

Strategic Meetings Management

A Handbook of Emerging Strategies for the Next Generation of Meetings and Events Management

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Executive Summary

The contemporary meetings and events management program has undergone a radical evolution. Management of modern corporate events now requires a multi-faceted series of tactics, including a shift to engagement management, reliance on social media and mobile solutions, and the utilization of key technology offerings to gain critical intelligence as a means of improving the value of meetings and events.

Best-in-Class Performance

Between May and June 2012, Aberdeen examined the use, the experiences, and the intentions of more than 167 enterprises in a diverse set of organizations. A series of key performance metrics were used to determine its Best-in-Class Maturity Framework: the percentage of meetings that meet or exceed goals and objectives, rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines, the percentage of meetings and events executed on or below corporate budgets, and the rate of meetings and events spend under management. Best-in-Class companies have achieved:

- A 48% higher rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines than all other organizations
- A 44% higher rate of meetings and events spend under management
- A 44% higher frequency of meetings and events meeting or exceeding goals and objectives
- A nearly 30% higher frequency of meetings and events executed on or below corporate budgets

Competitive Maturity Assessment

Survey results show that the firms enjoying Best-in-Class performance shared several common characteristics, including:

- 77% higher likelihood than all other organizations to persistently engage with attendees pre- and post-event
- 67% higher likelihood to utilize mobile applications to support events management and improve the attendee experience
- 63% higher likelihood to have the ability to track quality, effectiveness and ROI of strategic meetings and events

Required Actions

In addition to the specific recommendations in Chapter Three of this report, to achieve Best-in-Class performance, companies must:

- Transform the notion of "event management" into "engagement management"
- Look to a variety of technology offerings, including end-to-end strategic meetings management solutions and mobile applications, to enhance meetings management

Research Benchmark

Aberdeen's Research Benchmarks provide an in-depth and comprehensive look into process, procedure, methodologies, and technologies with best practice identification and actionable recommendations

How Does Your Performance Compare to the Best-in-Class?



- Compare your processes
- Receive a free, personal PDF scorecard
- Benefit from custom recommendations to improve your performance, based on the research

[Take the Assessment](#)

Receive Your Free Scorecard

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Chapter One: Benchmarking the Best-in-Class

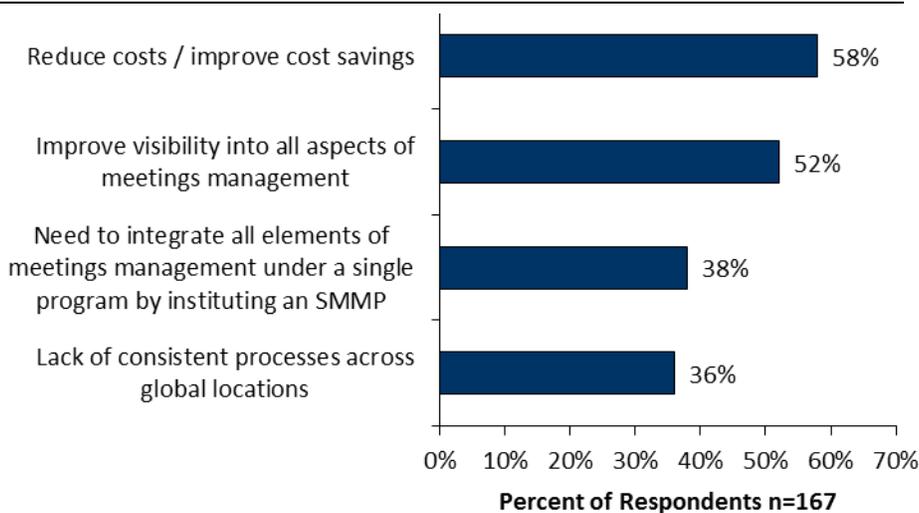
Since the dawn of the business age, live events and meetings have been an effective means for connecting with clients, engaging prospective customers, improving internal efficiencies and driving corporate revenue. While the notion of strategic meetings management may be classic in scope, this complex arena is undergoing a radical evolution that will require organizations to reevaluate the attributes of their meetings management programs and look to next-generation strategies and solutions as a means of driving ultimate value from their events.

A Modern View of Meetings and Events Management

Much like corporate business travel, meetings and events have been accepted as a conduit for conducting modern business and achieving organizational goals. New Aberdeen Group research has found that 9% of an organization's total yearly budget is spent on this category, reinforcing the need for companies to assess their existing attributes for managing strategic meetings and events.

Looking ahead to the future, this notion becomes even more critical for the average organization; over the next two years, spending on strategic meetings and events is expected to increase by nearly 20%. It is, then, not shocking to see the reduction of costs (and the improvement of cost savings) as the top organizational priority for strategic meetings and events management for companies in 2012 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Top Priorities for Strategic Meetings Management in 2012



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Fast Facts

- ✓ Nearly 9% of the average organization's total budget is spent on strategic meetings and events
- ✓ Spending on strategic meetings and events is expected to increase by nearly 20% over the next two years

Strategic Meetings and Events, Defined

The term "strategic meetings management" is a broad expression of formalized processes for the management of corporate meetings and events, including:

- ✓ Customer / client events
- ✓ End-user conferences
- ✓ Incentive meetings / events
- ✓ Internal training seminars
- ✓ Project-planning meetings

Also on the priority list for organizations is the improvement of visibility into all aspects of meetings and events management (52%). Corporate meetings and events have transcended into a new realm; the modern event is no longer centered on a single live / in-person conference or meeting. Organizations must focus on a full cycle of processes within what is now considered an engagement, and with this evolutionary notion comes a vast array of phases, including social media outreach, increased marketing and promotional activity, deep-dive analytics and consistent messaging to attendees.

Nearly 70% of organizations indicate that corporate meetings and events drive moderate-to-significant value to the greater organization. With this perception firmly-implanted into the minds of executives across the globe, there is added pressure to reevaluate existing events management programs, look to the attributes of Best-in-Class companies and embrace the concept of engagement management.

“We continue to see shorter lead times and increased budget scrutiny. It is critical to increase efficiencies, reduce expenses, achieve greater savings and manage risk.”

~ Director, Operations, Large European Organization

The Maturity Class Framework

Aberdeen used four key performance criteria to distinguish the Best-in-Class from Industry Average and Laggard organizations: percentage of meetings / events that meet or exceed goals and objectives, rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines, the percentage of meetings and events executed on or below corporate budgets, and the rate of meetings and events spend under management.

Table 1: Top Performers Earn Best-in-Class Status

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<p>Best-in-Class: Top 20% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 80% of meetings / events meet or exceed goals and objectives ▪ 78% rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines ▪ 75% of meetings / events executed on or below corporate budgets ▪ 71% rate of meetings / events spend under management
<p>Industry Average: Middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 58% of meetings / events meet or exceed goals and objectives ▪ 53% rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines ▪ 54% of meetings / events executed on or below corporate budgets ▪ 49% rate of meetings / events spend under management

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<p>Laggard: Bottom 30% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10% of meetings / events meet or exceed goals and objectives ▪ 4% rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines ▪ 29% of meetings / events executed on or below corporate budgets ▪ 10% rate of meetings / events spend under management

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Best-in-Class organizations in the strategic meetings management research study are noted for their superior level of performance across four critical meetings and events management metrics. These organizations have achieved:

- A 48% higher rate of compliance to internal meetings / events management policies and guidelines than all other (the Industry Average and Laggards combined) organizations
- A 44% higher rate of meetings and events spend under management
- A 44% higher frequency of meetings and events meeting or exceeding goals and objectives
- A nearly 30% higher frequency of meetings and events executed on or below corporate budgets

As we will experience later in the strategic meetings management research study, Best-in-Class organizations are leveraging a specific set of processes, strategies and next-generation solutions to gain a competitive edge over their peers.

The Best-in-Class PACE Model

Effective strategic meetings and events management requires a combination of strategic actions, organizational capabilities, and enabling technologies that can be summarized as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Best-in-Class PACE Framework

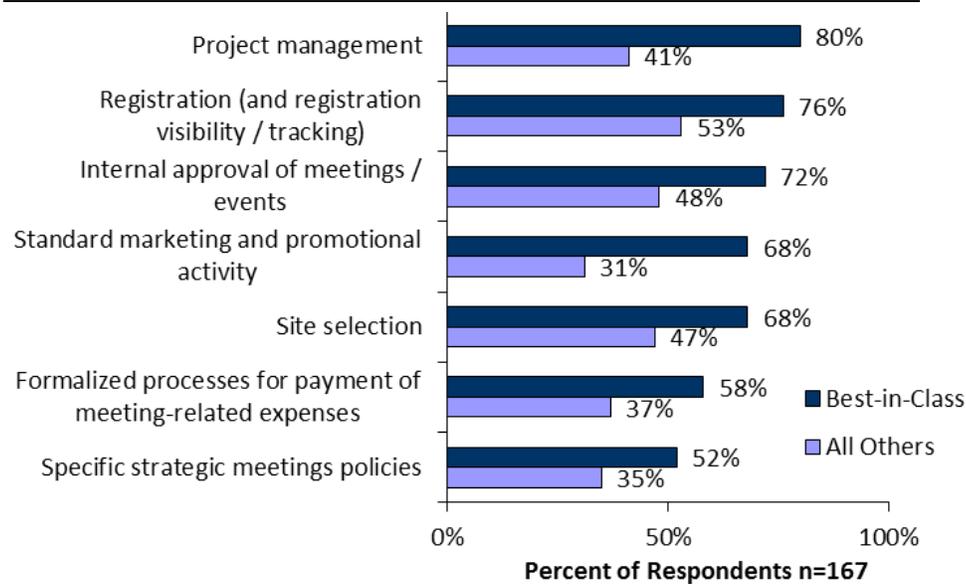
Pressures	Actions	Capabilities	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase cost savings and visibility into corporate meetings and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultivate an integrated engagement environment within meetings management ▪ Enhance analytical capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Real-time visibility into events spending against event budgets ▪ Ability to measure quality / effectiveness / ROI of corporate meetings and events ▪ Collaborative management of strategic meetings and events ▪ Ability to analyze attendee profiles (pre- and post-event) ▪ Mandated meetings management policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ End-to-end strategic meetings management solution ▪ Mobile capabilities (applications / portals) for managing meetings / events ▪ Meetings card ▪ Supplier / vendor network ▪ Virtual meeting / conferencing solution ▪ Integration with internal systems (CRM, travel and expense management, etc.) ▪ Destination management solution

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Attributes of the Best-in-Class Meetings and Events Management Program

The idea of formal Strategic Meetings Management Programs (SMMPs) has progressed as corporate meetings and events have encompassed more and more of the average organization's total budget. This section takes an in-depth look at two angles of the Best-in-Class SMMP: basic / intermediate and advanced attributes. Figure 2 details the basic and intermediate attributes of this program.

Figure 2: Basic and Intermediate Attributes of the Best-in-Class Strategic Meetings Management Program

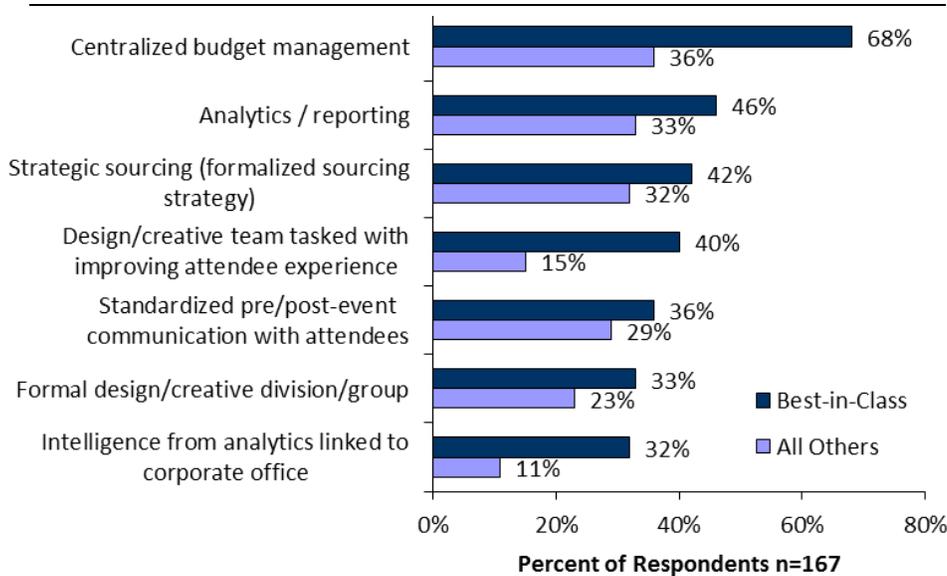


Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

The items addressed in Figure 2 range from the "simple," such as site selection (in place in 40% more Best-in-Class companies) and standard project management (in place in 41% more Best-in-Class organizations than all others). However, other basic / intermediate attributes have severe implications across the greater enterprise if not executed properly. Specific strategic meetings policies, an attribute that is 46% more likely to be present in Best-in-Class organizations than all others, ensures that the stakeholders tasked with planning corporate events abide by guidelines designed to keep costs down and maintain a satisfactory level of visibility (for wider spend-tracking efforts).

On the "advanced" side of the Best-in-Class meetings and events management program, the attributes highlighted in Figure 3 revolve around a series of intelligence-related processes and aspects that traverse beyond "classic" program items.

Figure 3: Advanced Attributes of the Best-in-Class Strategic Meetings Management Program



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

“There is now more focus on strategic meetings management at our organization. Compliance with audit requirements is a key area of focus, as is the desire to link strategic meetings management to our travel program.”

~ Manager, Large Telecommunications Organization

While it's no secret that complex spend categories often encompass a significant portion of corporate finances, what's sometimes lost in the shuffle is the lack of visibility into these purchases and how these categories affect the greater organization. Best-in-Class organizations (40% more likely than all others) are actively instituting centralized budget management for meetings and events. This factor allows them to understand where planned meetings sit against both an overall events budget and the corporate budget.

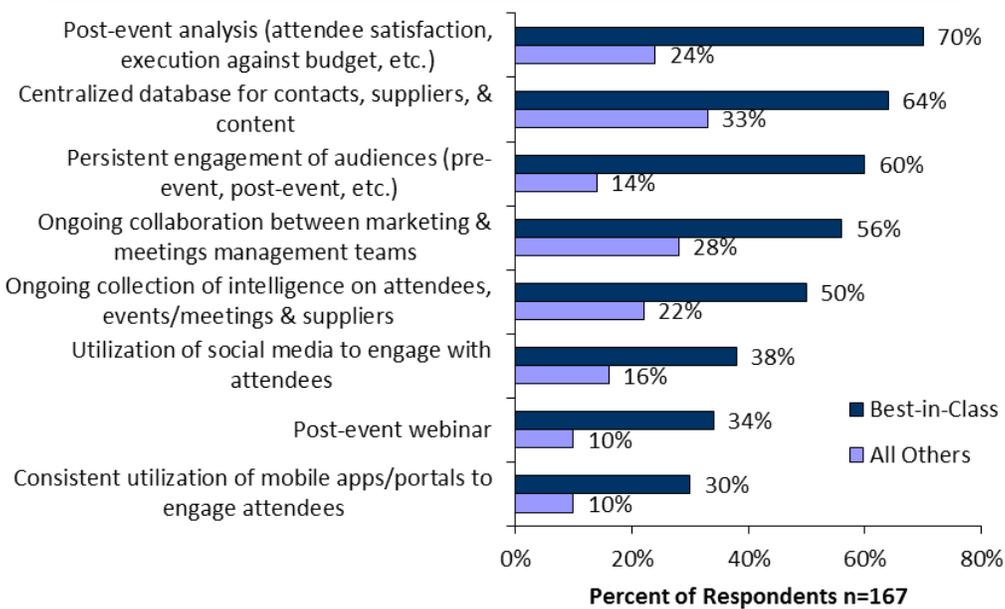
Analytics and reporting (46% more likely to be in Best-in-Class organizations than all others) is often the "weakest link" in strategic meetings and events management; only two years ago, this program attribute was a low-level priority. However, top-performing organizations realize the value in applying business intelligence and analytical process to their events management programs; analytics and reporting can help glean valuable information regarding suppliers and spending, as well as help executives gain a better view into the value of events and their effectiveness (as indicated by Best-in-Class companies linking analytics to the corporate office). Chapter Two will feature a full discussion of analytics.

Strategic sourcing and formal sourcing strategies (44% more likely in place in Best-in-Class organizations than all others) ensure that internal units generate favorable cost reductions and discounts with major suppliers (airlines, resorts / hotels, etc.), while a formal design / creative team (43% more likely in place in Best-in-Class organizations than all others) can be tasked with improving the attendee experience during meetings / events. This functional team will focus on driving more value out of strategic events by cultivating an environment where meeting attendees are productive and satisfied.

The Next Generation of Meetings Events Management (Part I)

As stated earlier in this chapter, 9% of the average organization's total budget is spent on corporate meetings and events. With this figure expected to increase by nearly 20% over the next two years (and with more and more organizations perceiving this function as having strategic value), companies across the globe must enhance their existing meetings management programs with next-generation strategies, approaches and solutions (Figure 4).

Figure 4: "Next-Generation" Meetings and Events Management Strategies



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Post-event analysis (66% more likely in Best-in-Class organizations than all others) has become a critical program attribute that not only helps gauge the effectiveness, value and ultimate Return-on-Investment (ROI) of a meeting, but also supports proactive planning in regards to future events. Ongoing collection of intelligence regarding attendees, events and suppliers, in a similar sense, can significantly improve future planning efforts and enhance the quality of imminent iterations of yearly meetings.

Ongoing collaboration between the marketing and event-planning units (50% more likely in Best-in-Class companies than all others) can help enhance the attendee experience and ensure that organizations achieve perhaps the most crucial goal of all when holding an event: *value*. By establishing a collaborative union between these two functions, marketing can assist in establishing promotions and applying leading-edge marketing tactics (like viral videos and social media efforts) to future events.

Engagement Management: An Emerging (and Evolving) Concept

Earlier in this chapter, the concept of "engagement management" was introduced. The archetypal model of meetings and events includes simple registration and limited contact with attendees before and after an event. The meteoric upsurge of social media is playing a vital role in many modern business efforts and this notion is also affecting meetings and events management.

Organizations must engage attendees consistently in order to augment the value of business events. Several of the "next-generation" strategies detailed in Figure 4 revolve around the idea of next-level engagement within meetings and events management:

- Best-in-Class organizations are 77% more likely than all other organizations to persistently-engage with attendees pre- and post-event. This aspect is the foundation for the next generation of strategic meetings management; top-performing organizations understand the importance of reaching out to attendees (and prospective attendees) and touching them with value beyond asking them to register for an event or participate in a pre-meeting survey. Post-event webinars, held by 71% more Best-in-Class organizations, are an ideal model to revisit key event themes and kick-start early promotions for future meetings.
- Top-performing companies are nearly 60% more likely than all others to leverage social media platforms to engage attendees and prospective attendees. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest and other platforms are ideal for engagement due to the propensity of social media in the modern business environment. Event planners can leverage these platforms to advertise upcoming events, detail unique promotions and shape agendas for future meetings.
- The utilization of mobile applications and portals (leveraged by 67% more Best-in-Class organizations than all others) supports engagement management as an added tactic / strategy in conjunction with other aspects, particularly social media. Mobile apps / portals can be used to supplement event materials, assist attendees in building an agenda and auto-schedule appointments with key members of the business host.

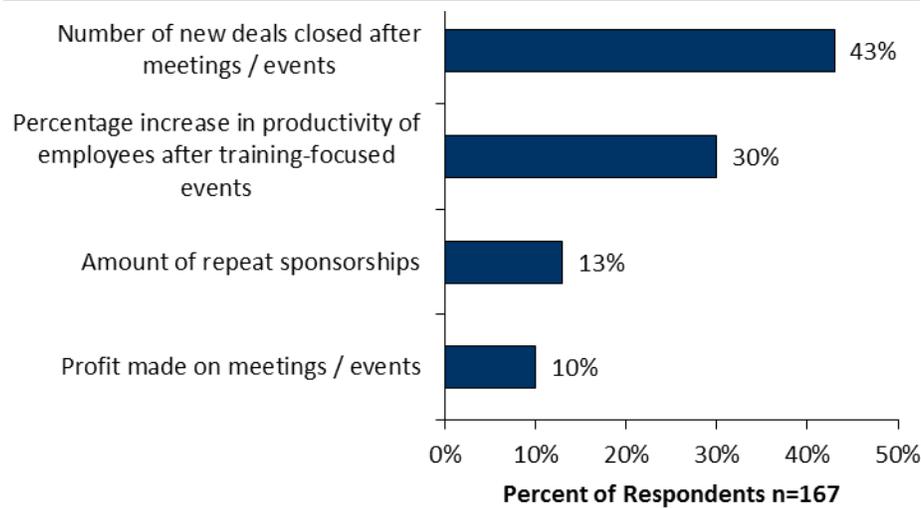
"We use social media to announce, promote and log information pre-, during and post-meeting. During our meeting we use Twitter as do our attendees. With LinkedIn we announce and promote our meetings and invite persons to attend based on areas of expertise that may be of interest to our client community."

~ Business Development
Executive, Asia / Pacific
Enterprise

What's the ROI of Our Events?

Strategic meetings and events encompass a significant portion of the average organization's overall budget, therefore, executives are often concerned with the return-on-investment of finances spent within this complex category. Much like the concept of "from event to engagement" has presented an evolutionary spin to this arena, the discussion of *what* exactly is ROI has spurred two varied notions. Figure 5 details the first of these two ideas and tackles the "classic" definition of event ROI.

Figure 5: Strategies to Measure "Classic" ROI of Events



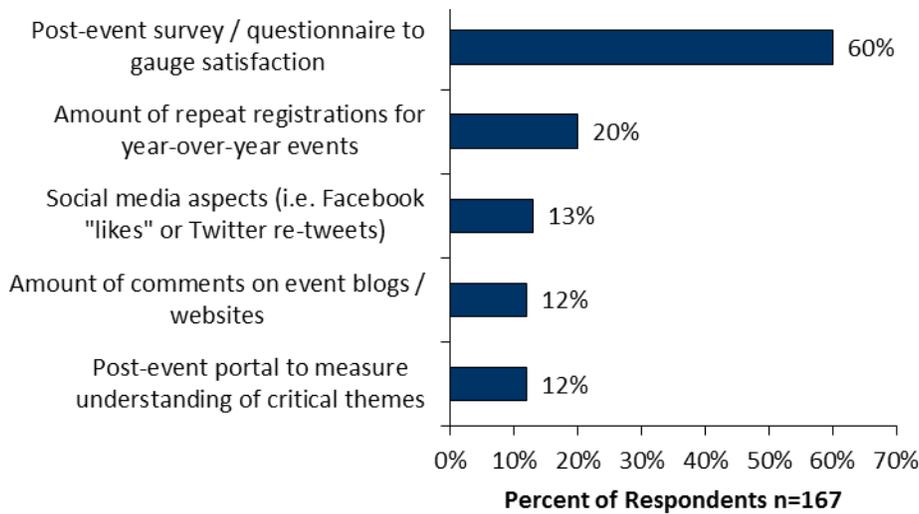
Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

The strategies detailed in Figure 5 focus on two major aspects: sales and productivity. Strategic meetings often take the form of client-focused gatherings, customer / end-user events or internal training seminars. With these forming the majority of an organization's meetings, it is not surprising to see that the top strategy to measure "classic" ROI is the number of new deals or contracts closed (43%). Organizations often use client and customer events to talk about new products / services and product updates with the hope that the sales team can close new business.

In regards to training seminars or sessions, the results can be a bit nebulous, as 30% of organizations indicated that they measure the ROI of these types of events by taking qualitative measures of their staff after they've completed training-focused events.

Over the past year, a new aspect has been aligned with this space to help organizations measure the "emotional" ROI of their events. This term can be considered an offshoot of the value of a corporate meeting; by tracking the emotional ROI of an event, an organization can measure whether or not it achieved a specific goal or objective outside of the sales arena, as well as uncovering the global reach of a particular event. Figure 6 details the strategies that organizations are currently leveraging to measure the emotional ROI of their meetings and events.

Figure 6: Strategies to Measure "Emotional" ROI of Events



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

“We have a stronger emphasis on defining and reporting ROI of our meetings and events. Our year-over-year savings percentage continues to increase, so we are shifting our emphasis to better define the contribution that meetings and events bring to profitable growth of the company.”

~ VP of Marketing, North American Financial Services Company

The vast majority (60%) of organizations rely on a post-event survey or questionnaire to gauge the satisfaction of attendees. This is an invaluable tool for quantifying the effectiveness of a strategic meeting or event; attendees can provide feedback on speakers and presentations, helping the internal SMMP or event-planning team to alter future agendas in a positive manner. Repeat registrations also factor into the emotional ROI spectrum (20%). Attendees who travel to events year-after-year find high value and want to ensure that they are deriving knowledge from each iteration of annual meetings.

Social media also plays a crucial (yet still evolving) role in the measurement of emotional ROI. Thirteen percent (13%) of organizations in the strategic meetings management research study quantify emotional ROI via Facebook "likes" or Twitter activity (such as re-tweets). Attendees who find value in current meetings / events will often engage in social media to express their satisfaction during their actual attendance. It is interesting to note that 44% more of meetings held by Best-in-Class organizations achieve satisfactory rates of emotional ROI as compared to all other companies.

Aberdeen Insights — Strategy: Application of Procurement Principles to Meetings and Events Management

Complex spend categories, such as printed materials / services, business travel, temporary labor, and, of course, meetings and events, are often high-spend areas that encompass significant corporate finances. However, not all organizations actively involve the procurement / purchasing / sourcing team in managing these complex arenas.

The strategic meetings management research study has found that Best-in-Class companies are regularly-applying procurement principles to this category to improve cost savings on meetings and events spending, and ensure that meeting planners adhere to corporate compliance policies. These top-performing organizations are:

- 53% more likely than all other companies to utilize standardized contract language and terms for all agreements with meeting / event suppliers
- 50% more likely to utilize analytics to identify opportunities for savings
- 43% more likely than all others to have a formal internal review process of contracts / agreements for meetings suppliers

The application of these procurement principles has assisted Best-in-Class organizations in addressing the top priority in 2012 for meetings management (the reduction of costs and improvement of cost savings). In fact, these top-performing organizations have driven 73% higher realized and implemented cost savings than all other companies.

Chapter Two: Benchmarking Requirements for Success

Strategic meetings management has entered a new age. The evolution of this category places significant weight on events as engagements, and with this notion as the foundation of modern meetings management, organizations must leverage a series of next-generation solutions, strategies and approaches to drive true value from their corporate events.

Case Study — Enhancing an Advanced SMMP

For a large global financial services and investment firm with over \$10 million in yearly spending on meetings, this complex spend category has become a top-of-mind item for the senior executive board due to the increased budgetary funds spent on corporate events. “We continue to see shorter lead times and increased budget scrutiny [in regards to meetings management],” said the Director of Operations. “It is critical to increase efficiencies, reduce expenses, achieve greater savings and manage risk.”

Although the organization’s Strategic Meetings Management Program (SMMP) is considered ‘advanced’ by Aberdeen standards (in place for more than three years), the company has prioritized the improvement of visibility and made spend optimization an objective. While the advanced nature of the firm’s SMMP has helped to effectively manage over 95% of the organization’s total events through the program, the organization turned to end-to-end technology, meetings cards and mobile applications as program enhancers to drive additional value from their corporate meetings and events.

“Event management technology has increased visibility into trends and patterns within our meeting and events program,” said the Director of Operations, adding that the organization has achieved Best-in-Class levels of policy compliance (over 95%) and SMM spend under management (nearly 97%).

Fast Facts

- √ Best-in-Class companies are 44% more likely than all others to institute collaboration between key internal units for management of strategic meetings and events
- √ Best-in-Class companies are 63% more likely than all others to have the ability to track quality, effectiveness and ROI of strategic meetings and events

Competitive Assessment

Aberdeen Group analyzed the aggregated metrics of surveyed companies to determine whether their performance ranked as Best-in-Class, Industry Average, or Laggard. In addition to having common performance levels, each class also shared characteristics in five key categories: (1) **process** (the approaches they take to execute daily meetings management operations); (2) **organization** (corporate focus and collaboration among stakeholders); (3) **knowledge management** (contextualizing meetings management data and exposing it to key stakeholders); (4) **technology** (the selection of the appropriate tools and the effective deployment of those tools); and (5) **performance management** (the ability of the organization to measure its meetings management results to improve its business). These characteristics

(identified in Table 3) serve as a guideline for best practices, and correlate directly with Best-in-Class performance across the key metrics.

Table 3: The Competitive Framework

	Best-in-Class	Average	Laggards
Process	Standardized meeting / event approval processes		
	72%	57%	34%
Organizational	Collaborative management of strategic meetings / events		
	52%	35%	20%
Knowledge	Ability to leverage pre- and post-event attendee information for future planning		
	48%	22%	11%
	Real-time visibility into SMM data (spending, suppliers, budgets, calendar, etc.)		
	40%	19%	14%
Technology	Meetings management technology currently in use:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 82% end-to-end meetings / events management solution ▪ 76% virtual conferencing ▪ 52% mobile application ▪ 55% supplier / vendor network ▪ 41% meetings card ▪ 36% destination management solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 62% end-to-end meetings / events management solution ▪ 37% virtual conferencing ▪ 14% mobile application ▪ 34% supplier / vendor network ▪ 24% meetings card ▪ 12% destination management solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 31% end-to-end meetings / events management solution ▪ 35% virtual conferencing ▪ 9% mobile application ▪ 27% supplier / vendor network ▪ 15% meetings card ▪ 7% destination management solution
Performance	Meetings / events management performance-tracking capabilities:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 60% ability to measure compliance against corporate guidelines ▪ 32% ability to measure quality / effectiveness / ROI of meetings and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 43% ability to measure compliance against corporate guidelines ▪ 15% ability to measure quality / effectiveness / ROI of meetings and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 22% ability to measure compliance against corporate guidelines ▪ 8% ability to measure quality / effectiveness / ROI of meetings and events

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Capabilities and Enablers

Best-in-Class organizations are known for their top-tier performance across a series of key performance metrics related to meetings and events management. To achieve these results, top-performing organizations are currently relying on a series of process, organizational, knowledge management, performance management and technological capabilities.

Process: Standardized Approval Processes

Aberdeen research has found that only 33% of an enterprise's total meetings and events are formally-managed by an internal SMMP or events management program. This leaves a significant chunk of meetings to be planned, organized and executed by internal units that may not hold the required level of expertise to drive value and effectiveness. Best-in-Class organizations are 35% more likely than all others to have standardized approval processes for corporate events; this capability ensures that only meetings that adhere to corporate guidelines are approved and planned.

Organizational: Collaboration

Best-in-Class companies are 44% more likely than all others to institute collaboration between key internal units for management of strategic meetings and events. This collaborative capability involves functional units, such as procurement / sourcing, finance, marketing and travel working in conjunction with the events management team to enhance all aspects of this category, including costs, effectiveness, spend visibility and corporate alignment.

“Visibility into strategic meetings is increasing. There’s a desire from the C-suite to explore consolidating planning activities.”

~ Vice President, HR, Large Food / Beverage Organization

Knowledge Management: Attendee Profile Intelligence and Real-Time Visibility

The ability to analyze attendee profile information (pre- and post-event), a capability in place in 73% more Best-in-Class enterprises, adds an additional layer of intelligence to events management. Information culled from attendee profiles can enhance the attendee experience; meeting planners can shape event agendas and even tailor event-specific mobile apps based on this type of information.

Best-in-Class organizations are nearly 60% more likely than all other companies to hold real-time visibility into data related to meetings and events management. This visibility, spread across the enterprise calendar of events, spend-specific information, and supplier performance, gives program executives a 360-degree view of the events management function.

Performance Management: Measuring Quality and Compliance

As with its "sister" category of Travel and Entertainment (T&E), compliance to internal policies is a cornerstone of the modern events management program. Compliance policies ensure that meeting planners adhere to

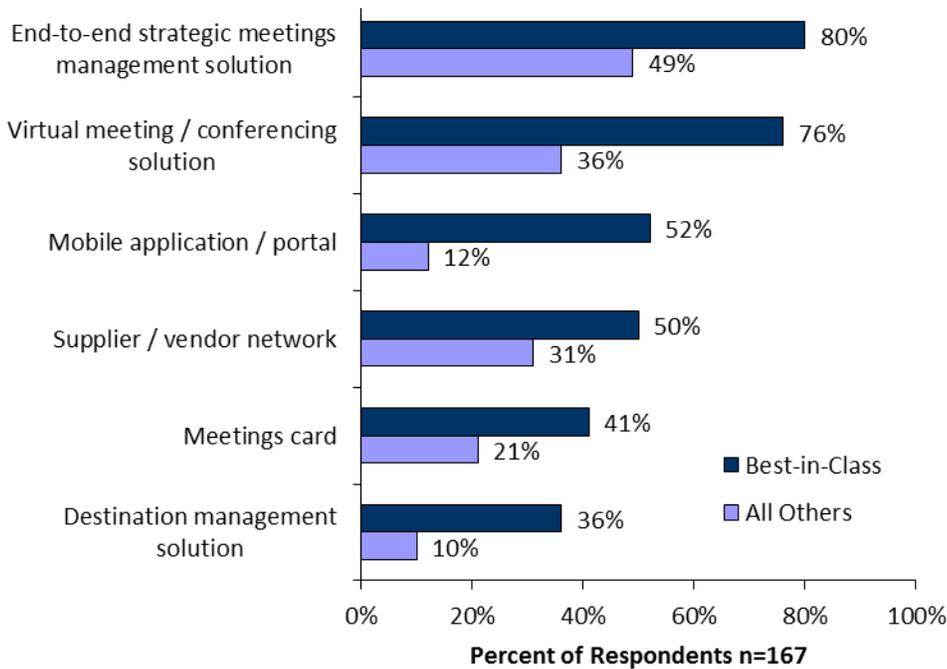
guidelines concerning pre-negotiated agreements with hotels, resorts, airlines and other suppliers, as well as budgetary and time-related constraints (some organizations may require that internal meetings only consume a limited amount of employee time). Best-in-Class organizations are 43% more likely to have this capability in place.

Best-in-Class companies are also 63% more likely than all others to have the ability to track quality, effectiveness and ROI of strategic meetings and events. This capability is crucial in the contemporary landscape of events management; with the notion of engagement management rising to prominence, it is important for organizations to be able to measure event-related aspects beyond cost savings.

Best-in-Class Technology Utilization for Meetings and Events Management

The contemporary events management program must be supported and enhanced by key technology solutions. As indicated in Figure 7, Best-in-Class organizations are leveraging a variety of solutions to enhance their strategic meetings management programs and ultimately drive value.

Figure 7: Best-in-Class Utilization of Technology Solutions



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Best-in-Class organizations are relying-upon the following solutions as sources for automating and streamlining processes, improving visibility into all facets of events management and bringing events management into a new generation:

- Best-in-Class organizations are nearly 40% more likely than all other organizations to leverage end-to-end strategic meetings management solutions. These solutions offer an automated platform for all attributes of modern events management, such as marketing, analytics, engagement management, and supplier selection. Aberdeen research has found that organizations currently leveraging these solutions have achieved 60% higher cost savings than companies without this solution in place, as well as 40% higher rates of compliance and meetings management spend under management, respectively. Users of these solutions are also planning and executing 36% more meetings that meet a satisfactory level of "emotional" ROI.
- Virtual conferencing technology has become a significant sub-component of the meetings management category, as nearly 35% of all corporate meetings are considered virtual or involve virtual technology in some way. Conferencing technology can either outright replace live / in-person events or supplement classic-styled meetings. Best-in-Class organizations are 53% more likely than all others to leverage this technology solution.
- Payment of meeting-related expenses is often an overlooked attribute of the modern events management program. Typical corporate meetings rack up expenses in relation to resort / hotel fees (including facilities-related fees) and entertainment and design costs, as well as expenses for catering and marketing materials. Meetings cards, used by nearly 50% more Best-in-Class companies than all others, can help organizations track and differentiate event-related expenses, institute spend limits to avoid overspending, and provide an automated platform for gaining intelligence into total meetings and events spending.

“Event management technology has been critical in enabling our team to do more with less. Shorter lead times, greater scrutiny over budgets, and competing priorities make the use of technology a must. We are working on a virtual meetings and event strategy, which will give our company another tool to bring forth environmental benefits and financial savings.”

~ Director, Meetings / Events Management, Large Financial Services Firm

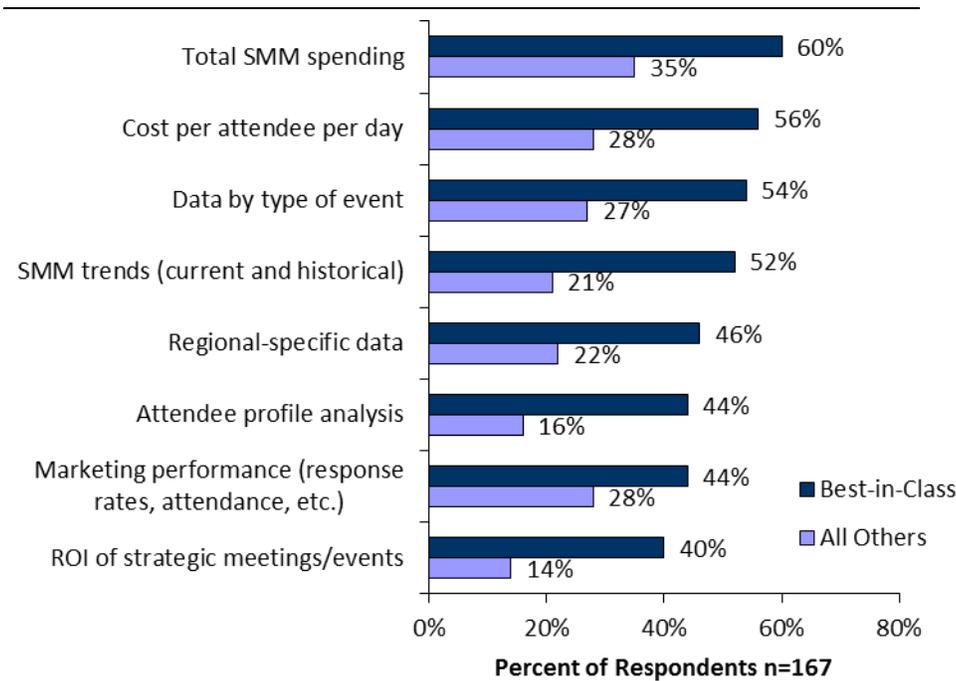
The Next Generation of Meetings and Events Management (Part II)

Chapter One detailed the first section of our discussion on the next generation of meetings and events management by highlighting specific strategies and approaches that Best-in-Class organizations are leveraging to propel this category into the future. Part II of this discussion focuses on the technological aspects of next-generation events management.

The Role of Analytics in Meetings Management

Data analytics and reporting was revealed to be an "advanced" attribute of the Best-in-Class SMMP in Chapter One of this study. Top-performing organizations are consistently finding value in leveraging analytics to gain a better understanding of events management, and utilize this intelligence to plan and execute superior corporate meetings. As detailed in Figure 8, Best-in-Class organizations are more likely than all others to track and monitor various aspects of meetings management via analytics and reporting.

Figure 8: Aspects Tracked Via Analytics and Reporting



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Best-in-Class companies are actively tracking and monitoring specific aspects of events management via analytics. By tracking total spending on meetings (tracked in 42% more Best-in-Class companies than all others), top-performing organizations gain a clear picture of how events stack up against corporate budgets. Meetings management trends (tracked in 60% more Best-in-Class companies than all others) can help event planners forecast future costs or future attendance, while marketing performance (which Best-in-Class companies are 36% more likely to track) can assist in gauging the performance of social media outreach and promotional activities.

“Event management technology has increased visibility to trends and patterns within our meeting and events program.”

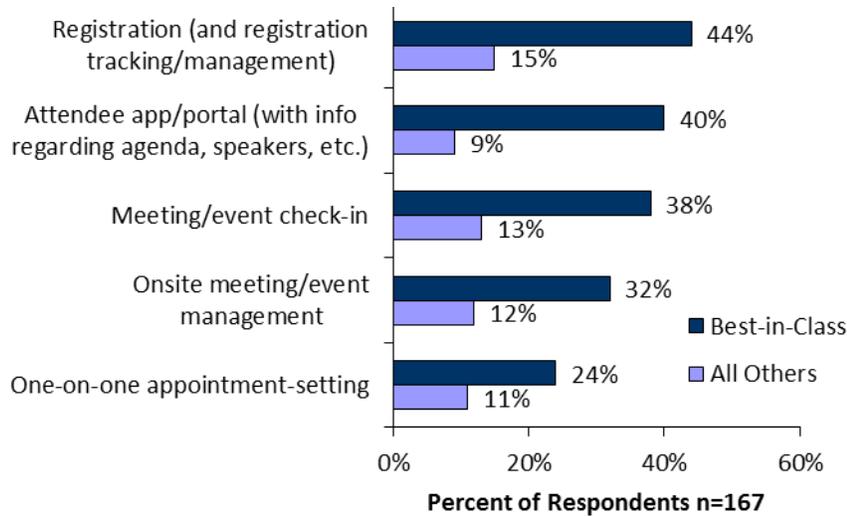
~ Director, Operations, Large European Organization

Next-generation aspects, such as ROI (discussed earlier in Chapter One; Best-in-Class companies are 65% more likely than all others to track this newfangled facet) and attendee profile analysis (tracked by 64% more top-performing organizations) support the idea of engagement management and enhance intelligence into consistent efforts to engage attendees through social media, targeted promotions and pre- and post-event communications.

The Mobile Edge

Many organizations are placing the power of robust technology directly into the hands of their executives and employees. Mobile applications and portals are an accepted business solution in today's environment, and their emergence as a next-generation attribute of events management is just now coming to fruition. As detailed in Figure 9, Best-in-Class organizations are relying on mobile applications as a powerful enhancer for their meetings and events management programs.

Figure 9: Events Management Attributes Managed by Mobile Applications



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2012

Mobile solutions are currently being leveraged on both the attendee and planning sides in regards to event management. Best-in-Class organizations are relying on mobile apps / portals to handle registration and registration-related activities (such as tracking and monitoring figures related to this program attribute) and enabling event staff to communicate with each other and check the status of specific on-site items.

For attendees, mobile apps and portals enrich the event experience. Based on profile information, organizations can create customized agendas for attendees and provide access to a portal that includes a vast array of information regarding an event. One-on-one appointment setting, a mobile capability in 54% more Best-in-Class organizations than all others, utilizes similar information to generate a tailored and more productive experience for attendees.

Mobile apps within this events management arena also present a real-time portal for feedback, helping event planners to gauge the effectiveness of a meeting while it is occurring. Mobility is also a vigorous link to social media platforms, which can expand the global reach of a corporate event.

Aberdeen Insights — Technology: Integration

Modern meetings and events management touches multiple internal stakeholders within the average organization. Integration of internal systems can help improve visibility into spending, improve the effectiveness of key processes, and help drive a better understanding of how this category affects the greater organization. Teams such as marketing, travel, finance, procurement, administration and operations all have a hand in the modern events management program.

Aberdeen research has found that Best-in-Class organizations are actively integrating their meetings / events management technology solutions with other internal systems for maximum efficiency. In fact, Best-in-Class companies are:

- 53% more likely than all other organizations to integrate meetings management technology and marketing / creative platforms for improving the attendee experience
- 44% more likely to integrate systems with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms, which can link specific sales projects, efforts and opportunities with customer / client-focused events
- 31% more likely to integrate meetings management solutions with T&E expense management systems - this integration improves visibility into meeting-related travel, presents a platform for attendees to book travel and register for a meeting in a simple and holistic process, and allows meetings management program executives to better control over travel and events-related spending

Chapter Three: Required Actions

The strategic meetings management research is meant to be utilized as a handbook for organizations that can be leveraged to enhance existing events management program attributes and ultimately drive more value from corporate meetings. The following recommendations and required actions are considered guiding steps in becoming a Best-in-Class organization.

Laggard Steps to Success

- **Transform the mode of thinking within the organization from "event management" to "engagement management."** The evolution of modern events management should be at the forefront of the Laggard program. Organizations in this Maturity Class must develop processes to improve the engagement of attendees beyond "classic" aspects.
- **Standardize event approval processes to control spending on corporate meetings.** Industry Average organizations are 40% more likely than Laggards to have standardized processes in place for approving strategic meetings; this critical capability will ensure that lower-level employees are not planning meetings outside of the meetings management program (or outside of executives' knowledge). This aspect can help avoid non-compliant spending and improve overall meetings management visibility.
- **Improve analytical capabilities related to meetings and events management.** Corporate events encompass a significant chunk of enterprise finances and it is critical for organizations to do anything they can to improve visibility into spending, suppliers and other types of data for effective planning. Industry Average organizations are 26% more likely than Laggard companies to hold real-time visibility into meetings management data, a factor which is directly linked to proficiencies in analytics and reporting.

Industry Average Steps to Success

- **Leverage end-to-end technology solutions to streamline, automate and improve a wide range of events management processes.** End-to-end strategic meetings management solutions offer an automated platform for managing analytics, suppliers, engagement and social media, and registration. Best-in-Class organizations are nearly 23% more likely than Industry Average companies to utilize end-to-end technology solutions.
- **Look to mobile applications / portals as a means of improving the attendee experience and enhancing existing processes.** Mobile apps and portals can support registration processes, support on-site management, and improve the attendee

Fast Facts

- √ Best-in-Class companies are 73% more likely than Industry Average organizations to include mobile applications in their meetings management programs

How Does Your Performance Compare to the Best-in-Class?



- Compare your processes
- Receive a free, personal PDF scorecard
- Benefit from custom recommendations to improve your performance, based on the research

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experience with one-on-one appointment-setting and customized agendas. Best-in-Class companies are 73% more likely than Industry Average organizations to include mobile applications in their meetings management programs.

- **Develop the ability to track and measure the quality and effectiveness of meetings (including "classic" and "emotional" ROI).** Value has become the true objective for the modern corporate event. It is critical for Industry Average organizations to develop abilities related to the tracking and monitoring of quality and effectiveness metrics; the notion of "emotional" ROI is a robust indicator of the real value of a meeting or event. Best-in-Class organizations are 53% more likely than Industry Average companies to have this capability in place.

Best-in-Class Steps to Success

- **Standardize guidelines concerning the utilization of virtual meetings and virtual conferencing.** Less than half (44%) of Best-in-Class organizations have formal, standardized guidelines for virtual conferencing. Although virtual meetings are alluring due to lower costs (due to the elimination of travel and lodging for live events), even top-performing organizations must apply rigorous policies for the utilization of this type of conferencing. Aspects such as the number of users on a platform or alignment of content can sneakily increase costs for planners that are unaware of specific details.
- **Improve multi-regional planning for meetings management program globalization.** For large organizations with multiple global locations, it is imperative to be consistent with planning for corporate meetings and events. Aspects such as compliance risks, lack of spend visibility and varying quality / effectiveness can sink the value of events that are not planned within the confines of standardized global processes and guidelines. Only 40% of Best-in-Class organizations are currently prioritizing the improvement of multi-regional / global planning for corporate event management.

Aberdeen Insights — Summary: The Next Generation of Meetings and Events Management

The next-generation strategic meetings management program involves a multitude of evolutionary aspects. By enhancing or improving processes related to these attributes, organizations can ensure that they are driving maximum value from their meetings and events.

continued

Aberdeen Insights — Summary: The Next Generation of Meetings and Events Management

From Event to Engagement

The "classic" measure of a corporate meeting involved simple registration, light contact with attendees and consistent communications regarding major themes and agendas. The contemporary events management program revolves around a series of processes to consistently engage attendees as a means of boosting the value of meetings and improving their experience at the actual event.

ROI, Quality, Effectiveness and Value

While cost savings and event-related revenue are two significant measures of the success of an event, the modern program must also include attributes to measure the quality, effectiveness and ultimate value of a corporate event. The rise in measurement of "emotional" ROI can help the typical organization quantify just how effective a particular meeting was in hitting goals or objectives.

The Mobile Factor

Enterprises must factor in mobile applications and portals as part of both their engagement processes and meetings management program attributes. Mobile apps contribute to the enhancement of the attendee experience via customized agendas and appointment-matching based on profile information. Mobile apps also link social media efforts in the engagement cycle and can improve on-site management of meetings and events.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Between May and June 2012, Aberdeen examined the use, the experiences, and the intentions of more than 167 enterprises in a diverse set of organizations.

Aberdeen supplemented this online survey effort with telephone interviews with select survey respondents, gathering additional information on meetings and events management strategies, experiences, and results.

Responding enterprises included the following:

- **Job title:** The research sample included respondents with the following job titles: manager (31%); director (23%); C-level (21%); EVP / VP / SVP (10%); and others.
- **Department / function:** The research sample included respondents from the following departments or functions: procurement and supply chain (21%); corporate management (18%); business development / sales (16%); meetings / events management or SMMP (13%); finance (10%); IT (6%); human resources (6%); operations (4%); and others.
- **Industry:** The research sample included respondents from the following industries: manufacturing (12%); finance (10%); education (7%); public sector (6%); telecommunications (5%); pharmaceutical manufacturing (5%); software (5%); and 25 others.
- **Geography:** The majority of respondents (63%) were from North America. Remaining respondents were from the EMEA (22%), Asia-Pacific (13%) and South / Central America (2%) regions.
- **Company size:** Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents were from large enterprises (annual revenues above US \$1 billion); 25% were from midsize enterprises (annual revenues between \$50 million and \$1 billion); and 40% of respondents were from small businesses (annual revenues of \$50 million or less).
- **Headcount:** Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents were from large enterprises (headcount greater than 1,000 employees); 27% were from midsize enterprises (headcount between 100 and 999 employees); and 30% of respondents were from small businesses (headcount between 1 and 99 employees).

Study Focus

Responding executives completed an online survey that included questions designed to determine the following:

- √ The degree to which strategic meetings management is deployed in their operations and the financial implications of related technology
- √ The structure and effectiveness of existing strategic meetings management implementations
- √ Current and planned use of strategic meetings management to aid operational and promotional activities
- √ The benefits, if any, that have been derived from strategic meetings management initiatives

The study aimed to identify emerging best practices in strategic meetings management, and to provide a framework by which readers could assess their own management capabilities.

Table 4: The PACE Framework Key

Overview
<p>Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:</p> <p>Pressures — external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations (e.g., economic, political and regulatory, technology, changing customer preferences, competitive)</p> <p>Actions — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures (e.g., align the corporate business model to leverage industry opportunities, such as product / service strategy, target markets, financial strategy, go-to-market, and sales strategy)</p> <p>Capabilities — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy (e.g., skilled people, brand, market positioning, viable products / services, ecosystem partners, financing)</p> <p>Enablers — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices (e.g., development platform, applications, network connectivity, user interface, training and support, partner interfaces, data cleansing, and management)</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, July 2012

Table 5: The Competitive Framework Key

Overview	
<p>The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the following three levels of practices and performance:</p> <p>Best-in-Class (20%) — Practices that are the best currently being employed and are significantly superior to the Industry Average, and result in the top industry performance.</p> <p>Industry Average (50%) — Practices that represent the average or norm, and result in average industry performance.</p> <p>Laggards (30%) — Practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry, and result in below average performance.</p>	<p>In the following categories:</p> <p>Process — What is the scope of process standardization? What is the efficiency and effectiveness of this process?</p> <p>Organization — How is your company currently organized to manage and optimize this particular process?</p> <p>Knowledge — What visibility do you have into key data and intelligence required to manage this process?</p> <p>Technology — What level of automation have you used to support this process? How is this automation integrated and aligned?</p> <p>Performance — What do you measure? How frequently? What’s your actual performance?</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, July 2012

Table 6: The Relationship Between PACE and the Competitive Framework

PACE and the Competitive Framework – How They Interact
<p>Aberdeen research indicates that companies that identify the most influential pressures and take the most transformational and effective actions are most likely to achieve superior performance. The level of competitive performance that a company achieves is strongly determined by the PACE choices that they make and how well they execute those decisions.</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, July 2012

Appendix B: Related Aberdeen Research

Related Aberdeen research that forms a companion or reference to this report includes:

- [*The Role of Mobile Technology in Modern T&E Expense Management*](#); June 2012
- [*T&E Expense Management: The Best-in-Class Pillars of Next-Generation Expense Management*](#); March 2012
- [*Strategic Meetings Management: A View Into the Best-in-Class Strategic Meetings Management Program*](#); June 2011
- [*Strategic Meetings Management: The Evolution of the Modern Strategic Meetings Management Program*](#); April 2010
- [*Strategic Meetings Management: Save the Date, Save Your Budget*](#); August 2009
- [*Meetings and Events Management: Driving Strategic Value Through Program Transformation*](#); October 2008
- [*Strategic Meetings Management: Of MICE \(Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions\) and Spend*](#); February 2008

Information on these and any other Aberdeen publications can be found at www.aberdeen.com.

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For more than two decades, Aberdeen's research has been helping corporations worldwide become Best-in-Class. Having benchmarked the performance of more than 644,000 companies, Aberdeen is uniquely positioned to provide organizations with the facts that matter — the facts that enable companies to get ahead and drive results. That's why our research is relied on by more than 2.5 million readers in over 40 countries, 90% of the Fortune 1,000, and 93% of the Technology 500.

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cvent

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