



THE VIRTUAL ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE REPORT

Benchmarks and Personas for

Better Understanding Your Audience



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As the world has shifted to virtual-only and soon hybrid events, keeping attendees engaged has remained imperative to event success. However, as countless event managers turned digital producers have learned, that is no easy feat.

In fact, **attendee engagement and satisfaction is the #1 challenge that organizers face.***

We set out to discover **why**.

* [Event Outlook Report](#), Bizzabo, 2020; [Evolution of Events Report](#), Bizzabo, 2020

OUR GOAL?

To understand the perception, needs, and motivations of attendees when it comes to virtual events.

Specifically in regards to:

- The shift from in-person events to virtual
- Differences in experience between in-person and online events
- Perception of virtual events, and their effect on attendance & engagement
- Expectations from future virtual events

TYPES OF PERSONAS

This is what we're talking about today

Buyer Personas

(who your customers are)

- Includes: Buyer habits & demographics
- Goal: Identify market segments and potential buyers

Event Personas

(who your ideal attendees are)

- Includes: Types of attendees for a specific event and their expectation from it
- Goal: Identify potential attendees for an event, to determine the agenda, marketing strategy, etc.

Experience Personas

(what are the different perspectives on virtual events)

- Includes: Types of attendee perspectives and needs in virtual events
- Goal: Understanding the attendee experience in virtual events to design a better online solution

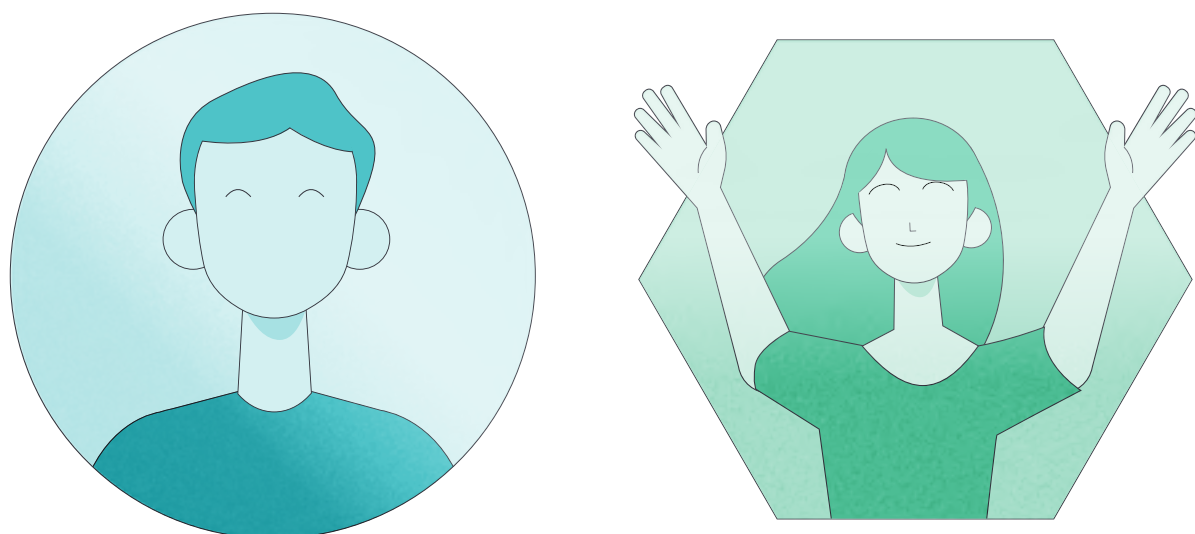
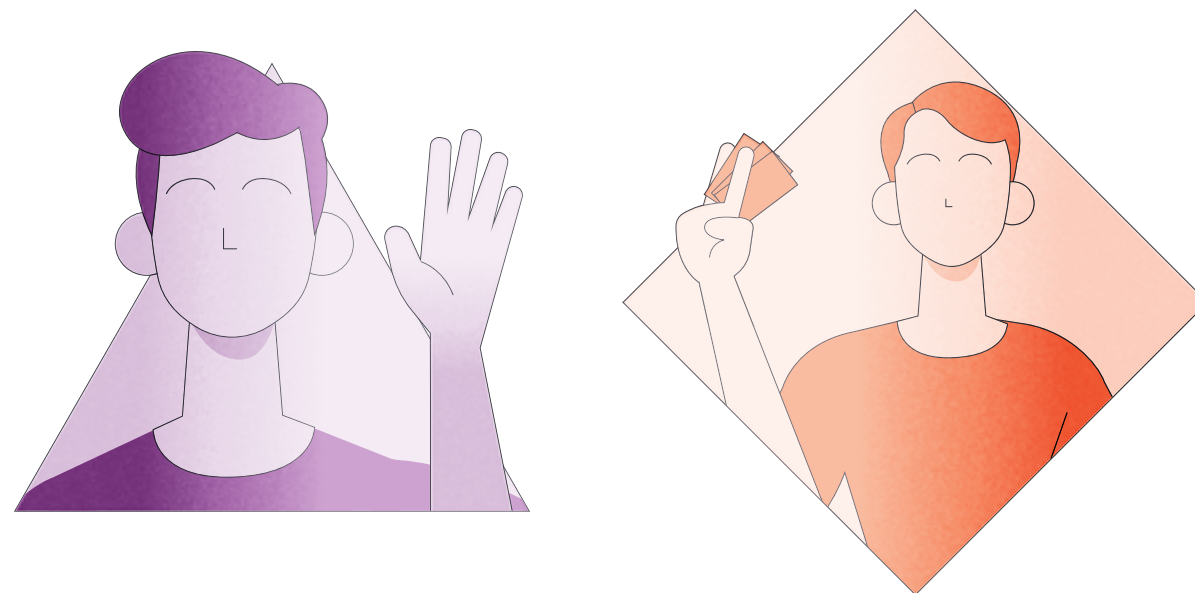
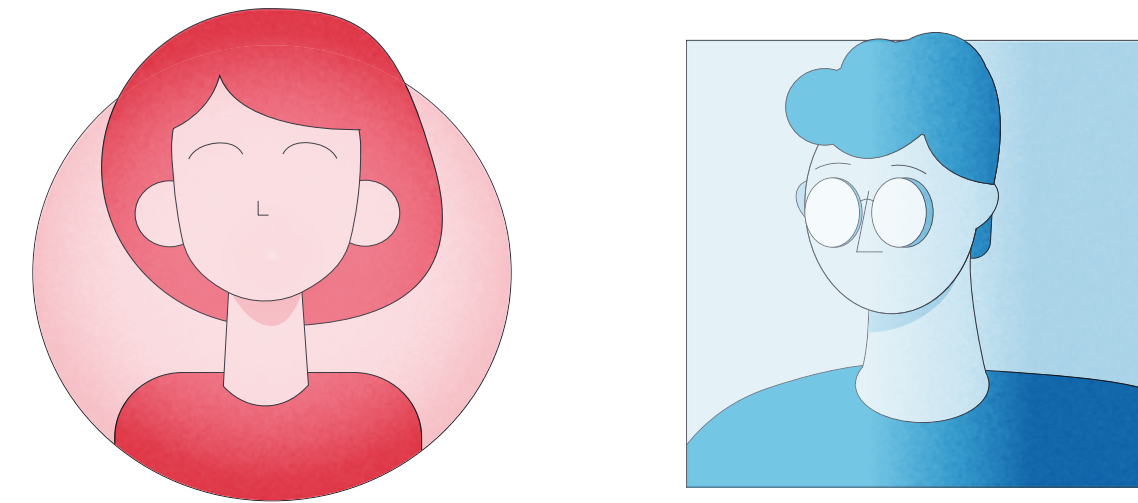
EXPERIENCE PERSONAS

What does this include?

- Visual representation of our virtual event attendees
- Capture Attendee Needs, Goals, Concerns, and Motivations
- Determine the Importance and prioritization of each persona

Why did we need personas?

- Create user empathy across events and solve for the needs of attendees in our virtual events platform
- Focus decisions when building events our virtual events platform
- Deliver value to you - our clients and the events industry



WHAT DID WE DO?

We used multiple research methods and usage data to compare attendees' experience across in-person and online events:

967 EVENTS

We analyzed data from 967 events (358 in-person, 618 virtual) between September 2019 and September 2020.

17 INTERVIEWS

We also interviewed 17 attendees who ranged location, age, industry, seniority, and company size.

660K ATTENDEES

To better understand 660K attendees (105K in-person, 556K virtual).

700 SURVEYED

We surveyed 700 total attendees to ensure target profiles.*

*All event data anonymously sourced from the Bizzabo platform. All attendee interviews and surveys sourced through a third-party firm.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

1. We learned about attendees' general attitude toward virtual events, and the change in behavior in event engagement, productivity, networking, and general experience
2. Based on this research, we identified six attendee personas to guide the direction of any virtual event - across industry, event type, or company size.

We're excited to share these findings with you.

The concept of a persona is often used in marketing and technology, and is not a foreign concept for many event organizers. There's a good reason why.

The application of a persona framework to events can make events even more successful by creating experiences that match with the goals, needs, and motivations of attendees.

However, no one has yet to conduct in-depth research into what virtual attendees — who recognize zoom fatigue as a household term — hope to get out of their virtual events.

Until now.

VIRTUAL ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

FINDINGS

ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE FINDINGS - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Engagement & commitment

- People are attending more online events than what they used to attend in-person (34% increase in attending 10+ events yearly online)
- Virtual events tend to be free & cheaper than in-person events (36% more free & -45% cheaper)
- Attendees are less committed to online events they register for (check-in rates are 21% lower for free events)

Productivity

- Attendees skip most of the event sessions, in all event types (most attendees go to 20% of the sessions)
- Attendees share their event insights with colleagues (51% of attendees summarize & share insights formally)

Networking

- In online events, attendees focus more on learning, and less on networking (25% decrease in expectation to network)
- More attendees report failing to network online (20% increase in failing to network as expected)
- Attendees struggle to ignite spontaneous conversations in online events (13% decrease in initiating natural conversation)

Fun factor

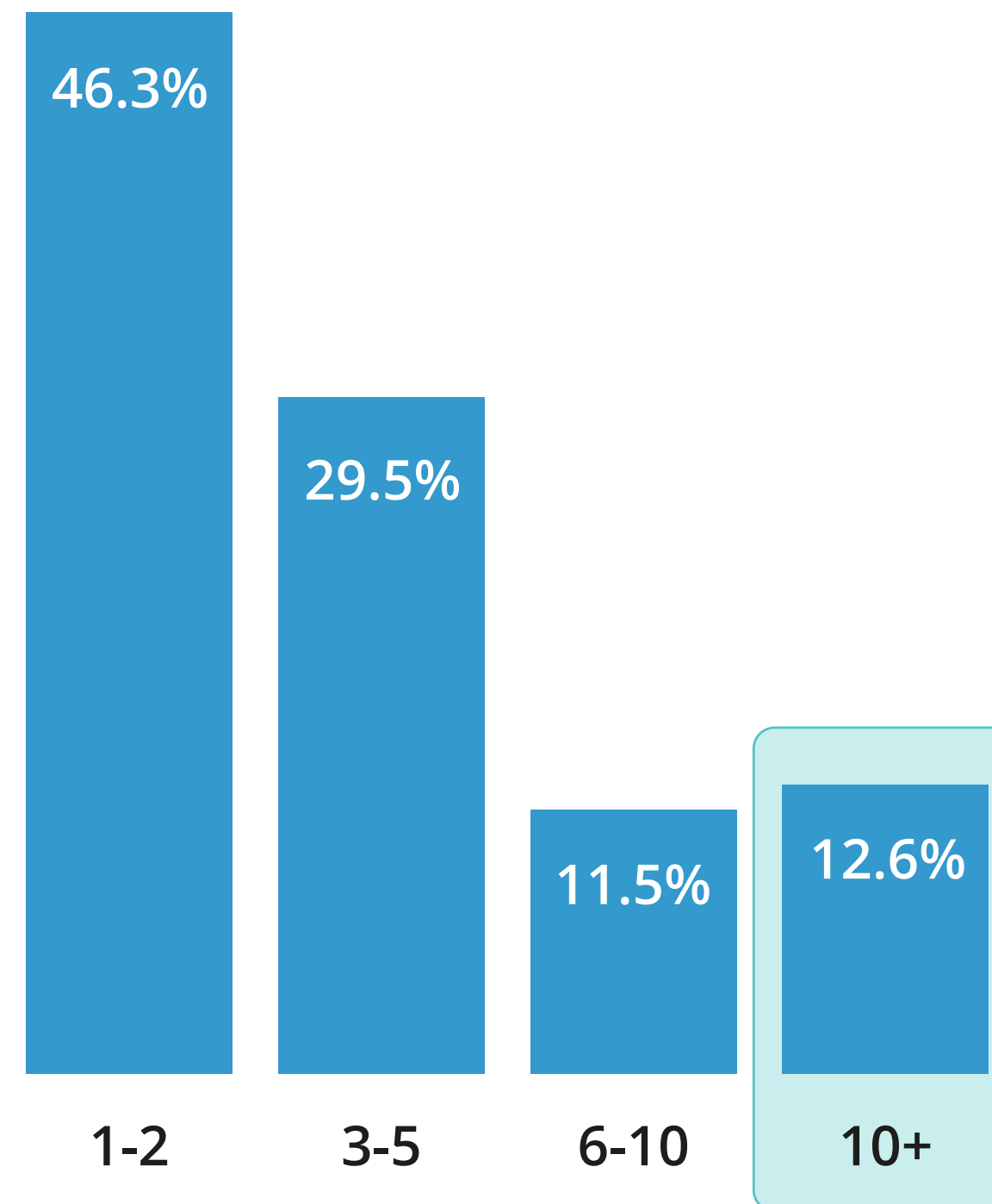
- Attendees mostly remember the social aspects of events they attend
- Attendees are having less fun on online events (26% more attendees stated last event was not fun)

Number of Events

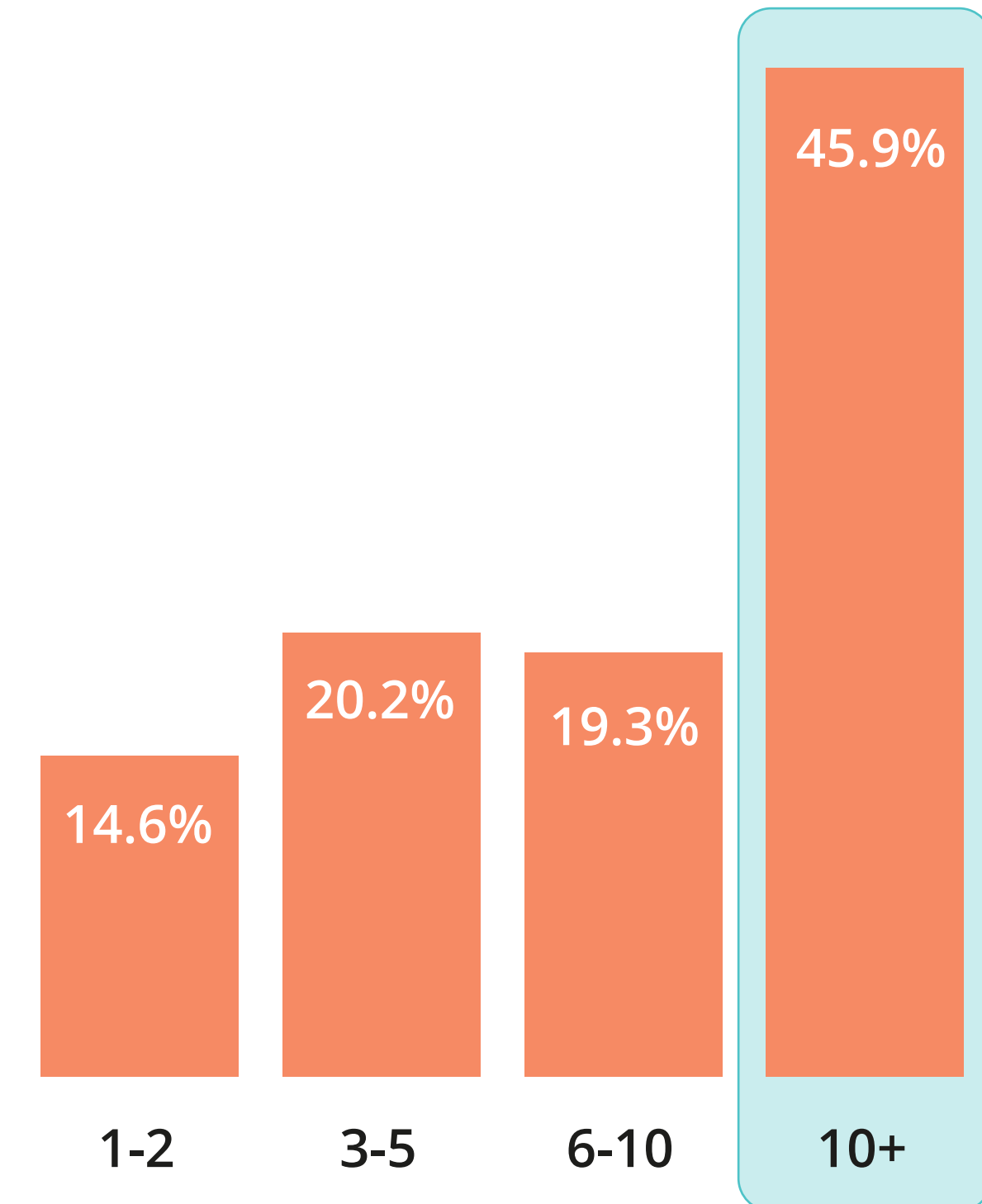
People are attending more online events than what they used to attend in-person

½ of survey participants attended 1-2 In-person events, but more than 10 online events in the past year.

In-person events



Online events

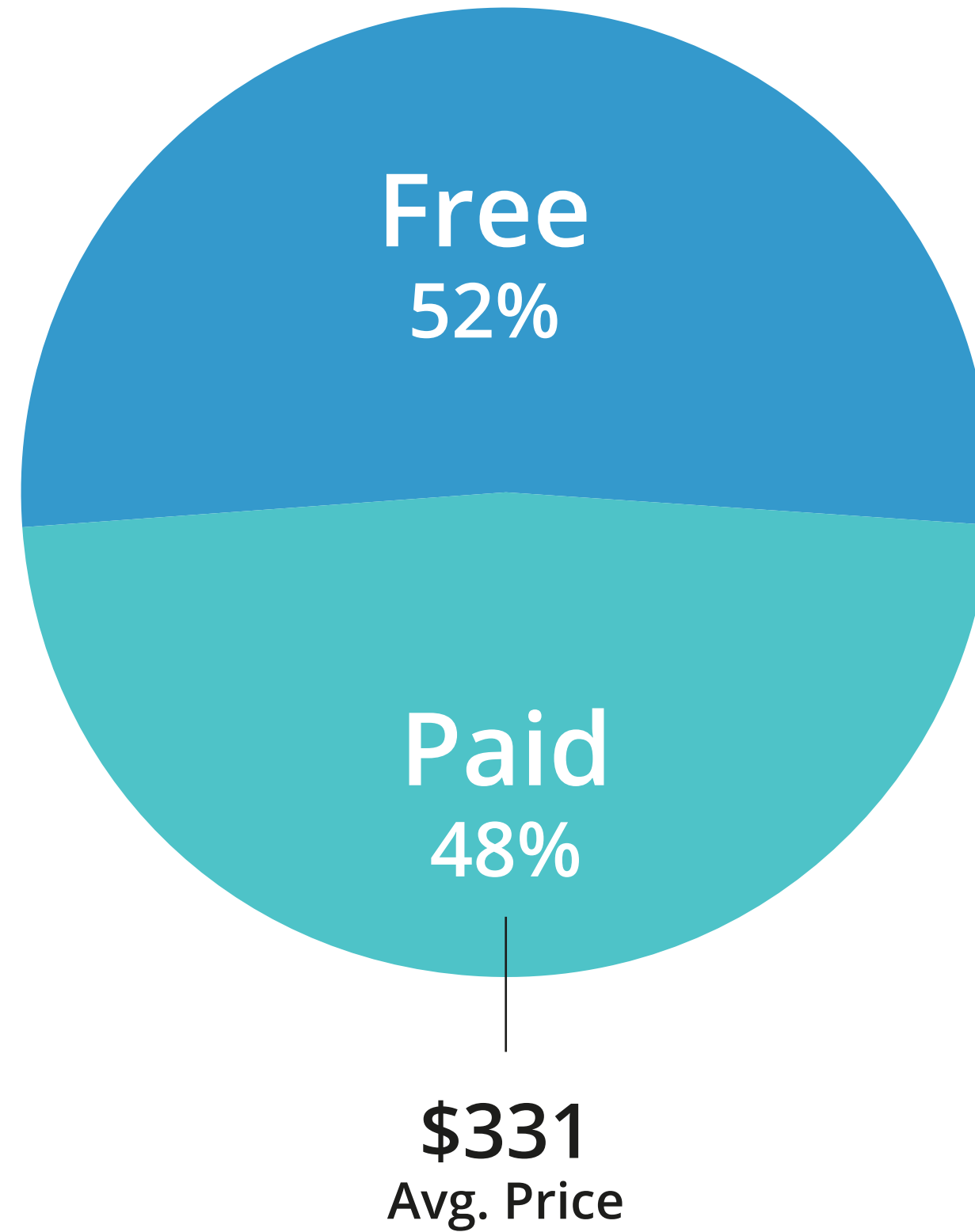


Ticket Prices

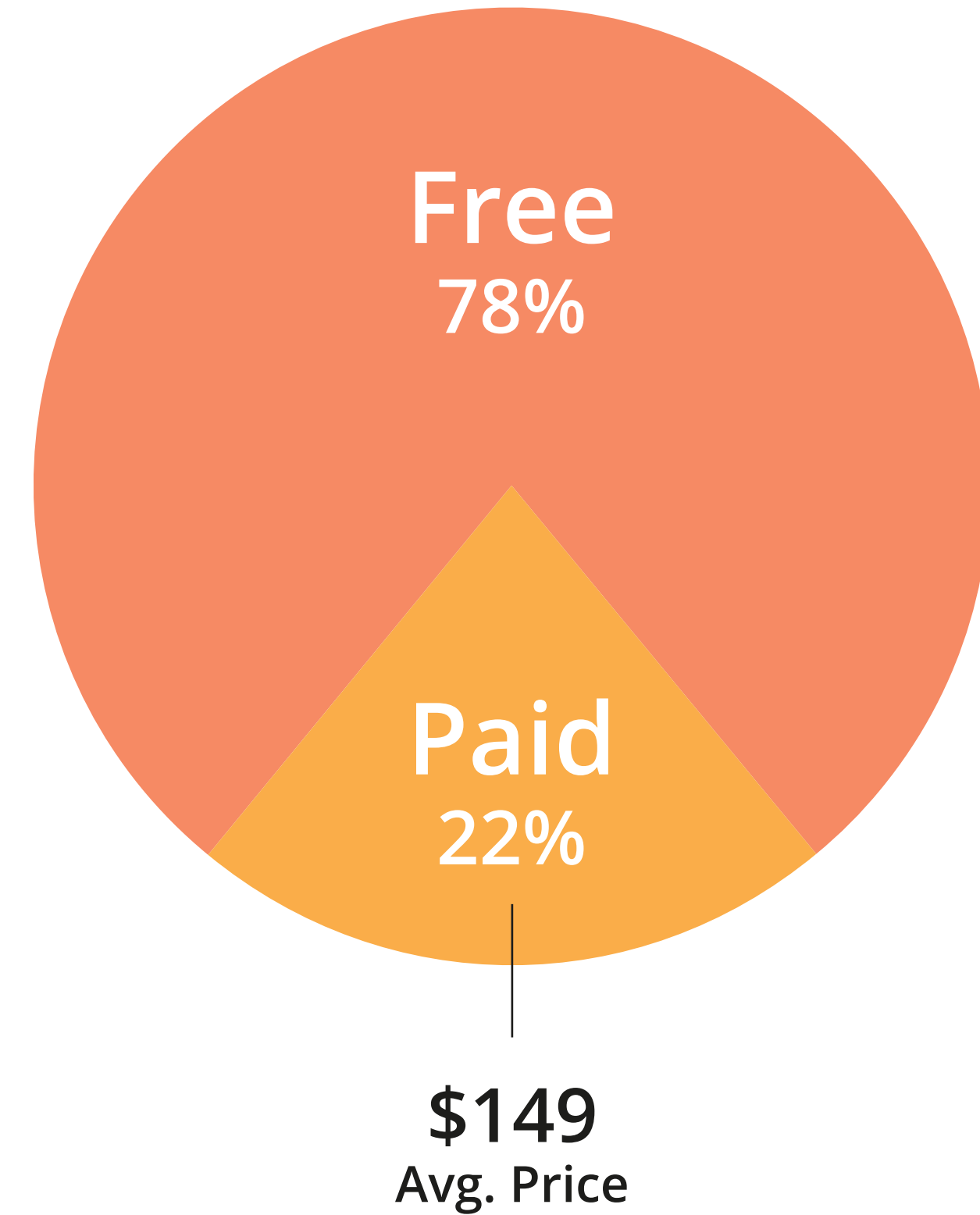
Virtual events tend to be free & cheaper than in-person events

- Virtual events are 36% more likely to be free than in-person events
- When tickets are paid, the average cost of a virtual event is -45% of an in-person event

In-person events



Virtual events

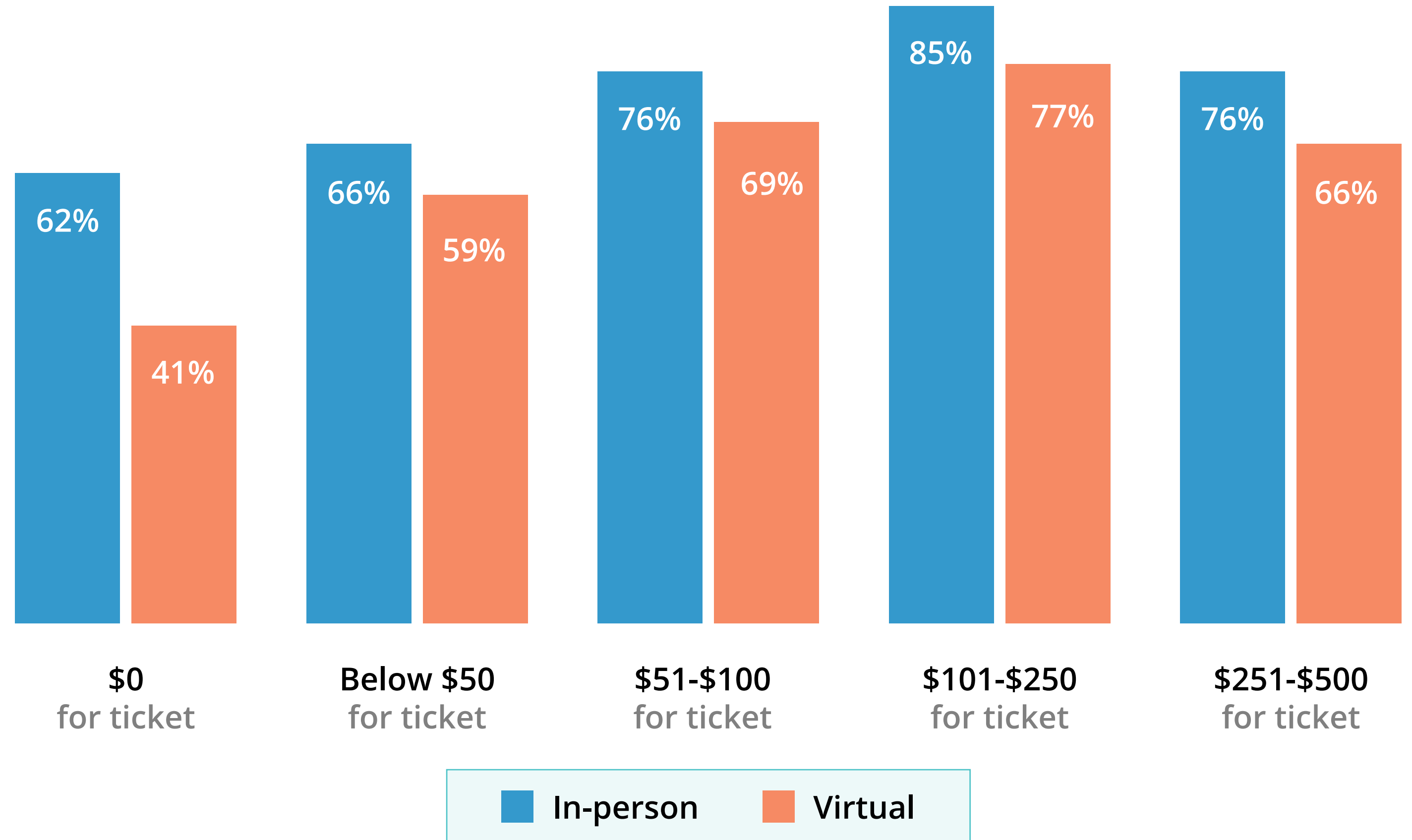


Attendees Check-in Rates

Attendees were less committed to online events they register

- Check-in rate with free tickets is 21% higher for in-person events
- Check-in rates for in-person events generally increase with ticket prices

Check-in rates, per ticket price

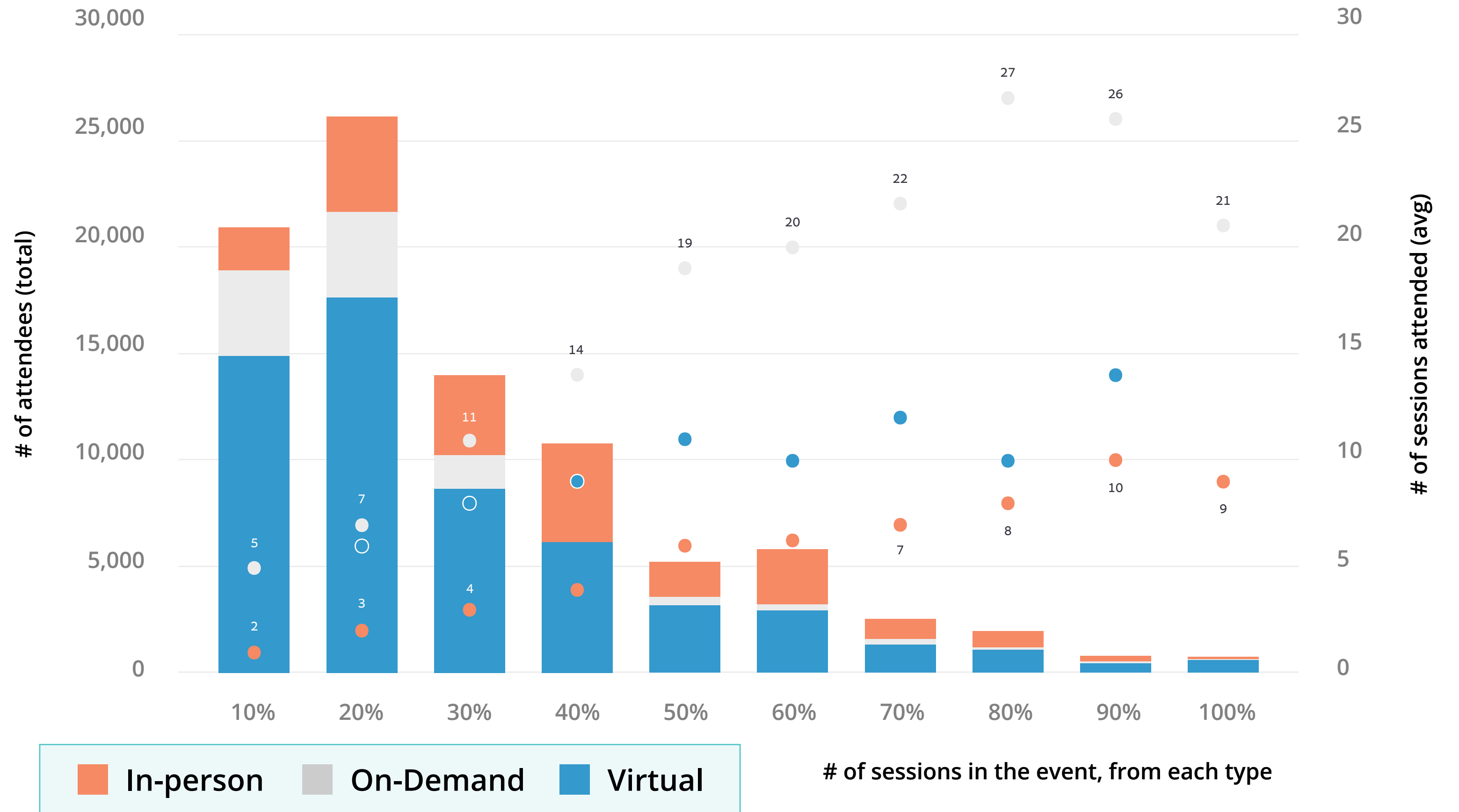


Session Attendance

Attendees skip most of the event sessions, in all event types

- 20% of the sessions are mostly attended across all types.
- While people attend less % of the agenda online, they view more sessions than in-person events.

Session attendance across event types



Sharing Event Insights

Most attendees share their event experience & insights with colleagues

- 81.8% shared their last event insights & experience with others they work with
- 44.2% sent event resources or an email recap
- 7.9% presented their insights with an official presentation they prepared

Informally through hallway conversations



Shared event materials/resources



Demonstrated it by taking on new tasks based on skills/information gained



Sent a recap via email



Prepared an official presentation



I didn't share my experience with others

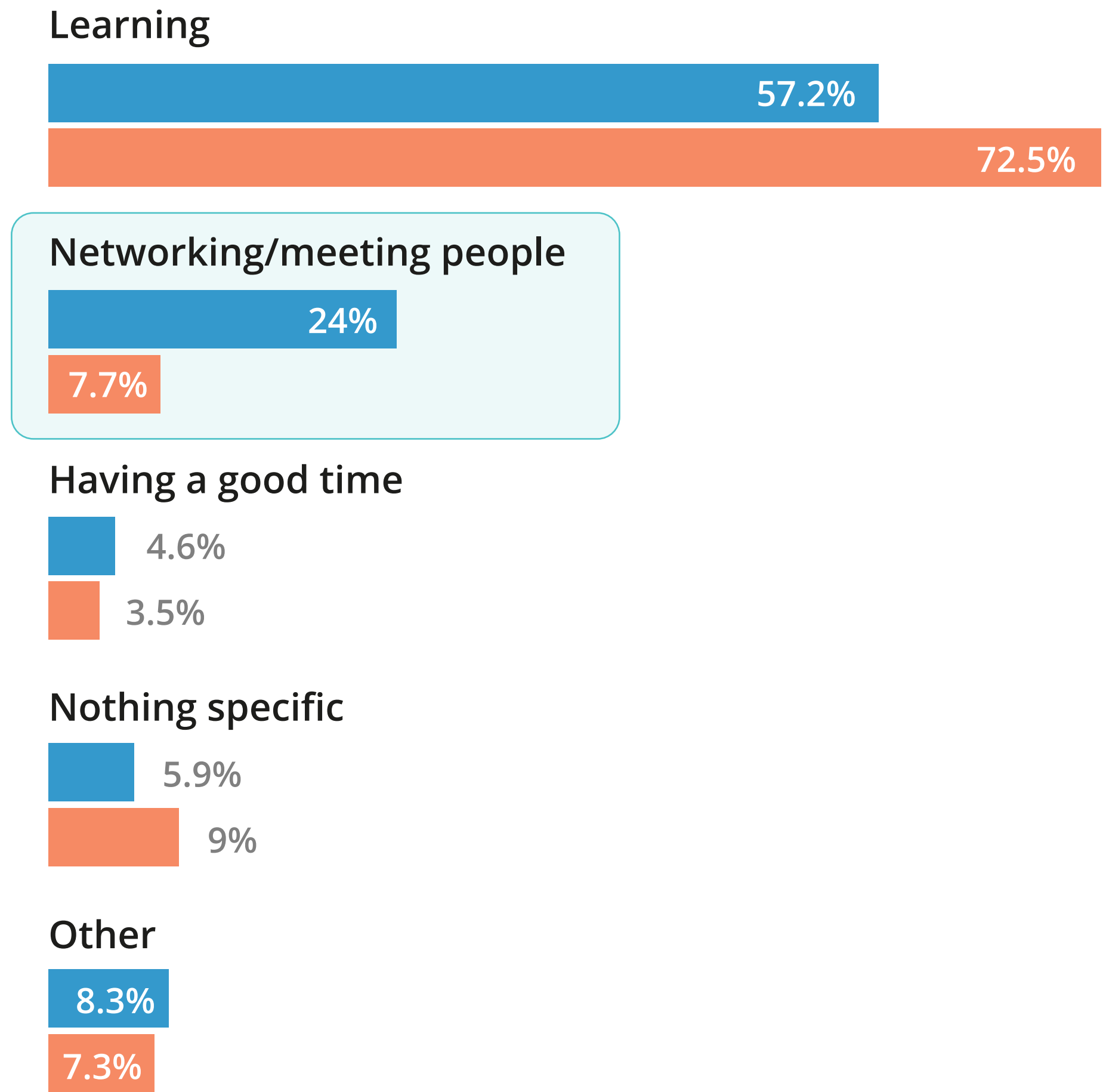


Q: How did you share your event experience & insights with others you work with? (N=479)

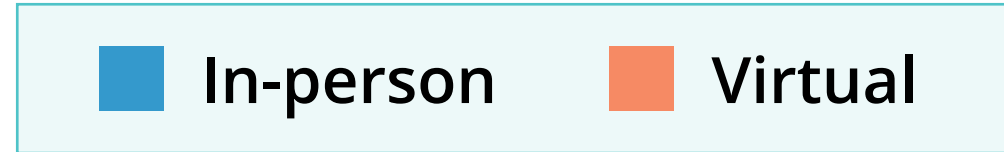
Attendees Goals

In online events, attendees focus more on learning, and less on networking

- Focus on networking as a goal, was reduced by 16% in online events (1/3 of in-person)
- Focus on learning as a goal, was increased by 15% in online events



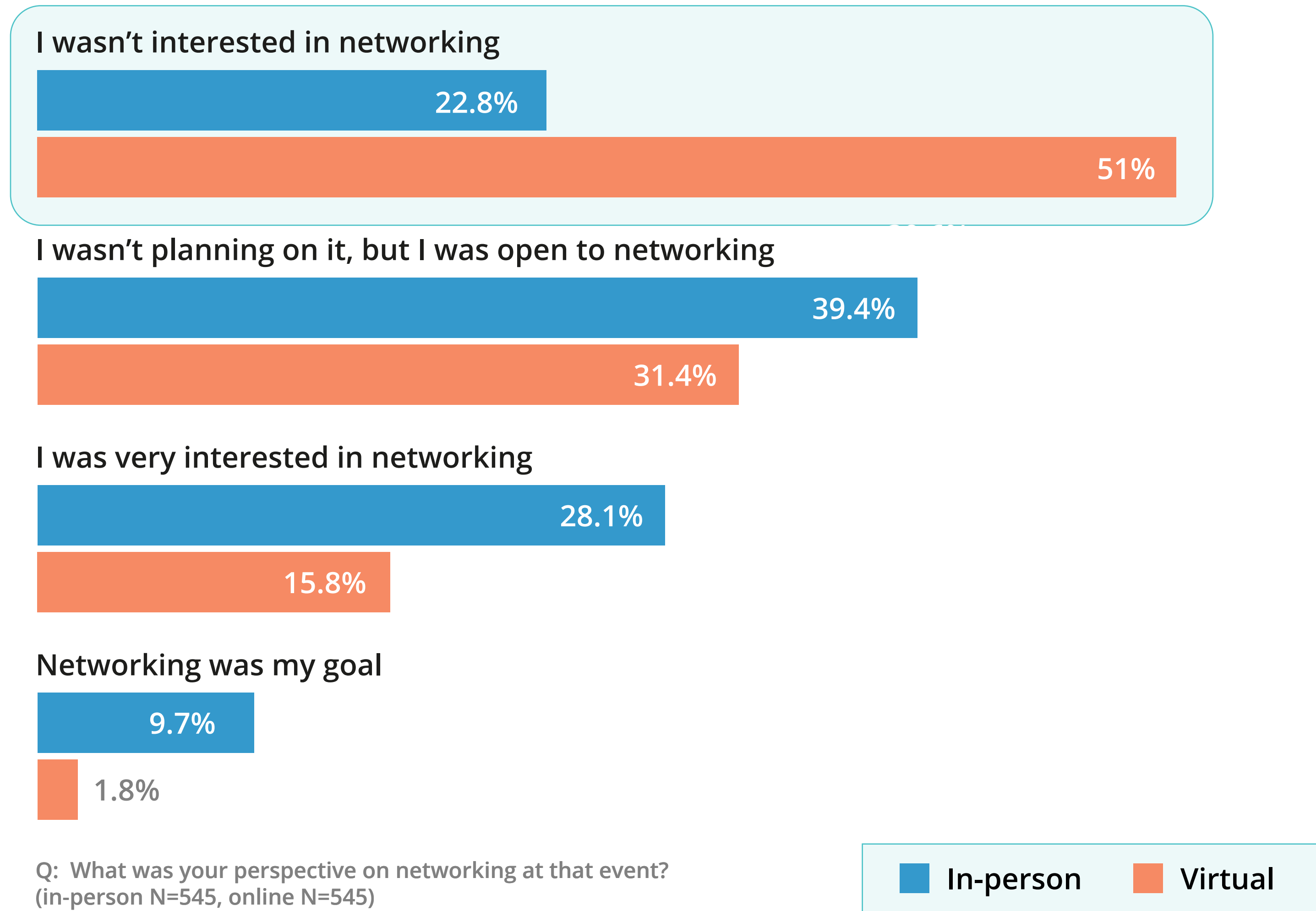
Q: What were you mostly hoping to achieve at that event? (in-person N=545, online N=545)



Importance of Networking

Attendees are less likely to plan for networking in online events

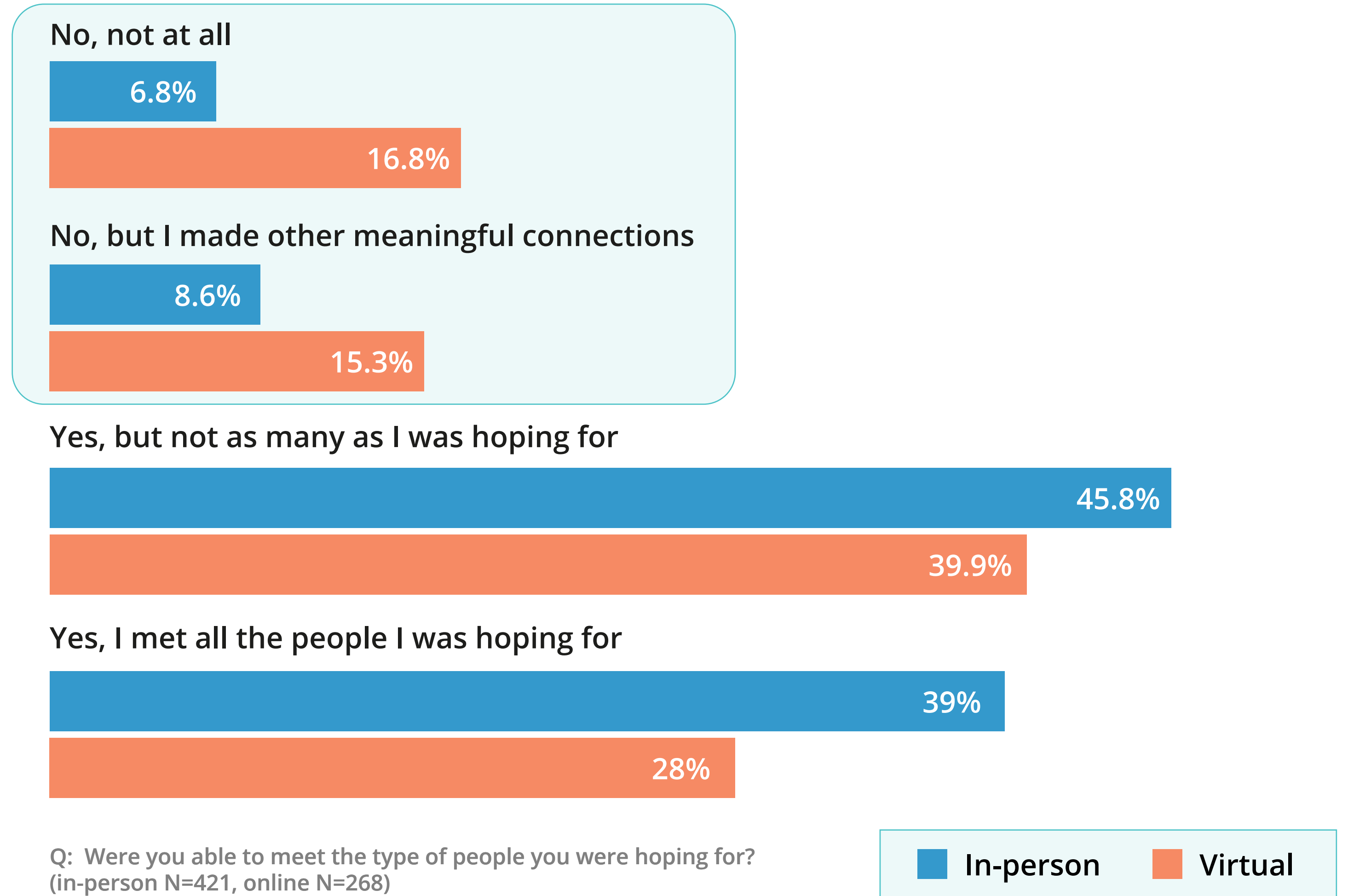
- Attendees are 28% more likely to be unconcerned with networking online
- Attendees are 20% less likely to be very interested in networking online or to set it as a goal



Networking Productivity

More attendees report failing to network online

Attendees failed to meet the type of people they hoped for 17% more online

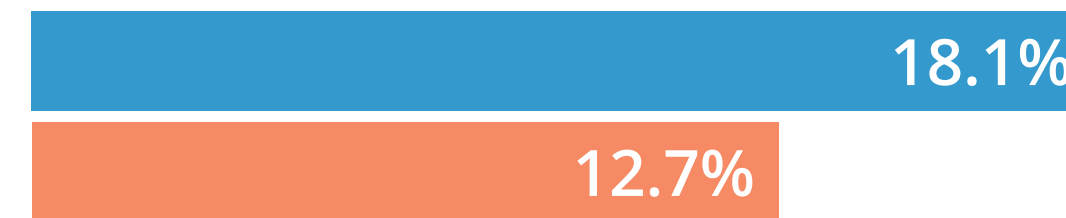


Networking Initiation

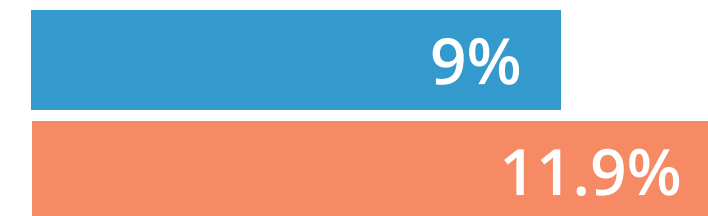
Conversations flow less naturally in online events, and depend on event activities

Igniting conversations neutrally or by approaching people, is 14% less likely in online events

I approached people



I was approached by others



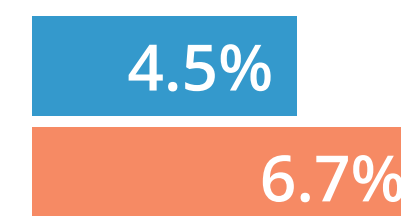
Neutrally (no one actively approaching)



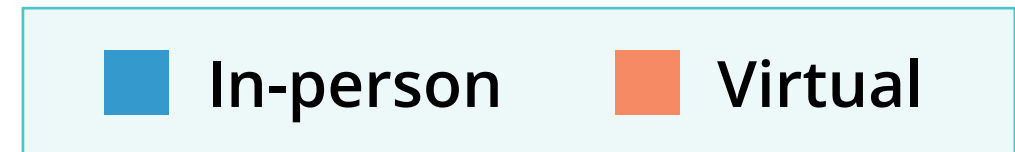
Event activities initiated conversations



I met people I coordinated with prior to the event



Q: What initiated most of your networking conversations at that event? (in-person N=421, online N=268)

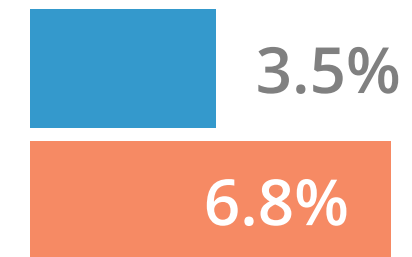


Importance of Learning

Attendees are more likely to plan for learning in online events

Attendees are 9% more likely to set learning as a goal online

I wasn't interested in gaining knowledge



I wasn't planning on it, but was open to it



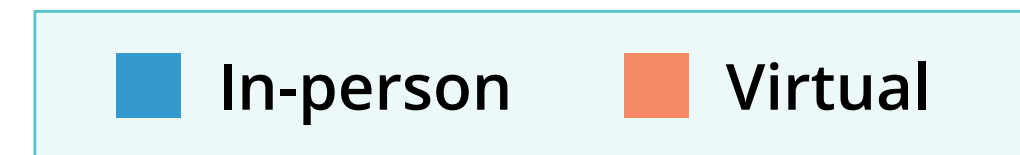
I was very interested in gaining knowledge



Gaining knowledge was my goal



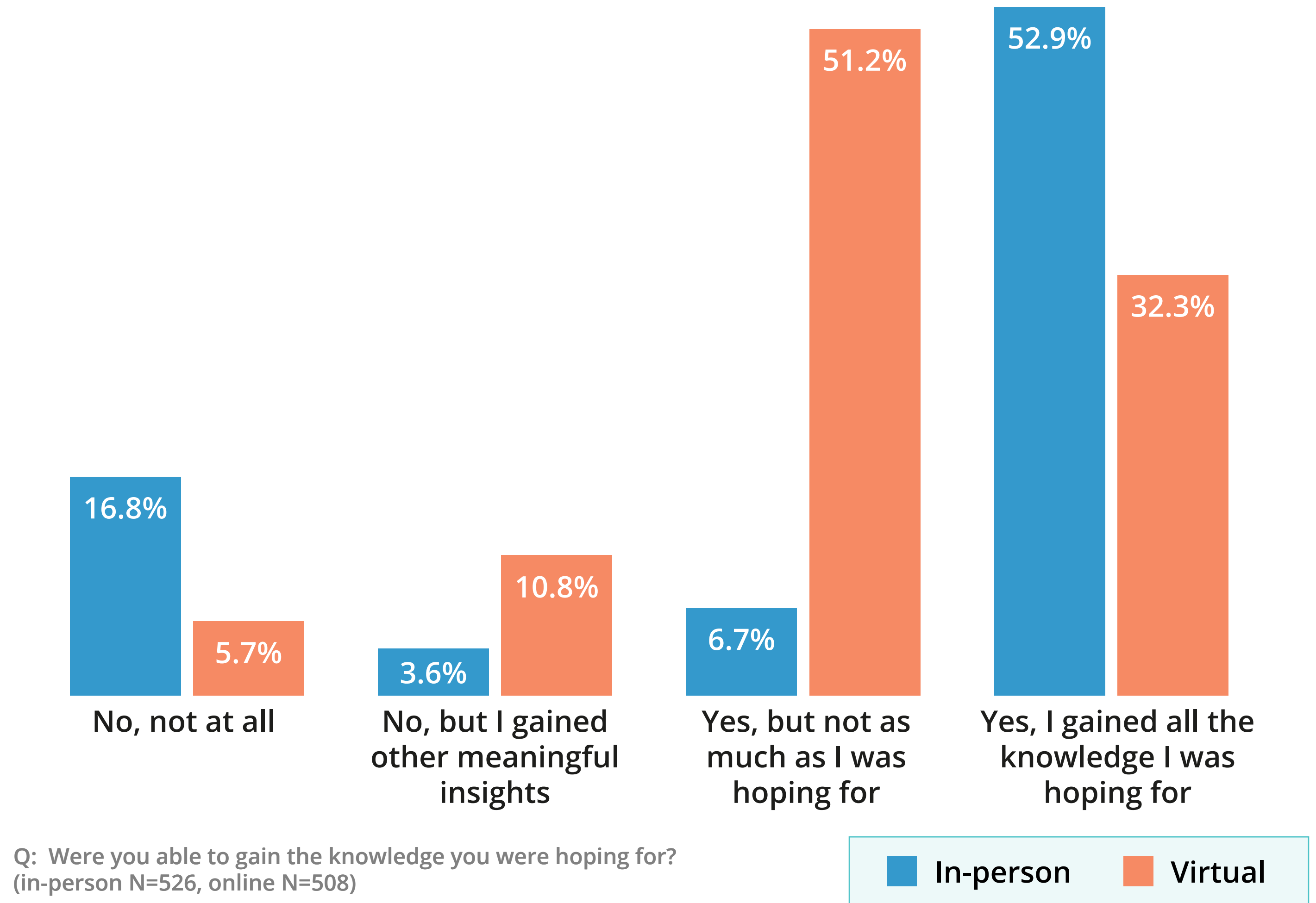
Q: What was your perspective on gaining professional knowledge at that event? (in-person N=545, online N=545)



Learning Productivity

Attendees report learning less than expected online

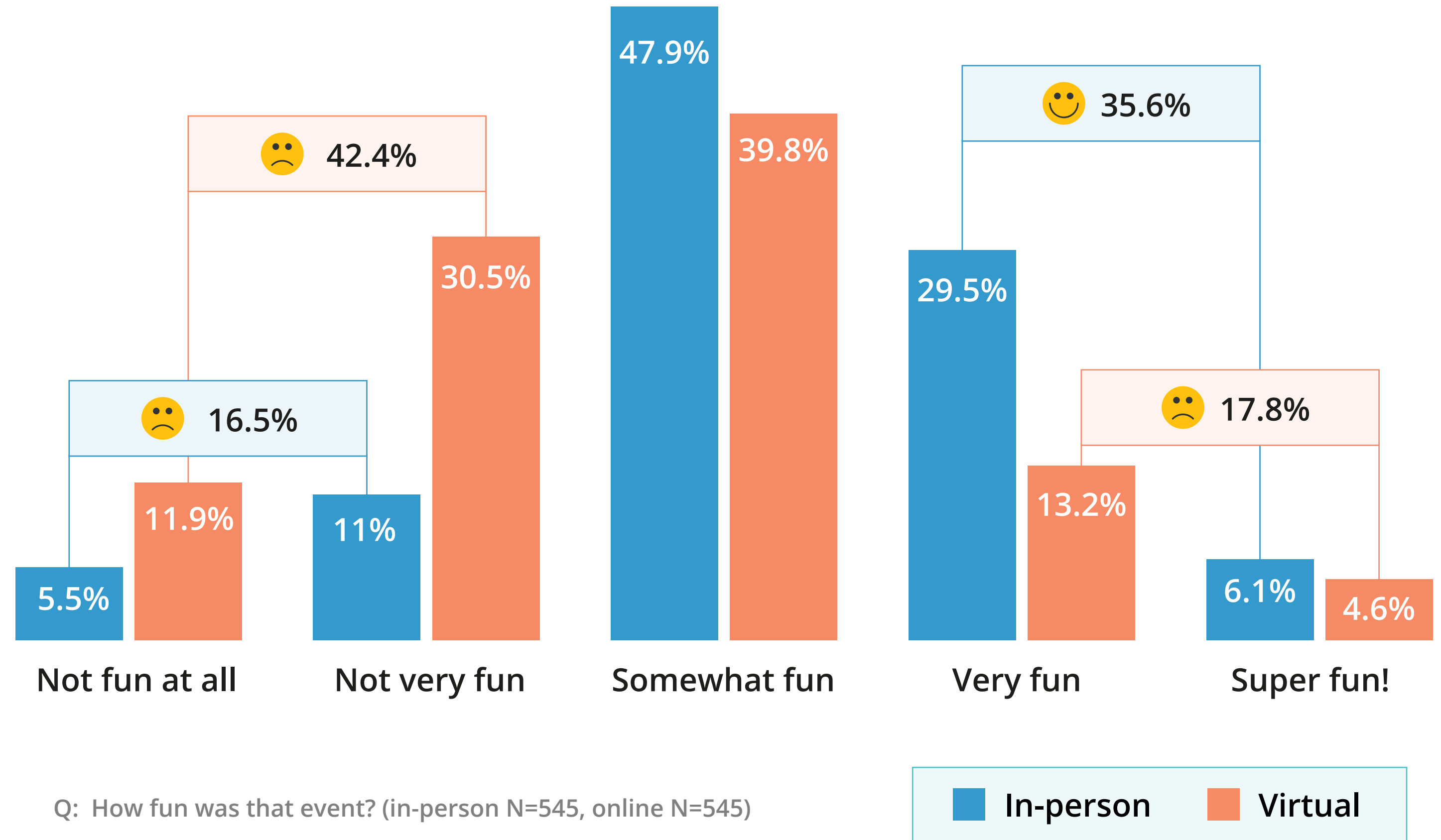
- Attendees failed to gain the knowledge they hoped for 11% more online
- Attendees learned less than expected 45% more online
- Attendees succeed to gain the knowledge they hoped for 20% less online



The Fun Factor

Attendees are having less fun at online events

- Attendees are 26% more likely to consider online events as not fun
- Attendees are 18% less likely to consider online events as fun



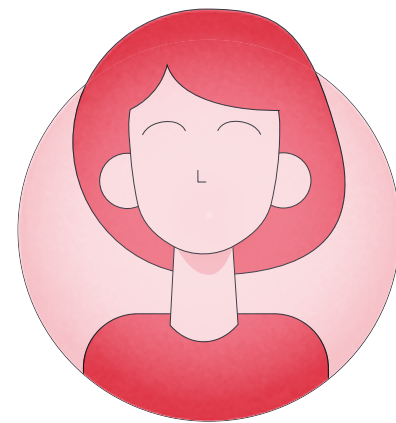


VIRTUAL ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

PERSONAS

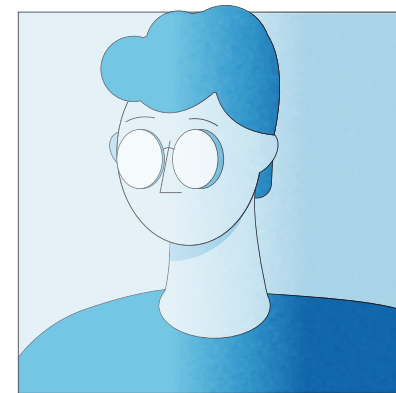
VIRTUAL ATTENDEE PERSONAS OVERVIEW

Learning



Mandated Learner

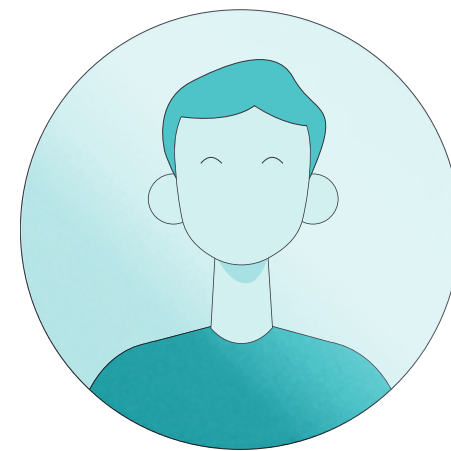
Focused on learning / internal networking



Solo Learner

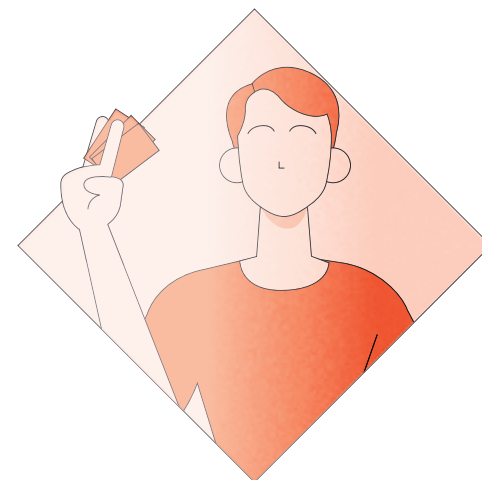
No networking / focused on learning

Networking



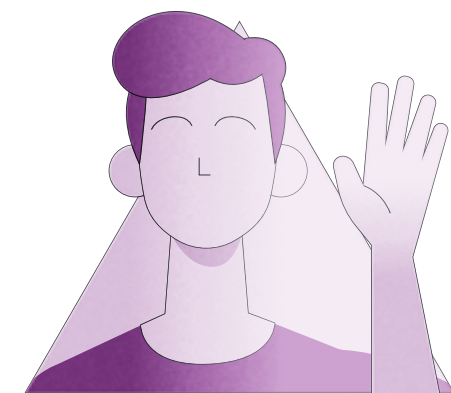
Internal Socializer

Internal networking / some learning



Radical Networker

Human connection / some learning



Strategic Networker

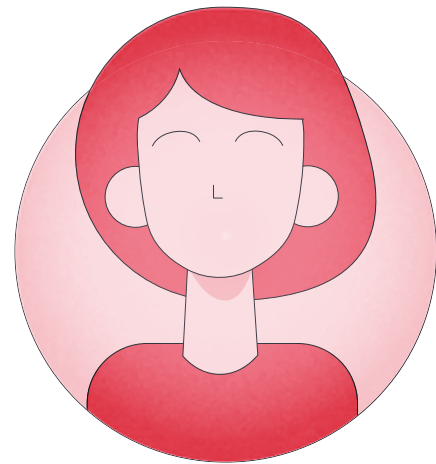
Business networking / no learning

Fun



Experience Seeker

No networking / some learning

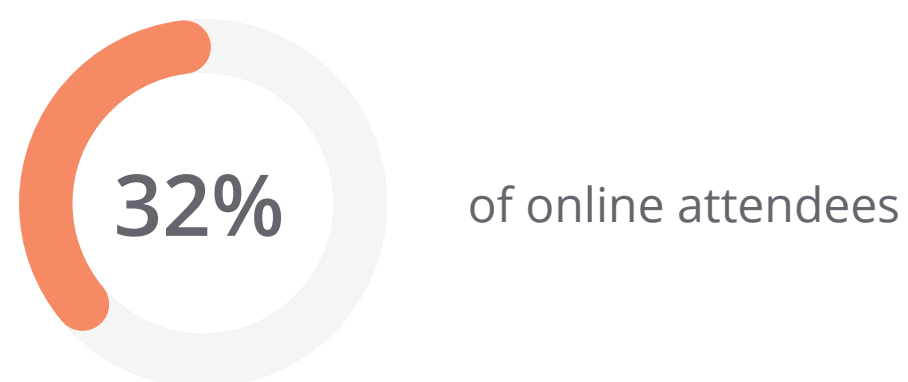
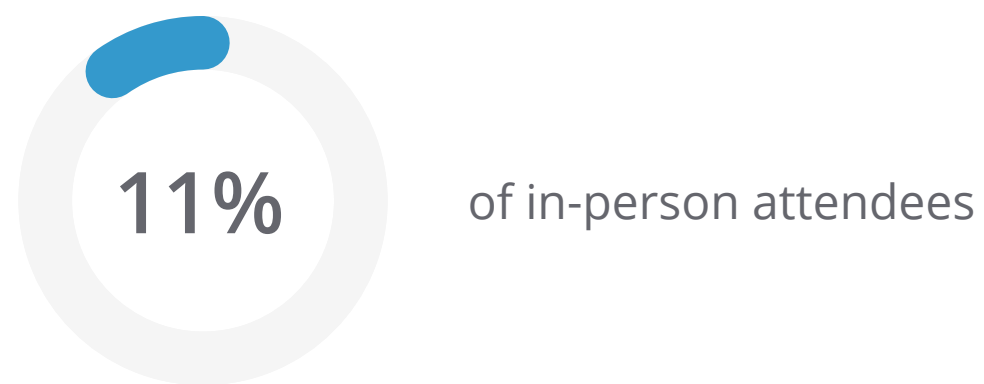


Sarah
Colorado, USA

Solo Learner

Learning

- Registers to multiple free/cheap online events each week, sometimes 2 a day
- Very focused on learning, and avoids social disruptions



Uncommitted

Takes attendance lightly, resigters to events and doesn't attend



Excited

To close knowledge gaps using the virtual space

Motivation to Attend

- Gaining work-related knowledge about the industry
- Enrich and expand knowledge in parallel fields of profession

Effect by Online Events

Able to join events she could never afford to attend in-person

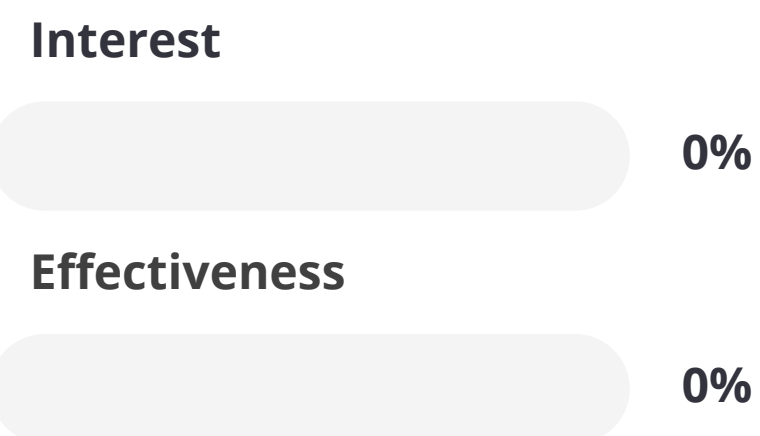
Networking Style

- Avoids networking, consider it a distraction from learning
- Ignores networking attempts from others

Learning Style

Very committed to effective learning, avoids all work distraction and fully focuses on the event

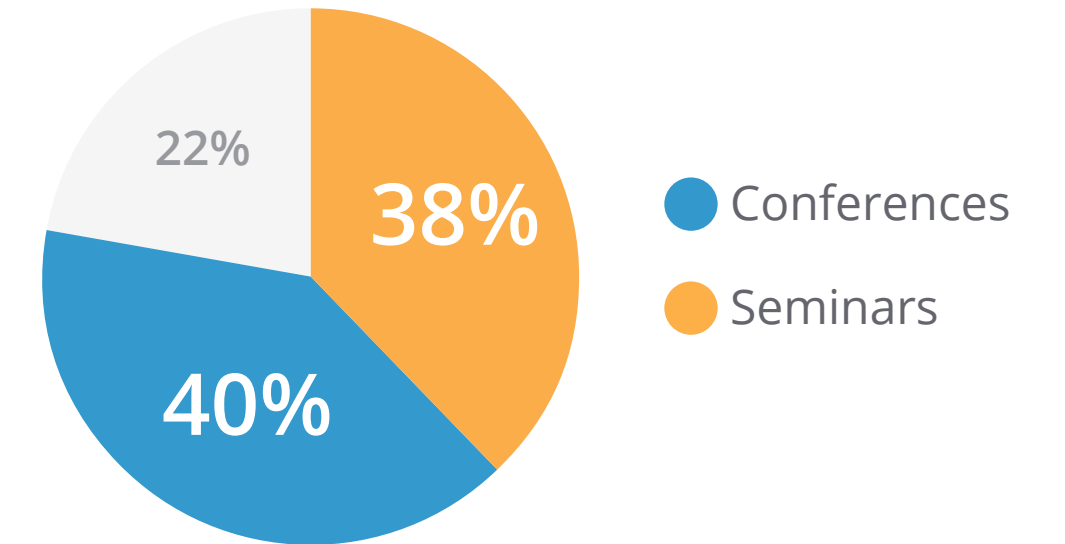
Online Networking



Online Learning



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

#1

Learning new things

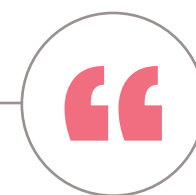
#2

Eating good food

Fun Rating

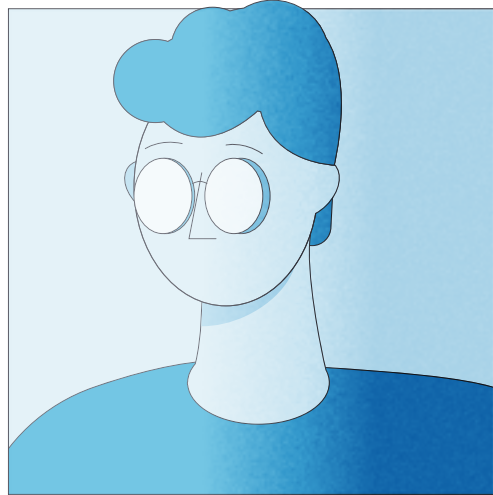
2.6/5
In-person

2.5/5
Online



"Online events are a dime a dozen nowadays. It's like cake tasting - you try out a few and pick"

"It's a volume thing - I go to many events and try."



Matthew

Arizona, USA

Mandated Learner

Learning

- Sent by his company to any event where learning takes place, with the goal to gain new knowledge
- Enjoys the social aspect in getting to know colleagues and peers in-person, but this is not the goal



Disengaged

No social aspect in virtual - no eating and going out



Frustrated

To sit through. Learning online isn't as effective

Motivation to Attend

- Set by the company to learn about his field and business
- Use the time to also socialize with peers and colleagues

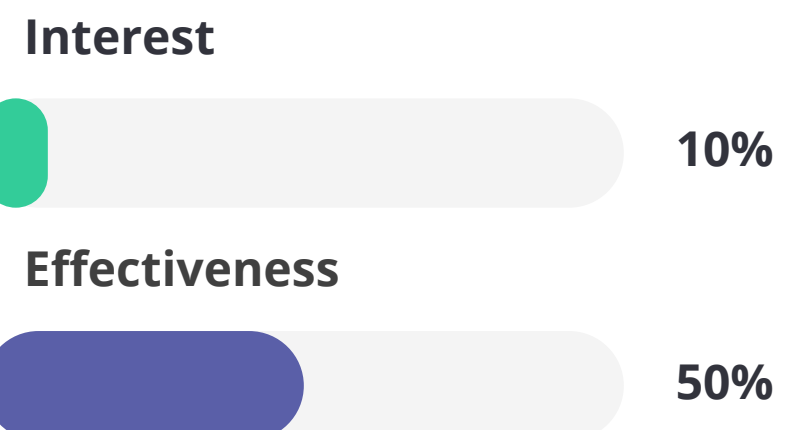
Effect by Online Events

- Lost the ability to bond with colleagues during these events
- Harder to learn online, training sessions are not as productive

Networking Style

- Creates stronger connections with the people he works with
- Looking for team-building experiences

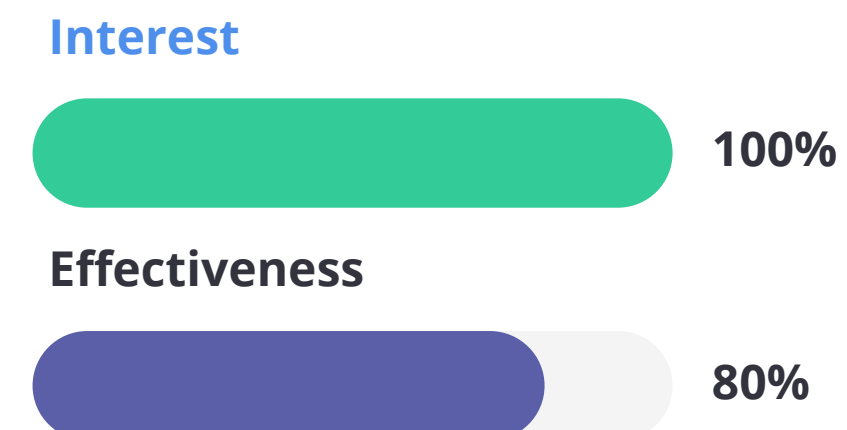
Online Networking



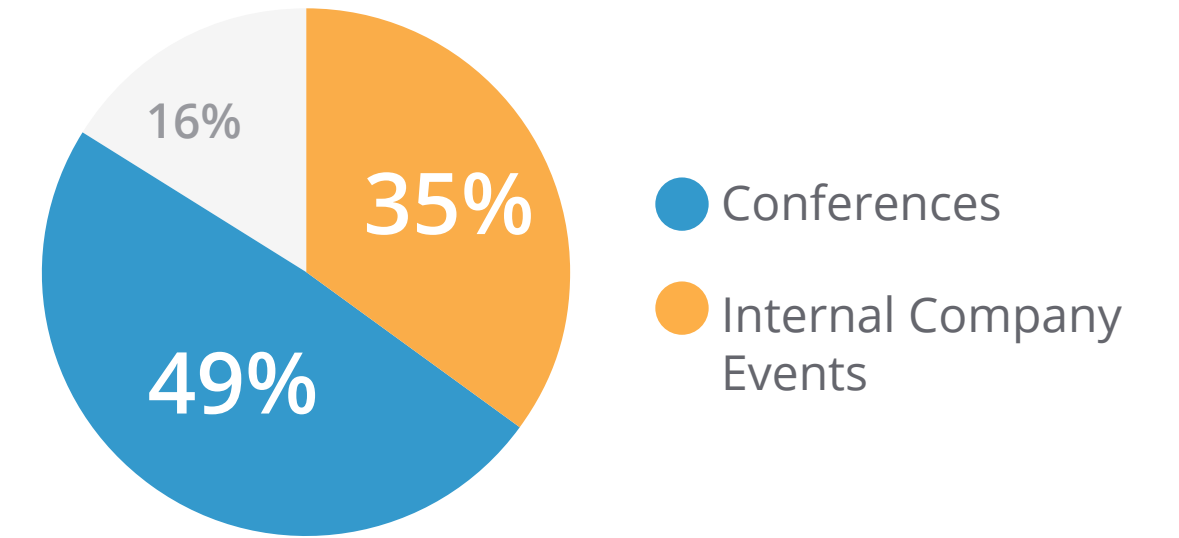
Learning Style

- Learning is the main reason he attends events
- Some are mandated events he has to attend for training or information transfer

Online Learning



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

#1

Learning new things

#2

Networking with colleagues

Fun Rating

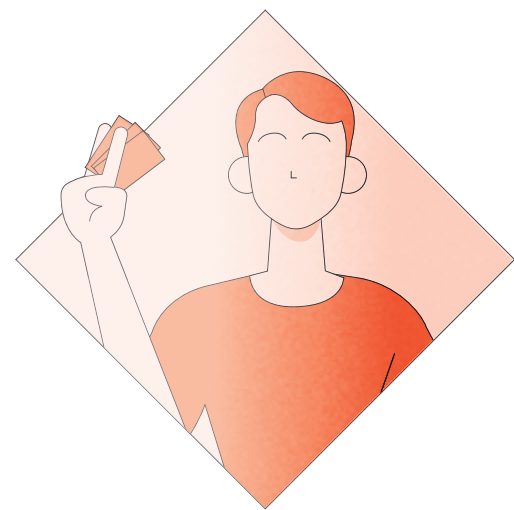
3.3/5
In-person

2.5/5
Online



"Team dinners, getting to know my team members - this is the best part of this event."

"They log in and mute themselves. There's no interaction between people."

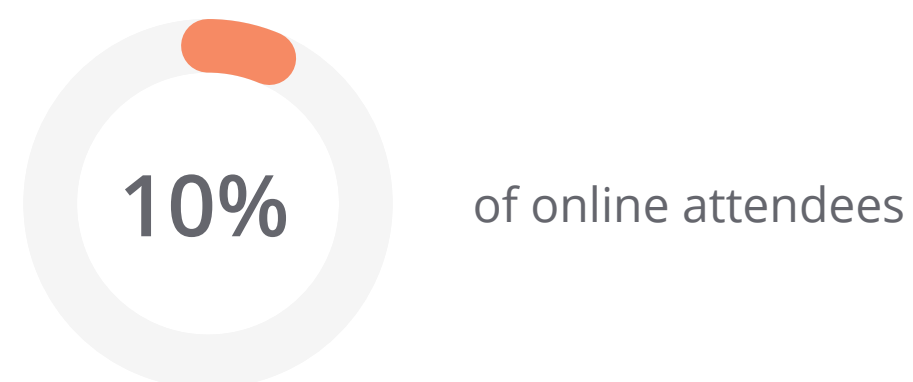


Sam
New York, USA

Strategic Networker

Networking

- Focused on making productive business connections
- Evaluates attendees to identify who to pursue, who is "the biggest fish to catch" at the event



Worried

About not making enough connections



Frustrated

That he can't use his charisma online

Motivation to Attend

- Networking is his job - going to events to find leads
- Business connections that benefit him and his business

Effect by Online Events

- Harmed his work, as networking is his job
- Extremely difficult to make connections without shaking hands

Networking Style

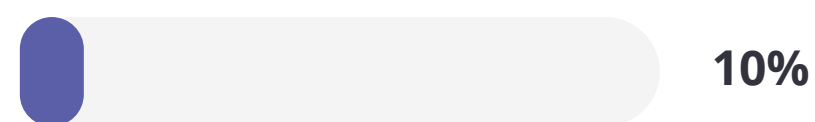
- Initiate conversations with many people during the event
- Selective about the type of people he engages with
- Most people ignore his attempts

Online Networking

Interest



Effectiveness

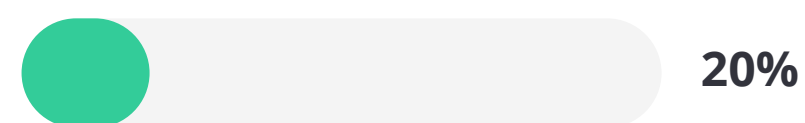


Learning Style

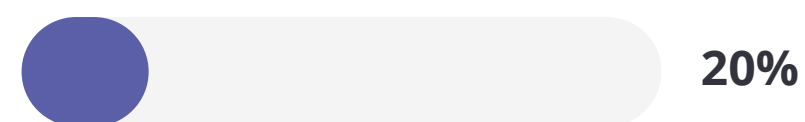
- Doesn't care about learning
- Ignores session content, uses the time to connect with people

Online Learning

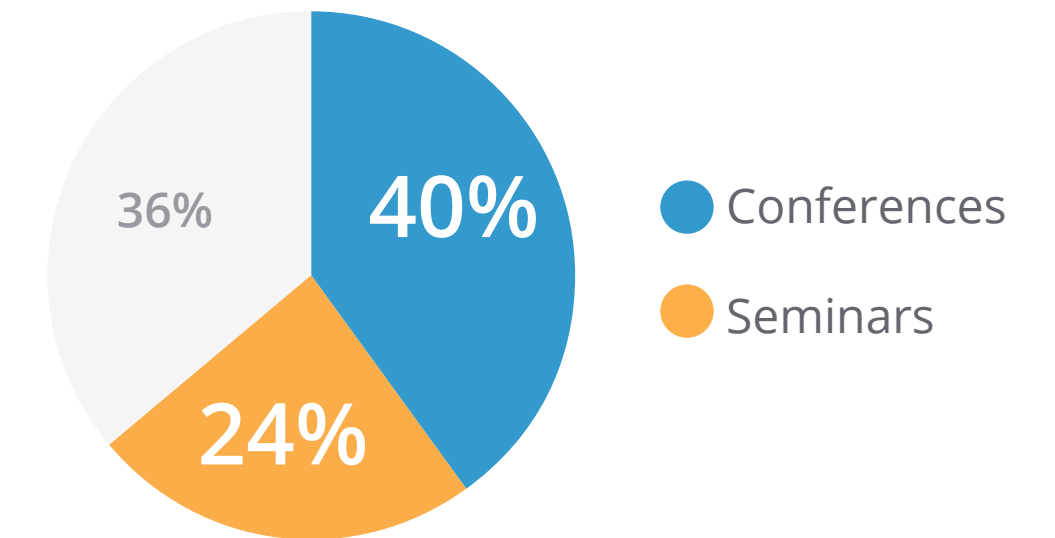
Interest



Effectiveness



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

#1

Increasing business network

#2

Sharing the event experience with others

Fun Rating

3.5/5

In-person

2.8/5

Online



"Once I was able to collect 150 business cards in two days."

"I didn't get a single lead since online events started. [...] I'm not here to make friends."



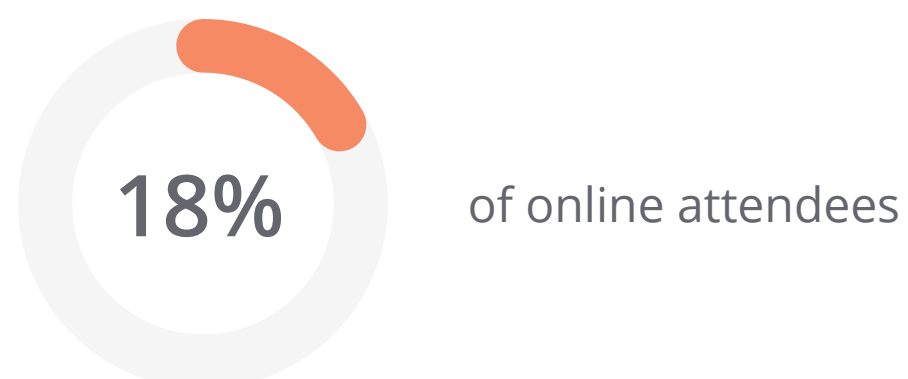
Robert

Melbourne,
Australia

Radical Networker

Networking

- The social aspect is critical for him, and this is his driver
- Not just networking, but getting to know people through real world interactions - running, eating together, and the event's social activities



Bored

in online events. It's not fun and he misses facetime with people



Sad

he cannot create real connections in online events

Motivation to Attend

- Making a human connection that will last after the event
- Making friends

Effect by Online Events

- Online events are missing the human connection and take away all the fun
- Igniting spontaneous conversations is harder online

Networking Style

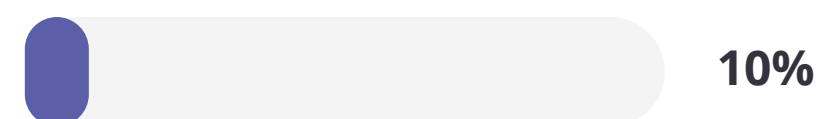
- Proactively reaches out to people in the events
- Starts conversations naturally with anyone

Online Networking

Interest



Effectiveness



Learning Style

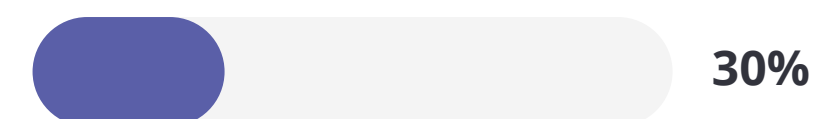
- Learning is the official reason, but he focuses on socializing
- Most of his learning comes from the people he meets

Online Learning

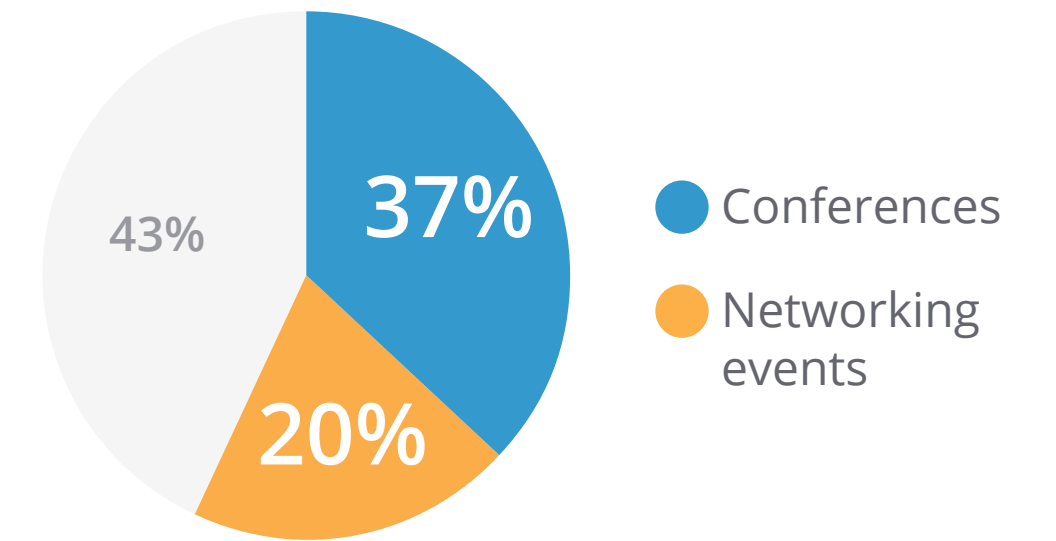
Interest



Effectiveness



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

#1

Making new friends

#2

Increasing social network

Fun Rating

4.2/5

In-person

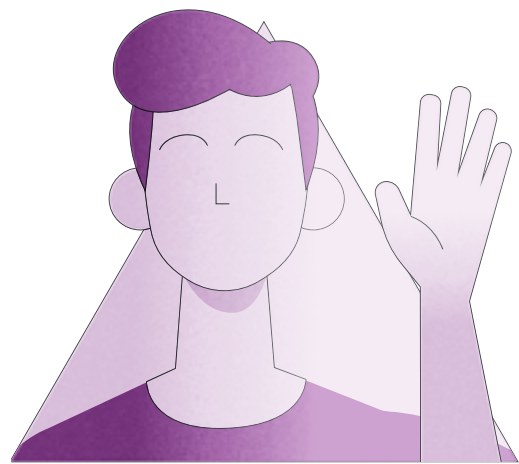
2.8/5

Online



"You're taking away all the fun stuff out of the conference."

"In online events, it's all business."

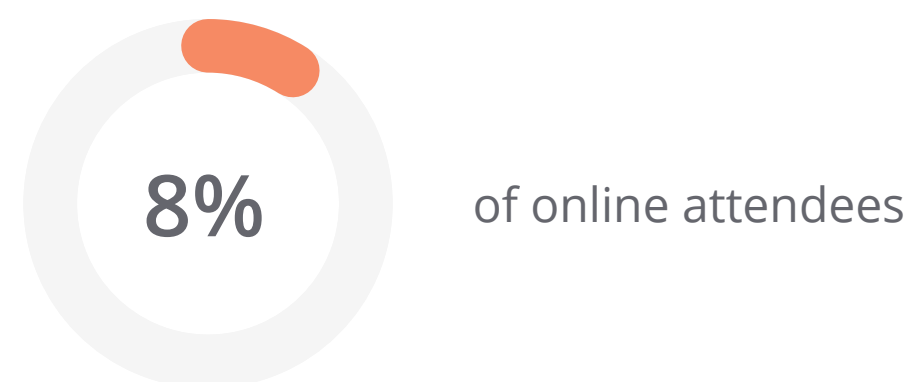


Ian
London, UK

Internal Networker

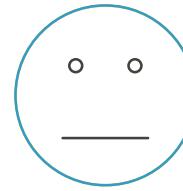
Networking

- Mostly attends events to meet colleagues and friends he already knows
- During the event, he spends most of his time in smalltalk and not engaged in the sessions



Bored

Missing the fun of socializing with friends



Missing

fun social engagements with friends

Motivation to Attend

- Socializing with friends and colleagues
- Having fun

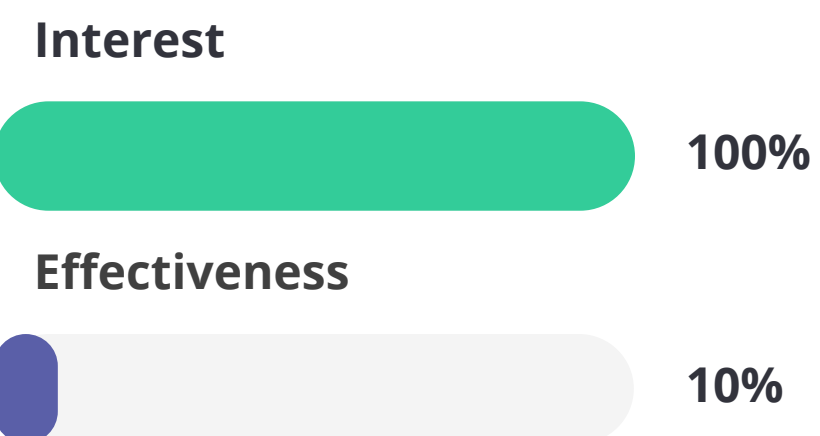
Effect by Online Events

- Lost the ability to socialize with friends and colleagues in-person
- Slowly became a more productive learner online

Networking Style

Meets people he already knows at the event

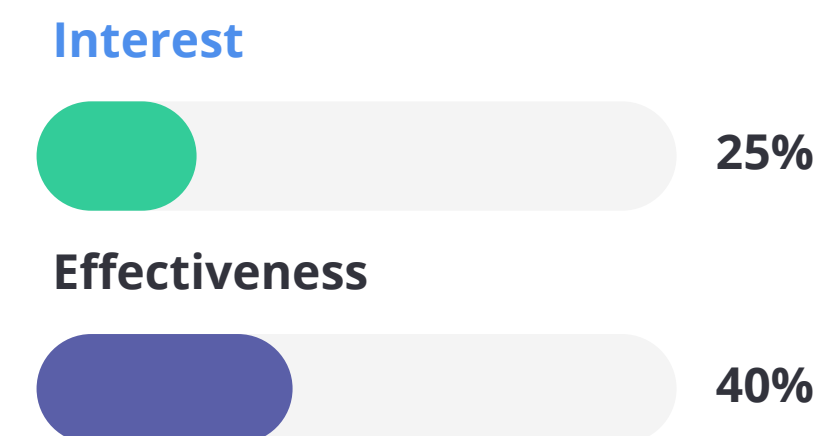
Online Networking



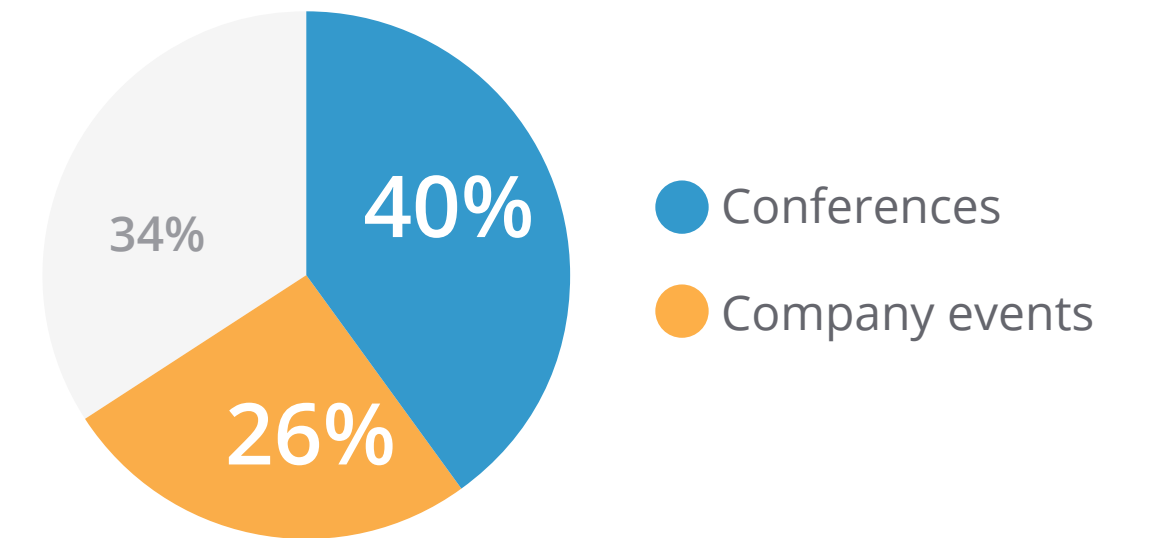
Learning Style

Learning is the official goal of him attending the event, but isn't his main focus

Online Learning



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

#1

Meeting friends and colleagues

#2

Making new friends

Fun Rating

4.0/5
In-person

3.2/5
Online



"I just get sick from looking at floating heads over Zoom."

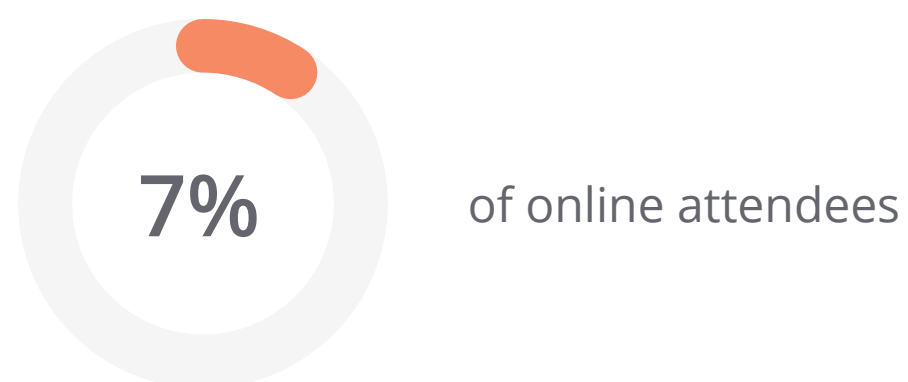
"When you attend an in-person event, you are part of it, just by being there."



Emily
California, USA

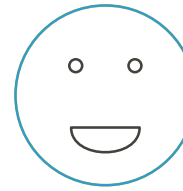
Experience Seeker **Having Fun**

- Attends events for the purpose of having a good time, getting gifts and giveaways
- She doesn't try to be productive, learn or network. Uses the time to travel, go to dinner, have fun with people



Bored & Distracted

Attending events from home is no fun, and work gets in the way



Excited

to receive physical gifts in online events

Motivation to Attend

- Having fun - new places, cool events, meeting people
- No professional gain from event - doesn't care about content or networking
- Seeks as many gifts as she can, even worthless ones

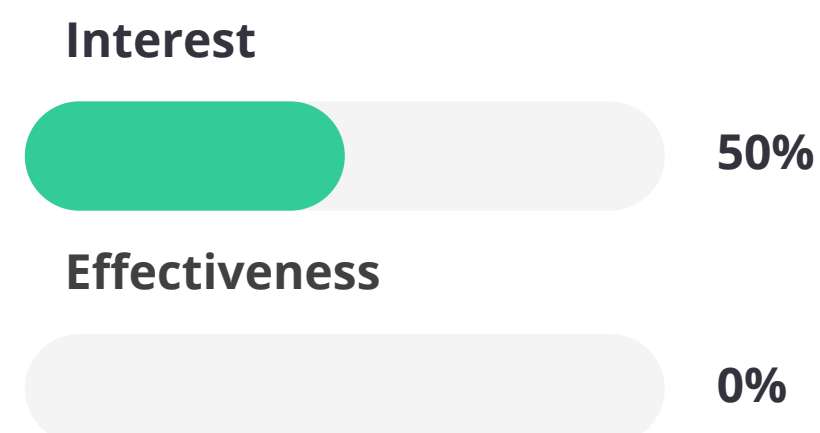
Effect by Online Events

- Missing the social aspect of events, online is not as exciting
- Giveaways more important online
- Networks more online, especially when event activities include it

Networking Style

- Doesn't aim to network
- Will participate when the event activities initiate conversations

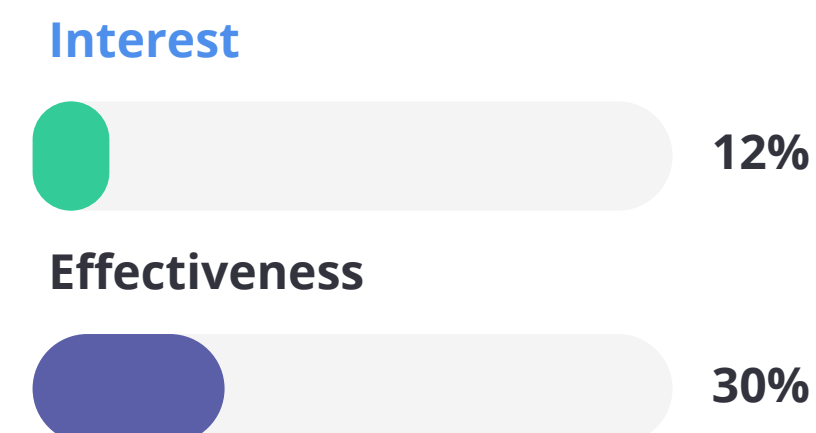
Online Networking



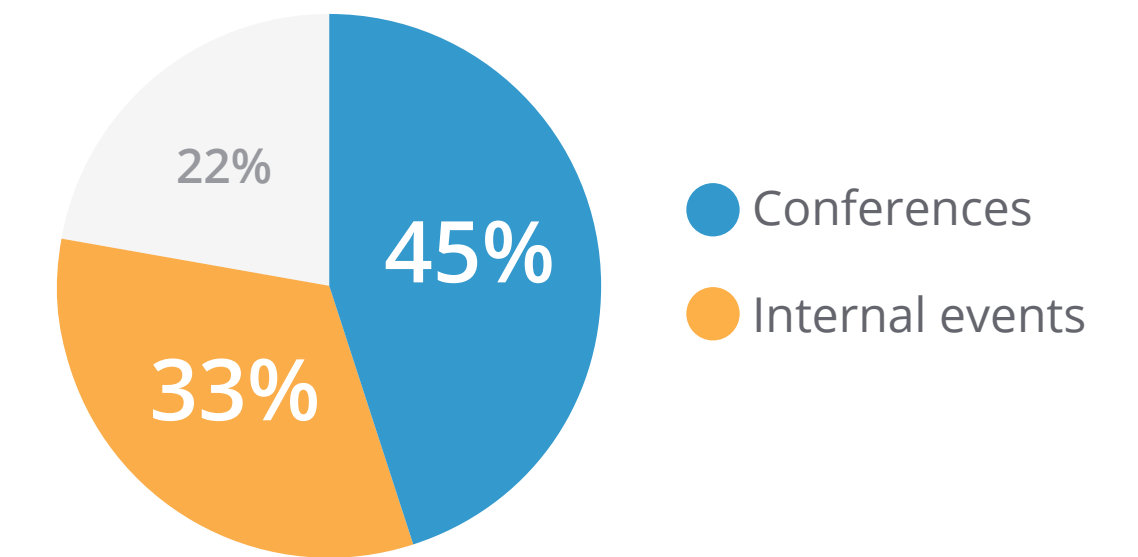
Learning Style

- Learning is the official reason for her to attend events
- Doesn't really aim to learn

Online Learning



Top Online Events



Fun Factors

- #1** Giveaways & Prizes
- #2** Good food

Fun Rating

4.2/5 In-person **2.2/5** Online



"I always comes back with a ton of junk I don't need."

"Online is not as exciting, it's just more stuff on the screen. There's no 'wow' factor."

WHAT VIRTUAL ATTENDEES WANT

Join Bizzabo's Director of Research for a
discussion on these findings

[Watch the Webinar](#)

February 25th, On-Demand After