

# Tactical Design Checklist



**Tools for Navigating the Future of Events In-Person** | October, 2020

## The attendee experience in both digital and physical platforms has changed.

Now more than ever, it is important that we redefine what **creative means to events**, and the approach we take, to create engaging experiences that connect us, even when we can't all be together in person.

The PRA Creative Team generated a program design checklist through a collaborative design thinking process, taking a **human-focused approach** and viewing hybrid events through the attendee lens, both remote and in person.

### Pre-Event

Start by re-evaluating the purpose of the meeting. Take into consideration any new messages or business objectives, and approach planning with your “attendee” hat on. Keep in mind, the success of the meeting will depend on your ability to make **guests feel safe and comfortable or engaged virtually**.

When you think of the attendee, consider changes to physical attendance (are they local, regional or remote?), as well as the size of the group. This will alter how you will connect and engage with them. They need to trust that you've thought through their experience and have put their health and safety first. Consider engagement tools such as experience boxes with tangible touchpoints for the at-home audience.



#### Pre-Event Communication

- **Start with transparency** in all pre-event communications to relay health and safety measures being taken at the conference
- Can you cover costs of **health screenings, COVID-19 testing or flu shots** prior to meetings?
- **Communicate to attendees** that onsite sanitation kits will be made available
- **Make sure attendees review and sign** a code of conduct outlining all new rules and parameters for the program
  - Can you come up with alternative greetings that are reflective of your unique culture and people?
  - Host a contest to see who can re-invent your company's greeting
  - Ensure onsite signage reinforces and highlights the change in behavior
- **Consider campaigns and touchpoints** to build excitement such as digital activities and experience boxes



## Space Considerations

- Look for venues with **outdoor spaces/open air**
- **Adjust based on any social distancing** limitations or recommendations and attendee comfort
  - Review your contracts to ensure that you have enough space based on guidelines
  - Adjust flow and footprint to meet all new guidelines for your event activities
  - If operating a reception, be creative with how you encourage physical distancing
- Make sure the **hotel/venue has ample bandwidth** for any web broadcast or digital/virtual component
- **How can the hotel ensure the safety of your guests** - room sanitation, increased air filtration or complimentary “travel clothes” cleaning?
- **For meal functions** (in the right climates) consider moving meals or overflow spaces outdoors
- **Provide hand sanitizers** at every entrance



## Re-Evaluate Your Agenda & Timeline

- **Stagger groups** to avoid queue lines or unnecessary bottleneck
- Consider offering **multiple and/or separate registration areas**
- Build time into your run of show for **sanitation services** by the hotel and all suppliers
- Consider building in **extended breaks** so guests can get out and get fresh air
- Ensure agenda and timeline work for remote audience and include break and mealtimes for at-home participants
- Include fitness or wellness digital activities for at-home participants

## Physical Design

It's important to consider guests have been at home for months in a secure, comfortable environment. How can we bring that same feeling into the meeting spaces? Utilize lighting, assigned seating, accents and bookshelves. Taking an utilitarianism approach for the greater good of the attendees, the focus should be on function before aesthetics. This shift requires new floor diagrams planning much earlier in the process. Ensure design reflects space considerations based on most current information.



## Registration

- **Increase the number of staff**, all properly outfitted and practicing sanitation
- **Consider installing clear plexiglass** between registration staff and guests at check in
- **Use floor decals** to ensure proper social distancing with 6-foot spacing
- If considering kiosks or contactless products in lieu of live registration staff, remember these will **require frequent cleaning**
- **Offer cellphone sterilization stations**
- **Consider a healthcare professional onsite** to screen temperatures or new RFID technology to read temperatures as guests arrive
  - Once the supply is there, can you provide onsite COVID-19 testing/vaccines?



## Table + Seating Guidelines

Each governing entity may have different guidelines, but overall, consider using 4-6 feet per person as you plan your spaces instead of industry standard 2 feet. Currently, we are recommending the below parameters for clients:

- **Rectangular communal tables** (raised or dining height)
  - 6 ft: 4 per table (1 on each side, including short ends)
  - 8 ft: 6 per table (2 on each side, 1 at each short end)
- **Rounds**
  - 72" round: 6 per table
  - 66" round: 5 per table
  - 60" round: 4 per table
  - No seated cocktail rounds are recommended at group functions in the near term
- **For classroom seating**
  - 6' x 18": 1 per table
  - 8' x 18": 2 per table
  - **Tip:** Offering wider club chairs w/swivel desktops and place them 4-6' apart in the room
- **Theater-style seating**
  - If using ballroom chairs, start with separating chairs 4-6' apart
  - **Tip:** Using wider, more comfortable club chairs will provide a comfortable environment
- **Use Highboy tables** for standing/perching only in lieu of offering stools
- **Use plexiglass dividers** on tables when available



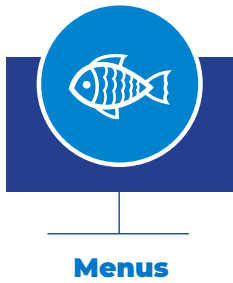
## General Sessions + Meetings

- **Increase the number and width of aisles**, and consider assigning seats
- **Decline pre-set items** such as pens and pads and forego communal sharing vessels, including candy dishes and water pitchers
- **Add areas for additional guest space** with highboys and communal tables around the perimeter of the room
- **Include supplies on the tables** for surfaces to be wiped down in the moment
- **Incorporate sanitation** into the design wherever you can to help ease guests' minds
- **Create designated entrances and exits** for the room



## Meal Functions

- **Breakfast & Lunches**
  - Offer boxed and pre-plated options for takeaway dining
  - Stagger dining times to minimize groups, and assign seating
- **Offer multiple dining area** options vs. one large group meal space
- **Stagger times** to avoid groups in elevators
- **Opt for more ancillary bars** instead of center focal bars to avoid lines



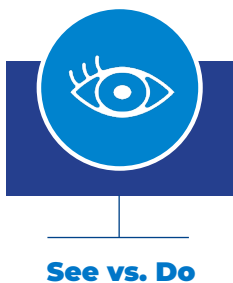
- **Incorporate immune-boosting food** and drink elements into the menu design.
- **Consider zero-waste menu planning** and locally sourced brands, business and farmers within 250 miles
- **Scale back the options** being offered on menus
- **Plan for plated meals**
- **Remove communal items** like bread baskets and butter from tables
- **Before opting for individual service items**, consider the cost to our planet. How much waste is being created by an increase in disposable items?

## The Experience

Networking and group behavior is changing, but still important. For your meetings, focus on creating opportunities and environments that **foster connectedness, while ensuring guests feel comfortable** that their health and safety are front of mind. Designate pre-assigned smaller groups for networking settings. For the at-home participants, look for networking apps to encourage connections.



- **Take extra precautions** with attendee-facing staff including health screening, COVID-19 testing, offering flu shots, sneeze guards, masks, gloves and breaks for frequent hand washing. Use repeat staff when possible for various meeting duties
- **Don't hide the cleaning process.** It's counterintuitive, but showing items and areas being sanitized will offer peace of mind
- **Implement staff and supplier testing** prior to meeting commencement



- **Consider curated experiences** for your guests to “see” instead of “do”, avoiding hand's on options (also great for virtual events)
- **Create a storybook experience** with one entrance and one exit, staggering groups to avoid bottlenecking
- **Utilize digital experiences and activities** to engage at-home attendees



- **Rethink roving entertainment** that relies on “up close and personal” exchanges
- Suggestions for socially distanced, **shared group experiences**:
  - Virtual concerts. It can feel like a shared connection, no matter where your groups are
  - At hotels where the balconies all face a pool area, consider balcony parties with a shared concert experience below. Use drone and video, large screens and delivered meals to bring this experience to a whole new level
  - Offer outdoor concerts in wide open spaces where guests can stretch out but still be entertained
  - Drive-in entertainment
- **Increase dance floor spacing**



- **In a hybrid setting of digital and onsite attendees**, remember to incorporate design elements for the virtual audience who have lost two senses, touch and taste:
  - Integrate what’s happening onsite with their virtual experience. Talk about integrated experiences for all audiences, something unique and special for the viewer at home
  - Decrease the difference between the physical event experience and the experience of the audience who is participating digitally
  - Create cinematic experiences using drones and more videographers
  - Enhance the hybrid event with tangible touchpoints via experience boxes for remote attendees so they feel connected

## **PRA is with you to help navigate your meetings and business events for in-person and remote settings.**

We hope the above recommendations, developed through the Design Thinking Process, are a good jumping off point, and we know the list will continue to evolve. PRA is focusing the passionate minds and hearts of our people on finding solutions that help move our industry forward.

**Reach out to [Digital@PRA.com](mailto:Digital@PRA.com) to start designing your strategic approach to planning events of the future.**