



EBNET 3-D EXPO AND CONFERENCE 2021 - REPORT

EBnet's 6th Annual Conference (the 2nd Virtual Expo and Conference)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

General	1
INTRODUCTION	1
THE STATUS QUO	1
TIME FOR CHANGE...	2
GAMIFICATION - ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES	2
Statistics	9
Views From The Event (Incl. Descriptions)	13
Contact Information	19

General

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the feedback on the content and format of the conference, provided by the participants and organisers. It also highlights some specific lessons learnt during the process and the event. The quotes in this report are extracted from the feedback received by participants during and after the conference.

THE STATUS QUO

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world has been profound and has introduced many new challenges and methodologies to help cope in this completely new environment.

In South Africa, the impact has been severely felt by all citizens and business alike. The hospitality and conferences industry has been no exception as businesses turned overnight to alternative ways to conduct conferences.

Since March 2020, platforms like Zoom, MS Teams and other on-line meeting applications have boomed as the immediate go-to replacement for business meetings, seminars and conferences. The word “Webinar” or “Let’s Zoom” has become much more mainstream as businesses initially struggled to pivot to this, until then, relatively under-utilised methodology.

Like with any new methodology however, it has it’s positive and negative sides.

The positive side has been that the methodology was relatively simple and for the most part (apart from the occasional face-swop with that of a cat – if the children had been allowed to play with the computer – or the odd guest appearance by an unsuspecting family member or pet – or the inevitable wardrobe malfunctions that have gone viral on YouTube and Tik-Tok) have become part of mainstream business.

The technology has also been very cost effective, and the plethora of online meetings, webinars and conferences rapidly took over our diaries, often back-to-back or overlapping each other.

Enter the downside effects. In a relatively short space, people have become overwhelmed by the frequency and number of sessions, all placing a demand on their time and concentration abilities. The ability to focus and action items forthcoming from meetings have started to lag as people started struggling with personal time-management.

Attendance numbers for online conferences as a result started to decline against a backdrop of initially being relatively highly subscribed to. Sponsorships for these online conferences have also seen a decline as attendees were not visiting virtual exhibition stands, thus causing exhibitors to question the expense.

TIME FOR CHANGE...

In the few months leading up to the EBnet annual Expo and Conference of 2020, we looked at the market and the developing trends, both positive and negative.

It was clear to us that we needed to do something different, something that could address the following issues:

- Have a minimum of fixed-time sessions - be flexible to allow for attendees to better time-manage themselves and attend in most part at their own pace and time.
- Be visually appealing and differentiate from the inflexible and static visual appearance of other online sessions by being more fun, engaging and providing a unique user experience.
- Find a methodology to get attendees to visit the exhibition stands and make the exhibitors stand out more visibly.
- Find a way to track attendee numbers and behavior and a platform that is stable throughout and that does not suffer from insufficient bandwidth issues of progression flow mishaps.
- Find a way to attract more attendees by not only delivering great content, but incentives too.
- Add the ability to get CPD Points
- Experiment with additional features like notice board displays, and chat-interactive tools.



GAMIFICATION – ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Our research led us to one type of methodology in particular – that of GAMIFICATION and the benefits and solutions it can offer to the challenges mentioned above.

Flexibility

Our platform is flexible, thus allowing attendees to self-direct and manage their attendance times for the most part. Conference presentations were all pre-recorded and accessible at any time during the 5 days of the conference. This aspect has been widely welcomed in an environment with multiple sessions placing demands on the time of potential attendees.

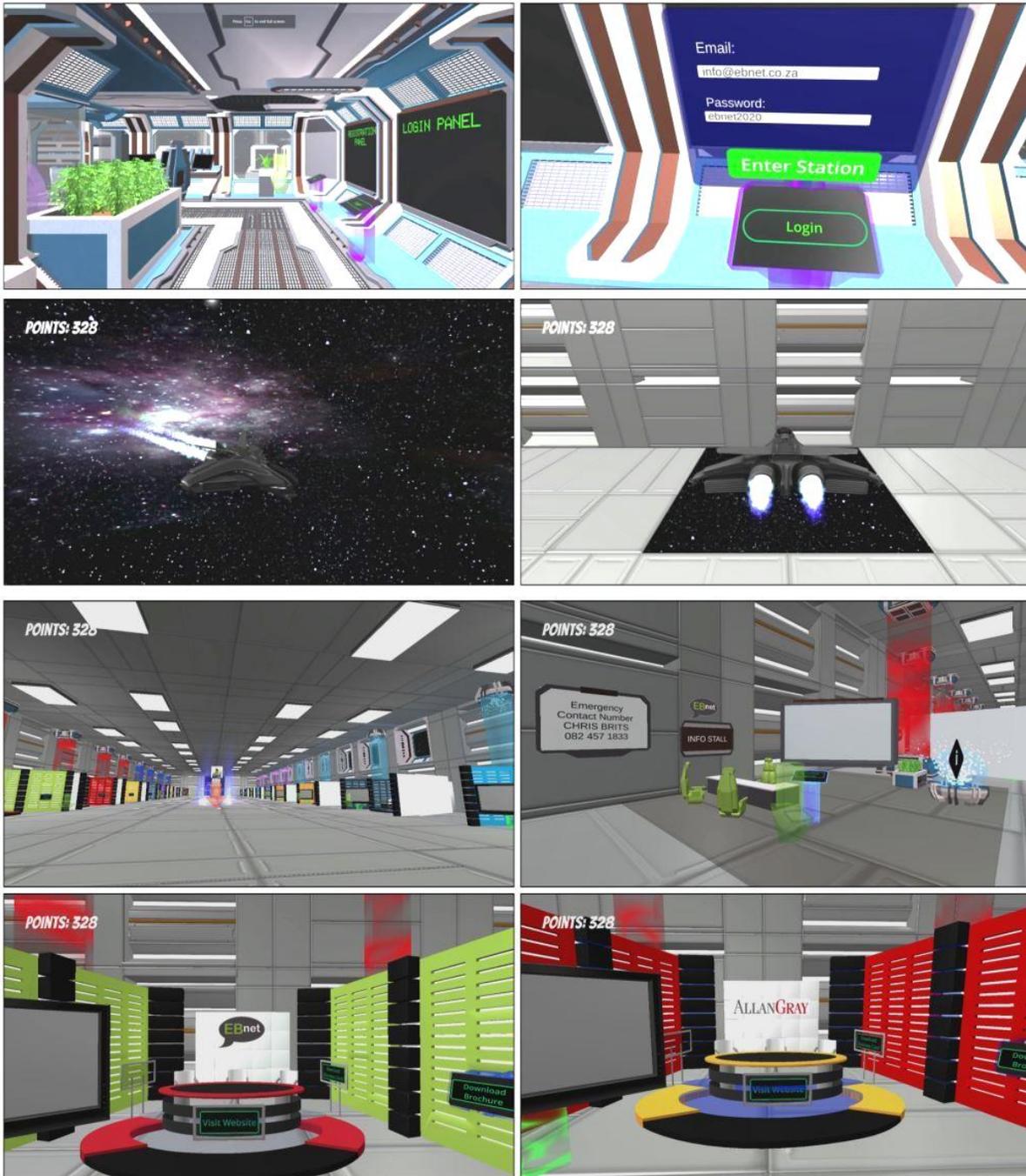
The only time-sensitive session during the entire 5 days of the conference was a single 2-hour live event used to formally welcome attendees and to host 2 prominent guest keynote speakers. Access to this session was gained via the main expo area and attendees could visit exhibition stands prior to the live session and continue doing so thereafter.

Unique user experience and stability

The UNITY GL game platform we chose is one that is used by millions of online gamers internationally. Not only does this provide proven stability to handle big attendee numbers, it also allows the flexibility to design any environment you can think of – thus creating a unique user experience both visually as well as being completely interactive.

GENERAL

For our first attempt in 2020, we built a virtual exhibition hall as a floating space-platform. After registering in a 3-D environment, attendees were ferried to the exhibition hall on board the space platform via a shuttle and upon arrival were deposited in a huge exhibition hall with exhibitor stands set around the perimeter.



Following the 2020 conference, we received these comments from attendees and sponsors.

"Never thought Gamification would make sense in our industry but the EBnet 3-D Conference proved me wrong. Thank you EBnet for such an amazing experience and the knowledge shared".

Caroline Dibakoane – Head of Marketing at Sanlam Corporate

"Congratulations EBnet for being able to quickly adapt to the current circumstances and produce an exciting virtual conference. It was an awesome experience to navigate to the various stalls and listen to the recordings at one's leisure. The keynote addresses dovetailed well with each other and was on point and relevant. I believe this may be the future for these type of conferences or at least some hybrid form of it.

Well done and thank you Chris for your responsiveness. "

Auburn Meyer – BrightRock Life

"We could never have predicted the world we have woken up in due to Covid.

Companies have had to adapt quickly to stay relevant and the EBnet 3-D Conference is a great example of how creative and innovative EBnet has been in hosting their virtual interactive conference.

A great experience - Thank you"

Graeme Brien - Quoin Wealth

"I just want to congratulate EBNET on a fantastic 3D conference. It is the first of its kind and I enjoyed every moment. The look and feel of the conference made you almost feel that you are still at a real conference as you need to move around to get to the different stalls. The content of each stall was well prepared. I liked the fact that I could visit each sponsor's website, this gave more information which is not always available at a conference. The speakers pre-recordings were great additions to the 3D conference as normally in an live event you only have time for 2 or 3 speakers where this time around there was an additional 10 speakers. Their content was very insightful and Relevant to our industry and well as during this difficult time that we are facing with a pandemic.

This was really an experience out of this world."

Braam Pool, Client Service Manager - Funds, Benefits and Annuities Division MIP Holdings

"The EBnet 3-D conference this year was a fantastic innovation in the midst of the COVID pandemic.

The interactive digital experience with exhibitors, the caliber of the attendees and the content provided during the keynote all combined to provide world class value.

Great job, EBnet!"

Jeremy Swartz, Vice-President at TransparentBusiness (Jeremy was one of the Keynote Speakers)

"Congratulations and well done on hosting EBnet's first virtual interactive 3-D conference!

A great experience -thank you.

I thoroughly enjoyed the flexibility it offered me in visiting the exhibition stands from the comfort of my new "home office" and being able to access the excellent line-up of pre-recorded speaker sessions at my leisure. Of particular relevance, in setting the scene in our new "Covid -19" world, was your choice of Keynote speakers namely Mike Saunders and Jeremy Swartz and their respective topics. Whilst I consider EBnet to be at the forefront of digital trends in our local industry, who could have expected we would see 2 years of digital transformation in 2 months!!

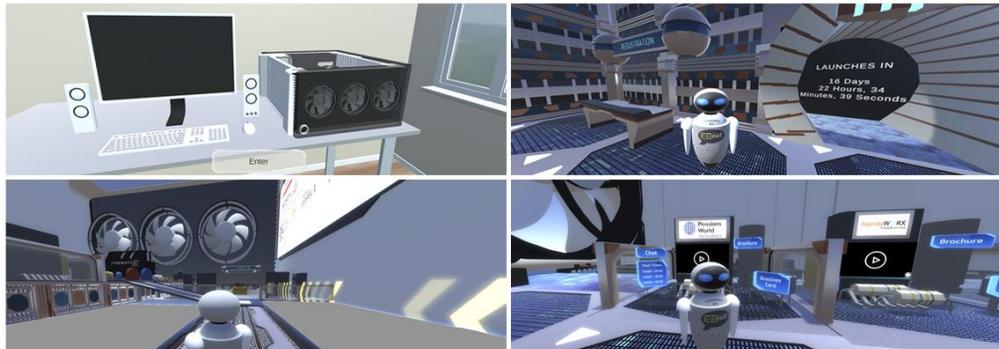
Keep up the great work."

Margaret Cameron, Business Development Executive – Willis Towers Watson

GENERAL

From the 2020 experience, we took a few lessons and sought to improve the platform even more for the 2021 event.

Differentiate the visual experience



For the 2021 Expo and Conference, we wanted to bring an even more realistic and visual user experience and whilst thinking OUT-OF-THE-BOX, stumbled onto the idea of actually **GOING-INTO-THE-BOX**, literally taking our attendees on a virtual journey and have the venue as a simulation of what things look like on the inside of a computer with working cooling fans and electronic parts for furniture!

Attendees to visit exhibition stands

Our Gamification Platform lends itself very favorably to this and by adopting a point scoring system, we were able to address this very effectively. Attendees to a conference are there in most part to watch the presenters and gain knowledge on the various topics presented. This usually means that they tend to bypass the exhibitors unless you can draw them in like most did in the old days by putting out nice pens, memory sticks and chocolates in their exhibition stands! Not possible in a virtual world.

To remedy this, we set minimum point limits to access the various speaker presentations and wrote the rules of the game in a way that had attendees first visit the exhibitor stands (and get points for specific items they click on in the stand), thus cumulating sufficient points to then start accessing the speaker presentations. Attendees are also further incentivized to visit more stands by having 3 top prizes to be won by the 3 attendees accumulating the highest number of points by engaging with the most exhibition stands over the 5 days of the conference.

EXCELLENT SPONSORED PRIZES TO BE WON BY ATTENDEES WITH MOST POINTS !



It worked brilliantly and the stats shown later in this report will demonstrate that.

GENERAL

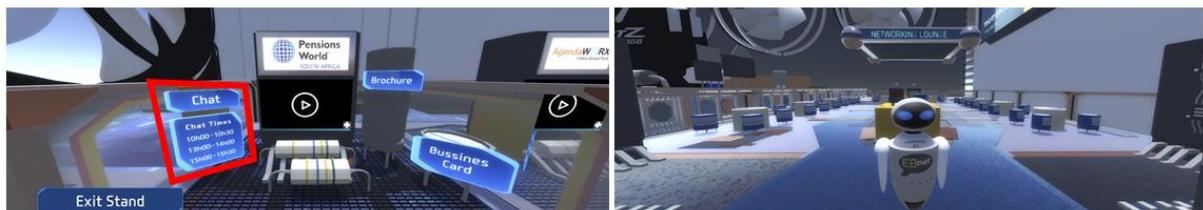
Adding a CPD Points facility.

We added a CPD Kiosk within which attendees could choose from a variety of pre-prepared CPD topics. Applicants were able to access the subject material via tutorials and then do an online submission for assessment.

CPD Sanlam S37C:	43 assessments completed – certification in progress
RisCura CPD Session:	22 assessments completed – certification in progress
Pensions World SA Session 1:	40 assessments completed – certification in progress
Pensions World SA Session 2:	56 assessments completed – certification in progress
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TOTAL ASESSMENTS:	265

Adding Chat and Networking facilities

As an experiment, we added a direct chat function to each exhibition stand to allow attendees to contact the exhibitor if they wished as well as a general networking lounge where attendees could engage with anyone else in the lounge freely.



Expectations on engagement were not high, based on other on-line events showing poor interaction but when faced with the choice of either having it or not, we chose the former.

Our expectations of low engagement did indeed materialize and we can only derive from that that attendees assigned a very low priority to one-on-one engagement and rather used their limited time to engage with the other stand items to gain points and the latest information available of the exhibitors and then attend the pre-recorded presentations. Where attendees however had specific needs for a solution or a product at the time, they did engage with a few exhibitors via the chat function and get solutions for their immediate need.

The Networking Lounge remained mostly unused with the highest number of people present at a single time being 15 with sporadic conversations mostly about the novelty of the venue and the big difference between on-line sessions and a real immersive 3-D conference.



Attendee and Exhibitor comments for 2021

Thanks EBnet for a well-executed event, the Virtual conference is only going from strength to strength in what is arguably the strangest time to network.

The stalls visual component was excellent, easy to navigate with relevant content, great idea to open and chat so that people can actually communicate directly with the various company representatives.

I also witnessed the best talk I have seen in years, and would want to congratulate all of your speakers, It was insightful and will definitely add value to us.

JF Hansen, Executive Head - Funds, Benefits & Annuities at MIP Holdings

Kudos to EBnet and all involved in their 2021 virtual conference. It was, as always, a privilege to be a speaker, but I also loved attending as a delegate. The innovative platform was fun, easy to navigate and the exhibitors all displayed great content with exceptionally informative information. I particularly enjoyed the flexibility of being able to move around at my own pace. Well done EBnet!

Teri Solomon BA LLB, Finpro Practice Leader - Marsh Specialty

One of the most important areas that should be a focus in our industry is ongoing innovation and adapting to change. In the absence of the ability to host physical conferences, the EBnet 3-D was exceptionally well thought-out and executed.

The caliber of exhibitors, presenters and attendees was, as always, world-class which makes for informative discussion and debate which ultimately drives focus from industry stakeholders for better outcomes for the members we serve.

Mark Swanepoel, Senior Associate at Axiomatic Consultants

Dear EBnet - Congratulations on hosting a truly innovative virtual conference. The gamification of the conference to collect points and unlock certain capabilities as you explore is a novel idea.

Keep innovating – I can't wait to see what you have planned for 2022!

MARK DAVIDS – Head Investment Strategy and Distribution, MOTSWEDI Emerging Manager Strategists

The EBnet 2021 3-D Virtual Expo and Conference, excellently built on from the 2020 3D virtual conference concept. There was a diverse range of topics and speakers covering all the most important discussion points in the industry. The 3D approach adds such a fun twist to the event!

Henre Prinsloo, Head: Employee Benefits at QED Actuaries & Consultants

Dear EBnet - Well done on your second successful virtual conference! The ease of navigating the conference and interactions with exhibitors really made it a pleasurable experience. Looking forward to the next one!

Natie van Jaarsveld, Actuarial Consultant at SNG ARGEN Actuarial Solutions

I wish to congratulate EBnet on a wonderful conference that had something for everyone.

I really appreciated the fact that I could watch the videos in my own time and I could even earn CPD points, which we all know is a very important part of attending conferences these days.

I found the variety of subjects of the presentations interesting and worthwhile. The live presentations were also very interesting, touching on two major focus points South Africans are having to deal with at this point in time.

Well done to the team for a successful conference!!

Anonymous - Retirement Fund Consultant from an Independent Consulting Firm

Congratulations! The EBnet conference is a great microcosm of the early stage metaverse. It was very well put together with a line-up of interesting and relevant content and an enjoyable experience.

Grant Nader, Chief Investment Officer and Portfolio Manager at Effectus Capital Management

A note of thanks to the organizers of the EBnet 3-D Virtual Expo and Conference that I attended last week. I found the format to be groundbreaking, informative, and fun. To sum it up an awesome experience, well done!

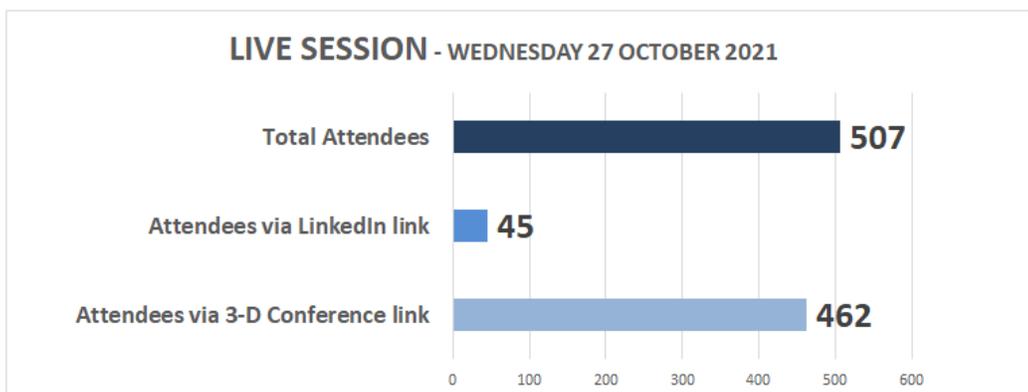
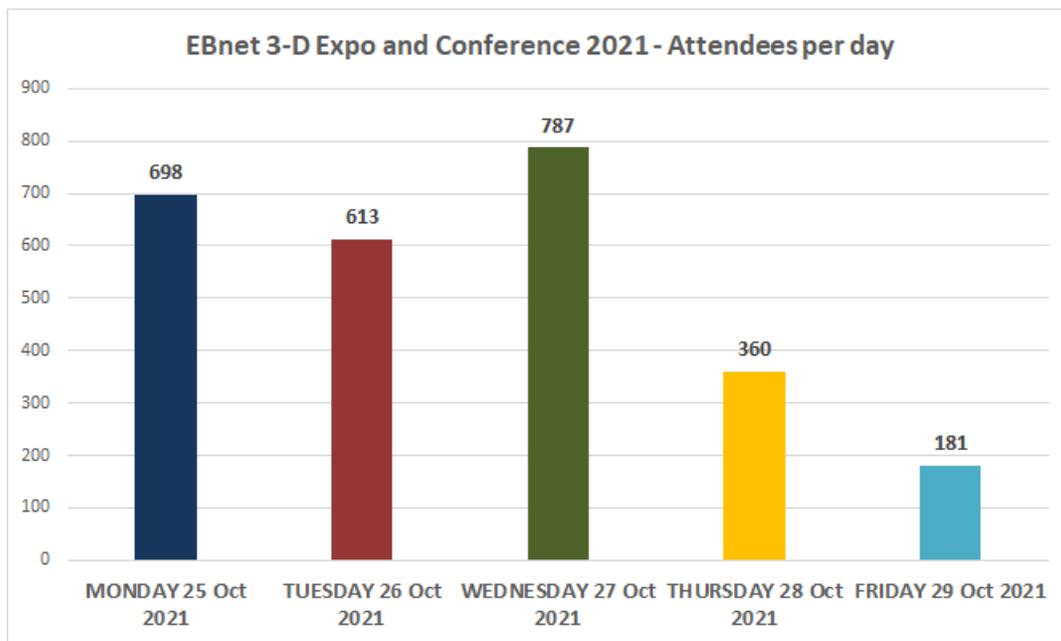
Gary Künemann, Principal Consultant: Employee Benefits Mentenova Consultants & Actuaries

STATISTICS

Statistics

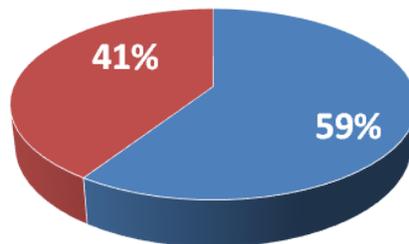
The conference was held over 5 days from 25 October – 29 October 2021 with only one time-based session, the LIVE EVENT on Wednesday 27 October between 09h00 – 11h00.

REGISTRATIONS	1328
DUPLICATES	158
FINAL REGISTERED	1170
NO SHOWS	223
UNIQUE ATTENDEES	947



STATISTICS

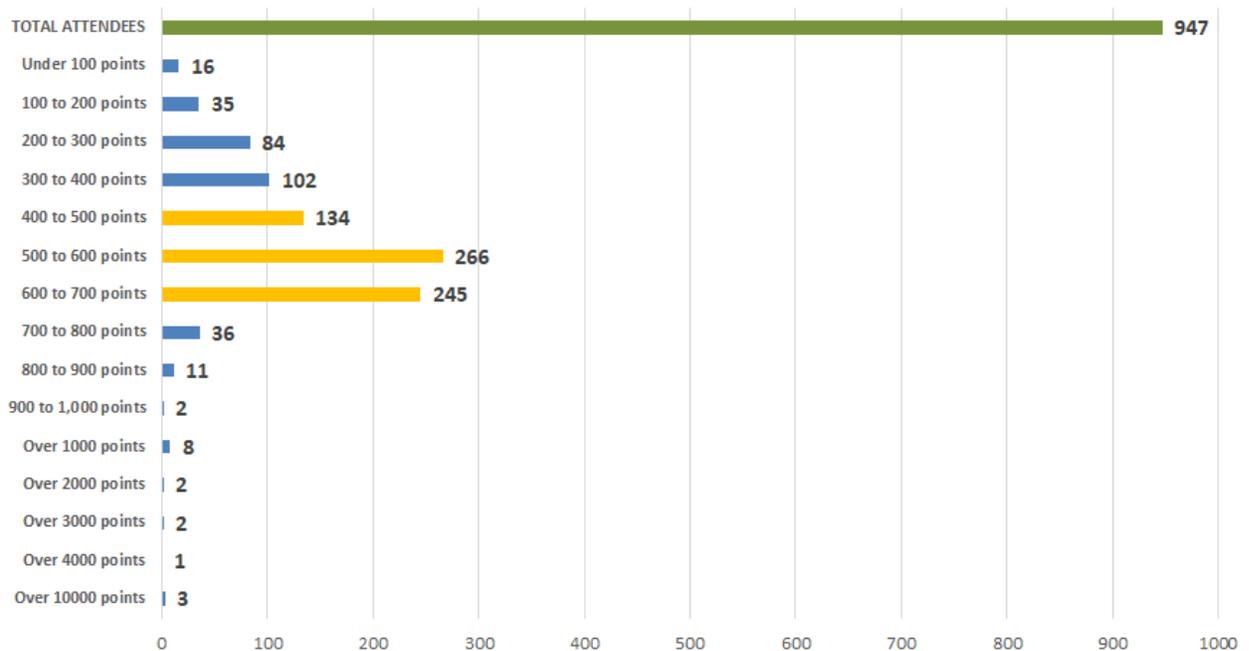
AUDIENCE COMPOSITION



- Principal Officers / Trustees / Independents
- Consultants / Intermediaries / Service Providers

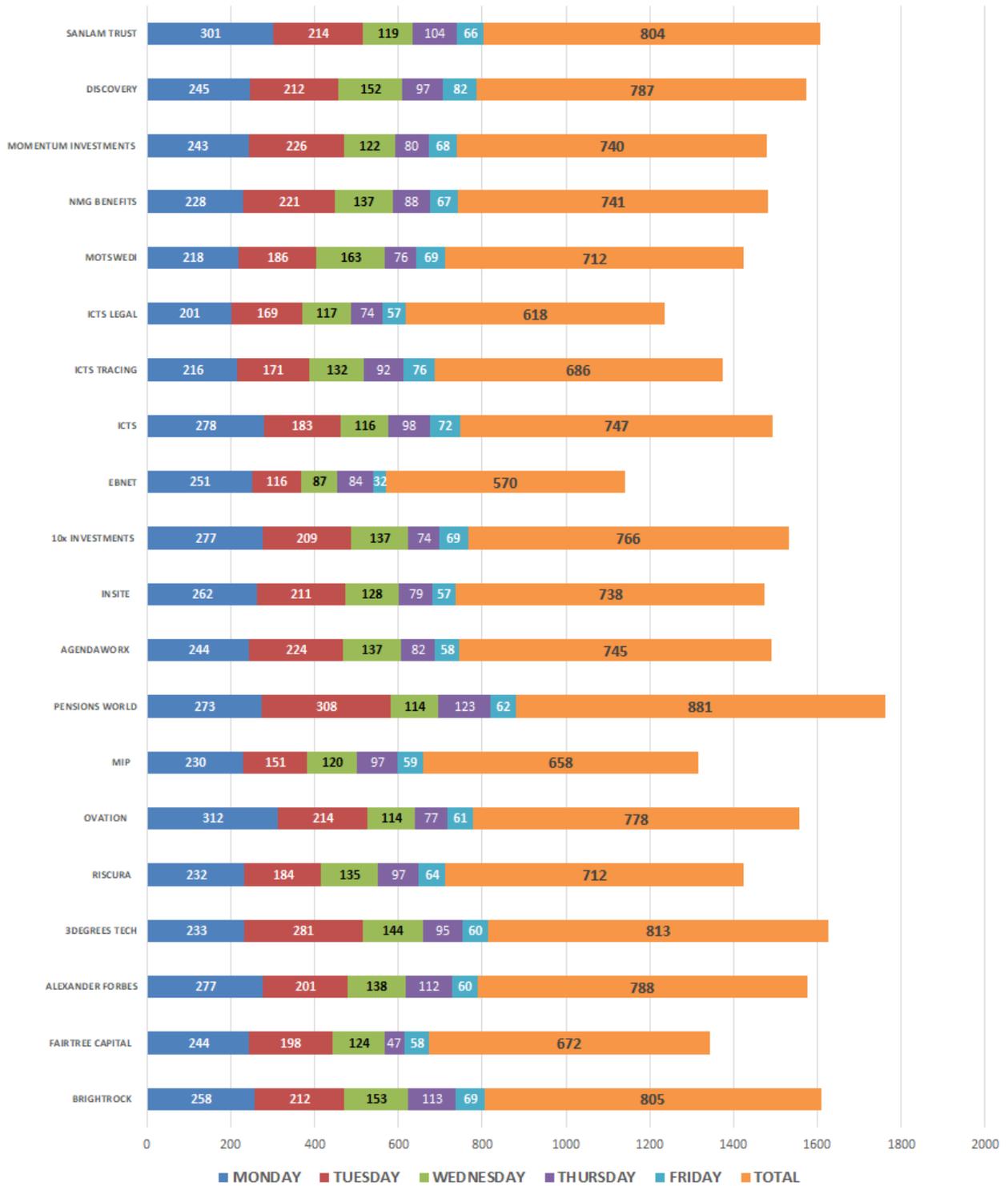
Name of Top 3 Points Scorers (Prize Winners)	Prize	TOP Scores
Bongani Molefe	HD TV	10050
Jonathan Sierra	Laptop	10010
Rukeyah Parker	iPad	10000

POINTS SCORED - NUMBER OF MEMBERS PER BRACKETS



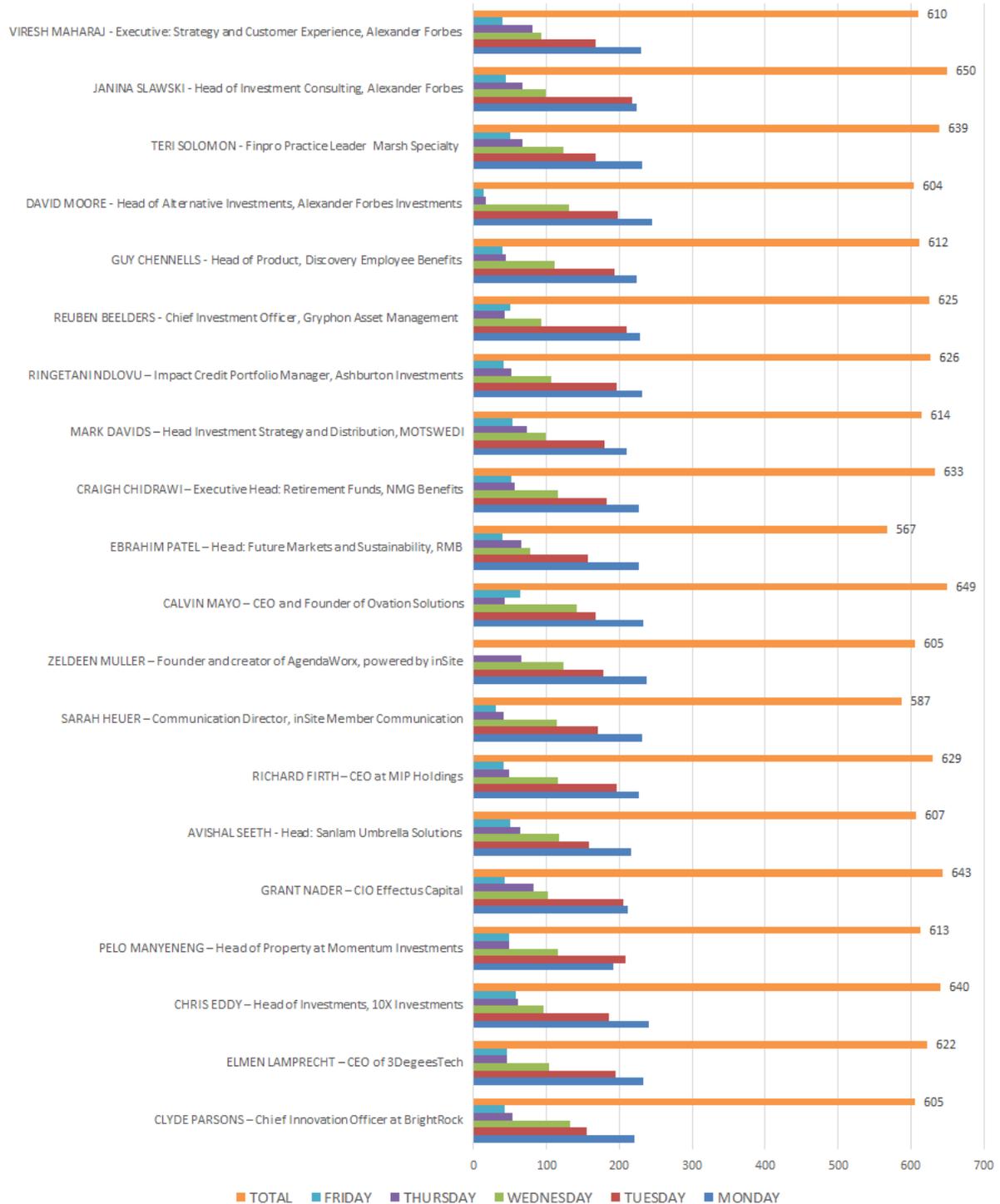
STATISTICS

EXHIBITION STAND VISITORS



STATISTICS

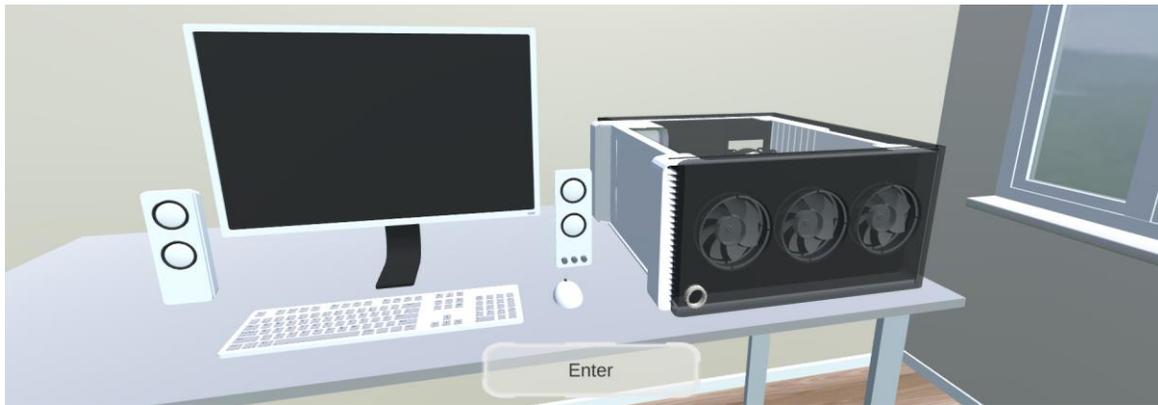
PRE-RECORDED SPEAKERS VIEWED



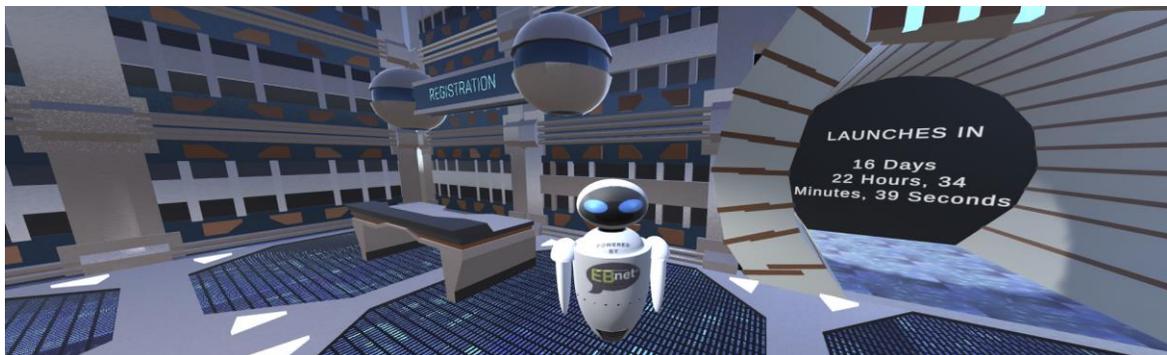
VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

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VIRTUAL VENUE FROM THE OUTSIDE



ENTRANCE PORTAL FROM INSIDE REGISTRATION ROOM

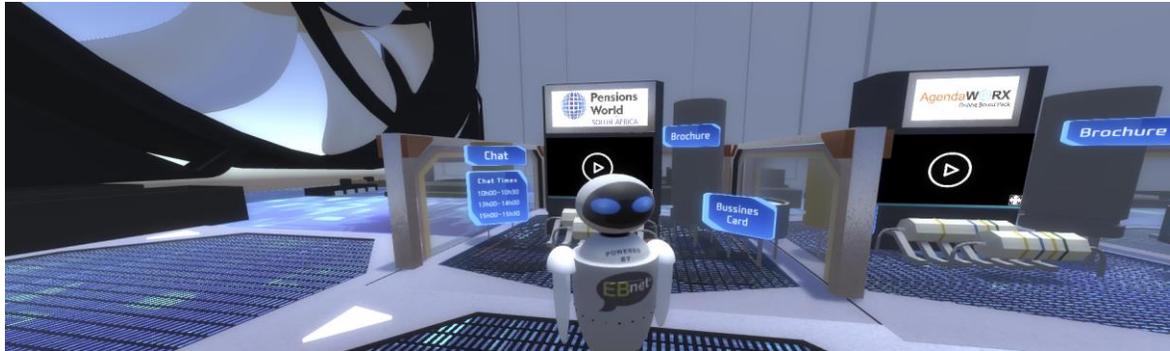


INSIDE THE VENUE (COMPUTER CPU)

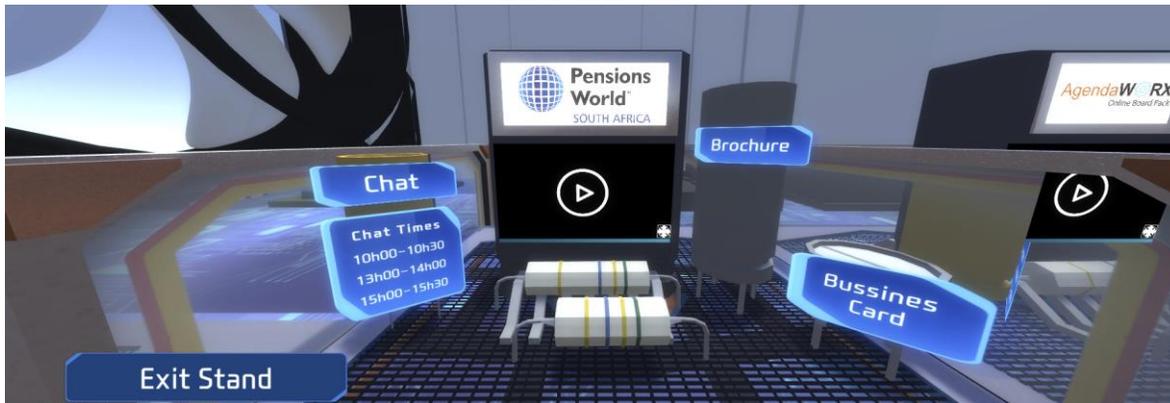


VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

TYPICAL STAND



STAND LAYOUT



NETWORKING LOUNGE



VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

GENERAL VIEW OF VENUE

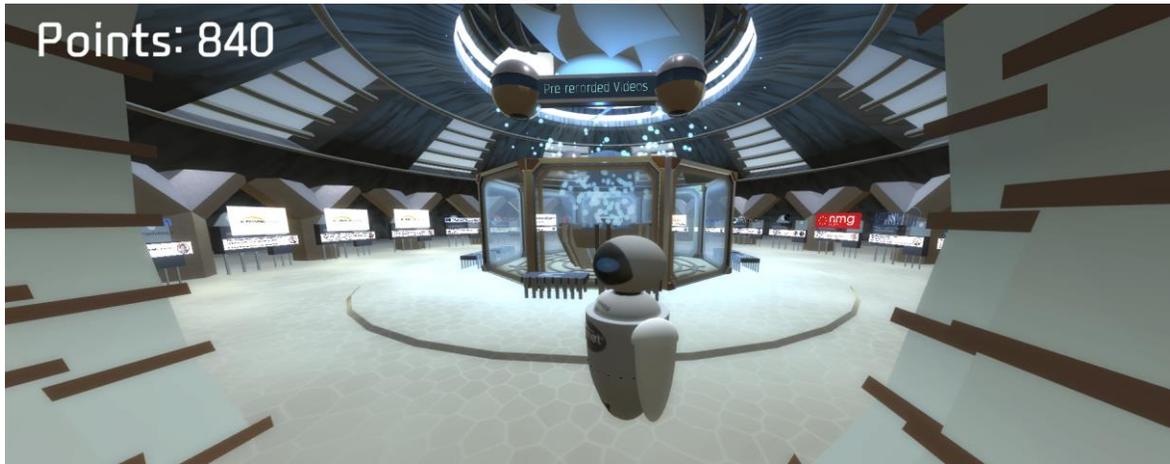


ENTRANCE TO PRE-RECORDED TALKS, CPD KIOSK AND LIVE EVENT



Points: 840

PRE-RECORDED ROOM



Points: 840

VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

CPD KIOSK



CPD CONTENT 4 CPD POINTS APPROVED



THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION IN RETIREMENT FUNDS

CPD CONTENT 3.5 CPD POINTS APPROVED



THE ROLE PLAYERS INVOLVED IN YOUR FUND INVESTMENTS

CPD CONTENT 4 CPD POINTS APPROVED



CATEGORIES OF RETIREMENT FUNDS

CPD CONTENT 3 CPD POINTS APPROVED



ESG FRAMEWORK

CPD CONTENT 3 CPD POINTS APPROVED



UNDERSTANDING RISK IN RETIREMENT FUNDS

CPD CONTENT 1 CPD POINT APPROVED



Sec 37 C – DEATH BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION TO A MINOR

CPD CONTENT **RISCURA**

A masterclass on blending managers

Thursday,
28 October 2021

[REGISTER HERE](#)

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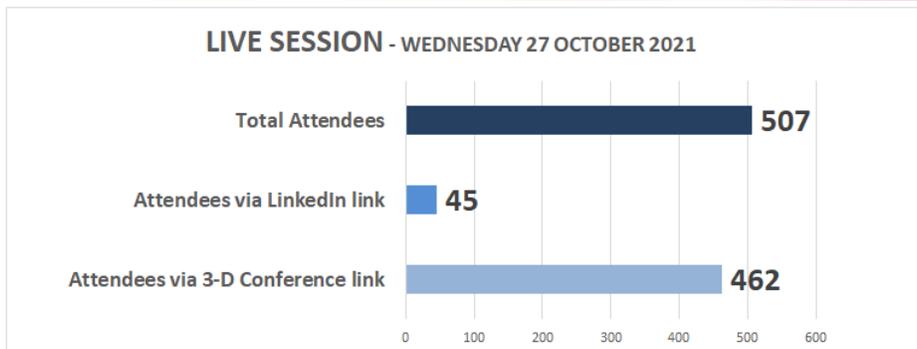
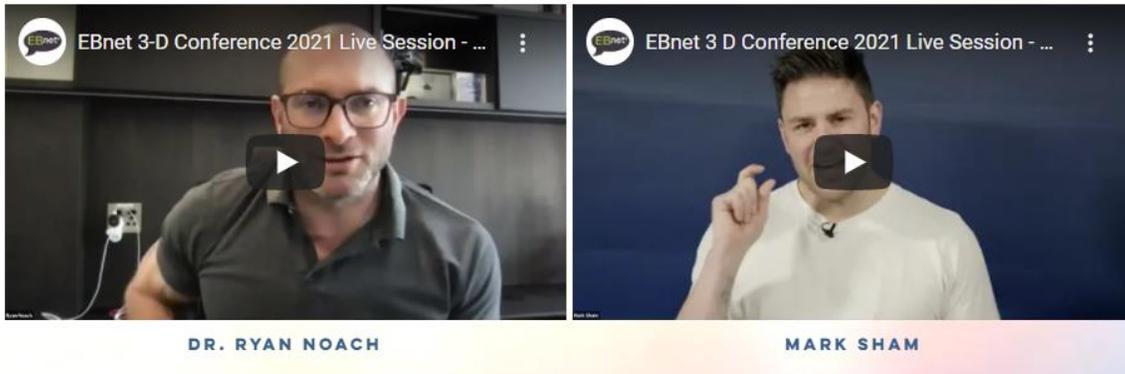
TOTAL ASESSEMENTS: 265

VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

LIVE EVENT ENTRANCE



KEYNOTE SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS FROM THE LIVE SESSION HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2021



30 Minutes before the live session started, we sent several direct invitations out via LinkedIn for a few last minute registrations – these invitations were direct and attendees did not have to join via the conference portal but could just log into the meeting directly.

Presentations can be viewed on the EBnet Website.

[CLICK HERE](#)

VIEWS FROM THE EVENT (INCL. DESCRIPTIONS)

PRE-RECORDED SPEAKERS



JANINA SLAWSKI - Head of Investment Consulting, Alexander Forbes



CHRIS EDDY – Head of Investments, 10X Investments



SARAH HEUER – Communication Director, inSite Member Communication



VIRESH MAHARAJ - Executive: Strategy and Customer Experience, Alexander Forbes



PELO MANYENENG – Head of Property at Momentum Investments



ZELDEEN MULLER – Founder and creator of AgendaWorx, powered by inSite



DAVID MOORE - Head of Alternative Investments, Alexander Forbes Investments



GRANT NADER – CIO Effectus Capital



CALVIN MAYO – CEO and Founder of Ovation Solutions



TERI SOLOMON - Finpro Practice Leader Marsh Specialty



CLYDE PARSONS – Chief Innovation Officer at BrightRock



CRAIGH CHIDRAWI – Executive Head: Retirement Funds, NMG Benefits



ELMEN LAMPRECHT – CEO of 3DegeesTech, HR Tech Expert, People Analytics, HR Chatbots, Virtual Reality



RICHARD FIRTH – CEO at MIP Holdings



MARK DAVIDS – Head Investment Strategy and Distribution, MOTSWEDI Emerging Manager Strategists



GUY CHENNELLS – Head of Product, Discovery Employee Benefits



ELENA ILKOVA – Investment Strategist, RMB



RINGETANI NDLOVU – Impact Credit Portfolio Manager, Ashburton Investments



AVISHAL SEETH - Head: Sanlam Umbrella Solutions



EBRAHIM PATEL – Head: Future Markets and Sustainability, RMB



REUBEN BEELDERS - Chief Investment Officer, Gryphon Asset Management

Pre-Recorded Presentations can be viewed on the EBnet Website

[CLICK HERE](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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EEBEE ONE
Virtual Assistant



(Unavailable – still playing around inside the venue 😊)