



The 2016

EVENT PROFESSIONALS OF TOMORROW STUDY

*The latest event planning trends organizers must
know to take their events to the next level*



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OUR FINDINGS

[#1 Survey findings summary](#)

[#2 Event Marketing](#)

[#3 Social Media](#)

[#4 Budgeting the event](#)

[#5 The state of event technology](#)

[#6 The event planner timeline](#)

[#7 Biggest trends in event planning](#)

[#8 Defining event success](#)

[#9 Event Planning Pain points and challenges](#)

[#10 How Event Planners Keep Up With Trends](#)

[#11 The Dream Event Planner Tool](#)

[#12 Recommendations and conclusion](#)

[#13 About Bizzabo](#)



1: SURVEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

In December 2015, Bizzabo launched a global survey to learn about upcoming trends within the event planning industry. The “Event Professionals of Tomorrow” survey sought to gather information regarding event planning best practices through direct insight from event professionals.

Topics covered in this survey include: a look at how planners budget for events, predictions regarding future event planning trends, ways in which organizers measure event success, and predictions related to the future of event planning technology.

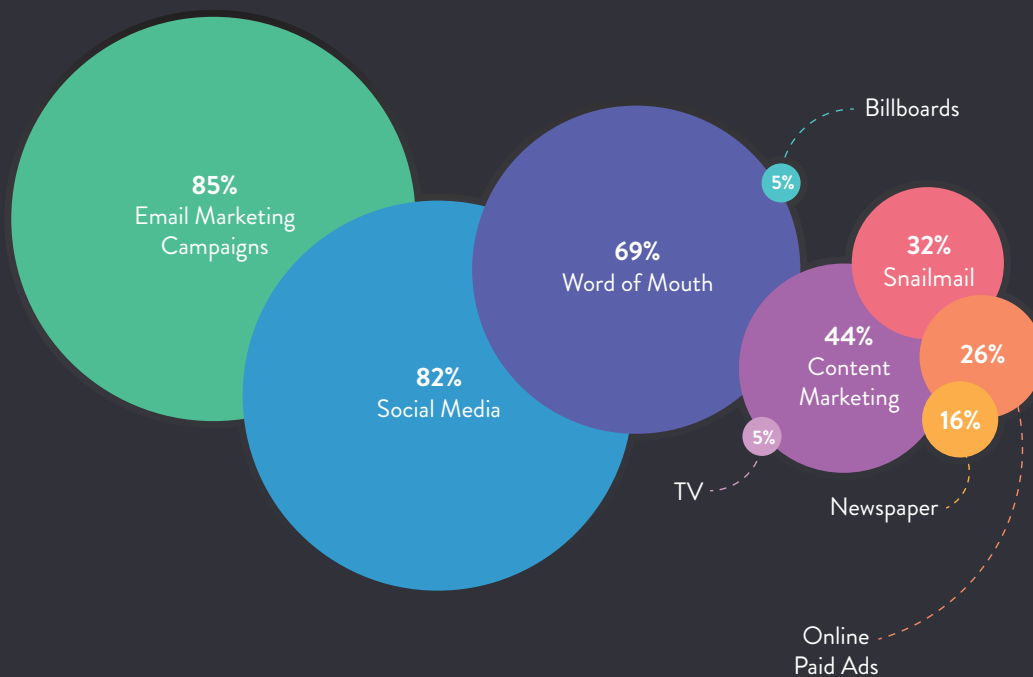
The survey indicates that email marketing is still king in event promotion, attendee satisfaction is the highest measurement for event success, and promoting the event and hitting registration goals are planners’ biggest pain points.

The survey results shed insight onto three particular facets of the event planning process: event marketing, event technology, and event success. Although the range of data acquired from this survey is diverse, its analysis illuminates important correlations between these three categories that can help us understand industry trends and event organizers’ thought processes.



2: EVENT MARKETING

With 85% of survey respondents choosing an email marketing campaign to promote their event, email marketing still dominates as the leading marketing campaign choice for event organizers. Compare this statistic of 85% who chose email marketing with just 32% who chose Snail Mail, we notice that the majority of event organizers are choosing automated platforms that streamline the CRM process over traditional methods like sending promotional fliers.

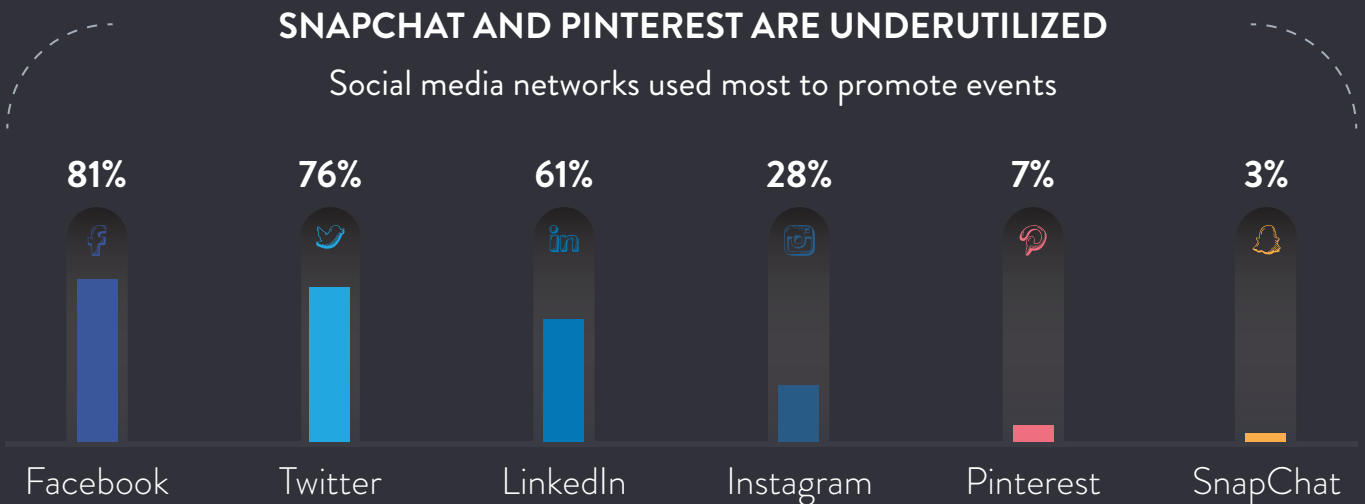


Over 45% of respondents said that email marketing has the biggest impact on actually increasing registrations. This statistic indicates not just that event organizers aren't particularly up to speed with new technologies or that they are simply choosing the easiest promotional tool to reach a wide audience, but it shows that email marketing actually has a high yield. In other words, email marketing actually works. This is also the reason why successful event technology, which is meant to maximize the promotional potential of your event, uses email marketing capabilities.

Event marketing and event success go hand in hand. Without thoughtful attention to event marketing, your event will simply not receive the traction needed to obtain registrations. Event marketing also provides the mechanism for event organizers to create a brand and reputation for their event. Therefore, without focused attention to an event marketing campaign, the success of the event will ultimately suffer.

3: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media marketing makes a close second most popular means of event promotion, with 82% of respondents choosing social media as a component of their event marketing campaign. The survey also breaks down which social media networks event organizers choose in order to market their event.



These statistics indicate that Facebook and Twitter are leading the way in terms of social media as an event marketing tool, with 81% and 76% of respondents using them, respectively. However, what we notice here is that certain social media networks, particularly Pinterest and SnapChat, are underutilized. SnapChat, for example, is growing rapidly, with about 100 million active daily users. Thus, the results of this survey indicate that there is a lot of potential for growth in terms of using social media as part of an event marketing campaign.

The ways in which SnapChat and Pinterest could be utilized to promote events are broad. One use case is SnapChat’s “live stories” feature which allows users to submit snaps from various event locations resulting in a story told from the community’s perspective with lots of different points of view. Additionally, Pinterest’s advanced mobile app that allows organizers to create a crowd-sourced photo album of the event where attendees can contribute photos instantly is yet another opportunity out of many to make use of these networks.



← 3: SOCIAL MEDIA

In terms of trends toward social media marketing, Instagram is arguably leading the way. In Iconosquare's 2015 report of 16,000 Instagramers, about 62% of users follow brands. With over 300 million monthly users, Instagram is thus a great platform to market your event brand. Planners are also using Instagram to market their event by creating and sharing hashtags, boosting ticket sales, and even sharing short promotional videos.

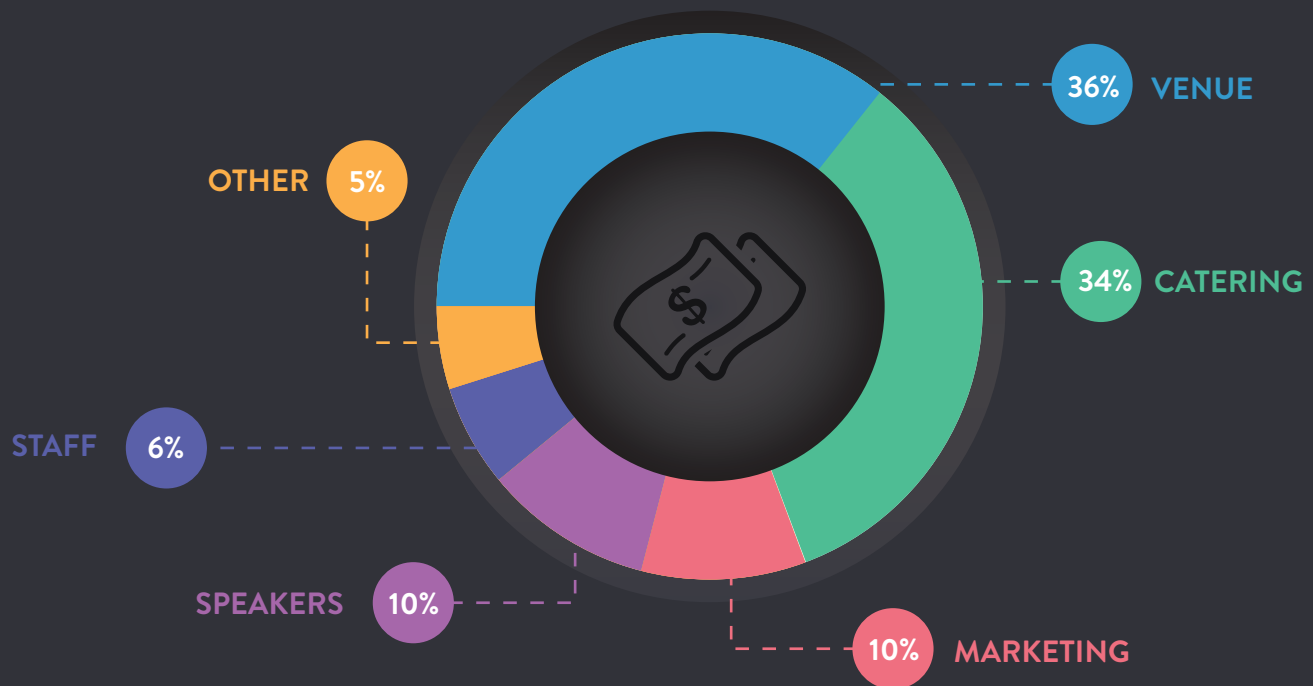
The data from this survey identified that event organizers understand the importance of event marketing. The data also illuminates that event planners are starting to choose ways to maximize their event marketing potential, specifically through email and through social media, indicating a trend toward automation and deeper segmentation over traditional outreach marketing campaigns. It used to be the case where potential attendees would all receive the same invitation to event email. Nowadays, customization and the ability to breakdown the different types of prospects depending on their engagement level, interests, location and so on, allows organizers to achieve much greater results with content specific emails.

The data from the survey also indicates interesting discrepancies. For example, 82% of respondents noted that they use "word of mouth" as a marketing channel to promote their event, yet only 12% consider "word of mouth" as having the biggest impact in increasing registrations. We believe this correlation indicates that event organizers are hesitant to abandon traditional marketing tactics even though they realize they aren't effective.

Social media sharing is the new "word of mouth," making it important for event organizers to master.

4: BUDGETING THE EVENT

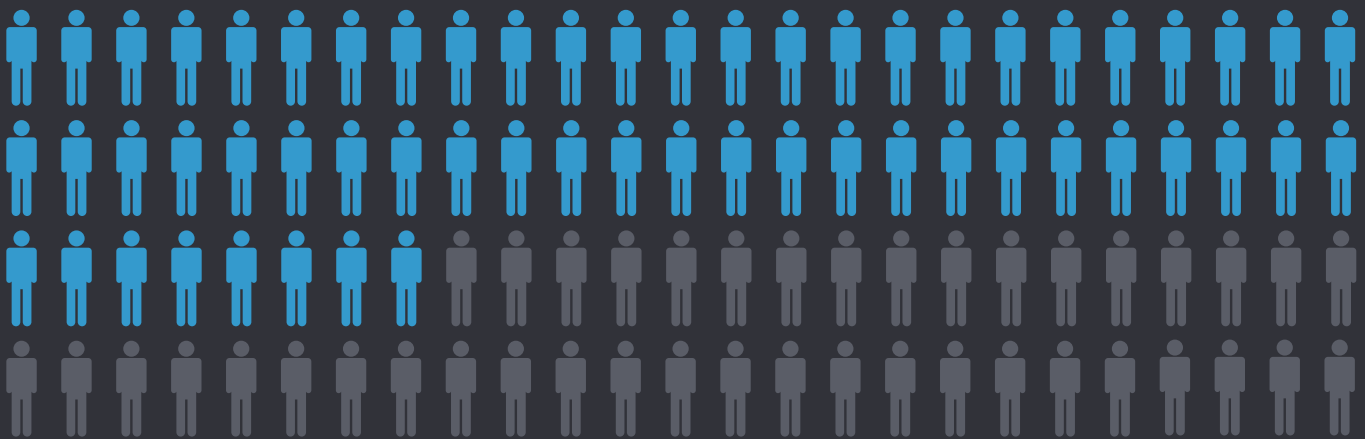
Despite the documented importance of event marketing, only about 10% of survey respondents spend the majority of their budget on marketing. According to the survey, 36% of planners spend most of their budget on the venue, and 34% spend most on catering. With venues and catering taking most of the budget for event organizers, we can begin to see the limitations that event organizers face when budgeting for their event. In other words, the high prices of venues and catering takes up a lot of the budgeting that could be designated for event marketing, event technology, and other important facets of the event planning process.



Rather than immediately investing in expensive event venues, organizers should take a step back and think how they can use event technology to expand their revenue. For example, using an event technology platform can help organizers obtain high quality and high paying sponsors, through features like event apps that can provide ads and a location for sponsor's promotional content. Planners can then designate these funds to acquiring higher quality speakers, which according to our survey, only about 10% of event organizers spend most of their budget on. More relevant and higher paying sponsors and higher quality speakers will in turn provide more value for your attendees, so you can even boost ticket prices accordingly.

5: THE STATE OF EVENT TECHNOLOGY

According to our survey, 58% of event planners spend less than 10% of their budget on event software. Even more striking, 15% of planners surveyed do not invest in software solutions for their event at all. Considering event technology's growing importance in the events industry, these statistics indicate an amazing opportunity for event organizers to adopt event technology platforms before they become a mainstream part of the planning process.



Event technology is a growing event industry trend because it makes the planning process much easier. Event technology, like event planning platforms, increases attendee engagement and ultimately provides more value for organizers, attendees, speakers, and sponsors alike.

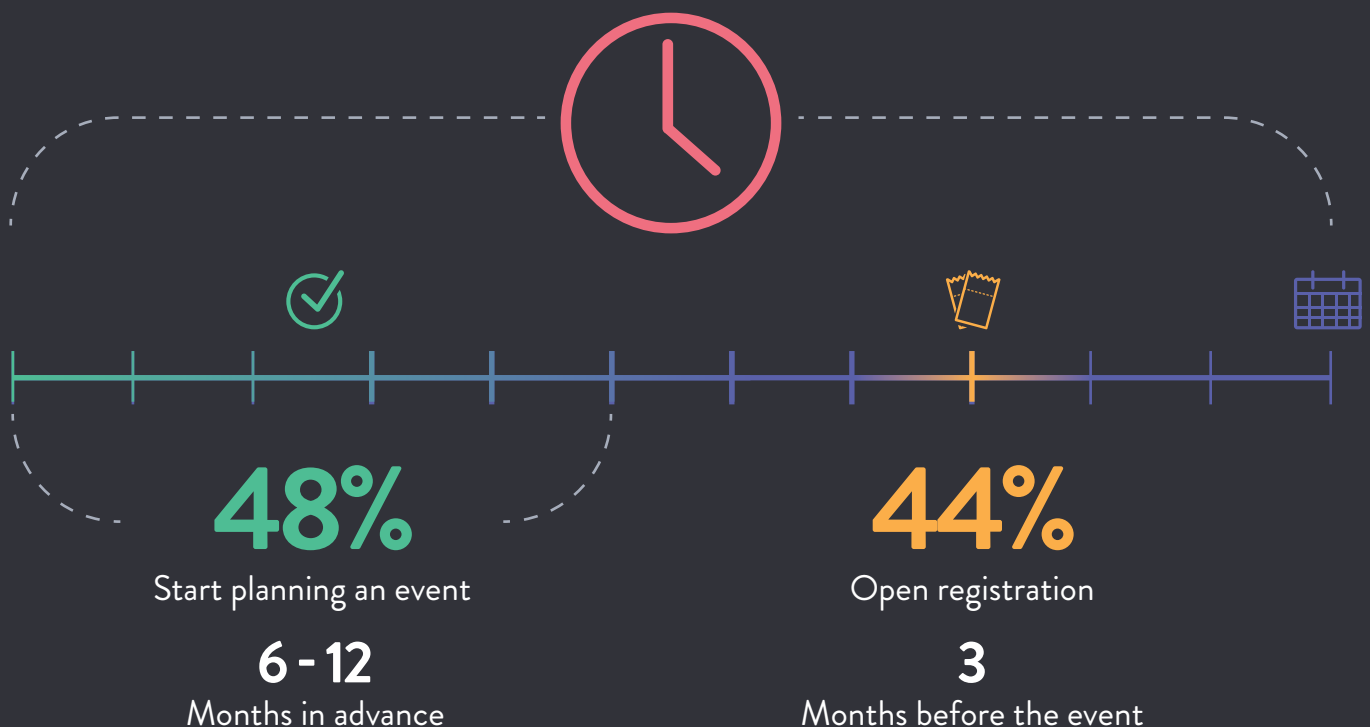
Event technology is particularly useful in terms of event marketing. Considering event planner's stresses and the many aspects of an event that they need to manage, such as sponsors, attendees, speakers, registration, marketing, etc., having an all-in-one platform can make a huge difference. This difference lies not only in making the event planning process easier for organizers, but it also makes event marketing more efficient, increases ticket sales, and provides more value for attendees by boosting audience engagement.

Given that the event technology industry is a \$20+ billion dollar industry, how can it be that those surveyed spend so little on event technology? The reality is that event budgets are quite large, while an event venue can easily cost tens of thousands of dollars, event technology platforms are considerably less expensive, though no less important.

6: THE EVENT PLANNER TIMELINE

The survey indicates that 48% of event planners typically start planning for their event 6-12 months in advance. Also, 44% noted that they tend to open registration 3 months before their event. These industry trends have significant marketing implications that event organizers should keep in mind. For example, with a large portion of respondents saying that they only open registration 3 months before their event, and 16% of respondents saying that they open registration just one month before their event, selling enough tickets to achieve event success relatively close to the event date can often be a difficult endeavor.

The marketing implications of opening registration so soon before an event ascribe an even greater significance to event technology, because event technology streamlines the ticket sale process with features like double sided ticket discount programs to encourage attendees to share events with friends. With the help of event technology, an event organizer can find success even with a more condensed promotional timeline - as more aspects of the event marketing could be pre-planned and automated through the event management software.



7: BIGGEST TRENDS IN EVENT PLANNING

The biggest trend in maximizing the event experience, with 84% of the survey's respondents, is audience engagement solutions. Audience engagement solutions include features like live messaging through event apps, networking capabilities through LinkedIn integrations, and other features provided by event technologies. Other big trends indicated in this survey include 35% for wearable devices, 23% for Augmented Reality, 19% for iBeacons, and 12% chose drones as the biggest trend in event planning.

Audience Engagement Solutions **84%**

A horizontal bar chart with a dark grey background. The bar for Audience Engagement Solutions is a vibrant green, extending 84% across the width of the chart area.

Wearable Devices **35%**

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Augmented Reality **23%**

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iBeacons **19%**

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Drones **12%**

A horizontal bar chart with a dark grey background. The bar for Drones is a light orange, extending 12% across the width of the chart area.

These statistics illuminate two of the three major event planning topics that the survey addresses: event success and event technology. With 84% of event planners choosing audience engagements solutions as the biggest trend in maximizing the event experience, we see how event planners see the future of the events industry as entirely integrated with event technologies that improve the attendee experience.



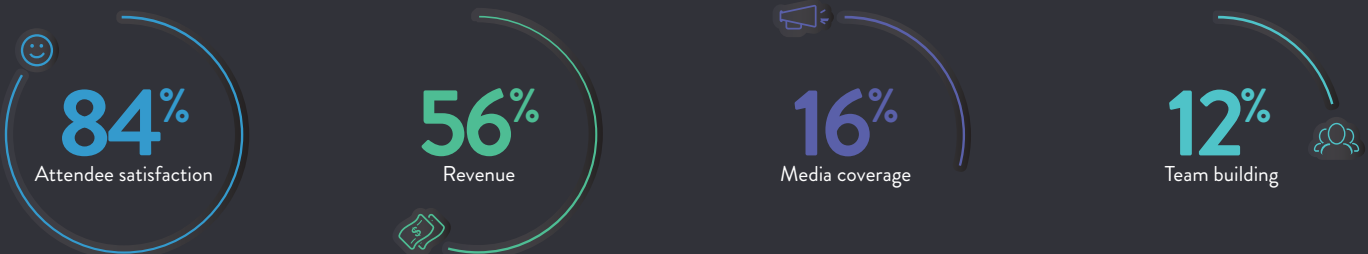
← 7: BIGGEST TRENDS IN EVENT PLANNING

New event technologies are developing with this industry trend toward audience engagement in mind. For example, Glisser offers an app that allows event planners to make their presentations more interactive for attendees, allowing them to engage with the content through live assessments and social media sharing. Another innovative event technology, CatchBox, offers a throwable microphone to engage the audience of an event by making the discussion more interactive and by promoting audience participation.

However, as noted above, event planners also find that other technologies, such as Augmented Reality and iBeacons, constitute the major trends of the events industry in maximizing the event experience. Event technologies, at least today, do not encompass all these capabilities. The feasibility of these features in actually providing value for attendees and event success is yet to be documented and it will be interesting to follow up and see whether or not they become more analytical and measurable in the near future.

8: DEFINING EVENT SUCCESS

Of the planners surveyed, 16% define success as the media coverage of their event, and only 12% of event organizers surveyed consider team building as the measure of event success.



But, how do you measure satisfaction? With 84% of respondents choosing attendee satisfaction as the measure of event success, it is important to highlight that measuring satisfaction is much more difficult than measuring other more tangible definitions of event success, like number of ticket sales.

Event technology provides the creative mechanisms by which to gauge attendee satisfaction. For example, some platforms provides real-time polls and surveys that can provide planners with data directly from attendees regarding their event experiences.

Nevertheless, contrary to common belief, attendee satisfaction leads the way as the determinate of event success, rather than revenue or ticket sales - by a vast difference of 28%. This statistic explains other data from this survey, notably how the majority of respondents chose audience engagement solutions as the biggest trend in maximizing the event experience. Based on this survey, event planners are realizing that event success has a lot to do with the attendee experience.

This realization seems to clash with the statistics on event technology. With 58% percent choosing to invest or set aside a budget of less than 10% for event software solutions, event planners are not fully aware of the benefits of event technology. A major benefit of event technology is that it makes event success measurable and understandable to event organizers. Event technology also augments event success for attendees in terms of engagement, particularly by maximizing networking opportunities through event apps and social media integration.

9: EVENT PLANNING PAIN POINTS AND CHALLENGES

With 37% of survey respondents, ‘promoting the event and hitting registration goals’ leads the way as organizers’ biggest event planning challenge. Sixteen percent chose finding sponsors, 14% chose measuring ROI, and 12% chose differentiating between similar events as their biggest challenges. On the lower end, 10% chose managing and monitoring registrations as the biggest pain point when planning an event, and 7% chose sourcing and managing vendors and suppliers.

Almost half of the event organizers in this survey found the time consuming nature of their profession as a major challenge. According to the survey, 46% of respondents claimed that curating content and building their event agenda are the most time consuming aspects of event planning.

This data illuminates that event organizers tend to feel overwhelmed with managing the many different facets of their event, and ultimately find it challenging to measure its success. The implications of building a thorough agenda and choosing relevant, quality sponsors, for example, are not just time consuming but can often be very complex.

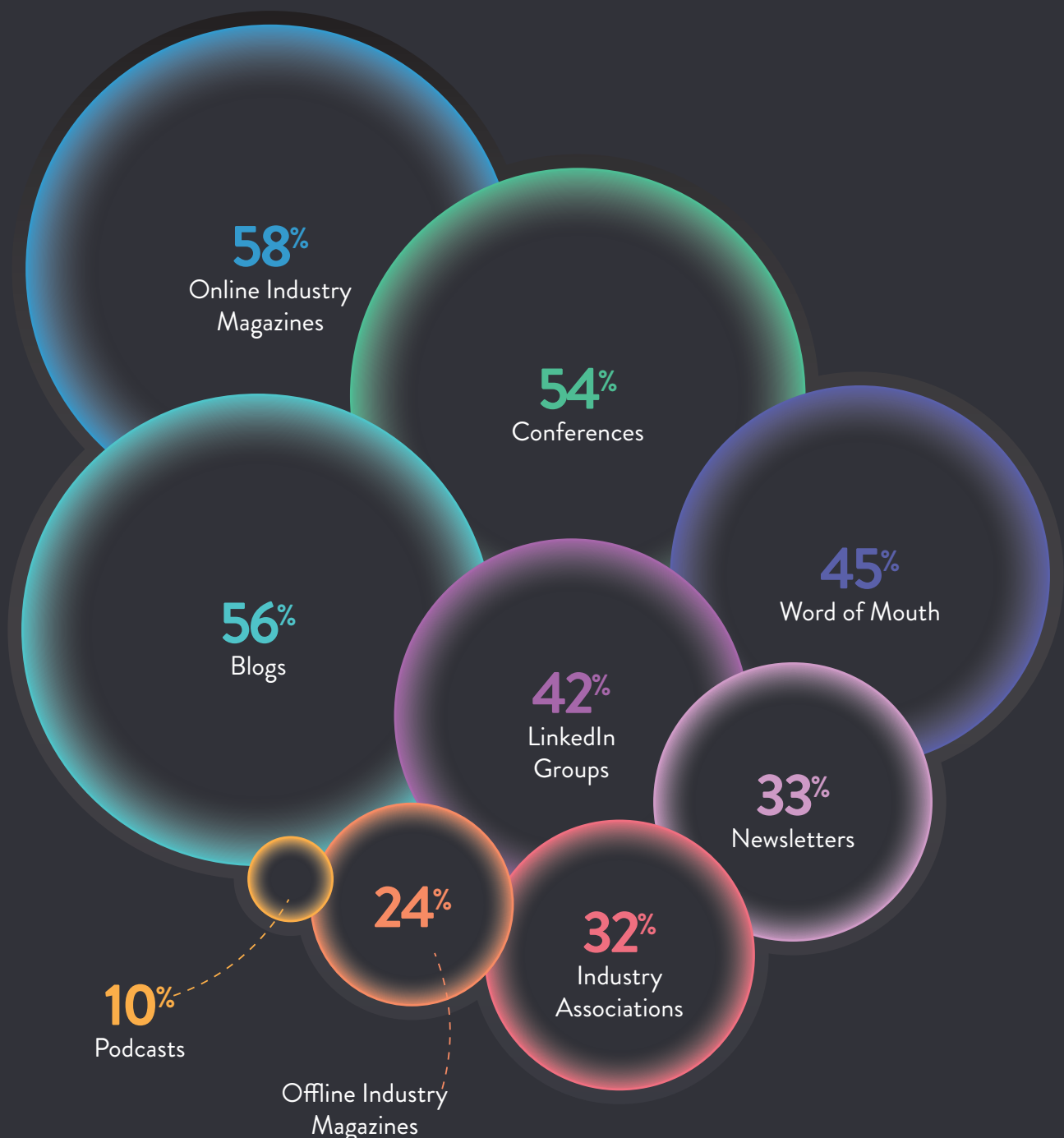
There are various ways to go about mitigating these pain points and challenges. From shared knowledge we gained at Bizzabo, we can say that some of the best practices for saving time and improving quality when building the content for an event are involving attendees in the planning process.

For example, organizers can use event technology to share a short poll with past attendees in order to ask questions like, “who would you like to hear at the next event?” This not only saves time but improves the event experience for attendees, because once you involve your attendees and incorporate their suggestions, they’ll naturally be more satisfied with the end result.

This practice also takes on more significance considering the statistic discussed above that 84% of planners in the survey chose ‘attendee satisfaction’ as the primary determinant of event success.

10: HOW EVENT PLANNERS KEEP UP WITH TRENDS

The survey also set out to find the platforms that event planners use in order to stay on top of new trends in the industry. Fifty eight percent of planners surveyed chose Online Industry magazines, 56% chose blogs, and 54% chose attending conferences. Other choices include word of mouth with 45%, LinkedIn groups with 42%, 33% for newsletters, and 32% with industry associations.



← 10: HOW EVENT PLANNERS KEEP UP WITH TRENDS

Realizing that over half of the respondents in this survey choose blogs and online industry magazines as their primary tools for keeping up with event industry trends can actually give event organizers ideas in terms of new platforms and ways to market and promote their event. In other words, the nature of the popularity of these tools suggests that writing guest posts on industry blogs and magazines about your event can actually serve to help boost the legitimacy and awareness of an event's brand.

This particular data from the survey also illuminates the importance of online media within the events industry. For example, whereas 58% chose Online Industry magazines as the major platform by which planners keep up with industry trends, only 24% use offline industry magazines. Similarly, 42% chose LinkedIn groups and 10% chose Podcasts, suggesting that in order to keep up with new trends in the industry, event planners need to be active users and followers of online media.

11: THE DREAM EVENT PLANNER TOOL

What tool do event planners wish they could utilize in order to achieve event success? The answers to this question of the survey were diverse, yet they nonetheless could be grouped under a number of categories. For example, 3.5% of the respondents requested a tool that would help ameliorate the process of acquiring and maintaining sponsors.

For example, one event planner dreamed of a tool that could automatically group and connect event planners with sponsors based on a shared criteria.

Another wished for a tool that could send automatic reminders to sponsors of key deadlines as a big portion of an event planner's time is spent on reminding people of deadlines.

In addition to sponsorship, around 8.9% of respondents dreamt of an event planner tool that could improve audience engagement. For instance, a number of the survey respondents wished for a tool that would allow the event organizer to reach attendees quicker with more efficient means of communication, and other respondents wished for a software that would allow the organizer to send updates to attendees' devices.

As an extension of improved audience engagement, around 7.1% of respondents dreamt of an event planner tool that relates to attendee feedback, surveys, and data collection. Numerous respondents wished for a tool that would provide an online space for metrics to analyze attendee behaviors at the event as well as more general metric measurement tools, and others would like a software that can generate post-event surveys to receive audience feedback.

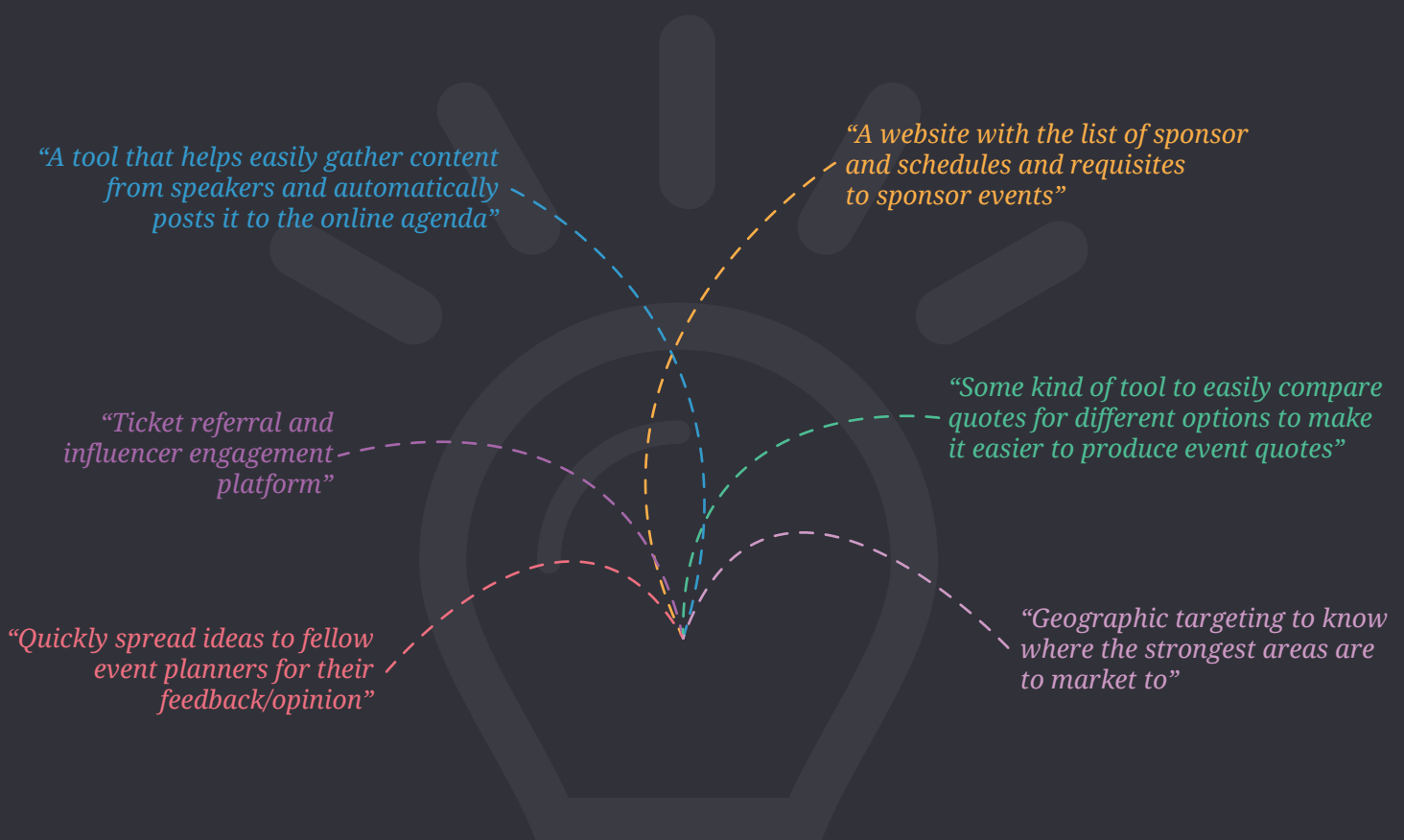
← 11: THE DREAM EVENT PLANNER TOOL

Around 8.9% of respondents dreamt of an event planner tool that relates to marketing, which reflects the perspective by many event planners that event marketing is the major factor in increasing registrations.

A number of different respondents wished for software that has automatic targeted marketing. One respondent even imagined a marketing tool that could target potential attendees based on geographic location.

All of these dream tools already exist as features of event technology. These statistics illuminate the ways in which event technology can truly mitigate a lot of the challenges that event organizers face throughout the planning process.

Additionally, about 11% of the respondents to this question specifically said that they would like an all-in-one software or event technology platform.



12: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The survey's results provide insights directly from event planners into the newest trends in the events industry, particularly regarding event marketing, event technology and event success.

With regard to event marketing, most planners choose email marketing as the most efficient tool to increase registrations, which indicates a trend toward automation in the marketing of events, versus more traditional promotional strategies. The survey also shows that social media platforms like Instagram and SnapChat are underutilized in event marketing campaigns, so planners have a lot of opportunity within these outlets to promote their event.

In terms of budgeting, most planners surveyed noted that they tend to set aside a significant amount of their budget on the event venue and on catering, which detracts from the funds that could be used to provide for other valuable components of an event, like higher quality speakers. The survey also indicates that event planners are putting aside only a minimal budget for event technology, which suggests that planners still have the opportunity to take advantage of event software in maximizing the potential of audience engagement, event marketing, and ultimately event success.

The majority of respondents said that they tend to launch registration just three months before an event. The marketing implications of selling enough tickets within such a short amount of time gives event technology part of its momentum, as it will help maximize ticket sales through targeted marketing. Event planners surveyed also indicated that they view the biggest trend in event planning as linked with audience engagement solutions, a trend that is exacerbated when coupled with the survey results that indicate 'attendee satisfaction' as event planners' definitions of event success.

Altogether, the survey's data indicates the importance of event technology as a tool that could help ameliorate the challenges that event planners face as well as industry trends in terms of event marketing and perspectives on definitions of event success.



BIZZABO

Bizzabo is an all-in-one event software that helps organizers create successful events by empowering them to build amazing websites, sell tickets, grow communities, go mobile and maximize event experiences - using a beautiful, user friendly platform. Bizzabo is used by thousands of conference organizers from around the globe.

The Bizzabo Event Success Platform includes all the tools event organizers need to manage their event from start to finish. The platform's main features include: ticketing and registration, event website builder, event app, contacts management, networking tools, polls and surveys, and of course powerful reports and dashboards to measure success.

Bizzabo was named "Best Event Management Software" and "Favorite Event Technology Supplier - The People's Choice Award" by Event Tech Awards of 2015.

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