

eventbrite

# The Pulse Report: 2018 Event Industry Trends



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# Introduction

Whether you're a large conference or a small charity, now's the time to get up to date on the latest event trends. Fall behind now, and attendees may simply pass you by.

To stay relevant in a saturated market, you need to constantly uplevel your attendee experience, reach new audiences, and best your competition. Which is why we asked you — event industry professionals — how you're running your business in 2018.

For this state-of-the-industry report, 1,000 event professionals in the United States and Canada weighed in. These survey takers organize a wide range of events — including charities, conferences, classes, endurance races, festivals, food and drink events, fundraisers, music performances, and everything in between. They also represented a wide swath of roles within the industry — professional event organizers, freelancers, fundraisers, small- to medium-sized business owners, and large enterprise executives.

As you know, your event is unique — and so are your needs and resources. This report will give you an overview of the events industry, including the key trends, challenges, and opportunities. Use it to benchmark your own event and discover tools that can take you to the next level.

## This report is for...

Any event professional who needs a deep understanding of the events landscape. Whether you consider yourself an events expert or an industry novice, you'll find out how other organizations are running their events in 2018.

## You'll learn...

- The tools event professionals consider most — and least — effective
- Where event professionals are spending the most budget
- The most common challenges events face today
- Where events plan to invest in the coming year
- The trends you can't afford to ignore in 2018

# 1 The Events Landscape in 2018

This survey was taken by 1,000+ event professionals in November of 2017. Here's a breakdown of these survey-takers:

- 44% of all those surveyed identified as a CEO, Founder, Director, or the equivalent
- 45% have teams of 2-5 people
- 83% are in charge of setting up ticketing or registration
- 82% are in charge of promoting their event

When asked to list their primary responsibilities, respondents indicated that their top three responsibilities include setting up ticketing or registrations (83%), promoting their event (82%), and managing ticketing or registrations (80%).

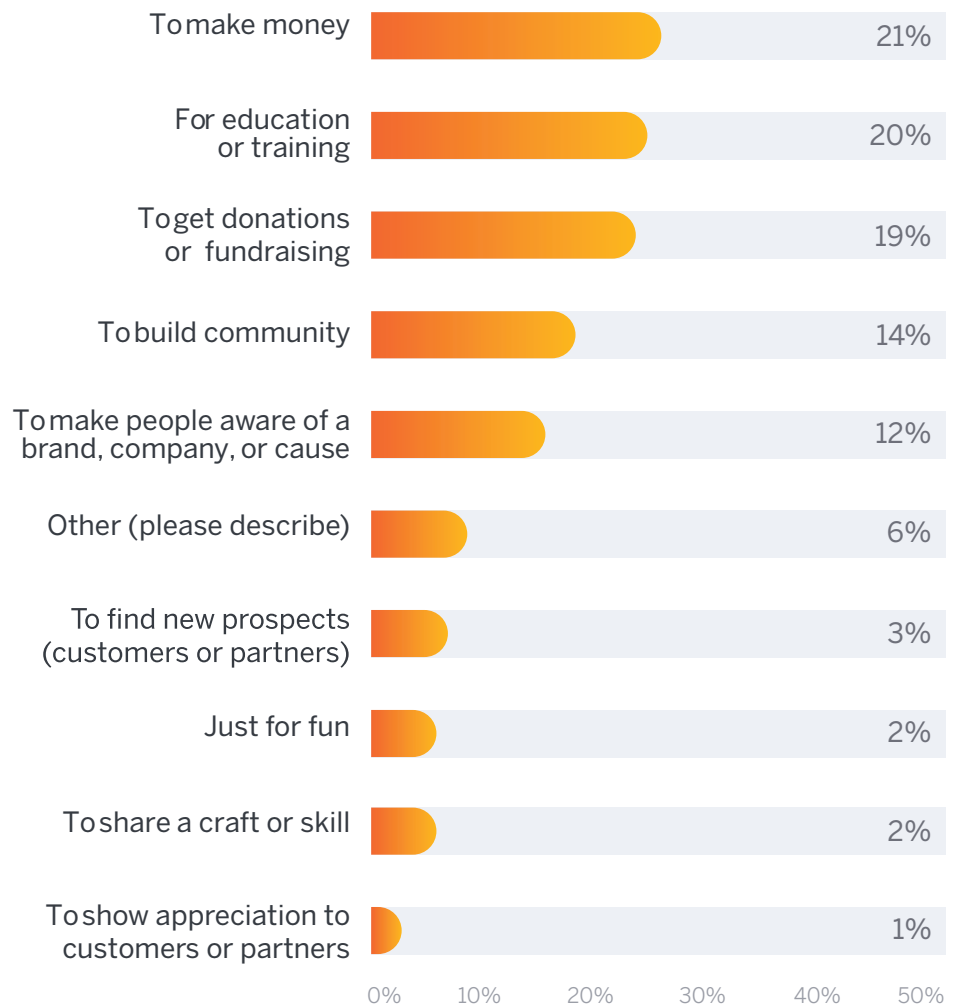
Almost half (44%) of all those surveyed identified as a CEO, Founder, Director, or the equivalent and were responsible for all aspects of the event — from managing the budget to choosing the event to reporting.

## What drives the events industry?

Millions of tickets are sold in the U.S. and Canada each year. And event creators run their events like businesses.

When asked what drives their event business, the most common primary reason was 'to make money' (21%). 'Education and training' (20%) and 'to get donations or fundraising' (19%) trailed just behind.

## What's the main reason you (or your company) organizes events?



Notably, the primary reason for hosting events may differ according to region. In Eventbrite's 2017 Pulse Report in the UK, 'education and training' (36%) was the primary reason for hosting events, with 'generating a profit' (30%) coming in second.

As you'd imagine, the purpose on the events depends on the organizer and the type of events they host. Nearly half of the respondents who listed profits as their primary purpose were in the music, arts, or entertainment space.

## 2 Teams and Talent

### How are teams staffed?

Regardless of industry, event professionals reported that their teams (including all full-time functions — sales, operations, marketing, etc.) were small but mighty.

Roughly 45% of survey-takers said their event teams were comprised of between two and five employees, and 28% said that one person was running the entire events operation. Larger teams (of 10+ employees) were less prevalent, coming in at 12% of all respondents.

But what about growth? More than half of all those surveyed expected that their team will remain the same size in 2018. Still, more than a third of teams expect to grow (38%). Of those teams that will increase staff, they also intended to increase budget in 2018 (64%) and run additional events (76%).

Only 2% of the respondents expect their team to decrease. The majority of those professionals (70%) work for nonprofits, and a significant percentage (39%) also plan to decrease the number of events they host.

45%

of event teams have between 2 and 5 employees

28%

of event teams have only 1 person running the event

### 3 Event Marketing

#### Which event marketing tactics are most effective?

Whether you're hosting a conference to recruit new customers or a festival to spread awareness about your cause, event marketers need a promotion plan that encourages early interest and maintains momentum until the last ticket or registration is sold.

From organic search to newsletters, marketers use a variety of tactics to promote their event. But how effective are they?

- **Most effective:** When asked about last year's marketing, our survey-takers said that email outreach was most effective in 2017. 33% of people agreed that it was "moderately effective" and 8% believed that it was "extremely effective." Across the board, 78% of event marketers will continue their email marketing efforts in 2018.
- **Least effective:** Event organizers marked webinars as the least effective promotional tool. For smaller organizations, webinars can be difficult to coordinate and don't reach the desired audience.
- **Most used:** Email marketing came in as the most used channel, with 86% of survey takers incorporating email outreach in their strategy. As noted above, the majority of event creators will also continue their outreach in 2018.





- **Least used:** With only 16%, webinars were also the least used tactic. Event professionals are looking for cheaper, quicker ways to promote to market their event. For example, 63% of those surveyed used influencer marketing. Peer-to-peer endorsements on social media can be just as effective as other tactics because they appear more authentic.
- **Other:** Other promotional tactics also performed well, including experiential marketing, influencer marketing, and content marketing. While not all organizations use each method, 95% of those that did found the tactics effective.

### How does the event industry use social media?

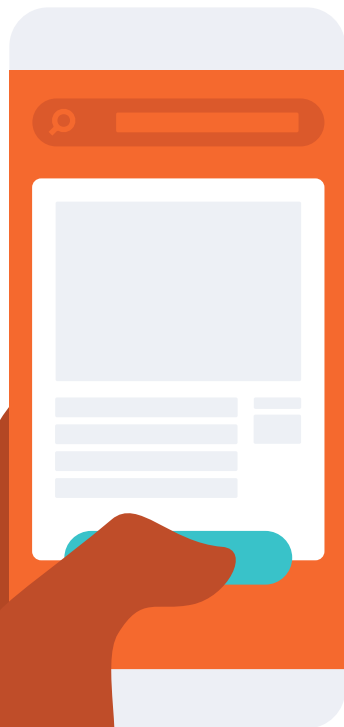
Social media appears to be one of the biggest areas of marketing growth for events. A presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or even Snapchat for your event is no longer a nice-to-have — it's essential.

Many events look to invest in social media in 2018, with 70% saying they will continue organic social media and 48% saying they will continue paid social media in the new year.

But at the same time, not all social channels are equally effective.

We asked survey takers to rank their social media promotions from "extremely effective" to "not effective at all." Here's what they said:

- **Most effective:** When asked about their social media tactics, 96% of survey takers who used contests said they were effective tools. Nearly half of those respondents said they were “very effective” or “extremely effective.” Contests are a cost-effective way to break through the noise on social media. You can give away free tickets, VIP upgrades, or sponsors’ products to incentivize engagement at no or little cost.
- **Least effective:** Although LinkedIn is the go-to social network for making professional connections, only 14% of event organizations who used paid LinkedIn ads marked it as “very effective” or “extremely effective.”
- **Most used:** If your target audience (aka potential ticket buyers) is online, they’re probably on Facebook — and [event creators are there too](#). Fifty-seven percent said they use paid Facebook ads to reach their audience.
- **Least used:** In addition to being identified as the least effective promotional tool, LinkedIn was also the least used tool. Only 7% of respondents said they used paid LinkedIn ads to promote their event.



96%

use contests as an effective tool in their social media

57%

said they use paid Facebook ads to reach their audience

14%

who use paid LinkedIn ads think it's very effective

7%

use LinkedIn ads to promote their event

## 4 Revenue

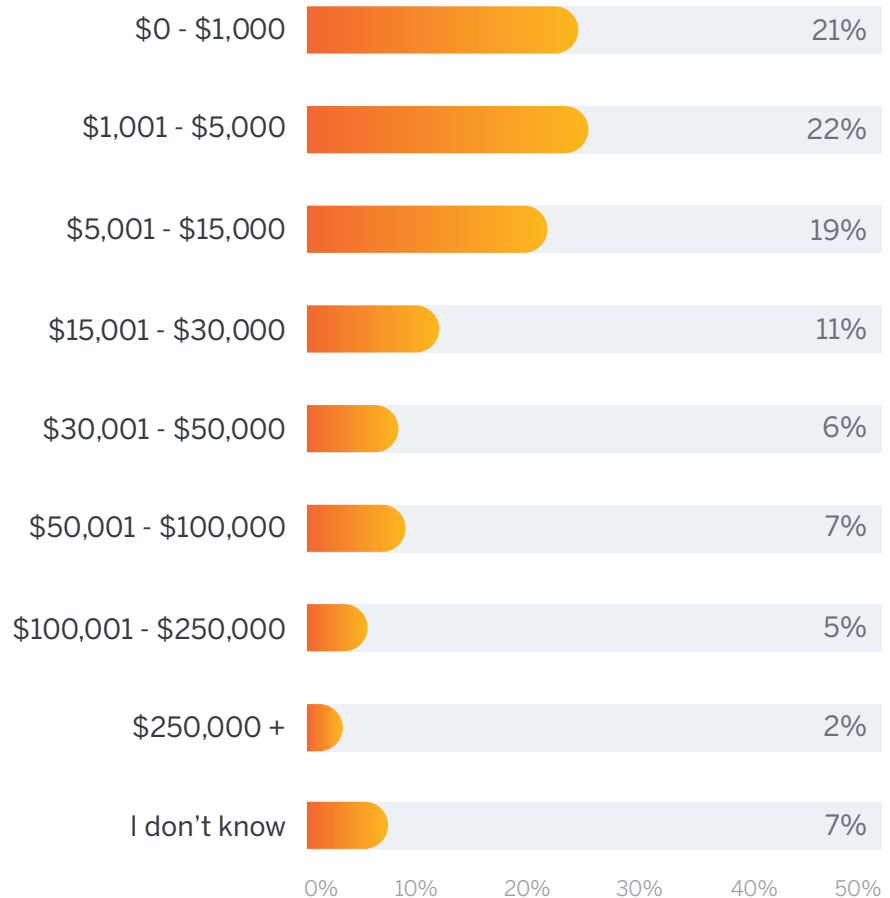
How much does the event industry spend — and where does the budget go?

Planning events is stressful — the pressure and the stakes are high, and you're asked to do countless tasks at an impossible pace and with limited resources. This is exacerbated by budget constraints — more than half of those surveyed said they will run more events in 2018, but only 57% of that group will have more budget.

The majority of all respondents (55%) said their budget will stay the same in 2018, and 4% said their budget would actually decrease. And almost all of those surveyed (72%) were working with an annual budget of less than \$30,000.

While budgets differ for each industry, budgets of \$100,000 or more were the outliers, making up only 8% of responses. The primary goal of those big-budget events was to make money, and the events tended to skew toward larger industries — music, arts, or entertainment (46%) and nonprofit, community, or educational (46%).

### What is your annual event budget?



### How much does the industry spend per event?

Many factors go into a budget — staff, speakers/talent, marketing, technology, insurance, among others. We asked how much event creators spend, in total, per event.

Mirroring trends reported about budgets, the majority of organizers (86%) spend less than \$30,000 per event. In fact, most (38%) spend less than \$1,000 per event.

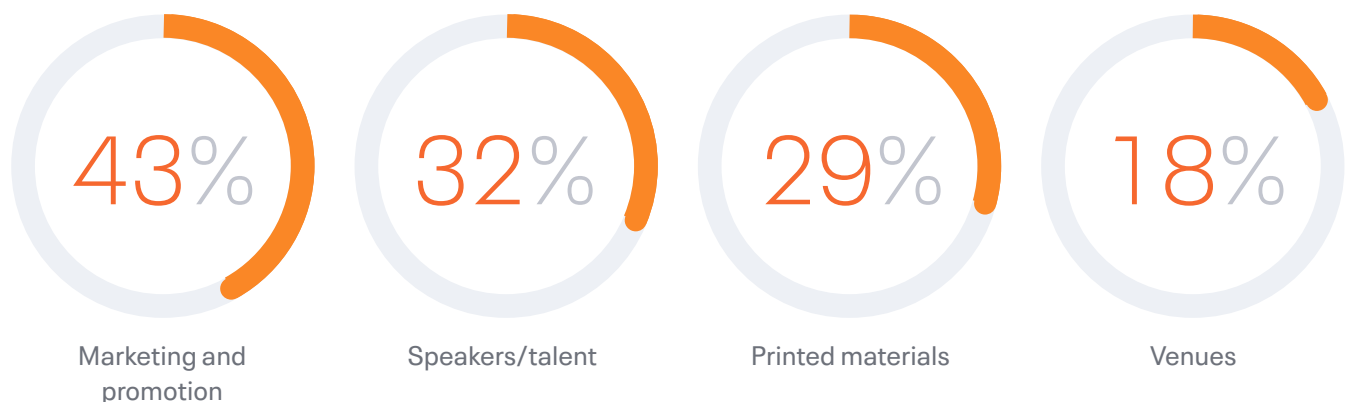
But what about those large events — the 8% that spend more than \$30,000? They tend to have larger teams (45% have teams of five or more), and almost half (49%) expect their budgets to increase in 2018.

## How does the industry allocate budget?

So where does all of that budget go? When asked to list their three biggest expenses, the top costs were:

- **Marketing and promotion (43%)** — Whether event creators are hosting a conference to recruit new customers or a festival to spread awareness about their cause, marketing is important to encourage early interest and maintain momentum until the last ticket or registration is sold.
- **Speakers/talent (32%)** — If well-known and credible, your entertainment can attract a bigger audience than you had ever imagined, instantly adding integrity to your lineup. But all-star entertainment often comes with a price.
- **Printed materials (29%)** — Handouts, signage, direct mail... Printing is still costly for event creators. That's why organizers are looking for ways to minimize the need for printed materials. Many are looking to [digital marketing](#) as a way to reduce cost while still reaching their audience.
- **Venues (18%)** — "Surprise" costs such as water, catering, and unquoted government taxes and services charges can hike up the price for the venue. To make sure you're getting an accurate estimate on your venue, [ask your venue](#) about any hidden costs.

These are the four biggest expenses:

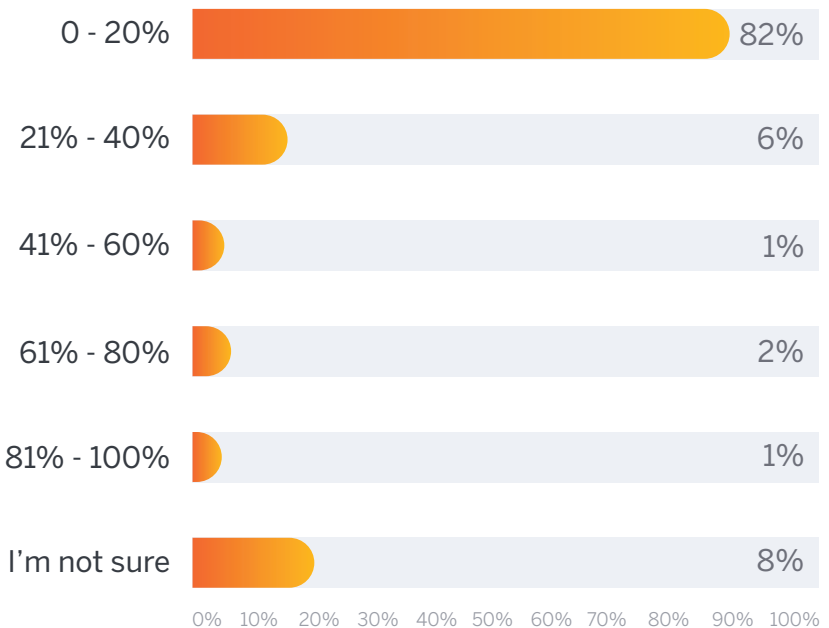


## What are the main sources of event revenue?

To get a better understanding of how events are generating a profit, we dug into main sources of revenue: ticket sales, sponsors, merchandise sales, and vendor concessions/food and drink sales. We specifically asked how each contributed to their revenue:

- 48% said ticket sales comprised 60-100% of their revenue.
- 63% said sponsors comprised 0-20% of their revenue
- 82% said merchandise sales and food and drink sales comprised 0-20% of their revenue

Approximately what percent of your total event revenue comes from vendor concessions/food and drinks sold?



## Challenge

The live events industry is booming, but it isn't without challenges. We asked survey takers to identify their top challenges in 2017, and predict which will endure in 2018.

Nearly all respondents (91%) marked insufficient budget as one of their top challenges in 2017. That makes it hard to reach new attendees, which came in second at 86%. Finally, securing sponsors (83%) filled out the top three challenges.

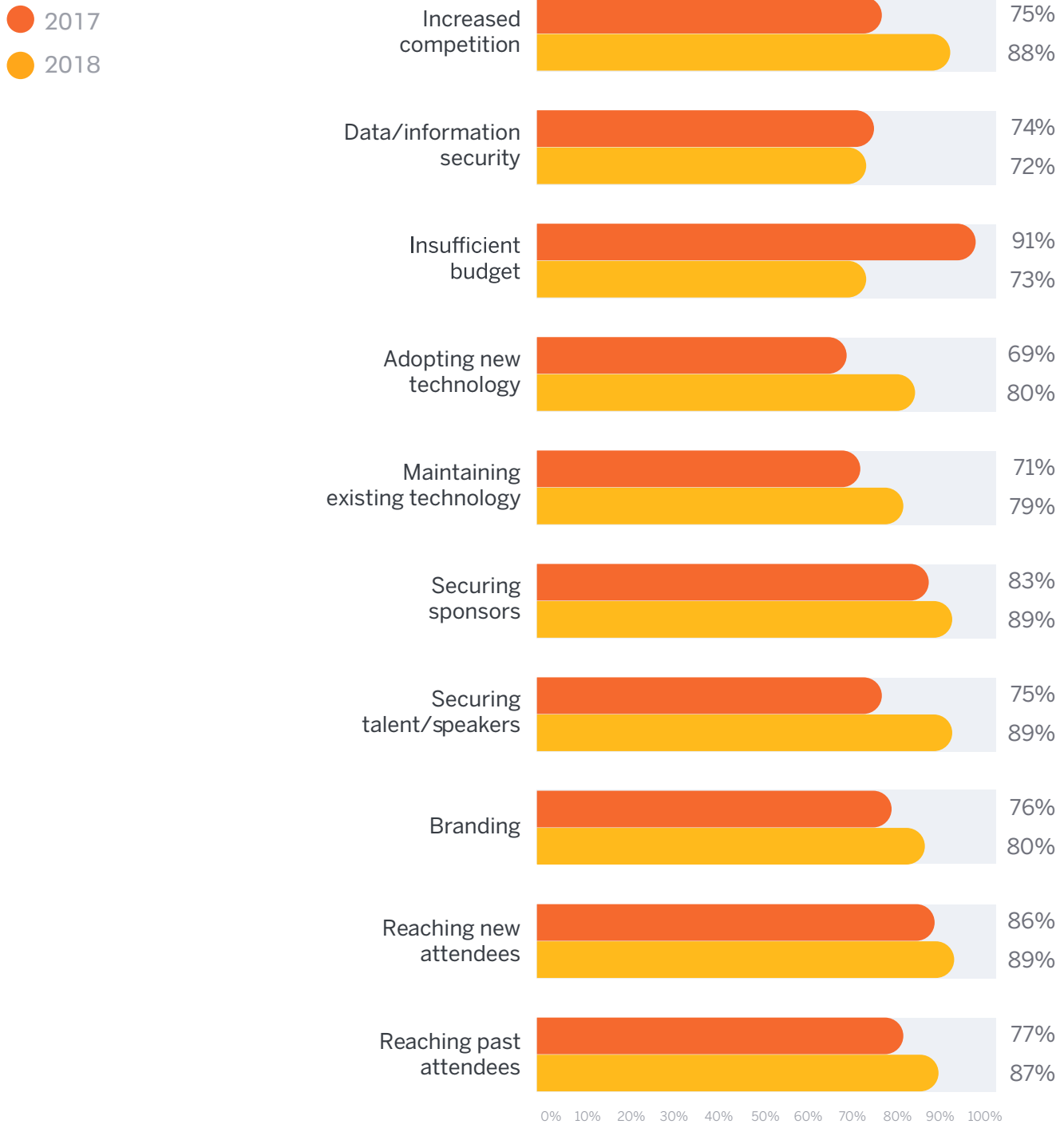
### Top challenges in 2017



### So what challenges do event professionals anticipate in 2018?

- **Reaching new attendees (89%)** — Finding new attendees isn't just hard — it's also expensive. Acquiring a new attendee can also cost [six to seven times more](#) than retaining an existing attendee.
- **Securing speakers and talent (89%)** — Between cost and availability, speakers and entertainment remain a challenge for most event creators.
- **Increased competition (88%)** — In a saturated market, events are looking for ways to stand out — and best their competition.

## What are your event's biggest challenges in 2017? Which will challenge you in 2018?





## 5 Technology Trends

### 2017 Review: Which tech trends stood apart?

Your event “technology stack” is the technology you use to run your business. Teams small and large depend on their technology stack, but the amount of technology you use is less important than which ones you’re using.

So, which technology rose to the hype in 2017?

- **Most used:** When asked about their technology stack in 2017, 83% of those surveyed said they used an event app. Event apps can help you with everything from tracking attendee data to being a single source of information for your attendees to getting your attendees to engage with each other. (Need help creating an app for your event? Check out [Aloompa](#) and [Entegy](#) which make it easy to get your event app up and running.)
- **Least used:** Only 41% of respondents said they used augmented reality, which “adds” things to a person’s view of the world. It does so by providing information to attendees on devices they already own. This technology is still new to events, and not yet adopted by most organizers.
- **Other highlights:** Livestreaming also rose to the top of the list, with 58% of respondents taking advantage of it. You don’t have to host an event the size of Coachella, which attracted 9 million livestream views in 2016, to use livestreaming at your event.

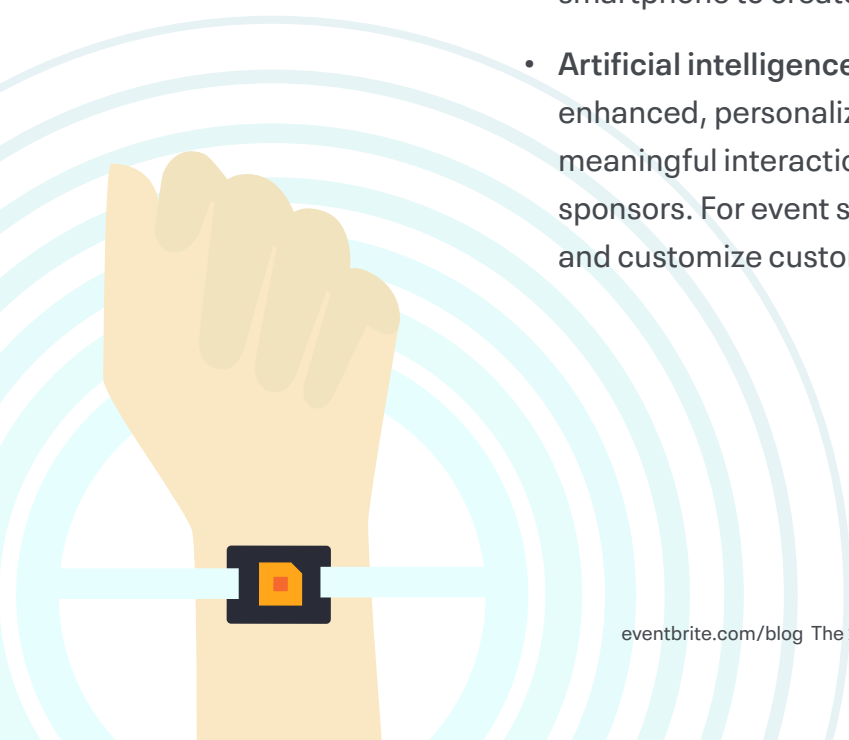


Live video is actually a worthy investment for many types and sizes of events — including small concerts or business events. Interested in learning more? Check out event-ready platforms like Livestream, Facebook Live, and Periscope.

### 2018 Predictions: Technology on the rise

If the US Bureau of Labor Statistics is right, your event will be one out of 79 million in the United States by 2020. With the right technology, you and your event team can position your event to stay at the forefront of the industry. So, we asked event creators what technology they will use in 2018. Here are the three major tools you should look out for:

- **Live streaming (96%)** - Usage of livestreaming may double in 2018, with 96% of respondents saying they will use it next year. And because viewers spend [8X longer with live video](#) than recorded video, livestreaming allows events to reach more attendees, wherever they might be.
- **Virtual reality (88%)** - Interest in virtual reality also increased, with 88% of survey takers saying they expect to use virtual reality in 2018, up from 43% in 2017. Experts are predicting that VR will grow into a [\\$30 billion industry](#) by the end of this decade. As VR technology has become easier to master, more affordable options have emerged. Google Cardboard is a literal cardboard box that works with your smartphone to create a simplified virtual experience.
- **Artificial intelligence (87%)** - Artificial intelligence enables enhanced, personalized attendee experiences with more meaningful interactions that delight attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors. For event staff, AI can improve business processes to build and customize customer engagement.



## Next steps

One thing is clear – the events industry in 2018 will continue to grow.

To differentiate yourself from other events, you need to stay at the forefront of industry trends and innovation. Reach out to our sales team at (866) 902-2531 or contact us [here](#) if you want more tips to stay ahead of the competition this year.

# Eventbrite

Powered three million events in 2017.

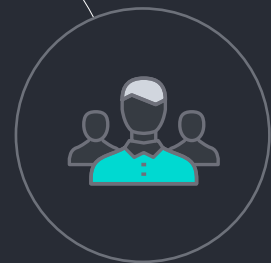
Eventbrite brings the world together through live experiences. More than 700,000 organizers used Eventbrite in 2017 to drive ticket sales, promote and manage events, handle on-site operations, and analyze results across multiple sales channels.



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