

InEvent®
Go Beyond

THE STATE OF ENTERPRISE EVENTS IN 2026

Signals, strategies, and technology shaping the next era of event management. Data from 2,000+ professionals across 6 industries.

Letter from the InEvent Team

Year on year, the events industry continues to reinvent itself.

The enterprise events sector is now contending with a new set of pressures:

- AI that's moving from novelty to infrastructure
- Attendees who expect experiences tailored to them before they walk through the door
- And leadership teams demanding a direct line from every badge scan to a business outcome.



Strategic Questions for 2026:

- How do we use AI without losing the human moments?
- How do we personalize at scale without it feeling manufactured?
- How do we design experiences that move pipeline?

The Report Methodology

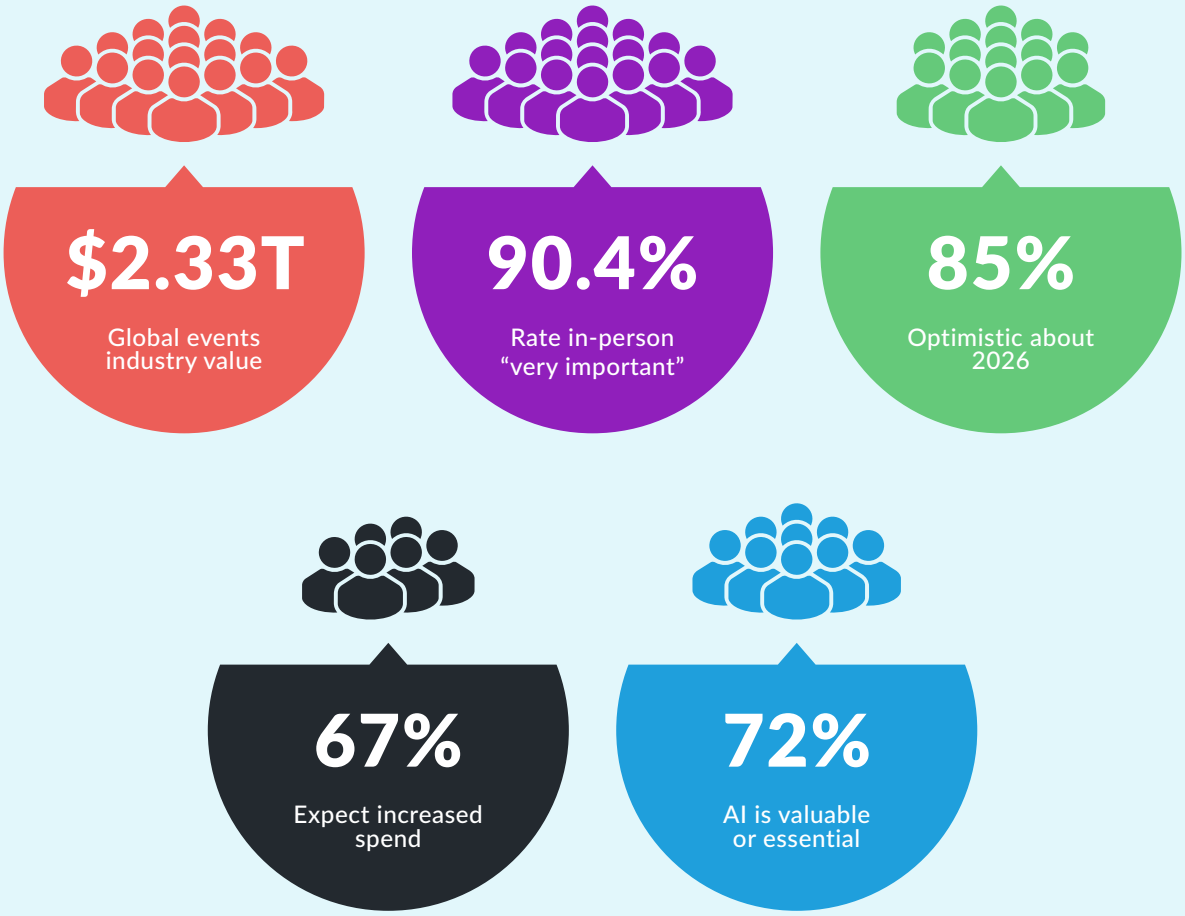
Analysis of 2,000+ event professionals across multiple regions.

Platform intelligence covering 50,000+ events.

You'll find the benchmarks, the trends, and a practical playbook for the era we're actually in.

2026 by the Numbers

AT A GLANCE



$940B U.S. Events Economic Output

29 Avg. events per marketer

61.9% Budget is top challenge

52% Attribute half of deals to events

-6% Cost-per-attendee increase YoY

Based on InEvent's analysis of industry data from 2,000+ event professionals.

Six Forces Reshaping Enterprise Events

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01

In-person is back at the center

90%+ rate in-person as very important. Attendance expected to increase 69%. Fewer than 16% rate live virtual as “very important.”

02

Budgets grow, but not fast enough

67% expect increased spend. Cost per attendee rises ~6% YoY. 71% expect overall costs to increase. Only 6.5% expect a significant budget increase.

03

AI has arrived, unevenly

72% believe AI is valuable/essential. 50% integrate AI in planning. But 26% aren’t using it at all. Top use: marketing (62%), data analysis (38%).

04

Engagement is the defining challenge

74% view it as a key success factor. 39% cite it as a top challenge. Passive formats losing impact. Personalization demand surging.

05

Measurement is evolving

83% track attendance. 82% track feedback. ROI difficulty dropped from 70% to 40% in one year.

06

Technology is consolidating

EMS market: $11–20B in 2026, growing 13–17% CAGR. Cloud: 55–71% of revenue. 88% plan to invest in event tech.

The Impact of In-Person Events

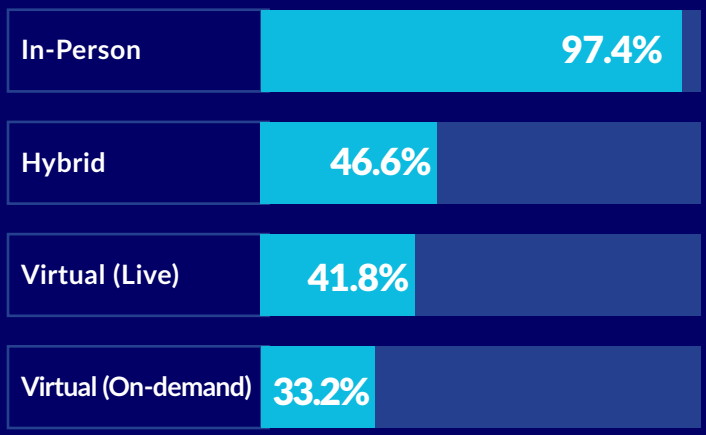
CHAPTER 01

If you've been in the events industry long enough, you've heard the eulogies. Hybrid was the future. In-person was too expensive, too risky, too hard to justify.

78%
Say in-person is most impactful channel

66%
Say in-person generated most revenue

Format Importance
(% Important + Very Important)



In 2026, in-person events aren't just alive — they're the backbone of enterprise event strategy.

These formats still have a role to play, but they're supporting acts. In-person events are the headline.

52%
Attribute at least half of closed-won deals directly to in-person events

A great in-person event puts the right people in the same room, removes distractions, and creates the trust that moves deals forward.

Teams are getting more deliberate, building fewer, higher-value experiences.

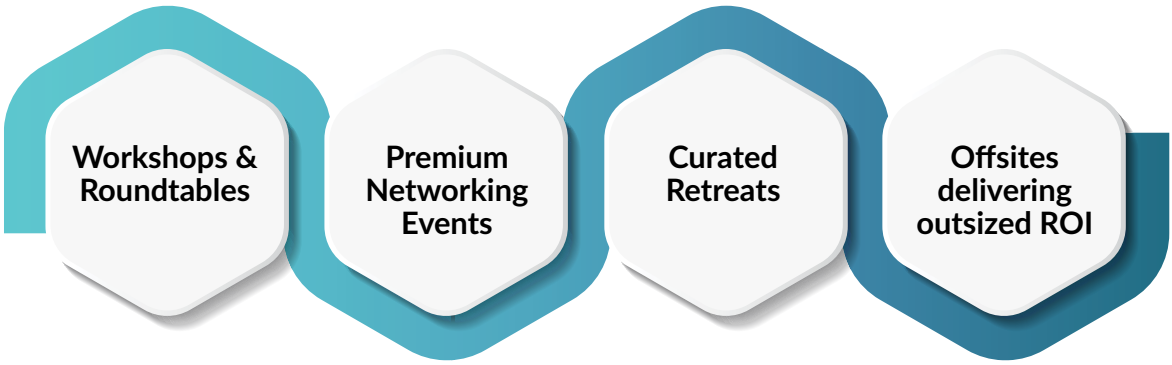
54%
Plan to attend more in-person events

Event Types and Format Trends That Are & Aren't Winning

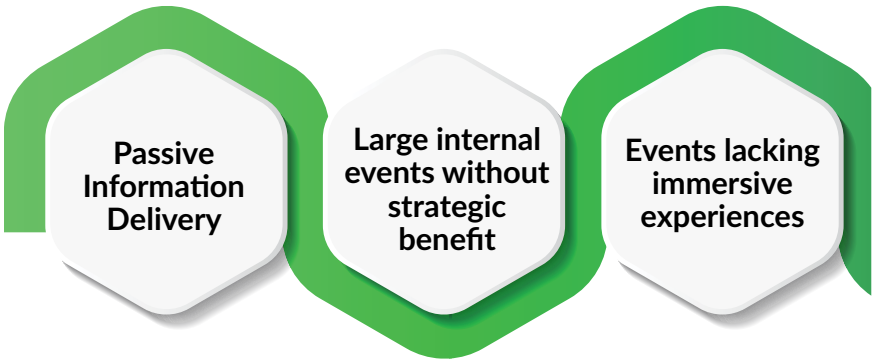
CHAPTER 01

Conferences still dominate the enterprise event calendar. But what's changed is everything around them. Formats gaining ground prioritize interaction over passive delivery.

Formats Gaining Grounds



Formats Losing Grounds



100 - 500

The **"Sweet Spot"**

Large enough for energy, small enough for meaning. Organizations are questioning if "bigger" is actually better.

STRATEGIC RETHINK

This shift toward smaller, higher-value formats reflects a broader strategy: when budgets must be justified, intimacy and focus become competitive advantages.

"The common thread in declining formats? They ask attendees to show up without a real reason to."

Hybrid With Intent. Virtual in Decline.

CHAPTER 01

Hybrid hasn't disappeared. But its role has fundamentally changed. It's no longer the default compromise it was during the pandemic years — it's now a deliberate tool, applied selectively when the use case genuinely demands it.

Selective

Hybrid

Applied when extending reach, reducing travel barriers, or supporting post-event engagement.

Supplementary

On-Demand

Fares better than live virtual as a post-event engagement tool, not a primary strategy.

Declining

Virtual-Only

Continuing to lose strategic importance as organizations reprioritize in-person presence.

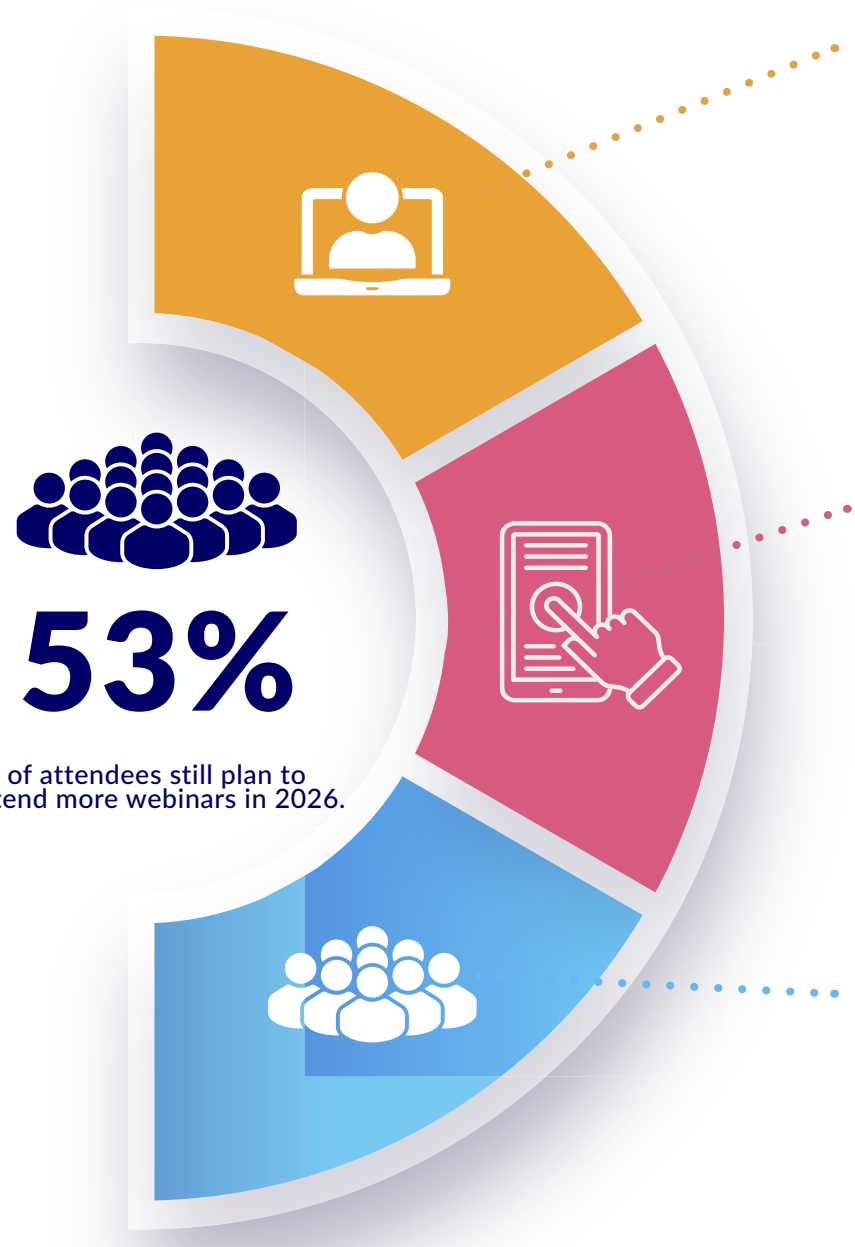
When organizations choose hybrid in 2026:

For budget-conscious organizations, hybrid has become a pragmatic tool used when the math makes sense.

Extending Reach: International attendees, distributed teams, and cost-restricted participants.

Reducing Friction: Navigating safety concerns, visa complexity, and limited travel budgets.

Event Longevity: On-demand content and recordings as high-value follow-up tools.



53%

of attendees still plan to attend more webinars in 2026.

Virtual-only events

Continue to lose strategic importance. Organizations are the most deliberate about pulling back.

On-demand content

The exception — earns its place as a post-event engagement layer, not a standalone strategy.

The new in-person

Not a return to 2019. Fewer, higher-value experiences — chosen deliberately, not by default.

THE REFRAME

The return to in-person isn't a return to 2019. It's something more considered. Organizations are asking harder questions about which events actually justify the investment and the trend is firmly toward fewer, higher-value experiences over a sprawl of mediocre ones.

Budget Pressures and Economics

CHAPTER 02

67%
Expect increased spend globally

6.5%
Expect a significant increase

71%
Expect costs to increase

-6%
Cost-perattendee rise YoY

The top-level numbers look encouraging: 67% expect increased spend, and 90% of European respondents anticipate rising budgets. But only 6.5% expect a significant increase. Nearly 60% are working with flat or marginally improved budgets. Meanwhile, 71% expect costs to increase.

The math doesn't work. Budgets are rising at single digits while costs climb across every major line item.

Budget Outlook Breakdown



- Slight increase — 38.6%
- Remain the same — 31.6%
- Slight decrease — 12.2%
- Unsure — 9.6%
- Slight increase — 6.5% 38.6%

Where Costs Are Rising and How Teams Respond

CHAPTER 02

DRIVER	DETAIL
Cost Per Attendee	-6% increase YoY globally
U.S. Visa Fee	New $250 integrity fee from Oct 2025
F&B Costs	Elevated globally. Most stretched category.
Venue Rates	Rising. Leisure tourism competes with corporate.
AV Production	Hotels recouping LED and sound investments.
Ancillary Costs	Quotes may differ widely from final invoices.

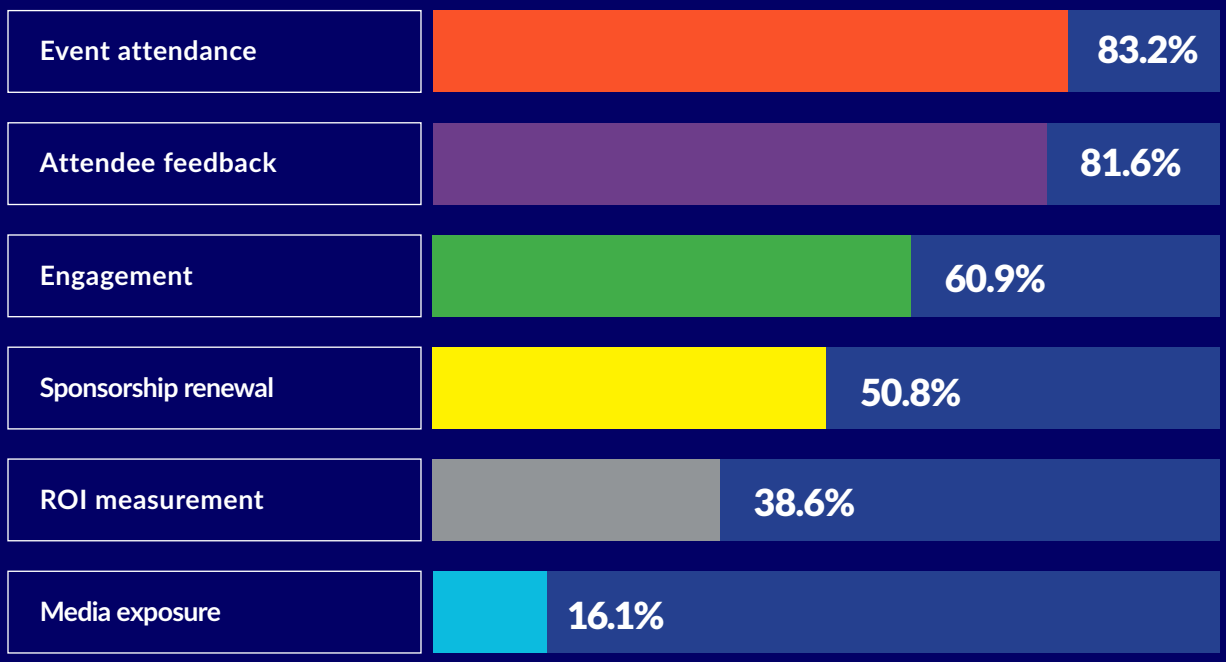
How smart teams respond



77% of marketers would host more events if they had technology that made it easier to execute and replicate them. 88% plan to invest in event tech.

Measuring What Matters

CHAPTER 03



Key Signal

Numbers alone are no longer enough — qualitative insight now carries equal weight.

-30 pts

ROI difficulty drop in one year
2025: 70% → 2026: 40%

$20.98

Return per $1 spent at trade shows

Revenue Attribution & Outcome-Based Measurement

CHAPTER 03

The data connecting events to revenue is getting stronger. 52% of marketers attribute at least half of closed-won deals to events. 88% say events helped generate steady revenue. 76% of marketers using events hit their revenue goals every single quarter.

The most sophisticated teams measure through business outcome lenses:

Sales events: Pipeline generated, deals accelerated, close rates.

Brand events: Sentiment shift, media coverage, brand recall.

Internal events: Engagement scores, knowledge retention.

Events are evaluated not just by what happens onsite, but by the momentum they generate beyond the room.

52%

Attribute half of deals to events

94%

ELG marketers report consistent revenue

$20.98

Return per $1 spent at trade shows

31%

Report 20-day reduction in close time

The Engagement Imperative

CHAPTER 04

74%

View engagement as a key success factor

39%

Cite engagement as their top challenge

Engagement is the single most talked-about challenge in enterprise events. And it's where the gap between aspiration and delivery is widest.

Businesses are increasingly realizing attention is a crucial resource, alongside labor and capital. Events are increasingly seen as a way of helping businesses allocate attention more efficiently.



What's Working in Engagement

CHAPTER 04

01 **Curated networking**

Facilitated roundtables, topic-matched small groups, and hosted speed-networking create more meaningful conversations.

02 **Multi-modal participation**

Live polling and gamification alongside wellness zones and quiet reflection spaces. Engagement doesn't always have to be loud.

03 **Behavioral science tools**

Understanding how ideas land and behavior changes — accounting for neurodiversity and how people actually learn.

04 **Extended engagement windows**

Pre-event communities and on-demand libraries create a continuous 12-month cycle — not just one day.

05 **Personalization at scale**

Login-based recommendations, AI-powered networking matches, and tailored follow-up.

40%
expect to deploy AI networking apps

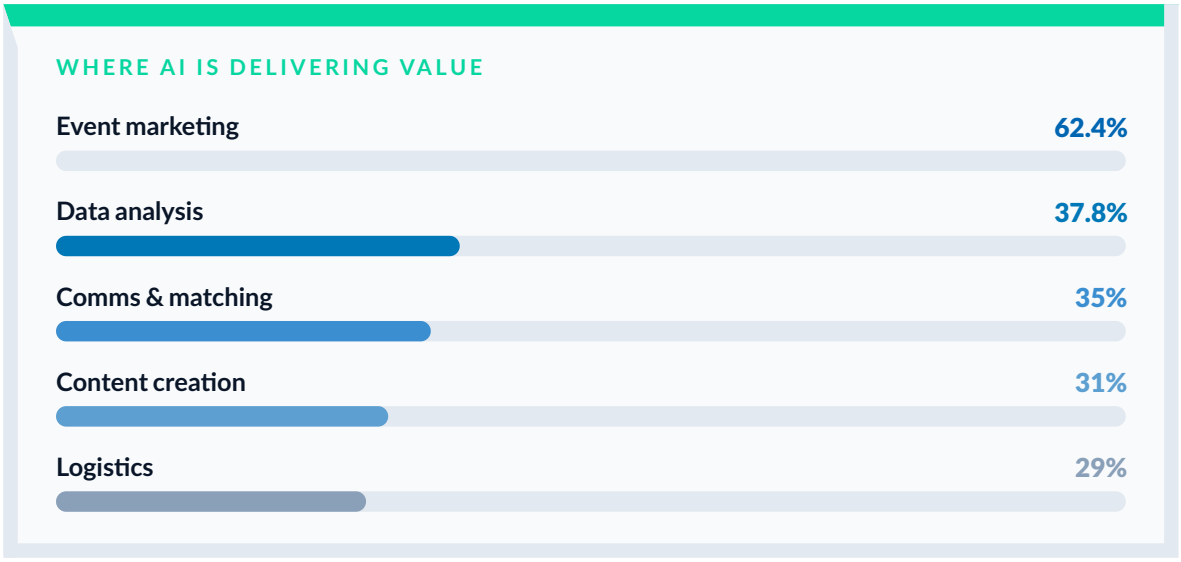
AI in Enterprise Events: The Divide

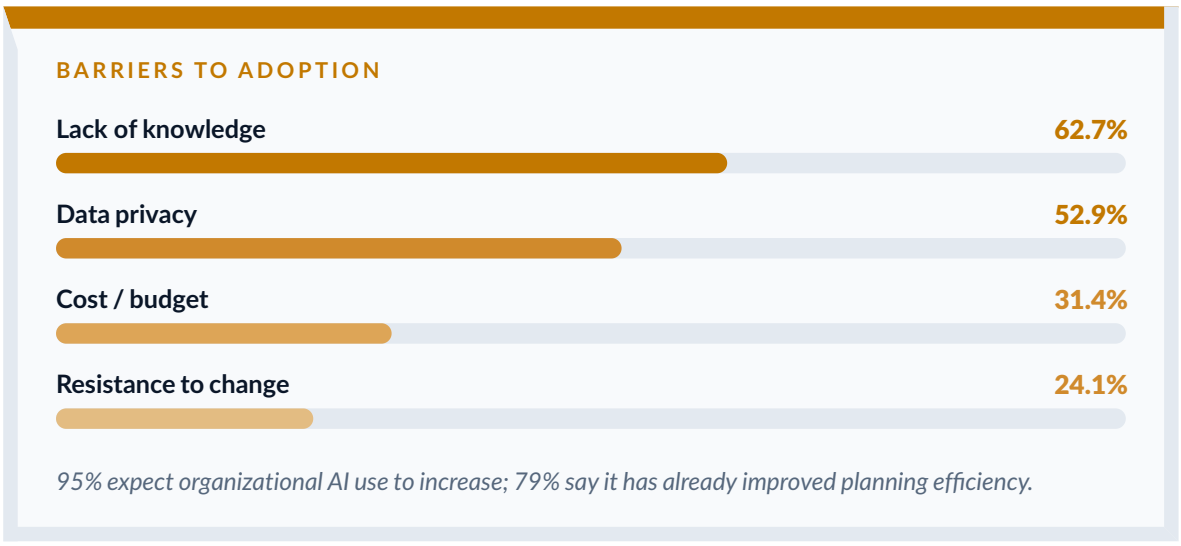
CHAPTER 05

AI has moved from theoretical possibility to practical presence. But adoption remains uneven. 50% of meeting professionals now integrate AI in some form. 95% expect organizational AI use to increase. 79% say AI has already improved planning efficiency. 66% say AI allows focus on higher-value tasks.

72% Believe AI is valuable or essential

26% Not using AI at all





95% expect organizational AI use to increase; 79% say it has already improved planning efficiency.

AI: Barriers, Impact, and What's Next

CHAPTER 05

Generative AI

Creates content — copy, images, session descriptions, email sequences. Well-understood and broadly adopted.

Agentic AI

Takes actions on behalf of users — scheduling, follow-up, matchmaking, reporting. The next frontier of AI impact.

+40%
Satisfaction from AI personalization

–30%
Operational waste reduction via AI

50%
Integrate AI in planning

Looking ahead — the most impactful AI applications:

- → Predictive attendance forecasting
- → Automated post-event reporting
- → Real-time engagement scoring
- → AI-powered matchmaking

Technology Consolidation

CHAPTER 06

ESTIMATE	2026 VALUE	PROJECTED	CAGR
A	**$11.31B**	$32.62B by 2034	14.16%
B	**$15.2B**	$24.17B by 2031	9.73%
C	**$19.9B**	$96.5B by 2036	17.1%
D	**$15.5B**	$34.7B by 2029	17.4%

55-71%
Cloud deployment share

61.5%
Large enterprise demand

35-43%
North America market share

88%
Plan to invest in event tech

For years, enterprise event teams assembled tools piece by piece: one for registration, another for email, a third for mobile apps, a fourth for check-in. The result: fragmentation, data silos, and operational complexity. In 2026, that model is breaking down. 25% of planners cite technology integration as a top challenge.

The market is transitioning from single-function tools to comprehensive event suites combining attendee lifecycle management, content delivery, lead capture, engagement analytics, and CRM integration. Modern platforms enable 200+ integrations with payment processors, CRM systems, and marketing automation tools.

What Enterprise Teams Need From Technology

CHAPTER 06

01

Integration with enterprise systems

CRM, marketing automation, finance, and HR tools. Data should flow bidirectionally.

02

Compliance and security

GDPR, CCPA, LGPD. Content approval workflows, audit trails, SOC 2 and ISO 27001.

03

Mobile-first attendee experience

Personal agendas, real-time updates, networking, wayfinding, feedback, and lead capture.

04

Real-time operational visibility

Session attendance, check-in velocity, engagement metrics, capacity alerts — all live.

05

AI embedded, not bolted on

AI within the existing workflow — not separate tools requiring new logins and learning curves.

06

Single source of truth

Data flowing across registration, engagement, finance, and reporting within one platform.

Regional Dynamics

CHAPTER 07

North America 93%

Domestic flagship events center stage. $250 visa fee impacting international travel; quality under greater scrutiny.

Europe 91%

90% expect spend to rise. Lead times increasing. Sustainability a key priority in France and the Nordics.

Asia-Pacific 74%

India's 13% GDP growth reflected in rising spend. Thailand a connectivity hot spot; Vietnam growing.

Latin America

Strong

Tech, pharma, and financial services resilient. National events creating concentrated demand.

MEA

Steady

Government initiatives from Saudi Arabia to the UAE. South Africa and Morocco emerging.

Sustainability, Wellness, and Inclusion

CHAPTER 08

20–30%
Cost savings from sustainable practices

15%
Carbon footprint reduction with green practices

28%
Of events using sustainability tracking apps

Sustainability & wellness

Sustainability is no longer optional — and it often saves money. Plant-based catering cuts food costs; local AV crews reduce transport; ground transport lowers both costs and emissions.

Wellness has moved beyond the 6 a.m. yoga add-on: quiet zones, extended breaks, and health-conscious F&B are becoming standard. Events that exhaust participants aren't delivering value.

Accessibility & inclusion

What used to be add-ons are becoming core: closed captions, real-time translation, quiet rooms, neurodiversity-friendly design, and inclusive dietary options.

Platforms must support accessibility natively — screen-reader compatibility, captioning integration, and flexible registration.

The Enterprise Event Playbook for 2026

CHAPTER 09

01 **Treat events as a business system.** 94% of ELG marketers report consistent revenue — build the connection deliberately.

02 **Invest upfront in design before operations.** Better design delivers better outcomes at lower total cost.

03 **Consolidate your technology stack.** The EMS market is growing 13–17% CAGR because enterprises are consolidating.

04 **Start small with AI, but start now.** 50% already integrate AI — begin with marketing, data, and comms.

05 **Build your measurement infrastructure.** ROI difficulty dropped from 70% to 40% in one year vfor teams with centralized data.

06 **Refresh your venue strategy.** Secondary cities, multi-year deals, and capped ancillary costs.

07 **Design for diverse engagement.** Curated networking, quiet spaces, digital and analog options.

08 **Make sustainability measurable.** Sustainable practices save 20–30% on costs.

09 **Protect your people.** Smaller teams, bigger expectations — burnout is real.

10 **Think in cycles, not events.** A 12-month cycle: pre-event community, live delivery, post-event extension.

Key Data at a Glance

QUICK REFERENCE

MARKET & REVENUE	
Global events industry	$2.33T
U.S. economic output	$940B
Corporate events	$325B → $595B
EMS market (2026)	$11–20B
Half of deals from events	52%
ELG consistent revenue	94%
Trade show ROI	$20.98 : $1

BEHAVIOR & TECHNOLOGY	
In-person very important	90.4%
AI valuable / essential	72%
Integrate AI in planning	50%
Expect AI use to increase	95%
Plan event tech investment	88%
Budget is top challenge	61.9%
Events = top channel	72%

Methodology

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Analytics

This report is based on InEvent's proprietary analysis of enterprise event industry data, aggregated from surveys of over 2,000 event professionals across multiple regions and market segments. Data was collected and analyzed between late 2025 and Q1 2026.

Verified & original

InEvent's analysis, framework, and strategic recommendations are original.



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