

Sizzabo

Listen, Learn, Lead:

The 2026 State of Events
Benchmark Report

After several years of disruption, recovery, and rapid change, events now operate as a core growth system within modern organizations. They are expected to support pipeline development, accelerate deals, strengthen customer relationships, and deliver measurable business outcomes. As expectations rise, event teams are being held to a higher standard across experience quality, operational efficiency, and accountability.

The 2026 State of Events Benchmark Report examines how these expectations are playing out in practice. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative research from 2026, with validated year-over-year comparisons to prior research, this report brings together three complementary perspectives: Listen, Learn, and Lead.

Listen: What event professionals report

New survey data from event leaders shows an industry that has entered a more disciplined phase. Compared with prior research, teams report more cautious budget expectations, stable headcount, and a shift away from aggressive expansion toward controlled growth. While many organizations continue to maintain or modestly increase event volume, they are doing so with greater emphasis on repeatability, consistency, and predictability.

At the same time, expectations around experience continue to rise. Organizers overwhelmingly view experiential learning and intentional experience design as essential, even as they balance these demands against operational constraints. Personalization is increasingly defined by agenda relevance and in-event experiences rather than by channels or tools.

Year-over-year data also reveals important tension points. Perceived networking effectiveness has declined since 2025, suggesting that while networking remains central to event strategy, execution quality has not kept pace with expectations. Measurement confidence, by contrast, shows signs of improvement, with fewer teams reporting difficulty proving ROI than in prior research, though progress remains uneven.

One of the clearest new signals in 2026 is the rapid acceleration of AI adoption. Nearly all respondents expect their organization's use of AI in events to increase, with adoption focused on practical workflows such as analytics, communications, and agenda design. At the same time, concerns around accuracy, trust, and governance underscore the need for intentional implementation.



Learn: What leadership predicts

Executive perspectives reinforce these findings. From the C-suite, events are increasingly viewed as infrastructure rather than campaigns, evaluated alongside other core go-to-market motions. Leaders expect clarity on how events influence pipeline, deal velocity, and retention, and they are less tolerant of fragmented data or disconnected tools.

Looking ahead, leadership predicts continued pressure on event teams to deliver focus over volume, precision over breadth, and insight over activity. Consolidation in event technology, deeper integration across systems, and AI embedded into everyday workflows are expected to shape how event programs evolve in 2026 and beyond.

Lead: How high-performing programs operate

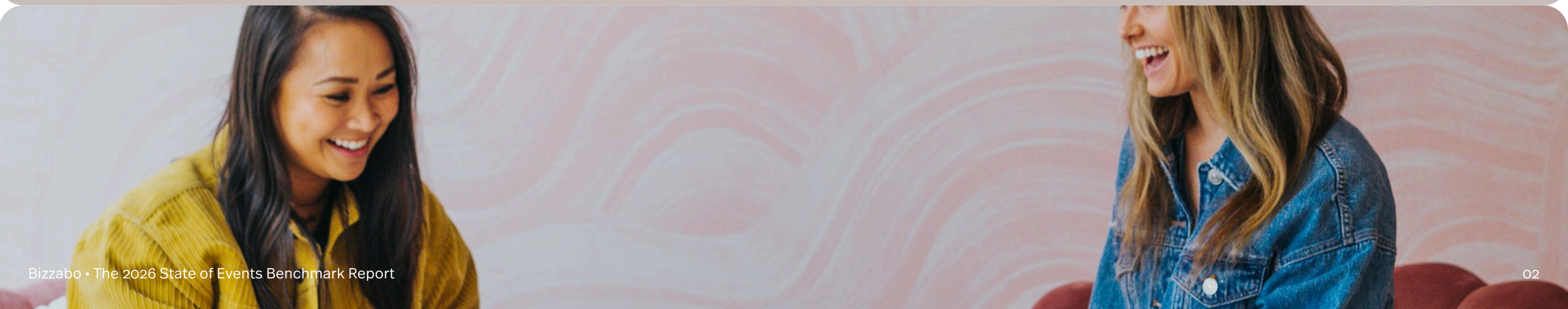
Anonymized, aggregated in-platform data from mature, multi-event organizations on Bizzabo in 2025 illustrates how these expectations translate into execution. High-performing teams run portfolios of mid-sized events throughout the year, design tighter agendas informed by engagement behavior, and treat engagement as a planned layer of the experience.

These programs benefit from unified systems that connect registration, engagement, networking, and revenue data, enabling more confident measurement and faster decision-making. Performance gains increasingly come from better utilization of integrated platforms rather than from adding new tools or increasing volume.

An optimization era for events

Taken together, the findings in this report point to a clear conclusion. The events industry has entered an optimization era. Growth remains important, but success is now defined by how effectively teams operate within constraints, design experiences with intent, and connect event activity to meaningful outcomes.

Event leaders who navigate this shift well are positioned to play a more strategic role within their organizations, shaping how relationships are built, investments are allocated, and impact is demonstrated across the entire event lifecycle.



What event professionals report

This chapter reflects survey insights from event leaders who are responsible for designing, operating, and scaling event programs. Using 2026 survey data as the primary lens, and validated year-over-year comparisons with [our proprietary research from 2025](#), this chapter highlights how operating realities, priorities, and expectations have shifted.

Teams are operating with stable headcount and more cautious budget expectations

In 2026, most event programs will continue to operate with lean teams. 45% of respondents report event teams of 1-3 people, 15% report teams of 4-10, and 30% report teams of 10 or more. Another 10% report having no dedicated events team. While team composition has shifted slightly over the past year, with 50% reporting some growth and 15% reporting reductions, the overall picture is one of constrained resourcing.

Budget expectations reinforce this constraint. In 2026, 40% of organizers expect their events budget to grow, 40% expect it to stay the same, and 20% expect a decrease. In research from 2025, 53% of organizers expected budget growth, indicating a year-over-year shift toward more cautious financial planning.

45%

Event teams of
1-3 people

30%

Event teams of
10 or more people

15%

Event teams of
4-10 people

10%

No dedicated
events team

"Costs for services are rising and budgets are not increasing at the same pace," noted one manager from a tech company."

Implications for event teams:

- Plan for stable headcount and cautious budget growth.

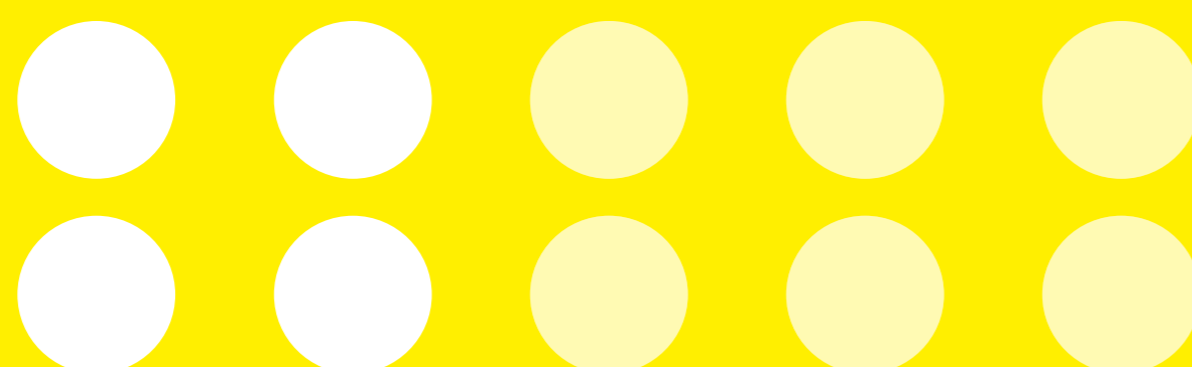
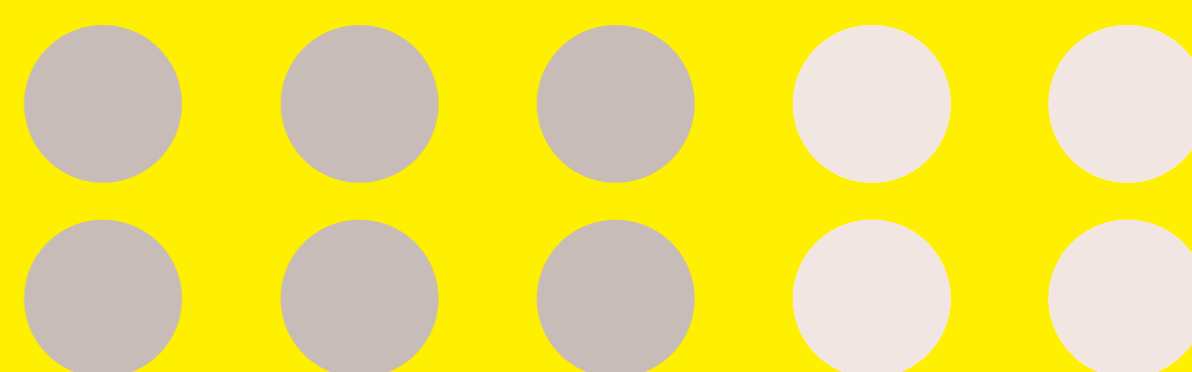
Event volume plans reflect a shift toward controlled growth

Despite moderated budgets, event activity remains steady. In 2026, 40% of respondents plan to run more events than in the prior year, while another 40% plan to maintain the same number. 15% plan to reduce event volume, and 5% are unsure.

This marks a clear change from earlier expansion patterns. In research from 2025, 66% of organizers planned to host more events year over year. The 2026 data suggests that growth has not stopped, but it has become more deliberate, with teams prioritizing balance and predictability over rapid expansion.

40%

of organizers in 2026 plan to host more events than the previous year.



66%

of organizers in 2025 planned to host more events than the previous year.

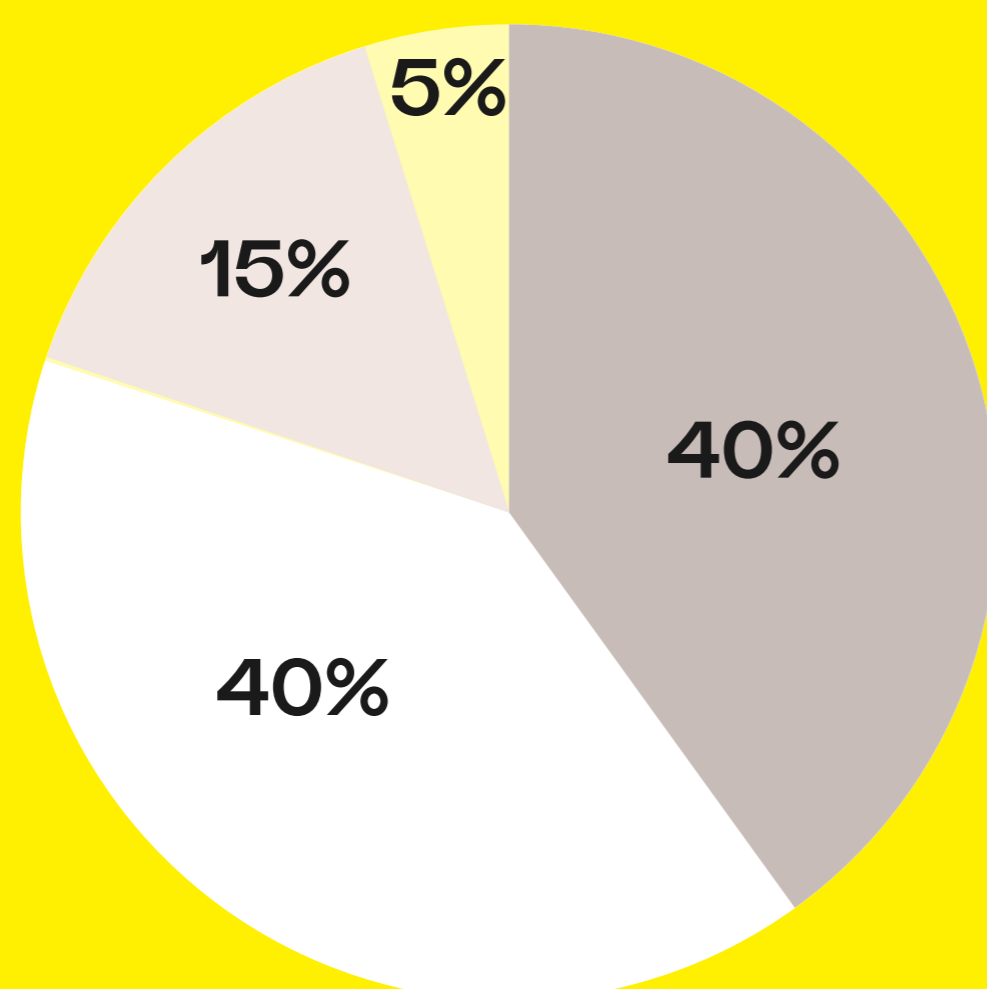
Implications for event teams:

- Portfolio planning should emphasize repeatable formats and predictable execution.
- Consistency across events is becoming more important than incremental volume growth.

Personalization priorities center on content relevance and on-site experience

When asked what most improves attendee personalization, organizers point first to *experience design* rather than channels or tools. In 2026, 40% cite content personalization as the most impactful lever, and another 40% point to personalized on-site activations. Smaller shares select personalized marketing communications (15%) or event app personalization (5%).

While earlier research emphasized attendee expectations for modern technology, the 2026 data suggests that organizers increasingly associate personalization with what attendees experience during the event itself, particularly agenda relevance and in-person moments.



40% ● Content personalization

40% ● Personalized on-site activations

15% ● Personalized marketing communications

5% ● Event app personalization

Implications for event teams:

- How relevant an event feels to attendees is increasingly shaped by agenda quality and in-event experiences. Event teams should approach personalization by focusing on agenda & content design and intentional in-person moments.



Experience design expectations continue to rise

Experience design has become a baseline expectation rather than a differentiator. In 2026, 95% of respondents say incorporating experiential learning elements into events is important, including 50% who say it is very important and 45% who say it's somewhat important. Similarly, 75% rate immersive experiences that allow attendees to disconnect and focus as important.

These findings reinforce a broader shift toward intentional experience design, even as teams balance these expectations against budget and resourcing constraints.

95% of respondents say incorporating experiential learning is important

Implications for event teams:

- Experiential design choices should balance attendee impact with cost and operational feasibility.

Networking remains widely used, but perceived effectiveness has declined year over year

In 2026, perceptions of networking effectiveness are mixed. 60% of organizers rate their networking opportunities as somewhat effective, while only 15% rate them as very effective. Another 15% are neutral, and 10% rate networking as ineffective.

This represents a notable shift from 2025. In research from 2025, 46% of organizers rated networking as very effective, and 36% rated it as somewhat effective, with only 2% indicating ineffectiveness. The 2026 distribution suggests that while networking remains a core component of events, fewer teams feel it is delivering strong outcomes consistently.

2026

60% Networking is somewhat effective

15% Networking is very effective

2025

36% Networking is somewhat effective

46% Networking is very effective

Implications for event teams:

- Networking design benefits from clearer audience segmentation and intent.
- Effectiveness improves when networking experiences are actively facilitated.



AI adoption is accelerating, driven by practical use cases

AI represents the most significant new signal in the 2026 data. 95% of respondents expect their organization's use of AI in events to increase, including 35% who anticipate significant increases. Current adoption is concentrated in areas such as event marketing, analytics, communications, and agenda design.

At the same time, respondents express concerns around accuracy, transparency, and privacy, reinforcing the importance of intentional governance as adoption increases.



“AI has disrupted digital marketing. AI now requires us to rethink how content is used and measured after the event,” noted one VP at a tech company.

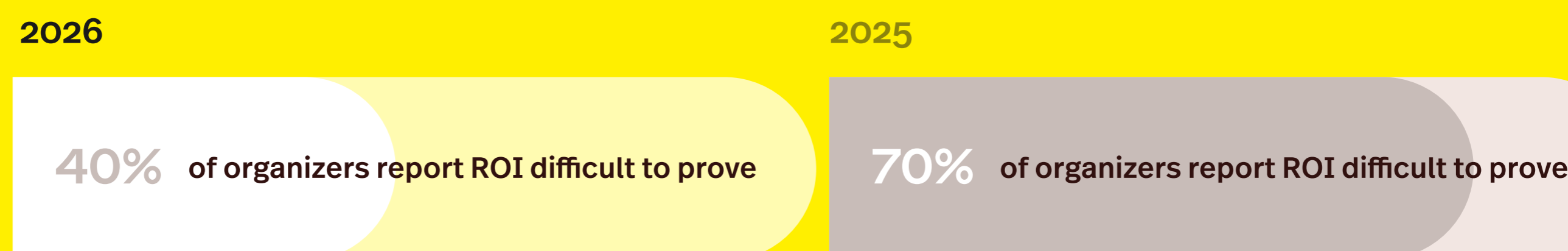
Implications for event teams:

- AI delivers the most value when applied to defined workflows.
- Governance and trust considerations should scale alongside adoption.

Measurement confidence is improving, but uneven

Confidence in measuring event ROI remains split in 2026. 40% of organizers report difficulty proving ROI, reflecting progress compared with research from 2025, where 70% reported challenges in demonstrating event impact. Despite this improvement, measurement maturity remains uneven across organizations.

This gap continues to limit how effectively event outcomes can be communicated to stakeholders, particularly when data remains fragmented across systems.



“Direct correlation from event to sale is difficult, especially with long lead times and disconnected CRM systems,” noted one specialist from a consulting firm.

Implications for event teams:

- Measurement confidence improves when event data is centralized, rather than spread across disconnected tools.

What leadership predicts for 2026

This chapter captures what executive leadership expects will define successful event programs in 2026. Drawing on perspectives from Bizzabo's executive team, it reflects how leaders see the market evolving, how event strategy is changing, and where expectations around accountability, scale, and measurement are headed.

Events become long-term growth infrastructure

Executive leaders increasingly describe events as part of the core growth infrastructure of the business. Rather than viewing events as episodic marketing activities, leadership teams expect them to operate alongside core revenue motions.

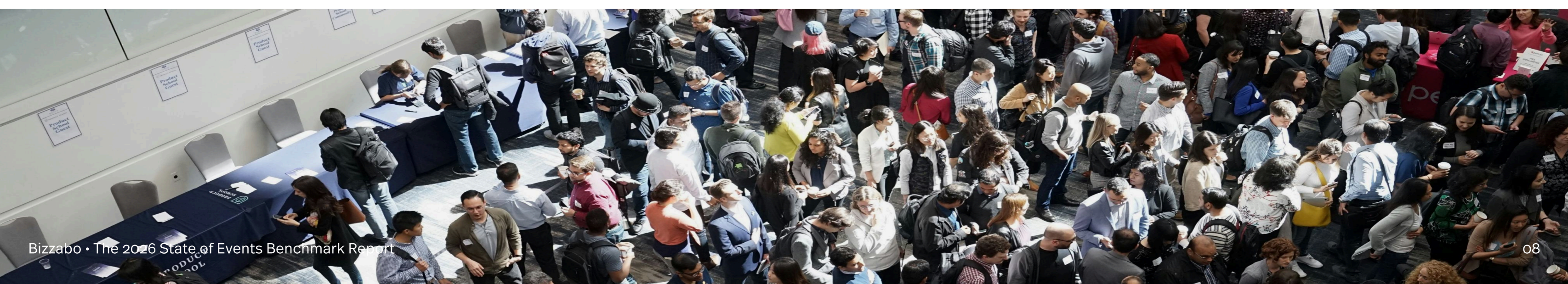
From the boardroom perspective, events are discussed in terms of pipeline contribution, deal acceleration, and customer retention. This reflects a structural shift in how events are positioned, funded, and evaluated. Programs that remain organized around one-off moments struggle to meet these expectations, while those built as long-term systems are better aligned with leadership priorities.

“When I talk to CEOs and CMOs today, events are no longer treated as nice-to-have campaigns. They are positioned as a core growth system. Events now sit alongside paid media, product, and sales in board-level discussions, evaluated on pipeline creation, deal acceleration, and customer retention.”

Eran Ben-Shushan, Co-Founder and CEO, Bizzabo



This shift places greater emphasis on operating maturity. Leaders expect event teams to plan, execute, and optimize with the same rigor applied to other growth functions.



ROI expectations move deeper into the business

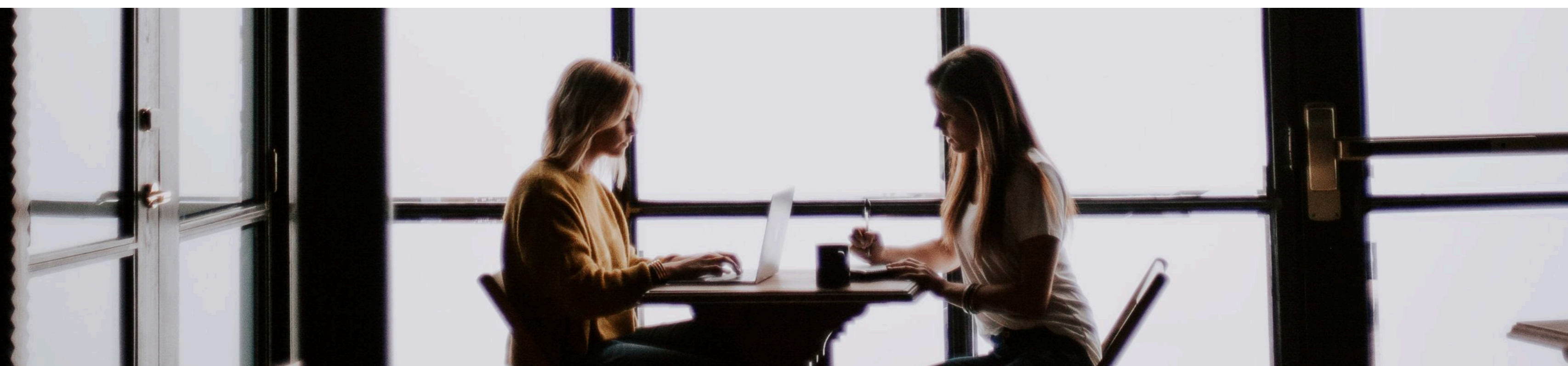
Leadership expectations around [event ROI](#) are also evolving. Attendance and satisfaction remain useful indicators, but they are no longer sufficient signals of success.

Executives increasingly want to understand how events influence opportunity movement, expansion, and sales cycle velocity. This requires event data to be connected directly into CRM, marketing automation, and revenue reporting systems. When those connections are missing, even high-performing events become difficult to defend at the executive level.

“Attendance is no longer the primary signal leadership looks for. Executives want to understand what changed in the business as a result of the event, including opportunity progression, expansion influence, and sales cycle velocity.”

Eran Ben-Shushan, Co-Founder and CEO, Bizzabo

As a result, ROI discussions are becoming more operational and less anecdotal, with greater scrutiny on data quality, attribution, and time to insight.



Precision and intent outweigh volume

Looking ahead to 2026, leaders consistently predict a continued shift away from broad, high-volume event calendars toward more focused, intentional programs.

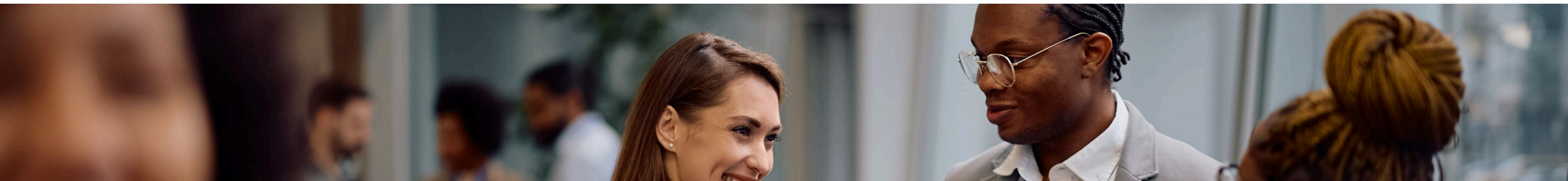
Executives observe that both organizations and attendees are becoming more selective. Each event is expected to serve a defined audience, address a specific business problem, and deliver a measurable outcome. Precision, rather than scale, is becoming the primary driver of perceived effectiveness.

“Attendees are more selective about where they spend their time. When they commit, they expect relevance, personalization, and clear outcomes.”

Alon Alroy, Co-Founder and CMO, Bizzabo



This trend places pressure on planning discipline and systems that support segmentation, reuse, and personalization without increasing operational complexity.



Sponsorship and field programs face higher accountability

Leadership teams also anticipate higher expectations around sponsorship performance and field execution in 2026.

Exposure-based sponsorship models are increasingly seen as insufficient. Sponsors expect access to the right audiences, structured opportunities for interaction, and credible engagement data they can act on after the event. Programs that cannot demonstrate this level of accountability risk losing sponsorship investment.

“Sponsors don’t want logo exposure alone. They want qualified conversations, co-created content, and real engagement data.”

Alon Alroy, Co-Founder and CMO, Bizzabo

At the same time, leaders predict continued evolution in field marketing. Rather than treating field events as isolated activations, high-performing organizations are building local ecosystems aligned with account strategy, sales priorities, and customer success initiatives.

AI and platforms evolve into operational command centers

From a leadership perspective, AI is expected to play a growing role in event programs, but primarily through practical, embedded use cases.

Executives predict increased adoption of AI where it supports attendee engagement, targeting, agenda design, attendance forecasting, and follow-up automation. Features that operate outside core workflows or fail to connect to sales and marketing systems are viewed as lower value. Platforms that unify data across the full event lifecycle and integrate cleanly with revenue systems are likely to replace fragmented point solutions.

“AI in events is probably the most misunderstood trend. People either think it will magically run their whole event or that it’s a gimmick. In reality, the real value is very practical... What’s under-discussed is precision over volume: fewer, better, more intentional events will outperform huge calendars that aren’t clearly designed for specific outcomes.”

Eran Ben-Shushan, Co-Founder and CEO, Bizzabo



Trust, governance, and data responsibility gain strategic weight

Finally, leadership predicts that trust and data governance will become increasingly important differentiators in 2026.

As personalization and analytics mature, executives expect event teams to be deliberate about what data is collected and how it is used. Transparency with attendees and alignment with internal governance standards are becoming strategic considerations rather than compliance requirements.

“Long term, privacy and control will become a differentiator. Attendees will choose platforms and brands they trust with their data.”

Boaz Katz, Co-Founder and CFO, Bizzabo



Programs that balance insight with restraint are better positioned to build durable relationships and long-term community.

What this signals for event leaders heading into 2026

Taken together, these leadership perspectives point to a higher bar for event programs. In 2026, success will increasingly depend on operating maturity, precision in design, and the ability to connect event activity to business outcomes with confidence. Event leaders who prepare for these expectations are more likely to secure sustained investment and strategic influence across their organizations.

About Bizzabo

Bizzabo is the Event Experience Operating System for modern enterprise organizations and the intelligence behind many of the world’s leading event programs. As C-suites push event teams to run events like a core growth system, Bizzabo gives them a single, connected platform to design, deliver, and measure events across the entire lifecycle.

By unifying event data, plugging it directly into sales and marketing systems, and layering in AI-powered insights, Bizzabo helps teams move from “who showed up?” to “what changed in the business because they showed up?”. From field events to flagships, Bizzabo is built to support in-person, virtual, hybrid, and local ecosystems at scale—reducing operational overhead for lean teams while making it easier to prove ROI.

To learn how Bizzabo can support your event strategy and help you meet rising expectations from leadership, [request a demo and talk to our team.](#)

How high-performing programs operate

This chapter examines how category-leading event programs operate in practice, based on anonymized, aggregated in-platform data from organizations running mature, multi-event portfolios on Bizzabo in 2025. Rather than reflecting opinions or intentions, these benchmarks show what high-performing programs consistently do across planning, execution, and measurement.

Portfolio-based event strategies are the operating norm

Category-leading programs distribute their efforts across the year rather than concentrating performance into a small number of high-stakes moments. Events function as an ongoing engagement channel rather than isolated campaigns.

Across the dataset, organizations run an average of 25 events per year, with 412 registrations and 269 attendees per event. Attendance rates average approximately 52% across events with recorded attendance, indicating relatively stable conversion from registration to participation at scale.

25

Average number of events run by organizations

412

Average registrations per event

269

Average attendees per event

52%

Average attendance rate across events

What this means for you:

- Execution across a full event portfolio supports more predictable performance and creates room to optimize over time. Programs built around a consistent cadence are better positioned to learn, adjust, and improve without relying on a single flagship to carry results.

Format strategy is intentional and concentrated

Leading programs rely on a small, repeatable set of formats aligned to specific outcomes. Format selection reflects intent rather than experimentation.

In 2025, 63% of events were in-person, 33% were virtual, and 4% were hybrid. Activity concentrates around a limited number of formats, with meetings and networking events (29%), webinars (23%), and conferences and conventions (22%) accounting for the majority of programs.

4%
Hybrid

33%
Virtual

63%
In-person

What this means for you:

- Concentrating on a defined set of formats simplifies execution and improves consistency. Format discipline reduces operational complexity while making it easier to design experiences that reliably support relationship building, education, or revenue goals.



Agendas are shorter and designed for completion

Agenda design among category-leading programs reflects a shift toward tighter, more deliberate structures that align with how attendees actually engage.

Benchmark data shows an average event duration of 11.8 hours, with 7.5 sessions per event. Session completion rates average 98.5%, indicating that attendees who participate tend to stay engaged through the full agenda.

11.8

hours average event
duration

7.5

average sessions
per event

95%

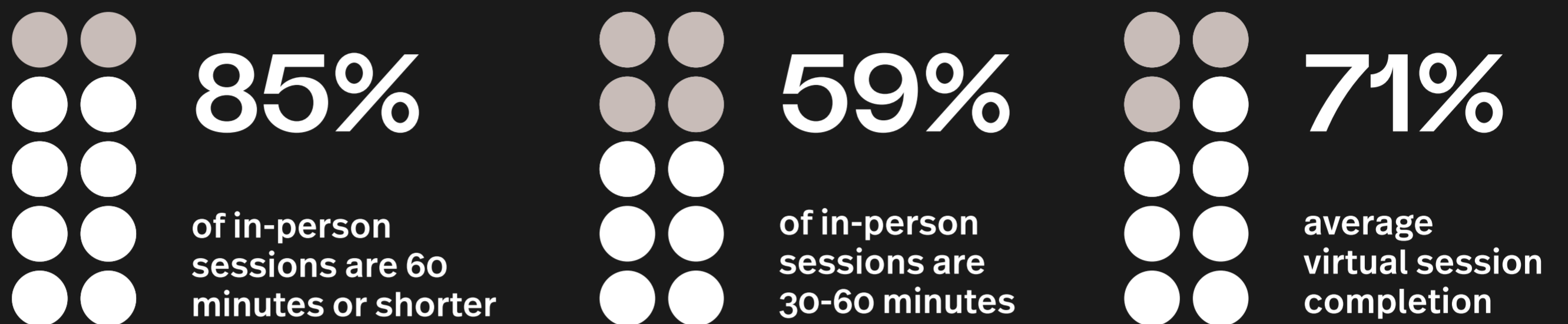
average session
completion rate

What this means for you:

- More compact agendas improve both experience quality and delivery reliability. Designing fewer, well-scoped sessions supports sustained engagement while reducing execution risk.

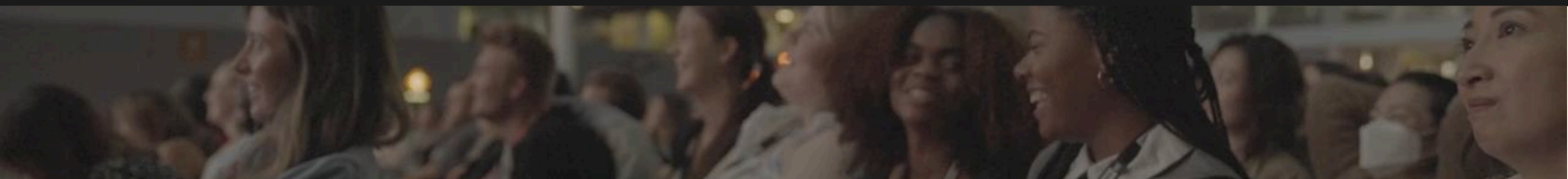
Session length aligns with observed engagement behavior

85% of sessions are 60 minutes or shorter, with 59% falling in the 30–60 minute range. For virtual sessions in 2025, attendees watched an average of around 46 minutes per session – 71% of the typical session’s full length.



What this means for you:

- Designing sessions within these ranges aligns programming with attention patterns. Longer sessions should be reserved for formats where extended engagement is clearly expected, such as workshops or training.



Engagement is intentionally designed into the experience

High-performing programs treat engagement as a planned component of the event experience rather than a passive outcome.

Across the dataset, 47.3% of attendees participate in community features, such as chat or discussion spaces. Events generate an average of 574 messages per event, indicating sustained interaction rather than one-off activity.



What this means for you:

- Meaningful engagement requires structure, moderation, and staffing. When engagement is designed intentionally, it becomes a source of insight rather than a byproduct of attendance.

Email remains central to event marketing at scale

Despite diversification in marketing channels, email continues to underpin event promotion, attendance, and follow-up for category-leading programs.

Event programs operate email at significant scale, with organizations running over 100 scheduled email campaigns per year and distributing tens of thousands of emails across their audiences. Scheduled email open rates average 40%, indicating consistent performance even at high volume.

What this means for you:

- Email remains effective when segmentation, timing, and messaging are coordinated with event behavior. Performance gains come from orchestration, not from reducing volume alone.

Registration experience design materially affects conversion

Registration is treated as an extension of the event experience rather than a transactional step. Overall visit-to-registration conversion averages 21.5%. Dynamic registration flows convert at approximately 24.4%, compared with 11.6% for static flows, representing a meaningful performance difference tied to journey design volume.

What this means for you:

- Optimizing registration flows can materially improve outcomes without increasing traffic or spend. Reducing friction and tailoring journeys delivers measurable returns.

21.5% Overall visit-to-registration conversion

Hybrid

24.4% Dynamic registration flow conversion

vs.

11.6% Static registration flow conversion



Paid events generate meaningful revenue at scale

For many category-leading programs, paid events represent a substantive revenue channel rather than an experimental model.

Across paid events, average revenue per event is approximately \$84,000, supported by disciplined pricing and discounting practices. Average discount rates sit at 36%, suggesting targeted incentives rather than broad price reductions.

What this means for you:

- Revenue performance improves when pricing reflects clear value and defined outcomes. Paid events benefit from the same intentional design applied to agenda and experience planning.

\$84,000

Average revenue per event

36%

Average discount rate

Lead capture remains an underused lever

Category-leading programs generate significant engagement during events, but many do not consistently provide structured ways for attendees to signal follow-up interest beyond registration.

In this context, lead capture refers to explicit expressions of intent from people who are already registered for or attending an event, not the acquisition of new potential attendees. This intent is captured through non-registration web forms, such as requests for meetings, follow-up conversations, content downloads, or sponsor contact. These forms sit outside the core registration flow and are designed to capture high-value signals after interest has already been established.

Platform data shows that programs deploy an average of 0.2 non-registration forms per event, meaning most events include no additional intent-capture mechanisms at all. When forms are used, however, they generate an average of 91 submissions per form, indicating strong response from attendees when clear opportunities to raise their hand are provided.

What this means for you:

- Providing simple, well-placed opportunities for attendees to request follow-up or additional information can materially increase insight and attribution. These signals help teams connect engagement to next steps without adding friction to the event experience or increasing event volume.

Conclusion

The findings in this report point to a clear shift in how events are planned, delivered, and evaluated. Across survey data, leadership perspectives, and real in-platform benchmarks, the same pattern emerges. Event programs are operating in a more disciplined environment, with higher expectations around experience quality, measurement, and consistency.

Growth has not disappeared, but it is no longer the defining challenge. Instead, event teams are navigating stable resources, more selective audiences, and greater scrutiny from leadership. Success increasingly depends on operating maturity, intentional design, and the ability to connect event activity to meaningful outcomes with confidence.

For event leaders, this moment presents an opportunity. Teams that invest in repeatable execution, unified systems, and practical use of data are better positioned to deliver impact without adding complexity. As expectations continue to rise, the organizations that thrive will be those that treat events as a long-term system rather than a series of isolated moments.

About Bizzabo

Bizzabo is the Event Experience Operating System for modern enterprise organizations and the intelligence behind the benchmark data in this report. Through a single, connected platform, Bizzabo helps teams run complex event portfolios, unify event data across every stage of the event lifecycle, and turn engagement into measurable business impact.

The same capabilities that power these 2025 benchmarks (unified intelligence, AI-powered insights, and deep integrations with sales and marketing systems) also help event leaders make confident decisions in real time. Whether you're running in-person, virtual, hybrid, or field events, Bizzabo is designed for scale, reducing operational overhead while giving you the data you need to optimize and clearly demonstrate ROI.

To see how Bizzabo can help you benchmark, improve, and grow your own event program, [request a demo and talk to our team.](#)

