

eventbrite

# 2020 Event Trends Report

The State of Gathering  
in North America



**Cuesa**  
First Bloom Spring Cocktails of the Farmers Market  
San Francisco, CA



**Superorganism**  
Great American Music Hall  
San Francisco, CA



**Ladies Get Paid**  
Get Money Get Paid  
Brooklyn, NY

## Insights for the year ahead

The decade ahead is shiny and bright for the events industry. The number of events grows every day on Eventbrite — and not just the tried-and-true, but all kinds of events, from outdoor art installations to goat yoga to fermentation classes and beyond. If you can dream it, you can create it.

To find out exactly what's driving this boom, we turned to you, our fearless event creators and industry professionals. Thousands of you, in fact. And the results were more than insightful.

Read on to get a glimpse at the looming trends that will impact the events industry in 2020 and beyond. Learn how other event professionals are navigating their roles and how you can face the contemporary challenges of event professionals head-on.

# Hello.

## **This report is for**

Any event professional who wants to gain insight into current and upcoming trends and receive practical advice on how to implement them. No flash-in-the-pan fads or gimmicks here.

Whether you're just starting out in the industry or you've been involved for years, this report reflects the current state of the North American event market and will keep you ahead of the curve.

## **You'll learn...**

- ✓ How the North American event industry is shifting
- ✓ Top trends impacting events in 2020 — and how to implement them
- ✓ How to tap into three highly-effective but underutilized marketing tactics

## **Methodology**

The results of the 2020 Pulse Report are based on responses from 6,843 event creators and experience makers worldwide, including 2,383 in Canada and the United States. These event creators organize everything from concerts to conferences, fundraisers to festivals, passion projects to parties.



THE STATE OF GATHERING IN NORTH AMERICA

BRINGING THE WORLD TOGETHER THROUGH LIVE EXPERIENCES



2020 EVENT INDUSTRY TRENDS

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Snapshot of the industry:

# Growing events, and budgets

The events industry is stable, to say the least. The data shows there are more events in the pipeline than ever before.

Event professionals are optimistic about the future of the events industry in general. It's an auspicious way to start the new decade.



Think their team size  
will stay the same or grow



Count on ticket sales as a  
top source of revenue



Expect their budget to  
increase this year



Are happy with their jobs

**What's changed:**

# How the market is shifting in 2020

If anything, the events industry has gotten more ambitious. Last year's survey showed 49% of event creators increasing the number of events they planned to throw. This year, that number is 57% — the majority. And job satisfaction among this crowd has increased from 53% to 70% in the last year.

The other big change reported by event creators is a decrease in the money spent on staffing. Last year, 29% called it a top area of expense, while this year, only 19% do.

And since the vast majority of creators (90%) say their budgets will stay the same or even increase, that leaves more money left over for event promotion and execution — also known as “the fun stuff.”



**Of event creators  
plan to throw  
more events  
than last year**

More events. Happier event creators. Less money and stress focused on staffing. No doubt, 2020 is going to be a banner year.

But with more events comes more competition. To be a leader of this pack, you'll want to tap into the trends driving the events industry into the next decade.





Beer InCider / Showgrounds / Brisbane

# 2020 Event trends

**A world where both impact and experience matter**



CUESA / First Bloom Spring Cocktails of the Farmers Market / San Francisco, CA

When analyzing the looming event trends for 2020, a pattern emerges: a simultaneous focus on in-the-moment experiences and the greater impact events make. How attendees perceive their place at events — and the place of those events in the world — influences where they decide to spend their time.



# Trend

01



**Sustainability  
is now  
table-stakes**



“At Sierra Nevada, we strive for zero-waste events because it’s the right thing to do,” says Experiential Marketing Manager Lee-Ann Loser. “While there is marketing credit there today, you’re much more likely to be successful in reducing your environmental impact when you’re approaching it with the right intentions.”

In our 2019 survey, a scant 6% of respondents thought environmental responsibility would have a big impact on their events. Just a year later, 59% of North American event professionals are taking steps to improve their event’s environmental impact.

**2019**

**6% | 94%**

**2020**

**59% | 41%**

- Sustainability as a creator’s priority for upcoming events.

That's a big switch, but not surprising. There's a massive global movement afoot to increase environmental action. Events are no exception. At this point, sustainability has moved beyond a national trend — it's a global responsibility.

### Top 5 ways events are tackling sustainability in 2020:



### Sustainability matters. But does it matter enough?

Now for the less encouraging news. While event creators all over the globe are upping their sustainability game, the U.S. is markedly behind in comparison to some other countries.

In New Zealand, 77% of event creators are taking steps to increase sustainability efforts. In European countries, that number hovers in the high 60s to low 70s. And even North-American counterparts in Canada clock in at 69% when it comes to improving their level of environmental sustainability.

Challenge issued! U.S. event professionals have an opportunity to help change within their own market.

## Put it in action:

### Creating an eco-friendly event

The vast majority of event creators have banished paper tickets to reduce paper waste, and at least half are using reusable or biodegradable items. Next steps might include banning single-use plastics or installing composting toilets.

Every step to increase environmental sustainability can make an impact, but truly progressive events invite attendees to get involved. How? Sierra Nevada's Lee-Ann Loser suggests tactics that tap into your attendees motivations, like incentivizing recycling and gamifying waste sorting.

"Let attendees know ahead of the event that they're expected to participate in zero-waste efforts," says Lee-Ann Loser. "Getting the whole group involved is how you can help change a culture."

## Behind the curve when it comes to sustainability?

### Quick tips to get you started:

- Check that your venues have policies for energy efficiency, recycling, and waste minimization
- Organize refuse stations into compost, recyclables, and trash
- Glitter = micro-plastics that get washed into the ocean. If you're organizing a craft workshop, children's event, or boho music festival, choose biodegradable, eco-friendly glitters like [Glitterevolution](#) or [Mermaid Magic](#).
- Consider ways in which your food, drinks, and swag could use less packaging and rely less on plastic
- Work with food and drink vendors with a commitment to sustainable practices
- Communicate your green policies to attendees and be transparent about all the actions you're taking to reduce impact

**Read More:** [Download The Simple Guide to a Plastic Free Festival](#)



# Trend

# 022



**Diversity  
steps to the  
forefront**



If responsibility for the environment has become a big deal, responsibility for our fellow humans is even more so. From gender-balanced lineups to staff racial diversity to more accessible venues, a progressive stance on inclusion has become a necessity.

Diversity is an important focus for 65% of event creators in North America. An even bigger number — 81% — agree that promoting events to a more diverse audience is a socially-conscious way to scale their event.

But it's not just about inviting more people to the table; it's about making everyone feel welcome. People look for subtle cues about whether they belong. Truly inclusive event brands are invested in overhauling their marketing, being clear in their communication, and using signage that makes explicit a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

**“ If I see a sign that [an event for] a QTPOC [Queer and Trans People of Color], I feel more at ease.”**

- Jorge Portillo, co-founder, Hard French

## Fair-minded event professionals are taking extra steps in 2020:



**48%** Plan for diversity within speakers, talent, and subject matter



**30%** Offer diverse dietary options



**32%** Have a code of conduct that promotes diversity



**20%** Use inclusive fields on registration forms



**17%** Grant scholarships to some event attendees

## Put it in action:

### Creating a more diverse and inclusive event

"If you're planning an event and creating a space where only certain people can join, your business model can't adapt to the changing needs of the market," says Maasha Kah, global head of diversity and inclusion at Eventbrite.

Whether your event aims to attract all types of people or serve a particular crowd, the objective is to build community. And the best communities consist of all different kinds of people, across gender lines, age demographics, racial designations, and levels of physical ability.

### Diversify your event lineup with these tips from event creators:

- **Unearth the up-and-coming:** Put a call out for submissions or host a competition to discover fresh talent from backgrounds that aren't yet represented at your event.
- **Reach out to outliers:** If the person you want isn't available, ask them if they can recommend someone who is.
- **Make sure your venue is inclusive:** From accessibility access to parent-friendly considerations, you must walk the inclusivity walk if you want your event to be taken seriously.

## READ MORE

Cultivating a culture of inclusion for your event can have a huge impact on both your brand and your overall event success. Dive into more advice from experts and other event creators with this free download: [Making Your Events More Inclusive and Diverse](#)



# Trend

03



**Immersive  
experiences are  
more meaningful**



The days of the quiet observer at the dry business lecture are long gone. Today, audiences want to deeply engage with subject matter via fully immersive experiences.

For instance, lifestyle brand Refinery 29's [29Rooms event](#) is a traveling "experiential funhouse" of curated art installations. The event's creators collaborate with local artists to create unique versions of this event in every city on the tour. It's impossible to have the same experience twice.

Attendees are drawn to events that impart memorable experiences and Instagram-worthy moments, and the research shows this trend is not going to let up. The appetite for interactive, and immersive events is growing among a generation that craves authenticity and originality.

**“ We set out to create a physical manifestation of our brand — reflecting the topics our audience cares about most, our commitment to celebrating diverse creative voices, and the engagement we strive to ignite with brands and our audience.”**

- Albie Hueston, Creative Director of Experiential at Refinery 29

## Put it in action:

### Creating immersive experiences

Immersive experiences are, by their very nature, unique and imaginative. There's no one playbook for how to pull them off. But here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Work with your sponsors and vendors to co-create exciting brand activations
- Think in terms of pop-ups and roving entertainment — not just conventional performances in prescribed places
- Lean into the design of your entire space and hire artists for the buildout



Superorganism / Great American Music Hall / San Francisco, CA



Juanita MORE / Powerhouse / San Francisco, CA

## The ongoing challenge

# Reaching more attendees for less money



Reaching new attendees



Insufficient budget



Ticket sales

- Top 3 challenges in 2020

Each year, creators aim to host more events. The added stress of this endeavor leads to familiar challenges — all of which are closely related.

The biggest challenge by far is reaching new event attendees. While a clean half of event creators report a steady amount of pressure in this area, 17% think it will only become more difficult to achieve their reach goals in the coming year.

The second and third biggest challenges — insufficient budget and ticket sales — underline the first. Clearly, what event creators need is to reach more people for less money so they can sell as many tickets as possible.

Not surprisingly, many of the responses point to marketing-related struggles. And many of the opportunities for 2020 lie within this realm.



# Opportunities to grow your audience in 2020

Most effective forms of event promotion:



Word of mouth



Social media  
marketing



Email  
marketing

The three most heavily cited types of event promotion — word of mouth, social media marketing, and email marketing — may already be in your wheelhouse. But within and beyond these mainstream modes of promotion, there's abundant opportunity to carve out innovative new ways to reach attendees.

Here are four high-performing tactics to add to your marketing arsenal in 2020.

# 1. Content marketing

93%

of respondents that use video find it effective for marketing

About 70% of event creators use content marketing — the whole gamut of content shared online, including blog posts, videos, GIFs, and social media — to increase their reach. Of those that use it, the great majority (93%) consider it to be effective.

There's a lot of room for event creators to grow here, because content marketing is a limitless medium. But to compete amid the noise, it's critical you pay attention to data. Reporting from the content marketing channels you use will tell you what's working and what's not. And luckily, metrics are getting more and more sophisticated.

For instance, with an Instagram Business profile, You can also weigh post engagement versus story engagement to determine what efforts are getting the most attention.

By paying attention to the numbers, you can fine-tune your content-marketing efforts over time.

## Tap into user-generated content

The content you publish is great, but without an endless creative budget, it only goes so far. User-generated content, on the other hand, is limitless. Think things like:

- Live video of your event shared on Facebook
- Snapshots posted to Instagram Stories
- Photos accompanying tweets
- Hashtags connecting all of the above

Studies show that consumers trust user-generated content 50% more than content straight from brands. "Encouraging the right types of content creation and sharing while customers visit your event is the best way to get discovered," says Mike Bronfin, product marketing manager at Instagram.

**Read More:** [How to Inspire User-Generated Content on Facebook and Instagram](#)

## 2. Public Relations

While publicity is something that every event wants, only half of event creators use public relations (PR) tactics. Still, 90% of those who do consider it an effective method of outreach.

With social media at everyone's fingertips, it can be tempting to rely on your own channels to spread the word. But the right external media coverage can help project your event to a whole new audience.

Think industry publications and blogs, community newsletters, podcasts, city guides and top 10 lists, tourism websites — the list is endless.

### Unlock 'The Mastery of PR' with this 3-part series

- ✓ [5 Steps to Make Your Event Press-Worthy](#)
- ✓ [How to Craft a Riveting Press Release](#)
- ✓ [Beyond The Press Release](#)



### 3. Experiential marketing

Building on the trend of immersive experiences at events, experiential marketing campaigns can help capture audience attention in a big way. And more than half (53%) of event creators aren't using this tactic yet. But of those that do, the resounding majority — 90% — find it to be effective.

**The term experiential marketing refers to roving activations like:**

- ✓ Pop-ups at other large events that complement yours
- ✓ Pop-ins to an environment such as a brand HQ or vendor site
- ✓ Taking your experience to the streets: public venues with a built-in audience

If you're looking to expand your audience or give people a taste of your event experience, it's the perfect way to get noticed.

Read [Experiential Marketing, Defined — and Examples to Inspire You](#) for more insight.



## 4. Video

“Given the benefit we’ve seen with the ROI of event marketing, it’s a great opportunity for event marketers to rally around video.”

- Jason Hsiao, Chief Video Officer, Animoto

When it comes to portraying event vibe and spirit, video is one of the most obvious and hard-to-beat mediums. According to video expert Animoto, 93% of businesses have gotten a new customer thanks to a video on social media. And video is also the best-performing content type on Facebook.

So it’s surprising that nearly half of all event creators (47%) don’t use it!

Possibly this is because of the misconception that video is expensive to produce and market. Not true. While you can certainly pay a pro to create a slick video ad for your event, that’s not the only way to create worthy video content. Consider:

- ✓ Quickie Instagram Stories behind the scenes before and during your event
- ✓ Re-posted videos from your performers, speakers, and vendors
- ✓ Professional-quality D.I.Y. videos using free Animoto templates specifically for events

For more ideas, download the free Guide to Video Marketing for Events.

### Give them a taste of your event with livestreaming

If video intimidates you, livestreaming may sound like a pipe dream. But events today cannot afford to ignore the livestreaming trend. Frankly, audiences expect it.

Adding a live video component to your event allows viewers around the world to join in, even if it’s not realistic for them to attend in person. And that’s a good thing for your brand awareness: this year’s viewers may be next year’s attendees. In fact, a New York Magazine survey revealed that 67% of viewers are more likely to buy a ticket to a concert or event after watching a similar event’s live video!

## A finger on the pulse of 2020

With the events industry seeing huge growth globally, there's an exciting world of opportunities for event professionals to throw smash-hit events in 2020.

You can't adopt every single marketing tactic at once. But a balance of the tried-and-true and trying something new is the formula to grow your events in 2020.

Take the time to evaluate your tools, technology, and event strategy based on what you've learned in this report. For more insight and advice on how Eventbrite can help you put this guide into action, get in touch with one of our event experts today.

[Get in touch](#)





## Eventbrite powered 3.9 million events in 2018

Eventbrite brings the world together through live experiences. More than 795,000 event creators like you used Eventbrite in 2018 to issue 265 million tickets and registrations. From music festivals and conventions to pop-up dinners and photography classes, events of all sizes use Eventbrite to transform your vision into an experience people will love.

### Get started in minutes

Make a beautiful event listing for free and easily drive attendance with marketing tools, payment processing, and analytics.

[Create your event](#)

### Partner with event experts

Speak with industry experts to learn how you can drive sales, delight attendees, and simplify your work Eventbrite's full event management solution.

[Contact sales](#)

### Create your next event

Already using Eventbrite? Publish your next event to reach new audiences and turn that interest into ticket sales or registrations.

[View demo](#)

Already a customer? [Contact your CSM](#) or sign in to [create your next event here](#).