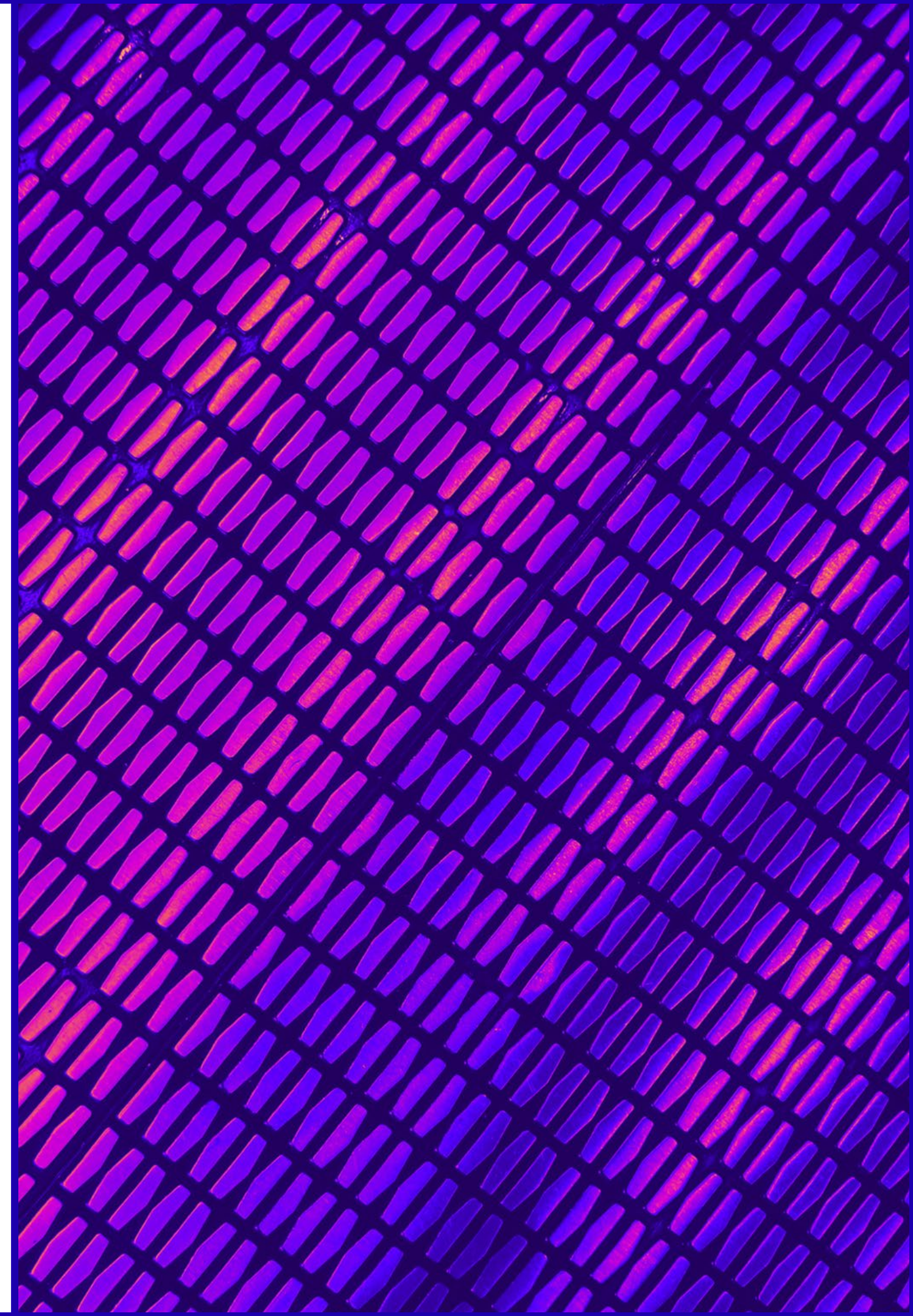




**EXHIBIT  
SALES**  
ROUNDTABLE

# EXHIBIT & SPONSORSHIP RESEARCH ROUNDUP

FEBRUARY 2026





# AGENDA

## EXHIBITOR SENTIMENT & OUTLOOK RESEARCH

Exhibitor thoughts, feelings,  
and outlook.

## TRENDS IN EXHIBIT AND SPONSORSHIP

Trends impacting the  
successes and challenges  
with exhibit and sponsorship  
sales

## CASE STUDY: AI FOR EXHIBIT AND SPONSORSHIP SALES

AI-assisted tips, tricks, and  
tools to assist you in your  
exhibit and sponsorship  
sales efforts

# EXHIBITOR SENTIMENT & OUTLOOK RESEARCH

## The Uncomfortable Truth: What Exhibitors Really Think (and Why It Matters)

# The Evolving Landscape of Event Marketing

*From the Perspective of Exhibit and  
Event Marketers*

January 2026



	2024	2025
Number of completed surveys	171	124
Margin of error (95% confidence level)	±7%	±9%
Average # of events annually	104	90
Exhibit at up to 20 events per year	42%	39%
Exhibit at 21 to 50 events per year	20%	20%
Exhibit at more than 50 events per year	38%	40%
Exhibit at over 100 events per year	18%	20%
Average years in the event industry	16 years	17 years
Purchasing decision-makers	59%	55%
Purchasing influencers	39%	43%
Top industries represented:		
Technology	20%	27%
Healthcare/pharmaceutical	36%	21% ↓
Manufacturing	12%	16%
Director level and above	25%	34% ↑
Manager level	60%	53%

# EXHIBITOR SENTIMENT



**75%**

Highly value  
tradeshows and  
events



**55%**

Increased costs are  
outweighing the  
investment



**43%**

Plan to go beyond  
the booth

# EXHIBITOR SENTIMENT

---

**72%**

Show organizers  
value my  
company's  
participation

---

**51%**

Show organizers  
care about their  
relationship with  
my company  
beyond the event  
dates

---

**53%**

Show organizers  
have open and  
honest  
conversations with  
my team and me

# EXHIBITOR SENTIMENT

---

**55%**

Show organizers  
provide options that  
align with my  
company's objectives

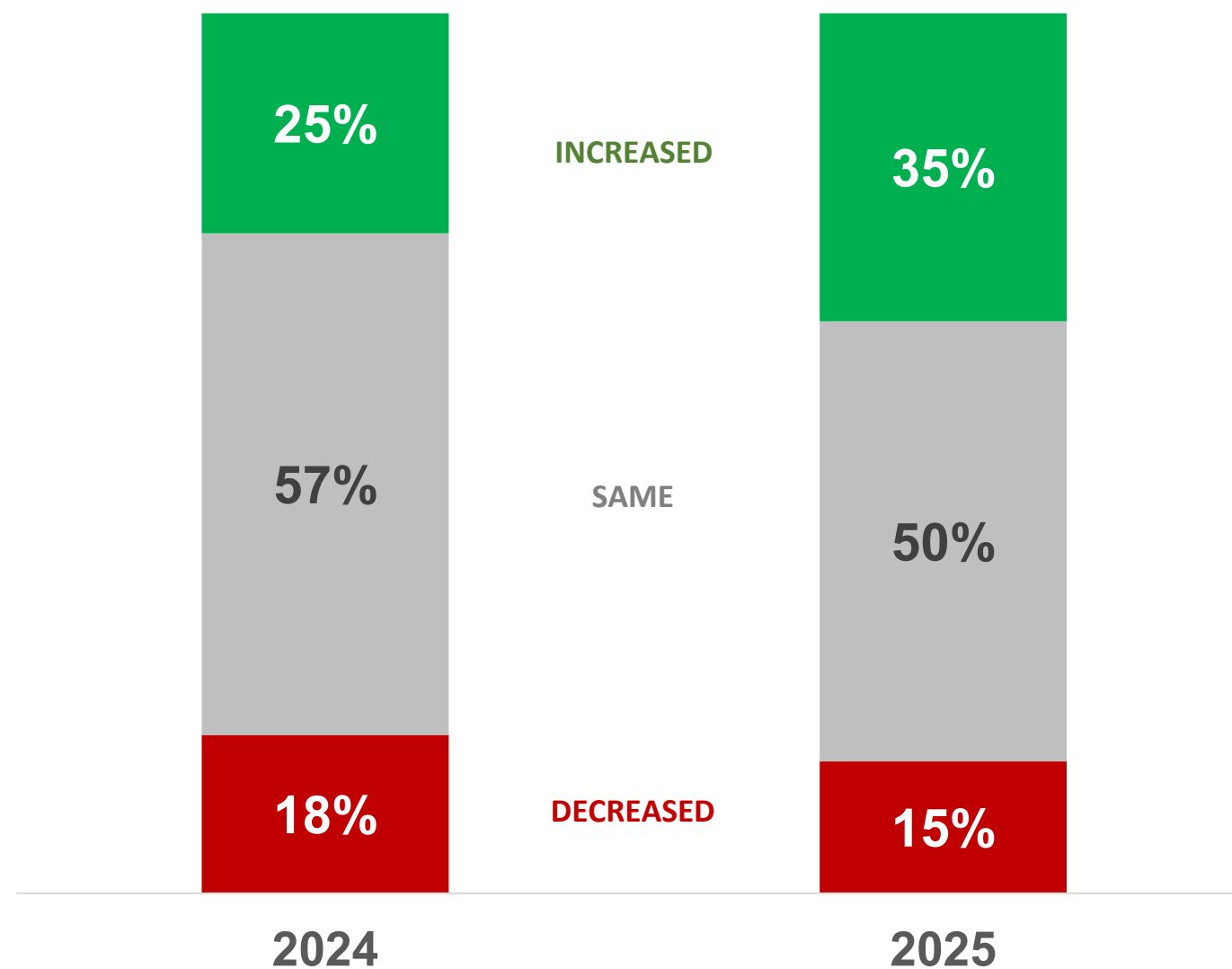
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**55%**

Show organizers  
provide valuable  
marketing tools and  
resources for my  
company's success

# EXHIBITOR OUTLOOK

BUDGET OUTLOOK OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS



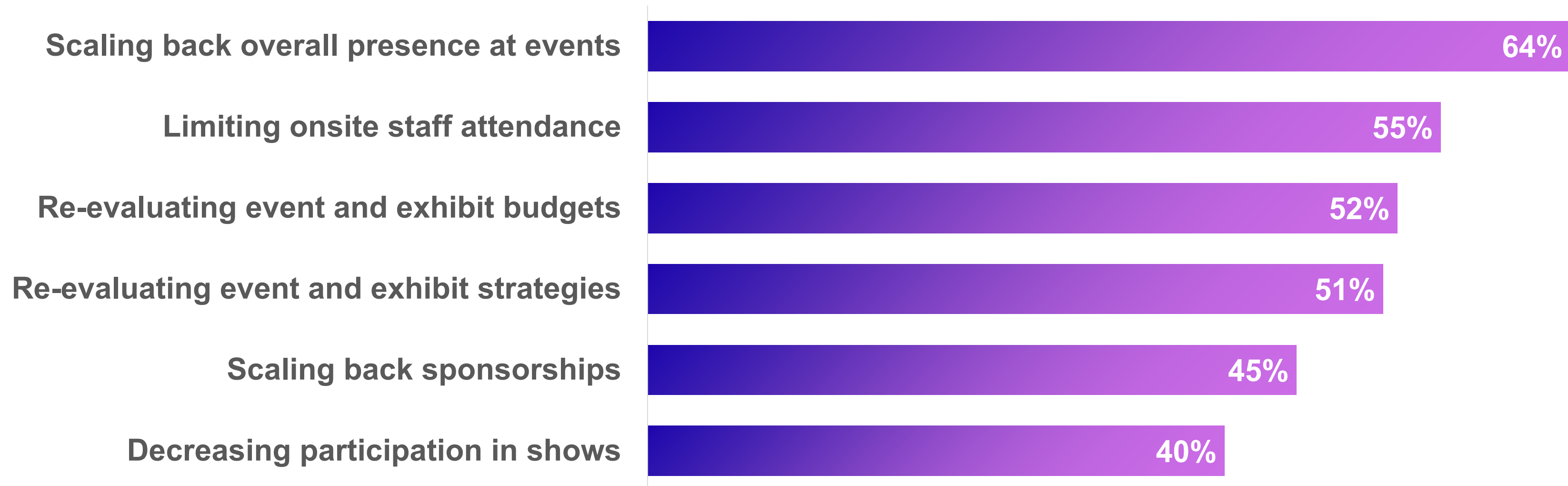
One-third anticipate increased event budgets in 2026, which is up 10 points from a year ago.

The question remains: Is this due to rising costs or true investments into event programs?



# EXHIBITOR OUTLOOK

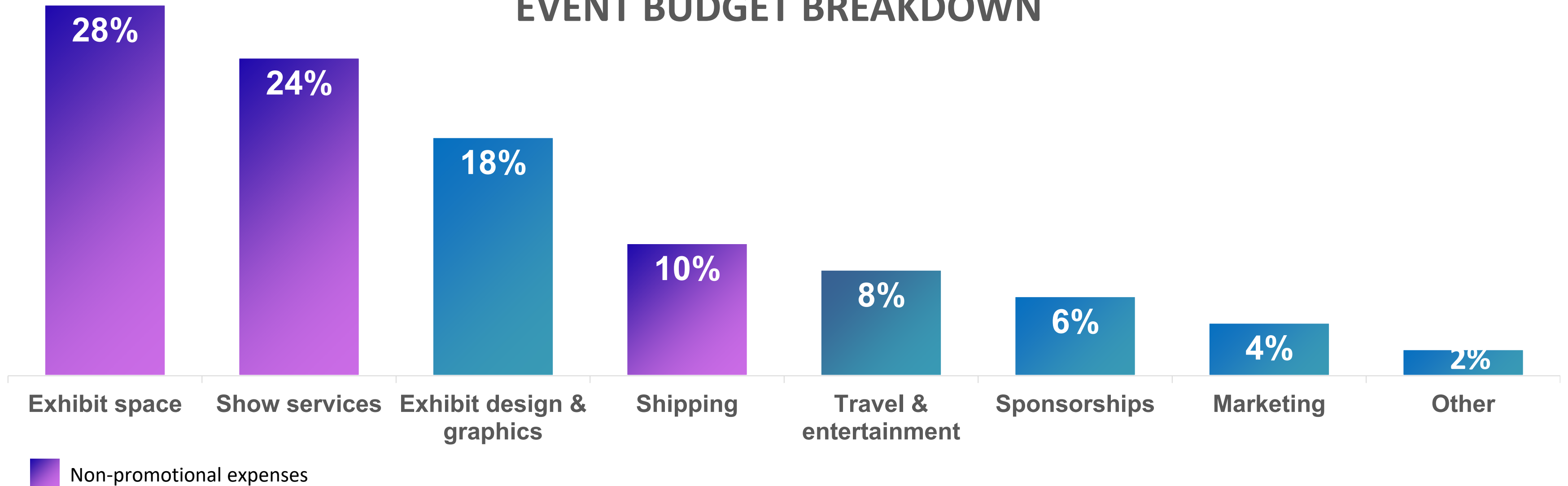
BECAUSE OF INCREASING COSTS, EXHIBITORS ARE...



# EXHIBITOR CHALLENGES

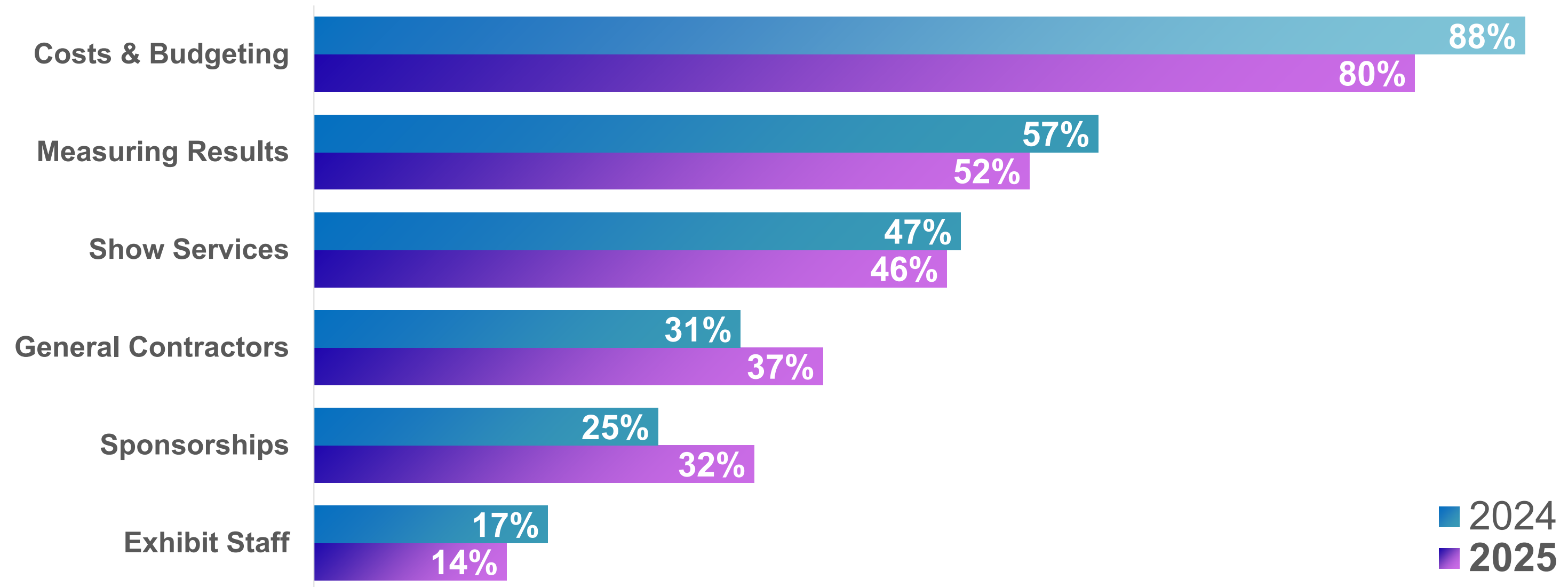
The cost challenge: 62% of budget is not directly revenue-generating

## EVENT BUDGET BREAKDOWN



# EXHIBITOR CHALLENGES

## EXHIBITORS' TOP CHALLENGES



**85%**

Unable to prove ROI and success  
*up 10 points, from 75% in 2024 (see next slide)*



# DEEPER INSIGHTS OF EXHIBITOR CHALLENGES

## Challenges Faced

## Additional Insights

**80%**  
costs & budgeting

**90%** show services costs (up from 82% in 2024)  
**57%** exhibit space costs

**52%**  
measuring results

**85%** need to prove success and (up from 75% a year ago).  
**50%** how to measure effectively (up from 38% a year ago).

**46%**  
show services

**91%** the cost of show services is the biggest pain point  
**57%** quality of services provided

**37%**  
general contractors

**89%** high costs of GCs  
**41%** union issues (down from 55% last year)

**32%**  
info from organizers

**72%** want information in a timely manner  
**53%** accurate attendance figures and a profile of attendees

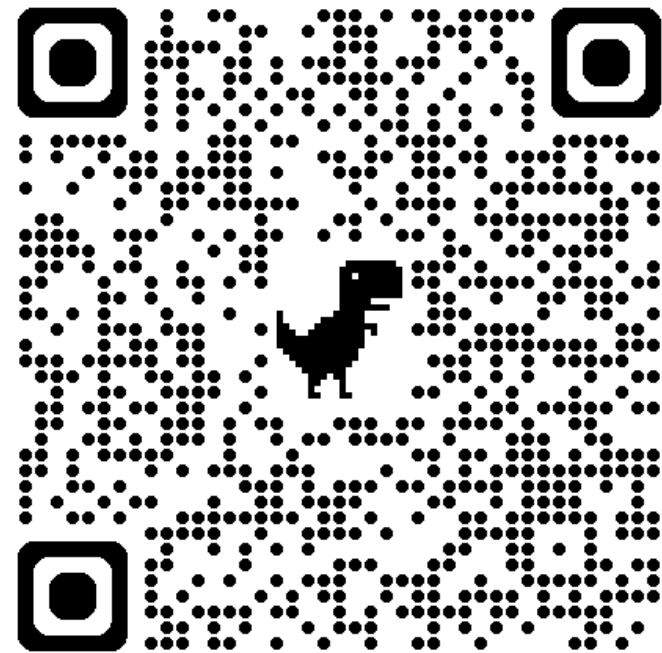
**14%**  
sponsorships

**71%** budget constraints, and measuring the effectiveness  
**64%** relevant sponsorship options (has doubled from 33% in 2024).

**14%**  
exhibit staff

**71%** ensuring the right type of staff is onsite, and staff training  
**57%** cite a lack of interest by the staff.

# DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT AND WATCH THE WEBINAR



## The Uncomfortable Truth: What Exhibitors Really Think (and Why It Matters)

February 5, 2026



## The Evolving Landscape of Event Marketing

*From the Perspective of Exhibit and  
Event Marketers*

January 2026

# CASE STUDIES: THE DATA IN ACTION

## Example #1:

Major tech company left the exhibit hall to have their own 'gated' experience. Includes keynote, demo showcase in ballroom, 3 breakout sessions, 8 meeting rooms, 1 staff room.

**Budget:** Saved 60%  
(saved \$2.5M)

**Traffic:** More press  
More customers  
No looky-loos

**Outcomes:** 350+ meetings  
\$87M+ in pipeline

## Example #2:

Major healthcare company did not increase their budget, despite rising costs of exhibit space, show services, and general contractor.

**Budget:** Flat program-wide

**Events:** 30% less investment space/sponsorships  
Cut 5 shows based on lack of info in timely manner

**Outcomes:** Very little negative impact on ROI/ROO

## Example #3:

Major tech company requested multi-year bundled pricing for exhibit space and sponsorships to avoid increased costs with an almost flat budget.

**Budget:** Anticipated 10% increase per year for the next 3 years program-wide

**Events:** No cuts or significant changes

**Outcomes:** Better budgeting and planning; Exec buy-in



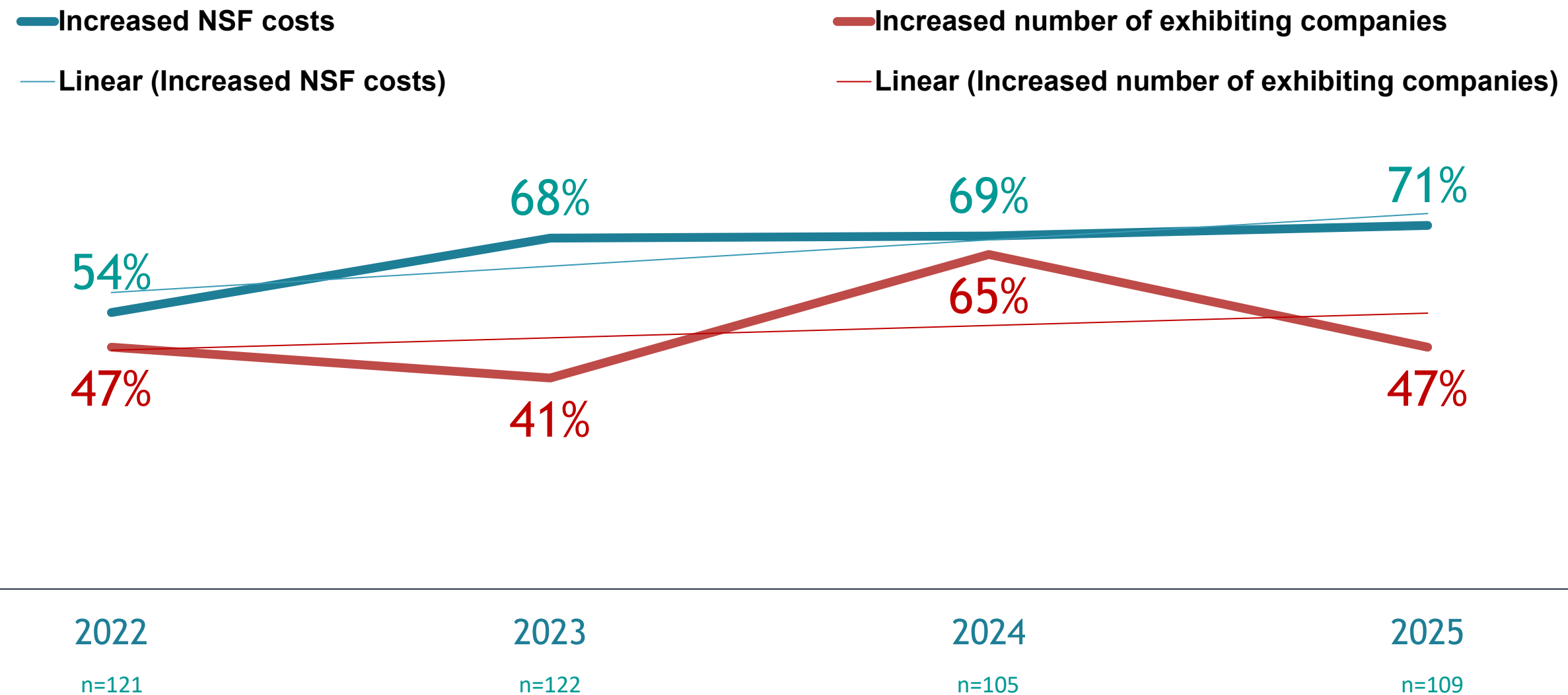
# Interested in knowing your exhibitors' sentiment?

Contact EVOLIO for details: [joef@evolio.co](mailto:joef@evolio.co)

# TRENDS IN EXHIBIT AND SPONSORSHIP SALES

# NSF ACTIVITY TREND

2022 – 2025 LIPPMAN / EVOLIO STUDIES

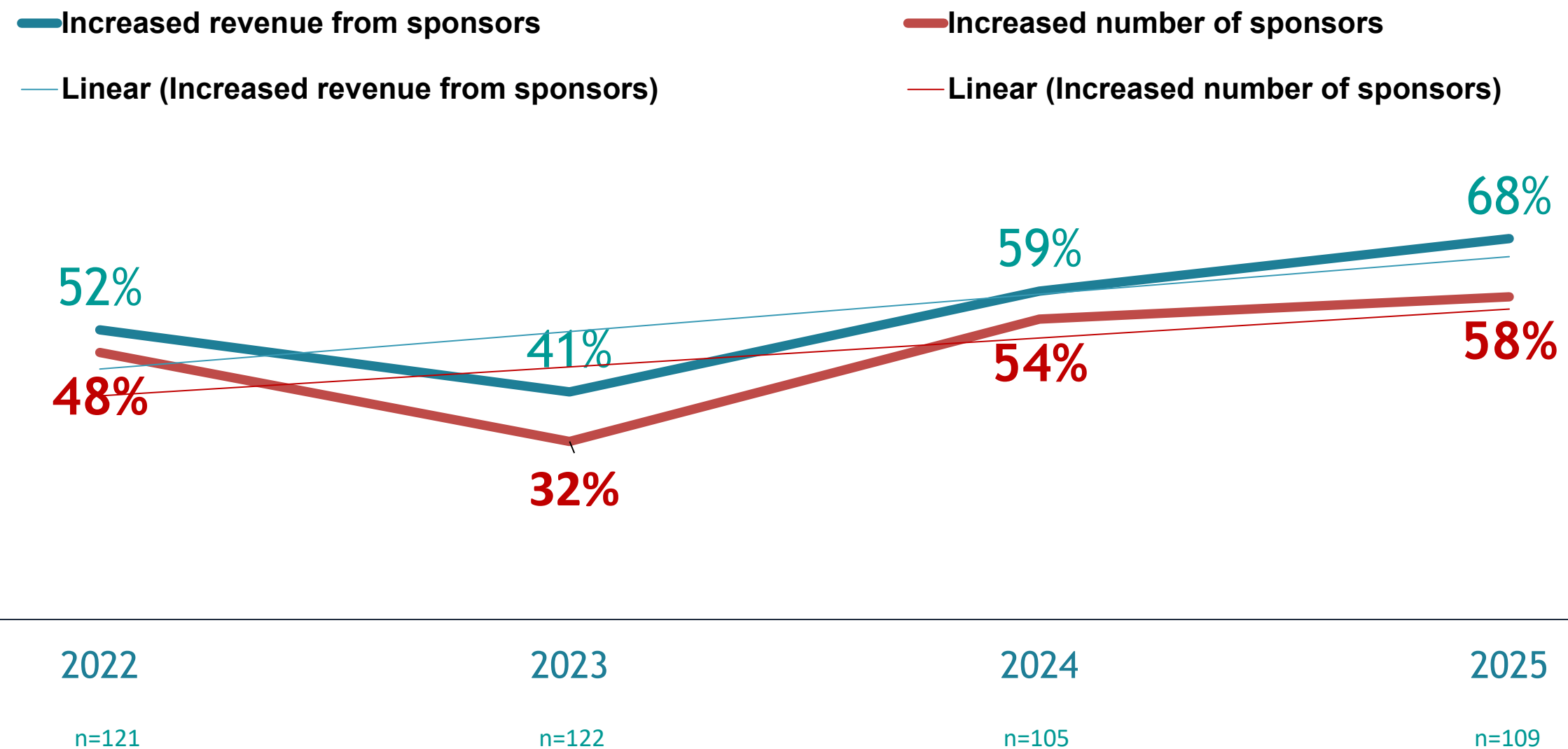


Question: In the past 24 months, have you increased your cost per square foot?  
Question: In the past 24 months, has the number of exhibiting companies increased?  
Values shown = Yes



# SPONSORSHIPS ACTIVITY TREND

2022 – 2025 LIPPMAN / EVOLIO STUDIES



Question: In the past 24 months, has your sponsorship revenue increased?

Question: In the past 24 months, has the number of sponsors increased?

Values shown = Yes

# JOE'S TOP TAKEAWAYS

Re-evaluate your sponsorship strategy and options, as many companies seek custom, thought-leadership, and highly targeted sponsorships with measurable ROI.

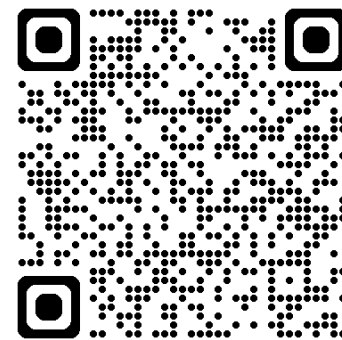
Since 68% of exhibitors have decreased their spend by an average of 21%, sales must be more consultative with transparent data and a clear understanding of what defines customer success.

AI is already reshaping sales. Early adopters are reporting measurable improvements. Over time, AI will be a foundational tool, much like CRM and other digital platforms.

## Key Attendee Acquisition and Exhibit & Sponsorship Sales Insights

Download this report with the latest tradeshow trends. Get inside the heads of your industry peers and learn how to tackle your event challenges.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT



## 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

# AI FOR EXHIBIT AND SPONSORSHIP SALES



# PROMPT EXAMPLE

Acting as a strategic executive team for the 2026 AIA Conference on Architecture and Design, focusing on strategic sales and sponsorships to gain new exhibitors. Using deep research and insights, and based on the attached current exhibitor list, can you identify 5 major architecture-related companies that are not on the exhibitor list but would benefit from exhibiting in the show? Please confirm that they are not on the current exhibitor list and also provide your rationale as to why they would be a good fit for this show. Then, in a table, include the 5 companies, their HQ address, phone number, executive-level marketing contact, email address, phone #, and the top products/services they provide. Any questions for me?

Based on a thorough review of the provided 2026 AIA Conference on Architecture and Design exhibitor list, five major architecture-related companies have been identified that are currently absent but represent highly strategic sponsorship targets. These industry leaders perfectly align with the architectural focus of the conference and offer substantial value to both attendees and the event's revenue.

## Strategic Target Rationale

A complete cross-reference of the provided data confirms that none of these organizations are currently registered as exhibitors for the 2026 event. Their inclusion would bring significant value to the conference floor: [AIA26ExhibitorList.xlsx](#)

- **Steelcase:** As a global leader in commercial interior architecture, Steelcase provides modular walls and spatial solutions that architects specify directly into corporate floor plans. [steelcase](#)
- **Kohler Co.:** High-end residential and commercial architecture relies heavily on premium fixtures, making Kohler's smart-home plumbing integrations highly relevant to design professionals. [rocketreach](#)
- **Bentley Systems:** Bentley Systems dominates the large-scale infrastructure software market, offering AI-driven digital twins and 3D modeling tools that cater to enterprise-level architecture firms. [bentley](#)
- **Saint-Gobain (CertainTeed):** With a growing architectural focus on decarbonization, Saint-Gobain's high-performance building envelope materials and acoustic ceilings directly support sustainable design initiatives. [linkedin](#)
- **MillerKnoll:** Representing the combined portfolios of Herman Miller and Knoll, this design collective produces iconic modern furniture that architects frequently integrate into high-end interiors. [moomoo](#)



# PROMPT EXAMPLE

Can you conduct deep research and insights into Kohler's current event program, sponsorships, and exhibit approach and strategy? Please provide results in a table detailing the events they participate in (exhibit/sponsor), along with dates, location, key messages, key products exhibited, if they speak and on what topic(s), and if they sponsor - what level and any details.

## Kohler's Event & Exhibit Strategy Insights

Based on their presence at recent global trade shows, Kohler's event strategy is highly sophisticated and heavily over-indexes on **experiential design, wellness, and artistic collaboration** rather than traditional "plumbing" displays. [skyline +1](#)

1. **Art-Forward, Immersive Installations:** Kohler treats its exhibit spaces like high-end art galleries or museum installations. They actively avoid standard product aisles. Instead, they partner with world-renowned designers, fashion icons, and artists (such as Daniel Arsham, Samuel Ross, Yabu Pushelberg, and Laura Kim) to create multi-sensory environments that blend industrial engineering with natural landscapes. [prnewswire +2](#)
2. **"Home as a Wellness Sanctuary" Messaging:** Across both tech and design shows, Kohler's core messaging revolves around self-care, longevity, and renewal. They position their products (like smart toilets, digital showers, and cold plunge baths) as lifestyle tech rather than hardware. [multivu +2](#)
3. **In-Booth Thought Leadership:** Rather than solely sponsoring external theater sessions, Kohler builds "stages" directly into their massive booths. They host daily panel discussions and live product demonstrations featuring celebrity designers and wellness experts (e.g., Tyler Florence, Jake Arnold, Dr. Jonathan Leary) to keep attendees dwelling in their space. [prnewswire](#)
4. **Story-Driven Sustainability:** Kohler highlights ESG initiatives through tactile storytelling. At recent shows, they built entire booth sections around their "Kohler WasteLAB," showing attendees how discarded manufacturing enamel and unfired pottery are transformed into luxury tiles. [prnewswire](#)
5. **Multi-Brand Ecosystems:** Kohler utilizes large-footprint booths to showcase its entire corporate umbrella, blending standard Kohler products with ultra-luxury or niche acquisitions (Kallista, Roborn, Kast conc [↓](#) basins, Klafs saunas) to prove they can



# PRO TIP: CREATE A STRATEGIC PITCH SUMMARY

Kohler's strategy proves they have the budget and appetite for massive, highly creative experiential marketing.

To win them for AIA26, go big. How about a large space with a custom wellness sanctuary or art installation, paired with a high-level thought-leadership speaking slot to mirror the success they've found at KBIS and Milan Design Week?

## Kohler Major Event Participation (2024–2025)

Event	Dates & Location	Key Message & Strategy	Key Products Exhibited	Speaking Topics & Sponsorship Details
<b>KBIS (Kitchen &amp; Bath Industry Show)</b>	Feb 2024 & Feb 2025 Las Vegas, NV	"Design Changes Everything"; transforming daily routines into rejuvenating wellness experiences. <a href="#">prnewswire</a>	Anthem+ digital shower, Ice Bath (Remedy Place partnership), Veil smart toilet, Billet faucets, WasteLAB tiles, Robern Instinct mirrors. <a href="#">prnewswire</a>	<b>Speaking:</b> Hosted daily in-booth thought-leadership panels with celebrity designers and doctors. <b>Sponsorship:</b> Anchor exhibitor; won "Best of Show" in 2024 for their immersive booth. <a href="#">prnewswire +1</a>
<b>Milan Design Week (Salone del Mobile)</b>	April 2024 Milan, Italy	Flowing water; combining natural landscape elements with luxury, purpose, and scale engineering. <a href="#">dezeen</a>	Formation 02 smart toilet, Anthem+ system, Kast concrete basins, Klafs S11 free-standing sauna. <a href="#">dezeen +1</a>	<b>Sponsorship/Exhibit:</b> Hosted a massive, multi-pillar off-site installation ("Terminal 02") at Palazzo del Senato with designer Samuel Ross, plus a Yabu Pushelberg-designed booth on the trade floor. Shortlisted for the FuoriSalone Award. <a href="#">dezeen +1</a> <a href="#">YouTube</a>
<b>CES (Consumer Electronics Show)</b>	Jan 2024 Las Vegas, NV	Smart Home Wellness; turning homes into personal sanctuaries for comfort and renewal through tech. <a href="#">multivu</a>	Numi 2.0, Innate, and Veil smart toilets; SpaViva handshower; Atmo Smart Fan; Stillness Bath. <a href="#">multivu +1</a>	<b>Sponsorship/Exhibit:</b> Major exhibitor (Booth #52817, Venetian Expo). Heavily leaned into PR/Media sponsorships, winning the CES Innovation Award for the Stillness Bath. <a href="#">multivu +1</a>

# PRO TIP: AI TO ASSIST IN DRAFTING AN EMAIL

Can you draft an email to Kohler's CMO suggesting why Kohler should be in this show? It should be strategic, to the point, focus on ROI and building connections, and also incorporate your findings about Kohler's approach at shows.

REFINE.  
REFINE.  
REFINE.

Subject: AIA26 – a focused way to turn Kohler's visibility into spec influence

Scott — I've been watching how Kohler shows up at Milan Design Week and KBIS, and there's a clear throughline: big, experiential statements that attract exactly the right people, then convert that attention into demand and preference.

AIA26 gives you that same opportunity, but with a narrower, high-value slice of the market: architects and designers who lead concept development, own or influence spec decisions, and shape brand standards across portfolios. The play is not just "another booth," but a strategic presence that:

- Puts Kohler's wellness, smart home, and sustainability stories in front of priority firms and segments.
- Creates a natural setting for meetings with key accounts and prospects you already care about.
- Generates trackable ROI: target-account meetings, qualified scans, and post-show actions (samples, project consults, design support requests).

If you're open to it, I'd propose a 20-minute working session to do two things:

1. Align on your 2026 priority audiences (firm lists, segments, and project types).
2. Design an AIA26 presence that's explicitly built around those targets and a simple ROI model, so you can see how visibility and conversations roll up to pipeline influence.

Would you be available sometime next week  that discussion?



# What else could you prompt?

- **Create a sales cheat sheet**
- **Develop consultative questions**
- **Develop an ROI calculator**



**When exhibitors and organizers align around priorities, then exhibiting can shift from cost centers to growth engines.**

**Be on the lookout for  
upcoming  
Lippman Connects,  
Tradeshow Executive, and  
EVOLIO Marketing  
Attendee Acquisition and  
Exhibit/Sponsorship Sales  
studies throughout this  
year.**

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Post-event Attendee And Exhibitor Surveys

Onsite Intercepts And Interviews

Focus Groups

Benchmark Studies

Exhibit/Sponsor Performance Analysis

Business Strategy And Intelligence

# THANK YOU!

For more information about having  
EVOLIO measure your upcoming events,  
contact:



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**joef@evolio.co**  
**+1 512 635 7477**

