

Transcript: De-escalation in Public Gatherings

Missouri Arts Safety Alliance

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Dana Knapp

My name is Dana Knapp and I'm president and CEO of ArtsKC. I am opening this webinar on behalf of the Missouri Arts Safety Alliance. I would like to lead off by thanking Michael Donovan, with the Missouri Arts Council for supporting this series of webinars. This is one we will be focusing on today. This is an opportunity for the arts and culture organizations who have reopened and resumed public programming to share their experiences with their colleagues who are integral to supporting the arts and culture participation.

This is a key opportunity to learn from our peers and be able to gain that wisdom and apply that to our programming and our support of the visitors. I'll lead off by introducing those that are participating, our panelists first and foremost. And I'll go by the panelists first and then the subject experts second. First up is Rashida Phillips. She is the executive director of the American Jazz Museum here in Kansas City. And she manages a couple of different venues.

So she has navigated this from several different vantage points. Second is Casey Claps, manager of strategic initiatives at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art. They have just opened very recently with much planning and preparation. So we're eager to hear from you. And then George Guastello, president and CEO of Union Station, Kansas City. And again, several different venues. And I think, George, you and your team have been open for some time.

So you have really learned as you as you've gone forward. Our two subject experts are Ellen McDonald. She's partner with Mershon and McDonald. They host or work with several arts organizations here in Kansas City. So they really have an expertise in our industry. And then Adam Doerr, attorney at Jackson Lewis in St. Louis. And then also available to pipe in and help us along is Michael Donovan. As we dive in, we will have three segments of questions.

And so we'll hear from the panelists for about 30 to 45 minutes and then we'll open it up to Q&A, question and answers from all of you. So please, as you go along, enter your questions in the chat and we'll try our best to navigate through those in the last, say, 15 minutes of the webinar. So I'm going to dive right in. First segment, briefly describe the programming that you've chosen to implement upon reopening. How are you able to communicate expectations of participation with your visitors and how are you navigating the fulfillment of those expectations once the visitors arrive? Rashida, I'll ask you to lead off, if you don't mind.

Rashida Phillips

Absolutely. So we've been open since about mid-June at this point, it's been a pretty full season. We've been weathering the storm with a lot of our public and we have the great pleasure of operating our complex with the Negro League Baseball Museum. So we worked in concert with them to think about procedures and policies to invite guests into our buildings safely. I think all the expectations that most would have visiting public spaces with PPE in place, sanitizer, masks, gloves, because we do have some touchable items in the museum as well.

We've actually found your covers, which is kind of interesting because we've got some audio elements where folks put on some headphones. So we've implemented some of those practices to make folks feel more comfortable. And I think, you know, most of us are pretty comfortable with distancing and what that means and all of the protocols there. So we have done that with the museum proper. We have also opened up some opportunities for live entertainment in our gym theatre space. So we also have a 500 seat theater across the street.

We've been very mindful about presenting hybrid opportunities, whether virtual or in person, opportunities for a small, select group of folks who want to come in and still enjoy this time during the year. Communicating expectations, you know, that's up front, right? As you walk in into our entrance, we have folks greeting you at the door to sort of check in and register. Some of our folks register on Eventbrite first with all of the details about whether there have experienced covid, etc.

Then when they get to our building, they're still responsible for purchasing tickets on our systems. Because we are two different museums, we have two different systems that we have to manage that room in terms of that work.

About fulfilling those expectations, I think we've done a fairly solid job. We've been at about 30 to 40 percent of our occupancy compared to last year. And given the situation of COVID knock on wood, we've not had any major issues that we've had to shut down or that we were overly concerned with inviting public back. If anything, folks have been very appreciative. They've been very cooperative with putting their face on an all times and a lot of our out of town tourists just are happy to have a place to go.

Quite honestly, they are thrilled. They feel better in terms of the spirit of wellness and maybe some of the things we're navigating in terms of germs out here. But folks really have wanted an outlet. And I think the beauty of our work and the arts and culture sector is that we really provide sort of community healing on a different level as well.

Dana Knapp

Casey, tell us about your first couple of weeks.

Casey Claps

This this has been a re-opening that's been long in the making. The Nelson has 30 individual bathrooms. It's got 16 elevators. It's an absolutely sprawling campus. And so in order to reopen, we had to really look closely at everything that we have done and think about it differently. One of the decisions we made is that we virtually eliminated all on-site programming in order to to balance our budget, but also because we wanted to, first and foremost work on rebuilding trust, of coming to a public space and getting comfortable with being in a museum. Again, the programs that we have brought back have been outdoors.

We have an unbelievably spectacular sculpture garden. And so we've been able to partner with other institutions. We've done events with the symphony out there and we have stuff coming up with the Rep as well. And so we've been able to reach out and be a community partner and to bring back programs at the museum. And we've also gone really hard at virtual programming. Just this week, we took our deaf cultural festival and we brought it entirely online in addition to our Juneteenth program, our festival, and also our passport to India.

So that transition of going from onsite to virtual has been what we've been focusing our programming on. As far as communicating the expectations, just like Rashida said: you need well-marked signage and strong communications, making sure people know that masks are not optional and reinforcing that everywhere. Navigating the fulfillment of those expectations with the visitor, one of our biggest shifts is that we've gone to ticketing and we've done this for a number of reasons. We're still free.

But in order to visit us now, you do need to secure a space. And that's a way to fulfill the expectation that you can feel safe in the museum and you can really relax and enjoy the time there because you're guaranteed to. We will enforce our capacities in order to give you the breathing room you need to really be in the gallery safely.

Dana Knapp

Thank you, Casey, George, share with us your programming and how you you've been able to communicate your expectations.

George Guastello

Well, thank you. Union Station is really the visible visual voice of Kansas City. Eight hundred and fifty thousand square foot complex with nearly 10 attractions. So we have a ninety thousand square foot hands-on science center, as well as a four hundred seat movie theater, as well as one hundred and fifty thousand square foot planetarium and a twenty thousand square foot touring exhibition space. Add in another hundred and fifty thousand square feet of office and tenants and in the election board wanted to elevators, four escalators, ninety urinals.

And that's our world. So for everybody that hasn't opened, it'll be just fine. For those of you that have opened, you know, it's great when you gain weight the way we have. Go out for the worry. But I guess what we have focused on and foremost at the very beginning, we earn one hundred percent of all of our revenues. We are supported not by tax dollars or donations, but by earned income. We were planning on opening a new fourteen thousand square foot new children's museum. The day it was to open was the day that the mayor closed our city. Then we were closed. All of our revenue disappeared overnight. One hundred percent for 12 weeks. In that 12 week time frame the team immediately moved to virtual programming and a lot of visual and video presentations to our community. I would do regular Facebook Live experiences with our community, sharing what we were doing, and then at the same time, we started to plan how to reopen.

We opened in mid-June. The challenges and thanks to Casey and Rashida, we developed a group called KC Cares. Which was what I like to call the United Nations of our cultural community. so we can all be on the same page for everyone to have the same things about wearing during all that time, the world was changing so dramatically, you would select one proud and the new law would come out with different numbers and different experiences. So it was for that we were able to come up with mask protocol and implement those strategies. We opened our science center and our planetarium on June 17. We only opened to our members for one week.

Our primary focus was very simple: protect our associates and our employees. Protect our customers and protect our cash, because we have to earn our income and make sure that experience all work together, we open to to members for one week, mask only. That was before there was a mandated mask experience in Kansas City. And it was really challenging. The minute we opened, the mask rule came from the mayor and that all stopped. And then we opened to the general public, one week later. Our science center has two shifts, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, deep cleaning and focus on that. And we constantly talk to our customers. We focus every day on surveys with the Net Promoter score, and we respond to those experiences that our customers are having now. We've been open for quite some time and we decided to open up a new touring exhibition. So in four weeks we opened up a dinosaur exhibition, reimagined it and changed the concept of hands-on to an immersive experience.

We've had about 28,000 people through the exhibition, social distancing, all the programming. But on our regular attractions and all of our restaurants, we had planned for a 25 to 30 percent return what we experienced last year and we are now in the high teens right around 20. And no challenges with our customers feeling safe and secure.

We also expected a couple of things. One, we expected the first wave. We're going to get those that are going to be the early adopters and felt safe. We saw them. Then there were those that said, well,

if there are other people out, I'll come back. And then there were those that maybe felt unsafe and they have not come back. And no matter what we do, they don't come back. So that's what we've done. I hope I've touched you.

Dana Knapp

Thank you, George. I appreciate it. Ellen, I'm just going to ask you real quickly, as it relates to communicating expectations in your work in Kansas City, I know that some have remained digital, some have reopened. Do you have any kind of consistent words of wisdom or advice that you share with your clients about trying to navigate this and keep them engaged?

Ellen McDonald

Now, sorry, back to what George had said about it. It's that balancing and mitigating risk, right? So you want to be able to communicate to the community that you're not dark. Incomes have dropped precipitously. Most of my clients are basically not bringing any income of any kind right now into your revenue, but you're not dark. Things are happening. Digital performances, conversations about reimagining programming, all sorts of things are definitely happening. But then you have to manage the risk. And it's really, honestly I think, about knowing your audience, about knowing who you are, who you want to reach out to.

I know for many of my organizations I work with the Kauffman Center. It's the Ballet, it's the Opera, the Kansas City Repertory Theater, some of the larger ones in town. And you if you know if you know who your audience is, that you have to be able to communicate accordingly. And what I have found in my world right now is we are just now putting our toes in the water with performances. These announcements are happening really this week and for the next week. Or so is trying to be able to manage their expectations about what you're able to do, but also really, really come to terms with who's going to show up and who's going to pay to want to show up.

These are not people who are...these are people who are definitely risk adverse, they're in the higher risk category. As much as they want to come, and we hear that consistently, probably all of you on this call, everybody wants to come, right? But frankly, in my world, with all the people and the organizations I'm working with, for the most part, we're not going to even begin to see normal. Well after a vaccine is an effective vaccine, and is well and truly available and out there for everybody. So we got in my world, we got a longer haul. So it's just about managing those expectations for everybody. Board members, donors, everybody. Right?

Dana Knapp

Right. It really is that we're in a new normal, at least for a duration. That's very true. OK, I'm going to transition to the second segment. And Adam, I'm going to come back to you after this second segment as it relates to mitigate risk. The second segment, I want everyone to kind of drill down into their day in, day out standing at the entrance. And how are you reinforcing successful behavior? I think both of your staff, but also your visitors coming through the door. How have you overcome the challenges or conflicts when expectations are not met? And what risks have you faced with enforcing health and wellness guidelines such as masks and social distancing? So, Rashida, if you wouldn't mind leading yet again, I'd love to hear from you.

Rashida Phillips

Well, I think one of the challenges we are facing is we're trying to avoid a backup at our entrance. Right. We don't want folks to get frustrated and leave and trying to figure out the ticketing situation because we prefer to have it online. So we have a QR code right there at the entrance. We really try to get folks to buy purchase their tickets outside so they can come in doors, just sort of a host that greets them as well, that can walk them through the process.

But we're really trying to get folks clear before they even enter the building into itself. That's been a little challenging, I think, for folks who are not used to sort of that technology and what it entails. Also, people that have to go through that two-step process of their sort of registration for the building

pass, which is that COVID information and purchasing a ticket. Some folks feel it's a little clunky, right. But after they visit the museum, they totally understand it, get it.

They usually are enjoying themselves here in the space. So we usually kind of avoid that piece of it. And then we have plenty of, I wouldn't say playing it, but we do have people at the door. We have the face mass at the door. They didn't bring a mask. We have sanitizer all over the building on both sides. So some of those things we try to avoid the anxiety of people coming in and feeling like they're not prepared, nor will they be able to visit for the day.

Dana Knapp

Very good. Thank you. Thank you, Rashida. Casey, what have you all learned in the last couple of weeks?

Casey Claps

So we're seeing about 40 percent of our average attendance returning right now. And because we've just recently reopened, we're definitely keeping an eye on if it's a honeymoon attendance or if it's something that is here to stay. But we know we're asking our visitors to behave differently when they arrive. We have historically been very porous and we have half a dozen a dozen entrances and we've always allowed people to come and go as they please. So moving to a ticketing system, which is important for contact tracing, it's important for capacities.

We know that this is a new experience for the people who consider us one of their most dedicated audiences. And a way that we're reinforcing the successful behavior is by trying to preserve the experience to create as much normalcy as we can once you're past it. To really still emphasize why people are coming to an art museum, to be in art galleries, to be with art and to not make the experience once you're inside alien to what you've known. And so we've done a really concentrated effort on maintaining what the Nelson's values are, but reconfiguring them for these COVID days.

You will see that in Rozzelle Court. Our restaurant is different than it was before. We have changed the ordering system around, but the intent and the purpose of being there is still preserved. So that's how we're trying to make it worth your while to still visit the museum. More internally for staff, one of our big mantras is lead with empathy, and we know that in times like this, it's not one size fits all.

People have different needs. And to really adapt what the expectations are of our staff, to be responsive to what their needs are right now with child care, with other partners. So that's sort of the way that we've been applying our framework. One of the ways we overcome these challenges when our expectations are not met or when our visitors' expectations are not met is having a really clear sense of purpose. You know, we had some conversations before the mayor put in the mask ordinance, which we're very grateful for, because, like George says, it allows us to say, you know, this is coming from the city.

But we had a lot of conversations if mask are optional or are masks required. And really making sure that all of our staff is on board with what we're doing, why we're doing has been very helpful to keeping those expectations aligned with who we are as an institution. Yeah, so the ways in which we're approaching it, just keeping that focus has been very helpful.

Dana Knapp

Excellent. Thank you, Casey George. What can you share with us?

George Guastello

You know, it's been an evolution and every day is a new challenge or new opportunity. We have thirty-two doors and multiple entrances. And what you have to do is you have to communicate to the masses and to walk in our doors, you have to have a mask. But what we find is people don't read. It could be nearly a football field before you get to box office to purchase your ticket.

So your phone is key. Directional signage is key, but it must be simple and easy. So for the general public, all the signage is on a third grade reading level. Arrows this way mask. When we get down to the science center, all the signs and all the foot walking and all the stickers are for kids. So they're human, they're humorous, they see the dinosaurs. But one of the challenges that we've seen, as we talked about earlier, you protect your customers and you protect your associates.

And what we were starting to see even once the mask order came in, were people that were choosing not to wear the mask once they were in there. And it became uncomfortable for our associates that are on the floor doing the educational program. And you can't ask them if they have a issue because you'll get sued. You can't put a sticker on them to say I have a medical problem. So our associates, our educators, have no idea if the individual has a medical issue or if they're just took it off the minute they came in.

So, as Casey said, empathy and sharing with people in a nice way in the community, collaborative way, that's some of the stuff that we've seen and how we police our customers. Starting to talk to each other about why aren't you wearing a mask? We have to teach and educate our educators on how to diffuse that and how to communicate that. And then the same way with our security guards, because we have people walking in our doors and we can't tell if they're going to the post office, if they're going downstairs to vote.

So there's a hard way to distinguish who those individuals are. Casey, I think you said the most important part, empathy, compassion and dialogue. And it's working out. And we've seen that go down and down and down the conflicts associated with that. Either that or COPD has disappeared in the last two weeks because that's what everybody had for every reason that they tell you and they can't tell you. It's been a little facetious, but that was the challenge.

Dana Knapp

George, if you wouldn't mind, just walk through a strategy that your visitor services staff and our staff utilize when someone didn't comply with the mask order request. What was an approach that your staff used?

George Guastello

Well, a lot of times they're educators and they just point to their mask without saying any words and then communicate with them a little bit. It's more challenging with security guards and the general public that you don't necessarily know if they're just coming in to use the restroom and we don't know what their capabilities are. That becomes much more difficult. And we make it very simple. It's the law. We are following the law. And if we don't follow the law, we are at risk. We can be fined and we can that can affect our associates, our organization and the individuals jobs. And we found that that really worked. We've seen that go down. We saw a much higher issue this summer because we did see travelers from smaller towns and other areas that may not have had the same challenges that Kansas City has in the high rate of incidence. But it's just really one of the things we found is vitally important to talk with your eyes and your eyes can become the window to their soul and the compassion. And we work with that. So we have very animated educators and that is how we try to do it. And we just point out to them it's the law we have to follow. Please protect others. And that's the most important.

Dana Knapp

Excellent.

Casey Claps

Mind if I just build on that? What George said, we have an amazing front lines team and a head of security at Joe Brethauer is actually on this call. But we've got a strategy in place very similar to what George just described. You know, seven percent of communication is verbal and the rest of its body language. And so one of the most important things that we drill in is that when you're communicating, it's got to be through your body language as well.

The other thing that we like to put forth is that we want to collaborate with someone to find a solution. So it's not you versus the museum. It's if we've got an issue, let's try and get a solution together. And those two strategies have been very helpful in some of our de-escalation efforts.

George Guastello

The goal is don't try to win, you know, that's what we tell our educators, it's not a win lose experience, it's a safety issue. but we're a science center, so we have to be able to talk about that.

Dana Knapp

Excellent. Thank you. Thank you both. Adam, talk to us very briefly about, you know, boundaries, perhaps the risk in navigating requirements. I know some places in Missouri do not have mask mandates. Therefore, you can't cite the law or the the municipal rules or executive orders. Talk to us just real briefly about some of those boundaries that we as organizations that invite visitors might need to be cognizant of.

Adam Doerr

Yeah, so there is a lot of gray areas where just your everyday attempts to not only be functional operational, but to be safe, to really also directly implicates competing interests and legal rights. So it's really a complex web of different obligations and potential pitfalls and keeping track of just the specific mask orders. Literally, we have a team at Jackson who is tracking that. It's not one person's or even your jobs to have to do that. We need to partner and work together to try to figure out the best strategies, because really we don't have clear legal guidance.

We have all kinds of CDC guidelines and OSHA regulations and local and state health administrators' guidelines. But none of that has been interpreted in context or implied in context by courts. So we don't know what it all means in practice in terms of your legal obligations as employers or as inviting the public into your interior areas. So it's you know, it's extremely complicated. But what I love to hear is everyone talking about going to those efforts to make PPE available, have sanitizer available, have clear, simple, easy to follow instructions and markings and signage.

You know, not only is that going to look like reasonable approaches in court, but it's also going to help, like Rashida, in case you were saying, it's going to help your visitors feel safe. And if they feel safe, they're not going to sue you. If they don't feel safe, they're going to look for a reason to point to you if they get it. So really, I would much rather defend the lawsuit where you were too strict with providing a safe environment than too lenient because you wanted to appease a political perspective or whatever the case may be. So the clear communication is excellent.

The going above and beyond with providing those safe environments is excellent. And then working collaboratively, as George said, building this end of the arts, because you're establishing the industry standards. And so if you've all collectively determined that this is the best way to provide your arts to the public in a safe way, that's going to be really hard to say, no, that is, in fact, unreasonable. Well, you show me what we can do better and then we'll consider that. I'm sure just having that open dialogue goes a long way to mitigating the legal risks.

Dana Knapp

Excellent. I think you collectively touched on a point I want to bring out based on one of the questions that I'm reading. You know, bringing arts organizations and or like organizations together in any community and agreeing to adhere to CDC guidelines carries a lot of weight and a lot of power. So with Kansas City coming together, KC culture cares and with ArtSafe really that collective value in safety can help compel behavior.

OK, I do want to move on to the next segment, so put yourself in kind of a reflective mode and think about the way that you play into this and how that intersects with reality. How have your reentry plans held up in the face of implementation? What changes have been made due to the realities of interacting directly with your public and your visitors? What training, if any, did the staff and teams

undergo? And then I'm going to ask you all one question at the end after we've concluded this segment. Rashida, lead off, if you don't mind, again.

Rashida Phillips

You know, most of our plans have held water, believe it or not, I mean, the adjustments have happened have been a little bit with the occupancy as the city has made those adjustments along the summer. We tend to be a little bit more conservative. So I think we haven't pushed it too far in terms of being comfortable in the building. We have quite a few spaces that people can spread out into. So we just want to make sure that it doesn't get overcrowded in any of those areas. In terms of preparation, we spent a week in advance training our staff and getting all kinds of questions and trying to supply the answers that we can. We also had direct contact with the health department here in town who was able to provide us sort of a webinar conversation and give some assurance, although, you know, there's still so many questions that loom, but certainly give our employees a little bit more of a comfortable feeling knowing that we have a direct line to the health department and that we're staying on top of the numbers and that we understand some of the district implications, too.

We do know that we're in a predominantly black neighborhood, so the risk is a little bit different here. Sometimes the numbers are a little bit higher here. So we certainly are conscious of that and how we see folks into the building making sure that they are cared for well and properly. I think a big missing element that we discovered early on and that I just touch base again with my staff this week is a mental wellness. Believe it or not, we've done a lot in terms of physical wellness, making sure that the safety implications are in place for guests and staff.

But the mental wellness was key. So we spent a decent amount of time, believe it or not, on mental wellness. I mean, how do you even face this daunting situation of being on the front line and interacting with public who you may or may not be afraid to interact with, not to mention just kind of the flavor out of society in general. So we circle back this week we actually had trauma and grief specialists that came in and did some specific work with some of our staff who were really struggling. And that department and I've gotten a lot of feedback from my staff that a lot of supervisors have never provided these services.

I mean, we normally have an EAP system that we can provide some of those reached out to therapists or other sort of help conscientious supports for our staff. But the mental wellness for us has been a golden item that has really kept our staff afloat, comfortable and able to really feel as if they could mentally face each day.

Dana Knapp

Those are wise words, Rashida, thank you. I think we can learn a lot from that. Casey, how about you?

Casey Claps

So we we've been very fluid in our reentry plans and have had to adapt as we've learned more. You know, we had high hopes of going up to capacities of 50 percent as this, you know, when we were first discussing this back in April or June.

But as we got to September, it really didn't feel right to grow our numbers when we are looking around and seeing cases in Kansas City, the highest they've been. So being adaptable to the changes and learning about the virus as it goes. There was talk about temperature taking and then you learned that 80 percent of people are asymptomatic and that fevers don't necessarily indicate someone is down with the virus.

And so making decisions to toss away old ideas that sounded good at the time, but are just going to create more work for very little return. In terms of interacting with the public and I have to say that that we have overwhelmingly been feeling very positively about people's reception to these changes,

and one of the ways that we've tried our best to maintain our friendliness and the qualities we want to exude is that we have taken the stance of not telling people what they can't do, but telling them what they should do.

You know, not to not take the elevator, but to take the stairs instead. And so those realities, I think, have helped us along way. And just keeping that customer facing attitude that that we've worked hard and cultivating. As far as training, we had three days of front lines training where they went over everything. And all of the operations have been evaluated for touch points, for social distancing. And so taking that lens and applying it to fire drills, to applying it to emergency procedures, really reorienting our staff to how we're going to have to react in this environment.

Dana Knapp

OK, George, how have things compared from your planning stages to now and what what are some of those things that you've learned and how have you trained your staff?

George Guastello

Well, you know, we made the best decisions that we could with the information that we had at the time. And one thing that we tell all of our associates and everything, we are human, we're imperfect and we're ever changing. And so my job is to be a cheerleader, but also protect the people that are employed with our organization. We went overboard and spent significant amounts of time. Anywhere from air handling units, which we have 20 to changing out every filter.

So I believe in our hearts that we did the best that we could to keep everybody safe and secure and tried to ensure that the associates were safe. And thereby, if they're safe, our customers will come back and we'll be safe. They are our customers and we expect them to come back. One bad review, one negative Net Promoter score can affect our experience. With nearly a half a million people that follow us on social media It turns out that you have to watch constantly and respond to them.

So that's really been the biggest challenge. And things continue to change. The economy is changing for us. We will announce this week that our four hundred seat movie theater will be closed until the holidays because no Disney product. I have no product. Nobody wants to see Ghostbusters one more time. So you can't have an empty theater. So the reality of all this is starting to come to roost. We typically have a quarter of a million people walking through our doors to experience holidays and experience Santa on the train. Well, Santa is not coming this year.

And we're going to lose because Kansas City Southern isn't bringing him in. And we will lose a quarter of a million people. We can't cancel Christmas. I'm already getting kids calling in saying, is Santa going to be there? So now we have to reimagine social distancing in immersive experience so that Santa can come to Kansas City. So that's what we're dealing with now. It's not about masks. It's about creating memories for families that have had it for years and years. These kids may not have that memory with their parents or their kids. So that's what's really starting to affect our psyche here is the responsibility of creating memories that we're not creating.

Dana Knapp

So Ellen, spend a little time with us about how you're helping organizations in the Kansas City area navigate that. You know, the constraints of COVID, but the expectations of our community and the visitors of the organizations and the institutions that see them through the summer and fall and now the holidays. How do you how do you navigate that from a marketing, communications and public relations standpoint?

Ellen McDonald

Well, I'm not going to lie. My mantra since March 13 has been give grace, give grace, give grace. Right. Because every day you just don't really know. As George said, you just don't know. So I'm going to I'm not going to lie. I have said this recently to executive leadership of a very large arts organization that my professional goal here before I retire is that this person never stands in front of

a camera and explains why someone got a severe case of COVID from one of our events. I never want to have to work on messaging and prep for that kind of an interview. It terrifies me, keeps me up at night and I see George nod your head. Nobody wants that. We all agree. All of you panelists. Nobody wants to be in that situation.

George Guastello

You can't recover from it.

Ellen McDonald

You can't. You cannot you cannot add all the filters in the hands that you know. So I and so I professionally am at a very interesting place because my world for a number of years has been to remove barriers to improve access. Let's tell the stories, the amazing things that are happening in this lovely town. And now I'm just, I am very cautious and careful and very conservative about our approaches. So I don't have a real answer for you yet, Dana, because every day and frankly, as I mentioned earlier, most of my organizations have been lucky enough because we've had this glorious weather. I hope it's the same in Kansas, in St. Louis. So we've been able to have a number of things outdoors for a while.

But now we're starting to transition and think about indoor activities. And referring back to what George said, and I feel this so deeply, because I have the Kansas City Ballet and the Kansas City Repertory Theater. So, yes, we've killed Christmas. We have there's no Christmas Carol. There's no Nutcracker. And that is heartbreaking to so many families and kids and staff and the musicians and artists and dancers. And it just the domino effect is huge. So we're trying to figure out how to navigate that in such a way.

That provides an experience, right, an immersive experience, provide those opportunity to create memories that people have been doing and participating in for 20, 30 plus years. Right. But it's a different world, so they're reimagining what those indoor activities are and. I don't and I should tell you as no surprise, you're all getting this as well, I get hammered every day from members of the media going, what are you doing? What are you doing? We want to know. We want to know. We want to know. Well, get in line. So do I. But we have to answer a lot of questions, right. You know, how do we keep people safe? Everybody. Right. And we're not there yet. We're not there yet. So, Dana, it much as it pains to kill me. I don't know yet. Except I think it was it Casey or Rashida that said, be honest, this is where we are. This is we're doing the best we can. And as George said, we are all human. We are all human. So let's check back in a month. Right.

Dana Knapp

And I can't speak for other sectors and other industries, but I have seen nothing but innovation and determination from our arts and culture organizations in the Kansas City area. And I'm sure that's true throughout the state of Missouri, just really working hard to stay connected to our visitors and provide those memories and that service that we're so motivated and driven and really in business to provide.

Ellen McDonald

Real quick, I will add just to add to that. There are not many positives that are coming out of COVID at all, let's be clear about this, but there is a lovely little glimmer and I think all of you are seeing this as well, some crazy, wonderful, exciting partnerships of collaboration within the arts community. It's lovely. I mean, everyone right now in Kansas City is about the Yes. What do you want? Let's do this. What do you got? Yeah, let's go in. And these conversations are just they fill my heart, so let's see what happens post COVID. But yeah. So anyway, I just had to mention that.

Dana Knapp

That's super. I'm going to ask one more quick question of everyone and if you wouldn't mind being concise. And then we're going to roll over to Q&A. But you were a good segue, Ellen. The last question really is what has been the most unexpected? And we talked about challenges here. So I'm

going to be specific what has been the greatest surprise and think about this in a positive way since the onset of COVID. What is that kind of unexpected moment that you've seen or experienced, Rashida?

Rashida Phillips

You know, what's really unexpected is that we have more control over indoors than we do outdoors, believe it or not. So sometimes and we're balancing our events indoors and outdoors, but we do know when people get outdoors, they feel pretty free. They're hugging up on each other. They're bundled together, they're drinking. You know, there's all this extra close social activity. And that isn't to say that people shouldn't be together with their friends and family. But in terms of distancing, it's hard to sort of communicate the distancing factor outdoors because you have the fresh air, the sunlight ways in which people need to feel good and thrive.

And so indoors we do at least have a little bit more control over the numbers in terms of telling them you need to sit here, you need to kind of stay in here, you need to keep your mask on, keep some distance between each other. So that's been pretty surprising to me. And that is there's no there's no one common between the both. I would absolutely prefer to be outdoors, but I just noticed the behavior outdoors is way more casual than it is indoors.

Dana Knapp

Interesting. Casey, what have you been surprised about?

Casey Claps

It's been really thrilling to see how badly the community wants to return to the Nelson Atkins and the desire to be back in the galleries to be with the works of art. That has been an expectation that I think none of us were imagining that people would be so, so excited and to see them really jump at the occasion to come back.

Casey Claps

And then internally, like Ellen was saying, this has forced us to sort of really look deep at the resources we do have, the objects that we do have, the talent that we do have. And it's taken away possibly, you know, some of the more glamorous stuff, the featured exhibitions that we love. But it's given us the opportunity to get back to the basics.

Dana Knapp

Excellent. Thank you, George. What has been a revelation or a surprise for you?

George Guastello

Well, we survey our customers daily and we focus on our Net Promoter scores and and root and get our associates that information. The toughest one we got back was your cleaning too much. That stuff is making my kids sick. I went, yay! So that was the greatest one. And I have no idea where that came from. In a nice way. They were saying thank you. You took care of us. And that made our associates feel that they were doing their job.

So it gives us great hope. And we're looking to the future. We're announcing our largest exhibition ever during the COVID environment. So we said we'll be back and we're going to be strong in this community is going to have the best. People who have responded to that.

Dana Knapp

That's fabulous. Thank you, George. So I would like to transition to Q&A. I have to here that we can touch on. Actually, three, so the first one has to do with ADA compliance and Sarah Holt has asked that they've become aware of the ADA requires requirements for people to basically accommodate those with differences, and that includes masks. And many retail organizations handle that through delivery and curbside pickup. How are those factors, same or different for non-profit organizations? So that's one and two services for which you can't provide an alternative to the attending in person,

like an interactive exhibit or live performance how do you accommodate that? So it really is around what is the obligation if someone can't come in with a mask on? What are some of those parameters or boundaries and what are organizations and businesses obligated to do?

Adam Doerr

Well, I suppose that question's for me,

Dana Knapp

Yes, Adam. Thank you.

Adam Doerr

Well, those are those are excellent questions that we're all kind of having to grapple with. We don't have hundreds of years of real good court decisions and guidance to guide us on that. And until we do have court decisions, we don't know what's going to be legal and illegal with respect to accommodating members of the public or employees, for that matter. Now, the question cited the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, which does specifically focus on individuals with disabilities, not any protected classification under the sun, but mainly on people who are disabled in some way.

And then generally in the employment context, it becomes a matter of the interactive dialogue and a reasonable accommodation. We can fathom and talk about context where there is or is not an accommodation that can be reasonably provided. Now the law uses a lot of squishy words like reasonable, and that's just going to be based on the expense it would take to implement, whether it's readily available, whether you've done it in the past, those kinds of things.

Now, it may be true that the building or the premises do not comply with basic access requirements, and that's a different question. But in the context of COVID, there's not really that that much in terms of, well, I've got this exhibit outside. Do I have to bring it outside to somebody who can't come in with a mask? No, that's just at least I haven't seen that be suggested as required, so I can't give a clear yes no what is or is not the boundary there. But it's one of reasonableness. And everybody so far has been, I believe, above and beyond what looks reasonable to me in this context and the more collaboration we will have as an industry, the more you'll be able to resolve those for the courts.

George Guastello

We follow the law number one, and whatever the law says in Kansas City, Missouri, we follow. But I can tell you the challenges that we've had is the laws are different across the state line, which is in our MSA. So we have a real difficulty in that regard. And even in the county, in the cities that we're in don't match. So we follow the city of Kansas City and we understand it that somebody has a medical issue. We don't push it. We don't say, well, show us. You can't say show us. You just say we understand and appreciate. Please be safe and understanding of our other guests and keep your social distance. And that's all you can do, because I can't get into a fight with somebody that says something. We don't have to. OK, well, whatever. Like, I got it. But here we go.

Adam Doerr

George, to your point, earlier you were talking about it takes only one bad social media review. Well, now it's no longer just a social media post. It's a picture and a video.

George Guastello

Oh, yeah, right. And it's and it's whoever wants to utilize that for whatever their messages. And that's what we watch for all the time.

Adam Doerr

So taking those sensible approaches, doing what you can to accommodate when you can, that's all going to be the best you can with the information you have. That's the best guidance.

Dana Knapp

So I'm going to conflate two questions here that have to do with preparing for cooler weather. So I'd love to hear from at least at least two, if not all of you. How are you preparing for cooler weather when events need to be indoors? And what special measures are you preparing for? Is there anything in addition to what you're doing that you're anticipating planning? Casey, you've talked about your outdoors and all that activity, how are you navigating that when temperatures are below 10 and 20?

Casey Claps

Yeah, so in order to to stay afloat this fiscal year, we zeroed out all of our programming budgeting and so we have nothing currently scheduled for indoors and we're putting all of our our firepower behind virtual right now. So for us, we're not ready to bite off indoor programming during this winter, but really taking the time to, again, refocus on what it is that we do best, our exhibitions, our rotations and what we can offer virtually to our audiences.

Just touching back briefly with the accessibility. This has offered us a opportunity to look a little more deeply on how we engage virtually and to come up with some brand standards like closed captioning during programs. And so using the opportunities at hand to advance what we can and when we can.

Dana Knapp

What else, Rashida and George?

George Guastello

I'll jump in very briefly, we are reimagining Christmas and the holidays, we're fortunate enough to have ninety five foot ceilings. So you are outside. So we will be pushing that and we'll be pushing our ability to make sure that we can keep our restaurants that are small business entrepreneurs in business and creating that way. But that's what we're going to be doing. And we'll be taking you on a journey through the holidays. And we're going to charge for it because we have to because it cost us about eighty thousand dollars just for Christmas tree ornaments. And so we're trying to figure out how to replace that. And it gets down to crazy.

We can't even put two individuals in the boom in order to put Christmas ornaments on the Christmas tree. So we don't know what to do about that. You can't put two people in a bucket and go up ninety five feet and decorate a 50 foot Christmas tree. So that's what we're doing and we're going to roll with it. And the past has shown us that if you're focused and you have a plan, it always works out and you'll be fine.

Dana Knapp

Very good. I have two more questions that I want to hit on, and then we're going to have to wrap up what is very tactical, and that is, are you using any specialized cleaning equipment? Have you found products that work and don't work? And we'll hit that this one very quickly so anyone can respond to that if you have any specific recommendations.

Casey Claps

We found that making a switch from liquid sanitizer to gel sanitizer has been a much better decision for the museum. There was some incidental damage that was occurring with liquid that we just caught, luckily. Very good.

George Guastello

We're using an electrostatic sprayer that is through Clorox and then not only the hand sanitizers, but we then go and sanitize all, of course, the Hands on Science Museum with that sprayer every day in the morning and at noon and then in closing, so so that it has 30 minutes to dry. We found that to be pretty beneficial to us.

Dana Knapp

Very good. Rasheed, any words of wisdom there?

Rashida Phillips

We're looking at the sprayer or as George mentioned, I mean, we've been wiping down like crazy. I don't know the exact chemicals, but they are up there in grade. So certainly we have cleaning throughout the day from our cleaning staff. But with our five hundred seat theater, we're going to look into the sprayer to just make it more convenient and get kind of up on the trend in terms of keeping things sanitized properly.

Dana Knapp

Wonderful. But we have one last question and or comment, rather, I guess both Brenda Moore, she's shared with us that that they've lost one of their violinist's due to complications from COVID. And she's asking, how do I let other musicians know they will be safe as possible as some are already voicing fear? We are all very sad right now. I don't know, maybe Adam touched on the legalities of that kind of notification and then anyone else kind of weigh in. And I know Rashida talked about wellness and mental health. Maybe weigh in if you faced any of this kind of fear within your own staff and your own organization. So, Adam, what are some of those requirements?

Adam Doerr

Yeah, well, I mean, aside from legal requirements, you know, people like to say that HIPPA or ADA or things like that. I mean, unless you're really a health organization, you're not really tracking civil documents. But as a matter of best practices, you just don't want to be spreading any employees or anybody else's private sensitive medical information to anybody that doesn't have a need to know basis. And even then, the names shouldn't be you just, you know, somebody in the area may have COVID you please quarantine because it's something like that. And I'm sure Ellen's had plenty of opportunity to craft these kinds of messages. Right. And plans because it is a delicate situation. And depending on the specific context, the wording can be very, very different.

Dana Knapp

Ellen, do you have any words of wisdom there?

Ellen McDonald

And a good lawyer. I mean, I am I am tied at the hip with all with lawyers for everyone, everything I write has to be vetted. And until they're comfortable. Now just what Adam said,

Dana Knapp

OK, OK.

George Guastello

We have a daily health form that you have to fill out and it's on your phone and it's on everybody's outlook calendar. It pops up at eight o'clock in the morning and you have to fill it out. So it helps us trace the associates in when your boots on the ground every day. That's one issue internally. Support staff up here. We're on one off one week. We're on one week. And we have had associates that have had COVID and they had it when they were off the form we were able to protect. So compassion is the most important during that time for them, places that they can get tested if they feel uncomfortable. We have a whole list of that.

Dana Knapp

Rashida, would you talk to Brenda and to the rest of us about how you have really embraced the mental wellness and prioritizing health and wellness within your staff? How do you approach that?

Rashida Phillips

You know, you can't you can't possibly have that expertise level. Right. I got to a point here that I certainly am going around and having one on one conversations and supporting my staff daily with

an open door policy as well. But there comes a point that you have to turn it over to the medical professionals. So I say reach out to medical professionals, reach out to those community health folks who are sometimes, you know, willing to come in.

We've got Truman Health Center, who was a great partner of ours. They did not hesitate to come in and help us work through the scenarios. They might not have the answers, but hearing it from them, I think just feels a little more secure, folks. So don't try to face it on your own. Please call in folks who are healthy, who are in that health industry.

Dana Knapp

Casey, any thoughts there and then I'll hand it over to Michael.

Casey Claps

You know what Rashida said? There's there are professionals that should be consulted. What we try and just remind our team about is that we are responsible for taking care of one another and for keeping each other safe, that if you see someone who's not wearing a mask, you are absolutely empowered to remind them that this is to protect each other and also to make sure that the CARES Act resources are really well known among our team that there is there's paid medical leave for COVID and there's absolutely no reason to come to work if you're not feeling well.

Dana Knapp

Right. Very good. Thank you. I think those are fabulous. Adam and Ellen, as our subject experts, do you have any last thoughts or comments you'd like to share overall?

Adam Doerr

Keep; that dialogue, you know, keep that collaborative approach, I think that's excellent. Just do your best. That's all I can say.

Dana Knapp

Thank you. Thank you both. OK, well, we are looking at five oh two. We've run over just a bit. First and foremost, I want to thank Adam, Ellen, George, Casey and Rashida for sharing your wisdom, your challenges, everything you've learned. This is a dynamic time. And I certainly and we certainly appreciate your willingness to share that today. We are here in large part due to Michael Donovan and his leadership. And so I'm going to hand the wrap up over to Michael so you can share with us first and foremost a program that you have at our disposal, plus the next tidbit about the next webinar.

Michael Donovan

So thank you all. Thanks, Dana. This was a great webinar. We talked a little bit about communication today and the next webinar is on PR and communications during COVID in two weeks from today, Wednesday, October 14 at 4 p.m. We'll send you a reminder for that and also the link to the recording and transcript for this webinar along with the previous webinar this Friday. And if you haven't already joined the over 40 arts organizations that are Missouri ArtSafe certified statewide find out how at MissouriArtSafe.org. And finally, when you leave the webinar you'll be invited to share your feedback in a brief survey. Your comments help us continue to improve these webinars and identify new topics to cover. Thank you for joining us today. Stay safe and be well. I thank you.