

How to Update your Event Planning Skills in the Age of COVID-19

We're officially six months into the COVID-19 pandemic and the events world has changed, possibly forever. Some of you might be working full- or part-time and some of you might be out of work, so this month, with the help of [Successful Meetings](#), we wanted to give you a few steps on how to fine-tune your event planning arsenal.

1 – Start an RFP sooner

Most companies have either cancelled or postponed their 2020 and early 2021 programs. This means, everyone is going to be fighting for space in Q3 and Q4 of 2021 and beyond. Send your RFPs early, or as early as possible, to ensure you're getting the best space for your clients. If you need help on updating your force majeure clauses and additional insurance information [click here](#).

2 – Establish your virtual event goals and objectives

If your program is switching to virtual, figure out your attendees' needs and wants. These will likely be different than an in-person meeting, so your agenda might have to change. Poll your attendees and ask your stakeholders and exhibitors/sponsors to determine your target audience and meeting goals.

3 – Train staff, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors

Everyone will need to adjust to their new role in a virtual environment. This includes training staff in key positions like serving as an engaging and knowledgeable host/moderator, monitoring Q&A and chat rooms, and providing overall technical support. Speakers will need to be trained to use the virtual event platform and might also benefit from coaching on how to make their presentations more engaging for remote audiences. Exhibitors and sponsors will need to understand the opportunities as well as the limitations of virtual events, and the ability to convey the ROI will be a key factor for staff and exhibitors alike.

4 – Learn from industry professionals and get certified

There are many places out there that are providing industry-endorsed certifications. These programs are designed to help professionals new to virtual events effectively plan, produce and measure results of virtual meetings and events, as well as enhance their in-person meeting planning skills.

- MPI and the Event Leadership Institute have created a [Pandemic Meeting & Event Design Certificate](#) in November
- The Events Industry Council has the globally recognized [Certified Meeting Professional](#) programme
- Earn [your Certificate in Meeting Management](#) from MPI
- Take Cvent's seven [event professional certifications](#) for free through December 31, 2020

5 – Stay connected and make good use of your relationships

Convention and visitors bureaus, hotels, restaurants, audio visual vendors and general service contractors have all felt the weight of the pandemic, but many were quick to pivot and add new services to their usual offerings. Many CVBs and hotels are offering virtual site visits and up-to-date COVID-19 safety policies to help events return to their cities. Reach out to your contacts on LinkedIn and via email. You never know when you can help someone out and when they can return the favor.