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Top 4 Investments for Meeting Planners preparing Now for “the turn”

We can sense it: some states are starting to reopen for safe gathering; social media is splashed with successful, safe in-person and hybrid meetings; hotel brands and properties are saturating In Boxes with enticing offers to safely meet. Can you feel your heart rate increasing? The wild card: *every* situation will vary, *and* you can prepare for YOUR time now.

1. Take good care of yourself first, so you can take care of others well

We’re 8 months into a different way of life – and literally every person has been directly impacted in one way or another by this pandemic. Not only relationally or financially, but emotionally. [This article](#) by Tara Haelle made me think differently about ambiguous loss, expecting less from myself and getting creative with “self-care”.

2. Invest in yourself through education

It’s not self-centered to focus on learning more: it’s a lift to self-esteem, it actually makes you more valuable to your employer, to meeting attendees, to supplier partners and...to employers looking for quality, relevant team members. Some examples:

- COVID-19 meeting resources continually vary, based on destination, supplier and your requirements. This (free) [AHLA \(American Hotel & Lodging Assn.\) “Safe Stay” guideline](#) is an excellent starting point to familiarize yourself with general protocols. Note that most hotel brands (and properties) will have specific requirements (and are available upon request).
- [Cvent Academy](#) certifications (free)
- [CFMP designation](#) (Certified Faith-Based Meeting Professional – [free with RCMA Planner membership])
- Virtual destination and hotel brand FAM (familiarization): especially helpful for destinations you’ve already contracted or may be considering, and most importantly, for cultivating relationships (free, and may be conducted upon request, although many may already have a presentation schedule).

3. Keep your membership / attendees (and exhibitors) engaged through strategic and informational posts or newsletters:

- Offer free online training or seminars (consider a well-being continuing series)
- Highlight a familiar industry speaker and accompanied by a brief article
- Include a “sanitation corner” to share what some hotels are doing to keep planners and attendees safe, and confident to travel and meet.
- Don’t re-create the wheel: for fresh ideas, go onto others’ websites to see and learn what they’re doing differently. Look at other industries, not just your own.

4. Stay engaged, don’t detach

- Keep conversations going! Even if your program(s) is on-hold for now, it’s important to stay connected with hotels and suppliers, regardless of whether you’ve already contracted or have requested proposals. This a great touchpoint that keeps everyone uplifted and encouraged, and cultivates relationships. Your future programs are directly relevant to hotels and other suppliers as they budget and contemplate staffing levels.
- Strategically utilize social media platforms to follow credible, interesting resources.
- Ask others outside your industry who they follow and why – this can give you a fresh perspective.

[Don’t get stuck looking back...](#)