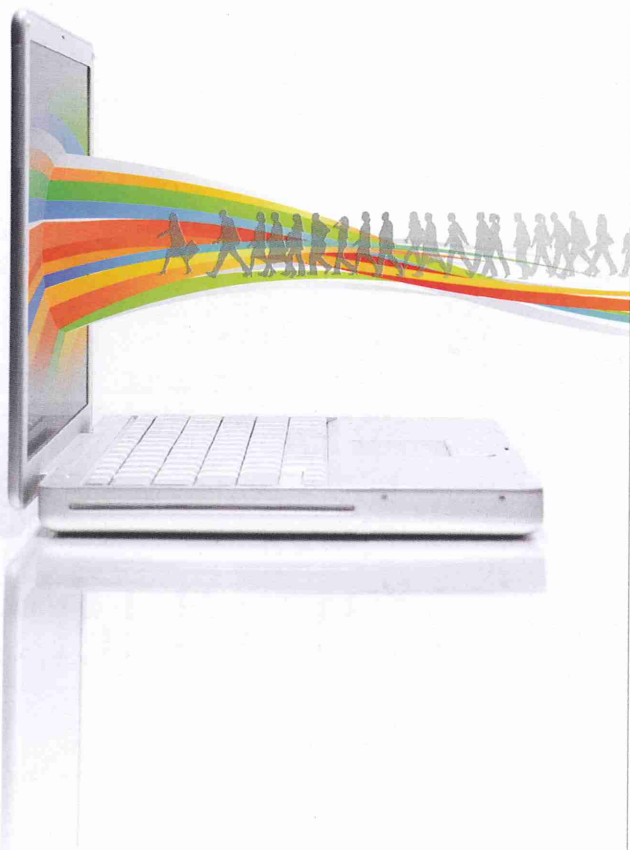




attracts more than 135,000 visits each month from event industry professionals looking for daily news, opinion, statistics, jobs, events, education, venues, suppliers and more



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## advice



# Sharing the pain

The supply chain needs to bear its share of responsibility as compliance issues become increasingly complicated, says John Hooker

**T**he relentless tide of change concerning the issue of transparency and compliance will be the single biggest catalyst for change in the future.

The raft of RFIs (requests for information) that land on desks, whether client to agent and/or agent to supplier, clearly ask what is included and for how much. No one is likely to be happy to learn that something that has been included as part of the service for years now has a separate cost attached to it.

Yet the increasing need for compliance, whether because of legislation, taxation or client processes, takes time and therefore needs to be reflected in the cost.

Things are complicated even further when this concept is exported to a different business environment. North Africa, for example, is not in the EU and yet some expect those based there to comply with UK data protection regulation; some demand a certain level of public liability insurance cover when the local government sets it at a lower level, for instance.

As an industry we have to learn to be far more collaborative. We're being bombarded with legislation and regulation and it is not fair to make this the responsibility of any one supplier in the chain. A transparent supply chain needs to

share the pain and responsibilities - and that includes the corporate client too.

I've even come across RFIs where the importance of risk management working practices is placed alongside jolly good ideas for room gifts - what impression does this create for an industry that claims to be professional?

Now is the time to start the process of managing client and supplier expectations from the outset and being very clear about the requirements of all sides. This may mean more contracts. Agencies must learn to show how they add value through skills, competency and track record and present the business rationale to support the proposal, because creativity alone will not be enough in today's world of growing regulation, never mind EU taxation and TOMS.

When we employ a heating engineer to service our boiler, charging £80 or more an hour, we recognise we have hired a professional to help keep us safe, warm and watered. Once we have found a good one, we stick with them. Why has the events industry never been strong enough to say: "You want me to do this? This is what it's going to cost?" ■





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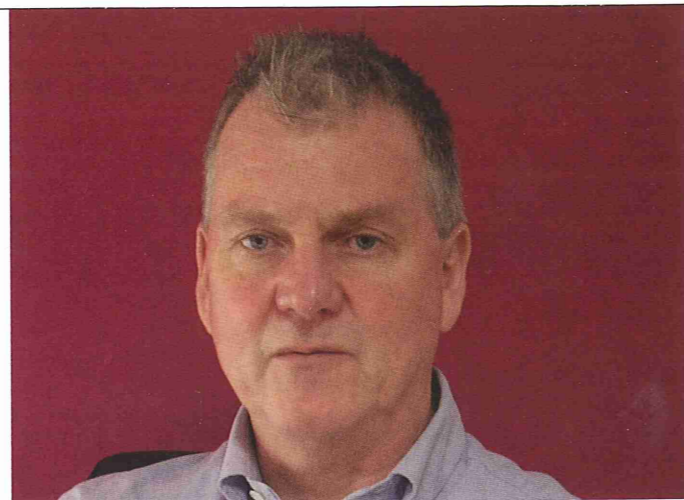


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**advice**line



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**virtual**survey

Is the future of meetings virtual? Quite probably, whether you plan it that way or not

**I**s the future of meeting virtual? The 2010 Virtual Market Outlook Report, an online survey of 889 US participants, conducted by experience marketing company George P Johnson in collaboration with the Virtual Edge Institute and the Lattanze Center at Loyola University Maryland, found nearly half (48 per cent) were currently producing virtual meetings and events. Moreover, 45 per cent said they were exploring the possibility.

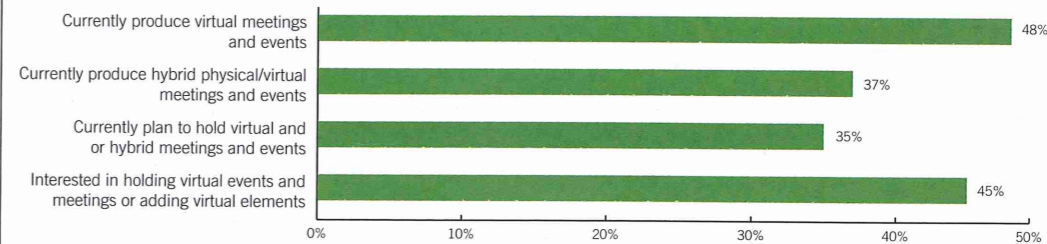
Kim Myhre, managing director, George P Johnson EMEA, says: "Last year when budgets were being cut, it raised the interest in the possibility of technology and taking events online to save money. The technology and bandwidth have improved, plus online metrics have improved - it's possible to monitor every single moment. But creating events within virtual environments is not cheap - there are a lot of costs involved in content, production values, design and technology infrastructure."

Unsurprisingly then, take-up of virtual events was highest (70 per cent) among the sample of companies with more than \$250m (£166m) a year in revenue.

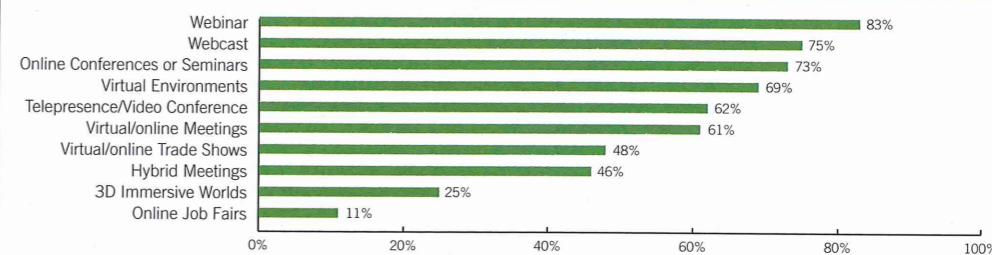
The most popular use of virtual meeting technology was for presentations, with 61 per cent using it for that purpose, followed by internal meetings (56 per cent), training/education (53 per cent) and conferences (48 per cent). When respondents were asked what virtual activities they had participated in during the past year, the most popular activities were webinars and webcasts. Forty-six per cent had participated in a hybrid meeting of both live and online content.

"I think we're currently on a learning curve in terms of how to use the technology effectively," Myhre adds. "Not every event should take place online - it's a case of looking at your objectives,

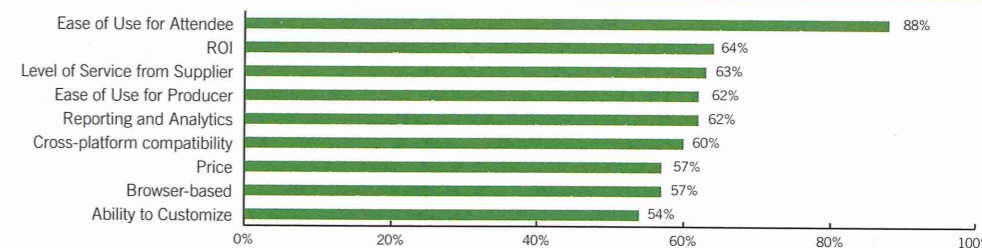
**Organisational experience with virtual meetings and events**



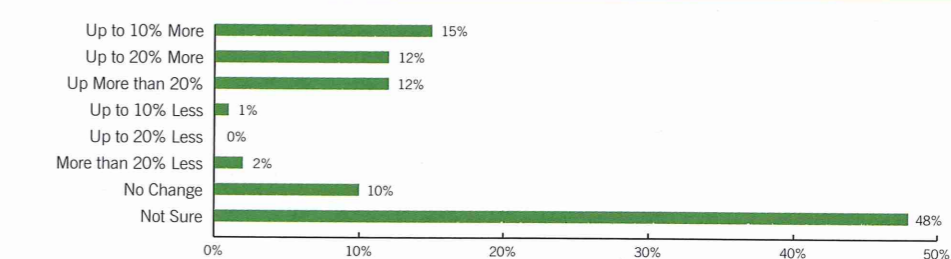
**Top 10 virtual activities participated in during the past year**



**Critical features considered when implementing a virtual meeting/event**



**Change in budget for virtual meetings/events in 2010**



\*Results from the 2010 Virtual Market Outlook Report

# The virtual future

what you want to achieve. How does your audience prefer to consume information and interact?"

Indeed, when implementing a virtual meeting or event, 88 per cent of respondents indicated that 'ease of use for attendees' was critically important, beating return on investment (64 per cent) and price (57 per cent).

Myhre adds that whether it's planned or not, live events in the future

are likely to have a virtual element: "Whether we create the opportunity online or not, our audiences will be doing that anyway - they capture and distribute content, posting video on YouTube, posting questions on Twitter. The days of turning your phone off at an event are gone.

"The key to integrated or hybrid events is harnessing what's already going on around you." ■