

Freeman<sup>1</sup>

# From Expo to Experience

How to design a show floor that engages all audiences





# Welcome to our high expectations era.

Freeman | From Expo to Experience

Attendees are no longer just showing up — they want immersive, personalized experiences that blend cool tech (how you doin', AI?) with authentic human interactions. With a diverse audience spanning generations, it's vital to offer varied engagement options.



# Floor Audiences With Experiences

In the past, planners spent more time designing the educational content of the show, but most attendees want education and personalized options.

## Enter experience zones.

By creating dedicated and diverse areas, you'll deliver an environment full of choice.

Think of your expo floor like a really awesome playlist — varied zones that suit different moods and interests, all working together to create just the right vibe for each attendee.

## Education reset

Does your learning approach need a refresh?

With so many resources online, attendees will appreciate richer, more targeted content they can experience live:

- New-to-the-industry and advanced-level sessions
- Q&As with industry experts
- Video recaps of key sessions

Then, consider building out stellar e-learning opportunities for year-round engagement.

# Activate Adventure: Five Ways To Play

By introducing separate yet focused zones across the floor, attendees can choose their own adventure — finding what they want and discovering even more as they explore.



Let's kickstart your own show floor adventure with a few examples:



**64%**

of attendees  
prioritize this type  
of experience  
- Freeman Trends  
Report

## Zone 1: Inquiring Innovation

For the tech-curious crowd who's seeking cutting-edge solutions and hands-on experiences

- AI-powered solution finder kiosks where attendees input their challenges and get matched with relevant exhibitors, products, or sessions
- Hands-on demos and tech showcases where people can interact with products, services, and tools (great sponsorship opportunity!)
- Testing labs where attendees can work through challenges with solutionst experts

## Zone 2: Brain Boosts

For knowledge seekers (yep, that's just about everyone) who prefer collaborative, hands-on learning:

- Quick-hit expert overviews and personal consultations such as pairing exhibitors with relevant content topics
- Peer-to-peer learning sharing
- Interactive workshops that get your brain and body moving
- Combine learning and education with interactive trivia or quiz activations

**Pro Tip: Theme activations for your industry.**

If you have a health and wellness show, bring in a chef to demo healthy snack ideas. For a sports-related event, bring in a golf pro to host swing clinics.



## Zone 3: No-Nonsense Networking

Modern attendees prefer structured, purposeful networking over ho-hum happy hours (so long, awkward small talk).

- Industry huddles around shared challenges
- Topic-focused meetups
- Mentor connections that don't feel forced
- Unique collab spaces that spark conversation and fun



**52%**  
of attendees  
prefer focused  
networking  
opportunities

## Experience Zones in Action: AIA

Discover how the Institute of Architects (AIA) transformed its 2024 conference by merging strategic design and intentional planning on the expo floor.

From sustainability showcases to AI demos, each zone offered tailored experiences.

[Learn more →](#)





## Zone 4: Recharge Ready

Providing thoughtful spaces for relaxation and rejuvenation is essential for maintaining engagement:

- Quiet spaces to catch up on email or just breathe
- Wellness opportunities like yoga or guided meditation
- Tech-free zones for relaxation and connection
- Individual reflection pods

## Zone 5: Giveback on the Go

Younger gens prioritize brands with purpose. So, how can you help them give back and feel good doing it? Here are some ideas:

- Puppy perks park with donation and adoption options
- Be cool for school...supplies: backpack-stuffing activity
- Notes of encouragement to benefit local nursing homes, children's hospitals, etc.
- Sustainability: electronic returns, recycling stations, etc.

### Pro Tip:

Structured doesn't mean boring! See how our team created unique and fun experience zones at the Inside Live at AIA event.

[Learn more →](#)

# Planning Your Zones

A successful strategy requires going beyond the standard expo playbook. The key? Personalization — for your various attendee profiles, industry, show location, and more.

Keep these points in mind as you're mapping the floor.

## Location, location, location

Asking yourself these questions when thinking about your venue and the event city:

- Even if all your e-zones are within the same building, how can they be best worked into the space?
- Is there architecture you can leverage to make an e-zone more impactful or interesting?
- What kind of floor plan makes the most sense for your event, the industry, and attendee priorities?
- Think outside the conference center box.



## Lead with LED

To ensure attendees can take the best advantage of experience zones and all they have to offer, make sure your experience zones are easy to spot.

LED walls can be super effective for providing information, wayfinding, or just grabbing attention with beautiful graphics and video interspersed with helpful information.

**BONUS:** Because these powerful screens can also feature ads, LED walls provide a wealth of sponsorship opportunities.

[Learn more](#) →



## AI that's A-okay

Tailored event experiences help make all attendees feel special. And today's smart tech AI can take that personalization to the next level.

Consider adding these elements into your experience:

- AI recommendation engines for relevant sessions and connections
- Real-time chatbot concierge services
- Personalized wayfinding based on attendee interests
- Smart content delivery based on engagement patterns

## Flex and go

Choice isn't only about having options — it's about creating a self-directed experience where every attendee can create their ideal journey with a few surprises along the way.

So, design a floor that offers:

- Multiple learning formats
- Varied networking and experiential opportunities
- Balance of high-energy and quiet spaces
- Tech-enabled and traditional engagement options

## Jazz up your zones

Learn about other event tech and audio-visual extras to innovate your special interest spaces.

[Learn more](#) →





# Zones With Benefits

Now that you've designed a more personalized show floor that works for your attendees, let's get exhibitors and sponsors into the mix. (And make it work for you, too!)

## For your exhibitors

Design the floor with exhibitors in mind. Aligning relevant products, content, and learnings with individual experience zones elevates the experience for everyone. Remember to include education, experiential activations, networking, and refreshments in each area.

## For your sponsors

These brands want to make real connections that move past mere logo placement. So, offer in-zone sponsorship opportunities that are relevant to their products or services.

## For you and your organization

Because you need to make the experience a success and feel good about the process, here are some final takeaways to make your event stand out today and tomorrow:

- Zones that can grow or shrink as needed
- Year-round engagement opportunities
- Better data about what's working
- Spaces that can transform on the fly
- Experiential activations that increase your traffic
- Create greater ROI for your exhibitors

## New Directions: Autodesk's Attendee Journey

Learn how this immersive environment compelled attendees with hands-on learning labs, interactive theaters, experiential networking, high-tech visuals, and more.

See how it came together →



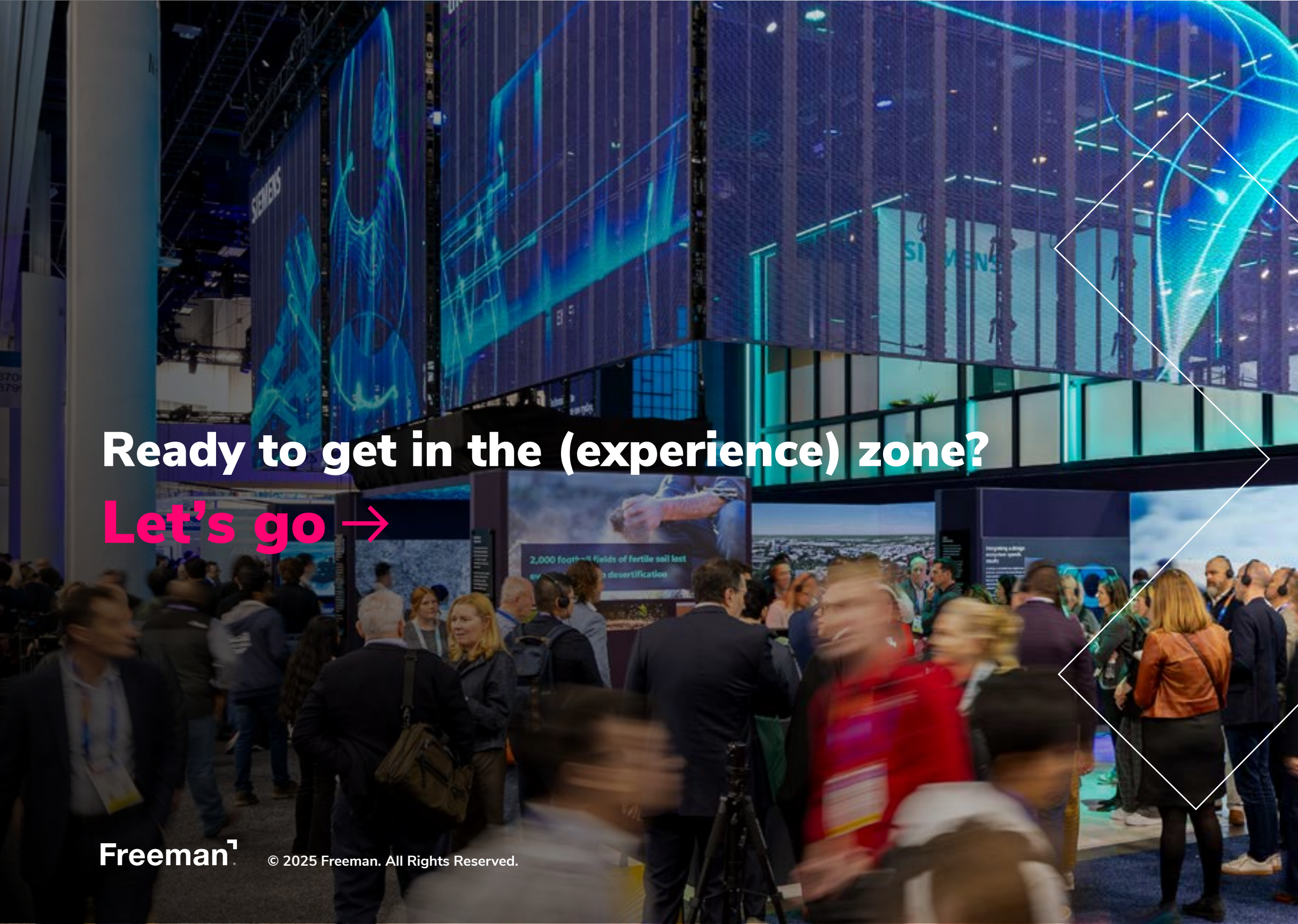
## What's Next?

The future of live events isn't about choosing between high-tech and high-touch — it's about blending what makes sense for your organization and your attendees.

Tomorrow's successful events will:

- Create spaces where different generations want to hang out together
- Use tech to elevate human connections, not replace them
- Let attendees choose their own adventure while still feeling part of something bigger
- Turn all that data into truly purposeful insights

Trying new ideas and evolving the experience tailored for your audience is how you create something memorable people can't wait to attend.



**Ready to get in the (experience) zone?**

**Let's go →**