

Shifting the mindset

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR A POST-COVID-19 WORLD

Updated April 8, 2021

Why this guide?

As the leading voice in live events, Freeman knows that show organizers and exhibitors are looking to us for guidance on protecting people at your event from the risks of COVID-19 transmission.

With this guide, we're pleased to share just that.

We mean this to be a general guide for different steps of the attendee journey — with the elements necessary to design safer events for all scales and functions. When we prioritize the health and safety of individuals attending an event, attendees will feel more comfortable, confident, and be able to engage and connect with those around them.



Today

We've led with the importance of health and safety because, clearly, they are the top priorities today.

At the same time, we see them as only part of the challenge ahead, because expectations haven't cooled for us to create better experiences, making each interaction more personal and meaningful for the attendee. We'll make these things happen not only with changes in physical design, but also by tapping the true potential of mobile devices, so that attendees can navigate and participate on their terms.

These are changes that our industry has talked about for a long time.

Now, that day has come. And with this guide, Freeman is here to help you seize it.

To do this, we're asking you to do no less than shift your mindset around how you approach live events.

We must move from the mentality of simply providing space and structures and furnishings — the components of live events — to providing the objective of live events: driving business results through engaging, motivating experiences. So, we must reimagine virtually every aspect of those components, from scaling to seating, from technology to traffic flow.

Some new guidelines will be obvious to you, while others will be more subtle and nuanced.. In all cases, we've put a lot of thought into them and ask that you read the guide carefully so that you understand our recommendations.

The following pages break down the design of live events into 10 sections, with guidelines based on the latest information available.

However, we know all too well how quickly the world can change around us.

And with that, let the shifting begin.

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Health and safety

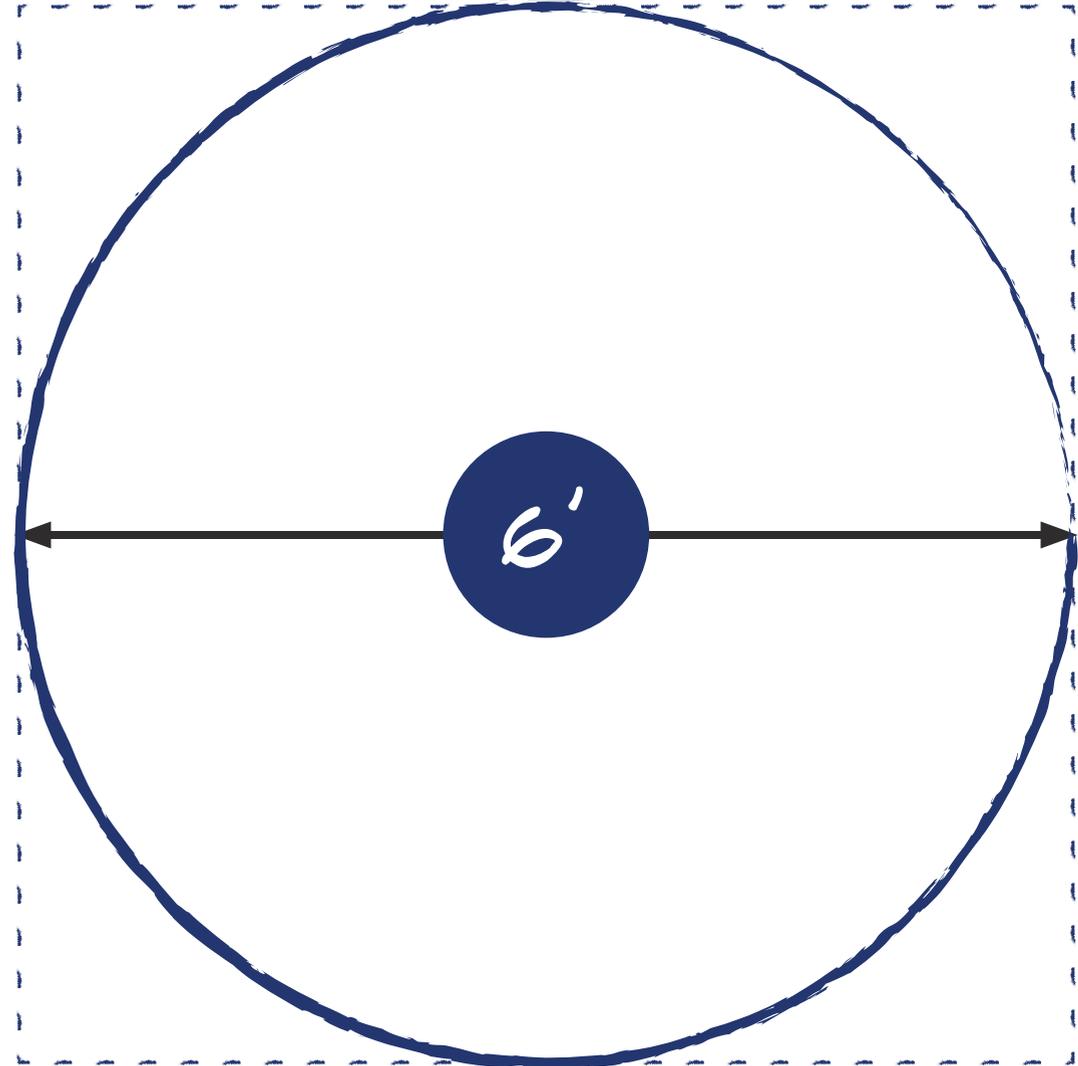
Practicing safe space

Why

This is critical. You want physical distancing in effect to comply with local, state, and CDC guidelines.

Benefit

This is an important sign assuring attendees, staff, and sponsors that you've prioritized their health and safety on-site.



Numbers tell the story of how much our world has changed. We've done the math ourselves to call out the most notable ones.

Pre-COVID-19

Max occupancy sample calculations

| FUNCTION OF SPACE | OCCUPIED AREA (SQ. FT.) | PRE-COVID-19 FACTOR (SQ. FT. PER PERSON) | MAX OCCUPANCY |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------|
| STANDING SPACE | 50,000 | 5 | 10,000 |
| THEATER STYLE | 50,000 | 7 | 7,142 |
| EXHIBITS | 150,000 | 15 | 10,000 |
| SEATING AT TABLES | | | |
| STAGES AND PLATFORMS | | | |

Post-COVID-19

Max occupancy sample calculations

| FUNCTION OF SPACE | OCCUPIED AREA (SQ. FT.) | POST-COVID-19 FACTOR (SQ. FT. PER PERSON) | MAX OCCUPANCY |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| STANDING SPACE | 50,000 | 28.3 | 1,766 |
| THEATER STYLE | 50,000 | | 1,766 |
| EXHIBITS | 150,000 | | 5,300 |
| SEATING AT TABLES | | 5,300 | |
| STAGES AND PLATFORMS | | 5,300 | |

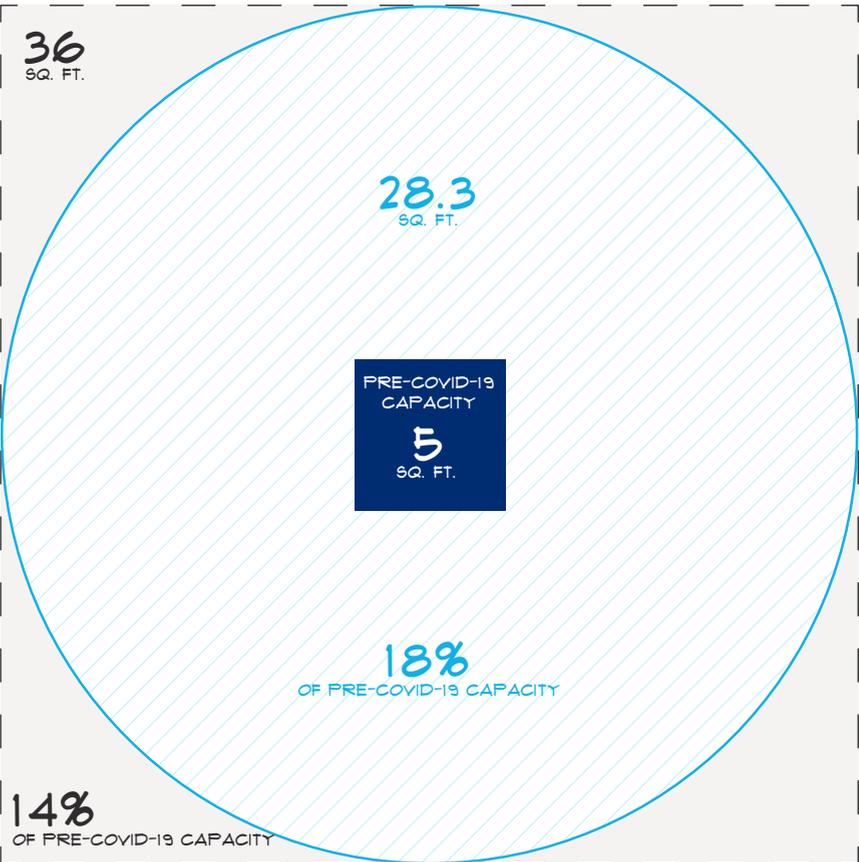
| FUNCTION OF SPACE | OCCUPIED AREA (SQ. FT.) | POST-COVID-19 FACTOR (SQ. FT. PER PERSON) | MAX OCCUPANCY |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| STANDING SPACE | 50,000 | 36 | 1,388 |
| THEATER STYLE | 50,000 | | 1,388 |
| EXHIBITS | 150,000 | | 4,166 |
| SEATING AT TABLES | | 4,166 | |
| STAGES AND PLATFORMS | | 4,166 | |

These graphics show how dramatically personal space at events is changing post-COVID-19.

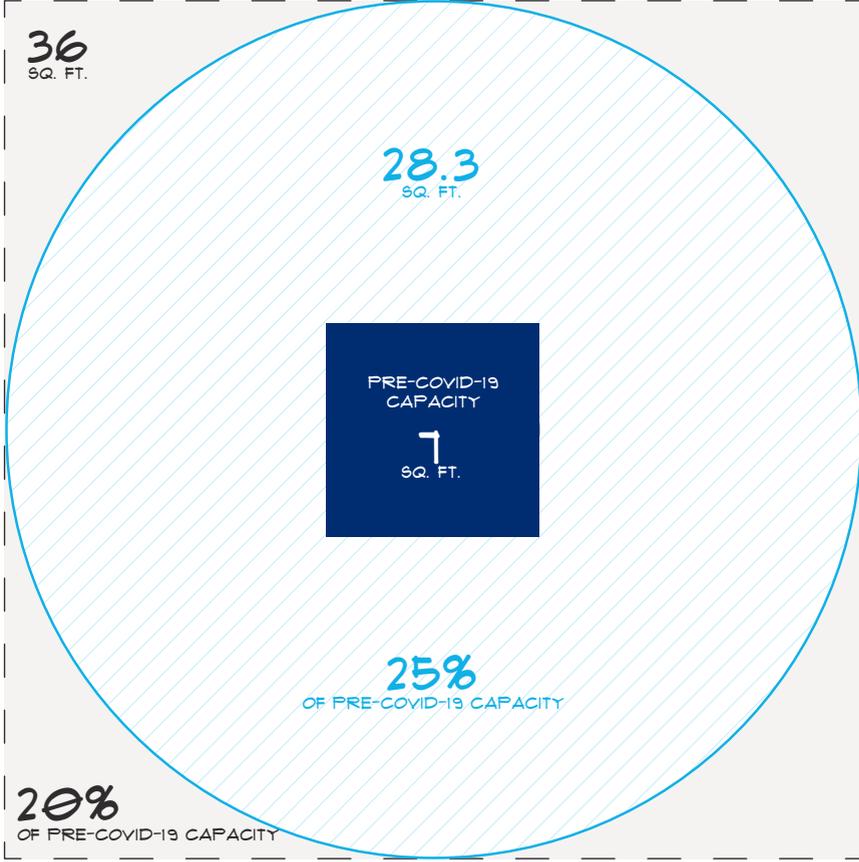
Max occupancy

Factor Comparison

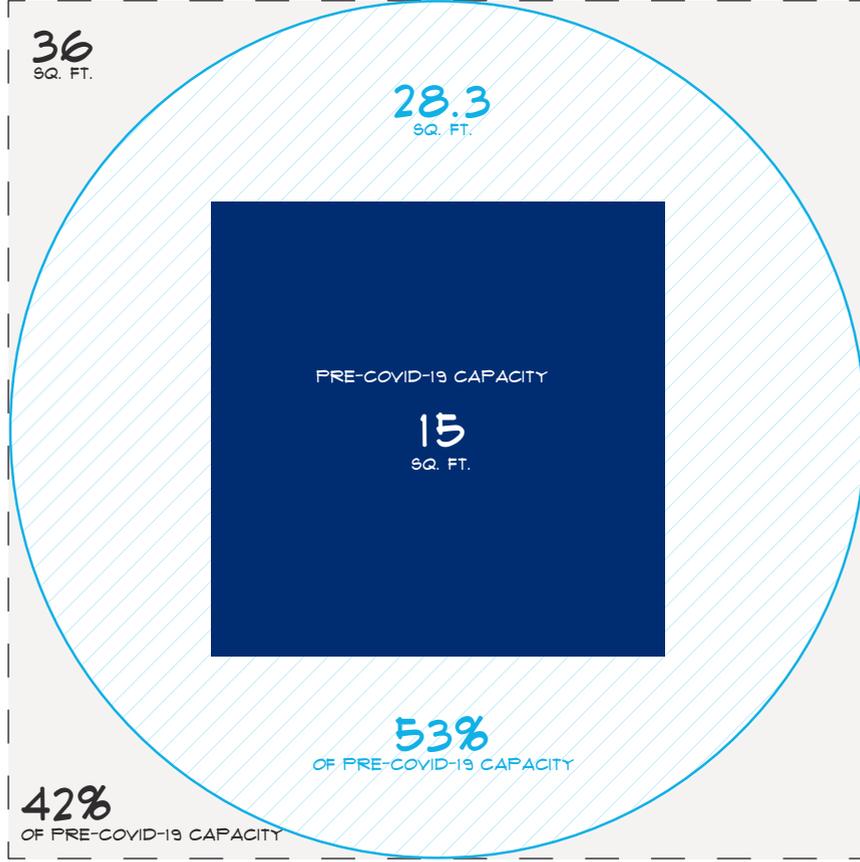
8 SHIFTING THE MINDSET / MAX OCCUPANCY



STANDING SPACE



THEATER STYLE



EXHIBITS, SEATING AT TABLES, STAGES, AND PLATFORMS



HEALTH CHECK
STATION

ELEMENTS & PROPERTIES
TO REINFORCE SOCIAL
DISTANCING

SANITIZATION BEACONS

FLOOR GRAPHICS TO
INDICATE SOCIAL
DISTANCING

Practicing **safe** everything else, too

Why

It's one thing to talk the health and safety talk.
Here's where you walk the walk.

Benefit

Attendees who'll be back next year.

2

Attendee journey

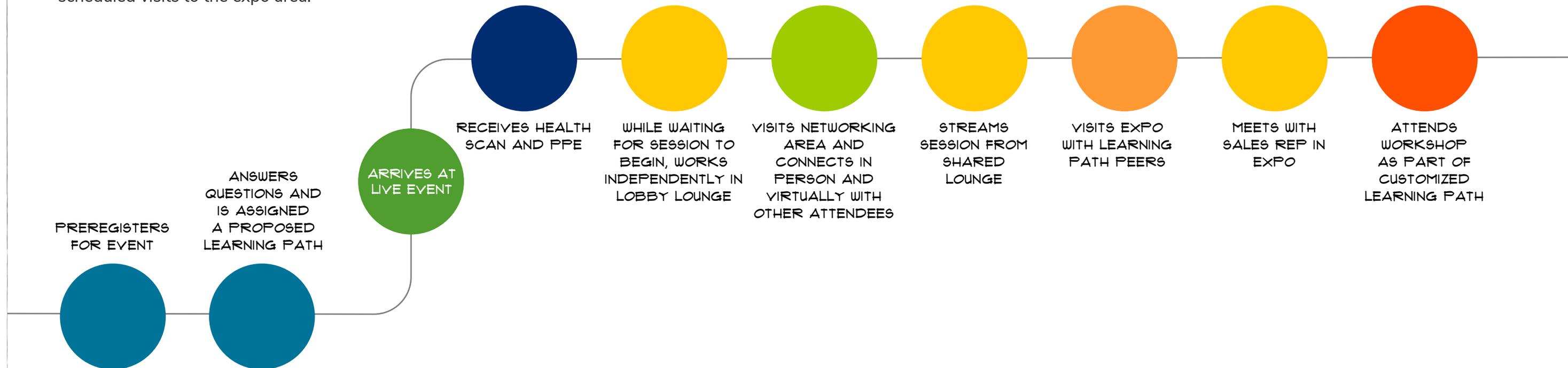
Departures from the same old journey

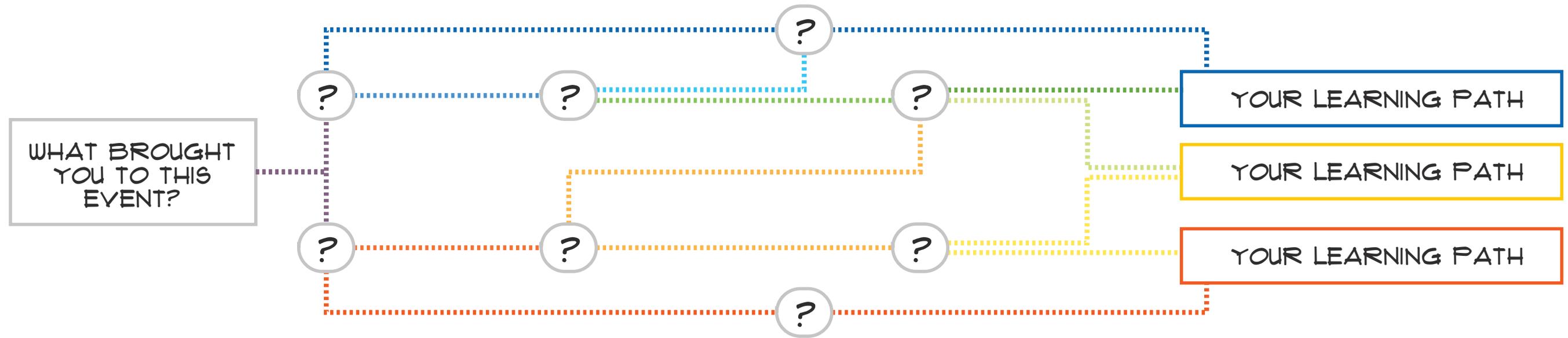
Why

After health and safety, this is the next priority of shifting the mindset. Today, we live in a digitally pervasive, on-demand world — and this constantly raises new expectations for the user experience (UX). Now, it's the live events industry's turn to step up with similarly thoughtful, entertaining, and rewarding live experiences. With overall event capacity restricted, density management is key. We recommend appointment-based, scheduled visits to the expo area.

Benefit

The more energy and creativity we put into the attendee journey, the more attendees take away. That reaps dividends in buzz, social shares, sales leads, and positive energy that continues well after the event itself.





Consider smaller, more curated experiences

Why

The new realities of health and safety will necessitate lower attendance. To avoid crowding, attendees will be managed as timed groups. So why not organize them by interests or networks (“learning paths”) and direct them to attend different parts of the event in staggered sections?

Benefit

Consider the attendees. For them, this means not just more breathing room, but potentially a better-quality event — with more time and space to connect with others and engage with the experience around them.

3



Technology

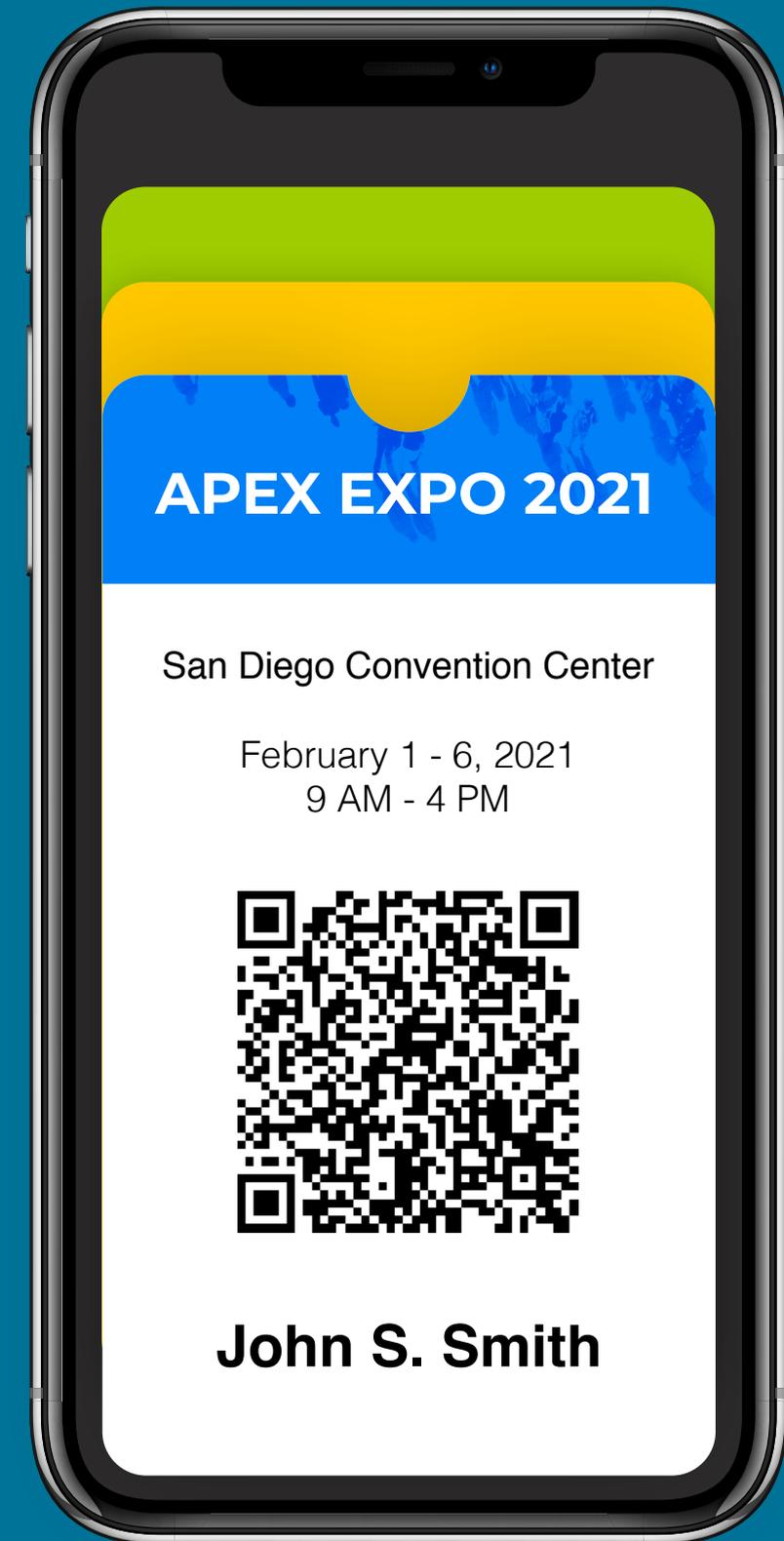
Amp up the experience via tech

Why

Attendees' lives already revolve around their mobile devices. Don't overlook mobile technology to help them navigate the show floor, rate speakers, and network with others — along with a hundred other things. Then there's virtual reality, geotargeting, and digital signage. Technology only enhances the physical experience.

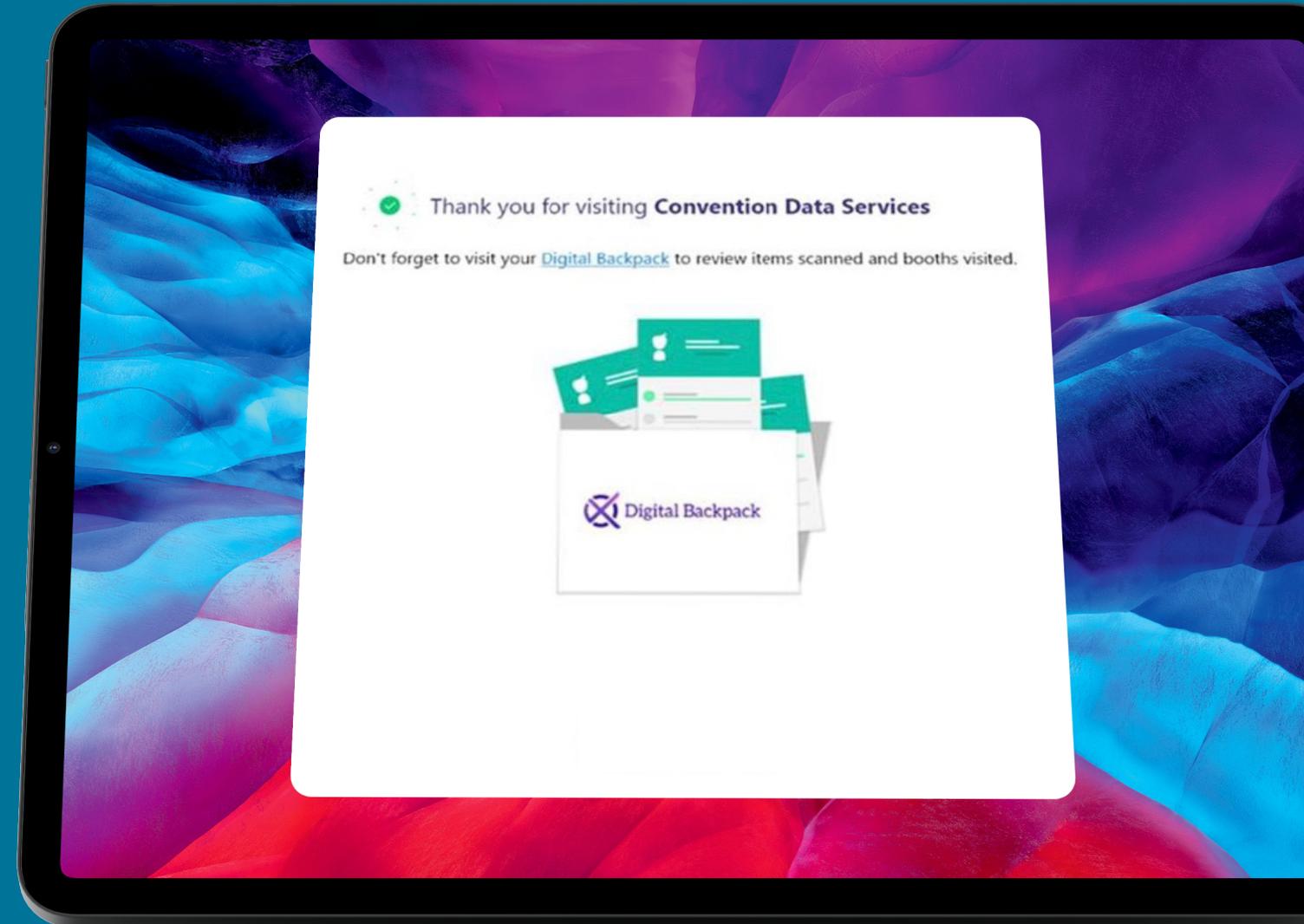
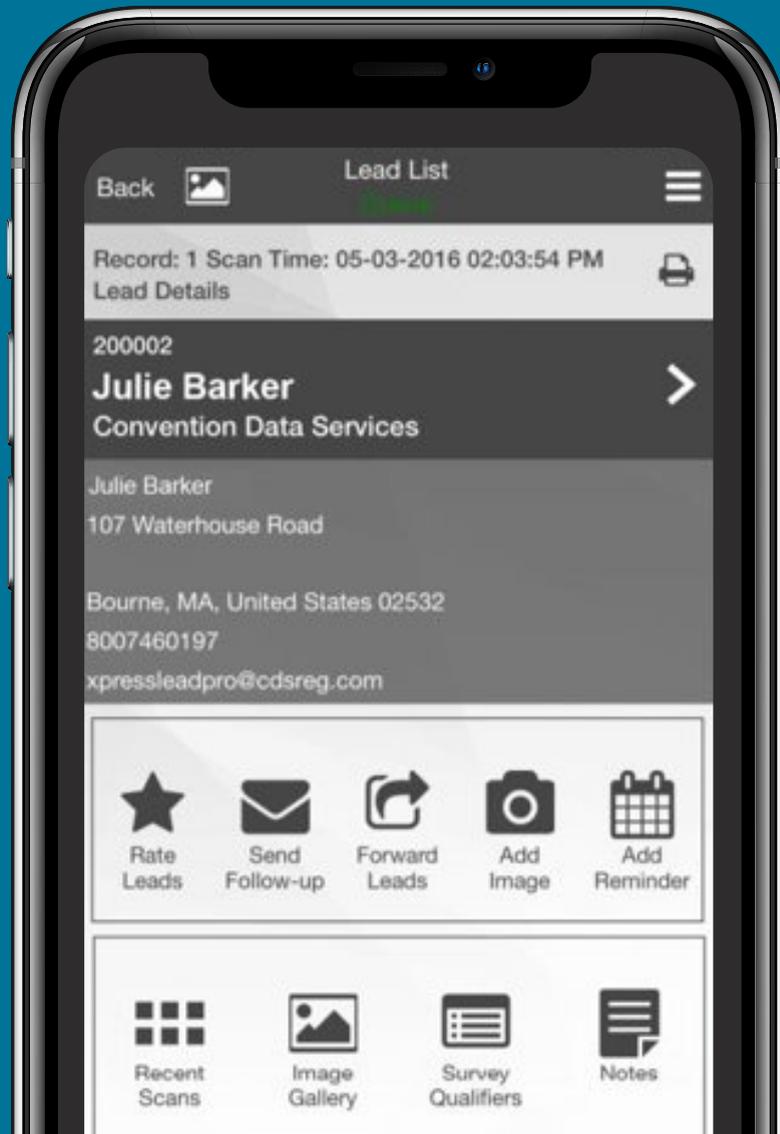
Benefit

In a word, convenience. In another, engagement. There are a lot more words we could use, but we think you get the idea.



Digital leads

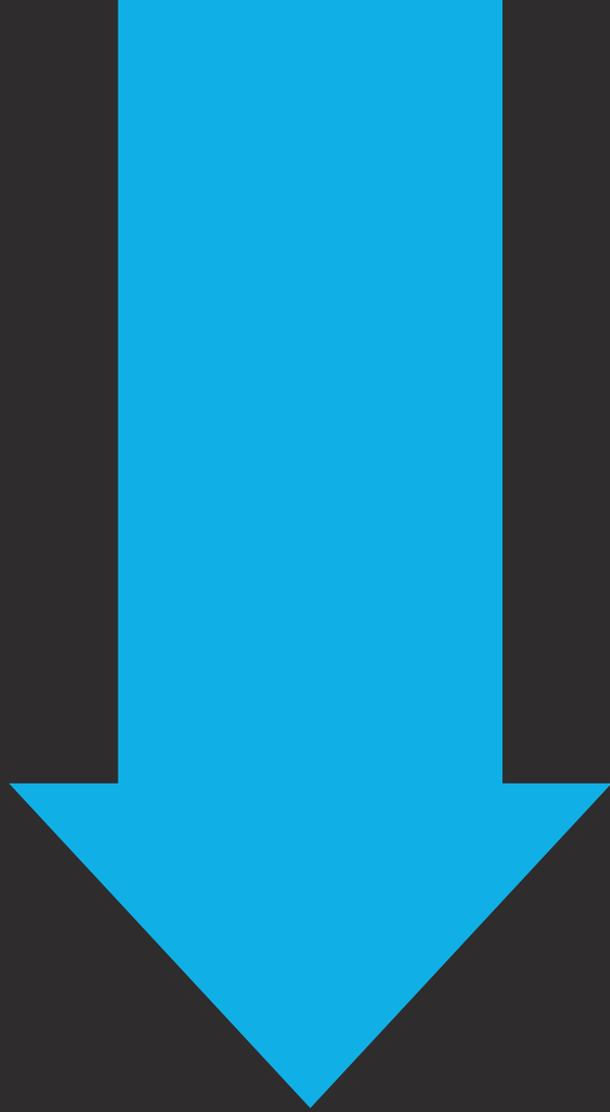
By downloading a simple application, exhibitors can scan attendees' personal mobile devices, prompting survey qualifiers to help generate and qualify sales leads.



Digital backpack

Attendees can self-select product literature that piques their interest from exhibitors across the show floor, equipping you with data about attendees' wants and needs.

4



Signage and wayfinding

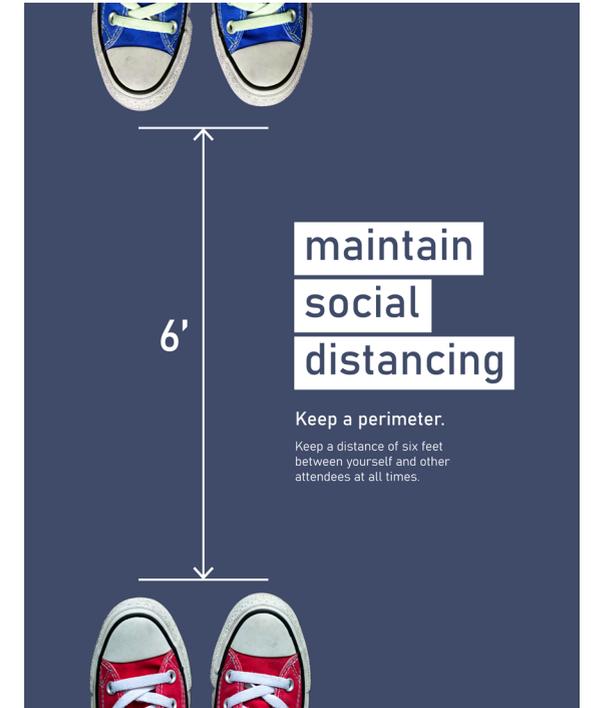
Use new ways to show the way

Why

Signage takes on a new urgency with the importance of health and safety. For that reason, we recommend creating one style/color scheme for health and safety signage, and another entirely for your event branding and wayfinding. Signage can also enhance the Learning Paths experience with the use of floor graphics to guide groups around the show floor.

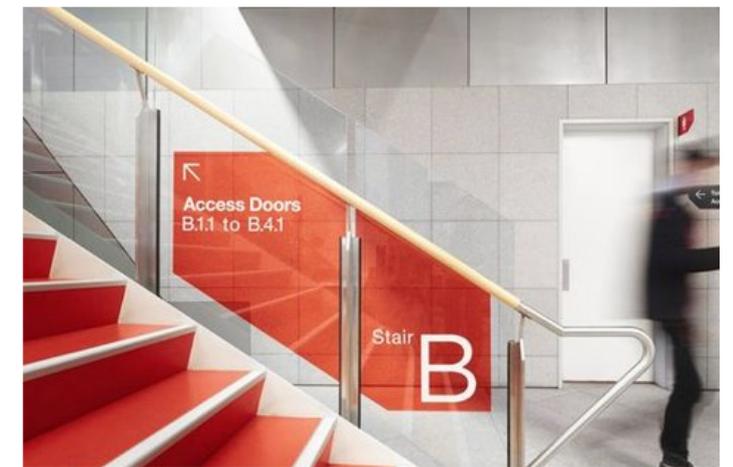
Benefit

Prominent health and safety markers will reassure attendees that the show is taking COVID-19 concerns seriously. Learning Path graphics will guide and simplify attendees' journeys around the show floor and demonstrate the show's attention to detail.

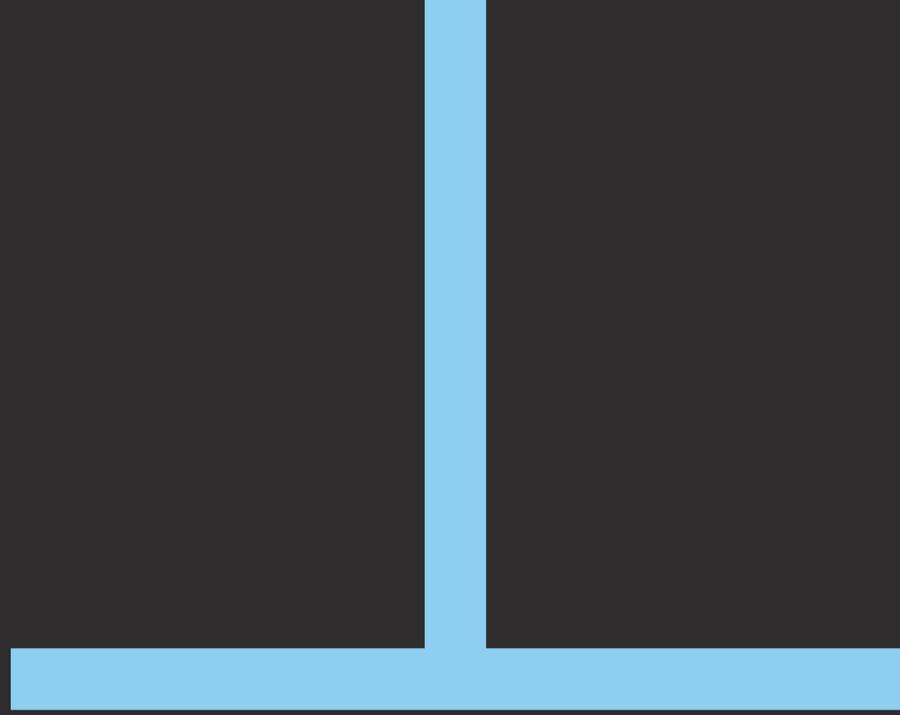


Be strategic with graphics

For show graphics, we recommend bold, simple graphics with large, clear copy/content that can be read from afar. This reduces the problem of attendees stopping, hesitating, and bunching. Put health and safety messaging at the top of your messaging hierarchy, then event messaging.



5



Venue overlay

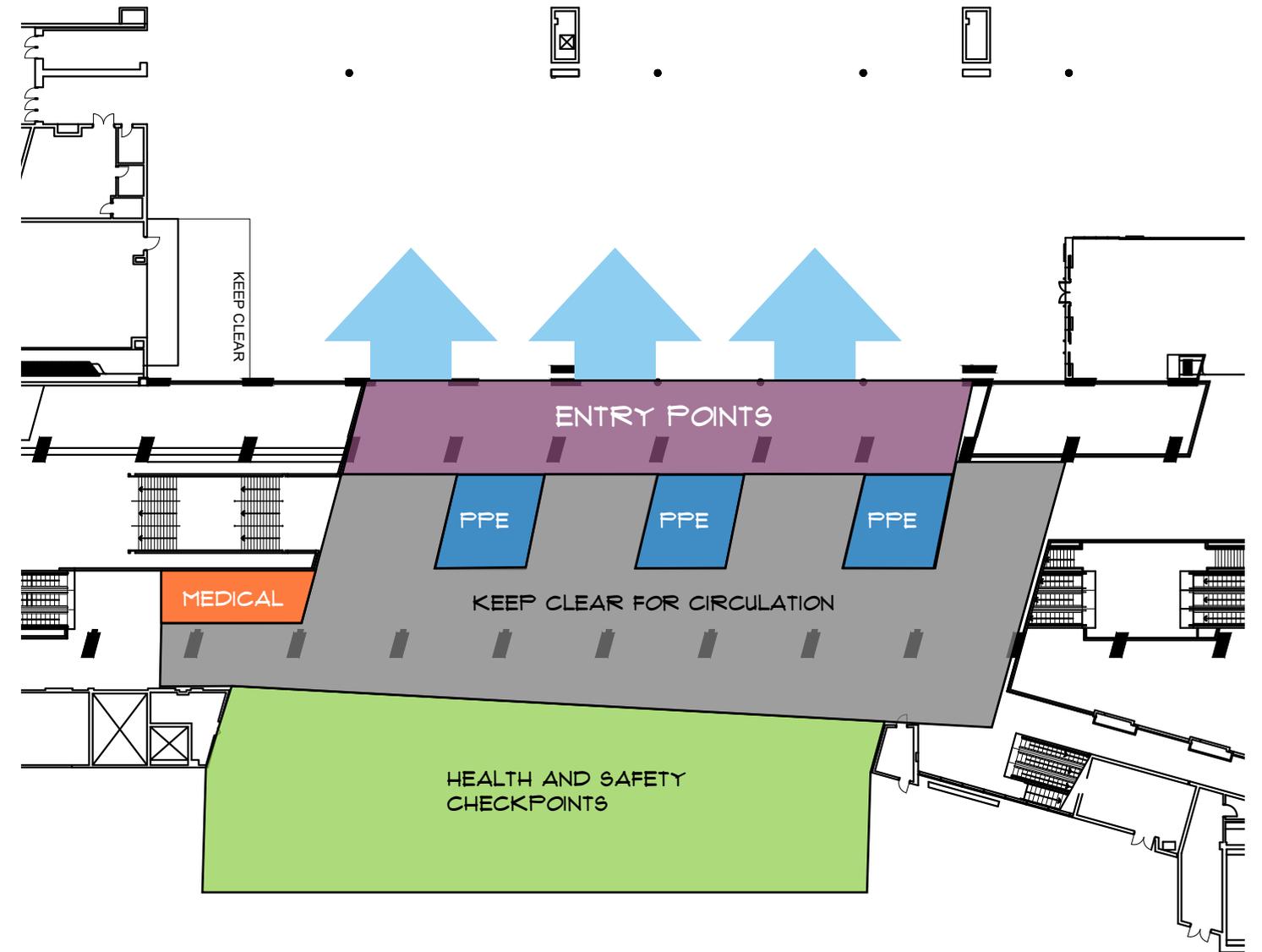
Evaluating the venue with new eyes

Why

Another important aspect of on-site health and safety is having dedicated entry and exit points minimize crowding and long queues. Look to minimize crowding in the floor plan, as well. At the same time, ask “How can these spaces contribute to the attendee journey?” With fewer people in the venue, but also new health and safety barriers in place, weigh audio considerations. How well will sound travel? How can you ensure that speakers will be easy to hear?

Benefit

Short lines and multiple entries/exits mean happier attendees. Anywhere you can use perimeter points to enhance the experience scores bonus points with attendees, too. On the audio side, great acoustics are also a big plus.





Entrances, exits, checkpoints, and traffic control

Rethinking the ins & outs

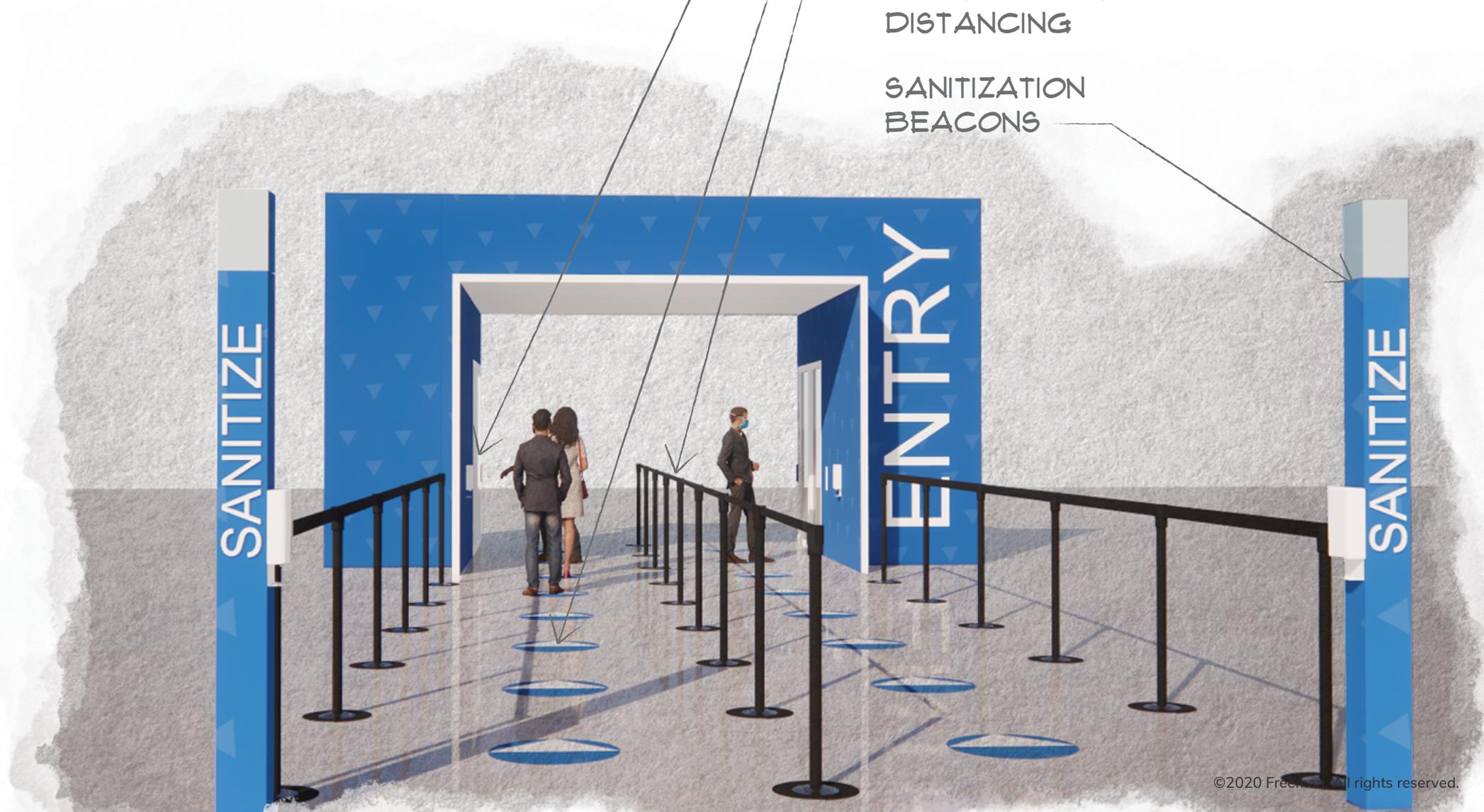
Why

Want to start an event experience with a bad first impression? Try a long line or crowd getting into the venue. Likewise, a long line or crowd trying to leave the venue makes a bad last impression.

Benefit

Easy in, easy out makes for better emotional bookends. And yes, less bunching means fewer opportunities for the virus to do its thing.

- TOUCHLESS BADGE SCANNING TO CONTROL ENTRY TO THE EVENT
- FLOOR GRAPHICS TO INDICATE SOCIAL DISTANCING
- ELEMENTS & PROPERTIES TO REINFORCE SOCIAL DISTANCING
- SANITIZATION BEACONS



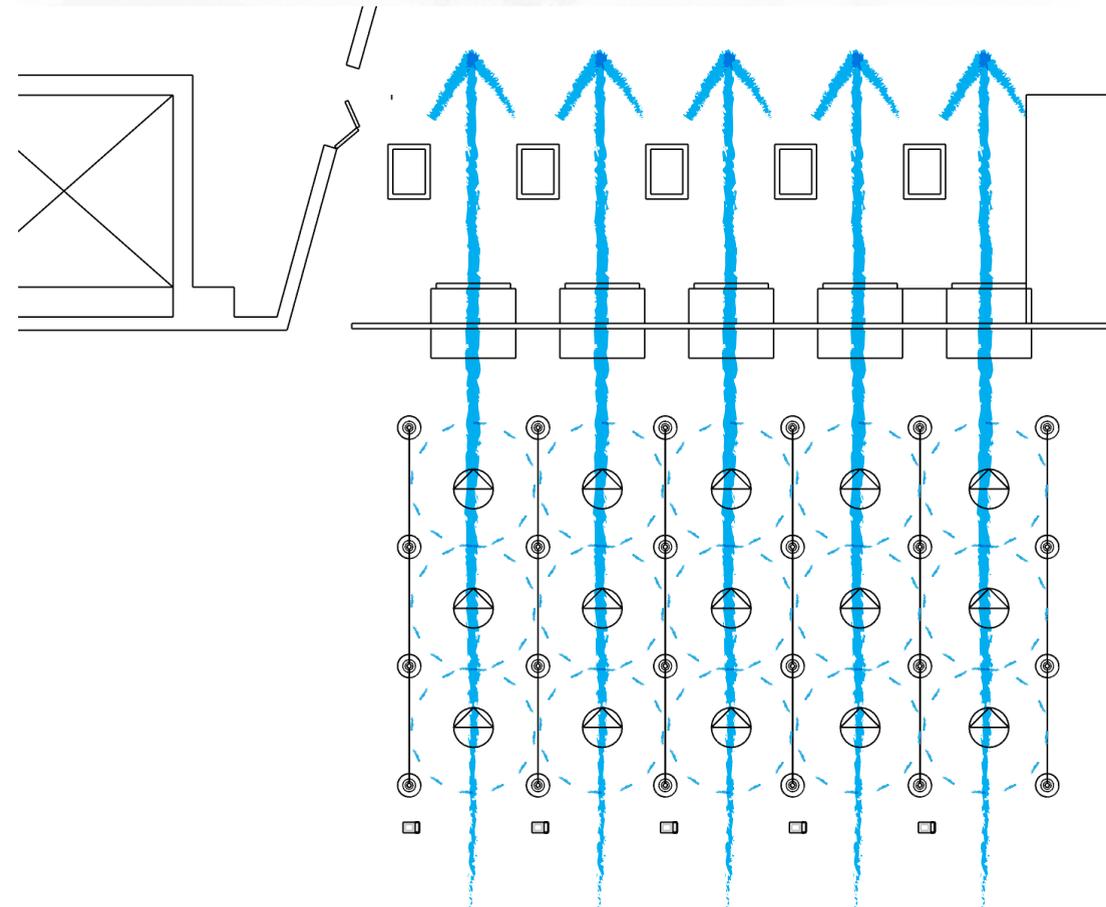
Mind your queues

Why

Attendees don't pay good money to stand in long lines. Nor do they think it's safe post-COVID-19.

Benefit

Moving attendees are happy attendees. And healthier ones, too.





Room configurations

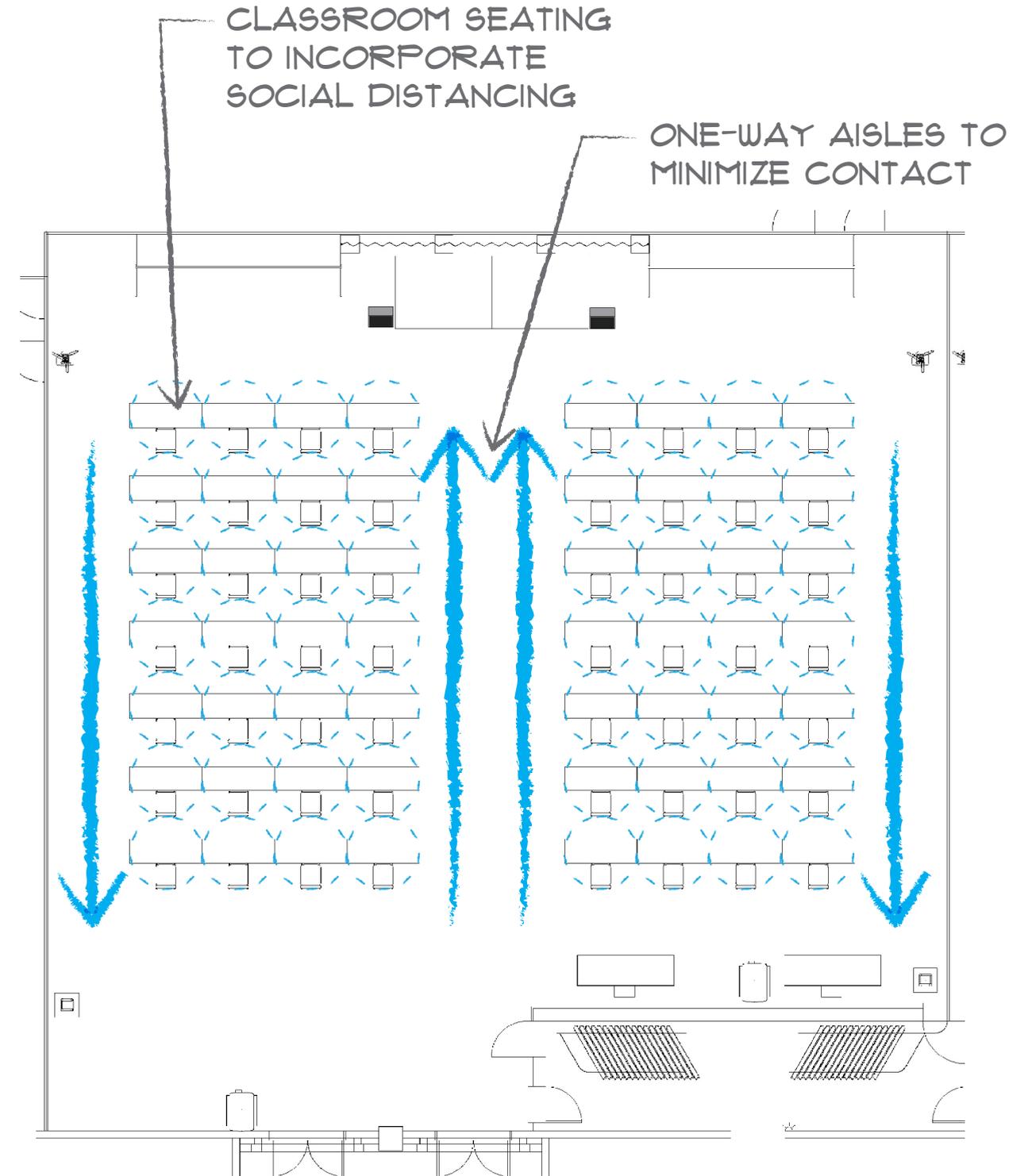
Reinventing the classroom

Why

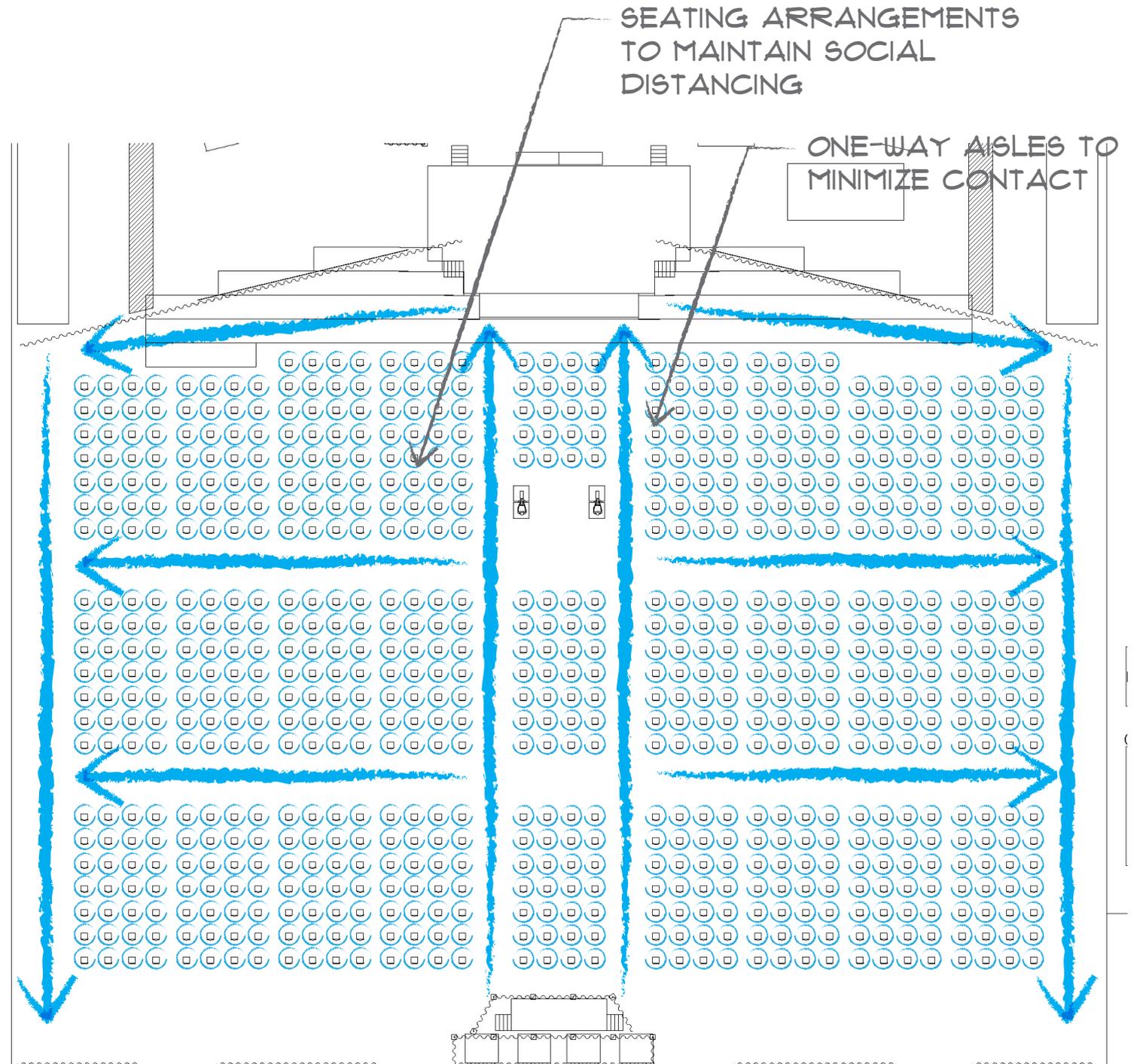
It's time to think inside the box. Six-foot physical distancing means we must reassess everything in our standard rooms — spacing, furnishings, materials, entrances/exits, traffic flow, and event technology.

Benefit

Attendees can focus on their meetings and not worry about their surroundings.



Reinventing the general session





Networking and lounges

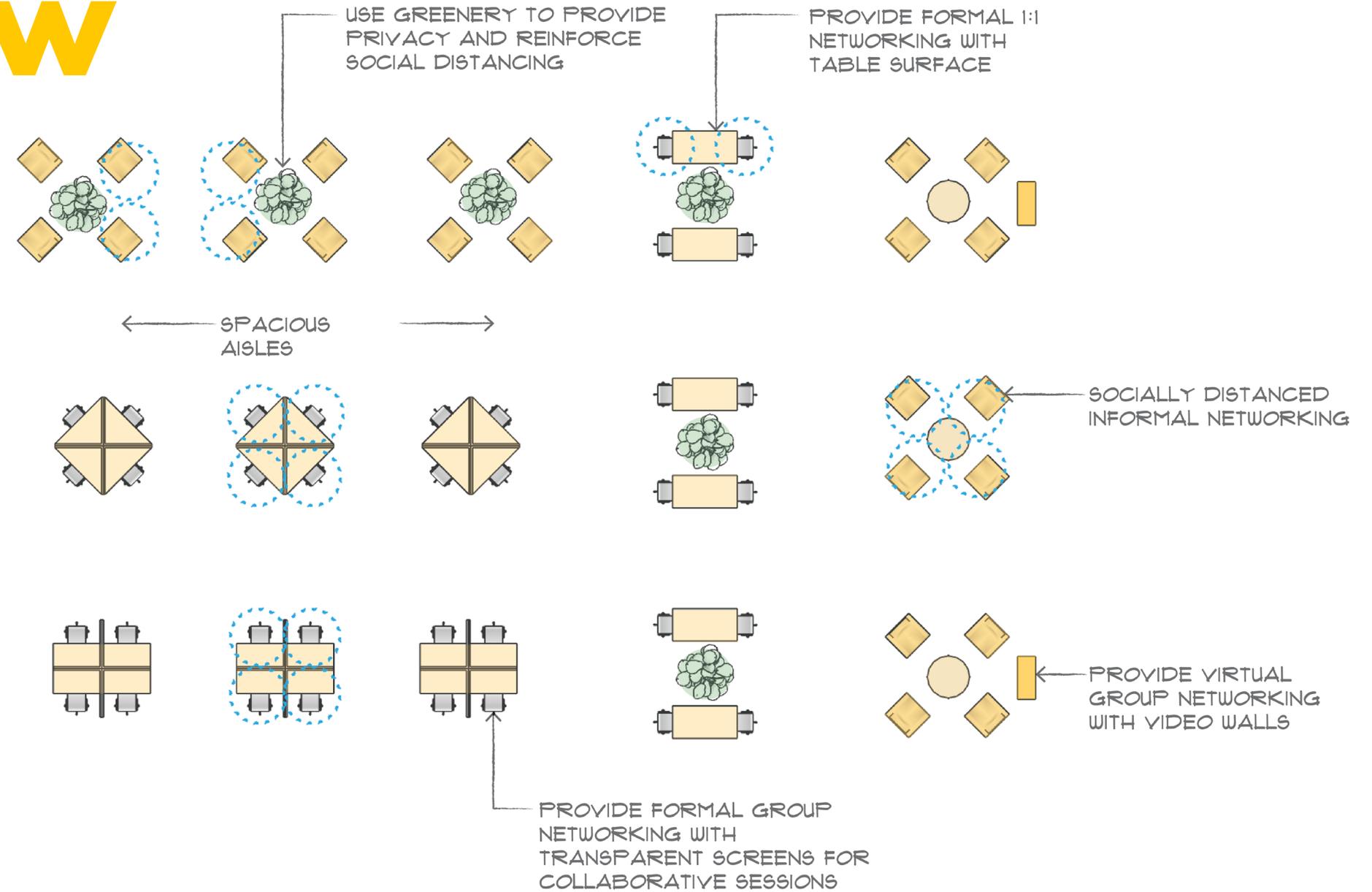
Networking in the **now**

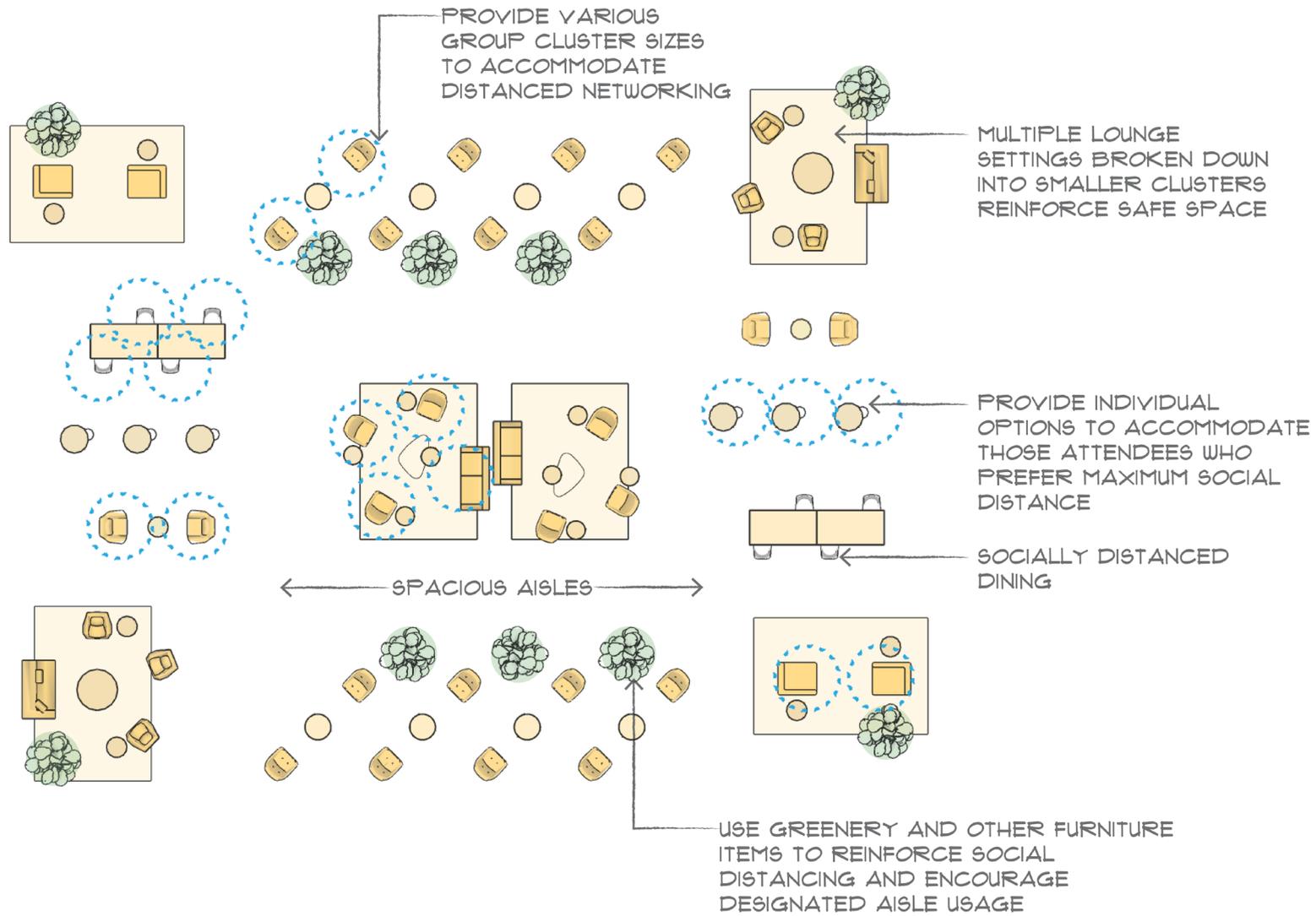
Why

Because these areas are where we want attendees to meet and connect, we must strike a balance between health and safety and people's ability to interact. Spacing and furnishings will play big roles here.

Benefit

Attendees will enjoy conversations in comfort and safety.

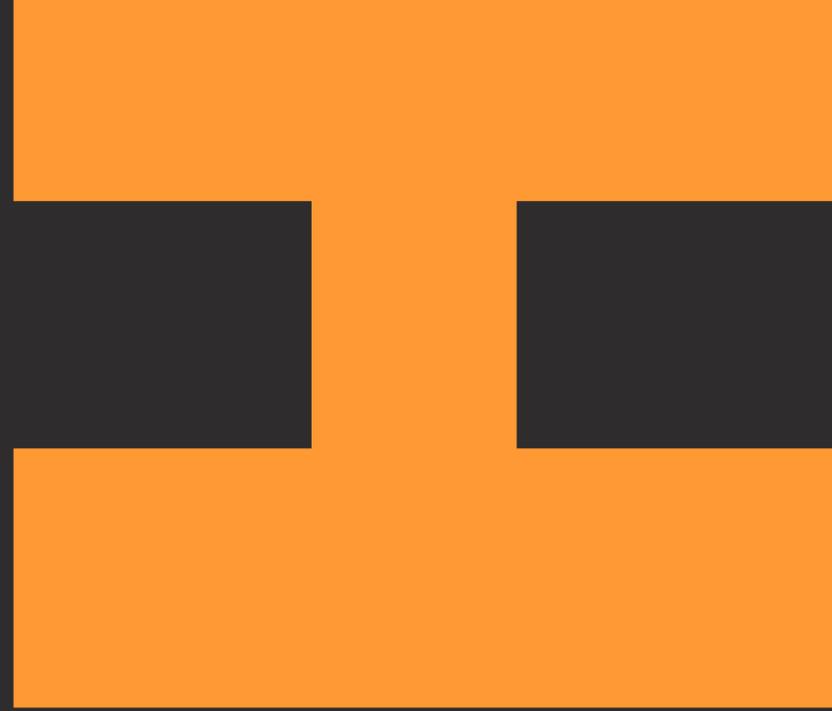




Common areas for 2021

In dining and food service scenarios, work with partners to develop socially distanced seating and smooth traffic flow.

9



Expo halls

Choreographing the show floor

Why

With COVID-19 literally in the air, we recommend embracing configuring expo hall layouts with wider aisles and one-way traffic where possible — ways where attendees will naturally physically distance from each other.

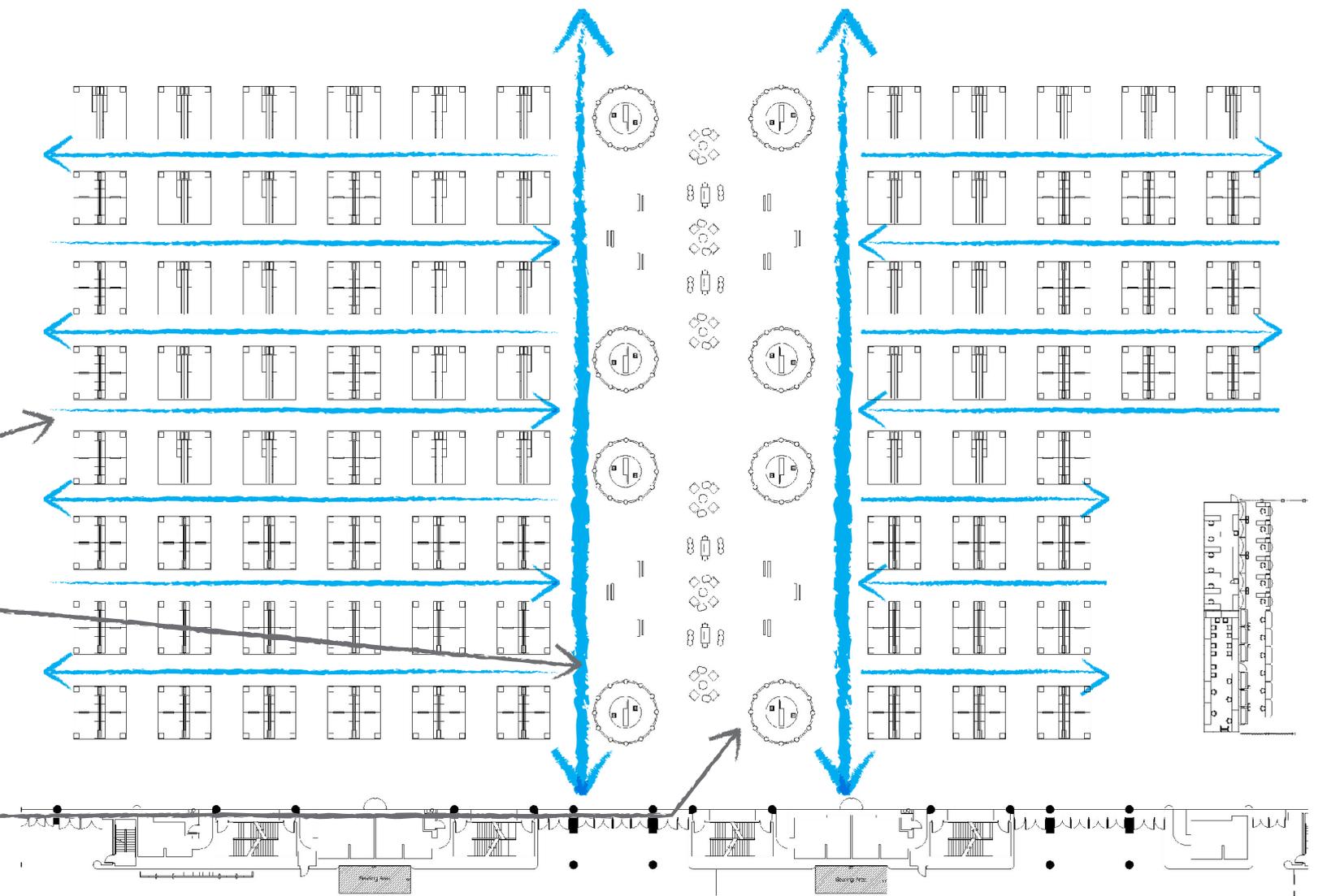
Benefit

As so much of attendees' time is spent on the floor, plotting out their space and time here is central to a positive experience. There are a lot of moving pieces to this, but synchronizing those pieces is well worth the effort.

ONE-WAY AISLES TO MINIMIZE CONTACT

WIDER MAIN AISLES

THEATERS, LOUNGES, AND SPONSORSHIP ELEMENTS THAT INCORPORATE SOCIAL DISTANCING



10



Exhibits

New exhibits for new expectations

Why

Exhibits are really where the rubber meets the road for everything we're talking about — they're the focal points for sales and demonstrations. Design must keep exhibitors and attendees within demo distance but still far enough away to comply with health and safety standards. More than ever, every square inch counts.

Benefit

With thoughtful design, we can optimize space, storage, furnishings, materials, and event tech to serve function without sacrificing safety.



10x10 exhibit

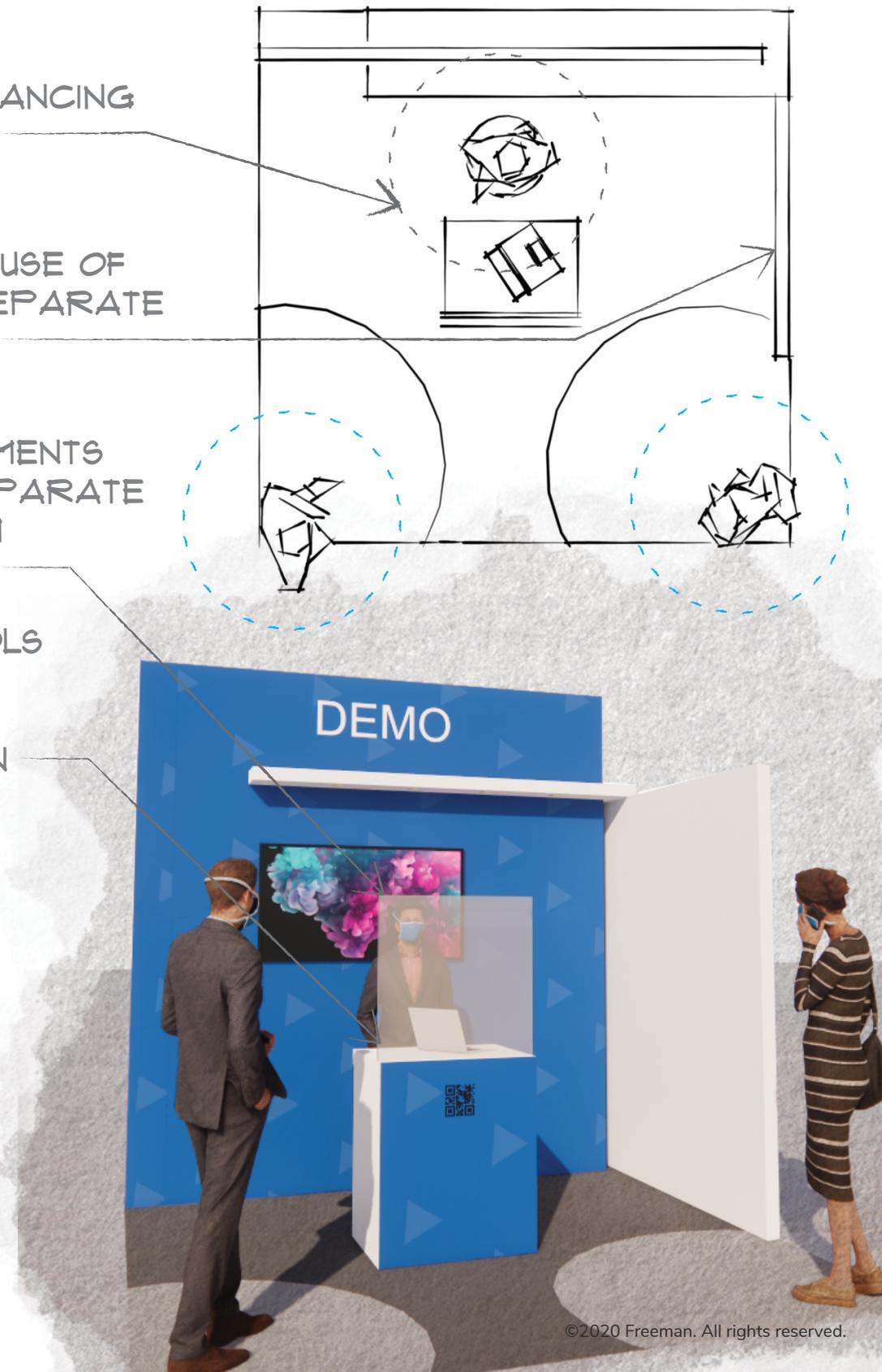
At first glance, an exhibit of this size may not seem adaptable to these new space requirements, but through the use of floor treatments, wall locations, and graphics, we will be able to guide attendees through the space easily while ensuring they, as well as your staff, remain safe.

SOCIAL DISTANCING MAINTAINED

INCREASED USE OF WALLS TO SEPARATE EXHIBITORS

DESIGN ELEMENTS USED TO SEPARATE STAFF FROM ATTENDEES

DIGITAL TOOLS TO LIMIT PHYSICAL INTERACTION



10x20 exhibit

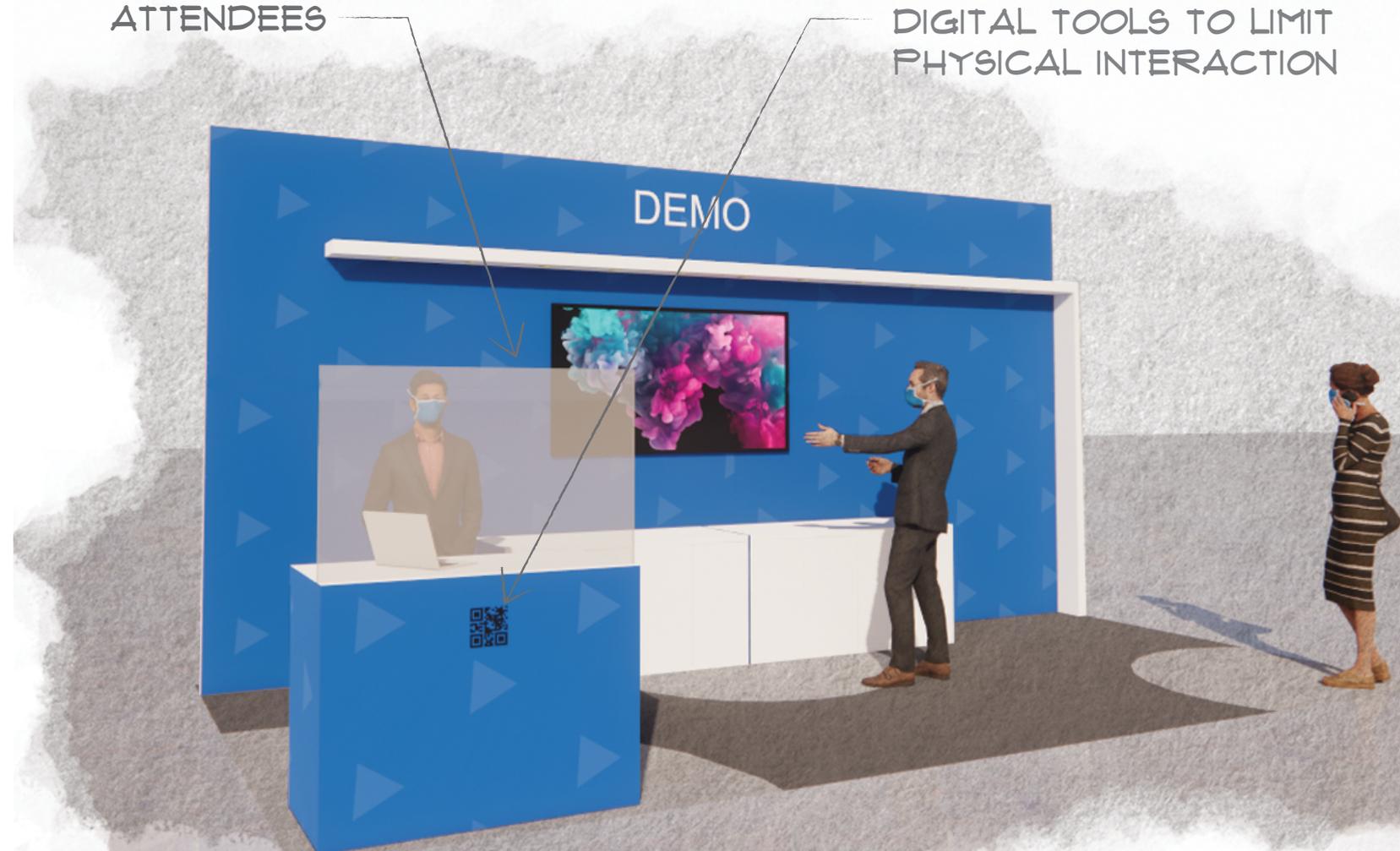
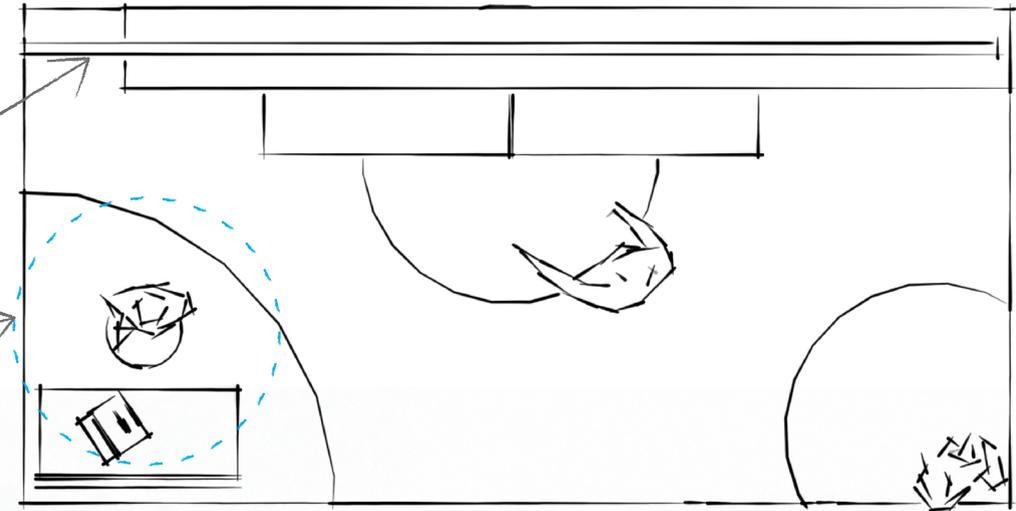
With more space comes more opportunities. Similar to a 10x10, we will use floor treatments, graphics, and structure elements to keep attendees and your staff safe, but with a wider application due to the size of the space.

INCREASED USE
OF WALLS TO
SEPARATE
EXHIBITORS

SOCIAL
DISTANCING
MAINTAINED

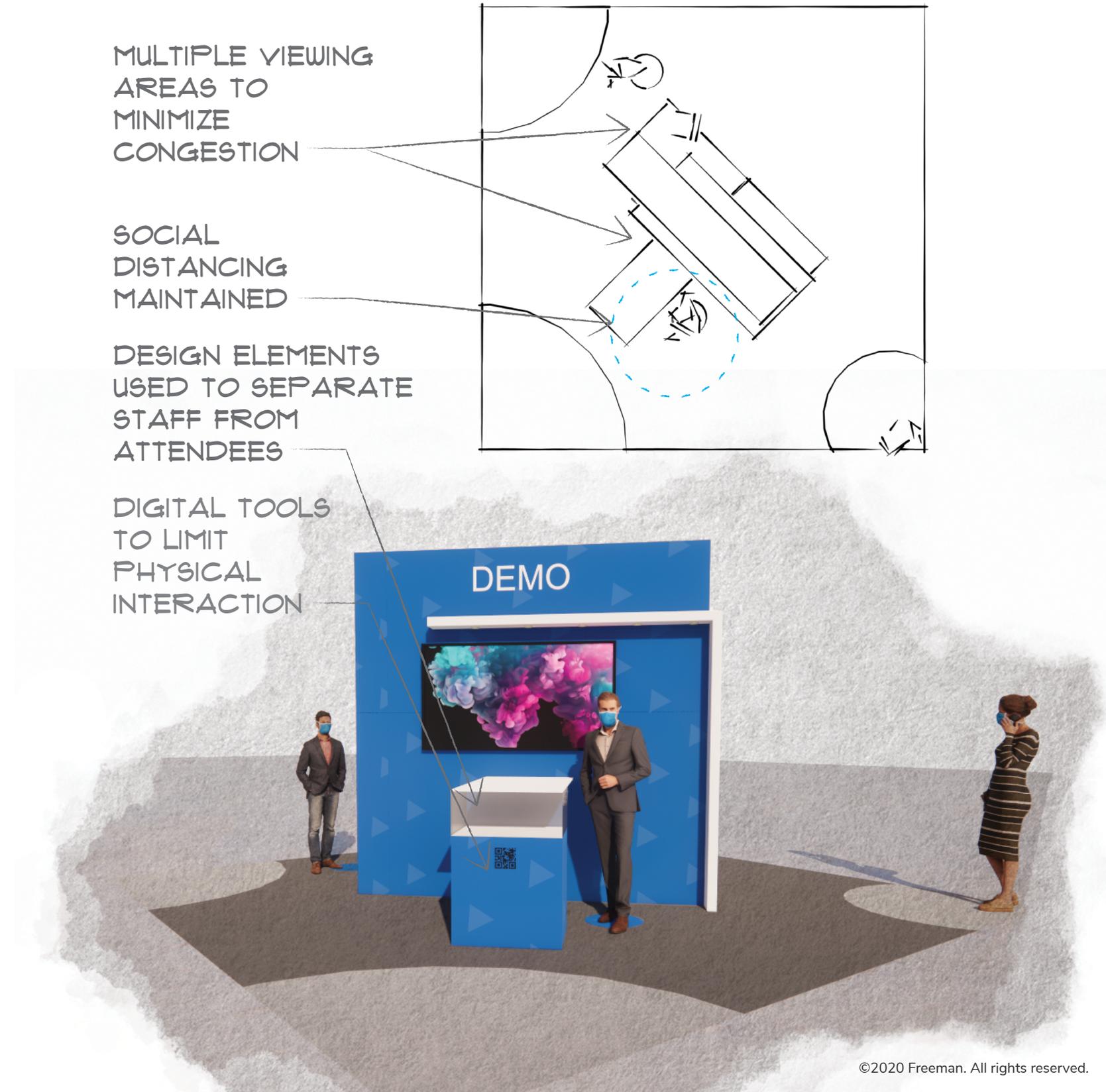
DESIGN ELEMENTS
USED TO SEPARATE
STAFF FROM
ATTENDEES

DIGITAL TOOLS TO LIMIT
PHYSICAL INTERACTION



20x20 exhibit

Similar to the 10x10 and 10x20 exhibits, we will use floor treatments, graphics, and structure elements to keep attendees and your staff safe. The 20x20 space allows for the additional option of more viewing locations so the space is less congested.



Shifting forward

By any measure, this is a huge change.

So, you have to ask, “Is it worth it?”

We answer with an unreserved yes. After all, there’s still nothing like meeting live.

We love seeing something firsthand. We’re social animals. It’s human nature.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 or not, progress continues. Big things await.

There’s still much new to see and do.

It’s our job to keep live events safer, ever more engaging, and sustainable.

So, here’s to the future of events. To working with you on designing what’s to come.

When you're ready,
feel free to **reach out.**

Contact us

About Freeman

Freeman is a global leader in events. Whether virtual, in-person, or hybrid, we are on a mission to redefine live for a new era.

With a data-driven approach and the industry's largest network of experts, our insights shape exhibitions, exhibits, and events that drive audiences to action. Our integrated full-service solutions leverage a 100-year legacy in event management as well as new technologies to deliver moments that matter.