

HOW WE MEET MATTERS

INSIGHTS ON
MEETINGS AND TRAVEL
FROM U.S. BUSINESS LEADERS

May 2022



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How Should We Meet?

The pandemic has forced most businesses to adopt virtual meetings widely. Now that concerns about Covid-19 are receding, business leaders are wrestling with the pros and cons of returning to the office, meeting in person, and the resulting need to travel for business meetings.

How we meet has long-term consequences for recruiting and retention, corporate culture, and competitiveness. Deciding how to meet is now a strategic issue.

This 37-page paper reveals the views of 522 U.S.-based business leaders on the importance of meeting in person, the core benefits of virtual meetings, and the risks of negative outcomes associated with each meeting mode. Insights are shared from C-suite leaders (95 of the 522 respondents) about their business travel strategies and priorities.

The paper concludes with new strategic frameworks for managing meetings and business travel. It also provides a companion's guide for choosing the best meeting mode, in person or virtual, for nine meeting goals (e.g., "Influence, Persuade, or Sell"). Hybrid meetings and meeting technologies are not included in this paper's scope.



1. Key Findings About Business Meetings



70%

of business leaders say **a balanced blend of working virtually and in-person** would allow them to do their best work. (Fig. 1)



Mode matters

When asked which meeting mode is best for accomplishing wide-ranging goals, **43% of business leaders say in-person meetings**, 35% say virtual meetings, and 22% say the meeting mode doesn't much matter.

(Fig. 10)



In-person

meetings **are most popular for**

- 1) building trust and teamwork,
- 2) influencing, persuading or selling,
- 3) solving important problems, and
- 4) becoming part of a team.

(Fig. 13)



In-person

meetings are significantly **more valued by C-suite executives** than by other business leaders (53% to 41% respectively). (Fig. 12)



Virtual

meetings **are valued over in-person meetings for**

- 1) saving time and money,
- 2) scheduling ease,
- 3) reducing travel and carbon emissions, and
- 4) protecting participants' health.

(Fig. 8).



More risk

Virtual meetings are seen as **nearly twice as likely** to cause a wide range of **undesirable meeting outcomes** when compared to in-person meetings, 47% to 25% respectively.

(Fig. 11)

Key Findings About Business Travel



84%

of C-suite leaders say their companies should travel **about the same as or significantly more than** their nearest competitors.

(Fig. 15)

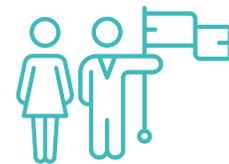


Top priorities

The C-suite's top priorities for business travel are to

- 1) earn customer trust,
- 2) win revenue, and
- 3) build culture, teamwork, and relationships.

(Fig. 18)



But 77%

of business leaders **can't determine if their companies are traveling too much or too little** other than by examining the travel budget.

(Fig. 20)



Travel-related goals

C-suite leaders say their three most critical travel-related goals are

- 1) achieving more successful trips,
- 2) protecting traveler health, and
- 3) retaining frequent travelers.

"Decreasing the prices we pay for our business trips" placed sixth; seventh and last was "Increase the number of our business trips."

(Fig. 19)



43%

of all leaders say that **judging the trip's importance** is the best guideline for approving travel when budgets are tight.

Only 30% say prioritizing customer-facing trips over internal trips is best.

(Fig. 16)



92%

of C-suite leaders say that frequent business travelers should spend a few minutes **justifying the need for their trips** before they travel.

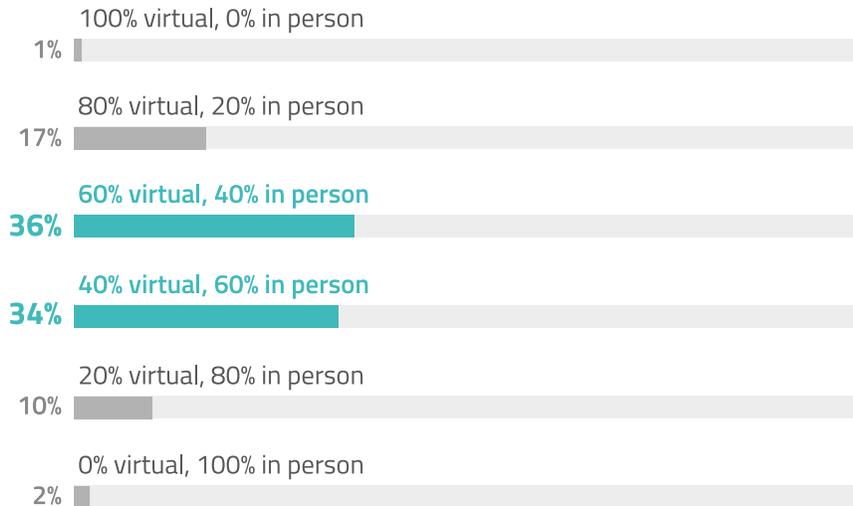
(Fig. 21)

2. WORKING VIRTUALLY HAS BROAD APPEAL EVEN AMONG THE C-SUITE

70% of all business leaders say that a balanced mix of working virtually and in-person would allow them to do their best work.

FIG. 1

Over the next 12 months, which way of working with others would allow you to do your best work?



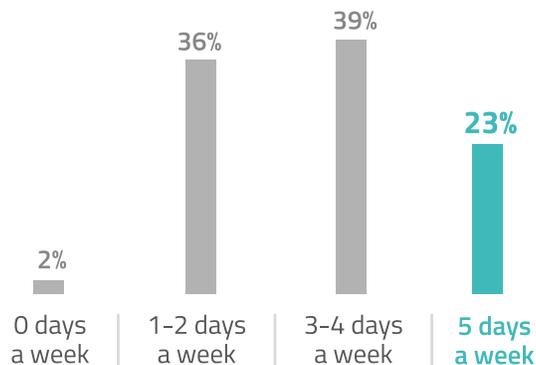
All Business Leaders
(N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

Only 23% of business leaders say they want to work in the office five days a week.

FIG. 2

How many days a week would you like to work in person with your colleagues in an office or other company facility?

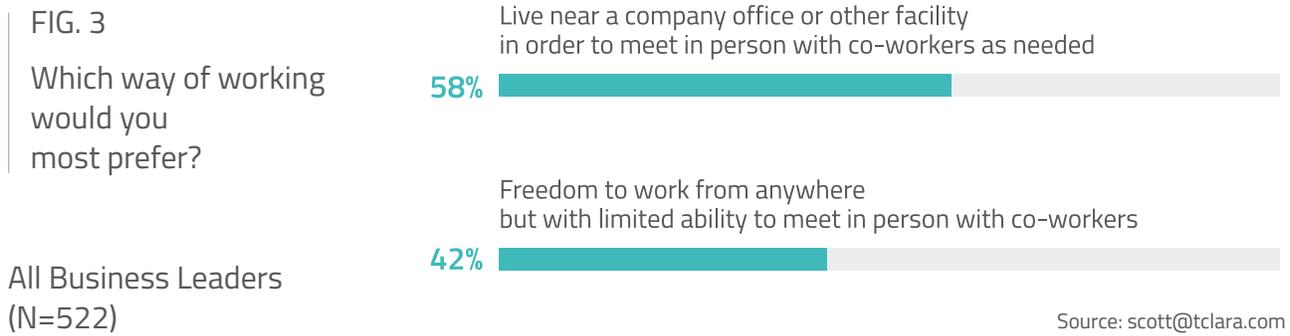


All Business Leaders
(N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

How does this interest in working virtually affect where business leaders want to live?

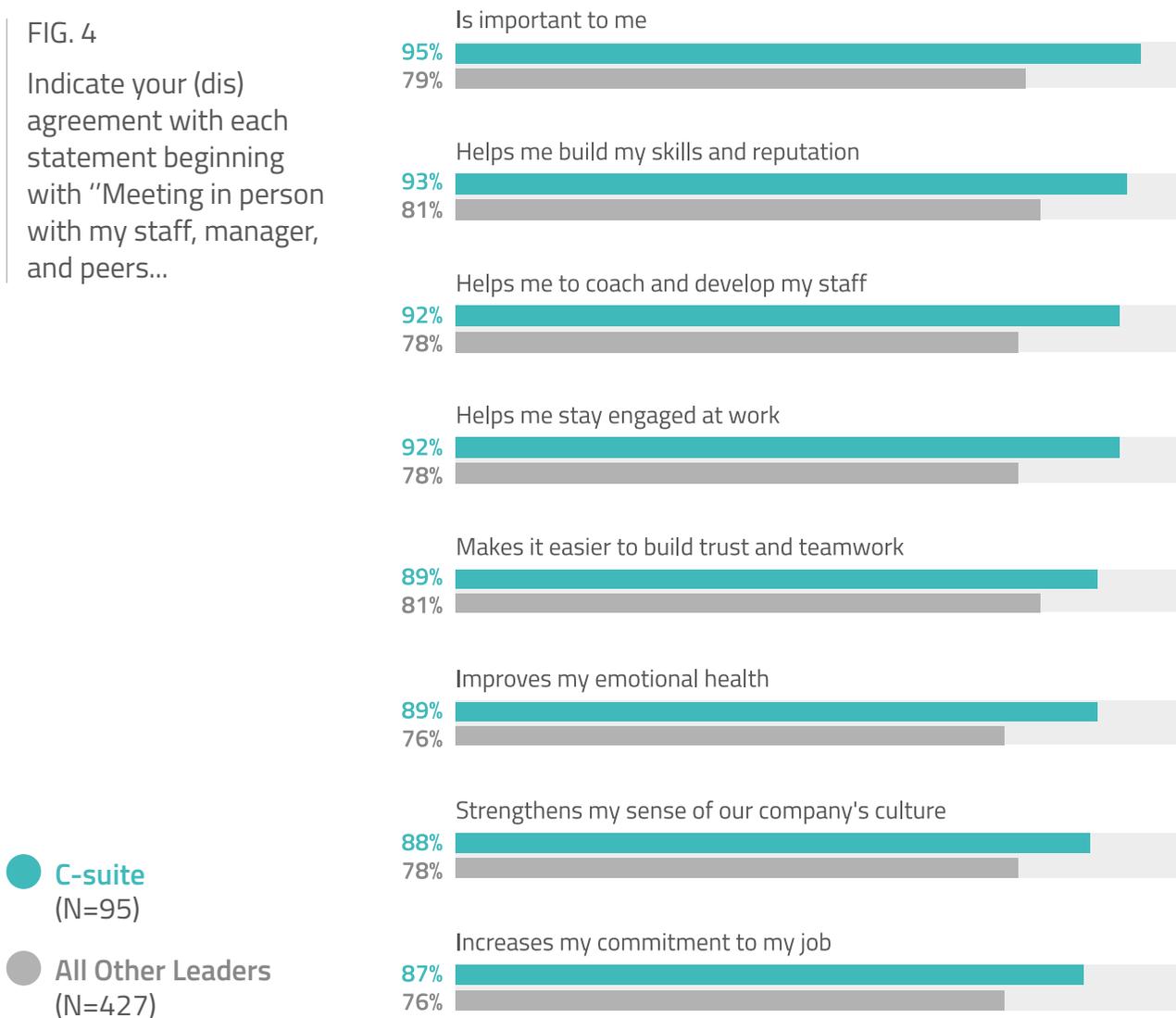
“The appeal of working from anywhere is quite attractive even to those who see value in meeting often in person with their colleagues,” says Scott Gillespie, tClara’s CEO.



3. MEETING IN PERSON WITH CO-WORKERS ENABLES IMPORTANT BENEFITS

Eight out of ten business leaders agree or strongly agree that meeting in person contributes to their engagement, emotional health, and ability to build trust and develop their staff. Among the C-suite leaders, this rate of agreement is even higher.

FIG. 4
Indicate your (dis) agreement with each statement beginning with "Meeting in person with my staff, manager, and peers..."

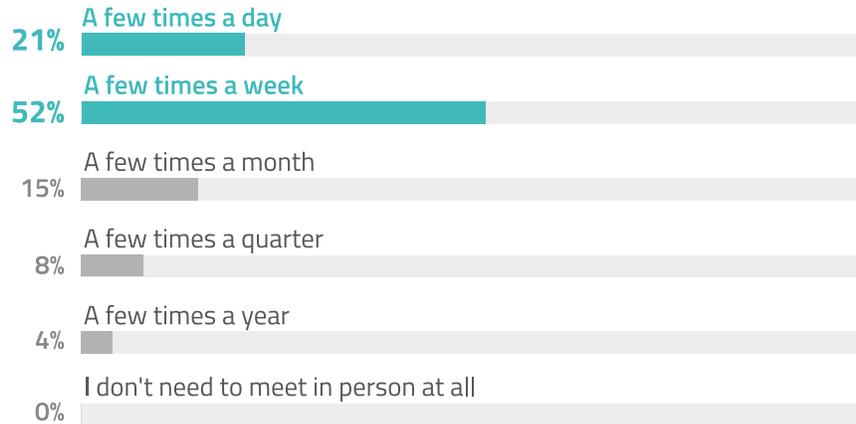


Source: scott@tclara.com

Nearly three out of four business leaders believe they need to meet in person with their colleagues at least a few times a week to be most effective at their job.

FIG. 5
How often do you need to meet in person with your colleagues to be most effective at your job?

All Business Leaders
(N=522)



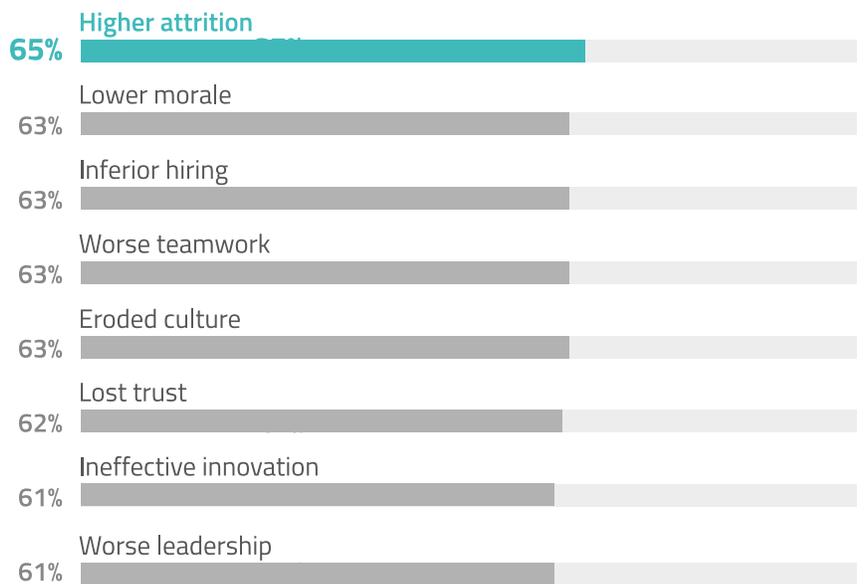
Source: scott@tclara.com

Downsides of Not Meeting Enough In-Person

Business leaders were asked to imagine that their company banned all in-person meetings. Nearly two-thirds say they would see significant problems within 12 months. Higher attrition leads the list of risks.

FIG. 6
Imagine that your company bans all in-person meetings for the next 3 years. How long, if at all, would it take to see significant signs of?

All Business Leaders
Share saying "Within 12 months"
(N=522)



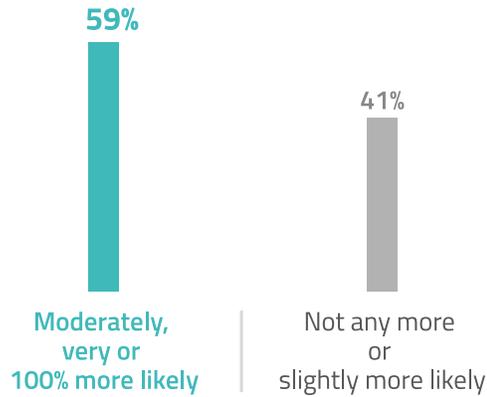
Source: scott@tclara.com

What's the attrition risk from not meeting often enough with co-workers in person?

“Leaders need to know how each person in their group feels about this important issue,” says Gillespie.

FIG. 7

How likely would you be to look for another job if you could not meet with your co-workers often enough in person?



All Business Leaders
(N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

4. A FRAMEWORK FOR DECIDING HOW TO MEET

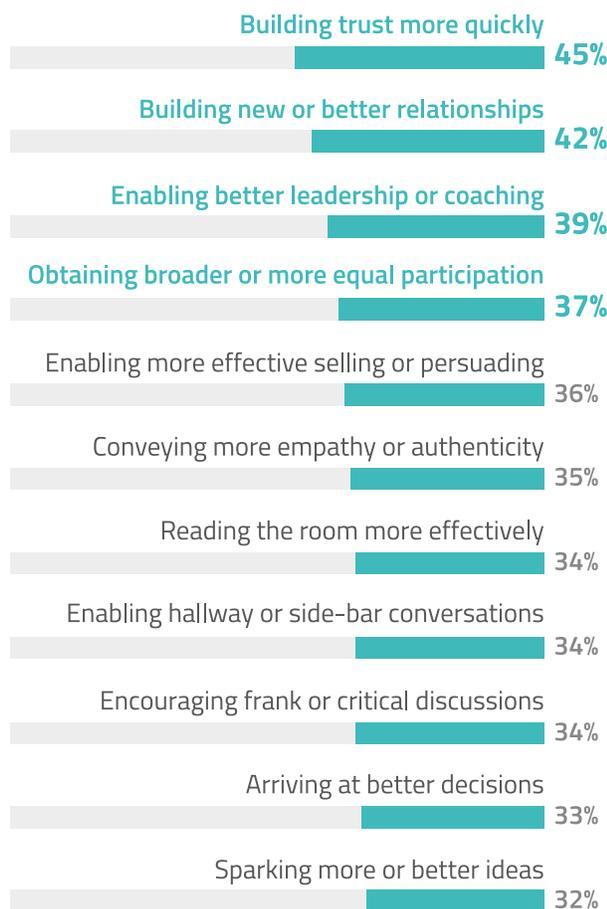
Business leaders were asked to identify the main advantages of each meeting mode over the other mode.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BETTER INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

Each of the advantages of in-person meetings is a form of better interpersonal dynamics.

FIG. 8

ADVANTAGES OF MEETING IN PERSON



ADVANTAGES OF MEETING VIRTUALLY



Share of Respondents.
All Business Leaders (N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

- Interpersonal Dynamics
- Meeting Friction

THE MEETING FRICTION FACTOR

Notably, the top four advantages of virtual meetings in Fig. 8 relate to meeting friction. “Meeting friction includes scheduling effort, meeting delay, cost, carbon impact, and health and safety risks,” explains Gillespie.

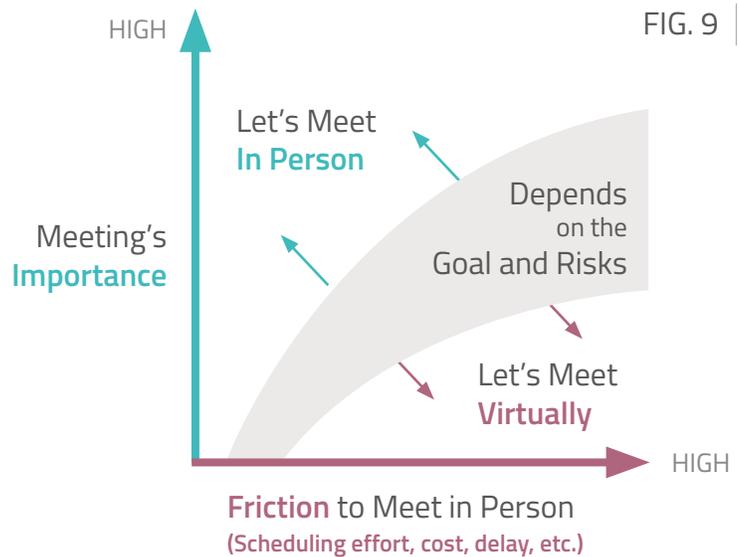
A DECISION MATRIX

Virtual meetings typically have lower friction than their in-person counterparts, so the key question is how important it is to meet in person.

The best mode will be intuitively clear for many meetings. But for those in the swath of uncertainty, meeting hosts should consider their meeting’s main goal and the need to avoid the risks of negative meeting outcomes.

How Should We Meet?

A MEETING MODE DECISION MATRIX

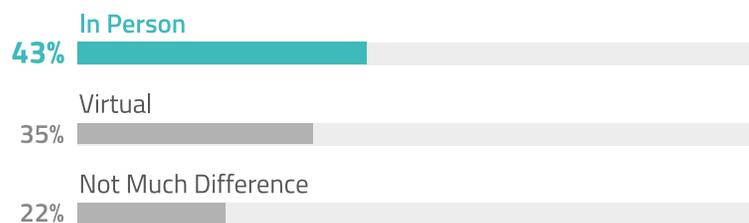


MEETING MODE EFFECTS ACROSS 26 GOALS AND 20 RISKS

For each of 26 meeting goals (e.g., “Decide or prioritize”), business leaders rated which meeting mode would be better. On average, across all 26 goals, 43% of business leaders prefer in-person meetings, 35% say virtual meetings are best, and one out of five see little difference.

Which method of meeting is more likely to achieve (a meeting goal)?

FIG. 10



Averaged Across 26 Goals.
All Business Leaders (N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

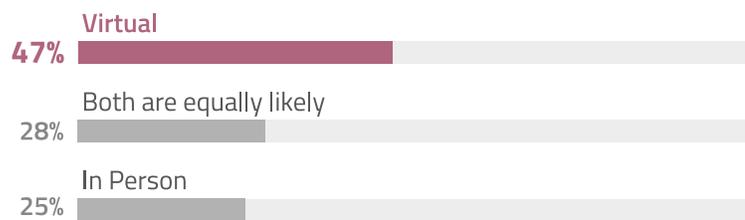
“Notably, 57% of leaders say virtual meetings are an adequate or better method for achieving the average meeting goal. This will likely mean more thoughtful decisions about which meetings can justify their meeting friction costs,” says Gillespie.

Across 20 meeting risk types, 47% of leaders say that the virtual meeting mode is most likely to cause a negative outcome (e.g., lost attention, weak collaboration, poor leadership) compared to 25% who believe these negative outcomes are more probable with in-person meetings.

Which method is more likely to result in (a negative outcome)?

FIG. 11

Averaged across
20 negative outcomes.
All Business Leaders (N=522)



Source: scott@tclara.com

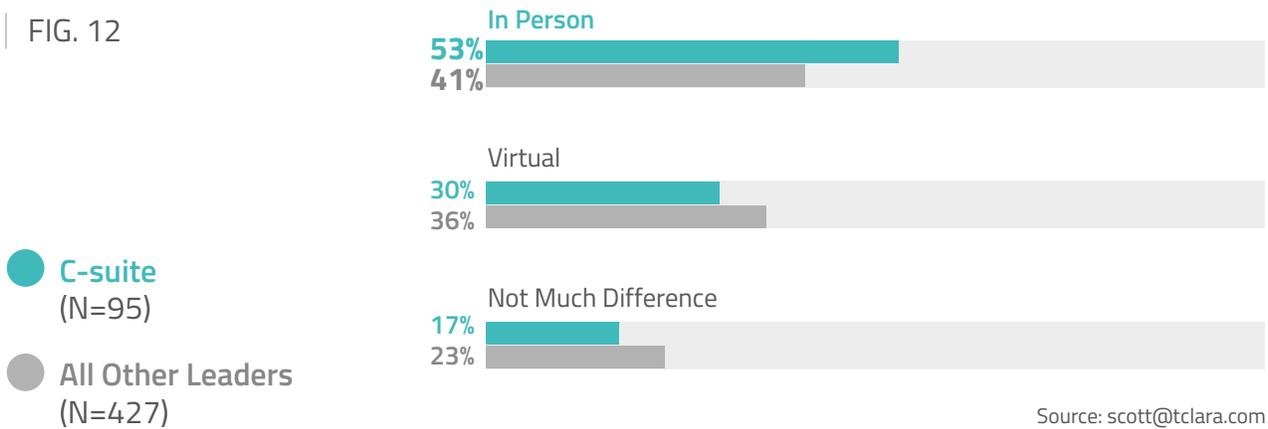
5. MEETING MODE PREFERENCES VARY BY MANAGEMENT LEVEL, GOAL, AND RISK

C-SUITE LEADERS PREFER IN-PERSON MEETINGS

C-suite leaders have, on average, significantly more preference for in-person meetings than other leaders to achieve most meeting goals: 53% to 41%, respectively.

Average Share of C-suite Leaders' Meeting Mode Preferences Across 26 Goals

FIG. 12



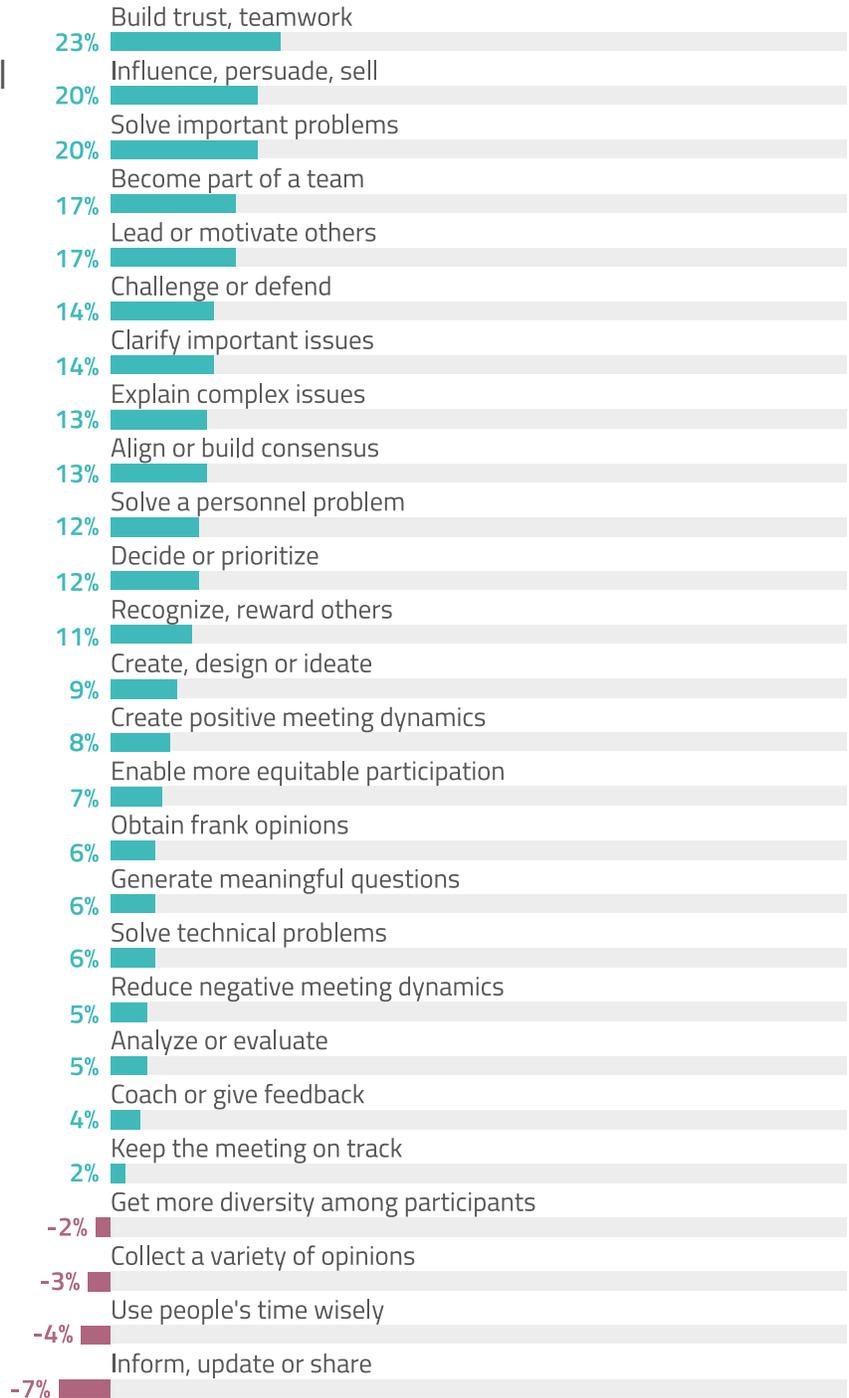
Source: scott@tclara.com

IN-PERSON MEETINGS ARE PREFERRED FOR MOST GOALS

This meeting type is the most popular mode for achieving 22 of the 26 goals. Virtual meetings are preferred if the meeting’s purpose is to get more diversity among participants, collect various opinions, use people’s time wisely, or inform, update, or share.

Net Preference for In-person over Virtual meetings to achieve each goal.

FIG. 13



All Business Leaders
(N=522)

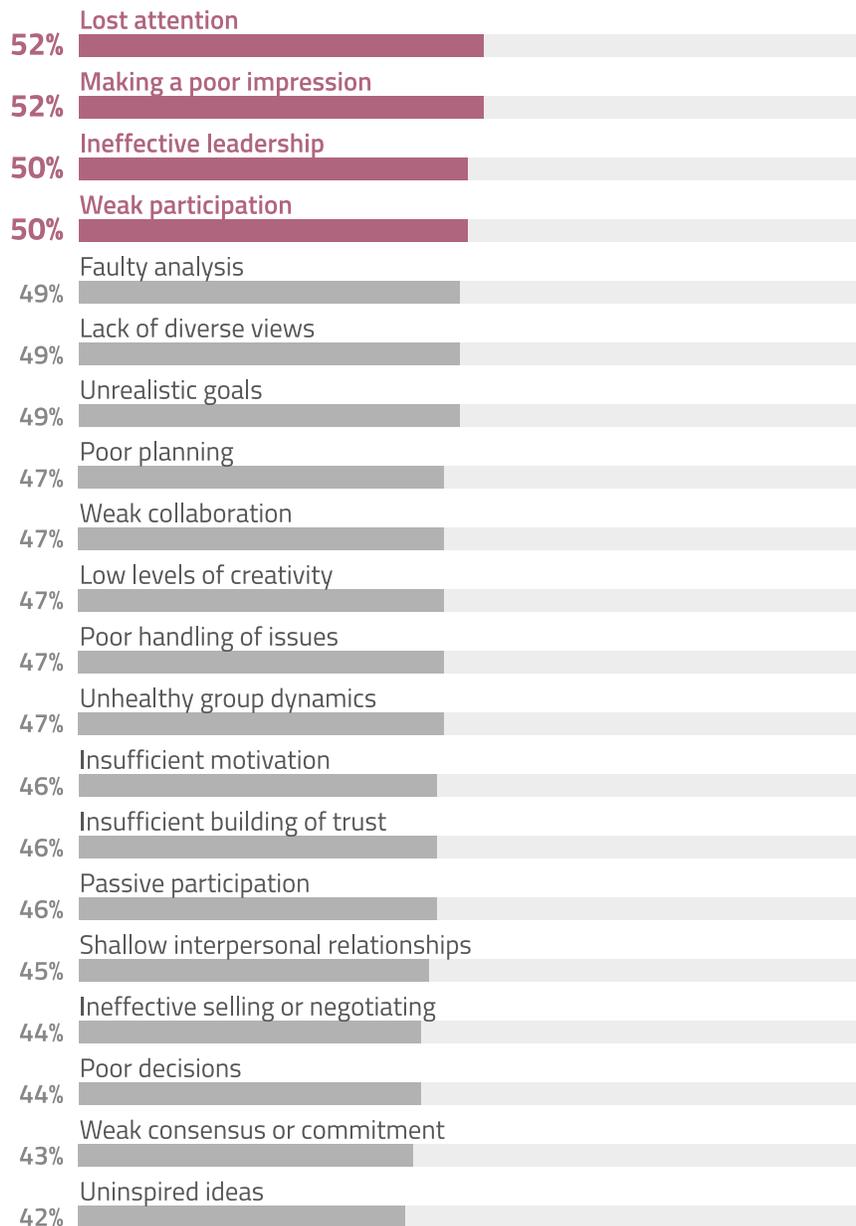
Source: scott@tclara.com

VIRTUAL MEETINGS CARRY MORE RISK OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

By a ratio of nearly two to one, business leaders say virtual meetings are more likely to result in negative outcomes (Fig. 11). The top four meeting risks shown here are relevant to most every meeting.

Share of All Leaders who believe virtual meetings are more likely to result in these risks.

FIG. 14



All Business Leaders
(N=522)

Source: scott@tclara.com

6. GAUGING THE BEST USES OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

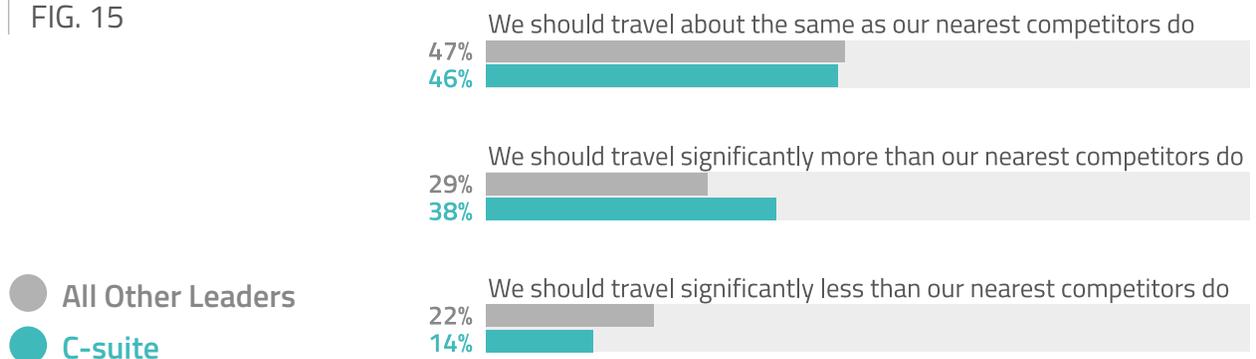
MOST LEADERS WANT TO KEEP UP WITH OR AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

Business leaders were asked about linking their company's travel levels to their nearest competitors. Nearly four-fifths (78%) of all business leaders would recommend travel levels similar to or significantly more than their closest competitors.

Notably, 38% of the C-suite respondents would recommend traveling significantly more than their competitors; only 14% of the C-suite leaders favor traveling less.

Business travel has benefits, costs, and climate impacts. Which strategy would you recommend for your organization?

FIG. 15



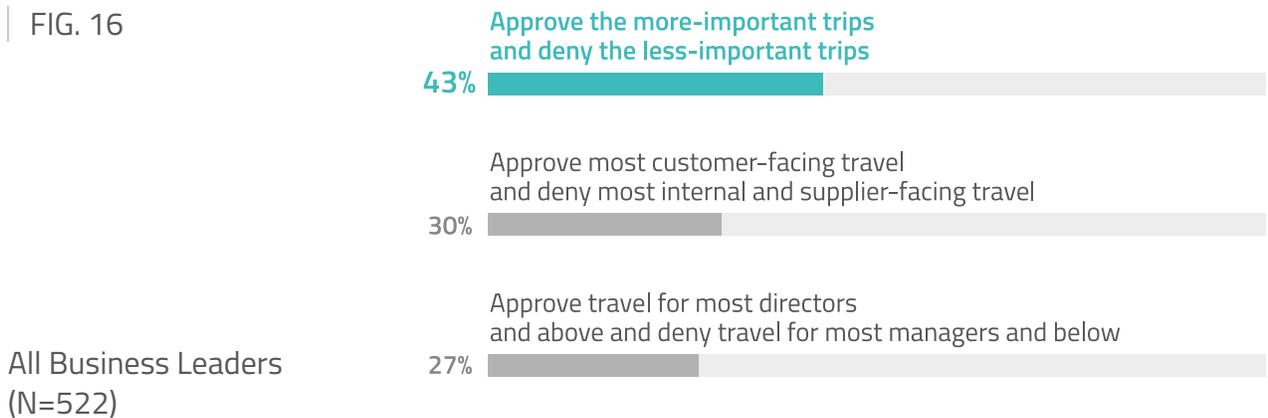
Source: scott@tclara.com

BUSINESS TRAVEL IS BEST USED FOR IMPORTANT TRIPS, INCLUDING TO BUILD CULTURE, TRUST, AND TEAMWORK

Notably, prioritizing customer-facing travel is not the most popular guideline. The most popular at 43% is judging the trip's importance. "Many leaders recognize that internal meetings can easily justify the cost and time to travel," says Gillespie.

If travel budgets are tight, which of these approval guidelines would be best for your organization over the next 12 months?

FIG. 16

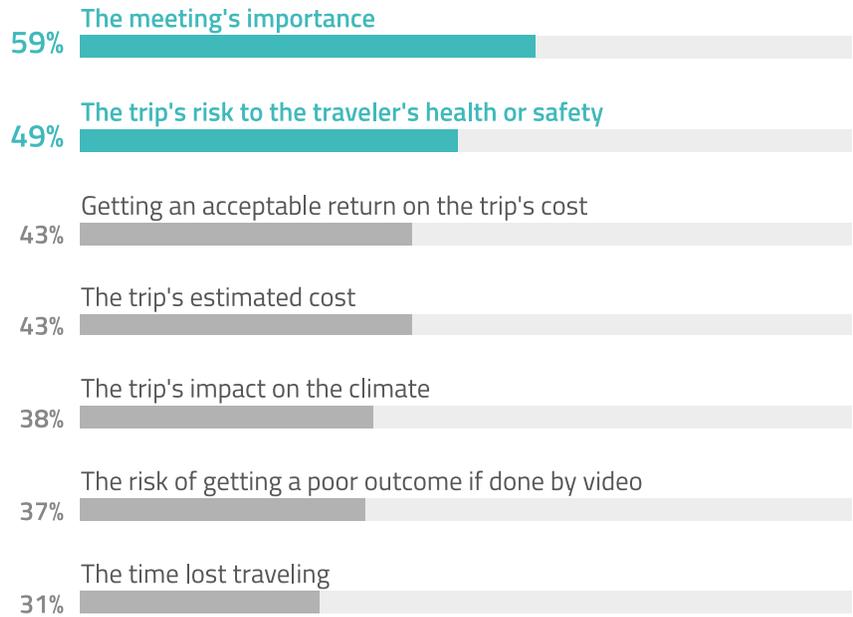


Source: scott@tclara.com

Regarding more specific criteria for approving business trips, C-suite executives say their top two criteria are the meeting's importance and the risk to the traveler's health or safety. The cost of the trip and the prospect of getting an acceptable return are tied for 3rd place.

Prioritize these criteria for approving travel for a work-related meeting in the U.S.

FIG. 17

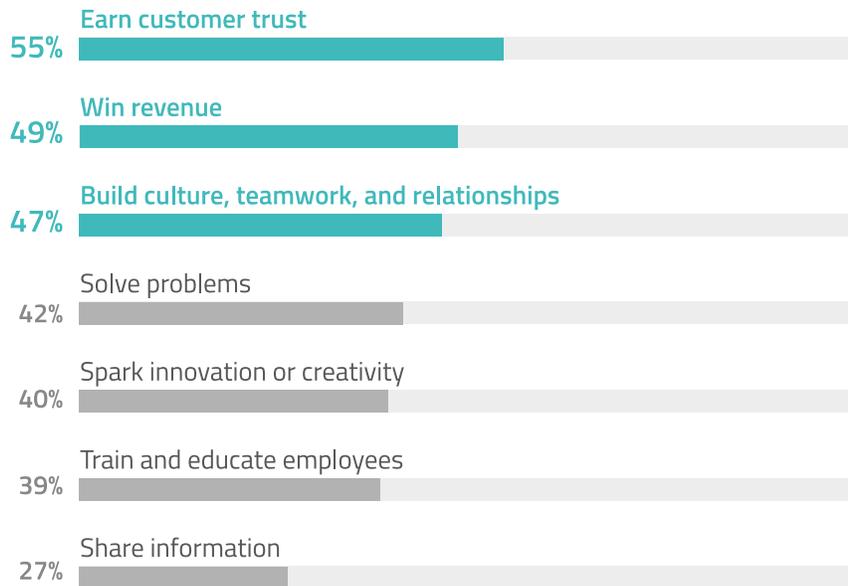


C-suite Leaders
(N=95)

Source: scott@tclara.com

C-suite executives prioritized seven popular reasons for taking business trips. “Earning customer trust” is most often mentioned in the top three. “Win revenue” followed, then “Build culture, teamwork, and relationships.”

FIG. 18
How should your company prioritize these reasons for taking business trips?



C-suite Leaders
(N=95)

Source: scott@tclara.com

7. MANAGING MEETINGS AND TRAVEL MORE STRATEGICALLY

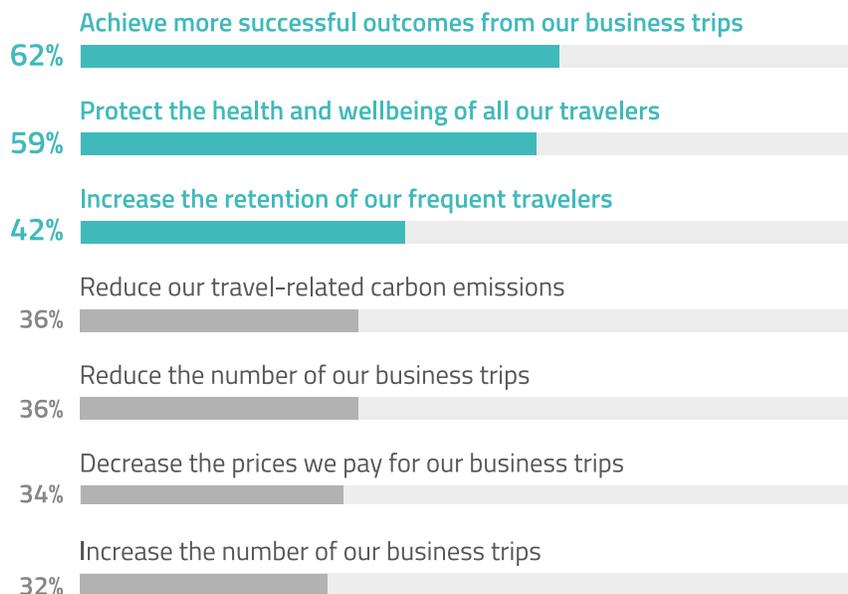
LINKING TRIPS TO GOALS AND OUTCOMES

“Achieving big goals requires good strategies. Unfortunately, most companies do not clearly link business travel to their key business goals, such as those listed in Figure 18,” asserts Gillespie.

When asked about travel-program priorities, leaders made it clear that achieving more successful trips is their top priority. This concern is followed by protecting traveler health and improving frequent traveler retention.

FIG. 19
How should your company prioritize these travel-related goals?

C-suite Leaders
(N=95)



Source: scott@tclara.com

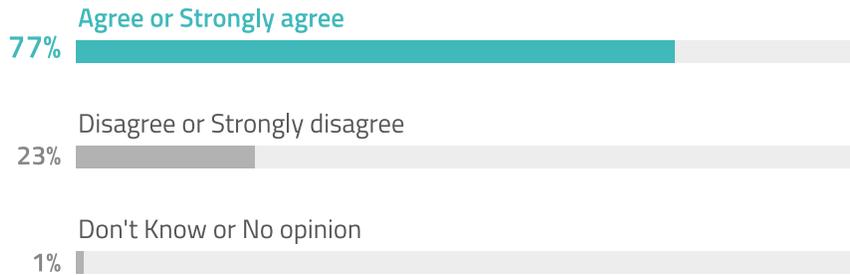
“Successful outcomes are the core value proposition of any business trip. Linking trips with goals and outcomes is the first step toward managing travel more strategically,” Gillespie says.

THE CASE FOR PRE-TRIP JUSTIFICATION

“It’s alarming that 77% of business leaders can’t tell if their companies are traveling enough. Executives need new and better metrics to recognize signs of under- or over-spending in this critical activity,” Gillespie says.

FIG. 20

Other than looking at the travel budget, our executives can’t tell if our company is traveling too much or too little.



All Business Leaders
(N=522)

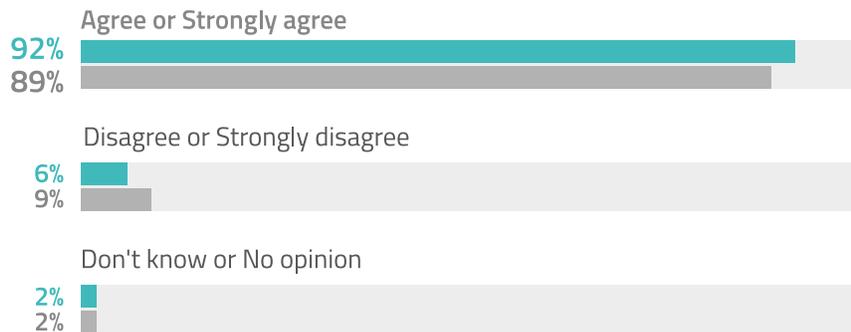
Source: scott@tclara.com

Fortunately, nearly nine out of ten business leaders, including 92% of C-suite executives, support the use of pre-trip justifications.

“Companies need a quick and effective way of assessing which business trips are justified and which ones are not. C-suite leaders realize that a few minutes of a traveler’s time is well spent on this. The modern pre-trip justification, not the outdated pre-trip approval, is the key to using business travel more strategically,” claims Gillespie.

FIG. 21

People who travel frequently for business should be required to spend a few minutes documenting why each trip is needed before they travel.



● C-suite
(N=95)

● All Other Leaders
(N=427)

Source: scott@tclara.com

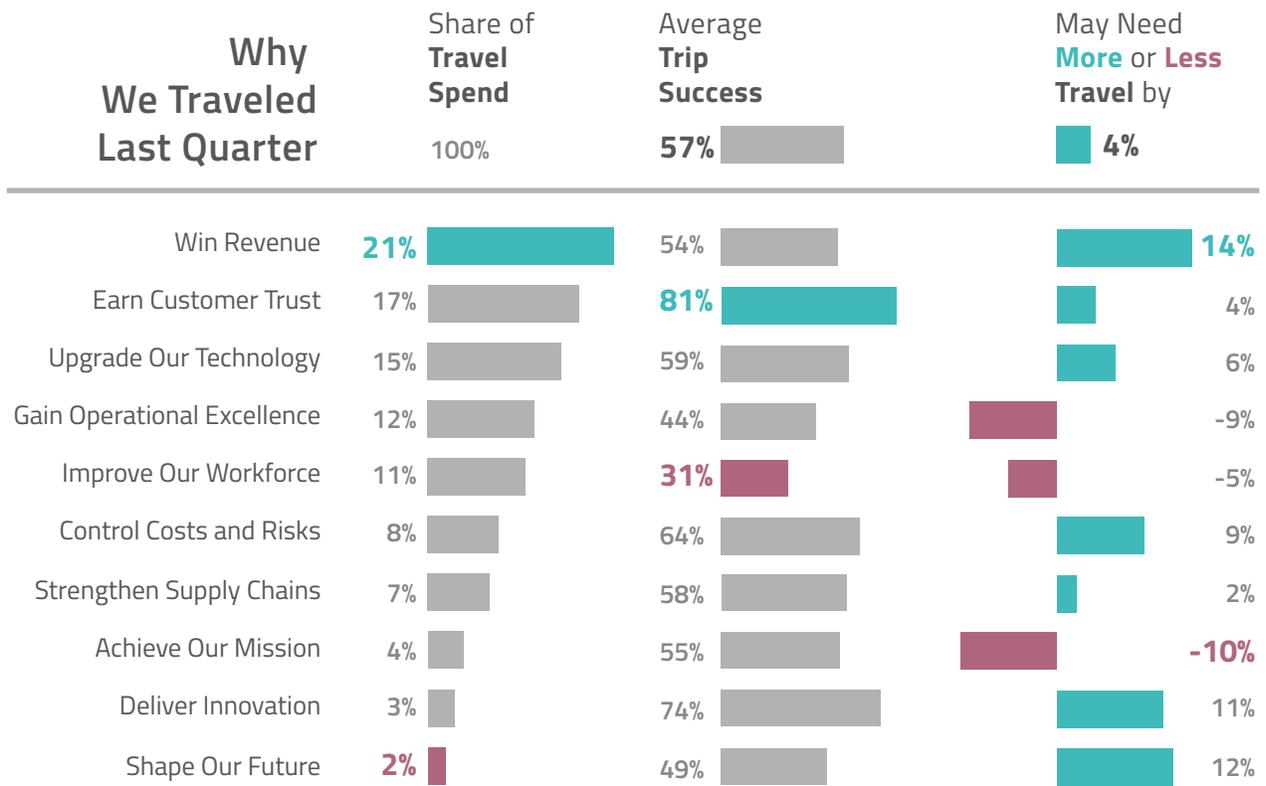
NEW METRICS FOR MAXIMIZING BUSINESS TRAVEL'S VALUE

“Management needs a much better handle on the value achieved by traveling. Asking travelers the right questions before and after their trips is essential. Doing this consistently will give business leaders the data needed to maximize the value from traveling.”

“I envision business travel being used much more strategically with a scorecard like this one,” offers Gillespie.

FIG. 22

A Travel Strategy Scorecard



Top and Bottom values in the left and center columns

Source: scott@tclara.com

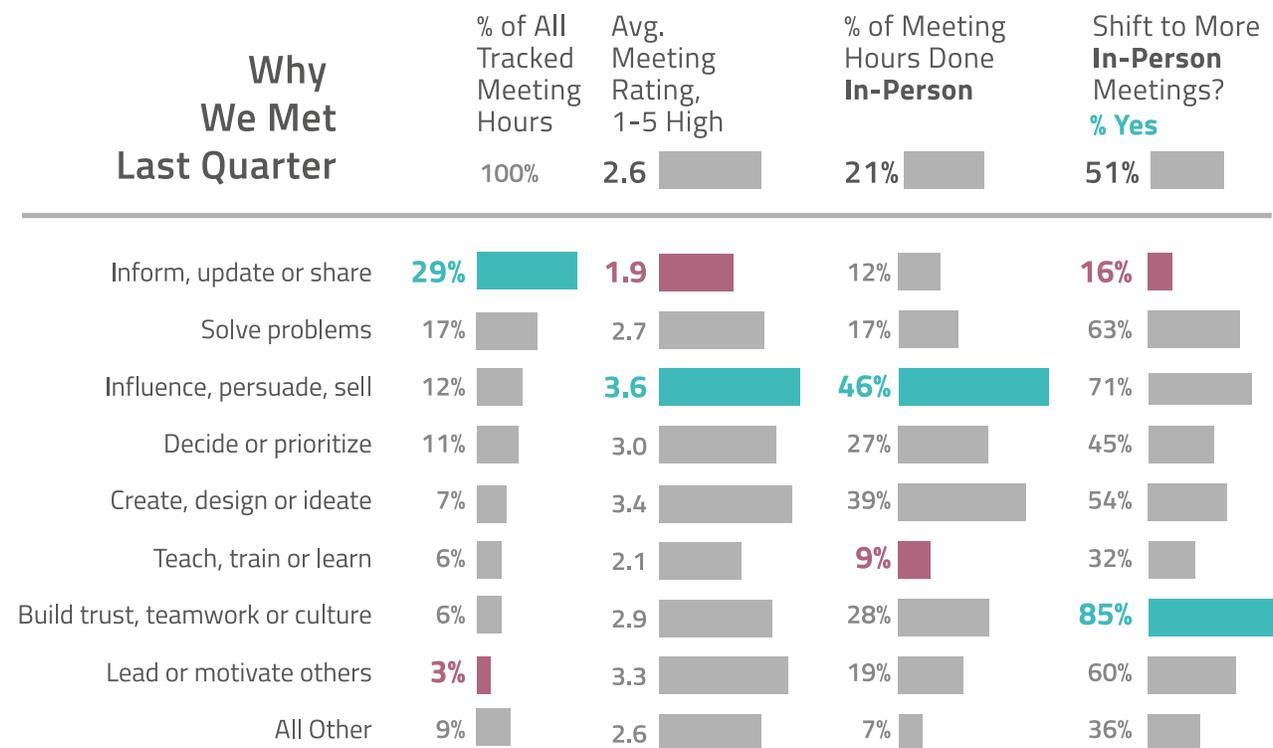
NEW METRICS FOR FINDING THE RIGHT MIX OF IN-PERSON MEETINGS

“Senior leadership teams are struggling to find the right balance between meeting virtually and in person. Getting this right will be a competitive advantage. The key is making a consistent effort to measure what matters in meetings,” notes Gillespie.

He continues, “Imagine the advantages to be gained with this type of scorecard – better meetings, higher engagement, and justified internal travel, to name a few.”

FIG. 23

A Meetings Strategy Scorecard



Top and Bottom values in each column

Source: scott@tclara.com

8. A COMPANION GUIDE FOR BETTER MEETINGS

Three out of four business leaders say that the meeting's mode, in person or virtual, impacts the risks and results of most meetings. (Figs. 10, 11)

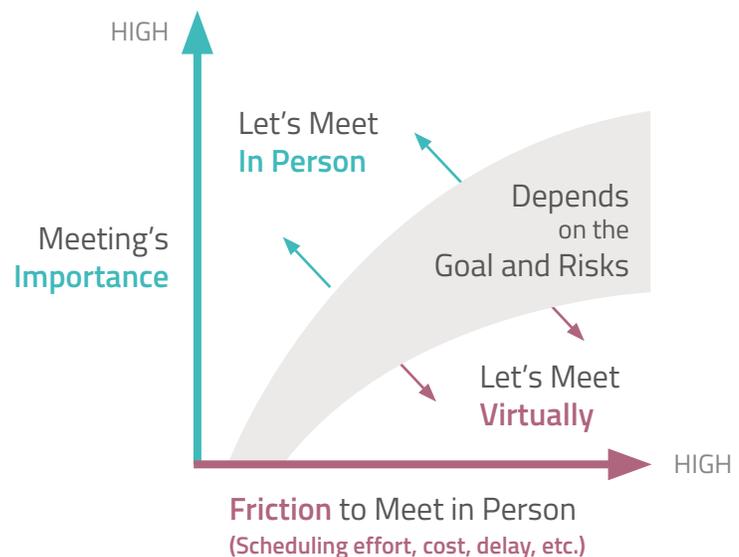
So how should hosts decide which mode will be best for their meetings?

Findings from this study suggest that choosing a meeting's best mode depends on four factors:

- The meeting's importance
- The friction required to meet in person
- The meeting's main goal
- The desire to reduce the risk of adverse outcomes

How Should We Meet?

A MEETING MODE DECISION MATRIX



This section gives context for assessing each mode and its relevant risks for meetings meant to:

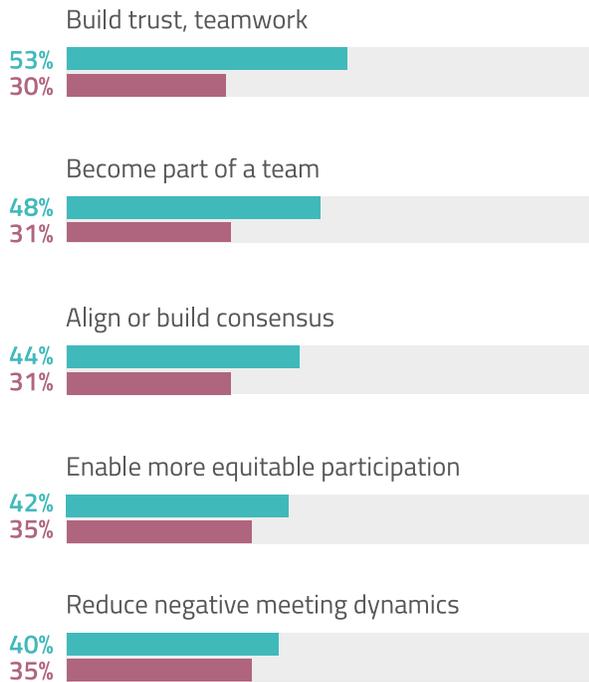
- Build Trust or Teamwork (Fig. 24)
- Influence, Persuade, or Sell (Fig. 25)
- Negotiate, Challenge, Defend (Fig. 26)
- Provide Leadership or Development (Fig. 27)
- Spark Innovation or Creativity (Fig. 28)
- Analyze, Plan, or Decide (Fig. 29)
- Improve Meeting Dynamics (Fig. 30)
- Improve Hiring and Retention (Fig. 31)
- Attend Conferences and Events (Fig. 32)

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Build Trust or Teamwork

FIG. 24

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

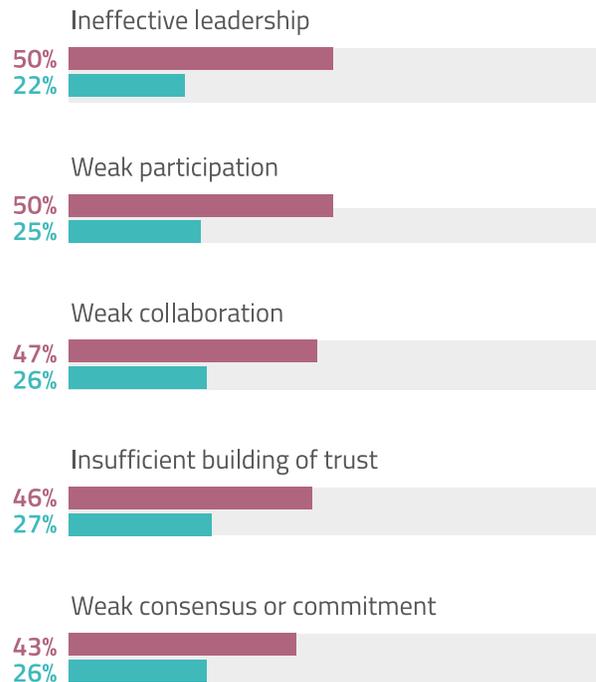


All Business Leaders
(N=522)

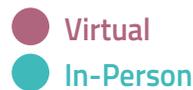


MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



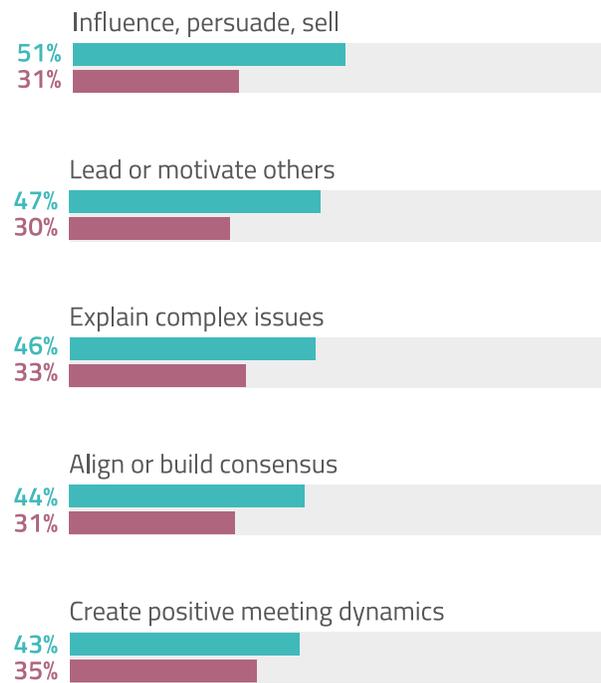
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Influence, Persuade or Sell

FIG. 25

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

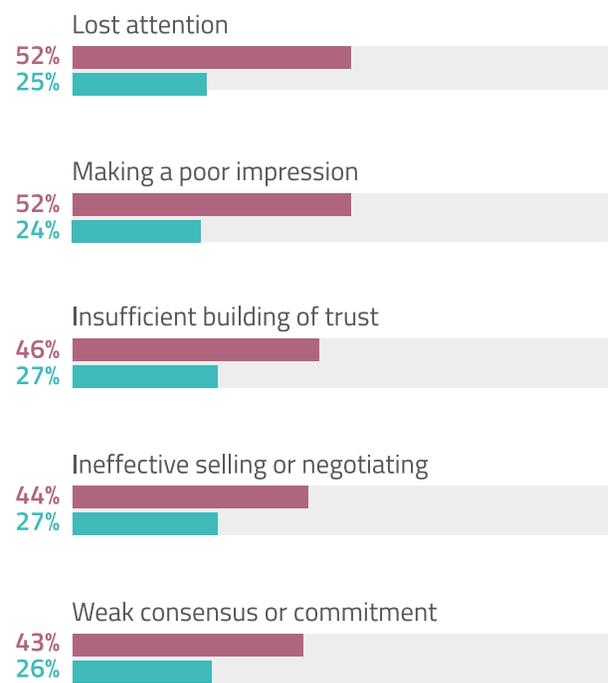


All Business Leaders
(N=522)



MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



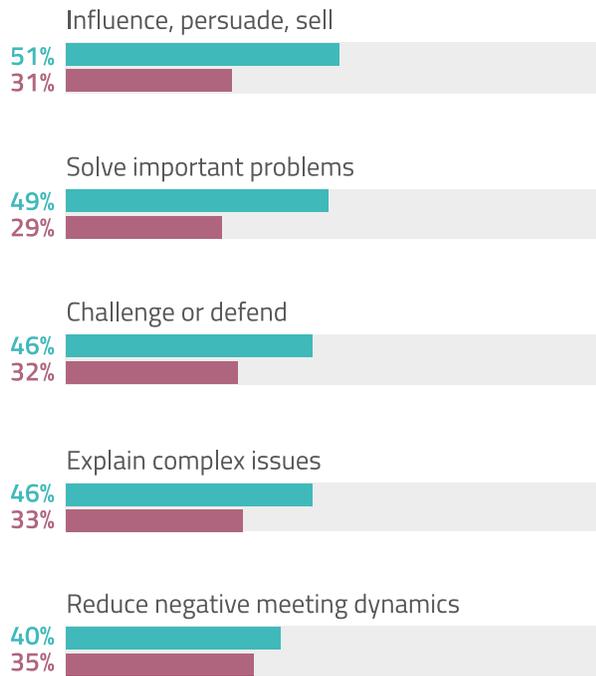
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Negotiate, Challenge, or Defend

FIG. 26

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

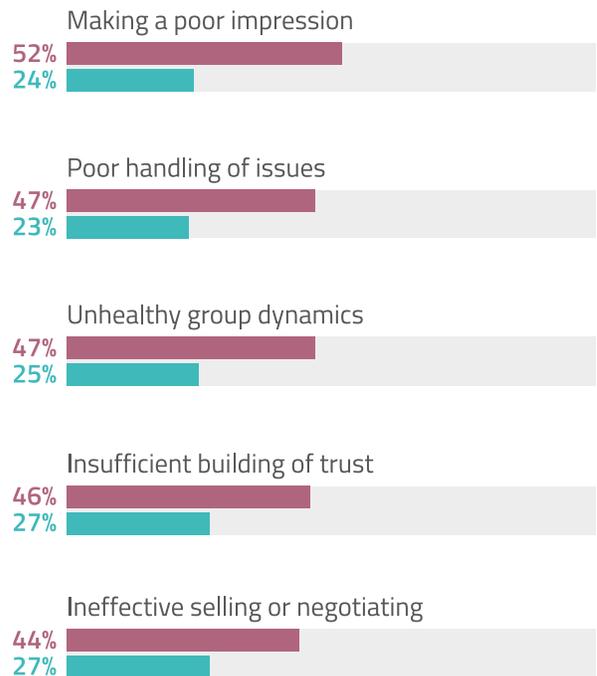


All Business Leaders
(N=522)



MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



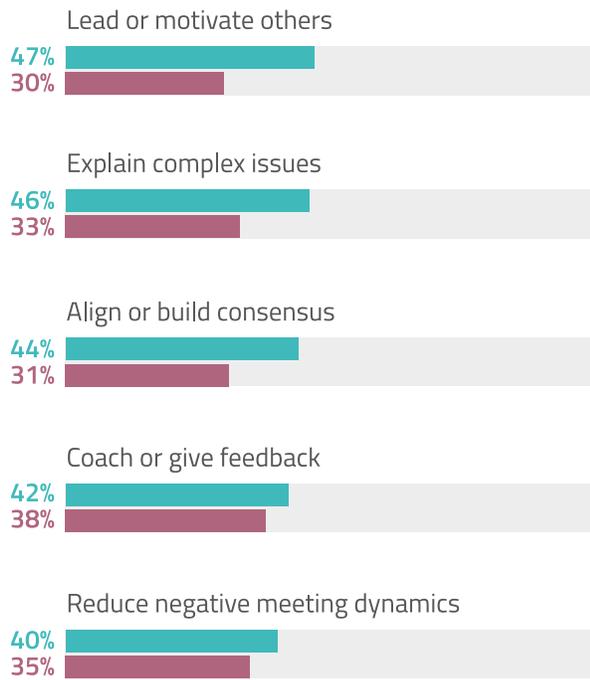
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Provide Leadership or Development

FIG. 27

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

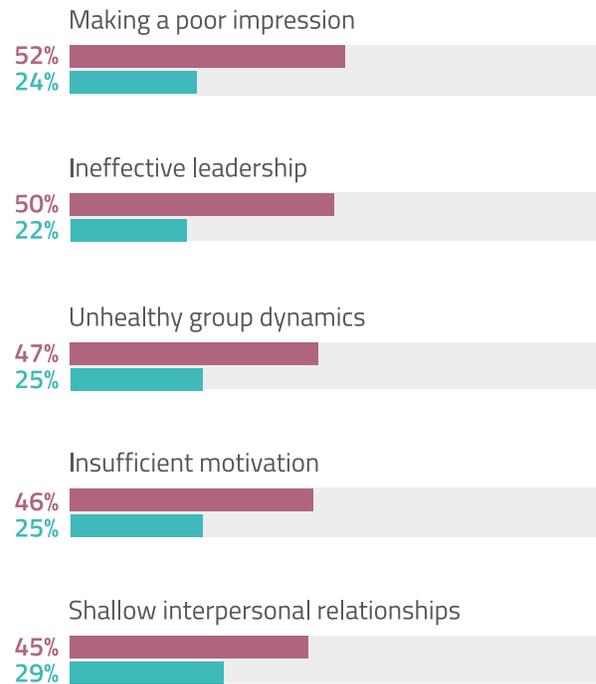


All Business Leaders
(N=522)

- In-Person
- Virtual

MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)

- Virtual
- In-Person

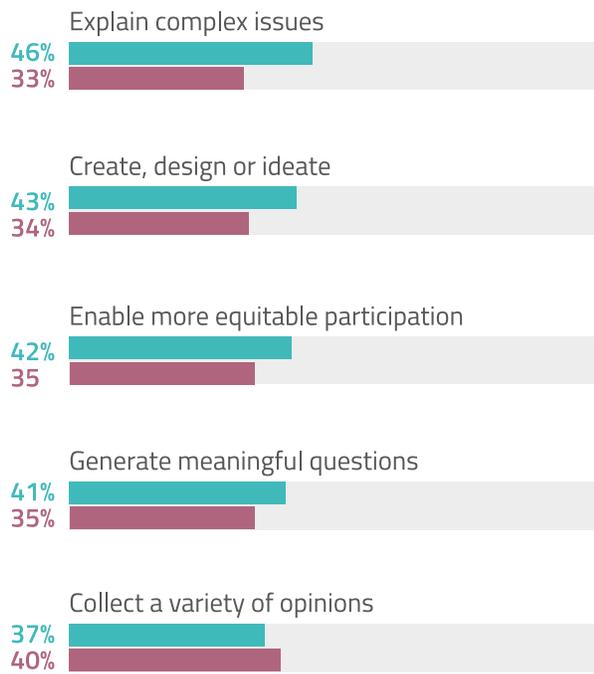
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Spark Innovation or Creativity

FIG. 28

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

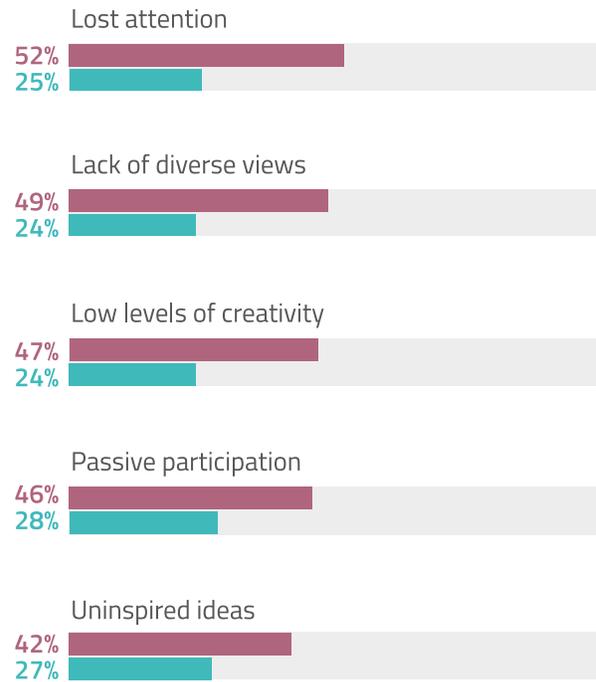


All Business Leaders (N=522)

- In-Person
- Virtual

MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders (N=522)

- Virtual
- In-Person

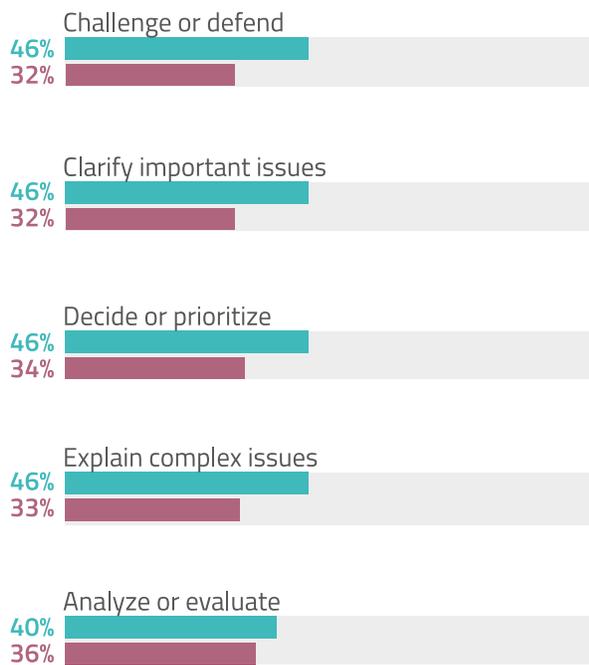
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Analyze, Plan, or Decide

FIG. 29

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

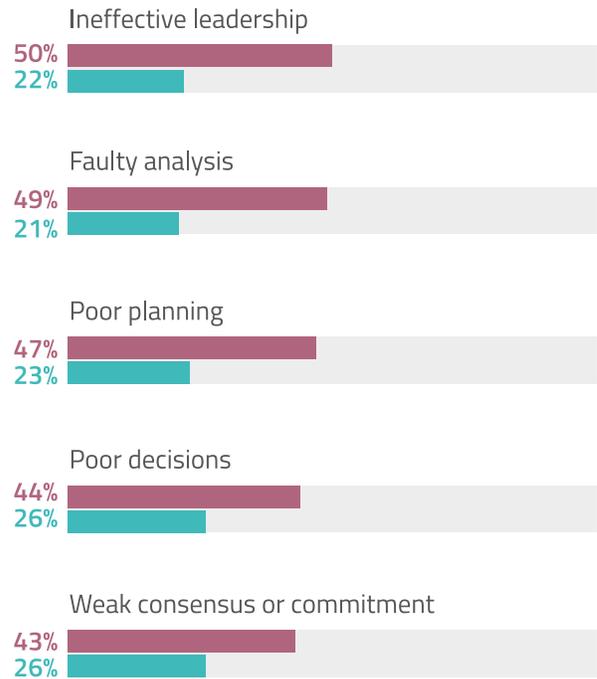


All Business Leaders
(N=522)



MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



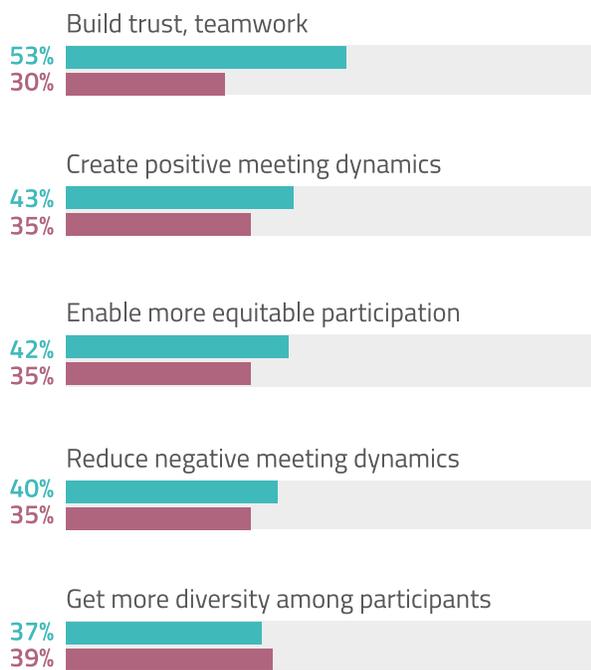
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Improve Meeting Dynamics

FIG. 30

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

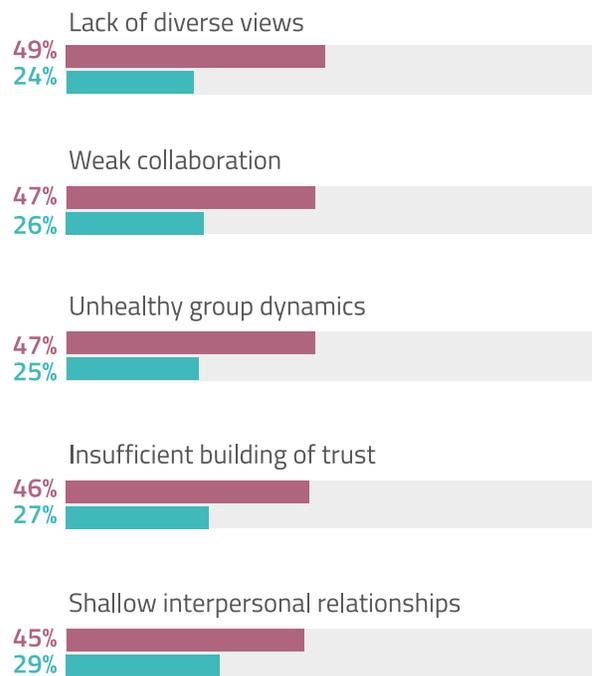


All Business Leaders
(N=522)



MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



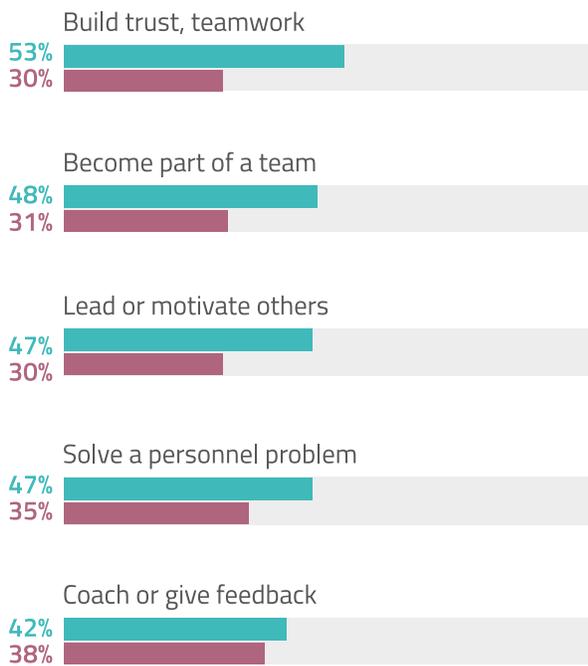
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR MEETINGS MEANT TO Improve Hiring and Retention

FIG. 31

BETTER RESULTS

Which method of meeting is best if the goal is to...

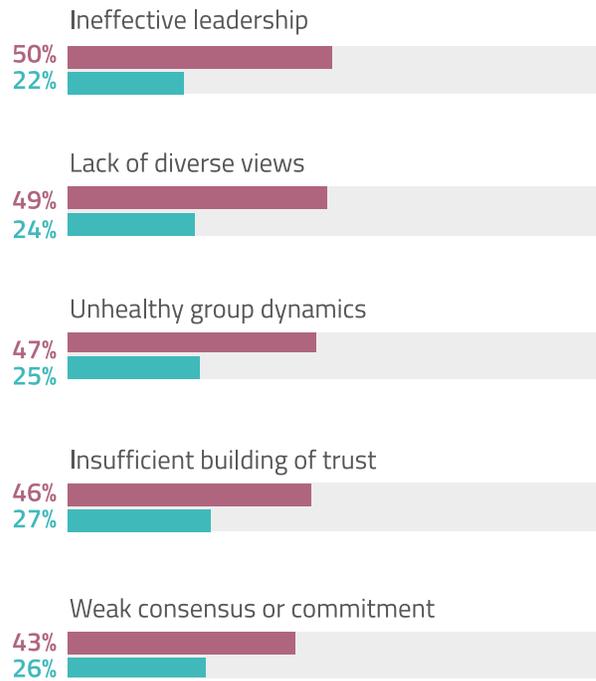


All Business Leaders
(N=522)



MORE RISKS

Which method of meeting is more likely to result in...



All Business Leaders
(N=522)



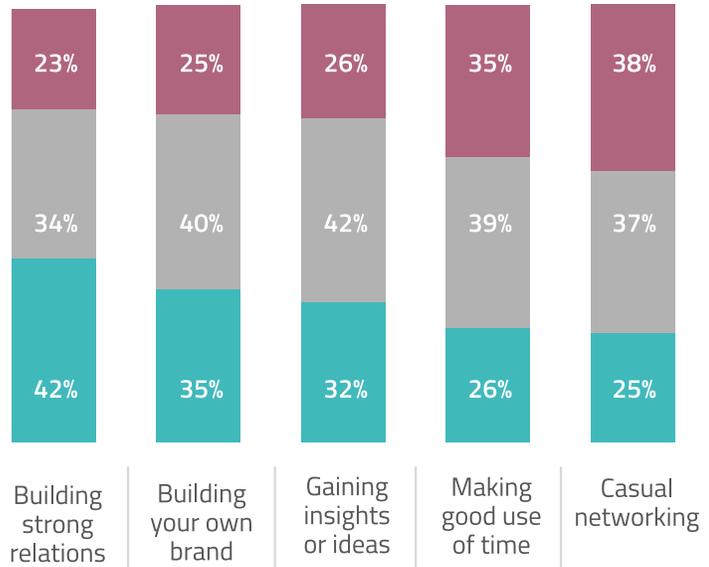
Source: scott@tclara.com

CONTEXT FOR Attending Conferences and Events

FIG. 32
Think about
conferences and
professional events.
Which method
of attending is
better for...

All Business Leaders
(N=522)

- Virtual
- About the same
- In-Person



Source: scott@tclara.com

9. ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Via a survey conducted in February 2022, 522 U.S.-based business executives and managers shared their thoughts on this topic.

Each respondent took at least five business trips by an airline in 2019 (21 trips on average), has managed at least five people and approved at least five business trips using airlines over the last three years. They work for organizations with at least 50 people (1,200 on average) and are between 28 and 60 years of age. The gender mix is 76% male and 24% female. All have at least a four-year college degree.

Ninety-five respondents (18%) reported their title as President, Partner, CFO, or C-Suite. This segment of respondents is called C-suite Leaders; the other 427 are referred to as All Other Leaders. These business leaders represent a wide variety of industries, excluding military, government, education, and non-profit organizations. Each of the 522 respondents passed all the survey's quality control checks, including all four red herring questions.

tClara designed the survey questionnaire and wrote this paper. Innovate MR conducted the survey between Feb 9-23, 2022, and provided the initial analysis of the survey data. CWT, Cytric by Amadeus, and Delta Air Lines sponsored this study.

10. ABOUT THE SPONSORS



CWT is a Business-to-Business-for-Employees (B2B4E) travel management platform and corporate events business. Companies and governments rely on us to keep their people connected – anywhere, anytime, anyhow – and, across six continents, we provide their employees with innovative technology and an efficient, safe, and secure travel experience backed by our three core promises: to simplify corporate travel, to connect to unlock possibilities, and to move forward, together.



Cytric by Amadeus is an effective and cost-efficient suite of business travel management solutions. **Cytric Travel & Expense** provides a seamless booking experience through business travelers' preferred channels. Currently, **Cytric by Amadeus** has a presence in over 130+ countries as a leading travel and expense management solution.

For over 30 years, Amadeus' solutions connect travelers to the journeys they want through travel agents, search engines, tour operators, airlines, airports, hotels, cars and railways. In 2019, Amadeus helped connect over 1.9 billion people to local travel providers in countries all over the world. Amadeus is passionate in its pursuit of better technology that makes better journeys. Amadeus' purpose is to shape the future of travel. Travel powers progress. Amadeus powers travel.



NO ONE BETTER CONNECTS THE WORLD

Nearly 5,000 Delta Air Lines (NYSE: DAL) flights take off every day, connecting people across more than 265 destinations on six continents with award-winning **operational excellence**, customer service, safety and innovation. As the leading global airline, Delta's mission is to create opportunities, foster understanding and expand horizons by connecting people and communities to each other and their potential.

Delta's people lead the way in delivering **a world-class customer experience**, and we're continuing to ensure the **future of travel** is personalized, enjoyable and stress-free. Our people's genuine and enduring motivation is to make every customer feel welcomed and respected across every point of their journey with us.

Connect with Delta on [Delta News Hub](#), [delta.com](#), via [@DeltaNewsHub on Twitter](#) and [Facebook.com/delta](#).



tClara provides provocative thought leadership to business travel stakeholders. **Trip Tester™**, our pre-trip justification tool, easily aligns business travel with strategic goals and maximizes travel budgets. Travel for the right reasons with Trip Tester™.

Learn more at

[www.triptester.com](#)

[www.tclara.com](#)

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These people and their work have inspired aspects of tClara's views on business meetings and business travel.

While none contributed directly to this paper, all are thanked for their contributions to the goal of making meetings and business trips more effective.

“The Surprising Science of Meetings: How You Can Lead Your Team to Peak Performance”

By University of North Carolina's Professor Steven G. Rogelberg
A pioneering work in the field of meeting science.

“Where The Action Is - The Meetings That Make or Break Your Organization”

By Lucid Meeting's J. Elise Keith
Clear and practical advice for improving any company's meeting culture.

Rate My Meeting

by Xander Groesbeek
A SaaS tool for improving the quality of meetings via constructive feedback.

The Purposeful Travel Model

by Festive Road's Caroline Strachan
An early catalyst for assessing the need to travel.

Advances in Travel Management

by many of the world's most determined and innovative corporate travel managers.
A vital source for nudging the travel industry forward.

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