



# EVENT MARKETING 2018:

*Benchmarks and Trends*



# INTRODUCTION

You are reading this report from your laptop or smartphone, but what I would like more than anything is to speak to you about it in-person. With contemporary digital marketing practices, brands have the ability to reach more people with more targeted strategies than ever before. Yet at the same time, nothing can quite compare to a face-to-face conversation. This isn't a nostalgic longing for simpler days. It's what the data says.

The average Chief Marketing Officer allocates **24%** of their total annual budget to live events in order to connect with customers, educate attendees and generate new leads<sup>1</sup>. Companies like Apple, Microsoft, GE, HubSpot, Salesforce, L'Oreal, Google, Ford and Wells Fargo all understand the value of live events and have committed themselves to marketing strategies that place face-to-face interaction front and center.

We are seeing unparalleled growth in marketing led events.

An increased emphasis on live events as being essential to marketing strategy has been aided and abetted by a new generation of technologies that have made it easier than ever for event marketers to manage, market and grow their events. Chief among these is the "event management software" industry, which is valued at **\$28** billion and is projected to have a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of **3.3%** moving forward<sup>2</sup>. And there's good reason for the industry to be growing, given that B2B events account for **\$512** billion in annual spend.

With these figures in mind, we set out to grab an authoritative pulse of the events industry. We asked over 400 mid- to senior-level event marketers from across the globe about their perspectives on where events are now and where they see the industry heading in the future.

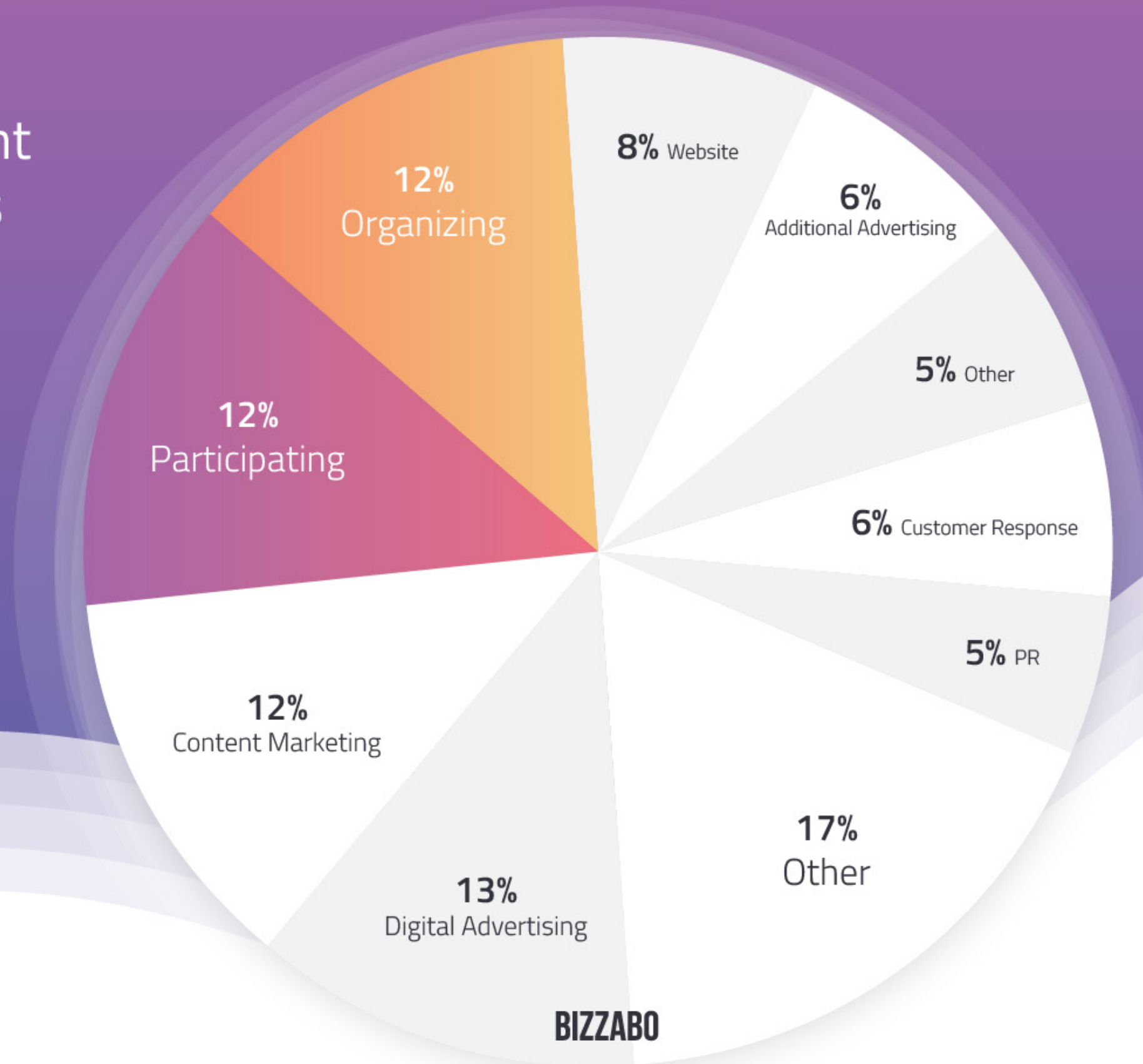
The results were staggering.

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1 Forrester Research: 2016 B2B Budget Plans Show That It's Time For A Digital Wake-Up Call

2 Frost and Sullivan: Financial Analysis and Market Sizing of the Event Management Software Market

24% is Spent  
On Events

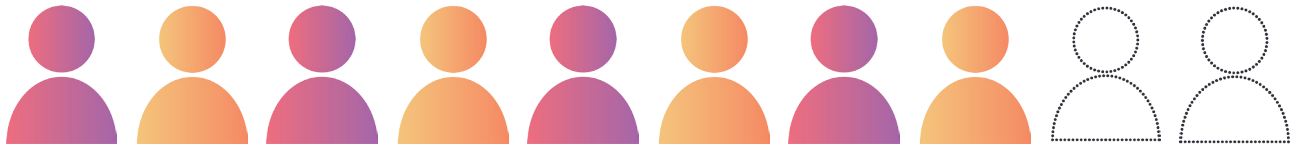


Over the course of this month-long study, we expected to see event marketers express some degree of investment in the events industry. What we did not expect was the sheer enthusiasm for and commitment to events that respondents reported across all levels of the organizational hierarchy.

For instance, 95% of respondents agree that live events provide attendees with a valuable opportunity to form in-person connections in an increasingly digital world.



Meanwhile, 80% of businesses that are overperforming in regards to their company goals will increase their live event budgets next year.



We are extremely proud to be a part of this movement. Bizzabo is the world’s fastest growing event technology company. Our Events Cloud empowers 8,000 event marketers across the globe to manage, measure and grow their professional events. We are pioneers of event technology and champions of our customers’ success. We are on a mission to bring people together and to make events more rewarding for everyone involved.

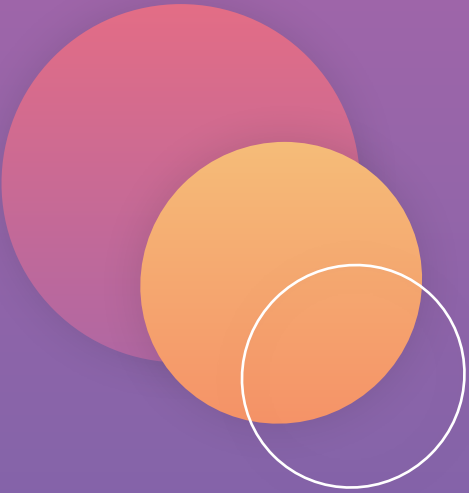
We hope you will find much to think about—and act on—in the following pages. Should the opportunity ever arise, I look forward to talking to you about the results of this study in person.



*Alon Alroy*  
Alon Alroy,  
CMO and Co-Founder, Bizzabo

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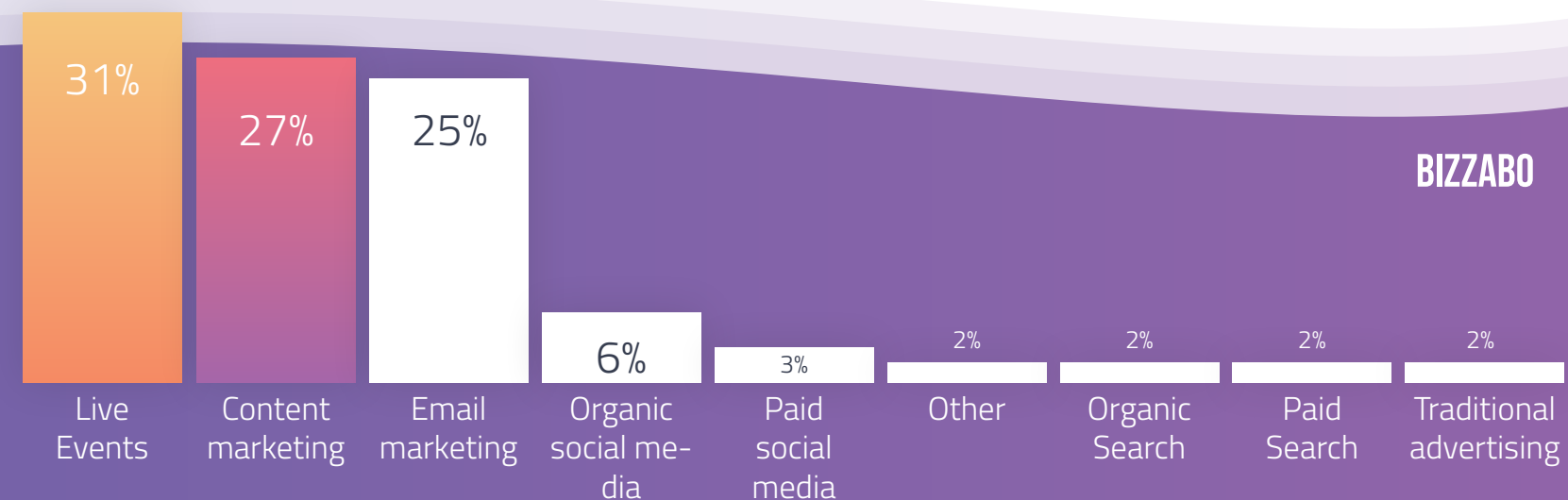


# KEY FINDINGS

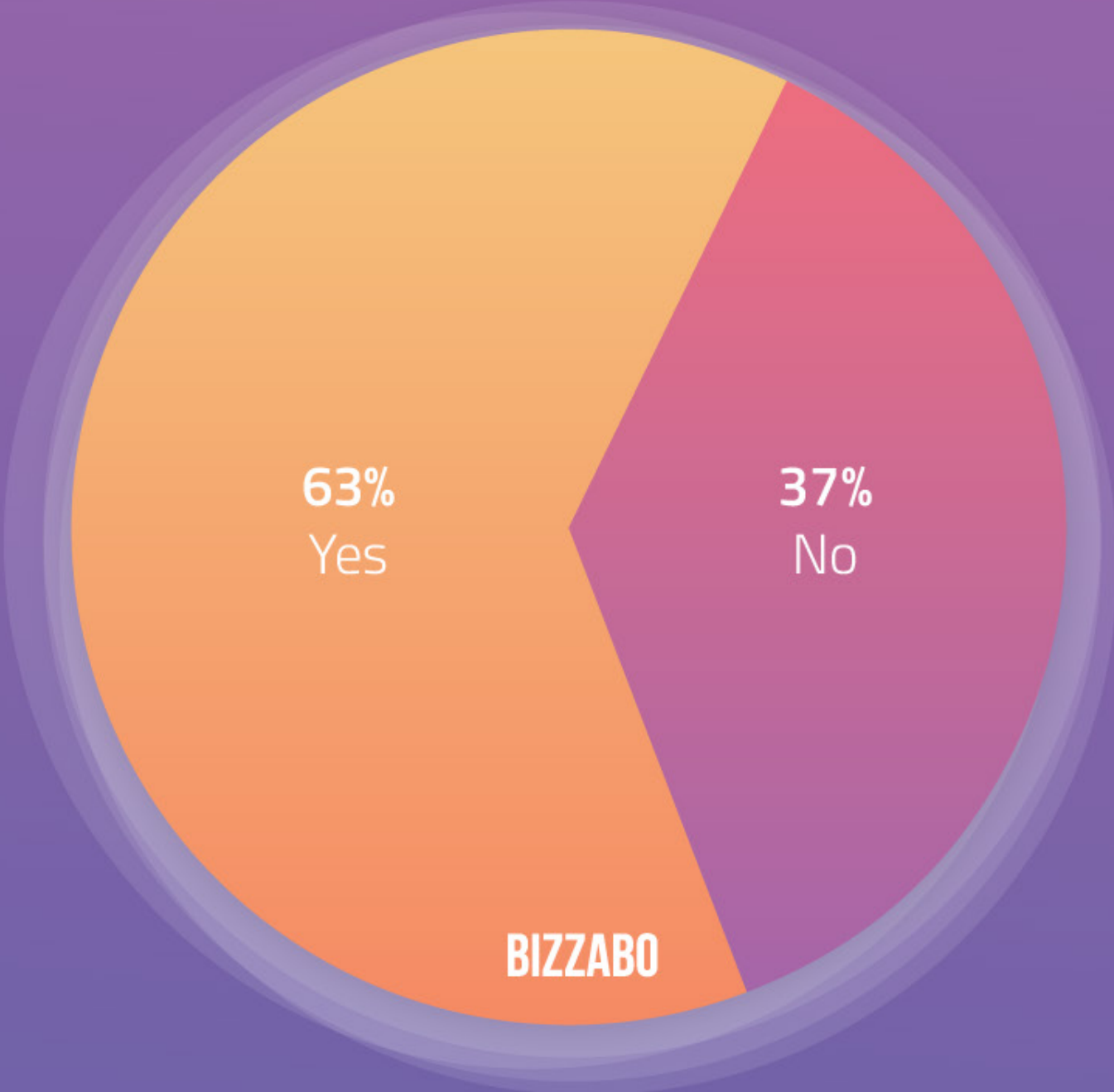
Across the board we see that live events are growing as a marketing channel. Not only do event marketers evince a significant degree of commitment to live events, but they also believe that it is the most effective marketing channel and plan on investing in it more in the future.

Here are some of the most significant findings from the study.

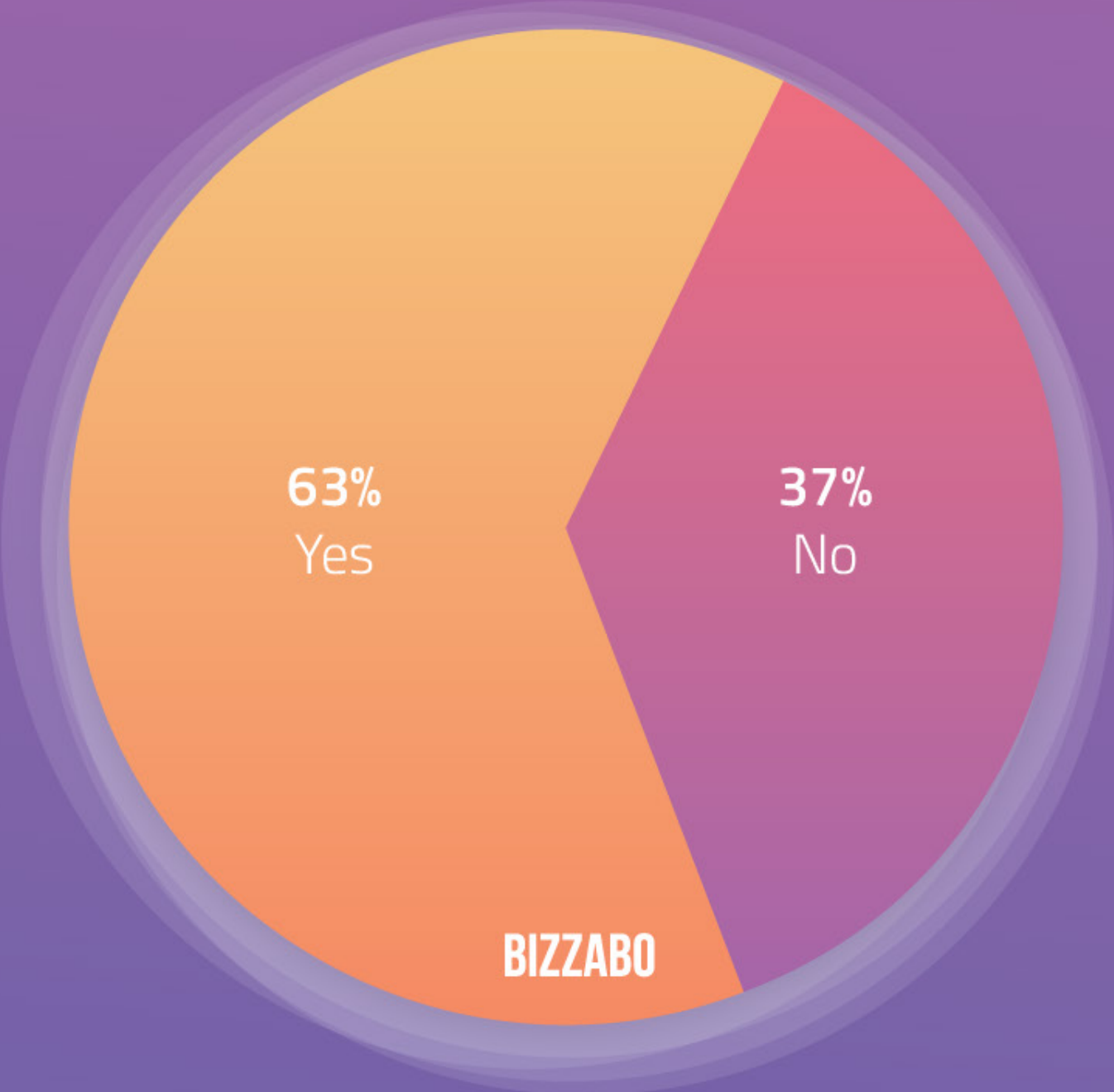
1. Most event marketers believe that events are the single most effective marketing channel (31%) over digital advertising, email marketing and content marketing.



2. The majority of event marketers plan on investing more in live events in the future both in budget (63%) and number of events (63%).



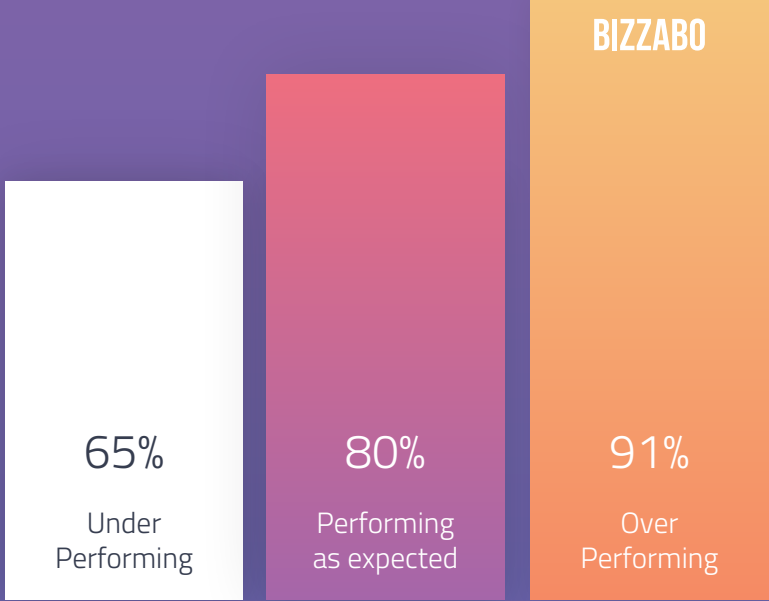
Q: Do you expect your budget for event organizing or event marketing will increase in the coming year?



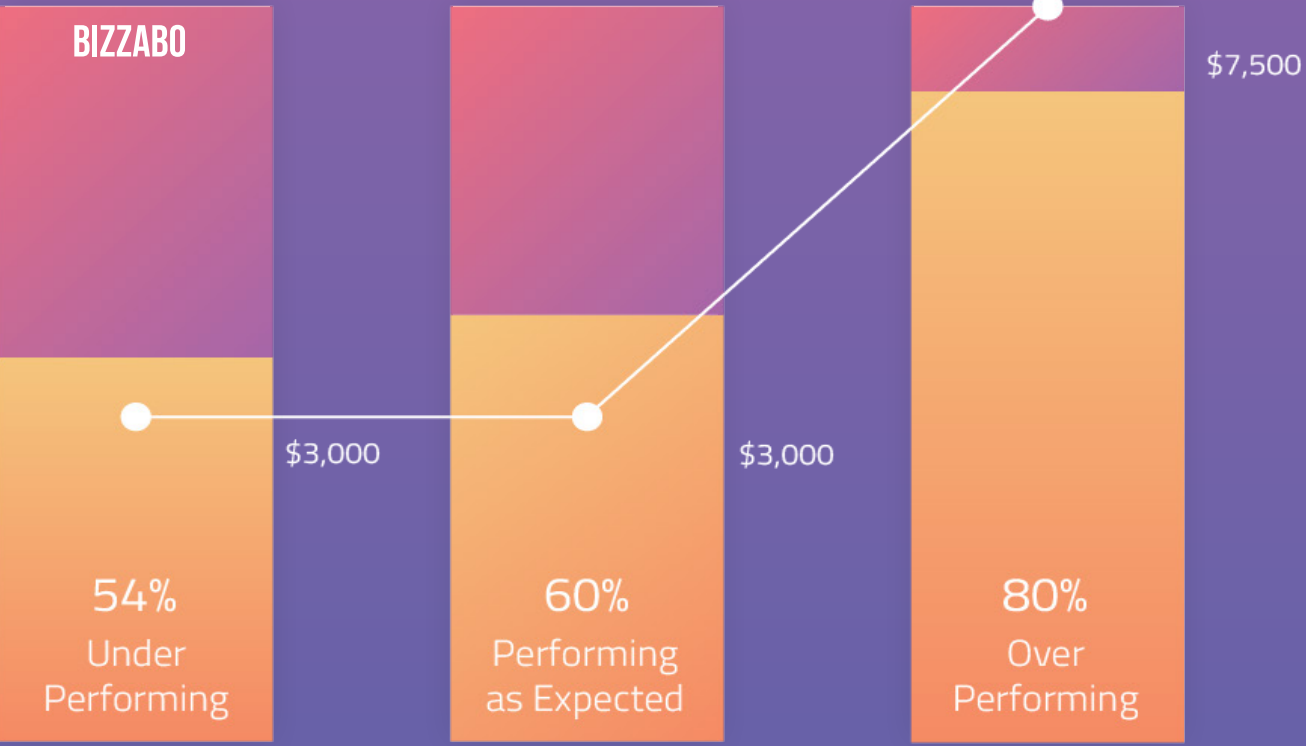
Q: Do you intend to increase the number of events you organize next year?

3. The majority (**91%**) of overperforming businesses place a greater emphasis on live events as a marketing channel than underperforming businesses or businesses that are performing as expected. They also plan on growing their event marketing budgets by more than the rest (**\$4,500 more**).

“Live events are an important component of my organization’s success.”



Q1: Do you expect your budget for event marketing will increase in the coming years?  
 Q2: If so, how much do you expect your budget will increase?

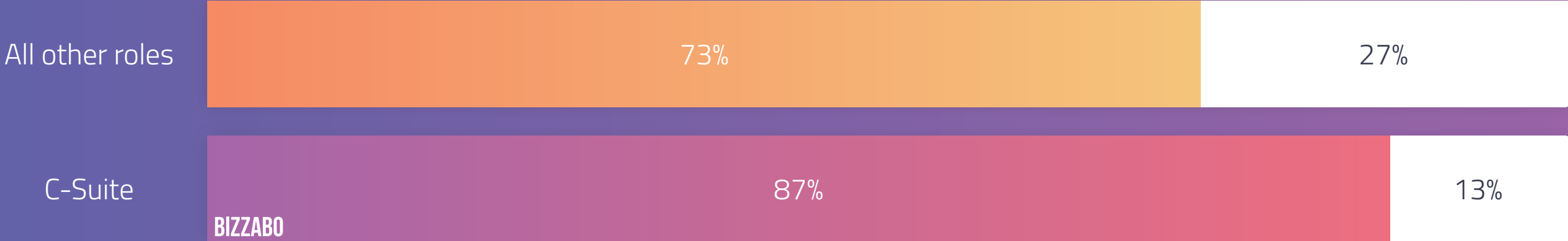


● Event budget increase ● Event budget will not increase ● Most popular increase



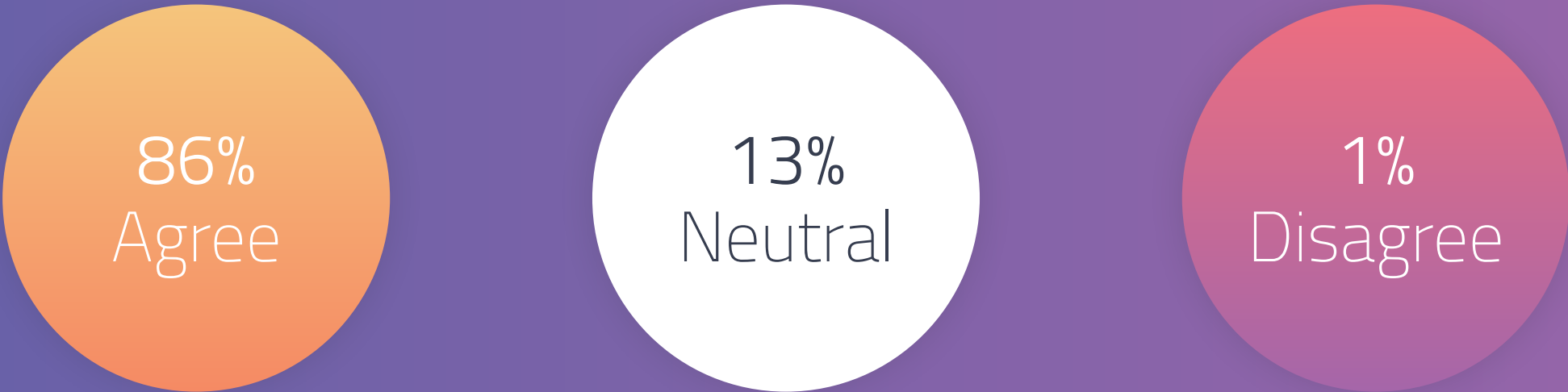
4. An overwhelming majority of C-Suite executives (**87%**) believe in the power of live events and plan on investing in them more in the future.

"In the coming years, live events will become increasingly important to my organization's success."



5. An overwhelming majority of event marketers (**86%**) believe that technology can have a major positive impact on the success of their events.

"Technology can have a major positive impact on the success of my events."

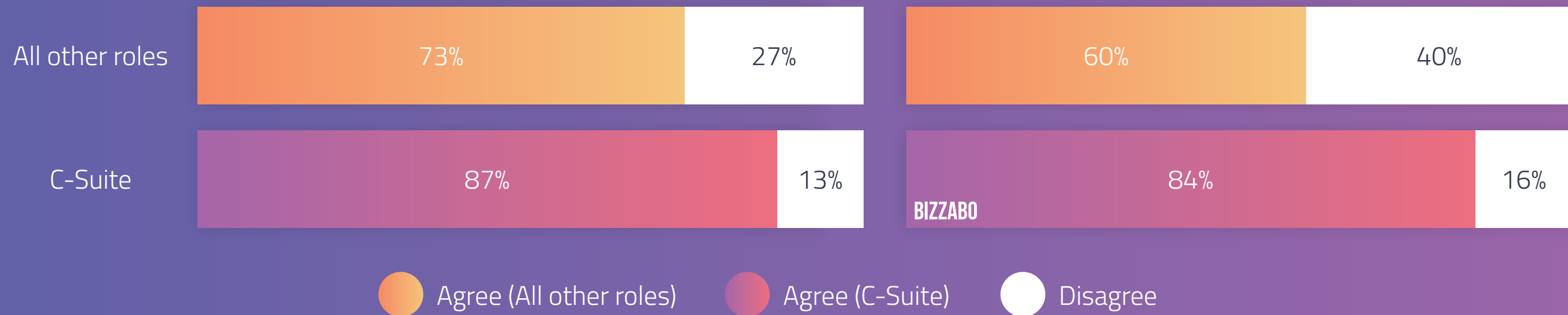


# C-SUITE PERSPECTIVES

While support for events is evident on all levels of organizational hierarchy, nowhere is it stronger than with the C-Suite. Those who are in charge of directing the future of their organization's marketing strategy value live events and believe that live events will become more integral to the success of their organization in the coming years.. Along these lines, the majority of C-Suite executives plan on increasing the number of events that their organization produces next year.

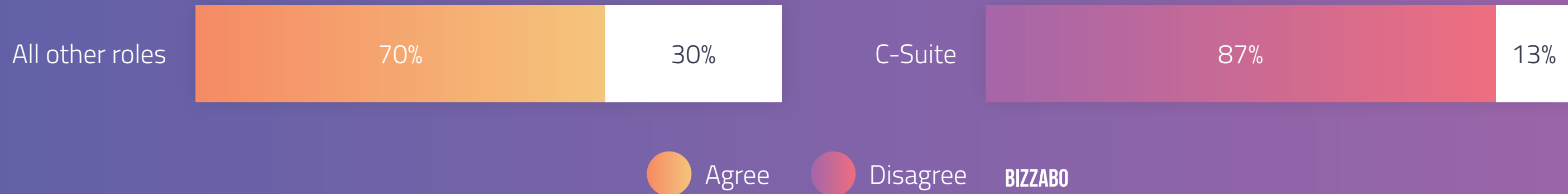
"In the coming years, live events will become increasingly important to my organization's success."

Q: Do you intend to increase the number of events you organize next year?



Compounding on the above findings, the majority of C-Suite executives (87%) believe that their leadership team (with which they may or may not be a part of) is supportive of live events strategy.

"Our leadership team supports our live event strategy."



Lloyed Lobo  
Co-founder and CSO

**BOAST**

"Live events are a great way for generating leads, if your annual contract for a client is large enough. If you're selling 10 dollar stuff it's not worth it, a way to primarily generate leads. Otherwise it's a great opportunity engage your community and to build products, to understand what your community cares about. Because as a business you should always be talking to your customers."

## A Successful alignment

Unanimously, C-Suite executives believe in the power of live events and in their significance in shaping the future of their organizations. Yet that is only part of the picture. Across all of the above findings, there is a disconnect between those in the C-suite and those not in the C-Suite perceive live events. With that in mind, the future of an organization's events strategy may very well rely on increasing alignment across all organizational levels.

## Tough Questions About C-Suite Perspectives

1. Where do you see live events fitting into your organization? Whether live events are instrumental or merely complementary to your company goals, why do live events fit into your strategy in the manner that they currently do?
2. Is there cross-organizational alignment about the position of live events in your marketing strategy?
3. Do you believe that your leadership team is supportive of your live events strategy? If so, how? If not, what are some ways that you could increase leadership support?



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BEST EVENT  
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2015 & 2016  
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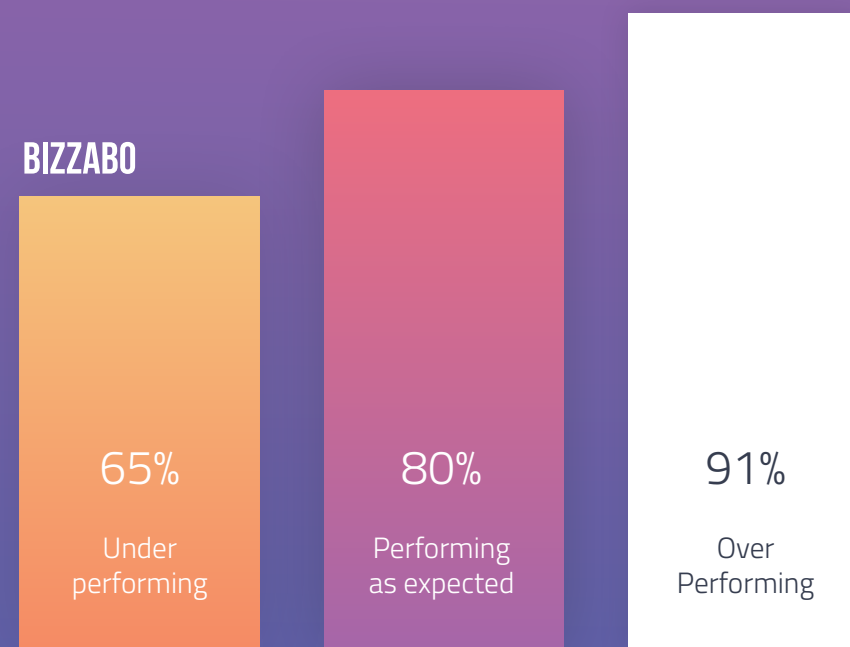
# OVERPERFORMING AND UNDERPERFORMING ORGANIZATIONS

One of the most surprising findings in our report is just how differently respondents from overperforming organizations perceive live events in comparison to those who are underperforming or are performing as expected. In this section we'll explore how overperforming organizations perceive live events to be considerably more valuable than organizations that are underperforming or are performing as expected. In this study, the definition of overperforming and underperforming was left to the discretion of the respondents.

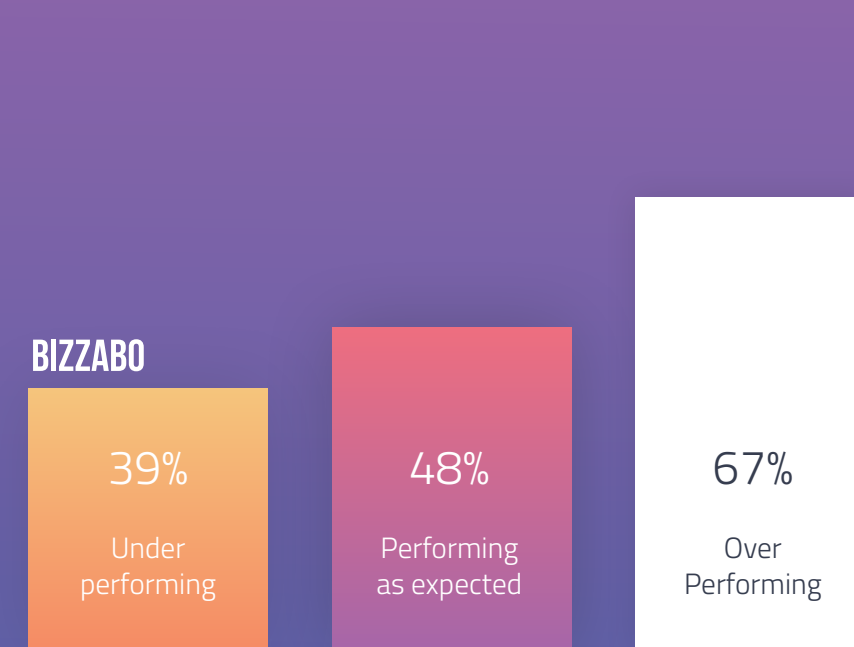
## Commitment to Live Events

Compared to underperforming or performing as expected organizations, live events are most important to overperforming organizations. Similarly, respondents from overperforming organizations believe that their organization as a whole is very committed to live events.

"Live events are an important component of my organization's success."

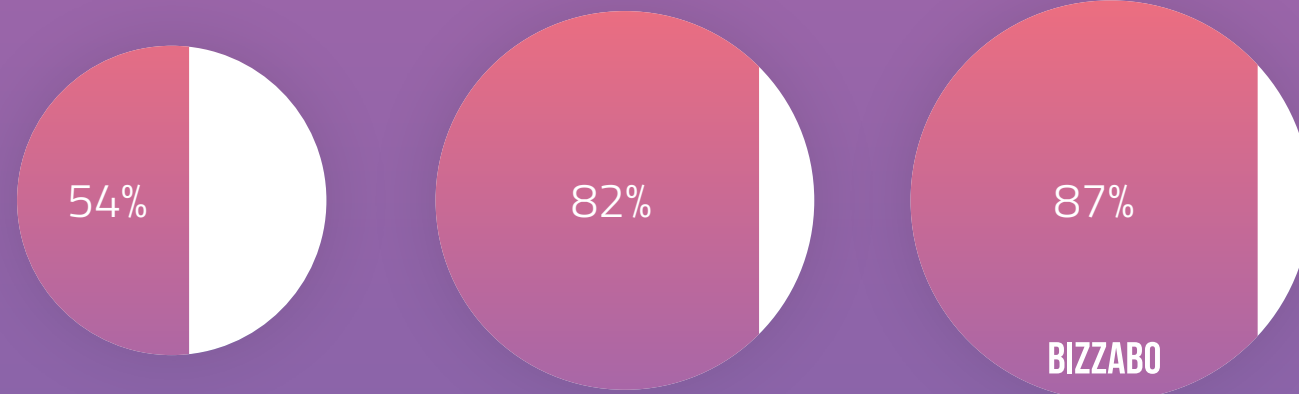


Organizations that are "very committed" to performance level.



By a smaller, though still noteworthy percentage (**87%**), respondents from overperforming organizations also believe that their leadership teams are more supportive of live events than those at other organizations.

"Our leadership team supports our live events strategy."

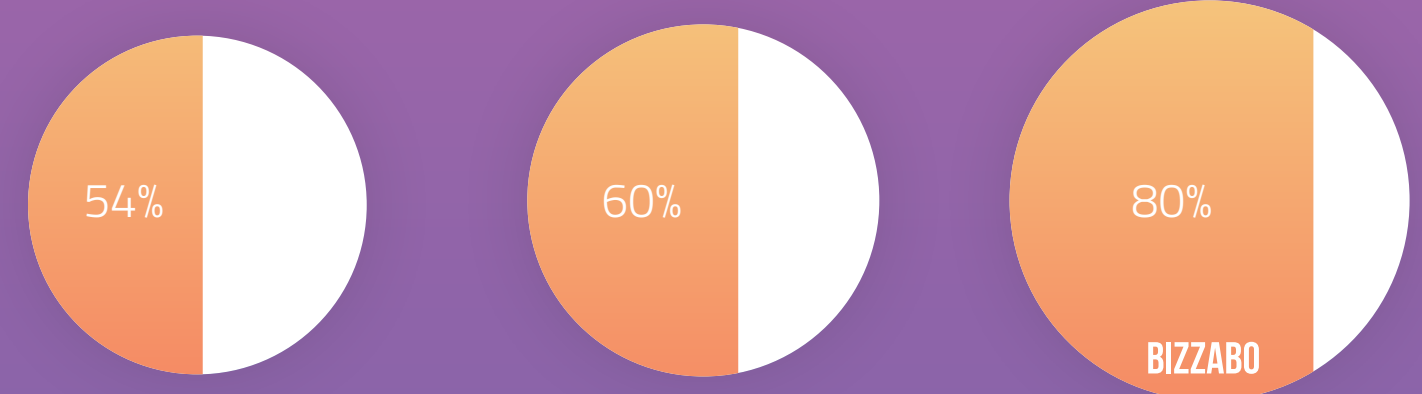


Underperforming

Performing as expected

Overperforming

"Our organization's live event budget will increase in the coming year."



Underperforming

Performing as expected

Overperforming

Given these findings, it may come as little surprise that overperforming organizations are also most likely to grow their events budget in the coming years.



Cari Goodrich, Senior Director of Global Marketing Programs



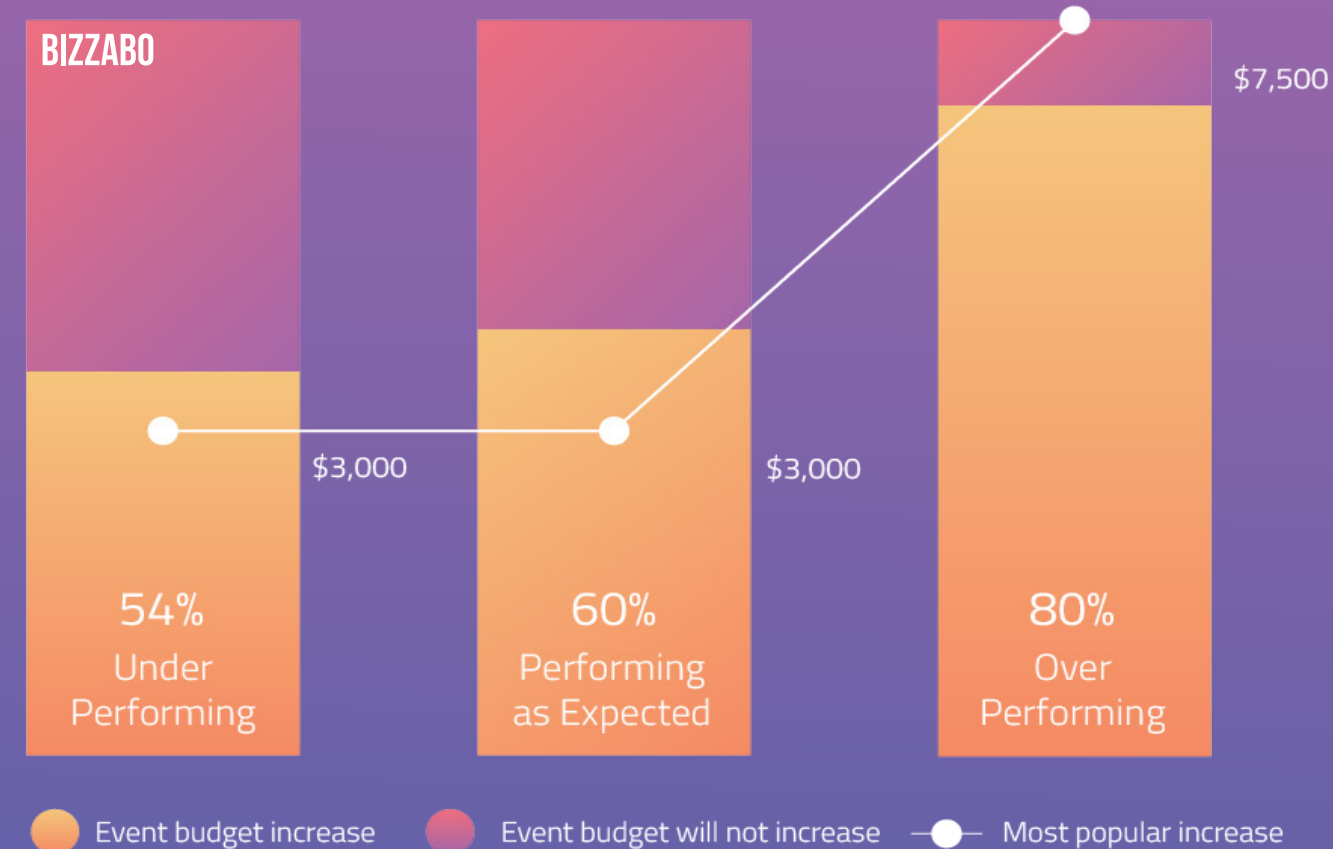
"I think live events are critical. They end up having this effect across the board, across all of the funnels that you might not notice at first. What we notice, is if we don't do events, it affects everything."

# EVENT TECHNOLOGY

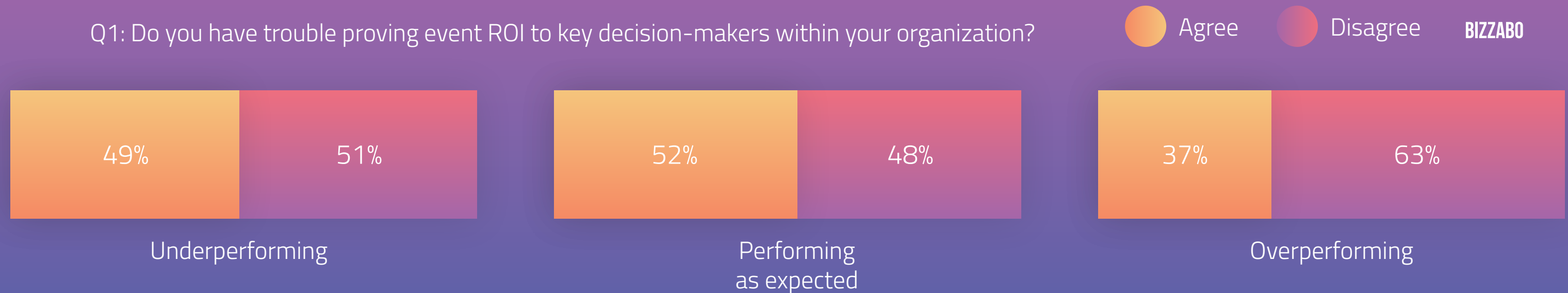
Overperforming organizations are more likely to increase the amount of money invested in event technology than organizations that are performing as expected or underperforming. Furthermore, of the respondents who said that they plan to increase their event technology spend, over performers said they would increase event technology spend by **\$4,500** more than respondents from the other two categories.

If a company is overperforming, they are likely leveraging event technology to better market, measure and grow their events. Once these companies witness the success of leveraging event technology, they then tend to increase their investment in event technology to increase their return.

Q1: Do you expect your budget for event technology will increase in the coming years?  
Q2: If so, by how much do you expect your budget will increase?



The above findings are further reinforced when compared to how capable overperforming organizations are in measuring event ROI in comparison to performing as expected or underperforming organizations.



Looking at the percent difference of the above data, overperforming organizations are able to demonstrate event ROI **26%** more often than organizations that are underperforming and performing as expected. We expect that one of the reasons for this is because overperforming organizations are willing to invest in event technology more so than other organization types.

### A Virtuous Cycle

Overperforming organizations are those that measure their event success and leverage event technology to do so. The result is an organization-wide commitment to events that, in a virtuous cycle, helps events stay successful.

### Tough Questions About Over performing and Under performing Organizations

1. Are you measuring event ROI? Why or why not?
2. How do you measure your organization's event performance? What metrics do you use?
3. Is your organization overperforming in comparison to company goals? If so, what do you attribute that success to? If not, what's standing in the way of success?

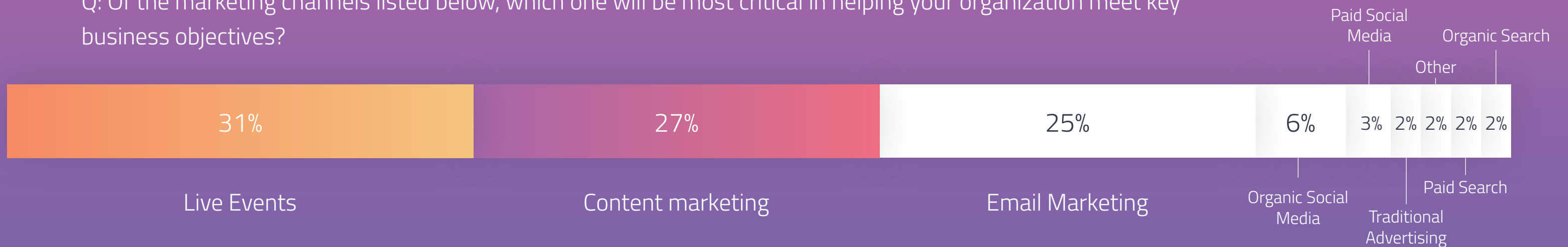


# INVESTMENT IN LIVE EVENTS

## Sentiment and Commitment

Most event marketers view live events as the most effective marketing channel, followed by content marketing and email marketing. At the same time, the majority (**80%**) of organizers believe live events are critical to their company's success. While overperforming organizations are putting the most investment into live events and are receiving the greatest return from them, event marketers across the board view live events as an indispensable marketing strategy. In this section we'll breakdown how event planners invest in events now and how they plan to invest in events in the future.

Q: Of the marketing channels listed below, which one will be most critical in helping your organization meet key business objectives?

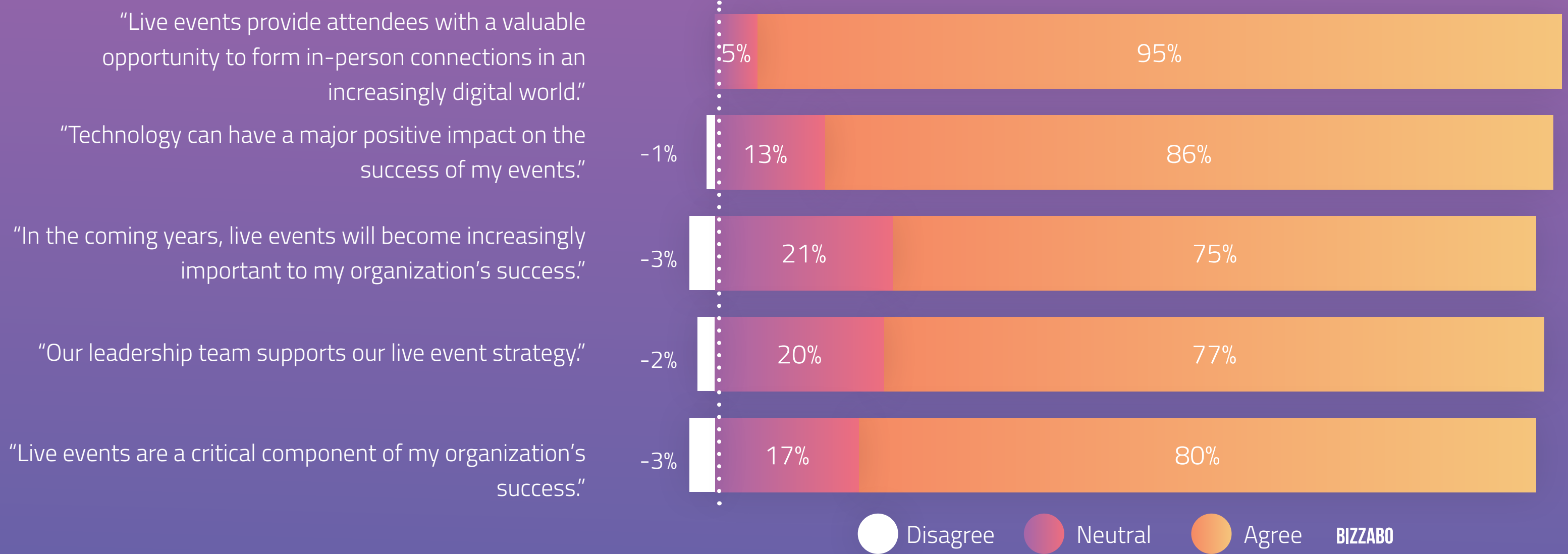


"Live events are a critical component of my organization's success."

● Agree   
 ● Neutral   
 ● Disagree   
 BIZZABO



Furthermore, when it comes to a variety of sentiment-based criteria, the majority of event marketers overwhelmingly regard live events favorably.



This is mirrored in how respondents feel about their organizations' commitment to live events.





**Emily Fullmer**  
Director of  
Global Events

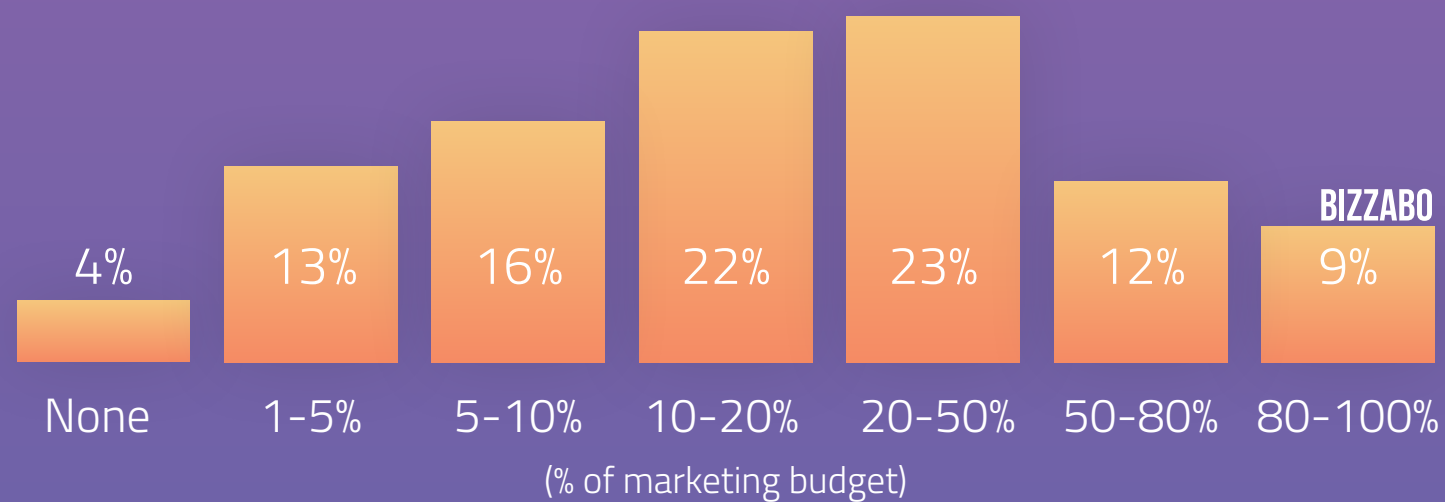


“GreenBook itself has always been a resource for the industry and now we see our conferences as aiding and abetting the future of the industry by showcasing stuff that people haven’t seen before. There are so many different facets to our events.”

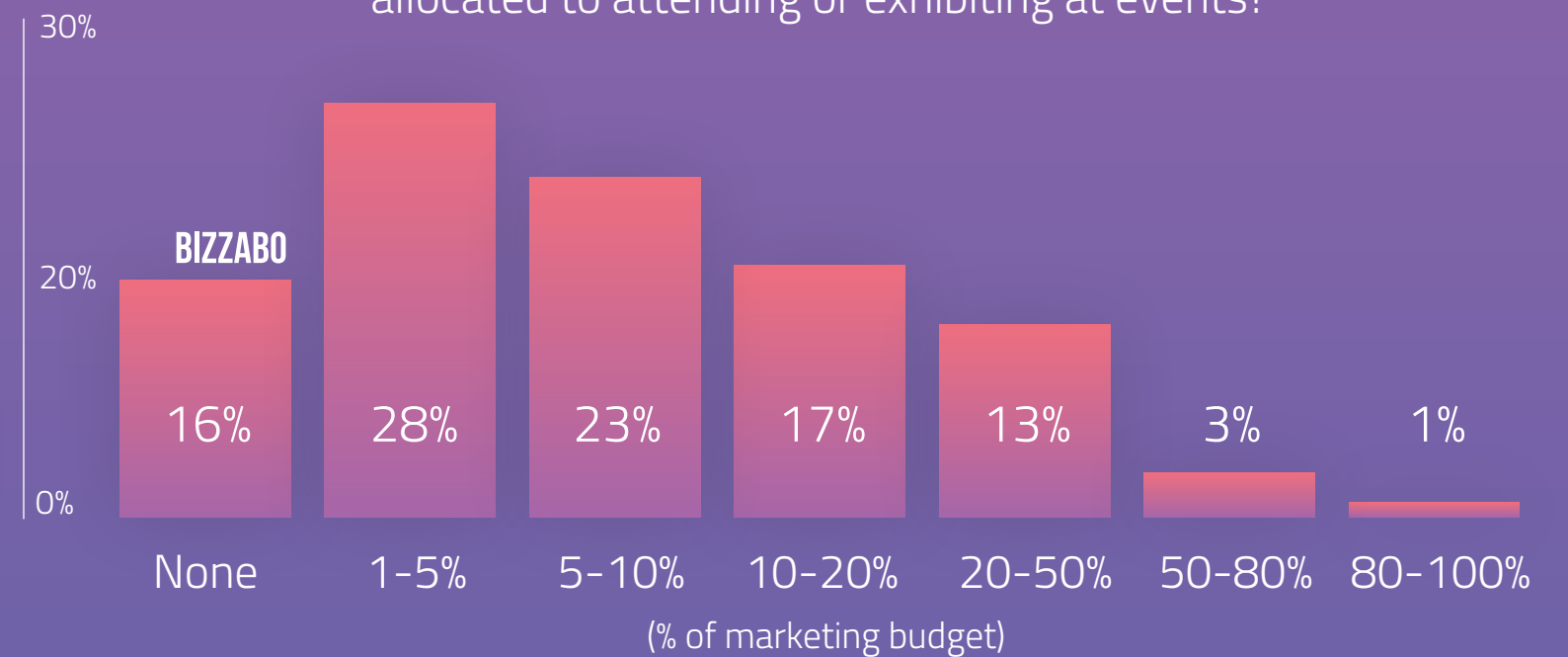
## Current Budget

While most (28%) of companies allocate over 20% of their marketing budget to organizing events, most companies spend only 1% – 5% when it comes to exhibiting at events. Meanwhile, a surprising 10% of respondents do not allocate any funds to exhibiting at events.

Q: What percent of your marketing budget is allocated to organizing events?



Q: What percent of your marketing budget is allocated to attending or exhibiting at events?

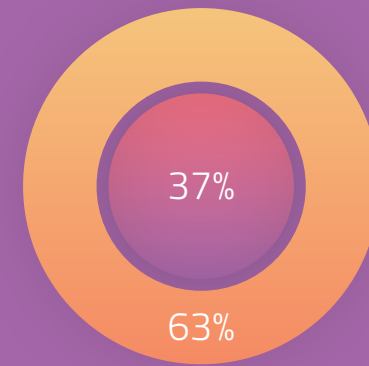


Given the sentiment and investment in live events as a whole, it appears that there is much room for growth when it comes to exhibiting at events that marketers do not organize themselves. For event marketers looking to get ahead of the competition, this may be a worthwhile approach.

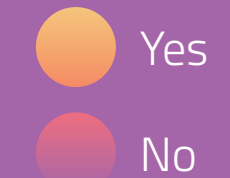
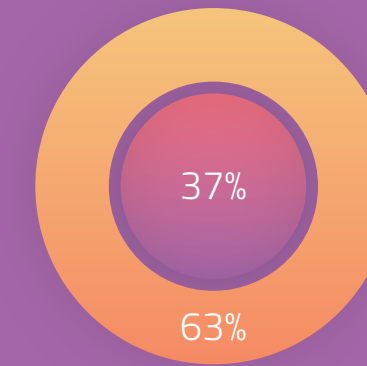
An alternative interpretation to the findings above is that marketers do not see the same level of return from exhibiting at live events, as they do from organizing live events. Either way, the data represents a meaningful opportunity for the organization who can make event exhibition a successful component of the marketing mix.

# Growth and the Future

Q: Do you expect your budget for event organizing or event marketing will increase in the coming year?



Q: Do you intend to increase the number of events you organize next year?



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Looking forward, the majority of event marketers plan on increasing the amount of events that they host. The majority of event marketers also plan to increase the marketing budget spent on live events as a whole.

## Tough Questions About Investment in Live Events

1. Do you feel that your organization is investing enough in live events? If not, what is holding you back?
2. Are you spending more of your marketing budget on organizing or exhibiting at live events? If so, why?
3. Given that the majority of event marketers plan on increasing their investment in live events in the future, where do you see live events in the future of your organization?



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- A head-to-head comparison of leading platforms using 3rd party data.
- Data-driven reporting that highlights future event tech trends to look out for.
- 70 questions to ask event tech salespeople.

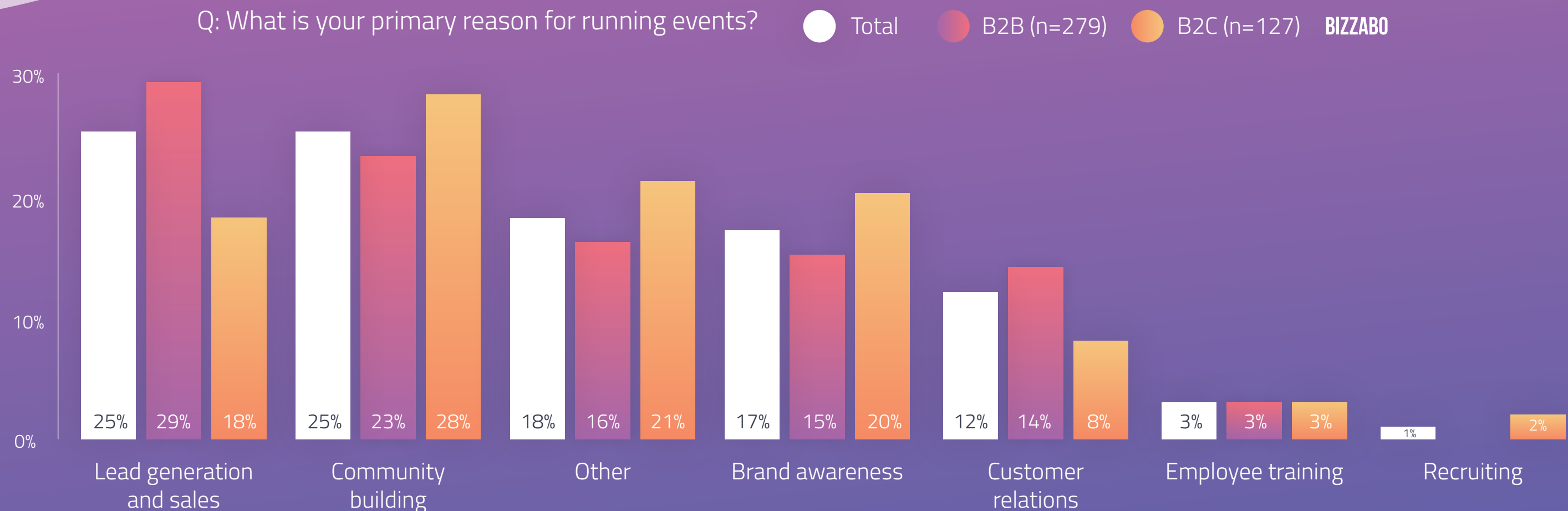
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# WHERE LIVE EVENTS FIT INTO MARKETING

In the previous section, we saw that most marketers believe that live events are the most effective marketing channel. In this section we will take a look at why.

## Goals

Exactly half of the participants in the study say that their primary reason for events are lead generation/sales and community building. If we take a look at the split between B2B and B2C organizations, we see that B2B organizations (**n=279**) are primarily concerned with lead generation and community building while B2C organizations (**n=127**) are concerned with a much more diverse set of goals.



## Metrics

For most organizers, revenue generated is the primary criteria by which event performance is judged. This could include revenue from event registrations, in addition to pipeline generated or sponsorship revenue. In any case, a revenue-based model of event success means having the right tools and technology to set revenue goals and measure event ROI are of paramount importance.



Sarah Bolt

Customer Marketing & Events Manager



"Events are essentially one of the biggest channels for engaging leads. We do a lot of work ahead of time prepping the people who are going to be there and setting up meetings with them and making sure that people know that we're going to be sponsors and where the booth is going to be to stop by."

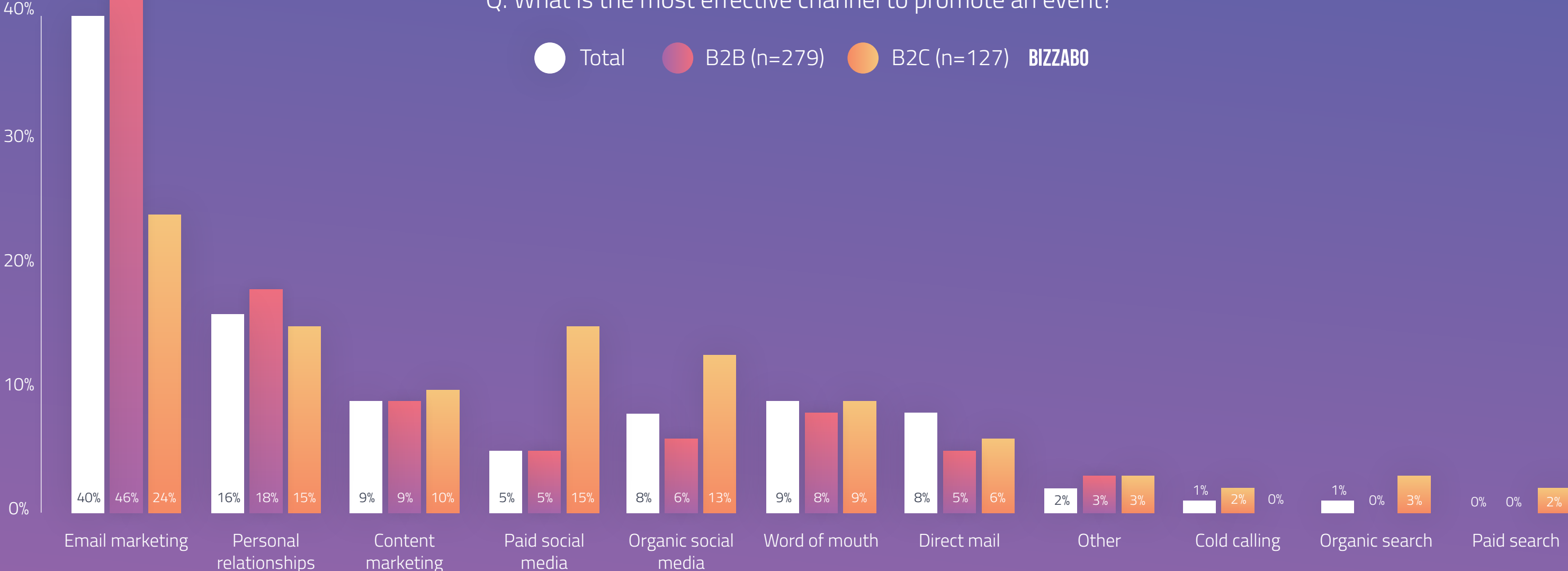
Q: What is the primary criteria that you use to measure event success?



## Promotional Channels

Most (40%) of respondents believe email marketing is the most effective channel to promote an event. Again, if we look at the B2B and B2C split, we find that B2B companies primarily rely on email marketing, whereas B2C companies rely on a diverse array of channels.

Q: What is the most effective channel to promote an event?



At the same time, many event organizers have yet to fully tap into modern digital marketing methods for promoting events, namely content marketing, paid social media, organic social media, paid search and organic search. This is undoubtedly an area for growth.



Roberta Ocampo  
Events Manager  
HubSpot

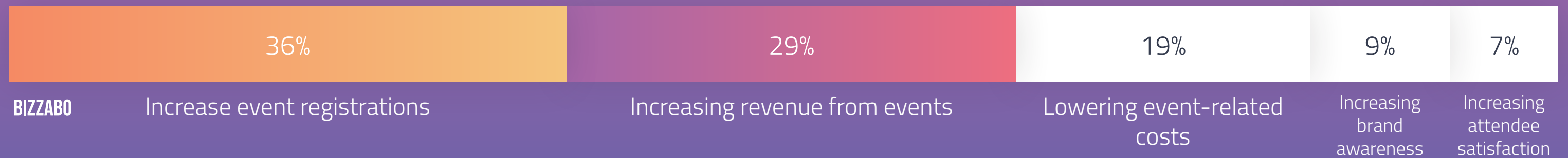
“Live events are a useful way to generate leads and helps accelerate the sales cycle because they are a great way to create face time with prospects. Our sales reps are on the phone day-in and day-out, and we feel events are a nice way to put a human touch to our sales process. They’re a great way to educate prospects, and those that go to an event close way faster than the online-only sales cycle.”



## Challenges

We see that the challenges confronting event marketers have changed little compared to a 2015 survey we conducted (**37%**). The main challenge to event marketers is still: increasing event registrations (**36%**).

Q: What is your biggest challenge when organizing or running events?



Event marketers will want to make sure that they are getting the right attendees in the room and not just the right number of attendees. In order to achieve this goal, event organizers will need to seize on innovative event promotion techniques.

### Challenges, Choices and Opportunities

Depending on whether event marketers come from B2B or B2C organizations, their goals may vary; however, lead generation/sales and community building remain king and queen when it comes to the reason for holding events. Underlining both goals, increasing event registrations is still the largest obstacle for event marketers. In order to confront this challenge and rise above the rest, marketers will need to learn to embrace innovative approaches to event promotion and attendee engagement.

### Tough Questions About Where Event Marketing Fits Into Marketing Strategies

1. The two most popular event marketing goals are increasing event revenue and community building. Are either of these your primary marketing goals? What are you doing to accurately measure them?
2. Most event marketers struggle with increasing event registrations. What is the primary obstacle that is in the way of you achieving your event marketing goal? What can you do about it?
3. Most event marketers believe that email marketing is the best channel for promoting an event. Which marketing channel do you primarily utilize to promote event? Are there any tools that could help you do so better?

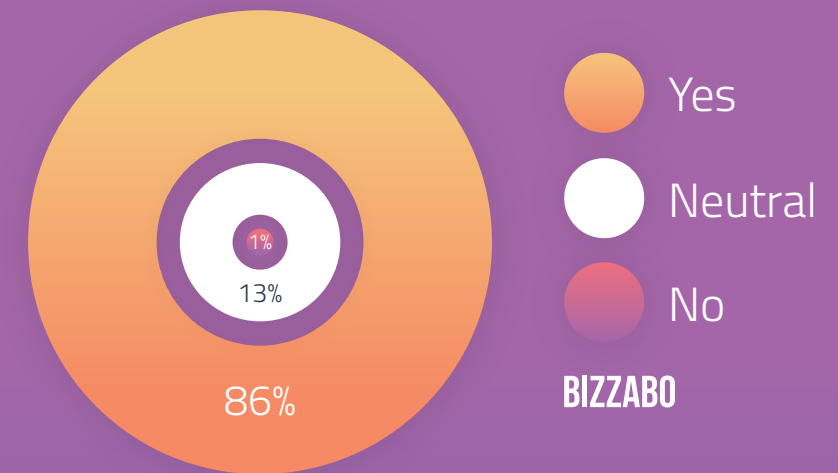
# EVENT TRENDS AND TECHNOLOGY

As we discussed earlier, the events industry is booming. In order to meet the needs of the **\$512 billion** (and growing) industry, a host of technologies have developed to directly and indirectly further event success. In this section we will take a look at those technologies.

## Technological Eminence

An overwhelming majority of respondents believe technology can have a major impact on event success. This includes VR/AR, live-streaming, AI, event apps and all-in-one event success platforms.

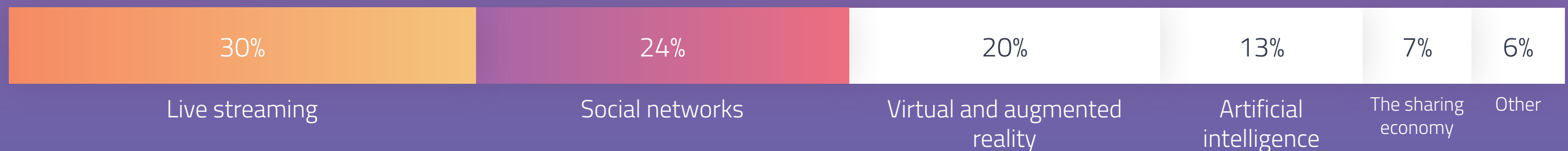
"Technology can have a major positive impact on the success of my events."



## Event Trends

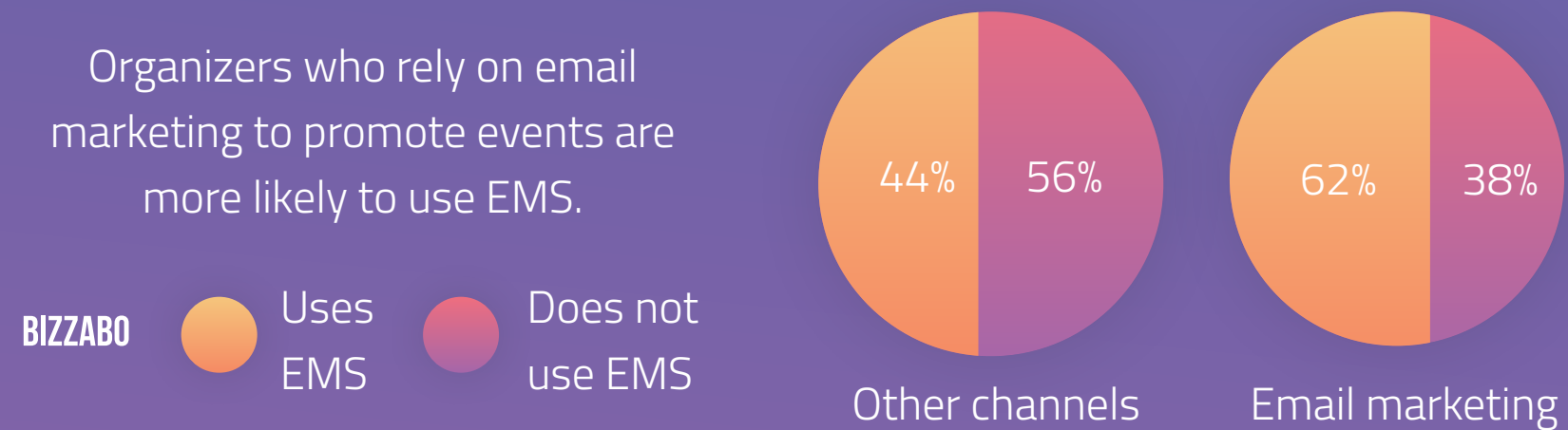
While most event planners believe that live streaming will play the biggest role in the future of events, other technologies appear to be underutilized. Both artificial intelligence and the sharing economy have become commonplace in other areas of business, yet in the world of event marketing, there is much room to improve how these technologies are perceived and utilized.

**Q: What technological innovations do you expect will impact events the most?**



## Event Management Software

As we saw above, email marketing is the most important channel for promoting live events. As it turns out, event marketers who rely on email marketing to promote events are more likely to use an event management software.



One could attribute the above correlation to event management software integrations making it easier for event marketers to pursue email marketing strategies. Alternatively, companies that use event management software may have more effective event promotion systems in place and in turn employ email marketing.

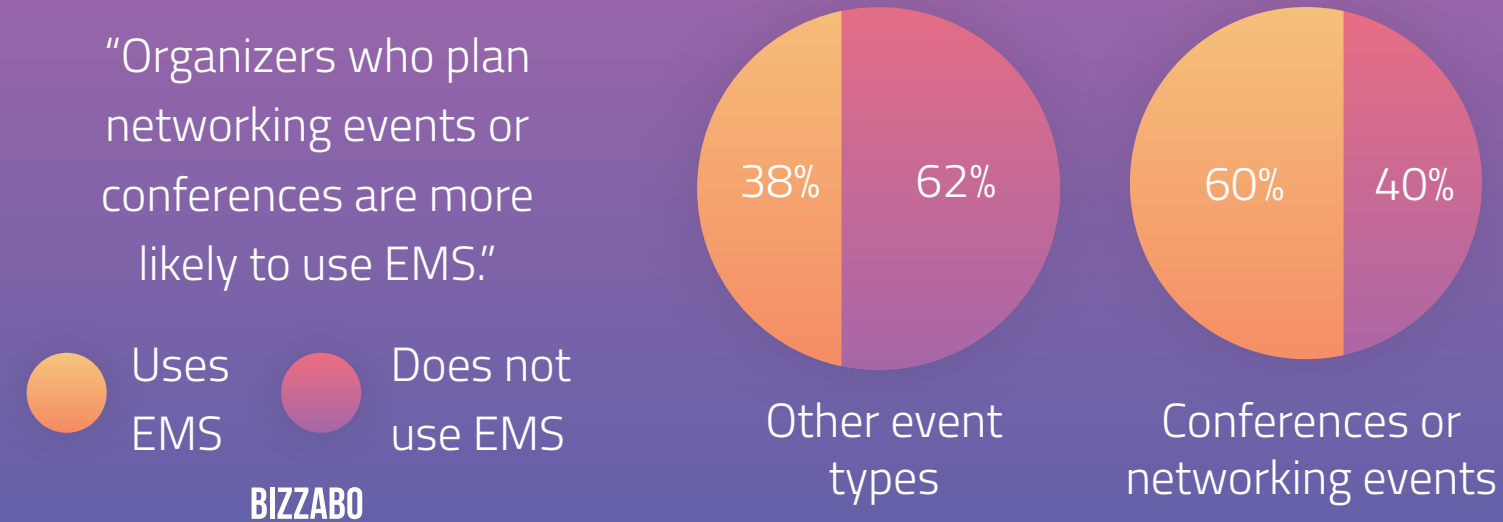


Cathy McPhillips  
VP of Marketing



"We mine our data in Salesforce by looking at topics/categories of interest in order to make our agenda relevant and timely to our attendees. We also can take our user data to not only reach out to alumni or certain segments of our audience by industry, job title and job function, but also by implied interest in which emails they've opened, blog posts they've read or ebooks they've downloaded."

These findings are reflected in the fact that the respondents who plan networking events and conference are more likely to use an event management system.



### On The Cutting Edge

We already see that overperforming businesses are more likely to invest in event technology, and that businesses that do invest in event management software are more likely to employ successful event marketing strategies, such as email marketing. But in addition to other leading technologies of today, respondents predicted that event technology will impact future events as well.

### Tough Questions About Event Trends and Technology

1. Are you currently investing in email marketing? In any case, which trends are you investing in and how do you rationalize investing in the trends that you do?
2. If live events are key to your success, how much are you currently investing in event technology to ensure that you are hitting your KPIs?
3. Do you currently produce networking events or conferences? If so, are using an event management system? If not, why?

## The Era of Event Marketing

The internet is not and will never be enough. People crave in-person experiences. The opportunity to travel somewhere else, meet someone new, learn something different is an irreplaceable experience—and the good news is that it's growing. As you've now seen, marketers—from the C-Suite to the event floor—believe in live events as an effective marketing channel and they plan on increasing their investment in the coming years. Instrumental to this growth has been a suite of digital tools that empowers marketers to work with technology, not against it.

The best news of all for event marketers is that organizations who rely on live events—and who plan to invest more time and money in organizing live events—tend to outperform peers. Overperforming organizations have better alignment about what event success looks like, because they are better able to measure event ROI thanks to outsized investments in event management software.

That so many organizations have found success by optimizing live events illustrates that the future of event marketing is bright. Moving forward, leading marketers expect that technologies related to social media, live streaming, and virtual and augmented reality will impact the industry. While these new technologies are expected to bring people together more readily, we fully expect that in-person live events will continue to reign as the single most effective marketing channel in 2018 and beyond.

Have any questions?

Get in touch!





# THE FUTURE OF EVENT SOFTWARE HAS ARRIVED

*"Bizzabo is one of the best companies I have ever dealt with in my past 12 years of marketing. Their dedication to us as a client is exemplary. The build up to the deal was pleasant and co-operative. The training (although not really needed) was great. The software is brilliant."*



2017 Shortlist for best  
CONFERENCE TECH  
EVENT NETWORKING TECH  
EVENT MARKETING TECH



Simon Kamsky  
Marketer at Etihad Airways

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