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CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS TODAY ARE SHAPING THE SAFE AND SWIFT RETURN TO CORPORATE MEETINGS AND BUSINESS TRAVEL

WASHINGTON – To showcase the innovative measures being taken to support the safe return of in-person meetings and events, the Meetings Mean Business Coalition (MMBC) is enlisting corporate executives, policymakers and meetings industry leadership to engage in critical conversations in a virtual discussion series – which premiered in July and will continue through the fall. Conversations thus far highlighted five key considerations, predictions and actions underway.

1. Safety comes first

The meetings and travel industry has been hard at work putting protocols in place so that those who want to meet in small numbers can do so safely, even now. Each stage of the meeting and travel journey is accounted for – from ground transport, to air travel, to visits at conference venues and hotels.

Blueprints of [safe, in-person meetings](#) include MMBC's own summer board of directors meeting on July 28 in Washington, D.C. "With the diligent and seamless coordination by our venue, the Grand Hyatt Hotel, to implement proper physical distancing, PPE and increased sanitation, we were able to show the world that it is possible to meet safely in our current environment," said Nan Marchand Beauvois, Senior Vice President, U.S. Travel Association and Managing Director, Meetings Mean Business Coalition. "We understand that not all organizations are in a position to host in-person meetings at this time. Our aim is not to rush them to a decision; it's to provide them with information and options, particularly those who do essential business and are continuing operations through the pandemic."

2. Consistency is key

Examples of safety-proofing across the travel ecosystem are vital to building the confidence of business travelers, said Richard Golinowski, Vice President for Operations Support, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. "Airports throughout the country are coordinating closely to ensure that the traveler experience is consistently safe." He added that travelers feel comfortable passing through the airport at the start of their journey and again when they depart for home – regardless of where in the U.S. they start and complete their travels. This level of deliberate planning, consistent coordination and information-sharing is essential in propelling the new meetings and travel journey.

Corporate leaders also have a role to play in sharing consistent information about new health and safety protocols, and the return to in-person interactions. Chief human resources professionals are at the forefront of these efforts said Nick Schact, Chief Global Development Officer, SHRM. SHRM is the foremost expert, convener and thought leader on issues impacting today's evolving workplaces, with 300,000+ HR and business executive members in 165 countries.

The role of HR professionals as internal advisors is growing and according to Schact, "Words matter. The information that leadership shares with its employees – and the consistency, tone and context in which they share it, is critical."

3. The bar has been raised



The meetings and travel industry has always prioritized cleaning and sanitation. What has changed? “People want to see it,” said Michael Dominguez, President and CEO, Associated Luxury Hotels International. What used to take place behind the scenes has been brought front and center to assure visitors that new health and safety standards are being met. Dominguez added, “I’ve worked in the hotel industry my entire life. I’ve always said that cleaning is extensive and top priority. Though it wasn’t always a part of the visitors’ palpable experience – it happened while they were asleep. We’ve embraced the opportunity to give them a front row seat to see the measures we’re taking to ensure their wellbeing.”

4. Collaboration with corporate leaders is evolving

In many cases, meetings and travel policies are being shaped directly by the C-suite, with input from a growing cohort of safety, security and wellness experts. Partnership between the meetings and travel industry and other influential business sectors has never been more apparent or essential.

“We are all in this together,” said Fred Dixon, President and CEO, NYC & Company and MMBC co-chair, noting that the bridges being built across industries to align on processes, protocols and policies are creating a safe meeting and travel experience for all.

5. Innovation is ongoing (and inevitable)

Despite the difficult and complex state of affairs, meetings and travel organizations are finding ways to innovate – through hybrid, satellite and virtual events. And they’re enlisting partners from the tech community to erect new processes for engagement and learning.

MMBC’s upcoming virtual discussion, slated for September, will cover how the industry is leveraging technology to meet shifting safety standards and needs – with exclusive commentary from an expert panel including tech industry leaders.

[Follow along](#) and stay tuned for timing, registration details and the opportunity to tune into this pivotal virtual discussion and visit meetingsmeanbusiness.com to learn more.

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About Meetings Mean Business

Meetings Mean Business is an industry-wide coalition to showcase the undeniable value that business meetings, trade shows, incentive travel, exhibitions, conferences and conventions bring to people, businesses and communities. By rallying industry advocates, working with stakeholders, conducting original research, engaging with outside voices and more, the coalition brings the industry together to emphasize its importance. Comprised of over 60 members, the coalition unites the meetings industry with one strong and powerful voice. For more information, visit meetingsmeanbusiness.com.