

**splash**



3	Foreward
4	Introduction
5	Methodology
6	Key Insights
9	Today's Buyer
11	Event Formats Mix
16	Event Technology
18	Conclusion

## Foreward

Event marketers have experienced a roller-coaster of change, but we prove that our agility knows no limits year after year. This time around, the challenge is especially pronounced as B2B buying behaviors shift rapidly and the economy ebbs. At the same time, resources remain limited, yet event pros remain steadfast in our determination to meet - and exceed expectations.

Events play an integral role in an organization's success. They are not only incredible revenue drivers, but events are essential to creating true connections and community. However, with limited resources and quirky tech stacks, running a successful event program can feel like a Herculean task.

Marketers have their work cut out for them in 2023. To stay top-of-mind, unforgettable branded experiences are vital to connecting with customers and buyers throughout the entire lifespan of the relationship - not just a few times a year at conferences or tradeshows. At Splash, our mission is simple: make executing brand-forward event programs easy, measurable, and compliant throughout today's enterprise organizations and teams.

Despite rising challenges, savvy event professionals know that with agile strategies and the right tools, they can create impactful experiences that drive revenue. The proof? Our research shows that 81% of event practitioners are ready to put on more events — if only those magical "right" technologies were in hand. At Splash, we know successful events. And we know that they don't have to be hard.

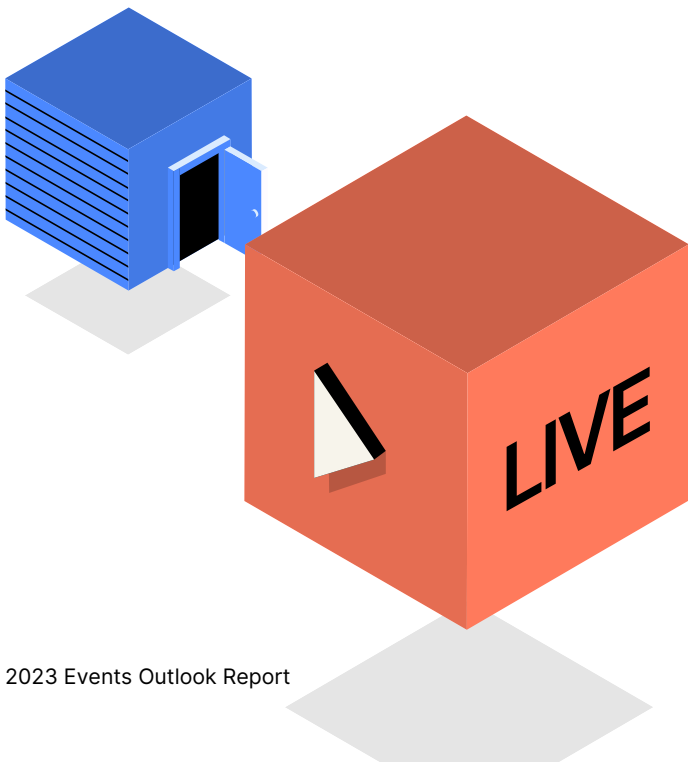
We undertook our annual global research survey in late 2022 to help our event marketing community hone its strategies for success in 2023. I am confident you will find the information we aggregated into the 2023 Events Outlook Report as compelling as I did.

This year, I'm looking forward to seeing event pros take their strategies and tactics to new heights, showcasing new and better ways to do more with less and make their brands pop. Here at Splash, we'll continue fostering a thriving community of professionals dedicated to learning, motivating, and being there for each other through these headwinds.

To my fellow marketers, keep showing up to the challenge with energy and courage, and always find the fun in what you do.



Kate Hammitt  
CMO, Splash



# Introduction

For decades, events have been a key component of businesses' marketing strategies, and their significance has only increased in recent years. Our annual survey of event professionals worldwide revealed that these marketers have a lot on their plate in light of a potential global recession and the challenge of standing out in the B2B space.

Our **2023 Events Outlook Report** confirms that events remain a highly effective tool for generating captivating content and encouraging engagement beyond the events themselves. Nevertheless, with limited T&E budgets, remote lifestyles, and competing other priorities, it can be difficult to attract and motivate audiences to participate.

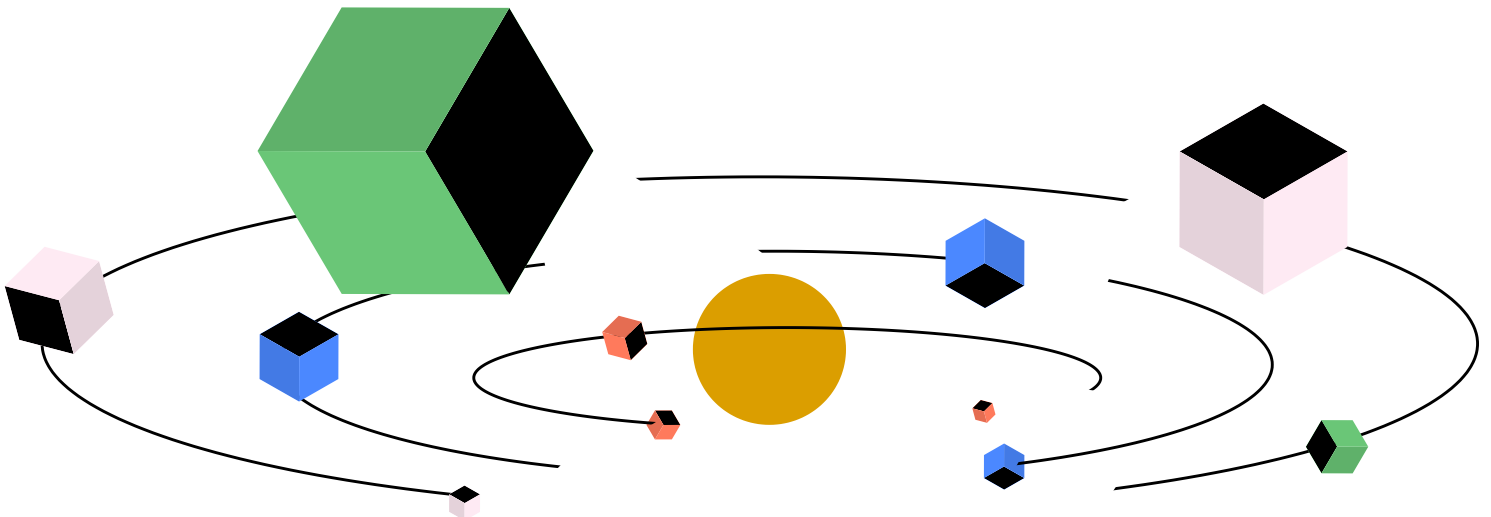
Creating the perfect blend of event formats is essential for unlocking an event program's full potential. Selecting the right combination of formats can be challenging, and executing this mixture can seem like an impossible feat, particularly when lacking the necessary tools and technology to simplify the process. Additionally, rising inflation has made it increasingly difficult for businesses to provide the budget required to host large-scale flagship events.

With more B2B prospects taking control of their buying journeys, it's become increasingly vital for event marketers to focus on repeatable, everyday events that provide engaging, high-value content.

Event marketers are leading the way in community building and engagement, trading flagship events for multiple events throughout the year that offer a unique connection with their audiences. This shift away from larger-scale engagements has been growing steadily over time - representing much more than a passing fad!

To maximize value and their impact on driving revenue, events must be at the core of the marketing mix, and digital audiences should be regularly optimized to ensure relevance and respect. This requires tracking ROI and identifying the optimal mix of events for their business.

Flagship events are still advantageous, but the (typically more intimate) everyday events have the greatest impact on buyers. Therefore, marketers should concentrate on creating meaningful connections through regular, consistent events to build trust, reinforce the brand, and increase the likelihood of buyers attending future events.



## Methodology

In November 2022, we surveyed 670 event professionals in the United States and Europe across a variety of industries. To qualify, respondents had to work in marketing, HR, or other departments within the survey criteria.

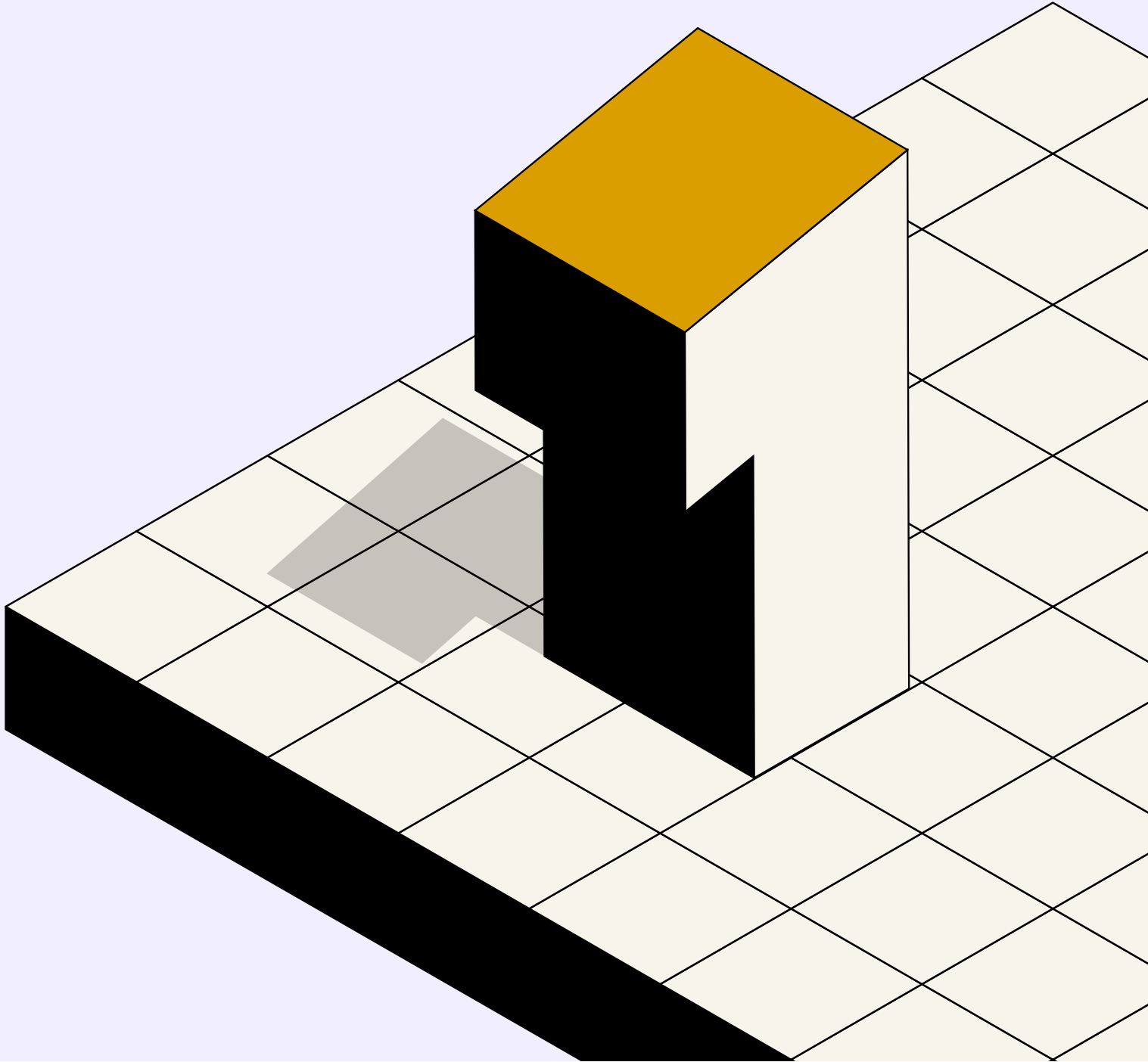
The survey was not weighted.

**EU countries represented:** France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, UK

**Key industries:** Advertising, Entertainment, Education, Finance, Healthcare, Hospitality, Media, MICE, Professional Services, Retail, Software, Telco, Transportation

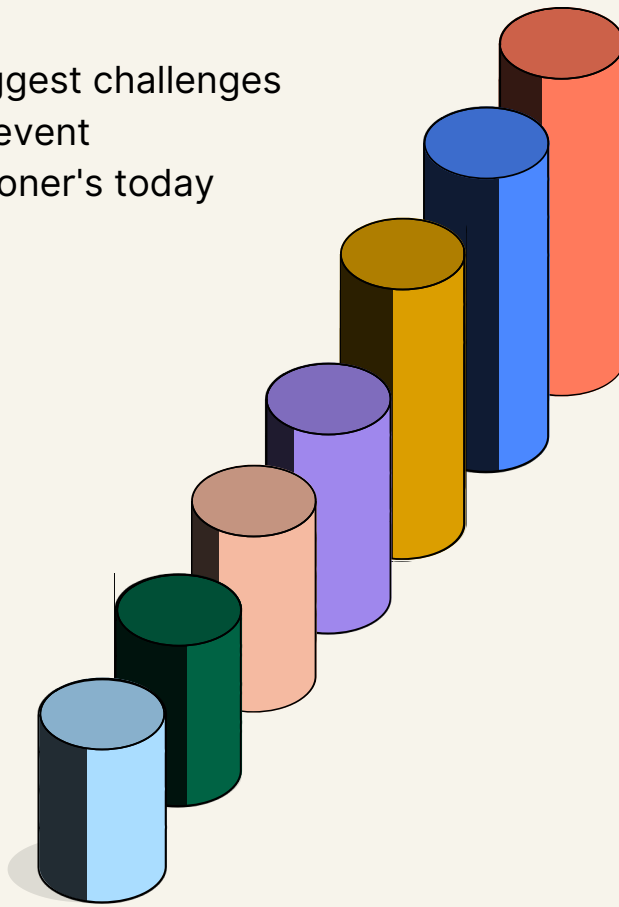
**Company size:** 100-999 employees (34%); 10-99 (30%); 10,000+ (25%)

# Key Insights



## Todays Event Marketer

The biggest challenges facing event practitioner's today



**26%**

Not enough resources (human) for me / my team

**23%**

Not enough budget and/or economic constraints

**20%**

Need better technology to support my role and/or create efficiencies

**11%**

Lack of training in the latest / best event marketing practices

**8%**

Collaboration / project management with my team and/or with other departments

**6%**

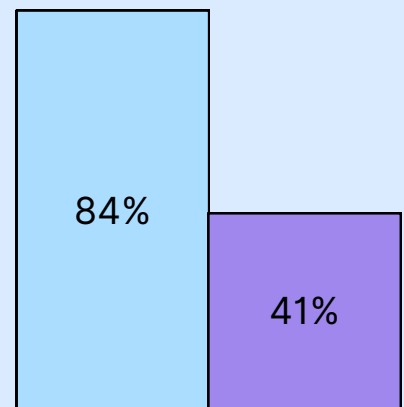
Delivering on expected outcomes / responsibilities on time and/or on budget

**5%**

Measuring results

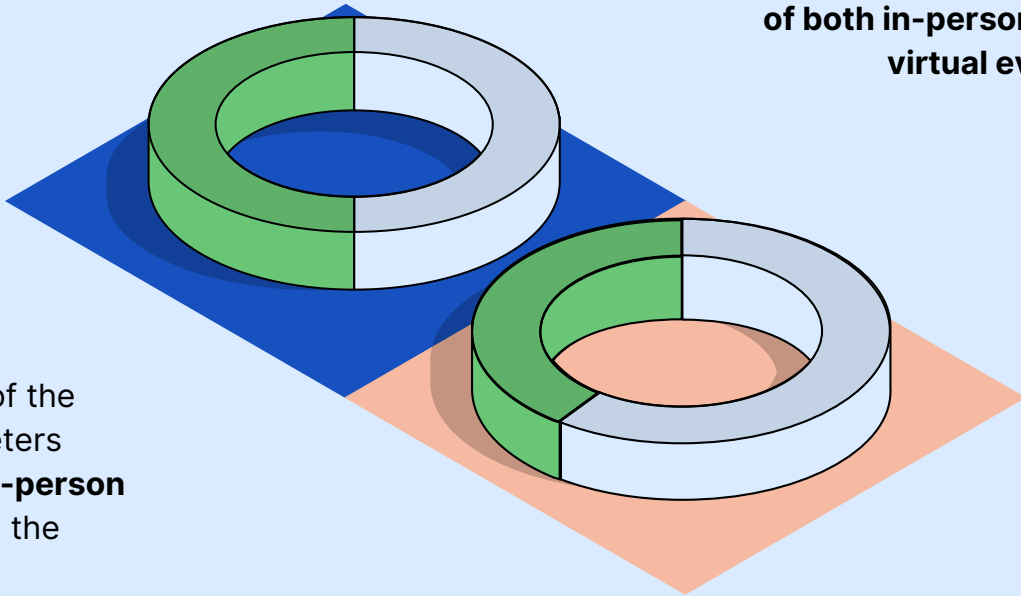
## Untapped Revenue Potential

The majority of events (**84%**) are geared toward current customers, while less than half (**41%**) target prospective buyers, leaving a lot of potential revenue on the table.



### Event Format Mix

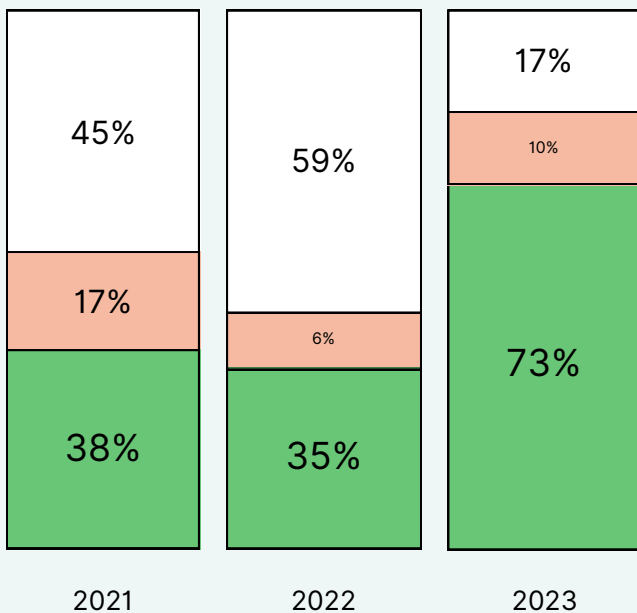
A similar number (43%) report that their programs contain **a mix of both in-person and virtual events**



Nearly half of the event marketers (47%) say **in-person events** yield the largest ROI

### Event Marketing Budgets YOY

- Stayed Same
- Decrease in Budget
- Increase in Budget



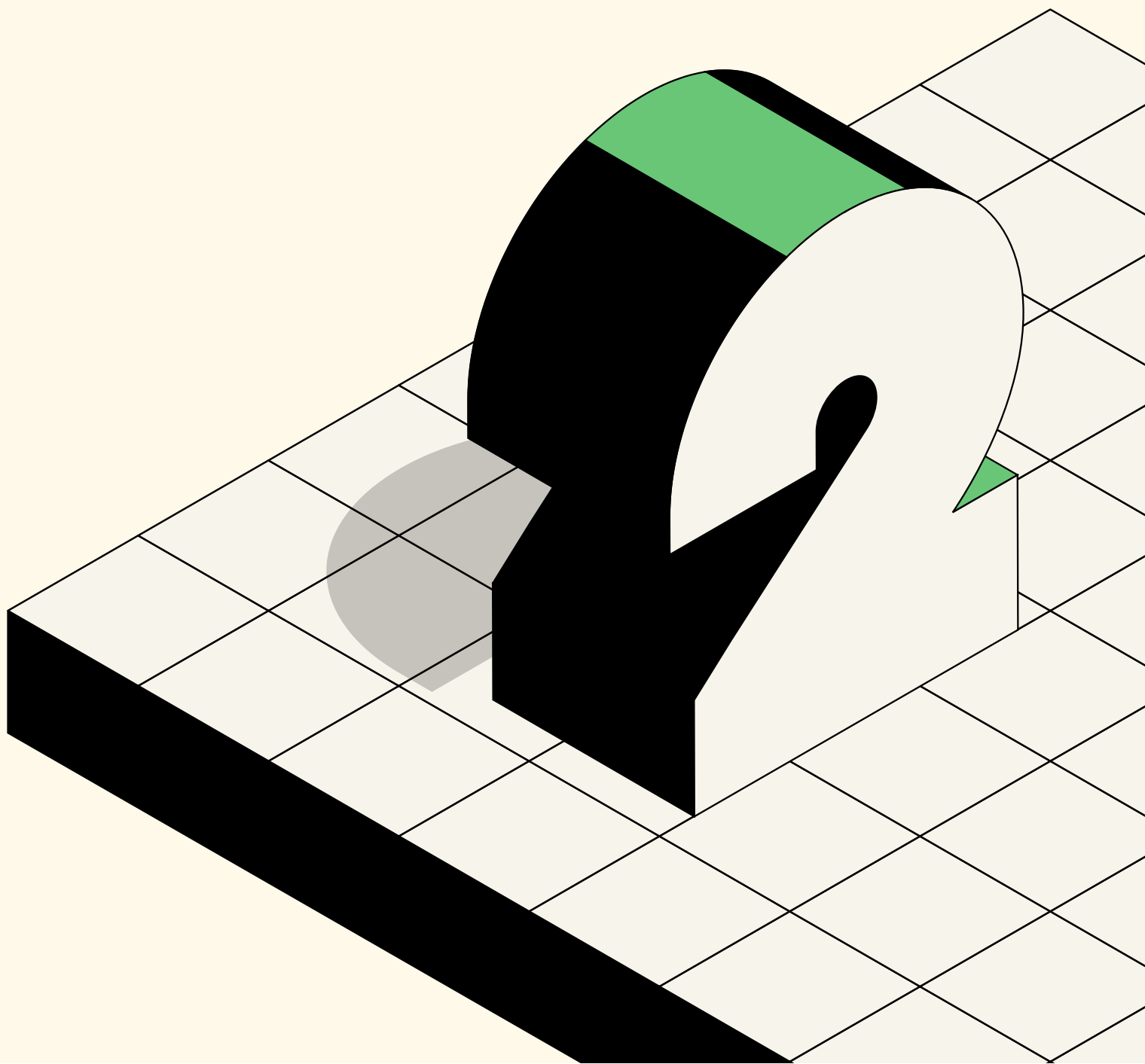
### Event Technology

**81%**

of event practitioners would hold more events **if they had the right tools.**



# Today's Buyer

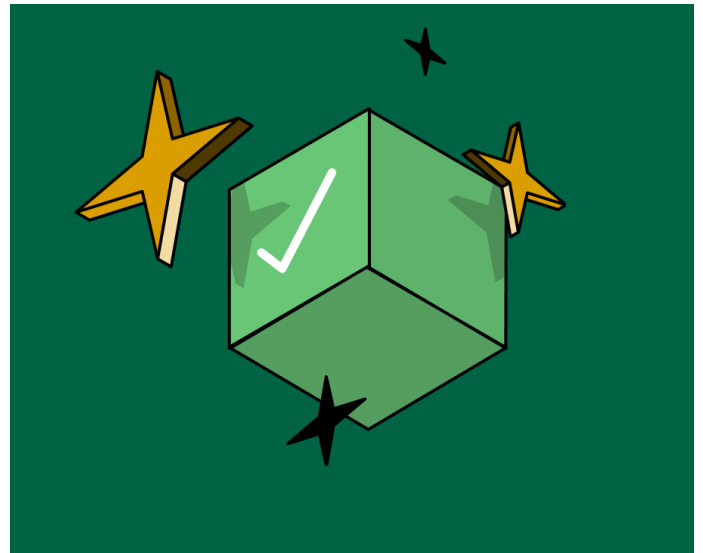


## The Anonymous Buyer

Today's buyers no longer entertain office visits and rarely attend tradeshows and conferences as part of their buying process. In fact, **many consumers start — and often complete — their journey online, often abstaining from interactions with sales and marketing until they're ready to buy**, leaving marketers scrambling to identify where and how to get in front of their audiences.

In the era of **dark social**, buyers prefer to rely on their own diligent research: downloading relevant information and viewing webinars or listening to podcasts.

These buyers frequently turn to peers and industry analysts for reviews and recommendations, often garnered by way of social media, podcasts, and word of mouth.

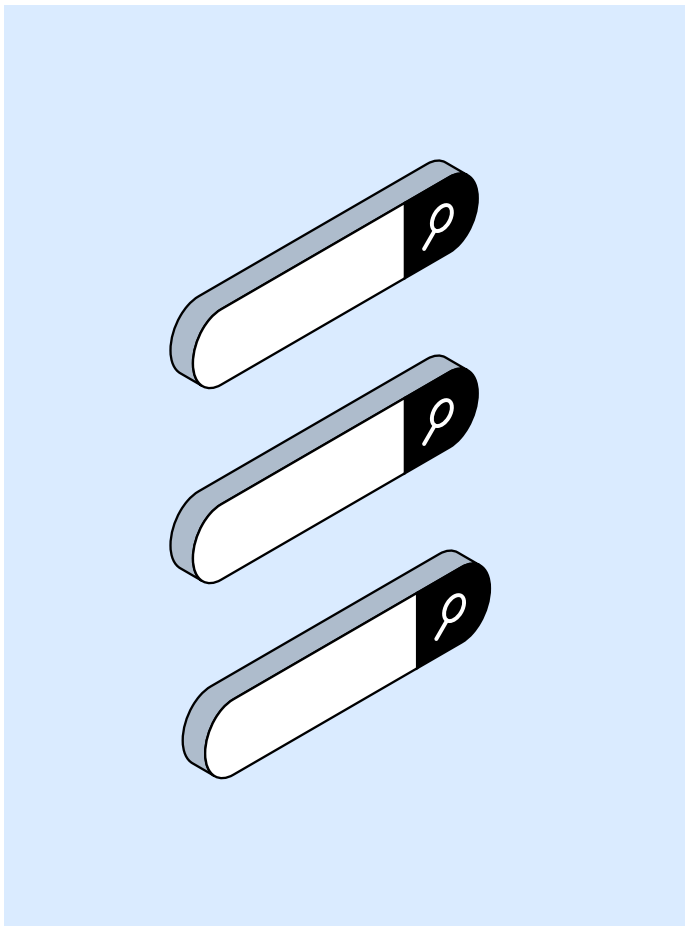


## Looking for Audiences

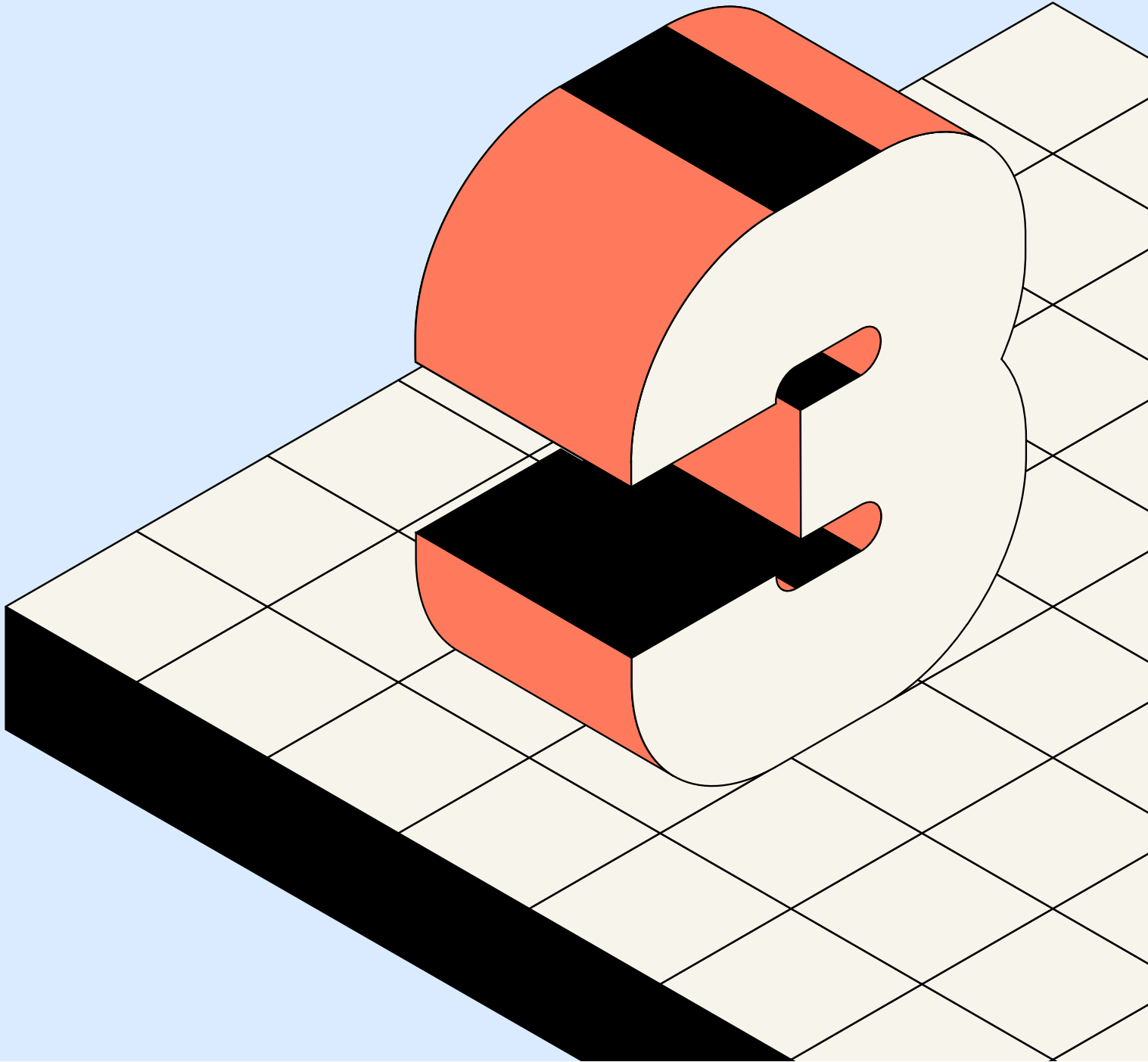
Although only 14% of respondents report that driving attendance is one of their main *challenges*, Nearly a quarter (23%) say they're measuring event success based on attendance, and **nearly two-thirds (67%) report that attendance is one of the most important metrics to the business**, with more than one-third (32%) say that attracting the **right** attendees will be one of their biggest challenges in 2023.

Marketers continue migrating to where their buyers are. Nearly half of those surveyed (47%) say that live-streaming software is the primary technology they'd need to invest in to get the tools they need for success, and 40% cite a mobile app as being their top priority.

Interestingly enough, for all of their virtual research and shopping, buyers guard their privacy and the protection of their personal data, thus making it all the more challenging for marketers to identify the right audiences and where to find them.



# Event Formats Mix



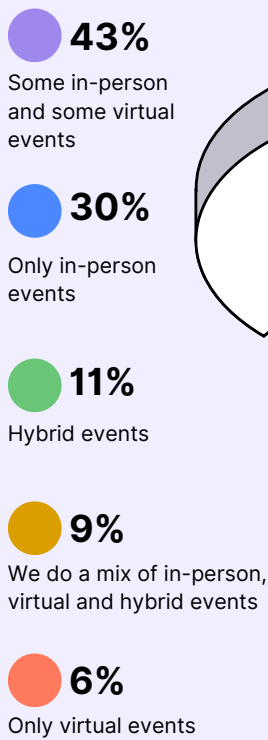
## The Current Event Mix

One of the greatest advantages in the event marketing landscape is the different modalities available - virtual, in-person, on-demand, hybrid, etc.

To maximize potential, it's essential to carefully evaluate the combination of modalities that best fit with the business's strategy, implement the mix, analyze the results, and iterate accordingly.



## What's the Mix?

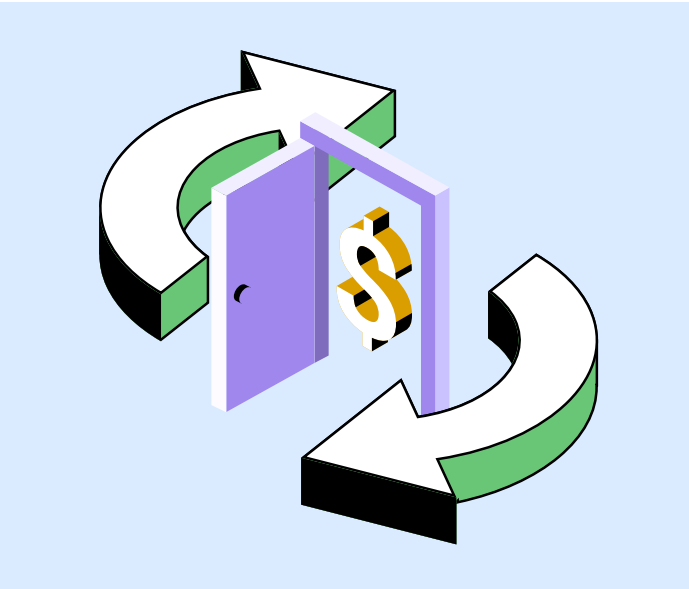


Our survey data indicates that the number of in-person events expected in 2023 remained essentially unchanged from 2022. 40% reported they hosted more in-person events in 2022 than they initially anticipated, likely due at least in part to the success of in-person events early in the year. However, many marketers may feel that they found their ideal event mix last year and are reluctant to make any changes in a year where funds for experimentation could be tighter.

On the other hand, **virtual events have not seen the same growth as their in-person counterparts.** Those planning to host five or fewer virtual events have nearly doubled since last year, indicating fewer virtual events in the works. This decrease is despite 41% expressing that **virtual events were more effective than anticipated** and 38% reporting that **virtual events were cost-effective.**

Unsurprisingly, event marketing investments are still being poured into in-person events despite challenges with inflation, tighter budgets, and other external factors. This is likely due to **nearly half of event marketers reporting that in-person events generate the highest return on investment.**

The fact that the primary audiences for these events appear to be customers might explain why they are so desirable: when done right, **in-person events provide opportunities to foster customer relationships and expand into existing accounts.**



## Flagship Events

**Channel diversification is absolutely critical** to ensuring a successful event program. While we'd never argue the importance of in-person events — and the benefits companies can gain from face-to-face interactions — ensuring there's a balance of different event formats in a program is paramount.

The exorbitant costs of major events like tradeshows, compounded by the rising prices of travel and accommodation, make it difficult to justify committing a large percentage of an annual budget to a single flagship event.

**Today, most companies produce smaller events frequently or employ a mix of both large and small-scale events.** A shrinking percentage focus primarily on flagship events.

Flagship events, like tradeshows, have missed attendance goals year after year for the past several years, with the pandemic serving to call attention to these challenges.

After a 3-day event, there are still 362 remaining days to stay connected with a buyer throughout their journey. Flagship events are great, but **consistent communication and multiple touchpoints keep your brand front of mind and your audience engaged.**

Successful buyer and customer journeys require multi-touch and multi-channel approaches.



**84%** of events serve current customers, while only **41%** target prospective buyers.

## Everyday Events

### ev·ree·dey ih·vents

*noun*

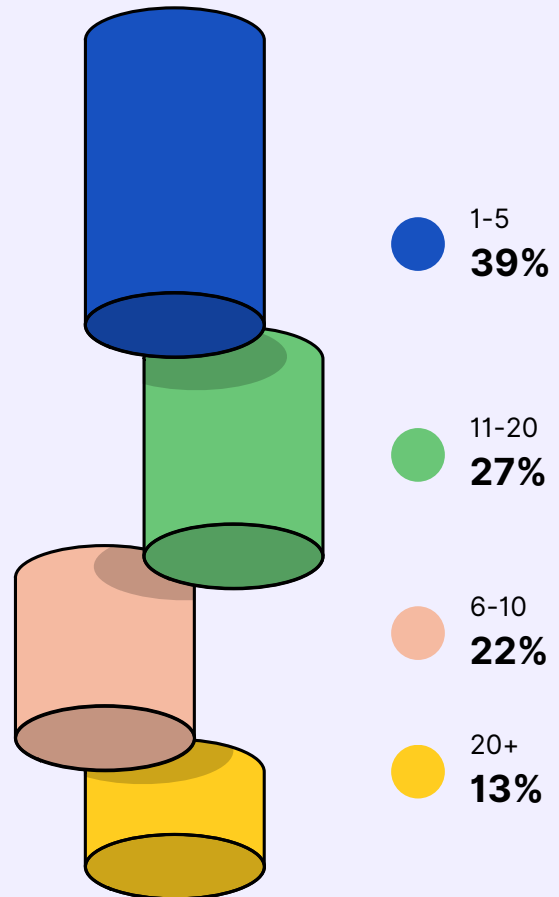
An event type designed to be used more than once across regions, verticals, formats (virtual/hybrid/ in-person), and stakeholders.

The latest B2B research reveals that today's buyer now needs to interact with a brand nearly 30 times during their pre-purchase journey, an increase of more than 60% in just two years.

**As a result, it certainly pays to create memorable, consistent buying experiences for customers in order to strengthen brand identity and stand out from competitors.**

Investing into creating remarkable customer journeys doesn't stop there, though; it also leads directly to trust and loyalty from existing clients — which translates straight back into the bottom line as healthier profits.

The average number of recurring / repeating events (or series) event pros are hosting in 2023



**Enter the everyday event.** Whether it's a lunch and learn, roadshow, workshop, community event, or customer panel, everyday events provide the critical connection points and experiences that facilitate engagement with a buyer throughout the buyer journey. **Everyday events at scale drive massive impact on the pipeline year-round.**

Our survey shows that marketers have gotten the memo on the importance of these everyday events.

## Scaling for Growth

Let's talk about the need for scale. At Splash, we consistently hear things like, "We do the same time-consuming steps every time we need to launch an event." Without addressing this significant pain point, how do you grow your program to scale in line with business needs?

Arguably, the biggest challenge with everyday events is ensuring you're not substituting quantity for quality, making it imperative to grow your program at a scalable pace.

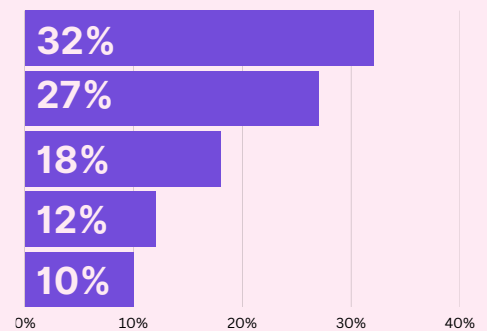


**51%** of non-event professionals surveyed spent between 10 and 39 hours per event creating, planning, and hosting internal events.

Identifying ways to simplify processes and do more work with fewer resources provides more time to focus on iterating, growing, and improving. Successful event programs thrive on the ability to both simply and *effectively* repeat what works.

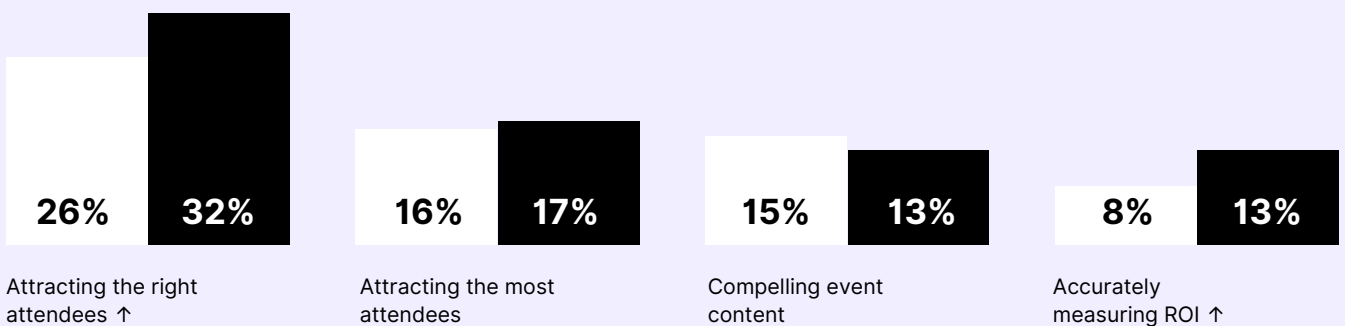
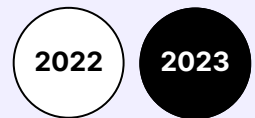
### Biggest frustrations with repeatable events

- Coordinating across departments
- Building new attendee/invitation lists
- Creating similar event designs/creative assets
- Recreating the event program
- Applying lessons from previous events to current event planning



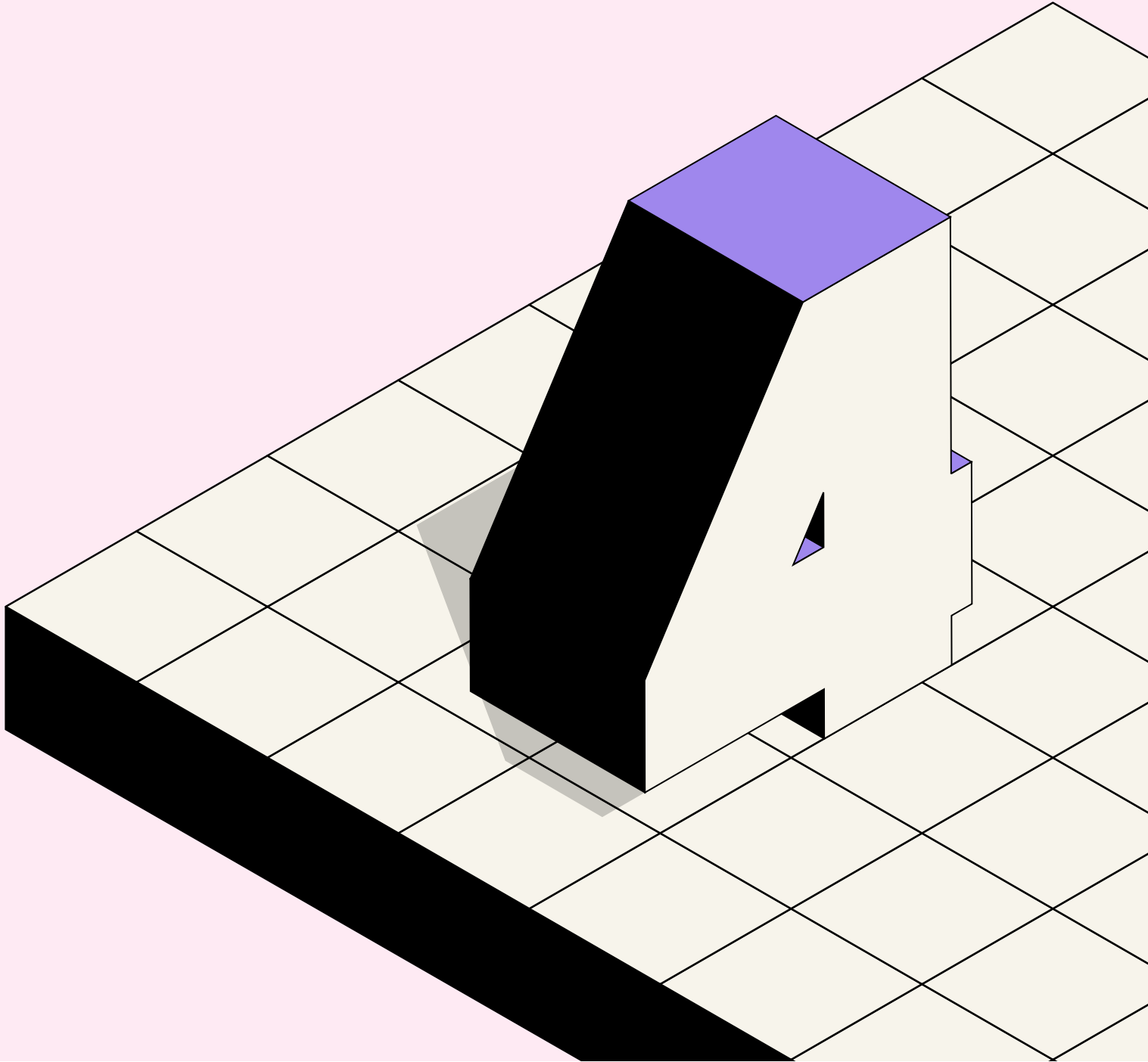
### Secrets to Success

The key to a successful event program - comparison 2022 vs. 2023



Only Top 4 responses in 2023 included

# Event Technology





## Measuring Success

Events and the platforms that support them can often get lost in the labyrinth of enterprise tech stacks — virtual services, MAPs, CRMs, ABMs, sales enablement platforms, customer success tools, etc. For event marketers, having the right technology can be the key differentiator for success. They need a self-serve, all-in-one tool that gives them the control to set up and manage events, make them visually appealing and branded, and provide easy access to the data needed to track success.

Organizations measure event success / ROI by various metrics — from registration and/or attendance (40%) to direct impact on revenue (15%). Only 2% of event pros surveyed did **not** try to measure ROI.

Unlocking the value of event data starts with having access to clean, reliable information. Unfortunately for marketers, most existing event management platforms lack an integrated measurement tool as a core part of their offering.

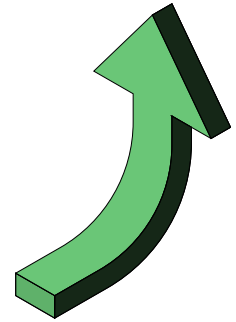
Getting past this hurdle and truly leveraging events within your marketing mix requires self-service visibility into performance metrics tailored toward strategic objectives - no small task! But only by testing and iterating on what works can the true potential behind leveraging events in your organization's growth plan be unlocked.

## Scaling for Growth

**It's difficult to prove ROI on an event without integrated marketing systems.** Event marketers resort to manual processes to import and export information, rely on other teams for support, or draw conclusions from disjointed data.

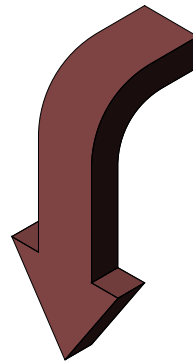
### 2022 Outlook Report:

**59% plan to increase their investments in event tech**



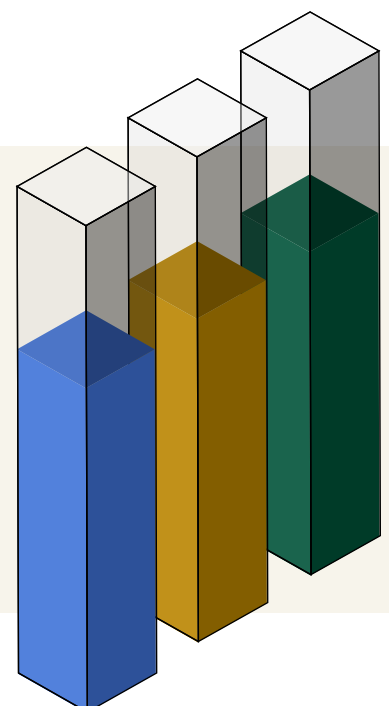
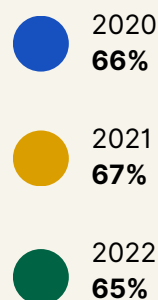
### 2023 Outlook Report:

**41% plan to increase their investments in tech; 53% report no change**

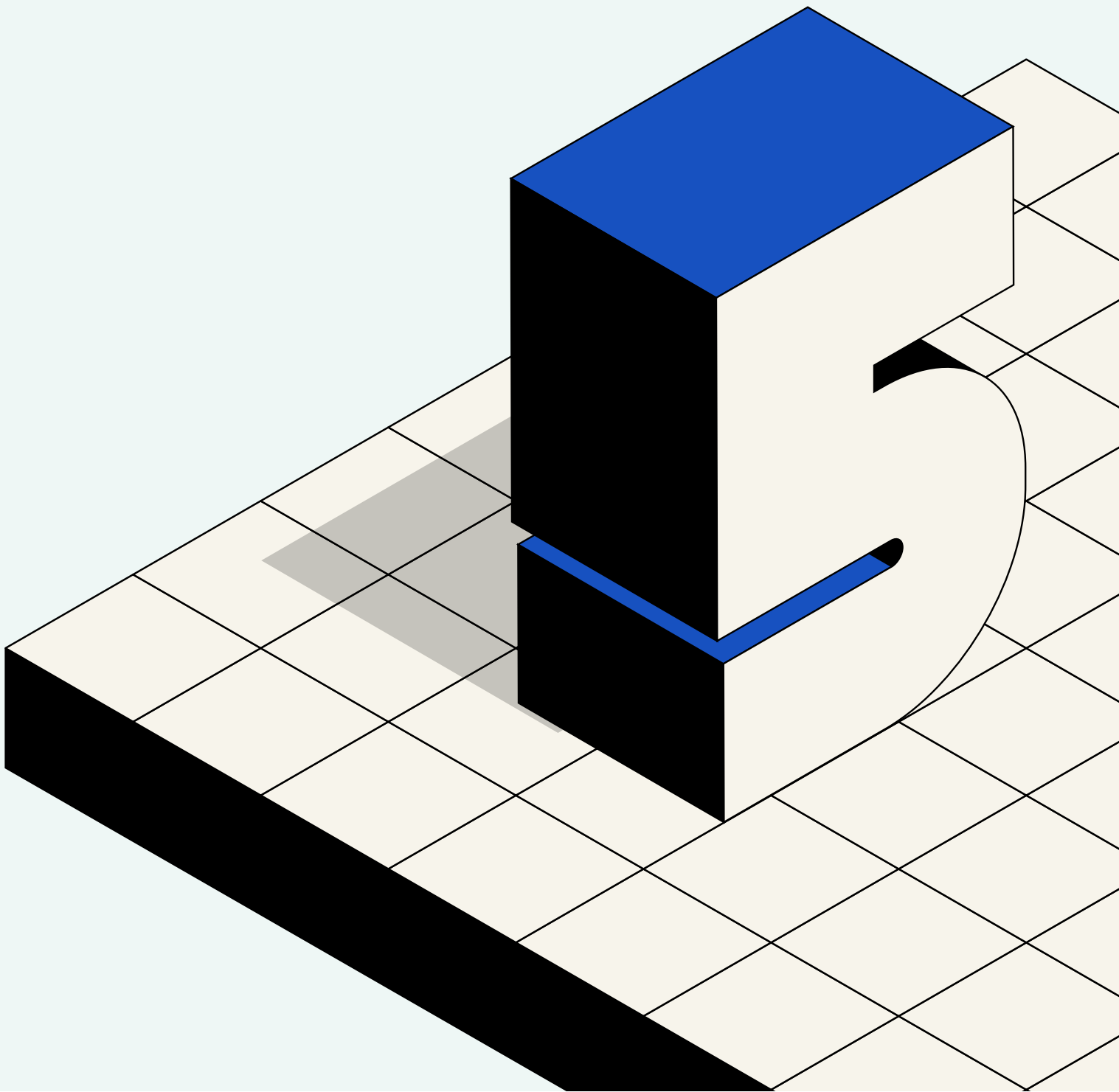


The effectiveness of any event management platform is highly dependent upon how it is selected, implemented, and used. Without interoperability, there are silos, inefficiencies, and, worst of all - an inability to measure. **And what gets measured, gets managed.**

Marketers are **still using the same event tools** as they did before 2020.



# Conclusion



The scale and impact of any event program are highly dependent on the event tech a team chooses. Without the right tools, there are silos, inefficiencies, and an inability to prove impact and ROI.

By selecting the right technology, event marketers can scale everyday events without sacrificing team bandwidth. Leveraging a platform that makes creating and managing events easier, more efficient, and more impactful could be the secret to unlocking future revenue. Spending less time on manual processes provides additional time to focus on successfully executing the events needed to foster growth.

The bottom line is that marketers need to do more with less - with the right tools, everyday events can easily be replicated, allowing precious time and resources to be used more efficiently.

The right technology can be the key to unlocking success. We'd love to help you get started!

Happy Planning! :)

***splash***

**The modern event platform.  
Built for event people.**

Learn more at [splashthat.com](https://splashthat.com)