



PCMA CONVENE

COVID-19 SURVEY

SURVEY DATES: APRIL 20-23

COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard

Survey and analysis by PCMA *Convene* editors

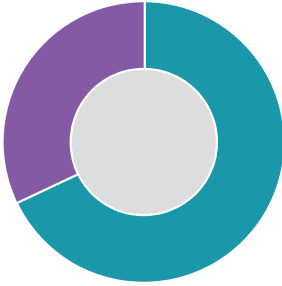
Charts and design by Point Five

COVID-19 has disrupted many things, including our sense of time. While the period of quarantining might seem interminable, our current reality and attempts to plan for the future have never been more fluid. The business events landscape used to take months and months to change. With the pandemic, it changed overnight and continues to evolve — but even “evolve” doesn’t do our current environment justice because it implies a gradual rather than rapid shift.

When we sent out our first COVID-19 survey on the last day of March and closed it after several days to analyze the results, we realized that we would need to frequently check in with the business events community. Here are the results of our first biweekly check-in, conducted during the week of April 20, to help us understand in as nearly real time as possible how the coronavirus is changing the work of business event professionals and to get a sense of what a post-COVID-19 — or more precisely, in the absence of a vaccine or effective treatment, what a “living with COVID-19” — business events world could look like. Look for us to be taking the industry’s pulse every other week.



What best describes your role in the business events industry?



68% Business events professional
32% Supplier serving business events professionals

What region best represents where you do the majority of your business?



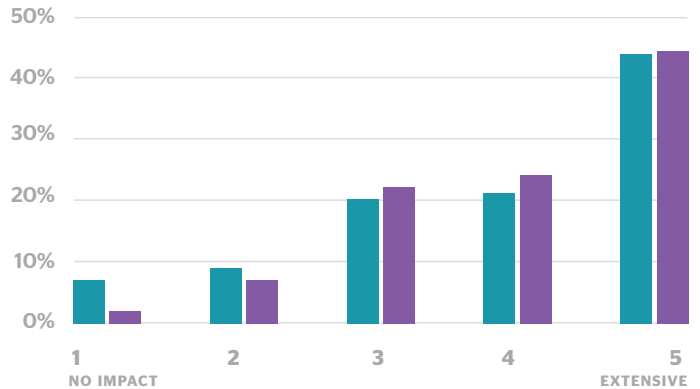
79% U.S.
6% Canada
5% APAC Region
9% EMEA region
1% Latin America

76% U.S.
6% Canada
6% APAC Region
8% EMEA region
4% Latin America

PLANNER TRACK
SUPPLIER TRACK



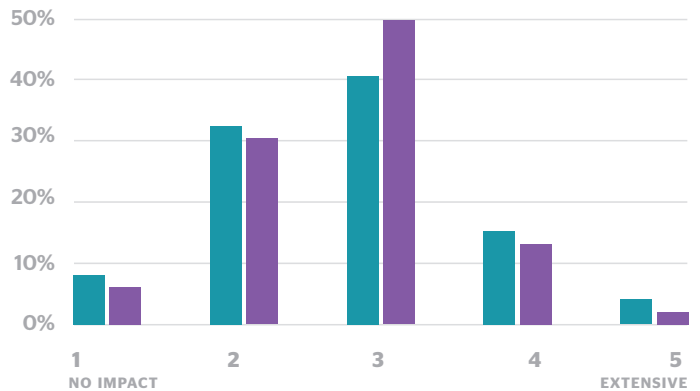
To what extent do you believe the rise in the use of digital-event technology will cannibalize face-to-face attendance at your event/s in the **next three months** on a scale of 1 to 5?



43%

OF PLANNERS BELIEVE IT WILL HAVE AN EXTENSIVE IMPACT IN THE **NEXT THREE MONTHS**

To what extent do you believe the rise in the use of digital-event technology will cannibalize face-to-face event attendance at events **in 2021** on a scale of 1 to 5.



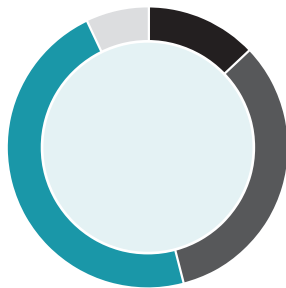
4%

OF PLANNERS BELIEVE IT WILL HAVE AN EXTENSIVE IMPACT IN **2021**



PLANNER TRACK

When the pandemic crisis passes, what scenario do you think best describes the recovery of face-to-face meetings for the business events industry in your geographic region?



- 13%** There will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 33%** People will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 47%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 7%** Other

For the “other” response, 29 percent of planners believe that some combination of these three scenarios will shape the recovery process. Eight respondents cited the need for expanded testing and/or a proven vaccine in order for people to be willing to travel and gather in large groups. In addition to physical health concerns, worries about financial well-being are on the minds of many meeting professionals: 15 respondents referenced budget cuts and economic repercussions as factoring into their expectations for how people will return to meetings. It’s clear that they believe the economic fallout and belt-tightening will impact organizations’ travel policies, which will in turn impact the events industry recovery.



Planners Say the Economy Will Shape the Scenario

“I expect that the financial impact will likely drive meeting attendance. It’s not going to be so much whether or not people want to attend meetings or feel comfortable with travel and face-to-face events, it will be that the financial standing of the organizations for which they travel will be at risk and so they won’t be able to pick back up very quickly. I expect a very slow progression for a lot of association-type travel.”

“There are so many other considerations aside from just being concerned to meet face to face. There are economic factors, i.e., job losses and slow re-employment or a need to re-skill and re-deploy that will impact people’s ability to afford to travel. I believe it’s more likely that there will be hybrid events with local or regionalized face to face occurring and using digital to connect outside of states, cities, and countries to bring wider audiences together in a new and fun way.”

“I think attendance will vary depending on how the crisis evolves over the next several months. Whether attendees will be fearful of travel and large groups really depends on the severity of the crisis at that time. Have things settled or are we going back and forth between public life and shelter in place to control the pandemic? Are there hotspots happening in or near the city where the gathering is supposed to take place? Is there a vaccine or treatment approved by the FDA yet? I think it’s fair to say people will start tip-toeing back into their local regions first before committing to any flights and overseas travel. My thoughts are we have a long and slow year ahead of us before things get back to the “new” normal. I work for a large corporation that has already announced we will pivot to as many virtual events for our smaller meetings going forward for health and safety reasons and to reduce travel costs on meetings that really don’t need to be done in person.”

“All travel and meetings will be affected by the economic situation. I think many people who may want to meet will not have the means to do so.”

“Our attendees are telling us that not only have the budgets for conference registration and travel been cut for this year, but that they have already been informed that the same budgets are cut for all of next year. I think when this passes, while people will want to meet again that 1) the budgets/economy will prevent that and 2) digital events will have gained such a stronghold that they’ll play a much bigger role in meetings than previously. More people will register for the digital component only, and some meetings will become digital altogether.”

Two respondents offered opinions on how suppliers will need to adjust in the aftermath of COVID-19, which may require adjustments to accommodate safety needs in the recovery.

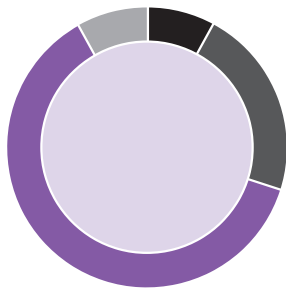
“Events will need to utilize more space to spread out their events. Convention centers may need to restructure rental to accommodate groups in the future.”

“Suppliers need to start working with business event professionals now to redo contracts and incentivize [business event professionals] to move forward even if a third of the attendees that normally show up [are] meeting. Face masks, spread-out meeting room sets, standing-only meetings with portable golf chairs for attendees to social distance, hiring of additional cleaning crews to supplement hotel staff in public space, etc. will be the new normal. Suppliers/vendors need to wake up and realize that until the science community comes up with a COVID-19 fix, face-to-face meetings will not return to their seller’s market peaks of the last 10 years.”



SUPPLIER TRACK

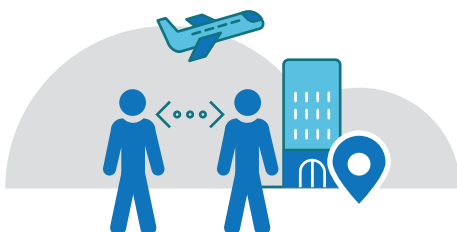
When the pandemic crisis passes, what scenario do you think best describes the recovery of face-to-face meetings for the business events industry in your geographic region?



- 8%** There will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 22%** People will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 63%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 7%** Other

Of the seven percent (32 respondents) who chose other, a majority believe it will be all three of the above choices, or at least a combination of two of them. “Hybrid meetings will become a standard for the next 12-18 months, as we ease back into face-to-face meetings,” one supplier wrote. “But they will come back; today is just a temporary new normal.”

Several said they think the timetable of a meetings revival will be dependent on outside factors, including local, regional, national, and international restrictions on travel and meetings, whether or not a vaccine is developed, what is being communicated based on testing and contraction, and even what event organizers communicate about safety protocols at meetings.



Suppliers Look at the Great Unknowns

ALL THE ABOVE

“This will all be dependent upon the unknown ‘when’ this crisis passes and varying government legislation. It may be three months until groups of more than 50 can convene, or it may be 13 months. With this unknown, all three — pent-up demand, hesitation to travel, smaller local and regional events — will apply. I don’t believe that a full recovery to pre-pandemic business levels will occur for quite a while.”

“Once there is a vaccine for COVID-19, I believe that travel to meetings nationally will come back full swing. I think international will be slower but with no other interruptions, international will come back a year after national.”

“There will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet, but restrictions will not all lift at the same time, with smaller local and regional events seeing the first wave of attendee registrations, whilst large events will need to provide compelling value propositions to obtain desirable sponsor and attendee levels.”

A COMBINATION

“People will want to meet face to face but will want social distancing, extra cleaning and disinfecting, and possibly wearing face masks in order to feel more protected.”

“I believe there will be pent-up demand, but not from everyone. Local/regional events will come back before international, but there will still be a significant percent of people who are hesitant to meet face-to-face, depending on what is being messaged based on testing and contraction.”

“People will be hesitant to travel and they will be hesitant to meet face to face. Smaller events will happen first but they won’t thrive until people feel safe from a biological perspective. At which point the regionality and the travel aspects

will not impact which events return. I do not see pent-up demand as likely for our industry. Any pent-up demand will be tempered by safety/biological concerns.”

DIGITAL or HYBRID

“I feel that after experiencing digital events and the investment being made for virtual connections, many organizations may cut budgets for in-person events to offset revenue losses from 2020.”

“The events industry will learn a lot from being forced into digital: better attendee engagement and networking. Digitized content will be shared, data collected, and digital will become a source of revenue and insights. When we go back to a hybrid experience, we will love being F2F, but we will want to keep the new aspects of connecting that a forced virtual/digital experience taught us. Win/Win all around, especially for attendees who we better bonded to the brand that reached out to them digitally.”

DECLINE IN EVENTS

“I think fewer organizations will be in existence, so while some will book face-to-face events, there will be fewer of them since other organizations will no longer be in existence.”

“People will be hesitant to meet in groups and companies will be assessing the need to participate in meetings, resulting in a potential and substantial decline in face-to-face meetings.”

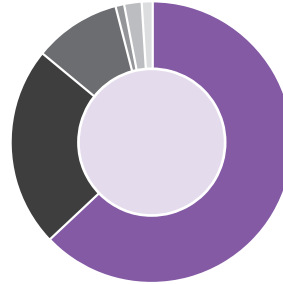


What do you believe will be the overall revenue impact of COVID-19 on your events-related business during the **next three months**?

PLANNER TRACK
SUPPLIER TRACK



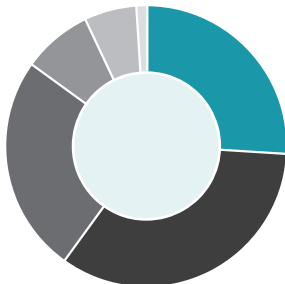
- 43%** Decline greater than 75%
- 24%** Decline 51-75%
- 17%** Decline 25-50%
- 7%** Decline under 25%
- 8%** No change
- 1%** Increase



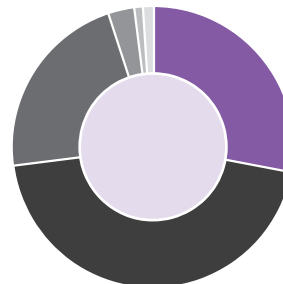
- 64%** Decline greater than 75%
- 23%** Decline 51-75%
- 9%** Decline 25-50%
- 1%** Decline under 25%
- 2%** No change
- 1%** Increase



What do you believe will be the overall revenue impact of COVID-19 on your events-related business for the **rest of 2020**?



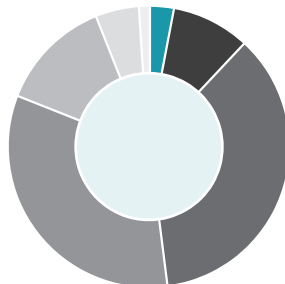
- 26%** Decline greater than 75%
- 34%** Decline 51-75%
- 25%** Decline 25-50%
- 8%** Decline under 25%
- 6%** No change
- 1%** Increase



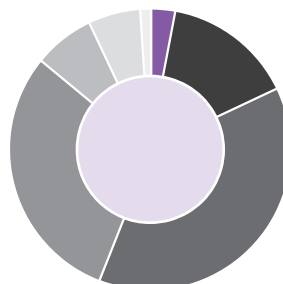
- 28%** Decline greater than 75%
- 44%** Decline 51-75%
- 23%** Decline 25-50%
- 3%** Decline under 25%
- 1%** No change
- 1%** Increase

What do you believe will be the overall revenue impact of COVID-19 on your events-related business for **2021**?

PLANNER TRACK
SUPPLIER TRACK



- 3%** Decline greater than 75%
- 8%** Decline 51-75%
- 36%** Decline 25-50%
- 34%** Decline under 25%
- 13%** No change
- 5%** Increase up to 50%
- 1%** Increase more than 50%

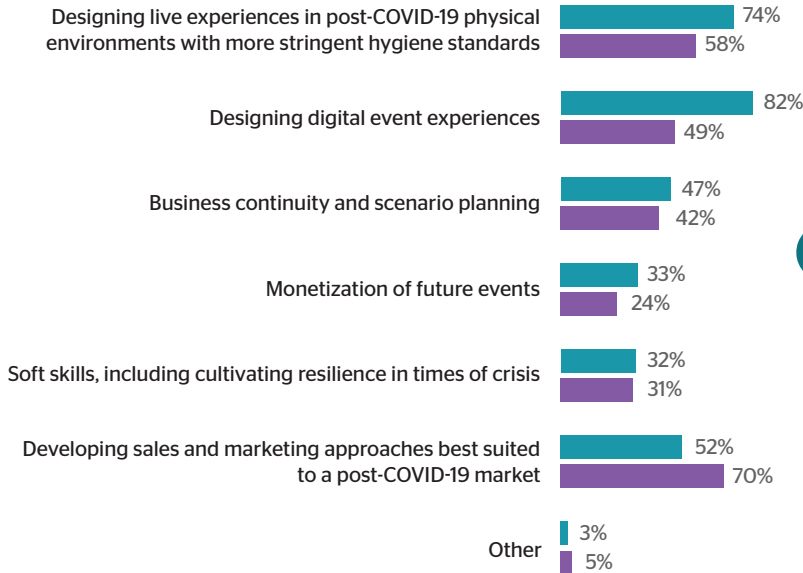


- 3%** Decline greater than 75%
- 15%** Decline 51-75%
- 38%** Decline 25-50%
- 30%** Decline under 25%
- 7%** No change
- 6%** Increase up to 50%
- 1%** Increase more than 50%



In order to prepare professionally for success in the business events industry during the recovery, which new skills do you think you need to pursue/develop?

PLANNER TRACK
SUPPLIER TRACK



PLANNERS SPEAK

Twenty-six planners mentioned pursuing other skill areas that do not fit neatly in buckets. One wrote about the need to be “open to a new era of business events, not better nor worse than before COVID-19, but different.” Three mentioned hybrid meetings.

“Designing live and virtual events to work together instead of competing. Clearly defining the business objectives of each kind of meeting and understanding those business objectives may be different. Creating more digital content presence at live events and highlighting the live events/relationship-building in-person value for those connecting in a virtual environment.”

As organizers think about their own skills, they are focused on how hoteliers will — or should — adjust, too.

“Hotel partners are going to have to re-design their offerings. Everyone was flying high on an incredible 2019 with inflated rates, F&B

pricing, and minimums... If they don’t slide scale these it will only hamper growth. I am not saying to slash prices but flexibility during contracting is key.”

Two respondents brought up a need to think about ROI in the next normal.

“How to demonstrate value to exhibitors if they are participating in a virtual exhibit hall.”

“How to raise funds/make sponsorship packages more resilient and make even more packages tailored to each company with limited tangible options.”

SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

“Other” answers here ran the gamut, but several respondents mentioned integrating “what we have learned.”

“Design events integrating the goodness that we learned by being forced to go virtual-only: better attendee interactivity, sharing digital content, and thought leaders who will build strong online communities around your brand. Also, the attendee will not want to go back to a one-way communications model. We will find that there is unlimited monetization in the digital space ... if only we get beyond our status quo and fear ... and explore. In addition, it is time to integrate the tech stack and share functions, data, and revenue with organizers, tech suppliers, venues — who invest in being smart. It can be the start of a circular economy for the events industry, which will make us stronger, more efficient, and more relevant.”

“Hoping that we all learned our lesson and emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, the truth, and empathy.”

OTHER IDEAS

“How meeting event planning will change in the new COVID-19 landscape specific to 2021 — one person per every six feet?”

“How to communicate that the hotels are clean, safe, and everything will be fine.”

“Hosting hybrid events (both live + virtual components). Leveraging a smaller hub event with distributed virtual watch parties at venues or hosted by user groups.”

“Greater collaboration with industry and community stakeholders within the region.”