

2023 EXHIBITOR DATA RESEARCH FINDINGS



INTRODUCTION

For organizations and companies of all sizes, conferences and trade shows remain powerful and versatile tools for establishing a presence in their respective industries. A2Z Events by Personify has recently researched the latest trends related to conferences and tradeshows. In January 2023, 318 participants from companies or organizations that have exhibited at least one trade show, conference, or event in the United States within the past 12 months were surveyed as part of this research project.

This survey was distributed amongst a wide range of industries, as described in Appendix A*, and reflected the perspectives of exhibitors with booths ranging from 100 Net Square Feet (NSF) or smaller to 700 NSF or larger, also included in Appendix A**. By examining these responses, we were able to gain insight into the motivations, preferences, and expectations of these exhibitors.

While each company or organization is unique in its participation in trade shows and events, A2Z Events believes our findings can help inform show organizers as they develop strategies designed to support the long-term growth and success of their organization. Event organizers and associations should take the opportunity to survey their exhibitors and evaluate their responses against the trends noted in this study.



KEY FINDINGS

Here's what we learned.

1. EVENTS ARE A POWERFUL MARKETING TOOL FOR BOOTHS AND COMPANIES OF ALL SIZES

The Show Must Go On! There is optimism surrounding future events, **with 89% of survey respondents saying their 2023 event participation is staying the same or increasing compared to 2022.** This could be attributed to fears associated with COVID-19 becoming less prevalent and people potentially feeling safer attending live events rather than virtual ones. Despite economic uncertainty, companies are looking to 2023 as a benchmark for successful events, recognizing the importance of event ROI and engagement in an ever-competitive market. Event organizers must deliver on more attendees and better engagement to meet this anticipation of what 2023 will bring—which could have significant implications on long-term profitability.

2. EXHIBITOR EXPECTATIONS FOR EVENTS CONTINUE TO GROW

The majority of surveyed individuals (93%) **anticipate either an increase or no change in attendee satisfaction and engagement levels.** This makes it even more important for event organizers to create engaging and memorable experiences for their attendees. Content is a key driver for this, as 84% of exhibitors believe it will

be the key driver for attendance at the events they participate in. Sustainability remains a focus for many exhibitor's events, with nearly half of all exhibitors citing it as a high-priority issue. Younger generations and companies are increasingly aware of the potential impact that events can have on the environment and society. In addition, companies are also recognizing that sustainability can provide cost savings by reducing waste and making more efficient use of energy and other resources.



KEY FINDINGS

3. EVENTS HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE THAN JUST A TOOL TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS

While generating new leads has always been a top priority, in 2023, exhibitors are looking to increase their visibility more than ever before. 67% of companies state visibility as the number one priority for exhibiting in 2023.

67% OF COMPANIES STATE VISIBILITY AS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY FOR EXHIBITING IN 2023.

Businesses are searching for ways to stand out and make an impact with their presence at events. This is especially true of smaller exhibitors who have fewer resources, means, and options beyond exhibiting at trade shows and events to showcase their products or services. Over half also look to increase their brand reputation, and 41 percent look to exhibit to form strategic partnerships. The success or failure of an event will depend largely on how effectively a company can draw attention and engage interests outside of just sales opportunities.



4. ORGANIZING EVENTS IN 2023 PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Despite the national emergency declaration ending in May of 2023, organizing events this year still presents unique challenges, some due to the lingering effects of Covid-19. While other challenges could be industry-specific, 64% of exhibitors believe that the virus may impact their future exhibitions. In addition, **76% of exhibitors cite cost increases as the most difficult challenge they face in 2023.** This corresponds with [CEIR's Third Quarter 2022 report](#), which stated that 50% of event professionals expect a recession in 2023. Therefore, participating in events in 2023 will require extra resources and effort to be successful — both financial and logistical — given the new economic and ever-evolving public health landscapes.

76% OF EXHIBITORS CITE COST INCREASES AS THE MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGE THEY FACE IN 2023.

KEY FINDINGS

5. EXHIBITORS ARE CATERING TO THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

According to the research, millennials are the most important demographic to focus on, with 47% indicating that this group was their primary target. Millennials are now (or will soon be) in a position to exercise considerable buying power, making them an attractive target demographic for businesses of all kinds. Additionally, millennials have been identified as one of the most tech-savvy generations, expecting event organizers to create curated, interactive, and engaging experiences before, during, and after events. Considering all these factors, it is easy to see why so many exhibitors are looking to engage with this demographic through their events.

ACCORDING TO THE RESEARCH, MILLENNIALS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DEMOGRAPHIC TO FOCUS ON, WITH 47% INDICATING THAT THIS GROUP WAS THEIR PRIMARY TARGET.





2023 EXHIBITOR DATA **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

1. EVENTS ARE A POWERFUL MARKETING TOOL FOR “BOOTHS” AND BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES

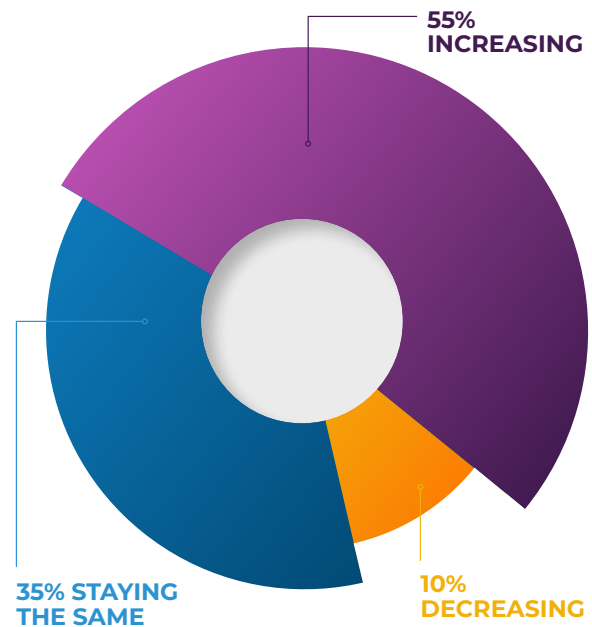
The survey results suggest that exhibiting companies of all booth sizes (see Appendix A**) are optimistic about their future events, with 89% claiming that their 2023 event participation will stay the same or increase compared to 2022. This is a positive sign for the industry, indicating that companies are willing to invest in events despite the economic challenges of the current climate.

When broken down further, 55% said they would be increasing their participation in 2023 events, 34.9% said it would remain the same, and 10.1% claimed it would decrease. This suggests a slight shift towards more optimistic investments in events, as the majority are expecting either an increase or no change in participation this year.



“Our exhibiting is increasing as people are becoming more comfortable meeting and gathering in person with less virtual / hybrid focus.”

DO YOU SEE YOUR 2023 EVENT PARTICIPATION INCREASING, DECREASING, OR STAYING THE SAME?



Events are often seen as a powerful marketing tool for companies of all sizes, so this data is encouraging for those who plan events in 2023. Ultimately, companies are still confident in their ability to leverage events as a powerful marketing tool despite challenging economic conditions.

2. EXHIBITOR EXPECTATIONS FOR EVENTS CONTINUE TO GROW

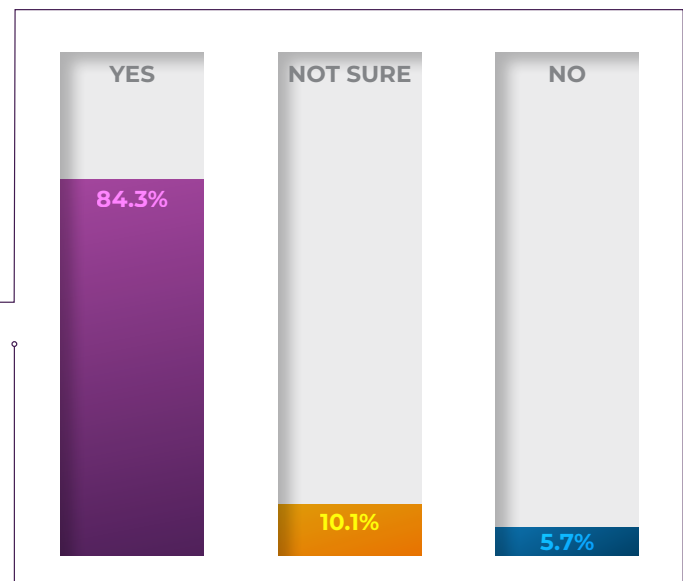
This survey revealed that most exhibitors, 93%, anticipate either an increase or no change in attendee satisfaction and engagement levels at events. This result indicates that exhibitors are expecting better experiences for attendees to support continued growth, increased attendance, and new audiences (buyers) as events return. The results of this survey demonstrate that the overall sentiment is towards increased expectations at events, with 68.9% of respondents expecting an increase in satisfaction and engagement, 24.2% staying the same, and only 6.9% expecting a decrease.

The high anticipation for increased attendee satisfaction indicates that show organizers should prioritize creating *engaging* experiences for their guests, as this is what attendees will be expecting from them.

Attendees will also expect more value from their event experiences than ever before; they expect useful content rather than just entertainment or freebies. Show organizers should create programming or content which adds value to attendees' lives and can make a real difference with its educational content or inspiring messages.

It's important for organizers to be aware of what is trending within different industries so they can create experiences that are relevant and timely. To truly engage attendees and make them feel valued, show organizers must deliver those personalized experiences which exceed attendees' expectations by offering something unique and worthwhile – whether it be through the creative use of technology, or creative event formats that break away from traditional conventions.

DO YOU BELIEVE CONTENT WILL BE A KEY FACTOR IN DRIVING ATTENDANCE FOR TRADESHOWS AND CONFERENCES IN 2023?



3. EVENTS HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE THAN JUST A TOOL TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS

These survey responses provided unique insight into the goals and objectives of event exhibitors in 2023. **As mentioned in the overview, 67% of event organizers stated visibility was their number one priority when exhibiting at events.** This is higher than the other options available, such as generating leads (59.4%), enhancing brand reputation (50%), and establishing strategic partnerships (41.2%). This indicates that exhibitors are increasingly trying to be seen and make a lasting impression on attendees, current and potential customers, as well as industry partners.

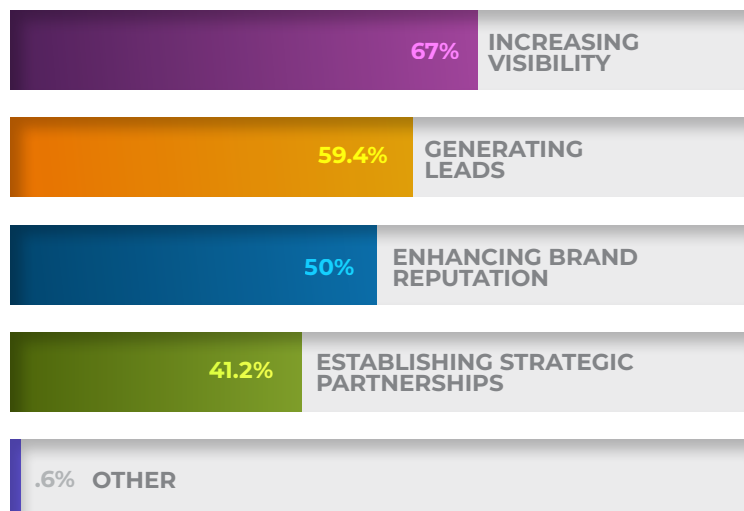
The results of this survey demonstrate the shift in how businesses approach events today compared to even a few years ago. Events

no longer serve merely as tools to acquire new customers but as a platform to increase visibility and foster relationships within the business's core market and beyond. In addition, events provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen existing customer relationships, create meaningful connections with new buyers/prospects, and deepen loyalty levels with customers who have already purchased from the business in the past. While lower in priority, 42.1% of exhibitors also felt events offered an opportunity to participate in the community (both online and in-person) that events have created.

Show organizers must continue to evolve and adapt their approaches to meet the demands of exhibitors. As companies increasingly rely on

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WHAT INITIATIVES ARE YOU HOPING TO ACHIEVE THROUGH PARTICIPATING IN TRADE SHOWS AND CONFERENCES IN 2023?



3. EVENTS HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE THAN JUST A TOOL TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS

← CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS

events as part of their marketing and customer relationship strategies, organizers must ensure that they provide a platform tailored to the needs of both businesses and attendees.

This requires an understanding of the wants and needs of exhibitors, proactive communication between organizers and exhibitors, creative problem-solving to answer those needs, flexibility in design elements such as booth size and display options, and a commitment to meeting the goals of all stakeholders.

By taking these steps, organizers can create a space where exhibitors can reach out to new customers while deepening relationships with existing ones. With the right approach, show organizers can provide an environment for companies to succeed in meaningful ways.



4. ORGANIZING EVENTS IN 2023 PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES

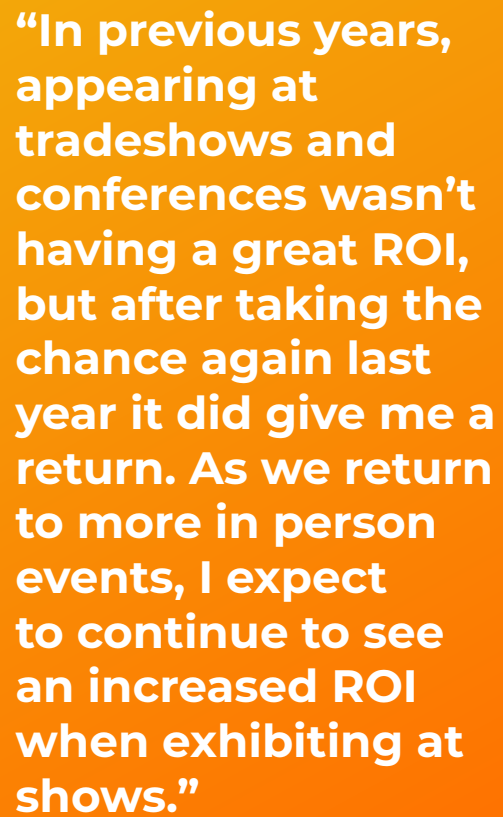
The survey results point to the need for show organizers to come up with creative solutions in order to meet the needs of exhibitors in 2023 and beyond. **Of particular concern is the rising costs of exhibiting, with 76% of respondents voicing this concern. This rate is even higher amongst exhibitors that use larger booths - 89% of those with 200 NSF or more cited cost as a major challenge.**

At the same time, 54% noted the importance of finding innovative ways to connect with attendees, and 27% reported decreased attendance as one of their biggest concerns. This is further compounded by the fact that many businesses are experiencing financial difficulties due to inflation and recessionary costs associated with the pandemic.

Given the current economic landscape, show organizers need to be resourceful when planning events in order to make them profitable. This can include re-evaluating their current exhibitor pricing and packaging, re-negotiating with service contractors/venues, providing more support services for exhibitors, such as online marketing, exhibitor education, and finding new ways to reach out to potential attendees. Additionally, organizers should explore ways to reduce costs while still delivering a quality experience. Show organizers should also consider diversifying their programming and activities to attract different demographics of people. For instance, by offering workshops, panel discussions, and seminars at the event, exhibitors may find themselves having access to a larger pool of visitors interested in their products or services. Events are increasingly using matchmaking and networking tools, as well as using online communities to connect their audiences to increase engagement and meet the younger generation on their screens.

By optimizing resources through careful

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“In previous years, appearing at tradeshow and conferences wasn’t having a great ROI, but after taking the chance again last year it did give me a return. As we return to more in person events, I expect to continue to see an increased ROI when exhibiting at shows.”

4. ORGANIZING EVENTS IN 2023 PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES

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budgeting and utilizing the latest technology available for communication with customers and suppliers alike, show organizers can help create an environment that fosters innovation and increased engagement from all parties involved.

In short, while it is true that show organizers face numerous challenges in 2023 and beyond, they can still successfully navigate them by being innovative and resourceful. With careful planning and a commitment to address changing needs and trends among exhibitors, there is no reason why events cannot remain successful despite the current economic climate.




5. EXHIBITORS ARE CATERING TO THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

This survey question reveals a great deal about why both show organizers and exhibitors need to recognize the importance of targeting and attracting the Millennial generation to their events. **Of all surveyed event exhibitors, nearly half, 47%, reported that Millennials are their primary target demographic, indicating that this younger generation is gaining considerable buying power.**

This is an important finding for show organizers, as it suggests that they need to cater to the needs and preferences of Millennials if they hope to attract them to their events.

The survey data also showed a significant gap between the other generations targeted by event exhibitors – Gen Xers: 23%, Gen Zers: 21%, and Baby Boomers: 9%. This data indicates that



“Millennials will be leading the next generation, and are most likely currently in decision making positions.”

while Millennials may be the primary target demographic, show organizers should not ignore other generations altogether when crafting their events' presence. It would be beneficial for show organizers to understand the needs and wants of each generation to ensure that everyone feels welcome at their shows and events.

Furthermore, event exhibitors indicated that Millennials are now (or will soon be) in a position to exercise considerable buying power – another indication of why show organizers should focus on this group when planning their events' presence. Associations also should evaluate this data as it relates to membership. Show organizers can take advantage of this trend by offering unique experiences tailored specifically towards

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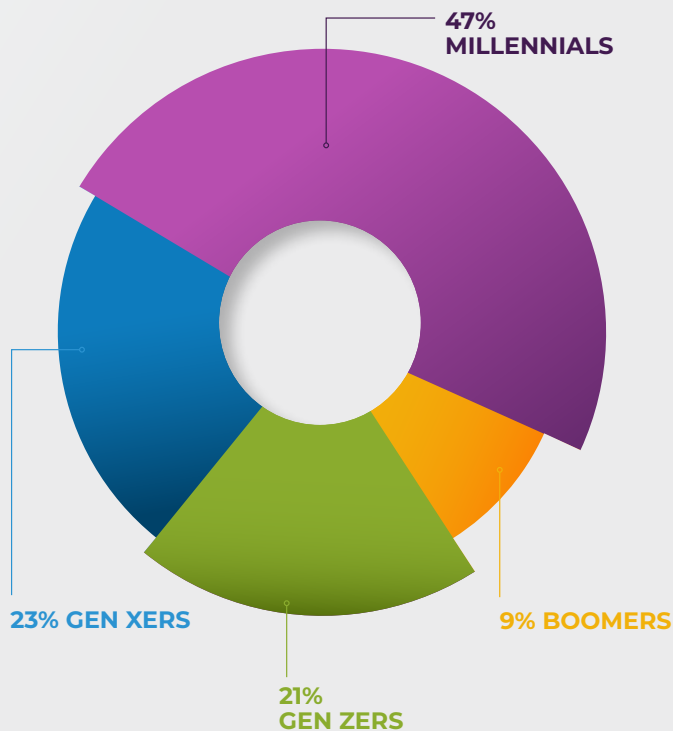
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Millennials, such as pop-up shops, interactive booths, or incorporating technology into their displays. Doing so will not only help attract more millennials, but also provide more opportunities for exhibitors to increase sales and build relationships with potential customers from this key demographic group.

In conclusion, understanding the importance of targeting Millennials when organizing shows and events, as well as membership, is paramount for show organizers who wish to remain competitive within their industry. Knowing how best to engage with different generations will allow show organizers to create an inclusive environment, where all feel welcomed, while also providing additional sales opportunities through tailored experiences specifically designed for the Millennial generation. As such, show organizers need to remain aware of current trends within different demographics as they plan their events' presence in 2023 and beyond.

WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC ARE YOU MOST FOCUSED ON FOR YOUR EVENTS' PRESENCE IN 2023?



WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

The research conducted by A2Z Events by Personify in January 2023 has highlighted some key trends in the world of ever-evolving events and event exhibiting. It has become clear that events are a powerful and versatile tool for companies of all sizes, with exhibitor expectations for events continuing to grow. Furthermore, it is no longer enough to simply use events to acquire new customers – they have become much more than that.

These results highlight that show organizers need to reconsider their approach when it comes to addressing exhibitor desires. On top of ensuring basic needs such as having an exhibition space and marketing materials available, they should also ensure they understand what else these exhibitors hope to get out of attending an event. This could be anything from greater engagement with attendees or access to exclusive content or partnerships with sponsors or other organizations within their industry.

Meeting the needs of exhibitors is not easy in today's world. Still, with the right strategy and proactive approach, show organizers can ensure they remain ahead of their competitors while delivering maximum value for their exhibitors. Knowing the trends within event marketing is essential for any event organizer who wishes to stay on top of the industry and grow their event in 2023 and beyond.

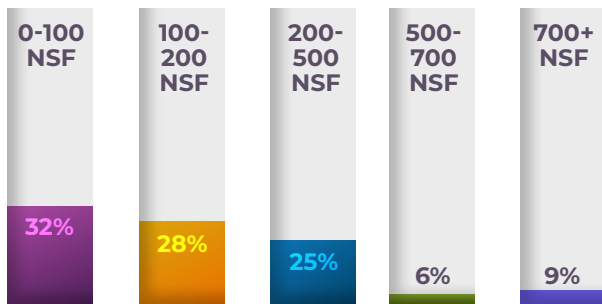
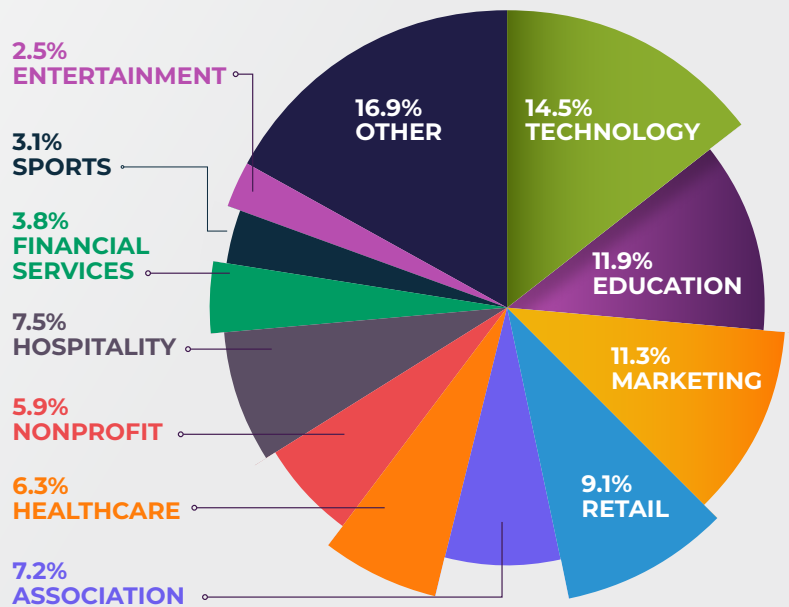


APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS FOR EXHIBITORS' SURVEY

The 318 exhibitors included a diverse range of industry representatives surveyed from January 5, 2023, through January 23, 2023.

*The survey participants spanned across various industries: Technology (14.5%), Education (11.9%), Marketing (11.3%), Retail (9.1%), Association (7.2%), Healthcare (6.3%), Nonprofit (5.9%), Hospitality (7.5%), Financial Services (3.8%), Sports (3.1%), and Entertainment (2.5%). Fifty-four other respondents had 'Other' industries listed that ranged from legal to construction services. (16.9%).



**Exhibitors' booths or stands varied in size, from (32%) having 100 Net Square Feet (NSF) or smaller, (28%) having 100-200 NSF, (25%) having 200-500 NSF, (6%) having 500-700 NSF, and (9%) having 700 NSF or larger at their respective events.

Overall, this survey provided a good representation of different types of exhibitors and their preferences when it comes to exhibiting at trade shows, conferences, and other industry events, giving us valuable insights that can help with future event planning decisions as well as helping everyone better understand how to target best and market to potential customers in the events industry space in general.