

WE ARE BACK!



Well, maybe somewhat back at least? I realize several campuses, venues, conferences and events are still in limbo or shifting, but there has been a great push forward for live programming and our industry as a whole over the past few months. Personally, we at Festevents have been part of 200-person community programs, 2,000-person productions and have hosted 20,000 guests for each of two traditional festivals over the past couple of months. In many ways, there are moments that feel like we are truly back. As we all are seeing, the demand from the public is there and it is strong. However, lack of staffing and police, food and beverage complications and of course the occasional mask, all quickly remind us that there is even more progress to be made to reach the “good old days”.

Before we make the full transition to the new normal, it is worth both a quick flash back in time and then a look to the future with the hopes of better preparing for the remainder of 2021 and the planning of 2022.

Flashing Back

Though health and wellness remain the priority and are a part of every conversation - masks, no masks, CDC Guidelines, etc., we must remember that prior to the pandemic, there were some difficult conversations taking place and very serious challenges to overcome. Security procedures, active shooters, perimeters, gates and tickets at free and open to the public events were all hot topics.

As we continue to progress through the pandemic and wrestle with new variants of the virus, we must not forget the major issues of the industry prior to the shutdown. Safety, the basic safety and security of our guests, volunteers, staff, performers and partners must remain priority number one!

Flash Forward

With so many unknowns in the world, it has never been more difficult to organize your long-range planning and work on strategic goals. This said, we must make time to flash forward and plan

accordingly for the continuing technological wave of services and gadgets that once again are changing our campuses, parks, venues and cities as a whole.

In a recent article in the Sports Business Journal, Bret McCormick and Eric Prisbell wrote an interesting piece titled, “Experience Is Everything”. They write about keeping the sense of community as technology moves forward with artificial intelligence, mixed reality moments and the blending of realities. And, here I am still stuck on trying to make sure there is ample wifi in our city parks for the big events?

The writers cover topics such as the next generation of wifi, data privacy and virtual reality. They hint at holograms of famous people greeting you as you enter and even greeting by name as you enter, with directions to the bar serving your favorite beer. They have you visualizing a large digital image of a Coke bottle floating over the crowds’ heads, replacing the physical blimp of the past. They even talk about facial recognition later in the publication.

The only way to balance all this moving into the new normal, is to keep the guest in mind in everything we do. This is good news for us as we are the scientists and the techies of the human spirit! If anyone can connect back to the past, not forgetting what is important to carry forward, all while integrating the realities of the future – it is us! We are the industry that takes the social trends and challenges of the time and wraps it with a woven blend of great traditions and never seen before experiences in a safe, memorable presentation!

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