PHT Members’ & Vendors’ Thoughts on the Impact of COVID-19 on the PHT 35th Meeting scheduled for November 2020 in Philadelphia

Susan Gleckner, Meeting Planner

July 16, 2020

In June the Planning Team for the 35th PHT Anniversary Meeting issued two different surveys to gauge members’ and vendors’ thoughts about the impact of COVID-19 on the PHT 35th Anniversary Meeting scheduled for November 2020 in Philadelphia. THANK YOU to all who partcipated. This notice provides an overview of the results.

The PHT Planning Team will issue further communications about the Meeting and other programming, likely in **early August**. (We're eager to get this Meeting nailed down too.)

There have been considerable changes around the pandemic in just the 3-4 weeks since the surveys were completed. For instance, on July 14, 2020 the City of Philadelphia announced a moratorium on publicly-advertised events on public property until Feb. 28, 2021. Additionally, indoor events are capped at 25 people and outdoor events are capped at 50 in Philly.

The Upshot: Members and vendors are experiencing travel bans in their organizations, and expect them to continue. Members want to network with their peers in person and vendors prefer a live conference too. However, personal concerns were expressed about COVID-19, budgets overall may be in jeopardy, and vendors seem unconvinced about the success of virtual alternatives.

These are some of the key hallmarks of the annual PHT Meeting – networking; meeting new people and vendors in a small, comfortable setting; and professional learning opportunities.

SURVEY OF MEMBERS

The Members survey was issued to 280 PHT Members on June 12, 2020. The survey closed on June 19.  Respondents numbered 91, a 33% response rate. (Some repsonses came after the close date and are not included here.)

Themes from Members

1. For an in-person Meeting this November, attendance will be very low.

2. April 2021 may be too early for an in-person meeting, again owing to anticipated low attendance.

3. There was a strong willingness to attend a series of one-off virtual sessions.

4. There was some skepticism about the practicalities and effectiveness of incorporating vendors into any virtual event.

5. Lots of ideas for programming were submitted (please scroll down to Q8 to see these).

SURVEY OF VENDORS

The Vendors survey was issued to 87 PHT Vendors (from a list of those already registered for the Meeting) on June 20, 2020. The survey closed on June 26. Respondents numbered 17, a 20% response rate.

Themes for Vendors

1. Re: an in-person Meeting this November, vendor respondents are leaning toward not attending.

2. April 2021 may be too early for an in-person meeting, owing to anticipated low attendance.

3. There is quite a bit of skepticism from vendors about the effectiveness of any virtual event.

4. Our vendors value seeing members face-to-face, developing relationships.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Members Survey: Some Details

**Q1 How likely are you to attend the in-person Meeting in November 2020?**

A1: The vast majority are NOT likely to attend, mainly due to travel restrictions and concerns about COVID-19; 21% of respondents cited budget restrictions.

Comments: Most mention travel or budget restrictions. Three mention the presidential election as a reason to not attend (a concern of which we were already aware, but had little choice in dates).

**Q3: How likely are you to attend the in-person November 2020 Meeting if it is moved to Spring 2021 (e.g., April 18 – 20, 2021)?**

A3: The majority pointed toward “Likely/Very Likely,” with a weighted average of 3.4 out of 5. The reasons given for not likely attending are similar to Q1, with continuing travel restrictions and COVID-19 cited.

**Q5: How likely are you to attend a virtual-only Meeting, in lieu of the in-person November 2020 Meeting, with most if not all of the same agenda sessions and possibly a vendor "virtual exhibit" of some kind, perhaps held across parts of multiple days in the Fall of 2020 (with an associated fee TBD)?**

A5: 60% of 89 respondents indicated “Likely/Very Likely.“

24 Comments: There were a comments questioning how a virtual vendor exhibit would work. One member had success with a recent large conference that included a vendor piece, using MS Teams Live Events. A vendor had a good experience with the Health Connect Partners virtual trade show. And there were a few comments about the “TBD fee” On the flip side, someone also wrote a virtual meeting “.. WOULD BE BORING.”  Some respondents “enjoy the legacy Spring PHT format,” meaning in-person, and others were also leery about being able to devote their full attention to anything virtual.

**Q7: How likely are you to attend an occasional series of single virtual programming sessions for the remainder of 2020, with the in-person November 2020 Meeting postponed until the Spring or Fall of 2021? These sessions would likely be a mix of no-to-low cost educational, professional development, best practices, and vendor presentations.**

A7: Respondents (n=89) were positively in favor of this (weighted average of 3.89).

15 Comments: “It's easier to commit to single sessions than block off a lot of time and the no-to-low cost is much appreciated.“

“I feel like single virtual programming sessions spread over the last months of the year would be easier to attend than a full virtual meeting.“

A veteran indicated she’d encourage her staff to attend sessions.

Others mentioned cost again, encouraging free.

**Q8: Please submit topics you’d like to see covered in PHT programming.**

*These are all the comments submitted for programming. Many people submitted more than one idea; they were separated grouped together under broad categories.*

|  |
| --- |
| **Q8: Please submit topics you’d like to see covered in PHT programming.** |
| **Getting More Out of Content** |
| Text and Data Mining, AI |
| Text and Data Mining Case studies in Libraries |
| anything on metadata & taxonomies |
| FAIR |
| Machine Learning and AI and how it is used by information professionals |
| Is anyone practicing Artificial Intelligence |
| **Regulatory** |
| Med tech - coping with MDR (regulatory) timeline changes due to COVID |
| Regulatory |
| Updates on recent or forthcoming changes in the FDA regulations and CMI/HHS policies for reimbursement / insurance coverage. |
| **Competitive/Business Intelligence** |
| Competitive intelligence Trends in pharma R&D |
| competitive intelligence -- BizInt has been doing a series of case studies using COVID-19 clinical trials and pipeline data |
| CI |
| 2. Manufacturing Intelligence: what resources are available; how are info pros supporting company goals with information on the manufacturing landscape (including FDA actions) |
| Med tech - using pharma event tracking for med tech purposes |
| Power BI |
| Med tech - monitoring med tech brands |
| **How to Work/Manage** |
| how to manage colleague expectations in the new work-from-home context for information managers |
| Panel: how some people working remotely are staying connected with their colleagues -- will this be the way forward for everyone? |
| Working efficiently in remote environments. |
| Working during times of crisis. |
| Remote outreach |
| **News** |
| How to do newsletters that have value |
| What are the best sources for news alerts in the pharma space? (can any be customized in this world of Too Much Info) |
| **Keynote Potential (?)** |
| 1. The NIH Microbiome Project (Dr. Leta Proctor)/the current landscape and future trends for the microbiome in pharma/biopharma treatments |
| **Best Practices/ How-To’s** |
| What's happening with the Division vs. SLA? |
| Would like to hear brief intros to every member's info center/library and/or updates -- the latest success or new practice |
| Lightning Talks from multiple members/info centers |
| For those relatively new to the field or who want to know about working in pharma or med devices -- an overview/intro of what we all do (perhaps a way to entice new members to PHT?) |
| Literature searching and other topics that a new medical librarian should or could need to know |
| Research Data Management Services, the Next Generation |
| I am always most interested in how other members use the drug databases and online resources. |
| Was excited for the systematic review session |
| The need for Discovery search tools |
| library portals in pharmaceutical libraries |
| looking for granular epidemiology information (not the easy ones) |
| Combination products  *(device + drug)* |
| Impact of companion diagnostics |
| PV |
| digital asset management in regulated industry |
| Classification and cataloging topics |
| I would like to learn more about academic research commercialization.  Market and competitive intelligence research methods in support of commercialization |
| Tips and tricks in patent prior art and patent landscape searching. |
| Poster sessions |
| **Tools** |
| More vendor updates |
| Updates on new or existing databases and other information products relevant to pharma markets. |
| Detailed database comparison: i.e., Pharmaprojects vs GlobalData (pharma) coverage, depth, scope |
| Direct comparison of popular databases (ideally by info pros using them, rather than the vendors) |
| Tableau |
| Clinical Trials databases |
| The need for Discovery search tools |
| Pharma business databases for non-CI librarians |
| Clinical Trials databases |
| **Operations** |
| Elsevier vs. UC and MIT *(subscription terms/negotiations)* |
| Vendor relations/negotiating |
| Change management - planning for and communicating about major changes to library resources (especially when key tools are overhauled or changed) |
| **Personal skills** |
| Interview skills/job hunting |
| Programming/coding |
| Presentation skills |
| Succession planning |
| **COVID-19 Impact** |
| How has COVID19 impacted members, how have they adapted? |
| Challenges and best practices for collaborating remotely Industry response to COVID-19 and how info pros contributed |
| information about all of the changing topics, resources, and technologies within the health/pharma field due to Covid-19 |
| Will COVID impact clinical trials? |
| **Other** |
| Current intended programme looks good - thank you. |
| PHT Annual Business Meeting |

**Q9: Additional comments**?

|  |
| --- |
| Select comments, grouped by general concepts (in color): |
| It's tough to plan ahead without a **solution to COVID-19**. |
| I will not feel comfortable attending an in-person meeting until the new **Covid** cases have gone down significantly and/or there is a vaccine. |
| I think with everything going on with **COVID**, PHT SLA should strongly consider **virtual** meeting either(s) this Fall 2020. My company has cut travel for rest of 2020. I also am skeptical about productivity for a meeting where we would all need to wear masks and social distance. |
| Right now, my personal **health and safety** is weighing heavily on my decisions here. Many thanks to you all for thinking of smart alternatives to help keep us safe. |
| We would be interested in participating in **virtual vendor** exhibits. |
| My answers are from a **vendor** perspective. Basically we do not view conferences as critical enough to risk traveling. We also suspect attendance will be even lower than usual, and that social distancing will decrease value for vendors. |
| I have never attended an in person meeting of this group, so the **virtual** meeting would be fine. |
| Thank you for considering a **virtual** conference and/or programming sessions. |
| Please consider transitioning to **virtual** meetings for the long term. The ongoing pandemic, climate change, and budget restrictions will continue to make travel difficult. |
| I can only attend every other year at best because of small budget for conference attendance. **More affordable virtual options** would be great even once travel restrictions are lifted. Thank you for sending out this survey. |
| I am curious as to how you are going to handle the **cost** for the conference, as my company has issued payment for the conference already. If you cancel November, would we receive a refund? If you postpone it until 2021, would we also receive a refund. Additionally, if we decide that we do not feel comfortable traveling during this time of unrest and possible contagions, can we ask for a refund if you do NOT cancel the in-person events? |
| Typically when I attend PHT or PDR events the reason most give is the **networking**. I think moving to a virtual session will lesson this benefit. |

Vendors Survey: Some Details

**Q1 How likely are you to attend the in-person Meeting in November 2020?**

A1: Just over a third of vendors indicated they are “Not Likely” to attend(at 35%). Reasons for not attending include travel restrictions, personal concerns about COVID-19, and anticipation that in-person attendee numbers might be low due to the continuing pandemic.

**Q3: How likely are you to attend the in-person PHT 35th Anniversary Meeting if it is moved to Spring 2021 (e.g., April 18 – 20, 2021)?**

A3: The majority (n=9) indicted they would “Very Likely” attend. The reasons given for “Not Likely” attending are similar to Q1, with travel restrictions and COVID-19 anxiety cited, as well as low turnout.

**Q5: How likely are you to attend a virtual-only Meeting, in lieu of the in-person November 2020 Meeting, with most if not all of the same agenda sessions and possibly a vendor "virtual exhibit" of some kind, perhaps held across parts of multiple days in the Fall of 2020 (with an associated fee TBD)?’**

A5: Responses were in the middle of the scale here.  Six responded that “Most of the virtual exhibitor-customer connecting solutions I've experienced thus far have not been productive” would be the reason to not attend.

Some Comments (from a total of 7 people commenting):

“Would depend on the cost. If it’s the full amount, we might decide it’s not worth it. The real value we get is from face to face meetings at this conference.”

“Staying as focused remotely (over multiple hours and days) is a challenge, but does seem better than outright cancelling.”

“I’m not sure a vendor will have the same benefits in an online meeting. The informal conversations and meetings with attendees are very important."

“We would probably sponsor just to support PHT, even if we felt we would get little value. I’m concerned that there will be many virtual conferences being held at the same time.”

“As a healthcare-associated organization, we should just plan a virtual meeting period. Forget about a face-to-face in Spring 2021, plan virtual for this year and next. Give yourself enough time to learn what worked, what didn't and improve between events.”

**Q7: How likely are you to attend an occasional series of single virtual programming sessions for the remainder of 2020, with the in-person November 2020 Meeting postponed until the Spring or Fall of 2021? These sessions would likely be a mix of no-to-low cost educational, professional development, best practices, and vendor presentations.**

A7: Respondents (n=17) were mostly positively in favor of this (weighted average of 3.47).

Comments:

“If you plan regular sessions, people can plan ahead. It would be like having a standing meeting on the calendar. But, of course, you should probably vary the time. There are a lot of variables, for sure. But, again, I think this is the way to go. Maybe consider what we can learn from each other at this time. What could be the basis for the most interactive sessions?”

“Happy to try.”

**Q8 Please share details about virtual vendor meeting formats you've experienced. What worked well? What shortcomings were there?**

|  |
| --- |
| **Q8 Please share details about virtual vendor meeting formats you've experienced** |
| Hard to get individual meetings with customers or prospective customers. |
| I have not attended any but will ask around and submit suggestions. I know this is challenging but completely think this is THE way to go. |
| Technical challenges and not much interaction |
| As a vendor, it is helpful to have some sort of virtual booth area in which we can display materials, contact information, etc. |
| Important to have clear agenda and timing, clear instructions regarding participation (if allowed; i.e. how to raise your hand on zoom, or using the Q&A chat functionality, etc.) |
| Getting attendees to visit online exhibitors, setting meetings have been difficult. |
| So far I've only experienced virtual vendor options in conjunction with live events, and those have not been useful. |
| I haven't attended any virtual conferences from a vendor perspective. |
| I have not attended any virtual conferences. |

**Q9: When all is said and done, please rank your preference for these options as they relate to the annual 35th PHT Meeting, with 1 as your top choice.**

The majority of vendors prefer in-person, face-to-face engagements with PHT Meeting attendees, if not in April 2021, then in October 2021. This is not a gigantic sample size, however.

