

unexpected
TRENDS
2020

We believe in the power of #HUMANCONNECTION.

hello.



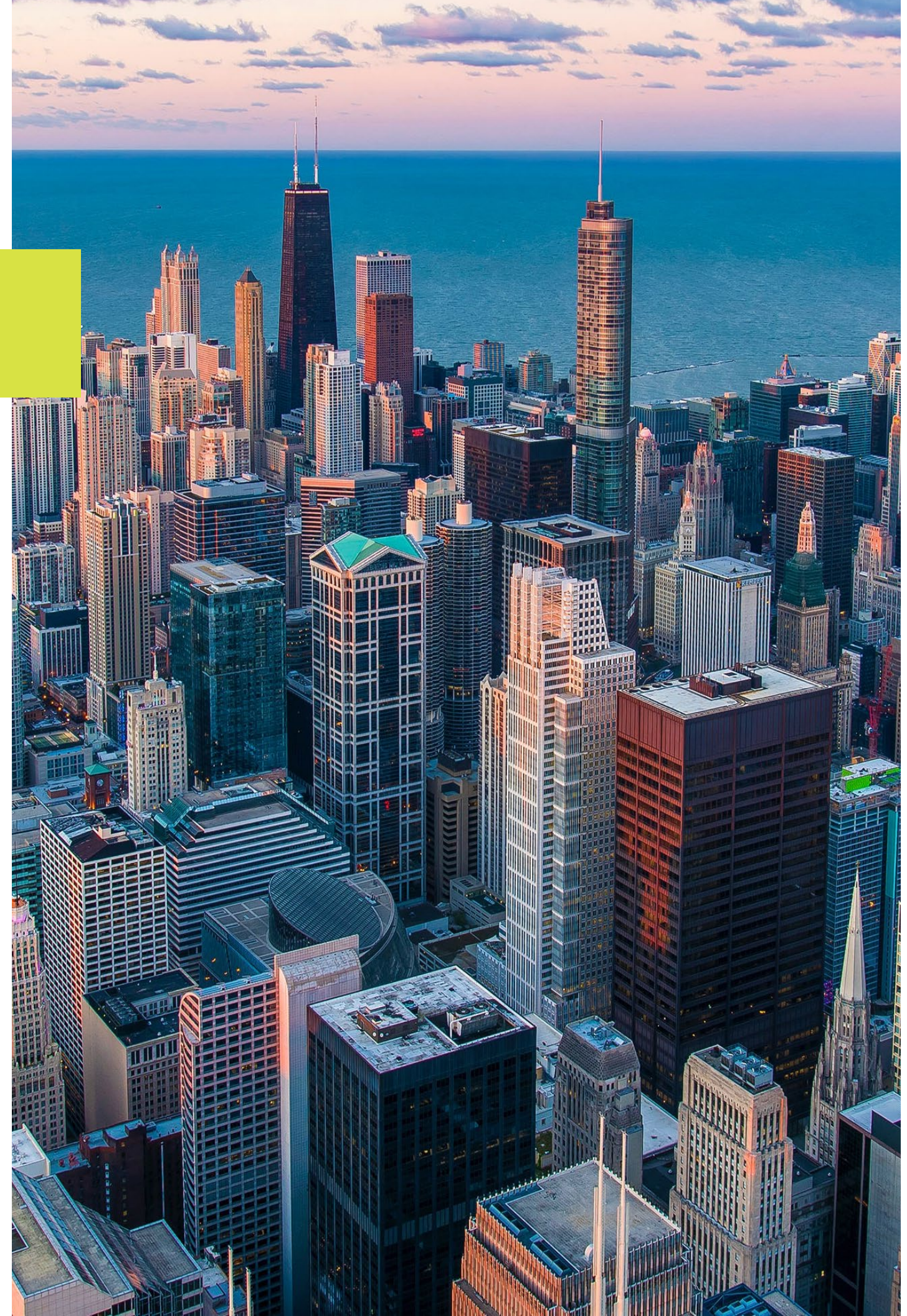
It has been just months since we first found our industry and lives at a standstill, yet some days it feels more like a lifetime. As we come together to create the path forward, the power of human connection is more relevant than ever. At BCD M&E, we've never been prouder to be part of the meetings & events industry. As we look forward to the future, we thought we would take a (very unplanned) pulse check around the world to share what's currently trending in our space.

Over these last few months, we've stayed close to you, our customers and partners, listening to your perspectives for mutual re-emergence from COVID-19. Collectively, we've reflected on how we plan for the protection of our people, save jobs, find creative ways to bring people together and drive the future of meetings & events. We've seen the true value of solid communications strategy, witnessed the transition of live events to virtual experiences and focused on creating modern meetings & events that empower and engage attendees while keeping them safe.

Above all, I know everything we have done and continue to do is to re-emerge in a healthy and stable manner, passionate about bringing people together. We will be ready when you are. For now, we're Still Connecting—albeit in new and unexpected ways.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Graf". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Scott Graf
Global President
BCD Meetings & Events



FROM AROUND

The World.



NORTH AMERICA

CHARLENE RABIDEAU — *SVP, Meetings Management & Global Client Team*
CHRISTINE ERICKSON — *SVP, U.S. Event Solutions & Sports*

With face-to-face meetings & events coming to a complete halt earlier this year, North America has had to embrace new ways of connecting, educating and engaging. Pivoting to virtual has been critical, but the “why” remains the same. The same business goals still exist, we’ve just had to approach the way we help clients achieve them differently. Companies are looking for ways to ensure their program strategy is on point and managed most effectively across the entire meeting and event life cycle. Trends we are experiencing include the move to digital, the need for personalization in strategic communications, and attention to sustainability and diversity and inclusion.



LATIN AMERICA

ANA PAULA HERNANDEZ — *VP Latin America*

LATAM was latest region impacted by COVID-19 and while other parts of the world are now re-opening, we are still seriously affected. With most of our cities in lockdown, we don’t expect face-to-face meetings to return until Q1 2021. Clients have expressed they will continue with virtual solutions. As things evolve and based on the recommendations from authorities, they will start to meet again in person. Our ability to support them with the postponement or cancellation of their events and the capacity to support them in redesigning their meetings & events strategy has been significant. Our team of more than 200 meetings & events professionals across the region have been working side by side with our valued customers since March to provide strategic insights, and we continue helping them make decisions towards the new reality.



EMEA

MIKAEL EK — *Managing Director, EMEA*

EMEA was the second region affected by the pandemic after APAC with Italy and Iran being hit the hardest initially. Despite enormous government funded work time reduction programs to avoid layoffs, we have seen and are still seeing an increased amount of talented M&E leaders and specialists being made redundant due to less demand and rightsizing of teams. Clients initially needed our support in canceling or postponing projects and to understand contractual aspects of liability but also duty of care. We’ve seen an impressive shift towards digital meetings replacing many of the traditional face-to-face meetings for now. Conversations with customers are shifting to be around the financial impact of the pandemic, i.e. future negotiations with suppliers. We are providing strategic support as our customers seek advise on how to improve their M&E program with duty of care and digitalization being the most important aspects of the discussion.



UK

HELEN MCCABE — *Managing Director, UK*

Connecting with our customers has been our number one priority in the UK as we saw the impact of the pandemic unfolding. Our clients reacted faster than local government, placing duty of care at the heart of their decision making. Like other regions, customers relied on our partnership to support their negotiations and risk for every cancellation. We proactively connected our senior UK leadership with customers and then shifted our service to meet quickly changing priorities—focusing on virtual solutions, communications, sustainability and delivering safe and effective meetings. We have advised the British Government on a return to meetings and have focused on our people and moved to a world of hyper-communication to stay connected.



ASIA PACIFIC

SANJAY SETH — *Managing Director, Asia Pacific*

The APAC region was where the pandemic originated, where it was contained and where we are seeing new waves appear. Lock downs, quarantines, work from home protocols and safe distancing measures are the new lexicon. Yet, at no other time in the meeting and events industry has the idea of human connection been more significant. The virus has forced us to look to technology—the great disruptor—to adapt and survive. Digital solutions, including virtual meetings, have been at the forefront of solutions we’ve created for clients, who look to us to provide strategic advice for their meeting programs. We have helped them continue to connect with their customers, in some cases with reassurances where there was initial hesitation on the medium. Integrating virtual meetings into their existing meeting programs has strengthened and enhanced their programs during this global disruption.

Hear from our regional leaders on how they and their teams are coping, how we are supporting clients and what the future of business might look like.

WHAT'S *trending?*

MODERN MEETINGS— LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This is a moment when companies are pausing and looking internally to reevaluate their programs, ensuring their attention is in the right place—keeping them sustainable, focused on safety and backed by adaptable strategies to keep them relevant through unstable times (like a global pandemic) and into the future. Now is the time for facilitating future-forward thinking conversations to understand opportunities to enhance a program and overall approach to meetings and events execution.

Understanding how suppliers have reacted and remained operational during the pandemic and how they are emerging from it while preparing for future sustainability is also critical. And in addition to the impact to suppliers, we must consider the impact to an organization, employees and the general operation of a program.

MANAGING ATTENDEE EXPECTATIONS

In the new future of meetings and events, face-to-face will be executed in tandem with virtual, and new expectations for attendees will need to be set. Organizations will need to meet audiences where they are and communicate new processes and experiences put in place to protect everyone involved with clarity.

Planners will need to ensure that attendee engagement strategies and communications are adapted for both the live and virtual audiences, and that allowances are made to combine both audience groups to experience events as a collective experience rather than as two distinctive groups. This may mean adapting schedules or combining smaller live and virtual attendee groups for innovative and interactive sessions.

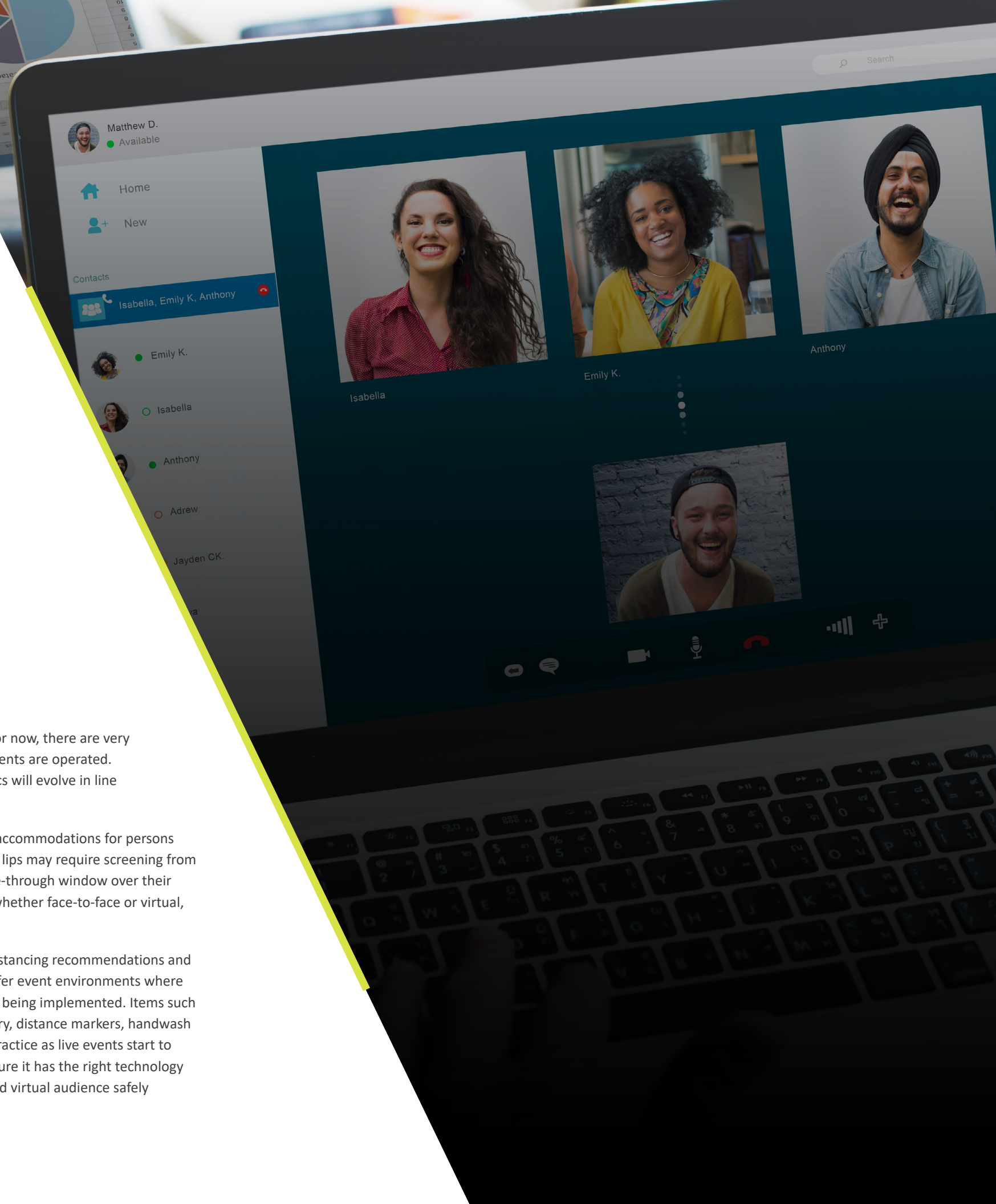
Having a good communication plan around events with targeted attendee messaging will be key, to ensure important messaging resonates at the right communication touchpoints.

CHANGES TO LOGISTICS

While hybrid program strategies will remain the norm for now, there are very tangible new trends we will see in how meetings and events are operated. Beyond supplier approvals and reporting, on-site logistics will evolve in line with this new way of bringing people together.

New health and safety measures may also require new accommodations for persons with special needs. For example, deaf patrons who read lips may require screening from a worker wearing a clear face covering or one with a see-through window over their mouth. It is important to know your attendee's needs, whether face-to-face or virtual, to ensure all are considered and supported.

The biggest change will be the incorporation of social distancing recommendations and COVID-19 protection measures that will help provide safer event environments where attendees feel that the appropriate safety measures are being implemented. Items such as non-contact temperature check technology upon entry, distance markers, handwash stations and mask provisions will all become standard practice as live events start to re-emerge. Additionally, sourcing the right venue to ensure it has the right technology infrastructure as well as room space to support a live and virtual audience safely will be critical.





Mitigating risk in contracts has always been a core focus of any program, but it's even more important in the face of COVID-19, especially as the globe begins to reopen. [Click here](#) to read about the future of contract negotiations.



As hotels are re-opening and starting to receive new RFPs, they are working with reduced staff. Now is the time to potentially ask **FEWER** questions to help them streamline, taking the time to really understand what's important during the initial request.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For on-site staff and attendees, staying healthy is a must!

- Make sure to stay hydrated while traveling
- Wash your hands often, especially after interacting with others or touching shared surfaces
- If traveling by air, wipe down the tray table, in-seat entertainment system and the seat pocket and avoid touching surfaces in the airplane bathroom
- Find new ways to greet others to avoid shaking hands when in groups
- Practice extra care with hygiene, for example by sneezing into your arm or a tissue

WHAT'S

trending?

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS— THE POWER TO DRIVE HUMAN CONNECTION

Today, meeting and event communication strategies are front and center. They are still a key part of a greater business strategy, but the considerations we've always faced are amplified in the current landscape. Bringing audiences together emotionally has never been more imperative. While many of us are working from home, the ways in which an organization communicates with employees, clients and partners can make a big difference in keeping connections strong.

In the immediate landscape, we're seeing communications programs needing to be executed within shorter runways. The quick pivot to virtual requires having subject matter experts in the room from the get-go. New additions to your initial planning team might include content developers, sponsorship strategists, gifting partners, production managers, IT specialists and web development teams. As we embrace the benefits of virtual meetings and begin to deliver hybrid events, these new planning teams will likely become the norm.

DRIVING ENGAGEMENT

With audiences more virtual than ever, now is the time to start thinking about harnessing the narratives and thought leadership within your organization and network. Use those stories to fuel empowerment, education, belonging and sense of community—make your audience anticipate your touchpoints. New endeavors require buy-in and commitment but can support long-term engagement strategies.

Faced with a global pandemic, challenges working from home and calls to civil action, audiences may be preoccupied, sensitive and understandably difficult to engage. Today's meeting and event professionals are challenged to promote belonging, purpose and wellbeing. When designing your engagement strategies, think about including Human Resources, Internal Communications, Marketing, and Diversity & Inclusion teams in the conversation. Avoid building communications in silo—you get better engagement with more perspectives represented.





For ideas on how to use content to build a sense of community, [read our blog](#).



Understand how to pivot your live event to a virtual experience. By knowing how your audience likes to receive information, you can tailor the content to meet them where they are. [Learn more from our experts](#).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Now is the time to be authentic.** Audiences will connect more deeply with honest communications that address our shared current realities along with business needs.
- **Be sensitive to differing experiences.** Not everyone is going through this time in the same way. Be hyper-aware of your tone and messaging to bring people together and not isolate those who may be having a particularly trying time.
- **Think virtually.** Mix produced virtual meetings and events into your overall content strategy. They provide a more polished way to deliver content and connect with audiences.
- **Collaborate** with diverse stakeholders to fully map out your engagement strategy pre, during and post event in a way that resonates across audiences.
- **Keep it varied.** Communications campaigns should be multi-dimensional. Go beyond email to a dynamic event website, social channels, intentional gifting, post mail, and community partnerships.

WHAT'S trending?

VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS— CONTENT DELIVERY REIMAGINED

Virtual meetings and events are not new. We're familiar with "going live" broadcasts and digital presentations. Recently, these virtual touch points have been the only way of bringing people together. While we know things will be back to in-person with time, there will be a slow process to get back to where we were.

As we start planning for business to resume, virtual and then hybrid meetings will become an essential part of the meeting mix. We expect an increased interest in offering a virtual solution for certain meetings as part of a long-term strategy.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS & EVENTS

There are a wide variety of virtual meeting platforms, and none is "one size fits all." Depending on the exact needs and specifications of the meeting or event (such as translations, live polling or Q&A), the audience, content mix and goals of the overall program, different platforms will fit best.

Planners can also determine what platform is used based on their existing relationships and what technology attendees are likely most comfortable using, guidance from their IT departments and security requirements.

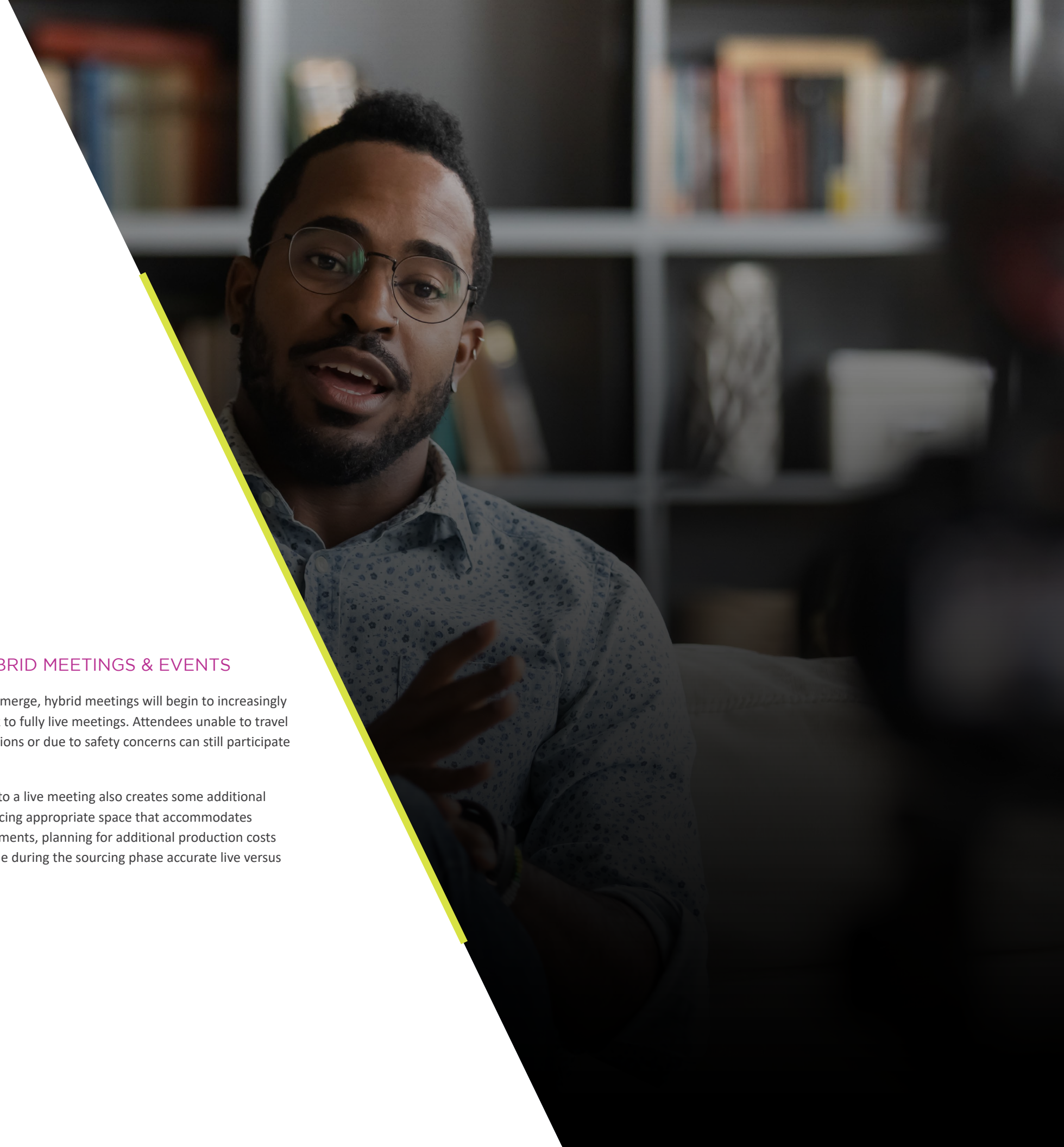
Expect that virtual meetings technologies will innovate and be disrupted due to the growth in demand. Partnering with an experienced supplier in this space will help you keep on top of new innovative options that help provide enhanced attendee experiences.

Although technology is a central part of the hosting of a virtual meeting, the wrap around support services such as registration and attendee management, communications planning, creative and production support, should also be acknowledge as essential components of designing a virtual meeting.

THE RISE OF HYBRID MEETINGS & EVENTS

As meetings begin to re-emerge, hybrid meetings will begin to increasingly bridge the transition back to fully live meetings. Attendees unable to travel due to local travel restrictions or due to safety concerns can still participate in this format.

Adding a virtual element to a live meeting also creates some additional complexities such as sourcing appropriate space that accommodates additional production elements, planning for additional production costs and the need to determine during the sourcing phase accurate live versus virtual attendee counts.





Creative and production: If your face-to-face-meeting has a virtual component, you must also consider the creative content design to engage in-room and virtual at the same time. This is an added service BCD M&E can offer, forming part of the attendee journey and engagement strategy pre, during and post.



Experience virtual meetings for yourself! [Click here](#) to schedule a free demo with our experts and discover how to elevate your digital events.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

MEASURING THE RETURN.

Pre-defining a methodology to measure the impact of your virtual meetings strategy is a paramount consideration when rolling out a virtual meetings line of service. Some suggested methodologies include:

- **Percentage target:** Setting a virtual meetings percentage target across all meetings
- **Savings:** Cost savings of holding a virtual/hybrid meeting versus a live meeting
- **Sustainability:** Calculating CO2 emission avoidance
- **Behavior changes:** Measuring behavioral changes that occur as an impact of your events
- **Attendee engagement:** Measuring attendee engagement across programs. Examples may include poll and Q&A engagement, open and click rates, survey engagement/feedback, RSVP response and social media engagement
- **Sales:** Measuring sales 90 days post meeting

try this

It's important to find ways to unwind, especially during times of elevated stress. Keeping your mental health strong is as crucial as keeping your body healthy. Here we give you some ideas on how you can de-stress while under social isolation.



Quiet time

As we self-isolate, it might be beneficial to keep a radio or TV on in the background to give yourself a sense of normalcy. We're all for it! But in the midst of all of the noise, try to turn off for a little bit every day. Even just five minutes of complete silence with a few deep breaths can allow your body to release tension and slow down.



Have a sense of humor

Things are not easy right now and there is a lot to be somber about. But finding reasons to laugh every day can do wonders for your physical and mental health. Laughing naturally releases stress and you just can't help but feel a little lighter. Try calling a funny friend, listening to a clever podcast or looking through photos of things that make you laugh. You'll feel better immediately!



Mindful media consumption

If you're constantly scrolling your news feed, it can easily become an overwhelming amount of information to process. While it's critical to stay informed with updates from trusted health organizations, try to limit the amount of news you consume daily. Be mindful to not be sucked into a rabbit hole every time you begin to scroll.

remind me

1

MODERN MEETINGS

For on-site staff and attendees, staying healthy is a must!

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- Practice extra care with hygiene, for example by sneezing into your arm or a tissue

2

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Communications have the power to bring people together, even while we are apart. For best impact, remember:

- **Now is the time to be authentic.** Audiences will connect more deeply with honest communications that address our shared current realities along with business needs.
- **Be sensitive** to differing experiences. Not everyone is going through this time in the same way. Be hyper-aware of your tone and messaging to bring people together and not isolate those who may be having a particularly trying time.
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3

VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Pre-define a methodology to measure the impact of your virtual strategy. Consider:

- **Percentage target:** Setting a virtual meetings percentage target across all meetings
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- **Sustainability:** Calculating CO2 emission avoidance
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inspire ME

Eventually we will go back to doing what we do best – coming together and creating live experiences that move, educate, inspire and reward – all around the world. But, it might take a while. So in the meantime, we thought we would share some of our favorite moments from past events...**until we meet again.**



Dubai



Puerto Rico



Netherlands



Thailand



Norway



Portugal



USA



Mexico

#WISHYOUWEREHERE

Still
Connecting.

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