



MCKENZIE PENTON
DIRECTOR OF EVENTS & BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT, IIUSA

To call 2020 an unprecedented year is perhaps a bit of an understatement. With worldwide shutdowns, office closures and cancelled events due to a global pandemic, everyone and every business is doing its best to stay afloat and if they are lucky, flourish.

As the industry leader in business development, networking and events, IIUSA was of course put into a difficult situation (along with everyone else) from the onset of the pandemic in early spring of this year. Namely, how do we continue to deliver value to our membership and ensure that industry stakeholders, investors, government officials and others remained informed and up to date all while stuck at home?

The answer may now seem simple as

IIUSA Goes Virtual

Continuing to Deliver Members Business Development and Educational Value in the Stay-at-Home Era

everyone has become more comfortable with living their lives (temporarily) through a Zoom video screen. However, in early March the decision was not so clear cut. In fact, as the COVID curtain began to fall on the U.S., IIUSA was gearing up for its next event in our Global Banquet Series in Johannesburg, South Africa. As our first-ever event in Africa, we were excited to go and honored to have the support of our members and the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce in our endeavor. With over 150 registrants and 12 sponsor organizations, we were assuredly ready to deliver a great event.

Of course, we did not go to Johannesburg in March, nor Washington, DC in May, Brussels in June or Sao Paulo in August. In fact, we cancelled events in almost every major investor market around the world. However, if there is a silver lining to that fact it is that we learned (on the fly) how to create effective digital marketing and educational

platforms in their place.

In late March, we proudly announced the launch of our Investor Market and Advocacy Webinars Series. To date, the investor market discussions have covered markets around the globe over the course

Continued On Page 49

IIUSA's Investor Market Webinar Series featured:

- 12 global events
- 25+ Sponsors highlighting their projects and services
- Expert discussions from industry leaders
- Well over 1000+ live participants!

Continued From Page 48

of 12 events and featured 25 sponsors highlighting their projects and services, illuminating expert discussions from industry leaders, and well over 1000+ live participants! The Advocacy Series was equally successful as we hosted the first-ever digital address by Charles Oppenheim, Chief of the Visa Control and Reporting Division, U.S. Department of State as well as a unique presentation by Congressional staff on the state of play and path forward for EB-5.

With the success of both of those series under our belts we felt confident enough to kick things up a notch with our Virtual EB-5 Industry Forum this fall. The event will cover many of the industry's hottest topics including redeployment, EB-5 litigation, real estate workouts, advocacy, investor market updates and much, much more. As of this writing, we have over 30 sponsor organizations, 50 speakers, 7 partner organizations and well over 300 registrants for the event. With such strong support and dynamic programming, we are

certain it will be informative and successful.

I would like to say our transition to the digital event space was seamless. However, I do not think anyone would believe that as we have all had our internet stop working, got stuck on mute or been the victim of an inopportune lawn mower in the background as we tried to navigate the digital work environment. In more serious terms, given the circumstances of this highly unpredictable and certainly unexpected year, I am proud of the work we have done to deliver value to our members and the EB-5 industry despite all of the obstacles.

IIUSA had to determine ways to reach new audiences, work collaboratively with partners across time zones, deliver content on virtual platforms and reengineer our marketing and business development prospective. We had to do this all while ensuring our members stayed engaged and enthusiastic about what we were up to; and for the most part, I am pleased to say we did just that. With over 16 virtual

events hosted since March, and a Virtual Forum upcoming, I am confident in saying that IIUSA has delivered on our mission of providing the industry with educational and business development opportunities and we have also laid the ground work for a successful 2021 of virtual and hopefully in-person events.

[Where Did We \(Virtually\) Go in 2020?](#)

So far this year, IIUSA has successfully hosted virtual events covering the largest investor markets and key target audiences including:

- India
- South Africa
- Brazil & Latin America
- Hong Kong & South Asia
- Russia
- Capitol Hill

On top of that, we have been pleased to see a truly global attendance for our events with many of the Investor Market Webinars

Continued On Page 50

Continued From Page 49

attracting not only market-specific attendees, but also those individuals from neighboring countries. In fact, our most recent discussion focused on the Brazilian market had live attendees from across Latin America including Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Panama and elsewhere.

Some Key Lessons Learned

1. There's no substitute for in-person meetings but virtual opportunities can be a cost-effective way to market and gain exposure...especially as one looks to enter a new market.
2. If you build it they will come. People continue to be eager for information on the EB-5 Program and with the barriers of travel and in-person gathering removed we have seen exponential international participation growth.
3. Partners are the key to success...and IIUSA is uniquely

positioned to capitalize on a strong international network.

4. Under promise and over deliver.
5. Virtual allows us to be more nimble and deliver educational content in a more timely manner than waiting for in-person events

Outlook for 2021 and Beyond

If nothing else, 2020 has shown us that much of what we as individuals, IIUSA as an organization and indeed EB-5 stakeholders as a whole deemed to be "essential" travel is anything but. That is not to say that we are not excited to once again be together in-person to help our members grow their businesses around the world.

However, as we grow and evolve in the digital environment we have come to realize that virtual educational and business development opportunities will continue to be of critical importance. That is not so much a prognostication on what 2021 may look like from a COVID perspective, but rather a recognition of the effectiveness of virtual events in the EB-5 space.

We know that when you get down to it no one is going to be closing a client, choosing a project to invest in or hiring an attorney from a Zoom meeting. But what the virtual landscape does offer projects, service providers and investors is an immediate entrance into a new market, access to timely information or a way to market a brand across the globe (and in multiple places at once with lower costs).

While it may be too early to tell exactly what 2021 has in store, we look forward to the continuation of our virtual series. In fact, the ground work has already started for virtual events focused on South Africa, Taiwan, Korea, India and Brazil for Q1 2021.

For members looking for business development and marketing opportunities in the year ahead, we invite you to consider our virtual platforms. A comprehensive 2021 schedule will be available soon, but in the interim we invite you to email info@iiusa.org to learn more about how you can get involved.

We hope to see you (virtually) in the year ahead! ▶

Thank you to our 2020 Event Partners



Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry





THANK YOU
to our

VIRTUAL FORUM SPONSORS



MONA SHAH & ASSOCIATES
GLOBAL
— ATTORNEYS AT LAW —

