

Why We Gather: The New Era of Purpose-Driven Meetings & Events

Hilton is introducing *Why We Gather* a new special section of its 2026 Trends Report, which explores the emotional, behavioral and cultural shifts redefining how people connect through meetings and events. Inspired by Hilton's World's Most Welcoming Events initiative, the research is grounded in the belief that **why** we gather is just as important as **how** we gather. The global report captures the key drivers of today's corporate gatherings — and the moments that define today's shared experiences.

IRL 2.0: The New Code of Connection



True You

8 in 10 (84%) say they love bringing their full, authentic selves to work events.



AI Assist

67% agree that AI helps them personalize their event experience.



Strengthening Connections

Nearly half (49%) say meeting new people and bonding with their team is their main reason for attending work events.



Culture Calling

84% agree that experiencing the local culture is a big perk of attending a work-related event.



Local Finds

81% are likely to go shopping in unique, local stores that aren't in their hometown while attending a work event.

The Blueprint: A New Era of Ambition



Best Foot Forward

83% of people are highly conscious of looking productive during meetings or structured programming.



Taking Cues

The majority (71%) admit to mirroring the actions of leaders whose careers they aspire to.



Generational Drive

More than two-thirds (68%) of Gen Zers agree that after-hours fun is a top motivator for attending work events, versus **34%** of Boomers.



Shareable Moments

67% agree they are more likely to attend an event if there are interesting opportunities to share on their social network.



Focused Attendance

Over two-thirds (67%) of global respondents only attend work events that support their career goals.

The Wellness Agenda: “Fit for Your Carry-On”



Rest Required

Two-thirds (67%) say that they feel less engaged during events if they don't get downtime, with **55%** skipping event sessions to decompress if there are no planned breaks.



Snack Break

80% say they look forward to enjoying specialty coffee or tea beverages during breaks at meetings and events.



Wellness Your Way

76% enjoy leaning into work-organized wellness activities, while **38%** prefer to spend their free time recharging on their own.



Parental Getaway

81% of parents agree that getting some alone time away from the pressures of parenting is an underrated benefit of work events.



Purpose Over Presents

68% would rather participate in a give-back activity that benefits the local community than receive a physical gift.