



# 6 Meeting Trends Accelerated By the Pandemic



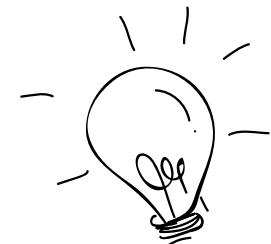
# The Time is Now

There's a classic adage which reads, "Nothing is permanent except change" and, if the last few months have demonstrated anything, it is precisely that sentiment. Change hasn't just arrived on our doorstep — it has invited itself in, and taken a seat at the table.

As we discuss this 'new normal' for the meeting and event industry, the question we continue to arrive at is: Just how much will things change? What constitutes a "meeting?" Will new policies be temporary, or here for the long haul? Will travel brands be able to consistently meet newly evolved standards? And how long will the need for virtual/hybrid meetings stay?

Many experts are seeing an unprecedented demand for new processes to manage internal meetings. Companies will still need their employees to meet face to face, and, of course, they will need to meet with customers. A vaccine will surely enable this. But until then, only 25% of planners whose meetings have been impacted by the pandemic are rescheduling them for sometime in 2020, according to Northstar Meetings Group's Pulse Survey. And the Planner Confidence Index from Immeet is showing an 11% increase week over week on resuming meetings in early 2021.

As the global economy cautiously reopens, it's important to recognize the trends which have been accelerated by the pandemic in your planning for the next year. These will help you prepare for 1) Small Meetings Are Back 2) Managing Traveler and Corporate Risk Is Top Focus 3) Company-wide Policy and Process Mitigate New Risks 4) Self-Service Meeting Tech Wins 5) Location: Keep It Close to Home and 6) Unique Venues Rise for Day Meetings.



# Small Meetings are Back

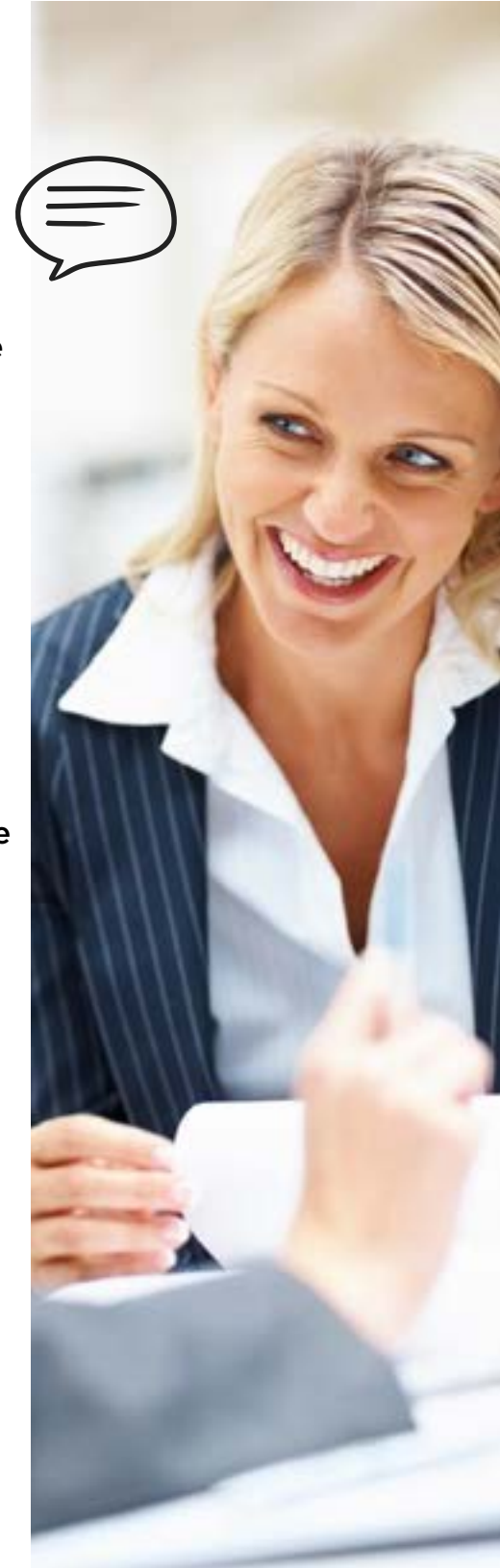
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## Smaller Meetings Will Be the Norm

In-person meetings and professional interactions are still integral to the success of a company. Harvard Business Review notes that a face-to-face request is 34 times more successful than an email, and studies show that 85% of people believe face-to-face meetings contribute to stronger, more meaningful business relationships.

But gone are the days of large meetings and events brimming with attendees shoulder-to-shoulder — at least, for now. In the interim, corporations are likely to embrace small-scale meetings that allow for in-person interaction in a manageable, low-risk environment. Hyatt recently reported that even with their Q2 profits in decline, smaller group meetings were occurring, and that they been working with planners on new designs for events. With a reduced number of attendees and, in some cases, a mix of in-person and virtual participants, venues and event planners are better able to enforce social distancing and protective measures such as temperature checks, one-way traffic flow, sanitation, and more. It also lays the foundation for enhanced contact tracing in the case of an outbreak.

From the perspective of the corporation, smaller meetings not only help to reduce risk, but also help to lower costs. And all those meetings that use to take place in an office will now take place off site due to capacity controls in an office. In many markets, day meetings have started to resume before offices. (See Trend #6 have even opened.



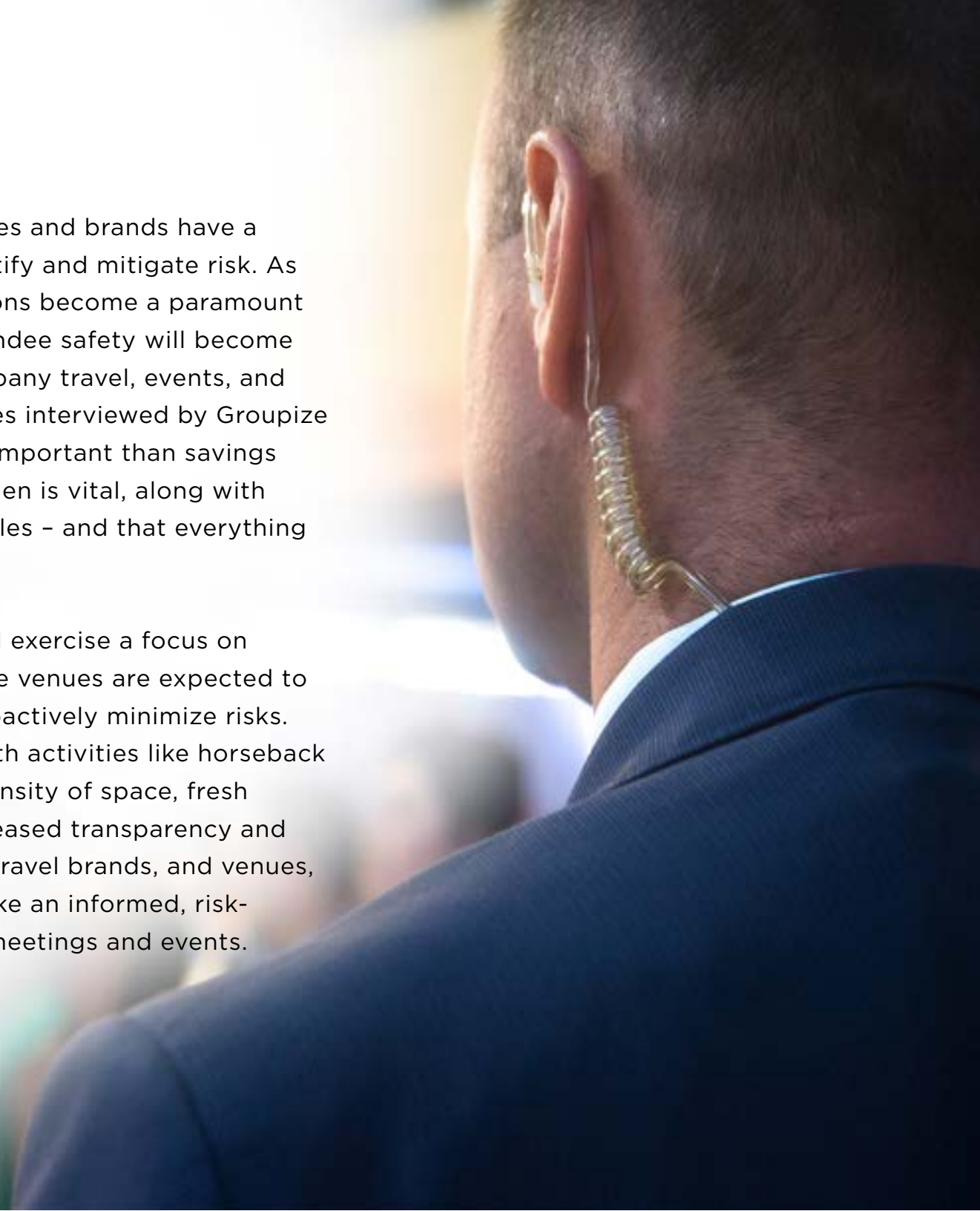
# Managing Traveler & Corporate Risk is Top Focus

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## Now Everyone Manages Risk

In a post-pandemic world, companies and brands have a responsibility to appropriately identify and mitigate risk. As such, health and safety considerations become a paramount operational consideration, and attendee safety will become the number one factor for any company travel, events, and meetings. In fact, 100% of companies interviewed by Groupize agrees that risk mitigation is more important than savings this year. Knowing who is where/when is vital, along with travelers acknowledging the new rules – and that everything needs to be auditable.

Managers and meeting planners will exercise a focus on safety over quantity and scale, while venues are expected to maintain sanitation measures to proactively minimize risks. While risk used to be associated with activities like horseback riding, risk has now expanded to density of space, fresh air circulation, and so on. With increased transparency and communication between planners, travel brands, and venues, corporations are empowered to make an informed, risk-measured decision while planning meetings and events.



# **Company-Wide Policy & Process Mitigate New Risks**

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## Company Wide Programs

The pandemic has exposed companies to so much new liability that loose meeting management is clearly no longer an option. The risks are just too high. Organizations are moving to developing and implementing new company-wide programs and mandating practices to standardize both managed travel and managed meeting processes, policy, and logistics.

What used to be a transient travel policy is now expanding to encompass meeting management processes, as well.

Even companies that had an SMMP (Strategic Meetings Management Program) in place to get through the onset of the crisis are now looking to incorporate self-service technology to navigate the ever-changing landscape, to enforce meeting policies, and make every step trackable and auditable for all attendees at all meetings.

The pandemic has also introduced another new phenomenon when it comes to meeting programs: acceptance. Employees are now willing to follow travel and meeting mandates because they realize it is important for everyone - the company, travelers, customers and their safety.





# Self-Service Meeting Tech Wins

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## **Self-Service Wins**

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Across all industries, we are witnessing the steady (and rapid!) adoption of self-service technology. Understandably, event and meeting planning is no exception. As companies continue to downsize, cut costs and reconsider budgets, they require easy to use, easy to implement and more affordable systems to manage their events and meetings.

Before the pandemic, many brands relied on high cost, complicated platforms to support the robust infrastructure of very large-scale meetings and events. Now, with cost-containment and the widespread shift to a 'start-up' business model in which staff members wear multiple hats; self-service tools provide the solution. Self-service technology enables anyone to handle the meeting/event booking process with ease, while maintaining full oversight.

Corporations now want to be able to manage expense, travel, and risk for all meetings and events within one user-friendly and centralized platform that offers both self-service and managed service workflows - while enabling the highest-ever level of internal collaboration.

# Location: Keep it Close to Home

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## Location, Location, Location

Vacations aren't the only 'travel' experience subject to a 'staycation' makeover this year - meetings and events are following suit. Meetings, corporate events, trade-shows and showcases that were traditionally held in big cities such as Las Vegas may be rerouted to smaller cities and local destinations closer to headquarters or less crowded regional airports moving forward.

Additionally, with the shift from weekend/overnight gatherings to day events/meetings, corporations are more likely to seek out venues that are within driving distance for most attendees. In many cases, virtually connected satellite events may complement a 'main event' event where the trainer, recruiter or speaker(s) are physically located with a core of attendees - following what happened in 2008 at the onset of the last global recession.

This then transforms travel arrangements from needing flights to driving. And it makes it doubly necessary for companies to find new ways to track this type of event for Duty of Care when traditional travel partners are not used for attendee logistics.



# Unique Venues for Day Meetings Rise

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## Venues for Day Meetings

As corporate offices and campuses remain shuttered, we are seeing an influx in demand for offsite meetings, board meetings, planning sessions, recruiting activities, and customer meetings. This shift applies to every single department, and Facilities is especially impacted.

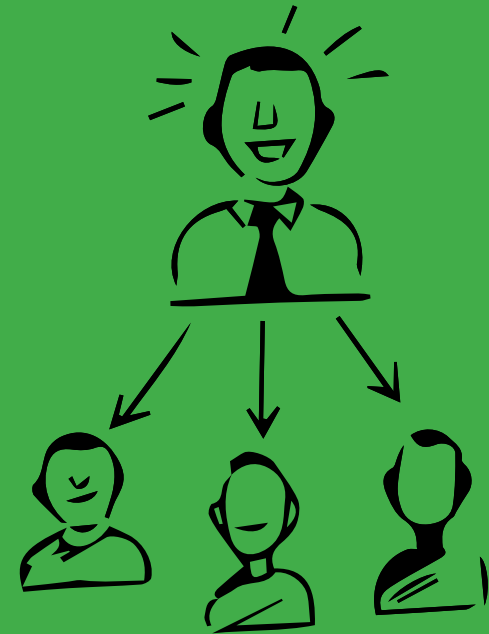
With so many companies switching to a work-remote model and on-going travel restrictions, corporate meeting and event planners will be expected to seek out short-term and daily venue rentals to meet the needs for in-person meetings and work sessions, without the need for overnight accommodations.

These bookings will include restaurants, workspaces, unique venues, and certainly hotels with updated, stringent health and safety measures.



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Ultimately, meetings and events are here to stay; they’ll just look a little different moving forward.

With these trends and emerging standards firmly intact, along with the right event management technology, corporations will continue to benefit from the safe execution of a high volume of small-scale events and meetings.”





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