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The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a unique opportunity to expand your professional knowledge and accelerate your lifelong learning.

While the coronavirus has forced many large venues to close their doors, preventing in-person training and conferences, many organizations, including the [Association of International Certified Professional Accountants](#) (Association), which combines the strength of the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), have successfully transitioned to online

conferences, webcasts and online trainings to assure members stay current in their

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For ten years, the AICPA has offered both online and onsite attendance at our conferences. During this time, we've seen digital delivery grow into a valued professional development experience. For the first time ever, the AICPA will offer its annual **ENGAGE conference** as a fully digital experience that has been tailored to assure attendees get the knowledge and experience they've come to expect from the event.

As you consider your Continuing Professional Education (CPE) this year and into the future, here are things that may be surprising about online learning:

It's relevant

Pick and choose the sessions and presentations most relevant to you. Digital event organizers are curating their roster of speakers and presentation topics to create exciting and interesting agendas. Plus, presenters are tailoring and customizing their content to meet your interests and educational needs in ways that work best for digital.

Moreover, many virtual delivery systems offer multiple ways to generate real-time feedback from participants, so speakers can truly see what topics are of most interest to you and assure they are covered thoroughly.

It's timely

Learn critical information and emerging issues in your field. Webcasts allow presenters to quickly deliver timely information and insights about pressing matters.

For example, the AICPA has hosted sessions on business continuity during **the COVID-19 pandemic**, including sessions on remote audits, taxes, the Payroll Protection Program and other components of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stimulus Act.

In addition, online learning is great opportunity to build skills that will help

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Often, this means you can expect videos, demonstrations or situational examples that will clearly convey difficult concepts.

It's interactive

Online events and webinars have never been so engaging. Presenters are using real-time surveys or quizzes to gauge your thoughts, perspectives and comprehension. They're using games to foster attendee interaction and participation. And they're using break-out rooms to encourage small-team collaboration.

Many conference apps and event platforms now allow you to connect and chat with other attendees virtually and to promote ideas and information on social media channels.

Virtual expo halls provide flexibility to peruse the many vendors supporting your industry and allow you to choose who to engage with.

So, while you may not be chatting with attendees over hors d'oeuvres, there are opportunities to mingle and meet new people.

It's more than just a screen

Remote education is now a lot more than sitting in front of a screen. Presenters are augmenting their online presentations with worksheets and other materials. Some are complementing presentations with podcasts. Others are taking things outdoors, holding audio-only presentations and encouraging participants to take a walk as they listen.

This not only makes sessions more interesting, it aids learning. Research show that blended learning, which is individual study plus instructor led education, is the most effective way to teach new material.

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