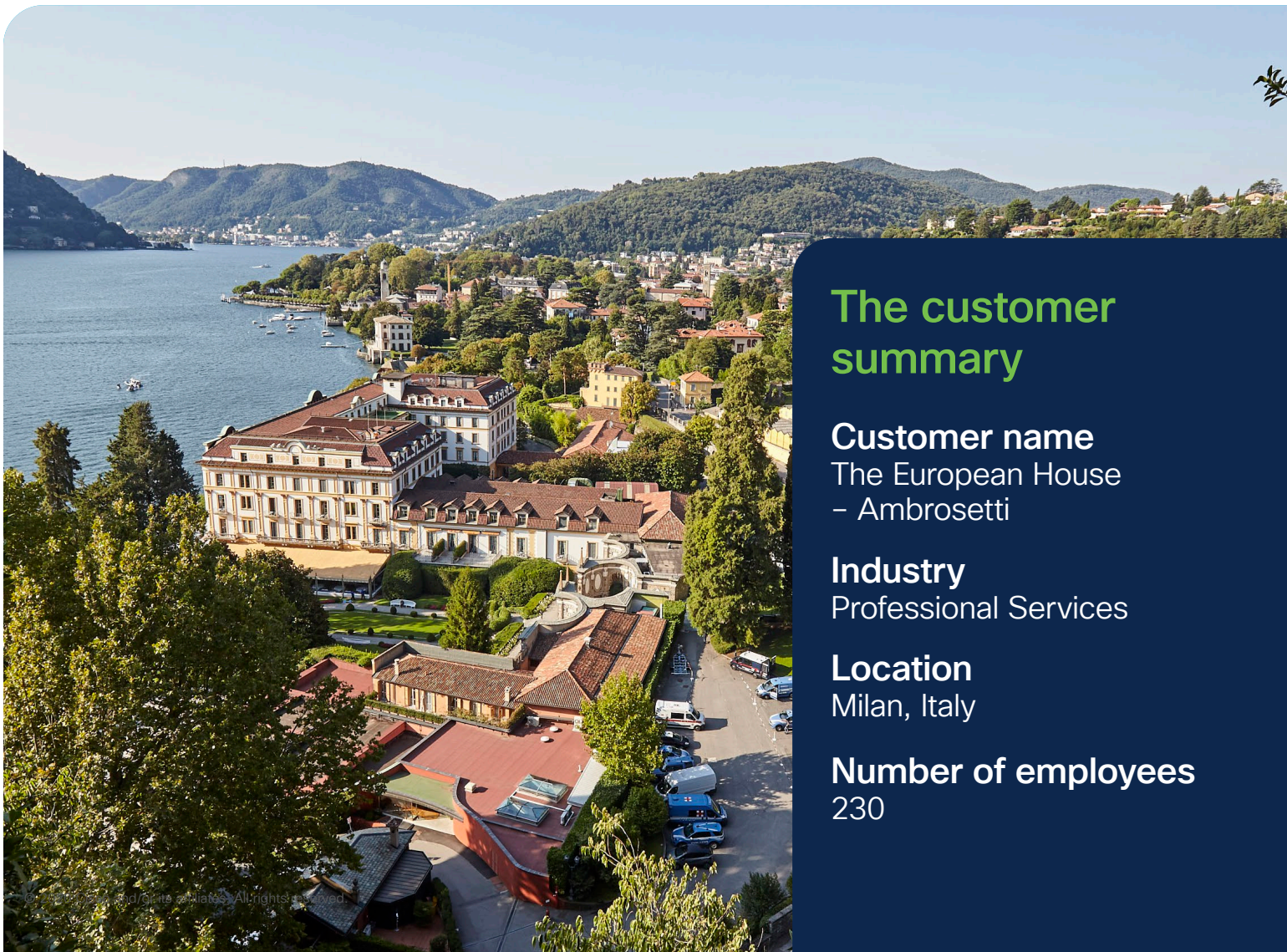


The European House – Ambrosetti

# Bringing Global Leaders Together as COVID Decimates the Events Industry

Italian think tank gathers 500 business and political leaders to ‘phygital’ event, built on Cisco solutions



## The customer summary

### Customer name

The European House  
– Ambrosetti

### Industry

Professional Services

### Location

Milan, Italy

### Number of employees

230



## Challenges

- Enable an annual gathering of global business and political leaders in the face of COVID restrictions
- Create an engaging, intimate schedule of content



## Solutions

- Remote participants connect to the event through a Cisco Webex virtual room, with a choice of five languages
- 60 speakers connect via Cisco Webex DX80 devices, including the creation of a live hologram
- The event schedule, plus the ability to book ad hoc meetings, is managed through Cisco Webex



## Results

- Delivered a successful global meeting despite travel and social distancing restrictions
- Provided the opportunity to almost double attendee numbers
- Reduced travel and carbon impact
- Speakers included Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy and Ban Ki-moon, the former UN Secretary-General

### Global pandemic threatens 46<sup>th</sup> edition

The European House – Ambrosetti is part think tank, part management consultancy, and 100 percent something most of us will have never heard of. It operates at the very top of the political economy. Its work influences big business and big politics.

“We bring together prime ministers, Nobel prize winners, CEOs, and economists,” says Valerio De Molli, Managing Partner and Chief Executive Officer.

The European House – Ambrosetti organizes around 500 events a year, quietly bringing the world’s most influential people together. Its flagship event is held over three days in early September, at the beautiful Villa d’Este overlooking Lake Como. It is the ultimate Ambrosetti experience.

“We invite no more than 300 attendees, plus media, to learn, share views, and inspire one another. We’ve held the event for the last 46 years,” says De Molli. “In 2019, we calculated that guests represented \$55 trillion of assets.”

Yet COVID-19 respects neither rank nor privilege. The global pandemic has locked down economies, axed travel plans, and struck a line through the events business. In March 2020, with invites being prepared to send out, this year’s event looked impossible.

“It would have been very easy to cancel, no one would have blamed us. But you should never confuse the easy with the right,” De Molli states. “Maybe this year, of all years, the world needs people to come together and and share ideas.”

**“I never had any doubt we would make it, though the summer months were hectic. But the right thing to do was to try and use this experience to inspire innovation and change. One thing is certain: you will never decide your future sat behind a desk.”**

### Valerio De Molli

Managing Partner and CEO  
The European House – Ambrosetti

## Blending physical and digital

The European House – Ambrosetti’s response was to create a ‘phygital’, part physical, part digital, event. Villa d’Este would host attendees able to travel safely from Italy and neighboring countries, and The European House – Ambrosetti would create ‘hubs’ in cities around the world to host local guests. In addition, speakers could present from anywhere in the world, and be presented as live holograms. Same quality of speakers and audience, same dates.

“It was only when we started talking to Cisco that we realized this could be possible,” says De Molli. “Slowly, a solution started to emerge – a solution so complex, so innovative that guests would be wowed.”

The challenge: these discussions were taking place in April, the event was still penciled in for early September.

The solution is built on Cisco Webex. Remote participants connect to the event by choosing the Cisco Webex virtual room based on a preferred language ensuring simultaneous translation. More ambitiously, 60 speakers connect via a Cisco Webex DX80 device, including the creation of a live hologram. Connexia delivered the Cisco Webex license platform and enablement, the Cisco Webex DX80 devices to remote speakers, and live tech support during the event. Connexia is the first independent marketing and communications agency that integrates data, creativity, media, and technology. The hologram was enabled through Naumachia, an Italian tech company, integrated through Cisco Webex’s open innovation platform. Finally, the event schedule, plus the ability to book ad hoc meetings, is managed through Cisco Webex.

“I think we realized that video conferencing alone would not be enough,” says Madi Piano Mortari, Associate Partner, The European House – Ambrosetti. “By adding holograms – an extra level of complexity – we could produce some extra emotion.”

Cisco Webex handles all of this. It offers highly secure integrated audio, video, and content sharing from the Cisco Webex cloud, and brings artificial intelligence to automate meeting tasks.

The technical was perhaps the simplest part of the challenge. In the lead up to the event, Cisco professional services also worked with every speaker to ensure they understood the technology inside out. Given the time constraints and the challenge of coordinating 60 global speakers (plus, Villa d’Este was only cleared to host events in July) there would be no time for a test event.

“Yes, the technology was an enabler,” says Piano Mortari, “but it also needed to be in the background. Cisco found a way to explain the technology in a language that everyone understood.”

## Global gathering through technology

“I never had any doubt we would make it,” says De Molli, “though the summer months were hectic. But the right thing to do was to try and use this experience to inspire innovation and change.” Once the decision to go ahead with the event was communicated, speakers and guests were immediately on board. “There was a tremendous amount of goodwill, particularly from those who know The European House – Ambrosetti,” says Piano Mortari. “They were delighted we were making such efforts.

“The event went flawlessly. It delivered the ‘wow.’”

**“It was a fantastic experience. The feedback, on the day and immediately afterwards, was overwhelming. Many have already signed up for next year, whatever our plans. We can be proud of the fact we tried it.”**

## Valerio De Molli

Managing Partner and Chief Executive Officer, The European House – Ambrosetti

The European House – Ambrosetti was able to gather a community of 500, nearly double the usual figure. Five different languages, a mix of reports, slides and presentations, one-to-one sessions, and all in one global ecosystem.

Speakers connecting via the Cisco Webex DX80 included Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy; Brad Smith, President of Microsoft; Ban Ki-moon, the 8th Secretary-General of the UN; Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President, European Commission; and Hillary Clinton, former US senator and presidential nominee. All presented live, as holograms.

The nine hubs comprised Brussels, Madrid, Milan, Moscow, New Delhi, New York, Shanghai, Tehran, and Turin. Each hosted 20-30 guests, all connected via Cisco Webex. Other attendees connected individually.

### Going forward

De Molli dismisses talk of a new normal. Change is constant, 2020 presented fresh challenges. “In reality, we tried this new approach because we were forced out of our comfort zone. We needed to react,” he says. “But nothing can replace the intimacy of meeting face to face, of spending time in someone’s company.”

The goal is to bring everyone back together under one roof, but there will still be room for a blended experience. The success of this year shows that The European House – Ambrosetti can bring together a global, engaged community, wherever the individual.

“Digital allows us to involve a wider audience,” says Piano Mortari. “It can also improve our environmental impact – fewer flights, less carbon, less paper. We can be global and create a positive impact.”

The advantage of Cisco, De Molli continues, is that it encourages open innovation. Holograms were possible in 2020, many other ideas were parked; next year could be something new. “One thing is certain: you will never decide your future sat behind a desk.”

Watch customer video

## For more information

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## Product list

### The European House – Ambrosetti:

- [Cisco Webex](#)
- [Cisco Webex DX80](#)