



STAY SAFE
AND KEEP YOUR
DISTANCE



NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING MEETINGS & EVENTS IN A POST-COVID WORLD

“Wash your hands, wear a mask and stay two arms’ length from other people.” Those simple instructions help us navigate our re-entry to social spaces and minimize our risk of contracting the novel coronavirus. But how are meetings supposed to look post-COVID? That question and the lack of a clear answer spurred the creation of this guide.

This is a community-created document, written by meeting professionals from our remote offices around the world while we were all sheltering in place. As borders continue to open and we get used to meeting face-to-face again, some of the advice in this guide might change. But we hope what you find here helps you get back to business now and feel confident moving forward.



CONTENTS

MEETING AND EVENT COMPONENTS..... 3

ADA Considerations3

Appointment-Based/Match-Making/Speed-Networking Activities3

Attendee Communications.....3

CSR/Sustainability Initiatives/Activities3

Cultural Considerations.....4

Emergency Response & Personnel4

Entertainment.....4

Food and Beverage4

Outdoor Venues4

People Movement/Crowd Control.....4

Registration/Badging/Check-in.....5

Room Sets.....5

Social Events7

Speakers/Education/Training7

Strategy8

Technology.....8

TIPS FOR TRAVELING AND MEETING SAFELY 8

Airlines8

Boat Tours8

Conference Centers, Convention Centers & Expo Halls.....8

Cruise Ships.....9

Destination Marketing Organizations/
Convention & Visitors Bureaus/Tourism Organizations.....9

Ground Transportation9

Hotels.....9

Venues9

VIRTUAL/HYBRID EVENT CONSIDERATIONS 10

Format, Content & Strategy 10

Tips for Monetizing Hybrid/Virtual Events..... 10

Virtual/Hybrid Event Resources 10

LEGAL & INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS 11

TIPS FOR MARKETING & SALES PROFESSIONALS 11

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASSOCIATION PLANNERS 12

INTERNATIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES & RESOURCES..... 12

Health Organization Guidelines 12

Event Industry Association Resources..... 12

Contributors..... 12

About MPI 13

MEETING AND EVENT COMPONENTS

ADA CONSIDERATIONS

- When creating one-way traffic patterns to minimize contact between individuals, don't forget your guests who might have physical disabilities or limitations. If they cannot enjoy your event experience because the circuitous routes you've mapped are exhausting or painful to travel, consider what concessions you could make to allow them to enjoy the experience in a more equitable manner (i.e., a special appointment time, motorized assistance, etc.).



- Be aware that some of the choices you make to minimize contact or risk of contagion, like meeting outdoors or having people queue at the World Health Organization-recommended 1.5 meters or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-recommended 6-ft. intervals, may create difficulties with people who have limited mobility, vision challenges, or can't stand for long periods of time. How can you maximize their comfort and help them navigate the space?
- By increasing space between meeting participants, be aware that it might become more difficult for people to hear each other, especially if they have hearing loss. For this reason, depending on how the room is set, you may need additional amplification to allow people to talk comfortably with each other when they're seated four to a banquet round or two to a 6-ft. table.
- Collect information from attendees about what special considerations you need to know about at registration. If you have a question about how to accommodate their needs, don't guess, ask them for advice.

APPOINTMENT-BASED/ MATCH MAKING/SPEED- NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

- Observe the 1.5 meter/6-foot suggested safe physical distance between people by using larger tables or install barriers/guards between participants to prevent contact (e.g., plexiglass partitions).
- Provide digital means for taking notes and exchanging information to replace business cards, shared pens and paper.
- Provide participants with masks and hand sanitizer.
- If necessary, utilize virtual options to allow for video meetings rather than face-to-face ones, etc.

ATTENDEE COMMUNICATIONS

- Reassure attendees. Communicate health and safety protocols, and the measures that event organizers, event partners, hotels and venues are taking to keep them healthy.
- Ask people to stay home if they are not well.
- Educate attendees about ways they can stay healthy and control their own exposure.
- Allow for flexibility in registration and cancellations.
- Be transparent about what you're doing to protect your own staff onsite.

CSR/SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES/ACTIVITIES

- Because safety considerations might spur an uptick in the use of single-use items, especially at mealtimes, consider using sustainable and compostable options, such as bamboo plates, where possible.
- Explore how technology can be used to replace physical items to reduce contaminated surfaces while reducing your event's carbon footprint (i.e., apps or digital files instead of paper, digital rather than printed signage).
- Collect sealed, wrapped donations and have a way to wipe down or sterilize items before they're distributed.
- Provide masks, gloves and hand sanitizer for people collaborating on CSR projects (i.e., building bicycles, creating welcome kits, etc.). Consider the use of masks and gloves for outdoor-based projects if people will be working side-by-side.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider the cultural variances of how your guests are used to gathering, greeting, meeting and being social together. How can you substitute for things like the air kiss, hugs and handshakes while creating a sense of warmth and community?
- It may not be possible for people to huddle closely and have “private” conversations in the way they did pre-coronavirus when they need to stay 1.5 meters/6 feet apart. If you are looking to create safe spaces for sensitive conversations, those rooms may need to be separated more from public spaces or occur in digital environments.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE & PERSONNEL

- Maintain specialized staff or a team onsite to manage temperature checks and activate any needed quarantine process.
- Don’t assume that low temperatures mean that masks, handwashing and social distancing measures are no longer needed.
- During the pre-planning process, don’t forget to review escalation plans that cover if/when someone gets sick onsite, what the communication plan around that is, and how you will get in contact with anyone potentially exposed onsite.

ENTERTAINMENT

- Employ larger stages to accommodate increased physical distancing between performers and entertainers.
- Create one-way exit and entrance points to minimize interaction.
- Assign each speaker/entertainer their own microphone that stays with them and is not handed off. Sterilize surfaces and equipment in-between use.
- Entertain smaller groups with smaller footprints to allow for social distancing requirements.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

- Eliminate buffet options where people self-serve and share utensils.
- Cover pre-plated salads/desserts.
- Think single-serve, individually packaged meals (e.g., bento boxes, pre-boxed meals, etc.) and how to mitigate the potential waste generated by that.
- Consider a cafeteria-style service where individuals select pre-packaged food items to comprise their meal.

- Eliminate open shared items, like bread and water, and substitute them for individually packaged or covered, pre-set items.
- Invite guests to food stations individually, much like the one-in, one-out policy seen at retail stores, to control traffic and minimize interaction.
- Use food trucks as a meal source to protect the venue’s kitchen, staff and guests from cross-contamination. Either stagger guest arrival times or provide multiple trucks to prevent large crowds from queuing.
- Implement physical distancing guidelines for queues at bars/beverage stations; more bars per event may be required to prevent attendees from bunching up.
- Utilize pre-packaged beverage options, such as single-serve alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages that are opened by the guest (e.g., mini cans of wine, beer, hard seltzer, etc.).
- If hygiene and safety concerns can’t be accommodated or are too cost-prohibitive, consider a bring-your-own option or adjust event timing to eliminate the F&B element altogether.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- In good weather, use of outdoor venues allows for groups to spread out better. Face coverings may not need to be worn outside if people maintain 1.5 meters/6 feet between themselves and others.
- Chalk or paint “circles” to create zones that allow for social distancing.



PEOPLE MOVEMENT/ CROWD CONTROL

- Consider doing a temperature check at Health Check stations when people enter the venue. If their temperature is elevated, have a quarantining process in place.
- Decrease distances between experiences.

- Decrease number of offsite experiences to minimize need for transportation.
- Increase use of markers and signage to replace volunteers so there is less contact in getting people from place to place. Use digital, recyclable, donatable or reusable signage whenever possible to reduce your event's environmental impact.
- Lengthen breaks, and consider staggered releases from general and concurrent sessions, to minimize lines for the bathrooms and people movement through the hallway. This might mean extending the event time to accommodate the longer breaks.
- Utilize one-way traffic control in exhibit halls and conference hallways.
- Consider "appointment-only" access to exhibit booths or expo halls, or stagger arrival times to provide for safe physical distancing.
- Consider how movement from hotel rooms to meeting spaces might change if there are limits to elevator capacity: Will that require timed releases from meetings or staggered arrival times?
- If anything during the registration/check-in process requires a touchpad, provide an individualized stylus for participants to use. Sterilize the styluses with an alcohol-based solution or UV light before reusing. Make sure that touchpads are sterilized at regular intervals. If touchpads are being used without styluses, sanitize after each use.
- If the registration/check-in process requires extended security/safety checks, employ extra personnel to keep wait times low or stagger arrival times.
- Include items like sanitizer, masks, gloves, styluses, etc., in the attendee gift bag (could be sponsor opportunity).
- Explore products you can use to replace traditional name badges (e.g., expanded use of QR codes in event apps, geolocating options that allow you to check in or share contact information at trade shows using your mobile phone, print logos or names on custom bandanas/masks).
- Consider posting a "safety greeter" or digital way to collect guest contact info if it wasn't gathered during registration in case there is a need to follow-up post-event with people potentially exposed to COVID-19.

REGISTRATION/BADGING/CHECK-IN

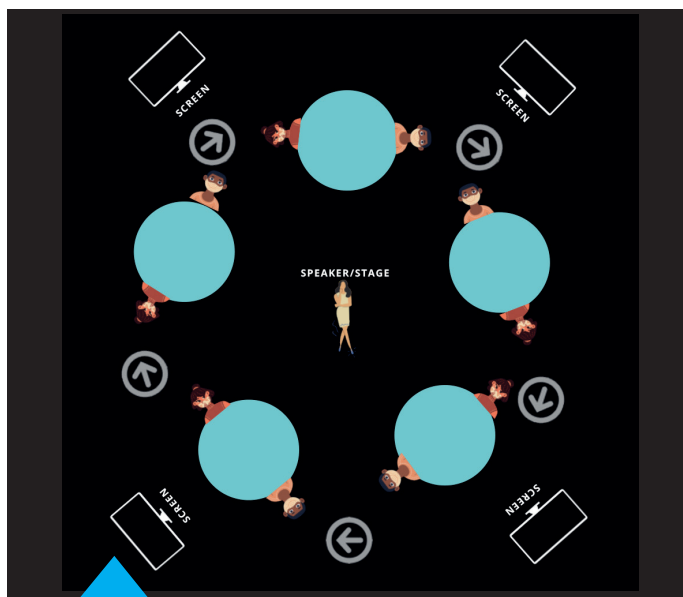
- Work with your staff to define the distribution process (who picks up the badge, how is it handled, etc.) and how procedures and expectations will be communicated to attendees.
- Consider mailing badges to attendees ahead of the event to minimize the need for physical contact.
- Schedule staggered time blocks for attendees to check in to minimize crowds, divided by name, registration type, etc.
- Consider implementing digital check-in via no or low-touch methods to minimize or eliminate the need for physical contact (e.g., facial recognition, RFID "magic bands," scanners for IDs and barcodes, self-printing stations, pre-arrival online check-in, automated bag/coat checks, etc.).
- Ensure staff stationed at the registration/check-in area have access to gloves, masks and hand sanitizer for their personal safety and/or are positioned behind a safety barrier.
- Eliminate lines at festivals or outdoor events by beginning the check-in process in cars as people arrive.
- Mark 1.5 meters/6-ft. intervals wherever lines may queue, so participants know where to stand to maintain the recommended safe distance
- Provide sanitation stations where guests can find hand sanitizer, no-touch trash cans, masks, gloves, etc.

ROOM SETS

- To maintain a safe physical distance, current guidelines suggest keeping people 1.5 meters/6 feet apart. This is a big change from the pre-coronavirus room-to-space ratios hotels used and means that a 150-person (pax) meeting may now need a space once earmarked for 250 people (pax).
- Suggested room diagrams for how to reconfigure traditional classroom, theater, U-shape and rounds can be viewed in [PSAV's Meet Safe Guide](#) (free download).
- Take advantage of this opportunity to test room sets more conducive to learning because the "traditional" set isn't available anymore.
- If you use "traditional" sets with new spacing required, be aware that you might need personal amplification devices or other ways to help people hear and communicate with each other.
- Encourage guests to bring their own note-taking devices rather than sharing pens and paper.
- Create directional signage for one-way exit/entry into the space and around the room.
- Clean and sanitize rooms and surfaces during breaks.
- If water bubblers are used, people may be required to use a clean cup rather than refill water bottles, unless the unit can be cleaned between use.
- Consider keeping the same people in the same seats for the duration of the event.

See Room Set Examples on the next page ►

EXAMPLES OF ROOM SETS



BANQUET ROUNDS

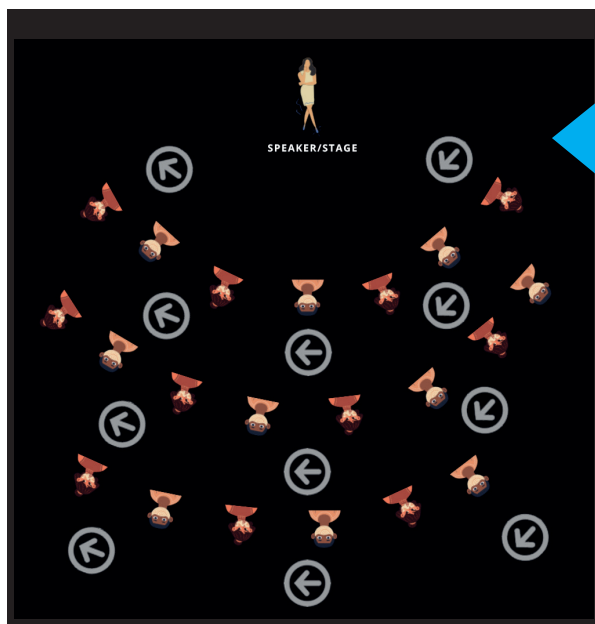
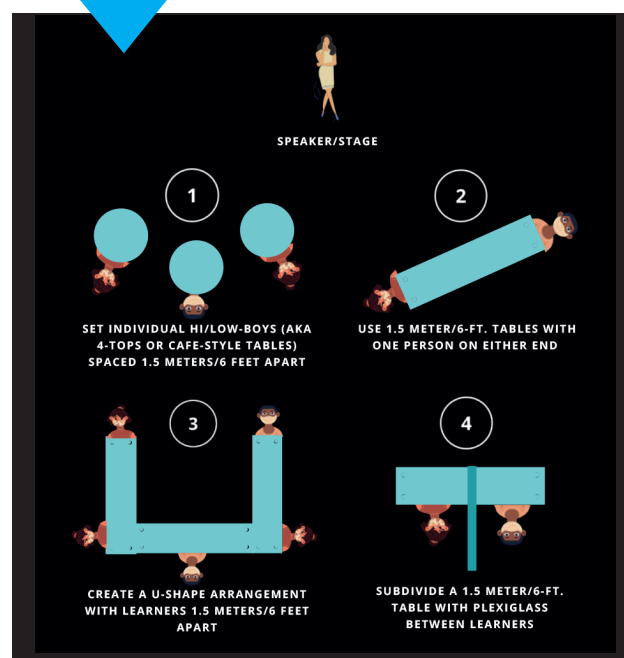
Maintaining the CDC-recommended distance of 6 feet between individuals means that a 72-inch (1.82 meter) banquet rounds may only be able to accommodate 2 people per table, instead of the customary 8 to 12 people per round. If you're looking at keeping the WHO-recommended 1.5 meters between people, then you could seat 2 people at a 66-inch (1.67-meter) round.

By positioning screens in four areas of the room and placing the stage in the middle of the floor, you can still create a feeling of intimacy despite the increased space required. The arrows indicate a one-way floor traffic pattern.

CONCURRENT EDUCATION SETS

Maintaining the recommended distance of 1.5 meters/6 feet between individuals can be a challenge when you're used to seating people much closer for concurrent sessions.

Here are four different ways that you can seat learners in a classroom to maintain recommended safe physical distances. To minimize contact further, consider one-way traffic patterns for entry and exit, staggered break times and having assigned seats for the duration of the event.



THEATER SETS

Maintaining the recommended distance of 1.5 meters/6 feet between individuals means that there should be about two arm's length between seats on the theater floor.

On the positive side, this set makes it easier for people with mobility issues to find a seat in a crowded theater and you can stagger the seats to improve sight lines. On the negative side, you will require a larger space than in the past. You will also need to think through one-way traffic movement with aisles and if you are going to allow for free or assigned seating.

Consider having greeters who guide people to open seats in an orderly manner and a clearly marked late-seating area. To make the space feel more intimate, curve rows around the stage or consider theater in the round with the stage in the center and screens along four sides behind the audience.



SOCIAL EVENTS

- Utilize “selfie”-style photo booths or social-media driven photo mosaics instead of group photos.
- Eliminate the use of props for photo booths. Or if used, sanitize in-between use.
- Place “X” or “O” markings on the dance floor to encourage people to maintain recommended physical distances. Consider teaching line-dances or group routines that allow people to connect through shared movement without touching each other.
- Reconfigure food service styles and bar options to avoid unnecessary social contact.
- Consider serving staggered meals.
- Utilize outdoor spaces as much as possible and be mindful of the extra considerations necessary to accommodate people with physical restrictions or disabilities.
- Investigate and introduce new ways to cultivate interaction using technology, mobile devices or personal amplification devices since close conversation will not be possible.
- Control entrance and exit points, and mark floor or outdoor areas as needed to provide for safe physical distancing and facilitate traffic flow.
- Provide hand sanitizing stations and contactless ways to dispose of waste or used glasses/plates/cups.
- Consider providing contactless ways for people to exchange information (e.g., RFID bands or lanyards, mobile/app-driven digital business cards, etc.).

SPEAKERS/EDUCATION/TRAINING

- Utilize online speaker management portals so speakers can upload presentations and handouts before they arrive onsite. Don’t allow the use of USB sticks or outside equipment.
- Either have the same speaker remain in the same room or build in longer breaks to sterilize all the microphones, remotes and other equipment in-between use.
- Hybrid and virtual event speakers/educators need to understand different tools and concepts than ones traditionally employed at in-person events. Things they need to know or be coached on include:
 - How [Adult Learning principles should be incorporated](#) into virtual learning
 - How to [facilitate online interaction](#)
 - [Tools](#) for online presentations
 - Camera & video [tips](#) for looking and sounding their best
 - Digital [team-building games/icebreakers](#) (MPI Washington member John Chen wrote the [book on this](#), and leads free sessions on [what’s new](#))
- Event organizers may not only need to prepare speakers for virtual events, they may need to master these skills themselves in order to better lead remote teams.
- Consider asking for speaker-generated content to use before and after the event to engage and promote (e.g., promo videos, blogs, podcasts, ask-me-anything, etc.). These marketing elements can be a part of the speaker contract.
- Don’t expect presenters to also moderate the virtual or hybrid chat feed. Provide a staff member to read out questions and moderate the conversation happening.



STRATEGY

- Create strategic plans or a structure for longer-range planning and thoughts about how to frame plans in a changing environment.
- Forecast multiple scenarios to account for uncertain revenue, attendance and attrition patterns, as well as cost increases related to increased safety protocols and space needs.
- Now that people have gotten used to not meeting in-person, prepare yourself to show why face-to-face meetings still matter.
- Educate internal stakeholders about the need for meeting departments to be a part of the virtual and hybrid event planning experience. Even if the IT or Marketing department “owns” the project, if your expertise and planning skills are incorporated, you can save them a lot of headaches and help enhance the experience for attendees. After all, a virtual meeting is still a meeting.
- When shopping for [virtual/hybrid event technology](#), begin with the strategy and experience you’re trying to create instead of starting with the platform requirements.



TECHNOLOGY

- Utilize event apps to increase attendee connectivity and facilitate the exchange of information.
- Provide cell phone/mobile device sanitizing stations.
- Exchange digital “business cards” via QR Codes or wearable devices to allow for contactless networking.
- Clean and sterilize high-touch tech tools like lavs, laptops, slide advancers, flip chart markers, etc., between use.
- Explore touch-free technological tools and activities that can help build a feeling of community, connection and collaboration.
- Use smart badges to track onsite contacts and alert wearers when they’re getting too close to other people (inside the 1.5-meter/6-ft. radius). Options include [Proximity’s The ResCUE](#).

TIPS FOR TRAVELING AND MEETING SAFELY

AIRLINES

- Increase use of mobile boarding passes.
- Utilize [Facial Recognition Scanners](#) in airports for passenger check-in.
- Check with the carrier to see how they sterilize between flights and sanitize checked bags and equipment. Some now use aerosolized disinfectants that coat the cabin and all surfaces.
- Maintain 1.5 meters/6 feet between yourself and others during boarding and deplaning.
- Ask the carrier if they allow for distance between passengers in the cabin. (Some do, some don’t.)
- Wear a mask while on board the aircraft.

BOAT TOURS

- Space participants out when boarding and disembarking.
- Block off seats, if necessary, to maintain physical distance between passengers.
- Avoid shared or open food and beverage. Use single-serve or pre-packaged items.
- Ask the provider about safety and sanitization protocols.

CONFERENCE CENTERS, CONVENTION CENTERS & EXPO HALLS

Ask about:

- **Sanitation stations.** Are they at every entrance, by elevators, and in restrooms?
- **Elevators.** Is there signage suggesting a limited number of passengers? Are they automated?
- **Information/registration desks.** Do they utilize plexiglass barriers? What are the options for contactless check-in?
- **Onsite medical/security staff.** Do they utilize thermal scanners for temperature checks? What’s their quarantine policy?
- **Safety guidelines.** What are their policies and requirements (e.g., one-way traffic patterns, face coverings, food handling, etc.)? How do they enforce it?

- **Digital signage.** What kind of digital directional signage is available?
- **Sanitation procedures.** How do they keep meeting/expo rooms, public spaces, and equipment clean and sanitized? (inside the 1.5-meter/6-ft. radius). Options include Proximity's The ResCUE.



CRUISE SHIPS

- Decrease port stops.
- Include more on-board activities in the meeting program.
- Buy out the ship, if possible, to control who the group meets.
- Ask the company what their safety and sanitation policies are around guest rooms, food and beverage, common spaces and meeting rooms.

DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS/CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS/TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS

Ask about:

- **Local restrictions** and guidelines that might affect gatherings.
- **Citywide policies.** For example, are they uniformly applied safety/sanitation protocols or does every hotel/venue do its own thing?

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

- Space out riders on the vehicle itself by blocking certain seats out or skipping rows. This may require carrying at half-capacity.
- Consider using smaller vehicles (such as mini coaches) vs. full-sized coaches for airport arrivals/departures, social events, etc.
- Require passengers to enter from rear doors and queue using the recommended safe physical distance (1.5 meters/6 feet).
- If sanitization stations aren't present, provide hand sanitizer and masks.

HOTELS

Ask the hotel about:

- **Guest check-in procedures.** For example, is there a plexiglass barrier at the front desk, keyless room entry, contactless check-in, or mobile check-in options?
- **Elevator policies and features.** For example: Are they limiting the number of people in the elevators to account for recommended physical distances? Do they have an elevator assistant who pushes the buttons for guests or an automated system that eliminates that need altogether?
- **Sanitization, health and safety.** For example: Do they have sanitization stations? Temperature check stations and a quarantine policy? What additional precautions are they taking to clean public spaces; recreational areas like the pool, health club and spa; meeting rooms and guest rooms?
- **Food and beverage.** For example: How do they minimize cross-contamination at meal functions? What precautions are they taking?

Understand that the increased need for sanitizing spaces, the adjusted room-to-space ratio and the additional precautions required for food and beverage preparation might increase prices on menus, space and rooms.

Many hotels are looking at creating documents and guidance inspired by the [“Wynn Document”](#); others, like Marriott, are utilizing increased sanitation measures like electrostatic sprayers with hospital-grade disinfectant. Ask how these protocols might affect room block availability and same day check-ins, and if you can have a copy of their guide.

VENUES

Ask venues about:

- Temperature check stations and quarantine policies. Note that thermal scanners are considered intrusive by some and that they may give people a [false sense of security](#).
- Availability and placement of sanitization stations and directional signage
- Formalized line-forming and queuing procedures
- Sanitization and staff practices. How are spaces cleaned and food handled to minimize risk of contamination and disease transmission?
- Availability of onsite medical and/or security staff and related procedures
- Availability of outdoor event spaces
- Traffic control measures/bag check
- How the venue enforces its safety and security protocols
- Other venue requirements

VIRTUAL/ HYBRID EVENT CONSIDERATIONS

FORMAT, CONTENT & STRATEGY

- While borders are closed and travel is restricted, reconfigure large (traditionally) face-to-face events as smaller regional events of 10-50 people who come together to experience virtual keynotes and digital activities as part of a larger global audience.
- Provide virtual training and run-through sessions for speakers to make sure they are familiar with the technical platform and show components.
- Enhance interactivity and engagement with digital breakout rooms.
- Share content in advance to generate discussion.
- Poll membership to determine interest in travel (and comfort with meeting face to face again).
- Consider regional F2F with hybrid element for global conferences.

TIPS FOR MONETIZING HYBRID/VIRTUAL EVENTS

- Calculate your [virtual event ROI](#).
- Provide a clear value proposition that emphasizes a sponsor's return on investment.
- Customize/tier the sponsor's exposure and price accordingly. For example, just having a logo displayed may not be as valuable as being able to address the digital audience.
- If your digital event has a virtual trade show component, make sure you have a strategy to drive traffic to your exhibitors, otherwise consider options that offer more interaction, like appointments.
- Offer exclusive content for paid registrants.
- If the cancellation of live events has left you with unfilled sponsor funds, talk to the sponsor before automatically issuing a refund. Together, you should be able to work out a way to deliver similar value at an upcoming online/digital event.
- Leverage pre-, during, and post-event opportunities for sponsors to engage with the audience.
- Think about ways that you can capture, curate and monetize access to digital content post-event. For

example, re-purpose sessions from a conference into topic-specific summits. Or create a "best of" webinar series where you broadcast highlights of the event you just had to create excitement for the next event and provide more sponsor opportunities.

VIRTUAL/HYBRID EVENT RESOURCES

- [Event Marketer's Guide to Going Virtual](#) Includes side by side tech platform comparison charts, event formats, tips on designing the experience, and more.
- [Happily x MPI ISBO learning series](#) A collection of videos with conversations that are relevant to independents and small business owners, including how to make the business pivot to virtual events.
- [MPI Virtual Meeting How-To Guide](#) How to start the design of your virtual events from a strategic place to enhance their value.
- [MPI Hybrid Event How-To Guide](#) Tips for creating blended event experiences for digital and face-to-face attendees.
- [Plan Your Meetings Livestreaming Checklist](#) Free white paper for DIY digital/hybrid event production.
- [PSAV Meet Safe Guidelines](#) provides suggestions for in-room set-ups for face-to-face, digital and hybrid events, as well as tips for setting up one-room, multi-room and multi-venue networked communication set-ups.
- [Speaker Tips for Virtual Presenters](#) Helpful ways to orient experienced speakers adjust to being on camera for fully digital or hybrid presentations.
- [Virtual Moderator Tip Sheet and Resource Guide](#) Example training materials for virtual moderators that you can use to train your own.
- [Virtual Event ROI Calculator](#) Google spreadsheet with an accompanying video for how to create a quantifiable defense for your production budget

Real-life examples:

- [Global Meetings Industry Day Virtual Event](#) and [GMID Goes Virtual](#): showcased the meetings and events industry and its direct impact on the global economy while connecting a global audience.
- For more inspiration, look to tech firms and companies that have been doing this for a while and/or have proven expertise, like [Adobe Summit](#), [Microsoft Ignite](#) and [Dreamforce](#).

LEGAL & INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Fear is not grounds to initiate a force majeure clause. It is only enforceable for illegal, impracticable and impossible events. That is why it was easier to evoke after governments issued bans on mass gatherings and not before.
- Some cities are beginning to waive attrition as a selling point because it's so difficult to predict, due to attendee concerns and uncertainty around when international travel restrictions will lift.
- Consider including in your contracts a clause that allows for an attrition step-down from the negotiated performance if something not covered by force majeure happens that prevents attendees, exhibitors, and speakers from getting to the event. For example, if room pick-up is 80 percent in an ideal environment, perhaps 60 percent performance is the step-down for something that happens that is out of your control and not covered by force majeure.
- Review room block, meeting space and food and beverage six months out. In the case an event goes hybrid, you might need to factor in an additional 10 percent of attrition.
- Push deposits way out or ask that they be held in an escrow-style account in case the supplier partner defaults (i.e. goes out of business).
- Remember: It's always about the relationship. Conversations about the contract and whether an event needs to cancel are happening between people, not organizations. It's imperative that both parties work toward a positive mutual resolution rather than a unilateral one where the planner defends the group and the supplier defends the venue and neither are willing to flex.
- Conduct baseline risk checks to ensure that business and planner are protected from litigation accordingly.
- Utilize augmented insurance riders with provisions to manage outbreaks of any kind.
- Consider purchasing cancellation insurance.
- If you're a small business owner, invest in business interruption insurance.
- If you are looking at creating attendee waivers for your venue or upcoming events to reduce potential liability, make sure you consult with your legal counsel in your local jurisdiction. Here are examples we found that are currently in use:

- [The Club at Hidden Creek COVID-19 Waiver of Liability & Indemnification](#)
- [YMCA of Greater Twin Cities Waiver of Liability, And Indemnity Agreement](#)
- [Boy & Girls Club of San Francisco Assumption of the Risk and Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/ COVID-19](#)
- [Colon Cancer Coalition Event Waiver and Release of Liability](#)
- [Canadian guidance on Waivers of Liability](#)
- [Mexican Waiver of Liability Examples](#)

TIPS FOR MARKETING & SALES PROFESSIONALS

- In times of crisis: Converse instead of negotiating with your clients.
- Now is not the time for blind prospecting and cold calls. Utilize unobtrusive means like retargeting ads to raise awareness of what you offer to reach new audiences.
- Check in with your contacts and see how they're doing.
- If you want to stay top-of-mind, consider sending contacts a gift that reminds them of you and supports a local business.
- Demonstrate understanding and compassion for how the current/official public health guidelines impact the outcome of whether an event can move forward.
- With crisis communications, act swiftly and authentically. It's ok to not have a fully vetted plan. First-to-market is key. But now that you've been through the wringer, are there messages you can craft, get approved and have waiting for the next crisis?
- Be transparent when answering questions. It's okay to acknowledge when you may not have an answer. People appreciate knowing what you're still figuring out if you follow up.
- Remember: It's important to take care of yourself. If you're part of a team that's been furloughed or laid off, you might be feeling depressed and anxious, even if you still have a job. [MPI has a wellbeing resource center.](#)
- Are you looking for a new job? [MPI has a Career Center,](#) and resume reviews are free for MPI members.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASSOCIATION PLANNERS

Associations must pivot to meet member needs. When members get the next dues invoice, they shouldn't be wondering where you went during the quarantine. They should be thinking about how the community and resources you offer are something they can't live without right now.

Questions to ask:

- How is COVID-19 and the resulting quarantine affecting your membership?
- How can their association be the resource they need to get through this crisis?
- How else can you get them through what's immediately ahead of them?
- If business continuity and health are tied to the big annual event and membership dues, how can you diversify that revenue?

INTERNATIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES & RESOURCES

For updates on current lockdowns, restrictions and other COVID-19 related policies, visit the [Global Dashboard](#) for a country-by-country list of links.

HEALTH ORGANIZATION GUIDELINES

The World Health Organization (WHO) offers several resources, including:

- [Key Planning Recommendations for Mass Gatherings](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) events as they happen](#)
- [Global research on coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Course: Public Health Preparedness for Mass Gathering Events](#)

- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has issued [Considerations relating to social distancing measures in response to COVID-19](#)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control [Guidance for Gatherings and Public Events](#)

EVENT INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

- Event Industry Council [COVID-19 resources](#)
- IATATravel [Regulations Map](#)
- MPI [Trusted Resource page](#)
- UFI: Global Association of the Exhibition Industry [Coronavirus Resources page](#)
- [The Event Safety Alliance Guide](#) (Canada)

CONTRIBUTORS

- *Connie Bergeron, CMP, Site Selection Solutions, Atlanta, GA*
- *Melinda L. Burdette, CMP, CMM, Director of Events, Meeting Professionals International, Jacksonville, FL*
- *Caitlin Gaborow, CMP, Controller, Courtyard by Marriott Saratoga Springs and Excelsior Springs Event Center, Saratoga Springs, NY*
- *Lindsay Faloon, CMP, Event Planner, Nintendo, Seattle, WA*
- *Ciara Feely, Creator of The Steps to WIN Program™, Conference Converter, Cork, Ireland*
- *Melissa Feinman, CMP, VP Marketing, Publicis Media, New York, NY*
- *Emily Gomes, BS SDSU Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sales Coordinator, Pendry San Diego, San Diego, CA*
- *Allison Harris-Turk, CMP, Owner & Managing Partner, Harris-Turk Consulting, San Diego, CA*
- *Mekeda Johnson-Brooks, Chief Client Experience Architect, MJ Design and Company, Chicago, IL*
- *Kyle Jordan, Ed.M, MS, CAE, CMM, CMP; Chief Learning and Experiences Officer, Financial Planning Association, Denver, CO*
- *Jennifer Lim, Public Programs, The New School, New York, NY*
- *Heidi Longton, CMP, CMM, New York State School Boards Association, Latham, NY*
- *Molly Marsh, CMP, AMR Management Services, Lexington, KY*
- *Miguel Neves CMP, DES, Chief Social Strategist at miguelseven.com, Copenhagen, Denmark*
- *Kristi Casey Sanders, CMM, CMP, Senior Director of Community Engagement, Meeting Professionals International, Sautee Nacoochee, GA*
- *Jessie States, CMP, CMM, Director of MPI Academy, Meeting Professionals International, Dallas, TX*

About MPI

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide. Founded in 1972, MPI provides innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges, and acts as a prominent voice for the promotion and growth of the industry. MPI has a global community of 60,000 meeting and event professionals including more than 17,000 engaged members and its Plan Your Meetings audience. It has more than 70 chapters and clubs in 75 countries worldwide. Join MPI today at mpi.org.



When we meet, we change the world.®