

FACTSHEET

Is space-only really the cheaper stand?

What 202 UK B2B trade shows charge for stand space, and what the rate card leaves out.

Stand Central checked the exhibitor pages of 202 UK B2B trade shows at 21 venues and captured 186 organiser-published stand rates from 46 shows (40 independent rate cards), accessed 28 September 2026.

1. The audience, not the venue, sets the stand price

Space-only rates in the same hall ran from £388 to £1,100 per m² at Excel and £207 to £789 at the NEC. One organiser, Diversified, charges £207 at Euro Bus Expo and £885 at the MSP Show. The six dearest rate cards all sell access to technology, business-travel, pharmacy or waste and energy buyers (26 rate cards; sector groups are small, so this is a pattern, not a rule).

2. Shell walls cost the same, however dear the floor

Across 25 rate cards that publish both, a shell scheme adds a median £50 per m² over space only, with no link to the space rate. So its share shrinks as shows get dearer: +1.3% at The Pharmacy Show (£90 on 9 m²) against +55.1% at Euro Bus Expo. Four of the six dearest shows charge under 5% for walls. Shell inclusions differ between shows.

3. Space-only minimums can double the cost of a small stand

At all five shows that publish a space-only minimum above 9 m² and a shell rate, the smallest space-only booking costs 1.3 to 2.1 times a 3m x 3m shell stand, before any build. At PATS the floor starts at 24 m²: £7,920 against £3,771. Only 6 of 26 space-only rates state a minimum, so ask before you plan.

4. Most shell stands come without a power socket

Of 26 shell schemes that list inclusions, 7 include power, 4 say electrics cost extra (National Civils, Floodex and National Drainage charge £349) and 15 do not mention it. Classification uses the rate passage; manuals may say more.

5. Compulsory fees add up to 13.9% to a small stand

Six shows publish per-exhibitor fees that apply to everyone, adding 4.4% to 13.9% to a 3m x 3m shell stand. At three (Business Travel Show Europe, Futurebuild, Solar & Storage Live UK) the fee costs more per m² than the shell walls.

6. Only 46 of 202 shows publish a price

22.8% of the UK B2B trade shows we checked publish any stand price. Eight organiser groups running three or more shows each published none for their 33 shows, against 44.9% of shows run by smaller commercial organisers. 60 shows have no identified organiser; the gap depends on who runs them, but the zero count does not.

7. Loyalty pays more than booking early

At SALTEX the early-bird rate was 14.9% below the late rate, but the show rate for exhibitors rebooking at the previous show saved 33.1%. Trade-association members get 12.2% to 30.8% off at the five shows that publish member rates. Few shows publish tiers, so treat this as indicative.

Advertised ex-VAT rates only; not an all-in cost. Price statistics cover the shows that publish rates. Full report, data (CSV) and every source link: standcentral.com.