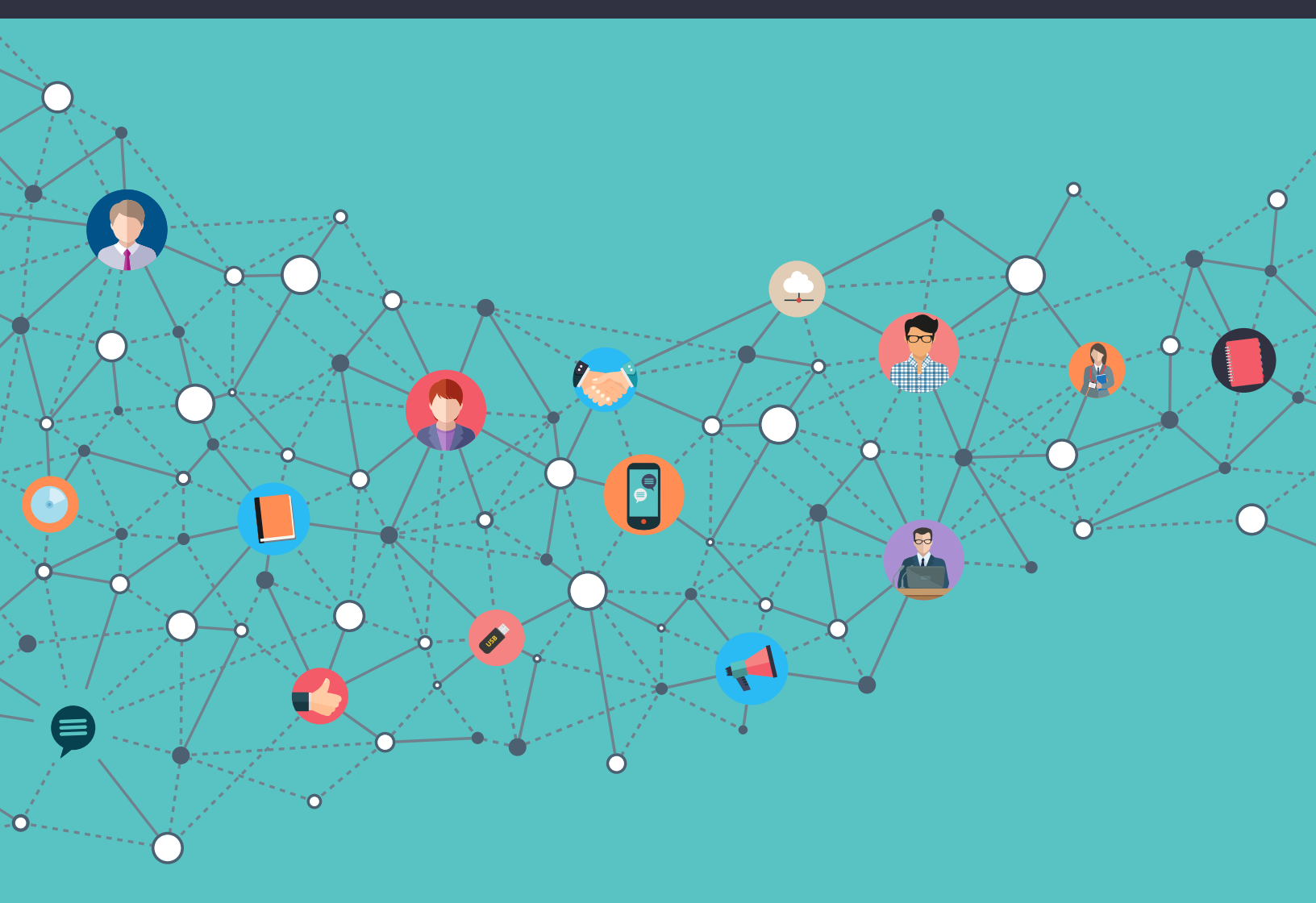




Delivering your content. Delivering your value.



2018 STATE OF THE CONFERENCE INDUSTRY

Managing an Increasingly Diverse Content Portfolio

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INTRODUCTION

For the fourth year in a row, Omnipress has tracked the evolution of conference content and the role it plays at an association's annual event. This year's results indicate that while educational content remains a significant source of value that associations provide, association *professionals* are facing new challenges as they strive to meet attendees' changing expectations.

Diversity is a word that comes to mind when looking at the responses to this year's survey. Whether it is the number of formats associations are using to deliver conference content, the variety of initiatives designed to increase attendee engagement, or the wide-ranging expectations of today's attendees, associations are managing an increasingly complex content portfolio before, during and after their events.

To understand how associations are currently using their conference content, we conducted an online survey of 143 association professionals, many of whom are directly responsible for conference planning. The following report compiles their responses to provide insight into questions like:

- How are associations using content to engage members and increase conference attendance?
- How are associations deciding which formats to offer at their events?
- Which types of content are associations currently providing at their conference?
- Are there common challenges that all associations are facing in delivering their conference content?

We close this year's report with some key questions to help your association turn these findings into action. We hope these ideas spark the conversations with your co-workers and members that lead to solutions for managing an increasingly diverse content portfolio.

ASSESSING MEMBERSHIP AND THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The annual conference remains a central part of the association's member growth strategy.

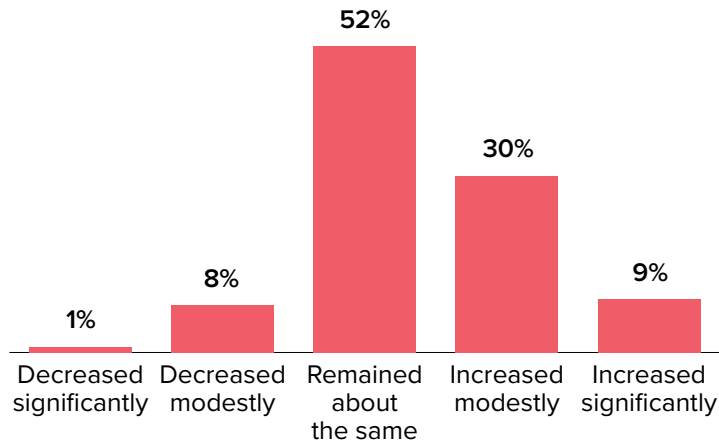
With most associations reporting flat membership growth in 2017, the ability to engage and retain existing members is critical. The annual conference provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate the association's value, and increasing attendance continues to be the number one priority for associations.

Respondents provided some specific areas of focus to increase attendance at their 2018 events:

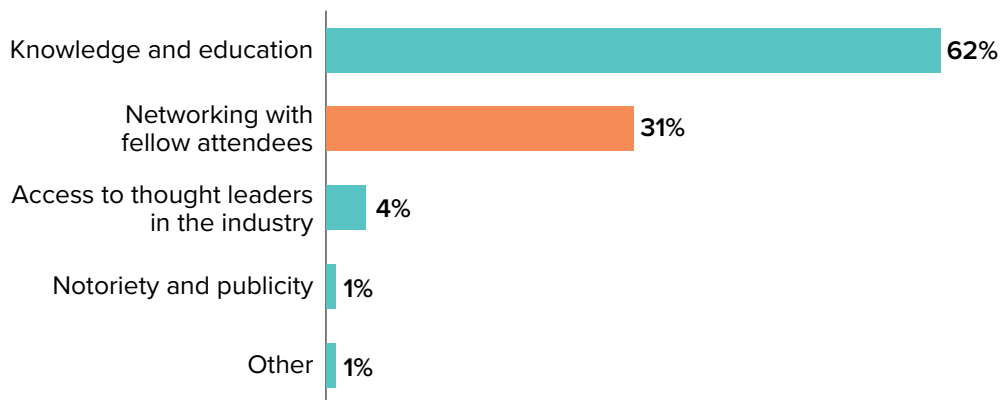
- Encourage peer-to-peer engagement
- Increase conference quality
- Update technologies to increase engagement
- Create more networking opportunities

The opportunity for member engagement extends beyond attending the conference. Associations can provide options for members to participate in other meaningful ways by including an open call for their event. Soliciting presentations from within the association allows the organization to recognize the contributions that members are making in their industry and advance their careers.

How has your membership changed over the past year?

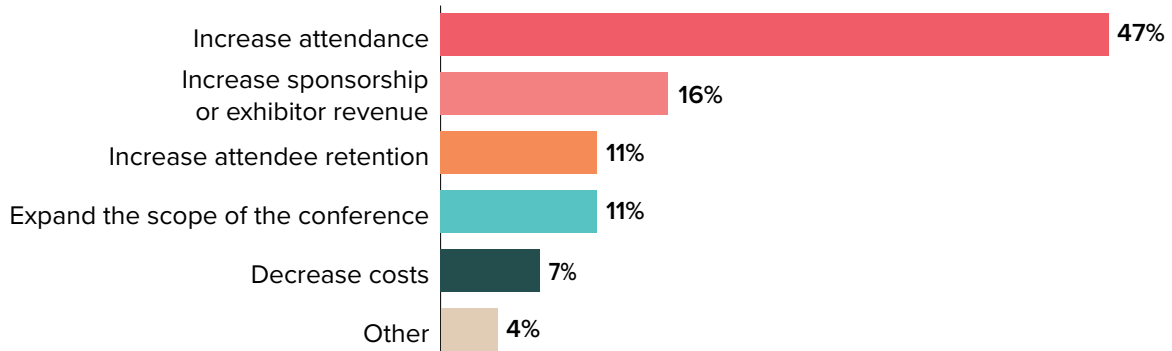


What is the single greatest value your annual conference provides to your members?

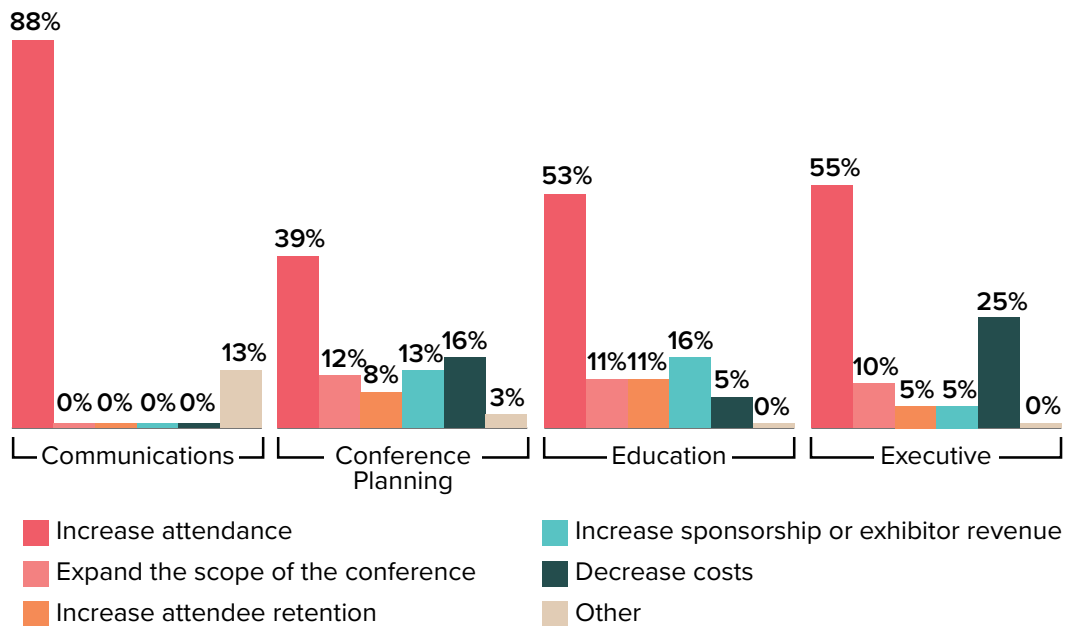


“Networking with fellow attendees” saw a 12% year-over-year increase in respondents that consider this the greatest value of the annual conference. This is a good reminder of the importance of having in-person events in an increasingly virtual world.

What is your #1 goal for your annual conference in 2018?

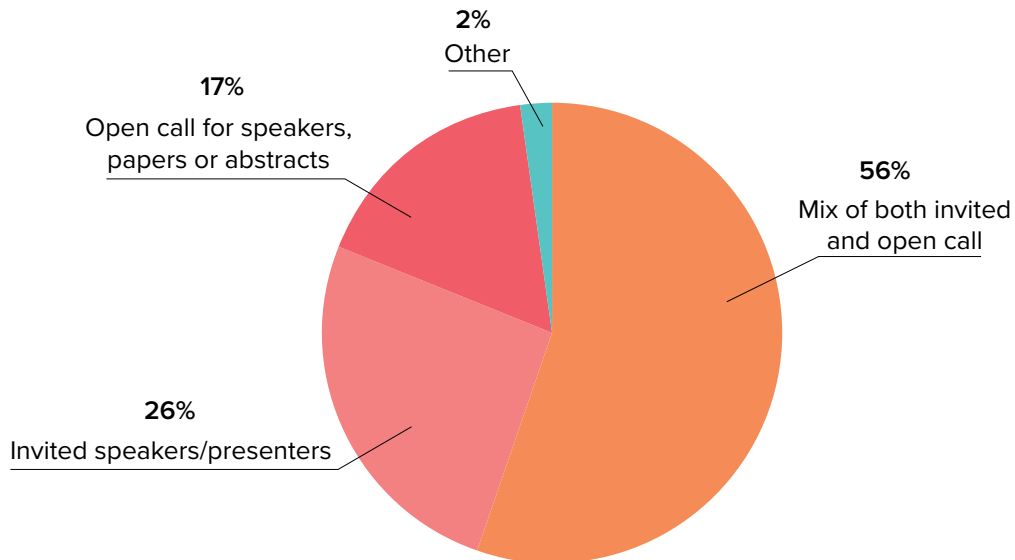


What is your #1 goal for your annual conference in 2018? (Segmented by role within the association)

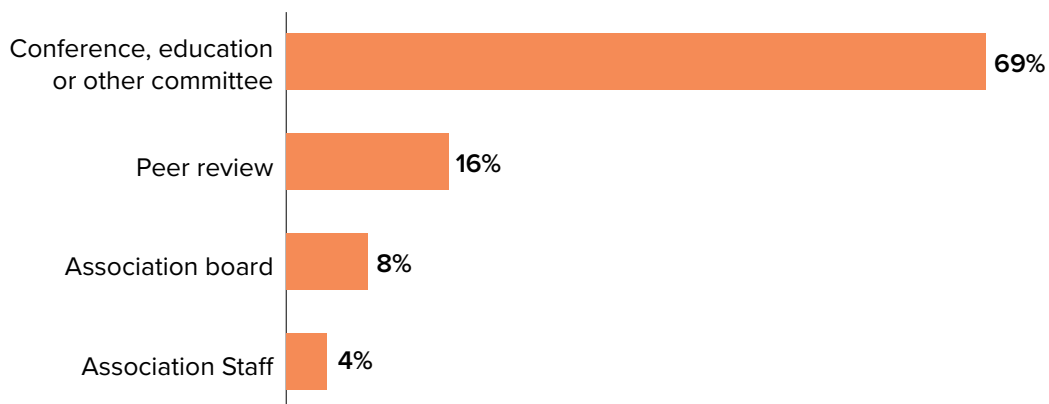


Increasing conference attendance is a top priority throughout the entire association, regardless of role.

How do you source content for your conference?



Who determines which content is ultimately selected for the conference?



Associations are creating opportunities for member engagement by offering an open call for submissions, as well as allowing them to participate in determining which content is selected for the conference.

DELIVERING CONTENT AT THE EVENT

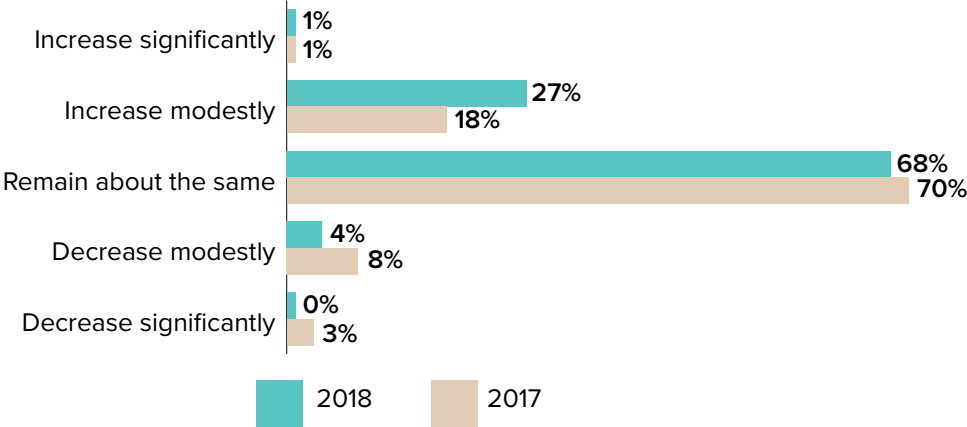
Attendee expectations of omnipresent content is leading to tough decisions for associations.

The number of formats associations are using to deliver conference content is increasing. That is one clear takeaway from this year's survey results. In fact, the average number of formats associations use to deliver conference content rose to 2.4 in this year's results, up from 2.1 last year.

When attendee influence is the primary factor in deciding which formats to offer, associations offer even more (an average of 2.6). These associations understand that attendees expect to access conference content in the format of their choice.

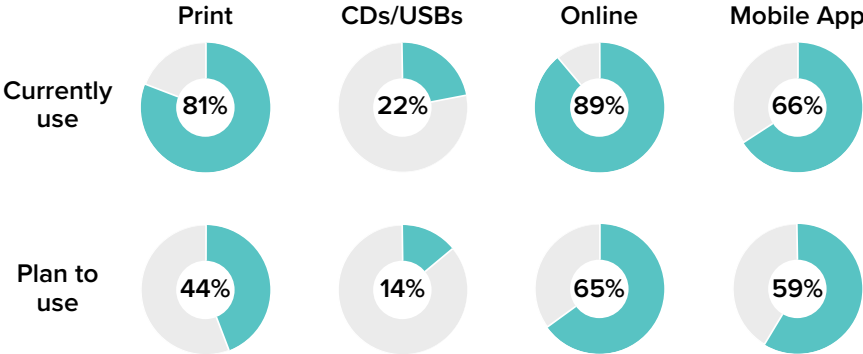
This preference for device-agnostic content can lead to some tough decisions for associations. Conference boards—and conference budgets—are more likely to be the primary factor in format selection compared to previous years.

How will your association’s budget for conference content change in 2018?



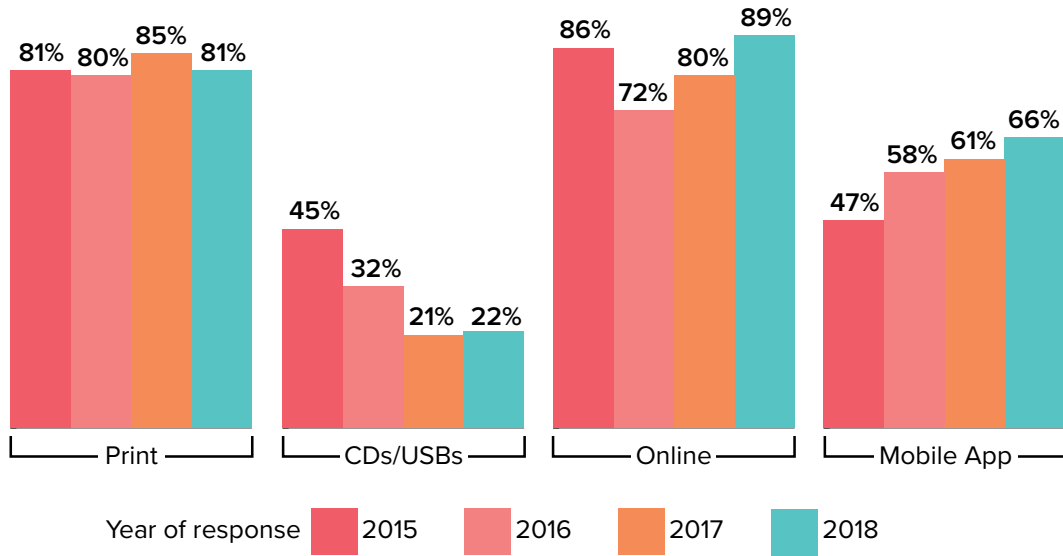
Associations understand the value of offering unique content to members and increasingly see the importance of this investment. As a result, budgets are increasing in 2018.

Which formats do you currently use/plan to use to deliver content?

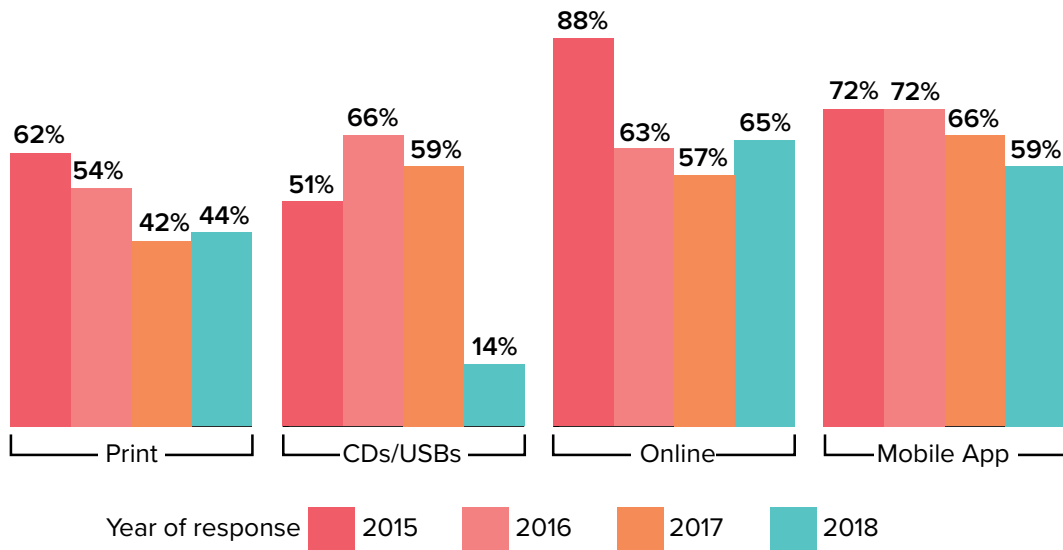


Respondents predict they will offer fewer formats at their next event, despite the trend to increase options for attendees.

Which formats do you currently use to deliver content?

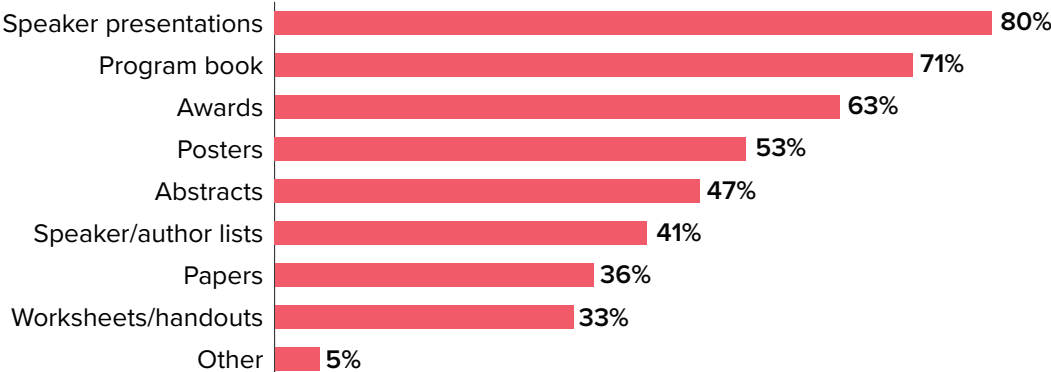


Which formats do you plan to use in the future?



The uncertainty around future content delivery continues. Historical predictions to decrease the use of certain formats in the future have not been reflected in subsequent surveys.

Which types of content do you currently provide at your conference?

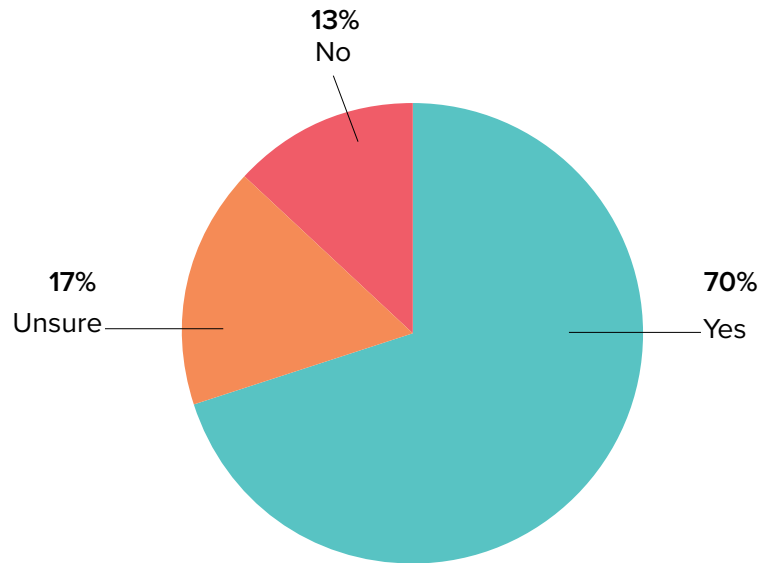


Which types of content do you currently provide at your conference? (Current and historical survey responses compared)

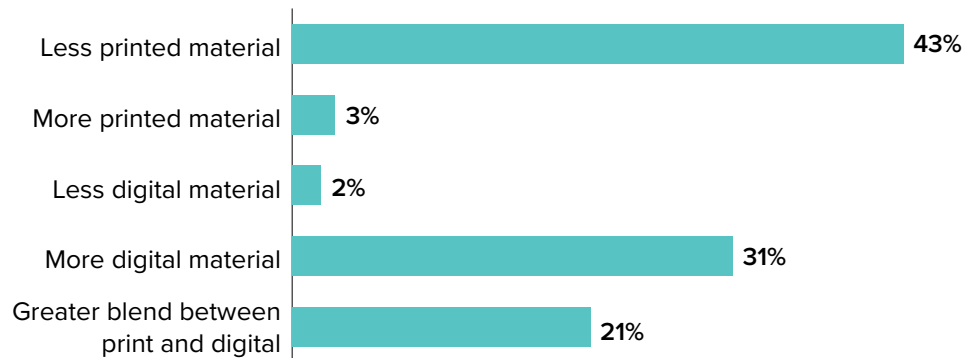
Rank	2018	2017	2016	2015
1	Papers/ Presentations	Papers/ Presentations	Papers/ Presentations	Papers/ Presentations
2	Program Book	Program Book*	Awards	Speaker lists
3	Awards	Awards	Speaker lists	Awards
4	Posters	Worksheets	Posters	Posters
5	Abstracts	Abstracts	Abstracts	Worksheets
6	Speaker lists	Posters		Abstracts

* first year this response was offered

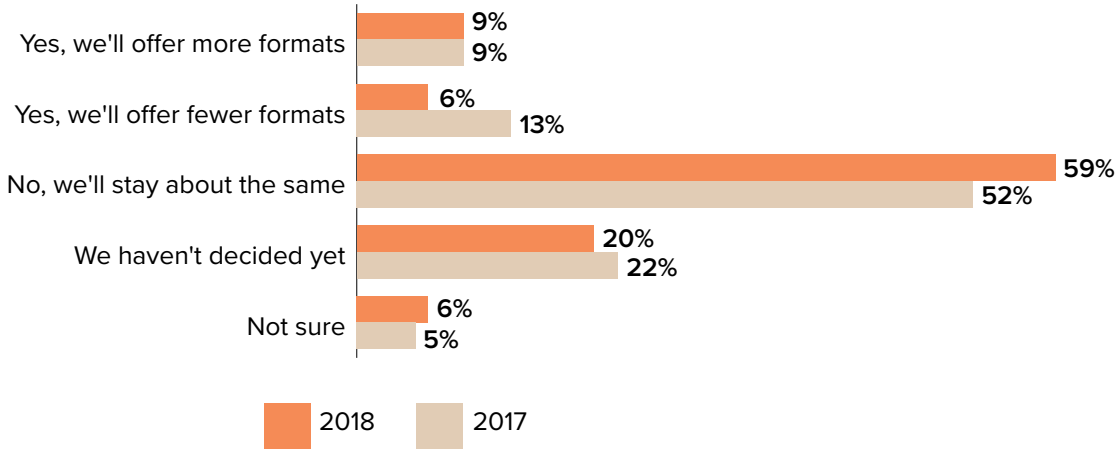
Are you seeing a shift in the formats that attendees prefer?



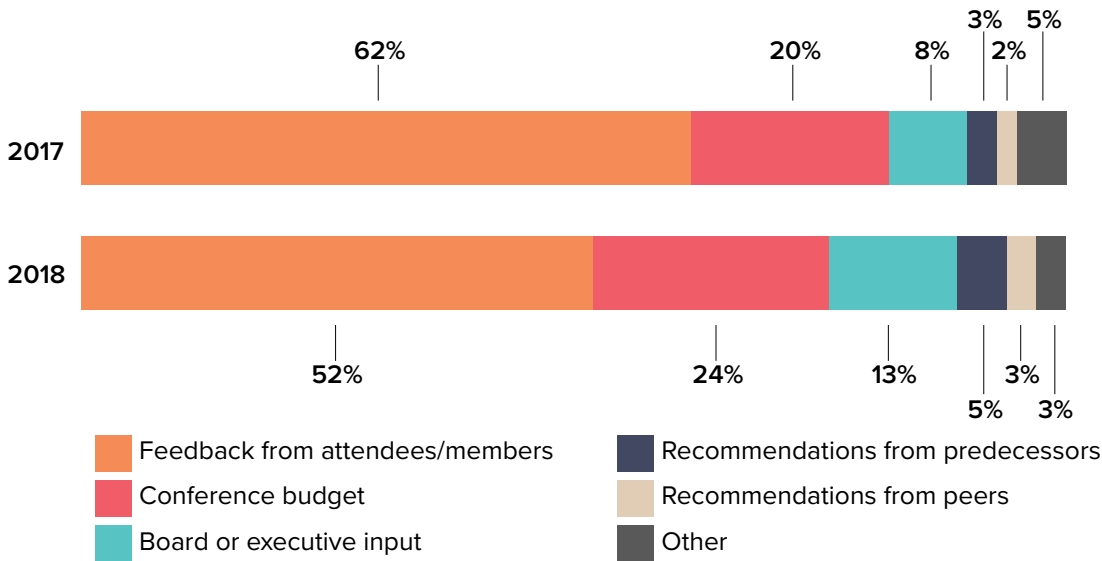
How would you describe that shift?



Do you expect to change the number of formats you use to provide content at your 2018 conference?

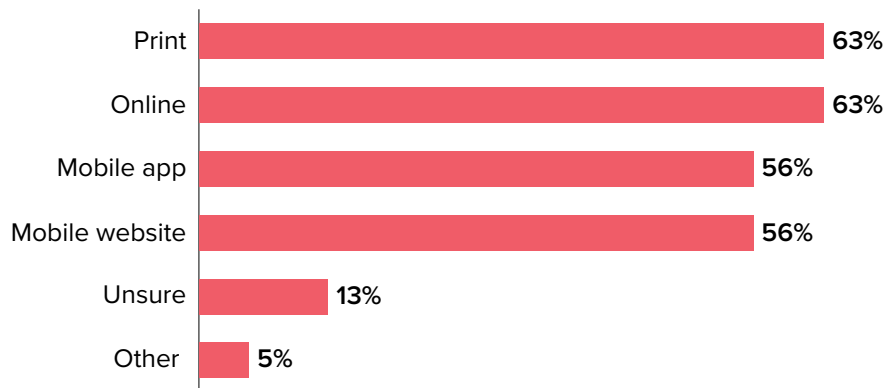


What is the primary source of influence on which formats you offer?

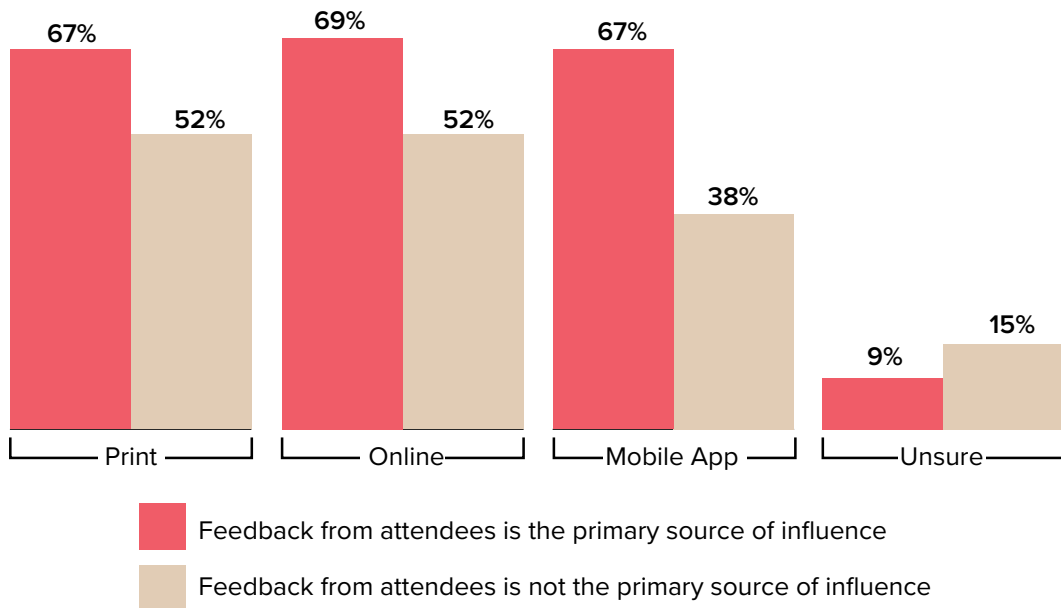


The shift away from attendee feedback could be problematic for associations. Decisions made without this valuable input could be detrimental to the attendees' conference experience.

How do attendees want the content delivered?

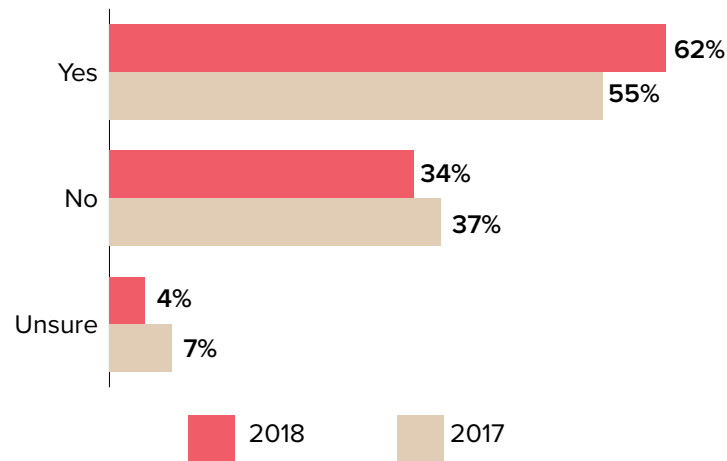


How do attendees want the content delivered? (Segmented by primary source of influence)



It's clear that attendees want to access content in the medium that is most convenient for them. Associations that solicit attendee feedback have a more accurate assessment of these expectations.

Do you currently re-use your content from your conference for any purpose?



How do you re-use this content?



Using social media to repurpose the most popular content from past conferences is an effective way to increase the visibility of your next event to potential attendees.

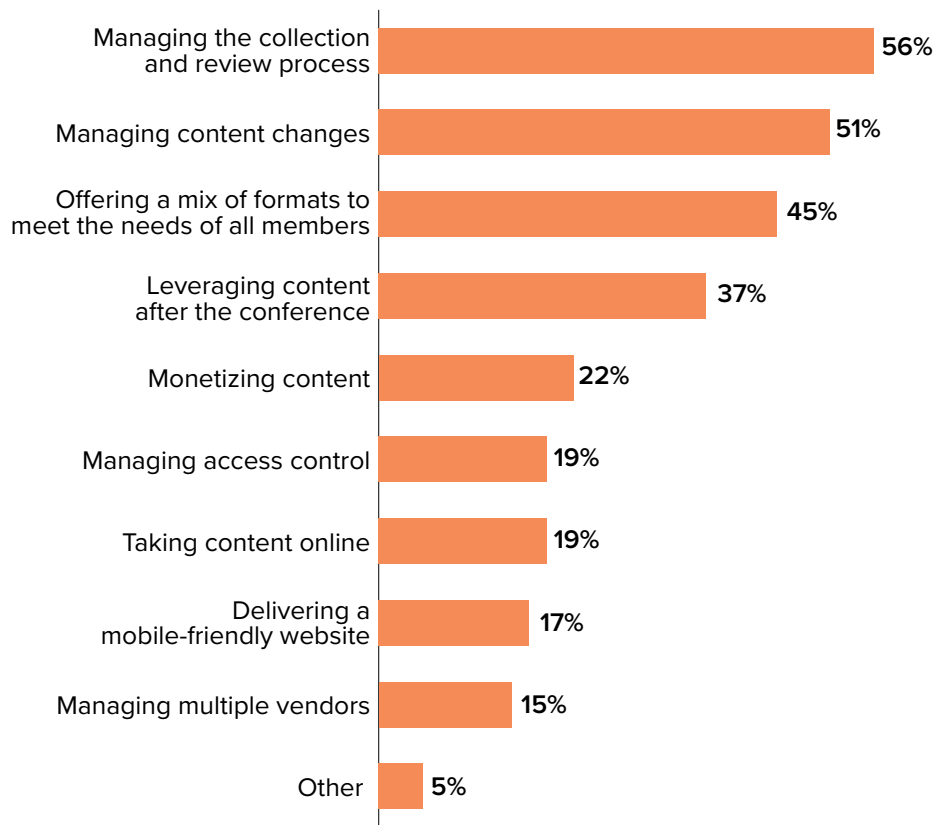
IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES WITH DELIVERING CONTENT

Associations face new dilemmas as they offer attendees more choices.

Managing the collection and review process continues to be the single greatest challenge that associations face with their conference content. Regardless of their role in the association, respondents understand the pain associated with this portion of conference planning.

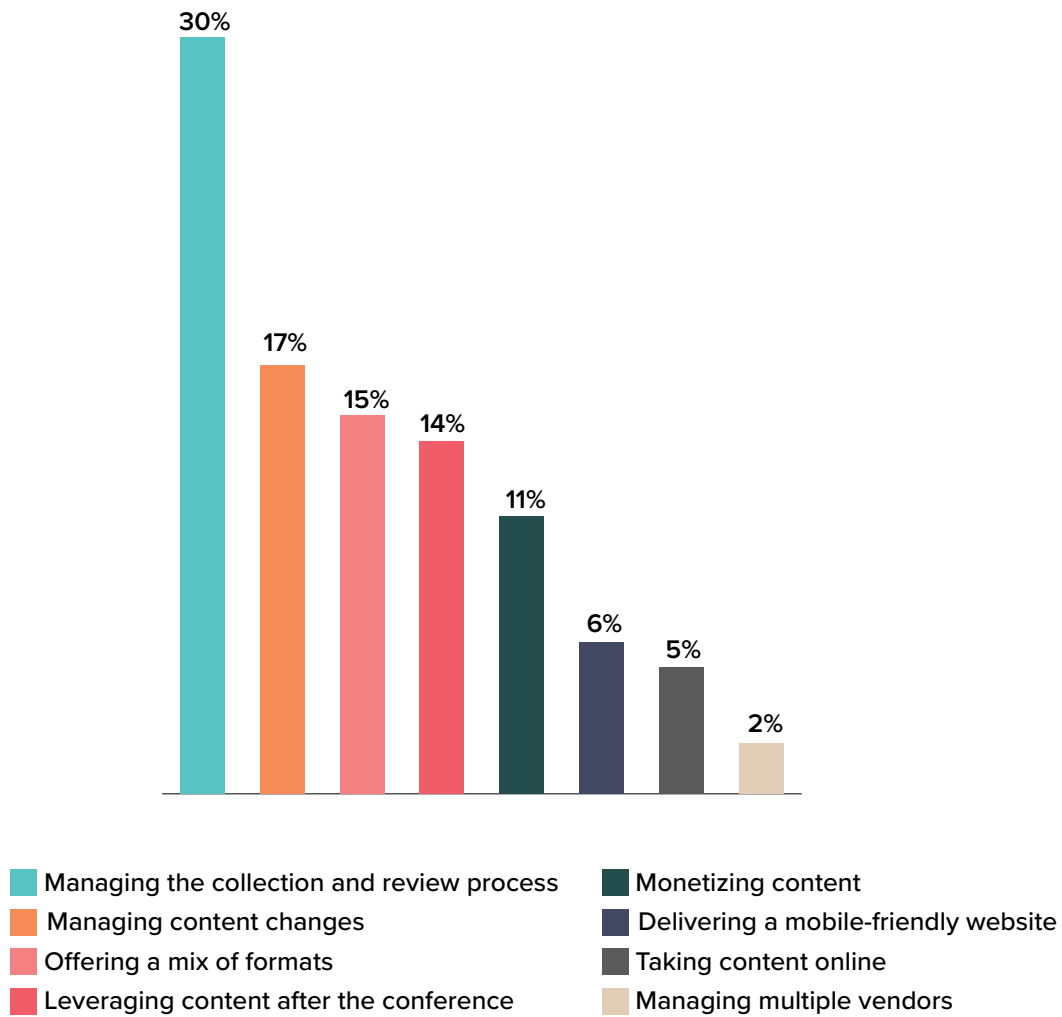
As associations increase the number of formats they are using to provide content, new complications are arising. “Managing content changes” was the only challenge that saw a significant year-over-year increase in responses. Last-minute changes to content is nothing new, but having to manage these changes across multiple formats—and potentially multiple vendors—becomes an increasingly time-consuming endeavor.

What are your top challenges with managing and distributing your conference content?



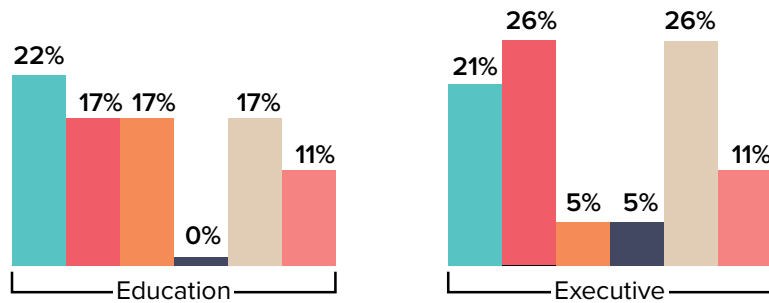
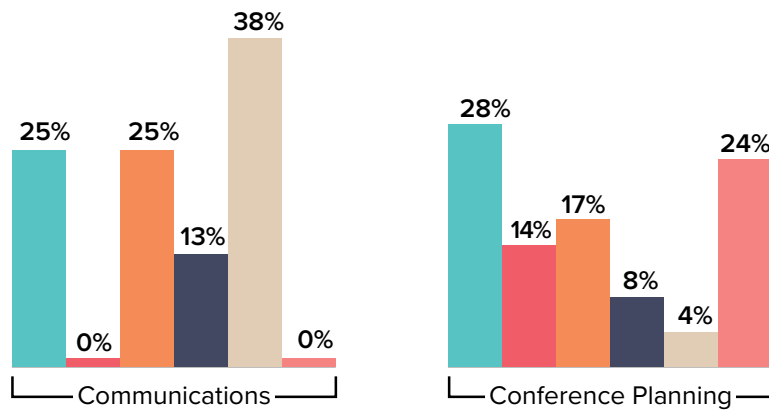
The number of respondents that find “Leveraging content after the conference” challenging declined from 50% last year to 37% in this year’s survey. It appears that as more associations invest in the tools and internal structure to re-use their content, they are finding solutions to make it easier.

Which of these is your single greatest challenge?



Which of these is your single greatest challenge?

(Segmented by role within the association)



- Managing the collection and review process
- Leveraging content after the conference
- Offering a mix of formats
- Delivering a mobile-friendly website
- Monetizing content
- Managing content changes

Association staff at every level understand the challenges associated with managing the collection and review process.

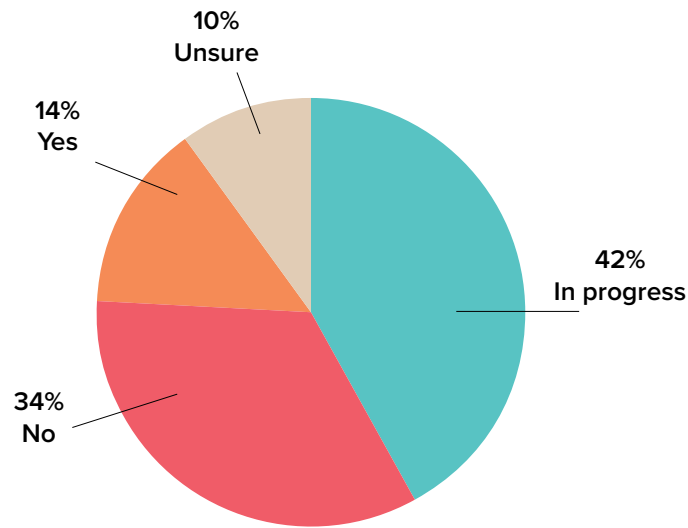
MEETING THE NEEDS OF A MULTI-GENERATIONAL AUDIENCE

As young professionals become a larger percentage of the workforce, association membership rates are not reflecting this trend.

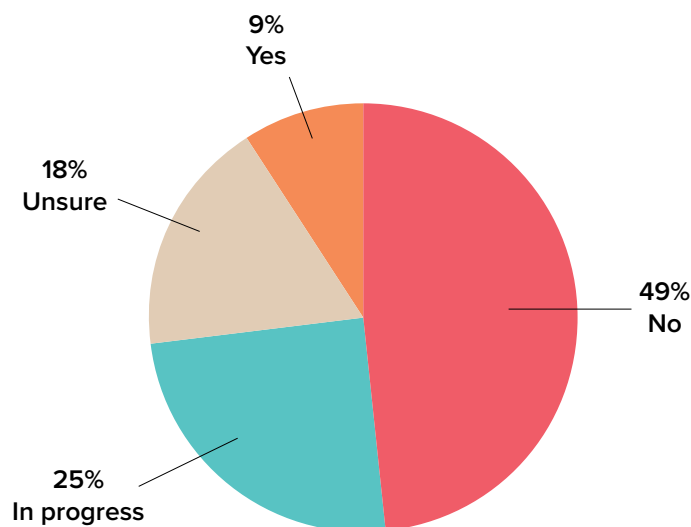
With the oldest of Millennials turning 36 in 2018, the idea of *preparing* for this generation may be behind us. Instead, these young professionals comprise a significant portion of the workplace and are advancing into more senior roles within their industries.

Unfortunately, associations are not seeing a corresponding rise in the number of Millennial and Generation Z members. Respondents indicated that Baby Boomers still comprise the majority of association members. The median percentage of Baby Boomer members (50%) continues to be much larger than the median percentage of Millennial members (10%). The gap in members' age range underlies the importance of creating initiatives that speak to these younger generations.

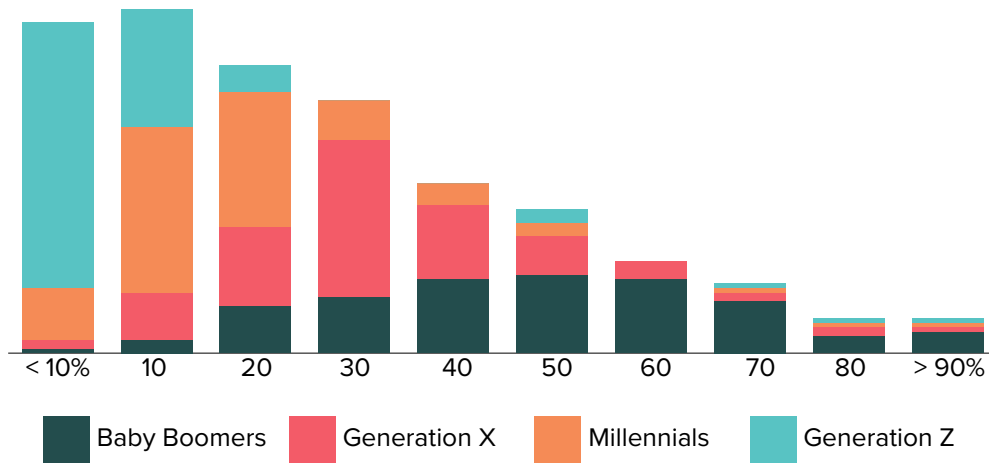
Has your association developed a strategy to address the needs and preferences of Millennials?



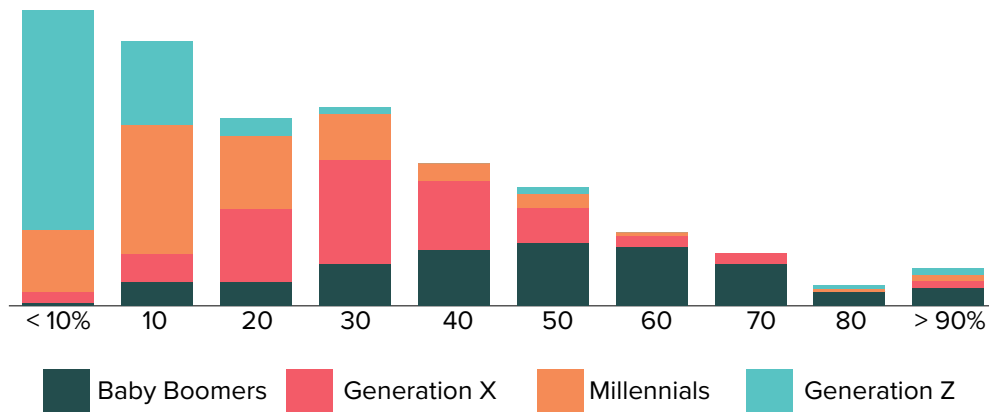
Has your association developed a strategy to address the needs of the post-Millennial generation (Generation Z)?



Approximately what percentage of your association's membership falls into each of the following demographic categories?



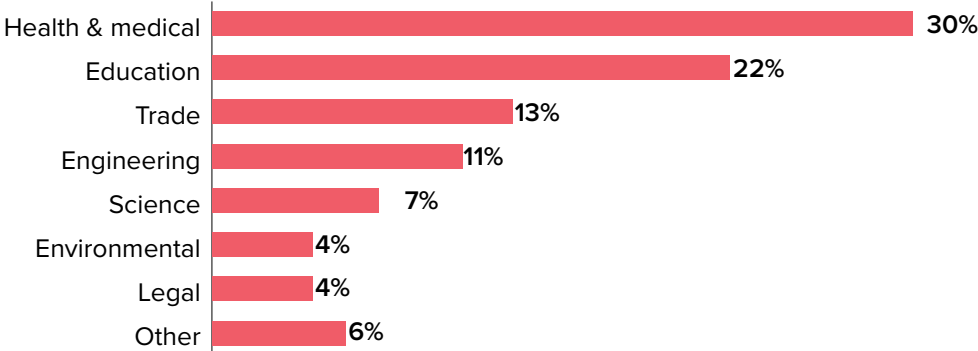
Approximately what percentage of your conference attendance falls into each of the following demographic categories?



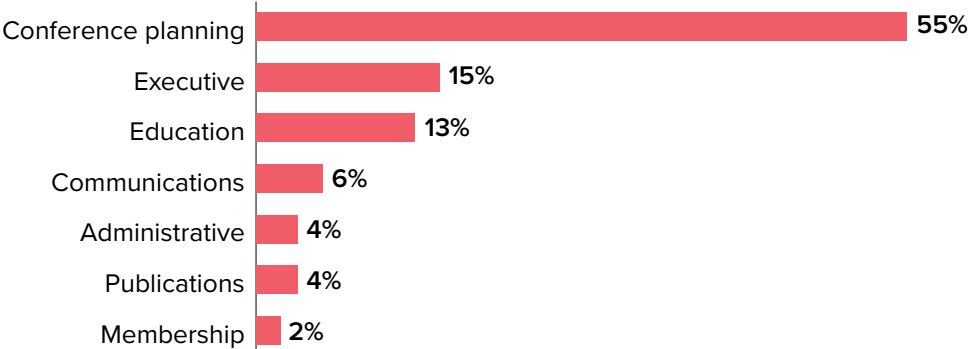
Conference attendee demographics mirror association membership demographics, making it difficult to increase the number of younger professionals at the annual event.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

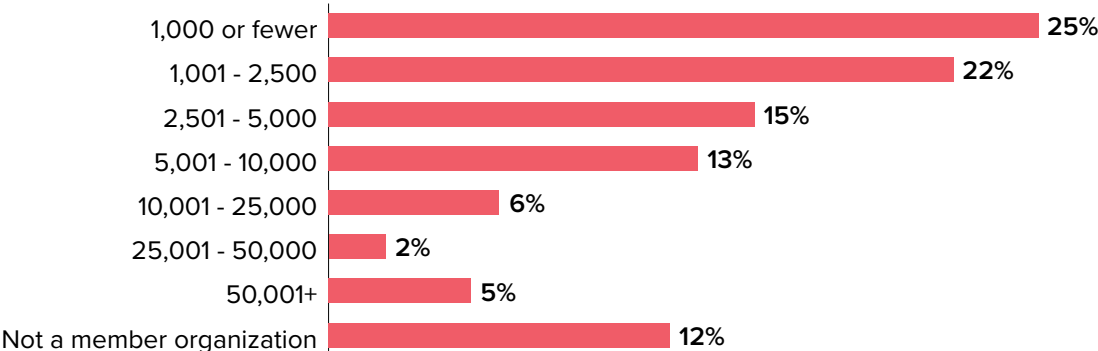
What industry does your association serve?



What is your primary area of responsibility?



How many members does your association have?



KEY QUESTIONS

The goal of this report is not only to shed light on some common trends facing associations, but also to help associations take action. As you prepare for your next event, here are some questions to think about as you talk with your co-workers and members:

Are there additional opportunities to increase member engagement with your content?

One idea might be to collect submissions for content that would be used exclusively to promote your event. This would provide new opportunities for up and coming members to showcase their work, while at the same time, increasing the visibility of your event.

How can you accurately determine the formats that attendees prefer when it comes to conference content?

For digital formats like mobile apps, USBs and online content libraries, review each format's analytics to understand when and how attendees engage with the content.

How can you make it easier for everyone in the organization to repurpose your event content?

Developing a content strategy that provides an overview of what content is available and suggestions on how it can be re-used could be shared with everyone that is involved in a communications role.

What steps can you take to make it easier to manage content changes across multiple formats?

Adjusting submission deadlines to provide more time for production can make last minute content changes less chaotic. If you are working with multiple vendors, make sure you coordinate with each of them ahead of time on how they would like to receive content updates.

Are there ways to leverage younger members' interest in technology at the event?

Recruit a Millennial to document the event on Snapchat or ask a Gen. Z member to write a blog article that explains the value your conference provides to other professionals that are just beginning their career.

NOTES:



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