

# One Space, Many Experiences: CORT Events' Hosted Buyer Lounge at IMEX America 2025



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IMEX America 2025 welcomed 17,633 participants and exhibitors. Over 6,000 buyers came from 75 countries, including 4,729 hosted buyers and 1,416 buyer attendees.

Over a three-day period, IMEX facilitated 92,000 individual and group appointments. The buying power at IMEX America was impressive: 25% of buyers reported budgets over \$10 million, 16% in the \$5–10 million range, and 29% in the \$1–5 million range. This underscores the value of the audience there.

CORT Events' Hosted Buyer Lounge was one of the centerpieces of IMEX America. CORT hosted the space as a central, purpose-built environment for hosted buyers to prepare, regroup, and recharge between appointments scattered across the show floor. The lounge served as critical infrastructure to support high-value buyers in performing at their best.

As Rosilyn Galicia, Experiential Marketing Specialist at CORT Events, described it, "The primary goal for the Hosted Buyer Lounge was to thoughtfully accommodate a large volume of attendees while creating a space that felt intentional, comfortable, and brand-aligned. From the outset, the Hosted Buyer Lounge needed to support the requested seating count while integrating multiple sponsor areas, each with distinct brand identities, into one cohesive environment." For the CORT Events team, the design brief was clear: scale had to feel intentional.

That design intention laddered directly to IMEX's hosted buyer promise: a premium space that protects buyer performance between meetings. "The Hosted Buyer Lounge is more than a perk — it's a key part of our hosted buyer program," said IMEX America.

The Hosted Buyer Lounge was a large space with 700 seats featuring a multizone layout in a single footprint. It was designed for high traffic and to meet the diverse needs of hosted buyers, featuring some of CORT Events' signature collections and decor designed to support different bodies, behaviors, and work styles. In Rosilyn's words, "Success was defined by more than capacity alone. It meant designing a space that encouraged natural flow, allowed attendees to intuitively find a place that suited their needs, and balanced visual cohesions with sponsor individuality." That's why a successful HBL needed to feel "curated rather than crowded, functional rather than transactional, and welcoming rather than overwhelming - especially within a large convention center setting." The Hosted Buyer Lounge is illustrative of CORT's expertise in planning, designing, and delivering a complex, high-stakes environment that supports many different experiences within a single shared space.

## **Why Hosted Buyer Lounges Matter So Much at IMEX**

### **Hosted Buyers as High-Value Attendees**

The hosted buyers at IMEX America have significant purchasing power. They're a force of 4,729, representing agencies, corporations, associations, independent planners, and representatives of governments and universities.

IMEX's hosted buyers are decision-makers, and they expect an experience that reflects their status — value, energy, focus, and quality. As such, the Hosted Buyer Lounge served as a space for preparation, reset, and continuity for them during a dense show schedule.

### **Design Expectations: Hospitality-Grade, Not Just 'Extra Seating'**

The Hosted Buyer Lounge blended hospitality with workplace productivity. Hosted buyers expected lounges that feel like modern hotel lounges or private clubs, not just rows of chairs, so CORT's Hosted Buyer Lounge included soft seating, workspace surfaces, and visually cohesive vignettes. The focus on comfort enabled these buyers to ease the physical toll of three days filled with meetings. Seating in the lounge supported both real rest and real work.

Within the Hosted Buyer Lounge, CORT also served the needs of destinations and sponsors with distinct yet integrated branding. The personalization allowed these brands to showcase their identities without compromising the overarching IMEX aesthetic. The lounge offered flexibility for networking, decompressing, focused work, quick follow-ups, and device recharging — often within the same space.



## The IMEX 2025 Hosted Buyer Lounge Brief

### Objectives and Stakeholders

IMEX's primary objective for the 2025 Hosted Buyer Lounge was to provide a reliable, premium environment designed specifically for hosted buyers. The intent of the space was to support buyer productivity with a place to review notes, prepare for interactions, send follow-ups, and reset between meetings. The lounge reflected IMEX America's standards and professionalism amid 3,700 exhibiting companies and the global press. It also integrated the branding of sponsors and destinations while maintaining the cohesion throughout the space that IMEX expected.

### Constraints and Challenges

The Hosted Buyer Lounge was designed to accommodate 700 seats within a single lounge to remain comfortable and usable even at peak times. It was planned for constant movement in and out around tight appointment blocks. The lounge was a single environment that had to support individual work, one-on-one conversations, small meetings, networking, and sponsor interactions, as well as quiet decompression and recharging.

Sponsor integration tailored each brand or destination's visual identity within a coherent IMEX-themed lounge design. The lounge also incorporated trends like biophilic elements, hospitality-inspired finishes, and a polished, contemporary aesthetic that still aligned with IMEX's expectations. It remained adaptable to new attendees and shifts in expected traffic, right up to show time.

As Rosilyn observed from the design lead perspective, "One of the biggest challenges was designing a space that felt cohesive while intentionally differentiating each sponsor area." At "over 40,000 square

feet,” she noted, scale itself became a design challenge because “Large spaces can easily feel disconnected or visually noisy if not carefully planned.” That same tension applied to product storytelling: “From a product and brand perspective, it was also important to showcase furniture that felt unique and elevated, reflecting the breadth and quality of the CORT Events rental catalog while avoiding repetition fatigue.” In practice, “The challenge was to strike a balance: repeat key furniture styles to maintain visual harmony, while varying layouts, colors, and spatial moments to keep the experience engaging throughout the Hosted Buyer Lounge.”

## **Planning the Lounge: Using Prisms To Design for Complexity**

### **Why IMEX Needed More Than a Basic Floor Plan**

The Hosted Buyer Lounge presented a complex design challenge: hundreds of seats, multiple zones supporting different behaviors, sponsor microsites with distinct branding, and high-volume circulation tied to 92,000 meetings across the event. IMEX needed confidence that the design would perform in real-world conditions, making a simple static floor plan insufficient for anticipating density, flow, and adjacency.

### **Prisms in Practice**

CORT utilized Prisms to model and test the Hosted Buyer Lounge layout in realistic conditions before the show opened. The tool allowed the team to test seating configurations to reach the required seat capacity without crowding, evaluate circulation paths to maintain clear entry and exit flow, and position high-demand zones, such as work areas and quiet corners, relative to traffic patterns.

For Rosilyn, Prisms was the bridge between concept and execution. “Prisms played a critical role in translating concepts into execution. I built the floorplan from the ground up using the dimensions provided by the general contractor, accurately placing walls, structural columns, entrances, and exits to scale.” That accuracy made key performance decisions easier to validate early. “This allowed me to validate circulation paths, seating density, accessibility, and sightlines early in the process.” And it accelerated alignment across stakeholders because “the ability to toggle between top-down 2D planning and immersive 3D walk-throughs helped confirm comfort, flow, and spatial balance before finalizing layouts. It also supported stakeholder buy-in by allowing collaborators to visualize the experience in real time, reducing ambiguity and accelerating approvals.”

Prisms also made it possible to assess the balance between soft lounge seating and more structured workspace furniture, align powered pieces with areas where buyers were most likely to work, and visualize how sponsor and destination zones would integrate within the overall lounge. As a result, key design decisions were validated in advance, giving IMEX confidence that the space would perform as intended under peak conditions.

# One Space, Many Experiences: Designing the 700-Seat Lounge

## Overall Layout Strategy

The Hosted Buyer Lounge included matching the scale of 4,729 hosted buyers and additional buyer attendees who used the space throughout the event. That seat distribution ensured buyers could find a place to sit even during peak traffic times and appointment blocks.

Distributing seats across zones helped avoid clustering all desirable seating in one area while spreading “magnet pieces,” such as powered tables and soft seating, throughout the space. Sponsor microsites, hospitality areas, and CORT’s featured furniture served as anchors that pulled people into different parts of the lounge.

Clear paths from the lounge entrance to primary zones supported circulation and flow. The layout included logical, intuitive navigation, so hosted buyers didn’t have to guess which type of space was right for them. This layout strategy ensured no single zone carried the full load of traffic or activity, helping the lounge function as a reliable, high-capacity environment throughout the show.



### Zone Breakdown

During long appointment days, soft lounge seating clusters provided hosted buyers with comfortable areas to relax between appointments or to engage in casual conversations. These zones used modular and lounge-style seating to support short breaks and low-pressure interactions, which helped buyers reset between tight appointment blocks. Their placement balanced calm with visibility and kept buyers connected to the broader lounge while easing fatigue.

High-top tables and stools worked well for brief, efficient conversations. These pods served to facilitate introductions, quick follow-ups, and informal check-ins, and the stand-or-sit format encouraged movement while still enabling meaningful interaction.

Workspace zones supported laptop use, note-taking, and email follow-ups between meetings. Task seating and powered tables gave buyers a reliable place to work without leaving the lounge to find power or quieter conditions. These zones reinforced the Hosted Buyer Lounge's role as a functional base for preparation and productivity throughout the show.

Quiet recharge corners were positioned slightly away from the busiest circulation paths to offer calmer pockets within the lounge. These areas supported brief mental resets and device charging, which gave buyers a place to pause and regroup without disrupting overall movement through the space. The integration of these zones ensured that buyers could recharge without sacrificing accessibility.

### Micro-Environments: Designing Choice in a 40,000 Sq Ft Space

In a lounge this large, "zones" only work if they feel intuitive, consistent, and human-scaled — a design approach Rosilyn described as "rooted in human behavior." To keep the footprint cohesive while still enabling sponsor customization, she began by identifying a 'baseline' seating style that is soft, comfortable, and offered in multiple color ways, that could be customized to reflect each sponsor's brand while maintaining consistency across the Hosted Buyer Lounge.

That baseline created the backbone for micro-environments: repeatable cues that help buyers navigate without having to stop and interpret the space. Within that consistency, variety becomes the tool that empowers choice. As Rosilyn explained, "From there, I intentionally mixed seating types and heights: bar tables and barstools, cafe-height seating, lounge soft seating, ottoman's, accent chairs, and communal tables." The purpose was practical because this variety allowed attendees to choose how they wanted to engage, whether working, socializing, resting, or observing.

Sponsor integration wasn't treated as isolated pockets, but rather it was designed as a set of intentional experiences inside one cohesive ecosystem. In Rosilyn's words, "Each sponsor area was designed like a micro-environment, including zones for cowering, focused work, and both small and large lounge groupings." That's how the HBL maintained visual confidence at scale: "The goal was to create a curated horizon. No matter where you looked, the space felt designed rather than improvised," helping counteract the challenges of high ceilings and large volumes often found in convention centers.

On site, buyer behavior reinforced why micro-environments mattered — especially the demand for calm inside a high-traffic lounge. Rosilyn observed that "Attendees used the Hosted Buyer Lounge exactly as intended: as a place to pause, recharge, and reconnect away from the show floor." She noted the range of use cases, "Some gravitated toward soft seating for rest and quiet conversation, while others used bar-height or cafe seating to work, recharge devices, or meet new people." But one preference was consistent. "One notable pattern was the strong preference for quiet, semi-private areas. Even within such a large space, attendees consistently sought moments of privacy and calm." To support that, she

used existing structural columns as anchors for intimate zones, layering in greenery to subtly define space without obstructing sightline or flow.

Those choices were reinforced by intentional placement logic. Furniture placement was intentional - ottomans and flexible seating were positioned where larger groups naturally formed, while open pathways preserved visual continuity. The result was “a balanced environment that felt open yet personal, encouraging choice and empowering attendees to use the space in a way that best suited them.”

### Inclusive Seating Strategy: Designing for Different Attendees

The Hosted Buyer Lounge featured a variety of seating types, including soft lounge chairs, modular sofas, task chairs, high-top stools, benches, and ottomans. Seating was available in a range of heights, depths, and firmness levels, with body types and comfort needs taken into consideration. Wider seating options and supportive structures helped accommodate different body sizes and requirements.

The mix of seating also supported different posture needs, including upright seating for work, reclined seating for rest, and perch seating for quick stops. At a high-intensity event like IMEX America, providing comfort and choice for high-value attendees communicated respect and reinforced an inclusive experience.



## The Furniture Ecosystem: Products With a Purpose

### Modularity for Real-Time Flexibility

An environment like the Hosted Buyer Lounge is well-suited to modular furniture collections. Modular pieces allow organizers to reconfigure seating clusters as traffic patterns emerge and to adjust zones as needed. In practice, modular furniture allows teams to move pieces to create more quiet seating without redesigning a space. Seating was adjusted to increase capacity in quiet zones as traffic patterns changed throughout the day. These real-time adjustments helped maintain comfort and usability across the lounge while preserving the original layout strategy.

### Hospitality-Forward Comfort & Aesthetic

Lounge-style furniture collections elevated the visual language of the Hosted Buyer Lounge, creating a warm, modern, and inviting aesthetic. This design strategy supported IMEX's vision for a global, professional, high-quality event. For the hosted buyers, the lounge read as a curated, intentional environment rather than a functional holding area.

### Powered Furniture: Supporting How Buyers Actually Work

Powered Collection pieces were strategically placed throughout workspace zones and select lounge clusters within the Hosted Buyer Lounge. These pieces ensured that buyers could charge devices and stay connected without leaving the space.

"Practical touches like charging stations made it easy to relax or catch up on emails," said the IMEX team.

### Biophilia, Partitions, and Microzones

The presence of greenery and natural textures within the Hosted Buyer Lounge visually softened the busy environment and reflected the trend toward biophilic design. These elements helped create a sense of calm and an oasis at a high-energy event.

Partitions and strategic layouts carved out micro-environments without closing off sightlines or disrupting the overall theme of the space. The partitions also created varying levels of stimulation and privacy. This approach supported different comfort preferences while maintaining an open, cohesive lounge experience.

### Hero Highlight: The Aruba Lounge Chair

CORT's [Aruba Lounge Chair](#) was one of the most frequently used or commented-on furniture pieces in the Hosted Buyer Lounge. This chair became a popular standout element within the space.

Why did buyers enjoy the Aruba Lounge Chair? Its papasan-style form and generous proportions radiate relaxation and comfort. Its papasan-style form and generous proportions encouraged relaxation, while the natural, rattan-like aesthetic aligned with the lounge’s biophilic design approach. The Aruba Chair consistently drew buyers seeking brief decompression and comfortable pauses between meetings.



**What IMEX 2025 Demonstrates About CORT’s Capabilities**

**Planning: Managing Complexity With Clarity**

CORT translated a multi-stakeholder brief for the Hosted Buyer Lounge into a clear, executable plan. As a central space serving hosted buyers, sponsors, and event operations simultaneously, the lounge required careful coordination to balance competing needs and priorities. CORT’s use of Prism reflected a commitment to data-driven, visual planning, enabling informed decisions and greater confidence when designing a high-stakes environment at IMEX scale.

**Design: Creating Many Experiences in a Single Space**

The Hosted Buyer Lounge highlighted CORT’s expertise in designing a single environment that could support many different experiences. Thoughtful space planning, an inclusive seating strategy, seamless sponsor integration, and cohesive aesthetics allowed the lounge to accommodate a wide range of attendee needs. Within one shared footprint, the space successfully supported focused work, informal meetings, rest, and recharging without feeling fragmented or overcrowded.

## Delivery: Executing Under Pressure

IMEX America welcomed 17,633 participants and 3,700 exhibiting companies, creating an environment that demanded reliable installation and responsive on-site execution. CORT delivered a layout capable of adapting in real time as attendee usage patterns became clear, which ensured that the Hosted Buyer Lounge remained functional and comfortable throughout the event.

“This project highlights CORT Event’s ability to handle complexity at scale — offering sufficient inventory, modular options, and color flexibility to meet both logistical and creative demands,” said IMEX. “The catalog’s consistency allowed for cohesion, while its range enabled customization across sponsor areas.”

From Rosilyn’s perspective, that same outcome is what made the project resonate. “What I’m most proud of is that the Hosted Buyer Lounge successfully supported so many attendees without sacrificing comfort, cohesion, or brand integrity. The space demonstrated how thoughtful furniture selection, modular design, and intentional planning can transform a large footprint into a human-centered environment.”

Ultimately, she summed up the bigger takeaway. “Ultimately, the Hosted Buyer Lounge proved that large-scale event design doesn’t have to feel impersonal. When design considers attendee psychology, movement, and choice, it becomes a powerful extension of the event’s message - communicating care, intention, and professionalism without a single word.”

## Looking Ahead

The Hosted Buyer Lounge at IMEX America 2025 underscores CORT’s ability to support complex, multi-use environments at large-scale events. From early planning through on-site execution, the project reflects an approach grounded in flexibility, thoughtful design, and operational reliability.

As event formats continue to evolve and attendee expectations increase, the need for adaptable spaces that support multiple behaviors within a single footprint will only grow. The IMEX 2025 Hosted Buyer Lounge offers a practical example of how CORT partners with event organizers to deliver environments that balance experience, functionality, and brand integration at scale.