

What to expect in the event industry in 2021

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What a challenging year it has been: a year full of forced changes, uncertainties, and unexpected plot twists. However, 2020 has shown how flexible, agile and indestructible event managers are. Yes, the pandemic has certainly knocked the event industry down, yet the industry has proven to be resilient! Event managers got right back up and pivoted.



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Even though our circumstances and its outcomes are still vague, the passion for the industry remains. Our next steps are clear - we will event again!

What does the next few months in South Africa mean for event professionals and what can we expect in 2021?

Here are five changes we can expect in 2021.

1. Hybrid events are the new normal

Once the number of South African Covid-19 cases have dropped indefinitely, only then will we be able to see a further ease in live event regulations. However, many events will still take place in a virtual environment that will often take place to compliment onsite events as part of hybrid concepts. Hybrid events will continue to be important for years to come for

various reasons:

- Travel budgets have been affected
- Hybrid events offer flexibility to deliver staff training and host client meetings, worldwide.
- The extended audience reach facilitated by technology and online content deliveries - in numerous locations worldwide.

We have however only just begun this journey down the hybrid route. Hybrid events remain to be a brand new concept worldwide. Event professionals are hustling to rethink, develop and shape these latest formats. With that being said, we strongly believe that with experience comes excellence and therefore the quality of virtual and hybrid events are expected to significantly increase in 2021.

2. Contactless interactions

Event organisers are all aware of the current measures that need to be taken in order to prevent further spread of the virus. Despite the fact that event managers ache to return to work and carry on as 'normal', we are not blind to the current situation and have all implemented rigorous safety measures to reduce high touch points and to ensure attendees' safety at live events.

2020 accelerated the overall digitisation of events. We will soon see contactless payments, online registration, visitor check in apps, digital ticketing, automated door systems, touchless hand sanitizers, and other forms of non-physical interactions.

Be prepared to take a big leap into the world of the IoT and rely on digital applications in more and more circumstances.

3. Personalisation and engagement

As virtual events allow for a larger audience, one of the biggest challenges faced by event professionals in South Africa will be to keep the virtual attendees entertained and engaged throughout the event.

The solution to an engaged audience is to create content that resonates with them, that addresses their challenges, and that provides answers to their questions, but most of all, finding the right speaker to deliver that content.

4. Event analytics

Like everything in the online world, virtual events open new horizons to event performance analytics. With the data gathered, there will be new insights and possibilities for event professionals to cater future events to the audience's exact needs which in turn should provide a higher success rate for future events.

It will also allow for them to provide insights to exhibitors, speakers and sponsors:

- Which presentation performed best?
- Which resource did attendees download the most?
- Which speaker profile was the most visited?
- Which exhibitor had the most scheduled appointments?
- What was their ROI?

We as event planners will be able to make more knowledgeable decisions based on the data collected and improve future event delivery accordingly.

5. More outdoor events

We live in an extraordinarily beautiful country. Why not take your next event outside? Every garden or piece of land can become a venue - add in a bedouin tent or marquee, furniture, catering, decor, AV, staging and tech - and you've got yourself a unique and scenic venue.

Outdoor events will be able to accommodate a larger number of guests without having spatial restrictions - we still need to comfortably distance from one another.

Conclusion

2021 will be the year of curated and personalised experiences! The line between the real world and the digital space will become almost non-existent as attendees become immersed in online experiences that will prompt them to comment, rate, vote, ask questions and share feedback.

Event professionals will be re-inventing their job profiles while the entire event industry will adjust to new revenue streams, monetisation models and event formats.

Despite the current situation, live events can still continue to take place in 2021 (once the bans have lifted of course), however, it is now more essential than ever to hire an event professional to address all your legal and safety concerns, as well as to think outside-the-box to create a memorable, yet 'Covid-safe' event.

So, the final question remains... Will the events industry bounce back in 2021, and the answer is Yes! We will event again!

ABOUT ZOE VAN DER VYVER

Zoe van der Vyver from RevelAfrica. Revel Africa is all about creating authentic, innovative, and memorable events. From the unorthodox to the more traditional, they will find a way to make your budget, theme, and required outcomes meet, and deliver on something that is stress-free, and a little magical. Contact them at info@revelafrica.co.za to initiate your unique experience.

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