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# EVENTTRACK 2026: EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING FORECAST & BENCHMARK STUDY

EXCLUSIVE  
DATA

# Introduction

For more than 23 years, Event Marketer has been tracking the meteoric rise of experiential marketing and measuring the impact events have on brands, audiences and bottom lines.

We are proud to introduce the latest installment in the industry's most-comprehensive, multi-audience annual report on experiential marketing: EventTrack 2026, a collection of data points and insights that have long been used by Fortune 1000 marketers to craft their strategies, sell in experiential programs to CMOs (and procurement departments), level-set budgets and standardize their measurement stack.

This year's data reveals that investments in experiential marketing continue to rise as more brands and marketing professionals discover the power live experiences have to drive business. And among the world's biggest brands, events are becoming the linchpin in the marketing mix, serving as the central strategy that ultimately drives all of the other marketing initiatives across the portfolio. Today, events are a lead discipline—a platform leveraged by advertising, content, social, broadcast, online, direct and PR to generate eyeballs, engagement, awareness and revenue.

Event creators are on the precipice of another phenomenon that will no doubt continue to drive the increasing interest in events: the rise of AI. Indeed, as many consumers and business audiences realize that the only reality they can trust is the one they experience themselves, more and more people will flock to events to engage with the cultures and communities they crave, but also to see and experience brands in real life to judge for themselves what's real and what's true.

EventTrack digs into consumer behaviors and sentiment to shed light on how they interact with brands at events. The study also surveys marketers to better understand how they leverage live events. EventTrack surveyed more than 1,000 U.S.-based corporate marketers (every business category was represented) and attendees in the summer of 2025. The study is comprised of:

- **Six separate surveys targeting consumer event marketers**, b-to-b event marketers, corporate trade show exhibitors—plus attendees at consumer events, b-to-b events and trade shows.
- **Topline and deep insights from Fortune 1000 brands** covering spending forecasts, investments by type of event, measurement practices, sustainability investments and more.
- **In-depth sentiment data from event and trade show attendees** on dwell time, purchase intent and what gets them to an event—and engaging with brands.

To elevate statistical reliability, questions were randomized for respondents, and the survey funneled Fortune 1000 marketers into their respective consumer or b-to-b question pools. Agencies and suppliers were automatically exited from the survey.

EventTrack is underwritten by leading global experiential agency Sparks (wearesparks.com). Event Marketer and Sparks want to thank all the respondents who gave their time to create the industry's leading research on experiential marketing. Additional copies of the full report, a "stat pack" of top charts, and private Zoom overviews of the research with your team can be requested at [eventmarketer.com/eventtrack26](https://eventmarketer.com/eventtrack26).

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# Turning Insight Into Action. Action Into Growth.

EventTrack fuels the industry's top experiential minds — and Sparks turns that insight into bold, measurable outcomes. From data to design to delivery, we help brands inspire audiences and move markets.



From Research to Reality:

## Let's Create What Others Will Follow.

Email [hello@wearesparks.com](mailto:hello@wearesparks.com)  
to schedule a chat today.

[wearesparks.com](http://wearesparks.com)

The background is a light blue gradient with various abstract shapes and symbols. There are several blue and purple rounded rectangles and lines scattered across the page. Small yellow dots are arranged in several vertical and diagonal lines. Symbols like plus signs and crosses are placed at various points. The text 'EXECUTIVE SUMMARY' is centered in a white circle.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP

It's impossible to get a full sense of the power and promise of experiential marketing without talking to all sides of the industry and, perhaps most importantly, event attendees.

This is exactly what EventTrack does. It's the only industry report that digs deep to extrapolate the latest data from the widest audiences, and then report back on the full health of the industry, backed by real sentiment and reporting from the people who produce the most events, and the people who attend them.

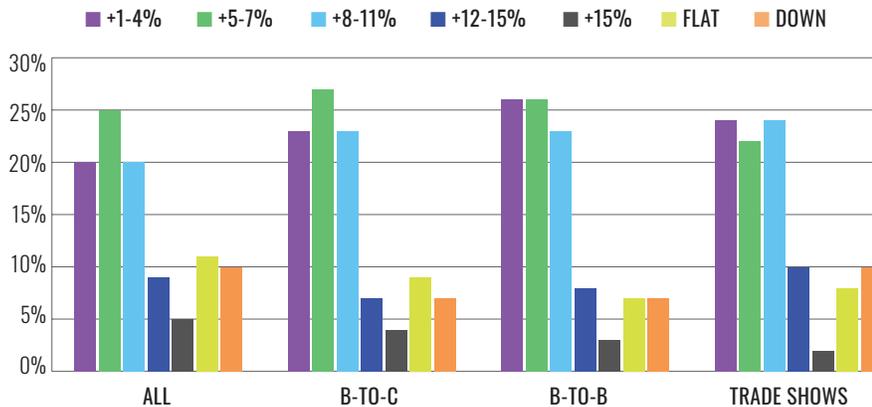
Fortune 1000 marketers turn to EventTrack to fortify their event strategies, prove the value of experiential programs to executive teams, build budgets based on real data and forecasts, and solidify measurement methodologies based on real ROI strategies and data.

Throughout the report you will hear directly from corporate event departments (consumer event teams, b-to-b conference/meeting teams and trade show departments) and all three types of event attendees (consumers, b-to-b professionals and trade show attendees). In addition to the more than 50 pages of data in the full report, EventTrack analysts have also provided essential context to help explain the "why" behind the research. They have also coalesced diverse data points to provide context around some of the upticks, downward trajectories and even surprising changes in the data this year.

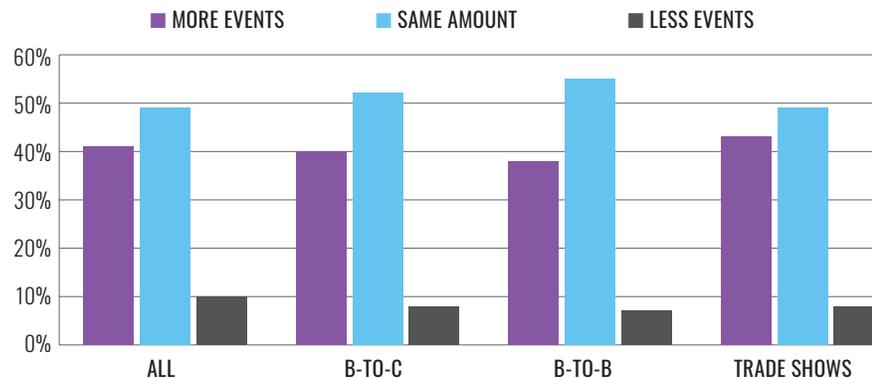
Despite the differences in how audiences experience events, and how marketers execute them, there are a few common themes you will see throughout the report that—collectively—point to a healthy, growing and optimistic year ahead for the event industry.

- Most event marketers say they will produce (or exhibit at) more events in 2026 than they did in 2025.
- Attendees (both b-to-b and b-to-c) plan to participate in more events this year than in 2025.
- The ROI marketers are getting from event and trade show investments is increasing.
- The majority of event marketers expect spending on events and trade shows to rise in 2026.

**2026 SPENDING:**  
BUDGETS ARE EXPECTED TO BE...



**PORTFOLIO VOLUME:**  
IN 2026, YOUR BRAND WILL PRODUCE...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Attendees will participate in more events in 2026



Brands across all sectors will spend 8-11% more on events in 2026

The majority of brands will produce the same number of events for this investment

Less than 10% of brands will produce fewer events in 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# REFINED GOALS. BIGGER INVESTMENTS

Events that might have been pure plays for foot traffic and awareness five years ago have evolved to become highly strategic engagement machines designed to achieve a clear set of outcomes. Event marketers are reporting sophisticated and layered thinking when it comes to the specific goals their events are designed to achieve. Media coverage and PR, for instance, is the top objective among consumer marketers, while b-to-b event marketers are focused mostly on relationship development. Interestingly, trade show marketers are not in lockstep with their peers in b-to-b and are also focused on media coverage and PR as their top goal.

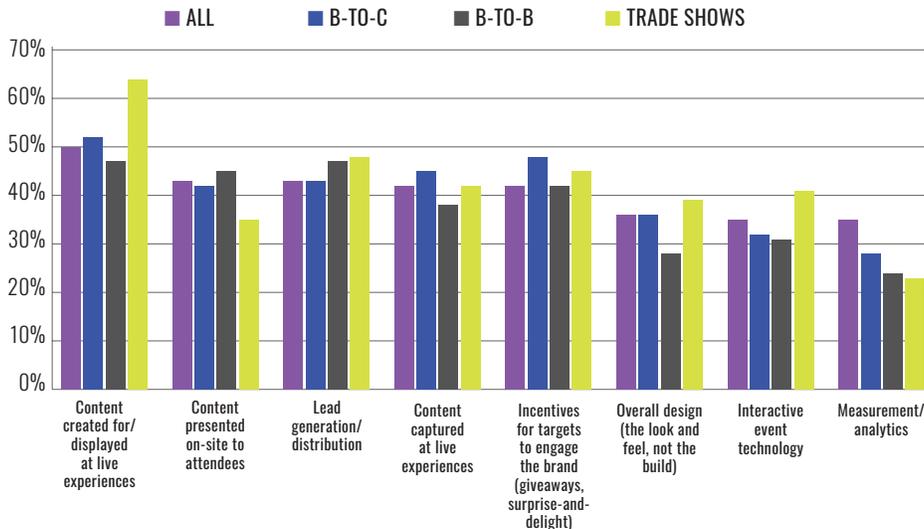
**Content is the #1 investment area among all brand marketers, with 48-65% citing they will invest more in content created for live experiences in 2026**

## INDUSTRY OBJECTIVES: TOP FIVE MOST IMPORTANT GOALS OF YOUR LIVE MARKETING PROGRAMS ARE:

B-TO-C	B-TO-B	TRADE SHOWS
1. Generate/increase media coverage/PR for brand/product/service	1. Engage target audience to generate relationship/connection with the brand	1. Generate/increase media coverage/PR for brand/product/service
2. Engage target audience to generate relationship/connection with the brand	2. Generate/increase media coverage/PR for brand/product/service	2. Engage target audience to generate relationship/connection with the brand
3. Generate/increase awareness for brand/product/service	3. Generate/increase awareness for brand/product/service	3. Connect with existing customers to maintain relationship/connection with the brand
4. Connect with existing customers to maintain relationship/connection with the brand	4. Connect with existing customers to maintain relationship/connection with the brand	4. Generate/increase awareness for brand/product/service
5. Drive/build social media engagement	5. Drive/build social media engagement	5. Drive/build social media engagement

Content remains king at events and continues to demand bigger investments as a means to create the kinds of live engagements that are memorable, impactful and—perhaps most importantly—shareable. Consumer, b-to-b and trade show event marketers are all in agreement that content created for, and presented to, attendees at events is the biggest investment they’re making this year. Forty-five percent of consumer marketers and 42% of trade show marketers plan to leverage more content captured at live experiences. And all types of event marketers plan to invest more in giveaways and surprise-and-delight experiences, which serve as powerful content generation opportunities.

## EXPERIENCE INVESTMENTS: ARE YOU INVESTING MORE OR LESS IN...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

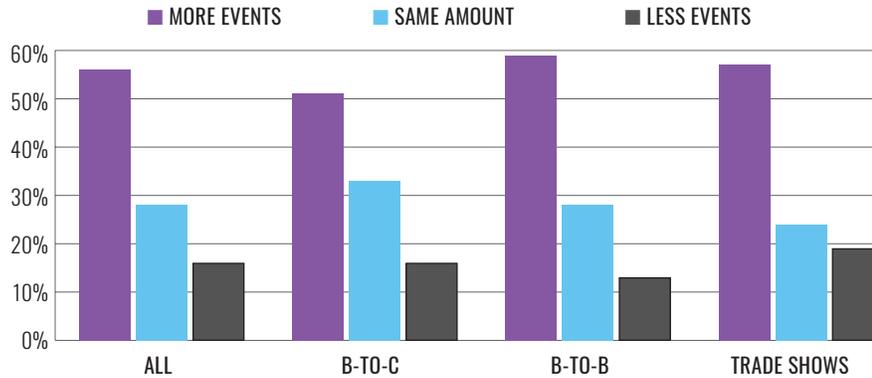
# ATTENDANCE RISING

## THE MAJORITY OF EVENTGOERS PLAN TO ATTEND MORE EVENTS

An industry that is often the first to feel the trickle-down impact of economic uncertainty has reason to be optimistic as 56% of event attendees surveyed report that they will attend more events than they did in 2025. B-to-b and trade show attendees are particularly bullish with 59% and 57%, respectively, reporting they will attend more events next year.

Events will experience a 50-60% increase in attendance across all segments

**EVENT ATTENDANCE:**  
DO YOU EXPECT TO ATTEND MORE OR LESS EVENTS THAN YOU DID IN 2025?



This data aligns with a larger, multi-year trend toward consumer spending on experiences versus hard goods, most recently documented in the Mastercard Experience Economy 2025 study. It is also well documented that Gen Z and millennials lean toward purposeful, meaningful experiences that create connection over “things” or status-building.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

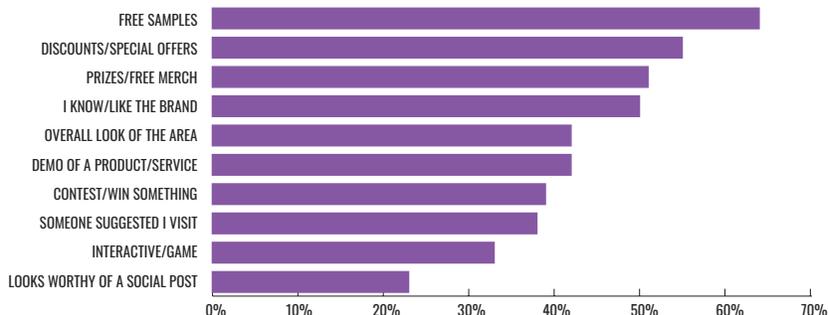
# DRIVING CONNECTIONS

## THE IMPACT OF INTERACTING WITH BRANDS

What the survey calls “free samples” really reflects event attendees’ desire to try it before they buy it, and that drive still reigns supreme when it comes to getting consumers to engage with your brand. Samples, discounts and free merch remain at the top of the list of key motivators for engagement. Product demos, which were at the bottom of the list in 2024, snuck up three notches this year, which may reflect experiential’s unique ability to turn a traditional (ahem... *boring*) show and tell into something more exciting, immersive and meaningful.

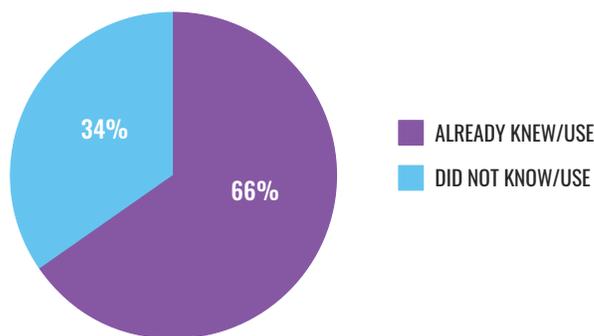
### TOP B-TO-C EXPERIENCE DRIVERS:

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ENGAGE WITH A BRAND AT AN EVENT?



Live events are instrumental to further developing existing relationships among those who are already familiar with a brand, but they are also key to penetrating new audiences. Thirty-four percent of consumers surveyed said their most recent interaction at an event was with a brand they *didn't* know or use. This data point should give consumer marketers seeking inroads into new markets and target audiences confidence in their event investments.

**EVENTS DRIVE CONSUMER AWARENESS:**  
YOUR MOST RECENT INTERACTION WITH A BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT AN EVENT WAS A BRAND YOU...



**Free samples, aka opportunities to try a product before you buy a product, remains the top motivator among attendees engaging at an event**

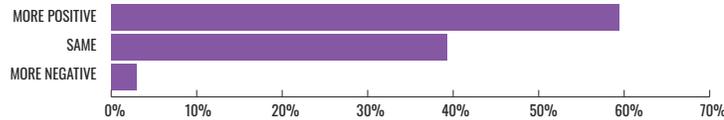
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## MORE THAN JUST GOOD VIBES, EVENTS DRIVE TRIAL AND PURCHASE

In addition to their ability to create awareness among new audiences, live experiences have the power to boost sentiment among nearly two-thirds of event attendees. Fifty-nine percent of consumers surveyed say they feel more positive about a brand after a live event. For comparison, most studies on sentiment and advertising estimate that only around 4% of ads are remembered positively.

### EVENTS BOOST SENTIMENT:

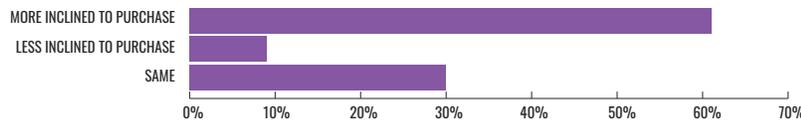
HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT AN EVENT AFTER THE EXPERIENCE?



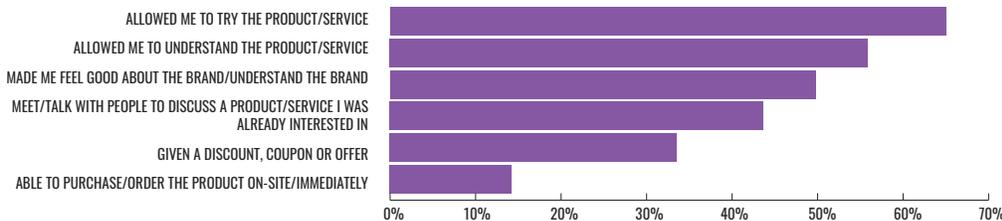
What do attendees do with all of those positive feelings they experienced after the live event? They hit the “purchase” button, of course. Two-thirds (61%) of consumers report that they are more inclined to purchase a product or service after a live experience. Unlike the engagement metric that showed attendees crave freebies, samples and discounts, this strong purchase inclination effect is driven by hands-on trial experiences, conversations and getting a good understanding of the product or service itself. Indeed, today’s event-to-sales funnel is refined and specific in the way each level and type of experience can generate a different outcome.

### EVENTS IMPACT PURCHASE INTENT:

INTERACTING WITH THE BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT AN EVENT MADE ME...



### POWERFUL TRIAL PLATFORMS: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



59% of attendees feel more positive about a product/service after an event or experience

61% of attendees are more inclined to purchase after an event or experience

Top three purchase drivers among attendees:  
 ① Trying products/services;  
 ② Understanding of product/service;  
 ③ Connection with the brand

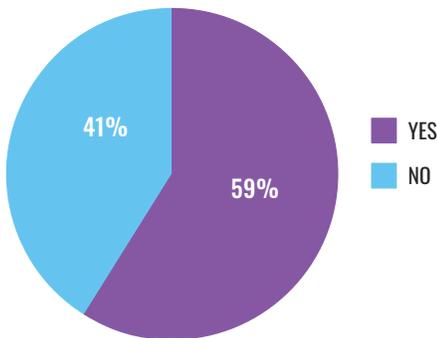
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

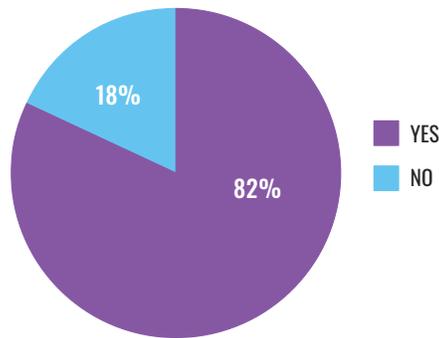
# CONTENT AND SHAREABILITY

Event teams are investing more than ever in the quality of their show content in an effort to entice attendees to snap, record and share their experiences with the world. And attendees are responding with nearly two-thirds (59%), stating that they do capture content at live experiences. A memorable event can also drive enormous word of mouth, according to 82% of attendees who say that they told their friends and family about their engagement with the brand. These data points should inspire event creators to consider the ways in which their engagement strategy acts as a catalyst for content capture, sharing and then word of mouth—and how those sharing actions are different and can be uniquely supported.

## ATTENDEES CAPTURE CONTENT: DO YOU CAPTURE CONTENT DURING INTERACTIONS WITH BRANDS?



## ATTENDEES AND SOCIAL SHARING: DID YOU TELL FRIENDS OR FAMILY WHO WERE NOT AT THE EVENT ABOUT YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE?



**59% of attendees capture content at live experiences**

**82% of attendees tell their friends and family about their engagement with a brand**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

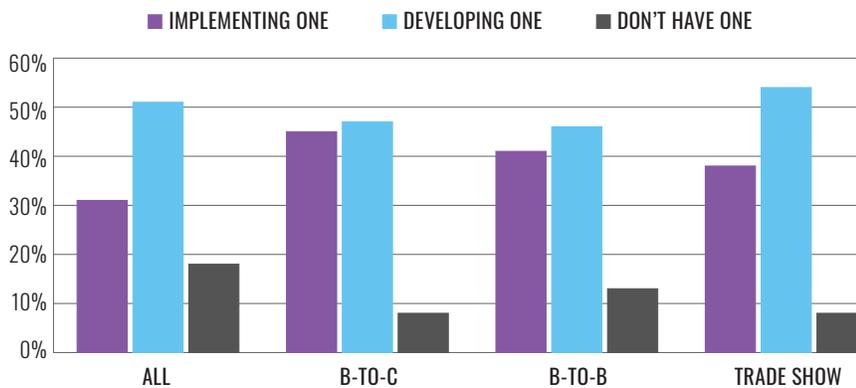
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SUSTAINABILITY: PROMISES AND PACING

Nearly three quarters of all attendees surveyed (73%) say they care about the sustainability of the events they attend, yet delivering sustainable events remains one of the biggest challenges impacting the industry. For Fortune 1000 companies and their event departments, the good intentions are reflected in the data, with 82% reporting they have a sustainability policy or are working on one. This is a massive increase over 2024 when the bulk of experiential marketers (76%) didn't have a sustainability policy in place. But most event agencies and departments still report that when it's time to make difficult budget cuts, the sustainable options (which are frequently the more expensive options) are the first to get cut from the budget.

**82% of Fortune 1000 companies report they have a sustainability policy or are working on one, a substantial increase over 2024 when the bulk of experiential marketers (76%) still didn't have a sustainability policy in place**

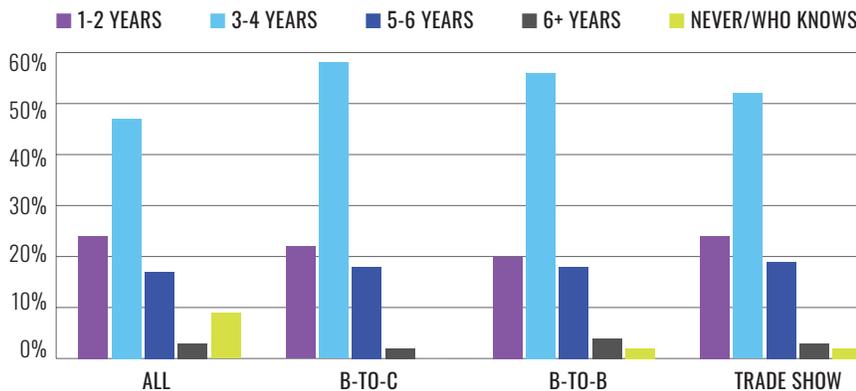
## BRANDS: SUSTAINABILITY PACING YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



Most event marketers (88%) forecast they will have a more sustainable portfolio in the next 2-6 years, and all three event audiences surveyed reported very similar pacing in terms of when they will expect to have a more sustainable portfolio.

**The majority of brand marketers expect to have a more sustainable portfolio by 2030 (3-4 years)**

## BRANDS: SUSTAINABILITY HORIZON YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



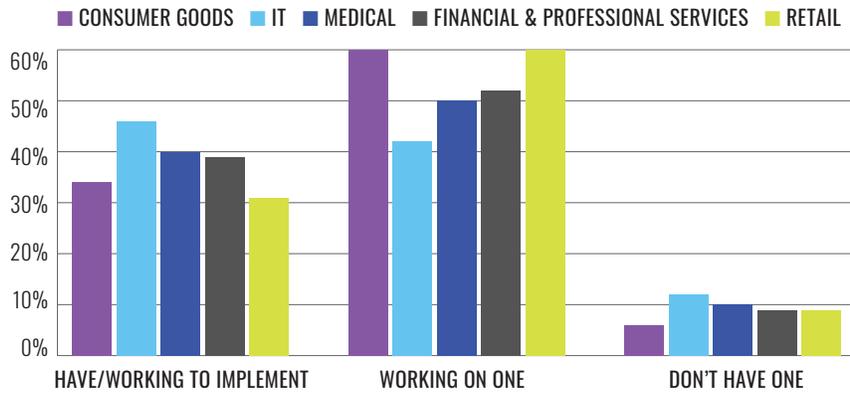
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

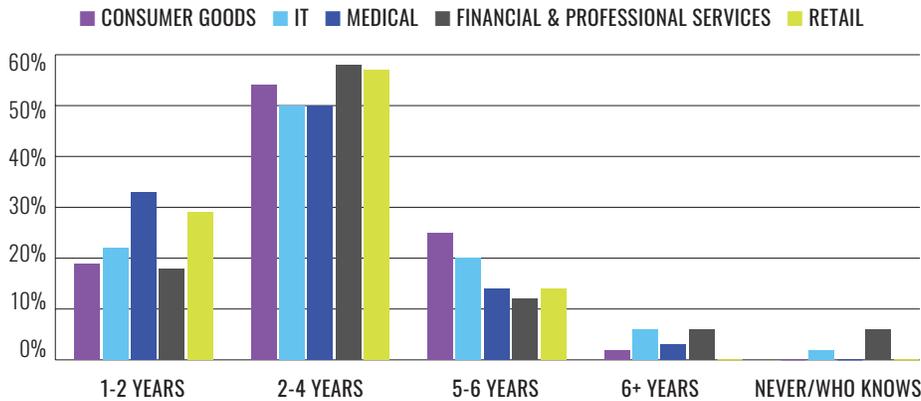
## SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS VARY BY VERTICAL

When you dig into the five industry verticals surveyed for this year's EventTrack (Consumer Goods, IT, Medical, Financial and Professional Services and Retail) the commitments vary. More than 90% of Consumer Goods and Retail brands, for instance, report they have a policy or are working on a policy already, no doubt due to the consumer-facing nature of their businesses. The IT sector is a tale of two extremes, with 12% (more than any other vertical) responding that they don't have a sustainability strategy, but the highest percentage of all the sectors (47%) saying they have one or are implementing one. The Medical vertical reports the lowest starting point but the most ambitious forecast, with 60% saying they don't have a strategy or are working on one, but 33% saying they will have one in 1-2 years, which is higher and faster than all of the other sectors.

### TOP FIVE VERTICALS: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



### TOP FIVE VERTICALS: YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



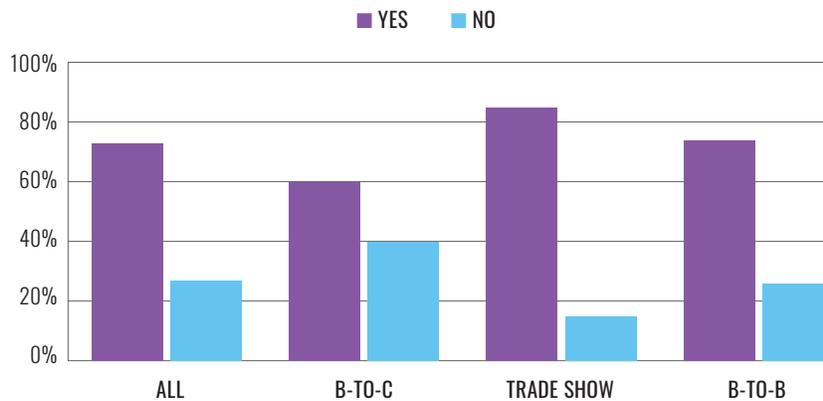
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SUSTAINABILITY: ATTENDEE PERCEPTIONS

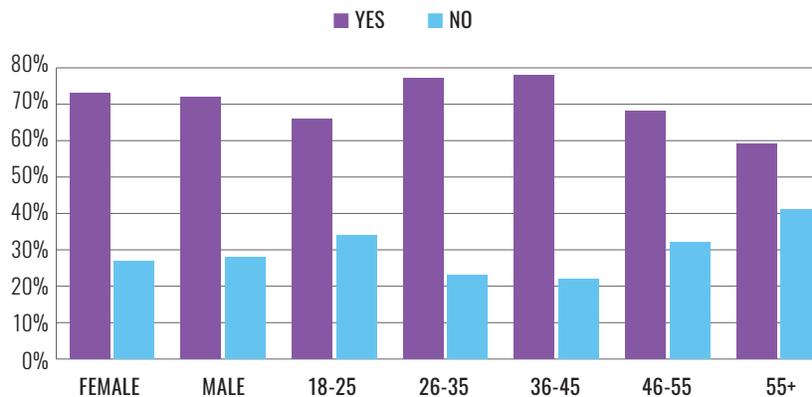
Most (73%) event attendees care about event sustainability. This data maps to outside research tracking consumer sentiment and brand loyalty. What may be surprising is that a greater number (85%) of trade show attendees care about sustainability than consumer attendees (60%). It may point to a common misperception that consumer events attract younger and therefore more environmentally conscious crowds. But the data shows that, in fact, trade shows, which have often been maligned for the inherent waste that comes with producing them, are actually attended by people who care *more* than their consumer counterparts. Perhaps also counterintuitive: Millennial and Gen X audiences outpace Gen Z audiences (77% and 78%, respectively, versus 66%) when it comes to caring about how sustainable events are.

**73% of event attendees care about sustainability**

**ATTENDEES: SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS**  
DO YOU NOTICE/CARE ABOUT HOW SUSTAINABLE THE EVENTS YOU ATTEND ARE?



**GENERATIONAL AND GENDER DIFFERENCES:**  
DO YOU NOTICE/CARE ABOUT HOW SUSTAINABLE THE EVENTS YOU ATTEND ARE?



**Women in every age category far outpace (by more than double) men when it comes to caring about how sustainable an event is**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer



**+**  
**BRAND MARKETER  
INSIGHTS**

# CONSUMER EVENT FOCUS

## SMARTER SPENDING. TIGHTER PORTFOLIOS.

Last year, 27% of b-to-c event marketers reported that their event budgets would remain flat for the year. This year, that number dropped significantly to just 9%, reflecting an industry-wide uptick in consumer event demand and consumer event spending. In fact, 84% of consumer event marketers report that they will increase their event spending, with about a third (34%) saying they will boost budgets between 8-15%.

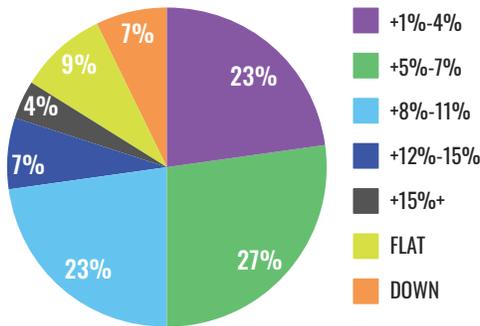
More than half of Fortune 1000 brands (52%) report that they will produce the same number of events, which is up 23% over last year. Forty percent will lean into creating a bigger portfolio of events, down 17% from last year.

Despite the overall vibe being best described as “flattish,” this is an optimistic story for event marketers, who have weathered several years of economic and political uncertainty and are finally reporting a high level of stability with existing events. And it reflects a wider trend towards tighter event portfolios with fewer, and arguably better, events in them.

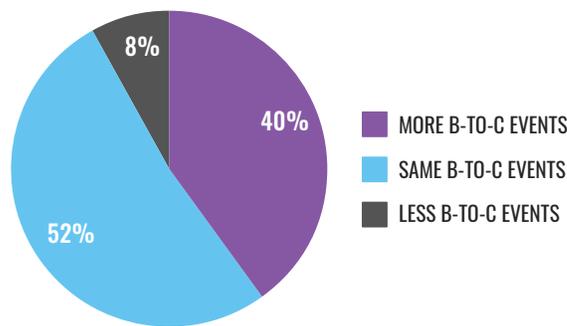
What types of events will make the cut when it comes to strategizing for growth? Loyalty events, retail events and surprise-and-delight experiences all top the list of event strategies receiving the most increases in overall investment over last year. The only event type to lose more than a few percentage points in investment is mobile tours. This may be a reflection of higher operational costs that historically impact this sector hardest.

**84%**  
of consumer marketers will increase event spending

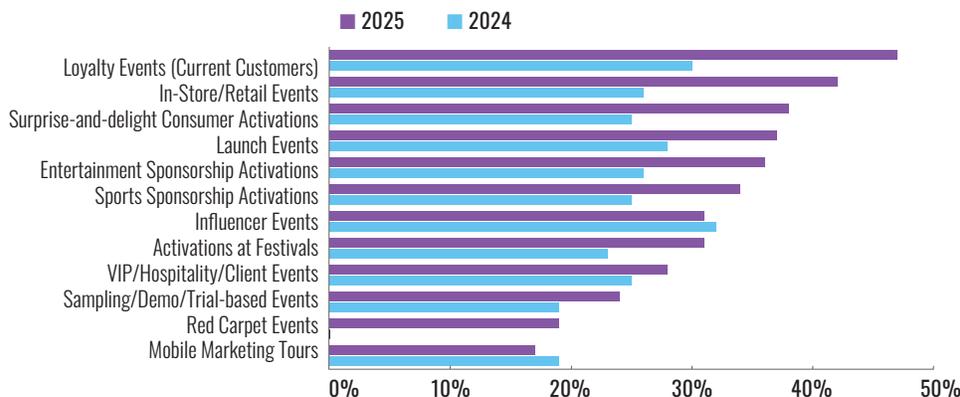
**B-TO-C EVENT BUDGETS:**  
2025 EVENT SPENDING WILL BE...



**B-TO-C PORTFOLIO VOLUME:**  
IN 2025, YOU EXPECT TO PRODUCE...



**B-TO-C PORTFOLIO BY TYPE:**  
IN 2026, YOU WILL LEAN INTO WHICH TYPES OF EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES?



**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

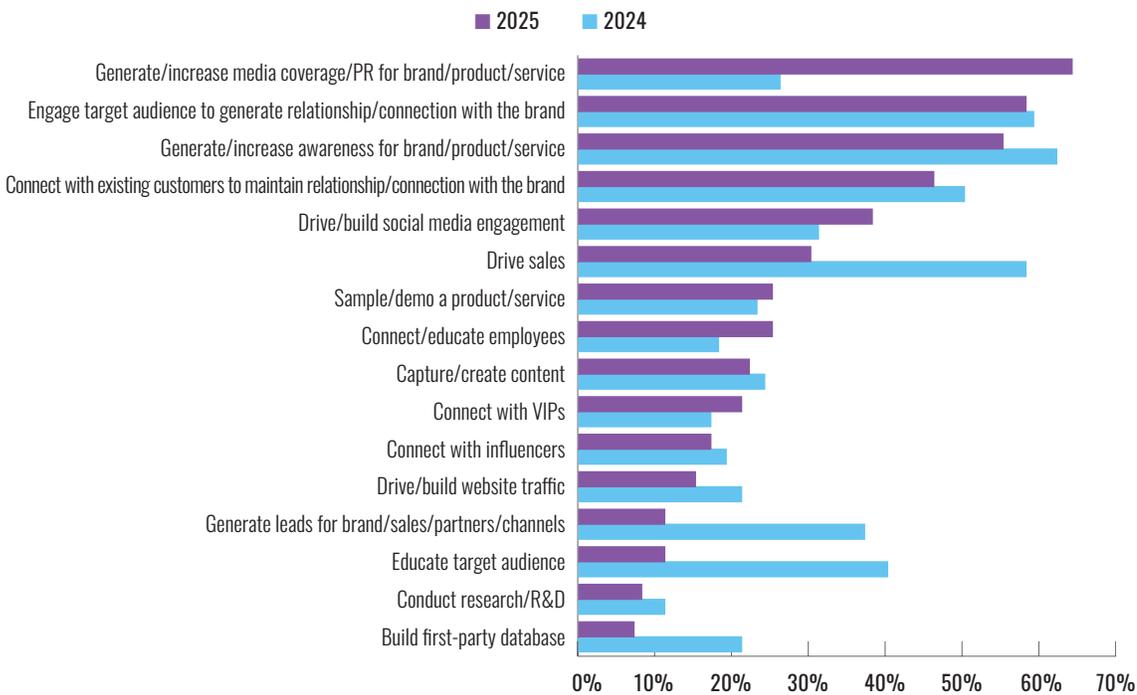
## 2026 B-TO-C EVENT OBJECTIVES

Are you ready to have your mind... blown? For the first time ever, since the inception of the first EventTrack study, consumer event marketers are reporting that increased PR and media coverage is the top goal for their events, displacing “awareness” as the evergreen event objective for more than a decade. Sixty-four percent of b-to-c marketers report that generating press hits is their top goal—a 38% increase over last year. Fifty-eight percent of marketers say that engaging audiences and generating relationships is next highest in importance, and then awareness takes the third spot with 55% of those surveyed.

The evolution of PR as a top event goal can be tracked back to the upward trajectory of social media, which was once a distinctly different “media” channel than traditional media, but today acts as its own powerhouse platform for brand visibility and growth. Today, PR teams are working more closely than ever with event teams to create a holistic strategy that leverages all of the power and impact of an event to drive impressions online.

**64%**  
of consumer  
marketers rank  
PR as their top  
goal

### KEY B-TO-C EVENT GOALS: THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT OBJECTIVES ARE...



**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

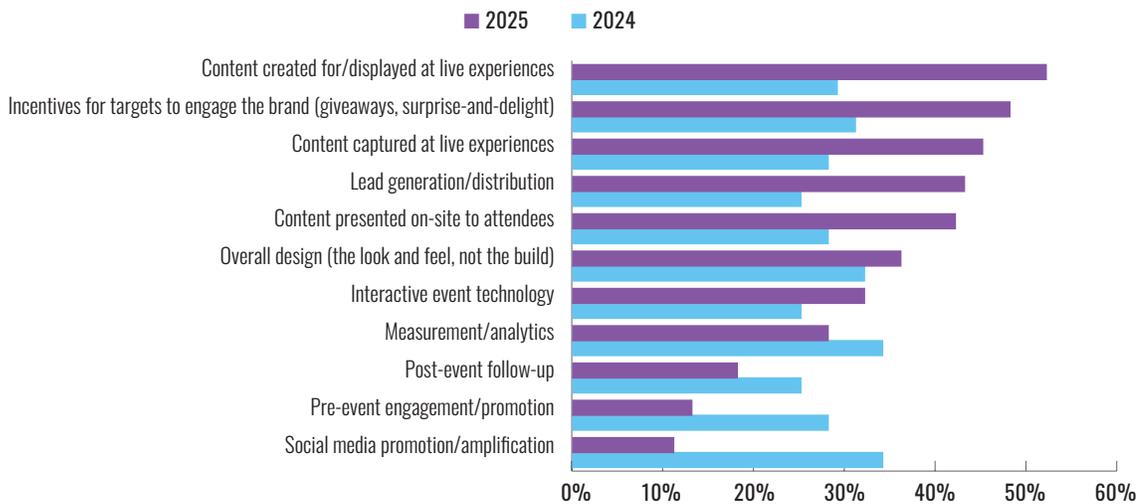
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

## 2025 B-TO-C EVENT INVESTMENTS, BY SILO

It should come as no surprise that consumer marketers, who are now chasing PR hits as their top objective, are investing in event content more than ever. Fifty-two percent of those surveyed say that content created for events is their top investment, a 23% increase over last year. Giveaways and surprise-and-delight experiences, (aka compelling fodder for social media capture and sharing), are next on the list with 48% reporting a boost in investment. And then content captured at live events, in the third spot, also saw a big boost in investment with 45% reporting it's a priority, a 17% increase over 2024. These data points all add up to a consistent investment picture among consumer marketers to recognize the power of events as platforms for content, media impressions and social sharing.

**42%**  
of consumer marketers will increase investments in event content

### 2025 EXPERIENTIAL INVESTMENTS: B-TO-C EVENT SPEND PATTERN, BY BUDGET ELEMENT



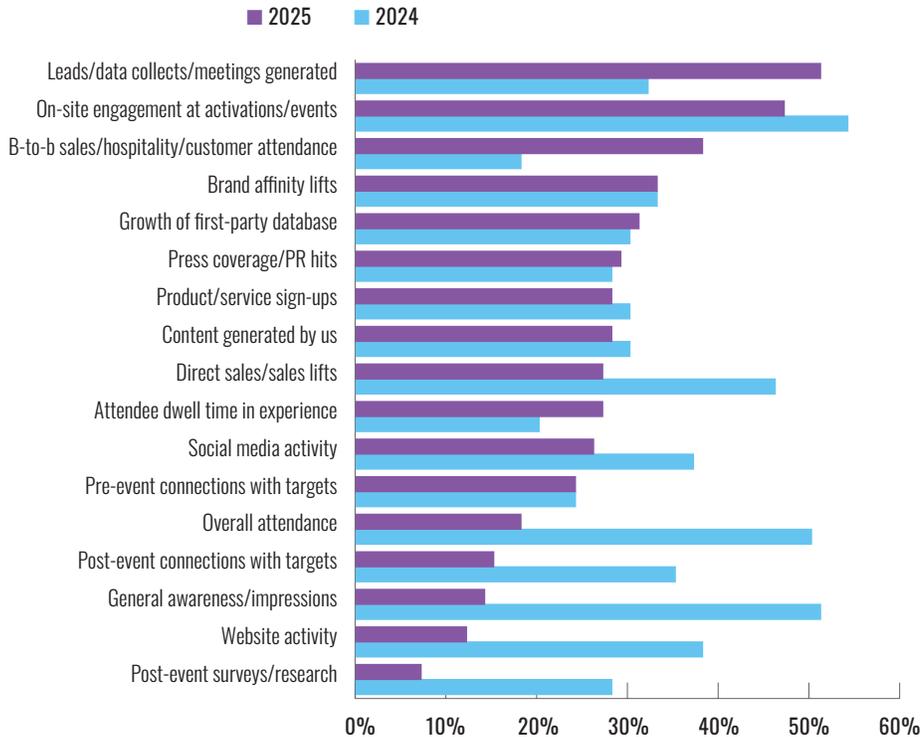
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

## MEASUREMENT AND ROI

For an industry sector that for years looked mainly to foot traffic for its measurement of “success,” this year might be the year things got real as the majority of consumer marketers (51%) for the first time reported that leads and data collection are the most important metrics when measuring their events. This data point should encourage consumer marketers still fighting for a place at the strategic table inside their marketing organizations and provide a strong proof point that events can, and do, generate bottom line results when the right metrics are employed. Lead gen displaced on-site engagement as the top metric from 2024, and b-to-b hospitality made a big jump into the third spot among 38% of marketers who are funneling their business audiences into their consumer experiences and tracking that action against measurable objectives. Two birds!

### MEASUREMENT MIX: THE MOST IMPORTANT B-TO-C EVENT METRICS YOY

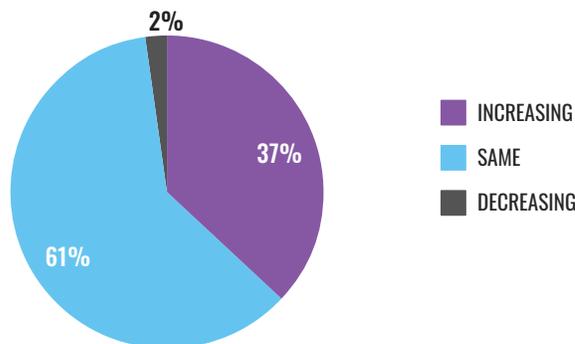


**Leads are the most important metric for b-to-c events**

With lead gen taking the... *lead* at consumer events, it's no surprise that return on investment at b-to-c experiences is strong. Ninety-eight percent of consumer event marketers say that the ROI from their experiential programs is the same or increasing over last year.

Broken down by sector, it's clear that lead gen is central to the success across a wide swath of the event industry. In fact, it's the No. 1 metric across every single sector. Among Consumer Goods, IT, Medical, Financial and Retail consumer marketers, leads and meetings generated is the “most important” b-to-c metric to event teams. On-site engagement is ranked next in importance followed by b-to-b sales and hospitality.

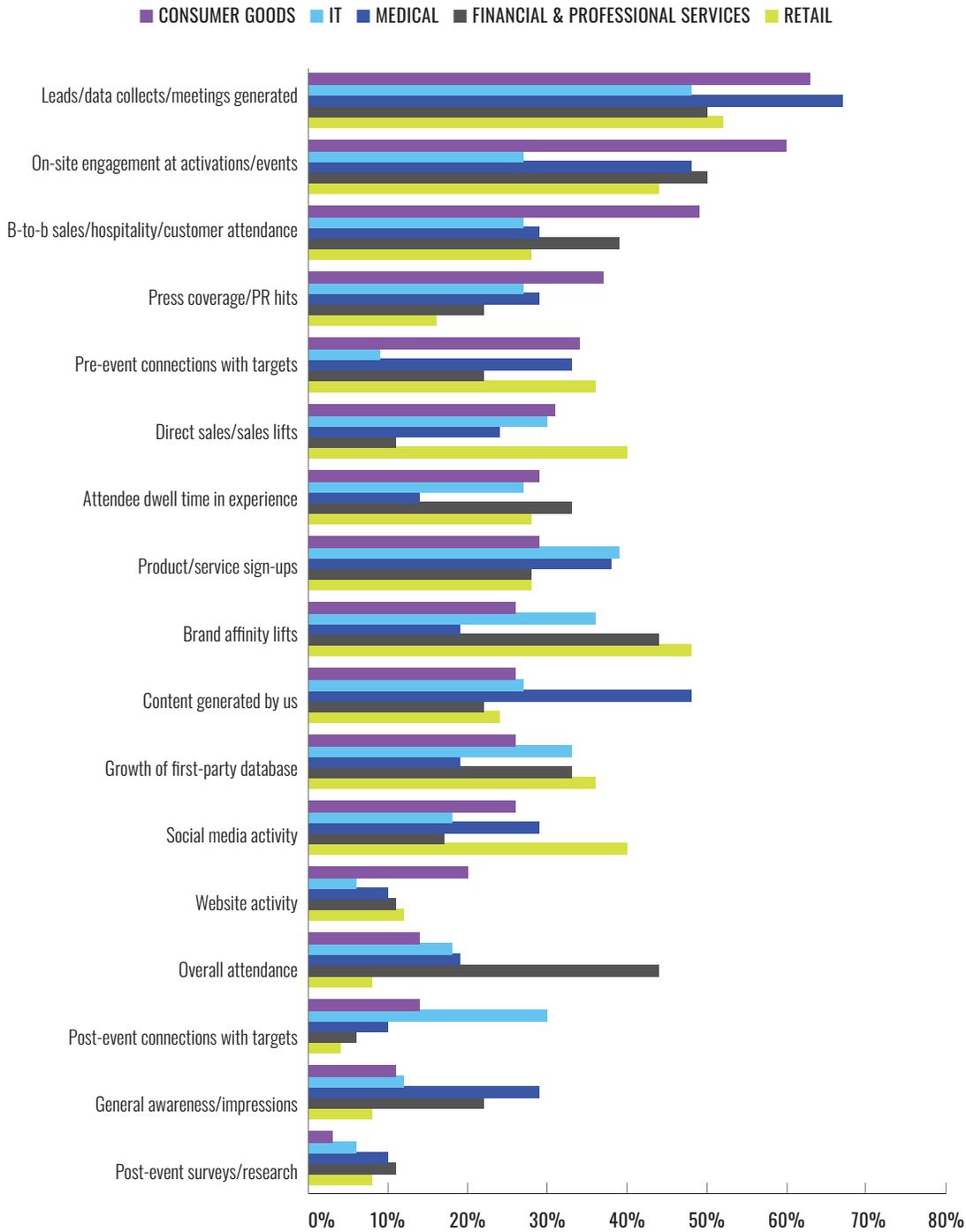
### B-TO-C RESULTS ON THE RISE: ROI FROM YOUR EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS IS...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

## MEASUREMENT MIX: THE MOST IMPORTANT B-TO-C EVENT METRICS BY SECTOR...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

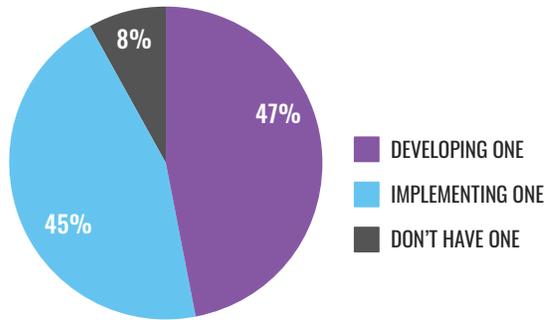
**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

# THE STATE OF SUSTAINABILITY

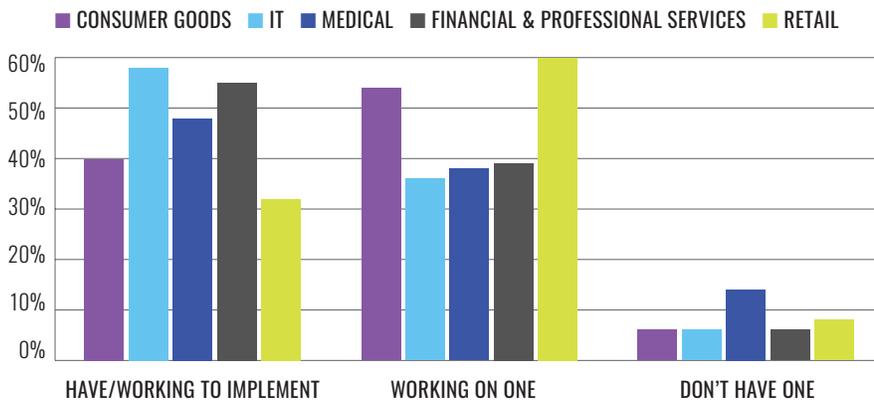
In 2024, only 24% of consumer event marketers reported having a sustainability strategy. That number shot up to 45% this year, signaling a continued interest by the industry in producing environmentally conscious events. EventTrack data on attendees reaffirmed that consumers remain committed to companies that bring sustainable practices to events. Despite the cost challenges many in the industry say slow down progress (and some say is, ahem, “just an excuse”), our analysts are seeing more dedication and focus on sustainable events across all sectors of the industry. The vast majority of consumer brands are “working on one” or “have one.” IT and Financial Services appear to have the leg up, with 58% and 55%, respectively, working to implement their strategy this year.

**92%**  
of consumer marketers have or are working on a sustainability strategy

## SUSTAINABILITY PACING: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



## SUSTAINABILITY BY SECTOR: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



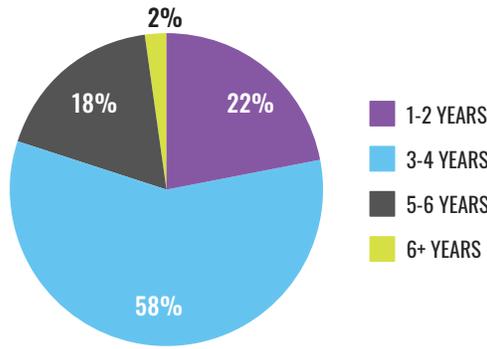
**B-TO-C  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

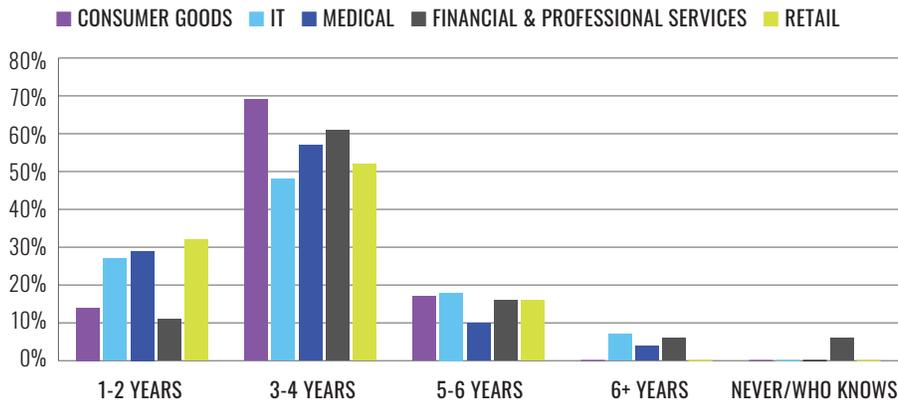
## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS ARE OPTIMISTIC BUT VARY BY SECTOR

The three- to four-year horizon appears to be the “magic window” for consumer brands in all sectors looking to fully implement a sustainable event portfolio. The IT and Medical sectors are reporting a more optimistic outlook, with 27% and 29%, respectively, saying they will be more sustainable in 1-2 years. What that actually means, however, varies by brand and event organization as the industry still doesn’t have one set of event sustainability standards that can help serve as a universal set of guidelines. Six percent of the Financial sector reported “who knows” when surveyed about a sustainability timeline. This is perhaps reflective of a sense of apathy among some in the industry who find many of the challenges inherent to sustainability insurmountable.

### SUSTAINABILITY HORIZON: YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



### SUSTAINABILITY HORIZON BY SECTOR: YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



B-TO-C  
EVENTS

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# CONSUMER BRAND RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### from the B-to-C section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the Consumer Event section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

**84%**  
of consumer marketers will increase event spending in 2026

**64%**  
of consumer marketers rank PR as their top event objective

**52%**  
of consumer marketers say that content created for events is their top investment

**51%**  
of consumer marketers reported that leads are the most important event metric

**92%**  
of consumer marketers are developing or implementing a sustainability strategy

**SECTION RECAP**

**1**

#### SPENDING IS UP, BUT PORTFOLIOS ARE FLAT.

More than half of Fortune 1000 brands (52%) report that they will produce the same number of events in 2026. Forty percent will lean into creating a bigger portfolio of events, down 17% from last year.

**What does it mean?** Less is more. Marketers are prioritizing fewer but more high quality, and highly targeted, events in their portfolios moving into next year.

**2**

#### PR IS THE NEW “IT” GOAL FOR CONSUMER EVENTS.

Sixty-four percent of b-to-c marketers report that generating press hits is their top goal—a 38% increase over last year. This increased interest in PR impressions displaced “awareness” as the evergreen event objective for consumer events.

**What does it mean?** More PR professionals entering the experiential industry brings a new awareness of the power of media to consumer events, and more urgency to optimizing events for PR value.

**3**

#### CONTENT CREATED FOR EVENTS IS WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING.

Fifty-two percent of those surveyed say that content created for events is their top investment, a 23% increase over last year.

**What does it mean?** “Content” is inclusive of the entire event experience, from speakers to on-site experiences. Bigger investments in content reflects an ever higher bar for what will get attendees off the couch. (Hint: It’s good content.)

**4**

#### AWARENESS METRICS WON’T CUT IT IN 2026.

For the first time in EventTrack history, the majority of consumer marketers reported that leads are the most important metrics for their events.

**What does it mean?** Serious consumer marketers will ladder up hard data from their portfolio in 2026 and beyond to prove that they are serious players when it comes to making business impact.

**5**

#### SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS ARE ON THE RISE.

In 2024, only 24% of consumer event marketers reported having a sustainability strategy. That number shot up to 45% this year.

**What does it mean?** Consumer event teams who are not making strides in sustainability will be left behind those who are making efforts and progress.

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SURVEY [SNAPSHOT]

EventTrack survey respondents were offered the opportunity to write in responses to certain questions, giving the report data a deeper perspective on some of the key themes and drivers influencing how event marketers will spend and strategize for 2026.

## **The survey asked, for those brands planning to participate in more events in the year ahead, what is driving the increase in participation? Here are their responses:**

- Building, increasing brand awareness
- Attracting new customers
- High quality lead generation
- Networking
- Market expansion
- Knowledge sharing, education, providing insights, market leadership
- Showcasing or launching products or services
- Strengthening company reputation
- Promoting or establishing partnerships
- Staying competitive
- Building community

## **The survey asked, for those brands forecasting an increase in event budgets, what is impacting that expectation? Here are their responses:**

- Introducing or adding new engaging activities
- Enhanced attendee experience
- Increase brand and product/service awareness, improve company visibility
- Offer product interaction and hands-on/immersive experiences
- Improve content and messaging at events
- Respond to changing industry and marketing trends and market environment
- Multi-channel, omnichannel platform marketing, tie events to other marketing initiatives
- Diversify event marketing activities, broaden variety of events, displays and formats
- Investment in creative displays, more eye-catching, interactive exhibits and activations

## **The survey asked, what's a big trend or element you expect to impact your event and experiential marketing programs in 2026? Here are their responses:**

- Need to provide unique and memorable experiences
- Change event marketing strategies in response to economic and market trends
- Incorporate AI in various event marketing areas
- Personalize, individualize experiences
- Build, cultivate sense of brand or related community
- Foster long-term relationships and partnerships
- Shifting event and exhibit design to meet consumer and business attendee priorities
- Demonstrate sustainability efforts, lessen environmental impact
- Hybrid events, merging in-person experiences with technology

# B-TO-B EVENT FOCUS

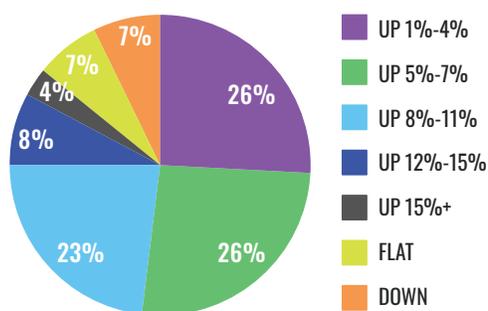
EventTrack analysts see a common theme among b-to-b event marketers who appear to be prioritizing the quality of their events over the quantity. While spending is up, the number of events in portfolios is trending down. When it comes to the investment and scope of modern event portfolios, event experiences are seeing greater investment and financial support while b-to-b event strategists are streamlining and optimizing their portfolios, keeping just the high performers and highly targeted experiences, and in some case, letting go of others.

Digging into the event spending data, there is a clear trend toward increased spending. Twenty-four percent of respondents last year claimed their budgets were flat, compared to just 9% this year. This year, 86% of those surveyed said their budgets would be up by at least 1%, with three-fourths (75%) saying their increases would range between 1-11%. Fewer business event marketers are taking their budgets down this year, with 7% reporting a decrease, compared to 9% in 2024. And 3% of marketers say they're taking their budgets up 15% or more.

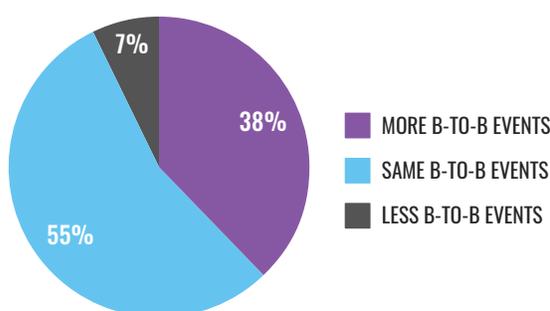
Making connections is the name of the game for b-to-b marketers who are trading in “sales” for “engagement” as their top priority this year (see next page). Sponsorships and local meetings and events are playing a larger part in the portfolio mix among b-to-b marketers, no doubt as a means to achieve the high-tough engagement objectives 61% of b-to-b marketers are chasing.

This hyper focus on engagement is driving conversations across the industry around how business events can—and must—evolve to meet the needs of modern attendees. From deconstructed keynotes to highly customized experiences using the latest AI to peer-to-peer learning, the portfolio refinement being tracked across the b-to-b space will also be reflected in massive changes in how business conferences, meetings and events will be experienced in the year to come.

**B-TO-B EVENT BUDGETS:**  
2025 EVENT SPENDING WILL BE...



**B-TO-B PORTFOLIO VOLUME:**  
IN 2026, YOU EXPECT TO PRODUCE...



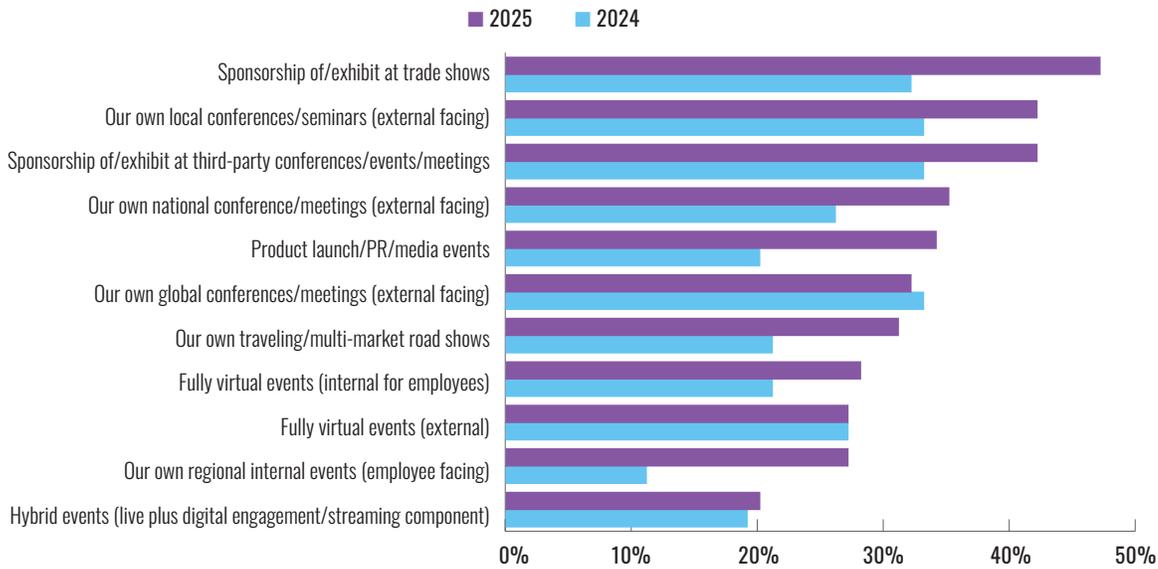
**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

## 2026 EVENT PORTFOLIOS, BY CHANNEL

Refining b-to-b portfolios means shuffling where the money goes, and business event marketers are moving their investments in strategic ways to optimize spending while getting the most bang for their buck—with the right people, at the right time. Trade shows are making a comeback among b-to-b brands as they take over the top spot on the list of areas where marketers will be “doing more.” Forty-seven percent report that trade shows and sponsors are their biggest piece of the portfolio, an increase of 13% over last year. Local conferences and third-party sponsorships and exhibits will also see more action by 42% of marketers. Regional events, again, as a means to connect with smaller, more targeted audiences, rank 10th on the list, but saw the biggest increase in interest among respondents, with a 15% jump year over year.

### EVENT PORTFOLIO FORECAST: 2026 B-TO-B EVENT VOLUME, BY TYPE



**47%**  
of marketers  
will do more  
trade shows

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

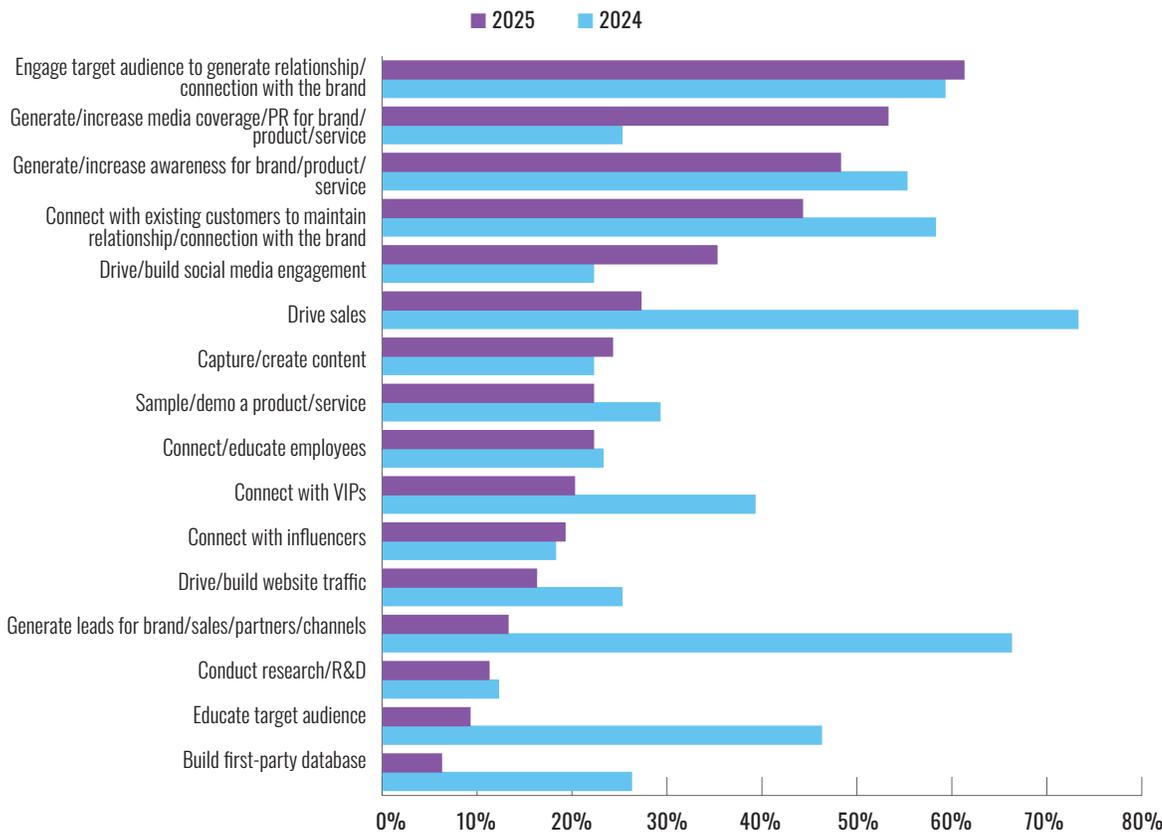
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

## 2025 B-TO-B EVENT OBJECTIVES

Engagement and relationship nurturing has always been a top objective among b-to-b event marketers (although, it's arguably one of the squishiest criteria to measure consistently). This year is no different as 61% of brands report that it's their top goal for their event portfolio. Media coverage made a big leap into the No. 2 spot, from 25% to 53%, reflecting a trend seen across the entire EventTrack study toward more PR-centric goals that, no doubt, include the positive impact of social media impressions. The wide margin surprised the EventTrack analysts, who had previously seen a steady increase in b-to-b events that were methodical about tracking event investments against sales. This year, sales dropped from the No. 1 seed to fifth place, with just 27% of respondents claiming it as a core objective—versus 73% in 2024. We suspect (and hope?) that this is a sign of shifting funnels as marketers are growing more savvy about the long-tail sales impact of a strong media showing at their events.

**Media coverage is the top goal among 53% of b-to-b marketers**

### KEY B-TO-B EVENT GOALS: THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT OBJECTIVES ARE...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

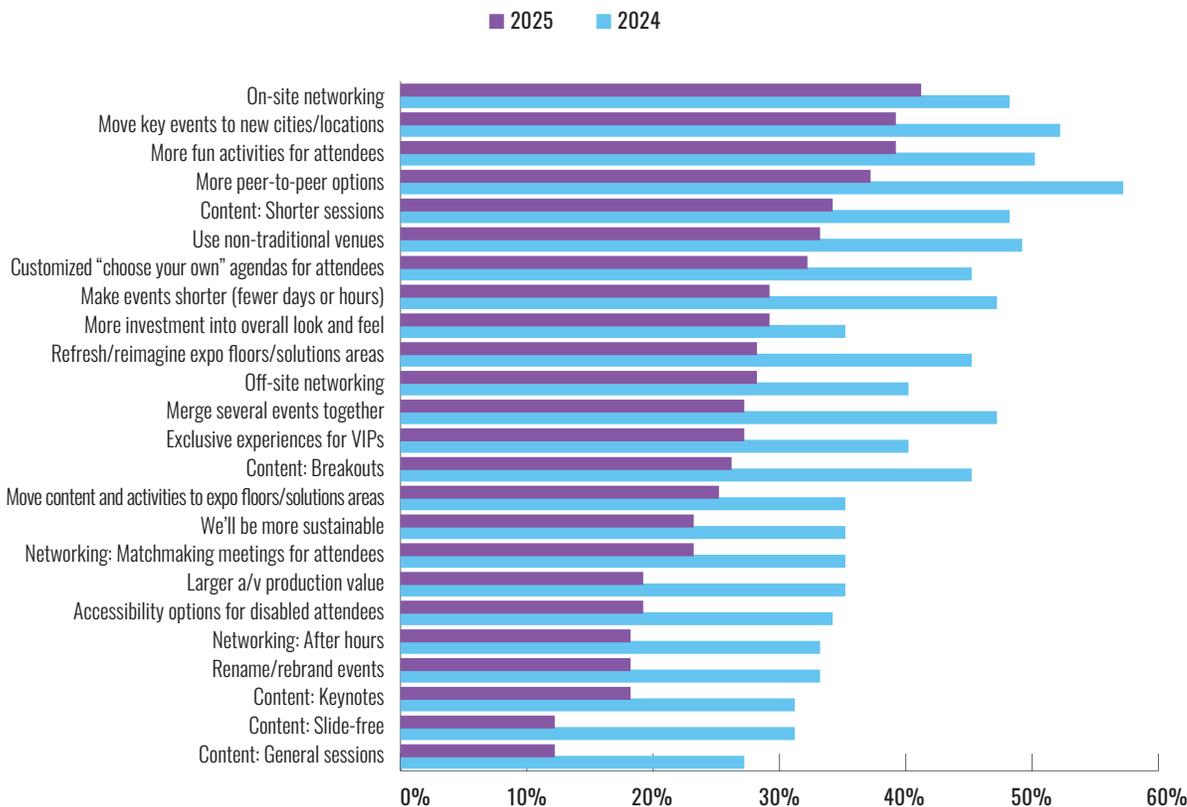
# FUTURE B-TO-B EVENT INVESTMENTS

Right now, b-to-b marketers are buzzing about the need for change. How old models don't work anymore. Why traditional keynotes are boring. How business events need to function in order to be relevant to modern audiences. Digging into the specifics, EventTrack flashed forward five years to find out what b-to-b brands think they'll be doing more of at their conferences and meetings. Networking wasn't at the top of the list in 2024, but it stole the top spot this year as more and more attendee segments do the math to determine if getting on a plane and going to an event is really necessary. Networking is the one power play that you can't get anywhere and any way else, so brands are leaning in to leverage more of it. New cities and "the fun factor" remain top priorities. Among the elements b-to-b marketers will be doing the least? Focusing on session content, it appears, which makes sense for an industry that learned during the pandemic that slides can be shared online with no pesky TSA line required.

Comparing sectors, fun activities are top priority for 2030 events among all slices of the industry. More peer-to-peer experiences and a discovery of new cities also rank consistently high. General sessions ranked dead last in importance, while after-hours networking came in second to last place, which may be a reflection of changing attitudes around alcohol-fueled networking experiences.

**Most (41%) b-to-b marketers will focus on more networking experiences in 2030**

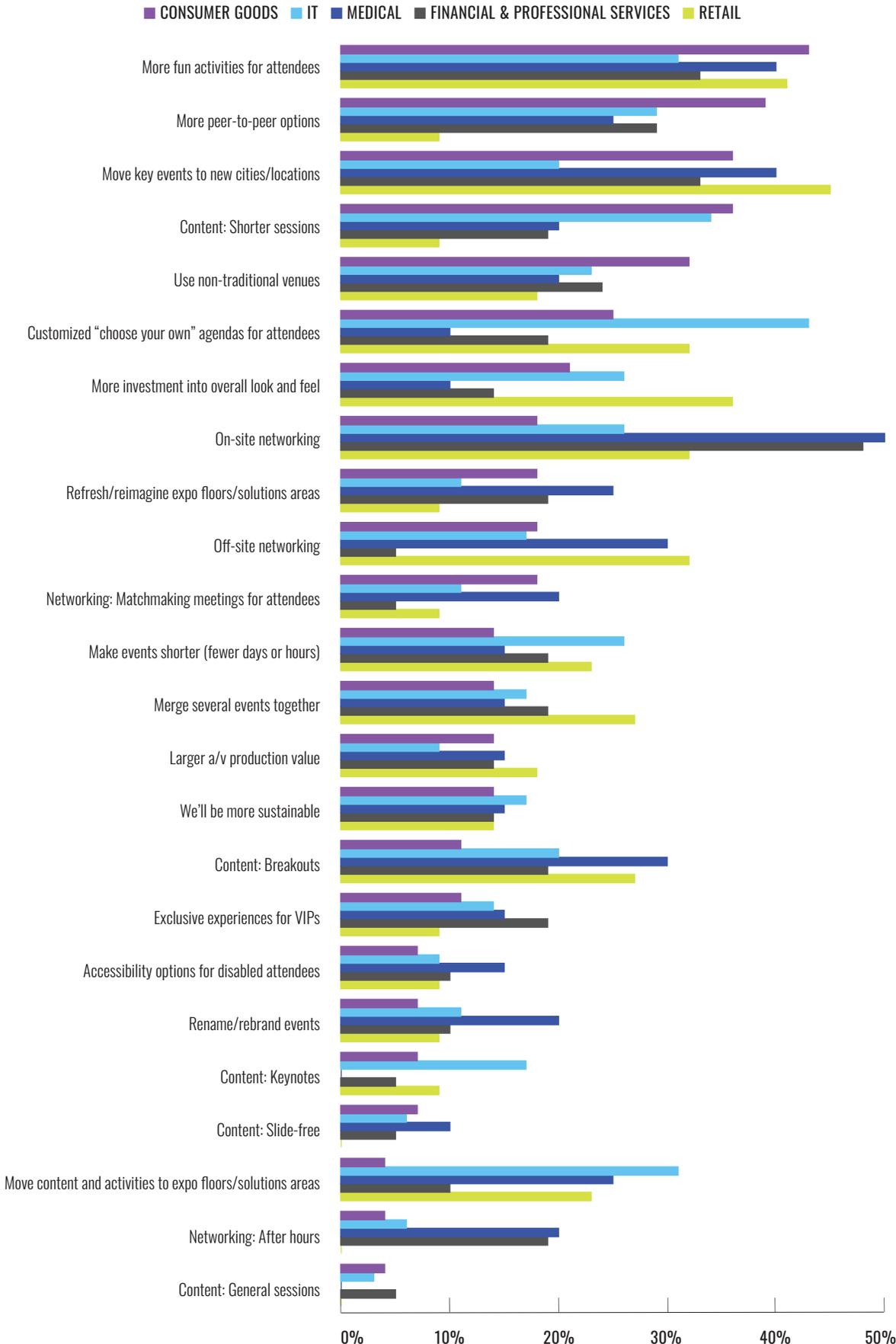
## FUTURE B-TO-B EXPERIENCES: IN 2030, HOW WILL THE B-TO-B MODEL BE DIFFERENT?



**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

## FUTURE B-TO-B EXPERIENCES, BY SECTOR: IN 2030, HOW WILL THE B-TO-B MODEL BE DIFFERENT?



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

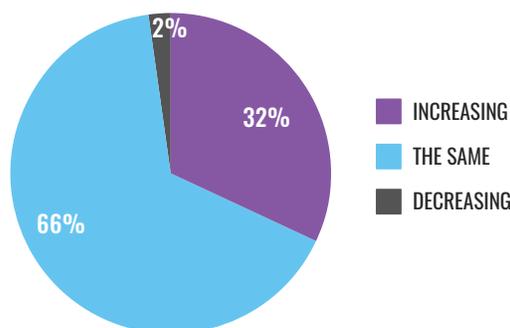
B-TO-B  
EVENTS

# MEASUREMENT AND ROI

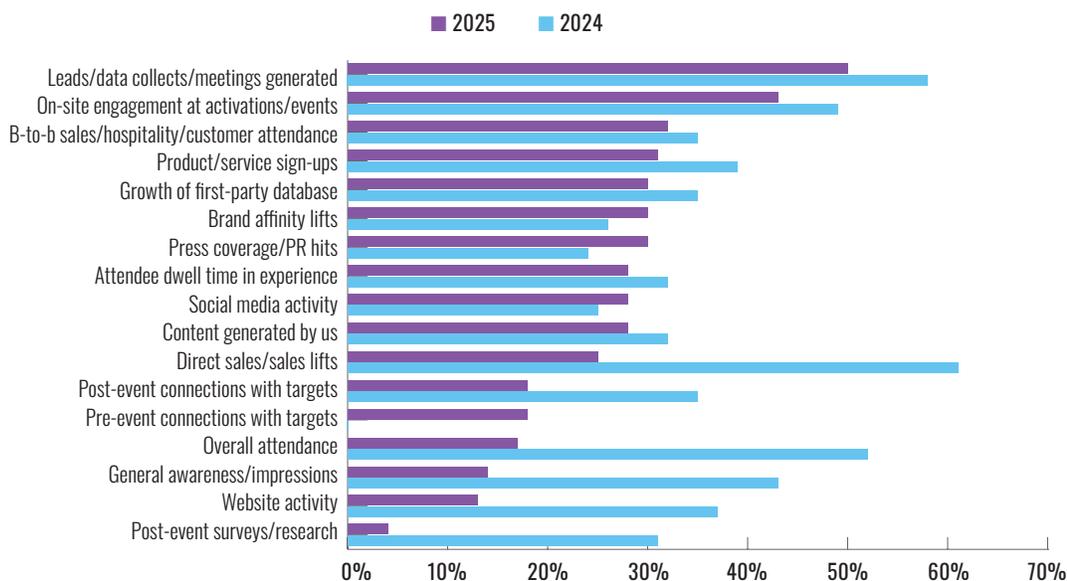
When it comes to mapping events to the bottom line, b-to-b event marketers have long blazed the trail for the industry. Events mean business—literally—on the b-to-b side of the business thanks to a sophisticated stack of measurement practices most event organizations are using to track business impact from first contact to closed/won status.

This tear continues as most of the brands surveyed (98%) report that the ROI from their events is either achieving the same ROI (66%) or an increase in ROI (32%). Lead generation remains at the top of the list of “most important” b-to-b metrics, although among a slightly smaller sample of the industry (50% versus 59% last year). Direct sales and sales lifts dropped down the list significantly, with just 25% reporting that it’s the most important metric, versus 61% last year. EventTrack analysts suspect that this is also the result of more sophisticated sales funnels and a trend toward events higher in engagement and fun (as reflected in the survey data) and lighter on closing sales. Softer “old school” metrics including awareness and overall attendance also dropped down the list with significant (30%+) decreases in the number of marketers ranking them as important.

## B-TO-B RESULTS ON THE RISE: ROI FROM YOUR EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS IS...



## MEASUREMENT MIX: THE MOST IMPORTANT B-TO-B EVENT METRICS YOY ARE...



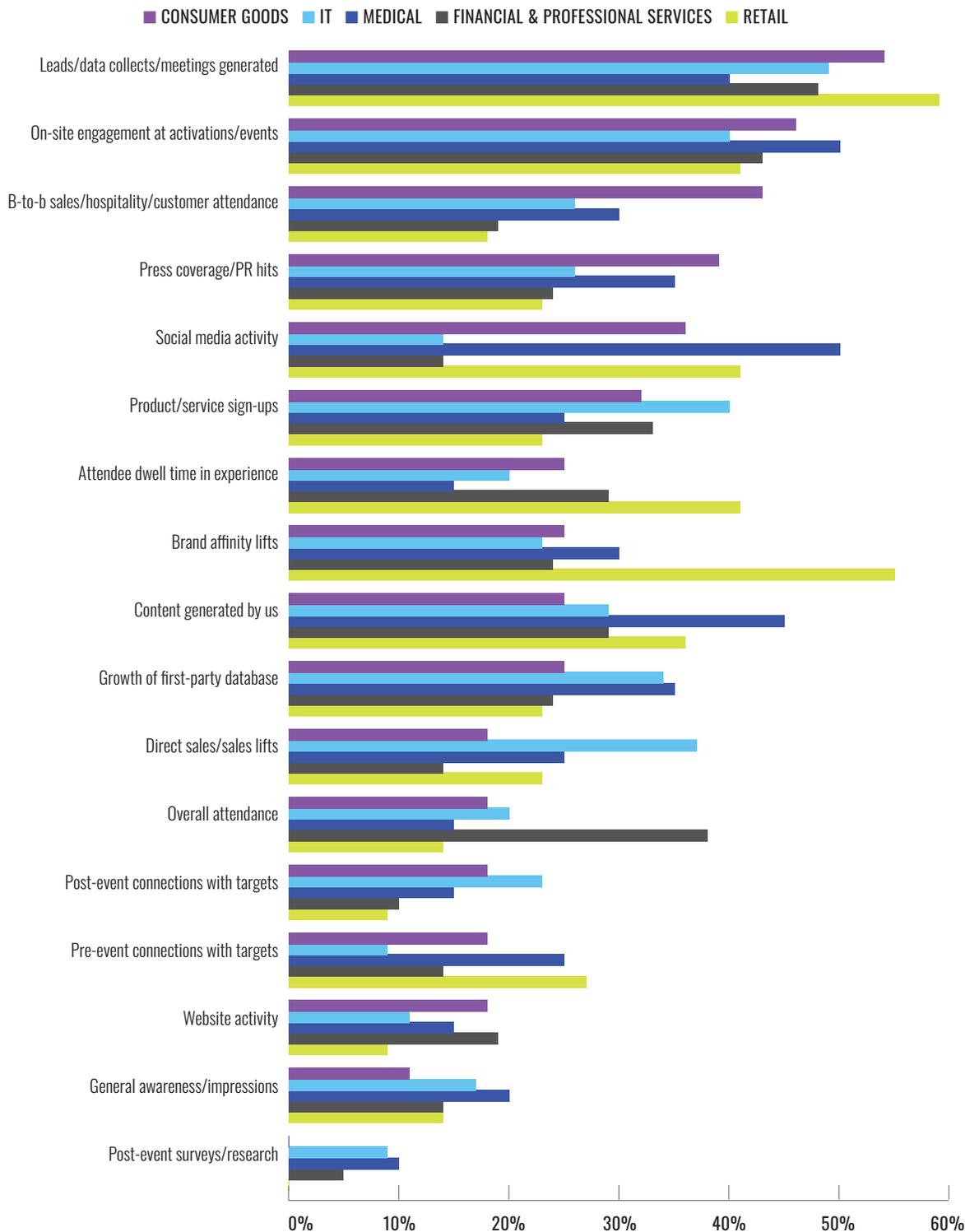
**32%**  
of b-to-b marketers  
forecast an  
increase in ROI

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Leads and engagement are universally regarded as the “most important” event metrics among all diverse sectors of the industry, followed by sales and hospitality, and press coverage. Interestingly, the Medical sector ranks social media activity as very important, tying with on-site engagement (who knew?). The Retail sector ranks brands affinity lift just below lead generation, which is an anomaly among the sectors. All sectors almost universally report that post-event surveys are not important metrics in and of themselves and general awareness and website hits are also weaker metrics.

### MEASUREMENT MIX: THE MOST IMPORTANT B-TO-B EVENT METRICS YOY ARE...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

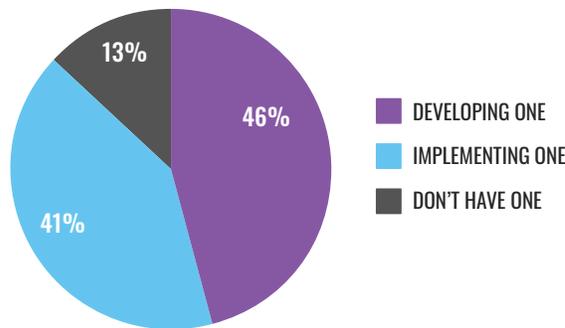
# B-TO-B EVENT SUSTAINABILITY

More b-to-b brands (13%) than b-to-c brands (8%) report that they don't have any kind of sustainability strategy yet. It's a curious statistical difference in an era when so many business marketers are reshaping their b-to-b events to reflect experiences found at consumer events. Do the same people who want sustainability at a music festival not want it at a conference? (Talk amongst yourselves.) The encouraging news is that the vast majority of b-to-b marketers (87%) do say they have a strategy or are working on one, which is optimistic for a side of the industry that often represents the highest amount of event waste due to the sheer size and scale of business conferences, trade shows and meetings—and the travel required to attend them.

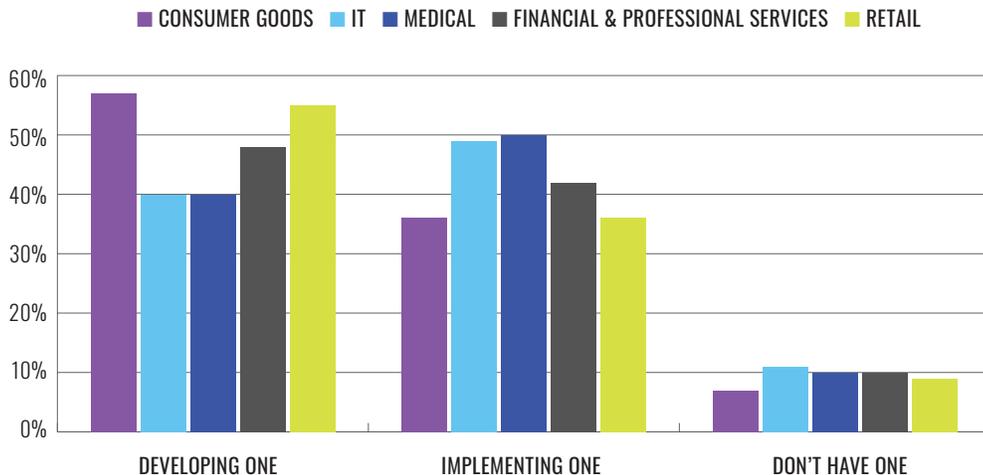
Medical and IT sector marketers lead the way with about half reporting that they have a strategy and are working to implement it. The majority of all five sectors predict it will take 3-4 years to fully implement a sustainability strategy, although 30% of the Medical sector is more optimistic and thinks it can get it done in 1-2 years. Sadly, 9% of the financial sector reports they may "never" have a more sustainable portfolio.

**87%**  
of b-to-b  
marketers have  
or are working on  
a sustainability  
strategy

## SUSTAINABILITY PACING: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



## SUSTAINABILITY PACING, BY SECTOR: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...

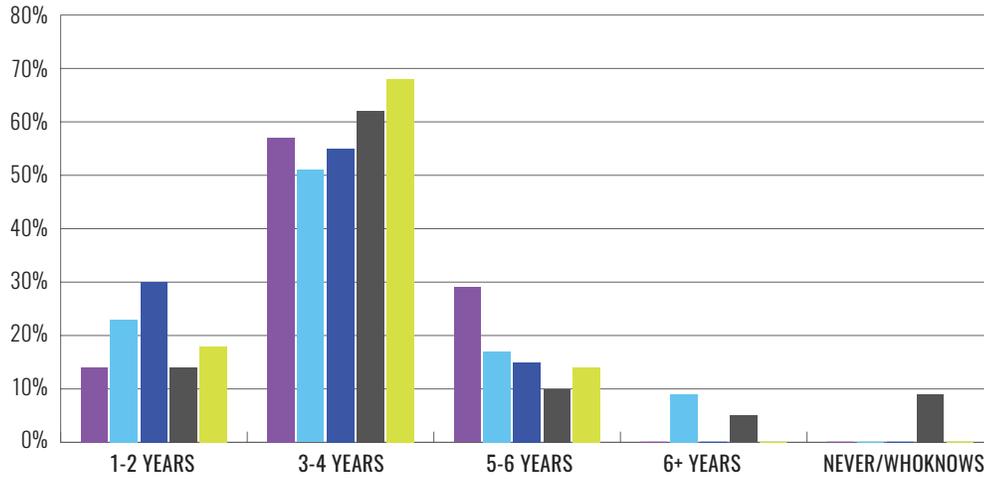


**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**TOP FIVE VERTICALS HORIZON:  
YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...**

■ CONSUMER GOODS ■ IT ■ MEDICAL ■ FINANCIAL & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES ■ RETAIL



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

# B-TO-B BRAND RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### from the B-to-B section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the B-to-B Event section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

1

#### SPENDING IS UP BUT PORTFOLIOS ARE DOWN.

Event experiences are seeing greater investment and financial support, while b-to-b event strategists are streamlining and optimizing their portfolios, keeping just the high performers and highly-targeted experiences.

**What does it mean?** Tighter portfolios with elevated engagement strategies are a post-pandemic level set that needed to happen for the health of the industry. “Fewer, but better, events” is a thoughtful mantra that’s considerate of environmental resources, budgets, objectives and attendee behaviors.

2

#### TRADE SHOWS ARE MAKING A COMEBACK.

B-to-b brands rank trade shows and trade show sponsorships as the areas where they will be doing “more” in 2026. This 13% increase over 2025 reflects growing interest in leveraging trade show audiences for on- and off-the-floor engagements.

**What does it mean?** Trade show organizers are evolving their offerings and selling less “space” and more sophisticated opportunities for engagement, which in turn creates more ROI-centric investment opportunities for b-to-b brands. There is a lot of opportunity for partnership and growth in this space.

3

#### NETWORKING IS THE FUTURE.

The majority of b-to-b marketers say the event of the future will focus most on networking. This data point captures a post-pandemic truth that persists still today: Attendees are only getting on planes when it’s clear that the live experience offers more than what they could experience online, at home.

**What does it mean?** From deconstructed keynotes to highly customized experiences to peer-to-peer learning, b-to-b marketers are rethinking—and in some cases, disbanding entirely—old conference and meeting models and trading in “talking heads” for “heads talking.”

4

#### SALES IS TAKING A BACK SEAT.

Making connections is the name of the game for b-to-b marketers who are trading in “sales” for “engagement” as their top event objective this year. Just 27% of respondents claimed it as a core objective—versus 73% in 2024.

**What does it mean?** EventTrack analysts believe that b-to-b marketers are growing ever savvier about the role their events play in sparking and nurturing long-term relationships. This shift into engagement and (slightly) away from driving sales is a reflection of a more sophisticated strategic view of what events can do—and do most effectively—with their valuable face time.

5

#### PR IS THE NEW “IT” GOAL FOR B-TO-B EVENTS, TOO.

Just like its counterpart on the consumer side, media coverage made a big leap into the No. 2 spot among b-to-b marketers, from 25% to 53%, reflecting a trend seen across the entire EventTrack study towards more PR-centric goals.

**What does it mean?** What were once closed-door b-to-b experiences are now just as visible on digital and social media as their sister events in the consumer realm. Watch as a more PR impression-centric approach to conferences and meetings takes hold in 2026 and beyond.

86%

of b-to-b marketers will increase event spending in 2026

47%

of b-to-b marketers will do more trade shows in 2026

21%

of b-to-b marketers say that sales is their top event objective

32%

of b-to-b marketers say ROI from their events is on the rise

87%

of b-to-b marketers say they have a sustainability strategy or are working on one

SECTION RECAP

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

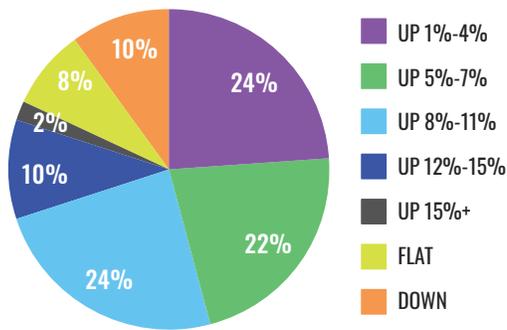
# TRADE SHOW FOCUS

Not only are b-to-b marketers reporting that they will be investing in more trade show sponsorships and exhibits than they did last year, exhibit spending is forecasted to be up year over year among 82% of trade show brand marketers as well. This is a 20% increase over last year, when 62% reported an increase in exhibit spending. About a third (36%) claim their spending will exceed 8%-15% this year.

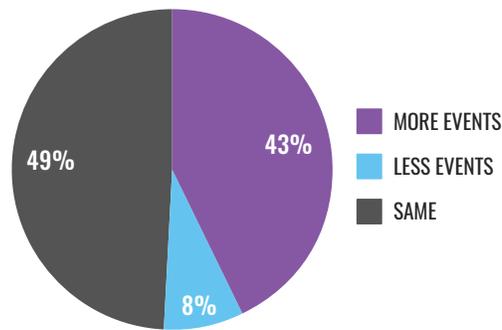
This data tells a story of an industry that could have lost its way post-pandemic, but didn't. And it's a testament to the hard-working trade show organizers and corporate marketers who have steadily infused more strategic, experiential strategies into their show floors and activations in order to be "essential" to their target audiences—not to mention fresh and enticing to *new* audiences looking for an experience worth their time and waning attention spans.

Trade show marketers are aligning with their brothers and sisters in b-to-c and b-to-b and investing in experiences while scaling back or "rightsizing" the number of events they will participate in. Forty-three percent of trade show respondents say they will exhibit at more events, which is down slightly from last year when 55% said they'd hit the gas on the number of events they'd activate at. The percentage of marketers exhibiting at *fewer* events is 8%, just two points higher than 2024, indicating a level of stability in the trade show industry and mitigating fears about any mass movements or exodus out of trade shows and into something else.

**TRADE SHOW BUDGETS:**  
2025 EXHIBIT SPENDING WILL BE...



**EXHIBIT PORTFOLIOS:**  
IN 2026, YOU EXPECT TO EXHIBIT AT...



**Trade show spending is up among 82% of marketers**

**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

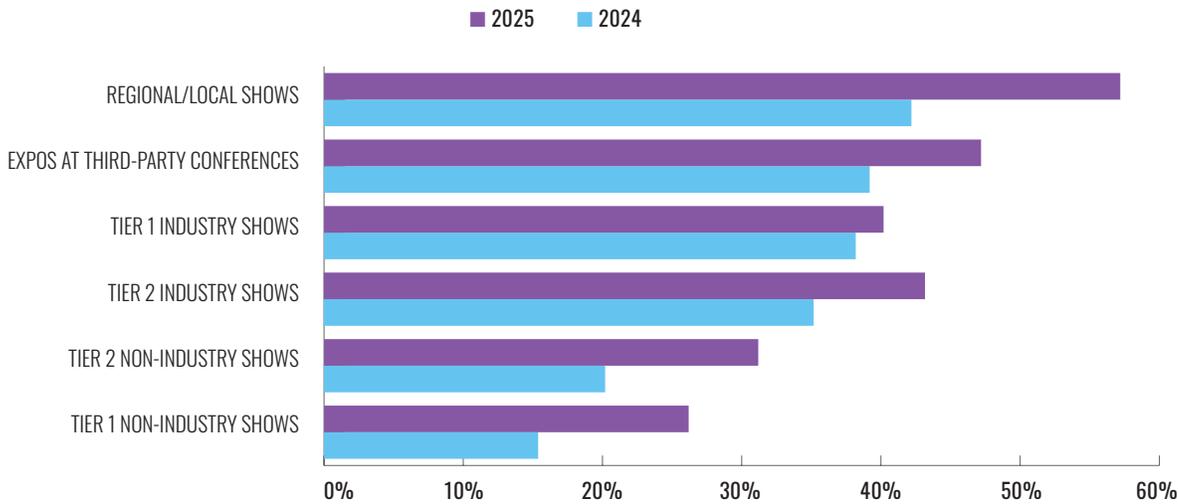
# TRADE SHOW EXHIBIT PORTFOLIO FORECAST

## 2026 EXHIBIT PORTFOLIOS, BY SHOW TYPE

Trade show marketers are spreading their investments across a variety of shows. Regional and local shows that support regional sales teams remain in the top spot with 57% of respondents saying they will do more of them, versus 42% last year. The descending order remains exactly the same as 2024, with third-party conferences, Tier 2 shows and then Tier 1 shows taking the next four spots. Tier 1 shows outside of a brand's specific industry remains at the bottom of the list but did generate slightly more interest among 26% of marketers, versus 15% last year.

**Most (57%) trade show marketers will do more regional or local shows in 2026**

**EXHIBIT PORTFOLIO FORECAST:**  
2026 EXHIBIT VOLUME, BY SHOW TYPE



**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

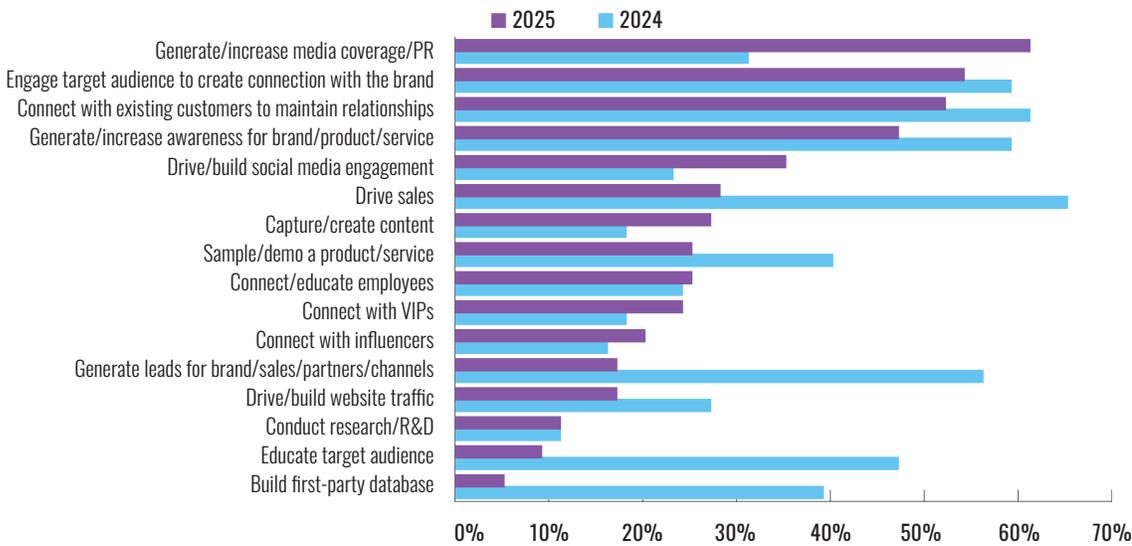
## 2025 EXHIBITOR OBJECTIVES

The similarities continue as trade show marketers do what their b-to-b and b-to-c peers are doing and rank media coverage and PR—overwhelmingly in this case—as a top trade show goal. Sixty-one percent of marketers surveyed called it the “most important” trade show goal, up from 31% last year. This shifting sentiment aligns with the wider industry as marketers seem to be united in their quest for greater visibility and PR value, which includes social media.

Sales took a dive down the list this year with just 28% reporting it as most important, compared to 65% last year. Also noteworthy: Educating target audiences and building first-party databases showed large drops in importance among marketers, each with a more than 30 percentage point delta between this and last year. Like their counterparts in corporate b-to-b events, many trade show professionals are no doubt shifting emphasis away from education because it falls into the “I can do this from my home office” category. Similarly, savvy tech stacks can build databases today more efficiently than an event can.

**28% of b-to-b marketers report that sales is the most important event objective, down from 65% last year**

### KEY EXHIBITOR GOALS: MOST IMPORTANT TRADE SHOW GOALS



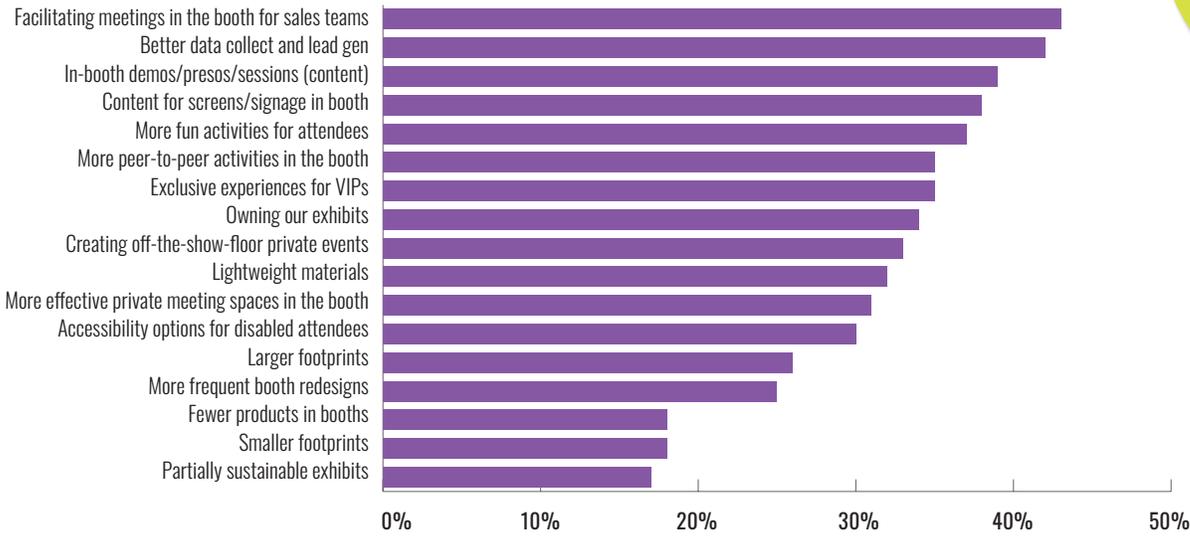
**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

## THE 2026 EXHIBIT EXPERIENCE

From inspired meeting spaces to painless data collection to engaging demos and shareable content, today's modern trade show teams have to be fully invested in making the booth more than a branded environment. It has to be an experience to make an impact. To that end, the areas where brands are focusing the most time and effort this year all point to greater engagement with target audiences. One-on-one meetings to support sales teams, smarter data collection, more engaging demos and presentations and top notch content and signage all ranked at the top of the list of areas exhibitors are leaning into. And the trend continues on down the list with nearly all of the main areas of focus being dedicated more to the experience and less to more tactical concerns like materials, products and, at the verrrrrry bottom of the list... sustainability. (Wah-wah, Earth. It was good knowing you.)

### THE 2026 EXHIBIT STRATEGY: EXHIBITORS ARE LEANING INTO...



**Most (43%)  
trade show  
marketers will lean  
into more facilitated  
meetings for sales  
teams in 2026**

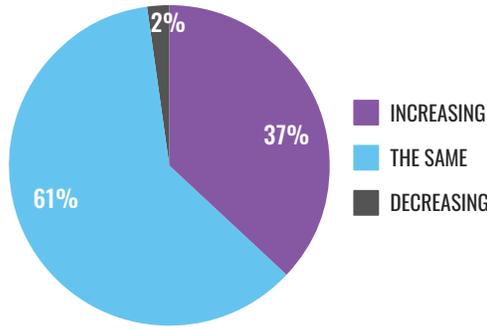
**TRADE  
SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# TRADE SHOW MEASUREMENT AND ROI

The value of trade shows remains high among corporate event departments. Thirty-seven percent of trade show marketers report that the ROI from their exhibit programs is increasing, while 61% say they're remaining steady. Only 2% report a decrease in ROI, and we bet that guy looked at his phone the entire show (you know who you are.)

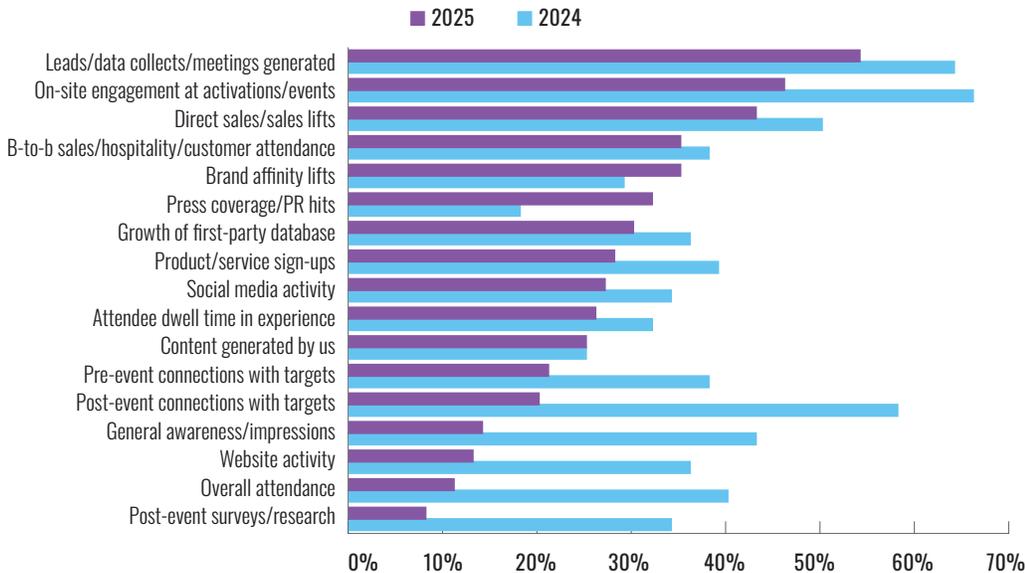
## EXHIBIT RETURNS TRENDING UP: ROI FROM YOUR EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS IS...



**98%** of trade show marketers report that ROI on their exhibits is steady or increasing

The list of “most loved” trade show measurement strategies has remained remarkably consistent since 2024. Most (54%) trade show marketers are still focusing on leads and data collection as their top priority, followed by engagement and activations (46%), sales (43%) and then hospitality (35%). You can see the jump in popularity of PR metrics here as well, with almost twice as many (32% versus 18%) marketers including media coverage on the list. Overall attendance, the OG of event measurement, was reported as one of the least important metrics with just 11% claiming it.

## EXHIBIT MEASUREMENT MIX: MOST IMPORTANT TRADE SHOW METRICS

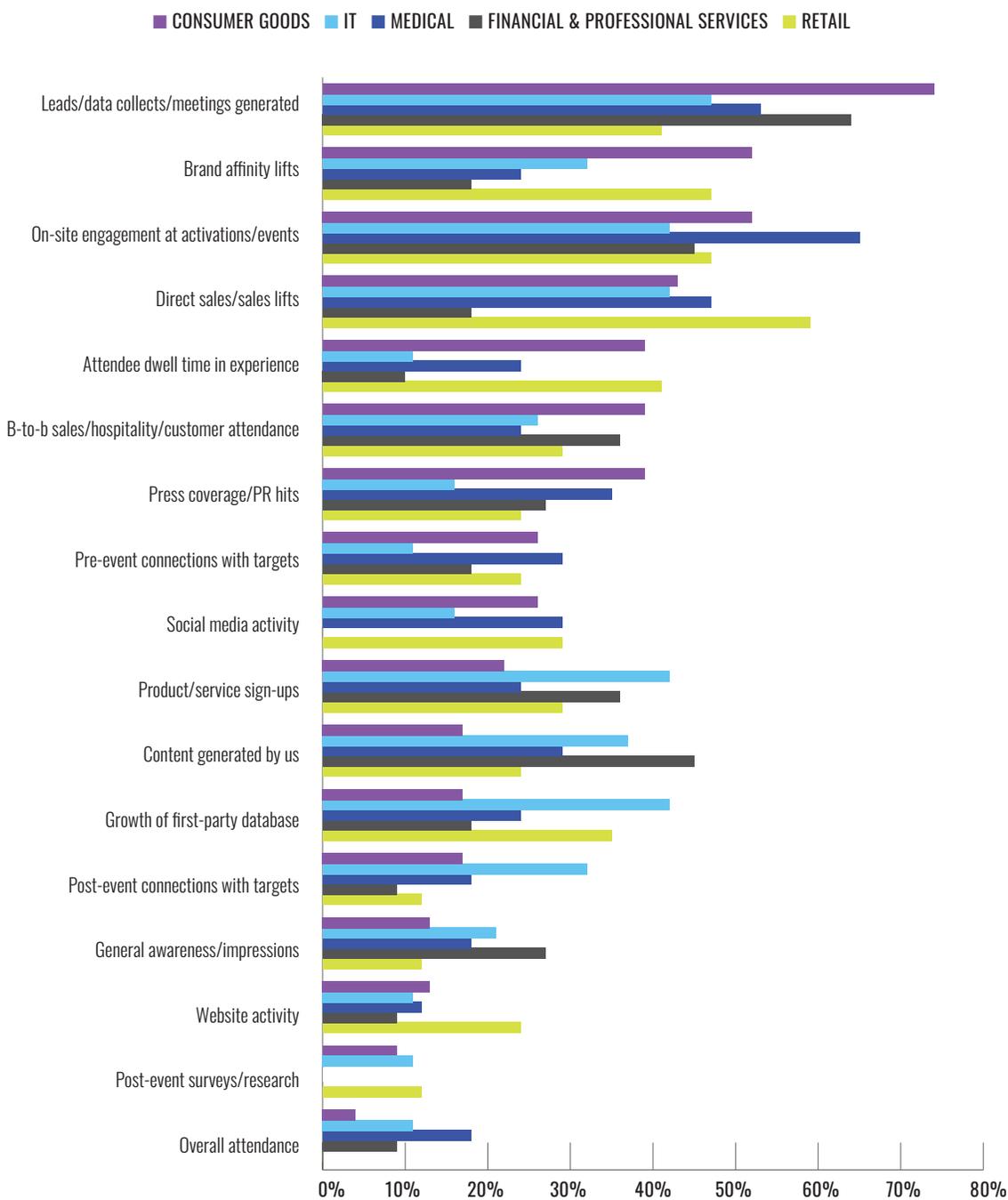


**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

There have been many common themes that have emerged among b-to-b, b-to-c and trade show marketers who responded to the EventTrack study—until now. A more detailed look into how top industry sectors rate the most important trade show metrics reveals wildly different approaches to tracking the success of their respective events. Lead generation is a top metric for Consumer Goods, IT and Financial Services companies, but direct sales takes the top spot for Retail event departments. Consumer Goods companies value lifts in brand affinity with 52% ranking it as important, while Medical trade show marketers (65%) rank engagement as the most important metric.

### EXHIBIT MEASUREMENT MIX, BY SECTOR: MOST IMPORTANT TRADE SHOW METRICS

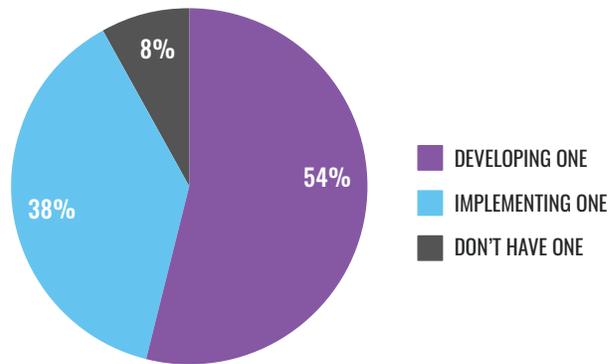


Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# THE STATE OF SUSTAINABILITY IN TRADE SHOWS

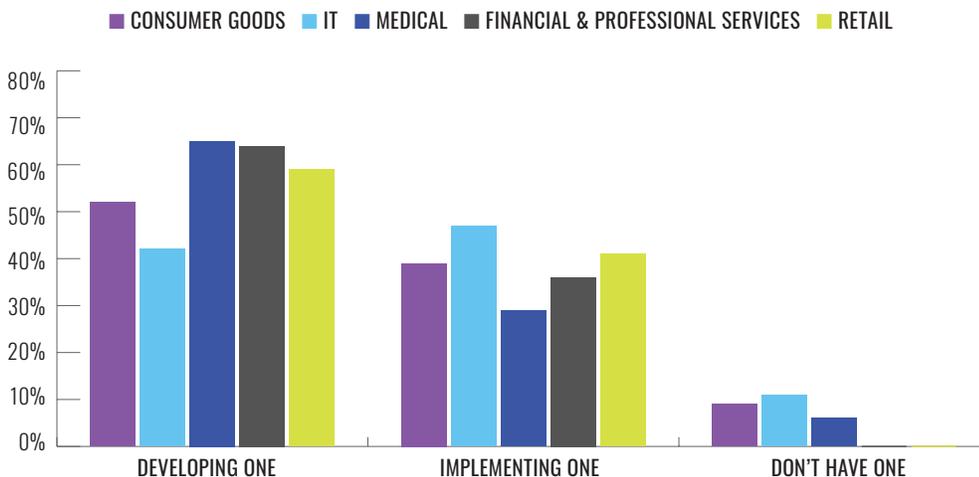
Sustainability initiatives are, by nature, often unseen. So it may be difficult to “see” the impact being made by diligent trade show marketers. But statistically, it’s being made. Last year, only 26% of Fortune 1000 exhibitors said they had a trade show sustainability plan, and 46% admitted they were still “working on one.” This year, 38% report having a plan, and 54% are working on one. Eight percent report not having one “yet.” It’s an optimistic story for an industry that, as stated earlier in the report, is often referred to as a living example of the excess and waste generated by events. Indeed, meaningful progress in trade show sustainability may be the most meaningful progress of all.

## SUSTAINABILITY PACE: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...



**92%**  
of trade show  
marketers report  
they have or  
are working on  
a sustainability  
strategy

## TOP FIVE VERTICALS: YOUR CURRENT EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS...

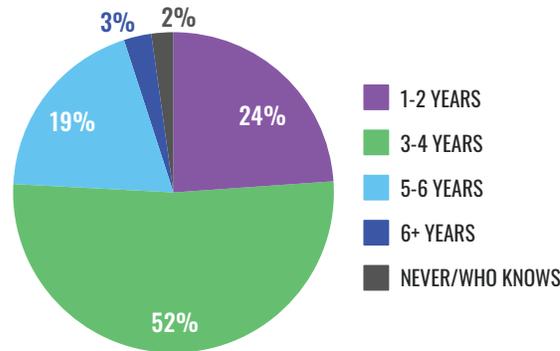


**TRADE  
SHOWS**

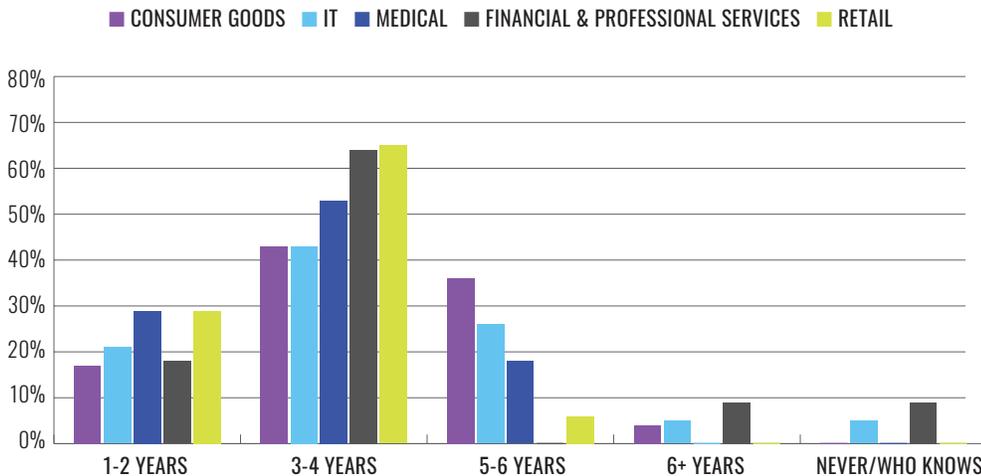
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Trade show brands report a longer timeline than their peers in corporate and consumer events when it comes to transforming their portfolios. Almost three quarters (71%) think it will take at least three years and up to six to make it happen. There is, however, a more ambitious contingent that believes a 1-2 year timeline is possible for meaningful change. Looking at the sectors more deeply, Financial Services companies are ambitious, with 64% saying they can make their portfolios more environmentally conscious in 3-4 years, while at the same time being the only sector to report that 9% believe it's just not possible, or "who knows." The Retail sector appears to be the most "all in" on the shortest timeline with 94% of respondents saying that, yes, they will have a more sustainable portfolio in the next 1-4 years.

### SUSTAINABILITY HORIZON: YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



### TOP FIVE VERTICALS HORIZON: YOU EXPECT TO HAVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE PORTFOLIO IN...



**71%**  
of trade show marketers believe it will take 3-6 years to implement a sustainability strategy

**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# TRADE SHOW RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### from the Trade Show section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the Trade Show section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

**82%**  
of trade show marketers will increase event spending in 2026

**43%**  
of trade show marketers will exhibit at more events in 2026

**57%**  
of trade show marketers will do more regional or local shows in 2026

**61%**  
of trade show marketers say PR is their top objective in 2026

**37%**  
of trade show marketers say the ROI on their exhibit programs is increasing

**SECTION RECAP**

**1**

#### LESS IS MORE.

Trade show marketers are aligning with their brothers and sisters in b-to-c and b-to-b and investing in experiences while scaling back or “rightsizing” the number of events they will participate in. Forty-three percent of trade show respondents say they will exhibit at more events this year, which is down 13% from last year.

**What does it mean?** Trade show marketers are being more selective about where they spend their dollars, but they are elevating their on-site experiences to get the most bang for their buck.

**2**

#### EXHIBIT ENGAGEMENT IS A TOP PRIORITY.

One-on-one meetings to support sales teams, smarter data collection, more engaging demos and presentations, and top notch content and signage all ranked at the top of the list of areas exhibitors are leaning into in 2026.

**What does it mean?** It's never enough to just “be there” at a trade show (if it ever was—which, it wasn't). While a flawless booth and environment is important, tactical elements like these are at the bottom of the list of important priorities in 2026.

**3**

#### PR IS THE NEW “IT” GOAL FOR TRADE SHOWS, TOO.

Just like its counterparts on the consumer and b-to-b sides, media coverage made a big leap into the No. 1 spot among trade show marketers as the most important objective for trade shows this year. This reflects a larger trend seen across the entire EventTrack study towards more PR-centric goals in all sectors.

**What does it mean?** As the lines between traditional media and social media continue to blur, trade show marketers will continue to leverage the environments and investments they're making on show floors to maximize reach, impact and engagement across every channel available.

**4**

#### THE MEASUREMENT MIX OVERALL REMAINS STEADY.

Trade show marketers report that the metrics they're tracking are leads, engagement and sales, in that order, which is consistent with previous EventTrack studies. But PR is inserting its power here, too, with twice as many marketers tracking media impact this year versus last.

**What does it mean?** Trade show marketers should be encouraged by the fact that the industry at large is tracking the same data year over year. Consistent, YOY event metrics can bolster any event organization's ability to align better with business goals, show progress and prove the value of their events over time.

**5**

#### SUSTAINABILITY IS MAKING HEADWAY.

Last year, only 26% of Fortune 1000 exhibitors said they had a trade show sustainability plan, and 46% admitted they were still “working on one.” This year, 38% report having a plan, and 54% are working on one.

**What does it mean?** Progress is slow, but the trade show industry has its eyes open to the fact that it is one of the event industry's largest contributors to environmental waste. Trade show brands need to be part of the solution even if it means small steps because attendees do care about environmental impact (see the trade show attendee section, ahead, for more.)

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

The background is a light blue gradient with various abstract elements: blue and purple rounded rectangles, thin lines, and clusters of small yellow dots. Symbols like '+' and 'x' are scattered throughout. The text 'EVENT ATTENDEE INSIGHTS' is centered in a bold, yellow-green font.

# EVENT ATTENDEE INSIGHTS

# CONSUMER ATTENDEES

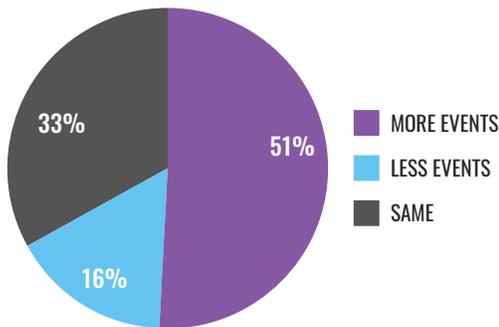
Entire generations have grown accustomed to experiencing brand activations at their favorite sporting events, music festivals and local gathering spots. Indeed, experiential marketing is a staple today in a way it wasn't 20 years ago, and expectations are higher than ever that brands will show up—and show out—in a big way for their most important audiences.

Consumers are well past the surge of excitement that brought events back to life after the pandemic, and today are part of a new generation of eventgoers who need to “see it to believe it.” More than half of event attendees surveyed (51%) for EventTrack this year will go to more events than they did last year. Thirty-three percent will hit up the same number of experiences.

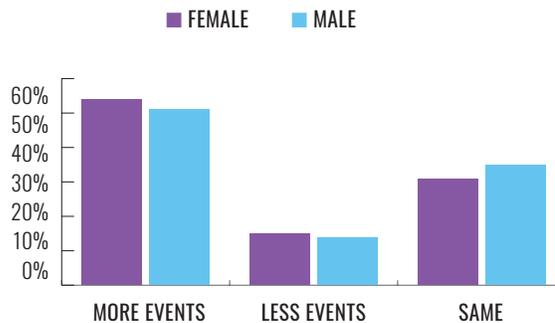
Analyzing the data by gender and age tells a slightly different story. Women will be heading to a few more events this year (54% versus 51% among men), and, not surprisingly, the 18-25 age group will be investing in the most event experiences (65%). But there are a few counterintuitive takeaways. Twenty percent of Gen Z says they will attend less events, which is nearly the same number reported by the over 55 crowd (21%). And don't count the millennials out. They are also heading to a lot more events, according to 60% of them, and will opt out of events at the lowest rate of all the age groups (8%). The Backstreet Boys reunion at the Sphere may be responsible for this number. Because... Backstreet's back, alright.

**51%**  
of attendees  
will attend more  
events in 2026

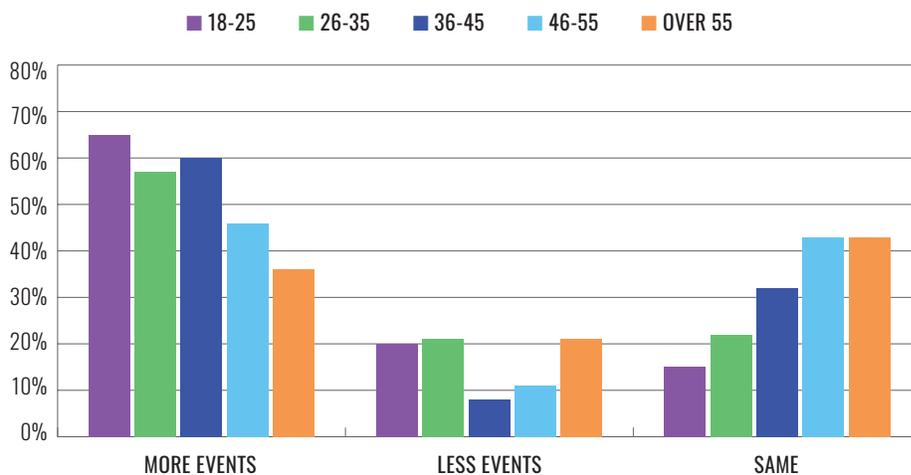
**CONSUMER ATTENDANCE FORECAST:**  
IN 2026, YOU WILL ATTEND...



**CONSUMER ATTENDANCE FORECAST BY GENDER:**  
IN 2026, YOU WILL ATTEND...



**CONSUMER ATTENDANCE FORECAST BY AGE:**  
IN 2026, YOU WILL ATTEND...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

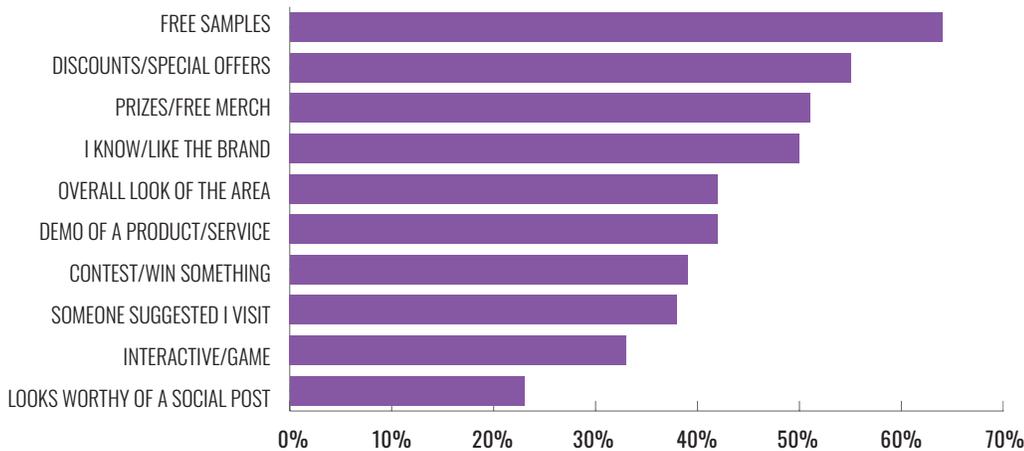
**B-TO-C  
ATTENDEES**

# TOP EXPERIENCE DRIVERS

Consumers crave the same freebies they always have, but the priority order of the samples and merch is slightly different this year. Product samples are again the No. 1 motivator for attendee engagement, but discounts jumped into second place this year, bumping prizes and free merch down the list one notch. Even so, half of consumers do still say that brands that align with their passions will get them to events.

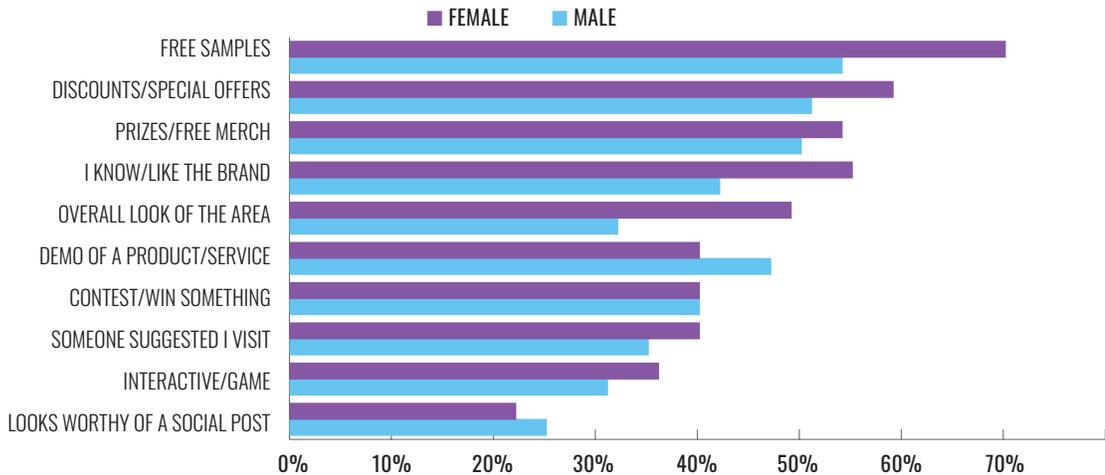
**Free samples (aka “try it before you buy it”) are still the top motivator for consumer engagement**

## TOP EXPERIENCE DRIVERS: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ENGAGE WITH A BRAND AT AN EVENT?



Drilling into the behaviors by gender reveals a higher inclination among women to go after those free samples, with 70% ranking it their top motivator, versus 54% of men. Discounts, merch and passion alignment rank in the same order for both genders, but there is one anomaly: 47% of men are driven by product demos, while only 40% of women say it will drive them to the experience.

## TOP EXPERIENCE DRIVERS, BY GENDER: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ENGAGE WITH A BRAND AT AN EVENT?

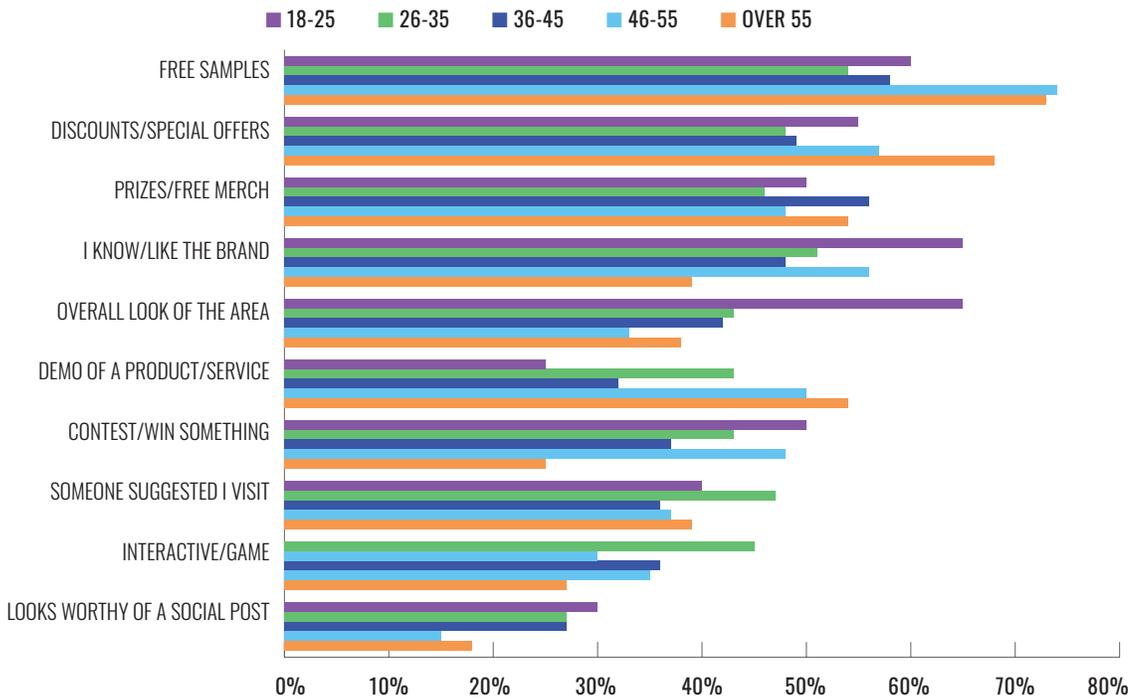


**B-TO-C  
ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

The latchkey generation (Gen X) is showing a proclivity for free stuff, stealing the top spot for the cohort that is motivated the very most (74%) by free samples. Boomers came in a close second at 73% and took the top spot among cohorts motivated by discounts, with 68% saying it's the second biggest driver for engaging in an event. Aligning with passions and the overall look of the experience are top drivers for Gen Z, with 65% of them ranking both options at the top of their lists and above all the free stuff the older generations get excited about.

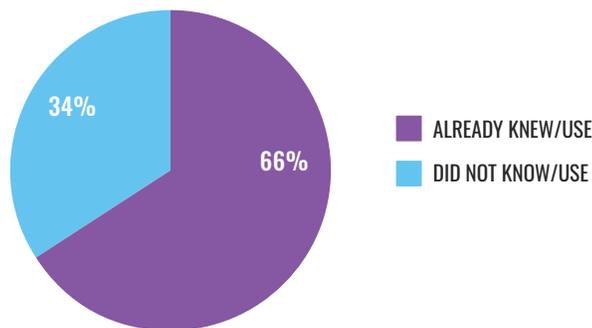
### TOP EXPERIENCE DRIVERS, BY AGE: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ENGAGE WITH A BRAND AT AN EVENT?



This next data point tells two stories. First, it lets us know that among those going to events, a majority (66%) already know or use the product or service, which means brand marketing teams are having good success laying the groundwork for their events as places where existing fans or brand advocates will show up, engage and hopefully spread brand love based on their experience. This chart also showcases the opportunity for event teams to utilize their events as a means for generating *new* awareness among one-third (34%) of event audiences. Both figures shine a light on the power events have to move consumers.

### EVENTS DRIVE CONSUMER AWARENESS:

YOUR MOST RECENT INTERACTION WITH A BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT AN EVENT WAS A BRAND YOU...



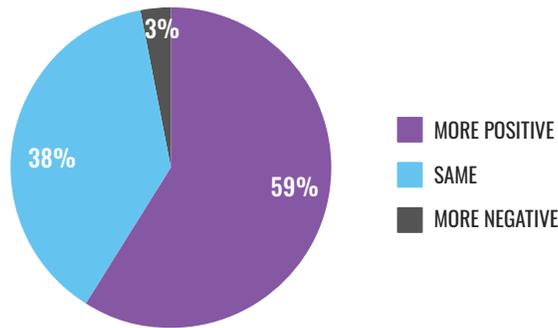
**Most (66%) consumers that engage with a brand at an event already know the brand**

**B-TO-C ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Live events can turn a few moments into a lifelong love affair with your brand, and no other chart in this year's EventTrack study illustrates it better than this one. The majority of consumers (59%) who attend events report that the events made them feel more positive about the brand, product or service, proving just how powerful, and pivotal, a live engagement can be.

**POSITIVE SENTIMENT:  
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A  
BRAND AFTER INTERACTING  
WITH IT AT AN EVENT?**

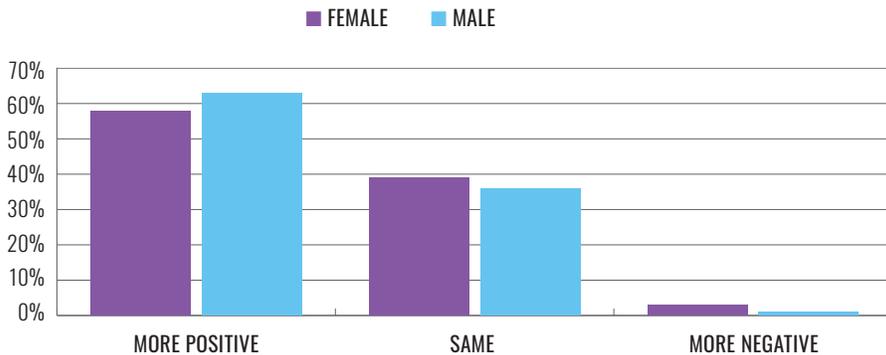


While the delta isn't large, men do have a slightly higher proclivity for changing their feelings about a brand based on a live experience, with 63% reporting their positive sentiment goes up, versus 58% of women. Discerning female crowds (3%) may leave feeling more negative, versus just 1% of men.

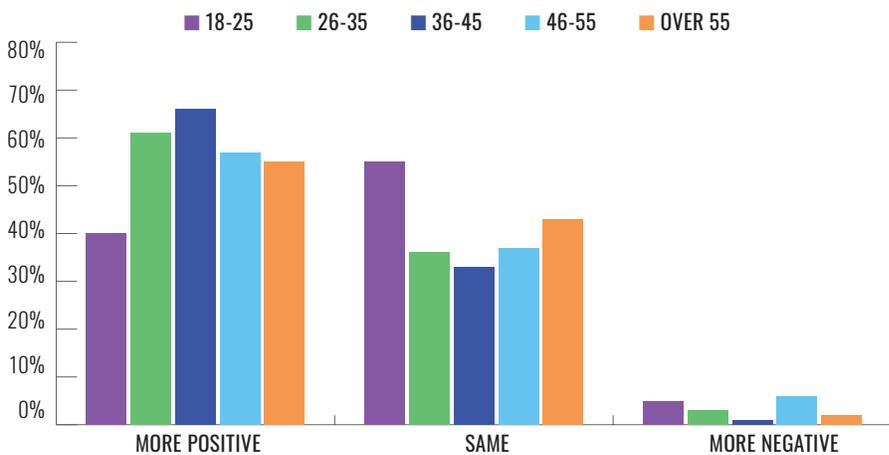
Comparing age cohorts, Gen Z, perhaps not surprisingly, might be one of the toughest customer groups, reporting that just 40% feel more positive after an event, compared to 66% of millennials. Those ages 18-25 and Gen X also report a higher level of discontent after an event or experience, saying that they (5% and 6%, respectively) feel more negative about a brand after an event.

**59%**  
of consumers report  
that attending an  
event made them  
feel more positive  
about the brand

**POSITIVE SENTIMENT, BY GENDER:  
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A BRAND AFTER INTERACTING WITH IT AT AN EVENT?**



**POSITIVE SENTIMENT, BY AGE:  
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A BRAND AFTER INTERACTING WITH IT AT AN EVENT?**



Just 40% of  
Gen Z feels  
positive about  
a brand after  
an event

**B-TO-C  
ATTENDEES**

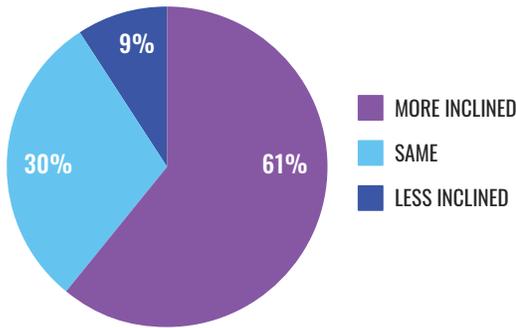
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# THE PURCHASE FUNNEL

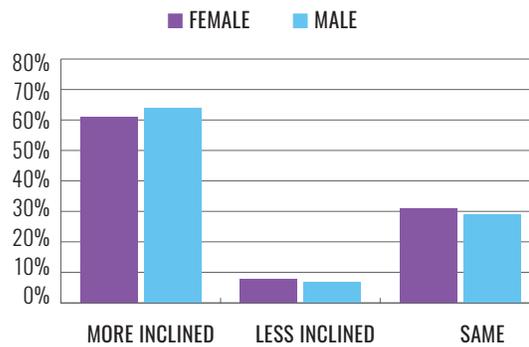
Positive sentiment isn't the only byproduct of an engaging live brand experience. Brand marketers also enjoy a significant uptick in purchase inclination after a live event. Among 61% of consumers surveyed, brand interactions generated purchase intent. The effect is slightly more powerful among men (64%), who report that events make them more inclined to purchase the product or service they experienced at an event, versus 61% of women. Panning in and looking at the data by age reveals that consumers ages 36-45 (millennials) show a markedly higher tendency to purchase after events, with 79% reporting that's the case. The youngest cohort, 18-25, needs more convincing, with the lowest purchase inclination (40%) and highest reported "less inclined to purchase" rate of 25%. Event marketers will have to work harder than ever to woo this audience who has never known a world without experiential marketing (read: the bar is high), or without the distractions of digital and social media.

**Events drive purchase intent among 61% of attendees**

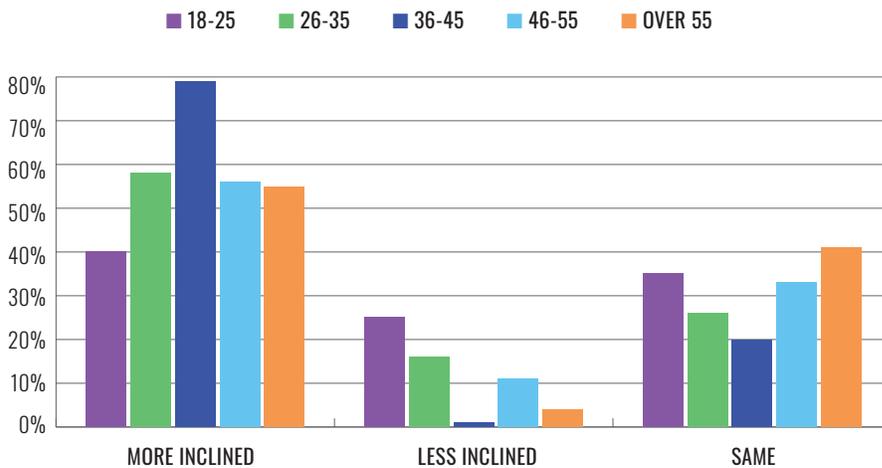
**EVENTS DRIVE PURCHASE INTENT:**  
DOES INTERACTING WITH BRANDS MAKE YOU...



**PURCHASE INTENT, BY GENDER:**  
DOES INTERACTING WITH BRANDS MAKE YOU...



**PURCHASE INTENT, BY AGE:**  
DOES INTERACTING WITH BRANDS MAKE YOU...

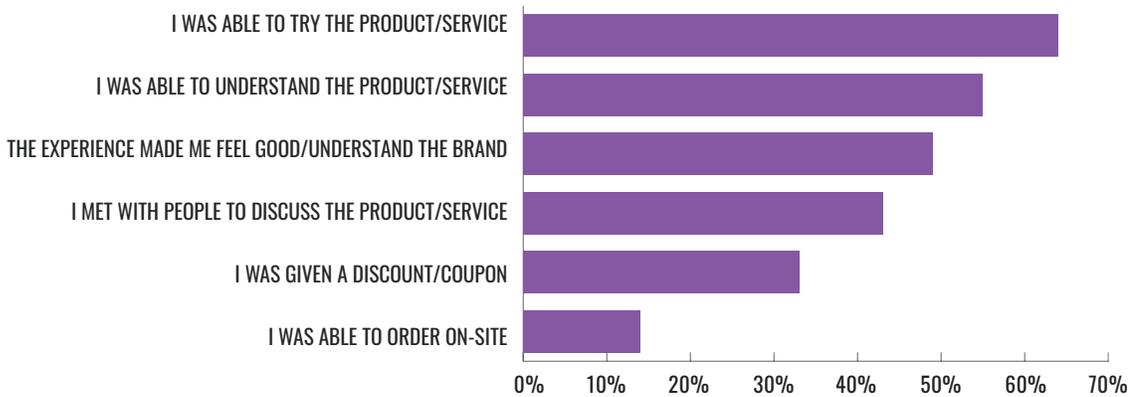


**B-TO-C ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

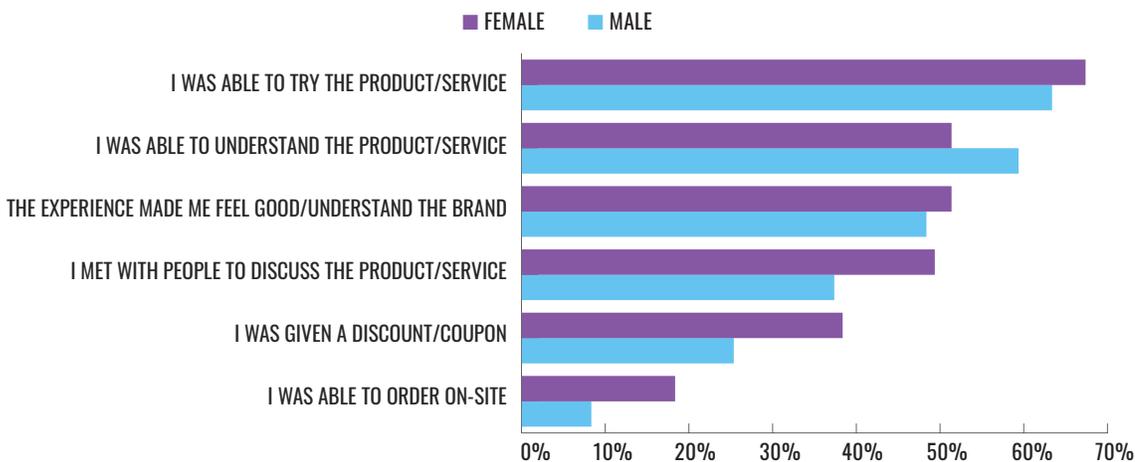
At the heart of most successful consumer activations is a “try it before you buy it” strategy that lets consumers get hands-on in fun and immersive ways that ultimately give attendees a personal sense of ownership of, or alignment with, the brand. EventTrack analysts were not surprised to see that this evergreen data point remains true again this year as 64% of consumers report that trying products and services not only changes sentiment and builds engagement—it moves them to purchase as well. Fifty-five percent say that experiences that created a better understanding of the product or brand increased purchase inclination, followed by experiences that create “feel good” moments, which led 49% of respondents to say it boosted purchase inclination for them.

### CONNECTIONS DRIVE TRANSACTIONS: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



Slicing and dicing the data by gender revealed that the same three drivers—trial, understanding and the “feel good factor”—were top purchase generators, but women skewed slightly higher (67% versus 63% of men), when it comes to getting hands-on with a brand. Men seem to seek a greater understanding before they pull out their credit cards, with 59% saying they want to have that better understanding first, versus 51% of women.

### CONNECTIONS DRIVE TRANSACTIONS, BY GENDER: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



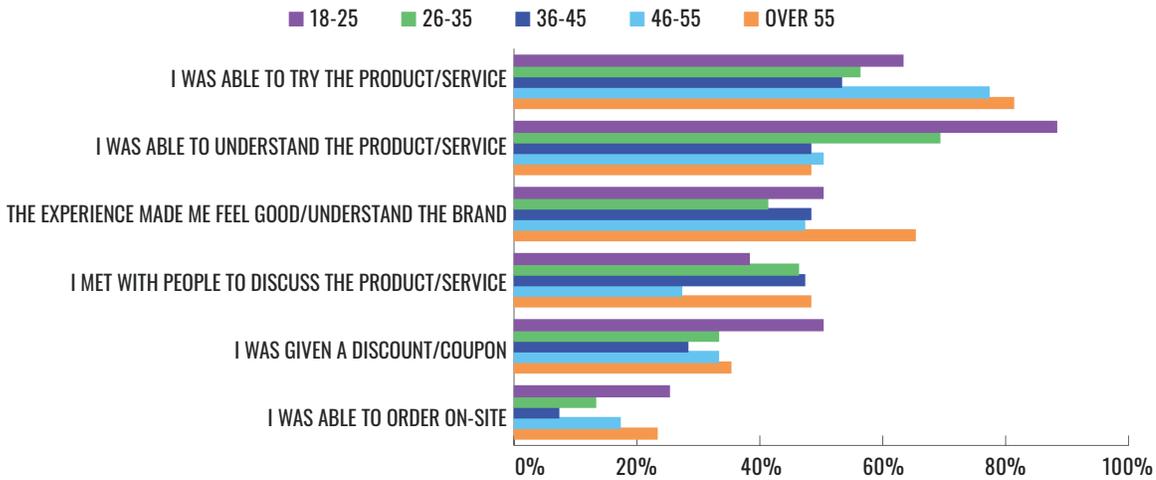
**Hands-on trial boosts purchase inclination among 64% of consumers**

**B-TO-C ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Purchase inclination drivers vary the greatest when you look at the different age cohorts. Nearly all (88%) of consumers ages 18-25 are looking for an experience that allows them to understand a product or service better before they make a purchase. Boomers (81%) and Gen X (77%) crave the “try before you buy” experience before they make a purchase decision. On-site purchasing options consistently ranked lowest among all age groups.

### CONNECTIONS DRIVE TRANSACTIONS, BY AGE: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



**Most (88%) of consumers ages 18-25 are looking for an experience that helps them understand the brand better before they buy**

**B-TO-C ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

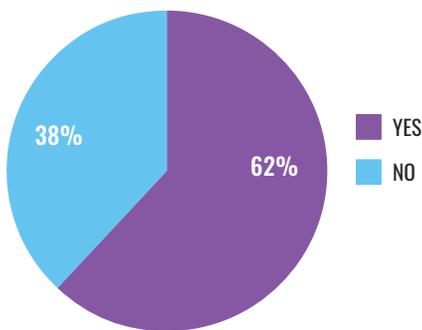
# PURCHASE CONVERSION AND LOYALTY

Events make cash registers ring. Full stop. According to 62% of consumers, the events they attend do, in fact, inspire them to purchase the product or service they engaged with at the event. The sales cycle is accelerated for eventgoers as well, with 38% reporting that they buy the product they engaged with at an event within 24 hours of attending. Thirty-four percent buy within one week of the live experience. Particularly noteworthy: The vast majority—81 percent—of consumers say they have become repeat customers or purchasers after the live event.

**38%**  
of attendees  
buy within 24  
hours of the  
event

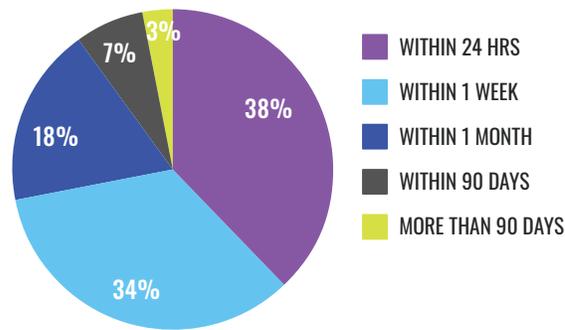
## EVENTS DRIVE SALES:

DID YOU PURCHASE THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE BEING PROMOTED AT THE EVENT?

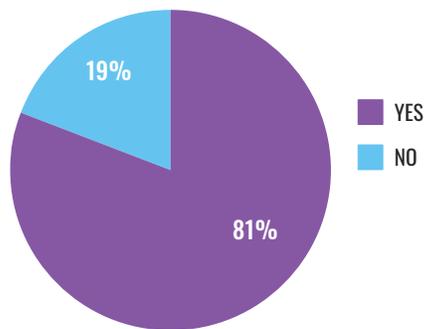


## TIMELINE TO PURCHASE:

WHEN DID YOU PURCHASE THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE BRING PROMOTED AT THE EVENT?



**LOYALTY INCREASES:** HAVE YOU BECOME A REGULAR/REPEAT CUSTOMER/PURCHASER OF THIS PRODUCT/SERVICE SINCE THE EVENT?



**B-TO-C  
ATTENDEES**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SHARING EXPERIENCES

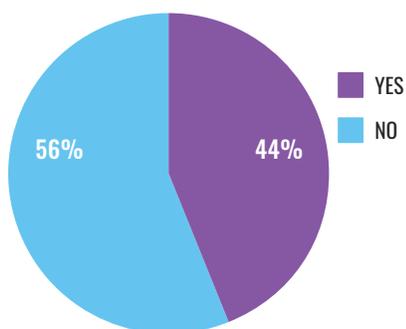
This year's EventTrack study marks the first time more consumers have said they *don't* capture content at events (56%) than those who do (44%). Taken in the aggregate, this number reflects vastly different social media usage patterns across a wide variety of age groups ranging from 18-55+. That said, the split remains nearly even, with almost half of all consumers claiming that they do, in fact, capture and share content at events—an important reminder that events are content platforms in action.

For those who do capture event content, Facebook is the top spot for social sharing among 61 of respondents, followed by Instagram (55%) and YouTube (48%). Word of mouth is a powerful factor among most (74%) of consumers who say that they tell their peers, friends and families about their event experiences.

**Facebook is the top platform for social sharing events**

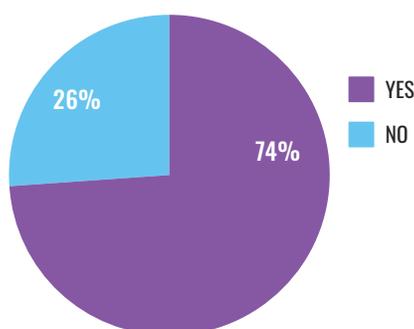
## CONTENT CAPTURE:

DID YOU CAPTURE PHOTOS/VIDEOS/CONTENT DURING YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE BRAND?



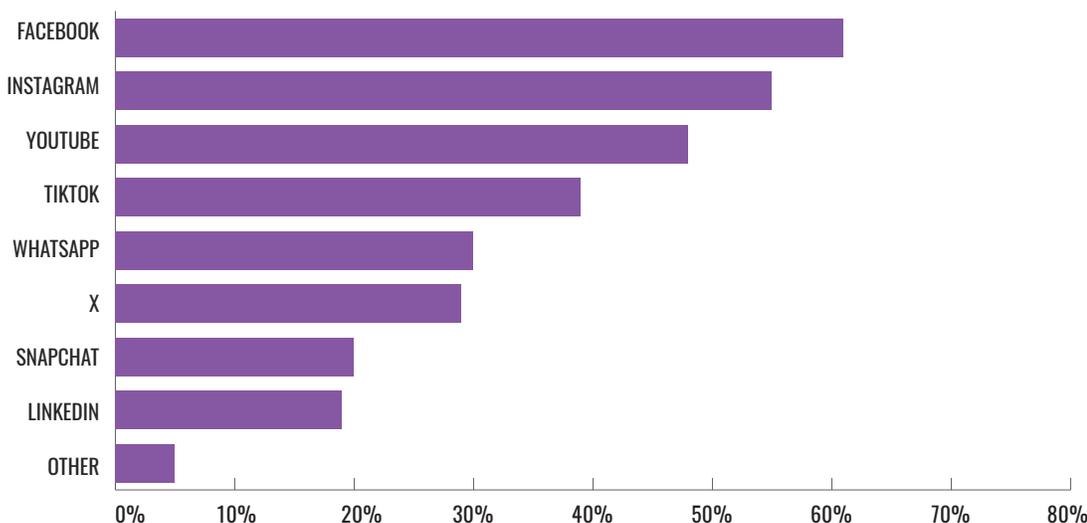
## PEER-TO-PEER:

DID YOU TELL ANYBODY WHO WASN'T AT THE EVENT ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE?



## SOCIAL CUES:

TOP SOCIAL PLATFORMS CONSUMERS POST EVENT CONTENT TO



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-C ATTENDEES**

# B-TO-C ATTENDEE RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### from the B-to-C Attendee section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the Consumer Event section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

# 1

#### ATTENDEE INTEREST IN CONSUMER EVENTS REMAINS STRONG.

More than half of event attendees surveyed (51%) for EventTrack this year will go to more b-to-c events than they did last year. Thirty-three percent will hit up the same number of experiences.

**What does it mean?** There may be no more important time to capitalize on this steady interest in events than 2026, when consumers will be inundated with ever more AI-generated content, and as a result, will look to live experiences to touch, feel and experience “what’s real” for themselves.

**51%**  
of b-to-c event attendees will attend more events in 2026

# 2

#### SOME AGE GROUPS BUCK TRENDS.

Not surprisingly, the 18-25 age cohort will be investing in the most event experiences, with 65% reporting they will go to more events next year. But there is one counterintuitive takeaway: Twenty percent of early millennials (ages 26-35) say they will attend less events in 2026, which is nearly the same number reported by the over 55 crowd (21%). Gen Z and Gen X = who knew?

**What does it mean?** Consumer marketers should do the deep work required to understand their target audiences on an intimate level. As this year’s EventTrack has revealed, tropes and stereotypes about generational and gender preferences may be outdated or inaccurate. Indeed, a more personalized event experience is a more impactful one.

**54%**  
of female b-to-c event attendees will attend more events in 2026

# 3

#### ‘TRY BEFORE YOU BUY’ DRIVES ENGAGEMENT.

Free samples remain the top motivator among consumers attending events, but the EventTrack study distinguishes between “free samples” and “prizes/free merch” to give a slightly more detailed view of what motivates attendees to engage at an event. Free samples are inclusive of hands-on trial and tasting experiences while free merch is just that—free stuff.

**What does it mean?** Consumer marketers should read the persistent popularity of “free samples” as “more opportunities to get hands-on with the brand.” Especially in light of the growing popularity of AI. Live events can turn a sampling experience into a “source of truth” experience for their brands.

**21%**  
of Gen Z b-to-c event attendees will attend fewer events in 2026

# 4

#### HANDS-ON TRIAL BOOSTS PURCHASE INCLINATION.

Sixty-four percent of consumers report that trying products and services at events not only changes sentiment and builds engagement—it moves them to purchase as well.

**What does it mean?** The best events in 2026 will close the gap between the live experience and the purchase to best capitalize on the spark created with consumers at live events. If your event strategy doesn’t have a post-event activation plan, you’re leaving money on the table.

**61%**  
of b-to-c event attendees say events make them more inclined to purchase

# 5

#### MANY CONSUMERS WILL BUY WITHIN ONE DAY OF AN EVENT.

According to 62% of consumers, the events they attend inspire them to purchase the product or service they engaged with at the event. The sales cycle is accelerated for eventgoers as well, with 38% reporting that they buy the product they engaged with at an event within 24 hours of attending.

**What does it mean?** Consumer event marketers have to create event strategies that are inclusive of what happens immediately after the event or risk losing the statistical probability that the consumers they engaged with will act on their likelihood to buy.

**59%**  
of b-to-c event attendees say events make them feel more positive about the brand

**SECTION RECAP**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SURVEY [SNAPSHOT]

EventTrack survey respondents were offered the opportunity to write in responses to certain questions, giving the report data a deeper perspective on some of the key themes and drivers influencing how event marketers will spend and strategize for 2026.

## **The survey asked consumer event attendees, why do you expect to attend more, less or the same number of events next year? Here are their responses:**

- Learning and exposure, attending events for personal or professional growth
- Ticket availability, exclusive invite
- Group participation, go with family, friends
- Meeting people with similar interests
- Topic specific interest: music, sports, entertainment, etc.
- Event variety and quality, interest in high-quality events
- Have more time to attend or participate
- Location and convenience, event locations becoming more accessible
- Travel opportunity, combining events with trip or vacation

## **The survey asked consumer event attendees who felt positively about a brand, product, or service after interacting with it at an event, what was driving those feelings? Here are their responses:**

- Learn about new products or service, or new experience
- Free samples
- Ability to try product or do demo
- Fun, enjoyable, entertaining
- Positive experience, worth time
- Event environment was interesting, unique, different
- Liked personal attention, was made to feel good
- Felt better about brand or company
- Enjoyed meeting celebrity, expert or company personnel
- Purchased product or improved likelihood of purchasing

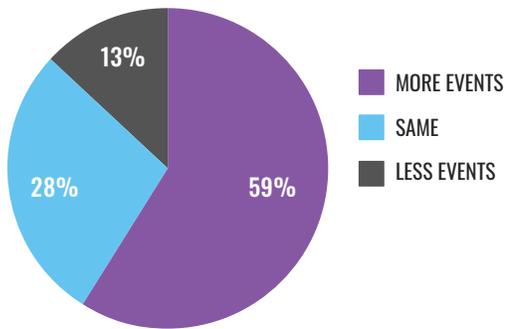
## **The survey asked consumer event attendees who planned to spend more time at events in 2026, what was driving that increase? Here are their responses:**

- Stayed for specific activity, presentation or incentive/benefit, other reason
- Enjoyed experience, had fun
- Experience was unique in some way
- Stayed for samples or demonstration
- Interactive experience
- Connections and networking, socializing, interacting
- Atmosphere, event, exhibit looked interesting
- Event, experience was relevant in some specific way
- (If staying a short period of time) To be efficient and have time to see wider event; time constraints

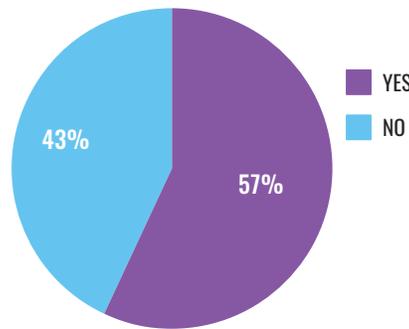
# B-TO-B ATTENDEE INSIGHTS

The segment of the industry typically most impacted by economic volatility and travel budget restrictions appears to be on the upswing heading into 2026, with slightly more conservative growth than last year. Forty-four percent of b-to-b attendees say they would attend more events in the year ahead, which is down 10% over the last EventTrack study. And more attendees (13% versus 8% last year) say they will attend fewer events in 2026. But event marketers should not fret about the downward trajectory in the data. As stated earlier in this report, b-to-b event departments are investing more into a *more selective* group of events, so portfolios are in effect getting smarter and tighter, which impacts the number of events that can be attended. Some of this sea change might be driven by attendees themselves, who will gladly travel for a must-attend experience, but need extra convincing that their T&E budgets (57% say this is a big factor) are being spent on something worthwhile, and something that they can't get at home.

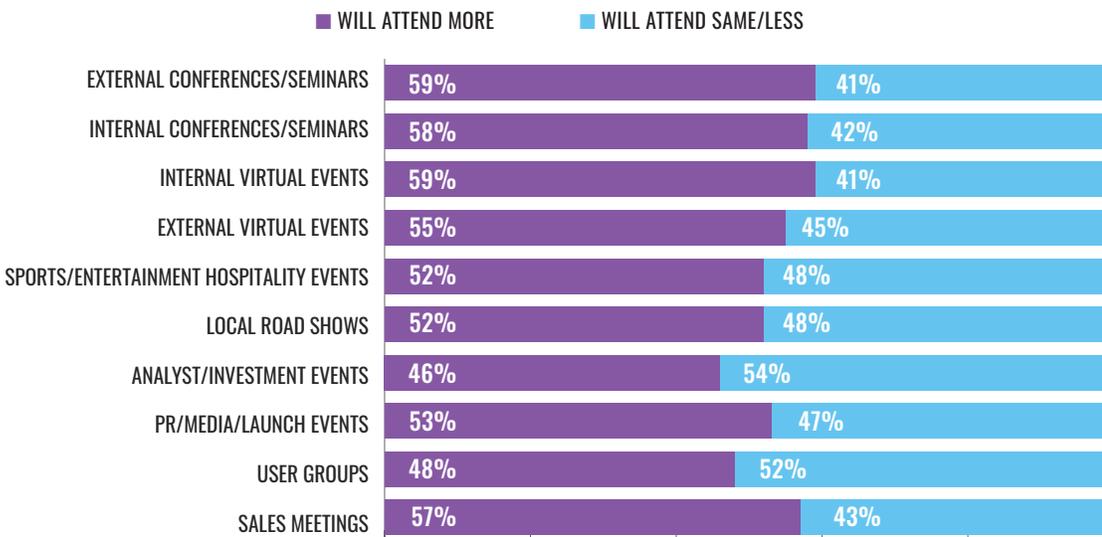
## B-TO-B ATTENDANCE FORECAST: IN 2026, YOU WILL ATTEND...



## T&E BUDGET IMPACT: WILL CORPORATE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IMPACT YOUR 2026 ATTENDANCE TO EVENTS, MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES?



## B-TO-B ATTENDANCE, BY EVENT TYPE: YOU'LL ATTEND MORE OR LESS OF...



**44%**  
of b-to-b  
attendees will  
attend more  
events in 2026

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

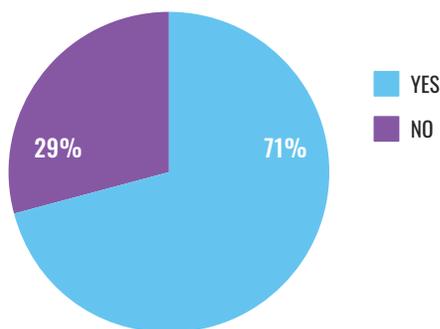
# SHARING EXPERIENCES

Instagram, Facebook and YouTube remain the top three destinations among b-to-b attendees who share their event experiences on social media. LinkedIn dropped down one rung on the list just below TikTok this year—a trend seen in other segments of the EventTrack study. A slightly smaller percentage of b-to-b attendees reported that they capture content and share it (71% versus 78% last year), but the data still represents a large majority of attendees and illuminates the persistent popularity of capturing and sharing content at conferences and events.

**Instagram is the top sharing platform among 68% of b-to-b marketers**

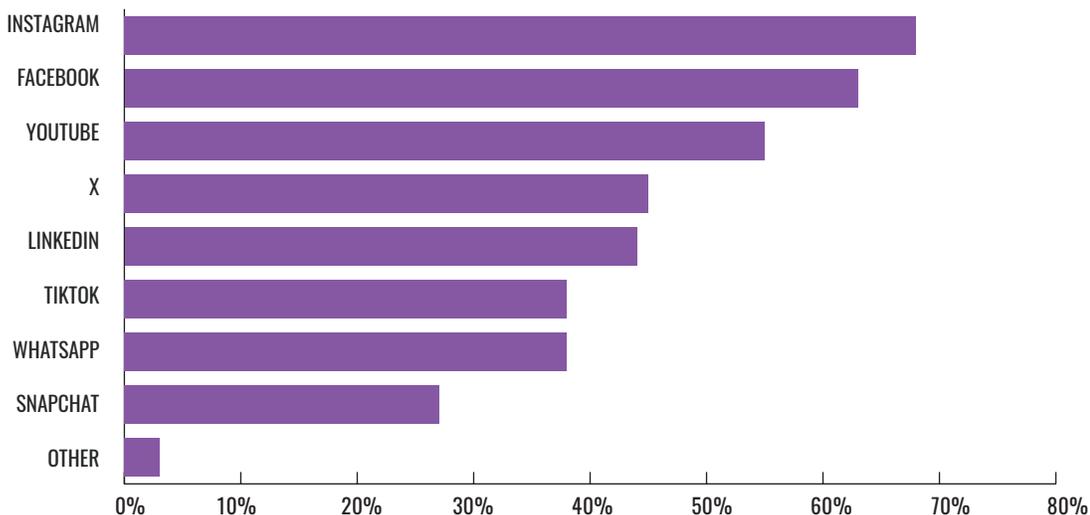
## CONTENT CAPTURE:

DID YOU CAPTURE PHOTOS/VIDEOS/CONTENT DURING YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE BRAND?



## SOCIAL CUES:

TOP SOCIAL PLATFORMS CONSUMERS POST EVENT CONTENT TO



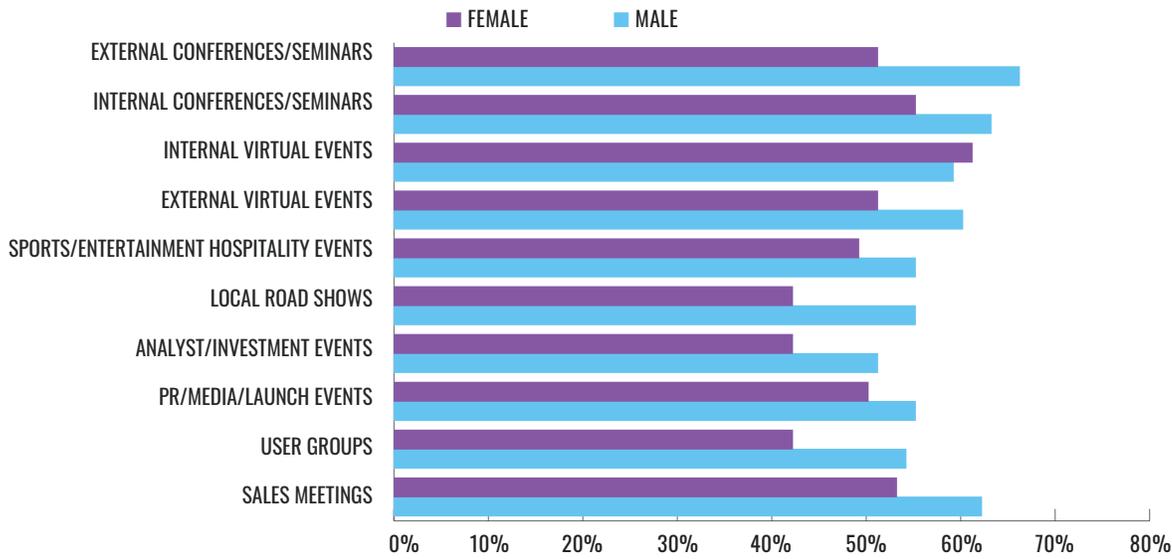
**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

The interest in attending any b-to-b event, regardless of type of event, is higher among the men who were surveyed, with the exception of internal virtual events, which 61% of women (versus 59% of men) said they would attend more of in 2026. Male respondents said they would attend more third-party events next year (66%), while internal virtual events received the highest response among women (61%).

**Men are more interested in attending b-to-b events than women**

**B-TO-B ATTENDANCE, BY EVENT TYPE AND GENDER:  
YOU'LL ATTEND MORE OR LESS OF...**



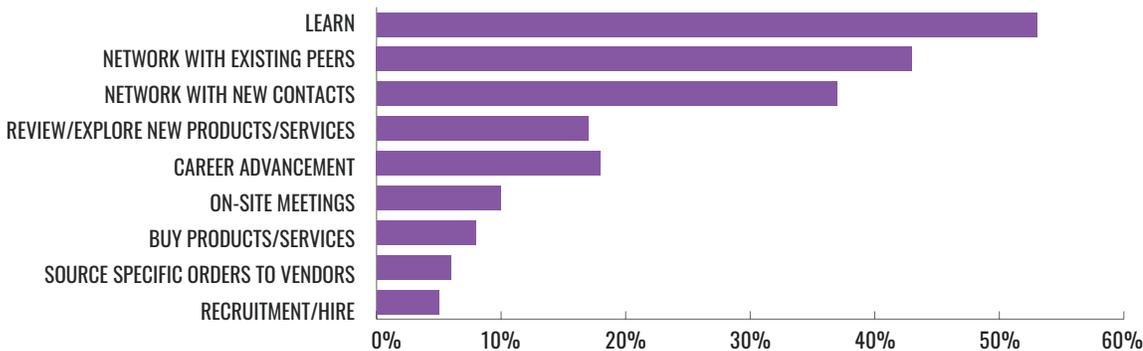
**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

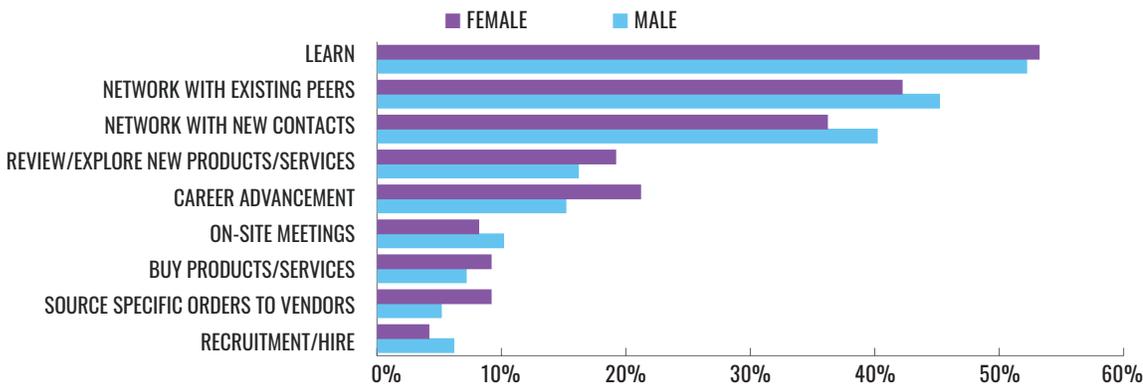
# WHAT'S DRIVING ATTENDANCE

The b-to-b experiences of today look more like music festivals than classrooms. But despite the exciting ways in which modern conferences and meetings are being activated, attendees still want the same thing: to learn and to network. Some 53% of attendees at b-to-b events say education is the top reason they attend, followed by networking with existing peers (43%), networking with prospects/new connections (37%) and exploring new products and services (17%). Drilling into the nuances between male and female respondents reveals that both sexes, within a few percentage points of each other, have the same motivations, with males wanting slightly more networking than women.

## REASONS TO ATTEND: WHY DO YOU ATTEND B-TO-B EVENTS?



## REASONS TO ATTEND, BY GENDER: WHY DO YOU ATTEND B-TO-B EVENTS?



**53%**  
of b-to-b attendees say that learning is the top reason they attend events

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

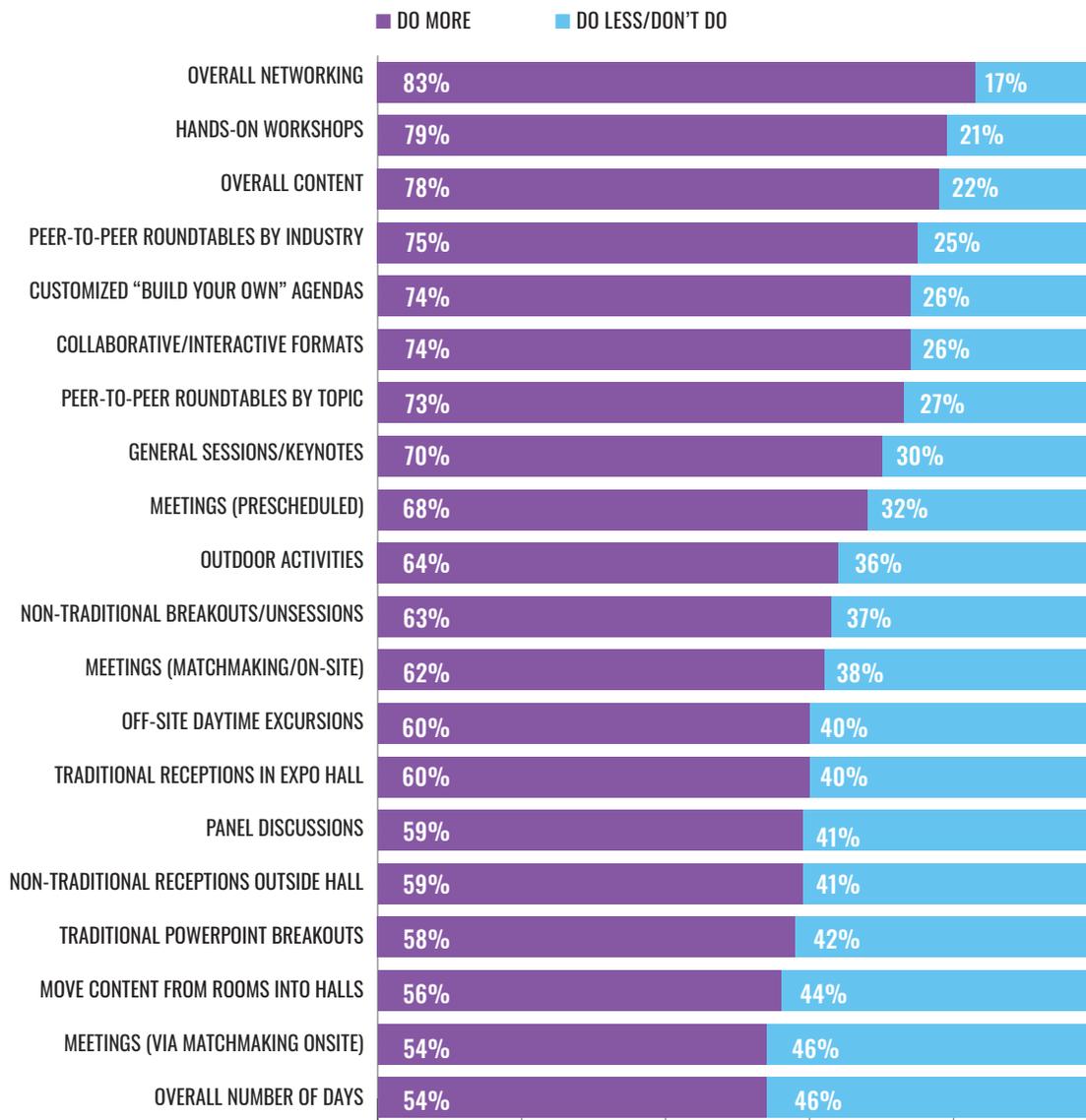
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# THE B-TO-B EVENT EXPERIENCE

When asked to build the perfect business event, most b-to-b attendees (83%) said more networking would be at the top of their list, followed by hands-on workshops (79%) and overall content (78%). The No. 1 “least perfect” activity isn’t an activity at all, but a suggestion to rethink the number of days the event runs, with 46% of respondents saying they would “do less.”

**If they could build their own event, 83% of b-to-b attendees would add more networking experiences**

## BUILDING THE PERFECT EVENT: IF YOU COULD DESIGN THE NEXT INNOVATIVE BUSINESS EVENT, YOU’D CREATE MORE AND LESS OF...



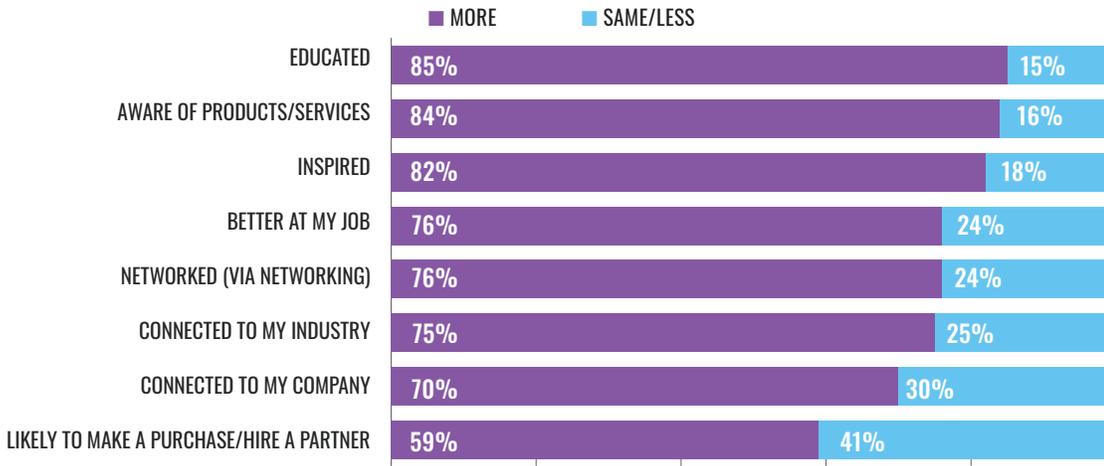
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

B-to-b event attendees overwhelmingly feel more educated after attending a business event, with 85% of respondents claiming they were more educated and, among 84%, more aware of products and services. Eighty-two percent say they feel more inspired after an event.

### IMPACT OF B-TO-B EXPERIENCES:

ARE YOU MORE OR LESS OF THE BELOW AS A RESULT OF ATTENDING A BUSINESS EVENT?



**85%**  
of b-to-b attendees  
feel more educated  
after an event



**B-TO-B  
EVENTS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# B-TO-B ATTENDEE RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

from the B-to-B Attendee section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the B-to-B Attendee section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

### 1 ATTENDEES PREFER CONFERENCES AND EVENTS.

Internal and external conferences and seminars top the list of events b-to-b attendees will go to in 2026, with more than 58% putting these event types at the top of the list of events they will do more of in the year ahead.

**What does it mean?** The classic conference format is still generating interest and engagement, but the nuances of how to make the most of a conference in 2026 should be extracted from other data points in the survey that point to increases in networking and other engagement tactics to keep the format fresh.

### 2 MEN ARE MORE INTERESTED IN B-TO-B EVENTS THAN WOMEN.

Interest in attending any b-to-b event, regardless of type, is higher among the men who were surveyed, with the exception of internal virtual events, which 61% of women (versus 59% of men) said they would attend more of in 2026.

**What does it mean?** This data point should inspire all b-to-b marketers to do their due diligence on who comes to their events and to implement personalized experiences into the event that speak to each attendee’s unique needs and interests. If there’s a disconnect between female representation in your database as it relates to your event’s attendee base, you should find out why.

### 3 MEN AND WOMEN WANT MOSTLY THE SAME THINGS AT EVENTS.

Within just a few percentage points, across the board, the men and women surveyed said they gravitated to the same things at b-to-b events: learning, networking with peers and making new contacts. Women, though, do want less networking overall than their male counterparts.

**What does it mean?** You don’t have to create gender-specific experiences at your event, but you should take into consideration that men and women will participate differently and then offer different types of engagements accordingly. Career advancement, for instance, is more important to women, by about 5%, than men.

### 4 ATTENDEES ARE DIVIDED ON HOW LONG IS TOO LONG.

Forty-six percent of b-to-b attendees would create the “perfect” event by reducing the number of days at the event, while 54% say they would make events longer. On-site matchmaking-style meetings are also an equally divisive topic.

**What does it mean?** Pre- and post-show surveys can give you a snapshot of attendee sentiment and may offer some surprising details on how attendees would like to experience the show. Event organizers would also be wise to consider what content can be experienced at home and what is essential in a face-to-face format, and then let that drive your event duration conversation.

### 5 B-TO-B EVENTS REMAIN POWERFUL LEARNING PLATFORMS.

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents claim they were more educated after attending a business event, and 84% say they were more aware of products and services. Eighty-two percent say they feel more inspired after an event.

**What does it mean?** Business event producers are always trying to strike the right balance between fun and making sure attendees get the intended message. This data point is an encouraging reaffirmation that attendees are indeed learning, and liking it.

**44%**  
of b-to-b event attendees will attend more events in 2026

**57%**  
of b-to-b event attendees say corporate travel restrictions will impact attendance

**53%**  
of b-to-b event attendees say that learning is the top reason to attend events

**83%**  
of b-to-b event attendees would add more networking to build the “perfect” event

**85%**  
of b-to-b event attendees say they were more educated after an event

**SECTION RECAP**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SURVEY [SNAPSHOT]

EventTrack survey respondents were offered the opportunity to write in responses to certain questions, giving the report data a deeper perspective on some of the key themes and drivers influencing how event marketers will spend and strategize for 2026.

## **The survey asked corporate event attendees who plan to attend more events in 2026, why do you expect to participate in more corporate events? Here are their responses:**

- Career advancement, growth and development
- Learning and education
- Interest in technology and AI topics
- Stay on top of innovations and best practices
- New business-related engagement and goals
- Product and service sourcing needs
- Like to attend high-quality events and conferences
- Company growth requires attendance
- Certain company events are mandatory
- Expanding role responsibilities, new job or promotion requires attending events

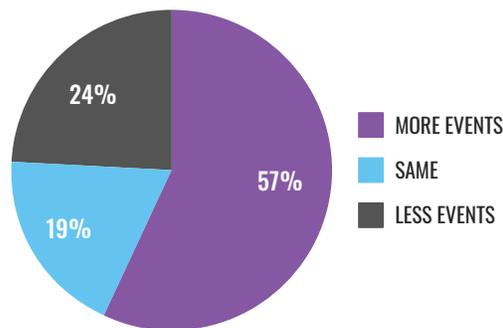
## **The survey asked corporate event attendees to describe the qualities of the “most valuable” keynotes? Here are their responses:**

- Speaker quality, type of information delivered, av production quality
- Agenda, knowing what will be covered
- Content and topic relevance
- Trending issues covered, important timely topics
- AI and emerging technology trends and outlook
- Ability to learn from speakers
- Inspirational, motivational and entertaining speakers
- Hear different viewpoints to key issues
- Access to influential and well-known speakers

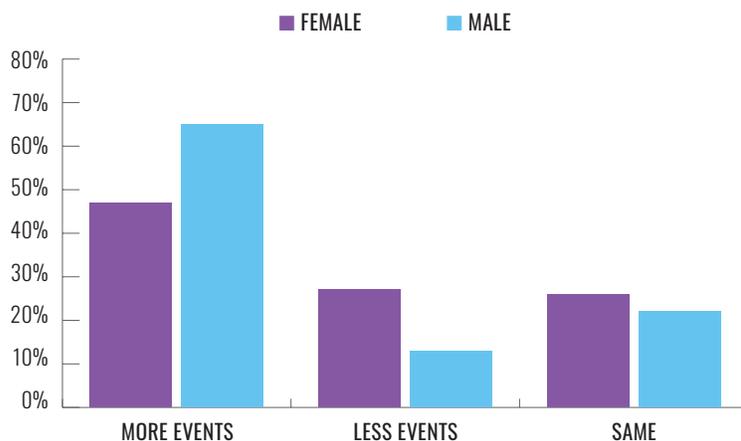
# TRADE SHOW ATTENDEE INSIGHTS

Trade shows are holding strong as the Fortune 1000 continues flocking to show floors to see and be seen, showcase the latest and greatest products and services and, on occasion, fuel entire secondary event portfolios off-site where exhibiting (and clandestine) brands treat the press, analysts and VIP attendees to intimate one-off experiences. It's the event discipline whose existence literally checks dozens of boxes at once, and among trade show attendees, interest is going strong among more than half (57%) who plan to attend more of them in 2026. Male respondents will attend more shows than women next year (65% versus 47%), and more women than men will opt out and attend fewer shows in 2026, a curious data point also reflected in the b-to-b survey data and something to consider for all b-to-b event strategists.

## TRADE SHOW ATTENDANCE FORECAST: IN 2025, YOU WILL ATTEND...



## TRADE SHOW ATTENDANCE FORECAST, BY GENDER: IN 2025, YOU WILL ATTEND...



**81%**  
of trade show attendees will attend more or the same number of shows

**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

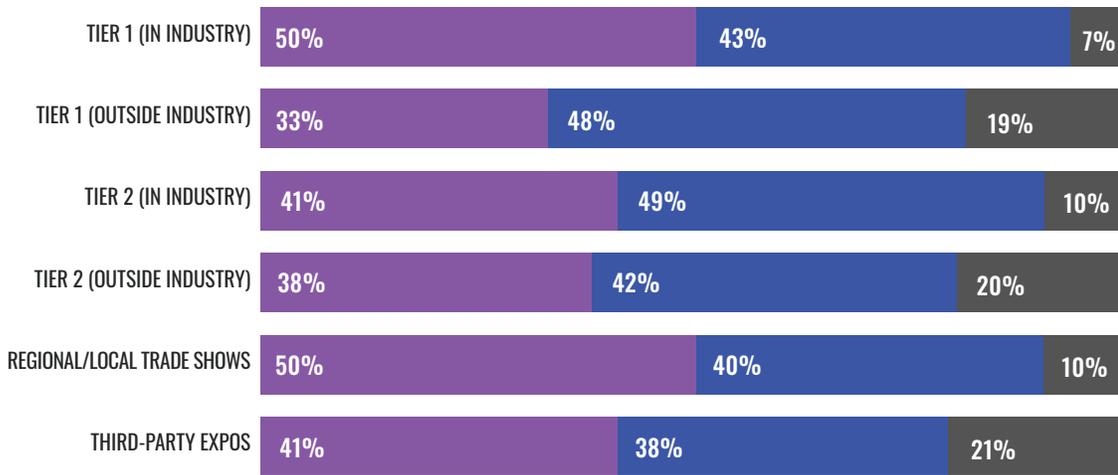
In 2026, trade show attendees will clock the most “new” miles at Tier 1 trade shows and regional or local trade shows and events. Half of respondents said they would attend more of both types of events. The data shines a spotlight on the continued popularity of smaller, regional events, which were a key pandemic-era “pivot” but for many brands, proved to be a savvy strategic model for reaching smaller and more targeted business audiences. A snapshot of the differences between female and male respondents shows that men plan to attend all event types more overall in 2026 with the most (57%) reporting they will attend more local and regional events in the coming year.

EventTrack does not have data on why women are attending fewer b-to-b events and trade shows, but several studies have tracked unemployment trends among certain cohorts of professional women that, as part of a downward trend, may also affect turnout at business events.

**Half (50%) of trade show marketers will attend more Tier 1 industry shows and regional/local shows in 2026**

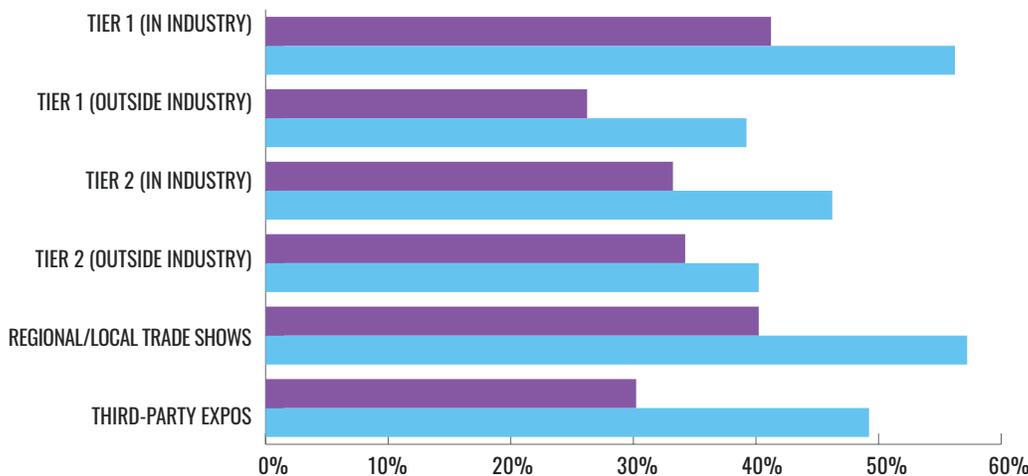
### TRADE SHOW ATTENDANCE, BY SHOW TYPE: YOU’LL ATTEND MORE OR LESS OF WHICH SHOWS?

■ WILL ATTEND MORE ■ WILL ATTEND SAME ■ WILL ATTEND LESS



### TRADE SHOW ATTENDANCE, BY SHOW TYPE AND GENDER: YOU’LL ATTEND MORE OR LESS OF WHICH SHOWS?

■ FEMALE ■ MALE



**TRADE SHOWS**

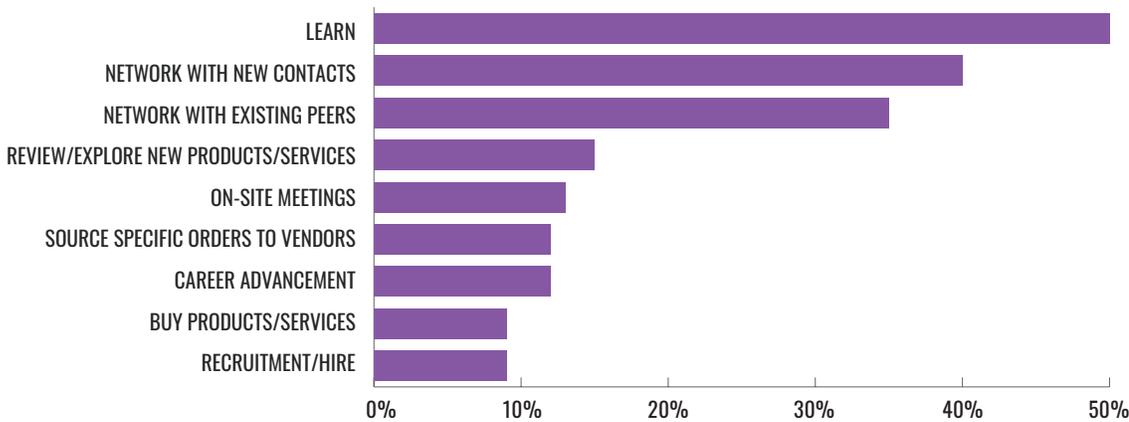
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# TRADE SHOW DRIVERS

The motivating factors among trade show attendees shuffled a bit this year versus last, with the No. 1 reason most go to shows being education instead of networking. Half of trade show attendees surveyed by EventTrack say education is the top reason they attend expositions, followed closely by networking with new peers, clients and customers (40%), and networking with existing peers, clients and customers (35%). The shake-up was only a few percentage points year over year but illustrates the ongoing renaissance trade shows are experiencing as a place where products break into the market and careers are elevated based on what attendees can learn. Trade show marketers will be wise to keep an eye on this subtle shift and how learning experiences can rise to the level of expectation reflected in the numbers.

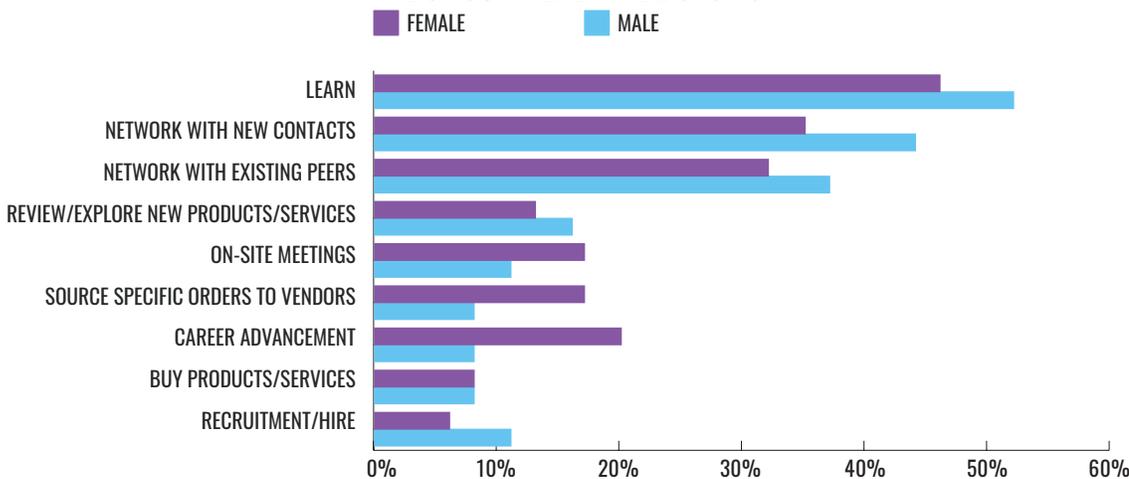
**Most (50%) trade show attendees go to shows to learn**

## REASONS TO ATTEND: WHY DO YOU ATTEND TRADE SHOWS?



Female and male respondents showed a wider variety of differences than other business audiences when it comes to the reasons they attend trade shows. Both groups rank learning and networking at the top of their respective lists, but women appear to be more interested in business meetings, sourcing new partners and career advancement, versus men whose interests skew higher when it comes to product demos and hiring potential new recruits. Indeed, modern trade shows check a lot of different boxes for a wide array of unique attendee interests.

## REASONS TO ATTEND, BY GENDER: WHY DO YOU ATTEND TRADE SHOWS?



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

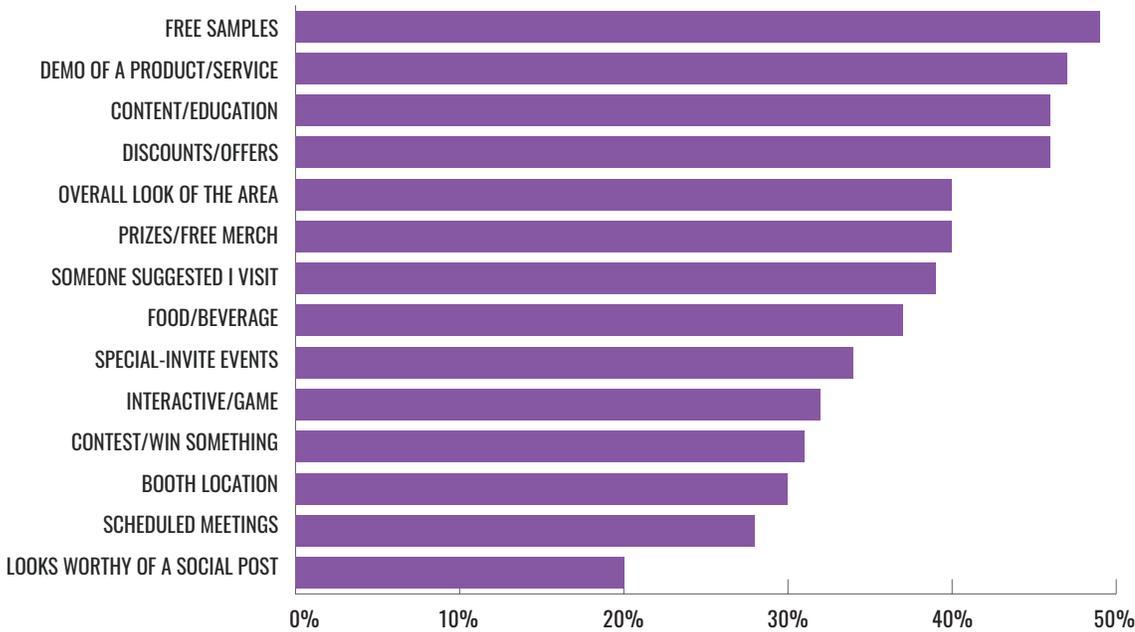
**TRADE SHOWS**

# TRADE SHOW ENGAGEMENT

With 57% of trade show attendees saying they'll be hitting more shows in 2026, the forecast for foot traffic at the industry's shows is very optimistic. What separates exhibits that are able to capture the attention of attendees—and then keep them in their booth? According to 49% of trade show attendees surveyed for this year's study, free samples will do the trick, followed by demos (47%), content and education (46%), and discounts (46%). While 40% of trade show audiences report that they do care about the design of the booth, it's curious that they care more about freebies, demos, content and discounts which is not to say that booth designers should care less about creating a compelling show floor environment, but perhaps more holistically about how the other elements are served best by the environment.

**Free samples (aka try it before you but it) are the top motivator among 49% of trade show attendees**

## THE BOOTH EXPERIENCE: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO INTERACT WITH A BRAND'S EXHIBIT?

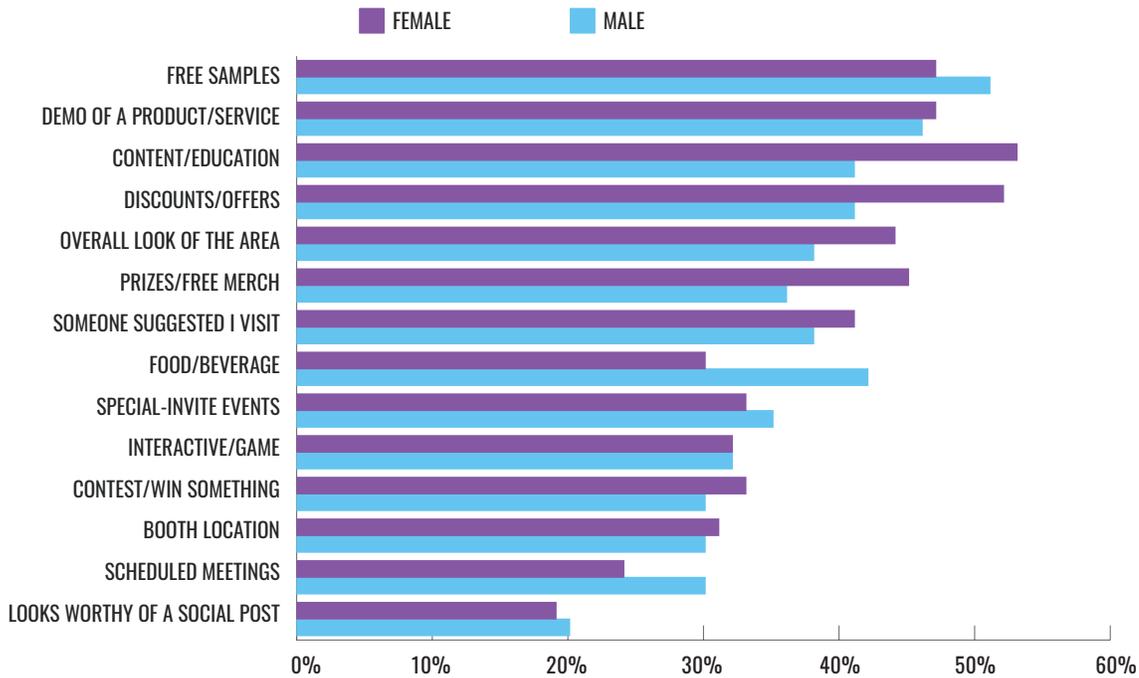


**TRADE SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

Trade show marketers may be wise to consider the gender breakout of their target audiences and customer groups, and how their unique motivators play a role in how the booth experience is designed. Women, for instance, have a stronger interest in content, discounts, the look of the booth, merch and the opinions of friends and colleagues on the value of the brand or exhibit. Male respondents value free samples, food and special-invite experiences more than women and may be ultimately more responsive to programs with those components.

### THE BOOTH EXPERIENCE, BY GENDER: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO INTERACT WITH A BRAND'S EXHIBIT?

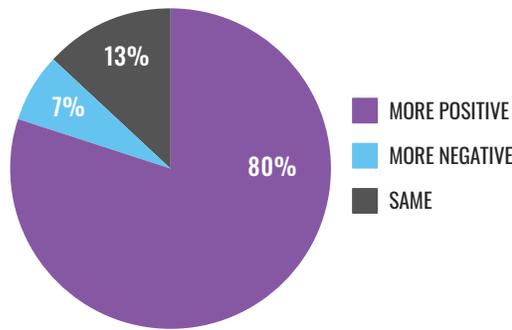


Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

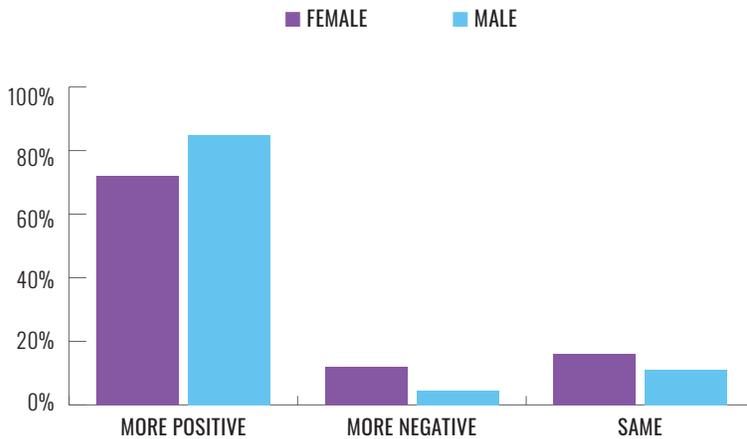
# SENTIMENT AND INTENT

Among all event attendees surveyed for the 2025 EventTrack survey, including consumer audiences, trade show attendees represent the largest audience segment (80%) that feels positive about a brand, product or experience after a live engagement. In short, this means that exhibit marketing works—and works powerfully. The metric is slightly more optimistic among 85% of women, versus 72% of men, who said booth experiences impact brand sentiment in a positive way. Yet women are three times as likely (12% versus 4%) to say they feel negatively about a brand after a booth experience, reinforcing just how important it is to know your audience and leave no opportunity untested when it comes to creating a compelling exhibit *experience*—emphasis on experience.

## BOOTH EXPERIENCES DRIVE SENTIMENT: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AFTER INTERACTING IN THEIR EXHIBIT?



## BOOTH EXPERIENCES DRIVE SENTIMENT, BY GENDER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AFTER INTERACTING IN THEIR EXHIBIT?



**80%**  
of trade show attendees feel positive about a brand after a booth engagement

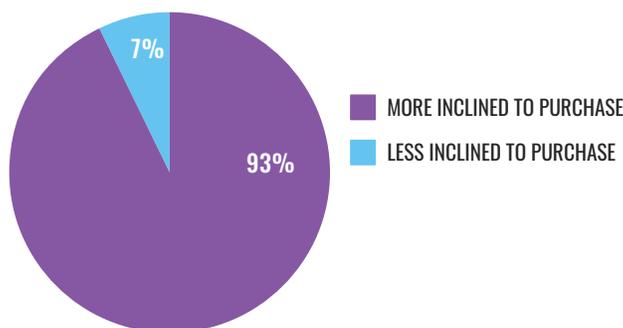
TRADE SHOWS

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

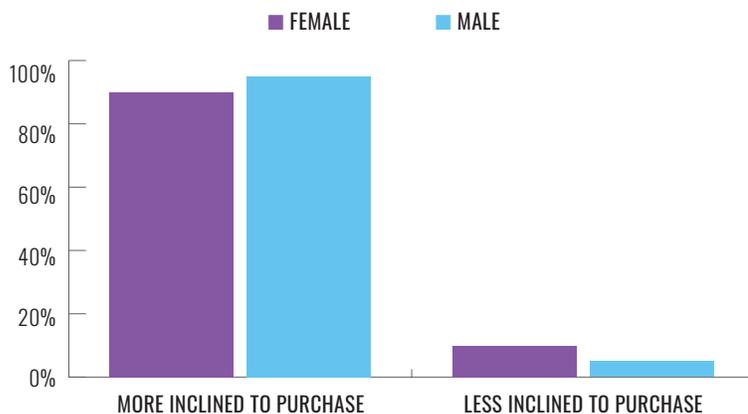
# PURCHASE INTENT

This one might be a framer for trade show marketers: A full 93% of trade show attendees surveyed say that interacting with a brand at a trade show made them more inclined to purchase their products or services. Purchase behavior is only slightly different among men and women, with men skewing slightly higher (95% versus 90%) in their intention to “buy after the booth.”

## EVENTS IMPACT PURCHASE INTENT: INTERACTING WITH THE BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT A TRADE SHOW MADE ME...



## EVENTS IMPACT PURCHASE INTENT, BY GENDER: INTERACTING WITH THE BRAND, PRODUCT OR SERVICE AT A TRADE SHOW MADE ME...



**93%**  
of trade show attendees are more inclined to purchase



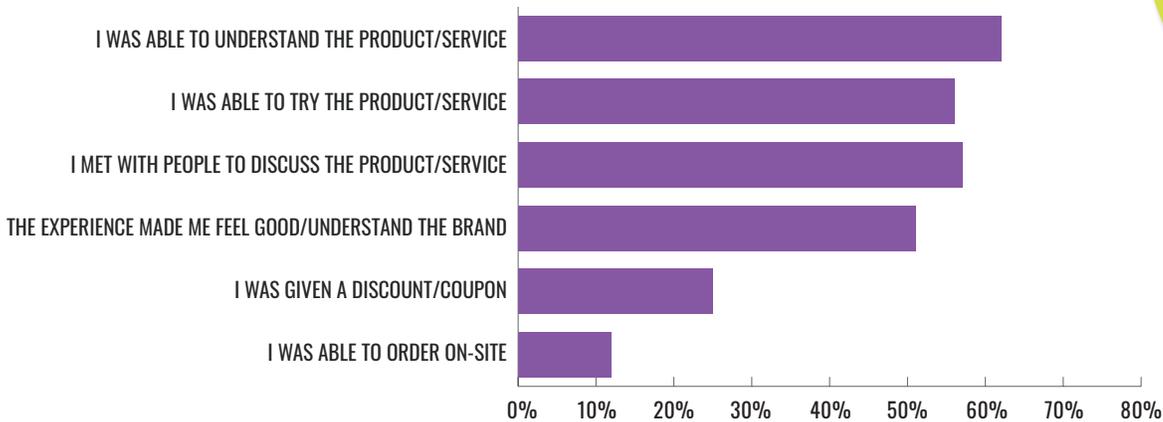
TRADE SHOWS

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

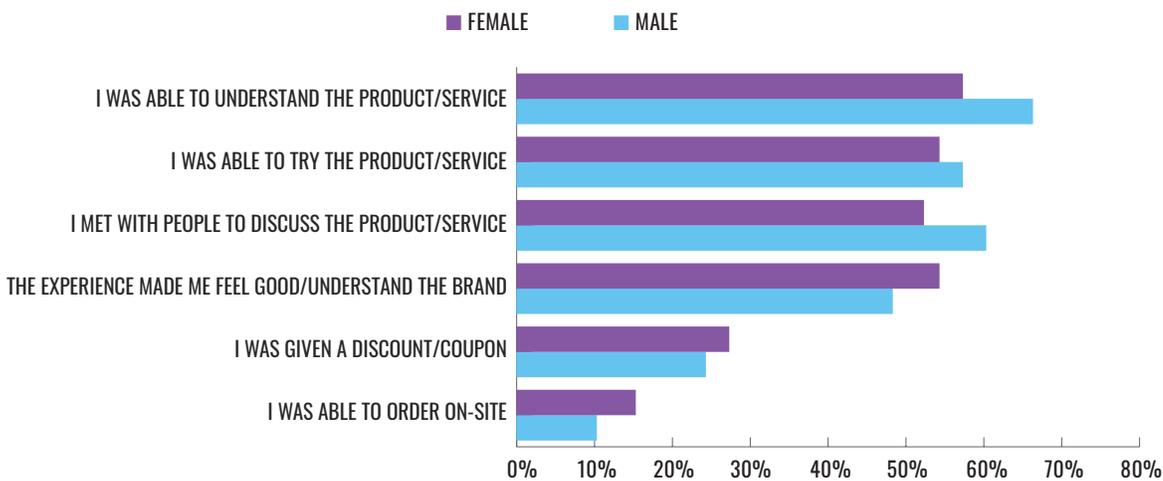
Trade show attendees say that booths that have certain qualities make them more inclined to purchase after the show. Among the most important factors, 62% say gaining a greater understanding about the product or service is a top driver, followed by meeting face-to-face with people who could offer deeper information on products they were interested in (57%), and finally having a chance to try out the product or service (56%). Of note is the lack of interest in discounts and buying on-site, which speaks to the expectation that trade show attendees have for a more “elevated” thought leadership experience where “the sale” isn’t necessarily part of the conversation (overtly, anyway). Men and women were mostly in alignment on this survey question, give or take a few percentage points.

**Gaining a deeper understanding about a brand or product is the top purchase driver among most (62%) trade show attendees**

### POWERFUL TRIAL PLATFORMS: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



### POWERFUL TRIAL PLATFORMS, BY GENDER: WHY WERE YOU MORE INCLINED TO PURCHASE?



**TRADE SHOWS**

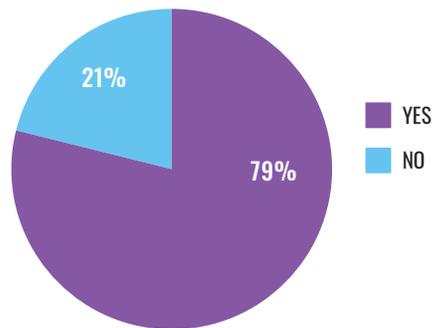
Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# CONVERSION AND LOYALTY

Seventy-nine percent of trade show attendees turn purchase inclination into actual purchases, according to the EventTrack data. Even more encouraging, 89% of those who engage with a trade show exhibit experience report they become regular or repeat purchasers of the brand's products or services. This loyalty metric should be a consideration for trade show marketers when it comes to financial investments and ROI tracking for their programs.

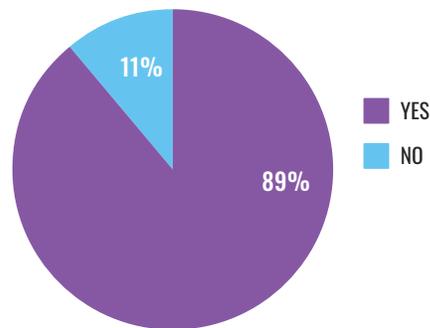
## BUYERS, NOT TRYERS:

DID YOU/YOUR COMPANY PURCHASE THE PRODUCT/SERVICE BEING PROMOTED AT THE EVENT?



## DRIVING LOYALTY:

HAVE YOU BECOME A REGULAR/REPEAT CUSTOMER/PURCHASER OF THIS PRODUCT/SERVICE?



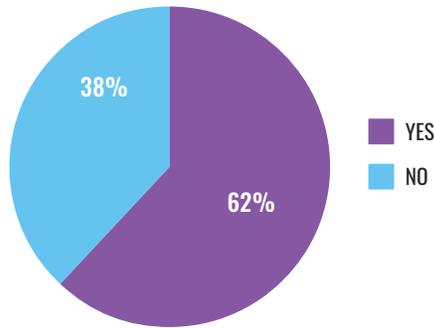
**89%**  
of trade show attendees become regular purchasers of a product or service

TRADE SHOWS

# SHAREABILITY OF EXPERIENCES

Trade show attendees are capturing less content at events than last year, with 62% reporting they engage in content capture, versus 79% last year. But it's still a clear majority of attendees who feel compelled to capture and share. It's interesting to note that attendee sentiment around social media sharing and trade shows is changing, and there appears to be less interest when asked the same question another way—see next section for more data.

## CONTENT CAPTURE: DID YOU CAPTURE PHOTOS/VIDEOS/ CONTENT IN BOOTHS?

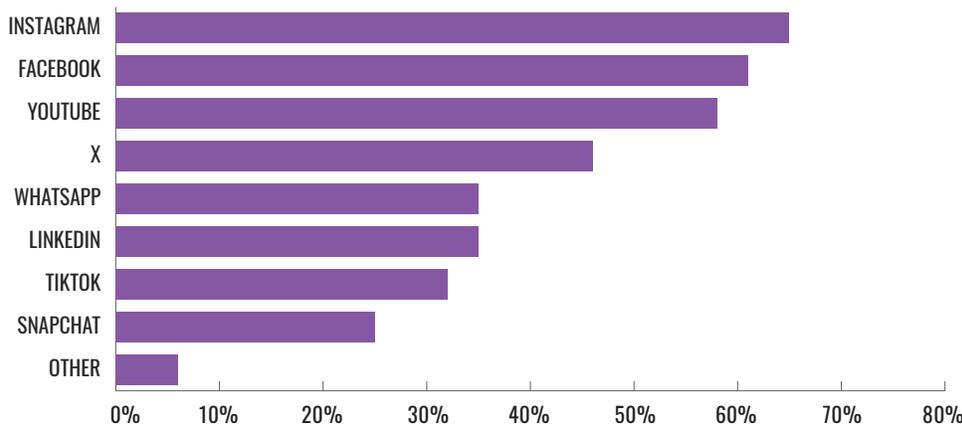


**87%**  
of attendees  
share experiences  
from events with  
friends and  
family

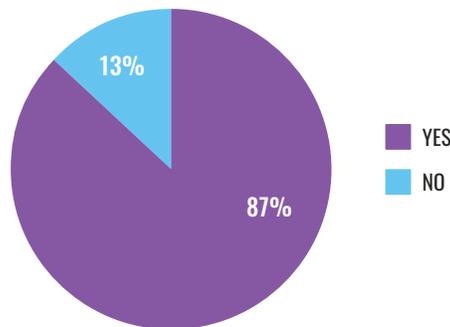
Unlike their peers in corporate b-to-b events, trade show audiences head straight to Instagram to post their exhibit experiences (65%), followed by Facebook (61%) and then YouTube (58%). Compelling booth engagements are powerful word-of-mouth generators as well. Eighty-seven percent of attendees say they will share their experiences from the show with those who were not there.

## SOCIAL CUES:

### TOP SOCIAL PLATFORMS TRADE SHOW ATTENDEES POST CONTENT TO



## PEER-TO-PEER: DID YOU TELL ANYBODY WHO WASN'T AT THE TRADE SHOW ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE?



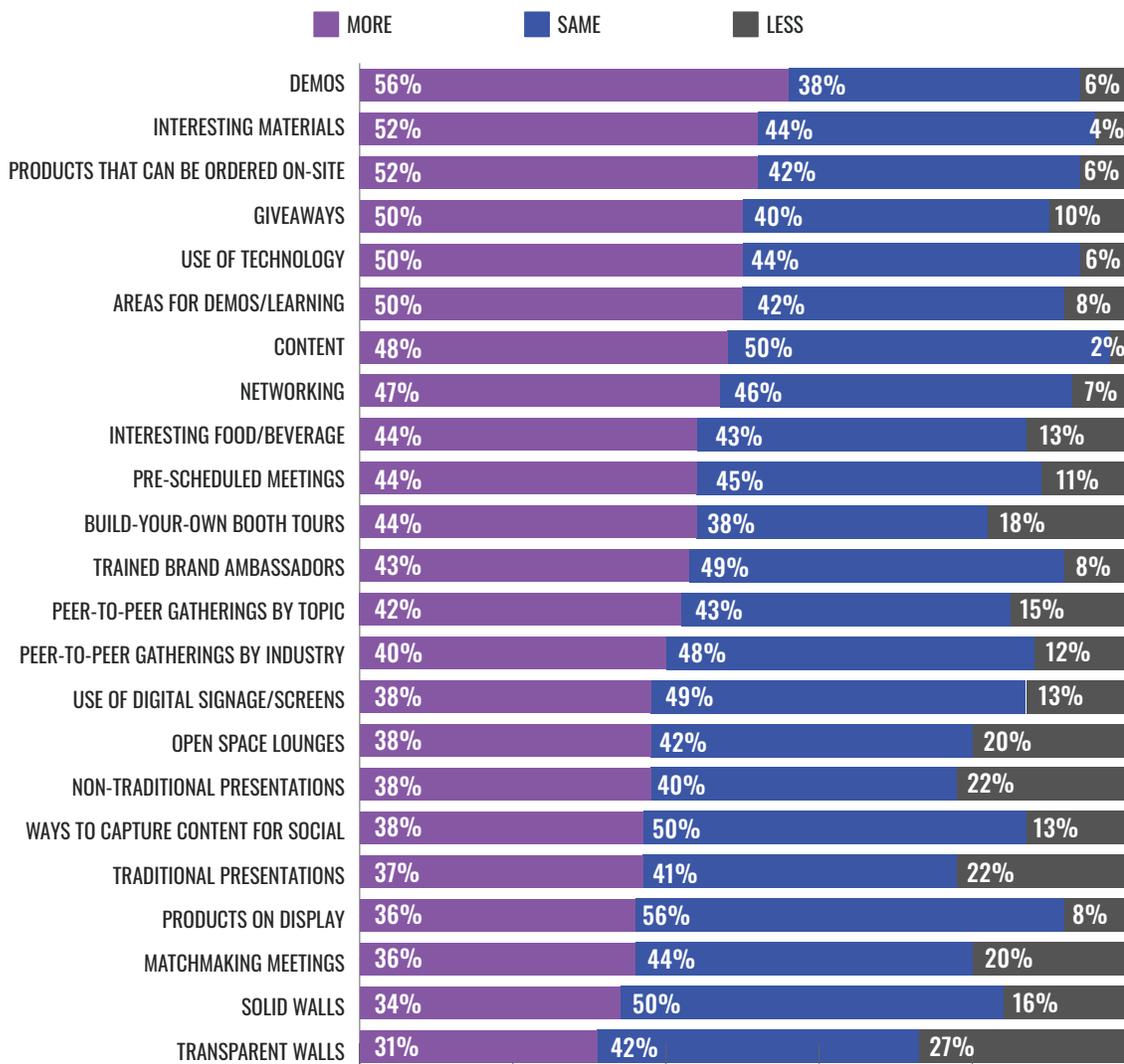
**TRADE  
SHOWS**

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# THE BOOTH EXPERIENCE

EventTrack analysts asked survey takers to share what elements they would focus on if they were exhibit designers, and 56% of respondents said more demos are at the top of their list. Interesting materials (52%), merchandise services (52%), giveaways (50%, because you just can't keep a freebie down!), interactive tech (50%) and open areas for demos (50%) followed. The No. 1 thing trade show attendees said they *wouldn't* do is employ transparent walls. Also low on the list among some but not all: open spaces, unsessions and traditional PowerPoint presentations. One thing more than 63% of respondents said they'd do less of, or not at all, was focus on opportunities for capturing content for social media, which aligns with earlier data points reflecting slightly less interest in sharing trade show content on the 'gram and elsewhere.

## IF ATTENDEES WERE EXHIBIT DESIGNERS: IF YOU DESIGNED A BRAND'S BOOTH, YOU'D INCLUDE...



Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# TRADE SHOW ATTENDEE RECAP

## THE TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### from the Trade Show Attendee section of the EventTrack report

This one-page recap distills the most consequential data points from the Trade Show Attendee section of the EventTrack study into “news you can use” as you strategize for 2026.

# 1

#### IF ATTENDEES WERE BOOTH DESIGNERS... THEY'D DO MORE DEMOS.

Fifty-six percent of survey respondents (the largest segment), said they'd do more demonstrations, which aligns with the fact that 50% of trade show attendees say learning is why they attend. Other demo-friendly options like interactive tech (50%) and open areas for demos (50%) were also top choices.

**What does it mean?** Trade show attendees are driven by learning and want to get hands-on with your products and services. This data should encourage event teams to consider how much of their booth creates an environment where inspired hands-on trial can happen, and how much doesn't.

# 2

#### ATTENDEES SHARE THEIR TRADE SHOW EXPERIENCES.

Sixty-two percent of trade show attendees share on social media (Instagram is the top platform), and 87% share with friends and family after the event. Interestingly, only 38% of attendees would add more ways to capture social media if they were designing the perfect event.

**What does it mean?** The era of creating socially shareable exhibit environments isn't over, it's just baked into most strategies now. That means that most attendees already share, and don't see the need to create more shareable opportunities in the “perfect” event.

# 3

#### TRADE SHOW EXPERIENCES BOOST PURCHASE INCLINATION.

Ninety-three percent of attendees report that trying products and services at trade shows not only changes sentiment and builds engagement—it moves them to purchase as well. Seventy-nine percent of trade show attendees turn purchase inclination into actual purchases.

**What does it mean?** The best events in 2026 will close the gap between the live experience and the purchase to best capitalize on the spark created with attendees. If your trade show strategy doesn't have an “immediately after the event” closing strategy, you're leaving money on the table.

# 4

#### MEN AND WOMEN ENGAGE WITH EXHIBITS IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

Women have a stronger interest in content, discounts, the look of the booth and the opinions of friends and colleagues, while men are moved by free samples, food and special-invitation experiences.

**What does it mean?** You don't have to create gender-based experiences in your booth, but you can offer distinctly different, insights-based engagements to enable attendees to self-select what speaks to them most. Gender-based preferences are always good intel for pre-show marketing, too.

# 5

#### ATTENDEES GO TO LEARN, EXHIBITORS DON'T TRACK LEARNING.

Trade show exhibitors list PR coverage, target audience engagement and relationship building as their top three show objectives, but rank “educating their target audience” second to last in priority with just 9% saying it's a key goal, down from 47% last year.

**What does it mean?** It's a big change in strategic thinking from last year that's also at odds with the 50% of attendees who rank learning about products and services as their No. 1 goal when attending a trade show.

## 57%

of trade show attendees will attend more events in 2026

## 50%

of trade show attendees say learning is the top reason why they attend

## 50%

of trade show attendees say free samples motivate them to engage with a booth

## 80%

of trade show attendees say booth experiences drive positive sentiment

## 93%

of trade show attendees say booth experiences drive purchase inclination

## SECTION RECAP

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

# SURVEY [SNAPSHOT]

EventTrack survey respondents were offered the opportunity to write in responses to certain questions, giving the report data a deeper perspective on some of the key themes and drivers influencing how event marketers will spend and strategize for 2026.

## **The survey asked trade show attendees, why do you expect to participate in more trade shows? Here are their responses:**

- Attending previous event was valuable
- Company is growing, business is strong, have event attendance travel budget, etc.
- Industry, market segment or event is gaining attention, company interest
- Education and learning
- Networking
- Community and socializing, enjoy trade shows and event (similar to networking)
- Product/service interest, research, review for sourcing
- Event has good reputation, important to attend regularly
- See certain companies, attendees, staff or speakers, etc.

## **The survey asked trade show attendees, what is an example of a trade show experience that caught your attention or engaged you and why? Here are their responses:**

- See new products and innovations
- Interactive games and prizes
- Hands-on product demos
- Attractive, eye-catching displays and graphics
- Educational and learning opportunities
- Ability to meet people, network
- Industry or work-specific information or product/service
- Liked seeing something new or for the first time
- Speakers, well known presenter or keynoter
- Immersive experience and what's memorable

## **The survey asked trade show attendees who plan to spend more time at trade shows in 2026, why do you typically spend this amount of time with a brand in their exhibit? Here are their responses:**

- Ask questions, talk to staff, evaluate, make connections/network
- Access information about products or services, provider capabilities
- Demonstrations, see products up-close, hands-on with products
- Level of interest impacts time spent in booth with company personnel
- Efficiency, use time at event wisely, schedule-related
- How crowded an event or exhibit is
- How appealing and engaging the exhibit is
- To get money's worth

# RESPONDENTS

The EventTrack brand surveys were conducted in June and July 2025 and received 517 responses. The attendee surveys were conducted in June 2025 and received 811 responses.

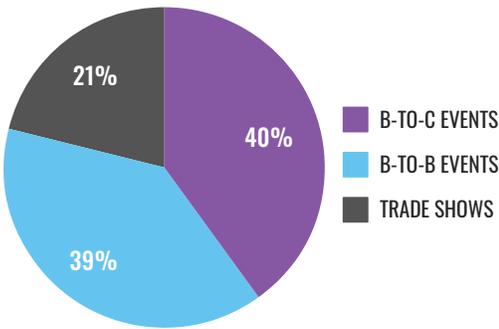
To elevate statistical reliability, questions were randomized for respondents, and the survey funneled Fortune 1000 marketers into their respective consumer or b-to-b question pools.

Agencies and suppliers were automatically exited from the survey.

EventTrack is once again underwritten by leading global experiential agency Sparks (wearesparks.com). Event Marketer and Sparks want to thank all the respondents who gave their time to create the industry's leading research on experiential marketing. Additional copies of the full report, a "stat pack" of top charts, and private Zoom overviews of the research with your team can be requested at [eventmarketer.com/eventtrack26](http://eventmarketer.com/eventtrack26).

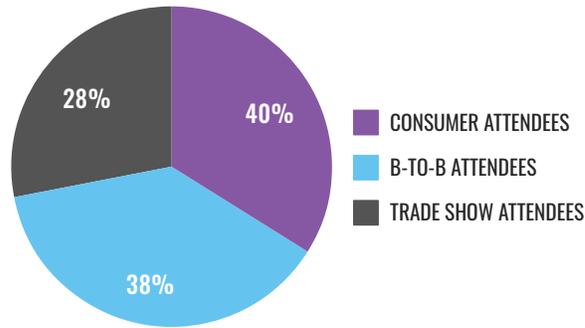
## BRAND RESPONDENTS

517 MARKETERS, BY PRIMARY FUNCTION



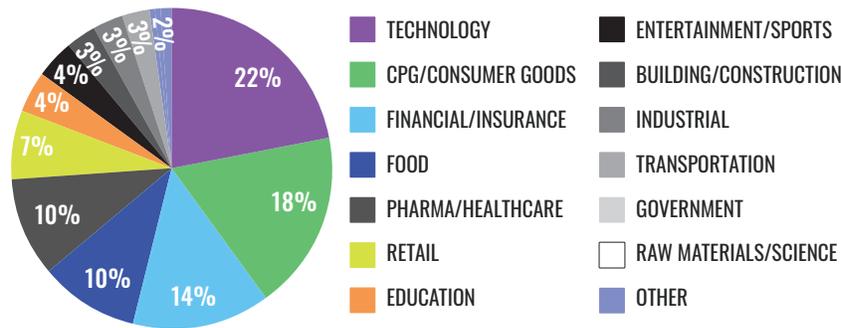
## ATTENDEE RESPONDENTS

811 EVENT ATTENDEES, BY TYPE



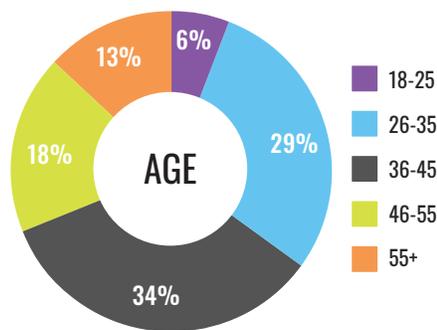
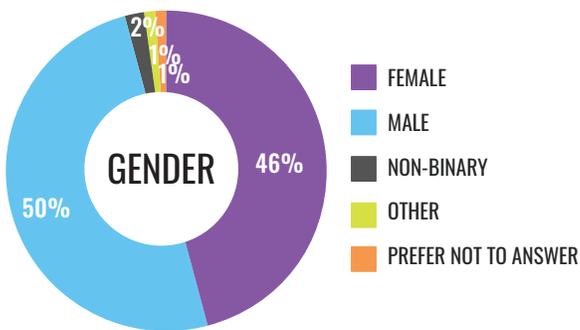
## CROSS-INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES

FORTUNE 1000 RESPONSES, BY SECTOR



## ATTENDEE DEMOGRAPHICS

SURVEY RESPONDENTS, BY AGE/GENDER



ABOUT THE SURVEY

Source: EventTrack 2026/Event Marketer

The image features a central logo for 'event marketer' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. The background is a light blue gradient with various abstract shapes: blue and purple rounded rectangles, thin lines, and clusters of small yellow dots. Several white plus signs and black 'x' marks are scattered throughout the design.

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