

COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard

Survey and analysis by PCMA *Convene* editors

Charts and design by Point Five

When we wrapped up the December Recovery Dashboard survey results, we noticed that both planners and suppliers reported feeling significantly more hopeful than in November. We attributed that to the timing of the survey, which went out the same week that the first wave of vaccines was being given to health-care workers.

Distribution of the vaccine in the weeks that followed that initial rollout was less promising and anything but smooth — vaccine shortages around the world, confusion around distribution plans that vary state by state in the U.S., and challenges with registration systems. Those frustrating realities dampened the hopes of participants — 491 planners and 219 suppliers — in our latest survey, conducted in late January. In December, 66 percent of planners said that news about vaccines had changed their thinking about what might be possible; January's headlines caused it to drop to 60 percent. Supplier responses took more of a dip: 74 percent in December vs. 63 percent in January.

There were 6 percent fewer planners in January who described feeling hopeful — 48 percent vs. 54 percent in December. And slightly more planners — 35 percent vs. 31 percent in December — reported feeling anxious about the future.

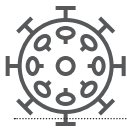
Writing, “Frustrated by the slow recovery and rollout of the vaccine,” one supplier spoke for many. Yet, suppliers seemed to be faring better mentally in January than their planner colleagues — and feeling better than in December. Seven percent fewer suppliers this time around were feeling anxious (30 percent vs. 37 percent) and only 13 percent said they were exhausted and burned out, compared to 24 percent who said that in December. Additionally, 16 percent of suppliers vs. 10 percent in the previous survey said they were feeling inspired and creative; 27 percent vs. 20 percent in December described their frame of mind as “determined.”

That more resolute attitude could be interpreted as being behind how they were shifting their reskilling efforts: A slightly larger percentage of suppliers said they are working on new business models and scenario planning than in the previous month's survey. And perhaps recognizing that we have a long road ahead of us before face-to-face events resume in full force, fewer are focused on designing live experiences — 35 percent in January vs. 44 percent in December.

F2F

At the same time, fewer suppliers envision hybrid events as the most likely recovery scenario — and 21 percent in January vs. 16 percent at the end of 2020 anticipate there will be a pent-up demand for groups to meet in person.

Suppliers are also more enthusiastic about their own recent experiences meeting face-to-face. Around one-third of participants said they had participated in a recent in-person event, but 77 percent in January said it was worth all of the precautions and safety measures, up from 65 percent in December. Only 21 percent (vs. 33 percent) rated their experience as only “okay” and didn't see it appealing to groups. And yet, even with more than three quarters giving that face-to-face event a thumbs-up, that didn't translate to a greater willingness to travel to an event — slightly more are unwilling to travel at all, and a lower percentage said they would go any distance if the program seemed worth it.



PCMA CONVENE

COVID-19 SURVEY

SURVEY DATES: JANUARY 25-28, 2021

For their part, planners also are more unwilling to travel for an event than in December. And while a greater percentage attended an in-person event recently (23 percent vs. 18 percent in December), 63 percent (vs. 65 percent in December) said it was worth all the safety measures and more than one-third — a few percentage points more than the previous survey — don't see it as an option for groups.

Fewer planners said they are launching an all-new digital event in 2021 than when we asked that question in December (45 percent vs. 51 percent), but more are seeking broadcast facilities for future hybrid events (39 percent vs. 34 percent).

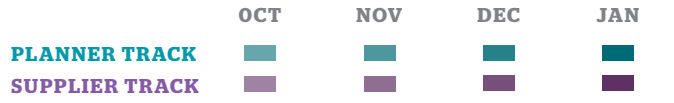
Financial Realities

As the pandemic rages on, its economic impact on suppliers continues to grow — 22 percent of suppliers in January predicted revenue declines of greater than 75 percent in 2021 vs. 12 percent in December.

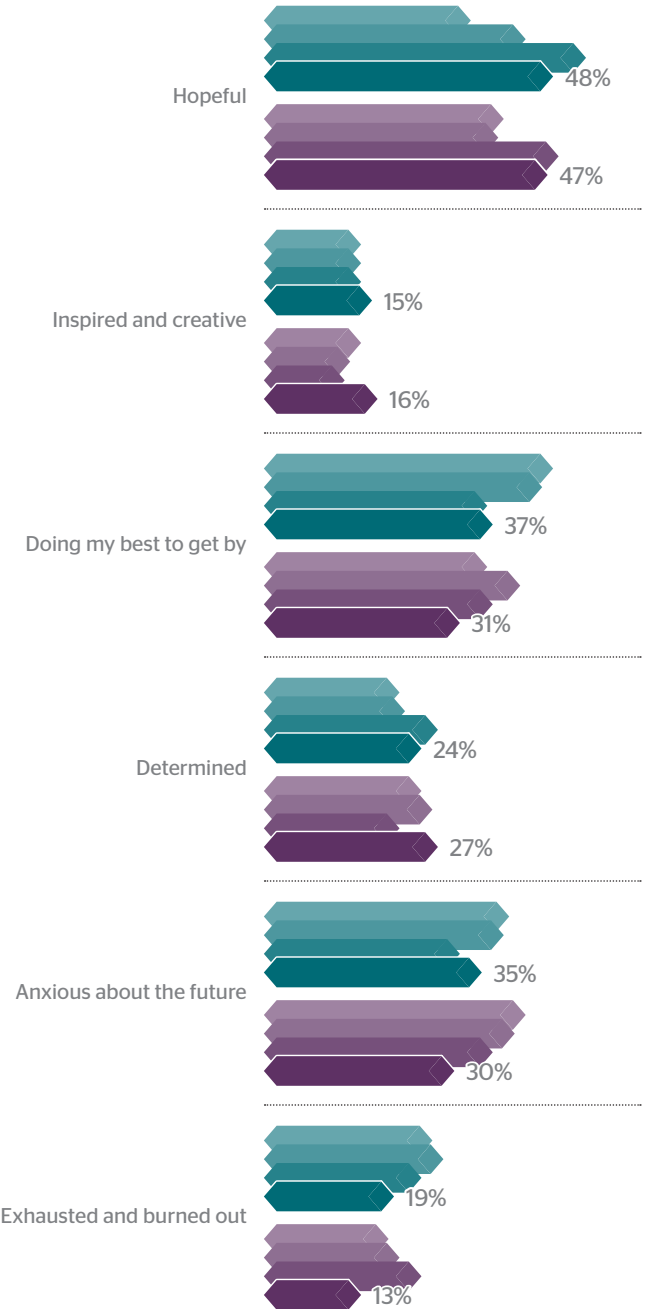
Planners who are budgeting for a hybrid event are finding the costs more difficult to justify: 44 percent said it was their top challenge in January vs. 37 percent in December. As one planner said, the issue is trying to design hybrid events “that are not double the expense and effort. Otherwise, live events won't happen until the pandemic is over and digital will be a piece of the live event, but not the same production quality and effort of an all-digital event. Unless vendors can come up with a way to make that affordable, the large in-person meetings will continue to languish as it's not commercially feasible to do both well right now.”

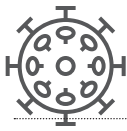
Another planner cited attrition penalties when face-to-face meetings resume — October 2021 at the earliest — as being problematic, “plus costs involved with stricter hygiene/safety protocols needed for in person meetings.” Concerns about similar “incremental COVID expenses” were shared by another planner — “in labor, exhibit space, meeting room, catering, GSC, sanitation, etc., to hold a safe, socially distanced meeting.”

One planner summed up the way forward succinctly: “Vaccines will dictate recovery. Until readily available universally, event business will be restricted. Even with facilities well-prepared on all aspects of safety, organizations will not be comfortable allowing members to travel until the vaccine process is complete.”

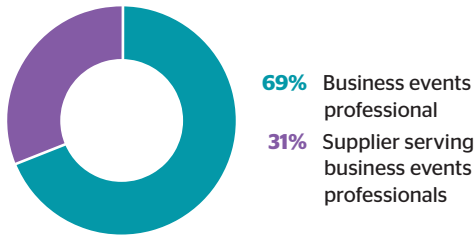


We appreciate your input in this survey. We'd like to check in with you first. What best describes how you're feeling right now? (Choose all that apply.)

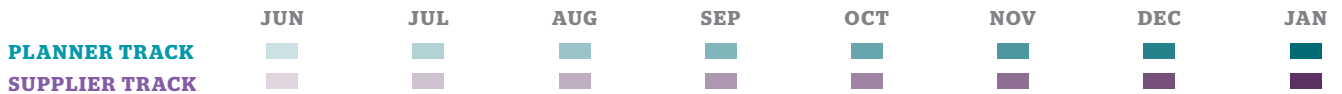
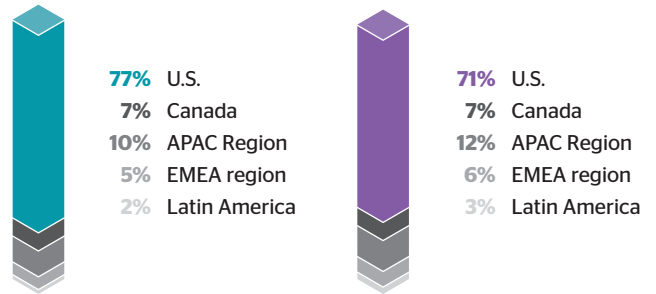




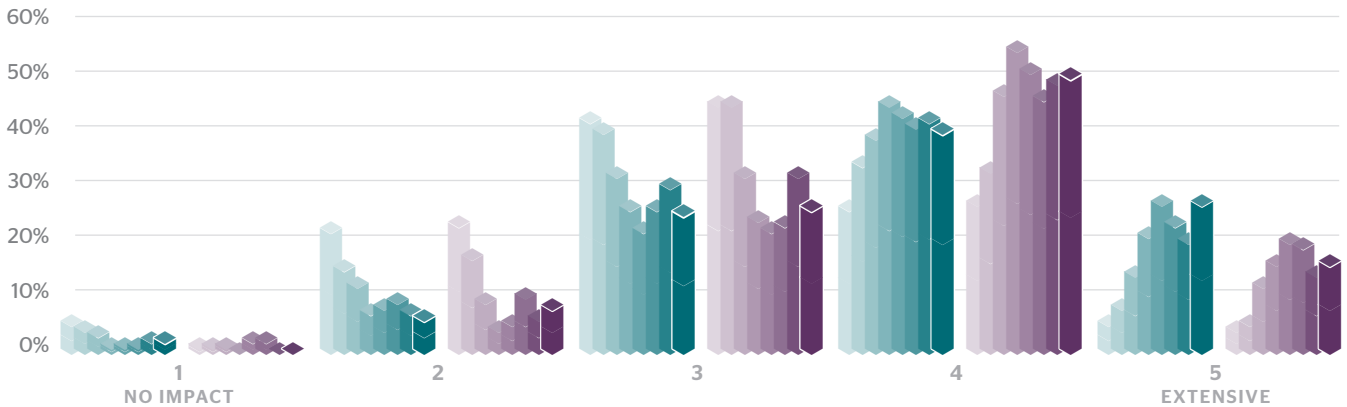
What best describes your role in the business events industry?



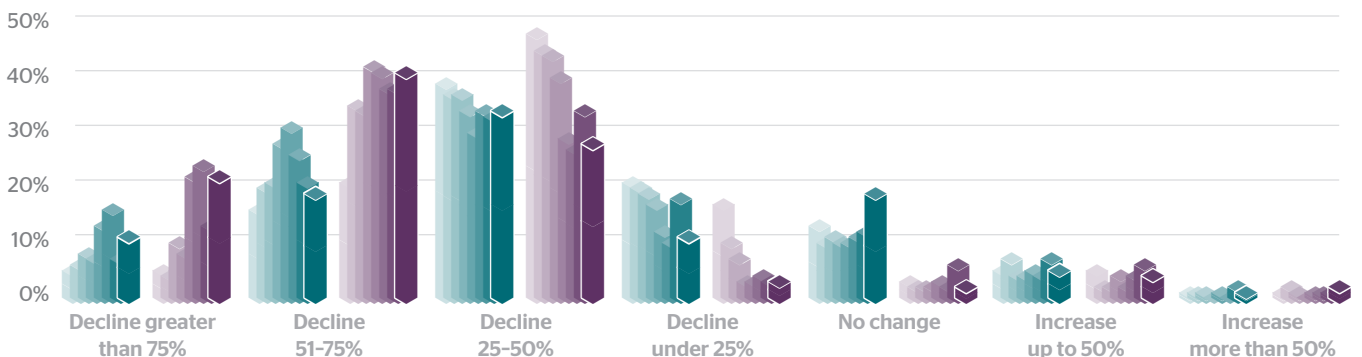
What region best represents where you do the majority of your business?

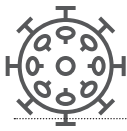


To what extent do you believe the rise in the use of digital-event technology will impact face-to-face event attendance at events **in 2021** on a scale of 1 to 5.



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





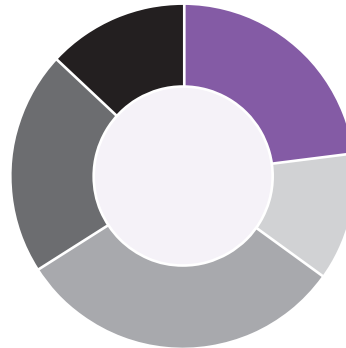
PLANNER TRACK

SUPPLIER TRACK

During the period of time it takes before the COVID-19 vaccine is widely distributed, what is the farthest distance from your home you would consider traveling to a business event, assuming there are no financial or regulatory restrictions placed on travel?



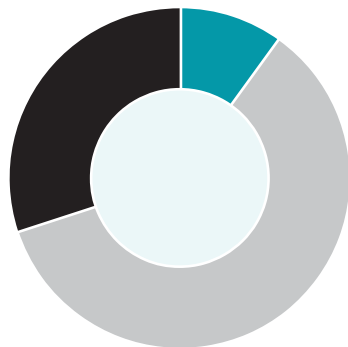
- 44%** I would not travel.
- 7%** Within a two-hour flight.
- 25%** Any distance necessary if the program was worth it.
- 16%** Within a four-hour drive.
- 8%** Within a five-hour flight.



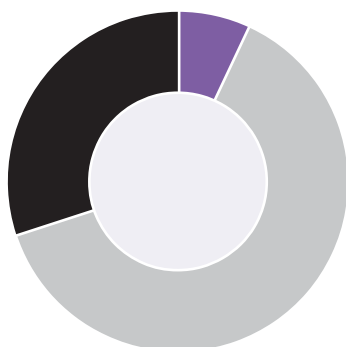
- 23%** I would not travel.
- 12%** Within a two-hour flight.
- 31%** Any distance necessary if the program was worth it.
- 21%** Within a four-hour drive.
- 13%** Within a five-hour flight.



Has the initial rollout of COVID-19 vaccines changed your plans for 2021?

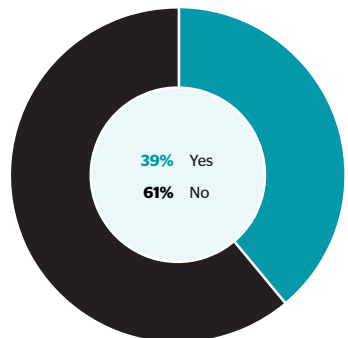


- 10%** Yes, I reserved space or initiated booking space as a result of the news.
- 60%** No action, but it changed my thinking about what might be possible.
- 30%** No, it did not change my plans for 2021.

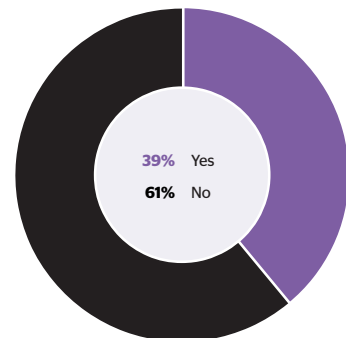


- 7%** Yes, I reserved space or initiated booking space as a result of the news.
- 63%** No action, but it changed my thinking about what might be possible.
- 30%** No, it did not change my plans for 2021.

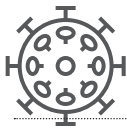
Once the vaccine is widely available, will you require attendees to show proof of vaccination in order to participate in your face-to-face event?



- 39%** Yes
- 61%** No



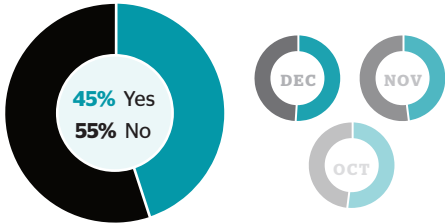
- 39%** Yes
- 61%** No



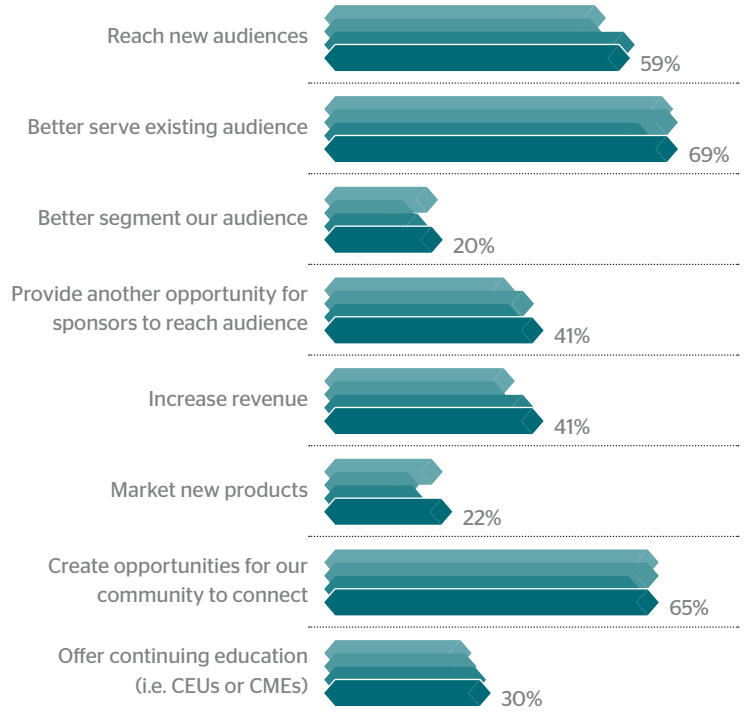
PLANNER TRACK

OCT ■ NOV ■ DEC ■ JAN ■

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



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



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



PLANNERS SPEAK

Planners who answered “no” said:

“I want a ‘plug-and-play’ option that can be facilitated by in-house staff as a simple ‘livestream’ without a bunch of bells and whistles for our smaller meetings (not our annual conference).”

“Better performance for both audience, delegates, and sponsors.”

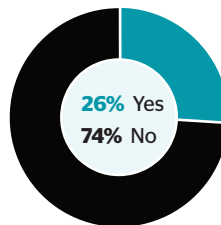
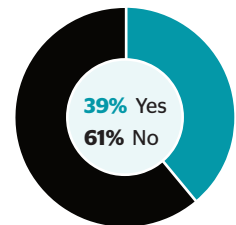
“Consistency in delivering same experience for a 50-person group as a 500-person group.”

“One platform that can offer multiple sessions, virtual booths, live chat, etc.”

“Not sure, but everyone is on a digital burnout. Road warriors will always be road warriors. There is no such thing a digital event warrior. Engagement.”

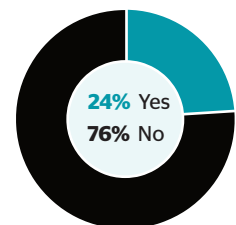
“Looking for a platform with an app interface that seamlessly integrates both virtual and in-person attendees.”

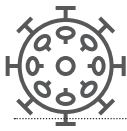
Are you seeking out broadcasting facilities in your site-selection efforts for future hybrid events?



Assuming you’re attracting a more global audience to your events, are you planning on offering translation services?

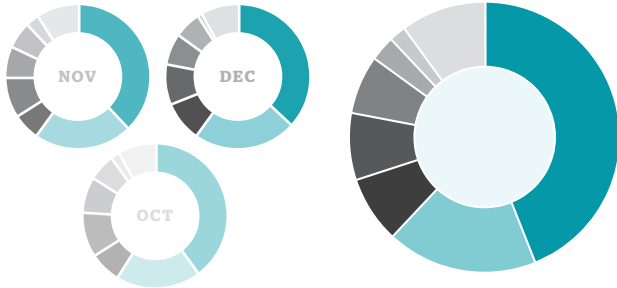
Do you offer transcriptions of your recorded online sessions?





PLANNER TRACK

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



- 44%** Budgeting/pricing for a hybrid (in-person + digital) events
- 18%** How to budget in terms of face-to-face attendance expectations
- 8%** Expenses related to enhanced hygiene and sanitary standards at a face-to-face event
- 8%** What to charge digital participants
- 7%** What to charge digital event exhibitors/sponsors
- 3%** Expenses related to event marketing and communications in a post COVID-19 world
- 2%** Deciding on registration pricing for face-to-face participants
- 10%** Other

PLANNERS SPEAK

“Attrition penalties when F2F Meetings resume, for us. We expect October 2021 at the earliest plus costs involved with stricter hygiene/safety protocols needed for in person meetings.”

“Incremental COVID expenses in labor, exhibit space, meeting room, catering, GSC, sanitation, etc to hold a ‘safe, socially distanced’ meeting.”

“Renegotiating the hotel contract in respect to the in-person event. Our host property tells us it is too early for renegotiations (event is October 2021). There is no scenario where we will get the in-person attendance we contracted for years ago.”

“Whether to proceed in hybrid format or maintain virtual until 2022.”

“Finding vendors, venues and other suppliers that are open and still in business.”

“Our event is paid for by sponsors and exhibitors... I’m worried I won’t have the number of exhibit booths available that I need to make the event pencil out. Between hesitancy and distance protocols I fear it will be impossible.”

“Creating value for all stakeholders without deeply discounting all assets from the exhibitor/sponsor side that funds most of the events.”

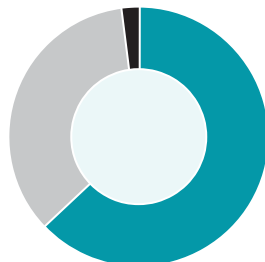
PLANNER TRACK

SUPPLIER 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.

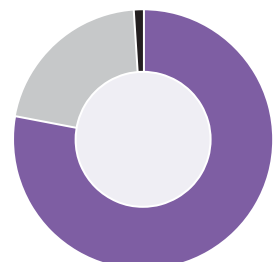
23% Yes

- 63%** It was worth all the precautions and safety measures – I would do it again.
- 35%** It was okay, but I don’t see this as a viable option for most groups.
- 2%** Not at all enjoyable – I wouldn’t do it again.



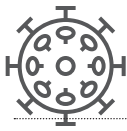
33% Yes

- 78%** It was worth all the precautions and safety measures – I would do it again.
- 21%** It was okay, but I don’t see this as a viable option for most groups.
- 1%** Not at all enjoyable – I wouldn’t do it again.



77% No

67% No



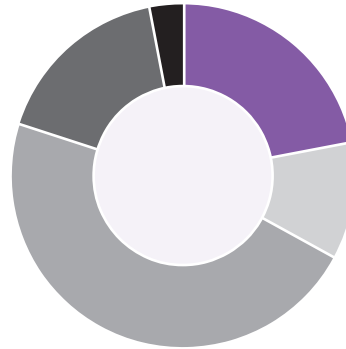
PLANNER TRACK

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?*



- 22%** There is/will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 22%** People are/will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 26%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 24%** Small in-person events are/will be hybrid, with a digital version for a larger audience.
- 6%** Other



- 22%** There is/will be pent-up demand for all groups to meet face-to-face.
- 11%** People are/will be hesitant to travel to meet face-to-face.
- 47%** Smaller local and regional events will thrive before national and international groups gather.
- 17%** Small in-person events are/will be hybrid, with a digital version for a larger audience.
- 3%** Other



* In October, participants could choose more than one response.

PLANNERS SPEAK

“There will be an interest to meet face to face when it is safe to do so. Attendees and speakers may look to attend virtually to save on travel costs. I feel that hybrid is here to stay as it offers so many options for client, attendees, speakers, stakeholders.”

“Combination of all of the above. We have recently conducted a survey of our members and we will run a main hub for our convention with satellite events held in various locations in Australia and New Zealand to counter those who are unable to travel due to COVID.”

“It’s going to take time and the hybrid solutions, while creative, are not providing the same value. I appreciate what the industry is doing to try and keep things going, but it’s not the same and we need to face that. We will be back to normal eventually, but it will be different. Hybrid is also very expensive. It’s like holding two events (one in-person and one virtual) at the same time. I appreciate optimism, but we also need to get real and stop forcing some things that simply do not work until COVID is more under control or — hopefully — over.”

“Governments will continue to prevent us from traveling and meeting for some time. People will lose confidence in the measures taken to reduce the effect of the pandemic and, as a result, will become wary and introverted. Back-to-normal is never going to happen — a new normal will evolve over the next three to five years.”

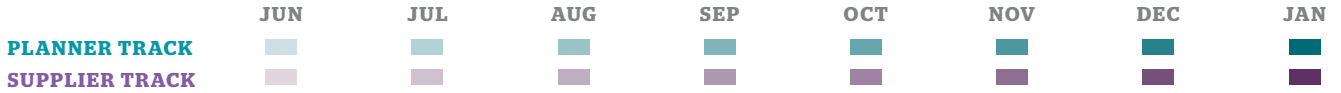
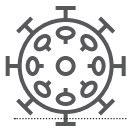
“We need to establish open access borders between select countries who are considered safe before we can tackle pure international groups. However, the demand is there.”

SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

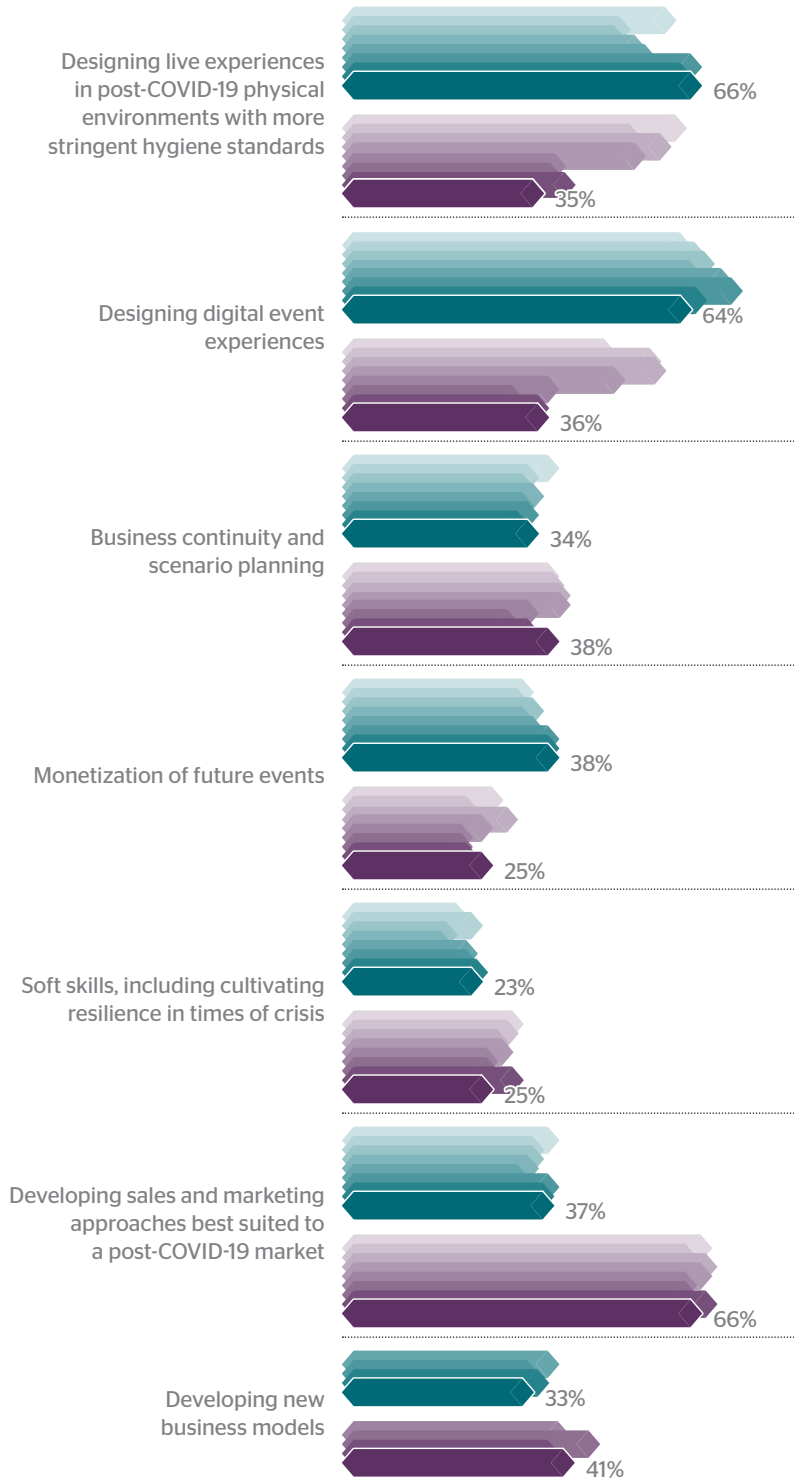
“We need a consistent national strategy for border openings in Australia and then travel bubbles with selected partners.”

“There is definitely a hybrid component, but I do feel once the vaccine is rolled out, pent-up demand will create a flurry of face-to-face gatherings.”

“Discussion with clients, they will not be meeting until 2022, they are afraid to travel, they will not be back in offices until this summer.”



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

"How to pivot your career in a new direction."

"Designing hybrid experiences. It seems the audiovisual component is still struggling."

"Offering hybrid events that don't break the bank by having to invest a lot more extra money into the digital option/creating a digital option that can be facilitated by in-house staff."

"Designing more experiential post-pandemic in-person events."

"Flexibility to plan for in-person events but being able to pivot to virtual, and vice versa."

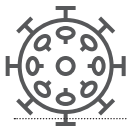
SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

"Adapting to new and emerging public health requirements and instituting confidence to our customers that the events industry is safe to participate in."

"Cashflow management."

"Crystal ball reading."

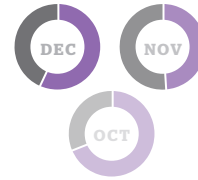
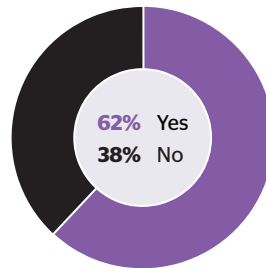
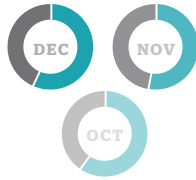
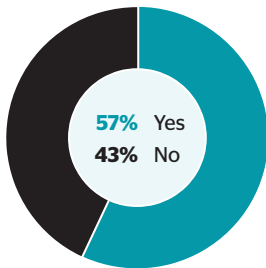




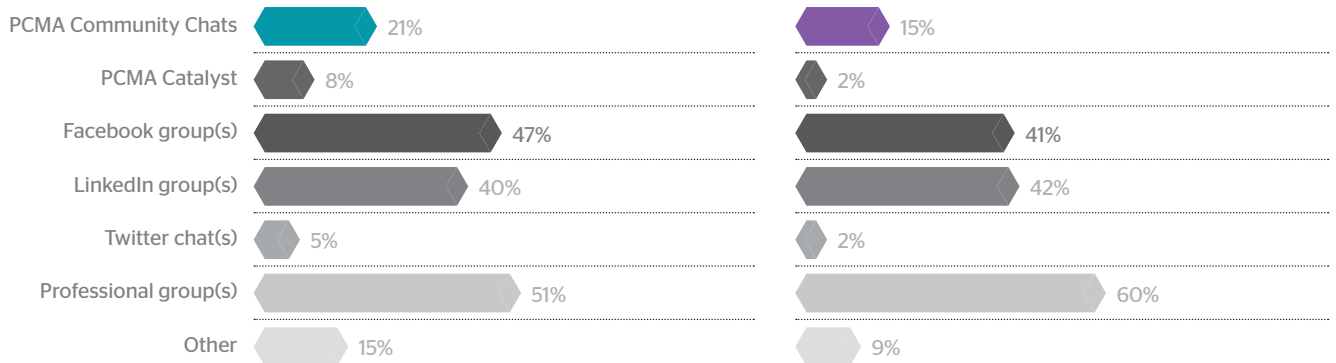
PLANNER TRACK

SUPPLIER TRACK

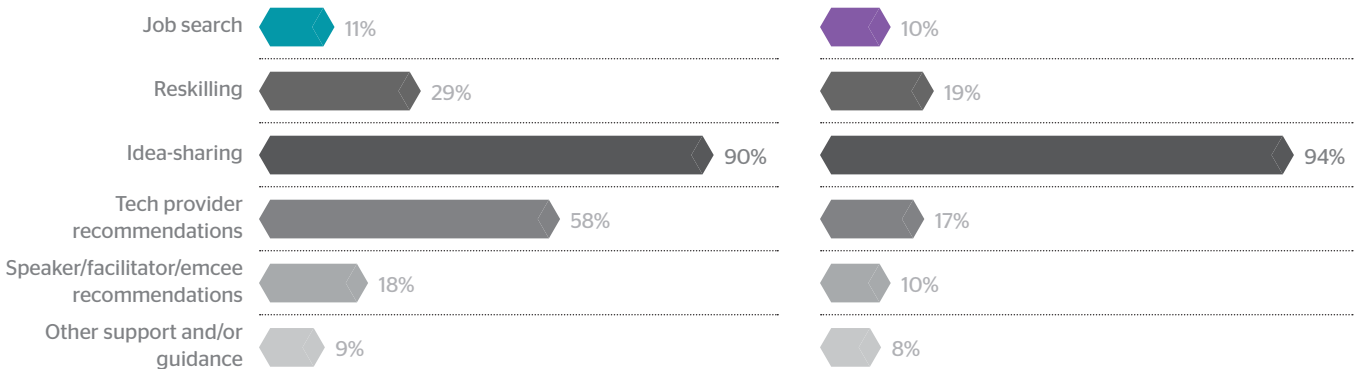
Have you joined any online community groups to help you navigate the crisis?



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



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



PLANNERS SPEAK

“Event cancellation insurance, contracts, force majeure, socially distanced floor plans & meeting space, etc.”

“Personal growth/emotional support (mind/body, resilience) to get through these trying times, business planning.”

SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

“Collaboration with pan industry peers regarding federal recovery measures.”

“Most updated governmental regulations.”