



Tradeshow Industry Insights Study

Key Insights and Trends Shaping the Future of Attendee
Acquisition and Exhibit and Sponsorship Sales

Conducted October - December 2025

Research conducted by



Trade Show Executive

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the key findings from an event industry survey conducted by EVOLIO Marketing, Lippman Connects, and Trade Show Executive in the Fall of 2025. The data collected reflects the current state & outlook on exhibit & sponsorship sales, attendee acquisition, & the integration of artificial intelligence. The purpose of this study is to assist event professionals in navigating the evolving landscape of the events industry.

Results were analyzed by mid-size (less than 125K square feet) & large shows (125K square feet or more). In addition, results were also compared with 2024 survey results. Notable differences are highlighted where applicable.



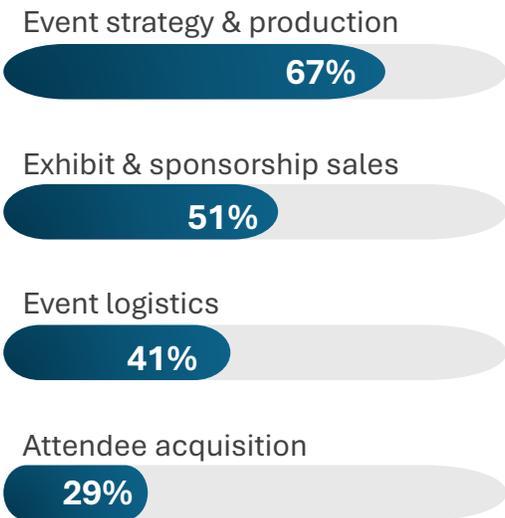
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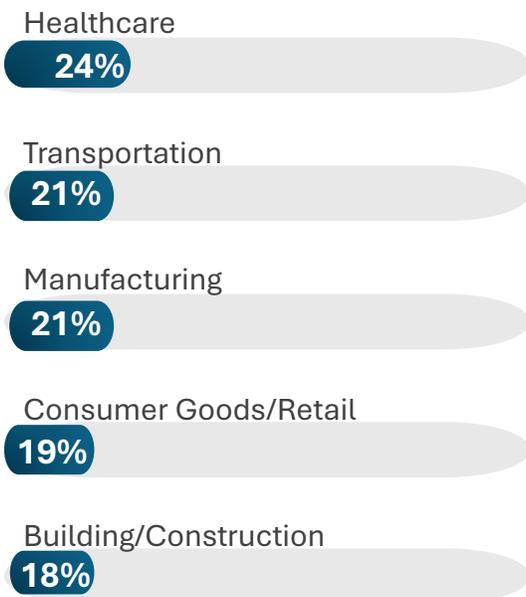
RESPONDENT PROFILE

A select group of senior leaders from mid-size and large B2B tradeshows were invited to participate in this study. 123 professionals completed the survey, representing a diverse cross-section of industries and responsibilities. These respondents are seasoned professionals, indicating that the insights captured reflect long-term industry knowledge and informed perspective.

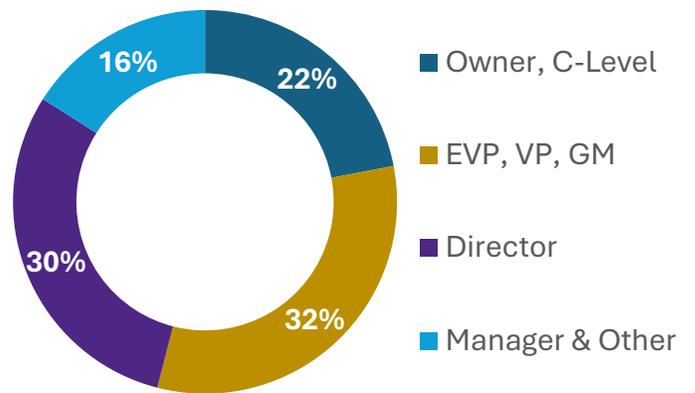
MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES



TOP INDUSTRIES



JOB LEVEL



20+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

64%

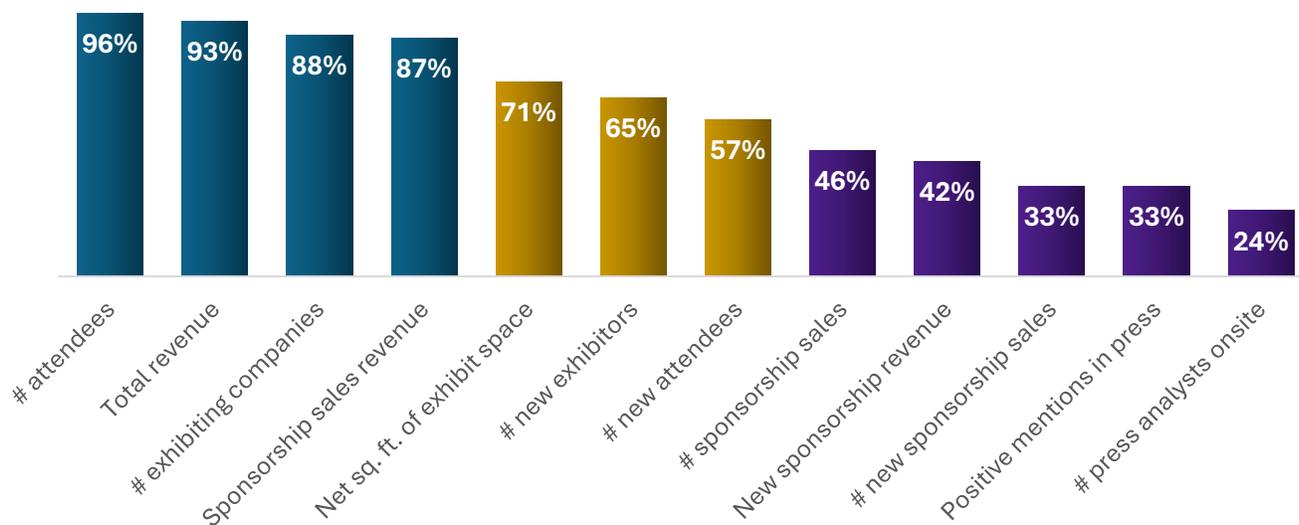
SIZE OF LARGEST EVENT



HOW IS EVENT SUCCESS MEASURED?

Event success is increasingly defined through a blend of financial performance and the number of attendees and exhibiting companies. Organizers are focusing on outcomes such as revenue stability and obtaining new event participants. Large shows focus more on exhibitor-related KPIs compared with mid-size shows.

KPIs USED TO MEASURE EVENT SUCCESS



Large events are significantly more likely to use exhibitor-related data (i.e., # exhibiting companies, total exhibit space sold, and new exhibitors) as KPIs versus medium-sized shows.

	<125,000 sq. ft.	125,000+ sq. ft.
Total # of exhibiting companies	79%	94% ↑
Net sq. ft. of space	48%	85% ↑
# of NEW exhibiting companies	50%	75% ↑

SPONSORSHIPS TRENDS

Sponsorship revenue remains resilient, with most sponsorship sales coming from repeat sponsors; an indicator of continued perceived value. At the same time, a quarter of sponsorship revenue comes from new companies, highlighting fresh demand and an opportunity for show growth. Organizers appear responsive to custom requests, with most either frequently or always accommodating sponsor needs. This flexibility is becoming a competitive advantage, as sponsors seek custom opportunities far more than they did just a year ago.



28%

of sponsorship sales are **NEW** sponsoring companies

72%

of sponsorship sales are **REPEAT** business

SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS

Organizers receive from exhibitors/sponsors

Custom sponsorships

85% (39% in 2024)

Thought leadership/speaking sponsorships

84% (61% in 2024)

Hosted events targeted to specific groups

53%

Sponsorships outside the event venue

34% (16% in 2024)

Request for year-long sponsorships

30% (11% in 2024)

DO ORGANIZERS ACCOMMODATE REQUESTS?

17% always

56% frequently

25% occasionally

2% rarely

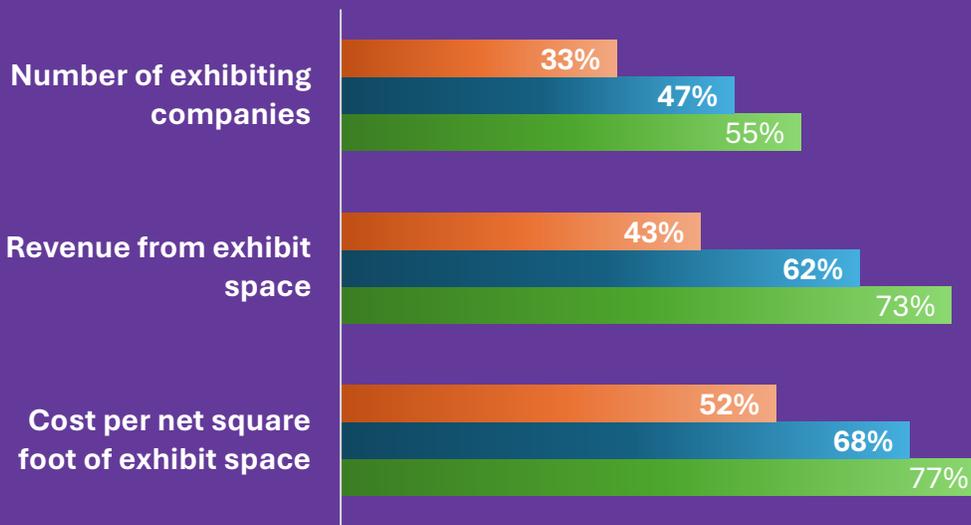
0% never

CHANGES IN EXHIBITOR PARTICIPATION

Exhibitor participation is shifting in uneven ways. As exhibit space costs and revenue from exhibit space have increased for most organizers, the number of exhibiting companies has not increased at the same pace. Higher operational costs are contributing to budget strain on exhibitors, with many decreasing their spend. This pattern suggests exhibitors are becoming more selective and value-driven, requiring organizers to demonstrate stronger ROI and potentially rethink floor plan strategies, pricing models, and service offerings.

The increase in the number of exhibiting companies is less dramatic than in the 2024 study when 77% of large show organizers reported an increase in exhibiting companies.

INCREASES IN THE PAST 24 MONTHS

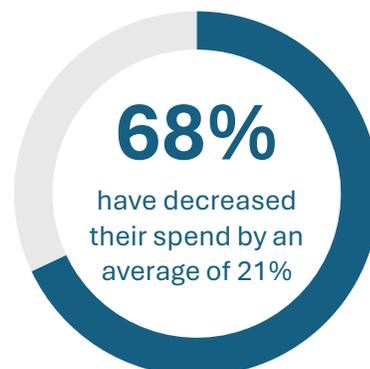


Large shows are much more likely than mid-size shows to have increases in exhibit space costs, revenue from exhibit space, and the number of exhibiting companies that participate.

■ Mid-Size Shows (up to 125,000 sq. ft.) ■ Overall ■ Large Shows (125,000 sq. ft. or more)

HAVE EXHIBITORS DECREASED THEIR SPEND?

for exhibit space or sponsorships



ATTENDEE ACQUISITION

Attendee-related trends show both opportunities and pressure points. While more than half of organizers have increased registration fees and nearly half have seen an increasing number of attendees, companies are not sending as many employees, potentially due to rising costs. This finding becomes more prominent among large shows.

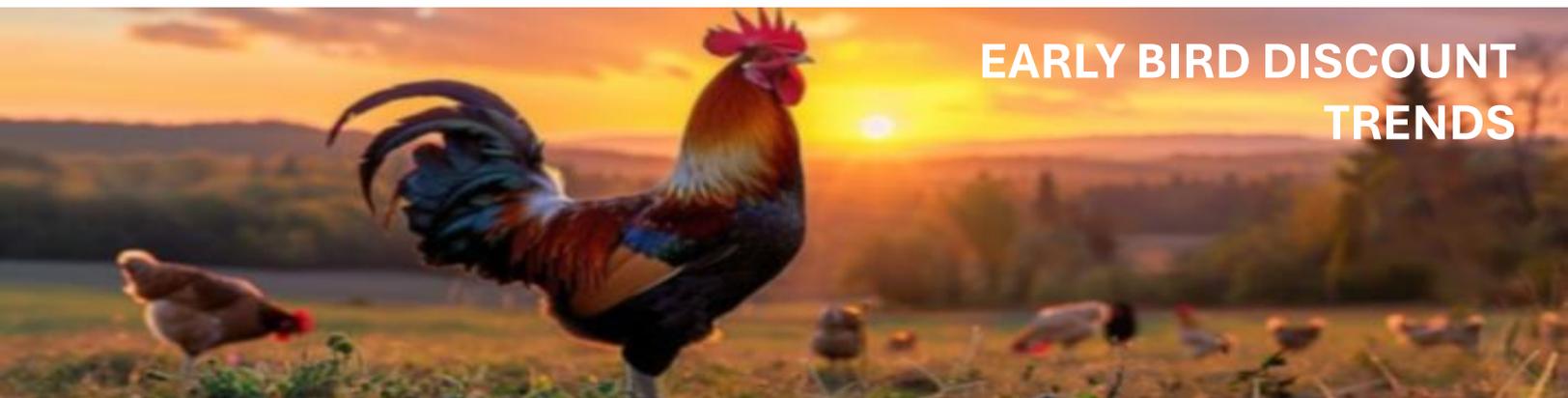
CHANGES IN THE LAST 24 MONTHS

↑ 56%
attendee registration fees have increased

↑ 45%
number of attendees has increased

↓ 34%
number of attendees sent per organization has decreased

🔍 43% among large shows



EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT TRENDS

Given the rising costs, early bird discounts are a powerful incentive: most shows offer them, and many attendees take advantage of discounted pricing. This indicates that as price sensitivity continues, early bird tactics continue to serve as an effective lever to accelerate registration and improve forecasting.

93% offer early bird discounts

39% of attendees register with early bird discount

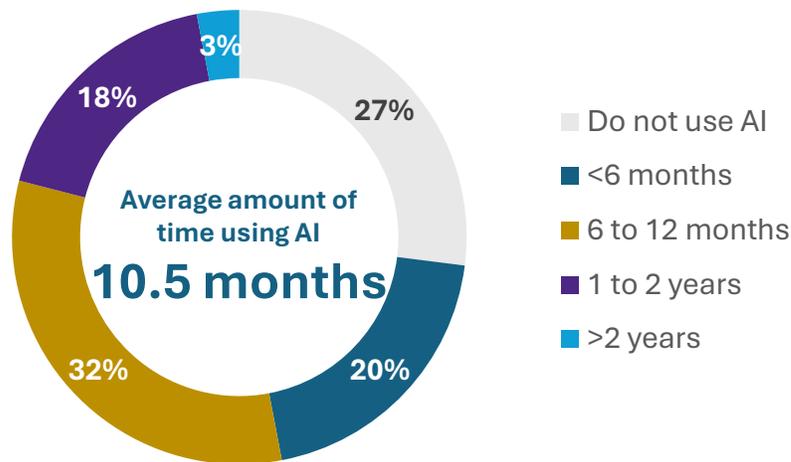
WHEN DO EARLY BIRD DISCOUNTS EXPIRE?



USING AI IN EVENTS

AI adoption is accelerating, though policy development is still catching up. Nearly half of organizations already have comprehensive or limited AI policies, and another quarter are actively building them. This demonstrates an awareness that AI must be implemented responsibly, balancing innovation with governance. The relatively even distribution between these policy stages indicates the industry is in a transitional phase, rapidly moving from experimentation to structured integration.

HOW LONG AI HAS BEEN USED TO AID IN EVENTS



FORMAL AI POLICIES IN PLACE BY ORGANIZERS



AI policies are more likely to be in place for large show organizers (81%) compared with mid-size show organizers (just 61%).

AI USE CASES, CHALLENGES, AND IMPACT

TOP AI USE CASES

How organizers are using AI to aid in their event success

Writing & Content Creation

82%

Marketing (digital, social, PR)

59%

Support & Customer Service (chatbot)

42%

Lead Generation Management

34%

IMPACT OF AI SO FAR

17% Time staff has saved per week by using AI

34% Improvement in marketing effectiveness

10% Improvement in sales close rates

TOP AI CHALLENGES

Issues organizers have encountered when using AI for events

Learning Curve

63%

Accuracy of Results (hallucinations)

48%

Data Privacy/Security

22%

Loss of personal expertise

19%

AI's impact is becoming tangible. Measurable efficiencies, such as time savings, improved marketing effectiveness, and better sales close rates have been reported, indicating that AI is delivering practical value rather than theoretical promise. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, primarily stemming from limited expertise and accuracy of results. Overall, AI is proving beneficial, but continued investment in skills and governance will be key to unlocking its full potential.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The 2025 findings reveal an industry that is adapting to economic pressures as well as rapid technological advancements. Organizers and exhibitors need to work together to tackle these quickly adjusting shifts, so all constituents realize ongoing value.



Differences between large and mid-size show organizers were minimal. Large shows (125K+ square feet) have seen greater increases in exhibit space revenue and are also more likely to have increased costs per square foot of space. This aligns with the fact that large shows place greater emphasis on exhibitor-related KPIs when evaluating event success. Metrics such as the number of exhibiting companies, the number of new exhibitors, and total net square footage are used more frequently by large shows than by mid-size events.



Although exhibitors are reducing overall spend, sponsorships remain relatively strong, supported by returning partners and a modest influx of new ones. This indicates that well-customized sponsorship programs aligned with company objectives continue to deliver strong ROI, even as traditional booth investments decline. Organizers report growing demand for custom sponsorships and generally accommodate these requests. Collaborating with exhibitors to tailor these opportunities can significantly strengthen long-term, trusted partnerships.



Attendee acquisition remains dynamic, with early bird discounts proving essential in driving early commitment. Due to the increases in attendee registration fees, organizations are sending fewer attendees or are becoming more selective in which shows to attend. Pricing strategies and high-value content and experiences will become increasingly more important.



AI is already reshaping event marketing, operations, and sales. Early adopters are reporting measurable improvements, though many organizations are still developing policies and processes. Over time, AI is poised to become a foundational tool, much like CRM systems or marketing automation platforms.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This research was conducted as a collaborative effort between Lippman Connects, Trade Show Executive, and EVOLIO Marketing. Together, we are committed to advancing the events industry through data-driven insights and community building.



EVOLIO provides event and exhibit strategy and measurement services that help turn moments into powerful brand experiences with meaningful feedback and actionable insights. Make data-driven decisions with EVOLIO. Measure what matters and let our data storytelling help shape your event strategy and planning.

Visit www.evoliomarketing.com to learn more.

Lippman Connects owns and produces Exhibition and Convention Executives Forum (ECEP), Attendee Acquisition Roundtable (AAR) Exhibit Sales Roundtable (ESR), and Large Show Roundtable (LSR). Sam Lippman is a certified facilitator, expertly keeping every Lippman Connects experience engaging and on topic.



Check out <https://www.lippmanconnects.com>



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