

THE VALUE OF
CORPORATE EVENTS
in an ever-changing world of work



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FOREWORD

"Corporate events, from conferences and training days to corporate retreats, have changed drastically over the last few years. The pandemic might have forced us to embrace flexibility and virtual experiences, but shifting corporate attitudes, particularly regarding employee wellbeing and environmental impact, has pushed the industry to evolve further and deliver enriching, engaging and eco-conscious corporate events.

I've witnessed first-hand the rise in demand for corporate events with a nature-rich backdrop, and our diverse wellness activity offering, from sound baths to the Treetop Sauna, has undoubtedly scratched a sizeable itch for all kinds of businesses. Indeed, Center Parcs enjoyed its best ever year for corporate bookings last year – and is seeing healthy appetite for 2025.

As businesses grapple with tightening purse strings and bleak economic forecasts, however, the need to quantify, measure and demonstrate the value of corporate events has never been more important. The purpose of this whitepaper is to uncover the multi-layered impact of events on business success and equip decision-makers with best practical recommendations to get the most value from their event programmes.

Looking ahead, I think the future of corporate events is going to be about striking the balance between creating meaningful experiences and capitalising on advances in technology including AI, VR, and data capture.

The opportunity for businesses to recharge, empower, and connect employees through corporate events in 2025 is exciting – and I cannot wait to see how the industry continues to develop."

INTRODUCTION

Corporate events have long been a staple of working life. Businesses have rightly relied on conferences of all kinds to bring employees together, foster deeper relationships, connect with customers and clients, and facilitate company communications.

Such markers of success and their impact on overall revenue and profitability are notoriously difficult to measure, however. As such, this whitepaper seeks to uncover the true impact of corporate events and offer a useful framework for designing and delivering high-impact events.

By speaking with corporate event decision makers across a wide range of companies, varying in size, industry and remote working policies, we've identified key trends in:

- *event expenditure*
- *shifts in corporate culture*
- *the reasons why companies are investing in, or cutting back on, events*
- *the impact of events on the bottom line*
- *the relationship between events in natural settings and employee wellbeing*
- *the most effective ways of hosting events*

Taken together, the results of this whitepaper offer critical insights into the changing nature of the events industry, spotlighting the challenges that lie ahead and the benefits businesses which continue to lean on corporate events can expect to enjoy in 2025 and beyond.

For anyone who has a stake in the corporate events industry, from CEOs to event planners to HR managers and employees more broadly, we're confident that the below findings will prove both interesting and useful as we enter 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *80% of businesses expect to increase or maintain current spend on corporate events over the next 12 months.*
- *More than half (58%) of businesses are increasing spend on corporate events to improve employee wellbeing.*
- *Only one fifth of businesses expect to decrease spending on corporate events over the next 12 months, largely as a result of budgets being slashed.*
- *More than two thirds (69%) of businesses think that corporate events contribute directly to revenue generation.*
- *Nearly all businesses (94%) agree that employee-centric events improve employee wellbeing.*
- *More than three quarters (76%) agree that corporate events help prevent future workplace disputes, rising to 83% for events held in natural settings.*
- *Three quarters of businesses agree that corporate events improve productivity, rising to 84% for events held in natural settings.*
- *Conferences and training events see higher-than-average productivity improvements (over 55%).*
- *A remarkable 80% of companies report increased employee satisfaction following events.*
- *41% of companies directly attribute improved retention rates to corporate events.*

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted among 300 UK HR decision makers. Interviews were conducted online by an independent third-party research company, Sapio Research, between September - October 2024 using an email invitation and an online survey. All survey responses were then shared with Center Parcs for analysis.

At the time of the survey, all participants had a substantial role in corporate event planning and worked in a range of departments such as HR, Accounting, Executive Leadership, IT, Business Development, Procurement, Sales, and Marketing.

Participants came from companies of varying sizes (between 50 – 1,000+ employees) and with differing WFH policies including fully remote, largely remote, largely in the office, and fully in the office. Participants were either Junior/Middle/Senior Managers, Directors, Heads of Department, or C-Level Executives.

An array of corporate events were considered in the survey including:

- Sales,
- Marketing,
- Conferences,
- Training,
- Team building,
- Away days,
- Networking,
- Product demonstrations,
- Incentive trips,
- CSR events,
- Internal COMMs,
- Customer events,
- Awards

INVESTMENT AND SPENDING ON CORPORATE EVENTS

Despite challenging economic circumstances in 2024, and tepid forecasts for 2025, investment and spend on corporate events remained strong over the last 12 months and is expected to increase over the next 12 months, according to our research. Indeed, the UK economy stayed flat in Q3 2024 and receded by 0.3% in Q4 2024 [1], **but 75% of businesses either increased or kept spending on corporate events the same over the last 12 months.**

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, **a remarkable 80% of businesses either expect to increase or maintain current levels of spending on corporate events.** Broadly speaking, the commitment to spending indicates that businesses view investment in corporate events as central to their wider strategies and objectives.

There were a number of key factors that led businesses to increase and maintain spend over the last 12 months. However, our research indicates that a focus on facilitating employee wellbeing was chief amongst these factors. To illustrate, **a sizeable 58% of businesses mentioned employee wellbeing as a reason behind increased spending on corporate events over the last 12 months,** compared to 42% citing increased appetite for events, 41% referencing events being critical to sales strategies, and 40% wanting to use events to bring together remote employees.

Put this in the context of a shifting corporate culture marked by the rise of the four-day working week and the 2024 UK Flexible Working Bill – it's evident that businesses increasingly attribute revenue gains in part to higher levels employee satisfaction and view corporate events as a means to improve the overall employee experience.



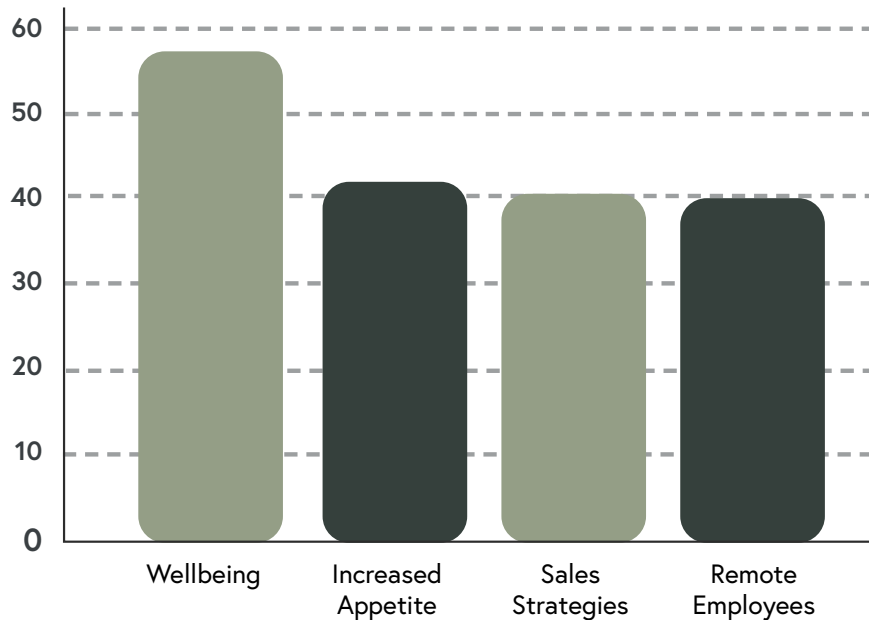


Fig.1 Factors motivating increased spend on corporate events over the last 12 months (percentage)

Almost half of businesses (48%) which expect to increase event spend this year (2025) cited 'loosening purse strings following improved business performance' as the primary reason – which aligns with predictions of a 1.5% growth in GDP in 2025 [2]. Nearly half of businesses (45%) also cited the rising importance of employee wellbeing as a motivation, further highlighting employee wellbeing as a key driver on event spend in the future.

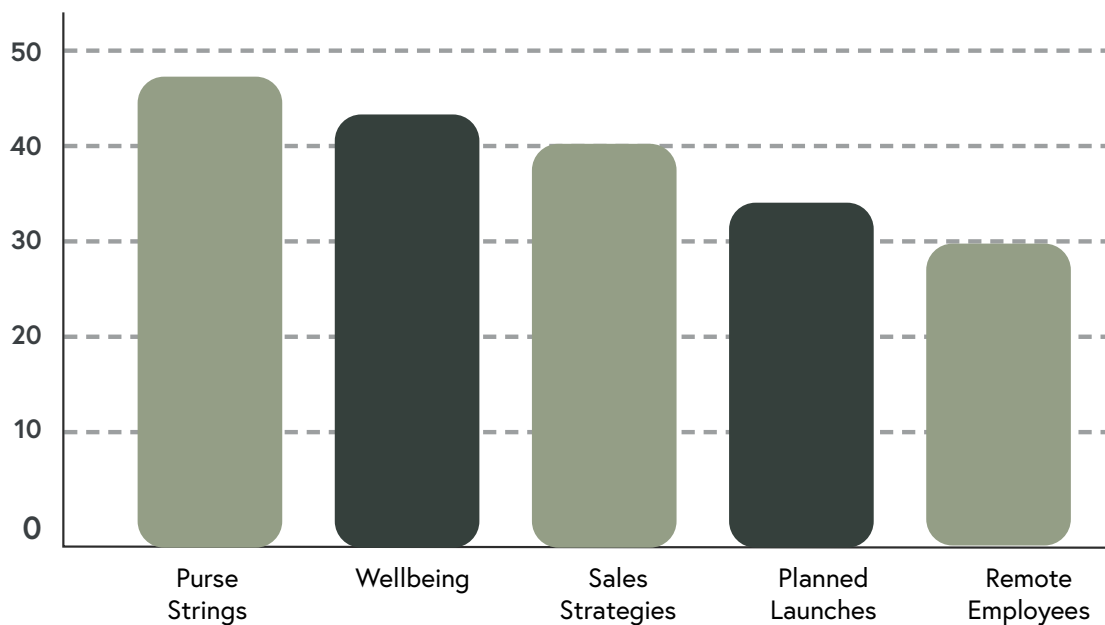


Fig.2 Factors motivating increased spend on corporate events over the next 12 months



Conversely, diminishing budgets threatened spend on corporate events over the last 12 months (39%) and will continue to threaten spend in 2025, suggesting that economic recovery may be slower than forecasts across certain industries and business sizes. Nearly a third of businesses plan on running fewer but larger events to help slash spending.

In the next section, we take a closer look at how companies are changing their approach to corporate events, and why these events are increasingly seen as valuable avenues for overall business success.



APPROACH TO CORPORATE EVENTS

Our data reveals a mixed approach to company-sponsored trips – by which we refer to corporate offsite events and overnight getaways designed to reward employees, boost morale and unite the workforce. While 32% of organisations maintained their existing program of events in 2024, a fifth have proactively strengthened their initiatives, and 19% have introduced new trips, indicating a ubiquitous commitment to enhancing employee experiences. However, 16% of respondents reported no exploration of these options, highlighting an opportunity for growth and broader adoption of such programs across industries.

Company-sponsored trips are increasingly tied to networking events and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. These associations highlight a strategic alignment with broader organisational goals, such as fostering collaboration, improving brand image, and supporting employee development. Additionally, increased spending in these areas suggests that businesses recognise the tangible value of incorporating trips into event-related strategies.

The size of an organisation significantly influences its approach to company-sponsored trips. Larger organisations, particularly those with 501 to 1,000+ employees, are leading the way, with more than one quarter (26%) introducing new trips and another 26% strengthening existing programs. In contrast, smaller businesses (with 50 or fewer employees) lag behind, with 30% not considering such initiatives, suggesting potential challenges related to budget constraints or prioritisation.

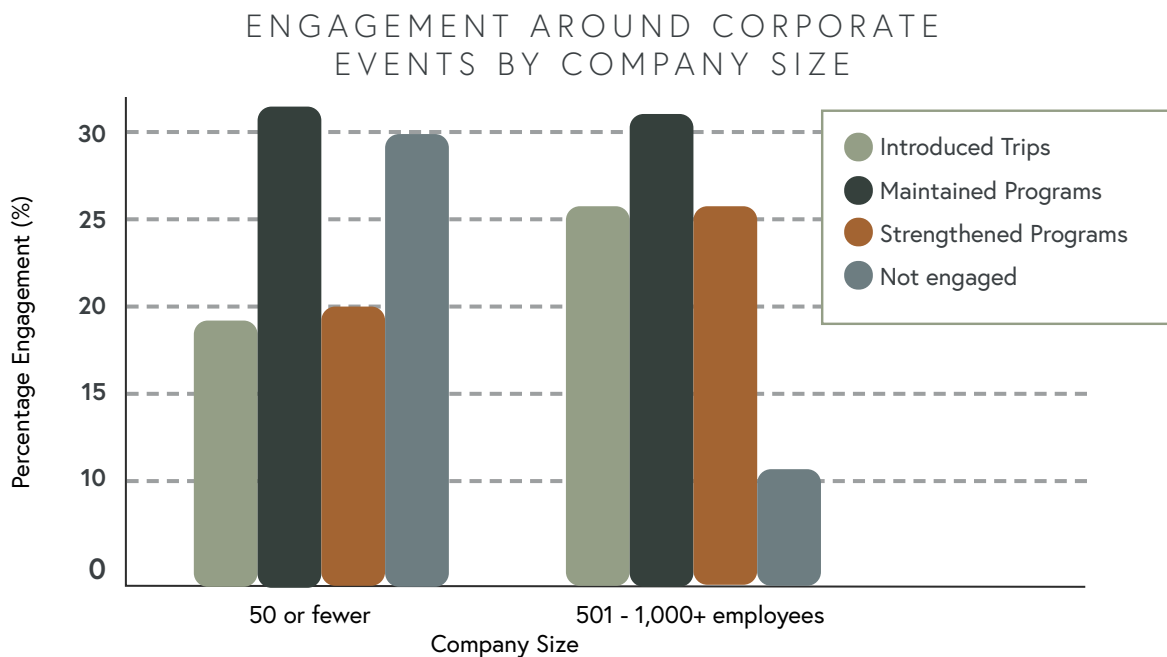


Fig.3 Engagement around corporate events by company size

Engagement with company-sponsored trips also varies by work model. Hybrid models, especially those with employees largely in-office, show the highest level of engagement, with more than a quarter (27%) introducing new trips. This trend could reflect the alignment of in-office interactions with trip planning and participation. Conversely, remote-only workers reported higher levels of non-engagement, signalling a missed opportunity for collaboration and team bonding, and a need for tailored approaches that cater to these unique work environments.

ENGAGEMENT AROUND CORPORATE EVENTS BY WORK MODEL

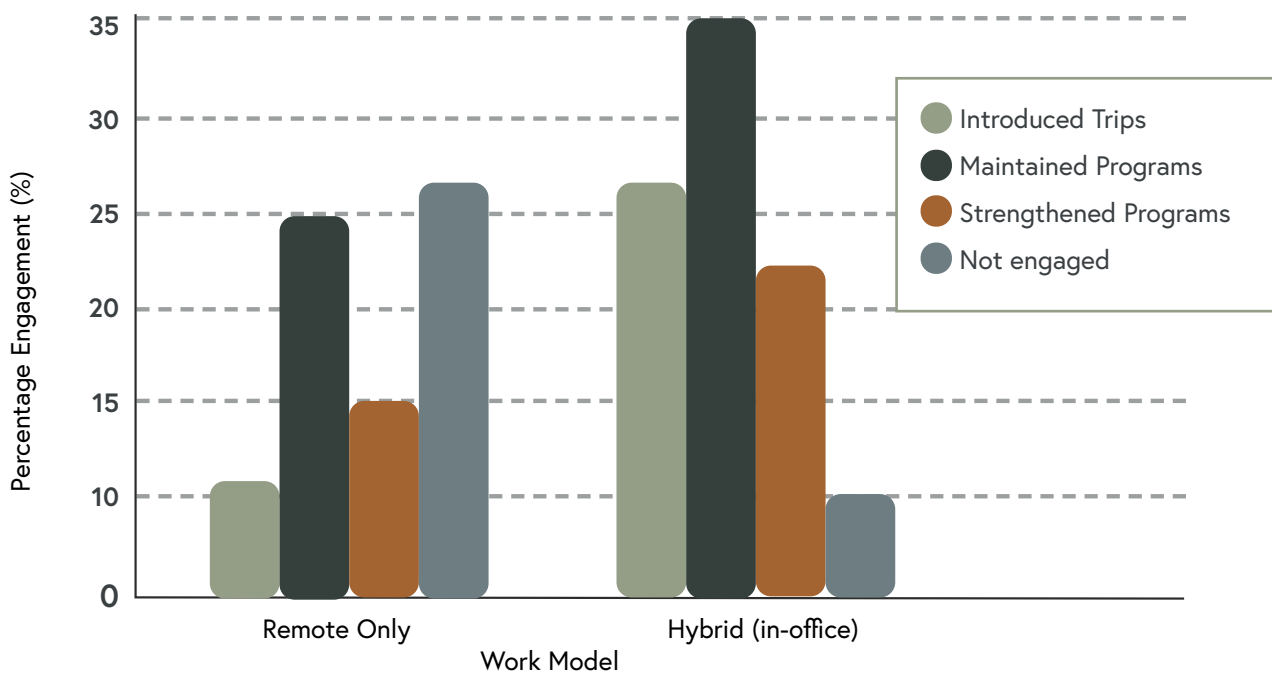


Fig.4 Engagement around corporate events by work model

THE VALUE OF CORPORATE EVENTS

In challenging economic times, businesses will often engage in a frantic search to identify their expendable outgoings – the 'nice to haves' – to which events often fall prey. But what this perception of business success fails to acknowledge is the fundamental role people play in making that success happen. A business is no better than its people – and nothing will drive better results than looking after the people holding up your company day after day.

A) STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE CORPORATE EVENTS

Corporate events play a pivotal role in shaping the success and operational efficiency of modern organisations. Our research reveals that 69% of companies agree that corporate events directly contribute to their revenue generation strategies. This finding underscores the strategic importance of events in driving business development, whether through fostering client relationships, enhancing brand visibility, or facilitating new business opportunities. Furthermore, 72% of companies acknowledge the indirect contributions of corporate events to their revenue streams, highlighting their role in strengthening the ecosystem that supports business growth, such as improving stakeholder engagement and creating long-term partnerships.

B) PRODUCTIVITY AND REVENUE

Three quarters of businesses (75%) noted an increase in employee productivity following a corporate event. It is widely recognised that enhanced productivity directly influences overall company performance [4], making corporate events a strategic investment to bolster the bottom line.

Reported efficiency improvements were particularly high in larger businesses (71% for 501–1,000 employees), suggesting again that larger budgets may enable more high-impact events with short- to medium-term improvements around employee engagement and productivity.

Conferences and training events see higher-than-average efficiency improvement percentages (over 55%), showing that structured and goal-oriented events with skill-building components which reinforce workflows with practical takeaways have a higher immediate ROI. Middle to junior management is the group most likely to immediately apply new skills post-event (47%), making events a practical investment in upskilling at this level.

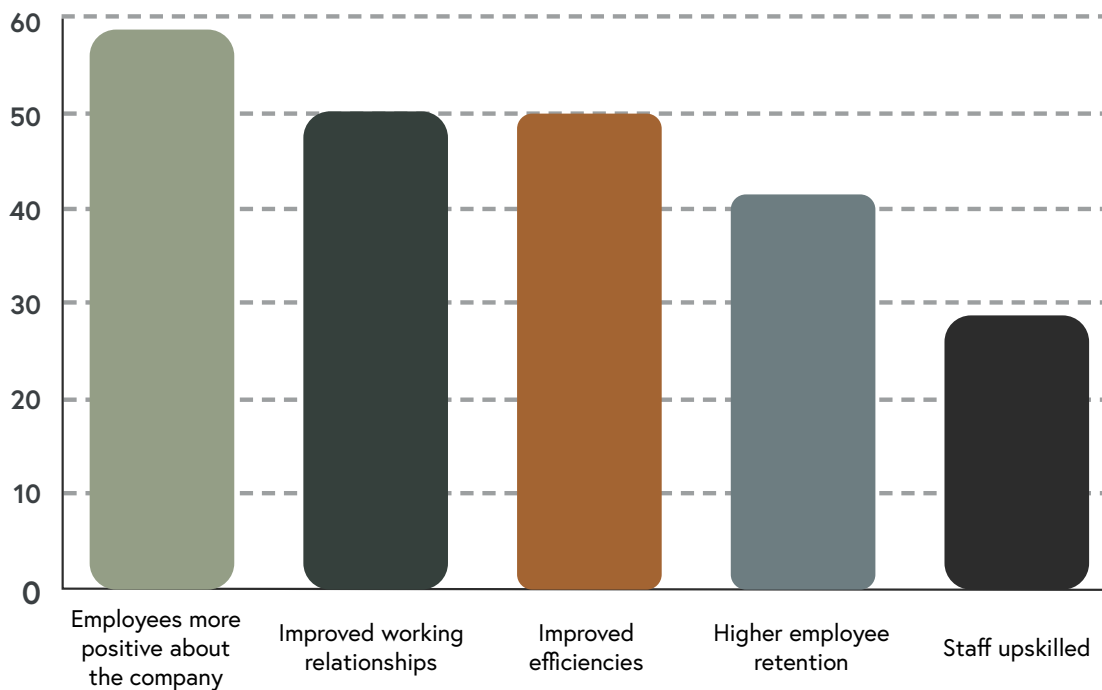


Fig. 5 The measured outcome of internal events on employees (percentages)

(C) EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, POSITIVITY AND RETENTION

Target-dependent corporate retreats have the potential to create emotional and professional incentives for employees to stay, rendering them a staple part of the employee benefits package in recent years.

Over half of respondents (53%) stated that corporate events are strategically on offer at their company to boost employee engagement and morale. Likewise, 46% of companies consider these event-led incentives to be key for attracting and retaining talent.

And our research shows it's effective in doing so. Three in five respondents (59%) reported that their employees felt much more positive about the company following an employee-led event. Larger organisations (1,001+ employees) see the highest positivity increase (68%), likely due to having the resources to create truly impactful events – and suggesting that the value of bringing people together is even greater for businesses with a larger workforce, often divvied up into siloed teams.

A remarkable 80% of companies report increased employee satisfaction following events, a factor that plays a critical role in enhancing retention rates and reducing the high costs associated with hiring and onboarding. Moreover, 41% of companies directly attribute improved retention rates to corporate events, indicating their effectiveness in fostering a positive and supportive work environment that employees don't want to give up.

Looking at wellbeing more specifically, 94% of respondents believe that employee-centric events have a positive impact on wellbeing (53% significantly and 41% slightly). Team building events and company away days are perceived as having the most significant positive impact (59% and 50% significant respectively).

Leadership roles tend to perceive events as more impactful compared to junior management, highlighting potential discrepancies in how these initiatives are experienced across organisational levels – but the perceived impact is overwhelmingly positive across the board. For instance, 61% of company owners believe that events have a 'significant' tangible positive effect on employee wellbeing, compared to 34% of middle to junior management, however both groups scored over 90% once the 'significant' requirement was stripped away to include all positive outcomes.

DO CORPORATE AWAY DAYS
IMPROVE EMPLOYEE WELLBEING?

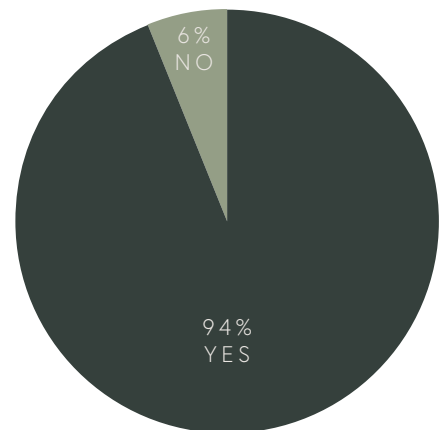


Fig.6 The impact of corporate events on employee wellbeing

D. RELATIONSHIPS, WORKPLACE DISPUTES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Improving relationships and enhancing communication is the most common objective behind hosting corporate events (56%) which, given the cost of negative employee relations on business success, comes as no surprise.

Research from ACAS [5] estimates that 9.7 million UK employees experience workplace conflict, and over 400,000 resign every year due to work disputes. Each year, workplace disputes cost businesses £120m in informal mediation conversations, a further £140m in formal workplace mediation, £589m in lost productivity and £2.2bn in sickness absence—to mention just a few. Allowing workplace tensions to rise will undeniably see businesses face the financial burden of replacing lost talent and facilitating remedial solutions.

Fortunately, corporate events appear to play a significant role in fostering workplace harmony and collaboration. Half of respondents report better working relationships post-event, with slight variations across business sizes and job roles. Events that focus on interpersonal interaction foster collaboration and trust, leading to stronger team cohesion. Training and team-building events show a significant influence, with over half (55%) of respondents reporting enhanced relationships following these event types.

The overwhelming majority of companies (76%) agree that corporate events help prevent workplace disputes and enhance employee relationships. This improved interpersonal dynamic not only promotes a cohesive and productive workplace culture but also has ripple effects on retention and organisational performance.

DO CORPORATE AWAY DAYS HELP
PREVENT WORKPLACE DISPUTES?

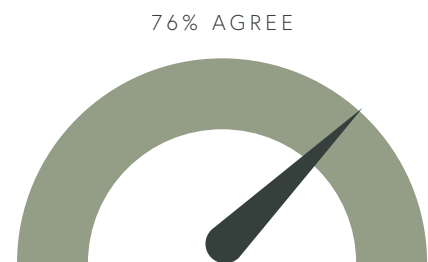


Fig.7 Impact of corporate events on workplace disputes

The business case for investing in corporate away days couldn't be clearer cut. Taken together, these findings highlight that corporate events are far more than social or networking opportunities; they are strategic investments that contribute to revenue, employee well-being, and organisational efficiency.

Companies would do best to invest in preventative solutions which ward off negativity and diminish the likelihood of such disputes occurring in the first place.

HOW CAN COMPANY SPONSORED TRIPS HELP PREVENT WORKPLACE DISPUTES?

We gathered feedback from over 300 HR decision-makers on this question, and extracted a few direct quotes below.

"Corporate events build a culture of trust and reliability and enhance the quality of understanding and communication across departments."

"When people see each other as people and friendships grow, barriers start to come down."

"When employees are away, they are in a neutral and more relaxed setting where they can share their experiences of the away days without pressure."

"Strengthening relationships through shared experiences can lead to a more harmonious workplace, ultimately preventing potential disputes and enhancing overall team dynamics."

"They break down the silo mentality that can prevail otherwise."

"Management can communicate new policies and processes to colleagues so they are more likely to understand the reasoning behind them. Employees feel consulted and considered. They have chance to ask questions and can make an input into changes."

"Away days build a culture of trust and reliability and enhance the quality of understanding and communication across departments."

"Because when people are face to face, mutual empathy is easier rather than sending faceless and sometimes blunt emails or texts to colleagues."

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF EVENTS

A) STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

Although the vast majority of event planners are measuring the impact of their events (92%) - only half claim to have a structured process in place (52%). This means that nearly half of all businesses are either not capturing any feedback or are doing so through informal channels, based on hearsay.

This presents a number of issues, primarily that of providing a safe platform for participants to speak freely and anonymously on their experience attending a company event. For example, depending entirely on feedback shared by managers (rather than polling the whole workforce) is a surefire way of receiving a rose-tinted review of your event, preventing opportunities for learnings and improvement.

B) METHODS

Among those companies that do collect feedback following corporate events:



74% of companies gather direct feedback from participants as the primary method to measure event success, with consistency across various event types, company sizes, and job roles. This highlights the importance of first-hand perspectives in evaluating event effectiveness. Companies rely on participant feedback because it provides real-time, actionable insights into the experience and outcomes of events.

Events directly tied to business outcomes like marketing events (82%) and sales events (77%) see higher reliance on participant feedback, while events like training events show more diversified feedback mechanisms – as a better assessment of ROI may be linked to post-event skills assessments, for example.

Companies that have hosted events in natural settings tend to emphasise direct feedback from participants (79%). Natural settings may evoke stronger, more memorable participant experiences, making direct feedback particularly valuable for understanding the unique impact of these events.



51% of companies use feedback shared by managers to gauge event success. This percentage rises for larger organisations (e.g. 57% for 501-1,000 employees). Larger companies may emphasise this method due to the need for a more strategic evaluation of the event's impact. Manager feedback is essential in understanding the alignment of events with organisational goals, but should not be the only source of feedback.

PREFERRED CHANNELS:



48% of companies use online surveys, a figure that rises to 61% among organisations with over 1,000 employees. Companies with remote work models also lean more heavily on online surveys (59%), compared to fully in-office settings (41%). Online surveys are favoured by larger organisations because they are scalable, efficient, and easy to distribute. The digital format allows for rapid data collection and analysis, catering to larger employee bases. Collecting feedback online is also preferable for its ability to provide greater levels of confidentiality – and in allowing responses to swiftly be converted into actionable changes for the next event.



27% of companies use paper questionnaires, with higher usage (34%) among companies with 501-1,000 employees. Despite the rise of digital tools, paper-based methods are still valued, likely in settings where employees or participants may not have easy access to digital platforms or where a more traditional approach is preferred.



WELLBEING AND NATURE

Our research has certainly made one thing clear: companies have become increasingly invested in improving and maintaining employee wellbeing. They are beginning to understand that corporate events (of various kinds) can be an effective lever to pull in the pursuit of improved happiness, connectedness, and overall productivity at work. But what role do nature-rich event venues play in supporting this objective?

The first point to note here is that corporate events held in natural settings proved to be relatively popular among the HR decision makers that we surveyed. More than half (52%) had already held one or several corporate events in a natural setting and a further 8% were actively planning to hold an outdoor event in 2025. What's more, a further 30% who were not actively planning on holding corporate events in a natural setting stated that they were open to doing so.

When assessing whether corporate events held in natural settings might be better at improving wellbeing when compared to standard settings, we found tangible evidence supporting this case. For example, while more than three quarters (76%) agreed that corporate events help prevent workplace disputes and improve employee relationships, this figure rises to a whopping 83% when considering corporate events held in natural settings.

In much the same way, the number of companies reporting employees to feel more positive about their respective companies following a corporate event, rose from 53% to nearly two thirds (63%) when referring to corporate events held in a nature-rich venue. Finally, three quarters stated that corporate events improved employee productivity, but this shot up to 84% for corporate events held in the great outdoors.

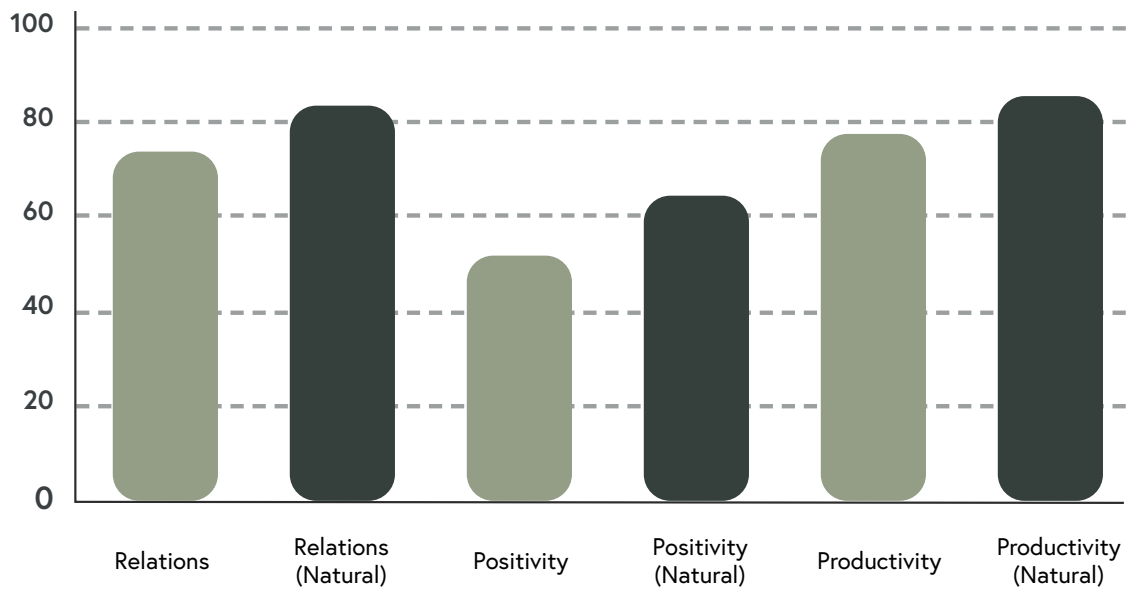


Fig. 8 Benefits of corporate events held in natural settings

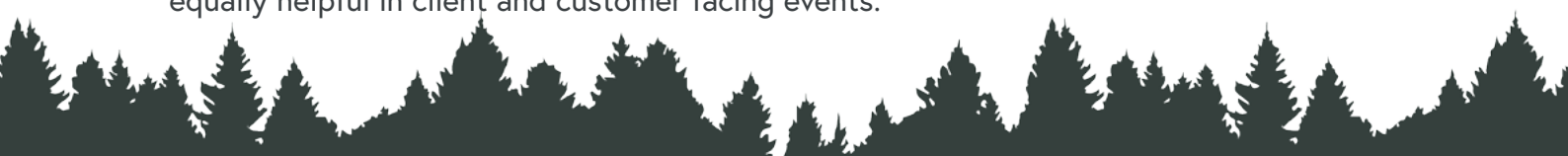
These findings indicate that breaking out of the corporate environment goes a long way in helping employees relax and bring fresh perspectives to their work.

As one HR decision maker put it: 'In a relaxed and informal environment away from daily work pressures, individuals can interact more freely, breaking down hierarchical or departmental barriers.'

Indeed, more than half (56%) of HR decision makers who agreed that natural settings are more effective for corporate events reported employees feeling more relaxed and willing to share in a less formal environment. In addition, 54% reported employees feeling as though they were able to bring new ideas to their work following corporate events held in a natural setting.

Unsurprisingly, employees at companies operating a fully in the office model were most likely to agree that hosting corporate events in natural settings would improve their effectiveness. For example, 43% of those working at companies with a largely remote workforce agreed that a natural environment would improve corporate events, compared to 53% working at companies with fully in the office models.

The above finding builds on the idea that the formality of the corporate environment can be stifling, and that employees who spend most of their time working in the office are more likely to be engaged in a fresh setting. Interestingly, this notion extends to sales events (58%), marketing events (53%) and product demonstrations (59%), suggesting that the benefit of hosting corporate events in natural settings can extend beyond internal get togethers (e.g. training, company away days, and team building events) and prove equally helpful in client and customer facing events.



DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

In this next section, we examine challenges and recommendations for hosting a successful corporate event, drawing on the insights gathered from 300 HR decision makers.

A) CHALLENGES



Budget: Smaller companies (fewer than 50 employees) struggle the most with budget, with nearly a third (30%) citing staying within budget as their top challenge. Offering pre-packaged away day solutions with cost-effective activities can mitigate these challenges.



Mixed Interests: Larger organisations (500+ employees) find it more challenging to accommodate diverse interests, with 31% struggling with activity alignment. Venues that offer modular activities catering to varied preferences can ensure broader engagement and satisfaction.



Logistics & Scheduling: Remote and hybrid teams experience higher scheduling difficulties, with 28% in largely remote teams and 27% in remote-only teams citing it as their biggest challenge. With 24% of total respondents citing scheduling as a top issue, advanced scheduling tools or decentralised planning could ease the burden, particularly for larger and hybrid teams.

B) RECOMMENDATIONS



Prioritise Employee Wellbeing. Design events that foster relaxation, creativity, and connection. Incorporate wellness activities and focus on themes like mindfulness and stress reduction. Emphasise team-building and interpersonal interaction to enhance morale. Employee wellbeing is consistently highlighted as a key driver for event spending and is linked to improved satisfaction, retention, and productivity.



Leverage Natural Settings. Consider hosting more events in outdoor or nature-based venues. These settings can reduce stress, foster innovation, and improve team dynamics. Align event goals with the environment, such as team retreats in scenic locations to promote creative brainstorming. Events in natural environments deliver superior outcomes, including higher productivity and stronger employee positivity.



Tailor Events to Business Goals. Plan events with clear objectives tied to sales, marketing, or employee development. Use goal-oriented formats like workshops, training sessions, and networking opportunities that deliver measurable outcomes.



Invest in Metrics and Measurement. Measuring ROI and participant outcomes is critical for justifying budgets and improving future events. Use key performance indicators (KPIs) such as employee engagement scores, productivity metrics, and retention rates. Combine these with direct feedback to refine event strategies.



Adopt Inclusive Feedback Mechanisms. Implement diverse and anonymous feedback channels like online surveys, participant interviews, and follow-up assessments. Ensure feedback is collected from all levels, not just managers, for a holistic view.



Optimise Budget Allocation. Economic pressures threaten event spending, but businesses that strategically allocate budgets see better ROI. Balance quality and quantity by prioritising fewer, high-impact events. Consider hybrid formats to reduce costs while reaching broader audiences. Use data from past events to identify what delivers the best outcomes and allocate resources accordingly.



Enhance Hybrid and Remote Engagement. Engagement is lower among remote employees, yet they benefit most from events that promote connection and inclusion. Develop virtual and hybrid event options to engage remote teams. Use digital platforms for pre-event collaboration and post-event follow-ups. Tailor activities to build a sense of inclusion and belonging for dispersed teams.

FIVE MOST POPULAR TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Based on feedback event planners received from employees



Fig. 9 Most popular team building activities ranked by event planners

1. **Problem-solving activities** rank as the most popular, emphasising the value employees place on critical thinking, collaboration, and teamwork. However, the days of virtual pub quizzes are well and truly over – with virtual activities featuring low on the list of preferred team building activities, in favour of in person events.
2. **Physical challenges and team sports** ranked as the second most popular activity type, reflecting a desire for active engagement and promoting health and camaraderie. Employees seek opportunities to stay active while building connections with their peers.
3. **Wellbeing activities** focused on mental health and relaxation, such as mindfulness sessions or yoga, are another firm favourite. There is a growing demand for events that address stress relief and promote overall mental well-being.
4. Engagement in eco-conscious or **sustainability-driven activities** appeals to employees, likely reflecting broader societal trends.
5. **Creative activities** such as art workshops or design challenges are the fifth most popular activity-type, according to event planners.



THE FUTURE OF CONFERENCES AND EVENTS & CONCLUSIONS

Corporate events are no longer just "nice-to-haves". They are vital strategic tools for improving productivity, fostering collaboration, and supporting employee wellbeing. In a tough economic climate, businesses may opt to deprioritise events, and very often won't feel the impact of reducing event spend until it's too late. The repercussions on recruitment, employee retention, productivity and business opportunities come later, and are much harder to reverse once set in motion.

In the UK, the average cost of replacing just one employee is estimated at around £25,000 when accounting for lost productivity, while for more senior roles this figure can jump to £40,000 to £100,000 per head [6].

While economic constraints pose challenges, the demonstrated ROI on revenue, retention, and workplace harmony underlines the importance of maintaining and innovating within this space. Corporate event spending has remained resilient in 2024 and shows signs of renewed investment in 2025 – with employee wellbeing is a primary driver for increased spending. Businesses wanting to adopt cost-saving strategies should consider running fewer but larger events.

Well-designed corporate events are seen not only as pivotal for revenue generation, strengthening stakeholder engagement and creating long-term partnerships, but also for nurturing collaboration and reducing workplace disputes, which cost UK businesses billions annually. Meanwhile, events in nature are linked to reduced stress, increased creativity, and improved team cohesion – rendering the practice furthermore beneficial to businesses' bottom line.

Strength comes in numbers, and when times are tough, the most effective strategy to build resilience and creativity within a business is to bring people together for a shared experience that broadens horizons and fosters connection.

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