

# Four Proven Tactics to Modernize Your Meetings

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Now is an incredibly energizing and exciting time to work in the meeting and events (M&E) industry, and Hilton is eager to equip planners with the tips and tools you need to navigate this evolving landscape effectively.

Read on to uncover real-time insights into the corporate M&E landscape, plus four surefire strategies to deliver exceptional customer experiences with each and every event.

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## TACTIC NO. 1: Infuse your event with a healthy balance of FOMO and JOMO.

These days, time is widely viewed as the world’s most valuable commodity—which means event professionals face the challenge of conceptualizing a meaningful, entertaining meeting experience that sparks a desire for in-person participation and empowers attendees to unwind in their own ways. Modern meetings must justify not only a company’s financial investment, but the collective investment of each attendee’s time, energy and physical presence.

*“With so many companies adopting a hybrid, or fully remote, business model, building culture on the road has become key to successful team building,”* said Eduardo Galvao, Hilton Worldwide Sales Executive Director for Specialty Markets & Canada. *“Corporate meetings are fast becoming the only opportunity for some employees to meet and spend time with one another, and companies are valuing this culture-building time as a top priority.”*

Just as office spaces around the world are evolving to reflect how (and where!) team members are showing up to work, shifting employee preferences—coupled with current travel trends—are also prompting big changes in M&E.

Attendees today want more choice built into their meeting agendas, and they also appreciate a fluid itinerary that organically incorporates opportunities for downtime, exploration and staying on top of their day jobs. Translation? Work/life balance is non-negotiable, even on the road, and participants need to feel empowered to “choose their own agenda” within the larger event. Meetings that successfully deliver on this idea can bank on a higher level of attendee buy-in, engagement and loyalty.

**JOMO**, or the “joy of missing out,” means taking pleasure in the freedom of not having to be everywhere at once.

## Hilton's Top Three Tips to Maximize (and Personalize) Attendee Time

- 1 Start mornings on the later side.**

If an early a.m. start time isn't essential, steer clear. Starting your meeting a little later means attendees will have added "me time" to honor their own morning routines, tackle pressing work needs and take advantage of conference locale offerings.
- 2 Deliver meeting content as advertised.**

Don't be guilty of bait and switch! Attendees who dedicate time to breakout sessions that dramatically pivot from advertised offerings are far less likely to take part in future events. Bonus points if you can share meeting content in advance, sending certain presentation materials and handouts ahead of time. Doing so ensures a positive first impression of your speaker(s) as prepared and organized while also better equipping attendees to absorb session content in real time.
- 3 Let optional things be optional.**

Now more than ever, people need to feel okay saying "no" to things they do not want to do. Whether that means sleeping in instead of sunrise yoga or FaceTiming with family during a nighttime networking event, shy away from "mandatory fun" and matching T-shirts touting your corporate logo or event theme. Instead, double down on allowing attendees to exercise personal choice, comfort and control.

### Planner Pro Tip



**Create a dedicated shared workspace** (tables, chairs, chargers, etc.) and communicate to attendees in advance that they can use this "pop-up office" to participate on calls, check emails and get caught up between sessions. Your attendees will thank you (and they won't be stuck sitting on the floor!).



## TACTIC NO. 2: Location, location, location.

While the allure of a great meeting location might be old news, it's still vital to acknowledge that, today, an engaging destination is essential to driving in-person participation.

Whether hosting your annual corporate retreat in a different exotic locale each year or simply thinking beyond traditional, four-wall meeting rooms for a regional quarterly meetup, your destination and venue are critical selling points for participants and can make or break attendee engagement at your event. Selecting a popular bleisure travel destination is a particularly strong strategy, as it not only encourages attendees to extend their stays but may also motivate them to bring family members or friends along for the ride.

*“Companies are making a concerted effort to spend their time, and their employees’ time, wisely, which can often translate to convening in a destination that feels meaningful and worthwhile,”* said Kellie Cahill, Complex Commercial Director for the [New York Hilton Midtown/Conrad NY Midtown](#). *“New York is one of those places. Our average meeting attendance here is currently up 12-18% over last year because participants are bringing their families, staying beyond their work travel dates and making the most of their opportunity to spend time in one of the world’s most sought-after destinations.”*

### Planner Pro Tip



**Make it easy (and convenient!) for participants to extend their stay.** *If meeting in New York, for example, offer a short list of additional lodging options in the area, such as the new [Tempo by Hilton New York Times Square](#), so attendees can position themselves at the heart of Broadway and, for those visiting NYC with kiddos for the first time, just steps away from the M&M’s store (IYKYK!).*



### Planner Pro Tip



**Create and share a one-pager of your destination’s top attractions** long before the event to generate excitement and boost attendance. Also, don’t be afraid to venture off the beaten path! For a recent event in Las Vegas, Hilton highlighted some of the city’s best spots “beyond the Strip” (best non-chain coffeeshop, best indie bookstore, best pizza joint, etc.), and attendees went wild over the opportunity to get a break from the hustle and bustle to try something new.

**VEGASHIDDENGEMS**  
Discover these hidden treasures that make Vegas really rock!

- AMBER UNICORN BOOKS**  
With over 200,000 used books, including over 20,000 cookbooks, you could easily spend a day in these stacks, but you'll find even more: Amber Unicorn is one of the top seven cookbook stores in the U.S. 2101 S Decatur Blvd #14 | [amberunicornbooks.com](#)
- GABI COFFEE & BAKERY**  
Sip, savor, craft, coffee and artisan pastries in an exotic, multi-cultural cafe. Combining the best of the East and West, Gabi's is a feast for the eyes and for the taste buds. 8808 Spring Mountain Rd, Ste 104 | [gabicafe.com](#)
- SECRET PIZZA**  
Stealth. This place is literally a hidden gem, a New York-style pizza eatery tucked away on the third floor of The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. After passing rows of vintage album covers, you've arrived at the truly stand-out, neon-only Secret Pizza The Boulevard Tower, 3708 S Las Vegas Blvd, Level 3.
- NACHO DADDY**  
This family-owned Mexican restaurant serves all-day breakfast and Mexican-American "collisions," offers a vegan menu and guarantees you'll never find a dry chili! Try the Best of Las Vegas "Daddy's Margarita" or the famous Scorpion Shot as seen on *TasteandTheFoodNetwork*. 3563 S Las Vegas Blvd | [nachodaddy.com](#)
- SIEGFRIED & ROY'S SECRET GARDEN & DOLPHIN HABITAT**  
Talk about magical: here you can explore an enchanted world filled with dolphins, white tigers, lions and zebras! Plus, one-of-a-kind experiences like Trainer for a Day and Vega with the Dolphins. The Mirage, 3400 S Las Vegas Blvd | [mirageandresorts.com/amenities](#)

## Planner Pro Tip



**Virtual visits from high-value speakers can give your event a huge boost** (and offer a welcome visual change of pace for in-person attendees). CEO not available to attend the meeting in person? Pipe him or her in on the big screen for a “live” appearance. Can’t fit a celebrity guest’s speaker fee into your budget? Schedule a brief virtual visit for a surprise pop-in that’s sure to delight. Whatever the occasion, help your customers get more mileage out of their AV investments by leveling up their events’ guest-speaker status.

## TACTIC NO. 3: Leverage opportunities to let AV be EZ.

While in-person events remain sharply on the rise, a digital or virtual component often plays a critical role in helping large teams stay connected. While investing in the right event technology for the meeting space can ensure you earn and keep your attendees’ attention, consider digital solutions to amplify the meeting beyond the meeting room in order to foster connectivity and inclusivity.

The pandemic was a powerful learning ground for virtual technology, and the lesson is clear: Technology cannot replace the value of meeting in person. But technology can add value to your meeting by increasing the return on investment for event sponsors and trade-show vendors. It’s a worthwhile consideration, depending on your event budget and company objectives.

When the occasion calls for mass reach via a virtual channel, consider introducing one of the new event technology solutions Hilton has been testing out with events partner [Encore](#).

For smaller meetings, we love the [Meeting Owl](#)—an all-in-one video conferencing solution that seriously simplifies digital collaboration. Featuring a 360-degree camera, microphone and speaker, the Owl sits in the center of the meeting space and includes all participants equally, automatically zooming in on whoever is speaking for organic face-to-face interactions. Meetings held with an Owl in their midst can be virtually streamed by hundreds, or even thousands, of participants who will feel like they are right there in the room (meaning they’re more likely to give a hoot about your meeting content).

## Planner Pro Tip



**When using Meeting Owls,** position nameplates or other easy-to-read identification in front of “in room” meeting members so each speaker’s identity is immediately clear to the broader audience.



Hilton and Encore are also teaming up on creative ways technology can help you maximize event space. At two recent sales conferences, 500 attendees participated in simultaneous breakout sessions taking place in one central ballroom. The secret? Silent theater headsets—think “silent disco” meets “meeting breakouts.” Attendees wore headsets and

tuned in to a different channel for every respective breakout, enabling everyone to gather in one shared space while eliminating sound interference. As an added bonus, F&B service was centralized to one location; event staffing was minimized; and attendees had far less ground to cover between sessions.

## **TACTIC NO. 4: Prioritize partners who know your group is a big deal.**

While business meeting “norms” may vary by region, customers around the world have largely similar needs when it comes to meaningful, in-person connection—and hospitality leaders like Hilton offer a wide range of sales support and planning resources for accounts of every shape and size.

For managed accounts, [Hilton Worldwide Sales](#) (HWS) experts offer one centralized resource to book M&E in thousands of locations across the globe. This set-up means you can partner with a dedicated account guardian who understands your business, develops a working knowledge of your preferences and provides in-market, boots-on-the-ground expertise to perfectly match your meeting needs ... no matter where you want to go.

HWS strategic partners can also leverage the destination expertise and high-level visibility of the entire global sales team, gaining insights into prime, untapped markets domestically and abroad. For example, if reduced availability is a barrier to gathering in a highly sought-after destination, our managed account guardians can steer groups toward trending alternative destinations that may be well worth a look. From Malta and Morocco to Croatia and Cleveland, many up-and-coming M&E locales offer venue infrastructure, flight options, capacity and amenities comparable to other major cities but with much greater booking availability.

As an added bonus, these up-and-coming destinations also offer “bucket list” appeal for attendees who will likely welcome the opportunity to travel somewhere new (and might even bring the family to extend their stay).



Booking events through a one-stop source like Hilton Worldwide Sales also provides managed account planners with centralized access to reporting—from consolidated spend to LightStay sustainability and social impact reports—for M&E business all over the world. HWS can even connect these groups with a charitable cause in the event destination and suggest strategic teambuilding opportunities that also benefit the local community.

And for unmanaged accounts, Hilton Direct Inbound offers personalized booking support—including sourcing and contracting solutions at over 7,200 hotels worldwide—from a dedicated team of hospitality experts who specialize in M&E requiring 10 or more guest rooms per night. Hilton Direct Inbound is the perfect pairing for smaller groups looking to team up with event professionals who understand your business and have the network and contacts to get questions answered fast. Here's how to get in touch with this resource: 1-800-321-3232 (weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST) or [via this form](#).

## Planner Pro Tip



### Self-service more your style?

**Say no more.** At [events.hilton.com](https://events.hilton.com), you can search and find right-fit hotels, submit a single RFP for multiple hotels at once, as well as book 10-25 guest rooms online. Once you have booked your event with a hotel, you can create an attendee website with the details of your event that make it easier than ever for your group members to book their own accommodations.

## **BONUS TACTIC:** **Lean on the experts to help you deliver the goods.**

No matter why and where groups are gathering, we know the modern meeting must be adaptable, sustainable and reflective of the needs and values of its participants. From our industry-leading tech partnerships and innovative, customizable meeting solutions to our world-class facilities and streamlined opportunities to [Meet with Purpose](#), Hilton has what it takes to help you take event execution to the next level (and then some).

When in doubt, source it out, and [look to the experts](#) to help you curate an unforgettable experience for your attendees.

