RealBridge
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Everyone in this event is probably now quite familiar with RealBridge, but we have been asked some questions about where it came from, how it works, and where it is going. This article gives some answers.

Where did RealBridge come from?

RealBridge began as a lockdown project in April 2020. Graham Hazel, a former England junior international who now works in the online games industry, found himself at home with some time on his hands. By June he had the basics of what you can see now - a program where you could play bridge while seeing and talking to the other players.

Shireen Mohandes joined him, and a few frantic months later they had a product that was ready to release to the world. The early adopters included the English Bridge Union, the USBF, Bridge From Home in India, and a number of bridge clubs from different countries. After the commercial launch in November 2020, other clubs and NBOs followed.

Who uses RealBridge?

RealBridge's customers are bridge clubs and bridge organisations. The objective is to provide a high-quality platform for organised bridge.

We work with bridge organisations all over the world, of all sizes, from small clubs with a weekly pairs event, up to national and zonal bodies. The platform is now used in over 50 countries, by more than 20 NBOs and more than 1000 bridge clubs.

During the pandemic we have helped all of these organisations to provide their members with something close to face-to-face bridge. As well as continuing to provide a game for their existing members, a lot of clubs have found new members, or reconnected with former members who had moved away.

We try to give organisers whatever they need to run an event successfully, in the way that they want to – many different formats and scoring-methods, with or without screens, with self-alerts or spoken alerts, with a simple interface for directors, an easy-to-use results interface, and a user-friendly but secure kibbitzing system.

How does it work?

You will have noticed that RealBridge runs entirely in your web-browser, without any downloads or installations. It uses a technology called WebRTC, which is a standard for web audio/video calls implemented by browsers.

Separately, it also connects to the RealBridge game-server, which controls the movement, and the boards, keeps track of bids made and cards played, manages the scores, and sends results back to each player's web-browser.

So, when you are in RealBridge, you actually have multiple connections handling different functions.

What happens next?

As the pandemic ends, many people are naturally keen to return to face-to-face bridge. Others are less certain, or want to continue to play some of their bridge online, or want to continue to play in clubs that are just too far to travel to. To meet this need, some bridge organisations are planning a mixture of face-to-face and online events; others are looking at hybrid events. RealBridge is working with its customers to make these plans work.

This EBL event has also demonstrated a number of benefits of playing electronically: no revokes or insufficient bids; no stacks of boards to manage; and, of course, much more secure. It also makes rulings easier and faster, because the directors had access to every bid and play, every explanation, and the time taken for each action.

Another area of interest is in online teaching. We are working on a range of new features to support online teaching and coaching.

How did we do?

This isn't the first zonal qualifier that has been run on RealBridge, but it is the biggest, and we care a lot about making it a success. We'd be very pleased to hear your comments about our platform, good or bad.

Contact us at **support@realbridge.online**