

MEETING PLANNER SURVEY

2025 State of the Meetings Industry

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CONFERENCEDIRECT

Cendyn[∞]™ In partnership with CONFERENCEDIRECT

cendyn.com

info@cendyn.com

Welcome to the annual meeting planner survey

Cendyn & ConferenceDirect collaborated on a survey to help industry professionals understand the state of the meetings industry from planners’ and event managers’ perspectives.

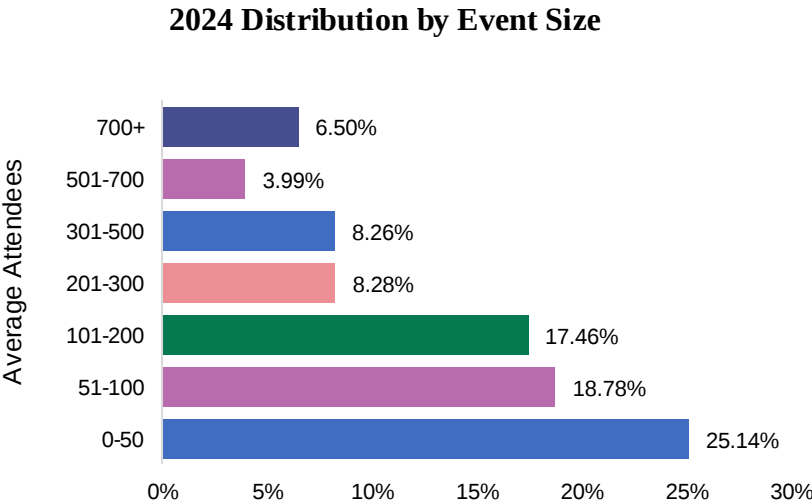
This must-read report provides insights into the state of the meetings industry from the perspective of planners and event managers — revealing their top challenges and expectations to guide hotels and venues on what to prioritize and how to stand out in 2025.

*The data used in this report was captured from Knowland by Cendyn and ConferenceDirect.

ConferenceDirect meeting planners were surveyed from November 1 to December 6, 2024

2024 SNAPSHOT

Almost 44% of U.S. meetings had 100 attendees or less in 2024. During the year, 49.4% of bookings were made in the year for the year. However, booking windows are lengthening as 9.5% of meetings booked were 3-5 years in advance with Chicago as the top destination.



1. Data from Knowland by Cendyn, 2024.

- 2024 Top 10 US Destinations
- 1. Chicago, IL
 - 2. Washington, DC-MD-VA
 - 3. Atlanta, GA
 - 4. Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA
 - 5. Dallas, TX
 - 6. Orlando, FL
 - 7. Boston, MA
 - 8. San Diego, CA
 - 9. Houston, TX
 - 10. Phoenix, AZ

2024 Booking Distribution

Year of Event	Booking%
2024	49.4%
2025	32.0%
2026	9.0%
2027	4.6%
2028	2.8%
2029+	2.1%

2. ConferenceDirect data, 2024

As we look to 2025, there's an optimistic buzz in the air—over 40% of meeting planners expect bookings to increase and 65% anticipate higher attendance.

While rising costs remain a major challenge for planners, new opportunities are emerging for smaller players in the industry. Secondary markets are surging in popularity, with 90% of planners considering them a cost-saving alternative.

Still, respondents emphasize that there is little room for compromise regarding event quality. The pressure is on to deliver exceptional attendee experiences, and

planners will prioritize venues capable of making a lasting impression. Advanced audio-visual support and technological capabilities are expected to play a crucial role in their decisions about event location and setup.

As planners set the tone for the coming year, this report examines how hoteliers can take advantage of their insights to increase sales. We explore the impact of key industry trends, such as sustainability, the economy, and technology, on planners' decisions.

Continue reading to discover the anticipated shifts and trends for 2025, along with insights straight from meeting planners themselves.

DEMAND

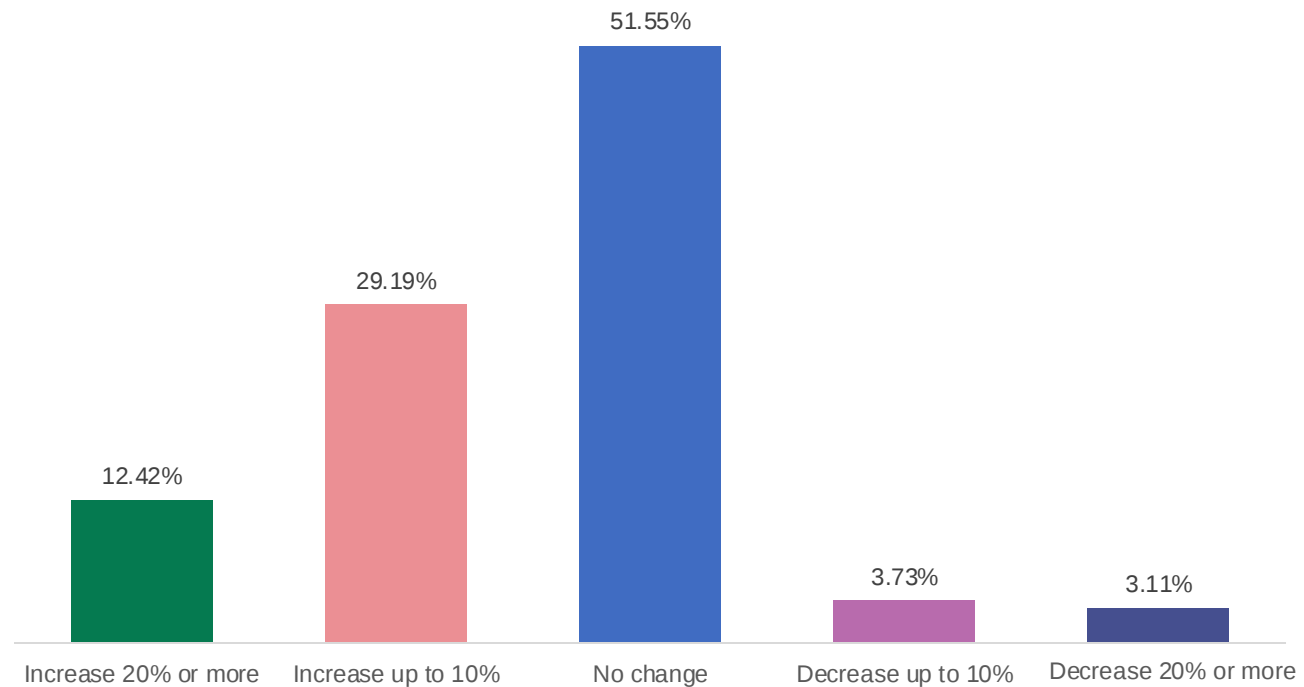
Planners are optimistic about 2025. Approximately 41% expect an increase in bookings, with 29.1% forecasting growth of up to 10% and 12.4% projecting a boost of 20% or above. These expectations are a positive indicator of the health of the meetings industry.



41%

of planners expect
bookings to
increase this year

How do you expect the number of events booked in 2025 to compare to 2024?



DEMAND

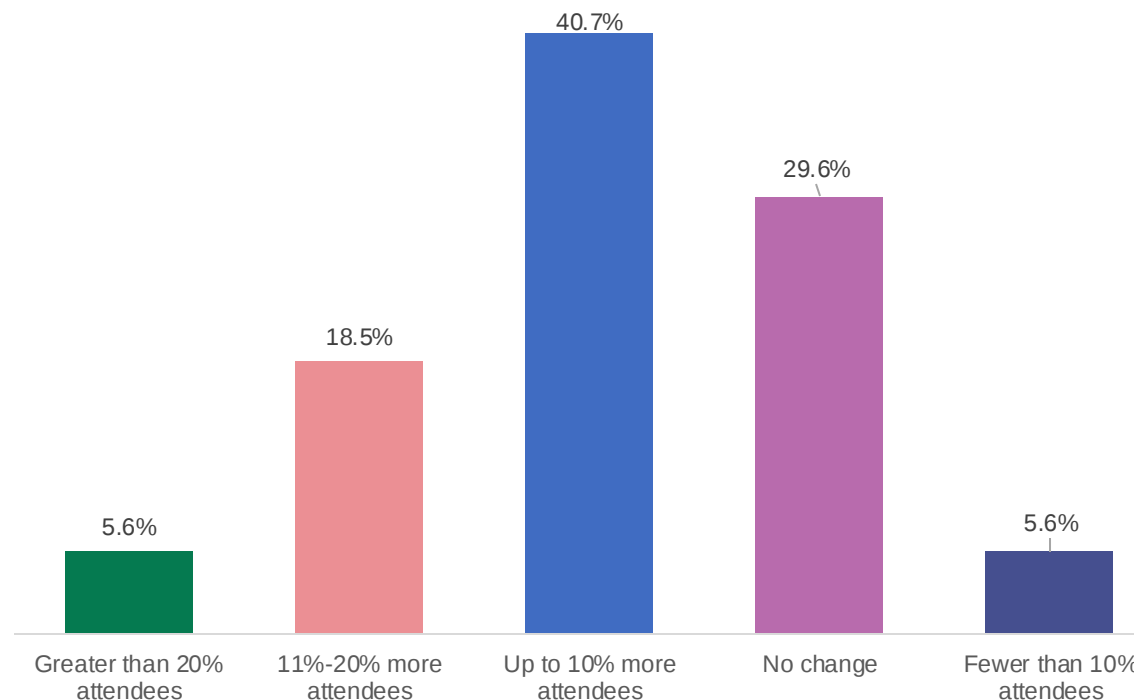
Approximately 65% expect an increase in attendees, with 40.7% forecasting growth of up to 10% increase in attendees, 18.5% forecasting growth between 11% and 20%, and 5.6% projecting a boost of over 20%. These expectations are a positive indicator of the health of the meetings industry.



65%

of planners expect
attendee count to
increase in 2025

How do you expect the average number of attendees at your typical events in 2025 to compare with those in 2024?



KEY HIGHLIGHT

Medium & large sized meetings strike a balance

Meetings with less than 200 attendees, which previously dominated the market, are facing a share shift as headcounts rise in 2025.

DEMAND

Meetings with 100 to 250 attendees represented 35.8% of all bookings, while events with over 500 attendees accounted for 32.4%. This trend shows an equalizing shift between smaller and larger events, emphasizing the need for hoteliers to improve services and amenities tailored to diverse group sizes. By focusing on both medium-sized meetings (100 to 250 attendees) and larger ones (over 500 attendees), hoteliers can take advantage of this balanced market.

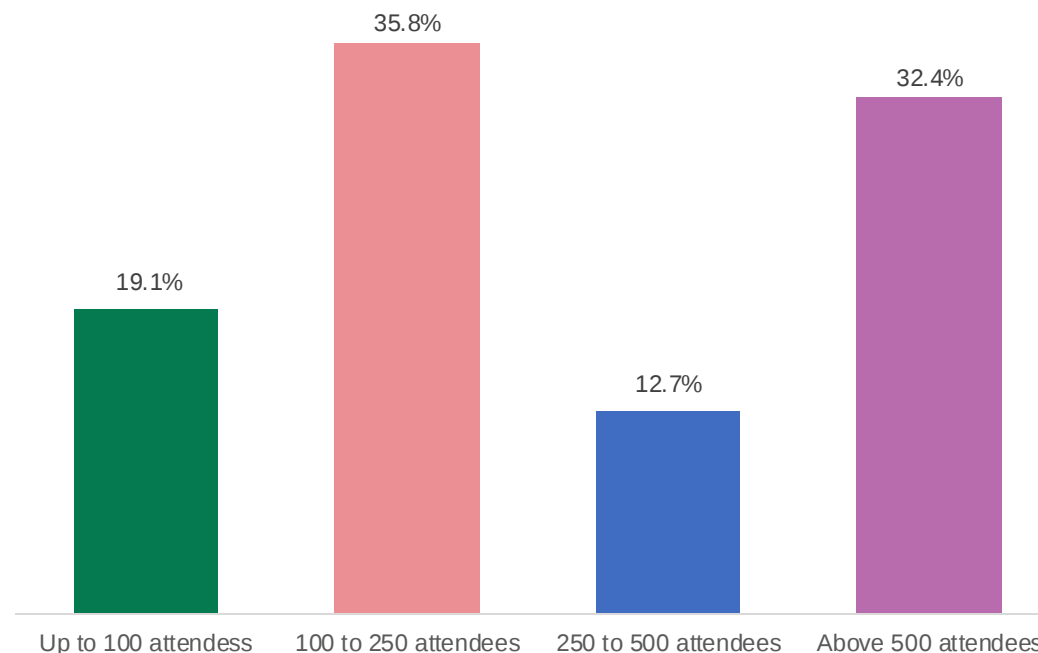


More than

54%

of planners most frequently booked groups of 250 attendees or less

What group size have you booked most frequently for meetings in 2024?



PLANNER SATISFACTION

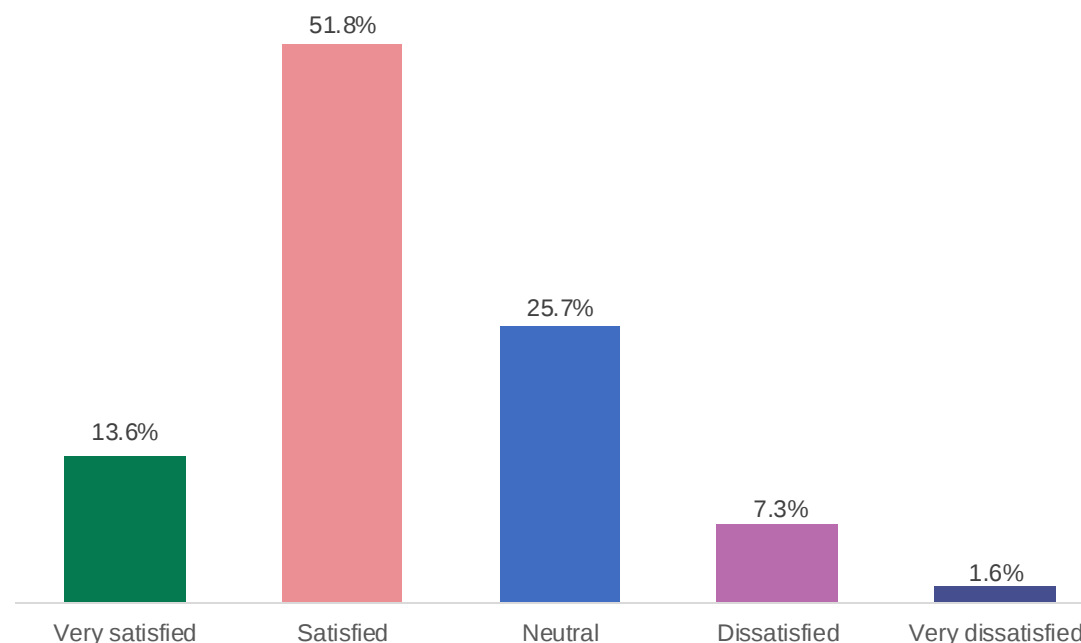
The majority (51.8%) reported being "Satisfied," while 13.6% were "Very Satisfied." However, a considerable proportion expressed neutral (25.7%), dissatisfied (7.3%), and very dissatisfied (1.6%) sentiments. To boost satisfaction, hoteliers should prioritize personalized communication, timely responses, and addressing unique needs. Regular check-ins and post-event feedback can help improve service and reduce dissatisfaction.



65%

of planners
report being
satisfied with
responses from
hotels and venues

How satisfied are you with your overall engagement with hotels during the meeting planning process, from inquiry to execution?



KEY HIGHLIGHT

*Rising costs remain top of
mind for planners*

Responding with flexible and creative solutions will be more important than ever.

PLANNER SATISFACTION

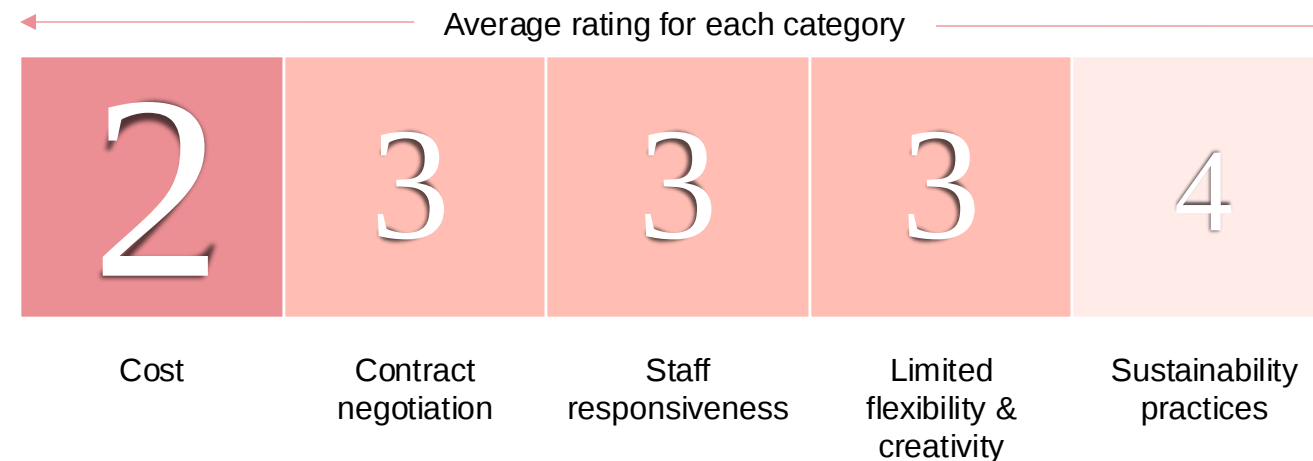
Planners are dissatisfied with rising costs, which strain budgets and affect the quality of events. Cost-cutting measures, such as shorter meetings, alternative destinations, and reduced activities or food and beverage options, must be managed effectively to avoid compromising the attendee experience.



Cost

is the top area of dissatisfaction for planners

Rank your main areas of dissatisfaction with hotels or other event venues?
(1 = Very Dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Satisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)



KEY HIGHLIGHT

Secondary markets shine as cost-saving alternatives

Planners may prefer primary markets—but trends are shifting as they seek budget-friendly ways to maintain event quality.

MEETING COST

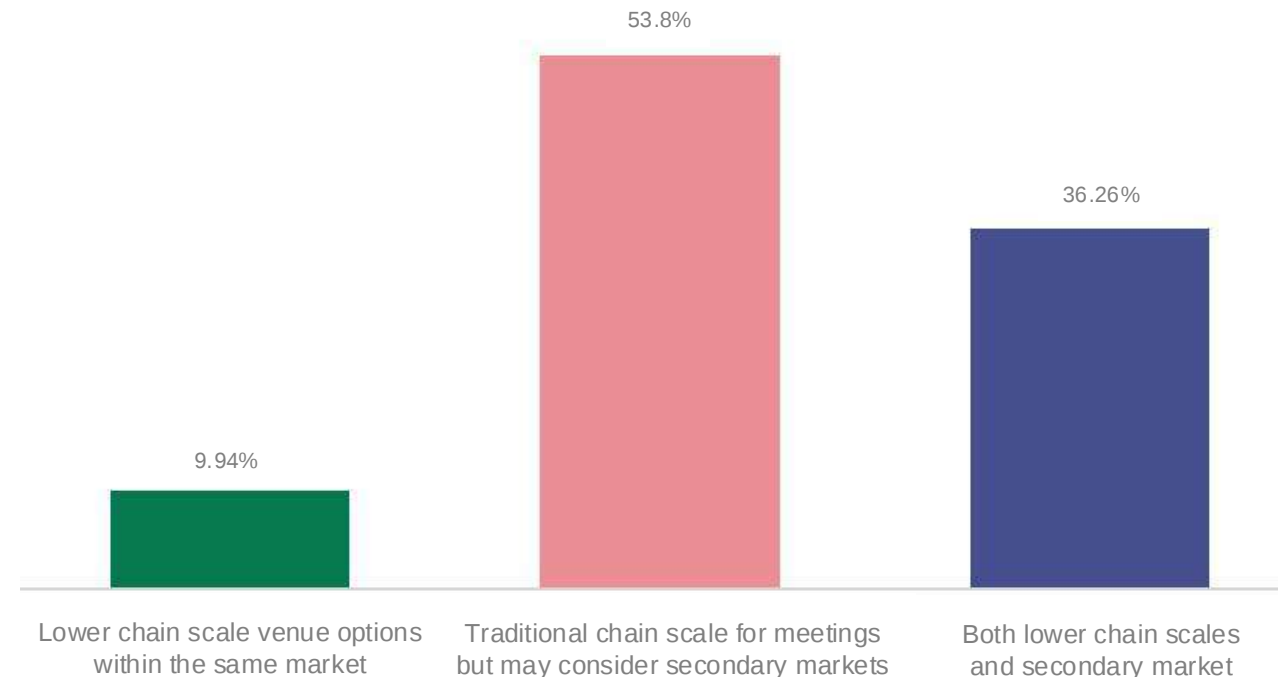
Companies may consider changing destinations and venues to manage meeting costs. Groups are more likely to relocate events to secondary markets to maintain their events' quality and/or status and avoid moving down in chain scale. This shift presents opportunities for secondary and tertiary markets to attract new business by offering quality products, services, and attractive pricing alternatives compared with the top 25 market destinations.



90%

of respondents
consider moving
meetings to
secondary
markets to reduce
costs

In 2024, what changes will your clients consider to reduce costs?



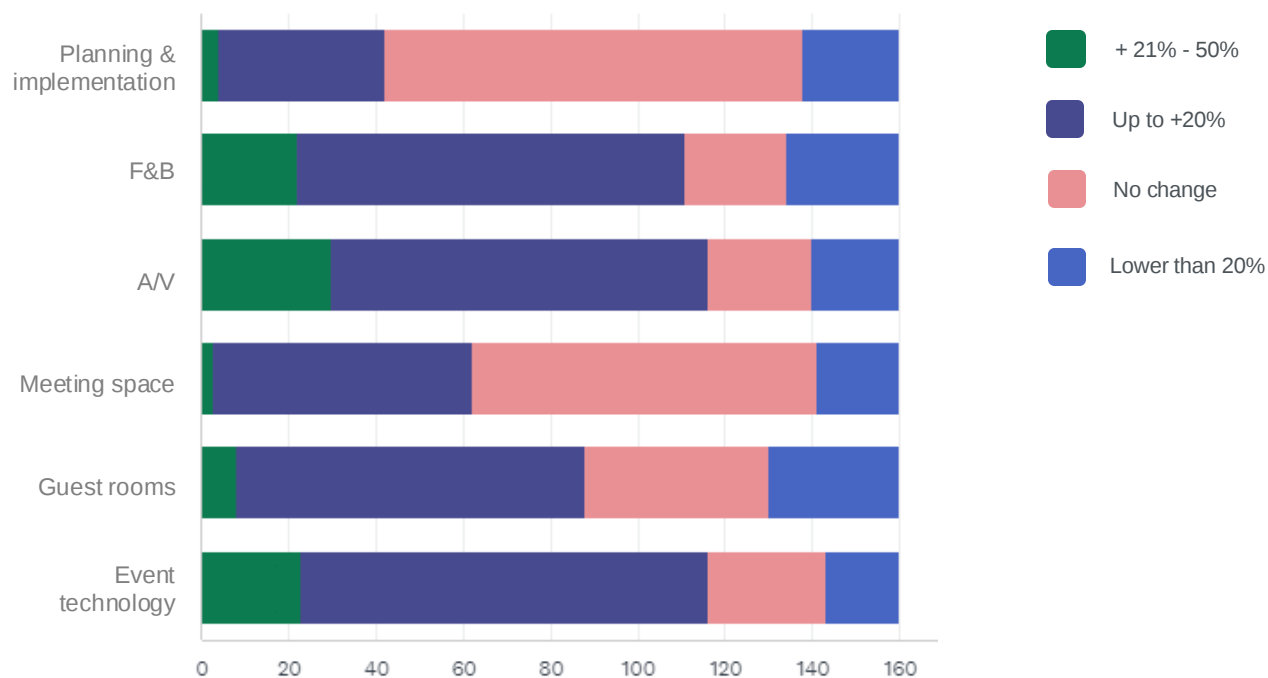
MEETING COST

Planners expect F&B (Food & Beverage) and A/V (Audio/Visual) to experience the highest price increases in 2025. While there is a possibility of prices rising up to 50%, the majority of respondents—more than 50%—believe that prices will increase by up to 20% for A/V, F&B, and event technology. Event technology is also seen as a sector with significant price adjustments, reinforcing the expectation of consistent upward pricing trends in the industry for the coming years.



Up to a
50%
increase is
expected for F&B
and A/V costs

What pricing changes do you expect to see for events & meetings?



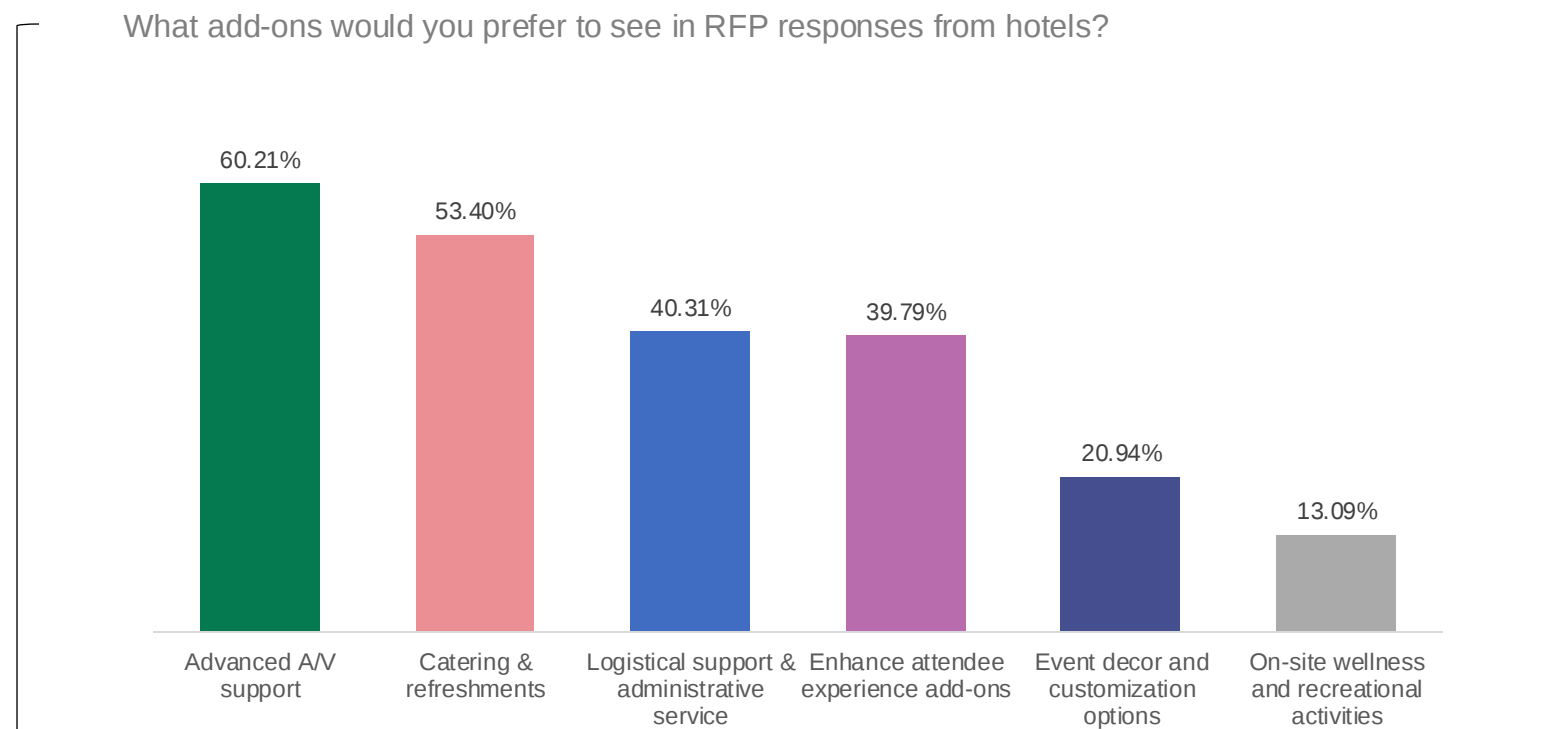
KEY HIGHLIGHT

Audio-visual support and F&B are top priorities

Planners seek proposals that clearly define technological capabilities and catering options, despite prices trending upward.

PLANNER PREFERENCE

Planners place a high priority on advanced A/V support (60.21%) and catering (53.40%) in RFP responses, emphasizing functionality and hospitality. Logistical support (40.31%) and attendee experience add-ons (39.79%) are also significant, indicating a need for streamlined operations and engagement. While event decor (20.94%) and wellness activities (13.09%) are considered less critical, they still add value to enhancing the overall appeal of an event.



60%

of planners report that advanced A/V support is their top priority

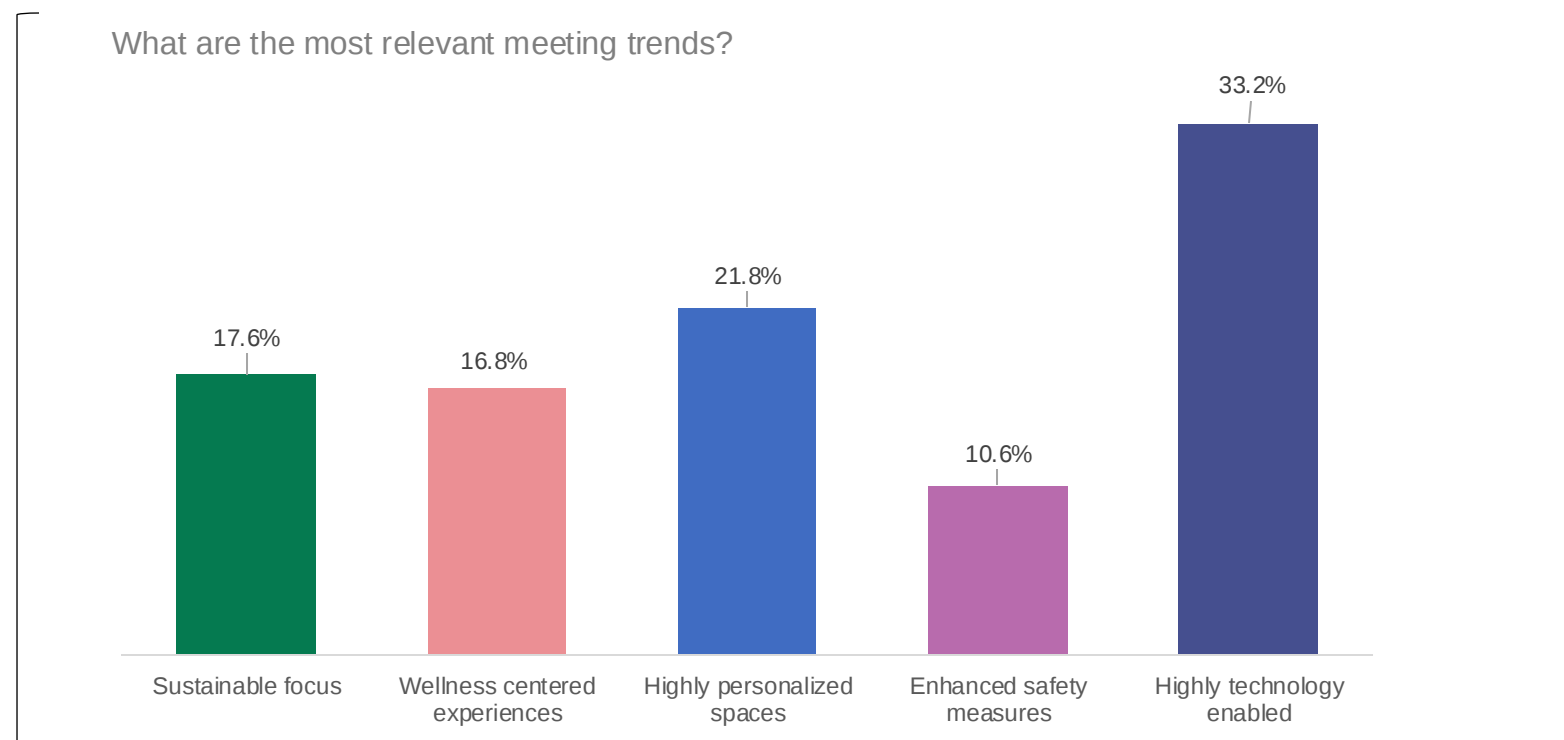
PLANNER PREFERENCE

Planners prioritize technology-enabled features (33.2%) as the top trend, followed by personalized spaces (21.8%) and sustainability (17.6%), with wellness (16.8%) and safety (10.6%) also relevant. These preferences shape meeting locations and event programming. Hoteliers should focus on integrating advanced technology and personalization while maintaining sustainability and wellness elements to meet these evolving trends.



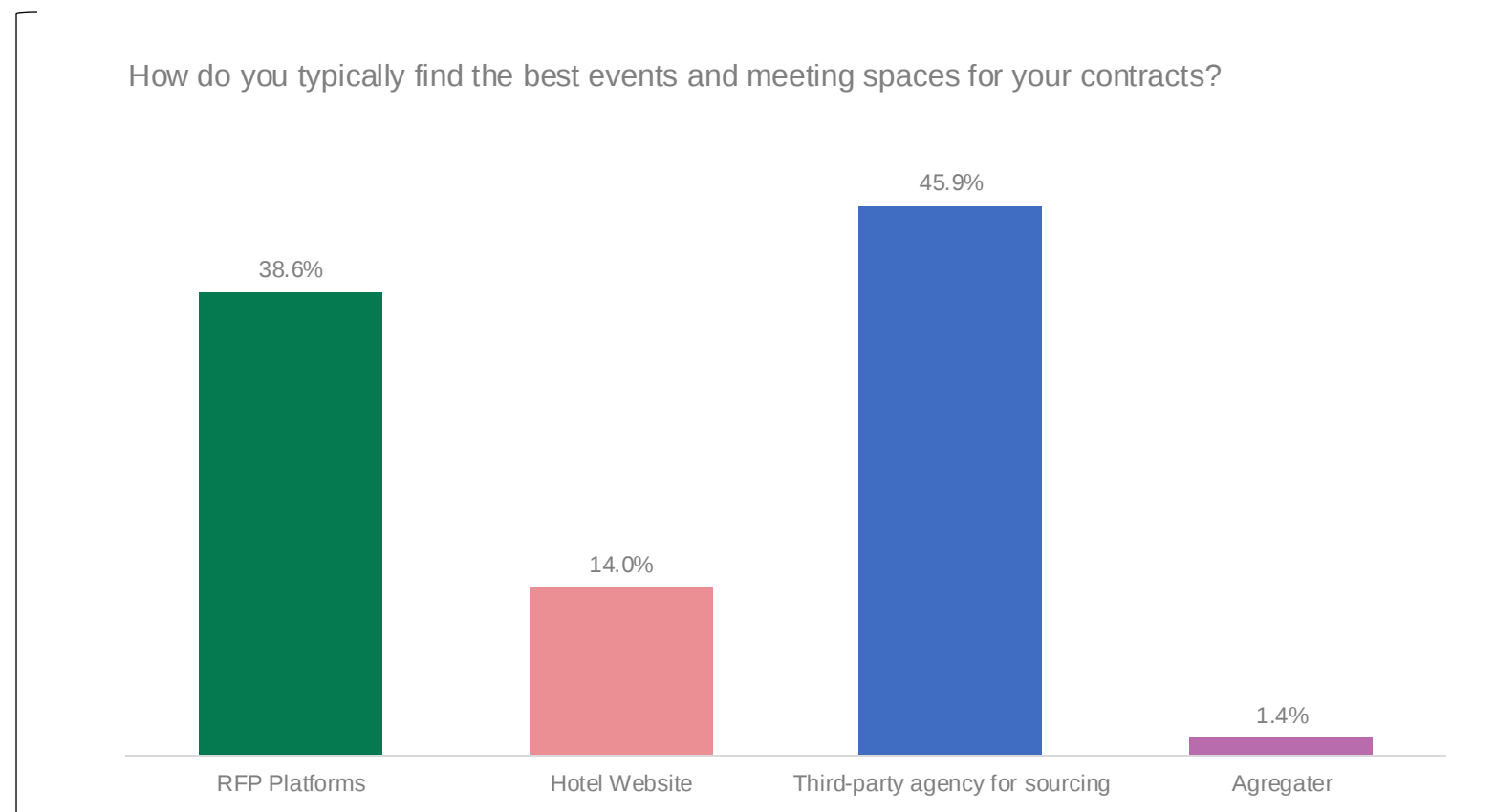
33%

say technology-enabled events are top of mind



INFLUENCING RFPs

Planners outsource most administrative tasks and keep control of strategic elements such as meeting strategy and content development. Around half of the respondents outsource venue sourcing, which traditionally involves distributing and evaluating RFPs.



46%

of planners
outsource venue
sourcing and
contract
management

KEY HIGHLIGHT

Digital proposals win the majority

More than half of planners prefer custom ‘digital proposals’ over traditional RFP response options, highlighting the growing desire for personalized and efficient planning experiences.

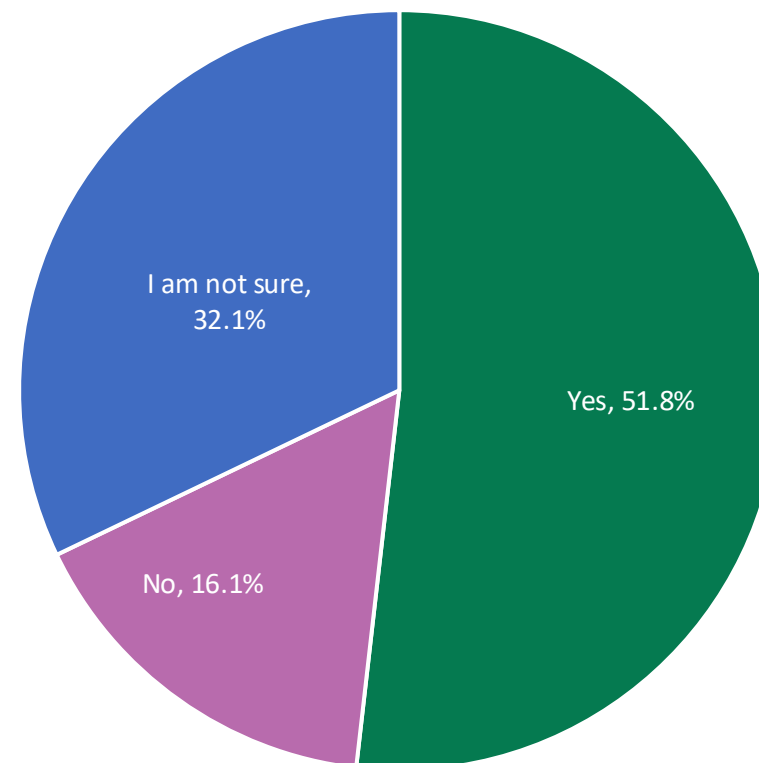
DIGITAL PROPOSAL

Planners increasingly prefer to receive personalized digital proposals for their RFPs from hoteliers. More than 51% agreed that tailored and visually appealing proposals can significantly enhance their decision-making process. Digital proposals not only save time but also provide a clear understanding of the offerings, pricing, and unique features of the venue. This shift indicates a growing preference for technology-driven solutions in the planning process, fostering better collaboration and transparency between planners and hoteliers.



More than
51%
prefer digital
proposals in
response to their
RFPs

Would you prefer to receive a
personalized digital proposal in
response to your RFP?



KEY HIGHLIGHT

Clarity on sustainability requirements for groups is essential

Sustainable food and beverage options, waste reduction, and recycling are essential for clients. Highlighting these practices during the discovery phase can help venues stand out and provide valuable guidance for groups that may not know where to start.

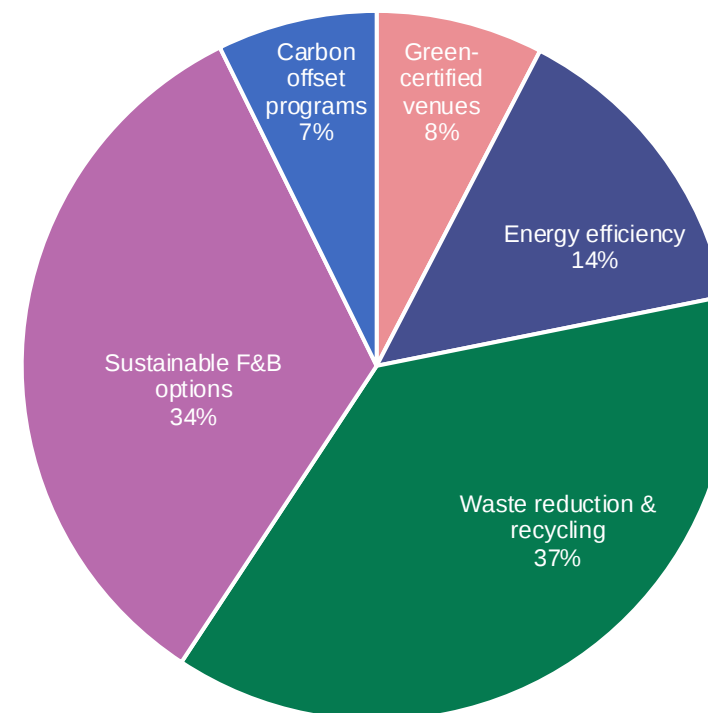
SUSTAINABILITY

Clients prioritize waste reduction and recycling (37%) and sustainable food and beverage options (34%) as the most important sustainability requirements, reflecting a strong focus on eco-friendly practices. To meet these expectations, venues should focus on robust waste management and offering environmentally friendly catering options.



More than
70%
of sustainability
requirements are
related to waste
reduction and
F&B options

What sustainability requirements are most important for your clients?



KEY HIGHLIGHT

*Q2 2024 held the highest
number of booked events*

QUARTERLY ANALYSIS

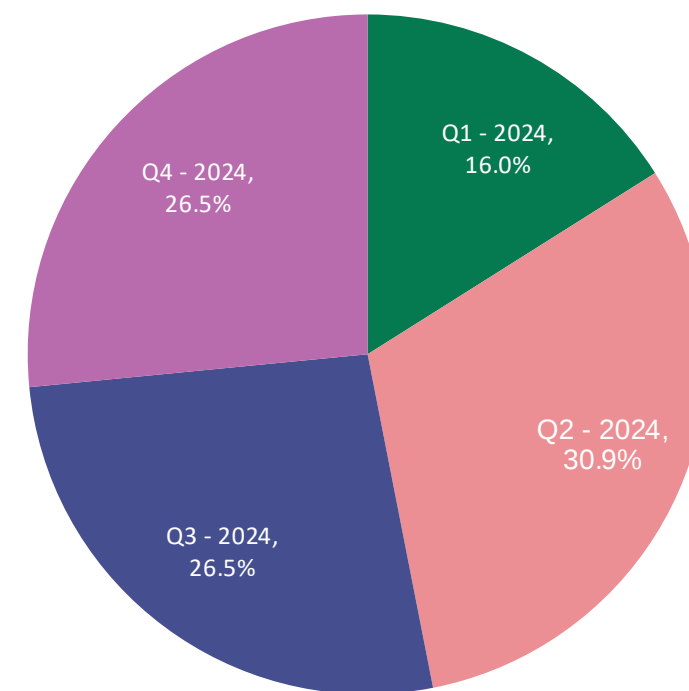
In 2024, Q2 was the busiest quarter, with 30.9% of respondents booking events, followed by Q3 and Q4 at 26.5%. Q1 had the lowest bookings at 16%. Hoteliers should focus on Q2, Q3, and Q4 with targeted promotions and robust strategy to capture more bookings and consider early-year incentives to boost Q1 demand.



Q2

was the busiest quarter, with planners reporting peak demand levels

In which quarter of 2024 did you book the most events?



ABOUT CENDYN

Cendyn is a global integrated hotel technology and services company that enables hotels to drive revenue, maximize profitability, and create deeper connections with guests through its integrated solutions.

Serving hoteliers for nearly 30 years, Cendyn drives commercial success for hotels through its Find, Book, Grow promise: find the right guests; drive them to book direct, and grow loyalty and revenue across the spectrum of digital guest interactions.

Cendyn has over 35,000 customers worldwide in more than 150 countries - including brands such as Outrigger Hospitality, Hyatt, IHG, Aman Resorts & Hotels, Relais & Châteaux, Highgate, TFE Hotels, Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, CoralTree Hospitality, and Onyx Hospitality Group - generating more than \$20 billion in annual hotel revenue. The company supports its growing customer base from locations across the globe, including the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangkok, and India. Learn more at [Cendyn.com](https://www.cendyn.com)

ABOUT CONFERENCE DIRECT

ConferenceDirect is a full-service global meetings solution company whose portfolio of services includes: Virtual/Hybrid Meetings, Site Selection & Contract Negotiation, Conference Management, Housing & Registration Services, Event Technology, Strategic Meetings Management Programs, Incentive Programs, Sustainable Meeting Strategy and Planning, Cruise Services and Marketing Support. Our 400+ Associates manage over 13,000 meetings, conferences and events for more than 4,400 customers. For more information, visit www.conferencedirect.com

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info@cendyn.com



(561) 515-6276

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