

Trade fairs will be different after the pandemic

1 Warmer

Read the facts about trade fairs across the world and choose the best options to complete the sentences.

1. The world's biggest venue for trade fairs is in **Hannover / Glasgow**.
2. Frankfurt is famous for its **book / boat** fair.
3. A large **food / video games** fair is held every September in Tokyo.
4. **New York / Orlando** holds more trade exhibitions than any other US city.
5. The first World Expo was held in 1851 in **Beijing / London**.

2 Choose the answer

Read the text quickly and decide which of these statements best represents the general meaning of the text.

1. People will never be able to travel and visit trade fairs and exhibitions after the coronavirus pandemic.
2. At the moment, the future of trade fairs is uncertain.
3. Trade fairs will start again in September and will probably be the same as before.

3 Key words and expressions

Find the words or phrases in the article that match the definitions below. Use the paragraph numbers to help you.

1. to decide not to continue with a plan or an event (1) _____
2. a problem or action that interrupts something and prevents it from continuing
(2) _____
3. goods that someone is selling (2) _____
4. to use persuasive language to convince someone to do something (two words)
(2) _____
5. reduced in amount, size or importance (3) _____
6. broken into a lot of small parts (4) _____

7. to allow or order someone not to go to work for a period of time (6) _____
8. to tell someone they must leave their job because they are no longer needed (2 words)
(6) _____
9. only good or effective on some occasions or in some situations (7) _____
10. to be persuaded to tell someone something (3 words) (8) _____
11. an expression used when you feel sorry for someone (8) (four words) _____
12. things such as locks, catches or bolts that you use to keep doors or windows closed
(9) _____
13. pieces of furniture or equipment that are fixed in place and considered to be part of a building
(9) _____
14. from only a short distance away (2 words) (9) _____
15. to arrange something in a different way (13) _____

How coronavirus will reshape the trade fair industry

BY MICHAEL SKAPINKER

- 1 From Switzerland's Watches & Wonders to Chile's Air and Space show, from South Africa's Travel Indaba to the East China Import and Export Commodity Fair, trade shows worldwide have been scrapped or postponed.
- 2 The losses to organisers and venues will be vast and the disruption to exhibitors' plans extensive. Trade shows have been places where buyers, whether of passenger jets or hotel shampoo bottles, could compare wares, and sellers could smooth-talk their potential customers in one noisy and exhausting place.
- 3 Covid-19 has shut the exhibitions business down. If and when it returns, will it be in a much changed or diminished form? Just as people have discovered that they can conduct their meetings from their living rooms, will buyers and sellers conclude that they too can do their business remotely?
- 4 I spoke to Hugh Jones, chief executive of Reed Exhibitions, which in good times runs 500 events a year, from the Mipim property fair in Cannes to Shanghai's International Natural Food and Beverage Expo. Reed Exhibitions is one of the world's leading trade-fair companies but, as an indication of what a fragmented industry this is, it accounts for just 5 per cent of the global market.
- 5 Unsurprisingly, Jones believes that striking up business relationships will always require face-to-face contact. In this column I have argued the same. But that doesn't mean this crisis will not reshape the industry.
- 6 Hugh Jones, chief executive of Reed Exhibitions As part of the Relx business information and analytics group, Reed Exhibitions has a more powerful backer than many of the smaller trade-show companies. Exhibitions account for just 16 per cent of Relx's revenues, and Jones has not had to furlough or make any of his 4,500 staff redundant. They are continuing to organise conferences that have been postponed, optimistically, until after September or, if the crisis isn't over by then, to 2021.
- 7 Smaller exhibition organisers will not be so lucky. Even a company as large as Reed Exhibitions wasn't fully insured against this year's disaster. Jones describes the insurance he had in place as "spotty".
- 8 He won't be drawn on what sort of industry consolidation will follow the crisis, saying only that his "heart goes out" to the smaller companies. But it seems likely that a post-coronavirus exhibitions industry will have fewer, bigger players.
- 9 What sort of trade shows will they provide? Some have already gone digital. MipTV, a Reed Exhibitions fair that brings producers of television content together with potential buyers, was meant to take place in Cannes in March. It went ahead with video content streamed online instead. But that's hard to do with a fasteners and fixtures fair or a metals show, where visitors need to see up close what they might be buying.
- 10 Last year, only 4 per cent of Reed Exhibitions' revenues came from online presentations — though Jones says the company is also making efforts to use digital advances to improve real-world conferences. It has already trialled and started using matchmaking technology that can tell visitors where to find an exhibitor they may be interested in, and what time they will be ready to have a meeting. Based on a visitor's meetings in previous years, it can also suggest who they may want to catch up with this time.
- 11 But using that technology implies that people will be ready to meet face-to-face once more. What if the Covid-19 crisis extends beyond 2020? What if it drags on for several years?

Continued on next page

12 Jones accepts the format may have to change, allowing greater distance between stalls and attendees. It may be that an exhibition that once occupied one hall will require two.

13 But, as he points out, that will not be an issue just for exhibitions. If social distancing becomes our way of life, then theatres, restaurants, airports and aircraft will have to be reconfigured too.

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Michael Skapinker, 20 April 2020.
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4 Understanding the article

Answer these questions about the text.

1. What has happened to trade fairs around the world and why?
2. What is the traditional purpose of a trade show?
3. How might the exhibitions business be different after Covid 19?
4. What percentage of the global trade fair market does Reed Exhibitions have?
5. How does the chief executive of Reed Exhibitions feel about smaller exhibition organisers?
6. How might the exhibitions industry change after coronavirus?
7. Why would it be difficult for some trade shows to be streamed online?
8. How is matchmaking technology used in the trade fair sector?
9. How could the format of face-to-face trade fairs change after Covid 19?
10. Apart from trade fairs, what other public facilities could be affected by social distancing?

5 Business language - word building

a. Complete the questions using the correct form of the word given at the end of each sentence. Note that you may need to add a prefix in some cases.

1. How have _____ at trade fairs had to change their business practices as a result of the coronavirus? [EXHIBIT]

2. Apart from the trade fair industry, which other sectors may also have to be _____? [CONFIGURE]
3. Why is it _____ that the chief executive of Reed Exhibitions believes that face-to-face contact is essential for business relationships? [SURPRISING]
4. The article describes trade fairs as noisy and _____ places. Is this your experience? [EXHAUST]
5. In future, there may have to be greater distances between stalls and _____. What other changes may be necessary? [ATTEND]
6. Do you believe it is realistic or _____ to reopen businesses while the pandemic continues? [OPTIMIST]

b. In pairs, ask and answer the questions.

6 Business language – phrasal verbs

a. Match the phrasal verbs from the text with their meanings.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. drag on | a. to talk to someone you have not seen for a long time and find out what they have been doing |
| 2. point out | b. close a business or stop operating a business |
| 3. shut down | c. to happen, especially after a problem |
| 4. catch up with | d. to continue for longer than you want or think is necessary |
| 5. strike up | e. to tell someone something |
| 6. go ahead | f. to start something such as a relationship or conversation with someone in an informal way |

b. In pairs, use your experience and the appropriate phrasal verbs in the correct form to complete the sentences.

1. If I want to make sure that a deal _____, I will ...
2. If I am _____ a relationship with a new business contact, I always ...
3. Many businesses in my area were forced to _____ for a time because of the pandemic, such as restaurants, ...

4. Whenever I _____ a business contact I haven't seen for a while, I make sure to ...
5. When the pandemic first started, I needed to _____ to my boss that ...
6. If the pandemic _____ much longer, then my company will need to ...

7 Discussion questions

- What problems has the coronavirus pandemic caused for the trade fair and exhibitions industry?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of trade fairs?
- What would be the disadvantages of attending an online trade fair?
- In what ways could the industry adapt in the future?

8 Wider business theme – promoting a product at a trade fair

- a. **Imagine that the coronavirus pandemic is over and face-to-face trade fairs have returned. You are members of a small group preparing to take your company's products to an upcoming trade fair. The fair is the most important in the world in your sector and is taking place in another country. Consider the following:**
- how many people will you need to represent your company at the fair and why
 - what promotional materials you will need to prepare and in what forms
 - what logistical considerations you will have to take into account (e.g. transportation)
 - what your target customers will be and how you will attract them to your stand
 - how your company is aiming to address the loss of sales because of the Coronavirus pandemic
- b. **Present your findings to the group.**