

EVENT HEALTH & SAFETY

strategies for a new normal post covid-19



Christian Retreats Network



CONTENTS

Establishing an Event Planning Team	4
Develop Emergency Action Plans for your Event	6
General Health and Cleaning Tips for Events	8
How to Handle Hygiene in Dorm Rooms	10
Hot Spots in Food Service & Rethinking the Snack Table	12
Zoom!	14

Establishing an Event Planning Team



Like a clock, there are numerous moving parts within event planning that need to sync together for it to be successful. However, instead of gears, the “components” are called details. These details are powered behind the scenes by an event planning team. But I know what you are thinking, do I really need a team? The answer is YES!

Working within a team atmosphere fosters creative and effective brainstorming. How? By allowing members to openly share and snowball off each other’s ideas. Which in turn can create thrilling experiences and a unique event. A team also encourages problem solving by bringing together different perspectives on how to address a problem.

Additionally, a team allows for tasks to be delegated so that each person is responsible for different aspects of the event. This environment inspires members to work hard in order to meet certain expectations. Or if there is a someone who is struggling, they can turn to the team for help. Nonetheless, having a team to help you navigate, prepare and execute an event can help reduce stress. Whether you are planning an event for 1,000 guests or 20, a planning team is a valuable asset for numerous reasons.

Here is a breakdown of the different branches that can make up this team:

1. Team Leader (aka you the planner)

As team leader, you are the director of this cruise ship. Obviously, there are specific event details that you will have to handle. You are the main point of contact and all communication with the venue goes through you. When it comes to the team, your job is to establish goals as well as a timeline, help where needed and oversee all of the teams to make sure they are on track. In other words, you have your thumb in all of the team pies.

2. Treasury Team

Obviously, this team is in charge of the event financials. Their duties include fundraising (if needed), keeping track of costs and updating the budget records. Furthermore, they receive and organize registration payments.

3. Creative Team

This team is tasked with creating and distributing any form of marketing or creative content for the event. Their duties include managing event social media pages, website, an online live feed, creating posters and/or flyers, distributing marketing materials (if needed). Additional resources they may be asked to assist with could include creating registration forms or informational handouts for guest packets or workshops, event swag, slides for worship or speakers. During the event this team can be seen capturing footage and collecting event feedback.

4. Activities Team

The Activities Team is in charge of planning, preparing and executing all activities at the event. So, for instance, they would be in charge of field games, indoor games, crafting workshops, putting together or booking a worship team and booking guests speakers. Depending on how large of an event you are hosting, you could create a Worship Team that solely focuses on that aspect of the event.

5. Operations Team

The Operations Team is truly your behind the scenes team. They are rarely seen by your guests, and often are supporting other teams in making their plans and vision a reality. This team strategizes closely with your Volunteer team, recruiting the labor it needs to pull off the operational tasks. The Operations team could be front of the house welcoming guests, staffing the event swag table, or serving appetizers for a meet and greet. They could be backstage preparing a set change, setting up an obstacle course in the field, or organizing the college volunteers for KP duty.

6. Security and Wellness Team

This team has numerous responsibilities. They are in charge of receiving and organizing the returned registration and health forms. Along with managing the registration table. Additional duties include, creating an emergency plan, conducting head counts throughout the event and caring for an injured guest. The team would also assist with disciplinary action, for example, if guests become too rowdy during worship or quiet hours. Members would be in charge of creating and explaining new health recommendations with counselors. For instance, cleaning and hygiene.

7. Volunteer Committee

This committee is in charge of recruiting as well as preparing volunteers for the event. For example, expressing their specific duties during certain times of the event. Volunteers are a wonderful resource, especially when it comes to setting up and tearing down. However, depending on your event size, you may or may not need to establish this committee.

There are numerous benefits to creating an event planning team. No matter how small or large the detail, each team member will play an important role in the planning process. As the leader, it is important that you clearly express your vision for the event and what you need from the committee. Make sure each team is aware of their specific duties and what is expected of them. It may be beneficial if you create some form of a handout that states this information as well as a timeline with due dates. This will help avoid any confusion down the road.





Develop Emergency Action Plans for your Event

The amount and type of emergency action plans you need to prepare will depend on the theme of your event, its venue location, and the demographic of your guests. We've put together some key points to help get your emergency planning started.

ASSESS POSSIBLE EMERGENCIES

Such emergencies could include

- Injured or sick guest or staff member
- Inclement weather
- Fire or Infrastructure failure
- External acts of violence
- Internal assault or theft

ASK THE VENUE FOR INFORMATION

Contact your venue for a copy of their EAP's. All properties in the Christian Retreats Network have emergency procedures in place; ask your Conference Services representative for a copy.

You don't want to alarm your guests by including the venue's full strategies though. Simply write-up a document that outlines evacuation and shelter-in-place guidelines for the venue, emergency phone numbers, and the "see-something, say something" idea; this can be included in their welcome packets.

WORK WITH THE VENUE ON PREVENTATIVE

Think on what preventative measures, if any, your event may need. More than likely after the COVID-19 pandemic, your venue will have extra steps in place to keep their staff and your guests safe. Just keep in mind that any extra steps you're taking are still practical for venue staff, your planning team, and guests.

If you feel you have several high-risk guests, provide additional supplies to your guests. You could setup additional hand sanitizer stations or provide face masks in their welcome bag. All event planners should be encouraging their guests to follow proper hygiene with frequent hand washing, limiting contact, and excusing guests that are visibly sick.



MAKE REGISTRATION FORMS THOROUGH

Make sure to include room for emergency contacts and relevant health information, especially if the guest is a minor. While cloud storage is convenient, download or print a copy in case of natural disasters or loss of INTERNET. Just ensure all information is secured and kept confidential.

COMMUNICATE WITH GUESTS

For youth camps, ask counselors to go over emergency information with the campers within their cabin on the first night. For retreats or conferences, provide an emergency document in their welcome packets as mentioned above.

If possible, you could setup a hotline for a guest to call and/or text with a concern.

CREATE A STAFF PHONE TREE

When it comes to emergencies, communication is very important. Make sure your staff are prepared by going over the Emergency Action Plans and know who to contact when something occurs.

PURCHASE FIRST AID KITS

Even if the property has supplies for you to use, it is still good practice to bring one or two of your own.

PREPARE EMERGENCY BACKPACKS

(Remotely located camps or Wilderness experience)

Provide at least one counselor per room/cabin/tent with an emergency supplies bag. These are important to have in case of a natural disaster, like a tornado, fire or earthquake.

Items within the bag should include:

- Water bottles
- Snacks (non-perishable like granola bars or trail mix)
- Survival emergency blankets (light weight and easy to pack)
- A copy of the Emergency Procedures
- A physical map, compass, or GPS

For additional supplies, check out the American Red Cross website.



Event safety actually starts well before the event. Planners should begin by checking with their venue about their procedures. Ask about things like deep cleaning and disinfecting public areas, staff training, most trafficked areas and surfaces, etc.

If they will allow it, ask for extra hand sanitizing stations around the property. This will promote hand cleaning without trying to send everyone to the restrooms.

You can also provide guests with hygiene products within their welcome packets. For instance, pocket-sized germ-x and gloves. Place a container of Clorox Wipes in all the guest rooms. However, before running to the store, check with the venue first. They may already provide this in the rooms.

The best way to handle an issue is to stop it before it starts. In addition to sanitizing stations, look for other preventative measures when it comes to spreading disease.

- ✓ **Implement an alternative to handshaking policy.**
- ✓ **Use individually packaged communion elements.**
- ✓ **Leave meeting room doors open during guest arrival and departure avoiding hot spot door handles.**

The less items people have to share, the less germs they will spread. Here's a few hot spots you may not have thought about:

- Registration Tables
(pens, clipboards, touchscreen kiosks)
- The Stage
(mics, podiums)
- The Sound Booth
(soundboard, computer)
- Merchandise Tables
(cash or credit cards, touching the merchandise)

It is most important to communicate with guests. Provide them with information that explains what measures you and the venue are taking to keep them healthy and safe. Ensure everyone knows what to do if they are feeling ill. Where is the nurse's station? Do you have an isolated area for guests to go that are sick, if they cannot immediately go home? Talk with guests openly so that they feel comfortable sharing any health concerns.

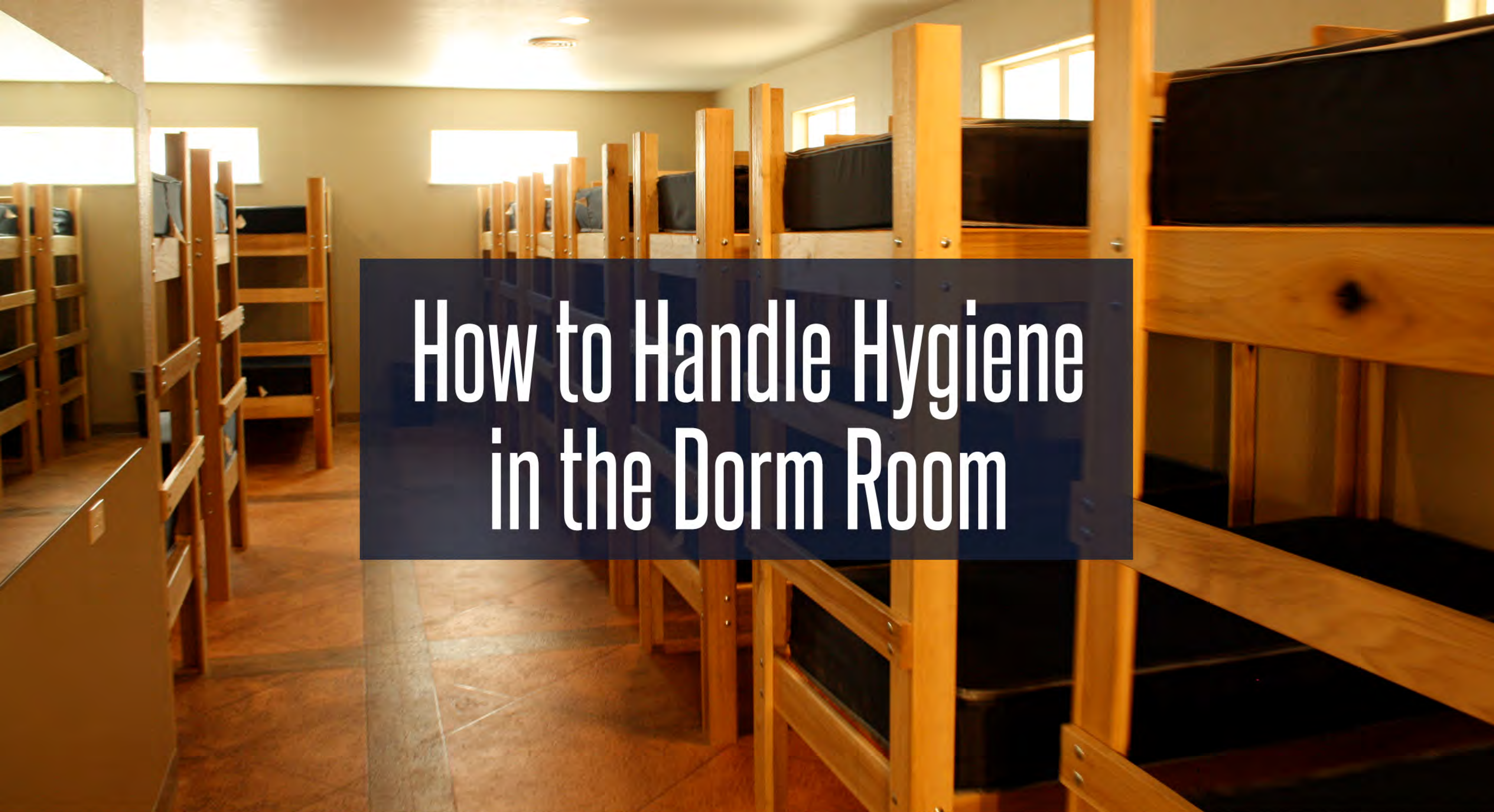
While health regulations for all businesses are in the spotlight now more than ever, the light is most intense on large gatherings aka your event.

Think outside the box on activities and games that are low contact. For instance, Bible trivia and bingo. A prize for the winning team could be first in line at a meal. Make sure to check with the property on what activities they offer as well.

Be prepared to be flexible. Make sure to adhere to any state or federal regulations on meetings and events. The venue will be able to help you with this; however, it is important to stay up to date. Remember, rules change.

Finally, it's important to relax. You heard us; relax. While we're outlining some great ways to stay healthy and safe, don't drive yourself insane trying to cover every inch of your venue with Lysol. Implementing some cautionary procedures, that your venue has probably already done for you, and staying smart with your activity planning will have you covered.





How to Handle Hygiene in the Dorm Room

A good chunk of time during events is spent in the lodging rooms. Guests sleep there each night, run back for a quick change after water activities, and sometimes just chill. This is also the area people can be most relaxed in, which is why hygiene and healthy practices within are so important.

Motel rooms do not cause as much concern, since they are usually used by individuals, couples, or families. Less beds, means less people, means less germs to spread. And if they already live together, there isn't going to be any new spreading than if they were still at home. However, dormitories raise more pressing concerns. They can often hold 10 to 30 or more guests at once, all in close proximity.

Be Proactive

Encourage your campers to carry tissues or a bandana around for them to cover a sneeze or cough. The counselor should be in the habit of wiping down hot spots in their dormitory room. This can be encouraged by event planners providing disinfectant wipes or spray to each counselor to use. Remember! Just be sensitive to those campers with allergies though.

Visit the Nurse

During an event, if any kind of wound or illness occurs, the guest should immediately visit the nurse or medical staff on hand. Sickness is very easy to spread in closed quarters and any discomfort should not be ignored.

Shower Specifics

It's hard enough to get a dorm full of middle school boys to shower once during camp, let alone shower daily. But counselors need to enforce the importance of hygiene AND event planners need to set aside enough time in the schedule for campers to do so. Finishing activities at 4:30 pm and expecting everyone at dinner at 5 pm just doesn't cut it. Additionally, shower shoes or flip-flops are a must! This helps prevent infections.

Make a Habit of Hand Washing

Each time a guest enters the dorm, the first place they should visit is the sink to wash their hands. Depending on the activities, guests should wash all the way up to elbows.

Laundry

If a guest begins exhibiting symptoms, it's important to get them to a nurse asap. After an examination, it may be determined the guest is to return home in which case you may be laundering bed linens and towels. Ideally personal items should not have been mixed with other guests, but if cross contamination did occur then laundering guests' clothes may need to happen as well.

Not Sharing is Caring



Personal items should not be shared. Items like towels, blankets, clothes, and even personal hygiene items like combs and toothpaste, should only be used by the person who brought them. Each guest needs a designated area for their things so that each person's items can stay separate and safe. If a guest forgot an item, maybe your venue has a gift shop, or your event has a camp store, or even a nearby gas station where you can pick up a replacement.

Here are some specific items:

- ◆ towel
- ◆ blanket
- ◆ pillow
- ◆ clothes
- ◆ comb
- ◆ toothpaste
- ◆ sunscreen
- ◆ jewelry
- ◆ hair tie
- ◆ deodorant
- ◆ headphones
- ◆ water bottle

Hot Spots in Food Service ■■■

For your three main meals of the day, they are typically being served in your venue's dining facility. All of your guests are going to funnel through the same entrance and through the same serving procedure; allowing you to manage sanitization and cleanliness. Your venue may already have hand sanitization stations setup, but if not encourage your guests to wash their hands or use sanitizer before entering.

You will notice your venue has probably also implemented frequent cleaning of hot spots (common points of contact) such as serving utensils; the venue may have opted to serving the guests instead, so they do not touch anything but their own plate or tray.

The final common touch area are the dining tables, and again, most venues will be wiping down tables between guests however if they are not this is great task for your event Operations or Volunteer team (as mentioned on page 4).

■■■ and Rethinking the Snack Table

Now let's talk snacks. This area is not so easy to keep sterilization refined. Whether it's a coffee bar, meeting room snack table, or a reception with finger foods, the premise is the same – set it up and allow guests to graze at their convenience over time.



Individually Packaged Snacks

Pro: Foods like cookies, ice cream, and even veggie sticks can be bought prepackaged. This is easy to set up and keep stocked. You also don't mess with plates or utensils, and limit spills. Just make sure there are enough trash cans around to throw away the wrappers.

Con: This isn't the most cost-effective measure. Excess packaging also means more waste, so it's not the greenest option. Also packaged snacks can be used in casual settings but would not fit well into a formal event.



Serve Them

Pro: You could opt for a handful of gloved volunteers either serving at the snack table or walking around distributing to each guest. This removes any hot spots for spread. This idea of serving can also be a more detailed and welcomed option for formal events.

Con: You're either paying the venue to serve or you're recruiting volunteers to do so. As a planner you'll also have to actually carve out a time for this snack to happen; eliminating the grazing option for guests to come and go as they please.

But with all those hot spots what can we do to be proactive in preventing spread?

Hand Sanitization Station

Pro: The most important way to keep food and people healthy is by keeping hands clean. Not everyone may have had the chance to wash their hands before heading over to the snack table, especially if it is their second trip. Putting hand sanitizer at the front of the line quickly allows and encourages guests to clean their hands before touching hot spots.

Con: You're leaving the responsibility to sanitize and not spread germs to the guest. Providing hand sanitizer is also an extra cost and needs to be monitored for refills.

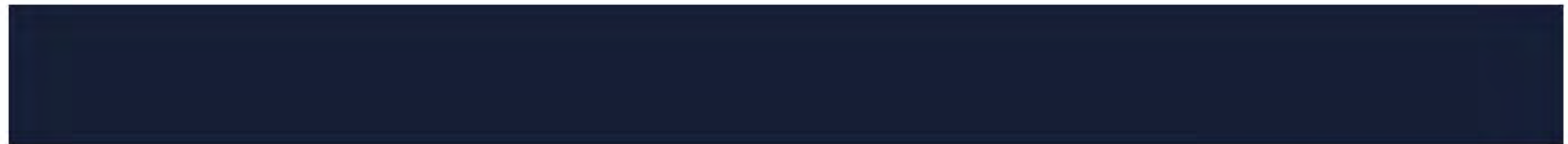




Zoom! No longer just a passing verb or callout balloon from a comic. The video conferencing platform and virtual meeting industry has gained new importance due to recent events. As things continue, this trend looks to becoming the new normal, but should every meeting make its way to the screen?

The greatest benefit to this backup plan we've been using is exactly that. Aside from someone not being available, not much can interfere with a virtual meeting and the hassle of reschedule or cancellation is eliminated.

We saw this recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. Business continued for many organizations but with their leadership meeting from their homes instead of congregating in a board room. A virtual meeting had always been a backup option, but through those months it was the only way for teams to forge ahead and keep operations going.

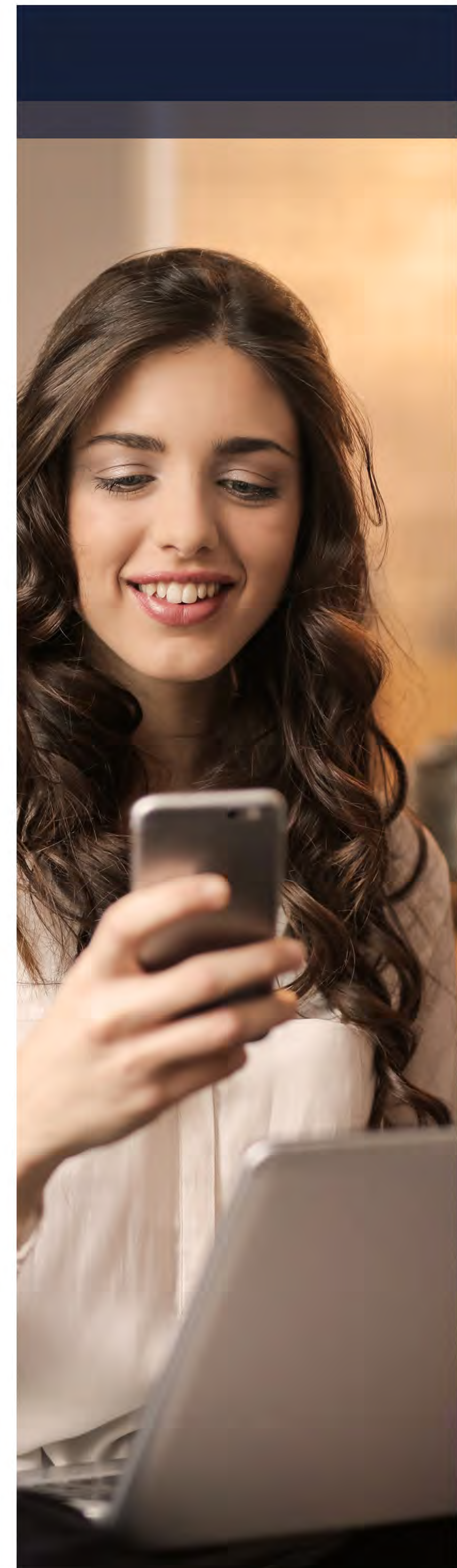


Although we adapted video conferencing and it began to feel like the new norm, I wouldn't start migrating all meetings and events just yet. Yes, the technology is amazing and the convenience undeniable, but it doesn't always work. I'm sure you've seen the hilarious video conference fails floating around on social media! There's the obvious logistics of equipment requirements and user error to work through. An internet outage or missing web cam for one individual can disrupt the whole meeting and leave a team member feeling embarrassed.

We miss these cues and details about our leadership, our team, and our work family.

Probably bigger than that is the social opportunities lost when we are not gathered together in person. Yes, I understand we still physically see one another on the computer screen but what virtual meetings cause us to miss seeing is that team leader nervously moving their hands during a presentation, a co-worker looking thinner from a lifestyle change, or that long yawn from a friend that's been up late with the baby. We miss these cues and details about our leadership, our team, and our work family. Being together in person lends the opportunity to open up about personal accomplishments and struggles, to offer praise or encouragement, to just be that listening ear.

The growth and success we saw with remote learning, video conferencing, and virtual workspaces was a silver lining in those tragic times. For some it was simply refining their tactics and for other companies it was learning a whole new language! But regardless we were all pushed, and we met the challenge. The important takeaway is that we continue to use our new strategies when they are best suited, that we don't wait for the next crisis to implement such technologies. We find a balance between board room sessions and casual virtual meetings.





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