Digital Event Benchmark Report

Produced by

Virtual Edge Institute

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Digital Event Benchmark Report Overview

The 2014 Digital Event Benchmark Report was produced to provide event, meeting, learning and marketing professionals with a tool to assess the performance of their digital initiatives and identify areas of opportunity.

The first Digital Event Benchmark Report was conducted in 2013; 2014 finding variances are noted throughout the Report.

The Virtual Edge Institute (VEI) provides insights to the findings highlighted in this report.

The survey, distributed to physical and online event producers via email, and promoted through social media, generated more than 200 responses.

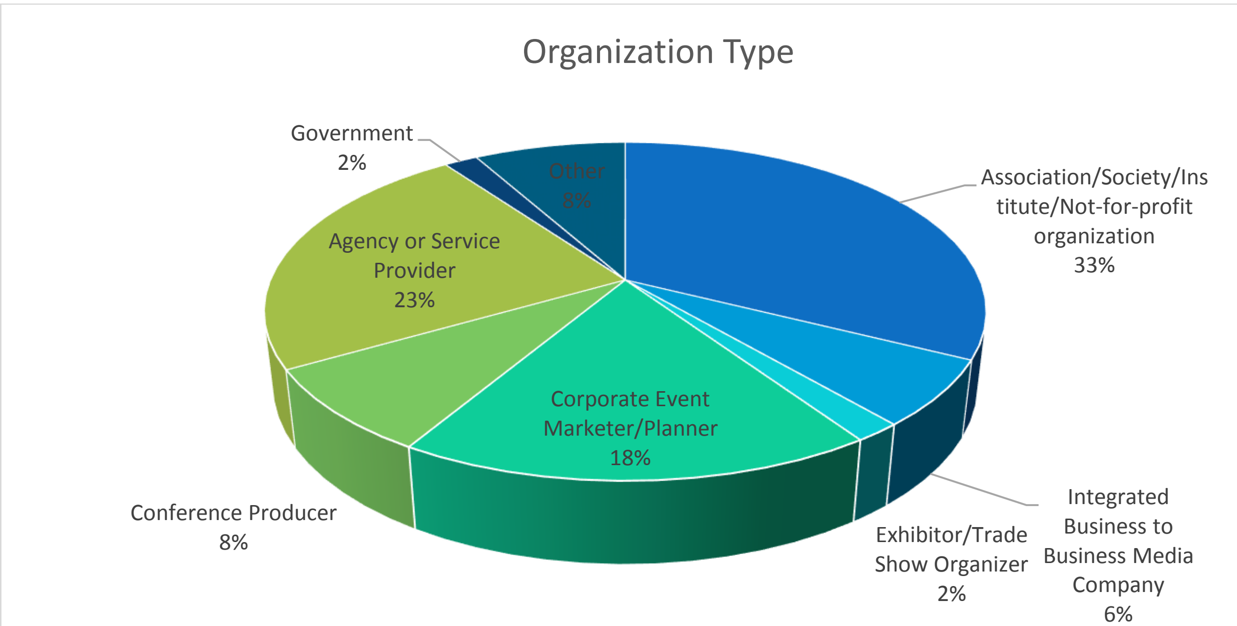
For purposes of clarification, references made in this report to 'hybrid' are those events that are simulcast online live during face-to-face events; references made in this report to 'digital events' are those that are produced online only.

The 2014 Digital Event Benchmark Report was sponsored by Digitell, Inc.

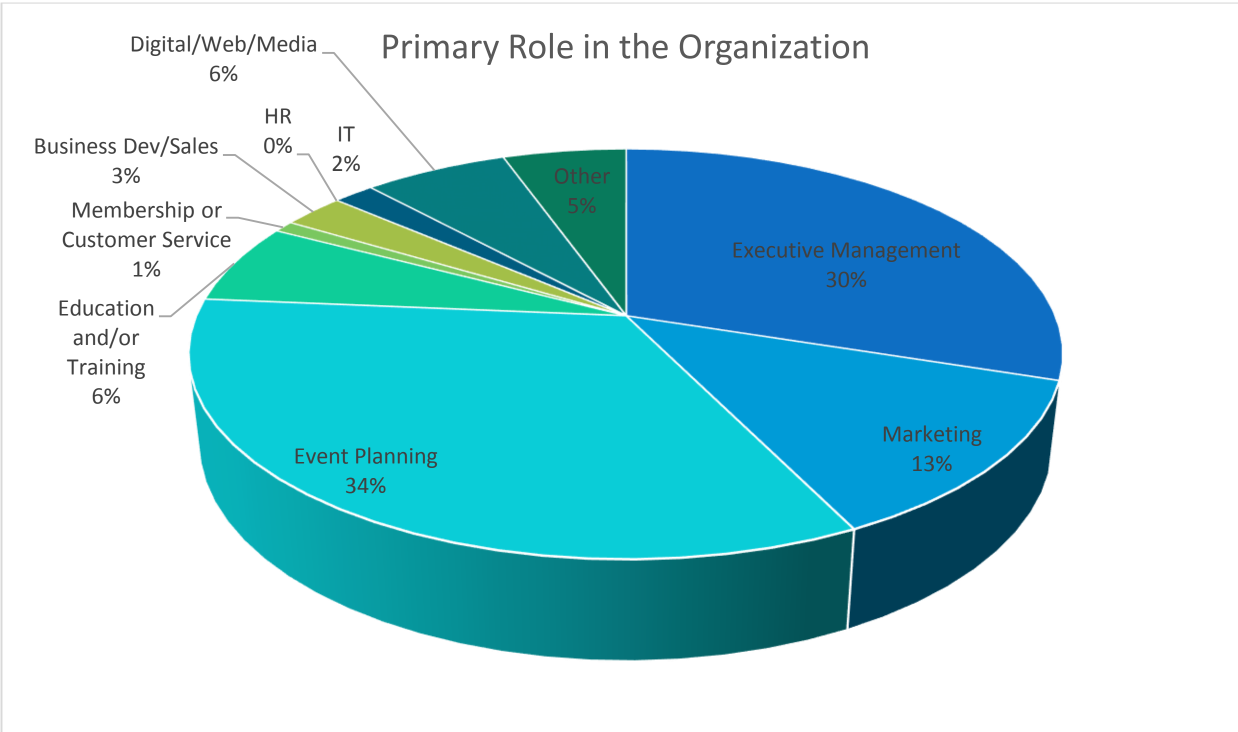
Survey Participants

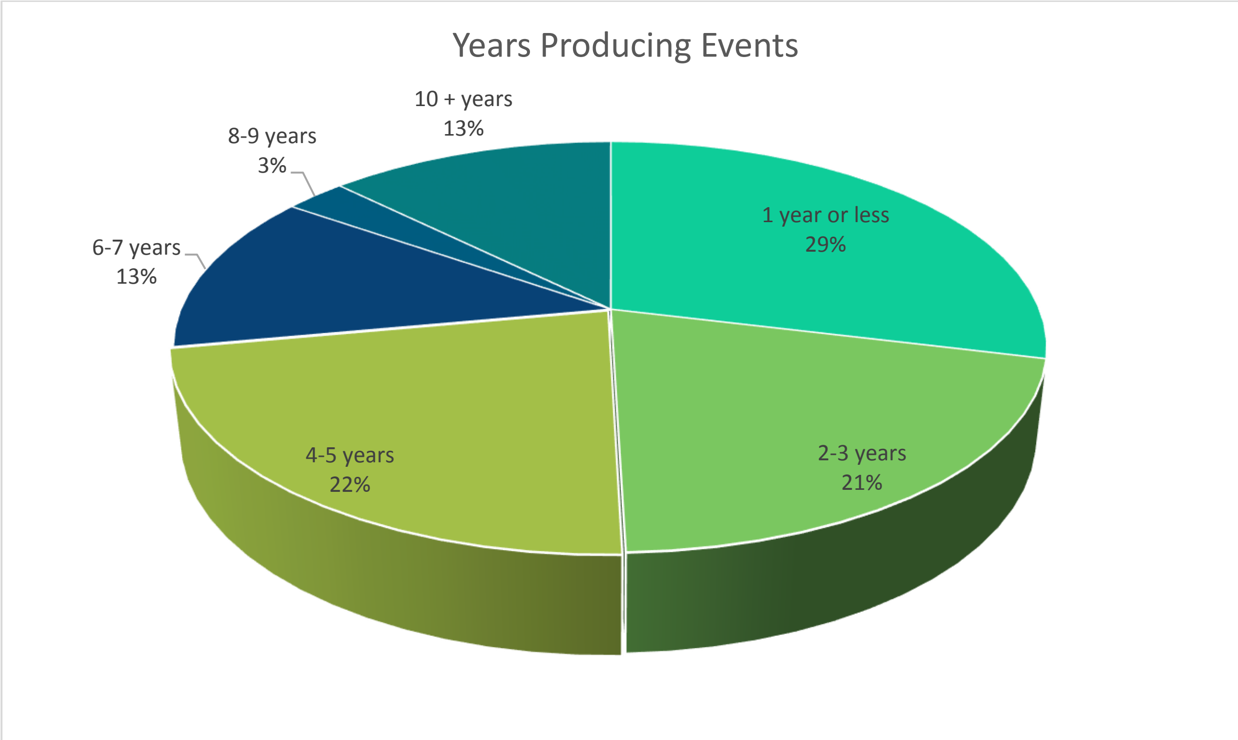
75 percent of survey participants produce physical events, with 64 percent of those respondents also producing hybrid events and 65 percent producing digital events. Forty-eight percent of respondents indicate their face-to-face event attendance is trending up, while about 17 percent note a downward trend. Following the face-to-face leaning both hybrid and digital events are trending up for the majority of respondents, with few experiencing a downward trend.

A broad and representative cross-section of the event industry participated in the survey, with a slight majority of participants coming from associations, while corporate event planners and agencies are also well represented.



Thirty percent of respondents indicate that they serve in executive management roles, while 34 percent work in event planning positions. Twenty-nine percent of the respondent's organizations have been producing online events 1 year or less; 21 percent 2-3 years; 23 percent 4-5 years; 29% 6-plus year.


Primary Role in the Organization
Digital/Web/Media 6%
HR 0%
IT 2%
Business Dev/Sales 3%
Membership or Customer Service 1%
Education and/or Training 6%
Other 5%
Executive Management 30%
Marketing 13%
Event Planning 34%

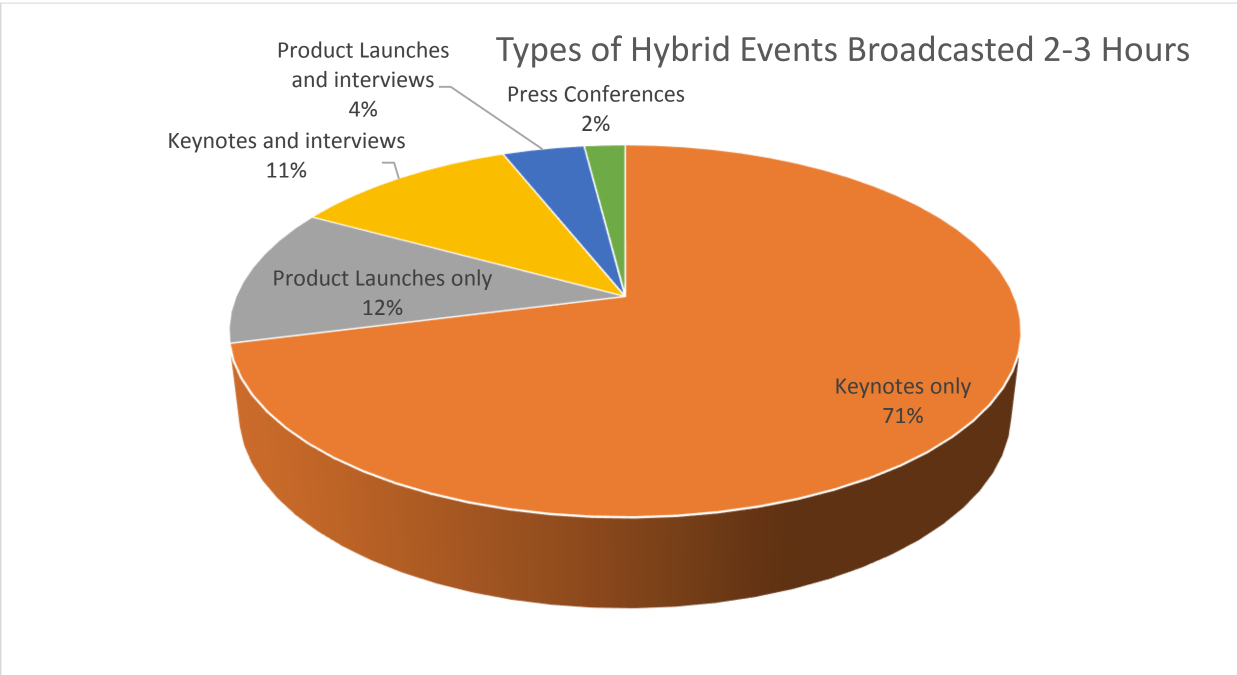

Years Producing Events
10 + years
13%
8-9 years
3%
6-7 years
13%
1 year or less
29%
4-5 years
22%
2-3 years
21%

Streaming, Capture and Engagement

The majority of survey respondents are both streaming their content live and capturing for future on-demand access. More than 70 percent of survey respondents are streaming and capturing keynote/plenary sessions, with more than 40 percent doing the same with breakouts, interviews, demonstrations and product launches.

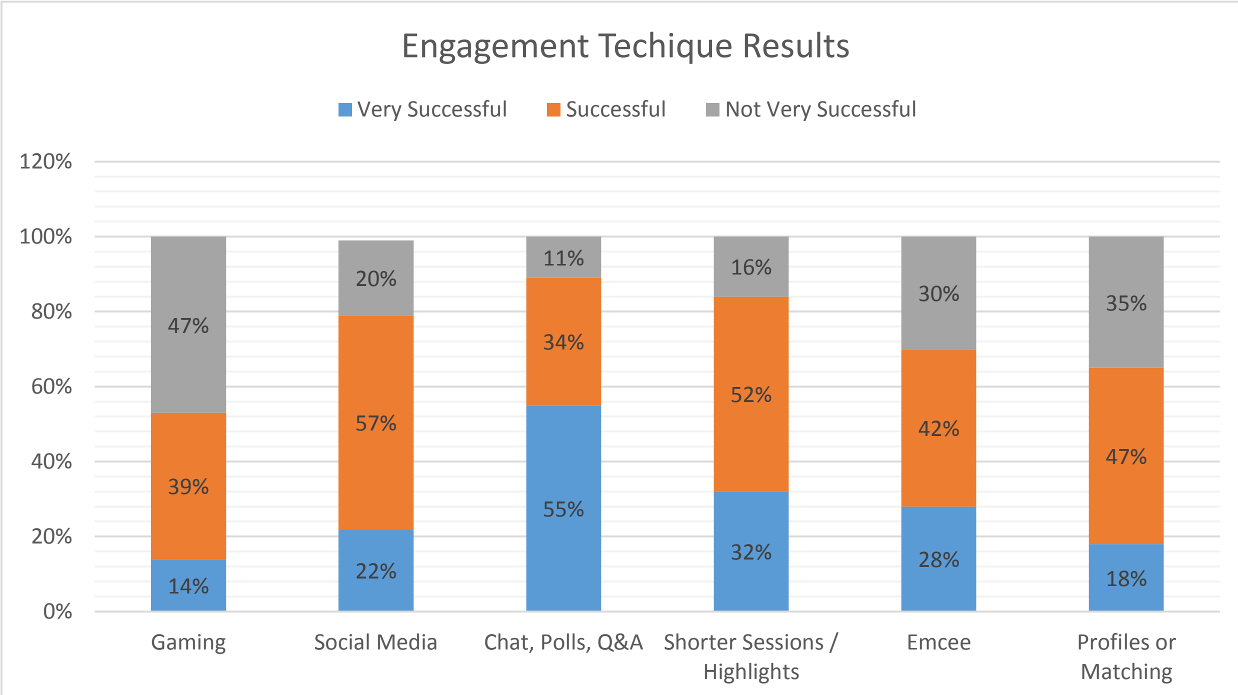
Of those respondents capturing but not streaming content, interviews garner the highest percent of content captured at 31 percent, followed by breakouts at 22 percent.

Not unexpected, poster sessions are the least captured or streamed form of content.



The most successful engagement techniques noted by survey respondents are attendee chat/polling/Q&A, social media streams and shorter length sessions/event highlights; the later validating the increased usage of companies such as CNTV. Online moderators and emcees are also noted as successful engagement elements.

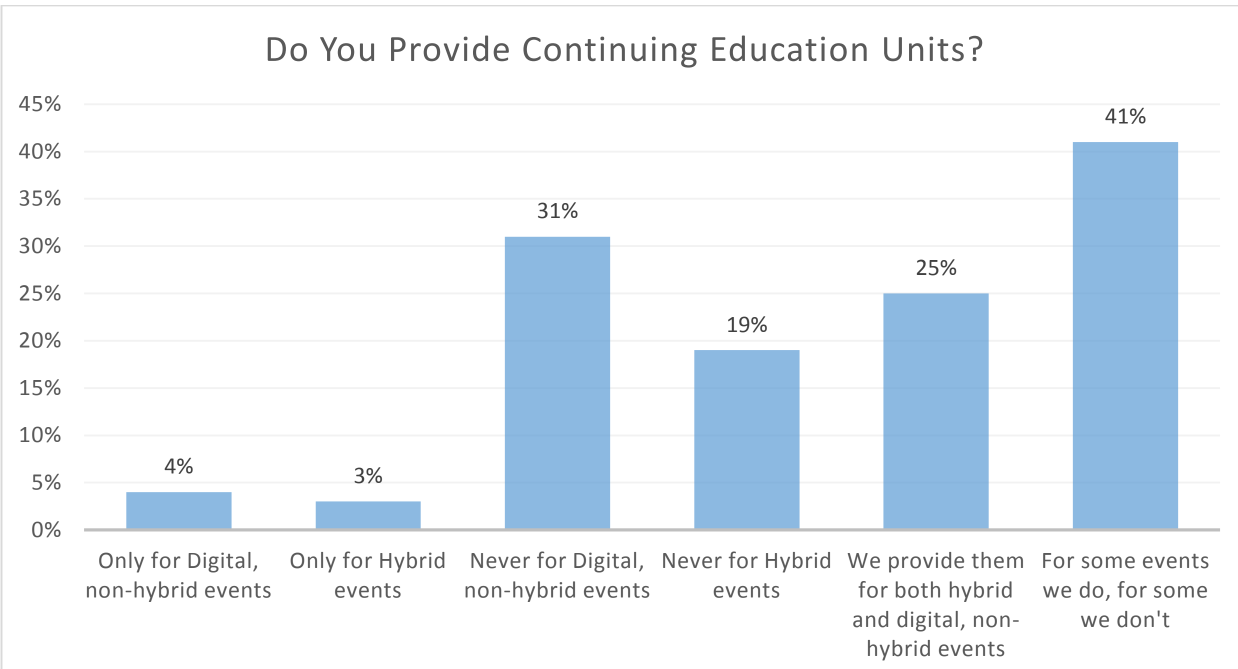
Not surprisingly, gamification, still a challenge for many face-to-face producers, is highlighted by survey respondents as the least successful of all engagement techniques


Engagement Techique Results
Very Successful
Successful
Not Very Successful
120%
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
47%
39%
14%
20%
57%
22%
11%
34%
55%
16%
52%
32%
30%
42%
28%
35%
47%
18%
Gaming
Social Media
Chat, Polls, Q&A
Shorter Sessions / Highlights
Emcee
Profiles or Matching

CEU Data

While the overwhelming majority of face-to-face producers offer continuing education credits; 32 percent of respondents confirm they offer CEUs for their hybrid or digital events, yet 19 percent never offer CEUs for their hybrid events and 31 percent never offer CEU's for their digital events.

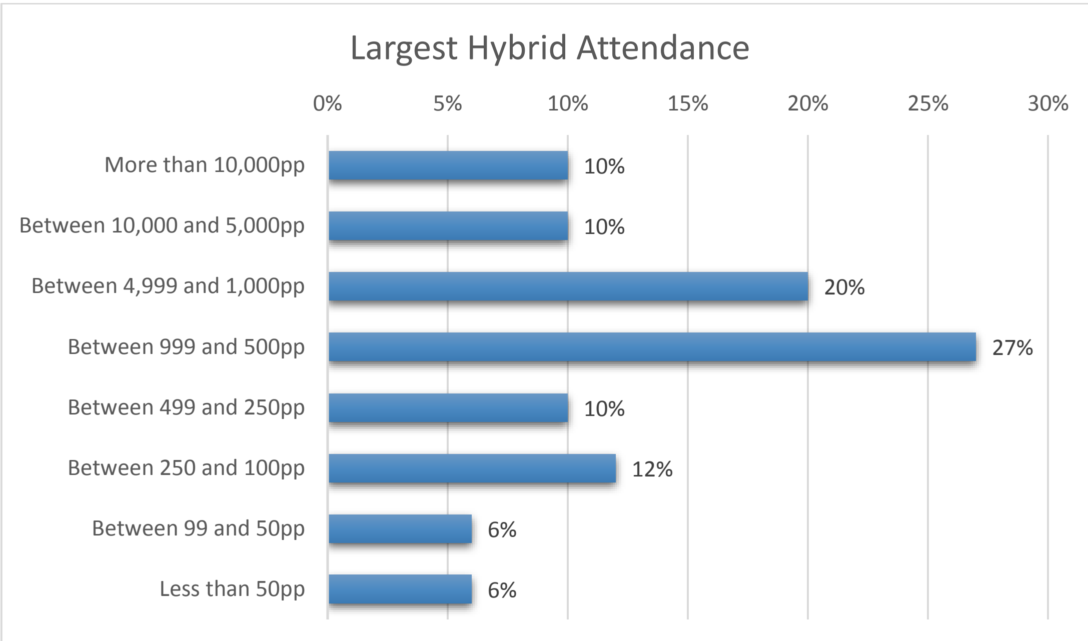
Forty-one percent state 'for some events we do, for some we don't' – cross tabbing reveals that these same planners produce online non-education events with interviews, product launches and sponsored content, which would not qualify for CEUs.

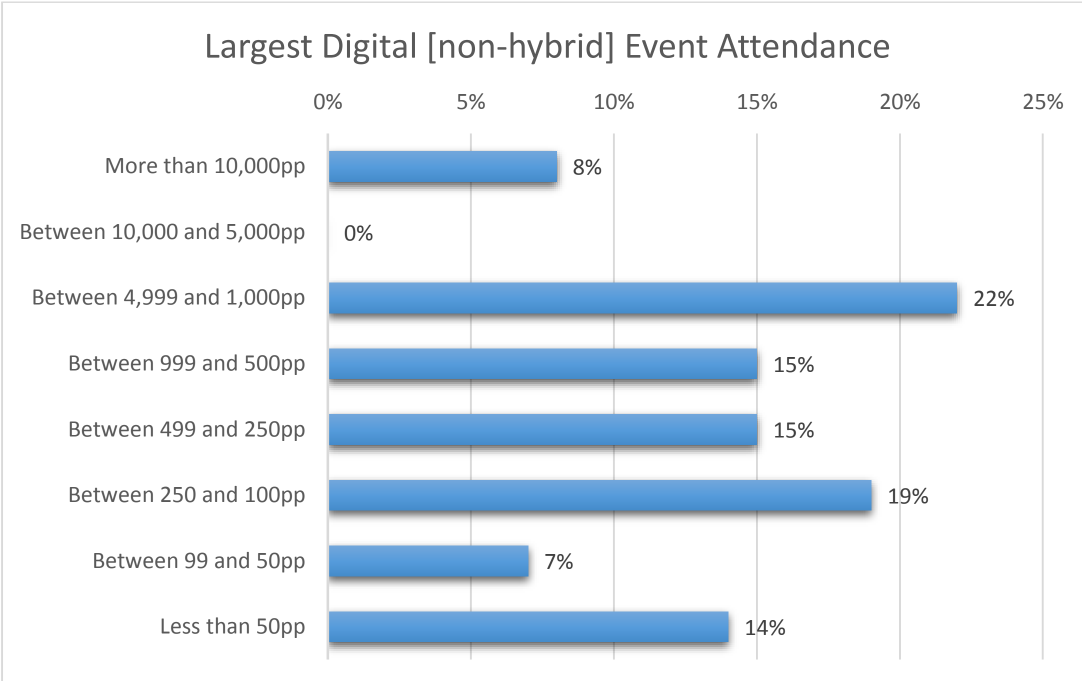


Online Attendance

The majority of respondents with face-to-face events report that their average attendance falls between 1,000 and 4,999 participants.

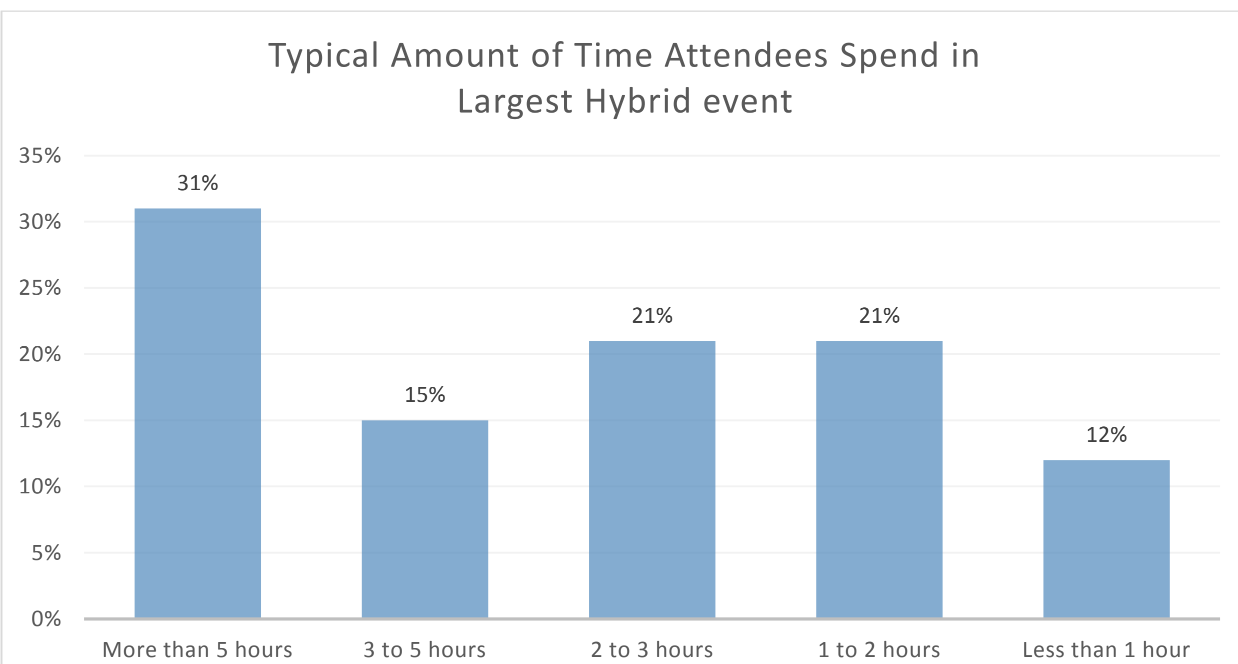
Forty-seven percent of respondents' hybrid attendance range between 500-4,999 attendees; with 20 percent capturing attendance exceeding 5,000 participants. The majority of digital event attendance falls below 500 participants.

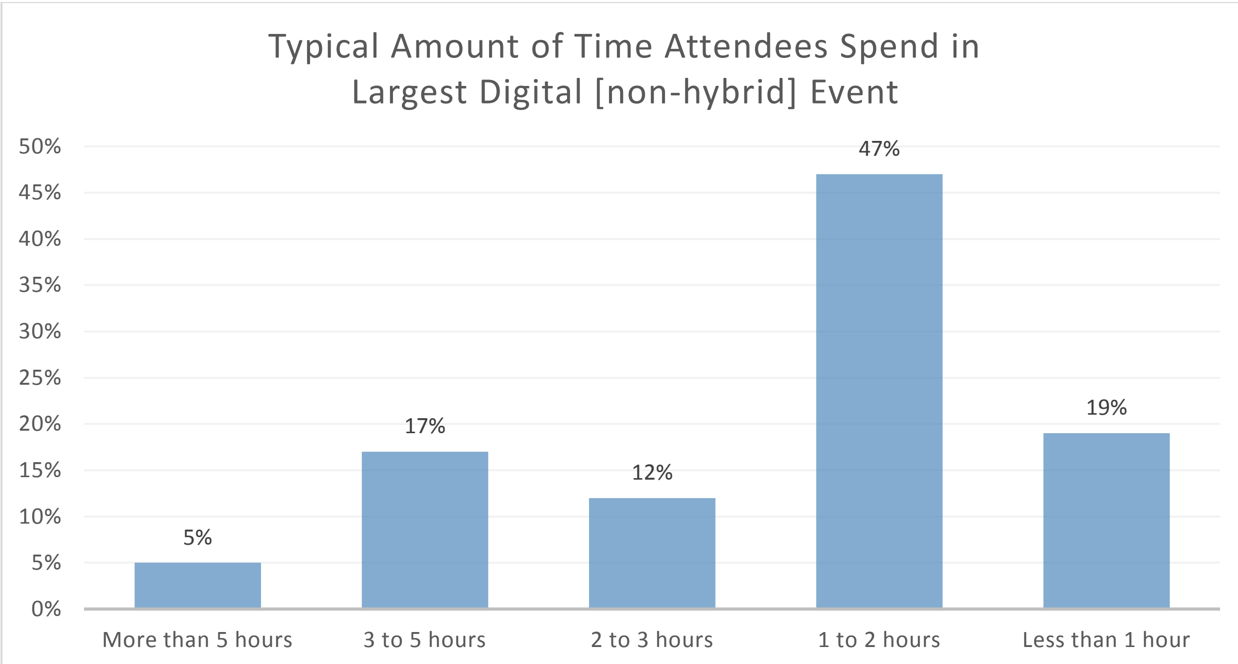




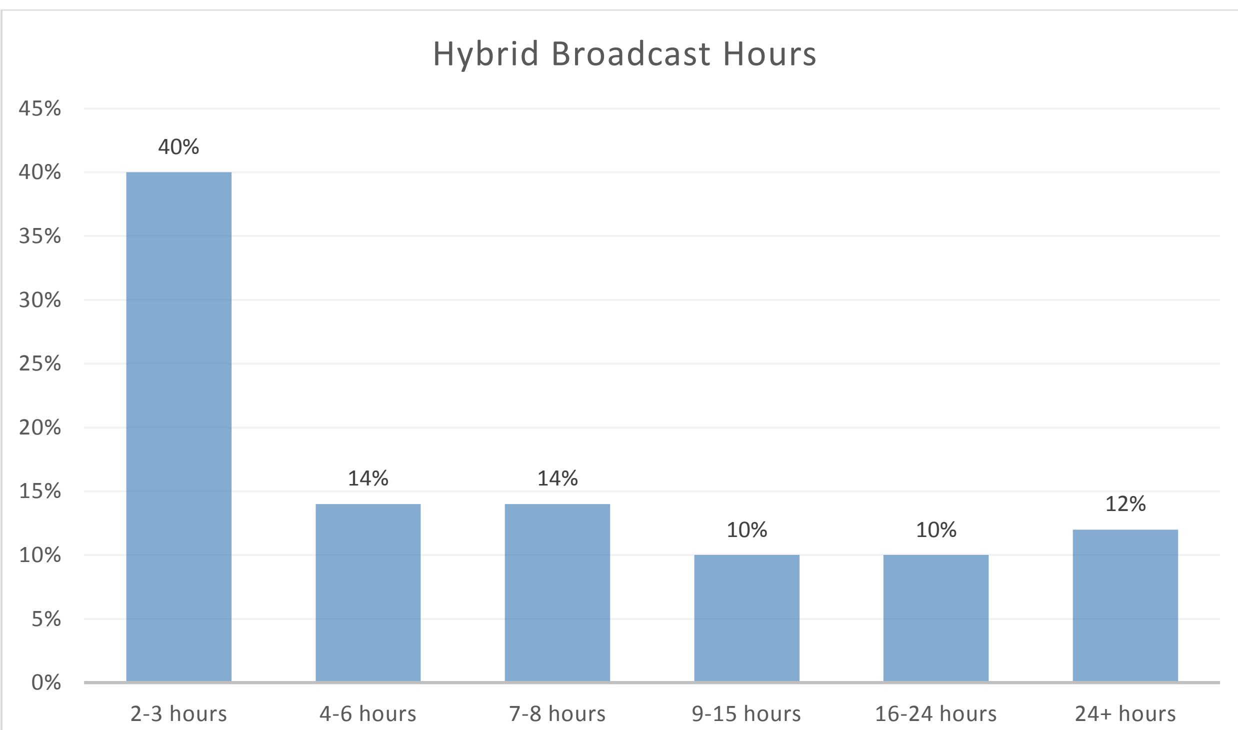
Thirty-one percent of survey respondents indicate their average length of hybrid attendance at more than five hours, while another 36 percent report 2-5 hours of attendance. Conversely, 47 percent of digital event attendee's average participation falls between 1 and 2 hours, with 19 percent reporting less than 1 hour of participation.

Need time spent for hybrid

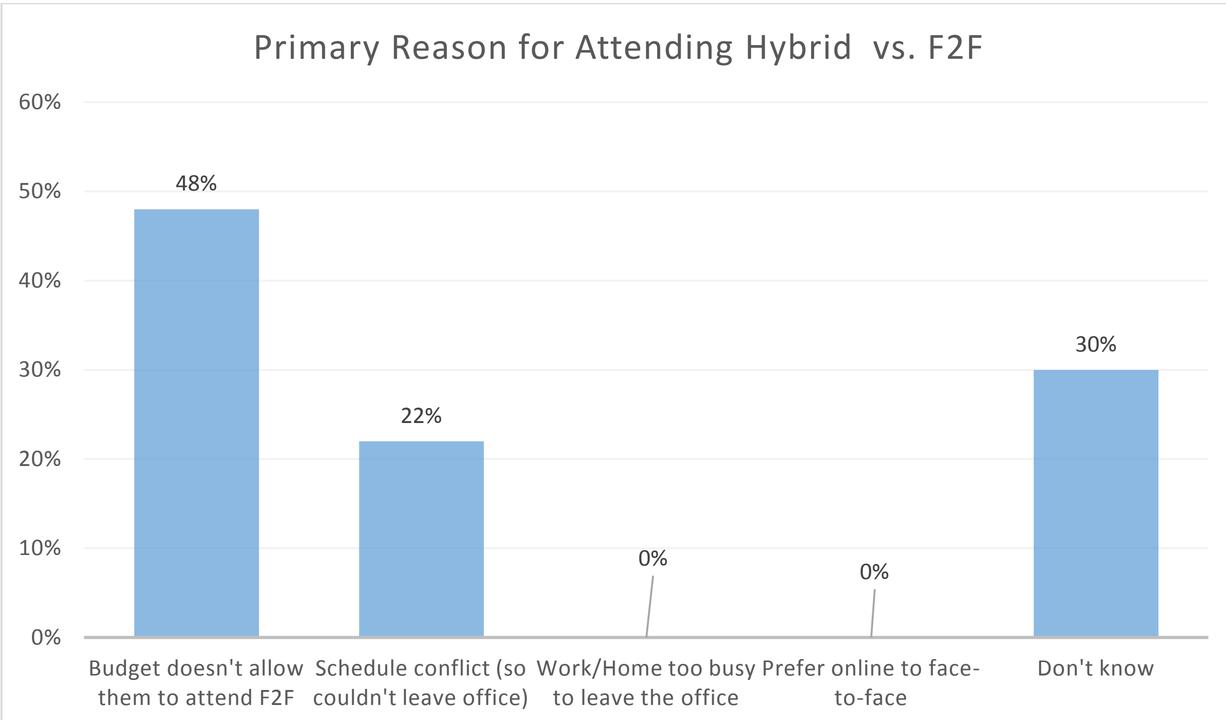




Forty percent of respondents indicate their hybrid broadcast hours range between 2-3 hours, with 32% indicating they broadcast between 9 and 24-plus hours. Sixty-five percent of digital event producers indicated their average online event are between 2-3 hours in length.



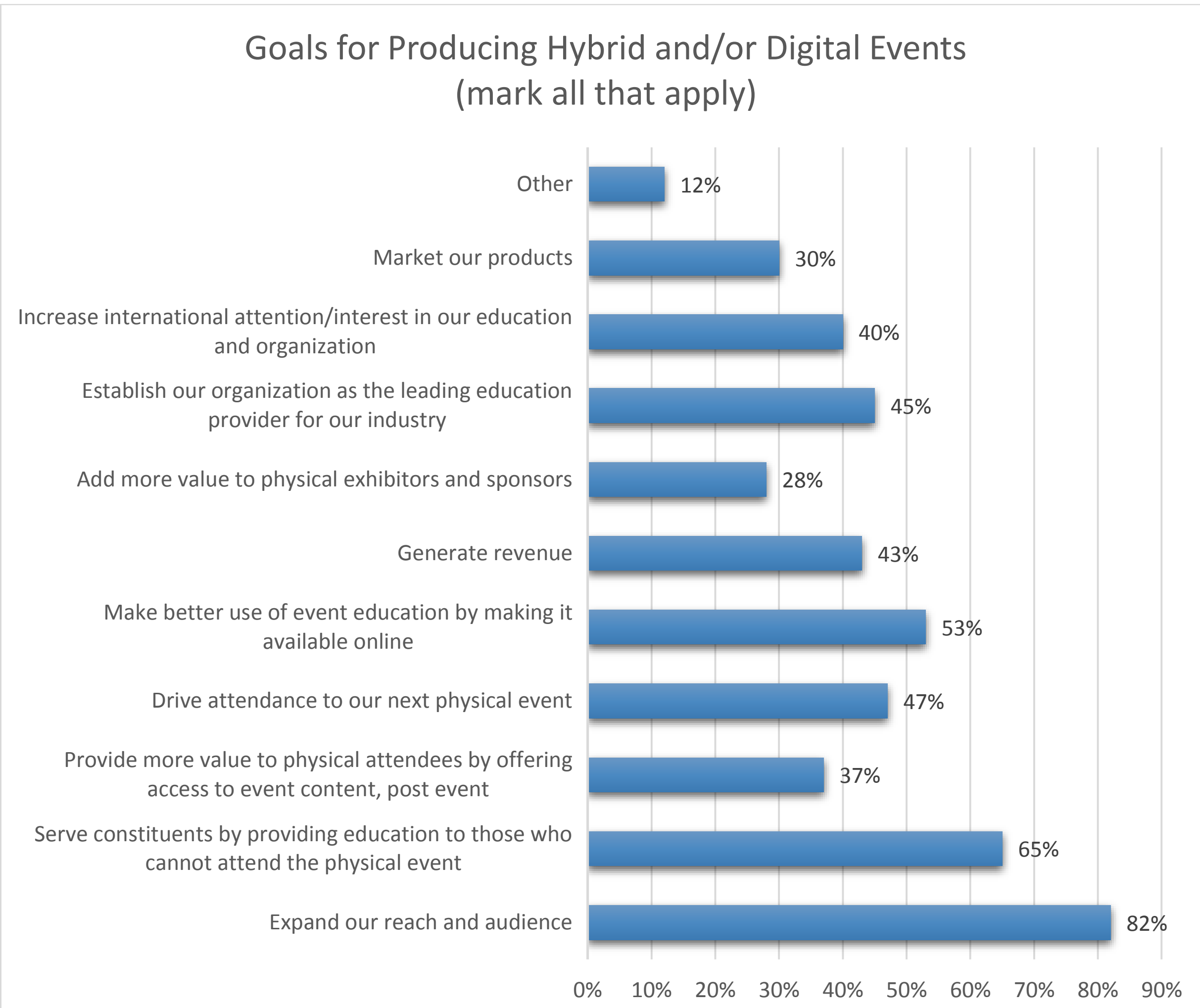
The majority, 48 percent of respondents site ‘budget doesn’t allow them to attend face-to-face’ as the number one attendance driver; followed by schedule conflict at 20 percent.



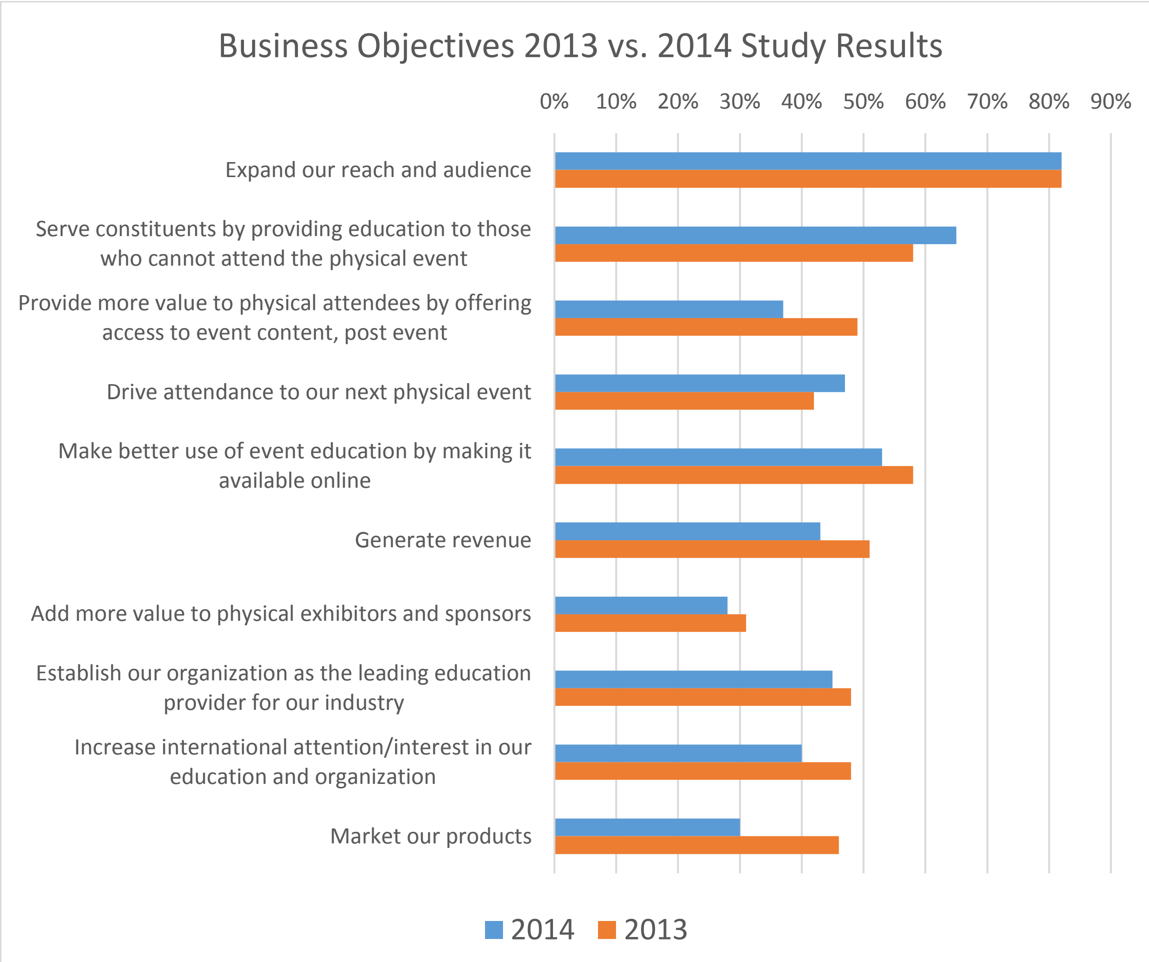
Business Objectives

The vast majority of survey respondents have multiple goals and objectives for their digital events, with the most reported goal being the ability for online events to expand the organization's reach and audience with 82 percent.

Making greater use of educational assets is clearly another strong objective for respondents, with nearly 65 percent indicating their goal is to serve their constituents by providing education to those who cannot attend the physical event, with 53 percent indicating their desire to 'make better use of event education by making it available online'.

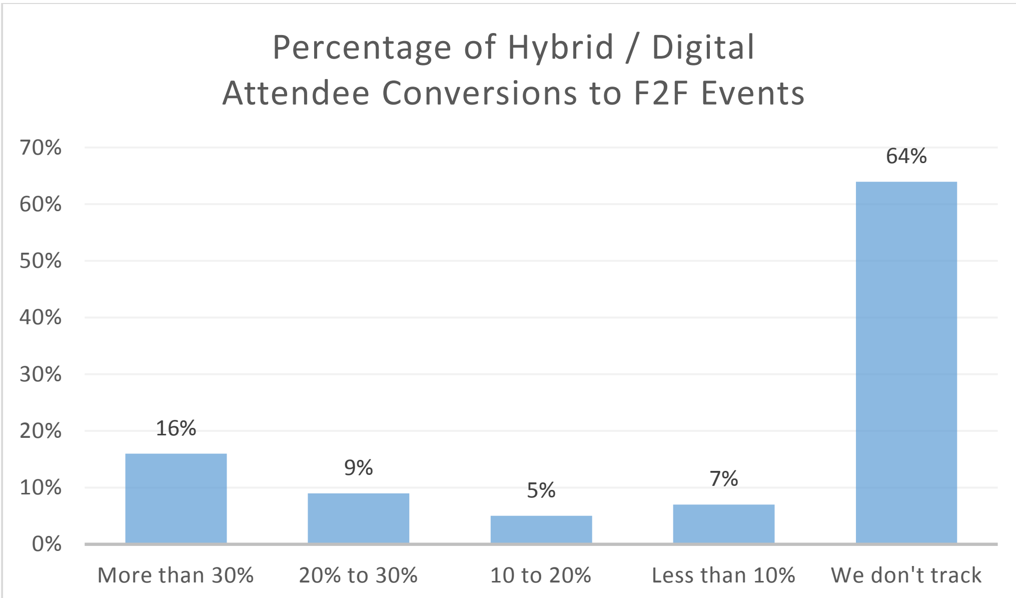


Forty-three percent of respondents list generating revenue as a goal or objective [down 7% from 2013], other goals with slightly more or less than 40 percent were: interested in establishing their organization as an industry leader, driving more international attendance and providing more value to physical event attendees by providing them access to event content, post-event.



Interestingly, while only 37 percent say their goal is to provide this additional value to physical event attendees, a 2013 physical event attendee survey conducted by VEI, found that 80 percent of attendees would actually use the fact that they had access to such content after the event as justification for their physical attendance.

While slightly more than 47 percent of respondents indicate that driving attendance to their physical events is a goal, 36 percent of them are, in fact, seeing varying degrees of success in this area, as seen on the chart on the next page. Regrettably, 64 percent of respondents don't track attendee's reason for attending.



Monetization through Sponsorships and Marketing Tactics

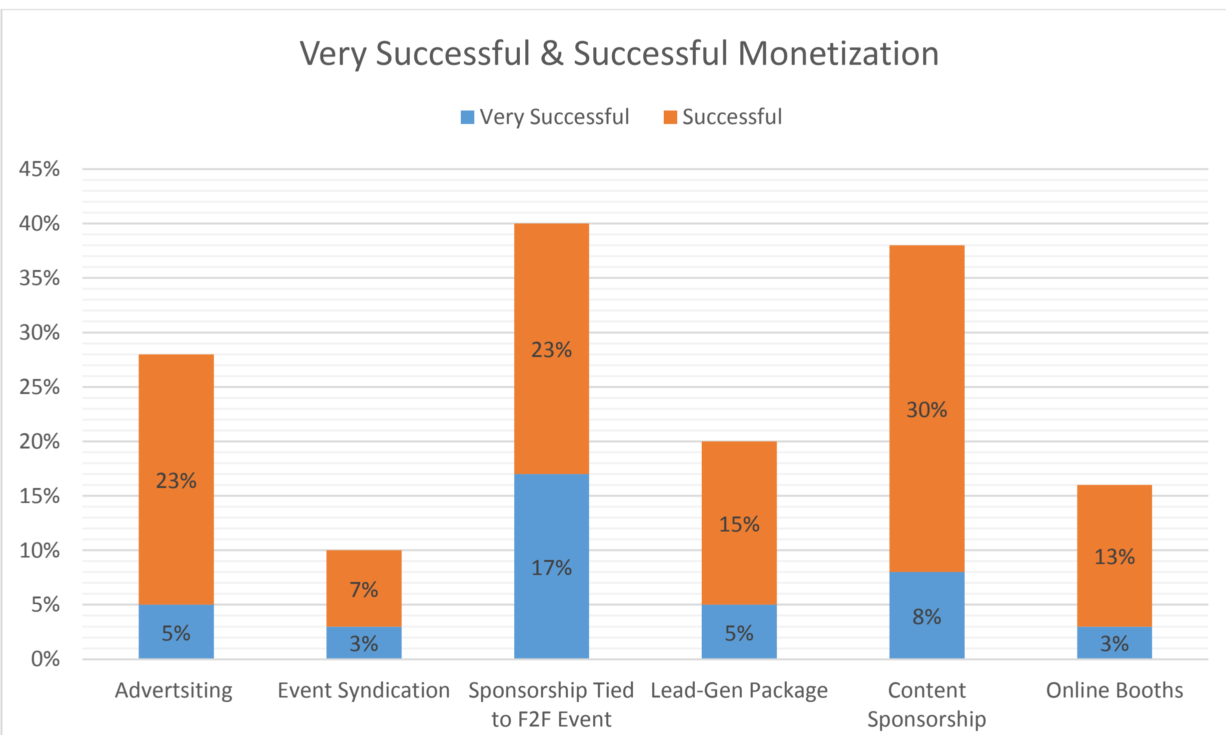
The 2014 results vary greatly over 2013. VEI attributes this to a few factors 1) more organizations are producing online events to market their organization and do not want the 'noise' created by monetization tactics; 2) 29% of the survey respondent's organizations have only been producing events for 1 year or less and have not yet matured their monetization tactics; 3) monetization is a moving target – what was successful in prior years may no longer be of interest to the online audience.

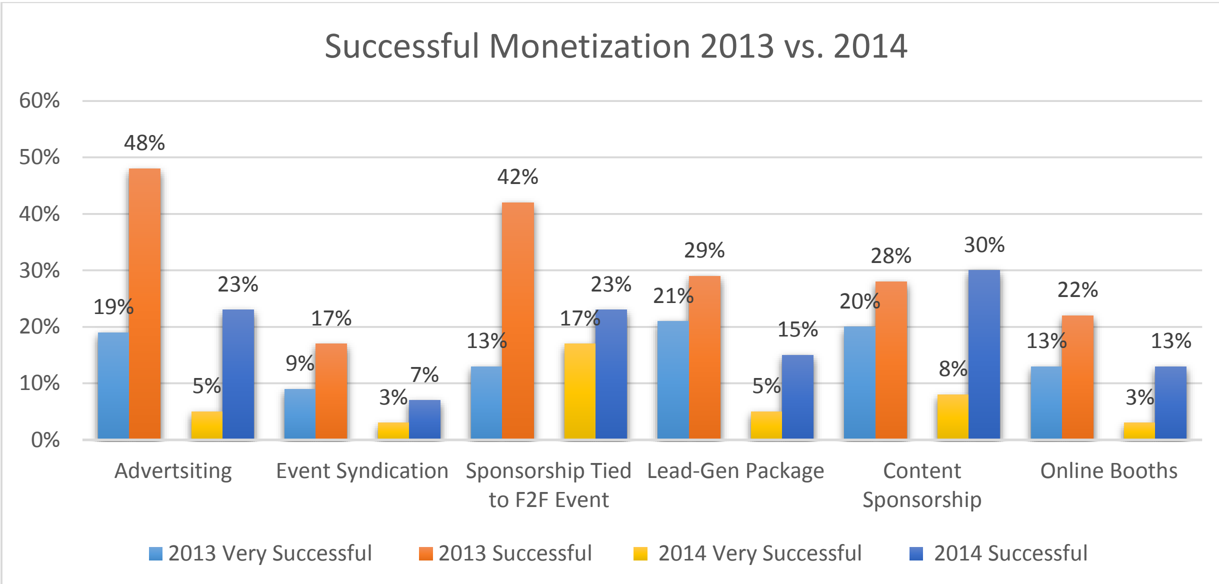
Of those survey respondents who try to monetize their online events [57 percent, a decline of 19 percent from 2013], the top three successful techniques are overall event sponsorships, followed by sponsorships tied to face-to-face event sponsorships and content sponsorship.

Advertising, which was second most utilized in 2013, fell to fourth; not surprising with the rise in content marketing's popularity.

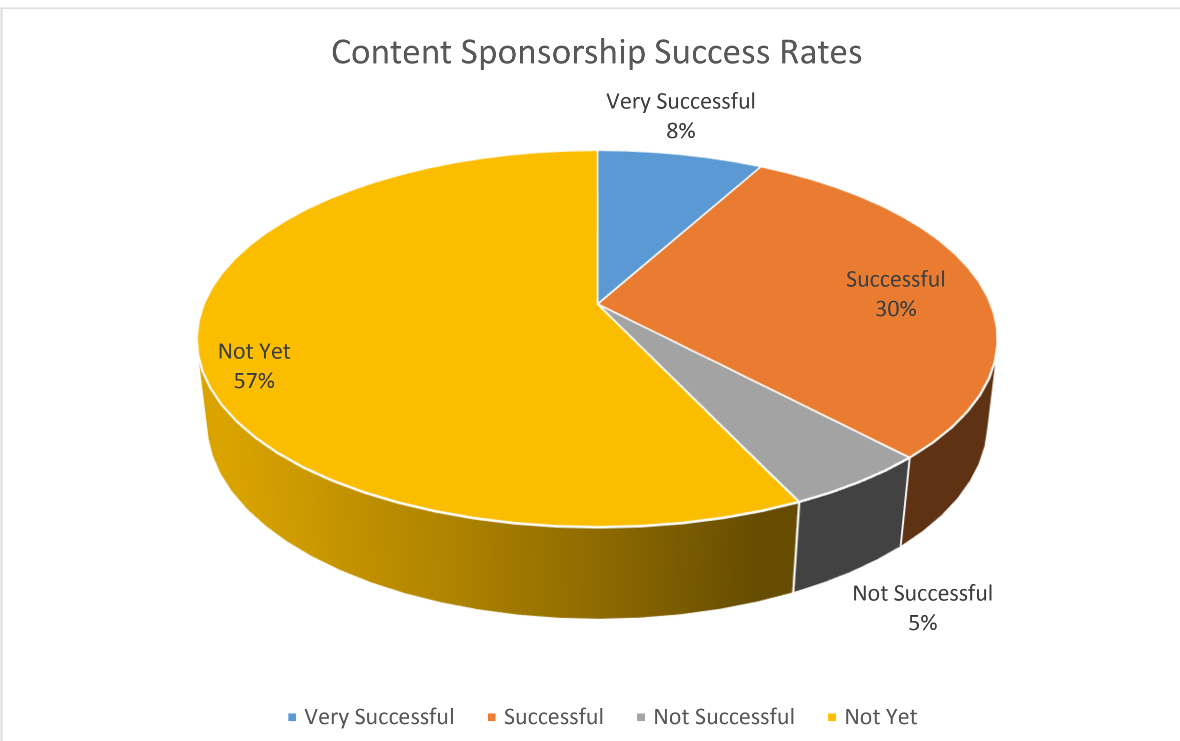
Online booths continued to be least successful and fewer are integrating this tactic into their events. Content syndication sponsorships continued ranked as the highest technique 'not yet tried.'

As evidenced by the second chart on the following page, most future monetization strategies will no doubt crystallize around content in a variety of ways.





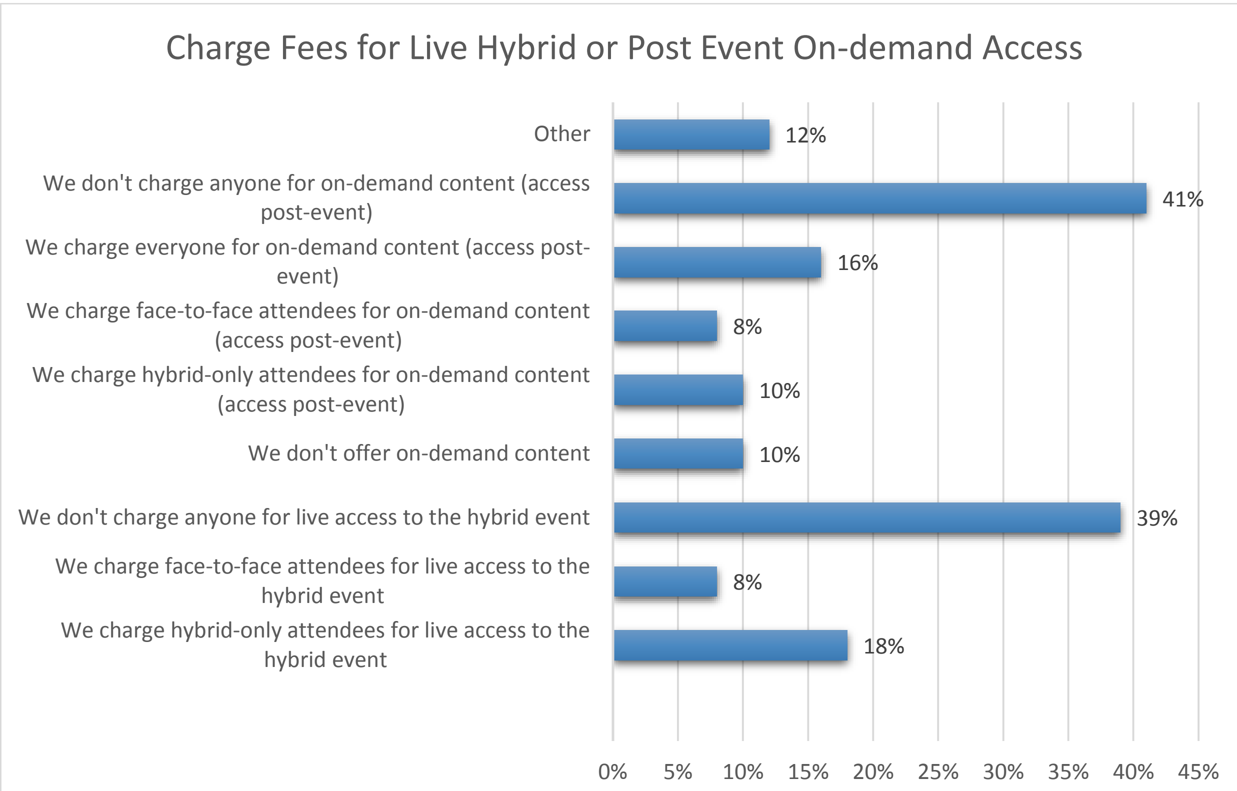
Successful Monetization 2013 vs. 2014
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
48%
19%
5%
23%
9%
17%
3%
7%
13%
42%
17%
23%
21%
29%
5%
15%
20%
28%
8%
30%
13%
22%
3%
13%
Advertsiting
Event Syndication
Sponsorship Tied to F2F Event
Lead-Gen Package
Content Sponsorship
Online Booths
2013 Very Successful
2013 Successful
2014 Very Successful
2014 Successful



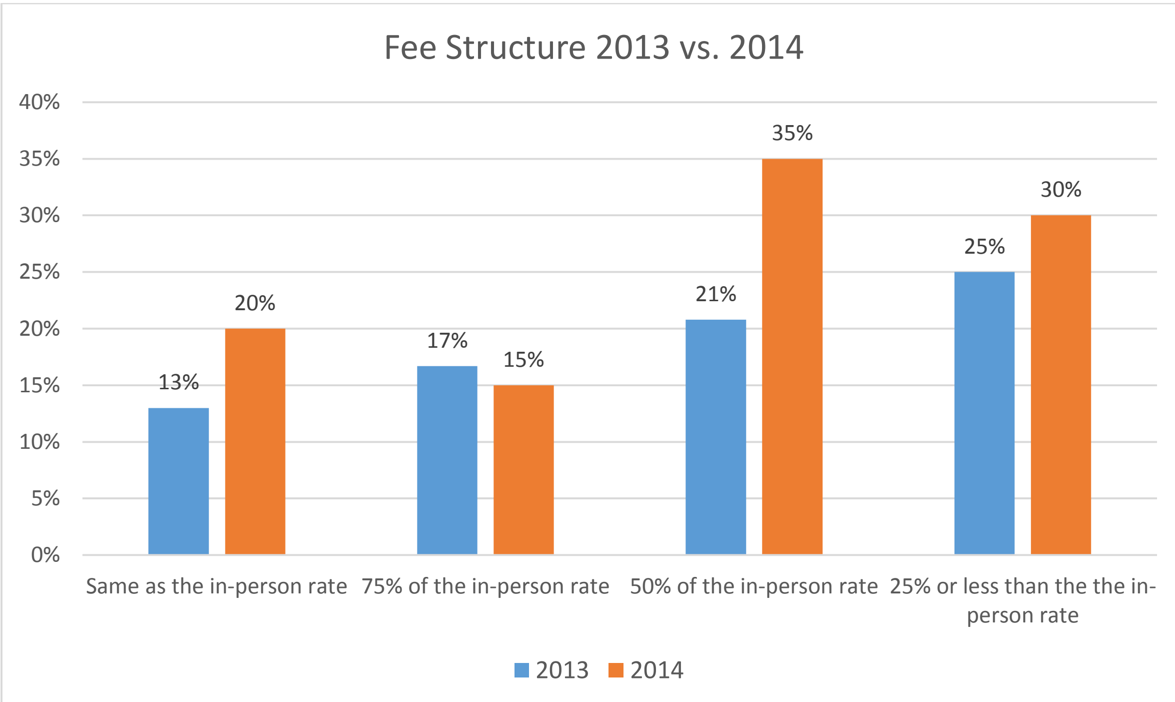
Content Sponsorship Success Rates
Very Successful 8%
Successful 30%
Not Successful 5%
Not Yet 57%
Very Successful
Successful
Not Successful
Not Yet

Attendance Fees

2014 survey respondents show a slight reduction in charging for live access to hybrid events, down 4 percent for online live access and down 3 percent for a face-to-face attendee live access. Conversely, charging for on-demand content reflects an uptick, with a 9 percent increase in 'we charge everyone for on-demand content.' These results reflect a slight shift in revenue strategy, yet aligns with identified top survey respondent's business goal for these events 'expand our reach and audience.'

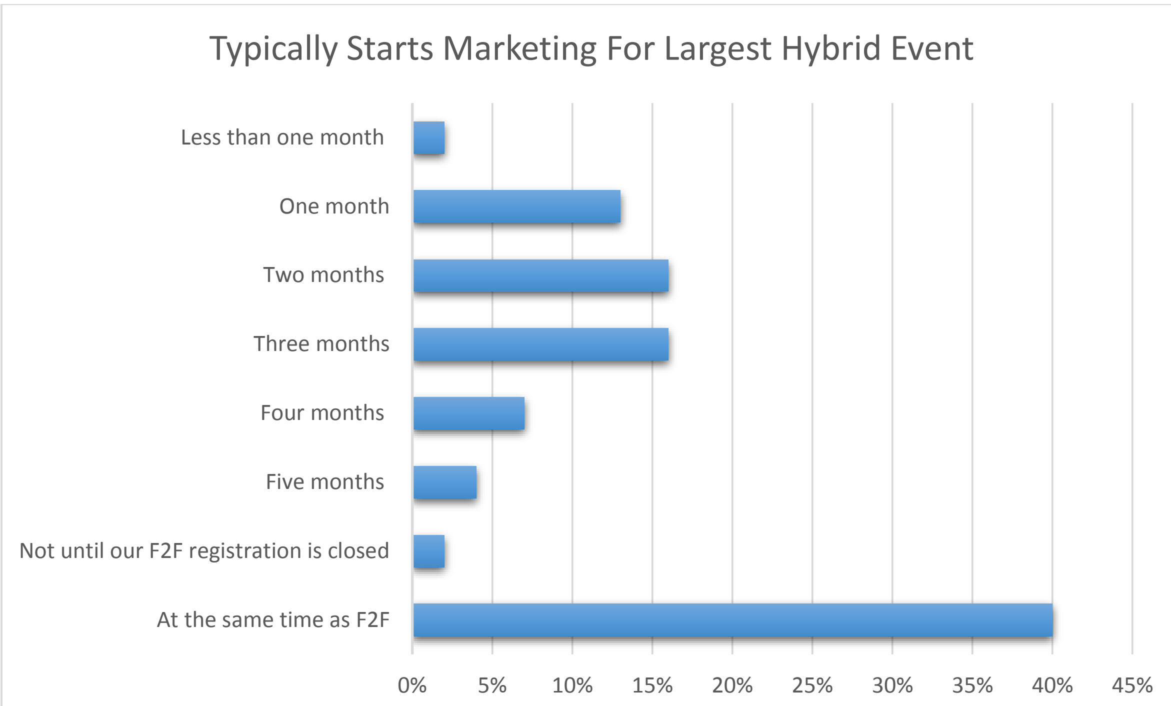


For those survey respondents who do charge attendees for access to the online event, there has been a significant shift in strategy. In 2013, 50 percent charged 25% or less than the face-to-face registration fee; in 2014 only 30 percent were charging this low of a fee. The majority, 35 percent, charge 50% of the in-person fee, with 15 percent charging 75% and 20 percent charging the same as the in-person fee.



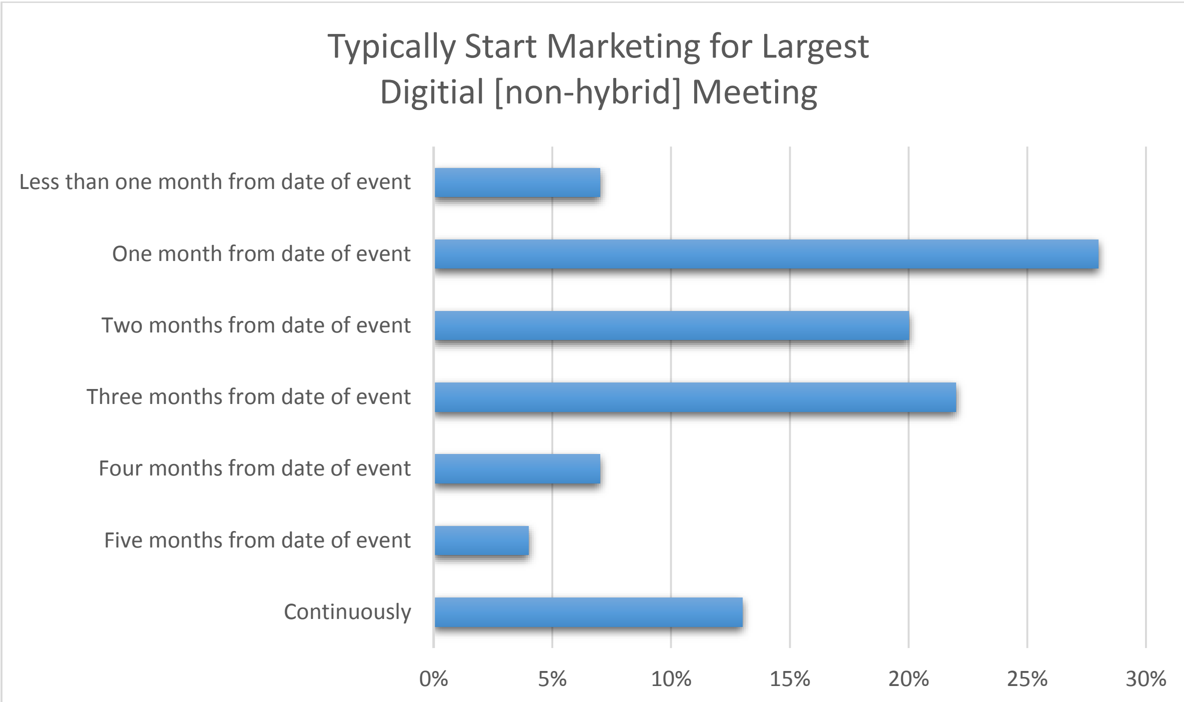
Event Marketing

There is little industry consensus in terms of marketing lead-time for hybrid events. Forty percent of respondents begin at the same time they promote their face-to-face event, while 16 percent promote 3 months out, 16 percent promote 2 months out and 13 percent promote 1 month out. Only 2 percent of respondents delay their marketing until their face-to-face registration closes.



Similar results are reflected in the respondent's marketing of digital events; with 22 percent marketing 3 months out, 20 percent 2 months out and 28 percent 1 month out. Thirteen percent indicated they market continuously.

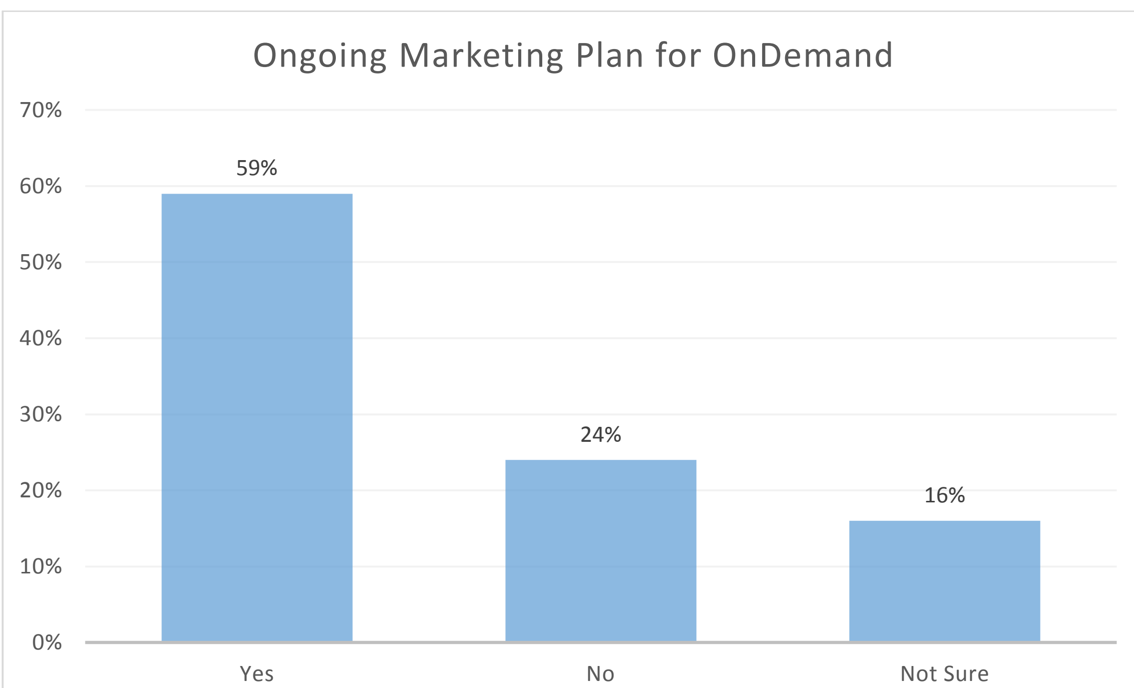
Studies have shown that while the bulk of registrations come in within the last seven days of a hybrid or digital event marketing campaign, the earlier the promotion begins, the higher final registration numbers will be. Email marketing is by far the most significant registration driver for digital events, followed by peer recommendations and social media. Advertising is the least effective driver according to respondents.



E-newsletters are the next most utilized tool, with 78 percent delivering a newsletter once or twice per month. Dedicated email messages are the next most widely used by survey respondents, with 34 percent sending them at least twice per month and 26 percent monthly.

While 59 percent of survey respondents report continuously marketing their captured, on-demand content availability, the fact that more than one-fourth of respondents are not marketing said content is worrisome given that they are failing to leverage an asset whose cost has already been realized.

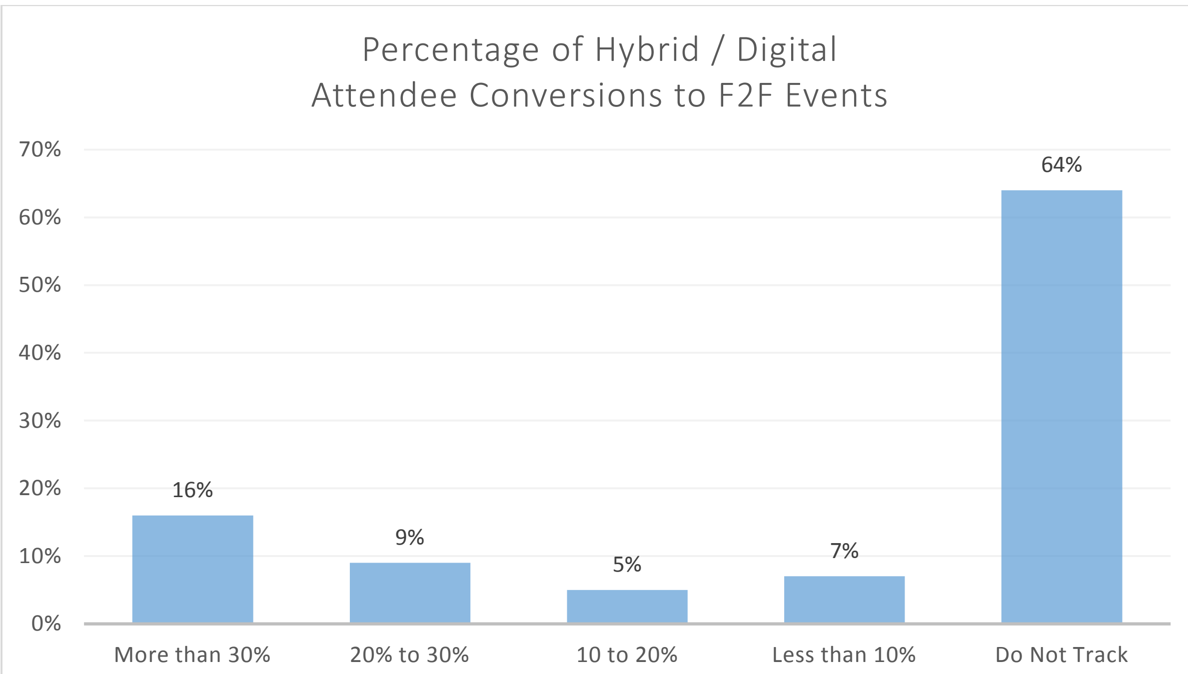

Most Successful Marketing Promotions
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
49%
3%
20%
20%
7%
Promotional emails
Website ads or placement
Peer recommendation
Social media
Other

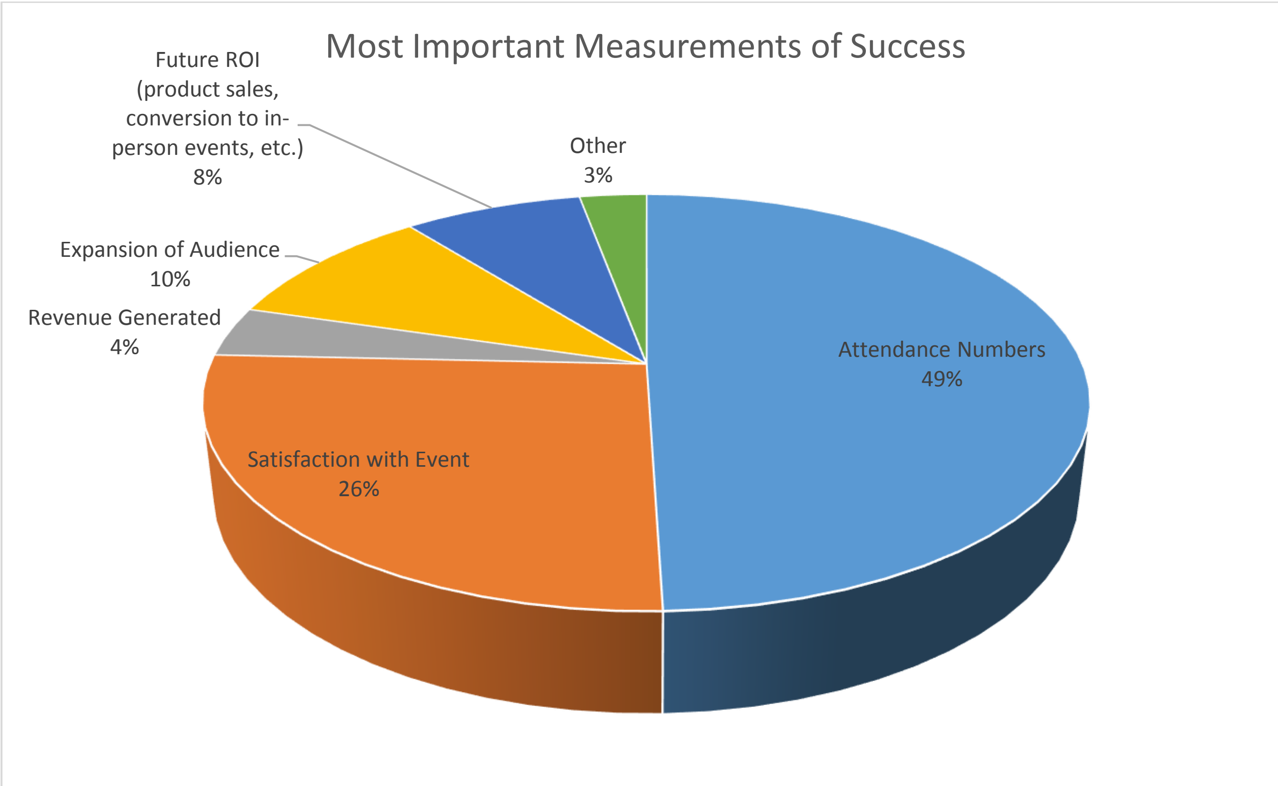

Ongoing Marketing Plan for OnDemand
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
59%
24%
16%
Yes
No
Not Sure

Measurement

Now that the face-to-face cannibalization myth has been debunked, hybrid and digital event producers are challenged with measuring the impact of their events. Many survey respondents are now tracking subsequent face-to-face attendance; of those that do, 16 percent indicated a 30%+ conversion rate, 9 percent 20-30% conversion and 12 percent less than 20 percent. Regrettably, 64 percent do not track this metric.

Respondents are measuring their success in a number ways; 51 percent indicated attendance is their primary success metric, while 27 percent indicate satisfaction is their primary, with expansion of audience and future ROI also considerations [sale of products or services.] Others indicated increased sentiment, engagement and positive feedback were measures of their success.




Most Important Measurements of Success
Future ROI (product sales, conversion to in-person events, etc.) 8%
Other 3%
Expansion of Audience 10%
Revenue Generated 4%
Attendance Numbers 49%
Satisfaction with Event 26%

What's Trending

Respondents were asked what changes they have made to their hybrid event[s] over the last few years. Not surprising, they are broadcasting more sessions, integrating social media and tweaking their monetization strategies.

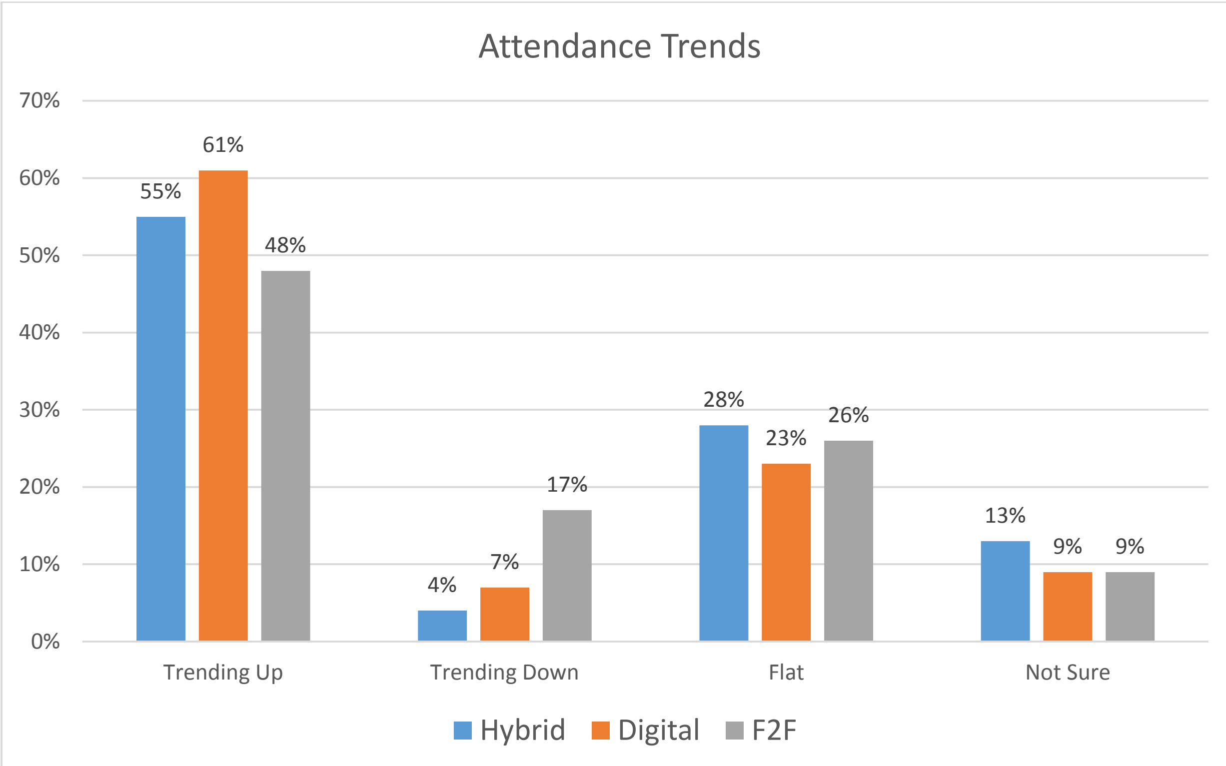
When asked what they see on the horizon in the next 2-3 years the answers fell into a few buckets:

- Technology will advance; quality will improve and cost will decline
- Increased adoption; from both the event producers and online attendees
- More content will be captured with on-demand products available 24/7
- Expanded reach to non-traditional markets

One respondent was bold in saying: *I believe they will completely transform the way most corporations as well as education facilities provide the majority of their CEUs required for accreditation.*

VEI does not believe face-to-face will disappear, or for that matter decline; in 2014 many organizations are reporting record breaking attendance, as more acknowledge it is difficult to see eye-to-eye if you don't meet face-to-face.

This report and the insights expressed here were crafted by VEI's Carolyn Clark and Mary Reynolds Kane.


Attendance Trends
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
55%
61%
48%
4%
7%
17%
28%
23%
26%
13%
9%
9%
Trending Up
Trending Down
Flat
Not Sure
Hybrid
Digital
F2F