



EVENT PLANNING IN 2023:

**5 NEW REALITIES SHAPING THE
EVENTS LANDSCAPE**



INTRODUCTION

Like many industries, the event-planning space is adjusting to a new normal after several tumultuous years. As the world returns to in-person after several years of “virtual everything,” companies are prioritizing live events once again, and the playing field is crowded. [According to the 2023 Northstar/Cvent Meetings Industry PULSE Survey](#), two-thirds of corporate event planners are expecting to produce more events this year than last, and 78% of planners are already planning their next event even while producing their current one.

Despite increased excitement for events, however, attendance is still down across the board. A [July 2022](#) report found that attendee numbers had stalled at 65% of 2019 numbers, and in 2023 [the vast majority of event planners](#) expect their attendance to be worse this year than last. In this e-book, we’ll explore five new realities that are shaping the events industry – along with tips for adapting to the new landscape.

01

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH— AND SMART BUSINESSES ARE MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Airfare, meals, and hotel accommodations. Valuable time away from family and work. For participants, attending a live event has always represented a significant commitment of both time and resources. But after several pandemic years, attendees are even more reluctant to leave the comfort of home. To entice attendees back to events, smart businesses are working even harder to boost the experience and offer real value.

**TIP: Be prepared to put on a show**

During the pandemic, businesses elevated the virtual experience with high-value production and innovative tech features to attract screen-fatigued audiences. These innovations proved popular – and audiences expect the same level of engagement, post-pandemic. For in-person events, this means upping the “experience factor” with multiple stages, the latest tech, top-line entertainment, and mind-blowing extracurricular activities.

02

IN-PERSON CONNECTIONS MATTER

After several years of online meetings and working from kitchen tables, the pandemic left many professionals with “[Zoom fatigue](#)” and [reduced attention spans](#). The result? Not only has it become more difficult to woo attendees back to in-person events, but when people *do* attend, they have a lower tolerance for sitting through speaker after speaker. Today’s audience members simply crave fewer presentations and more downtime. The good news is that after years of limited social interaction, in-person events offer the chance to interact and build deeper connections – and attendees value this connection.

TIP: Don’t try to cram in too much

Remember: quality over quantity. Taking these new factors into account, the ideal conference schedule balances content-rich presentations with adequate time to develop new relationships with potential vendors, customers, and peers. Event planners must prioritize designated downtime time for guests to build their network – or simply to relax.



03

EVENTS ARE MORE EXPENSIVE, AND COSTS WON'T REDUCE GOING FORWARD

If you've been shocked by how much your event budget has ballooned in recent years, you're not alone. In the same 2023 survey mentioned earlier, event planners singled out "rising costs" as their top concern, and selected "cost containment" as their No. 1 priority. The reality is that events in 2023 are significantly more expensive.

Since many budget line-items remain the same regardless of registration numbers, companies end up absorbing the lost revenue from low attendance. And while attendee numbers [remain stagnant](#), the demand for venues and talent has shot back up. The cost to rent a hotel ballroom, for example, will remain the same even if the room is only filled to 70% capacity. On top of that, many venues and vendors have raised their rates to compensate for lost revenue over the past few years.



TIP: Consider alternating years

To save money, some organizations are opting to alternate between in-person and virtual events, year to year. This strategy builds excitement ahead of the biannual in-person event, and allows for bigger budgets and more time to plan.

04

LABOR COSTS HAVE ALSO INCREASED, BUT **TOP TALENT IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER**

As the hospitality and events industries contracted during the pandemic, many people left their jobs. In fact, since 2021, the hospitality industry has maintained the highest quit rate across all sectors (above 5.2%), [according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#). As company leaders add live events back to their marketing plans, these industries are struggling to regain their pre-pandemic staffing levels. The result? Venues and vendors must pay top dollar for experienced labor – and that cost is necessarily passed down to companies hosting events.

TIP: Ensure your vendors are staffing properly

Facing a nationwide labor shortage, some venues and vendors are cutting corners by filling positions via online apps or by placing inexperienced workers in positions they're not qualified for. As audience expectations for events increase, staffing quality must keep pace, as unskilled workers can ruin a critical onstage moment. Make sure to inquire about the experience level and training requirements of team members – for both venues and vendors.



05

THE VIRTUAL ASPECT OF EVENTS IS HERE TO STAY

Not only are audiences accustomed to having a virtual option, but they also expect that option to be cutting-edge – there's no going back to the days of low-tech Zoom webinars. This reality presents an expensive and time-consuming challenge since companies are now essentially hosting two distinct events, with both experiences requiring top-level sophistication and technology.

Today, running an in-person event is like producing a Broadway theater show – except with multiple stages and days. Producing a virtual event, on the other hand, is similar to streaming a live television broadcast, with stages, green screens, lighting, and multiple camera angles.

**TIP: Give yourself a year to plan**

Since today's events require planning two separate experiences – online and in-person – they also require more pre-production time. Coupled with labor shortages and limited venue availability, this means that the lead time necessary for a smooth event-planning process has more than doubled. For an event with 1,000+ attendees, it's wise to start planning 9-12 months in advance, starting with reserving a venue and hiring a production company.

AN EXPERIENCED EVENT PARTNER CAN GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE NEW NORMAL

Despite the new challenges brought by the post-pandemic era, event planners feel the overall value of events for their organizations has gone up, with [61% reporting optimism](#) about the year ahead. It's clear that events continue to be an important way for companies to amplify messages and build excitement for their products and services. But as we've seen, pulling off a top-level event in today's landscape has become increasingly complicated. Experts in the event planning and implementation field can help navigate this complexity by vetting teams and venues, upping production values – both in-person and virtual – and responding to any hiccups along the way.

Stagedge is a leading event production provider with decades of experience helping customers from a variety of industries plan and host unforgettable events. To learn more about our offerings, visit www.stagedge.com.