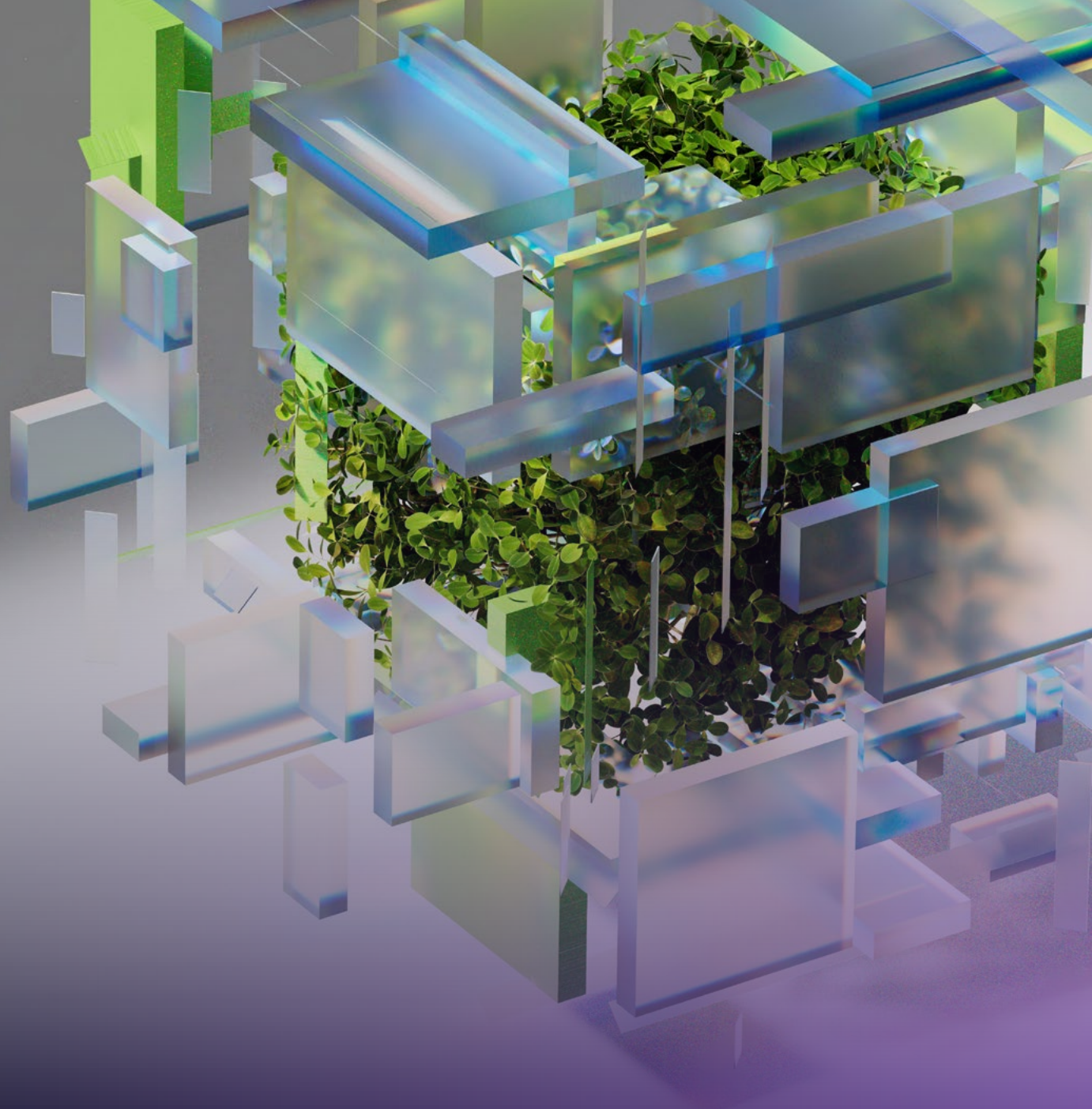


MEA Industry Survey Findings

Harnessing Sustainability and Technology in Event Management



A case study on industry trends and opportunities
Developed by Cliftons for MEA and the Events Industry



Introduction

In the fast-evolving landscape of event management, sustainability and technology are no longer optional - they are essential for staying competitive and future-ready. Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) conducted a 2025 industry survey to explore how these forces are shaping the sector. As the national body for event professionals, MEA provides research, education, and advocacy to help businesses navigate industry changes. This report examines key findings on sustainability adoption, AI and technology integration, inclusivity, and industry collaboration. It highlights both the challenges and opportunities that event organizers, venues, and suppliers face in adapting to these trends.

Sustainability Trends and Opportunities

The importance of sustainability is clearly recognised within the event management industry, with 89% of survey respondents considering it somewhat important, very important, or critical to their business operations. However, 11% still regard sustainability as irrelevant, and 8% have not yet focused on it, citing capacity limitations. A notable 8% view sustainability as critical, while 6% report having successfully monetised sustainable practices. These figures reveal a significant opportunity for organisations to leverage sustainability to create value, both for themselves and for the industry.

A key takeaway for organisations is the need to support employees in identifying, implementing, and measuring sustainable practices. This can be achieved through targeted initiatives in education, knowledge-sharing, case studies, best practices, and feedback loops, enabling businesses to not



only adopt sustainability but to also report on and build upon their efforts.

Sustainability Practices

Survey results indicate that the most common sustainability practices among event planners fall in the mid-range, with carbon off-setting being among the least adopted practices. This signals a critical area for development. The shift toward more sustainable events could start long before delegates step foot in a conference venue. Practices such as sustainable aviation fuel, green airports, public transport, and ride-sharing initiatives are vital components in reducing carbon footprints. Other key sustainability efforts include sustainable catering, food waste treatment, eco-friendly venues, and responsible sourcing in supply chains. These practices not only help in reducing environmental impact but can be expanded into broader public health campaigns, shifting consumer and industry behaviour toward more sustainable outcomes.

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AI and Technology Adoption in Events

The integration of AI and technology within the event industry is still in its early stages, with only 2% of survey respondents reporting extensive use of such tools. This finding is significantly behind the typical technology adoption curve, where early adopters make up around 13.5% of the population. Interestingly, 79% of respondents use AI and technology to a minimal or moderate extent, which may reflect generational differences – 24% of the respondents are Baby Boomers, and 39% are Gen X, groups that tend to be less engaged with technology compared to Millennials or Gen Z.

Despite the slow uptake, there is a clear opportunity for the industry to accelerate its use of technology. Organisations must focus on supporting businesses through education and resources that foster greater adoption. The pace of technological change is accelerating, making it essential for companies to keep up or risk falling behind.

AI and Technology Impact

The survey also explores how AI and technology are transforming business operations. With 19% of respondents not using AI at all, and 49% reporting minimal use, there's an immediate opportunity to support the industry in embracing technological solutions more fully. As AI and technology continue to evolve exponentially, organisations must ensure they are not left behind. The data suggests that with targeted support, those using AI minimally can become leaders in productivity, personalisation, and efficiency within the industry.

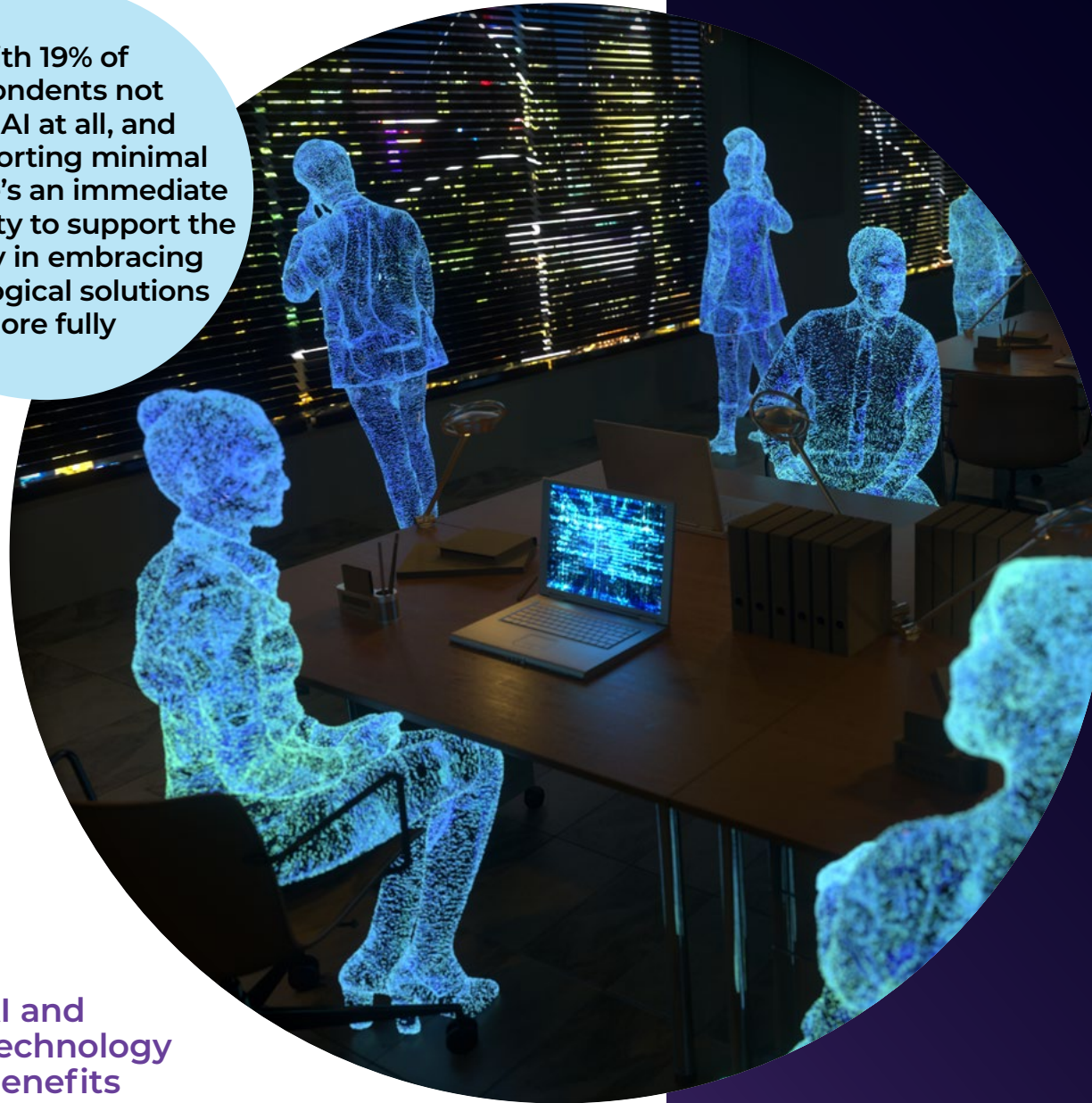
Moreover, as technological advancements continue at a rapid pace, there is an urgent need to support businesses through their digital transformation journeys, ensuring they are equipped to handle the changes and leverage new tools to drive growth. This is especially relevant as studies suggest that technological improvement is happening at an accelerating rate, exceeding 25% per year.

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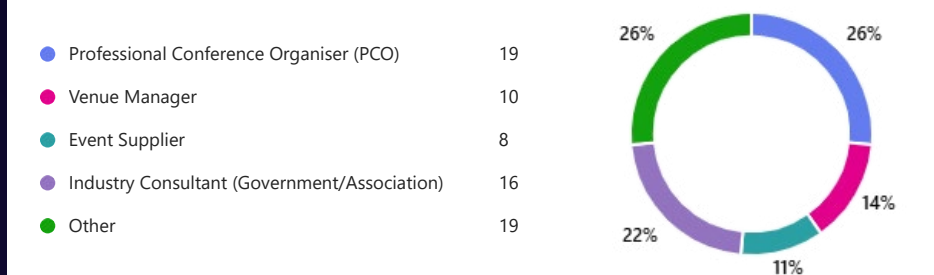
AI and Technology Benefits

Survey responses highlight several areas where AI and technology are already providing substantial benefits. Key applications include chatbots, content creation tools, event program access, customer relationship management, data analytics, and post-event content sharing. While these innovations significantly enhance operational efficiency and personalisation, there are also challenges to address. Issues related to data bias, privacy concerns, ethical use of AI, and intellectual property protection must be handled with care to ensure that technology benefits businesses without compromising standards.

To truly harness the potential of AI, businesses must adopt sound governance practices and stay informed about emerging risks, such as data security and algorithm transparency.



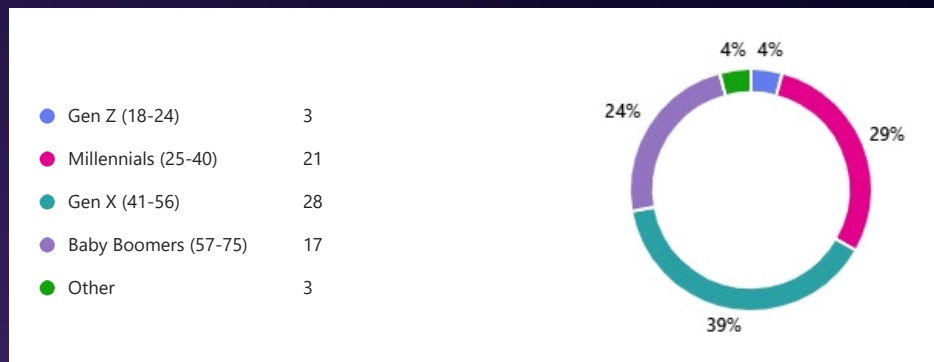
1. What best describes your role in the events industry?



2. How long have you been working in the events industry?



3. What is your age group?





AI and Technology Trends

While 35% of survey respondents acknowledge the widespread adoption of AI and automation in event planning, the full potential of these technologies has yet to be realised. The slow uptake of hybrid and virtual event formats, for instance, is surprising, particularly given the growing popularity of these formats in professional and skills development contexts.

Furthermore, trends in personalisation, predictive analytics, and automated tasks are expected to become even more crucial as they continue to reshape event management.

The use of smart registration platforms, virtual assistants, and AI-powered security systems is expected to drive efficiencies, improve user experiences, and enable more effective event management.

Success Factors and Future Trends

The survey also touched on several key success factors shaping the future of event management, such as personalisation, AI, and inclusivity. While 54% of respondents view personalisation and technology as critical to event success, 12% cite inclusivity and diversity as significant factors. Although the latter percentage seems low, it likely reflects that

diversity and inclusion have already become integral to event planning, rather than emerging trends.

Looking Ahead

The rapid pace of technological change, combined with the need for businesses to continually adapt, underscores the importance of innovation and continuous learning in the industry. The shift to AI and automation presents enormous opportunities for growth, but also significant challenges. As the technology landscape evolves, organisations must focus on creating frameworks for innovation at the

edge, improving trust boundaries, and fostering perpetual learning to ensure they remain competitive.

In conclusion, the event management sector is at a crossroads, where sustainability and technology are pivotal in shaping the future of the industry. The findings from this survey highlight both the challenges and the massive potential for growth, and they present a roadmap for industry leaders to drive transformation. By embracing these trends, organisations can unlock new value and remain at the forefront of the event management space.



About Meetings & Events Australia (MEA)

MEA is the peak industry association for event professionals in Australia, representing a sector that employs over 229,000 professionals and delivers more than 480,000 events annually. With a 50-year legacy, MEA leads the industry by providing professional development, accreditation and research. MEA empowers event professionals through education, business growth opportunities, and recognition programs, ensuring the sector remains innovative and resilient. MEA fosters collaboration across the events ecosystem, including Professional Conference Organisers, venues, suppliers, and corporate event managers.

For more information, visit www.meetingsevents.com.au or contact admin@mea.org.au

About Cliftons Event Solutions

Cliftons Event Solutions is a trusted partner in corporate event delivery, providing premium venues, AV, and seamless end-to-end event management. With a strong presence across Australia, New Zealand, and Asia, Cliftons is committed to creating remarkable event experiences through cutting-edge technology, outstanding service, and flexible event spaces. Whether face-to-face in our contemporary venues or a partner location, virtually via our seamless event technologies or a hybrid of the two, we deliver remarkable event experiences. With incredible service, inspiring hospitality, and the latest technologies, we make seamless global event delivery effortless.

For more information, visit www.cliftons.com

