



The State of Events 2026

Signals Shaping the Events Industry

↗ 2026



Letter from the CEO



The events industry enters 2026 with a renewed sense of momentum and a clear awareness of what it takes to sustain it.

Across regions and sectors, in-person events have firmly returned to the center of strategy. People want to be together again. They want shared experiences, engaging event content, meaningful conversations, and moments that create real connection. That demand is evident throughout this year's research.

At the same time, the conditions in which events are being delivered have changed.

Planners are operating in a more complex environment than ever before. Budgets remain constrained. Expectations continue to rise. Timelines are tighter, and teams are often smaller. Many professionals describe a pace that hasn't eased since events resumed, which requires constant prioritization, adaptability, and resilience.

This year's *The State of Events* report reflects that reality with honesty.

Engagement remains a defining focus, but also one of the industry's most persistent challenges. Measurement is becoming more considered, extending beyond attendance to include feedback, longer-term outcomes, and post-event impact. Technology continues to play a critical role — but with a more deliberate mindset. Event professionals are increasingly

selective, seeking tools that integrate smoothly, reduce friction, and support the expertise they already bring to their work.

AI sits at a particularly important point in that conversation. There is clear belief in its potential, alongside understandable caution around application, trust, and value. The industry is not resisting change, but it's rather taking the time to adopt it thoughtfully.

What stands out most, however, is the capability of the people behind the events. Despite ongoing constraint, planners are refining formats, rethinking engagement, and finding practical ways to deliver experiences that are relevant, inclusive, and worth returning to.

At EventsAir, we have the privilege of working closely with event professionals navigating these shifts every day. This report brings together survey insights and industry perspectives to provide a clear view of where the industry is today and where it is heading.

We hope it offers clarity, reassurance, and useful perspective as you plan for the year ahead.



Paul Trappett
Chief Executive Officer
[EventsAir](#)

Executive Summary

The events industry in 2026 is operating with corrected confidence but under sustained pressure.

This year's research shows a sector that has firmly re-centered around in-person experiences, while simultaneously rethinking how events are designed, measured, and delivered. With 90% of respondents rating in-person events as very important, this reinforces face-to-face connections as the foundation of modern event strategy. Hybrid formats remain relevant, but increasingly intentional. Virtual-only events continue to decline in strategic importance.

Yet this momentum exists alongside constraint.

Budgets remain largely flat, with nearly 70% of planners reporting little to no increase in funding. This financial reality shapes nearly every decision — from event format and scale to engagement design and technology investment. As a result, planners are prioritizing depth over breadth, focusing on fewer, higher-value experiences that justify investment and deliver clearer outcomes.

Engagement sits at the center of this shift.

While 74% of respondents view engagement as a key success factor, 39% cite it as one of their biggest challenges. This gap reflects a more nuanced understanding of what engagement means. Passive formats are losing impact, and one-size-fits-all approaches no longer resonate. In response, planners are experimenting with curated networking, multi-modal participation, and experiences that accommodate different audience needs — recognizing that meaningful engagement is not always loud or visible.

Measurement is also evolving. Attendance remains important, but it is no longer sufficient on its own. Feedback, participation, and post-event outcomes such as repeat attendance, partnerships, and extended content engagement are increasingly used to assess success. Events are being evaluated not just by what happens onsite, but by the momentum they generate beyond the room.





Technology continues to play a critical enabling role, though with greater selectivity. Planners are seeking platforms that reduce complexity, integrate cleanly, and support efficiency rather than add operational burden. This emphasis on integration reflects a broader understanding of technology's role. When data flows across registration, engagement, finance, and reporting, it becomes easier to personalize experiences, measure outcomes, and make informed decisions in real time.

AI is firmly on the industry's radar, but adoption remains cautious. While 72% of respondents believe AI is valuable or essential, more than a quarter are not using it at all. Where adoption is occurring, it is concentrated in low-risk, high-impact areas such as marketing, communications, and

data analysis. This pattern suggests an industry building confidence incrementally — focusing on practical value, trust, and clarity over experimentation for its own sake.

Taken together, the findings point to an industry that is no longer chasing scale or spectacle alone. Instead, event professionals are making more intentional choices. They're designing experiences that are inclusive, measurable, and sustainable within real-world constraints.

The events industry in 2026 is not standing still. It is refining its approach, with clarity, resilience, and a sharper focus on lasting value.

What follows is a closer look at the data, perspectives, and patterns shaping this moment, and what they mean for event professionals navigating the year ahead.



2026 Events at a Glance

In-person

In-person events are dominating, with **97.4% of respondents** rating them as “very important” or “moderately important”

↑ +2%



61% cite **budget constraints** as their top challenge, yet **ONLY 7%** expect a significant budget increase in 2026

Budget pressure

78%

rate content quality as “very important” to event success

↓ -2.5%

<16%

rate live virtual events as “very important”

↓ -5.8%

72%

believe AI is valuable or essential to event delivery, yet...

26%

are still hesitant to use AI at all. Mainly due to lack of knowledge or expertise

\$10K-\$30K

remains the most common annual investment in event technology

Attendance vs. feedback

83% rely on **attendance** and **82%** on **feedback** — showing success is measured almost as much by experience as by headcount

The Current Events Landscape

The events industry in 2026 is operating at full throttle but not without complexity.

After years of disruption, there's a renewed demand for in-person experiences, stronger investment in digital infrastructure, and growing pressure to deliver events that feel personal, premium, and purposeful.

While the industry has rebounded, many planners describe it more as a reinvention. One that still requires them to juggle rising expectations, compressed timelines, and tight budgets.

This year's survey reflects that momentum. **Over 380 event professionals** across ANZ, EMEA, North America, and beyond shared their perspectives, representing event agencies, associations, corporates, education providers, and government bodies. Managers and

Coordinators made up the largest share of respondents, supported by senior leaders and business owners. This broad participation gives a well-rounded lens on how the industry is tracking.

Meanwhile, event objectives are shifting: no longer just about logistics or attendance, the industry is seeing a pivot toward sector positioning, talent pipeline development, and long-term impact.

The current landscape is vibrant but demanding. Confidence is high, but so is the pace. The rest of this report will explore how planners are navigating that — across formats, engagement, measurement, technology, and more.

“What surprised me most this year is that we've been completely flat-out. I thought it would be a little quieter, but people want to be back together. Not just at conferences — they want incentive travel, celebration events, shared experiences. That demand has come back fast.”

Alkis Polyrakis

Technical Director, [CONVIN S.A.](#)

Event Format Evolution

In-person events are firmly back at the center of event strategy.

For 2026, **90% of respondents** rated in-person events as very important to their plans. This is not a marginal lead. It is a clear signal that face-to-face formats are once again the default, not the exception.

The reason is simple. In-person events deliver what no other format can replicate at scale: meaningful networking, brand immersion, and tangible ROI. From spontaneous conversations to shared moments in the room, planners continue

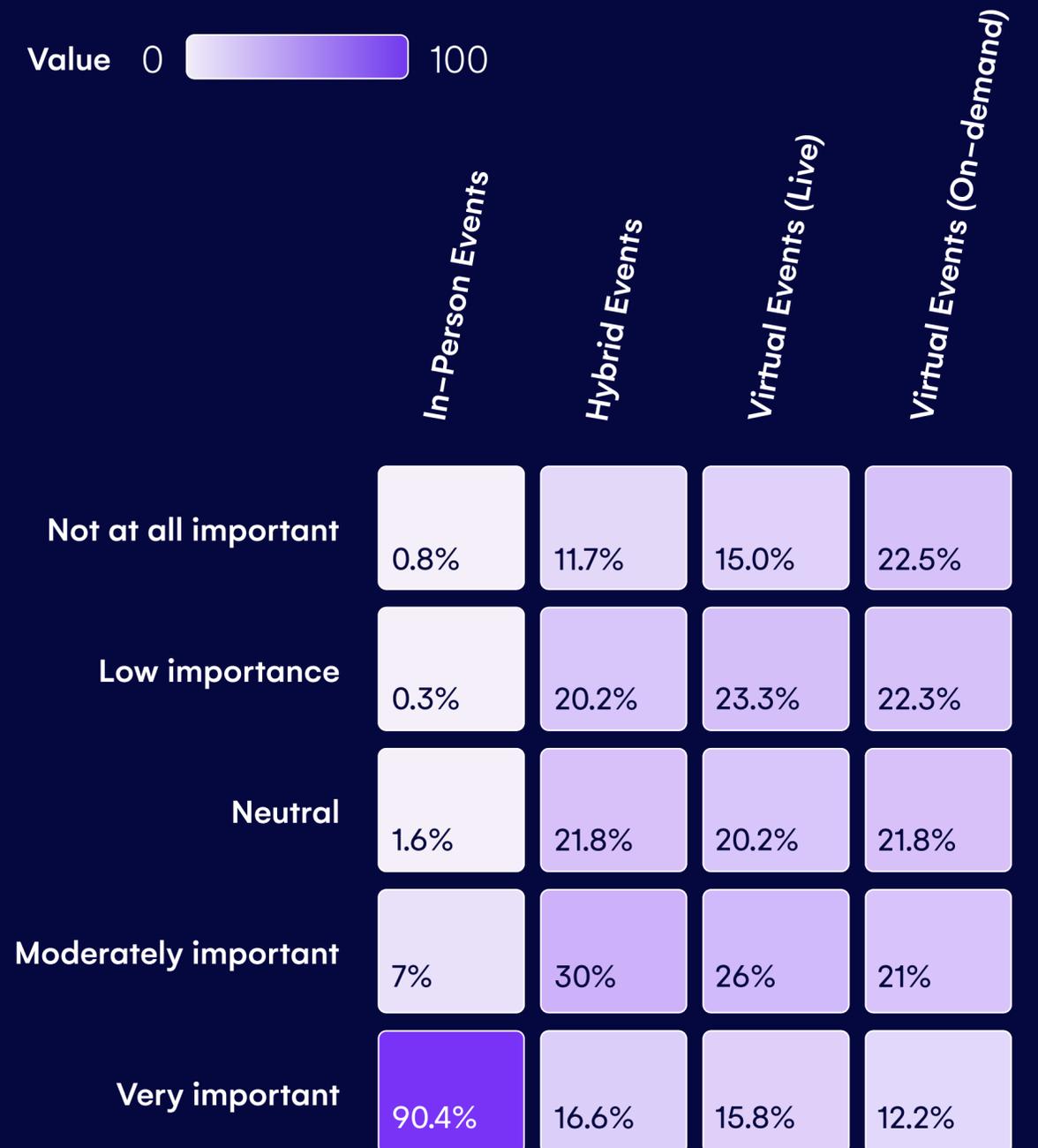
to see stronger engagement and commercial outcomes when people are physically together.

Hybrid and virtual formats have not disappeared, but their role has changed. Hybrid now clearly outranks virtual, both live and on-demand, but it is being applied with intent rather than by default. Planners are using it selectively to extend reach, reduce travel barriers, or support post-event engagement.

“We had clients that were virtual-only for a while, then hybrid. But now we’re seeing a strong return to fully in-person events. That personal connection is back in demand. People want to be in the room – engaging, networking, experiencing the event together.”

Ryan Mindling
Group Coordinator, [Navis Events](#)

How important are the following event formats in your event strategy for 2026?



As in-person takes priority, event design is becoming more deliberate.

Most respondents are delivering events in the 100–500 attendee range, followed by mid-sized events of 501–1000 and larger-scale events of 1,000+. These sizes reflect a sweet spot for in-person delivery. Large enough to create energy. Small enough to maintain focus and connection.

Event types reinforce this preference. Conferences and congresses, training and professional development, internal organizational events, and trade exhibitions remain the most common formats — all of which benefit strongly from physical interaction.

Alongside this, smaller, high-value formats are gaining momentum. Retreats. Closed-door roundtables. Premium offsite experiences. Several organizers described these as sell-out successes, delivering intimacy, exclusivity, and outsized ROI compared to broader formats.

Taken together, the message is clear. Planners are moving away from one-size-fits-all delivery. They are prioritizing depth over breadth. And they are choosing formats that maximize connection, impact, and long-term value.

“The most expensive event we’ve ever run was a cruise incentive in Japan, and it sold out in two months. I think that shows when people see a unique, high-quality experience, they’re willing to invest in it. There’s still strong appetite for in-person, premium-style events.”

Mike Tuzee

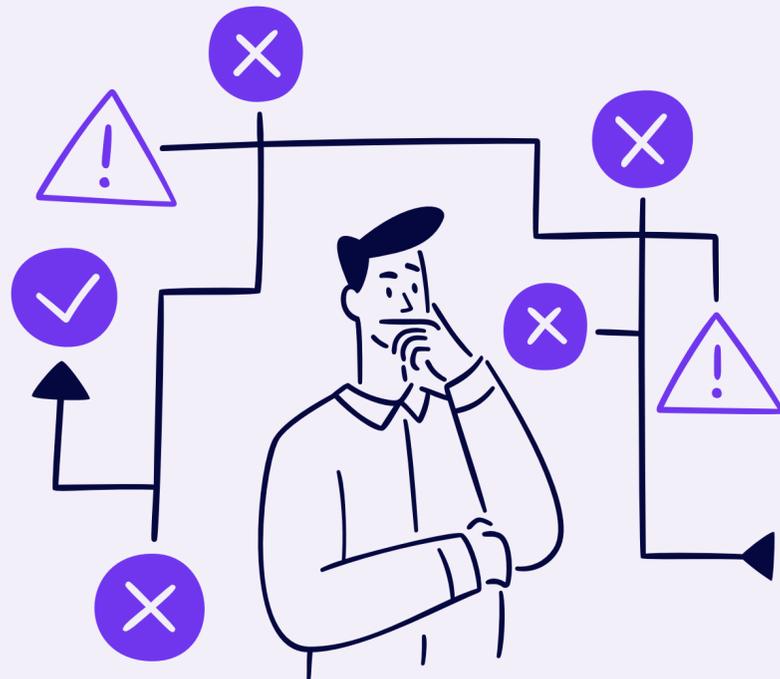
Founder & Managing Director, [Impact Events](#)

What types of events does your organisation typically organize?

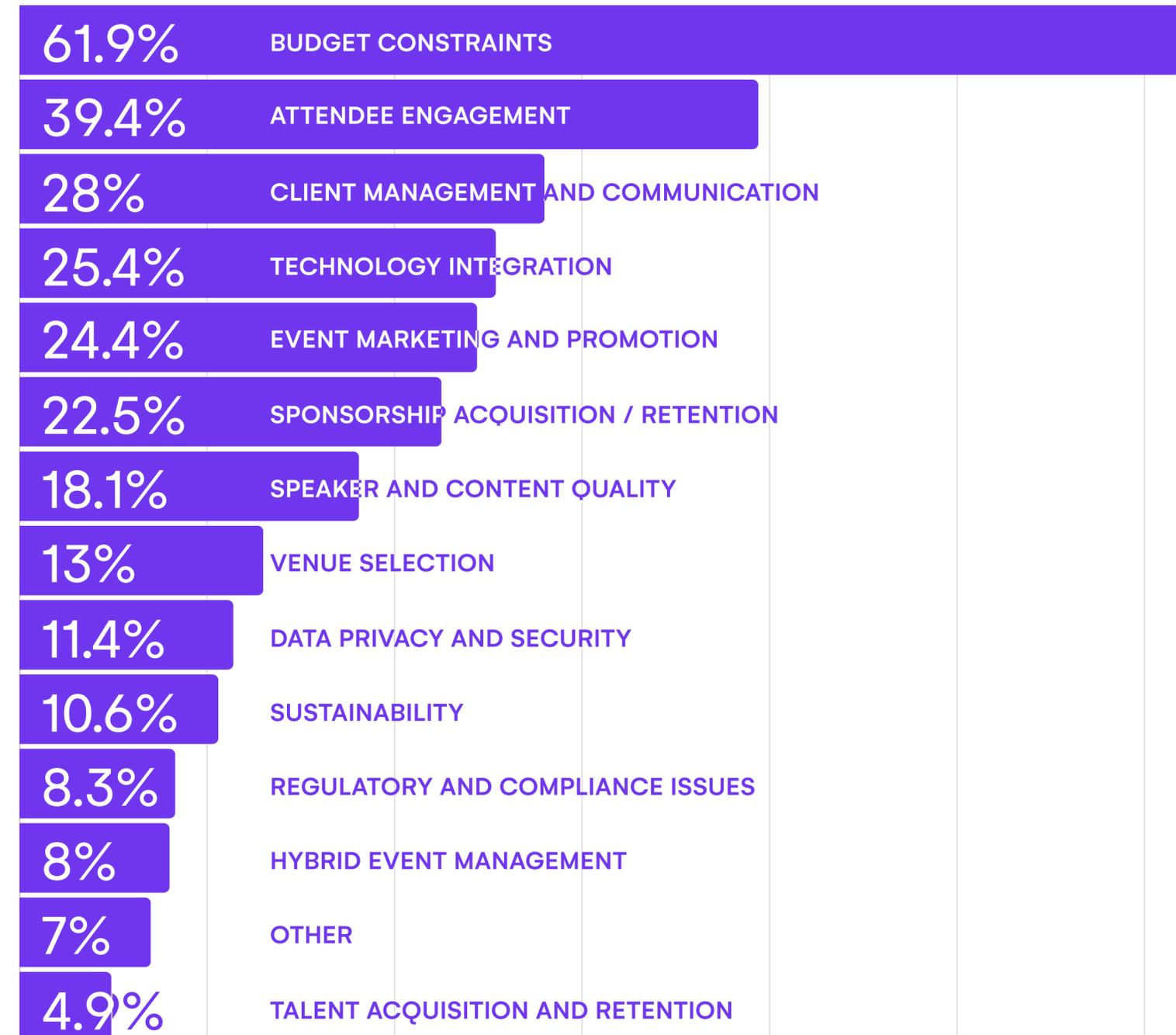


Top Challenges Facing Event Planners

When asked to rank their top challenges for 2026, event professionals pointed to a clear set of recurring pressures shaping how events are planned and delivered.



What are the **top three challenges** your organization faces when organizing events?



When asked to rank their top challenges for 2026, four themes consistently rose to the surface.

Budget constraints

Budget constraints remain the most significant barrier, cited by **61% of respondents**. Rising supplier costs and limited financial flexibility are influencing almost every planning decision, from format choice to production quality.

→ 61%



Attendee engagement

Attendee engagement follows closely at **39%**. Attendees expect more interaction, relevance, and personalization. Delivering those experiences requires time, tools, and deliberate design... all of which are under pressure.

→ 39%



Client and stakeholder management

Client and stakeholder management was flagged by **28%** of respondents, particularly among agencies and conference organizers. Indecision, shifting priorities, and unclear objectives continue to slow momentum and add strain to already tight timelines.

→ 28%



Technology integration

Finally, **technology integration** remains a challenge for **25%** of planners. Fragmented systems, budget limitations, and implementation complexity persist, even when the right solutions are available.

→ 25%



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Budget stagnation is the quiet force shaping every other challenge in this report. It limits innovation, constrains engagement, slows technology adoption, and increases pressure on teams — widening the gap between what's possible and what's delivered.

Planner Perspectives: Top Challenges

Across roles, regions, and industries, event professionals are facing intensified pressure. Here's how they're describing the challenge in their own words:



“There are always those moments when clients approve everything six months out, and then suddenly pull \$150K from the budget. The challenge is knowing how to cut without gutting the event. It’s a constant balancing act.”

Mike Tuzee

Founder & Managing Director, [Impact Events](#)

“Many associations are still using makeshift systems instead of centralized CRMs. It’s not sustainable. They’re realizing that without proper data infrastructure, they can’t deliver the experience modern attendees expect.”

Barbara Löffler

Head of Event Management Software,
[Mondial Congress & Events](#)

“Our events often reflect broader political tensions in the aged care sector. That can create challenges onsite — everything from protest risks to media scrutiny. It’s made us much more proactive in how we brief staff and prepare contingencies.”

KJ Smith

Events and Project Manager,
[Aged Care Association NZ](#)

One of the biggest challenges is when clients don’t know what they want — or they change their minds frequently. It creates stress on timelines and budgets. Our job becomes helping them clarify their vision before we can bring it to life.”

Rosie Peace

Public Relations & Event Manager, [AA&P](#)

“Burnout is very real. Everyone’s been going non-stop since events reopened. Teams are smaller, but expectations haven’t adjusted. People are still passionate, but they’re also exhausted. You can see it.”

Alkis Polyraakis

Technical Director, [CONVIN S.A.](#)

“For us, it’s the age-old issue of making everyone happy — members, sponsors, staff, speakers. Sometimes those priorities are at odds, and you have to find that middle ground without compromising the attendee experience.”

Lisa Muston

General Manager Events & Partnerships,
[Australasian Sonographers Association](#)

The Budget Reality

For many event professionals, 2026 is defined by a familiar reality: the mandate to do more with less.

Only **7%** of respondents expect a significant budget increase this year. **39%** anticipate a slight rise. **32%** expect budgets to remain flat. The rest expect cuts or remain unsure.

In real terms, nearly **60% of planners** are working with little to no additional funding.

This constraint touches every trend in this report. Innovation slows when budgets stall. Engagement suffers when teams lack the tools or time to personalize. Technology adoption becomes cautious rather than strategic.

When planners are limited by cost, they are also limited by opportunity.

Yet this is also where ingenuity has surfaced.

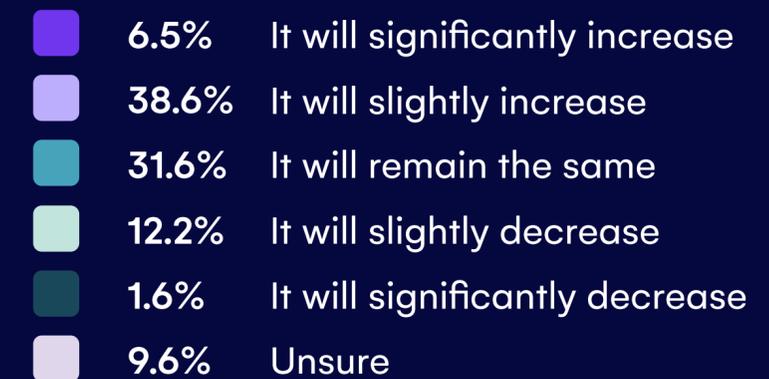
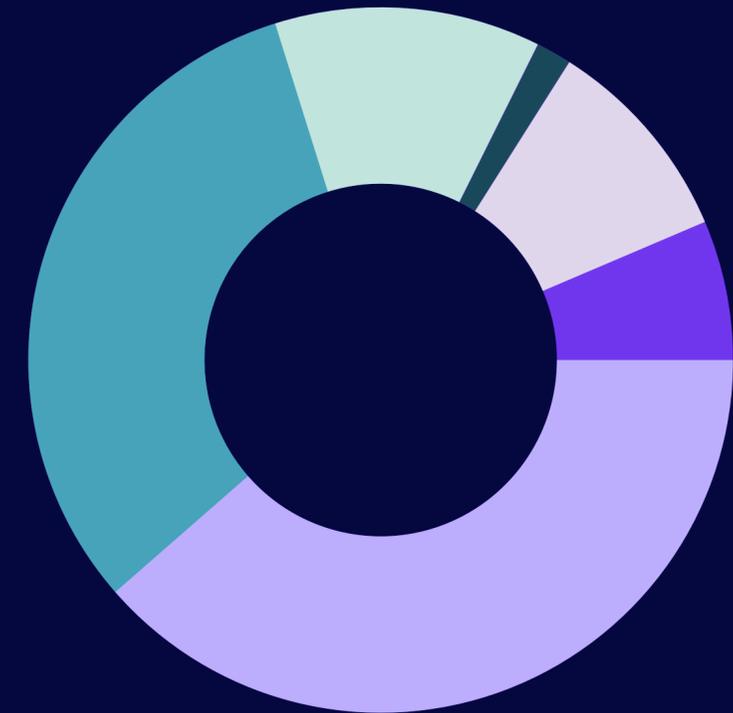
Across interviews, planners shared examples of rethinking formats, tightening event scope, and redesigning sponsor packages to unlock new revenue. Others are prioritizing fewer, higher-value experiences. Some are extending event lifecycles to extract more value before and after the live moment.

Technology plays a critical role here, not as an added expense, but as a multiplier. When providers act as true partners, they help planners scale efficiently, uncover new monetization opportunities, and align investment with outcomes.

The planners who succeed in 2026 will be those who prioritize sharply, communicate value clearly, and partner with technology providers who understand the bigger picture.



How do you anticipate your overall event budget will change for 2026 compared to 2025?



Measuring Event Success

Ask event professionals how they define success, and the answer is becoming more nuanced.

In the 2026 survey, **83% of respondents** rely on attendance as a core performance metric.

Almost the same number, **82%**, rely on feedback. This near-parity signals a meaningful shift in how success is judged.

While attendance continues to signal reach and relevance, feedback now carries equal weight in how success is judged. Numbers alone are no longer enough. Qualitative insight — how the experience was received, what resonated, and what fell flat — is increasingly shaping how events are evaluated and improved.

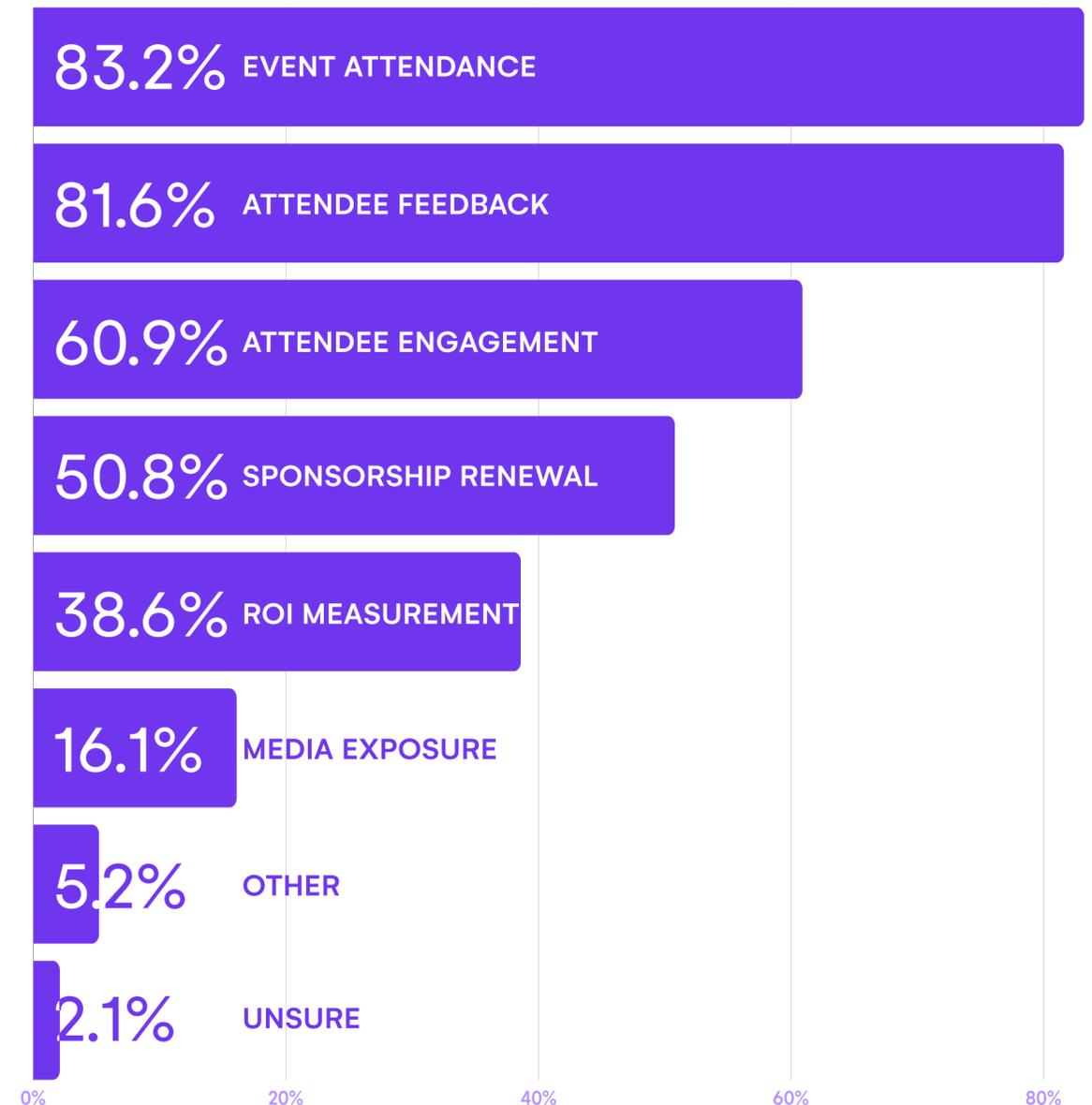
Engagement metrics sit alongside this at 61%. Participation levels, session interaction, and moments of connection help planners understand depth, not just volume.

What's changing most is how success is interpreted. Planners are blending quantitative measures with qualitative insight, pairing dashboards with lived experience. The story behind the numbers now matters just as much as the numbers themselves.

Event success is no longer a single figure. It's a fuller picture, one built from data, dialogue, and what happens in the room.



How do you measure the success of your events?



Beyond the Headcount

For many planners, the most meaningful indicators now emerge after the event ends.

Success is being measured through long-term outcomes and relationship-driven signals. Partnerships formed. Content reused across the year. Sponsors rebooking earlier. Communities gaining momentum beyond a single moment.

How that value is defined varies by sector.

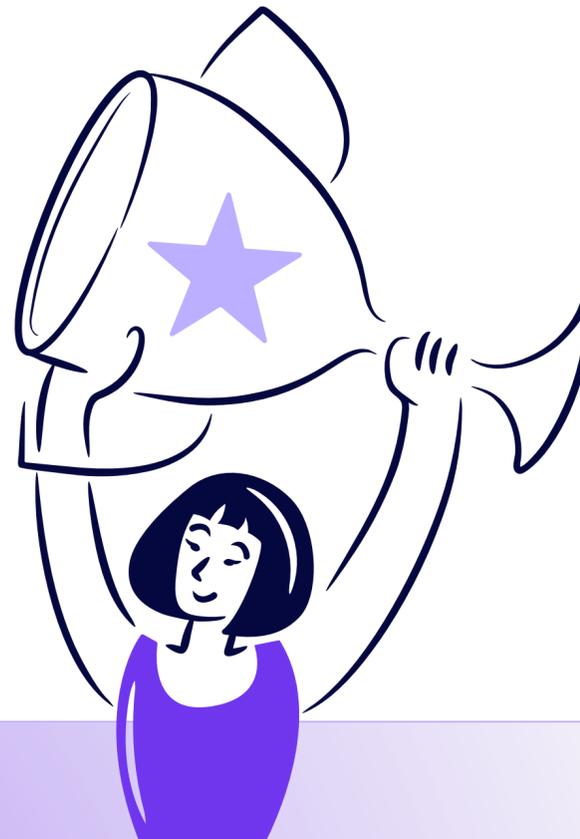
Agencies and PCOs are balancing outcomes for multiple stakeholders at once, measuring success through client feedback, repeat business, and delivery against shifting objectives. **For corporates**, success often shows up through renewals, upsells, and internal stakeholder satisfaction discussed in post-event debriefs.

For **associations, education providers, and government bodies**, success is frequently assessed through longer-term lenses. Advocacy impact. Member or participant retention. Sector positioning and credibility. Measures that don't always sit neatly in a dashboard, but matter deeply to organizational goals.

As a result, planners are blending data with judgment.

They aren't abandoning metrics. They're expanding them. Attendance still matters. Feedback still counts. But so do trust, traction, and long-term value.

In 2026, event success is no longer defined by numbers alone. It's defined by what those numbers enable, and how effectively events drive momentum beyond the room.



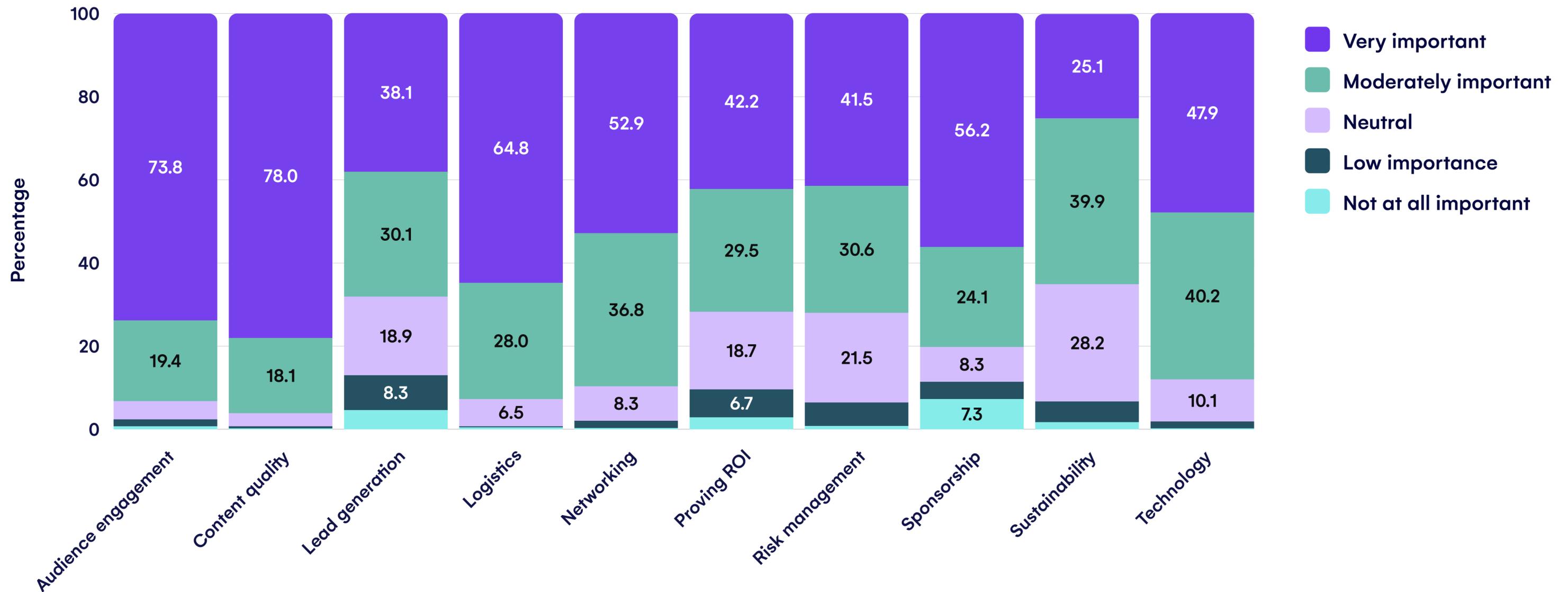
“We still track the fundamentals: attendee numbers, sponsor uptake, total revenue, and delivering on budget. But we also go deeper, mapping pre- and post-event engagement, measuring content reach, and assessing stakeholder impact. Success is no longer defined purely by how many people walked through the door, it's about who was in the room, how they engaged, and what happens after the event ends.”

Rosie Peace

Public Relations & Event Manager, [AA&P](#)

The Drivers of Event Success

How important are the following factors in the success of your events?



If measurement tells us how success is tracked, the data also reveals what actually drives it.

In 2026, event success is shaped by a clear hierarchy of priorities. **Content quality** leads the way, with **78% of respondents** rating it as very important. Strong programming, confident speakers, and clear narrative flow continue to define perceived value.

Attendee engagement follows closely, with **74%** ranking it as very important. Participation now matters more than presence. Curated networking, interactive formats, and authentic moments of connection consistently outperform passive event delivery.

Operational excellence remains foundational. **65%** of planners rated logistics and execution as very important. Seamless delivery is expected. What differentiates high-performing events is the ability to adapt in real time when plans shift.

Other factors reinforce this picture. Networking opportunities (53%), sponsorship outcomes (56%), and technology (48%) influence success most when aligned to clear objectives. Sustainability and risk management remain important, but are more situational than universal drivers.

“You need more than great logistics. Our members come for the content — but they stay for the connection. It’s not just what’s said from stage. It’s who they meet. That’s where the real value is.”

Lisa Muston

General Manager Events & Partnerships,
[Australasian Songwriters Association](#)

INSIGHT

Together, these factors explain why success in 2026 is no longer defined by isolated metrics. It’s defined by experiences that justify investment and deliver lasting value.



The Engagement Predicament

Engagement sits at the center of event success yet remains one of its hardest problems to solve.

As our research shows, **39% of planners say attendee engagement is one of their biggest challenges**, while **74% consider it a key success factor**. It is both the problem and the proof point.

This reveals a clear tension. Everyone agrees engagement matters. Fewer feel confident they're delivering it consistently.

Across interviews, several patterns emerged. Passive formats no longer cut through. Long keynotes and static panels struggle to hold attention. Audiences engage in different ways, and not all engagement is visible. Resource constraints limit how much tailoring is possible. And true engagement requires effort before, during, and after the event, not just onsite.

What is working tends to balance ambition with reality.

Planners pointed to curated networking, such as facilitated roundtables or peer groups. Multi-modal engagement, from live polling to wellness spaces. And emerging use of gamification, engagement points, and real-time feedback to better understand how audiences are interacting as events unfold.

The biggest shift is mindset. Engagement isn't about volume or visible energy alone. It's about relevance, agency, and lasting connection.

The predicament is real. But planners who solve it — even incrementally — are the ones creating events people return to.



“Some attendees just don’t engage publicly. They’ll sit quietly, absorb everything, and leave without making a scene. But that doesn’t mean the event didn’t land for them. It’s a reminder that engagement looks different depending on the person.”

Ryan Mindling

Group Coordinator, [Navis Events](#)

Planner Perspectives: Engagement in Practice

From large conferences to intimate activations, planners are experimenting with new ways to spark participation. Here's how leading planners are raising the bar:



“We introduced a podcast booth on our expo floor — and it was packed. Members loved being able to share their stories in real time. It gave them visibility, and gave us content for later. A win-win.”

KJ Smith

Events and Project Manager,
[Aged Care Association NZ](#)

“We’re embedding more curated networking. Rather than open mingling, we’re trialing hosted roundtables and topic-matched small groups. It creates more meaningful conversations, especially for our investor attendees.”

Maddie Healey

Event Coordinator, [AusBiotech](#)

“Delegates expect a curated, personalised journey — it’s no longer optional. That could be through login-based content recommendations or giving them control over what sessions they see. We need to make sure their experience is relevant from the start.”

Barbara Löffler

Head of Event Management Software,
[Mondial Congress & Events](#)

“This year we trialed wellness spaces — areas for quiet reflection or mindfulness. It was a small thing but really well received. Engagement doesn’t always have to be loud.”

Lisa Muston

General Manager Events & Partnerships,
[Australasian Sonographers Association](#)

“Gamification is more than a buzzword now — it’s a real engagement lever. We’ve used everything from live trivia to passport-style challenges, and it really pulls people into parts of the event they might otherwise miss.”

Rosie Peace

Public Relations & Event Manager, [AA&P](#)

“Community is everything. And attendees can tell immediately if it’s real or manufactured. The best engagement comes when the event speaks directly to who they are — not just what’s trending.”

Alkis Polyrakis

Technical Director, [CONVIN S.A.](#)

The AI Divide

From Curiosity to Capability

Artificial intelligence is no longer a future concept in events. It's emerging as a practical enabler. Yet unlike some industries where AI adoption has accelerated rapidly, event professionals are still **assessing value, balancing risk, and figuring out where to integrate AI most meaningfully.**

This year's survey reflects that moment of **transition and tension.**

On one hand, **72% of respondents believe AI is valuable to essential** for improving event outcomes. Yet, then we have **26% respondents say they're not using AI at all.**

72%

believe AI is valuable or essential to event delivery, yet...

26%

are still hesitant to use AI at all. Mainly due to lack of knowledge or expertise

This contrast highlights where the industry currently sits. Interest is strong. Belief in potential is widespread. But confidence in how to apply AI meaningfully is still developing.

What planners are responding to most is not automation for automation's sake. It's the idea of amplification. Using AI to support expertise, reduce friction, and free up time for higher-value work.

Not every planner is ready to adopt AI today. But many are watching closely, waiting for solutions that feel purposeful, secure, and genuinely helpful.

INSIGHT

For AI to move from curiosity to capability, it must feel practical and aligned. That means clear use cases, transparent safeguards, and tools that integrate naturally into existing workflows.

Where AI is Excelling

Where AI is being adopted, the focus is pragmatic. Our 2026 survey reveals a split landscape: planners are experimenting with AI, but use is largely concentrated in a few low-risk, high-impact areas.

- **Event Marketing (62%)** — such as email drafting, content repurposing, and copywriting
- **Data Analysis & Reporting (38%)** — extracting insights, surfacing trends, and answering planning questions faster

These applications share a common thread. They reduce time pressure. They're easy to test. And their value is quickly visible.

When asked what they would automate first, respondents consistently pointed to communication-heavy admin. Tasks such as

responding to attendee or client inquiries, managing pre-event communications, and maintaining email workflows were cited far more often than anything attendee-facing. Chatbots, FAQ tools, and AI-assisted email drafting were frequently referenced as ways to maintain responsiveness without increasing workload.

Better yet? They don't alter the core event experience. Rather, they support it and assist teams to work smarter within existing constraints.

This pattern suggests that AI adoption in events is not about sweeping transformation. It's about incremental confidence-building at a pace that feels manageable.

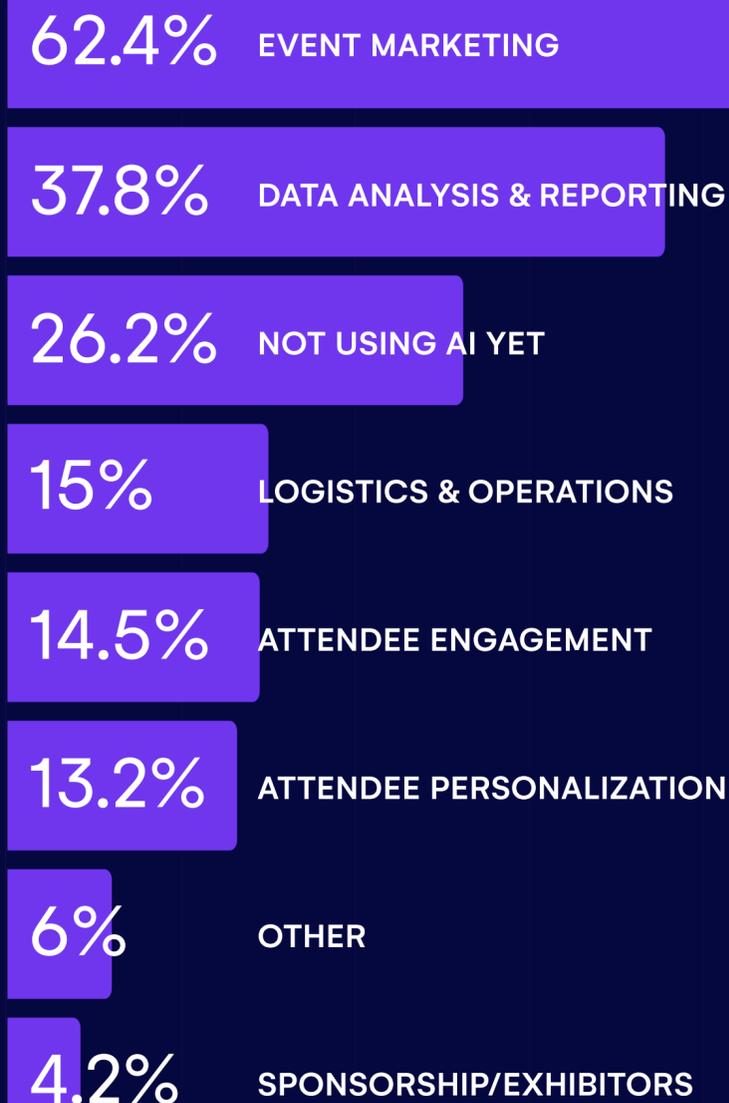
So, if the benefits are clear, what's holding the rest of the industry back?

“We've been experimenting with AI-generated session summaries — quick highlights, key themes. It's not perfect yet, but it gives us a faster way to repurpose content for those who couldn't attend live.”

Alkis Polyraakis

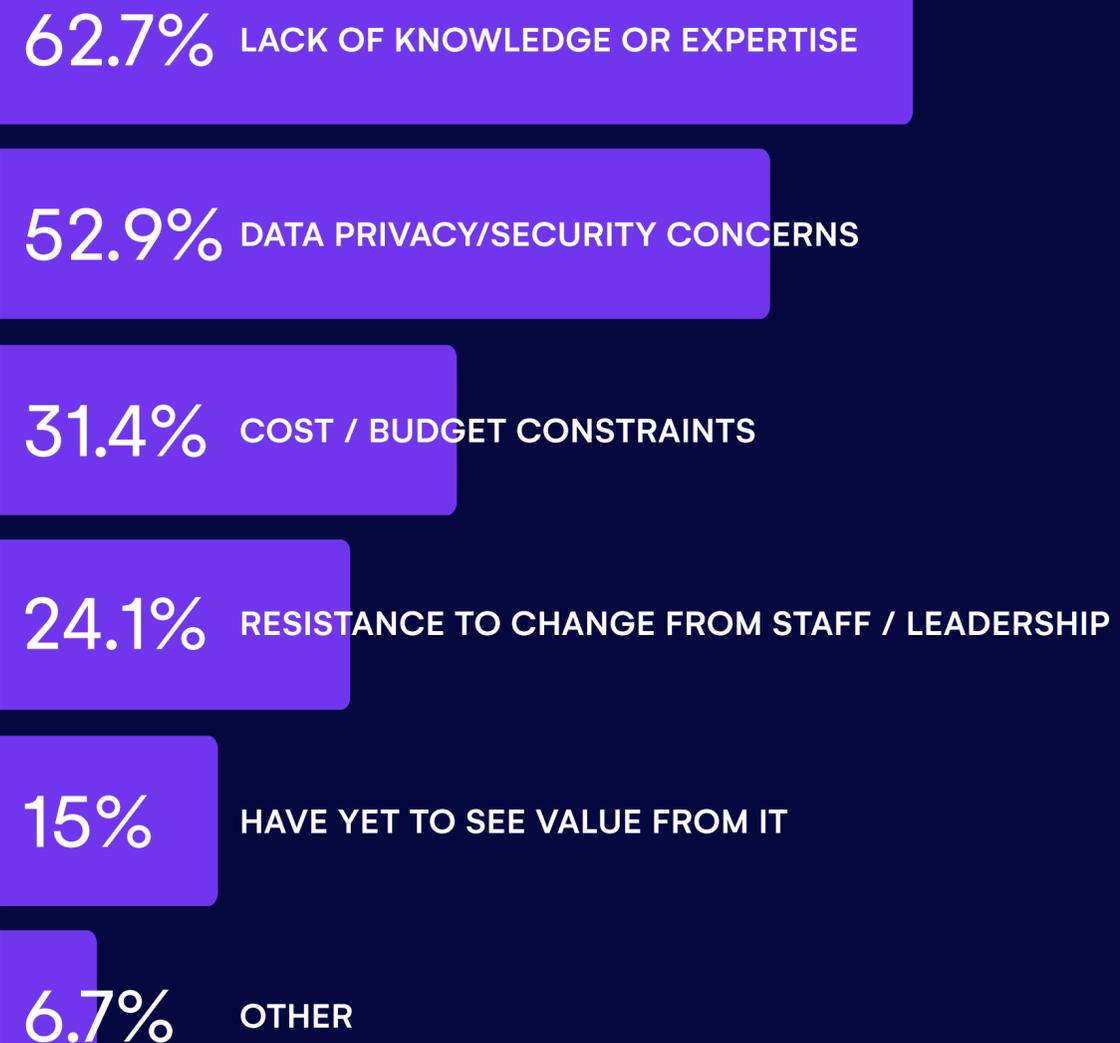
Technical Director, [CONVIN S.A.](#)

How do you currently use AI in your event management?



Why AI Adoption is Lagging

What are the main barriers preventing wider use of AI in your event management?



Despite strong interest, AI adoption is lagging.

When asked what's holding them back, **63%** of respondents cited a lack of knowledge or expertise. **53%** raised data privacy and security concerns, while **31%** pointed to cost and budget constraints.

These responses reflect a sector that is cautious by necessity. Events operate in environments where trust matters, data is sensitive, and mistakes are highly visible. Without clear guidance, AI can feel risky, even for planners who believe in its long-term value.

This caution is also reflected in investment intent. While 39% say they are likely or very likely to increase AI spend, a higher proportion remain unsure or unlikely to do so.

Importantly, that hesitation is less about fear of replacement, and more about uncertainty. Who owns the output? How is data protected? How do teams ensure accuracy and accountability

The industry isn't rejecting AI. It's pausing. Waiting for tools that feel safe, purposeful, and worth the investment.

“We haven't rolled out anything AI-heavy yet, but we're watching closely – particularly in comms, content summarisation, and translation. The key will be trust and consistency.”

KJ Smith

Events and Project Manager, [Aged Care Association NZ](#)

Applying AI with Purpose

As AI becomes more prevalent across event technology, planners are right to be discerning. The real question is no longer whether a platform includes AI, but whether it's being applied with purpose.

At EventsAir, our approach to AI has been shaped by the realities facing the industry. Flat or tightening budgets. Ongoing staff shortages and skills gaps. Increasing pressure to deliver more value, faster, with fewer resources.

That's why our AI strategy is built to amplify human expertise, not replace it — and why it's focused on three areas where planners feel the greatest impact.

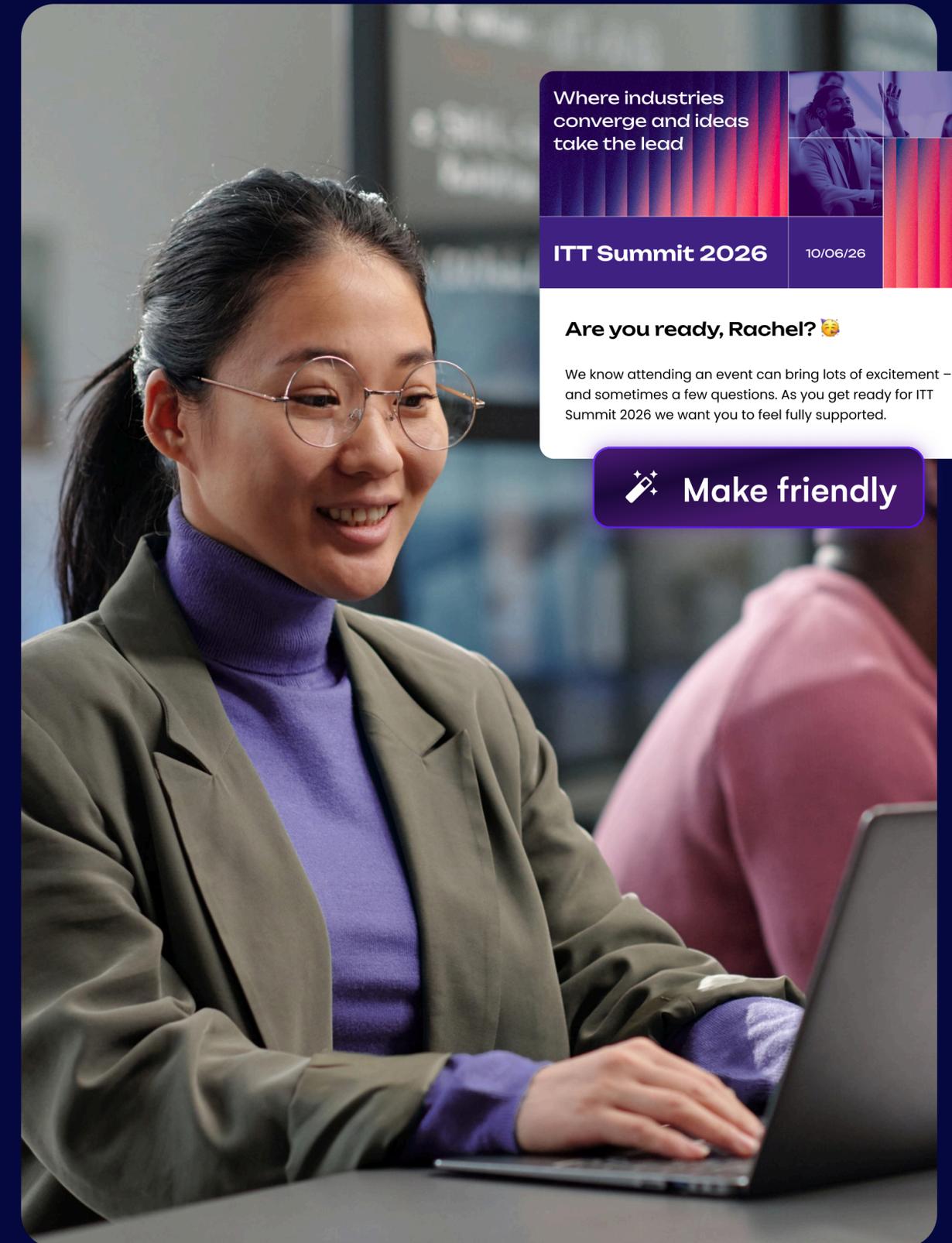
First, event marketing and communications. Tools like Comms Coach, already live in the EventsAir platform, help planners create clearer, faster, on-brand messaging across invitations, reminders, and post-event follow-ups.

Next, data and insight. We're developing an AI assistant that helps planners interpret analytics, answer natural-language questions like "How did this year's event compare to last?", and surface insights without digging through reports.

And finally, attendee experience. From real-time support to personalized agendas and smarter networking, we're building AI that makes events more relevant and responsive for every guest.

INSIGHT

This progression is intentional. It reflects how events are actually planned, delivered, and measured. Not AI for AI's sake. But AI that earns trust, solves real problems, and works where it matters most.



Looking Ahead

If the past few years have proven anything, it's that the events industry is no longer operating in a predictable cycle.

Audience needs are changing. Formats continue to evolve. Stakeholder expectations are rising. And while logistics still matter — venue, catering, registration — they're no longer enough on their own.

The future of events isn't defined by bigger budgets or bolder technology. It's defined by clarity of purpose.

Survey responses show a clear clustering of priorities for 2026. At the top sits the **in-person experience**, with planners doubling down on formats that deliver connection, immersion, and real-world value. Alongside this is a strong focus on **delivering impact on tighter budgets**, forcing sharper decisions about where time, money, and effort are spent.

Planners are also prioritizing **engagement with fewer tools**. Rather than expanding tech stacks, many are seeking simplicity — platforms that do more, integrate better, and support engagement without adding operational burden.

Together, these priorities point to a broader shift. Event strategies are becoming more intentional. And all of this is happening under constraint.

Flat budgets. Limited headcount. Higher expectations. Yet across responses, one quality consistently surfaced: adaptability. The ability to reassess, refine, and respond as conditions continue to change.

That adaptability is becoming the defining skill of the modern event professional.



“The future is all about modularity. Clients want to customise — and we want to give them that flexibility while also increasing our revenue. APIs and platforms like EventsAir are key to making that scalable.”

Barbara Löffler

Head of Event Management Software,
[Mondial Congress & Events](#)

“In five years, we won't be talking about tech versus people anymore. It'll just be expected that both work together. The question will be: how seamlessly do they integrate?”

Alkis Polyrakis

Technical Director, [CONVIN S.A.](#)

So what does this mean for the future of events?

First, **greater alignment between event strategy, data, and business outcomes**. Events are expected to contribute more directly to organizational goals — from talent pipelines and advocacy to revenue and retention.

Second, **increased pressure to prove value**. Boards, sponsors, and stakeholders want clearer evidence of return. Not just what happened onsite, but what changed because of it.

Third, a **deeper focus on meaningful engagement** — before, during, and after the event. This includes personalized journeys, long-tail content access, and continuity beyond the live moment.

Fourth, **sustainability and inclusivity are becoming baseline expectations**, not differentiators. Respondents pointed to growing ESG pressure, from carbon tracking and sustainable venues to accessible design and inclusive programming. And finally, **technology maturity**. AI, automation, and mobile-first tools are no longer viewed as experimental, but as long-term enablers — provided they are applied with intent. The appetite is not for more tech, but for better-integrated, more purposeful solutions.

What's clear is this: the future of events isn't about chasing the next shiny thing. It's about making smarter choices with the resources available. About designing experiences that feel human, relevant, and worth returning to.

For planners willing to embrace that mindset, the opportunity ahead isn't just to keep up, it's to lead.

“We used to think of our event as a stand-alone thing. Now we think about it as one part of a 12-month engagement cycle. What happens before and after matters just as much as the onsite experience.”

Maddie Healey
Event Coordinator, [AusBiotech](#)

“We're thinking about legacy now. Not just what happens onsite, but what the event leaves behind. Are we driving sector change? Are we building advocacy? That's where we're headed.”

KJ Smith
Events and Project Manager, [Aged Care Association NZ](#)

Thank You

This report would not have been possible without the generosity, insight, and collaboration of the wider events community.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the industry partners who shared The State of Events 2026 survey with their communities and networks. Your support helped ensure this research reflects a broad, global perspective.

With thanks to our survey partners:

- [ICCA](#)
- [ABEA](#)
- [PCOA](#)
- [BEIA](#)

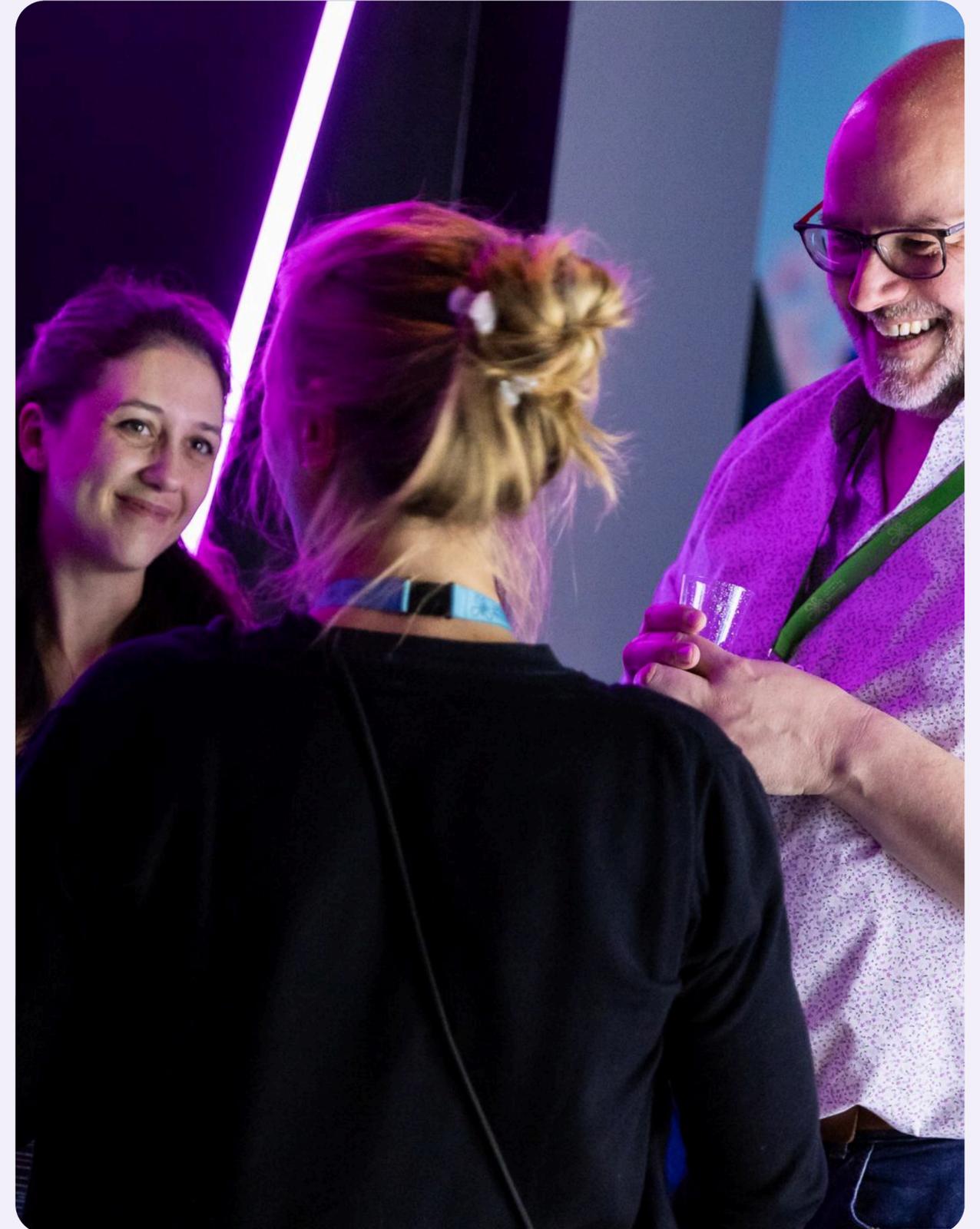
We are also deeply grateful to the event professionals and industry leaders who contributed their time and perspectives through interviews. Your openness and experience added essential depth to the findings, helping to bring the data to life through real-world context and lived experience.

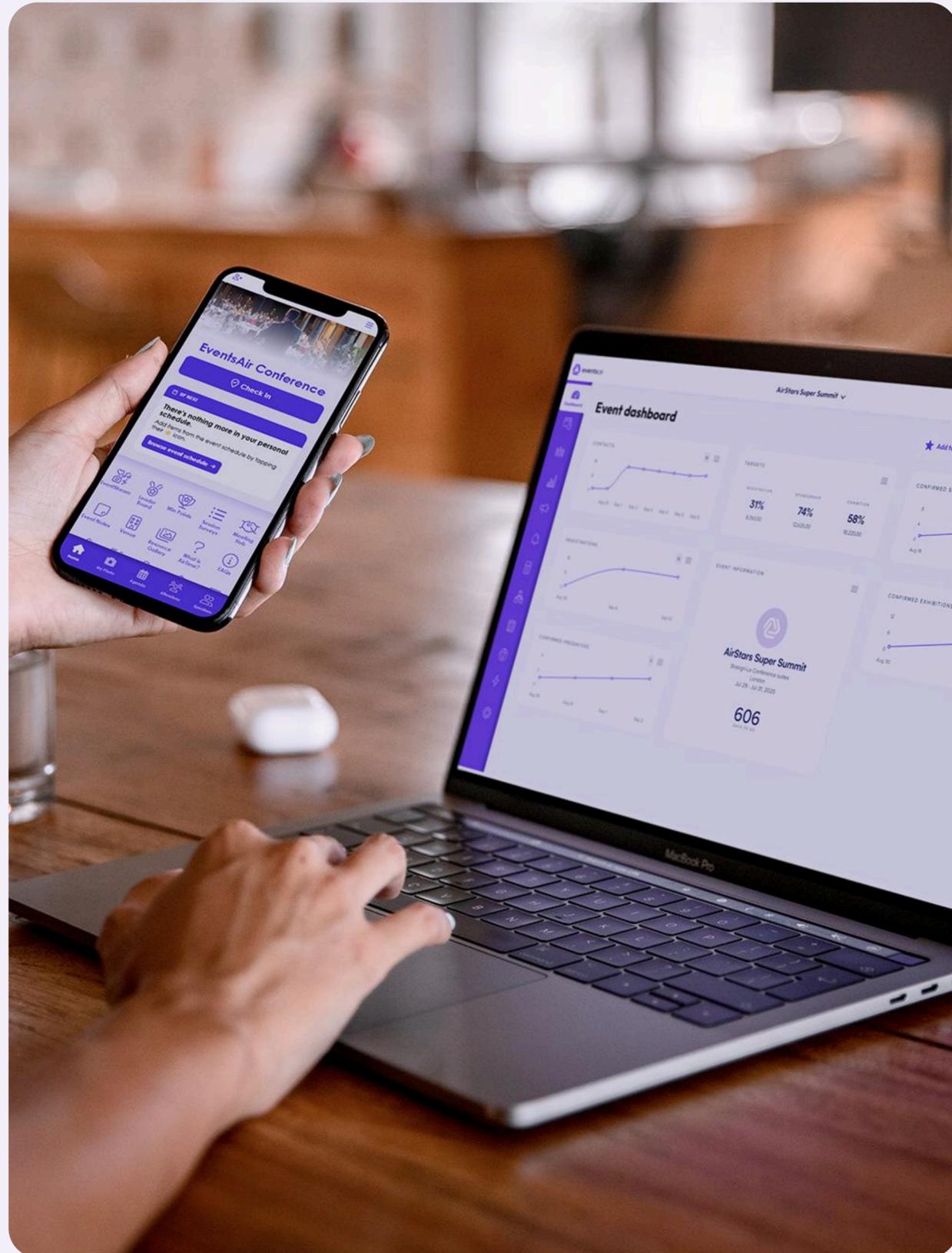
With thanks to our interview contributors:

- Alkis Polyrakis, [CONVIN S.A.](#)
- Ryan Mindling, [Navis Events](#)
- Mike Tuzee, [Impact Events](#)
- Rosie Peace, [AA&P Events](#)
- Barbara Löffler, [Mondial Congress & Events](#)
- KJ Smith, [Aged Care Association NZ](#)
- Lisa Muston, [Australasian Sonographers Association](#)
- Maddie Healey, [AusBiotech](#)

Finally, thank you to every event professional who took the time to respond to the survey. Your input continues to shape this report and contributes to a clearer understanding of how the industry is evolving.

At EventsAir, we are proud to work alongside this community, listening, learning, and supporting the delivery of meaningful events around the world.





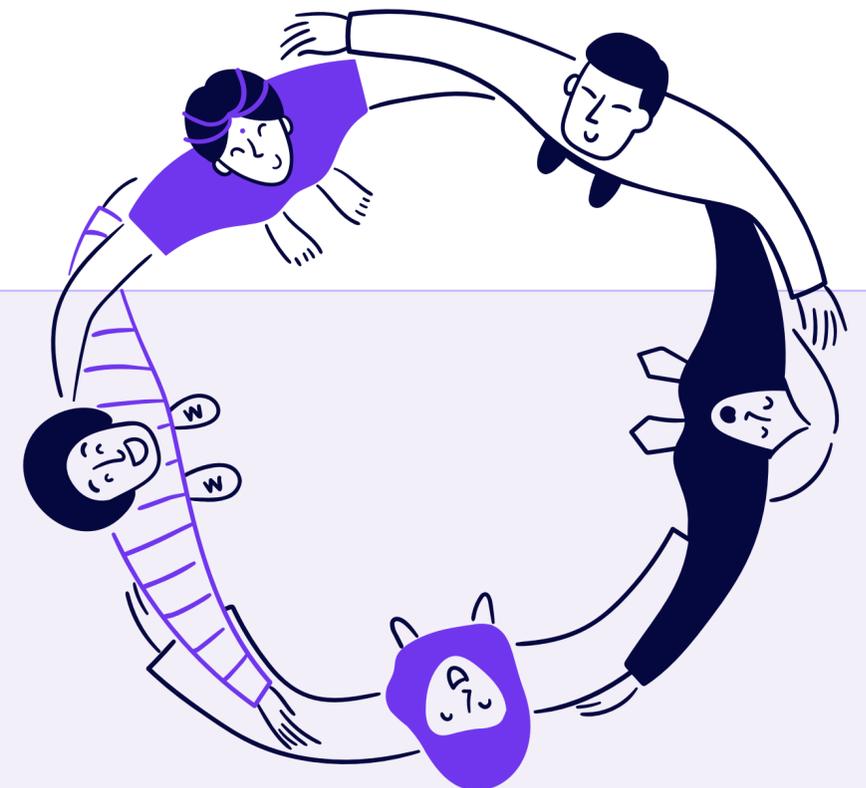
EventsAir unifies everything you need into one comprehensive event management platform, so you can plan smarter, engage better, deliver with confidence, and scale effortlessly.

With more than 35 years of experience and over 400,000 events delivered globally, EventsAir is a trusted leader in the event technology industry.

Built for the demands of dynamic events, EventsAir provides a single source of truth across the entire event lifecycle. From on-brand event sites and secure registration to custom apps, engagement tools, budgeting, abstract management, and more — every detail lives within one powerful, user-friendly solution.

With EventsAir, planners can confidently deliver engaging in-person, virtual, or hybrid events, access real-time insights, and supercharge productivity, ensuring no detail is ever overlooked.

The State of Events 2026 report reflects our ongoing commitment to listening to the industry and sharing insight grounded in real-world experience. By combining research, data, and practitioner perspectives, we aim to support clearer decision-making and better outcomes for event professionals worldwide.



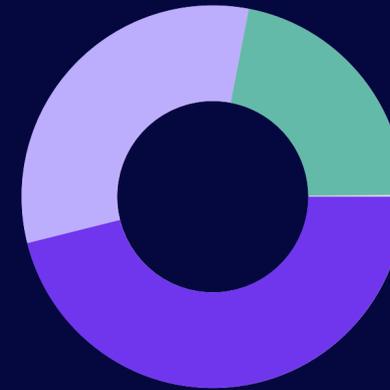
Methodology

The *State of Events 2026* report is based on a combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative industry interviews, providing a balanced view of the challenges, priorities, and emerging trends shaping the global events industry.

The primary research was conducted through an online survey of over 380 event professionals, spanning ANZ, EMEA, North America, and other regions.

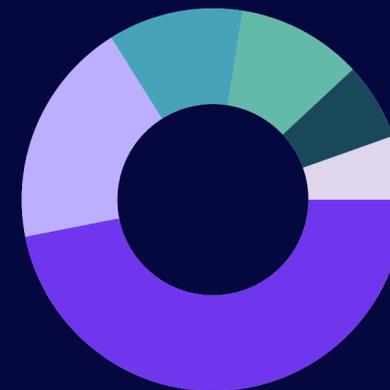
Survey findings were supplemented with in-depth interviews with senior event professionals, capturing qualitative insights into how planners are responding to ongoing budget pressure, rising expectations, evolving engagement models, and technology adoption, including the emerging role of AI.

Together, these inputs offer a current snapshot of an industry in transition, reflecting both measurable trends and the lived experience of event professionals navigating a rapidly evolving landscape.



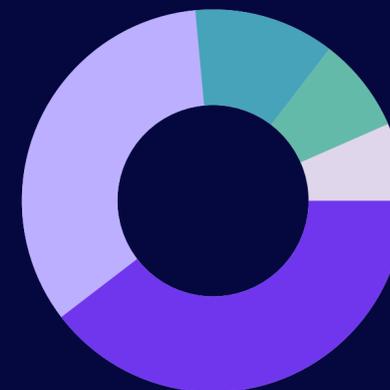
Regional Representation

- 46.1% APAC (Asia-Pacific)
- 31.9% EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa)
- 21.8% NA (North America)
- 0.3% LATAM (Latin America)



Industry Breakdown

- 46.9% Event Agency/PCO
- 19.2% Association
- 11.4% Corporate
- 10.6% Education
- 6.5% Other
- 5.4% Government



Role Levels & Responsibilities

- 39.6% Manager
- 33.9% Coordinator
- 11.9% Director
- 8% Senior Executive
- 6.5% Business Owner

