



THE ORGANIZATION FOR SOCIAL IMPACT



# The Diversification of Events

2022  
EVENT  
TRENDS

AN IMPACT EXCLUSIVE

THE MEETINGS  
INDUSTRY IN A  
DIGITAL WORLD



The COVID-19 pandemic impacted every organization, every person, and every aspect of our lives. Supporting over 26 million jobs, the business events industry was hit hardest. Customer-facing workers in hotels, restaurants, airport convention centers, etc., all lost employment because of the pandemic. The \$841 billion industry paused, and a reimagining of industry formed from the silence. Enter the digital experiences.

The business events industry is one of the most dynamic professions globally. It has the power to drive social and economic transformation within global communities by connecting people; however, to realize that north star is to confront the past. This past is one of exclusion.

Business events were very time- and location-bound, often requiring many resources — including money and personal time to participate. Attending meetings help people solve their problems by learning, networking, and sharing ideas. Organizations were unconsciously limiting who could attend and eventually solve these concerns, which fostered systemic inequality.

### An “empactful” approach

Planners should constantly reevaluate their approach to designing and executing experiences. While trying to sustain organizations and their meetings, planners discovered something interesting — virtual meetings diversified their attendance. The virtual meeting allows participants to access content remotely, lifting the obstacle of travel previously required to access.

The opportunity gave all organizations a global footprint, but with this new audience came an even greater responsibility. In identifying new stakeholders, organizations needed to ensure the design, marketing, and execution of experience focused on removing any barriers or deterrents that were once in place so each participant could feel welcomed and able to participate actively.

Now that many planners and organizations have mastered the virtual meeting, it is time to reintroduce the in-person element in the planning process — enter the hybrid meeting. Though many planners and suppliers within the business events industry are anxious for in-person meetings to dominate the business event space once again, the experiences must include a scalable virtual element. Hybrid is the new industry standard, and organizations need to continue dismantling existing barriers to impact their communities.

In the early 20th century, you needed to go in person to watch a football game. It wasn't until 1939 that we started watching football on television. Today, you can experience football in person, watch it on television, or access a recording whenever you want.

Virtual components did not cannibalize the in-person event. The experience and accessibility changed. Hybrid meetings require a similar approach, strategy for execution, and engagement of all potential stakeholders.

Business events have shifted from logistics to human-centric design. Planners and organizations must empathize with all people to ensure inclusive experiences are the new normal. Time does not go backward — we are never going back to how things were pre-COVID-19. Learning from the past and embracing the liberated future for business events is essential to the world's impact from the meetings industry.