

Predictions for the Continuing Evolution of Virtual and Hybrid Events

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The world of virtual and hybrid conventions, corporate events, trade shows and meetings will further evolve as the world continues to dig out from the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, PGI saw an increase of 136 percent in the number of hybrid and virtual events.

The pandemic forced audiences and organizations to interact with one another in new ways. Some approaches worked better than others, but these changes were likely just the beginning.

Based on our conversations with and what we're hearing from customers, we anticipate the number of such events will only increase moving forward. Companies learned during the pandemic that virtual and hybrid events weren't just a stopgap measure but a viable alternative that will continue in the post-pandemic world.

The old adage that "the only constant in life is change" has never been truer than after a year in lockdown. Looking ahead, and in the spirit of embracing change, here are three predictions for how virtual and hybrid events will further evolve over the next year.

They will be more relevant and regionalized.

The pandemic tested our time and patience in ways we couldn't previously imagine and will never forget. As a result, many no longer have the patience for meaningless exercises, including

gatherings that do not add value.

Successful events will also tailor their offerings to deliver a valuable experience that exceeds attendees' expectations. Content cannot remain static; it must be something audiences can engage with and provide value.

To this end, when in-person gatherings return, many will turn to a series of smaller events at locations throughout the country rather than bringing everyone to a single site.

While the events may be shorter and seemingly reduced in scope, they can be more tailored, leading to more robust and beneficial interactions. Taking this approach will allow organizations to adhere to social distancing and other COVID-inspired safety protocols and potentially help attendees reduce their travel budgets.

They will be more flexible.

The world is still in a state of flux, and many organizations are determining what their travel budgets should be. Technology offers organizations the opportunity to create content that attendees can consume on their schedules. That means an event is no longer limited to a particular time and date.

Organizers can create content ahead of time and make it shorter and more digestible. It can also live on post-event as part of ongoing nurture campaigns. Plus, taking this approach will enable companies to engage with anyone who planned to attend in person but who had to cancel their travel plans at the last moment.

Experience will take center stage.

If the pandemic taught us anything, aside from perseverance, it should be that experiences matter. In the year ahead and beyond, audiences will place new value on the experiences. To

deliver a positive one will require organizations to understand and engage with their audiences in more meaningful ways.

The successful organizations will be the ones that take this lesson to heart and offer events that provide attendees with the information they need to be successful in the new era that is dawning.

While they may seem daunting now, the pandemic-inspired changes are an opportunity we should seize to future-proof our approach to event planning. Hopefully, this once-in-a-generation pandemic won't make an encore, but if it does, we'll be prepared and better connected.

Are you ready?



About the Author: *Lauren Weatherly is the SVP of marketing at global virtual meetings and events company PGI, www.pgi.com, which is dedicated to making meetings and online events simple to join and secure to use so people connect wherever they are. She is responsible for developing and leading a results-focused global marketing strategy to drive growth and build brand recognition for the company.*