

A 2018 CVENT/EDELMAN STUDY

Inside the Mind of Event Attendees



Introduction

What's really on the minds of event attendees? It's not an easy question to answer. In an industry where much of the focus is placed on the event planner, this research study was designed to better understand event attendee expectations and experiences to help identify unmet needs in the event space. Identifying attendee traits and priorities will help meetings and events professionals deliver more engaging, profitable, and memorable events — events attendees want, need, and will return for year after year.

Cvent and Edelman Intelligence conducted a global study to dive deeper into the mindset of event attendees.

This report focuses on:

- The Attendee Journey: pre-, during-, and post-event.
- The unique differences regarding the attendee event experience across the United States, UK, and Germany.
- Actionable recommendations based on the results of this study.

This study helps identify attendee attitudes and preferences while highlighting how technology can help measure the impact and improve upon the overall event experience. In the end, this benchmark will enable meetings and events professionals to put into practice better ways to tap into the minds of their attendees, in order to improve the events they plan

and market. Additionally, this report includes key demographic data regarding event attendees – why they attend meetings and conferences, what they find stressful or enjoyable, their wants and needs, and insight into their professional pain points.

Survey Respondents

Cvent and Edelman surveyed 3,000 (1,000 people from each the United States, UK, and Germany) people via a 15 minute online quantitative survey from August 9-21, 2018. The respondents represent attendees of professional conferences in the past six months. To further dissect the results, we also looked at event participants who attended at least ten events in the past year (referred to throughout as “Frequent Participants”).





Executive Summary

Meetings and events continue to be a key business generator for organizations, so understanding the wants and needs of event attendees has become increasingly critical for industry professionals. Creating and delivering an overall positive attendee experience to attendees begins with understanding them better.

This study reveals that professional events continue to be extremely valuable for attendees and offer them an un-paralleled way to learn and grow professionally, as events provide significant impact on their jobs and careers.

NETWORKING

is also a key component to attending, both professionally and socially, as most attendees have made friends at professional events.

70%

say they learn something new at every event that makes their job easier

90%

of respondents say the last event they attended was a valuable time investment

50%

say that they engage with content prior to the event

40%

continue to engage with content after the event

Because of the potential for each event to contribute to their professional development, attendees are engaged throughout the process, from pre-event prep work to sharing what they've learned after the event.

But there are stressors – aside from the time away from home, some attendees struggle to share what they've learned and prove the value of their attendance.

While most attendees don't report that the last event they attended was stressful, there is always room for improvement.

German attendees find events stressful, due to the time away from home and the logistics/navigation of the event itself.



Key Findings

Face-to-face events continue to be extremely valuable and continue to play a critical role in professional development for attendees. Specifically, helping people further their careers by attending educational sessions, having the ability to network with peers and prospects, and the opportunity to engage and consume valuable content specifically related to their profession.

Technology continues to shape the future of events – with mobile event apps and onsite technology having a significant, favorable impact on the overall event experience and helping to drive future event attendance. Because of the rapid development of event management technology, planning (and attending) events has never been more convenient. This is leading to unparalleled engagement before, during and after events.

Technology combats some of the key stressors of and barriers to attending events:



Onsite solution technology (such as check-in and onsite badge printing) help ease stressors for attendees by eliminating long queues and make moving from session-to-session a smoother process.



Mobile event apps help ease the stress around navigating the event and provide features, content, and information that attendees crave during the entire event lifecycle.



As for the future of events, findings are consistent across countries featured in this study. Millennials are the fastest growing segment of event attendees and are eager to continue attending events but may require more direction and guidance from events to make their overall experience less stressful. Stressors include being away from home, not knowing anyone, traveling to and from the event, and networking.



Millennials are currently attending the same number of events as other generations but are most likely to attend more events in 2019 than they did in 2018. That said, they do find the overall event experience significantly more stressful, especially having to network with people they don't know. They are leaning on events to provide more recommendations that are personalized to their needs, from which sessions to attend to who they should connect with.



Recommendations

Professional events are a source of excitement for attendees across the globe. So much so, that most create their own opportunities to attend events since they are a place to learn and grow. Take full advantage of the uniqueness of your events and capture the excitement surrounding professional development to reach event success. This can be achieved through every phase of the event lifecycle.





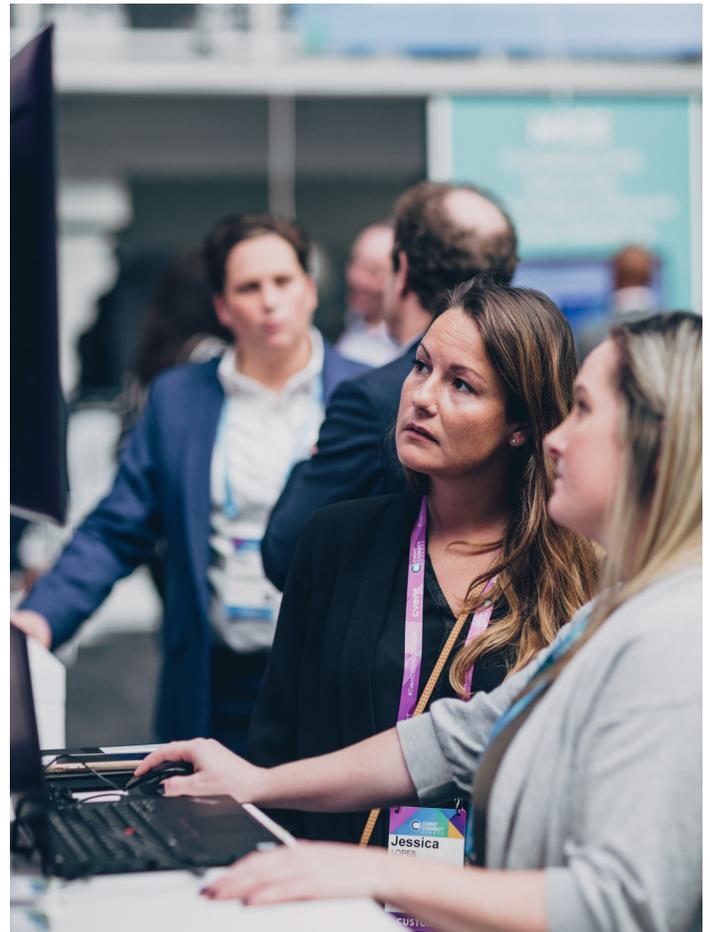
PRE-EVENT

We know attendees are excited about attending events, so using the pre-event process to ride the wave of enthusiasm is key.

Most attendees who seek out events find out about them first via email communications—far outdistancing all other channels, including: advertising, referrals, social media and more. Creating a thoughtful and consistent email marketing plan surrounding an event leads to higher attendance and engagement.

Also, most event attendees engage with that content before they arrive onsite. And they want that content to be more impactful and useful. There are several ways to achieve this.

- Supply recommendations for sessions to attend based on specific interests and past attendance patterns.
- Recommend networking sessions with like-minded attendees based on industry and job role.
- Share a fully-detailed schedule to be created prior to the event (including sessions to attend, where to eat, and social events to attend) based on attendee preferences. Limited and general information about events is a stressor, so mitigating this will go a long way toward improving the pre-event experience and lead to more engaged attendees.
- Drive awareness of mobile event apps. Only 1 in 4 attendees report the last event they attended offered a mobile app, but when available, 3 in 4 download them and derive a lot of value from them. This is an extremely effective way to keep maintain the engagement and excitement about events.





DURING THE EVENT

Successful events offer the opportunity to learn, valuable speakers, networking opportunities and good overall organization. Facilitating engagement onsite is seen as key to attendee satisfaction. It is recommended to offer the following onsite:

- In-person networking opportunities
- Planning/logistics support
- Mobile events apps
- Interactive sessions
- Valuable keynotes
- Presentation materials (content) to download
- An easy check-in process
- Session information
- Schedule Trackers
- Venue maps
- Detailed speaker information
- Push notifications
- Activity feeds
- Attendee Messaging

Keeping attendees engaged and informed will lead to higher satisfaction rates.

Events can be overwhelming experiences for attendees at times, and mobile event apps and other onsite technology provide a good solution for easing logistical and navigational stress. Continue to drive app adoption onsite (68% of mobile event app downloaders had a positive experience at their last event and 70% found them extremely valuable). And, it is strongly recommended to use these specific mobile app/onsite features as indicated by their value to attendees:



POST-EVENT

Following events, many attendees across the US, UK, and Germany feel burdened to justify their attendance, especially given the costs associated with attending. Lessening this stressor for your attendees is seen as very important. One of the best ways to achieve this is to help them share their learnings back at the office.

Provide post-event materials that are ready to share and socialize.



1 in 4 struggles to share their learnings with colleagues, so materials that can be directly shared would be valuable



Mobile event apps are the #1 preferred way attendees want to consume content and share it out

(Note German attendees place a higher importance on presentation materials / leave behinds compared to US and UK).



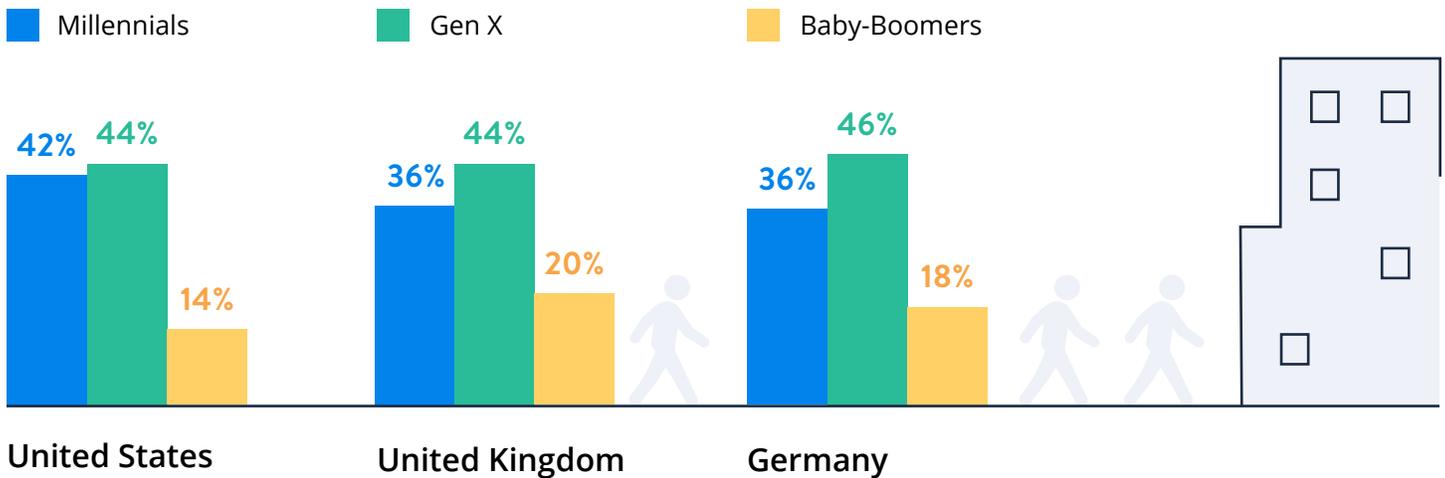
What's on the Mind of Event Attendees: The Numbers Speak for Themselves

Who are the people we spoke with, and why are they attending your events? Information gathered about participant's demographics, background, and mindset can help you better tailor your content and create more memorable events.

We collected data from a broad demographic of event participants, from Millennials to Baby-Boomers. This was key in capturing the unique wants and needs of attendees, all of which are extremely relevant and will help you navigate the general shifts of the future. Additionally, respondents were polled on a global level. We know all attendees are not the same, so it's important to gather feedback from several types of attendees from different regions across the world. This way you can better understand your guests and customize valuable content.

Demographic Profile

AVERAGE AGE OF ATTENDEES

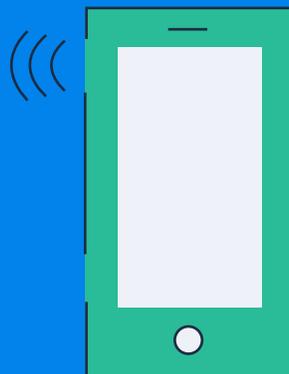


AVERAGE NUMBER OF

3

EVENTS ATTENDED
A YEAR

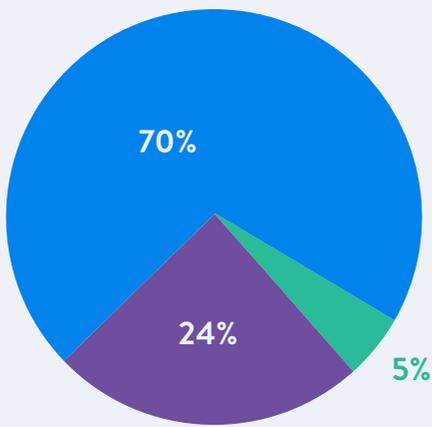
% WHO DOWNLOADED THE MOBILE APP



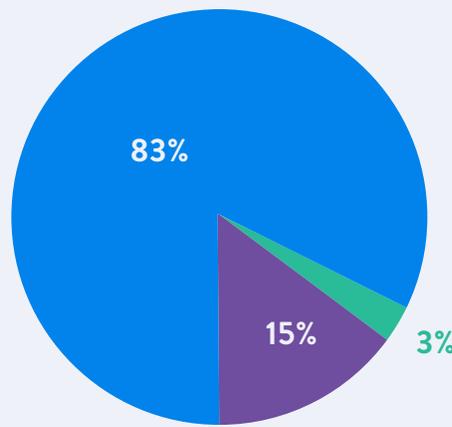
84% United States
74% United Kingdom
75% Germany

EVENT ATTENDANCE

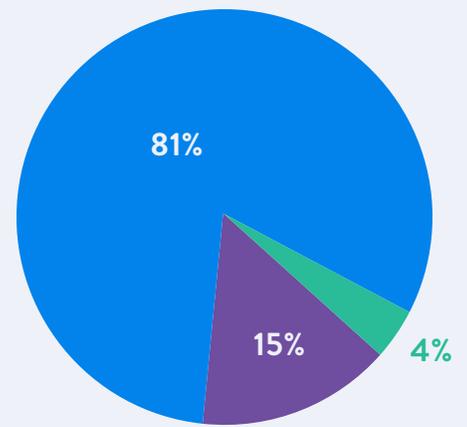
■ In-person
 ■ Remote/virtual
 ■ Mixture of both



United States



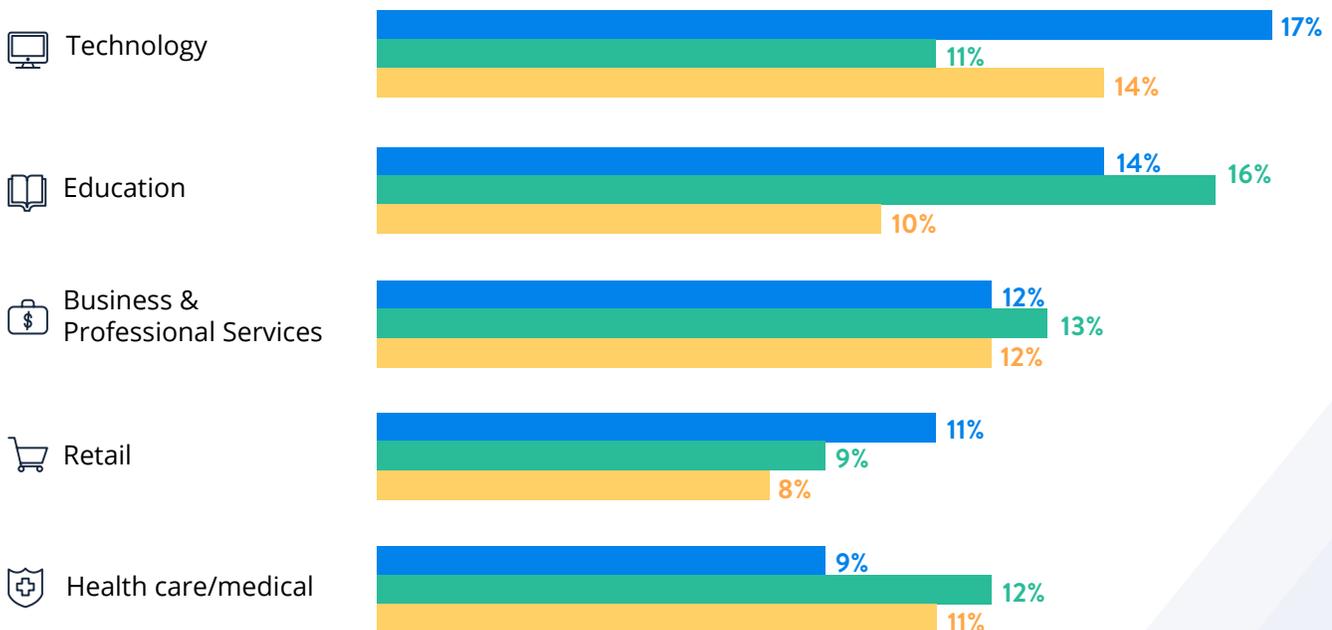
United Kingdom



Germany

TOP 5 ATTENDEE INDUSTRIES

■ United States
 ■ United Kingdom
 ■ Germany

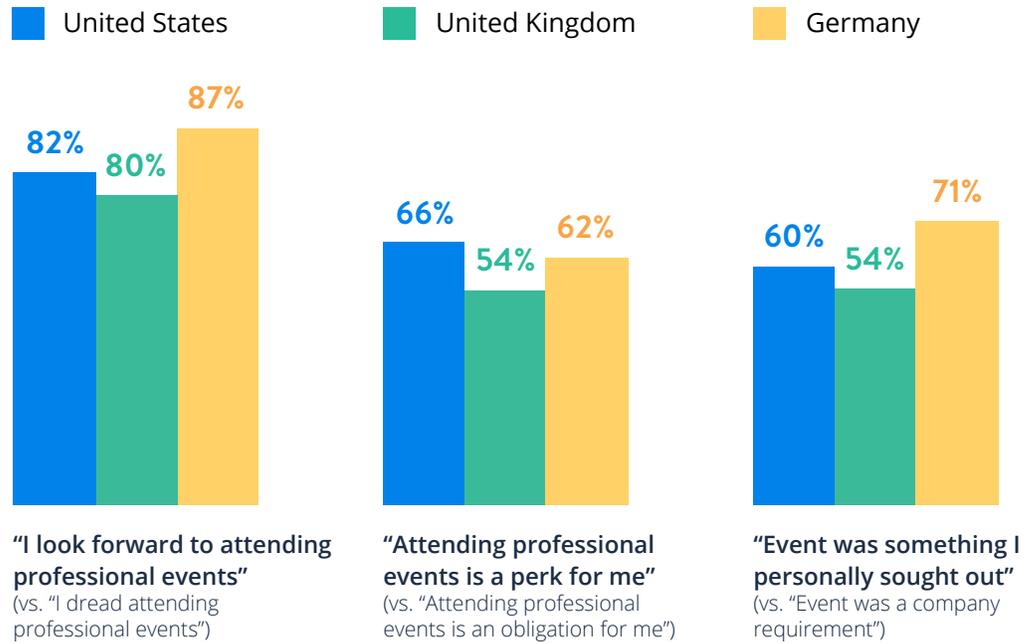


The Event Attendee Journey

PRE-EVENT

Attendees are excited about coming to your events!

The range of excitement varies by region.



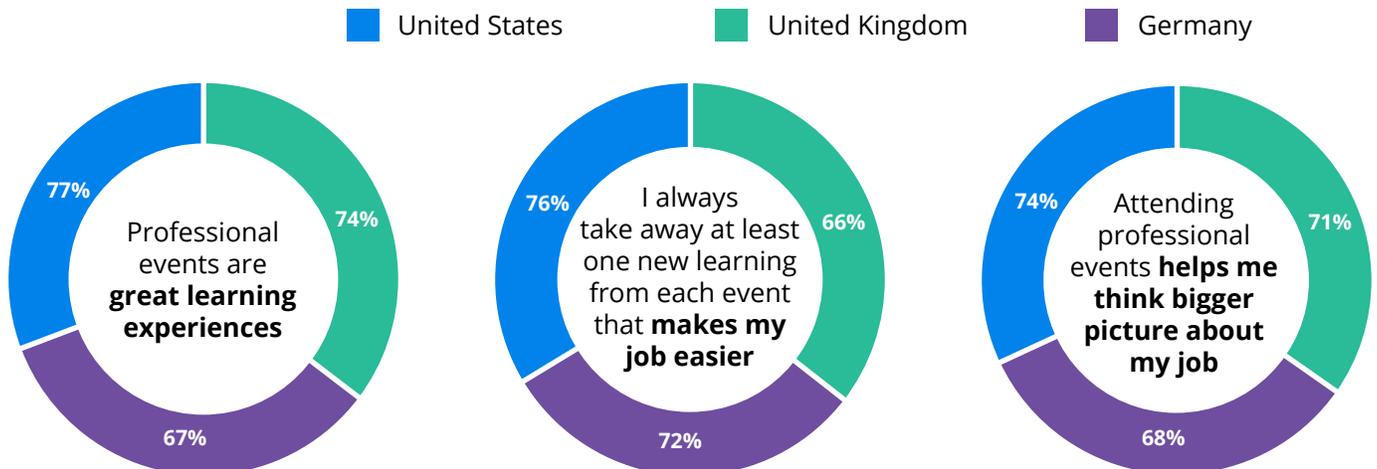
#1

Most important factor of event attendance in all countries is "Quality of learning opportunity"

#1

Reason for attending an event in all countries is "Professional development"

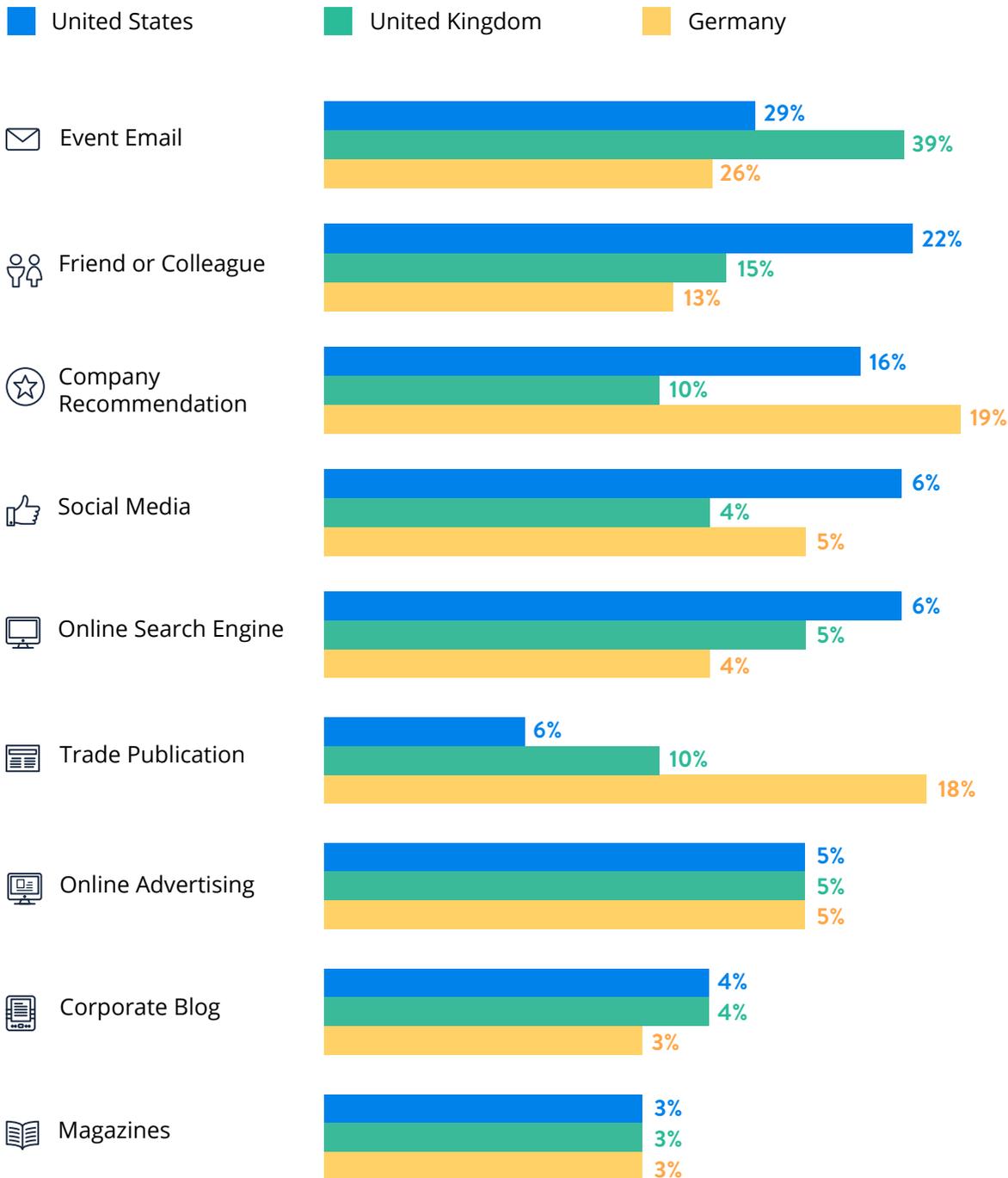
The reasons for attending are clear. Above all else, attendees see professional events as a place to learn and grow, as events have a significant impact on their jobs.



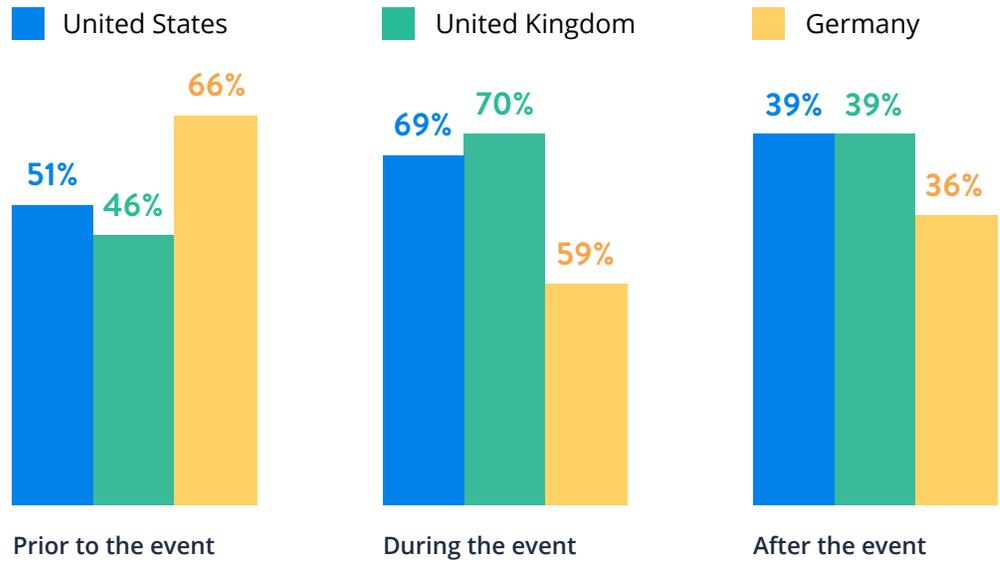
Leveraging this excitement is key to events professionals. The pre-event process is critical in capturing this “wave” of excitement, and riding it all the way to registration, and eventually, the onsite experience. The takeaway here is to communicate early and often to your prospective attendees.

For the majority of attendees who seek out events, event emails are the first touch point.

TOP SOURCES OF INFORMATION



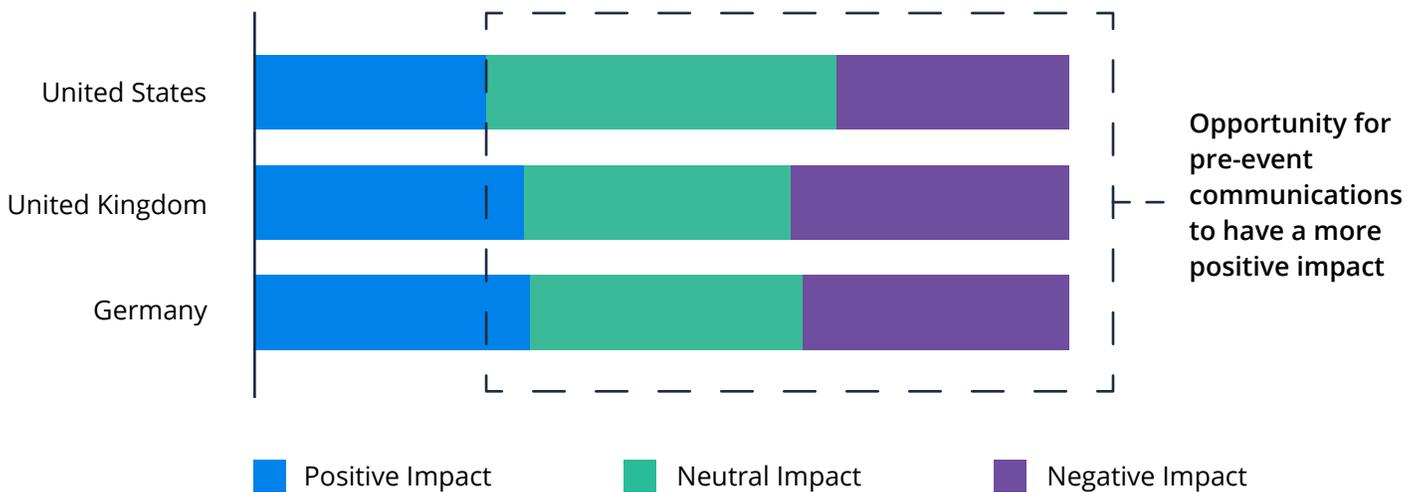
The majority of attendees do their homework — many start engaging with content and prepping for events ahead of time.



“I do a lot of prep work before a professional event” (vs. “I don’t prepare before a professional event”)

According to attendees, while they are mostly satisfied with pre-event communications, there is room for improvement.

Impact of pre-event communications on overall event experience:



Opportunity for pre-event communications to have a more positive impact

One improvement would be to provide session recommendations

#1
desired recommendation in 2 out of 3 countries

Preferences for personalization of events:

■ United States
 ■ United Kingdom
 ■ Germany

I would like **recommendations for sessions to attend** based on my interests and past attendances



I would like **recommendations on other attendees to network with** based on my industry and job role



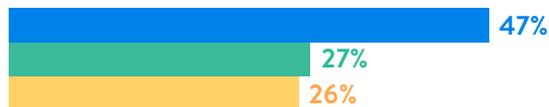
I would like a **fully detail schedule to be created for me by the event**, including which sessions to attend, where to eat, and what social events to attend, based on my interest and past event attendance



I would like **recommendations for other professional events to attend** based on my attendance at past professional events

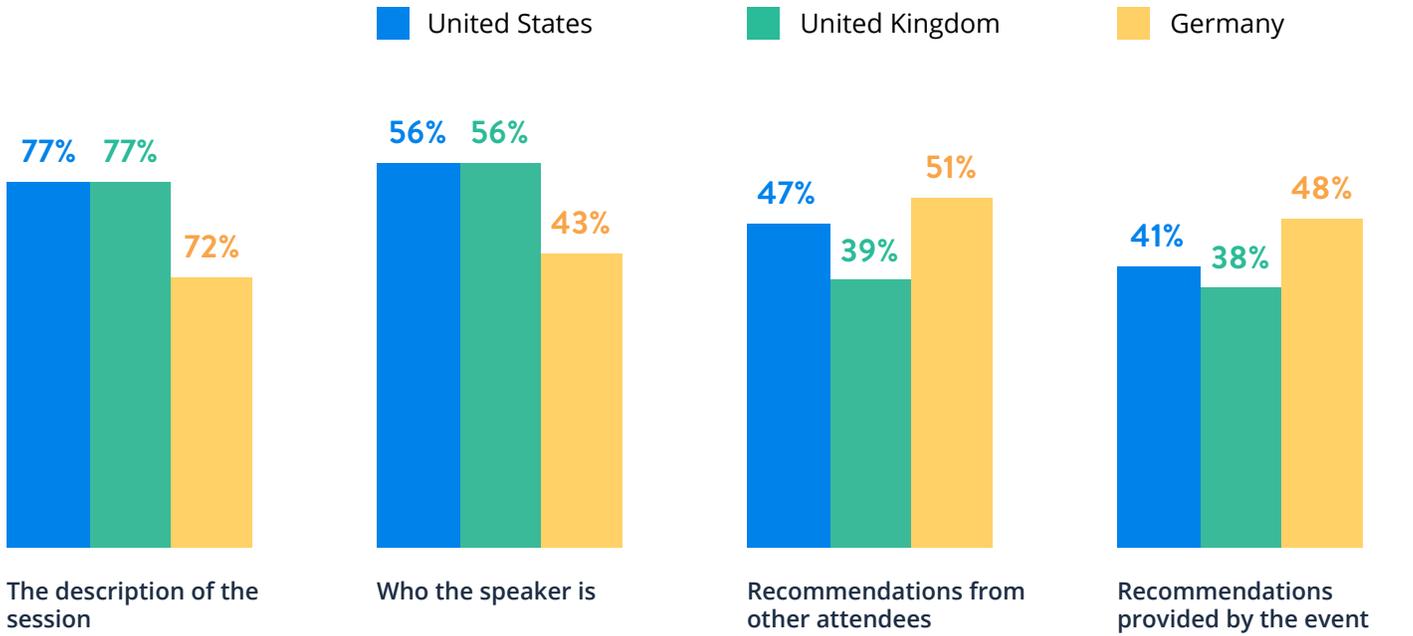


I would like a **professional concierge service that assists me throughout the entire event attendee process**, from registration to my journey home afterwards



This may be because most attendees are relying on limited and general information when deciding which sessions to attend.

How attendees decide which sessions to attend:



Opportunity for recommendations to play a larger role



#3

STRESSOR GLOBALLY

“HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO SESSIONS I WANTED TO ATTEND THAT WERE BEING HELD AT THE SAME TIME.”

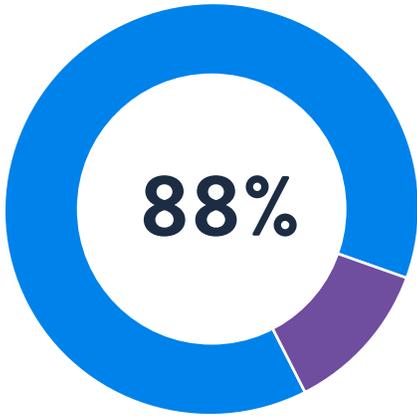
Which might be because they are relying on session descriptions to make that choice, which are limited in the information they provide.

DURING THE EVENT

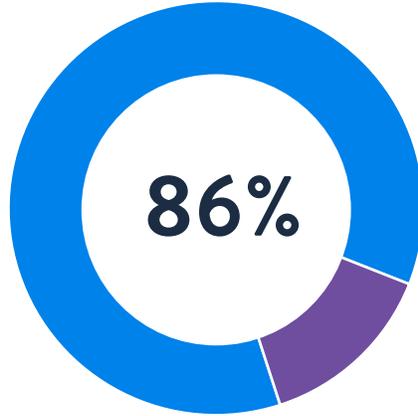
Attendees value their time at your events, seizing on opportunities to learn, network, and grow their careers.

Professional events are extremely valuable opportunities for attendees.

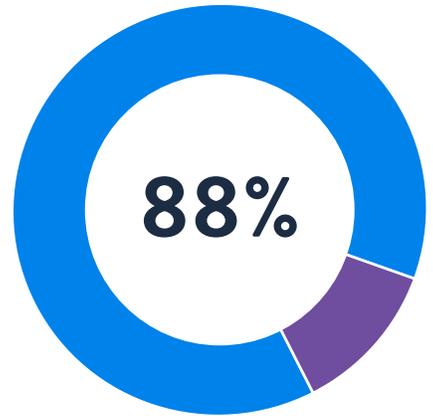
“The last event I attended was a valuable time investment”



United States



United Kingdom

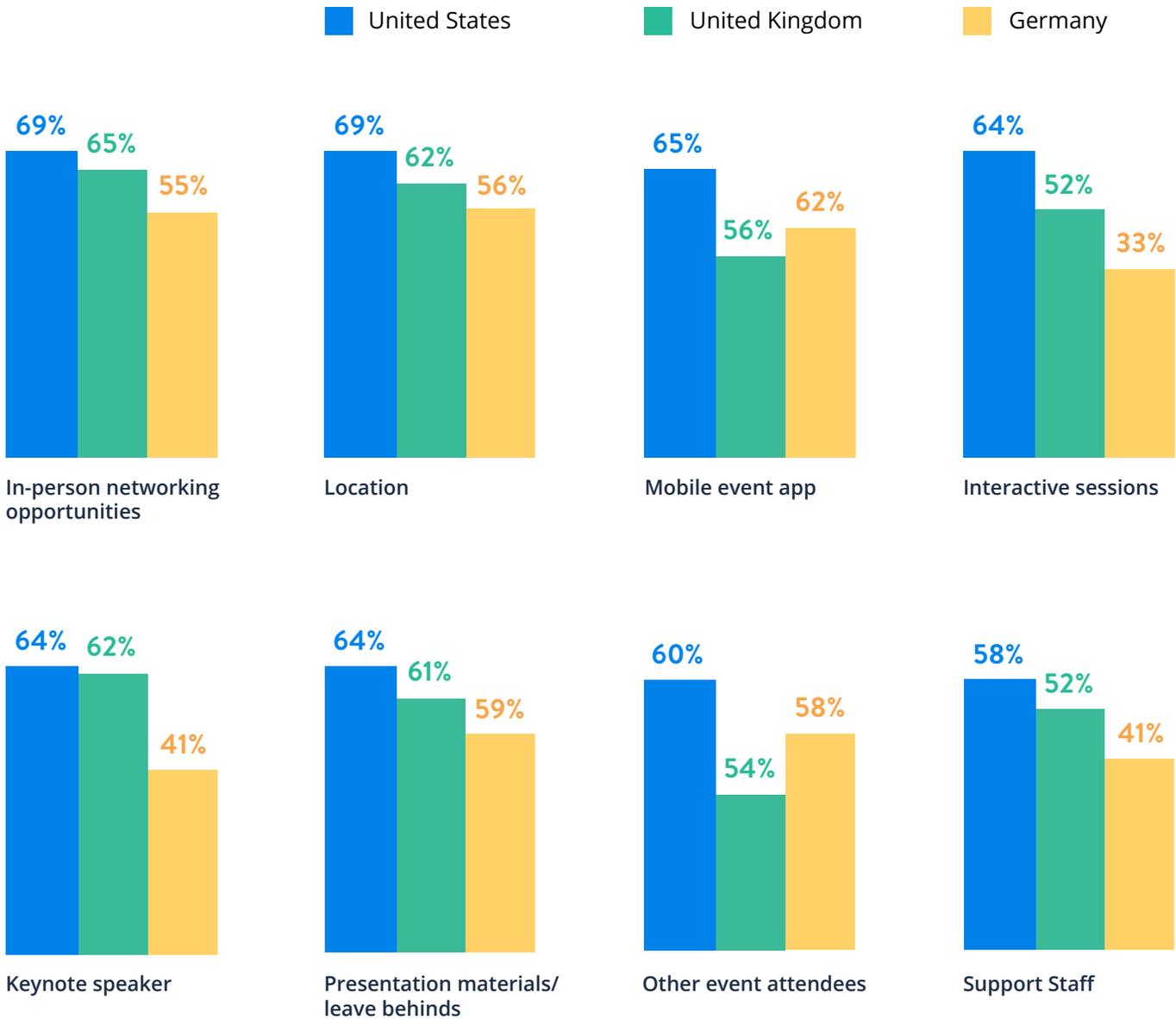


Germany



Components that facilitate engagement are key to driving value, especially networking opportunities.

Event factors that contributed positively to overall event experience.



Other factors include:

- Food
- Non-keynote speakers
- Lodging accommodations
- Check-in process
- Planning/logistics support
- Travel recommendations
- Pre-Event Communications
- Social events, such as happy hours
- Ability to attend remotely/virtually

76%

United States

74%

United Kingdom

79%

Germany

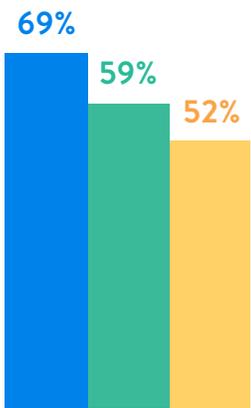
“Networking with other attendees is a key part of the professional event experience” (vs. “Networking with other attendees makes me anxious”)

Not only do attendees see networking as an integral part of events, many of their lives have been significantly impacted by other attendees.

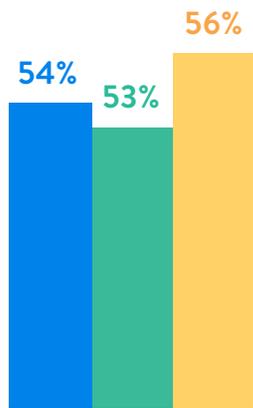
United States

United Kingdom

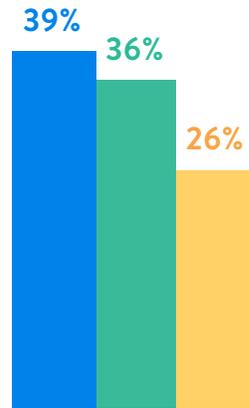
Germany



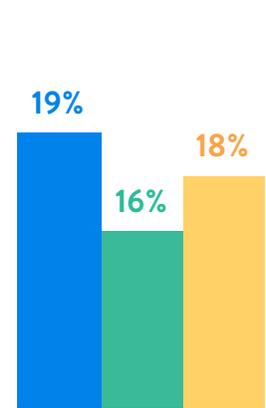
Made a friend at a professional event



Socialized late into the night with other attendees



Met someone at a professional event that you wanted to avoid the next time you attended



Missed an early morning session because you were out too late socializing with other attendees the night before



1 IN 4 US EVENT ATTENDEES HAVE GOT A NEW JOB FROM AN EVENT CONNECTION



ON AVERAGE, 1 IN 7 HAVE MET A SIGNIFICANT OTHER AT AN EVENT

A large segment of attendees find events stressful, for a variety of reasons, and vary by region. German attendees especially find events stressful.



Besides the time away from home, each region has unique stressors.

- In the US event attendees are more stressed by balancing their event attendance with keeping up with their regular work.
- In the UK event attendees are more stressed by how to present and conduct themselves with people they don't know.
- In the Germany event attendees are more stressed by navigating the event and proving the value of what they learned.

Mobile event apps are a good solution for easing logistical and navigational stress.

TOP 5 VALUABLE COMPONENTS OF MOBILE EVENT APPS

- Session Information
- Schedule Tracker
- Maps
- Speaker Information
- Notifications



POST-EVENT

Like event professionals, the onsite experience is not the “end” of the event for attendees. Stressors surround justification for attendance, costs associated with travel, and loss of working hours due to time away from the office.

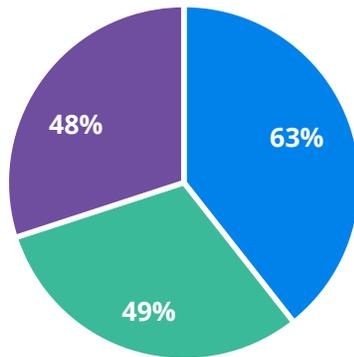
Following events, many feel the need to justify their attendance, especially given the costs associated with it.

United States

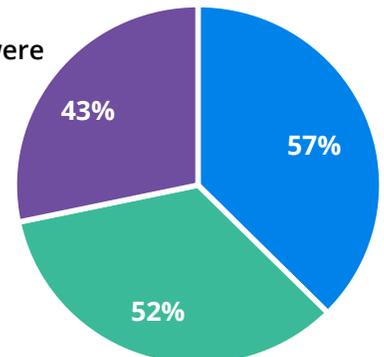
United Kingdom

Germany

“I would go to more events if I could justify the cost”



“I would go to more events if they were cheaper”



And for good reason; most are investing fairly significantly in attending events, driving value and logistics to rise to the top as key event factors.

AVERAGE COST OF LAST EVENT ATTENDED



\$811

United States

£364

United Kingdom

€485

Germany

AVERAGE DISTANCE TRAVELED TO LAST EVENT ATTENDED

470 mi

United States

382 km

United Kingdom

350 km

Germany

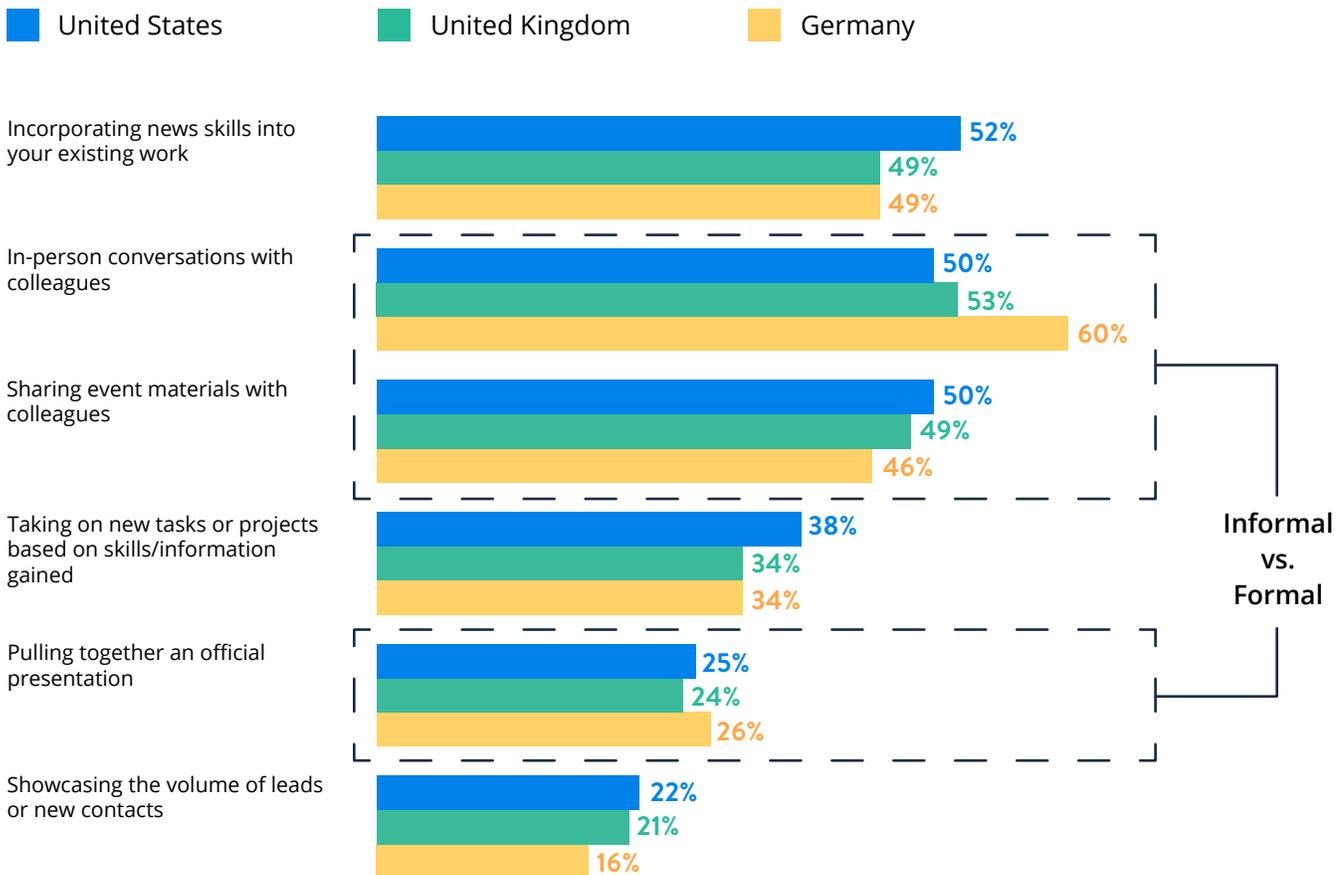


Although events are valuable, demonstrating that can be difficult; **1 in 4 attendees struggle to share learnings**, even though they share informally.



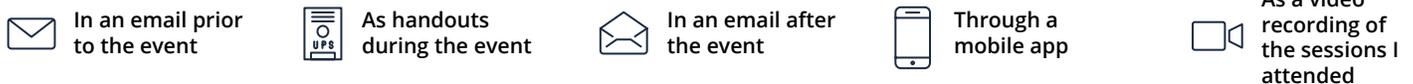
"I struggle to share the things I learn at events with coworkers who did not attend"

HOW ATTENDEES DEMONSTRATE VALUE



Which is why easily accessible and sharable event content is so important, before, during, and after the event.

Preferred delivery of event content:



Regionally, the US, UK, and Germany differ when it comes to the wants and needs of attendees at events. And looking at key event improvements, the US and UK are focused on logistics and amenities, and Germany is more focused on content quality.

“If there was one thing you could change about the last professional event you attended, what would it be and why?”

UNITED STATES



UNITED KINGDOM



GERMANY





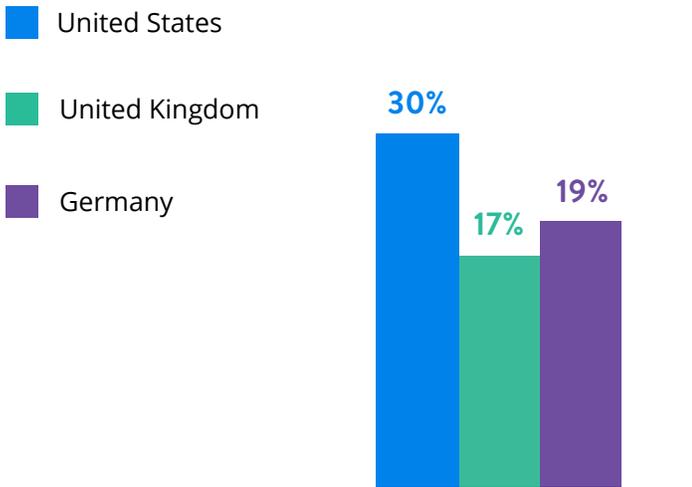
Professional Events: A Peak Into the Future

The attendee experience will continue to evolve through the use of technology: from virtual attendance to onsite innovations.



Virtual attendance, when in its early stages, is only expected to increase.

Attendees who have attended an event virtually.



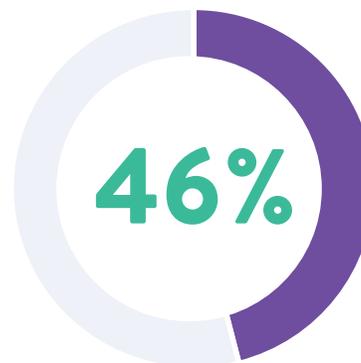
Attendees who believe that attending events virtually will continue to grow in popularity.

And for good reason - those who attend virtually are more likely to have had a positive experience at their last event.



Among attendees who **have** attended virtually

vs



Among attendees who **have not** attended virtually

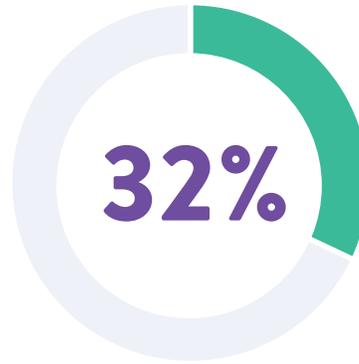
And among those who have attended virtually, the ability to continue doing so is important, and they are more likely to increase attendance in 2019.

"I would attend more events if they were hosted with the option of attending remotely/virtually"



Among attendees who **have** attended virtually

VS



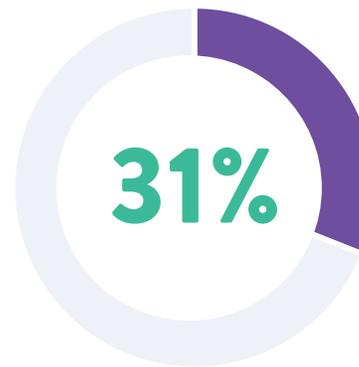
Among attendees who **have not** attended virtually

Those who will attend more event in 2019 than they did in 2018



Among attendees who **have** attended virtually

VS



Among attendees who **have not** attended virtually

So why is attending virtually an attractive option? It helps offset the biggest stressors of attending events – being away and logistics.

TOP 5 STRESSORS OF ATTENDING EVENTS

■ Being away from home and loved ones

■ Getting to and from the event location

■ Being away from the office

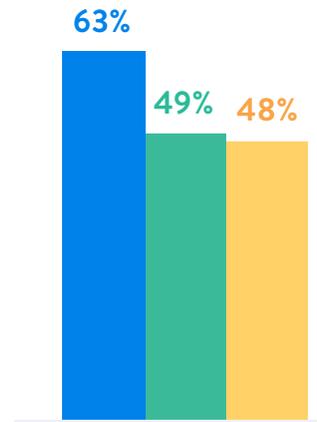
■ Translating key learnings into action at work

■ Having to choose between two sessions I wanted to attend that were being held at the same time

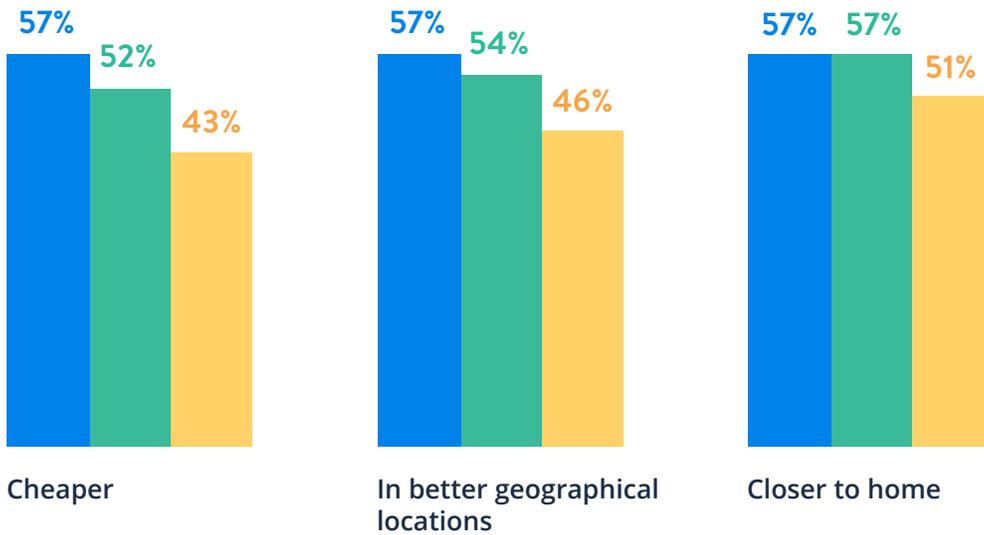
And offers an alternative to those who do not attend more events due to costs or unwillingness/inability to travel.

“I would go to more events if I could justify the cost”

United States United Kingdom Germany



TOP 3 INCENTIVES TO ATTEND MORE EVENTS





Mobile Event Apps: The Not-So-Secret Weapon

Mobile event app adoption leads to better, more educational and engaging events.



While mobile apps aren't expected at events, adoption is high when attendees are aware they are available.



**1 IN 4 ATTENDEES
REPORT THE LAST EVENT
THEY ATTENDED HAD A
MOBILE APP AVAILABLE
TO DOWNLOAD**



**3 IN 4 ATTENDEES
DOWNLOAD THE EVENT
APP WHEN THEY ARE
AWARE IT IS AVAILABLE**

Those who downloaded the mobile app had a more positive experience at their last event.



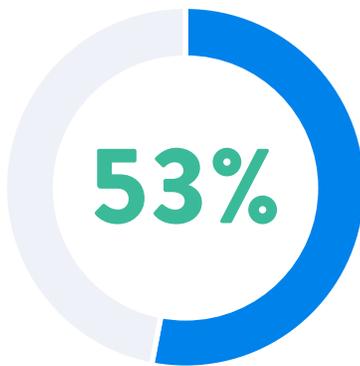
Among mobile app downloaders

VS



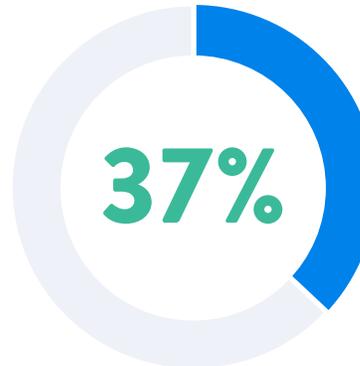
Among non-mobile app downloaders

And those who downloaded the app are more likely to attend more events in 2019.



Among mobile app downloaders

VS



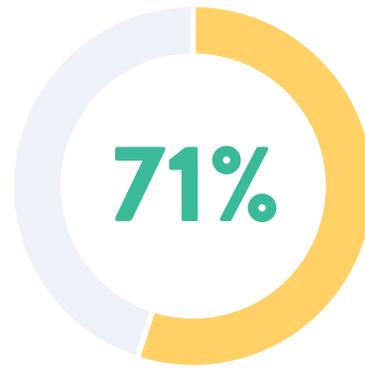
Among non-mobile app downloaders

Even though mobile apps are only considered nice to have, those who downloaded them find them extremely valuable.



“Mobile apps are nice to have” (vs. “Mobile apps are a need to have)

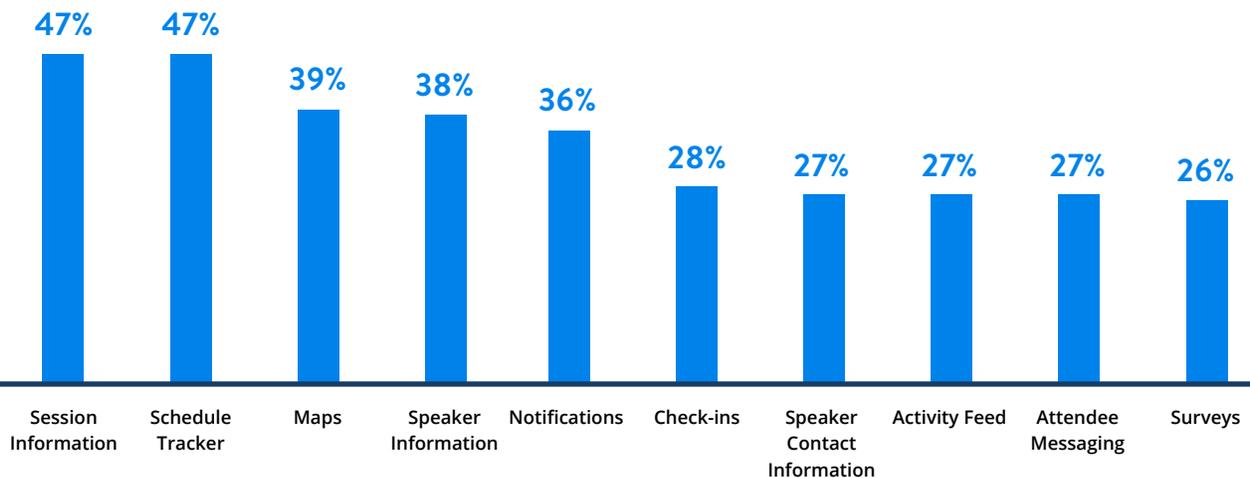
vs



Percent reporting mobile apps were valuable to them

Mobile event apps put your attendee’s minds at ease, enabling them to plan their days, navigate the venue, and make valuable connections. Why? Mobile apps help ease the stress around logistics, helping attendees plan for the event and navigate the grounds.

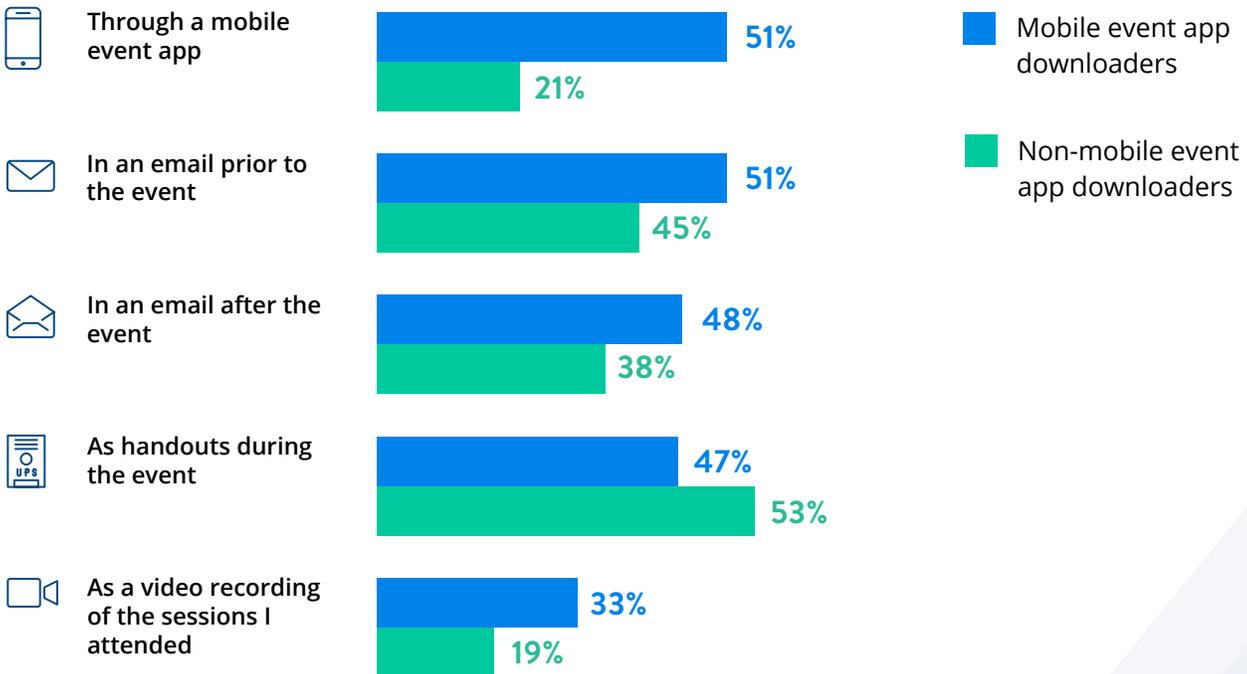
TOP 10 VALUABLE MOBILE EVENT APP FEATURES



Beyond logistics, attendees also want mobile apps to be the one-stop-shop for all their event content.



PREFERENCE ON HOW CONTENT IS TO BE PROVIDED





Professional Event Attendees: A Consistent Evolution Across Countries

While we have noticed many differences based on country and region, the future event attendees are similar. However, events professionals should note the effects this generational shift will have on the current, ideal attendee experience.

Millennials are currently attending events at roughly the same rate as other generations, but expect to attend even more next year.

3

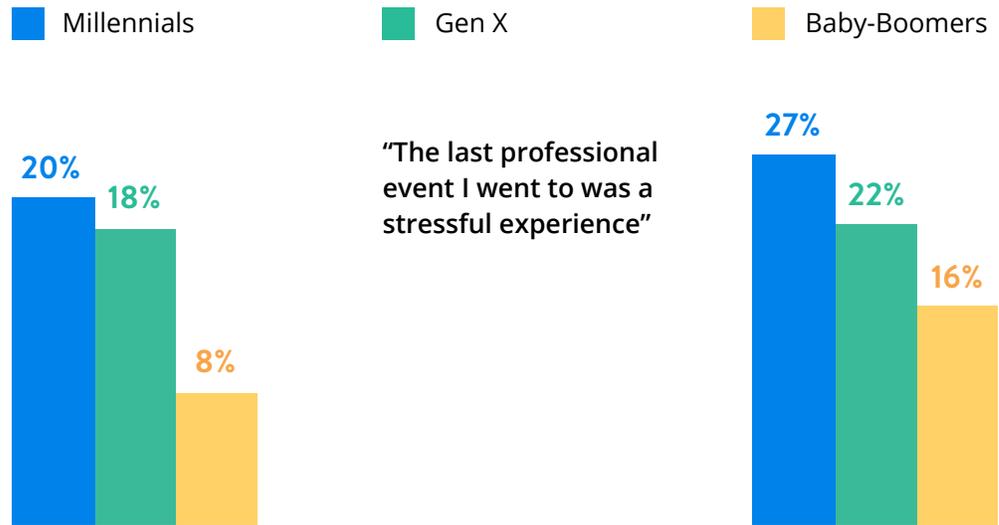
AVERAGE NUMBER OF EVENTS ATTENDED IN PAST YEAR

Those who will attend more events in 2019 than they did in 2018.



43% Millennials
33% Gen X
20% Baby-Boomers

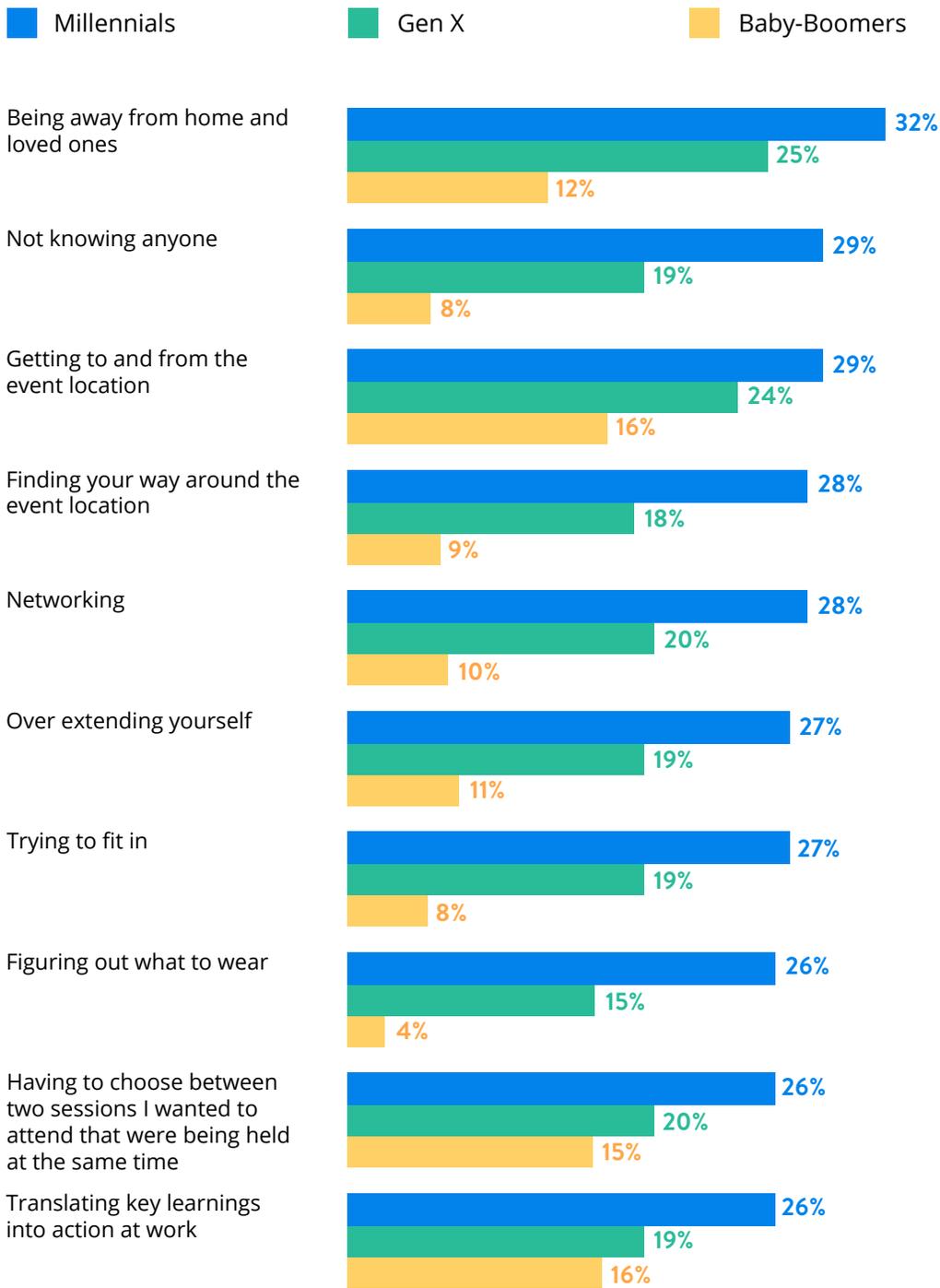
However, they are more stressed out about the experience, and need more guidance and support than other generations.



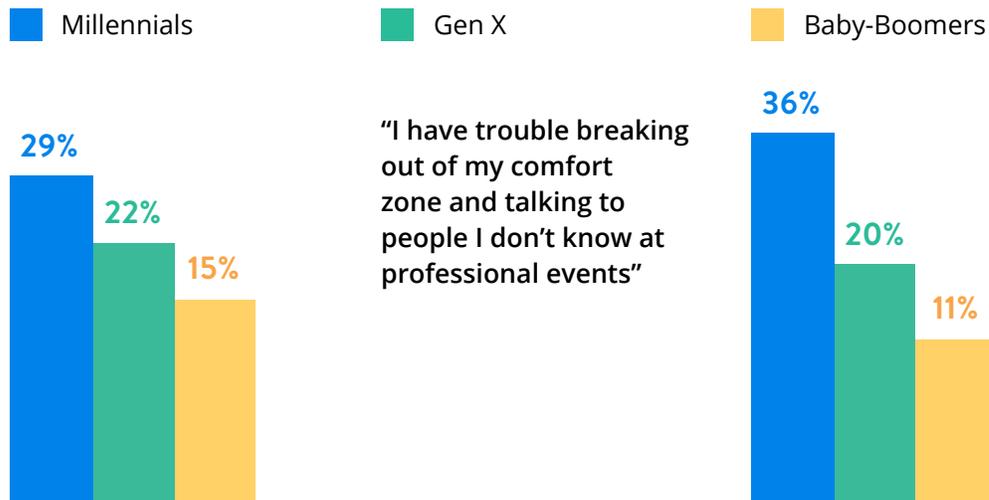
Millennials show higher stress levels across the board, especially when it comes to the more social aspects of attending events.



TOP 10 STRESSORS OF ATTENDING EVENTS

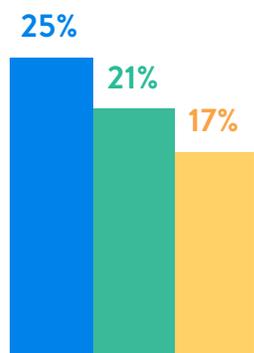


Networking makes attendees more anxious because they have trouble breaking out of their comfort zones.

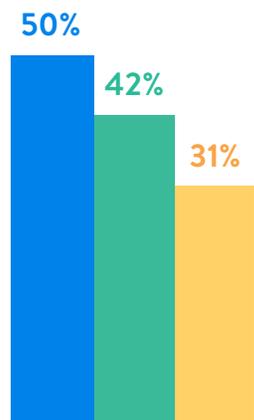


A shift in attendee value proposition could lead to a shift in focus for events professionals in the future. Millennials are more likely to say they go for fun than other generations.

"I attend professional events because they're fun" (vs. "I attend professional events because I learn a lot")

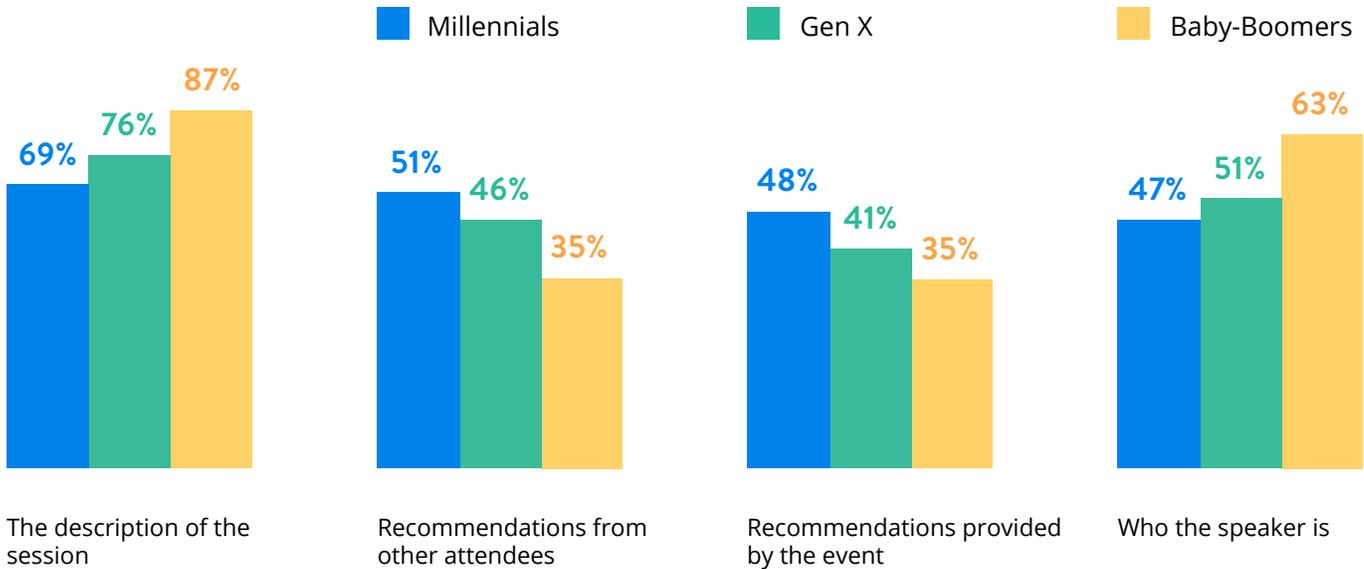


Importance of social events, such as happy hours



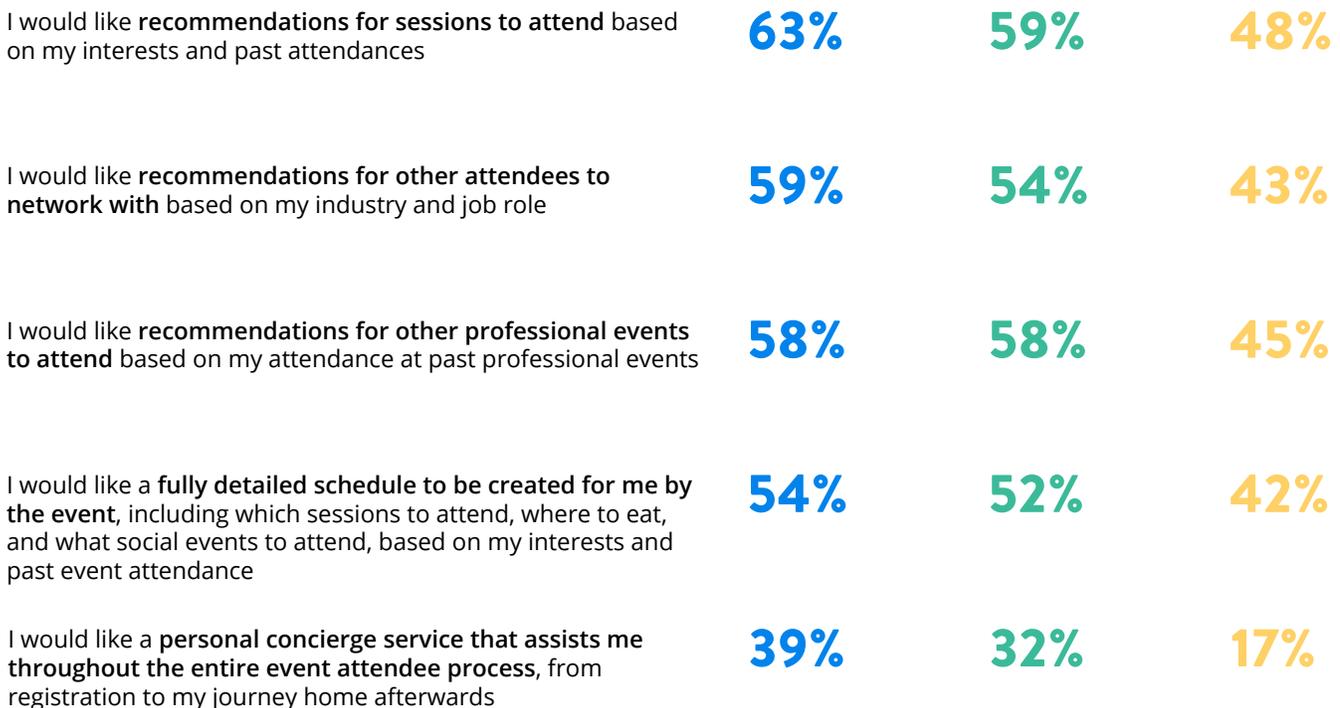
While most lean on session descriptions, Millennials also rely more heavily on the event to help them decide what's most relevant to them.

HOW ATTENDEES DECIDE WHICH SESSIONS TO ATTEND



Specifically, recommendations tailored to their interests and past event history.

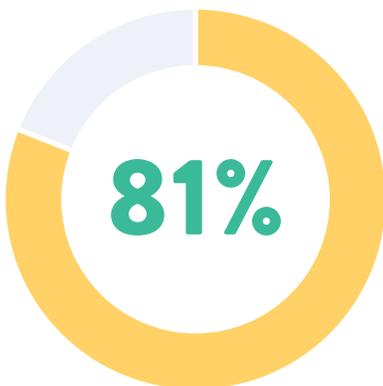
PREFERENCES FOR PERSONALIZATION OF EVENTS





Mobile event apps will continue to be increasingly important as both Millennials and Gen X download them when available

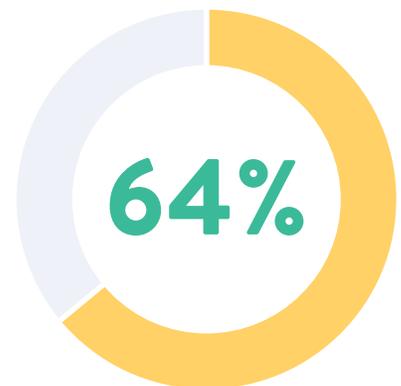
ATTENDEES WHO DOWNLOADED A MOBILE EVENT APP



Among Millennials



Among Gen X



Among Baby-Boomers



What's Changed in the Past Three Years?

Technology growth and new innovations have contributed greatly to events, and there have been a few slight changes to the overall events landscape from 2015 to 2018.

CHANGES IN THE US: 2015 VS. 2018

Event Attendance

is down slightly, from an average of 4.6 events a year in 2015 to 3.5 events a year in 2018

Types of Events

they're attending may be shifting - events that last one day or less rose from 35% in 2015 to 38% in 2018

Frequent Attendees

(those attending 6 or more events a year) have shifted from working mostly in tech in 2015 to mostly in education in 2018

The professional event landscape has changed slightly

Conclusion

The meetings and events industry is evolving, from attendees wants and needs, to the technology that powers them throughout the entire event lifecycle. This report offers events professionals key insights into the minds of their attendees, providing key drivers of event success in the process. As illustrated, event participants in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany are complex and diverse. It is critical for event professionals to understand this in order to build and execute events that are engaging, educational, and worthy of their time and money.

