aanmelder.nl



Event Trends Report 2027

What stays and what shifts?

From sustainability to cost savings, and from phone-free events to peer programs. Which trends have by now become the new normal? Which are still up and coming? Discover the 10 most important ones and stay ahead of the curve.

Contents

Introduction 3

Part 1: General trends

The new normal

01 Live events thrive & hybrid is here to stay 5

02 AI 7

03 Cost savings 11

04 Small and intimate 13

05 Sustainability 15

Part 2: Emerging trends

The shift

01 From speaker program to peer program 19

02 Phone-free events: attention comes first 26

03 Events as an answer to the loneliness economy 32

04 A generation that has already googled everything, and chooses, experiences and judges events differently 37

05 Mental health for event professionals 43

Conclusion 47

Introduction

As an event manager, you are the director. You make sure every player, resource and moment comes together perfectly, without stepping into the spotlight yourself. That modesty suits you, but we know full well how much work, oversight and vision goes into it.

What if you could take that vision even further? With the right knowledge of event trends, a lot becomes possible. Trends give you the edge to do more than organize: to impress and to exceed expectations. Our software is your Swiss Army knife for running any event, and this Trend Report 2027 is your compass for what's ahead.



As an organizer, you don't need repetition. You need concrete insights. So this year we're doing things differently. The report has two parts. Part 1 covers the usual suspects: the broader trends that have been steering the market for years. In Part 2 we dig a layer deeper. We look at big, gradual shifts and at surprising developments that are set to turn our field upside down in the years to come.

Get ready to be inspired!

Part 1
The new normal

Part 2
The shift

Part 1

General trends

The new normal



This part of our Trend Report is about the trends that have, in fact, been the norm for a few years now. They grow in popularity every year and shape how attendees experience B2B events. Predictable? A little. But even familiar trends keep surprising us. So we keep it short and go straight to what stands out: a few striking recent developments for each trend.

01 Live events thrive & hybrid is here to stay

02 AI

03 Cost savings

04 Small and intimate

05 Sustainability

General trend

01 Live events thrive & hybrid is here to stay



Inspiring speakers making a passionate case, live, about the latest developments in your niche. Or real conversations with peers from your field once the sessions are over. Live events are hard to beat. But the pandemic made event managers around the world realize that the digital experience of an event can be just as valuable as the live one. Not so much in terms of experience, but certainly in terms of reach and accessibility. The first hybrid events appeared around 2010, but it took until 2020 for them to go from a cautious niche to a global necessity.

±2010

The first hybrid events appear

2020

From cautious niche to global necessity

Now

Equal interaction between live and online attendees

Recent developments

What started out as a simple livestream to extend reach has grown into a mature, innovative standard in the events landscape. Today the concept is all about equal interaction between live and online attendees, supported by modern technology such as AI-driven networking software and advanced event software.

Multilingual events

In-person events that could also be followed online used to run into one problem: translating international speakers (especially in real time) cost a fortune. Thanks to AI, that problem is a thing of the past. One concrete example is Sentio, which at the TCEA convention served thousands of attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing, speak English as a second language or need captioning support.

AI fan profiles

At SXSW, IBM showcased its AI Sports Club. Visitors could create AI-generated fan profiles, which earned them personalized credentials and access to gamified challenges. With live AI commentary.

All those technological gadgets are wonderful, of course. And take it from a software company: they get us excited too. We're living in an exceptional time in which technology makes almost anything possible. But in a column on BizBash, Daniel Shaffer, Director of Strategy and Innovation at Wilson Dow, points to what he calls invisible tech: frictionless registration, intuitive wayfinding on site, personalized recommendations and immersive stories that support interaction rather than drown it out. And honestly? As tech lovers, we couldn't agree more.



General trend

02

AI

Some say the rise of AI will have a far bigger impact than the Industrial Revolution ever did. That remains to be seen, of course, but the first signs are already mind-blowing. Things are moving at lightning speed, and experts agree this trend is here to stay. AI's arrival in the events industry began in 2023 and focused mainly on content creation. In 2024–2025 it spread into deeper layers of event management. Think of analyzing data faster and more thoroughly and using that to make smarter choices when sourcing materials, speakers and venues. Something we already covered last year in Trend Report 2026.

Two other major developments have changed the AI landscape dramatically: the use of MCPs and the EU AI Act. The effect of both will become more and more visible in the years ahead. Let us walk you through them.

MCPs



With MCPs (Model Context Protocols), we take an important leap: from simply talking to AI, to AI that actually carries out tasks for you. Connect the Shopify, Gmail or Notion MCP to Claude or ChatGPT, and you no longer need to open those programs. You simply give the instruction and the AI manages your online store, sends emails or creates a Notion list. Without you opening a single program. It's developments like these that make your work as an event manager a lot easier. But keep a close eye on things like privacy and cybersecurity. AI is "the shiny new object" and many agree it's the technology of the future. But as with any new technology, there's always a chance something goes wrong. Think of the OpenAI models that managed to hack another company in the summer of 2026, without any human involvement.

EU AI Act

The EU AI Act is the European law that sets rules for developing and using AI. The greater the potential risk to safety, health or fundamental rights, the stricter the requirements. Some applications are banned outright. So-called high-risk AI, for example, comes with heavy obligations around transparency, oversight and risk management. Many everyday AI systems face few extra rules. And since August 2, 2026, broader transparency requirements apply too: for instance, people must know when they are communicating with AI and certain AI-generated or manipulated content must be recognizable as such.



August 2, 2026

Broader transparency requirements take effect

For most organizers, this doesn't suddenly make AI hard to use. But when you choose event software, it does matter that you know whether AI is running behind the scenes and, if so, which. Is personal data being used? And when do you need to tell your attendees? This mainly applies to events that use AI matchmaking, facial recognition at check-in, sentiment analysis, personalized recommendations or automatically generated event content. The exact obligations depend on how a system works technically and what risk level it has.

Recent developments

In today's operational phase, AI is fully woven into event infrastructure. It's no longer about gimmicks, but about efficiency, hyper-personalization and real-time logistics.

Crowd management

Large conferences and festivals can map visitor flows in real time. That way, busy spots at a venue are flagged and the relevant teams, such as security or catering staff, are alerted. And by linking the AI system to digital signage or to the event app on attendees' phones, visitors can be guided to quieter areas.

Dynamic agendas

Using data such as the location information an event app gives organizers, you can offer each user a unique, real-time and flexible program. Based on the sessions someone has attended, the app can suggest which keynotes to catch next.

Matchmaking

Networking is one of the main reasons people attend events. Often, chance decides who you meet, and so which business cards you leave with. AI matchmaking software makes that chance a thing of the past. Advanced networking apps connect visitors and investors through a smart matchmaking database, based on in-depth data analysis, previous interactions and shared business interests.

In September 2026, something remarkable happened. Major AI players such as OpenAI, Anthropic and even Elon Musk sounded the alarm because they feel AI is developing too fast. They want to pause, to make sure AI develops within so-called safe guardrails so it can't harm humanity.



General trend

03

Cost savings

During the dotcom boom, the sky was the limit. In event organization too. Planning an event in the late 90s? Then you probably had money to burn to make it a spectacular one. Fast forward to today and we see almost the opposite. Costs are under scrutiny worldwide, and partly because of that, event managers often have to do more with less. We covered this trend last year in our Trend Report 2026 too. Will 2027 be the year this trend peaks? The first signs are already here...

Recent developments

Recent research by Forrester (2026) shows that two-thirds of B2B organizations are dealing with flat or shrinking event budgets. This is mainly driven by macroeconomic pressure and inflation. Throughout the event supply chain, that means venues and catering have become a lot more expensive. At the same time, the changing behavior of business attendees is another reason budgets are going down. Because of hybrid working, they travel less and are quicker to choose compact, hybrid or highly targeted knowledge sessions. That makes large, costly mass events less profitable.

2/3

of B2B organizations are dealing with flat or shrinking event budgets

Forrester, 2026

75%

AI venue sourcing

The Cvent Planner Sourcing Report, based on 1,650 event professionals, shows that 75% now use AI to find venues. The result is a structured sourcing process, which has cut both lead times and costs by 10 to 30%. And it goes beyond searching: comparing quotes, optimizing RFPs and automating communication with venues are all tasks where respondents save time.

63%

Light at the end of the tunnel

The same Cvent report shows that the most important KPI is no longer cost control. 63% of respondents now name attendee engagement as their primary measure of success. And that's remarkable. For years, event programs were judged on scale: number of events, total attendance, budget managed and so on. That has now shifted to demonstrable business outcomes, such as stronger relationships, better-quality networking and knowledge retention.

General trend

04 Small and intimate



We've covered this trend in previous Trend Reports too. In 2025 we explored micro-events, and in 2026 we described the shift from micro-events to micro-experiences: truly tailored experiences. That trend is still going strong. It has its roots in the COVID period. Large gatherings were off the table, so small weddings appeared: "micro-weddings". Looking back, many people didn't mind at all. Some even called it a blessing in disguise. In 2021, the business world adopted the idea. The starting point: the fewer the attendees, the better, deeper and more genuine the conversations. Small events are cheaper, which helps with tight budgets (one small caveat: lots of small events do mean more work and costs in the long run). Attendees also prefer a personal experience to a big conference, and want events that actually deliver something. So the format stayed the same for five years. Only the reason kept changing: first "there's no other way", then "it's cheaper", and now "it simply works better".

Recent developments

This year the trend reached a clear new phase, and it's more fundamental than the previous steps: from individual small events to portfolios of small events. Something Ei Advisory has noticed too. A portfolio is a mix of different types of events, each with its own goals and audiences. Together, they match the customers and roles you want to reach. Every format has its own pros and cons, and the key is to use them deliberately: big shows for reach, hosted buyer programs for pipeline, roundtables for access to senior leaders and your own formats for your most important customers. The heart of the story: treat events as a way to build relationships. Because people come for their peers, not for your product.

Big shows
for reach

Hosted buyer programs
for pipeline

Roundtables
for access to senior leaders

Your own formats
for your most important customers

Micro-events at mega-events

105,000
visitors at MWC 2026

€585m
economic impact for Barcelona

Large mass events have picked up on the micro-event trend as well. But instead of seeing it as competition, tech event MWC 2026 in Barcelona embraced it. The event drew no fewer than 105,000 visitors and generated €585 million in economic impact for the city of Barcelona. Yet inside those halls, it deliberately ran small, curated micro-events: think intimate roundtables, executive briefings and invite-only sessions that offered the intimacy of a small event within a mega-conference.

General trend

05 Sustainability



Sustainability in the events industry has been on the agenda for years. The trend took off in 2008, after a pioneering phase of small-scale experiments. It then broke through around the 2012 London Olympics (billed at the time as the greenest Games ever) and the development of the ISO 20121 standard. The Paris Agreement, between 2015 and 2019, pushed it further into the mainstream. And with stricter legislation and circular concepts, sustainability became an absolute necessity from 2020 onwards.

Recent developments

In recent years, sustainability has become firmly embedded in the way we organize events. The trend has shifted for good from “symbolic green gestures” to transparency and technological integration. In our Trend Report 2026, we already said that sustainable organizing is becoming less of a choice and more of a given.

> “
>
> It’s not just in the small decisions (such as how you buy, collaborate and organize) but also in the bigger choices, like what your organization stands for and what impact you want to have on the world. Organizers who are consciously working on this today make the difference. Not only for the value and impact of their events, but also for the world around them.
>
> Trend Report 2026

2008

Pioneering phase with small-scale experiments

2012

Breakthrough around the London Olympics and ISO 20121

2015–2019

Paris Agreement: a push into the mainstream

2020

Stricter legislation: an absolute necessity

A few inspiring developments:

Predictive catering

The AI boom has, of course, hit the hospitality industry too. Especially in the US and the UK, you see plenty of start-ups like Winnow using AI to reduce food waste at large hotel chains such as Hilton and Marriott.

Carbon budgets

Carbon budgets are quickly gaining ground in the events industry. Instead of offsetting CO_2 emissions afterwards, a carbon budget sets a hard limit on an event's maximum emissions in advance. This budget is managed just as strictly as the financial one.

To make these trends work within tight budgets, the industry is moving toward cost-saving sustainability: by simply buying less (cutting printed materials and goodie bags, for example), reusing materials in modular ways and making vegetarian, local catering the default, both the environmental footprint and operating costs come down.

Still, limited budgets can also be the very reason not to invest in sustainability. Some sustainable choices simply cost money, and without the budget, they don't happen. We hear this more and more often from event professionals. The fear of being labeled a 'greenwasher' also holds some back from talking openly about their sustainability efforts. A shame, because that could end up standing in the way of making our planet more sustainable.

Part 2

Emerging trends

The shift



In *Part 1: General trends – The new normal*, we looked back at the big developments that have been taking shape in the events industry for several years. In *Part 2: Emerging trends – The shift*, we dive into developments that sit a little deeper below the surface, but are clearly on the rise. We've rated each trend on maturity, using three levels, from least to most mature: signal, emerging, established. That shows how strong we think each trend is. Some may become the new normal, others may be temporary. Either way, they're worth knowing about as an event manager. Preferably before everyone else does.

Maturity per trend

Signal **Emerging** **Established**

Emerging trend

01 From speaker program to peer program



Signal | **Emerging** | Established

Maturity: emerging. *The evidence is stacking up, but the mainstream hasn't fully come round yet.*

Most conferences follow roughly the same pattern. Once the last speakers have shared their key takeaways, the audience heads for drinks. And in many cases, that's where the real encounters and conversations happen, the ones attendees remember. More and more organizers no longer treat that moment as a by-product, but build their entire event around it. And they cut the rest. At these events, the attendees themselves are the program. In practice, this comes down to four proven concepts, ranging from exclusive networking dinners to participatory sessions in which the audience takes control of the content. What does this trend involve? Is it equally relevant for everyone? And how do you organize events like this? Read on, and see what happens when your attendees become the main act.

The signal

Where the classic event has one sender and many receivers (in most cases, as many as possible), this new format is all about the attendees themselves. The organizer no longer builds a program of speakers, but makes sure the guests are the very reason other attendees want to come. So they can learn from each other as equals and have real conversations. Think private dinners, executive roundtables, unconferences and facilitated peer sessions. Relatively small sessions where interaction with each other is the main driver.



Classic event

One sender, as many receivers as possible



Peer program

The attendees are the program

What it isn't

We're not talking about scaled-down conferences. It's about the knowledge attendees can give each other, not speakers on a stage feeding the audience ideas. Yes, these events are small: think eight to fifteen people around a table, or a few dozen at a roundtable. But the small scale is a result of the need for high-quality conversations.

Why now

Information used to be scarce. That was always a good reason to go to events where speakers shared interesting insights on topics you didn't know much about yet. But the internet in general, and digital trends like AI, podcasts and in-depth reports in particular, mean information is now anything but scarce. You can look up anything. So even keynotes by captains of industry no longer feel urgent enough to travel for. What leaders are looking for is no longer more information, but better perspective.



On top of that, it's getting harder and harder to truly trust the automated and AI-generated information available through those digital channels. That raises the value of the one signal that can't be automated: a peer who looks you in the eye and tells you what went wrong for them. Gartner expects that by 2030, three-quarters of business buyers will prefer experiences that put human interaction first.

Figures and research

-12%

Planning of large-scale events fell 12% year on year, while 59% of marketers want to run more micro or intimate events.

Engineerica

63%

63% of B2B tech marketers say credibility through association with analysts or peers is the main reason to invest in external events, ahead of lead generation and brand visibility.

IDC 2026 Sponsor Survey

73%

73% of business decision-makers say word of mouth and peer recommendations are the most decisive factor when assessing suppliers.

Wynter

74%

74% of enterprise software exhibitors now have an enclosed meeting room in their booth, compared with 48% in 2021: the booth as meeting infrastructure rather than a branding vehicle.

Showhero

> The sharpest summary of the mechanism comes from the Ei Advisory report: a CIO doesn't give up her evening to hear your product roadmap. She gives up her evening to find out how four other CIOs are dealing with exactly what keeps her up at night.

What it looks like

These events come in different forms, from lightly facilitated to fully attendee-led. We take a closer look at a few of them below.

01
Hosted dinners

02
Executive roundtables

03
Unconference

04
Peer-first conference

01

Hosted dinners

Eight to fifteen of your peers, all talking about one pressing topic. Over delicious food and drinks to match. In American B2B marketing circles, these hosted dinners are already being called the successor to the trade show booth. The reasoning: the most valuable moments at a trade show always happened in the conversations before or after. So why not organize those directly?

02

Executive roundtables

An executive roundtable is a meeting for a small group of experienced leaders. During these sessions, they discuss an important topic in their work or industry. They're usually invitation-only, which guarantees the knowledge and experience in the room. Attendees share experiences, ideas and solutions and learn from each other. The rise of these meetings is seen as an important way to network with like-minded people.

03

Unconference

At an unconference, attendees build the agenda themselves, on the spot. Innov8rs is one organization that runs events around set themes, where the attendees decide how to tackle them. You spend a full day working with a carefully selected group of innovation professionals from other organizations on one concrete challenge. Innov8rs: "You bring your own challenge and go home with new insights, relevant input and a practical solution you can put to work straight away."

04

Peer-first conference

At a classic conference, the audience listens passively to an expert on stage. A peer-first conference assumes the expertise is already in the room. Attendees (equals, or peers) are the experts, the speakers and the active thinkers all at once. A peer-first conference is an interactive event built around the attendees and the knowledge they share with each other. These events usually draw more people than the formats above, but numbers are still limited compared with large conferences.

Good to know

It doesn't scale by itself

These events can take a lot of time, money and energy. 15 dinners means organizing 15 events. The trend leans heavily on the assumption that automation will solve this, but that promise hasn't been kept yet. Of course, a lot of event organization, especially the digital side, can be automated. So from that angle, good event software lets you scale up to multiple events quickly. But other things, like finding the right speakers or attendees, catering and other production matters, are harder to *copy and paste*.

Good to know (continued)

Not for every audience

These events only work for attendees who share a certain level of seniority and are looking for shared context. And for problems that only a select group of people have experience with.

ROI takes time

A table of twelve won't produce an impressive lead list. The value often only unfolds over a few quarters, once the ideas have found their way through an attendee's organization.

What does this trend mean for you?

Ask yourself these questions when you take a critical look at your next event, to see whether this trend could work for your events too.

1. Have you put together a program an attendee could just as easily read, listen to or have summarized at home? If so, it isn't really a program anymore. See it as preparation instead.
2. Who's at the table? And when would they stay at home? What if your speaker dropped out, or the other guests didn't show up?

Emerging trend

02 Phone-free events: attention comes first



Signal | Emerging | Established

Maturity: signal. *Proven on the consumer side, only just starting in B2B.*

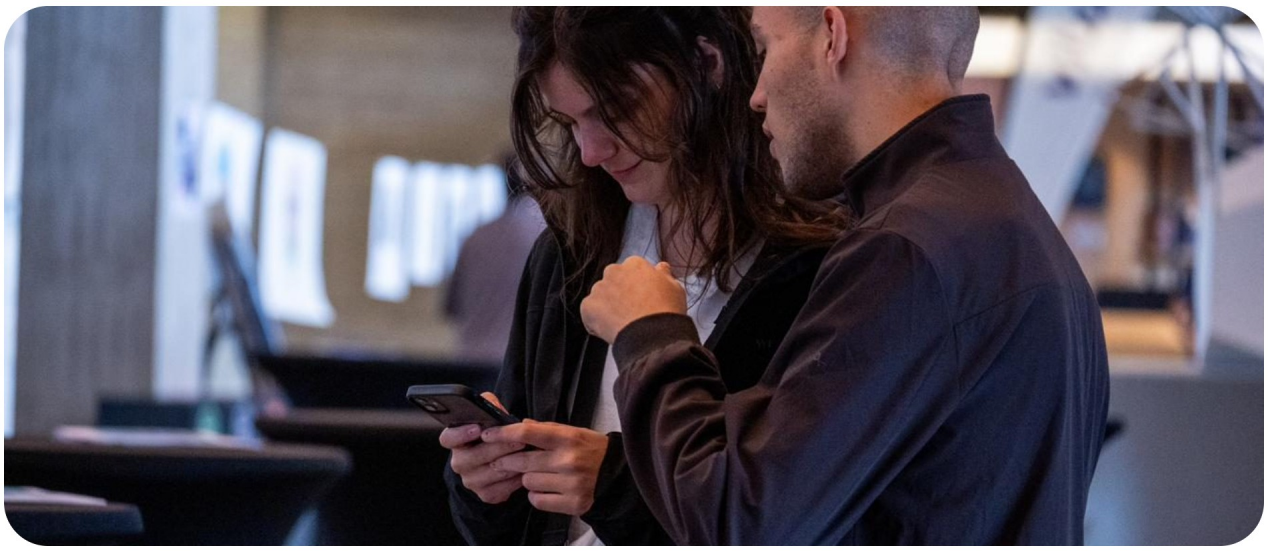
At the next keynote you attend, try not looking at the speaker. Let your eyes wander around the room instead. Chances are a large part of the audience isn't really there at all. Many are hunched over their phone or laptop, checking one last email, catching up on Slack or scrolling through LinkedIn. In response, a new kind of event is emerging where you hand in your phone at the door. Voluntarily, mind you. So that all attention can go to the program and the people in the room. The reason this is happening now: attention has become this decade's most precious resource. And yes, that includes the attention in your room. At B2C events, this trend has been running for a while, and the numbers there are spectacular. At business events, the evidence is thinner. That gap is exactly why this is a signal and not yet a trend. But it's a development to keep a close eye on, because it could easily spill over into B2B events.

The signal

Berlin club Berghain was one of the best-known places where the first signs of this trend appeared. As far back as 10 to 15 years ago, visitors were asked not to take photos or videos inside. Phone cameras were covered up, and staff strictly enforced the no-filming, no-photos rule. What started in nightlife and at creative gatherings is now showing up at business conferences: no screens between speaker and audience, handwritten notes, and conversations that aren't cut short by a push notification. This B2B development is still in its early days, but it's one we're watching.

What it isn't

These events aren't necessarily born out of irritation with smartphones. They're more of a promise: you get something back for what you hand in. More inspiration, more connection. And technology is actually used to make sure you don't depend on your phone during the event: the keynote speaker's slides are emailed to you afterwards, for example. Plus, it's often not all or nothing. Most business events riding this trend work with set times or areas where you can or can't use your phone.



Why now

In the attention economy we're living in, attention is simply in short supply. From the living room (TV, smartphones, tablets and radio) to the busy shopping street: everything is competing for our attention. At events too. As an event manager, you can put together a brilliant program, arrange the best catering and book the most beautiful venue. But you can't force attendees to be truly present. Someone sitting in the room reading their inbox is mentally somewhere else. And it's questionable whether they'll take anything away from your speakers.

The force behind this trend comes from outside the industry: a broad cultural counter-movement against being permanently connected. The digital detox has grown from a personal discipline into a collective format. People pay to be offline together, because they can't manage it on their own.

Figures and research

567%
growth 2024–2025

121%
higher attendance

5 → 12
countries

Phone-free events grew by 567% worldwide between 2024 and 2025, with attendance up 121% and an expansion from 5 to 12 countries. In the first quarter of 2026, more than a third of the volume of the whole of 2025 had already been reached. An important nuance: this is nightlife and consumer data, and it's growing from a low base.

Eventbrite, Offline by Design, April 2026; journalistic context and methodology via Mixmag and DJ Mag

Figures and research (continued)

49% 79%

49% of 18 to 35-year-olds want live experiences to feel less curated and more authentic; 79% prefer spontaneity to a perfect plan.

Eventbrite

Nordic Business Forum

At business conferences, the evidence is anecdotal and indirect. Nordic Business Forum (more than 8,500 executives, Helsinki) has no phone ban, but it deliberately designs against screen behavior: every attendee gets a notebook and pen, and written summaries of all keynotes follow afterwards. Exactly the kind of give-back that makes it possible to be fully present, offline.

The Offline Club

The Offline Club is an initiative that started in the Netherlands in 2024 and is now active in several European cities. It offers phone-free events for teams, brands and organizations. So the consumer concept already has a business proposition.

What it looks like

Completely phone-free

At these events, you hand in your phone when you arrive. Phones go into a lockable pouch or are kept in lockers. The organizer does provide a central phone point or an emergency number people can give to those at home. These will mostly be small events where attendees really want this kind of phone-free experience: a chance to go offline for a while, helped by the peer pressure of other attendees and the context of the event.

Phone-free zones

A variation on the above is an event where you can't use your phone in certain areas only. Think of it a bit like the quiet car on a train, where you don't talk so there's a calm space in an otherwise noisy train. Attendees choose to enter the zone themselves, and by doing so, they're open to spontaneous conversations with other attendees. This version works especially well for larger events or for audiences who need to stay reachable.

Phone-free time slots

Events where you have your meetings without a phone in the morning and get your phone back in the afternoon. An easy way to let your attendees experiment with a phone-free day. It's interesting to measure the number of conversations and the feedback scores for both halves.

Gentle nudges

In this version you don't ban anything, but as an organizer you try every way you can to nudge attendees in the right direction. Just like Nordic Business Forum does: notebooks on every seat, no Wi-Fi passwords, sessions too short to drift off in and hosts who don't just introduce new speakers but also explicitly ask people to put their phones away.

Good to know

The numbers are thin

567% growth from a low base is still 567% of not very much. On top of that, these results come mainly from nightlife and B2C events, not B2B events. So there's no serious research yet showing that phone-free events lead to better business outcomes. The claims about focus and retention are plausible, but they haven't been properly measured yet.

Not for every audience

Some audiences really do need their phones. For them, a smartphone isn't a distraction. Think of parents of young children, people with caring responsibilities, or professionals who are on call. For events with audiences like these, a phone-free event is almost impossible.

No phone, no posts

These days, the content attendees create at your event is part of your event's marketing strategy. If attendees can't use their phones, you need another way to make your event visible on social media. That is, if that matters to you.

What does this trend mean for you?

1. We opened this trend by asking you to look around the room during your next keynote. Really do try it. What percentage of the audience is looking at a screen? That percentage is the real share of attendees who won't take much away from the keynote.
2. If you do decide to organize a phone-free event: what do you give back in return? If you can't answer that in one sentence, it's probably too early.

Emerging trend

03 Events as an answer to the loneliness economy



Signal | **Emerging** | Established

Maturity: emerging, with an established undercurrent. *The budget is already moving; the framing is on its way.*

Until 2020, the five-day working week was the norm. In the Netherlands, most working people did nine to five, Monday to Friday, and shared the ups and downs with their colleagues. COVID brought that to an abrupt end in March 2020. Working from home became the new normal, and the five-day office week was gone for good. The result: a generation of workers who see each other far less, with much looser bonds between colleagues. HR departments are trying to close that gap with a whole range of measures, and the physical event has become a very important one. The numbers behind it are more solid than you might expect: a fast-growing, multibillion market, and research that links connection directly to absenteeism and staff turnover.

The signal

Most business events are organized by the marketing department. But more and more often, HR managers are stepping up to organize events too. And they have very different goals from marketers. Where marketing wants to build lasting relationships with external attendees, HR focuses on its own people: employees and colleagues who see each other much less because of hybrid working.

What it isn't

We're not talking about team building. That also strengthens cohesion within your organization, of course. But its main goal is to create a good atmosphere and cohesion within a team. The difference is mainly in the reason behind it. Events against loneliness are organized above all to tackle hard, measurable costs: staff turnover, absenteeism and productivity.

Why now

Chats in the corridor, catching up at the coffee machine, or simply sitting down to lunch together: it's becoming increasingly clear that those once 'trivial', or even non-work, conversations were far more useful than we thought. Remote and hybrid working have made them disappear. The result is a workforce that feels lonelier and lonelier. The global State of the Global Workplace monitor shows that, worldwide, one in five employees felt lonely the previous day. And that has been the case for years, despite all the apps and digital workshops rolled out to solve the problem.



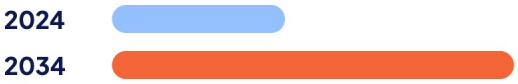
Figures and research

1 in 5

One in five employees worldwide felt a lot of loneliness the previous day.

Gallup, State of the Global Workplace

$73.7bn



The global corporate retreats market was valued at $31.8 billion in 2024 and is expected to grow to $73.7 billion by 2034. More than 70% of medium-sized to large companies now hold an annual offsite, with budgets of $1,000 to $3,000 per person.

Allied Market Research

46.2%

In the Netherlands, roughly half of all Dutch adults feel lonely (46.2%). Almost 1 in 7 even feel severely lonely. Loneliness is slightly more common among men than women, but for severe loneliness there's hardly any difference.

Een tegen Eenzaamheid (Dutch national program against loneliness)

79%

At B2C events we see the same need: 79% want to attend more events, while almost a quarter of 18 to 29-year-olds feel lonely. Dating app Hinge invested $1 million in free in-person events, explicitly reasoning that its own app was contributing to the problem.

Eventbrite Social Study

What it looks like

The offsite as a recurring event

2.6
offsites a year (US)

70%
plan 1 to 2 offsites (UK)

10%
every quarter (UK)

Companies are making more and more use of offsites. That is turning them into a regular fixture rather than an occasional outing. We see this especially in the US, where companies hold an average of 2.6 offsites a year. Shorter, more frequent get-togethers are replacing the traditional "one big annual trip". The number of offsites is growing in the UK too. There, around 70% of companies plan 1 to 2 offsites a year, while no fewer than 10% have already switched to quarterly offsites.

Corporate retreats

Corporate retreats are hugely popular in the US, but you see them more and more in the Netherlands too: companies taking their whole team to Bali, Ibiza or another warm island to work for a week. Thanks to the big budgets involved, this field is developing rapidly. Alongside retreats meant mainly to bring teams closer together, leadership retreats and wellness retreats are on the rise. That last segment is growing fastest, as employers have started treating mental health as a strategic priority. And which locations are popular for corporate retreats? According to Skyquestt, it's mainly resorts, because you can meet, stay and unwind under one roof. At the same time, adventurous locations are showing the strongest growth.

Good to know

Different decision-makers

These events aren't organized with a marketing goal, but with an HR goal. That means the final decision-makers have different interests, budgets can vary and success is measured differently.

Watch how you frame it

Be careful how you sell an event designed to combat loneliness. Nobody wants to go to an event whose invitation implies they're lonely. Put that goal in your event briefing, not in your invitation.

Micro-events

Events as an answer to the loneliness economy fit naturally with the micro-event trends: small, intimate events built around getting to know each other in a safe setting. So take a good look at how you can combine these two developments and kill two birds with one stone.

What does this trend mean for you?

1. Who is your client? Marketing, HR or the board? Be aware of everyone's interests and what each of them expects an event to achieve. But most importantly: put your attendees first.
2. What specific insights, knowledge and experience can you, as an event manager, bring to events that help bring employees closer together? That's valuable information for HR.

Emerging trend

04 A generation that has already googled everything, and chooses, experiences and judges events differently



Signal | Emerging | **Established**

Maturity: established, but with a new cause. And that's why it belongs here. *Critical attendees are nothing new. Being able to measure it, and what's driving it, is.*

Your event ticket is booked, your train ticket too, and the whole day is blocked out in your calendar so you can dive into all the inspiration at that one B2B event. On the train, you read the event program and check out the speakers' profiles on LinkedIn. You also do a bit of homework with ChatGPT and skim these experts' key articles and white papers. By mid-morning, you're sitting in a room listening to exactly that. Only slower. Was that worth the ticket price, the travel time and the block in your calendar? More and more research shows a gap between what attendees expect and what organizers invest in. If you want to close that gap, you mainly need to change your promise, your program choices and your groundwork. Because most decisions are made before anyone walks through the door. Attendees will always be looking for the value an event can give them. The question is: do you, as an organizer, know which part of your program still delivers that value today?

The signal

Younger audiences are critical when it comes to choosing the right B2B events. And the share of millennials and Gen Zers attending these events keeps growing. Combine those two insights with the way they use technology to size up B2B events, plus the higher costs and limited time this group faces, and you understand why, more than ever, attendees decide in advance which events they'll attend that year. The question shifts from "is it interesting?" to "what do I give up for this, and what do I get in return?"



What it isn't

This trend isn't about the peer program events we discussed in trend 1. That one is mainly about what you offer your attendees. This trend is mostly about who does the choosing, and what resources and information they have. Both trends come from the same need: offering what people are asking for. But the first looks at that need from the supply side, while this one looks at it mainly from the attendee's side and how they select their events.

Why now

1 We see three key developments driving this trend right now. The first is mainly about attendance. Or rather: the availability of an alternative to it. Content is available everywhere and can be on your screen in no time. And that affects how attendees behave. Research by RainFocus found that the average number of sessions attended per visitor fell from 5.3 in spring 2025 to 4.2 in spring 2026, while participation in scheduled meetings tripled. People still come; they're just sitting somewhere else.

2 The second development is a generational shift. According to Freeman research, by 2030 around 75% of event attendees will be millennials and Gen Z, while many business events have historically been designed around the wishes, preferences and habits of older generations: think long plenary sessions or a formal dinner. And according to research by Hilton, that difference shows up in expected behavior: 61% of millennials and Gen Z expect to skip sessions, compared with 31% of baby boomers.

3 The third development relates to rising costs and budget cuts. Or at least a more critical eye in response to them. Think of higher prices for travel and tickets, and the time you can't spend on your 'normal' work. None of it has to be a disaster, but it does mean attendees are more selective about the events they choose to attend.

Figures and research

20,000

"Value for cost" is the main consideration for people who don't attend events. Based on almost 20,000 responses from professionals who are in the target audience but didn't show up, Freeman sees a consistent gap between how events position themselves and how this audience judges value. The conclusion of research director David Saef is sharp: potential attendees doubt whether the value is clear enough to come.

Freeman, What's Keeping People Away, May 2026

60%

60% of those non-attendees would be more likely to come if the event offered knowledge you can only get in person. This group is younger and more career-focused than the current audience, and chooses benefit over experience.

Freeman, What's Keeping People Away, May 2026

2,600

Organizers and attendees look at different things. A survey of more than 2,600 attendees and organizers shows that organizers invest in entertainment, atmosphere and emotional experience, while attendees focus on learning, networking and discovering new products.

Freeman, Unpacking XLNC: Bringing the X Factor, October 2025

84%

84% of business event attendees explicitly name gaining new knowledge as added value. And attendees increasingly arrive with a clear intention, skipping parts of the program that don't fit it.

aanmelder.nl, on the IMEX session by Kuoni Tumlare Congress

54%

Attendees want to spend 54% of their learning time outside the session room; at trade shows, that rises to 64%. They value demos, access to real subject experts and practical takeaways more than short-form content or passive presentations.

Freeman, Unpacking XLNC part 2, July 2026

What it looks like

01

Promise concrete outcomes

The lineup of speakers you've booked shouldn't be the main selling point of your event. Focus more on what people will learn, and you connect better with the needs of your potential attendees. Freeman's first recommendation for 2026 is literally: show people what they'll take home, and link that benefit to their own goals. So not "5 keynotes and 3 panels", but "you'll leave with an approach to X, tested by peers and experts who have faced the same problems."

02

If you can't measure it, you can't improve it

Before your event, try to find out what someone hopes to get out of it. And follow up on that afterwards. You can do this very simply by adding those questions to your registration form, then asking in your evaluation survey whether those wishes were met. So not "How satisfied were you?", but: "You came mainly for knowledge, and secondly for contacts. Did you find them? And if not, how can we help?" The Event Canvas Model also recommends turning your registration form into a measuring tool like this.

03

Modular programming

We saw earlier that younger attendees think skipping sessions is normal. If they're your audience, a tight, rigid program is a design flaw. Think instead of parallel sessions, varied session lengths (short blocks versus real deep dives), the option to build your own program, and matchmaking features to network with the people you actually want to meet.

Good to know

Not everyone values an event in the same way

A junior marketer attending a marketing event still has a lot to learn, so they can make the most of big, classic marketing conferences with plenty of sessions, speakers and peers. A senior professional with far more expertise but less time to spare will probably get more out of smaller sessions and different topics.

Be careful with generational thinking

It's good to take into account the different generations you organize your events for. But don't let it become a blueprint, or you'll quickly slip into stereotypes. There's also a demonstrable gap between what people say and what they do. Research by SGK shows that 72% of boomers are willing to change their behavior for sustainability, compared with 58% of Gen Z. The exact opposite of what you'd expect.

Measure what matters, but use the same yardstick

An event's success is often measured by how many people turn up. But which event is more successful: a completely sold-out event rated 5.5 out of 10? Or an event that was only half full but scored a solid 9 out of 10 from attendees?

What does this trend mean for you?

1. Go through the program of your next event and ask yourself the same question for each part: could an attendee have gotten this at home? Anything you can answer yes to is no longer a reason to come.
2. At your next registration, ask yourself: what is someone coming for? And can you show them afterwards whether they found it? As long as the answer to both is no, you're measuring satisfaction, not value.



Emerging trend

05

Mental health for event professionals

This last trend is a bit of an odd one out. That doesn't make it any less important or urgent, but it is why we approach it differently from the previous trends.

Event managers almost never say their work is stressful. When last-minute changes come their way, they shrug them off with a simple "I love a challenge." That flexible, solution-focused attitude is what makes event managers who they are. Yet your field is seen as one of the most stressful there is. And it's starting to take its toll. More and more research shows that the mental health of professionals in the events industry is increasingly at risk.

Admittedly, this has been going on for a few years. And it isn't limited to the events industry. Many young people and young adults experience stress, anxiety and other mental health issues. But it's only in recent years that people who struggle with this have started talking about it openly. Professionals in the events industry included. That's making the issue more visible and drawing more attention to it, including its causes.

Striking research

#1
Military service

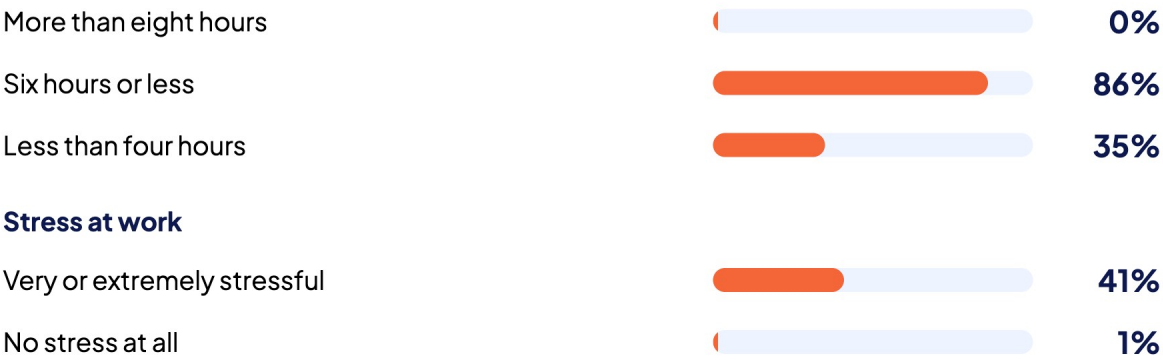
#2
Home care

#3
Event management

In 2023, World Scholarship Vault published a widely quoted ranking of the most stressful professions. Event management came out as the third most stressful job in the world, after military service and home care. That figure has been cited everywhere since, and two years later ClinkClink wanted to know whether anything had changed. It surveyed 150 event managers in the United Kingdom. But instead of asking how stressed people felt, it asked how many hours of sleep they got the night before an event. Around that, it mapped two other things: where the stress came from and what event managers themselves thought would help. The outcome? Poor sleep and high stress aren't exceptions. They're baked into the way events are organized. And the causes turn out to be structural: schedules that are too tight, decisions made too late, too few people.

Key results

Sleep the night before an event



Stress at work

Almost a quarter say their workload often or always affects their mental health and private life.

Biggest cause of stress



What keeps event managers up at night

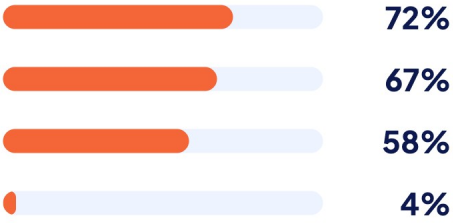


In other words: event managers don't lie awake because of the event, but because of decisions other people make too late.

Source: ClinkClink, survey of 150 event managers in the UK

Key results (continued)

What employers offer



What's more, 85% feel moderately to extremely supported by management. And yet 86% have physical symptoms of stress, and only one in five sleeps well in the week before an event.

The report's conclusion is clear: unless workload and expectations are looked at differently, rolling out all kinds of mental health programs makes no difference at all.

Good to know

What frustrates event managers

We probably don't need to tell you that event managers experience a lot of stress. Or that you're not the only one who struggles with it. You might think it simply comes with the job, or with the kind of person who becomes an event manager. But nothing could be further from the truth. 81% of event managers name last-minute changes as one of the main reasons they lie awake. Far ahead of personal worries (46%).

Focus on keeping the people you have

The tight labor market plays an important role in solving the mental health problem in the events industry. Management needs to act on this by investing more in existing staff. 30% have considered leaving. The rest (70%) want to stay, and 64% are optimistic about the future. So even small changes to the problems above can make a world of difference and make existing staff a lot happier.

Conclusion

After reading a trend report, it's always worth zooming out for a moment. Which trends will stay trends, and which are on the rise? And how do the two relate? Time will tell. But when you put Part 1 and Part 2 side by side, we see an interesting movement. Where the established, general trends in Part 1 are almost all about production (purchasing, technology, processes, budgets), the trends in Part 2 seem to focus mainly on the attendee (how they choose, what they expect, where they put their attention and when they decide it was worth it).

Part 1

Production

Purchasing, technology, processes, budgets

Part 2

The attendee

How they choose, what they expect, where they put their attention

So what does that mean for tomorrow? Start small. The developments in Part 2 lend themselves well to low-risk experiments: one dinner instead of a session, one half-day without screens, one extra question on your registration form about what someone is coming for. Low cost, lots of insight. And keep in mind that not every signal will come true. Especially the trends in Part 2.

With this conclusion, we've reached the end of our Trend Report 2027. Here's to the events you'll organize in 2027. May they be your best yet.

aanmelder.nl

Get started

Make 2027 your best event year yet



Reading trends is one thing. Turning them into your event is another. Start small: one intimate dinner, one screen-free half-day or one smart extra question on your registration form. Our software takes the routine work off your hands, and we're happy to think it through with you.

Intuitive

Get up and running fast, with as few dependencies as possible. You build your own form, website and emails.

Smart automations

From invitation to evaluation. Automate as many loose tasks as you can. That leaves you time for the concept and all the details that matter.

Secure and reliable

ISO 27001 certified, SOC 2 Type II report and hosted in the EU: your data and your attendees' data are safe.

Talk to an event expert → **Try it yourself**