

SCARCITY IN ABUNDANCE

How **SCARCITY** is shifting behavior
in the age of infinite information.

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CROWDPulse
BY THE EXPO GROUP

THE EXPO GROUP
Architects for connecting communities.™

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MIND THE VALUE GAP

Abundance was supposed to make work easier - instead, it made the things that matter most harder to earn.

Our latest Pulse Report explores the new scarcities shaping live events → and how the best shows are already designing around them.

Events that understand what's become scarce are pulling away from those that don't.



OUR APPROACH

OBSERVED BEHAVIOR AT SCALE

Revealing the key
forces reshaping
live events.

Start with
what people

DO

Validate vs.
what they

SAY

175K

Industry conversations

20M

Audience Reach

+50

Industry reports
cross-referenced
against our findings



WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

IS YOUR AUDIENCE INTELLIGENCE FIT FOR THE AI AGE?

Billions of real-time audience insights

CROWDPulse analyzes **billions** of real-time interactions to uncover what your audience is connecting with – **giving you the blueprint** of what truly moves them.

FROM ATTENDEES TO WHOLE HUMAN BEINGS

Revealing a comprehensive picture of who your audience is – *in work and in life* – through observed behaviors at a scale and depth that traditional surveys can never capture.

UNDERSTAND HOW TO CREATE VALUE

Design for what's scarce, not what's safe. Recognition, exposure and conviction are the new currencies of event value.

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THREE SCARCITY DRIVEN SHIFTS

Three behavior shifts. Three new scarcities. Three things the best events are already designing around.

AI is redefining what's scarce - therefore what's valuable.

Experience is the new professional currency.

The best events understand this new scarcity-driven mindset – and design for it.

1

Status Signals:

Experiences that create spendable stories

2

Escape The Algo:

Engineering exposure to new ideas

3

Conviction Gap:

Leaving with the confidence to act



1 STATUS SIGNAL: SPENDABLE STORIES

The new professional currency
isn't knowledge. It's experience.

AI has devalued content. Being informed is
no longer impressive - it's the baseline.

The scarce resource now is recognition: the
visible, participatory moments that signal
status and generate spendable stories.

The best briefs aren't asking what do we
let them do? They're asking: what story
does this give them permission to tell?

72%

Participation posts signal
status and recognition

— CROWDPulse

3x

Spendable Stories:
participation posts
engagement vs
passive content

CROWDPulse, 2026

82%

US professionals
don't receive
enough recognition

HBR, 2025

20x

Recognition
drives uplift in
employee
engagement

Gallup, 2025



THE RECOGNITION DEFICIT

RECOGNITION IS SCARCE – HELP THEM GET SOME

Attendees are walking in from a recognition crisis.

Most US professionals feel their potential isn't being seen - and that gap has real consequences.

Participation is the mechanism.

Recognition is the outcome.

65%

US employees received no recognition in the past year

Takeout

Know what your attendees are walking in from.

Then design the moment that changes it.



Canva

STATUS SIGNAL IN ACTION

**Canva turned everyday users
into celebrated contributors.**

Canva Create was built by the people who use the product. Guest contributions - ideas, feedback, wishes - were elevated to the main stage and shared across a community of 260 million.

**Elevating community from
audience to the main event –
creating recognition at scale.**



BÉIS

SPENDABLE STORIES IN ACTION

BÉIS gave people the ultimate spendable story - by turning them into human claw machine.

The product line was limited. The experience was limited. Being one of the people chosen - dangled above the ball pit, in public, while the crowd watched - meant you had something nobody else had – and the story to prove it.

Create exclusivity in public and let the stories write themselves.



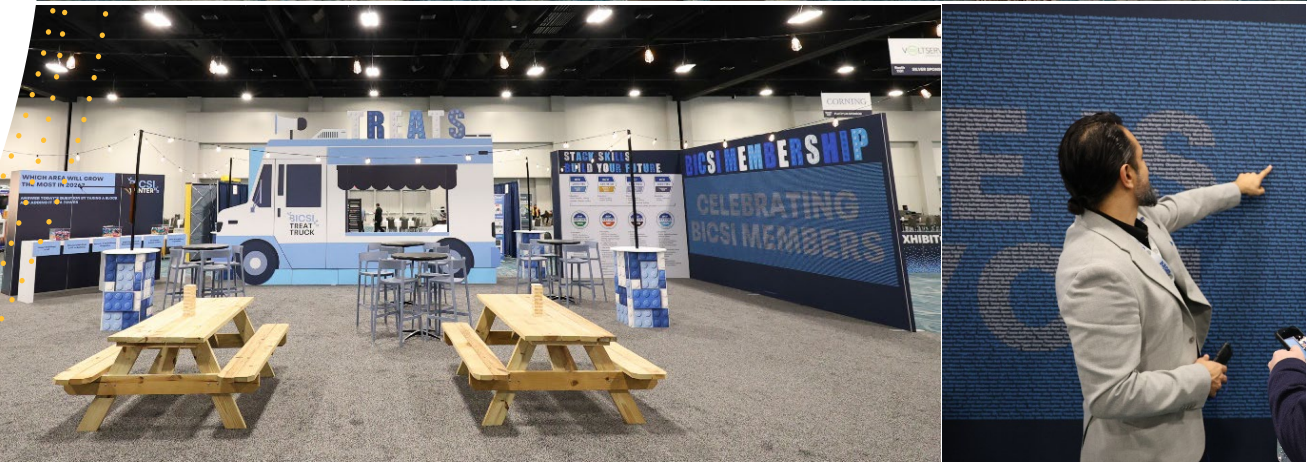
CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



IMPACTFUL SHOUT OUT

Recognizing The Community at BICSI Winter

BICSI Winter featured a dedicated space within the Community Hub to acknowledge its more than 10,000 members. Attendees were drawn to a mural made up of member names, searching for their own and taking photos beside them. The activation offered a simple yet meaningful way to recognize members and make them feel valued within the BICSI community.



KEY TAKEAWAYS >>>>

1

Experience is the new professional currency.

The moments that generate status - visible, participatory, unrepeatable - are what professionals are showing up for.

2

**Recognition isn't incidental.
It's the return on attendance.**

Experiences designed to deliver that moment of recognition are the ones attendees remember and talk about.

3

Stop designing for participation.

Participation is the mechanism. Social capital is the outcome. The design question that separates the best briefs from the rest: what story does this give participants permission to tell?



2 ESCAPE THE ALGO: *ENGINEERED EXPOSURE*

Professional life has become efficient and narrow.

Algorithmic feeds, curated networks, optimised workflows - all designed to surface what's relevant, filter out what isn't. **Attendees feel it.**

The moments generating the most signal are unexpected ones. Collisions with different worlds, conversations not on the agenda.

The best events are designing for it. Strategic friction. Counterintuitive configuration. Designing the conditions for collision rather than engineering them out.

70%

Practitioner conversations
are about new encounters,
not content or programming

— CROWDPulse

120%

New encounter posts
engagement uplift vs
program content

CROWDPulse, 2026

61%

Less connected
due to digital and
dislocated working

Microsoft, 2025

63%

Value work more if it
requires some effort –
“Ikea Effect”

Psychology & Marketing, 2026



INSIGHT:

MODERN WORK KILLED CURIOSITY

Professionals feel blocked off from fresh views and ideas.

Algorithms do the same thing - optimising for relevance until the world gets smaller.

What the algorithm can't give them is exactly what they come for:

exposure to thinking they wouldn't have found, from people they wouldn't have met.

Myth busting:

All friction at events is bad.

Strategic friction wins attention & drives engagement

60%

Feed Their Curiosity

Six in ten workers identify as strongly curious. But only three in ten say their workplace actively rewards curiosity

KEY TAKEOUT

The design implication isn't to strip out all friction – it's to use it strategically to enable curiosity to flow

SurveyMonkey, 2026





REWARDING CURIOSITY IN ACTION

Google Cloud turned a technical conference into a treasure hunt.

At Cloud Tech Immersion, the best content wasn't announced: glowing key trails led attendees to hidden zones, speakeasies and live musicians. Curiosity was the mechanism - discovery was the reward.

The result: a 97% attendance-to-RSVP ratio across three continents.



STRATEGIC FRICTION IN ACTION

Pinterest built a discovery experience by switching off its own product.

Pinterest's Coachella activation asked festival-goers to lock their phones away. The friction was deliberate - removing the obvious to create the conditions for the unexpected.

The harder it is to enter, the more valuable it feels to be inside.



CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



DISCOVERY THROUGH PHYSICAL PLAY

Smart Lego Community at Fiber Connect

Rather than a guided tour, the Smart Community environment allowed attendees to choose their own path through a dynamic, digital Lego city – stumbling into unexpected connections between healthcare, energy, manufacturing, agriculture, and other sectors they wouldn't normally see side by side. Touch-enabled exploration meant no two visits followed the same route. Attendees could also create their own Lego figure and add it into the environment for a more hands-on evolving interaction.



KEY TAKEAWAYS >>>

1

Professional life has become efficient and narrow. Algorithms optimise for familiarity. Events should do the opposite - starting with who's in the room.

2

Design for the unplanned. The conversations that don't appear on the agenda are the ones that change how people think. Build the conditions. Don't leave them to chance.

3

Friction isn't the enemy - it's the mechanism. Effort creates the conditions for unexpected encounter. Use it deliberately.



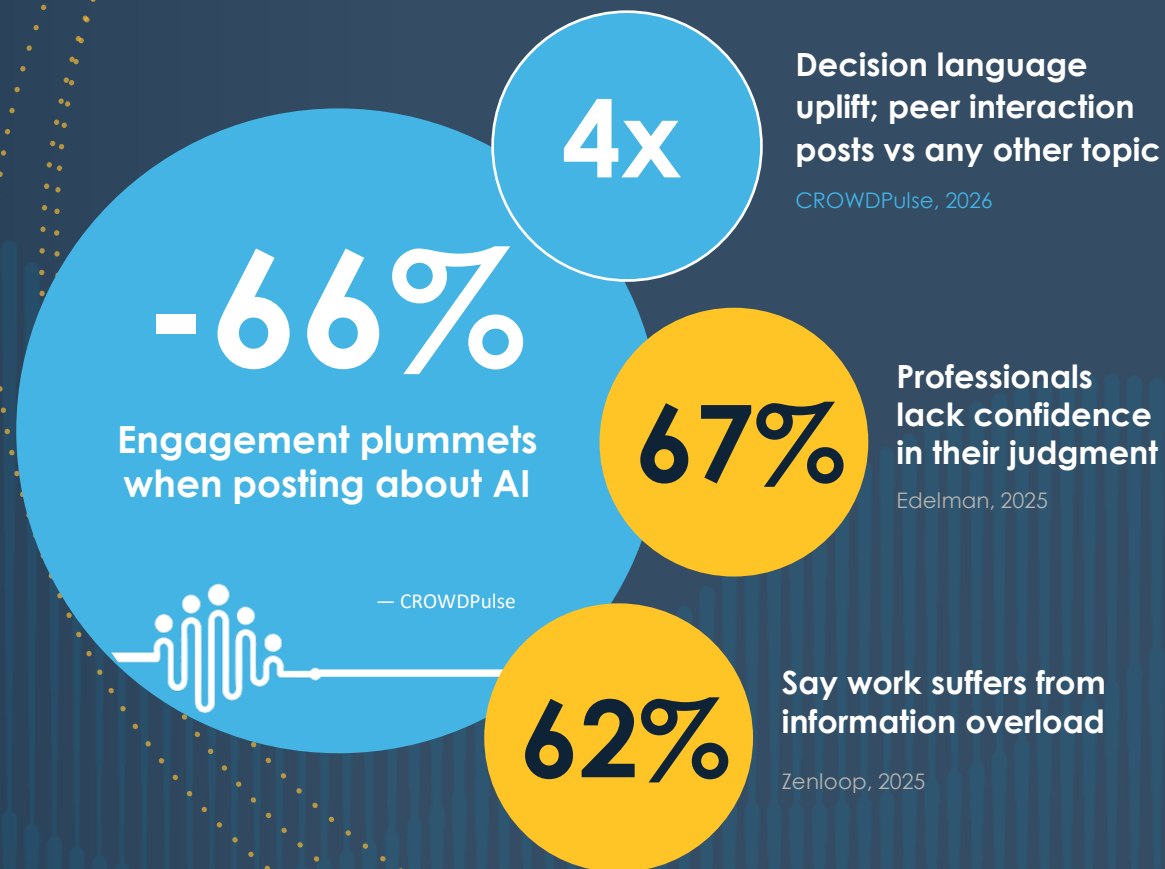
3 CONVICTION GAP: CONFIDENCE TO ACT

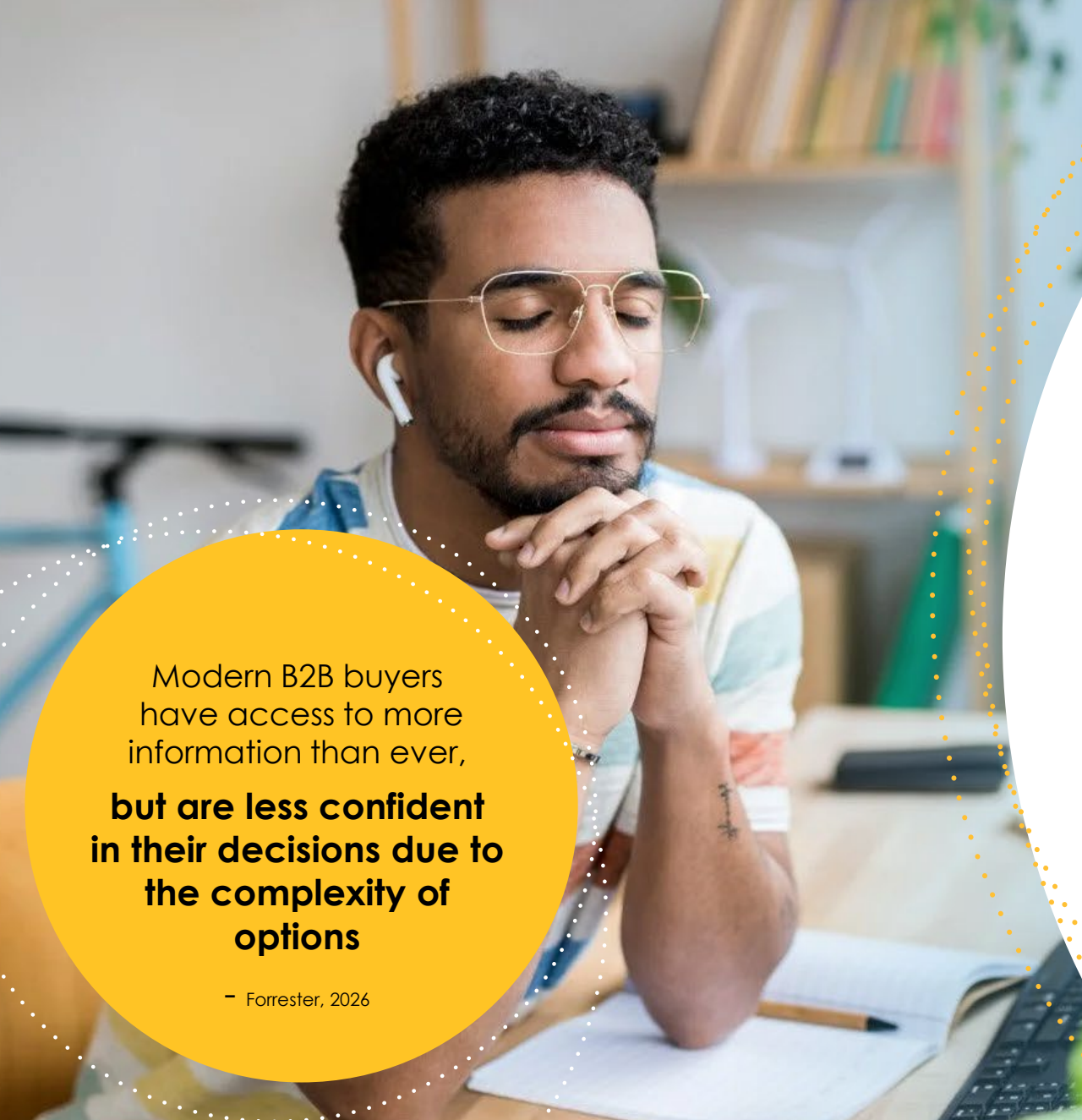
Abundance hasn't made professionals more decisive. It's made them more hesitant.

When all content looks equally valid, the **response isn't confidence - it's paralysis.**

The events closing that gap are protecting space for conviction to form. Not the keynote. Not the curated session. The peer three months ahead of the same decision, working through it in front of someone who can judge it.

Proximity, not authority. That's what moves people from stuck to decided.





Modern B2B buyers have access to more information than ever, **but are less confident in their decisions due to the complexity of options**

— Forrester, 2026

FIGHTING COGNITIVE FOG

A decade ago, more information meant better decisions. That relationship has broken down.

Volume has outpaced judgment. But the bigger problem isn't volume - it's contamination.

Professionals have stopped trusting their own judgment - confidence in handling new technology fell 14 points in a single year.

Map the decisions your attendees are stuck on.

Then design the encounters that clear the fog.

BCG, 2025





BUILDING CONVICTION IN ACTION

Salesforce replaced the vendor pitch with confidence-building conversations.

Braindates paired attendees one-on-one, organized by role, company size, and challenge - someone who faced the same decision, in the same context and the decisions they made.

At the world's largest AI event, 1 in 5 attendees chose a peer conversation over 1,500 sessions.



A photograph of three runners at a Brooks expo. On the left, a man in a black Brooks t-shirt and cap is smiling and holding a pair of glasses. In the center, a woman in a bright orange Brooks jacket is laughing. On the right, another woman in a bright orange Brooks long-sleeve shirt is smiling with her arms crossed. The background shows an expo booth with blue and white branding.

BROOKS

CONFIDENCE TO ACT IN ACTION

Brooks built confidence in the company of people who have already made the decision.

Hyperion House paired new runners with those a few steps ahead - same starting point, same fears, same finish line. No performance pressure. Cancelling noise and building confidence to act through proximity to someone one step ahead.

Membership of Brooks' run clubs tripled in a single year to 785,000.



CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



CONFIDENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY

The MORE Store at Dominos World Wide Rally

At the MORE Store attendees were given the opportunity to interact with vendor and franchise owners at numerous levels. From first timer store owners to multi store franchisees, the visitors could ask and receive great information at various expertise levels. Encapsulating the space as a sectioned store environment featuring several stations and information about the various aspects around the creation and infrastructure needed to operate a Dominos franchise.



KEY TAKEAWAYS >>>>

1

Audit your agenda for conviction moments

Are there moments designed specifically to cancel noise and build conviction? If not, rethink experiences designed to close the conviction gap.

2

Replace a panel with a peer story

Proximity to the real thing beats authority every time. Put the buyer in the room with someone twelve months further down the same road.

3

Curate by decision stage, not job title.

The most valuable connection is the one who walked in with the same question.



THE NEW SCARCITIES ARE CLEAR. NOW IT'S TIME TO

CLOSE THE GAP.

1

Status Signal: Spendable Stories

Stop designing solely for participation. Start **engineering moments that earn recognition.**

2

Escape The Algo: Engineered Exposure

Design for the unplanned.
Build the conditions for **unexpected encounter, and use friction deliberately.**

3

Conviction Gap: Confidence To Act

Map the decisions your attendees are stuck on. Then build encounters with people who've already solved them.



WANT TO LEARN HOW TO UNDERSTAND YOUR COMMUNITY BETTER?

The power is in the data. But it takes a specialized team of data analysts and strategists to distill it into insights that drive impact.

Are you ready?

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