

# A stand works only as well as **the hall already knows** **you**

What one conversation cost at your last exhibition, why the emails afterwards went unanswered, and what changes if you start from the other end.

On the third day a man came to your stand, looked at the cutaway assembly, asked about bearing life and let you scan his badge. Your engineer said afterwards that it had been a good conversation.

A week later an email went out to him with the catalogue. Two weeks later, another one. He answered neither.

**There are two hundred like him on the list.**



The business card goes to someone hearing about your brand for the first time.

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He had never heard of you before the show. Three minutes at a stand do not turn an unknown foreign company into a supplier he will go and defend to his director. A stand converts only as far as the hall already knows your name, and the rest of this document is about what that costs and what people do about it.

# The price of one conversation

Work out what that bearing conversation cost.

UFI and Oxford Economics measured direct exhibitor spending worldwide in their 2026 study. A European company spends an average of 37,158 euros on a single event. By CEIR's count, exhibitions take 41% of the annual marketing budget.

CEIR also publishes a formula for setting a contact target: exhibiting hours, times staff on duty, times conversations per hour, times the share that clears the criteria. In their own example twenty-four hours, four people and three conversations an hour give 288 conversations, of which 39% clear the criteria.

|                                   |              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Exhibiting hours                  | 24           |
| Staff on duty                     | × 4          |
| Conversations per person per hour | × 3          |
| Conversations across the show     | 288          |
| Clear the criteria, 39%           | 112 contacts |
| <hr/>                             |              |
| €37,158 ÷ 112 contacts            | €332 each    |

332 euros a conversation. The man with the bearing question cost you exactly as much as any other of those hundred and twelve, and in that minute you could not tell one from another.

This figure deserves an honest caveat. It is the upper bound. CEIR states that the formula assumes a company which has already invested in marketing before the show and on the floor, and the 39% comes from 568 completed surveys with a margin of error of 4.1%. By the count of Experient and CompuSystems, fewer than 10% of exhibitors apply selection criteria at all, so for most of them those hundred and twelve contacts are never counted. You can work out your own figure in an evening, using your own hours, people and budget.

# Why the email arrived late

While your manager was putting the email together, that man was already looking for you himself.

Gartner published a survey of 646 B2B buyers in March 2026: 67% would prefer to run a purchase without a sales rep, and 45% used AI in their most recent deal. Your buyer is one of those two thirds. He opened your site, looked for what you ship to his country, and asked a search engine who brings equipment like this into Kazakhstan at all.

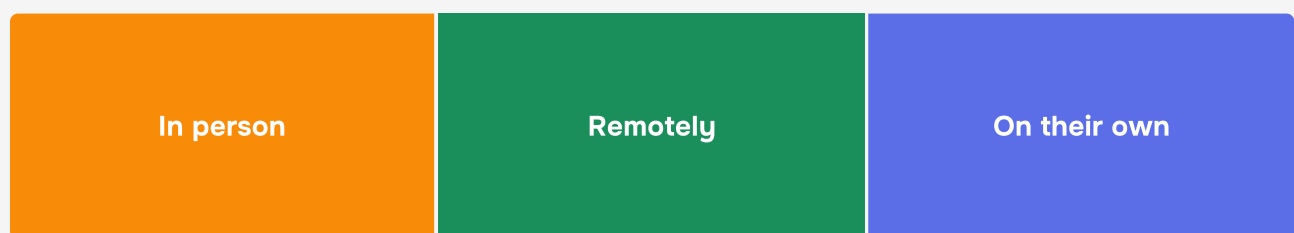
He did all of it in Russian, in the places your head office does not watch. By the time the email arrived the decision had been made, and it was made without you.

# What only a stand can do

It is easy to jump from here to the conclusion that exhibitions should go. The conclusion is wrong.

Nothing but a stand lets a person hold the assembly in his hands. No website answers a question about bearing life in the voice of the engineer who fitted it. Three days in a hall hold as many meetings as a year of correspondence. McKinsey's B2B Pulse counts around ten interaction channels in a B2B buying journey against five in 2016, and sets out a rule of thirds.

## How buyers want to deal with you at any stage



■ want to meet in person   ■ want it remote   ■ would rather work it out alone

A stand covers the first third, and covers it as nothing else can. You sent it to cover all three.

Rule of thirds, McKinsey B2B Pulse. The shares are roughly equal; the study gives no exact percentages.

# The same man, a different conversation

Now the same man, except that for two months before the show he had seen your equipment in his feed, read your piece on the life of the assembly, and once written to you in a messenger.



He has read the site for months, followed the feed and exchanged messages with you, and arrives at the stand to talk partnership.

He comes to the stand not to get acquainted. He comes to ask about lead times and minimum order, because he has looked at the rest already. The same three minutes, except they start on the fourth step.

What also changes is who writes to whom. While nobody knows you, you look for a distributor and explain why he should spend warehouse money on you. When people in the region are asking about you, he writes first. And then part of the travel loses its point on its own: you go where there is something to deepen, not where you have to be seen.

# How we do it

At Artifact we handle what happens before the trip, and we work from Almaty, in the region's working language.

## **Reconnaissance**

We go through your brand, your audience and the competitors already on that shelf. We build a distributor map by country and look at who imports what. The entry strategy grows out of that rather than out of thoughts about a growing market.

## **Production**

You ship us the smaller items and we shoot them with actors. For plants and large lines we work from your existing video or travel and shoot on site. The photography, the video and the copy are made here.

## **The language of the market**

The site, the catalogues, the ad creative and the brand story are written again in the language people negotiate in here, not translated into it. An English catalogue rarely survives to the study stage: on the production floor the language is barely spoken.

## **Site and platforms**

A separate site for the region, with its own domain and analytics, built so that local search engines and the AI assistants now drawing up buyers' shortlists can read it. Social channels are chosen from data on where your audience actually sits, not from the usual set.

## **Advertising and publications**

We run traffic and test demand with money rather than with a hypothesis. Alongside it we publish material that gets you found in search and quoted by AI.

## **Enquiries and handover**

Incoming enquiries come to us and we work them here, in Russian. We filter out intermediaries and the merely curious, and check what kind of company is writing and what it needs. What reaches you is a contact somebody has already spoken to. From there your own representative runs the negotiation while we stay on as translator and intermediary for as long as it helps. The site, the content and the channels stay yours.

If the market stays silent, you get that answer too, for a fraction of one trip rather than after a year and three exhibitions.

**At the next exhibition a man will come to your stand again and ask about bearing life. The one difference: you will not have to write to him, because he will write first.**

**\$5,000**

First month. Half the full rate, our introductory price for early clients.

**\$10,000**

From month two onward, everything running in parallel.

Ad budget separate, 500 to 1,500 dollars a month for one or two countries.

**Ask how: [lina@artifactentry.com](mailto:lina@artifactentry.com)**

#### SOURCES

- **UFI and Oxford Economics**, Global Economic Impact of Exhibitions, 2026. Direct spend per exhibitor by region.
- **CEIR**, Marketing Spend Decision Report, 2018. Share of the annual marketing budget that goes to exhibitions.
- **CEIR**, Exhibitor ROI and Performance Metric Practices, 2015. Share of contacts clearing the criteria. 568 completed surveys, margin of error 4.1%.
- **CEIR**, Industry Insights Series, How Exhibitors Can Improve Lead Quality and Sales Conversion, by Jefferson Davis. The formula and the Experient and CompuSystems count.
- **Gartner**, press release of 9 March 2026. Survey of 646 B2B buyers, August and September 2025.
- **McKinsey**, B2B Pulse, The new B2B growth equation. Interaction channels and the rule of thirds.