

SECURING THE FUTURE OF VENUES

AN ASIA-PACIFIC INDUSTRY REPORT ON PRODUCTIVITY,
DIVERSIFICATION & SMARTER OPERATIONS



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SECURING THE FUTURE OF VENUES

Costs are up, audiences are tight and government support is thinning.

The next decade won't look like the last, and the venues that secure their future will be the ones that stop relying on a full calendar and start getting more value from the spaces, days, people and data they already own.

As the Venue Management Association (VMA) insights and data partner, this report sets out to understand how sport and entertainment venues can secure their future through diversification and active management of revenue streams, underpinned by real productivity improvements across people, operations, technology, data and asset utilisation.

Drawing on a benchmark of venues across Australia and New Zealand, it defines what "productivity" actually means for venues in practical, measurable terms, and maps how the industry stacks up beyond the P&L: revenue diversification maturity, space and asset productivity, operational productivity levers, and workforce capability and constraints.

The future of venues won't be won on volume. It will be won on focus, execution and discipline.

FAN FOCUSED. RESULTS DRIVEN.

ABOUT VMA

The Venue Management Association (VMA) is the peak body representing venue professionals across the Asia-Pacific.

For more than 35 years, the VMA has supported, connected and elevated the people and organisations that shape experiences across stadiums, arenas, showgrounds, performing arts centres and convention centres.

Purpose

To future-proof the venue industry.

Mission

To empower the industry and its people through education, collaboration, thought leadership and strategic partnerships.

Vision

A globally connected, innovative and resilient venue industry that thrives in every possible future.

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Contents

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THE PROJECT

01

As the VMA's official insights and data partner, we conducted research on how sport and entertainment venues can future-proof their operations

THE WHY BEHIND THE PROJECT

THE CONTEXT Why now?

- Costs are up, audiences tighter, government support thinning
- The next decade won't look like the last

THE PURPOSE What we set out to do

- Understand venue productivity in the region.
- Determine how venues can secure their future through:
 - Diversification
 - Active management of revenue streams; and
 - Productivity improvements in people, operations, technology, data, and asset utilisation.

THE OUTCOME What you'll walk away with

- A shared language for venue maturity
- Industry benchmarks to measure yourself against
- Four evidence-based plays for the next decade

We heard from a representative sample of venues across Australia and New Zealand

WHO WE HEARD FROM

66
venues

across Australia and New Zealand
completed our survey



Key Sample Features

Venue types: Stadiums, arenas, performing arts centres, convention centres, community venues

Role: CEOs/ GMs, COOs / Head of Ops, Event Ops, Commercial / BD leaders

Geography: All Australian states + New Zealand

Activation: 35% of venues activated 300+ days a year

Scale: From under 50,000 to over 1,000,000 attendees annually

Operating models: Hire-only, self-promoted, and mixed

Ownership: Government, private, trust/not-for-profit

To make sense of where the industry sits, we organised the findings around four pillars of venue maturity

ANALYSING VENUE MATURITY

ASSET PRODUCTIVITY

How well venues monetise the spaces, days and digital inventory they already own.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

Reducing dependency on hire and ticketing through sponsorship, IP, premium and content ownership.

WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

Building skills, depth and operating models that scale with ambition.

SMART OPS & DATA

Integrating data, BI and AI into how decisions get made.

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THE LEARNINGS

02

THERE IS A CHALLENGE

Venues are busy but not optimised.
Innovating, but not focused.
Know what to do but need help doing it.

The research has highlighted four key focuses for venues to secure the next decade

FOUR PLAYS FOR VENUES TO SECURE THE NEXT DECADE

01

Yield over Activity

Run the calendar for margin, not volume - every event earns its slot.

02

Pick a Few Diversification Bets

Stop experimenting everywhere, back one prioritised stream and execute.

03

Workforce as Strategy

Treat capability, rostering and retention as one connected system.

04

Data and Integration Before AI

Build the warehouse (only 30% have), KPIs and integrations before scaling AI ambition.

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MARVEL STADIUM

ASSET PRODUCTIVITY

03

Cost-of-living pressure is the number one competitive force for venues. With customers already stretched, maximising yield becomes crucial

THE FORCES RESHAPING THE INDUSTRY

Number 1 Threat

94%

of venues cite cost-of-living pressure as their #1 competitive force.

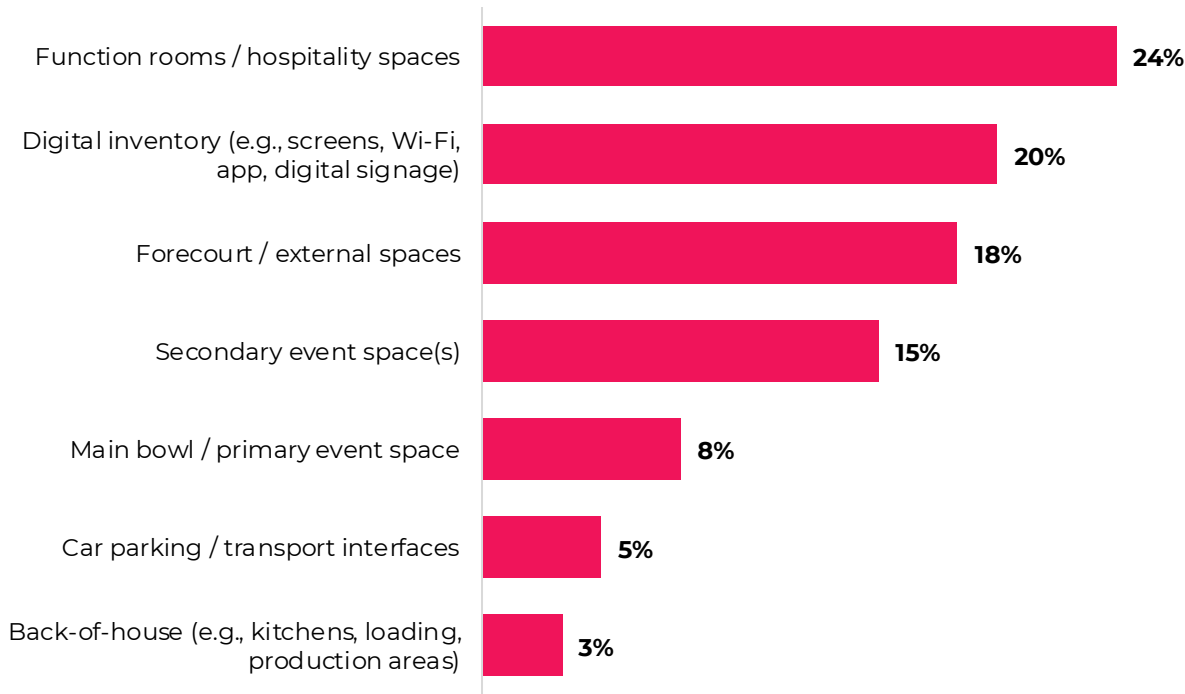
Other Compounding Pressures

- Alternative live entertainment and experiences
- Streaming and gaming competing for attention
- Rising customer expectations on value
- Government support thinning, costs rising

Venues have the assets but need better models to commercialise underutilised revenue streams today

UNDERUTILISED REVENUE STREAMS

The biggest underutilised assets today



Key Takeaways

- Every venue has at least two of the underutilised revenue streams
- The opportunity for venues sits inside an existing asset base, but the gap lies in the commercial models
- These underutilised revenue streams present as the most immediate opportunity for the industry and one that will require internal capability building in the short to medium term

The most common actions to increase utilisation are consistent across the industry but structural barriers are holding venues back

ACTIONS AND BARRIERS TO INCREASING ASSET UTILISATION

Actions

- 01** Attracting New Event Types
- 02** Improving booking and sales processes
- 03** Community programming and local partnerships
- 04** Growing non-event day revenue
- 05** Packaging spaces with services

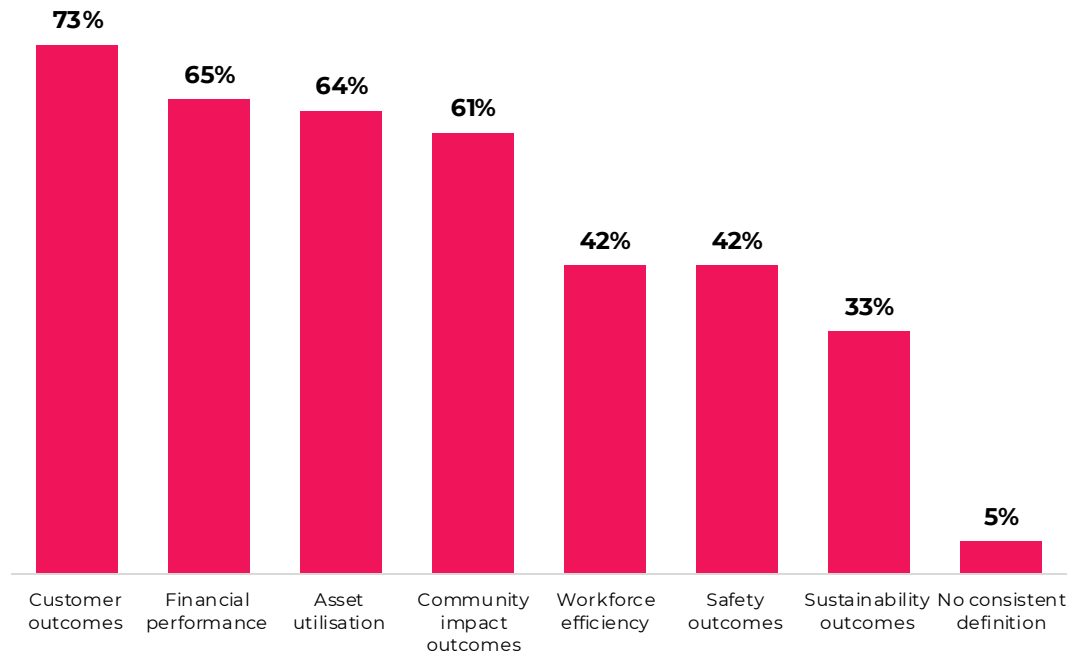
Barriers

- 01** Fit-for-purpose spaces
- 02** Content pipeline / promoter demand
- 03** Staff availability
- 04** Capital constraints
- 05** Governance constraints

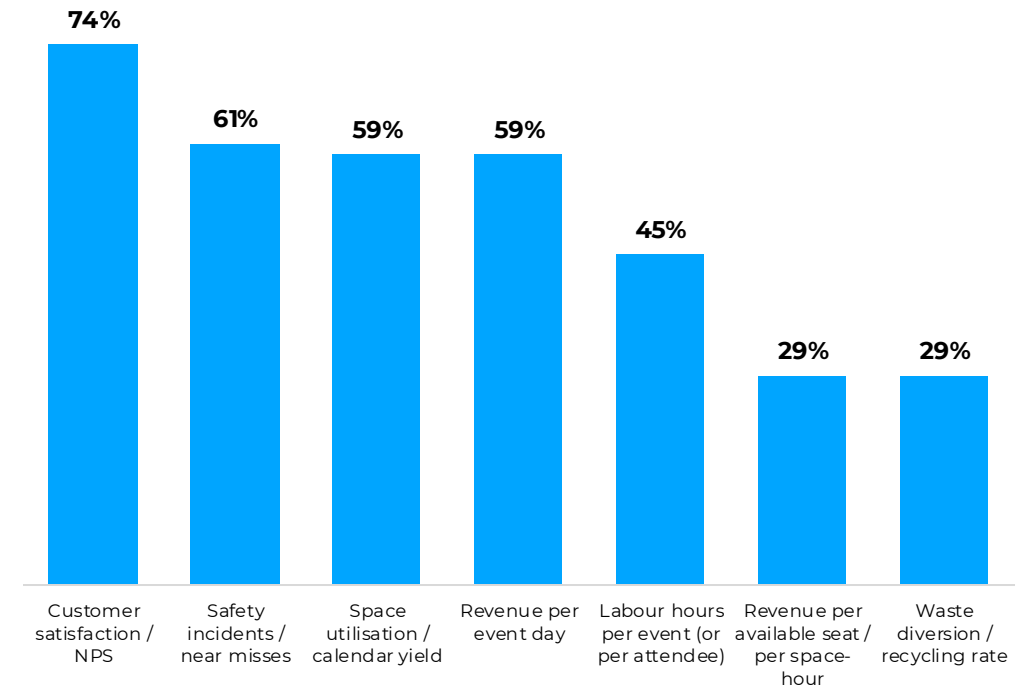
The customer is the strongest organising principle in the industry; it defines productivity and is actively measured

DEFINING AND TRACKING VENUE PRODUCTIVITY

How venues are defining productivity



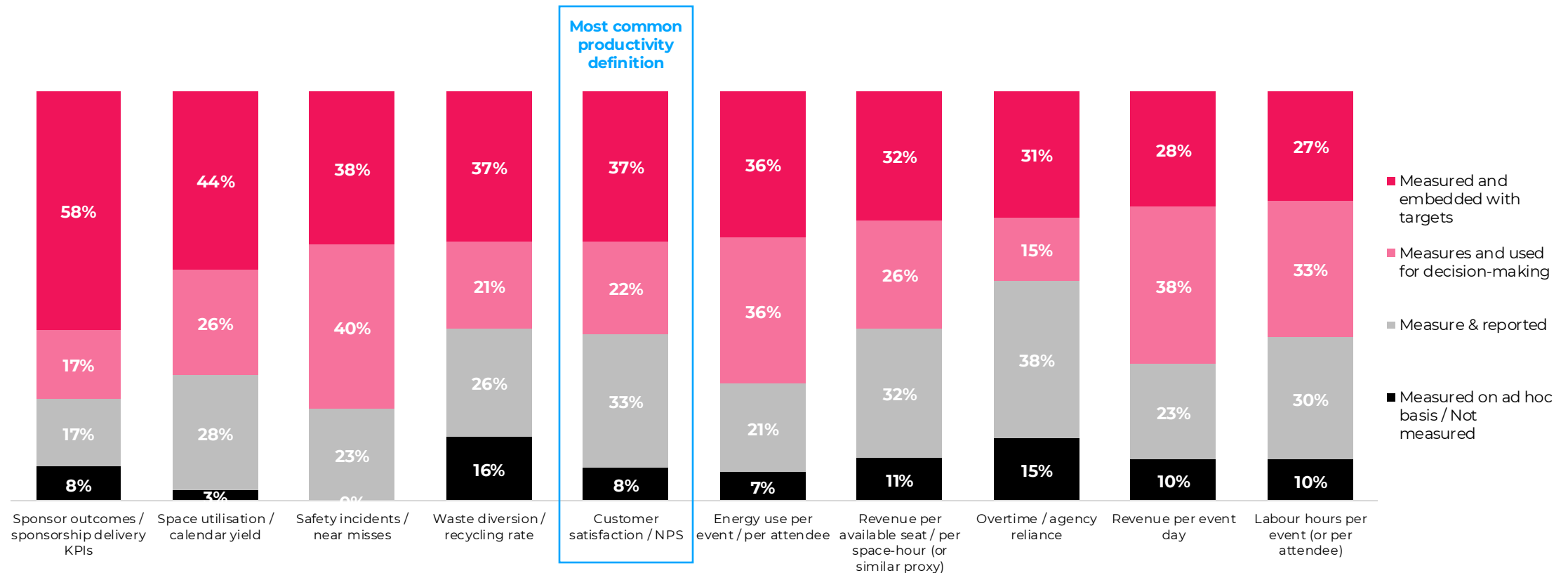
Productivity-related KPIs venues track and review (top selected)



Source: Gemba x VMA Venues Industry Research

However, the industry is often measuring to report and make decisions, but productivity measurement isn't always embedded with targets

MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY



Source: Gemba x VMA Venues Industry Research

Winning venues are moving from CX measurement to management

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE LEARNINGS



Everything is being tailored – segments and offerings are purposively built



Winning venues plan proactively



Customer experience is moving from measurement to management

Key Takeaways

- The leading venues are shifting from measuring the customer to managing the customer
- Building offers for defined audiences and planning ahead rather than reacting.
- AI is enabling venues to make real-time decisions that impact customer experience in the moment



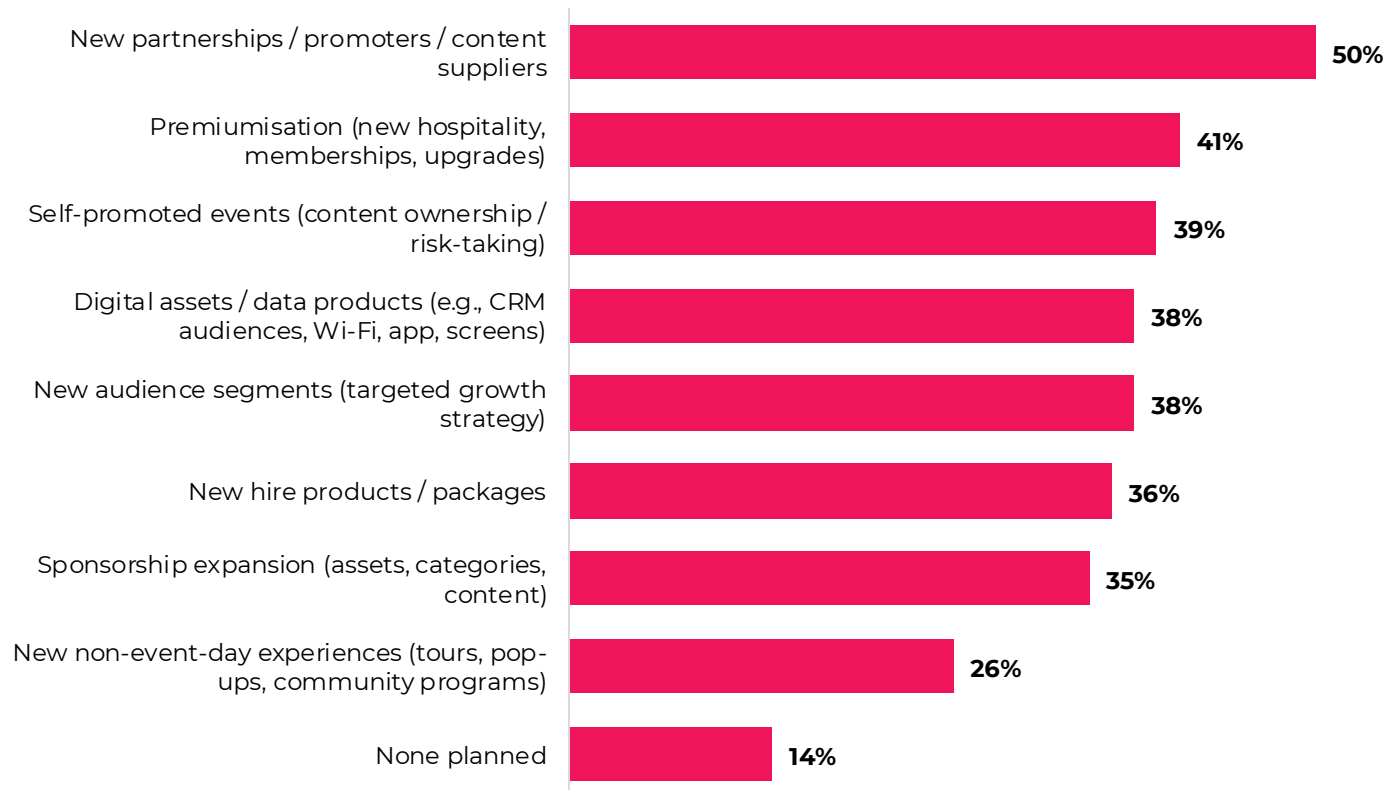
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REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

04

Venues are facing an *innovation scramble*; multiple innovation plays at once, making it difficult to focus and prioritise

KEY DIVERSIFICATION PLAYS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

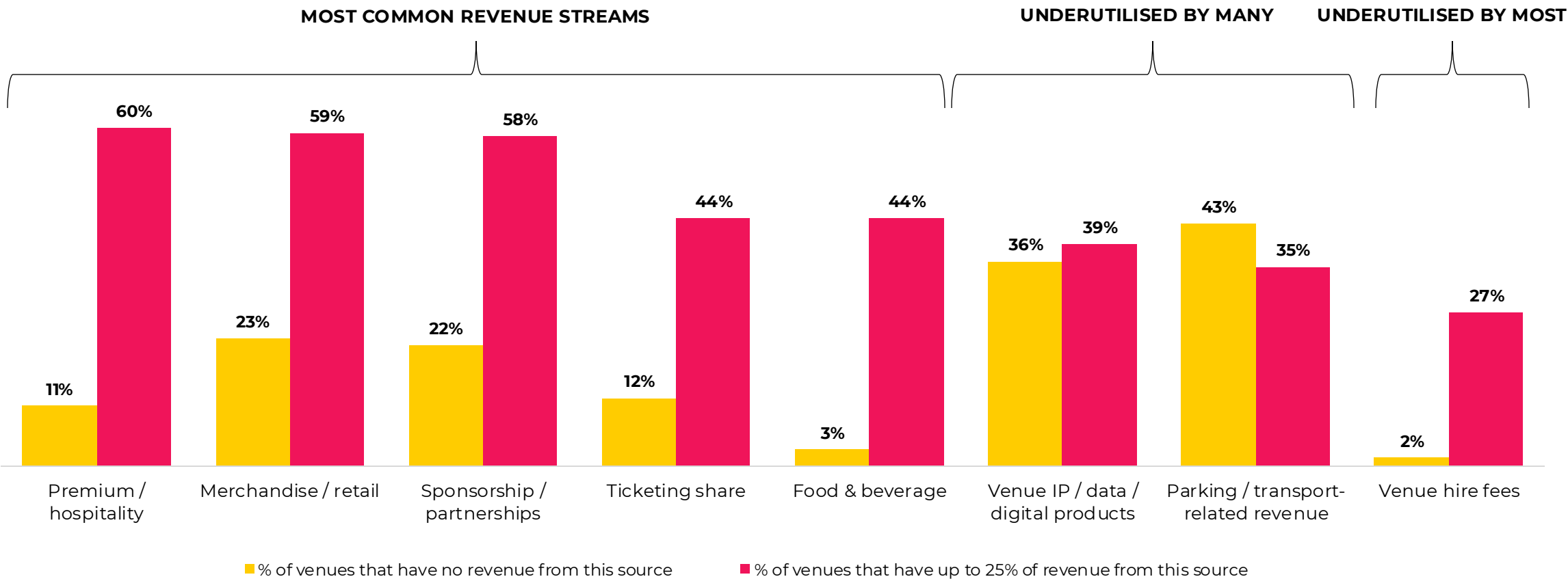


Key Takeaways

- Parity in results points to a scramble among the industry
- Venues aren't laser focused on a few diversification plays, they are trying to do multiple things at once which has the potential to impact productivity and impact
- Venues should pick a few innovation initiatives to focus on and resource properly

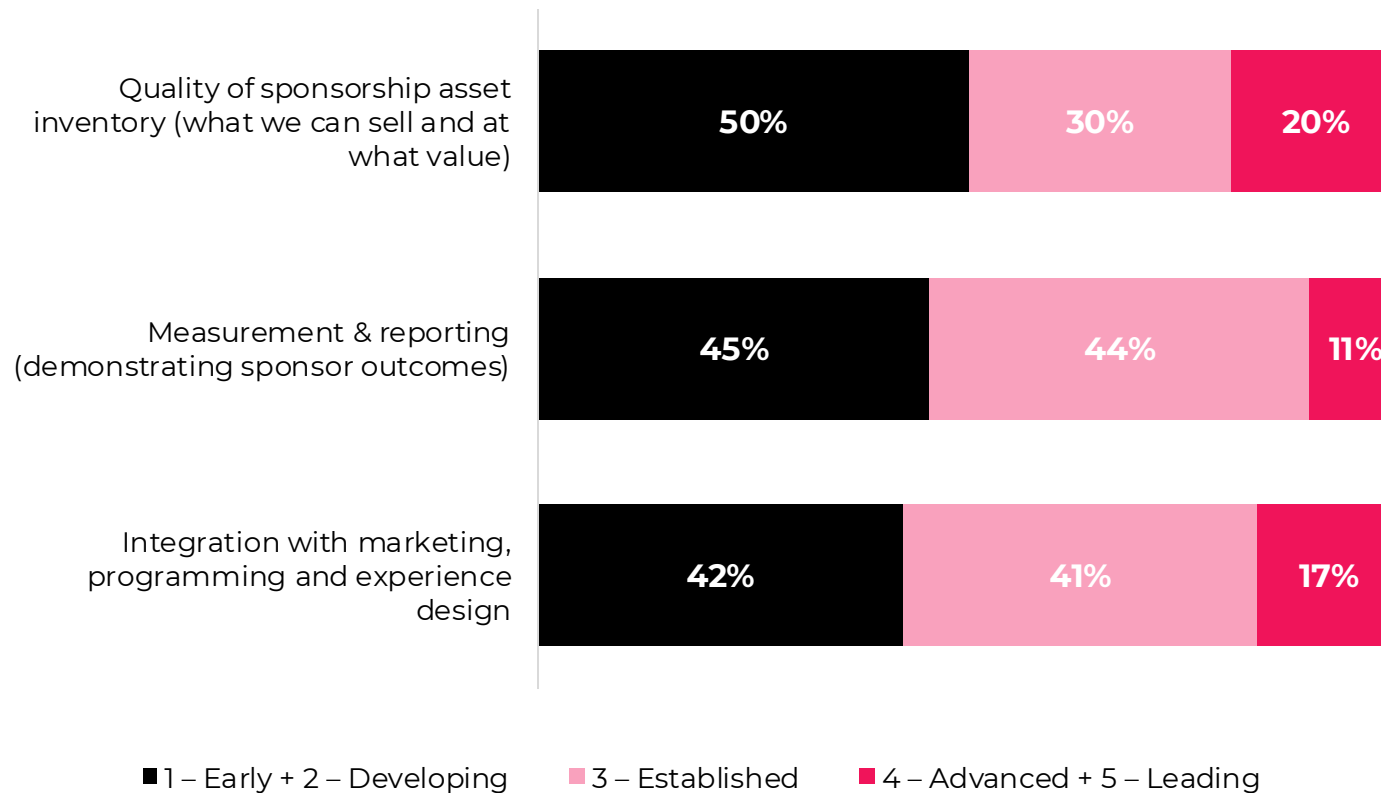
Venues own the sponsorship inventory but aren't necessarily selling it well enough

WHERE VENUE REVENUE IS COMING FROM



Building sponsorship capability over the next 18-24 months is a key opportunity for venues

SELF-REPORTED SPONSORSHIP CAPABILITY

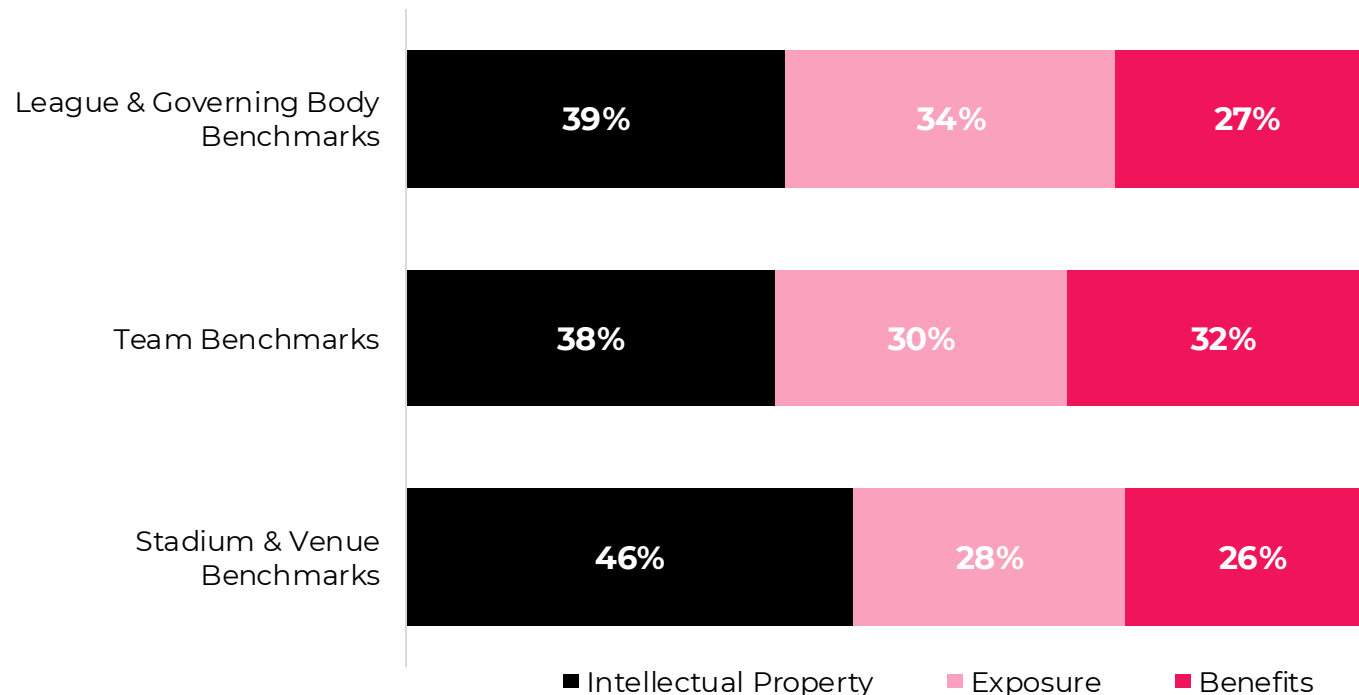


Key Takeaways

- The industry has an opportunity to improve its sponsorship capability and maximise revenue from associated streams
- The first part is knowing what makes up the value of sponsorship packages and how to price assets accordingly
- Growth over the next 18-24 months is hiding in this area. The inventory is available to venues but the capability to sell it and commercialise isn't there yet

Our Turnstile product data shows venue sponsorship value is led by Intellectual Property, accounting for 46% of total deal value

GEMBA BENCHMARKS: STRUCTURING VENUE SPONSORSHIP DEALS



Key Takeaways

- Venue sponsorships are more heavily weighted towards Intellectual Property than other asset classes
- Robust Intellectual Property valuation is critical to maximising sponsorship revenue potential
- Benefits value for venues is concentrated in three core areas: Tickets & Hospitality (40%), Digital, Social & Email Marketing (20%), and Use of Facilities (12%)



To learn more about our Turnstile product, click here



Venues are targeting premium audiences, but premiumisation only works if the experience is already worth it

AUDIENCE AND EXPERIENCES

TOP PRIORITIES

Who Venues are Courting

- **Premium customers (61%)**
(despite recognition that demand change isn't as strong)
- Corporate (45%)
- Youth (36%)
- Regional/ event tourists (33%)
- Community groups (29%)
- Cultural communities (24%)
- Families (20%)



Repeat Visitation Drivers

- **In-venue experience (79%)**
- Pricing and value (67%)
- Ease of access (64%)
- Program quality (56%)
- F&B (44%)
- Safety and comfort (29%)
- Comms and marketing (24%)
- Membership and loyalty offers (18%)

We find that most venues jump straight to designing the offer before they've defined the audience or set up the means to measure it

CASE STUDY: HOW GEMBA IS HELPING VENUES, EVENTS AND RIGHTSHOLDERS UNDERSTAND THEIR AUDIENCES

01

Define

- Who are we designing offers and products for? 86% research before visiting (Gemba data)
- Why are we designing? Opportunities exist beyond the event
- Who should we not design for?

CASE STUDY



- Gemba has just completed a data-driven customer segmentation & personas for Marvel Stadium
- The work will form the foundation for experience design across stadium & precinct

02

Design

- What products are we designing to meet audience needs? 40% slow service is most common frustration (Gemba data)

CASE STUDY



- Gemba's segmentation was used to design the precinct and drive development of a Membership product to serve specific segments
- It is now driving the re-design of the Food & Beverage offering of the Australian F1 GP

03

Embed & Track

- How are we embedding our customer segments?
- How are we tracking customer experience and measuring success?

CASE STUDY



- Gemba built Arsenal's fan segmentation
- We have mapped the segments to their data-warehouse
- We have created data science models to drive personalised recommendations for content and offers tailored to segments

To learn more about how Gemba helps rights holders understand their Fans, click here



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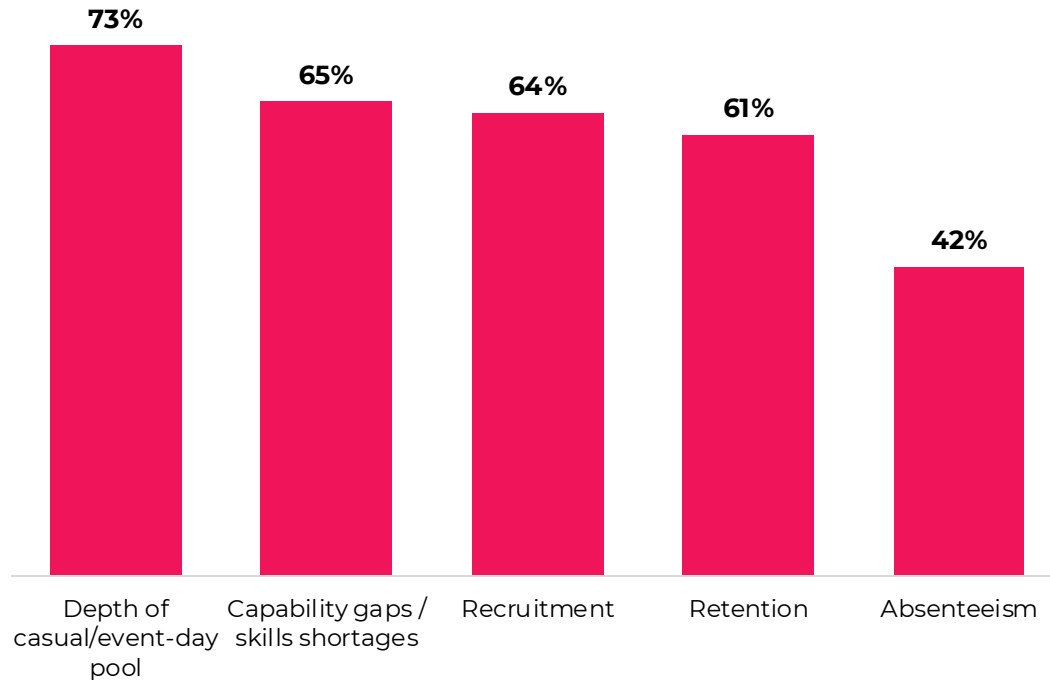
WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

05

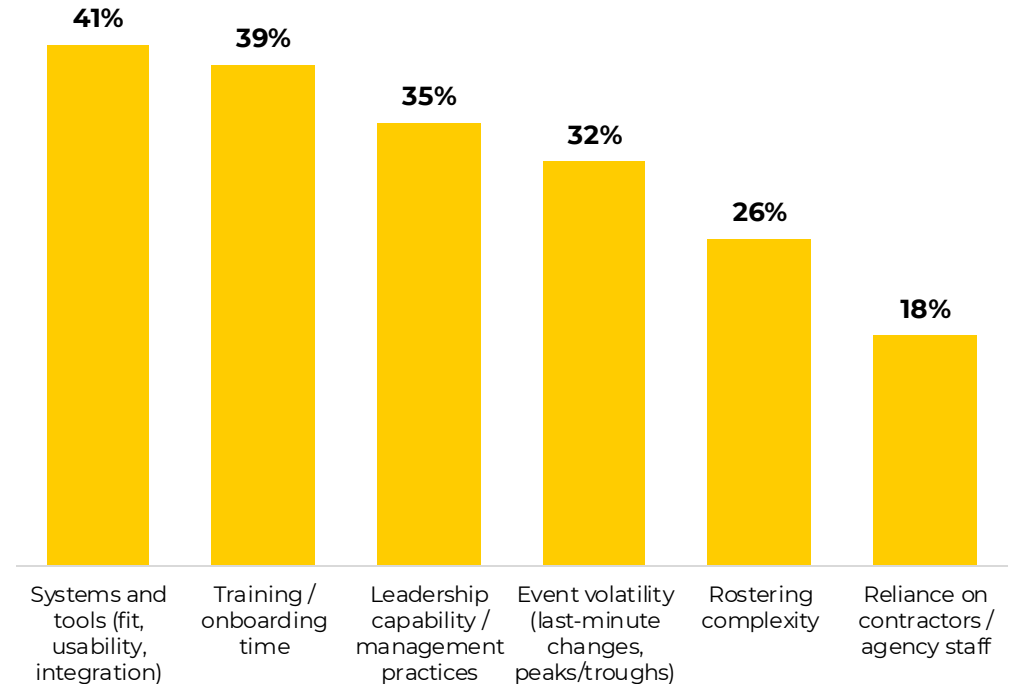
The workforce challenge is less about headcount and more about capability, systems and tools

WORKFORCE PRESSURES AND PRODUCTIVITY HITS

Biggest workforce pressures



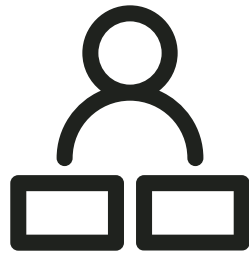
Biggest hits to workforce productivity



Source: Gemba x VMA Venues Industry Research

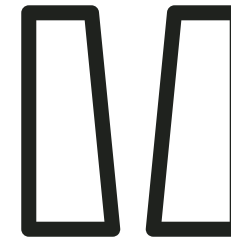
Workforce foundations are strong; strategies and technology are set but the ability to implement and utilise isn't built yet

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE



Teams and Culture are Built

- The industry reported strong self-management (76% agree)
- Teams collaborate well (73%)
- Leaders set clear priorities (68%)
- People are empowered to make decisions (64%)



The Defining Gap

- Only **45%** are confident their teams have the right skills to adopt new technology and data-led ways of working

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SMART OPS AND DATA

06

Venues are strong on productivity definition but weaker on execution; this is where the opportunity lies

SUMMARY OF THE PRODUCTIVITY GAP

What Venues Measure

- Customer outcomes and satisfaction
- Financial performance and margins
- Asset utilisation and calendar yield
- Workforce efficiency
- Community impact

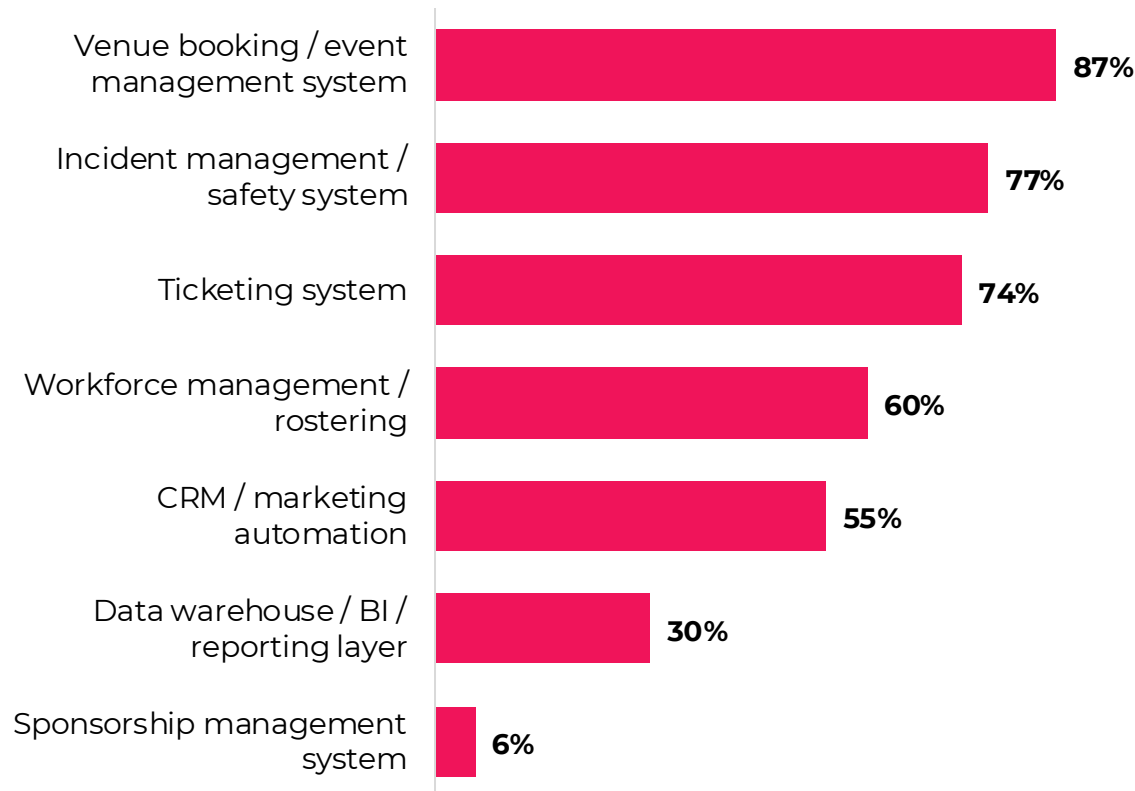


The Gap

- Confidence in measurement: rated only 6.7 out of 10
- Data integration maturity: rated just 2.4 out of 5
- Only 30% of venues have a data warehouse
- AI: 38% piloting, 34% operational, just 4% embedded (noting institutional restrictions)

Many of the systems are there but data isn't integrated which can impact decision-making quality

CORE SYSTEMS VENUES HAVE IN PLACE



2.4/5

Rating on data integration across ticketing / CRM / operations / sponsorship

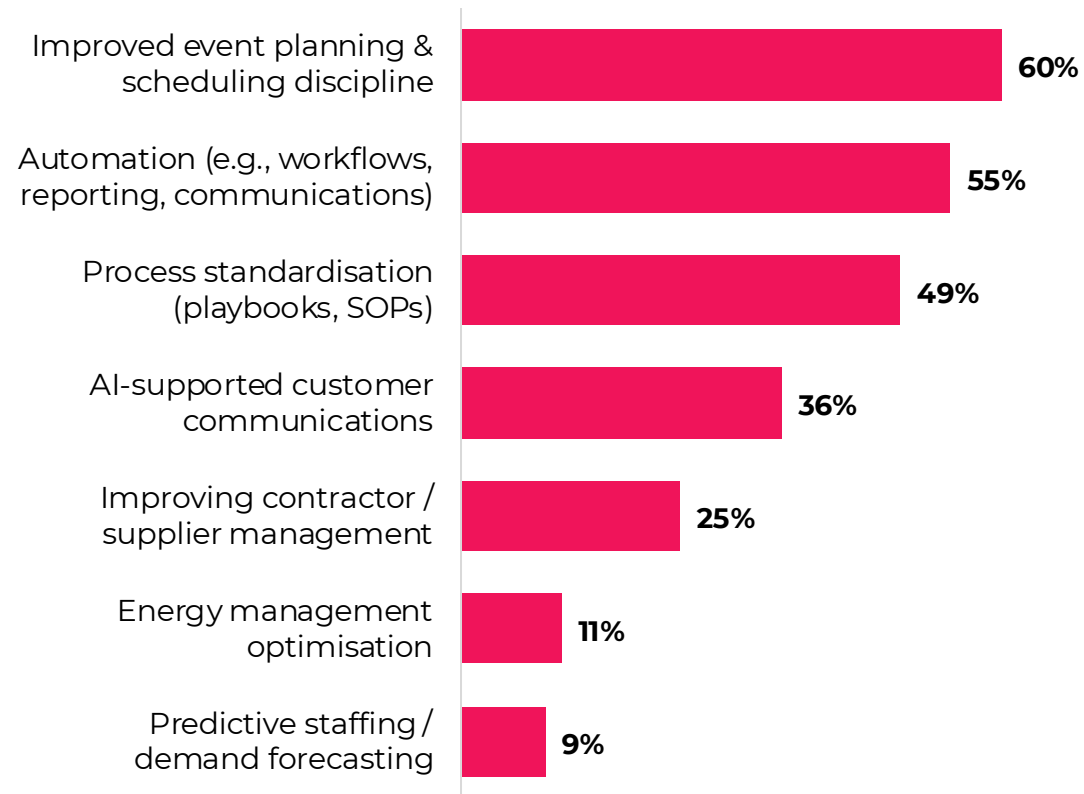
Key Takeaways

- In most venues, systems aren't talking to each other, leaving data stuck in silos.
- Disconnected data is a hindrance to better decision making.
- Venues need to build from the bottom up: integrate data first and then look to automation efficiencies

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Data isn't integrated, but initiatives may be acting like it is

OPERATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY MEASURES CURRENTLY UNDERWAY OR PLANNED



Source: Gemba x VMA Venues Industry Research



We are currently working with major venues to help optimise yield

CASE STUDY: HOW OUR CLIENTS ARE OPTIMISING YIELD

venues. new south wales

- Post-event profitability reporting & analysis
- Event revenue & cost driver analysis

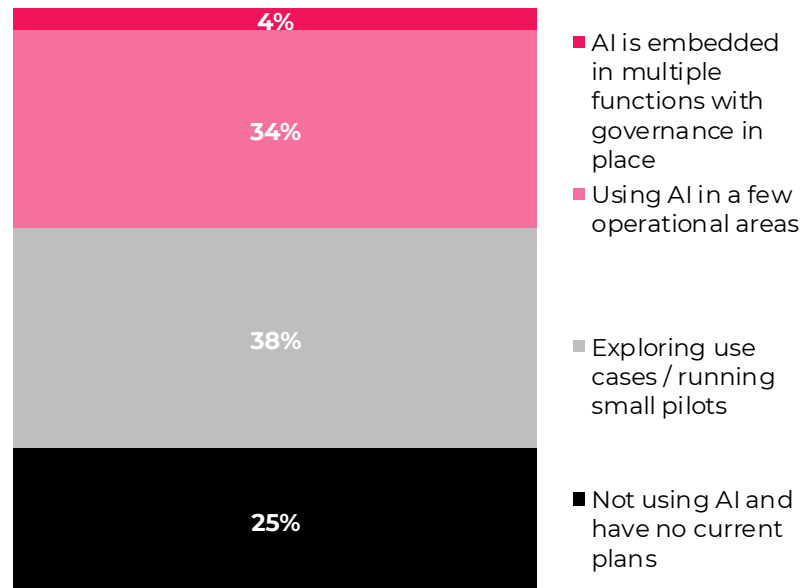
MELBOURNE PARK

- Event profitability evaluation & reporting
- Identification of major profit drivers & KPIs to target
- Priority commercial metrics for event acquisition & commercial negotiation

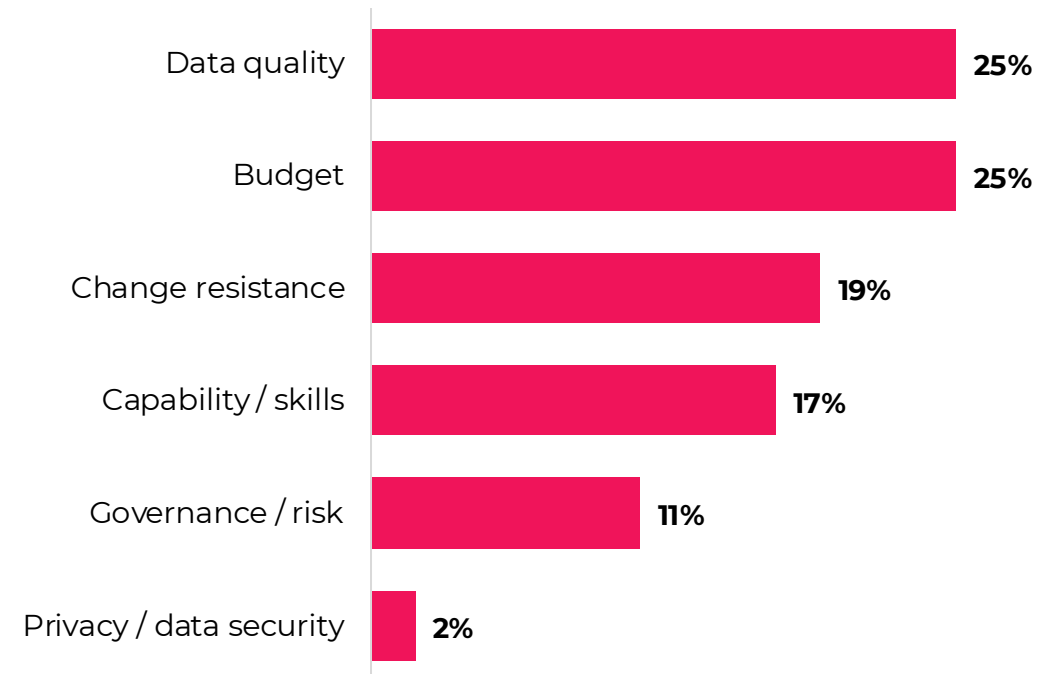
The relatively low rate of AI embedment provides opportunity for the industry to build the data foundations first

AI ADOPTION AND BARRIERS

AI adoption in venues



Barriers to AI adoption



The better performing venues are implementing the same strategies better with a focus on integration and discipline

WHAT THE TOP QUARTILE OF VENUES ARE DOING DIFFERENTLY

THE TOP 22 (HIGH CONFIDENCE ON OWN PRODUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT: $\geq 8/10$)

Yield-led calendar management



Choose events on margin, not volume

Customer experience is a core focus



Number 1 priority for these venues

Data warehouse and integrated analytics in place



Moving towards single source of truth across the venue

Stronger focus on AI-supported operations



Building the foundations to enable AI integration

Workforce planning treated as strategy



Capability, rostering, retention as a system

A few prioritised diversification bets, not eight



Focus and execute, not experiment everywhere



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ABOUT GEMBA **07**

We help rights holders and brands unlock and commercialise the passion of Fans

FAN FOCUSED | RESULTS DRIVEN

UNDERSTANDING THE PASSION OF FANS

In a Sport & Entertainment world that is increasingly competitive and fragmented, Fan insights are critical. We provide insights from a broad range of sources to give our clients the best understanding of Fans.

FAN RESEARCH

FAN DATA & ANALYTICS

DELIVERING AND MEASURING RESULTS

We deliver and measure results for our clients. Whether it be better commercial or participation results, this is our ultimate proof-point of shaping a better future for Sport & Entertainment.

TICKETING & HOSPITALITY

SPONSORSHIP

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

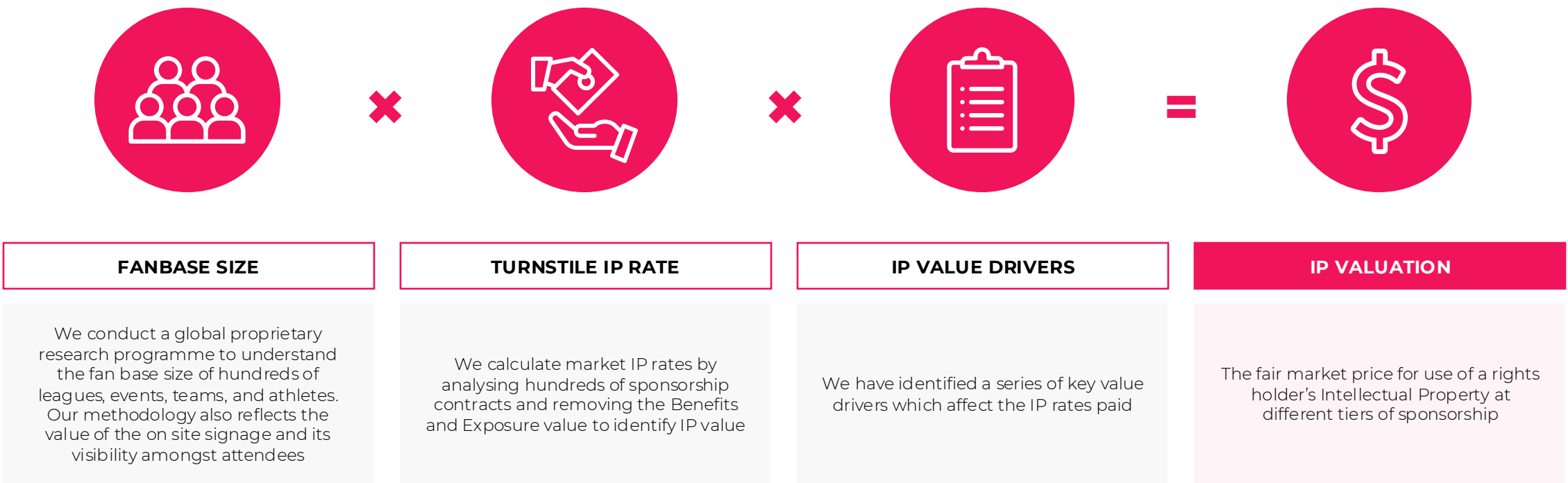
RETAIL & LICENSING

COMPETITION STRUCTURE

PARTICIPATION

Our Turnstile Intellectual Property valuations are the global market leader

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY VALUATION METHODOLOGY



Gemba works with venues, events and sports organisations across the globe; we partnered with VMA to create an important industry snapshot

GEMBA OVERVIEW

Our Services



Commercial Strategy



Research & Insights



Sponsorship Strategy & Valuations



Data & Analytics



Venues & Facilities



Marketing Campaign Delivery

Our Venues And Events Clients



FIFA

OPTUS
STADIUM

MARVEL
STADIUM

啟德體育園
KAI TAK
SPORTS PARK



AUSTRALIAN
GRAND PRIX
CORPORATION



venues.
new south wales



MELBOURNE PARK

skySTADIUM



VENUES
ŌTAUHAHI



OUR CLIENTS

We partner with a fantastic group of rightsholders, venues and events in Sport & Entertainment



MELBOURNE PARK



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