



# GET LOCAL 2021

18-19 OCTOBER ICC SYDNEY

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Get Local expo e-newsletter July 2021

## The state of play in business events



Get Local's Ambassadors aren't just representatives of our event, they also have real lives and run real businesses.

With the latest outbreaks around the country and corresponding lockdowns we asked a few of them how these had disrupted their businesses, what they were doing about the disruptions, and how the remainder of the year was looking.

Australia's hardest working emcee, Andrew Klein, who has found himself in front of a camera and computer screen more than on a stage over the past 12 months says the second half of this year was up around 70 per cent face to face and 30 per cent online.

"The online work remains, but all of my conference bookings for July, August and September have been postponed or cancelled and some already for October and November have gone due to the general nerves and uncertainty."

“That said, my experience from 2020 was that a lot more online work popped up, new clients came to light and often the bookings were quite late in the piece.”

Managing director of Face to Face Event Management, Stephen Turner, says his company managed to deliver all of its scheduled events in the pharmaceutical and automotive sectors up to June 30 but believes the current restriction on travel will keep the event management sector in a state of hibernation other than producing virtual and some hybrid events.

He says the good news is that “every firm that values a face-to-face meetings is yearning for increased human interaction.”

Arinex CEO, Nicole Walker, describes the current environment as “a constant uphill battle, not just with the current lockdowns but with continual border restrictions.”

“We start to build momentum and confidence across the sector and then we are quickly brought back to reality,” she says.

Like Stephen Turner, Walker says all of her Arinex clients are eager to reconnect face to face.

“Virtual event burnout is real and the inability for associations and corporate companies to connect with their members and/or colleagues after so long is really putting strain on engagement and overall value,” she says.

While Andrew Klein agrees – “We are a resilient industry, humans love being face to face, nothing beats a live conference vibe – and we will be back” – he believes the growth of virtual events will continue.

“I take my hat off to all the techie people (the AV operators, studio owners, platform providers) who have just done an incredible job during COVID.

“Virtual has literally created a sub-genre in our industry that is here to stay. About half of my conferences will likely switch to virtual.”

But in saying this, Klein adds that quite a few are also saying virtual is all too hard and they will postpone until 2022 where they can come together in a live environment.

“Since the start of this year face to face conferences were pouring back and as I saw on many occasions attendees were so pumped to be back in a room with people. The in-person conference appetite was huge and so many clients had told me that their members or staff were so excited to be attending in-person events again.

“Yes, it’s unbelievably difficult and frustrating, but I remain super confident, judging by my many discussions with many clients, that live events will again come back and come back stronger. It takes a brave person to predict when that will be.”

And it is that unpredictability which has demonstrated the smarts of the business event sector as a whole.

“The positive outcome from COVID is the (Arinex) team have inbuilt flexibility and are ready to take on any of the challenges,” says Nicole Walker.

“We are now almost un-phased by lockdowns! We are fortunate that due to our hard work last year we have the systems and teams in place to convert events from physical to virtual seamlessly.”

And the company did just that recently, delivering the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf virtually.

“The Sydney team were set to travel to Brisbane to deliver the event with support from the Brisbane team until border closures prevented this just days before the event. Instantaneously we found ourselves managing the 600 international delegates from the comfort of our lounge rooms! It was a wonderfully successful event and no one would have known the challenges and issues except us, which in the end is what clients expect.”

“I’d say that conference and event organisers are now amongst THE most agile professionals in the world,” says Andrew Klein.

“So many conference organisers I know have (since June or July 2021 alone) postponed, re-booked, re-post-postponed and re-booked an event. And often many. That is devastating and time-consuming but it takes agility.”

Government support for the sector continues to be talked about and is unlikely to be forthcoming.

Are we, as an industry, getting enough government support?

Andrew Klein – “No.”

Nicole Walker – “No.”

Stephen Turner – “By and large the travel industry has been left behind in the equation.”

And a final comment from our Get Local ambassadors...

Andrew Klein: “I know how tough it is for so many in our industry but I just don’t believe the naysayers who say our industry won’t survive. I’m an optimist and 25 years in this industry tells me that we will be back bigger than ever when ‘normal life’ starts. Conferencing will be the place to be. Hang in there everyone.”

Stephen Turner: “Here in Australia and New Zealand we do have an opportunity to ride a domestic bubble. But with constant border shutdowns and travel disruption it makes the task somewhat harder. While all event management and travel companies can persevere, the market will determine the outcome. Post Winter in ANZ, we need to have a much stronger strategy in dealing with the health versus the economy balancing act.”

Nicole Walker: “Our industry is exceptional at remaining positive and focusing on genuine outcomes. We do not give up and events like Get Local really motivate us to look forward to increasing fantastic opportunities to reconnect with our industry. I can’t wait to see everyone face to face at Get Local in October!”

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