2023

SPEAKING INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT

AAE | SPEAKERS

AN INSIDE LOOK

It's no secret that the event industry is constantly evolving. Sometimes the changes are massive shifts that seem to happen all at once, but more often, our industry is going through smaller, incremental changes thanks to emerging technologies and new audience preferences.

Event professionals and speakers are able to thrive in the midst of these changes because of their ability to pivot and adapt. At AAE Speakers Bureau, we get a front row seat to how our clients turn challenges into opportunities to improve their process and elevate attendee experience.

Knowing how to pivot and adapt in this dynamic industry depends on reliable, insightful data. In this 2023 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report, a follow-up to our award-winning 2022 report, that's exactly what we're bringing you. You'll find insider knowledge from event professionals and keynote speakers on the entire event planning process — from choosing a speaker to orchestrating an unforgettable event experience — as well as predictions and reflections on what lies ahead for our industry.

Let's jump into the numbers!

"With events, we often find ourselves attempting the impossible: forecasting the future. This 2023 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report, while purely a prediction, gives us all a clearer look at the months ahead, opening the door to better informed, data-driven decisions. Thanks to the hundreds of participants who shared their insights, we are in a better position to create dynamic event experiences for attendees in 2023."

— **Greg Friedlander**, CEO and Founder, AAE Speakers Bureau

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY is driving event organizers' decisions on format, budget.

81.25% of event organizers said they are concerned about the impact of economic uncertainty on their 2023 event plans. 75.25% of those said it impacts their decisions around event format, and 68.23% said their budget for speakers would be lower because of it.

1

CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS: event pros likely to ask for tweaks, speakers likely to oblige.

We asked event organizers how likely they would be to ask a keynote speaker to tweak their presentation if they thought their views could be polarizing. The overwhelming majority (72.83%) said they would consider it. Almost all (95.86%) speakers said they would consider tweaking their presentation if asked.

2

WHAT EVENT PROS WANT: speakers to drive engagement, attendance, and education.

The most important goals event organizers have for their booked speakers are audience engagement (69.57%), education for the audience (51.63%), and increased attendance (41.03%).

3

WHAT SPEAKERS WANT: ideal fees, topic relevance, and values alignment.

The three things that make speakers most likely to accept an offer are whether the event pays their ideal fee (62.76%), whether the topic is relevant to their expertise (61.38%), and whether the event or organization aligns with their values (41.38%).

4

EVENT BUDGETS DOWN slightly in 2023, while speaking fees are up.

33.15% of event organizers said their budgets are lower in 2023, while 24.45% said they were higher. 53.11% of speakers said their fees are increasing. 44.14% said their fees are not changing this year, and just 2.76% said they were decreasing. However, the number of events planned in 2023 is up by 26% on average.

5

PRIORITY SPEAKING TOPICS for event pros held steady from 2022 to 2023.
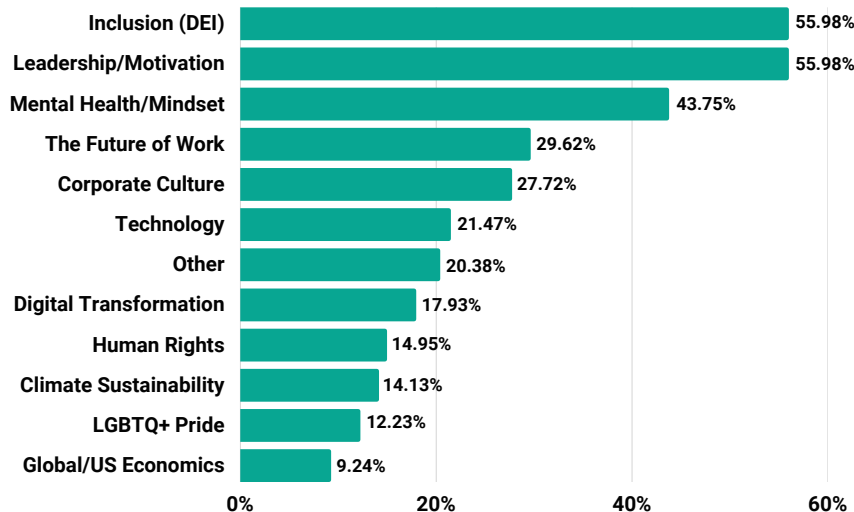
The topics event strategists are prioritizing in 2023 are diversity, equity, and inclusion (55.98%), leadership and motivation (55.98%), mental health and mindset (43.75%), the future of work (29.62%), and corporate culture (27.72%).

6

2023 SPEAKING INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT

AAE | SPEAKERS

EVENTS IN 2023

What topics are event professionals prioritizing in 2023?

No forecast of events in 2023 is complete without a clear picture of the speaking topics event organizers are targeting this year. So we asked them. The top answers given were **diversity, equity, and inclusion, leadership and motivation, mental health and mindset, the future of work, and corporate culture** — in that order.

Topic	Percentage
Inclusion (DEI)	55.98%
Leadership/Motivation	55.98%
Mental Health/Mindset	43.75%
The Future of Work	29.62%
Corporate Culture	27.72%
Technology	21.47%
Other	20.38%
Digital Transformation	17.93%
Human Rights	14.95%
Climate Sustainability	14.13%
LGBTQ+ Pride	12.23%
Global/US Economics	9.24%

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) 1

LEADERSHIP & MOTIVATION 1

MENTAL HEALTH & MINDSET 2

THE FUTURE OF WORK 3

The data also suggests that **more event organizers are prioritizing corporate culture as a speaking topic for their events in 2023**. From last year, the percentage of corporate culture events jumped up 26% to over 27% of all event topics.

How many events should we expect this year?

With the speaking topics for 2023 coming into clear focus, let's take a look at the events themselves.

Our event organizer respondents made it clear that — on average — they **plan to host more events this year** than they did in 2022. We saw a 26% average increase between events hosted in 2022 and events planned in 2023. The average estimated audience size that respondents provided was 1,874 attendees.

26%
INCREASE BETWEEN 2022 EVENTS AND EVENTS PLANNED IN 2023

1,874
AVERAGE ANTICIPATED AUDIENCE SIZE FOR 2023

What types of events are planned this year?

We can expect more events overall this year. But what will these events look like? Let's talk about that. Event organizers told us that the top five kinds of events they have planned are employee/member/student trainings, fundraisers, end of year celebrations, holiday celebrations, and sales kickoffs.

EMPLOYEE/MEMBER/ STUDENT TRAINING 1

FUNDRAISER 2

END OF YEAR PARTY 3

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION 4
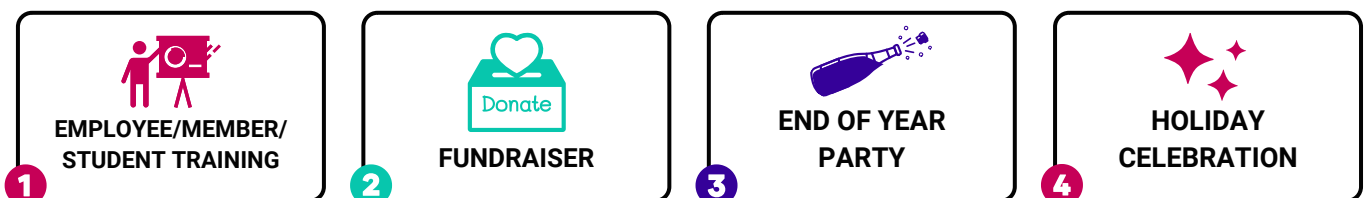
TYPES OF EVENTS PLANNED IN 2023	
1. EMPLOYEE/MEMBER/STUDENT TRAINING	36.96%
2. FUNDRAISER	24.73%
3. END OF YEAR PARTY	22.83%
4. HOLIDAY CELEBRATION	17.39%
5. SALES KICKOFF	11.68%
6. PRODUCT LAUNCH	10.87%
7. PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING	4.89%
8. COMPANY/ORGANIZATIONAL MILESTONE CELEBRATION	3.53%

Many of the clients we work with — who also make up a large portion of the event industry itself — are university event organizers. While every organization has its own unique goals for events, we asked our university respondents this question separately to get the most accurate representation.

For university events, the top answers were lecture series, general entertainment events, university staff keynotes, and homecoming entertainment. **Of those who selected "other,"** the top three most common write-ins were conferences, DEI related lectures, and professional development events.

UNIVERSITY EVENTS PLANNED IN 2023	
1. LECTURE SERIES	36.96%
2. GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT	24.73%
3. UNIVERSITY STAFF KEYNOTE	22.83%
4. OTHER	17.39%
5. HOMECOMING ENTERTAINMENT	11.68%

UNIVERSITY EVENTS IN 2023

39.96%

LECTURE SERIES

1

How does economic uncertainty impact decisions on event format?

Closing out 2022 and coming into 2023, economic uncertainty has been a major theme. We asked event organizers about their level of concern. 81.25% of event organizers said they are concerned about the impact of economic uncertainty on their 2023 event plans. 75.25% said it impacts their decisions around event format.
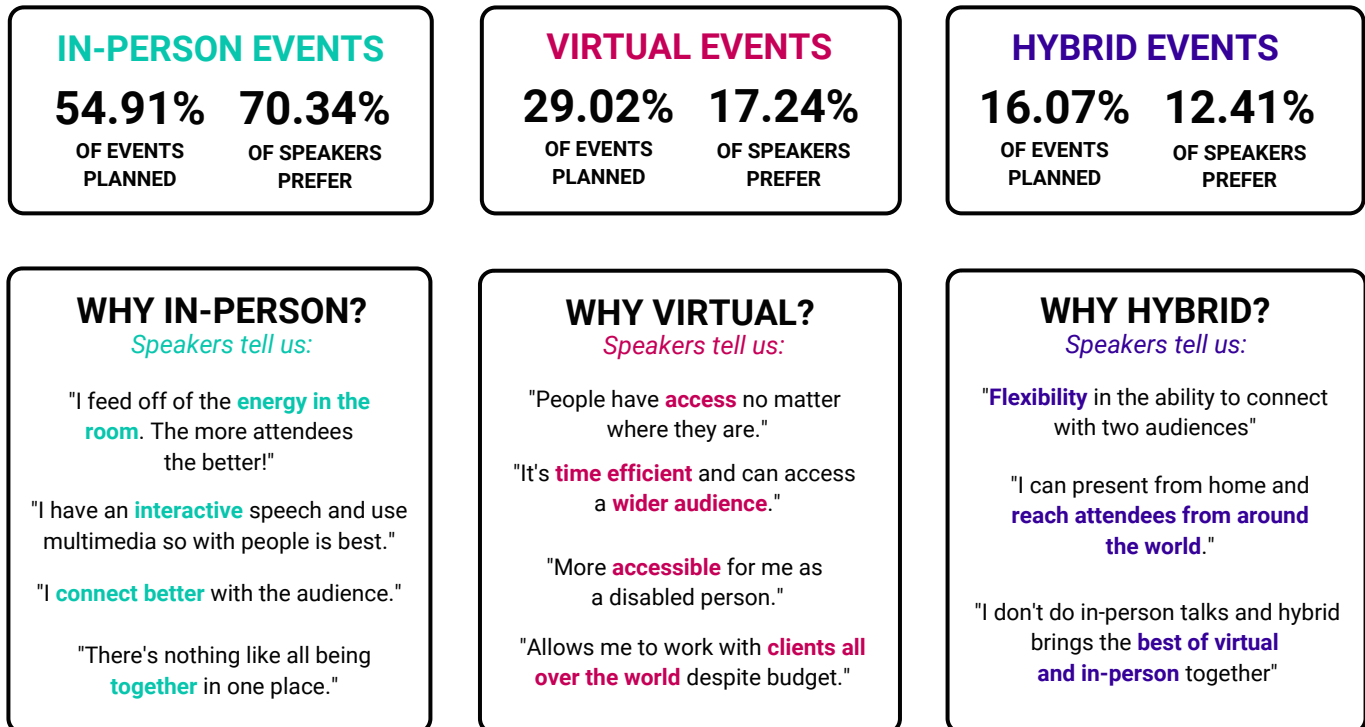
75.25%

OF EVENT ORGANIZERS SAY ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY IMPACTS DECISIONS AROUND EVENT FORMAT

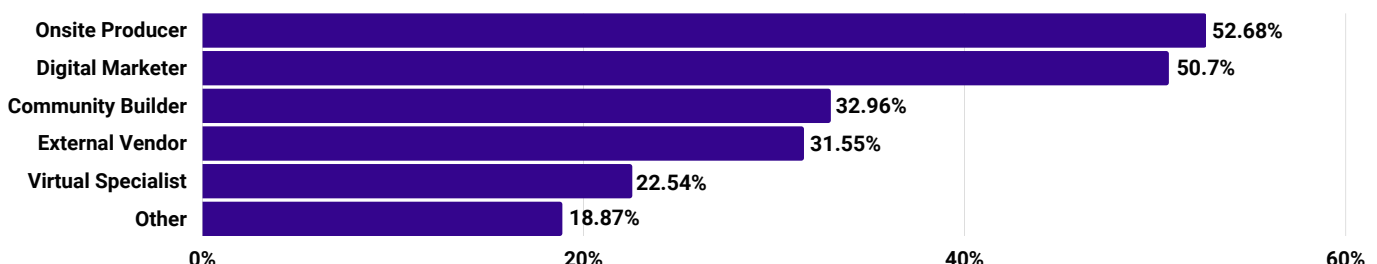# Which formats do event organizers and speakers prefer in 2023?

There are many different ways to host a successful event in 2023 and no two events are exactly the same. Event organizers told us about the formats they plan to utilize for their events in 2023. The **most popular event format by far was in-person**, making up more than half (54.91%) of all events planned this year. Virtual events came in next at 29.02% of the total, and hybrid events made up 16.07%.

We also asked speakers which format they prefer and why. A resounding 70.34% prefer in-person events, as being in person allows them to feed off the energy and momentum of the live audience and creates active engagement and participation during their sessions. View the comparison and quotes from speakers:

IN-PERSON EVENTS		VIRTUAL EVENTS		HYBRID EVENTS	
54.91% OF EVENTS PLANNED	**70.34%** OF SPEAKERS PREFER	**29.02%** OF EVENTS PLANNED	**17.24%** OF SPEAKERS PREFER	**16.07%** OF EVENTS PLANNED	**12.41%** OF SPEAKERS PREFER

WHY IN-PERSON?
Speakers tell us:

"I feed off of the **energy in the room**. The more attendees the better!"

"I have an **interactive** speech and use multimedia so with people is best."

"I **connect better** with the audience."

"There's nothing like all being **together** in one place."

WHY VIRTUAL?
Speakers tell us:

"People have **access** no matter where they are."

"It's **time efficient** and can access a **wider audience**."

"More **accessible** for me as a disabled person."

"Allows me to work with **clients all over the world** despite budget."

WHY HYBRID?
Speakers tell us:

"**Flexibility** in the ability to connect with two audiences"

"I can present from home and **reach attendees from around the world**."

"I don't do in-person talks and hybrid brings the **best of virtual and in-person** together"

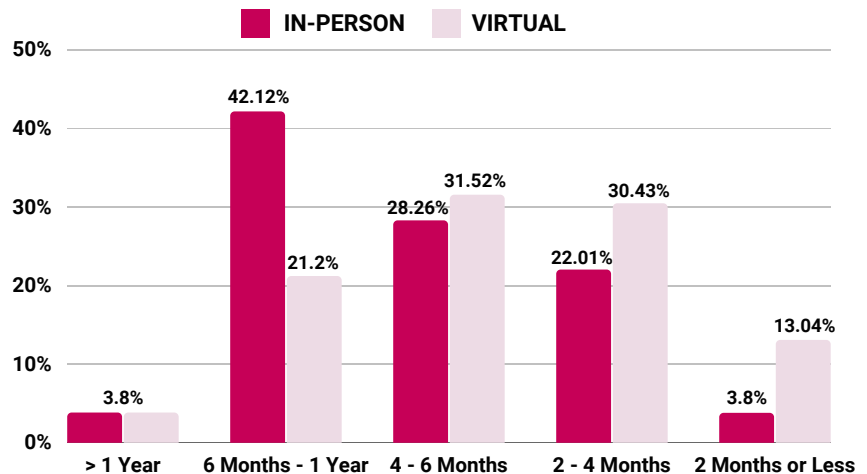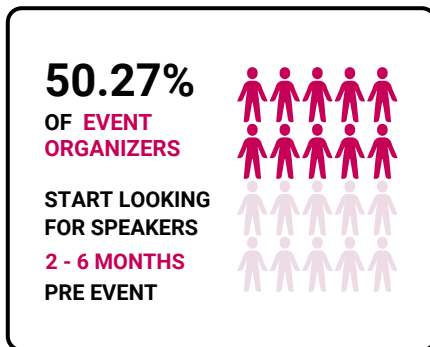# What kinds of roles make up an event planning team?

Event organizing is difficult, complex work. It's hard to do it all on your own. For those working with a team to execute events, the most common roles involved were onsite producers (52.68%), digital marketers (50.7%), community builders (32.96%), and external vendors (31.55%).

Role	Percentage
Onsite Producer	52.68%
Digital Marketer	50.7%
Community Builder	32.96%
External Vendor	31.55%
Virtual Specialist	22.54%
Other	18.87%

1 ONSITE PRODUCER	2 DIGITAL MARKETER	3 COMMUNITY BUILDER	4 EXTERNAL VENDOR	5 VIRTUAL SPECIALIST

How far in advance do event organizers look for speakers?

More than half (50.27%) of the event strategists planning in-person and hybrid events said they start looking for keynote speakers **between two and six months before their event**. 42.12% answered in the six months to a year range, and just 3.8% said they book more than a year before their event. Some are operating on much shorter turnarounds, with 3.8% saying they book within two months of their event or even closer.

50.27%
OF **EVENT ORGANIZERS**

START LOOKING FOR SPEAKERS
2 - 6 MONTHS
PRE EVENT

IN-PERSON   **VIRTUAL**

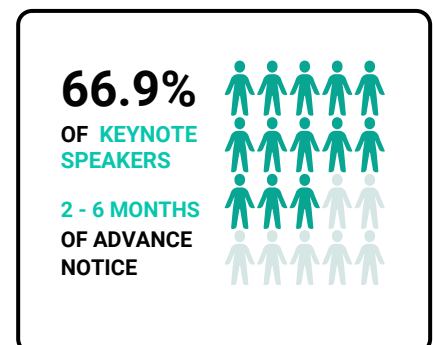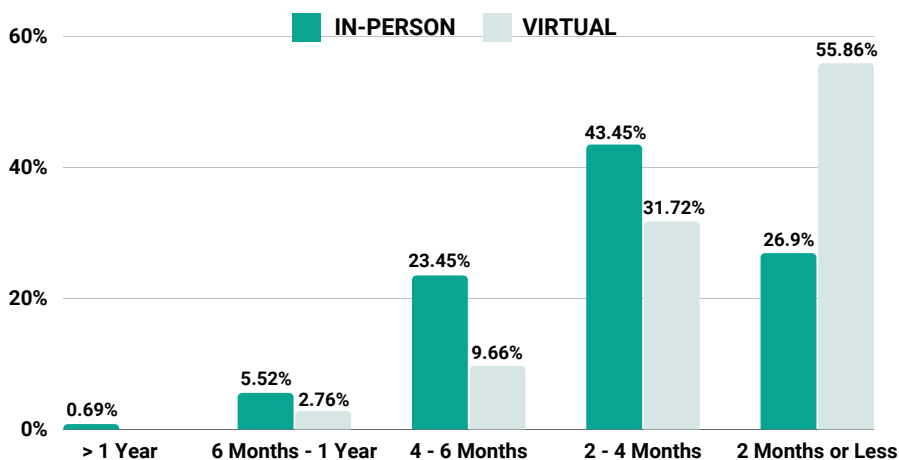|	> 1 Year	6 Months - 1 Year	4 - 6 Months	2 - 4 Months	2 Months or Less
In-Person	3.8%	42.12%	28.26%	22.01%	3.8%
Virtual	3.8%	21.2%	31.52%	30.43%	13.04%

Overall, respondents felt that in-person events required more planning time when incorporating the potential for limited speaker availability and travel.

The planning windows were much shorter on average for virtual events, with two to four months being the most popular range at 30.43%. Only 21.2% of respondents said they book between six months to a year before their virtual event. A significantly higher percentage (13.04%) indicated that they book within two months of the event for virtual, versus 3.8% for in-person events.

## How much advance notice do speakers want for their events?

While event organizers are planning far ahead for in-person events, 43.45% of speakers said they need only two to four months' notice for an event. For virtual events, 55.86% said they are comfortable with less than two months' notice.

IN-PERSON   **VIRTUAL**

	> 1 Year	6 Months - 1 Year	4 - 6 Months	2 - 4 Months	2 Months or Less
In-Person	0.69%	5.52%	23.45%	43.45%	26.9%
Virtual		2.76%	9.66%	31.72%	55.86%

66.9%
OF **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

2 - 6 MONTHS
OF ADVANCE NOTICE

## Event organizers and speakers: are the timelines aligned?

For the most popular format among event organizers and speakers alike — in-person events — the trend is pretty clear. And it's a trend that seems to work out for all parties involved. The majority of event organizers are **looking for speakers more than four months in advance** of the event. Very few keynote speakers indicated that they prefer to have more advance notice than that.

Whether this is a trend that emerged out of necessity or a convenient alignment is another discussion. But anytime event organizers and keynote speakers are on the same page about timelines, it's a good thing.
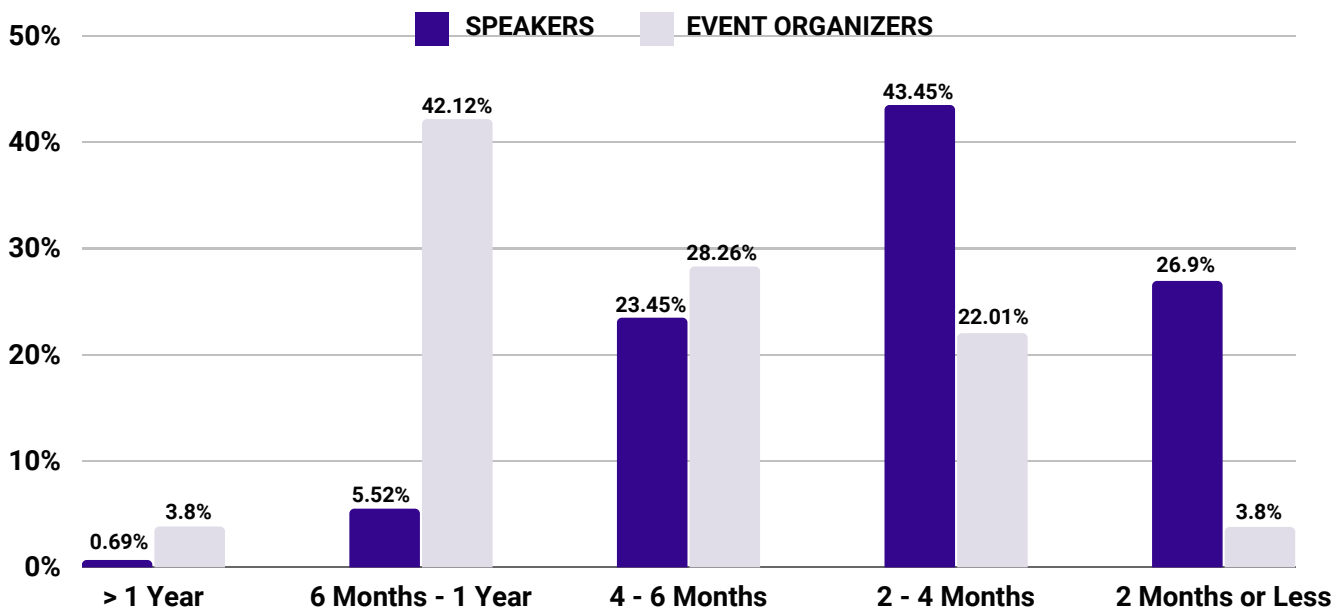
How many people are involved in the speaker booking decision?

Selecting the perfect speaker is a big decision for event organizers, so it's good that they're largely not making this decision alone. Just 2.47% said that they were the sole decision maker involved. Of those with multiple decision makers, only 17.84% said that more than five people were involved. It seems that two to five people is the most common zone for most, with 79.67% of respondents falling in that range.
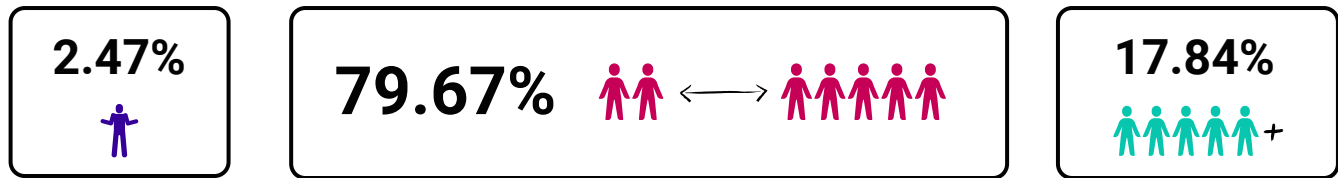

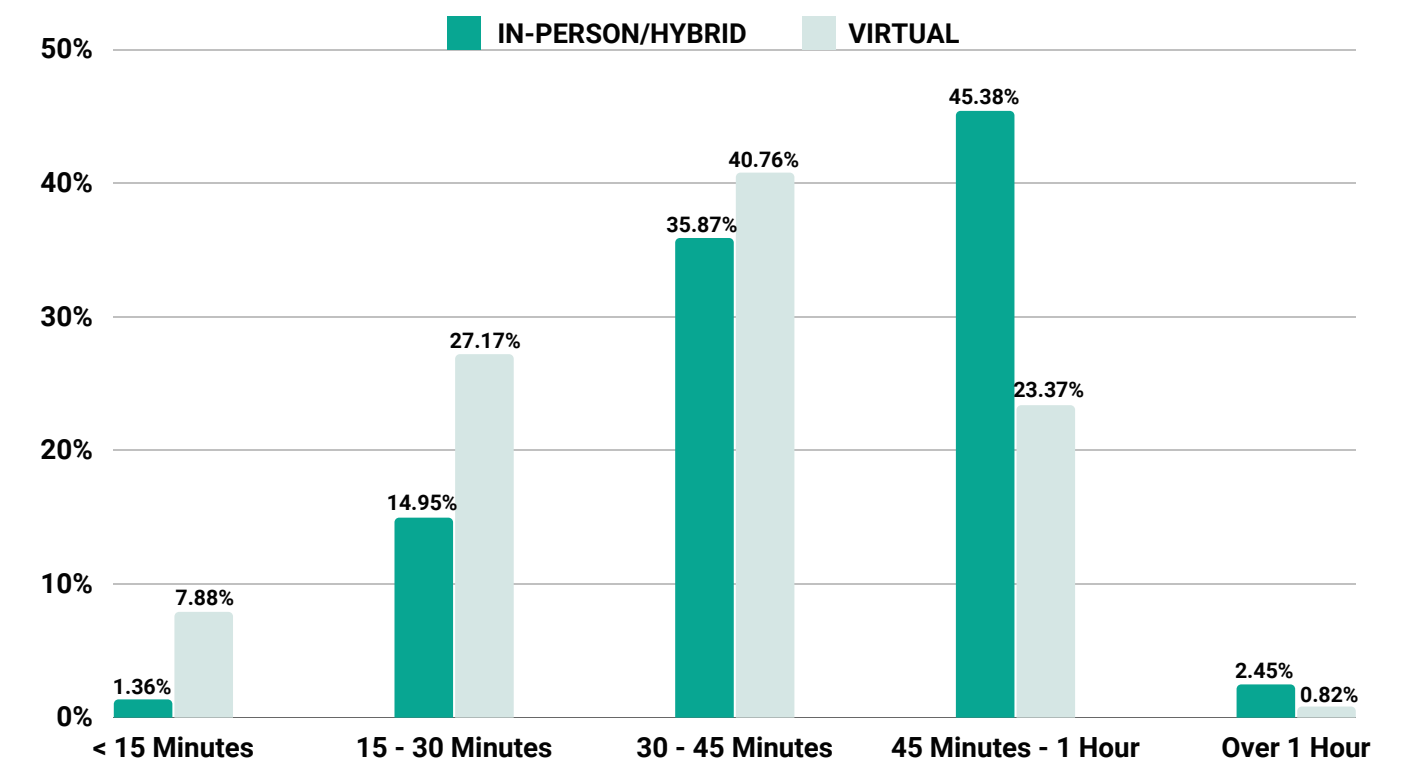## What's the right presentation length, according to event organizers?

Event format impacts what event organizers see as the right length of time for a speaker to present, which in turn may narrow down the selection — since speakers have their own preferences on presentation length.

For in-person or hybrid events, the highest percentage of respondents (45.38%) said that the right length of time for a speaker's presentation is **45 minutes to an hour**. Next was 30 to 45 minutes at 35.87%. Just 2.45% said over an hour.

IN-PERSON/HYBRID
45.38% 45 MIN. - 1 HR

For virtual events, the highest percentage of respondents (40.76%) said that the right length of time for a speaker's presentation is **30 to 45 minutes**. A solid 27.17% said 15 to 30 minutes.

VIRTUAL EVENTS
40.76% 30 - 45 MIN.
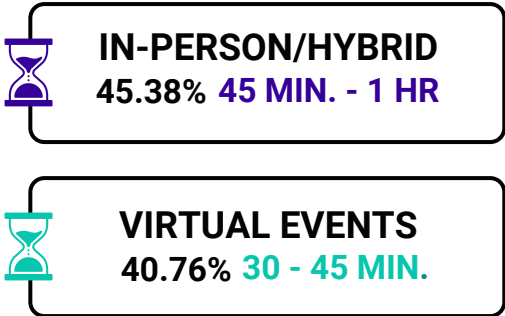
The **most significant difference in preferences between virtual and in-person presentation length was in the 45 minutes to 1 hour range**. Only 23.37% said this was the right length for virtual, while — as mentioned above — nearly half selected this range for in-person presentations.

■ IN-PERSON/HYBRID □ VIRTUAL

	< 15 Minutes	15 - 30 Minutes	30 - 45 Minutes	45 Minutes - 1 Hour	Over 1 Hour
In-Person/Hybrid	1.36%	14.95%	35.87%	45.38%	2.45%
Virtual	7.88%	27.17%	40.76%	23.37%	0.82%

How do event organizers approach hybrid events in 2023?

When it comes to hosting hybrid events — combining elements of both in-person and virtual events — the largest percentage of event organizers (36.68%) prefer to host the speaker in-person. Significantly fewer (11.41%) prefer to host the speaker virtually, and 10.87% say it depends on the session or topic. 9.24% prefer to host multiple speakers, some in-person and some virtual, and 1.63% say it depends on what the speaker prefers.

1. SPEAKER IN PERSON
2. SPEAKER VIRTUAL
3. DEPENDS ON TOPIC/SESSION
4. MULTIPLE SPEAKERS IN PERSON + VIRTUAL
5. WHATEVER SPEAKER PREFERS
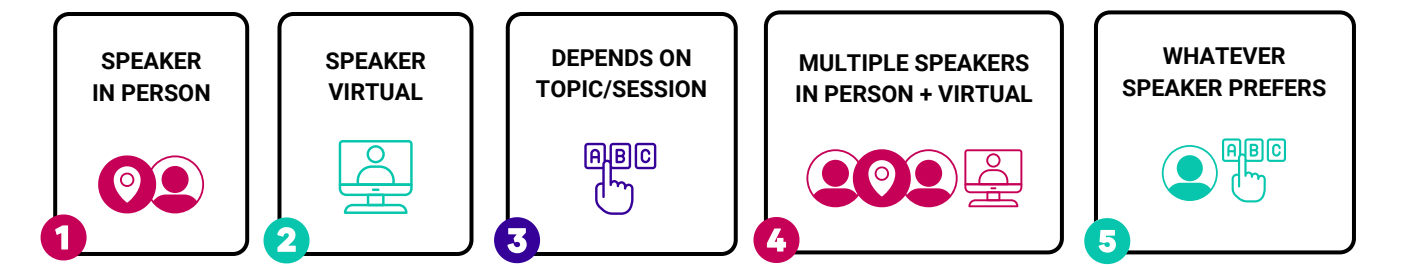
How do event budgets and speaking fees line up this year?

Can the importance of budget be overstated? There's no need for us to speculate about how much it matters — event organizers have more than confirmed it. In our 2022 report, 75.5% of them said that budget was a top factor that determines how they choose speakers. With that in mind, let's dive into all the numbers around budgets and fees in 2023.

For event organizers, **the average event budget was $26,582.88**. The most common range (46.2%) was $10,000 to $50,000. 44.29% of event strategists said their average budget for hiring a keynote speaker was less than $10,000. Only 9.51% of respondents said their budget was more than $50,000.

$26,582.88
AVERAGE EVENT BUDGET
OF EVENT ORGANIZER
RESPONDENTS

$16,659.48
**AVERAGE SPEAKING FEES**
OF EXPERIENCED SPEAKER
RESPONDENTS

To complete our picture, we asked speakers about their fees in 2023. Of the speakers surveyed, **the average speaker fee was $15,551.72** for in-person events. More than half (52.42%) had fee ranges under $10,000. Just 10.35% of speakers had fee ranges greater than $30,000. Most speakers (60.69%) said that total audience size does not influence their fees, with 39.31% saying it does.

For the more experienced speakers, the average speaker fee was $16,659.48. Of the speakers we surveyed who had 10 years of experience or more, 75% had fee ranges under $20,000 for in-person events. Less than half (40.48%) had fee ranges under $10,000. 15.47% of them had fee ranges greater than $30,000.

> **Keep in mind:** *Every speaker runs their own business uniquely. In some cases, speaking fees are completely inclusive of all additional requests such as travel and accommodation. For others, speaking fees are considered exclusive of expenses like agent commissions or management fees. For the purposes of this survey, we did not specify whether these are gross or net fees, and as such, we saw a range of responses that may or may not be inclusive of additional speaking expenses.*

With data on both sides — we can see how the **average event budget and speaker fee appear to be aligned** in 2023. Take a look at the differences between ranges for event pros and speakers below.
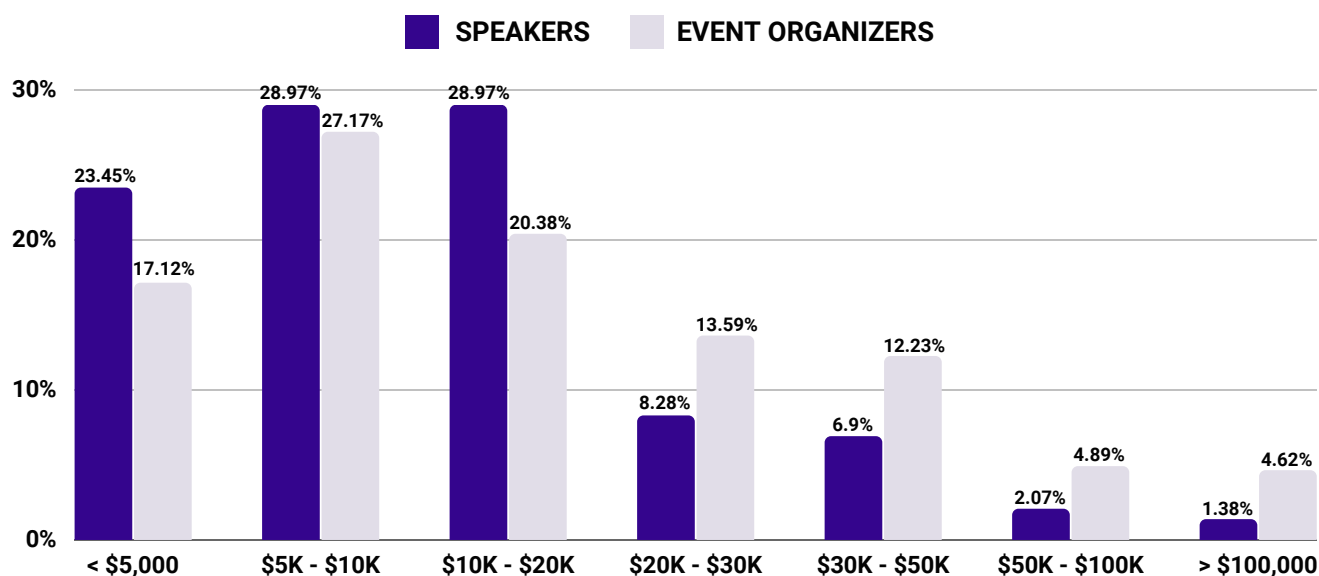
How does the **virtual format impact speaking fees?** For virtual events, **80% of speaker respondents had fees under $10,000**, and the majority (64.83%) said that their virtual speaking fees stayed the same in 2022. When asked **if speaking fees are higher for hybrid events**, 80% of speakers said no.

80% OF SPEAKERS SAID THEIR FEE RANGE FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS IS LESS THAN $10,000
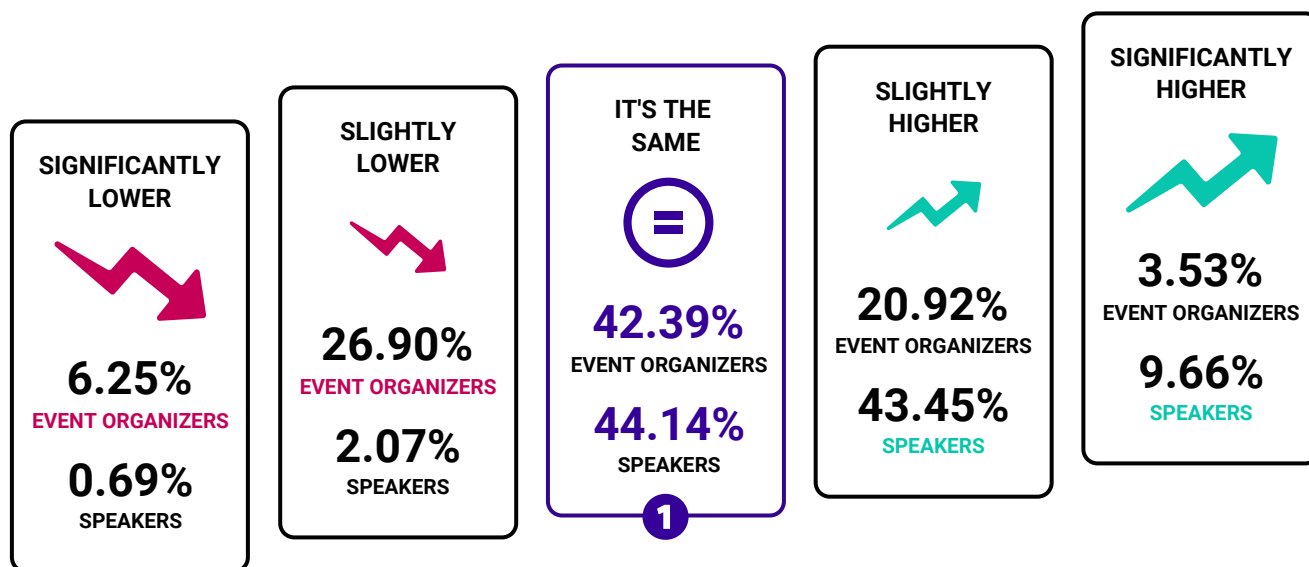
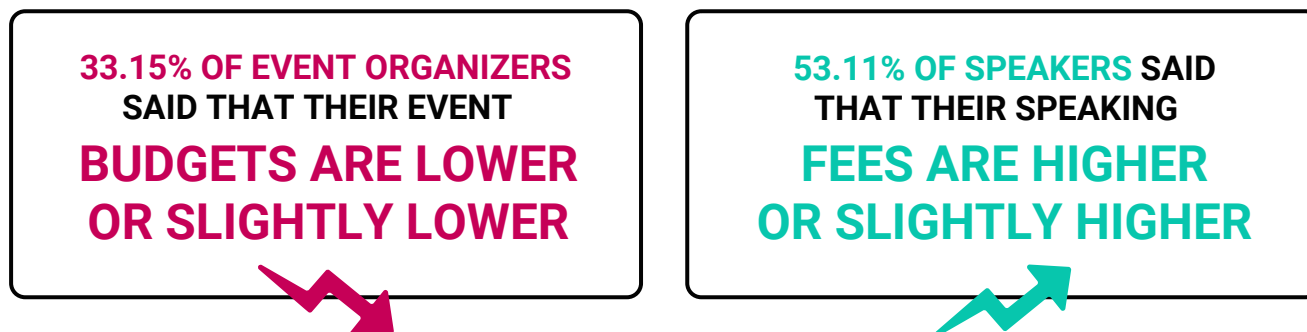## What impact will economic uncertainty have in 2023?

Even more so than with other aspects of event planning and speaker booking, economic uncertainty is an important factor for budgets. Among event organizers who said they were concerned about economic uncertainty, **the majority (68.23%) said that their concern is the driver for lowering their average budget in 2023** — with 27.76% saying it isn't having an impact on budget.

How are event budgets and speaking fees changing this year?

Overall, **33.15% of event organizers said their budgets decreased in 2023**, while **24.45% said their budgets increased**. The largest portion of respondents said that their budget was the same this year.

SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER

6.25%
EVENT ORGANIZERS

0.69%
SPEAKERS

SLIGHTLY LOWER

26.90%
EVENT ORGANIZERS

2.07%
SPEAKERS

IT'S THE SAME
=

42.39%
EVENT ORGANIZERS

44.14%
SPEAKERS

1

SLIGHTLY HIGHER

20.92%
EVENT ORGANIZERS

43.45%
SPEAKERS

SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER
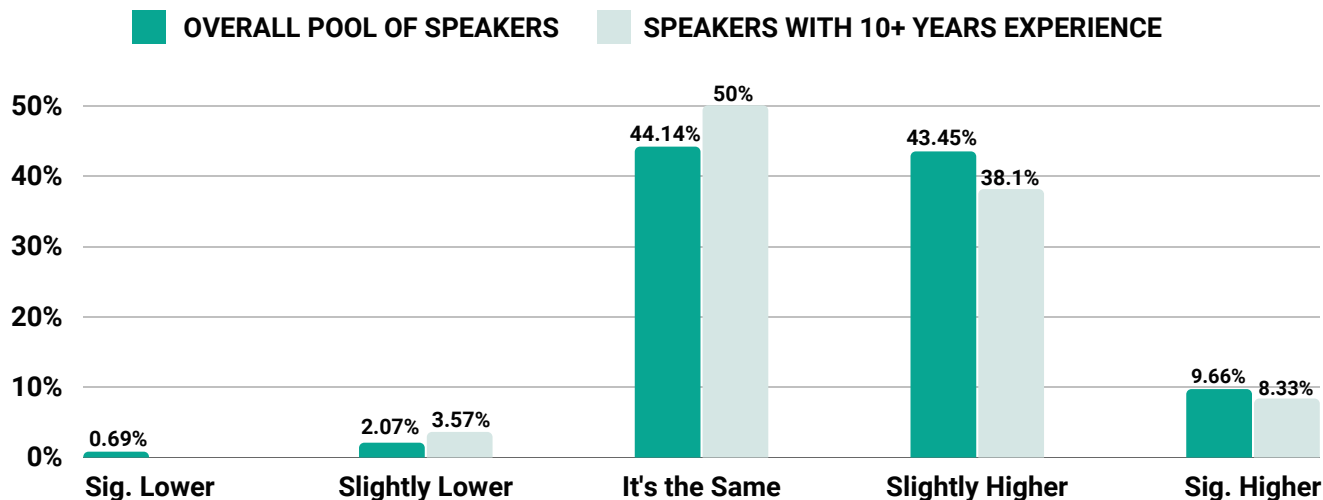
3.53%
EVENT ORGANIZERS

9.66%
SPEAKERS

As far as speaking fee changes in 2023, **more than half of speakers (53.11%) said their fees are increasing**, with 43.45% saying they are, but just slightly. 44.14% said their fees are not changing this year, and just 2.76% said they were decreasing.

33.15% OF EVENT ORGANIZERS SAID THAT THEIR EVENT BUDGETS ARE LOWER OR SLIGHTLY LOWER

53.11% OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT THEIR SPEAKING FEES ARE HIGHER OR SLIGHTLY HIGHER

Speakers tended to be more likely to have fees in 2023 that were the same or higher than their 2022 fees. And event organizers were more likely to have a budget in 2023 that is the same or lower than their 2022 budget. Keep in mind that this survey covers a subset of the market, and these percentages only demonstrate overall trends, not the amount of any decrease in spend. Also, speakers may be showing increased fees overall with more in-person events coming back this year.

It should be noted: *Speaking experience had an impact on fee changes. For speakers with 10 years of experience or more, 46.43% said their fees are increasing in 2023, with just 8.33% saying they're increasing a lot. 50% said their fees are not changing this year, and 3.57% said they were decreasing. See the comparison of responses from experienced speakers compared to the overall average for yourself below.*

Bar chart:

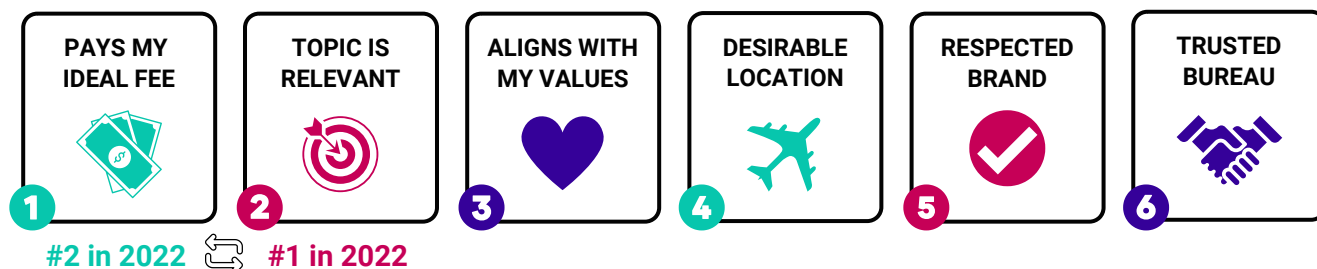|	Sig. Lower	Slightly Lower	It's the Same	Slightly Higher	Sig. Higher
Overall Pool of Speakers	0.69%	2.07%	44.14%	43.45%	9.66%
Speakers with 10+ Years Experience		3.57%	50%	38.1%	8.33%

What activities do event organizers typically hire speakers for?

You know what you hire speakers for, but what about all the other thousands of event organizers out there? We asked respondents to give you an idea of how you compare to the industry at large. The top answers were **delivering keynotes (78.8%) and participating in a Q&A or panel (51.63%)**. Here's how the rest of the answers filled in:

IN 2023, EVENT ORGANIZERS WILL HIRE TALENT FOR:	
1. DELIVERING KEYNOTES	78.80%
2. PARTICIPATING IN Q&A OR PANEL	51.63%
3. HOSTING AS AN EMCEE OR MODERATOR	25.00%
4. UNIVERSITY EVENTS	24.46%
5. PERFORMING AS MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT	14.95%
6. PERFORMING AS COMEDIC ENTERTAINMENT	13.32%
7. OFFERING ACCESS TO CELEBRITIES	9.78%
8. OTHER	6.79%

What do speakers consider when choosing their bookings?

When asked about the top factors that determine how they choose their bookings, the top three answers speakers gave was that **the event pays their ideal fee (62.76%)**, that **it is a relevant topic for their expertise (61.38%)**, and that **the event or organization aligns with their values (41.38%)**.

PAYS MY IDEAL FEE	TOPIC IS RELEVANT	ALIGNS WITH MY VALUES	DESIRABLE LOCATION	RESPECTED BRAND	TRUSTED BUREAU
1	2	3	4	5	6

#2 in 2022 ⇄ #1 in 2022

Additionally, whether it is **in a desirable geographical location (22.76%)**, is **hosted by a well-respected brand (17.93%)**, and whether the booking request came through a **trusted speakers bureau (17.24%)** were of importance to speakers.

What additional activities are event organizers requesting of speakers?

When seeking to maximize engagement with speakers, organizers will ask for additional requests at the time of securing talent for their event. The top request that event strategists said they typically have for speakers beyond their presentations were **meet and greets with attendees (66.3%)**. Here's how the rest of the answers filled in:

Meet and Greet with Attendees	66.3%
Social Media Promotion	41.58%
Book Signing	37.5%
Pre-Event Publicity	35.6%
Meeting with Executives	31.25%
Other	11.41%

0%   25%   50%   75%
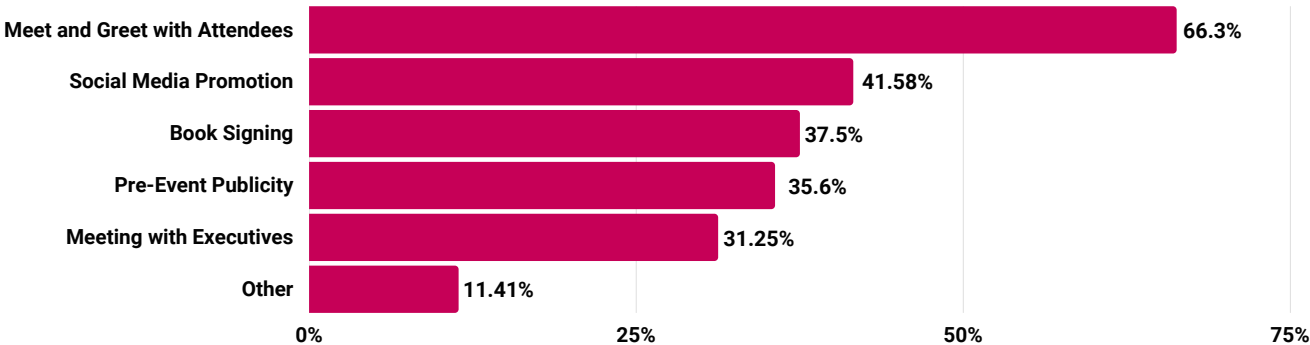
How do event organizers plan the content of their events?

When it comes to the event content and keynote speaker, this is no chicken or egg situation. Event organizers overwhelmingly (61.96%) indicated that they seek a speaker who fits the content and theme of their event. However, a significant portion **(20.92%) did say that they choose a speaker based on their expertise** even if it's different from the event theme. Fewer **(17.12%) said they plan the content around the speaker**.
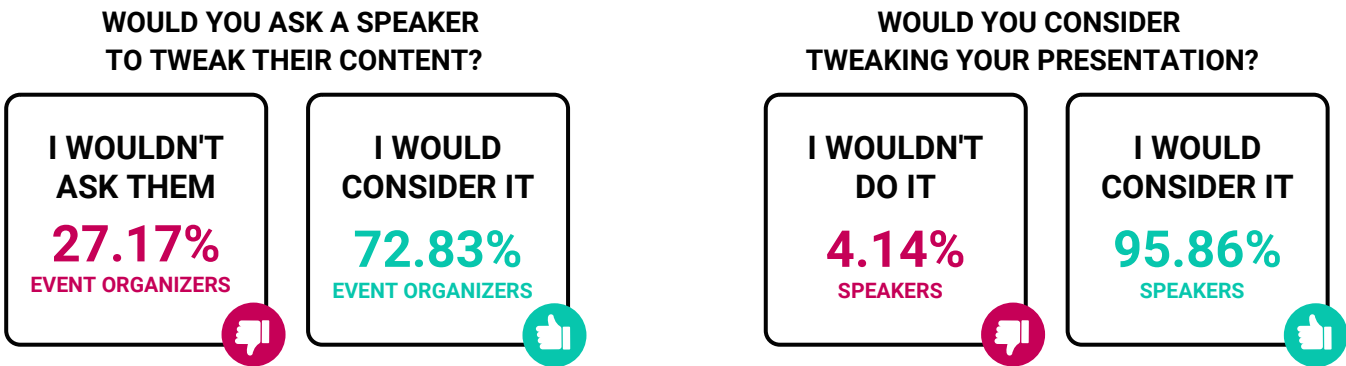
61.96%
OF EVENT ORGANIZERS

SAID THEY SEEK A SPEAKER WHO FITS THE CONTENT AND THEME OF THEIR EVENT

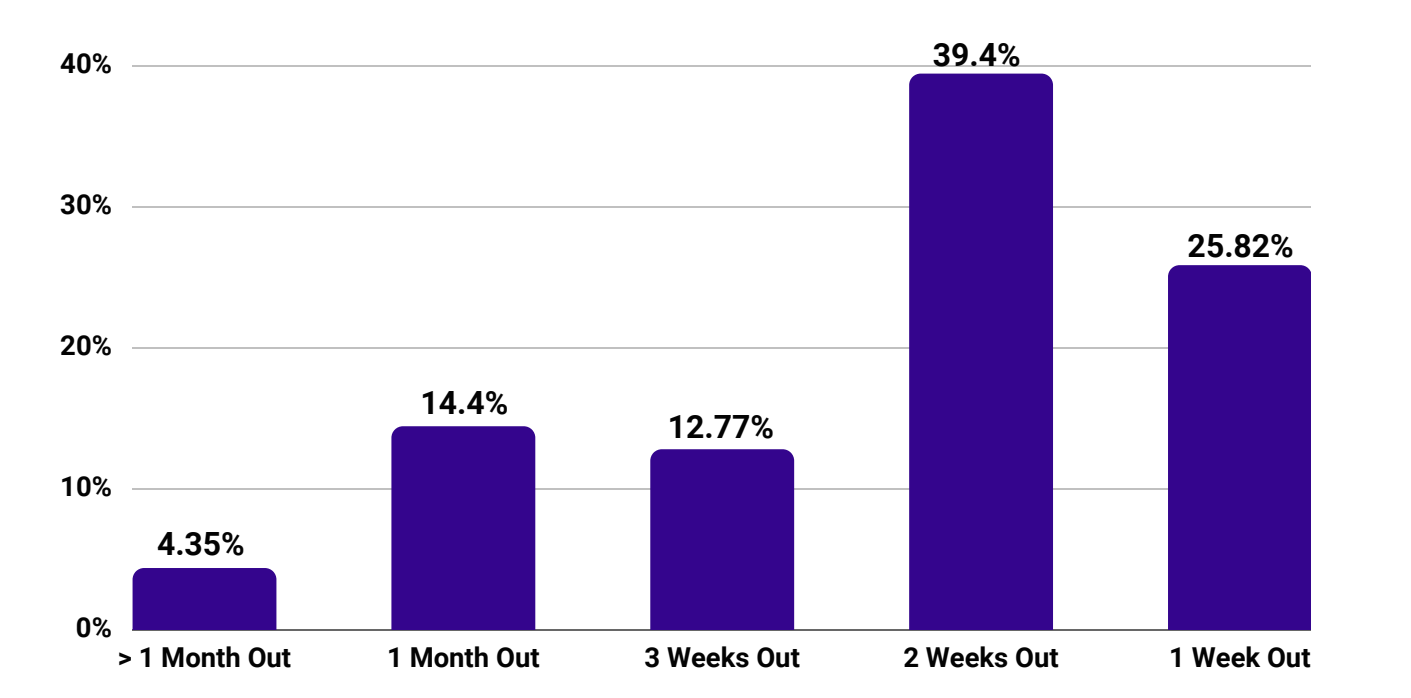## How do event organizers and speakers approach controversial topics?

New this year, we wanted to get a sense of **how event organizers and keynote speakers might approach potentially controversial content** in 2023. First, we asked event organizers how likely they would be to ask a keynote speaker to tweak their presentation if they thought their views could be polarizing. The overwhelming majority (72.83%) said they would at least consider it. Only 27.17% said they wouldn't do it.

Next, we asked keynote speakers how likely they would be to oblige such a request from an event organizer. Almost all (95.86%) said they would at least consider tweaking their presentation in such a scenario. Just 4.14% said they wouldn't do it.

WOULD YOU ASK A SPEAKER TO TWEAK THEIR CONTENT?

I WOULDN'T ASK THEM	I WOULD CONSIDER IT
27.17%	**72.83%**
EVENT ORGANIZERS	EVENT ORGANIZERS

WOULD YOU CONSIDER TWEAKING YOUR PRESENTATION?

I WOULDN'T DO IT	I WOULD CONSIDER IT
4.14%	**95.86%**
SPEAKERS	SPEAKERS

When are event organizers running through final prep?

As the date of the event approaches, **most event organizers (65.22%) are running through final preparations with speakers in the last two weeks before the event**.

Event organizers and speakers: biggest challenges of working together?

Like any working relationship, event organizers and speakers may come across challenges as they work together to deliver memorable event experiences. On a positive note, the **top response from event strategists (30.1%) was that they've had no issues at all working with keynote speakers**.

The top challenges listed by event organizers were speakers **not having an understanding of their audience** (24.35%), **not communicating clearly** or in a timely manner (15.18%), **not being flexible enough** when unavoidable changes come up (10.21%), or **requesting changes** after contracts are signed (8.64%).

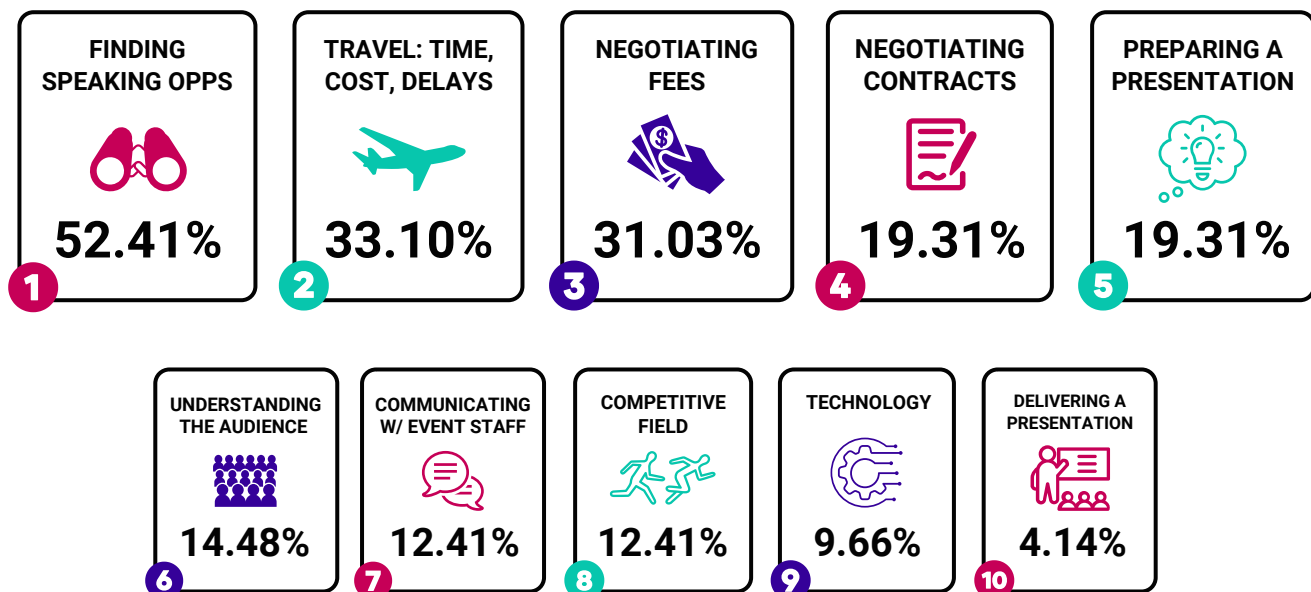| CHALLENGES EVENT ORGANIZERS FACE WORKING WITH SPEAKERS	
1. I'VE HAD NO ISSUES WORKING WITH PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS	30.10%
2. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE	24.35%
3. THEY DON'T COMMUNICATE CLEARLY OR IN A TIMELY MANNER	15.18%
4. THEY ARE NOT FLEXIBLE WHEN UNAVOIDABLE CHANGES ARE NEEDED	10.21%
5. THEY REQUEST CHANGES AFTER CONTRACTS ARE SIGNED	8.64%
6. OTHER	6.81%
7. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE TECHNOLOGY WE USE	3.66%
8. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF MY TIME	1.05%

The positive trend continues, with the **most popular answer (41.98%) among speakers being that they had no issues** partnering with event organizers.

Of the concerns raised, most center around **communication, clarity, and timeliness** (30.25%). About 19.76% of respondents raised a concern about **getting requests for donating additional time or other extra appearances** that are not negotiated up front.

CHALLENGES SPEAKERS FACE WORKING WITH EVENT ORGANIZERS	
1. I'VE HAD NO ISSUES WORKING WITH EVENT ORGANIZERS	41.98%
2. THEY ASK FOR EXTRAS THAT ARE NOT NEGOTIATED IN ADVANCE	12.35%
3. THEY DON'T COMMUNICATE CLEARLY OR IN A TIMELY MANNER	12.35%
4. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF MY TIME	9.88%
5. THEY DON'T ACCURATELY EXPLAIN WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE	8.02%
6. THEY REQUEST CHANGES AFTER CONTRACTS ARE SIGNED	7.41%
7. OTHER	7.41%
8. THEY UNDERESTIMATE AUDIENCE SIZE	0.62%

What are the hardest parts of being a professional speaker?

While the most experienced of speakers make it look easy, being a professional speaker is hard work. When asked about the most challenging parts of the job, more than half (52.41%) of speakers said it was finding speaking opportunities. Other top answers were travel (33.10%) and negotiating fees (31.03%).

FINDING SPEAKING OPPS	TRAVEL: TIME, COST, DELAYS	NEGOTIATING FEES	NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS	PREPARING A PRESENTATION
52.41%	33.10%	31.03%	19.31%	19.31%
1	2	3	4	5

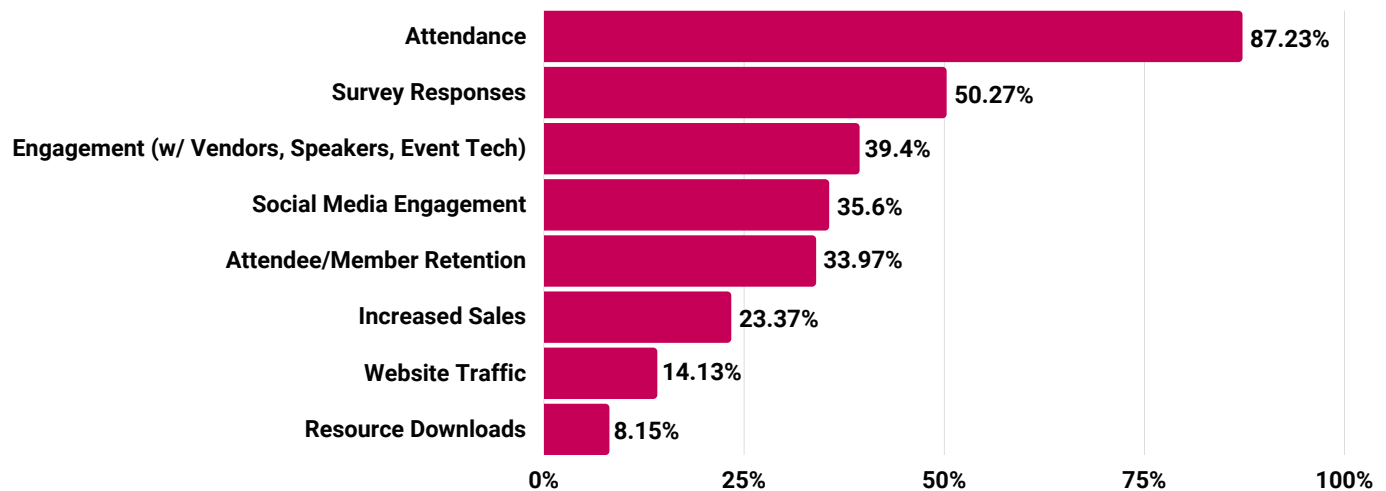| UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE	COMMUNICATING W/ EVENT STAFF	COMPETITIVE FIELD	TECHNOLOGY	DELIVERING A PRESENTATION
14.48%	12.41%	12.41%	9.66%	4.14%
6	7	8	9	10

BEYOND THE EVENT

How do event organizers measure event success?

Successful event organizers know that measuring the outcome of your events is essential, and it starts at the beginning of planning an event. We know every event is unique, which is why event organizers should identify key performance indicators that are tailored to align with their overall event goals.
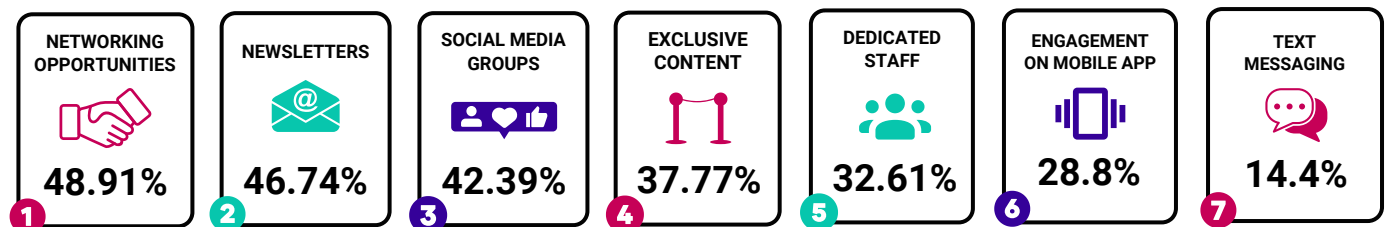
The top five key performance indicators that event organizers use to measure the success of their events are **attendance, survey responses, engagement with vendors, speakers, or event technology, social media engagement, and attendee retention**. Here's the full breakdown of responses:

KPI	Percentage
Attendance	87.23%
Survey Responses	50.27%
Engagement (w/ Vendors, Speakers, Event Tech)	39.4%
Social Media Engagement	35.6%
Attendee/Member Retention	33.97%
Increased Sales	23.37%
Website Traffic	14.13%
Resource Downloads	8.15%

The type of organization planners work for seems to impact their KPI preferences. Event organizers who work for **associations seem more keen on survey responses**. They more frequently listed it as a KPI they utilize (84.6% compared to 50.27%). **Independent planners were slightly less interested in attendance** as a KPI (71.43% compared to 87.23%).

How do event organizers build community among attendees?

Maintaining connections with and between your attendees beyond your events is a top priority in 2023. The most common tools event organizers are employing to accomplish this are **exclusive networking opportunities, newsletters, social media groups, access to exclusive content, having dedicated staff members for community, and mobile app engagement**.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES	NEWSLETTERS	SOCIAL MEDIA GROUPS	EXCLUSIVE CONTENT	DEDICATED STAFF	ENGAGEMENT ON MOBILE APP	TEXT MESSAGING
48.91%	46.74%	42.39%	37.77%	32.61%	28.8%	14.4%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Fewer university respondents selected exclusive networking opportunities as something they utilize to build community (30.7% compared to 48.91%). More associations indicated they leverage exclusive networking (76.92%) to build community. Associations were the least likely to utilize social media groups (23.08% compared to 42.39%).

Over half of corporation respondents said they are more likely than average to use access to exclusive content as a community-building tool (51.47% vs 37.77%). Nonprofits were most likely out of the personas to have a dedicated staff member for community (43.66% vs. 32.61%). Associations were most likely out of the personas to use mobile app engagement (50% vs. 28.8%).

What predictions do you have for the event industry in 2023?

Event pros and speakers shared about common themes like the resurgence of in-person events, the importance of attendee experience, the need to demonstrate event ROI, the disruptive potential of AI, and the impact of economic uncertainty.

EVENT ORGANIZERS

"**In-person events return** to being the industry norm."
TOM RINGHOEFFER

"Increased importance of **wellness** and **concern about the future**."
STEVEN AST

"**Shorter session times**, more engagement asked of speakers."
KALEIGH IMBRIALE, IMPACT POINT GROUP

"People are excited to be back in **live settings** and are enthusiastic for **quality programming**."
BARBARA JACK STRICKLAND

"It's been hard to find hotel/conference space, so I'm thinking a lot **more conferences are coming back**. Will be interesting to see the future of hybrid events."

"**Budgets will be cut** for 2023 events and we will **need to adapt** in order to produce events that are still meaningful."

"Attendees will **demand more ROI** and be more selective about why and which events to attend."
MARNIE HERREN, EVENTPOWER

"**Economy** is going to continue to be a **challenge** in driving attendance."
ROBERT SADOWSKI

"**In-person** meetings will continue to be popular as people are **eager to travel again**."
JENNIFER NEWMAN

"Events will **prioritize physical "wow" factors** (interactive scenic elements) more than speakers when curating their budgets."
ABBEY BURKE

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"**Generative AI applications** will change everything."
CHRIS MESSINA

"**AI-generated content** will create a sea of noise."
DAN CHUPARKOFF

"Layoffs will lead to even **more people seeking knowledge** from expert speakers."
DARREN MURPH

"Speaking **business will recover** a little more."
DAVE CAREY

"With things returning to more normal post-pandemic, I expect to see **more in-person** speaker demand."
DENNIS GAGE

"**Artificial intelligence** will be a topic of increasing interest and importance for audiences."
RICHARD YONCK

"Certain topics will be even **more critical** in many areas while receiving even **more resistance in others**."
KEN SHELTON

"The speaking arena will continue to grow, but people need speakers that are **available, accessible and affordable**."
GAIL A. GLOVER

"I have many predictions: Event **data and analysis** will become increasingly important. **Sustainability** is becoming more important. Organizations will do more to **leverage event content** in the year after the event. **Event experiences** will be key in 2023."
SHAWN DUBRAVAC

"In 2023, I feel we will still be seeing organizations that have not held **in-person events** since the pandemic began."
GREG SCHWEM

What advice would event organizers share with their peers?

"Be **patient and kind** to those you want to work with."
MARY RAUCHUT

"**Plan well in advance**. It always takes 50% more time than you think."
MARIO PERAZA

"Have several **back-up options** and get speaking availability even while narrowing speaker options. It saves an enormous amount of time."
PATRICK GRANEY-DOLAN

"Be **clear in expectations and asks** from the get-go. Adding on asks later creates headaches for all involved."
SEAN LASHLEY

"Make your **in-person meetings fun** — do something fun and exciting. Give your attendees free time to **enjoy the venue**."
KATHI BRETCKO

"**Engage** your **stakeholders** in the process as **early** as possible."
KALEIGH IMBRIALE, IMPACT POINT GROUP

"Try to **find speakers that fit** the event, rather than the other way around."
HEATHER MARKS

"Stay **open to change**…there have been times where the direction the speaker went was not my plan, but was exactly what my audience needed to hear."

"**Flexibility** is key! Also, **be nice**. We're all running the same race, just at way different speeds."
MARY SPADONI

"**Plan ahead** of time to try to find a speaker that **fits your mission and goal** of the event in advance (6 months to 1 year)."
RICHARD YONCK

What inspires professional speakers to pursue this career?

"Unique opportunity to **connect** with people in a **meaningful way**."
DAVE CAREY

"I enjoy the **creativity** involved in public speaking and find **purpose and meaning** in it."
EDUARDO BRICEÑO

"I realized very early on in my comedy career that corporate **audiences desperately need to laugh**."
GREG SCHWEM

"I **love working with event planners** to make an event successful! There is no better feeling than when you leave the stage and you know you **helped the event planner look like a rock star**!"
SHAWN DUBRAVAC

"To be **as impactful as possible**, especially given the topics I cover."
KEN SHELTON

"I was encouraged to become a speaker because of the **knowledge that I have** in my area."
GAIL A. GLOVER

"I have an **important message to share** and I love being in front of a group and sharing it."
MIKE JAFFE

"I've always **enjoyed teaching and sharing**. To me, having the opportunity to share, teach and inspire individuals and organizations to improve is beyond gratifying."
SCOTT DEMING

"I love investing in and **seeing people grow** in their personal development."
JASON MILLER

"It was a **natural progression for me** from baseball career, movie, and book to speaking."
JIM MORRIS, "THE ROOKIE"

ABOUT AAE SPEAKERS

AAE Speakers Bureau is a full-service speakers bureau and talent agency that exclusively represents the interests of meeting and event professionals to select, book and execute events with keynote speakers and entertainment to leave a lasting impact on their audiences. We work tirelessly for event professionals as their centralized, trusted, and impartial partner in the talent booking process.

With our expansive industry experience and exceptional customer support, AAE has connected more than 10,000 events with their perfect speaker, host, celebrity, or performer since 2002. We have booked over $300M of celebrity talent on behalf of thousands of the most respected companies and organizations in the world.

If you have any questions related to this report, please contact Jennifer Best or Evan Owens at jennifer@aaehq.com and evan@aaehq.com, respectively.

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