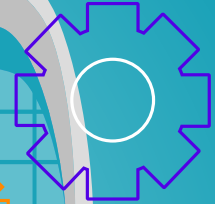
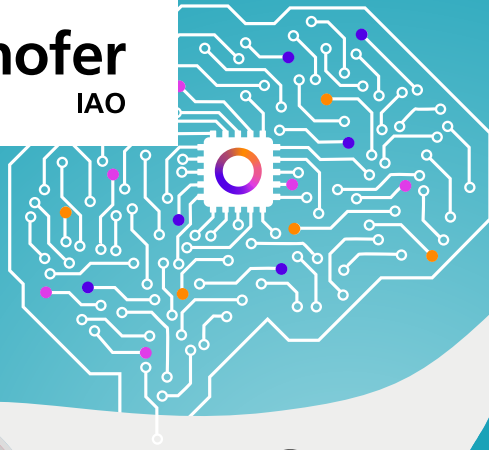




Fraunhofer
IAO



Tilman Naujoks, Mara Zaccaria, Wolfgang Beinhauer,
Stefan Rief

Demographic Change Meets AI and Automation

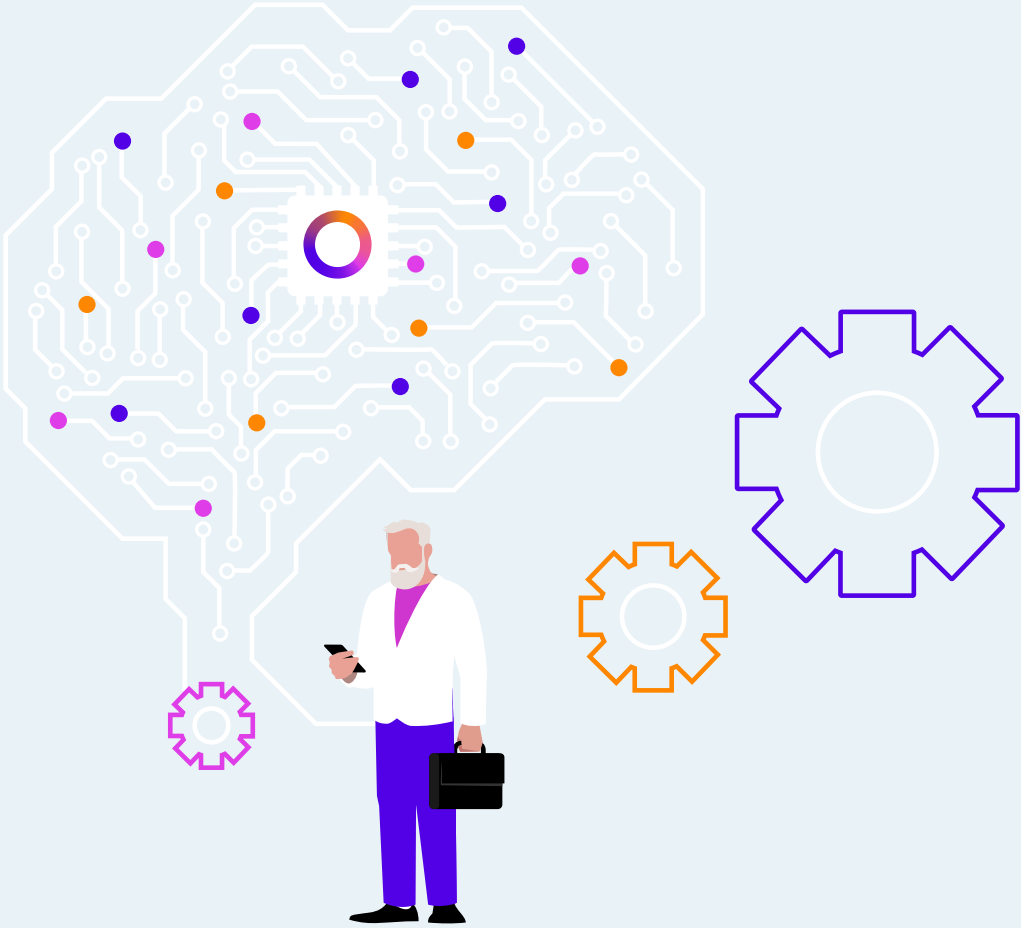
Requirements and Smart Solutions for the Ecosystem
of Business Events

The "Future Meeting Space" Innovation Network

Co-Initiator:

GCB
Meetings made in Germany
German Convention Bureau

Ed.: Katharina Hölzle, Oliver Riedel, Wilhelm Bauer,
Stefan Rief, Matthias Schultze



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Management Summary

Automation and AI help ease workforce pressures

Demographic change and the associated ageing of the population are leading to a shortage of skilled workers on the labour market. This is also increasing the demand for staff in the business events ecosystem, particularly in operational roles such as service, media and event technology, and event security. At the same time, there is currently strong demand for specialised staff in technology-intensive fields such as software development and IT systems management. Advances in AI and robotics are creating new opportunities for supporting processes and integrating automation. Tasks with a high degree of routine or standardisation, such as registration, service, or event logistics, can benefit from self-service systems, robotics, and automated logistics solutions that reduce the burden on personnel. In contrast, roles that are knowledge- or strategy-intensive, e.g., IT systems management, business development, or innovation management, have limited potential for substitution. Key responsibilities in these areas remain difficult to automate, and technological solutions tend to complement rather than replace human expertise.

AI and data skills are becoming essential qualifications

As AI and robotics are increasingly integrated into a wide range of applications, business events professionals will in the future work more closely with AI-based systems, automated processes, and data-driven applications. As a result, AI and data literacy will become fundamental skills for almost all roles. This includes the confident use of AI tools and automation features, a solid understanding of data-driven models, and the ability to critically evaluate and interpret AI-generated outputs. In addition, the professional handling of automated processes and robotics is gaining in importance. This technological proficiency includes operating and monitoring automated systems as well as handling technical disruptions appropriately to ensure their efficient and accepted integration into daily work practices.

Automation is reshaping role profiles and skill priorities

As routine tasks become increasingly automated, the scope of many roles is changing fundamentally. The focus is shifting from execution to process management and supervisory responsibilities. Tasks such as monitoring, coordination, handling exceptional occurrences, and fine-tuning automated processes are becoming more critical. As a result, existing role profiles need to be adjusted, jobs require redesigning, and ongoing upskilling is a must. At the same time, distinctly human strengths are coming to the fore. Empathy, communication, creativity, situational decision-making, and problem-solving remain key quality factors, particularly in service, consulting, security, and strategic or conceptual roles.

Future staffing needs require alternative strategies

The findings of our research indicate that, despite increasing automation, workforce demand will remain high in certain job role clusters. In areas with limited potential for automation, organisational measures such as more efficient processes, flexible work arrangements, targeted training, and attractive working conditions will therefore be essential in order to remain attractive to employees in the future. In addition, consolidating job role clusters with declining demand and redistributing tasks enable tapping into existing skills in related areas. By deliberately developing AI and data know-how, pressure on staff in functions such as IT systems management and data analysis can thus be reduced.

1 The “Future Meeting Space” Innovation Network

1.1 Origins of the Innovation Network

The “Future Meeting Space” (FMS) innovation network was launched in 2015 by the GCB German Convention Bureau e.V. and the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO with the goal of systematically exploring developments within the business events ecosystem to identify future requirements as regards events organisation, technology and spaces. In collaboration with various research partners, our innovation network analyses key trends and emerging opportunities across the event value chain and develops practical, actionable recommendations. By combining scientific analysis with an applied, practice-oriented perspective, FMS makes a significant contribution to the advancement of the business events ecosystem and the future-proof design of events.

1.2 The Initiators

The initiators of the FMS innovation network combine hands-on industry with scientific research expertise. The GCB German Convention Bureau represents and promotes Germany nationally and internationally as a leading destination for meetings, congresses, events, and incentives. Its close ties to the events industry give the GCB deep insights into market needs and trends across the entire event value chain. The Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) complements this perspective with its scientific expertise in developing new business models and efficient organisational structures. Based on its interdisciplinary approach, the institute combines technological innovation with practice-oriented solutions, helping to optimise the interaction between people, organisations, and technology. Through this partnership, both institutions pool their expertise to shape the future of the business events ecosystem.

1.3 Innovation Network Partners

The innovation network addresses the complexity of its mission in close collaboration with innovative technology companies, solution providers, and forward-thinking event organisers and destinations. Research partners of the 2025 research phase were

- Cologne Convention Bureau, Köln Tourismus GmbH
- Cvent Deutschland GmbH
- Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e. V. (DLR)
- EVVC Europäischer Verband der Veranstaltungs-Centren e.V.
- H World International
- Handelsblatt Media Group GmbH & Co. KG
- Luxembourg Convention Bureau
- Schwarz Campus Service GmbH & Co. KG
- SevenCenters of Germany
- Siemens AG
- Tourismus Marketing GmbH Baden-Württemberg (TMBW)

Strategic industry partners:

- ICCA – International Congress and Convention Association

In cooperation with:

- German National Tourist Board e.V. (DZT)



Figure 1: Organisation of the "Future Meeting Space" innovation network.



2 Context: Megatrends in the Business Events Ecosystem

The 2025 research phase focused on two megatrends: demographic change and advancing automation. Demographic change is resulting in an ageing workforce and growing skills shortages, while technological progress is simultaneously creating new opportunities to automate processes within the business events ecosystem.

2.1 Demographic Change as a Key Challenge

Demographic change is one of the most significant societal developments of our time, affecting the economy, labour market, healthcare system, and social security systems alike. It is primarily driven by three factors: rising life expectancy,

declining birth rates, and the resulting shift in the age structure. In Germany, the proportion of the population over 60 continues to grow, while the number of those under 20 is declining sharply, according to the country's Federal Statistical Office¹. This shift alters the balance between the working and non-working population, placing increasing pressure on social security systems.

This shift in age is associated with a decline in employment among older age groups, which further intensifies existing demographic challenges. In particular, employment drops significantly from around the age of 60, resulting in the loss of valuable work experience and expertise². Combined with the decreasing number of younger workers, this trend contributes to a structural skills shortage that will have long-term implications for Germany's economic performance.



Figure 2: Development of the working-age skilled staff in Germany up to 2040, IW 2021.

¹ cf. Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis): *Bevölkerung in Deutschland, Wiesbaden 2025*

² cf. Techniker Krankenkasse: *Gesundheitsreport, Hamburg 2024*.

These trends are confirmed by the German Economic Institute (IW) forecasts³ shown in Figure 2, which predict a significant decline in working-age skilled staff in Germany by 2040 from 43.3 to 38 million people. The group of professionally qualified workers, i.e. that have undergone apprenticeships, is expected to be particularly affected, with numbers projected to fall from 31.6 to 23.3 million. In contrast, the number of university graduates is expected to rise. This development highlights a structural shift across the skills spectrum, further intensifying the shortage of practice-oriented skilled workers.

On the supplier side, i.e., event venues, destinations and service providers, the tight German labour market is clearly evident, as illustrated in Figure 3. More than one third (34 per cent) are actively recruiting but are unable to meet their current staffing needs. A further four per cent have outsourced individual functions for this reason⁷.

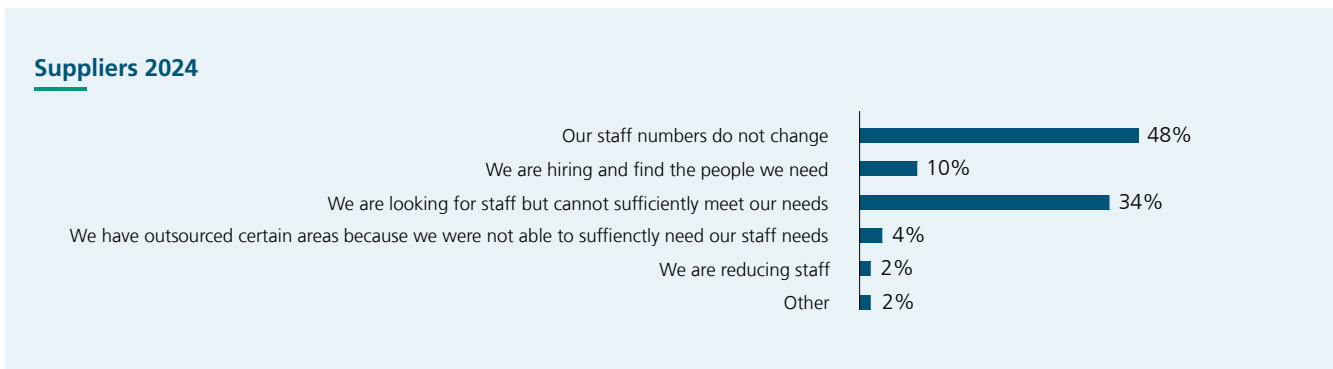


Figure 3: Staffing needs among business event suppliers, EITW 2023/2024.

The effects of this structural skills shortage are also evident in the business events ecosystem. The staff shortage represents a long-term and profound challenge for the events industry, particularly affecting event agencies and technical service providers. Qualified staff are especially scarce in event management, technical operations, service, and security⁴. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant skills shortage was apparent, particularly in technical roles, project management, and hands-on production⁵. The pandemic further exacerbated this trend: with the industry coming to an almost complete standstill, many employees lost their jobs or moved into other, more crisis-resilient professions and did not return⁶. Despite the subsequent recovery and rising demand due to catch-up effects following the pandemic restrictions, the workforce remained decimated. The structural decline in skilled staff therefore has a lasting impact on the performance and competitiveness of the entire business events ecosystem.

³ cf. German Economic Institute (IW): *Mögliche Entwicklungen des Fachkräfteangebots bis zum Jahr 2040*, Cologne 2021.

⁴ cf. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK): *Fachkräftesicherung*, Berlin 2025.

⁵ cf. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK): *Monitoringbericht Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft*, Berlin 2021.

⁶ Ifo Institut: *Corona hemmte zunächst die Arbeitsplatzwechsel*, Dresden 2023.

⁷ Europäisches Institut für TagungsWirtschaft GmbH (EITW): *Meeting- & EventBarometer Deutschland*, Frankfurt 2023/2024.

Almost all of the recruiting organisations (97 per cent) on the supply side report that they are specifically looking for skilled workers, as shown in Figure 4. In addition, around half of the organisations are also seeking non-skilled workers (55 per cent) and apprentices (51 per cent) and others (5 per cent)

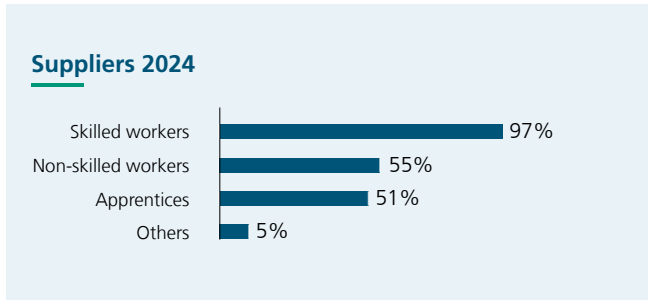


Figure 4: Staffing needs among business event suppliers, EITW 2023/2024.

A similar picture emerges on the organiser side, as shown in Figure 5. For almost half of organisers, i.e., organisations such as corporates and associations that initiate, design, and run events, staffing shortages are considered very important (40 per cent) or important (47 per cent). This highlights that personnel constraints are a central concern for both suppliers and organisers alike.

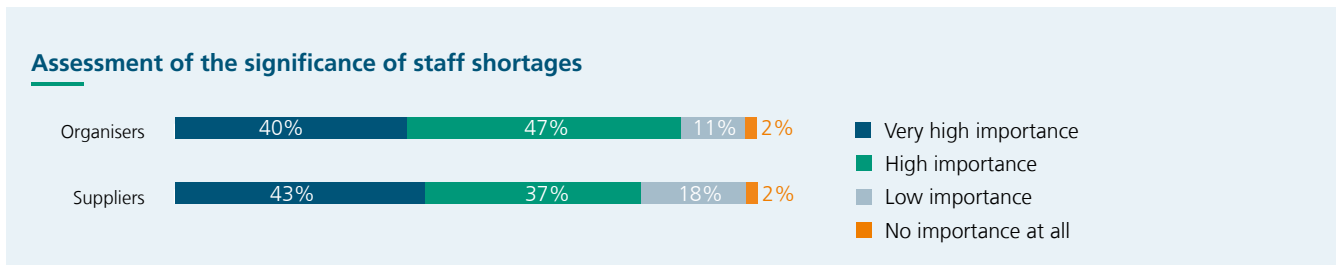
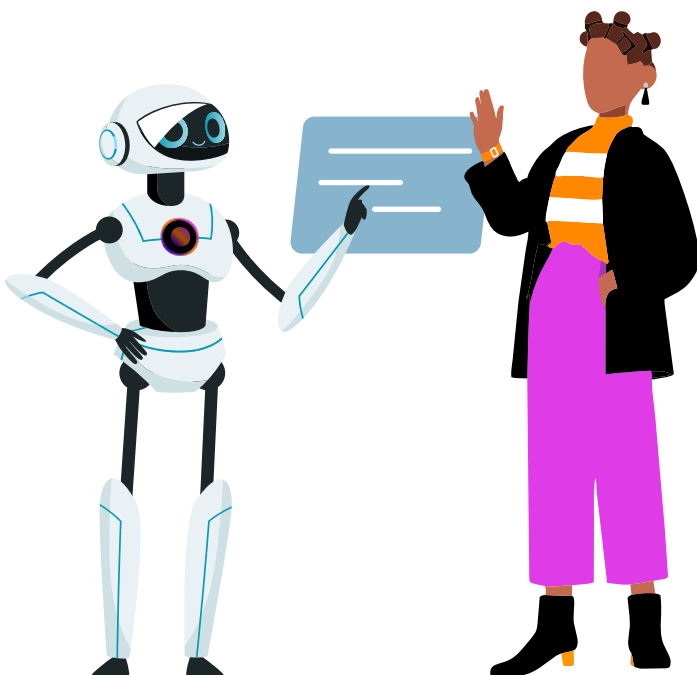


Figure 5: Staffing needs among business event organisers, EITW 2023/2024.



2.2 Advancing Automation and AI as Drivers of the Future

Advancing automation and AI are fundamentally changing society and the economy. Not only do they increase efficiency in numerous areas, but they also open up new forms of interaction between humans and technology. Automation and AI systems are increasingly being used in sectors such as healthcare, transport, trade and education. With their ongoing development, they will play an even more central role in the world of work and everyday life in the future.

According to forecasts by the World Economic Forum⁸ (Fig. 6), the proportion of tasks performed by humans will fall from 47 per cent to 34 per cent by 2030. At the same time, the proportion of automated tasks and those performed by humans and technology in collaboration will each rise to some 33 per cent. Automation and augmentation, the latter referring to the expansion of human capabilities, will increasingly influence our day-to-day work in the future.

An adequate response to these changes in the world of work requires ongoing training and retraining. According to a survey by the McKinsey Global Institute (Fig. 7) executive level managers expect the skill levels of their workforces to change significantly in the coming years⁹. To purposefully shape these developments, companies are primarily relying on three strategies to close skills gaps: retraining, new hires and external contractors. Retraining and ongoing training in particular play the most important role as a strategy for closing skills gaps.

Human-machine evolution: automation vs. augmentation, 2025-2030

Projected distribution of tasks by 2030 (%)

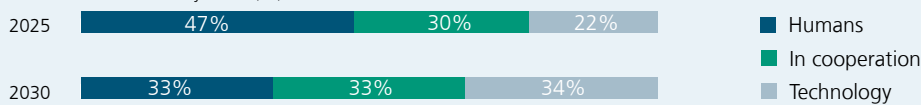


Figure 6: Human-machine evolution, World Economic Forum 2025.

⁸ World Economic Forum: *Future of Jobs Report*, Cologny/Geneva, Switzerland 2025.

⁹ McKinsey Global Institute: *Eine neue Zukunft der Arbeit*, 2024.

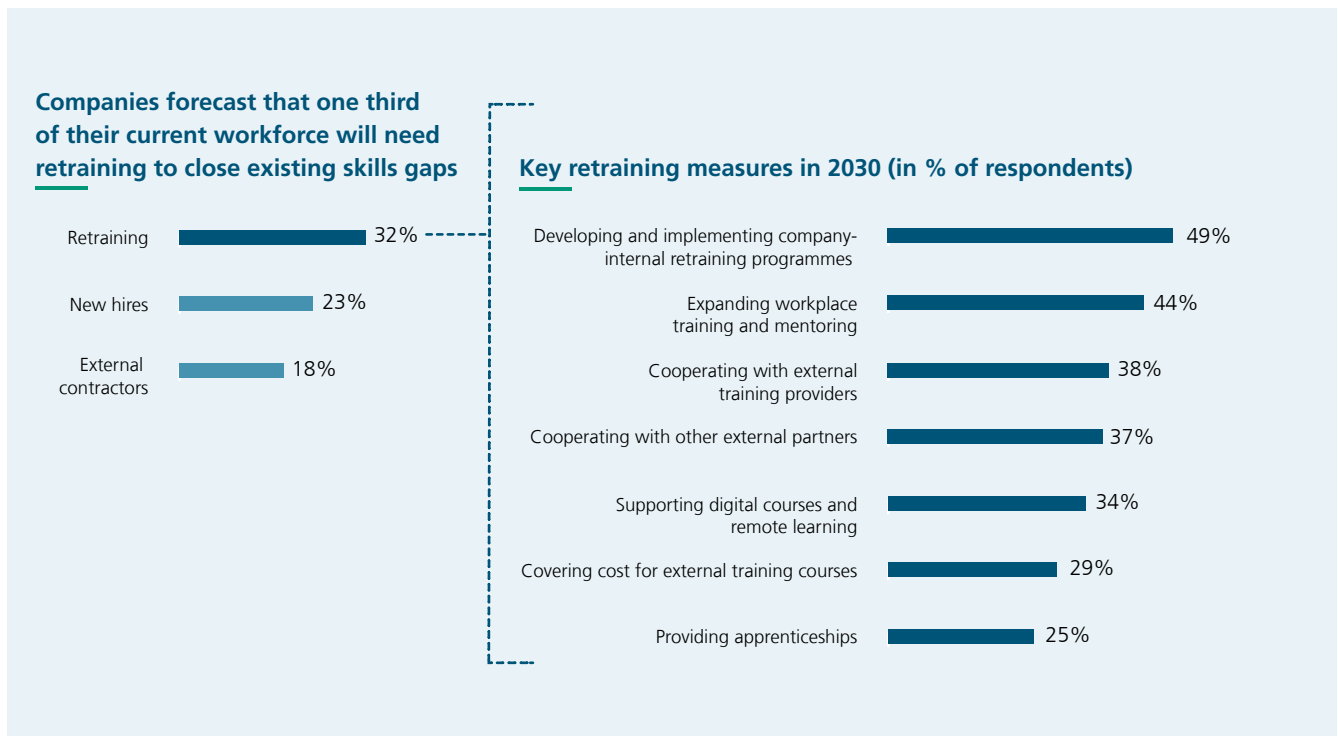


Figure 7: Workforce skills gaps, McKinsey Global Institute 2024.

The advancing use of automation and AI is opening up a wide range of opportunities in the ecosystem of business events. AI agents and humanoid robotics in particular are considered pioneering technologies that enable new forms of interaction, organisation and service provision.

Humanoid robotics¹⁰ especially has potential for a wide range of applications. Thanks to their human-like appearance, natural-looking movements and ability to interact via speech, gestures and facial expressions, humanoid robots can be used in a variety of areas. They could potentially serve drinks, carry trays or move trolleys, welcome attendees or provide information. Thanks to AI-supported developments, they are increasingly mastering complex movements such as walking, climbing stairs and avoiding obstacles, which significantly expands their application range. At events, humanoid robots could be used in particular for attendee and other services to optimise processes, relieve staff and offer people innovative and interactive experiences.

Similarly, AI agents could be deployed for a range of job¹¹. As software-based systems, they use AI to independently perform tasks, prepare decisions and interact with their environment. They can be used as substitutes for humans, e.g., as chatbots in customer service to automatically answer enquiries and guide attendees through the event process. They also provide complementary support for technical processes by monitoring machines or systems and predicting failures at an early stage. In addition, they enhance creative processes, such as writing event-related copy, advertising materials or speeches. In the future, AI agents could even control other AI systems, such as in the context of developing autonomous, self-deciding event management systems. This combination of automation, predictive capabilities and decision intelligence makes AI agents a key driving force in the business events ecosystem.

¹⁰ Fraunhofer IPA, *Humanoide Roboter. Game Changer oder Irrweg?* Stuttgart 2025.

¹¹ Fraunhofer HNFIZ, *KI-Agenten verstehen und anwenden.* Stuttgart 2026.

3 Objectives and Structure of the 2025 Research Phase

The 2025 research phase set out to examine how the two megatrends demographic change and advancing automation interact, and to translate these insights into practical, business-ready solutions for the business events ecosystem. We focused on the question of how organisations can deploy and develop skilled staff effectively in the face of labour shortages caused by demographic change, while at the same time making strategic use of the opportunities offered by AI and robotics. The overarching aim was to strengthen the long-term viability and competitiveness of the events ecosystem.

The research phase was structured into four consecutive workstreams, which together formed the analytical framework. The first step involved identifying key job role clusters within the business events ecosystem and assessing their current staffing requirements. This made it possible to pinpoint areas where significant skills shortages already exist and where the need for action is particularly acute.

Building on this foundation, the second step focused on developing specific use cases for automating core processes through AI and robotics, and assessing their feasibility and implementation potential. These insights informed a set of broader future perspectives, looking past individual tasks and addressing entire areas of activity. They outline smart, technology-driven developments that open up new ways to automate, enhance and redesign work across the business events ecosystem. These opportunities were then evaluated in terms of both their practicality and their anticipated benefit.

In the third step, we produced an estimate for the future workforce requirements for the identified job role clusters, drawing on both expert assessments from across the events ecosystem and an AI-based analysis. Comparing these two perspectives enabled us to arrive at a robust and well-grounded forecast of future staffing needs.

Finally, we set out overarching recommendations and practical solutions, covering both technological innovation and organisational development. The aim is to future-proof skills, adapt work processes to new technologies, and put in place strategies to manage skills shortages effectively.

Throughout this process, our research addressed several key questions: How is demographic change affecting the talent pool in the business events ecosystem? Which skills are likely to be replaced or enhanced by AI and automation? Which new skills will be needed in the future? And what approaches can organisations take to close emerging skills gaps?

The research process was based on an iterative process, as illustrated in Figure 8, which ensured continuous feedback between the different workstreams. Changes in skill requirements, automation potential, and staffing shortages were regularly reviewed and adjusted in light of new insights. This ensured that changes in job roles were continuously monitored and considered. The repeated reflection and integration of up-to-date findings created a dynamic research process, ensuring that the solutions developed align with the needs of the business events ecosystem and can be translated into practical, smart strategies.

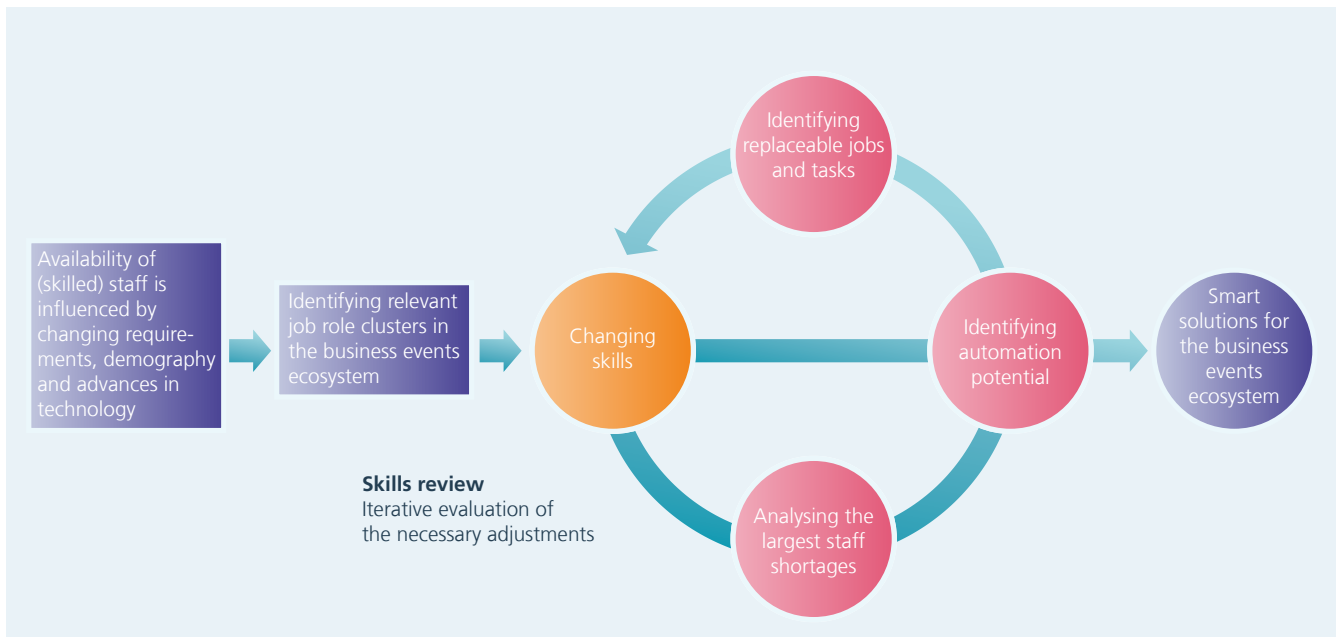
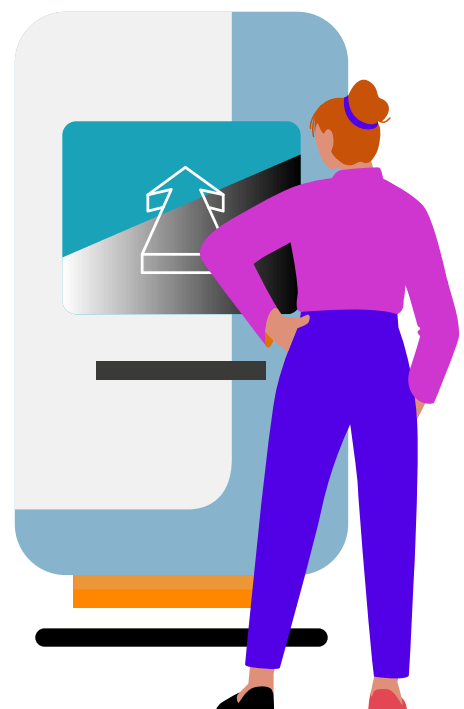


Figure 8: Iterative research process.

The research findings provide the FMS partner organisations with a solid foundation for understanding and strategically addressing skills shortages in the business events ecosystem. They highlight where automation, AI, and robotics can be used to ease pressure on staff and increase efficiency, while also allowing future skill requirements to be anticipated early. In doing so, the insights support the ongoing development of work structures and training strategies. Over the long term, these practical, technology-driven approaches help make business events more attractive and boost the overall competitiveness of the events ecosystem.



4 Identifying Relevant Job Role Clusters in the Business Events Ecosystem and Assessing Current Staffing Needs

As a central part of the research phase, developing and evaluating the relevant job role clusters within the business events ecosystem form the basis for analysing AI and automation potential and the future skills this will require. We use the term “job role clusters” for groups of roles with similar responsibilities and skill sets to help organise work systematically and make changes in qualifications and staffing needs easier to analyse.

The first step involved identifying all relevant job role clusters by mapping activities across the ecosystem, structuring them logically, and determining the current skill requirements for each. In the second step, these job role clusters were assessed in terms of current staffing needs.



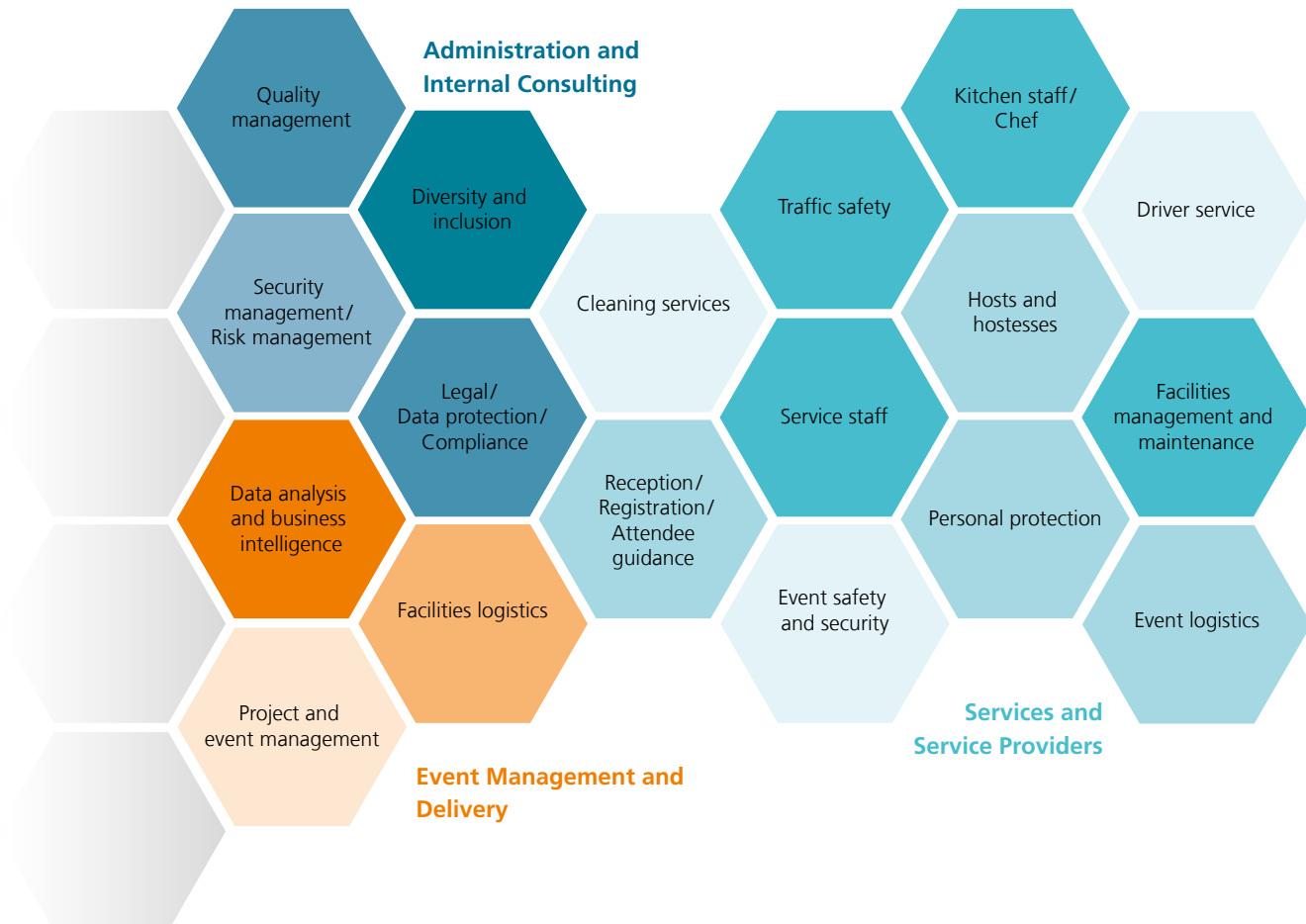
Figure 9: Overview of job role clusters in their corresponding groups.

4.1 How we Identified Job Role Clusters

We used a multi-step, qualitative approach to identify the job role clusters, starting with workshops involving experts from across the business events ecosystem. During these sessions, key activities were systematically identified and recorded, categorised, and structured. Similar activities were then grouped into broader functional areas, which were finally consolidated in distinct job role clusters.

Figure 9 illustrates the outcome of this process, which identified a total of 40 job role clusters. For clarity and further analysis, these were organised into four overarching groups: Administration and Internal Consulting, Sales, Community and Content, Event Management and Delivery, as well as Services and Service Providers.

Administration and Internal Consulting covers cross-functional roles that ensure strategic management, legal compliance, and efficient organisational processes. Sales, Community and Content includes job role clusters responsible for communication, marketing, sales, and community building that shape the event’s public profile and audience engagement. Event Management and Delivery groups roles that coordinate the planning, organisation, and technical execution of events, ensuring everything runs smoothly. Finally, Services covers operational activities such as providing attendee services, logistics, catering, and cleaning, all of which play a key role in the overall quality of the event experience.



4.2 How we Analysed Current Staffing Needs

Assessment

The staffing needs of selected job role clusters were determined through a quantitative online survey. The aim was to gather insights from individuals across different areas of the business events ecosystem. From the total of 40 identified job role clusters, 16 were selected for the survey. This was necessary to keep the survey at a length that was viable for respondents to complete. Our selection was based on several criteria that emerged during discussions and workshops with the research partners. Primarily, it focused on job role clusters that are at the core of the business events ecosystem, have the largest staffing numbers, and therefore account for the greatest share of currently filled roles within the ecosystem. These clusters were also frequently mentioned in connection with skills shortages. In addition, the survey included clusters with strong links to emerging topics and significant potential for automation or AI-supported processes.

Composition of the survey sample

Between 11 August and 16 September 2025, a total of 166 people took part in the survey. It was aimed at professionals within the business events ecosystem, including organisers, planners, different types of suppliers, and destinations. This target group was specifically approached and invited to participate by the partner network. Of the respondents, 10 per cent were service providers, 36 per cent worked in event planning, 16 per cent represented destinations (e.g., cities or regions), 29 per cent represented venues and 10 per cent fell into other categories. 31 per cent of participants indicated they were staff-level employees, while 69 per cent held managerial positions.

Participants were asked to estimate the current staffing needs for our selected subset of 16 out of the total 40 identified job role clusters. Responses were given using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “very low demand” to “very high demand”.

4.3 Findings

Figure 10 shows the assessment of current staffing needs across the different job role clusters. It is noticeable that there is a clear demand in all of the selected clusters, with more than 46 per cent of respondents indicating high or very high demand in every case. The highest current staffing needs were reported for the clusters of service staff and media and event technology.

Of the 16 job role clusters assessed, seven were selected as illustrative examples for the further research process based on their particular relevance to the business events ecosystem: service staff, media and event technology, software development and IT systems management, sustainability management, data analysis and business intelligence, event safety and security, as well as concept development and innovation management.

The following sections describe these job role clusters in terms of their core tasks and responsibilities, along with the associated skill requirements. This is followed by the survey results on current staffing needs for each cluster.

Service staff

The “service staff” job role cluster covers activities that ensure the smooth running of catering within the business events ecosystem and make a key contribution to service quality and attendee satisfaction. Core tasks include serving food and drinks, clearing and cleaning service areas, interacting with attendees, restocking supplies, and preparing the service areas. Depending on the context, responsibilities may also include basic quality checks and team coordination. These tasks ensure smooth operations and the maintenance of service and quality standards.

Survey results indicate a very high staffing need for this job role cluster: 63 per cent of respondents rated the current demand as high, with a further 26 per cent rating it as very high, while only 11 per cent reported lower demand.

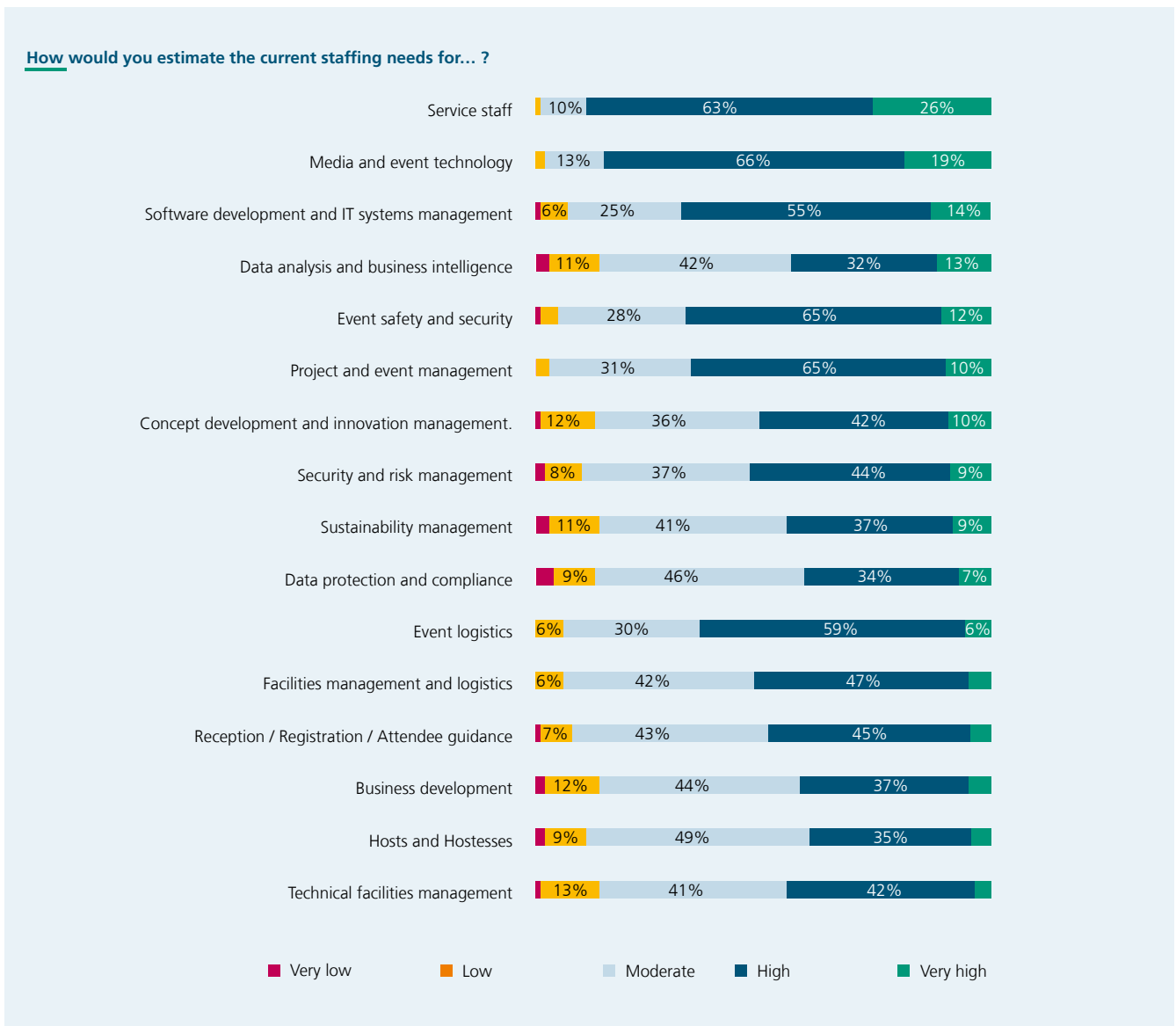


Figure 10: Current staffing needs per job role cluster.

Media and event technology

This job role cluster covers the planning, implementation, and management of the technical infrastructure for events. Key tasks include the proper setup, operation and management of lighting, sound, and media systems, as well as the live control of technical processes. Responsibilities also involve confident handling of various media technologies and quick fault diagnosis to resolve any issues immediately. Equally important are professional coordination with external service providers and careful documentation and preparation of technical setups. These tasks ensure technical quality and the smooth running of events.

According to our survey results staffing needs for this job role cluster are very high: 66 per cent of respondents rated the current demand as high, with a further 19 per cent rating it as very high, while only 15 per cent reported lower demand.

Event safety and security

This job role cluster ensures safety and security at events and within event venues. Core tasks include entry and bag checks, directing and assisting attendees, and enforcing venue rules. Another key area is the professional handling of critical situations, particularly through de-escalation and conflict management. Equally important is clear, audience-appropriate communication to coordinate operations and respond effectively in exceptional situations. These skills safeguard the wellbeing and safety of all attendees.

Survey results show that staffing needs in this job role cluster are particularly high: 68 per cent of respondents rated the current demand as high to very high, while according to 32 per cent demand is moderate to low.

Concept development and innovation management

People working in the job role cluster “concept development and innovation management” develop creative, user-focused concepts for event formats and attendee experiences. They analyse target groups and stakeholder needs, integrate relevant trends and technologies, and translate ideas into programmes, products, or services that can be implemented in practice. Core skills include creative and conceptual thinking, thorough target group and needs analysis, storytelling, and dramaturgical design. This is complemented by systematic trend scanning, close collaboration with stakeholders, and a clear focus on impact and cost-effectiveness. These skills enable the development of effective and innovative event solutions.

Survey results indicate that staffing needs for this job role cluster are currently moderate to high. Overall, 36 per cent of respondents rated the demand as moderate, while 52 per cent assessed it as rather high to very high.

Software development and IT systems management

The job role cluster “software development and IT systems management” covers designing, managing, and optimising software solutions and IT infrastructures for events. Core skills include software architecture, system integration, and the development and maintenance of interfaces. Key tasks also involve setting up and configuring technical systems, both online and on-site, as well as professional database management. The role also includes troubleshooting and technical support to ensure stable operation of networks, applications, and databases. Ensuring IT security, particularly when handling sensitive data and connected systems, is another important area of expertise. Altogether, these skills ensure user-focused, reliable, and efficient event IT operations.

Survey results show that staffing needs for this job role cluster range from moderate to high. Currently, 69 per cent of respondents rated the demand as high or very high, while 32 per cent reported lower demand.

Data analysis and business intelligence

This cluster groups job roles that involve the collecting, structuring, and analysing of data from a wide range of sources, including ticketing, registration, event apps, CRM systems, technical infrastructure, and logistics. Core skills include careful data cleansing and preparation as the basis for more advanced analysis, as well as the development of dashboards and reports. Using statistical methods, people in data analysis and business intelligence jobs identify patterns and relationships, interpret results, and translate them into clear recommendations for decision-makers. Additional responsibilities include interface management and the tracking and monitoring of key metrics to highlight opportunities for efficiency and support automation initiatives. Overall, jobs roles in this cluster enable sound, data-driven decisions for the planning, marketing, and ongoing development of events.

Survey results indicate that staffing needs for this job role cluster are currently moderate. In total, 42 per cent of respondents rated the current demand as moderate, while 43 per cent assessed it as high to very high.

Sustainability management

This job role cluster refers to the development and implementation of sustainability strategies for events, including for energy, transport, materials, and waste management. Core skills include designing and delivering holistic sustainability concepts, as well as CO₂ tracking to measure environmental impact. Other key responsibilities cover certification and reporting processes, conducting audits, and ensuring compliance with relevant regulatory requirements. Sustainability management also involves analysing supply chains and engaging with stakeholders to drive improvements across different areas and embed sustainable practices strategically within event operations. Through continuous innovation and professional development, people fulfilling sustainability management roles support the long-term transition towards more resource-efficient events.

Survey results show that staffing needs for this job role cluster are currently moderate with a slight tendency towards high. Overall, 41 per cent of respondents rated current demand as moderate, while 46 per cent assessed it as rather high to very high.

5 Developing Use Cases for AI-Supported Process Automation

To address staffing needs in the events sector through strategic AI-driven automation, we developed a set of practical use cases for automating processes and workflows on the basis of the identified job role clusters and their underlying skill profiles.

Together with experts from different functional areas within the FMS partner organisations, we outlined specific automation approaches in interdisciplinary workshops. The event lifecycle as shown in Figure 11 served as the reference framework for structuring these use cases.

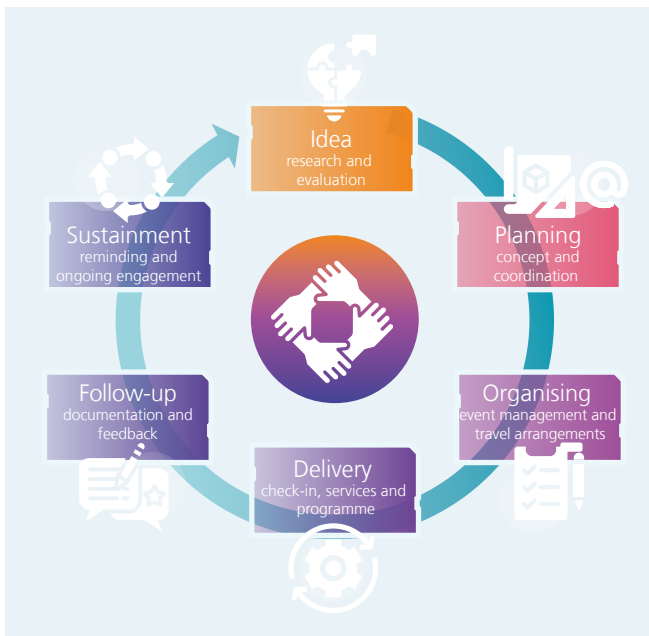


Figure 11: Event lifecycle.

5.1 Description and Evaluation of the Developed Use Cases

In total, more than 40 use cases were developed and assessed by the research team in terms of their feasibility, using a scale from very low to very high. For the purposes of this results report, we have selected four use cases that were considered particularly relevant and valuable for events. These are mapped onto the event lifecycle, which illustrates the consolidated processes from the perspective of both attendees and organisers.

AI agent for trend clustering

The ideas phase marks the starting point of every event lifecycle and involves identifying initial topics, target audiences, and formats. At this early stage, organisers face the challenge of identifying, evaluating, and categorising relevant content which requires substantial research and communication effort.

The use case “AI agent for trend clustering” addresses this challenge through an AI-powered tool that continuously analyses trends from a variety of sources, including social media, studies, surveys, and event labs. An integrated alert system provides event suggestions around emerging topics at an early stage. Based on this, weekly trend reports are produced, which are then consolidated twice a month into a strategic monthly report. This accelerates idea generation, anchors it in data, and improves its quality. All of this also provides a solid foundation for making decision on event planning, communications, and strategy.

The feasibility of this use case is rated as high, indicating good potential for implementation. This assessment is based on the fact that AI technologies for automated trend analysis already exist and can be relatively easily adapted to sector-specific requirements.

AI-powered concept simulation with personas

The planning phase marks the next stage in the event lifecycle and focuses on turning an event idea into a concrete plan. During this phase, budgets, schedules, service providers, contracts, and communication processes are drawn up and coordinated. It is characterised by a high degree of coordination, administrative work, and dense information flows.

The use case “AI-powered concept simulation with personas” addresses these demands through the use of AI-generated personas, which allow event concepts to be simulated in advance and assessed for audience impact, relevance, and potential success. For example, the AI can analyse a concept from the perspective of different target groups, such as senior executives or young talent, identify weaknesses in the agenda, format, or messaging, and provide specific suggestions for improvement. This enables data-driven decision-making early in the planning process, improves ROI estimates, and allows resources to be allocated more efficiently.

On a scale from very low to very high, the feasibility of this use case is rated as moderate. This assessment reflects that while the technology for AI-generated personas exists, its application in the business events worlds still heavily depends on data availability and the integration of suitable simulation models.

Automated media technology control

The delivery phase of the event lifecycle focuses on the actual running of events. This involves welcoming attendees, guiding them through the programme, and supporting them throughout. It is characterised by a fast-paced environment, the need for rapid responses, and high demands on technical stability and service quality. In particular for anything happening on stage, the technical execution and coordination of key processes are critical: sound, lighting, and projection systems need to be synchronised to ensure a cohesive and professional event experience.

The use case “automated media technology control” describes the use of AI to regulate audiovisual components in real time. For example, lighting can be automatically adjusted according to the time of day, room conditions, or progress of the event. Sound levels can be regulated based on room acoustics and audience size, and projections can be dynamically linked to presentation content. Integrated feedback mechanisms also enable continuous optimisation of the media technology. This enhances technical quality, increases responsiveness, and overall professionalises the event experience.

The feasibility of this use case is rated as high, indicating strong potential for implementation. This assessment is based on the fact that AI-based systems for controlling lighting, sound, and projection are already used in professional event environments and are becoming standard practice.

Sustainability reporting

The sustainment phase concludes the event lifecycle and aims at securing long-term attendee engagement as well as the ongoing development of the event experience. Organisers need to maintain attendees’ interest over time, supported, for example, by feedback processes to ensure that relevant content is continually provided. In addition, it is becoming increasingly important to systematically capture the environmental impact events have and make them more sustainable.

The use case “sustainability reporting” addresses this by using AI technologies to automatically calculate and analyse the carbon footprint of events. Different types of data including for transport, energy use, and material consumption is collected and compiled into a comprehensive environmental assessment. Based on this, automated sustainability reports can be generated for both internal evaluation and external communication with stakeholders. The systems also provide data-driven recommendations for reducing emissions at future events, supporting continuous improvement in environmental performance.

The feasibility of implementation is considered moderate overall. While the technical capabilities for collecting and analysing sustainability data are generally available, challenges remain in standardising data interfaces and integrating different sources automatically.

6 Exploring Future Perspectives and Assessing their Feasibility and Impact

Building on the developed use cases and the findings from the job role cluster analysis, we then identified broader future perspectives. These do not focus on individual tasks or processes, but on entire areas of activity within the business events ecosystem. In the following, “future perspectives” refers to smart technological developments that open up new opportunities for the automation and advancement of business events. They go beyond the automation of single work steps and point to more far-reaching changes in organisation, interaction, and value creation across the event ecosystem. In total, we outlined eight such perspectives. These were subsequently assessed by both a range of AI personas developed for this project and business event professionals (experts), with regard to their feasibility and their expected benefits for both event attendees and other stakeholders within the ecosystem.

6.1 How we Evaluated Future Perspectives

AI personas

The initial assessment of the future perspectives was carried out using AI-generated personas. These virtual characters were modelled by an AI on the basis of defined attributes, roles, and perspectives. The aim of this approach was to gain an early appraisal of our eight future perspectives from a range of professional, organisational, and societal viewpoints.

The AI personas represented key stakeholder groups within the business events ecosystem, including organisers, agencies, corporate clients, venues, the public sector and tourism, as well as service providers. In addition, external perspectives from academia and other socially relevant disciplines were included to enable a well-rounded evaluation. When developing the personas, attention was paid to diversity in terms of age, gender, background, and organisations in order to reflect a broad spectrum of views. In total, 18 AI personas were created using a large language model (GPT-5). They embody different outlooks on change, ranging from optimistic to sceptical and conservative to disruptive, and thus support a comprehensive, multi-perspective assessment of the perspectives.

Examples for our AI personas are a trade fair director, an event agency manager, a catering business owner, a political advisor, a sociologist, a technology researcher, and a sustainability expert.

Experts

Following the assessment by AI personas, the developed perspectives were reviewed by human experts from both practice and research, using a quantitative questionnaire. The aim was to validate the insights from the AI personas and complement them with professionally informed perspectives. The online survey was carried out between 22 September and 6 October 2025, with a total of 26 experts from various areas of the business events ecosystem participating.

Assessment criteria

Both group, i.e., the AI-generated personas and the human experts, evaluated the perspectives using a consistent set of criteria to ensure comparability of their assessments. Three key dimensions were considered:

1. Likelihood of occurrence, defined as the estimated probability that the future perspectives will be realised within the next five years;
2. Expected benefit for attendees, defined as the perceived usefulness and relevance of the future perspectives from the view of business events attendees; and
3. Expected benefit for organisers, defined as the significance of the future perspectives for destinations, venue operators, and other organisational stakeholders.

All three dimensions were measured using a five-point Likert scale from 1 = "very low" to 5 = "very high" to allow for nuanced assessments and quantitative comparability. The evaluation covered a time horizon of approximately five years, capturing both short-term developments and medium-term changes within the business events ecosystem.

6.2 Assessment of Future Perspectives

A total of eight future perspectives were developed: holographic telepresence, autonomous event ecosystems, upskilling co-pilots, humanoid robots, metaverse-native business events, delivery drones, adaptive wearables, and digital twin events.

For the purposes of this research results report, we discuss four of these perspectives as examples and present the assessments from both the AI personas and the human experts using calculated mean values (M_{ai} and M_{ex}).

Upskilling co-pilots

Upskilling co-pilots are digital assistant systems that support event staff in real time via mobile devices or augmented reality (AR) glasses. They act as context-aware companions, guiding users through tasks, correcting errors immediately, and providing continuous learning and training modules. This approach integrates upskilling directly into the workflow, embedding learning seamlessly into the daily work routine. A key feature of these systems is their customisability: content is tailored to employees' skill levels, language, and specific roles. This allows both new hires and experienced staff to receive support that meets their individual needs. AR-enabled learning environments also provide instant feedback, speeding up learning and reducing error rates.

Overall, upskilling co-pilots promote ongoing learning and development, contributing to greater professionalism and efficiency in event management. They blur the line between work and training by delivering knowledge precisely when and where it is needed. Upskilling co-pilots were rated very positively by both groups. Comparing the two, our experts assessed feasibility slightly higher ($M = 3.8$) than the AI personas ($M = 3.7$). For the expected benefit for event attendees, the experts gave noticeably higher scores ($M_{ex} = 4.1$ vs. $M_{ai} = 3.7$), as they did for the benefit for organisers ($M_{ex} = 4.0$ vs. $M_{ai} = 3.6$).

Although overall ratings were high, this future perspective provided by the upskilling co-pilots was judged to be greatest in terms of benefit for attendees. This likely reflects the clear, tangible advantages of work-integrated learning and support systems for event staff, such as faster onboarding, reduced error rates, and the opportunity for continuous on-the-job training. Feasibility was rated more cautiously, as wide-scale implementation still faces technical and organisational challenges, and such systems are currently only used sporadically in practice.

Holographic telepresence

Holographic telepresence has been widely discussed in the events industry for some years and refers to live, three-dimensional representations of speakers or attendees that are projected as holograms on stages or in event spaces, without the need for VR glasses. The technology enables a more lifelike form of presence and interaction by seamlessly blending physical and digital dimensions. Speakers and attendees can interact in real time regardless of location, creating a realistic and immersive event environment. This technology allows people around the world to participate in events as fully engaged contributors. Speakers cannot only join remotely but also actively take part in presentations, discussions, and workshops. When combined with coordinated lighting and sound systems, the effect produces a highly authentic experience, simulating physical presence and opening up new forms of collaborative interaction.

Overall, holographic telepresence helps blur the boundaries between physical and digital event spaces, significantly enhancing the quality and interactivity of hybrid events.

Holographic telepresence received moderate to positive ratings overall. Comparing the two groups, human experts rated feasibility slightly higher ($M = 3.9$) than the AI personas ($M = 3.6$). Conversely, the AI personas rated the expected benefit for users higher ($M_{\text{ex}} = 3.3$ vs. $M_{\text{ai}} = 3.9$), as well as for key stakeholders ($M_{\text{ex}} = 3.3$ vs. $M_{\text{ai}} = 3.6$).

Looking across the three evaluation dimensions, this future perspective was rated highest for feasibility, while the expected benefit for event organisers received the lowest score. This likely reflects that, although the underlying technology is already highly developed and tested in pilot projects, its immediate economic and organisational value for organisers is still unclear. For many stakeholders, the necessary investments, the setup of technical infrastructure, and the currently limited practical benefits do not yet provide a clear justification in terms of potential returns or efficiency gains.

Autonomous event ecosystems

Autonomous event ecosystems are AI-driven systems that automate and connect all phases of event planning and delivery. They create a seamless digital platform where planning, marketing, attendee management, and operational coordination are integrated. Based on extensive data analysis, these systems can identify relevant target groups or communities, suggest suitable event formats, and independently manage operational processes. The result is a smart, self-learning event organisation that recognises needs and can manage events almost end-to-end.

Agentic AI forms the core of these systems, as it can detect patterns and preferences in large datasets, even without pre-existing structures or networks. This allows potential partners or attendees to be identified automatically and integrated into personalised event offerings. The platform also manages key processes such as marketing, communication, and resource planning, significantly reducing organisational effort.

Over the longer term, autonomous event ecosystems could not only improve efficiency but also enable new forms of data-driven collaboration and value creation in event management. Their self-learning nature continuously optimises processes, supporting a more adaptive, connected, and responsive event organisation.

Autonomous event ecosystems received moderate ratings for their feasibility and benefits they deliver. Comparing the groups, our experts assessed feasibility slightly higher ($M = 3.6$) than the AI personas ($M = 3.4$). Experts also gave higher scores for the expected benefit for attendees ($M_{\text{ex}} = 3.8$ vs. $M_{\text{ai}} = 3.4$) and for key stakeholders ($M_{\text{ex}} = 3.5$ vs. $M_{\text{ai}} = 3.3$).

Across the three evaluation dimensions, this future perspective was rated highest for the benefits it delivers to attendees, while the benefit for organisers scored lowest. This assessment suggests that while the potential of such systems is broadly recognised, there are doubts about practical implementation, user acceptance, and technological maturity. This is likely because autonomous systems require significant changes in organisational structures and responsibilities, and raise concerns among organisers about control, data security, integration effort, and their own role within a self-managing event ecosystem.

Humanoid robots

Humanoid robots act as AI-driven service and assistant systems at events, taking on a wide range of supportive tasks in operational workflows. They move autonomously, interact with people depending on the situation, and respond flexibly to on-site demands. They can assist staff and attendees, e.g., by handing out microphones, distributing drinks or information materials, or providing guidance and directions. In this way, humanoid robots can provide interactive service support. Their application options are diverse and include interactive product demonstrations, conducting attendee surveys, or providing logistical support during events.

In the long term, humanoid robots could improve efficiency and reduce the workload for event staff. Through continuous learning and adaptive AI models, they could evolve into flexible service-support systems that assist operational processes and enable new forms of human-machine interaction in the realm of events.

The use of humanoid robots was rated cautiously overall. Comparing human experts with the AI-generated personas, experts assessed feasibility significantly higher ($M = 3.2$) than the AI personas ($M = 2.2$). Similarly, experts gave higher scores for expected benefits for attendees ($M_{ex} = 3.1$ vs. $M_{ai} = 2.2$) and for organisers ($M_{ex} = 3.2$ vs. $M_{ai} = 2.1$).

Overall, the potential of humanoid robots were considered moderate across all three evaluation dimensions. Feasibility received relatively higher scores, while the expected benefits for attendees and organisers were lower. This might be due to the high technical, organisational, and financial requirements currently associated with humanoid robots, as well as their limited practical use in event operations to date. Uncertainties around acceptance by staff and attendees, as well as integration into existing workflows, may also have contributed to the cautious assessment.

Overall assessment

Figure 12 shows the comparison of aggregated mean values across all four developed future perspectives across both groups. In the overall evaluation, clear differences emerge between the various future perspectives. The potential of holographic telepresence and upskilling co-pilots scored particularly high, both in terms of feasibility and in the overall assessment. Both perspectives are based on existing technologies and can be integrated into current event processes relatively easily. Upskilling co-pilots achieved the highest ratings for their expected benefit for attendees, and they were also rated especially advantageous from the perspective of organisers and venue operators. This is likely because upskilling co-pilots provide immediate, practical benefits in daily work and complement existing structures without requiring major organisational changes.

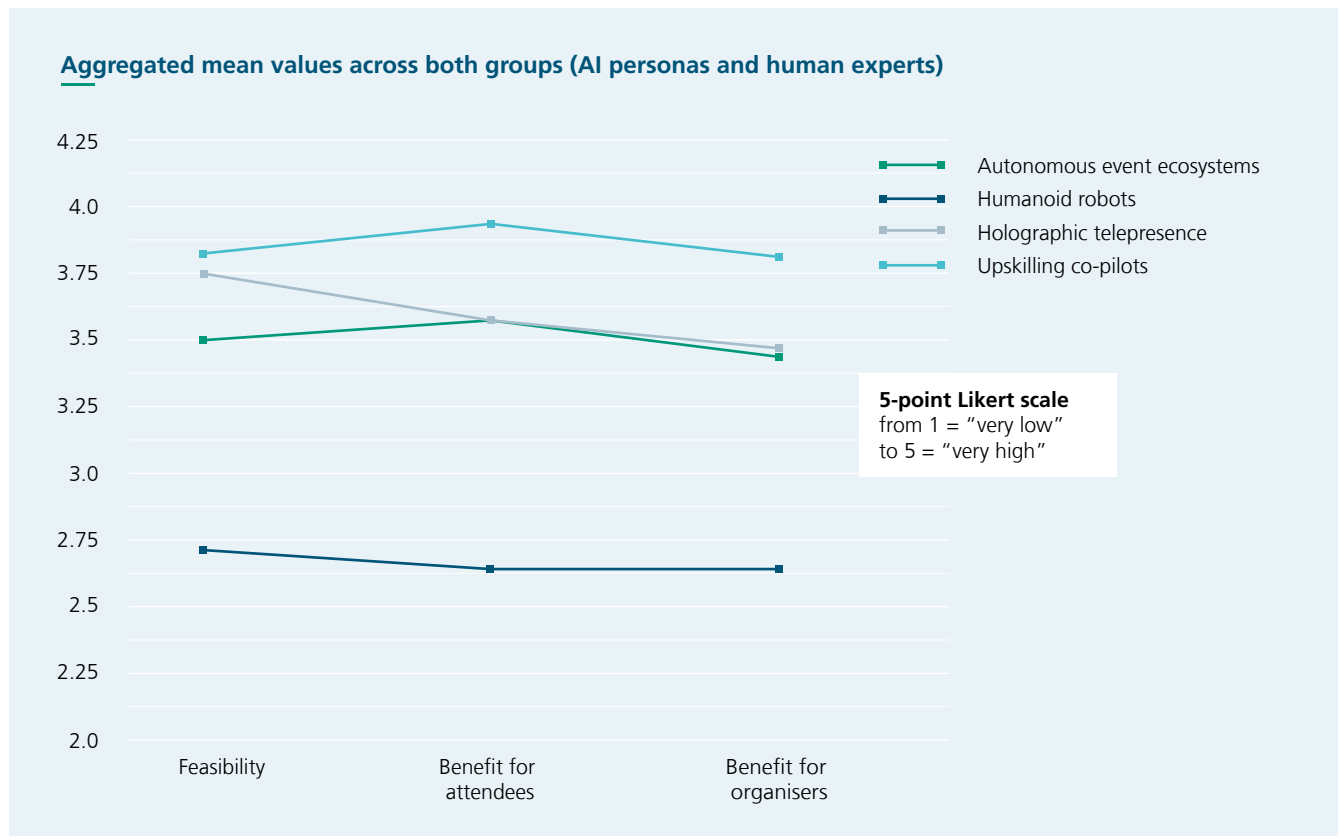


Figure 12: Aggregated mean values across both groups (AI personas and human experts).

Autonomous event ecosystems scored in the medium-to-high range across all three dimensions, which can be attributed in part to the fact that their implementation requires coordination and integration across multiple processes and stakeholder groups. Humanoid robots received the lowest ratings across all dimensions, reflecting the high technical, organisational, and financial demands associated with their use, as well as their currently uncertain practical benefits for events.

Across the board, the expected benefit for attendees was consistently rated higher than that for organisers. This suggests that technological innovations initially appear most attractive from the users' perspective, while structural or economic effects for organisations only become apparent upon closer consideration. In addition, human experts generally rated feasibility and benefits higher across most future perspectives than the AI personas. One possible explanation is that, drawing on practical experience and up-to-date industry knowledge, experts assess the chances of implementation more realistically and at the same time more optimistically. AI personas, by contrast, adopt a more cautious stance, particularly for technologies that still seem somewhat further off, such as humanoid robots.



7 Workforce Trends across the Different Job Role Clusters

Having identified which job role clusters in the ecosystem currently face the greatest staffing needs, and which use cases and future perspectives could influence these demands, the following section focuses on how personnel requirements are likely to evolve. The aim is to analyse the expected changes in staffing across the individual job role clusters, providing an outlook on the ecosystem's structural workforce requirements.

7.1 How we Analysed Future Staffing Need

Assessment of future staffing needs

To estimate how staffing requirements might change, each of the 16 selected job role clusters was evaluated in terms of how its personnel needs are expected to develop compared with current levels. A five-point bipolar Likert scale with a neutral midpoint was used, ranging from "strongly decreasing demand = -2" to "strongly increasing demand = +2". Both industry experts and a large language model assessed the staffing needs.

Expert assessment

As part of the quantitative survey, our business events experts were asked not only to assess current staffing levels but also to estimate the expected development of the 16 job role clusters over the next five years. Their evaluations were based on professional expertise and practical experience within the industry.

AI-based validation considering technological developments

To complement the expert assessment, we used a large language model for an AI-driven analysis. The aim was to examine how technological developments, based on the previously developed use cases and identified future perspectives, could affect future staffing needs. To minimise potential biases or hallucinations from the model, four different calibration prompts were used, and the resulting evaluations were systematically compared.

7.2 Findings

The assessment of future staffing needs as shown in Figure 13, indicates that several job role clusters are expected to experience rising personnel demand, while other areas are projected to see a decline. In particular, the results point to a significant increase in staffing requirements for software development and IT systems management, data analysis and business intelligence, as well as concept and innovation management.

Conversely, the findings suggest a likely decrease in personnel needs for certain job role clusters, especially in host and hostess roles, as well as reception, registration, and attendee guidance. Declining demand is also expected for positions in service, event logistics, and business development.

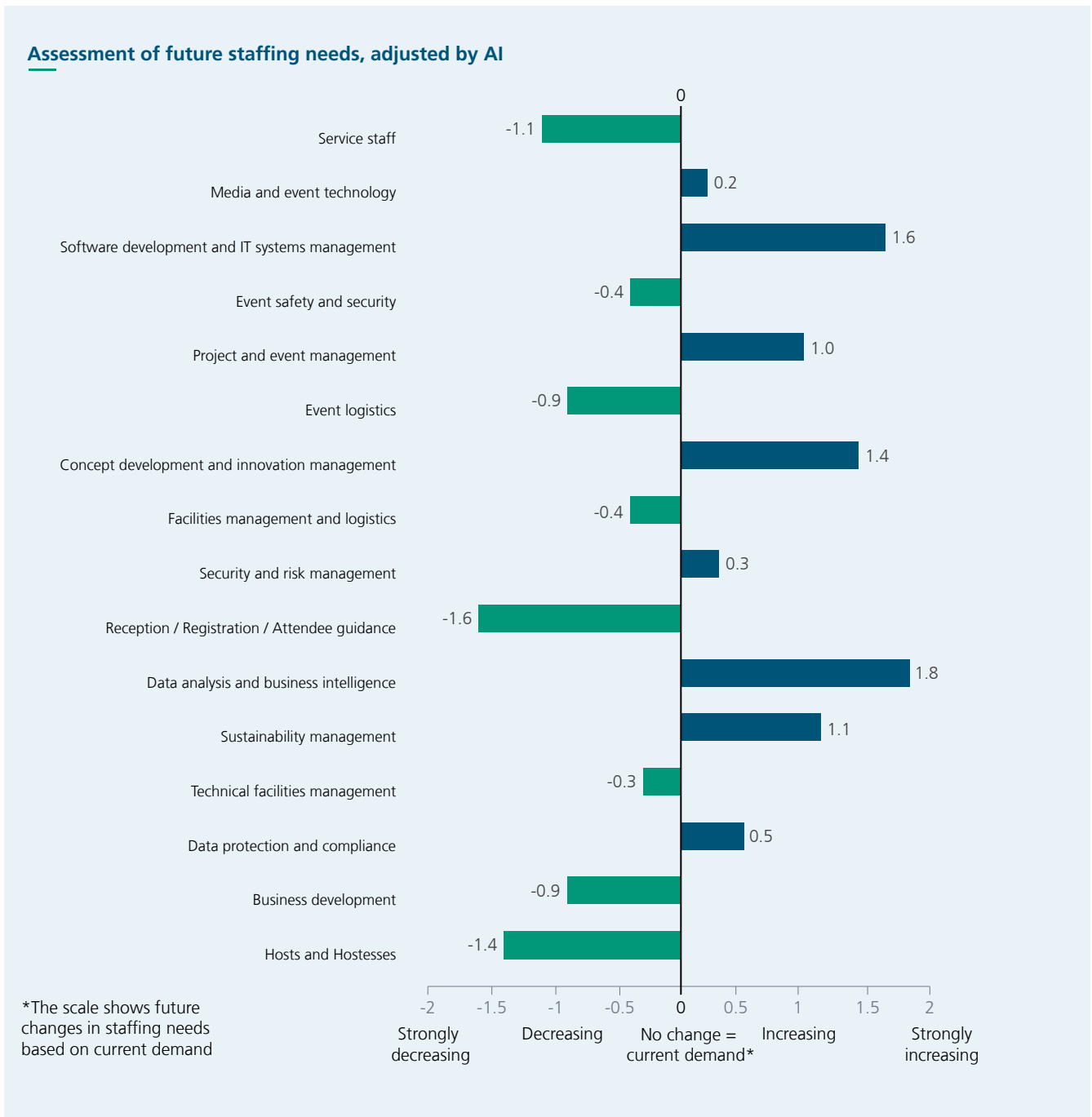


Figure 13: Expected changes in staffing needs.

The following section presents our findings for the job role clusters that were specified for the assessment of current staffing needs in an earlier phase of our research project. The experts who took part in our survey assessed future demand based on their evaluation of current demand.

The results are summarised using mean values. First, current staffing demand is presented on a scale from 1 (“very low demand”) to 5 (“very high demand”). This is followed by the expected change in future demand, expressed relative to the current level as a baseline (zero) and measured on a scale from -2 (“strongly decreasing demand”) to +2 (“strongly increasing demand”). We, i.e. the authors of this report, then added our own interpretative assessment to contextualise and explain the findings.

Service staff

Service roles currently show a very high level of demand ($M = 4.14$). While industry experts expect a slight increase over the next five years (+0.3 scale points), the AI-based assessment, drawing on the identified use cases and automation potential, projects a marked decline in demand (-1.1 scale points).

From our perspective, many standardised tasks such as serving, clearing, cleaning, and preparing or replenishing materials could in future be partially automated. Humanoid robots could play a supporting role here by taking over routine activities and, over time, also handling basic interaction with event attendees and assist them. As a result, requirements are likely to shift and skills related to operating and supervising robotic systems, managing human-robot interaction, and overseeing digitally supported service and catering processes would become increasingly important.

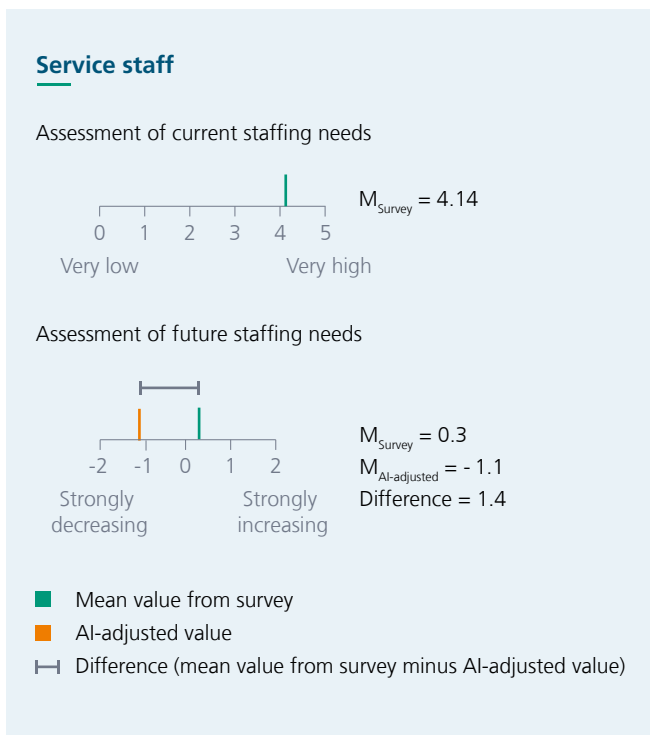


Figure 14: Current and future staffing needs for the service staff job role cluster.

Media and event technology

Staffing needs in media and event technology are currently very high ($M = 4.2$). Experts expect a moderate further increase over the next five years (+0.55 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, projects a slightly smaller but still rising need (+0.2 scale points).

Automation potential is particularly evident in standardised routine tasks, such as preparing lighting, audio, and projection equipment, performing basic functionality checks, and managing technical documentation. These tasks could increasingly be handled by automated control and support functions and are directly linked to the automated media technology control use case. More complex activities, such as equipment setup, fine-tuning, and live operation of media systems, remain core human responsibilities. AI could assist in these areas by providing guidance or automatic adjustment suggestions. Overall, the focus for people working in this job role cluster may shift increasingly toward monitoring and targeted control of technologically supported systems.

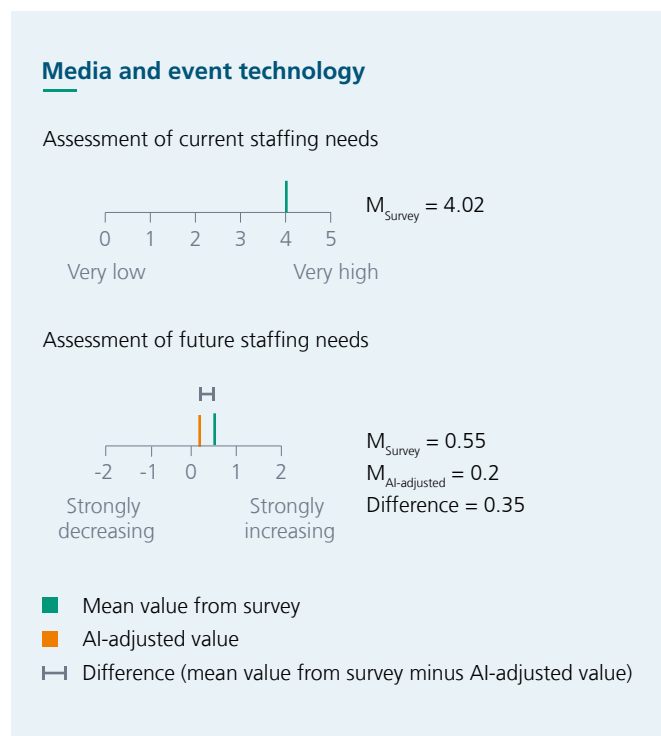


Figure 15: Current and future staffing needs for the media and event technology job role cluster.

Event safety and security

Staffing needs in event safety and security are currently somewhat lower than in other job role clusters, but still high ($M = 3.77$). Our experts anticipate a further moderate increase over the next five years (+0.6 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, projects a slight decrease in staffing needs (-0.4 scale points).

Standardised tasks, such as entry and access controls, could in future be partially replaced by self-check-in processes. Tasks like bag checks will remain, but their requirements may change: AI-supported assistance systems, such as the outlined upskilling co-pilots, could help staff by automatically flagging potentially dangerous items, enhancing decision-making, attention, and situational awareness. Additionally, AI-driven analysis tools could enable precise monitoring and prediction of crowd flows, improving control and prevention in safety management. As a result, alongside traditional skills for maintaining safety and order, being able to operate AI-assisted systems and other AI-supported applications is likely to become increasingly important.

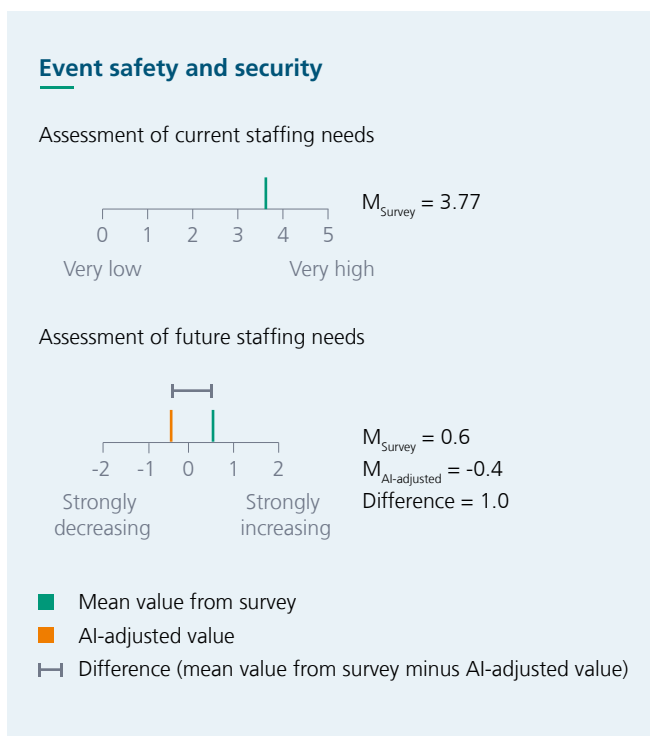


Figure 16: Current and future staffing needs for the event safety and security job role cluster.

Concept development and innovation management

Staffing needs in concept development and innovation management are currently somewhat lower, but still high ($M = 3.51$). Experts expect a moderate increase over the next five years (+0.53 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, projects a significantly higher increase (+1.4 scale points), differing from the other job role clusters.

Jobs in this cluster focus on creative and strategic tasks so that automation is limited. Creative and conceptual work could be augmented by generative AI. The use case “AI-powered concept simulation with personas” is an example, as AI allows different target group perspectives to be explored in advance. Analyses of target groups and stakeholder needs could be enhanced by the potential of autonomous event ecosystems that systematically evaluate available data to inform conceptual decisions. Additionally, the “AI agent for trend clustering” use case can help identify and consolidate relevant developments more quickly. These changes imply evolving skills requirements, particularly in the reflective use of AI-supported creative and analytical tools, and in evaluating and integrating AI-generated proposals into the decision-making process.

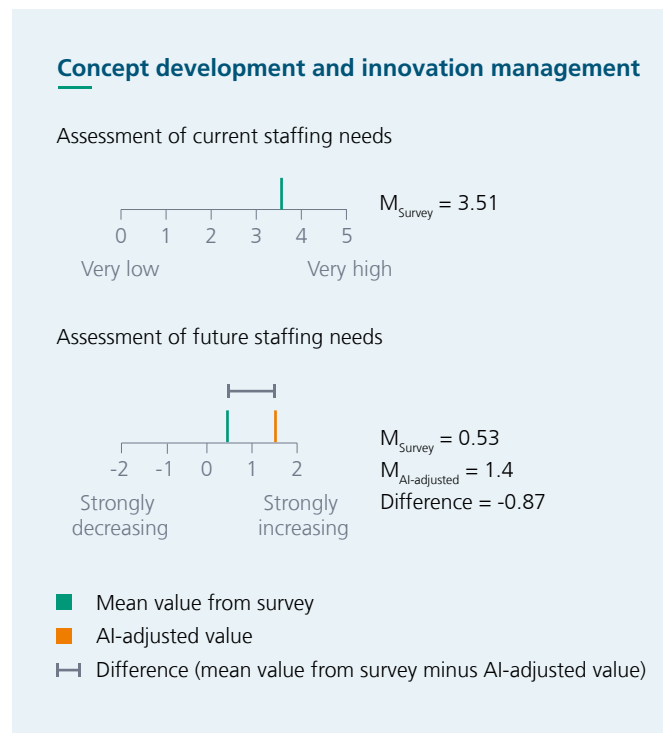


Figure 17: Current and future staffing needs for the concept development and innovation management job role cluster.

Software development and IT systems management

Staffing needs in software development and IT systems management are currently high ($M = 3.78$). Experts expect a further significant increase over the next five years (+0.92 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, projects an even stronger increase (+1.55 scale points).

From our perspective, the substantial increase in staffing needs projected by both experts and AI is plausible. While AI can achieve efficiency gains of around 15 to 20 per cent in this area, these improvements do not lead to a fundamental reduction in staffing requirements. In the business events ecosystem, software development tasks are so far only partially supported by automation, leaving many organisations with considerable catch-up needs, particularly in modernising, integrating, and stabilising digital systems. Task profiles are also becoming increasingly fragmented and are composed of more specialised steps. Alongside traditional development, the operation, integration, adaptation, and continuous improvement of existing systems are gaining importance. In this context, the rising demand for the corresponding skills appears to be a logical development.

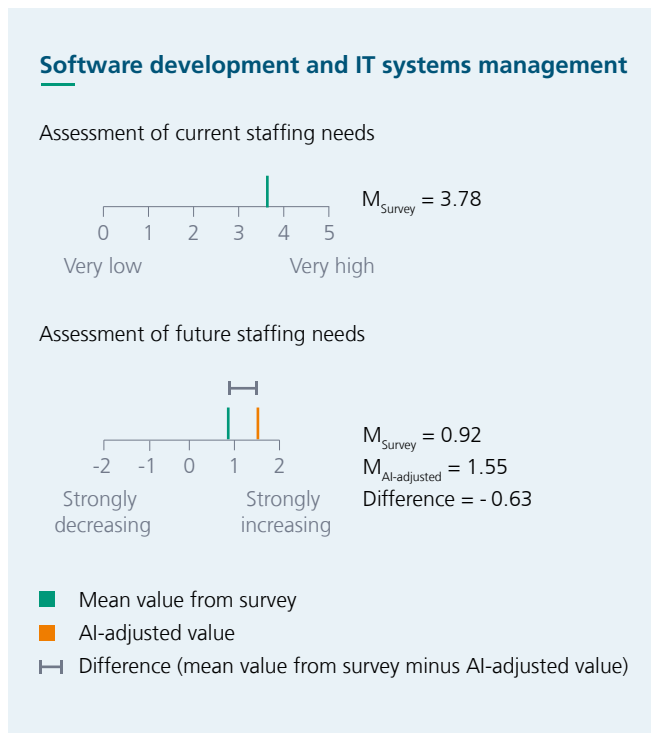


Figure 18: Current and future staffing needs for the software development and IT systems management job role cluster.

Data analysis and business intelligence

In data analysis and business intelligence, there is currently a high staffing need ($M = 3.44$). Experts anticipate a significant increase over the next five years (+0.65 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, predicts an even sharper rise (+1.75 scale points).

From our perspective, this development is plausible, as data-driven decision-making is becoming increasingly important in the business events world. While standardised tasks such as data cleaning and structuring can be partially automated, core analysis and evaluation tasks are not replaced but augmented by AI. AI applications enable the processing of larger datasets and the faster identification of patterns, yet human expertise remains essential for interpreting results and turning them into actionable insights. Particularly in the context of autonomous event ecosystems, which consolidate data across different phases of event planning, the demand for professionals who can analyse this information reliably and make it usable for strategic decisions is rising. Accordingly, the required skills are shifting. Advanced analytical skills are increasingly important, including the critical handling of AI-assisted analyses, ensuring data quality, and the responsible interpretation of data-driven outcomes.

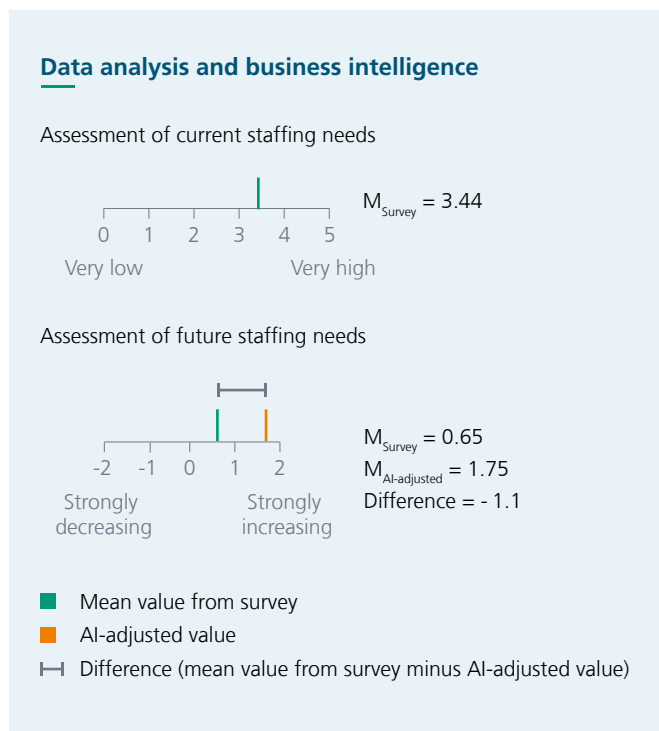


Figure 19: Current and future staffing needs for the data analysis and business intelligence job role cluster.

Sustainability management

In sustainability management, there is currently a high staffing need ($M = 3.41$). Experts expect a significant increase over the next five years (+0.69 scale points), while the AI, based on the identified use cases and automation potential, predicts an even slightly higher rise (+1.1 scale points).

From our perspective, this development is plausible. Reporting and documentation requirements in sustainability management continue to grow and are set to become even more extensive due to additional legal and regulatory obligations. While there is potential for automation in areas such as data collection, structuring, and reporting support, gathering sustainability data is often complex, as it comes from various, partially decentralised, and not always reliable sources and must be carefully checked and interpreted. In addition, sustainability management involves a large proportion of operational tasks, particularly the planning, implementation, and coordination of specific sustainability measures in the event operations. These tasks are highly context-dependent and can only be automated to a limited extent. Another factor explaining the high anticipated staffing needs may be that society expects sustainability requirements to continue to gain in importance. This might have influenced both the experts' assessments and the AI predictions.

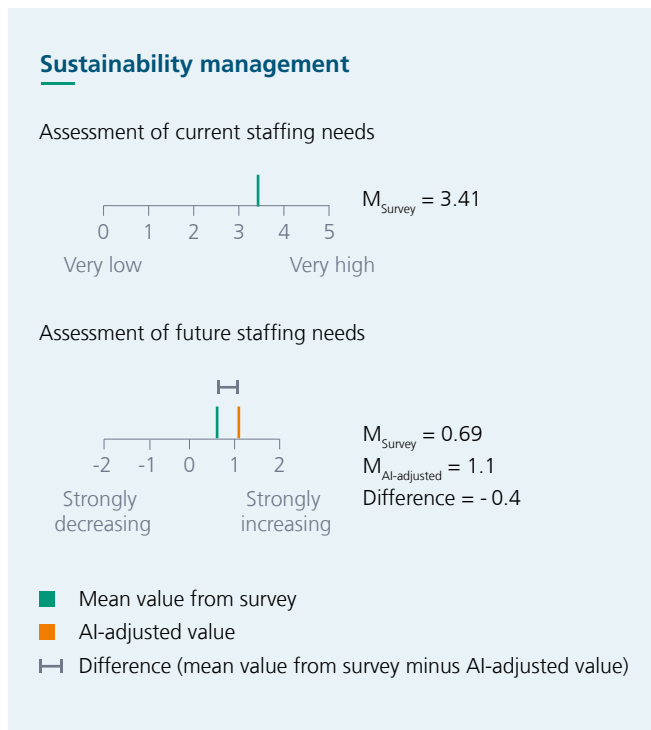


Figure 20: Current and future staffing needs for the sustainability management job role cluster.

8 Developing Overarching Recommendations and Designing Smart Solutions

Our findings clearly show that the staffing situation in the business events ecosystem over the coming years is likely to change less due to a decline in headcount and more as a result of a fundamental change in required skill sets. Automation, AI-assisted support systems, and digitalised event ecosystems relieve staff of routine tasks, while complex, coordinating, analytical, and strategic activities gain in importance. This leads to several overarching recommendations for organisations and decision-makers.

Treat AI and data skills as core qualifications

As nearly all job role clusters will increasingly work with AI-based systems, automated processes, and data-driven decisions, AI and data skills need to be core qualifications for almost every role. This includes a confident use of AI tools and automation functions, a basic understanding of data-driven models, and the ability to critically assess and interpret AI-generated results. These skills form the foundation for confident and effective use of digital technologies across the business events ecosystem.

Redesign roles

With routine tasks increasingly automated, the focus of many roles is shifting from hands-on execution to the management and oversight of automated processes. Activities such as monitoring, coordination, handling exceptional occurrences, and the fine-tuning of digital systems are gaining in importance. Role profiles therefore need to be adapted, and staff supported in developing the skills required to take on these new management and oversight responsibilities.

Actively foster human strengths

While technological systems provide support in many areas, human strengths such as empathy, communication skills, creativity, situational judgement, and problem-solving remain key qualities. In particular, in service, consulting, security, and concept and innovation work, significant value is created when these abilities are deliberately developed and strategically applied.

Ensure professional handling of automation and robotics

As service robots, automated media technology, and self-service systems become more widely used, staff need training to use these technologies safely and effectively. Technological proficiency includes not only operating and monitoring automated systems but also assessing technical faults. This both increases efficiency and strengthens acceptance of the systems.

Enable continuous upskilling and job redesigning

Given the pace of technological change, organisations need a systematic approach to continuous upskilling. Role profiles should be regularly reviewed and updated to meet new requirements. Work-integrated learning formats, such as digital upskilling co-pilots or AR-based training, can help staff keep pace with new technologies. Institutionalised job redesign thus becomes a central element of workforce development.

Establish AI ethics, transparency and governance

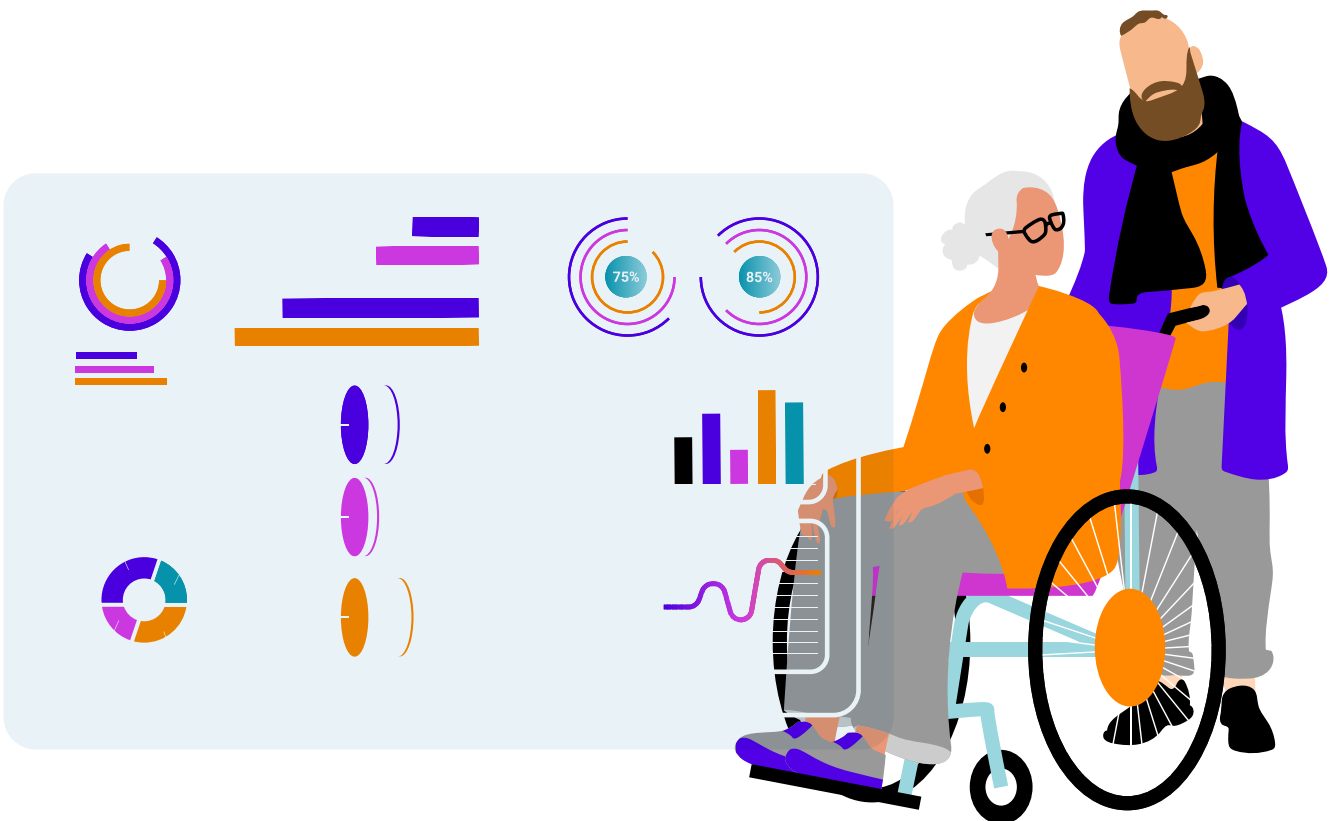
As AI-based systems become increasingly common, clear ethical and organisational guidelines are key. Organisations should develop transparent rules for handling automated decisions, protecting sensitive data, and ensuring the quality of AI models. Reliable governance structures help minimise risks such as bias, misinterpretation, or opaque decision-making processes, while also building trust among staff and participants.

Increase interdisciplinary collaboration

The successful adoption and use of smart event technologies require close collaboration across different departments. Only by combining diverse perspectives can technological developments be effectively integrated into existing processes. Interdisciplinary teams are therefore crucial for sustainably improving the quality and efficiency of digitally supported event processes.

Develop alternative strategies beyond AI

In job role clusters with limited automation potential, optimising organisation is key. This includes more efficient process design, flexible deployment models, targeted training, and more attractive working conditions to attract and retain skilled staff. Additionally, clusters with declining staffing needs can be merged or tasks redistributed, allowing skills to be integrated into adjacent areas and existing resources to be used more effectively. This approach helps stabilise staffing needs even where AI provides only limited relief.



9 Summary and Key Findings

Our 2025 research phase examined how the two megatrends demographic change and advancing automation interact. Central to the study was the question of how organisations can deploy and develop skilled staff effectively despite demographic-driven labour shortages. At the same time, we explored how the potential offered by AI and automation can be used strategically to inform practical solutions for the business events ecosystem.

The findings show that current staffing needs in the business events ecosystem are not a short-term phenomenon, but rather the result of long-term demographic developments and structural shifts in skill requirements. Across almost all job role clusters analysed, elevated staffing needs are already evident. These are particularly pronounced in operational areas such as service staff, media and event technology, and event safety and security. At the same time, there is sustained high demand for qualified professionals in job roles that focus on technology and analysis, including software development, IT systems management, data analysis, and business intelligence.

Furthermore, numerous automation applications based on AI and robotics were identified in the business event ecosystem that were long regarded as distant prospects but are now technically feasible or already partly in use. These applications were methodically assessed and evaluated using a combined approach of AI personas and expert opinions, which took different perspectives into account and highlighted concrete entry points for the practical adoption of advanced technologies.

The analysis of future staffing needs shows that these applications can help ease staff shortages in roles characterised by a high degree of routine and standardisation, particularly in job role clusters such as service, reception and registration, as well as event safety and security, but also in areas like event logistics. In other fields, such as media and event technology, automation potential is more moderate. Here, AI-based solutions tend to play a supportive role and do not fundamentally reduce the need for skilled staff, as human expertise remains essential. Likewise, in complex, knowledge-intensive and concept-driven areas such as IT systems management, business development, or innovation management, the scope for substitution remains limited. In these clusters, the potential for automating core tasks is still limited, with technological solutions primarily complementing human work rather than replacing it.

Overall, the business events ecosystem is characterised by a wide range of job role clusters with differing qualification requirements, whose skill profiles continue to evolve as part of the technological transformation. The findings suggest that new hybrid roles are emerging where human work and technological support intersect, while existing role profiles are being broadened. Against this backdrop, strategic approaches to qualification and professional development are becoming increasingly important as the growing use of AI, automation, and data-driven systems makes AI and data skills foundational qualifications across almost all job role clusters. Continuous learning and the deliberate adaptation of role profiles therefore emerge as key success factors in addressing skills shortages and managing technological change.

10 Outlook on rcfms 2026

In 2026, we will continue our research work on the business events ecosystem under the umbrella of the newly established **Research Centre for Future Meeting Studies (rcfms)** that continues the work of the “Future Meeting Space” innovation network initiated in 2015. Exploring trends and future prospects, the aim of rcfms is not only to analyse the event formats of tomorrow, but take an active role and set new future-proof standards.

rcfms builds on the insights gained and the collaborative structures established within the “Future Meeting Space” network and focuses on evidence-based and innovative research as a basis for advancing business events as sustainable, inclusive and user-centred event design.

Research topics at the rcfms are defined in collaboration with an interdisciplinary advisory board and in close coordination with research partners from across the business events ecosystem. This includes both current challenges, such as the use of generative AI or skills shortages, and emerging trends like humanoid robots and new communication formats.

The current selection of research topics can be viewed at rcfms.org.

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Contact

Project organisation and project management:

GCB German Convention Bureau e. V.
c/o WeWork
Taunusanlage 8
60329 Frankfurt a. M.
www.gcb.de

Matthias Schultze

Managing Director
Phone: +49 69 242930-14
schultze@gcb.de

Birgit Pacher

Programme Lead Research Centre and
Market Intelligence
Phone: +49 69 242930-18
pacher@gcb.de

Project concept and project process:

Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO
Nobelstraße 12
70569 Stuttgart
www.iao.fraunhofer.de

Dr. Stefan Rief

Head of Organisational Development and
Work Design Research Unit
Phone: +49 711 970-5479
stefan.rief@iao.fraunhofer.de

Tilman Naujoks

Research Associate, Project Manager
Phone: +49 711 970-2086
tilman.naujoks@iao.fraunhofer.de

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Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO
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www.iao.fraunhofer.de

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Dr. Martina Neunecker, GCB German Convention Bureau e. V.

English version

B Connects. Barbara Geier Content Services

Contributors

Pauline Teresa Stiefel

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