



ASK THE PANEL

Outstanding Questions not discussed at the Session held on 1st December 2020 with written responses from some of the panel members.

QUESTION: We are not a ESSA member, and only an observer (contractor). If I may ask: I do agree that the relationship / trust between the contractor and the organiser is #1, the financial pressures both parties are under, will place this relationship under significant pressure particularly on costing structures. I think that there will be very significant increased contractor / competitor competition, with vigorous pricing / quoting. How 'secure' is the relationship between an organiser / contractor going to be? I am interested in the panels thoughts.

RESPONSE: Relationships between an organiser/contractor are built on trust and as we move forward it is important that we continue to engage in open and honest conversations. I would hope that if an organiser was struggling with a limited budget that they could approach their contractors and discuss this with them in the hope of finding a solution together. To start pricing wars would break the relationships that we have and likely have a detrimental effect on the shows and the industry moving forward.

RESPONSE: I agree with this contractor and he has a valid question. Although Kerrie representing the Organiser side said that you shouldn't undervalue your services I have already been asked for discounted rates by organisers for 2021 shows on more than one occasion. Our suppliers have already increased their prices to us so I will certainly not be entering a price war. We deliver a great service and charge what I feel is a fair rate, however, there are more ways than one to offer a better price and be more attractive.

QUESTION: If design is not being charged for, why would the customer value it, offering it for free devalues this part of the process and undermines the real costs of this aspect.

RESPONSE: I agree that charging no cost for design time can undermine its value, organisers may not be aware of the time that is dedicated to the design process. From my own experience, contractors that I work with have allocated a set amount of FOC design i.e. 3 re-draws and time thereafter is charged for. As an Ops Manager, this ensures that I collate a strong brief in the initial stages to avoid going back and forth with changes and incurring costs.

RESPONSE: This is purely our choice not to charge for designs. If the initial design is amended on numerous occasions then I will impose a design fee. When you're dealing with a space only client with a small budget they are not likely to part with £300-400 for a design concept. I guess it's a balance between your conversion rate and margin.

QUESTION: What is top of the wish list for the panel and the sector to get back to business as normal?

RESPONSE: That we do not lose the amazing, experienced individuals from the Industry and we can encourage them to return to Events. I hope that we are mindful of the pressures we all face and





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continue to come together and communicate as we have done during the last few months. That we do not burn out when we are back onsite and are mindful of our own Welfare and capacities. (Laura Cole, IC Events UK)

RESPONSE: Top of my wish list would be for a rapid belief and trust in the government, exhibitors and visitors that we can host and run exhibitions/events in a safe and responsible manner. It will clearly be many months until we are back to anywhere close to how things were so time is of the essence.

QUESTION: Contractors/Suppliers and their talents are leaving the industry through choice or liquidation. Does the panel believe that sufficient shows and business as normal will return before we reach a critical point of insufficient supply to meet demand?

RESPONSE: I truly hope that Events return in time to see talent come back to the Industry. There are certainly a lot of shows clashing in June / September and I foresee a big demand for event pros as well as stock/materials during this time.

RESPONSE: Sadly we have lost a number of suppliers. I am sure that these voids will be filled with new companies but as mentioned in the question, experience is key and could be a factor in the future

QUESTION: Do organisers see more risk to quality and service levels, if the full service contractors start to outsource CORE services more going forward.?

RESPONSE: I think we could be at risk of lower levels of service or we may lose the privilege of having dedicated PM'. However I believe that this will be at the forefront of contractors minds and they will look to streamline processes and packages in order to cope with the demand.

RESPONSE: Speaking as a contractor our service levels, delivery or quality will not be affected going forward.

QUESTION: Should we be looking at the American system of forwarding and storage stand fittings ,so the stand fittings are ready to start on at 8am

RESPONSE: I think this system can be of benefit, however, from my own experience in working in the states this is not always a financially viable solution and we would need to consider the storage availability, labour capacities and other influences on the show floor i.e. Vehicle Displays, Rigging etc that could impact on the stand fitting start time.

RESPONSE: I'm not fully understanding of the American system but guess this would be dependent on extending the shows tenancy times. If this was possible and the stands were all delivered to their respective sites so that work could commence at 8am this could possibly work. However, there would be additional lifting and shipping costs that can only be passed onto the exhibitor.





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QUESTION: We all understand that END client (exhibitors) budgets are squeezed, and this "squeeze" tends to roll downhill in the supply chain. Exhibitors>Organisers>contractors>subcontractors>supply chain.

RESPONSE: I don't think the tightening of budgets and the squeezing of costs will ever change. It's not just our industry but business in general.

QUESTION: Are you concerned that this, whilst unfortunate, will lead to a "race to the bottom" on the supplier end, leading to a drop in quality standards and service, Quality suppliers being driven down on costs will lead to the "premium" suppliers being squeezed, sometimes beyond their fiscal abilities, leading to yet more insolvencies and loss of resources and people.

RESPONSE: This is a concern which is why I feel that honest and open communication is paramount to the success of our events. We need to start conversations early on in the planning stages. This will enable discussions around capacities, pricing, servicing etc to take place and be managed between the two parties (orgs and contractors). We are all working towards the same goal.

RESPONSE Yes, I am sure that this will happen but there will be no longevity for companies offering cheap solutions that compromise on quality and service. We'll have survived nearly 12 months with our industry being closed so another few months will not worry me until such companies get flushed out and fall by the way side.

QUESTION I think the organiser and key contractor already have a good communication link, but how can the organiser play a better part in including the various space-only contractors working direct for the exhibitor. Can zoom meetings be inclusive of this community in the future?

RESPONSE I think we can look to improve our communications and engagement with the space-only contractors: Enhance our Exhibitor manuals and written communications. Zoom calls would also be of benefit but perhaps not always realistic if you have 1000 space only stands on a show vs an ops team of 3. I believe this would need to be on a case-by-case basis.

