COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard

Survey and analysis by PCMA *Convene* editors
Charts and design by Point Five

Last week, at the same time that more than 400 event professional respondents were checking off boxes and typing in comments for our latest COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard survey, *The New York Times* published an article by bestselling author and Wharton professor of management and psychology, Adam Grant. His opinion piece, "There's a Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing," may help shed light on this month's responses.

According to Grant, languishing is a sense of stagnation. "We just feel somewhat joyless and aimless. ... It feels like you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield," Grant writes, adding that he thinks languishing will be "the dominant emotion of 2021."

The pandemic, he writes, has dragged on, and our initial state of anguish "has given way to a chronic condition of languish." We don't operate at our full capacity — our motivation is dulled and our ability to focus disrupted.

Perhaps Grant would attribute differences in some of the responses of 260 planners and 146 suppliers in this month's survey vs. last month to all of us experiencing that sense of languish. In the month between the two surveys, vaccinations in the U.S. (where the majority of respondents live) have averaged around 3 million shots per day — certainly our best chance of recovery. Yet, 7 percent fewer planner respondents reported feeling hopeful (50 percent vs. 57 percent) compared to last month, and fewer said they were feeling inspired and creative. More said they were doing their best to get by. Suppliers seemed to indicate a greater need to dip into their reservoirs of resiliency: 34 percent compared to 27 percent last month said they were feeling determined, and 4 percent more said they were feeling anxious.

In terms of reskilling, while all signs point to a surge in leisure travel, significantly fewer suppliers and planners said that they are focusing their efforts on designing live experiences in post-COVID-19 physical environments compared to last month: only 26 percent vs. 46 percent of suppliers and 65 percent vs. 71 percent of planners. This, of course, could be due to a recognition that event venues have made safety protocols a top priority and so that's not something non-venue operators are concerned about mastering. It could also indicate a continuing state of uncertainty about how events will play out this year. Slightly more planners are focusing their reskilling efforts on digital experiences and monetization of future events vs. last month and more suppliers said they are working on developing new business models (51 percent vs. 43 percent last month) and business continuity and scenario planning.

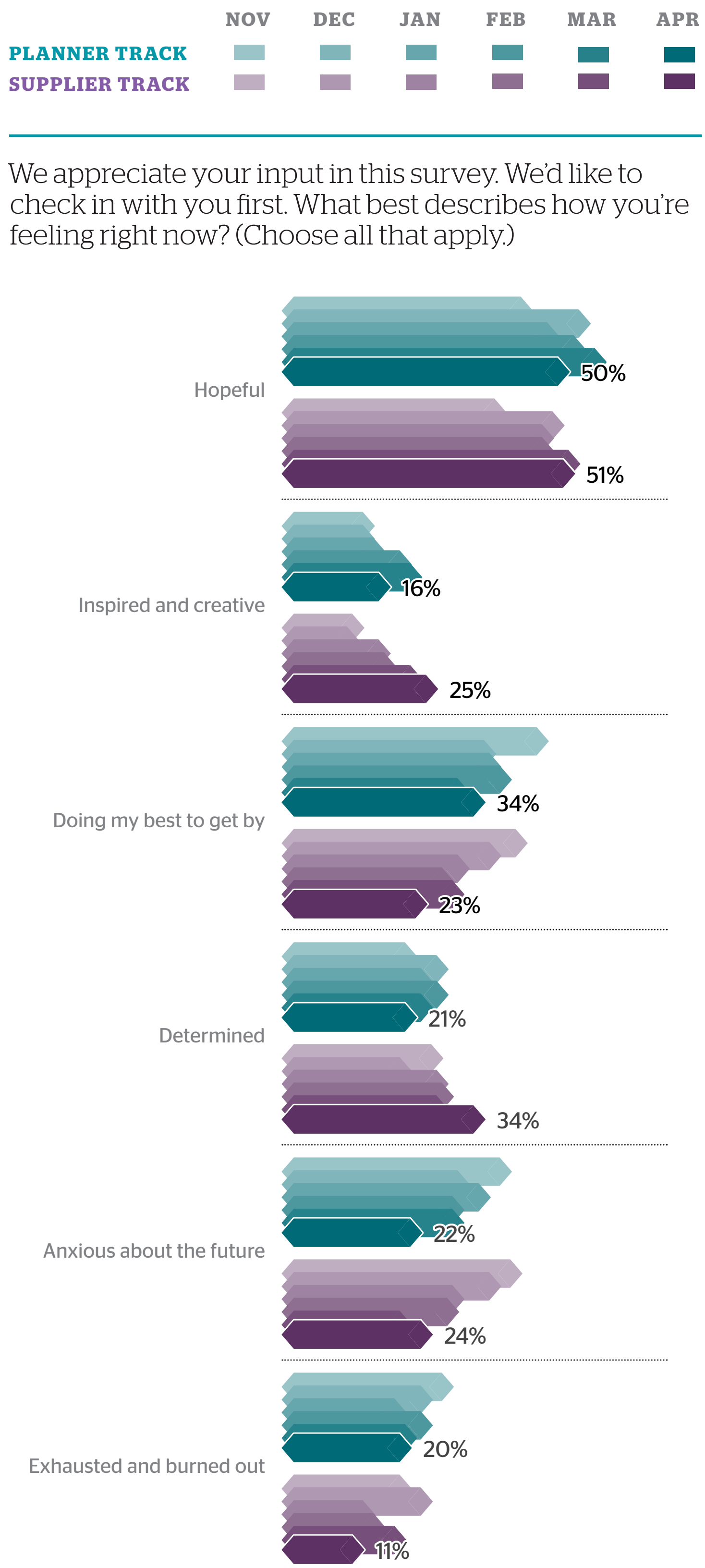
This month, instead of asking whether organizers were planning hybrid events in 2021, we spelled out three variations: in-person only, online only, and digital plus in-person. Online-only was selected by the largest percentage — 67 percent — with nearly half choosing hybrid and 36 percent planning a fully in-person event. A larger percentage (19 percent vs. 14 percent last month) said their in-person event would likely take place in the second quarter; a smaller percentage (40 percent vs. 50 percent last month) selected Q3.

Forty-five percent of planners said they are planning to do networking differently to encourage interaction at their in-person or hybrid event, with many saying that they are planning to find ways for the in-person and online audiences to connect.

Networking is just one of the many aspects of 2021 events requiring rethinking. In order to chart a path forward, planners and organizers are taking many contradictory factors — like a pent-up demand to meet in person on one hand and a hesitancy to travel on the other — into account. One planner summed up the conflicts this way: “Many of our speakers, attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors are under employer travel bans for most of 2021, so determining the financial viability of even attempting to move forward with a smaller in-person event — when hotels are unwilling to allow you to rebook — is a huge challenge.” Another cited the biggest challenge as “Getting senior management to find the balance between value and risk with F2F meetings.”

One thing remains certain: There is no one way back or forward. As a supplier wrote: “I think any singular prediction misses how complex and varied the business event landscape will continue to be.”

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?

64% Business events professional

36% Supplier serving business events professionals

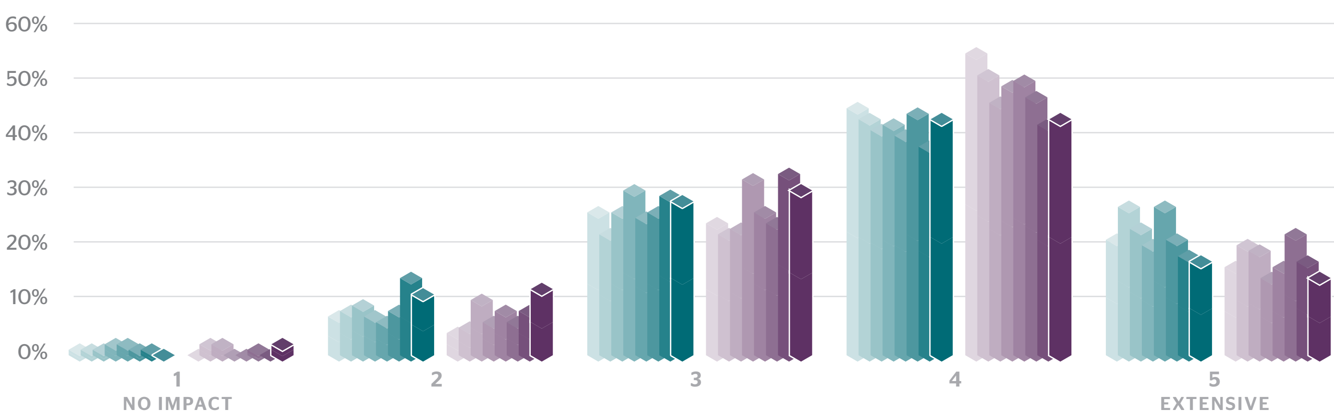
What region best represents where you do the majority of your business?

74% U.S.
7% Canada
8% APAC Region
8% EMEA region
3% Latin America

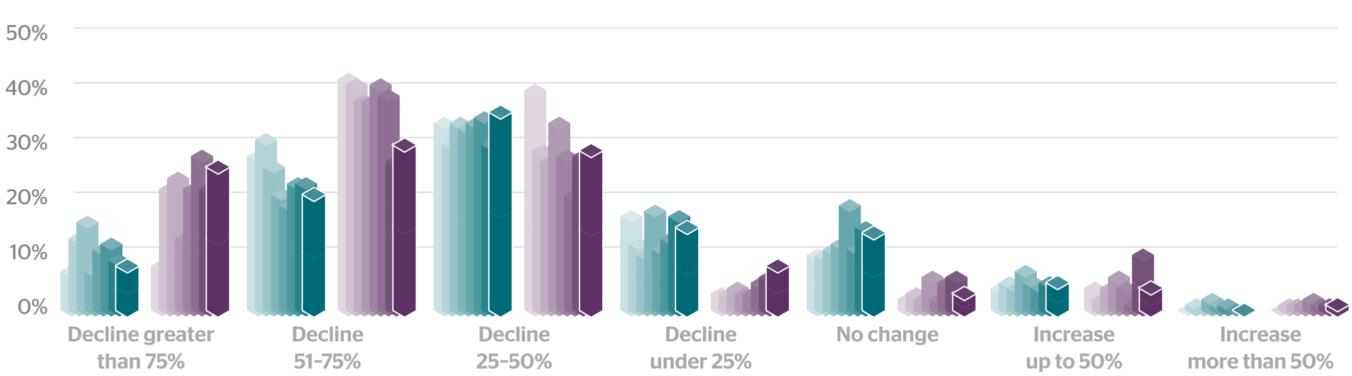
74% U.S.
8% Canada
5% APAC Region
10% EMEA region
3% Latin America

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
PLANNER TRACK								
SUPPLIER TRACK								

To what extent do you believe the rise in the use of digital-event technology will impact face-to-face event attendance at your event/s in 2021 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being no impact and 5 being extensively?

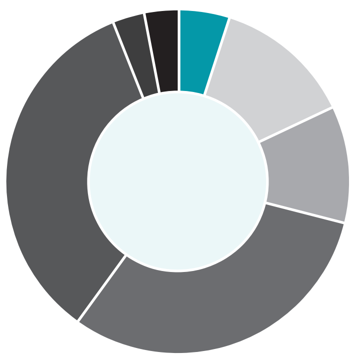


What do you believe will be the overall revenue impact of COVID-19 on your events-related business for 2021?



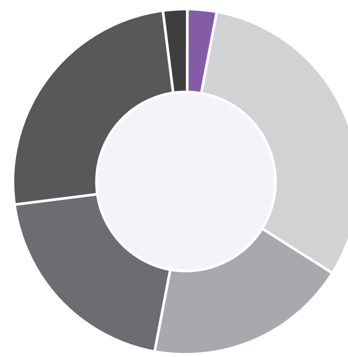
There has been a lot of press recently about the expected leisure travel surge in the coming months. What do you think this means for face-to-face event attendance?

PLANNER TRACK



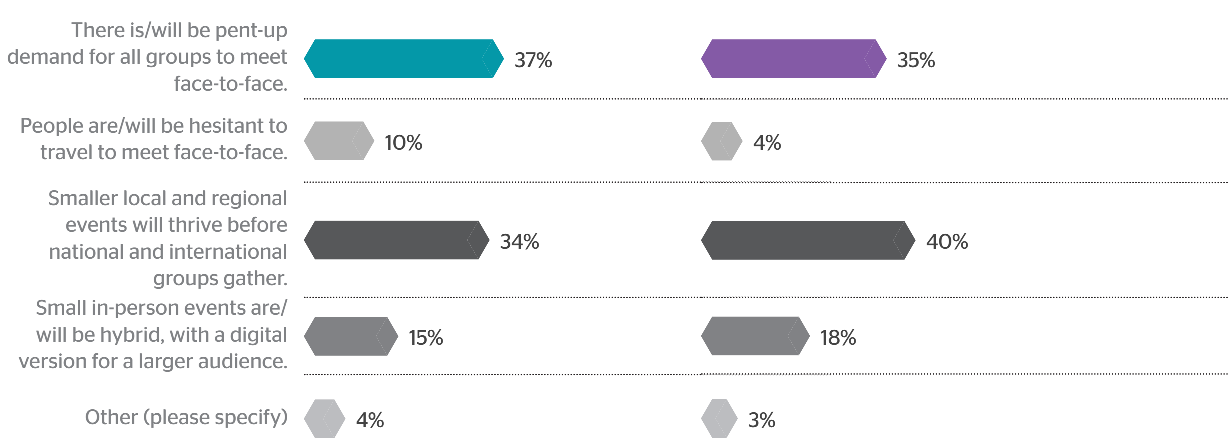
- **5%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q2.
- **13%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q3.
- **11%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q4.
- **31%** There may be pent-up demand for F2F events, but budget cuts, the economy, and/or job insecurity will limit attendance
- **34%** There may be pent-up demand for F2F events, but until there is herd immunity, organizations will avoid assuming business travel risk.
- **3%** No change — attendees have grown accustomed to digital events and will participate virtually.
- **3%** Other

SUPPLIER TRACK



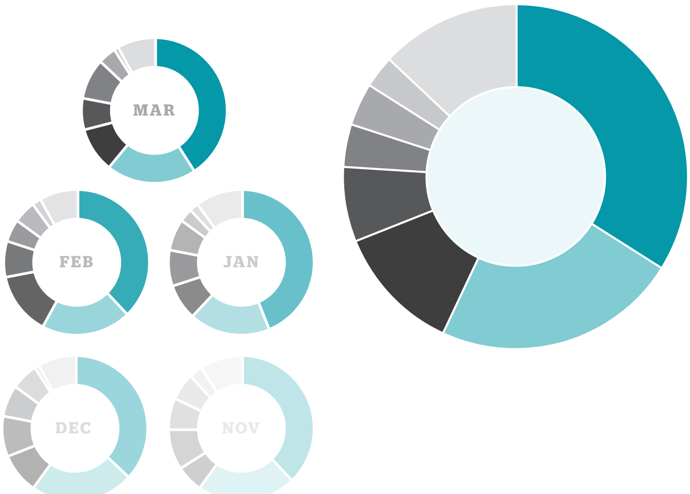
- **3%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q2.
- **31%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q3.
- **19%** People will travel to attend regional and domestic events Q4.
- **20%** There may be pent-up demand for F2F events, but budget cuts, the economy, and/or job insecurity will limit attendance
- **25%** There may be pent-up demand for F2F events, but until there is herd immunity, organizations will avoid assuming business travel risk.
- **2%** No change — attendees have grown accustomed to digital events and will participate virtually.
- **0%** Other

What scenario do you think best describes the recovery of face-to-face meetings for the business events industry, according to the industry or field you represent?



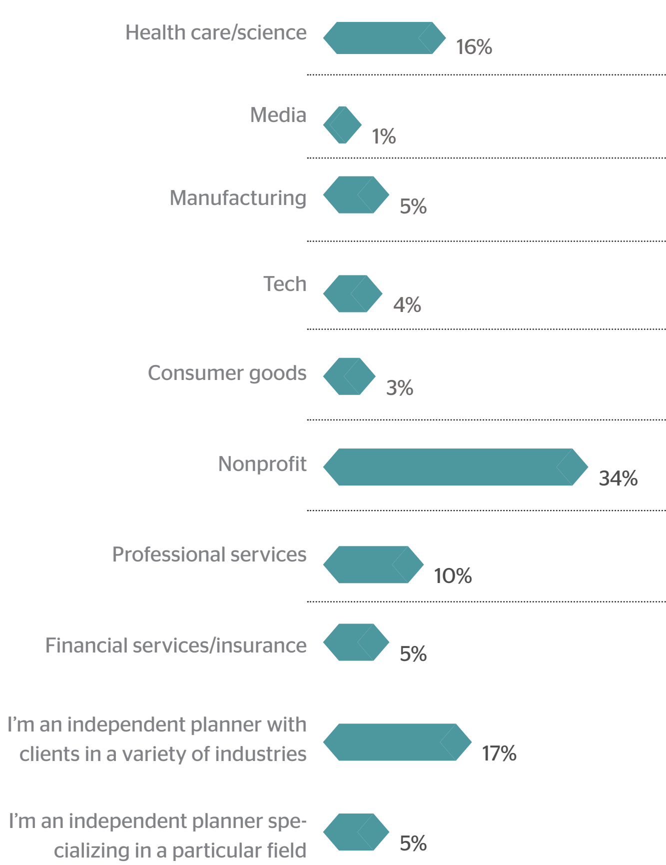
PLANNER TRACK

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



- **34%** Budgeting/pricing for a hybrid (in-person + digital) events
- **23%** How to budget in terms of face-to-face attendance expectations
- **12%** Expenses related to enhanced hygiene and sanitary standards at a face-to-face event
- **7%** What to charge digital participants
- **4%** What to charge digital event exhibitors/sponsors
- **4%** Expenses related to event marketing and communications in a post COVID-19 world
- **3%** Deciding on registration pricing for face-to-face participants
- **13%** Other

What best describes the industry you represent?



PLANNERS SPEAK

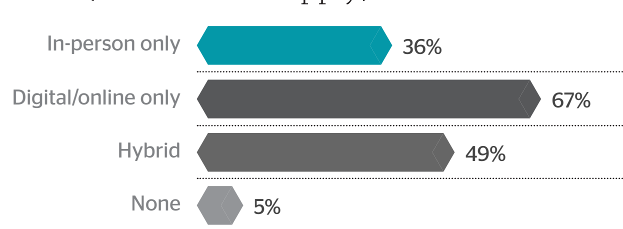
"With the timeline for planning a digital event compressed, cash flow is a problem if registration/ sponsorship is not in before platform/production expenses need to be paid."

"Fixed costs remain the same but due to COVID space guidelines, which reduce seating capacity at the hotel, our registration limit is 50-55-percent less this year."

"Cost of duty of care for participants (corporate planner), risk mitigation, managing attrition due to travel comfort level of participants, increased production/AV expenses, ground expenses."

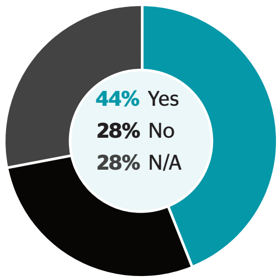
"Not being able to attract sponsors for a digital event."

What type of event are you planning in 2021? (Choose all the apply.)

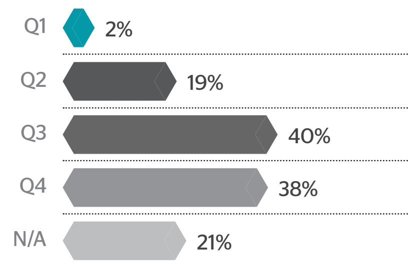


PLANNER TRACK

Are you planning to do networking differently to encourage interaction at your in-person or hybrid event(s)?



What is the anticipated date of your in-person or hybrid event planned for 2021?



What is your planning window for in-person events in 2021?

21% We are making a go/no-go decision within four months of event date.
20% We are making a go/no-go decision within three months of event date.
22% We are making a go/no-go decision within two months of event date.
26% N/A
11% Other

PLANNERS SPEAK

"Making go/no-go decisions about six months out or more. We can't keep hotels waiting to commit to contracts. We lose options that way. Hotels are starting to have limited inventory due to pent-up demand and now an excessive need for 2022 dates."

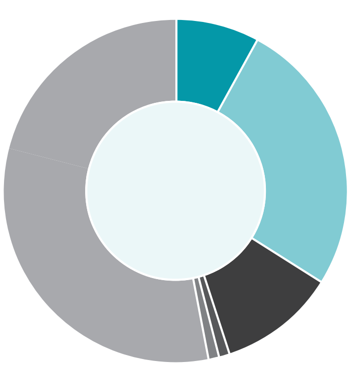
"Making go/no-go five months out."

"Go/no-go decision within a month of event date."

"Offering hybrid means that we have the flexibility to change to fully virtual just days before the event."

"We already made the go/no-go four months out. Now we are just working on adjusting our in-person activities to the guidelines from the location."

What kind of overall registration numbers are you expecting for your planned 2021 in-person only event vs. 2019 (or pre-pandemic 2020)?



8% Decline greater than 50%
26% Decline up to 50%
11% Same
1% Increase up to 50%
1% Increase of more than 50%
32% Unable to estimate until we get closer to the scheduled event date due to a fluid COVID environment
21% N/A

PLANNER TRACK

If you are planning a hybrid event, how do you foresee it taking shape?

27% Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video and separate online program for virtual audience, with ability for both audiences to interact via the event platform

11% Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video and separate online program for virtual audience, without ability for both audiences to interact via the event platform

17% Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video for virtual audience; no separate online content for digital participants

5% Hub-and-spoke model: small regional in-person events held simultaneously with separate content for digital audience

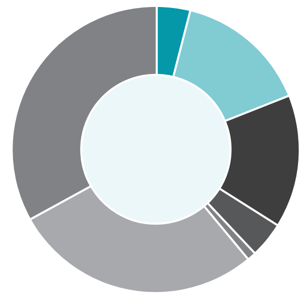
33% N/A

7% Other

PLANNER SPEAKS

"We are surveying attendees seven months in advance and will determine if we will go hybrid or in-person-only based on the results of the survey."

What kind of overall registration numbers are you expecting for your 2021 hybrid event vs. 2019 (or pre-pandemic 2020)?



4% Decline greater than 50%

16% Decline up to 50%

15% Same

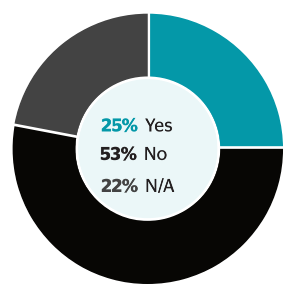
4% Increase up to 50%

1% Increase of more than 50%

28% Unable to estimate until we get closer to the scheduled event date due to a fluid COVID environment

32% N/A

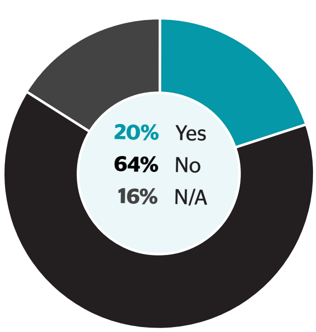
Are you seeking out broadcasting facilities in your site-selection efforts for future hybrid events?

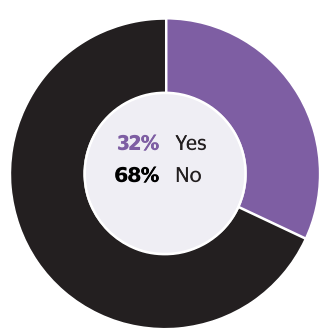


PLANNER TRACK

SUPPLIER TRACK

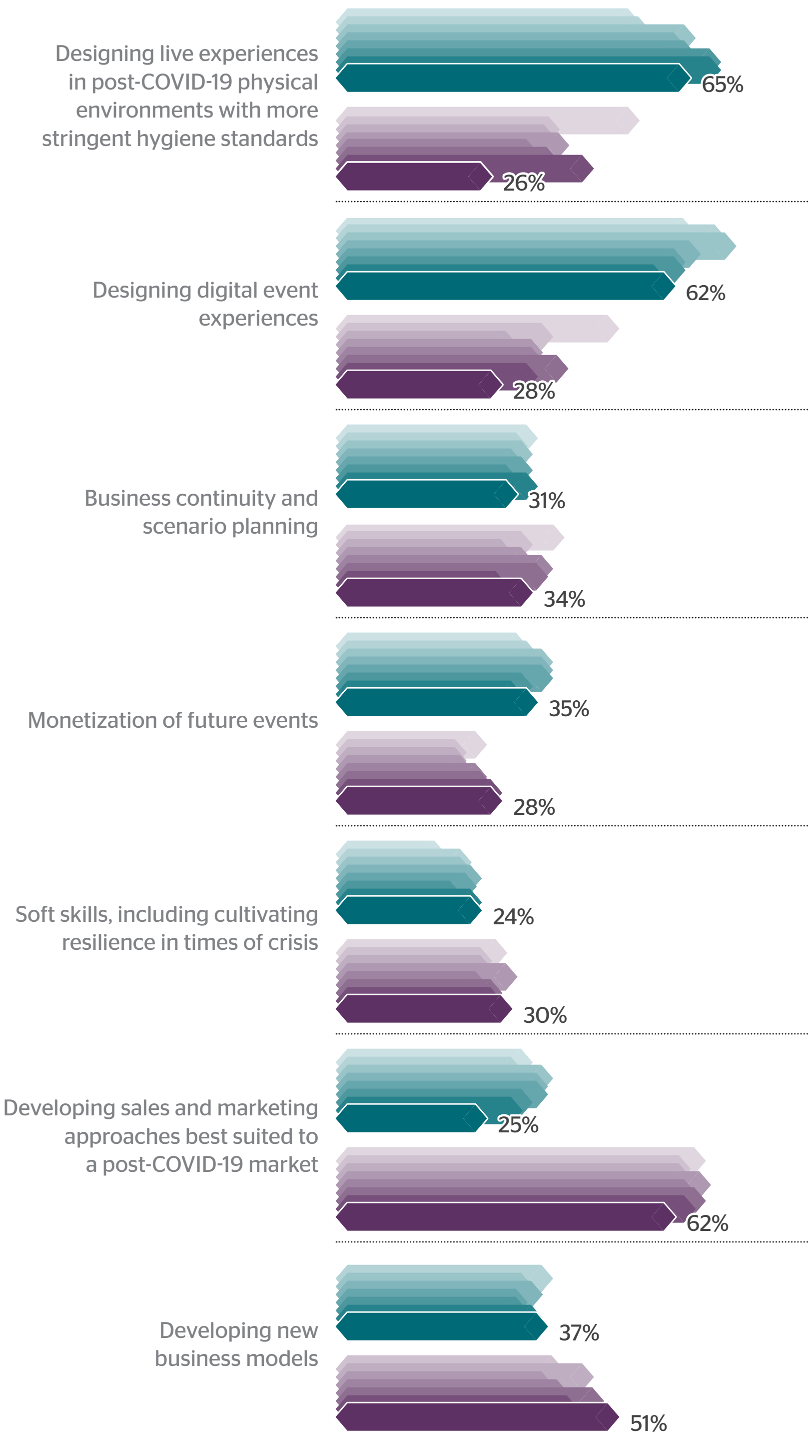
Once the vaccine is available to everyone, will you require attendees, staff, and visitors to show proof of vaccination in order to participate in your physical events?





	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
PLANNER TRACK								
SUPPLIER TRACK								

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.)



SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

"Designing more valuable and motivational experiences for younger generations [in the workforce]."

"Engaging and designing experiences for two disparate audience types (in-person and virtual) and how they consume, engage, and interact with content, speakers, and experience."

"Time management! 2020 accelerated the pace of business, and now with travel and in-person officing coming back, juggling the demands of everyone (work and home) is getting harder."

PLANNERS SPEAK

"We need to understand what people want in F2F experiences coming out of COVID. We'll need to change more than just planning around hygiene/health & safety. I think it will be a bigger lift than we think as things start moving."

"All of the above. ... It is a new era of education and technology. We need to stay ahead to remain relevant."

"Merging online experiences with live experiences — the hybrid model will be here for some time and finding ways to engage both audiences will be how our events stay successful."