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How to create SOCIAL DISTANCING at conferences

In-person conferences and events are known for creating immediate engagement, and offer incomparable opportunities for participants, companies, associations, and stakeholders to generate connections and create business opportunities. They also allow attendees to get together, socialize and reconnect with colleagues and friends. As countries emerge out of lock down we need to start considering what a social distanced conference could look like.

In a post COVID-19 world, frameworks for delivering safe events will be crucial for instilling confidence in everyone. As Professional Conference Organizers we need to deliver risk-free events. While it is very important for us to keep the event experience authentic, we must be aware and be up to date on all health regulations. We need to be ready to implement the required measures and work on recreating the conference experience with social distance.

As we work to build trust and confidence amongst our partners, we are looking for solutions and best practice for BEFORE and DURING the event. Measures are needed to support and create a safe on-site environment without losing the upsides of the gathering. The 'new normal' at social distanced conferences consists of complying with rapidly changing regulations and safety measures; carefully considering onsite event check-in areas; exhibition floor and session layouts; hygiene stations, crowd management, social distancing tools; engagement monitoring; and much more.



COVID Complied Conferences!

At Ortra, we have created a new standard, which we call: **CCC - COVID, Compliant Conferences**. Our new framework allows us to continue delivering conferences and events, and to bring our industry back to life.

What is CCC?

CCC is a series of considerations which conference organizers and their clients must take before and during an event to prevent or reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 during an event.

Key considerations **BEFORE** the meeting or event:

- Stay abreast of local regulations where the event will take place and advise your clients accordingly.
- Plan clear communication about the status of the conference and the measures that will be implemented to make the event safe for all participants.
- Publicise the information on the landing page of the conference website as well as in social media posts and in all marketing materials.
- Actively send relevant information to the conference mailing list explaining precautions taken and the requirements for attendees such as providing necessary documentation prior to and during the conference.
- Provide contact details that participants can use for additional advice or guidance.
- Send all registrants a guidance letter prior to their attendance reminding them to be attentive of the rules on-site.
- Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend.
- Order sufficient sterilizing supplies and materials, including tissues, hand sanitizer, surgical masks and gloves etc.
- Collect personal data on delegates and staff attending the conference for easy identification in the event of suspected infection.
- Develop and confirm with the client a response plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Don't forget to estimate costs for social distancing and safety measures and include them in your event budget.
- Keep calm and confident. Illustrate your professionalism and knowledge in dealing with the situation and provide a sense of security for the clients and attendees.
- Most importantly: don't lose the momentum and excitement of holding the conference!

Key considerations DURING the meeting or event:

- Set-up multiple signage areas with clear safety instructions throughout the conference venue.
- Encourage regular hand-washing and supply hand sanitizing facilities throughout the venue.
- Supply tissues and closed bins to dispose of them throughout the venue.
- Adopt respectful 'bowing' to replace handshakes or hugs.
- Conference staff and hostesses should welcome attendees wearing gloves.
- Plan for increased staff for cleaning and sanitation.
- Reinforce the conference team with additional people dedicated to offer assistance and to man venue entrances.
- Ensure there are sufficient open areas to gather with a special focus on conference and exhibition halls.
- Ensure that participants in conference halls are sufficiently distanced as required by the regulations of that country.
- Provide individual boxed meals and drinks.
- Present registrants and/or speakers the option to log into an online broadcast.
- Ensure the venue is well ventilated by opening windows and doors whenever possible.

Hopefully the issue of social distancing is temporary and conferences will soon get back to being more close and personal. In the meantime, social distance will become an additional parameter to consider when planning a conference. It is our job to translate these requirements to our clients and maintain an honest and open communication about what needs to be done to deliver a compliant event or conference. Our job as conference organizers is to reassure those involved and to help navigate the challenges. We have the ability to continue to plan conferences while keeping attendees safe and not losing the enjoyable experience of attending an event. The more comprehensive the preparation, the better the conference will flow and the more satisfied the attendees will be.

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