



Event Insights

Measuring the importance of

creativity

in the meeting/event industry

Presented by
Red 7 Media's *EXPO* Magazine
and *Agenda*

With creative inspiration from
Orlando/Orange County
Convention & Visitors Bureau

Measuring the importance of **creativity**

The word isn't often found in job descriptions, nor in most resumé's. Yet companies crave it and people strive for it. It's an essential trait that helps define success in today's business environment.

The word is "creativity," and its value has never been measured as it pertains to professionals in the meeting and events industry. People can easily recognize creativity. You can see the effects of it. But you can't as easily explain what environment helps encourage it, how people are motivated to seek it or how they're compensated for showing it.

In an industry with wide-ranging job titles, roles and responsibilities, we sought to determine just how important the discipline of creativity is in

the corporate and association workplaces. Do meeting, event and trade show planners regard it as an important element of their jobs? Do they feel creativity is given the right emphasis in their organizations? In a business climate in which every ounce of productivity is scrutinized, is creativity something that takes on more significance — or less — in separating the haves from the have-nots?

And how do we define creativity? Elaborate receptions and multimedia extravaganzas? That's part of it. But as one respondent to our survey said: "Creativity isn't always artsy. Creativity is paying a \$50K bill with \$40K in the bank. Creativity is fitting 100 people in a room meant for 60 or conversely fitting 50 in a room for 100. Creativity is

selling exhibitors slots to a very limited audience. Creativity, for me, is more problem-solving than it is the colors of the linens for the banquet."

This study, which measures results from 330 respondents to an e-mail questionnaire in fall 2008, focuses on four categories of industry job responsibilities, and studies creativity through their different vantage points:

- Meeting/event planning for a corporation
- Meeting/event planning for an association or not-for-profit organization
- Independent meeting/event planning
- Trade show management or executive



A commitment to **creativity**

Anyone who's been to Orlando knows that creativity is a vital part of our heritage and personality as a destination. That's why a meeting in Orlando generates ROI: a Return on Ideas. It's also why we were excited to partner with Red 7 Media's *EXPO* magazine and *Agenda* to present this first-ever survey exploring the roots and impact of creativity in the meetings and events industry.

Elevating the importance of creativity in the industry and making meetings more powerful as a result is a significant accomplishment for the entire industry.

Thank you to those who participated in this survey and sent your creative ideas. You have earned a place in a prestigious group that is leading the way innovating for the industry. We welcome your feedback and look forward to greeting you in Orlando.

— **Gary C. Sain**, President & CEO, Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Executive **summary**

- **Almost 95 percent of respondents** regard themselves as creative, with 40 percent regarding themselves as “very creative.”
- **Ninety-seven percent of respondents** consider being creative an important part of their jobs.
- **Three-quarters of respondents** feel it’s possible to influence the level of creativity within an organization by setting up certain procedures, infrastructures and environments.
- **Being creative has had a strong positive effect** on the respondents’ personal career advancement (57 percent).
- **Being creative has had a positive effect** on financial compensation for 72 percent of the survey respondents.
- **Four out of five respondents** say the current volatile business climate has increased the need for them to be more creative at their jobs.
- **One-third believe that creativity** is not fairly and adequately rewarded in the industry (one-quarter of respondents say it is, and 38 percent are not sure).
- **Internal recognition and citation** is the number-one form of showing appreciation for creativity within organizations.
- **The elements of respondents’ jobs** that require the most creativity are: (1) event marketing and promotion, (2) event design and (3) special events.
- **Corporate meeting/event planners** place a much higher premium than the survey average on being creative in the site-selection process.
- **Independent meeting/event planners** regard themselves as much more creative than the other job titles surveyed.
- **One-third of respondents** feel creativity in employees is not being measured at their organizations.

Demographic snapshot of survey respondents

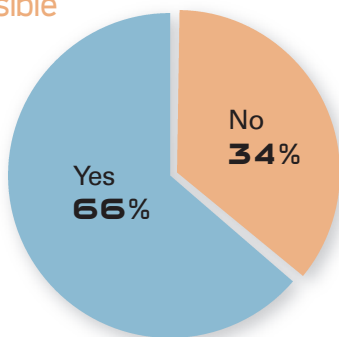
Job responsibility

- 23%** Meeting/event planning for a corporation
- 35%** Meeting/event planning for an association or not-for-profit
- 23%** Independent meeting/event planning
- 19%** Trade show management or executive

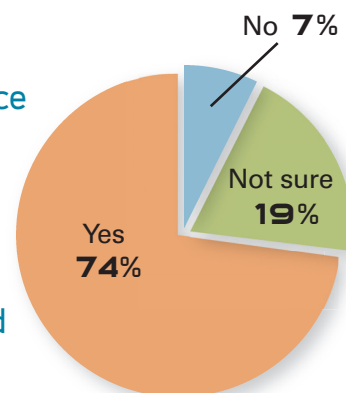
Years of experience

- 2%** Less than two
- 12%** Two to five
- 25%** Six to 10
- 61%** More than 10

Are you responsible for setting the tone in your organization or department for motivating people to be creative?



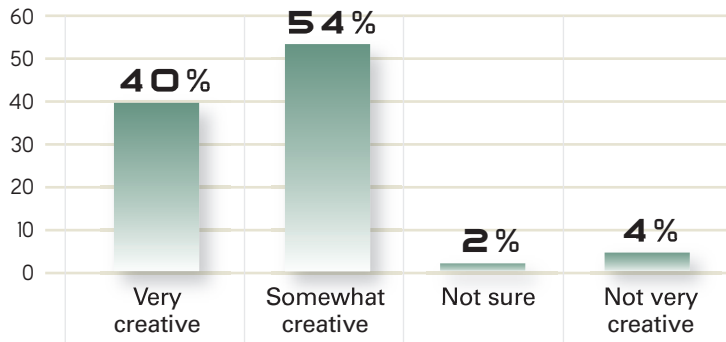
Do you believe it’s possible to influence the degree of creativity within an organization by setting certain procedures, infrastructures and environments?



How **creative** are we?

As most would expect from a profession comprised of people who develop and implement events, we consider ourselves to be a highly creative group of people, though no distinction is made between strategic planning and purely logistical functions.

How creative do you consider yourself?



Ninety-four percent of survey respondents regard themselves as creative, with 40 percent indicating they're "very creative." Seventy-three percent felt they were more creative than other people in their own organizations (21 percent felt they were "much more creative"), with only 10 percent feeling they were less creative.



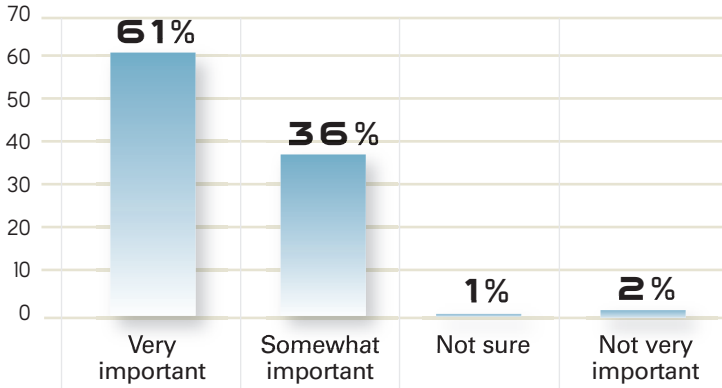
Creativity at work

Real ideas that have worked for others

- Throw a black tie breakfast
- Proclaim a "Wear Your Socks Day," where attendees can wear socks or flip-flops in exchange for a donation to a predetermined charity
- Plan a candy-making party at a local chocolatier
- Keep the location of your opening night party a secret and hype the suspense
- Wrap walls and bookcases in brown packing paper and paint bakery shop scenes all around for a fun dessert station
- Recreate a game show complete with sound stage, lights, game panels and an MC.
- Hold a general session in a church and open with a brief organ recital

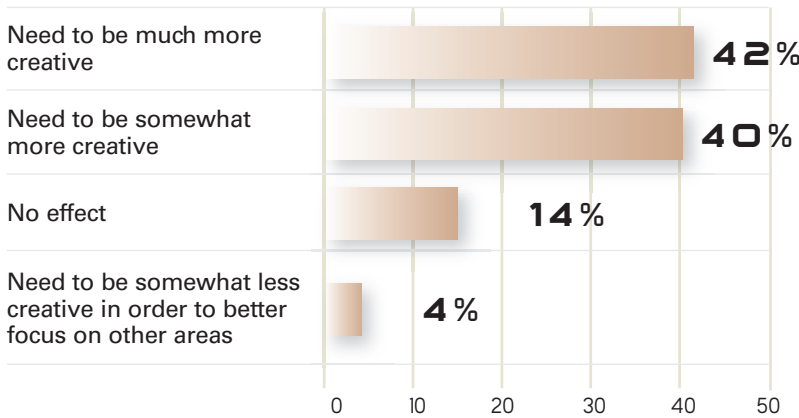
The importance of being creative

How important do you consider being creative as part of your job?



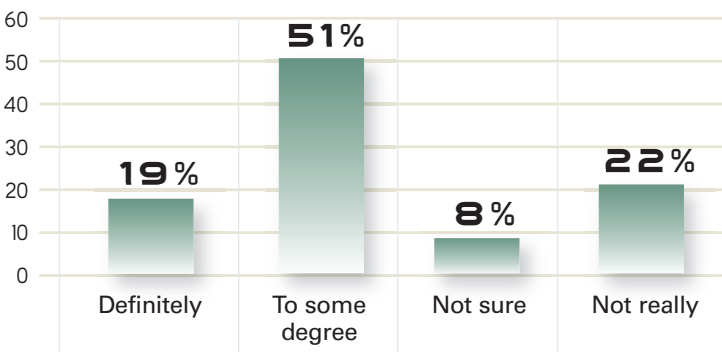
If there was any question of the importance creativity plays in the jobs of meeting/event professionals, these findings put the issue to rest — it's extremely important. The significant majority of survey respondents, 97 percent, say being creative is an important part of their jobs. Sixty-one percent indicate it's a "very important" aspect of their responsibilities.

How has the volatile business climate affected your need to be creative?



Interestingly, the current business climate has prompted meeting/event professionals to believe they need to be even more creative than in the past. Forty-two percent say they need to be "much more creative," with 40 percent saying they need to be "somewhat more creative." In this context, creativity likely can be translated into doing more with less — still delivering ROI and accomplishing the goals and objectives of an event, but doing so without some of the excessive spending characterized in healthier economic times.

Do you feel management places a premium on people who are creative?

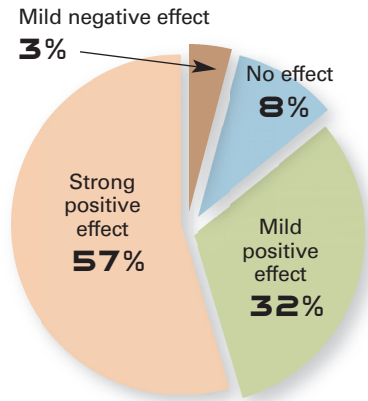


While respondents vigorously endorse the need to be creative, they are less enthusiastic in assessing their managements' take on the role creativity plays. Asked whether they feel their management places a premium on people who are creative, 19 percent say "definitely," while 51 percent indicate "to some degree." Twenty-two percent say their management doesn't really place a premium on creative people. So it's not surprising that respondents feel that more emphasis should be given to the concept of employee creativity — 29 percent say "much more" emphasis should be given, and 54 percent respond with "somewhat more."



Direct effects of **creativity** on personal career advancement

Effect of creativity on your personal career advancement



One of the more compelling topics in the survey was the question of how one's level of creativity has affected personal career advancement. Eighty-nine percent of respondents say their ability to be creative has had a positive effect on their career growth, with 57 percent noting it has had a "strong" positive effect.

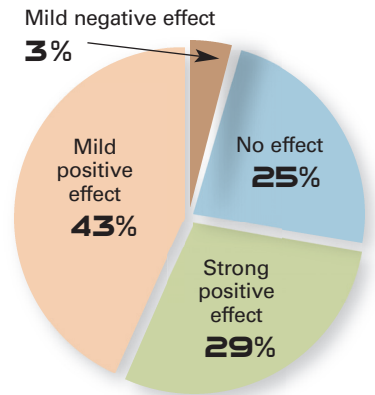
In a cross-tabulation by job responsibilities, trade show managers responded slightly more positively than the survey norm, with 61 percent indicating their creativity has had a strong positive effect on their careers. Perhaps there is a connection between this group's inclination, documented earlier, to regard themselves as the least creative of the four survey groups. Because as a group they don't feel as creative as the others, perhaps the ones who are creative tend to stand out more and be appropriately rewarded.



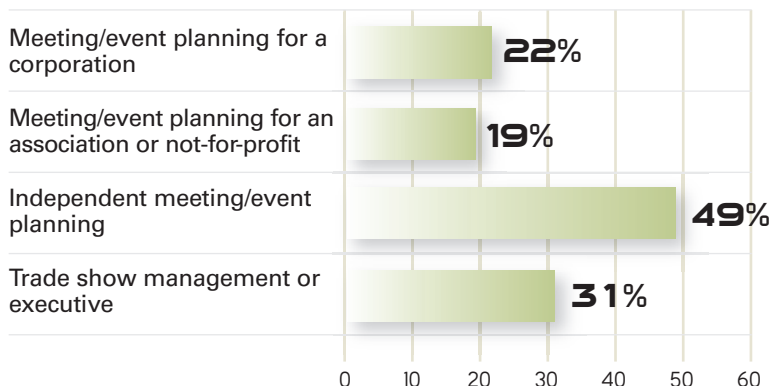
Direct effects of **creativity** on financial compensation

Effect of creativity on your financial compensation

Does creativity translate into more cash? Yes, according to survey respondents. Nearly three in four indicate that their ability to be creative has had a positive effect on their financial compensation — 29 percent say it has had a "strong" positive effect, and 43 percent say it's had a "mild" positive effect. About 25 percent say their creativity quotient has had no effect on their earnings.



Respondents who report a "strong positive effect" of creativity on financial compensation (by job groups)



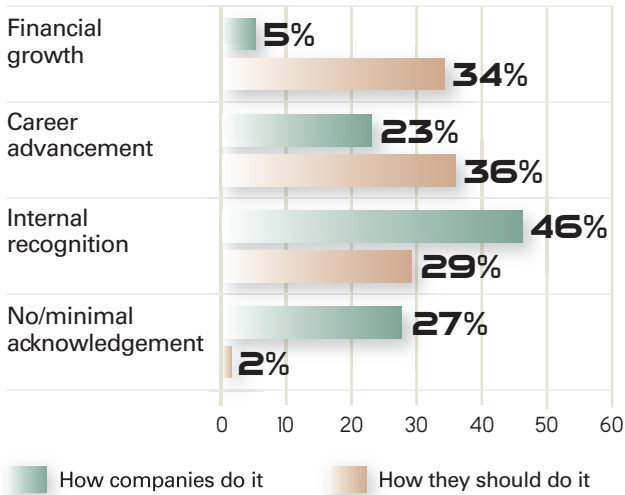
Once again, the highest correlation of creativity and financial compensation was among the independent meeting/event planners.

Forty-nine percent of respondents in this category say their creativity level has had a "strong positive effect" on their earnings. The corporate meeting/event planners and association participants fell below the norm on this question, with 22 percent and 19 percent, respectively, reporting a "strong positive effect" on financial compensation. Thirty-one percent of trade show managers reported a "strong positive effect."



Is **creativity** being recognized and properly rewarded?

Recognizing creativity: the way it is, the way it should be



What survey respondents want most in terms of recognition for their creativity — financial growth and career advancement — is what organizations in our industry currently provide least often.

Some form of internal recognition is the norm for 46 percent of respondents, with 27 percent reporting minimal or no recognition for creativity. Career advancement ranked third at 23 percent, but perhaps most strikingly, financial growth was a distant fourth at five percent.

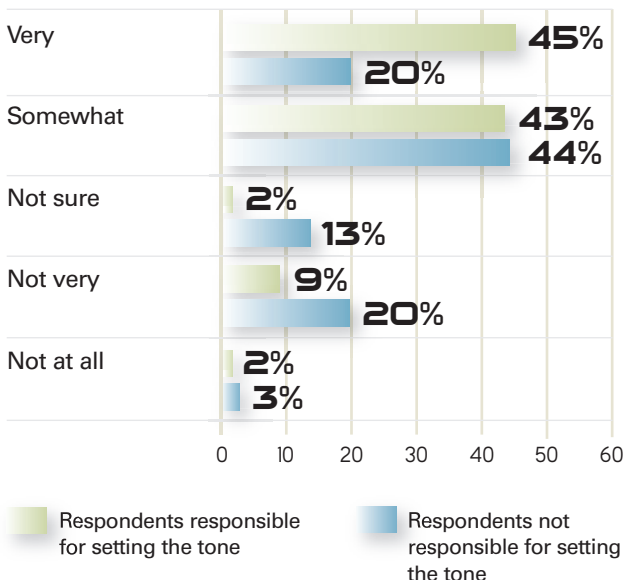
Not surprising, when asked how companies should recognize creativity, career advancement shot to the top of the list at 36 percent, with financial compensation right on its heels at 34 percent. The message appears to be that recognition is nice, but it doesn't pay the bills.

In a related question, when asked if they felt creativity was rewarded fairly in the industry as a whole, only one-quarter of the respondents felt it was, while 32 percent said it was not. Thirty-eight percent were unsure and five percent said creativity wasn't that important to their jobs or their companies.



Measuring the atmosphere for **creativity**

How conducive is your organization's atmosphere for encouraging creativity?



As previously noted, respondents do believe it's possible to control or influence the level of creativity in an organization by setting certain procedures, tones and atmospheres. Asked to rate the degree to which they believe their organizations' infrastructures are conducive to creativity, 37 percent of respondents say "very conducive" and 43 percent say "somewhat conducive." Five percent aren't sure, and 14 percent say their environments are not conducive to creativity.

The findings are more telling when examining this cross-tabulation of those respondents responsible for setting the creative atmosphere and those respondents who are not. There's a 25-point gap between the two groups reporting that their atmospheres are "very conducive" to creativity.



Creating an atmosphere for creativity

Which factors would help companies be more creative?

95% Set up an atmosphere that encourages employees to come forward with ideas

65% Offer financial incentives for creative ideas that work

54% Hire people with proven creative experience

54% Have contests/rewards/recognition for those who develop creative ideas

When asked what factors would help organizations become more creative, 95 percent of respondents say setting up an atmosphere that encourages employees to come forward with ideas is the answer. Sixty-five percent of respondents think organizations should offer financial incentives for ideas that work, while 54 percent want contests and rewards for those who have creative ideas. Fifty-four percent of respondents think hiring people with proven creative experience will create the right atmosphere, and 36 percent like the idea of setting up special internal teams whose sole function is to develop new ideas.



Job function areas of creativity for meeting/event professionals

Which job functions require the most creativity?

84% Event marketing and promotion

84% Event design

75% Special events

60% Program content

59% Social functions

53% Operational/logistics issues

47% Site selection

46% AV/lighting/production

What areas of an event professional's responsibilities require the most creativity? Event marketing and promotion is tied with event design for the number one spot by 84 percent of respondents. Seventy-five percent of respondents ranked "special events" next, followed by program content (60 percent) and social functions (59 percent).

Summary and recommendations

Professionals in the meeting/event industry overwhelmingly regard themselves as creative people and regard their ability to be creative and think creatively as a very important aspect of their jobs. They believe that their personal career advancement and financial compensation have accelerated in part relative to their ability to be creative.

For the four respondent groups studied, independent meeting/event planners regard themselves as the most creative and trade show managers see themselves as the least creative, with corporate meeting/event planners and association professionals in the middle.

While industry professionals cite the need and importance of being creative, they don't always feel it is being recognized in a manner appropriate to them.

The areas within the meeting/planning function that require the highest levels of creativity are event marketing and promotion, event design and special events.

As business conditions present new challenges within organizations, the need to be creative will become more important than ever.

Suggestions for executive management:

- Understand the value and importance that your meeting/event team places on creativity.
- Create the proper environment and processes to encourage creative thinking.
- Examine the processes you have that acknowledge and reward creative ideas and ask whether you're giving the necessary attention to employee recognition and growth commensurate with how important creativity is to you.
- Consider the specific areas that require the highest amount of creativity from your team and compare those with how they feel about their abilities to be creative in those areas. Respond to their desire for professional training to help them become more creative in the deficient areas.
- Ensure that you have the right people to provide the necessary amount of creativity needed in your organization.
- Consider budgetary adjustments to account for new programs and processes for ensuring creativity in the future.

About the Orlando/Orange Country Convention & Visitors Bureau

World-renowned creativity, imagination and innovation truly separate Orlando from every other meetings destination. You'll get your greatest possible ROI — that's Return on Ideas — from the one place you can count on every hotel, attraction, recreational facility and meetings-related business to help spur your out-of-the-box thinking! Lean on us for new, exciting events and ideas that will build your success. www.orlandoinfo.com/meet/