
YOUR TOP EVENT TRENDS FOR 2026

A look at what's shaping the industry, and the
areas that are ripe with opportunity

cvent™

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The events industry doesn't stand still. Global economic pressure, shifting attendee behavior, and rapidly evolving technology are rewriting the rules of what great looks like.

Budgets are rising. So are costs. 35% of planners say staying within budget is their number-one concern, and 30% are calling out the rising cost of meetings and events specifically.¹ The pressure is real. But so too are the opportunities.

Marketers see the moment clearly. 82% of marketers expect their total marketing budget to rise over the next year, with 43% anticipating increases of 25% or more.² And 85% of event professionals feel positive about the health of the industry, the highest level recorded in five years.³ The organizations that act with intent right now are the ones that pull ahead.

AI has moved from promise to practice. It's already changing how events are planned, run, and measured. From smarter workflows to deeper data use and sharper attendee experiences, AI earns its place when it's used with

purpose. But technology doesn't replace the human element. The most effective event programs blend intelligent tools with the kind of real, personal connection that no tool can manufacture.

Attendees are direct about what that connection has to deliver. Relevance, personalization, and genuine value at every touchpoint are now the standard every event must deliver.

This report draws on deep industry research and Cvent insights to surface the trends that will define meetings and events in 2026. For event professionals, marketers, and hospitality professionals, it's a practical guide to where events are heading and how to position for what's next.



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TREND ONE

AI GOES OPERATIONAL

Across the event planning and attendee journey, AI is already creating tangible value. And with significant investment flowing towards both AI and events, it's down to marketers, event planners, and suppliers to show the return on investment and the real-world outcomes AI delivers.

AI can make an impact at every stage of the event lifecycle, from sourcing venues and personalizing communications to managing logistics and capturing post-event insights.

Done well, it frees professionals to focus on strategy, creativity, and high-impact experiences. It's why 66% of event professionals themselves say AI allows them to focus more time on high-value tasks.⁴

Yet AI maturity remains low. Only 11% of respondents report high-level use of AI,⁴ so there's significant room to lead and differentiate through strategic adoption.

HOT TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE AI USE

- **Be purposeful:** don't invest in AI for the sake of it. Define your desired outcomes first and implement solutions that align with them.
- **Assess your risk tolerance:** think about what can safely be automated or delivered as self-service, versus what still requires human oversight and sensitivity.
- **Evaluate data privacy and security:** undergo a thorough governance and security assessment when selecting large language models (LLM). If you work at a larger organization, review your organization's guidelines, as your IT team likely has approved technologies for you to use.

GenAI versus Agentic AI

Not all AI tools work the same way – and the distinctions matter when planning investment and implementation.

- **Generative AI (GenAI)** can help you personalize and scale assets such as agendas, content, and communications. It can also be used to match people at events and answer attendee questions automatically, freeing marketers and event professionals to focus on the overall picture.
- **Agentic AI** goes further, with the potential to make autonomous decisions within predefined rules and take on larger workflows, such as managing travel policies and reviewing contracts.

AI across the event planning lifecycle

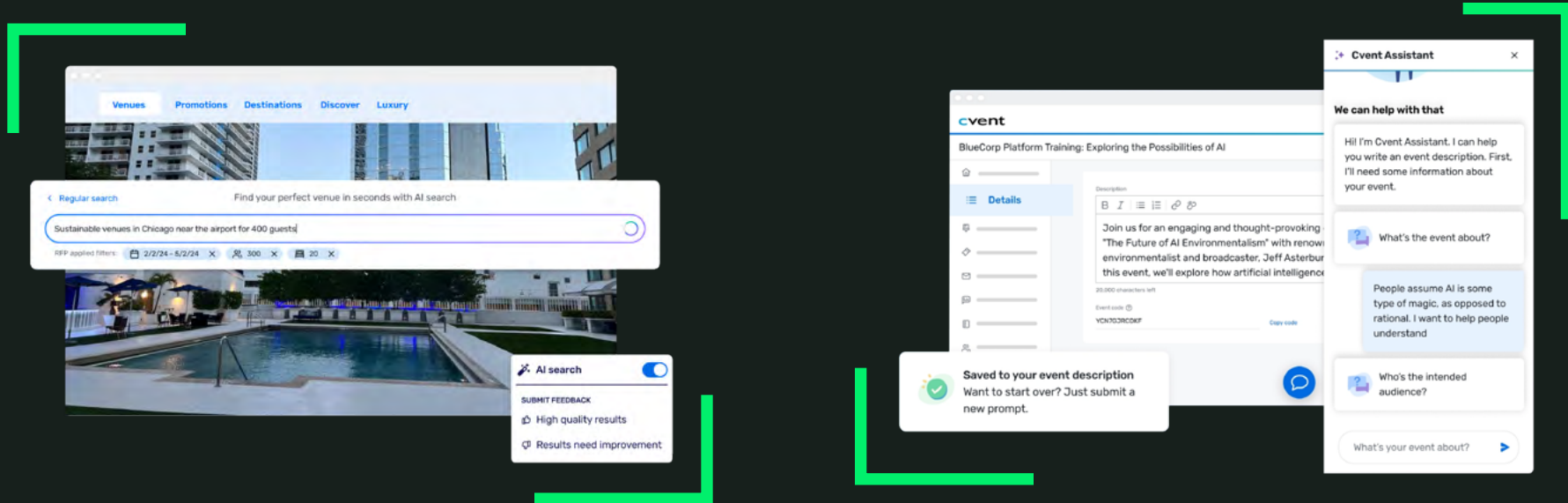
Start by mapping your process before introducing AI tools:

- **Map your workflow** – Document existing processes to uncover bottlenecks and inefficiencies.
- **Identify pain points** – Focus on repetitive, non-strategic tasks that absorb valuable time.
- **Set the human-AI handover** – Design clear transition points where AI support ends, and human expertise takes over.

Across sectors, 88% of agentic AI early adopters are seeing positive ROI, with 39% seeing ROI on use cases for productivity and 37% for customer experience.⁵

AI for every stage of the event lifecycle

- **Sourcing and Planning** – Use AI-driven sourcing and diagramming tools to help get supplier responses quickly, secure the right partners and design the perfect event that aligns with your goals.
- **Promotion** – Use AI to help simplify and automate audience segmentation, build on-brand, personalized content and deliver context-aware communications to attract the right audience and drive pipeline.
- **Day of the event** – AI can help to personalize event recommendations such as agendas and networking tips, share live session transcripts, and implement tools such as event chatbots to help keep people engaged and supported.
- **Post-event follow-up** – Re-engage attendees with personalized recaps, summaries of feedback and insights, and tailored follow-up communications to help prove ROI and improve future events.



SPOTLIGHT

CventIQ™

CventIQ™ is the AI that powers the Cvent platform, purpose-built for the events industry, and sharpened by 25+ years of industry expertise.

For planners and marketers, it surfaces insights that make decisions easier: smarter automation, personalized attendee experiences, and clearer connections between event activity and business outcomes.

For venue and supplier teams, it speeds up the work that matters most: faster RFP responses, more accurate proposals, and better visibility into group demand.

50%

of agentic AI users will use AI across the entire meetings journey³

TREND TWO

TRUST IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR

People crave real human connection...

AI-generated content is everywhere, and misinformation spreads fast. Feeds are noisier than ever, and digital fatigue is real. People are more skeptical of what they see, more selective with what they consume, and far more tuned in to what feels genuine.

In a 2026 survey of 901 marketers and event professionals, 85% of respondents said the rise of AI-generated content has made it harder to build trust with audiences, with generic or AI-generated content cited as the single biggest risk to audience trust.⁶

People crave real human connection, authenticity, and evidence to justify the promises that brands make. Events, both in-person and virtual, are built for this. They provide space for people to share and validate their real experiences. Technology matters, but its job is to run quietly in the background, freeing teams to focus on people and connection.

In the same survey, 98% of respondents reported in-person and community-based events as being an important

part of their marketing strategy, while 81% stated that audience trust in their brand increases directly after an in-person event. And 84% have increased investment in in-person experiences over the past 12 months — with trust-building as the primary driver.⁶

For brands focused on growth, the data points in one direction: events are where trust is earned, and trust is what converts audiences into the outcomes that matter most.

81%

of marketing and event professionals say their audience's trust in their brand increases after an in-person event.⁶



The role of venues in building trust

Venue environment is doing more trust work than it's often given credit for. It ranks third among the factors that most directly contribute to building trust at events (30%), behind content quality and relevance (37%) and brand authenticity in how the event is run (35%).⁶

Planners are also clear about what they need from a venue to deliver on those expectations. Flexibility ranks as the number one driver of venue decisions, ahead of experience, cost, and amenities. And when it comes to evaluating a venue in the first place, photos, videos, and 3D tours are the most trusted content planners turn to (24%) – a venue's digital presence is where the evaluation begins.⁶

As technology becomes further embedded into the event experience, the venues that use it subtly and strategically will pull ahead. Guests don't want to see the tech; they want to feel the hospitality.

When technology operates in the background, friction disappears, staff focus on people, and the experience feels personal rather than managed. That invisible infrastructure enables the kind of personalization that makes guests feel recognized, not processed. Venues that get that balance right don't just deliver a good event. They build the kind of trust that brings people back.



TREND THREE

B2B STILL DEMANDS
AUTHENTIC EMOTION

To stay in someone's mind, an event has to make people feel something.



It's not enough to deliver content and networking opportunities. Attendees want emotional connection – to be seen, heard, and recognized. The experience should leave an impression if you want to turn attendees into brand advocates.

In B2B, we've seen that it's possible to build a diehard fanbase. Think about Dreamforce – a conference that continues to generate interest and genuine anticipation year after year. With the right strategy, any B2B brand can start to create the same level of energy.

Data is key to this strategy: deep, accurate insights help marketers and event planners shape experiences that feel personal and emotionally resonant, while still delivering measurable results. There's much to learn from B2C, with a focus on storytelling, cultural specificity, and community-building. Building online forums and membership-based groups to maintain a sense of community between events will be key to building the same loyalty often seen in B2C. Pair this approach with the natural demand of B2B customers for impact and proven, data-led measurement, and brands have a recipe for exceptional event outcomes.

There's no magic bullet or single touchpoint to generate this kind of emotional engagement. A coordinated effort matters. It's imperative to consider the whole journey, including how audio-visual media, technology, venue, transport partners, local businesses, and vendors contribute to a rich, smooth, and consistent quality of experience.

It's beneficial to factor in attendees' free time, too. Making it worthwhile for people to travel to a destination by giving them time to explore the local area is a great way to signal respect for their time and create opportunities for connection beyond the event itself.

Measuring impact

63%

of planners now cite attendee engagement as their primary success metric, a shift away from total cost, making it the most cited metric this year.

70%

and the same research found that 70% of planners predict up to a 20% increase in in-person meetings and events in 2026.¹

72%

say deals close faster when prospects attend events.²

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS – SO MAKE IT PART OF YOUR STORY

40% of attendees want to see sustainability measures at events.³ By demonstrating your environmental impact, you can reinforce a positive brand image and connect with new people. This could be eliminating single-use plastics where possible, implementing robust recycling programs, opting for eco-friendly venues, and even encouraging public transport and lift sharing. Working with sustainable suppliers and partners, choosing local, and deploying sustainable lighting options are also ways to do this.

“

“If you think about all the brands that you love in your life and potentially the brands that you are being compared against, it’s because they are part of your cultural narrative. They all invest in brand experience. They’re everywhere. The newer brands that are coming up, the reason why you know about them is because they’re investing in their community. They’re investing in fandom, and they’re investing in brand experience.”

“It’s all just building a narrative around your brand so that you are, they are in your subconscious all the time. And as humans, we crave experiences. And that is why the biggest brands in the world continue to go and thrive because they invest in their communities and build that fandom.”



LOUISA O'CONNOR
Managing Director,
Seen Presents

“

“At the Forrester B2B Summit, we had a cookie-printing station and invited attendees to choose a photo from their own camera roll and have it printed onto a cookie. Many chose images of loved ones, pets, or friends back home, as a great reminder that events don’t exist in isolation. It brought a human touch to the show floor and encouraged people to share their personal stories.

“At INBOUND, we also hosted a tote bag decorating experience. Attendees were able to step away from conference mode, using markers, stencils, and craft materials to inspire some nostalgic, creative experiences. It offered a pause in the day that helped create openness, conversation, and a sense of play to naturally connect people.”



CHELSEA HILL

Senior Associate, Event Marketing,
Cvent

[View all sources](#)

ACTIVATION IN ACTION

At our recent trade shows, we showed off some simple yet powerful activations that sparked emotional connection and created space for genuine conversation.



How suppliers can help build memorable moments

To stand out in what is a highly competitive market, venues need more than dates, rates, and space. Planners want partners who can help bring their event story to life and align with the precise purpose of each event.

Venues that can differentiate themselves will be those that can clearly communicate what makes them unique – and show how their resources support the intent of the event.

There are a few ways suppliers can build a stronger competitive edge here:

- Developing a strong brand and point of view that planners can connect with
- Clearly articulating what makes your venue different and why it matters
- Using your space, service model, and local resources to help tell the story of the event
- Collaborating with planners to ensure the venue actively supports their goals for the event
- Engaging in targeted outreach to planners whose events align with your story, to help build long-term partnerships

This is a great way for suppliers to move beyond transactional conversations and position themselves as a strategic collaborator in creating memorable moments.



TREND FOUR

PERSONALIZATION IS
ATTENDEE-LED

Personalization is no longer something that is done to or for attendees – it increasingly relates to experiences that are curated and led by them, often in real time. The most engaged participants tend to be those who can build their own journey – choosing the content they see, the people they meet, and the moments they experience.

To support this shift, the technology must be seamless. Slow, clunky apps and unstable Wi-Fi can limit accessibility and quickly undermine even the best experience design. The experience needs to feel as easy, fast, and intuitive as possible, to avoid engagement slipping away before it's begun.

96% of marketers report that personalized experiences have increased sales.⁸

37% of attendees want more personalized experiences.³

3.7X Customers who receive personalized communications were 3.7x more likely to purchase more from a brand or supplier than originally intended.⁹

How to put attendees in control

Step 1: Use data to offer choice

By leaning into data collected from previous events and understanding attendee preferences, you can refine options and provide the attendees with more tailored choices based on what they have told, or shown you, they want.

Step 2: Use AI to create real-time recommendations

Mirroring the models of social media and video platforms such as TikTok and YouTube – where content is dynamically shaped by live audience behavior – is something to consider. Think about how to continually adapt agendas, networking suggestions, and next steps to create longevity and personalization across more touchpoints.

Step 3: Make it simple to register

AI can help to reduce friction in the registration process and avoid people

losing interest between deciding to attend and registering. Use AI to reduce the number of required questions, auto-fill forms, or do things like create a ‘VIP lane’ for return attendees.

Step 4: Account for cultural context

Tailor event elements such as content, timings, food, and beverage provision to the customs and communication styles of the location where the event is held. This is a great way to signal respect for local culture, add a touch of exclusivity to an event, and improve inclusivity for a diverse audience.

Step 5: Establish areas of interest ahead of time

Collect input from your audience ahead of the event to help tailor sessions, answer questions more proactively, and inform your networking mix and recommendations.



Free attendees to capture the content they want, how they want, with Cvent

Our Session Snapshots solution transforms event notetaking. Attendees can capture what resonates with them most without filling up their camera roll or having to take numerous notes. It's ideal for on-the-go attendees hopping from session to session, with live speech transcription and one-tap content capture making it easier to stay engaged and connect with others free from distractions.

“

“People demonstrate their interest by what they do, not by what they say they're interested in.”



MCNEEL KEENAN
VP of Product Management,
Cvent

How suppliers can get personal

There are two areas to consider when it comes to personalization for venues and suppliers. The first is the event as a whole. Each event should be treated as a unique entity – so flexible room layouts, curated vendor suggestions, tailored local partnerships, and recommendations that align with attendee needs and event objectives will be key.

The second area is the event attendee. Here, small touches can create an outsized impact, with careful consideration of experience elements by event organizers, such as:

- Personalized food and beverage options
- Add-on amenities
- Local experiences and excursions
- Accessible event and venue design
- Applying past preferences for returning guests

These details help attendees feel valued as individuals, rather than just being part of the crowd.

SPOTLIGHT

CventIQ™

CventIQ™ makes personalization at scale possible. Event professionals, marketers, and venue teams can design experiences that feel individually relevant to every attendee:

- Help attendees find relevant content, sessions, and connections in one place.
- Build registration websites that are fully tailored to your brand, with responsive, intuitive interfaces.
- Generate personalized summaries of each attendee's participation and sessions automatically.
- Capture live session transcripts with highlights for key moments, making follow-up content easier to share.
- Test unique room layouts and physical setups virtually before the event, removing the guesswork from diagramming.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CVENTIQ™



TREND FIVE

EXCLUSIVITY AND MICRO EVENTS
DRIVE DEMAND AND ENGAGEMENT

When attendees choose to come to an event, they're giving up their valuable time; in return, they should receive perceived value. Exclusivity and the promise of a high-value experience are becoming essential to creating interest and securing attendance.

Marketers are steering away from a strategy that focuses on maximizing total registrations, instead focusing on getting the right people in the room and ensuring high-quality interactions. And with curated, peer-to-peer experiences, attendees get a seat at the table to be part of the conversation and connect with the best in their industry.

Exclusive formats such as 'apply to attend', VIP-style experiences, curated dinners, and invite-only sessions are gaining traction among field marketers who need to drive impact in a limited time and with limited budgets.

Micro events are also on the rise – with marketers turning to smaller, more intimate event formats to foster relationships and improve trust between attendees.



Improving attendee experience with more memorable events is the top priority for professionals.³

WHY MICRO FORMATS WORK

Smaller, curated events are thriving because they create the ideal conditions for personalization, meaningful conversations, and relationship-building. They allow marketers to adapt faster, localize content and experiences more easily, and create deeper relevance more consistently. At a time when almost everything is accessible, being in the room is a new kind of premium.

Micro event formats can work just as well for virtual experiences, too. Bringing a sense of exclusivity by having webinars or online roundtables, for example, with a cap on the number of attendees.

Large conferences should look for ways to build 'micro moments' within the event – such as small-group breakouts, curated workshops, or invite-only tracks – to deepen engagement.

Exclusivity in action

At Cvent CONNECT, invite-only programming in parallel with our core conference agenda brings greater relevance for specific audiences. This includes:

Leadership summit

A small, invite-only experience for senior marketing and event leaders, featuring workshops, roundtable discussions, and networking designed to prompt peer-level exchange.

Partner summit

A tailored track for agencies and third-party planners, that provides bespoke content, peer connections, and opportunities to strengthen partnerships.

Hospitality customer advisory boards

Closed-door conversations with hospitality executives to discuss industry trends, challenges, and technology developments.



58%

of respondents stated that their organization planned to host more small in-person events (under 200 in-person attendees) over the next 12 months.¹⁰

How suppliers can stand out

Marketers and event planners are actively seeking partners who can help bring exclusive, curated experiences to life. Smaller experiences require thoughtful design and attention to detail, making the role of the venue even more critical. Suppliers who combine flexibility with specific expertise have an opportunity to stand out and shape these smaller-scale formats.

With adaptable spaces, integrated technology, and services that reduce operational lift, suppliers can help planners deliver multiple tailored experiences with greater consistency. By understanding the intent of each event, venues can recommend specific vendors, menus, experiences, or activities that add value and make meaningful moments easier to execute.

Micro format events may include:

- Creative and flexible layouts that support discussion, collaboration, and networking for smaller groups

- Options to host multiple small experiences in parallel such as invite-only briefings, hosted dinners, or roundtable conversations
- High-touch service models, including private dining and concierge-style support tailored to intimate groups
- Staff training to deliver attentive, boutique-level service and read the needs of smaller groups in real time
- Partnerships with local restaurants, experience providers, transportation services, or cultural destinations that make events feel special and rooted in place

By designing with intimacy, flow, and emotional impact in mind, suppliers can help planners execute micro events that feel intentional, memorable, and worth the investment.



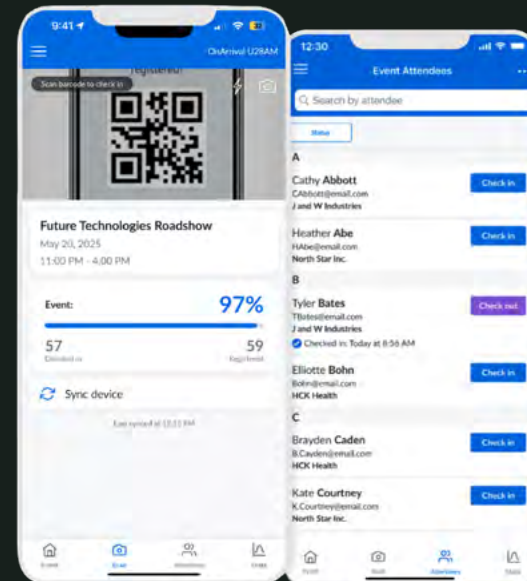
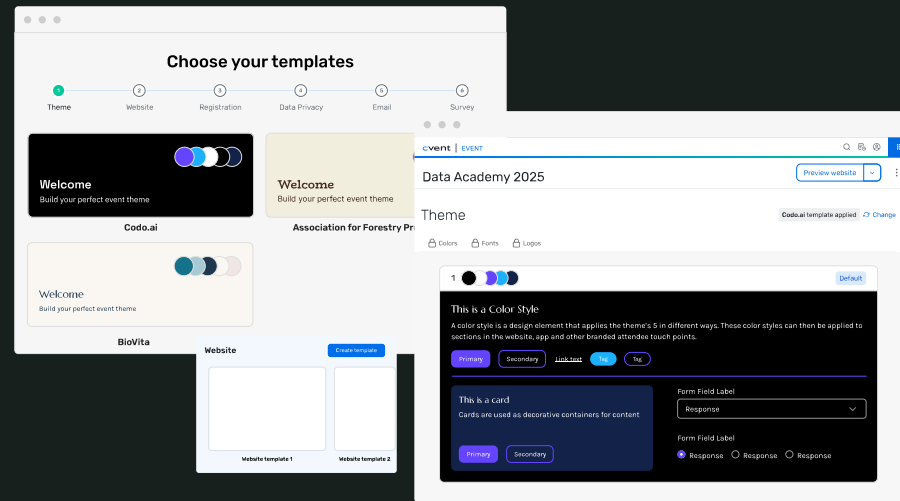
SPOTLIGHT

Cvent Essentials

Cvent Essentials is an event management solution designed specifically for smaller, high-volume in-person events. Marketing and field teams can use it to run repeatable formats such as workshops, roadshows, sales-led events or training sessions – without getting slowed down by manual processes or bottlenecks.

With Cvent Essentials, teams can:

- Launch events faster with pre-approved registration and event page templates
- Ensure brand consistency and compliance without additional approvals
- Manage on-site check-in through a synced mobile app
- Engage attendees through live polls, Q&A and post-event surveys
- Measure impact with intuitive dashboards and CRM/MAP integrations



TREND SIX

DESIGN ENVIRONMENTS
WITH PURPOSE

There has been a clear shift in event space preferences, from specifically searching for interesting or unconventional spaces, towards purposeful environments that can actively support connection and collaboration to shape event outcomes. Event planners don't want novelty anymore; instead, they are increasingly selecting locations to facilitate intentional interaction and engagement.

A space can affect the energy, mood, and behavior of an event, with layout, lighting, acoustics, and movement all impacting

the quality of conversations. If marketers and event planners want their event to unlock new thinking or build meaningful relationships, the space design must help to enable those processes.

And it's not just the room itself. Food and beverage, AV, local experiences, and vendor services should be thoughtfully integrated as part of a complete environment that keeps participants focused and comfortable. When each element works together, people can engage more naturally and spend less time worrying about logistics.

THE SHIFT BY THE NUMBERS¹

- Since 2023, sourcing for special event venues has increased by over 30%.
- 48% of planners say they are currently sourcing **non-hotel locations**.
- The most popular non-hotel venues are **restaurants (45%)**, including bars (23%) and wineries (19%).
- Planners are driven most by **flexibility of the space (41%)**, attendee **experience (35%)** and **cost (34%)**. Followed by **unique amenities (32%)** and **aesthetics (29%)**.
- Almost a third (32%) look for **unique amenities** when selecting a venue.



How venues and suppliers can be more intentional

As event strategies become more purpose-driven, suppliers have a growing opportunity to help planners design environments that actively shape behavior and support the intended outcomes, whether that is decision-making, relationship-building, learning, or inspiration.

Venues and partners can collaborate with planners to create purposeful environments through multi-sensory design and thoughtful experience flow. This includes planning for the emotional journey of attendees by incorporating quiet spaces for reflection, energizing areas for recharging, and natural networking moments between sessions.

Venues and partners can support this shift by offering:

- Multi-sensory design elements to help influence mood and behavior such as lighting, acoustics, scent, and seating configuration
- Flexible layouts and modular spaces that can shift between learning, collaboration, networking, or quiet reflection depending on the event objective
- Experience flow planning that guides attendees through energizing zones, quiet areas, networking touchpoints, and transition moments to support the emotional arc of the event
- Behind-the-scenes technologies, such as Wi-Fi, AV, check-in tools, and digital wayfinding, that reduce friction and empower staff to focus on personal interaction

SPOTLIGHT

Cvent Solutions

To support more intentional event design, suppliers need tools that make collaboration easier and help planners see the full potential of a space. Cvent offers a suite of solutions that connect venues with planners and marketers to bring event visions to life:



Cvent Supplier Network

Quickly discover the right venues while hotels showcase what makes them unique. Built-in RFP and proposal workflows help planners and suppliers collaborate efficiently from shortlist to selection.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Cvent Vendor Marketplace Powered by Reposite

Explore special event venues, local activities, and amenities to craft standout experiences. AI-powered vendor sourcing streamlines discovery and collaboration for any event type.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Cvent Event Diagramming

Design layouts intentionally to foster connection and flow. Planners and venues co-create precise floor plans to align stakeholders and bring the space to life.

[LEARN MORE](#)

TREND SEVEN

TECH FOR ALL

“

“The best experience for your people is that registration be forgettable. If anyone remembers the process of getting their badge, it’s because the tech failed. Something went sideways. So, creative and technology, from my perspective, need to be invisible. All the attendee needs to remember is ‘I had this beautiful experience that was relevant to the content I came for’.”



JEN PERRY
Senior Director,
Event Content
& Creative,
Workhuman

[View all sources](#)

Being a tech-savvy brand in 2026 doesn’t mean appealing to a younger audience to the exclusion of others. Technology must work for everyone, with systems that are familiar and intuitive enough that any attendee can pick them up quickly and use them in a way that’s seamlessly integrated into their day-to-day tasks.

Event technology can enable attendees to navigate everything from registration to in-person experiences. When done well, technology streamlines processes, reduces costs, and frees up brainpower. As an example, smart apps can be used to resolve attendee queries, reducing the time staff have to spend on firefighting issues and answering questions.

57% of Gen Zs and 56% of Millennials are using GenAI in their day-to-day work.¹¹

45 is the average age of B2B event attendees post-pandemic, down from 51.⁷

30% of Gen Zs and Millennials say they use it all or most of the time, an increase from 2024.¹¹

The tech that event attendees expect to see in 2026...³

39%

more virtual meetings to help drive costs down

35%

said sophisticated AV tech (LED video walls, AI camera tracking)

31%

live polling and feedback tools

TURNING UP WITH TECH IS VITAL FOR VENDORS

For suppliers, technology is a core piece of the value proposition. Offering built-in AV, white-label app solutions, interactive video walls, VR experiences, or integrated room-block and vendor management tools can make your venue or service stand out. By integrating the technologies that planners need, suppliers can keep the attendee experience simple and intuitive to deliver efficiency and engagement.

TREND EIGHT

COST IS THE BIG INFLUENCE
FOR SOURCING

Increased scrutiny on spend is changing how sourcing decisions are made. Today, venues and destinations must justify their value by demonstrating measurable ROI and enabling meaningful attendee experiences.

72% of event planners globally expect costs to rise by up to 20% from 2025.¹

Cost-cutting steps are front-of-mind for event professionals

Event planners are already taking measures to manage spend:³

30% Alternative venues

28% Reducing food and beverage costs

24% Reviewing event destinations

27% Opting for fewer giveaways and corporate gifts

[View all sources](#)

In response, event planners and their marketing colleagues are placing greater emphasis on value-driven decisions. Flexibility, transparent pricing, and attendee experiences that can be built into the venue offering are all key considerations rather than added bonuses.

Sustainability is another way to think about reducing costs, with more organizations looking to make environmentally friendly choices around giveaways, printed materials, travel, and food and beverage options. As well as strengthening the sustainability credentials of the brand, these measures are a useful way to reduce spend.

How vendors can navigate the cost crunch

Even under cost pressure, attendee engagement is still the yardstick of event success – and event professionals shouldn't be willing to compromise on experience. There's a significant opportunity for those venues and vendors that can demonstrate value beyond price.

Hotels and venues can stand out by:

- Showing how spaces support outcomes and interactions beyond pure capacity metrics
- Offering flexible packages and concessions for repeat bookings
- Providing a single point of contact and streamlined contracting
- Highlighting tools, technology and layouts that improve flow and connection

The goal for venues should be to enable marketing and events clients to defend their venue choice both in terms of budget and tangible business outcomes.

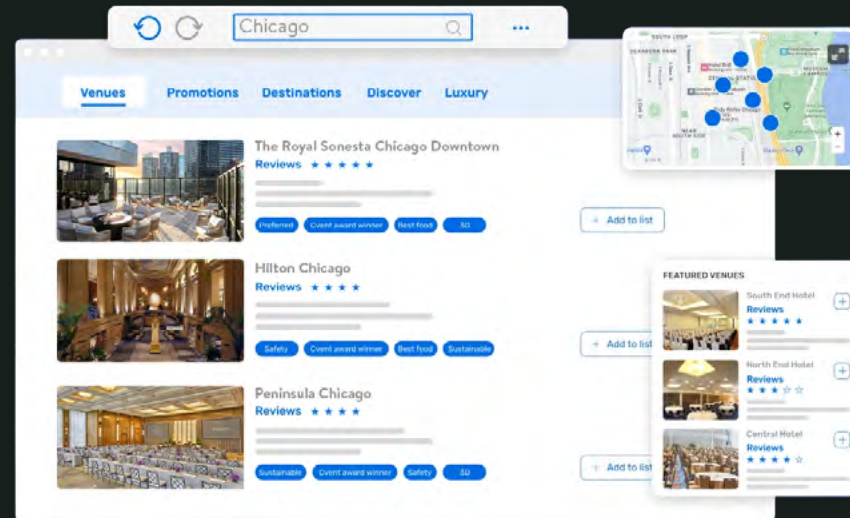
SPOTLIGHT

Event Supplier Network

Our AI-powered venue sourcing platform connects planners to a global network of hotels and event spaces, so planners can discover venues that best match their event size, objectives, and budget.

The platform streamlines venue sourcing into a single workflow. You can search using AI-driven filters, build RFPs using templates, compare bids side by side, and manage data and communications in one place. Rather than starting from scratch each time, it's possible to quickly narrow down options and make decisions faster.

For suppliers, it's a tool that broadens reach and makes it easier to showcase what makes a space functionally valuable. By responding quickly with clear proposals and offers, venues can demonstrate value early and win business based on outcomes.



Bid Comparison Report Save as template Export

Venue Information			
Venue Name	Cvent Capital Inn Advanced Proposal	Executive Mountain Retreats Advanced Proposal	Seaside Vista Summit Hall Advanced Proposal
Venue Photo			
Venue Proposal	View proposal	View proposal	View proposal
Venue Type			
Venue Chain			
Venue Brand			
Venue Website			
Venue Address			
Venue Guest Rooms			
Total Meeting Space			
Largest Meeting Room			
Supplier Categories			
Preferred Supplier			

TREND NINE

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES ARE
MORE CRUCIAL THAN EVER

Budgets are under pressure and scrutiny is up. Attendance figures no longer make the case on their own. The measure of a successful event has shifted; what matters now is whether it moved the needle for your organization.

68%

of marketers say events are their most effective marketing channel

83%

say events generate a steady flow of revenue

Proving return on investment (ROI) and return on experience (ROE) starts with clarity. Define your metrics upfront, and you can build towards outcomes with purpose: designing every element of the event, from session formats to post-event engagement, around the results you're trying to drive.

This is driving a shift towards Event-led Growth (ELG), a go-to-market strategy that uses events as the primary channel for acquisition and retention across the entire buyer and customer journey.

53% of marketers say their team uses an ELG approach. The emphasis shifts from one-off activities to consistent, repeatable programs tied directly to pipeline, revenue, and retention, scaled with purpose. ELG teams are 31% more likely to trace pipeline directly back to event touchpoints. 49% attribute 21% or more of their total pipeline to events. And 46% attributed more than 40% of their closed-won deals to events in 2025, up year on year.²

How to translate ELG into measurable success

ELG FOCUS AREA	WHAT IT DOES	CORE KPIS AND METRICS	HOW TO TRACK
Lead generation	Brings new people into your sales funnel	Net-new leads acquired; number of leads reactivated; meetings booked	CRM (Salesforce, HubSpot, etc.)
Opportunity generation	Converts high-intent prospects	Opportunities created; total pipeline; average contract value	CRM
Sales acceleration	Accelerates prospects through the funnel	Lead-to-opportunity conversion time; opportunity-to-close timeline	CRM
Renewal & expansion	Closes renewals and grows ARR	Renewal rate; ARR expansion	CRM

The impact of AI on digital engagement and event measurement

Digital engagement is shifting. Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) and AI-generated summaries in search results mean that answers are presented directly on the results page, without users needing to click through. This has led to a rise in zero-click searches, reducing the volume of measurable traffic and click-based attribution that marketers would previously get from traditional organic search.

With organic attribution harder to come by, first-party data is more critical than ever, making events a powerful channel to generate rich behavioural and engagement data that brands can fully own. This presents an opportunity for events to gain visibility as strategic engines and data sources. And with events able to provide clarity where digital channels are losing it, event programs must be structured to clearly demonstrate business impact with clear measurement frameworks.

Three principles to measure what matters

Here are three ways to build more measurable, defensible event programs:

1. Define your intended emotional outcomes early, by asking what people should feel and do after an event.
2. What people do is a more valuable signal of their buying intent than what they say. You can use AI to turn behavioral signals into insights and drive revenue-generating activity.
3. Get real feedback; post-event sentiment can add more context to metrics and give a more comprehensive basis on which to justify future investment.



DON'T FORGET THE FUNDAMENTALS

Even as formats evolve and new technologies rise to prominence, event planners, suppliers and marketers need to anchor programs in core principles. The most successful events are those that get the fundamentals right consistently and without compromise:

1. Accessibility and security

Inclusive design, clear navigation, and safe environments are table stakes to ensure that everyone can reach and enjoy your event. Attendees also expect their data privacy to be taken seriously, so make sure to consider compliance from the outset.

2. Health, safety, and risk management

The operational structure of your event matters. Tools like meeting request forms and coordinated meetings management processes are vital to the quality, consistency, and accountability you deliver across your events.

3. Virtual still has a role

40% of event programs today include virtual or hybrid event formats.¹² While in-person experiences still lead, virtual events, such as and webinars, remain a valuable tool for broader reach,

accessibility, and engagement across different audiences.

4. The vendor ecosystem matters

It's important to have a robust and trusted network of partners. This may include venues, production teams, technology providers, and local suppliers. As well as being able to call on the right experts, you need a coherent plan to integrate their capabilities to deliver events that really resonate.

5. Content is how you engage

The better you know your audience, the more precisely you can target bespoke and relevant content to them – before, during and after the event. Getting content right requires strong preparation, to both create relevant sessions and clearly set out the value of event takeaways to different audience groups. The same is true for hotels and venues – relevant, up-to-date content is essential

to attract new business, especially when bolstered by GEO targeting and emerging AI models.

6. Community is a long-term connector

Whether people join an event online or in person, we all want to feel part of something. Forums, local hubs, peer groups and regular live opportunities to network and connect are great ways to extend the reach and impact of an event and create strong relationships within peer groups that keep them coming back for more.

7. Sustainability is on the agenda

Event attendees pay attention to environmental impact. Measuring and communicating sustainability efforts in areas such as logistics, food choices and local sourcing, can support your brand perception and build trust with your desired audience.

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In an increasingly AI-driven world, trust has become the defining currency, shaping how events are designed, delivered, and experienced. People seek transparency, credibility, and authenticity, and events remain the most effective way to build trust through human connection. At the same time, AI is shifting to practical application, where its value will come from proven, purposeful use cases rather than experimentation for its own sake. While large, flagship events continue to play a critical role in driving brand awareness, smaller, curated formats will help extend the conversation, deepen engagement, and build community over time—making both essential components of a balanced event strategy.

With these shifts in play, the most successful event programs in 2026 will be defined by intentionality. That means designing experiences around audience needs, with a clear purpose, defined objectives, and the right data to understand performance. Success will ultimately come from treating events as strategic investments—planned with intent, disciplined execution, and measurable impact.



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CONCLUSION

The message from these nine trends isn't to do more. More events, more sessions, or more budget aren't necessarily the answer. The teams that win in 2026 are the ones that act with intention: clear on their goals, deliberate in their choices, and focused on outcomes that matter.

The ask is significant: drive more impact, often with fewer opportunities to do so. But clarity of purpose is what makes that possible. When every decision is made in service of a defined outcome, events stop being cost centers and start being growth drivers.

AI makes the work more efficient and scalable. But efficiency isn't the point. AI earns its place when it supports trust and genuine emotional connection, and delivers the kind of personal relevance that makes people feel seen. Used with purpose, it frees teams to focus on what only humans can do.

As AI and generative search continue to dilute digital engagement metrics, events are becoming something rarer and more valuable: a direct source of trusted, first-party behavioral data that brands actually

own. In a world where that kind of data is getting harder to come by, that's a significant advantage.

Bigger, meanwhile, is not always better. The sustained demand for curated formats, micro events, and exclusive environments shows that intimacy and relevance often outperforms scale. The most memorable events are the ones where people felt like the experience was made for them.

Through all of this, the fundamentals hold. Accessibility, security, and sustainability aren't optional considerations; they're the baseline that every event, at every touchpoint, needs to meet. And beyond the event itself, the brands that build community in the spaces between events will compound trust over time.

2026 is a year for intention. Prove the value of what you do, design for the outcomes that matter, and create experiences people carry with them long after the event ends.



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Resources

- [Mastering AI for Events](#)
- [Your Checklist for Running Small Events](#)
- [How to Use AI for Personalization in Hospitality](#)

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Event expectations are rising. Budgets are tighter, attention is harder to earn, and every experience has to prove its value. Make every moment more intentional with a purpose-built, AI-powered platform that connects planning, engagement, and insights to measurable outcomes.

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