

Freeman<sup>1</sup>



# The new normal

Considerations for business events  
in a post-COVID-19 world







# Health and safety are the #1 priority

At Freeman, our first and foremost concern is the health and safety of our employees and their families, our customers, and the wider communities where we live and work. The purpose of this document is to outline new ideas, processes, and protocols to help ensure the safety of everyone at controlled business events.

We encourage our team members and partners to utilize this resource to help you take necessary precautions and determine next steps while planning for your events during this challenging time. What we know about the novel coronavirus is constantly evolving, so please always rely on resources such as the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and your local public health department for the latest information. We will proactively update policies and safety recommendations as they become available.

We are stronger together. If you have best practices and new ideas for making your business events safer, please share those at [bettertogether@freeman.com](mailto:bettertogether@freeman.com).

Any questions or comments related to this document should be directed to Dan Steiner, Freeman's Head of Enterprise Risk Management, at [dan.steiner@freeman.com](mailto:dan.steiner@freeman.com) or [469-673-8275](tel:469-673-8275).

# Marketing checklist

Adapt communication strategies and campaign tactics.

- ✓ **Ensure your tone and message are authentic, honest, open, and transparent.**
- ✓ **Answer the “what’s in it for me” question.**  
Ensure your value proposition is strong and, as much as possible, personalized and targeted.
- ✓ **Avoid statistics touting the overall size of an event.**  
These are how show organizers measure their own success, not how an attendee measures the quality of their experience. These statistics can exacerbate fears about business gatherings and even set unrealistic expectations for your audience.
- ✓ **Shift your focus from the size of the event to the smaller, more intimate connections that are made.**  
Recognize that many attendees will be balancing the desire for connections and community with their fear of crowds. Address this by promoting the connections that can be made within smaller settings, e.g., matchmaking programs, a CEO breakfast, an LGBTQ reception, a mentor program, etc. For exhibitors, focus on the quality of the attendee you are attracting through your marketing campaigns.
- ✓ **Let your audience know what your on-site preparedness/sanitation plan is, but don’t lead with it.**  
Just as a restaurant doesn’t lead with messaging about cleanliness, you need to make the case first as to why an attendee should be interested in attending. Dedicate a page on your website to event health and safety measures.
- ✓ **Look at your creative through a new lens.**  
This won’t necessarily be business as usual, and your typical creative approach will likely need to be revisited from the perspective of this “new normal.” Show visuals that focus on an individual’s experience at an event. Avoid any visuals that will exacerbate your audience’s fear of germ-spreading or that will provide fodder for critics on social media.
- ✓ **Consider a hybrid event.**  
Savvy event organizers should be adding virtual components to future events. Coordinated as a combination of in-person meetings and virtual presentations, a successful hybrid event blends these elements seamlessly to expand reach and engagement.



# Event registration checklist

It's time to up your reg game.

- ☑ **Registration becomes entirely digital.**  
Use an eco-friendly alternative to printed programs and handouts — give your attendees the option to register in advance by using their laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Some tools feature tracking and do-it-yourself options where you can share contact information and enable contactless pay.
- ☑ **Staggered check-in times.**  
Give attendees a specific time window for check-in so registration happens in waves versus a mass rush.
- ☑ **Antibacterial surface wipes for counters.**  
Clean counters frequently.
- ☑ **Express check-in and satellite registration at hotels and airports.**  
Eliminate long queues and crowds by enabling convenient locations for check-in and registration.
- ☑ **Pre-event badge delivery.**  
Provide the option for attendees to be mailed their badges in advance or provide a print-at-home option.
- ☑ **Body temperature detection, such as thermal cameras and/or infrared thermometers.**  
Consider requiring temperature checks for all employees and attendees of the event.
- ☑ **Medical exam room.**  
Provide facilities to care for workers or attendees who may become sick on-site. Assess and refer them to medical professionals as soon as possible, if needed.

# Event logistics checklist

Navigating your show.

- ☑ **Floor graphics for social distancing.**  
Use graphic indicators as a reminder of how far apart attendees should stand when in line.
- ☑ **Enable touch-free doors and entryways.**
- ☑ **Sanitation stations.**  
Provide touch-free hand sanitizers, hand-washing stations, etc. Mark the locations on signage maps or within your event app.
- ☑ **Utilize remote robotics.**  
Enable attendees to explore and interact with spaces via a roaming robot versus physically doing it themselves.
- ☑ **Service desk / concierge.**  
Transition away from a physical to a virtual service desk. Provide on-demand response services, but have the first touchpoint be virtual, and follow up through mobile communications or email.
- ☑ **Protect workers and attendees with transparent barriers where appropriate.**  
Use sneeze guard protections and other barriers for appropriate areas (information desk, service desk, registration) where technology-based distancing isn't feasible.
- ☑ **Chatbot and AI-driven service.**  
Voice-based interactive systems provide a quick and cost-effective way to answer questions and request services. Show organizers can benefit from improved efficiency and reduced person-to-person interaction.

# Education checklist

Make it a digital engagement, not just an event online.

- ☑ **Focus on pre-show content delivery to prepare (and enhance) on-site experience.**  
It sets the tone for what your audience can expect during showtime.
- ☑ **Embrace rehearsals — just as you would for a live event.**  
Online audiences were slightly more forgiving of technical glitches; this is no longer the case.
- ☑ **Experiment with microlearning. Adults have a 10-minute attention window.**  
It's critical to deliver information in very small amounts quickly. It boosts knowledge retention and enables individuals to quickly pick up concepts.
- ☑ **Choose the right tech for your use case.**  
Livestreams, webinars, virtual conferences — each has unique benefits for your attendees and your sponsors.
- ☑ **Personalization x10.**  
Audience segmentation and even self-selection can be further leveraged with attendees dispersed throughout the globe. Think about adding more breakouts to discussions with unique focus. This allows each audience to get more of what they need from you.
- ☑ **Incorporate learning paths and gamification to encourage participation.**  
Create thoughtful experiences that balance competition and collaboration. Engage your audiences to embrace their inner problem solvers.
- ☑ **Never underestimate on-demand content.**  
Our clients share that nearly 60% of online viewership comes from the on-demand version of their content. Broadcast live is great, but depending on your content and budget, it's not always necessary.

# Show floor checklist

Enhance the show floor experience for exhibitors and attendees.

- ✓ **Curate the experience.**  
Create recommended pathways for different interests and transform the typical booth model into interactive vignettes.
- ✓ **Rethink the layout.**  
Larger lounges with individual seating are a good place to start. Go further. Rethink the rows of 10x10 booths and create more space for your exhibitors to interact safely with attendees.
- ✓ **One-way aisles vs. wider aisles?**  
One-way aisles are more cost-effective, as they leverage infrastructure already in place. We recommend adding personnel with signs at aisle openings to help ensure traffic flows smoothly. These individuals can help direct traffic at a safe distance to put attendees at ease.
- ✓ **Schedule tours of the show floor.**  
This could also include scheduling visitors for your exhibitors, so meetings are done by appointment only.
- ✓ **Enable the ability to navigate the floor virtually.**  
If attendees can use the event application to search the show floor using keywords, guests will be more efficient with their time and how they get from place to place.
- ✓ **Control density.**  
Use measurement technology and heat maps to determine and control capacity levels to ensure areas do not become overly crowded.
- ✓ **Adjust KPIs.**  
Foot traffic may very well no longer be the best indicator of success. Think quality over quantity, and educate your exhibitors on this shift.
- ✓ **Plan for cleaning of spaces throughout the day.**  
Build breaks into schedules to clear attendees from show floors to allow for cleaning. These defined time segments will also allow more flexibility in offering “sessions” or segmenting audience visits like a museum might manage a special exhibit.

# Digital checklist

Virtual isn't going away. Master it.

## Online experience

- ✓ **Create communities online.**  
Focus on creating opportunities for discussion and interaction rather than simply archiving what's happened at an in-person event.
- ✓ **Mirror what your audiences already consume online.**  
Give your audience content that is stimulating and fun by using the methods of podcasting, influencer-led forums, and entertainment.
- ✓ **Embrace more voices.**  
Integrating digital means bringing more voices into the conversation. Rather than a single speaker, bring in multiple thought-leaders to share varying perspectives. Find speakers and experts who can speak to different levels of audiences.
- ✓ **Inject humor, fun, and engagement into content.**  
Understand that your job may have evolved from delivering information to, at times, entertaining your audience. Keep it fresh, fast-moving, and fun.
- ✓ **Be aware that online events are different.**  
It's a different medium, and the best practices are different. It's not as simple as just translating face-to-face event best practices.

## Digital at face-to-face events

- ✓ **Apps will be key.**  
Technology providers will continue to integrate new application technology into the fabric of events, but with a 365-day mindset. Future apps will go beyond location finding, session schedules, bios, attendee profiles, and matchmaking to seamlessly connect physical and digital worlds.
- ✓ **Large touchscreens and wearable tech (VR goggles) will need to take sanitation standards into effect.**
- ✓ **Enable attendees to use their own devices to drive a digital experience wherever possible.**
- ✓ **Utilize beacons for crowd control and push notifications.**  
This creates an easy snapshot of where attendees are.
- ✓ **Tap into touchless tech.**  
Hands-free technology is changing the game in automotive and manufacturing industries. Even Nike recently invested in technology so you can step into their sneakers without the use of your hands. With gesture recognition and other touchless tech, we'll soon see new ways to engage even more safely at events.