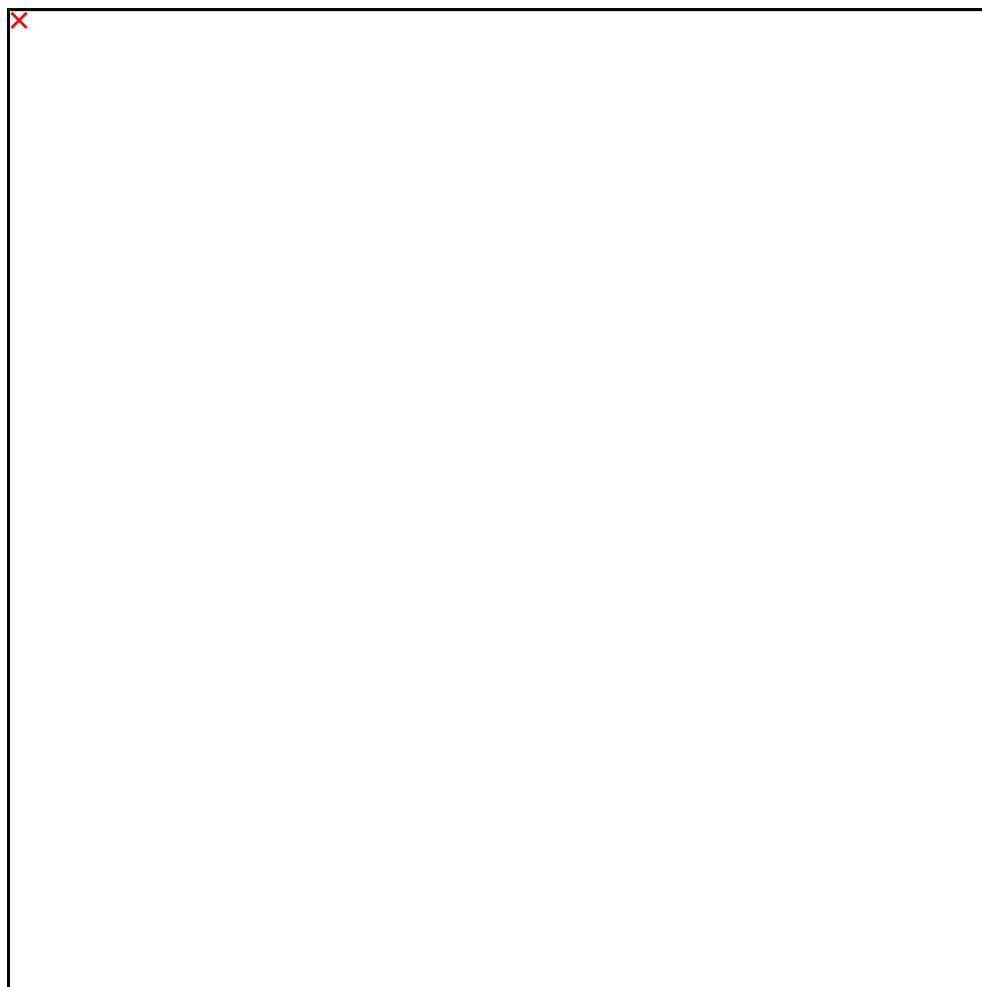


# Five Trends Transforming Meetings in 2020

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The Woodlands (Houston), Texas, February 3, 2020 ... BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company, announces Five Trends that will Transform Meetings in 2020. The trends have been observed by its diverse portfolio of meeting properties located coast to coast. Benchmark is the leading U.S.-based independent hospitality management company, operating 80 award-winning hotels, resorts, and conference centers within its Benchmark Resorts & Hotels, Gemstone Collection and Benchmark Conference Centers brands. Benchmark's 2020 meeting trends were announced by Ted Davis, chief sales and marketing officer.

“We’ve seen this coming, but in 2020 millennials have become the dominant force in meetings,” said Ted Davis, “and their impact is being felt by planners and venues alike. Our sales and conference services teams interact closely with millennials, responsive to their needs for everything from building personal time into meetings to accommodating a myriad of out-of-the-ordinary dining requests to creating curated destination experiences customized to the individual interests of the millennial--all of which needs to be considered when planning, preparing for and executing meetings today. This is having a transformative influence how we approach the group meeting experience in 2020 and beyond!”

## **Trend 1 Millennials Have Moved into Meetings Mainstream**

Millennials have moved into the meetings mainstream and have now become a dominant force in meetings. Conference attendees in 2020 increasingly average in age from 30-45 years. It is a generation that is so tech savvy that this is inherently reflected in their expectations when meeting for business and pleasure. What does this mean for planners and for suppliers? With millennials comes an accompanying demand for highly advanced and sophisticated technology, significantly increased dietary requirements, personal enrichment experiences curated to individual interests, privacy concerns going well beyond technology and toward individual wellness during the meeting with planners building in private, personal

time for attendees.

## **Trend 2 Sustainable Food & Beverage 2.0**

Creative, sustainable, and plant-based cuisine are the new go-to food choices for 2020. As are special diets with an emphasis on accommodating a growing list of dietary restrictions. What meeting attendees put into their bodies impacts attentiveness and productivity, so healthful refreshment breaks are a high priority too. Increasingly planners want to know where a property's food ingredients are sourced (this includes at the bar for such items as organically produced liquors), how food and beverage selections are prepared, and that an executive chef can easily accommodate a growing number of diet requests--that are no longer considered "special".

## **Trend 3 Demand Holds Firm**

Meeting demand is holding firm this year, despite economic, political and business concerns. Planners are slower to commit, perhaps waiting to see what else is coming down the pike. That said, pricing has not taken a hit as of yet, and is, for the most part, on the increase with planners actively seeing the value of meeting packaging, which is experiencing strong demand. Meetings remain, on average, three days and average group size is actually on the increase. And pharma, education and technology are the top three industries hosting meetings in 2020.

## **Trend 4 Giving Back While Coming Together**

Teambuilding is the most popular inclusion in meetings this year, and initiatives that involve community and charitable activities for social impact are what planners are looking for in 2020. Giving back enhances personal and group mindfulness and empathy which helps develop a productive team and this is on the meeting agenda this year, as is the strong desire is for group experiences that inspire productive and positive change and leadership development. This is especially the case in the tech industry.

## **Trend 5 Get Out and Explore**

Wanderlust and the desire to explore and discover is a flourishing element of meeting agendas in 2020. Moving off property and experiencing local color -- or if in an urban location historic and cultural sites, cutting-edge restaurants or micro distilleries -- is an essential request of planners for their groups this year even if for an evening. Planners and properties are curating these experiences for individual and group enrichment. Everyone returns to the meeting refreshed and having learned/experienced something unique in the destination in which they have come together for their meeting.

## **About BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company.**

BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company, is a leader in the development, management, and marketing of independent, soft branded, and experiential hard branded resorts, hotels, and conference centers. In addition to the company's award-winning full service Benchmark Resorts & Hotels, its lifestyle and luxury Gemstone Collection, and its industry-leading Benchmark Conference Centers. BENCHMARK is also an investor in etc.venues, a leading provider of contemporary city centre venues for meetings, signature events, and conferences. Benchmark's combined portfolio features more than 80 unique projects across three continents. The company is passionately committed to delivering personal, inspiring, and memory-making experiences, driving total revenue and profitability, and cultivating an award winning, "Be The Difference" culture for all its employees. Benchmark, is based in The Woodlands (Houston), Texas, with offices in London, England; Miami, Florida; Park City, Utah; Scottsdale, Arizona; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Seattle, Washington; and Tokyo, Japan.  
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