

Recommendations for Safe Mass Gatherings in a Post-Coronavirus (COVID-19) World

by Meeting and Event Planner, Steve Kemble

It is clear the global meetings and events industry has been hit hard by the disruption of COVID-19. As we prepare to start the global economy back up and move forward, it will be critical that those in the meetings and event industry give our clients and businesses confidence that cities and venues are safe again and that the power and value of mass gatherings remains strong.

About Steve Kemble

Steve Kemble, Steve Kemble Event Design, recently profiled in The New York Times and named one of the “Top 10” Event Planners in the world has produced events for President George W. Bush, Oprah Winfrey, President Barack Obama, the Dallas Cowboys and more. Kemble has garnered more than twenty-five industry awards for his event, including being inducted in the Event Industry Hall of Fame, receiving the Special Event Industry Lifetime Achievement Award and being named Meeting Professional International’s International Planner of the Year. Kemble served as President of the International Live Events Association (ILEA), as President of the Dallas Meeting Professionals International Chapter (MPI), served on the national board for the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE), served as Chairman of the SEARCH Foundation assisting event professionals in crisis. Kemble currently serves as a Board Member of Visit Dallas, and he is chairperson of the Steve Kemble Leadership Foundation.

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*Sporting Events, Religious, Weddings, Meetings, Conventions, Political, Festivals,
Parades, Non-Profit Events, Seminars, Cultural, Concerts and more...*

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RISK & REVIEW

Input and partnership from local, state and national public health authorities is critical to a successful Risk Assessment

Items to consider:

- 1) Type of event
- 2) Location of event and any potential effect on the local community
 - a. Was the venue used for any purpose for COVID-19
 - b. When was the last time the venue was cleaned
- 3) Duration of event (longer than 14 days (incubation period of COVID-19) any infection would likely occur during event, or less than 14 days cases would most likely occur after the event, when attendees have travelled home)
- 4) Density of crowd and contact between attendees during the event
 - a. Review layout of venue to determine risk-mitigation
 - b. Consider staggering and increasing the amount of transport vehicles if an off-site venue is being utilized
- 5) Attendee Profiles
 - a. Demographics of attendees (age, vulnerable populations, etc.)
 - b. Number of attendees from countries affected by COVID-19 within 14 days of the event
 - c. Identify potential language, cultural and disability barriers of attendees
 - d. Will screening of attendees occur upon arrival at the event
 - e. Possible previous exposure of attendees
 - f. Who will decide if previously affected attendees can attend the event
 - g. Discourage people who feel they have the symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough and shortness of breath) or may be sick from attending the event
 - h. Gather emergency contact information from attendees
 - i. How will any affected attendees be transported home
- 6) Treatment Options and Resources available (for example should an attendee be diagnosed where will they be isolated and what medical treatment facility would they be taken to)
 - a. Notify the attendees local health authorities of their COVID-19 diagnosis
- 7) How will any emergency information during the event be communicated to attendees
- 8) What key elements and actions would result in a postponement or cancellation of the event
 - a. How will you communicate your plans (website, social media, etc.)
 - b. Develop a FAQ page
 - c. Do you have a refund plan

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PLAN & PREPARE

Creating a plan for mass gatherings is critical for it can help protect the health of the attendees and the event and meetings industry.

- 1) Establish someone within your organization to be a direct liaison
- 2) Connect and meet with the local and state Health Department for a copy of their outbreak response and mitigation plan for the community. Agree on methods of communication.
- 3) Connect and meet with the Emergency operations staff at the venue in which you will host the event. Agree on methods of communication.
- 4) Share your plan and establish relationships with key community leaders and stakeholders (vendors, suppliers, hotels, schools and universities, healthcare symptoms, airlines, transportation companies, law enforcement, faith leaders, health care and more)
- 5) Review valid and trusted sources of information related to COVID-19. For example websites from both the World Health Organization (who.int) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov) have advisories, warnings and suggested guidelines.
- 6) Connect with industry peers to see how they are handling the situation
- 7) Review models used for other events
- 8) Share with attendees:
 - a. assessment of health risk and previous and current levels of transmission in the local host city/state/country
 - b. information about the disease signs and symptoms
 - c. information on how to access local health care and information
 - d. advice on respiratory and hand washing practices
 - e. information about wearing a face mask
- 9) If need be, consider holding the event, yet reduce the number of attendees for safety and health concerns

GATHERING & COMMUNICATING

Regular and visible sharing of information during event will ensure both a safe and successful event

- 1) Promote throughout the venue(s) the daily practice of preventive measures (electronic communication, posters, speakers and more)
 - a) Stay home when you are sick
 - b) Consult medical advice if you feel you have any of the symptoms and do not attend the meeting or event
 - c) Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds
 - d) Remind people to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
 - e) Cover your mouth when coughing and sneezing
- 2) Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies or setup monitored station for attendees
 - a) disposable facemasks
 - b) and sanitizers (with at least 60% alcohol)

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- c) alcohol tissues
- d) trash baskets
- e) disposable disinfecting wipes
- f) clean frequently touched surfaces with EPA-approved disinfectants
- 3) Review and ensure there is a cleaning and disinfection plan for the venue (kitchen, meeting & event space, etc.)
- 4) Minimize crowding with distancing measures in the venue (review seating plans, etc.)
- 5) Review banquet or catering kitchen safety and cleanliness plan for staff and equipment
 - a. additionally, review food serve plans (are buffets and communal meals appropriate?)
- 6) Consider using water bottles over water pitchers
- 7) Demonstrate greeting alternatives to shaking hands, “high-fives” or hugging
- 8) Establish an isolation area with necessary supplies for any attendees and event staff who become ill

LEGACY & LESSONS

Document lessons learned through a post-assessment review of the event and share them with other event and meeting planners, venues, host cities, and countries.
Continue to follow-up on any necessary actions.