



What Can We Expect for Meetings and Events Next Year?

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American Express's 10th annual Global Meetings and Events Forecast offers insights into what the industry can expect in 2021. (Courtesy AMEX)

American Express released its 10th annual Global Meetings and Events Forecast, which surveyed more than 560 meetings and events professionals from around the world on everything from budgets to technology. Below, we've highlighted several of the key takeaways. To download the entire report, visit the [AMEX Global Business Travel site \(https://www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/meetings-events/meetings-forecast/\)](https://www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/meetings-events/meetings-forecast/).

When will live events ramp up again? Probably in late 2021. Most respondents reported that they expect to hold their next in-person event in the second half of 2021. Most said it will be a small, simple meeting or an internal meeting.

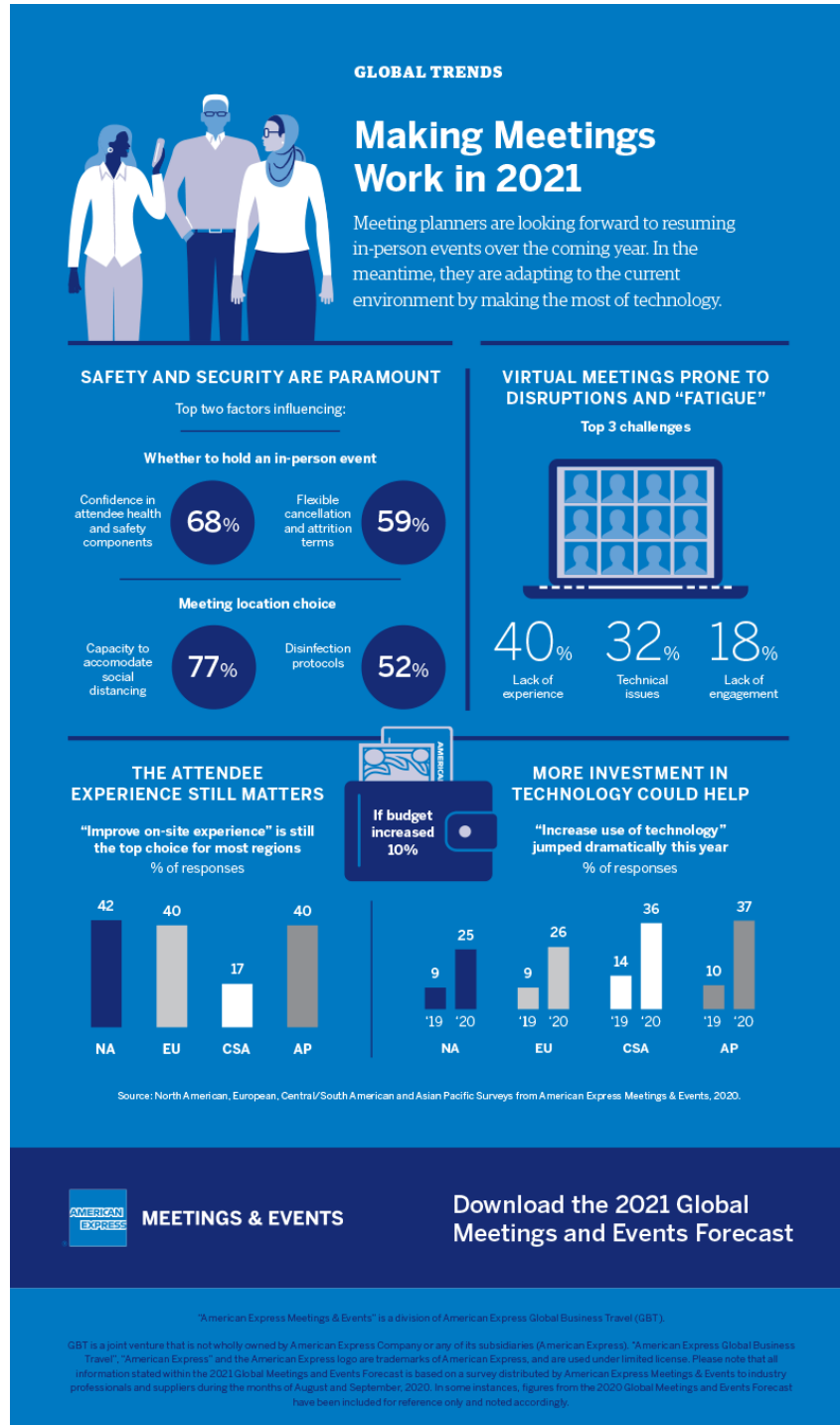
No surprise, event tech will still be top of mind. Regardless of their meeting's purpose, right now planners are focused on technology options to power their hybrid or virtual programs. When respondents were asked where they would spend their 2021 budget if it increased by 10 percent, 39 percent chose to "increase use of technology." Respondents in North America also estimated that 23.6 percent of their 2021 events will include a virtual component.

Budgets will be slimmer. "Respondents estimated that budgets will decrease 3.7 percent, globally," Milton Rivera, vice president of global business development, global client group and APAC region for American Express Meetings, said during a recent webinar on the report. The first item to get cut? Off-site optional activities, said 27 percent, followed by the number of nights or off-site evening events, according to 18 percent of respondents.

Planners have an opportunity to make meetings management policies a priority. "This period of disruption has now brought policies for meetings and events to the forefront," said Rivera. "And quite frankly, it's overdue." This especially pertains to duty of care due to the increased COVID-19 protocol. Globally, 67 percent of respondents said that their meetings and events policies contained explicit language around safety and security.

It's also a good time to rethink your approach to sustainability. The report highlighted that 79 percent of respondents believe that their organization already emphasizes sustainability in meetings and events, mostly by recycling, avoiding disposable items, and choosing local, organic food items. But "with the explosion of hybrid and virtual meetings, corporations can more readily consider who absolutely has to travel and who can participate virtually, thereby lowering the meeting's carbon footprint," the report said.

There may be a squeeze on supply heading into 2022. "This is a tricky one," Rivera said. "The initial response is that meeting space is expected to be readily available in 2021, but somewhat more difficult in 2022." Why? Increased competition for space and potential contraction in supply due to closures and conversions of hotels and venues. In addition, planners may require more space in order to adhere to physical-distancing guidelines.



(Courtesy of 10th annual American Express Global Meetings and Events Forecast)

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