

TOAST OF  
THE TOWN



EVENT SERVICES

# 2023 State of the Industry

Meetings & Events



“As we look to 2023, it’s an exciting time to be in this industry. In-person meetings and events are roaring back.”

SOURCE

- Event industry professionals have had many thoughts and predictions over the halt of in-person events during these last few years.
- Some said virtual would reign supreme.
- Some predicted attendees simply wouldn’t make the switch and planners instead would be forced to figure out how to safely gather in person.
- Some said 2021 would be the return to ‘normal’.

And in their own way, many of these estimations were accurate throughout 2021 and 2022, but this year - 2023 feels different. Not simply because industry pro’s said so, but rather because the numbers, and more specifically - 2022 bookings - said so. 2022 absolutely showed an enthusiasm for in-person events, with an incredible return that was faster and at a greater volume than anticipated.

**In fact this year’s industry predictions are much more clear. . .**

### **Live Events Are Back - And Bigger Than Ever!**

We have compiled data and forecasts from some of the event industry’s top leaders, agencies, research firms, blogs, and other professional resources that all point to a roaring and triumphant return of in-person events in 2023. Read on and buckle up!

**MEETING LEVELS WILL RECOVER TO 106.4 PERCENT OF 2019 LEVELS BY MID-2023 AND 129.2 PERCENT IN 2024.**

SOURCE





# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Reporting from the 2023 AMEX Global Event Trends Forecast shows that in-person events are set for their **strongest year ever** in 2023. Planners are reporting COVID-19 to have **little to no effect** on their planning. Also a factor is the fairly widespread **removal of travel restrictions** that has released a substantial amount of human energy around the world. These two aspects alone have people and organizations **rushing to reconnect**, with the result being a **dramatic increase** of in-person events.



## In Person

All meeting types are expected to increase in 2023 with in-person seeing the largest increase at an estimated **62%** of event formats.



## Hybrid

As attendees opt to see each other in person, planners are prepping for hybrid as a fallback rather than the first option, and anticipate will make up for **28%** of meeting types.



## Virtual

Virtual is expected to see the most dramatic reduction and will make up only **10%** of market share.

### Event type increases from 2022 numbers:

<b>+4.62%</b> Internal Team Meeting/Training	<b>+4.60%</b> Client/Customer Advisory Board
<b>+3.74%</b> Product Launch (Internal/External)	<b>+4.34%</b> Senior Leadership Meeting/ Board Meeting
<b>+3.62%</b> Conference / Tradeshow	<b>+4.01%</b> Incentive/Special Event
<b>+4.72%</b> Small/Simple Meetings	

\*NOTE - these are all from the attendee perspective\*  
SOURCE

Planners report **booming optimism** with **72%** of event professionals rating their optimism at **8** or higher out of **10**.

**63%** predict 2023 will be the year live events return to 2019 levels.

To accompany this surge of in-person meetings and events, event professionals' will adjust their focus to concentrate on **quality over quantity**. The result of an extended hiatus from gathering, we see this revival bringing with it a **renewed focus on RETURNS....**



## 2023 BUZZWORD OF THE YEAR

# ROA - Return on Attention

ROA, short for **Return on Attention**, is basically the new event ROI.

After having missed personal connections for two plus years now, the main 'value' being sought by attendees is the ability to **build meaningful connections and have memorable experiences**.

The focus here is on making the in-person experience worth it for people by highlighting what matters now: **engagement**. Expect to hear this term more and more throughout the year as event planners look to capitalize on this new metric.



## Here are a few events that are doing it right:

The Boca Raton ENGAGE! 2023 Summit - <http://engagesummits.com/engage23bocaraton/>

HLTH Annual Conference - <https://www.hlth.com/2022event>

Health & Wellness Society annual Conference - <https://healthandsociety.com/2023-conference>

Forbes CIO Summit - <https://www.forbes.com/connect/event/2022-cio-summit/>

2022 TBM Conference - <https://www.tbmconference.org/>

5G Expo North America - <https://5gexpo.net/northamerica/>

SXSW - <https://www.sxsw.com/conference/>

The Science of Reading Summit - <https://aksorsymposium.org/>

Covenant House Fire & Ice Ball - <https://covenanthouseak.org/events/fire-ice/>



## TOP TRENDS

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# #1 In Person Events Are Back

In-person events started making their gradual comeback in the second half of 2022. However both the enthusiasm for and the frequency of in-person events, was a bit shocking for most, including those in the event industry. What started as a slow rumble has turned into a loud roar, with a clear momentum taking us well into 2023. This faster than expected **'return to normal'** does not seem to be slowing down anytime soon, and there are all sorts of signs that point in this direction. The cost and availability of venues, hotel room rates, airfare, vendor scheduling and on. Sure some of this is related to inflation (*which we will dive into later*), but it is also purely Economics 101 - Supply vs Demand, and demand is currently very high!! With covid-19 becoming longer in the rearview, expect to see more and more organizations bringing their teams and their customers back together again. With so many encounters and transactions having happened across a screen in the last few years, there is a renewed focus on meaningful, human-to-human, experiences.



“

“The meetings and events industry is experiencing an unprecedented recovery, and all signs point to a busy 2023. More meetings and events, more attendees, higher budgets, and higher rates are all expected.”

SOURCE



## TOP TRENDS

# #2 Hybrid Isn't Going Away



While In-person events surge, and hybrid/virtual events dramatically decline compared to their exceptional prevalence in 2021 (**80%**) and 2022 (**60%**), they still make up for the 2nd most common form of events at roughly **30%** for 2023. Zoom fatigue is a real thing, and with more and more options to return to in-person, we clearly see the enthusiasm to do so. BUT.....hybrid isn't going away. And for many reasons....

1

Companies have invested in and fine tuned their tech stacks for 2+ years now, and are not willing to scrap them just yet. Their system is dialed in and it still works well, for those to want it.

2

Not all company budgets are ready to support staff/attendee travel just yet, and in this sense hybrid is still a much more affordable option, while still providing a very valuable user experience or ROI.

3

Although waning - covid-19 is still a thing and still continues to circulate. While most people appear eager to return to in-person, not all speakers or attendees are ready to do so, and still require some sensitivity and accommodations.

4

Venues, organizations, and planners will continue to need and plan for backup options, possibly indefinitely, moving forward. A virtual option has now become the norm not the exception.



## TOP TRENDS

# #3 Experience(ial) is Everything

- ✓ Nationally recognized centers/speakers
- ✓ Top notch entertainment
- ✓ World-class culinary offerings
- ✓ Unique & exclusive venues
- ✓ Easily accessible and enticing destinations
- ✓ Event design that is over the top and immersive
- ✓ Dynamic program with varied sessions and curated tracks
- ✓ A seamless mix of live & digital programming and engagement opportunities
- ✓ Access to attendees through face-to-face networking opportunities



These are just a few of the elements that event producers are intentionally designing into their events for 2023, and will be a recurring theme throughout this year as part of the **'return to in-person'**. With more options for events and conferences, and the one-click the ability to simply stay at home and consume the same content for a fraction of the cost, event planners realize they really need to go big for attendees in 2023. In order to really entice someone to not only leave their home, possibly drive hours to the next town, or hop a plane a few states away, AND spend more money - **the event better be worth it.**

The event has to have a draw, event info needs to be easily accessible, provides an engaging format and content, implements ample opportunities for person-to-person connection, leisure and down time built into programming. Imagine a multi-sensory experience from start to finish. Overall an event in 2023 needs to be **dynamic, unique and memorable** to capture an attendee's attention and registration dollars.



## TOP TRENDS

# #4 Wellness & Leisure



“After two years of being mostly confined to the indoors, people are looking for fun, adventurous, often outdoors, and definitely out-of-the-box.”

SOURCE

Trend #4 is all about health, wellness and the coveted work/life balance, acknowledging an accelerated ‘values reset’ that took place due to the global pandemic. As people return to travel for both work and play, they are more often seeking to blend whatever travel they can at the moment. This has led to a sharp rise in the mixing of business and leisure, or, ‘bleisure’ travel, with much more anticipated on the horizon.

From the planner perspective this may just be a blessing as the typical metro markets are at, or near capacity in terms of venue space availability and hotel room occupancy. This has in turn pushed planners to look outside the urban centers to find locations that would traditionally be considered leisure destinations. With larger tourist destinations offering increased space and room availability, coupled with frequent air service and higher staffing levels, these cities have become more attractive for both planner and attendee.

## Why Anchorage is a Perfect Destination for Trend #4

**Daily direct flights** from 15 major domestic airport hubs including:

- Seattle
- Portland
- Vancouver
- San Francisco
- Los Angeles
- Phoenix
- Las Vegas
- Salt Lake City
- Denver
- Dallas
- Atlanta
- Minneapolis
- Chicago
- New York
- Honolulu

### Anchorage Features:

2 Convention Centers

6,000+ Hotel Rooms

A Delicious Mix of **Dining Options**

World Class **Museums & Galleries**

**Access to outdoors** just steps away!

**AND** No Sales Tax!







## TOP TRENDS

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# #5 Seamless User Experience is Paramount

**Streamlining and fine tuning your event tech stack** is more important than ever in 2023. Picture the last breakout session you sat in on - all attendees present in-person, yet on their phones or laptops the entire time. While physically present, they are nonetheless posting on social media, engaging with event participants, reading topical blogs, registering for other tracks, sessions, or conference social events, downloading keynote presentations, booking meetings and appointments with attendees, speakers, prospects, etc.

This all happens in real time, and the expectation is that **IT WORKS!** Wifi needs to be strong, and digital platforms need to be seamless and intuitive. An additional component of this trend is the **expectation for accurate and up to date communication**. Attendees more and more are wanting to know ahead of time what the event experience will be, including updates, scheduled changes, event announcements, and more.

When done correctly the event portrays a consistent experience that makes the attendee feel like they are a part of the event. Consider this a way for a planner to **build a relationship with the event attendee**, and an additional way to offer increased value of their attendance before, during and after the event.

### A complete tech stack should include:

- ✓ Event registration
- ✓ Event ticketing & contactless check in
- ✓ Appointment-setting software
- ✓ Strong WiFi
- ✓ Polling and audience Q & A
- ✓ Charging stations
- ✓ Wearable beacons
- ✓ Mobile app that includes:
  - ✓ Networking
  - ✓ Gamification
  - ✓ Survey capabilities





## SPECIAL SECTION

# RISING COSTS & RECESSION-PROOF MEETINGS

2022 certainly finished strong, and 2023 is overall looking very promising. Yet despite the bright outlook, there is a dark cloud looming in the horizon. Inflation has impacted almost everything in our daily lives, and surely increased the costs of doing business in the meetings and events world.

*Some specific factors leading to these increased costs include:*

**1.**

a surge in demand for venue space, hotel availability, airfare, vendors providing AV, catering, transportation, etc.;

**2.**

ongoing staffing challenges that has resulted in higher wagers and temp workers filling gaps;

**3.**

continued supply chain disruptions leading to limited inventories and premium pricing for some goods and services

Each of these has their own challenges that will resolve at their own, likely, uneven pace, but when combined together, have led to the current and overarching frustration of **INFLATION**.

In fact, according to the Northstar/Cvent PULSE Survey, rising costs are the top planner concern for 2023, as many have seen costs increase roughly **+25%** YOY when compared to 2019, and anticipating an additional **+7%** increase in 2023, for a total of **+32%** YOY when compared to the pre-pandemic markers of 2019 costs.

The 2023 MPI Meetings Outlook report shows the increases in the most common event related categories:

### INFLATION/RECESSION/COST CHANGES

With growing inflation and concerns of a pending recession, meeting professionals are anticipating cost increases across most elements of their work. How significantly are costs rising? Well, take F&B for example: 77% of respondents expect F&B costs to rise by at least 6% over the next year—41% actually anticipate increases of more than 10%.

	1%-5% increase	6%-10% increase	>10% increase	no change/decrease
F&B	12%	37%	41%	11%
Audiovisual	24%	34%	26%	16%
Meeting space	27%	28%	15%	30%
Hotel accommodations	19%	34%	33%	14%
Staffing	20%	28%	28%	25%
Transportation	15%	32%	38%	15%
Marketing	23%	25%	19%	33%
Swag	22%	25%	19%	34%

Image Source: MPI Meetings Outlook Report



## SPECIAL SECTION

# RISEING COSTS & RECESSION-PROOF MEETINGS

The strategies being implemented to address these costs are fairly conventional - simply increase the budget and plan to spend more money / reduce costs of production to maintain the static budget / increase revenues to compensate for a static budget and increased cost differential.

These are typical responses for any business unit dealing with financial intake vs expenditure issues. But what is unique about this challenge happening at this particular time, is that planner enthusiasm is at an all time high. And this enthusiasm has planners opting for creative approaches to find savings in areas that don't diminish attendee experience **such as:**



A shortening of event days vs full cancellation of an event



Less production budget cuts and more experimenting with revenue generating amenities or charging for upgrades



Opting for less internal overhead staff costs vs more 3rd party hired contractors



Sticking to hard budgets by reducing the number of included event evening or offsite activities, and instead structure them as attendee paid add-ons

The key takeaway here should however be that while inflation is indeed a factor, it is also something that will **eventually be tempered**. Hard to say when exactly, but by all estimates we should see a leveling of these factors by mid year. Until then, there are a number of things a planner can do to mitigate increased costs.





## SPECIAL SECTION

# RISING COSTS & RECESSION-PROOF MEETINGS

## Here are some Pro Tips for managing increased event planning costs:

### Book Further Out

The surge of meetings and events flooding the market from pent up demand is consuming every venue & vendor in site, leading to less availability and increased costs.

### Negotiate for Flexibility

By booking further out you may also have better luck requesting a more flexible venue contract or room block. Ask for a sliding scale and more favorable attrition policies that happen at **90**, **60** and **30** days out. This helps to alleviate unnecessary costs on the planner side, and puts valuable inventory back on the venue side.

### Be Intentional With F&B

Rather than offering food & drink at every turn, create intentional moments that complement the event schedule and include opportunities to network or socialize. Rather than a full-fledged dinner, a reception might be sufficient. Reduce the bill by serving coffee and giving tea and decaf by request.

### Lock in Menus

Work with the venue to better understand what other events are taking place possibly before or after yours, then choosing similar food and beverage options for your event as well. This will save the venue costs from ordering specialty items plus could include better pricing from increased order quantities. Once aligned, push for pricing to be locked in at the time of contracting to ensure no inflation surprises prior to event day.

### Rent and Reuse

Consider less custom items that require building for your next event, and opt for more modular rental equipment that can be reused and repurposed. This can also reduce rental costs from a company that has more common pieces versus having to source or even make unique custom pieces.

### Keep it Local and Casual

Take advantage of the return to socializing and the desire for people to connect. The vibe at many event social functions is far less formal these days as people want genuine connection. Jeans and sneakers, live music and local beers have been frequently replacing suits and wine dinners.

[SOURCE](#)



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# RESOURCES

[How to Combat the Rising Cost of Meetings](#)

[Meetings Industry Forecast 2023](#)

[It's No Longer About B2B or B2C, but H2H](#)

[Meetings Outlook](#)

[Global Business Travel Forecast 2023](#)

[2023 Global Meetings and Events Forecast](#)

[Meetings Recovery Forecast](#)

[14 Meeting and Event Trends You Need to Know for 2023](#)

[Meetings Events Industry Trends and Predictions for 2023](#)

[Northstar/Cvent Meetings Industry PULSE Survey](#)

[Business Travel Continues Bouncing Back with a Strong Outlook for 2023](#)

[What's Trending 2023](#)

## TOP INDUSTRY BLOGS

[www.eventindustrynews.com/category/features](http://www.eventindustrynews.com/category/features)

[www.bizzabo.com/blog](http://www.bizzabo.com/blog)

[www.cvent.com/en/resources](http://www.cvent.com/en/resources)

[www.bizbash.com/](http://www.bizbash.com/)

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