



## PANDEMIC AND BEYOND : **N. Binu, Founder Director** Meroform (India) Pvt. Ltd.

2020 is over. Thank God ! A year that felt like a decade. A year that spelt doom to the business of exhibitions and events, a year that challenged all systems of management and financial planning, a year that taught us that cash is really the King and a virtual world exists. What industrial revolution took half a century to achieve, COVID did it in one year. The world changed beyond recognition.

We are into 2021. What will the year be like for all of us and the industry? COVID is still not over. The embers of the pandemic are seen on and off at places. The governments go into a huddle whenever they see another one smouldering somewhere. That brings back travel restrictions and anxiety across the industry about a possible return to lockdown or partial lockdowns which can derail current plans and projections.

The vaccination drive is progressing at a snail's pace. Probably many thinks of it as an unnecessary evil. Vaccines are still not accessible to public. It looks like that the budget figures of the government considers seventy crores of vaccinations and we just crossed the one crore figure. Many countries across the world does not have access to enough vaccine. Luckily, we who live in the ' Pharmacy of the World ' are a luckier lot.

Under the circumstances, what is the future of our business and what is on anvil for exhibition and events industry? This is the question in everyone's mind. Prediction is a daunting task. For, none of us are Nostradamus. Even governments thought that the pandemic can be brought under control in weeks and months. But it was not to be.

Many of our companies are bleeding. UFI report states that 58% people in our industry lost jobs.

Maybe many have shut down and many are facing acute cash crunch. Not much support was given by the Government to our industry in India.

COVID 19 is a Black Swan event. None saw it coming and none was prepared to address it proactively. We can only react to situations like this when it happens. But COVID changed the world and the way of working and thinking. Everyone found the virtues of technology and adapted fast. Shopping became online and so did education and entertainment. OTT platforms became big draws and all E-Commerce companies flourished. People understood that it is not necessary to travel to buy vegetables or to do a meeting. Microsoft teams, WebEx and Zoom became household names. Weddings were live telecast on these platforms and even on Facebook. WFH became common. Large companies found out that it is no longer required to hire office space and assemble everyone under a roof to achieve an objective. Barring manufacturing WFH became norm. The world suddenly became a very efficient space!

What happened to exhibitions, events, and conferences? They all followed the pattern and became online. It was a necessity driven change. AGMs were to be held during the pandemic and so did launches of vehicles and other products. All went online. The word 'Hybrid' became a word in common parlance, when events happened physically and virtually. Even Prime Minister's programmes became hybrid.

Do we now need physical exhibitions and events? Do we need to hire a hundred thousand square meters of space to showcase cars or

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machines? Will the exhibitions ever return or will the world remain content with virtual ? The reply lies in the very old wisdom which states that Change is the only Constant. A change has happened, and it is more efficient. People and companies will not let go of an efficient way of working wherever possible. But we all know and admit that animal kingdom which includes homo sapiens love herd mentality. We are a social animal and social life is an inherent feature of human beings. Even the social media platforms endorse the human craving for social interaction and peer acknowledgement. A shake hand or cocktail can achieve more than one hour of virtual interaction. To that extent, exhibitions, and events is something which people can not get away with, immediately. Our behavioural patterns are the result of millions of years of human existence in the world. We are not going to shed these habits over an year.

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## A Message from the President



**Sunil More**  
President, IESA

Dear Friends,

Although we have left behind the jinxed 2020 and have entered 2021 with hope, the fear of CoVid-19 is still present. The much awaited vaccine for the virus has been rolled out and is presently being administered to the CoVid-19 workers and soon the same will be made available to others. However, doctors have cautioned that irrespective of getting vaccinated, we will have to take due care by wearing masks and maintaining social distance. We need to be cautious while venturing out until a large part of the population is immunised.

The good news for the industry is a few B2B exhibitions have taken place in Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai, Hyderabad etc. Recently in the month of February 2021, the Aero India 2021 and The Economic Times - ACETECH 2021 were successfully organized in Bangalore and Mumbai respectively with all safety and health precautions. A success story about Aero India 2021 is covered in this edition as the expo work was carrying out by one of our members - Pavilions & Interiors Pvt. Ltd.

On the front page of this edition, our Association's Founder President, Mr. Nanu Binu, has shared his valuable thoughts on the existing situation of the exhibition industry under title, "Pandemic and Beyond". We hope you will like and appreciate the same.

IESA is also arranging its monthly meetings with members on Zoom Platform from time to time to reach to its members.

Now, everyone is trying hard for their survival with a hope that events and exhibition industry will be back on track and will accelerate.

We at IESA also hope the same.

Best Regards.

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The world of virtual is still nascent. And right now, it is also costly. To showcase a complex machine virtually is more expensive than carting it across the world. To show every part of a car in a virtual demo is currently expensive and not effective. It is also true that companies do not have enough virtual assets to participate in a virtual exhibition even if they want to. They need all literature in small size PDF files, all the exhibits in 3D or even 2D format, even if it is not a working model in 3D or films or TVCs that can be accommodated in a virtual fair. All these assets must be compressed to small sizes to get accommodated in the space allotted by the exhibition organizer. They cannot accept large files because platforms become heavy and network capacities are still limited across the world. More use of these platforms and heavy use of networks for WFH and OTTs have resulted in a logjam in the networks. So, the efficacy of a

virtual exhibition is still limited and not optimal right now.

But technologies develop fast. And having experienced the virtues of the virtual, organisations will not let go of that. The same applies to conferences also. We have realised that a conference can be done without booking hundred air tickets, three hundred room nights and many dinners. The virtual conference is very efficient compared to the physical one. Therefore, It is here to stay, at least as a hybrid model or a parallel run with the physical conferences in the future.

What can our industry do? The first thing to do will be to become super-efficient. Raise the efficiency of every activity that it poses a challenge to the virtual world. Use technology to drive efficiencies across each activity. Let's go back to the basics of management. Create a thinking organisation that is adept both at

physical and virtual. The future organisations should be ready and vigilant to learn and adapt to the changes that world will go through. There lies our panacea. COVID is a Black Swan and a game changer. Nobody knows for sure the future pandemics or the effect of technology on human psyche especially among the Next Gen.

Let us be ready for a quantum leap to catch up with the emerging scenario in marketing communication where new tools and technologies will develop. For, exhibitions are nothing but a tool for effective communication in the context of human interaction.

**N. Binu**  
Founder Director

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# UFI RELEASES GLOBAL BAROMETER REPORTS POSITIVE SIGNS FOR 2021

UFI, has released the latest edition of its flagship Global Barometer research, which takes the pulse of the industry.

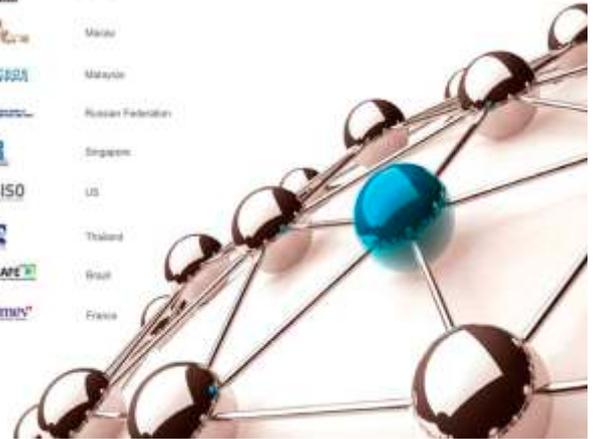
Results highlight the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the exhibition industry worldwide, in 2020. There are also positive signs regarding a quick recovery in 2021.

Globally, between April and August 2020, more than half of all companies reported no activity. This situation changed from September, where the majority of companies declared some operations, at reduced levels for most. Looking ahead to 2021, the share of companies expecting a return to “normal” activity is expected to grow from 10% in January to 37% in June.

These results vary depending on region, and are primarily driven by the “re-opening date” of exhibitions. In all regions, most companies expect both local and national exhibitions to re-open by the end of June 2021, with international exhibitions resuming in the second half of the year. Company operations also include, while face-to-face events are not possible, working into the development of digital solutions.

## UFI Global Exhibition Barometer

UFI The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry  
**26th Edition**  
 Report based on the results of a survey conducted in January 2021



When asked what element would most help with the “bounce back” of exhibitions, the majority of companies, ranked “readiness of exhibiting companies and visitors to participate again” (64%), “lift of current travel restrictions” (63%) and “lift of current public policies that apply locally to exhibitions” (52%) as key factors.

### Overall

- 44% of companies benefitted from some level of public financial support; for the majority this related to less than 10% of their overall 2019 costs.
- 54% of companies had to reduce their workforce, with half of these by more than 25%.

- 10% of companies will have to consider permanently ceasing operations if there are no events for the next six months.

As expected, the “impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business” is considered the most important business issue (stated by 29% of companies, a 2% increase on six months ago). The “impact of digitalisation” (11%) and “competition with other media” (7%) have also increased (+1% and +2% respectively), while the “state of the economy in the home market” (19%) and “global economic developments” (16%) have decreased, but remain amongst the top three concerns.

In terms of future exhibition formats, global results indicate that 64% (compared to 57% six months ago) are confident that “COVID-19 confirms the value of face-to-face events”, indicating an expectation that the sector will bounce back quickly.

Source : [www.ufi.org](http://www.ufi.org)



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## THE 13<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF AERO INDIA 2021: INDIA'S PREMIER AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE EXHIBITION

Aero India 2021, the first major exhibition since the onset of the pandemic, got off to a colorful start on 3rd Feb 2021 with Hon'ble Raksha Mantri inaugurates the event and concluded on 5th Feb with a grand valedictory function presided over by the Hon'ble President of India.



### Pavilions and Interiors

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The stringent Covid protocols enforced during the build-up to the exhibition and the show days ensured that there was no flare up of Covid cases despite the large gatherings present at the event venue. Apart from compulsory masks and enforced social-distancing, each entrant to the venue had to carry an RT PCR negative certificate not older than 72



hours. In case of visitors coming without the mandatory certificates, there were testing facilities made available near the Registration. The entire venue was sanitized periodically. There were automatic people-counting and entry cut-off procedures for the entire venue as well as individual exhibition halls.



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Altogether there were 524 Indian exhibitors and 78 foreign participants from 14 countries. A concurrent Virtual exhibition also took place where 338 virtual exhibitors were present. So, effectively this was a hybrid exhibition having a real and virtual presence.

In between there were various sub-events like 'Manthan'-the startup summit, 'Bandhan', MOU signing session (where 134 MOUs were signed), IOR (Indian Ocean Region Defense ministers') conclave, Indo-Russian Military conclave etc. Apart from the sub-events there were 18 conferences

spread over 3 days in the 3 conference rooms at the Grand Convention Centre created for that purpose.

It may be rightfully stated that through this exhibition India has showcased to the world how to successfully conduct a business exhibition even during adverse environs. And Pavilions & Interiors (I) Pvt. Ltd. is proud to have partnered this challenging venture and have come out with flying colors.



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## Upcoming Exhibitions/Events

A decent number of Exhibitions/ Trade Shows have been postponed or cancelled worldwide due to the COVID 19 Pandemic till further notice.

We will share the updates on upcoming Exhibitions/ Events in the edition of next month.

**Keep Reading and Stay Safe !!**



### From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

Welcome, once again, to have you here – IESA TIMES – E-Newsletter – January-February 2021 edition. As, we all are breathing in difficult times due to pandemic but our best response to this outbreak is to stay positive and more focused on recovery only.

In this edition, a very significant outlook on the current situation of the exhibition industry in India shared by Mr. N. Binu, FD, Meroform (India) Pvt. Ltd. and he is also Founder President of IESA. In addition, a report released on the Global Barometer of exhibition industry by UFI also covered. We look forward that both the reports you all will find informative and useful.

It is a good indication for the industry that Indian government now allowed all kinds of exhibitions can be held anywhere with the

safety guidelines and SOPs. In the month of February 2021, the Aero India 2021 and The Economic Times – ACETECH 2021 were successfully organized in Bangalore and Mumbai respectively with all safety and health precautions. The Aero India expo was accomplished by Pavilions & Interiors, who is a Founder member of our association. We have covered the report with details for our readers.

We always welcome and encourage to share your success stories relates to your work with us to publish in our E-newsletter. At the end, wishing a healthy and booming year ahead.

Please send the reports / information as per the guidelines mentioned below, the deadline for submitting the details is 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2021:

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