



The Future Of Events In The US Post COVID-19

Whitepaper

Table of Contents

Introduction

Current State Of the Event Industry in US During The Pandemic

How Are Your Event Strategies Affected By COVID-19

Pivot To Online Events

Pivoting To Online Events In Associations And Chambers

The Hybrid Approach

Monetization of Virtual Events

Balancing Revenue And Customer Experience

Enhance and Monetize Your Virtual Events

Video Recording From Panel Discussion

Contact Info

Introduction

The current health crisis has certainly taken a toll on the event industry and as a result industry's future landscape is bound to transform.

Panel



Deborah Rosati
Founder & CEO of
Women Get On Board



Julie Coons
CEO of Northern Virginia
Chamber of Commerce



Sarah Markfield
Vice President at
Association For Print
Technologies



Aidan Augustin
Co-Founder & President
of Feathr



Eric Schmidt
CEO of Glue Up

But every crisis has two sides - a challenge and an opportunity. As such, it's not just a matter of getting the event industry engine restarted. The collective event ecosystem must understand what has changed, and what will be the best position for the industry to grow together and become a global force once again.

Many conferences and industry events worldwide are being cancelled or postponed, but the learning doesn't have to stop. With more employees working from home, organizers and participants of in-person events were forced to switch to digital. While in-person events will not be replaced entirely after COVID-19, event organizers will have to figure out ways how to drive revenue through events post crisis.

In partnership with Feathr, Glue Up (formerly EventBank) hosted a panel discussion last May 7, 2020, where a diverse panel of event leaders came together to discuss what will be the future of events post pandemic.

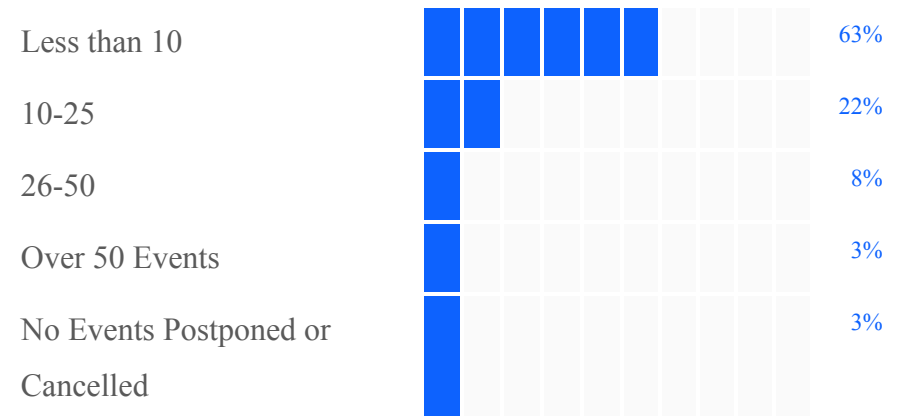
Current State Of The Event Industry In US During The Pandemic

Among survey respondents

98%

have considered or starting learning new skills

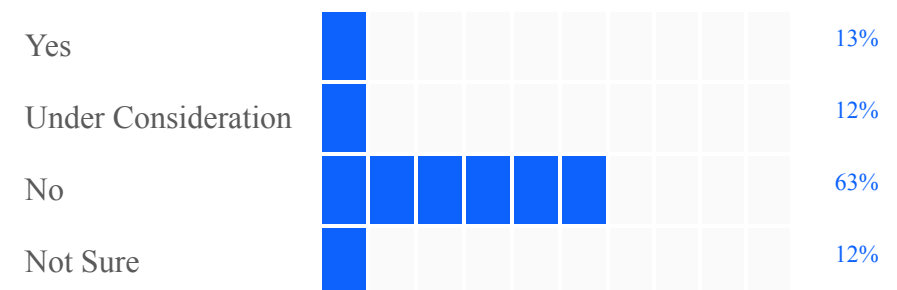
How many face-to-face events have you cancelled or postponed during the COVID-19 Pandemic?



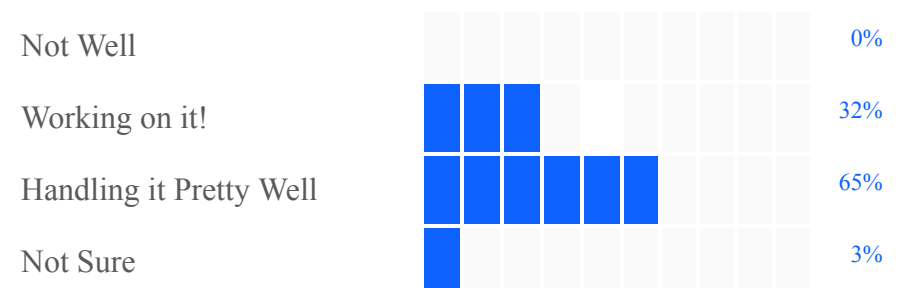
Has your organization implemented any salary cuts as a direct result of COVID-19?

75%

of organizations have had no reductions in their workforce



How Well do you think your organization is handling the COVID-19 Pandemic?



How Are Your Event Strategies Affected By COVID-19

According to statistical data, a total of 74 countries that were impacted by COVID-19 pandemic have cancelled or extended international meetings or relocated during the months of March and April. It seems to be, however, a trend that more and more have shifted to online events.

"Some key signature events will be cancelled. Some smaller monthly events will become virtual for the next quarter at least."

Chris Clark

CEO, Queens Creek Chambers of Commerce

The changes are mainly concentrated in the field of scientific research and technology services, but rental and commercial services reveal the highest change ratio of changing their event management strategies. Based on conference size, it seems that smaller and mid-sized conferences and events are the most impacted. Medium and large conferences are greatly affected by the epidemic and small and large conferences are less affected. By dividing 381 international conferences that have provided the expected number of participants into small, medium, large meetings according to the scale of attendance, adjusted by 193 times, accounting for 50, 66% of the total.

"They will look completely different from our usual packed houses. We will continue with our virtual town hall series and will host some smaller more intimate major donor events in the fall."

Sarah Kittle
Event Manager, Chaldean
American Chamber of
Commerce

The main challenge that organizations have is monetizing the events as much as in-person events, because there are no fees for admission or tickets. With that, there is also the problem of marketing virtual events to attract enough people to attend. Also, because there is not an actual location, it is difficult for many sponsors to want to be a part of events or trade shows. In APAC, during June, chambers and trade shows are beginning to happen as the main wave of the pandemic has passed, and the idea of distancing and safety measures during events is considered. Through these new experiences, however, Feathr believes companies can learn more about the opportunities of moving to online conferences and events as well. Also, because so many events are being delayed until next year, there will likely be overlapping in events so that there is increased competition for attracting audiences.

Additional reading: [27 Strategies to Run a Successful Webinar](#)

"We're re-evaluating each quarter and working to determine what can work virtually going forward. Anything planned "live" will have a Plan B in place!"

Kate Lee

Executive Director, Education & Workforce, South Bend Regional Chamber

Pivot To Online Events

The pivot to online events from face-to-face events creates a need for a certain level of technological standards for companies around the world. These factors primarily revolve around the idea that the technology implemented when pivoting to online events are the reliability and readiness of the platform. To pivot to online events from face-to-face events, one must consider the resistance to change some participants may have. Changing from a traditional face-to-face event structure to one that is hosted online may seem counter-intuitive for participants because having the in-person interaction is the value they see in events.

Event Management Communication

It is important for the event industry that all stakeholders are updated. Event management software may help people communicate with attendees effectively, particularly with mobile app notifications. Your event website is another area that will be important to communicate effectively with attendees. The event management can be used for communicating re-scheduled or cancelled events, or updates on the pandemic. Just be sure to let people know what's happening. Communication is key especially in a time of crisis.

Among surveyed respondents

55%

have seen decreases in their budgets
and revenues

With the rapidly concerning COVID-19, threat looming over the globe, it's important for organizations to communicate, cancel, re-evaluate events, expectations and activities for members and attendees alike. With professionals working at home to prevent the spread of the virus, it is fast-become known as the world's biggest work-from-home experiment, and this directly affects organizations and events.

Cancelling or postponing an event, especially when it happens because of reasons out of your control, is one of the most headache-inducing problems you can possible face.

According to the World Health Organisation, "meeting organizers must liaise with public health authorities and facilitate the sharing of information about all symptomatic participants," so event management communication needs to update information in itineraries, contact information, and visa procedures.

Additional reading: [14 Strategies for Paid Webinars that Bring Value](#)

Among surveyed respondents

45%

estimate negative growth in 2020
revenues

Online Engagement

To ensure that the participants are getting the level of in-person interaction, the platform that you are pivoting to must provide a high level of engagement, not only from the speakers to the participants, but also inter-participant engagement opportunities. Allowing the participants to network with one another is a value on your platform because participants will be able to interact with other individuals who work in the same industry. A method for doing that may be to allow participants to create e-business cards on your platform and share it with whomever they choose to, on your event platform. This can be attractive to new participants because it allows them to continue to network with other participants who work in the same industry without being limited by the pandemic.

Platform Reliability

When it comes to pivoting to an online event, platform reliability is of utmost importance. An extensively tested platform is necessary in order to iron out as many possible issues with the platform before it is used for an event. Some technological issues may be out of your control, but it conveys a sense of unprofessionalism. Finding a platform that can host your events for you may be the most time efficient and cost efficient solution to platform reliability issues. To develop your own platform may not be a cost effective solution.

Pivoting To Online Events In Associations And Chambers

As associations and chambers regulate their events during the COVID-19 pandemic, they will steadily need to transfer their events online. When doing so they need to create an engaging platform for their participants, as well as, making their events easily accessible by any participant. This can include the ease of installing necessary programs to join the event, and the different devices the platform can be accessed by.

Program Installation

When deciding platforms, associations and chambers must ensure they pick a platform that has ease of access and a low barrier of entry for its participants. Downloading and installing programs on computers is a hassle for most participants, so they would much prefer use software that is already integrated online, software that they already use, or mobile apps. Associations and chambers need to certify that their participants are not turned away from their events because of barriers of entries because of technology, especially during these difficult times.

"Soon we will get back to our small in-person events while still hosting them via Zoom. So hybrid approach going forward."

Jessica Burleson

Events and Program
Manager, Edmond
Chamber of Commerce

Device Accessibility

Another way for associations and chambers to ensure that the platform they implement is accessible from a myriad of different types of devices. An important device implementation on the platform should be that it needs to be mobile device friendly. 25% of people join webinars from a mobile device and associations and chambers would not want to turn 25% of their potential participants away.

Feedback

Participant's feedback needs to be valued when pivoting to online events. A survey should be sent out at the end of every event for the participants to provide some suggestions. On the back end of things, one may not see the slight changes that could be made that could vastly improve the participant's experience. Striving for improvement will help keep you innovating and making changes for the better faster than your competitors. It will make your platform more inviting to participants and easier to use.

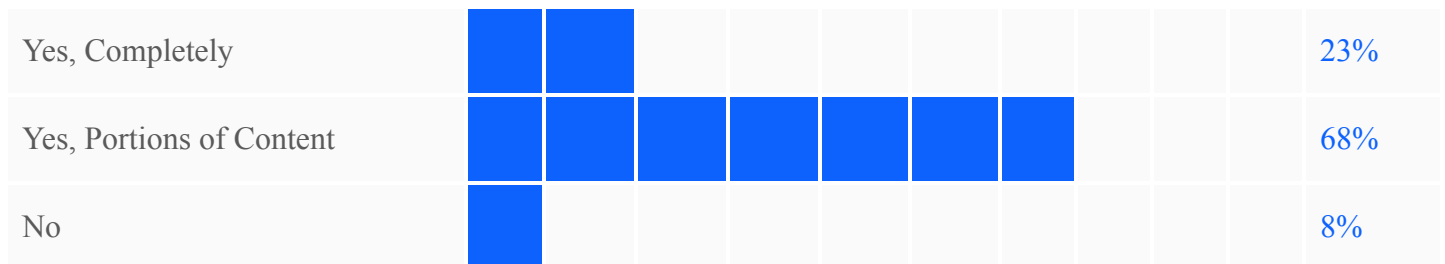
Additional reading: [15 Webinar Invite Email Examples that Bring Viewers](#)

The Hybrid Approach

The Hybrid Approach of having both online participation as well as in-person events seems to be a trend for many industries. By having a lower commitment option, companies might entice people who never would have otherwise paid for content, and these customers may become converted into in-person attendees and members.

There has been high retention and positive feedback with the hybrid model of online events, and importantly helps companies in building their funnel for new members.

Did you or will you move your face-to-face event to a virtual platform?



Online events have allowed companies to attract demographic groups that were formerly not as accessed or engaged. Online events also have the appeal of international outreach, as companies and individuals can participate more easily without the demanding aspect of flying to a physical location across the world, and more audiences who are looking for a product can be reached. In this way, online events have the advantage of replacement value of recorded sessions, online Q&As, and the beforehand of events themselves, by which attendees can engage more with events.

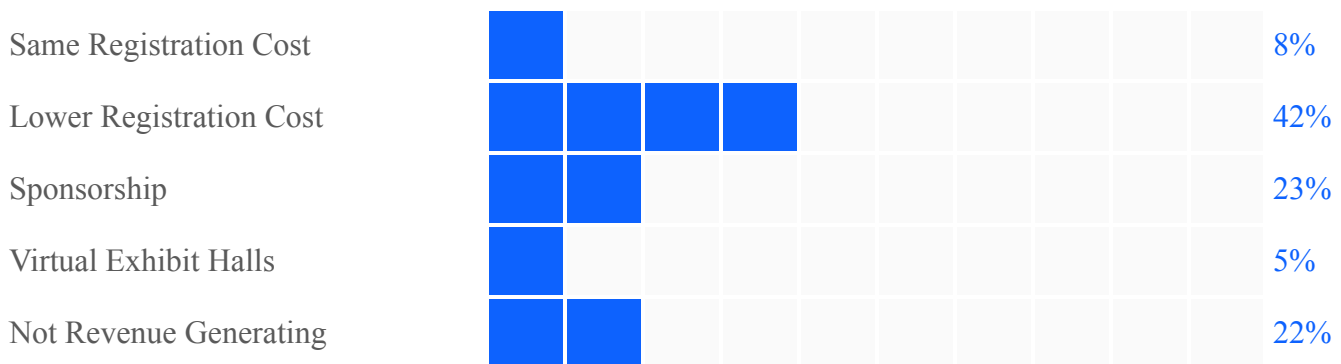
Prerecording has been a best practice for many companies, with speakers or panelists who are played with the speakers in the live chat. Companies can use sound clips, that may engage attendees, and play them to promote upcoming events or products. This increases engagement with speakers and the audience, who can receive more opinions and depth in events. Another advantage to prerecording is that it can prevent time lags across international platforms, so that the event has less technical problems.

Prerecording events can also be used for awards programs, which may be especially used for Chambers, to capture people where they are and adjusting that. While the move to online events has already been a trend, because of the pandemic, this move has accelerated, impacting business models and the necessity for experience with dual online and in-person conferences.

Monetization Of Virtual Events

Increasing your customer experience is important in every organizations, associations or chamber when they want to monetize their events. As more events become based online to combat the effects of the pandemic, these same events need to bring at least the same amount of value or more than a traditional live event. If the value created outweighs the cost, your participants will be more likely willing to pay for your event.

How Did You or Will You Monetize Virtual Events?



Monetizing an event needs to be done with careful pricing considerations because if priced too low, an event can lower the perceived value of the event, however, an event that is priced too high becomes a barrier of entry for some participants. Charging for your virtual events can be done with a 2-step approach. The virtual event tickets should be comparatively lower in price than tickets to a live event. This helps lower the barrier of entry to a wider and possibly more international audience on the virtual end of an event compared to a live end.

In addition, tickets to participate live in a hybrid event will be more expensive than tickets to the same event online. Even with rapidly improving engagement on platforms, having in-person contact will always provide a greater amount of value. Having the virtual end of the event at a lower price attracts a newer crowd as well as the usual crowd because there are much lower barriers of entry compared to a live event. A virtual event can have participants from all around the world rather than limited to a region or a long international flight. Moreover, the lower price provides an incentive for people who are curious in the industry and still are not committed yet to test the waters.

Additional reading: [Hybrid-Webinar Events: Combining Your Online and Offline Attendees](#)

"We will continue to host learning programs online and have canceled our larger in-person regional conference."

Amy Verhulst

Director of Marketing and
Business Development,
Coats Rose, P.C.

Monetization can be done in many ways, and some of them do not require the participants to pay for the event. Sponsorships can help all three participating parties during your online events. It allows the sponsor to build brand awareness as well as image, it allows your participants to join your event for free, and chambers and associations are able to possess a revenue stream without charging the participants.

Improving Trust Before Monetization

Companies can monetize the events online. It is important to improve the trust and relationship with members, so that they know they are receiving high quality content that is digital. The Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce started by using a continuity series for companies and businesses, marketing that and expanding it. The information was given out freely, and the focus was on building the database beyond what it was before. The company converted existing content that they would have been at a cost, to the digital format, on a paid basis as well with lowered prices. They are achieving about 25 percent of what they would have, with a normal registration. It is important for companies to convert, and create a trust so that members are more willing to pay when the product or event is released. Companies can encourage membership in this way because customers will be more willing to join knowing there are lower costs with high value in content.

"We are looking to hold our annual industry awards ceremony fully online in Q3/Q4 2020, and we are looking for a virtual platform to use for this."

Amy Verhulst

Director of Marketing and
Business Development,
Coats Rose, P.C.

Balancing Revenue And Customer Experience

Using online webinars, member based organizations and companies may achieve their purpose by advocating for their customers, or for local, state, and federal advocacy. This can be achieved through bringing specific speakers that may provide knowledge to members, like governors for Chambers, or through federal delegation, get-to-know events available for members, and other opportunities to improve customer experience and retention. Through this, organizations can celebrate members by digital webinar format and digital recordings. Sponsorship and registration revenue must also be considered to achieve profits, but especially during this time, membership is the highest value to be driven.

For Chambers, this would be allowing access to policymakers. Non-profits can better customer experience by being also being engaged and celebrating, being a resource and posting updates, as well as recognizing members of the community that are doing well with corporate responsibility. It may be difficult for the general response of companies' audience to become engaged in virtual versions of large events or celebrations, but it is now more necessary than ever to adjust to the changing times, with flexibility and engagement.

Enhance And Monetize Your Virtual Events

Virtual events have the advantage of ease of communication with large audience and the ability to further understand your audience through analytical features. Make a plan for how you will use the features of a webinar in alignment with your value proposition.

Run professional webinars and provide your attendees with a premium branded experience with Glue Up's [Webinar Engagement Software](#).

Create breath-taking event pages, send out event invite emails and reminders, and get feedback with surveys in only a few easy steps.

Enable your community to create and share their own digital business cards, manage their contacts, book meetings and effectively connect with anyone.

Spark discussions and turn webinars into experiences with live chat, direct messaging, and event room discussions so your audience can network and exchange their experiences.

Enable your brand to stand out, and monetize your webinars with an exclusive premium experience normal platforms can't deliver.

The Future Of Event Industry

According to this event post survey, 77 percent of event organizers found that the event industry would be better prepared to adapt and collaborate in the future. The main challenges in achieving this preparation are of creating incentives for people to pay for events digitally, like in-person, and increasing retention through event experiences. Choosing the platform, pricing model, and medium may be some of the challenges that organizations can experience during this crisis.

Among surveyed firms

77%

feel the event industry is now prepared to adapt and collaborate for the greater good.

Though the crisis has been challenging, the experience seems to be providing a unique opportunity for event industry. Attendees are forced to question and realize the experience of virtual events, while event organizers continue to strive to provide this value to customers through digital. Naturally, even after the pandemic, the strategies used with combining in-person and online events may be included, so that there is more diversification in event experiences for consumers.

While in-person events will not be replaced entirely after COVID-19, the event industry will be more ready than ever. Provided with the right techniques and platform experience needed to create an approach that may be more adaptable and digitally advanced than before. Prior to COVID-19, it was primarily events on the forefront of technology which included gamification, chat bots, chat rooms, virtual streaming, and more and these being standard across all events going forward, not an afterthought or a nice to have.

In the future, there may be increased revitalization in the event industry, due to the ability of the conference industry to drive the economy. There may be increased reinforcement of risk awareness in the future and effectively respond to the impact, the prerequisite is to enhance the risk management awareness of conference service enterprises, adjust corresponding management mechanisms, and stress the handling of unexpected public health incidents. The event industry has played an important role in stimulating the economy by serving diplomacy, hosting events that improve economic development, market vitality, and industrial integration for many industries.

From a global perspective, the conference industry in the United States, Japan, Germany and other countries is mature with a solid economic foundation and experience in resisting market fluctuations and risks.

Video Recording From Panel Discussion



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The Future of Events Post Crisis event was held on May 7, 2020 in partnership with **Feathr**.

Learn about Glue Up's all-in-one Event Management Suite:

<https://www.glueup.com/features/event-management>