



MEETING PLANNER SURVEY

2024 State of the Meetings Industry

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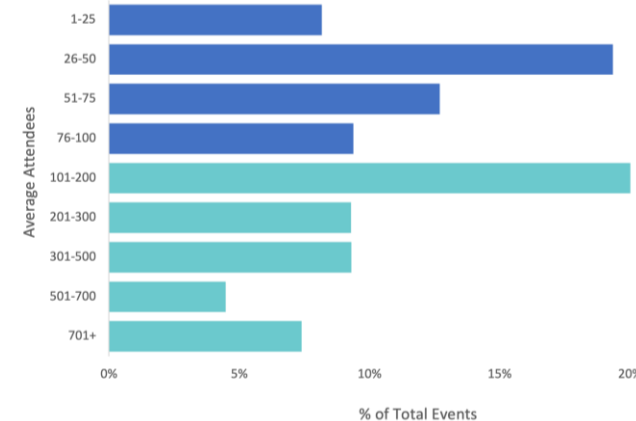
Welcome to the annual meeting planner survey brought to you by Knowland & ConferenceDirect.

This must-read report provides insights into the state of the meetings industry from the perspective of planners and event managers — revealing their top challenges and expectations to guide hotels and venues on what to prioritize and how to stand out in 2024.

2023 SNAPSHOT

Almost 50% of U.S. meetings had 100 attendees or less in 2023¹. During the year, 51.4% of bookings were made in the year for the year. However, booking windows are lengthening as 8.3% of meetings booked were 3-5 years in advance with Las Vegas as the top destination².

2023 Distribution by Event Size



1. Knowland data, 2023.

2023 Top 10 US Destinations

1. Las Vegas, NV
2. Orlando, FL
3. Washington DC
4. Chicago, IL
5. Atlanta, GA
6. Nashville, TN
7. San Antonio, TX
8. Seattle, WA
9. Dallas, TX
10. San Diego, CA

2. ConferenceDirect data, 2023

2023 Booking Distribution

Year of Event	Booking%
2023	51.4%
2024	32.4%
2025	7.9%
2026	4.2%
2027	2.2%
2028+	1.9%

REPORT OVERVIEW

Meeting planners are optimistic about 2024, with almost half of survey participants expecting to book more meetings than 2023.

However, challenges like higher prices and inexperienced hotel staff will change how and where planners book events.

Respondents say they face more pressure to deliver high-quality events and game-changing attendee experiences with limited resources. While some book in secondary markets to reduce costs, others must modify the event experiences to stay within budget.

We explore how hoteliers can capture these opportunities to drive sales.

The report also examines the impact of hot topics like AI, diversity, and sustainability. What are the top trends driving decision-making? How can hoteliers influence the RFP process? What meeting or group size should you focus on?

Read on to see what will impact the meetings industry in 2024 and what's top-of-mind for meeting planners — in their own words.

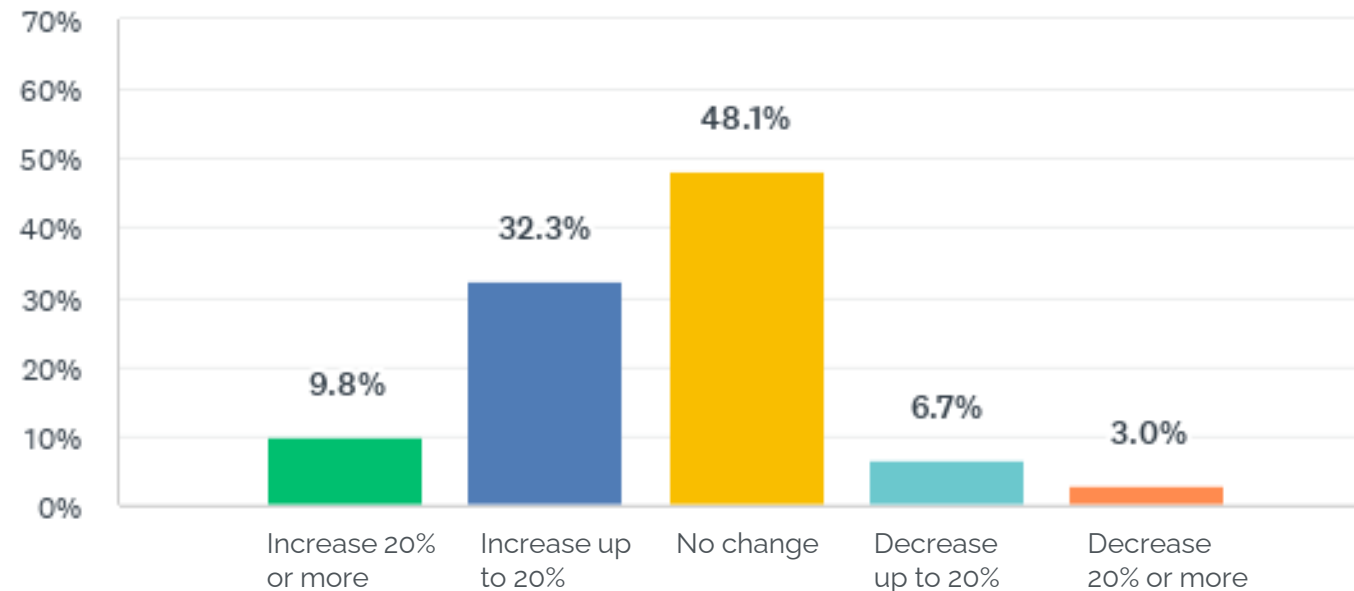
DEMAND

Planners are optimistic about 2024. Approximately 42% expect an increase in bookings, with 32.3% forecasting growth of up to 20% and 9.8% projecting a boost of over 20%. These expectations are a positive indicator of the health of the meetings industry.



42%
of planners
expect
bookings
to increase
this year

In 2024, how do you expect the number of events you book to compare to 2023?



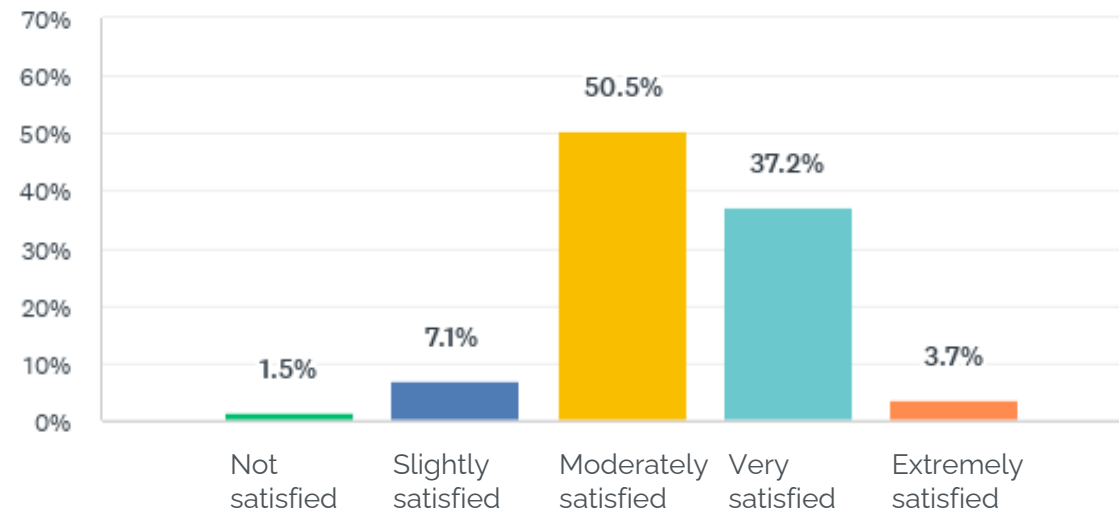
PLANNER SATISFACTION

Staffing improvements and new technology have helped hotels become more responsive over the past year. Compared to 2023, twice as many planners are “very satisfied” with venue responsiveness, at 37.2%. “Not satisfied” levels have decreased from 12% to just under 2%.



100%
more planners
are “very
satisfied” with
responses from
hotels and
venues

How satisfied are you with the responses you get from hotels/venues on your meeting inquiries?



VOICE OF THE PLANNER

Pricing is a big issue.”

PLANNER SATISFACTION

Planners express the most dissatisfaction with continued high costs. Rising prices put pressure on delivering high-quality events within budget. The need to cut costs has led to shortened meeting duration, alternative destinations, and fewer/lower cost activities or F&B — impacting attendee experience. Although staffing levels and experience have improved, over 30% of planners still identify them as top areas of dissatisfaction.



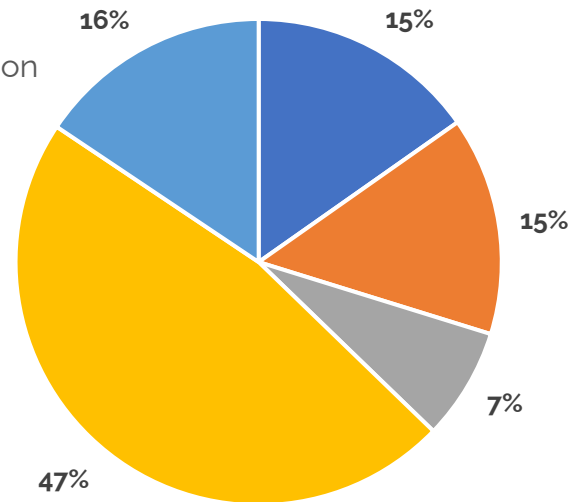
47%

of planners
report costs as
the top area of
dissatisfaction

Rank your main areas of dissatisfaction with hotels or other event venues?
(1 = highest dissatisfaction, 5 = lowest dissatisfaction)

Rated "1" for Dissatisfaction

- Staffing levels
- Staffing experience
- Quality of product
- Costs
- Responsiveness



VOICE OF THE PLANNER

Hotel sales staff are more inexperienced than ever before, which impacts how much work I have to do on each contract.”

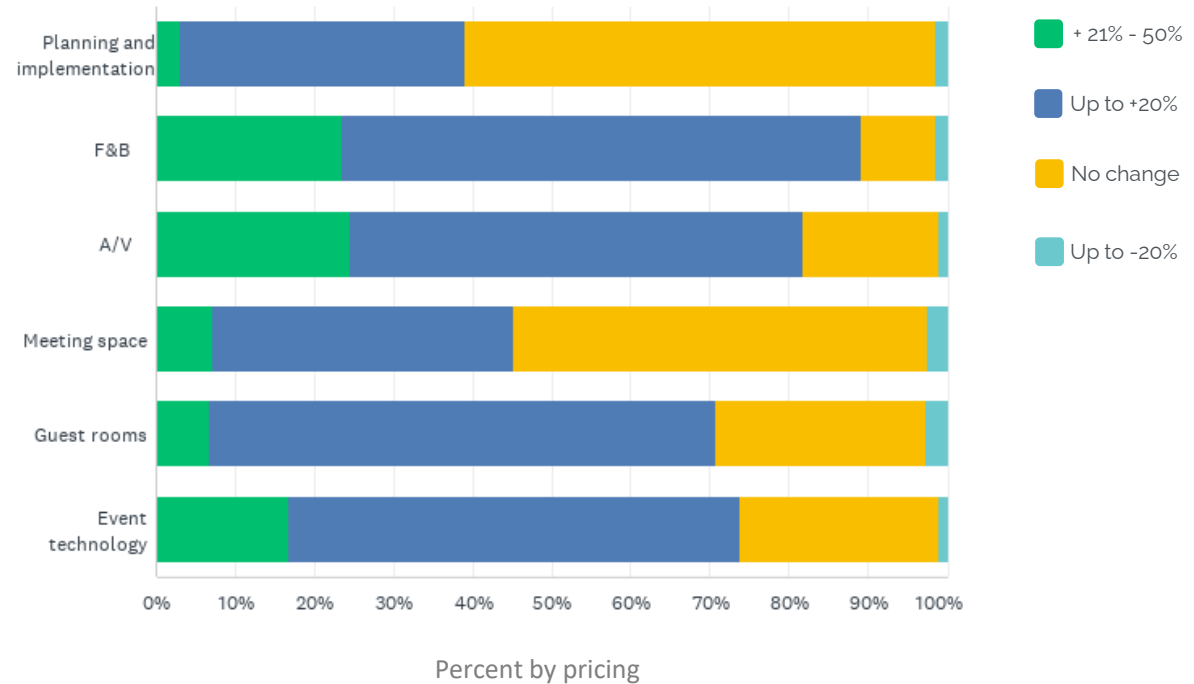
MEETING COSTS

Planners expect F&B and A/V to have the highest price increases in 2024. Some planners seek creative tech solutions and local catering partnerships to alleviate these rising costs. Venues can help customers by offering creative F&B options or flexible pricing for outside A/V providers.



Up to a
50%
increase is
expected for
F&B and A/V
costs

What pricing changes do you expect this year?





VOICE OF THE PLANNER

It is sad to see smaller companies eliminating functions and reducing attendee numbers.

Even big organizations are cutting costs in many areas, impacting the overall attendee experiences.”

ALTERNATIVE DESTINATIONS

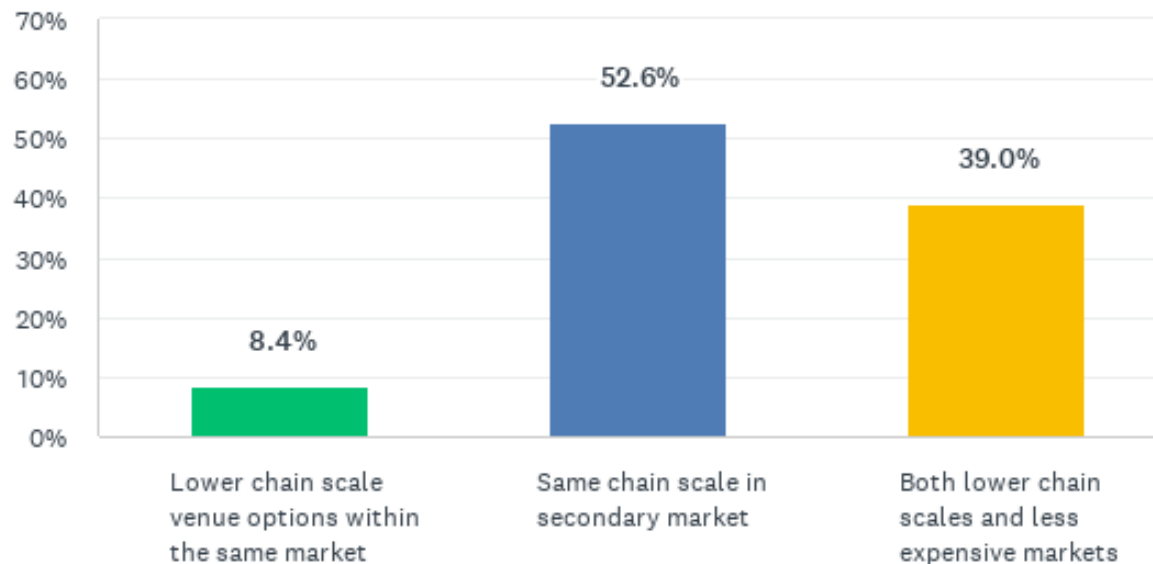
Companies may consider changing destinations and venues to manage meeting costs. Groups are more likely to relocate events to secondary markets to maintain their events' quality and/or status and avoid moving down in chain scale. This shift presents opportunities for secondary and tertiary markets to attract new business by offering quality products, services, and attractive pricing alternatives compared with the top 25 market destinations.



53%

of respondents consider moving meetings to secondary markets to reduce costs

In 2024, what changes will your clients consider to reduce costs?



VOICE OF THE PLANNER

Decision makers are relying on their planners and intermediaries to find ways to do more with the same or lower budget.

This shift presents opportunities for second and third-tier destinations, especially venues with attractive experiential value propositions, first-tier product quality, and quality service levels.”

INFLUENCING RFPs

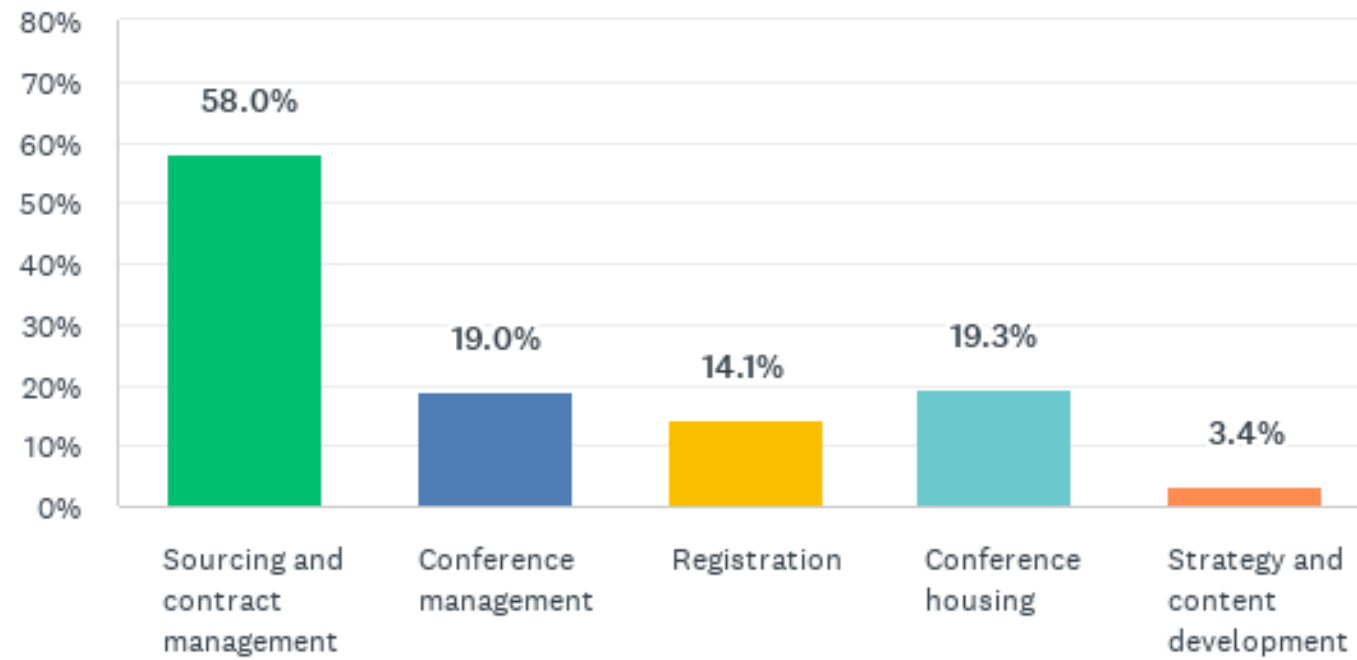
Planners outsource most administrative tasks and keep control of strategic elements such as meeting strategy and content development. Over half of the respondents outsource venue sourcing, which traditionally involves distributing and evaluating RFPs.



58%

of planners outsource venue sourcing and contract management

What services do you outsource? Please check all that apply.



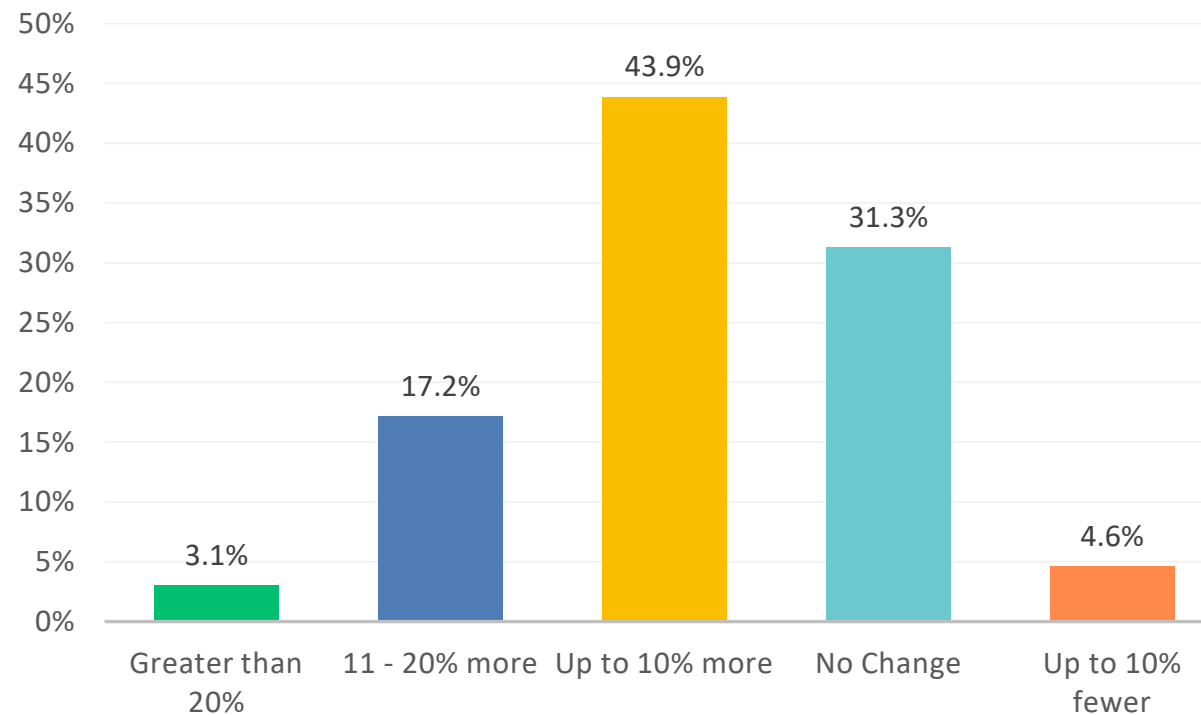
MEETING SIZE

Planners expect meeting size to grow, but not dramatically, in the coming year. Over 40% project growth of up to 10%, while 17% anticipate up to 20% more attendees. Hoteliers should focus on events with fewer than 200 attendees, which represent ~70% of all bookings.



Up to a
10%
increase
in attendee
numbers
is expected
for 2024

In 2024, how will your average number of attendees for a typical event compare to 2023?



ROLE OF RFPS

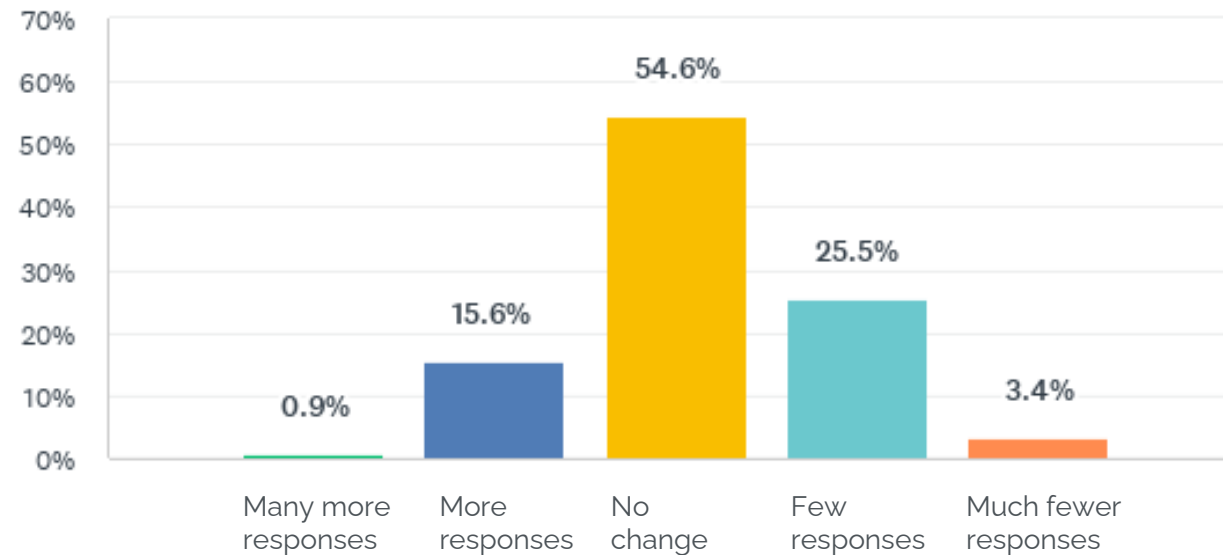
While 40% of planners send RFPs to up to 5 venues and 34% to as many as 10, many are receiving fewer responses. Hoteliers may have become more selective to get the best fit for their properties. With today's higher group demand, hotels can be more discerning by responding to RFPs that address need periods best and offer greater profitability.



25%

of planners are getting fewer responses to RFPs

How does your volume of RFP responses compare to last year?



PRIORITIES

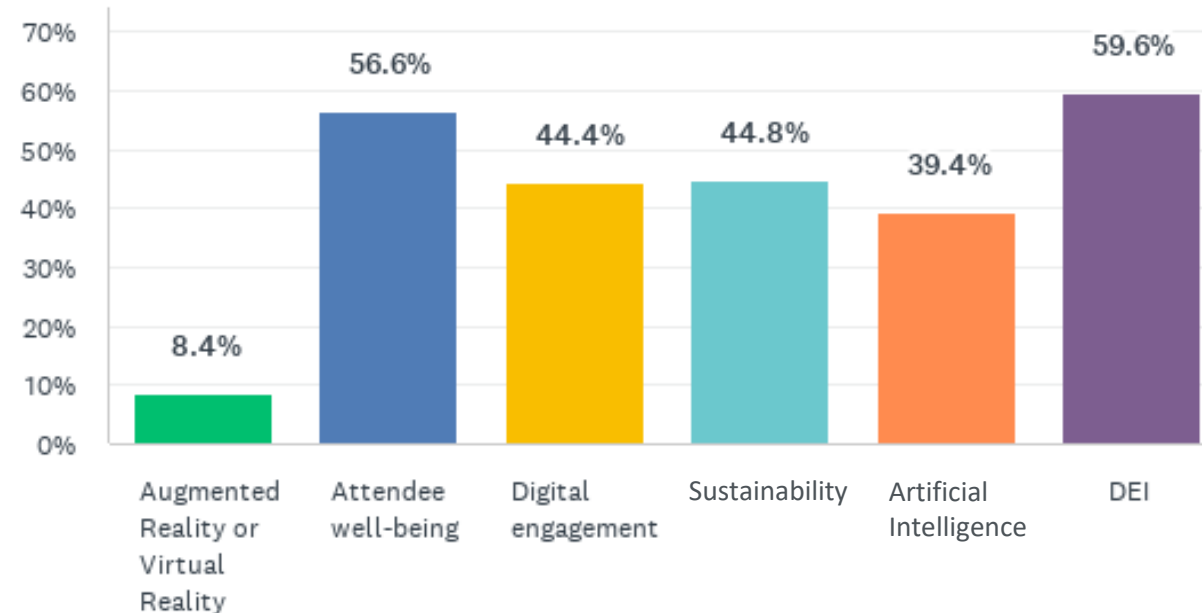
Planners agree that DEI and attendee well-being are the top trends influencing meetings. In some cases, hotly debated issues make it more challenging to choose a meeting destination where everyone feels accepted. These priorities may influence an event's location and overall structure, likely impacting content and programming. Sustainability and digital engagement are the next top trends on planners' minds.



60%

say DEI is top of mind

What are the most relevant meeting trends? Select the top 3.



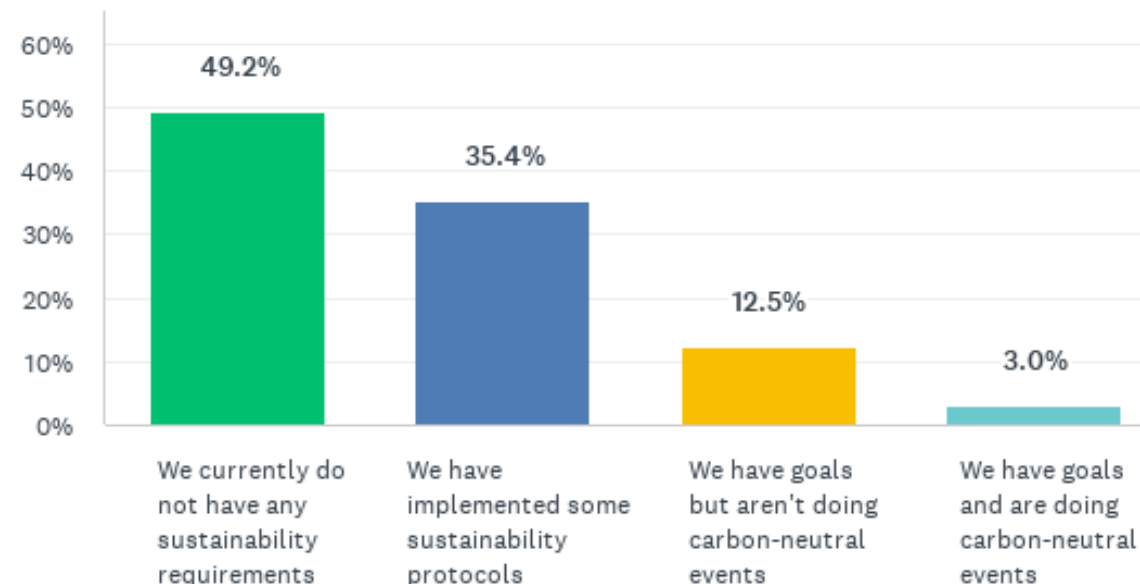
SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a hot topic. However, the meetings industry will need to up its game in the coming year. Although 35% of planners say groups have some protocols, almost 50% indicate their meetings do not have sustainability requirements. This trend offers opportunities for hotels to step up by implementing sustainability standards for all events, going beyond the basics like recycling and excluding single-serve utensils.



Almost
50%
of events do
not have
sustainability
requirements

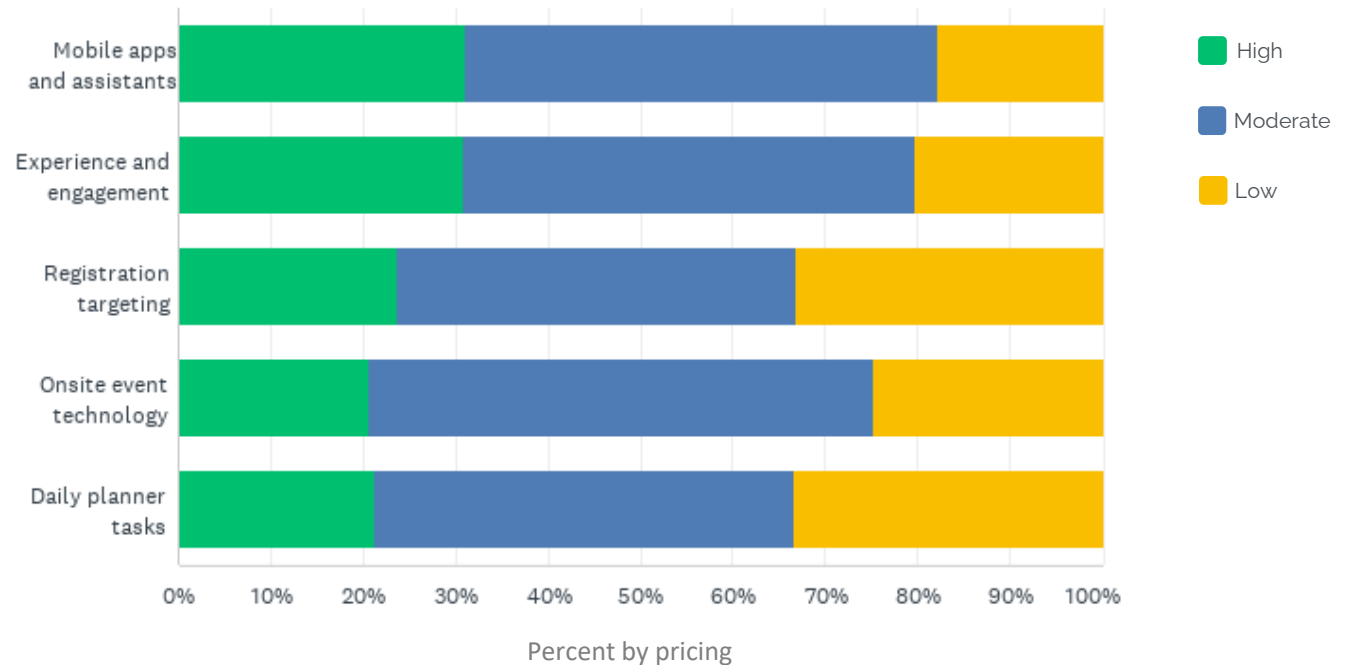
In general, what is your client requirement for sustainability?



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI plays an increasing role in the meetings industry. Planners see opportunities for AI in expected uses such as event mobile apps and virtual assistants to augment attendee experience and engagement. Yet, there is less excitement for AI in daily operations or game-changing digital applications to boost event performance by finding new registrants for events – at least for now.

Where do you see the greatest opportunity for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in meetings and events?



80%

say AI offers value for personalized mobile apps and personal assistants

VOICE OF THE PLANNER

As an industry, we have to figure out how to staff appropriately.

Attendees are not having the same experiences as they did pre-COVID. Eventually, the acceptance of lower service levels will trail off.

ABOUT KNOWLAND

Knowland is the world's leading sales intelligence provider for meetings and events. With the hospitality industry's only account-based selling platform, it connects data insights with sales entablement to put hoteliers in control of total account revenue.

Knowland goes beyond data and analytics. Industry experts from its account management and customer success teams help hotel sales leaders implement a customized strategy to support proactive selling so they can do more with less, boost productivity, and accelerate growth.

Knowland's market analysis, competitor tracking, and account booking history help hotel sales leaders forecast confidently, managers coach at scale, and sellers compete on property differentiation instead of price. Learn more at www.knowland.com.

ABOUT CONFERENCE DIRECT

ConferenceDirect is a full-service global meetings solution company whose portfolio of services includes: Virtual/Hybrid Meetings, Site Selection & Contract Negotiation, Conference Management, Housing & Registration Services, Event Technology, Strategic Meetings Management Programs, Incentive Programs, Sustainable Meeting Strategy and Planning, Cruise Services and Marketing Support. Our 400+ Associates manage over 13,000 meetings, conferences and events for more than 4,400 customers. For more information, visit www.conferencedirect.com.

KNOWLAND

✉ info@knowland.com

☎ (202) 312-5880

For more information or to schedule time with a member of our team, visit:

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