

COMPETITIVE OVERVIEW

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Summary

CONVENING EVENTS (convenings) can refer to meetings, conferences, workshops, symposia, and other events. In a convening event, the attendees are participants in a collective effort that serves a specific shared purpose.¹

Convening Events are Becoming a Big Business

- According to a study conducted by the [Events Industry Council](#), 1.9 million meetings were held in the US during 2016, attracting 251 million participants. 248,000 were conferences and ‘congresses’ without exhibit floors.
- The size of the meetings sector increased 22.7% between 2009 and 2016 based on the number of meeting participants, lifting total meetings direct spending to \$325 billion, a 23.4% increase.
- On average, in 2016 meetings generated \$1,294 of spending per participant.²

[Anil Punyapu](#) of Cvent, an events-management software company, says that many organizations are getting into the game, including Wall Street banks. “Every major company is starting to do big conferences.”³

Face-to-face is a Valuable Tool

To brand and differentiate, opportunities for traditional networking stand out when potential customers are lost to competitors in the morass of the internet.

Convenings Can Differentiate by Appearing to be Exclusive

“Apply to Attend” is a big trend. TED, Summit LA, NexGen, and Code, for example, all invite potential attendees to apply.

Other events are completely open to the public, provided one purchases a ticket – which can be steep. Burning Man, for example, sets attendees back \$500, simply to camp in the desert, with little amenities.

Other Differentiators include: Fanciful Networking Milieus, Dedicated Apps, Interactive Technology, Appearances by Entertainers, and Wellness Offerings

CONVENINGS ARE...	CONVENINGS ARE NOT...
Composed of diverse stakeholders who represent a range of perspectives on a topic, often from different organizations	Regular, internal meetings
For accomplishing a clear purpose (e.g., drive toward decision-making or alignment) and intended outcomes	Focused on administrative, process-related topics
Designed to draw on all participants to generate insight and action beyond what any single actor could achieve on his or her own	Solely for delivering information or a single point of view (e.g., a training or a media event)

Yoga studios and meditation sessions aren't just for Gwyneth Paltrow's In Goop Health Summit. SALT has a "glam squad" and fitness sessions along with a spa, and SXSW unveiled a new "Wellness Expo" in 2019; C2 Montréal features empathy workshops and a "brain dating lounge" for one-on-one meetings for peer learning.

The Speaker Circuit is a Lucrative Side-gig

Former US Presidents command hefty 6-figure fees, as do some other government and business leaders. Now, nearly anyone with the right following or personality (along with some domain expertise) can become a "key opinion leader" to supplement their income. More and more, entertainment personalities and actors are also joining the speaker circuit. Robert Downey Jr., for example will be at Re:MARS along with Jeff Bezos in June.

Quick Guide to Convening Events 2019/2020

Event	Date	Entry Cost	Description/Differentiator	Venue
Allen & Co Sun Valley	July	Invite Only	Summer camp for billionaires; Not all who are invited attend, however.	The lavish Sun Valley Resort, ID
Art Basel: Miami	Dec 5-8	\$50	Decadent parties	Miami Beach Convention Center; Offsite Venues
Aspen Ideas Festival	June 20-29	\$1,900 (Student)- \$10,500 (Patron)	<p>This June, 3,000 attendees and 450 presenters will convene for the 14th Aspen Ideas Festival. Launched by education and policy thinktank The Aspen Institute, the event takes place in three parts: Health (June 20-23), Festival 1 (June 23-26), and Festival 2 (June 26-29). Speakers include Harvard Economics Professor Raj Chetty and Tara Westover, author of <i>Educated</i>.</p> <p>Aspen Ideas to Go Podcast Michael Bloomberg a repeat attendee; tickets for the public sell out. Hurst Lecture Series</p>	Aspen Institute campus, Aspen, CO

Bilderberg	TBD	Invite Only	Invited elite of the world only; Often protested	TBD, last year: Turin, Italy
Brilliant Minds (Formerly Stockholm Symposium)	June 13-14	Invite Only	The brainchild of Swedes Daniel Ek (Spotify) and Arash Pournouri (a record industry personality), Brilliant Minds' two-day leadership summit aims to scale the Swedish values of openness, transparency, trust and social responsibility to world. This year's event, "Fluxability Quotient" will feature President Barack Obama, Barry Diller of IAC, and Evan Spiegel of Snapchat as speakers. The concept of Fluxability Quotient (FQ) "measures sustainability in the art of constant transformation...bucking 'the way things have always been done' and blazing your own path over and over ad infinitum."	Stockholm, Sweden
Burning Man	Aug 25-Sept 2	\$390 + \$80 vehicle; Turnkey camping: \$1,000 - \$2,500	Attendees co-create Black Rock City, a temporary metropolis dedicated to art and community; no MOOP (matter out of place)	Black Rock Desert, NV
Business Roundtable	TBD	Invite Only	CEOs of America	-

C2 Montréal	May 22-24	\$2,695	<p>C2, short for commerce and creativity, will focus on “Tomorrow” as the theme for its 6th event, e.g., the need to act upon long-discussed issues such as climate change and diversity.</p> <p>Networking is a big focus, and unusual arrangements such as suspending conferees in chairs above the floor provide unique conversational settings.</p> <p>Among the many speakers are: 14-year old Québécois author Laura Bourbeau; 14-year old gene analyzer and entrepreneur Ayaan Esmail; humanoid robot BINA48; Northwestern computer science professor Brent Hecht; and filmmaker Spike Lee.</p>	Montréal, QB
CES	Jan 7-10, 2020	<p>\$300-\$1,700 (Tech Industry)</p> <p>In 2017: \$100</p>	The Consumer Technology Associations’ annual trade show. 2019 saw a breadmaking bot and a text-enabled self-cleaning litter box.	Las Vegas Convention Center, Casinos
Collision	May 20-23	\$695 - \$2,595 CAD	<p>Collision is the North American counterpart to Web Summit, which began in Ireland in 2009 and has since moved to Portugal. Collision purports to convene some 25,000 attendees of whom 68% are in senior management. Sessions include topics such as: Breakout Startups, Driverless Cities, and Secrets of the CEO / VC Relationship.</p> <p>Speakers include: Mona Siddiqui, Chief Data Officer, US Department of Health and Human Services, musical artist Timbaland, and Seth Rogan, actor and co-founder of Houseplant, a Canadian cannabis company.</p>	Toronto, ON

In Goop Health Summit	May 17-19	\$1,000-\$4,500 In 2017: \$500	<p>Founder Gwyneth Paltrow expanded her Goop lifestyle empire with the In Goop Health Summit in 2017, and the event is now bi-coastal as well as headed across the pond to premiere in London this June.</p> <p>The LA event will host panels and chats with scientists, doctors, and current “thought leaders.” Between sessions attendees are supplied with the latest in meditation technologies and healthy snacks – and an abundance of other wellness and self-care activities. All-day wellness and beauty stations are part of the draw. Speakers at the event include: “Mind Architect” Peter Crone and actress and entrepreneur Jessica Alba of the Honest Company. The speaker panel is further rounded out by astrologers, doulas and an endocrinologist.</p>	LA/NYC/London
Milken Institute	Apr 28-May1	\$15,000-50,000; Discounts for nonprofit/ education leaders	<p>A gathering of people who are seriously looking to deploy capital. Considered by some as the Davos of North America, however, doesn’t hold the same quotient of heads of state.</p> <p>Sponsored by the economic think tank founded by controversial Wall Street figure Michael Milken, The Milken Institute Global Conference reconvenes this April in Beverly Hills, CA. Among the many speakers scheduled to appear are: Maria Bartiromo of FOX Business Network; Steven A. Cohen, CEO of Point72 (formerly SAC Capital); Christine Lagarde, Managing Director and Chairwoman of the International Monetary Fund; and U2’s guitarist, The Edge.</p> <p>In its 21st year, admittance to the exclusive event requires a Milken Institute membership (purchase price: \$15,000 - \$50,000). Membership aside, many of the sessions also remain invite only.</p>	Beverly Hills

NexGen Summit	June 7-9	Apply to Attend \$249-\$499	<p>An event started by twenty-something entrepreneurs Justin Lafazan and Dylan Gambardella, NextGen Summit invites millennial entrepreneurs to apply for membership to attend. Aside from speaker sessions, attendees can additionally apply to PITCH, a controlled opportunity to meet with angel investors and VCs. Other networking opportunities with venture fund managers are promised, as well as office hours where attendees can receive one-to-one mentorship from startup leaders and industry executives.</p> <p>Ultimately, 1000 persons are invited to the conference.</p>	New York City
Re:MARS	June 4-7	\$1,999	<p>2019's Re:MARS, an artificial intelligence and machine learning event, is the inaugural offshoot of Amazon's invite-only MARS (Machine learning, Automation, Robotics and Space) conference hosted by Jeff Bezos. The event combines interactive "Tech Showcases," expert talks, and networking opportunities. Actor Robert Downey Jr., MIT researcher Kate Darling and Bezos himself are among the featured speakers.</p>	Las Vegas, NV
SummitLA	Nov 9-11	Apply for Invite	<p>TED meets summer camp meets Burning Man. Founded by millennial investors who bought Powder Mountain.</p>	LA Theater District
SXSW	March 16-22, 2020	\$825-\$1,650 (walk-up) In 2013: \$600	<p>Indie and hipster appeal; music and film focus; networking/interactive events. Tech launches are common under a buzz of excitement. Hip factor enables a lot of free local labor.</p>	Austin, TX
SALT (Skybridge Alternatives)	May 7-10	Invite Only Institutional Investors: Free; then \$1,250-\$9,850	<p>Anthony Scaramucci's (Skybridge Alternatives) gathering of hedge fund investors. Face-to-face networking interspersed with wellness opportunities, sessions on Blockchain, Inside the FBI, and more.</p>	

Tech Crunch Disrupt	Oct 2-4	\$1,000-\$2,000 Expo: \$145 Student: \$295	The startup world gathers to see the present and the future of tech. Hackers can apply to participate in the Hackathon, winners receive free entry.	San Francisco
TED	April 15-19	Apply \$5,000-\$25,000	Technology * Entertainment * Design <i>TED2019: Bigger Than Us</i> . Speakers vie through local TEDx conferences for a chance to speak at TED, unpaid, however, a session can make a career.	Vancouver, BC
TNP (Nantucket Project)	Sept 19-27	\$5,665-\$6,780 Less for educators, islanders	Thought leaders, change makers and performers – under a spacious tent by the sea.	Nantucket, MA
Wall Street Journal CEO Council	May 14 May 21-24	Invite Only	<p>This exclusive, invite-only event convenes members from 20 countries across a wide selection of industries. Attendees are limited to CEOs from companies such as: Cisco, FedEx, Freddie Mac, IBM, JPMorgan Chase & Co, Johnson & Johnson, among others.</p> <p>2019's London CEO Council will convene as the Brexit debate continues to dominate world politics. The council is expected to discuss the populist movement in Europe, as well as the status of international trade, particularly between the US and China. As if these looming topics weren't enough, the council will discuss technological changes in business and diversity in the workforce. While a program is not yet made public, a recap of the 2018 London CEO Council meeting is available for perusal.</p>	London/Tokyo
Web Summit	Nov 4-7	€850 (\$950)	A company from Dublin, Ireland that creates: Web Summit in Lisbon, Collision in Toronto and RISE in Hong Kong. The 'anti-CES.'	Lisbon, Portugal
World Cancer Congress	Oct 19-20, 2020	TBD; In 2018: \$300-\$1,200	Unites the world cancer community, facilitating information exchange and learning/collaboration.	Muscat, Oman

World Economic Forum	Jan 2019	Invite Only	<p>Best known for its annual meeting, which took place this past January in Davos-Klosters, the Forum itself consists of a group of political, media, academic, and business elites from 1,000 companies throughout the world. The forum is chaired by Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab (MPA Harvard, 1967).</p> <p>This regional meeting will explore the “Transformation of Industry and Business: Globalization 4.0,” a continuance of Davos’ theme from earlier this year. An unknown selection of Forum members is anticipated to discuss broad themes such as: data governance, cybersecurity, the influence of climate change on business, and the effect of volatile geopolitical environments on industries.</p>	Davos, Switzerland
World Health Care Congress	Apr 21- May 1	\$3,000 - \$5,000	<p>Founded in 2003, the World Health Care Congress convenes to “transform the delivery, affordability, and quality of health care.” The interdisciplinary conference features leaders in healthcare technology, medicine and the insurance industry – among many niches.</p> <p>Featured speakers include: Harvard Medical School instructor Michael Docktor, MD, Boston Children's Hospital; Carlos Arceo, President of the Mexican Council for Medical Tourism; and Joy Fitzgerald, Chief Diversity Officer for Eli Lilly and Company.</p>	Washington, DC

Economics of Convening Events

Brilliant Minds (Stockholm): Losing Money?

110k earned in 2015.

Founded by Spotify entrepreneur Daniel Ek, Spotify financed the first event in 2015 for 1.1M, while it earned only 110K. After that, the music streaming company sold its shares of the conference organization.⁴

Brilliant Minds is now backed by some of Sweden's biggest industrial dynasties, such as Caroline Berg (Ax:son Johnson family), Fredrik Rapp (Pomona Investments), and Ek.⁵

Karl-Johan Persson, chief executive of retailer H&M, sits on the advisory board. The families are reportedly financing the event for five years for an undisclosed investment.⁶

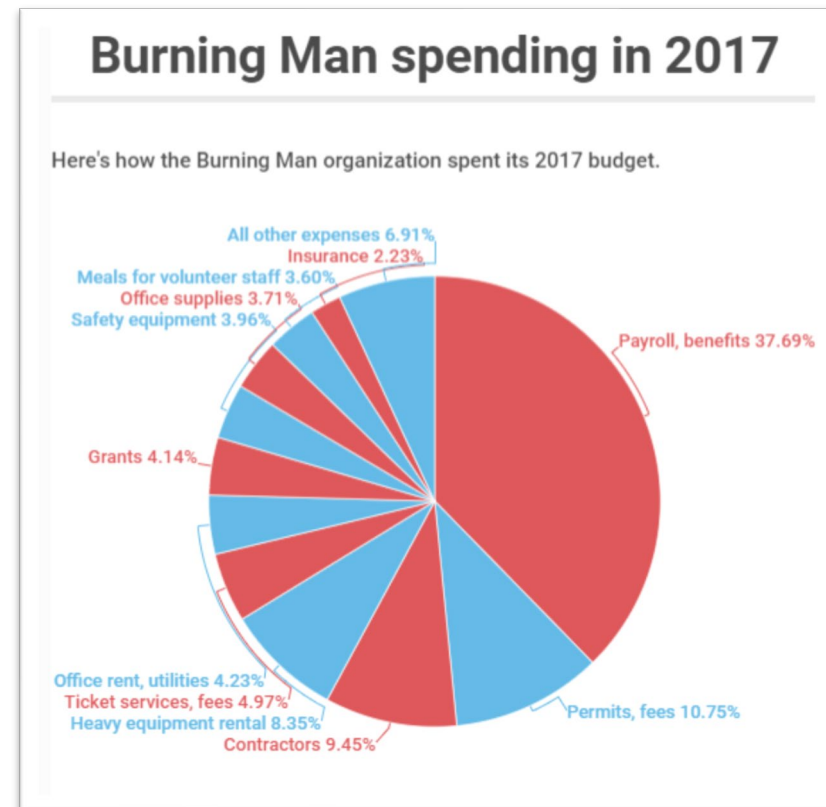
Barack Obama will keynote in 2019 – a big investment for the conference given Obama's speaker fee is last noted at \$400k.⁷

Burning Man – Making a Profit after Paying High Costs

69,000 attendees in 2017, \$3.7M net income.

The 501(c)(3) non-profit known as Burning Man Project is headquartered in San Francisco, California. From their [public 990 tax form](#), in 2017 Burning Man grossed \$44.5M in 2017, netting \$3.7M after expenses. \$42 million of gross revenues stem from ticket sales (69,000 were in attendance in 2017). Any additional income from the event comes from ice and coffee sales.⁸

The same year, the organization spent approximately \$40.8 million on the following (see graphic):⁹



C2 Conference (Montreal): Expansion to Australia failed.

Sponsored by the Government/Ad Firm Sid Lee; Corporate Sponsors.

Created by Quebec advertising exec Jean-François Bouchard (of [Sid Lee](#)) and in partnership with entertainment company Cirque du Soleil, C2 is a Canadian non-profit organization. The Canadian government has supported the conference from the beginning to foster economic development in the Quebec region; \$1.5M was given to C2 by the Canadian government in 2016-2017.¹⁰ C2's income is unreported.

In 2015, C2 International, a separate entity, was created to host international events, namely, C2 Melbourne in 2018. The group came under fire in early 2018, however, when they abruptly cancelled the Australian conference, leaving unpaid debts to suppliers.^{11 12}

According to C2 Montréal, the conference injects \$130 million into Québec's GDP and an additional \$18 million to the provincial government. "C2 Montréal also creates, directly or otherwise, 1,715 jobs."¹³

CES: Consumer Technology Association's (CTA) Conference

184,498 attendees in 2018 ; net \$17M

The largest technology event on the planet, CES occupies 2.6 million feet of exhibit space throughout Las Vegas. Total attendance in 2017 was 184,498, and revenues from CES itself were \$106M. With additional revenues coming in from publications, meetings and membership, net income for the CTA was \$17M as reported on the association's [990 form](#).

Staff compensations for CTA are also high: CEO Gary Shapiro earned \$2.6 million in 2017, and seven of the association's Senior VP's earned upwards of \$300,000 each in compensation for the year.

South by Southwest (SXSW):

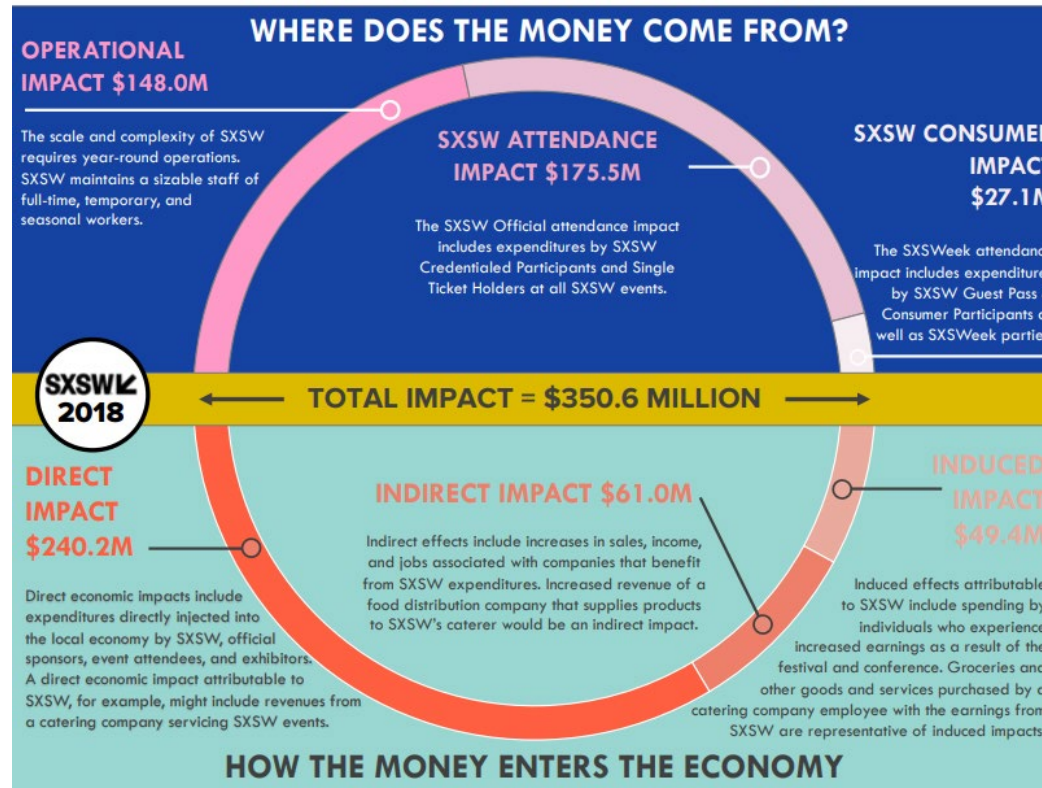
Unreported income, major economic boost to Austin, unpaid volunteers and bands.

75,000 attendees in 2018.

SXSW began as a small music festival with 700 attendees in Austin, TX, in 1987. In 1994 the conference expanded to include both *Film* and *Multimedia* (later, *Interactive*), a strategic move given the numerous hardware and Web 1.0 companies in Texas' "Silicon Hills."¹⁴ The event became a showcase for technology; later, Twitter held its release at SXSW 2007 and [Foursquare](#) was launched at SXSW the same year.¹⁵ As a private LLC, **SXSW tax returns are not publicly available**. For public opinion, SXSW does release economic impact data on the festival's contribution to the Austin economy. The latest report (2018) claims that SXSW's total impact on the Austin economy was \$350.6M.¹⁶

The festival employs 130 full-time workers year-round. As the event ramps up, more full-time workers are added as well as many volunteers who receive some perks toward attending the event.¹⁷ Badges are desirable social capital in Austin; returning volunteers receive better badges, e.g., “platinum.”

Musical acts have always been unpaid unless a showcase event for a major artist such as Prince (2013) or Jay-Z (2012).^{18 19}



The World Economic Forum (WEF): Breaking even.

\$1.7M net

Funding is provided by its members, which are business entities who join to participate in its activities. Member fees range from \$60k - \$600k, depending on the level of engagement. Members include companies such as Facebook, AT&T, Alphabet, Ericsson, HP, Hitachi, Huawei, JP Morgan, among others.

When the fee to be a member is paid, most will then be able to attend the annual meeting, however, attendance is subject to an extra fee. Annual meeting revenues represented 14% of total revenues in 2018.

[Balance Sheet from WEF Annual Report, 2018](#) (USD is .98 to 1 CHF)

Swiss Francs (000s)	30/06/2016	30/06/2017	30/06/2018
Profit & Loss			
Total Revenue	228,343	280,022	326,740
Membership	34,876	30,817	31,620
Participation Fees	43,568	43,200	43,299
Partnership	140,643	185,307	227,317
Other	9,256	20,698	24,503
Total Expenses	227,101	278,809	325,023
Staff ¹	101,865	108,360	130,790
Office & Activity	125,236	170,449	194,233
Carried to Foundation Capital	1,241	1,213	1,717

TED – High Conference Fees and Grants/Gifts; no Payouts to Speakers

1000+ attendees; \$795k net

TED is owned by the Sapling Foundation, a private nonprofit foundation (a 501(c)3 organization under US tax code). The foundation was established in 1996 by publishing entrepreneur Chris Anderson.

[According to the TED website](#), “TED makes money through conference attendance fees, sponsorships, foundation support, licensing fees and book sales, and we spend it as soon as we get it — on video editing, web development and hosting for TED Talks and TED-Ed videos (ideas are free, but bandwidth is expensive...); support for community-driven initiatives like TEDx and the TED Fellows, and of course, paying fair salaries to staffers and interns.”

TED has been criticized for its ticket fees – which range from \$5,000 to \$25,000; also for not paying its speakers.²⁰

In 2015, the foundation's 990-PF tax return showed that the Sapling Foundation earned revenues of \$65 million (\$42M from the conference; \$23M from gifts and grants) which net \$795,000 after expenses.

That year, Sapling paid its top six employees over \$2 million in compensation, and reported assets of \$53 million. Sapling holds investments in Charles Schwab according to the document.²¹

Speaker Trends

Gender

Diversity continues to be a hot topic going forward: in its "[Gender Diversity & Inclusion in Events](#)" report, event software firm Bizzabo reviewed more than 60,000 speakers at professional events in 23 countries between 2013 and 2018, finding that 69% of speakers were male, while less than one-third were female.²² At technology related events, 80% of speakers were male.²³ Out of the 23 countries studied, Kenya, Mexico and the United States had the highest numbers of female speakers— 42 percent, 39 percent, and 35 percent, respectively.

Speaker Types

Keynote Speakers can reinforce branding, create buzz, add value or provide something extra for audiences. They can take a message, repackage it and deliver it back to attendees. Bringing in outside voices lends spark to events and can help boost motivation and buzz, as well as leaving people feeling energized and inspired.²⁴

Business Leaders/CEOs/Entrepreneurs

[Peter Thiel](#), Former CEO and Co-founder of PayPal; Technology Entrepreneur, Investor and Philanthropist

Spoke at: [SXSW 2013 \[Video\]](#). [Spoke at DLD](#). Has created two conferences, [Founders 50](#) and Dialog, both of which are/were very exclusive and invite-only; little is reported on them in the media, none in recent years, and they may be defunct.

[Joy Fitzgerald](#), Chief Diversity Officer, Eli Lilly

Has a website to promote her speaking engagements – [Speaking Joy](#)

Spoke at: [Catalyst Awards Conference in March 2019](#); [World Healthcare Congress \(DC\)](#) in May.

[Anne Wojcicki](#), Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, 23andMe (\$100k + fee)

Former Speaker/Judge at [Tech Crunch Disrupt](#); Spoke at TEDMED [2009 and 2015](#).

Scientists/Academics

[Raj Chetty](#) (Harvard)

The Harvard Economics professor has spoken at Google as well as the London Business School; he is a Carnegie Fellow and the director of the non-profit Opportunity Insights at Harvard. Chetty will [speak at the Aspen Ideas Festival in June](#).

[Kate Darling](#) (MIT)

Darling, a researcher at the MIT Media Lab and affiliated with Harvard's Berkman center, is an in-demand presenter on robots, AI and human computer interaction. Darling spoke at C2 Montreal in 2016; Spoke on the emotional [connection to robots at last year's TED \[VIDEO\]](#); Speaking at Jeff Bezo's/Amazon's [Re:MARS conference in June](#).

[Brent Hecht](#) (Northwestern), Chair of ACM Future of Computing Academy

Spoke at [Electronic Resources in 2014](#); Speaking at [C2 Montreal in May](#)

Actors

Jessica Alba, creator of The Honest Company spoke at In Goop Health 2019 [along with the actresses Busy Philips and Olivia Wilde](#).

Seth Rogan, founder of Canadian cannabis company, [Houseplant](#), will speak at C2 Montreal.

Robert Downey Jr. is headlining [Re:Mars in June](#)

Politicians

Many US politicians are represented by the [Harry Walker Agency](#); standard expenses for engaging with high level politicians may include (but are not limited to): unrestricted, first class, round-trip airfare; hotel accommodations; ground transportation by a professional car service (both in the event city and city of speaker's origin), meals, and incidentals.

Some require additional expenses such as security or expenses for an aide.²⁵

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro

Spoke at Davos 2018 about lowering taxes, fighting corruption and the benefits of trade.

"He was conservative but not populist," said Stuart Eizenstat, a former U.S. Treasury official now with the law firm Covington & Burling.

"It was not rabble-rousing."²⁶

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair(\$616k)

In 2009, Blair made almost \$616,000 for two half-hour speeches given in the Philippines: over \$10,000 a minute.²⁷

President **Barack Obama** (400k fee)²⁸

In 2017 President Obama was hired to speak by: private equity firm Carlyle Group LP, a healthcare conference by Cantor Fitzgerald, and Northern Trust Corp, for 400k each.

President Obama is speaking at [Brilliant Minds](#) (Stockholm) in June 2019. (A high speaker fee for a conference that is not generating revenue.)

Former Vice President Al Gore (100k)²⁹

Vice President Gore spoke at a wine industry conference in March, as well as a climate change conference in Alabama this past February.^{30 31} Gore also spoke at [Summit LA in 2018](#).

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (\$225k)

Clinton brought in nearly \$22 million from a wide range of engagements between leaving office in 2013 and running for president in 2015.³²

President Donald Trump (1.5M, 2008)³³

In 2006 and 2007, The Learning Annex hired Donald Trump to speak at their Real Estate Wealth Expos, paying him \$1.5 million per speech.³⁴

Influencers/Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)

Online personalities are popular speakers who can generate an atmosphere of excitement. Such influencers spend time investing and engaging with their 'followers' on Twitter, Instagram, via podcasts, or YouTube, among other platforms. They tend to have a direct relationship with their audience, who are often fervently engaged in the conversation.

Benefits to adding influencers they may share pieces of content after the event, even if not obligated to do so, or recommend the branded event.³⁵

Prominent influencers can add appeal to events and inspire attendees who feel they are learning something new or different. Laura Howell, client services coordinator at agency FreemanXP notes: "A keynote delivered by an influencer who is considered an expert in their field, or panel sessions featuring top brands that delve into pressing industry issues can help draw in the crowds."

When considering KOLs, it's important to understand their individual personalities, beliefs, and what they stand for. Finding the right influencer for the right type of audience is equally important.³⁶

2019 Noted Influencers:



[Kara Swisher, Executive Editor, Recode](#) (fee unknown)

[Spoke at SXSW 2019](#) [Video], Speaking at the [Rock Health Summit](#) (September), [SALT 2019](#), [NRF 2020](#)

Prominent technology journalist Swisher, formerly of the Wall Street Journal's *All Things Digital* column with Walt Mossberg, is executive editor of Recode, and hosts *Recode Decode*, an interview column on the site.

Further, she co-produces Recode's own [Code Conference](#). Fisher is represented by several speaker agencies.



[David Goggins](#) (50k-100k)³⁷

Has spoken at corporate events for Cisco, PiperJaffray, Nissan and BET. Speaking at [Specialty Tools and Fasteners Distributors Association in November](#).

David Goggins, a retired Navy SEAL is the only member of the U.S. Armed Forces to complete SEAL training, the U.S. Army Ranger School (where he graduated as Enlisted Honor Man) and Air Force Tactical Air Controller training. His book, *Can't Hurt Me* is a New York Times best seller.

He has spent the past two decades exploring the outer limits of human performance, both as an elite Special Operations member and an accomplished ultra-endurance athlete. David has completed more than 50 endurance races, including multiple ultra-marathons, ultra-triathlons, bike races and arduous mountain ascents.³⁸



[Sadhguru](#) (7.5k – 10k)³⁹

Indian Yogi and spiritual teacher, New York Times bestselling author. YouTube personality.

Has spoken at the United Nations World Headquarters and the World Economic Forum, and at New York Fashion Week on the topic of [textile waste](#) [Video]. He has also been invited to speak at leading educational institutions, including: Oxford, London Business School, IMD, Stanford, [Harvard Medical School](#) [Video], Yale, Wharton and MIT. Speaking at [SummitLA in November](#).

Demographics

Where the elite Davos 2018 was characterized by who wasn't there (President Trump and his cabinet, who remained in Washington to deal with the government shutdown; British Prime Minister Theresa May was absent due to Brexit), several convenings offer in-depth demographic data, however, for others, transparency may hurt their marketing efforts.⁴⁰

Web Summit

After announcing the conference would move to Portugal from its native Ireland in 2016, Web Summit faced some backlash in the media about the conference falsely advertising its attendance figures. Journalist Neil Murray, deep in the Denmark startup scene, argued that the conference had certainly not signed up 400 individuals from Denmark as advertised at the time. Moreover, Jason Calacanis, an US based angel investor revealed on twitter that several colleagues had been offered a \$10,000 package by Web Summit to meet with angels at the conference that year.⁴¹

At any rate, Web Summit is advertising the following for its 2019 event; as a for-profit no further disclosure is available:

Web Summit	
Attendees	70,000
Speakers	1,200
CEOs	2,600
Journalists	11,000
Countries	170

C2's noted figures are somewhat humbler:

C2 Montreal	
Participants	6,500+
Industries	20+
CEOs	2,145
C+ Managers	3,705
Professionals	650
Countries	50+

TED

While TED has been criticized for its hefty conference fee (average \$7,500), it does offer its talks online for free. In 2013, Chris Anderson, the director of TED, took to the stage to report on the growth of the organization and shared the following numbers for the conference that year:

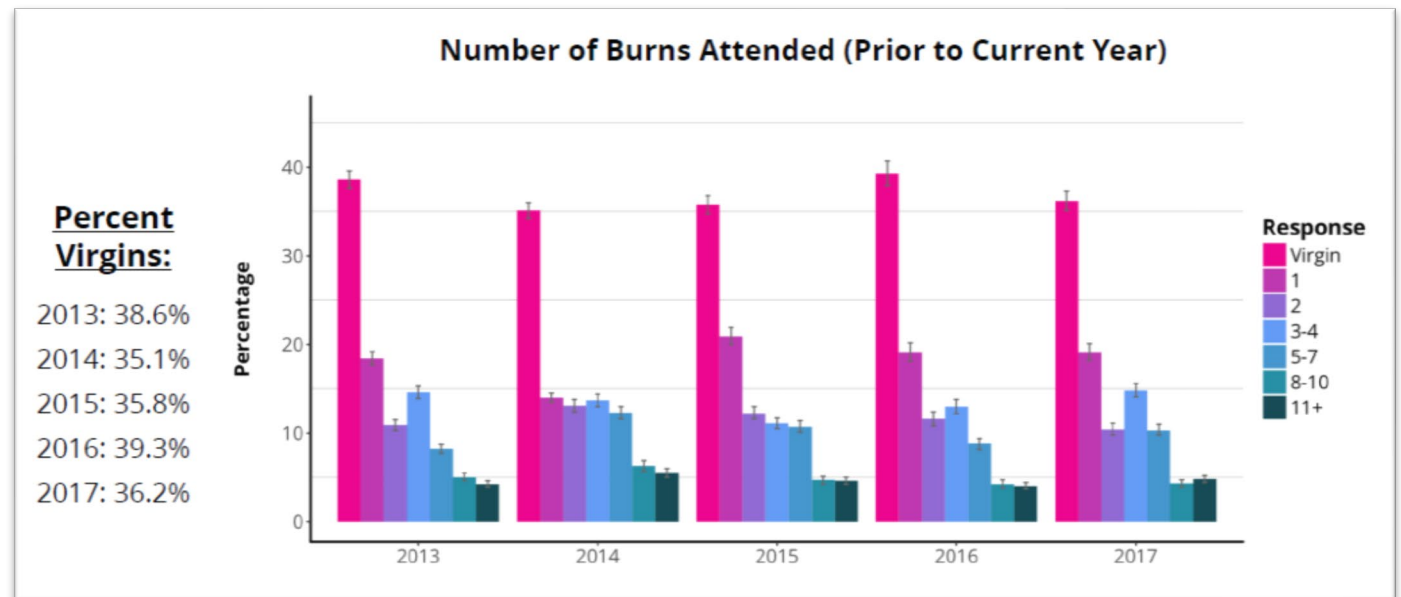
TED	
Attendees:	1,400
Countries	50
Speakers	80

Burning Man

Burning Man seems devoted to collecting data on its attendees and making that data transparent. Its [Afterburn census report](#) and [summary report](#) details Burning Man's Black Rock City population and how demographics have shifted [from 2013-2017](#). The methodology consisted of randomly sampling 5-10% of attendees to determine their: day of arrival, gender, age, sexual orientation, virgin burner status (or not), country of residency first language, US party affiliation (if eligible) and even voting behavior, among other data points.

Newcomers (Virgins) outweighed repeat burners in all the years surveyed by more than 1/3. (graphic)

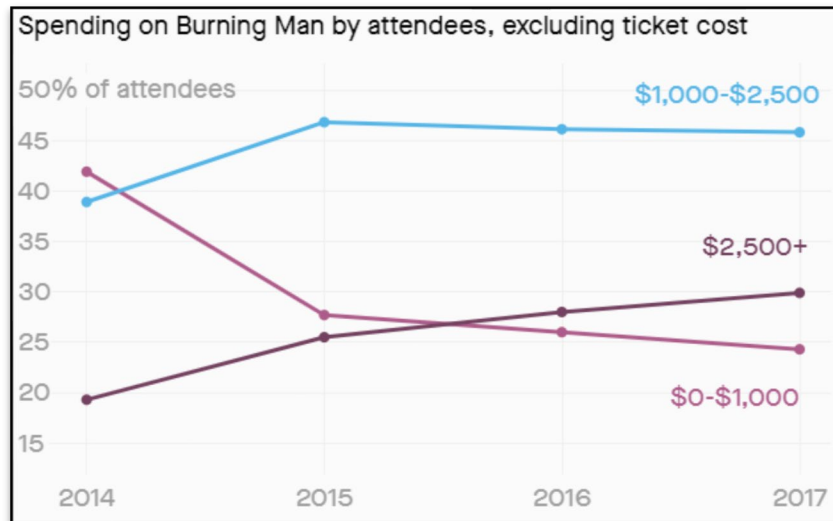
- Attendance to the event is capped by the Bureau of Land Management as the event takes place on BLM property in Nevada. The cap has increased markedly, however, from 50,000 in 2011 to 70,000 in 2018.



- Burners in 2017 were additionally found to be:
 - 58% Male;
 - 69% Heterosexual;
 - 80% American (47% of whom were Californian);
 - 82% White.
- The Median age of burners has stayed the same; Household and Personal Income among attendees have increased slightly in recent years:

Burning Man Attendance, Attendee Median Age and Income				
Year	Attendance	Age	Personal	Household
2013	69,613	33	\$51,100	-
2014	65,922	34	\$53,900	-
2015	67,564	33	\$54,900	\$89,400
2016	67,290	34	\$60,000	\$94,200
2017	69,493	34	\$60,700	\$94,900

While entrance to the event is \$390, since 2014, the number of people spending over \$2,500 on the event to stay in turnkey camps has increased every year. Like many cities of 70,000 people, the population has become wealthier, some even bringing personal chefs and setting up luxury sleeping arrangements.⁴²



As the event is founded upon principles such as decommodification and self-reliance, ticketing changes in 2019 will begin to favor lower income individuals as planners attempt to control the amount of higher priced tickets sold by entrepreneurial camps which cater to those seeking more of “glamping” experience.

- Burning Man will increase its low income ticket program by 18% beginning in 2019. High-priced tickets will be reduced by 30%.
- CEO Marian Goodell described the changes as a “course correction” in [a recent blog post](#). According to Goodell, product and business launches and commodification of Burning Man culture in social media are out of line with the event which is “not a festival.”⁴³

SXSW

Southby additionally releases comprehensive demographics on its attendees, however, they do not report on racial demographics or sexual preference.

[2018's demographics report](#) was recently released on the SXSW Website; for the last four years, the attendee profile has not changed much, namely, participants are 50% male, 50% married, and more than 50% are between 25 and 34.

SXSW Attendee Demographics 2015-2018				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Attendance	81,600*	84,560*	70,696	75,098
Gender				
Male	55%	55%	54%	52%
Female	45%	45%	45%	47%
Other	-	-	<1%	<1%
Marital Status				
Married	45%	47%	53%	54%
Single	43%	40%	44%	43%
Other	12%	13%	3%	3%
Age				
<21	<1%	1%	1%	1%
21-24	6%	6%	6%	6%
25-34	42%	38%	38%	37%
35-44	32%	33%	33%	31%
45-54	14%	17%	17%	18%
55-64	5%	5%	5%	6%
65+	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Household Income				
<\$25,000	5%	5%	6%	6%

\$25,000 - \$49,999	10%	10%	9%	9%
\$50,000 - \$74,000	15%	13%	13%	13%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	14%	13%	14%	14%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	21%	23%	21%	21%
\$150,000+	35%	36%	37%	37%

*2015 & 2016 attendance included artists, crew, and “collateral attendees”

Additionally reported for SXSW 2018:

- 75% of attendees were from the US; 26% of whom were from Texas
- 69% were childless
- 46% held bachelors degrees
- 40% held graduate degrees or higher
- Business Goals Breakdown:
 - Find New Business Opportunities: 64%
 - Connect with Existing Clients: 46%
 - Launch a New Product or Service: 10%
 - Invest in New Companies 5%
 - Seek Investors 12%
 - Seek Employment/ Contract Work 16%
 - Hire Talented People 10%

Campus Differentiators

Milieus / Experiences

[SummitLA19](#) will inhabit six historic theaters in the heart of downtown LA for its 2019 conference, in addition, a 30,000 square foot outdoor lounge and marketplace will be constructed to connect events with “reimagined retail storefronts, rooftops, spas, underground speakeasies, bars, alleyways, sidewalks, and many more surprises.”⁴⁴

C2 is arguably the pinnacle of event planning conventions, setting the bar higher each year with unparalleled creativity. Hanging trapeze chairs, a speakeasy, smoothie shots at the revolving entrance. Co-founder Cirque du Soleil performs and creates exhibits and artwork. Over 3,000 face-to-face meetings were scheduled at the 2017 C2 according to event technology firm CVENT; some face-to-face sessions were situated in hanging chairs as in the image to the right.⁴⁵



SXSW sponsors are known to create popup experiences throughout Austin during the event. Last year’s Land o’ Lakes venue summoned participants to slide into a green ball pit shaped like an avocado to highlight the role of nanoparticles in supporting plant growth. Another popup at the Driskill Hotel housed Comedy Central’s *Donald J. Trump Presidential Twitter Library* where a nickname generator created perjorative nametags for participants to wear while exploring the library. Dating app Bumble took over a local taco/coffee shop and offered free tacos for attendees who made friendship bracelets or took part in a dog party.⁴⁶

Culinary

[The Event Marketing Blog](#) reports that, an event’s culinary offerings not only help to keep participants going but can make or break a conference experience. As tastes evolve, a shift toward socially responsible and experiential culinary choices means that food is more than basic nourishment at conferences.

Offering smoothie shots at the entrance, **C2**’s creativity lends toward lower-cost, unexpected conference activities such as [the Cake Lab](#), where participants contributed to baking a huge 10-layer cake over three days. Other Labs at C2 host gardens, machine building areas, and a random telephone game where attendees chat with strangers.

[SummitLA](#) considers culinary to be a pillar of the event, and will bring in chefs from around the world to offer late-night street food, craft beverage programs, and a 30,000 square foot “epicurean marketplace”

Wellness

Wellness is not just for Gwyneth Paltrow's In Goop Health Summit, although the most bespoke wellness innovations can be found there. In a [Wall Street Journal article](#) from March 2019, nine women describe their experiences at Goop and why they attend. Some of them received B12 shots or listened to sessions on psychedelic medicine. Sleep workshops, superfoods and psychic readings were also available.

Anthony Scaramucci's Skybridge Alternatives conference, [SALT](#), recently released its [2019 program](#) where health and wellbeing opportunities, offered on a first-come-first serve basis, are available throughout the conference. While descriptions are unavailable the listings include: NOVA Fitness Sessions, Extreme Bootcamp, Yoga, SALT Spa, and Glamsquad.



According to David McMillin, Associate Editor of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), "Sleeping might be the coolest thing in the world right now." Attendees are more focused on staying healthy, and organizers will bring sleeping solutions to events in 2019, to keep eventgoers at the venue rather than forcing them back to the hotel.⁴⁷

Sleep-focused start-ups including [MetroNaps](#) and [Hohm](#) bring opportunities as well as sleep pods—which serve dual purpose as they are designed to promote sponsor messages.⁴⁸ MetroNaps set up a pod at 2019's Super Bowl for media personnel.

Event Technology

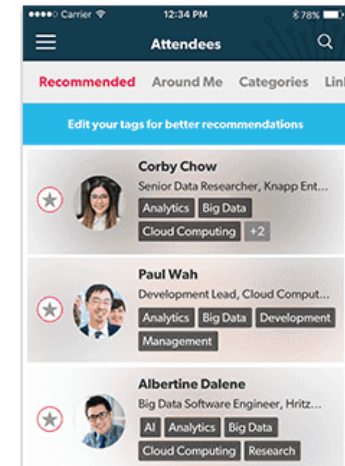
Using apps and chatbots

[SXSW GO](#), the Austin event's 2019 app, is an all-in-one solution designed by tech firm [Eventbase](#). [Eventbase](#) was founded in 2009 and received funding from SXSW alongside VC investment. The company is based in Vancouver, Canada.⁴⁹ The technology has also been used by The Montana Film Festival and Sundance.

The app has been in use for the past 8 years and offers an all-in-one solution for updating event attendance in real-time, aiding users to navigate events, and even offers networking features as conferees are listed in a searchable directory.

Users can see how their peers have “favorited” sessions; also, users can confer with “Abby,” a chatbot who combines a mix of natural language processing and AI to answer questions and assist with navigation. The app is offered for both iOS and Android devices.⁵⁰

In 2018 and 2019, according to *Event Marketer's Event App Bible*, chatbots are becoming a way for people engaged and answer questions without taking up staff time. According to Event Market, while event app adoption of chatbots is currently low, it will likely increase over the next few years and more dynamic chatbots will be seen in the future.⁵¹



The [Texas Mortgage Bankers Association](#) uses an app that harnesses an activity feed showing trending sessions, topics, and most popular pictures. With the app, attendees are further immersed by experiencing an aggregation of sentiment and shares.

Other ideas: apps can be used as a content library, where speakers upload materials and bonus information – users wanting additional content may be more likely to download the app and having it on their device may increase audience engagement even after the event.

Other Apps ⁵²

[Whova](#)

A platform for event organizers for event engagement and networking. Used by TEDx, IEEE, American Heart Association.

- Attendees can plan their experience with a focus on meeting contacts; maximize their opportunities to participate in the right
- A built-in system provides an overview of key attendees' social profiles
- Guests can plan to meet and begin networking before the event has even started.

[Eventmobi](#)

A platform for building a custom conference app. Provides a content manager, authority to update offline, prime real estate for sponsors, and customized branding options. Used by John Hopkins, facebook, cisco, VISA, Delta.

- Integrates event data into the app from any database or registration system
- Secures app with login credentials so that only approved attendees can access it
- Supports 17 languages so that you can communicate with all your attendees

[Pathable](#)

Features community and networking, private meeting scheduler, conference agenda manager, mobile apps for tradeshow, polls and surveys, metrics and ROI. Used by Tech Crunch, The United Nations, Microsoft.

- Badge scanning, live polls, gamification
- Scalable app can support events of all sizes

Interactive Floor Plans

The CES and the Detroit Auto Show have enormous attendance numbers and exhibit halls, leaving attendees feeling lost. CES's MyCES app seamlessly intertwined with CES's existing channels to provide an interactive exhibitor directory, floor plan and agenda planner (also a map of Las Vegas).

The app's enhancements included showcased listings with static pictures, expanded descriptions, videos and multimedia presentations. Data gathered from the app showed that advanced tools led to more than 1.3 million booth views of the virtual directory and floor plan, (both of which produced more than 167,000 qualified leads for exhibitors.)⁵³

Electronic Q&A

Eliminates Passing the Mic

Event app [Sli.do](#) is a Q&A and polling platform for events. In a study performed by Event Marketer, nearly all respondents listed Q&A as a top feature for efficiency and anonymity, and most of all, users enjoy it. Questions can be voiced by the presenter and answered without everyone in the audience turning focus on an attendee, or the mic runner.⁵⁴

Augmented Reality

In the Event Manager Blog's Event App Bible, researchers note that out of 350 apps studied, 80% of the apps did not offer augmented reality (AR). For those that do, the ones which disclosed app prices cited \$5,000, but reported that the AR functionality could be set up within a week. So, while AR is not necessarily commonplace yet, it will likely be adopted more frequently in the future.⁵⁵ Virtual and augmented was a significant feature at SXSW, with numerous demos and panels on the technologies. That said, the technology remains fairly new and developing, which according to an article in the Austin American Statesman, made some experiences "low-quality, nauseating and glitchy."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, festival attendees waited in long lines to experience stories through VR goggles.

Sessions on the technologies included: "Making VR and AR for Television," "[A Virtual Minefield: Creating VR Responsibly](#) [AUDIO]" and "[How VR and AR Change the Way We Express Ourselves](#)."

Exhibits Floor

Exhibitor Trends

Exhibitors should focus on crafting an interactive experience to make one's booth a destination with comfortable seating, tailored talks, and consider even offering food and drinks.

"Apple comprehends engagement really well," says Mark Goren, CEO of [Point to Point](#). "An Apple retail experience is not because of the magic of Apple and its products — it's the way they guide you into a purchase. Trade shows should do the exact same thing."⁵⁷

58% of people who work in the conference industry prefer to meet colleagues and vendors and talk to them directly at shows, 76% of decision makers who attend are interested in buying and 50% of the participants are there for the first time, so they can be potential customers.⁵⁸

Revenues from Exhibits

Industry estimates put the cost of setting up at booth at a trade show at \$150+ per square foot.

The trade show industry is growing by 2.9% year-over-year, according to data released in August 2017 from the Dallas-based Center for Exhibition Research.⁵⁹

Article Roundup: When Convenings Go Wrong

SXSW Lawsuits, 2014

[Lawsuits: Deadly SXSW crash could have been prevented](#), KXAN, Dec 19, 2014.

The lawsuits contend the crash on March 13, 2014 was “a preventable, foreseeable tragedy.” It claims SXSW planners did not adhere to “industry standards” for traffic control and took “inadequate” steps that allowed “a dangerous opportunity” for an errant vehicle to enter the festival zone and given Federal Transportation and Texas guidelines, that rigid barriers should have been deployed.

Web Summit, 2015

[A hugely influential Irish tech conference has been forced to deny it's a 'scam'](#), Business Insider, Oct 2, 2015

Web Summit, the Irish technology conference which was in the news recently for its decision to move its hugely influential annual meeting to Lisbon, has been forced to publish a blog post denying that it's a "scam" that targets startups.

TED, 2017

[Vancouver TED conference grapples with sex harassment accusations](#), Washington Post, Nov 17, 2017

At least five people, including a past main-stage speaker, have told TED officials they were harassed or groped during the organization's flagship conference in Vancouver in April, according to interviews and email correspondence seen by The Washington Post.

Fyre Festival, 2017

[There were ominous signs the disastrous supermodel-backed Fyre Festival was doomed weeks ago](#), Business Insider, Apr 28, 2017

"After careful consideration, Starr Catering Group realized that there were significant business issues that could not be resolved and would not allow them to deliver a premium food and beverage experience that met Starr's exceedingly high standards," the statement reads.

[At Up to \\$250,000 a Ticket, Island Music Festival Woos Wealthy to Stay Afloat](#), Wall Street Journal, Apr 2, 2017

General-admission tickets sold out within weeks of the December announcement, said a person close to the event, thanks not just to the supermodels but to 400 other entertainers—from football players to comedians—who all posted on social media the same mysterious burnt-orange color tile with the hashtag #FyreFestival, reaching 500 million viewers in 24 hours.

C2 International (Melbourne), 2018.

[C2 Melbourne cancelled as creator suddenly steps down](#), Paul Coston, Conference News, Aug 24, 2018.

The C2 business event model slated to come to Melbourne in October has been pulled following the sudden departure from C2 on 16 August of the event creator and C2's CEO Asia-Pacific Martin Enault. It has been reported he has cited health reasons for his decision. Enault had relocated from Canada to set up C2 Melbourne. A terse announcement on the C2 Melbourne website simply states: 'Sorry to break it to you: EVENT CANCELLED.'

[The truth behind C2 Melbourne](#), Lauren Arena, Biz Events Asia, Dec 4, 2018

Ron Gauci, known as a "go-to" corporate consultant for businesses in trouble, was hired as C2 Melbourne's managing director in June (four months before the event) to address a supposed revenue shortfall.

"There were significant cost management issues," Gauci said, "along with a lack of robust [financial] reporting."

Despite this, Gauci claims he devised a number of investment solutions to address the cost overrun, but in the end he simply "ran out of runway" and Montreal-based directors decided to cancel the event.

Ultra Music Festival, Miami, 2019

[Ultra Music Festival Strands 80,000 on Miami Island](#), Tarpley Hitt, Daily Beast, Mar 30, 2019

The massive electronic music event held near Miami ended in pandemonium when a fire broke out, stranding tens of thousands of attendees on an island without transportation. Some had to walk over an hour to the mainland in the dead of night. And there are still two more nights to go.

Further Reading

[Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy](#), Events Industry Council/Oxford Economics, February 2018

This Economic Significance Study (ESS), conducted by Oxford Economics, quantifies a vital industry that contributes billions of dollars to the U.S. economy, while creating millions of jobs in almost every community in the country. The data in this study provides a clear and credible statistical base on which to gain recognition for this vast and diverse industry as a vital economic driver and clearly articulates the downstream effect on other industries and the people who work in them. Anyone who reads this report will better understand the economic significance as well as the depth and breadth of the meetings and events industry.

[20 Conferences You Can't Miss in 2019](#), Inc.

Any one of these conferences could have a huge impact on your year, and your life.

Tech Crunch, Summit, Inc 500, Crypto Invest, more.

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