



# The return to face-to-face events: **What you should know**

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As the world begins to re-open, people are hungry to connect in person with family, friends, colleagues and community members. That certainly includes top achievers longing to meet up in the winner's circle on an incentive travel experience and convention goers eager to learn about leading trends, solutions and products in their industries.

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For decades, research has shown incentive travel to be the most powerful motivator of peak performance. While the pandemic has changed the world forever, one thing it has not changed is people's desire to travel, based on a study published in late June 2021.\* Group incentive travel awards were considered 'very' or 'extremely' motivating by 80% of the respondents in the study. Individual incentive travel awards also received high ratings for motivational appeal, with 84% saying individual travel awards are 'very' or 'extremely' motivating.

At BI WORLDWIDE, we see the power of both group and individual experiences.

To help with your company's return to face-to-face experiences and events, use this three-step process:

## Step one: **ASSESS**

The first step is to determine when it is the right time to return to face-to-face travel. The answer will be different for every company. Here are a few questions to help you decide when it will be right for yours:

- What are your corporate guidelines?
- Is there a date when corporate travel can resume?
- When can you return to working in the office?

**TIP:** Survey your participants to get a pulse check on what their comfort level preferences are when it comes to traveling.

## Step two: **PLAN**

We all know there is a great deal of effort that goes into planning, but three areas under constant change right now are (1) **hotels/venues**, (2) **air/ground transportation** and (3) **health/safety**. Hoteliers and venues are seeing unprecedented demand for bookings in 2021, 2022 and even 2023; options are available but you will want to act swiftly because available space is dwindling. Air was once fairly predictable but now is under continual change; ground transport such as motorcoaches and rental cars are being booked at unprecedented rates.



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And duty of care efforts are paramount: it is important to have well-established standards and practices that prioritize the safety of all event travelers and staff. It is equally important to stay informed and be agile, as standards and protocols change by the day and can vary widely depending on the location of your particular events.

**TIP:** While we have all become used to safe distancing during the pandemic, keep in mind that your event travelers span the continuum when it comes to how they desire to interact with others physically. A best practice for approaching this is communicating safe distancing protocols and standards well before the event. On site, offer participants a wristband or name badge identifier that communicates their level of comfort.

**GREEN** means a participant is open for handshakes and hugs.

**YELLOW** indicates fist bumps are just fine.

And **RED** means keep your distance with a head nod and a smile.

### Step three: **ACT**

Pre-pandemic expectations, practices and ideas are a thing of the past. You should refer to the survey you performed during the assessment phase; if that survey was done months ago, consider conducting a second survey. As you need to accelerate your decision-making due to industry compressions, you may need to quickly consider different destinations and reimagine your events from start to finish.

**TIP:** Do not make assumptions that activities that have been popular in the past will remain the go-to experiences for events today. You will need to leave behind pre-conceived notions and know that your event travelers may make decisions that are counterintuitive. For a few recent programs BIW has operated, people who traditionally had selected individual or small-group activities like golf, tennis and spa have switched to large-group activities. This is perhaps because today, people are craving human interactions and connections.

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\* *"The Impact of Destination Choice on Motivation"* study by Incentive Research Foundation  
July 28, 2021 Study

