

MEDIA ENTREPRENEUR

MEETUP

Roundtable: Back to Live

Key takeaways

Two of the attendees who had run events this year had about one third of their usual numbers turn up, but the audience was 'better'

- Because of social distancing, or your international audience's inability to travel, your numbers may well be significantly down
- But this will help reduce tyre kickers

"In 2019 we had 26000 people in Madrid...People can't access because of the regulations, because of social distancing. So all the auditoriums and the stages were 30% approximately"

"And so we were at about a third of our usual numbers - about 500 attendees. But it was perfectly acceptable. It was a vibrant event."

"I believe that we had more qualified delegates, if you can say that we sort of filtered automatically all those coming into the trade show only looking for pencil sharpeners and gum. So the audience was different. And I also believe that people are more open to business discussions because they need to come as we now have all the sessions available on streaming."

If you're concerned about virtual cannibalising your live attendance, don't give them the option until 48 hours out

- Keep your online option to yourselves until just before the event
- You can offer it at the same rate as in-person

"We've carried out the marketing in a very similar way to two other editions. And we actually enabled the streaming just two days prior to the event - we didn't publish it til then. So, today you can buy a pass to attend all the different sessions. It's 60 Euros when you register, you could choose either to be on site or attend virtually."

Marketing messaging should be "we're all in it together" to minimise onsite policing

- You don't want to be ordering your delegates about too much as this spoils the atmosphere
- Use your marketing to engender a Blitz-spirit in your attendees

"I've heard stories of events taking place in the UK recently where the protocols are there and then within half an hour, they've all kind of disappeared. I feel it's about your messaging being 'we're all in this together and it's your responsibility as well', to not come if you don't feel well, you know, 'masks are welcome for people that want to wear them', all the distancing things are in place, 'we've taken all these precautions', but let's also be responsible ourselves for the community. So I think we're hoping that that kind of messaging will resonate, whilst also making clear the specific measures that we have taken along with the venue and how catering works and things that are clearly communicated as well."

International organisers are noticing a degree of price-gouging, and some interesting venue T&C's

- Venues and other suppliers seem to be trying to recoup lost revenue
- Roundtable attendees cited German venues as a particular example

"I've been doing some booking work on behalf of delegates, and looking at some of the gouging that's going on US domestic airlines right now, I think they're trying to regain their lost revenues in two weeks."

"We have an event in November in Berlin. Now just recently they tried to evacuate all the force majeure clauses. And the reason is that they are a private business and therefore they need to, to protect their company. So you're going to be hit with cancellation charges, even if the German government closes the event. So that's an interesting approach."

"I don't know what's going on within that market (Germany) but for some reason, they're being very challenging and it's not just one venue, however many you talk to they're all heading the same way."

As Jaimie Leonard says, "Safety is now a commodity"

- No matter what you're obliged to do legally, you need to create a sense of safety to attract attendance
- Don't rely on your venue's own regulations to do this

"In the US right now I find that most places don't really have any restrictions. So we're really developing our own protocol to make the attendees feel comfortable, more than anything else, but you know the venue just wants the business, there's no government restrictions in place - we could do whatever we want. At the same time, you can't just do whatever you want because you know there's a level of comfort you need to instill in the minds of the attendees to show up."

In a live world, what's the future of hybrid?

- On-line events still have a role to play going forward, especially in 2022

"I think it's dangerous not having those options, at least during a transitional period."

"...The physical event is the thing that causes you to carve out time out in order to go, it's worth the money and it's worth sitting on a flight for however long, because once you're there, you know you're fully immersed in it and you're engaged."

"I still believe that I can get sponsors more one-on-one meetings for a virtual event versus an in-person event. There's a lot of extra work to set those up and schedule it because you have to kind of recreate all those interactions that happen naturally on site...it's just really that sponsors do see it as a lower value interaction versus an in-person interaction. I think most people do."

"One of the biggest challenges is that all of our clients are at different stages of what they want as well. So some of them have jumped at this really quickly, they've adapted our events team to be a marketing lead gen team and they're all over it and they're very happy to take away 100 leads from doing a digital event. And then a bunch of our clients are like no, we know everybody in the market that we need to speak to. We come to your event for that face time, and you can't replicate that online."

Make your in-person events exclusive experiences

- Make your live events essential to attend to stop your (or competitors) online offering detracting from your in-person event

"I think, although we don't have the luxury of being able to rely on continuing education credits and things like that for our events, we are going to have to provide more concrete takeaways for our delegates. So, special education sessions perhaps, something like that - walk away with a piece of paper on the back end of the event may well be what we have to go for in the future."

"Into next year we're definitely increasing our spend on venues, and on the experience of the event because I would agree that's going to be a big area into the future so we're going to be

looking at that. So we're going higher on the quality spectrum into 2022 for all of our venues and general experience costs."

Or just do the same thing again, because the basics are going to feel novel for a while

- The value of person-to-person has just gone up, perhaps for the next decade

"I'm not sure we need to kind of create some new level of on site experience that's never existed before because now there's an easy option for virtual attendance. People like people. People that want to get on site are still going to want to do that and I think the lasting effect of going through what's now been two years (and it's not over yet...) I think that's going to last another decade."

Guest speaker: Malin Svensson, Digital Enterprise Show

Moderator: Simon Crompton-Reid, Co-Host, Media Entrepreneur Meetup

Adam Raleigh - Markets Group

Andy Smith - Halldale

David Foster - BV Resources

Robert Stead - Sense Media