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A new report from Imago Venues suggests that face-to-face engagement and personal development are the most important factors for meeting attendees. Technology, while a factor, should

take a back seat to these primary goals, the report suggests.

Tech can help give your events an extra spark, but it's not the spark that got your attendees to the host city in the first place.

That's the key idea of a new report from Imago Venues, a U.K.-based continuing education facility operated by Loughborough University.

The company's report raises a simple question: "Is the meetings industry of today doing enough to inspire the business leaders of tomorrow?" (The answer? They could be doing more, of course.)

The report—based on survey results from 430 students, delegates, and event organizers, along with information gathered from focus groups and interviews—emphasizes that attendees go to meetings with the goal of gaining knowledge from both educators and peers.

The report suggests that younger attendees, in particular, struggled to find encouragement to take part in the meetings they attended, despite going there with the goal of forging creative thinking by the sessions they attend and the people they meet.

"The underlying message from our results paints a telling picture," the report states. "Millennials want to learn something valuable and develop relationships that will

benefit them. A meeting has to be linked to what they want to achieve, not the organization.”

Often, technology is used for building such engagement, but the report makes the case that tech-based engagement has its limits. A key point: While technology should be used (and is favored by 77 percent of students and 75 percent of delegates), it must be done carefully to avoid becoming a distraction. Ultimately, the differentiator of meetings, according to the report, is the face-to-face engagement potential, which (unlike the tech in many cases) can't be replicated online.

“Our respondents don't consider technological delivery of information as the most important driver of face-to-face meetings; that sort of information can be readily accessed by individuals online,” the report states. “They care far more about creating relationships and emotional connections that enable career progression and personal development.”

The report makes the case that attendees are looking for a return on their investment of time, with a goal of personal development. The objectives of meetings for organizers get a bit more muddled in comparison.

In comments on the report to *Incentive Travel & Corporate Meetings*, Imago Venues' Emma Boynton, who leads the organization's sales and marketing, suggested that the tech can't get in the way of the ultimate goals of the event.

“Whilst it is important to recognize that there is a demand for a personalized approach with technology, event organizers

should remember meeting attendees want to learn something valuable and develop relationships that will benefit them, and technology isn't always the way to achieve this," she stated.