

Bye Bye Virtual Events

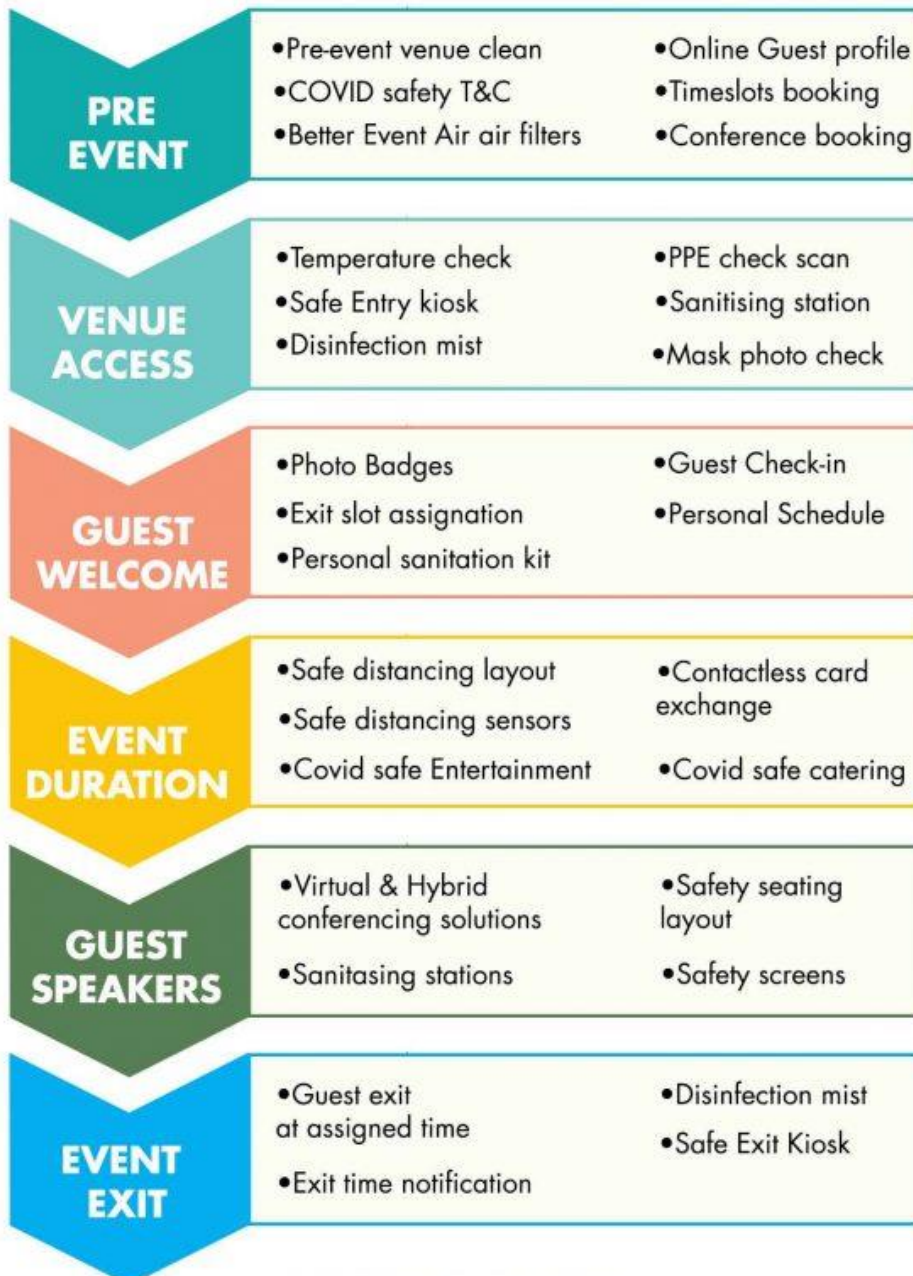
By Poppy Surplice, Events and Marketing Coordinator at the West Midlands International Trade (Department for International Trade), and events graduate at Birmingham City University.

With Boris Johnson's go ahead with the complete lockdown lift yesterday, will we see virtual events being a phrase of the past? As for many, virtual events just don't compare to the experience and thrill you receive at in-person events. Although for many event institutes, virtual events have been a great asset to drive attendee numbers than they would at in-person events.

The future for live events all relies on attendees. Live events provide audiences with one-to-one interaction, thrill, and a sense of enjoyment within the crowd. People are raving to get back to what they enjoy, on the other hand, some prefer the virtual platform. According to the [Live Streaming Music Project](#), over two thirds of participants believe live streaming would remain 'an important part' of the music landscape after the pandemic. Therefore, this suggests some events are better staying virtual, than in-person. Of course, there are both pros and cons for virtual events despite the cost efficiency and flexibility of using software such as zoom and WebEx.

As mentioned above, some events have excelled during the pandemic using virtual platforms. For example, conferences and webinars have succeeded due to the fact, the user only has to log onto their laptop and watch the workshop from the comfort of their home. Accessibility is also a common factor when considering work meetings virtually, as applications like zoom allow clients to communicate across the globe. Although some events like Festivals and Concerts, inhale in-person experience in order to thrive. Fortunately for many festivals such as Creamfields and Park life later in the year, they have the 'go-ahead' dependent on the COVID-19 status. On the other hand, festivals like Glastonbury – ['which features more than 100 stages, thousands of performers and nearly 200,00 fans'](#) meant they had to make the decision on their viability earlier in the year.

Many, are still worried about attending live events again, with the risk of catching another variant. One event company called ['Julia Charles Event Management'](#) created a model that includes a list of basic measures expected at live events post pandemic. This includes the full life cycle of the live event, from start to finish. The model includes pre and post event cleaning, hygiene, and sanitation measures, as well as security processes.



JULIA CHARLES
EVENT MANAGEMENT

Luckily for some of us that graduated this year, we have managed to secure full time events positions within the West Midlands. I currently work at the Department for International Trade as an

Events and Marketing Coordinator. My role involves planning and delivering workshop sessions to clients interesting in exporting their products and serviced overseas. Throughout this role, I have gained a wider context of the events industry, as well as hands on experience in marketing and communication. As more event companies begin to reopen their doors, this will create many job opportunities for graduates seeking employment in events.

Many like myself, are getting 'zoom fatigue' from watching events on a laptop screen. However, research shows virtual events have benefited the environment from reduced travel emissions and venue pollution. Events are one of the biggest influences on climate change, with many festivals generating large amounts of waste per year. Thankfully, the pandemic has allowed many event organisers to resurface their event landscapes in order to become more sustainable. Nevertheless, in-person events rely heavily on transportation, the ease of attending a virtual event from anywhere in the world is a major perk. Virtual events, on the other hand, haven't been able to stimulate networking amongst colleagues.

As we move into a positive future, and 'hopefully' COVID free, there is light at the end of the tunnel for many in-person events. The real question is whether virtual events will still be as popular now lockdown is lifting? In my opinion, the thought of watching a Festival on zoom over going to the venue, will not be favoured by many!