



2022

SPEAKING INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT



AN INSIDE LOOK

AT THE STATE OF THE SPEAKING INDUSTRY.

If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that the event industry is always evolving. Sometimes, the changes the industry experiences are massive and happen within mere weeks, like with the shift to virtual events at the start of the pandemic. But more often, events are going through smaller, incremental changes because of things like emerging technologies and new audience preferences.

The event industry has remained resilient in the midst of this ever changing landscape thanks to the ability of event organizers to pivot and adapt. We've seen first-hand how our clients have turned challenges into opportunities to improve their processes and elevate attendee experience.

Staying ahead in a dynamic industry depends on reliable, insightful data. In this 2022 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report, the first of its kind created by AAE Speakers Bureau, you'll find insights from event strategists 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!

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The **top three most important qualities of a keynote speaker**, according to event organizers, are how well they fit within their budget (75.5%), how relevant their speaking topics are (65.7%), and how compelling their story is (52.4%).
- The **two factors that make speakers most likely to accept an offer** are whether the topic is relevant to their speaking expertise (77.9%) and whether the event pays their ideal fee (68.4%).
- The **most important goals event organizers have for their booked speakers** are audience engagement (74.7%), education for the audience (58.7%), and increased attendance (47.7%).
- The **topics event strategists are prioritizing in 2022** are diversity, equity, and inclusion (58.1%), leadership and motivation (57%), mental health (47%), and the future of work (33%).
- 81.9% of event strategists said that **their budgets in 2022 were the same (57.4%) or higher (24.5%)** versus where they were in 2021. 4.8% said it is significantly higher.

In our industry, we're always looking ahead and predicting the future. Thanks to our hundreds of participants, this 2022 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report gives event strategists and speakers a clearer picture of the coming months, equipping us all to make better informed, data-driven decisions about the best ways to enrich the experience of our audiences.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOP 3 QUALITIES OF A KEYNOTE SPEAKER:



HOW WELL THEY FIT WITHIN MY BUDGET



HOW RELEVANT THEIR SPEAKING TOPICS ARE



HOW COMPELLING THEIR STORY IS

WHAT GOALS DO EVENT ORGANIZERS HAVE FOR THEIR SPEAKERS?



AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT



EDUCATION FOR THE AUDIENCE



INCREASED ATTENDANCE

2 THINGS THAT MAKE SPEAKERS MOST LIKELY TO ACCEPT AN OFFER:



IS THE TOPIC RELEVANT TO MY EXPERTISE?



DOES THE EVENT PAY MY IDEAL FEE?

BUDGET CHANGES FROM 2021 TO 2022:

 81.9%

SAME OR HIGHER

TOPICS EVENT STRATEGISTS ARE PRIORITIZING IN 2022

1. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)
2. LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION
3. MENTAL HEALTH
4. THE FUTURE OF WORK

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

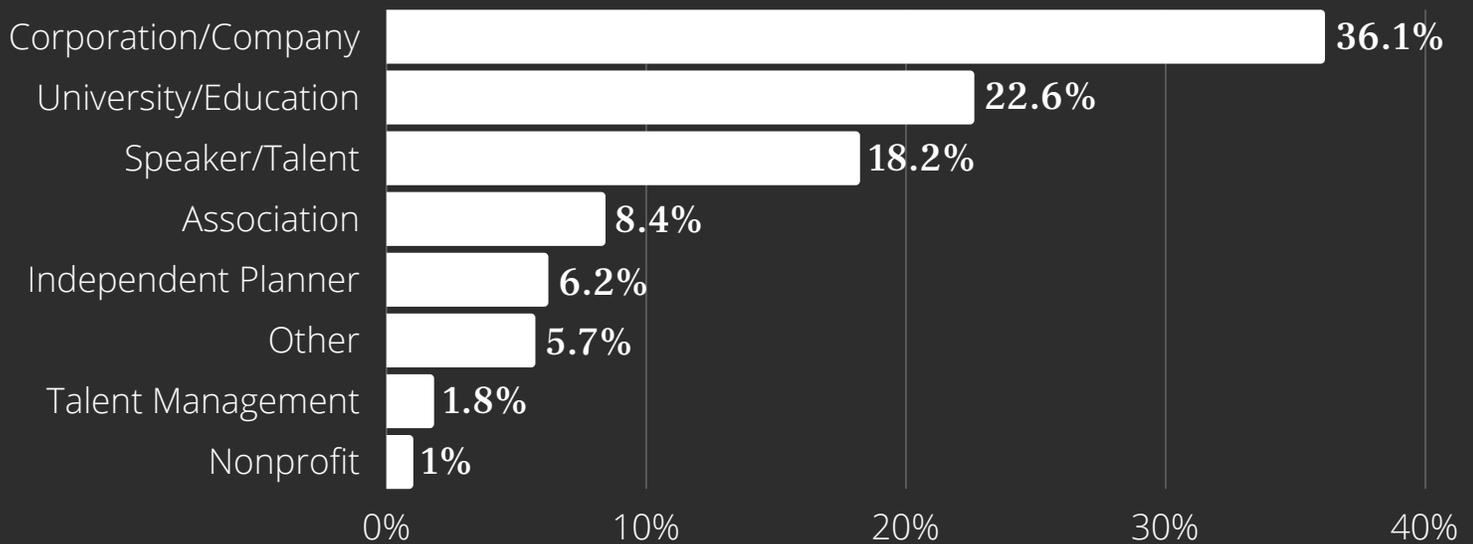
TOTAL EVENT ORGANIZERS:

541

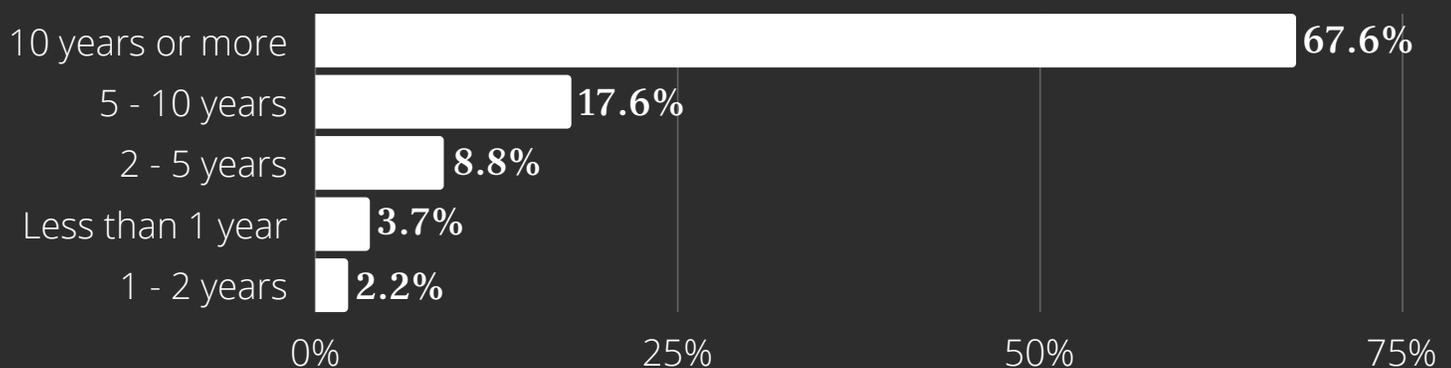
TOTAL SPEAKERS AND TALENT MANAGEMENT:

136

CATEGORIES RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED WITH



YEARS OF EXPERIENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER RESPONDENTS





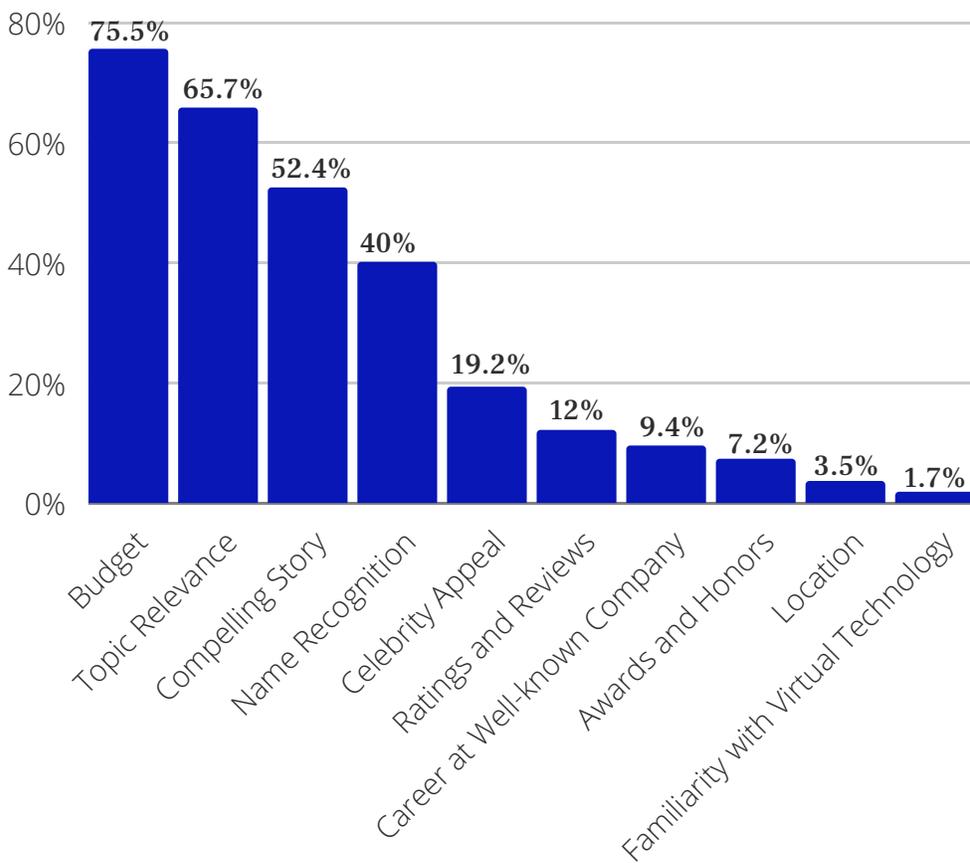
CHOOSING A SPEAKER

2022 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report

CHOOSING A SPEAKER

QUALITIES THAT MATTER MOST TO EVENT STRATEGISTS WHEN LOOKING FOR A KEYNOTE SPEAKER

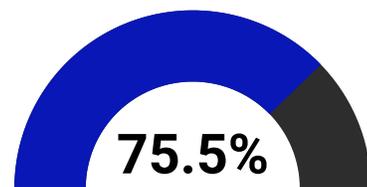
WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 FACTORS THAT DETERMINE HOW EVENT ORGANIZERS CHOOSE SPEAKERS?



When choosing a keynote speaker, it's obvious that some qualities mattered more than others. Whether the **speaker's fees fit within their budget (75.5%)**, whether the speaker covers relevant topics (65.7%), and whether they possess a compelling story (52.4%) were among the highest priorities for event strategists when it comes to selecting a keynote speaker.

Among the lowest priorities were having a career at a well-known company (9.4%), having received awards and honors (7.2%), and being located in a convenient area (3.5%).

Budget received the highest percentage of answers from university respondents, coming in at 82.4% versus 75.5% overall. A speaker's ability to cover relevant topics garnered the highest response rate from independent event organizers, at 71.4% versus 65.7% overall.

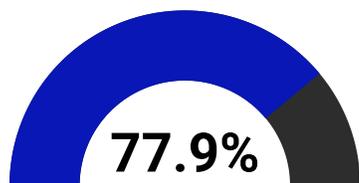


75.5% OF EVENT STRATEGISTS SAID THAT **BUDGET** WAS ONE OF THEIR TOP THREE FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A SPEAKER.

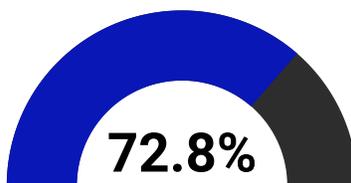
CHOOSING A SPEAKER

SPEAKER QUALIFICATIONS

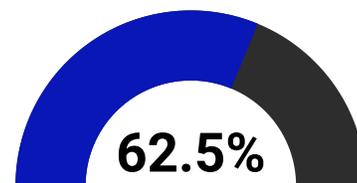
When it comes to finding a highly qualified speaker for your event, experience matters. Of the speakers surveyed, **over two-thirds of respondents have been speaking for 10 years or more**. In addition, speakers were asked to list how many accomplishments they have achieved, from authoring a book to founding a company. On average, **speakers possess more than four significant qualifications** (avg 4.24) which have contributed to their successful speaking career.



77.9 % OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT THEY HAVE **RECEIVED AWARDS**.

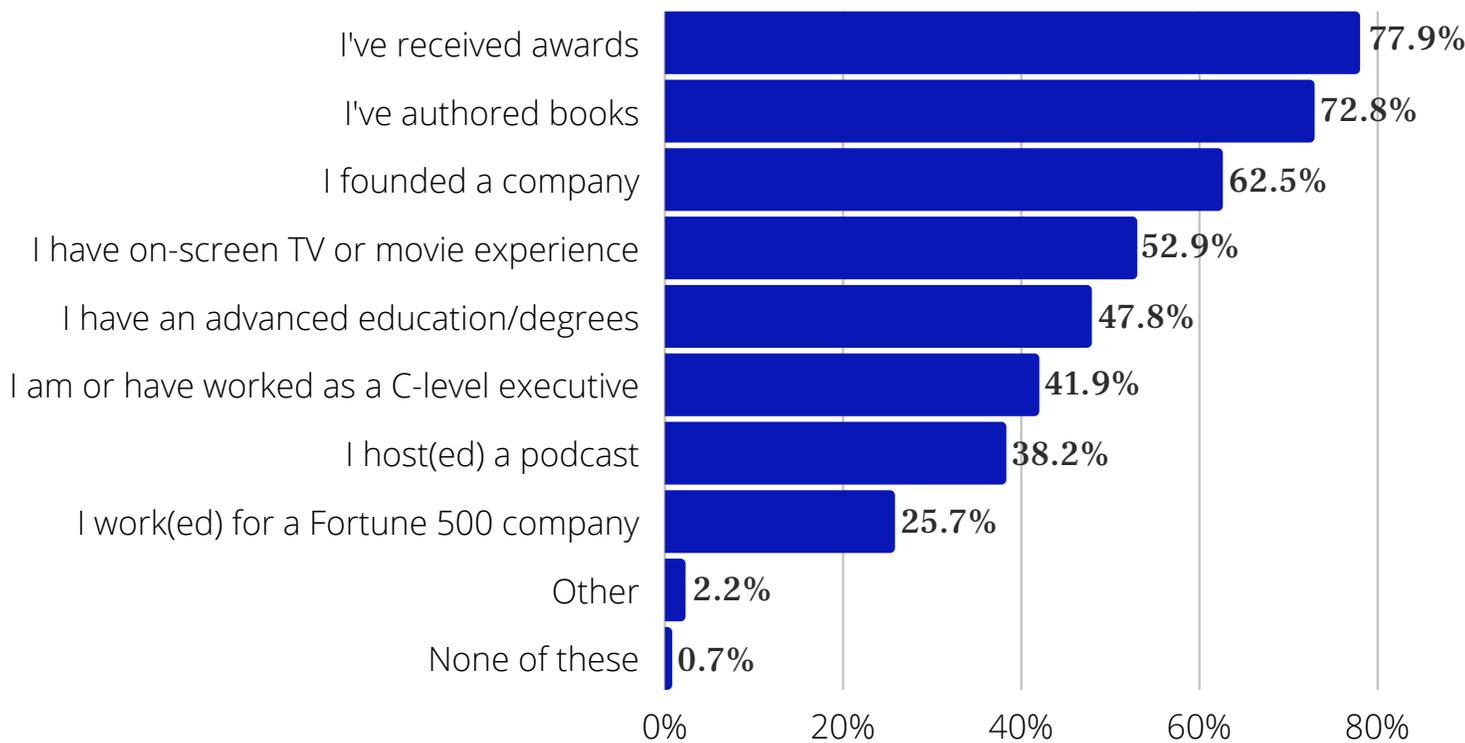


72.8 % OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT THEY HAVE **AUTHORED BOOKS**.



62.5 % OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT THEY **FOUNDED A COMPANY**.

WHICH OF THESE QUALIFICATIONS DO SPEAKERS CURRENTLY HAVE?



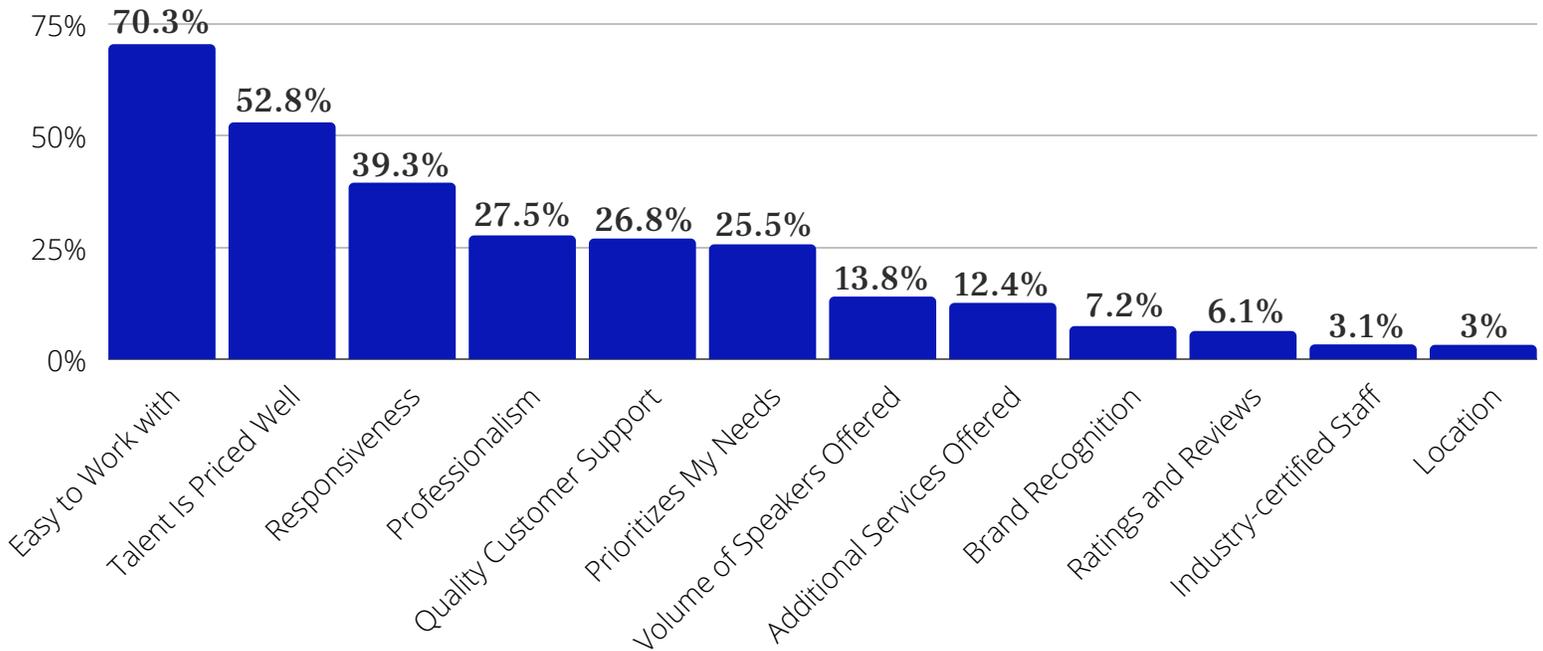
CHOOSING A SPEAKER

QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR WHEN PARTNERING WITH A SPEAKERS BUREAU

Event strategists also had some strong preferences when it comes to speakers bureaus. They want a **partner who is easy to work with (70.3%), has talent that is priced well (52.8%), and is sufficiently responsive (39.3%)**. Other popular answers included professionalism (27.5%), customer support (26.8%), and prioritizing clients’ needs (25.5%).

Having talent that is priced well was the number one answer on average for association event organizers, racking up 70.2% versus 52.8% overall. On average, independent event organizers indicated that they value being easy to work with (78.6%), responsiveness (50%), and professionalism (45.2%) a bit more than the average respondent.

WHAT ARE **EVENT STRATEGISTS'** TOP 3 DRIVERS WHEN CHOOSING A SPEAKERS BUREAU TO WORK WITH?



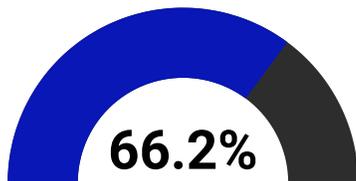
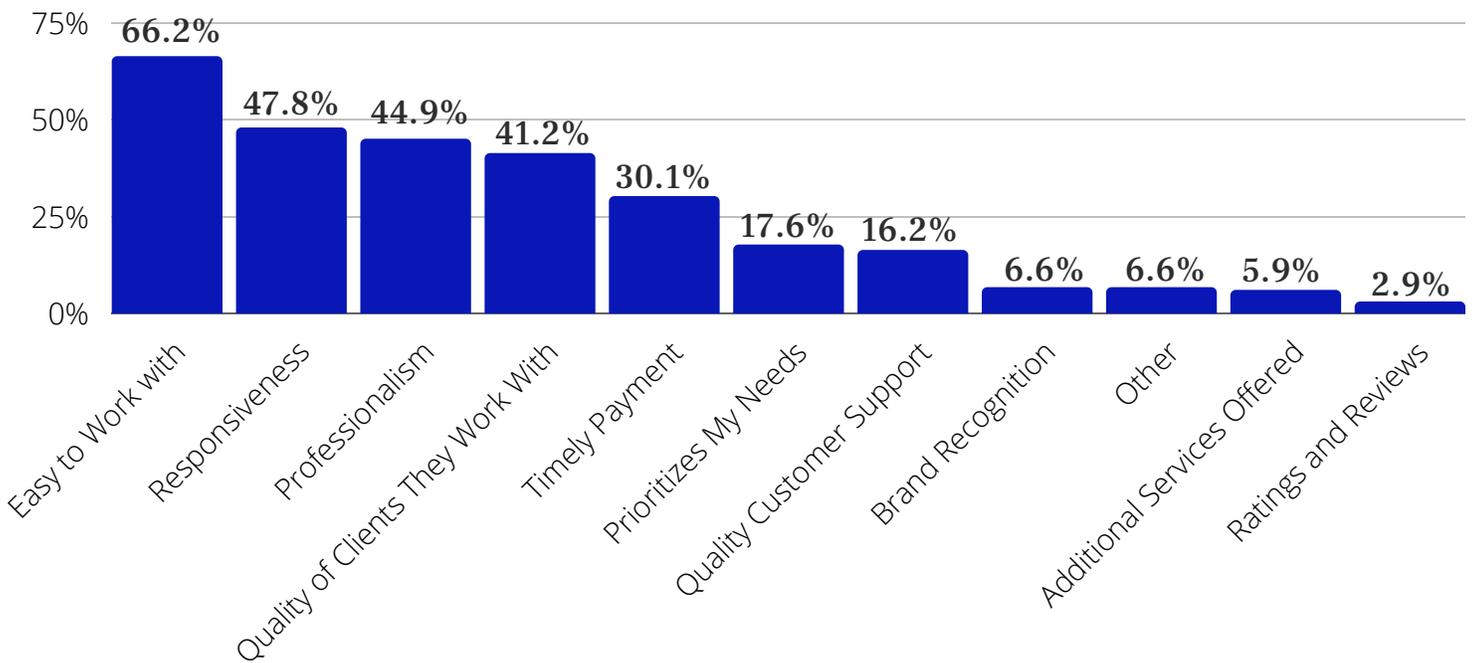
45.2% of independent event planners included “professionalism” as one of their top three drivers when choosing a speakers bureau to work with – 17.7 percentage points higher than the overall percentage of all respondents.

CHOOSING A SPEAKER

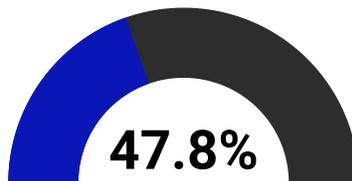
QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR WHEN PARTNERING WITH A SPEAKERS BUREAU

Speakers felt similarly about working with speaker bureaus. **“Easy to work with”** was the top response for two-thirds (66.2%) of those surveyed, followed by responsiveness (47.8%), professionalism (44.9%), and quality of clients/event producers they work with (41.2%). Industry certifications and location were not cited as factors in how they choose which speakers bureau to partner with.

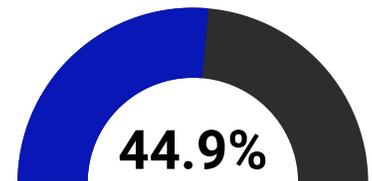
WHAT ARE SPEAKERS' TOP 3 DRIVERS WHEN CHOOSING A SPEAKERS BUREAU TO WORK WITH?



66.2% OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT A SPEAKERS BUREAU BEING EASY TO WORK WITH IS A PRIORITY



47.8% OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT A SPEAKERS BUREAU BEING RESPONSIVE IS A TOP PRIORITY



44.9% OF SPEAKERS SAID THAT A SPEAKERS BUREAU EXHIBITING PROFESSIONALISM IS A TOP PRIORITY

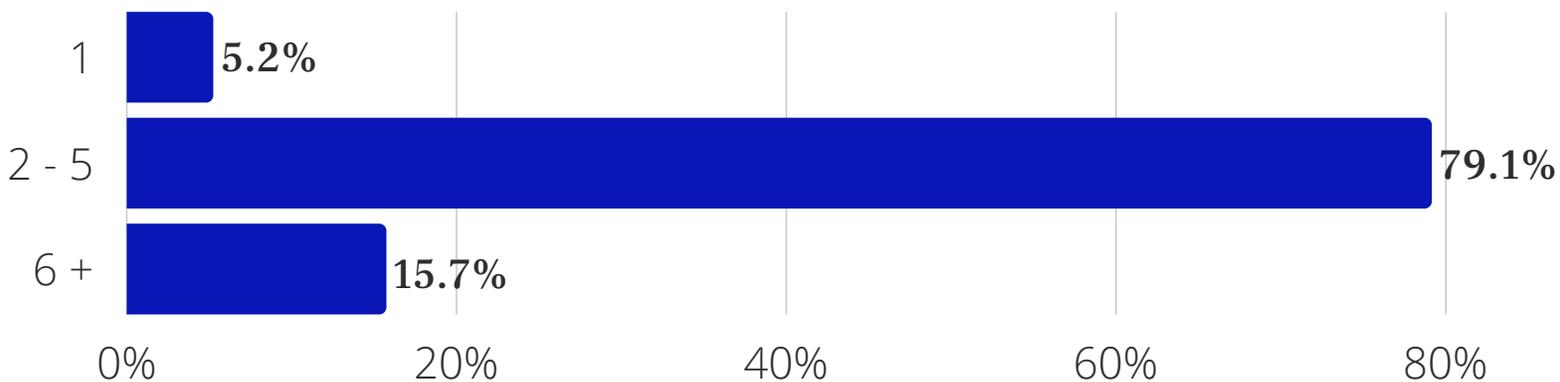
CHOOSING A SPEAKER



DECISION-MAKERS INVOLVED IN THE BOOKING PROCESS

The bulk of respondents (79.1%) said that **two to five people are involved** in the speaker-selection process. Only 5.2% said that they were the sole decision maker involved, and only 15.7% said that more than five people are involved.

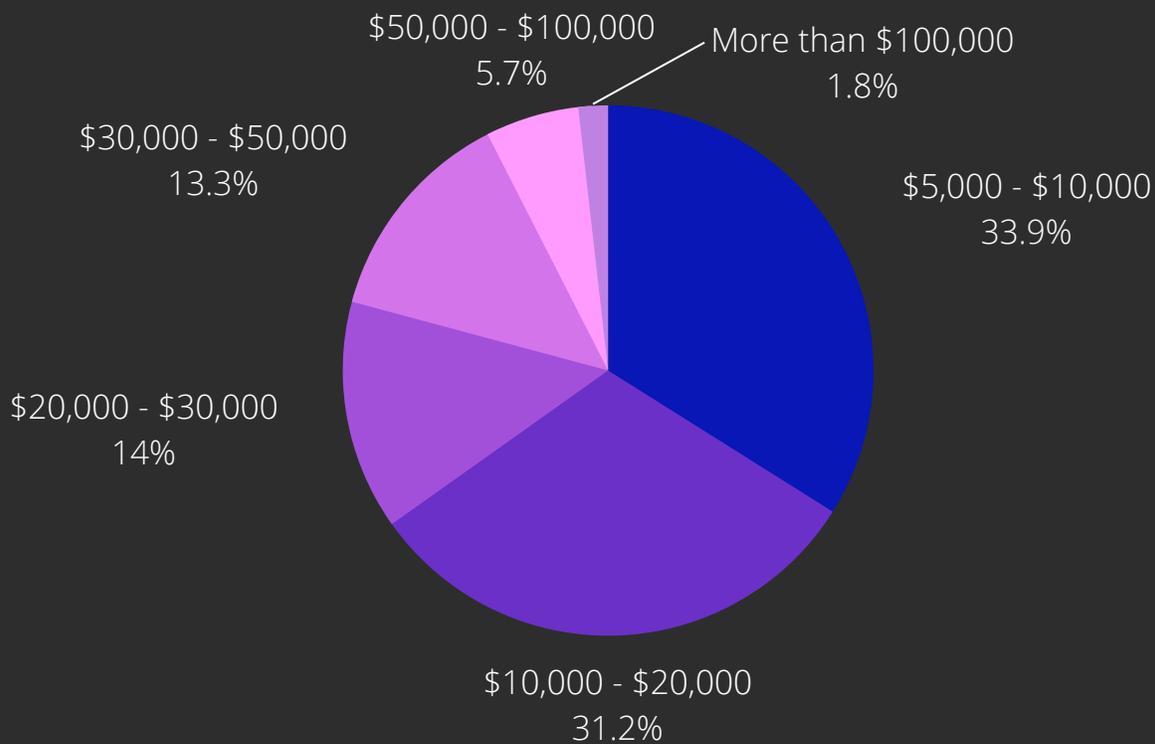
THE LARGEST MAJORITY OF EVENT STRATEGISTS SAID TWO TO FIVE PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN THE SPEAKER-SELECTION PROCESS



CHOOSING A SPEAKER

BUDGET RANGES FOR BOOKING A SPEAKER IN 2022

When asked about their average budget for keynote speakers, most event organizers (65.1%) answered in the \$5,000 to \$20,000 range. Of those responses, the most common range selected (33.9%) was \$5,000 to \$10,000 followed by (31.2%) \$10,000 to \$20,000. On the higher end, 34.8% of respondents indicated their budget was more than \$20,000, and 7.5% of respondents said their budget was more than \$50,000.



SPEAKER FEES AND EXPERIENCE

For in-person events, **speakers with 10 or more years of experience earned about 54% more than those with less than 5 years of experience.** However, this gap closes in the virtual space, with speakers having 10 plus years of experience yet only earning 22% more than those with less than 5 years. Additionally, surveyed speakers with 5 to 10 years of experience cited the highest virtual fee ranges of any group, showing virtual fees that were 20% more on average than those with 10 or more years of experience in the industry.

CHOOSING A SPEAKER

WHAT SPEAKERS WANT TO BE PAID

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.

Of the experienced speakers surveyed, 63.5% of respondents had fee ranges over \$10,000 for in-person events, and **the average in-person fee in 2021 was \$17,318**. For virtual events, 41.8% of speakers had fees over \$10,000, and **the average virtual speaking fee was \$12,799 in 2021**.

Going one step further, we asked speakers whether total audience size factors into a fee quote. **Only 32.4% of them said that audience size matters**. When asked if speaking fees are higher for hybrid events, 79.4% of speakers said no.



CHOOSING A SPEAKER

GOALS EVENT ORGANIZERS WANT TO ACHIEVE BY HIRING A SPEAKER

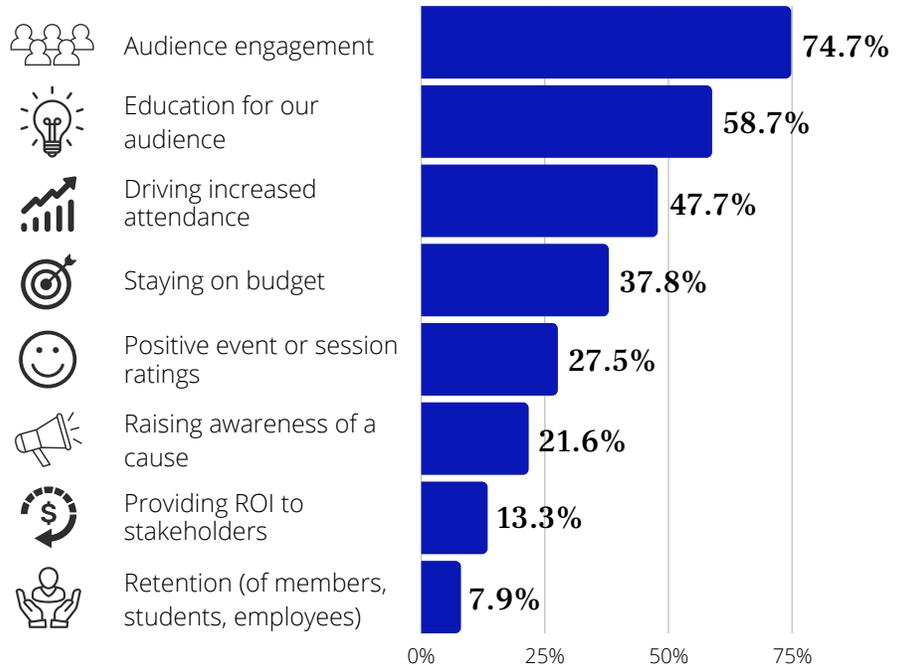
What makes a keynote speaker so valuable, anyway? We asked event strategists what their biggest priorities are when booking speakers, and what they are hoping the speaker will impact most when it comes to their event.

The clearest message was that a good keynote speaker should **increase audience engagement**, with 74.7% of respondents listing that as one of their top priorities. Second was that a speaker should provide education for their audience (58.7%). And on average, driving increased attendance rounded out the top three at 47.7%.

In 2022, the majority of event strategists are looking for keynote speakers who are fluent in virtual technology.

84.1% of our respondents said that it was at least somewhat important that a speaker has experience with virtual event technology, with 29.7% characterizing it as very important.

WHAT GOALS DO EVENT STRATEGISTS HAVE FOR KEYNOTE SPEAKERS?



“Speaking ability is THE MOST important factor to a keynote as it sets the tone for your entire conference. Figure out what state of mind you want your conference attendees in and select the conference keynote accordingly.”

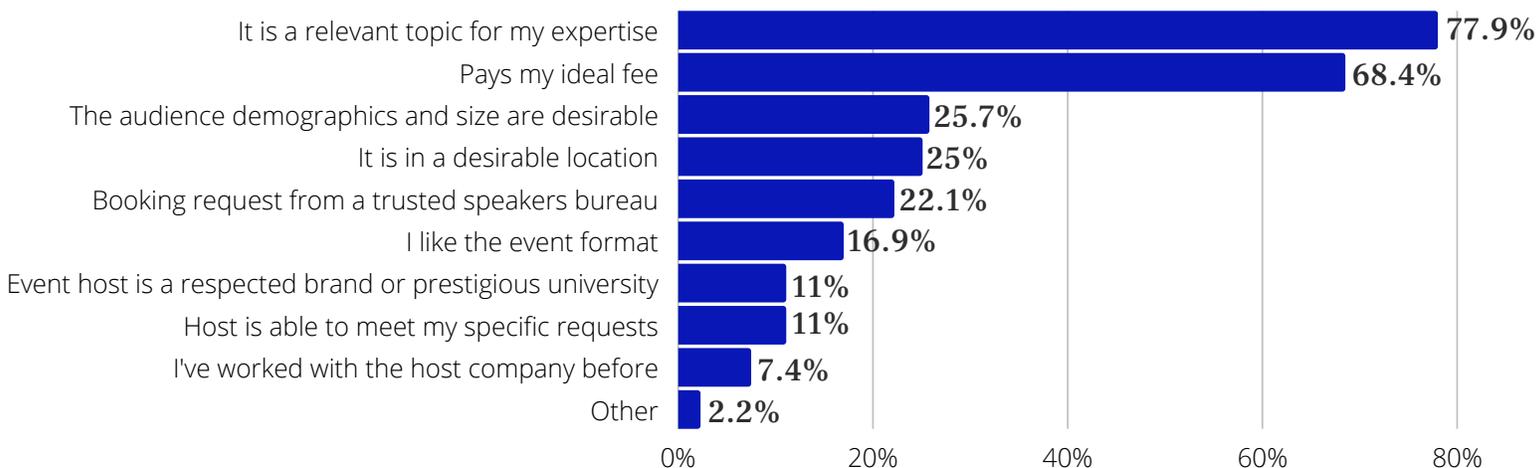
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CHOOSING A SPEAKER

WHAT MAKES SPEAKERS MOST LIKELY TO ACCEPT AN OFFER?

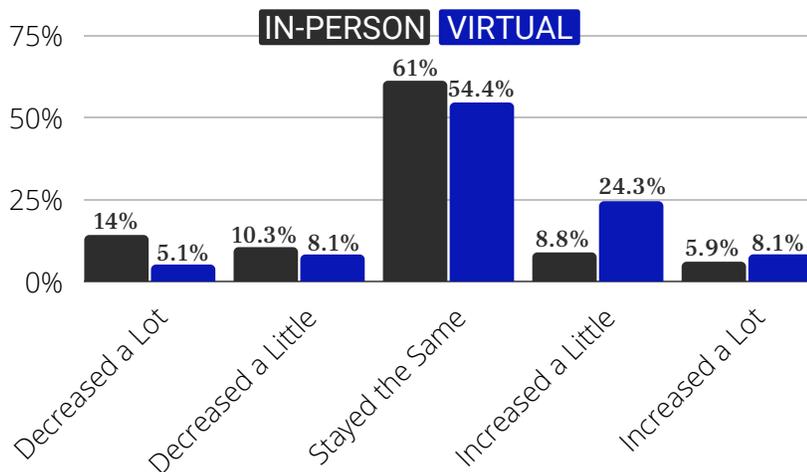
Nearly 80% of speakers surveyed said that if they feel **the event theme and keynote speaking topic** are a great fit for their subject matter expertise, **they are highly likely to accept an offer to speak**. The next most popular criteria is that it is within their desirable fee range (68.4%). These two elements dominated the answers to this question. Additional answers to note included: desirable audience demographic and size (25.7%), in a desirable geographic location (25%), and whether the request came through a trusted speakers bureau (22.1%).

WHAT ARE THE TOP FACTORS THAT DETERMINE HOW SPEAKERS CHOOSE YOUR BOOKINGS?



We also asked speakers whether their fees increased in 2021. For in-person events, **61% of respondents said their live fees remained the same in 2021**, and another 24.3% said that their in-person fees went down last year. Less than 15% of those surveyed increased their in-person speaking fees. **By comparison, virtual event fees stayed the same (54.4%) or increased (32.4%) in 2021.** Approximately 13% reported decreased virtual event speaking fees last year.

HOW DID SPEAKERS' FEES CHANGE FROM 2021 TO 2022?



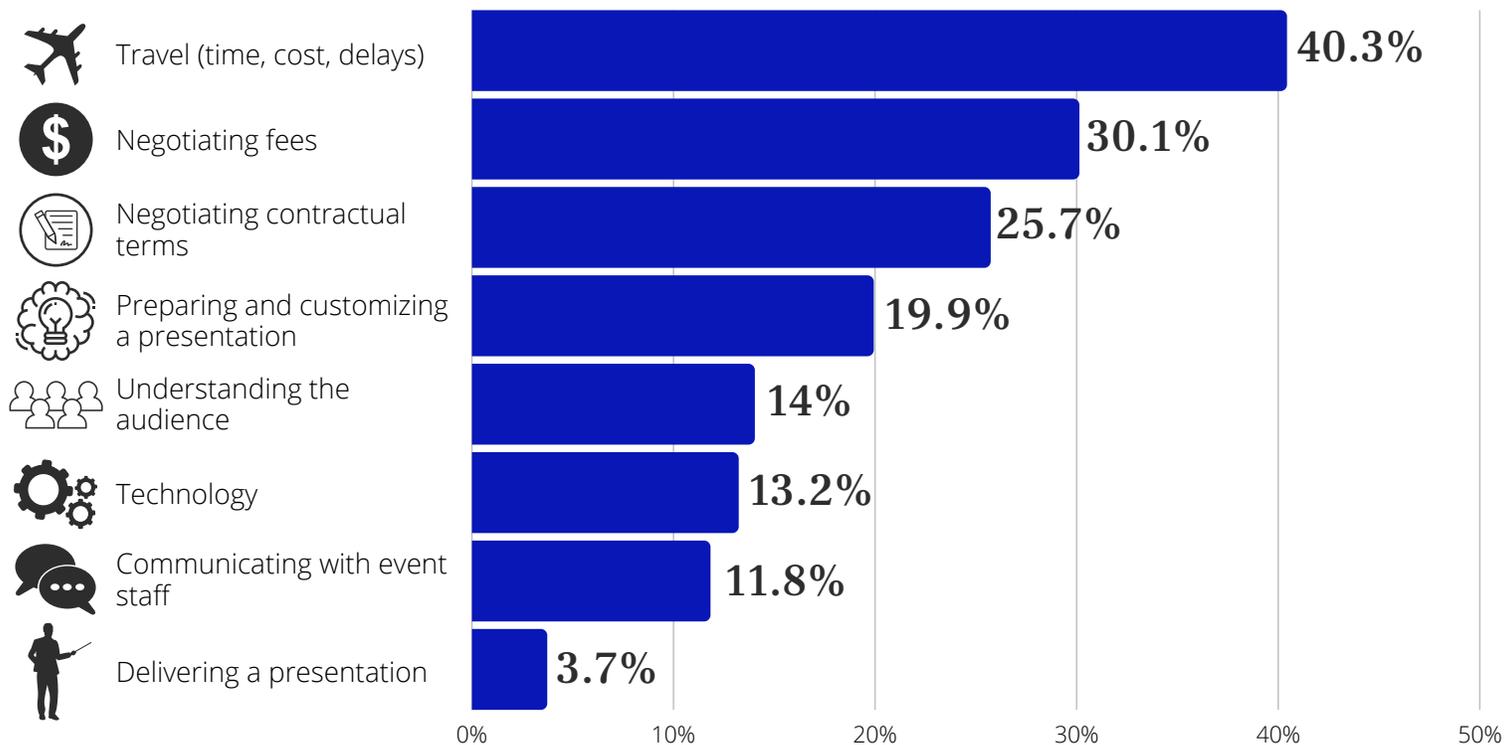
CHOOSING A SPEAKER

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF BEING A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER

Captivating and entertaining an audience is not as easy and seamless as a great keynote speaker can make it appear to be. Many years of hard work have gone into developing the right skills. Surveyed speakers shared some of their biggest challenges during their professional speaking careers.

The largest challenge speakers identified is travel (40.4%) – rising costs, travel delays, and the time involved in getting to and from a destination. Speakers also cited that the booking process of negotiating fees (30.1%) and contractual terms (25.7%) were also among the more challenging tasks they needed to complete. Less than 4% said the delivery of the presentation itself was challenging, an indication of the high level of skill and experience that these speakers have achieved.

WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING PARTS ABOUT BEING A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER?



CHOOSING A SPEAKER

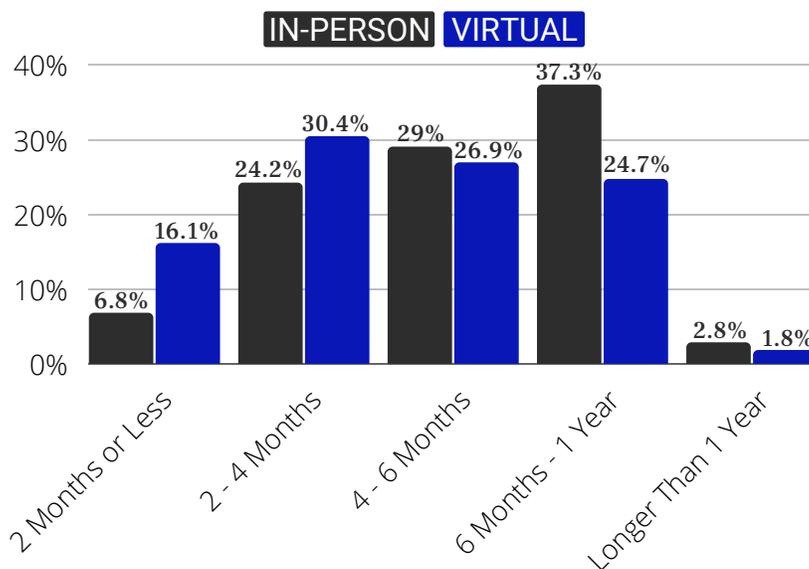
HOW FAR IN ADVANCE OF THE EVENT SHOULD EVENT STRATEGISTS BOOK: IN-PERSON VS. VIRTUAL

More than half of the event strategists planning in-person and hybrid events (53.2%) said they start looking for keynote speakers **between two and six months before their event**. 37.3% answered in the six months to a year range, and just 2.8% said they book more than a year before their event. Some are operating on much shorter turnarounds, with 6.8% saying they book within two months of their event or even closer.

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 30.4%.

Only 24.7% of respondents said they book between six months to a year before their virtual event. A significantly higher percentage (16.1%) indicated that they book within two months of the event when it comes to hybrid, versus 6.8% for in-person events.



How much lead time do **speakers** like to have? While event organizers are planning far ahead for in-person events, **50% of speakers said they need only two to four months' notice of an event**. For virtual events, 61.8% said they are comfortable with less than two months' notice.

While individual keynote speakers cite shorter windows of preparation, the resurgence of in-person event bookings in 2022 is rocketing up demand for speakers, meaning **event organizers should still consider booking early to secure their ideal speaker**.



CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

2022 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report

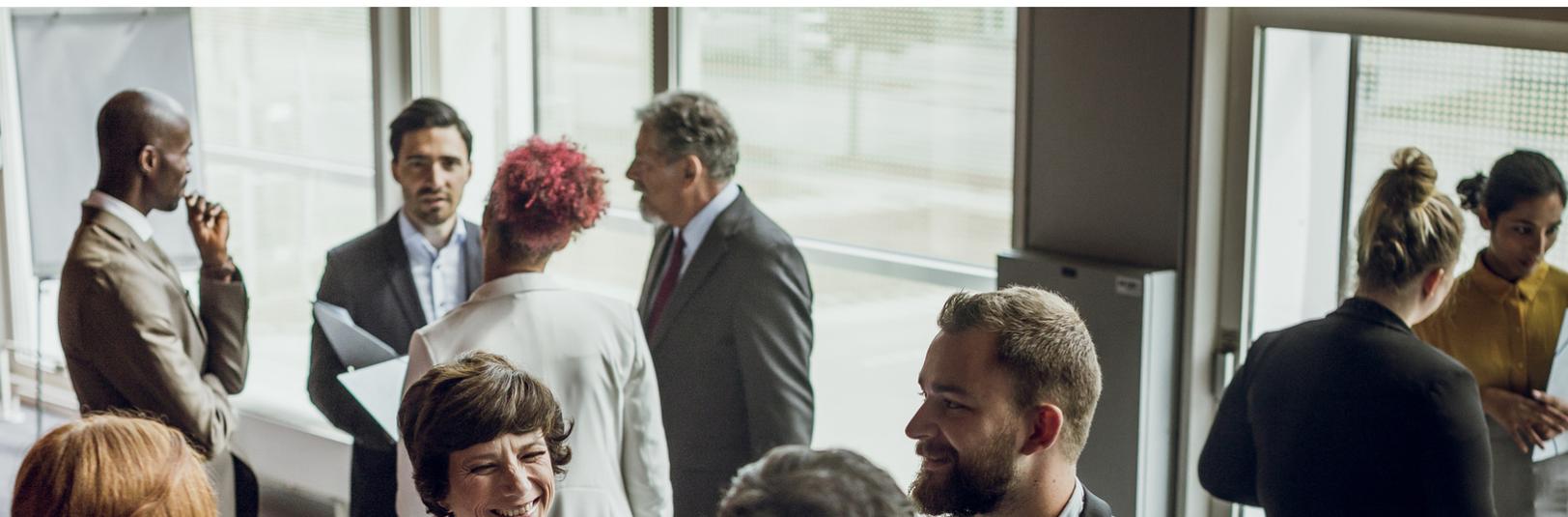
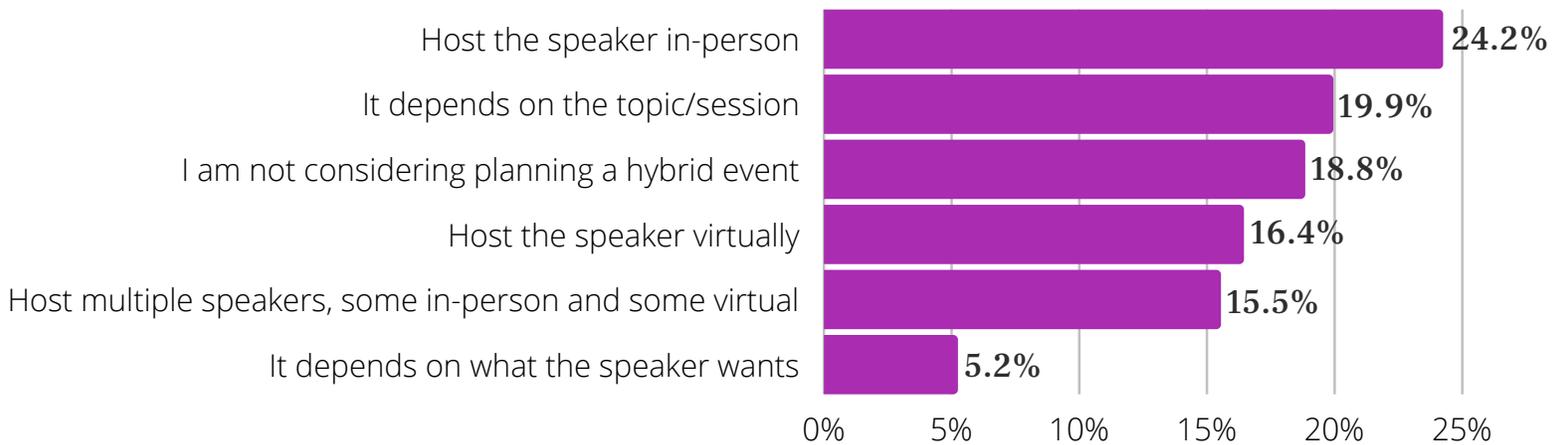
CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

MOST COMMON APPROACHES TO HYBRID EVENTS

Event organizers have risen to the challenge when planning hybrid events. Initially considered a more complex and expensive option, through careful planning, it seems that **the industry has embraced the potential that hybrid events can offer.**

24.2% of event strategists said that they are most likely to host the speaker in person when planning a hybrid event in 2022. 16.4% said that they are most likely to host the speaker virtually. 15.5% of event strategists said that they are most likely to host multiple speakers, some in person and some virtual. And 18.8% of event strategists said they are not currently considering planning a hybrid event in 2022.

WHEN PLANNING A HYBRID EVENT, EVENT ORGANIZERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO:



CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

THE FORMAT PREFERRED MOST BY SPEAKERS

There are many different ways to host a successful event in 2022 and no two events are exactly the same. We asked speakers which format they prefer and why.

WHICH EVENT FORMAT DO SPEAKERS PREFER THE MOST?



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A resounding 66.2% prefer in-person events. Here's what several speakers said about why in-person events are their favorite format:

"No better way of engaging with people than seeing their body language and facial reactions in person."

"I enjoy the more nuanced interaction and the ability to make eye contact across the room."

"The energy of the audience, feedback and questions to be answered, socializing, shaking hands, meeting people."

Hybrid events gained 22.1% of the vote for favorite event format from speakers, for a wider range of reasons around accessibility, safety, and cost:

"I think it may be more realistic as organizations cut back on travel costs, as well as continued concerns about COVID exposure."

"It's a great way to connect with everyone that can't attend the actual event."

"Better accessibility and attendance."

While only **11.8% of respondents said that virtual events were their favorite format**, the reasons why are notable, including work-life balance, safety, and comfort:

"All participants can see and hear with equity from the comfort of their chosen spot."

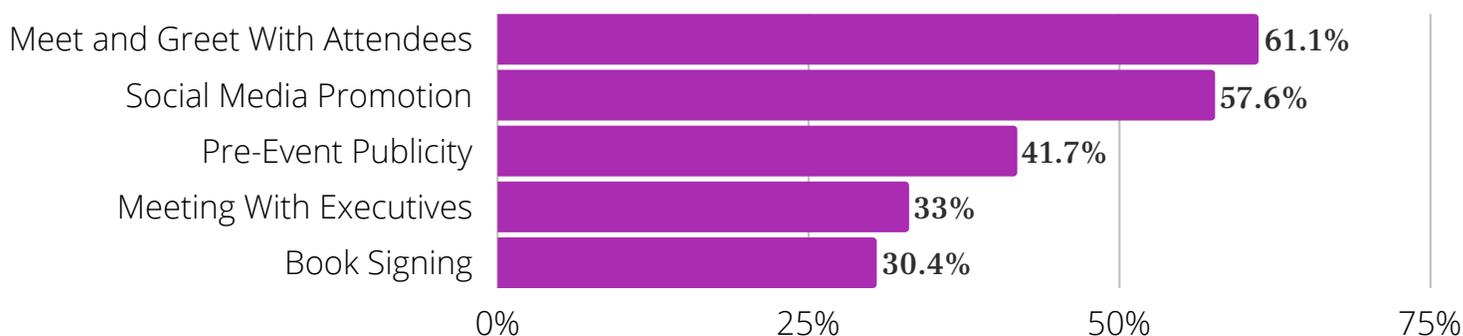
"Virus safety, get to stay home, more control over my presentation. I pre-tape highly customized shows."

CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

BEYOND SPEAKING: ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FOR 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 requests that event strategists said they typically make of speakers beyond their presentations were **meet and greets (61.1%)**, **social media promotions (57.6%)**, pre-event publicity (41.7%), meeting with executives (33%), and book signings (30.4%).

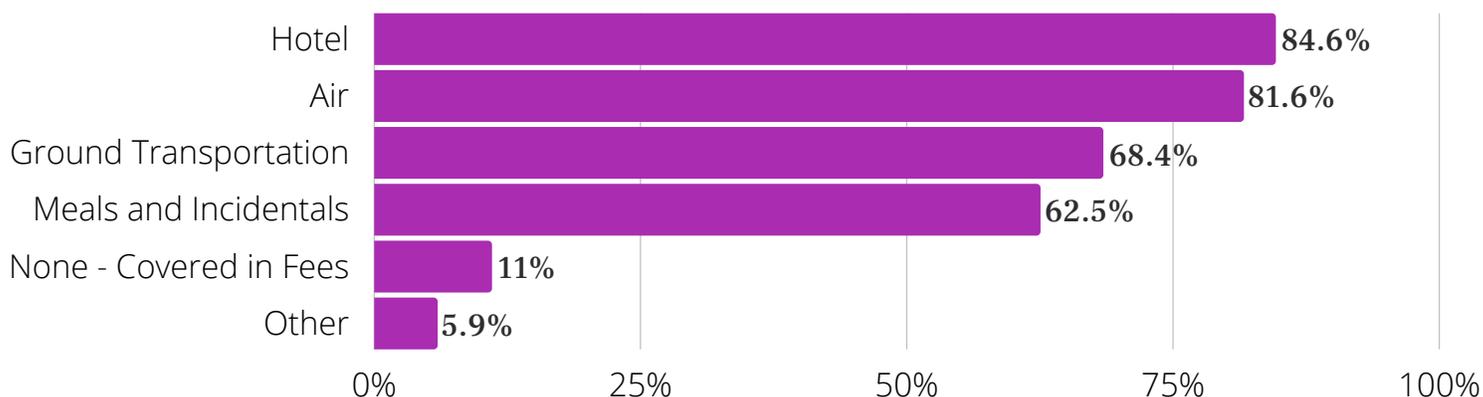
WHEN BOOKING A SPEAKER, WHAT ADDITIONAL REQUESTS DO EVENT ORGANIZERS TYPICALLY ASK FOR?



BEYOND SPEAKING: ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FROM SPEAKERS

When presenting at an in-person event where travel is involved, **the three most common requests that speakers make of event organizers are hotel, air, and ground transportation.**

WHEN YOU PRESENT TO AN IN-PERSON AUDIENCE, WHAT DO SPEAKERS REQUEST FOR TRAVEL?



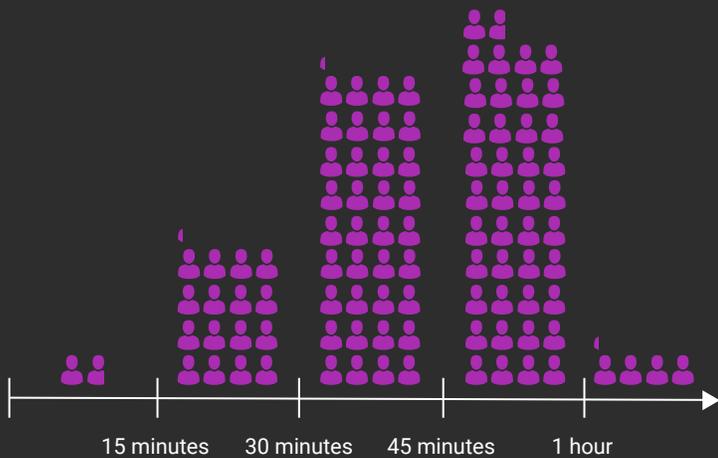
CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

THE RIGHT LENGTH FOR A SPEAKER'S PRESENTATION: IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL

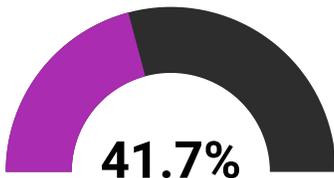
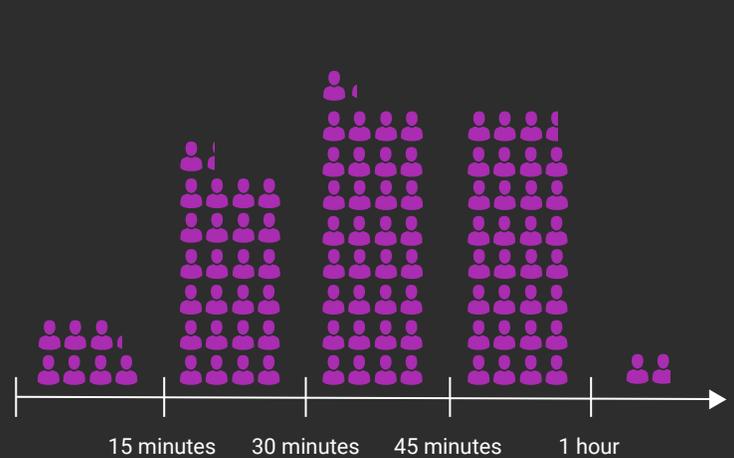
For in-person events, 41.7% of event strategists said that the right length of time for a speaker's presentation is **45 minutes to an hour**. 36.2% said 30 to 45 minutes. Just 4.1% said over an hour.

For virtual events, 33.2% of event strategists said that the right length of time for a speaker's presentation is **30 to 45 minutes**. 31.5% said 45 minutes to an hour. 25.3% said 15 to 30 minutes.

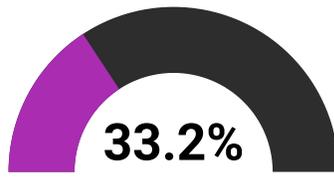
THE RIGHT LENGTH FOR A SPEAKER'S **IN-PERSON PRESENTATION** ACCORDING TO EVENT ORGANIZERS.



THE RIGHT LENGTH FOR A SPEAKER'S **VIRTUAL PRESENTATION** ACCORDING TO EVENT ORGANIZERS.



41.7% OF EVENT STRATEGISTS SAID THAT THE RIGHT LENGTH OF TIME FOR A SPEAKER'S **IN-PERSON** PRESENTATION IS **45 MINUTES TO AN HOUR**



33.2% OF EVENT STRATEGISTS SAID THAT THE RIGHT LENGTH OF TIME FOR A SPEAKER'S **VIRTUAL** PRESENTATION IS **30 TO 45 MINUTES**



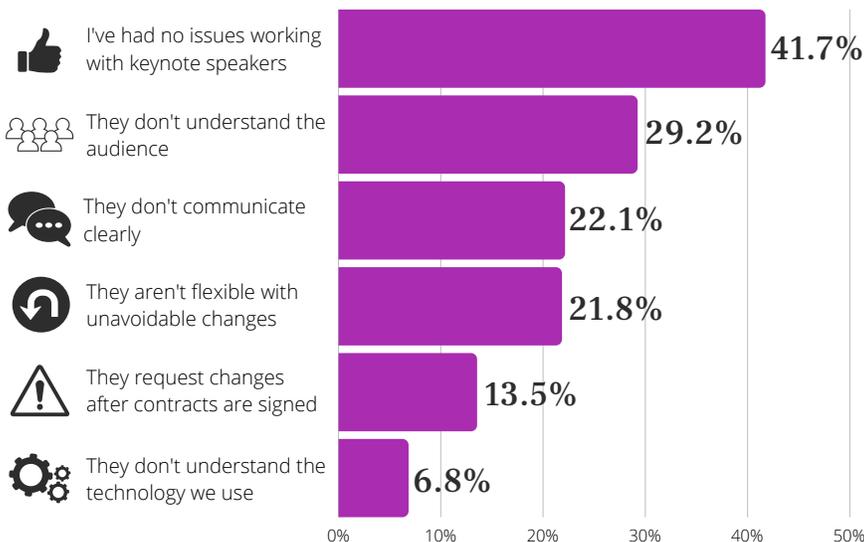
4.1% OF EVENT STRATEGISTS SAID THAT THE RIGHT LENGTH OF TIME FOR A SPEAKER'S **IN-PERSON** PRESENTATION IS **OVER AN HOUR**

CREATING EVENT EXPERIENCES

BIGGEST CHALLENGES EVENT STRATEGISTS FACE WHEN PARTNERING WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Like any working relationship, event strategists and keynote speakers may come across challenges as they work together to deliver memorable event experiences. On a positive note, the **top response from event strategists (41.7%)** was that **they've had no issues at all working with keynote speakers**.

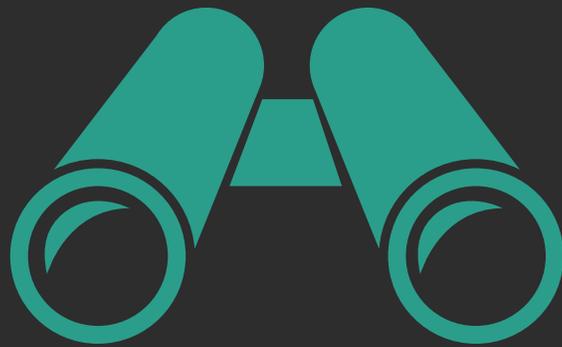
WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WORKING WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKERS?



The top challenges listed by event organizers were speakers **not having an understanding of their audience (29.2%)**, not communicating clearly or in a timely manner (22.1%), aren't flexible enough when unavoidable changes come up (21.8%), or requesting changes after contracts are signed (13.5%). 6.8% said their biggest challenge is speakers not understanding the technology involved in their event.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES KEYNOTE SPEAKERS FACE WHEN PARTNERING WITH EVENT STRATEGISTS

We saw another positive trend to this question, with just over **half of surveyed speakers (51.5%) saying they had no issues partnering with event organizers**. Of the concerns raised, **most center around communication, clarity, and timeliness (20.6%)**, and not effectively explaining the audience (13.2%). About 30% of respondents raised a concern about getting requests for donating additional time or other extra appearances that are not negotiated up front.



FORECASTING THE FUTURE

2022 Speaking Industry Benchmark Report

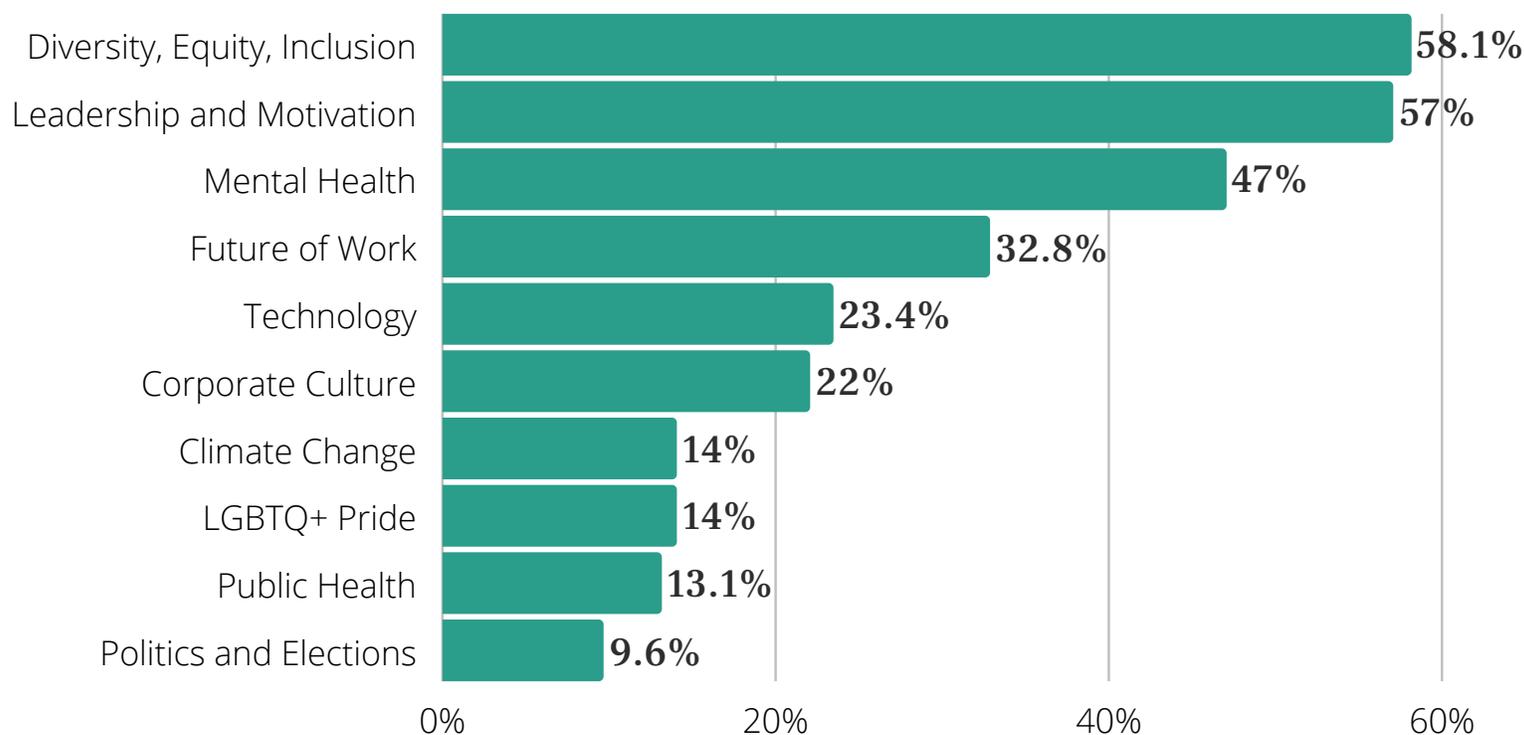
FORECASTING THE FUTURE

TOPICS EVENT STRATEGISTS ARE PRIORITIZING IN 2022

We asked respondents to list the speaking topics they are targeting in 2022. The most common answers were **diversity, equity, and inclusion (58.1%)**, **leadership and motivation (57%)**, **mental health (47%)**, and **the future of work (32.8%)**.

University event organizers favored DEI topics at a much higher rate than the average respondent, with 73.2% versus the overall percentage of 58.1%. Independent event organizers tended to favor the future of work, with 52.4% listing it as a speaking topic they're targeting in 2022 – compared to 32.8% of total respondents.

WHAT SPEAKING TOPICS ARE EVENT ORGANIZERS PRIORITIZING IN 2022?

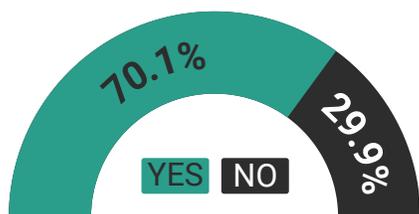


"Diverse voices yield better outcomes – it's our job to make sure that our clients, our leaders, understand that as they assess presenters. Making room for diverse voices is not just the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense."

- Omar Sanabria, JM Family Enterprises

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

HOW DID THE PANDEMIC INFLUENCE YOUR EVENT STRATEGY FOR 2022?



70.1% OF EVENT ORGANIZERS SAID THAT **THE PANDEMIC HAD AN IMPACT** ON THEIR EVENT PLANS IN 2022.

In 2020, the pandemic shook the events industry to its core. After over two years of trial and error and lots of lessons learned, event strategists, keynote speakers, and speakers bureaus have managed to keep the industry growing and thriving.

However, COVID-19 still has an undeniable influence on event strategy in 2022.



70.1% of respondents indicated that **the pandemic had an impact on their event plans in 2022**. 27.1% said that the pandemic caused them to change the format of one or more scheduled events in 2022. 22.9% said that the pandemic caused them to change the physical location or reschedule an event completely, and an equal percentage said that the pandemic caused them to completely rethink their 2022 strategy.

29.9% of event strategists said the pandemic had no impact on strategy, and 10.3% of respondents said they're only planning virtual events in 2022.

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

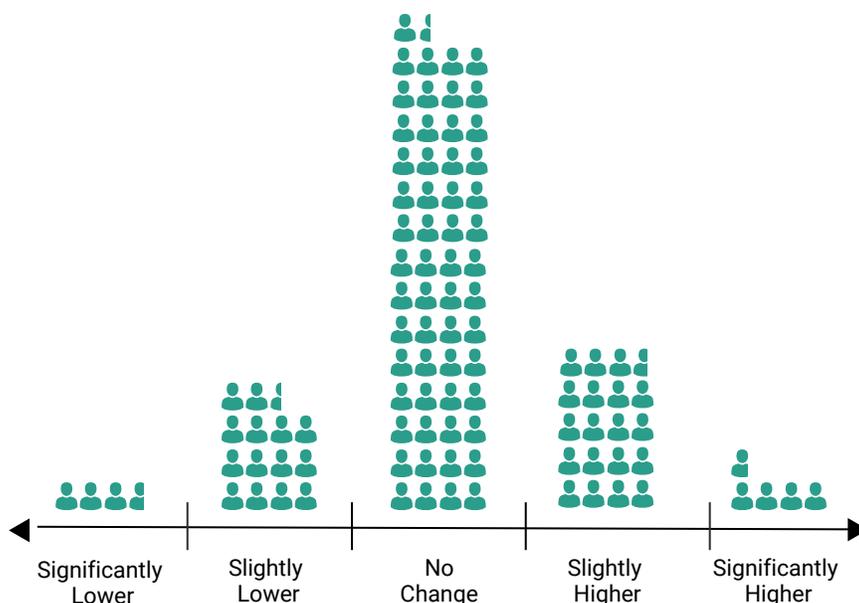
EVENT BUDGET BREAKDOWN: 2021 VS. 2022

Consistent with the return of more in-person events this year, budgets seem to be making a recovery in 2022, with **81.9% of event strategists saying that their budgets were the same (57.4%) or higher (24.5%)** versus where they were in 2021. 4.8% said it is significantly higher.

Independent event organizers showed the largest variation versus the total average when it comes to budget. One-third (33.3%) said their budget was slightly higher in 2022 versus 2021, showing that any increases made were done more conservatively than in corporations or university environments.

This response was 13.6 percentage points higher than the overall average number of respondents who said “Slightly Higher.”

HOW DID EVENT ORGANIZERS' BUDGETS CHANGE FROM 2021 TO 2022?



FORECASTING THE FUTURE

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR 2022 AND BEYOND, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In some instances, the data does not tell the entire story. We asked the event professionals surveyed to share their biggest event challenges in 2022, and here's what they said:

"Return on investment for having your event - attendance for in-person events is still uncertain and very much dependent on personal confidences in the management of the pandemic. And while convenient, hybrid or virtual events are not the same and people do not want to pay as much for them."

- Anonymous

"Constant change in technology and hybrid events which is double event planning. Becoming 'tech' professionals as well as event professionals."

- Nicola Clarke, FWD Insurance

"The unknown of attendance. We are coming off of virtual conferences and moving into hybrid and in-person conferences and really just the unknown of if attendees will be comfortable traveling and showing up in person."

- Marissa Streun, Site Solutions Worldwide

"Uncertainty – rules, regulations and new variants seem to change by the minute. It's hard to keep up at times and make difficult decisions in terms of how to move forward."

- Anonymous

"Gracefully navigating a hybrid landscape – keeping things accessible virtually while we embrace the in-person moments we've all so desperately missed."

- Spencer Blank, Fastly

"From the perspective of working at a university, we struggle more and more to get attendees to events. We can no longer use previous attendance as a way to predict. So it's challenging to want to secure a big speaker when we aren't sure of how it will go over."

- Anonymous

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

EVENT STRATEGISTS SHARE ADVICE FOR THEIR PEERS IN THE INDUSTRY



We asked respondents to also share their advice for those event organizers who are new to the field. Here are some of the best tips shared.

“Take a deep breath. We’ve literally survived almost 3 years of a global pandemic and need to be kinder to ourselves and understand where our work fits into the vast scheme of life.

Our health (mental included) and safety come first.”

- Anonymous

“Be flexible, adaptable and responsive. Anticipate the need to propose creative solutions. Expect to be challenged and/or inconvenienced due to changes out of your control. This is standard practice for meeting/event planners, but has become more intensely prevalent since the onset of COVID-19.”

- Anonymous

“Work with an agent who listens to your needs and knows their speaker’s style and content very well.”

- Patricia Hanrahan, Rothschild & Co.

“Now, more than ever, event planners need to think outside of the box, collect data and personalize experiences.”

- Jade Scott, Masterclass

Consider ordering signed books as a follow-up to send to all virtual attendees.”

- Sean Lashley, SLASH Ent.

“Speaking ability is THE MOST important factor to a keynote as it sets the tone for your entire conference. Figure out what state of mind you want your conference attendees in and select the conference keynote accordingly. Also to get to know your speaker well enough to ensure no surprises – we once had a speaker that unexpectedly took things in a New Age direction to a scientifically-based audience, and I learned the hard way to talk specifics about content in advance.”

- Anonymous

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

SPEAKER INSIGHT: WHY DID YOU PURSUE A CAREER AS A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER?



As a speakers bureau that works with an extensive number of speakers, the answer to this question is one that is always unique and reflective of the experiences of the individual speaker. To help event professionals further understand what makes keynote speakers tick, here are a few of their responses:

"I worked in corporate for 17 years and when I made it to the top, I realized I wanted so much more. It became my purpose to help women evolve and not settle for something that doesn't align with their values and or priorities."

- Alicia Driskill

"I love watching the 'light bulb' come on over people's heads!"

- Jack Shaw

"So I can share my expertise and pay it forward."

- Matt Episcopo

"I wrote a NY Times bestseller, and the bureaus started to get requests for me, and it went from there."

- Shawn DuBravac

"I have devoted my life to helping elite clients achieve excellence and success on the world's biggest stage (Olympic Gold, Professional World Championships), and I love to share the actionable techniques and strategies that 'corporate athletes' can implement to achieve their own professional targets for success!"

- Dr. Colleen Hacker

"I have a passion to help others. This is my opportunity to give assistance I never received."

- Jenn Donahue

"I used to be in rooms where I was too afraid to use my voice which prevented me from creating meaningful exchanges. I want to inspire others who are afraid of speaking out loud to use their voice even if it trembles."

- Kristie Kennedy, Queenfidence Image Consulting

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

SPEAKER INSIGHT: WHY DID YOU PURSUE A CAREER AS A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER?



"I failed as a standup comic. It was easier to get laughs as a speaker. Then I realized that I was more of a storyteller than a joke teller. Then I realized that stories are the most powerful technology we have for driving change."

- Steve Donahue

"I am passionate about what I do and really enjoy sharing it with the world and, hopefully, inspiring people to achieve things they thought were out of reach."

- Jordan Evans

"It was thrust in my lap when my career in MLB exploded and my agent set it up. It's the dream I never knew I wanted. I love it."

- Jim "The Rookie" Morris

"The chance to empower others."

- Anonymous

"It kind of chose me, but I love being able to share information that has the potential to change people's lives."

- Anonymous

"To share my passion for culture and human leadership with others so together we can create a world in which work works with life and people come first."

- Kristen Hadeed

"Clients started to reach out. When I had my first best-seller, it really took off."

- Anonymous

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

SPEAKER INSIGHT: ONE PIECE OF ADVICE



As we did with event strategists in the survey, we also asked our experienced speakers to share their advice with those who might be considering a career as a keynote speaker.

"Care for the team supporting you – event organizers – by making sure you understand their audience and can deliver for them. And for speakers bureaus – by working with them to make sure they can position you in the best possible way."

- Jana Eggers

"Present/speak as much as possible as that would allow you to hone your craft."

- Bonin Bough

"Know and own your unique brand."

- Tim Slaughter

"All you need is a strong beginning, a solid message and an equally strong ending/takeaway."

- Scott Hamilton

"Treat it as a serious profession, and do the work to become a pro."

- Josh Linkner

"Learn how to work well with Speakers Bureaus!"

- Jack Shaw

"Understand what problem you solve for your clients. It's not about you – it's about them. What is their problem and how can you offer the solution for that problem. Also remember that this is a business. Having a 'passion' is not enough. You must continue to develop both the business side of your speaking business and the stage/content development/expertise side."

- Kim Connolly

"Know who you are and what your value is, and refuse to get pulled into events that do not align with those attributes."

- Lenn Millbower

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

SPEAKER INSIGHT: ONE PIECE OF ADVICE

"Have a hook, a story, or life experience that will allow you to connect with your audience. Something that makes you unique."
- Commander Scott D Waddle, USN Ret

"Get a professional on stage video recording."
- Silvia Garcia

"Value your time and expertise."
- Laurie Wondra

"It's not about you – it's about the audience. Hence, start with a distinct value proposition where you deliver material that is innovative or counterintuitive. This ensures the audience is more than an observer and brings them into the experience while connecting your content to their challenges."
- Vince Poscente

"If you wake up the morning of your presentation and are not absolutely excited and anxious to be with your audience, then find another profession. Speakers need to be passionate about their topics and audiences."
- Joseph A. Ruffini

If you can, speak to attendees who show up early – ask them why they came, what their biggest challenge is – work their names and responses into your talk. 'I was talking to Shira before the show, and she nailed it...[insert personalized story.]'"
- Paul A. Reynolds

"Think in the long term. It takes about 7-8 years of full-time speaking to be well established. Climb all the steps on the ladder – there are no shortcuts. Create good relationships with fellow speakers and speakers bureaus. Remember at each and every presentation, regardless of format, it is about the audience and their needs...not you. Gratitude for the privilege of sharing your knowledge and expertise is what will give you a happy and fulfilling career. This is an incredible business. Give it 120%, and you will get back a life of pleasure and reward."
- Sheila Murray Berthel, PhD, CPAE

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With our expansive industry experience and exceptional customer support, AAE has connected thousands of live, hybrid, and virtual events around the world with their perfect speaker, host, celebrity, or performer since 2002. We have booked well over \$200M 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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