



MCEC LAUNCHES VIRTUAL EVENTS

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has this week announced the launch of a new virtual event offering “to help customers connect with their audiences in uncertain times”.

The facility has invested in several purpose-built studios that allow for scalable events, ranging from an intimate fireside chat right through to a panel discussion of up to six presenters.

Live-streaming facilities are also in place across multiple spaces which will allow for hybrid in-person and virtual events when restrictions ease.

“While we can’t meet in person or use our studios under current restrictions in Melbourne at the moment, we’re offering our customers solutions on the other side of our city’s Stage 4 restrictions,” said MCEC Chief Executive Peter King.

“Even when we are able to come together in person, virtual will give customers access to new audiences and audience



insights, while making it easier for international delegates and presenters to take part.”

The MCEC offering is coordinated by Joshua Bryce, Manager of Technology Sales, who said the facility’s team can take the pain out of organising a high quality online event and elevate the audience experience.

He cited research showing up to 60% of event organisers are

not confident running virtual offerings, with MCEC’s in-house experts “ensuring a seamless experience from planning to delivery”.

With Stage 4 restrictions in place until midnight on Sun 13 Sep, bookings for the MCEC virtual event offering and studios are only available beyond that date - more at mcec.com.au/virtual-events.


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Qld framework

THE Queensland Government has released a list of FAQs relating to COVID Safe events to help facilitate the return of the industry - [CLICK HERE](#).

Cvent hub

CVENT has unveiled the new Cvent Engagement Hub, a virtual event solution built to work seamlessly with the company’s suite of event marketing and management solutions.

The Cvent Engagement Hub delivers a “fully branded turnkey virtual event experience” meaning the overall Cvent platform now powers all event types - in-person, virtual or hybrid - to give organisations a single solution to run their entire events program.

The new Hub provides a consistent, fully branded experience at each step of the virtual event lifecycle, and supports sponsored sessions, online exhibition booths and more.

High quality, secure event content can be delivered live or on-demand to any user on any device anywhere in the world, and the platform collects rich attendee and digital event data.

The new Cvent Engagement Hub will be showcased at the upcoming Cvent CONNECT conference on 25-26 Aug, with over 23,000 delegates already registered - sign up to attend free at cventconnect.com/us.



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THE king still draws a crowd. Authorities in Memphis, Tennessee last weekend presided over a somewhat smaller than usual event to commemorate the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death.

Normally thousands of devotees descend on the Graceland tourist attraction to remember the megastar outside the mansion where he died on 16 Aug 1977.

However this year the managers put a cap on the number of people allowed to attend the vigil in person, with just 720 spots available because of COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

The gathering is the central event of Elvis Week, which this year was somewhat subdued with the elimination of all live performances, autograph signings and group parties.

Those who missed out on the opportunity to file past Graceland carrying a candle (**pictured**) can still get that lovin' feeling by watching the recorded 90-minute livestream at graceland.com.



HKG industry support

MEMBERS of the Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Industry Association (HKECIA) have urged authorities to provide more support to help them ride out the COVID-19 storm, with more than 90% saying measures implemented so far are insufficient.

A scheme which subsidises venue rental at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre had been ineffective because all exhibitions have been deferred, meaning no organisers had received any benefit from the subsidy.

HKECIA members have urged greater flexibility on quarantine requirements for foreign business travellers, the acceleration of the formation of "travel bubbles" and industry-wide subsidies and support so companies can survive.

CINZ urges help

CONVENTIONS and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) has asked NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to help facilitate a "specific ministerial relationship" to support a more direct dialogue between the Government and the business events sector.

The push followed the upgrade of restrictions in Auckland due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, with CINZ also urging an extension of wage subsidies and an acknowledgement of the key role the industry plays in the economy.

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Gray's Say



Peter Gray, an independent Motivation Consultant, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the Conference and Incentive industries.

To pivot or not to pivot?

IF ANY word in the Oxford or Macquarie Dictionaries has ever been overworked, it's PIVOT. I don't know who is responsible for first using it in the context of the pandemic, but I wish they hadn't. Now, almost every email, every newsletter I receive uses the word in abundance; often in the wrong context. It's become a 'style word' that is required use even when it's not really relevant.

Webinars too have become 'the thing to do' and, no doubt, Zoom, Go To Meeting, Skift and the many similar products have been raking in dollars by the million as a result.

It's not webinars I have a problem with - they're a great way of communicating with a widely dispersed audience - but with many of the organisations that use them. If we are to believe the doomsayers in our midst, webinars or virtual meetings are the way of the future. I've already made my thoughts known on this in a previous column so I won't repeat them here. However, substitute the word 'event' for webinar and it's immediately apparent what the problem is. When has an event organiser sent out invitations to their or, more probably their client's event twenty-four hours (or less) in advance? And yet this seems to

be the norm for webinars during the last few months.

It is getting better, I must admit, but not by much. The assumption is that the audience has nothing better to do than wait for an invitation and then jump on the laptop or tablet immediately. Event managers - and most webinars seem to be organised by everyone but event managers - know that this isn't the way to attract an audience. Time zones are also a problem. I wish the USA would realise that it's not the centre of the universe and that Australia is fourteen hours ahead of their east coast.

And finally, content. So many webinars are about as entertaining as watching paint dry; teacher/pupil stuff. Would we really expect a live audience to sit through some of the unimaginative presentations that webinar participants deliver? Death-by-PowerPoint is not the thing of the past I had hoped it to be.

There are event managers, AV companies and others who could raise the standard of webinar content - but if the people responsible don't ask they won't learn. If you want to know who I'd recommend, send me an email (peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net).

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