wanted to still find a way to help our industry in this time of need and having content focused around those topics with strong speakers," said Director of Marketing Lindsay Smith.

### **Start by Starting — But with a Plan**

With this in mind, the MemberClicks marketing team sprang into action, coming together to determine what a virtual event may look like in terms of planning,

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meeting goals, and delivering value.

“We began by putting together a charter, which stated what the event was, who it was for, and what our goal of hosting it was,” said Senior Inbound Marketing Specialist Callie Walker, who also served as MC Thrive’s emcee. “Once we were all on the same page about that, we split responsibilities. One person handled sponsorships, one person handled the speaker lineup, one person handled the technology, etc. But all starting off on the same page was vital to our success.”

From this point forward, over the course of five weeks, the five-person marketing team spent the better part of each day working tirelessly to deliver an experience that attendees would enjoy and learn from.

“Planning attendee engagement intentionally was a huge priority,” said Colleen Bottorff, MemberClicks’ Inbound Marketing Specialist and MC Thrive Producer. “With MC Thrive in particular, we knew we needed to try to somehow replicate that on-site energy in order to show that virtual is just as valuable.”

## Creating a Memorable Experience Virtually

First, it was important that we offer complimentary registration to those who were planning to attend MC LIVE! 2020. Beyond that, the team felt strongly about making the price point for new attendees palatable. The entire day was \$99 — a true value given the content and the five CAE credits that came with live attendance. And, from an administrative angle, it was simple to collect online registrations and payments using MemberClicks’ own event management software, [ePly](#).

When it came to event promotion, a strong visual tie to the event’s name and its intent was vital.

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on the coronavirus, and everything was very doom and gloom,” said Senior Creative Specialist, Cari Chen. “We wanted to center our event’s identity around hopefulness, practical helpfulness, and also providing people with a sense of community and opportunity in the midst of the developing quarantine.”

This intent led to the creation of an artful representation of fresh perspective, unbounded growth, and hope for an optimistic future.

Once the goals, visual identity and pricing for the one-day event were created, MemberClicks started nailing down how it would deliver the event in a virtual environment. Luckily, MemberClicks has a learning management software, **MC | LMS**, that could serve as the perfect online host to MC Thrive.

The platform extended flexibility to deliver live sessions with attendee chat through CrowdCast, host a virtual marketplace, offer brain break activities during down time, organize important day-of resources, and award certificates of attendance after each session.

The aim was to give attendees a streamlined, enjoyable experience in an organized virtual environment that justified their daylong investment without it feeling daunting, boring or repetitive. MC | LMS was the perfect solution for the job.

“There was an added element of fatigue and knowing that webinar-style presentations are only so engaging,” said Bottorff. “We didn’t want to lose people throughout the day so we spent a lot of time figuring out how to best lay the agenda out, encourage speakers to create engagement, and incorporate other activities within the agenda and outside of it.”

Within the live portions of MC Thrive, engagement was encouraged through facilitated attendee conversations, polls to gain real-time insight from the audience, and a mid-day trivia game and end-of-day raffle. A “room” was also set up where attendees could take advantage of brain break opportunities



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consisting of yoga videos, coloring sheets, online jigsaw puzzles, card games, and — a celebrated inclusion — a link out to classic 80s arcade games such as Pac Man.

“The event was very informative,” said attendee Connor Boyd, Senior Marketing and Communications Coordinator with SBI Association Management. “It moved smoothly and was interactive. I would say it was one of the best virtual events I have participated in as a user.”

### **Building Content and Crowdsourcing for the Win**

As with an in-person conference, the speaker quality and content relevancy are the backbone of a successful event. With this in mind, topics were first identified that would resonate with the intended audience: financial management, strategic planning, communication, member retention and virtual event management. The next priority was finding the perfect speakers.

“We tapped into our network to identify who has expertise in that area and could speak to that topic,” Walker said.

Most agenda spots were filled with content and a presenter with ease. However, there was one spot that was proving tricky to fill with the perfect person, and social media proved to be mightily helpful.

“We turned to one of the industry Facebook groups we are a part of, and asked for recommendations,” Walker continued. “We received a ton — which will help tremendously as we plan future events — and that’s actually how we landed on one of our highest-praised speakers of the day.”

The speaker lineup, along with their talking points and interactions with the audience, was one of the most successful aspects of MC Thrive, according to many attendees.

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“What attracted me to MC Thrive was the shared strategies and tactics offered,” said attendee David Crenshaw, COO of Industry Council for Tangible Assets. “It was a great opportunity to learn new things about the presented topics.”

As with an in-person event, a big part of ensuring success of the speakers is constant communication and an intensive run through. In fact, detailed rehearsal may even be more important with virtual events since logistical complications can be intensified by technology. Plus, extensive prep can help plan for day-of execution.

“We tested with each other and with speakers,” Smith said. “We also created a run-of-show script which had every detail of the day to help it run smoothly.”

These preparations not only contribute to a seamless event, it gives a tremendous amount of confidence to the speakers. This goes a long way toward creating a great relationship with speakers and an enjoyable experience for attendees.

“There was excellent prep, and the back-end logistics were flawless,” said MC Thrive speaker Bennett Napier, CAE, president and CEO of Partners in Association Management.

## **Using Energy and Enthusiasm to Drive Success**

When the big day came, the MemberClicks team felt eager for launch. Of course, with all live, virtual endeavors, there were nerves associated with getting the event kicked off. But because of effective collaboration, communication, and preparation, there was a tremendous feeling of confidence signaling that the day was going to be a success.

With a start time of 10 a.m. EDT, the early morning was spent running through

final considerations and making sure a few additional staff were on hand to tackle help requests and technical troubleshooting. The rest of the company was also reminded about MC Thrive, eliciting excitement about the opportunity ahead. This energy was unexpected yet appreciated, and something that will be tapped into earlier and more often for future events.

“A big success — and surprising outcome — was what this event did for company morale,” said Bottorff. “We were so busy planning the event itself that we didn’t take as much time as we probably should have to stop and hype it up internally. But Clickers came through anyway! Tons of people joined the event live and helped answer questions in the chat and engage with attendees. And then even our internal communications were so fun and encouraging throughout the day. I think the whole company felt that lift for a while.”

The attendees were also very positive and highly engaged throughout the day, noting especially the relevancy of the content, quality of the speakers, ability to converse with peers, and availability of distractions during break times.

Throughout the day, MC Thrive hosted a steady stream of attendees, most of whom stayed for the entire seven hours. At most, the event had 343 attendees join; 400 with sponsors, Clickers and consultants. All sessions were available for on-demand purchase for a nominal fee for those who weren’t able to join us live. So far, that’s brought in interest from 15 more paying customers. The event ended up generating \$13,800 from new attendee registrations (keep in mind, MC LIVE! registrants received complimentary registration as a value-add).

MemberClicks also increased value for sponsors, who initially invested in sponsoring MC LIVE! and received complimentary exposure in the MC Thrive virtual marketplace.

“We had 10 sponsors at the event, and each sponsor received about 5-12 leads, with no money invested in the MC Thrive program itself,” Smith said.

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“I participated in MC Thrive because it was a great opportunity to share experience, represent the AMC model, and learn.” said speaker Molly Lopez, MS, CAE. “The overall experience was excellent. I appreciated the preparation, tech support, and facilitation.”

### **Excited for Big Things Ahead**

For MemberClicks, MC Thrive and its success highlighted opportunities to serve the association and chamber communities in different ways not previously thought possible. This is probably not an uncommon realization for many member-based organizations who are evaluating the future of events.

“The future of MemberClicks events is a combination of virtual, in-person, and hybrid—depending on the purpose of the event, its content and audience,” said Bottorff. “I’m really looking forward to being able to try offering a live stream option for an in-person event when it’s safe to do so.”

Through MC Thrive, the MemberClicks team literally put itself in the shoes of the customer. Everyone involved learned more about the capabilities of MC | LMS, which allowed MemberClicks to feel more equipped to offer advice to attendees interested in hosting their own successful virtual events. In fact, the marketing team parlayed its experience into the creation of a **Virtual Event Playbook** which contains checklists for strategically developing a virtual event strategy and tips for how to execute it (psst, and if you are an MC | LMS customer, you’ll get access to a super special version with an appendix containing valuable templates and bonus material).

Going forward, MemberClicks is looking forward to using the experience and





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headwinds generated by MC Thrive to inspire constant iteration and innovation.

“I see MC Thrive being on the forefront of events like this; being the event where attendees see things they’ve never seen done before,” Walker said. “ I think of HubSpot’s INBOUND conference that way. I always look forward to what they’re going to do; even if it’s just little details here and there — because they’re always SO innovative. I’d like MC Thrive to be that for our industry.”

The MemberClicks team is ready to deliver more value to both customers and members of the association and chamber industries not only through product and service offerings, but also through a commitment to providing thought leadership and tackling unmet needs; a template the company aims to continue sharing with those wanting to replicate similar endeavors.

“I think MC Thrive has helped us identify new ways we can be of value to customers and help them navigate these crazy times,” said Chen. “For now, it’s a much needed source of community and insight. Going forward, beyond times of strict quarantining, I think it could continue to be a high-value, low-cost alternative (or even addition) to in-person meetings that helps people grow and connect at a higher frequency, with more convenience.”

## Quick View: Lessons Learned

- Establish clear goals, keep scope manageable & give yourself plenty of time to plan.
- Delegate specific responsibilities based on desired outcomes.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with speakers and attendees regarding expectations and instructions.
- Test technology from an attendees point of view...and then test again.
- Be fearless in trying new things.
- Celebrate success.

## Advice from the Planners at MemberClicks

“Spend a ton of time playing around in whatever technology you choose to host the event. ALL of the technology — the platform you’re using to host it, the livestream provider (Zoom, Crowdcast, etc.) and anything else you plan to incorporate. Doing so will help you 1) learn about all the different tools and settings at your disposal, 2) get more comfortable with using them, 3) figure out how to BEST use them to achieve your goals, and 4) understand how everything looks and flows from an attendee perspective.”

**Colleen Bottorff**, *MC Thrive Producer and Inbound Marketing Specialist*

“If you can give yourself a little more time to plan, I’d certainly recommend that. Even if it is just an extra week or two. (I don’t know that I’d necessarily recommend trying to execute in a month’s time.) TEST EVERYTHING! How to launch and end sessions, your speakers’ audio and video, any interactive games you might be hosting...you cannot test enough.”

**Callie Walker**, *MC Thrive Emcee and Senior Inbound Marketing Specialist*

“Plan! Just like you would an onsite event. Divide up responsibilities like you normally would. Set weekly goals and execution plans. And TEST, test the technology like you are an attendee, test the platform with your speakers, test internally with your IT help. And be confident!”

**Lindsay Smith**, *Director of Marketing*

“Taking an event like this virtual is no small undertaking. I would say to start planning as early as you can, and also be practical about what you can truly do well with the team, resources, and timeline you’re working with.”

**Cari Chen**, *Senior Creative Specialist*

► Read more at [blog.memberclicks.com/case-studies](https://blog.memberclicks.com/case-studies)

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► **Take a look**  
at the MC Thrive platform

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on-demand access

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more about MC | LMS