

cvent

15 Meeting and Event Trends You Need to Know for 2021

Bright ideas and digital innovations to accelerate the road to recovery



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Introduction

Welcome to 2021! Or, rather, the “year of the comeback,” as MICE and transient business begins to emerge from the uncertainty of COVID-19 to build a new and more resilient meetings and events industry.

Too optimistic? Maybe. But then again, consider Cvent’s [recent findings on planner sentiment in Europe of 2020](#): 74% felt either positive or neutral about the state of in-person meetings and events at the time, and 81% said they will feel either positive or neutral about in six months (February-March 2021). With vaccines being distributed, COVID-19 protocols established, and virtual event technology sweeping the industry, there is quite a bit to be optimistic about.

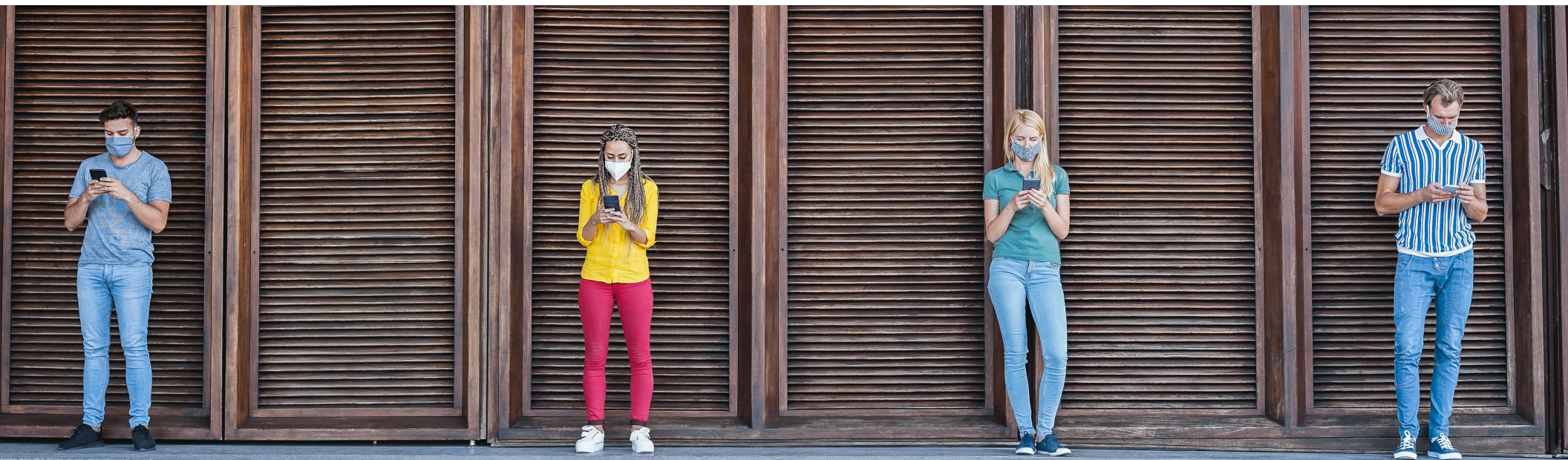
In fact, after reading through the following list of 15 innovative and creative trends for 2021, we think that this year – and beyond – has an opportunity to reinvent how MICE and transient business is conducted. Consider, for example the opportunity to create unforgettable F&B experiences in an era of sustainability and social distancing. Or how it’s now possible to put together a series of smaller

meetings across regions, connecting them via a virtual event platform to create a truly global – yet small – event. As Reggie Aggarwal, CEO and Founder of Cvent put it during the [2020 Cvent CONNECT Europe Virtual](#) conference: “Despite the struggles of our industry, we persevere, and we sit on the cusp of the Golden Age of Events.”

The 15 trends listed here just may be a start toward that era. We’ve organized them across three key categories:

- 2021 Trends for Hotels and Venues
- 2021 Trends for Hotel and Venue Marketing
- 2021 Trends for Hotel and Venue Operations

Included here is everything from basic trends such as virtual event technology (and its larger impact) to more creative ideas around F&B, marketing, and more. Some may help drive the ultimate recovery of the meetings and events industry – others may just wind up as good ideas that didn’t work in the practical world. All, however, are thought-provoking and relevant to the work of bringing people together.





2021 Trends for Hotels and Venues

- **Trend 1:** Planners will seek out environmentally sustainable venues.
- **Trend 2:** Training and upskilling for digital competency is quickly becoming a necessity.
- **Trend 3:** Local partnerships will become a greater part of the hotel event experience.
- **Trend 4:** The popularity of small groups will continue to grow, especially with hybrid meeting technology.
- **Trend 5:** More venues will become “hybrid ready.”

Trend 1: Planners will seek out environmentally sustainable venues.

Environmental sustainability within the hospitality industry was gaining momentum well before the COVID-19 pandemic. Then came 2019 — the year of Greta Thunberg — and major shifts toward corporate responsibility. 2020 was ripe for an eco-friendly overhaul. Hotels were already making great strides, and for many businesses, corporate social responsibility became a way to win the business of increasingly eco-conscious consumers.

Then COVID-19 halted progress. Suppliers turned to rubber gloves, single-use plastics, harsh chemicals, and an increased use of water to maintain guest safety. But what about event planners? They saw the air pollution in Delhi vanish, pollution of the Venice canals clear up, and an almost tangible image of a sustainable world. It's likely that as we move forward, a venue's sustainability will rank near the top of the priority list for planners.

So, what can suppliers do in 2021?

- Look into the U.N.'s [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- Provide work-from-home options to conserve energy.
- Rethink supplier partnerships — go local.
- Develop earth-friendly food and beverage menus.
- Invest in predictive maintenance systems to save on effort, energy, and disposal costs.
- Obtain official certification for sustainability.
- Become capable of hybrid events to reduce the need for long-distance travel.

The pandemic is not an answer to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but it should make us consider how we can do better. The [hospitality industry plays a huge role in this](#). Turning to greener ways of operating will not only create a better tomorrow, it will safeguard your business for the years to come.

Takeaway for Suppliers

Show the steps you're taking to contribute to a greener future. Start by updating your [Cvent Supplier Network](#) profile. Display green certifications and link to more information about your efforts. The pandemic is not an answer to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It should make us realize how we can do better.



Takeaway for Suppliers

Invest in technology that helps to create safe and effective meetings, and get your team trained on leading MICE business tools like Cvent Event Diagramming and Cvent Supplier Network.

Trend 2: Training and upskilling for digital competency is quickly becoming a necessity.

According to recent survey conducted by Simplilearn (a global skills provider), training offered to employees and prioritised during COVID-19 has had a heavy focus on digital competency, ranging from operations (66%) and technology/software (64%), to digital marketing (53%), and Artificial Intelligence (45%). The finding reflects an urgent need to increase proficiency in digital skillsets – a reality that includes the hospitality sector. In fact, the National Skills Coalition found that 36% of hospitality workers have limited or no digital skill.

Upskilling hotel and venue employees

Companies are training employees on essential digital skills – tasks that touch every aspect of a hotel's operation. That includes the meetings side: from virtual technology to sales, marketing, and diagramming, effective MICE business must leverage digital skills to be safer and more efficient. For example, Cvent's certification programme, which has certified over 50,000 hospitality professionals, offers a wide array of digital disciplines, including a [Cvent Supplier Network Certification](#) and a [Cvent Event Diagramming Certification](#).

"In early March, when the global pandemic really began to impact those in the meetings, events, and hospitality industries, we were looking for opportunities to not just give back, but provide support in a way that could facilitate an even stronger industry post-pandemic," said Cvent CMO, Patrick Smith. "Our goal is to train and certify tens of thousands of industry professionals, giving them the tools and skills they need to more quickly bounce back once things start to go back to normal – boosting not only their confidence and careers, but also the industry at-large." Suppliers should take note of the emerging digital-first requirement and make plans to adopt training programmes that turn a skill gap...into a skill set.

Trend 3: Local partnerships will become a greater part of the hotel event experience.

“Conducting business with local partners, manufacturers, and service providers may become a sign of the times,” said Carlos M. Meléndez, cofounder of the software company Wovenware, writing for [the Future of Sourcing Digital](#). “While it’s unclear where the next hotbed of COVID-19 will arise, the risk is better managed when partners, subsidiaries, and manufacturers are all located in the same country to ensure all parties follow similar guidelines and situations.” In many cases, the same can be said for states, regions, and cities.

Hotels can help local businesses thrive

There are also benefits beyond the lower risk of partnering close to home. Hyatt, for example, has an initiative that matches hotels with small local businesses. Called [Hyatt Loves Local](#), the programme currently involves nearly 60 hotels and resorts. At Andaz West Hollywood, for example, the stylists of Barcode Barbershop, a unisex hair salon, practice their art on the hotel’s rooftop overlooking the Sunset Strip. The shop had closed temporarily in the face of COVID-19 but reopened at 25% capacity under social distancing rules — and now Andaz provides additional customers and space to work for many of the stylists. Other examples include:

- Anna Bell’s Mac & Cheese, with kitchen space and sales in the Lobby Market of the Hyatt Regency Atlanta.
- Wild Heart, a pop-up women’s clothing boutique, at Colorado’s Grand Hyatt Vail.
- Bamboo toilet paper sourced from West Baltimore’s Lor Tush at Hotel Revival Baltimore, a Joie de Vivre hotel.
- Socially distant yoga and Pilates taught by the concierge fitness company BACH at Gild Hall, a Thompson Hotel in New York City.

Takeaway for Suppliers

At least one hotel company looked beyond the benefits of lower risk when operating close to home and asked: *How can we help?* Until the restrictions around health and travel ease, hotels will do well to cast their nets for customers and partners closer to home than in the past.

Trend 4: The popularity of small groups will continue to grow, especially with the emergence of hybrid meeting technology.

The [2021 Global Meetings and Events Forecast](#) from American Express predicted that in-person meetings would be smaller than before the pandemic throughout 2021. The European version of Cvent's [2020 Planner Sentiment and Sourcing Report](#) came to the same conclusion — and added that 30% of its respondents will be planning for fewer attendees as they source venues for the coming months.

The same Cvent study found that 76% of the planners surveyed would consider holding a hybrid event — and 43% of those would expect their venues to support a hybrid meeting's online component. So, for planners wishing to include both on- and off-site participants, a hotel's capability for hybrid meetings will be a top priority in the months and probably years ahead.

Hybrid possibilities are endless

For a good example of what's possible with a hybrid meeting, consider [IACC Americas Connect 2021](#), IACC's annual conference for member conference-facility executives. On March 16, IACC's MultiPOD hybrid digital platform will unite five in-person gatherings set in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York, and Toronto. One digital platform will connect all groups to live general sessions and support interaction between locations. Everyone will attend the general sessions, and each locale will hold breakout sessions. Meanwhile, virtual attendees will provide the sixth group. From anywhere in the world, they'll be able to join the main events in real time, plus breakout sessions at their choice of locations.

Takeaway for Suppliers

The secret to the success of hybrid meetings?
The latest in digital support — including Cvent's guidance and [virtual platform](#).
For planners wishing to include both on- and off-site participants, a hotel's capability for hybrid meetings will be a top priority in the months and years ahead.

Trend 5: More venues will become “hybrid ready.”

Because of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, event professionals are turning to hybrid events — small in-person meetings combined with a virtual audience watching via livestream. But hybrid is more than a short-term solution. This shift toward blending in-person and virtual attendees is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

As a result of this shift toward virtual and hybrid events, venues are having to upgrade their capabilities, partner with audiovisual and other technology vendors, and adjust their event spaces. Some are even streaming event content to attendees in their guest rooms. “We have had conversations with our clients to become more creative with our meeting space, broadcasting meetings to multiple meeting rooms in the hotel as well as in the guests’ rooms upstairs,” said Gul Turkmenoglu, general manager of the InterContinental Times Square in New York, in an article for [Hotel News Now](#).

Intelligent use of space and technology

In the same article, Vanessa Claspill, vice president of sales at Pivot Hotels & Resorts, said rethinking both indoor and outdoor spaces has been a key part of their hybrid event strategy. “We are activating rooftops and patios into learning environments,” she said. “In some of our other properties to ensure proper attendee distancing, we are utilising breakout rooms in addition to the general session in order to provide appropriate spacing for all the attendees. In either example, webcasting solutions are the most requested. Many of the keynote speakers are delivering their message from a remote location.”

Takeaway for Suppliers

Look to [Cvent Event Diagramming](#) digital tools to ensure social distancing and safer meeting layouts for the in-person component of hybrid events.

As a result of this shift toward virtual and hybrid events, venues are having to upgrade their capabilities, partner with audiovisual and other technology vendors, and adjust their event spaces.

2021 Trends for Hotel and Venue Marketing

- **Trend 6:** There will be greater awareness and emphasis on diversity and inclusion.
- **Trend 7:** MICE and transient success will depend on the ability to optimise marketing initiatives around new priorities.
- **Trend 8:** Business travel will increasingly be regional, so think local.
- **Trend 9:** Elopements, micro weddings, and hybrid weddings will provide scaled-down event options at hotels.
- **Trend 10:** Individual properties will increasingly leverage digital marketing to communicate their readiness for meetings and events.



Takeaway for Suppliers

Drafting and posting your property's policy on inclusivity can go a long way toward making planners and attendees feel welcome, according to Nalan Emre, COO of the IMEX Group. Emre shared [her company's statement](#):

“Everyone has a place. Everyone has a voice. The IMEX family table is a warm friendly place that is sometimes chaotic but always inclusive.”

Trend 6: There will be greater awareness and emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

In 2020 we lived through months of headlines raising national awareness of systemic racial, ethnic, and gender inequities and abuses. Now, we can expect a greater emphasis on diversity and inclusion as the hotel and meetings industries rebuild their strength. [An article on race for MeetingsNet](#) noted a first few initiatives as rays of hope for the meetings industry: new partnerships in 2020 for the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals, the launch of a Black in Events network, and broadened criteria for the Events Industry Council's Hall of Leaders recognition.

A moral and business imperative

The moral imperative for building greater diversity and inclusion ranks first in motivation, of course, but studies also reveal a strong business case. A [report from the management consulting firm McKinsey & Co.](#), for instance, showed that gender-diverse businesses are 21% more likely to earn more revenue than their industries' national averages — and that ethnically and racially diverse companies are 33% more likely to earn higher profits than industry norms. A [study from Deloitte](#), one of the world's largest accountancy and audit firms, found that inclusive workplaces are 6 times as likely to be innovative and have 2.3 times the cash flow per employee over noninclusive workplaces.

Released during the pandemic, Deloitte's report concluded: “As we saw during World War II — when many married women with children joined the labor force for the first time — big crises can bring about big change. At this watershed moment, there is an opportunity to forge a new commitment to equality and fairness that will ensure more prosperity for all.”

Trend 7: MICE and transient success will depend on the ability to optimize marketing initiatives around new priorities.

Budgeting for 2021 will be volatile. Due to the uncertain environment of hospitality, planning will require patience and flexibility. One thing is for certain, though – event planners and corporate travel managers have changed their needs and approach, and few are sourcing. Winning MICE and corporate travel business will require suppliers to assess the new needs, priorities, and challenges of their clients. They will need to use these insights to invest in the [right marketing initiatives](#), to price strategically and competitively, and to employ flexible cancellation policies.

Leveraging the right digital channels correctly will be the first step to recovery in 2021. Planners and travel managers will want to know whether you're open for business and, if so, how you intend to keep

guests safe. Start by adding all your COVID-19 prevention plan and property precautions to your sourcing profiles. Hilton, for example, shows it is "EventReady" by linking to its COVID-19 protocols page and a [Cvent microsite](#) that explains more about its safety standards. Other key marketing initiatives suppliers need to consider are:

- Search engine optimisation (SEO)
- Search engine marketing (SEM)
- Content marketing
- Online media
- Customer relationship management (CRM)

Takeaway for Suppliers

Suppliers must continually measure the success of their campaigns, and monitor competitor activity in term of average rate offer, breakfast and amenity inclusions, last-room availability, and more. Winning MICE and corporate travel business will require suppliers to assess the new needs, priorities, and challenges of their clients.



Takeaway for Suppliers

Keep the target of your marketing efforts relatively close to home for a while. To help properties communicate how well they're operating locally and globally, Cvent introduced 59 questions for hotels to answer and update on [Cvent Business Transient](#).

Trend 8: Business travel will increasingly be regional, so think local.

During Cvent Connect Europe Virtual, Kevin Barr, the CEO of IHG, said that early in the crisis he believed leisure travel would be the only travel hotels would see for a while. In fact, in a [poll conducted by the Global Business Travel Association](#) in August 2020, 93% of respondents reported that COVID-19 had halted most of their organisations' international business trips. In contrast, only 74% of respondents said the pandemic had stopped all or most of their organisations' domestic trips – a 19% fall since GBTA's mid-April poll. Barr was surprised to learn, then, that a meaningful volume of domestic business travel was taking place alongside leisure trips.

Corporate travel recovery: regional first?

As we head into 2021, it's likely that traveller confidence will increase. "More companies look to be trending positively on domestic trips, with Europe still showing the most positive uplift," said Dave Hilfman, GBTA's interim executive director.

A [report by the management consulting firm McKinsey & Co.](#), based on interviews with travel managers in 2020, projected that the first signs of corporate travel recovery will be regional — trips that can be completed in personal or rented vehicles. So, in 2021, hotels seeking to restart their corporate travel business should aim their marketing campaigns at local organisations to let them know about the steps they're taking to keep guests safe. They may wish to invest in paid social media or search campaigns to target ads to a specific audience, for example.

Trend 9: Elopements, micro weddings, and hybrid weddings will provide scaled-down event options at hotels.

It's not just the meetings industry that has adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Weddings have had to adapt, too. Couples are still getting married during the pandemic, but because groups are often limited to small numbers of people, couples have found new ways to tie the knot with elopements, micro weddings, and hybrid weddings.

[A recent Brides magazine survey](#) found that 47% of couples are planning to downsize their wedding guest list as a result of the pandemic. Even, Etsy, an e-commerce site for handmade and vintage items, found a [29% increase](#) in searches for small weddings. These statistics indicate a continued interest in smaller weddings at hotels, many incorporating a livestream.

Hotels finding creative ways to accommodate couples' needs

21C Museum Hotel Cincinnati recently hosted a [rehearsal dinner](#) where the attendees received three-course meals in their rooms and dined together with the wedding couple and other guests via Zoom. The Founders Inn and Spa, Tapestry Collection by Hilton in Virginia Beach, Virginia, has used its Presidential Suite balcony, which overlooks the gardens where ceremonies are held, to hold guests who wanted to attend a wedding in person but with maximum social distancing in place.

Couples are also opting to livestream their ceremony for family and friends unable to attend due to various restrictions. Nichole Wardle, director of sales and marketing for Longwood Venues & Destinations, said of livestreaming in [an article for Brides](#), "We first saw its significant increase in corporate events, but now we are starting to see this trickle into weddings."



Takeaway for Suppliers

Make sure to advertise your micro wedding, elopement, and hybrid wedding packages, as couples wishing to marry during the pandemic (and its aftermath) will be most interested in these smaller, safer options. Couples are also opting to livestream their ceremony for family and friends unable to attend.

Trend 10: Individual properties will increasingly leverage digital marketing to communicate their readiness for meetings and events.

Even during a downturn, [experts advise against abandoning digital marketing](#). In fact, this could be the perfect time to invest in building your presence on digital platforms. Richard Horvath, founder of the web design and internet marketing company TheeDigital, wrote that digital marketing is an engine, not an on-off switch. “The more you add fuel and the more momentum you gain,” he said, “the faster and more effective it will be.”

Margaret Mastrogiacomo, executive vice president of strategy at Next-Guest, wrote in a recent article for Hotel News Resource that staying ahead of industry and marketing trends and leveraging the right digital channels and strategies are [key to setting up your 2021 marketing strategy for success](#). She also suggested establishing a COVID-19 task force to monitor trends in your area, and globally, and to shift

your strategy accordingly. Creating an easily accessible COVID-19 prevention plan and FAQ page is essential in communicating your safety to planners. Post the plan on your website and include it in pre-arrival emails. “The more visual and easy to digest your prevention plan is, the better,” Mastrogiacomo said.

Adjust visuals to reflect pandemic realities

Photography is another area of digital marketing greatly affected by the pandemic. Make sure that any photo of your property or meeting rooms illustrates the new normal. Avoid photos of crowds; and consider updating old images of restaurants, event spaces, and common areas with new photos reflecting social distancing guidelines and expanded floor plans.

Takeaway for Suppliers

Planners want to know about your hotel’s preparedness to host safe meetings, so be sure to publish your policies on your website and particularly on sourcing platforms like the [Cvent Supplier Network](#). [Cvent’s Source Safely Resource Hub](#) provides a central location for planners to search for venues following the latest health and safety guidelines.



2021 Trends for Hotel and Venue Operations

- **Trend 11:** The ability to plan meetings remotely will be essential for event professionals.
- **Trend 12:** Hotels and venues will need to provide expanded health checks and increased safety support for groups.
- **Trend 13:** Food & Beverage and lifestyle offerings will shift to immunity-boosting food, takeout or dine-in options, and mindfulness.
- **Trend 14:** Virtual meetings technology support may become an incremental revenue source for venues.
- **Trend 15:** Single-source technology platforms will become more important, as planners and venues prioritise efficiency.

Trend 11: The ability to plan meetings remotely will be essential for event professionals.

When it comes to planning events in 2021, the importance of health and safety cannot be overstated. Guests' safety is absolutely crucial, but awareness of a hotel's commitment to safety also plays a role in helping clients feel comfortable. In fact, 66% of the respondents to [Cvent's 2020 Planner Sentiment & Sourcing Report](#) said they expect a hotel to provide a sanitized environment. In-person site visits may be on hold due to COVID-19 fears and continued travel restrictions, but planners still want to ensure a safe, socially distanced setup for when the live event goes ahead.

Giving event planners the ability to plan their events from a distance, while designing optimal seating arrangements, will be critical. Event space needs to be used differently than in the past, with bigger spaces for fewer attendees and instituting one-way traffic patterns.

Room diagramming and interactive floor plans

These types of remote-accessible tools have become increasingly important for hotels. Kasia Urbanska, Senior Meetings & Events Executive for InterContinental London - The O2, said that for planners, Cvent Event Diagramming shows them that they "can still run amazing events with us without worrying about guest's safety,"

Ultimately, the question on every planner's mind is: What does the experience look and feel like from the attendee point of view? So, in addition to providing clear diagrams of the event space, zooming out shows the surrounding area, which can help eliminate surprises and help planners feel more comfortable.



Takeaway for Suppliers

Digital tools like [Cvent Event Diagramming with Interactive Floor Plans](#) can help you collaborate with planners and give them a better idea of your space and its capabilities. They can also contribute to reassuring planners of your hotel's commitment to safety. Ultimately, the question on every planner's mind is: What does the experience look and feel like from the attendee point of view?

Trend 12: Hotels and venues will need to provide expanded health checks and increased safety support for groups.

In the European Edition of [Cvent's 2020 Planner Sentiment and Sourcing Report](#), 56% of planners said that health and safety measures will most influence their selection of a venue. Furthermore, 65% of the respondents wanted venues to add daily temperature checks, and 53% wanted on-site medical personnel included as well.

The pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives for the immediate future — and possibly for the long run. Across the board, hotels are updating their health and safety procedures for guests and event attendees. These measures will continue throughout 2021 and likely until a time when it's deemed safe to gather freely once again.

Hotels and venues have established and vetted safety plans

Companies like Marriott International, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, and MGM Resorts International, for example, have all released safety plans that involve mask-wearing requirements, enhanced cleaning protocols, social distancing measures, temperature checks, contactless experiences and touch-free solutions, and modified food and beverage options. In Japan, Hoshino Resorts developed an app that allows guests to check the number of people in a hotel's common spaces in real time. Montage Hotels partnered with One Medical, a membership-based primary care practice, to allow guests to schedule virtual doctor appointments during their stay — and for up to one month after checkout.

[Some hotels are even offering COVID-19 tests](#), or reimbursing guests for the cost of getting tested. Wynn Resorts, for example, partnered with the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada to provide an [on-site COVID-19 testing lab for Wynn Las Vegas](#).

Takeaway for Suppliers

You can use [Cvent Event Diagramming](#) to create photorealistic 3D tours so event planners can view every aspect of your property – all without leaving their desks.

You can also place elements like social distancing signage, hand sanitizer stands, and temperature-taking stations throughout a diagram so planners can be reminded and assured of proper safety precautions. Across the board, hotels are updating their health and safety procedures for guests and event attendees.



Takeaway for Suppliers

It's essential to rethink your amenities and food and beverage options for a world changed by COVID-19.

For example, you could invite guests to reserve private time slots to use the gym or other on-site amenities, offer a complimentary grab-and-go breakfast bag or stocked mini fridge, or partner with local health providers for on-site testing and medical attention.

Trend 13: Food & Beverage and lifestyle offerings will shift to immunity-boosting food, takeout or dine-in options, and mindfulness.

People are more focused now on healthier food to support their immune systems, contact-free dining options like grab-and-go or delivery, and amenities related to health and mindfulness. [Research from ADM](#), one of the world's leading agricultural companies, found that 57% of consumers report being more concerned about their immunity as a result of COVID-19, and 48% plan to purchase more items related to health and wellness.

New year, new wellness goals

[In an interview for Forbes](#), Scott Gingerich, a senior vice president for Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, noted that guests are making healthier food choices. "While 2020 may have been a year full of uncertainty where we had little control," he said, "diners are slowly starting to reset their wellness goals with clearer plans and more stability in 2021. Plus, many people are learning more about what goes into certain dishes with the rise of cooking at home, and expect the same level of freshness and transparency from the restaurants they dine at, as well."

[CNN.com](#) recently highlighted a number of properties providing special health and wellness amenities to help guests feel safer on-site. In Rhode Island, for example, Ocean House replaced happy hour at the bar with an expert mixologist pushing a Ferrari-red "BarMobile" from room to room, mixing craft cocktails on the spot, and serving them with complimentary canapés. And in southwest Florida, the Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village offers to stock guests' refrigerators and pantries before arrival with ready-made meals or ingredients so they can make their own and dine in the safety of their own rooms.

Trend 14: Virtual meetings technology support may become an incremental revenue source for venues.

Hospitality's once-reliable revenue streams will continue to be negatively impacted by the pandemic, so hotels need to incorporate new or newly reinvigorated ones. Properties that can supply the latest advances in virtual meetings technology, guidance, and support will be well ahead of the competition.

Off-site audiences will undoubtedly constitute a significant portion of the attendee mix for the next year. This will give planners the chance to balance in-person and virtual formats — and potentially to scale up as needed. Cvent, for example, discovered the potential of its annual conference, Cvent CONNECT Europe, when 2020's two-day virtual event drew a crowd nearly eight times larger than 2019's in-person conference. Participants grew from an impressive 1,500 people at InterContinental London - The O2 to more than 8,000 on Cvent's newly minted digital platform, [Virtual Attendee Hub](#).

Necessity creates innovation

"Challenging times like this are a great breeding ground for innovation," noted Cvent's Vice President of Product Management, McNeel Keenan, during the [2020 Cvent CONNECT Europe Virtual conference](#). And there's no question that the latest innovations in technology will be an even greater generator of revenue for hotels and other meeting sites going forward. Staying ahead of the competition will require seamless online connections — from bolstered bandwidth to systems for RFPs to virtual site visits, hybrid meetings, and more.

It will also require a staff that's thoroughly versed and trained in the technology's potential, from the hotel's audiovisual team to its marketing, sales, and in-house meetings professionals.



Takeaway for Suppliers

Properties that supply the latest advances in virtual meetings technology and support will be well ahead of the competition.

Trend 15: Single-source technology platforms will become more important, as planners and venues prioritise efficiency.

According to a [recent survey by Cvent](#), 41% of planners say that investing in virtual meeting technology is their most important priority for 2021. And in a recent [PCMA study](#), 76% of planners said that they are going virtual. These aren't isolated statistics – or even very surprising. The reality is that technology such as virtual event platforms are increasingly popular because they help ensure the safety of a meeting, and expand potential meeting reach at a time when fewer people can meet in person. As a result, these solutions are quickly becoming a staple of events programming: [the Cvent survey](#) found that 66% of planners intended to use virtual event technology for at least 50% of their events in 2021.

That's good for business. But not so great for planner workload or event cost. As a result, many event planners are looking for a single virtual platform for all events, insights, and digital marketing tasks.

With planners increasingly adopting a single-source technology approach, suppliers should follow suit, especially when it comes to operations tasks that help planners diagram and plan events. Whether all-virtual, hybrid, or in-person, a single platform powering all aspects of the event lifecycle helps to control cost and tamp down user confusion. Single-source platforms offer the following benefits:

- A single technology vendor with a dedicated support staff
- Simplified execution of events, whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid
- A single source of truth for all event data

For suppliers, this trend is important because it will begin to inform how to best accommodate planner needs for hybrid events. Ultimately, this will have a significant impact your sales approach, marketing messaging, and operations tasks.

Takeaway for Suppliers

Make sure your team is up-to-date and knowledgeable about the latest virtual event solutions. Better yet, understand how you are able to support event professionals who use a specific single-source technology platform, such as [Cvent's Virtual Attendee Hub](#). Doing so will help close the deal.



Closing: Takeaways for 2021 Hospitality Trends

After a year of uncertainty, 2021 brings with it the hope of a new era in group and transient business. That doesn't mean going back to the way things were, but moving forward with expansive ideas driven by technology and our own plucky resourcefulness. In fact, change is here already: virtual event technology is more advanced, as are the possibilities of hybrid events. Even something as foundational to the business as F&B has become an exciting new horizon.

It's all there – ahead of us. As we learn to live with COVID-19 and future crises that are sure to impact travel and events, many of the trends we've outlined here will gain velocity and become permanent solutions. To that end, as you work to attract planners and travel managers to your hotel or venue, prepare to solve for the following:

- Planners will seek out environmentally sustainable venue choices
- Suppliers will need to be expert at hosting hybrid events
- Smaller groups will continue to be important, and virtual event technology will connect multiple locations into a larger experience.
- Hybrid-ready rooms will become a requirement.
- More business travel will be regional, so think local.
- Individual properties will rely on digital marketing to compete.
- Remote planning capability will be essential for event professionals and vendors.
- Single-source technology platforms will become critical, as planners and venues prioritise efficiency.

Are you ready? 2021 awaits.



Did you know that 76% of event professionals said that they'd be willing to plan an in-person/virtual "hybrid" event?

[Click here](#) to learn more about event planner priorities.

Additional Hotel and Venue Resources

To learn more about meetings and events best practices, check out the following supplier and venue resources:

eBooks and reports

- [Cvent's 2020 Planner Sentiment & Sourcing Report - Europe Edition](#)
- [The Hotel Manager's Guide to Safe Events Technology](#)
- [Cvent 2020 Travel Managers Report - EMEA Edition](#)
- [The Hotel Manager's Guide to Restarting Transient Business](#)
- [The Hotel Manager's Guide to Marketing During Uncertain Times](#)
- [The Hotel Manager's Guide to Restarting MICE and Transient Business](#)
- [Straight From Cvent CONNECT Virtual: MICE and Corporate Travel Best Practices](#)

Blog posts

- [17 Hotel Revenue Generating Ideas to Boost Business](#)
- [Hotel Safety Spotlight: An Interview with Reece Vanasse, Vienna Marriott Hotel](#)



ABOUT CVENT

Cvent is the global meeting, event, travel, and hospitality technology leader. Cvent provides easy-to-use, integrated technology solutions to maximise the impact of meetings and events of all sizes. We help organisations plan and market events, execute onsite, engage audiences, and measure and analyse results.



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