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A REPORT FOR PEOPLE WHO RUN ANNUAL CONFERENCES

What Sponsors Buy

More organizers are raising sponsorship and exhibit prices than are gaining buyers, and exhibitors want to know who will be in the room. What is being sold, how it is priced, and who sells it.



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Directors of meetings, association leaders, and exhibit and sponsorship sales teams

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Nine short sections, about 25 minutes to read.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sponsorship revenue is up. Look at what is underneath it.

Most organizers will tell you sponsorship had a good two years, and the surveys agree with them. The same surveys hint at how: more organizers report raising prices than report gaining buyers, and half of the companies paying those prices say their own event budgets are flat. No public source measures how much of the growth is price, which is a reason to measure it yourself. This report puts the organizer's numbers beside the exhibitor's numbers, which are usually read apart. It covers what sponsors and exhibitors are buying now, how it is priced, what they want to know before they sign, and what is and is not known about the people who sell it. Most of the evidence comes from trade shows, where exhibit and sponsorship sales are studied most closely. Where it is applied to an association meeting, the text says so.

Organizers reporting higher sponsorship revenue than two years ago

68%

58% report more sponsors. Lippman Connects and EVOLIO, 2025 study

Exhibitors scaling back sponsorships because of rising costs

45%

EVOLIO with The Exhibitor Advocate, 2025 study

Exhibitors who say events explain the ROI of exhibiting or sponsoring well

16%

Very or extremely effective. Freeman, September 2026 survey

Five findings

1. **More organizers raised prices than gained buyers.** In the Lippman Connects and EVOLIO study of show organizers, 68 percent reported higher sponsorship revenue than two years earlier, up from 41 percent in the 2023 edition, and 58 percent reported more sponsors. Seventy-one percent had raised the price of exhibit space, while 47 percent had more exhibiting companies. These are shares of organizers, not amounts; nobody has published the size of the price rises.[1]

2. **Most buyers' budgets did not rise with it.** Half of exhibitors expect a flat event budget and 15 percent a smaller one, though the 35 percent expecting an increase is up from 25 percent a year earlier. Because of cost, 64 percent are scaling back their presence and 45 percent are scaling back sponsorships. In the preliminary organizer results, 69 percent said their medium and large exhibitors had cut spending over two years, by 21 percent on average.[1,2]

3. **They still buy presence, in a different shape.** Brand awareness is the reason 93 percent of exhibitors give for exhibiting. What changed is the ask: 85 percent of organizers get requests for

custom sponsorships and 83 percent for thought leadership, and 72 percent now say yes to custom requests frequently or always, up from 52 percent a year earlier. The organizer figures are preliminary, from 105 organizers, and the exhibitor figure is preliminary too.[2,13]

4. **The question before the sale is who will be in the room.** In Freeman's September 2026 survey, 56 percent of exhibitors named the types of organizations attending among the information they most want to see. Only 16 percent said events are very or extremely effective at explaining the ROI of exhibiting or sponsoring.[3]

5. **The team that sells it is small, and almost nothing about it is published.** The last public benchmark of exhibit sales team shape is from January 2020. No public source gives salespeople per show, revenue per salesperson, commission or pay.[19,5]

One ask

Before the next prospectus goes out, do two things with records you already hold. Split last year's sponsorship and exhibit revenue into what came from price and what came from the number of buyers. Then write one page that answers "who will be in the room" in the buyer's terms. Section 6 shows both, step by step, for a team of two.

SECTION 1

More price than buyers

1.1 Sponsorship revenue is up, and so is the price

There is a slide most sponsorship leads would be glad to show their board this year. Revenue from sponsors is up on last year, and up again on the year before. The awkward question is the next one: are there more sponsors, or are the same sponsors paying more.

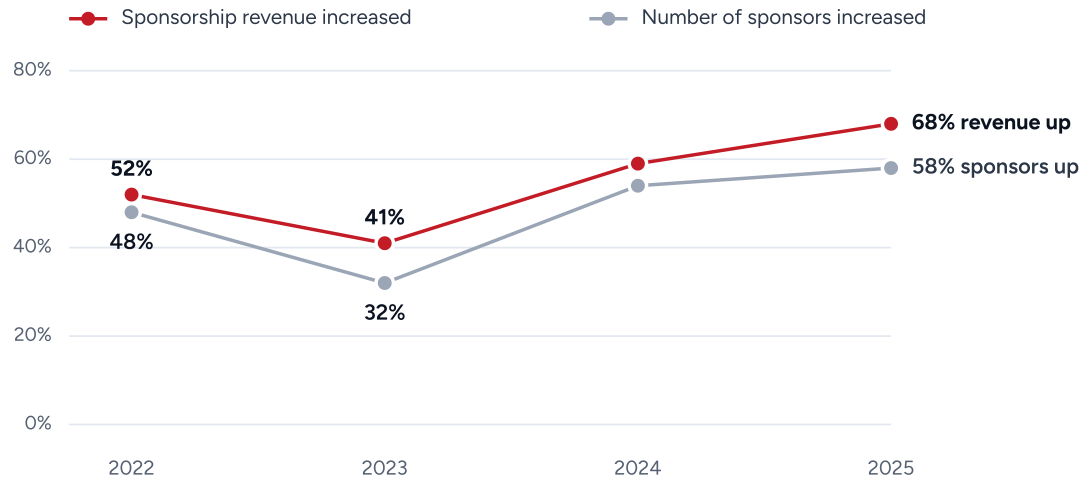
The best public answer comes from a study that Lippman Connects and EVOLIO Marketing have run with show organizers each year since 2022, joined by Trade Show Executive in 2025. EVOLIO publishes the results as one series: the share of organizers whose sponsorship revenue increased over the past 24 months, and the share whose number of sponsors did. The wording and the sample have varied a little between editions, and respondents answer for their largest event. In the 2025 edition, 68 percent of 109 organizers said revenue had increased, the highest share in the four editions. Fifty-eight percent said the number of sponsors had.[1] In every edition more organizers reported revenue growth than reported more sponsors.

Two cautions before reading the chart. These are counts of organizers answering yes, so they say how widespread a change is and nothing about its size. And 68 percent is not unusual on a longer view. A different study, run by Freeman, Lippman Connects and Trade Show Executive before the pandemic, found sponsorship revenue growing at 61, 66, 57 and 60 percent of organizers in its 2017 to 2020 editions.[19] The low point of 41 percent in 2023 is the odd year, not this one.

FIGURE 1

More organizers grew sponsorship revenue than grew their number of sponsors

Share of show organizers answering yes: "In the past 24 months, has your sponsorship revenue increased?" and "has the number of sponsors increased?" By study year.



Source: Lippman Connects and EVOLIO Marketing studies of show organizers, 2022 to 2025 (n = 121, 122, 105, 109), as published in EVOLIO's February 2026 roundup. Respondents are show organizers and their sales staff; the slides do not say how many run association meetings.[1]

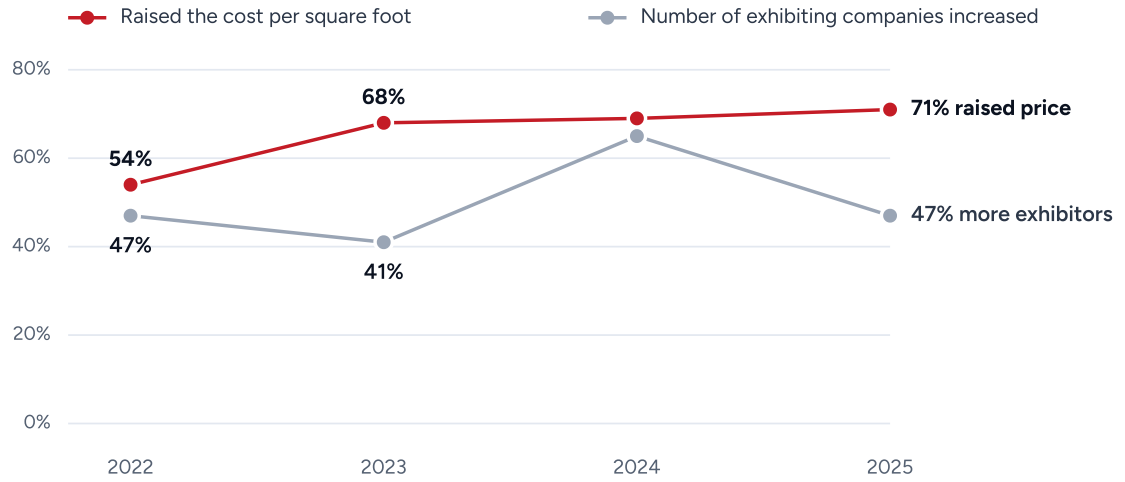
The preliminary results of the 2025 edition, presented in November 2025 when 105 organizers had answered, add some detail. Sixty-six percent had raised sponsorship prices compared with two years before. Fifty-seven percent had more sponsors, and 13 percent had fewer.[2] So most organizers gained sponsors as well as raising prices, and few lost them. What the surveys cannot say is how much of the extra revenue each accounts for. That is the gap this report keeps returning to: price rises are more common than buyer growth, and an organizer's own records are the only place to find out which one is carrying the budget.

Exhibit space tells the same story with a sharper edge. Seventy-one percent of organizers raised their cost per square foot, the fourth edition running in which a majority did. Forty-seven percent had more exhibiting companies, down from 65 percent the year before.[1] In the preliminary results, 44 percent had more exhibiting companies and 24 percent had fewer.[2]

FIGURE 2

More organizers raise space prices than gain exhibiting companies

Share of show organizers answering yes: "In the past 24 months, have you increased your cost per square foot?" and "has the number of exhibiting companies increased?" By study year.



Source: Lippman Connects and EVOLIO Marketing studies of show organizers, 2022 to 2025 (n = 121, 122, 105, 109), as published in EVOLIO's February 2026 roundup.[1]

This matters because of how much of an event's income sits on these two lines. CEIR's 2026 benchmarks for independent business-to-business exhibitions put exhibit sales at 60 percent of revenue, sponsorships at 20 percent and attendance at 16 percent, with an average net margin of 46 percent.[4] The mix is not the same everywhere. For exhibitions of 200,000 net square feet or more, CEIR's head of research told Trade Show Executive that attendee registration fees account for a share of gross revenue "nearly equal to exhibit sales revenue."[5] No public benchmark gives the mix for association annual meetings, where registration usually carries more. For an independent show, though, about four fifths of revenue comes from companies and not from attendees.

1.2 Most buyers' budgets are flat

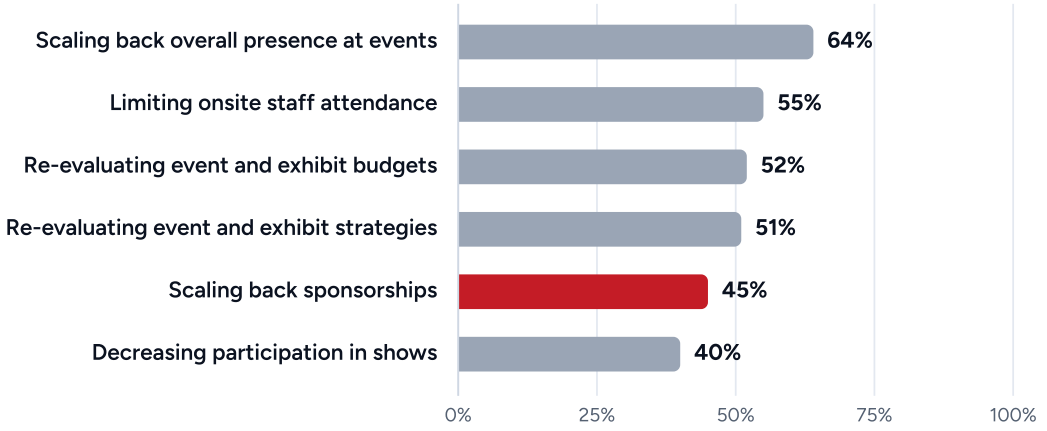
Now read the other side of the invoice. EVOLIO runs a companion study of exhibit and event marketers with The Exhibitor Advocate, a group that represents exhibitors. In the 2025 edition, published in January 2026, 35 percent of exhibitors expected their event budget to rise over the next twelve months, 50 percent expected it to stay the same and 15 percent expected it to fall. A year earlier the figures were 25, 57 and 18.[1,8] The share expecting an increase is up ten points, and EVOLIO's own slide asks whether that is new investment or simply the bill going up. The mood has improved in other ways too: 75 percent rated the value of their event program excellent or good, up from 67 percent, and cost as a top challenge eased from 88 to 80 percent.[1,8] Two thirds of exhibitors still expect a budget that is flat or smaller.

CEIR's Marketing Spend Decision report, a survey of 362 business-to-business exhibitors taken in late 2025, points the same way. Exhibitions take 40.8 percent of exhibitors' marketing budgets, the largest share at every budget size. But most exhibitors described their overall marketing budgets as mostly flat. Forty-seven percent planned the same number of shows in 2026, 28 percent planned to add some, and 83 percent planned to keep their booth the same size.[6] Most exhibitors are staying, and most are not buying more space.

When a flat budget meets a rising price, something is cut, and the exhibitor study asks what. Sixty-four percent are scaling back their overall presence at events. Fifty-five percent are sending fewer staff. Forty-five percent are scaling back sponsorships, and 40 percent are doing fewer shows.[1] These are exhibitors talking about the sponsorships they buy on top of a booth. No survey found for this report covers companies that sponsor without exhibiting.

FIGURE 3 **What exhibitors do when costs rise**

Share of exhibit and event marketers saying that, because of increasing costs, they are doing each of the following. 2025 study.



Source: EVOLIO Marketing with The Exhibitor Advocate, 2025 exhibitor study, as presented in February 2026. The final sample size is not on the slides; the preliminary count in November 2025 was 179 responses.[1,2]

Sponsorship is exposed for a simple reason: it is the part of the budget an exhibitor can drop without leaving the show. In the same study, exhibitors said 28 percent of their event budget goes to exhibit space, 24 percent to show services and 10 percent to shipping. EVOLIO calls that 62 percent "not directly revenue-generating." Sponsorships are 6 percent and marketing 4 percent.[1] CEIR's 2026 study of the exhibit dollar puts space higher, at "roughly 40 cents of every dollar an exhibitor spends," as the chairperson of IAEE summarized it in June 2026.[7] The two surveys draw their cost categories differently and ask different exhibitors, so the figures will not match. They agree on the order: the fixed costs of being there come first, and the money for standing out comes from what is left.

Organizers see it from their side. In the preliminary 2025 results, 69 percent said their medium and large exhibitors had reduced their spending over the past two years, and put the average cut at 21

percent.[2] That is the organizer's estimate of the exhibitor's spending, not the exhibitor's own account, and it should be read that way. Fifty-five percent of exhibitors agree that the increased costs of event marketing are outweighing the investment, about the same as the 54 percent who said so in the 2024 study.[1,13]

WHY ONE REVENUE NUMBER IS NOT ENOUGH

This report's own arithmetic, with round numbers, to show what a total can hide. An event has 50 sponsors paying $10,000 on average: $500,000. It raises prices 10 percent and three sponsors do not come back. Forty-seven sponsors at $11,000 is $517,000. Revenue is up 3.4 percent, and the board slide is green. The buyer's view is different: each of the 47 paid 10 percent more to reach an audience that may be no larger. This is an illustration, not the typical case; in the preliminary 2025 results only 13 percent of organizers had fewer sponsors than two years before. The point is that the total looks the same either way.

1.3 In real terms, and in associations

Two more measures put the growth in proportion. The first is inflation. CEIR's index of the US business-to-business exhibition industry tracks organizer revenue after adjusting for it. For 2025 as a whole the index stood at 93.6, or 6.4 percent below 2019, and real revenues were still more than 10 percent below.[10] Net square feet and exhibitor numbers were the best-performing measures.[11] The most recent quarter read for this report, the third quarter of 2025, had real revenues 18.2 percent below the same quarter of 2019 and exhibitor numbers 5 percent below.[9] CEIR has since published a midyear 2026 index report, which is sold and was not read.

That complicates the story in a useful way. Since 2019 the number of exhibitors has recovered further than revenue has once inflation is taken out, so over six years prices have not kept up with costs. The price rises of the last two years are partly catching up. They are landing, all the same, on buyers whose budgets are mostly flat, and that is the part an organizer has to manage.

The second is the association balance sheet. Naylor's 2026 Association Benchmarking Report, built on 665 responses from senior association staff, found sponsorship's share of non-dues revenue slipping from 29.7 percent to 25.3 percent in a year, while job posting sales nearly tripled from 3.6 to 10 percent. Generating non-dues revenue was the top challenge for the fourth year in a row, named by 51.9 percent, down from 61 percent.[12] A share can fall because sponsorship shrank or because other lines grew, and Naylor reads it as associations diversifying. It is a share of revenue, not a dollar figure, and it should not be quoted as a decline in sponsorship income.

Put together, the evidence does not say sponsorship revenue is falling. It says something more specific. More organizers are raising prices than are gaining buyers, many buyers say they are

trimming, and nobody has published how much of the growth is price. An organizer can answer that for one event in an afternoon.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Take last year's and this year's sponsor lists and put them in one sheet with the amount each paid. Work out how much of the change in revenue came from price and how much from the number of sponsors. If nearly all of it is price, you have found the number to watch.

SECTION 2

What they are buying now

2.1 Presence, in a different shape

It is tempting to say sponsors have stopped buying exposure and started buying data. The research does not support that, and an organizer who believed it would misprice the prospectus. Asked why they exhibit, companies in EVOLIO's preliminary 2025 results put brand awareness first, at 93 percent, ahead of seeing customers and generating leads. EVOLIO's own headline for the slide is that lead generation is no longer the number one reason.[2]

FIGURE 4 **Why companies exhibit**

Share of exhibit and event marketers naming each reason. Preliminary results, 179 responses, autumn 2025. Other figures from this preliminary cut moved by 4 to 12 points in the final results.

REASON	SHARE NAMING IT
Brand awareness	93%
See customers	78%
Generate leads	75%
Show new products	71%
Networking	64%
See the competition	58%

Source: EVOLIO Marketing with The Exhibitor Advocate, preliminary results presented November 2025. The final values for this question were not found.[2]

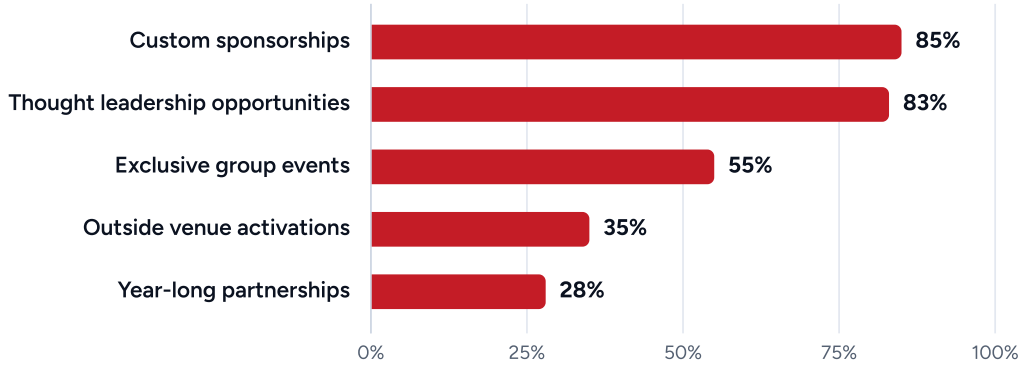
A second slide in the same deck lists two further motives, thought leadership positioning at 54 percent and supporting the association's mission at 37 percent.[2] Treat all of these as preliminary.

Where both cuts of this study can be compared, the final figures came in lower: exhibitors scaling back sponsorships because of cost was 57 percent in the preliminary results and 45 percent in the final ones.[2,1]

So exposure still sells. What has changed is the form buyers want it in. When organizers were asked what sponsors request, the same preliminary results put custom sponsorships at 85 percent and thought leadership opportunities at 83 percent, well ahead of exclusive group events, activations outside the venue and year-long partnerships.[2]

FIGURE 5 **What sponsors ask organizers for**

Share of show organizers reporting each request from sponsors. Preliminary results, 105 organizers, October to November 2025.



Source: EVOLIO Marketing with Trade Show Executive and Lippman Connects, preliminary results of the 2025 show organizer study, presented November 2025.[2]

A year earlier, the 2024 edition of the study offered a shorter list. Thought leadership or speaking was the most requested type then too, at 70 percent, with activations outside the venue at 18 percent and year-long deals at 14 percent. The lists differ, so the rise is not a clean trend, but the direction is the same in both.[13] Organizers have also become readier to say yes. In 2024, 52 percent said they frequently or always accommodate these requests. In the preliminary 2025 results, 72 percent did.[13,2]

Other surveys describe the same move in their own words. Showcare's 2026 survey of association sponsorship teams found targeted, personalized opportunities ranked as the top emerging sponsor expectation, ahead of traditional volume-based exposure.[14] In Bizzabo's 2025 networking survey, 57 percent of sponsors (56 percent in the report's own chart) said they see greater value in sponsoring branded experiences, such as dinners and curated sessions, than in traditional booth space. Bizzabo does not publish how many of its more than 300 respondents were sponsors, so treat that as a direction and not a measurement.[15]

There is a harder version of the same wish. In the 2024 exhibitor study, 57 percent agreed that at some trade shows they would prefer to hold their own offsite activities instead of exhibiting. In the edition published in January 2026 the figure was 43 percent.[13,8] That is lower, and still more than four in ten.

One of the cases EVOLIO presented in February 2026 was a large technology company that left an exhibit hall for its own gated space with a keynote, demonstrations and meeting rooms. It is a single case and the outcome figures are the company's own, so they are not repeated here.[1] The point for an organizer is that "beyond the booth" can mean beyond the event.

The older record shows how far the ask has moved. In the January 2020 study by Freeman, Lippman Connects and Trade Show Executive, the three sponsorships most in demand were lanyards, mobile apps and receptions. Half of organizers already had past exhibitors who now chose only to sponsor, and 29 percent had exhibitors taking less space in order to sponsor more.[19] That study is nearly seven years old and drew on a different sample, so it is a marker and not a trend line. CEIR's head of research made a related point about large shows in July 2026, naming "sponsorships and experiential activations that extend beyond the physical exhibit booth" as a possible area of untapped opportunity.[5] The product has been moving off the lanyard and toward the program for some time.

2.2 What attendees will accept, and what they want from exhibitors

Thought leadership only works as a product if attendees will sit through it. Freeman's July 2026 study of more than 3,300 attendees and exhibitors found that 84 percent of attendees view sponsored sessions neutrally or positively when the sponsorship is clearly disclosed. Sixteen percent view them negatively.[16] Disclosure is the condition. An organizer selling a speaking slot is selling the audience's patience along with it.

Freeman's data also shows a gap between what exhibitors buy and what attendees want from them. Asked for the things that would most improve their interactions, 58 percent of attendees chose speaking with subject-matter experts from exhibiting companies. Only 26 percent of exhibitors chose it. For being scanned and emailed afterwards about products, the numbers reverse: 23 percent of attendees and 49 percent of exhibitors.[17] Those figures were presented by a Freeman company in June 2025; the slide does not give the survey date. Far fewer attendees than exhibitors, in other words, see the scan and the follow-up email as the thing that helps.

Attendees who want to speak with exhibitor subject-matter experts

58%

Exhibitors who chose the same: 26%. Freeman data, presented June 2025

Attendees who want to be scanned and emailed afterwards

23%

Exhibitors who chose the same: 49%. Freeman data, presented June 2025

Attendees neutral or positive about disclosed sponsored sessions

84%

Freeman, July 2026

2.3 How it is priced and sold

Public data on sponsorship pricing is thin, and this section says where it stops. What can be said with a source:

- **Prices went up.** Sixty-six percent of organizers raised sponsorship prices over two years, in the preliminary 2025 results.[2] No published source gives the size of the increases.
- **The booth is no longer the ticket.** An edition of CEIR's benchmarks for independent shows, reported by IAEE in February 2026, found more than four in ten organizers do not require a booth purchase to sponsor, and nearly a third of those do not charge a premium for the access.[18] In the last study that asked a broader group, in January 2020, 55 percent of organizers sold sponsorships to companies that did not exhibit.[19]
- **Multi-year deals exist and are not new.** In that 2020 study, 35 percent of organizers offered multi-year sponsorship agreements, usually with a discount in the later years. It is nearly seven years old and nobody has published the figure since. EVOLIO's February 2026 cases include a technology company asking for multi-year bundled pricing on space and sponsorship to hold its costs steady, which suggests the buyer now asks for what the seller used to offer.[19,1]
- **Custom costs the seller time.** CEIR's head of research, discussing large shows, noted that sponsorships needing little staff can be highly profitable while customized ones may demand significant resources.[5] The 72 percent of organizers saying yes to custom requests are taking on work that the price has to cover.
- **Smaller buyers have the least left over.** Summarizing CEIR's 2026 study of exhibit spending, the chairperson of IAEE wrote that for exhibitors with smaller marketing budgets "spending is concentrated on the core necessities such as space and staffing, leaving little room to invest in the kinds of engagement strategies that generate real floor traffic and qualified leads."[7] A sponsorship menu that starts at a price only the largest exhibitors can pay leaves that group with nothing to buy. No public data shows how organizers spread their packages across price points.
- **Buyers weigh price against audience.** IDC's 2026 Sponsor Survey asked 150 senior technology marketers in four countries how they choose third-party events. Price-to-value ratio came first at 84 percent, then a high-caliber audience at 69 percent, personalization at 66 percent, fast execution and support at 54 percent, lead-to-pipeline conversion at 53 percent and custom targeting options at 51 percent.[20] These are technology marketers choosing commercial events, surveyed by a firm that sells event sponsorships itself, not suppliers choosing an association meeting. The order of the list is still worth knowing.

One complaint recurs in the exhibitor research and deserves a line of its own: costs that appear after the contract. The chairperson of IAEE asked organizers in June 2026 whether they are "offering transparency and flexibility in sponsorship structures so exhibitors at every budget level can access meaningful visibility."[7] EVOLIO's president described such a case to PCMA Convene in April 2024: a sponsor of a networking event learned late that the venue and catering were not included, and ended up paying about 40 percent more than budgeted.[26] What a price includes is fully within the seller's control.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

List every custom request you received last cycle, whether you said yes, and how many staff hours each took to deliver. If you cannot list them, start a log today. It is the only way to price the next one.

SECTION 3

The audience answer

3.1 The question before the sale

Every sponsorship conversation reaches the same moment. The prospect has seen the floor plan and the price list, and asks: who is actually going to be there. What happens next decides more than the package does.

Freeman's Pre-Event Edition, released on October 13, 2026 and based on a September survey of more than 3,400 attendees and exhibitors, is the most recent evidence on that moment. Exhibitors, it says, "are looking for a clearer picture of the audience." Fifty-six percent named the types of organizations attending among the information they most want to see. And only 16 percent said events are very or extremely effective at explaining the ROI of exhibiting or sponsoring.[3] Freeman does not publish how many of the 3,400 were exhibitors, and its respondents come from the events it serves, most of them trade shows. Even so, it is a low number for an industry that sells on return.

Exhibitors who most want to see the types of organizations attending

56%

Freeman, September 2026 survey

Exhibitors who say events explain the ROI of exhibiting or sponsoring well

16%

Very or extremely effective.
Freeman, September 2026 survey

Exhibitors who have used AI to find relevant events

25%

Freeman, September 2026 survey

The third number in that row belongs in a sales conversation too. One in four exhibitors has already used an AI tool to find events worth considering.[3] Some prospects now arrive having read a summary of your event that you did not write. For a sales team it is enough to say that the audience answer has to exist somewhere a prospect can find it before the first call.

Other sources describe the same ask without a percentage. Reporting on CEIR's Marketing Spend Decision study, Smart Meetings wrote in May 2026 that "exhibitors increasingly want evidence that attendees are qualified buyers."[6] In IDC's survey of technology marketers, 53 percent named lead-to-pipeline conversion performance as a criterion for choosing an event partner.[20] And in August 2026 the chairperson of IAEE asked organizers to "take an honest look at whether their events provide exhibitors with the data, tools and insights needed to demonstrate ROI internally."[21]

3.2 The proof during and after

After the sale the evidence is mixed, and both sides of it belong here. In EVOLIO's exhibitor study, measuring results was the second most-named challenge after cost, chosen by 52 percent in 2025 and 57 percent in 2024.[1] Against that, in Bizzabo's 2025 survey 71 percent of sponsors said they can accurately measure their event goals, 75 percent said those goals are met always or most of the time, and only 8 percent named unclear or inconsistent ROI as their biggest challenge.[15] Bizzabo does not publish how many sponsors answered or how they were recruited. The two are not measuring the same thing. A sponsor can be confident in its own numbers and still say the event did little to explain the return, which is what Freeman's 16 percent records.

EVOLIO's own post-event surveys of exhibitors, 2,309 of them across 2019 to 2024, give a calmer baseline. Fifty-seven percent were highly satisfied with the quality of leads and 66 percent with the quality of the audience. Exhibitors' net promoter score, the share who would recommend the event minus the share who would not, was plus 21, against plus 41 in EVOLIO's attendee surveys over the same years.[22] Those are averages across EVOLIO's clients, who are organizers that pay for exhibitor surveys, and they run through 2024. They say the audience is usually good enough. What is missing is the means to show it.

Sponsors are specific about what would help. In the same Bizzabo survey, 20 percent of sponsors named limited or no access to attendee data as their biggest challenge, second only to poor booth traffic, and 23 percent said advance access to attendee profiles would help them make the most of each interaction. Asked which data they value most when judging an event, 30 percent chose the quality of leads and 23 percent pipeline, ahead of the number of leads captured at 11 percent.[15] The buyer's own yardstick is moving the same way: in Cvent's 2026 survey of more than a thousand marketers, 74 percent said they can trace pipeline directly to event touchpoints.[23] A sponsor who measures pipeline will ask the organizer for more than a scan count.

FIGURE 6 **Three moments of proof**

What the buyer asks at each point, and the records that answer it. This report's framework, built from the surveys in this section.

WHEN	WHAT THE BUYER ASKS	THE RECORDS THAT ANSWER IT
Before the sale	Who will be in the room? Which kinds of organizations, at what level, and how many are new?	Last year's registrations by organization type and job level, matched to membership records and to this year's registrations so far.
During the event	Who came to our booth, our session, our dinner? Were they the people we came for?	Lead scans, session attendance and booked meetings, each tied to the registration record.
After the event	What did we get, and how does it compare with what we were told?	The before-the-sale answer, set beside who actually attended and who the sponsor met.

Source: this report. The third row, and the timing of the sponsor report, are the subject of an earlier report in this series, The Return Rate.

3.3 What organizers measure about their own sales

Organizers count the money carefully and the customers less so. In the preliminary 2025 results, 87 percent of organizers used sponsorship revenue as a measure of success. Sixty-two percent tracked the number of new exhibitors and 55 percent the number of repeat exhibitors. Only 39 percent tracked new sponsorship revenue, and 31 percent the number of new sponsors.[2] Most organizers, on those figures, could not say from their own scorecard whether last year's growth came from new sponsors or old ones.

Exhibitors, asked how they see organizers, are polite and lukewarm. Seventy-two percent agree that show organizers value their company's participation. About half agree with anything more demanding.[1]

FIGURE 7 **How exhibitors see show organizers**

Share of exhibit and event marketers who agree that show organizers do each of the following. 2025 study.



Source: EVOLIO Marketing with The Exhibitor Advocate, 2025 exhibitor study, as presented in February 2026. Sample size not on the slides.[1]

What follows the event was covered in The Return Rate: Showcare's finding that nearly 60 percent of sponsorship teams measure sponsor ROI inconsistently, and the sponsor report that arrives too late to help the renewal.[14] This report's concern is the step before. An organizer who cannot describe the audience before the sale is asking the sponsor to buy on trust, at a higher price than last year.

One limit should be stated. No study measures how quickly an organizer can answer an audience question, or what share can answer it at all. Freeman's 16 percent is the exhibitor's verdict on the result. The claim that most organizers cannot produce the answer quickly is an inference from that verdict and from what organizers track, and it is labelled as one here. Nor does any study show that giving sponsors an audience answer raises sales. The case for it rests on what exhibitors say they want.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Ask whoever sells your sponsorships to write down the last five audience questions a prospect asked, and how long each took to answer. Then try to answer one of them yourself from last year's registration export. Time it.

SECTION 4

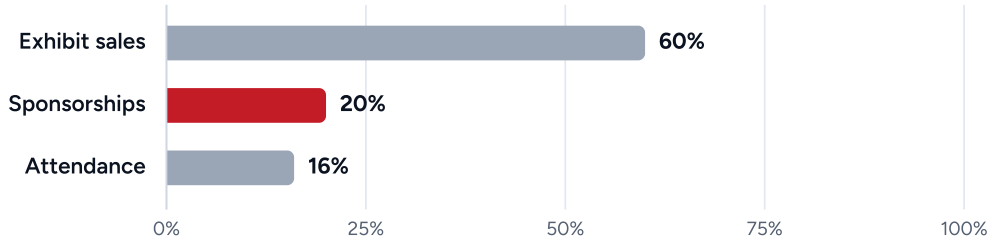
Who sells it

4.1 The money the team carries

For an independent trade show, exhibit and sponsorship sales bring in about 80 percent of revenue.[4] The people who sell them carry most of the event's income, and the split between the two lines tells you where the growth is expected to come from.

FIGURE 8 **Where an independent show's revenue comes from**

Share of revenue by source, independent business-to-business exhibitions. The remaining 4 percent is not itemized in the report of the study.



Source: CEIR, 2026 Performance Benchmark Playbook: Independent B2B Exhibitions, as reported by PCMA, August 20, 2026. Sample size not given in the article. No equivalent public figure exists for association annual meetings.[4]

Most of the sponsorship line is renewal. In the preliminary 2025 organizer results, repeat sponsors accounted for 71 percent of sponsorship revenue and new sponsors for 29 percent.[2] That is a healthy base and also a description of the job: roughly seven dollars in ten depend on keeping a relationship, and three on finding one. Showcare's survey found over half of sponsorship teams naming new sponsor acquisition as their biggest challenge, with most relying on inbound interest; it gives no exact figure.[14]

4.2 What is public about the team

Less than a reader would hope. What can be sourced:

- **It is among the largest teams at a large show.** Discussing CEIR's 2026 benchmarks for exhibitions of 200,000 net square feet or more, its head of research said exhibit and sponsorship sales, with operations, "tend to have the largest teams."[5] The article gives no headcounts. The same benchmarks put the median gross revenue of those shows at $12.5 million, which gives a sense of what the largest teams carry. CEIR's playbooks include staffing benchmarks, but they are sold, and were not read for this report.
- **In one vendor survey it is two or three people.** Fifty-six percent of sponsorship teams in Showcare's 2026 survey had two or three people, and only 22 percent used dedicated sponsorship

software. Showcare describes the respondents as association sponsorship teams and publishes neither their number nor the survey dates.[14]

- **The last study of team shape is from January 2020.** Freeman, Lippman Connects and Trade Show Executive surveyed 205 organizers that month, 64 percent of them associations. Eighty-seven percent said their exhibit sales team was staying the same size, and 23 percent were adding outside resources to it. The average event in the study had 536 exhibiting companies and 47 sponsors, and total revenue of about $5.2 million.[19] The study's authors suggested that investing more in exhibit sales staff could help future growth. It was fielded weeks before events shut down, and nothing comparable has been published since.
- **Associations said staffing was the constraint.** The most recent survey of association business development that could be found is also old: a February 2023 report from Professionals for Association Revenue, based on 100 association executives surveyed over the previous 18 months, so the answers date from the recovery after the pandemic. Thirty-three percent named staffing and resources as the top barrier to revenue growth. Fifty-three percent had a dedicated sales budget and 70 percent used a CRM. Only 39 percent expected to meet their exhibit targets and 48 percent their sponsorship targets.[24]

WHAT NOBODY HAS PUBLISHED

Four numbers an organizer would want before hiring, and for which this report found no public, dated source: the number of salespeople per show or per million dollars of revenue; revenue per salesperson; how commission is structured; and what the roles pay. Vendor blogs offer figures for all four without a survey behind them, and they are not repeated here. Job advertisements for these roles do list pay ranges, but the job boards could not be read reliably for this report, and a handful of advertisements is not a benchmark. The 2020 study's averages are the closest thing to a workload figure: 536 exhibiting companies and 47 sponsors for one event. However many people you have, that is the size of the account list they are working. Until someone publishes better, the practical source for the four missing numbers is other organizers: ask ten peers and you will know more than any public report can tell you today.

4.3 How the work is divided

Without benchmarks, the useful question is not how many people but which jobs. Four are visible in the research, whatever the titles.

1. **New business.** Finding companies that are not on the list. This is the job most association teams say they do least systematically.[14]
2. **Renewal and rebooking.** Keeping the 71 percent. Often done on site, and often by the same person as new business. When one person does both, renewal tends to win the calendar, because it comes with a deadline.

3. **Service after the sale.** Answering the exhibitor's questions, delivering the custom package, and making sure nothing arrives as a surprise on the invoice. Exhibitors notice when this job has no owner; Section 5 has their words for it.
4. **The list.** Someone has to own the account records: who bought what, at what price, what they asked for, and who the audience was. In a team of two this is often nobody's job, and the audience answer waits for whoever has a free afternoon.

An association has one more thing to settle. The company that sponsors the meeting is often also a corporate member and an advertiser, and it may hear from three different people in one quarter. Nothing published says how common that is. It is worth knowing before anyone picks up the phone, because a sponsor asked for money three times by one organization tends to mention it.

For organizers with more than one event, IAEE published a model in August 2026 worth knowing. The chief executive of an exhibitions consultancy, who previously ran a show portfolio at a large organizer, set out "two base rules for an agile sales team: Firstly, everybody can sell everything and, secondly, each salesperson must sell products he or she was not hired for." In his experience salespeople can do this "for around 20% of their working time, which is one day per week," after which the team "can join rebooking teams from other shows" or be moved onto an underperforming one.[25] It is one consultant's model, drawn from large commercial portfolios, and no data is offered with it. The idea travels to an association all the same: the person who sells booths should be able to sell a sponsorship, and the reverse.

The newest change to the job is research. EVOLIO's roundtable decks in 2025 and 2026 show sales teams using AI tools to find companies that exhibit at similar shows but not their own, to summarize a prospect's event program, and to draft the first email.[1,2] The February 2026 deck says early adopters report measurable improvements and gives no figures. Showcare found most sponsorship teams are not yet using AI in their work at all.[14] Section 7 has a caution about it.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Write the four jobs above on a page and put a name beside each. Where one name appears three times, or no name appears, you have found the first thing to change.

SECTION 5

In their own words

Surveys count. Comments explain. The voices below are exhibitors and organizers answering open questions in EVOLIO's surveys, practitioners on public forums, and three people quoted in the trade press. Each quote is one person's words. Two of the named roles sell services to organizers, and that is noted where it applies.

> "As an exhibitor, it feels like once the exhibit space is sold, we no longer matter."
>
> Exhibitor, open comment in EVOLIO's survey of exhibit and event marketers, 2024[22]

> "Actually care about the brands and not only the cash."
>
> Exhibitor, open comment in the same survey, 2024[22]

> "Our budget is flat but costs have increased by about 30%, so we have had to reduce our space by about 40% and our booth staff at some shows."
>
> Exhibitor or sponsor, quoted in EVOLIO's 2024 show organizer study[13]

> "Companies don't always see the ROI with our event because of their traditional method of ROI."
>
> Show organizer, open comment in EVOLIO's 2024 show organizer study[13]

> "If exhibitors are stretching their budgets to maintain or expand participation, we owe them an intentional value proposition in return."
>
> 2026 chairperson of IAEE, an executive at a show organizer, June 2026[7]

> "Some companies are doing an amazing job with this and with sharing attendee information with exhibitors, and sponsors and potential ones, but many don't."
>
> President of EVOLIO Marketing (a research firm that sells surveys to organizers), PCMA Convene, April 2024[26]

> "There are two base rules for an agile sales team: Firstly, everybody can sell everything and, secondly, each salesperson must sell products he or she was not hired for."
>
> Chief executive of an exhibitions consultancy (sells consulting to organizers), IAEE, August 2026[25]

> "Every file is formatted differently... It can result in a delay in getting the leads to the sales people."
>
> Marketer loading event attendee lists into a CRM, r/Automate[27]

> "The product claims to have an integration, but all it actually does is send data to a source field on a contact. If you interact with people across multiple events... this is super one-dimensional."
>
> Revenue operations builder, r/tradeshows[27]

The research firm president's remark continues, in the original: "I think it's not because they're hiding it or they're ashamed of it. They just haven't been asked. It's that simple."[26] It is two and a half years old,

and it comes from someone whose firm is paid to do the asking. It is here because nobody has put it more plainly since.

Four things the comments have in common

1. **The sale ends at the signature.** Exhibitors describe being courted and then left alone. Nobody in these comments complains about the salesperson. They complain about what happens after the salesperson has moved on.
2. **Cost and proof sit close together.** The exhibitor who cut space by 40 percent did it because the budget was flat. The show organizer says companies cannot see the return. These are two people at different events, so one does not explain the other, but they describe the two ends of the same conversation.
3. **A question that was not asked.** "Communicate with exhibitors" is how another exhibitor in the same survey put it.[22] The research firm president says organizers have not been asked for audience figures. It is one survey and one interested observer, which is thin, and it is also cheap to test: ask.
4. **The data arrives in pieces.** The two forum comments are from business-to-business marketers describing what happens to event lists inside their own companies, not conference sponsors as such: files that do not match, and a single field on a contact record. A sponsor whose own systems lose the detail will find the return hard to show, which is one more reason the organizer's account of the audience matters.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Pick five current sponsors or exhibitors, not your largest. Call them and ask one question: before you sign again, what do you need to know that we have not told you? Write the answers down word for word.

SECTION 6

The playbook

Sized for a team of two that sells the prospectus and also runs the show. None of it needs a new platform. All of it needs last year's records in one place.

6.1 A revenue sheet that separates price from count

The board sees one number for sponsorship and one for exhibits. Add the lines underneath that explain them. Where a published figure exists it is given, with its limits. Where none exists the cell says so.

SPONSOR AND EXHIBITOR REVENUE SHEET	WHAT TO COMPARE IT WITH, AND THE SOURCE
Change in revenue from returning buyers, and from buyers gained and lost	No published benchmark. In the 2025 organizer study, 68 percent grew sponsorship revenue and 58 percent grew the number of sponsors; 71 percent raised space prices and 47 percent had more exhibiting companies.[1]
Share of sponsorship revenue from repeat sponsors	71 percent repeat, 29 percent new, in preliminary results from 105 organizers, mostly trade shows.[2]
Number of new sponsors and new exhibitors	Track it before setting a target. Only 31 percent of organizers track new sponsor count.[2]
Exhibitor company retention	69 to 78 percent by show size, in CEIR's September 2026 benchmarks. The Return Rate covers this in full.[28]
Custom requests received, accepted, and hours to deliver	72 percent of organizers accept them frequently or always (preliminary). No published figure for the cost of delivering them. Kept by hand, in a log.[2]
Share of sponsors and exhibitors with a stated objective on file	Aim for all of the top 20 by spend. This report's recommendation.
Days to answer an audience question	Two working days. This report's recommendation; no benchmark exists. Kept by hand, in the same log.
Exhibitor net promoter score	Plus 21 across EVOLIO's exhibitor surveys, 2019 to 2024. Fifty-eight percent of large shows track it, in CEIR's 2026 benchmarks.[22,5]

SPLITTING PRICE FROM COUNT, BY HAND

- **List** every sponsor and exhibitor for the last two editions, one row per company, with what each bought (square feet, or the named package) and what each paid. Match on company name, then check the matches by eye; parent companies and renamed brands will not match on their own.
- **Mark** each company as returned, new or lost.
- **For those who returned and bought the same thing,** the change in what they paid is price. Check it against the change in your published prices.
- **For those who returned and bought more or less,** the change is a mix of price and size. Show it on its own line: bought more, bought less.
- **For new and lost,** add what the new ones paid and subtract what the lost ones paid last time. New buyers pay this year's prices, so this line carries a little price too.
- **Report the lines separately.** If the event moved city, changed length or ran with a co-located show, say so beside the numbers.

6.2 The 90 days before the prospectus goes out

WHEN	WHAT HAPPENS	WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE IN THE SYSTEMS
Day 90 to 60	Build the audience answer from last year's records (6.3). Split last year's revenue into price and count.	Last year's registrations can be exported with organization, job title and member type, and checked-in status is on the same record.
Day 60 to 30	Call the top 20 sponsors and exhibitors by spend. Ask what they came for and whether they got it. Record the answer against the company.	There is one account record per company, and the person who makes the call can write to it.
Day 30 to 0	Write the prospectus with the audience page first. State what each price includes and what it does not. Decide in advance which custom requests you will take and what they cost to deliver.	The price list, the inclusions and the audience page come from the same source the sales conversation uses.
After it goes out	Each week, look at who has signed, who has been asked and who has gone quiet. Answer audience questions inside two working days.	This year's registrations so far can be cut the same way as last year's, so the audience answer can be updated as the room fills.

The two-day standard in the last row is this report's recommendation, not a benchmark. One of EVOLIO's February 2026 cases is an exhibitor that cut five shows over information that did not arrive in time. That is one company's account.[1]

The table assumes a prospectus that goes out once a year. Many events do not work that way. If you rebook on site, the audience answer has to be ready before the event opens, built from the edition before, and the calls in the second row move to the weeks after. If you sell all year, treat the table as a list to work through once and then keep current. If the event changes city, say on the audience page which city last year's figures describe.

6.3 The audience answer sheet

One page, built from records and not from memory. It is what Freeman's exhibitors said they most want to see, and it is the data minimum for everything else in this section.[3]

- [ ] How many people checked in last year, with staff, speakers and exhibitor personnel counted separately and shown separately. A sponsor is buying the first number, not the total.
- [ ] The types of organizations they came from, in the categories a sponsor would use, with the count for each.
- [ ] Job level or function, from the registration form or the membership record, with the share that is unknown stated.
- [ ] How many were new and how many had attended before.
- [ ] How many organizations sent more than one person.
- [ ] Where this year's registrations stand against the same week last year, updated as the event approaches.
- [ ] What a sponsor will receive afterwards, and what attendees were told about it when they registered.

Two cautions. Counts by category are generally safe to share, provided no category is so small that it identifies someone; a list of names is a different thing and Section 7 comes back to it. And the sheet is only as good as the fields behind it. If organization type is a free-text box, the first job is to clean last year's answers into a dozen categories, by hand if necessary.

6.4 Three honest ways to get there

- **An export and a spreadsheet.** Right when there is one event, a few thousand registrations, and someone who can spend two days on it once a year. Most teams can produce the first audience sheet this way. Wrong when the question comes mid-cycle and the person who built the sheet is on site somewhere else.
- **Reports inside the registration or membership system.** Right when the categories a sponsor cares about already exist as fields and the system holds more than one year. Wrong when attendance, membership and the sponsor's own account sit in three systems that spell the same company three ways.
- **Connecting the systems,** in-house or with outside help. Right when sales needs the answer on demand, when exhibitors and sponsors are also members, or when there are several events a year.

Wrong when a yearly export would have done; pay for it only when the question comes often enough to justify it.

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Open last year's registration export and try to fill in the second line of the audience sheet: types of organizations, with a count for each. Note how long it takes and what you had to guess. That note is your starting point.

SECTION 7

A decision guide for technology and data

For the reader about to buy, renew or rebuild the tools that sales depends on. Dated, neutral, and explicit about what is not known.

7.1 Decide where the account lives

A sponsor or exhibitor usually exists in four places. There is the floor plan or exhibitor system, the finance system that sent the invoice, the membership database if the company is a member, and a spreadsheet the salesperson trusts. In Showcare's 2026 survey only 22 percent of association sponsorship teams used dedicated sponsorship software, though CRM and event platforms were widely adopted.[14] The older survey from Professionals for Association Revenue, released in February 2023, found 70 percent of associations using a CRM, a customer relationship management system, but only 27 percent of those tracking sales activity in it.[24] Owning the software is not the same as the account living there. Pick one system as the place where the company record, its history, its stated objective and its contacts are kept, and make the others feed it.

7.2 Sharing audience data with sponsors

Sponsors want advance access to attendee profiles.[15] What an organizer may give them depends on what attendees were told. MultiState counted 24 US states with comprehensive consumer privacy laws as of October 28, 2026, four of them enacted this year, and notes that the count depends on whether Florida's narrower law is included.[29] The laws differ, and several restrict the sale or sharing of sensitive data whatever consent was given. Whether a given law applies to a nonprofit association also varies by state, and attendees from outside the United States bring their own countries' rules. This report is not legal advice. The practical line for a sales team is simple. Counts and categories describe an audience and can go in a prospectus. A named list is personal data. It needs its own consent at registration, written so an attendee understands who will receive it.

7.3 Lead capture, and who owns the leads

If the organizer provides the lead capture tool, the organizer can see which sponsors met whom, and can build the second and third rows of the table in Section 3. If each exhibitor brings its own, the organizer sees nothing. Neither is wrong, but it should be a decision. The buyer's side of this is described in Section 5: files that are "formatted differently," arriving late.[27] An organizer who delivers leads in one consistent layout, with organization type and job level attached from the registration record, is handing the sponsor part of the proof they could not assemble alone.

7.4 AI for prospecting

The prompts EVOLIO has shown at sales roundtables ask an AI tool to name companies missing from the exhibitor list and to return contact names, emails and phone numbers for each.[1] Two cautions, both this report's own. Check every contact detail before using it, because these tools will supply a plausible one when they do not have a real one. And remember that one in four exhibitors is using the same kind of tool to look at you.[3]

7.5 Ten questions to ask before signing

1. Where will the sponsor and exhibitor company record live, and which other systems update it?
2. Can we see everything a company has bought from us across events and years in one view, including its parent company and whether it is a member?
3. Can we report last year's attendees by organization type and job level without an export?
4. Can the same report be run on this year's registrations so far?
5. Can a custom package be recorded with what it included and what it cost to deliver?
6. Who owns lead capture data, the organizer or the exhibitor, and in what layout is it delivered?
7. Where is attendee consent to share data with sponsors captured, and can we prove it later?
8. How is the same company matched across the exhibitor system, finance and membership, and can we test that on our own records before we sign?
9. What can we export, in what format, and what happens to our data when the contract ends?
10. Who is on call for sales and exhibitor questions during our event, by name?

SOMETHING TO DO ON MONDAY

Send questions 1, 3 and 7 to the vendors you already pay. The answers will tell you whether the audience sheet in Section 6 is a report you can run or a project you have to do.

SECTION 8

Methodology, timeliness and sources

How this report was made

This is a desk-research report. Most of what it draws on was published between November 2025 and November 14, 2026. Eight sources are older and are dated where they appear: a January 2020 study of exhibit and sponsorship sales and a February 2023 survey of association business development, both used because nothing newer has been published; EVOLIO's 2024 studies and its June 2025 presentation; an April 2024 interview; Bizzabo's May 2025 networking survey; a June 2025 presentation of Freeman data; and IDC's October 2025 sponsor survey. Each was read at the publisher's page, in the publisher's own slides, or in the trade press that reported it. Practitioner comments are verbatim and attributed by role. No vendor was interviewed or paid, and no vendor reviewed the text. No Event Data Pro client data was used. Before publication, the full draft was checked against its sources a second time by a reviewer briefed to argue against it, and the text was corrected where the argument held.

The report began with a working argument: that sponsors have moved from buying exposure to buying evidence about the audience, that sponsorship revenue is under pressure, and that most organizers cannot produce audience proof quickly. The evidence changed it. Organizers report rising sponsorship revenue, so the second part is wrong as stated; the pressure is on the buyer's budget and on revenue after inflation. Exposure is still the top reason to exhibit, so the first part holds only as a change in the shape of what is bought. The third part is an inference, and Section 3 says so.

Several limits should be plain. Much of the data comes from one research firm, EVOLIO Marketing, working with Lippman Connects, Trade Show Executive and The Exhibitor Advocate; its figures were read from presentation slides, some labelled preliminary, and the final exhibitor sample size was not found. EVOLIO sells research to organizers. Most respondents in most of these studies run or attend trade shows, not association conferences, and no public benchmark for sponsorship at association annual meetings was found beyond Showcare's and Naylor's. Showcare and Bizzabo do not publish sample sizes, and Showcare's figures come from its public summary page; the full report is behind a form. The organizer study's central figures are shares of organizers answering yes, which show how common a change is and not how large. Preliminary figures from the exhibitor study moved by 4 to 12 points in the final results, so the preliminary organizer figures used here may move too; the final white paper of the 2025 organizer study, and any results from the 2026 edition, were looked for and not found. The report does not cover the rules on commercial support that govern sponsored education at medical and scientific meetings, table-top exhibits, or firms that sell exhibits and sponsorship on commission for associations, because no dated public figures were found for them. Organizer-reported and exhibitor-reported figures are kept apart throughout, because a number does not mean the same thing on both sides of the invoice.

Left out on purpose: any figure for salespeople per show, revenue per salesperson, commission or pay, because none has a public primary source; a widely repeated claim that 52 percent of companies prefer a la carte sponsorships, which could not be traced to a study; a line in EVOLIO's February 2026 slides that 85 percent of exhibitors are unable to prove ROI, because the slide does not say what the figure is a share of; lead-conversion statistics from vendor roundups with no method; the outcome figures in single-company case studies; and sources that could not be read without buying them or filling in a form, namely CEIR's report on exhibit and sponsorship sales approaches, CEIR's midyear 2026 index, the full Exhibitor Advocate and EVOLIO report, the full Showcare report, and a vendor's survey of 500 exhibitors.

How fresh each number is

Every statistic in this report is dated in the text or in the source list. The table shows when the main sources refresh, so a reader can judge what may have moved since November 14, 2026.

SOURCE	EDITION USED	REFRESHES	NEXT EXPECTED
Freeman Trends Reports	October 13, 2026 (pre-event); July 2026 (learning); 2025 data via a June 2025 presentation	Roughly quarterly	Year-end recap, January 2027
Lippman Connects, Trade Show Executive and EVOLIO show organizer study	2025 edition: preliminary (November 2025) and trend (February 2026)	Annual, fielded in autumn	2026 edition; no results found as of November 14, 2026
The Exhibitor Advocate and EVOLIO exhibitor study	Second edition, January 2026, via slides and Exhibitor	Annual	January 2027
CEIR benchmark playbooks (independent, large, series)	July, August and September 2026; an earlier independent-show edition via IAEE, February 2026	Annual	2027
CEIR Marketing Spend Decision; How the Exhibit Dollar is Spent	2026 editions (surveyed late 2025)	Irregular; the previous editions were 2018 and 2017	Unknown
CEIR Index	2025 annual (IAEE and Skift Meetings, May 2026); Q3 2025	Quarterly, with a midyear report	A midyear 2026 report exists and is sold; not read
Naylor Association Benchmarking Report	August 2026	Annual	August 2027
Showcare Sponsorship Pulse	2026	Annual	2027

SOURCE	EDITION USED	REFRESHES	NEXT EXPECTED
IDC Sponsor Survey	2026 edition, October 2025	Annual, autumn	No 2027 edition found as of November 14, 2026
Bizzabo Event Networking Report	May 2025	Irregular	Unknown
Exhibit and sponsorship sales team benchmarks	January 2020 (Freeman, Lippman Connects, Trade Show Executive); February 2023 (Professionals for Association Revenue)	Not refreshed	Unknown
State privacy law count	October 28, 2026	Continuous	Recount before acting

A note on where this comes from

Event Data Pro connects registration systems, event apps, CRMs and membership systems for conferences, and the people who wrote this are usually called when someone needs last year's attendees by organization type and the answer is in three places. That is the bias to be aware of. It is also why this report is about what to count and what to ask, not what to buy. If you would like a second pair of eyes on whether your records can answer "who will be in the room," we offer a free consultation and will tell you honestly if an export and a spreadsheet is enough. Write to contact@eventdata.pro.

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Appendix: chart data

Figure 1. Share of show organizers reporting an increase over the past 24 months, by study year (percent)

MEASURE	2022	2023	2024	2025
Sponsorship revenue increased	52	41	59	68
Number of sponsors increased	48	32	54	58
Respondents	121	122	105	109

Figure 2. Share of show organizers answering yes, by study year (percent)

MEASURE	2022	2023	2024	2025
Increased cost per square foot	54	68	69	71
Number of exhibiting companies increased	47	41	65	47

Figures 1 and 2 use the series as published in EVOLIO's February 2026 roundup, one question and one definition for all four years. An earlier EVOLIO deck (September 2024, 141 surveys in three waves) gave slightly different 2024 values, and the preliminary 2025 results (November 2025, 105 respondents) differ from the final ones by up to five points. The series shows how many organizers reported an increase, not how large it was.

Figure 3. Because of increasing costs, exhibitors are doing the following (percent, 2025 study)

SCALING BACK PRESENCE	LIMITING ONSITE STAFF	RE-EVALUATING BUDGETS	RE-EVALUATING STRATEGIES	SCALING BACK SPONSORSHIPS	DECREASING PARTICIPATION
64	55	52	51	45	40

Figure 5. Requests organizers receive from sponsors (percent of organizers, preliminary 2025 results, n = 105)

CUSTOM SPONSORSHIPS	THOUGHT LEADERSHIP	EXCLUSIVE GROUP EVENTS	OUTSIDE VENUE ACTIVATIONS	YEAR-LONG PARTNERSHIPS
85	83	55	35	28

Figure 7. Exhibitors who agree that show organizers do each of the following (percent, 2025 study)

VALUE MY PARTICIPATION	OPTIONS ALIGN WITH MY OBJECTIVES	VALUABLE MARKETING TOOLS	OPEN AND HONEST CONVERSATIONS	CARE BEYOND THE EVENT DATES
72	55	55	53	51

Figure 8. Revenue mix, independent B2B exhibitions (percent, CEIR 2026)

EXHIBIT SALES	SPONSORSHIPS	ATTENDANCE	NOT ITEMIZED
60	20	16	4

Figures 4 and 6 are tables in the text and carry their own values.