COVID-19

WHAT EFFECT IT IS HAVING

AND

LIKLEY TO HAVE ON YOUR EVENT
(as of April 13, 2020)
Dear friend,

A few weeks ago, if you had told me we would be looking at not returning to some sort of normal by May, I would have thought that is highly impossible. Well, the impossible has happened! The one constant is that everything is fluid right now with a lot of uncertainty. This has no doubt led to a whole new complexity in producing your mass endurance event, regardless if it is in the summer, fall, or winter of this year. We are all facing the effects!

We have continued being part of many consortiums of experts over the last several weeks from events, registration partners, medical partners, and our peers. We are compiling a lot of information in this guide to help you navigate the effects this pandemic and thus the economic and social shutdown is having on your event. We are here to help you in any way we can, so please always feel free to reach out.

All of what we are providing is as of the time of this writing. How we would advise and consult with you even a week ago, has changed based on the ever-increasing data that has come in. We hope this assists you as your organization faces many new factors in your event planning process.

We will be covering the following areas in this guide.

- What is the current and potential likely state for events in 2020
- What to consider in cancelling (or postponing) your event
- What should you be doing to protect your event
- If we move to a virtual option, what options are available
- How is HAL Sports here to help

We will keep communicating with you and assisting you through this. We are here for you!

All our best for your health,

Lonnie & Michelle Somers
HAL Sports
CURRENT AND LIKELY STATE FOR EVENTS IN 2020

What is the current and likely state for events in 2020? Hamlet might have said, “To be or not to be, that is the question?”, but for all of us today, the real question is when will things return to normal? The truth of the answer is, no one knows. In our history, we never have had to deal with what really amounts to a full war against an alien invader (COVID-19) that has infiltrated every community across the planet in a span of just a few months. What most of the experts can agree on is that until there is a vaccine, a return to pre-COVID-19 word is unlikely to take place. So, what does that mean for your event?

- **Regardless of when your event is in the year, it is going to be affected** – No event is going to be immune to the effects of COVID-19. From mandates around mass gatherings and events, major recession (personal disposable income), comfortability in people attending events, resources available for your events (getting enough portable restrooms, volunteers, all as examples), and enough time to properly market your event.

- **Don’t focus on what the current stay-at-home order expiration dates are** – these are very likely to change and even if they somehow do expire without any continuation (hopeful scenario), it is very very likely that social distancing and mass gathering restrictions will be in place for some time. This will certainly determine your ability to successfully produce the event.

Why? Regardless of how you feel about the appropriateness by governments around the pandemic, the reality is we cannot risk the ability of our health care system to treat those that are ill. We certainly don’t want to get to a point that the health care system has to decide who gets treated and who doesn’t due to a lack of resources to care for those who are sick with COVID-19. Let’s not also forget about those that are sick with cancers, heart disease, strokes, etc. still need to be cared for too. We also cannot risk the ability of police and fire departments to respond to emergencies due to their workforce being affected heavily from the virus, we have to spread this out to ensure our safety as a society.

The reality is that COVID-19 is going to be with us for many many months (until the vaccine) and people will still be getting sick and people will still die from it. The goal for our society is to control the infection to a level that allows some of the economy to start back up without causing a large spike in cases that could overwhelm or medical resources and ability for people to safely work.

- **Registration numbers are likely to be down** – economically, while we may not have a declared recession, make no mistake, we are in one. Our estimated unemployment rate has estimated to have jumped almost 10% in less than a month. Even those that are fully employed are watching spending and while we think most people will still want to attend events if they can afford to, they likely will be registering for a lot less of them.
• **Have a plan in place if you have to cancel or postpone your event** – No event is safe from having to think about the possibility of cancelling or postponing. It does not matter if your event is in 60 days from now, or in December. It is better to have a plan in place now on how you will handle this versus waiting and scrambling last minute if you need to do something. As with all crisis and emergency plans, it is better to be prepared as best you can for them than it is to be caught without a plan.

• **If your event can take place, have plans on how to keep your participants safe** – It is reasonable to expect that when events can take place again, there will be required precautions to limit possible mass contamination. Safety is your number one priority! You need your participants to feel you are doing everything you can for their safety, regardless if it is mandated or not. Make a plan on how you will keep contamination risk low. This encompasses every area of your event. Just a sampling of things to consider are:
  
  o Spread out start areas so participants are not in close proximity together
  o Elimination of post event expo/festivals to discourage large close proximity gatherings
  o Ensure all volunteers and staff have at a minimum have gloves when handling anything being given to a participant (medals, food, water, bibs).
  o Portable restrooms may need to be spaced out more, disinfected frequently, and markers placed for cues to ensure participants are not in very close proximity while waiting
  o Packet pickups may need to be spaced out more and have markers where participants stand in line to also ensure safe distances.
  o Having extended event times that may require smaller subsets of participants run/walk/participate before the next group can participate.
  o Having portable sinks and hand sanitizing stations
  o Only have package foods to give out

These are just a sampling of areas you need to consider how you will handle to keep participants safe. Have a plan and reserve your needs with your suppliers early so they can accommodate the demand. I can tell you first hand finding portable sinks and having more portable restrooms has been challenging as many of those suppliers are being inundated with needs from the makeshift hospitals, construction projects, etc. as they have to add additional resources to ensure safety of their employees, etc.

Our personal opinion (while we pray this is not the case) is that it will be at few months before we even know if run/walks and other participatory events can take place. When they are allowed, they likely will have certainly requirements and restrictions. While there has been some touting that everything will bounce back as fast as it ceased (and we hope we are wrong about this), realistically it is going to take some time and the current consensus is that we will not see things as they were pre-COVID-19 until we can vaccinate all of those that have not been stricken.
WHAT TO CONSIDER IN CANCELLING (OR POSTPONING) YOUR EVENT

As if it isn’t already stressful enough in planning out an event with every thing and “moving part” that goes into it, it is even more stressful when faced with the negative possibility of having to cancel (or postpone) your event. Under the current circumstances, we urge you, regardless when your event is, to have a plan in place of how you will decide and handle cancelling your event.

There are many things to consider as follows:

- **Governmental mandate** – Your event may have no choice but to cancel if there is a mandate by the government (federal, state, or local). If that is the case, the decision is out of your hands. You need to be sure you are keeping informed about all restrictions where your event is due to take place. Despite State’s stay-at-home orders, some municipalities have put in place bans on mass gatherings that are at later dates than stay-at-home orders. Some have even banned and canceled events through the end of August in some areas of the United States already. Check with your permitting agencies or event company to be sure you know what the latest mandates are.

Your event could also be under mandates to size allowed. If your event cannot be viable with caps in participation, you may need to cancel.

- **Economic considerations** – There are several economic considerations around if it is feasible to carry out your event such as follows.
  
  - Participant disposable income – A vast majority of households are cutting their spending due to loss of income/employment, or protecting their cash as much as possible. With the uncertainty, not only are people hording toilet paper, food, etc., they are also holding onto their cash. We no doubt know that people want to help when they can, but they are also worried about their own personal situation and that means they may not sign up for as many events and/or donate like they have been able to in the past. Plan that you may see a significant reduction in registrations and donations.
  
  - Sponsorship decline – Every business, just like your participants, are being economically and negatively affected. We have seen many businesses are working hard to make it a priority to support important causes, it stands to reason some may have to pull back their contributions and number of events they can support. Be sure to communicate with your sponsors and find out their ability to commit. Now also might be a good time to help them out as well to encourage them to help with more sponsorship benefits (or reduction in pricing on your levels).

If your event may not be able to cover your expenses due to decline in revenues, you may be best off cancelling all together or focusing on virtual options.
• **Participant confidence** – Every person would love to wake up tomorrow with the news the pandemic is over and see us all in the streets shaking hands, giving hugs, and celebrating that we got through this. That is a nice dream, but in reality, this is not how it is going to happen. Until the mass majority of people feel safe (safe from getting COIVD-19 and safe from transmitting it), they are going to feel uneasy about large gatherings. This may not be how you personally feel, but some initial statistics are indicating that even if mass gatherings were allowed, only about one (1) out of every (5) people would feel comfortable or consider even being in large gatherings.

Be sure you are also considering your main demographic at your event. If you could have a higher population of higher risk participants, you need to be sure you can keep them safe from exposure.

Further, will you have enough “ramp up” time to allow for registration after mass gathering restrictions are lifted.

• **Event expenses** – With the uncertainty of how to plan for how many registrants and sponsorship (revenues) you may have, the cost and upfront outlay of cash for permits, insurance, shirts, medals, etc. is very challenging. Generally, you need to purchase and pay for these items months in advance. If you over order vs how many registrants you have, then your expenses can easily be greater than your revenues. Additionally, if there are mandates/requirements for limiting potential contamination, you will have more expense in providing these measures (and even possibility of challenge securing them). We have seen some events, even late summer/early fall cancel their event in order to be sure they can maintain viability and be back in 2021 versus having to risk the expenses up front and potentially threaten their ability as a going concern.

• **To Cancel or Postpone** – About four (4) weeks ago we recommended that if you can postpone, you should and reschedule. Don’t cancel unless you absolutely had to. Our professional recommendation is now don’t even consider postponing (This is hard because we know how important the event is to have, including all the small businesses/contractors that make their living serving you).

Don’t get us wrong, if you can postpone and still be able to absorb the potential of lower revenues while ensuring limited contamination and you have the availability of all of your suppliers, by all means go that route.

Why Cancel? There are various reasons, as follows, as to why it may be better to cancel than postpone:

  o Venue availability – your venue may be limited in dates availability if any at all.
  o Competition – with events that have been able postpone to new dates already, those events area already competing against a busy late summer, fall, and winter
event schedule. All these events will be competing for some portion of the same demographic participant which then will see reduced participation numbers. Plan that you could see from a 25% to 50% reduction in planned participants.

- **Timelines to your 2021 event** – As an example, say your event was to take place in March 2020, then you postponed to a Sept/Oct date. Would you be able to and successfully plan two events within in six (6) to seven (7) months of each other? Would you be able to secure sponsorship dollars and registration dollars for both? As we know, there already never seems to be enough time to get an event fully planned within a twelve (12) month period, let alone two within a very short time frame.

- **Should we move to virtual** - If you have to cancel your original event, we highly recommend moving to a virtual event, if it is feasible for you. We will go into more discussion around virtual options. Regardless though, as we will talk about next, you should have a virtual option available for those that may be uncomfortable participating in person, but still want to support and be part of your event.

- **Other options** – another thing to consider is joining forces with another event and co-produce an event together to share costs and save, or even see about options to piggy back on another event. This is not an ideal situation, but the opportunity to still have an event in some fashion while reducing or eliminating some costs might be a way to still have your event with limiting the cost and uncertainty risk.

HAL Sports is working on some plans to allow our clients that have had to cancel their events to be part of one of our events in the late fall or early winter. We will have more details coming in the next few weeks, but if you would like to inquire more about this, please contact us.
WHAT SHOULD YOU BE DOING TO PROTECT YOUR EVENT

There are several things that you should be doing to protect your event, those affiliated with it, and its brand. Do not sit idle, consider putting in place these measures to protect your event:

- **Communicate** – With uncertainty comes uneasiness. It is very hard, despite all the less than positive news everyday, we gravitate to know what is going on. Your participants and stakeholders (sponsors, suppliers, expo vendors, staff, and volunteers) need to be communicated to. Do not go silent! Most importantly, be transparent, be honest, and certainly be compassionate in all your communications about your event from refund/deferment policies, what steps you are taking to keep your event safe and limit potential exposure, to updates about if your event will take place. The more you communicate with your potential and current participants and stakeholders, the more support you will have from them. As mentioned, be sure you are compassionate. I have seen some terrible communications from events who have had to cancel or have gotten questions about possible cancelations and have in return disenfranchised their participants and even been less than kind to them in public communications.

  Don’t take negative responses personally, even though there will always be that “one” person who won’t agree with what you are doing, how you are handling things, etc. Respond kindly and move on. Don’t engage them in a battle. Everyone else sees that they are being a bully or less than understanding.

  Communicate on your website, social media sites, and your registration pages. Even consider doing video via YouTube, Facebook Live, or another platform. Let them hear personally from you or someone that can represent your event well.

- **Share your story** – Generally we are always encouraging you to share about the fun attributes and uniqueness of your event in order to standout. Everyone has a good cause, so it can be hard to promote only that part of your event. However, now under these circumstances, with so many focused on COVID-19, it is easy to forget that your event has a reason in either raising funds for you charity, or supporting a charity or community. Tell that story and remind everyone the importance of the event and what is it providing. It is very easy right now for the general public, without blame, to be focused on the current pandemic and economic situation. However, COVID-19 didn’t stop people from getting cancer, having heart attacks, or needing mental health resources. It is important to remind your potential and current participants and stakeholders the reason for your event.

- **Add a virtual option** – Generally a virtual option is there to capture those that might want to support your event but cannot be there on event day. Regardless if you have this or not currently and no matter when your event is this year, put in a virtual option that allows participants to sign up and support your cause, or transfer to the virtual option at
anytime leading up to the event for any reason. We will have more detail about virtual options bit later.

- **Set policies and be clear in your communication** – With things being so uncertain, it is important to be sure you have clear and visible policies on how you are handling matters such as:
  
  - Refunds (either due to someone being uncomfortable or cancellation) – most events do not offer refunds. If you are able to, great, but many cannot. It is important to be clear about that upfront. With much of the expense of an event being paid out before the event can happen, it is usually not feasible to refund registrations since it would put the event/organization in financial harm.
  - Deferments – will you allow deferments or transfers if you have to cancel or postpone.
  - If you cancel and move to a virtual event, be clear if you will offer any additional options, such as maybe just donating their registration to your cause/charity.

- **Update your registration and participation waiver** – With many events that do not offer refunds, under the current pandemic, it is a good time to update your waiver to cover all situations. This protects you and your processing registration platform from unnecessary disputes and charge backs. Below is a very good example of one you can use, or modify your own to be sure you include key areas.

**WAIVER EXAMPLE**

In consideration of you accepting this entry, I, the participant, intending to be legally bound do hereby waive and forever release any and all right and claims for damages or injuries that I may have against the Event Director, (event name), (event organization), HAL Sports, (city and county of event), and all of their agents assisting with the event, sponsors and their representatives, volunteers and employees for any and all injuries to me or my personal property. This release includes all injuries and/or damages suffered by me before, during or after the event. I recognize, intend and understand that this release is binding on my heirs, executors, administrators, or assignees.

I know that running/walking in this event is a potentially hazardous activity. I should not enter and participate unless I am medically able to do so and properly trained. I assume all risks associated with participating in this event including, but not limited to: falls, contact with other participants, the effects of weather, traffic, and course conditions, and waive any and all claims which I might have based on any of those and other risks typically found in participating in this event. I acknowledge all such risks are known and understood by me. I agree to abide by all decisions of any event official relative to my ability to safely complete the run. I certify as a material condition to my being permitted to enter this event that I am physically fit and sufficiently trained for the completion of this event and that a licensed Medical Doctor has verified my physical condition.
In the event of an illness, injury or medical emergency arising during the event I hereby authorize and give my consent to the Event Director and/or Medical Director to secure from any accredited hospital, clinic and/or physician any treatment deemed necessary for my immediate care. I agree that I will be fully responsible for payment of any and all medical services and treatment rendered to me including but not limited to medical transport, medications, treatment and hospitalization.

By submitting this entry, I acknowledge (or a parent or adult guardian for all children under 18 years) having read and agreed to the above release and waiver.

Further, I grant permission to all the foregoing to use my name, voice and images of myself in any photographs, motion pictures, results, publications or any other print, videographic or electronic recording of this event for legitimate purposes. I also give my permission to receive communications from the event, its sponsors, supporters, and vendors via electronic or print means.

This event follows the standard event industry policy: All entry fees are non-refundable. We reserve the right to postpone or cancel the event due to circumstances beyond our control such as a natural disaster or emergency or as required to protect the safety of participants and staff. No refunds will be issued under these circumstances. We reserve the right to change the details of the event without prior notice. I understand that my entry fee is nonrefundable under any circumstances. I understand that my entry and bib numbers are nontransferable without permission.
IF WE HAVE TO MOVE TO A VIRTUAL EVENT, WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE

Whether you offer a virtual option, move to a virtual event, or have to cancel the in-person event and move to virtual, there are some great solutions to help you administer a virtual event. Generally, in the past (a whole two months ago!), a virtual event was usually just a way for someone to still support and/or be part of your event. You would allow them to complete the event whenever they wanted (sometimes within some time period of a few weeks), you would ask for them to post or share that they did the event on social media (but truly you didn’t need to verify or care if they did), and you would send them their stuff. They really had no other connection to the event outside of getting their swag and maybe posting on social media.

With the, hopefully short term, increase in virtual events due to cancellations or changing events to be virtual, the goal is to bring as much of the event experience to your participants. You want them to feel connected to you and to their peers in completing and participating in a virtual format. The great news is, that many tech companies in the participatory events space have quickly developed solutions or reformatted their solutions to help do this at very low cost or no cost to you as the event.

So how do you do a virtual event? It really encompasses what we mentioned how a typical virtual event works, except that now there are tools you can use to “bring” your event experience to your virtual participants.

Things to consider or options available:

- **Select a time frame for your virtual event to be completed in.** The beauty of a virtual event is your participant can complete it at anytime or even over several days (such as a half marathon, they could complete it in phases). We generally recommend that you set some period from your original event date (if you can) of no longer than two weeks, but this will be up to you.

- **Set up a time frame** (if applicable) for those that they have to register by certain time frame to guarantee their shirt and medal or other swag (this is also a great way to engage your sponsors by putting their coupons, swag, in the goodie bags) by the original or virtual date of the event. You can ensure those that register after, you can order additional shirts, medals, etc. but they will be fulfilled post virtual once the order has been filled. This helps to control your costs and guessing of needed shirts, medals, etc.

- **Determine how you will get swag items to participants.** Will you mail everything to them? Have a pickup location with a partner (such as a running specialty store, which some are open for curb pickup and might be able to handle handing out people’s goodie bags from their store)? Or combination of both perhaps. (this can be a sponsorship opportunity)
• **Allow ability for virtual participants to submit their times.** There are various ways to do this from some of our peers that cost you nothing at all. Essentially, you or HAL Sports assisting, would upload all participants into the virtual system and that would send them an email to submit their completion of the virtual event. Some have results displays that show (not for awards of course since there is no way to verify a correct time and distance by true timing and course certification measures) who has completed the virtual event. Here are recommended tech peers that have these offerings (again HAL Sports can help set these up for you)

  o Let’s Do This has a very good free program – example is: [https://www.letsdothis.com/us/e/social-distance-run-series-presented-by-kaiser-permanente-week-1-187566](https://www.letsdothis.com/us/e/social-distance-run-series-presented-by-kaiser-permanente-week-1-187566) - if you want an intro just reach out to us and we will set you up.

  o Race Roster also has a very good tool - [https://raceroster.com/articles/new-virtual-race-toolkit](https://raceroster.com/articles/new-virtual-race-toolkit). Again, if you are interested, we can do an intro and help with setup.

• **Bring sound messaging and photo collaboration walls to your event.** Our wonderful partners at Motigo (getmotigo.com) are offering some tools at low or no cost to you during this pandemic. Motigo is an app that essentially runs in conjunction with your participants smart phone and their playlist. Many people run now with their smart phones and listen to music. What the Motigo app does is once they start, it can play messages from you, your announcer, VIP, sponsor, etc. to them as they complete the challenge. For example, once they start, they could hear your announcer sending them off, then at say at each mile, you could have a message played from someone your event/charity supports, or from a celebrity/VIP, from the charity director, etc. You can help bring the meaning and sounds from the typical event to them. The best part is, all these messages are pre-recorded and are played when the person signs into the app and actually starts their virtual run/walk. Some other great features are you can allow the participants friends and family (peers, team members, etc.) send them messages to. This is a great way if you have social teams or fundraising teams as part of your event to encourage each other and create that comradery.

  Motigo (as some other solution providers) also have a way for participants to upload photos. You can easily do this too by asking people to upload to a thread you have on social media, but the great think about some of the tech solutions is the ability for everyone involved to see all who are involved. You can see what one of our charity events, The Great Candy Run, did a few years ago with a photo wall, [https://gcr.coloradohalrun.com/denver-2017-photo-wall/](https://gcr.coloradohalrun.com/denver-2017-photo-wall/). The added feature to this is you can put in phrases for participants to complete with their photo such as: I am running in honor of _______. This can create a very powerful visual to bring everyone together virtually.

  Both of these can be a sponsorship opportunity!!!
- **Consider an event day live video kickoff.** If you have typically had a celebration/festival, consider doing an event kickoff with your typical emcees on event day (regardless if the participant will do the virtual run/walk component that day or not) and do it live via zoom, Facebook live, google talk, or other platform that people can join via video. You can do all sorts of things from remembrances, someone singing the national anthem, sharing stories from those that your event/charity supports, recognizing fundraisers, etc.

- **Create a post virtual event video montage.** Collect pictures, video messages, sponsors messages, etc. and create a three (3) to (5) minute video recap of the event. Have your emcees or announcers provide commentary and voice overs. Have a way to recognize and celebrate the virtual event.

- **Be creative.** Think outside the box as a way to make your virtual event creative. Think of what sponsors and vendors usually are at your event. Is there something they provide that they can provide to the virtual participants? Maybe you have a food vendor that usually donates some food to the event. What if everyone that does it virtually gets something free or discounted from them? Or those that have alcohol at your event, perhaps the brewery would donate a free drink at some point, etc. Be creative in how your sponsors and vendors could be part of it.
HOW HAL SPORTS CAN HELP

We have always been and always will be there for you to support you, your events, and your causes in any way we can. We always have your back and work hard to do all the research, find best practices, and help you navigate all the challenges you may face. We are here to make everything as easy for you as possible and be the experts for you, especially in crisis situations.

We are here to help, and here are some of the offerings we are providing to you under this pandemic at no cost or minimal cost.

• Virtual Run Management – we can manage fully your virtual event in all aspects
• Virtual Run Fulfillment – we will fulfil all your event packets, mailing, and distribution to participants
• Consulting – we can provide additional consulting to your organization on any of the areas we have covered in this guide.
• Video Messaging – Lonnie, who announces many events professionally, can record video messaging that can go out to your participants with updates and news about your event.
• Virtual Event Announcing/Hosting – Lonnie is available to virtual host/emcee your event with live video, recorded sound, etc.
• Need something else we can be of service for? Just contact us!!!