

How do you source a 400-delegate conference venue in five working days?

Shortlisted, negotiated and contracted in Birmingham - 22% under rack rate, at no fee to the client.



400

delegates

5 days

from brief to signed contract

22%

below published rack rate

GBP 0

fee - the venue pays our commission

180

bedrooms on-site secured

Prepared by the Jigsaw Conferences delivery team

Established 2003 · ISO 9001 & ISO 27001 certified · Free to the client

Client identities withheld under our confidentiality policy

THE 40-SECOND ANSWER

Jigsaw Conferences shortlisted five Birmingham venues within 48 hours, negotiated on the client's behalf and contracted a city-centre conference venue for 400 delegates in five working days - 22% below the venue's published rack rate, a saving of GBP 21,200. The service cost the client nothing: the venue pays our commission.

What do you do when your booked venue cancels six weeks before a national conference?

The head of sales operations at a national distribution company called us on a Monday morning. Their contracted venue had double-booked and pulled out of their January national sales conference - 400 delegates, six weeks away, invitations already sent.

The brief was unforgiving: a plenary room for 400, three breakout rooms, exhibition space for fourteen partner stands, full AV production, 180 bedrooms on-site or adjacent, and a date that could not move. Ringing venues one by one would have consumed the team for weeks they did not have - and booking direct at six weeks' notice usually means paying whatever the venue asks.

How did five days go from brief to signed contract?

DAY 1 (MON)

Brief taken and success criteria agreed: capacity, breakouts, exhibition space, bedrooms, AV spec, budget ceiling and the immovable date.

DAY 2 (TUE)

Five-venue Birmingham shortlist delivered as a like-for-like comparison grid - rates, capacities, bedroom blocks and availability confirmed, not scraped.

DAY 3 (WED)

Accompanied site visits at the two front-runners; AV production walkthrough with the in-house technical teams.

DAY 4 (THU)

Negotiation: day delegate rate reduced, 180-bedroom block held, 20% attrition allowance and a staged cancellation schedule added, AV package included.

DAY 5 (FRI)

Contract reviewed, signed and countersigned. GBP 21,200 (22%) below the venue's published rack pricing.

Why did the winning venue say yes to terms a direct booker would not get?

Venues negotiate differently with an agency that places hundreds of events a year than with a one-off booker under time pressure. We knew which Birmingham venues had genuine January availability, what their real floor on day delegate rates was, and which contract clauses they would flex on.

- A like-for-like comparison grid, so the client judged five venues on identical criteria instead of five different sales decks.

-

Negotiated commercial terms: 22% under rack, AV production included, and a bedroom block held without deposit.

- Contract protection a standard venue agreement does not offer: 20% attrition allowance and a staged cancellation schedule.
- One point of contact from brief to signature - the client's team stayed on their day jobs.
- No fee: like every Jigsaw venue find, the venue pays our commission, so the client's saving is a genuine saving.

What does sourcing through Jigsaw change versus booking direct?

	Sourcing with Jigsaw	Booking direct yourself
Cost of the service	GBP 0 - commission paid by the venue	Your team's time, for weeks
Rates	Agency-negotiated, benchmarked across the market	Published rack rates, take it or leave it
Shortlist	Five venues compared like-for-like in 48 hours	Whatever your calls uncover
Contract terms	Attrition and cancellation clauses negotiated in	The venue's standard paper
Risk at short notice	Availability confirmed before you see the list	Discovering the double-booking yourself

“

We lost our venue six weeks out and I genuinely thought the conference was gone. Jigsaw had a shortlist in two days and a signed contract by Friday - at a rate our procurement team could not believe.

- Head of Sales Operations, national distribution company (name withheld under our confidentiality policy)

Questions clients ask about this work

Is venue finding really free?

Yes. Venues pay Jigsaw a commission on confirmed business, which is standard across the industry - so our shortlisting, negotiation and contracting cost the client nothing, and the rates we negotiate are net savings.

How quickly can you produce a venue shortlist?

For most UK briefs we deliver a like-for-like shortlist with confirmed availability within 24-48 hours. Complex international or multi-venue briefs take a little longer.

Do you negotiate contract terms as well as price?

Always. Attrition allowances, staged cancellation schedules, deposit terms and included AV are frequently worth more than the headline rate reduction - on this event the 20% attrition allowance protected the client when final numbers landed at 371.

Can you handle bedrooms, AV and exhibition space in one brief?

Yes - residential conferences are our core work. This brief combined a 400-seat plenary, three breakouts, fourteen exhibition stands, full AV production and a 180-bedroom block in a single negotiation.

What happens if our delegate numbers change?

We negotiate attrition allowances into the contract up front - typically 10-20% - so reasonable movement in numbers adjusts your bill rather than triggering penalties.

Need a venue found - fast or otherwise?

Send us the brief. Shortlist with confirmed availability in 24-48 hours, negotiation and contracting included, at no fee.

> <https://jigsawconferences.co.uk/enquire?type=venues&mode=quick-brief>

Published 11 August 2026 - Last updated 11 August 2026

Case study prepared by the Jigsaw Conferences delivery team. Client identities are withheld under our confidentiality policy; outcomes are operational figures reported by the delivery team.