TOAST OF THE TOWN
EVENT SERVICES

2024
State of the Industry

Meetings & Events

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2024 Topline Trends

In-person events are back!

The meetings and events industry has recovered!

Attendee numbers have returned!

Enthusiasm is up!

Costs, however, will also remain up!

. . . And while this doesn't represent every event for every organization, it is true that the surge in the return of in-person meetings and events was evident for many in 2023. In fact, a majority of event professionals in the global business travel industry say their sector has **reached near-full recovery since the pandemic**. *SOURCE*

But for those whose event metrics (attendance, frequency, budgets, etc.) have yet to return to post-pandemic levels, expect and plan for them to in 2024. According to the 2024 AmEx GBT Global Meetings and Events Forecast, all meeting types are expected to see growth in 2024. *SOURCE*

> **"70% of respondents report their 2023 meeting programs either met or exceeded pre-pandemic attendee levels or are expected to in 2024."**
>
> *SOURCE*

These fantastic results represent a faster-than-anticipated return to normal, which was no small feat considering some of the major hurdles planners faced throughout the year. But don't hold your breath **because 2024 is going to see many of the same challenges for many event planners, with the main source of irritation continuing to be increased costs**. And while we do see trends of event budgets increasing, they simply won't be enough to match the level of sustained increases in costs.

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EVENT PLANNERS EXPECT THE BIGGEST PLANNING CHALLENGES FOR 2024 TO BE:

Challenge	Percentage
Costs	54%
Location & venue availability	44%
Company budget cuts	39%
Flight availability & costs	32%
Hotel staffing levels	26%
Approval/buy-in from higher ups	25%

! **In-person events** are more important than ever, more anticipated than ever, and are expected to be more impactful than ever, all while simultaneously being more expensive than ever.

If you liked 2023, you are going to LOVE 2024!

SOURCE

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TOP TRENDS 2024

#1 Expect More of the Same

Demand for events is still high around the globe, with event professionals reporting continued growth across crowd size, number or volume of events, as well as budgets and costs. *SOURCE*

70%
Expect attendee numbers to return to **2019 levels by 2024**

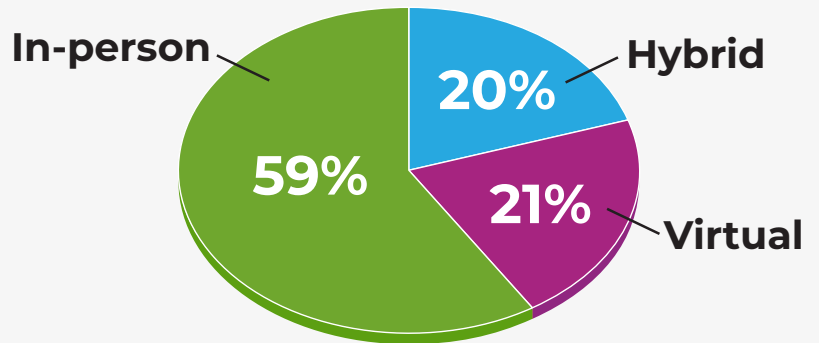### Event (cost) Components

52%
Held in a hotel

47%
Include social activities/ networking

46%
Held in a different city than corporate office

The majority of meetings will be in-person...

In-person

59%

20% Hybrid

21% Virtual

79% will have an in-person component

Requiring of more budget . . .

67% predict an increase in overall meeting spending in 2024
Of those 67%, **13%** predict an increase of more than 10%

54% $-$$ **13%** $$$+

…but more so to match increased costs.

Hotel ADR's average ~ 18 to 20% ahead of 2019 levels. 2024 will see increases of 4+% YOY from 2023 *SOURCE*

Airfares are anticipated to rise 5% in 2024, which is smaller than last year's increase *SOURCE*

Staffing is still tough, with 53% of event planners reporting difficulty in filling job vacancies for three quarters in a row *SOURCE*

**Conferences and tradeshows** are expected to see an increase of +3.8% per attendee in 2024 *SOURCE*

Global inflation forecast is down from the 2022 high of 8.7% but remains a stubborn 5.2% for 2024 *SOURCE*

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TOP TRENDS 2024

#2 Sustainability

Sustainable options at your event are no longer a 'nice-to-have,' as attendees expect to have these options included in the event experience. Vegetarian options from locally sourced farms and gardens are a must. Plastic water bottles are practically the new cigarettes; make sure to have water refill stations onsite and easily accessible.
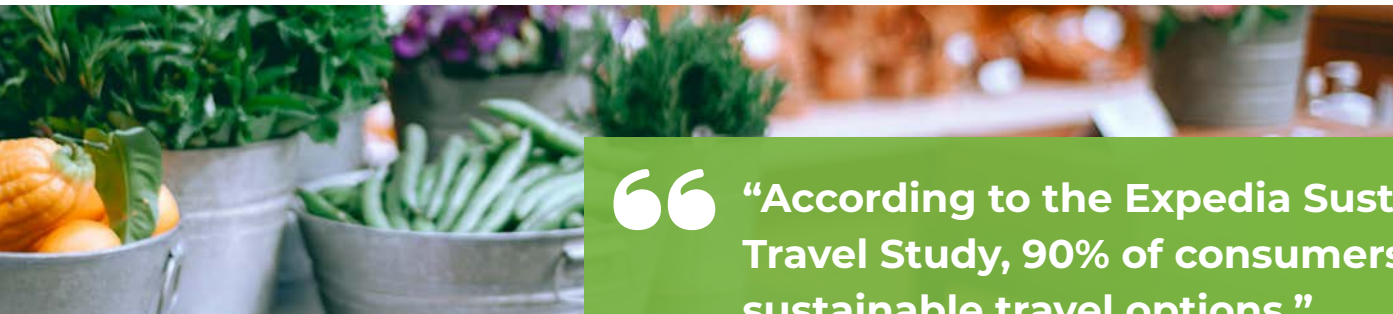
> **"According to the Expedia Sustainable Travel Study, 90% of consumers seek sustainable travel options."**
>
> *SOURCE*

Event planners around the world are using their corporate buying power to effect change to great results. According to the 2023 Cvent Planner Sourcing Survey for Europe, **65% of respondents said they always or often search for venues based on their sustainability offering**, and organizations are responding with a whopping 78% of respondents saying their organizations are planning to have net zero goals by the end of 2024. *SOURCE*

But this trend is worth a planner taking note of, as not only is it proactively responding to what an attendee wants, but it also allows for some **cost savings** along the way when approached intentionally.

Why you should incorporate these practices:

It is more important than ever to attendees and the planet

Has become an attendee expectation

More widely available green options for all products and services

Can help with cost savings as well

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TOP TRENDS 2024

#3 Celebrate the Human Connection

During the pandemic, the events industry rose to the occasion to provide options for meetings. Gathering virtually worked for the moment, but as we have seen throughout this past year, nothing replaces the value of meeting face-to-face or the impact of gathering in person. **88% of event professionals say that the main reason people attend events is for networking opportunities.** *SOURCE*

> ### Think less of the old motto - 'work hard, play hard,' and focus more on a work-life balance approach.

The renewed focus on interpersonal connection, however, has also brought along a new value metric in that attendees are seeking more meaningful and transformational experiences at events. More wellness, more food options, more downtime, more options for physical activity, less alcohol-fueled receptions, and less back-to-back meetings or sessions. In 2024, planners will need intentional built-in programming that attendees value, such as high-quality content, networking opportunities, sales leads, education, and hyper-personalized experiences. *SOURCE*

EVENT PLANNER PRO TIPS | Here's how to do it!

- ☑ Select a venue that will be attractive to the audience
- ☑ Create event sponsorship packages that add value to both sponsors and attendees
- ☑ Make sure to offer plenty of session counter-programming such as yoga classes, mindfulness workshops, spa vouchers, etc.
- ☑ Incorporate gamification at the event, including a scavenger hunt, an event quiz, plus a leaderboard showcasing participants' progress
- ☑ Leverage social media for more impactful event promotion
- ☑ Implement effective post-event engagement to sustain interest
- ☑ Integrate printed QR code badges into networking events
- ☑ Utilize event tech to empower attendees to influence event content
- ☑ Create immersive environments with Augmented Reality (AR) & Virtual Reality (VR)

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TOP TRENDS 2024

#4 Tech Integrations
Convenience, Customization, and Increased Data Capture

" "Event technology has become the backbone of modern-day events, revolutionizing the way professionals plan, organize, and execute."
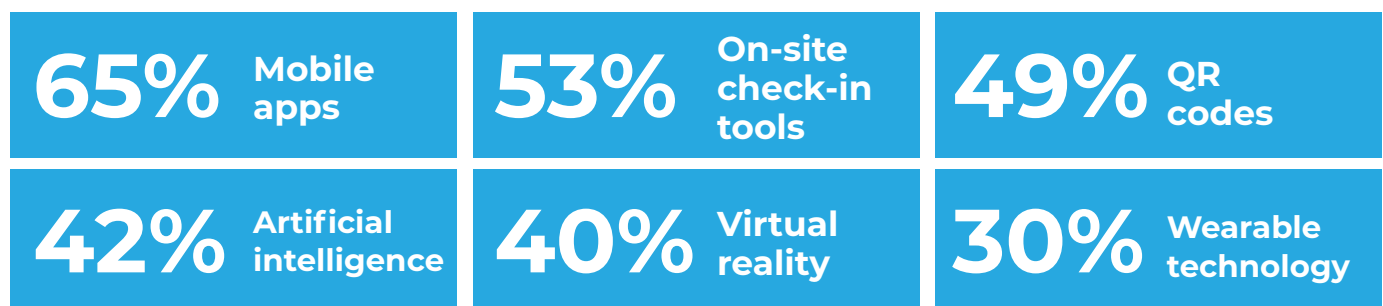
While the return to in-person events is significant and dynamic, a sophisticated tech stack is still just as vital to the user experience, and possibly even more so, than ever before. Event attendees now just expect an event to have a hybrid component and **prefer one end-to-end event interface**. Attendees commonly interact with on-demand content, access conference information and updates at their fingertips, interact through live Q&A sessions, and participate in virtual networking lounges and collaborative digital spaces.

But this inclusion certainly isn't a bad thing, and certainly not just a one-sided value add. The inclusion of this tech provides access to troves of amazing user data, which can be used to improve event efficiencies and results. It allows for increased customization and response to user/attendee interests, which overall creates a better user experience in general.

This increase in event customization and increased attendee satisfaction leads to **events being used as a core marketing strategy**, as in-person events are the only way to receive first-person user data. As organizations continue to invest in events as a marketing tool, it's crucial to get this piece right in order to generate leads, build lasting customer relationships, and drive sales.

SOURCE

Top Tech Stack Requirements *for Planners in 2024*

65% Mobile apps	**53%** On-site check-in tools	**49%** QR codes
42% Artificial intelligence	**40%** Virtual reality	**30%** Wearable technology

SOURCE

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TOP TRENDS 2024

#5 Designing an Experience
Food, Decor, Interactivity, and Highlighting Culture

What seems like a simple topic will take center stage this year. As guests continue to return to events, planners are focusing on creating unforgettable experiences far beyond a catchy theme or a well-stocked bar menu. With an increase in events fighting for an attendee's calendar and a decrease in attention due to countless digital distractions, **event planners will be pulling out all the stops this year and incorporating design elements that highlight all senses, including scents, flavors, sounds, colors, interactivity, and emotion**. The goal is to create a deeper connection to the event and keep guests talking about it long after the event is over. Here are a few things we anticipate seeing more of this year in the design and decor world:

Immersive Storytelling

Passive, voyeuristic design is dead. **Guests want to engage in the decor and be told a story**. They want to explore a narrative thread that unveils itself throughout the event, from arrival experience to venue decor, programming, and interactive entertainment. Not only is this a more memorable experience, but is key for connecting with guests on a deeper level.

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#5 Designing an Experience
Food, Decor, Interactivity, and Highlighting Culture -- (cont.)

Rich Multi-sensory Experiences

Planners will be designing experiences for all five senses this year. **Jungle themes will come to life** with eccentric, over-the-top floral displays and sounds of birds and animals played throughout the venue as guests work their way from the entrance to the main room, slowly becoming more immersed in the decor. Interactive entertainment could consist of **event actors wearing costumes of trees or animals roaming the event floor**. Food and beverage are all on theme, tasty and delicious, and include a nod to the food of the 'region.' The options here are endless, and planners are excited to bring these visions to life for dynamic and tactile event design experiences.
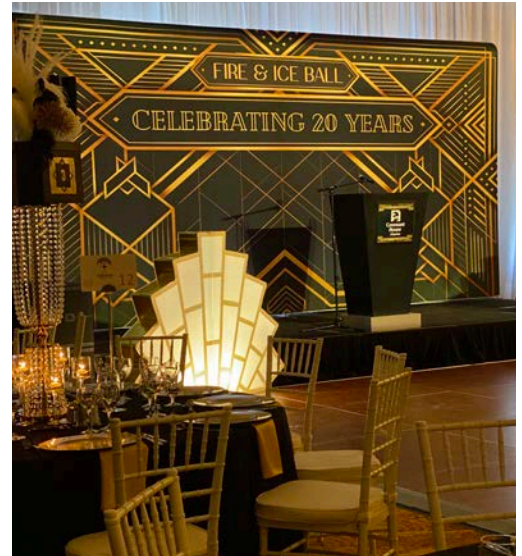

More Personalized Incorporation of Technology

Technology is no longer just a tool for presentations and logistics; it's now an integral part of creating unforgettable event experiences. Event designers are using technology to enhance interaction, personalization, and data collection. **From interactive displays and augmented reality experiences** to personalized messaging and social media integration, technology is transforming the way attendees engage with events.

Highlighting of Local Cultures

Attendees are increasingly **seeking out authentic experiences,** especially when it comes to travel, and the event world has a huge opportunity to embrace this and bring it into event design. Guests yearn for local cuisine, local beverage, and food specialties unique to the region and are increasingly **interested in supporting organizations that give back to local communities** while doing so. Bringing the local 'hidden gems' into an event with unique culinary or entertainment experiences is a way to authentically feature components of the local culture that guests will appreciate and continue to prioritize throughout 2024.
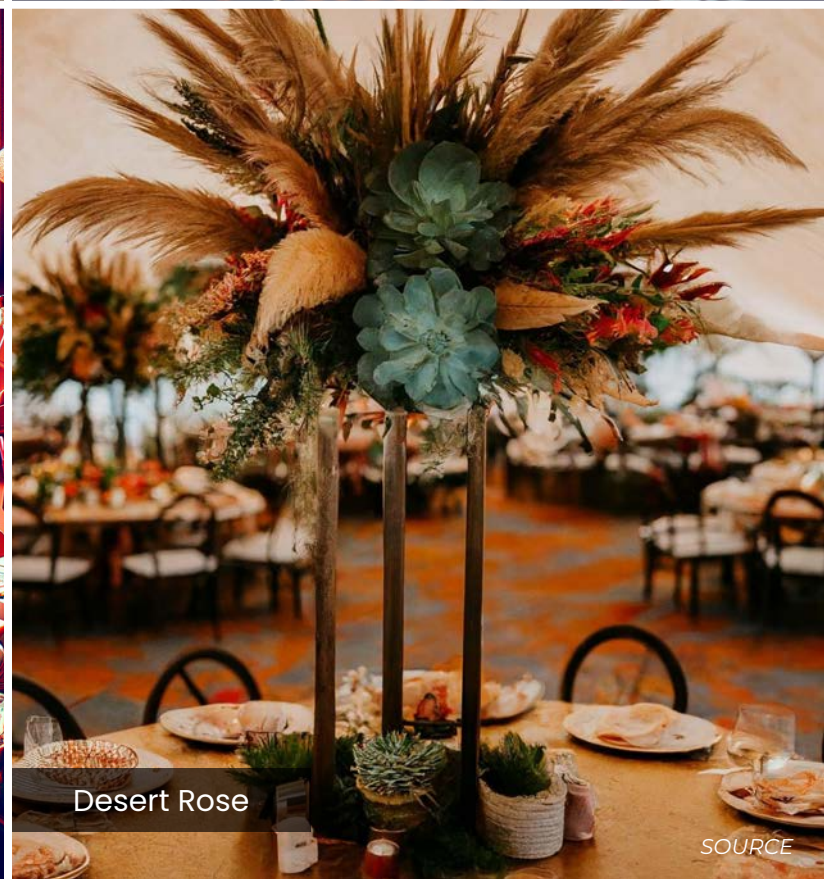
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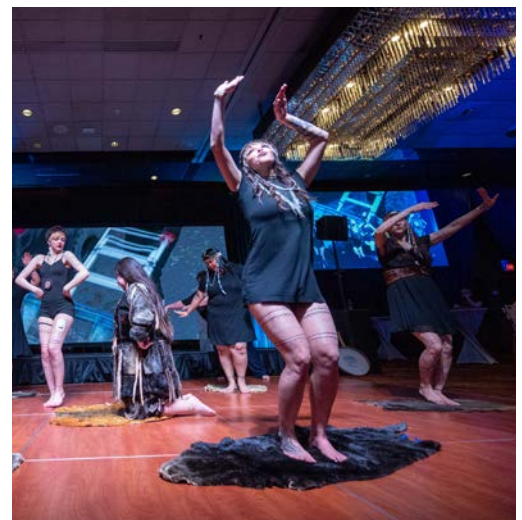
DESIGN TRENDS
THEME INSPIRATION FOR 2024

Secret Garden

All That Jazz

Paint the Town

Desert Rose

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RESOURCES

Global Business Travel Industry Sees Rebound in 2023 With Shifting Challenges and Opportunities for 2024

AMEX GBT: 2024 Global Meetings and Events Forecast

4 Highlights from the 2024 Amex Meetings and Events Forecast

Meetings Industry Forecast 2024 - Northstar Meetings Group

MPI Meetings Outlook

CVENT: Meeting and Event Trends You Need to Know for 2024 – & Beyond

12 Key Event Trends: How to Make Your Events Stand Out 2024

8 Emerging Event Industry Trends 2024-2026

Event Tech Trends & Predictions for 2024

5 Design Trends That Are Shaping Unforgettable Event Experiences

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