rai
AMSTERDAM

RAI INSIGHTS INSPIRATION FOR EVENT PROFESSIONALS

Table of contents

CLICK ON A SUBJECT TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE RELEVANT CHAPTER

Introduction – How to increase the impact of your business event

The research – customer journey study

The customer journey – description

The customer journey – in focus

5 success factors

How to increase the impact of your business event

We've been reading about it in blogs and trend reports for years: content is essential for business events, return on investment is the new key indicator and there is a vital need to provide both a physical and a virtual experience. All this and more must be taken into account to ensure an optimal event for your visitors. But how can you successfully translate a carefully arranged event from the drawing board into reality? How do you create the best possible event for visitors?

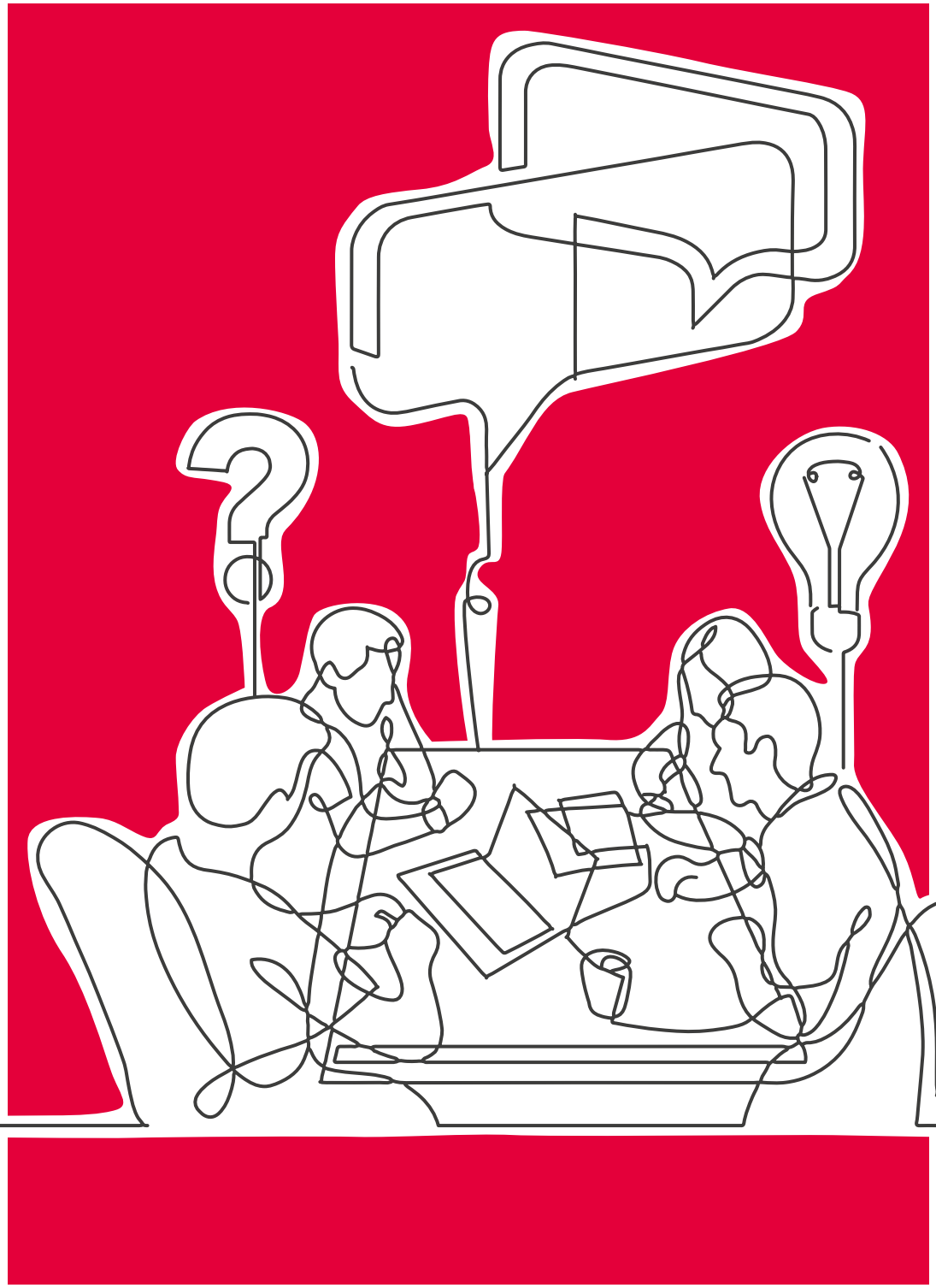
This edition of RAI Insights looks closely at the overall visitor experience. Step into the shoes of your visitors and walk with them on their 'customer journey'. By mapping this journey step by step, you'll learn which moments are crucial to optimise the event visit of your target group.

Mapping the customer journey can provide all those involved with added value. At RAI Amsterdam we recently embarked on this trajectory ourselves and are pleased to share the main insights we gained.

Sanne Jolles
Market Research Manager

Sylvia Molenkamp
Innovation Manager

rai AMSTERDAM



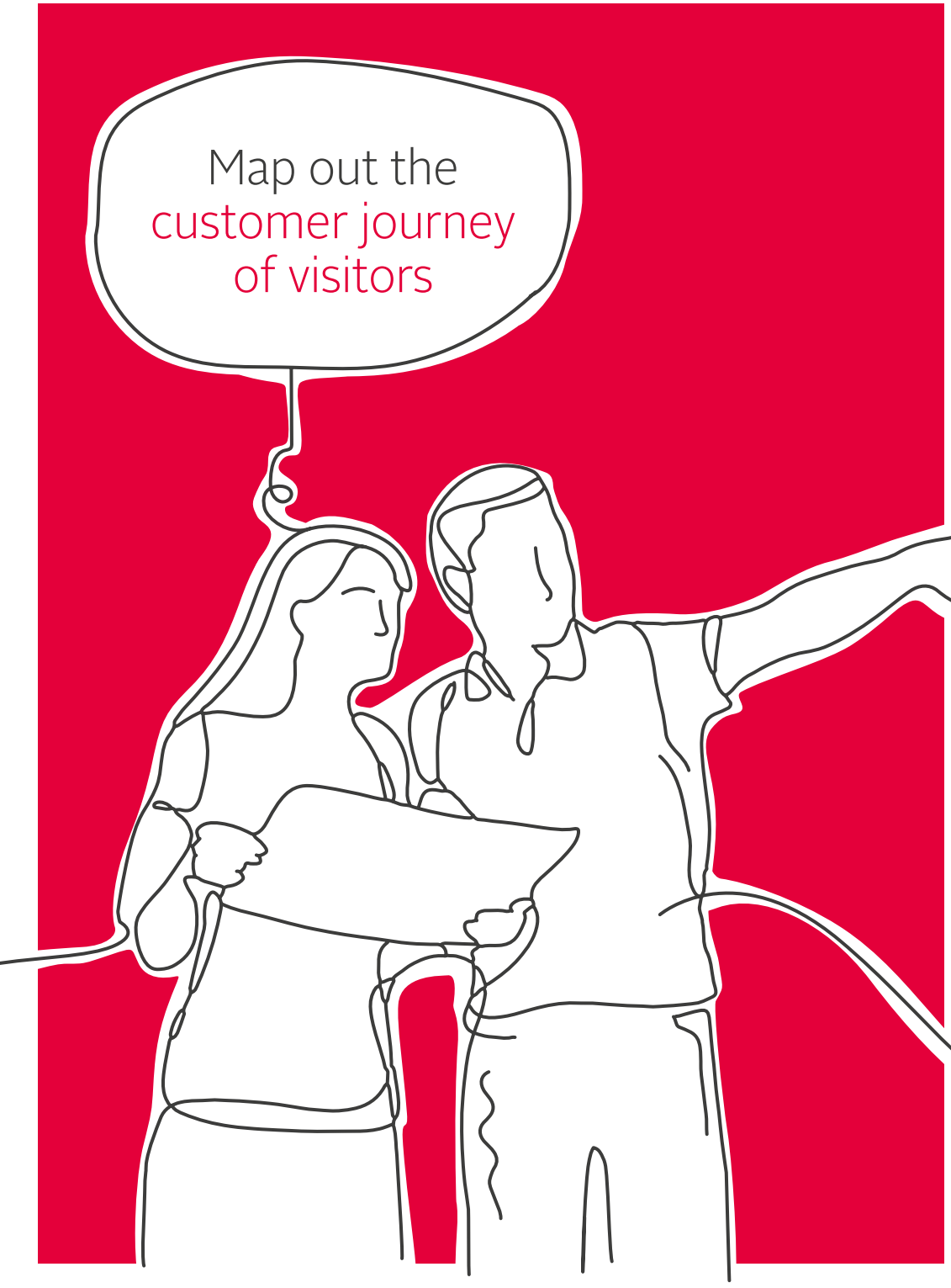
The research – customer journey study

RAI Amsterdam partnered with Unplugged (part of Makerstreet) to map the journey of business event visitors. Our goal was to discover and utilise the most decisive moments on this 'customer journey'.

Supported by a team of RAI specialists, including marketers and event managers, we started by mapping the various contact moments and experiences of visitors to RAI Amsterdam, from their initial orientation to the 'onboarding' and evaluation.

We then took the resulting knowledge to the next stage. Via observation and interview techniques based on design thinking, we took a close look at international and Dutch visitors. We then validated and refined the concept journey and gained insight into what visitors expect.

Finally, we tested the interview results based on a survey of a broad group of B2B visitors, and tested the customer journey in focus groups among exhibitors and organisers.



The customer journey

A customer journey mainly consists of chapters and micro-moments. For business events, the following chapters can be discerned:

Orientation

Preparation

Travel to the event

Onboarding

Event visit

After the event

Evaluation

‘Post-event’ moments

The customer journey

Orientation

Potential visitors usually shop around before making the decision to attend an event. This mainly involves contact with relations, colleagues and social media. During this orientation stage potential visitors look at the topics, reach, exhibitors, speakers: all the factors which help them make a well-founded choice and eventually decide to register.

Preparation

Visitors can basically be divided in two types: 1) people who prepare everything in detail before arriving at the event, and 2) people for whom the preparation starts when they take their first steps onto the exhibition floor. We need to provide both groups with tools and information to help them make the most of their visit.

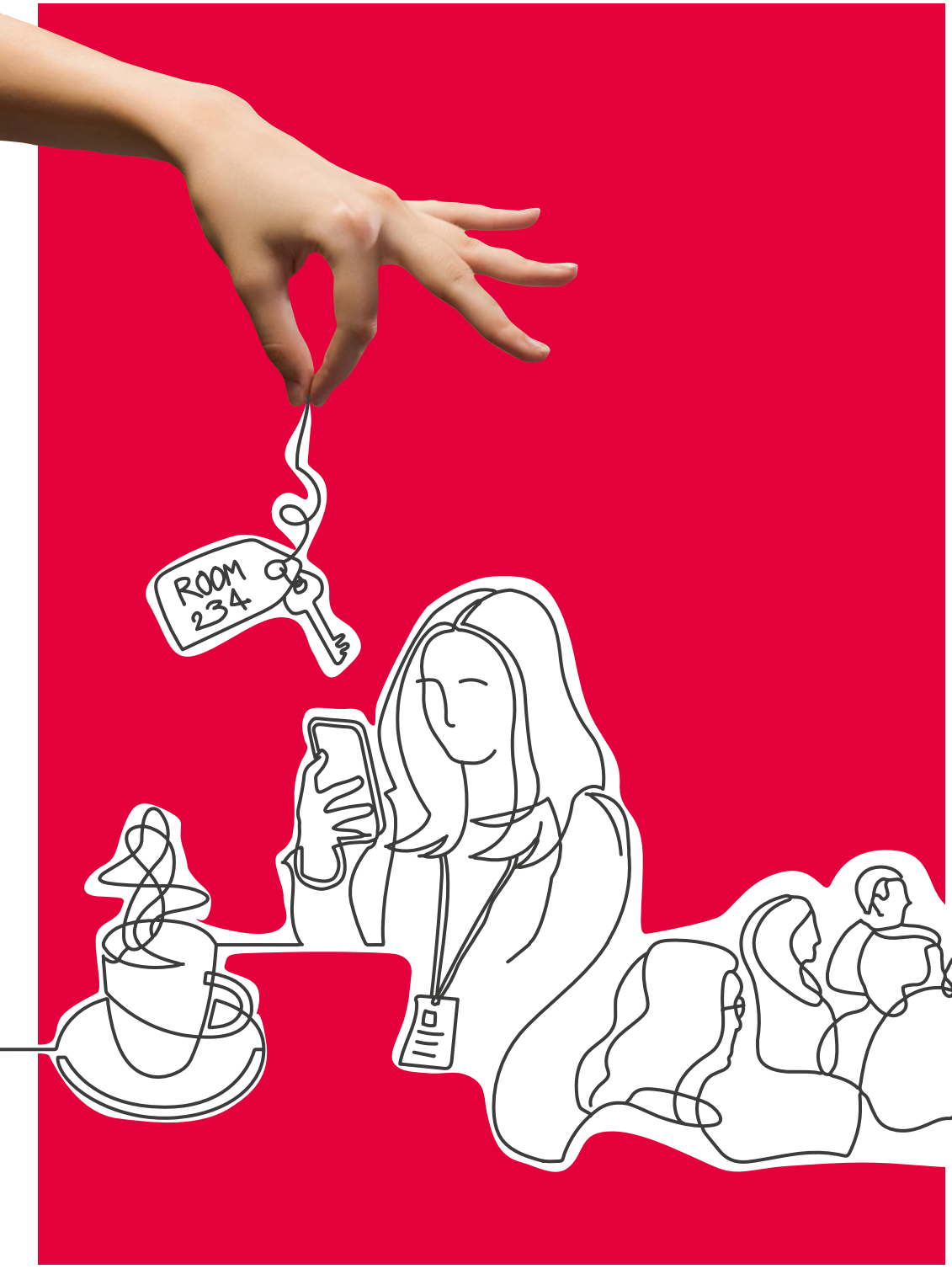
The customer journey

Travel to the event

Visitors make a physical journey from A to B and arrive at their hotel or event location. The phenomenon of ‘way-finding’ plays a crucial role in travelling to the event location.

Onboarding

After registering, picking up a badge and possibly visiting the cloakroom, visitors will need some ‘me time’. Now comes a moment of acclimatisation: checking out the floor plan, contacting the home front, re-reading the programme.



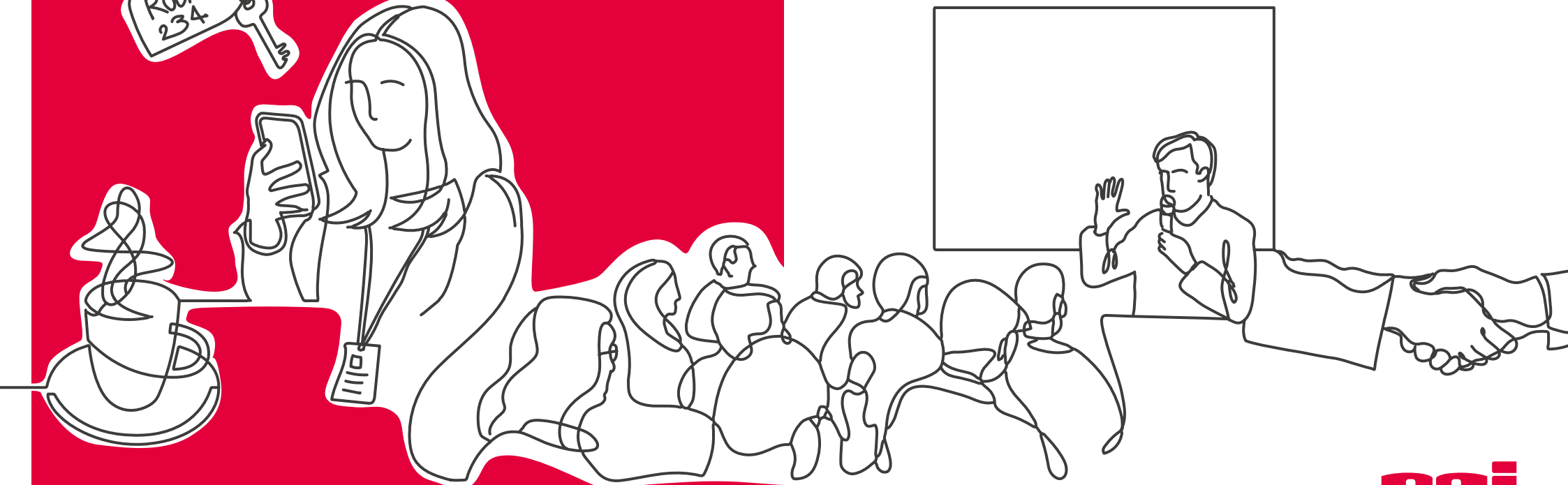
The customer journey

Event visit

Visitors spend their time on attending sessions, visiting exhibitors, making appointments, having conversations, collecting information, walking around the exhibition floor and doing business. This also includes stops for lunch or resting.

After the event

Visitors may go into town, leave for their hotel or return home.



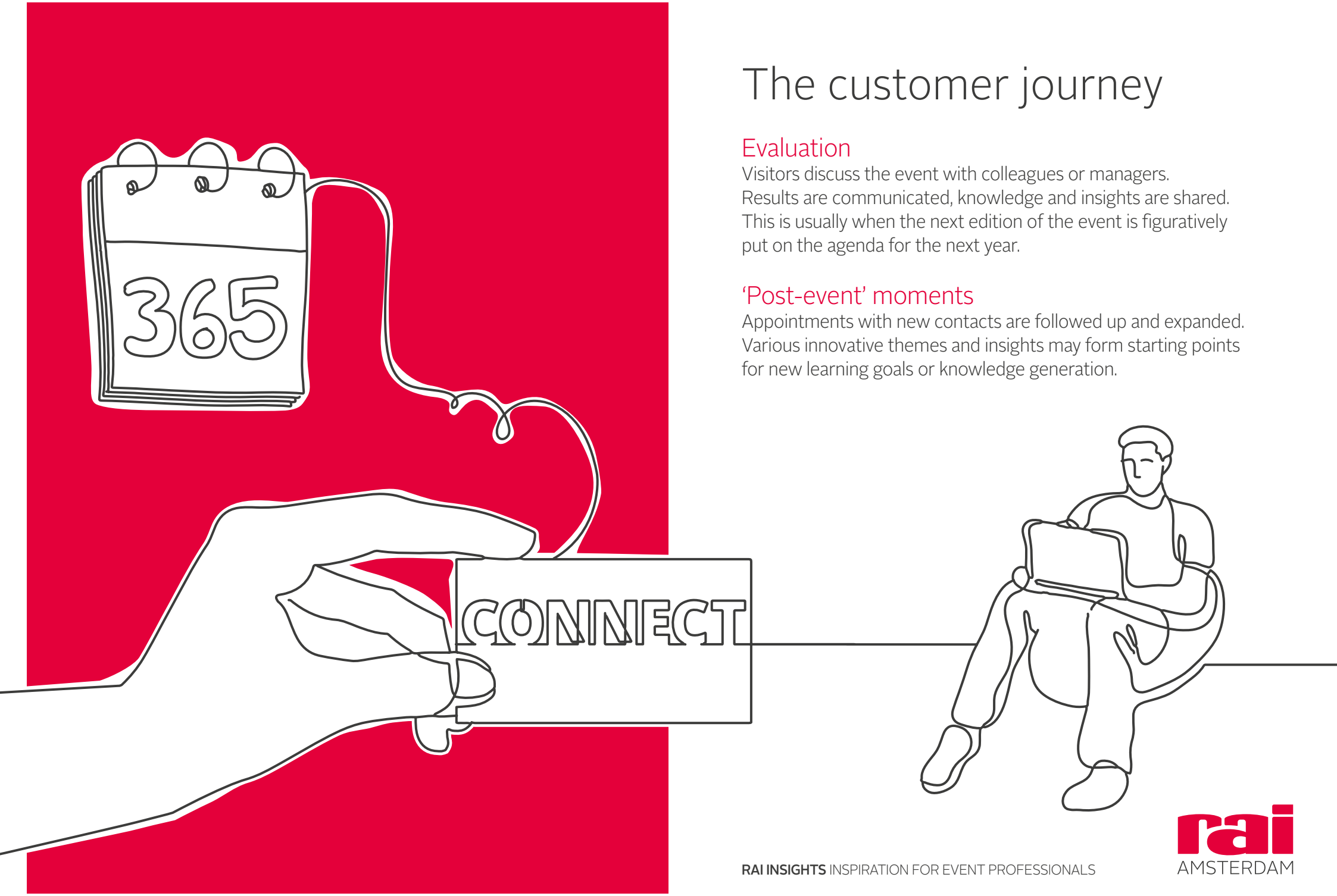
The customer journey

Evaluation

Visitors discuss the event with colleagues or managers. Results are communicated, knowledge and insights are shared. This is usually when the next edition of the event is figuratively put on the agenda for the next year.

‘Post-event’ moments

Appointments with new contacts are followed up and expanded. Various innovative themes and insights may form starting points for new learning goals or knowledge generation.

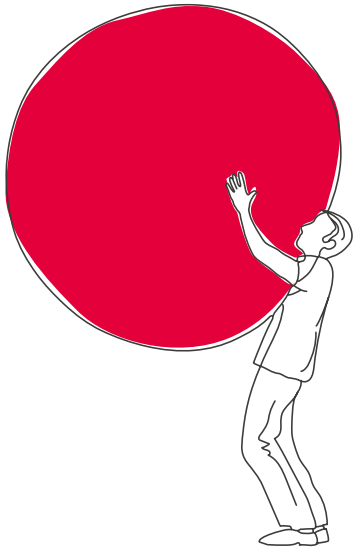


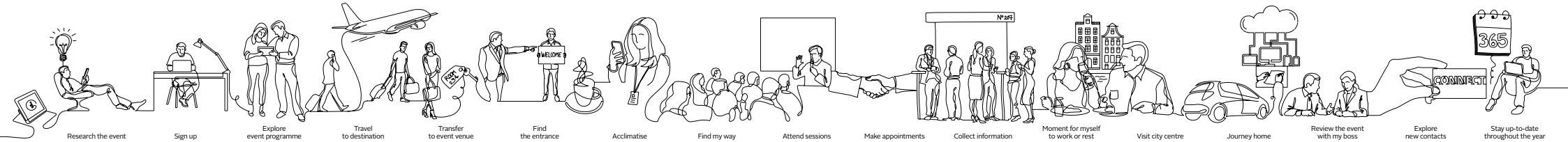
rai AMSTERDAM

The customer journey in focus

The red circles show the importance of every micro-moment to a visitor and their relevance for an event.

The larger the circle, the greater the importance for the visitor and the relevance for an event.





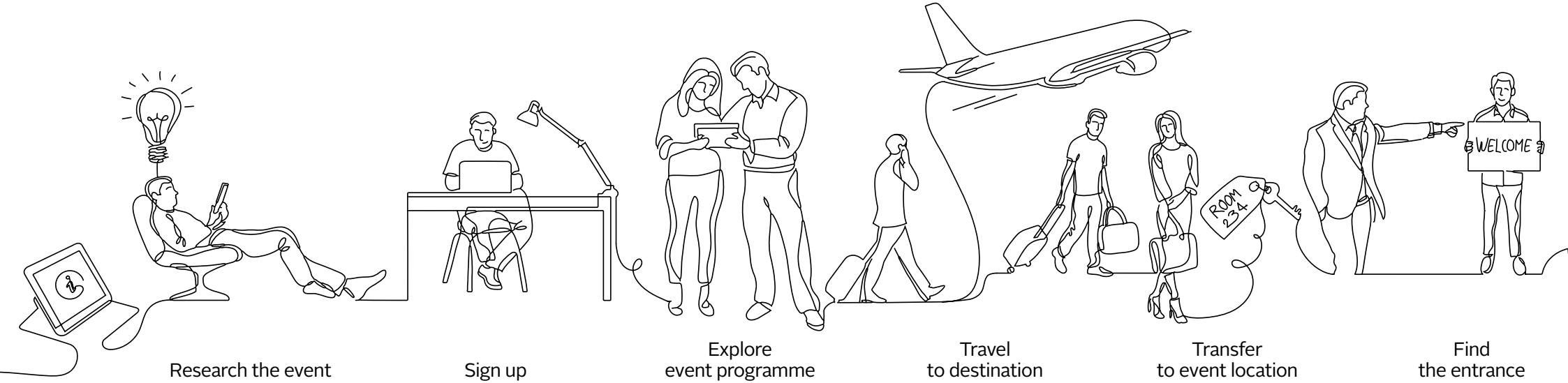
Get informed
Research the event
Decide to go
Sign up
Discover who else is going
Explore event programme
Prepare for the journey
Travel to destination
Check in hotel
Transfer to event venue
Park at event location
Find the entrance
Enter event location
Acclimatise
Check event programme
Find my way
Walk around
Attend sessions
Visit exhibitors
Make appointments
Talk to people one-to-one
Collect information
Get lunch
Moment for myself to work or rest
Leave event location
Visit city centre
Stay at hotel
Journey home
Make report about the event
Review the event with my boss
Share findings with colleagues
Explore new contacts
Follow up with (new) contacts
Stay up-to-date throughout the year

Orientation | Preparation | Travel to the event | Onboarding event | Visit event | After the event | Evaluation | 'Post-event'

How can we draw attention to potential visitors?	How can we help visitors in their decision making process?	How can we support to connect before the event?	How can we support visitors organising their travel?	How can we support visitors navigate during the event?	How can we support visitors to enhance the event programme?	How can we make sure that visitors connect with the right people?	How can we elicit the spontaneous encounter between visitors?	How can we support visitors in their need for personal space and me-time?	How can we support visitors collecting information during the event?	How can we support visitors to create a report about the event?

rai AMSTERDAM

The customer journey



Get informed
Research the event
Decide to go
Sign up
Discover who else is going
Explore event programme
Prepare for the journey
Travel to destination
Check in hotel
Transfer to event location
Park at event location
Find the entrance

Orientation

How can we draw attention to potential visitors?

Preparation

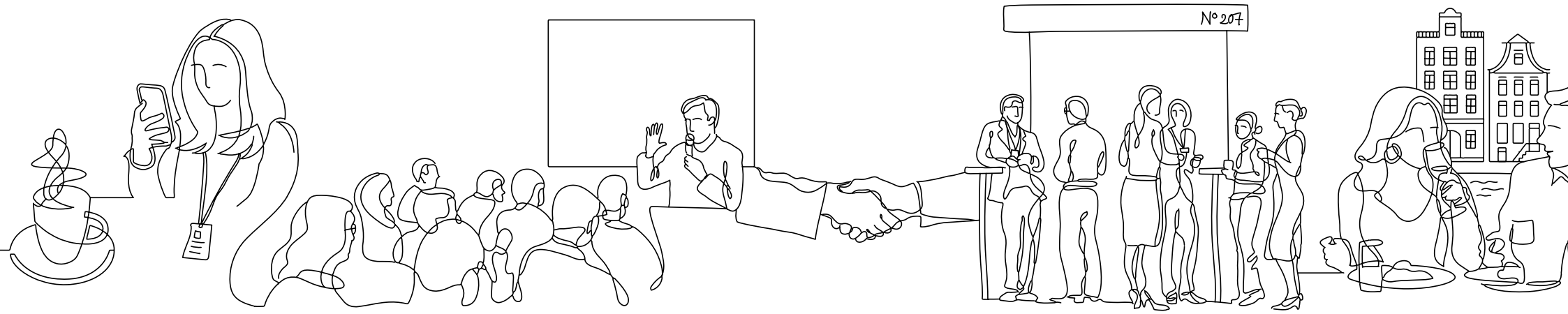
How can we help visitors in their decision making process?

Travel to the event

How can we support to connect before the event?

How can we support visitors organising their travel?

The customer journey



Enter event location

Acclimatise

Check event programme

Find my way

Walk around

Attend sessions

Visit exhibitors

Make appointments

Talk to people one-to-one

Collect information

Get lunch

Moment for myself to work or rest

Leave event location

Onboarding event

How can we support visitors navigate during the event?

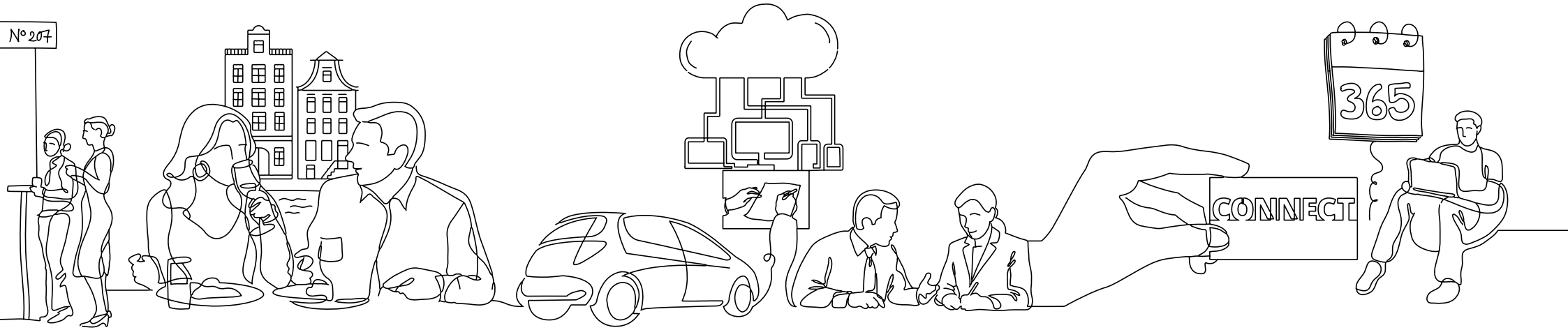
Visit event

How can we support visitors to enhance the event programme?

How can we make sure that visitors connect with the right people?

How can we elicit the spontaneous encounter between visitors?

The customer journey



Get lunch

Moment for myself to work or rest

Leave event location

Visit city centre

Stay at hotel

Journey home

Make report about the event

Review the event with my boss

Share findings with colleagues

Explore new contacts

Follow up with (new) contacts

Stay up-to-date throughout the year

After the event

How can we elicit the spontaneous encounter between visitors?

How can we support visitors in their need for personal space and me-time?

Evaluation

How can we support visitors collecting information during the event?

‘Post-event’

How can we support visitors to create a report about the event?

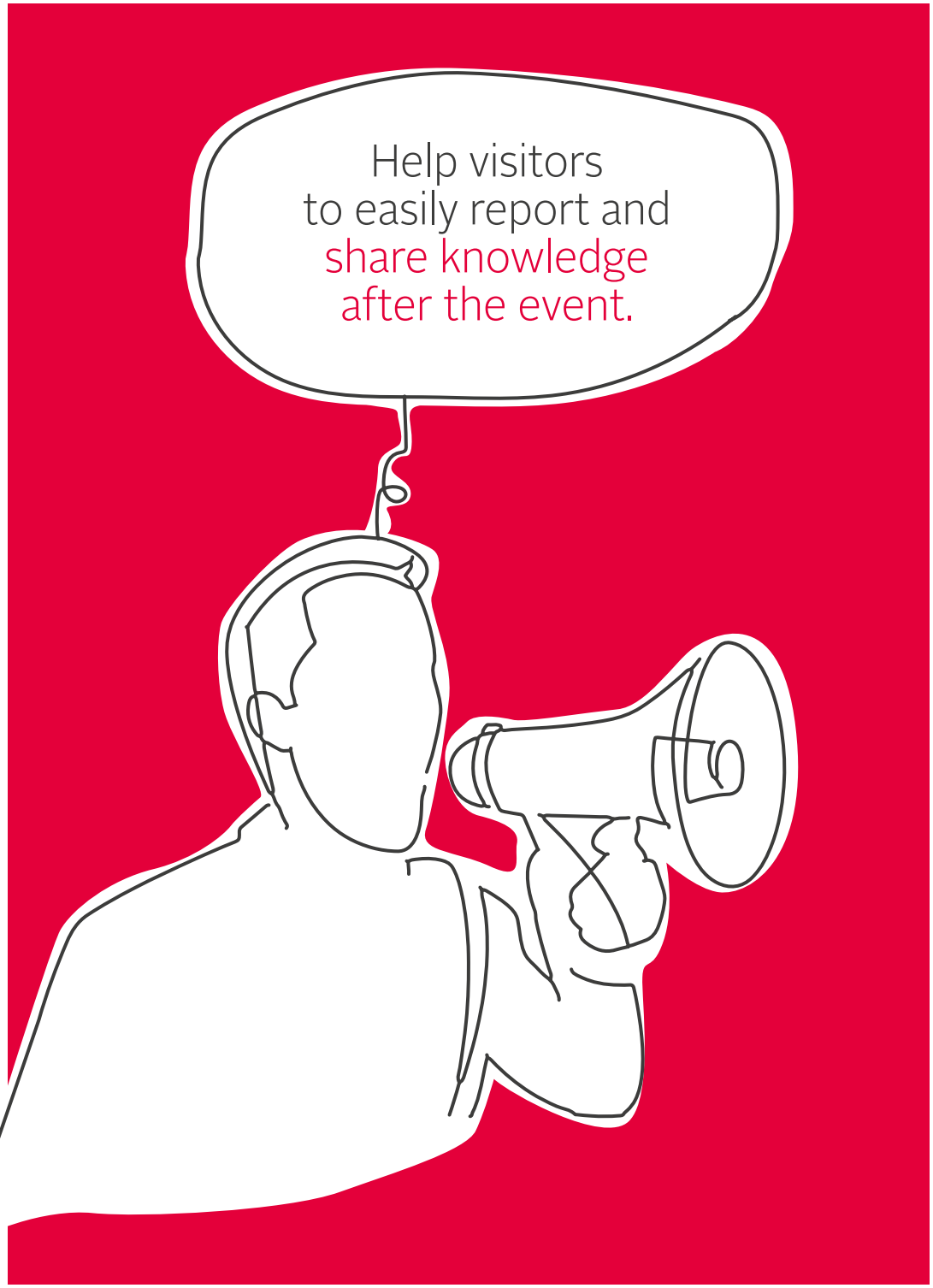
Creating a successful event together

The visitor customer journey is influenced by many factors. Is it their first visit or are they regular attendees? Are there major cultural differences between their country and the one in which the event takes place? Are they coming to network and speak to lots of people, or to acquire information and participate in sessions? Are they active in online communities, or are they barely active on social media? Each factor demands a different approach.

Nonetheless, there are a few aspects in the customer journey that are equally relevant to all visitors and to which you, as an organiser, can pay attention at any time during the journey. For example, visitors feel more relaxed when they have everything under control. So, give them this opportunity. Provide information about the weather, traffic and other details on the website, for instance. The more tools you provide, the better visitors can focus on what really matters: content, networking and doing business at an event that meets all their expectations.

Benefit from the following five success factors to increase the impact of your business event!

rai AMSTERDAM



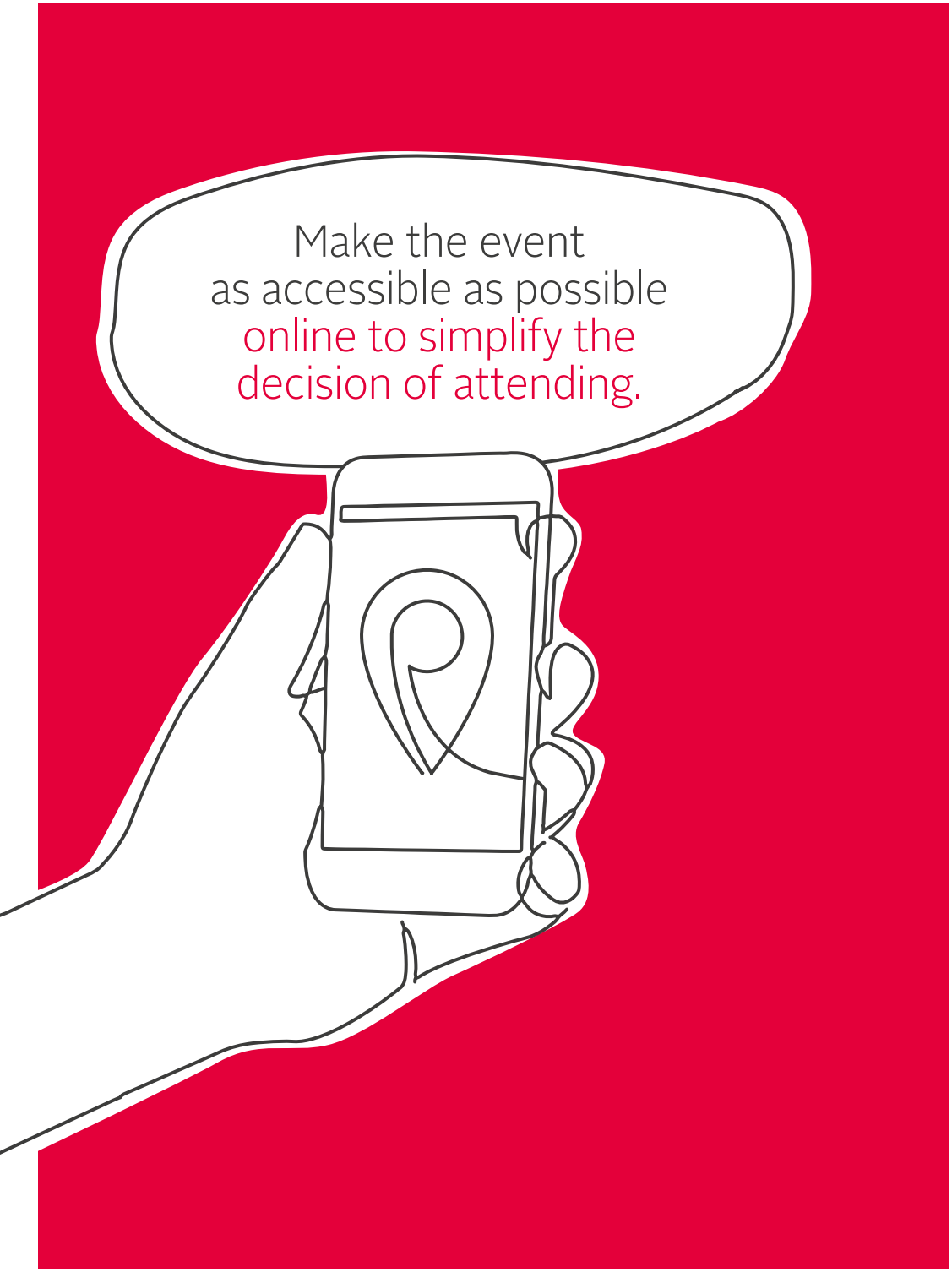
01 Spread the word

Reach potential visitors

It may be an obvious point but always ensure good online findability. What characteristics and key words will boost your SEO score? And via which channels? The more you share with the broad target group (e.g. whitepapers, blogs, vlogs), the greater the chance that visitors will find your event. This also applies to participation in conversations, communities and other (online) networks.

Many people learn about events via word of mouth. This makes it important to provide both visitors and exhibitors with plenty of material to share, for example via innovative content or unique photos with a hashtag on the exhibition floor. Ensure that there are lots of shareable moments.

Make it easy to directly download and forward summaries of all sessions, including via the event app. Or ensure that all visitors find the details of the sessions they visited and relevant innovations directly in their inbox. Many visitors share content with colleagues after the event and create a minor spin-off.



02 Easy access

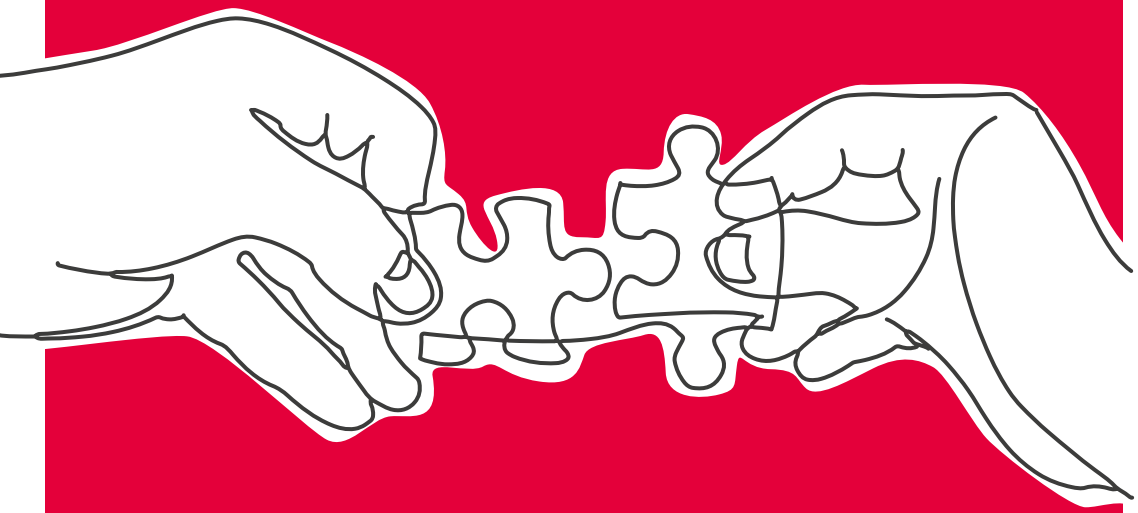
Optimise the physical journey for visitors

Make sure that the main programme elements are easy to find. Make it easy to see what the event entails and for whom it is intended. Some events have a 'convince your boss' section on the website which describes the potential ROI for visitors. Smart!

A video compilation or infographic with facts and figures related to the previous edition is not only practical for evaluation moments, but can also be part of the decision-making process. Ensure that it is clear what the event does and does not entail. Use clear language and don't overcomplicate.

Be clear with signage. Organisers often know a location well. It can be useful to walk the route with someone who has never attended the event. How do visitors get from A to B? How do they walk from the parking area or metro stop to the entrance? You can show the route via augmented reality or the event app, but physical signs are needed too. As visitors encounter so many new things during the event, the journey to the entrance should be a hassle-free experience. It is also a good idea to have friendly staff welcome visitors at the entrance.

The magic word is matchmaking: facilitating meetings before, during and after the event



03 Route to success

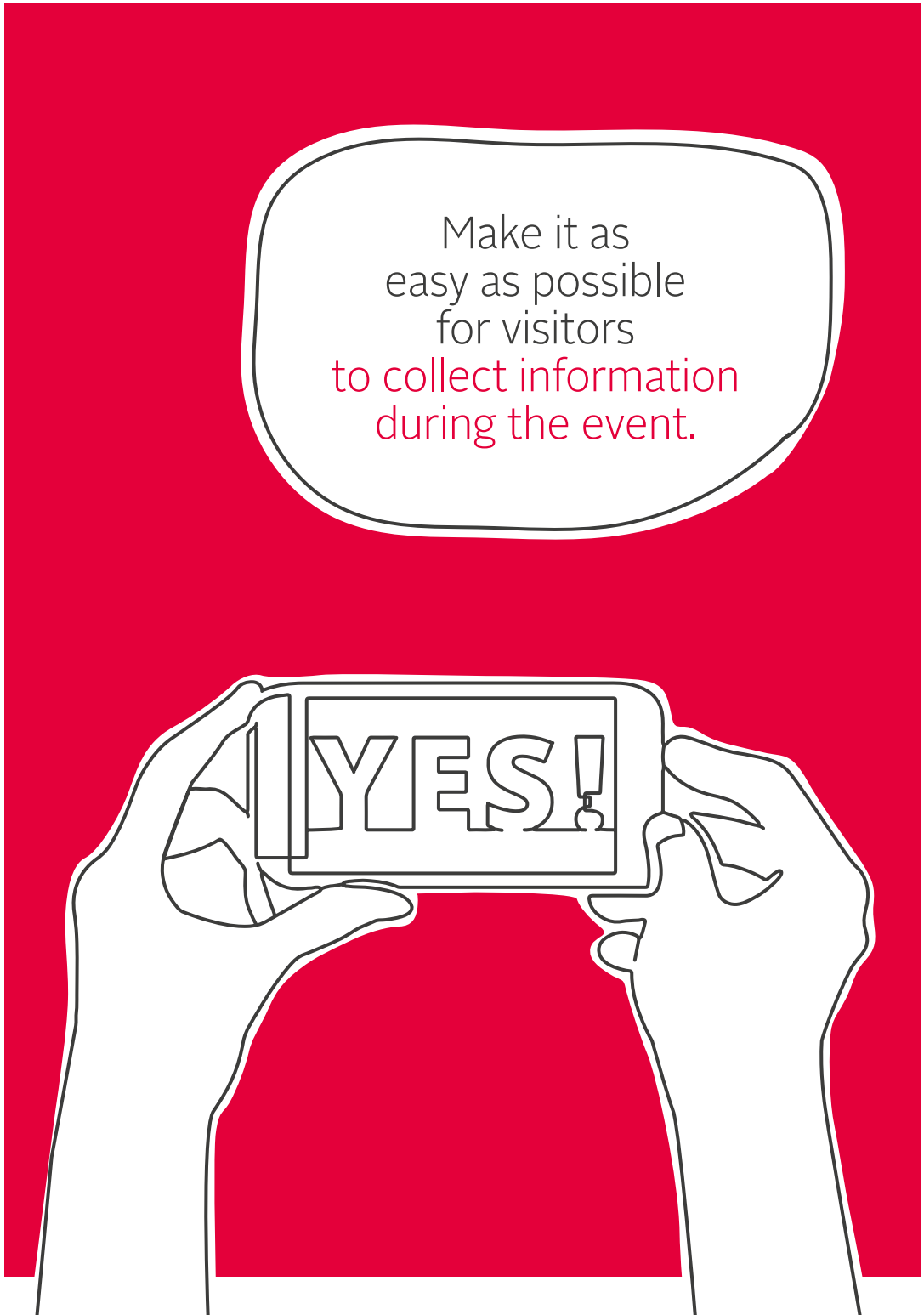
Ensure that all relevant exhibitors and sessions are easy to find

Ensure that visitors know who they can expect and make it easy for them to establish contact with others. Is there a community where people can meet virtually? Are there sessions in which visitors can ask questions in advance? In addition to facilitating meetings via technological matchmaking, you can boost the experience by facilitating more spontaneous networking as well. Remember that the networking will continue after the event via the app.

How do visitors find the right exhibitors and sessions? The programme, floor plan and app are obviously key. Make sure that the floor plan does more than just provide an easy route from the session location via the exhibition floor to the network lounges, and provide a personalised programme. Take into account that many visitors don't decide what they're going to do or who they want to speak to until they arrive. A 'prep room' may not be such a bad idea...

The more personal the floor plan with routes, the better. This way you can plot a route that simply shows the stands indicated by the visitors, and even include online advice, such as: 'you are now passing stand x; people with a similar profile have stopped here.' Or: innovation routes, routes plotted by trendwatchers or the favourite route of well-known professionals from the sector.

And this probably goes without saying, but remember to place a clear, large-scale floor plan of the entire event at the entrance. Visitors often want to see the bigger picture before zooming in on a niche.



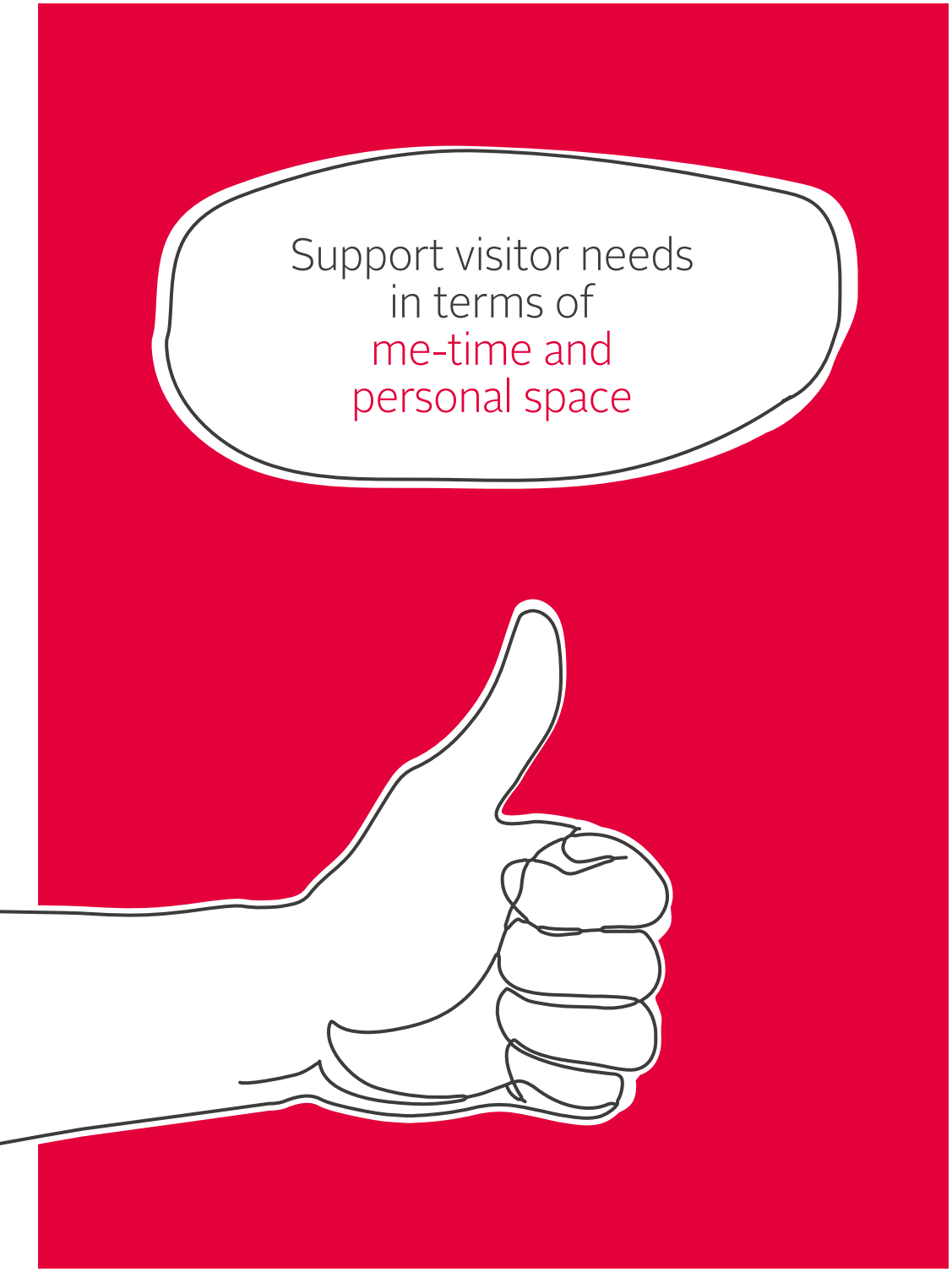
04 Be in charge

Help visitors meet relevant people and participate in suitable sessions

The era of brochures and paper is over, isn't it? Visitors expect to have the right information digitally at their fingertips. So, when exhibitors scan a badge, why not immediately attach the right content too?

Make a section of the event that is purely focused on retrieving information. All content related to the sessions, all information on the exhibitors and all basic characteristics of the visitors should be directly available here. Make sure you take the personal data protection legislation into account. You can locate the section in the technology or innovation lounge and turn it into a data hotspot, or provide something similar in the online community after the event. This way, you'll immediately create a moment for visitors to become (re)acquainted.

A good event depends on meeting the right people and acquiring relevant knowledge. Make it easy for visitors to choose the best sessions. Provide a clear description of content, target group and intended results. Also, keep the 'unconference' option in mind: sometimes we help visitors by creating space for them to take the lead themselves. Sharing knowledge and networking can be initiated online prior to the event.



05 Feel at home

Facilitate spontaneous meetings that result in slightly different kinds of conversation

A spontaneous meeting during an event that also offers business opportunities has great value to visitors. Provide places where these types of meetings can take place, for instance by communicating discussion topics in network lounges or in general areas.
Art, technology, rarities; nothing stimulates a conversation more than a shared odd man out feeling.

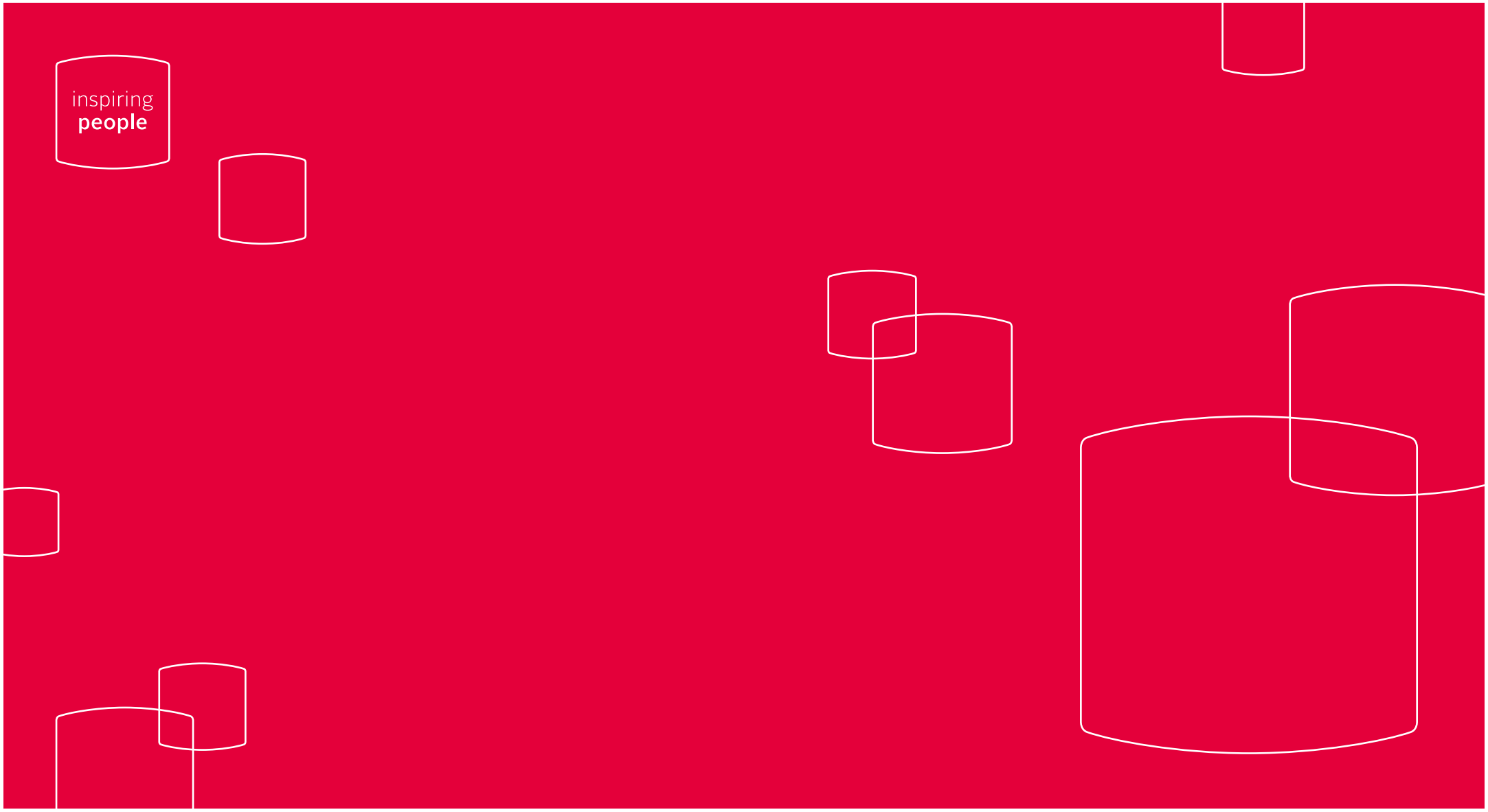
Provide plenty of places to work, lounges with seating and charging stations, space for contemplation and one-on-one meetings, and napping zones. Well-rested visitors are better able to absorb information and will get more ROI from the event. This also applies to visitors who don't have to spend time worrying about that one email from work – who have plenty of time for everything.

Personal space also involves the time visitors can spend on lunch and coffee breaks. Take diets into account and provide a varied offer. Make sure water is readily available, and that there is plenty of time to work and meet during lunch as well. It helps if the app or online floor plan informs visitors where they can get their favourite coffee or how long they will have to wait for food or drinks at the various hospitality facilities.

The beginning or end of the customer journey?

Although the customer journey can logically be seen from start to finish, each moment of the event is a possible beginning of the journey. People can hear about it for the first time before, during or after the event.

Ensure all the information related to the event is accessible and communicates a clear message. By keeping the lines of communication open and active throughout the year, it will be easier for potential visitors to find the organiser and the event. This makes every new journey a route to familiar and trusted ground.



Europaplein
NL-1078 GZ Amsterdam
t +31 (0)20 549 17 22
welcome@rai.nl
www.rai.nl

rai
AMSTERDAM