

Post-Pandemic: What next for the Events industry?

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With Events changing and adapting in the past year, we need to prepare for a post-pandemic boom for jobs within the industry. Event managers and staff have suffered from the outcomes of the pandemic crisis, with many planners either furloughed or out of work entirely. The pandemic has caused impacts for both large and small organisations within the events industry, but it's now time to prepare for the next steps.

A recent EventMB survey showed about 20% of event professionals have been put out of work through lay-offs and mandatory furloughs' (1) and there is uncertainty whether the event industry will ever be the same again, but we do know for a fact people are desperate to get back to live events once again.

The events industry is essential for the UK economy, soaring to over £42.3 billion per year. An event manager doesn't just consist of planning events, but it involves an entire system of venues, travel, entertainment, media, creative production, design, and catering services (2). Without these logistics, the chain will simply not function. So, what can event managers do, to prepare for the future of events again?

One way to prepare, is adaptation and digitisation. Given the current impacts of social distancing, events simply cannot function as they used to. Innovated and imaginative event managers need to use their professional industry knowledge to 'keep the show going' in a completely new format. Optimising platform use is one example; while there are tools and platforms that both enable and embellish online events (such as VR and AI), the success of an event lies mainly in making the most creative use of them. Often virtual reality is a great innovation to create immersive events because it helps to create an experience.

Another successful strategy to keep attendees engaged is through the 'new normal' event platform. As countries slowly begin to reopen their

establishments and reconvene in public spaces, hybrid events, which may be attended in person as well as online, are likely to become more popular. Hybrid events are often used by large event companies, allowing a selection of attendees to the venue, and the rest through an online platform. In person events can resume as long as they follow the government guidelines of health and safety measures. Some measures already in place for event managers to follow include limiting attendee numbers, choosing open-air venues, limiting duration of event, and using PPE throughout.

For event managers to prepare for this 'boom' for the industry after the pandemic, when people will be keen to start enjoying large events once again, there are several techniques to get yourself out there. One good impression is to create a professional networking site for your portfolio. This can be through the likes of LinkedIn, Instagram and websites related to your area of interest in events. According to a 2018 survey by Performance-Based Hiring Learning Systems, 86 percent of respondents found their jobs through networking. A sophisticated networking profile allows event managers to be more noticeable and tailored to fit future event jobs.

Networking is also a great way to create a personal brand, and is ideal as event professionals will need to know how to communicate value and differentiate themselves from the competition. Now is the time for event managers to invest in their brand, reach out, and get involved in the wider event community. An example would be to create your own event business or website by contributing to blogs and webinars and raising your own personal awareness of the industry. This pandemic has taught event managers new strategies to expand and grow in the event industry. Event managers must demonstrate these new strategies, to strive against competitors.

For University students graduating next year, it appears to be the best time to find employability in the events sector, as we will see a boom for live events again. Unfortunately for those who graduated in the past year, there is lack of employability due to the current issues we face from COVID-19. As a University student myself, it has been hard to find experience and voluntary work in the events industry during my University studies. In previous years, we have gained industry knowledge from University research trips, and with both voluntary and paid opportunities to work alongside experts.

But the past year has been challenging for University students across all departments. Personally, I do not see University being the same for a while, especially as the main demographics at University falling in the 'younger' category will be last to receive the vaccine. As a final year student studying event management, it has been a difficult and challenging time to stay motivated. Luckily, our online Centre for Brexit Studies events have been running on a monthly basis, which has generated popularity and interest to a range of audiences. Of course, I miss the face to face events, but our virtual events have been incredibly popular too.

All subdivisions of the event industry including weddings, festivals, concerts, and corporate events have been impacted by the pandemic. Of course, it will be challenging to manage social distancing at a festival, compared to a conference event with a smaller capacity. In order to manage these events, event planners need to make sure they plan and execute the event according to safety regulations. Therefore, with the current pause on the event sector, it is good time to start planning for foreseeable events after the pandemic.

Overall, the pandemic has caused great pressure for all employees in the event industry. From events being cancelled, to redundancies throughout companies. Post pandemic will be great for go getters in the event industry, as there will be an increase for customer consumption. Innovations and advances are needed, to immerse customer experience. But with adaptation, and a bit of imagination, 2021 may well see the return of the events sector, and we'll be ready for it.

1. <https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/job-market-event-industry-recovery>

2. <https://academy.smu.edu.sg/insights/post-pandemic-event-management-what-we-can-expect-new-normal-events-4751>