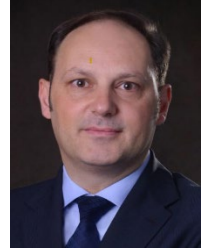


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American Express Global Business Travel 2024 Meetings and Events Forecast

2023 has been a very active year for Meeting and Events business, both globally and in Japan. Virtual fatigue – a feeling of exhaustion following video conference calls- was real as we have most meetings return to in-person formats. Attendee numbers have rebounded, to pre-pandemic levels and internal team gatherings, customer board meetings and special events have been on the rise. We have also noted a more widespread use of technology. Such trends point univocally to the strategic nature of the Meeting and Events as a key path to business and organizational growth.

In Japan, Meetings and Events has been recognized for its ability to drive business, add value, and attract visitors to regional areas. After being severely impaired by the pandemic, Japan`s inbound tourism industry has bounced back stronger than ever, also supported by deliberate public policies and strategies.

For instance, the “Action Plan for Expanding Inbound Travel in the New Era”, decided by the Ministerial Conference for the Promotion of Tourism in May 2023, sets the three pillars of "business," "education and research," and "culture, art, sports and nature" as its three main areas. In the business field, the plan calls for maintaining Japan position as the No. 1 host country for international conferences in Asia and one of the top five in the world.

American Express Global Business Travel Meetings and Events has recently released its 13th Annual Meeting and Event Forecast 2024. Over 500 Meetings and Events professionals from around the world and over a dozen industry leaders have shared their insights. Result shows that 2024 is clearly going to be a dynamic year, characterized by substantial growth and continued tech adoption.

On top of the enduring emphasis on the value of in-person meetings, the report has highlighted many more key trends set to shape the evolution we’re witnessing in the meetings and events realm. These

include the adoption of technology and leveraging of automation, artificial intelligence (AI), a greater commitment to sustainability, and a renewed focus on smaller, simpler meetings.

And that's not all – emerging technologies used to streamline and automate event planning are taking center stage now planners realize time saved from admin tasks can be channeled into more strategic and creative endeavors. We're also expecting to see a surge in adoption of robotics, AI, and data analysis systems, with technology poised to help track and manage corporate sustainability goals.

Although the mood remains positive, professionals are still likely to face a myriad of complex challenges, including global inflation, ongoing staff shortages, higher attendee expectations, and the growing importance to not only act sustainably but also explicitly demonstrate that sustainability is a priority.

Meeting planners can respond to these obstacles by harnessing the available tools effectively. They can do this by using technology to automate tasks, revising meeting program policies for faster budget approvals, integrating travel for business and meetings, and working closely with their partners and agencies.

Let's zoom into the Asia Pacific region.

Overall meeting spend in Asia Pacific is expected to increase by 4.3% in 2024, compared to 2.7% in 2023. Respondents expect an increase of 4.9% in group hotel rates and 6% in group air rates. Asia marginally lags the other regions when it comes to in-person meetings and events, with respondents indicating that 42% of the events will be in person, 29% will be virtual and 29% will be hybrid in 2024.

Singapore is back on top of the Asia Pacific destinations list, followed by Tokyo, Bangkok, Sydney and Hong Kong.



For those who are wondering how to stay ahead with the latest trends and confront any potential challenges head, here are '7 actionable insights to elevate further your organization`s meetings program'.

1. Cultivate strong partnerships

Planning meetings has evolved and become more complex, but cultivating robust relationships with travel management companies, vendors and suppliers will make life easier. Work as a team with everyone involved to build trust and confidence. Create safe spaces for suppliers to share their creative ideas – no matter how out of the box they might appear when you first hear them. Listen and trust that they're the experts and empower them to make your meeting a success.

2. Keep it simple for attendees (and yourself)

People have adapted well to the self-serve and online environment for booking personal travel and events. Try to incorporate consumer-type experiences for meeting stakeholders by offering self-booking and automated processes wherever possible.

3. Fully leverage technology and automation

Although ideal tech solutions for registration and logistics aren't fully in place, there are still lots of ways organizations can make the most of existing solutions. Use artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize communications. Tried and true mobile apps are also a great way for attendees to interact with meetings and events, as well as stay on top of agendas, sign up for workshops, ask questions and much more! When meeting in person is not in the cards, virtual meetings and events can be effective. And if your organization wants to demonstrate a tech forward approach, they can incorporate virtual reality (VR) and offer VR meetings that allow remote attendees to connect in a 3D space, or they can use it to provide life-like demos of products on site.

4. Make your meeting or event unmissable.

Encouraging people to take time away from home to attend your meetings and events can be tricky. They need to know it's going to be worth the trade-off. So, make sure their time will be well spent by understanding what they will value such as high-quality content, networking opportunities, sales leads, and education. Consider the wellbeing of attendees with sufficient breaks, self-care or mindfulness activities, plenty of good food and beverage options, and even consider the design of the room. Adding a personal touch from the start with outreach emails, through to post event, can also go a long way to drive attendance and reiterate your event's value.

5. Prioritize sustainability

Sustainability is a top priority for most businesses these days, and meetings and events often come under scrutiny. Organizations can be a step ahead by employing sustainable cost-effective practices.



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For example, reducing food waste by streamlining menus will be cutting costs.

6. Go big with strategy

As well as making sure they're sustainable, small and simple meetings need to include all the components big meetings do. Just because they're smaller, it doesn't mean they don't need as much consideration. So, make sure to include DE&I strategies, consider attendee wellbeing, pack them full of worthy content and utilize helpful tech such as mobile apps or easy registration.

7. Educate and advocate for your profession

The role of the planner is extensive and complex. The more awareness there is around these roles, the easier it is to onboard new people. And think about ways you can shout about just how rewarding it is, to encourage a new generation of eager meetings and events planners.

At GBT NTA, we know how to make meetings work for your company, your attendees, and your brand. Whether virtual, hybrid or face to face, we design experiences that matter. And we have the team, technology, and supplier network to deliver them. We can assist you end-to-end, or at any point in the meetings and events process.

As another exciting year for Meeting and Event business has just started, I would like to wish all continued success as you "Travel to grow, Meet to succeed", and please reach out if you have any additional ideas you would like to share and discuss.

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