



Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

Virtual ROI is better

THE move to online events has in many cases exceeded the Return On Investment (ROI) of their previous physical versions, according to new research released by marketing automation firm Swift Digital.

The company surveyed its clients about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 81% of respondents reporting the same or better attendance at their virtual events than previous in-person meetings or conferences.

When COVID-19 shut down the industry, about half of the organisations surveyed shifted some of their events to online, with just 18% completely stopping all events.

More than half of respondents said they were not planning physical gatherings until at least Apr 2021, with 10% deferring beyond Oct next year.

Two thirds of those surveyed said their virtual events had proven so effective that they were planning to continue to utilise the online format even once restrictions are fully lifted.

"On balance, the ROI of virtual events exceeds the ROI of in-person events," said Swift Digital CEO Poochee Yuen - see the report at swiftdigital.com.au.

NZ green light

NEW Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern this morning confirmed that Auckland will move to Alert Level 1 restrictions from midnight tomorrow, meaning uniform requirements apply for business events right across the country.

Conventions and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) CEO Lisa Hopkins said with the nation fully opened up to domestic groups "now is the time to rebuild the industry and deliver confidence back to organisers who have been holding off planning and booking their events".

EVENT solution

EVENT Hotels has unveiled Event Conference Connect, a new purpose-built hybrid solution bringing in-house event services at QT, Rydges and Atura properties together via a centralised event and AV team.

EVENT Conference Connect aims to challenge the notion that virtual conferences are difficult and expensive, with a dedicated team able to assist with arranging events of all sizes - rydges.com.

JOHNSON TO LEAVE MEA

THE Australasian events sector has paid tribute to Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) CEO Robyn Johnson who has announced she is stepping down after four years with the organisation.

Johnson is relocating to the NSW South Coast and said she intends to continue working within the sector.

"I am extremely proud of all that's been achieved on behalf of the industry during my time at the helm - including rebranding our flagship annual conference as Evolve and positioning it as a key event on

the industry's calendar," she said.

"When I became CEO MEA was going through an extremely challenging period...with support from the industry, in particular MEA's partners, the board and branch committees we rebooted the organisation and developed new programs to support our members and the broader industry."

A LinkedIn post announcing Johnson's departure from MEA has attracted an incredible response, with more than 7,000 views and a host of positive comments on her achievements during her time at the body.

Harwood to lead IHG in IMEA

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) this morning confirmed the pending departure of its MD Australasia and Japan, Leanne Harwood, who will next month relocate to take up a new role in Dubai.

Harwood, who joined IHG in

2005 and has led the business locally since 2017, will become IHG's MD for India, Middle East and Africa (IMEA), replacing Pascal Gauvin who is retiring after almost three decades with IHG.

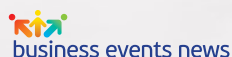
The company is conducting a search for her successor.

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YOU'VE heard of virtual, hybrid and online events, but could the ultimate future of the sector end up inside a video game?

That's the vision of gaming platform Roblox, which claims to have last month hosted more than one million people to a massive music launch event.

US pop star Ava Max held a "virtual fan meetup" in the game to celebrate the debut of her new album *Heaven & Hell*, reportedly appearing on a "huge screen in front of a colourful dance floor floating in the sky" according to gaming website *The Verge*.

She then performed several numbers to a crowd which peaked at more than 160,000 - somewhat larger than could fit into any real life arena!

OnAir version 3

EVENTSAIR has released the latest update of its onAIR hybrid event solution, with version 3 including AIRCast streaming and AIRCast Studio, which allows organisers to bring speakers and audience members into a green room to check audio, video and composition before moving them to the main stage to present.

OnAIR also allows easy connection with AV production companies via RTMP feeds, as well as streaming back to preferred platforms - for info see www.eventsair.com.

MCB event series

THE Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) is hoping to prepare the industry for the resumption of life as we know it, with a new webinar series to keep planners up to date.

Sessions will cover venue safe protocols, business event venues and experiences available in Melbourne including hybrid solutions.

Topics include team building ideas, hero venues and venues with a difference, how to experience the best of Melbourne and Victoria, and MCB support services.

The new educational series kicks off next week on Thu 15 Oct at 11am AEDT, with presenters including MCB's Joanna Garrie, Jade Carter and Krystle Mutton.

Registration is open now and free at melbournecb.com.au.

Singapore return

SINGAPORE'S Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre will next month host TravelRevive, with the aim of paving the way for the future of MICE events in the Lion City.

A collaboration between the Singapore Tourism Board and ITB Asia, it will be the first pilot trade show to trial the newly developed prototype for safe business events in Singapore.

The 25-26 Nov event will feature conference sessions, exhibitions and one-on-one meetings with 150 hosted buyers from across Asia.

Theming your events Taiwanese style

MICE bouncing back in Taipei!

THE MICE community in Taipei has been working hard on planning how to provide Covid19 secure event services once the borders will open for MICE event participants.

As event management companies they realize that it is all about the people, the experience and the fun. All Taipei's EMCs take great delight in being the bespoke event planning company that brings together all the strands of clients' dreams and design ideas into one beautiful parcel.

They all have fantastic teams who shoulders the great responsibility of planning spectaculars that showcase the best of absolutely everything - the location, the food and the activities, and all the little personal bits that really make things special. When corporations plan team-building activities in Taipei, popular choices include Taiwanese glove puppetry (budaixi) and dominoes, which can be fun challenges that strengthen a team's bond. Besides, Taipei City Government is now promoting the city as a museum without walls, with living museums based on five traditional districts of the city, such as Beitou, Dadaocheng, Banka, North Town, South Town and three modern areas such as

Taipei Performing Arts Center, Taipei Music Center and Songshan Culture and Creative Park. It is hoped that visitors can literally and figuratively get a taste of different cultures from among the districts and explore the undiscovered beauty hidden in Taipei City.

The pandemic has impacted so many people personally, and professionally, but the Event Management stakeholders in Taipei remain hopeful and positive going forward.

They have been focused on keeping themselves busy, volunteering their time, augmenting skills & equipment where needed & creating new ways to work and remaining open for business. One of these key focuses has been enabling events in a socially-distanced world and they look forward to opportunities to put this into practice.

For more information please visit www.expopark.taipei or www.anticovid19tw.org

Pictured: See-Join Puppet Theater Restaurant is the first glove puppetry cultural-creative restaurant in Taiwan. (Source: See-Join Puppet Theater Restaurant)

