



WHITEPAPER

# What's Next in Event Intelligence

How Event Intelligence and AI  
Are Revolutionizing Events



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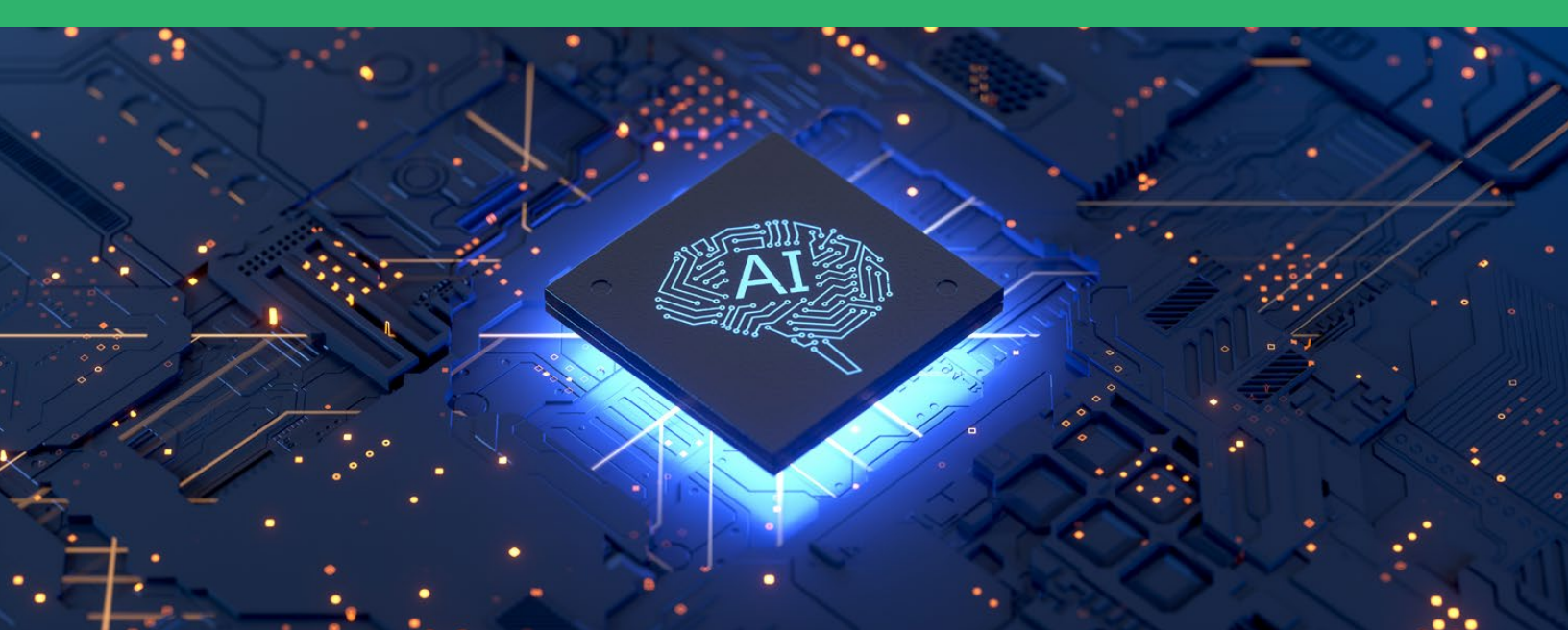
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**In the wake of the release of generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications like ChatGPT and Google Bard, we have seen everyone from well-established companies to tech ingenues scrambling to incorporate it into their offerings.**

Within event marketing, ChatGPT is mostly being used to automate tasks we have largely mastered. Everyone wants to know how it can be used to meet their event's copy needs such as the event description, copy for their registration page or their next email blast, but writing basic marketing material is fairly straightforward. It's tedious, but most of us can already do it.

What will more likely interest event teams is AI's ability to improve areas with historically low levels of competence, like collecting, analyzing, and making event data actionable with meaningful insights. In fact, a recent PCMA webinar on AI found that 80% of audience respondents thought AI's "most significant" impact would be on taking data analysis and insights to the next level.

The potential for ChatGPT and other AI to generate event insights deserves more exploration as it continues to evolve; the next generation of industry leaders stand to benefit greatly from learning to harness AI rather than shying away from it.

As such, we will take a look at AI's potential within the event industry to uncover the following:

- ▶ AI's impact on current event trends
- ▶ The role of event data in powering AI
- ▶ AI's reciprocal role in improving data collection and analysis
- ▶ AI's implications on data privacy and security within the industry



## Is Event Intelligence an Important Part of Your Event Strategy?

Not that long ago, evaluating event performance was a matter of “people seemed to like it” anecdotal evidence dubiously supported by surveys with lackluster response rates. Eventually, this evolved to include quantitative metrics around the number of registrants, attendees, session check-ins, etc. This smattering of very basic (and mostly lagging) indicators became common parlance at event debriefs.

But as demand for more metrics rose, event tech companies responded by offering:

- ▶ Event engagement tracking through mobile applications
- ▶ Better integrations with marketing tech (martech) and customer relationship management (CRM) tools
- ▶ Lead capture functionality for exhibiting teams
- ▶ Richer “buyer journey mapping” capabilities overall

This wave of mostly mobile-oriented innovation allowed event planning teams to track more granular attendee behavior in the form of personalized agendas, sponsored banner clicks, in-app chat activity, and engagement with polls, surveys, and gamification. However, traditionally poor onsite adoption made it hard to consistently use these data points to demonstrate event ROI.

When the Covid-19 pandemic brought events to a grinding halt, virtual meetings and events were introduced and normalized overnight. These offered the same level of user engagement tracking as mobile event apps but multiplied by 100% adoption. Finally, marketing managers had the full, representative and largely automated data collection they had been lacking from events.

Now, this precedent combined with a series of changing market factors serves as an impetus to focus on event intelligence as in-person events return, and event owners investing in it have a clear advantage.

## 5 Key Features of an Event Intelligence Dashboard

Data analytics dashboards have improved to alleviate the burden on time-poor event teams. A competitive dashboard will include the following five features:

**1) Rich data visualization.** Nobody wants to look at their event data in Excel, and few have the skills to transform raw data into intelligible reports anyway. A dashboard that lets planning teams visualize the data they need at a glance is now an absolute must-have for a competitive event intelligence platform.

**2) Event ROI dashboard.** ROI accountability is on the rise and deserves a dedicated dashboard. It's incumbent on your event tech provider to not only furnish you with ROI data, but to help you make sense of it by reconciling it with your spend and revenue.

**3) Advanced reporting.** Event teams have a variety of stakeholders, all of whom are time poor, and each of whom need event reports that speak to their interests and key performance indicators (KPIs). Analytics dashboards today come with smart reporting capabilities that collate event data and convert it into event intelligence at a glance.

**4) Historical data.** Event planning teams need to be able to look beyond the event they're evaluating to see performance in the context of their whole annual program in order to see the larger trend. The numbers for a given event might seem reassuring in isolation, but if previous years' numbers were even higher, the event might be trending in the wrong direction.

**5) Event tagging and categorizing.** Especially crucial for event planning teams at large corporations is the ability to tag and categorize events within the platform and have those tags filter your data analysis. The benefit of looking across an entire event program is dramatically reduced when different event teams in different departments are lumped together and forced to compare apples with oranges.

Dashboards that do the heavy lifting finally put event organizers in a strong position to not only collect and analyze a variety of event data for demonstrating ROI, but to glean event insights that they can use to improve the event experience.

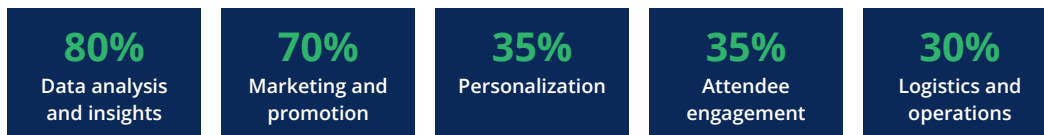




## How the Event Industry Is Embracing AI

A study by PCMA found that 70% found that 70% of audience respondents selected “marketing and promotion” as one area where AI will have the “most significant” impact. However, as mentioned, these are tasks in which humans have a generally high level of competency.”

*In which areas do you think AI can have the most significant impact on events?*



Notably, while many providers in the last few years marketed AI that gives attendees more personalized event experiences, personalization and engagement were only cited by 35% of respondents. Event professionals – a traditionally high-stress category – prioritize tech that simplifies their lives.

While it often falls on tech providers in the event industry to prove the untapped potential of new features and capabilities, listening is key:

***80% of audience respondents to the PCMA webinar poll believed that AI's most significant impact will be on data analysis and insights.***

Event professionals respond to marketing automation and faster research because these are tedious aspects of their jobs that detract from the more creative and interesting work of solving problems and designing attendee experiences. In the same way, they recognize that event data is critical and are looking to AI to solve the burden of collating, analyzing and packaging event data, and to provide data-driven inspiration for their event ideation and design.

# Generative AI: Here's What You Need to Know

*What is generative AI? What is natural language processing? Where do these things come from, and what are they being built for?*

Before we get into the discussion about how AI will impact event data and intelligence, it's important to cover some basics, especially around generative AI that powers things like ChatGPT.

## Generative AI Key Facts

- ▶ ChatGPT was launched by OpenAI in November 2022 and hit the million-user-milestone within a week. It remains arguably the most popular generative AI application as of the time of writing (June 2023).
- ▶ ChatGPT is just one of several heavily funded chat-based generative AI offerings entering the market. Others include Google Bard and Microsoft's Bing AI.
- ▶ These services largely take publicly available data and use it to provide responses to queries, but they are also trained on the queries and responses from users themselves.
- ▶ The public release and use of generative AI trained on absolutely massive bodies of information is a contentious issue among experts who largely agree that we have to exercise caution in the way that we use it.





## AI Glossary

**Deep Learning and Neural Networks:** AI that uses layers of pattern recognition and weighted data inputs to get progressively better at evaluating the relationships between different pieces of information in a way that is basically designed to mimic reasoning in the human brain.

You can find a more technical explanation [here](#) and a slightly less technical explanation [here](#).

**Natural Language Processing (NLP):** A subcategory within AI that tries to analyze, understand, and generate [language](#) in a way that mimics a natural human capacity. Applications include speech recognition and real time language translation, open text analysis, and text summarization.

**Large Language Models (LLMs):** A way to train NLP programs through massive, diverse bodies of unlabeled text that the AI uses to develop a rudimentary kind of “general intelligence” rather than forcing it to focus on mastering a specific task based on a narrow body of information.

**Generative AI:** AI that uses LLMs to learn how to [generate](#) new content, such as text, images, videos, and recently music.

### What Was Generative AI Built For?

Proponents of generative AI cite the potential to solve major global problems and make life easier for all. In practice, here are some of the applications currently being explored:

- ▶ Market research and copywriting automation
- ▶ Automated video, art and music creation (very contentious)
- ▶ Language translation
- ▶ Software development



# Event Intelligence in Action: AI Use-cases and Applications

Now that you're familiar with the larger concepts, let's take a deeper look at specific features and use cases.

## AI Supports Event Networking

While tech providers had started using tags or keywords to recommend networking contacts as of 2018, AI was eventually introduced to improve recommendation engines based on attendee reactions and feedback. Now, according to Skift Meetings' recent Event Tech Made Simple report, 61% of vendors offer at least one "AI-powered feature," and nearly 40% (two thirds) offer AI-powered attendee matchmaking.

### How does it work?

Attendee data is collected at the point of registration or through the attendee's social media, LinkedIn, etc, and is then used to suggest matches based on weighted pairings. The AI then evaluates the way attendees react to those suggestions (whether they accept them, reach out, scheduled meetings, etc.) to learn which criteria and networking signals are more successful at determining a match. It then weighs those more heavily when making matches in the future. This data could theoretically be used to design better events in the future by, for example, using the AI to help filter invitees before they even arrive in order to design ultra-targeted networking sessions or activations.

AI-driven automated personalization will become even more common as B2B marketing teams strive to create compelling customer experiences that foster networking and increase attributable ROI. A survey by Forrester found that the top use case for AI in B2B marketing was targeting (40%), followed by personalization (36%) and marketing automation/tactic orchestration (36%). Experts see that marketers can now determine how customers interact and engage with their product, service or brand — at an individual level and across larger groups — to create more tailored content.





## Event Intelligence in Action: AI Use-cases and Applications

### AI Connects Event Participants With the Content They'll Like

A similar concept has been applied to helping attendees find content they'll appreciate most. According to the same Skift report, a third of providers offer AI-powered content suggestions.

Some of the companies that emerged as market leaders during the industry's virtual phase are now doubling down on digital content on their platforms. They not only offer content recommendations but use AI to identify heatmaps of engagement in live streams and recorded event content, and then use that data to automatically curate and edit content for on-demand consumption. However, while 85% of providers offer on-demand content according to the Skift report, only 18% provide auto-generated highlights.

What's interesting about the developments in generative AI is that this trend of automatic content curation is likely to increase, and it's conceivable that AI will not only be able to edit highlight reels but to be trained to use event and other content to produce new topics and engage customers in insightful conversations based on your published expertise.

# Event Intelligence in Action: AI Use-cases and Applications

## Natural Language Processing, AI Chatbots and Attendee Insights

While AI-powered chatbots have been around for at least six years, only 14% of event tech providers reported having them. This could be because of the typically low ability to deliver helpful customer service. These rudimentary replacements for a human interaction would often produce frustrating and circular conversations that mostly relied on a series of preselected prompts, which may not have had anything to do with an attendee's issue.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to change this by combining a breadth of data from its large language model training database with an event organizer's own knowledge base and support protocols to provide more targeted responses that are both more helpful (by virtue of being more tailored to the particular customer support interaction) and more conversational.

Artificial-intelligence-powered chatbots also offer insights into the attendee experience via questions, inquiries, and expressed issues that can be mined for pain point data. This data can be used for a myriad of analytic data points:

**Sentiment analysis.** Are people happy with the event? Are they finding it valuable? Easy to navigate? AI can use NLP to assess even open-ended questions that users write in freehand to evaluate how attendees feel about their support interaction, the event, the online experience, and many other steps along the attendee journey.

**Opportunities for improvement.** Where are their points of frustration? What are they still confused about? Where should you focus your signposting along the attendee journey?

**Net Promoter Score (NPS) and other quantitative data.** Offering a prompt to rank the service or the event when you already have an attendee's attention is a clever way to encourage a higher response rate, especially if you have just delivered value through a helpful interaction.

Natural language processing AI also makes it a lot more practical to analyze open text attendee feedback within surveys as well as a range of new sources like social media and user-generated digital event content. This promises access to even more (and arguably more candid) event feedback.



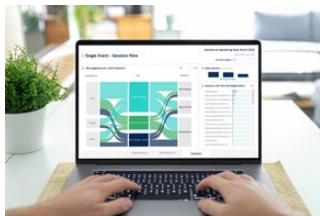
# Event Intelligence in Action: AI Use-cases and Applications

## AI-powered Event Analytics Dashboards

Event tech providers are supplying data from each point within a typical event tech stack. “Attendance, registration, and engagement reports are offered by over 90 percent of event technology platforms,” reports Skift. Marketing and lead generation data is also popular – offered by roughly three quarters of providers, and mobile app data is offered by two thirds.

*The upshot: Event teams now enjoy a pool of data, but at the moment, their bandwidth typically restricts them to the shallow end.*

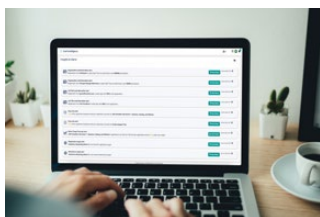
This is where advanced data analytics and data visualization sets event tech providers apart, and smart features are a growing part of that trend.



**Outcome-oriented insights.** Smart dashboards not only provide the data in a way that’s visually accessible, they correlate multiple data points to form outcome-oriented insights, like ROI based on your attendance and event spend/revenue data or a turnout percentage based on how many registered attendees actually came.



**Predictive AI.** Using data from across your event program, next-level event analytics employs complex algorithms to help you side-step pitfalls and keep things on track by making predictions based on past performance and current engagement tracking. In practice, predictive dashboards deliver actionable insights in near real-time to optimize your events.



**Insights and real-time alerts.** While you might not be in a position to loom over your dashboard throughout your event, your dashboard should be able to flag things you or your team should pay attention to. By packaging the data and predictive insights in this way, your team gains visibility over problems as (or before) they emerge, which facilitates a more timely response.



## Generative AI: Implications for Risk and Security

### Practical Damage from the Learning Curve

Despite ChatGPT's meteoric rise in popularity, it still has some major issues in professional use cases – namely accuracy, “hallucinations” that produce counterfactual information and sources, and the limit of data until 2021. As such, using ChatGPT for research or content writing still requires significant fact-checking.

Though this will get better with future iterations, GPT-4, the AI's next iteration, is still susceptible to inappropriate questions, hallucinations, reasoning errors, and harmful misuses. As such, OpenAI recommends a protocol that includes human review, grounding requests with contextual information, or “avoiding high-stakes uses altogether.”

### AI Ignorance and Inherent Harms

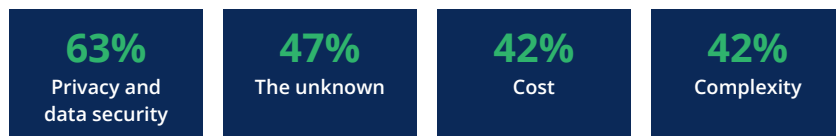
Because LLMs must be trained using a combination of massive selections of text and feedback from users, it has the potential to inherit biases from either source, which produces questionable results even when technically accurate. This training is also susceptible to “training trolling,” in which users deliberately try to develop harmful or misleading tendencies.

Concerns have been raised regarding politically motivated or racially biased responses, and proponents caution against using it to make decisions with serious social impacts, like in employment decisions.

### ChatGPT and Proprietary Information

Both the PCMA webinar and an [op-ed by Karla Grossenbacher published in Bloomberg Law](#) described concerns over employees using ChatGPT at work and the implications for confidentiality and data privacy.

#### *What are your primary concerns regarding AI implementation in your work?*



Although OpenAI claims that ChatGPT does not retain information provided in conversations, these conversations are part of its training. If employees share proprietary, confidential, or trade secret information in “conversation” with ChatGPT, “there is no guarantee of security in such communications,” writes Grossenbacher.

## Closing Thoughts

Event intelligence is likely to become increasingly important as AI continues to play a bigger role in events and marketing. Higher competition, new technologies, and shifting patterns in the way people work and engage with events mean that pre-pandemic models may not deliver as expected. Event data will be the rudder as you navigate these market changes, but whether AI fuels you or anchors you will depend not only on its ability to automate mundane tasks, but on its ability to empower you in areas your team may have less capacity.

However, while some of these applications have been tested, the technology on the whole is new, and the event industry has barely scratched the surface on what AI is truly capable of. It's important to be mindful of the risks to data privacy and security whenever you introduce a new technology into your event stack, and to follow safeguarding protocols accordingly.

Certain is fully embracing AI in areas that bring value to event professionals in innovative ways and is committed to empowering enterprises to get more business value out of their events through data analytics, event intelligence and AI-driven technology.



To support your future in-person and hybrid events, [Certain Event Management](#) offers a unified, branded, and scalable attendee experience throughout your event planning, registration, and execution cycle. Certain's AI-powered event intelligence capabilities enable marketing professionals to seamlessly capture insights and buying signals from all types of attendees, be they in-person or virtual -- and share them across their enterprise technology stack to drive revenue and customer success.

## Learn More



### eBook

Event Intelligence Playbook

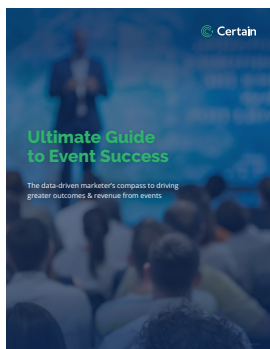
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