



GREEN & FORTUNE

TIME WELL SPENT

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Green & Fortune's client survey highlights a new nuance to meetings that is culminating in big changes on how and why events are run.

The survey, conducted in Spring 2023, drew on the voices of corporate clients, agents and delegates with an estimated cumulative annual buying power for events and entertainment of £30m.

THE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

apathy for formal, content rich events


employees are happy to extend their hours during TW&T days, however they remain protective of WFH on Monday and Friday

delegates have a choice - in person or online - ROTI, Return on Time Invested, is emerging as a new, key criteria for event planners.

ROTI is bringing an understanding around the value, experience and whether the event is worthwhile attending. This is pushing boundaries, heightening experiences and growing budgets.

We work better with the people we know and trust, and with whom we have a pattern of interaction. And as technology hasn't yet reliably replaced human engagement; getting together remains imperative for organisations.

Employee wellbeing and mental health is core to an organisation's ESG policy, and we've recognised that improving team cultures isn't about paying people more money – it's about consistently listening to people, having strong team communication, and recognising individual and team efforts. Such activities don't cost money, but they do require time and empathy.



THE CURRENCY OF A GOOD RELATIONSHIP IS TIME NOT MONEY.

KEY INDUSTRIES OF RESPONDENTS

<p>TECHNOLOGY</p> <p>17%</p>	<p>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</p> <p>14%</p>
<p>MEDIA</p> <p>9%</p>	<p>ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>8%</p>



The research highlights that **networking sessions and product or service demonstrations act as catalysts for interaction and as lead generators for potential clients or partners.**

TYPES OF EVENTS ORGANISED

Respondents' activations fall broadly between internal events for workplace colleagues and external events for clients, stakeholders and suppliers.

	Corporate Events Organisers	Event Agents
CLIENT NETWORKING AND SALES	27%	19%
EXHIBITIONS / TRADE EVENTS	20%	18%
SEASONAL (CHRISTMAS OR SUMMER) PARTY	16%	13%
TEAM BUILD AND COLLEAGUE NETWORKING	14%	12%
COMPANY UPDATES / AGM	13%	20%
COMPANY TRAINING	7%	13%
EMPLOYEE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	4%	4%
EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION	0%	1%

EXTERNAL EVENTS

There's a predominant focus on developing external relationships for lead generation and anticipated sales with nearly 45% of corporates' event activities focused on client engagements. The research highlights that networking sessions and product or service demonstrations act as catalysts for interaction and as lead generators for potential clients or partners.

With sophisticated CRM systems in place, the interactions don't just foster connections but enable the acquisition of valuable contact information, thereby making business events an indispensable tool in driving leads and conversions.

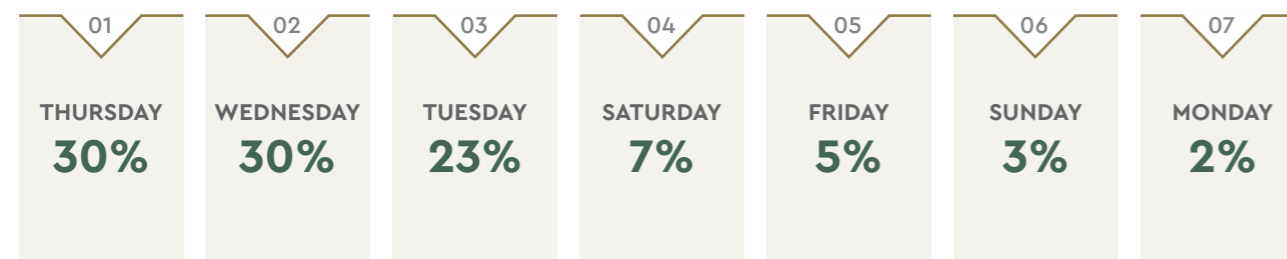
INTERNAL EVENTS

Organisational culture, employee wellbeing and mental health are business critical for employee retention.

Corporates continue to invest in their people - as developing a cohesive team is proven to lead to better business productivity.

Additionally investing in employee training and development helps businesses stay competitive by ensuring that their workforce has the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The survey shows that 20% of internal events are focussed on employee learning and development. And with economic uncertainty looming, its key to keep investing in people, retraining them to retain them when there may be a hesitancy to hire for new roles and positions.

WHICH DAYS DO ORGANISERS LOOK TO HOST EVENTS?



The hybrid work norm has created a new issue for resolution and it's a predicament that is clearly informing when events take place.

- Greater flexibility around where we work can mean that employees are commuting to their workplaces only to find themselves alone in the office and logging on to online meetings just as they would from home.

Clearly it makes little sense to have some people on-site and others dialling in. Therefore, events are helping encourage people back together as a fully formed team in one place and in person.

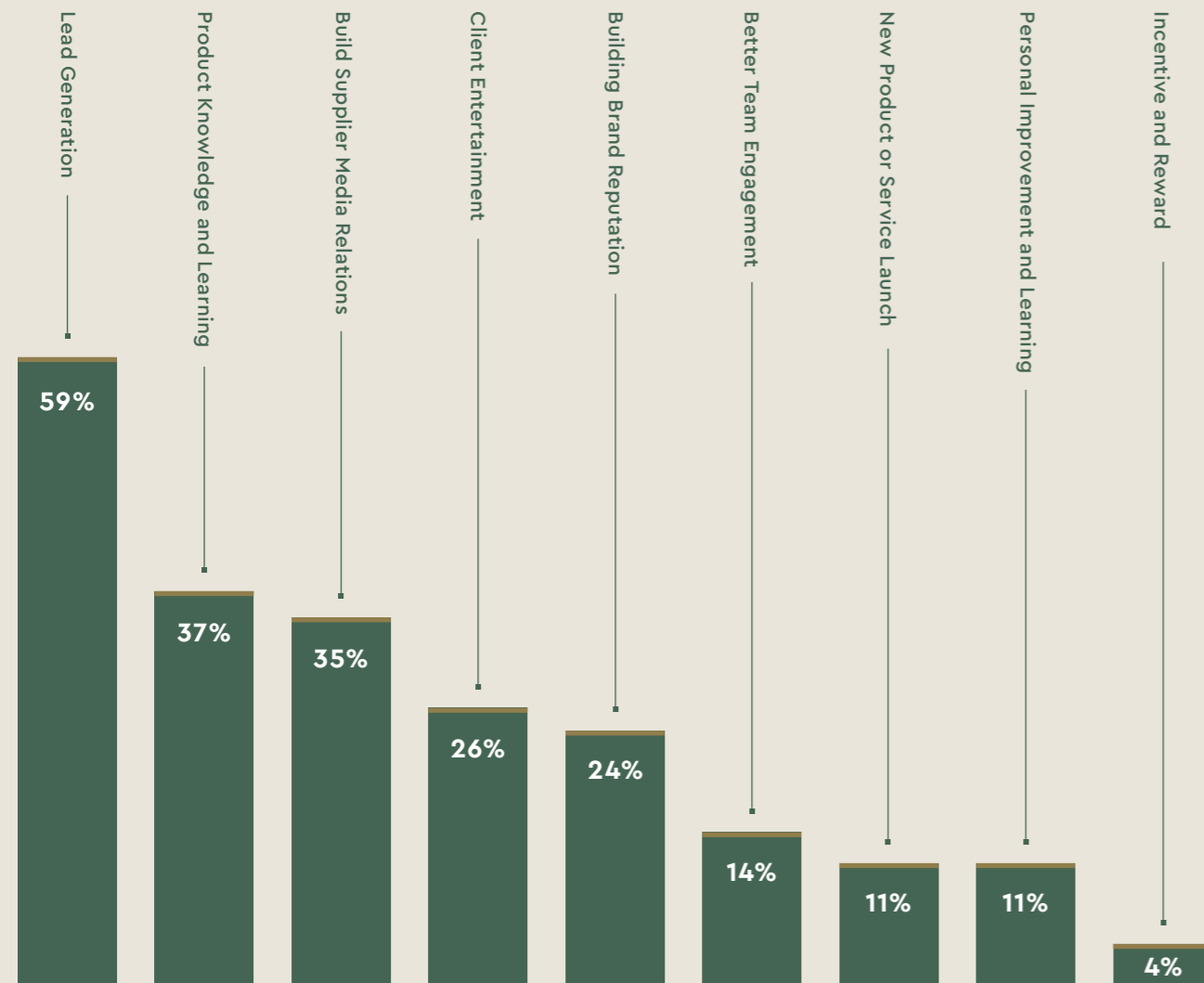
Responding to reduced footfall to the workplace on Monday and Friday, Wednesday and Thursday have become the event organisers days of choice. In the short term, adapting to this mid-week high is essential for event professionals to maximise attendance and engagement at their internal and external events. However, a longer-term consideration for planners is that according to *The Financial Times*:

'Half of multinationals plan to cut office space in the next three years'

For the capital, reduced office capacities coupled with a proven need to get the office talking will lead to a growing reliance on outsourced hosts and venues putting greater pressure on availability on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH ARE BUSINESS CRITICAL FOR EMPLOYEE RETENTION.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST OUTCOMES OF EVENTS YOU'VE ORGANISED?

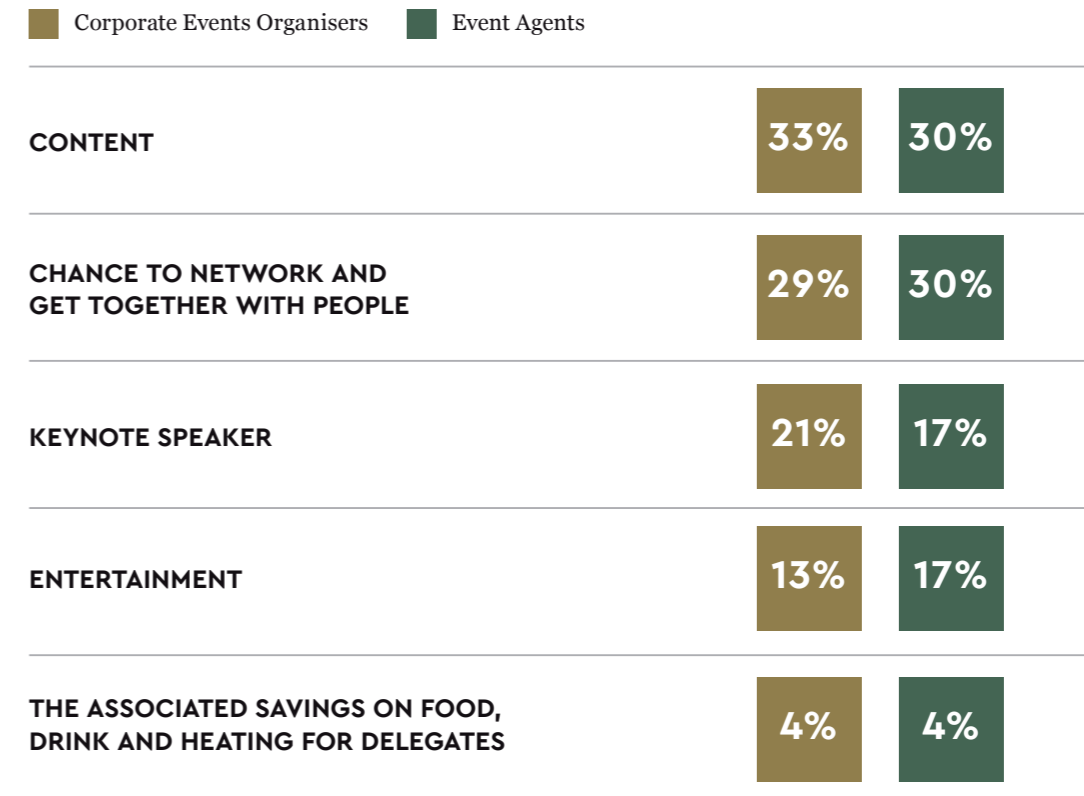


Unquestionably, the most significant reason for hosting a business event is the opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with clients and suppliers.

Amidst the rise of digital platforms and digital learning, corporations acknowledge that many events can effectively take place online. However, the value of face-to-face engagement in cultivating enduring commercial relationships cannot be dismissed.

The cornerstone of delegate attraction to events remains interaction and networking, offering invaluable opportunities to foster relationships, promote professional growth, exchange knowledge, and unearth business prospects.

WHAT ATTRACTS A FULL DELEGATE LIST TO YOUR EVENTS?



Content and content reign supreme as the reason why people choose to attend an event in person.

Big-name keynote speakers don't serve as the primary draw for attendees, rather, for corporates, content is king followed by networking and interaction. Agents prioritise interaction over content perhaps due to the onus on measurement and Return on Time Invested.

The widespread shift to remote work has amplified the importance of employee wellbeing and brought in new variables for event planners to consider.

Traditional all-day conferences laden with speakers are losing favour as corporations strive to reunify their teams, re-establish engagement, enhance communication and reinforce their value as employers.

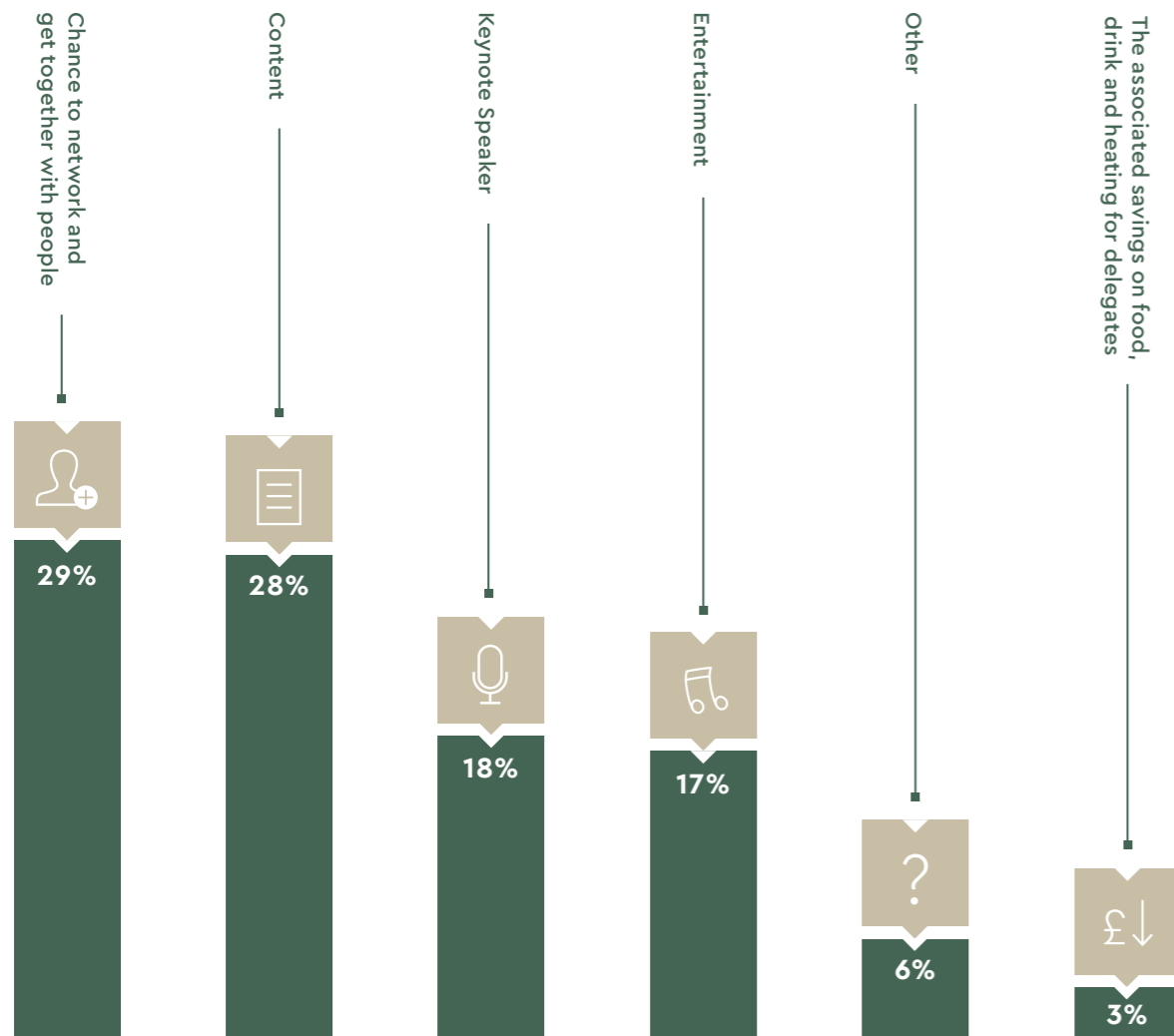
'It's said that 'time is of the essence'

And it's all the more prevalent in corporate organisations where employees have a choice of how they interact.

Employers need to use their employees' time wisely. And by creating a culture that values time management and that measures Return On Time Invested organisations can improve employee satisfaction, boost productivity, and enhance their reputation.

Planners need to ensure their delegates time is well spent and networking and environments conducive to interaction and connection both elevate the event experience and ensure a good ROTI.

WHAT ATTRACTS YOUR CLIENTS' DELEGATES TO AN EVENT?



With work-related tasks now frequently accomplished from home it has heightened the significance of in-person gatherings for interaction, engagement and meaningful conversation.

For event organisers, the ability to spark engagement and conversation among delegates is paramount.



‘Events are a powerful way of changing the world’

Sasha Frieze,
MD of The Business Narrative

Active participation, knowledge sharing, and relationship building elevate overall attendee satisfaction and contribute to the event's success. Moreover, such engagement creates memorable experiences, cementing the event's impact long after its conclusion.

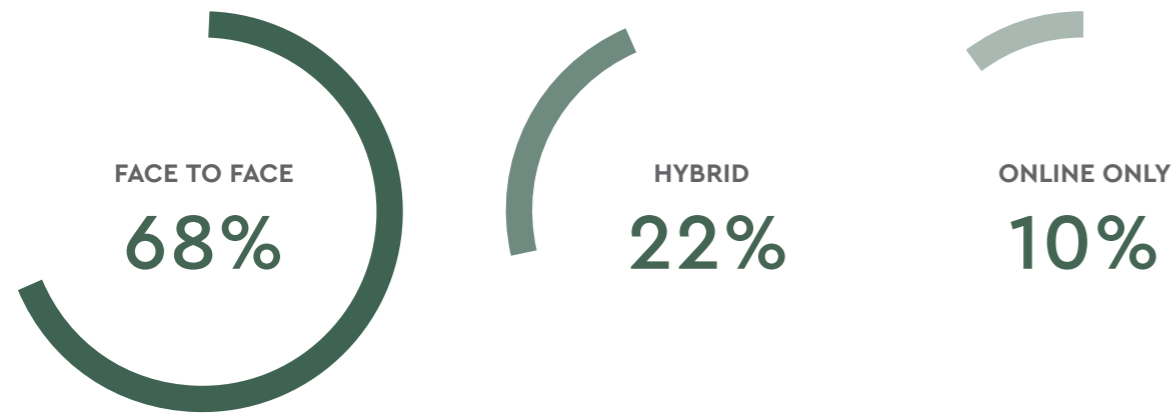
83% of organisers want their delegates to engage and have conversations against 17% who want learning and development as their key criteria.

Agency professional organisers clients tend to favour hybrid and online events more than their corporate counterparts, possibly driven by a desire to maximise event monetisation but also due to the fact that they are often planning larger, globally oriented events and hybrid and online formats expand audience reach and accessibility.

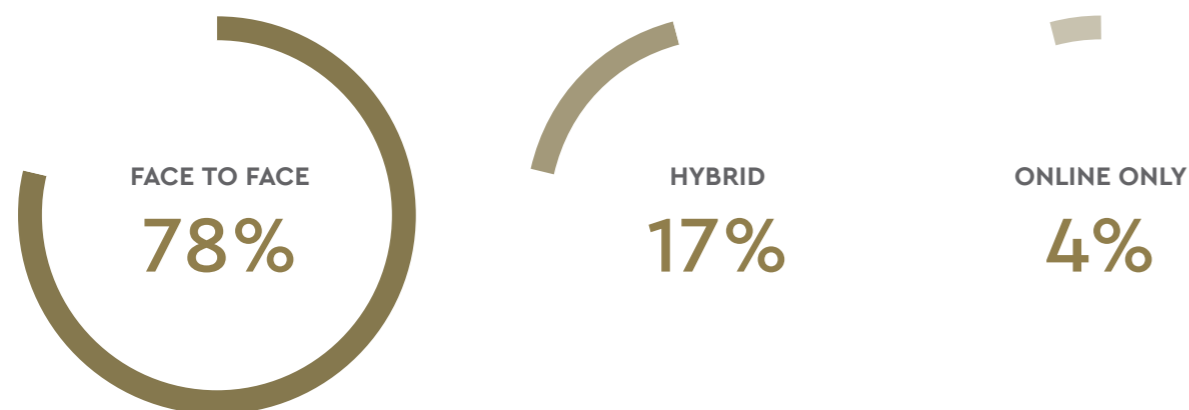
Corporates place a higher premium on the merits of face-to-face interactions for networking and engagement. The direct contact from in-person events provides corporates with a potent platform to effectively convey their brand ethos to their clients, employees and stakeholders.

HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS PREFER TO MEET?

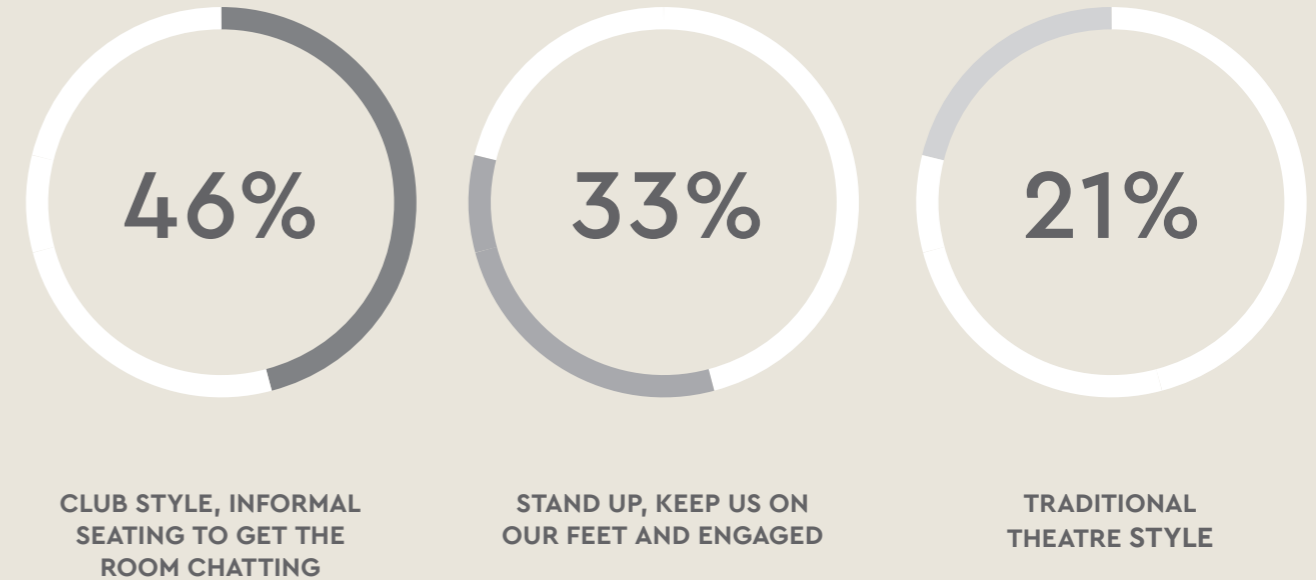
Event Agencies



Corporate Events Organisers



WHAT SETUP WORKS BEST FOR YOUR EVENTS?



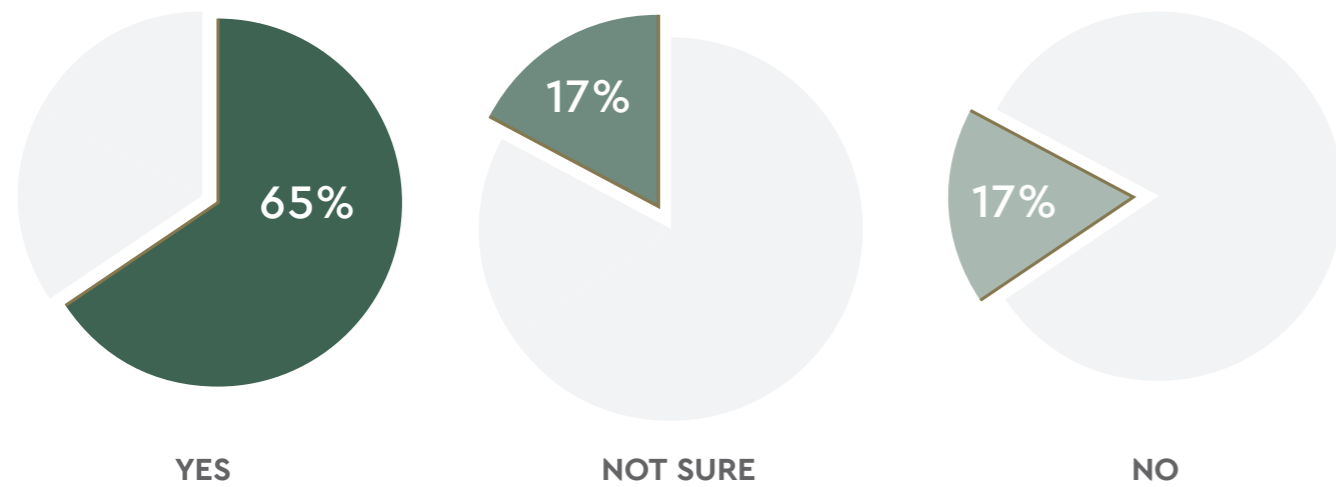
The events industry is experiencing a notable shift in event set-ups as we move away from traditional theatre-style set-ups which are known for their formal atmosphere and staid transfer of knowledge.

Contemporary events are prioritising dialogue, collaboration and engagement and are being held in more relaxed and flexible seating arrangements. A trend that's also reflected in office and workplace design.

More progressive sectors like technology and retail are adopting stand-up meetings as they encourage more inclusive and interactive styles of knowledge sharing that helps to improve communication and collaboration.

Increasingly, corporates are extending their conference days with additional social events such as post-event dinners or drinks.

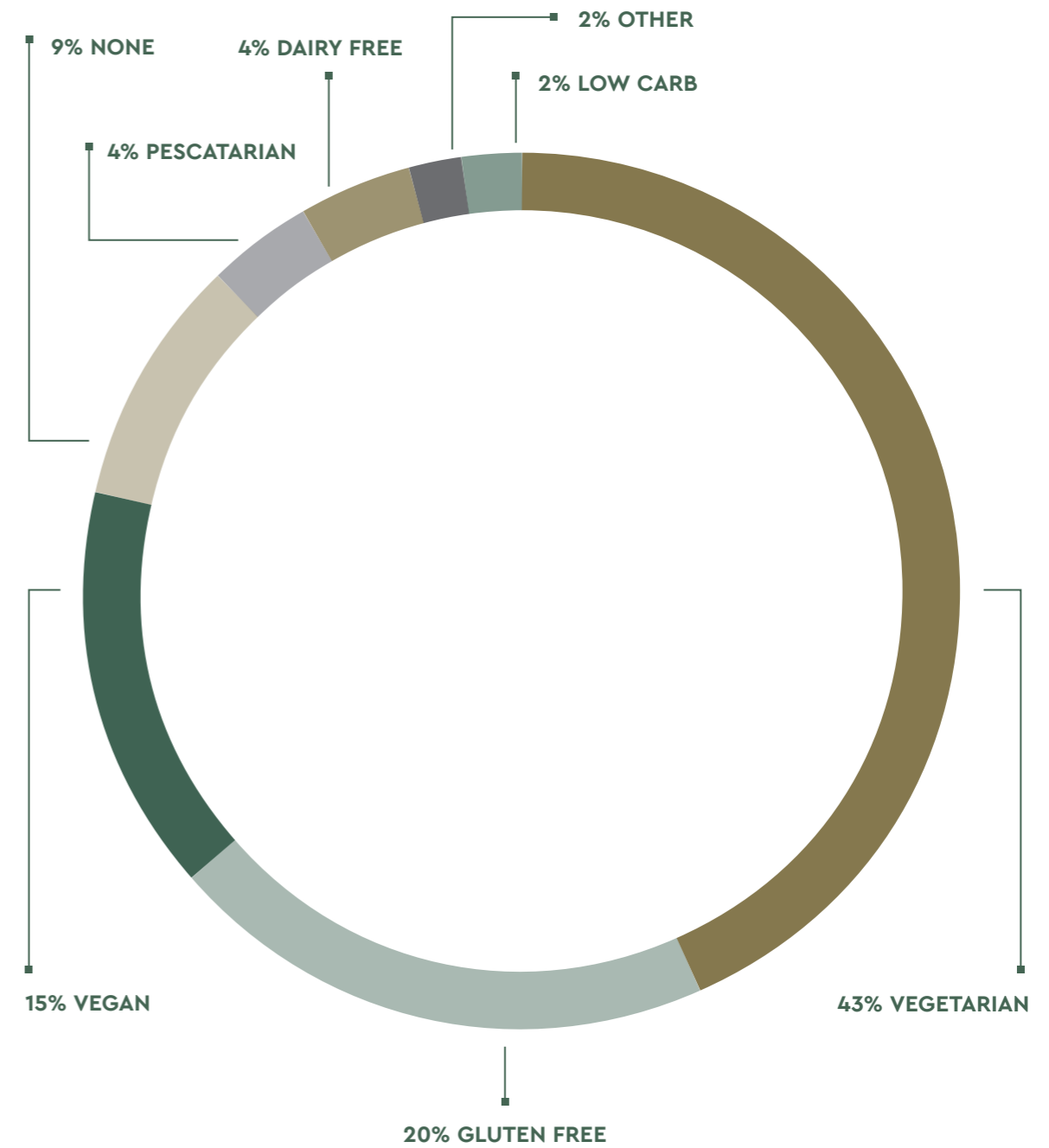
ARE YOU SEEING EVENTS YOU PLAN INCLUDING A POST EVENT 'SOCIAL' MAKE THE MOST OF THE AUDIENCE BEING TOGETHER?



This not only maximises participation but also enhances the attractiveness of the event, especially for full time office-based or home-based participants, who may view a few days at an event as a welcome escape from the norm.



COMMONALITY OF DIETARY REQUIREMENTS AT EVENTS



Many events are pivoting to exclusively vegetarian menus, phasing out red meat in the process. This shift reflects a more conscientious approach to catering that takes into account both health and environmental considerations.

Event planners today are more interested in the provenance of their food and drink, with a heightened emphasis on utilising seasonal products and supporting local supply chains. This trend signifies a broader transformation in the events industry, emphasising the importance of sustainability and responsible sourcing, which is valuable knowledge for meeting and event professionals aiming to create successful, contemporary, and responsible events.

CORPORATE EVENTS ORGANISERS

What's important when
planning an event?

MOST IMPORTANT

ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSATION

A NEW EXPERIENCE

ETHICAL BEHAVIOURS OF
THE SPEAKERS AND CONTENT

FOOD AND DRINK

THE CHANCE TO GO TO
AN AMAZING SPACE

PERSONAL WELLBEING
AND MENTAL HEALTH

BRINGING MY WORKPLACE
CULTURE TO LIFE

EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT

LEAST IMPORTANT

ATTENDEES

When attending an event how
important are the following?

MOST IMPORTANT

A NEW EXPERIENCE

THE CHANCE TO GO TO
AN AMAZING SPACE

ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSATION

FOOD AND DRINK

PERSONAL WELLBEING
AND MENTAL HEALTH

ETHICAL BEHAVIOURS OF
THE SPEAKERS AND CONTENT

BRINGING MY WORKPLACE
CULTURE TO LIFE

EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT

LEAST IMPORTANT



INTERVIEW WITH SASHA FRIEZE

Sasha Frieze, MD of The Business Narrative, is a long-term friend of Green & Fortune and has conceived and created some of the most successful events and brand activations we've hosted in our venues.

Very deservedly, she was awarded Event Producer of the Year in 2020 and she's the go-to voice for insights and outlooks on the changing face of events strategy, design, and engagement. A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and Royal Society of Arts, she's been a mentor on Fast Forward 15, sat on the board of the event industry's Event Apprenticeships Programme and is a Visiting Lecturer in Event Management at Westminster University.

Sasha is a powerhouse in helping brands realise their purpose by creating events with lasting impact.

The events scene highlights the importance of engagement and dialogue, with a heightened focus on the ethical behaviours of speakers and event management protocols.

Corporates are expected to foster an environment that guarantees safety, care, and a sense of belonging for delegates. In light of recent years that have adversely affected mental and physical health, the emphasis on delegate wellbeing has come to the fore with employees increasingly seeking out employer support in managing and improving their overall health.

In the Instagram era, design, aesthetics, and unique destinations have emerged as significant elements that delegates value, often sharing these experiences on social platforms. Accordingly, the need for neuro-inclusive meetings and sessions that engage attendees as much as possible have come into sharp focus. The transformation of traditional meeting room setups reflects this shift.

Diversity and inclusion breeds innovation by exposing changemakers to different perspectives, fostering an environment of open-mindedness and receptivity to change. Establishing a dialogue with community stakeholders is crucial to an event's ability to maximise its positive impact.

In a world defined by remote work, the younger attendee seeks experiences that respect this reality, preferring personalised, inclusive, and culturally rich experiences. The definition of the workplace has evolved. No longer simply a location for task completion, it is now viewed as an interactive hub fostering creativity and embodying company culture. As such, event professionals must adapt to these changing dynamics to successfully cater to modern needs and expectations.



For the foreseeable future it's all about putting the delegate at the heart of the experience

REBECCA HARRIS, OUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, DELVES A LITTLE DEEPER WITH SASHA ON THE PAPER'S FINDINGS:

RH: Engagement tops the reason for having face to face events while learning and development features far lower down the scale. Do you foresee training, learning and development ever becoming the most important reason for hosting an event?

SF: The pandemic taught us all how to deliver digital events, and at speed. It also taught us to differentiate between content-led presentational learning and engaging, immersive, collaborative event experiences. Basically, when it comes to event planning if it should be a webinar, create a webinar.

While in the past a number of event organisers would design classroom-style events for teams, focused on knowledge delivery, we know more now. We have a more nuanced understanding of both people's personal learning styles, neurodiversity, and individual needs. So we're able to create events that have a more informal, collaborative feel, and are able to bring people together to explore the content more deeply.

Consequently, we're convening conversations around content and it's an improved way of learning, amplifying collaboration, and community within an organisation.

For the foreseeable future it's all about putting the delegate at the heart of the experience, learner-centred development, sharing and solving problems in an informal atmosphere. And, as the report clearly shows, engagement and dialogue top the agenda.

RH: Delegate wellbeing is a big feature of events – how can organisers ensure they have considered and demonstrate wellbeing practices in their events?

SF: In the past 5 years delegate wellbeing has come to the fore partly because businesses are focusing on their people and are seeking to attract tomorrow's talent. ESG, now a key criteria of events, isn't just about sustainability at events. It's part of a strategy for companies to act responsibly and it's joined-up with workforce strategy, improving employee satisfaction and potentially attracting and retaining new talent. Organisations want to create immersive and engaging experiences for their talent. From a planners' perspective it shows delegates that brands or companies are genuinely invested in people too.

The delegate experience has changed over the years – just as the workplace has – we've moved beyond the "suit and tie" brigade - people donning their work dress-code and personality – to delegates showing up as their authentic selves. Great events are now designed with inclusivity baked-in, to meet individual delegates needs.

A crucial part of the event design process is to ensure broad accessibility, considering all of your audience avatars to ensure an accessible event. This means everything from quiet spaces, parent and child rooms, additional places for carers, closed captioning at all events (it's not just about language, but about neurodiversity and personality-style accessibility) and using fully accessible venues.

Also ensure a range of dietary options including vegetarian, vegan, and halal options are on every menu. It may have once been the toast of a good event, but is alcohol even right for your audience? Think too about signage especially for those with visual impairments who may require braille, tactile maps, and tactile diagrams to help access information.

The delegate experience starts right from receiving the invitation, and planners need to consider visual accessibility in their design and offering opportunities for delegates to sensitively request support with any additional needs.

RH: There's a move away from traditional set ups such as classroom style seating. What are some of the best new event formats that work and why?

SF: I'd always encourage organisers to 'remove the fourth wall'!

Events are moving on from an "us and them" "speakers and delegates" experience, and we're now looking to design truly participative events that grab people's attention in a progressively attention-poor society.

Gone are the days of poorly designed, lengthy PowerPoint or Keynote presentations – delegates are seeking inspiration, engagement, and increasingly, interaction.

The art of event design – curating and creating both programme and experience to meet the audience needs – is coming into its own. It's all about the balance of opening with a bang – an inspirational keynote for example – while ensuring that delegates get to connect, have those orchestrated serendipitous moments, meeting both new people and reconnecting with others.

Some of the big wins we've seen in terms of set up include:

Fishbowl meetings – a great alternative to panels - with two circles of chairs, an inner circle, and an outer circle. The inner circle is known as the fishbowl and usually has 4 or 6 chairs. The outer circle can be much larger so that a greater number of people can observe the conversation. Those in the inner circle start a conversation among themselves and are observed by those in the outer circle. Individuals can choose to enter or leave the fishbowl (one at a time) and are replaced by someone from the outer circle. This leads to new perspectives and enables individuals to step away when they want time to reflect, or when they think they have contributed enough. The conversation can grow and flow as the participants desire.

I also love themed roundtables. I increasingly find that participants want to share with peers as much as learn from industry rockstars, and a lightly moderated roundtable discussion let's people both learn and connect. I also love this for poseur tables during breaks and lunch – creating signposted spaces for delegates to convene around a subject.

RH. Workspaces have become more casual, and the report highlights that events must take a more casual approach too. How can event planners and managers guide their bosses towards less formality and therefore to delegates achieving ‘time well spent’?

Cultures have changed at an unprecedented pace with organisations re-aligning their values and recognising a more digital and inclusive workplace. Events too must reflect company culture and now I'm finding that organisations are questioning more deeply why events are being hosted.

Post-pandemic, the world has changed, and the world of events has changed. People are rightly more thoughtful about travel, when WFH is the norm, people may need to be persuaded to change their habits, and crucially, purpose has become increasingly important.

It's no longer “oh, go to that event” it's more “what's the purpose, what will I learn, what difference will it make”.

With this in mind, event teams need to manage up and in some cases challenge legacy events held by their company, how relevant they are and whether it is delegate ‘time well spent’. Today's events must go beyond solely having objectives – they need to be transformative.

Bringing senior stakeholders round the table to dig deep into the delegate journey, and the transformation you are creating – whether that's for individual participants, your organisation or sector – is crucial to creating events that deliver in the twenty-first century.

Transformation is an area I spend most of my time on with clients as the industry steers a new path and we address not only the in-person delegates and online audience but potentially sponsors too. Through a structured process - The Event Narrative Framework, seven questions to create a coherent narrative communicating your event's transformation - we're helping organisers transform and show a genuine purpose behind their events.



For more information on Sasha's The Event Narrative Framework:

Sasha Frieze,
The Business Narrative

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CONCLUSION

Spending time together as a collective is imperative for business success, yet the casualisation of the working routine must be taken into consideration when planning events.

Office design is more fluid, there's greater flexibility in the working week and how we are informed can be across differing formats from face-to-face, videos, podcasts, social media, and internal comms.

Bringing people together needs to be for good reason with a focus on ensuring their time is well spent. Much of business has been automated, many processes have been digitised, AI is informing sales and marketing. Bringing people together for human interaction, collaboration and interjection defines a network, organisation, or tribe. As conversation creates connection, it is our duty to ensure we achieve a Return on Time Invested.

Time well spent defines good business decisions.



GREEN & FORTUNE

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