



## CONGRESSE.ME CASE - REINVENTING ITS BUSINESS MODEL IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

## CASO CONGRESSE.ME - REINVENTANDO SEU MODELO DE NEGÓCIO NO PÓS-PANDEMIA

## CASO CONGRESSE.ME - REINVENTANDO SU MODELO DE NEGOCIO EN EL POS-PANDEMIA

**ABSTRACT**

**Dilemma** - The case explores the trajectory of Congresse.me, an online congress platform operating in Brazil since 2018. After a period of success driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, the company now faces the challenge of reinventing its business model once again.

**Educational Objective** - After discussing this case, students are expected to: a) Understand and assess the platform business model by examining how Congresse.me balanced the needs of different customers and partners in its multilateral platform; b) Identify and discuss the nuances of brand positioning between Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) market segments, using Congresse.me's audience transition as an example; c) Develop adaptive strategies to navigate volatile markets, using Congresse.me as a case study.

**Context** - Luiz Gustavo, CEO of Congresse.me, faces a critical moment. After rapid growth during the pandemic, the demand for online events has declined, requiring a new strategic positioning to maintain competitiveness.

**Main Theme** - Business models and strategic adaptation challenges in the post-pandemic era.

**Audience** - Recommended for undergraduate and graduate students in business administration, applicable to courses in business, entrepreneurship, strategy, and marketing.

**Originality / Value** - The case explores the challenges of transitioning into a digital platform impacted by external factors, highlighting innovation and strategic adaptation in uncertain markets.

**Keywords:** Business Model; Multilateral Platforms; Innovation; Strategic Adaptation; Events.

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## RESUMO

**Dilema** - O caso explora a trajetória da Congressse.me, uma plataforma de realização de congressos online, em atividade no Brasil desde o ano de 2018. Após um período de sucesso impulsionado pela pandemia de COVID-19, a empresa se depara com a desafiadora necessidade de reinventar mais uma vez seu modelo de negócio.

**Objetivo Educacional** - Após a discussão do caso, espera-se que os alunos sejam capazes de: a) Entender e avaliar o modelo de negócio de plataforma, examinando como a Congressse.me equilibró as necessidades de diferentes clientes e parceiros em sua plataforma multilateral; b) Discernir e discutir as nuances do posicionamento de marca entre segmentos de mercado Business to Business (B2B) e Business to Consumer (B2C), utilizando a transição de público da Congressse.me como exemplo; c) Compreender e desenvolver estratégias adaptativas capazes de lidar com mercados voláteis, utilizando o exemplo da Congressse.me como estudo de caso.

**Contextualização** - Luiz Gustavo, CEO da Congressse.me, enfrenta um momento crítico. Após crescer rapidamente durante a pandemia, a demanda por eventos online caiu, exigindo um novo posicionamento estratégico para manter a competitividade.

**Tema Principal** - Modelos de negócio e desafios de adaptação estratégica no pós-pandemia.

**Público** - Indicado para alunos de graduação e pós-graduação em administração, aplicável em disciplinas voltadas para negócios, empreendedorismo, estratégia e marketing.

**Originalidade / Valor** - O caso explora os desafios da transição de uma plataforma digital impactada por fatores externos, destacando inovação e adaptação estratégica em mercados incertos.

**Palavras-chave:** Modelo de Negócio; Plataformas Multilaterais; Inovação; Adaptação Estratégica; Eventos.

## RESUMEN

**Dilema** - El caso explora la trayectoria de Congressse.me, una plataforma de congresos en línea que opera en Brasil desde 2018. Después de un

período de éxito impulsado por la pandemia de COVID-19, la empresa enfrenta el desafío de reinventar su modelo de negocio una vez más.

**Objetivo Educativo** - Después de la discusión de este caso, se espera que los estudiantes sean capaces de: a) Comprender y evaluar el modelo de negocio de plataforma, analizando cómo Congressse.me equilibró las necesidades de diferentes clientes y socios en su plataforma multilateral; b) Identificar y discutir los matices del posicionamiento de marca entre los segmentos de mercado Business to Business (B2B) y Business to Consumer (B2C), utilizando la transición de audiencia de Congressse.me como ejemplo; c) Desarrollar estrategias adaptativas para enfrentar mercados volátiles, utilizando Congressse.me como estudio de caso.

**Contextualización** - Luiz Gustavo, CEO de Congressse.me, enfrenta un momento crítico. Después de un rápido crecimiento durante la pandemia, la demanda de eventos en línea ha disminuido, lo que requiere un nuevo posicionamiento estratégico para mantener la competitividad.

**Tema Principal** - Modelos de negocio y desafíos de adaptación estratégica en el pospandemia.

**Público** - Recomendado para estudiantes de pregrado y posgrado en administración, aplicable en cursos de negocios, emprendimiento, estrategia y marketing.

**Originalidad / Valor** - El caso explora los desafíos de la transición de una plataforma digital impactada por factores externos, destacando la innovación y la adaptación estratégica en mercados inciertos.

**Palabras clave:** Modelo de Negocio; Plataformas Multilaterales; Innovación; Adaptación Estratégica; Eventos.

## INTRODUCTION

In the post-pandemic period, the event ecosystem in Brazil was undergoing a transition phase between in-person, online, and hybrid formats, as the demand for congresses and meetings returned and evolved amid new technologies. The experience gained during the pandemic propelled the emergence and consolidation of event management platforms, increasing the importance of integrated solutions for organizers, congress participants, and sponsors. Competi-



tion had never been so fierce, with new entrants combining scalability and user experience personalization, pressuring companies in the sector to continuously innovate with more flexible business models. In this dynamic scenario, leading competitors sought to sustain growth while offering increasingly engaging and efficient experiences for their clients.

It was February 2023, and Luiz Gustavo was hurrying through downtown Rio de Janeiro on his way to a meeting with Gávea Angels, attempting to raise a new investment round of around 1 million reais for Congresse.me — a digital platform launched in 2018 with the proposal to provide the necessary tools to facilitate the execution of 100% online congresses. The CEO knew this fundraising opportunity was a great chance to generate increasingly better results for his business. *"The market experienced a big boom starting in 2020 with the pandemic, but obviously, this attracted the attention of many other companies in the sector. The truth is that competition is growing, and a new investment round now would mean, for Congresse.me, staying competitive in this fight for differentiation,"* Luiz Gustavo emphasized.

On his way to the meeting room, Luiz Gustavo received a notification on his phone about recent news just released by one of the country's most widely circulated media outlets: *"A major online events company had declared bankruptcy due to lack of investment and increased mass layoffs in its sector."* The news highlighted for Luiz Gustavo the importance of acting quickly to ensure the survival of companies in this field, especially in the post-pandemic period, which brought with it the gradual return of in-person events. Reflecting on his brand's positioning in this market, the production engineer found himself thoughtful about which business model would be the most assertive for Congresse.me in this new context. The only certainty was that there was no time to make mistakes.

## BACKGROUND

Luiz Gustavo Borges graduated in Production Engineering from the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) in Minas Gerais, with a postgra-

duate degree from the Laboratory of Technology, Business Management, and Environment, linked to the School of Engineering at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) in Rio de Janeiro. Since 2009, he had worked in academia as an engineering professor, university extension coordinator, and later as director of online distance learning (EAD) courses. Always driven by innovation, Luiz Gustavo came from an entrepreneurial family and believed that technology would make a significant difference in creating new solutions. In 2012, he began entering the startup world by joining the operational area of an innovative new business in sustainability, at a time when there was substantial investment in this field, especially from the state government. *"Innovation and digital have always been in my DNA, even at a time when there was still great skepticism about digital business models; however, here we are,"* Luiz Gustavo commented.

The idea won several awards, including international recognitions. However, due to both managerial and operational problems, the startup did not materialize as expected. From this experience, Luiz Gustavo developed the desire to create his own business. So, in 2013, he founded the startup "Me passa aí," a streaming platform with video lessons that helped in the academic journey. This platform allowed students to engage with peers from other courses, universities, and even other cities across the country. On this platform, courses were recorded by the students themselves, making the teaching language more dynamic and adapted to the student context. In the first few months after its launch, the platform confirmed its success by receiving several awards and a growing number of requests from new users. *"I like to joke that 'Me passa aí' was my first child, what really led me to want to become an entrepreneur. Although I had to discontinue the business due to a series of problems, I am very grateful for the learning it gave me,"* Luiz Gustavo highlighted.

With the visibility gained from Me passa aí, Luiz Gustavo began to be invited to speak at various engineering events held in different parts of Brazil. While participating in one of these events, which took place online, he realized the innovative potential that the digital format could



represent compared to the traditional in-person model. This was because the online modality offered scalability of audience, as well as substantially lower costs, which a physical event could never achieve. *"It's almost funny, from being a total unknown, I started to feel like someone important with so many invitations to talk about digital business at a time when there were still very few of us,"* said the entrepreneur.

It was in this context that Luiz Gustavo conceived the idea of what would become the digital platform *Congresse.me*, an innovative solution based on a business model aimed at optimizing the entire event organization process and providing faster and more efficient results. *Congresse.me's* primary goal was to connect teachers and event organizers directly with their target audience. Initially, the company's structure was very lean, with only three people: one responsible for lead generation, another in charge of marketing strategy development, and a third who handled the technological part and platform development. *"The idea was to start small, even as a way to test the business. We didn't have many resources to invest at that time; I even had to borrow money from family and friends,"* Luiz Gustavo recalled.

The business started from the assumption that the primary focus should be the end customer, that is, event participants. However, over time, Luiz Gustavo realized it would be necessary to pay special attention to the other side of the equation: event organizers. Thus, he began to adopt a more careful and strategic approach to also serve this audience, a perspective typical of multi-sided platforms. *"We were there between 2018 and 2019, and anyone who says they completely mastered platform businesses in Brazil at that time is probably lying. At the beginning, the biggest challenge was to start generating revenue; it wasn't very clear to us where it would come from or at least the best path. Eventually, we had to learn,"* Luiz Gustavo added.

## DIFFERENT PHASES AND BUSINESS MODELS

Throughout its years of existence, *Congresse.me* underwent several adjustments in its

business model, oscillating between phases focused on the business-to-business (B2B) model and others emphasizing the business-to-consumer (B2C)<sup>1</sup> model. The company's first phase was marked by organizing events in a model that directly reached the end consumer of the product—meaning, a period in which *Congresse.me* organized events with a total B2C focus. In this phase, all the structure, content, marketing, and mindset were oriented toward satisfying the only group of end customers: the congress participants. Luiz Gustavo believed that this direct focus on the end customer was a comparative advantage for the platform compared to other competitors emerging at that time. *"We saw our competitors at that moment much more concerned with the technical details of broadcasting than with creating a pleasant experience for viewers in general. We truly believed we had something to add, and that this should be the path to follow,"* Luiz Gustavo highlighted.

"The pandemic in 2020 changed everything. People may say it was luck, but the truth is we had very good timing in this sense. Overnight, everything needed to be online, and while everyone else was learning how to do it, *Congresse.me* already had at least a year of experience operating digitally," commented the CEO. However, as the Covid-19 pandemic began to ease in 2021, there was a gradual migration of events from the online environment back to in-person formats. In this context, Luiz Gustavo realized a new need was emerging: including other players who had previously not been part of *Congresse.me's* focus, such as event organizers. This group, in turn, was still adapting to the new scenario—an until-then unexplored landscape marked by the possibility of hybrid broadcasts, which had now become a viable option. This paradigm shift represented the transition from the first to the second phase in *Congresse.me's* business model. *"It was a window of less than two years where everything changed and changed back very quickly,"* joked Luiz Gustavo. "And the truth is that many companies were left behind in this process. We had barely started getting used to one mo-

<sup>1</sup> B2C (Business to Consumer): A business model in which a company sells products or services directly to the end consumer. In the case of *Congresse.me*, this occurred in the first phase, when the company organized events and sold access directly to the participants.



del and already had to change again. But it was about adapt or perish," said the CEO.

In this new phase, Congresse.me's platform shifted from a B2C<sup>2</sup> to a B2B2C<sup>3</sup> (business-to-business-to-consumer) model, bringing another crucial player into the scene. From this point on, the structural focus of marketing, sales, content, and mindset would be directed not only at congress participants but also at event organizers. This change in perspective led to structural changes in the platform's own *modus operandi*. In this context, the platform needed to manage a greater number of events, which were increasingly broad and complex. However, to operate at this new standard and scale, new rounds of fundraising became necessary. *"It's simply impossible to change processes without money. Every change has a cost, and there came a moment when our cash flow could no longer support all the investments we needed to make. That's when I had to turn to external capital for the first time,"* said Luiz Gustavo.

With these new resources, it was possible to expand the team of employees from 4 to 40 people. Between 2020 and 2021, this new team configuration allowed Congresse.me to operate at a scale never seen before, reaching the capacity to host 220 events with up to one million participants over the year. This represented a considerable increase in capacity—up to ten times what they were used to operating. *"At a certain point, we began to be able to offer additional technologies for event organization to our clients, such as real-time audience interaction, KPIs, and a range of possible customizations. And more and more people started seeking us out for these features,"* Luiz Gustavo highlighted.

In 2022, changes continued to occur, but with them, new dilemmas emerged. The increase

2 B2B (Business to Business): A business model in which one company sells products or services to another company. In Congresse.me's transition phase, the company began focusing on selling its technological solution to other companies, such as event organizers.

3 B2B2C (Business to Business to Consumer): This is a model where a company sells its product or service to another company, which then uses it to deliver an offer to the final consumer. It works as a bridge, where the first company empowers the second so that both can reach the customer more efficiently. In the case of Congresse.me, the platform (the first B) provides technology to event organizers (the second B), who use it to connect with congress participants (the C).

in scale and market popularity brought greater complexity to the environment, as other players began to enter the online scientific congress market, further intensifying competition. In response to this new market dynamic, Congresse.me and its business model had to adapt once again. As a survival strategy, the range of services offered by Congresse.me needed to be expanded. The company began offering, in addition to basic IT services, complementary services such as video broadcasting, audience support, marketing, and lead generation, among others. *"There came a point when it was no longer enough to simply host the event; we had to help our clients attract participants. This led to an increase in the scope of our work that we hadn't anticipated before,"* commented Luiz Gustavo.

However, after the initial boom, the scenario marked by market saturation in online events, combined with improved sanitary conditions, resulted in significant disinterest—both from the public and from companies—regarding the services offered by Congresse.me. *"There came a moment when we noticed a significant drop in demand for our services. People were tired after nearly two years of pandemic; they wanted to get out of the house in some way,"* Luiz Gustavo observed. In an attempt to face this decline in demand, starting in the second half of 2022, Congresse.me began offering a service focused on lead generation for event organizers. By creating a database of potential participants interested in specific topics, Congresse.me became an important and strategic component for its client companies, facilitating access to qualified future customers.

In this latest stage, *"We began to characterize ourselves less as an online technical-scientific event platform and more as a platform focused on the capture and management of qualified leads through event organization,"* the CEO evaluated. However, Luiz Gustavo also noted that, despite the different phases being essential for the survival and adaptation of Congresse.me's business in a volatile, constantly growing, and changing market, these adaptations also resulted in high costs for the company. *"I can't go into specific numbers here, but we're talking about costs in the hundreds of thousands of reais,"* the CEO stated. These costs were largely due to the learning



curves imposed on employees, who had to deal with processes in constant transformation.

## THE EVENTS MARKET AND POST-PANDEMIC CHANGES

In the Brazilian context, the events sector has grown steadily. It has shown impressive figures, accounting for 4.5% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and representing about 7.4% of all jobs generated in Brazil in 2022. Events play a prominent role in marketing and brand positioning, generating notoriety and visibility within their market niches. Historically, they have also contributed to increased engagement and facilitated networking among people, companies, and/or institutions. According to the Brazilian Association of Event Companies (ABEOC), the sector moved approximately R\$209.2 billion in 2019, the last year before the pandemic<sup>4</sup>.

Political, economic, and health factors have had a significant impact in recent years on various market segments of the economy. In this sense, the events sector was one of the most affected. According to ABEOC, there was a 14% growth in the sector in 2019 compared to 2018. However, starting in 2019, with the worsening of sanitary conditions in Brazil and worldwide, the reduction in in-person events was offset by an exponential increase in online events. These events occurred in a wide range of formats, from artistic shows to technical-scientific congresses, popularizing the format known as "Lives." This change profoundly altered the audience landscape, regarding inclusion and the social character of events. From that point on, events became more accessible and easier to participate in. While online events already ranked third among the most promising event types in 2013, with about 16,000 online congresses driving the sector in Latin America, this number increased significantly in the following years<sup>5</sup>.

"In terms of logistics, however, it is important to highlight that we are dealing with fundamentally different aspects," commented Luiz Gustavo. He continued: "On one hand, online events

4 Abrape (2024). Números do setor. Available at: <https://abrape.com.br/numeros-do-setor/>

5 Oliveira, R. V. (2024). O ponto de vista de um investidor sobre o mercado de eventos. Available at: <https://www.moblee.com.br/blog/o-ponto-de-vista-de-um-investidor-sobre-o-mercado-de-eventos/>

*gain a lot in flexibility, easily increasing their audience capacity with minor adjustments to IT infrastructure. On the other hand, the online format still presents limitations regarding the generation of rich exchanges and connections among participants. This was something we already felt, and it became more evident over time."* This type of interaction continued to be observed much more intensely in in-person events. Thus, despite the rapid growth of the online events market and its being considered a great opportunity for organizers and sponsors in the first months of the pandemic in 2020, significant challenges emerged. These challenges were driven by low entry barriers, as well as improved sanitary conditions worldwide, which resulted in a preference for the return to in-person activities.

## STAKEHOLDERS

In the online events market, it was possible to identify some stakeholders who played fundamental roles. The first group worth highlighting was event organizers, who could be companies, agencies, or individuals responsible for the conception, structuring, and production of online events. When they migrated from the physical to the virtual environment in 2020, these organizers faced technological, managerial, and relational challenges that required significant efforts in terms of organization and strategy. "In a matter of a few weeks, everything changed, and not everyone was prepared for this change. Even we, who were born with a digital focus, were caught off guard by the increase in demand," highlighted Luiz Gustavo.

The second group of note was the spectators, who played a crucial role as consumers of online event content. The opinions and behavior of this audience were decisive factors, influencing the development of policies and strategies in the sector as a whole. For this reason, organizers focused their efforts on meeting the expectations and needs of their audience, ensuring an experience that met the expectations of participants. "We started this way, with a business model focused on the end spectator, but there came a moment when we realized we also had to do more for other audiences," commented the CEO.

In addition, speakers and presenters were



also important agents in this market. *"Many companies do not pay much attention to the role of the people who are part of the agenda; they are always very concerned with what will appear on screen, but the truth is that they are an essential part of this machinery,"* said Luiz Gustavo. They are usually groups of experts, artists, influencers, or renowned professionals who provide content, deliver lectures, participate in panels, or perform during virtual events. These people play a central role in the attractiveness and quality of events, adding value and attracting the attention of participants.

On an online platform like Congresse.me, both speakers and organizers held prominent positions in the chain of relevance. They provided valuable content and ensured the basis for a satisfactory experience for participants. At the same time, it was important to recognize the interdependence and synergy among these stakeholders in the online events market. Collaboration between organizers, audience, and speakers became essential for the success of virtual events, guaranteeing the delivery of relevant content and the creation of an engaging experience. *"Everything is connected, like essential pieces that are part of an engine. Without one of these pieces, the engine will not work. That's how we like to think here,"* commented Luiz Gustavo.

In the context of the events market, Luiz Gustavo also recognized the extremely relevant role of sponsors: *"Without sponsorship, an event does not happen, because the truth is that many cannot cover all costs just with registration fees,"* he said. Sponsor participation was fundamental both for the promotion of their brands and for the financial support of events. The relationship established between event organizers and sponsors was usually based on mutual cooperation, bringing benefits to both parties involved and their respective brands.

Congresse.me knew that adequate sponsorship support became essential for the viability of both online and in-person events. Although each modality presented specific demands in terms of resources and infrastructure, when companies or brands became involved in an event, they sought, in return, to increase their brand

visibility and promote their products or services, taking advantage of marketing opportunities targeted at the event's audience. *"A difficulty we had was measuring the value of a brand's exposure in a digital event,"* said Luiz Gustavo.

This partnership relationship between organizers and sponsors was usually built on a basis of mutual benefits. While sponsors ensured brand exposure for themselves, event organizers benefited from the necessary financial and logistical support, allowing for the realization of events with greater quality and reach. *"We tried to establish a win-win relationship, and for a while, we were successful with this approach,"* said the CEO.

This interdependence has always regulated the events market and the mindset of industry managers. With online events, however, it became more difficult for brands to measure the impact and scope of their campaign exposure. This made it harder to quantify the results of initiatives. Over time, what was seen was the saturation of online events and the gradual return to in-person events. This made brands increasingly reluctant to direct resources to this event modality, creating even greater complications for Luiz Gustavo and other Congresse.me collaborators. *"There are, indeed, some metrics, but not all sponsors accept them well, and this was a difficulty we began to have over time,"* concluded Luiz Gustavo.

## REDESIGNING THE PATHS OF CONGRESSE.ME FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

In 2023, what Luiz Gustavo had in hand was a multilateral platform striving to simultaneously serve both of its main audiences: organizers and congress participants. One of the company's main strengths was precisely having built a database since 2018, as the CEO pointed out: *"We spent a lot of money maintaining an updated database, but we knew it would be useful at some point."* This database was robust and capable of mapping audience profiles based on their participation in previous events, thus suggesting new events relevant to their specific interests.

Alongside this, Congresse.me had distinguished itself from other market players by offering a complete service package capable of



meeting all the needs of event organizers. These additional value-added services included marketing, customer service, IT support, and infrastructure. However, despite this expanded offering, the company's revenues had declined in recent months.

Another concern for Luiz Gustavo was the leadership he exercised over the team and the brand itself. In previous years, he had learned that to withstand so many changes in such a volatile market, the business needed capital to adapt and continue growing. Constant fluctuations in events, caused by environmental changes, brought additional challenges, especially regarding team sizing. There were times when the team faced a heavy workload, while at other times, many employees experienced idleness. *"This market has changed so many times since we created Congresse.me that sometimes I wonder if we will survive another drastic change. The processes we implement today are no guarantee they will work next year,"* said Luiz Gustavo.

It became increasingly clear to Luiz Gustavo that the problems stemmed from the disorderly and unplanned growth of the business in previous years. *"Maybe we are paying the price for a lack of planning,"* admitted the CEO.

Arriving at the meeting, Luiz Gustavo was greeted by Alessandra Dornelas, senior partner at Gávea Angels, who had known him for a long time. The teams sat down, and Alessandra began reviewing some notes from her team about Congresse.me's financial indicators for the first half of 2023. *"Luiz, you know how much I like what you do; we even invested in the idea right from the start. But with these numbers, it will be hard to convince my colleagues here to release the additional 1 million reais you are asking for."* The room fell silent, and before Luiz Gustavo could respond, Alessandra continued: *"I think maybe it's time to slow down growth, review processes, and cut costs, don't you think?"*

Luiz Gustavo replied shortly after: *"Alessandra, my team and I have had this conversation many times internally, but you know how competitive and dynamic the online events business has become lately... The pandemic changed every-*

*thing. After analyzing different scenarios, we really believe the best solution is to continue expanding Congresse.me's scale and scope. Maybe this is the only viable way to ensure the business's survival."*

Choosing the strategy to slow growth could bring short-term financial stability, reduce operational expenses, simplify structures, and focus on delivering value more efficiently to existing customers. This route would increase cash flow predictability, reduce vulnerabilities to volatile demand cycles, and allow strengthening operational foundations and data governance. However, the cost of this path could slow the network's expansion experience, causing the company to lose relevance to more aggressive competitors and potentially lose market share if there were no clear reorientation of offerings or platform performance improvements. Additionally, aggressive cuts could affect team morale and Congresse.me's ability to attract growth-minded talent.

On the other hand, continuing to expand aimed to leverage its database, increase capacity to serve organizers and congress participants with integrated services, and explore new monetization models. This trajectory had the potential to increase revenue through upselling complementary services such as marketing, customer service, support, and infrastructure, gain greater market share, and benefit from network effects. However, this path would require continuous capital, significant investments in people, technology, and data governance. There were also risks of dependence on demand cycles and cultural challenges in implementing rapid changes in an already constantly transforming organization.

Regardless of the path to follow, Luiz Gustavo knew it might be time once again to change the company's focus and business model. But for that, he depended on the outcome of the conversation with Alessandra. The only certainty was that decisions needed to be made, and they could not wait.

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## EXHIBITS

**Figure 1**  
Congresse.me website.



Source: Congresses.me (2024a).

Congresse.me (2024a). Congresses.me Página Inicial. Available at: <https://eventos.congresses.me/>

**Figure 2**  
Congresse.me in numbers.



Source: Congresses.me (2024b).

Congresse.me (2024b). Congresses.me Eventos. Available at: <https://eventos.congresses.me/>



**Figure 3**  
*Plans and prices.*

CONGRESSE.ME

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Source: Congressme.me (2024c).

Congresse.me Planos e Preços. Disponível em: <https://congressme.com/planos-e-precos>

**Figure 4**

*Video – Congresse.me institucional.*



Source: Congresse.me (2021). Congresse.me Institucional.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMDGcujlQXI>



## TEACHING NOTES

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After discussing the case, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand and evaluate the platform business model, examining how Congresse.me balanced the needs of different customers and partners on its multilateral platform;
2. Discern and discuss the nuances of brand positioning between Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) market segments, using Congresse.me's transition in target audience as an example;
3. Understand and develop adaptive strategies capable of dealing with volatile markets, using Congresse.me as a case study.

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

To achieve learning objective 1, which addresses the multilateral platform model, concepts such as multilateral platforms, network ecosystems, intermediation, and network effects will be presented (Nambisan, Zahra & Luo, 2019; Leinwand & Mani, 2022). For objective 2, which deals with brand positioning between B2B and B2C, concepts such as brand identity, channel management, and user experience will be highlighted, including references to transitions to B2B2C (Kumar & Raheja, 2012; Holsapple & Sasidharan, 2005; Mingione & Leoni, 2019). For objective 3, which examines adaptive strategies in volatile markets, the discussion will be anchored in concepts such as dynamic capabilities and proactive planning (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997; Newey & Zahra, 2009). Thus, the table provides a clear map of how each objective is grounded in specific theories to interpret the Congresse.me case, facilitating the connection between theory, case evidence, and pedagogical practice. This structure, together with the discussion question, is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Interação entre Objetivos de Aprendizado e Perguntas de Discussão*

Learning Objectives	Authors	Plenary Discussion Question
Multisized Platform Model	Nambisan, Zahra & Luo (2019); Leinwand & Mani (2022)	How would you describe Congresse.me's business model, and what were the main factors that drove its initial success?
Brand Positioning between B2B and B2C	Kumar & Raheja (2012); Holsapple & Sasidharan (2005); Mingione & Leoni (2019)	How did Congresse.me decide to transition between the B2B and B2C audiences? What were the implications of this positioning for the brand and its relationships with customers?
Adaptive Strategies in Volatile Markets	Teece, Pisano & Shuen (1997); Newey & Zahra (2009)	Given Congresse.me's current context, what immediate actions would you advise the company to take to recover from its revenue decline and maintain its market relevance?

Source: Developed by the authors

### TARGET AUDIENCE

The case was developed with a focus on undergraduate students in Business Administration in their final year, as well as postgraduate students in Administration. The recommended courses for applying this case are: Business, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, and Strategy, allowing for discussions on Digital Business Models, Marketing Strategies, Platform Business Management, and Innovation.

### DATA SOURCES

The preparation of this case considered the use of both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were collected from a variety of sources, including scientific articles, relevant journalistic material, and analysis of industry reports and information from consulting firms. To complement and deepen these data, in-depth interviews were conducted with the company's CEO, Luiz Gustavo. Although requested, the company's financial indicators were not made available due to the sensitivity of the data involved. In addition, some of the dilemmas presented here were unfolding almost simultaneously with the



interviews, which limited the possibility of accessing more detailed financial information.

## CLASS PLAN

This teaching plan is a suggestion for a 120-minute class. It was designed considering that students have previously read all the case material and prepared for discussion. The suggested teaching plan is as follows:

- **Case Presentation (10 minutes):** Begin the class with an overview of the case. At this stage, the context and main challenges should be explained. This will ensure all students are aligned in their understanding of the case, standardizing any uneven prior preparations.

- **Small Group Discussion (30 minutes):** Divide students into small groups of up to 6 people and give them the assignment questions to discuss and solve. This will allow students to discuss their ideas, share their perceptions, and build solid arguments. Reinforce to students that there is no need for consensus among group members.

- **Plenary Discussion (60 minutes):** With the instructor's guidance, assisted by the discussion questions presented in the analysis plan, an open debate on the proposed questions will be held, in which all ideas will be discussed. During this phase, it is important to ensure that all aspects of the case are addressed and that different views, arguments, and findings are presented by participants.

- **Conclusion and Wrap-up (10 minutes):** It is suggested that the instructor reserve the final minutes to summarize the main points discussed during the plenary session. Talk about the different perspectives presented, how they relate to the real-world situation of the case, and, fundamentally, how the insights and challenges of Congresse.me in its adaptation process can be adapted and applied by managers in other contexts of digital companies, startups, and markets characterized by volatility and uncertainty.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Assignment Questions)

1. What different positions did Con-

gress.me adopt over its years of operation, and how do they differ?

2. With the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2023, what changes could be observed in the market in which the company was positioned? What were the main challenges faced?

3. How does the platform business model adopted by Congresse.me differ from traditional businesses? Highlight its main characteristics.

4. In Luiz Gustavo's place, what paths and strategies would you suggest for Congresse.me, considering the context in which the case takes place?

5. Now assuming the role of the group of investors about to meet with Congresse.me, what concerns would you highlight regarding a new round of investment requested by the company?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PLENARY (Case Analysis Plan):

### Opening

During the initial minutes of the plenary session, the instructor may present the following opening question to the class to warm up the discussion:

*(Opening Question) How would you describe Congresse.me's business model, and what were the main factors that drove its initial success?*

Multilateral platform business models, like the one adopted by Congresse.me, represent an innovative approach to connecting different user groups, establishing an interaction ecosystem (Nambisan, Zahra & Luo, 2019). This type of model is not limited to the traditional direct-to-consumer sales relationship. Instead, it acts as a bridge, a kind of intermediary that facilitates interactions and transactions among users, reducing friction and increasing market efficiency (Leinwand & Mani, 2022).

Looking at the Congresse.me case, we see that it functioned as a virtual platform for hosting congresses, connecting various groups—such as



speakers, event organizers, and participants. Since its founding in 2018, this allowed efficient interaction and transactions among them.

When analyzing the elements that drove the company's initial success, some important considerations arise. One of these elements was the existence of a market need for a platform like *Congresse.me*'s, driven by the growing demand for virtual events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This allowed *Congresse.me* to establish itself as an innovative solution at a strategically opportune moment.

*Congresse.me*'s platform also stood out for its ease of use, both for event organizers and participants. This attractive usability helped *Congresse.me* attract an increasing number of users to the platform, which over the years consolidated and became a competitive differentiator for the company. This broad reach, provided by the multilateral business model, allowed the company to effectively satisfy the needs of different user groups.

Finally, *Congresse.me* benefited from network effects (Nambisan, Zahra & Luo, 2019). As the number of users increased, the platform became increasingly valuable, since each new user increased connection options for others. Thus, this cyclical effect boosted both the growth and initial success of *Congresse.me*. See (Table 1).

To conclude this stage and help transition to the next discussion phase, the following transition question may be presented to students:

*(Transition Question 1) What signs indicate that Congresse.me successfully connected different types of users? How can these signs guide the company's strategic choices?*

From the opening question, students should identify clues such as how the platform connected event organizers, speakers, and participants amid a growth context driven by demand for virtual events and the ease of use of new technologies. These indications should suggest that interaction among diverse groups was facilitated, which can influence the company's decisions on how to maintain this connection during the strategic focus transition, adjusting communication channels and prioritizing features that reduce friction among different users. From this, studen-

ts are expected to discuss how to balance distinct needs (organization, participation, and content offering) in the next section, without imposing concepts beforehand, letting evidence guide reasoning. See (Table 2).

After this initial phase and to continue the proposed discussion plan, the following discussion question could be presented:

### *Analysis*

*(Discussion Question) How did Congresse.me decide to transition between the B2B and B2C audiences? What were the implications of this positioning for the brand and its relationships with customers?*

When discussing the transition of a company's focus from B2B (business-to-business) to B2C (business-to-consumer), it is important to understand what these terms imply and the different strategies involved. B2B refers to a business model where a company's main clients are other companies. In this model, strategies, communication channels, and product specifications are often complex and require a deep understanding of the industry and the specific needs of each client. The sales cycle is typically longer, relationships are more enduring, and purchasing decisions are generally based on logic and return on investment (Kumar & Raheja, 2012).

On the other hand, B2C refers to a model where a company's main clients are individual consumers. Marketing and sales processes are generally more direct, and purchasing decisions may involve various intangible attributes, often driven by emotions and personal preferences. The sales cycle is shorter, the product or service usually targets a broad audience, and customer engagement and personalization are key sales components (Holsapple & Sasidharan, 2005).

Reflecting now on *Congresse.me* and its transition from B2B to B2C: this was a strategic decision involving an expansion of its reach and diversification of its service portfolio. Originally, the company operated mainly in the B2B space, providing a platform for companies and event organizers to hold congresses. However, an opportunity was identified to also serve the B2C audience, enabling individuals to participate



directly in events through the platform.

This transition had several implications for the brand. First, it required a redefinition of the company's identity and positioning to accommodate both B2B and B2C audiences. This also involved a shift in brand communication and marketing to attract and meet the needs of two different audiences.

Moving to the B2C model led Congresse.me to develop new features and services to meet the specific demands of this user group. This included implementing features that allowed individual ticket payments and personalization of the user experience on the platform.

Regarding customer relationships, including the B2C audience opened a new direct interaction channel with end users, allowing Congresse.me to collect more detailed feedback and better understand the needs and desires of event participants. However, it also represented a challenge, as the company had to learn to manage and meet the expectations of a broader and more diverse audience.

Overall, the transition from B2B to B2C, and ultimately to operating in a B2B2C model (Mingione & Leoni, 2019), represented a growth and diversification opportunity for Congresse.me but also brought new challenges and demands, requiring a more flexible and comprehensive approach to meet a variety of needs and expectations from different clients. See (Table 3).

To conclude this stage and help transition to the final discussion phase, the following transition question may be presented to students:

*(Transition Question 2) What elements of Congresse.me's evolution, as it began serving end users as well, indicate practical short-term actions in product, communication, and pricing that could encourage greater individual participation without compromising value for other clients?*

The goal is for students to identify signals in the narrative about the expansion to serve individual users (e.g., inclusion of individual payments, personalization of experience) and reflect on immediate actions such as simplifying onboarding, payment options, targeted messaging, pricing experiments, and customer support. Based on these clues, the instructor can discuss

how such changes affected relationships with business clients and end users in the case, what communication adjustments would be necessary, and which risks (value cannibalization, increased complexity, brand dilution) need to be managed. The focus here is on translating transition evidence into practical short-term decisions without prescribing solutions, allowing students to arrive at answers from the case. See (Table 4).

After this part is completed, it is suggested that the instructor begin guiding the plenary session toward its final phase. At this point, the following closing question could be presented to students:

### *Closing*

*(Closing Question) Given Congresse.me's current context, what immediate actions would you advise the company to take to recover from its revenue decline and maintain its market relevance?*

First, it is essential to understand that, in the corporate world, the ability to adapt to changes in market conditions and consumer behavior trends is a vital component for the survival and prosperity of companies (Schulman, 2023). This implies not only reacting to circumstances but also engaging in proactive strategic planning, identifying emerging opportunities, and implementing necessary changes in operations or business models (Newey & Zahra, 2009).

This understanding provides the basis for discussing the immediate actions Congresse.me could take to recover its revenue decline and maintain market relevance. First, the company could analyze sales data, customer feedback, and market trends to understand the specific causes of the revenue drop. With these insights, the company would be able to develop appropriate strategies to address them, which may include product or service reconfiguration, adjustments in marketing strategies, or price reevaluation.

To maintain relevance in the market, it is crucial that Congresse.me seeks innovation, whether in the product/service it offers or in how they are delivered. The use of new technologies,



adoption of new business models, or creation of new ways to engage customers could be viable paths for students to explore.

Additionally, other strategies to consider could include customer retention strategies, which are fundamental to preserving market relevance and driving revenue. Alongside this, improving customer service, offering loyalty programs, or enhancing the customer experience also become valid options.

Finally, financial strategies such as cost reduction, investment in growth areas, and financial forecasting could be evaluated. However, obviously, all actions should align with the company's overall objectives and capabilities.

It is worth noting for the instructor that, due to the limited class time, these are only some general recommendations, as a more detailed plan could be assigned to students as homework, thus requiring them to have a thorough understanding of Congresse.me's situation in the case vis-à-vis the current moment experienced by the company, its resources, and challenges. See (Table 5).

## BOARD PLAN

### Board 1 – Opening

- Key Points
  - o Multilateral ecosystem
  - o Ease of use
  - o Virtual demand (pandemic)
  - o Network effects
- Supporting Questions
  - o Which element is central?
  - o Impact on B2B → B2C transition?

Instructor Guide: Ask for practical examples; Connect with the next stage (Analysis)

### Board 2 – Transition 1

- Key Points
  - o Connection between groups
  - o Growth with virtual events
  - o Network value
- Supporting Questions
  - o Which channels to maintain?
  - o What connectivity metrics?

Instructor Guide: Identify textual signals; Relate to channel/feature decisions

### Board 3 – Discussion

- Key Points
  - o B2B vs B2C differences
  - o Motivators: reach, portfolio
  - o Brand repositioning
  - o New B2C resources
  - o Customer relationships (feedback)
- Supporting Questions
  - o Which metrics are sensitive?
  - o How to balance brand messaging?

Instructor Guide: Structure in blocks: strategy, brand, operation; Explore trade-offs and communication

### Board 4 – Transition 2

- Key Points (short)
  - o Individual payment
  - o Personalization
  - o Simple onboarding
  - o Risks: cannibalization, complexity
- Supporting Questions (short)
  - o Product priority?
  - o Messages for B2B/B2C?



Instructor Guide: Identify evidence in the text; Discuss priorities without closed solutions

### Board 5 – Closing

- Key Points
  - o Analyze data
  - o Innovate/new models
  - o Retention/experience
  - o Price/marketing adjustments
- Supporting Questions
  - o Which metrics to monitor?
  - o How to prioritize with limited resources?

Instructor Guide: Propose 1–3 priority actions; viability and metrics. When discussing financial strategies, guide students to reflect on the challenges of making decisions under financial data uncertainty. Encourage them to consider qualitative financial implications (e.g., impact on cash flow, expected profitability) and to propose key information they would seek to support an investment decision.

### DISCLAIMER

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose and have not received any financial support for conducting this research. Although the article is based on a real company and real characters, the authors have made narrative adjustments to meet the proposed educational objectives. Therefore, the information and dialogues contained herein do not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of the cited characters, thereby exempting them from any responsibility.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS TO STUDENTS

The recommended readings for students focus more on concepts and tools applicable to analyzing the strategy and business model of digital platforms.

Parker, G., Van Alstyne, M., & Choudary, S. (2016). *Platform revolution: How networked markets are transforming the economy and how to make them work for you*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Chapter 1: The Platform Revolution: Introduction to the Concept of Platforms, Their Types, and How They Have Transformed the Economy  
Essential for understanding Congresse.me's business model. This chapter introduces the concept of digital platforms, explores their main types (such as marketplaces, social networks, and service platforms), and explains how platforms have reshaped modern economies by connecting users, enabling new business models, and driving innovation.

Chapter 3: Platform Architecture: Building and Maintaining a Successful Platform  
Details the structure and key components of a successful platform, helping to understand how Congresse.me operates and creates value. This chapter covers topics such as ecosystem design, user engagement, network effects, and the technical and strategic foundations necessary for platform growth and sustainability.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2012). *Administração de marketing*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

Chapter 13: Value Design: Strategies for a Digital and Social World  
Addresses marketing in the digital environment and the importance of social networks and customer engagement. Useful for analyzing how Congresse.me positions itself in the online market and attracts users.

Chapter 14: Service Development and Service Management  
Discusses marketing for services, which is relevant to the Congresse.me case, since its product is a service for events.

Satell, G. (2017). *Mapping innovation: A playbook for navigating a disruptive age*. New York: McGraw-Hill.



Chapter 2: The Four Types of Innovation: Explores the different types of innovation (radical, sustaining, disruptive, and basic), enabling students to analyze how innovative Congresse.me's model is in the events market.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS TO INSTRUCTORS

The recommended readings for instructors deepen the case analysis on topics such as strategy, digital transformation, competitiveness, and innovation, enabling a more sophisticated facilitation of classroom discussion.

Parker, G., Van Alstyne, M., & Choudary, S. (2016). *Platform revolution: How networked markets are transforming the economy and how to make them work for you*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Chapter 1: The Platform Revolution: Establishes the Theoretical Foundations of Platforms, Comparing Them with Traditional Businesses (the "Pipelines")

Allows the instructor to contextualize the rise of Congresse.me and discuss the implications of transitioning from a traditional business model to a platform model in the events sector.

Chapter 4: The Chicken and Egg Problem: Addresses the Critical Challenge of Any Platform: Attracting Producers and Consumers Simultaneously  
This is a crucial discussion for Congresse.me and allows the instructor to explore network leverage strategies, such as "seeding" and value creation, that the platform needs to adopt.

Porter, M.E. (2008). *A vantagem competitiva das nações*. Rio de Janeiro: Campus.

Chapter 3: The Diamond of Competitive Advantage:

Discusses the factors that drive competitiveness. Applicable for analyzing Congresse.me's competitive environment, considering rivalry and the bargaining power of suppliers and customers in the events market.

Westerman, G., Bonnet, D., & McAfee, A. (2014). *Leading digital: Turning technology into business transformation*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Chapter 1: What is Digital Transformation and Why Does It Matter?

Provides a solid foundation for discussing digital transition in the events sector and Congresse.me's role in this process.

Satell, G. (2017). *Mapping innovation: A playbook for navigating a disruptive age*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Chapter 5: The Innovation Map:

Presents the innovation mapping framework, a useful tool for instructors to guide discussion about Congresse.me's innovations.