

# SPECIAL REPORT: NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

In March, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus a pandemic, and governments across the globe began mandating strict limits on face-to-face gatherings that were soon followed by more severe measures requiring citizens to stay in their homes except for critical needs.

The short-term impact on the meeting industry has been devastating, and we wait to see how life will return to normal (and what “normal” will even mean). But meeting professionals are resilient, collaborative and always looking to the future, so here we’ve teamed up with many of your colleagues to provide important knowledge, resources and a even a little hope so that you can keep business going and come out stronger and more prepared for what lies ahead.



p.2

## Asking the Hard Questions

From force majeure clauses to cancellation insurance, preparing for and managing a health crisis.



p.3

## Survey: Looking to the Future

Meeting pros project the impact of business over the next 12 and 24 months.



p.4

## Resources for Meeting Pros

Including [mpi.org/Trusted Resource](https://mpi.org/TrustedResource), our central resource page with news, essential links and relevant blog posts.



p.6

## Healthy Meetings

Ensuring attendee wellbeing onsite.



p.8

## What We Say and How We Say It

Developing a strong crisis communications plan.



p.9

## MPI Education Resources

Including the “Coronavirus Dialogue Series” and on-demand opportunities.



p.10

## When Face-to-Face is On Hold

The agility and reach of livestreaming.



p.11

## A Strong Message

“We will be part of the solution to drive recovery, growth and social impact that will transform the world.”



p.12


## Stay in Sight

Creatively mitigating short-term vendor losses.

## ALSO INSIDE

How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic: focusing on all that’s good in your world, being more mindful, acknowledging the compassion shown by others, recognizing peers, moving (taking a walk, clearing space for yoga) and reinventing your business model.

# Asking THE HARD QUESTIONS



From force majeure clauses to cancellation insurance to crisis plans, preparing for and managing a health crisis like the coronavirus.

BY MARIA LENHART



### How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

“In times when fear can run rampant and infect us (like...a virus), perspective is key. I like to return to gratitude with a shift of focus back to all that is good in my world—my amazing kids, the freedom I have to bob and weave as an entrepreneur, warm friendships that will last through a few months of minimal contact because of the work we’ve done to build the foundation. It’s the same in business. This could be an opportunity to fortify the foundation of your business relationships by communicating well and getting creative with service.”

**Heather Hansen O’Neill**, Find Your Fire  
MPI WestField Chapter

**T**he novel coronavirus has thrown the meeting and tourism industries into a tailspin for much of this year, but it’s also a good reminder that meeting professionals must be prepared for the next global health crisis that comes along. While nothing can completely erase the fallout, industry experts say a wise approach to contracts, insurance coverage, crisis plans and relying on trusted information sources can minimize the consequences.

#### Contract Matters

When it comes to protection from a disastrous situation causing loss of attendance or the cancellation of an event, meeting industry attorneys say the starting point is the force majeure clause in any contract with hotels and meeting facilities.

“These clauses need to cover every situation outside of the contracting parties that might cause the planner to cancel the meeting,” says Joshua Grimes (MPI Philadelphia Area Chapter) of the Grimes Law Offices. “It may also allow for a meeting to be reduced in appropriate circumstances, rather than a total cancellation.”

However, Grimes notes that a typical force majeure clause may not fully protect the planner from attrition penalties in the case of a health crisis.

“Some force majeure provisions may cover a health concern like coronavirus, but they usually do not contemplate a situation where

## Meeting Pros Project **Severity of Economic Impact**

It didn’t matter whether respondents to our flash novel coronavirus survey (March 12-20) were planners or suppliers—the business hit from this pandemic is across the board. As to the economic impact from the virus over the next 12 months: **NO ONE** responded that this will have zero impact.

|     |                   |
|-----|-------------------|
| 59% | A Great Deal      |
| 24% | A Lot             |
| 13% | A Moderate Amount |
| 4%  | A Little          |
| 0%  | None at All       |

Many more respondents are hopeful that the novel coronavirus will have only minor effects on business in 24 months.

|     |                   |
|-----|-------------------|
| 24% | A Great Deal      |
| 32% | A Lot             |
| 24% | A Moderate Amount |
| 16% | A Little          |
| 3%  | None at All       |

attendees may not want to travel out of fear of catching an illness that is centered in another location," he says. "Similarly, force majeure clauses usually do not anticipate that some attendees may be banned from leaving their countries."

In these cases, it's crucial for planners to have a dialogue with their hotels and other vendors, he adds.

"If one group is thinking of canceling an event, others probably are as well," Grimes says. "The venues and vendors may have a

suggested solution that would work for all involved. Some may allow the planner to cancel; other solutions might involve permitting a smaller meeting without attrition damages or allowing the meeting to be postponed to a future date without liability, with all group

## Coronavirus Resources for Meeting Professionals

### **CDC Coronavirus Disease**

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

The main page on this topic from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) includes information about COVID-19, SARS, MERS and more common coronaviruses that affect humans.

---

### **CDC Coronavirus Disease Information for Travel**

[tinyurl.com/CDCCOVIDTRAVEL](https://tinyurl.com/CDCCOVIDTRAVEL)

Recommendations and guidance from the CDC, offering information on travel within the U.S. as well as what to expect if returning from international destinations.

---

### **EPA: Disinfectants Effective Against Coronavirus**

[tinyurl.com/EPACORONA](https://tinyurl.com/EPACORONA)

Research is showing that the novel coronavirus remains active on some surface materials much longer than previously known. To properly cleanse surfaces, use disinfectants from this list, approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

---

### **Events Industry Council: About COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

[tinyurl.com/EICCOVID](https://tinyurl.com/EICCOVID)

Advice on making informed event decisions as well as updates by industry leaders.

---

### **Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Global Cases Tracker**

[tinyurl.com/JHCOVIDTRACK](https://tinyurl.com/JHCOVIDTRACK)

The best source for real-time data on the spread of the virus, including the number of people infected, recovered and deceased worldwide as well as by country.

---

### **MPI: Coronavirus Resources for Meeting Professionals**

[mpi.org/TrustedResource](https://mpi.org/TrustedResource)

MPI's central resource page for all things related to the novel coronavirus. Includes links to essential information sites, relevant blog posts and all of the most important industry news about the virus and holding events. Also listen to our podcasts, sponsored by Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI); the first one features Michael Dominguez from ALHI, Renee Radabaugh from Paragon Events and Mary Pat Cornett from the American Society for Nutrition.

---

### **Public Health Agency of Canada: Risk-Informed Decision-Making for Mass Gatherings During COVID-19 Global Outbreak**

[tinyurl.com/CAGATHERINGS](https://tinyurl.com/CAGATHERINGS)

---

### **U.S. Travel Association: Emergency Preparedness and Response**

[tinyurl.com/USTACOVID](https://tinyurl.com/USTACOVID)

Guidance for healthy travel practices and a plethora of industry advocacy resources.

---

### **White House Coronavirus Task Force**

[coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov)

Updates from the U.S. Executive Branch with guidance for businesses as well as home and school environments; includes mitigation strategies for the areas hardest hit.

---

### **WHO Coronavirus Disease (2019) Outbreak**

[tinyurl.com/WHOCOVID](https://tinyurl.com/WHOCOVID)

Guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO), including FAQs, travel advice, situation reports and more.

---



## How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

“We as an industry are strong and driven. We have clients who look to us for ideas and we are responsible to deliver on that. I have bounced back from two recessions, SARS and now this. I think that it’s not so much about coming back stronger but more mindful about our world. From what I have seen, the most important thing we have to be doing as leaders is to make our teams feel secure in their jobs. I also feel that as an industry there are not nearly enough people making changes to their habits. So many people are still drinking out of water bottles, and while all of these viruses have started with animals, it also has everything to do with our environment and the changing landscape. Those that lead with the commitment for change will come through this with flying colors.”

**Janice Cardinale**, The Idea Hunter  
MPI Toronto Chapter

costs transferred to that rescheduled date.”

If no resolution can be found through discussions, the next course of action is to read the contract carefully, possibly with an attorney, to see if there are provisions or nuances that would allow the planner to get some relief, Grimes adds.

“For example, if the force majeure clause excuses performance ‘in part’ based on an unforeseen occurrence, the planner may have a contractual right to reduce the event without liability,” he says.

Attorney Barbara Dunn, partner at Barnes & Thornberg LLP, stresses the importance of including a “catch-all” provision in the force majeure clause that covers anything that prohibits fulfillment of the meeting.

“For example, the clause may not mention infectious disease, but it does say ‘any other cause beyond the party’s control,’” she says. “We can never list all the specific things that can go wrong.”

Another point to consider is what protection may be offered under the local laws in the meeting destination, a point addressed in the “choice of law” clause in contracts, Grimes says.

“This clause states which jurisdiction laws would govern the contract,” he says. “Some states and countries have statutory force majeure provisions that would help in something like a coronavirus situation.”

### Insurance Coverage

Purchasing event cancellation insurance is another way to protect against financial loss due to a health crisis or other disaster. Coverage is especially important in the case of meetings and trade shows that are a revenue source for an organization, Dunn says.

“Many organizations don’t purchase it, despite recommendations from lawyers, because of the high premium cost,” she says. “The reason the cost is high is because the coverage is that good—it really underwrites the

bottom-line revenue for your meeting.”

Dunn notes that such policies not only cover cancellation, but reduced attendance.

“Under these policies, there are a variety of covered items, including weather, destruction of the facility, the cancellation of an important speaker or if the event had to start late or finish early,” she says.

However, coverage for terrorist incidents or infectious disease is usually not included in basic premiums, but requires endorsements at added cost, Dunn says, noting that many insurers have declined to cover the coronavirus.

### Plan of Action

Tyra Hilliard (MPI North Florida Chapter), an attorney and expert on meeting risk management issues, stresses the importance of having a crisis plan in place. While many organizations have such plans, she notes that all too often they don’t specifically pertain to meetings.

“The organization’s plan usually applies to the office building where people are working every day in the same city,” she says. “Meetings happen in various cities and buildings and are a whole different situation. Unfortunately, most organizations don’t offer help to planners in formulating a plan for meetings. So the planner has to take the initiative.”

Even if the organization doesn’t provide support, there are resources that meeting planners can use in formulating a plan, Hilliard says. Along with consultation with risk management experts, she recommends visiting the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website, which offers an emergency response plan template for events ([tinyurl.com/FEMA-Events](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery)).

“It’s a good starting point and it’s publicly available,” she says.

Along with formulating a written plan that addresses issues such as emergency response and business continuity, Hilliard says it’s

essential to work with hotel and security staff from the very beginning.

“You need to ask the right questions of your partners before you get on site,” she says. “This should happen at the RFP stage. Make it part of the criteria for choosing partners.”

### Reliable Sources

Event security expert Alan Kleinfeld (MPI Carolinas Chapter), who has served on MPI’s Security & Risk Management Task Force and is director of Arrive Conference Solutions in Charleston, S.C., advises meeting planners to monitor a crisis situation, but not rely solely on the widespread media and social media coverage that usually surrounds any kind of disaster.

When determining whether the situation is dire enough to cancel or postpone an event, he says it is essential to consult trusted sources (see sidebar on Page 4) in the destination and organizations such as the World Health Organization and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rather than simply follow the headlines, which often paint a distorted picture.

“We all too often see something in the news and freak out about it, but the reality may be quite different,” Kleinfeld says.

Hilliard also cautions against overreaction to media reports, which she says happens all too often when things are not put into perspective.

“It’s always frustrating when people act like a crisis is something that never happened before,” she says. “People have short memories. We’ve had SARS and Ebola before the coronavirus and there will be something else next time.”

Being proactive, rather than reactive, is the best strategy for managing any crisis, health-related or otherwise, Hilliard adds.

“If we’re prepared all the time, we don’t have to overact,” she says. “We need to have procedures in place and be ready to go.” ■

# HEALTHY MEETINGS: Common Sense and Sound Protocol

If there is a positive legacy from the COVID-19 crisis, it may be that standard health-related practices at meetings will be improved.

BY MARIA LENHART

**M**edical professionals and veteran planners see this as an opportunity to develop strategies that help keep any kind of infectious outbreak in check.

## Be Prepared

Dr. Jonathan Spero, CEO of InHouse Physicians, a company that provides medical support at meetings and events, believes meeting planners should always be addressing ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, particularly flu, at meetings. He recommends taking steps well in advance of the meeting to formulate an illness prevention plan.

“Planners need to talk to their clients or the human resources department about any policies they have regarding sick attendees,” he says. “Ask if they are going to prevent people from attending a meeting if they show flu-like symptoms. Are there plans to arrange access to medical resources if there is an outbreak at the meeting?”

Having pre-arranged access to medical care should people become sick is particularly important, he says.

“Talk to the venue in advance about arranging for an ER or medical professional that sick attendees can be sent to,” Spero says. “If people

start showing flu-like symptoms, you want them to be screened by a health professional so it can be determined what they really have.”

Once preventative protocols are in place, he says it is essential to communicate to attendees about what the organization is doing to keep them safe.

“You can alleviate their fears by telling them you are cognizant of their concerns and that you have protocols in place to protect them,” Spero says. “Share the facts, including what you are doing onsite to prevent illness, including hand sanitizers, healthy meal options and stress-reduction activities.”

Renee Radabaugh (MPI Greater Orlando Chapter), president of Paragon Events, and her team have been focused on creating a sanitary environment, such as bringing in 65 small hand-sanitizing units that were branded and sold as a sponsorship.

“We are giving everyone their own stylus to do their own registration and keyboarding with their own devices,” she says. “Of course, we encourage people to wash their hands. It’s about the common sense things that go back to good hygiene year round.”

Meetings educator Joan Eisenstodt (MPI Potomac Chapter) says it’s important to remind attendees about the basics of staying healthy.



## How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

"At MPI Iberian we have been organizing the second edition of the MPI Iberian Awards. After the outbreak of COVID-19 we decided to stand up and give a positive message to our peers. Recognizing their leadership, CSR practices or the way they contribute to shattering the glass ceiling is a great way to keep spirits up. We received more than 30 applications to the different categories and are quite satisfied. Reaching each nominee and telling them some colleague has thought of them as one of the best MICE leaders makes their and our day!"

**Alessia Comis**, Pidelaluna  
MPI Iberian Chapter

"A lot of it is the usual stuff, which may seem silly but isn't at all—providing hand sanitizer and hospital-grade wipes, reminding people to wash their hands and to refrain from hugging or shaking hands," she says. "You can do this with firmness but with some humor from a main stage."

Spero says the greatest preventative measure for planners and meeting attendees alike is to maintain a strong immune system through healthy living.

"We are exposed to hundreds of viruses a day, but your immune system can protect you from them, including coronavirus," he says. "It's really important to do things that enhance your health—get plenty of sleep, eat a healthy diet, exercise and do things like meditation that relieve stress. Meeting planners all too often work from 6 a.m. to midnight without taking breaks. Get away from your desk and take a walk. Downtime is preventative time."

## Onsite Practices

To protect against a health crisis, vetting partners on their sanitation practices and educating attendees on precautions also comes into play.

"We all need to ask more of our vendors about what they are doing, not just in regards to the coronavirus but with all flus and other diseases," Eisenstodt says. "For example, do they have hand sanitizers, do they provide flu shots for their employees? As planners, we need to ask hard questions and let hotels know how important this is to us."

Event planner and food and beverage consultant Tracy Stuckrath (MPI Carolinas Chapter) of Thrive! Meetings & Events agrees, adding that planners should learn what they can about housekeeping and food service practices.

"You need to ask hotels about how they keep rooms sanitized—do housekeepers wipe down handles, do they disinfect the rooms in between guests?" she says. "Who

on your staff has food safety certification? What are your practices with buffets? Have you taken steps to remind your employees about safe food handling?"

When it comes to buffets, Radabaugh says it's important to implement modifications so they don't become a "potential Petri dish" for germs.

"I like buffets, but you need to display food in smaller portions and change it quicker," she says. "Rather than have people serving themselves and touching the same spoon, bring on additional staff to serve the guests as they go through the line."

Working closely with hotels and venues has become even more paramount than usual, Radabaugh adds.

"We're asking them about their protocol—what are they doing about high-touch areas, how often do they go around and swab things like elevator buttons and escalator rails?" she says.

David Stevens, director of global events for Alation, a data technology firm, has found that it pays to be persistent in demanding that hotels keep surfaces clean.

"In one case, I noticed that the hotel gym had no wipes available, which I complained about and no one followed up," he says. "I was told that they were out of them. I insisted they do something, so in a few minutes they showed up with paper towels and a spray bottle. You have to insist on getting things right."

Among the recent challenges has been finding enough supplies such as hand sanitizer and wipes, given the fact that the general public has been buying up these items.

"It's reminiscent of what happens during a hurricane," Radabaugh says. "All too often the big-box stores may be out of what you need. One way to circumvent local shortages is to order online." ■

## MEETINGS OUTLOOK™

### DESCRIBE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS AFFECTING MEETINGS/EVENTS.

"Safety and security continues to be a priority, and that is elevated due to the coronavirus outbreak. The assessment of risk, establishing plans to mitigate and address risks and communicating effectively under uncertain circumstances is a norm now rather than an exception. We have overhauled our emergency preparedness and response plans and are having much more proactive conversations around environmental and cultural issues, which may impact our events more than even two to three years ago." -Molly Marsh, MPI Kentucky Bluegrass Chapter

"This is going to kill us." "We have had to cancel many events but have become very versed in executing web-based meetings in return." "COVID-19 is showing us just how fragile the travel, meeting and event industry really is." "The industry will come out stronger, especially as it relates to contractual issues."

Our Business Research Panel had a lot to say about the novel coronavirus when asked about trends affecting their meetings and events. Read the full *Meetings Outlook* report in the May issue of *The Meeting Professional*.

# WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE SAY IT

When disaster threatens an event, it's critical to have a strong communications plan in place.

BY MARIA LENHART AND MICHAEL PINCHERA



**A**ccording to Tracy Stuckrath (MPI Carolinas Chapter) of Thrive! Meetings & Events, there should be a variety of channels in place for communicating crisis-related or other pertinent information to attendees before, during and after the meeting.

“You can’t just rely on the meetings app—you can’t assume everyone has downloaded it,” she says. “You’ll need to use the website, texting, e-mails, social media—whatever it takes for everyone to get the information they need. This applies not only during the event, but afterwards. Sometimes people get infected during the meeting, but don’t show signs until it’s over. How do you handle that?”

Attorney Barbara Dunn, partner at Barnes & Thornberg LLP, recommends enlisting the aid of a public relations or crisis communications expert if circumstances warrant it.

“What we say and how we say it are very important during a crisis,” she says. “We need to acknowledge the tragic nature, but we don’t want to stoke fear or hysteria. Having someone come across as insensitive could create big problems for the organization. It could spark wildfire on social media.”

## 9 Crisis Communications Best Practices

To limit disruption and stakeholder blowback, meeting and event professionals must excel at crisis communications. Following are some best practices worth implementing into your communications strategies as a result of the novel coronavirus—but applicable across the board.

**Communicate Across Multiple Platforms.** Utilize every way in which you typically communicate with your attendees—email, Facebook, WhatsApp, SMS, Twitter, etc.—to ensure everyone hears your





## How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's a strange new day in the world for all of us. An extreme anxiety-producing new world for many, if not most. But I've seen a surprising calm and compassion from my fellow human beings when I've been to the grocery store or anywhere else in the public the past few days. Some good always comes from the bad. Maybe there's hope for us after all!"

**Leonard Hoops**, Visit Indy  
MPI Indiana Chapter

important messages. You need to lead the conversation and be the source for information related to your event. If you're unable to do that, the community will step in to fill the void and you won't be able to control the messaging.

**Be Clear and Consistent.** Because you're leveraging multiple platforms when getting out the word about the status of your event, it's essential that the information provided is consistent. This is nothing new for planners, but when dealing with things that may change on a daily basis, consistency can become more of a challenge.

**Share Updates Early, Regularly.** Communicate important updates to all stakeholders as soon as possible. Overall, this will make things easier and less hectic for both you and attendees. As much as you can, avoid making last-minute proclamations that may upend attendees' plans. This isn't always something that you can control, but be mindful of the timing when evaluating major decisions, such as cancellation or postponement.

**Explain Changes to Norms.** Inform attendees how the social norms at your event may have changed. Want to discourage handshakes and other forms of casual social contact that can spread germs? Don't be afraid to tell attendees—if everyone is on the same page, they won't feel as strange when avoiding the outstretched hand of a professional peer. The same applies to norms related to using sterilizing gel and avoiding touching your face.

**Tell the Truth.** Sometimes the reality of a spreading contagion can mean a financial loss for your organization's events. Do not, under any circumstances, mislead your stakeholders as to the associated risks of something such as the novel coronavirus. You've got a duty of care

responsibility when it comes to the safety of your attendees and staff and must avoid making your organization culpable/liable should an outbreak manifest onsite.

**Have Compassion.** If attendees do not feel comfortable traveling or spending time at densely populated venues due to a rise in communicable disease transmission, consider offering no-penalty refunds. Sure, this is an inconvenience and may cost your organization when it comes to F&B guarantees, room blocks, etc., but if attendees wishing to cancel feel they're being punished for something out of their control, your brand reputation could take a hit—and there's certainly a cost to that.

**Explain Contingency Plans.** First off, you should make it clear in no uncertain terms that anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms should not attend. Explain the processes in place should someone start exhibiting such symptoms while onsite.

**Be Available to Answer Questions.** Endeavor to have staff available online and onsite to answer attendee questions and concerns. If this necessitates expanding the team that fields such communications, look inside your organization to gauge if staff can appropriately be re-assigned to handle such outreach; perhaps trusted volunteers from your attendee base can help as well.

**Provide Resources.** No one expects your organization to reinvent the wheel and attempt to be the clearing house for novel coronavirus information, but you should provide clear, relevant guidance from trusted sources such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and local health officials at the intended destination (see Page 4). ■

## MPI YOUR TRUSTED RESOURCE

**Coronavirus Dialogue Series:** "Crisis Communications - Coronavirus Edition" and "Building a Lean & Agile Business. It's Not Too Late!" Join our ongoing series of virtual conversations and discussions on COVID-19 and how you can ensure business continuity and communications with your stakeholders and participants.

**MPI's Safety & Security microsite:** Your resource for risk assessment and emergency planning. It's a comprehensive overview of important planning components, assessment tools and implementation strategies for safety and security planning and operations for meetings. (You can also join our Safety & Security Community, sponsored by Take1 Insurance, at [mpi.org/communities](https://mpi.org/communities)).

**MPI Academy on-demand sessions and webinars:**

- "Risk Management: Band-Aids to Bad Guys"
- "Contract Strategies for an Evolving Marketplace"
- "Safety & Security: It's Everyone's Business"

For the latest news and resources, follow MPI's daily e-newsletters and visit [mpi.org/TrustedResource](https://mpi.org/TrustedResource).

# WHEN FACE-TO-FACE IS ON HOLD

Livestreaming, which can provide agility and a longer reach to many events, is more relevant than ever before.

BY MIKAYLA MILBURN

**A**s planners worldwide consider face-to-face alternatives in light of the novel coronavirus pandemic, many will be stepping more deeply into virtual events. Whether you're just getting started or expanding your online meeting offerings, here's a rundown of some of your options.

Livestreaming provides agility and a longer reach to your event. Not only are you reaching the live audience in front of you, but also the online audience that is unable or unwilling to travel.

Among other myths about livestreaming, there has been some question as to whether streaming events will cannibalize some of your live audience. According to a study by Digitell, between 20 percent and 40 percent of the virtual audience will invest in the event next time, providing a positive rate of attendance (ROA).

Whether you're just starting this venture into livestreaming or you're a veteran looking for new resources, the plethora of choices can seem daunting. Here, we present some quick tips and basic information about livestreaming options to get you started.

## Quick Tips

- Use a high-quality camera setup if streaming for a large audience or for a more professional broadcast. Built-in cameras on phones and computers are getting better, but there is still a vast difference between them and a professional camera and microphone.
- Many of the following free livestreaming services are social media platforms, which provides a perfect opportunity to engage with the audience before, during and after the event (not to mention easy promotion via speakers). That said, social media may not work for white-label branding, but it is up to you and your vision.
- When choosing a streaming service, keep in mind monetization, privacy/security and tech support.

## Facebook Live

Facebook Live is free, quick, easy and has the ability to reach a large audience pool from a mobile phone or computer. However, if using a computer, you must download broadcasting applications such as Open Broadcaster Software (OBS), Wirecast or XSplit, most of which have free and paid options.



## How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

**“Understand:** This too shall pass; while cliché, we need to hear that trouble doesn't last. **Cherish:** Time to prioritize what truly matters most—you, your family and your friends. **Breathe/Meditate/Pray:** Whatever your beliefs may be, take moments to be still and submit to one or all of these practices. **Move:** Take a walk or run every morning; clear a space in your home and start perfecting your yoga poses. **Create:** If everything was right in the world, where would you be? What would you be doing?”

**Monica Grinage-Prince, CMP, CMM, American Society of Mechanical Engineers  
MPI Houston Area Chapter**

One of the best aspects of Facebook Live is its internal reacting and commenting within the live feed. Audiences can use emojis and live chat, providing direct engagement and interaction with you and each other. If you don't want the chat open to the public, you can also choose who sees and interacts with the feed by broadcasting to either the public, friends or yourself. Facebook also provides “Insights” into your video by giving you basic data about your stream, such as how many viewers are watching and when.

Caveats: Longevity is not a strength for Facebook Live. The scrolling capability of Facebook makes it difficult to keep viewers consistently watching an entire video. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that people scrolling through their timeline will find your video again, as Facebook videos cannot be found via search engines such as Google.

### YouTube Live

YouTube Live is free and versatile. You can stream from your mobile device, a webcam or a professional setup using an encoder (some of which are not free). If you don't already have a channel, you'll need to create one in order to stream—but once that's in place, you can go live immediately or pre-schedule a live event.

Your YouTube Live video's reach will extend far beyond the original broadcasting time as once the stream has ended, you can upload it as a video with keywords geared for search engine optimization (SEO).

One drawback of YouTube Live is that if you don't already have YouTube subscribers, your video may not initially reach as large of an audience.

### Discord Streamkit

For events with a more laidback approach and greater online presence, there's the Discord Streamkit. As the name implies, the program includes Discord and multiple add-ons to assist in livestreaming. Although to be clear, you do have to create a Discord server if you don't already have one.

Some of the add-ons include

Patreon (an easy way for patrons to donate), Nightbot (moderation tools for spam, inappropriate words/phrases, other inappropriate communication), Muxy (analysis add-on for metrics) and MEE6 (fun moderator that includes “leveling” for audience members who interact the most).

The kit also hosts Twitch integration, YouTube integration and Mixer Integration while also including some of the aforementioned broadcasting applications (i.e., XSplit and OBS). What's more, although all of these applications are available, you can mix and match to best suit your needs.

### Vimeo Livestream

Although Vimeo Livestream is a paid service, they are also high-quality with extended capabilities. You can simultaneously stream full HD video to social media and your personal websites straight from Vimeo. They also have built-in engagement tools, video metrics and video editing.

Customers can try any Vimeo streaming plan for free for 30 days; plans range from US\$7 to \$75 per month. To live stream, you must have the \$75-per-month premium plan.

### IBM Cloud Video

IBM Cloud Video boasts customers such as Food Network and Mazda and is the most ideal for white-label branding.

This service is available for multi-screen broadcasting and is scalable for large and small events so you're not paying for services you're not using. IBM Cloud will also help find marketing resources and provide in-depth analytics on your video. They also have a content delivery network (CDN) to avoid a network overload and have an emphasis on security.

Monthly plans vary from \$99 to \$999 but include viewer hours, video storage, HD broadcasting, support, live polling and control over where you embed your videos. If you're not sure if you want to commit, they offer a 30-day free trial. ■

## imex GROUP

### A STRONG MESSAGE

“United. Resilient. Proud. To the global business events industry, our extended family—remember who you are and what you represent. We are an industry that contributes US\$1.5 trillion of GDP to the global economy. As we've demonstrated many times before, we will be part of the solution to drive recovery, growth and social impact that will transform the world.”

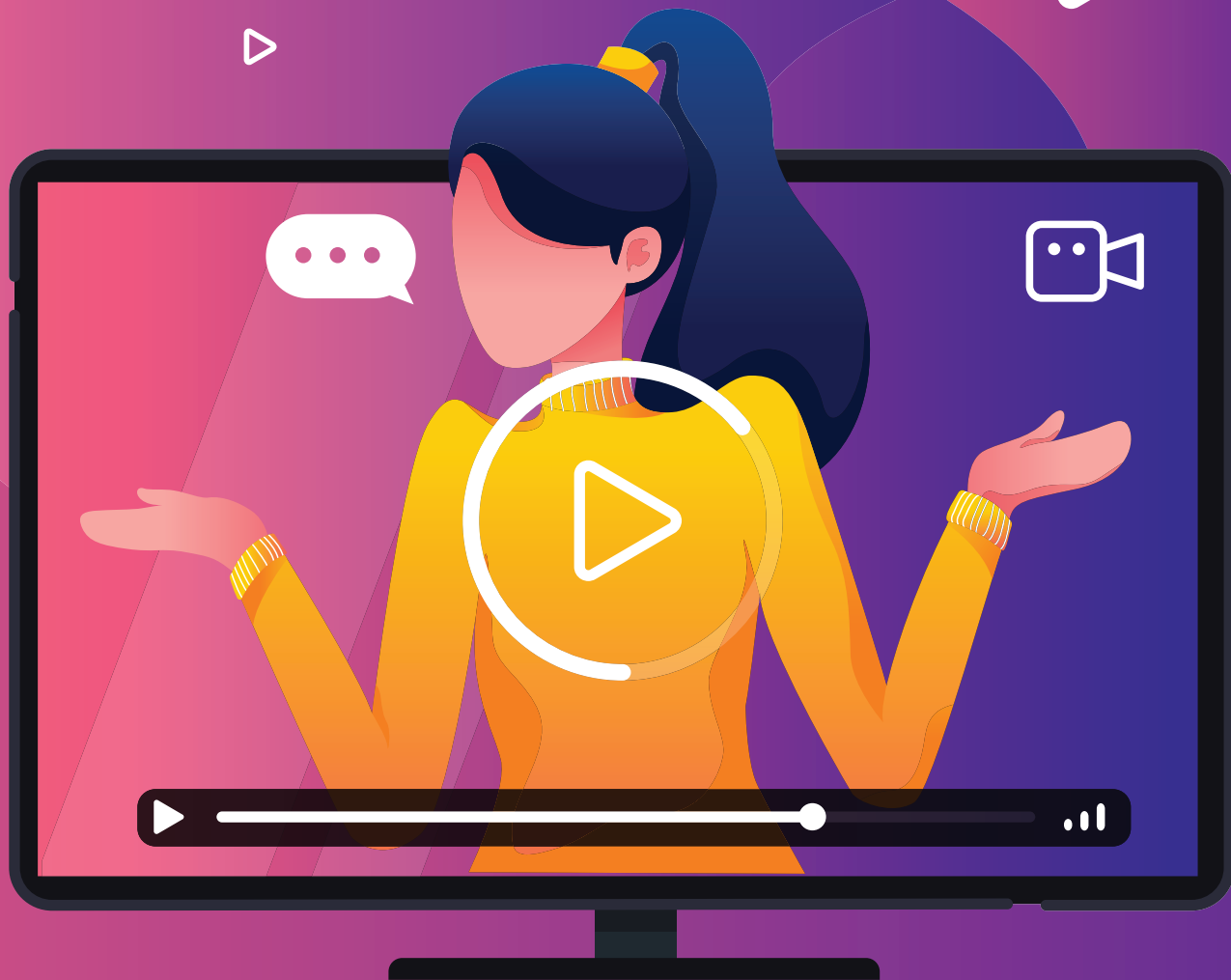
That powerful message was issued by the IMEX Group's Ray Bloom (chairman) and Carina Bauer (CEO) following the cancellation of IMEX in Frankfurt last month.

The event, scheduled for May 12-14, was, of course, a victim of the novel coronavirus and related bans of large (and, then, small) face-to-face gatherings around the world.

Bloom and Bauer said that they intend to keep morale high and, “together with leaders around the world, to focus on collective efforts to rebuild confidence and advocate for the power of business events to aid economic recovery once this situation is over.”

There's still all the greatness you've come to expect from IMEX on the horizon as the group moves full steam ahead, focused on delivering the 10th edition of IMEX America this September in Las Vegas.

“The feedback from clients is that they are very much looking forward to being together again with the global industry in Las Vegas and they too are focusing on how they can make the most of the show after this very difficult period,” Bloom and Bauer said.



# STAY IN SIGHT

Creatively mitigating short-term losses when the big event is canceled.

BY ALLAN LYNCH

**C**anceled and postponed are the dominant concepts for the first quarter of 2020. Life—and business—will eventually go forward, but in the meantime some groups are working to mitigate short-term losses for vendors.

A case in point is seafood company Kvaroy Arctic, which was booked to attend the Seafood Expo North America in Boston in March and the Seafood Expo Global in Brussels in April. These are two of the world's leading trade shows for the aquaculture industry. The Boston show draws 22,150 industry professionals, 1,300 exhibitors and 600 key buyers from 49 countries. The Brussels show,

which was seeing six percent exhibitor growth over 2019, had 1,622 exhibitors booked, making it the largest event in the show's 28-year history. In early March both shows were postponed to an unspecified later date in 2020. Attendees and exhibitors were offered the option of rolling fees to the later show or the 2021 version.

When Boston was postponed, Jennifer Bushman sprang into action.

"When a trade show gets cancelled, most companies wipe their hands, cancel flights and go home," says Bushman, whose company, Route to Market, provides strategic development consultancy to the



## How MPI members are getting through the coronavirus pandemic.

"The art of pivoting has become a new norm for my team and I as we navigate this uncharted territory. As a small business owner, I had to reinvent our entire business model almost overnight in an effort to adapt to the needs of the planner community. After experiencing many in-person event cancellations, it only made sense to take our background in production and offer virtual event experiences. The pivot is a collaborative effort with trusted partners like Dahlia+Agency. We have been working to expand our brands collectively during these trying times by merging our diverse skill sets. It's important for small business owners to help one another and remind each other that this too shall pass."

**Sarah Soliman Daudin, DES, Soliman Productions Inc.**  
MPI Greater Orlando Chapter

aquaculture industry.

Kvaroy was launching a new product, had invested in a substantial booth to bring the sea farm experience to the show floor and had *Top Chef* contestant Adrienne Cheatham ready to cook fresh fish being shipped to the show.

Rather than hibernate until the replacement event was held, Bushman, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area where she knows many tech executives, wondered about a virtual sea-food show.

Kvaroy's longtime eastern sales manager, Bill Hewitt, told Bushman about the old days in the industry when companies couldn't afford to attend shows. They would distribute fliers describing products and offering specials. Bushman says producers would take the flier and "call or visit their customer. They called that the No Show Food Show." Hewitt suggested Bushman consider organizing a virtual No Show Fish Show.

Realizing that the industry could be in lockdown for a long time, Bushman looked to create longer legs than a one-week novelty. She developed the idea by arranging online tastings with selected clients who had fresh fish delivered to them. These clients then watched online as Cheatham prepared the fish as if they were at the trade show booth. The experience was further enhanced by asking taste questions borrowed from a sommelier's wine test. Next she added

panels with the James Beard Foundation and company CEO and added other product information. Then Bushman moved this and other content to Instagram, placed it on Facebook, created a LinkedIn community, pushed it via her social media contacts and let the media know.

"The response was fantastic," she says.

Another client, Pacifico Aquaculture, followed a similar path promoting their farmed striped bass. Bushman says the result for some products has been a rise in retail sales of up to 70 percent.

"Videos and photos have in excess of 15,000 likes and chefs are reaching out for samples," she says. "We found in this tactile world that chefs and F&B people live in they were already relying on Instagram more than any other platform, including email, in order to engage."

With all of the issues surrounding the spread of the coronavirus and the impact on individuals, companies and the economy, Bushman's bottom line is not to walk away but "to stay in sight." ■



## PROVIDING MEALS IN A TIME OF NEED

The novel coronavirus has devastated the meeting industry and also made it much more challenging for food banks to provide for people in need. But there's an upside to the cancellation of so many events, in the near term: available meals.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC and a major entertainment company recently had to cancel their events in Raleigh, N.C., and since there wasn't time to properly strike the food orders, the groups worked with the Raleigh Convention Center and catering company Centerplate to coordinate the donation of the meals to local non-profits.

As a result, almost 800 banquet-ready meals were sent to a number of organizations to support those experiencing homelessness and those who are food-insecure.

[Watch an MPItv video in our digital edition to learn more about how the meeting industry is handling the novel coronavirus pandemic at \[themeetingprofessional.digital.org\]\(http://themeetingprofessional.digital.org\).](#)

