



**Transforming exhibitions from
lead generation venues into
platforms where long-lasting,
deep B2B partnerships are forged.**

1. The New Strategic Role of Exhibitions in B2B Partnerships

For decades, exhibitions have functioned as high energy commercial arenas where organisations showcased products, generated leads, and initiated supplier or distributor relationships, amplified by the media visibility. These functions still matter, but in today's environment, they are no longer enough.

Exhibitions are now navigating a landscape that is far more complex and risk-intensive than in the past.

Rising fraud, escalating regulatory pressures, geopolitical instability, and increasingly complex global supply chains have reshaped how organisations evaluate potential partners. It is no longer sufficient to identify a company that meets operational needs; businesses must determine whether that company is safe to partner with.

Financial integrity, compliance posture, governance transparency, cyber resilience, sustainability maturity is now core partnership criteria, not optional extras.

This reality demands a new role for exhibitions. To remain relevant, exhibitions must evolve from traditional lead generation venues into pre-qualification environments for long-term, strategically aligned B2B partnerships. They must become decision platforms, where organisations can not only discover potential partners but also assess their credibility, validate their claims, and determine whether they pose financial, compliance, or reputational risk.

Embedding due diligence into and around the exhibition experience transforms the entire partnership lifecycle.

- It reduces onboarding failures.
- It shortens deal cycles.
- It prevents costly regulatory or reputational fallout.
- And it builds confidence into every interaction from the moment participants arrive.

The urgency for this shift is undeniable. Recent industry data illustrates the scale of the challenge:

- 30% of all breaches in 2025 involved a third party — nearly double the previous year
Source: Black Kite | 2025 Third-Party Breach Report: Key Stats at a Glance: blackkite.com/blog/infographic-key-stats-from-the-2025-third-party-breach-report/
 - Each third party breach carried an average cost of nearly \$4.91M
Source: [Global data breach costs reach all-time high of \\$4.9M, IBM says | Cybersecurity Dive](https://www.ibm.com/blogs/ibm-security/2025/01/global-data-breach-costs-reach-all-time-high-of-4-9m-ibm-says/)
 - 98% of organisations discovered at least one vendor connected to a known breach
Source: Cybersecurity Dive: [cybersecuritydive.com/news/connected-breached-third-party/641857/](https://www.cybersecuritydive.com/news/connected-breached-third-party/641857/)
- These numbers reveal a fundamental truth: Today, the greatest risk lies not only in what you buy or sell but in who you choose to partner with.
- In this new landscape, exhibitions have a unique opportunity and a responsibility to become trusted gateways for safe, sustainable, and credible global business relationships.
- This is the new mandate for the exhibition industry. And the time to act is now.

2. Why Exhibitions Must Lead with Due Diligence

2.1 The Exhibition Market Is Entering a New Growth Phase:

According to the Future Market Insights – Exhibition Market Analysis Report 2025–2035, the global exhibition market is expected to expand from USD 45.1 billion in 2025 to USD 88.7 billion by 2035, reflecting a 7% CAGR and signalling strong long-term growth and stability. This sustained expansion creates ideal conditions for integrating structured due diligence solutions into the exhibition ecosystem.

Source: Future Market Insights – Exhibition Market Analysis Report 2025–2035:
futuremarketinsights.com/reports/exhibition-market

2.2 Attendee Quality Has Never Been Higher: The 2025 Trade Show Stats:

The 2025 Trade Show Stats: Attendees, ROI & Costs report shows that 82% of trade show visitors hold purchasing authority, underscoring exhibitions as high value environments for connecting with key decision makers and forming risk screened partnerships. Additionally, 46% of attendees arrive already in the final stages of their buying journey, heightening the importance of credible, validated exhibitors.

Source: 2025 Trade Show Stats: Attendees, ROI & Costs:
boothexperiences.com/trade-show-statistics

2.3 Exhibitions Are Becoming Core to B2B Strategy:

Event, conference, and exhibition data for 2025 indicates that 49% of CMOs consider B2B events more important now than before the pandemic, raising the bar for trust, transparency, and credibility measures such as formal due diligence. With events continuing to represent a major investment area for B2B marketers, features that minimise risk are increasingly viewed as essential to meeting ROI expectations.

Source: Event, conference and exhibition statistics for 2025:
[Event, conference and exhibition statistics for 2025 | Adverset](https://adverset.com/event-conference-and-exhibition-statistics-for-2025)

2.4 AI, Screening & Data Driven Tools Are Becoming Standard:

The UFI Global Barometer shows that 92% of exhibition companies already leverage AI predominantly across sales, marketing, and customer relationship functions creating an ideal foundation for integrating automated due diligence workflows.

Source: UFI Global Barometer indicates further growth expected in 2025 for the exhibition industry globally: [UFI Global Barometer indicates further growth expected in 2025 for the exhibition industry globally - UFI](https://ufi.com/global-barometer-indicates-further-growth-expected-in-2025-for-the-exhibition-industry-globally)

2.5 Sustainability & Compliance Expectations Are Rising:

Exhibitors are increasingly evaluated on their sustainability performance, transparency, governance standards, and overall operational credibility factors that now significantly influence buyer decisions and event participation. As this scrutiny intensifies, exhibitions are uniquely positioned to make due-diligence a core feature, enabling participants to confidently verify credibility, compliance, and ethical alignment before entering strategic partnerships.

Source: Deloitte's 2023 Global third-party risk management survey shows resiliency and building trust as top priorities for leaders: [Deloitte's 2023 Global third-party risk management survey shows resiliency, building trust top priorities for leaders](https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues-and-ideas/industry-4.0/2023-global-third-party-risk-management-survey-shows-resiliency-building-trust-top-priorities-for-leaders)

3. Incentives for Trust First Exhibitions

3.1 Strengthen Exhibition Value Through Trust Infrastructure:

With third party involvement in breaches doubling to 30% year over year, exhibitions that provide trust building tools become more attractive to serious buyers and suppliers. Trust becomes a differentiator, enhancing the exhibition's perceived quality and relevance

Source: Black Kite | 2025 Third Party Breach Report: Key Stats at a Glance:
blackkite.com/blog/infographic-key-stats-from-the-2025-third-party-breach-report/

3.2 Embedding due diligence differentiates exhibitions in a crowded market:

As global event competition intensifies, providing structured partner risk insights becomes a premium capability that sets an exhibition apart and attracts higher tier buyers and enterprise participants.

3.3 Unlock New Premium Revenue Streams:

Exhibition organizers can monetize trust services through: Verified exhibitor tiers, Risk scored matchmaking, Premium due diligence reports, Data driven partner profiling dashboards.

3.4 Improve Deal Conversion and Event ROI:

Organizers can enable buyers to engage only with credible, low risk partners dramatically increasing the likelihood that meetings progress into signed deals. This directly enhances exhibitor ROI and strengthens the event's reputation as a trusted venue for high value B2B partnership formation.

3.5 Improved participant experience through reduced post event friction:

When risk insights are surfaced up front, organizations avoid lengthy, duplicated, or failed onboarding cycles making exhibitors more likely to return and reinvest in future editions.

4. Data is the new currency of trust in Exhibitions

Data is no longer an add-on; it is the core trust fabric of the modern exhibition ecosystem. Exhibitions have traditionally operated as physical marketplaces, spaces where businesses present themselves through booths, brochures, and conversations. But in a world defined by heightened regulatory scrutiny, complex global supply chains, and rising expectations for transparency, trust cannot be inferred from branding alone. Attendees now expect evidence, context, and credibility behind every business they consider engaging with. This makes data not displays but the new currency of trust in exhibition environments.

To enable this, exhibitions must evolve into intelligent platforms that can ingest, align, analyse, and activate third party data in real-time. Without this infrastructure, the full potential of trust intelligence cannot be realised

4.1 Third Party Data Enables a Complete, 360-Degree View of Exhibitors:

No single organization can provide all the information attendees need to make risk aware decisions. Trusted insights often come from external sources such as: Credit Reference Agencies, Sanctions lists, Regulatory registries, ESG databases, financial ratings, Adverse media feeds, Beneficial ownership datasets, Cyber risk signals. By ingesting third party datasets, exhibitions can transform from "information-light" environments into rich intelligence hubs that give attendees a more accurate, well-rounded view of every potential partner.

4.2 Trust Cannot Be Claimed; It Must Be Verified:

Exhibitor self declarations are no longer enough. Attendees want independent validation of what exhibitors claim about their governance, compliance, sustainability, and integrity posture. Third party datasets provide that independent verification layer. They turn claims into trusted facts, enabling Unbiased due diligence, Credibility scoring, Confident matchmaking, Transparent risk signalling. This strengthens trust across the entire ecosystem benefiting attendees and exhibitors alike.

4.3 Participants Expect Intelligence, Not Generic Content:

Today's attendees want experiences that feel personalised, informed, contextual, predictive, relevant. This expectation mirrors how they interact with digital products every day.

Third party data allow exhibitions to meet these expectations by enabling: real-time micro insights during booth visits, proactive risk notifications, smart matchmaking, deeper business context for every conversation. This transforms exhibitions from static events into dynamic intelligence ecosystems.

4.4 AI Depends on Data to Deliver Meaningful, Contextual Insights:

AI may be the future of delivering advanced use cases, but its true power is entirely dependent on the quality of the data behind it. Without rich, reliable, and diverse external intelligence sources, AI simply cannot perform the tasks organisations expect whether it's detecting risk signals, interpreting sanctions flags, surfacing governance concerns, comparing potential partners, or assessing trustworthiness.

To unlock meaningful, actionable intelligence, exhibitions must build the right infrastructure to ingest, harmonise, and activate third party datasets. This ensures AI becomes right powered not just technologically capable.

4.5 Risk, Compliance, and ESG Are Global—Therefore Data Must Be Too:

Attendees come from different geographies, sectors, and regulatory environments. Risks they care about differ accordingly. Only with diverse, global third party datasets exhibitions can support these varied needs and provide intelligence that respects: regional regulations, sector-specific vulnerabilities, cross-border due diligence requirements. This makes the exhibition truly inclusive, globally relevant, and trust first.

4.6 Data Infrastructure Futureproofs the Exhibition Model:

As exhibitions shift from physical-only events to hybrid, intelligence-led platforms, their success will increasingly depend on their ability to integrate external intelligence, support real-time data exchange, enable AI-driven advisory, measure trust, risk, and credibility signals, create safe, compliant business environments. A robust third party data ingestion infrastructure becomes the strategic backbone of this evolution.

5. Unlocking New Strategic Value: The Five Transformative Use Cases of Due Diligence Enabled Exhibitions

As exhibitions evolve from traditional networking environments into intelligence enabled partnership platforms, integrated due diligence capabilities redefine how participants discover, evaluate, and engage with prospective partners. When risk, compliance, and governance insights are embedded directly into exhibition systems from matchmaking tools to exhibitor directories and meeting schedulers. Participants gain a more strategic, efficient, and trustworthy experience across the entire event lifecycle.

The following use cases outlines the five major ways integrated due diligence elevates value for participants.

5.1 Building Trust from the Start:

In modern exhibitions, the first challenge participants face is identifying which organizations are truly worth engaging. Integrated due diligence tools allow exhibitions to filter partners not only by business offering but also by verified indicators such as compliance readiness, ESG alignment, financial health, governance maturity, and geopolitical safety. Instead of relying on introductions or booth visibility, participants can confidently discover pre qualified partners that meet minimum thresholds of credibility and low risk operation. This risk aware intelligence also powers smart matchmaking, enabling platforms to connect buyers and exhibitors based on deeper compatibility factors such as operational capacity, ownership stability, resilience indicators, and risk culture. As a result, early stage interactions shift from opportunistic networking to curated engagement with partners who are strategically aligned from the outset.

5.2 Creating Purposeful Engagement:

Traditional meeting scheduling within exhibitions often prioritizes convenience or topical interest, leading to mismatched or low value conversations. With due diligence embedded into event platforms, participants can schedule meetings only with organizations that meet defined risk and compliance criteria such as clean sanctions profiles, verified beneficial ownership, acceptable cybersecurity ratings, or validated sustainability practices. This transforms the meeting calendar into a deal ready pipeline, ensuring that conversations during the exhibition are not exploratory but strategic. Time wasting interactions are minimized, and qualification cycles are significantly accelerated because participants already know that every meeting aligns with their internal governance and risk requirements.

5.3 On the Floor Risk Intelligence:

Exhibitions operate within compressed timeframes where decisions move fast. By providing embedded vendor risk reports including AML/KYC indicators, Legal Events, UBO mappings, predictive risk scores, governance scores, cyber risk snapshots, and reputational assessments. Participants can make informed decisions directly on the exhibition floor. Additionally, real time risk monitoring ensures that emerging issues such as leadership changes, ESG controversies, sanctions updates, or newly identified breaches immediately surface in exhibitor profiles. This continuous intelligence protects participants from making commitments based on outdated or incomplete information, reinforcing exhibitions as trusted spaces for high stakes decision making.

5.4 Accelerating Growth:

Post-event onboarding is often the bottleneck that slows partnership progress. Integrated due-diligence capabilities allow exhibitions to generate pre-screened shortlists tailored to participants' procurement criteria, ensuring that only the most credible and strategically aligned prospects move forward. With pre-populated KYB, UBO, ESG, cyber-risk, and governance data captured during or before the event, organizations can initiate onboarding almost immediately compressing timelines that would traditionally take months. Moreover, the ability to export evidence-backed due-diligence packets streamlines internal approvals with procurement, legal, compliance, and risk committees. This reduces friction inside organizations and accelerates the transition from event discussions to formalized partnerships.

5.5 Enhancing Transparency and Confidence:

Finally, exhibitions equipped with due-diligence capabilities can offer participants clear, visible indicators of partner credibility. Trust badges such as Verified ESG, Verified Cyber Hygiene, Verified UBO, or Governance-Ready help participants quickly identify which exhibitors uphold strong operational and ethical standards. These trust signals simplify partner evaluation and elevate the overall credibility of the exhibition ecosystem. By centralizing strategic-alignment assessments and offering transparency into a partner's stability, reliability, and long-term viability, exhibitions shift from transactional gatherings to high-trust environments where participants can make confident, scalable partnership decisions.

6. Intelligence in Balance: AI That Guides Without Overwhelming

In traditional due diligence journeys, users are often overwhelmed by dense reports, fragmented data, and irrelevant information. This leads to confusion, inefficiency, and most importantly drop in trust. What customers truly need is not more information, but the right information delivered precisely when it matters.

Agentic, AI driven interactive intelligence can transform this experience entirely. Rather than pushing static dashboards or large data dumps, the system should behave like a knowledgeable, human-like advisor one that listens, interprets, and responds in the moment. Users engage in a natural conversational flow, asking questions in their own words, and the AI dynamically tailors the insight to match their intent, role, and risk appetite. This creates a personalised discovery journey, where the AI progressively reveals insights based on the user's curiosity and context. If a visitor starts with a simple query "Is this supplier financially stable?" the AI responds with clarity and precision, without unnecessary complexity.

But if the user chooses to go deeper, the system adapts instantly, providing layered intelligence on governance, sanctions exposure, ESG posture, ownership structures, or reputational signals. By scaling information in this adaptive, demand-driven way, users receive neither too little nor too much just the right level of detail, at exactly the right moment.

The result is a due diligence experience that feels intuitive rather than intimidating, empowering rather than overwhelming. Attendees gain clarity without effort, confidence without expertise, and insight without friction.

AI-driven interactive intelligence doesn't simply automate due diligence; it humanises it, simplifies it and elevates it into a truly user centric, trust enhancing experience.

7. What Exhibition Organizers Must Do Next

To capitalise on this market shift and position themselves at the forefront of future B2B engagement, exhibition organisers should take the following next steps:

7.1 Build a Trust Ready Data Infrastructure

- Establish the capability to ingest and unify third party datasets (ESG, sanctions, governance, cyber, finance etc).
- Implement secure data pipelines that support real time insight generation during the event lifecycle.
- Create governance frameworks ensuring data accuracy, privacy, and ethical use.

7.2 Position Trust as a Core Value Proposition

- Introduce trust badges, verified exhibitor tiers, and compliance transparency layers.
- Market the exhibition not just as a networking venue, but as a secure, curated partnership platform.
- Highlight reduced risk and enhanced deal readiness as key differentiators.

7.3 Build Strategic Partnerships with Data Providers and AI Platforms

- Collaborate with leading risk intelligence vendors, KYB/KYC data sources, ESG databases, and compliance platforms.
- Form alliances with AI innovators to co develop trust centric exhibition technologies.
- Ensure datasets are global, diverse, and continuously updated to support cross-border due diligence.

7.4 Reframe Success Metrics

Move beyond traditional KPIs (footfall, booth size, lead counts) toward metrics such as:

- Quality of verified matches
- Reduction in post event onboarding time
- Volume of risk-screened engagements
- Partnership conversion rates
- Trust confidence scores across participants

7.5 Integrate AI Powered Due Diligence Across the Participant Journey

- Embed AI screening and risk scoring into registration, matchmaking, and meeting scheduling tools.
- Deploy AI assistants that provide real time partner insights on the exhibition floor.
- Offer adaptive, conversational due diligence support to reduce participant friction.

7.6 Monetise Trust Services as Premium Offerings

- Offer enterprise grade due diligence packs, enriched intelligence dashboards, and risk scored matchmaking tiers.
- Provide premium onboarding acceleration tools for high value exhibitors and buyers.
- Develop subscription-based intelligence services that extend beyond the event.

7.7 Future Proof the Exhibition Experience

- Transition from event only intelligence to year round partnership enablement.
- Provide continuous monitoring of exhibitors for returning participants.
- Evolve to become a trusted digital physical ecosystem that supports long term B2B resilience.

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