

News

Accor, Marriott, Omni and IHG Join Hilton in Offering More Hybrid-Event Options

The hotel companies want to facilitate the planning and execution of hybrid meetings.



by [Michael J. Shapiro](#)

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Kate Mikesell, Hilton's vice President of corporate responsibility and president of Hilton Effect Foundation, records a message for the global Hilton Worldwide Sales hybrid event at Hilton McLean Tysons Corner in McLean, Va. Source:Hilton Worldwide

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A growing number of hotel companies are preparing to embrace [a future that relies heavily on a hybrid-event model](#), in which many in-person gatherings also will have a remote audience. [Hilton](#), [Accor](#), [Marriott International](#), [Omni Hotels & Resorts](#), and [IHG Hotels & Resorts](#) are the latest to beef up their capabilities to handle such hybrid programs. The approach taken by each company varies slightly, but whether by formalizing tech requirements, partnering with other suppliers or combining all of the above, each hopes to facilitate the hybrid-event process for planners.

Hilton, like all of the hospitality companies that have [rolled out health-and-safety cleanliness programs](#), had always acknowledged that hybrid-event technology must be part of the pandemic-era promise to planners. In January, the hotel giant formalized some of those offerings with the rollout of [Hilton EventReady Hybrid Solutions](#).

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Hilton's guidelines, which will evolve over time, identify which properties in the hotel company's portfolio are hybrid-ready. Additional resources include flexible meetings offerings and an expanded Hilton EventReady Playbook, which addresses minimum hybrid-technology requirements, as well as the already existing health-and-safety best practices.

Participating hotels are able to access training resources to get team members up to speed on hybrid-event production — and to stay informed as best practices evolve.

Accor, meanwhile, has formed a partnership with Microsoft to launch All Connect, a program powered by the integration of [Microsoft Teams](#) technology into all of its meetings properties. Marriott International, which began publicizing its Connect with Confidence with a [hybrid event](#) in November, has just expanded that meetings program with a curated list of third-party hybrid-technology providers and by creating a [guide](#) to evolving best practices. Omni Hotels & Resorts has created a trio of hybrid solutions in tandem with event-production partner [Encore](#), while IHG has partnered with a few third-party suppliers who will offer services for the two hybrid solutions planners can choose from.

Hilton EventReady Hybrid Solutions

Hybrid Solutions began rolling out globally last month, and the expanded Hybrid Events chapter in the [EventReady Playbook](#) has been posted (in English, to start). The new material provides case studies, pro tips and a hybrid-events glossary.

To be included in Hilton's portfolio of hybrid-ready properties, hotels must meet baseline tech requirements and offer additional resources such as:

- **IT readiness:** Each property has been evaluated to ensure the available bandwidth and IT infrastructure meet the requirements of small hybrid events. Hotels must have a minimum amount of incremental and available bandwidth that is above the property's average circuit-use level. The goal is to ensure seamless communication and connectivity to optimize the hybrid-meeting experience.
- **Multisite offerings and express agreements:** Planners must be able to book the in-person portions of the event at multiple hybrid-ready Hilton properties, and express agreements should be available to help streamline the contracting process.

As part of the new program, Hilton technology partner [Encore](#) (formerly PSAV) will offer several packages at participating hotels that were created specifically for small hybrid events. Some hotels include Encore's [Presentation Stages](#), production-ready studios equipped with broadcast infrastructure and staging equipment. Production Stages, like the [growing number of hybrid-specific studios](#) appearing at facilities around the world, are prebuilt locations designed to produce, record and broadcast online events, with high-quality production values. Such stages can accommodate between two and six presenters on-site and 50 in-person attendees.

The Hilton properties that currently offer Presentation Stages include the [Conrad Fort](#)



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[Lauderdale Beach](#), [Hilton Atlanta](#), [Hilton Anatole](#), [Hilton Denver](#) and the [Beverly Hilton](#).

Several more are being built and will be available by year-end in Cleveland; Minneapolis; New York City; Washington, D.C.; and across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

An updated list of hybrid-ready hotels can be found [here](#).

Accor All Connect

Accor's partnership with Microsoft is meant to capitalize on the 115 million people already using Teams to communicate and collaborate for work on a daily basis. The program, which rolls out next month, will focus primarily on small meetings of 8 to 50 participants. The Teams tie-in will involve the integration of the platform's features into the meeting-room experience, using hardware infrastructure like screens, cameras, microphones and broadband to connect remote attendees with those gathered in the room.



All Connect is powered by a collaboration with Microsoft Teams. *Source: Accor*

According to Accor, about 55 percent of the company's hotels with meeting rooms — about 1,800 properties worldwide — are currently hybrid ready, meaning the basic hardware and internet infrastructure is ready to go. The broader rollout will depend on the individual property's tech-adoption schedule, but Accor aims to have all 3,200 of its hotels with meeting rooms set up for All Connect by the end of 2022.

In some of Accor's premium- and luxury-segment hotels, planners can expect to find upgraded equipment such as [Microsoft Teams Rooms](#), purpose-built meeting rooms outfitted with HD video and audio equipment, as well as interactive white boards like Microsoft's [Surface Hub 2S](#). Accor also plans to facilitate larger hybrid events based on partnerships already in place with providers such as Encore.

Marriott Connect With Confidence Hybrid Meetings

Beginning later this month, Marriott will gradually add new resources, including providers and pricing, for hybrid meetings at properties throughout the U.S. and Canada. The company intends to roll out such resources globally in the near future.

Among the curated list of providers working with Marriott are Encore, [Cvent](#), [Convvene](#), [MeetingPlay](#) and [Hopin](#), all of which will partner with Marriott properties to provide the technology platforms to hold hybrid events.



A Connect with Confidence hybrid event was held at the Gaylord Rockies in conjunction with PCMA Convening Leaders in January 2021. *Source: Marriott International*

Like the other hotel companies, Marriott highlights the fact that hybrid-meeting success must incorporate the [safety and hygiene](#) logistics outlined in its companywide plan. Connect with Confidence incorporates cleanliness protocols, physical distancing, redesigned food and beverage, contactless check-in, well-being checks, occupancy monitoring and more. Marriott has compiled best practices and insights gleaned from the hybrid events the company has hosted, and packaged them in the [Connect with Confidence Hybrid Meetings and Events Insights Guide](#).

Ready, Set, Go Hybrid with Omni

Omni has collaborated with event-production partner Encore to provide three flexible hybrid-meeting solutions. Each incorporates the safety and hygiene protocols outlined in [Omni Safe & Clean](#) and [MeetSafe from Encore](#).

Omni Virtual Studio is tailored for the individual or small group that simply needs a professional environment from which to present, promising a distraction-free environment with robust broadband and technical support if needed.

Omni Hybrid Small Meeting is a package for up to 15 in-person attendees and some flexibility to scale when needed. It's geared for collaborations and presenter-focused meetings that require a bit more than a simple group call. Multiple cameras and displays are provided, as are sound reinforcements for a clear audio experience.

Omni Hybrid Your Way is tailored for on-site groups larger than 15 people and promises the multiple cameras, displays and audio components required to create a robust

experience for larger in-person and remote groups. Interactive elements such as gamification and polling can be added in, as well as the opportunity to connect groups at multiple Omni locations.

IHG Meet With Confidence Hybrid Events

IHG has just expanded its health-and-safety protocol program, [Meet with Confidence](#), to include resources, technology and tools for hybrid meetings. One area of focus for the program is to connect attendees at multiple hotel locations, bringing them together for larger, global events.



IHG's Kimpton Fitzroy London built a green-screen studio to accommodate broadcasts for hybrid events. *Source: IHG Hotels & Resorts*

To aid in successfully executing hybrid meetings, IHG has partnered with a number of companies — [Wellness 4 Humanity](#), [Williams Sonoma](#) and [Weframe](#) — that will offer rapid on-site Covid-19 testing, customized food-and-beverage experiences and technology to facilitate collaboration, respectively. (See more about these partnerships in the solutions below.)

The hotel company is offering two hybrid packages: Smart Solution and Expert Solution.

Smart Solution, which is available at participating properties worldwide (except for China), includes the following:

- Adherence to the [IHG Way of Clean](#) protocols, which include enhanced cleanliness, social distancing and other safety measures;
- On-site rapid Covid-19 testing, provided by Wellness 4 Humanity, if planners elect to incorporate it; and
- Cloud-based digital collaboration technology, provided by Weframe, including Weframe One, an interactive 86-inch touchscreen.

Expert Solution, initially available at nearly 100 hotels in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, adds the additional services:

- Virtual technology experiences that connect the in-person and remote attendees, as well as advanced audiovisual production and multivenue linking; and
- Curated food-and-beverage experiences, in which food, drinks and dessert packages from the Williams Sonoma catalogue can be delivered to offsite attendees.

IHG is promising additional flexibility as part of a limited-time promotion. For Smart Solution events booked by June 30 that meet or stay by the end of 2021 and are 10 - 50 rooms on peak, there are no cancellation fees or attrition fees for rooms that are not booked. There's also as much as a 5 percent rebate toward the master bill and streamlined contracting available. All of that applies to the Expert Solution as well, although the rebate will be a flat 5 percent for that package.

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