

what's

TRENDING

2025

sponsored by

MINOR
HOTELS

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hello



As we near the end of 2024, I reflect on a year marked by optimism and growth, with the focus firmly on the future. Despite the global issues of recent years, our desire to connect and love for discovering new experiences remain. We've been listening to our clients, and understand that for some organizations, the lines between meetings management and experience solutions continue to blur, and our customers remind us daily that they want more variety. It's why we've expanded services such as our [Films](#) offering to deliver engaging content through powerful storytelling. Demand for our creative brand experience agency, [The Collective](#), also continues to grow, and we're finding more and more chances to offer a mix of services to our customers.

Within our goals to meet customer needs and keep up with industry trends, we haven't lost sight of our greatest asset – our people. We know many of our employees are attracted to this industry because of their passion for creativity and unique experiences, and we're committed to providing an environment where they can thrive.

As we look ahead to next year, the meetings and events industry will continue to face persistent economic pressures and the need for cost control. Additional constants will be the focus on sustainability, and the importance of remaining flexible to deal with challenges from geopolitical factors that can add complexity to the planning process. The demand for personalization and immersive experiences will keep evolving, with the rise of AI and technology transforming the way we approach events.

I'm energized about what's coming for BCD M&E over the next 12 months. We've gained strong momentum this year, and we're ready to build on that success. I hope you enjoy reading [What's Trending](#), and I look forward to connecting with many of you in the months to come.

Happy reading!

– Bruce

q & a



BRUCE MORGAN
Global President

You recently marked your first year as BCD M&E's Global President. How has the journey been so far?

It's been a fast-paced year, which I think everyone can relate to. My highlights are typically focused on people and my interactions with both employees and our customers. In the past 12 months I've had the chance to visit every region, meeting with teams and clients from around the world. Recently, I had the opportunity to connect with customers in Singapore, the UK, and North America, which was fantastic.

One key moment for me was transitioning into this role after Scott Graf, who led the organization for over 25 years, and retired in September 2023. Naturally, there was some trepidation, both for me and the business. But I'm grateful for how everyone embraced the change. The result has been continuity, and we've kept moving forward. Scott played a significant role in making that transition so smooth, and I'm incredibly thankful for that.

What's on the horizon for BCD M&E in 2025?

Earlier this year, we launched our three-year plan, **Thinking Forward**, which is equal parts strategy and mindset in empowering employees and clients to be active participants as BCD M&E defines its future. While some initiatives are still under review by our shareholders and the board, we've already started implementing what we know needs to be done to serve our customers today and in the coming years.

We've viewed 2024 as a foundational year to ensure we are prepared for the future. Now, our focus is on building a strong base to support continued growth. As we look toward 2025 and beyond, one key priority will be making ourselves simpler and easier to work with, both externally and internally.

We have an unmatched service offering, and you're not going to see us pivoting drastically into new areas. Instead, we'll focus on what we do best, ensuring consistency across all our regions. For example, we currently offer The Collective (our specialized brand experience agency) service suite in the UK and North America, and we're planning to expand that into Latin America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific.

These are all key components of our three-year plan to continuously improve our organization, which strikes a balance between a growth mindset and reinforcing what we already do well.

What excites you most about the future of our industry? Are there any key trends or developments our customers should prepare for in 2025?

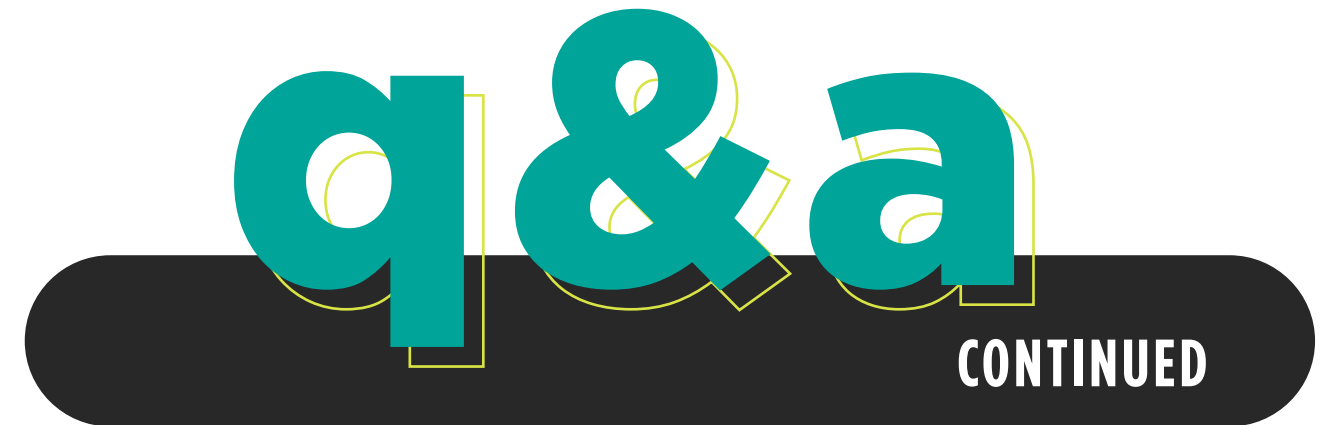
One major opportunity I see is the use of automation and AI. Our industry, compared to others, is still relatively manual in terms of operations. Whether it's streamlining processes between us and our customers, or enhancing participant experiences, automation has a huge role to play.

This naturally ties into the growing focus on personalization and customization. AI is already making waves, and while it's often discussed, its real potential lies in both helping our teams work more creatively and efficiently, and enhancing the experiences we deliver to our customers.

People join this industry to create memorable experiences and foster engagement. There's a creative aspect to the experiences we design for our customers, but there's also a significant amount of administration involved. Our focus should be on automating that administrative work, allowing people to focus on the meaningful and creative tasks that inspired them to join this business in the first place.

The more we focus on designing exceptional experiences and delivering unmatched engagement, the better service our customers will receive. Streamlining both internal and external operations through automation is incredibly exciting to me.

But there's still a lot to be done in terms of governance around AI usage. We need to be mindful that our customers may not have the same policies or guidelines regarding AI that we do. It's crucial that we align our approach with theirs as we're creating content and experiences. We must be transparent about how we use AI in development and ensure we understand any potential differences between our policies and those of our clients.



What challenges do you foresee for the industry considering global geopolitical issues?

One thing we've learned over the last five years is how resilient this industry is. External factors – whether they're political conflicts, inflation, or other challenges – will always have an impact. We've proven that we can adapt and focus on what we can control, which is designing and delivering incredible experiences for our customers.

For example, we're aware that many clients are working with tighter budgets due to inflation or other global factors. They're managing costs differently now than they did a few years ago. Our role is to react and adapt, and part of that is improving our internal efficiencies to meet those needs. I'm confident that regardless of what 2025 brings, our industry, and BCD M&E, will continue to thrive.

a note

FROM OUR SPONSOR

MINOR
HOTELS

We are coming to the end of an extraordinary year where we've had fantastic results across all segments, including MICE, which has gained prominence and greater importance to Minor Hotels.

With the shift towards remote and hybrid working models, we are seeing the demand for face-to-face events increase substantially as professional interactions are now more highly valued by companies. Minor Hotels has turned the MICE segment into a success story by crafting "industry-specific" value propositions that offer enhanced experiences across all our brands and focus on delivering unique and bespoke events.

Technology, personalization, and sustainability are some of the major trends impacting MICE today. In collaboration with our IT and digital teams, we are working towards integrating the use of AI and interactive technology solutions, such as enhanced mobile apps, real-time surveys, and gamification, to better facilitate seamless events from planning to execution. These are just a few steps we're taking to provide distinctive and inspiring events tailored to our guests' expectations, while delivering memorable moments for their attendees.

Dedicated to sustainable hotel development and corporate responsibility, Minor Hotels is passionate about ensuring positive contributions to both local communities and the ecosystems where our properties are located. Outside of waste and water management, we are incorporating everyday practices at our hotels such as the installation of urban vegetable gardens, that not only enhance the landscape but the gastronomic value of dishes while promoting km0 products. We understand that sustainability also plays an important role in what clients are looking for, as they want to work with a company who is equally focused on the environment and can offer end-to-end eco-friendly experiences.

With a portfolio of over 550 hotels across six continents, Minor Hotels drives growth through eight hotel brands; Anantara, Avani, Elewana, NH Hotels, NH Collection, nhow, Oaks, and Tivoli ranging from midscale to luxury that offer their own unique personality.

We are very excited to partner with BCD M&E and continue working together to spot new trends, share knowledge, continue to innovate and further grow our partnership. The collaborations we have nurtured and built over the years have helped both organizations achieve great successes.

This report will explore the latest global trends impacting MICE and offer invaluable insights into the future of this very exciting and ever-changing segment.



IAN DI TULLIO

Chief Commercial Officer, Minor Hotels

from around

THE WORLD

As we look ahead to 2025, the meetings and events landscape is marked by strong growth across various regions, though inflation and cost control continue to pressure budgets. A strong majority of meeting and event planners are optimistic about the future, with nearly three-quarters of respondents in industry organization [MPI's fall 2024 Meetings Outlook](#) survey expecting favorable business conditions for the year ahead.

Personalization has become increasingly vital, with a heightened focus on delivering tailored experiences even as companies navigate financial constraints. Sustainability remains a top priority, especially for multinational organizations. While cost still wins out in decision making, companies are starting to dive deeper into tracking their impacts and understanding meeting owner and attendee behaviors to better adapt their M&E strategies around sustainability. The integration of AI is playing a crucial role in driving innovation and efficiency within events, offering new ways to streamline operations and enhance attendee engagement. Meanwhile, geopolitical and regional influences such as upcoming elections and economic instability are shaping strategic decisions, particularly in regions like LATAM and EMEA, where market level challenges can be more pronounced.

Despite these pressures, the continued emphasis on creativity, combined with the need to adapt quickly to changing conditions, is driving the industry forward, highlighting the importance of agility and forward-thinking in planning successful events.

north america

A positive spirit pervades the meetings and events landscape in North America, which has increased about 20 percent YOY amid a client retention rate of 98 percent. This consistent growth can be attributed to a few different factors: diversification, customer-centric solutions and sustainable business practices among them.

Introducing new offerings like the **Congress Practice Area** and Films has been successful, indicating a strategic move toward innovating within the industry for third-party providers. In 2025, our team will further expand our focus on the Financial & Professional Services vertical.

Legal has taken a bigger role in setting up Master Service Agreements (MSAs) or contracts that allow for speed to scale, but that protect the company and key terms of partnership. More customers are looking to agencies to help augment and/or scale their own internal teams to deliver across the organizations' meeting and event needs.

In hotel contracting, MSAs are being reviewed to avoid all-encompassing terms that are difficult for hotels to agree on at a property level. It's best to not ask for too many concessions. Instead, focus on the key terms and conditions that need to govern the partnership, and allow choice at the individual meeting level to include concessions or additional business terms that add true value to that unique meeting or event.

Congress attendance, which has risen significantly post-pandemic, is under new scrutiny as clients seek to ensure they are investing in the right corporate participants and putting governance or an intentionally managed program around this space. Meanwhile, clients are seeking cost-saving opportunities across the board, considering options such as outsourcing meetings-related services and/or having us fulfill certain suitable services in low-cost markets to keep costs down.

Overall, the total package of cost savings/negotiations, thoughtful solutions, destination experience, DE&I, sustainability and personalization of experience is the recipe for success on the event side. With many stakeholders involved, each wanting their priorities addressed, it's important to find solutions that work for everyone. This helps them gain consensus faster internally.



CHARLENE RABIDEAU
Managing Director, NORAM

destination SPOTLIGHT

Aspen, Colorado

From the high elevation to the high-end lifestyle, Aspen is a year-round destination perfect for groups keen on adventure. Discover a wide range of activities like hiking, wildlife safaris, skiing, snowboarding and river rafting.

Though it's known for its wild beauty, Aspen doesn't sacrifice comfort. The area is plentiful with luxury accommodations, including high-end hotels like the iconic St. Regis and The Little Nell as well as many lodges and ranches. Stroll through downtown under the backdrop of Aspen Mountain and find everything from incredible dishes made with locally sourced game to top-notch shows at the famous concert venue, Belly Up.



**Best for: Top-tier skiing,
celebrity sightseeing, high-end shopping**



united kingdom

The mood across the UK is buoyant, as volume and opportunities have returned to levels we saw pre-pandemic. Clients continue to want to hold meetings, though we're increasingly having to boost creativity to combat flat budgets or very small increases and deliver more for their money. There's a need to address skyrocketing expectations, in that every year we add more value to a customer's experience or event, and we must build upon that the following year. The question becomes: How do we continue to evolve and go from good to great, when "great" one year is just "good" the next?

We are seeing consolidation of agencies throughout the UK, which is creating a new picture for us. Procurement being involved in purchasing meetings and events is the norm, with a greater focus on driving value, containing costs, and achieving optimization through procurement specialists. The old challenge with procurement and local stakeholders conflicting over wants and needs continues to impact the ability to balance cost and service.

On the venue side, the leisure market is reducing once again after taking over for a period post-pandemic. This adds additional pressure for meetings and events, where we continue to see venues stand firm on the acceptance of clients' MSAs, and on occasion, show little flexibility with their terms and conditions. However, with lead times continuing to extend, especially for those larger annual events, we're seeing a little more opportunity to obtain decent levels of space and some leniency in rates, although there are still challenges from venues on client specific MSAs.

Following the UK's change to a Labour government, we're on the cusp of understanding what impact this will have within our sector but are expecting changes for 2025 that will be announced late this autumn.

Regionally, London is a hot spot, but the city has its upsides and downsides, which governments and local businesses are aware of and working to address. From a sustainability point of view, it has an excellent public transportation system, but it's also very expensive, tipping some organizations out of the city.



HELEN MCCABE

Managing Director, UK

destination

SPOTLIGHT

Newquay, England

Located in southwest England on the coast of Cornwall, Newquay is a seaside town known for stunning sandy beaches, dramatic cliffs and laid-back atmosphere. The picturesque coastline serves as a fitting background for activities like surf lessons, paddleboarding and coasteering (exploring cliffs and caves along the coast). Groups interested in more low-key adventure can enjoy leisurely coast hikes or scenic boat trips.

The area takes sustainability and responsible tourism seriously, with local authorities always looking at how they can protect the environment amidst the bustle of tourism. These initiatives make Newquay an ideal destination for sustainably-minded organizations. Despite its remote, tranquil feel, Newquay is easily accessible via Newquay Cornwall Airport, with direct flights and rail travel from London and other UK cities.

Newquay's accommodations range from luxury beachfront hotels, like The Headland, to charming boutique guesthouses and eco-friendly lodges. Many venues provide stunning ocean views and top-notch conference facilities, and also have spas and diverse dining options suitable for groups. Cornwall is renowned for its fresh seafood, and Newquay is no exception. From fine dining at coastal restaurants to traditional Cornish pasties, Newquay's culinary scene offers something for every palate.



Best for: Outdoor adventurers, sea lovers



● europe, middle east, africa

The overall business sentiment is encouraging, with face-to-face events remaining strong as companies continue to perceive meetings and events as pivotal despite ongoing challenges.

Looming large are the ongoing war in Ukraine and conflict in Israel, which do not look to be ending soon. Countries in the Middle East, including Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, are most insecure and taking things day by day, which is impacting short-term business. However, business activity has normalized somewhat across the rest of EMEA.

Inflation is another major concern heading into 2025, with some countries experiencing double or even triple-digit inflation. Doing more with less is a common theme, especially with some costs such as hotels difficult to predict. Budgets are expected to remain flat or slightly decrease in 2025 due to inflation, so cost containment is paramount.

In addition to being tasked with doing more with less, meetings and events teams are facing even shorter lead times than last year. For example, it's not uncommon to see an RFP for a 1,000-person event as little as 5-6 weeks out. Companies are looking at budgets and financial control with an extremely critical eye and have lengthy internal approval processes, therefore greatly reducing the time to plan meetings and events. As expected, this creates challenges with sourcing. Hotels have strong balance sheets, and we're seeing continual new openings but with high rates.

On a positive note, companies are realizing the value of investing in **Strategic Meetings Management** programs, with renewed focus on tying direct outcomes to meetings spend by taking a holistic and strategic approach.

Incentive programs continue to be critical for companies focused on driving sales incentives or employee experience incentives, and budgets remain strong for product launches as well.



MIKAEL EK
Managing Director, EMEA

destination

SPOTLIGHT

Istanbul, Türkiye

Istanbul is a vibrant city steeped in history and cultural heritage, with a dynamic mix of modern amenities and ancient wonders. Groups can tour the city's iconic landmarks, such as the Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque and Topkapi Palace, then be immersed in traditional Turkish cuisine, whether it's upscale dining or street food.

Home to many luxurious hotels, conference centers and event spaces, Istanbul offers a range of venue experiences. From facilities with panoramic views of the Bosphorus Strait or charming historical venues like a converted Ottoman palace, the city has options that remain authentic to the region but meet modern business needs.

Compared to many European capitals, Istanbul offers great value for high-quality services, from five-star accommodations to gourmet dining and luxury experiences, making it a favorable option for an incentive trip. Additionally, Istanbul's position as a bridge between Europe and Asia is convenient for travelers across continents, and an asset to consider when aiming to reduce flight emissions.



**Best for: History fanatics, foodies,
luxury experience seekers**



asia pacific

Business is growing aggressively, largely driven by in-person events. About 80 percent of meetings are taking place face-to-face, followed by a smaller percentage of virtual meetings among clients looking to reduce travel costs, and few hybrid events. As echoed in other regions, clients have higher expectations when it comes to creativity, but are also looking for good value for their spend. Budgets are generally remaining flat for 2025, but due to restructuring among some clients, there's a lack of clarity on who owns the budget. This is causing confusion and leading to a reduction of meeting and event requests in some areas.

In tandem, third-party supplier options are expanding, enabling much greater flexibility than we've experienced in the last two years. However, lead times continue to be a challenge, especially for events, with RFPs required in just a few days.

Pharmaceutical clients, which are generally more conservative with budgets to begin with, have considered event objectives and spend more stringently in the second half of 2024 and are demonstrating increased caution in committing to events in the first half of 2025. This is happening for a couple reasons. For one, several pharma clients have products approaching the end of their patent life and are therefore more cautious about spending on marketing events, where eventually they may see leakages to generic brands. Second, healthcare professionals tend to find more value in attending global congresses than company-hosted events, so the acceptance rate of invited guests attending a congress is climbing upward.

The stakes for innovation continue to climb, though budgets are not following suit. Clients who have traditionally hosted simpler events are now seeking more creative attendee experiences to leave a lasting brand impression. For example, a recent product launch event featured a visually striking setup with giant eyeballs and syringes, showcasing the company's ability to deliver dramatic and impactful concepts.

Challenges in hiring qualified event professionals persist. Many in our region left the industry or began freelancing during the global pandemic, so there's difficulty in finding the right talent with the appropriate level of experience, being able to hire quickly, and retaining team members amid increased poaching by competitors. Within our team, we are focused on creating a positive company culture that fosters loyalty and a sense of belonging.



SANJAY SETH
Managing Director, APAC

destination

SPOTLIGHT

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, a tropical island often called the “Pearl of the Indian Ocean,” is an emerging gem in the world of incentive destinations. Beyond its idyllic beaches, the country’s 2,000-year-old history is deeply woven into its culture, with UNESCO World Heritage Sites scattered across the island.

While the capital Colombo offers typical modern convenience, there’s magic to be discovered in venturing off the beaten path. Groups will enjoy exploring the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, visiting the iconic Sigiriya rock fortress, or marveling at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. Each provides an invaluable mix of learning and leisure that will forever connect attendees to the country’s vibrant heritage.

Sri Lanka is home to an array of luxury hotels and resorts that cater to groups, including beachfront properties like Anantara Peach Haven Tangalle Resort or serene mountain retreats like Madulkelle Tea and Eco Lodge. Many resorts offer wellness-focused retreats, including yoga sessions, Ayurvedic spa treatments and mindfulness programs, which are ideal for relaxing and re-energizing your team in a tranquil setting.



Best for: Beach lovers, historians



latin america

Over the past two years, economies and government issues have created unpredictability across LATAM, and looking ahead, this region will continue to face challenges impacting M&E. Among the top concerns heading into 2025: increasing environmental changes (such as natural disasters), persistent inequality, and growing violence that's forcing millions of people throughout the region to live in a continual state of uncertainty. Government transitions in markets including Mexico, Venezuela and most Central America countries are posing issues as well.

Challenges aside, Latin America continues to be a vast land of opportunity. BCD M&E has seen continuous strong and steady growth in this region over the past four years. LATAM is increasingly taking note of our innate desire to be in connection with one another, which has led to growth in launching **solutions for Life Sciences**. This presents incredible opportunity in this region, especially around new product launches, along with other industries such as technology, oil and gas, manufacturing, agricultural industries and retail.

We are seeing an increase in convention and incentive travel, and clients are becoming more interested in data management and incorporating greater use of technology within their event programs. Mini meetings are on the rise in our region as clients evolve their strategies and work to position their brands in small groups that can be very influential.

Our clients are increasingly looking for integrated solutions that enable them to have a single point of contact. However, some already have strategic alliances with production houses and advertising agencies that create all the content for their brands, with the owners of the SMM program typically having visibility of that spend. Another determining factor is the lack of consolidation of suppliers in the event planning arena, but we expect this to change. Overall, we are seeing moves toward greater overlap in procurement and marketing buyers, but it will take some time before these two buyer types fully align in LATAM.



ANA PAULA HERNANDEZ

*VP & Managing Director,
Mexico & LATAM*

destination

SPOTLIGHT

Bariloche, Argentina

Set amidst the Patagonian Andes within Nahuel Huapi National Park, San Carlos de Bariloche is known for its dramatic mountain views, crystal-clear lakes and lush forests. The area offers a wide range of outdoor activities including hiking, kayaking, trekking, cycling and boating. In winter, the region transforms into a skier's paradise, with Cerro Catedral mountain offering some of the best slopes in South America.

One of Bariloche's unique identifiers is its blend of European and Argentine influences. The town is famous for its artisanal chocolate shops, alpine-style architecture and thriving local food scene. Group activities could include cultural experiences like guided wine tastings, traditional Patagonian dinners featuring local delights like lamb and trout or exploring the vibrant local markets.

Bariloche's relatively remote location naturally lends itself to wellness and helping guests disconnect from the daily hustle. From yoga sessions with views of Lake Nahuel Huapi to nature retreats encouraging slow travel, Bariloche offers a holistic approach to incentive travel. Venues like the exclusive Llao Llao Hotel & Resort provide everything from executive meeting rooms to wellness centers, and many of the hotels and resorts in the region practice eco-friendly and sustainable operations.



**Best for: Skiers, hikers,
admirers of natural beauty**



a note

FROM OUR SPONSOR



Fueled by Passion, Focused on Perfection.

Incentive travel is a powerful tool to reward and motivate your team and clients.

Minor Hotels' diverse portfolio offers a range of brands and destinations to suit every preference. From vibrant cities and historical towns to beautiful beaches and vast deserts, there is something for everyone. Clients can explore our growing collection of hotels in breathtaking destinations, booking an entire hotel or just parts of it for a personalized experience.

Travel and experience the Anantara Convento di Amalfi in one of the more exclusive locations on the Italian coast or relax on the beach at the Anantara Kihavah in the Maldives. Try our all-inclusive resort, Tivoli Alvor in Portugal, and play a round of golf, an activity that can also be enjoyed in Marbella at the Anantara Villa Padierna or Ireland at the Anantara The Marker in Dublin. Unwind in our Spa & Wellness hotels like Tivoli Portopiccolo Sistica.

With Minor Hotels, discover urban luxury in cities like Vienna at the Anantara Palais Hansen. Venture to the islands and experience Tivoli in Tenerife or into the desert to the Qasr Al Sarab Resort by Anantara. Enjoy once-in-a-lifetime experiences at the Anantara Golden Triangle in Thailand, NH Collection Madison in New York City, or our nhow hotel in London. Create unforgettable incentive travel experiences that make your team and clients feel unique and truly rewarded.



Tivoli La Caleta Tenerife Resort, Spain

what's trending

**PERSONALIZATION AND ENGAGING CONTENT:
A STRATEGIC APPROACH
TO MEASURING VALUE**

GLOBAL

insights

Personalization, immersive experiences and engaging event design are increasingly driving event strategy globally. It's become essential to capture the attention of attendees and demonstrate the clear impact of events.

Companies are looking not only at how events can help to drive revenue, but also company culture. Growing diversity on many different levels among audiences lends a need for much deeper personalization of events than we've seen before. Simultaneously, engagement between clients and customers, as well as employees who may not be working under the same roof anymore, is increasingly important to demonstrate how events are driving business relationships.

Technology, particularly generative AI, is playing a crucial role in transforming how events are planned and executed. This technology uses machine learning to analyze data patterns and create original content in the form of images, text, audio, and more. It offers several advantages, such as enhancing creativity, streamlining operations and improving attendee engagement leading to increased satisfaction for all parties. The M&E industry will increasingly reap the rewards of generative AI. However, before embarking on any artificial intelligence-driven initiative, it is imperative to have a framework in place that addresses compliance, security and the responsible use of AI for the meeting provider, the client and the attendees.

Across regions, data is king and remains a cornerstone of today's M&E landscape. Data acquisition, quality and aggregation is at the heart of enabling meaningful reporting, visualizations and insights. Today, clients require more than standard analytics to drive program success and attendee engagement. This is where AI can be utilized to gather next level insights from meeting and event data and drive program success through enhanced data processing, predictive analytics and natural language processing.



The Collective Advantage



Within BCD M&E, The Collective serves as an experiential brand agency that focuses on design and engagement, taking a highly creative and intentional approach to meetings and events. The team is thoughtful on how many programs each team member managers to ensure an advanced level of focus on intentional design and customization. By harnessing expertise, innovation and the power of imagination, The Collective in NORAM and the UK provide elevated experiences and events that create human connections and inspire change.

In NORAM, clients are moving away from the persona model and are focusing on highly personalized event designs, incorporating elements of choice, virtual components and shorter event duration to cater to attendees' evolving preferences. LATAM, in particular, is seeing a rise in incentive travel, emphasizing meaningful, experience-driven events that resonate with participants on a deeper level, particularly among younger generations.

Strategic planning and event formats are also evolving, with a strong focus on agility and efficiency. In EMEA, clients are exploring a mix of local and centralized services to manage costs, while in the UK, financial services clients are investing in face-to-face events for new graduates to build interpersonal skills. Across most regions, lead times for event planning are becoming shorter, making it essential for planners to adopt more flexible and innovative approaches to meet the growing demands of the industry.

Focus on Storytelling



There's a growing trend in customers asking for more meaningful storytelling, either in an event series or as a standalone piece. We know people are experiencing brands in new and exciting ways every day, and the corporate space is struggling to keep up.

Often overlooked in a sea of keynotes, charts, and graphs is the storytelling element of live events, experiences and content. The storytelling element is a critical part of connecting a brand to attendees on a deeper level and blends into the growth of personalization and the call for more tailored content. It's one of the reasons BCD M&E has introduced Films, a new offering focused on creating high-quality, cinematic content. Whether it's a powerful brand story or an emotional moment in a company event, Films brings messages to life in an authentic way.

3

STEPS TO TAKE NOW

1

Know the right questions to ask as people are registering for your event. When handled strategically, this allows for greater personalization and attendees feeling like they have a choice, but in a controlled way without breaking the budget.

2

Set up an enterprise framework around how you want people to look, feel and act at your events. This should be representative of your brand and help to drive consistency and engagement across your meetings and events program and be applicable to events of all sizes.

3

Evaluate your tech stack to understand where you need to invest and when third-party support makes sense, to ensure these tools tie into your overall event objectives.

REGIONAL

insights

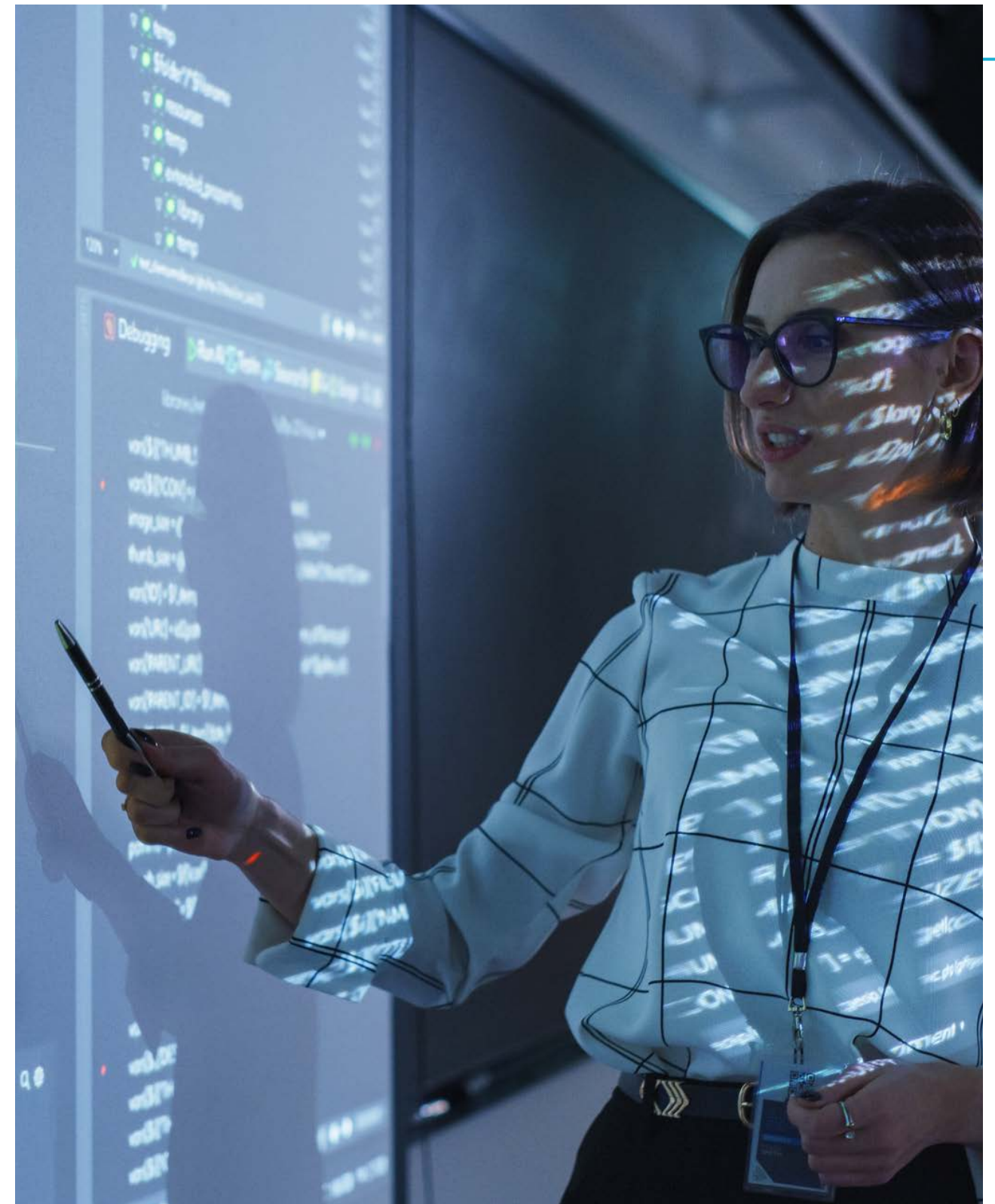
NORAM

Personalization and experience at meetings and events are increasingly important to meet attendees where they're at and to continue to hold attention among a generation that's grown up with experiential events.

Customers are driving agencies to expand services in different ways. For instance, new offerings that include specialized consulting in areas like neurodiversity and change management as well as trade show design and booth fabrication, helping companies to create environments where employees are motivated to work beyond just selling products.

Participants are more selective about the events they're willing to travel for. A lot of planning teams are adjusting to make them more attractive. In addition to personalization, this includes shortening the duration of events, incorporating virtual components and choosing desirable locations closer to key offices or larger cities to reduce travel costs.

Use of generative AI tools is growing by leaps and bounds, particularly in visuals, including dynamic backgrounds that don't cost a lot but deliver major impact. Incredible audio tools can enhance speech and remove existing music or distracting background noise. Transcripts can now be generated instantly from soundbites and clips can be refined, reordered and trimmed as easily as editing a text document. Music tracks can be shortened or lengthened with a simple click and drag, versus the older, time-consuming method of manually re-editing music. There is also a new world of AI-generated voiceover that can be utilized when it makes sense to avoid either costly voiceovers from a voice-over artist or when a simple edit as a proof of concept is needed.



APAC

The market is changing and becoming more mature than ever before. Previously, clients worked with a local agency and purchased end-to-end services in one bucket but weren't open to the idea of an enterprise-wide solution or buying into a more global program. Now there's a willingness to drive global corporate behaviors, at least in managing hotel spend, while still allowing for local influence and choice at the planning level.

For clients where it makes sense, we collaborate by providing a one-stop-shop proposal that offers more control and a seamless event planning process from sourcing to planning stages.

Face-to-face events remain the main event format across the board, and we're seeing greater adoption of technology such as attendee hubs or event apps. Both create more seamless attendee management and check-in processes.

Generative AI

Meetings management and event strategy have pain points that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) are helping to solve from perspectives of both operations and engagement. We're utilizing generative AI as an assistant, harnessing its power to drive creativity, efficiency and engagement with the proper governance model in place to ensure compliance, security and the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

Operationally, generative AI is helping to augment efforts around ideation, content, registration, communications, translation and analysis. When it comes to engagement, it can be used to analyze large volumes of data at scale, in real time, to produce personalized experiences onsite to help drive satisfaction, such as revamped networking opportunities. Gen AI is also being used to uplevel chatbots giving them the ability to provide robust answers to complex questions versus traditional chatbots programmed to answer basic Q&A.

RPA can also be used to offload manual repeatable tasks, allowing individuals to focus on the creative and strategic aspects of their role. Processing documents, data and invoices are very manual, repeatable processes that are ripe for automation.

RPA and generative AI together are boosting productivity as well as employee satisfaction by freeing up time and augmenting creativity. The key to success with teams using these tools is to take a pragmatic approach that focuses on assisting humans rather than replacing them.

EMEA

Customers are looking to put more of a regional or global approach on how they organize across their M&E programs, especially for budgeting, compliance and spend. This provides more visibility to spend and more intention to how, what and why they're doing it, enabling them to maximize investment and continue to grow and evolve their portfolios. This is challenging for agencies, however, because costs are rising and there's a gap between what clients want and what they can afford.

A big topic is whether to use local services or centralize services (called "hubbing"). A mix of both is often the best solution, depending on a client's needs.

From a sales perspective, understanding what an organization wants from the start is crucial. Companies are trying to simplify by using fewer suppliers, and there's often confusion because meetings and events can overlap.

Events are starting to return to long-distance destinations like South Africa or Asia. Istanbul is also a popular destination again, next to European spots like Spain and Italy. Clients want events to be more interactive and engaging, with tools like event apps improving the guest experience.



UK

Larger agencies are well positioned to accommodate growing requirements of all events, including managing liability, sustainability, legal, compliance and security. Meanwhile, smaller agencies are going up for sale, either through acquisitions or partnerships within the space, as they struggle to accommodate these additional requirements that are becoming table stakes.

Lead times for smaller events are swelling a bit, from 3 to 4 months, while key target annual events are being looked at two or more years out. Clients are feeling more confident in forward planning and using rates for extended commitments with venues in the same brand but different destinations.

Across verticals, planners are emphasizing overall wellbeing, such as incorporating more outdoor experiences and adding “quiet rooms” to prioritize participants’ mental health. However, they aren’t prepared to allocate more budget toward these additions.

Client expectations from a production and engagement standpoint are climbing, but budgets to affect those changes rarely match. As a result, we’re seeing a shift in spend, with companies dedicating more budget to breakout sessions (where attendees spend more time) versus the main plenary, or repurposing equipment across individual breakouts within an event (such as a wide LED screen being divided into three screens for three breakouts).

LATAM

Following turbulent times both before and after the global pandemic, numerous industry sectors have bounced back to incredible results and are wanting to compensate their sales force, partners and peers. That’s leading to an increase in incentive travel, focused on the experience and the impact they have on individuals and the community. Younger generations especially have a strong desire to travel in a smart way and with respect to the environment and the destination in which they’re visiting. While LATAM is in the early stages of responsible travel compared to other regions, given the natural disasters and social disparities in this region, we predict it won’t be long before this approach becomes the predominant force in decision making.

Sustainability overall is a necessity and being evaluated in every event decision, though some organizations are further ahead than others in this area. Choosing “greener” options is still perceived as being more costly, but this can and will need to change.

Meet Cluttercore

Bold patterns, textures, colors and complex typography with mixed styles are hallmarks of maximalist style. The next iteration of this is “cluttercore”, a new aesthetic focused on surrounding yourself with all the things that bring you joy. While maximalism focuses on design, cluttercore leans into nostalgia. Born out of decades of minimalism popularity, both design styles feature a “more is more” concept.

Cluttercore is gaining in popularity in both graphic and interior design and is being translated to events in creative ways. This could look like personalized, creative environments filled with items that evoke memories or align with interests of attendees. For example, a breakout room filled with vintage books or eclectic art, a networking zone designed to evoke a specific era (like a 1980s-inspired arcade lounge), or event spaces channeling the comfort of a living room with mixed furniture styles and textures.



a note

FROM OUR SPONSOR

MINOR
HOTELS

Minor Hotels recognizes that the meetings and events industry is consistently evolving, driven by new trends to enhance attendee experiences and streamline planning processes. Strategic planning has become crucial since the return of meetings post-pandemic. Setting clear objectives and leveraging data ensures events align with overarching goals, driving brand awareness and fostering meaningful connections.

Personalization is vital, offering tailored agendas to create memorable moments that captivate attendees and ensure each participant feels valued. AI is revolutionizing the industry by automating administrative tasks, allowing for more individual and faster responses to clients. By optimizing event logistics, we enhance attendee engagement and facilitate client experiences.

By embracing these trends, Minor Hotels and our clients will continue to create dynamic and impactful experiences that resonate with attendees and achieve event objectives.



Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara, Abu Dhabi

what's trending

NAVIGATING EXTERNAL PRESSURES:

**RESOURCEFUL MEETING
AND EVENT MANAGEMENT**

GLOBAL

insights

Looking ahead to 2025, the meetings and events landscape will continue to be shaped by a need for resourceful management, driven by economic pressures, sustainability goals and geopolitical influences. Companies are balancing the need to control costs and manage those factors outside their control while delivering impactful, meaningful events.

UFI, the global association of the world's tradeshow organizers, [Global Exhibition Barometer](#), published summer 2024, reported the most pressing business issue in most countries is the state of the economy in their home market, followed by global economic developments. Geopolitical challenges came in as the third-most mentioned issue of concern, except for in the Middle East and Africa, which ranked these as number one.

Economic pressures remain a top concern, with rising costs, inflation and tighter budgets influencing event planning and execution. In NORAM, companies are prioritizing ROI more than ever, seeking consultation to ensure their events align with business goals. In the UK, inflation and increased costs in areas like food and energy are leading clients to scrutinize their budgets, while in LATAM, widespread inflation is pushing clients to produce smaller, more cost-effective meetings. Across all regions, companies are exploring creative strategies to stretch their budgets without compromising on quality – a tough ask when the stakes grow higher year after year.



Sustainability continues to be top of mind, though the level of commitment varies by region. According to The International Congress and Convention Association's [International Sustainability Report](#), based on 2023 data, 71% of respondents cited sustainability as "extremely important" or "very important." Interestingly, 25% of respondents also reported a "significant increase" in participants requesting more sustainable options or initiatives in live events.

In NORAM, corporations are setting emissions reduction goals and incorporating sustainable practices into their event planning, despite the tension between these goals and budget constraints. In APAC, awareness of sustainability is growing, with some clients beginning to adopt greener practices, while in EMEA, companies are weighing the financial implications of sustainable events, looking for ways to offset costs while reducing their carbon footprint. In nearly all countries, sustainability is increasingly seen as a necessity, though it often competes with cost concerns.

Geopolitical and regional influences are also shaping the industry, with different regions facing unique challenges. In NORAM, the upcoming U.S. election may impact decision-making, while in LATAM, political instability and hyperinflation are significant concerns. In EMEA, the ongoing effects of Brexit and regional conflicts are influencing event planning and supplier choices.

4

STEPS TO TAKE NOW

1

Costs are going up, yet budgets often remain flat. Manage costs in a smart way by understanding the types of meetings and events you are managing across the enterprise – think size, spend, activity, number of meetings – so you can influence where your investment is going on a continual basis.

2

Even if sustainability is not yet a decision maker, start tracking two or three areas at events to show impact and be able to demonstrate improvement in the future.

3

Understand what you can and can't control, including the internal and external influences that might impact your events, and develop framework or global governance around how you hold events to mitigate risk.

4

Implement a data policy and understand what your meetings activity and spend looks like through data so you can manage it effectively and use it in negotiations with suppliers. Be able to demonstrate you can control spend and influence behavior to drive better partnerships and relationships across the supply chain base for meetings and events.

REGIONAL

insights

NORAM

Business objectives have a deeper meaning in relation to events. ROI is more important with inflation and employee costs rising, so the impact of events and ensuring the experience matches the goal is top priority. Companies are looking for consultation to achieve these business goals, both at an event level and an overall approach to their enterprise meetings and events program. As clients are looking to control costs, this is an important element to ensure value.

Sustainability remains a hot topic, with corporations having emissions reduction goals and looking toward how they can achieve impact toward those through meetings and travel. Many clients have incorporated contracts and set standards for all meetings, such as eliminating water bottles, opting for group transfers, and walking to nearby venues and restaurants instead of ground transfers, to name a few. Sustainability calculators continue to aid in measuring and improving sustainability efforts within the industry. However, clients are wrestling with the competing objectives of planning sustainable events and the continued pressure on budgets.

Though geopolitical concerns are not a major factor in decision making for NORAM currently, the upcoming U.S. election in November may have some impact on meetings and events in the region.



APAC

Most clients in APAC are still in the stage of building awareness and moving toward adoption of sustainability measures. One large financial services client has established a sustainable checklist that is implemented as part of every RFP and is willing to spend more to facilitate greener practices. For the rest, however, it's more of a "nice to have" than a "must have."



EMEA

While EMEA has strong views that sustainability is important, companies need to be able to see financial support for these investments to make decisions. For instance, if an event will cost \$1 million or \$1.2 million, sustainably planning teams must offset some of the costs. That could look like decreasing in-person attendees from 1,000 to 800 and moving 200 guests to virtual, reducing CO2 emissions from travel as well as reporting cost savings.

Maximizing Corporate Real Estate

Continuing a trend we've seen over the past couple of years, clients are increasingly utilizing their office spaces for more than daily work. Companies are moving toward unifying the processes of managing meetings both at their own offices and at external locations as leadership teams work to streamline operations. They're combining internal and external support services for meetings and event logistics into a single RFP, selecting one agency that can handle multiple tasks and therefore saving them time and effort. With rising pressure to manage costs effectively, fewer people are accountable to handle the supply chain. They are working closely with other outsourced providers to set the standard terms and conditions to allow for business term negotiations at the meeting level, under enterprise guidance. This collaboration is crucial for managing costs and making sure everything runs smoothly despite financial challenges.

UK

Budgets are under scrutiny. We are also finding that HMRC's tax allowance for staff or client entertainment has been static for over 20 years and no longer aligns with the prices venues are demanding, which means tax bills are higher than ever before. Clients need to accrue and allow for this in their annual budgets. Despite inflation easing and fuel costs dropping, rising food prices, energy costs, and venue service fees are driving up M&E expenses.

Many companies have stricter budgets and compliance processes, leading clients looking to us for technology solutions that ensure policy alignment, reduce fraud risks, and minimize training needs. This impacts the resource models and solutions we develop to meet these evolving demands.

Clients are prioritizing cost and ROI over sustainability, despite dedicated teams monitoring supplier performance. To cut emissions, some are opting for smaller regional events, while others prefer one larger global event. We're focused on benchmarking carbon footprints to help reduce them in the coming year.

LATAM

Widespread inflation across countries is causing pervasive impacts on M&E. For instance, Argentina experienced hyperinflation (soaring to more than 200% in 2023) following a change in government, and Brazil continues to be in an especially sensitive fiscal position. Inflation remains a top concern among customers, who are questioning how to keep up with increasing costs when some meeting budgets have been impacted by double-digit figures year on year. To stretch their budgets, clients are producing more smaller meetings and reducing internal meetings.



Return on Experience

Over the past few years, metrics around return on experience have crept to the same level as return on investment. The experience of events is increasingly important, and event teams must be able to demonstrate those specific outcomes to C-suites. With more of the workforce working remotely, there's higher pressure to use events to drive positive culture, behavioral change and enhanced team spirit. It comes down to setting KPIs ahead of time and being able to measure attendee sentiment before and after an event. More and more customers are digging deep on ROE by utilizing software that engages participants through gamification before, during and after an event.



a note

FROM OUR SPONSOR

MINOR
HOTELS

Minor Hotels focuses on resourcefulness, with a significant emphasis on sustainability. We prioritize using renewable energy, sourcing local products, and incorporating green initiatives into our building designs, as seen in our recent openings in Frankfurt and Helsinki. We offer clients eco-friendly practices to minimize their carbon footprint through sustainable event practices.

Ongoing geopolitical issues require us to stay informed about changing climates to adapt our strategies accordingly. By remaining aware, we better mitigate risk and work in partnership with clients to ensure guest safety. In today's economic environment, cost control is crucial. By collaborating with clients, we offer cost-effective strategies to maximize value while delivering impactful and successful events.

By staying on top of these trends, Minor Hotels continues to enhance our meeting and event offerings, ensuring they are cost-effective, resilient to geopolitical pressures, and always keep sustainability at the forefront, positioning us as leaders in the industry.



Chef Claudio Lanuto in hotel local garden in the **Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel, Italy**

for your

CONSIDERATION

Meeting and event professionals are busy. Here, we've picked out a few of the key trends with actionable insights and practical advice. Use it as your quick go-to reference to refine your event strategy and ensure you're ahead of the curve in 2025.

Personalization and Immersive Experiences

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Incorporate data-driven personalization:** Tailor event experiences by using attendee data to create custom agendas and personalized communication. Use AI tools to analyze preferences and improve event content.
- **Adopt flexible event formats:** Consider shorter, adaptable event formats that can be adjusted to fit changing needs and preferences.
- **Encourage cross-collaboration between meetings and events:** Explore opportunities to blend elements of both meeting strategy and event design. There is a growing shift towards integrating key components, such as sustainability, compliance and security, into both meeting and event planning.
- **Improve efficiency:** Implement AI tools to automate routine tasks and analyze data, freeing your team to focus on strategic and creative aspects of event planning.
- **AI for Attendee Engagement:** Use AI-driven chatbots and real-time analytics to offer personalized recommendations and improve the attendee experience.

Adapting to Economic Pressures

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Prioritize ROI:** Seek consultation to ensure events align with business goals. Use data to justify expenses and optimize investments.
- **Implement budget controls:** Develop strategies to track and manage expenses effectively.
- **Stay informed on regional issues:** Monitor geopolitical developments and their potential impact on events. Be prepared to adapt strategies based on regional circumstances.
- **Build flexible plans:** Create contingency plans to handle potential disruptions or changes in the geopolitical landscape, ensuring smooth event execution.

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