CLOUD NATIVE DAYS ITALY

A GUIDE FOR SPONSORS

PROOF OF PRESENCE

Why companies that want developers' attention should invest in in-person community events

Published by the Cloud Native Days Italy organizers
November 2026 · cloudnativedaysitaly.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SHORT VERSION

Companies that want developers' attention should put more of their budget into in-person community events.

AI has made content cheap to produce, and people trust online content less than before. Developers in particular check what they read and rely on the advice of people they trust. Meeting them in person is one of the few channels where trust is built directly.

B2B budgets are already moving this way. Marketers plan to spend more on in-person events, and the formats growing fastest are small events and workshops.

47%

of B2B technology buyers trust online resources less than a year earlier, up from 39%.

TrustRadius 2026 [1]

62.2%

of B2B marketers plan to invest more in in-person events in 2026.

B2BMX 2026 [2]

2 in 3

organizations plan more workshops, roundtables and structured networking.

Forrester 2026 [3]

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The guide combines public research from 2025 and 2026 with the experience of community event organizers who also work as senior practitioners in developer relations, community and marketing.

Chapters 1 to 3 cover the research. Chapters 4 to 6 explain what makes community events different, how to choose one and how to sponsor it. Chapter 7 is a case study.

CONTENTS

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 MORE CONTENT, LESS TRUST

02 WHY PERSON-TO-PERSON CONVERSATIONS MATTER

03 BUDGETS ARE MOVING TO IN-PERSON EVENTS

04 WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY EVENTS DIFFERENT

05 HOW TO CHOOSE AN EVENT

06 HOW TO SPONSOR AND MEASURE RESULTS

07 CASE STUDY: CLOUD NATIVE DAYS ITALY

Sources are listed at the end. Numbers in brackets, like [1], refer to them.



CHAPTER 01

MORE CONTENT, LESS TRUST

About half of new online articles are now AI-generated, and tech companies use generative AI more than most industries. Developers have reacted by trusting less of what they read and relying more on people they know.

MORE CONTENT, MUCH OF IT AI-GENERATED

Graphite sampled 55,400 English-language articles from Common Crawl[4]. Before ChatGPT launched in November 2022, almost none were primarily AI-generated. A year later the share was 35.9%, and since early 2025 it has stayed close to 50%.

In McKinsey's 2025 survey, 55% of technology companies used generative AI regularly in marketing and sales, against 42% across all industries[5]. Across B2B marketing, 95% of marketers say their organization uses AI tools, but only 39% say it has improved their content's performance[6].

TRUST IS FALLING

The share of AI-generated articles has stopped growing, probably because they perform poorly in search[4]. The damage to trust is already done.

In June 2026, Cynthia Dunlop, Sr. Director of Content Strategy at ScyllaDB, surveyed 668 developers and readers of tech blogs about AI-written posts[7]. The sample is self-selected, but the results are clear. Almost all respondents care whether a post is AI-written, most stop reading as soon as they suspect it, and many avoid the author afterwards.

Developers distrusted vendor marketing long before AI, and AI content has added to that distrust. In TrustRadius's 2026 survey of 1,862 technology buyers, 47% trust online resources less than a year earlier, up from 39%[1].

HOW DEVELOPERS CHOOSE TOOLS

Developers have a real say in what their companies buy. In Stack Overflow's 2026 survey, 59.5% influence tool choices, 48.2% evaluate, recommend or shortlist tools, and 17.7% make the final purchase decision[8].

72%

of developers trust the people they work with most, ahead of the code (63%) and documentation (60%).

Stack Overflow 2026 [8]

48%

trust AI output only when they can easily verify it.

Stack Overflow 2026 [8]

6.6%

would trust AI with an important decision.

Stack Overflow 2026 [8]

CHAPTER 02

WHY PERSON-TO-PERSON CONVERSATIONS MATTER

People trust a signal more when it is hard to fake. A well-written whitepaper used to show that a company understood its field. Today that expertise can be "produced" in minutes. A conversation with an engineer who knows the subject can't.

PEERS ARE THE SOURCE BUYERS TRUST

Reddit and SurveyMonkey surveyed 1,202 US business decision-makers between December 2025 and January 2026[9]. 73% trust peer recommendations when evaluating a purchase, against 55% for vendor websites and 39% for AI chatbots.

TrustRadius found that demos, free trials, buyers' own experience and peer reviews influence purchases most, and vendor marketing content least[1]. In a Gartner survey of 645 B2B buyers, 69% said they ask a salesperson to confirm information they got from AI[10].

At a community event, a sponsor's engineers talk with practitioners as peers. Over time, they become part of the network those practitioners turn to.

TRUST FOLLOWS PEOPLE, NOT BRANDS

Studies show that the same request is far more effective in person than by email, because people find it hard to trust someone they can't see[12].

B2B marketing is moving in the same direction. Companies are shifting social media effort from brand pages to the personal profiles of founders, executives and employees, and paying creators to speak for them. In the LinkedIn-Ipsos 2025 B2B Marketing Benchmark, 55% of B2B marketers already used influencer or creator marketing on LinkedIn, and another 29% planned to start within a year[25]. 45% of B2B brands use their own employees as influencers[26].

> **THE COMMON THREAD**
>
> **These strategies and community events rely on the same thing: buyers trust a person they can identify more than a company. At an event, that person is in the room and can answer questions directly.**

THE EFFECT ON PIPELINE

HockeyStack's analysis of 198 B2B SaaS companies found that leads from in-person events reached the qualified stage at 5.50%, against 4.82% for other marketing channels[13]. In a 2026 Vendelux survey of more than 120 B2B marketing and events leaders, 39% called events their most important revenue channel and 44% called them influential for pipeline albeit hard to measure[13]. The results of a conversation at an event often show up months later.

CHAPTER 03

BUDGETS ARE MOVING TO IN-PERSON EVENTS

B2B marketers are spending more on in-person events in 2026, while overall marketing budgets are flat or shrinking. Most of the growth is in small events and workshops.

62.2%

of B2B marketers plan to invest more in in-person events and trade shows in 2026, the top channel, ahead of the website.

B2BMX 2026 [2]

+10.9%

change in US event budgets for 2025/26.

B2B Events Intelligence Report 2026 [14]

40.8%

of exhibitors' marketing spend goes to B2B exhibitions, the largest category.

CEIR 2026 [15]

WHICH FORMATS ARE GROWING

Forrester's 2026 analysis shows organizations choosing smaller events[3]. A majority plan more events under 200 attendees and more networking events, while only 18% plan more large events. Two-thirds plan more workshops, roundtables and structured networking.

CLOUD NATIVE EVENTS

KubeCon + CloudNativeCon Europe 2026 in Amsterdam had nearly 13,500 attendees, its largest edition so far[16]. CNCF has also added regional KubeCons in Japan and India, and both sold out registration and sponsorship[17].

Attendance at CNCF's Kubernetes Community Days (KCDs) grew 3.5% in 2025, to more than 10,500[17]. Several KCDs, including those in Italy, France, Spain, Romania and Belgium, now run as independent Cloud Native Days and are growing fast.

BEYOND CLOUD NATIVE

Google Developer Groups ran 790 DevFest events in 114 countries in 2025, up from more than 565 in 2024[21]. DevOpsDays, a community-run series that started with one event in Ghent in 2009, has since been held in 162 cities with more than 150,000 participants[22]. The community-maintained listing developers.events counts about 2,470 developer conferences for 2026[23].

TAKEAWAY

Companies are running fewer events of their own, but community-organized events keep drawing large and growing audiences.

CHAPTER 04

WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY EVENTS DIFFERENT

Talks, workshops, booths and hallway conversations happen at any tech conference. What differs at a community event is the setting, and that changes how attendees behave.

A VENDOR-NEUTRAL SPACE

Community events are organized by volunteers, usually as non-profits, and no single company owns them. A program committee selects talks from an open call for papers. Sponsor slots, where they exist, are separate and labelled.

ATTENDEES COME TO HEAR FROM PEERS, NOT TO BE SOLD TO.

So they speak openly about their problems, the tools they've dropped and what they're evaluating. These are the most useful conversations a sponsor can have, and they happen because nobody feels they're in a sales meeting.

Sponsors who respect this setting are treated as part of the community. A company that contributes a workshop, a talk on a real problem or engineers at the booth builds relationships that outlast the event. Attendees return the following year, meet again at local meetups and remember who helped them.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE COMMUNITY

Community events don't have the marketing budgets or full-time teams of commercial conferences. Their attendance, speaker submissions and partner communities can't be bought with advertising. They grow only if practitioners know the event, recommend it and want to take part.

For a sponsor, these figures measure how well known and trusted an event is among the people it wants to reach. Growth in call-for-papers submissions is a particularly strong signal, because it shows practitioners consider the stage worth earning.

CHAPTER 05

HOW TO CHOOSE AN EVENT

Community events vary a lot in quality. Before committing a budget, check these six things.

1. **Past editions**
   An event run several times by the same people is more likely to happen as planned.

2. **Growth**
   Rising attendance and call-for-papers submissions show practitioners value the event.

3. **Published data**
   Attendance, seniority and satisfaction figures let you check the audience before paying.

4. **Returning sponsors**
   Companies that sponsor again have already judged the results.

5. **Organizers**
   Organizers with roles in the ecosystem, such as CNCF Ambassadors, maintainers and meetup leads, bring contacts and a quality bar.

6. **Partnerships**
   Ties with local meetups, open source projects and other events extend the event's reach.

WARNING SIGNS

No data from past editions · vague audience numbers · paid talks presented as regular talks · dates or venue still unconfirmed close to the event · no clear sponsor contact.

CHAPTER 06

HOW TO SPONSOR AND MEASURE RESULTS

The sponsors who get the most out of community events take part in them rather than only placing a logo.

BEFORE

- Pick one main goal: hiring, product adoption, brand awareness or product feedback.
- Choose the package and extras that match it, for example a workshop for adoption or the job board for hiring.
- Build workshops around a problem attendees actually have, not a product tour.
- Announce your participation on social, email and community channels, from both company and employee accounts.

DURING

- Send engineers, not only sales staff. The event doubles as a short offsite for your team.
- Prioritize relationships over demos. The demos will follow.
- At the booth, ask about attendees' work instead of pitching.
- Give people something they can use: lab instructions, a reference sheet, a working example.
- Attend talks and spend time in the community area.

AFTER

- Follow up within a week with something useful, not an automated sales sequence.
- Share your workshop material and a short summary.
- Tell the organizers what worked and what didn't.
- Decide early whether to come back. Returning sponsors are more recognizable to attendees.

WHAT TO MEASURE

GOAL	WHAT TO MEASURE
Adoption	Workshop attendance, sign-ups or trials from the event, follow-up conversations
Hiring	Applications through the job board or QR codes, candidates who mention the event, hires within 6–12 months
Brand awareness	Booth conversations, social media mentions, inbound contacts that mention the event
Product feedback	Notes from workshop and booth conversations, issues or feature requests raised
Sales pipeline	Opted-in leads, meetings booked, opportunities over the following two quarters

Results from community events build over time. Evaluate a sponsorship over at least two editions.

CHAPTER 07 · CASE STUDY

CLOUD NATIVE DAYS ITALY

A non-profit event organized by the Italian Cloud Native and Kubernetes community. The same community has run it since 2022, first as Kubernetes Community Days Italy. The 2027 edition is the fifth.



THE 2026 EDITION

285+ +27% Attendees	**60%** First-time attendees	**228** +68% CFP submissions	**49** +44% Speakers
60 Workshop participants, across 4 workshops	**15** +36% Sponsors	**29** +100% Partner communities	**117** Companies represented, from 18 countries

Change vs 2025. Source: Cloud Native Days Italy 2026 Transparency Report [24].

WHO'S IN THE ROOM



10% 24% mid

62% of attendees described themselves as senior, 24% as mid-level and 10% as junior; the rest didn't answer. The event gave €7,000 in ticket discounts to community members, education and other organizations.

WHAT ATTENDEES SAY

Attendees rated sessions and speakers from 1 to 5. Sessions averaged **4.70** and speakers **4.71**, with about 95% of ratings at 4 or 5. The four workshops, free for attendees, averaged **4.75**.

CHAPTER 07 · CASE STUDY

CHECKED AGAINST CHAPTER 5

How Cloud Native Days Italy measures up against the six checks.

Past editions
Run by the same community since 2022. 2027 is the fifth edition.

Growth
In 2026: attendees +27%, CFP submissions +68%, speakers +44%, partner communities doubled to 29.

Published data
Public transparency report for 2026, covering attendance, audience, speakers, workshops, satisfaction, diversity and social reach.

Returning sponsors
The main sponsors, Clastix, Desotech, ReeVo, Seacom and SparkFabrik, support every edition.

Organizers
Six CNCF Ambassadors involved, plus people from companies that are members of and contributors to CNCF, the Linux Foundation and European cloud native communities.

Partnerships
29 partner communities and open source projects in 2026, and ties with Italian meetups and other European community events.

SOURCES

SOURCES AND METHOD

Figures in chapters 1 to 3 come from public sources accessed in November 2026, and figures in chapter 7 from the event's 2026 transparency report. Chapters 4 to 6 are based on the authors' experience as organizers and practitioners. Some surveys use self-selected samples, and the AI-content studies rely on detection tools; the text notes this where relevant.

[1] TrustRadius / HG Insights, 2026 B2B Buying Disconnect Report, 1,862 buyers. hginsights.com/blog/trust-more-verify-everything-what-t...

[2] Demand Gen Report, The 2026 B2BMX Insights Benchmark Survey Results. www.demandgenreport.com/resources/the-2026-b2bmx-insigh...

[3] Forrester, The Next Era of B2B Events: Eight Data-Backed Shifts Defining 2026. www.forrester.com/blogs/the-next-era-of-b2b-events-eigh...

[4] Graphite, AI Now Writes as Many Online Articles as Humans Do, 2026. graphite.io/five-percent/research/ai-now-writes-as-many...

[5] McKinsey, Gen AI's broad reach, from The state of AI, March 2025. www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/week-in-charts/gen-a...

[6] Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, 2026 B2B research, 1,015 marketers, as reported by Crossglobe Marketing. crossglobemarketing.com/blogs/b2b-content-marketing-tre...

[7] Cynthia Dunlop, Report: How developers react to AI-scented blog posts, Write that blog!, June 2026, 668 responses. writethatblog.substack.com/p/dev-reaction-to-ai-blog-posts

[8] Stack Overflow 2026 Developer Survey, 30,000+ responses (Work and Knowledge sections; also IT Brief, daily.dev). survey.stackoverflow.co/2026/work/data

[9] Reddit and SurveyMonkey, The Hidden B2B Journey, 1,202 US decision-makers, as reported by Demand Gen Report, March 2026. www.demandgenreport.com/industry-news/news-brief/trust-...

[10] Gartner survey of 645 B2B buyers, May 2026, as reported by Norbelys. norbelys.com/blog/what-buyers-say-about-ai-outreach-202...

[11] Stack Overflow, 2023 Developer Survey insights for advertisers. cdn.stackoverflow.co/files/jo7n4k8s/production/af840c35...

[12] Roghanizad and Bohns, "Ask in person: You're less persuasive than you think over email", Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, vol. 69, 2017. news.westernu.ca/2017/05/study-put-face-request

[13] Vendelux, Event Marketing Statistics 2026, incl. Vendelux 2026 B2B Events Survey and HockeyStack 2025 State of Event Marketing. vendelux.com/event-marketing/event-marketing-statistics

[14] EI-A, B2B Events Intelligence Report 2026. ei-a.com/b2b-events-intelligence-report-2026

[15] CEIR 2026 Marketing Spend Decision Report, as reported by Smart Meetings. www.smartmeetings.com/meeting-planning/180462/ceir-2026...

[16] CNCF, KubeCon + CloudNativeCon Europe 2026 report. www.cncf.io/reports/kubecon-cloudnativecon-europe-2026

[17] CNCF, 2025 Annual Report. www.cncf.io/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/03_CNCF-Annual-R...

[18] CNCF, Mark your calendars: here come the 2025 Kubernetes Community Days, October 2024. www.cncf.io/blog/2024/10/30/mark-your-calendars-here-co...

[19] CNCF, KCD FAQ; Cloud Native Days Spain, formerly KCD Spain. cncf.io/kcds/faq

[20] Cloud Native Days France; previous-edition attendance from Zwindler's 2026 recap. cloudnativedays.fr/en

[21] Google for Developers, DevFest 2025 recap; 2024 figure as reported by GDG Ahlen. developers.google.com/community/devfest

[22] DevOpsDays figures as reported by Relianoid. www.relianoid.com/about-us/events/devopsdays-almaty-2025

[23] developers.events, community-maintained listing, November 2026. developers.events

[24] Cloud Native Days Italy, 2026 Transparency Report. cloudnativedaysitaly.org

[25] LinkedIn and Ipsos, 2025 B2B Marketing Benchmark, as reported by TechnologyChecker.io. technologychecker.io/blog/influencer-marketing-statistics

[26] Marketing Week, State of B2B Marketing 2025, as reported by DSMN8. dsmn8.com/blog/b2b-social-media-statistics

Published by the organizers of Cloud Native Days Italy. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

CLOUD NATIVE DAYS ITALY

SPONSORING CLOUD NATIVE DAYS ITALY 2027

The 2027 dates and venue are confirmed: May 19–20, at the Savoia Hotel Regency in Bologna. May 19 is for hands-on workshops. May 20 has talks, keynotes, the sponsor area and the community area.

PACKAGE	MAIN BENEFITS
Diamond SOLD	Large booth, 30-minute keynote, 15-minute community pitch, keynote greetings, 2 extra items, 5 passes, opted-in leads list
Platinum	Large booth, 15-minute community pitch, keynote greetings, 5 passes, opted-in leads list
Gold	Booth, 10-minute community pitch, roll-up banners on stage, 5 passes, opted-in leads list
Silver	Small booth, job offer board, 2 passes
Supporter	Shared networking point, logo, 1 pass
Hands-on workshop (extra)	3-hour session on May 19, 30–40 seats, 4 slots

Other extras include the coffee station, after-party, speaker dinner, charging station and speaker transfer. For prices and current availability, check the official sponsorship prospectus or contact the organizing team.

LET'S TALK

sponsor@cloudnativedaysitaly.org

Full prospectus at cloudnativedaysitaly.org

LinkedIn CloudNativeDaysItaly
YouTube CloudNativeDaysItaly
Instagram @CloudNativeDaysItaly
Bluesky CloudNativeDaysItaly.org
Threads @CloudNativeDaysItaly
X CNDItaly