

2020 Experiential Marketing Cost Benchmarking Report

What top brands are spending on event and experiential services



Includes in-depth data on:

- + Average costs for the most commonly used event expenses
- + Insights into what you'll spend on brand ambassadors, registration, labor, audio-visual and more
- + Costs broken out for 24 different rates in eight major budget categories

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2020 Cost Benchmarking Report: The industry's only in-depth study on what top brands are spending on event and experiential services

In our fourth edition of the Cost Benchmarking Report, created exclusively for premium subscribers of Event Marketer, we break down the most frequently used services purchased by event and experiential marketers across the industry. The study is designed to give you crucial information to build better budgets, compare costs and to, overall, give you a sense of what others in the industry are paying for key event production and activation elements.

Included in this report are in-depth insights for the following cost categories:

- + Brand Ambassadors
- + Registration and Check-in
- + Audio-Visual
- + Locations and Venues
- + Event Service Labor
- + Scenic and LED Screens
- + Ground Transportation
- + Food and Beverage

To develop the analysis, Event Marketer conducted a survey of leading event marketing brand-side and agency executives. The respondents represent many of the largest corporations and brands with event and experiential marketing programs in the world, as well as the top agencies serving them.

Event Marketer thanks all of the respondents for their invaluable contribution to the study.

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Below, you'll find a summary of the national average rates for important event and experiential activation services. A noteworthy stat: the average cost of a brand ambassador with a high level of experience increased to \$53.14 per hour from \$45.92 the previous year; and the average food and beverage seated banquet per-person costs decreased to \$96.67 per hour from \$120.18 per hour the previous year.

Category	Average	Range
Brand Ambassadors: High level of experience per hour	\$53.14	\$14 to \$350
Brand Ambassadors: Medium level of experience per hour	\$39.98	\$12 to \$300
Location and Venue Rental per day	\$22,630	\$5,000 to \$110,000
Registration: On-site execution (staff, equipment, supplies, etc.)	\$17,753	\$200 to \$200,000
Registration: Desk build-out and signage	\$7,389	\$200 to \$100,000
Audio-Visual: Highest level AV service package	\$231,715	\$1,000 to \$3M
Audio-Visual: Medium level AV service package	\$99,445	\$500 to \$1.5M
Event Service Labor: Rate per hour for event laborer	\$54.23	\$12 to \$325
Food & Beverage: Seated banquet with servers per person	\$96.67	\$25 to \$300
Food & Beverage: Buffet per person	\$63.30	\$11 to \$250

In this section, we explore the average hourly rates for brand ambassadors and event staffers.
Note: Agency fees may also be paid in addition to the hourly rates.

National Averages: Brand Ambassadors, Event Staff and Security

Category	Average	Range
Brand ambassadors with high level experience per hour	\$53.14	\$14 to \$350
Brand ambassadors with medium level experience per hour	\$39.98	\$12 to \$300
Brand ambassadors with low level experience per hour	\$26.07	\$10 to \$100
General event staffers per hour	\$28.36	\$10 to \$95
Security guards per hour	\$37.48	\$12 to \$100

Registration and check-in procedures are one of the first interactions your attendees will have at an event or experience. Below, we provide cost benchmarks for these functions. It’s important to point out, as you’ll see in the table, registration service levels and fees range widely. Reasons for the wide cost ranges include:

- + Some registration pricing models are based on event size and number of attendees.
- + There are different levels of registration services: some providers offer basic online tools, while others are full service and provide hotel bookings management, lead retrieval, staffing, and other services.
- + Some brands and agencies pay registration providers on an annual or multi-year contractual basis, while others pay per event and experiential activation—still, other pricing models include subscriptions or licenses.

National Averages

Category	Average	Range
Software platform purchase or rental	\$30,240	\$200 to \$1M
On-site execution (staff, equipment, supplies)	\$17,753	\$200 to \$200,000
Registration desk build-out and signage	\$7,389	\$200 to \$100,000

Of all the service areas included in the study, none have wider service and cost ranges than the audio-visual category. As shown in the first table below, based on the entire data set of brand and agency responses, the lowest “high level” service package cost is \$1,000, and the highest is \$3 million. Clearly, terms like “high,” “medium” and “low” are relative based on the size of the event program. Factors that account for these large cost differences include:

- + Event and experience size and scope.
- + Type of entertainment and/or number of content presentations.
- + Number of producers and technicians required.
- + Package and specific service levels such as staging, lighting, sound, video, etc.
- + Live production, broadcast and recording requirements.

National Averages by A/V Service Levels

Category	Average	Range
Highest level A/V service package	\$231,715	\$1,000 to \$3M
Medium level A/V service package	\$99,445	\$500 to \$1.5M
Low level A/V service package	\$37,549	\$500 to \$750,000

National Averages for Photographers, Videographers and Video Post-Production

Category	Average	Range
Photographer per day	\$1,265	\$110 to \$6,250
Videographer per day	\$1,940	\$125 to \$10,000
Video post-production (day rate)	\$2,345	\$150 to \$18,000

The average costs to rent locations and venues for events and experiential activations are provided in this section. Though offbeat or unexpected venues are trending, the survey this year found that convention centers and exhibition halls, as well as hotels, continue to be top location options for event professionals.

National Average

Category	Average	Range
All Venues/Locations per day	\$22,630	\$5,000 to \$110,000

Most Used Types of Locations and Venues

Category	Percentage
Convention centers, exhibition halls	71%
Hotels	49%
Festivals	37%
Pop-up stores and locations	31%
Stadiums/arenas	29%
Retail stores	26%
Music, performing arts centers	22%
Malls, shopping centers	21%
Fairgrounds	18%
Colleges and universities	17%
Other	21%

Provided here are typical hourly rates for general event labor for set-up and tear-down. These rates are often provided by union labor through general service contractors. The rates are for pre-event orders for straight time.

National Average

Category	Average	Range
General event labor per hour	\$54.23	\$12 to \$325



Provided below are average costs for scenic event installations specifically for stage and drape and LED screen rentals. The average costs associated with LED rentals decreased slightly from \$11,761 the previous year.

National Averages for Stage and Drape and LED Screen Rental

Category	Average	Range
Stage and drape	\$16,325	\$500 to \$300,000
LED screen rental	\$10,142	\$100 to \$100,000



The data table provides national averages for typical shuttle bus and limousine transportation rates brands and agencies pay per vehicle per day. Traditional ground transportation is one of the cost areas with the most uniform pricing across the country.

National Averages

Category	Average	Range
Shuttle bus per vehicle per day	\$1,307	\$500 to \$3,500
Limousine per vehicle per day	\$1,067	\$115 to \$5,000



Food and beverage services as shown below are more often related to business events and conferences. The costs per person range widely based on menu items, food and beverage quality, and service level.

National Averages

Category	Average	Range
Seated banquet with servers per person	\$96.67	\$25 to \$300
Buffet per person	\$63.30	\$11 to \$250
Reception with multiple food and beverage areas/stations per person	\$92.34	\$20 to \$210
Reception with bars and limited food per person	\$76.16	\$15 to \$260



In November 2019, Event Marketer conducted a survey of leading event marketing executives with a focus on large companies in both consumer and business-to-business markets. Leading agencies were also surveyed. The survey received 122 responses.

The data in this report should be used as a general guideline only. Most of the survey questions asked respondents to provide typical costs for their largest and most important event and experiential activation.

The information contained in this report has been collected from sources we believe to be authoritative and reliable. The calculations and estimates in this report are made in accordance with our professional judgment and calculations based upon the available information. However, we do not and cannot guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any such information.

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