

MEETINGS

Meet the Moment

Tough Q&A

Most executives already understand and believe in the value of in-person meetings. The challenge is that those same executives may be asked to defend a decision to hold a new in-person, offsite meeting, or might face pushback from finance teams or others.

The questions in this guide reflect common objections sales teams may face with customers, or that customers face within their own organizations. Each is paired with a response grounded in research and focused on business outcomes. Use them to prepare your team, sharpen your own talking points, or as a reference for customer conversations.

→ QUESTION 1

“My CFO doesn’t see the value of conducting a strategically important meeting in person. He/she believes we can accomplish our objectives by conducting the meeting virtually over Zoom or MS Teams.”

Sample Response 1: Your CFO is asking the right question about value. The real question isn’t in-person versus Zoom/Teams. It’s whether this meeting is a moment where gathering in the same room delivers a return virtual meetings can’t: aligning on strategy, pursuing a growth opportunity, accelerating an important decision, deepening the trust that closes a deal. If those are the stakes, this in-person meeting is a strategic investment, not a travel expense.

Supporting Points:

- Strategic management is the #1 reason executives advocate for in-person meetings, cited by 72% of business executives.
- Meeting off-site removes day-to-day distraction, creating space for leaders to focus on strategic opportunities.
- Speed matters. Meeting face-to-face collapses the time between identifying a challenge and reaching a decision.
- Nine-in-ten executives say in-person meetings have advanced their careers, from developing stronger networks to forging deeper customer relationships.
- Building relationships and trust is the #1 “human ROI” executives use to justify in-person meetings.

→ QUESTION 2

“Our team traditionally travels to a key trade event, but this year I’m considering sending a much smaller group to the event.”

Sample Response 2: A smaller group can still drive strong outcomes, but will there be enough people attending to maximize the trade event’s opportunities to grow key existing relationships and forge new ones? Will you have the right people for the relationships at stake? What would a reduced team footprint signal to your customers and competitors? In uncertain moments, presence matters more, not less. If others are pulling back and you’re showing up with the right people, you’re capturing share.

Supporting Points:

- New growth opportunities are the #1 most powerful catalyst for in-person meetings, according to executive research.

- Building durable customer relationships comes down to trust, which is built in person. In-person meetings strengthen the bonds with the people most vital to an organization's success.
- Group travel enables the exchange of ideas, fuels innovation, and fosters trust in ways that cannot be replicated virtually.
- Reducing presence at the moment competitors are pulling back misses an opportunity to capture share and press your competitive advantage.

→ QUESTION 3

Economic pressure means tighter budgets in our organization this year. We've been instructed to plan no new in-person meetings.

Sample Response 3: Each organization faces distinct business challenges, but blanket pauses on in-person meetings can create their own costs. Some meetings on your horizon may actually generate the solution to pressure your organization is experiencing: alignment on strategic initiatives, growing customer relationships that drive next year's revenue, business opportunities that won't move forward without people in the same room. If there's a meeting tied to one of those moments, the cost of not meeting is higher than the cost of meeting.

Supporting Points:

- Executives surveyed cite new growth opportunities as the #1 most powerful catalyst for new in-person meetings. The very thing budgets are protecting is often the thing in-person meetings are best positioned to unlock.
- Capitalizing on a strategic opportunity requires the kind of singular leadership focus only meeting off-site can provide.
- Speed can be the difference between opportunity seized and opportunity lost. Meeting face-to-face collapses the time between identifying a challenge and reaching a decision.
- Strategic management is the #1 reason executives advocate for in-person meetings, cited by 72% of business executives.
- A majority of executives expect to host more in-person meetings in the year ahead, even amid economic headwinds.

➤ The more consistently our messages reach business executives, the more durable our impact will be.

Questions? Contact [Kevin Hinton](#), Managing Director, Group Travel, U.S. Travel Association