



# THE 2016 PLANNER SOURCING REPORT

# INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, both hotel professionals and planners want every step of the event planning process to go smoothly. Hoteliers long to access the mind of the planner, while planners juggle the demands of the venue, their organizations, and of course, the attendees. To help our hoteliers understand just exactly what meeting and event planners are up against, we're continuing our annual Planner Sourcing Survey to wrap up 2016. As the Cvent network continues to grow, we're connecting our Event and Hospitality clouds to foster those relationships that power group business.

From the sourcing process to actual budgets and post-event feedback, we've asked 710 planners to share the details about the events they plan throughout the year. You'll see the difference between 2015 and 2016's results, with the added bonus of questions that are pertinent to this year. See the stats below – the results might surprise you.

**90%** of planners surveyed start the sourcing process on a desktop or laptop computer

**39%** host mostly conferences

**#1** driver of final venue decisions was a venue in a major city

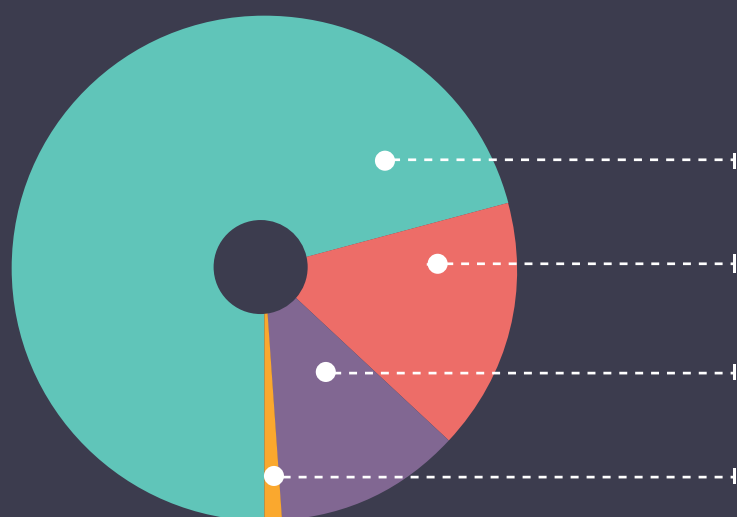
**48%** of respondents said attendee messaging and networking are the best techniques for building memorable event experiences



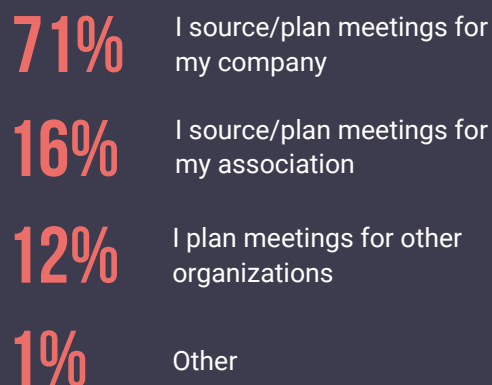
# SECTION 1

## PLANNER PERSONA

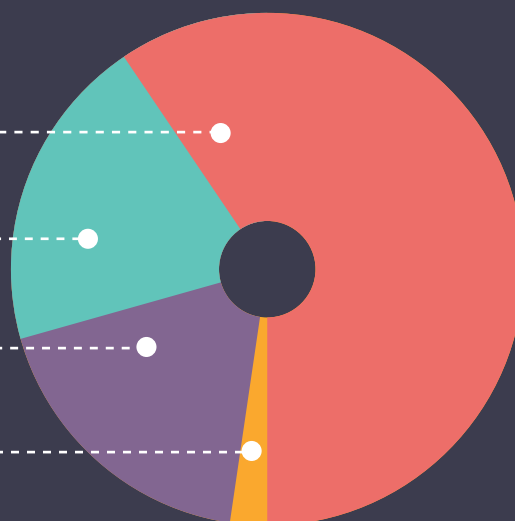
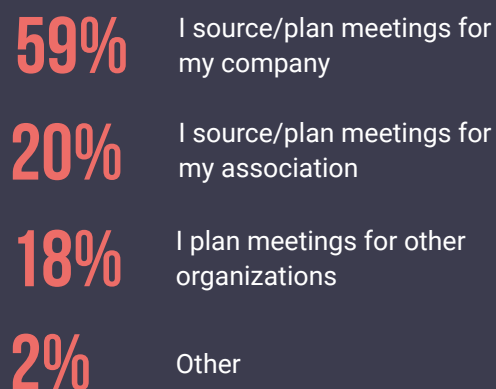
Of the 710 planners we surveyed, 59% source meetings on behalf of their company, 18% were association planners, and 20% were third-party planners. 35-52 year olds represented the largest demographic of event planners with 47% of the surveyed audience. Millennial/Gen Y planners (18-34 year olds) were the second largest segment, comprising 35% of respondents.



### 2015 PLANNER BREAKDOWN



### 2016 PLANNER BREAKDOWN



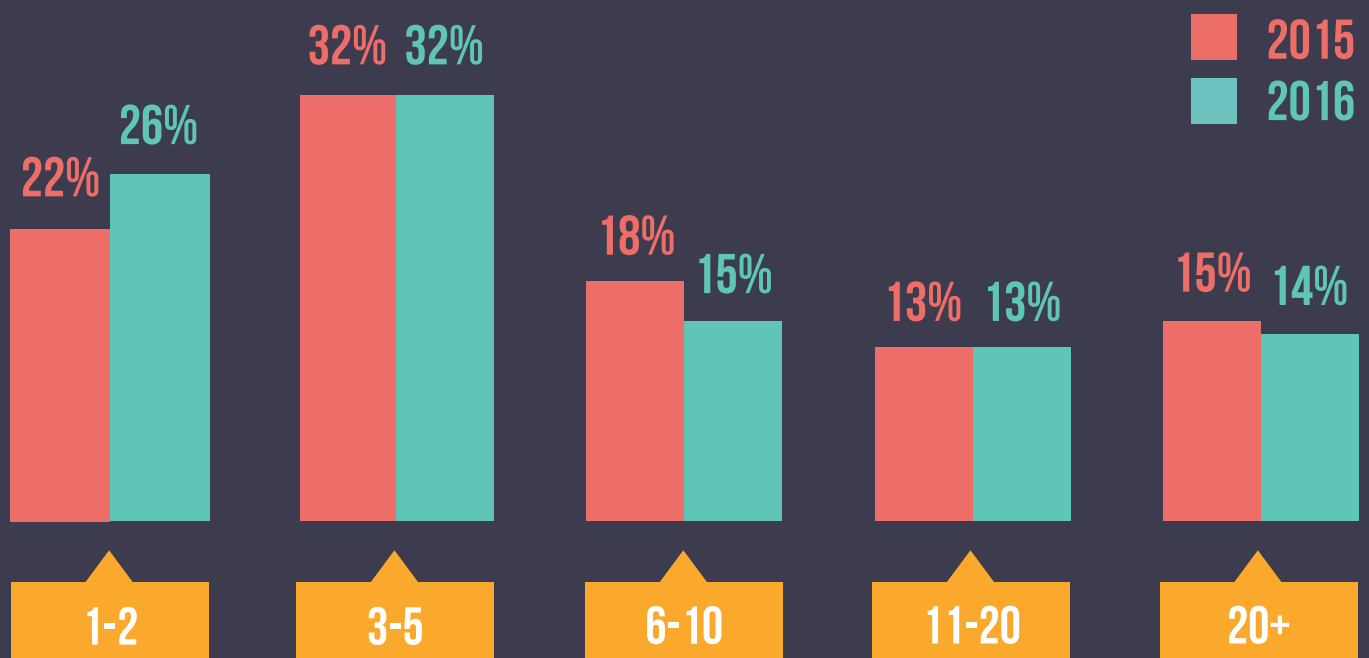


**I AM NOT A FULL-TIME EVENT PLANNER,** IT'S ADDED ONTO MY CURRENT WORK LOAD. SO IF I CAN GET THROUGH THE INFORMATION AND PROCESS OUR NEEDS ON MY OWN, **I LOSE LESS TIME FROM MY MAIN FOCUS.**

## HOW OLD ARE THEY?

	18-34 YEARS OLD	35-52 YEARS OLD	53-64 YEARS OLD	65+ YEARS OLD
2015	41%	43%	14%	2%
2016	35%	47%	17%	1%

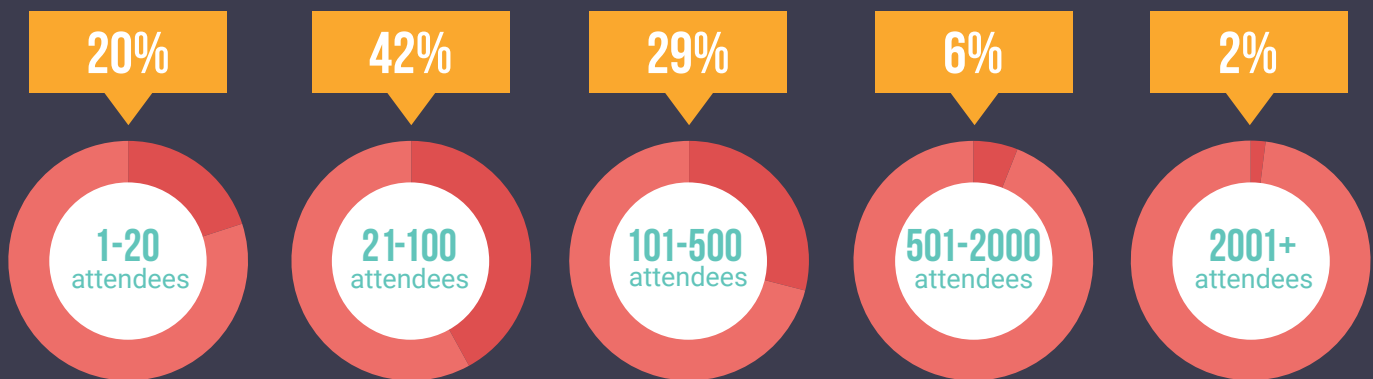
## HOW MANY EVENTS DO YOU TYPICALLY PLAN IN A YEAR?



## MOST POPULAR TYPES OF EVENTS



## HOW MANY ATTENDEES DO YOU AVERAGE PER EVENT?



## HAS THE NUMBER OF ATTENDEES AT YOUR EVENTS CHANGED SINCE 2015?

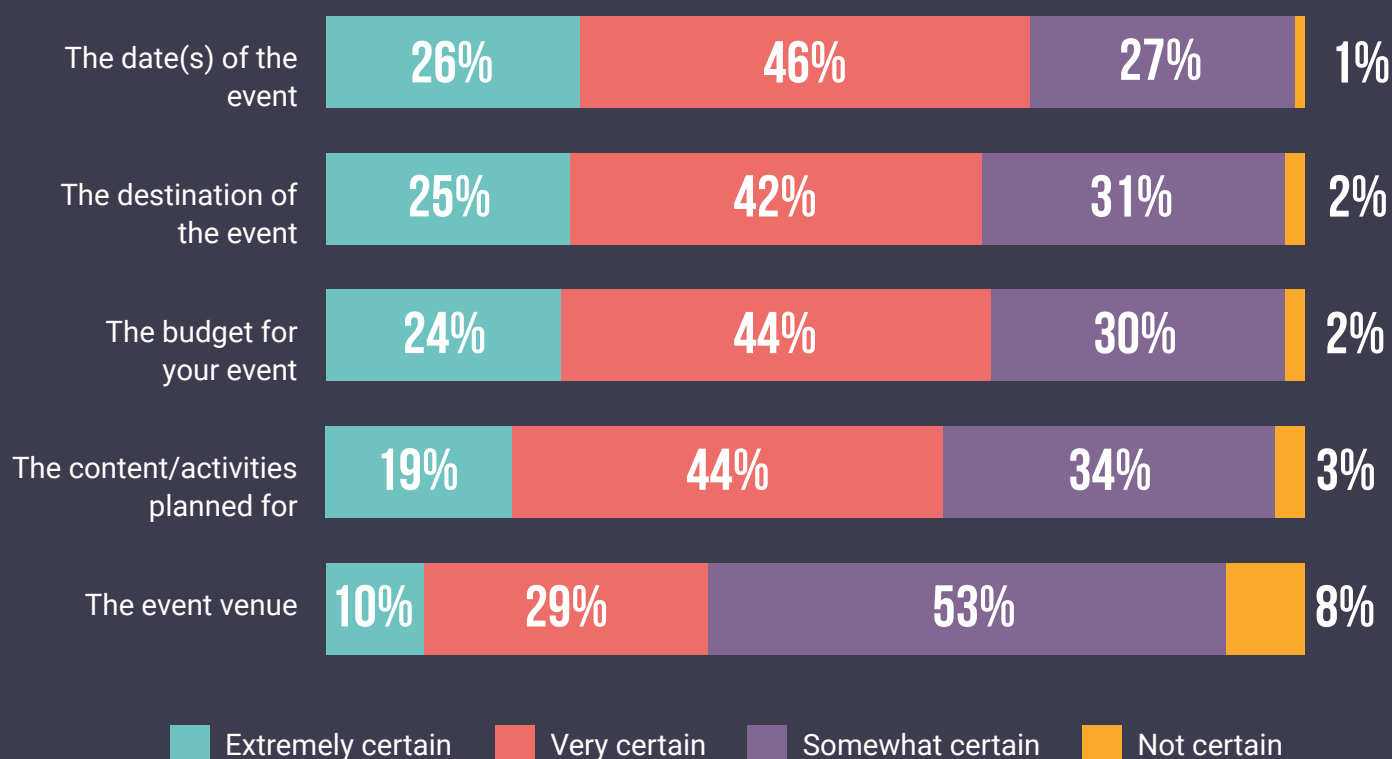


# SECTION 2

## SOURCING PROCESS

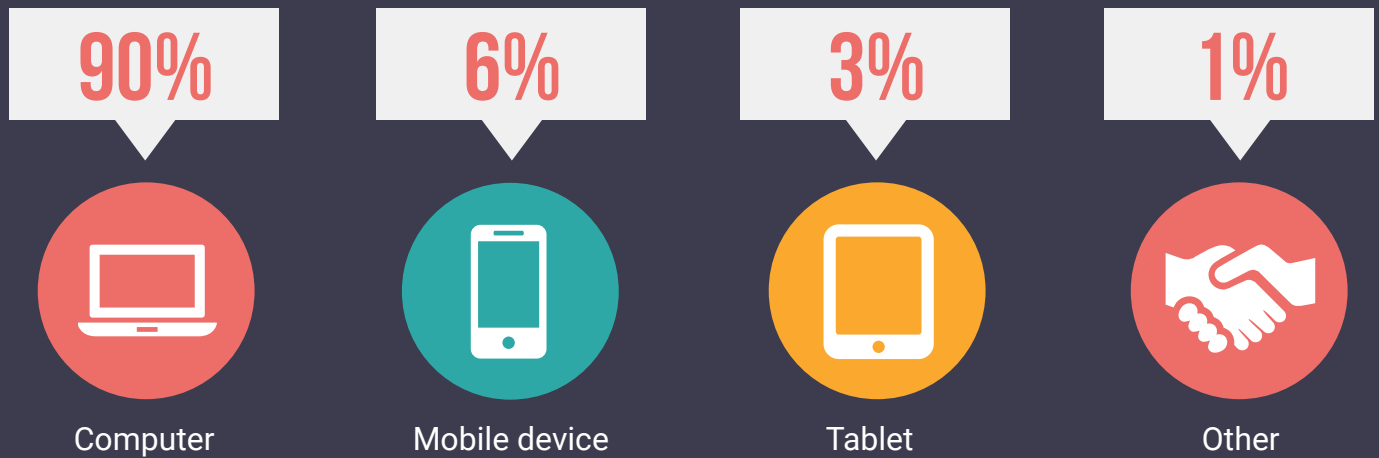
To fast-track a more successful sourcing process, we asked planners to outline the steps they take before choosing a venue and awarding the final RFP. In this section, hotel professionals can see how their digital presence affects a planner's impression of a venue, and where they can improve the overall interaction. Follow event planners from sourcing to suggestions using the data below.

WHEN YOU BEGIN **SOURCING YOUR EVENT**, HOW CERTAIN ARE YOU OF:



**I'D LIKE MORE INFO AVAILABLE ONLINE.** I WANT TO ONLY CONTACT THE VENUE ONCE I'M QUITE CERTAIN OF MY CHOICES.

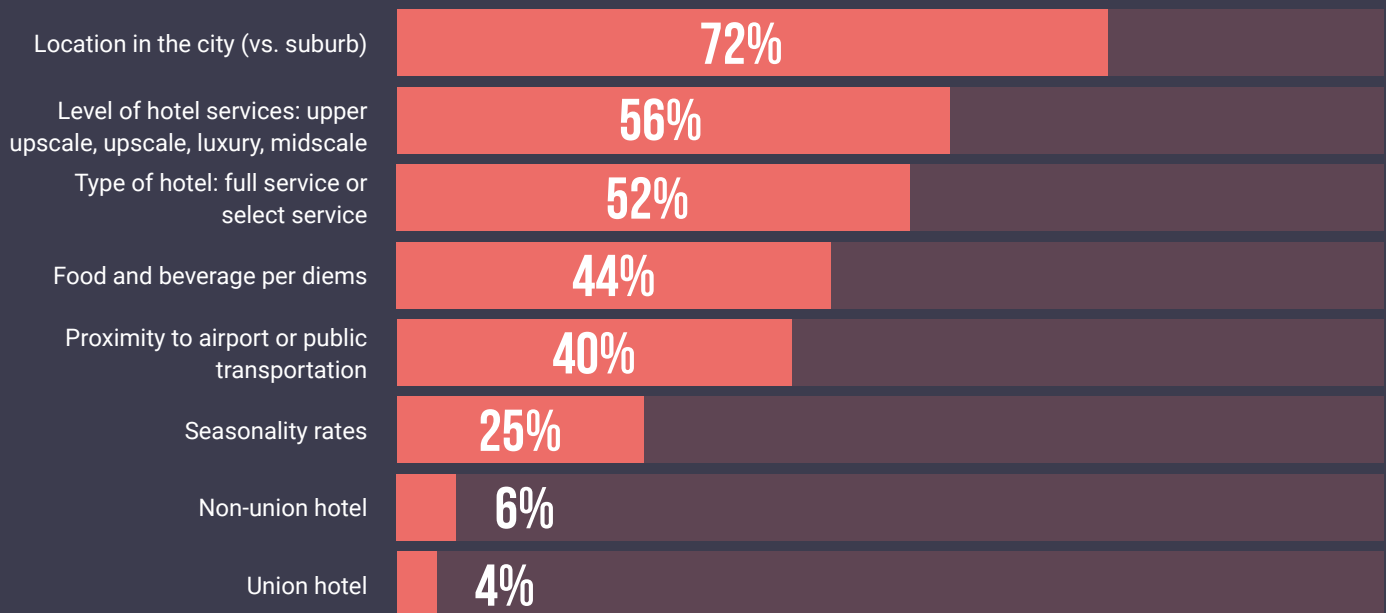
## ON WHICH DEVICE DO YOU TYPICALLY START YOUR ONLINE VENUE SOURCING PROCESS?



## WHICH RESOURCE HAS THE MOST INFLUENCE ON YOUR SOURCING?

PEER RECOMMENDATIONS	19%
HOTEL SALES STAFF	15%
ONLINE SOURCING TOOLS (CVENT SUPPLIER NETWORK, SPEEDRFP, ETC.)	14%
VENUES' CORPORATE WEBSITES	14%
SEARCH ENGINES (GOOGLE, BING)	14%
REVIEW SITES (YELP, TRIPADVISOR)	12%
SOCIAL MEDIA/BLOGS	5%
TRADE SHOWS	4%
MAGAZINES	3%

## WHAT DRIVERS HELP YOU DECIDE WHO GETS YOUR BUSINESS?



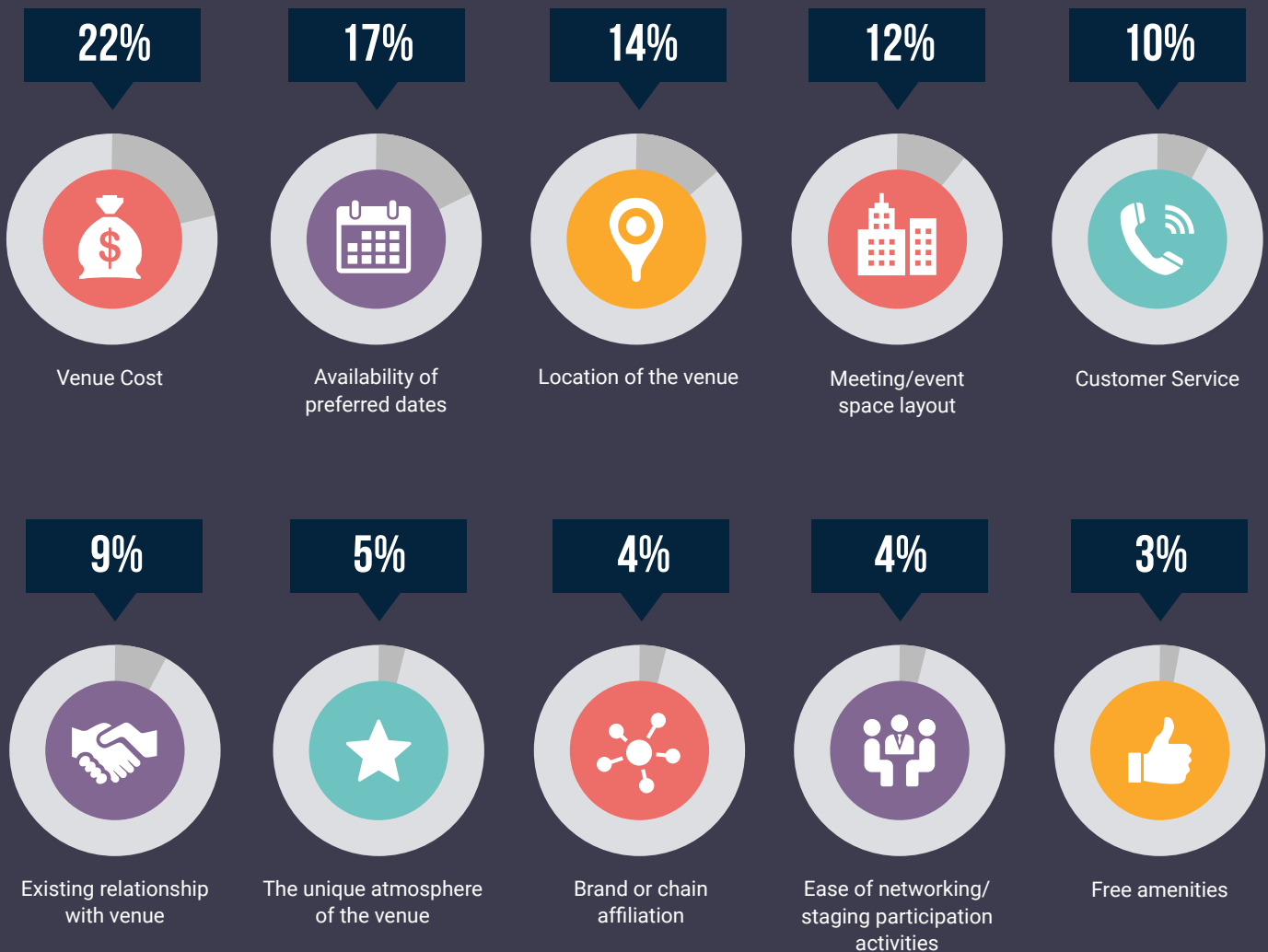
## WHAT MOST INFLUENCES YOUR DESTINATION CHOICE?



IT'S IMPORTANT THAT A VENUE GIVES A LITTLE MORE TO SHOW THEY WOULD **APPRECIATE AND VALUE OUR BUSINESS.**



# WHAT FEATURE MOST INFLUENCES YOUR FINAL DECISION TO **BOOK A VENUE?**



“

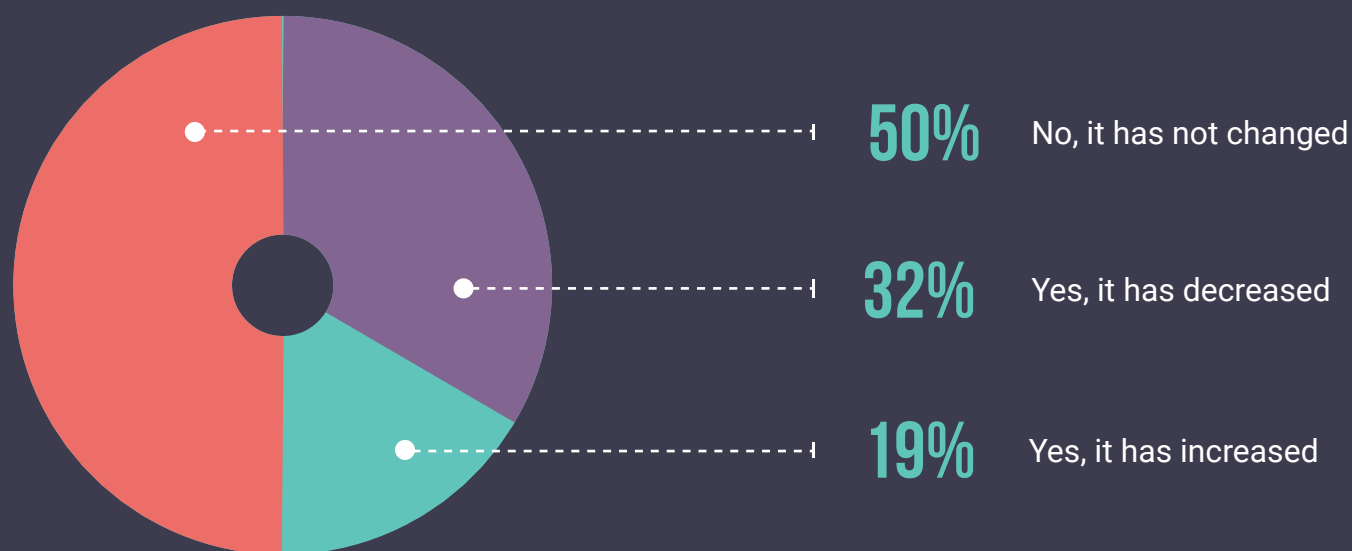
**CREATIVITY IS WHAT I NEED.** REALLY LOOK AT MY RFP, PICK UP THE PHONE, AND TALK THROUGH MY NEEDS. IT **SAVES US BOTH TIME.**

# SECTION 3

## BUDGETING FOR EVENTS

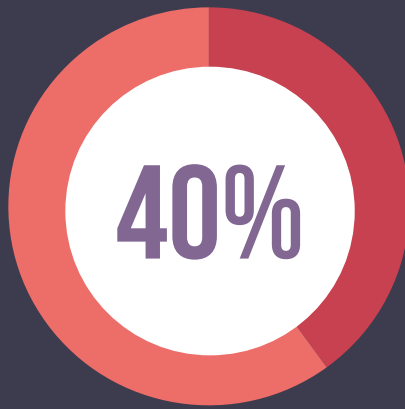
Last year, more than half of planners required more than 10% savings to switch venue choices, but that number dropped to 44% of planners in 2016. Flexibility is a major component for the sourcing process, and it provides negotiation power to hotels and their clients. In [Cvent's 2016 Planner Loyalty Study](#), we compare hotelier's assumptions with planner insights. Planners provided more detail on what influences them to return to a trusted venue, as well as their likelihood to recommend it to a peer. Discover what effect budgeting had on 2016 meeting and events below.

### HAS YOUR BUDGET CHANGED **SINCE 2015?**

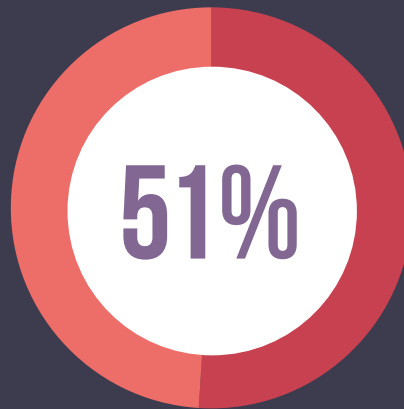


AT WHAT LEVEL OF SAVINGS **WOULD YOU BE WILLING**  
**TO SWITCH TO YOUR SECOND-CHOICE VENUE?**

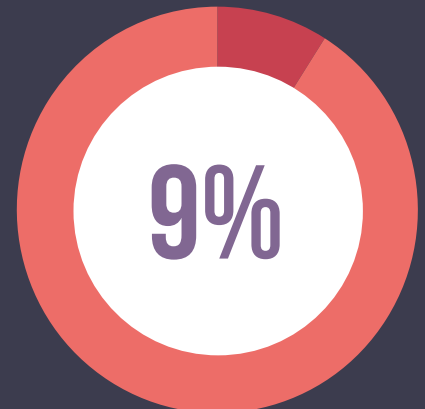
■ 2015  
■ 2016



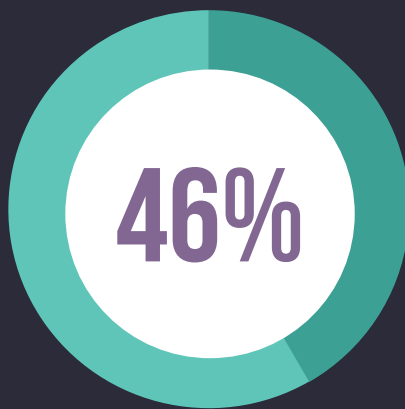
UNDER 10%



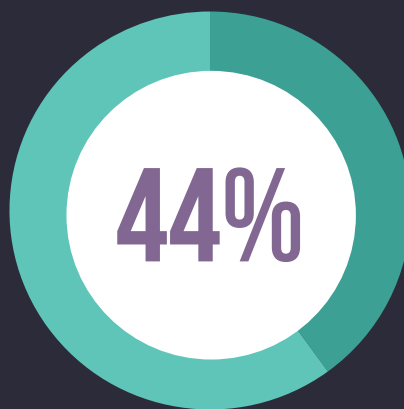
OVER 10%



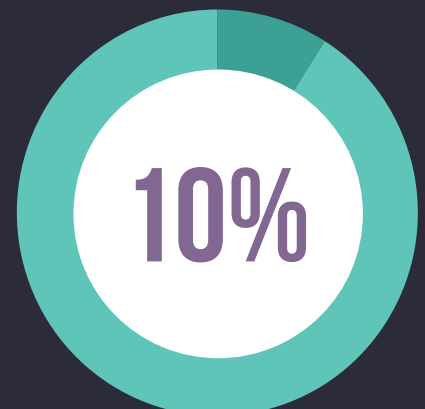
A DISCOUNT WOULD NOT  
CHANGE MY DECISION



UNDER 10%



OVER 10%



A DISCOUNT WOULD NOT  
CHANGE MY DECISION

# SECTION 4

## THE EVENT EXPERIENCE

One thing that sets successful venues apart is their ability to create positive, unique experiences for planners and their guests. While most planners have solid plans for building engagement, venues struggle to showcase how their group spaces can facilitate planners' ideas. Below are examples of how modern planners build their events around attendee engagement, and which aspects are most relevant to their idea of event success.

### WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU TYPICALLY EMPLOY TO BUILD **MEMORABLE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCES?**\*

ATTENDEE MESSAGING AND NETWORKING	48%
LIVE MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT	46%
SOCIAL MEDIA DISPLAY	42%
MOBILE EVENT APP	27%
INTERACTIVE POLLS	25%
SURPRISES/POP-UP EVENTS	25%
SECOND SCREEN PRESENTATIONS	21%
ACTIVITY FEEDS	19%
PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES VIA REAL-TIME TRACKING	14%
MOBILE GAMIFICATION	8%
VIRTUAL/AUGMENTED REALITY	7%
OTHER	4%

\*Select all that apply.

"

OUR RETREAT WAS MEMORABLE BECAUSE IT INCLUDED **A SMALL GROUP IN AN INTIMATE SETTING** THAT ALLOWED FOR DEEPENING CONNECTIONS AND **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS**. THE VENUE DID A GREAT JOB.

"

**I USED THE MOBILE APP**, WHICH WE IMPLEMENTED FOR A REAL-TIME CONTEST. **EVERYBODY LOVED IT.**

## THESE PLANNERS NOTED THEY **"ALWAYS" USE THE FOLLOWING EVENT SERVICES\***

90%



A/V

6%



Venue Rental

3%



Transportation

1%



Entertainers

90%



Suppliers/Renters

6%

Photographers/  
Videographers

3%

Decor (florists,  
interior designers)

1%



Entertainment

*\*Select all that apply.*

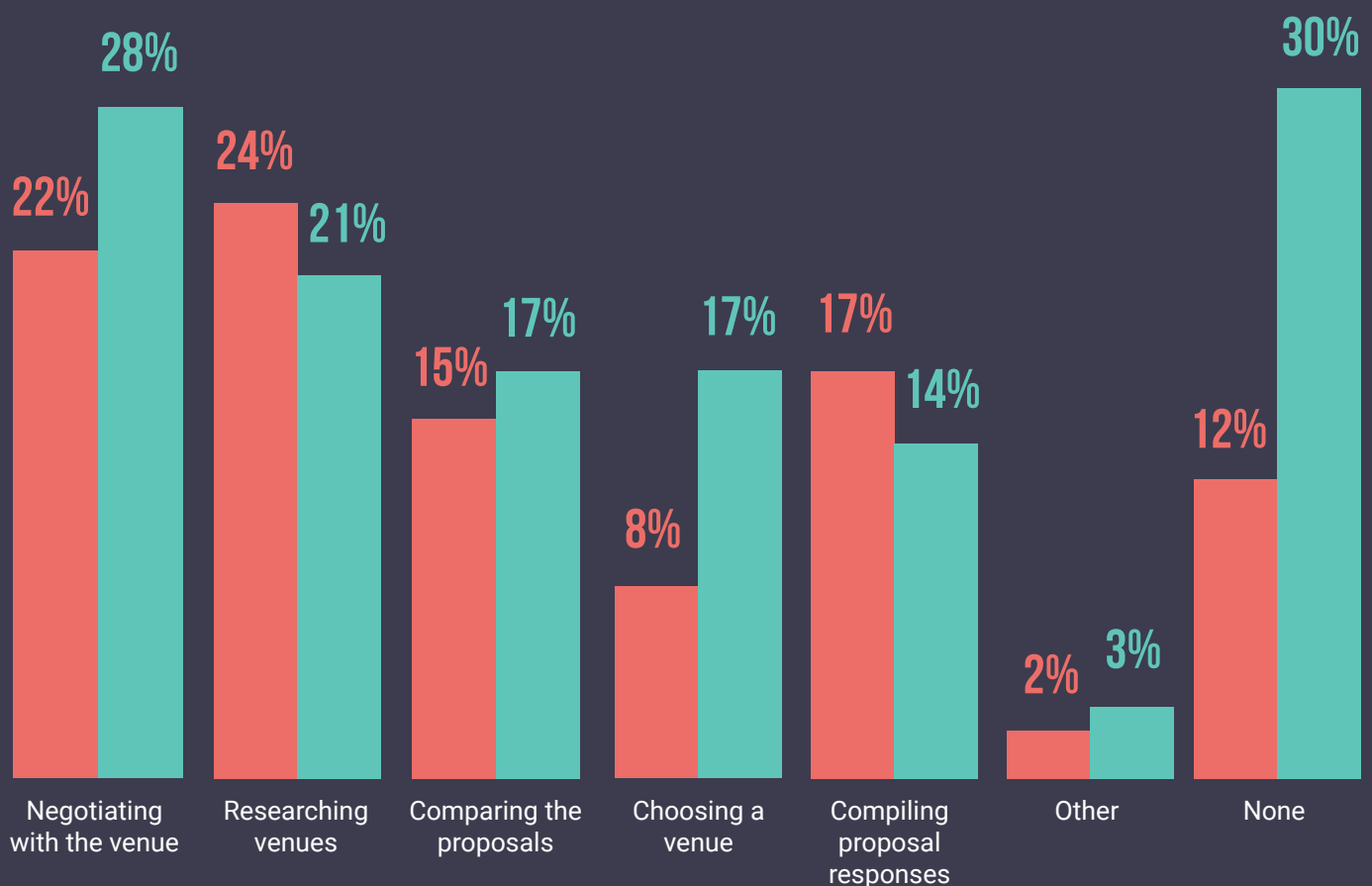
# SECTION 5

## PLANNER SUGGESTIONS

Often a favorite with hotel professionals, we've collected suggestions from event planners across the industry. This year, 17% of planners said that choosing a venue is the most difficult part of the sourcing process, which increased from just 8% last year. Professionalism and responsiveness of hotel sales staff was named the most important factor for maintaining planner loyalty, with more than half of respondents choosing it in their top two.

AT WHICH STAGE DURING THE SOURCING PROCESS  
DO YOU **EXPERIENCE THE MOST DIFFICULTY**?\*

■ 2015  
■ 2016



\*Select all that apply.

## TOP SIX REASONS PLANNERS SWITCH VENUES\*

53%



Professionalism/  
responsiveness of hotel  
sales staff

36%



Bad experience with  
booking process

33%



Venue cost

27%



Unavailability of dates

26%



Size and adequacy  
of space

12%



Location of venue

7%



Limited availability to  
support networking or  
experiential activities

3%



Venue variety

*\*Select all that apply.*

”

DUE TO COMPETITIVE OFFERINGS OF VENUES, I OFTEN WILL PRIORITIZE CHOICES AND CONSIDER **THOSE WHO EXPEDITE THE RFP RETURN.**

## WHICH ELEMENT DO YOU THINK HOTELS COULD MOST IMPROVE WHEN RESPONDING TO YOUR RFPS?

	2015	2016
SPEED	32%	36%
THOROUGHNESS	42%	33%
TRUSTWORTHINESS IN MEETING/ EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS	7%	20%
BREVITY	5%	6%
OTHER	5%	4%
NONE	9%	1%

“

HOTELS THAT PROVIDE BACK GENERIC RESPONSES AND DON'T ANSWER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS LEAD ME TO ASSUME THEY DON'T REALLY WANT MY BUSINESS. **WHEN I GET A THOROUGH RESPONSE, THOSE HOTELS MOVE TO THE TOP OF THE LIST FOR CONSIDERATION.**

“

**CUSTOMER SERVICE TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ALL SERVICES.** EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE INCLUDES TIMELINESS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND **THOROUGHNESS IN UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER NEEDS.**



# SECTION 6

## FINAL TAKEAWAYS

Below are planner quotes that outline successful experiences while working with venues. The majority of responses mentioned RFP response time as the most important aspect of the sourcing process, and customer service also topped the list among meeting planners of all types. Overall, planners look for timely and effective communication, flexibility within the space, and that extra touch that shows planners and attendees that the venue cares about guests' experiences.

**" THE PERSONAL SERVICE AND EXCLUSIVENESS OF OUR EVENT'S VENUE**  
MADE THE EXPERIENCE UNFORGETTABLE FOR OUR ATTENDEES.  
THE HOTEL STAFF QUICKLY LEARNED GUESTS' NAMES AND  
**PROVIDED EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE. "**

**" THE HOTEL WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND**  
TO PROVIDE GREAT ROOM RATES, WONDERFUL FOOD, AND ONSITE  
ASSISTANCE FOR ATTENDEES. **"**

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