communitybrands®

2024 Event Trends Study

IGNITE EVENT SUCCESS: TECHNOLOGY IS THE GAME-CHANGER FOR ENHANCED ATTENDEE EXPERIENCES AND VALUE

2024

TRENDS,
INSIGHTS,
AND TIPS FOR
CREATING MORE
SUCCESSFUL
EVENTS

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Authors:

Jennifer Lee, President, Association and Events Division, Community Brands

Jen Martin, Product Marketing Manager, Events, Community Brands

Tirrah Switzer, Senior Director of Product Marketing, Associations and Events, Community Brands

Survey conducted by: **Edge Research**

Foreword

The events industry has always been a dynamic landscape, and event professionals' dedication to navigating recent changes and challenges is truly commendable. Those efforts have resulted in increasingly positive outcomes, so it's especially rewarding for us to share data to support – factually, for the second consecutive year – that the future of events continues to be bright.

While celebrating achievements and remaining optimistic, the data also makes clear that Planners understand how important continuous progress really is and that there's no time for complacency in this evolving domain. Planners press on, even while facing significant challenges, including worries about potential economic, staffing, and supply chain issues, and choosing the right event technology.

Again this year, we've found a distinct correlation between technology adoption and overall event growth and success, so it's no surprise organizations are embracing and investing in event technology designed to amplify their impact. We know event professionals are tech-savvy and action-oriented people. So, drawing from our close relationships with events clients, we strive to understand what they really need to create the most memorable and streamlined attendee experiences. Because with memorable experiences, engagement and overall value skyrockets – and that's a win for everyone.

Just as our longstanding Association Trends research study has been instrumental in guiding member-based organizations, this second annual Event Trends Study explores compelling questions about Planners' mindsets, and examines transformative industry shifts. Our goal is simple: Provide accurate data, powerful tools, and connected technology solutions designed to help Event Planners elevate the attendee experience, foster deeper engagement with sponsors and exhibitors, and leverage event technology to drive event success.

We are thrilled to share this year's study. It's stuffed with actionable insights and data that illuminates current industry trends and offers practical takeaways. As more organizations harness the potential of technology and data, we anticipate an exciting new year in the events world – one defined by innovation and unparalleled event experiences.

Jennifer Lee
President, Associations & Events,
Community Brands

WHY CARE ABOUT THIS STUDY?

Learn important industry insights.

Trends in the outlooks, priorities, and challenges of event planners

How event planners are using technology to improve key aspects of event management

Which strategies event planners are using to market events and improve the event experience

Tips for how to use the information in this study to take your events to the next level

Discover important steps to ignite event success.

Uplevel the attendee experience.

Improving the attendee experience is a top priority – with Event Planners focused on attendee satisfaction, experiences, trust, and engagement.

Re-focus on sponsors and exhibitors.

Sponsors and exhibitors are a high-priority audience for Event Planners, with a focus on increasing exhibitor/sponsor satisfaction, helping sponsors/exhibitors increase their ROI, and increasing the number of exhibitors/sponsors.

Don't forget about your speakers.

This study indicates that influencers are a top five marketing channel for reaching attendees. Your event speakers are also influencers in your industry or profession that can help you to drive attendance.

Evolve your use of technology.

Respondents who say their organization is an early adopter of technology report stronger growth in almost every area of event management and execution. Tech-forward organizations plan to incorporate new and better event technology to continuously improve their events.

A survey was conducted of 541 adults in the United States who work in event planning/management – either for a company that specializes in this area or for which event planning/management is their area of responsibility within their company/organization – for commercial events, conferences, and/or tradeshow planning and/or management at least five times per year. The term "Event Planner" refers specifically to those who responded to the survey. The online survey took place between February 5, 2024 and February 23, 2024. Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report equal 100 percent.

KEY FINDINGS

1 The outlook for events remains bright.

Event Planners continue to report positive event trends, with almost all reporting that event trends have improved or remained the same. They report growth in multiple areas, including increases in event revenue and budgets as well as number of in-person events and attendees. They predict even better performance in these areas for next year.

	Increased	Same/DK/NA	Decreased
Number of attendees	57%	33%	10%
Event revenue	55%	36%	9%
Operating budget	52%	38%	10%
Number of in-person events	52%	36%	12%
Number of sponsors	46%	46%	8%
Number of exhibitors	41%	50%	9%
Number of speakers	39%	54%	7%
Number of paid staff	38%	52%	10%
Number of abstract submissions	30%	62%	8%

Legend: ■ Increased ■ Same/DK/NA ■ Decreased
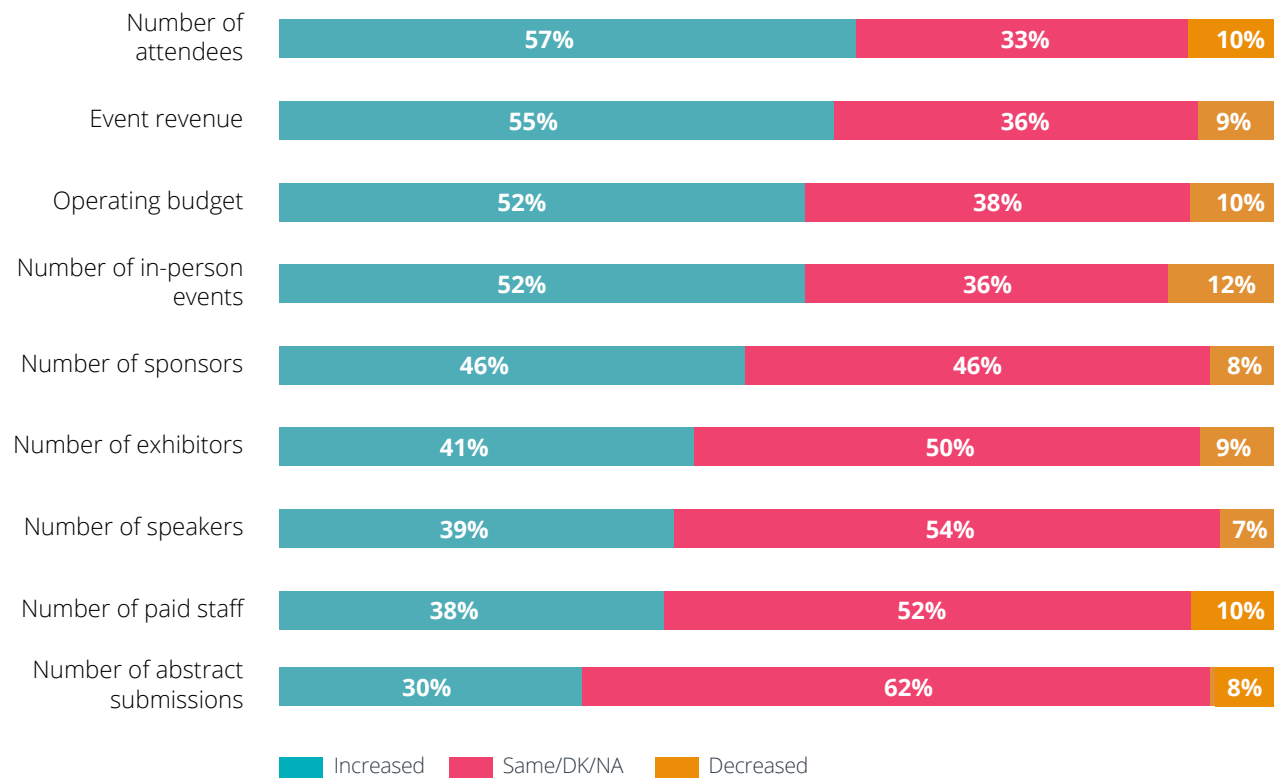
2 Attendee experience is the priority.

This year, many Event Planners' top priorities for the next 12 months involve areas that impact the attendee experience, including improving attendee satisfaction, experiences, trust, and engagement. While majorities of Event Planners say event attendance is increasing, they are slightly more satisfied with the *number* of attendees versus the *quality* of attendees. And although most say they have an attendee engagement strategy, a closer look reveals an area of opportunity: only 31% express full confidence that their organization has a holistic event attendee experience strategy and approach.

Top priorities for Event Planners next 12 months

Increasing attendee satisfaction	**58%**
Providing a memorable attendee experience	**57%**
Increasing revenue	**55%**

3 Sponsors and exhibitors are an important audience for Event Planners.

Increasing sponsor/exhibitor satisfaction is in the top 10 list of priorities for Event Planners. Other priorities include helping sponsors/exhibitors increase their ROI and increasing the number of exhibitors/sponsors. For those who aim to increase the volume, planned approaches include attracting more first-time sponsors/exhibitors and creating unique experiences and new package offerings. And even though Event Planners are thinking about numbers, majorities are satisfied with the *quality* of exhibitors/sponsors.

49%
Increasing exhibitor/ sponsor satisfaction is a top priority

4 Technology plays a key role in event success and growth.

As with last year's study, organizations that are early adopters of technology report stronger growth in almost every area of event execution. Meanwhile, almost half of Event Planners say that incorporating new or better technology into events is a top priority, and choosing the *right* event technology is among the five biggest challenges to achieving event goals. The top areas for technology investment in the next 12 months include data analysis, mobile event app, and event registration.
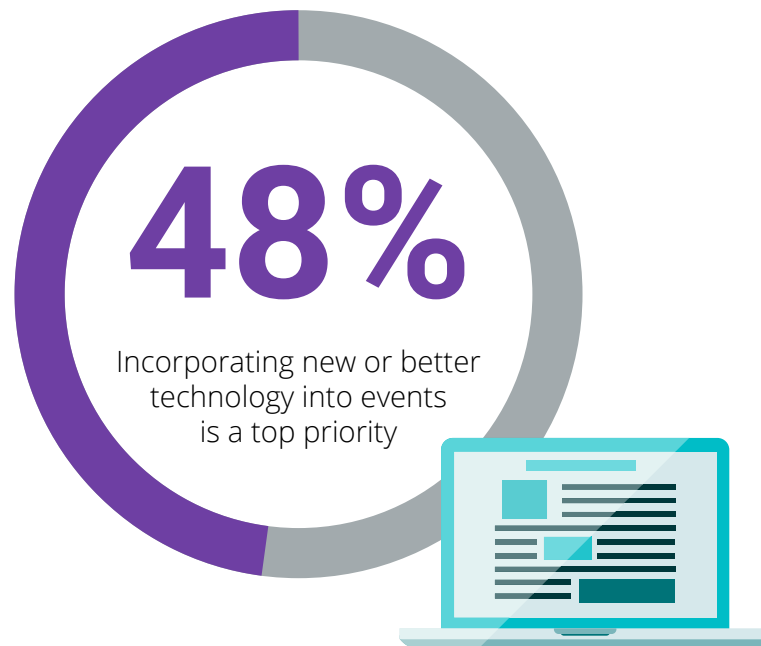
5 Event AI usage is growing.

Outside of event technology, Event Planners are embracing other technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI) – which is not surprising given the rise and growth of generative AI in 2023. Almost half of respondents say they are using or plan to use AI in their events – up 12 points from last year's study. They are using AI in multiple ways: simple data analysis, analyzing event buzz, and creating personalized event experiences for attendees. About a third of Event Planners are incorporating virtual reality solutions, and a quarter are adding immersive experiences.

48%
Incorporating new or better technology into events is a top priority

45%
Using/planning to use artificial intelligence (AI)
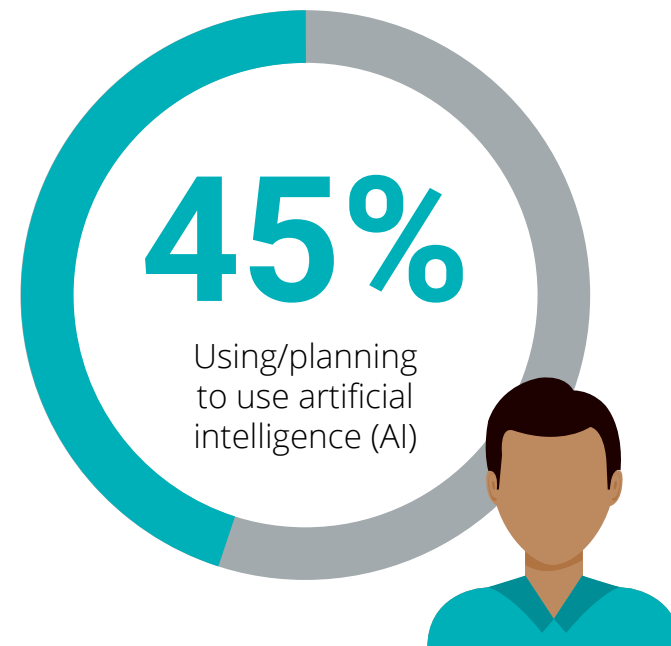
EVENT PLANNERS' OUTLOOKS, PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES, AND CONCERNS

Trends

Event Planners remain optimistic. They continue to report **positive trends**, including the number of attendees, event revenue, operating budget, and number of in-person events. Event Planners reporting an increase in operating budget and number of sponsors is up significantly from 2023. As they look toward the next 12 months, Event Planners predict even more increases in all areas except the number of abstract submissions.

Event trends

Predict increase next 12 months

	Increased	Same/DK/NA	Decreased	Predict increase
Number of attendees	57%	33%	10%	**59%**
Event revenue	55%	36%	9%	**59%**
Operating budget	52%	38%	10%	**58%**
Number of in-person events	52%	36%	12%	**57%**
Number of sponsors	46%	46%	8%	**55%**
Number of exhibitors	41%	50%	9%	**50%**
Number of speakers	39%	54%	7%	**47%**
Number of paid staff	38%	52%	10%	**45%**
Number of abstract submissions	30%	62%	8%	**35%**

Legend: ▮ Increased ▮ Same/DK/NA ▮ Decreased

Figure 1. Questions asked: Thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the last 12 months, have each of the following increased, remained the same, or decreased? | And thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the next 12 months, do you think each of the following will increase, remain the same, or decrease?

A **look back at Event Planners' predictions** from Community Brands' 2023 study shows most were on target. The only exceptions: increases in the number of exhibitors, speakers, and abstract submissions were lower than expected.

What They Predicted in 2023

	Reported increase	Predicted in 2023
Number of attendees	57%	58%
Event revenue	55%	NA
Operating budget	52%	52%
Number of in-person events	52%	55%
Number of sponsors	46%	48%
Number of exhibitors	41%	48%
Number of speakers	39%	46%
Number of paid staff	38%	41%
Number of abstract submissions	30%	43%

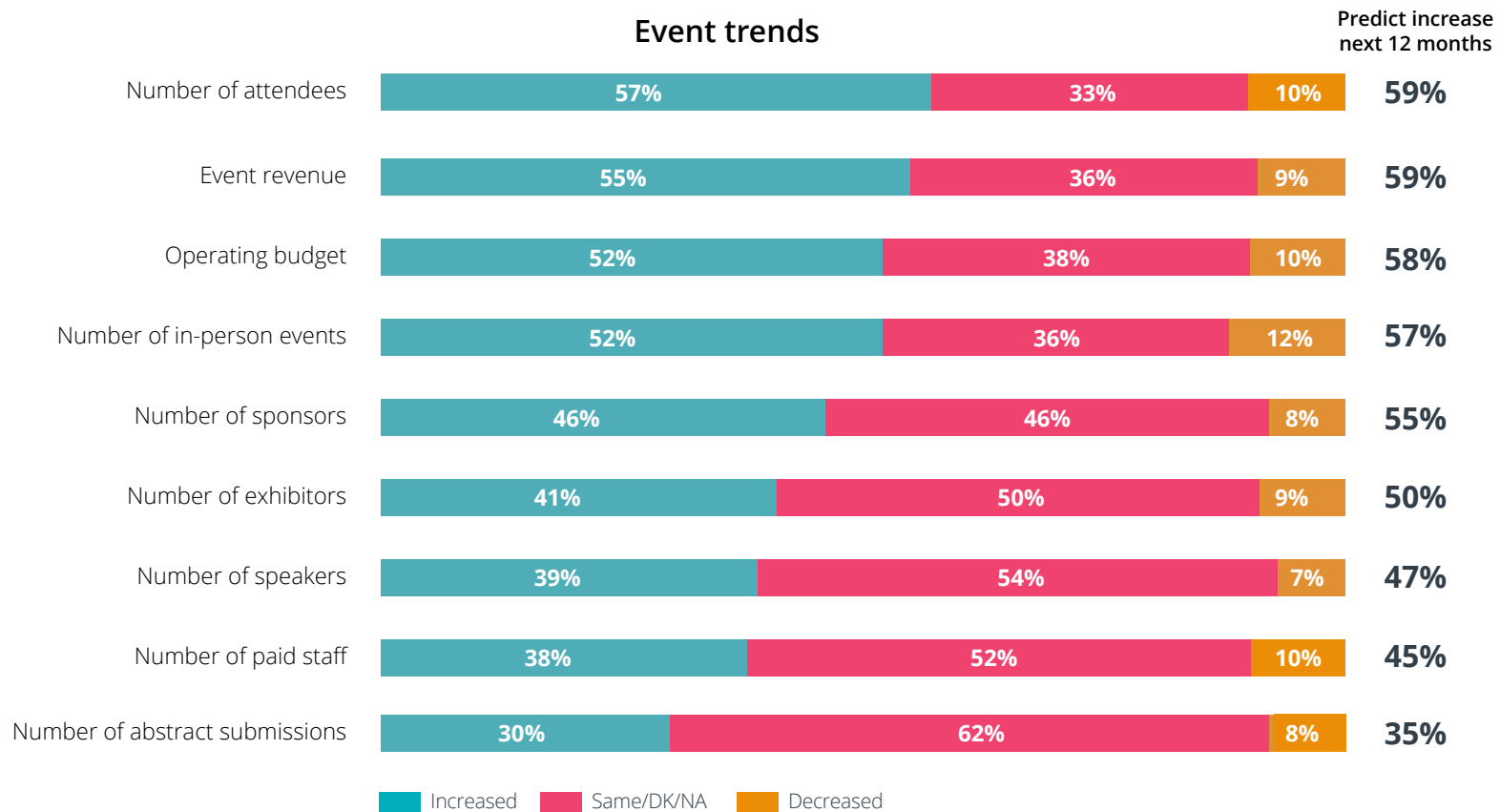■ Reported increase in event patterns over last 12 months
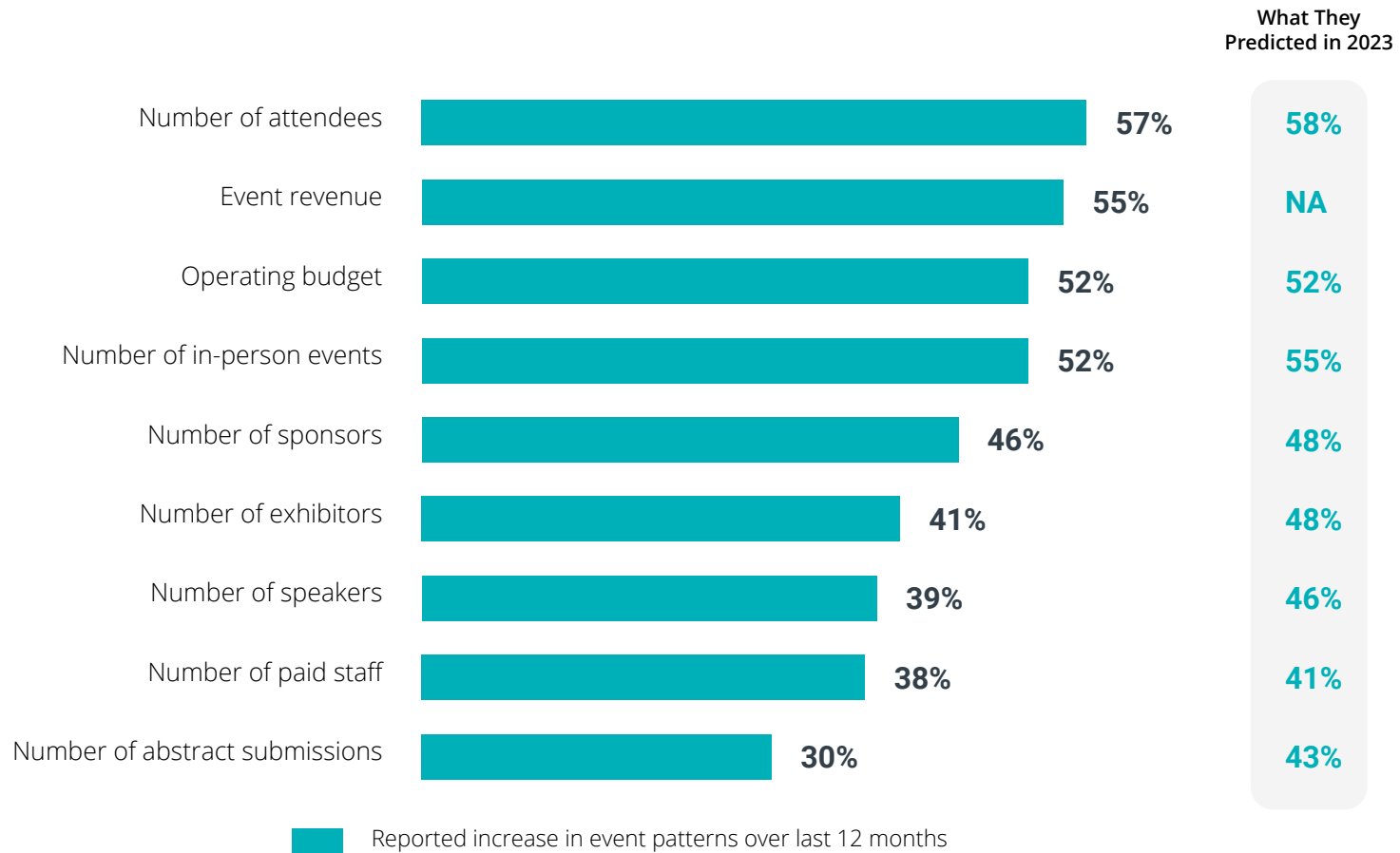
Figure 2. Questions asked: Thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the last 12 months, have each of the following increased, remained the same, or decreased? (2024 survey) | And thinking about your events/meetings/conferences/tradeshows over the next 12 months, do you think each of the following will increase, remain the same, or decrease? (2023 survey)

Priorities and concerns

Event Planners' **top priorities** are mostly focused on increasing revenue and on the attendee experience (increasing attendee satisfaction, providing a memorable attendee experience, building trust with attendees, and improving attendee engagement) Other top priorities are increasing attendance, increasing exhibitor/sponsor satisfaction, building brand awareness, and proving ROI.

As with last year's study, incorporating new or better technology into events also makes the list of top priorities, which suggests that Event Planners see the value of using technology to help achieve their most important goals.

Top 10 priorities for Event Planners for the next 12 months

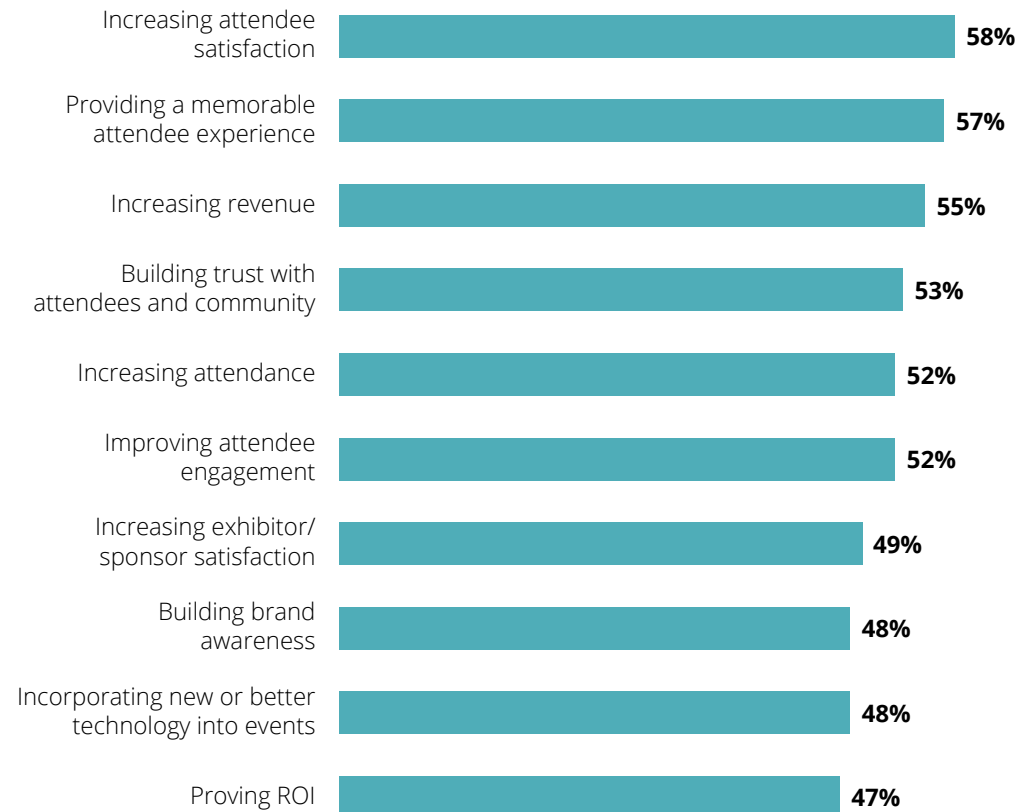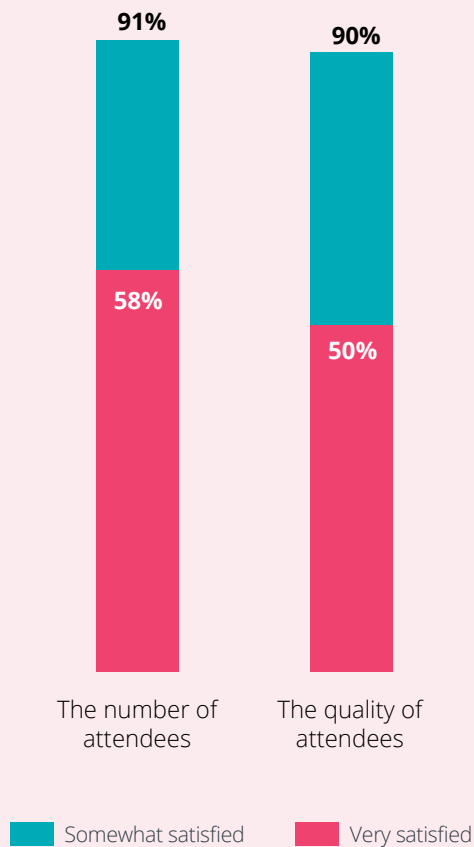| Priority	%
Increasing attendee satisfaction	58%
Providing a memorable attendee experience	57%
Increasing revenue	55%
Building trust with attendees and community	53%
Increasing attendance	52%
Improving attendee engagement	52%
Increasing exhibitor/ sponsor satisfaction	49%
Building brand awareness	48%
Incorporating new or better technology into events	48%
Proving ROI	47%

Figure 3. Question asked: Thinking about the events/ conferences/tradeshows your organization is planning in the next 12 months, how much of a priority is each of the following?

A closer look at increasing attendance

While event attendance has improved and is expected to continue improving, slightly more Event Planners are very satisfied with the *number* of attendees versus the *quality* of attendees. Among those Event Planners who prioritize increasing attendance, majorities say they plan to accomplish this goal by attracting more first-time attendees and creating unique experiences.

Event planner viewpoints of attendee numbers and quality of attendees

	The number of attendees	The quality of attendees
Total	91%	90%
Very satisfied	58%	50%

Legend:
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

Planned approaches to increase attendance

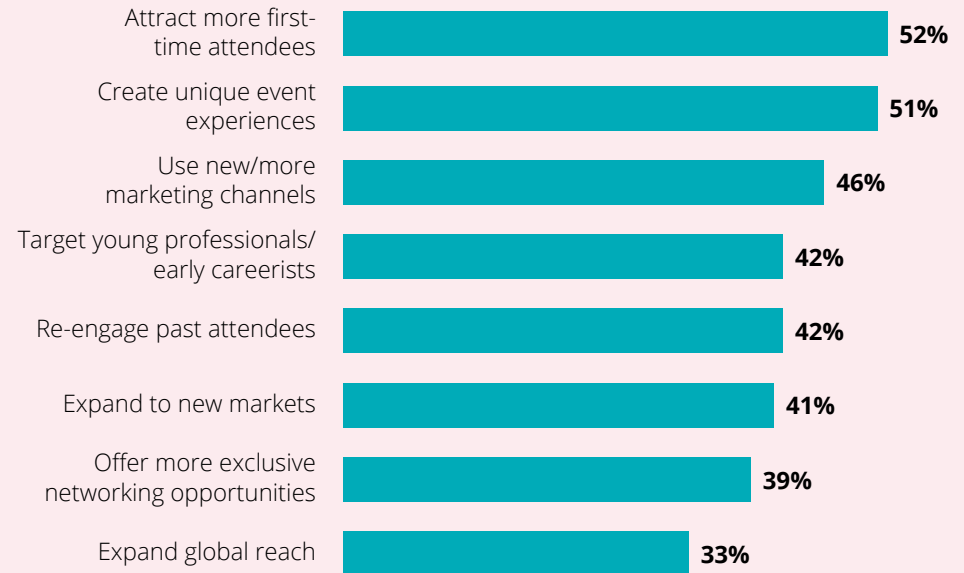| Approach	%
Attract more first-time attendees	52%
Create unique event experiences	51%
Use new/more marketing channels	46%
Target young professionals/ early careerists	42%
Re-engage past attendees	42%
Expand to new markets	41%
Offer more exclusive networking opportunities	39%
Expand global reach	33%

Figure 4 and 5. Questions asked: Thinking about your most recent event/conference/tradeshow, how satisfied were you with each of the following? | You indicated that increasing attendance is important to you. How do you plan to achieve this? Select all that apply.

Despite their overall optimism, Event Planners still face **challenges**. As in 2023, they continue to be concerned about economic issues, including inflation/supply chain issues, tighter budgets, and economic downturn. Nonprofit organizations appear more concerned than other organizations about an economic downturn. After economic worries, choosing the right event technology emerges this year as a top concern. Corporations, associations, and government organizations rank choosing the right event technology significantly higher than nonprofit organizations.

Top challenges to achieving event goals

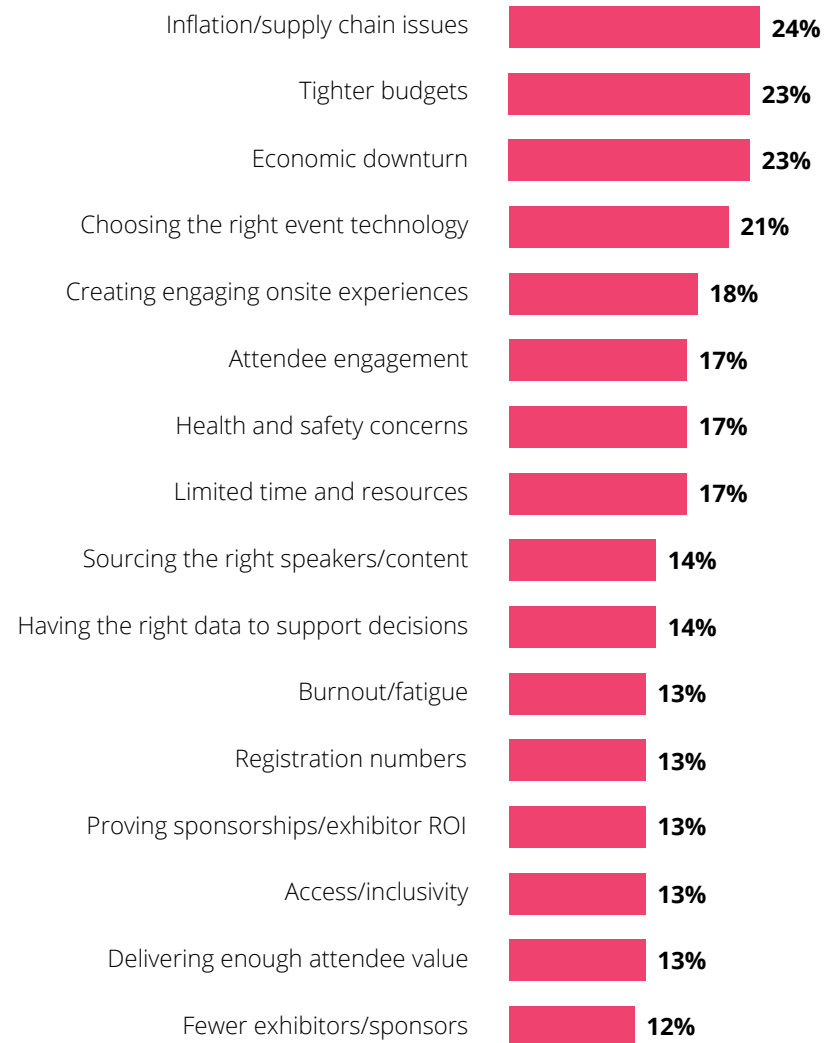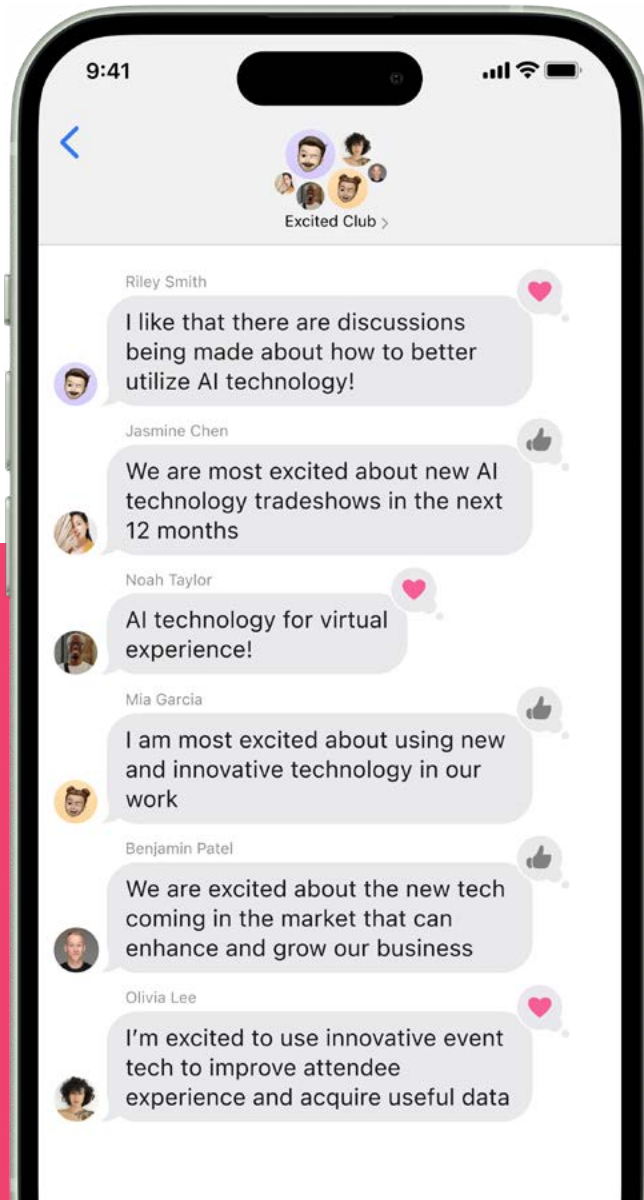| Challenge	%
Inflation/supply chain issues	24%
Tighter budgets	23%
Economic downturn	23%
Choosing the right event technology	21%
Creating engaging onsite experiences	18%
Attendee engagement	17%
Health and safety concerns	17%
Limited time and resources	17%
Sourcing the right speakers/content	14%
Having the right data to support decisions	14%
Burnout/fatigue	13%
Registration numbers	13%
Proving sponsorships/exhibitor ROI	13%
Access/inclusivity	13%
Delivering enough attendee value	13%
Fewer exhibitors/sponsors	12%

Figure 6. Question asked: Which of the following, if any, are the biggest challenges to achieving your organization's priorities/goals related to events/ conferences/tradeshows over the next year? Pick up to 3.

What Event Planners are saying about events over the next 12 months

What are you most excited about?

Excited Club >

Riley Smith
I like that there are discussions being made about how to better utilize AI technology!

Jasmine Chen
We are most excited about new AI technology tradeshows in the next 12 months

Noah Taylor
AI technology for virtual experience!

Mia Garcia
I am most excited about using new and innovative technology in our work

Benjamin Patel
We are excited about the new tech coming in the market that can enhance and grow our business

Olivia Lee
I'm excited to use innovative event tech to improve attendee experience and acquire useful data

What are your biggest concerns?

Concerned Club >

Isabella Rodriguez
Recession is a large worry. When economic times are hard, event industry takes a hard hit

Ethan Williams
Current price increases across several vendors...

Sophia Nguyen
My biggest worry is the slow down of events due to the recession.

Benjamin Ramirez
Handling venue, transportation, and supply chain challenges

Maya Patel
Having enough employees to take care of all the aspects of our event coordination

Being able to procure necessary supplies for event

Jackson Barnes
Having enough staff to cover the tradeshows in the next 12 months

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THE TECHNOLOGY MINDSET OF EVENT PLANNERS

Technology adoption and event success

The **adoption of technology** remained consistent from the 2023 study, with a directional increase in the number who describe their organization as tech-forward (80% describe their organization as an early adopter or ahead of the curve, versus 77% in 2023).

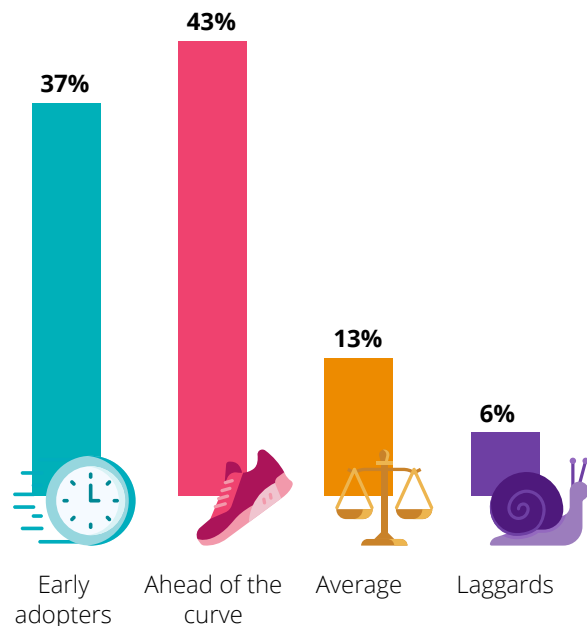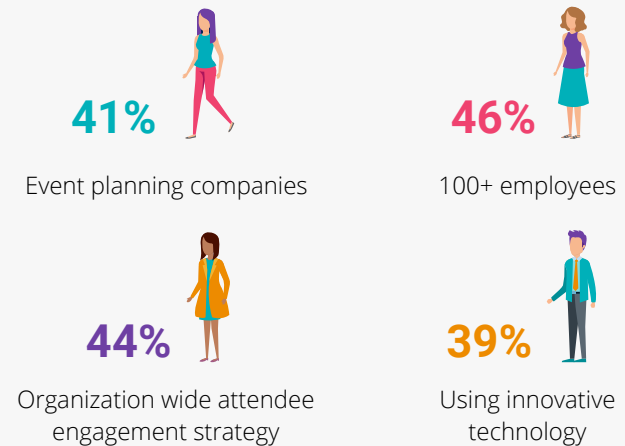**Event Planners' viewpoints of their organization's pace of technology adoption**

Early adopters	Ahead of the curve	Average	Laggards
37%	43%	13%	6%

Figure 7. Question asked: Thinking of your organization, how would you describe its adoption of new technologies?

Those more likely to rate themselves as early adopters are:

41%
Event planning companies

46%
100+ employees

44%
Organization wide attendee engagement strategy

39%
Using innovative technology

When asked to rate their organization's overall use of technology for events, 82% of Event Planners respond "very good" or "excellent" – up slightly from 80% in 2023.

Event Planners' viewpoints of their organization's use of technology

34%	48%	13%	4%	1%
Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor

Figure 8. Question asked: How would you rate your organization's overall use of event technology for events, conferences, and/or tradeshows?

As with the 2023 study, Event Planners who rate their organization as an early adopter of technology are more likely to report growth in almost every area of event management and execution.
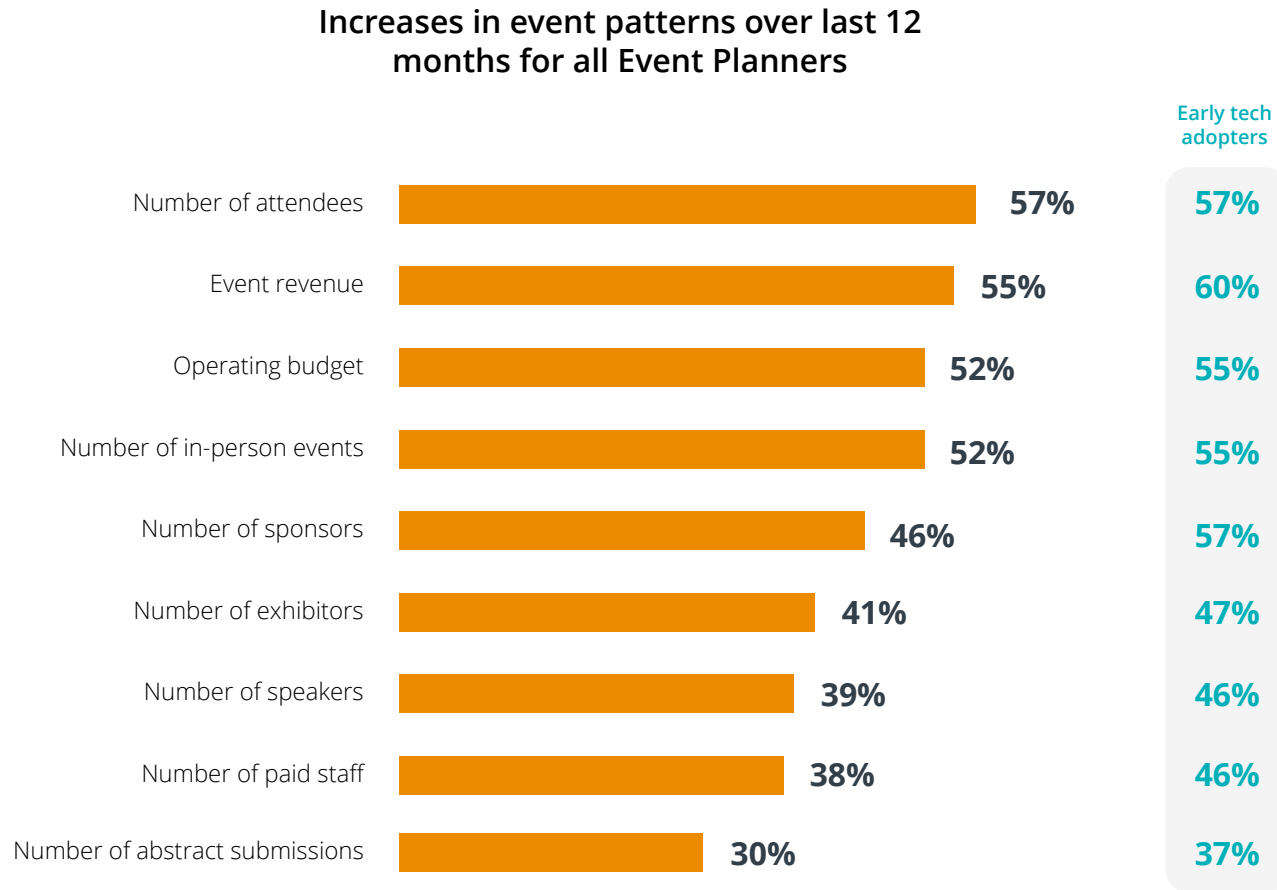
Increases in event patterns over last 12 months for all Event Planners

		Early tech adopters
Number of attendees	57%	57%
Event revenue	55%	60%
Operating budget	52%	55%
Number of in-person events	52%	55%
Number of sponsors	46%	57%
Number of exhibitors	41%	47%
Number of speakers	39%	46%
Number of paid staff	38%	46%
Number of abstract submissions	30%	37%

Figure 9. Questions asked: Thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the last 12 months, have each of the following increased, remained the same, or decreased? | And thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the next 12 months, do you think each of the following will increase, remain the same, or decrease?

In terms of **most used technology**, event registration is both most used and considered most important. Event Planners also consider data analysis and 365 mobile event app to be of top importance among those who use them.
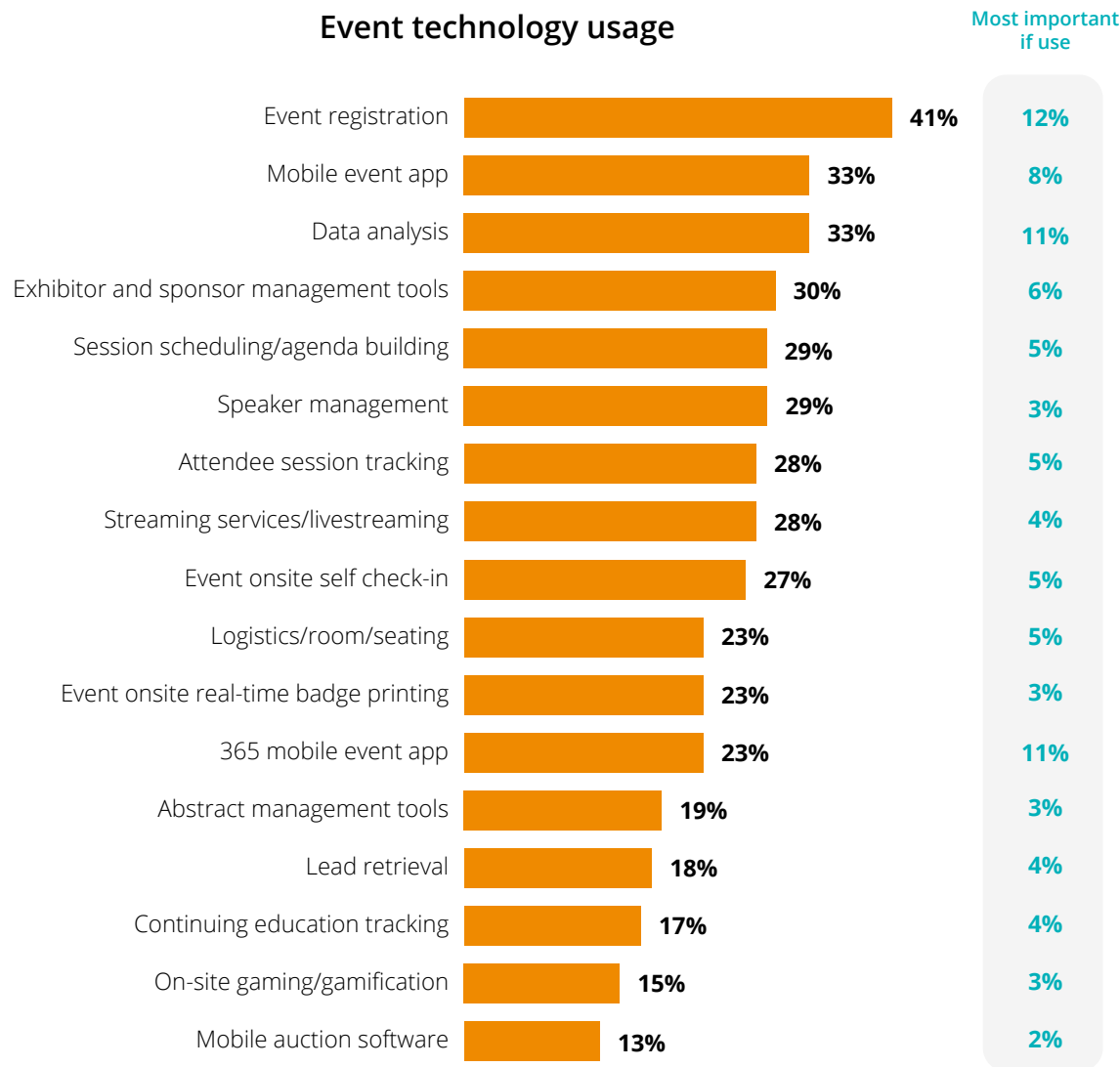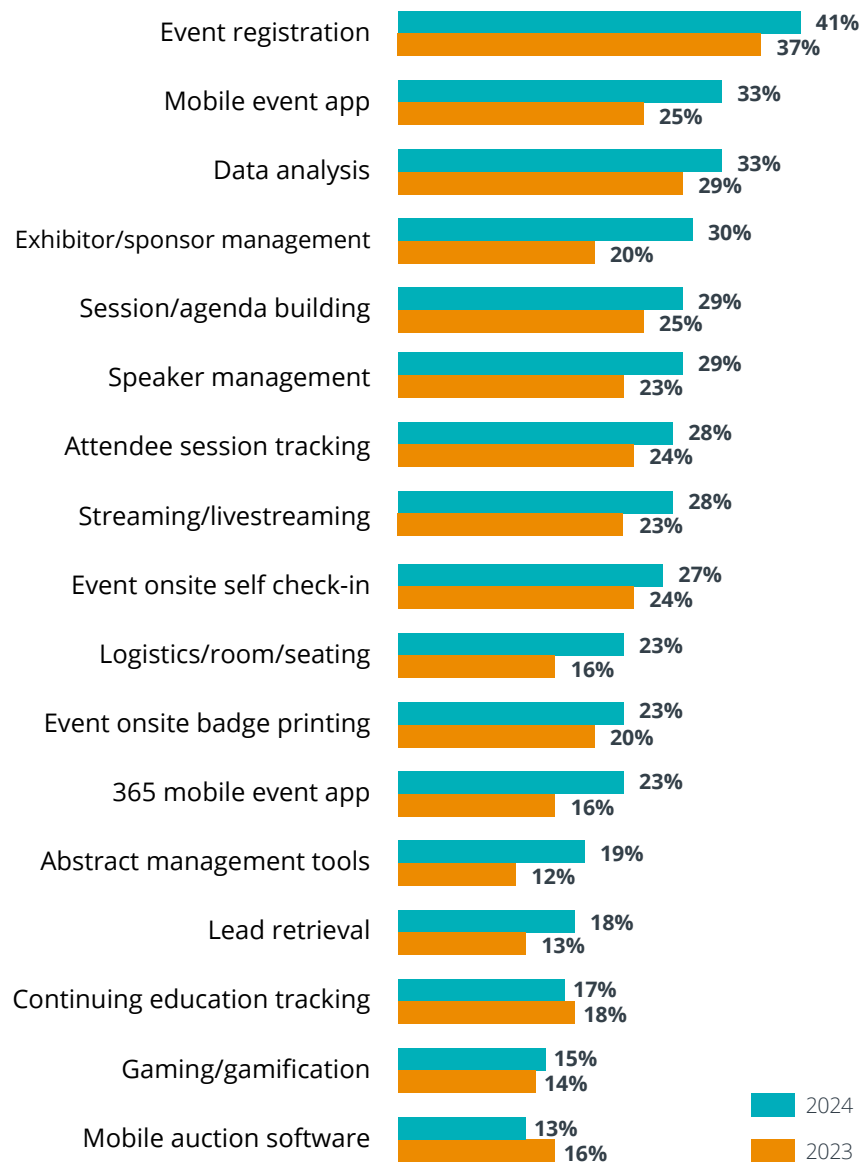
Event technology usage

Technology	Usage	Most important if use
Event registration	41%	12%
Mobile event app	33%	8%
Data analysis	33%	11%
Exhibitor and sponsor management tools	30%	6%
Session scheduling/agenda building	29%	5%
Speaker management	29%	3%
Attendee session tracking	28%	5%
Streaming services/livestreaming	28%	4%
Event onsite self check-in	27%	5%
Logistics/room/seating	23%	5%
Event onsite real-time badge printing	23%	3%
365 mobile event app	23%	11%
Abstract management tools	19%	3%
Lead retrieval	18%	4%
Continuing education tracking	17%	4%
On-site gaming/gamification	15%	3%
Mobile auction software	13%	2%

Figure 10. Questions asked: Which of the following event technology, if any, are you currently using for pre-event planning, event execution, and/or post-event analysis? Select all that apply. | Which of the following event technology that you are currently using, which is the MOST important to your organization?
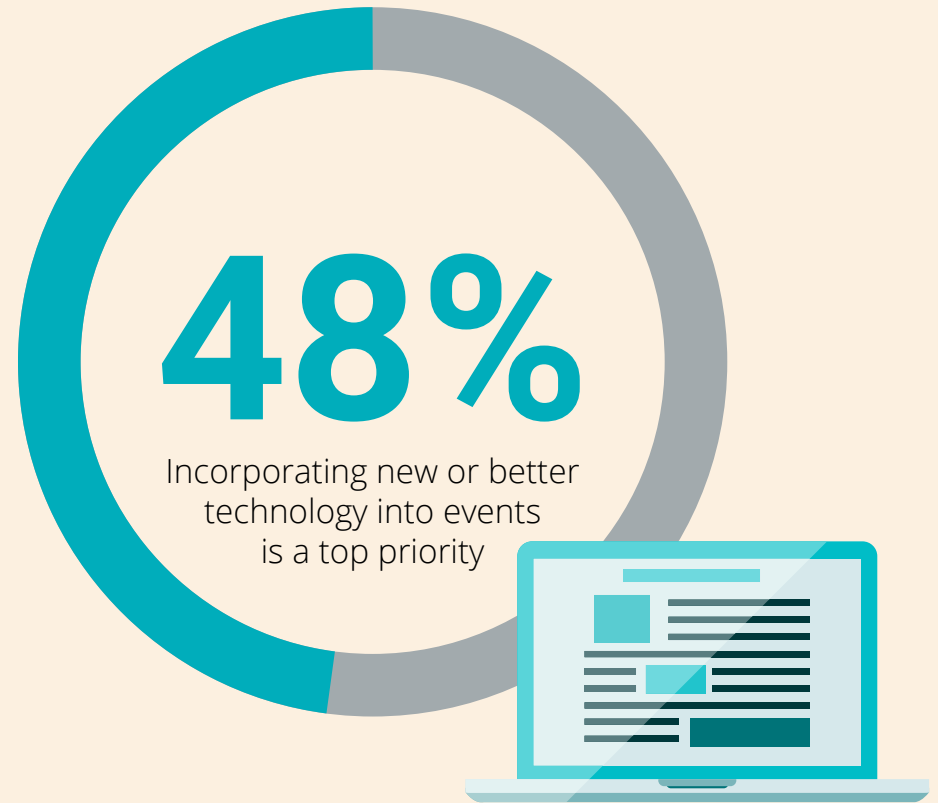
Event technology usage

Technology	2024	2023
Event registration	41%	37%
Mobile event app	33%	25%
Data analysis	33%	29%
Exhibitor/sponsor management	30%	20%
Session/agenda building	29%	25%
Speaker management	29%	23%
Attendee session tracking	28%	24%
Streaming/livestreaming	28%	23%
Event onsite self check-in	27%	24%
Logistics/room/seating	23%	16%
Event onsite badge printing	23%	20%
365 mobile event app	23%	16%
Abstract management tools	19%	12%
Lead retrieval	18%	13%
Continuing education tracking	17%	18%
Gaming/gamification	15%	14%
Mobile auction software	13%	16%

Many technologies saw an uptick in use over the past year, including mobile event apps, exhibitor/sponsor management, and speaker management.

Figure 11. Question asked: Which of the following event technology, if any, are you currently using for pre-event planning, event execution, and/or post-event analysis? Select all that apply.

Technology investment

About half of Event Planners say incorporating new or better technology into events is a top priority. The percentage is higher for early adopters and those that have an attendee engagement strategy.

48%

Incorporating new or better technology into events is a top priority

Technology investment is expected to increase or be steady in most areas, though Event Planners expect to see a decline in investment in a few product categories.
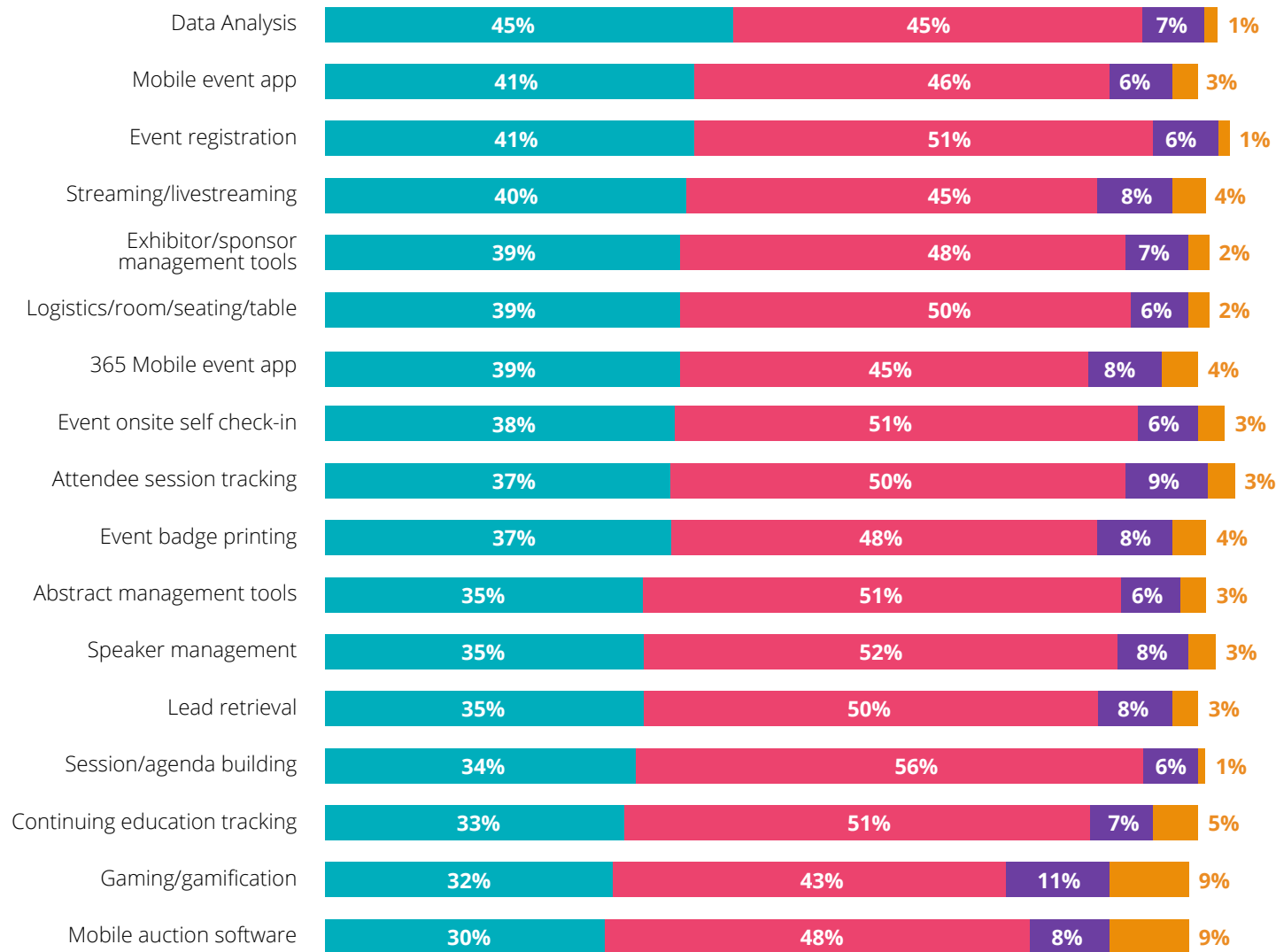
Event technology investment in next 12 months

Technology	Invest more	Invest the same	Invest less	Won't invest
Data Analysis	45%	45%	7%	1%
Mobile event app	41%	46%	6%	3%
Event registration	41%	51%	6%	1%
Streaming/livestreaming	40%	45%	8%	4%
Exhibitor/sponsor management tools	39%	48%	7%	2%
Logistics/room/seating/table	39%	50%	6%	2%
365 Mobile event app	39%	45%	8%	4%
Event onsite self check-in	38%	51%	6%	3%
Attendee session tracking	37%	50%	9%	3%
Event badge printing	37%	48%	8%	4%
Abstract management tools	35%	51%	6%	3%
Speaker management	35%	52%	8%	3%
Lead retrieval	35%	50%	8%	3%
Session/agenda building	34%	56%	6%	1%
Continuing education tracking	33%	51%	7%	5%
Gaming/gamification	32%	43%	11%	9%
Mobile auction software	30%	48%	8%	9%

Figure 12. Question asked: Thinking about the next 12 months, will your organization invest more, less, or the same in each of the following?

Legend: Invest more · Invest the same · Invest less · Won't invest

Asked about which **additional technology** they use or plan to use in the next 12 months, Event Planners place Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics, and virtual reality at the top of the list. Both AI and workflow automation current or planned usage increased from the 2023 study. Early adopters are more likely to use or incorporate many of the additional technologies listed.

Additional technology using/planning to use

Early adopter

Technology	Using/planning	Early adopter
Artificial Intelligence	45%	53%
Data Analytics	35%	37%
Virtual Reality	34%	38%
Workflow Automation	28%	33%
Augmented Reality	27%	33%
Immersive experiences	23%	28%
Internet of things	21%	25%
Facial recognition	19%	21%
Machine learning	18%	18%
Holograms	15%	13%
Robotic process automation	14%	15%
Wayfinding	10%	13%
NFTs	10%	9%
None of the above	12%	9%

Figure 13. Question asked: Here is some additional technology. Which of the following, if any, are you currently using in your events, or planning to incorporate over the next 12 months? Select all that apply.

Additional technology using/planning to use

	Corporations	Government	Non-Profits	Associations
Artificial Intelligence	48%	57%	49%	49%
Data Analytics	36%	49%	36%	38%
Virtual Reality	37%	37%	32%	38%
Workflow Automation	29%	28%	26%	31%
Augmented Reality	29%	40%	31%	32%
Immersive experiences	24%	30%	26%	25%
Internet of things	23%	35%	21%	22%
Facial recognition	19%	21%	18%	22%
Machine learning	18%	21%	16%	20%
Holograms	14%	21%	21%	17%
Robotic process automation	15%	15%	13%	15%
Wayfinding	10%	20%	10%	11%
NFTs	9%	14%	11%	11%
None of the above	13%	5%	17%	7%

Government organizations are significantly more likely to use data analytics, augmented reality, internet of things, and wayfinding technologies. Corporations are less likely to use augmented reality and holograms.

Figure 14. Question asked: Here is some additional technology. Which of the following, if any, are you currently using in your events, or planning to incorporate over the next 12 months? Select all that apply.

How Event Planners plan to use innovative technologies

In the next 12 months, how will your organization use these technologies at your event or in your planning?

45%
Using/planning to use artificial intelligence (AI)
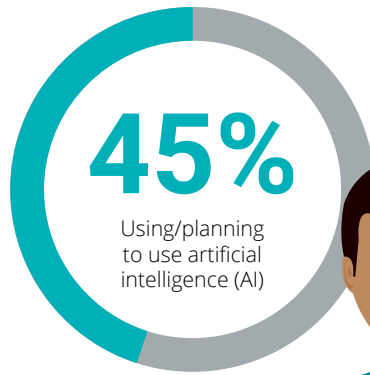
Mainly used for some **project reminders and simple questionnaire** analysis. In-depth application requires continuous learning.

Using AI algorithms to **analyze social media data** and sentiment to gauge event buzz and engagement levels in real-time.

We will use AI to **create personalized event experiences** for attendees.

We plan to use it to **add virtual stages, interactive walls, and smart lighting** to create an engaging atmosphere.

Utilizing **360-degree video tours to showcase event venues** and exhibition spaces to remote attendees.

For **better effects on our stage performances** and crowd reactions.

34%
Using/planning to use virtual reality (VR)
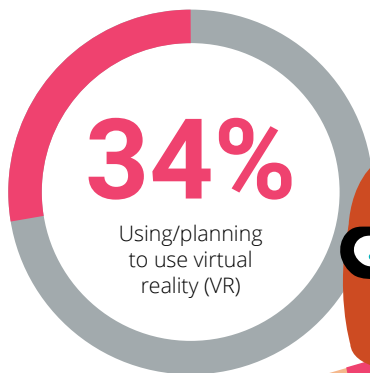
Offer **virtual reality experiences during hybrid events** to engage remote attendees.

We plan to use virtual reality (VR) technology to create **immersive and engaging training sessions** for our event staff and volunteers.

Create **training simulations and product demonstrations.**

23%
Using/planning to use immersive experiences

EVENT ENGAGEMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Attendee engagement

With attendee engagement as a high priority, it's perhaps not surprising that nearly 9 in 10 Event Planners say their organization has an **attendee engagement strategy**. That rate is higher for Event Planners whose organizations are early adopters of technology.
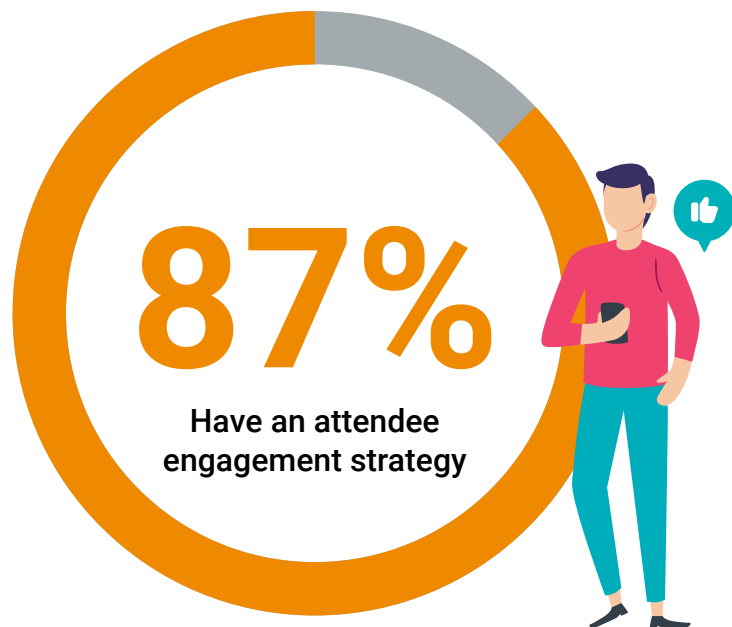

87%
Have an attendee engagement strategy

Figure 15. Question asked: Does your organization currently have an attendee engagement strategy?

Event Planners that say their organization has an attendee engagement strategy in place report higher usage of many event technologies, including data analysis, exhibitor/sponsor management, and session/agenda building.

However, just a third of Event Planners say **specific event planning techniques** tested in this study describe their organization "perfectly." Event Planners are more likely to say the techniques tested describe their organization "perfectly" when their organization is an early adopter of technology or has an attendee engagement strategy.

Event planning techniques

We utilize demographic data to improve the event experience — **32%**

My organization has a holistic, end-to-end event attendee experience strategy and approach — **31%**

We utilize post-event surveys to drive decisions for the next event — **30%**

■ Describes perfectly
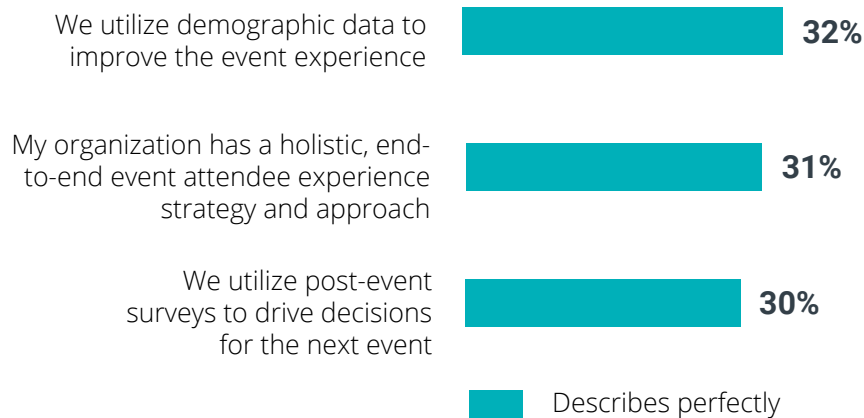
Figure 16. Question asked: How well do each of the following statements describe your organization's event planning?

The most effective marketing channels for event attendees are social media, email, digital ads, event websites, and influencers.

Top five most effective marketing channels for attendees

Social media — **47%**
Email — **30%**
Digital ads — **28%**
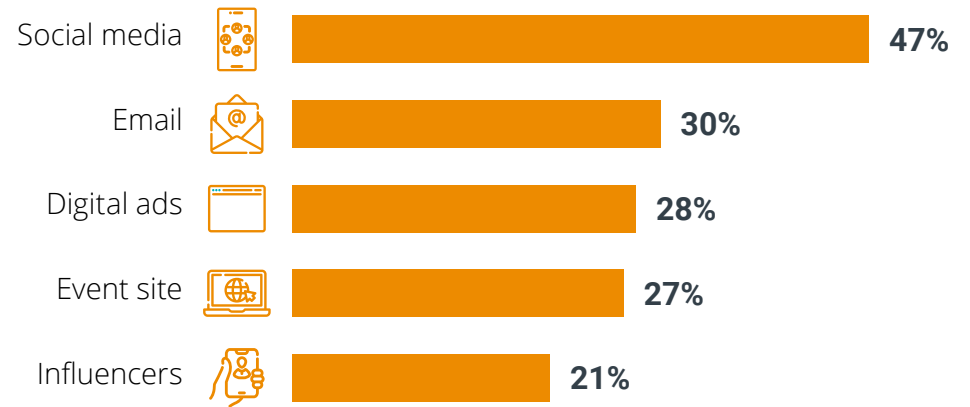Event site — **27%**
Influencers — **21%**

Figure 17. Question asked: Which of the following marketing channels is most effective for promoting your event to attendees?

When it comes to **event promotion timing**, most Event Planners begin outreach within 60 days of the event. Only 22% start more than 61 days prior to the event.
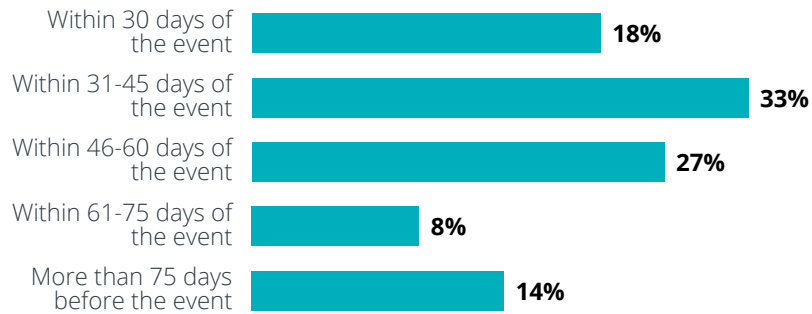
When Event Planners start event promotion

Within 30 days of the event	18%
Within 31-45 days of the event	33%
Within 46-60 days of the event	27%
Within 61-75 days of the event	8%
More than 75 days before the event	14%

Figure 18. Question asked: Thinking about your largest event in the last 12 months, when did you start promoting the event?

When asked to think about their **attendees' initial event experience**, Event Planners rank easy registration as, by far, most important. This response aligns with Event Planners also saying event registration technology is most used, most important, and one of the top areas in which they plan to invest more in over the next 12 months. Early adopters of technology are even more likely to rank easy registration as most important.

Importance to attendees' initial experiences

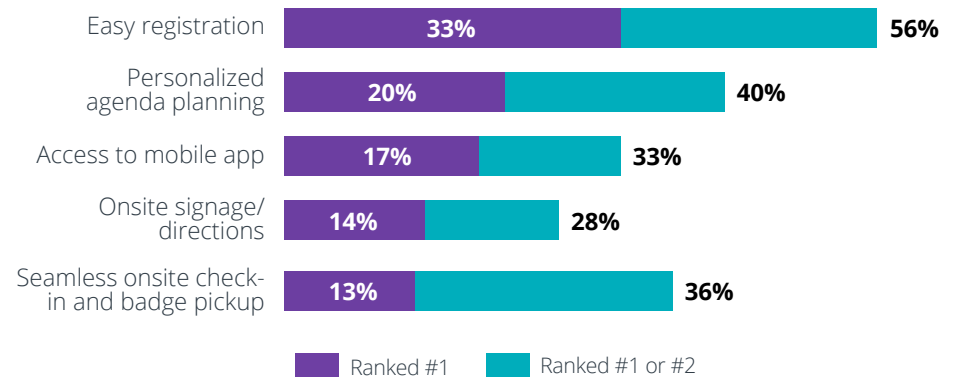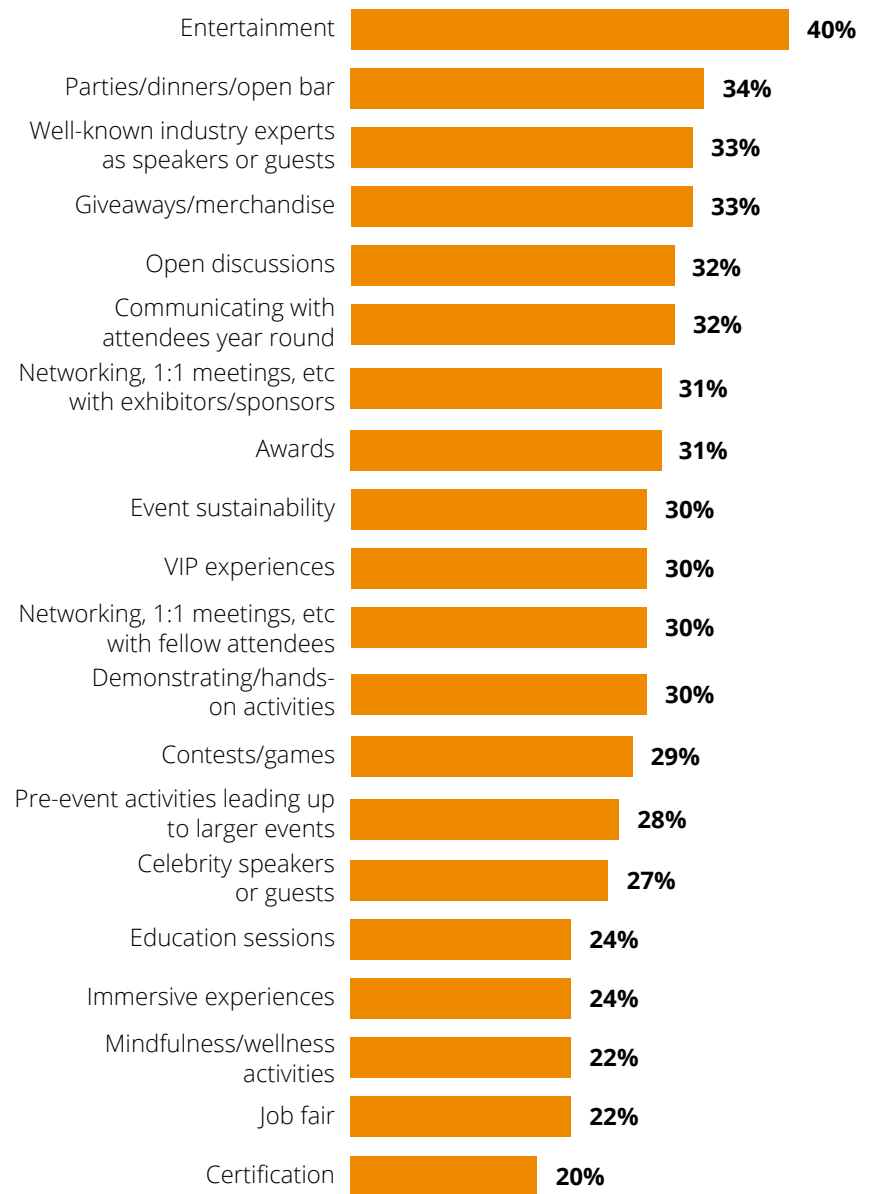|	Ranked #1	Ranked #1 or #2
Easy registration	33%	56%
Personalized agenda planning	20%	40%
Access to mobile app	17%	33%
Onsite signage/directions	14%	28%
Seamless onsite check-in and badge pickup	13%	36%

Figure 19. Question asked: Thinking about your attendees' initial experiences with your events, please rank the following from most important to least important.

When it comes to **attendee engagement activities**, Event Planners continue to use traditional means. Entertainment, parties/dinners/bars, and well-known industry experts as speakers or guests top the list. Usage of some engagement activities have gone down from 2023: parties/dinners/open bars, communicating with attendees year-round, and education sessions have decreased significantly from last year.

Figure 20. Question asked: Which of the following, if any, is your organization using to engage your event attendees during the event? Select all that apply.

Top engagement activities

Activity	%
Entertainment	40%
Parties/dinners/open bar	34%
Well-known industry experts as speakers or guests	33%
Giveaways/merchandise	33%
Open discussions	32%
Communicating with attendees year round	32%
Networking, 1:1 meetings, etc with exhibitors/sponsors	31%
Awards	31%
Event sustainability	30%
VIP experiences	30%
Networking, 1:1 meetings, etc with fellow attendees	30%
Demonstrating/hands-on activities	30%
Contests/games	29%
Pre-event activities leading up to larger events	28%
Celebrity speakers or guests	27%
Education sessions	24%
Immersive experiences	24%
Mindfulness/wellness activities	22%
Job fair	22%
Certification	20%

Sponsor/exhibitor engagement

While they are a secondary priority (versus attendees), **sponsors and exhibitors are still important** audiences for Event Planners. Almost half of Event Planners say increasing exhibitor/sponsor satisfaction, helping sponsors/exhibitors increase their ROI, and increasing the number of exhibitors/sponsors are among their top priorities.

49%
Increasing exhibitor/
sponsor satisfaction
is a top priority

45%
Helping exhibitors/sponsors
increase their ROI
is a top priority

45%
Increasing the number
of exhibitors/sponsors
is a top priority

Figure 21. Question asked: Thinking about the events/conferences/tradeshows your organization is planning in the next 12 months, how much of a priority is each of the following?

For Event Planners who say increasing the number of sponsors/exhibitors is a priority, their key approaches to achieving this goal include attracting more first-time sponsors/exhibitors, creating unique sponsorship opportunities, and creating new sponsorship/exhibitor packages.

Planned approaches to increase exhibitors/sponsors

Approach	Percentage
Attract more first time exhibitors/sponsors	59%
Create unique sponsorship opportunities	52%
Create new sponsorship/ exhibitor packages	51%
Identify prospective exhibitors/ sponsors from related events	46%
Offer more exclusive opportunities	46%
Re-engage past exhibitors/sponsors	43%
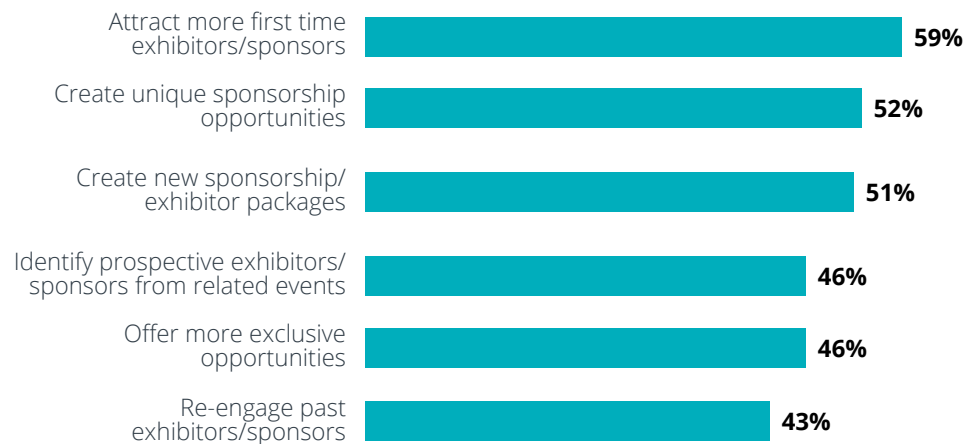
Figure 22. Question asked: You indicated that increasing the number of exhibitors/ sponsors is important to you. How do you plan to achieve this? Select all that apply.

A closer look at Event Planners' outlook for this audience shows they are more optimistic about the number of sponsors than exhibitors.

In contrast to their perspectives on attendees, Event Planners say they are more satisfied with the *quality* versus the *quantity* of sponsors/exhibitors.

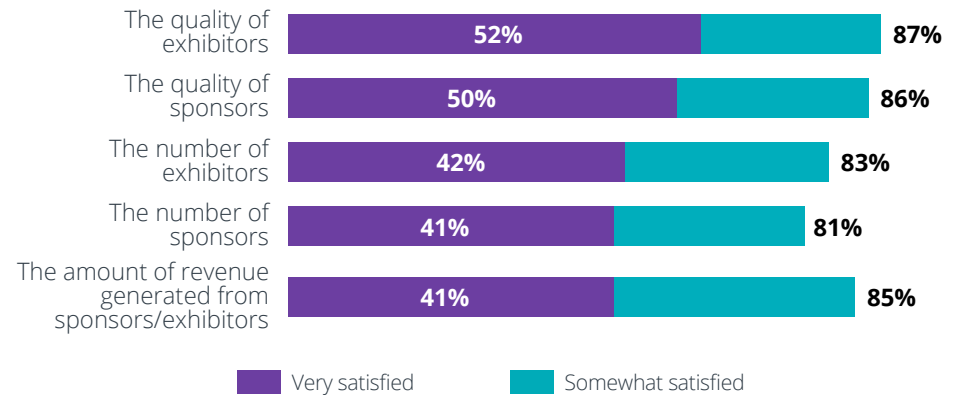## Outlook of Event Planners for sponsors and exhibitors

📅 Last 12 months

	Increase	Remain the same	Decrease
Number of sponsors	46%	43%	8%
Number of exhibitors	41%	46%	9%

📅 Next 12 months

	Increase	Remain the same	Decrease
Number of sponsors	55%	37%	6%
Number of exhibitors	50%	42%	5%

Legend: ■ Increase ■ Remain the same ■ Decrease
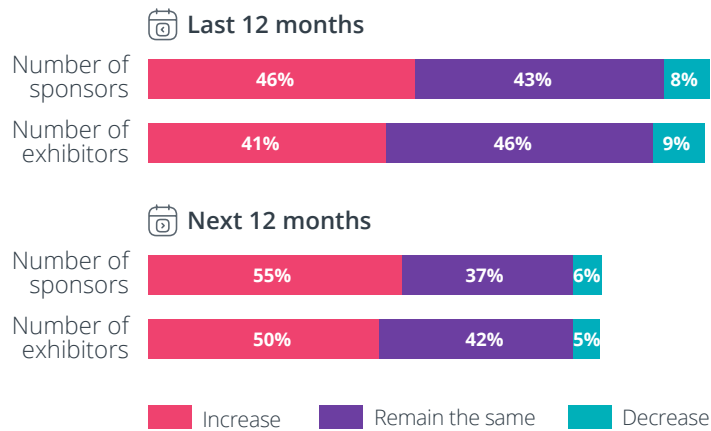
Figure 23. Questions asked: Thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the last 12 months, have each of the following increased, remained the same, or decreased? | And thinking about your events/conferences/tradeshows over the next 12 months, do you think each of the following will increase, remain the same, or decrease?

Event Planners' satisfaction with sponsors/exhibitors

	Very satisfied	Total
The quality of exhibitors	52%	87%
The quality of sponsors	50%	86%
The number of exhibitors	42%	83%
The number of sponsors	41%	81%
The amount of revenue generated from sponsors/exhibitors	41%	85%

Legend: ■ Very satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied

"Very satisfied" higher among Early Adopters

Figure 24. Question asked: Thinking about your most recent event/conference/tradeshow, how satisfied were you with each of the following?

Just a third of Event Planners fully agree their organization successfully works together on sponsorship efforts, and fewer say they fully agree they use lead retrieval data and attendee demographic information to recruit more sponsors and exhibitors.

Event Planners' exhibitor and sponsor strategy status (describes perfectly)

Departments accross my organization work successfully on sponsorship efforts	37%
We utilize lead retrieval data to recruit more exhibitors and sponsors	32%
We utilize attendee demographic information to sell sponsorship/exhibitors	29%

Figure 25. Question asked: How well do each of the following statements describe your organization's event planning?

Few Event Planners use lead retrieval technology today, but a third plan to invest more in this technology in the future. Among those using lead retrieval, seven in 10 prioritize quickly providing their exhibitors with their leads; only 10% of Event Planners wait days or weeks to provide access to exhibitors' leads.

Time it takes for exhibitors to receive leads

Immediately in real time	38%
At the end of each event day	34%
At the conclusion of the event day	15%
A few days after the event	8%
A week or more after the event	2%
Not sure/NA	3%
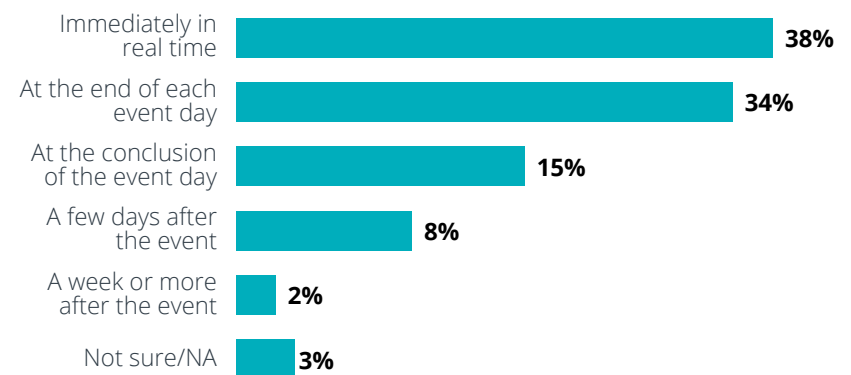
Figure 26. Question asked: How long does it take for exhibitors to receive their leads? (among those using lead retrieval)

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Findings in this study indicate that events remain strong.

Event Planners continue to see a bright future for events, and are aiming to uplevel key priorities, such as the attendee experience and sponsor/exhibitor participation. They're looking to technology to help them achieve their goals and enhance their events.

Now it's time to use the information in this study to take *your* events to the next level.

Here are four ways to use the findings from this study to transform your organization's events:

1 Uplevel the attendee experience.

Improving the attendee experience is a top priority – with Event Planners focused on attendee satisfaction, experiences, trust, and engagement. Yet only 30% of Event Planners express full confidence that their organization has a holistic event attendee experience strategy and approach.

To take your attendee experience up a notch, create an event strategy that emphasizes a smooth attendee experience and high-value engagement activities. To support your strategy, incorporate technology throughout your event. For example:

- **Easy registration** -- Use event registration technology to give registrants a great first impression and a convenient experience from the get-go.

- **Smooth check-in** -- Give attendees a quick and easy check-in experience when they arrive at your event using real-time badge printing technology that also saves your staff time and resources.

- **Active engagement** -- Give attendees a stellar experience before, during, and after the event by using a mobile event app that provides a convenient way to stay informed and interactive ways to stay engaged.

- **Attendee value** -- Boost attendee satisfaction by using attendee tracking technology to better facilitate event activities like awarding earned continuing education credits and scanning attendee badges to eliminate the need for carrying around physical tickets. Take it a step further by using data analytics to uncover which activities are most effective at driving attendee engagement so that you can invest more in those efforts and deliver the ultimate in attendee value.

2 Re-focus on sponsors and exhibitors.

Second only to attendees, sponsors and exhibitors are a high-priority audience for Event Planners, with a focus on increasing exhibitor/sponsor satisfaction, helping sponsors/exhibitors increase their ROI, and increasing the number of exhibitors/sponsors.

Attract and engage more sponsors and exhibitors for your events by providing:

- **A great experience** -- Use **event technologies** to provide sponsors/exhibitors with a convenient and engaging experience that rivals the one you provide your attendees.

- **Increased ROI** -- Give your sponsors/exhibitors more bang for their buck. For example, utilize lead retrieval technology that provides sponsors/exhibitors with immediate access to their leads. Also, consider including the cost of lead retrieval in their sponsor/exhibitor fee. Another example: Allow them to sponsor content in your mobile event app to expand their exposure to more attendees. You can also continue to provide value to sponsors after the event by repurposing their sponsored session content as on-demand content to reach a broader audience. Also, use data analytics to uncover which activities are most effective at driving sponsor/exhibitor value so you can invest more in those areas for future events.

- **Attractive options for lapsed sponsors and exhibitors** -- Staff, budgets, and priorities evolve for organizations, so be sure to engage with past sponsors/exhibitors to bring them back. You might offer them new sponsor benefits to entice them back, such as additional conference registrations, dedicated sponsor "meet and greet" hours with attendees, and opportunities to sponsor sessions.

3 Don't forget about your speakers.

This study indicates that influencers are a top five marketing channel for reaching attendees. Keep in mind your event speakers are also influencers in your industry or profession that can help you to drive attendance.

Increase the quantity and quality of your event speakers by:

- **Starting promotions early** -- Allow plenty of time to promote your abstract submission period. Reach out to past speakers and ask them to submit session ideas. Also, promote the submission period more broadly through multiple channels, including email and social media.

- **Streamlining your submission form** -- Keep the submission form as simple as possible by asking for only the essential information needed to process submissions. Whenever possible, use multiple choice questions instead of text answers.

- **Using abstract management software** -- Put abstract management software to work to help your event staff efficiently acknowledge session submissions, manage and review submissions, and notify speakers of session acceptance – giving your speakers a great event experience.

- **Allowing your event speakers to impact the attendee experience** Speakers can offer a unique perspective, inspire new ideas, and elevate the entire event experience. For those planning Corporate and Government events, inspiring and educational speakers can engage attendees and position your organization as dedicated to your employees' career advancement, ultimately making you an attractive employer for younger generations. For Associations, past Community Brands research studies have found career advancement benefits are some of the top member priorities. Embrace the diverse backgrounds and expertise of speakers to contribute to a more satisfying, informative, and engaging event experience for attendees.

4 Evolve your use of technology.

As with last year's study, respondents who say their organization is an early adopter of technology report stronger growth in almost every area of event management and execution. They also say their organization will invest more in event technology in the next 12 months.

Incorporating new or better technology into events is a top 10 priority for Event Planners, and choosing the *right* event technology is a top five challenge to achieving event goals. Plus, Event Planners are incorporating innovative technologies into their events to provide modern event experiences.

Take your organization's use of technology to the next level by incorporating event technology throughout your event strategy – delivering greater efficiencies to your staff and transforming the event experience. To choose the right technology for your event needs, be sure to focus not only on the technology itself, but also on the support you receive from the technology provider. Work with a technology partner that offers multiple product options to meet your specific needs, as well as strong customer support and on-site assistance at your events.

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Boost attendee engagement with a user-friendly mobile app that transforms session support, networking, and enhanced sponsorships from imagination to reality.

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- Event Registration
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- Lead Retrieval
- Exhibitor Management
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- Attendee Tracking

Maximize your event success with connected technology designed to fit your needs.

Learn How

PUT THE INSIGHTS FROM THE 2024 EVENT TRENDS STUDY INTO PRACTICE.

Transform your events with connected solutions from a reliable partner. To learn how you can deliver more value, elevate the attendee experience, enhance engagement, and improve ROI, request a consultation with our experts today.

Let's Chat

Research methodology Commissioned by Community Brands, Edge Research conducted an online survey of 541 U.S. event planners who self-reported they are 18 years old or older and who currently work in event planning/management for a company that specializes in this area or work in event planning/management within their company/organization. Survey respondents worked on commercial events, conferences, and/or trade show planning and/or management at least five times per year. Those who plan only events for individuals (i.e., weddings), corporate meetings, or are self-employed, were excluded. Respondents were recruited through an online non-probability sample, meaning findings are not projectable to the larger population of event planners. The term "Event Planner" refers specifically to those who responded to the survey. The survey was in the field February 5, 2024 through February 23, 2024.

About Community Brands Community Brands amplifies the impact of over 50,000 purpose-driven organizations in over 30 countries. Associations, nonprofits, and K-12 schools rely on our software and services to solve their most critical challenges: engage the people they serve, simplify operations, and grow revenue. Built with reliability at the core and strategically focused on events, education, careers, fundraising, financials, and operations, our family of brands is bound by a common purpose to serve the organizations that make our communities a better place to live. Learn more at communitybrands.com and follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook.