

**PREDICTING THE MEETING ROOMS AND SPACES
OF THE FUTURE & IMPROVING MEETING DYNAMICS**

June 2017 Report | iacconline.org



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PREDICTING THE MEETING ENVIRONMENTS OF THE FUTURE & IMPROVING MEETING DYNAMICS



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INTRODUCTION



This report brings together insights from global meeting planners, IACC members and industry experts for the second year in a row.

In 2016 the IACC Meeting Room of the Future™ report provided a pulse on meeting industry trends. This year, 2017, the IACC Meeting Room of the Future has gone even further to identify new trends and understand how previous trends have manifested within the past year.

With younger generations becoming a larger part of the delegate pool, the meetings industry continues to evolve and expand at a rapid pace. At a time when a do more with less budget is becoming the norm meeting planners are more critically assessing those meeting venues and elements that provide high impact experiences with strong returns on investment.

In 2016, the overall objectives and goals of meetings were generally constant with years past. In 2017, the adoption and use of new technology, the physical design of meeting and networking spaces and the greater emphasis on experience creation have sparked a shift in meeting planner objectives and goals. While planners are still focused on return on investment, education and networking, an increased focus on delegate engagement and personal development is taking shape.

Understanding current meeting planner objectives and goals, and how these are projected to change meeting elements demands will allow venues to thrive in this increasingly competitive environment. Data for the 2017 iteration of the report was obtained through a detailed survey with similar questions from the 2016 report. More than 180 meeting planners from 4 different continents provided their insight, allowing us to identify and deliver key trends on what will be required in meeting rooms of the future and to help venues respond to the following questions:

- *How have the objectives and goals of meetings changed over time?*
- *Is experience creation going to be more important when planning meetings in the future?*
- *What are the ideal physical aspects of meeting space and how have they changed over time?*
- *What will be the most critical technology needs over the next three to five years?*

Meeting planners surveyed managed corporate, association and government meetings and conferences. A larger portion of this year's respondent pool, **17%, were third-party agency planners. 54% of the meeting planner respondents dedicated more than 75% of their working time to meetings management,** while only **24% spent less than 49% of their time organising meetings.** This is a marked increase from 2016, where **37% of respondents spent less than 49% of their time organising meetings.**

This summary will support meeting venues operating in a time of rapid change by offering insights into the challenges and future needs of buyers and delegates.



A SUBTLE SHIFT IN MEETING OBJECTIVES



The objectives we plan today are truly focused on education, networking, creating opportunities for sponsors to obtain new business, and creating a more experiential/interactive memorable experience for the attendees. The meetings from 5 years ago were mostly about education and networking. As mentioned above, it is much, much more than that today.

– Carol Malinky, CM,
Event Dir. C.A. Malinky
Communications & Events.



The confluence of advancements in technology, demands of incoming generations, and tighter budgets across the industry are subtly shifting the objective and goals, as well as how they are achieved, in the meetings industry. This year meeting planners report that the objectives and goals are largely pointing towards delegate engagement, away from presentation and lecturing style meetings to interactive sessions to create *memorable experiences*.

The 2017 report found that in pursuit of creating memorable experiences, meeting planners are looking to create more personalised experiences for delegates by,

- Heightening the importance of personal development objectives
- Integrating more interactive technology
- Carving out time for more networking and social opportunities
- Changing conference formats

The trends indicate a need for less productivity and more creativity according to Adam Lanteigne, Sr. Product Marketing Manager from the Surface division at Microsoft. According to a 2017 study conducted by Steelcase, 60% of workplaces are measuring productivity by how much work employees are producing while only 33% measure productivity by

creative thinking and idea generation. 77% of workers believe that in the future, creativity will be a critical job skill and 76% believe that emerging technologies will change their job. Whilst this research focused on workplace environments, we can assume it translates into meetings and conferences. Even more concerning, only half believe they are creative at their job and most feel every job requires creativity. By breaking down planning and engagement silos and leading with purpose, every person becomes more accountable to develop and maintain the culture of an organisation including the results of implementing the change required to leverage technology toolkits.

Adam Lanteigne further recommends that simultaneously, conference venue management must embrace the diversity of thought and culture and consider the experience of remote delegates in foreign geographies. This will inevitably improve the mobility of experiences as companies move rapidly to more secure, cloud based infrastructures. Cloud based technology will connect an ecosystem of people through devices that make sharing creative ideas an expectation rather than a hindrance.

Content & Educational Objectives

Content and educational objectives of meetings remain critical for meeting planners, but personal development has gained traction in the past five years. Planners agree that over the past five years, personal development as an objective in the meetings space has become more important. The industry is moving into an environment where delegates and attendees are looking for a personal experience, personal service, and content delivered based on personal preferences.

Last month, the Incentive Research Foundation published *Translating the Neuroscience of Behavioural Economics into Employee Engagement*. This latest research helps prove that corporate retreats, meetings and incentive travel programs drive real results to enhance organisational growth. The study brings new science to what motivates employees. Primarily, the research explains how most human decision-making is emotional as opposed to rational. A newfound emphasis on emotional decision-making is a driving force for the increased focus on a delegate's personal and emotional connection with educational content to achieve personal development.

Sharing Experiences, Engaging with the Outside

While interactive technology in the meeting space fosters individual engagement to provide a more personal experience, technology evolves rapidly and can be expensive. Nearly 20% of meeting planners report that in the next five years, they expect increased pressure to stay ahead of the curve by integrating the latest, greatest technology.

Implementing new technology has always been an issue, but with tighter budgets and increasing demand, planners should ask what is the problem that needs to be solved and what is the need? Is it meaningful, beneficial and will it ultimately add value?



Alastair Stewart, MD of etc. venues has found ways to combine technology and art to create engaging venue spaces. He explains *“Part of the delegate experience includes the effect that artwork in a venue has. One example being that etc. venues provides art that is especially designed for taking selfies, creating a selfie spot, for delegates to share their experience with others outside of the meeting.”*

Delegate Connectivity

Mobile technology provides greater connectivity between delegates and the outside world and, while this can be a positive, greater access to the outside world is leading to less engagement and relationship-building during the meeting. Meeting planners are counter-acting this by carving out more time for networking, and using technology and strategic planning to foster collaboration and personal interaction between attendees.

Creating networking opportunities can begin even prior to the event. As delegates arrive at the venue, meeting planners can create gathering spaces or co-working spaces for delegates to open their laptop, meet, and talk with other delegates. For larger events, apps can provide pre-event communication between delegates.



Hybrid Meetings

“There will be more emphasis on Hybrid Meetings to fulfill more engagement goals” according to Cory Brooks, Managing Partner at Speciality Planners International.

Glisser Founder Michael Piddock shared his observations “We’re seeing smart planners begin to get twice as much value from their technology budgets. The same technology that is being used to create interactive experiences in the venue (digital Q&A, polling, etc.) is being combined with streaming video to deliver an interactive online meeting as well. We ran an event ourselves and, despite being overbooked, we lost 50% of attendees to the weather (a glorious sunny Thursday evening in London). However, we had 200 people on the livestream actively participating. It saved the day!”

Budgets and ROI

Despite appreciating the importance of creating larger than life, memorable experiences for delegates, meeting planner budgets appear to be tightening. In providing examples of how objectives of meetings they plan today have changed versus the meetings planned five years ago, 28% of meeting planners indicated an increased emphasis on providing accurate financial ROI measurements and doing more with less budgets.



“It’s all about the attendee experience and what they can remember and retain from the conference or event. For financial ROI, the budgets are tighter and we need to do more with less and find synergies and cost savings without compromising the quality of the event.”

The increasing importance of measuring ROI is also felt in the delivery of training courses. Valerie Hausman, Associate Dean, Global Executive Education at Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business confirms that their clients are asking for this more now than in the past.



Meeting organisers eschew the use of once-popular surveys that primarily assessed whether attendees had a good time in exchange for a growing body of metrics that determine whether their events met the business objectives and impacted the bottom line.

– Jessie States, MPI



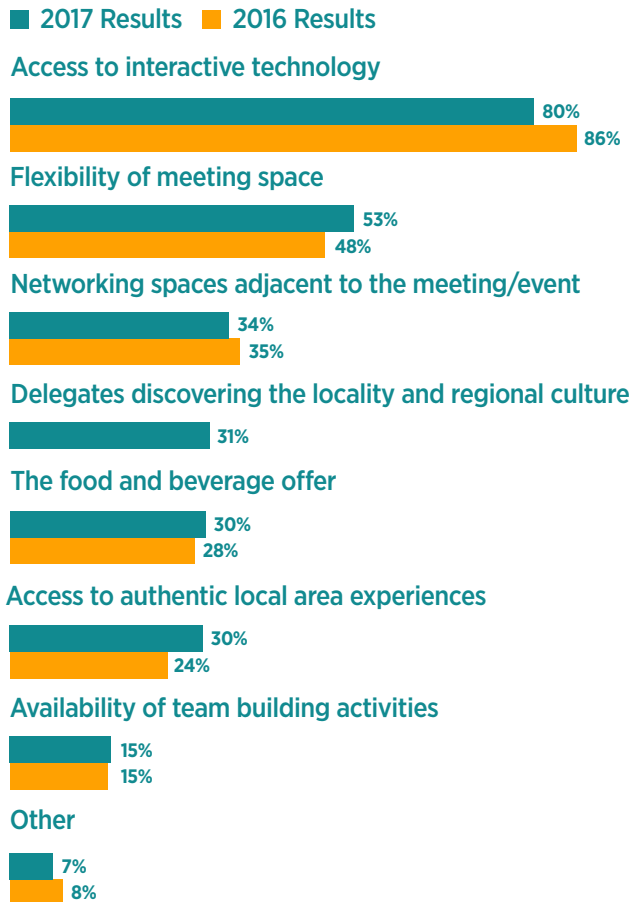
The idea of doing more with less no longer applies to JUST the budget. Meeting planners are becoming increasingly aware of delegate's time out of the office. 11% of meeting planners report that in the past five years, time management has become increasingly important. Similarly, 15% of meeting planners report that in the next five years, they anticipate more frequent, smaller, focused meetings to reduce time spent out of the office.

MEETINGS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Meeting Venue Elements

Meeting planners are still aware that meeting environments influence the way delegates learn and communicate and that a good meeting environment will foster productivity and motivation. In line with 2016 findings the flexibility of meeting space, access to interactive technology, and networking spaces are among the most important venue elements. It is no surprise that meeting planners report these elements increasing in importance in the next five years.

Figure 1. Meeting Venue Elements More Important in the Next Five Years



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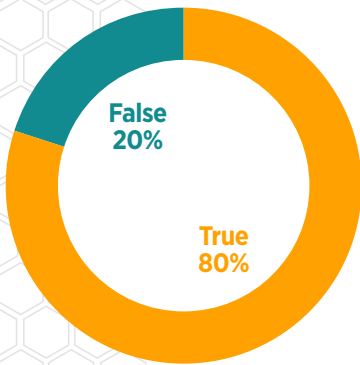


Heidi Neisen, Hospitality Sales Manager for SICO Inc., designers of meeting and F&B venue furniture highlights *“Design elements have a large impact on meeting spaces. We are experiencing a trend where operational advantages of some products are overlooked to accommodate the design and overall feel the product helps create. More work on the operations side for venue staff, but visually pleasing for the meeting attendees.”*

Adam Lanteigne, Sr. Product Marketing Manager from the Surface division at Microsoft believes that workplace and meeting environments can be far better aligned, given the future is less about predictable, repetitive processes and more about creative thinking and problem solving across companies, at every level and in every role. During this time of unprecedented change, there will need to be an increasing focus on employee and delegate experiences, developing agile people, tools, spaces and processes to disrupt the status quo and maintain relevancy.

Figure 2. TRUE or FALSE:

My current role in planning meetings involves MORE experience creation for delegates versus two to five years ago.



“Access has led youth to rely less on info they receive from teachers and parents. Consequently, they are less interested in lectures, and more interested in having their specific questions addressed. Indeed, helping delegates learn how to find answers will be much more valuable than what the answers are. Connecting them to the right subject matter experts, the right partners and the right peers will be far more valuable than delivering content that may or may not be valuable to them. Content delivery can be easily accomplished via online vehicles; meetings will be a means of connecting people.”

- MPI, Future of Meetings Research

CREATING MEETING EXPERIENCES

Meeting planners in 2017 indicate food and beverage offerings are becoming more important. By taking technology, flexibility of space, networking spaces, and food and beverage into consideration, planners are looking at the meeting more holistically, using these elements together in their experience creation.

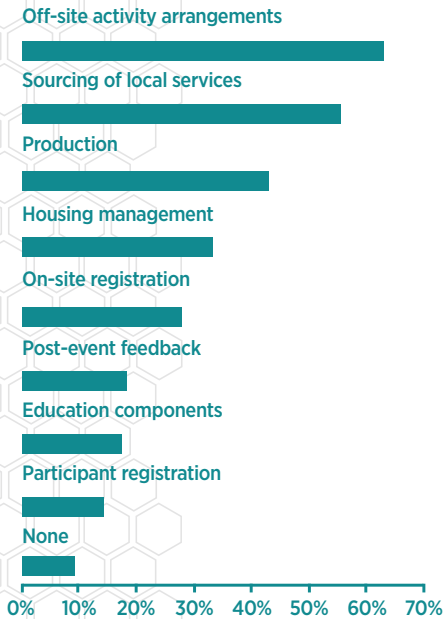
With shorter attention spans and higher expectations, delegates today are looking for high impact memorable experiences. The role of the meeting planner is following suit. This year, 80% of meeting planners report their current role in planning meetings involves more experience creation, a 5% increase from 2016.

Meeting planners do not anticipate this role to decrease anytime soon. When asked to think five years ahead, respondents agree that experience creation will be increasingly important when planning meetings. Planners pointed to the demands of incoming generations as the primary driver of this trend.

The clear majority of meeting planners agree that incoming generations are influencing meeting formats. Meeting planners report this new cohort of delegates are looking for,

1. **Increased integration of new technology (especially mobile connectivity)**
2. **More opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and stimulation**
3. **Shorter, quicker sessions replacing long-form presentations**
4. **More emphasis on creativity**

**Figure 3. Venue Elements
Planners Consider Outsourcing**

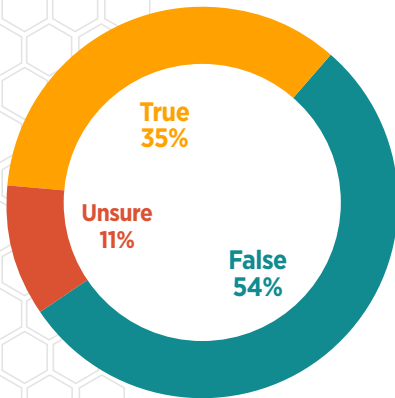


Meeting planners and venues, more than ever, must work together to provide these experiences. Fortunately, this year meeting planners report more openness to sharing the roles and responsibilities of the meeting planning process than in years past. Over 50% of respondents indicated their willingness to outside off-site activity arrangements and the sourcing of local services (i.e. entertainment, printing, etc.). Dianne Devitt, DND Group highlights that the increasing complexities and experiences introduced to meetings can carry risk if not delivered properly and the advent of the Meeting Stylist/Architect can plan an important part for larger events.



In addition to the continued importance of experience creation, meeting planners, as in 2016, still agree on the growing emphasis on delegate productivity and networking. These two trends will be the foundation for meeting planners' measuring return on investment and providing justification for the expense of experiential events to key decision makers. Leading planner association MPI has developed a formula for measuring the ROI of learning and networking; once considered unquantifiable, many organisations are finding unique ways to identify quantitative means for calculating business value.

Figure 4.
Can brands alone give confidence and reassurance that the meeting product and services will be of a high standard?



Big Brands Influence on Meetings

When asked how they believe major branded venues (Hilton, Marriot Hyatt, etc.) influence meeting elements, meeting planners indicate that in general branded venues had positively influenced venue elements such as food and beverage quality, meeting space design, staff, flexibility, and technology. When it came to creativity, meeting planners report major brands have little or no influence.

Even though meeting planners report creativity as an important consideration in meeting design, the majority, 62%, are still using major hotel brand venues over independent and small group venues. While 54% of meeting planners believe that a brand alone can give confidence and reassurance that the meeting product and services will be of high standard, there are still a large percentage of planners who lack confidence in brands or are unsure of the quality standard a major brand can provide.

While a brand may be a door-opener and often appear to be the safer option, meeting planners are carefully assessing the standards, capabilities and incentive programs of venues before placing a meeting there.

Meeting planners are still mindful of the effects a meeting environment can have on overall delegate productivity. This year's findings show planners are approaching the venue selection process in a more holistic manner and considering all meeting venue elements as part of the memorable experience they aim to create.

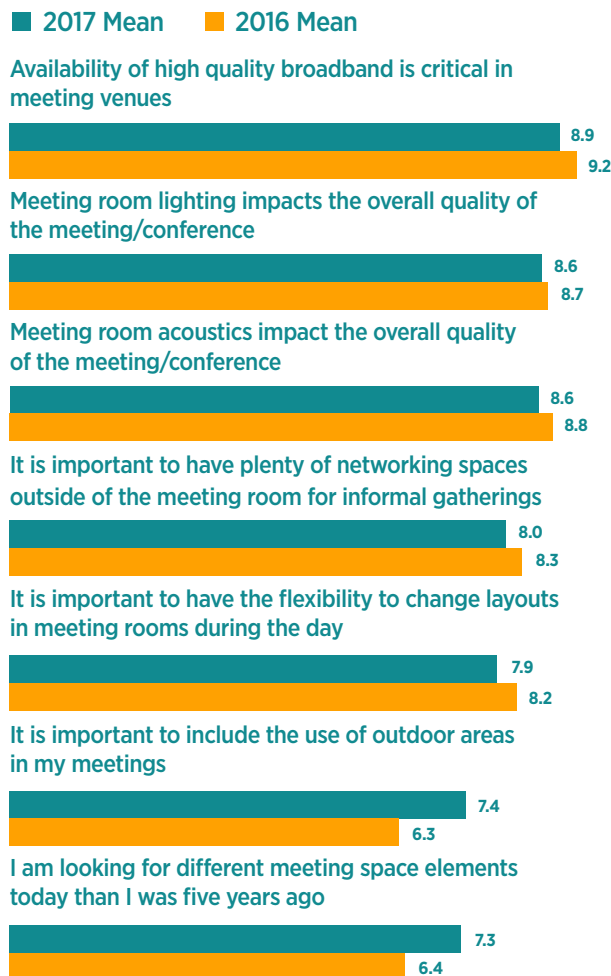
PHYSICAL MEETING SPACES AND DESIGN

Helpful Tip for Meeting Planners:
When inspecting a potential site for a meeting, download an Internet Speed Test App on your mobile device to test various areas throughout the venue.

Planners Savvy When Assessing Venue Suitability

Throughout the past several years, physical meeting venue elements deemed critical to the success of meetings have largely remained constant. As meeting planners work hard to create engaging experiences, these same elements are projected to remain important, with access to outdoor areas becoming more important in the years to come than in the past.

Figure 5. Current Physical Elements of Meeting Venues



Broadband, lighting and meeting room acoustics remain the most important physical elements of meeting venues. Jeff Loether of Electro Media Design notes that venues and meeting planners can use portable technologies to supplement or compensate for poor lighting, Wi-Fi, sound & video. But fixing poor acoustics is extremely difficult unless you put headphones on everybody. Background noise, reverberation & echoes, and poor isolation from adjacent spaces, for example, can have negative effects on meeting room acoustics. Good acoustics must be baked into the room and systems design from the beginning or during renovations.

Internet Infrastructure

Meeting planners and venues increasingly need to consider the contention rate for Wi-Fi. It is not just the speed of the internet in a venue, but the load that it can handle at any one time, when multiple meetings and delegates are using it simultaneously. Venues are increasingly looking to dedicated Wi-Fi capacity for each event, to ensure each event gets the quality and capacity they need.

Many meeting planners report Wi-Fi should be included in venue rates, and request this service be provided at a low rate, or even free. While it is important for venues to supply high quality Wi-Fi at an affordable rate, venues can ease tension by raising awareness of the expense of the service at various levels, and include this information at the beginning of the venue inspection process.



Michael Piddock, Founder of Glisser highlights, *"Decent Wi-Fi really is a must-have now. It's not only about supporting event apps and audience participation technology, but to provide the basic connectivity busy delegates expect wherever they go. I'm pleased to say that the quality has improved dramatically in the last few years, but it's just as important to have knowledgeable technical staff available to support the infrastructure. The best venues stand out by employing great tech people - and it really shows."*

The Venue DNA

When asked to describe the physical characteristics of their ideal meeting venue in five words, meeting planners mentioned the following words most often,

1. **Open**
2. **Flexible**
3. **Bright**
4. **Natural Light**
5. **Comfortable**

Further, when presented with several options of room types and asked to rank their likelihood of using the room type (on a scale of 1=not likely to 10=highly likely) meeting planners were most likely to use flat-floored meeting rooms with flexible layouts, or rooms offering homey lounge style informal seating. Auditoriums and tiered meeting or lecture rooms are out of favour with planners.

As we saw last year, meeting planners are trending towards more unique and flexible meeting spaces. When asked how strongly they agree with the statement "access to collaborative friendly meeting space will become more important in the next two to five years" (on a scale of 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree), meeting planners provided an average rating of "8.7," a .7 increase from 2016.

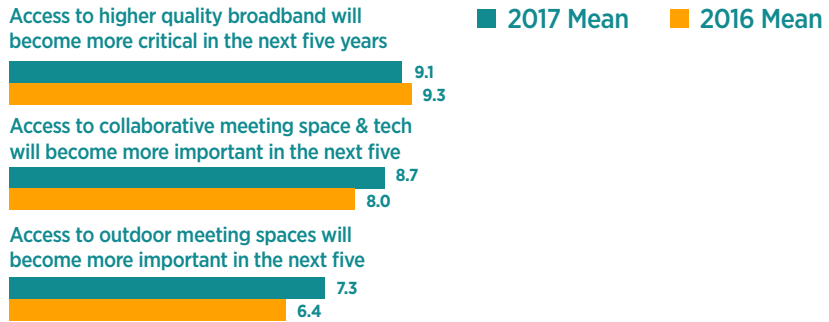


I need to be able to customise my meeting room without a lot of restrictions. The criteria for my meeting rooms have increased drastically. Clients are more educated than they were before and a simple meeting room with bare bones will not cut it anymore. The AV quality, set-up tables, internet options, food originality in the space, etc. are all on the check list when it comes to finding a space that fits. Venues are having to upgrade once or twice a year to keep up with the demand of clients and their every-changing needs.”

- Eileen Ettinger,
Events Manager
The international Centre.



Figure 6. Future Physical Elements of Meeting Venues



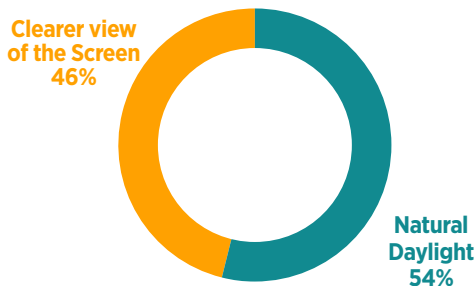
In some cases, venues report that small break out rooms are being replaced with communal co-working spaces, without walls and doors. The modern delegate wants less time in session and more time networking in high quality social spaces.

Alastair Stewart, MD of ETC. Venues highlights that exhibition space is critical to conference planners, in that its location relevant to the meeting space and break areas, is key to maximizing the exhibitor opportunity. The exhibition experience for the exhibitor and delegate is very important and often venues in the past have not considered this.

To make these more open, flexible, collaborative layouts a comfortable experience for delegates, venues are using wayfinding, the concept of planning venue layouts and signage with the focus of alleviating delegate pain points. If they are not doing so today, meeting planners, should be asking if the venue being considered is easily navigable by delegates, making the user experience, simple and easy.

In 2016, we asked meeting planners which is more important in their opinion, natural daylight or a clearer view of the screen. When posed with the same question this year, 54% of meeting planners chose natural daylight, a 17% increase from 2016. Good design provides both, especially with direct-view flat-panel displays instead of projection technology.

Figure 7. Which is more important in your opinion.





I think a more global emphasis will be used and unique venues will be in higher demand instead of the traditional ballroom or meeting space.”

**– Jessica Utterback,
Sales and Events
Manager, Howl at
the Moon St. Louis**



Myriad studies show that natural light aids learning. What needs to be determined (and the answer will undoubtedly vary by the design of curriculum) is whether screens, monitors and displays are more important to the delivery of education and content than the addition of natural light – and to what extent this can be ameliorated on either end to create the ideal learning environment.

Alternative Spaces

In addition, meeting planners reported flexibility in rooms, layouts and size, and alternative spaces (venues other than the traditional classroom or ballroom style) as the leading differences in the meeting spaces they’re looking for today versus the spaces they required five years ago.

These alternative spaces, meeting planners report, are part of the overall experience creation wherein delegates are transported to a space unlike the sterile hotel meeting spaces they’re used to. As meeting environments clearly influence the way delegates learn and communicate, alternative spaces are a creative solution to creating the wow factor.

Tina Buehler, Senior Conference Planning Manager at Dolce Q Center has observed a change in meeting organiser behaviours in the last 12 months, which includes different configurations, using lighter furniture that Planners can change around in the day themselves rather than having to ask venue staff.

Alastair Stewart, MD of ETC. Venues feels that the incoming generation of delegates want a different meeting experience from their parents at conferences and events and the emergence of city located non-residential day meeting venues is tapping into this desire, where urbanisation is playing a part in buyer location preferences.

Bringing the Outdoors into Meeting Formats



Meeting planners this year report an increase in demand for outside learning spaces. No matter the use, outdoor spaces are used to shake up the monotony at meetings and increase delegate productivity. As such, venues are looking to develop outdoor spaces where available.

Trends in the physical elements and design aspects of venues, once again, contribute to creating an experience with a high impact factor on the audience.

According to Jeu Bressers, owner of Kapellerput Conference Centre and Hotel in Eindhoven, the meeting experience is not limited by the exterior walls of the venue. A lot of venues are in stunning natural environments, perfect for the creative meeting. Relaxation recharges the brain, and fresh air can speed up that process. *“You might think that holding a meeting outside, the attendees will be distracted. Brain science shows that learning in an unexpected environment, like outside in nature, triggers the release of dopamine to the hippocampus, the part of the brain that creates memories.”*

COMMUNICATIONS & CONNECTIONS



Interaction, Engagement & Communication

As incoming generations demand the latest in technology advancements to stay engaged and interacting with meeting content, technology is becoming of critical importance in venue selection. Meeting planners are continuing to implement technology that boosts delegate interaction and engagement, and with the success of these new technologies in improving communication, integration of new technology is not slowing down anytime soon.

Per MPI's 2017 spring edition of Meetings Outlook, meeting planners are significantly increasing budgets for conference technology and AV equipment suggesting that meeting planners are willing to make the investment because of the competitive edge and wow factor new technologies bring to meetings.

Creston Woods, General Manager at Benchmark at Deloitte University in Westlake feels a focus on learning and networking can be stimulated during the planning process. Deloitte's delegates use Proximity technology to attach detailed profiles to their name badges, helping delegates discover each other based on shared interests.

Figure 8. Implemented Technologies and Their Effect on Communication

Technologies	% of Venues Implementing	Improved Communication?
Conference App	49%	✓
Audience Participation/Audience response/Social Q&A	48%	✓
Social Media Campaigns	46%	✓
Telepresence/Virtual participation/Remote presenters	37%	✓
Live Event Streaming	36%	✓
Delegate Screen-sharing	18%	✓
Beacon/GPS Delegate Tracking	14%	✓
None of the above	4%	✓
Other	1%	✓



As a technology provider, this is hugely important to us - event planners are looking to companies like ours to guide them through the challenges. With GDPR rules around data protection due to come into play in 2018, it's important that delegate information is collected and stored correctly. Venues need to have good technical know-how (even if just taking an email address to use the Wi-Fi), or partner with vendors that they can rely on to be on top of this."

– Michael Piddock,
Founder of Glisser.



Conference Apps

A surprisingly lower percentage of meeting planners from our survey indicated implementing conference apps versus findings from MPI's research on app adoption. MPI found, in 2014, that 63% of meeting professional had implemented a conference app. Although the technology is improving communication, it's popularity among meeting planners may be waning due to the high broadband apps demand.

Technology that encourages communication between hosts and delegates continues to be amongst the leading technologies implemented in meetings today. By providing delegates the opportunity to communicate directly with meeting hosts, planners can better understand delegate preferences. Planners can use this knowledge to act on trends that will be most impactful for their attendees' personal experience.

Security of Data

In 2016, the security of data was highlighted as important to meeting planners. This year, when asked how much they agree or disagree (on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree) with various statements around technology, respondents provided an average rating of "8.9," a .7 increase from 2016, for the statement "security of my data will become more important in the next five years at meeting venues."

Guaranteed Broadband

Meeting planners, once again, agree that their dependency on internet/Wi-Fi at a venue has increased, and will continue to increase in the next five years. Most meeting planners, 58%, indicated that they would not even consider shortlisting a venue that did not have the guaranteed internet capacity to support the needs of their event. An even larger majority, 72 percent, indicated that affordable (or free) high, speed wireless internet will be the most critical technology needed for meetings in the next five years.



More conference apps are being developed and when you have hundreds to thousands of participants downloading / streaming / uploading to a conference or gamification app, it can create a negative vibe for the experience. I recently attended a meeting where all the participants spent 1.5 hours in gamification mode uploading photos and videos. The hotel's Wi-Fi could not handle the volume and most of the uploads were delayed. This was a small group of about 130 people divided into 16-18 teams.”

– Diane Deyerler
CMP, Principal
Deyerler & Watanabe LLC

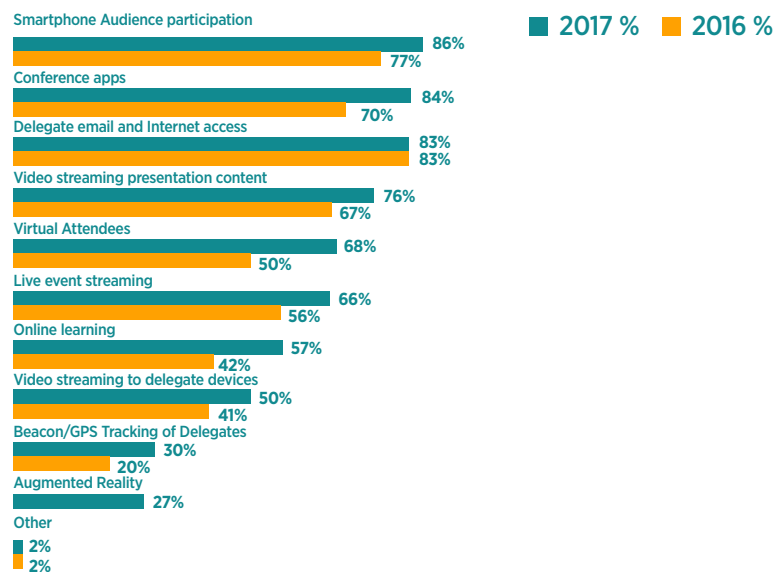


Figure 9. Top Critical Technology for Meetings in the Next Five Years

1. **Affordable (or free) high-speed wireless internet**
2. **Data Security**
3. **Apps (for networking, scheduling, communication, sharing, etc.)**
4. **Interactive technology**
5. **Streaming support**

In 2016, meeting planners indicated that internet bandwidth was most important for delegate email and internet access. This year email sunk to the number three position, behind smartphone audience participation and conference apps. Meeting planners are increasingly focused on keeping delegate attention on program content and away from their outside lives. Corbin Ball, a meetings industry technology expert warns that one challenge with meeting technology, is that it is reliant on the delegates phone technology.

Figure 10. Tasks Requiring More Broadband the Next Five Years



GPS technology is also cited as a challenge as often conferences take place in buildings where GPS signals are weakened. Danny Han of NHTV University of Applied Sciences Breda feels that Infra-red technology will play a bigger part in future meeting technologies.

The results showed that internet is vital to their experience & extremely important to them. Venues are catching up and now providing valuable usage statistics to planners post event.



It will tie into the experiential design, whatever that may be – being at a healthcare conference and feeling what it’s like to be a patient in surgery, travel conference showing you VR of a destination, etc.”

– Carol Porter,
Chief of Staff, Viawest



Virtual & Augmented Reality

MPI’s Spring 2016 Meetings Outlook report found that 20% of meeting professionals said they will use or will likely use *Virtual Reality* or *Augmented Reality* technologies within the next year indicating high adoption rates and openness to this technology.



Danny Han, Lecturer & Researcher at NHTV University of Applied Sciences, Breda, the Netherlands comments, *“On the actual question of VR in the survey, it could be interpreted that many respondents were not entirely sure what to expect from VR and whether it would be ready to actually be used meaningfully for their events. It was*

interesting to see though that participants that had an idea of VR largely referred to the interactive element that VR could provide, connecting people rather than showcase. While many respondents seem to be aware of the potential that AR or VR technology could provide, the big question is how to develop it meaningfully and cost-efficiently?”

Alastair Stewart of etc venues, predicts that as one of the highest costs for a conference, is hiring the keynote speaker, hologram technology as it evolves could soon become a more cost-effective solution. The costs of hologram technology may need to drop further before the tipping point occurs. The unattainable speaker could be attainable in future.

As planners continue to implement the new technology at meetings now and in the future, two key questions will be essential in guiding which technology to invest in, and which planners should scrap:

1. *What problems are we looking to solve?*
2. *How will this help achieve our meeting objectives?*

BREAKS & MEAL TIMES

Allergies and Personal Eating Plans

Results from this year's survey show meeting planners are increasingly including the food and beverage offerings in their overall experience creation. When asked how much they agree or disagree (on a scale of 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree) to a series of statements about food and beverage offerings, meeting planners provided a rating of "8.4" for the statement "food and beverage is a key part of the meeting design and experience."

The inclusion of food and beverage in the *experience*, is not just about providing culturally relevant food or boosting the wow factor with creative food stations. Meeting planners report that food and beverage offerings directly link to attendee satisfaction and the personalised experience.

As seen in figure 11, meeting planners most agree with the statement, "In the past two years there has been an increase in the number of requests to accommodate allergies, personal eating plans or preferences."



Figure 11. Importance of Food and Beverage Offerings

In the past two years there has been an increase in the number of requests to accommodate allergies, personal eating plans or preferences.



There is a link between food types served at different day parts and delegate energy levels.



Food & Beverage is a key part of the meeting design and experience.



There is a benefit in venues offering meeting and conference delegates continuous refreshment break service throughout the day versus set times for delivery.



Nutritional information should be visible or available.



Food offerings and corresponding presentation should be offered based on the time of the year (seasonality) and the venue's geographic location.



Health and well-being is a primary initiative of my organization.



We offer evening activities, beyond simply bar service after dinner.



The topic, tone or message influences menu planning. Example: bad news = comfort food.



Food is necessary and considered "fuel" only.



When asked, what frustrates them the most in terms of food and beverage offerings, meeting planners listed the lack of accommodation for dietary needs as one of the top issues they encounter with venues.



Figure 12. Frustrations with Food & Beverage Offerings

1. Lack of variety and creativity (including local options)
2. Lack of accommodation for dietary needs (including labeling of food)
3. High prices
4. Lack of healthy options
5. Menus are not bespoke enough



Warwick Conferences Head of Food, Mark Ralph confirms that although menus at their three conference centres changing daily, they offer an allergy sheet for each service denoting the allergens in each dish. All their chefs are trained to the UK's Royal Society of Public Health level in allergen awareness.

Andrew Taylor, Operations Manager of the same venue group further suggests *“Diets based on allergens, intolerances and lifestyle are becoming ever more prominent, there is an expectation that there is a good choice for those with dietary needs. Soya Milk, Gluten free options are expected as standard, options that show a lack of imagination are viewed negatively.”*

Liz Pearson, registered dietitian and author adds, “As a dietitian, I’d love to see more healthy options delivered with greater creativity. For example, a “build-your-own” Greek yogurt parfait as an afternoon snack can be highly nutritious, help sustain energy levels, and be a whole lot of fun for meeting participants to eat and put together.”

Health & Wellbeing

Overall, meeting planners are looking for healthier, more creative food options. These could include locally sourced foods, creative food stations or simply more vegetables and less saturated fats. One venue group felt the salad bar is ever more important with a growing number of delegates considering this as the focus of lunch as opposed to a side option. MPI reports seeing a strong trend in the demand for continuous break stations and healthier food options.



Molly Marsh, Director of Education & Engagement at AMR Management Services comments *“I think there is a variance from venue to venue in terms of willingness to work with the client. We continue to be told -- by the industry -- that we should be talking to chefs to tailor menus, tell them what we want and need and work together to create the best all-around experience. I have seen some chefs and venues work with us and others simply direct us to their established menus. That lack of “service” has meant a lot of times F&B gets disconnected from our other meeting design approaches just because we aren’t always seeing the partnerships we need.”*

Venues acknowledge that there is a need for food to be ever more ethical and sustainable and that organisers and delegates have concerns around wastage.



Health and wellness deserves to be a top priority. What we eat not only affects our physical health, but more and more research shows it greatly impacts our mental health too. Eating a diet high in plant foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, is linked to significantly better mental health, including lower levels of anxiety, along with higher levels of energy and happiness.”

- Liz Pearson, Registered Dietitian and Author, www.lizpearson.com

Changing Meeting Formats Around Food Delivery

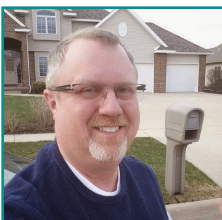
Meeting planners agree that the format of break and meal times should change in the future. When asked how formats should change, meeting planners were divided on whether the trend should move towards shorter, more frequent breaks or longer breaks and meal times. Perhaps the best solution for this discrepancy is for venues to allow more flexibility in breaks and meal times, as well as the meals provided, to accommodate meeting planner and delegate requests.



Michael Pryner, Head of Advisory Services at ConsensusOnline.dk feels, *“Lunch seating are time consuming and doesn’t support networking as good as reception style lunches (standing) and they shouldn’t be more than 45 minutes.”*

Figure 13. Top Changes in Format of Breaks & Meal Times

1. More frequent, shorter breaks
2. Longer breaks and/or meal times
3. Healthier food & beverage offerings
4. Flexibility in breaks/meal times
5. Creative food stations as part of the overall experience creation



Scott Dart, Principal, Scott Dart & Associates cites *“I can tell the traditional plated meal is going away. Probably continuous breaks (offered by many conference venues) will become more popular, offering individual attendees the ability to “break” whenever they need/desire, rather than schedule time points for everyone to do it simultaneously.”*

Survey respondents felt strongly that breaks should occur more often throughout the day, be lighter and healthier in terms of food and beverage provision and in some cases, have little or no food available. The key is to create more environments for networking opportunities to assist delegates in continuing engaging discussions, increasing their enthusiasm for the meeting agenda topics.

Meetings need inspiration and creativity in their overall food and beverage program. Venues need to consider that personalising and ensuring the variety of food items is part of the individual experience and having trained staff to manage dietary requirements and allergies will better support their clients.

CONCLUSIONS



There are meetings and then there are IACC meetings.”

Even over the course of one short year, the meetings industry has continued to shape and evolve influenced by incoming generations, advances in technology, experiential meeting design and the continued mandates to do less with more. The data contained in this report identifies some of the prominent trends seen among meeting planners.

The phrase, meeting experience, is now common-place, but we should consider how much do we understand about how to best design and create these experiences and which have the biggest impact on delegates and create strong connections and memories? Gaining a better understanding about how to influence the experience for delegates, both positively and negatively, will be important and will be linked to the need for more ROI. Looking forward, venues should consider themselves curators of exceptional experiences and offer more advice and services in addition to the typical venue elements.

There will be a greater importance given to the destination or venue setting, in terms of what it can do to support the off-site activities which are needed. Planners may look to outsource further in these areas as events become multi-dimensional.

About IACC

The IACC Vision: IACC is a community of passionate people and organisations delivering innovative and exceptional meeting experiences.

Founded in 1981, IACC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to promoting understanding and awareness of the meetings venue industry and to giving member properties the tools necessary to provide an exceptional IACC meeting experience. Active members meet a set of stringent Quality Standards and agree to a Code of Ethics. Currently, the association includes approximately 350 members from the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Kenya, Nigeria, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Spain, England, Scotland, Ukraine, The Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Hungary and the Philippines.

For more information, visit the website at www.iacconline.org

Official Research Partners

IACC wishes to acknowledge the following partners who have contributed to the funding of the IACC Meeting Room of the Future (TM) initiative.



PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF MEETINGS

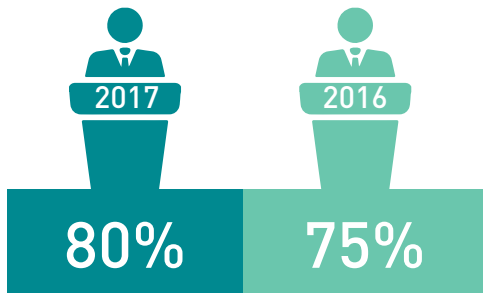


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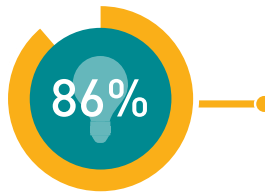
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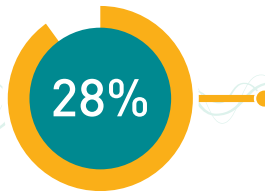
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An increase of 5% of responding meeting planners report that their current role involves more "experience creation" versus two to five years ago.

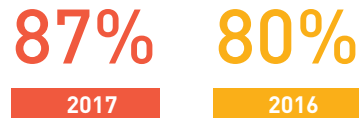
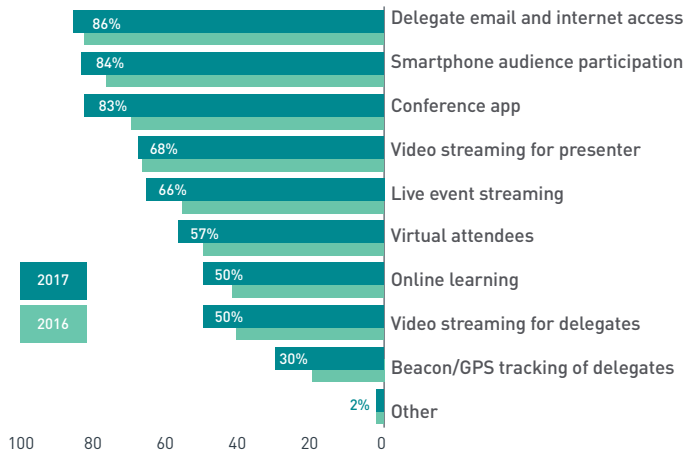


Of respondents who agree that Meeting room lighting impacts the overall quality of the meeting/conference.

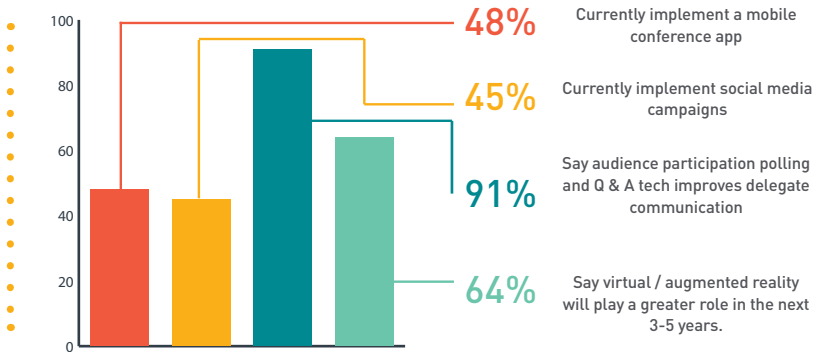
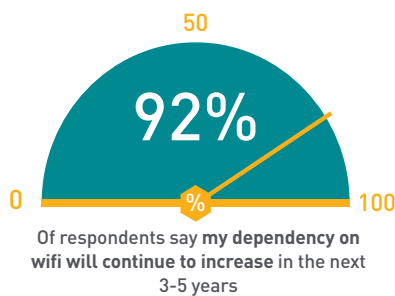


28% report an increased emphasis on providing accurate financial ROI measurements.

Why will Broadband be increasingly important in the next two to five years in order to better handle these tasks ?



Of respondents agree that access to collaborative meeting space will become more important over the next two to five years



Over 50% indicated a willingness to outsource off-site activity arrangements and sourcing of local services



Say that nutritional information should be visible at food stations.



Say in the past two years, there has been an increase in the number of allergies, personal eating plans.



Believe that networking spaces adjacent to the meeting room are more important now, than they were two to five years ago.

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In general, meeting planners do cite a continued trend towards needing more flexible meeting spaces, where they can adjust layouts continuously.



80%

Say access to interactive technology will be more important in the next 5 years.



Primarily due to the changing demographics of attendees, with millennials preferring experiences over meetings, it is worth noting that within 10 years they will make up 70% of the workforce.

Adam Lanteigne, Microsoft



Conference venue management must embrace the diversity of thought and culture and consider the experience of remote delegates in foreign geographies.

Valerie Hausman, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business



Confirms that their clients are asking for ROI measurements more now than in the past.

Alastair Stewart, etc Venues



Exhibition space is critical to conference planners, in that its location should be relevant to the meeting space and break areas. It's key to maximizing the exhibitor opportunity and often venues in the past have not considered this.

Mark Ralph, Warwick Conferences



Due to the rise in allergies, confirms that although menus at their three conference venues change daily, they offer an allergy sheet for each service denoting the allergens in each dish.

Corbin Ball, Meetings Industry Tech Expert

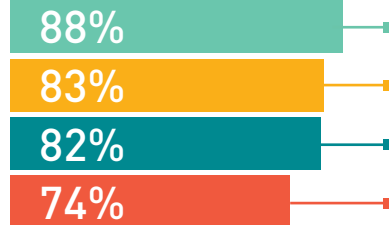


Warns that one challenge with meeting technology, is that it is reliant on the delegates phone technology.

Jessie States, Meeting Professionals International



Meeting planners eschew the use of once-popular surveys that primarily assessed whether attendees had a good time in exchange for a growing body of metrics that determine whether their events met the business objectives.



Meeting room art / design elements have a motivational influence on delegates

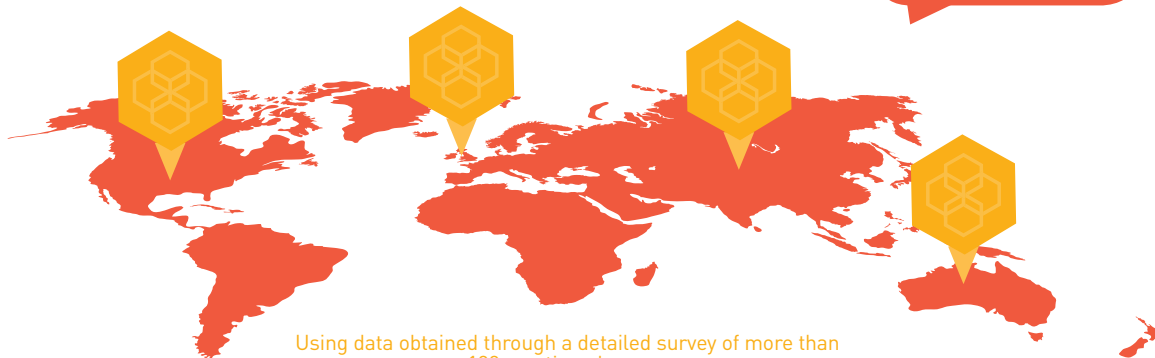
Meeting room and supporting spaces influence delegate creativity

Meeting room and supporting spaces influence delegate productivity

Of planners are willing to outsource off-site activity arrangements

Delivering a personalised delegate experience will be more important in future.

Meeting Planners report major brands have no influence on creativity.



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