

# Meetings Outlook August 2021

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FEATURE



**MEETINGS  
OUTLOOK™**



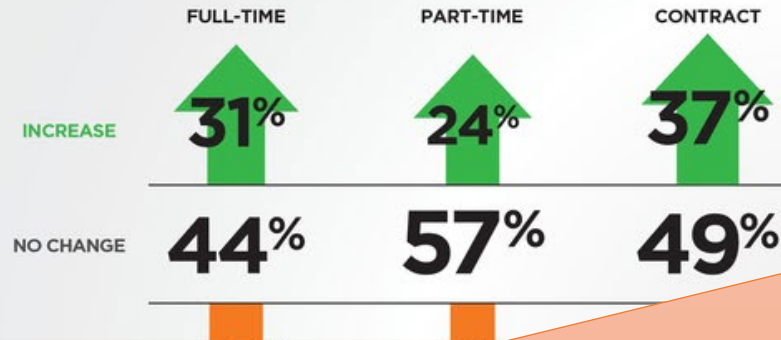
*Optimism and business expectations are the highest ever seen in Meetings Outlook, while prices and budgets are also growing, and staffing and reskilling becomes a significant challenge.*

**アンケート回答期間：2021年6月28日～7月7日**

2021 SUMMER EDITION

## GLIMPSE AT CURRENT EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The positive trend for employment continues at a slow rate. Despite many meeting pros remaining on furlough or still seeking employment, more are getting back to work. In fact, as discussed during the State of the Industry panel during MPI's Global Meetings Industry Day live broadcast, industry leaders expressed some concern about the massive amount of hiring activity with which they could soon be tasked.



*"One of the biggest immediate challenges we are finding is the slow process of bringing employees back to full time work, both on the planner and supplier sides."*

**JUANA ANDERSON**  
MPI Southern California Chapter

In addition to losing talent by way of people who may have left the meeting industry during the pandemic for a more stable work schedule or possibly even more money, Judge says she is also seeing women left the workforce in larger numbers. In fact, numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 Survey of Income and Program Participation revealed that women have accounted for 77% of people who have left the workforce during the pandemic. "That's a crazy statistic because 77% of the meetings and events industry workforce is women," Judge says. "Additionally, Harvard Business Review published something that two-thirds of highly skilled women said they wouldn't have exited the workforce had they had more flexibility in their jobs."

Flexibility is a key trait of meeting professionals and one of the most sought-after traits for organizations during the pandemic, which saw most employees working from home. Many respondents (47%) say their organizations are keeping the option of full-time remote work for new hires and existing employees—adapting to these challenging times while understanding the needs of employees. (Thirty-one percent said they are not offering full-time remote work; 22% responded "it's complicated.") Judge says one of the barriers that was difficult to break through in the industry was that people have been so used to working together in person that setting, face to face. The pandemic fast-tracked the adoption of remote work, which is significant for Judge's business of placing

freelancers. "I really broke down the barriers that freelance talent face as far as getting into other organizations—when you're a freelancer, you don't have a larger organization that you're plugging into," she says. "One of the things [organizations] needed to focus on was cultural changes and how to change the organization culturally for remote work. The pandemic gave us the technology that has helped make freelancers more successful. Things like Zoom, project management tools... A lot of the things that have become standard because of COVID are the things that help people work from home. Companies are positioned so much more to use remote work now than pre-pandemic."

But it's not just freelance or contract hiring facing challenges. Judge says (MPI Tennessee Chapter), corporate talent buyer, Nestlé, says finding skilled staff hasn't been difficult for her company, attributing that to how "Live Nation prides itself on making sure everyone feels valued as an employee and person. The focus on employee education, community service and respect for everyone is at the core of what we do so that appeals to many people. [But] I see my friends who work at hotels, restaurants and bars struggling to find employees and who want to work. It is very sad."

Judge says she thinks many in the industry are having trouble acquiring suitable staff. "There are a few reasons," she says. "One, people have left the industry

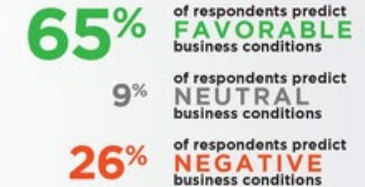
## Business Conditions

An astounding 93% of respondents are projecting favorable business conditions over the next year, making this the **second consecutive quarter with record-breaking positive expectations.**

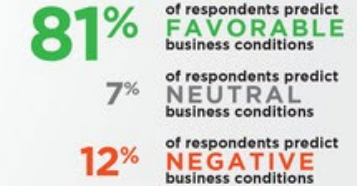
Fall 2020



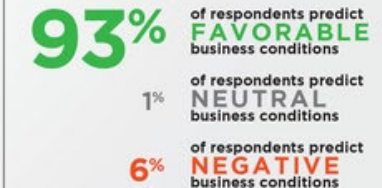
Winter 2021



Spring 2021



Summer 2021



## 【ビジネスコンディション予測】

2020年秋：良好58%/消極的34%

2021年冬：良好65%/消極的26%

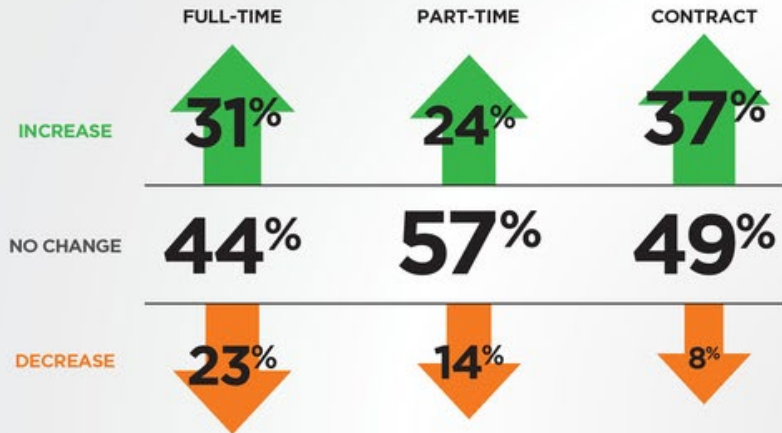
2021年春：良好81%/消極的12%

2021年夏：良好93%/消極的6%



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## PRICING MOVEMENT

According to respondents, prices for many meeting/event-related expenses have risen this year. How much have they increased?

	+1%-5%	+6%-10%	+11%-25%	>25%	No change
Airfare	12%	24%	19%	13%	20%
Audiovisual	11%	20%	17%	9%	32%
Entertainment	11%	23%	7%	3%	39%
F&B	16%	32%	22%	5%	16%
Guest rooms	17%	17%	19%	7%	29%
Office space	14%	10%	2%	2%	50%
Onsite security	10%	12%	9%	4%	44%
Rental cars	7%	15%	13%	24%	26%
Space rental	16%	23%	12%	6%	33%
Speakers/presenters	12%	17%	9%	2%	45%

*“One of the biggest immediate challenges we are finding is the slow process of bringing employees back to full time work, both on the planner and supplier sides.”*

**JUANA ANDERSON**  
MPI Southern California Chapter

In addition to losing talent by way of people who may have left the meeting industry during the pandemic for a more regular work schedule or possibly even more money, Judge points to stats showing women left the workforce in larger numbers than men. In fact, numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau released earlier this year revealed that women have accounted for nearly 80% of people who have left the workforce during the pandemic.

“For us, that’s a crazy statistic because 77% of the meetings and events workforce is women,” Judge says. “Additionally, Harvard Business Review published something that two-thirds of highly skilled women said they wouldn’t have exited the workforce had they had more flexibility in their jobs.”

Flexibility is a key trait of meeting professionals and one of the most important traits for organizations during the pandemic, which saw most employees working from home. Many respondents (47%) say their organizations are keeping the option of full-time remote work for new and existing staff—adapting to these challenging times while understanding the wants and needs of employees. (Thirty-one percent said they are not offering full-time remote work; 22% responded “it’s complicated.”)

Judge says one of the barriers that was difficult to break through in the meeting industry was that people have been so used to working together in an office setting, face to face. The pandemic fast-tracked the adoption of regular remote work, which is significant for Judge’s business of placing freelancers.

“COVID really broke down the barriers that freelance talent face as far as plugging in to other organizations—when you’re a freelancer, you don’t have that larger organization that you’re plugging into,” she says. “One of the things [organizations] needed to focus on was cultural changes and how they need to change the organization culturally for remote work. The other things were technology that has helped make freelancers more successful, things like Zoom, project management tools... A lot of the things that ended up becoming standard because of COVID are the things that help freelancers be remote. Companies are positioned so much more to use freelance talent now than pre-pandemic.”

Of course, it’s not just freelance or contract hiring facing challenges.

Jill Kopecky (MPI Tennessee Chapter), corporate talent buyer, Neste Live! A Live Nation Company, says finding skilled staff hasn’t been difficult at her company, attributing that to how “Live Nation prides itself on making sure that everyone feels valued as an employee and person. The focus on diversity, education, community service and respect for everyone is at the core of what we do so that appeals to many people. [But] I see my friends that work at hotels, restaurants and bars struggling to find employees and people who want to work. It is very sad.”

So why does she think many in the industry are having trouble acquiring suitable staff?

“There are a few reasons,” she says. “One, people have left the industry

## Business Conditions

An astounding project over the course of the pandemic.

### 【雇用についての現状】

“私たちが直面している最大の差し迫った課題の1つは、プランナー、サプライヤーの両方で、従業員をフルタイムの仕事に戻すプロセスが遅いことです。”

-Juana Anderson MPI 南加チャプター

26% of respondents predict **NEGATIVE** business conditions

Spring 2021

81% of respondents predict **FAVORABLE** business conditions

7% of respondents predict **NEUTRAL** business conditions

12% of respondents predict **NEGATIVE** business conditions

Summer 2021

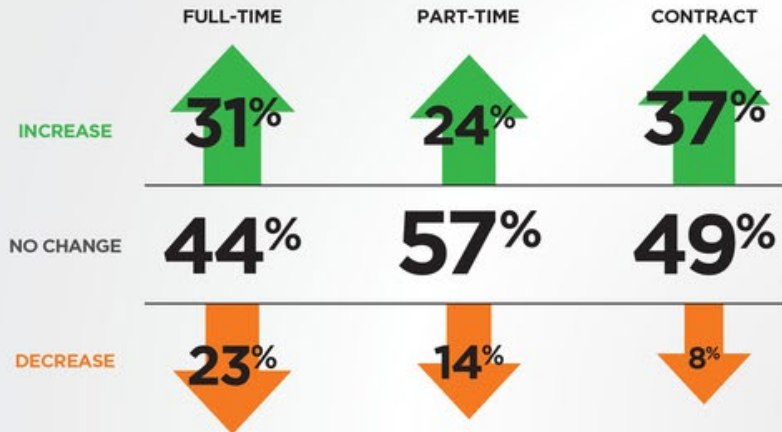
93% of respondents predict **FAVORABLE** business conditions

1% of respondents predict **NEUTRAL** business conditions

6% of respondents predict **NEGATIVE** business conditions

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An astounding 93% of respondents are projecting favorable business conditions over the next year, making this the **second consecutive quarter with record-breaking positive expectations.**

Fall 2020

**58%** of respondents predict **FAVORABLE** business conditions

**8%** of respondents predict **NEUTRAL** business conditions

**34%** of respondents predict **NEGATIVE** business conditions

Winter 2021

**65%** of respondents predict **FAVORABLE** business conditions

of respondents predict

イベント業界、ホスピタリティ業界は現在売り手市場である。コロナ禍でイベント業界、ホスピタリティ業界を離れた人材がAmazonなどコロナ禍でも業績の良かった企業で働き始め、戻ってこないケースも多くみられる。またイベント業界を離れた女性の割合は男性のその4倍にあたる。



## ATTENDANCE FORECASTS

THE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ANTICIPATING FAVORABLE LIVE ATTENDANCE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS IS ALSO AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH, WHILE VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE PROJECTIONS CONTINUE TO DECLINE. FOR COMPARISON, LAST SUMMER, 87% OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED FAVORABLE VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE TO COME.



### Projected Live Attendance

77%  
POSITIVE

4%  
FLAT

19%  
NEGATIVE

and found other work that allows them to stay at home instead of on the road. The desire for a more stable working environment is appealing.”

Kopecny also suspects there are people who don't want to work any longer and/or are staying out of the workforce because they're sufficiently concerned about catching COVID-19.

“Finally, people that have been working the entire time, many taking on extra work in order to keep their jobs, are finding that they aren't getting supported now that people are getting back to work,” she says. “For example, I know a sales director at a hotel who had a support staff of four prior to the pandemic, and the ownership or management team won't give him one of those employees back and they expect him to continue on doing it all. He quit for his own mental and physical well-being.”

Similarly, Juana Anderson (MPI Southern California Chapter), director of meetings and expositions for Bostrom, reports having no trouble finding staff, saying, “Our organization is a welcoming, diverse group of people who value [an] individual's contribution to the team.”

Anderson says her organization's HR director has found hiring success by broadening their search to include candidates from more diverse backgrounds.

*“Re-establishing an equilibrium is imperative in facing the [industry recovery] in the best possible way.”*

**STEFANIA MURA**  
MPI Italia Chapter

“Many people have taken advantage of the shutdown to learn new skills, and companies may be able to find some hidden gems with different work histories,” she says.

The shift to virtual and hybrid meetings over the past year-and-a-half reveals even more so the need for flexibility—and, for many, that has necessitated some degree of reskilling.

Judge says another reason her business has grown so much during the pandemic is because they've invested in educating their freelancers. In March 2020, SoundingsConnect began doing webinars and striving to build a community to help determine what education meeting professionals needed and what they wanted to learn

## MARKET LANDSCAPE

Meetings Outlook shows what appears to be a market shift that many have been anticipating. For more than a year, respondents have indicated a market landscape favoring buyers—which, on paper, sounded great for buyers aside from the fact that very few had in-person events to plan so few were able to leverage this fluctuating advantage. As more events return and venues and services deal with the complicated hiring situation, this is likely to once again swing in suppliers' favor.

	Fall 2020	Winter 2021	Spring 2021	Summer 2021
Buyer's Market	73%	76%	67%	44%
Balanced Market	14%	13%	19%	18%
Seller's Market	13%	12%	14%	38%

【マーケットの状況】  
過去1年間は買い手市場であるという回答の割合が高かったが(2020年秋:73%)、今回は44%に留まり、売り手市場であるという回答率が伸びてきている。

time, according to the latest Meetings Outlook. The greatest increase appears to be in full-time hiring, with 31% of respondents indicating active growth. While that's not quite back up to pre-pandemic levels, it's been improving notably for each of the past few quarters—up from 4% last summer.

Another impact of the staffing issues that many in the industry are facing is that some business functions may be slower than accustomed pre-pandemic—whether slower F&B service or responses to RFPs.

“I think that one of the biggest immediate challenges we are finding is the slow process of bringing employees back to full time work, both on the planner and supplier sides,” Anderson says. “As a planner, I believe that we need to reach out early and expect there to be more delays in response time and production from our supplier partners. Patience and proactivity will be key in the coming months.”

According to Judge, the staffing and skills situation will hamper in-person events into the near future.

we're seeing] and we try to work hard on the first especially in the type of program we are proposing and in the selection of suppliers and try to include a wellness element into any event whether meeting, incentive or congress,” says Stefania Mura (MPI Italia Chapter), director at CS events.

Throughout the pandemic, she notes, everyone spent more time indoors—many exercising less—and this has an effect on physical and mental health.

“Re-establishing an equilibrium is imperative in facing the [industry recovery] in the best possible way,” she says. ■



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an equilibrium

### 【予想されるリアル参加について】

ここ1年間で最も高い77%が「確信的である」と回答。また、昨年の夏には87%がバーチャル参加が有利と回答していたが、今回は36%に留まった。

diverse group of people who value [an] individual's contribution to the team."

Anderson says her organization's HR director has found hiring success by broadening their search to include candidates from more diverse backgrounds.

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about and verifying the need for those skills in the market.

"Our goal has been to retain industry talent by providing education and community for freelance talent and talent that lost their job due to the pandemic," she says. "We are focused on creating opportunities for talent to upskill and find work."

Marina Parra, CTP (MPI Germany Club), managing director, Weichlein Tours + Incentives, says she foresees a reduction in staff at her organization, with increased utilization of remote work and freelancers. For that, they've created a database of professional freelancers and are launching education to train future staff to meet the needs of tomorrow.

"We are creating an academy, which will launch in September, where we will train people to be able to work remotely and as a freelancer," Parra says. "[Courses will be a] combination of practice and theory, together with guest speakers from the MICE industry to offer the right mixture of experience and knowledge needed nowadays."

Due to the changing business and workforce landscape, Parra hopes to train enough freelancers so her DMC can thrive with a main team of staff that's enhanced with contract workers only when projects are confirmed.

That said, hiring is up across the board—contract, full- and part-time, according to the latest Meetings Outlook. The greatest increase appears to be in full-time hiring, with 31% of respondents indicating active growth. While that's not quite back up to pre-pandemic levels, it's been improving notably for each of the past few quarters—up from 4% last summer.

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According to Judge, the staffing and skills situation will hamper in-person events into the near future.

"I think that people are ready to get back to events—and with hybrid events in there, I think there'll be a lot more spend coming to our industry because now people are seeing the value of both and when to use one versus the other," she says. "The virtual side of things: I don't think we have enough talent to sustain it right now, but I think we're actually better positioned on the virtual side right now than we are on the live side because while companies are ready to come back, we still have labor shortages—hotels and convention centers aren't going to be able to take the volume right away that we were able to do pre-pandemic. And even getting back up to those staffing levels, people are rusty, they haven't worked together in a long time, it's getting that groove back. Things are going to be different."

### Greater focus on wellness

With all of the talk about building back better, it's encouraging to see the majority of respondents (63%) expressing a greater interest in wellness-specific content at meetings/events. In fact, only 4% of respondents are less interested in onsite wellness than prior to the pandemic.

"Sustainability and wellness are the most significant [trends we're seeing] and we try to work hard on the first especially in the type of program we are proposing and in the selection of suppliers and try to include a wellness element into any event whether meeting, incentive or congress," says Stefania Mura (MPI Italia Chapter), director at CS events.

Throughout the pandemic, she notes, everyone spent more time indoors—many exercising less—and this has an effect on physical and mental health.

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