



'MIXED SIGNALS'

Go!
Stop!
Lose a turn.
Merge into oncoming traffic.
Roll the Dice.
Go directly to jail. Do not pass Go; Do not collect \$200!
Protect your resources.
No U Turn!

Cook at 425 degrees for 90 minutes.
Wear a mask (or two).
Push the prime button 10 times before trying to start.
Safe Distance.
Better to wait.
Apply now.
Engage the brake.
Apply again.

Only those with a minimum balance in your account.
Show proof of vaccination.
Close.
Open.
Listen to the medical professionals.
Hire.
Fire.
The Governor says we can.

Indoors.
Outdoors.
The Mayor says we can't.
6 feet.
3 feet.
Maybe next year.
Start over.
Reboot.
Reimagine.

In today's festival and event environment, it feels a bit like playing a new board game, where the instructions keep changing every day and are all different based upon where you may have bought your game; the playing pieces are being crafted by each of us out of whatever creative resources we can find; our 'lifelines' don't understand the rules any better than we do; the game started by taking away all of our financial resources, versus putting everyone on equal footing; and winning may simply be the ability to stay in the game.

Understandably so, it is a confusing time. Professionals across our global industry are making critical decisions about cancelling their events for a second year; postponing; protecting the health of their staff, volunteers and attendees; protecting their now very limited financial resources, with most having depleted any reserves or 'rainy-day' funds long ago; the ability/timing of bringing back furloughed staff; and committing to potentially bank-breaking contracts and commitments if audiences/attendees are not on the same page as we are.

I talk everyday with people who are seeing the mixed bag of continued closures versus those who seem to be throwing all caution to the wind, and trying to make sense of it for their own situations. No one wants to be left behind; everyone wants to return to 'normal'; but no one wants to make a catastrophic call.

People are looking at vaccination rates and increased virus surges in some parts of the country/world; the impact of travel restrictions, continued border closings, and group tour hesitancy; unexpected impacts of the pandemic on critical infrastructure and operational necessities, like seasonal staffing and insurance coverage; new budget expenses that we didn't have before; and the ability/readiness of important industry vendors and suppliers to retool and repivot themselves to support the needs of a pent-up, yet still uncertain industry, at least in the short-term.

Even in our own internal industry surveys, we have seen a majority response of those who, while eternally hopeful, are

personally and/or professionally hesitant or unable to travel, gather, or commit to certain, future budgetary decisions. And in our ongoing conversations with other allied (and even non-related) industry associations/organizations, government agencies, and host cities/municipalities, they – and all those that they serve and represent – are struggling with the same challenges.

Confusion and uncertainty and lack of control are nightmare environments for event professionals. We understand. And while we can't make all of that go away, what we can provide you with is a reassurance that you are not alone. There is not any one right or wrong answer; 'best practices' of the past are all having to be revisited, reinvented, and reimaged; but I can't imagine a better industry to do so and bring us all out the other side stronger and better than ever before.

The IFEA remains committed to driving the conversations and professional networks that continue to be our best resource as we keep charting new courses and pathways; providing access to the most current and pertinent information/programs that you should be aware of; keeping you updated on what your peers are doing and how they are responding around the world, so that you can evaluate your own position and prevent/partake in any new relevant changes/trends as they develop; maximizing the return on your important and finite resources, by providing you access to as many free member benefits as possible, including educational webinars, invaluable publications, hosted professional exchange with those who share your challenges, and just that breathe of (non-masked) fresh air that comes from knowing that you are connected – through very few degrees of separation - to the most talented, creative, supportive and sharing network of professional leadership in our field. Those who are cheering you on, every day.

Hang in there, let us know how we can assist your success and sanity, and stay safe and healthy.