

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK – STRATEGY & GUIDELINES FOR CONFERENCES

Author: Congrex Switzerland, February 28, 2020

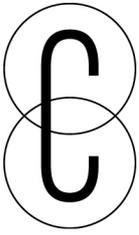
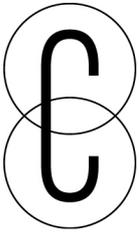


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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

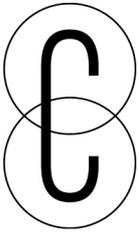
We continue to receive updates on the escalating global impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on people's lives and on the meetings industry.

After the first reports of cases of acute respiratory syndrome in the Chinese Wuhan municipality in December 2019, the Chinese authorities have identified a novel coronavirus as the main cause. The outbreak has rapidly evolved. On 12 February 2020, the novel coronavirus was named severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) while the disease associated with it is now referred to as COVID-19. It is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is in continuous contact with the European Commission, the public health authorities in China and the World Health Organization regarding the assessment of this outbreak. They have published a [good Q&A](#) on COVID-19 and also publish [daily summaries](#).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the meetings industry is directly feeling the effects of the outbreak. According to the world's largest network of business events strategists, PCMA, "the Coronavirus continues to roil global travel and trade, event strategists are delaying, canceling, or soldiering on with their plans". They created a [dedicated web page](#) with updated information on the situation.

In this document you will find reliable information about the coronavirus outbreak and meetings industry-related resources to ensure you are prepared.



CORONAVIRUS EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

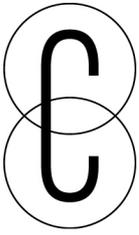
The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released a comprehensive document with key recommendations for those planning large events in the context of the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak.

In the planning phase, WHO advises event planners to base the decision on how to proceed with the event (e.g. restrict, modify or postpone the event) on a thorough risk assessment taking into account:

- ✓ Crowds density
- ✓ Nature of contact between participants including the layout of meeting venues
- ✓ Participant's profession and related possible exposure risk
- ✓ Number of participants coming from COVID-19-affected countries within the previous two weeks
- ✓ Average age of participants, since elderly groups appear to be more affected

Furthermore, the WHO recommends to be in contact with both local and national public health authorities and to communicate preventative measures to attendees, including respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.

Action plans should be developed to mitigate all risks identified in the assessment. The WHO specifies all aspects that an action plan should include.



The WHO document also provides guidance in preparing for worst cases, for example if an attendee exhibits symptoms consistent with the virus during the event. Organisers need to consider where the participant will be treated and how he will be transported to a treatment facility.

Furthermore, the WHO showcases general principles for reducing transmission of the COVID-19 virus, which are also applicable for international events.

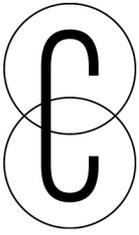
The full documents can be found on the [WHO website](#).



ON - SITE MEASURES

For the safety of all conference participants, we propose the following on-site measures to ensure everyone's health and wellbeing:

- ✓ Make sure your attendees are aware of the safety guidelines set out by the WHO
- ✓ Keep up-to-date information on your event websites pertaining to the status of the event, and precautions for attendees on-site
- ✓ Offer appropriate hand hygiene (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers and tissues), easily accessible in all common areas of the venue
- ✓ Encourage respiratory hygiene/ cough etiquette (e.g. with signage)
- ✓ Provide person who are ill with a mask to help contain respiratory droplets
- ✓ Instruct cleaning professionals to be particularly vigilant with regard to critical areas (reception, rest areas, washrooms, handles, etc.)



- ✓ Minimise crowding where possible (e.g. increasing frequency of transport, minimizing congregation at sanitary stations and food distribution areas)
- ✓ Provide signage to encourage attendees to maintain Social distancing (e.g. no-handshake policy)
- ✓ Ensure that you have a list of contact information for the nearest hospitals and centers for disease control
- ✓ Conduct pre-entry country checks and health screening (screenings involve a temperature check and observations for symptoms)
- ✓ Ask attendees on-site who might begin experience cold or flu-like symptoms to please seek medical care right away
- ✓ Have local medical care contact information available for all attendees
- ✓ Give attendees access to basic medical supplies
- ✓ If your venue is in a high-risk zone, ensure that it is taking extra measures to maintain hygiene best practices



TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

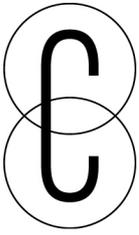
One of the main benefits of meetings and conferences is the ability for professionals to meet face-to-face. However, when that very benefit comes with a potential global health risk, what are the alternatives?

Remote Speaker

If some of your speakers are unable to travel, you can offer them the possibility to give their speech at home and to livestream it remotely to your on-site audience.

Participants will see the speech on one screen and the corresponding slides on the other screen. Audio cabling even enables live communication with the on-site audience.

If you think your event will be impacted by the current outbreak, we recommend to start brainstorming about your online experience as soon as possible. Coming up



with a remote attendance plan that offers a solid experience requires speakers, AV team and venue to be on the same page.

Virtual and live Congress in combination

The talks on-site and remote of your congress will be streamed and broadcasted live as well as on demand for your participants who cannot attend. This ensures the delivery of the content even if they cannot attend on-site and prevents you from financial claims.

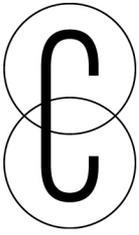
The biggest difference in the development of virtual meetings is the attention to detail that is needed to prepare the sessions and ensuring the content is presented in-away that is engaging and relevant for the participants.

There are many virtual solutions. As you explore options, you should keep an eye on compatibility, performance and the ability to target both desktops and mobile devices. We are happy to advise you about the various possibilities.

Virtual Sponsorship/ Exhibition

There are different possibilities of virtual exhibitions allowing attendees for example to visit virtual exhibition booths and chat with booth reps. A great benefit of virtual exhibitions is that you can track what content attendees are interested in and for how long they interacted with. If some of your speakers or many participants are unable to attend the conference because of the coronavirus outbreak, virtual conference platforms can provide a simple but professional solutions.

If you are interested in a virtual exhibition solution, we are happy to provide you with further details. The setup needs some time to plan so please contact us as soon as possible.



HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AS FREQUENT FLYER

If you are a frequent traveller, you may have a queasy feeling when you have to board the plane again. In the following we have summarised some advice on how to avoid risks:

1. Disinfect hands regularly

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used when soap and water are not available.

2. Protect mucous membranes

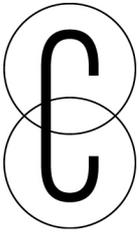
Since the air above the clouds is very dry, the mucous membranes are more vulnerable. Eye drops or nasal spray are helpful here. You should also drink a lot.

3. Face masks

Face masks offer some protection as they block liquid droplets. However, they do not block smaller aerosol particles that can pass through the material of the mask. There is a so-called FFP (Face Filtering Piece) classification from 1 to 3, with only levels 2 and 3 providing protection against pathogens. But FFP3 masks make breathing more difficult.

4. Keep a distance

In general, keep as much distance as possible from people who have a cold and avoid large crowds. If you are particularly anxious, you can book Business Class instead of Economy Class, which automatically gives you more distance to other passengers.



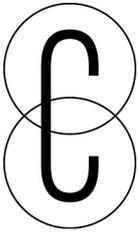
CONCLUSION

In general, the most important measure to do in this situation is to stay calm to contain the spread of unnecessary panic. Stay in constant contact with all attendees and suppliers to update them on possible changes and communicate responsibly.

Follow news from local, national and international health authorities and keep up to date with the latest developments.

Review your crisis communications plan to ensure it is up to date.

Should you consider one of the mentioned technical solutions, we are happy to provide you with detailed information about possible solutions.



Should you need further information, please feel free to contact our **dedicated Account Management Team:**



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