eventmarketer
INDUSTRY RESEARCH

EXPERIENCE DESIGN & CREATIVE PROCESS BENCHMARK REPORT

EXCLUSIVE DATA ON THE INNERWORKINGS OF CREATIVE DEPARTMENTS AT TOP EVENT AGENCIES AND EXHIBIT BUILDERS

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HIGHMARK
TechSystems **USA**

Inside

Premium Event Structures

YOUR CREATIVE TEAM'S GO-TO PARTNER FOR OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

From ultra-mobile, super versatile kiosks that set up in a snap, to branded outdoor environments and premium VIP structures for festivals and large-scale events... All the way to semi-permanent buildings and showrooms. We have what you need for just about any outdoor activation, tour, hospitality event, or brand experience. And it comes with Highmark's legendary expertise and customer service.

Pull us in on your next creative brief— and we'll build your experience together.

Introduction

The Experience Design & Creative Process Benchmark Report delivers an unprecedented look inside the creative departments of the event marketing industry's top agencies and exhibit builders. With input from hundreds of creatives across the U.S., the research reveals how creative teams are structured, how they function, and what they're producing. The goal: Benchmark the changing processes related to experience design and the roles of the people who create live engagements.

This year's study captures both the form and function of creative departments—from staffing and team structure to creative outputs and the tools in use. It explores how time is spent, which roles are growing, and how responsibilities are divided among creative directors, designers, and specialists across both agency and builder organizations. With a spotlight on workflow, management, and collaboration, the report also uncovers how creative departments are partnering internally across strategy, operations, finance, and executive teams to respond to client briefs and RFPs.

A major focus of this report is the exploration of the creative briefing process—what information brands are sharing at kickoff, how thorough those briefs are, and what critical inputs are often included or missing. It also examines how teams are building out their RFP responses, who is involved in developing ideas, and where opportunities exist to streamline or improve processes between agencies, builders, and clients.

Another key component is the increased use of artificial intelligence. This year's data shows that more creative teams are integrating AI tools into their workflows, particularly for ideation, renderings, deck development, and creative refinements. The report documents where AI adoption is strongest and how these tools are complementing—not replacing—the human creative process.

Beyond structure and tools, the report also captures the work creative departments are actually producing. It details the types of experiences being developed more frequently—such as consumer activations, influencer events, and immersive trade show builds—and tracks the creative elements that are getting more play, including tech integration, analytics, social media, and data collection. It also identifies which formats and features are becoming less prominent, helping teams align their capabilities with evolving client demand.

Event Marketer and Highmark hope creatives across the industry will use this data as a practical look inside how the industry's top teams are organized, how they collaborate, and how they're delivering on the next generation of brand experiences.

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Executive Summary

The Experience Design & Creative Process Benchmark Report respondents represent a diverse cross-section of the top 200 event agencies and exhibit builders in the U.S.—just over half of all survey-takers hail from creative departments at agencies and just under half come from the exhibit builder community. Surveying these audiences together to compare and contrast their creative teams, processes and functions provides a first-of-its kind look at how experiences are being concepted and brought to market.

A quick topline on some of the "broad strokes" is below. But the real meat comes in the sections that follow this Executive Summary—as we dive into specific data areas, function and processes across all respondents, just agencies and just exhibit builders.

Designer Headcount Largely Flat-ish

Overall creative department headcount is flat at 60% of creative departments (creative staff is increasing at 30% of companies). The roles seeing the most hiring activity are Creative Directors, 3D Creatives, and Multimedia/Content Creatives. At agencies, the most active open roles recruiting include Multimedia/Content Creatives—being recruited by 29% of agencies. Elsewhere, 59% of builders say creative headcount is flat, but the two roles experiencing hiring activity by fabricators are Creative Directors and 3D Creatives. To review the agency-only and builder-specific data cuts, see page 9.

EVENT AGENCY/BUILDER CREATIVE DEPARTMENT HEADCOUNT

Legend: ■ Flat □ Increasing ■ Decreasing

All Creatives

Role	Flat	Increasing	Decreasing
Total Headcount	58%	36%	6%
Creative Directors	63%	31%	6%
Art Directors	68%	22%	10%
3D Creatives	58%	31%	11%
2D Creatives	63%	24%	13%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	65%	24%	11%
Interactive Tech Creatives	68%	26%	6%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
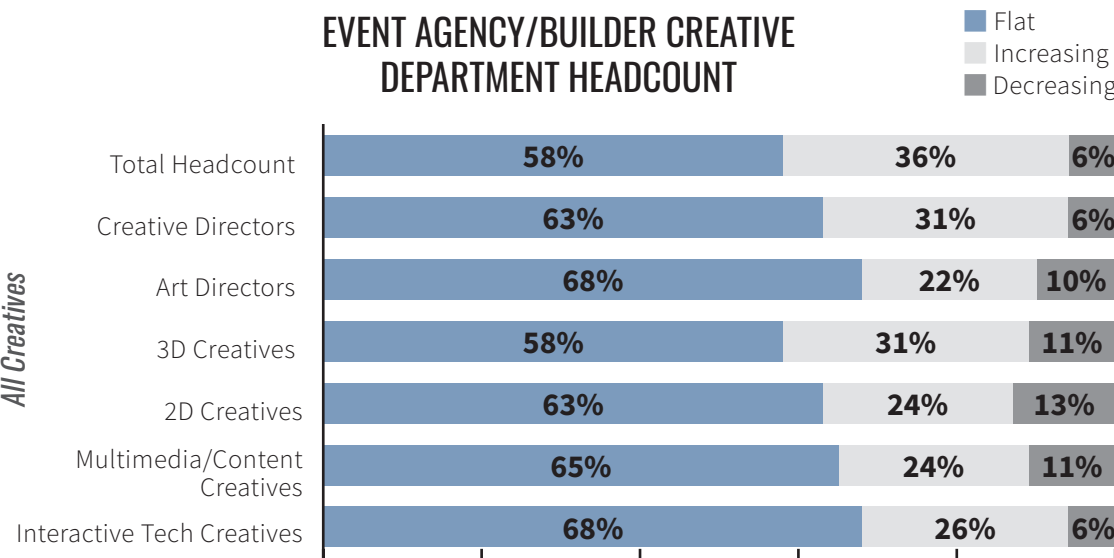
Creative Departments Pulled in Many Directions

Gone are the days when creatives focused on ideas and renderings. This most recent audit of agency and builder creative staffs finds teams spending their time on no less than eight areas (see chart below). The typical creative spends most of their time developing RFPs and nurturing client relationships. Department heads add team management to their plate—as well as work on builds and activations. Most respondents spend the bulk of the time at their desk—the average creative says they spend 10% of their time on-site at events or trade shows. To review the agency-specific and builder-only deeper dives, see page 8.

YOU SPEND YOUR TIME ON...

Pie chart segments:
- 18% RFPs for New Clients
- 18% Client Relationships
- 16% RFPs for Existing Clients
- 13% Team Management
- 11% Builds/Activations
- 10% On-Site at Events/Trade Shows
- 8% Non-Creative Team Communications/Meetings
- 6% Sourcing/Managing Vendors

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Despite the rise of specialized roles and specific focus areas for members of creative teams, the research shows unequivocally that members of the creative team work together on ideation, pitches, client service, build-outs and activation of events. Not one respondent reported being uninvolved with any output area, a testament to the growing collaboration among creatives as well as the expanding collaboration between creatives and other key company departments. To review the agency-only and builder-specific data cuts, see page 11.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH?

Legend: RFPs, Ideation, Client Pitches, Client Service, Build/Fabrication, Execution/Activation

All Creatives

	RFPs	Ideation	Client Pitches	Client Service	Build/Fabrication	Execution/Activation
Creative Directors	73%	75%	71%	71%	45%	48%
Art Directors	50%	77%	52%	56%	36%	34%
3D Creatives	36%	51%	31%	46%	46%	45%
2D Creatives	30%	48%	28%	47%	33%	39%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	31%	50%	33%	45%	33%	49%
Interactive Tech Creatives	32%	53%	35%	45%	39%	52%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ideation Tied to Cross-Company Collaboration

Creative teams brainstorm and ideate client projects with constituents across the company—most often account-service staffers and strategists. About half of the roles listed are always somewhat involved in creative idea generation and strategic planning. Operations/production staff and executive teams are involved in these areas to a lesser extent, depending on the agency or builder company size or specific client requirements. To compare agency and builder responses, see page 12.

WHO JOINS CREATIVE ON IDEATION DEVELOPMENT?

Legend:
- Always Involved
- More Involved
- Less Involved
- Not Involved

All Creatives

Role	Always Involved	More Involved	Less Involved	Not Involved
Account-Service/Client-Service	55%	28%	9%	8%
Strategy	49%	29%	12%	10%
Operations/Production	35%	36%	19%	10%
Executive Team	35%	21%	32%	12%
Business-Development	30%	30%	21%	19%
Estimating/Finance	27%	26%	24%	23%
Technology/IT	20%	26%	31%	23%
Other	14%	10%	32%	44%

A.I. Creative Stack Expands

The adoption of AI across the creative teams at event agencies and exhibit builders is on the rise, with most creatives using some but not all tools—mostly for initial ideation, 3D renderings, and deck development. Only 20% of experiential agency creatives are always using AI tools for initial ideas and early blueprints. That said, most agency designers say they are using "some" AI for various tasks. Exhibit house creative teams use most AI tools "some of the time" to enhance a majority of their idea-related work and when collaborating with colleagues and clients. To review more of the A.I. data from the survey, see page 13.

THE STATE OF THE CREATIVE A.I. STACK

Legend:
- Using More
- Using Some
- Not Using

All Creatives

Task	Using More	Using Some	Not Using
Initial Ideation	18%	53%	29%
3D Renderings	14%	39%	47%
Slide Deck Creation	14%	38%	48%
Initial Message/Copy	13%	57%	30%
Architectural/Build Blueprints	12%	34%	54%
Refinement to Initial Ideas	11%	56%	33%
Activation Timeline/Project-Management	10%	39%	51%
Initial Look/Feel	9%	58%	33%
Refinement to Initial Designs	9%	44%	47%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Client Creative Briefs Still Have a Long Way to go

Both agency and builder teams say that clients only provide full event and experiential program and creative briefs between 25% to 50% of the time at the start of project communications. Clients often hold back some information and often don't have their project goals and ideas fully thought out. Only 21% of agencies and 25% of builders say that clients provide a full brief more than half the time. For deeper dives, see page 14.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF CLIENTS PROVIDE A FULL CREATIVE BRIEF?

Legend: All / Agencies / Builders

Category	All	Agencies	Builders
None	7%	8%	6%
>25%	35%	37%	34%
26 – 50%	35%	34%	35%
51 – 75%	18%	14%	22%
75% +	5%	7%	3%

MOST CREATIVE BRIEFS INCLUDE …

Legend: Always Included / Usually Included / Rarely Included

All Creatives

	Always Included	Usually Included	Rarely Included
Timeline/Deadlines	44%	43%	13%
Overall Objectives	32%	62%	6%
Brand Standards	26%	54%	20%
Brand Background	18%	49%	33%
Initial Ideas	16%	44%	40%
Actual Budget	16%	44%	40%
Initial Messaging	16%	52%	32%
Some Budget Parameters	16%	59%	25%
Some Level of Creative Guidance	13%	54%	33%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Macro Analysis: Creative Department Output

The three types of experiences and events seeing the most new production activity are consumer activations, influencer events, and external meetings/conferences. Nearly half of agency creatives are working on more consumer activations this year, and more than 30% note there is increased demand for influencer events, external meetings/conferences, and pop-ups. Thirty percent or more builders are also working on more consumer activations, press/media events, and large trade show exhibits.

THE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES YOU CREATE ARE USING MORE AND LESS OF...

Legend: More Use of | Same | Less Use of

All Creatives

Category	More Use of	Same	Less Use of
Overall Technology	61%	29%	10%
Measurement/Analytics	57%	30%	13%
Social Media Amplification	51%	40%	9%
Data-Collection	50%	43%	7%
Capturing On-Site Content	41%	47%	12%
Lead-Generation	41%	45%	14%
Interactive Tech	41%	43%	16%
Post-Event Engagement	40%	43%	17%
Pre-Event Promotion	36%	53%	11%
Screened Content	36%	46%	18%
Sustainability	34%	47%	19%
Mobile Apps	33%	48%	19%
A/V	31%	53%	16%
On-Site Education	30%	53%	17%
Streaming Online	30%	47%	23%
Incentives/Giveaways	29%	53%	18%
Samples/Demos	26%	48%	26%
Accessibility/Diversity	25%	54%	21%
First-Party Data	25%	43%	32%
Physical Builds	21%	57%	22%
Larger Footprints	19%	43%	38%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Section 1. Creative Department Structure

Time, focus and function across event agencies and exhibit builders

For the first time ever, Event Marketer quantified how event agency and builder creative teams are structured and staffed. Included in this section are unique benchmarks covering how creative team members spend their time plus insights on how they collaborate within (and with) various teams. Also covered is how AI is being used to assist a range of creative work tasks.

Time and Focus

Breaking down where creatives spend their time

Agency and builder creative staffs have many job requirements and roles. The typical creative spends most of their time developing RFPs and nurturing client relationships. They also often have team management requirements and oversee or work on builds and activations. Most spend the bulk of the time at their desk—the typical creative spends 10% of their time on-site at events or trade shows.

YOU SPEND YOUR TIME ON...

ALL CREATIVES

Pie chart — ALL CREATIVES: 18%, 18%, 16%, 13%, 11%, 10%, 8%, 6%

EVENT AGENCIES

Pie chart — EVENT AGENCIES: 17%, 20%, 13%, 13%, 11%, 11%, 8%, 7%

Legend:
- RFPs for New Clients
- Client Relationships
- RFPs for Existing Clients
- Team Management
- Builds/Activations
- On-Site at Events/Trade Shows
- Non-Creative Team Communications/Meetings
- Sourcing/Managing Vendors

EXHIBIT BUILDERS

Pie chart — EXHIBIT BUILDERS: 19%, 26%, 18%, 12%, 11%, 9%, 10%, 5%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Headcount, by Position
Creative department headcount is...

Industry-wide, creative department headcount is flat across 60% of agencies and builders, while creative staff is increasing at 30% of companies. The roles seeing the most hiring activity are Creative Directors, 3D Creatives, and Multimedia/Content Creatives. Creative headcount is flat at 62% of agencies—the hottest roles are Multimedia/Content Creatives which are being hired by 29% of agencies. Fifty-nine percent of builders say their headcount is flat, but the two roles experiencing the most hiring activity are Creative Directors and 3D Creatives.

CREATIVE DEPARTMENT HEADCOUNT

Legend: ■ Flat ▫ Increasing ▪ Decreasing

All Creatives

Position	Flat	Increasing	Decreasing
Total Headcount	58%	36%	6%
Creative Directors	63%	31%	6%
Art Directors	68%	22%	10%
3D Creatives	58%	31%	11%
2D Creatives	63%	24%	13%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	65%	24%	11%
Interactive Tech Creatives	68%	26%	6%

Event Agencies

Position	Flat	Increasing	Decreasing
Total Headcount	62%	25%	13%
Creative Directors	70%	22%	8%
Art Directors	70%	18%	12%
3D Creatives	69%	21%	10%
2D Creatives	73%	16%	11%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	63%	29%	8%
Interactive Tech Creatives	70%	23%	7%

Exhibit Builders

Position	Flat	Increasing	Decreasing
Total Headcount	60%	30%	10%
Creative Directors	66%	26%	8%
Art Directors	69%	20%	11%
3D Creatives	64%	26%	10%
2D Creatives	69%	19%	12%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	64%	26%	10%
Interactive Tech Creatives	69%	25%	6%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Function and Involvement, by Position
Individual team members are involved in...

Creative staffers tend to lean into specific elements of the creative process. Industry-wide, Creative and Art Directors are typically involved in, oversee, or contribute to *all* aspects of client projects and activations. Yet less than half of Creative Directors are involved in build/fabrication and/or execution/activation. It's no surprise that creatives at agencies are less involved with fabrication and those at builders are more often involved in builds.

WHO LEADS THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN YOUR DEPARTMENT?

Legend: All (blue), Agency (light gray), Exhibit Builder (dark gray)

Position	All	Agency	Exhibit Builder
Head of Design/Creative	32%	32%	30%
Creative Director	48%	54%	41%
Project Manager	12%	9%	14%
Art Director	4%	1%	8%
3D Creative	1%	0%	3%
2D Creative	1%	0%	3%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	1%	3%	0%
Interactive Tech Creatives	1%	1%	1%
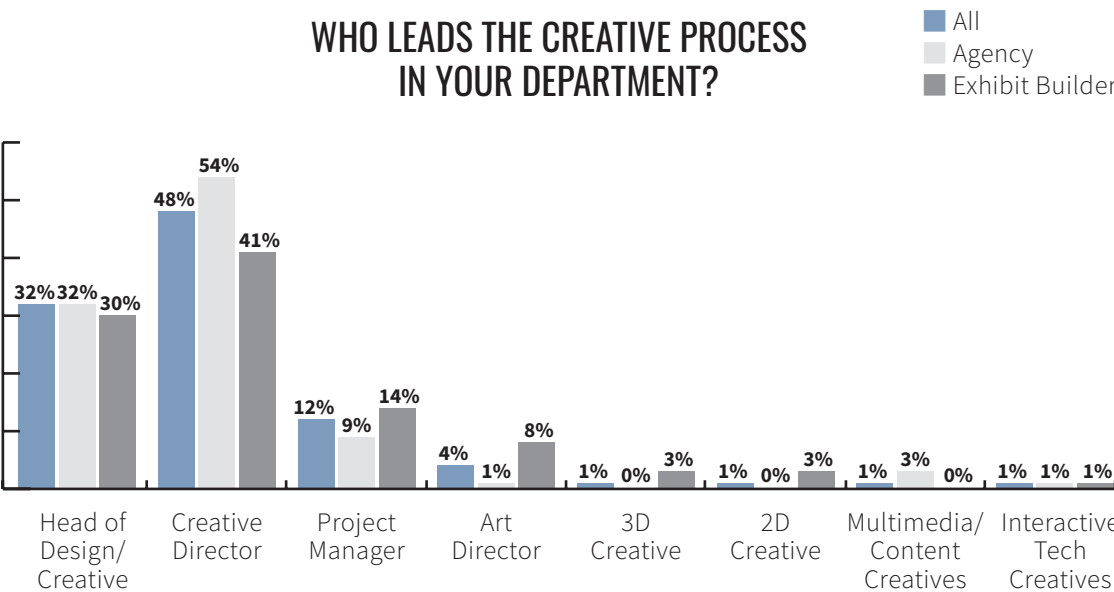
Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH?

Legend: RFPs, Ideation, Client Pitches, Client Service, Build/Fabrication, Execution/Activation

All Creatives

	RFPs	Ideation	Client Pitches	Client Service	Build/Fabrication	Execution/Activation
Creative Directors	73%	75%	71%	71%	45%	48%
Art Directors	50%	77%	52%	56%	36%	34%
3D Creatives	36%	51%	31%	46%	46%	45%
2D Creatives	30%	48%	28%	47%	33%	39%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	31%	50%	33%	45%	33%	49%
Interactive Tech Creatives	32%	53%	35%	45%	39%	52%

Event Agencies

	RFPs	Ideation	Client Pitches	Client Service	Build/Fabrication	Execution/Activation
Creative Directors	75%	81%	73%	70%	36%	49%
Art Directors	45%	79%	53%	53%	33%	35%
3D Creatives	31%	51%	21%	34%	45%	51%
2D Creatives	29%	50%	25%	41%	35%	45%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	31%	51%	34%	40%	34%	54%
Interactive Tech Creatives	33%	54%	33%	45%	40%	58%

Exhibit Builders

	RFPs	Ideation	Client Pitches	Client Service	Build/Fabrication	Execution/Activation
Creative Directors	72%	67%	70%	72%	55%	46%
Art Directors	57%	75%	52%	60%	40%	33%
3D Creatives	42%	51%	43%	60%	48%	37%
2D Creatives	31%	45%	31%	54%	30%	31%
Multimedia/Content Creatives	31%	48%	33%	51%	33%	43%
Interactive Tech Creatives	31%	52%	39%	45%	37%	46%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Ideation Collaboration

The creative team partners with which internal departments on ideation?

Creative teams brainstorm and ideate client projects with constituents across the company—most often account-service staffers and strategists. About half of the roles listed are always somewhat involved in creative idea generation and strategic planning. Ope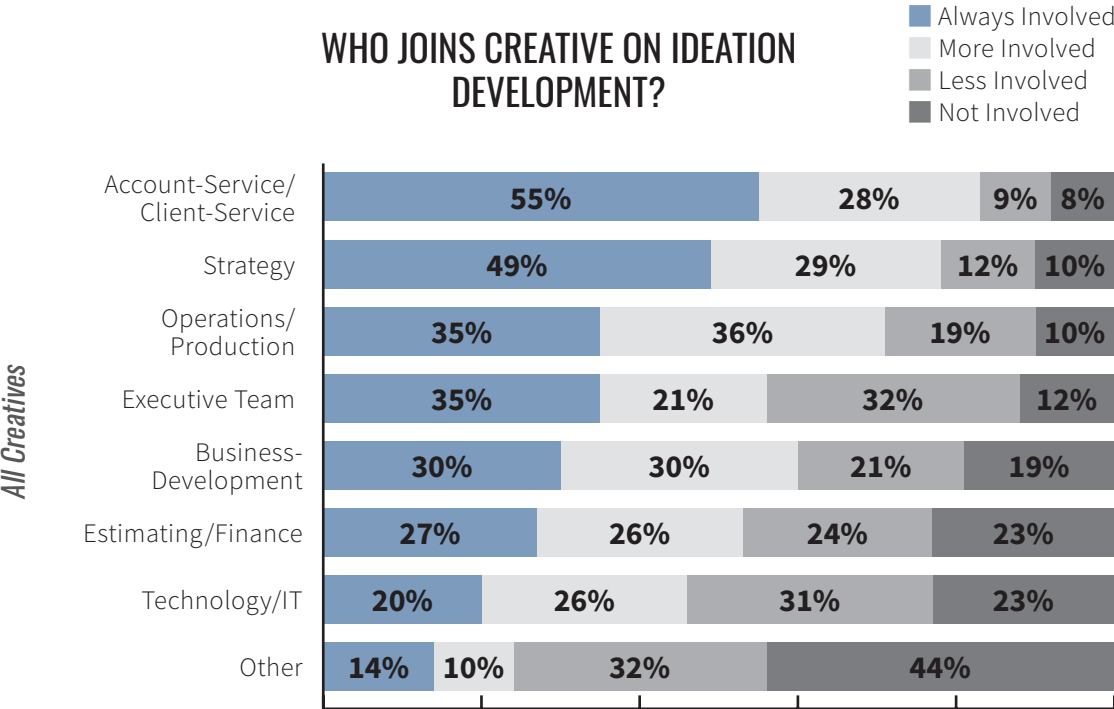rations/production staff and executive teams are involved in these areas to a lesser extent depending on the agency or builder company size or specific client requirements.

WHO JOINS CREATIVE ON IDEATION DEVELOPMENT?

Legend:
- Always Involved
- More Involved
- Less Involved
- Not Involved

All Creatives

Department	Always Involved	More Involved	Less Involved	Not Involved
Account-Service/Client-Service	55%	28%	9%	8%
Strategy	49%	29%	12%	10%
Operations/Production	35%	36%	19%	10%
Executive Team	35%	21%	32%	12%
Business-Development	30%	30%	21%	19%
Estimating/Finance	27%	26%	24%	23%
Technology/IT	20%	26%	31%	23%
Other	14%	10%	32%	44%

Artificial Intelligence Adoption

Your creative team is using AI tools for…

Creative departments have added bench strength and much needed processes over the last few years. Now they're evolving as they figure out the right way to embrace artificial intelligence. The adoption of AI across the creative teams at event agencies and exhibit builders is on the rise, with most creatives using some but not all tools—mostly for initial ideation, 3D renderings, and deck development. Only 20% of experiential agency creatives are always using AI tools for initial ideas and early blueprints. That said, most agency designers say they are using "some" AI for various tasks. Exhibit house creative teams use most AI tools "some of the time" to enhance a majority of their idea-related work and when collaborating with colleagues and clients.

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

A.I. CREATIVE STACK

Legend: ■ Using More   ■ Using Some   ■ Not Using

All Creatives

Category	Using More	Using Some	Not Using
Initial Ideation	18%	53%	29%
3D Renderings	14%	39%	47%
Slide Deck Creation	14%	38%	48%
Initial Message/Copy	13%	57%	30%
Architectural/Build Blueprints	12%	34%	54%
Refinement to Initial Ideas	11%	56%	33%
Activation Timeline/Project-Management	10%	39%	51%
Initial Look/Feel	9%	58%	33%
Refinement to Initial Designs	9%	44%	47%

Event Agencies

Category	Using More	Using Some	Not Using
Initial Ideation	19%	49%	32%
3D Renderings	13%	37%	50%
Slide Deck Creation	15%	40%	45%
Initial Message/Copy	12%	56%	32%
Architectural/Build Blueprints	19%	25%	56%
Refinement to Initial Ideas	12%	59%	29%
Activation Timeline/Project-Management	10%	33%	57%
Initial Look/Feel	9%	53%	38%
Refinement to Initial Designs	7%	47%	46%

Exhibit Builders

Category	Using More	Using Some	Not Using
Initial Ideation	17%	58%	25%
3D Renderings	14%	42%	44%
Slide Deck Creation	13%	35%	52%
Initial Message/Copy	12%	61%	27%
Architectural/Build Blueprints	16%	33%	51%
Refinement to Initial Ideas	9%	55%	36%
Activation Timeline/Project-Management	11%	45%	44%
Initial Look/Feel	9%	63%	28%
Refinement to Initial Designs	11%	41%	48%

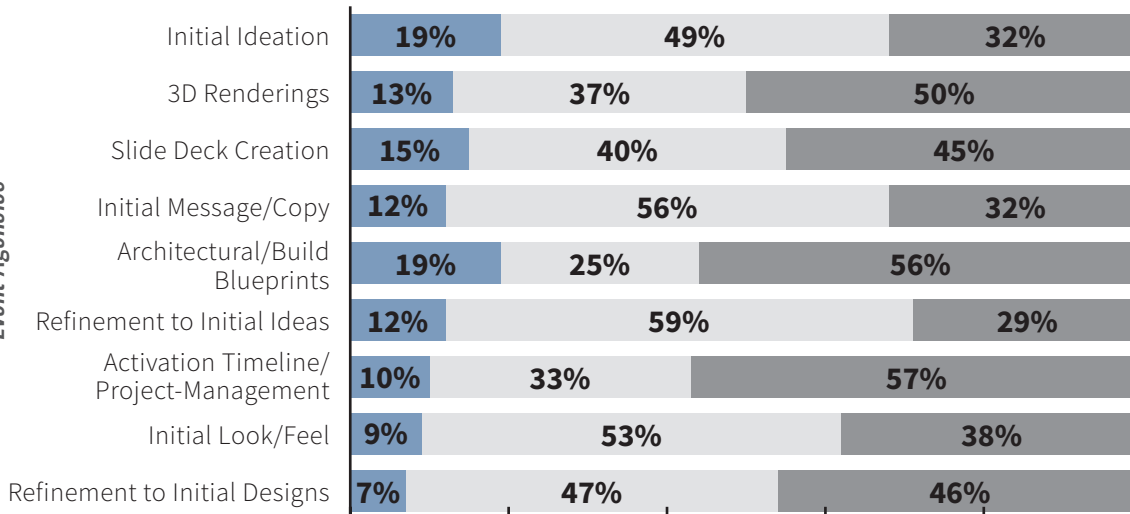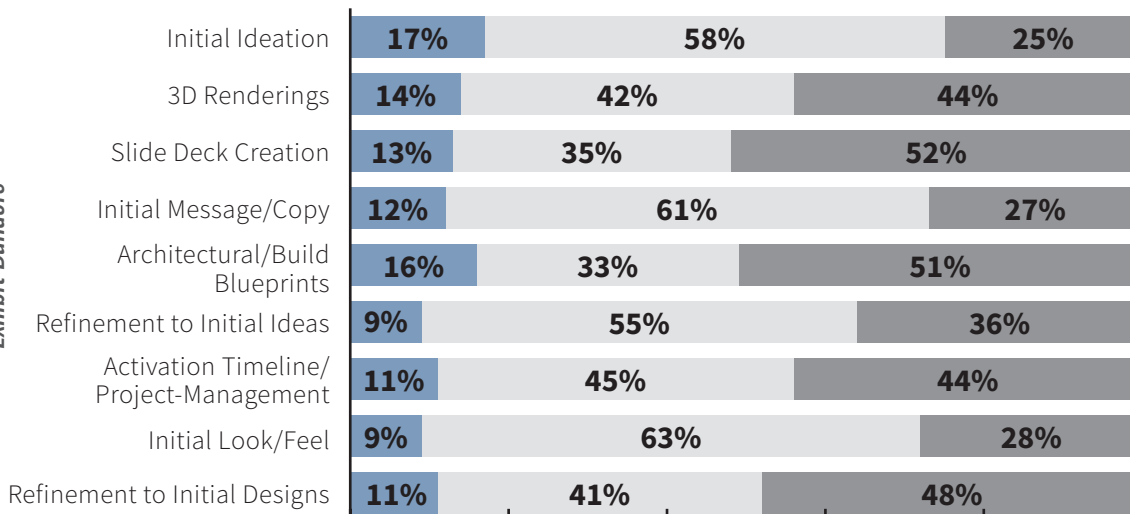*Source: Event Marketer/Highmark*
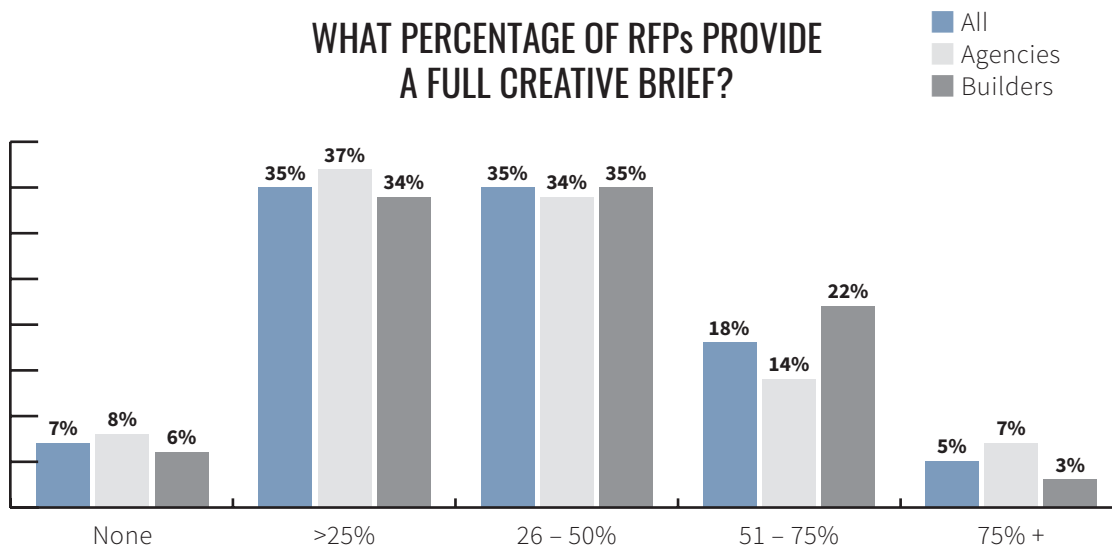
Section 2. Creative Briefs and RFPs

Connecting clients and creativity across event agencies and exhibit builders

Given that most creatives spend a large amount of time developing RFPs and nurturing client relationships, we dug deeper. Event Marketer asked the industry's top agency and exhibit builder creatives for an honest (and anonymous) temperature check on inbound creative briefs and outbound RFP responses. We asked what's included (and missing) on the briefs and who collaborates on responses to get a sense of the creative process.

Inbound Creative Briefs

Brands still have work to do when it comes to providing complete information

Both agency and builder teams say that clients only provide full event and experiential program and creative briefs between 25% to 50% of the time at the start of project communications. Clients still hold back some information and often don't have their project goals and ideas fully thought out. Only 21% of agencies and 25% of builders say that clients provide a full brief more than half the time.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF RFPs PROVIDE A FULL CREATIVE BRIEF?

Legend: All (blue), Agencies (light gray), Builders (dark gray)

Category	All	Agencies	Builders
None	7%	8%	6%
>25%	35%	37%	34%
26 – 50%	35%	34%	35%
51 – 75%	18%	14%	22%
75% +	5%	7%	3%

Anatomy of a Creative Brief

Clients have more to learn about helping creatives help them

The survey broadly identifies two types of clients: one group that usually includes detailed briefs with goals, objectives, budget, and initial scope—and then a second segment that provides only a mere timeline and general outline. Agency teams say they are most likely to see project timelines, overall objectives and brand standard information in initial project briefs. Twenty-five percent or more of builder creatives note they usually always see client timelines, overall objectives and brand standard information in initial client briefs.

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

CREATIVE BRIEFS INCLUDE…

Legend: ■ Always Included ■ Usually Included ■ Rarely Included

All Creatives

Category	Always Included	Usually Included	Rarely Included
Timeline/Deadlines	44%	43%	13%
Overall Objectives	32%	62%	6%
Brand Standards	26%	54%	20%
Brand Background	18%	49%	33%
Initial Ideas	16%	44%	40%
Actual Budget	16%	44%	40%
Initial Messaging	16%	52%	32%
Some Budget Parameters	16%	59%	25%
Some Level of Creative Guidance	13%	54%	33%

Event Agencies

Category	Always Included	Usually Included	Rarely Included
Timeline/Deadlines	43%	44%	13%
Overall Objectives	36%	60%	4%
Brand Standards	27%	53%	20%
Brand Background	17%	53%	30%
Initial Ideas	17%	42%	41%
Actual Budget	11%	43%	46%
Initial Messaging	11%	55%	34%
Some Budget Parameters	14%	66%	20%
Some Level of Creative Guidance	13%	56%	31%

Exhibit Builders

Category	Always Included	Usually Included	Rarely Included
Timeline/Deadlines	46%	41%	13%
Overall Objectives	28%	64%	8%
Brand Standards	25%	55%	20%
Brand Background	19%	45%	36%
Initial Ideas	14%	47%	39%
Actual Budget	21%	45%	34%
Initial Messaging	20%	50%	30%
Some Budget Parameters	17%	52%	31%
Some Level of Creative Guidance	13%	53%	34%

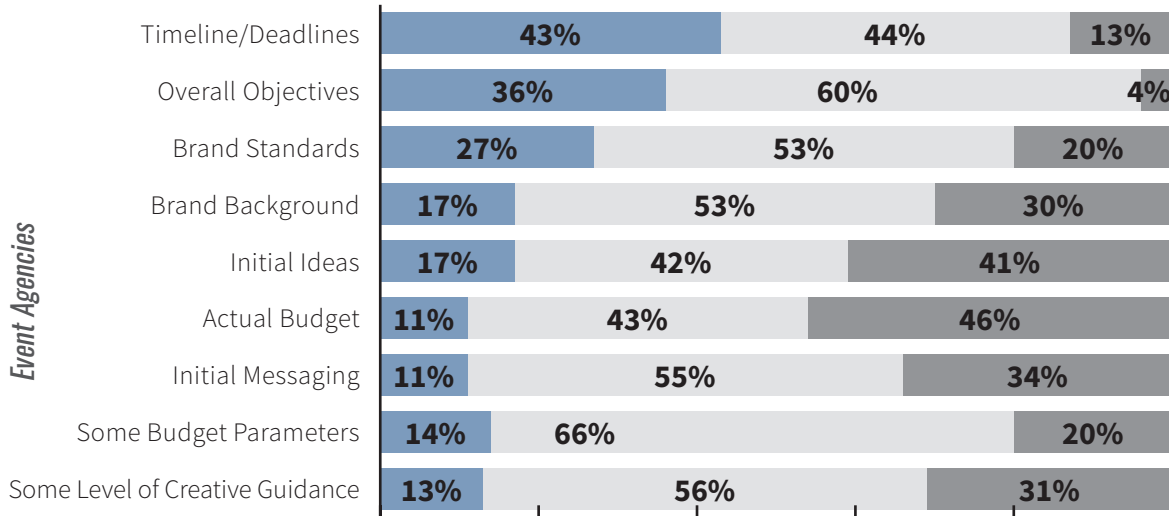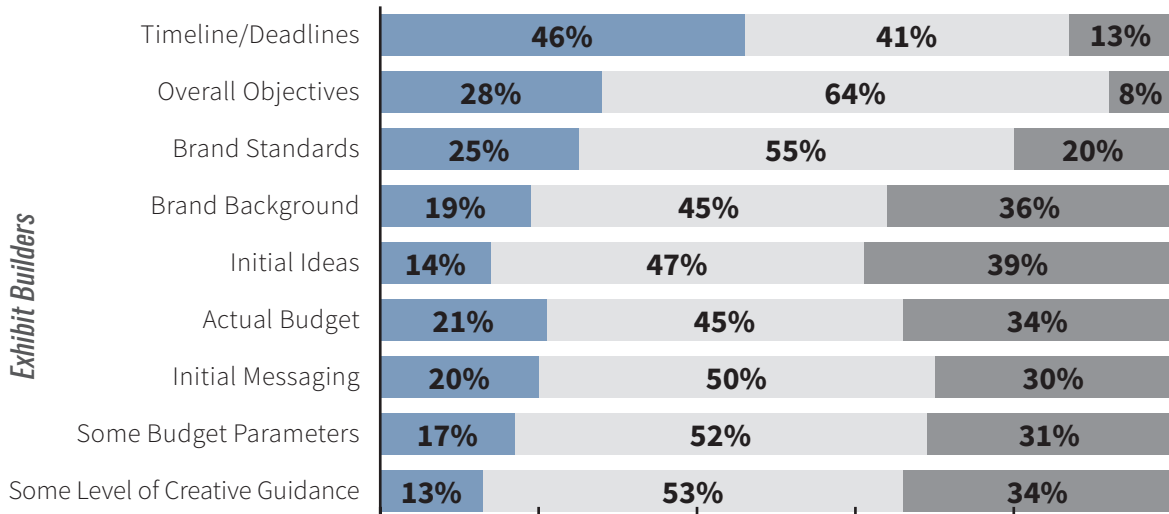*Source: Event Marketer/Highmark*

RFP Response Collaboration

The creative team partners with key internal departments on RFP responses

Over the last decade the art and science of responding to RFPs has spawned entire RFP departments, opportunity scorecarding and processes across event agencies and builders. As a result, creative teams work across their org charts on inbound and outbound work. Account reps, business-development staff, and strategy teams are always involved in RFPs at more half of agencies and builders throughout the industry.

WHO WORKS WITH CREATIVE ON RFP RESPONSES?

Legend:
- Always Involved
- More Involved
- Less Involved
- Not Involved

All Creatives

Department	Always Involved	More Involved	Less Involved	Not Involved
Account-Service/Client-Service	58%	27%	10%	5%
Business-Development	53%	27%	12%	8%
Strategy	53%	24%	16%	7%
Executive Team	42%	28%	20%	10%
Estimating/Finance	37%	29%	20%	14%
Operations/Production	35%	36%	21%	8%
Technology/IT	21%	20%	36%	23%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Section 3. Creative Department Output

The experiential output coming from the industry's top creative departments

After gauging team structure, focus, function and collaboration levels across event agencies and builders, the survey sought to benchmark the work—gauge what types of experiences agency and builder design departments are creating and specifically what elements of experiences they were leveraging more and less of.

Experiential Elements

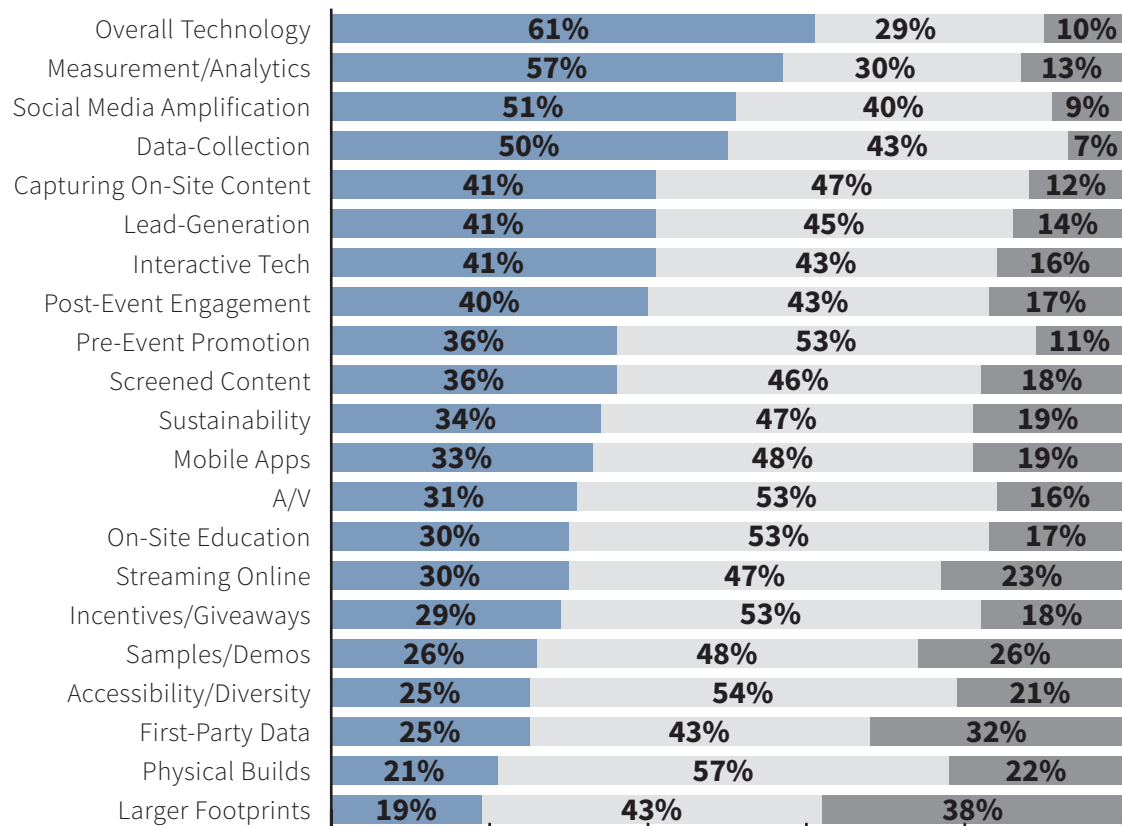## Tech, social and measurement getting bigger play

Industrywide, half or more brand experiences are using more technology, measurement/analytics processes, social media amplification strategies, and data-collection. Secondary, but still important, experiences now feature more on-site content, lead-gen, interactive tech, and post-event engagement opportunities.

Agency creatives say their experiences are emphasizing technology, social media amplification, measurement/analytics, on-site content, and data collection. Builders are also focusing on adding technology elements to their structures along with more data collection and measurement/analytics.

THE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES YOU CREATE ARE USING MORE AND LESS OF...

Legend: ■ More Use of ☐ Same ■ Less Use of

All Creatives

Experience Element	More Use of	Same	Less Use of
Overall Technology	61%	29%	10%
Measurement/Analytics	57%	30%	13%
Social Media Amplification	51%	40%	9%
Data-Collection	50%	43%	7%
Capturing On-Site Content	41%	47%	12%
Lead-Generation	41%	45%	14%
Interactive Tech	41%	43%	16%
Post-Event Engagement	40%	43%	17%
Pre-Event Promotion	36%	53%	11%
Screened Content	36%	46%	18%
Sustainability	34%	47%	19%
Mobile Apps	33%	48%	19%
A/V	31%	53%	16%
On-Site Education	30%	53%	17%
Streaming Online	30%	47%	23%
Incentives/Giveaways	29%	53%	18%
Samples/Demos	26%	48%	26%
Accessibility/Diversity	25%	54%	21%
First-Party Data	25%	43%	32%
Physical Builds	21%	57%	22%
Larger Footprints	19%	43%	38%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Event Agencies

Category	More	Same	Less
Overall Technology	63%	29%	8%
Measurement/Analytics	58%	31%	11%
Social Media Amplification	58%	33%	9%
Data-Collection	43%	48%	9%
Capturing On-Site Content	45%	41%	14%
Lead-Generation	42%	46%	12%
Interactive Tech	34%	52%	14%
Post-Event Engagement	40%	42%	18%
Pre-Event Promotion	34%	54%	12%
Screened Content	37%	45%	18%
Sustainability	31%	43%	26%
Mobile Apps	37%	38%	25%
A/V	29%	54%	17%
On-Site Education	31%	52%	17%
Streaming Online	31%	38%	31%
Incentives/Giveaways	35%	45%	20%
Samples/Demos	22%	49%	29%
Accessibility/Diversity	23%	52%	25%
First-Party Data	23%	53%	34%
Physical Builds	22%	51%	27%
Larger Footprints	17%	40%	43%

Exhibit Builders

Category	More	Same	Less
Overall Technology	59%	28%	13%
Measurement/Analytics	55%	29%	16%
Social Media Amplification	44%	47%	9%
Data-Collection	58%	37%	5%
Capturing On-Site Content	38%	53%	9%
Lead-Generation	41%	44%	15%
Interactive Tech	48%	33%	19%
Post-Event Engagement	40%	44%	16%
Pre-Event Promotion	39%	52%	9%
Screened Content	34%	49%	17%
Sustainability	37%	52%	11%
Mobile Apps	28%	58%	14%
A/V	34%	52%	14%
On-Site Education	30%	53%	17%
Streaming Online	29%	55%	16%
Incentives/Giveaways	23%	63%	14%
Samples/Demos	30%	47%	23%
Accessibility/Diversity	27%	56%	17%
First-Party Data	27%	43%	30%
Physical Builds	20%	64%	16%
Larger Footprints	22%	45%	33%

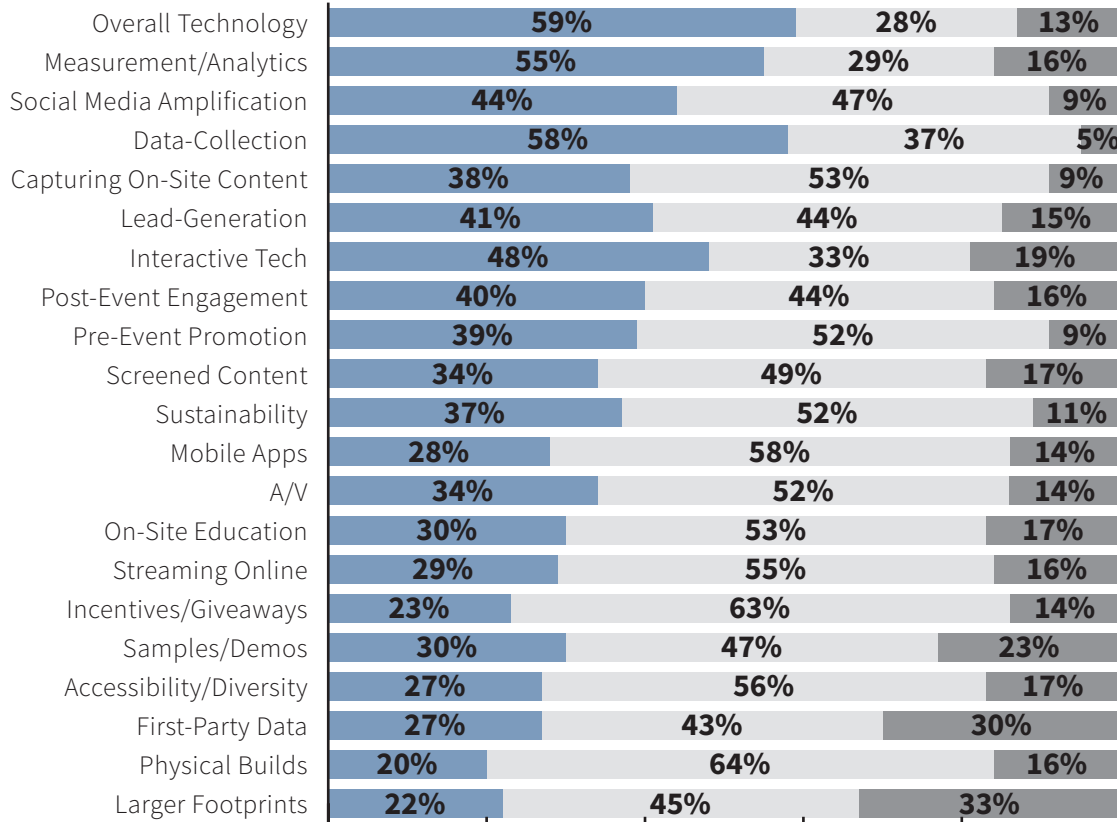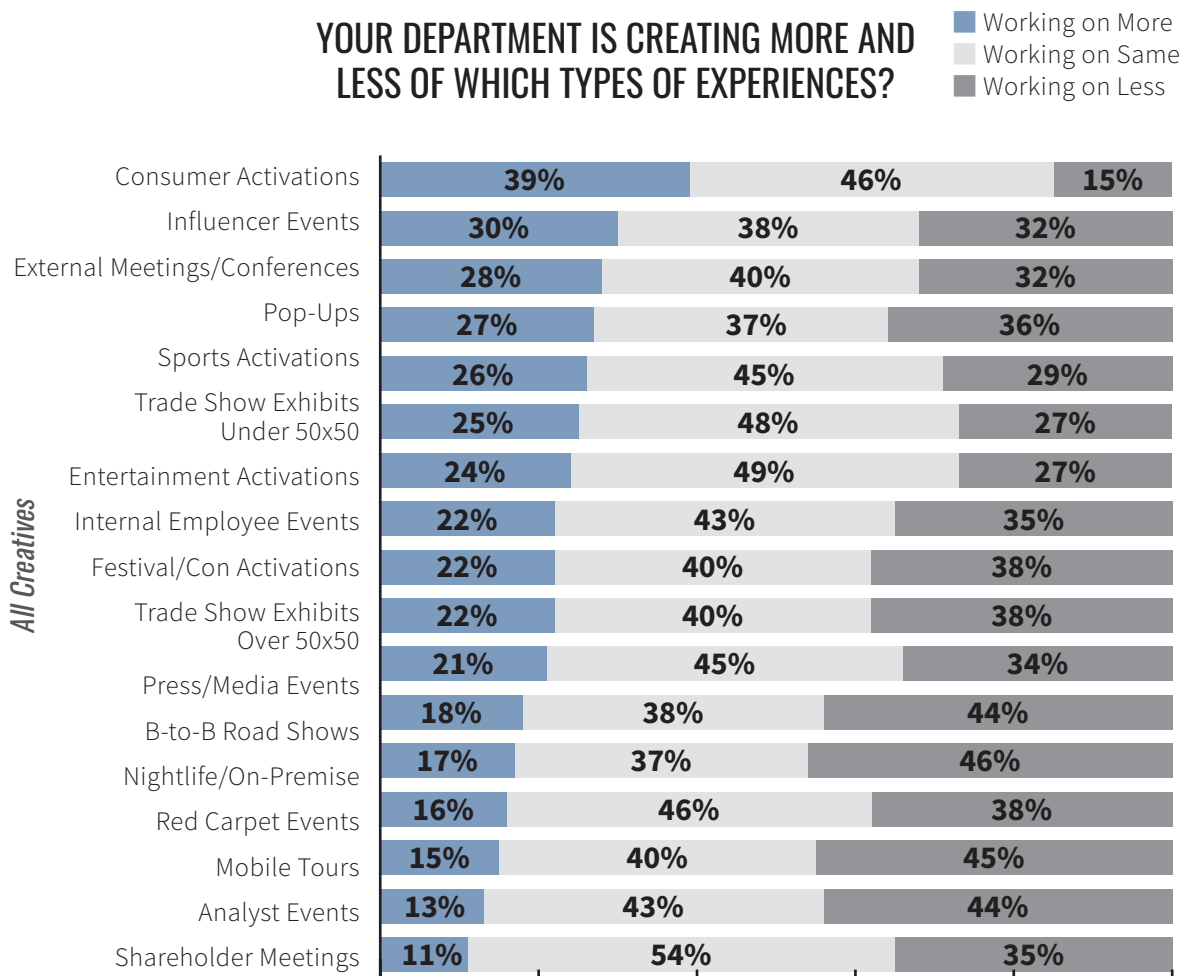*Source: Event Marketer/Highmark*
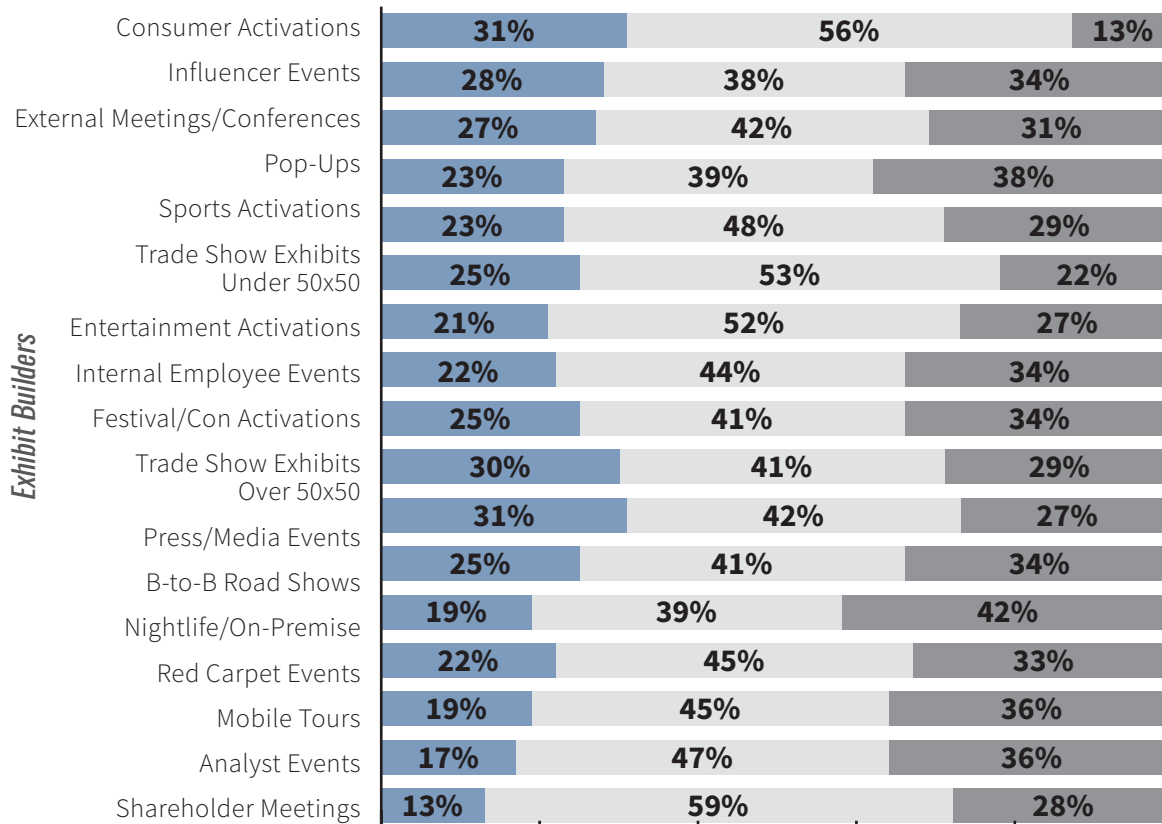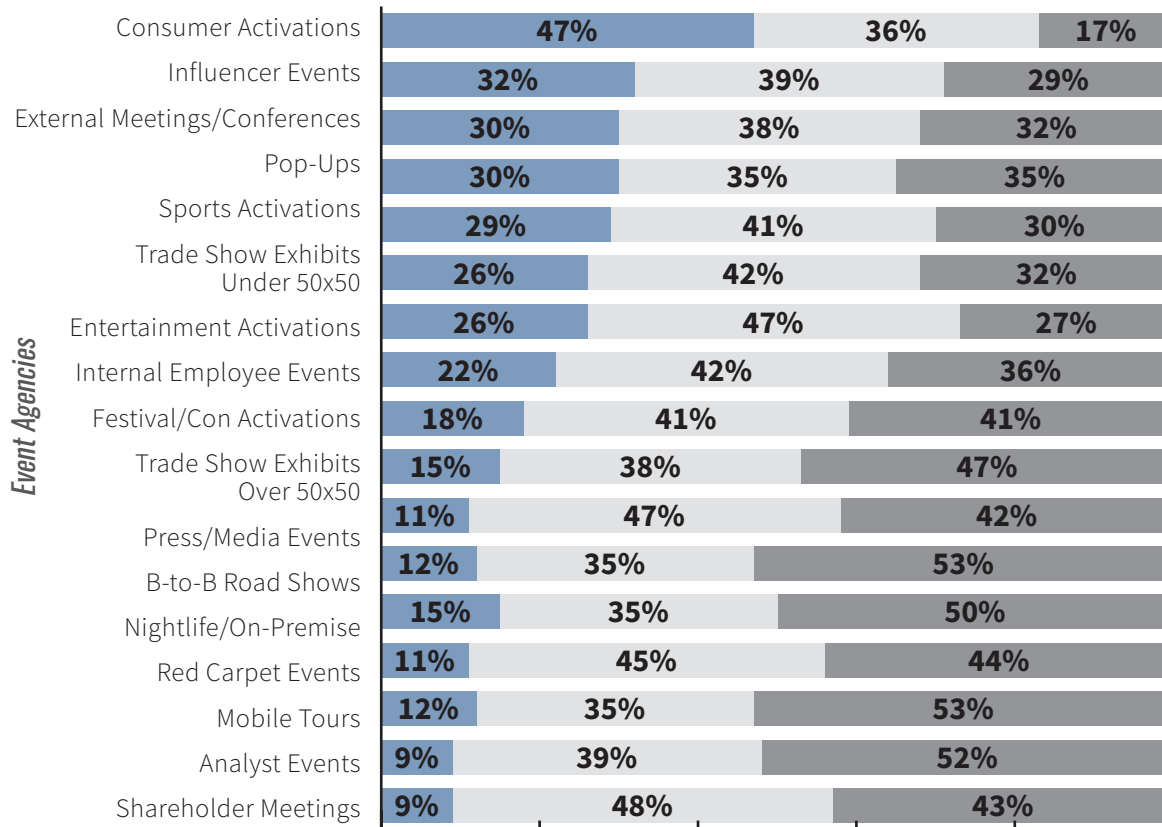
Volume of Work

Analyzing the types of experiences coming out of creative departments

The three types of experiences and events seeing the most new production activity are consumer activations, influencer events, and external meetings/conferences. Nearly half of agency creatives are working on more consumer activations this year, and more than 30% note there is increased demand for influencer events, external meetings/conferences, and pop-ups. Thirty percent or more of builders are working on more consumer activations, press/media events, and large trade show exhibits.

YOUR DEPARTMENT IS CREATING MORE AND LESS OF WHICH TYPES OF EXPERIENCES?

Legend:
- ■ Working on More
- ■ Working on Same
- ■ Working on Less

All Creatives

Experience Type	Working on More	Working on Same	Working on Less
Consumer Activations	39%	46%	15%
Influencer Events	30%	38%	32%
External Meetings/Conferences	28%	40%	32%
Pop-Ups	27%	37%	36%
Sports Activations	26%	45%	29%
Trade Show Exhibits Under 50x50	25%	48%	27%
Entertainment Activations	24%	49%	27%
Internal Employee Events	22%	43%	35%
Festival/Con Activations	22%	40%	38%
Trade Show Exhibits Over 50x50	22%	40%	38%
Press/Media Events	21%	45%	34%
B-to-B Road Shows	18%	38%	44%
Nightlife/On-Premise	17%	37%	46%
Red Carpet Events	16%	46%	38%
Mobile Tours	15%	40%	45%
Analyst Events	13%	43%	44%
Shareholder Meetings	11%	54%	35%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

Event Agencies

Category			
Consumer Activations	47%	36%	17%
Influencer Events	32%	39%	29%
External Meetings/Conferences	30%	38%	32%
Pop-Ups	30%	35%	35%
Sports Activations	29%	41%	30%
Trade Show Exhibits Under 50x50	26%	42%	32%
Entertainment Activations	26%	47%	27%
Internal Employee Events	22%	42%	36%
Festival/Con Activations	18%	41%	41%
Trade Show Exhibits Over 50x50	15%	38%	47%
Press/Media Events	11%	47%	42%
B-to-B Road Shows	12%	35%	53%
Nightlife/On-Premise	15%	35%	50%
Red Carpet Events	11%	45%	44%
Mobile Tours	12%	35%	53%
Analyst Events	9%	39%	52%
Shareholder Meetings	9%	48%	43%

Exhibit Builders

| Category			
Consumer Activations	31%	56%	13%
Influencer Events	28%	38%	34%
External Meetings/Conferences	27%	42%	31%
Pop-Ups	23%	39%	38%
Sports Activations	23%	48%	29%
Trade Show Exhibits Under 50x50	25%	53%	22%
Entertainment Activations	21%	52%	27%
Internal Employee Events	22%	44%	34%
Festival/Con Activations	25%	41%	34%
Trade Show Exhibits Over 50x50	30%	41%	29%
Press/Media Events	31%	42%	27%
B-to-B Road Shows	25%	41%	34%
Nightlife/On-Premise	19%	39%	42%
Red Carpet Events	22%	45%	33%
Mobile Tours	19%	45%	36%
Analyst Events	17%	47%	36%
Shareholder Meetings	13%	59%	28%

Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

About the Respondents

The Experience Design & Creative Process Benchmark Report respondents represent a diverse cross-section of the top event agencies and exhibit builders in the U.S.—just over half of all survey-takers hail from agencies and just under half come from the exhibit builder community.

Surveying these audiences together to compare and contrast their creative teams, processes and functions provides a first-of-its kind look at how experiences are being concepted and brought to market.

YOU WORK AT AN…

- 58% Event Agency
- 42% Exhibit Builder
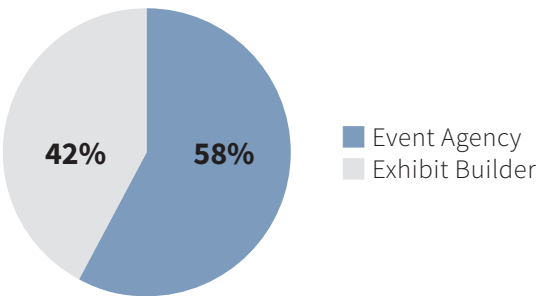
DO YOU BUILD WHAT YOU CREATE?

- We build what we ideate in-house
- We outsource what we ideate to build partners

AGENCY

- 34%
- 66%

BUILDER

- 90%
- 10%
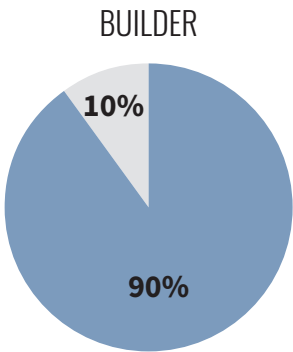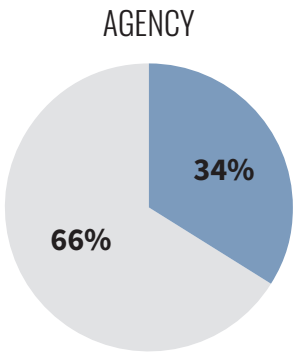
Source: Event Marketer/Highmark

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EXPERIENCE DESIGN & CREATIVE PROCESS BENCHMARK REPORT

EXCLUSIVE DATA ON THE INNERWORKINGS OF CREATIVE DEPARTMENTS AT TOP EVENT AGENCIES AND EXHIBIT BUILDERS

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