









# Leeds Digital Festival: The Tech Event for Everyone

The Leeds Digital Festival is an open, collaborative celebration of digital culture in all its forms.

Whether you're interested in coding, fintech, social media, AI, healthtech, data, start-ups, digital music, cyber security or AR/VR, we've got something for you.

Returning in 2022 for its 7th year, and following the success of the April "mini-fest", Leeds Digital Festival will be hosting a two-week programme packed with world-class tech content this Autumn.

With an ever-growing voice and reach, Leeds Digital Festival will continue to celebrate the digital expertise and innovation that is happening in the city on a regional, national and international level.

The Festival, which has maintained the same collaborative approach since it first began in 2016, will operate on an open-platform system – meaning that anyone can host an event, and it's free to do so. From start-ups to tech giants, anyone with a passion for tech and digital is encouraged to get involved and be part of Leeds Digital Festival 2022.

Join us from the **19th – 30th September** as we invite the tech world's best and brightest to come together and showcase our dynamic digital sector.

# **Planning Your Event**

### Coming up with the content

So you want to host an event as part of Leeds Digital Festival, but you're not sure where to begin? We'd recommend kicking things off by working out what you want your event to look like. Is it a chance to show off some of your technical skills? Or maybe you want to bring industry experts together to tackle a burning question? Once you know what it is you're looking to gain from involvement in the Festival programme, you'll be able to come up with content that helps to meet these objectives, and deliver value to your attendees. If it's not something that you'd want to attend yourself, then you might need to go back to the drawing board!



### Making sure your event is Accessible and Inclusive

At Leeds Digital Festival we're committed to breaking down the barriers to Digital Accessibility because we believe tech is for everyone, and as an LDF host you'll be expected to introduce suitable measures to your event to ensure that it can be accessed by anyone who'd like to attend.

Access requirements vary from person to person and between different event formats, and the best way for you to make sure attendee needs are met is to go straight to the source. By asking in advance, you can make sure that the relevant measures are in place and that all attendees can engage comfortably.

Sites like Eventbrite make gauging access requests really simple – you'll just need to enable this option on the booking form. If you're holding a physical event and there are restrictions at the venue, make them clear on the booking form (e.g. 'Not wheelchair accessible' or better still, find a venue that is!)

If you're hosting a virtual event, both Zoom and Microsoft Teams offer a live captioning feature which is a cost-effective way to improve the event experience for people with hearing impairments. Or, if you'd like to go a step further, you could employ a BSL interpreter to sign your presentation. Providing attendees with slides in advance of the event is another simple way of improving accessibility, and one we'd recommend all hosts consider.

When employing additional accessibility measures for the first time, we strongly recommend conducting a run-through to ensure the experience for contributors and the audience is as stress-free as possible.

If you have questions or concerns about the accessibility of your event, please contact the Leeds Digital Festival team.





### **Diversity Matters**

Representation matters at all levels of industry and across all sectors, and by now we all know that diverse teams make successful teams. So there really is no excuse for submitting an event that doesn't offer up a range of perspectives, lived experiences and roles within tech.

Aside from the obvious benefit of allowing for a more well-rounded discussion, events that are representative of the diversity within the tech sector and wider UK can also help to attract a broader audience and encourage more sign-ups to your event. A diverse panel that features contributors of varying genders, races, ethnicities, ages and seniority level also sends the message to attendees that your company supports and encourages a diverse workforce, which could prove beneficial if one of the goals of your Festival involvement is expanding your talent pool.

### Variety is the Spice of Life

Does your event have a varied mix of speakers? A common mishap for companies when planning speaking engagements is looking too close to home for contributors. Sure, you want to guarantee that the discussion remains relevant to your organisation, but that doesn't mean you should only feature speakers from your own company!

Why not ask some of your suppliers, customers, partner organisations or even competitors to feed into the discussion? This is a great way to add depth to your event without losing focus.

If you're looking to explore another angle and need help sourcing a few more speakers for your event, get in touch with the LDF team and we'll do our best to match you with appropriate contributors who've registered interest via our Speaker Form. Though we can't guarantee that we'll be able to align every speaker with an appropriate event, we do our best to play matchmaker!



# **Submitting Your Event**

As Leeds Digital Festival runs on an open platform system, we welcome submissions from businesses across the digital sector. So, whether you're just starting out, scaling up, or a tech powerhouse in your own right, there's room for you at #LeedsDigi22.

In order to feature your event in the September programme, you'll just need to send us the event details – including an event title, image, description, and booking link – for our team to review before listing on the website.

Our submissions page will go live on Monday 6th June and remain open until Wednesday 3rd August. We'll announce through the website and our social media once it's open for business. Please note that your event details should be sent via the submissions page only – events sent via email will not be listed as part of the programme.

Check out what you'll need to submit below so you can get cracking with your event planning:

#### **Choosing an Event Title**

What's in a name? Well, quite a bit actually. We're expecting to include over 200 events in the September Programme, so your title needs to stand out and clearly communicate to your audience what they're signing up for.

Think of the event name as your first chance to make an impression on potential attendees. If the title's a snooze-fest people might assume the same about your event, and whilst a snappy name alone can't guarantee good attendance, it certainly doesn't hurt!

#### **Top Tips**

**Get straight to the point** There's nothing worse than a wordy title that still leaves you scratching your head. Choose something that gives attendees a clear idea of what they're signing up for, in as few words as possible.

**Avoid generic titles** Titles like "How to Transform Your Digital" give nothing away and do a terrible job of convincing someone why they should attend your event. Put yourself in the shoes of someone browsing the LDF website: faced with 200 events, who's got the time to guess what content your event might include? So, make your title as specific as possible, and ensure that the right people are signing up.

**Don't be afraid to be funny!** Tech is a serious business, but your event name doesn't have to be. A memorable tongue-in-cheek title can do wonders for sign-ups, and establish the tone of your event before it's even begun – not to mention the extra promotional value that a 'punny' title can bring. Here are a few cheeky examples from previous Festivals:

"What the FLoC"

"Your Place or Ours - The Future Workplace"

"The Road to Better Data – a Highways England Ontology"

### **Choosing an Event Image**

The title and image are the first two things anyone will see. Together, they set the tone for what value your event will deliver, long before anyone has had a chance to read the full description. Here's how to make your visuals work hard so you don't have to...

#### **Top Tips**

**Hi-res, low-text** They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and when it comes to a thumbnail, that tiny picture has got to do a lot of talking. So, for obvious reasons, avoid text-heavy images and opt for something that communicates the focus of your event with visuals rather than words. Unlike in previous years, we can now accept event images that include text and logos, but we'd still recommend keeping these to a minimum!

**Size matters** To ensure that your event image looks right in situ on the LDF website, please make sure that it adheres to an aspect ratio of 5:2. We'd recommend sizing at 2000 x 800px.

**Functionality is key** Before making your selection, think about the various ways the image will be used in the lead-up to the Festival. As well as featuring on the website, the image you choose could be incorporated into social media marketing, mailers, ads and more. So, in this instance, it pays to be pretty!

**There's no shame in a stock photo** If you have an in-house marketing team that's happy to knock you up a graphic or two, that's great. But if you don't, we'd recommend utilising sites like Unsplash, Shutterstock and Pexels which are packed with thousands of free images – just let us know the artist's details so we can credit them accordingly.



Example event image



#### **Writing Your Event Description**

When it comes to creating interest for your event, a snappy title and strong visuals will do a lot of the hard work, but the description is where the real magic happens!

It's your opportunity to tell the audience what unmissable content you'll be bringing to LDF, and why attendees should want to book a ticket. For maximum impact, we'd recommend keeping it to a few paragraphs and being as creative as you can.

#### **Top Tips**

**Keep it simple** The best descriptions give the audience a taste of what to expect from the event. Avoid overwhelming potential attendees with inaccessible jargon, and only use terminology that's relevant to your audience.

**If in doubt** If you're new to the festival and looking for a bit more guidance on how you should structure your description; start by contextualising your core event question, provide a brief outline of the topics up for discussion, and then let attendees know who'll be speaking at your event.

**Choose your guests / panellists wisely** Your description should explain the value each contributor brings to the discussion – why should someone want to hear these people speak? Have they built an award-winning company from the ground up? Maybe they're pioneering life-changing tech? The event description is a great place to shout about the brilliant, diverse panel you've built out, so why not include speaker bios when you submit your event. Or, if you're still firming up speakers, you can email these details to us at a later date.

### **Adding Your Booking Link**

Leeds Digital Festival runs on an open platform, so in addition to planning and hosting your event, you'll also be responsible for managing the booking process.

This means you'll need to create a booking page, and provide us with the link during the submission process. We then add this link to your event listing on the LDF website, so we can direct potential attendees straight to you.

Please make sure that the event date and time listed on your booking page is correct.

Which booking site you choose to list the event on is completely up to you; we just need the link. Around 90% of our hosts use sites like Eventbrite or Zoom Webinar.

Please note, you won't be able to submit your event without a functional booking link.



#### **The Final Details**

In addition to the above, during the submission process you'll also need to select which areas of the digital sector your event is most aligned with from a list of 19 possible categories (Healthtech, Al, Data etc.). Selection is limited to a maximum of three categories to allow for more efficient search and filtration on the LDF website, and to ensure the right people find your event.

You'll also need to select the date and time of your event, which you can do using the calendar. If you've selected a time already occupied by an event covering similar tech categories, the calendar will notify you.

Given the scope of the Leeds Digital Festival programme, some overlap in the schedule is inevitable, but we'd strongly recommend that you avoid hosting at the same time as an event covering similar content.

If you're hosting a Fintech event, for example, a scheduling clash with an Edtech or AR/VR event would likely have little to no effect on your attendance, but a scheduling clash with another Fintech event could prove problematic for everyone involved. In addition to working twice as hard to vie for the audience's attention, you'll also be putting potential attendees in the difficult position of having to choose which event to go to. In short, nobody wins!

The LDF team will make every effort during the submission review process to identify potential overlap in the schedule, and will contact you directly should we need to discuss any scheduling concerns regarding your event. If you have any questions about the festival schedule and wish to talk with the Festival team directly, you can contact us on admin@leedsdigitalfestival.org

The Leeds Digital Festival Awards will take place **6pm-9pm on Thursday 29th September.** Given the popularity of this event in previous years, and to avoid a conflict of interests for attendees of the awards, we would strongly recommend that you avoid hosting your event at this time.

You can submit as many events as you like but please note that each new event should be sent as a separate submission.



The submission deadline is midnight on Wednesday 3rd August. Any event received after this deadline will not be included in the programme.

### **Reviewing Your Event**

Once your event details have been submitted, they'll be reviewed by the Leeds Digital Festival team. The review stage is where we're able to double-check the quality of the events being entered into the programme, and that we have all the information we need.

Once your event has been reviewed, the team may get in touch with some suggestions or amends where appropriate. This could be anything from a small tweak to your event description, to selecting a different time slot if your first-choice clashes with another event aimed at a similar audience.

In some instances, the team might get in touch to offer up some thoughts on the event content, or make suggestions as to how your event could better align with the Leeds Digital Festival brand and the programme of events already confirmed.

We're looking for fun, relevant and innovative events to help showcase the city's dynamic digital sector. In the event that your event doesn't pass the review stage, we'll be in touch to let you know next steps.

Please allow for up to 5 working days from submission to contact us in regards to your event – we're a small team manually checking hundreds of event submissions!

# **Promoting Your Event**

As an LDF event host you'll have access to our captive audience of tech-heads, and your inclusion in the Festival programme means you'll also benefit from our in-house marketing activities. But when it comes to telling people about your event, you'll be expected to conduct your own promotional activity, too.

As well as listing all events on our website, in the lead up-to the Festival we'll be pushing out regular organic content across our social media and website. We'll also be rolling out a paid social and PR strategy where we'll be able to spotlight some of the exciting events taking place at the festival. In previous iterations this has included working with regional and national press outlets like The Yorkshire Post, Prolific North, businessdesk, Insider, Business Cloud and more to spread the word about what the Festival has in store.

Given the volume of events the September programme will include, we can't promote every event individually, but we'll do our best to ensure that a broad range of events are promoted in the lead up to the Festival. One way to ensure that your event makes it onto the LDF channels is to create your own content for the team to repost.

In previous years, we've found that those hosts who regularly share engaging online content around their event generally benefit from higher sign-ups and attendance levels. The more you shout about your own LDF involvement, the more we can amplify the message that you are putting out!



Photo Credit: Pete Daykin, 2021



# **Any Questions?**

If you've made it this far and still need some extra guidance, feel free to send your questions over to the Leeds Digital Festival team on:

admin@leedsdigitalfestival.org



