

How Restart Expo is going to change exhibitions post-COVID-19

Towards the end of November, the impossible happened. After the many months of lockdown with limited numbers at social gatherings, the Restart Expo made a splash as an exceptional showcase of how the exhibitions industry can safely host live events.

Run over two days on 25 and 26 November 2020, and held in Hall 8 at the Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC), attendees were abuzz with enthusiasm and excitement for one of the first in-person exhibitions to take place since the beginning of lockdown in late March. With an emphasis on cleaning, hygiene and social distancing protocols, no stone was left unturned to ensure all measures were taken to keep delegates, exhibitors and speakers safe. This included:

- online declaration forms prior to registration
- contactless pre-registration
- hourly visitation slots during which numbers were capped at 250
- step sanitisers at every entrance and exit point
- pre-packaged delegate badges and food items
- zoned entry and exit walkways
- temperature checks
- seating at least 1.5 m apart
- complimentary masks
- sanitising of seating and podiums in-between sessions
- QR codes displayed at various locations to download the visitor guide and seminar programme
- health and safety officers to oversee the adherence of protocols.

Ensuring the safety of a visitors, exhibitors and an entire event requires extensive planning, co-ordination and a collective effort by all stakeholders involved in organising an exhibition or an event. The Health and Safety of all concerned must be taken care of. To ensure that the whole industry works towards one goal, in being safe and secure at all times., Specialised Exhibitions partnered with numerous key partners, suppliers and associations.

The event hosted extensive seminar sessions to ensure all participants receive a full awareness in safety and security requirements, as well as tourism aspects that are required to help the local economy bounce back.

Commenting on the wrap-up of the Restart Expo was Gary Corin, managing director of Specialised Exhibitions: “Listening to our seminar speakers talk about the tourism aspects of what needs to be done to help our local economy recover and bounce back, it shows how exhibitions, events and conferencing have an enormous role to play.”

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