May 2010

Event marketing survey

Results of a survey of business-to-business marketers' attitudes to the use of events, carried out by B2B Marketing in association with Marketing Options International

B2B marketing

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Survey analysis

The recession has had little impact on the use of events as a marketing tool, or channel, with a third of companies increasing their investment in events in the last 12 months (against only 23 per cent who decreased it). A similar number expect it to increase in the next year (whilst only 10 per cent expect it to decrease).

This is according to a new survey by B2B Marketing, in association with Marketing Options, which underlines the importance of B2B events, with just under 70 per cent of respondents describing them as either 'critical' or 'very important'.

This result is surprising given the recent recession and the investment in both time and money to make events work effectively. Also, the increasing migration towards digital communication would suggest that face-to-face interaction is going out of fashion. Despite this – or perhaps because of it – as demonstrated by the survey, B2B brands appear to be increasing their focus on, and investment in, face-to-face events, rather than reducing it.

According to the research, events take a significant portion of many brands' marketing budgets, with almost 40 per cent spending at least a quarter of their total budget on them. Almost 20 per cent spend at least 50 per cent of their budget on events, whilst a further 20 per cent had no formal budget or were unable to disclose their spend.

Mixed event profile
In terms of the type of events used by respondents, the majority (just under 60 per cent) said they used a mixture of generic industry events (e.g. trade shows) and their own bespoke events (e.g. launch parties). A third of respondents said their focused on one type or other: 23 per cent on bespoke events, whilst 12 per cent focused on general industry events.

Branding still a key objective
As regards to objectives for events, the most important objective was 'building customer relationships' cited by 59 per cent of respondents, followed by 'generating sales leads' which was cited by 53 per cent. However, surprisingly in the current environment, 'building/raising brand awareness' was still cited by 45 per cent of respondents as the most important objective from an event, which demonstrates that events are not all about harder business objectives.
As regards to measurement of success, however, 'number of leads generated' was the most popular response (37 per cent) closely followed by 'number of sales ultimately generated' (36 per cent).

Events are most effective at targeting middle-management employees, according to the results, with 44 per cent of respondents describing them as 'very effective' at reaching this audience. Furthermore, and very surprisingly given the increasingly time-poor nature of senior management, almost 40 per cent of respondents believed events remain very effective at targeting this audience. Conversely, respondents suggested that events were much less effective at reaching junior level executives, perhaps because this audience are less able to attend industry events.

A digital horizon

The survey also confirmed that digital events remain in their infancy in the B2B sector, with only 30 per cent of organisations either using them ‘regularly’ or ‘sometimes’. The largest group of respondents (47 per cent) have not used digital events at all.

There is much interest in digital events, although marketers remain rightly sceptical that they will take over completely from the face-to-face variety. Rather they will be ‘ a different option’ in the future, suggesting that the medium would mature and that it would be viable in certain instances.

About this survey

The results are based on the responses of 245 B2B marketers who completed the survey after receiving an email from B2B Marketing on May 12 2010. The survey, compiled in conjunction with Marketing Options, included a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions with the aim of highlighting how useful marketers find face-to-face events in light of increasing digital activity.

Sponsor's comment

Face-to-face still key in B2B

By Lilah Walker, director of events at Marketing Options International

At a time where traditional forms of marketing are being substituted for digital alternatives, it is reassuring to see that face-to-face events still have an important role to play for the modern B2B marketer.

With 92 per cent of those surveyed currently executing marketing events, it proves that relationship building is best conducted in a person-to-person situation. It is, however, imperative that marketers and event managers aren't complacent during this changing landscape and embrace emerging initiatives to ensure the best ROI from their events.

Face-to-face events are most successful when executed within an integrated marketing campaign that ensures that visitors are well briefed and truly engaged with the message of the event. This also helps sales teams to be equipped with the background knowledge of each delegate, as well as the objectives of the event, in order to achieve maximum benefit. Furthermore, it is critical that marketers recognise the value of maintaining the communication with delegates after the event has finished to effectively nurture any relationships developed during the event.

Whilst the survey results clarify the innate need for people to have face-to-face interaction and networking opportunities with their peers or suppliers in order to secure business deals, there does appear to be a rising demand to explore new innovations within event campaigns. This is particularly the case around the area of social media for audience generation and digital/virtual events for securing a wider reach of audience.

It is those organisations that are able to design hybrid events that encompass both a physical, as well as online marketing presence before, during and after an event that are likely to see the greatest levels of audience engagement – and ultimately convert the pipeline into actual sales.

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About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for business-to-business marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as B2B Marketing magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

B2B Marketing Online: A huge archive of content focusing on every conceivable aspect of business-to-business marketing, and including various opportunities for online interaction and learning, such as a best practice webcast programme, and an interactive online directory for supplier sourcing.

B2B Marketing Magazine: The essential monthly guide to business-to-business marketing, with a key focus on best practice guidance, plus monthly features looking at current trends, regular research, profiles etc.

The B2B Marketing Awards: The showpiece event for brands and practitioners, attracting over 600 people, and with former winners including a host of top-tier B2B brands including, Barclays, TNT, American Express, HP, Microsoft, JCB, Symantec, DPD, Rackspace, Volkswagen, Stanley, RSA, and many more…

B2B Marketing Events: Regular seminars and training sessions aimed at helping marketers hear and learn first hand from the experts in order to hone their skills.

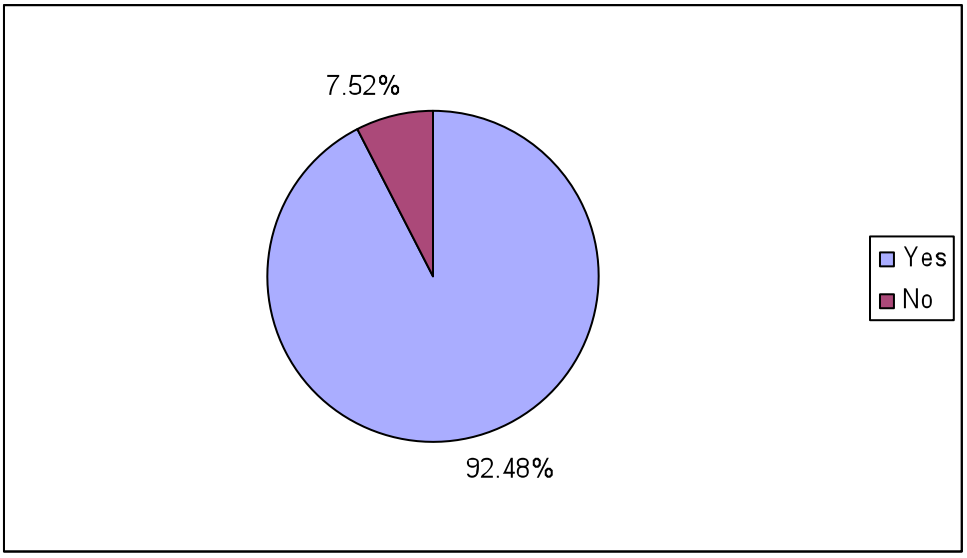
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success through information

Events survey results – May 2010

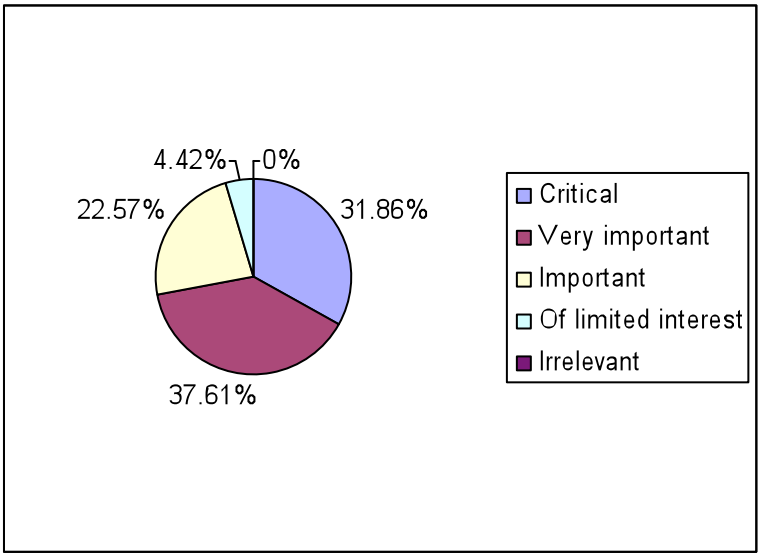
Q1 Do you run face-to-face events as part of your marketing strategy?

Answers	*Percentage*
Yes	92.48
No	7.52



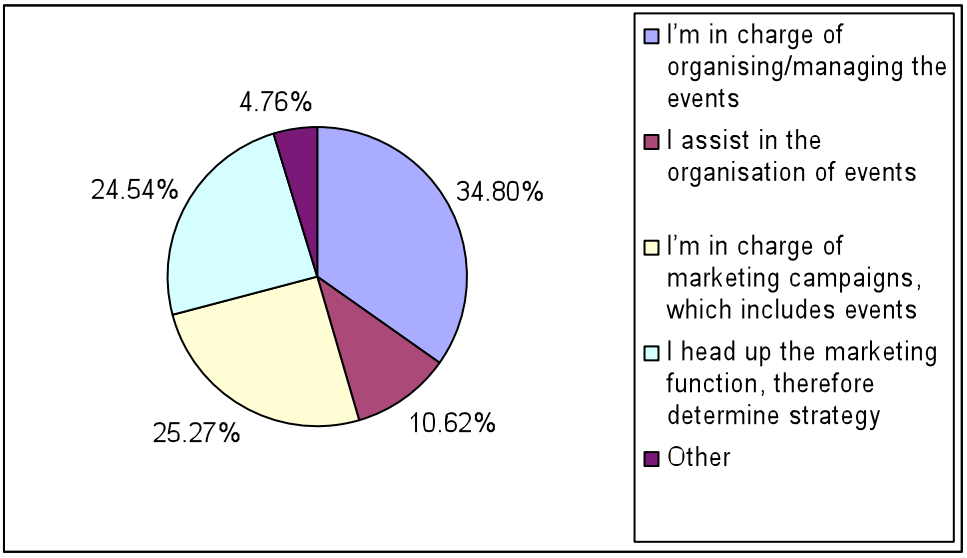
Q2 How important would you describe face-to-face events as part of your marketing strategy?

Answers	*Percentage*
Critical	31.86
Very important	37.61
Important	22.57
Of limited interest	4.42
Irrelevant	0



Q3 What is your role in the running of events for marketing?

Answers	*Percentage*
I'm in charge of organising/managing the events	34.86
I assist in the organization of events	10.62
I'm in charge of marketing campaigns, which includes events	25.27
I head up the marketing function, therefore determine strategy	24.54
Other	4.76

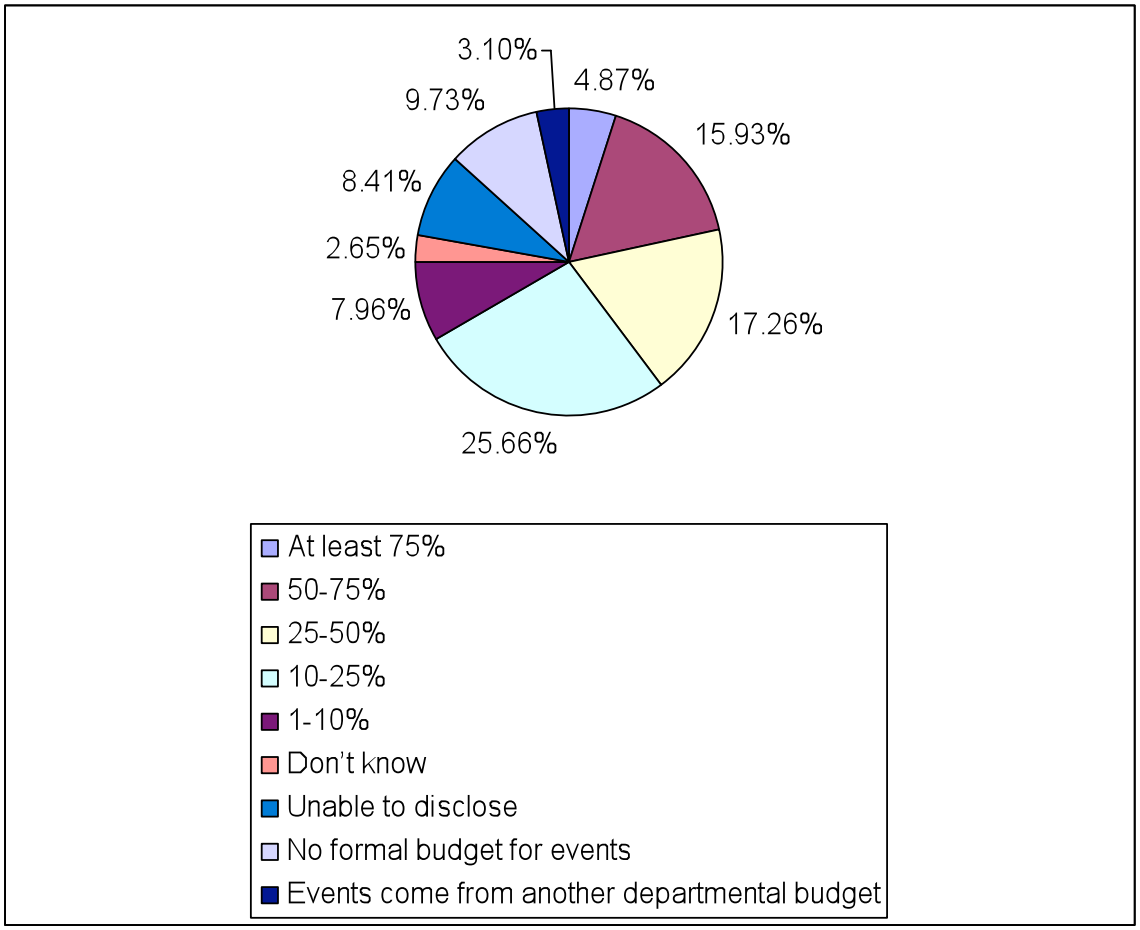


Q4 If you selected 'other' please specify (free text responses)

- I support them through website presence
- Selection of right segment is very necessary. E.g. a businessman having 3yr old car would be interested as he can upgrade as well claim depreciation benefit while claiming incometax
- We apportion a significant amount of our marketing spend in sponsoring and exhibiting at procurement and marketing events. We find you cannot beat the opportunity to articulate your value proposition and create rapport with a prospect.
- presentation and marketing strategy
- I encourage clients and prospects to take part
- I am in charge of the database team and therefore good quality data. We are involved in all marketing campaigns and we assist in the running of the events where appropriate
- Advise clients on strategy
- Head of office
- MD of organisation with responsibility for corporate marketing
- MD - host and set strategy for events
- Having previously been a director of the UK's No.1 corporate event agency, I advise several clients on how to use events for marketing and communications and I help them run events.

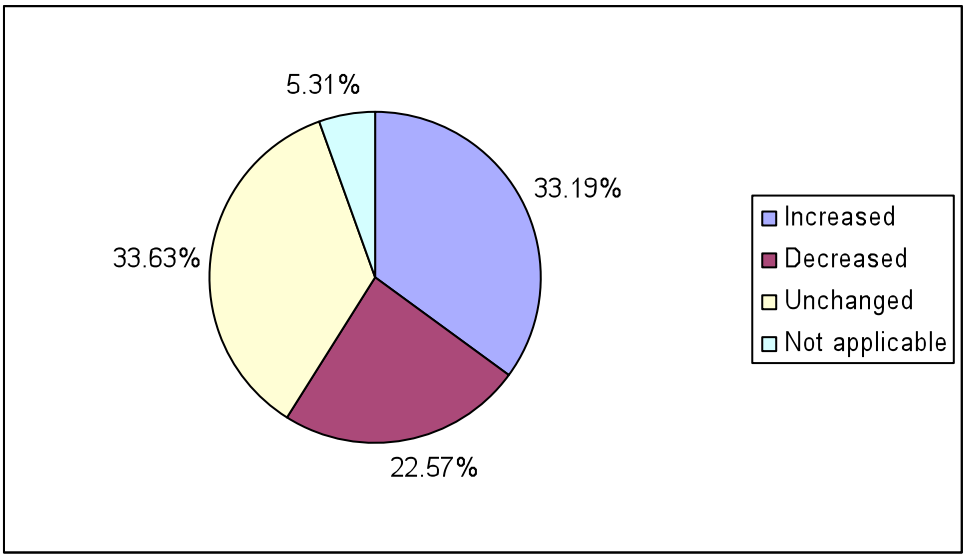
Q5 What percentage of your annual marketing budget is allocated to face-to-face events?

Answers	*Percentage*
At least 75%	4.87
50-75%	15.93
25-50%	17.26
10-25%	25.66
1-10%	7.96
Don't know	2.65
Unable to disclose	8.41
No formal budget for events	9.73
Events come from another departmental budget	3.10



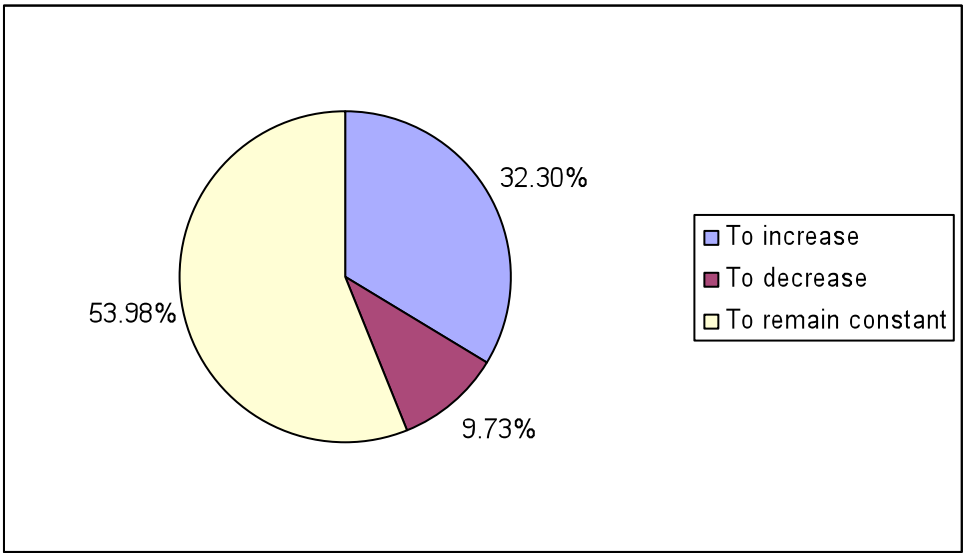
Q6 Has this number increased or decreased over the past 12 months?

Answers	*Percentage*
Increased	33.19
Decreased	22.57
Unchanged	33.63
Not applicable	5.31



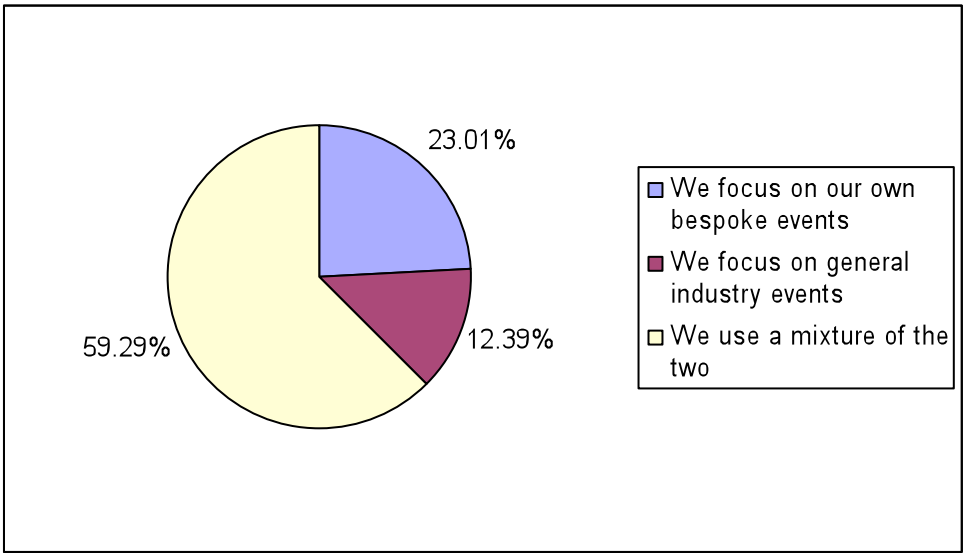
Q7 How do you expect this to change in the next six months?

Answers	*Percentage*
To increase	32.30
To decrease	9.73
To remain constant	53. 98



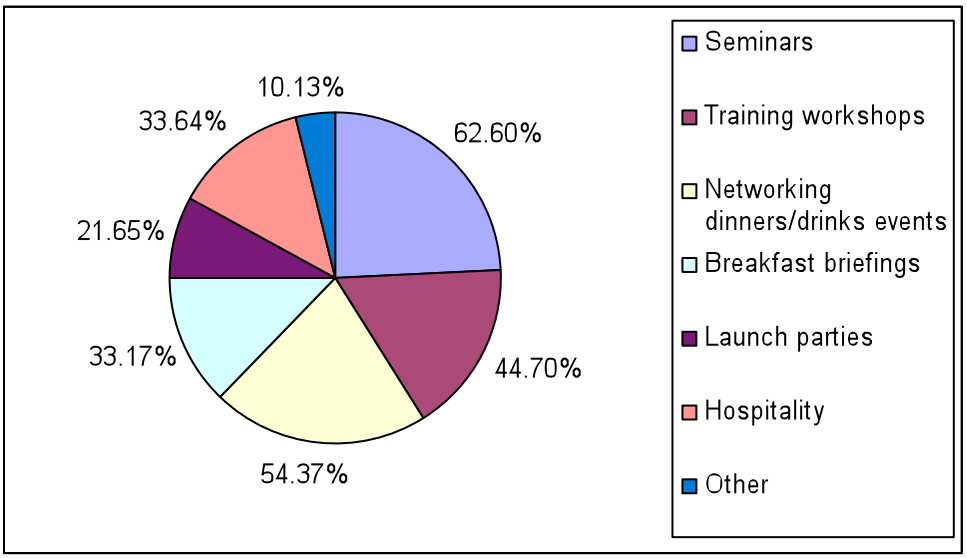
Q8 Do you run bespoke events or do you use generic industry events?

Answers	*Percentage*
We focus on our own bespoke events	23.01
We focus on general industry events	12.39
We use a mixture of the two	59.29



Q9 If you run bespoke events, which of the following types do you use?

Answers	*Percentage*
Seminars	62.60
Training workshops	44.70
Networking dinners/drinks events	54.37
Breakfast briefings	33.17
Launch parties	21.65
Hospitality	33.64
Other	10.13

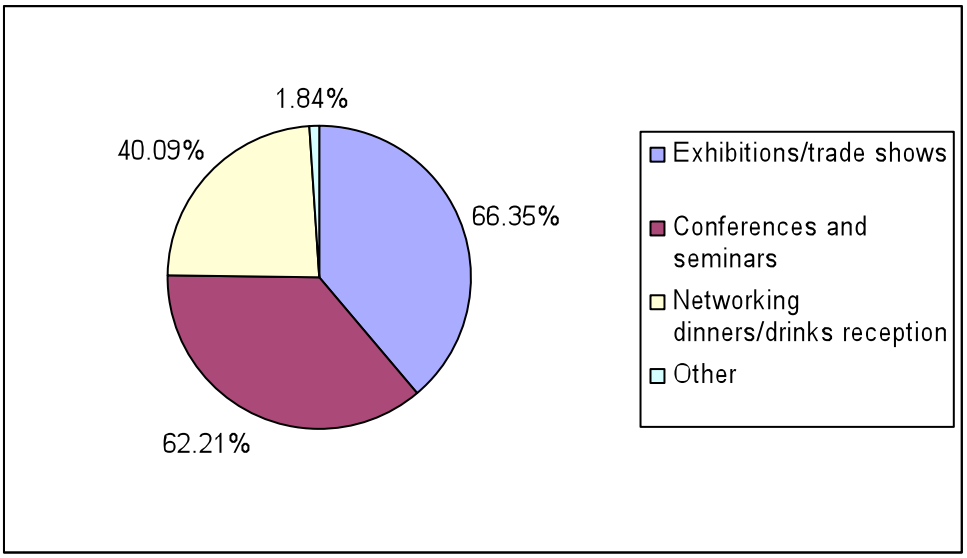


Q10 If you selected 'other' please specify (free text answers)

- Forums
- CPD / sharing insight / live experiences / case study / workshops
- Webinars
- Customer forums, offsite workshops
- Have been running 'hybrid' events that combine both face-to-face and virtual involvement (via Twitter, CoverItLive, Ustream, etc)
- Fairs, conferences
- Own company golf day
- Speed dating concept
- Press briefings
- Conference and Exhibition combined...and generic trade events
- Awards
- Technical meetings
- Trade events
- Trade community forums
- Sports events
- Executive roundtables, evening dinners
- We create our own multi-facett events
- Full/Half day conferences
- Informal open day events to display hardware and software products.
- Annual member's conference
- I advise on some large industry conferences, direct media initiatives around them and also benefit from networking at them.
- Mobile events - 'roadshows'
- Customer/annual conference

Q11 If you rely on generic, industry events, which of the following types do you use?

Answers	*Percentage*
Exhibitions/trade shows	66.35
Conferences and seminars	62.21
Networking dinners/drinks reception	40.09
Other	1.84

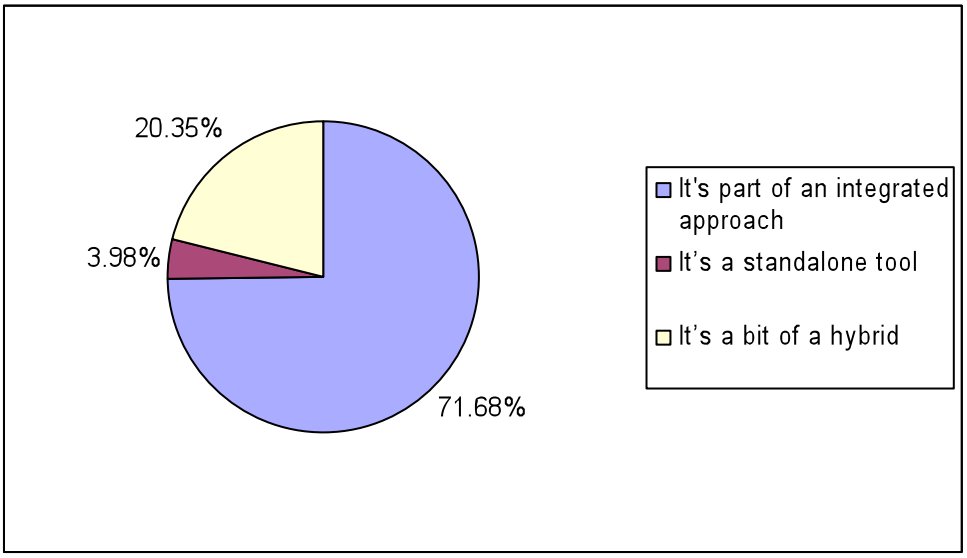


Q12 If you selected 'other' please specify (free text answers)

- Field trips
- Award ceremonies
- Occasional, individually-targeted hospitality.

Q13 Is your use of events part of an integrated approach to marketing, or a standalone tool used to achieve specific and distinct objectives?

Answers	*Percentage*
It's part of an integrated approach	71.68
It's a stand alone tool	3.98
It's a bit of a hybrid	20.35

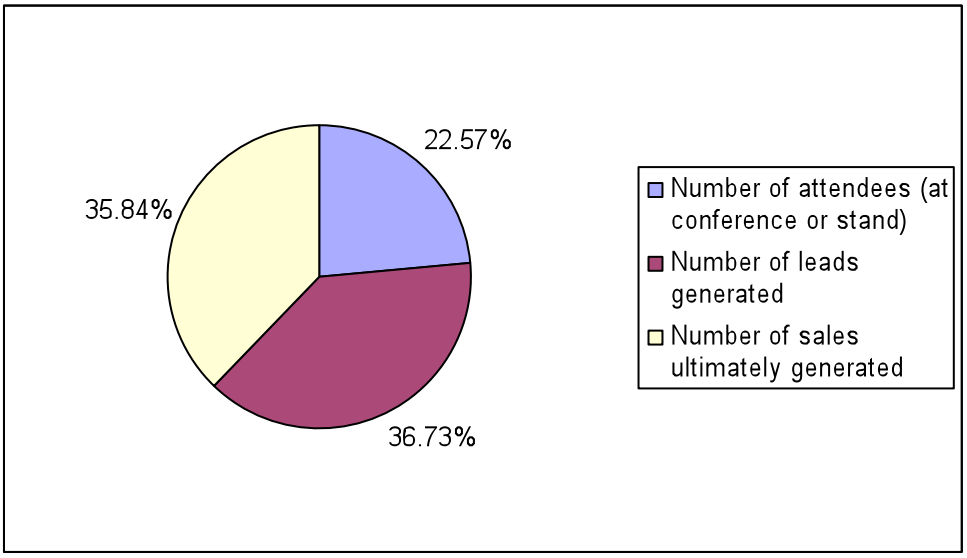


Q14 Which of the following objectives do you seek to achieve through your use of face-to-face events?

	Most important %	Important %	Not relevant %
Building the brand/raising awareness	45.12	53.95	0.93
Driving sales	44.17	49.03	6.80
Generating leads for the sales team	52.86	38.10	9.05
Building customer relationships	58.60	40.47	0.93
Supporting channel partners	10.55	47.24	42.21
Educating customers and prospects	36.67	56.19	7.14

Q15 How do you measure the success of events?

Answers	*Percentage*
Number of attendees (at conference or stand)	22.57
Number of leads generated	36.73
Number of sales ultimately generated	35.84

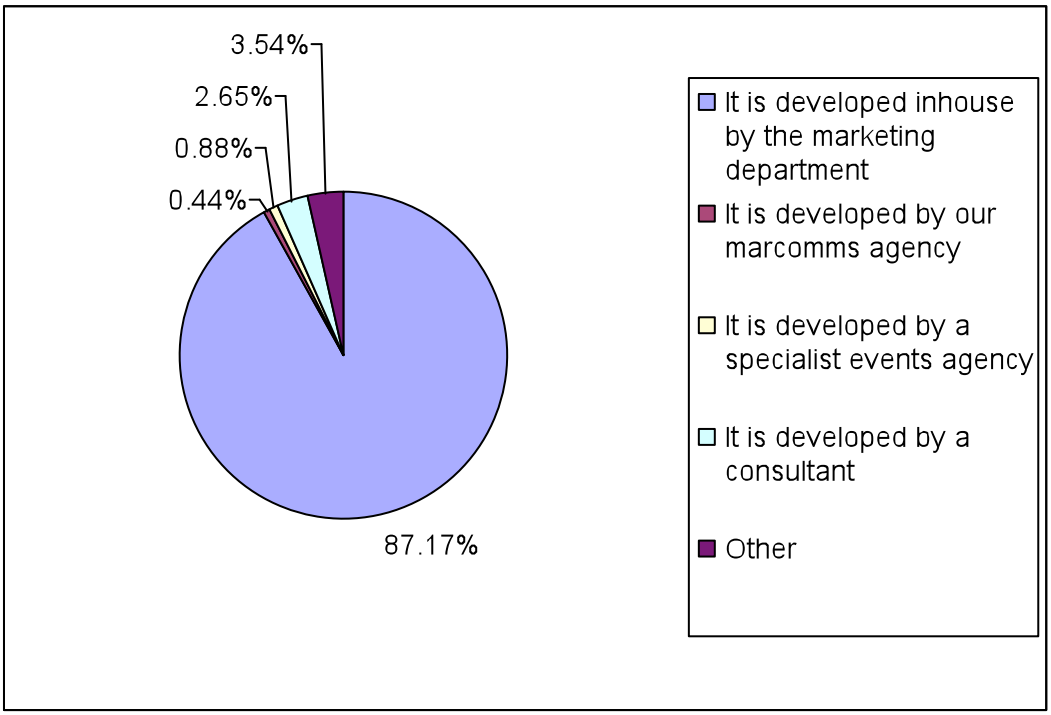


Q16 How effective are events at targeting business decision makers/influencers at different levels?

	Very effective %	Effective %	Not effective %
Senior level	38.14	48.84	13.02
Mid management	43.81	54.29	1.90
Junior level	20.60	46.73	32.66

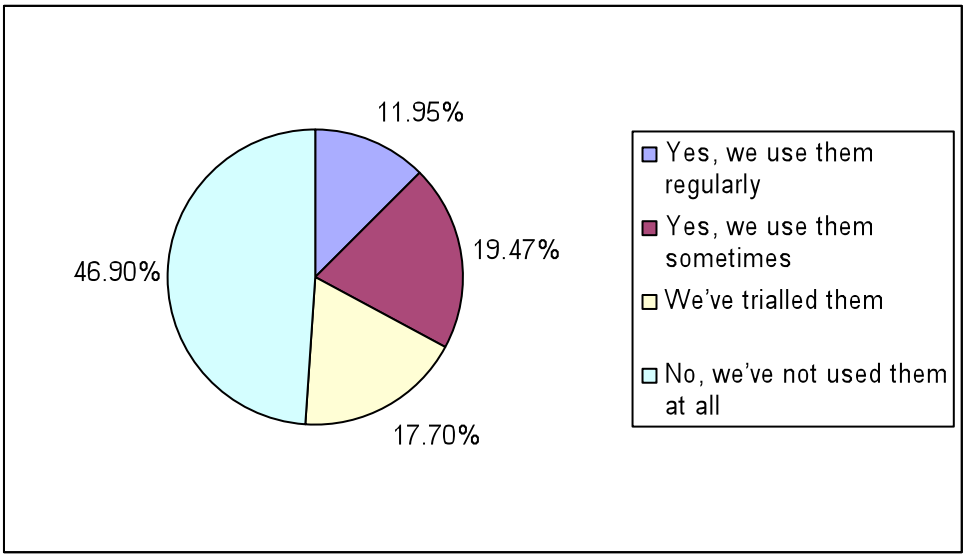
Q17 Who is responsible for your events strategy?

Answers	*Percentage*
It is developed inhouse by the marketing department	87.17
It is developed by our marcomms agency	0.44
It is developed by a specialist events agency	0.88
It is developed by a consultant	2.65
Other	3.54



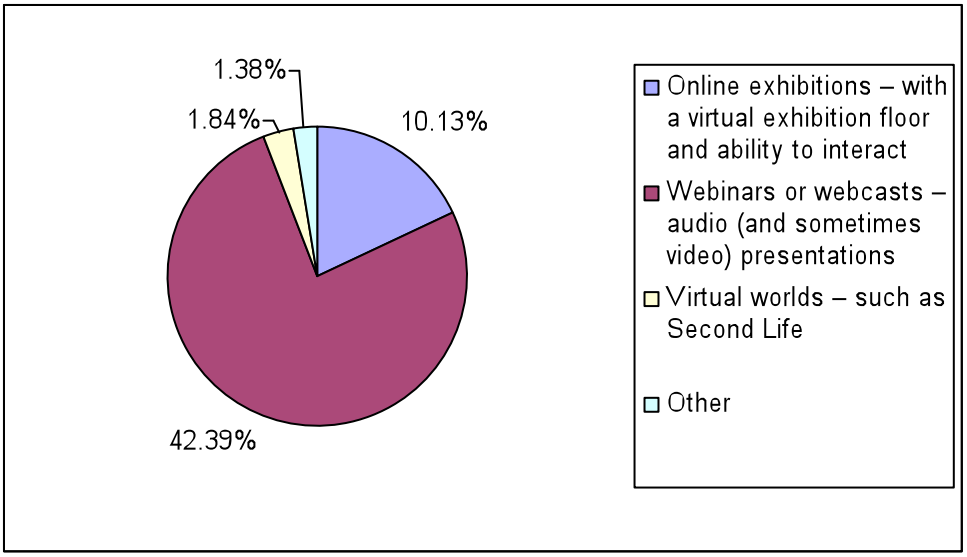
Q18 Do you run digital events?

Answers	*Percentage*
Yes, we use them regularly	11.95
Yes, we use them sometimes	19.47
We've trialed them	17.70
No, we've not used them at all	46.90



Q19 If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, which types of digital events have you trialed?

Answers	*Percentage*
Online exhibitions – with a virtual exhibition floor and ability to interact	10.13
Webinars or webcasts – audio (and sometimes video) presentations	42.39
Virtual worlds – such as Second Life	1.84
Other	1.38

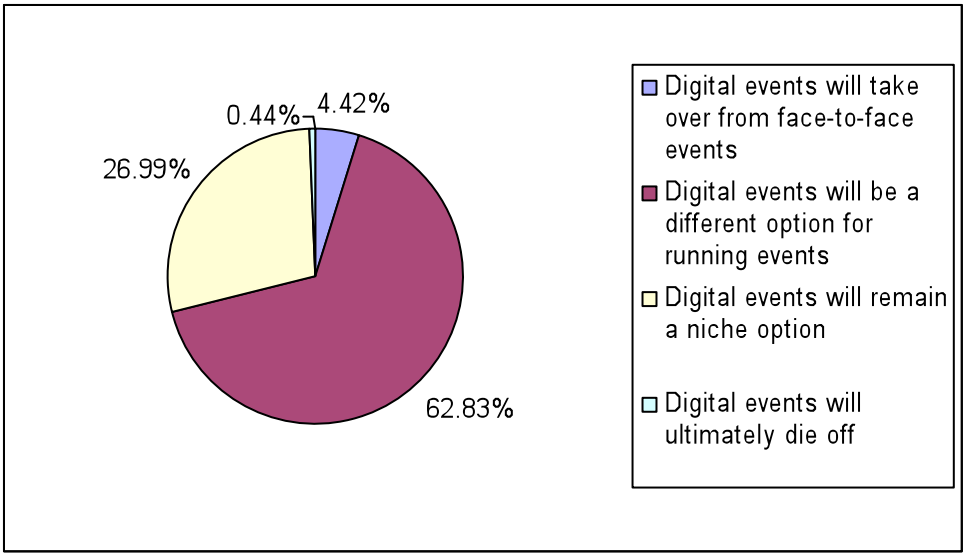


Q20 If you selected 'other' please specify (free text answers)

- Email campaigns
- Have been running 'hybrid' events that combine both face-to-face and virtual involvement (via Twitter, CoverItLive, Ustream, etc)
- We have just started blogging (late I know) and using more social media tools

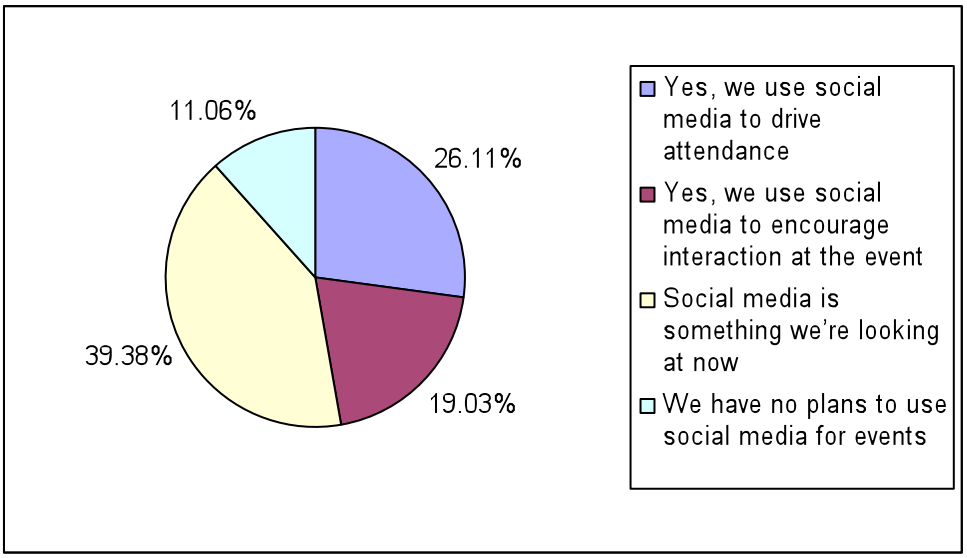
Q21 How important do you think digital events will be in the future for marketing-related events?

Answers	*Percentage*
Digital events will take over from face-to-face events	4.42
Digital events will be a different option for running events	62.83
Digital events will remain a niche option	26.99
Digital events will ultimately die off	0.44



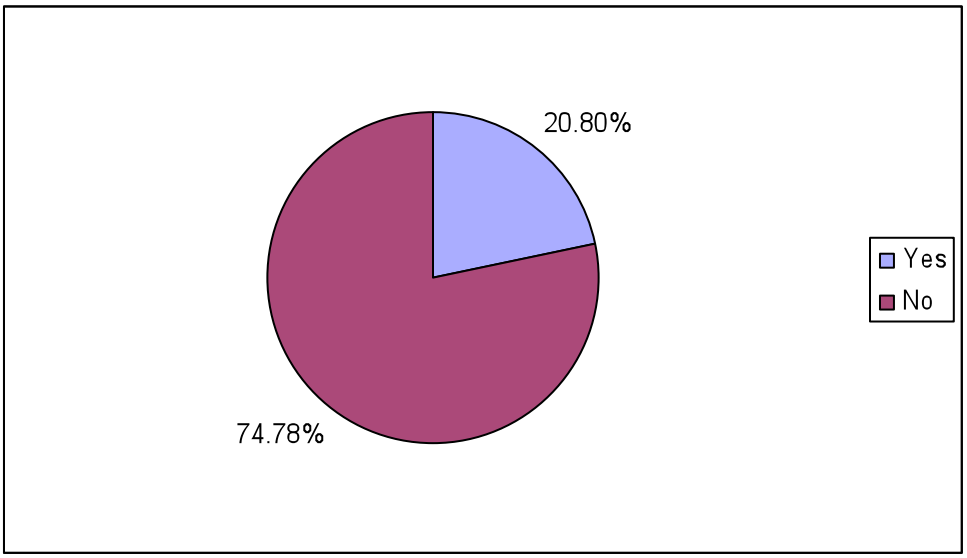
Q22 Do you use social media to either market your events or to encourage interaction/dialogue?

Answers	*Percentage*
Yes, we use social media to drive attendance	26.11
Yes, we use social media to encourage interaction at the event	19.03
Social media is something we're looking at now	39.38
We have no plans to use social media for events	11.06



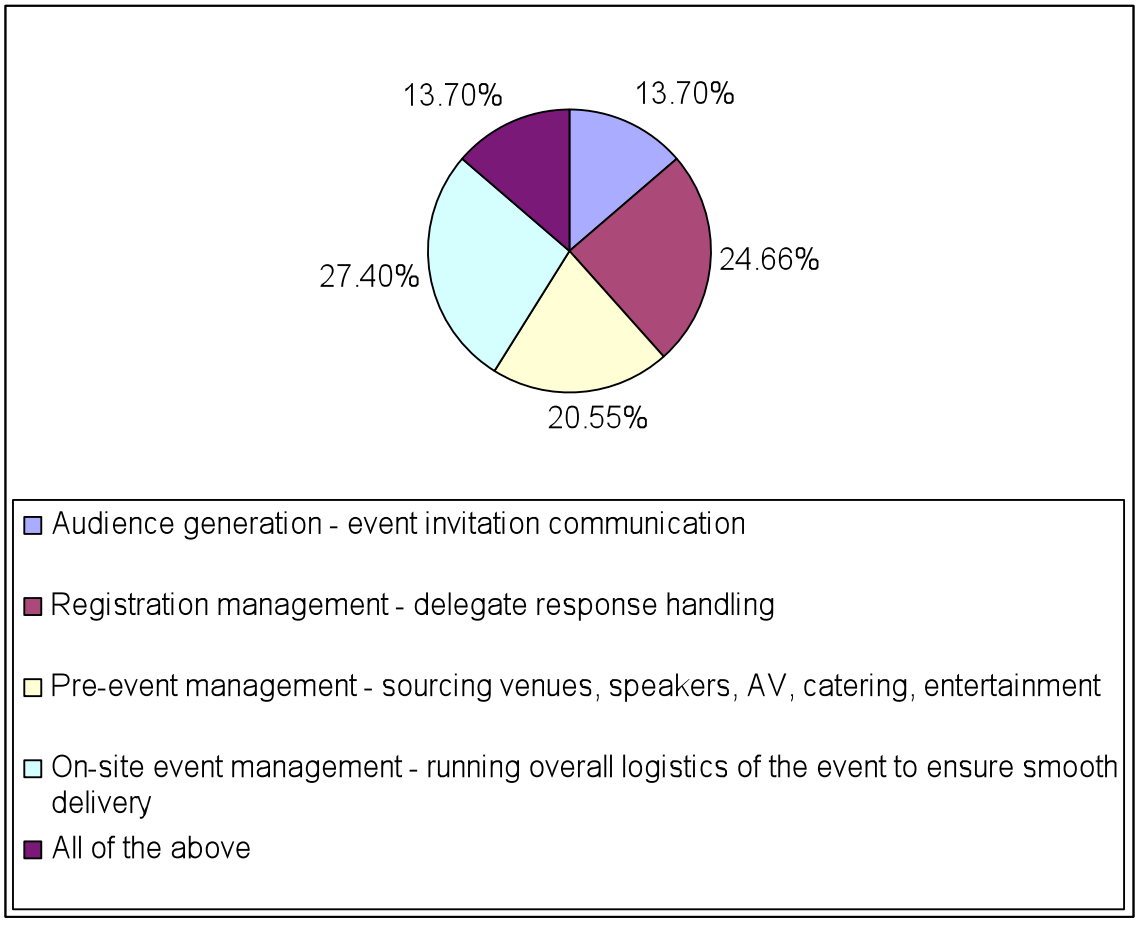
Q23 Do you work with an agency when running events?

Answers	*Percentage*
Yes	20 .80
No	74.78



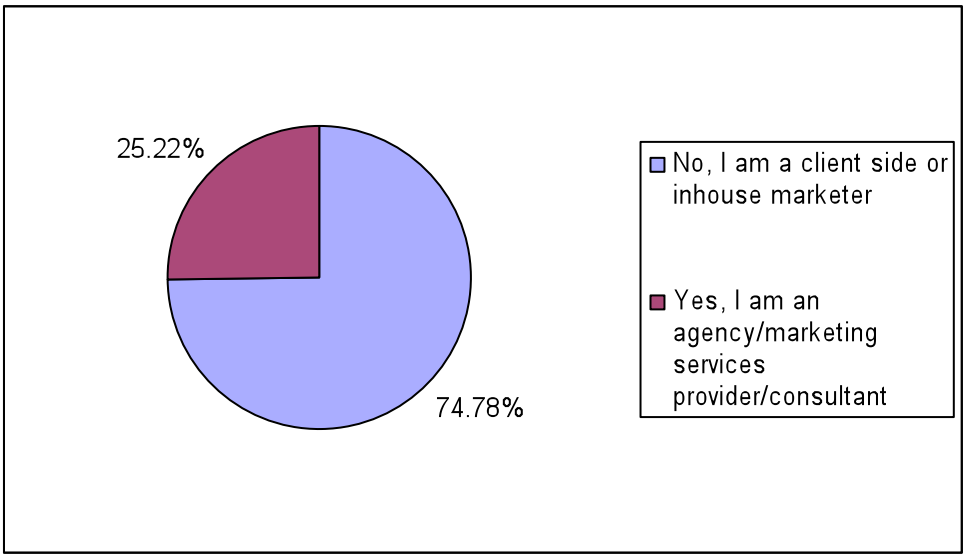
Q24 If you answered 'yes' to the previous question do you use agencies for any of the following?

Answers	*Percentage*
Audience generation - event invitation communication	13.70
Registration management - delegate response handling	24.66
Pre-event management - sourcing venues, speakers, AV, catering, entertainment	20.55
On-site event management - running overall logistics of the event to ensure smooth delivery	27.40
Other	13.70



Q25 Do you work for an agency or marketing services provider, or are you a marketing consultant?

Answers	*Percentage*
No, I am a client side or inhouse marketer	74.78
Yes, I am an agency/marketing services provider/consultant	25.22



For more information please B2B Marketing on: 020 3077 0068