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*Get Local*  
THE MEETING PLACE

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## Gosh darn, people want a return to live events!

We've always had a soft spot for those hard working folk at the International Congress and Convention Association and now we love them even more following their latest survey which found that 84 per cent of us agree that virtual meetings have networking limitations and the value of in-person events is matchless.

Equally as exciting is that 70 per cent of us say the opportunity to meet new people and make new contacts at face-to-face events can't be replicated virtually.

Those who took part in the survey may have been getting a bit jaded with attending meetings pre-covid but that's certainly not the case now.

"When comparing the results from the 2020 survey, it is clear that the general sentiment about the need for meeting face-to-face has not only remained but intensified," the writers of the ICCA report said.

"The camaraderie apparent in face-to-face meetings does not exist at the same level when collaborating digitally or remotely."

Factors such as enjoying the host destination (41 per cent) and feeling a sense of community (66 per cent) also play a part in the desire to return to in-person events.

While delegate sentiment remains strong to meet in-person again, factors including travel restrictions (20 per cent) mean delegates are unable to get to a destination. Other respondents indicated they wouldn't travel or attend meetings until a vaccine was available (24 per cent) and stringent safety measures were in place (16 per cent).

Despite a desire to meet face-to-face again, 56 per cent of respondents said they would be adopting the virtual format for their largest planned meeting in 2021, while only 17 per cent said they would adopt a hybrid format with one destination hub.

Just two per cent said their largest meeting would be hybrid format with multiple destination hubs in multiple countries and six per cent said they would postpone their largest meetings until 2022.

However, only one per cent said they would cancel their largest meeting in 2021.

The face-to-face format is looking more favourable for smaller meetings with 49 per cent of respondents planning an in-person meeting for 50 people or more this year.

When in-person events resume, 26 per cent of association professionals polled said they will be looking for transparency and flexibility in requests for proposals (RFPs) from suppliers. Cancellation options and force majeure clauses will become more prominent in contracts.



Association professionals will also be looking for support in virtual event production from professional conference organisers in the future, with 40 per cent indicating this was an area where they needed assistance in.

In summary, flexible contract conditions, Covid-19 related safety protocols and integration of technology to support hybrid and online events were the top three requirements survey respondents will be seeking from meeting suppliers in the future.