



## REED & MACKAY WHITE PAPER

# The Travel & Events Merge

In an increasingly digital-first world, the value of in-person offsites, meetings, and events has never been more pronounced.

The shift to hybrid and remote working has made direct, human connections not only desirable but essential. Organisations seeking to foster stronger relationships among colleagues, partners, and clients are rethinking their meetings and events strategy, not as a logistical necessity, but as a strategic enabler of culture, collaboration, and commercial success.

Research continues to validate this shift. [A Stanford University experiment](#) found that in-person teams generate 15–20% more ideas than virtual ones. The [Gitnux Meeting Industry Statistics Report 2025](#) states that 85% of businesses report improved collaboration and team cohesion through meetings. Meanwhile, [Freeman's Trend Report](#) reveals that 82% of attendees prefer in-person to virtual events, citing deeper engagement and more meaningful networking.

Put simply, face-to-face interaction is not just back, it's leading the way.

This resurgence in the importance of in-person meetings and events coincides with a significant operational shift: the merging of responsibilities between travel and meetings & events (M&E) management. Travel buyers and managers are increasingly being tasked with overseeing M&E strategy, spend, and supplier relationships. According to [Cvent's 2025 Travel Manager Report](#), 91% of travel managers now say that meetings and events are either fully or partially integrated into their travel programmes.

As the lines between business travel and event attendance continue to blur, organisations are recognising the need for a unified approach; one that delivers greater visibility, control, and strategic value across all forms of corporate travel.

# Executive Summary

This white paper explores the growing trend of integrating Meetings & Events (M&E) into corporate travel programmes.

It outlines the internal and external pressures driving this shift, including cost control, risk management, sustainability, and traveller wellbeing.

Drawing on Reed & Mackay's extensive experience and recent industry research, it presents a compelling case for consolidation and offers a blueprint for success, particularly within the legal sector.



# Introduction

As part of our continual innovation in global travel programme management across Reed & Mackay, we regularly assess emerging industry trends to ensure our clients remain ahead of the curve.

One such trend is gaining significant momentum: the integration of Meetings & Events (M&E) into corporate travel programmes. With our global reach and deep expertise, Reed & Mackay is committed to sharing insight and guidance to help organisations navigate this shift and unlock the full potential of a unified travel and events strategy.

## The Rise of Integrated Travel & Events

Since the return of business travel post-pandemic, traditional travel programmes have had to adapt to a dramatically changed landscape.

One area that has come into sharp focus is the management of meetings and events. Internally, organisations are scrutinising M&E for its impact on cost control, risk management, traveller wellbeing, and sustainability.

Externally, the topic has become a focal point at industry seminars, in trade publications, and across the wider business travel community. In the past year alone, several key developments have underscored the urgency of this shift.

Business Travel News (BTN) published a comprehensive report titled "[Travel & Meetings: Heavy Merge Ahead](#)", highlighting the accelerating convergence of these two functions.

M&IT, a leading events publication, reported that [one-third of all business travel buyers expect the meetings management role to merge with travel management in the near future](#). Veteran travel consultant Kevin Iwamoto echoed this sentiment, stating:

*"Honestly, I think the travel manager is the best person to manage it. It's in their wheelhouse of savings, duty of care, making sure you are using the right contracts and preferred suppliers."*

Against this backdrop it is an opportune moment to explore why this discussion is being raised and some of the reasons why it may resonate with your own travel programme requirements.

# Strategic Pressures Driving Change

As organisations reassess their travel programmes in light of evolving business needs, a number of internal pressures are driving the conversation around integrating Meetings & Events (M&E) with transient travel. These concerns are not isolated; they reflect a broader desire for efficiency, accountability, and strategic alignment.

One of the most common challenges is the inefficiency of managing travel and events as separate functions. In many organisations, different teams are responsible for booking flights, rail, transfers, and accommodation, despite these being shared logistical components.

This siloed approach often leads to duplicated effort, inconsistent service delivery, and missed opportunities for optimisation.

Supplier negotiations are also bec

oming more complex. Airlines and hotels are tightening their deal criteria, and many now offer enhanced rates only when M&E spend is included in total volume calculations. Without integration, companies risk leaving value on the table.

*According to [BTN's 2025 State of the Industry Report](#), 60% of corporate travel buyers expect their company's travel spend to exceed 2024 levels with meetings and events cited as a key driver.*

Data capture and policy compliance present another challenge. While transient travel programmes typically benefit from robust reporting and policy enforcement, M&E procurement often involves a patchwork of suppliers with limited oversight.

This lack of visibility can undermine cost control and make it difficult to meet internal compliance targets.

Risk management is similarly affected. Many organisations rely on real-time data feeds to support their duty of care obligations. However, when M&E suppliers are selected ad hoc, often for each individual event, it becomes difficult to maintain consistent risk protocols. This is particularly concerning in the context of traveller wellbeing, where inconsistent support can compromise safety during incidents or emergencies.

Smaller meetings, such as departmental offsites or private dining events, also pose a challenge. These are frequently organised outside the scope of managed travel programmes, leading to unchecked spend and limited visibility. As sustainability targets become more central to corporate strategy, unmanaged events can also contribute disproportionately to emissions. A single poorly planned event can negate the environmental gains of an entire travel programme.

Finally, there is growing recognition that in-house teams, while knowledgeable, may lack the creative resources, global reach, and buying power of a consolidated travel management service. Reed & Mackay's integrated approach offers access to experienced professionals, advanced technology, and supplier relationships that deliver measurable value.

These concerns are not theoretical; they are being raised in boardrooms, budget reviews, and strategy sessions across industries. The question is no longer whether to integrate M&E with travel, but how to do so effectively.

# Supporting Strategic Integration

As organisations begin to explore the integration of Meetings & Events (M&E) into their broader travel programmes, many are looking for guidance on how to navigate this shift effectively.

Reed & Mackay brings decades of experience in both transient travel and event management, offering insight, infrastructure, and support to help clients respond to this evolving landscape.

Reed & Mackay operates with 1400 staff globally and is built on more than 60 years of experience. Our dedicated Events division is recognised as C&IT's number one events agency in the UK and won Cvent's Partner of the Year award at Cvent Connect Europe 2024. We have an incredible ability to scale and adapt to a wide range of needs.

Our supplier relationships are a key strength. These partnerships allow us to secure savings on standard rates, often offsetting service fees entirely.

Beyond cost efficiency, these relationships also unlock added value such as complimentary upgrades, refreshments, and room drops, that enhance the attendee experience while supporting budget goals.

But our value extends beyond logistics. We understand the importance of data integration, policy compliance, and strategic alignment. By consolidating transient and M&E travel, organisations gain access to unified reporting, improved budget management, and stronger supplier leverage.

This integration also supports traveller wellbeing and risk management, ensuring consistent standards across all travel activities.

As a provider of both transient travel and M&E, we're not just equipped to support this transition, we're already doing it for a range of corporate clients. Our teams work collaboratively with clients to assess readiness, identify opportunities, and build tailored strategies that reflect organisational goals.

The opportunity to unify travel and events is not just about operational efficiency, it's about unlocking strategic value. And we're here to help you do just that.





## SECTOR SPOTLIGHT: The Legal Industry

The legal sector presents a unique set of challenges and expectations when it comes to meetings and events.

From confidential partner conferences to private dining and practice group offsites, law firms require precision, discretion, and seamless execution. These events are not just logistical exercises; they are reflections of a firm's reputation and professionalism.

In recent years, law firms have faced increasing scrutiny over matter code costs; expenses that are eligible for client recharge. With many firms now required to tender for business relationships and demonstrate cost efficiency, the pressure to deliver measurable savings and added value has intensified. Reliable spend data reconciliation is no longer a nice-to-have; it's a prerequisite for maintaining client trust and securing new engagements.

Reed & Mackay is deeply familiar with these dynamics. Our expertise is long-standing and well documented and we've built a enviable reputation in the sector. We currently support over 80% of the UK "magic circle" law firms, and our dedicated Reed & Mackay Events team manage meetings and events programmes for more than 20 firms in the UK alone. Our teams understand the importance of confidentiality, cost control, and strategic alignment in legal settings. We work closely with clients to ensure that every event, from a small offsite to a global partner summit, is executed with precision and purpose.

The momentum in the legal sector is clear. Firms are recognising that unmanaged or siloed M&E activity can undermine their broader travel strategy, expose them to risk, and erode client confidence. The time to act is now.

# Strategic Outcomes of Integration

Integrating meetings and events into a unified travel programme delivers more than operational efficiency, it unlocks strategic value across the organisation. Reed & Mackay's approach is built around four core benefits:

## 1 **Visibility and Control**

A consolidated programme provides overarching visibility into both transient and M&E travel. This enables stronger supplier negotiations, improved compliance, enhanced risk management, and a more robust duty of care framework.

## 2 **Unified Data and Budget Management**

Integrated reporting supports better budget oversight and reconciliation. Organisations can track spend across all travel activities, identify trends, and make informed decisions that align with business goals.

## 3 **Strategic Account Management**

A joint account management model enhances user experience through shared traveller profiles and consistent service delivery. It also elevates the role of travel in driving business outcomes, positioning it as a strategic enabler rather than a transactional function.

## 4 **Innovation and Consistency**

A unified service model fosters creativity and ensures consistent standards across all travel and event activities. This sparks innovation and helps organisations deliver memorable, high-impact experiences.



# Conclusion and Next Steps

The integration of meetings and events into corporate travel programmes is no longer a future consideration, it is a present imperative.

As organisations seek to optimise spend, improve compliance, and meet sustainability goals, the case for consolidation becomes increasingly compelling.

Reed & Mackay offers a wide-ranging service covering every aspect of planning and executing meetings and events through our award-winning in-house specialist teams in seven locations across the globe: UK, USA, Sweden, Spain, France, Germany, and Australia.

Whether you're already exploring integration or just beginning the conversation, now is the time to act. The opportunity to unify travel and events is here and we're ready to help you make the most of it.



## Get in touch

Contact our dedicated Reed & Mackay Events team today to discuss the merge and your group travel, meetings & events requirements.

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