

**LYYTI**



**REPORT**

# The State of Events

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How will COVID-19 change  
the event industry

# A black swan event often comes with a crisis.

*by Anna Kauppila  
& Antonia Ridderstråle from Lyyti Ltd.*

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# Introduction

It seems that the event industry has met its black swan: COVID-19. The great uncertainties make forecasting the future close to impossible, but we thought we'd give it a try. We asked altogether 497 event professionals based in Northern Europe how they see the future of events. All in all they had planned 4973 events between March and May 2020.

Along with the survey, we conducted qualitative expert interviews with a few B2B event professionals. We wanted to know how other companies, that also have events as a cornerstone touchpoint in the customer lifecycle, are coping with the current situation.

The event industry is used to adapt to change. It might be one of the industries that has experienced the most radical changes in the way it operates. The rise of the digitalisation era: social media, big data, and online tools have modified the industry, but haven't replaced peoples' need to interact with each other face to face – rather the opposite. The core values and functions of events have not changed, and based on our data we don't think it will in the future either. What's unusual in this situation is that COVID-19 changed the industry over a few days, not in the course of years, in the way digitalisation changed the industry.

Will this black swan kill the event industry? Probably not. However, in short-term we need to understand and adapt to the current situation to succeed. The key is to identify the impact of COVID-19 on our businesses and be open to change. With the loss of in-person touchpoints and the current gap in the customer lifecycle – what can we do?

With the help of Lyyti, we wanted to contribute to the industry by collecting helpful information by asking those who work within the industry, and later provide the information as valuable guidelines when creating events in this difficult time.

We welcome you to read this report and hope that it will give you ideas on how to work with events now and in the future.

Take care of yourself and each other!

Best,  
Anna & Antonia from Lyyti

“This time has tested our ability of innovation and agility. We quickly used the capabilities of Lyyti to communicate with our members, and then we have found new ways of backing our customers in this time of crisis. Instead of physical events we have offered streamed performances and concerts, and free delivery of your restaurant dinner, more safely served at home. We will do what we can to help our customers through this, and in the meantime plan how we can continue to offer them extraordinary events and experiences when this pandemic is behind us.”



**JENNIE E. GILLBERG,  
HEAD OF AMEX EXPERIENCES,  
AMERICAN EXPRESS**

# The impact of COVID-19 on the Event Industry

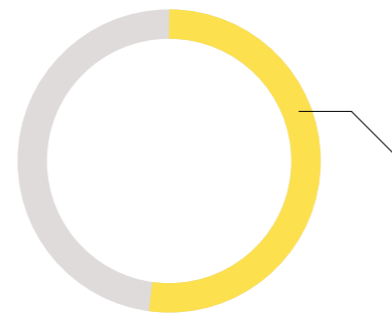
Many companies have been forced to pivot their event strategy to cope with the current situation.

In the beginning of February 2020 the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona was one the first major B2B events to cancel due to COVID-19, and after that we have seen a domino effect, as well as country restrictions to prohibit events with over 500, 50, and now 10 participants. It's obvious that companies, big and small in various types of industries which have B2B events as a cornerstone touchpoint, need to rethink the way they do things in order to not lose against the virus.

During the period between March and May 2020, all in all 4973 events were planned by the respondents. The large number, 4973 events, emphasises the importance of events as part of companies' business and marketing strategies.

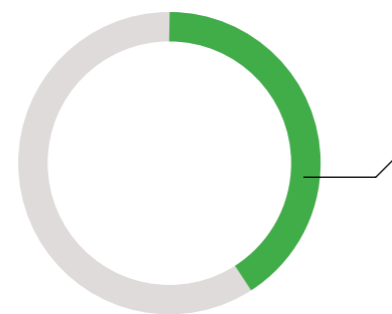
Based on the number of planned events we asked how many of these have been canceled, postponed or changed into webinars due to COVID-19. The impact of the virus is obvious; the current situation looks very different than it did a couple of weeks ago.

According to our data, the short-term change is obvious but the future looks bright. We hope that the data can help you decide how to pivot your event strategy to cope with the current situation.



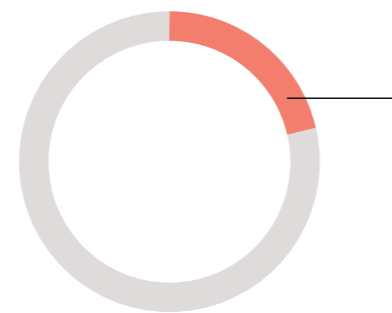
## 53%

Percentage showing postponed events based on the total amount of planned events



## 40%

Percentage showing canceled events based on the total amount of planned events



## 16%

Percentage showing events changed into webinar or similar based on the total amount of planned events

*The numbers exceeds 100% due to the format of the survey. Some events are both postponed and changed into webinar or similar.*

“I do believe this is temporary and when it’s all over, people will find it wonderful to be able to meet each other face-to-face. There will be an event boom, where both organisers and participants are active. Until we reach that point, we’ll go with manual control. In the meantime, let’s not forget the importance of visuals! Until we can meet up face-to-face, let’s meet up online.”



**AARNE TÖLLINEN,**  
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER,  
BARONA

“When all of this is over, I believe people will have the feeling of breaking free. Us humans are a social breed and as such we long for physical encounters and the feelings and the experiences they bring us. Live encounters will definitely make a comeback and I also hope and believe that social responsibility and green values will be a big theme. These have been notable themes before the virus as well, but especially now, both organisers and participants will prefer local productions. People will try to avoid flying and other kinds of long-distance travel and choose to support next door events instead. In addition to this, online events and different hybrids

will become more common. Nevertheless it’s important to remember that an online event will never fully replace physical events. Such things are mainly non-verbal communication, the usage of all senses and the energy and sensations derived from the interaction between people. All of these things are very hard to convey through a screen, as opposed to live encounters.”



**OSNAT MANGS,  
EVENT ARCHITECT, PARTNER,  
SISTERS INC.**

# The Future of Events

It's safe to assume that those event organisers and marketers who are able to adapt to change will be the ones that survive the COVID-19 challenge. The ones that can change their thinking and actually learn from this, will be the ones who make it in the future.

The attitude towards the future is a positive one and the general assumption is that the final change might not even be that considerable. In this moment most of us aren't able to see much further than the day we're living right now. We focus on the problems we're experiencing this very minute, such as how will we maintain customer engagement and how can we bring people together, when it can't be done face to face?

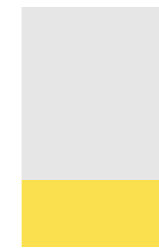
The easiest solution to the latter has been to create opportunities for people to meet up online. There are many benefits with online events and they should indeed be capitalised on. Saved costs, more flexible choices and easy access are just a few examples of these benefits. Nevertheless, it's still important to remember that online events don't offer the same kind of experiences and sensations that physical events

do. Event marketers want to affect the participant's thinking and actions, which is very difficult to do through a screen. In other words, an online event can't be the only event concept of the future, but it will be an important one. In these exceptional times the potential of online events has become more obvious than ever and at the same time we've learned to appreciate the power of physical encounters even more.

When we're able to look beyond the situation we're in now, we'll definitely focus more on the future and the positive results of this ordeal. The excitement of being able to meet people again, combined with all the possibilities we didn't have online, will surely generate new ideas, concepts and visions. Different combinations or hybrids, where physical encounters are combined with modern technology, through which you can connect with people on the other side of the world, will be interesting alternatives to implement. The power of change and the possibilities it offers us is truly something to put our trust in.

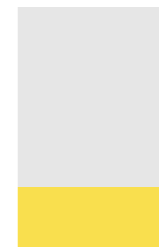
How do you predict the future of events, will your amount of organized events change when the pandemic is over?

18%



The amount of events will increase

17%



The amount of events will decrease

69%



The amount of events will be similar as of before

Do you think there will be changes to the size of your events after the pandemic?

14%



The events will be smaller

3%



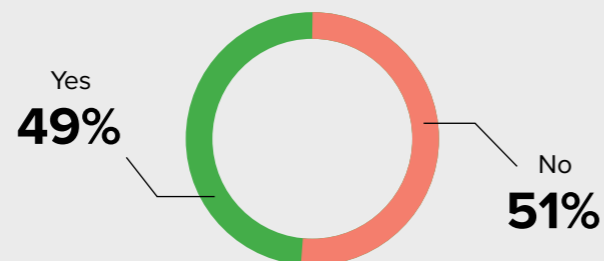
The events will be larger

83%



The events will be similar as of before

Do you think you'll be hosting more online events after the pandemic?



# Conclusion

It's clear that COVID-19 has made an impact on the event industry. However, the data tells us that in the long-run, after the pandemic, the effects of the virus will successively fade away. We'll walk away with best practices and an increased knowledge about online events, as well as the knowledge of how crucial a backup plan is. This to minimise the risk of gaps in the customer lifecycle.

The future of events is bright and an increased demand of events for the latter part of the year 2020 is to be expected. Then the problem won't be if events can be arranged, it will be when and where for the organiser and which one(s) to choose for the participant. The world is going to go back to the good old fashioned model of supply and demand. When this time comes, event organisers and marketers will be more prepared than ever.

Now it's important to look at the outcome of this challenge with optimism. Hopefully you feel inspired and have obtained new ideas on how you can continue to work with events in the future. Let's keep in mind, that the purpose of events will still be clear after the pandemic, if not even clearer. Now is the time to use this opportunity to be creative, in order to start again when the time comes. Because the time *will* come.

“I'm not worried about the future. Things will continue to happen in the world, things that are bigger than us. It's our job to adapt and do the best we can. The most important thing is that we don't rest on our laurels. It's amazing to see how this has brought people together, created unity and given us perspective on how we could be more responsible. Now is the time for doing and creating – to lose heart is not an option.”



**OSNAT MANGS,  
EVENT ARCHITECT, PARTNER,  
SISTERS INC.**

# LYYTI

## The Most Loved Event Marketing Solution in the Nordics

**LYYTI** is a software specialized in participant data collection and management. Lyyti does the manual work so you can focus on your event content and participants. We want to introduce and sustain the idea that successful events result in actual, measurable growth, instead of events being a burden on both budget and staff. We aim to benefit you and your customers on every level.

### LYYTI'S KEY BENEFITS:

- + Participant data management
- + Questionnaires and feedback
- + Automated event communication and messaging
- + Analytics & reporting
- + Tickets & payment
- + Integrated with Marketing and CRM platforms

Start building your event success with Lyyti!

[SEE LYYTI IN ACTION](#)