



Return on investment and engagement

A guide to consolidating business travel
with meetings & events



Introduction

Working with a great travel management company (TMC) delivers all kinds of added value, not only financially but for your colleagues' overall experience working for your organisation.

But what about meetings and events? This category accounts for a sizable percentage of most company travel budgets. A 2024 survey from Business Travel Show Europe found that 32% of responding business travel buyers felt they would soon assume responsibility for meetings & events, with cost savings and improved visibility the primary reasons cited for the change.

If the travel and meetings & events categories are increasingly merging, there are opportunities to consolidate and optimise. After all, there are a lot of crossovers between the two.

But how do you give your meetings specialised attention and keep a consistent and seamless experience for your travelling employees? This is where you may need to consider the needs of a meetings specialist.

“Meetings specialists can elevate your events by ensuring all the opportunities are leveraged to engage attendees. They can deliver the “wow” factor, give peace of mind while organising group travel elements including accommodation, flights, and transfers, ensuring smooth delivery and hassle-free experience for all.

When events come into the mix, the experience matters even more. So, what does it take to deliver not just a return on investment, but also a return on engagement? Let’s examine how consolidation can drive both.

“From the planning stage to final execution, a dedicated professional can seamlessly manage and enhance all aspects of your event.”

MANPREET BINDRA
HEAD OF ASIA
FCM MEETINGS & EVENTS



Why consolidating business travel management with M&E makes sense

Think back to when you've crafted a travel programme. You would have had goals at the front of your mind, perhaps to improve traveller safety and wellbeing, or to reach a savings or carbon reduction target.

Adding meetings and events into your strategy is almost like starting fresh, but with the backing of your experience managing the travel category.

"What is considered for business travel can also be considered for events and meetings," says Seiler. "But there's an added fun twist; there's the creative side of events. It doesn't mean travel managers or procurement will turn event organisers; but there are benefits to bringing everything together for a more cohesive programme."

Travel and M&E crossovers

There are already many factors of travel that are relevant to M&E.

Productivity & stress

Travel programmes are often born from alleviating the stress and pressure of travel bookings and changes off internal staff. M&E is no different. Organising an event is all-encompassing and takes days to get those finer details right, on top of the organisers' day-to-day responsibilities.

Supplier consolidation

In the past, you may have been booking company travel across 10s or 100s of booking sites, and now you use just a few TMCs. The same can be said for M&E – teams could be using multiple event and meeting specialists or different event tools and websites. Think also about your preferred airline and hotel suppliers; is there potential to shift more bookings to them?

Employee experience

Organisations increasingly want one unified experience for their employees. Similarly to travel services, if everyone is using different suppliers and tools, there is no consistency for your colleagues. Another experience that aims to unify is the all-expenses-paid trip, for some a major perk. Known as incentive travel, this shared experience is a chance to boost morale and enhance employee engagement.

Hyper-focused expertise

You trust your TMC to deliver travel services with high satisfaction, and to stay on top of any challenges or trends in the travel space. A meetings and events specialist will do the same, with experience and knowledge of the industry that is their job day in, day out.

Hidden costs and missed savings opportunities

You may not know how much is being spent on meetings and events currently, and with everything else, costs are rising. The cost of in-person events is thought to have increased 25% between 2019 and 2022, and is expected to rise another 7% in 2023, according to the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA). Plus, given that a lot of business travel's purpose is to attend a conference, a celebration or a reward trip; there could be additional travel spend you aren't aware of, or untapped savings potential.



Sustainability &/ wider goals

Are you confident that your travel policy is being adhered to for events, or that they're being organised with corporate goals in mind? Using sustainability as an example – research suggested the events industry produces 1.89kg of waste per delegate per day, and 1.2 billion kg of CO2e per year. The reporting and tactics you've applied to travel can also apply to M&E.

Risk management

Whether on home soil or overseas, an employee has a duty of care to their employees. Where risk is considered for travel, should be applied to M&E too.

4 ways a M&E specialist can help

1. End-to-end support

A M&E specialist encompasses all the elements of an event or meeting you can think of. They can provide comprehensive support throughout the entire lifecycle.

“Specialist teams can be organised to provide optimal support at all phases, from event planning and travel arrangements, through on-site support and post meeting follow-up,” says Simone. “Your meetings and events specialists will listen to your vision and objectives and will bring your event to life with meticulous attention to detail and flawless execution.”

For instance, a specialist can assist with:

- Organising and venue management of any gathering from a 10-person board meeting to a conference of thousands including all the minor details.
- Group travel reservations, changes and more.
- Registration websites and management, as well as mobile apps.
- Format and staging of your event, including presentations, A/V, entertainment, speaker options and more.
- Effective options that won’t blow your budget.
- On-site support to run the event and manage all aspects.
- Risk assessments and management, from travel plans and location choosing, to on-site crises.



2. Productivity up, stress down

While your colleagues won't be cut out of planning entirely, using a M&E specialist means:

- Less stress and more time for teams like marketing and EAs, as they aren't bogged down with the intricacies.
- Access to specialist technology that makes registration and budget tracking easier.
- Option to offer a self-serve quick venue searching and booking website.
- More creative brains in the room to come up with great formats and ideas.
- If you're use a specialist connected to your TMC, there will be familiarity with culture and service standards.

3. Data to power your next event

A world-class meetings & events programme requires world class reporting capabilities that help you make data-driven decisions and optimise your meeting and event management strategies. Data available to you should include:

- Attendee management to gain valuable insights about demographics, engagement levels, and feedback.
- Sustainability reporting to track your event's environmental impact and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Powerful budgeting tools that monitor and control event expenses, ensuring you stay within your allocated budget.

4. Supplier management and consolidation

You've heard the saying, "a rising tide lifts all boats." Consolidating event and travel management builds that rising tide, creating synergies that generate substantial efficiencies and unlock potential opportunities. Here are a few examples:

- Stronger supplier negotiation power, resulting in more favourable rates and terms.
- Discounted rates through group bookings for flights, accommodations, and other travel elements.
- Time saved not having to find a new event supplier.
- Confidence that the event organiser will do a good job.
- Choosing cost-effective destinations or international locations with favourable currency conversion rates can stretch your event budget further.
- Reducing carbon footprint by choosing locations that reduce least emissions based on where attendees are travelling from.



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Don't skip the sparkle and pizazz

What's an event or meeting without those little "I wouldn't think of that!" touches? You need formats, delivery and seamlessness that keeps people's eyes away from their phones and locked in for the full experience.

Creative and unique events

Every meeting and event should be an extension of your company's brand and culture, telling your story through new and engaging experiences. A well-aligned travel and meetings strategy presents a unified, professional image of your company to clients, partners, suppliers, and recruits, but you need that dash of creativity too.

"An M&E specialist can help you bring your brand to life across every aspect of your event or meeting with new and creative ideas for set-up and production, to entertainment, sets, and activities. There really are no bounds to the creativity that they can bring to your event!" says Simone.

Tied closely to your objectives and budget, an M&E specialist will help you create a bespoke event or meeting that hits the mark and will stick in attendees' minds for the right reasons.

Move past boring PowerPoints

If an event is the living representation of your brand and culture, you need a creative implementation of technology to tell your stories.

On stage, lighting, sound, and video technology brings presentations and demonstrations to life, creating engaging experiences that encourage interaction and feedback from attendees.

All touch points should be seamless and fun to use, from registration websites and mobile apps to event interaction and post-event communications.



ROI & ROE

Every meeting or event has a purpose. To celebrate. To inform. To inspire. To connect.

That's why events and meetings need to consider Return on Engagement (ROE) as much as Return on Investment (ROI). If your goal was to have an event leaving people feeling inspired or a meeting to align on the year ahead, was that achieved? Did your delegates engage the way you'd hoped; were they pleased with the event?

Post-event surveys, feedback and Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are some of the ways you can measure ROE. Your event specialist can help with communication and tactics.

At a glance

Return on Investment (ROI)	Return on Engagement (ROE)
Consolidate or find synergies across supplier contracts and negotiations.	High satisfaction and engagement with creative and unique events.
Cost reduction due to increased visibility of event and meeting spend.	Reduced stress for internal staff and organisers.
Safer and more effective events that deliver on objectives and purpose.	Better retention of valuable team members, and professional feel for clients/VIPs/partners.
If TMC and event supplier are same organisation or closely aligned, you can expect the same standard of value and service.	If TMC and event supplier are the same, it's a consistent experience for travellers, boosting confidence and satisfaction.

How to get started: Considerations for travel managers & event teams

Aligning business travel with meetings and events can be a game changer for your company. Integration can be a multi-step process that includes discovery, strategy development, programme design, implementation, and ongoing evaluation. Let's dive deeper into some of the details:

Travel policy + meetings policy

If you have a managed travel programme, you likely have a corporate travel policy in place. Do you have a meetings and events policy? Identifying similarities between travel and meetings policies can lead to quick wins and increased alignment across these frequently overlapping categories. Some areas you may look at include:

Sustainability

- Mode of transport (carbon offsets, electric vehicles, public transport)
- Water and energy usage at venues
- Catering wastage and sustainable food options
- Waste management and recyclability of event materials and props

Duty of care

- Selecting reliable and safe venues and suppliers for travel to and from the event
- Implementing responsible service of alcohol practices and communicating expectations and policies
- Fostering positive, inclusive employee peer relationships
- Ensuring physical and psychological safety for all employees including accessible spaces
- Developing comprehensive emergency response plans

Data capture & visibility

Are you aware of all the money spent on events and meetings across your business? If you aren't, there's a whole gap of knowledge to be explored. Capturing that data will help you understand what you're spending on meetings and events, the suppliers being used, and how much carbon is being produced.

If you choose to work with an events specialist, they'll have dedicated reporting just like you get from a travel management company.

The trick is, finding that spend. Which brings us onto...

Varied planners and bookers

With little or no structured process, booking meetings and events is like the Wild West. EAs and PAs might be managing board meetings, while Marketing is organising press launches, and your global Technology team could be planning an internal hackathon.

To streamline meetings & events efforts, there will need to be an understanding of who is booking, what suppliers they are using and what their priorities are. Are they even booking in line with the M&E policy?

Global vs local

Do you want to use one globally consistent supplier, or multiple locally based companies? It's something you considered when choosing a travel supplier and applies to a M&E specialist too. Culture, capability and price will all play into your supplier choice too; you may decide to use the M&E team that's connected to your TMC for ease and familiarity.

Wherever your meeting or event is held, you want to know you have support close by. With FCM Meetings & Events' global coverage and supplier network, you can have the advantage of globally consistent services, with on-the-ground knowledge and support of a local team who know cities inside out. Depending on the size and requirements of your occasion, your meetings specialist may conduct site visits to check your venue/s are perfect for the job.

There's never been a better time to get started

It's clear there's lots of advantages to consolidating your travel and meetings spend. And how a meetings specialist can elevate not just your event ROI, but ROE too. FCM Meetings & Events brings the worlds of commercials and creativity into one. With experts in event management, group travel, managed meetings and event technology, you can leave the organisation to us, while you focus on growing your business and achieving your goals. Don't wait to realise the benefits of aligned travel and meetings & events. Contact our team today to find out how we can help transform and revitalise your programme.

<https://www.fcmtravel.com/en/what-we-do/meetings-events>