

Event Performance Landscape In The Age Of AI

How Unified Event Technology Creates The Performance And Data
Infrastructure For High-Impact Event Programs

A FORRESTER CONSULTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER, SEPTEMBER 2026

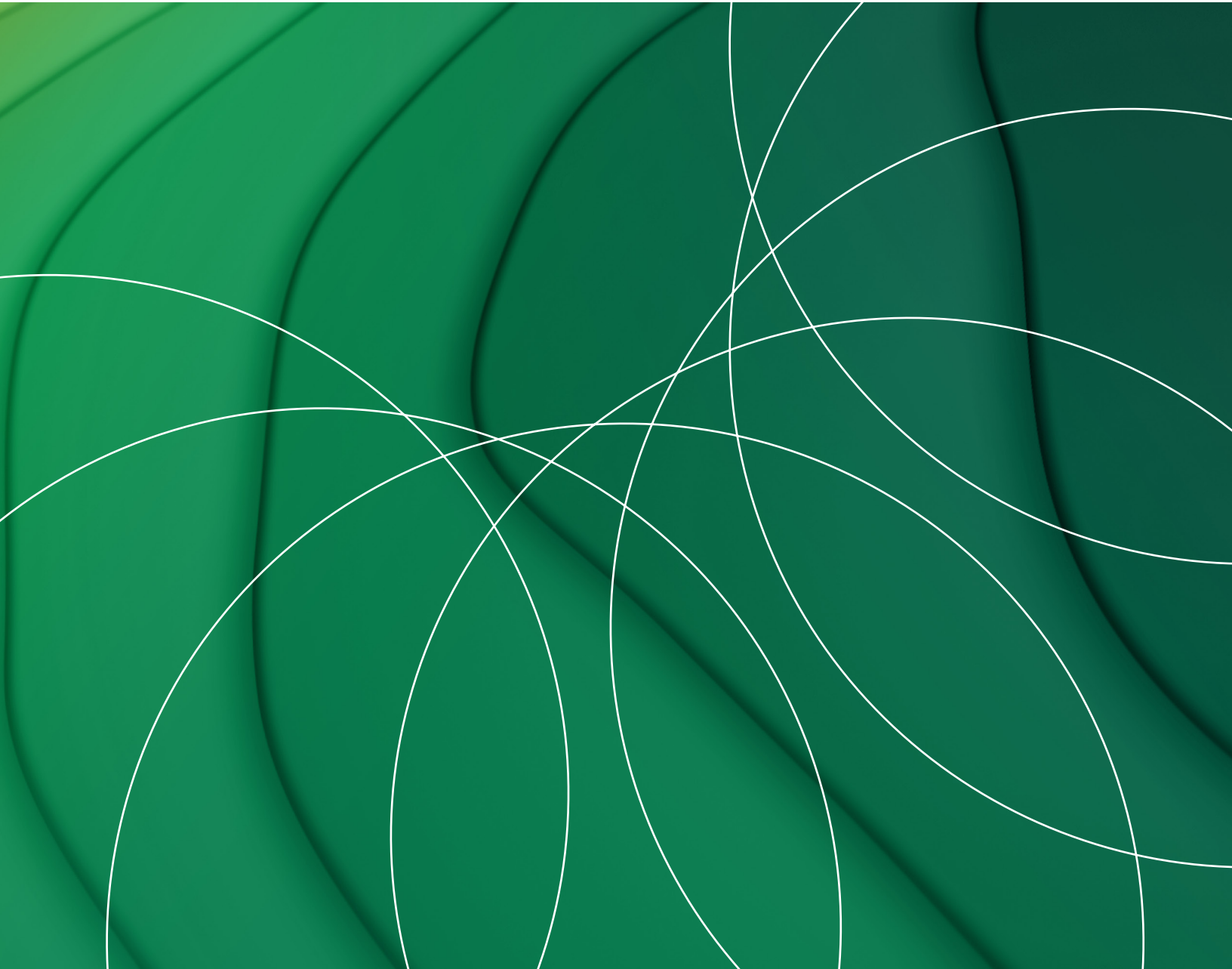


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Executive Summary

As AI-generated content becomes easier to produce and harder to tell apart from human-generated content, buyers are placing greater weight on experiences that can't be synthesized. Events — whether in-person, virtual, or webinars — give organizations a way to cut through the AI noise, capture valuable zero- and first-party data, and turn meaningful engagement into growth.

While organizations understand how critical events are for their business, many still lack the technology foundations and connected data they need to prove event ROI, attribute pipeline and revenue, and effectively utilize AI for events. To combat these issues, many are finding a unified, centralized approach to event technology to be the solution. This approach provides organizations with that stronger foundation necessary to scale event programs, personalize attendee experiences, and connect events to broader business outcomes.

In June 2026, Cvent commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how organizations are using events to drive growth, capture value from event data, and prepare for AI-enabled engagement. Forrester conducted an online survey of 459 global decision-makers at the director-level or above in marketing, events, and operations who are responsible for event strategy at their organizations to explore this topic.



Key Findings

Events have become a critical driver of growth as AI-generated content explodes. As AI makes content easier to produce, organizations are placing more value on experiences that foster human connection and meaningful engagement. This heightens the need to leverage events as a core marketing channel that differentiates the brand, builds trust, and enables personalized audience interactions.

Complex tool ecosystems make it difficult to prove the value of events and utilize AI. Respondents' organizations average more than five solutions to deliver their event portfolio. These tools are often poorly integrated, creating disconnected workflows and fragmenting event data across systems. Consequently, these organizations struggle to attribute pipeline and revenue to events, enhance attendee experiences, and effectively leverage AI.

A centralized approach creates a stronger foundation for event outcomes. Most respondents agree that a unified approach to event tech helps address top challenges. Consolidation enables improved data consistency, greater value of event insights, and better connection of events and business outcomes. It also creates a better foundation for AI, enabling more accurate insights, personalized attendee experiences, and greater value from event investments.

Those that get it right are better positioned for success. Respondents whose organizations have mature event programs are more likely to treat events as a strategic priority, have increased event budgets, integrate event data consistently, and more broadly adopt AI. They are also more likely to see the value of a unified event technology approach, enabling them to maximize event impact and better connect events to business outcomes.

Organizations Are Prioritizing Growth And Using Events To Get There

Organizations have a clear focus for the next year: growth. Yet with budgets under continued scrutiny, every program is expected to pay its own way and prove its impact. In the face of economic uncertainty, rapid advances in AI, and rising customer expectations, organizations are prioritizing strategies that drive measurable impact and sustainable growth. Survey respondents said to support these goals, their organizations' top marketing priorities center on generating buyer insights, building pipeline, and expanding customer relationships, which are growth-focused strategies that connect engagement to business outcomes.

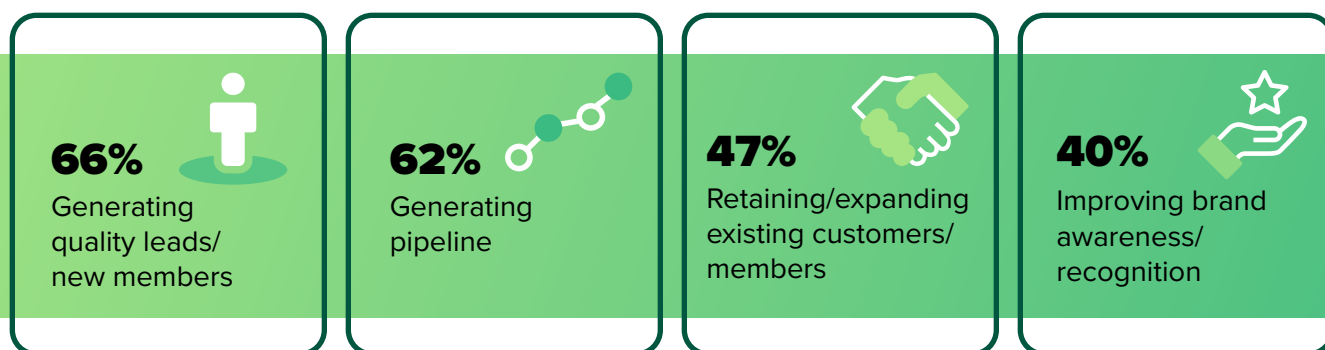
Events bring together prospects, customers, partners, and sellers in highly engaged environments, helping businesses drive their growth priorities forward. According to the survey, by creating these opportunities for meaningful interactions, events help organizations generate demand, accelerate opportunities, and strengthen customer relationships, making events a critical driver of growth. In surveying marketing and events leaders about the impact of events, we also found that:

- **Events are closely linked to achieving business goals.** Surveyed decision-makers see events as a driver of business growth, with 66% of respondents saying they are “Important” or “Critical” for generating quality leads, 62% saying they are essential for generating pipeline, and 47% saying the same of retaining and expanding existing customers (see Figure 1). With organizations placing greater emphasis on the business impact of events, event teams are aligning their priorities accordingly. Over the next year, event teams are most focused on pipeline and revenue generation, closely mirroring the goals of the broader marketing organization.

FIGURE 1

“How important are events in helping your organization achieve each of its top marketing priorities?”

(Showing “Important” and “Critical”)



Note: Showing four responses

Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization

Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

- **In the era of AI, events are more important than ever.** As content becomes easier and faster to create, organizations are looking for novel ways to stand out and build meaningful connections with their audiences. In fact, 70% of respondents agree that as AI makes content more accessible, events are becoming more critical for driving authentic engagement, trust, and differentiation. At the same time, 77% say that audience expectations for personalization and ongoing engagement are increasing. As buyers grow more skeptical of increasingly noisy, AI-generated digital channels, events have become the channel where they go to validate what they have seen and build confidence before they buy.
- **Human connection has become a premium asset.** Events enable organizations to deliver authentic, personalized experiences that audiences increasingly expect, while also creating meaningful opportunities for attendees to connect with peers and experts, validate decisions, and build trust.¹ In fact, according to Forrester, 72% of business buyers report trusting peers in their industry for purchase decisions.² By creating opportunities for these moments of connection, events become a critical driver of engagement, customer confidence, and growth.

- **Events strengthen customer relationships and brand awareness.**

Events create value beyond the immediate sale — they can drive value across the customer lifecycle. Respondents noted that over the next 12 months, their organizations are prioritizing customer retention and expansion (53%) and increasing brand awareness (44%). By creating opportunities for meaningful engagement, events help strengthen customer relationships, build trust, and increase brand visibility in ways digital channels alone cannot.

70%

of respondents say that events are becoming more critical to drive authentic engagement and differentiation as AI makes content easier to produce



Too Many Tools And Data Challenges Inhibit Growth

Organizations understand what events can do, but many have not positioned events to consistently deliver it. Only 25% of respondents say their organization treats events as a core pillar of marketing strategy; most still assign them a supporting role. But that's changing. Sixty-one percent say integrating events into broader marketing campaigns is a major priority over the next year. That aspiration is fundamentally a martech question — event management platforms that operate outside the marketing technology stack cannot power the attribution, personalization, and audience intelligence that growth-focused marketing organizations now require.

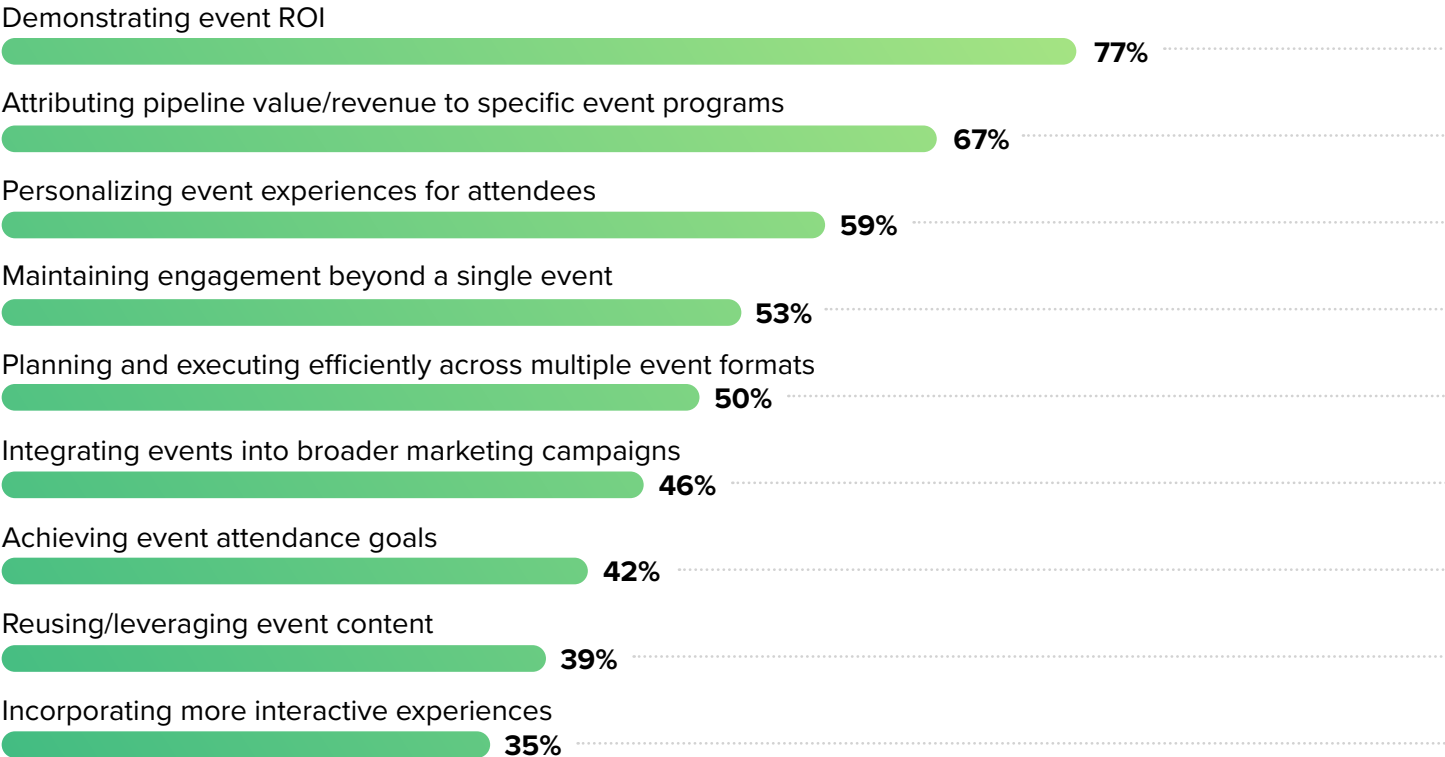
Pulling events closer to the campaign mix raises the stakes on what teams do with event data. Every conversation, session attended, and question asked reveals something about where a buyer is in their journey. Used well, those signals sharpen the next touch, making the rest of the marketing mix more personalized and more effective. Used poorly — or not at all — they disappear. Events are a critical component of the customer journey, and by aligning events more closely with broader marketing strategies, organizations can better understand their contribution to business outcomes and maximize their impact, thus shifting them from a tactical execution function into a core strategic business capability.³

Realizing this shift requires organizations to clearly demonstrate the business value of events. As events become more deeply integrated into marketing strategies, expectations around measurement, attribution, and business impact increase. This is much easier said than done, however, and 67% struggle to connect event engagement and success to revenue impact, 77% struggle to demonstrate event ROI, and 59% find delivering the personalized experiences audiences expect to be difficult (see Figure 2). As a result, there is a gap between the strategic importance of events and organizations' ability to measure, optimize, and scale their effectiveness.

FIGURE 2

“How challenging are the following event-related areas for your organization?”

(Showing “Challenging” and “Very Challenging”)



Note: Showing nine responses
Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization
Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

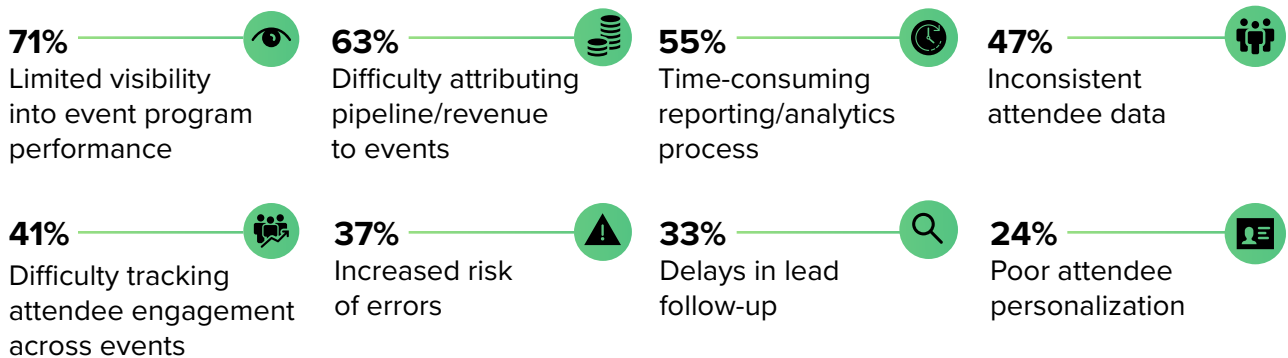
COMPLEXITY KEEPS EVENTS FROM SHOWING THEIR WORTH

Too often, organizations treat events as a siloed tactic, with different teams planning and executing events and making decisions around event technology in isolation and little consideration given to integrating the different formats to deliver more connected and personalized attendee experiences.⁴ As a result, survey respondents said on average, their organizations are using over five tools and solutions to manage their events. This is something that scales with organizational size, so larger organizations with over \$5 billion in yearly revenue are on average using nine tools just to manage events. Eventually, juggling this many tools inhibits results, attendee experiences, and growth. We specifically found that:

- **Tool sprawl creates overwhelming complexity.** Surveyed decision-makers agree that using at least five tools and solutions to run events is too complicated. Sixty-two percent say their event technology ecosystem is overly complex, and 61% say they have too many suppliers. Furthermore, too often these tools lack connection between them. Event data, workflows, and insights are often spread across multiple systems that operate in silos. As a result, 65% say that managing events through multiple disconnected tools prevents their organization from scaling their event programs. Instead of enabling growth, adopting point solutions makes it difficult for organizations to execute events consistently and creates friction.
- **Complexity kills visibility.** When event technologies operate in silos, organizations struggle to see a complete picture of event performance and business impact. For some organizations, this challenge is further compounded by the fact that many field events are still managed with no dedicated technology, leaving data trapped in spreadsheets and inboxes.⁵ Data becomes fragmented across registration platforms, engagement tools, marketing systems, CRM solutions, and more, making it difficult to connect event performance to business outcomes. As a result, 71% of respondents report limited visibility into event program performance, 63% struggle to attribute pipeline and revenue to events, and 55% say reporting and analytics processes are too time-consuming (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Consequences Of Managing Events Across Multiple Disconnected Tools



Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization

Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

DISCONNECTED DATA HINDERS AI ADOPTION AND MAKES IMPACT HARD TO PROVE

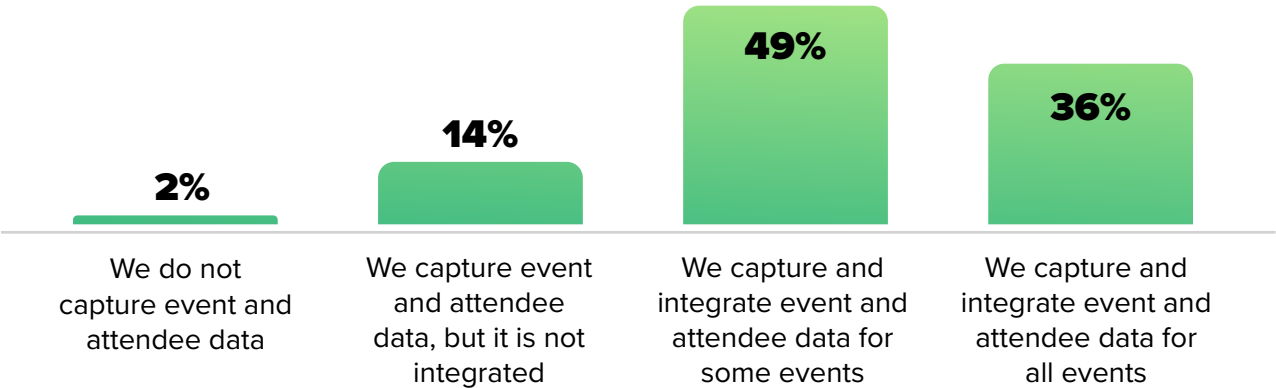
With AI reshaping how buyers discover, consume, and evaluate information, many traditional sources of customer data and buying signals are becoming less reliable and harder to access.⁶ This means that event data has become one of the most valuable sources of zero- and first-party data.⁷ To realize that value, organizations must be able to collect, connect, and activate event data across systems and teams. However, few are able to do this seamlessly, as data is a consistent problem area for event teams. Many struggle with fragmented data environments as a result of their overly complex tech ecosystems. Furthermore, inconsistent data collection, disconnected systems, and limited integrations make it challenging to transform event data into actionable business insights. When surveying respondents about their organization's top data-related problems, we found that:

- **Poor integration makes it difficult to prove business impact.** Organizations lack the connected data foundations required to measure impact. This is the result of poor tool integrations. Only 19% of respondents say both their organization's customer relationship management platform (CRM) and marketing automation platform (MAP) are fully integrated with their primary event management platform, leaving the majority without a complete view of how event engagement translates to business results. In fact, those that have limited tool integrations said they can't prove event ROI (66%), have lost pipeline and revenue visibility (59%), and aren't able to measure event performance effectively (57%).
- **Unstructured data can keep AI benefits out of reach.** AI promises to improve audience personalization, automate workflows, and generate deeper insights from event programs. But realizing these benefits hinges on establishing the proper data foundations, and many organizations are not there yet. Often, event data is scattered across platforms, teams, and processes, with 71% noting that their event data is fragmented across tools and stakeholders. Furthermore, only 36% consistently capture and integrate data across all their events, meaning that most are doing so on an ad hoc basis or leaving data underutilized and in silos (see Figure 4). As a result, two-thirds say their data is too unstructured or inconsistent to leverage AI effectively.

However, when data is in order, AI can pay off. For organizations that have gotten their data AI-ready, data-driven use cases are delivering some of the strongest results. Forty-six percent saw significant improvements in pre-event marketing strategy after implementing AI, 44% reported the same for data analysis, and 41% said the same for creating personalized recommendations. By comparison, only 26% reported significant improvements in event content creation. This suggests that AI creates the greatest value in use cases that rely on integrated, high-quality data, rather than in what's most accessible.

FIGURE 4

“Which of the following best describes how your organization captures and integrates event and attendee data with its revenue and customer relationship systems?”



Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization
Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

67%
of respondents say event data at their organization is too unstructured or inconsistent to leverage AI effectively

A Unified Event Tech Strategy Enables Organizations To Deliver Business Goals

As organizations look to close the gap between the criticality of events and the results they deliver, many are reassessing the technology that supports their event programs. Rather than continuing to add new tools and processes, organizations are recognizing the value of creating a more connected and consistent approach to event execution and measurement. Consolidation is not about tidiness — it is how organizations structure event data to fuel AI and capture it consistently enough to prove ROI across and between events. Nearly three-fourths of respondents agree that a unified, centralized approach to event technology would be valuable in addressing their organization's core event and marketing challenges.

Respondents believe a unified approach can have the biggest impact in the areas where they fall short today and would deliver the greatest business benefits. Seventy-nine percent believe that this approach would have a positive impact in capturing event and attendee data consistently, 75% said the same of maximizing the value of event data, and 73% said it would better enable them to integrate events into broader marketing campaigns (see Figure 5). Moving forward, this lets them address two main gaps: connecting events to business outcomes and more effectively using AI. We specifically found that:

- **A unified approach unlocks the full value of event data.** By aggregating all event data in a single integrated platform, organizations can mitigate many of the visibility gaps disconnected systems create. With a more complete view of event activity and outcomes, teams can better understand which programs drive engagement, influence pipeline, and contribute to revenue. This creates a stronger foundation for measurement and attribution, helping organizations more effectively demonstrate ROI and quantify the business impact of their events. For organizations that treat event management as a core layer of their marketing technology stack — alongside CRM and MAP — this is where that investment pays off.

- **Consolidation enables better AI applicability.** Even though adoption of AI continues to grow, organizations are still struggling to reap the full benefits it promises. Much of today's adoption is focused on tactical use cases, where implementation is more straightforward and can deliver a quick win. Transformative applications of AI, however, require access to high-quality, well-structured data, making adoption less common. For example, while 59% of respondents note that their organization has adopted AI to create event content, only 26% note that they have seen a significant improvement from this investment.

FIGURE 5

“What level of impact would a unified, centralized approach to event technology have on the following?”

(Showing “Slight positive impact” and “Significant positive impact”)

Capturing event and attendee data consistently



Maximizing the value of event data



Integrating events into broader marketing campaigns



Delivering more personalized attendee experiences



Improving attendee engagement



Delivering consistent attendee experience across all our events



Demonstrating event impact/ROI



Increasing event-related revenue



Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization

Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

By consolidating technology and creating a single, trusted source of event data, organizations provide AI with the foundation it needs to generate more accurate outputs, surface deeper insights, and drive greater business impact from every event. It can automate workflows, generate more relevant content, extract actionable insights, and deliver personalized attendee experiences. Respondents specifically note increases in team productivity (66%), improved insights from events (59%), and enhanced attendee experiences (54%) as key benefits of AI adoption. However, to reap the full benefits, event data must flow into a broader, well-governed data lake, which typically sits beyond the remit of the events team and requires cross-functional ownership and governance.⁸

73%

of respondents say a unified, centralized approach to event technology would be valuable for their organization



Getting Events Right Creates A Foundation For Growth

The experiences and outcomes of organizations who get events right versus those who still struggle with the basics will vary vastly. Those who get it right will take an audience-centric approach, planning events around customer needs, buying journeys, and ongoing engagement; they will therefore be better positioned to drive growth, build stronger customer relationships, have a greater ability to demonstrate the value of events, and make more informed business decisions.⁹

To specifically understand how these organizations compare with less-mature ones, we assessed the effectiveness of organizations across four pillars: event strategy and planning, event technology, processes, and event teams. Those that scored the highest across all four pillars were categorized as advanced organizations, while those that scored lower were considered beginners. Comparing these groups illustrates what leading organizations do differently and the outcomes they achieve as a result. We found that:

- **Perceived business value drives event investment.** Advanced organizations are significantly more likely to view events as a strategic driver of business success. Forty-two percent of respondents from advanced organizations say events is a core pillar of their marketing strategy and planning, compared with just 6% of respondents from beginner organizations. This strategic importance is also reflected in budget growth. Advanced organizations are 140% more likely to report an increase in their event budget over the last year compared to lower-maturity organizations. When events are seen as a core component of business and marketing strategy, organizations are more likely to invest in them.
- **Stronger data practices are a hallmark of advanced organizations.** One of the most pronounced differences between advanced and beginner organizations is their ability to capture and integrate event data consistently. Sixty-one percent of respondents from advanced organizations say they capture and integrate event and attendee data for all events, compared with

only 10% of those from beginner organizations. Advanced organizations have largely overcome the data capture and integration challenges plaguing other organizations, enabling them to create a more complete and reliable view of their event programs.

- **Higher event maturity creates a stronger foundation for AI adoption.**

Advanced organizations are much more likely than lower-maturity organizations to use AI across a wide range of event activities, including content creation (71% vs. 41%), creating event data analysis and insights (61% vs. 29%), and repurposing post-event content (55% vs. 29%).

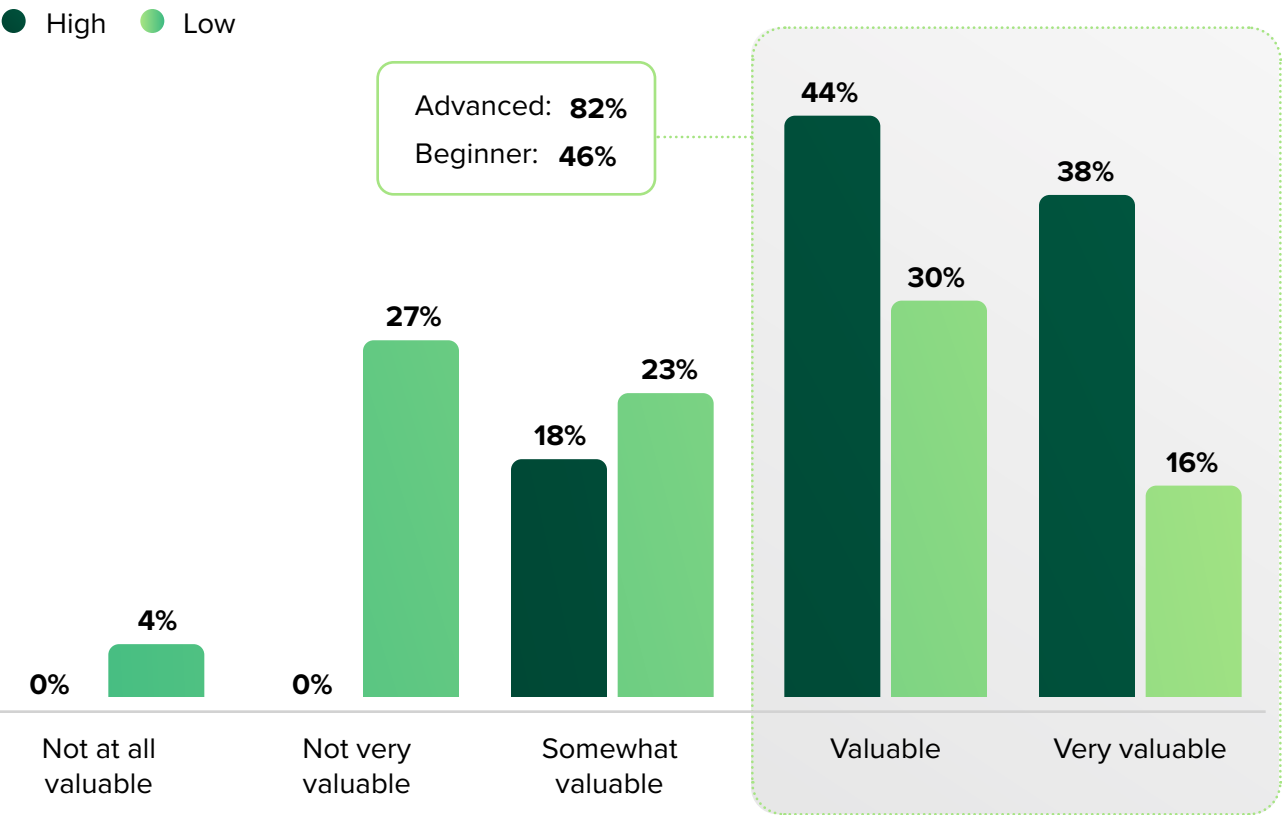
Advanced organizations are also 30% more effective at incorporating AI into workflows than lower-maturity counterparts. Enabling this adoption are stronger data practices, connected technology ecosystems, and process standardization — traits that advanced organizations are more likely to exhibit.

- **Advanced organizations see the value in a unified approach to event technology.** Organizations with more mature event programs are much more likely to see the benefit of a unified, centralized event technology strategy. Eighty-two percent of respondents from advanced organizations say a unified, centralized approach to event technology would be “Valuable” or “Very valuable” in addressing their event and marketing challenges compared to just 46% of those from beginner organizations (see Figure 6). This suggests that organizations with greater event maturity have a clearer understanding of how connected technology and data contribute to event success.

Furthermore, advanced organizations also recognize the impact this approach has for specific event-related use cases at higher rates than beginner organizations. Eighty-eight percent of respondents from advanced organizations say a unified, centralized approach to event tech would have a positive impact on capturing event and attendee data consistently compared to 56% of respondents from beginner organizations. Furthermore, 87% from advanced organizations say it would positively impact their ability to maximize the value of event data versus 55% from beginner organizations, and 84% from advanced organizations say it would help deliver consistent attendee experiences across all events, compared to 48% of beginner organizations.

FIGURE 6

“How valuable would a unified, centralized approach to event technology be in addressing your organization’s core event and marketing challenges?”



Base: 459 global decision-makers at the director level or higher in marketing, events, and operations responsible for event strategy at their organization
Source: Forrester's Q2 2026 Event Marketing Survey [E-71937]

Key Recommendations

Forrester's in-depth survey of marketing and events decision-makers yielded several important recommendations:

Build a unified event data foundation across every event. Consistently capture, integrate, and activate event data across all event types. Organizations cannot maximize the value of events if engagement data remains trapped in standalone tools, spreadsheets, and disconnected teams. Establish a common framework for capturing audience, engagement, and buying signal data across webinars, field events, conferences, executive programs, and customer events. Integrate this data into the broader sales and marketing technology stack so event insights can be used consistently for audience intelligence, opportunity identification, attribution, and AI-powered analysis.

Rationalize event technology around a centralized platform strategy. Consolidate event management capabilities and establish a centralized system of record for events to reduce technology complexity. Many organizations have accumulated fragmented event technology stacks that create operational inefficiency, inconsistent attendee experiences, and disconnected data. Rather than continuing to add point solutions, leaders should identify a core event management platform capable of supporting multiple event formats while integrating with critical marketing, sales, and customer systems. A centralized approach improves governance, simplifies execution, enhances visibility into performance, and creates the connected data foundation required to deliver more consistent attendee experiences and measurable business outcomes. Organizations that evaluate event technology through the same lens as their CRM or marketing automation platform — with the same integration standards, data governance expectations, and ROI criteria — are better positioned to realize events' full strategic value.

Shift from event-centric execution to audience-centric engagement.

Manage events as part of an ongoing audience engagement strategy rather than as isolated tactical activities. The highest-performing organizations treat events as strategic growth engines, not standalone tactics. Focus planning around audience needs, buying journeys, and customer outcomes rather than individual event success metrics. Use event insights to inform broader marketing and sales motions, connect events into integrated campaigns, and create continuous engagement before, during, and after events. As AI changes how buyers discover information and reduces the value of traditional digital engagement signals, events become an increasingly important source of human interaction, intent data, trust-building, and decision validation. Organizations that operationalize this audience-centric approach are better positioned to generate pipeline, strengthen customer relationships, and scale AI-enabled growth initiatives.

Move beyond tactical AI to build an AI-ready event operating model.

Create the data, governance, and process foundations required to scale high-value AI use cases. Most organizations' AI event adoption remains concentrated in tactical activities like content creation. While these use cases can improve efficiency, they rarely transform business outcomes. To unlock greater value, organizations must focus on creating an AI-ready event operating model built on well-structured event and attendee data, standardized processes, and strong integration across marketing, sales, and customer systems. Event data should not remain trapped within event platforms; it must flow into broader enterprise data environments where AI can connect event interactions with customer, pipeline, and revenue data. Organizations that establish these foundations will be better positioned to identify buying signals, generate deeper audience insights, automate workflows, deliver more personalized experiences, and connect event investments to measurable business outcomes.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 459 global decision-makers at organizations in North America, EMEA, and APAC to evaluate the current state of events and event marketing. Survey participants included decision-makers in marketing, events and meetings, IT, and operations. Questions provided to the participants asked how their organization is managing events today and related challenges and benefits. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank-you for time spent on the survey. The study began and was completed in June 2026.

Appendix B: Demographics

REGION	
North America	75%
EMEA	15%
APAC	10%

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES	
Associations	10%
Technology and/or technology services	10%
Pharmaceuticals/life sciences	10%
Hospitality	10%
Financial services and/or insurance	10%

ANNUAL REVENUE	
\$50M to \$299M	2%
\$300M to \$399M	8%
\$400M to \$499M	8%
\$500M to \$999M	28%
\$1B to \$5B	41%
>\$5B	12%

RESPONDENT LEVEL	
C-level executive	31%
Vice president	32%
Director	37%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Appendix C: Supplemental Material

RELATED FORRESTER RESEARCH

[Rethinking Event Strategy With AI](#), Forrester Research, Inc., March 12, 2026.

Appendix D: Endnotes

¹ Source: [Build An Integrated, Aligned, And Data-Centric Event Plan To Power Revenue Process Transformation](#), Forrester Research, Inc., July 9, 2025.

² Source: [Buying Network Essentials](#), Forrester Research, Inc., March 24, 2026.

³ Source: [Measuring Event Performance Inside The Forrester Campaign Measurement Framework](#), Forrester Research, Inc., October 8, 2025.

⁴ Source: [The All-In-One Event Management Platforms Landscape, Q3 2024](#), Forrester Research, Inc., July 5, 2024.

⁵ Source: [Build An Integrated, Aligned, And Data-Centric Event Plan To Power Revenue Process Transformation](#), Forrester Research, Inc., July 9, 2025.

⁶ Source: [The Impact Of AI-Powered Search On The Intent Data Market](#), Forrester Research, Inc., April 8, 2026.

⁷ Source: Conrad Mills, [The Forrester Wave™: All-In-One Event Management Platforms, Q4 2024 — Navigating The Evolving Event Tech Landscape](#), Forrester Blogs.

⁸ Source: [The Global State Of B2B Events, 2025](#), Forrester Research, Inc., July 21, 2025.

⁹ Source: [The Forrester Event Planning Framework](#), Forrester Research, Inc., August 12, 2024.

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