



# Virtual conference enables not-for-profit to connect with their constituents during challenging times

## Overview

The Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America (MGFA) is a not-for-profit organization that works to raise awareness of and support those living with the medical condition Myasthenia Gravis (MG). This autoimmune neuromuscular disorder results in fluctuating weakness of voluntary muscle groups, which can affect the patient's ability to move or even breathe. The disease affects people of all ages, races and ethnicities, including an estimated 2 million people worldwide. The MGFA works to enhance the lives of those living with MG by creating support networks, spearheading promising research, and raising awareness through advocacy and education.



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Nancy Law – Chair–Board of Directors, MGFA



## The Challenge

The MGFA holds an annual conference to bring together the MG community, including patients, healthcare providers and industry partners, many of whom sponsor the event. In 2020, this event was scheduled to take place in early April in Fort Worth, Texas. Unfortunately, three weeks before the event, the COVID-19 global pandemic suddenly made an in-person conference impossible. The executive leadership of MGFA was committing to delivering value to the MG community, so cancelling the event outright was not an option. They also knew that trying to reschedule confirmed speakers and exhibitors to another date or location would be a logistical nightmare. So how could MGFA change their plans in a very short timeframe to still deliver the benefits of the event to their constituents?

**‘NTT was like a true extension of our team. In these challenging times, they helped us execute exactly what we wanted and enabled us to serve our community; I just can’t tell you how important that was to us.’**

Samantha Masterson – CEO, MGFA

## The Solution

After receiving recommendations from their industry partners, the MGFA selected the Cloud Communications division of NTT Ltd. to deliver a complete online conference and virtual exhibit hall to replace the in-person event. In less than two weeks NTT built several interactive components, including:

- The Conference Lobby greeted attendees with MGFA branding and messaging, as well as a secure registration experience. A Help Desk was staffed by MGFA and NTT personnel to answer questions about the association, and the event platform.
- The Conference Theater allowed attendees to create a customized agenda by selecting from 14 conference sessions. The 25+ conference speakers had the ability to interact with attendees using interactive features, including Q&A and polling, as well as share streaming media and downloadable content. Sessions could be viewed live or later, on-demand.
- The Virtual Exhibit Hall gave the MGFA sponsors a way deliver their message to all conference attendees in an interactive way. Exhibitors could customize and brand their virtual booths, as well as offer live chat sessions, downloadable content, streaming media and interactive experiences like trivia and polls.
- The Event Lounge offered attendees an additional way to network and interact with each other. One-on-one chats as well as group discussions helped the MG community to connect and build stronger relationships.

## The Result

According to Nancy Law, Chair–Board of Directors for the MGFA, the three-day online conference and exhibit was *‘an unparalleled success’*. By shifting to an online experience, the attendance for the event skyrocketed to 1,500, up from the 200 that their in-person events previously averaged.

In terms of the conference sessions, Law said, *‘all in all, the overall conference experience was great and we got such nice feedback from our attendees and speakers. To be able to bring our community together virtually in the midst of this crisis was fabulous.’*

In the exhibit hall, the sponsors and industry partners used the virtual booth platform to create meaningful interactions with the event attendees. Sam Gardner, Director of Fundraising for the MGFA, said, *‘overall, the sponsors were very happy to be a part of the virtual event and were very impressed by the platform.’*

Beyond the technology that powered the event, the MGFA was particularly appreciative of the expertise and client service of the NTT employees who built and managed the event. MGFA CEO Samantha Masterson summed up their experience. *‘NTT was like a true extension of our team. In these challenging times, they helped us execute exactly what we wanted and enabled us to serve our community. I just can’t tell you how important that was to us.’*



**Which Technologies?**

- 3D Virtual Environment

**Which Services?**

- Registration/Lobby
- Theater
- Exhibition Hall
- Lounge

**Which Partners?**

- Intrado