

PCMA CONVENE

COVID-19 SURVEY

SURVEY DATES: OCTOBER 19-22

# COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard

Survey and analysis by PCMA *Convene* editors

Charts and design by Point Five

In all of our Dashboard surveys, our goal has been to get our arms around how our industry is handling the pandemic and moving forward. This time around, we decided to get more to the point, so we simply asked respondents: What best describes how you're feeling right now?

The most popular answer among the 400-plus planners who participated, chosen by nearly half, was “doing my best to get by.” That sentiment was shared by 36 percent of the more than 200 supplier respondents, but a more dominant feeling, chosen by 43 percent of them, was anxiety about the future (vs. 40 percent of planners). Yet a larger percentage of planners identified with exhaustion and burnout than suppliers: 26 percent vs. 18 percent. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 39 percent of suppliers said they were hopeful, compared to 33 percent of planners. One supplier said s/he is practicing “patience: This is a marathon, not a sprint.”

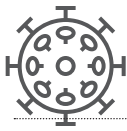
These results prove that we, as an industry, are experiencing the full range of emotions as we go about our days, and that we continue to demonstrate grit in the face of extraordinary disruption and uncertainty.

More than grit, actually. Although only 13 percent of both planner and supplier participants said they were feeling “Inspired and creative,” their responses to another survey question tell us that while they may not be feeling very creative — let's face it, it's difficult to feel inspired in the midst of a crisis — they are innovating nonetheless. Forty percent of suppliers and 38 percent of planners said they are focusing their reskilling efforts on developing new business models, a new response option we added in this month's survey.

We also threw in a new question this month for planners: Are you planning to launch a new digital event that was not previously held face to face? More than half (52 percent) said yes. Their top reasons are to better serve their existing audience (68 percent) and to create opportunities for their community to connect (65 percent). But 54 percent said the new event is an effort to attract new audiences, demonstrating how digital events can extend an organization's reach.

Some changes we're noticing between the September and October survey results:

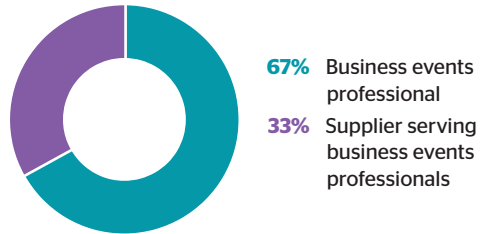
- **Wanting more out of platforms.** Fifty-eight percent of planners said they were satisfied with their tech solutions for digital and hybrid events compared to 69 percent on the last survey. This may indicate that as digital events become the norm, organizers are seeking new ways to engage their audience.
- **More willing to travel.** In the absence of a widely available vaccine or therapeutic treatment, only one-third of planners said they would not travel to a business event in the October survey and 26 percent said they would travel any distance necessary if the program was worth it — vs. 44 percent who wouldn't travel and 21 percent who would go anywhere in the September survey. The same is the case for supplier respondents: Only 18 percent said they would not travel vs. 29 percent in last month's survey — and 37 percent vs. 27 percent last month said they would go any distance if the program was worth it.
- **Coming to terms with financial implications.** When estimating the overall revenue impact of the pandemic on their events-related business in 2021, the percentage of planners who expected a decline of greater than 75 percent nearly doubled from the last survey: 13 percent vs. 7 percent. And 31 percent vs. 28 percent expect to see revenues drop in the 51-75-percent range. As for suppliers, the revenue shortfall is even more acute: 22 percent vs. 8 percent in September predict declines of greater than 75 percent.



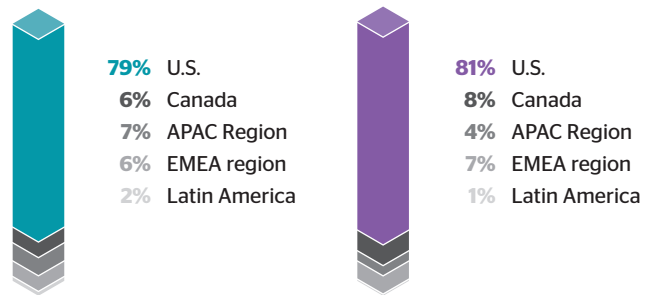
- **More are reaching out for help.** Sixty percent vs. 51 percent of planners last month said they have joined an online community group to help them navigate the crisis. As for why they have sought or are seeking help from the community group, we gave respondents the option to select all answers that applied this time, and idea-sharing took the lead again, checked off by 89 percent of planners. Tech provider recommendations came in second again as the leading objective in joining a community group. Similarly, 69 percent of suppliers vs. 52 percent in September said they have joined an online community group, primarily for idea-sharing, with reskilling as the next most-cited reason for joining.

- **Suppliers are more enthusiastic about in-person events.** Most planners have been able to pivot their events online, but business has dried up for many of their supplier partners, so they are understandably anxious to get back to work. Of the 36 percent of suppliers who said they had attended an in-person event recently, 84 percent (vs. 74 percent last month) said that it was worth all of the precautions and safety measures and they would do it again. Fewer planners (only 19 percent) said they had attended in in-person event but only 65 percent said it was worth it — and 30 percent said that they don't see it as a viable option for most groups.

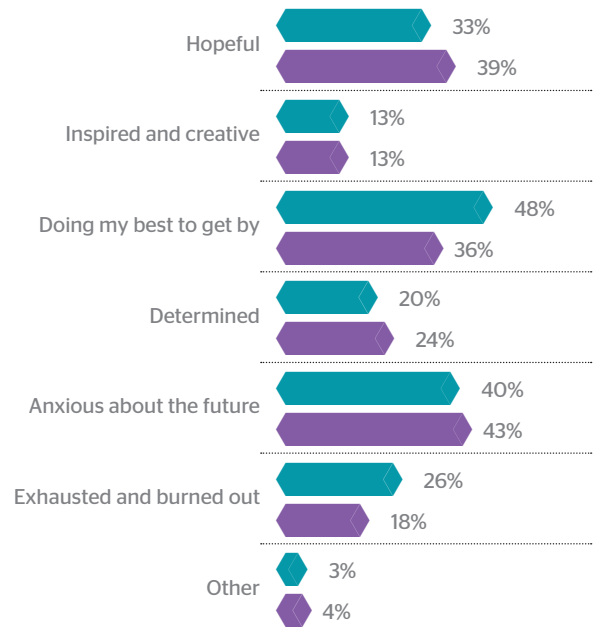
What best describes your role in the business events industry?



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



We appreciate your input in this survey. We'd like to check in with you first. What best describes how you're feeling right now? (Choose all that apply.)



### PLANNERS SPEAK

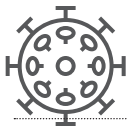
*"Tired of the roller coaster, but love all the people that I have met and collaborated with over the last few months and continue to talk with and cheer on."*

*"Doing my best to get by given all the variables around the world. I'm not anxious, but concerned, about what is around the corner and how it's going to impact much more than the events industry."*

### SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

*"Impatiently patient."*

*"A healthy mix of all of these depending on the week, day, and sometimes even the hour."*



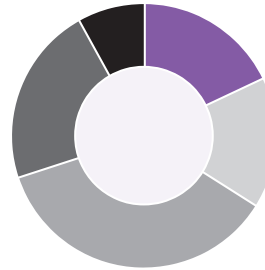
## PLANNER TRACK

## SUPPLIER TRACK

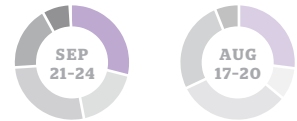
In the absence of a widely available therapeutic treatment or vaccine, what is the farthest distance you would consider traveling to a business event, assuming there are no financial or regulatory restrictions placed on travel?



- 33% I would not travel.
- 14% Within a two-hour flight.
- 26% Any distance necessary if the program was worth it.
- 19% Within a four-hour drive.
- 9% Within a five-hour flight.



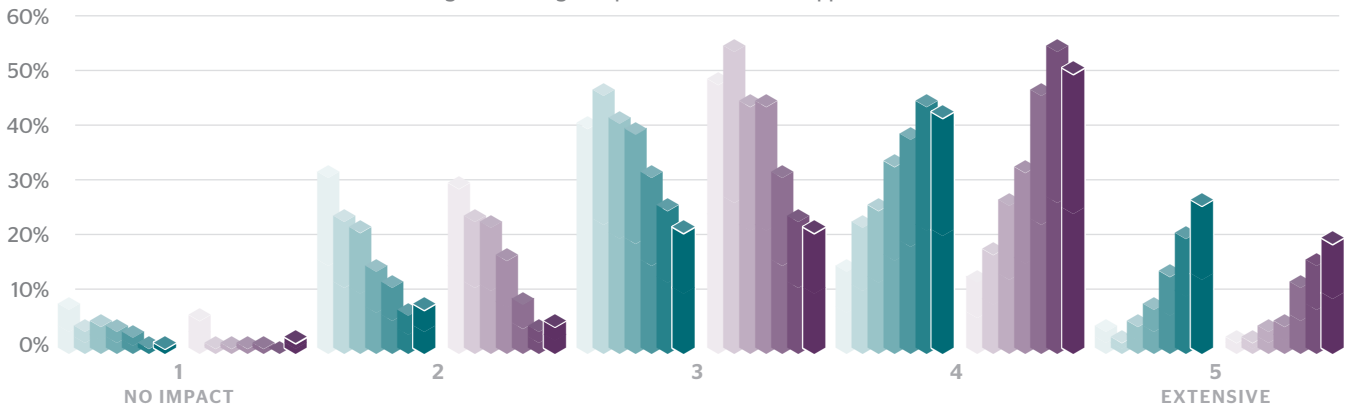
- 18% I would not travel.
- 16% Within a two-hour flight.
- 36% Any distance necessary if the program was worth it.
- 22% Within a four-hour drive.
- 8% Within a five-hour flight.



<b>PLANNER TRACK</b>	APR 20-23	MAY 18-21	JUN 15-18	JUL 13-16	AUG 17-20	SEP 21-24	OCT 19-22
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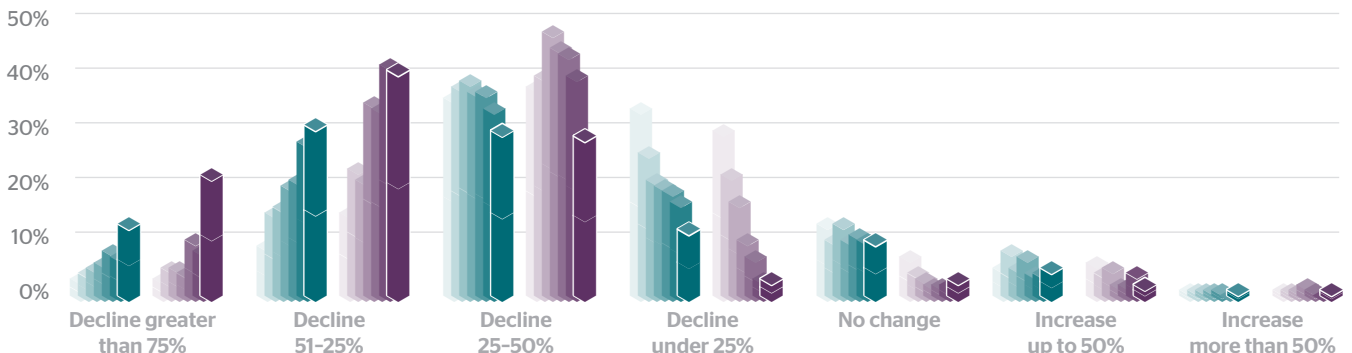
To what extent do you believe the rise in the use of digital-event technology will impact face-to-face event attendance at events **in 2021** on a scale of 1 to 5.

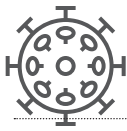
Weighted average for planners is **3.9** and suppliers is **3.8**



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

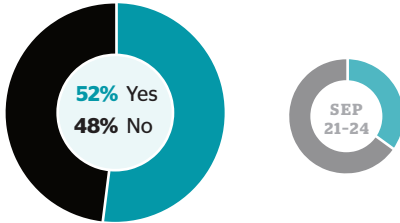
Weighted average for planners is a decline around **25%** and suppliers is a decline around **40%**



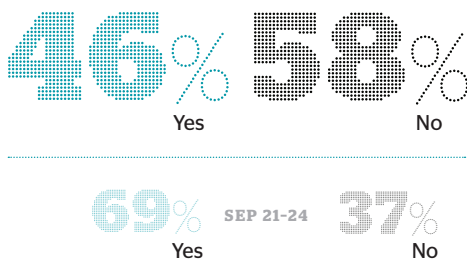


## PLANNER TRACK

Are you planning to launch a new digital event that was not previously held face to face?

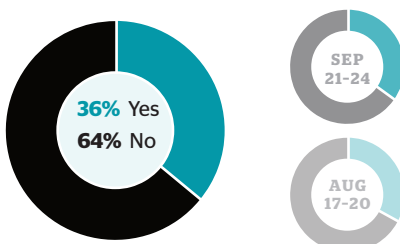


Are you satisfied with your tech solutions for your online events?



Respondents who answered “yes” named Zoom more than any other tool, but GoToWebinar, Cvent, 6 Connex, Webex, and Pheedloop received multiple mentions. The majority of those answering “no” wanted a “one-stop shop” platform, better networking, and less expense.

Are you seeking out broadcasting facilities in your site-selection efforts for future hybrid events?



What are your goals for this new event? (Choose all that apply.)



### PLANNERS SPEAK

*“We’ve had to limit amount of content we can stream/offer on demand due to bandwidth. Adding a new event affords us the opportunity to provide more content throughout the year.”*

*“Keep attendees safe during a pandemic.”*

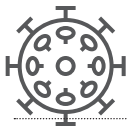
*“Help the board make more rapid decisions in a changing world.”*

*“Internal – increase sales team capabilities for supporting our customers in a remote landscape.”*

*“Maintain attendees and revenue”*

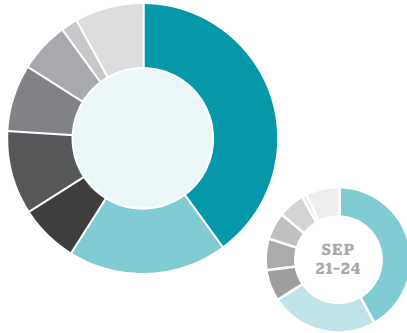
*“Training”*





## PLANNER TRACK

What is your biggest financial challenge with regard to planning a business event **in 2021**?  
(Please choose one.)



- 40%** Budgeting/pricing for a hybrid (in-person + digital) events
- 19%** How to budget in terms of face-to-face attendance expectations
- 7%** Expenses related to enhanced hygiene and sanitary standards at a face-to-face event
- 10%** What to charge digital participants
- 8%** What to charge digital event exhibitors/sponsors
- 6%** Expenses related to event marketing and communications in a post COVID-19 world
- 2%** Deciding on registration pricing for face-to-face participants
- 8%** Other

## PLANNERS SPEAK

*“We do not charge for our events, so we are seeing real savings on flight, accommodation and F&B - our challenge regarding finances is finding digital solutions that are easy and affordable. Most of the products seem to be priced as one-off.”*

*“How to budget for hybrid, yet also budget for plan B in case we have to go fully virtual.”*

*“Expenses due to pivoting from face-to-face/hybrid to fully virtual a short amount of time before event dates.”*

*“As a virtual exhibit manager, what to spend on official sponsorships vs. individual marketing campaigns to reach potential virtual exhibit visitors.”*

*“The leap of faith in investing in the tech and resources to plan and host not fully knowing if attendees will come and sponsors and exhibitors will participate.”*

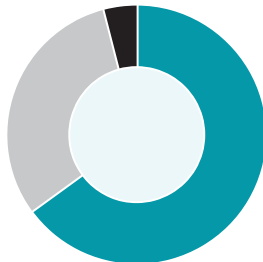
*“Confirmation that members are ready for face-to-face meetings and when [they will be ready].”*

## PLANNER TRACK

Have you attended a face-to-face event in the last few months requiring the use of PPE and other safety protocols? If you answered “yes,” please choose the statement that best describes your experience.

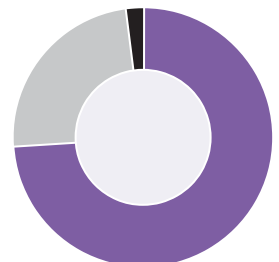
**19%** Yes

- 65%** It was worth all the precautions and safety measures – I would do it again.
- 30%** It was okay, but I don't see this as a viable option for most groups.
- 5%** Not at all enjoyable – I wouldn't do it again.



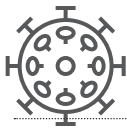
**36%** Yes

- 82%** It was worth all the precautions and safety measures – I would do it again.
- 18%** It was okay, but I don't see this as a viable option for most groups.
- 0%** Not at all enjoyable – I wouldn't do it again.



**81%** No

**64%** No



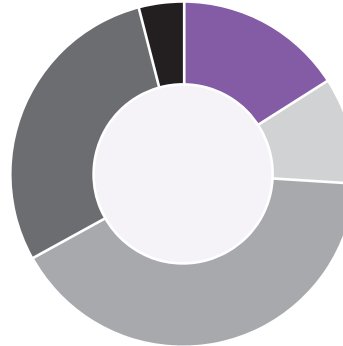
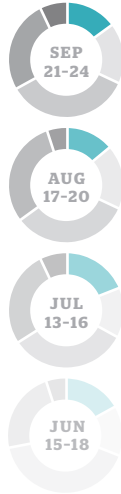
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## SUPPLIER TRACK

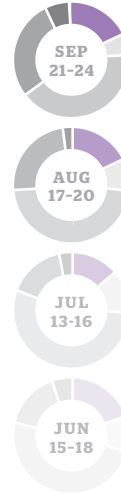
What scenario do you think best describes the recovery of face-to-face meetings for the business events industry in your geographic region?\*



- 18%** There will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 28%** People will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 28%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 24%** Small in-person events will be hybrid, with a digital version for a larger audience.
- 2%** Other



- 16%** There will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 10%** People will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 41%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 29%** Small in-person events will be hybrid, with a digital version for a larger audience.
- 4%** Other



\* This month participants could choose more than one response.

### PLANNERS SPEAK

*“Our association serves university and college staff, and funding has been cut dramatically for them, which has greatly reduced their budgets to travel to events. Digital is going to be the only option for awhile.”*

*“We draw mainly from academia. After surveying our audience, it’s clear they will not travel until there is widespread use of a vaccine. This is both personal and institutional – institutions aren’t supporting travel because of cost and safety. At this point, I don’t see this audience returning until fall of 2021 at the earliest, but I fear it won’t be until 2022. So then, my big concern is not about holding events safely in person – it’s clear that can be done (though at a significant cost). It’s that we can’t get people to travel to events.”*

*“Hotel blocks will be significantly smaller as attendees choose alternatives like private homes or campers/RVs.”*

*“Recovery is going to be long and drawn out, corporate financial restraints will limit ability to travel extensively which will impact live events moving forward.”*

*“Small events will happen without hybrid, but larger events will have a hybrid program until a vaccine is available.”*

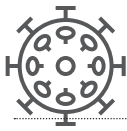
*“I’m not sure. Because I specifically work in university admissions with recruitment-based events locally and around the nation, it’s very difficult to know what people want.”*

### SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

*“There will be pent-up demand, but the state of the country in tackling COVID-19 and the state of the economy will drive how large or small the recovery will be. If large-scale events are able to stage, they will be business as usual with a larger virtual presence but not a large virtual focus.”*

*“Nothing replaces face to face. Human interaction and touch are one of the top needs of human beings. Fear from the media sensationalizing COVID-19 will impact hesitancy. The biggest obstacles right now are the various government restrictions. Those who are comfortable will meet in person and those who aren’t will participate in digital opportunity.”*

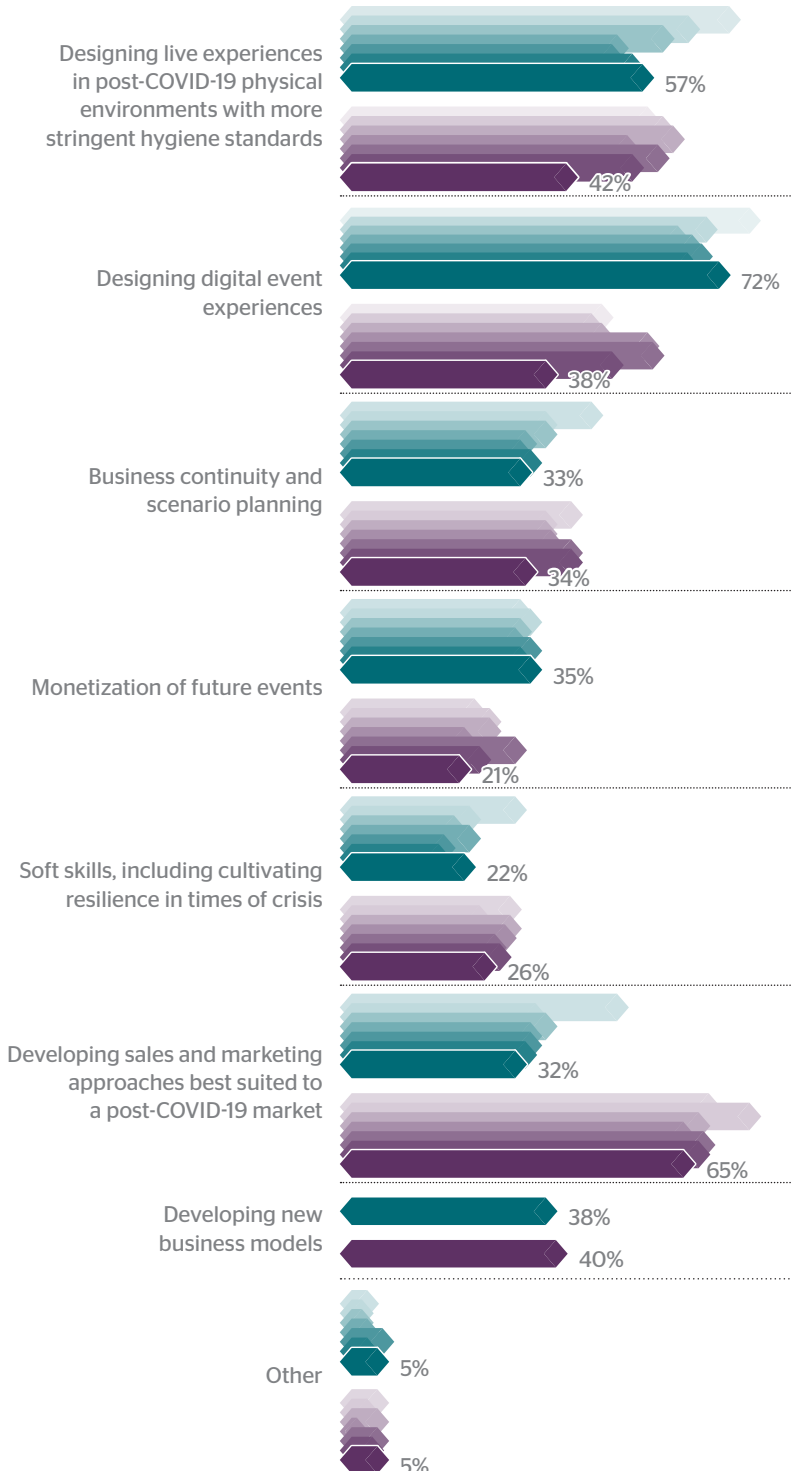
*“We sell consulting services to advise about these trends based on the specific industries our clients are in. Not all industry segments will bounce back, or at all.”*



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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? (Choose all that apply.)



### PLANNERS SPEAK

*"I do not need to create or learn a new skill to continue being successful."*

*"Hybrid events — best practices, contract clauses, what's different from live events, AV, internet, and electrical needs"*

*"Designing events with both in-person and digital components — we have never done that. We were always in-person pre-COVID-19 and now are all virtual during COVID."*

### SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

*"We are looking to see if we can buy competitors or make new investments that can secure us a new position in the market."*

*"It is not about hygiene per first option above. It is about controlled access and everyone confirming their current health status prior to entry. If everyone is healthy, getting together poses minimal risk."*

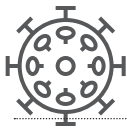
*"New business model as a vendor that only has services for in-person meetings. Need clients to come to table with shared risk."*

*"Reimagine the sponsor/exhibitor experience."*

*"Reduce overhead, expenses, and labor. Instead of offering all production services, narrow down to one thing really well."*

*"Assisting with community resilience."*





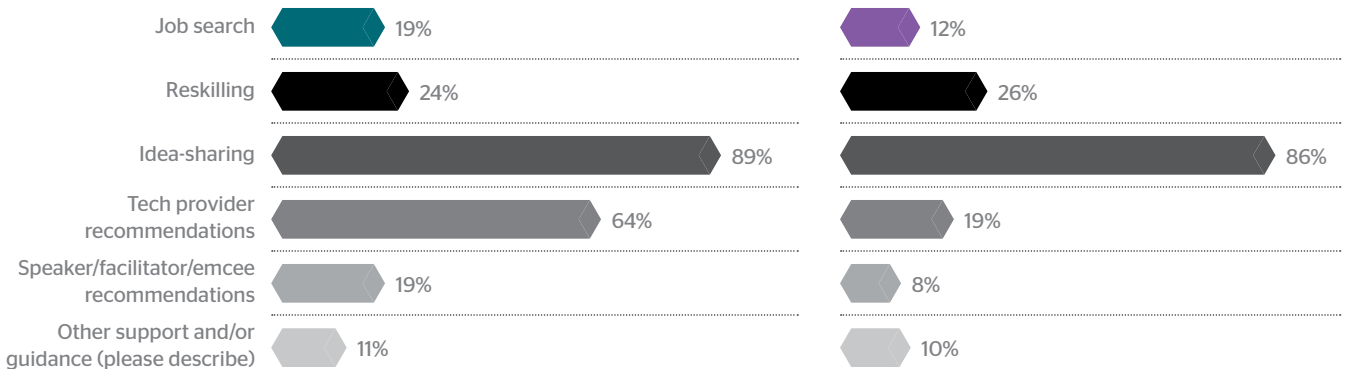
## PLANNER TRACK

## SUPPLIER TRACK

Have you joined any online community groups to help you navigate the crisis?



In what areas are you looking for help from the community group? (Choose all that apply.)



### PLANNERS SPEAK

*“How to prove ROI to exhibitors and offer valuable networking opportunities to attendees.”*

*“Case-study examples of success or failure, platform feedback, tips and tricks.”*

### SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

*“Support is very important to those of us in the hotel and DMC industries.”*

*“Laughter and encouragement, thoughts”*

On what channel or platform does the community group you participate in meet? (Choose all that apply.)

