BI WORLDWIDE

The evolution of live *Events*

Trends, takeaways and tips for 2025

Setting the stage

In this report, we delve into the latest trends shaping the future of corporate events.

From the rise of artificial intelligence, to the diverse needs of a multi-generational workforce and growing emphasis on wellbeing, inclusivity, and accessibility, we explore how these trends are helping us create more impactful and memorable experiences.

We also examine the economic pressures that continue to influence our industry and the crucial role of in-person events in fostering connection and engagement in a hybrid working world.

Read on as we break down these trends, highlight their significance, and share our insights on what's coming next. Discover how we can help you navigate these changes and create events that resonate with your entire audience.

Jade Ball
Head of Events
BI WORLDWIDE EMEA

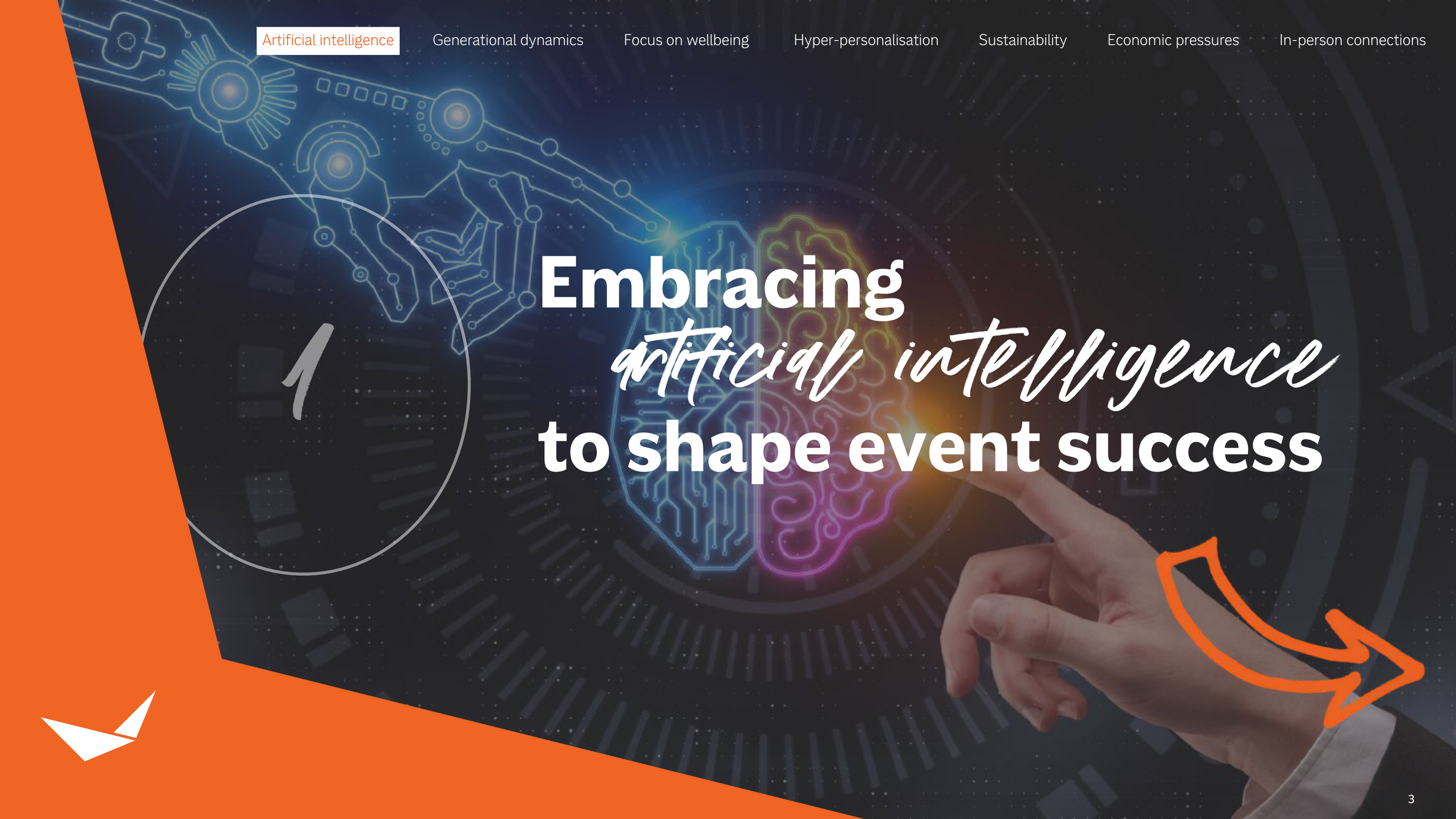
BI WORLDWIDE

Trends shaping *corporate events* in 2025

1. **Artificial intelligence**
2. **Generational dynamics**
3. **Focus on wellbeing**
4. **Hyper-personalisation**
5. **Sustainability**
6. **Economic pressures**
7. **In-person connections**

1

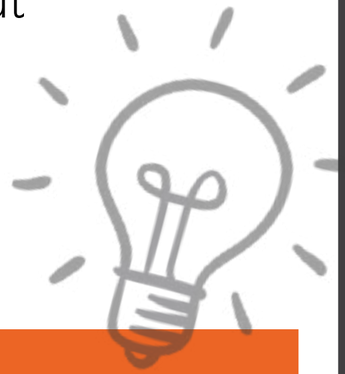
Embracing *artificial intelligence* to shape event success



The role of *artificial intelligence* in shaping event success

Have you gone a week this year without hearing the word AI?
No, us neither and with good reason.

Without a doubt, AI is here to stay.



> **I view artificial intelligence as the most profound technology that humanity will ever develop and work on . . . if you think about fire or electricity or the internet, it's like that. But I think even more profound.**

Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google

Overcoming challenges

The challenge, of course, is that AI capabilities evolve minute by minute, and it's up to us to keep pace. The good news? The possibilities seem limitless, offering an abundance of opportunities within the events industry. The latest report from Incentive Research Foundation dives into how industry professionals are using AI tools and explores where they see AI going next. For example, they shine a light on the possibility of leveraging AI robotics with facial recognition software to provide real-time feedback on audience engagement, something that BI WORLDWIDE is already utilising with clients to identify effectiveness of content and enhance attendee responsiveness.

Enhancing experiences

At BI WORLDWIDE we are also implementing AI to help improve efficiency; streamlining our processes, reducing costs, and enhancing participant experience. For example, we are using AI for tasks such as voice overs and voice of gods, allowing us to ensure a continuity of voice throughout an entire event including pre and post communication.

Security focus

As we move into 2025, a key priority will be continuing to explore integration opportunities while maintaining a critical focus on data security. Adapting and integrating AI into our practices is essential to remain competitive. At BI WORLDWIDE, we have developed stringent processes to ensure that both our own and our clients' PII and IP security are at the forefront of our AI usage. This commitment to data and technology security is a trend that will never change in our approach.

2

Understanding evolving *generational dynamics*

Understanding evolving *generational dynamics*

2

We have seen the impact of Gen Z in the workplace and their voices are only set to get louder.

Research[1] has shown that compared with their older colleagues this generation prioritises sustainability in their decision-making more than any other generation, and are proactively choosing sustainability over brand.

Gen Z independence

In our latest research on traveller trends, Gen Z delegates showed significantly lower motivation for group travel and compared to other generations tended to have less favourable views towards travel awards overall, an important consideration for incentive travel design moving forward.

When asked what their ‘best possible’ travel experience would be, results showed a lot of diverse choices, from experiences that include wellness (spa), sports (great seat), and outdoors (wilderness), to charitable (volunteering), and adrenaline-fuelled activities (ziplining).

This sentiment is reflected in similar research conducted by Skift[2] who suggested that both Gen Z and millennials are steering travel trends with a focus on distinctive and unique experiences.

Generational preferred *experiences*

The latest Hilton[3] report outlines the following preferences of the majority generations in the workforce right now:

TIP

33%

Millennials

prioritise cultural events and live music experiences

Baby Boomers

Appreciate cultural experiences and unique travel moments.

Gen X

Seek personalised experiences and value connectivity.

Millennials

Enjoy outdoor activities like hiking and beach outings.

Gen Z

Enjoy technology, food, wellness, and cultural experiences.

2

Understanding evolving *generational dynamics* 2

Multi-generational workplaces

With generation Alpha set to hit employment in the next decade and employees staying in work into their late 70s, we are entering an unprecedented era of having the potential of up to six generations in a workforce at any given time.

Understanding that reward and recognition effectiveness hinges on aspiration and desires, the ongoing challenge will be learning to understand how we can engage an audience whose age range could span more than 70 years. To address this, offering choice and personalising events as much as possible will be key.

Choosing your rewards

Applying choice architecture principles can help present options in a controlled manner and manage decision-making effectively. For example, providing options for wellness activities, cultural experiences, and adrenaline-pumping adventures.

This allows attendees to select experiences that resonate most with their personal interests. Or utilising default choices to guide attendees towards sustainable and inclusive choices. For instance, making eco-friendly options the default.

Considering communication

Beyond travel preferences, consideration also needs to be given to content and communication approaches that cater for the needs and preferences of a multi-generational audience.

TIP

Appeal to different generations, by offering *choice* and *personalisation* as much as possible.

> **"At BI WORLDWIDE, we will continually seek out the latest research, event analysis and insights, supporting our commitment to ensuring our clients' events resonate with their entire audience.**
>
> Jade Ball, Head of Events, BI WORLDWIDE

TIP

By 2030, workforces could feature up to *6 generations* at one time.

3

Prioritising and measuring event *wellbeing*

3 Prioritising event *wellbeing*

Building on the generational preferences discussed previously, it's clear that there is a growing focus on wellbeing at events. While wellbeing is already a key consideration, we anticipate it will play an even more significant role in event delivery moving forward.

Meeting their needs

The challenge lies in moving beyond mere lip service to truly integrating wellbeing into event agendas. This could involve creating spaces for quiet reflection or offering free time for attendees to network at their own pace.

In 2025, it will be essential to leave behind 'forced fun' and instead foster environments where attendees feel comfortable, valued, and able to participate in ways that suit them.

Focus areas:

1. Fostering inclusivity
2. Embracing neurodiversity
3. Ensuring accessibility
4. Promoting physical health

Prioritising event *wellbeing*

3

Fostering inclusivity

Inclusivity is not a new concept, but it remains crucial. Our research shows that a sense of belonging is a key driver of engagement. To ensure our events have a meaningful impact, we must make ongoing efforts to be fully inclusive.

> **Inclusion starts with understanding our audience and recognising that they may have both declared and undeclared needs and preferences that affect how they engage with events.**
>
> Jade Ball, Head of Events, BI WORLDWIDE

Leveraging previous event data and feedback is an excellent starting point. For new audiences or events, we must draw on our collective experiences, considering the potential physical and emotional needs of attendees and designing accordingly. It's important to remain aware of our own biases and knowledge limitations. The biggest mistake is trying to cover all scenarios alone; instead, we recommend leveraging the expertise of event agencies and subject matter experts who can provide broader and more specialised perspectives.

At BI WORLDWIDE, we suggest reaching out to the target audience to ask what they want and need. Using their feedback, aligned with event objectives and organisational values, helps us create messages that engage and inspire each delegate.

Embracing neurodiversity

In line with our commitment to inclusivity, we predict an increase in events designed to cater for the needs of neurodiverse individuals. Successful events must accommodate a wide range of learning styles, ensuring neurodiverse attendees feel supported and included.

This requires rethinking traditional event formats, which often assume that long presentations or rigid structures are effective for everyone. Providing diverse formats will be central to engaging neurodiverse attendees and meeting event objectives.

Prioritising event *wellbeing*

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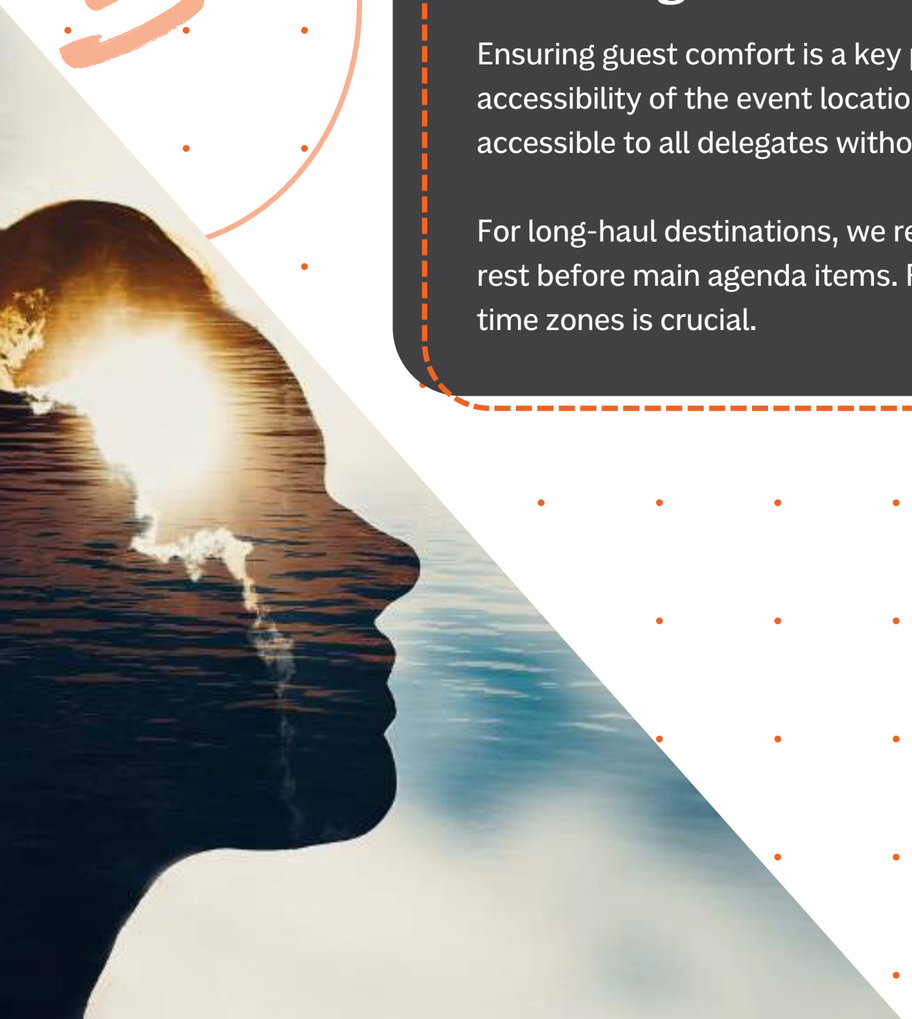
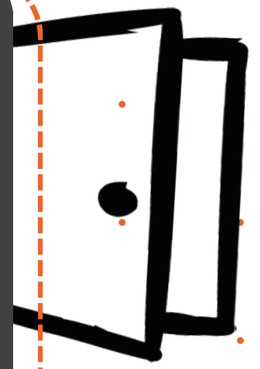


Ensuring accessibility

Ensuring guest comfort is a key part of event wellbeing. This includes considering the accessibility of the event location and the impact of our choices. For example, is the destination accessible to all delegates without detracting from their enjoyment or engagement?

For long-haul destinations, we recommend scheduling suitable downtime to allow guests to rest before main agenda items. For global audiences, managing differences in schedules and time zones is crucial.



Promoting physical health

Meals are essential for sustained energy, but tight schedules often lead to rushed dining experiences.

In 2025, we will continue to challenge and collaborate with venues on wellness menus. These should include local, low-calorie options and minimise high-sugar content.

For example, breakfast can feature whole fruits and low-carb cereal bars to promote sustained energy throughout the day.

TIP

Follow the *18 minute rule* for maximum session engagement.

3 Tracking and measuring *wellbeing* impact

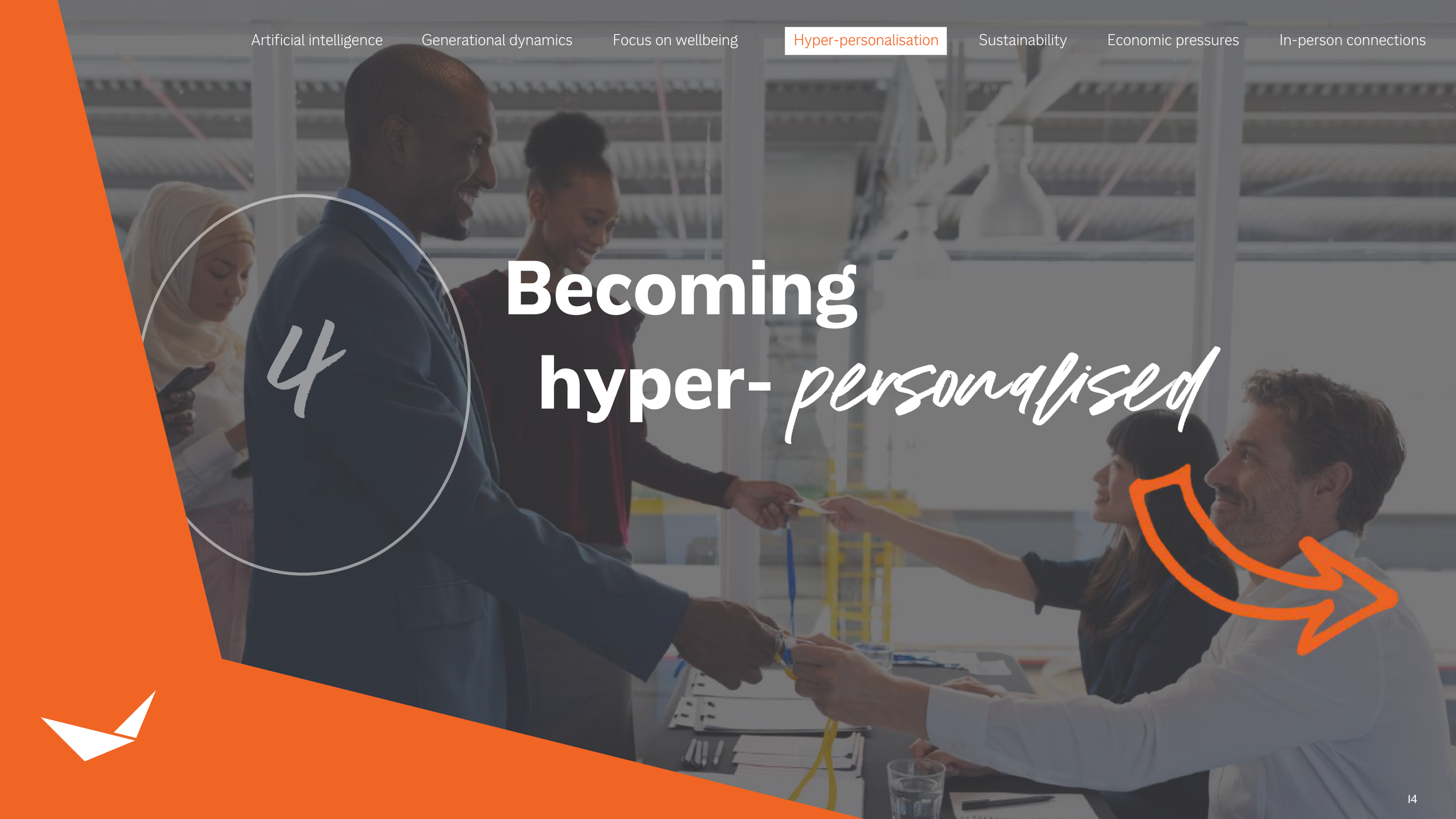
In 2025, we will work closely with our clients to measure and track the impact of event agendas that consider wellbeing and neurodivergence.

There is a growing body of research that shows how traditional event formats, like long plenary sessions and lengthy presentations, aren't conducive to positive outcomes.

The World-Famous TED conference is a great example of how science has driven its 18-minute rule format to optimise engagement.

Shorter, more interactive sessions can significantly improve engagement and information retention, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the event in achieving its objectives.

Generating proof points that demonstrate the benefits of inclusive, wellbeing-focused agendas will allow us to refine our strategies further. We regularly share evidence to clients that investments in neurodiversity and wellbeing are not just 'nice-to-haves' but essential for achieving desired event outcomes.



4

Becoming hyper- *personalised*

4

Becoming hyper-*personalised*

Delegate name

As travel preferences continue to diversify and AI capabilities advance, hyper-personalisation will become increasingly feasible, allowing us to enhance event experiences with a one-size-fits-one approach.

Adding genuine value

Personalisation will be a significant trend in 2025, but it's crucial to implement it in a way that feels relevant and sustainable. From personalisation of event agendas, content, communications, to gifting, personalisation doesn't have to be costly or gimmicky. Attendees often appreciate thoughtful, simple touches that add genuine value to their experience. For example, offering personalised engravings on refillable water bottles provides a meaningful and environmentally friendly memento without straining the budget.

> **"It's important to offer personalised experiences that can be extended to all attendees, not just a select few. This ensures that everyone feels valued and included, enhancing the overall event experience.**
>
> Jade Ball, Head of Events, BI WORLDWIDE

5

Measuring *sustainability* impact

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Measuring *sustainability* impact

Present day challenges

While sustainability is not a new trend, we believe 2025 will be a pivotal year for event agencies and operators to advance their sustainability efforts.

For a while now there has been an awareness of the need for sustainable events, which evolved into proactive sustainable decision-making.

Now, with sustainability embedded in C-Suite goals, objectives, and remuneration, all areas, including scope 3 emissions where the biggest challenge and impact opportunity lies, are under the microscope when it comes to tracking and reporting.

Future solutions

With net zero ambitions, this shift involves not just identifying sustainable activities but also collaborating with sustainability consultants like Event:Decisions to measure and report the impact of these activities.

This approach enables continuous improvement towards achieving net zero goals year after year.

6

Navigating *economic* pressures

Navigating *economic* pressures

6

Political and social changes

2024 was a year of global turbulence, particularly in terms of geopolitics. With nine elections held worldwide, it was the largest election year in history. This political and economic uncertainty, coupled with global conflicts and rising inflation, compounded the pressure on businesses across all industries.

One of the biggest challenges we've faced in the events industry is that many of our clients' budgets have remained static since the COVID-19 pandemic and haven't kept pace with rising global inflation. This means that while the costs of essentials like hotels, food and beverages, and flights have increased, event budgets have not. Additionally, as clients expand their teams, growing headcounts have led to more attendees at events, further stretching already constrained budgets.

The result has been increased pressure to deliver top-tier events within tighter financial constraints—a challenge we rose to in 2024.

TIP

2025 may see a lot of geopolitical changes, as 2024 saw

9 elections

held worldwide.

Rising to the challenge

In response, we've been laser-focused on our strategic approach, working closely with our clients to define well-tuned, impactful objectives. In 2025, it appears that these economic pressures are likely to continue.

By helping our clients allocate their budgets more effectively, we will continue to ensure that their spending delivers maximum value. This partnership approach will allow us to keep producing outstanding events, even in uncertain times.

7

Showing the value of *in-person* connections

Showing the value of *in-person* connections

7

With hybrid working becoming the norm across many industries, opportunities for businesses to gather their teams in person have become rarer. This makes those occasions where employees are physically united more precious and valuable than ever.

In 2025, it will be crucial to seize these opportunities and ensure that key event outcomes are met. What do we want attendees to think, feel, and do differently because of attending?

TIP

89%

Global event strategy leaders say in person events are critical to increasing revenue

Delivering real value

Events can no longer be one-size-fits-all; they need to be highly targeted and designed with specific goals in mind, ensuring that the time spent together, and the money invested deliver real value for the organisation.

In-person events provide a unique opportunity to engage, inspire, and motivate teams, especially in challenging times. Despite the global situation remaining difficult, we expect the demand for live events to remain strong.

Companies continue to recognise the importance of face-to-face interactions in driving future success and are likely to maintain their investment in these events.

Looking ahead:

Ready to *elevate* your events?

As we look ahead to 2025, the corporate events landscape is set to continue to evolve. The diverse needs of a multi-generational workforce, the growing emphasis on wellbeing, and the importance of inclusivity and accessibility are reshaping how we plan and execute events.

Despite ongoing economic pressures, strategic planning and a focus on delivering maximum value will enable us to create impactful and memorable experiences. In this evolving context, in-person events will continue to play a crucial role in fostering connection and engagement, especially as hybrid working remains prevalent.

> “At BI WORLDWIDE, we are committed to helping you navigate these trends and challenges. Our expertise in creating tailored, high-impact events ensures that your investment delivers real value and drives success. But above all, inspires and engages your audience.

Mike Davies
CEO EMEA
BI WORLDWIDE

Takeaways from 2025 *events* trends

AI integration

Use AI for real-time feedback and automate tasks like voice overs to enhance experiences, whilst ensuring robust data security.

Generational Dynamics

Tailor events to generational preferences through surveys, diverse activities, and choice architecture.

Sustainability

Partner with consultants to measure impacts, choose eco-friendly options, and improve sustainable practices.

Economic adaptation

Allocate budgets strategically, define clear objectives, prioritise high-impact areas, and find cost-effective solutions.

In-person value

Set specific goals for attendee outcomes, create targeted content, and align every event aspect with these goals.

Wellbeing focus

Include genuine wellbeing initiatives with downtime, quiet zones, and flexible networking sessions.

Inclusivity and accessibility

Ensure inclusivity by gathering feedback, consulting experts, and designing for diverse learning styles and accessible venues.

Hyper-personalisation

Use data for meaningful personalisation, offer thoughtful touches, and ensure scalability.

Proof of Impact

Measure impact through engagement data, use interactive sessions, and provide evidence of benefits to clients.

Learn more about our events solutions and services and discover how we can help you create unforgettable experiences that resonate with your entire audience in 2025 and beyond.

References

1. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/03/generation-z-sustainability-lifestyle-buying-decisions/
2. https://skift.com/2024/01/12/exploring-gen-z-and-millennial-travel-habits-new-skift-research/
3. https://stories.hilton.com/2024trends

About BI WORLDWIDE

With its EMEA head office in the UK, BI WORLDWIDE helps organisations solve critical business challenges by driving positive behaviour change and engagement. BI WORLDWIDE applies its talent and expertise in behavioural economics to deliver complementary recognition, rewards, incentives and live event solutions.

Our full-service portfolio offers clients a unique blend of consulting expertise and proprietary technology solutions that drive value from programme design to implementation and beyond. Working with over 2000 organisations worldwide, across 183 countries, BI WORLDWIDE has been inspiring people, partners, and customers since 1950.

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