

Freeman Perspectives: Events after COVID-19

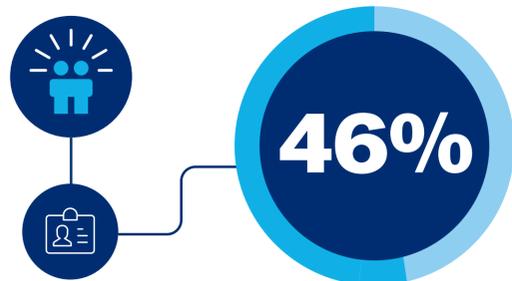
In mid-April 2020, Freeman surveyed 200+ marketers to learn how they think marketing events, sponsorships, and promotions will change post-COVID-19.

Here's what we learned, validated by external research and supplemented with perspectives and considerations for event professionals.

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The good news

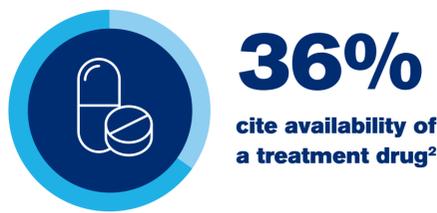
46 percent of consumers say they will value events more than they used to due to experience with social distancing.¹

Event timing

Almost half of marketers expect to start planning live events in 4-6 months.²



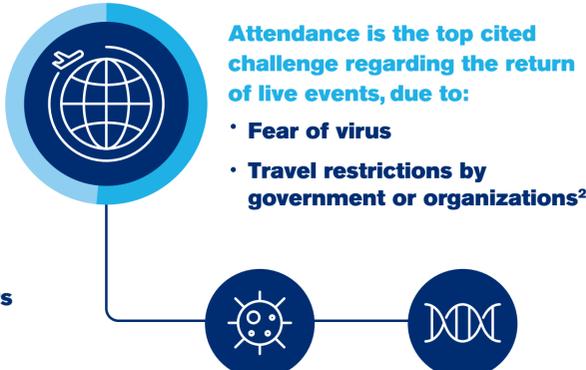
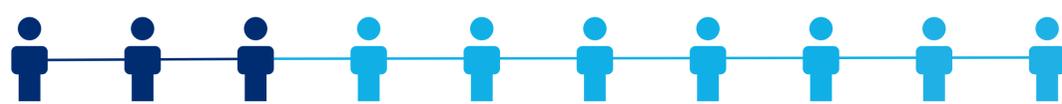
What will increase confidence in live events?



"The live event strategy is in complete motion. However, there is an understanding that until there is a vaccine many guests/attendees will not be able to attend live events due to risk factors."²

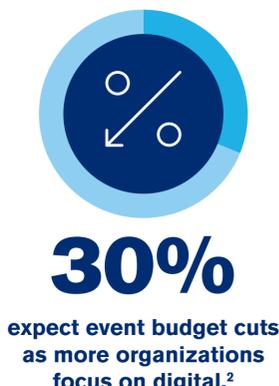
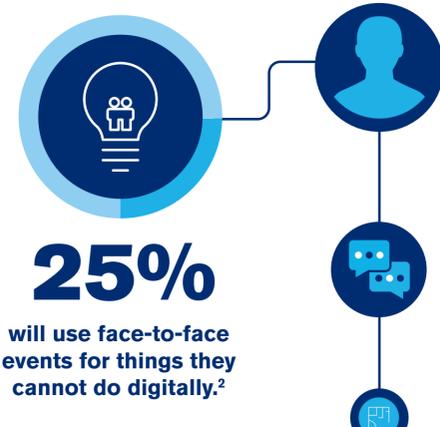
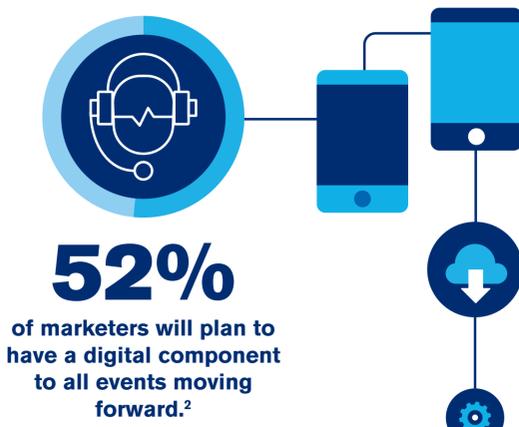
Smaller to start

One third of marketers will host smaller events (average 69 participants)¹ with an increase in regional or local events.³



"We are very concerned about attendance and would prefer to invest where our intended audience feels comfortable traveling, which is probably closer to home."²

Digital first



"This is the time to create that new big idea in the digital world. As a corporate marketing professional, we need true innovation in this space. Time to recalibrate and innovate!"²

"Behavior! All interactive behavior has already changed, and it will never be the same. We need to adapt to the new normal, but it is uncertain at this time what that new normal will be."²

The Freeman Perspective

A digital mindset is the new normal and must be foundational to event planning.

As you plan, a hybrid approach (blending live and online) will allow you to pivot quickly — especially because, in the immediate term, digital will be the primary touch point.

The focus now is on using strategies that create better online experiences to engage audiences.

Longer term, and as your audience becomes more comfortable traveling and attending gatherings, digital will become a tool to amplify your message and extend the reach of your event. You may decide to employ different strategies to meet face-to-face, using a digital component serving as the connector.

SOME IDEAS INCLUDE:

- Hub and spoke:** Small regional events connected via general session, livestreamed, and allowing for at-home participation
- Regional events:** Small events at multiple locations throughout a single city, livestreamed, and allowing for at-home participation
- Road shows:** Small events that travel from location to location

Whether online, in small group formats, or as a hybrid event, the key to success will be finding moments of surprise and delight — giving people a reason to come back.

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1. Impact of COVID-19 on Live Events Study, Performance Research, March 2020

2. COVID-19 Event Marketer Sentiment Research: Wave 1, Freeman, April 2020

3. The Future of Meetings and Events in the Era of COVID-19, Northstar Meeting Group, April 2020