

WHAT'S

Trending

2021

hello

To put it mildly, 2020 has been a year. It has been a year of firsts, uncertainty, reflection, hard conversations, innovation and pure dedication to upholding the power of human connection. Such a year makes it difficult to truly understand what 2021 will bring. Our collective crystal ball is cloudy on good days. But one thing we know for sure, is that at BCD Meetings & Events, we are in this—truly—in this together.

Our industry, businesses and economies depend on our collaboration, flexibility and speed. We will show up together to work through recovery, continue to drive business forward and evolve what meetings & events means to organizations, to attendees and to the people passionate about their purpose.

While the upcoming year's trends are more difficult to forecast, we have seen key themes emerge stronger than ever. Surprisingly, the conversations we are having are not necessarily new. It is the perspective and renewed vigor on topics such as duty of care, hybrid event design and stakeholder engagement that has shifted. The ability to react quickly to changing and refined needs while remaining flexible to pivot again is mandatory.

While there is still uncertainty in our industry and lives in general, I am looking forward to what is to come. As an eternal optimist, I see success and recovery on the horizon and sense a level of collaboration between suppliers, buyers and agencies unlike any our industry has ever seen. As we plot out 2021, we remain focused on Still Connecting. Come 2021, more than ever before, BCD Meetings & Events is all in.

Stay safe.
-Scott



scott
GRAF
Global President
BCD Meetings & Events



FROM AROUND

the world.

With situations changing monthly, weekly and at times daily due to COVID-19, we asked our regional leaders three questions: What is the state of the M&E industry within their region? What is the latest regarding the pandemic? What's trending with customers?

NORAM



christine
ERICKSON
*SVP, U.S. Events Solutions,
Sports & Global Industry Relations*



charlene
RABIDEAU
*SVP, Meetings Management
& Global Client Team*

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

All things digital sums up the M&E industry in North America. Organizations are looking for unique solutions that allow them to engage, communicate and motivate without the ability of in person gatherings. There are few to no live, face-to-face meetings or events happening.

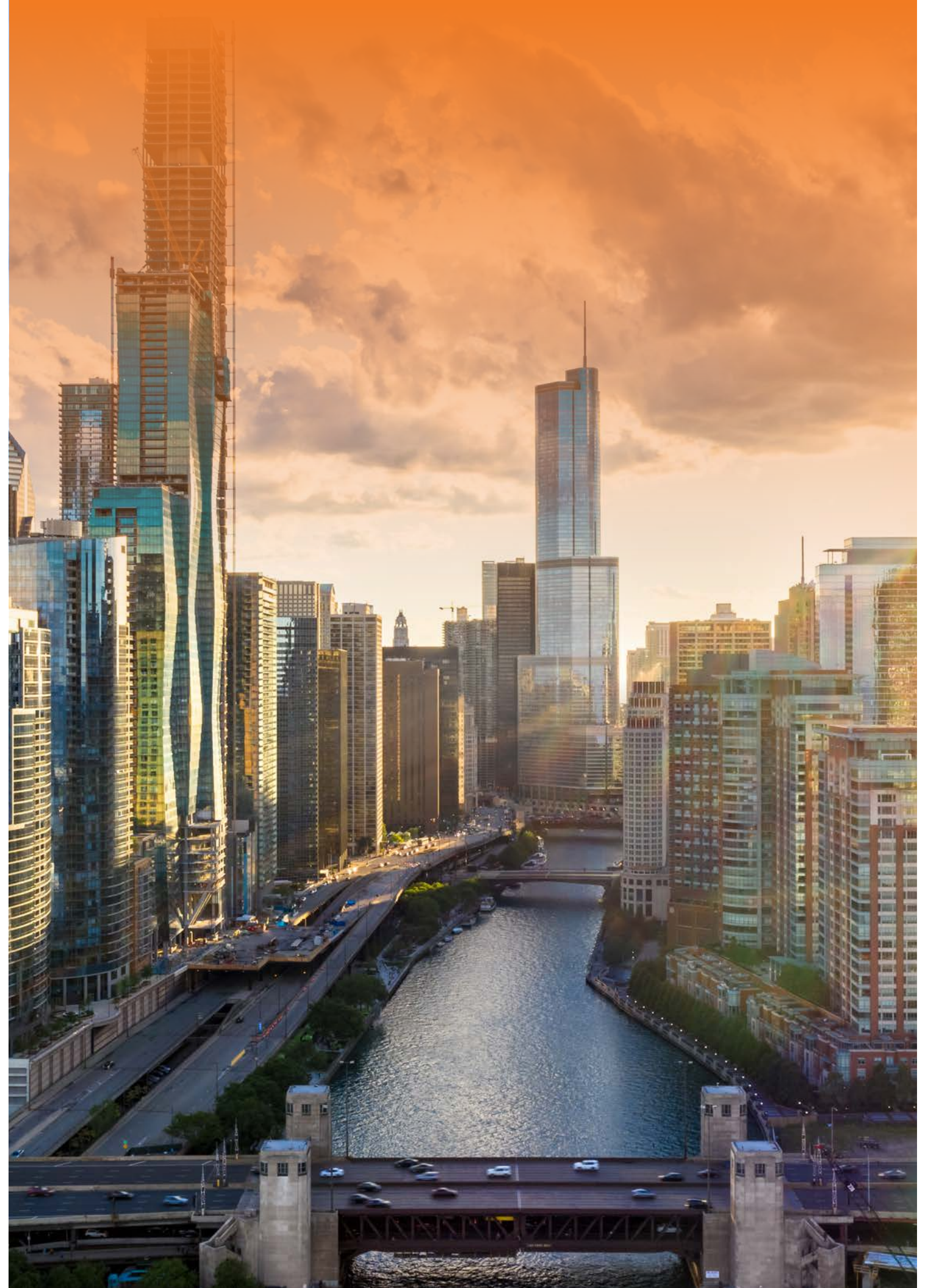
COVID-19

In the U.S. we continue to see a resurgence of COVID-19 cases across the nation, prolonging our inability to meet in person.

CUSTOMER TRENDS

Our customers are continuing to convert live meetings into virtual experiences through Q2 2021 due to COVID-19. There is interest in understanding what hybrid meetings look like with anticipation that we will begin traveling and meeting face-to-face. However, even when in person meetings/events return, there will be new limitations that drive the need for a different approach to engage audiences both live and virtually.

While volume is low due to circumstances outside of our control, it has been a great time for customers to review programs and make changes, expand services, review suppliers, etc.



LATAM



ana paula
HERNANDEZ
VP, LATAM

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Live events are very limited depending on the market. The few we are seeing are association and social events (mostly weddings postponed at the beginning of the year). In the corporate events space, most of the activity sits in virtual. Customers are anticipating virtual meetings to continue into 2021 with some markets anticipating the introduction of hybrid events. We do not expect face-to-face meetings and events to begin until the second half of 2021.

COVID-19

Across Latin America, the number of COVID-19 cases have not decreased. Unlike in EMEA and other parts of the world, governments across the region are not predicting massive lock downs due to the economic conditions and pressure from the industrial/private sectors.

CUSTOMER TRENDS

Partnering with our customers to design their virtual/hybrid strategy is key. Our customers need flexibility, innovation and teamwork more than ever and trusted relationships are critical to success.



UK



helen

MCCABE

Managing Director, UK

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Small meetings up to 30 people within safe venues are possible; however, the second full UK lockdown began November 5 and will last four weeks. Many venues are going into liquidation as well as some smaller M&E agencies. The demand for virtual events continues to evolve which includes smaller, managed workshops as well as the creative, content-driven produced events.

COVID-19

In October the UK was looking forward to holding a few socially distanced, large-scale pilot events to kick start the region's M&E industry. But, unfortunately, the number of COVID-19 cases began to increase, and the pilots were cancelled. Regional tiering measures followed based on localized case levels, but widespread increases of cases continue—with some hospitals now stating they are close to capacity levels once again.

CUSTOMER TRENDS

We continue to create and drive dynamic, agile solutions given the uncertainty of the virus. We are committed to forging long-term partnerships by having regular, transparent and pragmatic conversations about the value BCD M&E can offer. Supporting and adding value to our customers in terms of virtual communication and engagement will be the key priority, common denominator and differentiator for 2021.



EMEA



mikael

EK

Managing Director, EMEA

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

As regulations suppress the ability to conduct live meetings & events, the MICE industry is quickly pivoting towards an online environment via virtual meetings. This causes dramatic new challenges for the industry as virtual studios are overbooked but hotels are empty.

COVID-19

After a summer with generally open borders and societies, many countries in EMEA have seen a second wave of infections and, with that, further lock downs and regulations. However, the lock downs and regulations are generally less stringent than before.

CUSTOMER TRENDS

Our customers need one thing above all else with a financially solid supplier that can do live, virtual and hybrid meetings & events—either as a standalone event request or part of a local or regional strategic meetings program.



APAC



Sanjay

SETH

*Managing
Director, APAC*

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

It is as diverse as is the region. Short of international travel, business appears to be back to normal in China with no attendance caps on events. SMM in industry speak is now an acronym for Safe Measurement Measures in Singapore—two successful pilot hybrid events have paved the way for MICE events subject to attendance caps and government application approvals. New Zealand is one of the only places in the world where musicians are touring. The state of Victoria (where Melbourne is the capital) in Australia will finally reopen again on November 23 after a second lockdown when it was the center of a national public health crisis. We are seeing largely virtual format meetings and events in Hong Kong and India, lockdowns in Malaysia and business as usual in Taiwan.

COVID-19

We are seeing infection and fatality rates rise again in markets in APAC (Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines), in some case where initial recovery was leading to some sense of normality. On the other hand, numbers have drastically reduced in other markets or come close to zero new local infections or fatalities (Australia, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam).

CUSTOMER TRENDS

It is simple. Our customers need event practitioners who are trained and experienced in digital solutions and delivery.



WHAT WE KNOW

Today.

Typically, by this point in the year, we have data on business travel, meetings and events that allow us to create global forecasts for the upcoming year. However, it's been a long year with a lot of uncertainty. No one can be sure where we will be in three months, much less 12. So instead, we've been having meaningful conversations with customers to understand where they are and how we can move forward *together*. It's time to start looking ahead so we can continue reinventing meeting strategies for where we will be tomorrow; and as we do that, here's what we know.

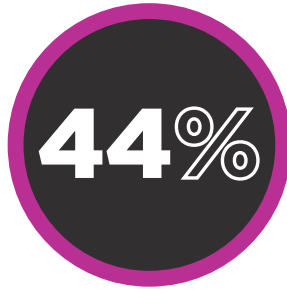




of our customers are in the process of creating a long-term virtual meetings strategy.



of organizations say the return of meetings and events is a key priority for the business.



of our customers say the value of a meetings management program is higher than before the pandemic.

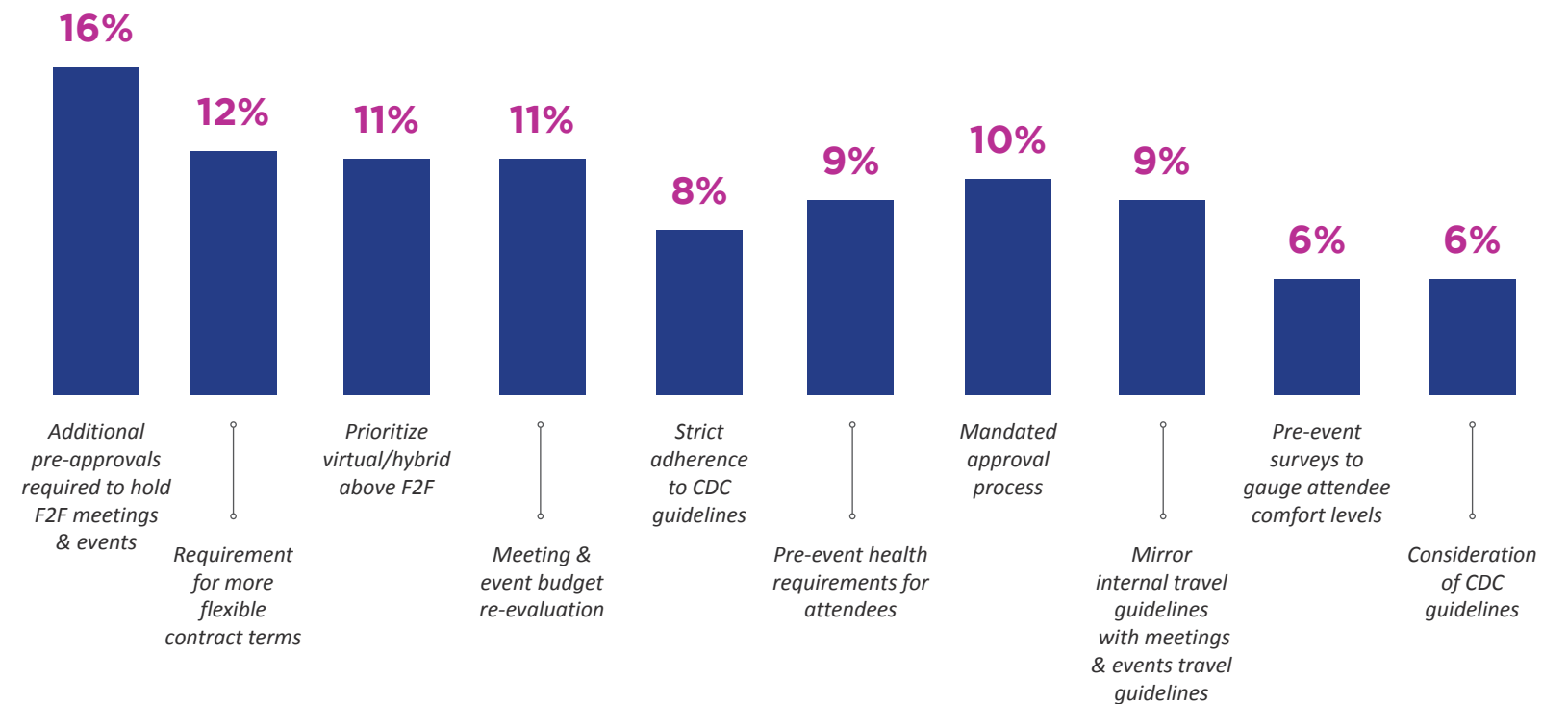


When it comes to outsourcing meetings & events, **79%** of organizations will either increase outsourcing or have levels remain the same.

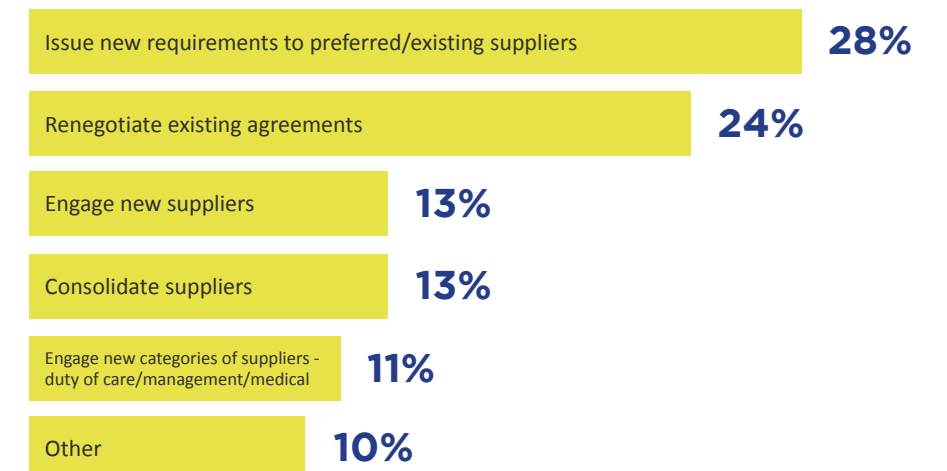


of organizations have either formed or are forming policies or guidelines for the return of safe face-to-face meetings & events.

HOW WILL M&E POLICY CHANGE AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?



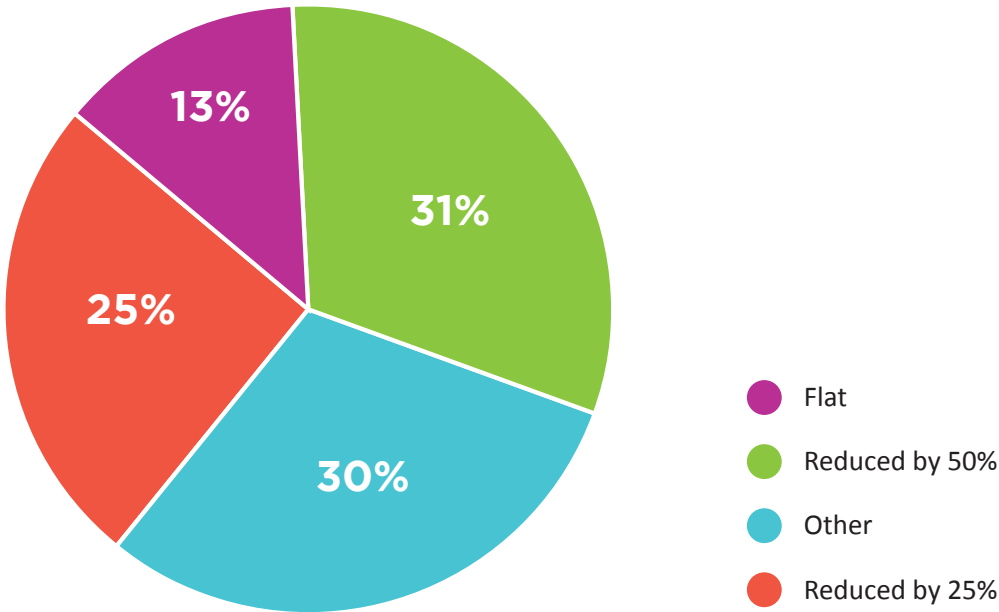
HOW ARE SUPPLIER NETWORKS BEING MANAGED AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?



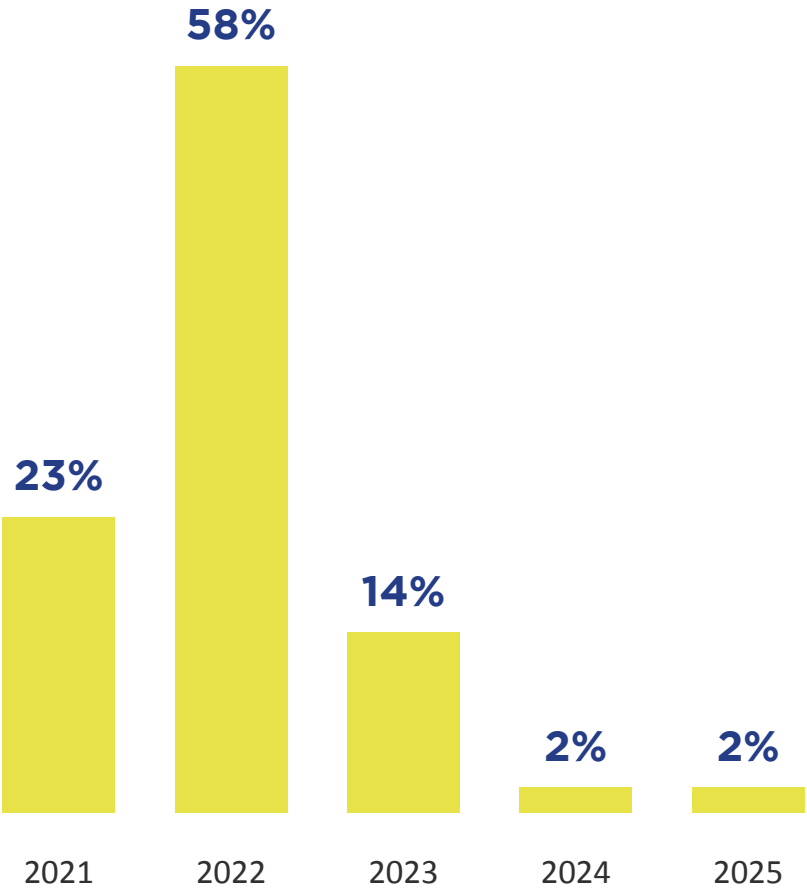
WHICH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS ARE LEADING THE RETURN OF M&E?



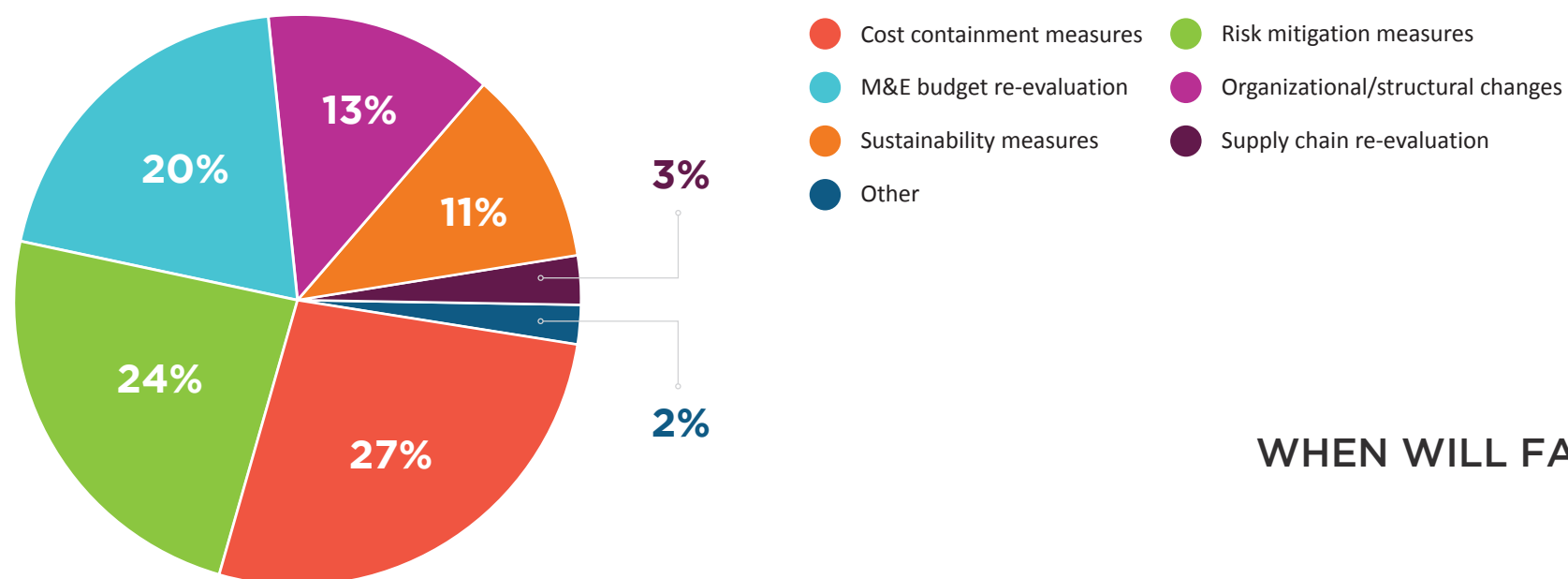
HOW WILL M&E BUDGETS BE IMPACTED IN 2021?



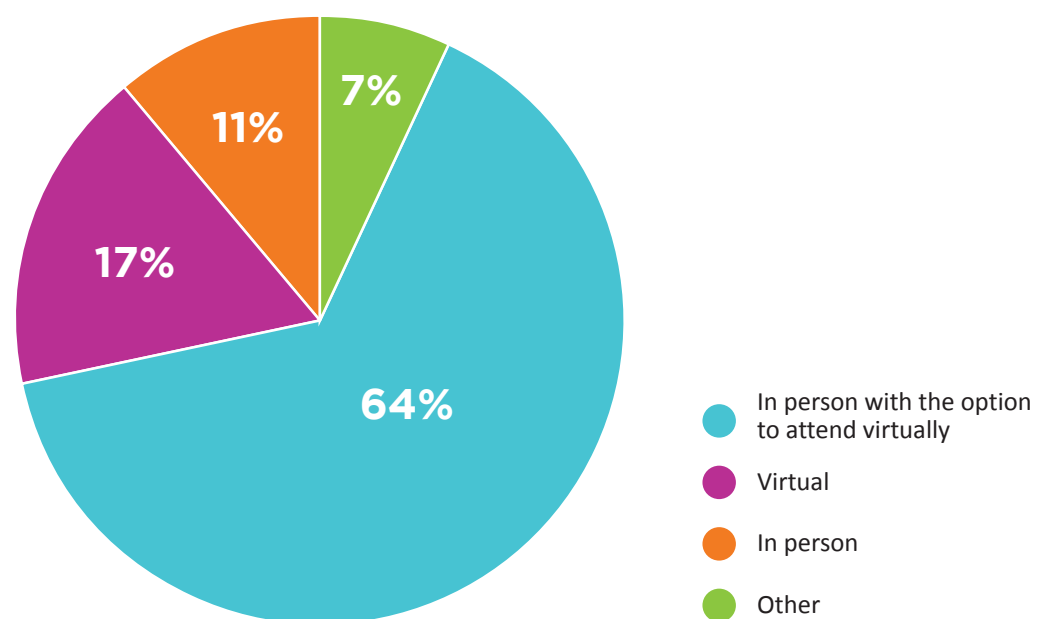
WHEN WILL M&E VOLUME RETURN TO 2019 LEVELS?



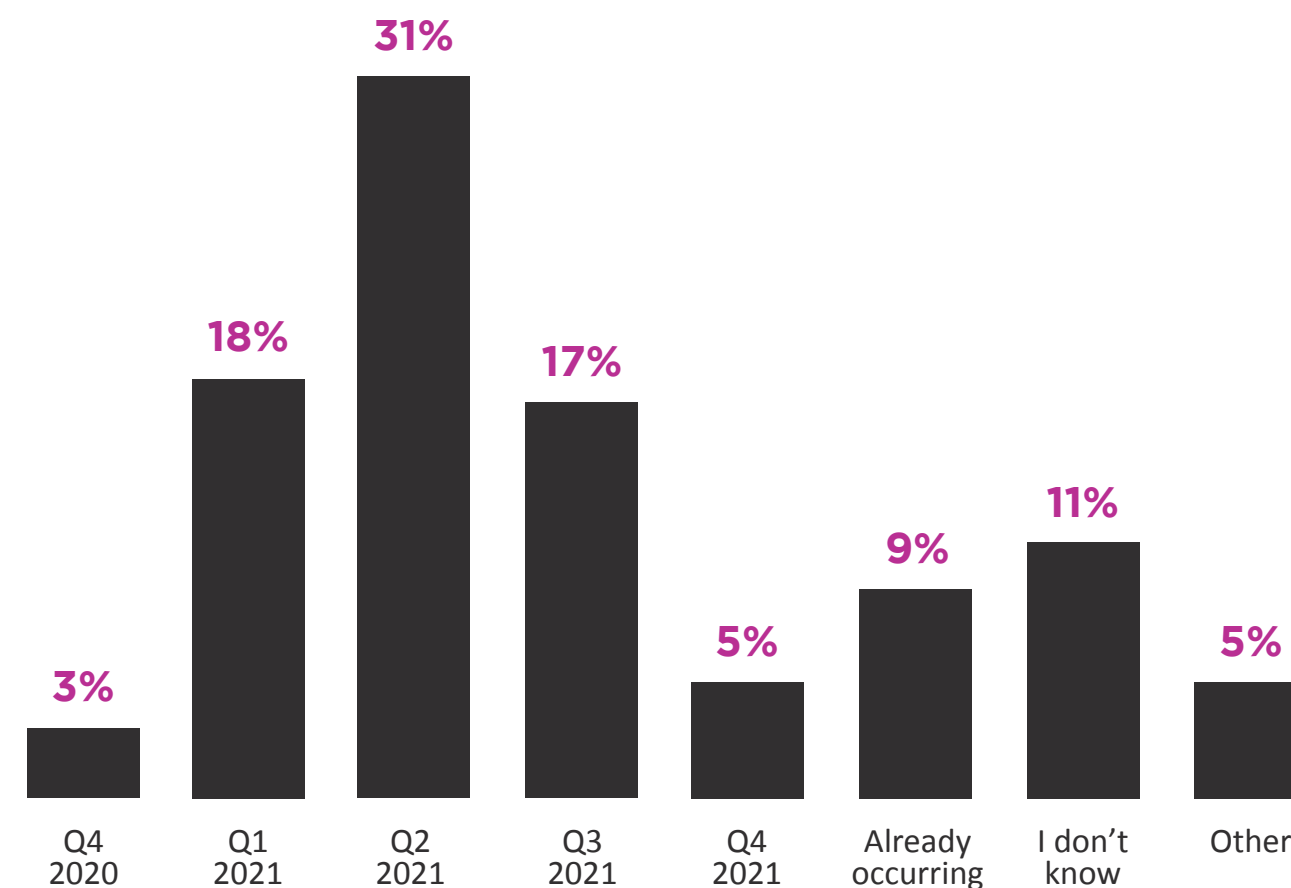
SECONDARY TO COVID, WHAT INTERNAL INFLUENCES ARE IMPACTING YOUR M&E PROGRAM?



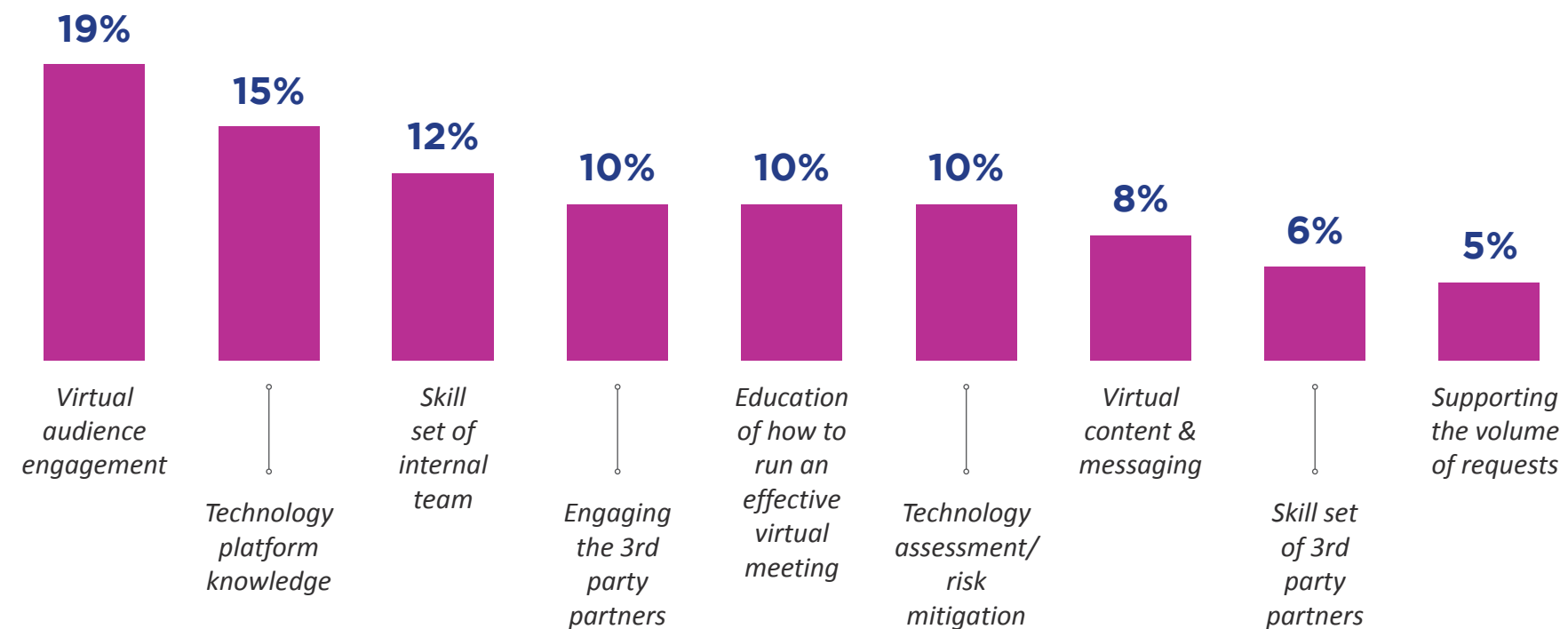
WHAT M&E FORMAT WILL ATTENDEES PREFER IN 2021?



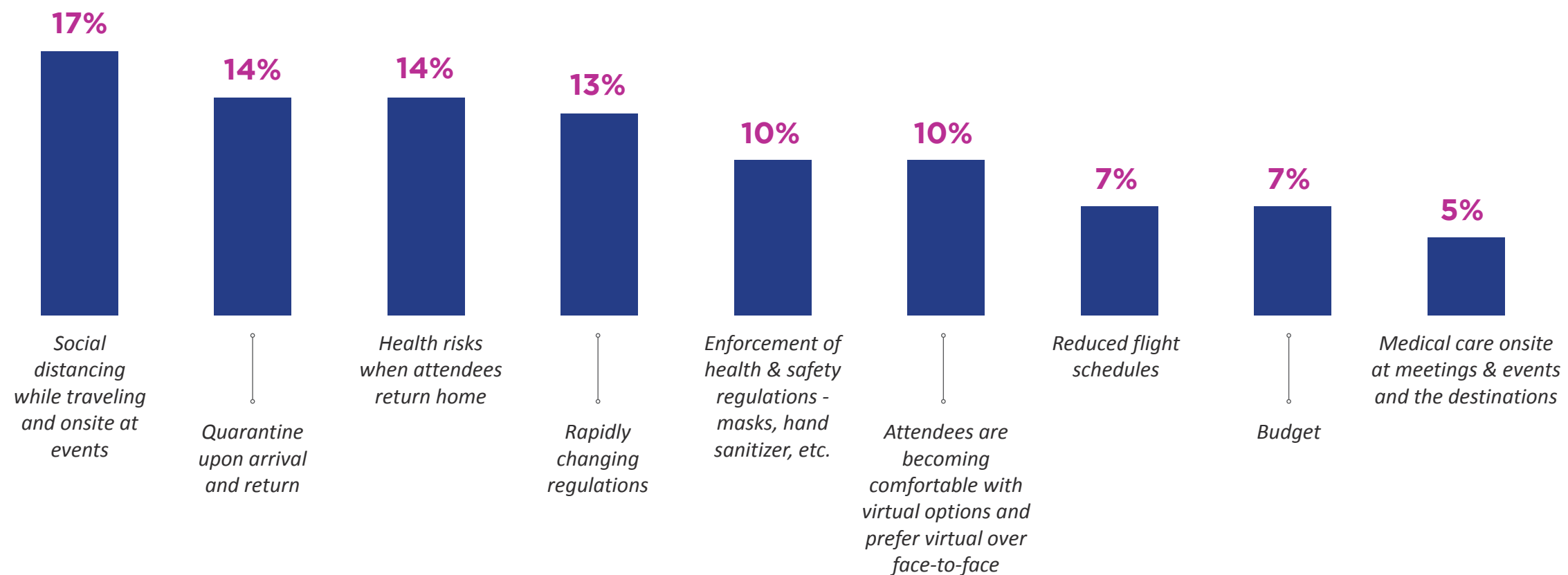
WHEN WILL FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS RETURN?



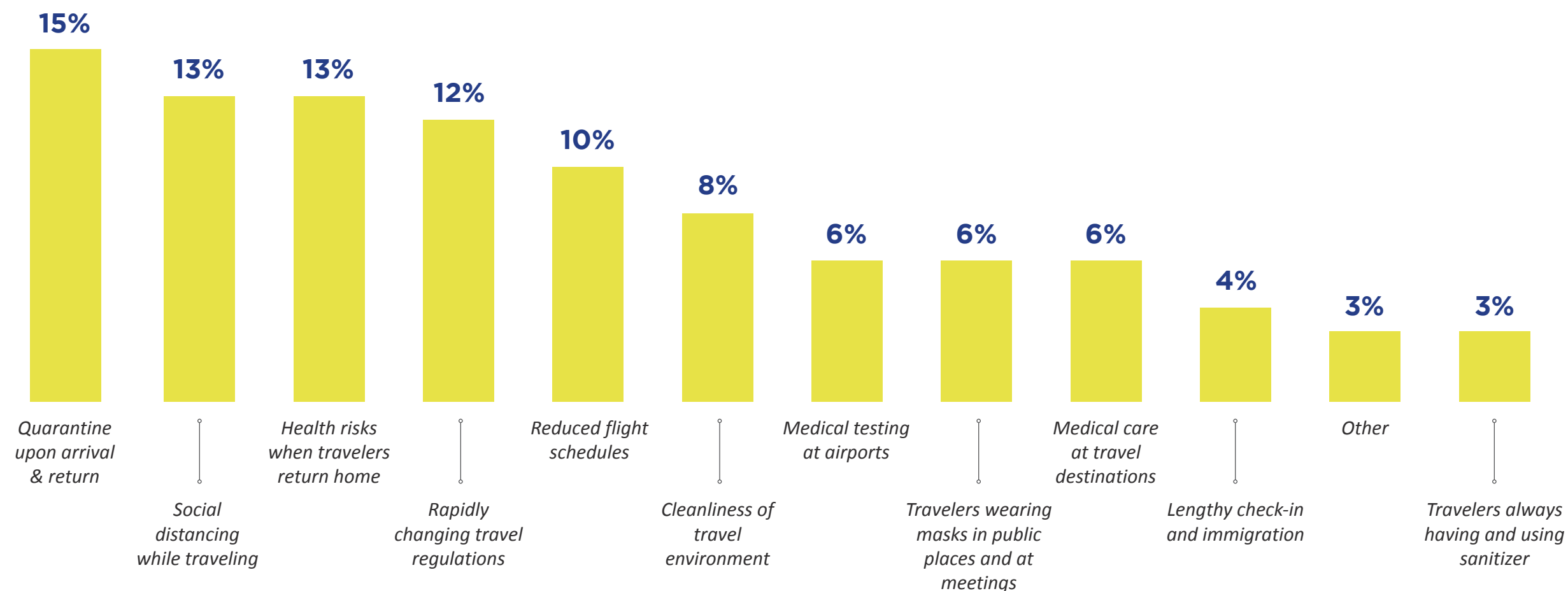
WHAT ARE THE CURRENT CHALLENGES WITH VIRTUAL MEETINGS?



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO RETURNING TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS?



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES WHEN TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ARE LIFTED?



IN *closing*

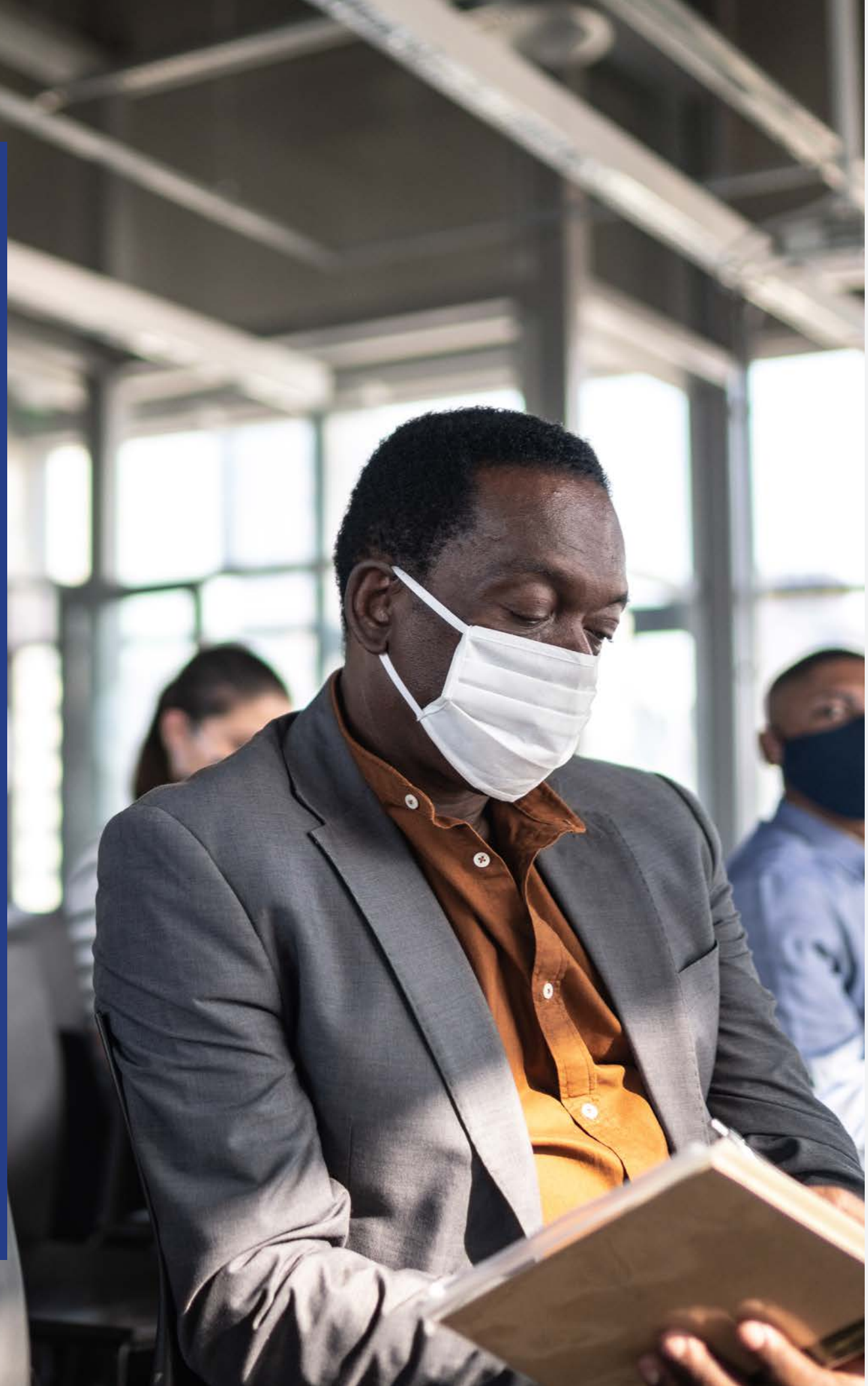
The return to meeting in person may take a while and will come with challenges. However, it will also likely be filled with innovation and dedication to emerging strong. Out of all the unknown, one thing is certain: collaboration and flexibility are key to our collective success.

WHAT'S *trending?*

DUTY OF CARE

TOP OF MIND FOR BUSINESSES,
PLANNERS AND ATTENDEES

Duty of care has been a focus in leading SMMPs for years. However, there is now a new level of attention and focus on the systems, approvals and processes in place across an organization to be able to not only move back into a face-to-face meetings environment but also communicate and act quickly in managing attendee and employee safety. This will remain the case in 2021 and beyond and should be top of mind from policy design to business planning. Moving forward, a duty of care strategy will no longer be “nice to have.” Onsite safety protocols will be critical factors to the return to live meetings. Attendee and employee safety are paramount.



NEW PLAYBOOK FOR LIVE EVENTS

Meeting in person safely looks a lot different than before and so should your playbook. Clear protocols for onsite operations are more important than ever and need to be communicated to all involved. Attendee confidence for those going onsite will depend on the amount of clear information provided from the beginning of a program. There will be new expectations from attendees that need to be addressed and understood by all program staff to ensure consistency. There needs to be a clear understanding of changes in perceptions and realities around safety and logistics to manage these new expectations.

Consider the following:

- Availability of handwashing or disinfecting stations
- Distanced seating and room configurations
- PPE for attendees
- Daily health checks
- Cleaning frequency for common/shared surfaces

It’s important to keep in mind that new types of onsite roles will be required to maintain health and safety standards (temperature check support, monitoring venue health and safety compliance, etc.) and additional staff may be required.

DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING: PROGRAM MANDATES VS. GUIDELINES

As we return to meeting face-to-face, there is a need to have clean, real-time data in any given situation in order to ensure attendee safety for everyone. Data points around cleanliness standards, safety protocols and links to local COVID-19 health resources can and should be captured at the time of sourcing. Having pre-established reportable data needs for your organization can help determine if a location or a locale is within the safety parameters for your organization. With the active pandemic, and even as it begins to wane, health and safety information can change from the time of initial booking to the date of meeting execution. Having a set cadence of when you are checking in on current regulations and on the ground updates on your chosen locale, in relation to COVID-19, will assist in determining if a meeting is safe to operate or if it needs to shift due to increasing health concerns. By having an established health and safety cadence, you can reassure your attendees that their wellbeing is of utmost concern, as well as make sure that you have a regular point of check-in that can be quickly communicated back to your organization.

Program policies need to be established and translated into formal guides for onsite operations. As with all health and safety policies, it must be clearly defined where there is and is not flexibility. Both mandates and guidelines should start from a collaboration between the program stakeholders and the operating events team, including internal resources and third party providers such as the TMC, M&E agency, etc. who support in executing programs. The framework of the policy that’s been created from that collaboration should then be shared and compared to the health and safety policies of the destination, venue and additional program partners, pre-booking. Achieving alignment and support for your mandated health and safety policies will be essential to ensuring their success and creating attendee confidence.

Have some fun while playing it safe.

This is a new opportunity to provide branded PPE to ensure your attendees are safe, comfortable and on-brand! Consider the needs of your attendees from the moment they leave home to their return and how you can be there for them.

SILVER LININGS



Factors guiding your health and safety standards onsite will be dictated by multiple variables, but it’s important to realize that the program destination and venues may have more or less strict health and safety policies than you intend to implement. As there is no universal consensus on health and safety policies, we cannot rely on everyone to be on the same page regarding minimum health and safety standards for a program. You may find yourself in a situation of needing to support stricter policies than you planned, or you may find yourself needing to ensure alignment between your stricter policies and those of the venues your program will take place in. In either case, your choice of destination and venue should be seriously reviewed for its potential impact in supporting your programs health and safety policies onsite.



WHAT *you* CAN DO

- Review duty of care protocols for using the reported data if an incident occurs. This should be clearly documented in your SOPs, including the name of your third-party security provider (if applicable) and any emergency numbers for travelers, which should be included in attendee communications.
- Ensure your TMC/M&E agency is involved in the conversation to identify where there is overlap in information or gaps where meeting specific reporting is required such as hotel name and check in/check out dates. Any OBT integrations should also be considered as an option to automate group air reporting and consolidate this information within a client's meetings management system.
- How are you properly tracking employee movement, if they are not flying? Is there visibility into all attendee travel or just flight and rail? Consider lowering thresholds for mandating attendee registration for meetings and making attendee data part of the security and duty of care reporting.

REFOCUS ON A STRONG BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

One thing that 2020 highlighted is the need to be proactive in re-assessing an organization's business plan to prepare, react quickly and, ultimately, survive things like a global pandemic. By having a strong business continuity plan, you seek to protect mission-critical services and give your organization the best chance at continued operation, even (and especially) during difficult scenarios. This type of planning enables you to re-establish services to a fully functional level as quickly and smoothly as possible. This also means correcting course for the aspects of your program that were shown to be vulnerable and reinforcing the areas that work in this new future. Now is the time to engage functional teams that may not have always been in the conversation before (think: security, HR) in order to have clear direction and communication across all levels of an organization. Attendee and employee safety are the highest priorities to operating a successful program, and engagement from all stakeholders remains key to that end.

WHAT'S *trending?*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THEIR ATTENTION

COVID-19 has disrupted our lives in the most fundamental ways. It has stopped travel. It has redefined the meetings & events industry by introducing virtual as the only point of human connection into nearly all businesses. And, it has made people pay attention.

In the world of Strategic Meetings Management, COVID-19 has shone a light on meetings programs. New stakeholders are connecting to seek information, guidance and drive solutions to ensure people can still meet and business goes on. Stakeholders at the C-suite level are taking a closer look and wanting to know more about duty of care, cost controls and risk mitigation. And, collaboration between stakeholder groups is more critical to program recovery and success than ever.



NEW STAKEHOLDERS

With safety top of mind, new digital meeting formats and risk mitigation critical, there has been a shift in stakeholders that are required to collaborate in order to provide solutions and options that are fiscally responsible, safe and secure to ensure business continuity in all event environments: be it live, hybrid or virtual. While marketing and sales are still involved, executive leadership, human resources and security are groups that must buy in to continue activity and lead the return of meetings within their organization.

Engaging a new and wider group of stakeholders doesn't have to be difficult. Tried and true methods still work. Whether formal (advisory board, planning committee, executive sponsors) or informal (1-1 catch up's, trends and update webinars, supplier updates), but you need to understand who needs to come to the table now and what is important to them. A company's culture will dictate how best to engage and drive support, but frequency and follow up are key to success. Once you have people engaged and involved and understand their WHY, keep them informed. Giving people the opportunity to feel some level of contribution and ownership of a project is the best route to success. Timelines with deliverables are effective here or consider a simple project plan to drive anticipation and accountability. Most important is celebrating milestones, no matter the size of impact.

COMBINING FORCES

Procurement and marketing are two significant players in any company's meeting program. They contribute to spend, ROI and overall program governance. Traditionally, the two departments haven't always worked hand-in-hand. In fact, they are often siloed departments that run alongside one another, rather than integrate with each other for the optimization of a meetings program. With the attention of executive leaders on meetings & events, combining forces to gain buy in from the C-suite could be incredibly successful and drive value and results for both business areas.

Marketing teams are typically focused on building relationships and connecting people to the brand to drive profitability. They thrive on creativity and tight timelines to push out relevant content. Procurement on the other hand, is typically transactional and focused on driving efficiencies and cost savings. They couldn't be more different, yet we know for a successful SMMP, they need to be focused on the same objectives. It comes down to understanding the same objectives from a different perspective and aligning their collective goals to the best possible results not only for the business, but for their meeting attendees.

There seems to be a common misconception that SMMP is adding in another layer, which delays timelines and inevitably leads to reasons to skip the process. The marketing team is under unique pressure to meet the needs of the business units yet comply with policy. If they follow policy, they can spend less time thinking about risk and contractual terms and focus more on content creation and communication strategy which is critical in today's virtual/hybrid space. With marketing and procurement working together, they can showcase aligned data points surrounding the value of meetings & events to their organization: increased attendee engagement, attendee safety, cost containment and risk mitigation—all which appeal to executive leaders.

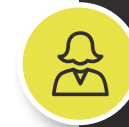
START THE CONVERSATION

Chances are the strategies marketing is developing to **engage** attendees in a virtual space may be a **great roadmap** for engaging your internal stakeholders.



FORECASTING

With so much uncertainty today, forecasting meetings activity is more difficult than ever. There is a strong need to engage proactively with each area of the business to better prepare for what is to come. The far-reaching net of key stakeholders that need to buy in to program strategy and event design requires collaboration, conversation and transparency. The need for good data to forecast is critical.



C-Suite senior leaders had a comfort zone around their signature events. They knew how the stage felt under the lights. They could read the room for questions by seeing faces. They could prepare for likely conversations at the bar after the Gala Dinner. And yet, with the emergence of virtual or hybrid events, the years of experience in live events for these presenters has disappeared. It makes sense why forecasting is difficult—there is a completely new way of working and confidence levels are being challenged.

WHAT *you* CAN DO

1. Identify the current mix of stakeholders driving meetings & events in your organization and identify what is most important to each group.
2. Frequently communicate with your stakeholders so they feel informed, engaged and connected to your program and the value it drives to your organization.
3. Bring marketing and procurement together to craft a data-backed value story of your program that keep your C-suite leaders interested.
4. Combine data points across your stakeholder groups to better forecast meetings activity.

WHAT'S *trending?*

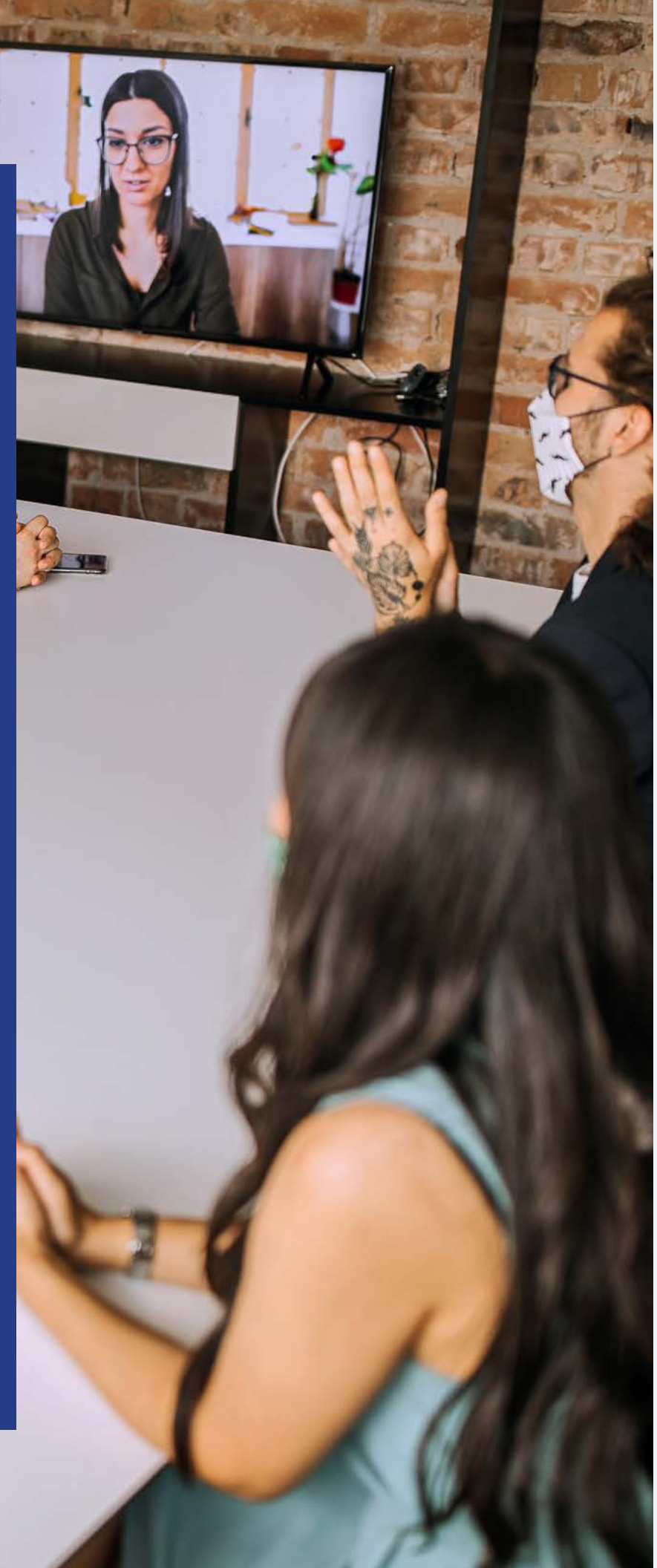
HYBRID MEETINGS

THE ART OF STAYING CONNECTED WHILE MEETING APART

Typically, virtual and hybrid events take a backseat to face-to-face interaction. However, over the past year, the hybrid experience has become the star of the show, standing in as an innovative solution to keep us connected. But innovation can come with costs, including the misconception that hybrid meetings are easier to plan than its virtual or live counterparts.

Hybrid meetings often present unique challenges because from start to finish they require intense attention to detail and two-pronged solutions. Instead of thinking about one audience, you'll always need to account for at least two—in-person and remote.

As the demand for hybrid grows, it's critical to remain mindful about planning in ways that feel seamless and engaging for both audiences. Even as the industry evolves, a few key components of hybrid event planning will be around for the long haul and focusing on these areas will be critical to creating successful meetings for today and tomorrow.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF HYBRID EVENT PLANNING

PLANNING & STRATEGY

Hybrid events can present more logistical obstacles because of their duality. Now more than ever strong planning and strategy is paramount to your meeting and event success. Accounting for audience engagement, multiple time zones, pandemic safety protocols, unexpected emergencies, and technology failure (among other variables) can be a challenge. But by facilitating thoughtful conversations with clients, employing content-rich strategies, establishing audience profiles and planning for the unexpected you'll better meet the needs of both audiences and eliminate the need for undue course correction later.



Mind your budgeting

Budgeting has become increasingly complex with hybrid events. Really get to know your client's needs so you can make informed decisions that maximize budget without sacrificing attendee experience. Among other factors, you'll need to weigh costs for venue choice, on site and remote production, technology tools and attendee engagement strategies for two audiences instead of one.

PRODUCTION

As one of the most critical elements of the design process, production quality can be the difference between an event that amazes and one that falls flat. A watertight agenda, sound content delivery strategy, thoughtful location sourcing, reliable technology and a few backup plans are keys to excellent production. Your production strategy will inform many of the experiences your attendees have interacting with your event, its content and one another. Make sure there's fewer hiccups by employing proper production planning.



Have a Plan B

Technology isn't perfect. So when it fails, make sure that you've got plans B, C and D ready. Ensure your feed has redundant backup internet cables for your broadcast and consider providing 4G/5G hotspots in case the internet falls through. Additionally, if you're utilizing a live broadcast, employing a hub and spoke approach ensures that you have multiple hosts across different locations that are prepared to seamlessly pick up where others leave off in the event you experience technical issues.





CONTENT & COMMUNICATION

Although hybrid models are a great step for our industry, we need to keep in mind that for the time being most of our audiences will still be behind screens when attending events. That means that content is still king. Optimizing content so that it resonates with both sets of attendees will be critical for retaining engagement. That doesn't necessarily mean that everything has to look the same for both audiences. But creating a consistent experience across your different attendee types and providing plenty of opportunities for your remote audience to interact with your content will aid in strengthening their attention span and experience.

Invest in dynamic content

Screen fatigue is a harsh reality these days, so vary the type of content you utilize with your attendees. Although PowerPoint presentations and live speakers are a comfortable go-to, using the same format repetitively can get old and lose your audience. Where possible, work in videos, networking applications, augmented reality or animated content to mix things up and help maintain attention and interest from both of your audiences.

ATTENDEE ENGAGEMENT

Attendee engagement continues to be one of the biggest challenges for hybrid formats and understandably so. Recreating the allure of a live event can be tough for audiences at home, and in-person experiences don't feel the same with social distancing and safety protocols for attendees. But, achieving quality engagement can be made easier when keeping in mind that the human connection is still as important as it's always been. Creating shared experiences for guests, prioritizing the needs of virtual attendees and really nailing down your agenda during the planning phase to facilitate consistent communication can help effectively bridge that gap.

Prioritize virtual attendees

Even looking ahead, when the scales tip and your hybrid events have more in-person than remote attendees, it will still be critical to prioritize your remote attendees' experience. It is much more difficult to keep remote attendees engaged and alert during hybrid events. Plan your agenda around the time zones of your virtual attendees, create mirrored content delivery strategies, include interactive elements and consider an event series model or creating smaller regional hybrid events if your time zones are impossible to align to keep that engagement up.



It is impossible to deny the incredible shift we've seen within the industry towards the adoption of hybrid meetings and events and its ability to revitalize the human connection. Even amidst the year's uncertainties if anything is true it is that even as this industry continues to change, hybrid will be here to stay. As we look to 2021 and beyond, this shift begs some questions: How can we address the challenges that will accompany the growth of hybrid events? What benefits have we uncovered as a result of embracing hybridized models? Will those advantages have staying power as the industry continues to evolve?

If you're interested in learning more about what trends will emerge with the rise in hybrid meetings, keep an eye out for more key considerations in our Hybrid Event Series on our blog.

WHAT *you* CAN DO

1. Develop a deep understanding of your client's goals and their audience to inform your event planning, preparation and strategy. A keen understanding of what your different audiences need will help you craft an agenda and event that doesn't break your budget and keeps attendees engaged.
2. Even after creating a sound agenda and event strategy, always make sure you have a plan B in place. The technology and production resources available for organizing hybrid events can be incredible tools, but even the best technology can fail. Ensure you have a backup plan in case of technology failure, internet delays or broadcasting issues to keep your content seamlessly flowing and engagement high.
3. Prioritize and invest in dynamic content. Whether it's videos, animation, augmented reality or live speakers, your content is the main event and your technology is its delivery vehicle. Make conscious choices to create a consistent experience for both audiences, vary the formatting and optimize the delivery to keep engagement high and screen fatigue low.

FOR THE GREATER *good.*

There are trending themes in our industry that continue to evolve but not disappear. These are topics that remain top of mind because they impact every one of us as individuals, our organizations and our world. 2020 has been a year full of reflection on many different levels. It's been humbling to say the least, and it's also given us a chance to pause and re-evaluate where our collective efforts can make the best impact.

From transportation services to hotels, technology providers and more, many businesses involved in corporate events have been impacted by the global pandemic. In order to efficiently adapt to current changes and successfully move forward we must rely on one another's help and insight. Sharing knowledge around the latest restrictions, policies and best practices is crucial. Since safety and innovation are key to surviving in a post-pandemic world, collaboration is necessary for progress. There will always be a need for people to meet in order to accomplish business goals. And, by working together we can contribute to kick-starting a thriving industry once again.

What we do individually, as organizations and as an industry has the ability to impact the world. Let's make sure it's for the greater good.



WELL-being

The meetings and events industry, one of the most high-stress fields, has always placed priority on the mental health of employees and attendees. Conversations around stress management are still imperative, but an emphasis must now be placed on physical well-being too. As hybrid becomes more common and face-to-face an eventual reality, attendee safety as well as that of employees onsite, is of the highest priority. Necessary precautions will need to be outlined and followed at every part of the planning process. We must all do our part to take the necessary precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19. With human connection at the epicenter of our industry, it's our responsibility to make meeting again as safe as possible.

sustainability

With the reduction of travel, meals and materials, virtual events already offer an eco-friendlier option. But due to the pandemic's economic impact, there's still an immense need to focus on social sustainability. By incorporating initiatives into meeting programs, it provides opportunity for involvement at mass. Consider shipping pre-paid boxes to attendee homes to collect clothing donations or send meal packing kits for a virtual packaging session in support of an organization working to end hunger. By helping individuals and families, we're not only taking ownership of our social responsibility but also increasing the chance of a thriving economy post-pandemic.



DIVERSITY & *inclusion*

In 2020, awareness around diversity and inclusion was an issue thrust to the forefront of every industry, including meetings & events. Many organizations have taken a proactive approach by creating internal task forces to evaluate and establish D&I policies as well as provide necessary education around this important topic to address it at every level of an organization. The conversations have also encouraged meetings & events professionals to become more mindful of individual variances throughout each part of the attendee experience. Establishing and executing diversity and inclusion initiatives not only ensures each participant feels welcomed during an event but also sets a precedent with the aim to inspire other individuals and industries—in 2021 and beyond.



D&I Ideas:

- Include a diverse representation of speakers
- Provide live captioning during presentations
- Consider crafting a Diversity & Inclusion statement for your organization and/or event
- Be sensitive of dietary preferences due to religious reasons in addition to health restrictions

SUPPORT *Local*

Unfortunately, necessary quarantine precautions in 2020 put a halt on many businesses that couldn't afford a closed door. Now that restrictions have lifted in some areas, it's more important than ever to support local commerce. These businesses are important because they help to provide new jobs, create competition which leads to lower prices long-term and often have a smaller carbon footprint than larger companies. Luckily, the meetings and events industry has ample opportunities to support these establishments by planning local outings for incentives, providing catering from independently owned restaurants and sourcing gifts from local vendors.



WHEN WE *work together, we...*

We value true partnership above all else. Even with our world turned upside down, we have partnered with our customers to do some incredible things over the last few months. Here's a snapshot of what can happen when we work together.



STRENGTHEN OUR PARTNERSHIPS

BCD M&E is very proud to have been recognized with the global #StongerTogether Bayer Partnership Award in July for our contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our partnership enabled Bayer colleagues to continue striving for their vision of “Health for all, Hunger for none” and is a real recognition of the work our teams did to manage a huge amount of cancellations and postponements, as well as provide guidance during the first stages/impacts of COVID-19 to Bayer’s meeting program.



CAN REACH A WIDER AUDIENCE

When the COVID-19 crisis forced our global non-profit client to shift one of their annual meetings from live to virtual, we pivoted, managed and executed the event with a tailored approach. BCD M&E served as the client’s in-house creative team, supporting their website, social media and broadcast production. The TV broadcast approach created a familiar setting for their audience and leveraged a local radio host and keynote speaker to enhance their messaging and create engaging content. Additionally, they were able to increase the size of their audience by attracting year on year sponsors and local businesses by using their social media to engage the community.

As a result of this content-rich and focused strategy, our client was able to reach a wider audience for their annual event than in years past and is considering continuing to use a virtual format in the future to retain that engagement and participation.





CREATE SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to evolve in the beginning of 2020, our global pharmaceutical client was quick to stop all face-to-face meetings and travel. For the regional office, this created challenges around maintaining momentum with business opportunities and sales. Our dedicated BCD M&E team was quick to identify the need to move to an alternative space and equip ourselves with the necessary skills to move the client's meetings to a virtual platform. This also meant understanding limitations and boundaries governing security to push forward with the changes. Our team effectively showcased our abilities by adapting to multiple platforms and have completed 60 virtual meetings for our client since July 2020. Given the relaxation of some COVID related meeting restrictions, we were able to conduct the client's first hybrid meeting in their office and projected online to an audience in both Singapore and Malaysia. We believe that the meetings landscape will continue to change and have been actively upskilling to ensure successful meetings for the client whether they are virtual or hybrid.



DEVELOP FULL SERVICE SOLUTIONS

One of our global pharmaceutical clients contacted us to ask for our participation in an RFP for their virtual sales program. For the last 9 years of our partnership we had only managed their full-service internal sales incentive program. Given their long-standing relationship with their production provider, we initially denied the request expecting it to be a procurement pricing exercise.

Ultimately, we participated in the bid process, presented to senior leadership and won the virtual sales business from their long-term incumbent. Based on the performance with the virtual meeting, we have now been asked back to participate in a virtual RFP for their incentive program which will operate in the spring of 2021. We will provide full-service support for the program including a communications campaign, attendee journey mapping, full-service production, registration and platform support, platform design and full project management.



EMPLOY INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Today, clients across all industries have come to terms with virtual meetings being the key communications platform to meet their day to day requirements—whether they are launching a new product, creating awareness through education or simply keeping their customers engaged.

In efforts to introduce innovative practices to our luxury automotive client, we created a concept for their very first virtual training program for the brand's dealers and distributors across the region. We steered away from the traditional "presentation" format and aligned with their brand marketing team's campaign for the to-be-launched car model. BCD M&E fabricated a branded "home" within a studio to compliment the new car model and set the scene for the audience. Individual presenters became characters in a storyline we weaved, with the car as the key focus in their exchanges. We also created a platform with longevity: a mini branded TV series. Their dealers and distributors can now look forward to the next episode and new seasons.

WHAT'S

Trending

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