



GLOBAL MEETINGS INDUSTRY DAY

EVENT professionals from across the globe will gather in cyberspace today and tomorrow, with a virtual celebration of Global Meetings Industry Day.

Convened by business events coalition Meetings Mean Business, the event is being supported across the globe with participation from peak industry bodies in the USA, Canada and India as well as the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE Global).

Late last month formal gatherings related to Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID) were postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, but “in the meantime we don’t want 14 Apr to just pass us by,” the coalition announced.



The event aims to bring together 15,000 industry peers from across the globe for an interactive virtual event which will break the Guinness World Record for Largest Audience for a Virtual Conference.

It’s going to take some commitment from the local market, however, with the #GMIDGOESVIRTUAL online meeting kicking off at 9am in

New York - or 2am Australian Eastern Time tomorrow morning, 15 Apr 2020.

A 12 hour “VMID Virtual” broadcast will also be hosted by Meeting Professionals International, and the event also aims to galvanise the industry in support of its local communities across the globe.

For more information see www.gmidgoesvirtual.com.

Today’s issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

Monaco helps

THE Monaco Convention Bureau has worked with key suppliers to wherever possible waive contractual cancellation fees and postpone deposits for upcoming events which are affected by COVID-19.

The policy has also been extended by most Monaco hotels for individual and group reservations already confirmed for the now-cancelled 2020 Grand Prix.

Organisers of regular Monaco conferences and meetings are being offered new dates and the most suitable solutions “according to the formats of each event”.



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VIRTUAL conferencing is all well and good, but what happens when you just want some physical contact?

Just like Andrew Klein (see column at right), the Icelandic Forest Service is in touch with these basic urges, and is suggesting people should hug a tree while you can't hug other people.

Forest rangers in the country's eastern Hallormsstaður National Forest have been hard at work clearing snow-covered paths, allowing socially distanced people to "get up close and personal with their forest friends," according to the *IcelandReview* newspaper.

"When you hug a tree, you feel it first in your toes and then up your legs and into your chest and then up into your head," according to forest ranger Þor Þorfinnson.

"Five minutes is really good...if you can give yourself five minutes of your day to hug a tree, that's definitely enough," he said.

The best technique, Þor added, is to close your eyes, lean your cheek against the trunk and "feel the warmth and the currents flow".



Skye fast track

CROWN Group has announced the accelerated opening of its new Skye Suites & Residences at Sydney's Green Square, with the aim of catering to long-stay guests.

The group's third property, Skye Suites Green Square is set to officially open as a hotel in Jul, but from next week will offer serviced apartment stays of three months or more.

It joins Skye's other properties in Parramatta and the Sydney CBD's Clarence St.

The Parramatta Skye Suites is part of a mixed use residential, retail and hotel development which also features conference rooms with full remote video facilities - more information at skye-hotels.com.au.

NZ tourism webinar

TOURISM New Zealand will tomorrow host a webinar on "re-imagining the future of tourism," as part of a wide-ranging review commissioned by the country's Tourism Minister, Kelvin Davis.

The online session will discuss issues around the recently announced expanded remit for Tourism New Zealand to lead domestic marketing alongside industry partners during the recovery phase from COVID-19.

Presenters will include Davis, along with Tourism NZ CEO Stephen England-Hall and Air NZ Chief Revenue Officer, Cam Wallace - to register see tourismnewzealand.com.

Confessions of a compulsive conference-goer

Andrew Klein, professional MC and presentation skills speaker and director of SPIKE Presentations, presents his front line observations on conferences in a regular feature in *BEN*.

Who wants a virtual hug?

IS IT possible to write anything at the moment that doesn't address or reference the current situation? I think not. So I won't even try.

And as this column has always been about observations made from conference attendance, I guess I will for the foreseeable future be mainly addressing my thoughts and experiences in the world of online conferences.

But right now I simply want to give a virtual hug to our amazing industry.

I've been part of the conference and events industry for 25 years. It's filled almost every week of my working life, it's provided me with endless travel opportunities and amazing experiences across this country and throughout the world. It's led to countless friendships and valued relationships.

Oh, and it's allowed me to house and feed my family!

And then in what seemed like a few crazy days in March, EVERYTHING CHANGED for our conference and events industry. I don't need to explain. You all went through it. We're still going through it. I'm not sugar-coating. It was bad. It IS bad.

And I'm not here now to offer platitudes because while we know this will pass, it's OK to acknowledge that it hurts and it's hard and the reality is that for some of our close colleagues and friends in events - it's the end of their businesses. For almost everyone it hurts financially and emotionally and achingly difficult business



decisions are having to be made each day.

So all I want to do is in this column this month is send you all a virtual hug.

We're in this together (sorry, that is a platitude...but it is true).

And to offer a heartfelt thank you - because one thing this has shown me is how close this industry is. I cannot even begin to count the number of calls, texts, Zoom invites and emails I have received over the past 3 weeks and still receive from industry clients and colleagues, just checking in, checking up, checking on me and my family - supportive messages, messages of hope, of collective despair, some that made me cry, many that made me laugh.

I know you all got those and gave those too. We all did.

I'd never really reflected on how close-knit and supportive our big yet little industry is.

Thank you to you all. Gotta love this industry. Let's hang in there together and support each other through to the other side.

See you online soon.

If you are looking for an MC for your next conference or a speaker/trainer on presentation skills or pitching skills, email andrew@lunch.com.au or visit his website at www.andrewklein.com.au.

