



Hooray! We are thrilled to see a return to live and in-person corporate events, conferences and trade shows! At Blue Hat we have also seen a sharp rise in live team building event bookings as we head towards a more exciting looking spring and summer than the last 2 years. After all, nothing can replace the energy and invigorating appeal of an in-person event that engages all 5 senses and connects us with like-minded people.

According to the famous experiments by psychologist Albert Mehrabian the 60s and 70s, "There's also real science behind the importance of in-person interactions. Consider, for instance, how [55% of the impact of our communication](#) comes from body language, [38% from tone](#) of voice, and just [7% from the words](#) themselves.

However, while many event organisers can't wait to get to work planning their big comeback event, others appear to be more conservative in their approach to this change, wanting to consider all elements before taking the leap back into live experiences; looking for a trusted partner to take the pressure off the planning work to ensure the event is a success.

2022 has been labelled the year of recovery in terms of financial, physical, emotional and environmental! It will be the year for welcoming back staff to the workplace and for those choosing to stay working remotely, it will be the year to optimise teamwork across the varied working locations.

Our handy guide below outlines how to transition back to in-person events most effectively and it should support you when you decide you and your team are ready to return. Read on to learn ways to attract hesitant team members back together, how to manage expectations and how to leverage being face-to-face to maximise attendee experience.

## **Outline Your Objectives**

First, it is vital that you think about the reason why you wish to return to live events. What are your desired outcomes for the company, for your team and for yourself? Knowing this is important as it will directly impact the structure of your event and communications strategy. For example, your company may need to hit new goals that requires better collaboration and team cohesion. Your team members may be experiencing burnout and isolation as a result of the pandemic. As an event organiser, this may be your chance to raise your reputation and be the positive driving force for bringing everyone back together again.

The best way of going about this is to first collect as much information as you can from your attendees and employees. Surveys and polls via your email, social accounts or internal communications programmes, can be a great way to determine how people feel about attending an in-person event and gives people anonymity whilst doing so.

## **Set Your Budget**

Funding and staffing your in-person event should be considered at the early stages of planning. What standard operations you may have had in place before may now be just the foundations for what is now to be considered post pandemic. For example, you may need extra staff onboard to support health and safety measures to create a safe and comfortable setting, staff assistance for attendees with accessibility requirements, catering and additional resourcing for events you wish to make hybrid for online attendees.

## Communicate With Clarity

Your communication strategy is a critical aspect of planning a successful event. Once you have gained your peers opinion and have decided an in-person event is in favour by the majority, you can communicate your strategy to them before the event. Crystal clear communication is the best way to ease the minds of your attendees by letting them know exactly what to expect at each stage of the event.

### **– Pre-event communication**

Frequent and consistent communication before the event will enable attendees to understand and prepare for it, avoiding any unnecessary or unwelcome surprises on the day.

A covid protocol should be presented to attendees prior to registration. Whether you choose to require proof of a negative test, for people to remain socially distanced, pass a temperature check or have no requirements at all, this should all be communicated across all your company email and social channels along with your usual safety plan. Any contingency plans you have in place can also be included at this point.

### **– Day-of-event communication**

Clear and concise signage at the event location will negate any confusion or issues with your attendees navigating the event from beginning to end.

### **– Post-event communications**

Always remember to acknowledge and thank those that attended your event and encourage them to openly discuss or communicate with your event community with any thoughts, questions or feedback. Keeping the conversation going post-event will enable you to get as much ROI out of your event as possible. Why not use a survey with the aim to improve the content as well as all other aspects of your future events?

Finally, don't forget to follow up with session replays, digital downloads, workbooks or tip sheets so your attendees can continue to reap the benefits of your event, even after it's over.

## Maintain Inclusivity

One of the many benefits companies discovered from hosting virtual events, was that they experienced a rise in attendee numbers. Remote workers from all different locations could easily attend at no extra cost. So let's look at ways in which you can increase inclusivity at your next in-person event.

- Travel constraints can play a big part in the lower attendee numbers, so first, talk to your community to get their opinion on how likely they will want to and be able to attend.
- Add online accessibility to certain parts of your event so that people can still join in at their convenience, wherever they are and in any time zone. This is what is called a 'hybrid event'.
- Stick to organising local or regional events to keep travel costs low and commute time to a minimum.
- Choose team building activities that are designed to challenge a range of different people's skills so that everyone can feel involved. Try these [Top 12 Team Building Activities to Try In 2022](#)

## Choose The Perfect Venue

For events planned for this spring and summer, do consider venues with a combination of plentiful indoor and outdoor space so that more vulnerable people will feel more comfortable being able to spread out and protect their personal space. With this option, there may be extra things to consider with the setup, such as the setup of the Wi-Fi, AV tech and bad weather provisions. Other health and safety features such as automatic doors, hand sanitiser stations, prepacked lunch options and even QR code/ facial recognition registration can play a huge part in increasing your attendee numbers.

A professional venue sourcing team can help you with your search and simplify the process of finding the perfect venue to meet your requirements. A fantastic idea is to distribute colour coded wrist bands, where the different colours indicate clearly how comfortable each person is with close interactions.

Preparing for a change in circumstances is something that we have all learned in the last couple of years. That's why flexible contracts with venues is the safest option to go for right now. In the event your event gets cancelled or delayed by the outbreak of another covid variant this year, cancellation or postponement contractual agreements can negate the loss of funds, or at least some of it.

## **Cater For Varied Culinary Experiences**

In recent years there has been a shift in demand towards catering for specialised dietary requirements to satisfy everyone's tastes. Also, since the pandemic and first lockdown in 2020, people have been more health conscious and there has been a recent push to reduce alcohol consumption.

Find out if your attendees have any dietary requirements so that you can prepare accordingly to ensure everyone is catered for. Offer a variety of health-conscious options alongside more indulgent comfort food and compliment the healthy meals with sophisticated non-alcoholic beverages. Safe food preparation is going to be at the forefront of people's minds too, so think of innovative ways this can be served or otherwise, made accessible to your guests.

A great culinary experience can leave a lasting impression and add value to your event as it is essentially fuel for your attendees as well as part of the event experience.

## Manage Expectations

According to the recent [Northstar/Cvent Meetings Industry PULSE Survey](#), 80% of event organisers report that the return on time and investment for on-site attendees is the most important factor when planning in-person events this year. Having spent the last 2 years participating in super convenient and low cost virtual events, expectations of value have increased towards in-person events.

To make the live experience worthwhile for people to attend, it is vital to pool your resources into creating an incredible engagement strategy. Content can easily be shared online so the delivery of content is not the primary focus. Think about delegate personalisation or even utilising the human senses for an immersive experience. Overall, for attendees to feel true long-lasting value, the event experience should accentuate and celebrate the opportunities for building meaningful connections.

Introduce elements of exclusivity to create FOMO. You may choose to entice people to attend your in-person event with exclusive features. These might include celebrity guest speakers, VIP dinners, speed networking games or swag bag gifts.

## Assess Your Attendees Agenda

Some people have experienced heightened stress and fatigue levels due to the pandemic and because of this, concentration levels have waned. It therefore would be appropriate to adjust the event agenda to include frequent breaks scheduled between shortened sessions. For any sessions missed due to your attendees needing a respite, record all your sessions so that they are accessible on demand post event.

Feed in workshops, campfire sessions and panel discussions for people to collaborate and enjoy a shared experience where they can learn as well as feel valued for contributing their thoughts and ideas.

## Use An Event Management Platform

Event tech has many advantages and may well be worth the investment for your upcoming in-person event. It can streamline the registration process, provide a better attendee experience on-site and tick the sustainability box all at the same time. All event information and collateral can be delivered digitally saving paper and communication channels for any FAQ's will be easy to use for attendees. You can even use a management platform to connect your attendees prior to an event to optimise their networking opportunities on the day.

## Finally, Have a Contingency Plan

If there is one thing we have learned from the Covid pandemic, it is how to stay on our toes and have a back up plan for the back plan! Being adaptable has been the way to survive and thrive throughout the continuous changes. Whilst in-person events already has it's risks of late caterers, delayed deliveries or last minute speaker cancellations, it is likely that further complications could arise due to covid. Share your contingency plans with your event community in advance so everyone knows what to expect if you need to pivot last minute.

## Get Cracking!

Now that you have armed yourself with how to navigate your way back into planning a winning in-person event, you're ready to get started! Feel free to bookmark this page and refer to it as you work through each step.

[Contact our team today](#) to learn more about how Blue Hat's [in-person activities](#) can help you energise your attendees, facilitate fun [networking sessions](#) and overall, provide an unforgettable shared team building experience.

Interested in learning more? Get in touch with our team building experts for a [free consultation](#) to help you organise your 2022 team building plan.

Blue Hat Teambuilding specialise in developing teams. Need help to develop your team?

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## About the Author



Heather Ee, our event marketing expert, blog writer and contributor to the [Blue Hat Teambuilding](#) blog. Blue Hat Teambuilding has been recognised over 45 times by the main industry awards bodies, with 1 million people in 57 countries having experienced a Blue Hat product, giving an average rating of over 97%.