
derse
black hat
USA
2026
An Exhibitor’s Guide to Success at Black Hat

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01

Black Hat Overview

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Hacker Summer Camp

"Hacker Summer Camp" is the cybersecurity community's nickname for the annual convergence of BLACK HAT, BSIDES LAS VEGAS, and DEF CON, three influential events that collectively bring thousands of practitioners, researchers, executives, investors, media, and vendors to Las Vegas. For one week each year, Las Vegas becomes the epicenter of the cybersecurity industry, creating an unmatched concentration of networking, thought leadership, and industry conversation.

Because attendees remain in-market across multiple overlapping events, Black Hat exists within a much broader weeklong cybersecurity ecosystem. Brand activity extends well beyond the exhibit hall, with events, experiences, and communications competing for attendee attention throughout Hacker Summer Camp.





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The Black Hat Origin Story

Born from DEFCON's hacker roots



2

JEFF MOSS

HACKER. SECURITY EXPERT. FOUNDER OF DEF CON AND BLACK HAT.

Moss built his career at the intersection of the hacker underground and professional cybersecurity, uniquely positioned to bridge worlds that historically didn't always speak the same language.

DEFCON

2

1992

DEF CON IS BORN

Moss launches DEF CON as a gathering for the hacker community: a place to share knowledge, test boundaries, and explore technology alongside fellow hackers, researchers, and enthusiasts. What began as a grassroots event would grow into one of the world's largest and most influential hacker communities.

black hat

2

1997

BLACK HAT FOLLOWS

Five years later, Moss creates Black Hat, bringing the hacker and security-research community into dialogue with corporate, government, and professional security practitioners.

Black Hat and DEFCON share a founder, a community, and a commitment to technical security research but have evolved to serve different sides of the cybersecurity ecosystem.

HACKER SUMMER CAMP

2

Today

HACKER SUMMER CAMP

That shared DNA still shapes the culture today. Black Hat and DEFCON remain distinct but interconnected—converging each summer alongside BSides Las Vegas during the weeklong cybersecurity pilgrimage known as "Hacker Summer Camp."

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August 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26	27	28	29	30	31	black hat DEFCON
black hat DEFCON	BSIDES black hat 10	BSIDES black hat 11	BSIDES black hat 12	DEFCON black hat 13	DEFCON 14	DEFCON 15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

For one week each year, Black Hat, BSides Las Vegas, and DEF CON create one of the most concentrated gatherings of cybersecurity professionals in the world.

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Creative Imperative – Audience Fluency

Black Hat attendees love great swag, memorable experiences, and a good party. They just don't want to be marketed to.

Black Hat is not a typical trade show audience. Attendees include security practitioners, researchers, network architects, CTOs, CISOs, analysts, and technology leaders who evaluate vendors through the lens of technical credibility. The show's reputation is built around a highly informed and naturally skeptical community that can quickly distinguish genuine expertise from marketing hype.

At the same time, Black Hat's culture is uniquely paradoxical. Attendees are deeply technical and intensely curious, yet they also embrace the community traditions that surround the event, from coveted swag and memorable activations to networking events and industry celebrations. Success requires striking a careful balance: creating experiences that are engaging and memorable without *feeling* overly promotional.

For anyone designing within this environment, audience fluency is critical. The strongest experiences balance visibility with substance, creating opportunities for authentic engagement while reinforcing a brand’s credibility within one of the most discerning professional communities in technology.



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Get to Know the Audience

More than 23k attendees in 2026 trained to question assumptions, challenge claims, and verify everything.

15% year-over-year growth

ROLES

Technical Practitioners, Security Leaders, Technology Decision-Makers, Trusted Advisors, and Industry Influencers

KEY TITLES

Security Engineer, Security Architect, SOC Analyst, Threat Hunter, Pen Tester, Red Teamer, Security Researcher, Security Director, VP of Security, CISO, CIO, and CTO

INDUSTRIES

Financial Services, Government & Defense, Critical Infrastructure, Healthcare, Technology, Telecommunications, Energy, Retail, and Education & Research

EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Early-career, mid- to senior-level professionals (3-20+ years)

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Get to Know the Audience

AUDIENCE MINDSET

Skeptical by default. Curious by nature. They value proof over promises, technical depth over buzzwords, and credibility over credentials.

EARN THEIR RESPECT

Demonstrate, don’t claim.
Reveal, don’t explain.
Invite scrutiny, don’t avoid it.
Reward curiosity, don’t force participation.

PREFERRED CONTENT

Technical Briefings
Arsenal & Demos
Training & Certifications
Networking & Community
Business Hall Solutions

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Get to Know the Audience

Behaviors

Attend technical briefings, Arsenal, and hands-on trainings.

Get hands-on with security tools and technical demos.

Collect limited-edition swag and event-exclusive merchandise.

Explore the business hall in search of new solutions and vendors.

Test boundaries and probe systems for weaknesses.

Network at hosted parties, receptions, and after-hours events.

Share discoveries, techniques, and intelligence with peers and teams.

Buying Influence

Many attendees directly evaluate, recommend, or purchase security solutions.

Blend of hands-on practitioners, technical leaders, and executive decision-makers.

Technical validation often precedes executive buy-in.

Peer recommendations carry significant weight.

Influence is expertise-driven rather than title-driven (e.g., a skilled researcher or engineer can carry as much weight as a senior executive in shaping purchasing decisions).

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Get to Know the Audience

This audience is trained to probe for weaknesses, and Black Hat creates a rare environment where that behavior is actively practiced. Thousands of security professionals are experimenting with attack techniques and tools, so you must behave differently here than you would at a typical trade show.

BLACK HAT, A SURVIVAL GUIDE:

Update everything	Install the latest software and security updates before you go.
Pack light	Bring only the devices and data you actually need—and don’t let them out of your sight. Physical opportunism is still a way in.
Be suspicious of Wi-Fi	Rogue networks can impersonate legitimate ones.
Keep your signals quiet	Disable Wi-Fi and Bluetooth when you aren't using them.
Don’t plug in random things	Avoid unfamiliar USB drives, cables, and public charging ports.

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Black Hat Business Hall

460 exhibitors on one very crowded battleground. Differentiation is a design imperative.



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WIZ BOOTH #2148



SENTINELONE BOOTH #2933



PRIMARY BOOTH #4215



JETSTREAM BOOTH #4075



JETSTREAM EXTERNAL ACTIVATION SPACE



SAFE BOOTH #4422

Derse Booths at BLACK HAT

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02

Design Trends

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Field Notes

GOTTA CATCH ‘EM ALL

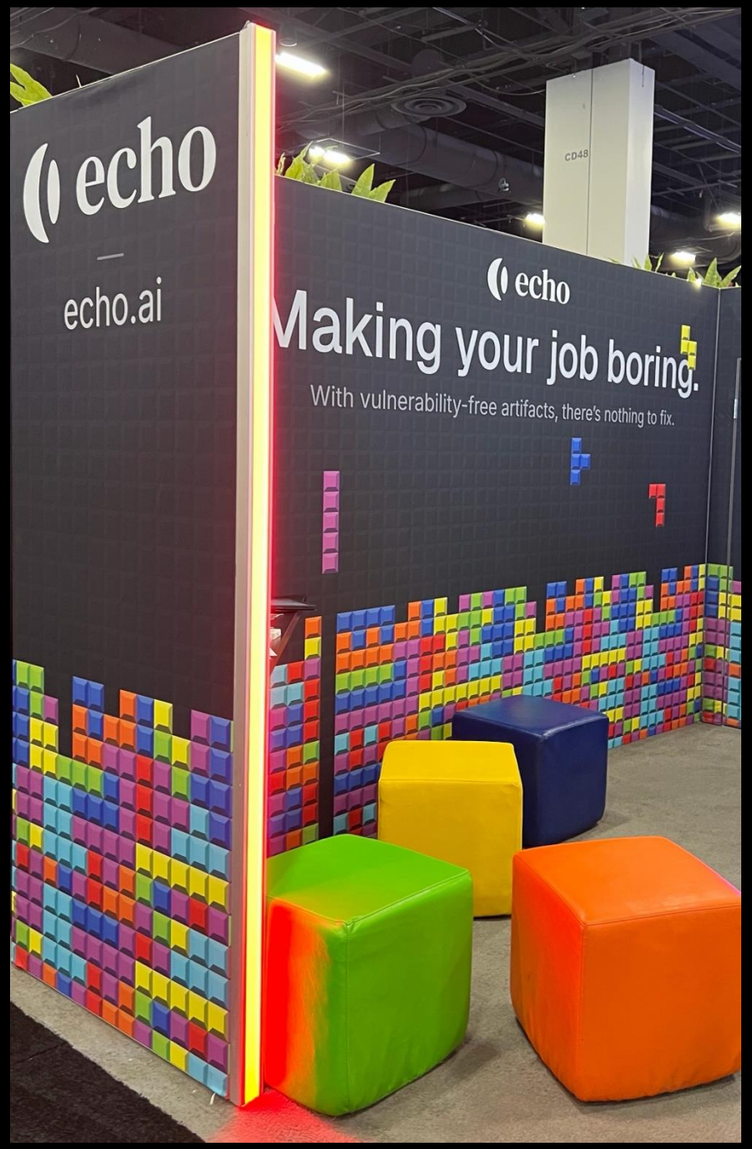
A collection of trends, tactics, and takeaways spotted in the wild across the Black Hat Business Hall.

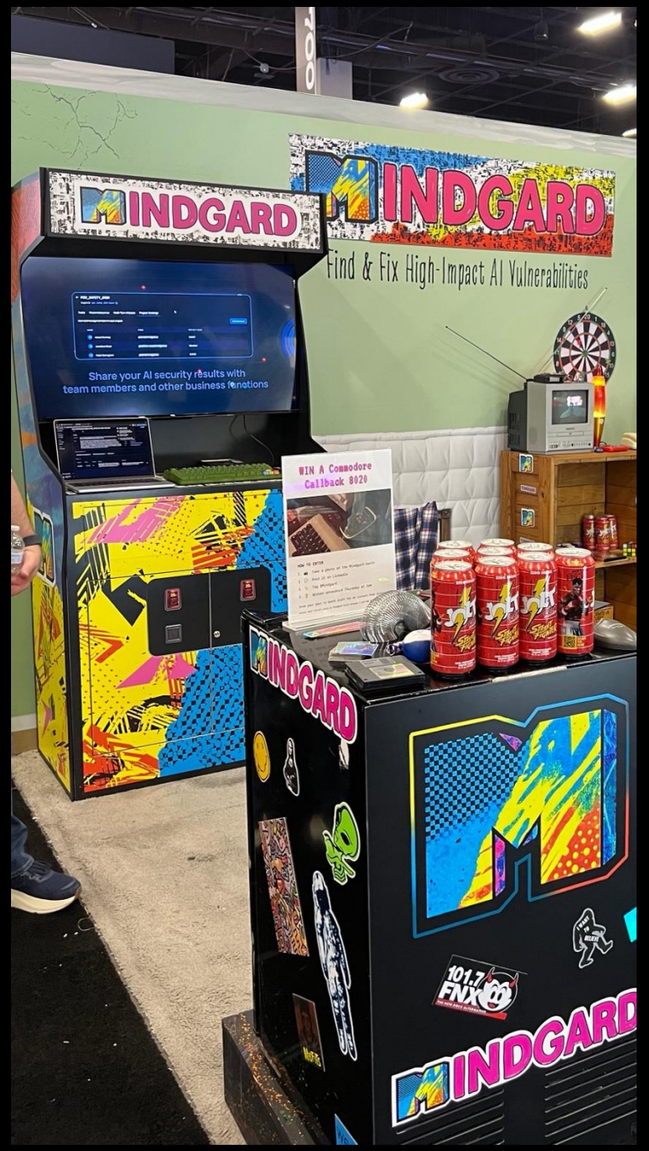


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Trends









Ready Player One

Rebooting the 8-Bit Aesthetic

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Trends







Ready Player One

Continued

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Trends













Green is the New Black

Cybersecurity Gets Wild

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Trends









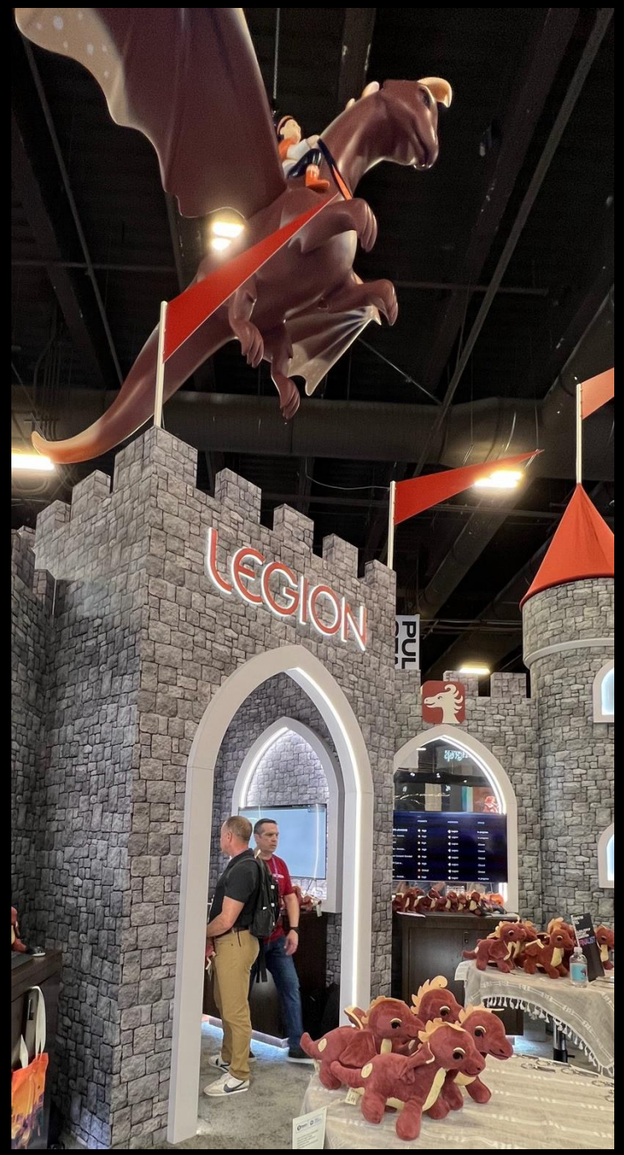
Creature Feature

Mascots Take Over the Show Floor

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Trends











Creature Feature

Continued

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Trends







Robot Uprising

Automation Gets Interactive

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Trends







Robot Uprising

Continued

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Trends







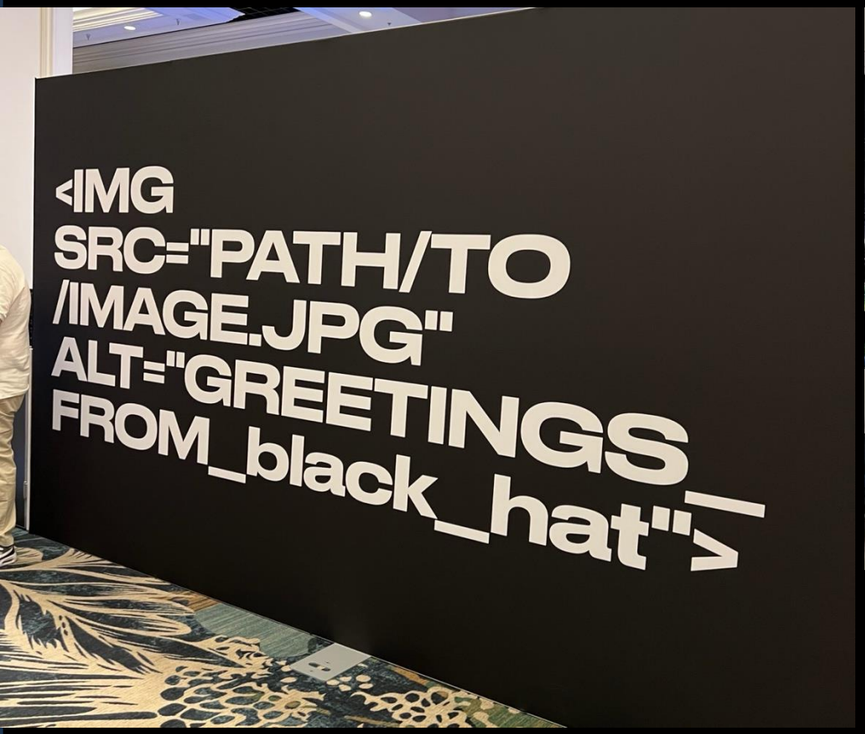


Think Outside the Box

Digital Displays Breaks the Rectangle

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Trends













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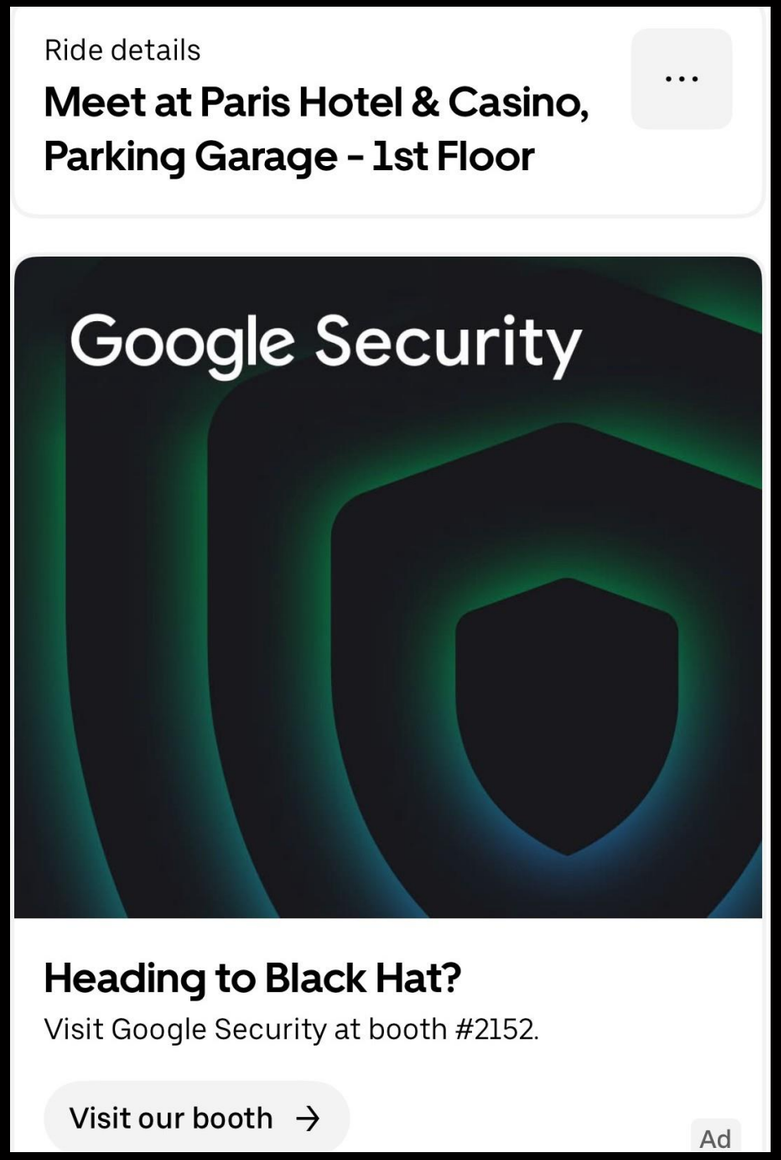
Subversive Messaging with a Wink

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Trends











Surround Sound

Black Hat Marketing is Everywhere

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03

ASO Best of Show

The Standouts of Black Hat 2026

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BRONZE MEDAL



Air Circus of Skills

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What I Loved

A fully realized brand world.
The “Circus of Skills” concept carried cohesively through every layer of the experience, from the giant circus tent canopy that acted as a beacon across the show floor to the smallest graphic details and giveaway strategy.

A journey built into the story.
Rather than a collection of disconnected booth moments, the experience created a clear path through *Meet Your Agent → Skills of Fortune → Marketplace → Merch Pickup,* where engagement touchpoints became part of an intuitive narrative.

Merch with a purpose.
Premium giveaways were thoughtfully integrated into the experience, giving attendees something to discover, earn, and ultimately take away.

(I wanted one of the hats SO bad!)

Beautifully executed.
Everything was bold, polished, and cohesive. Chef’s kiss! Every touchpoint reinforced the same visual language and idea, making the booth feel thoughtfully considered from concept through execution.











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SILVER MEDAL



Zafran Comics

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What I Loved

A real sense of place.
The Zafran booth truly *felt* like a comic book store. Incredible attention to detail and set dressing created an immersive environment filled with easter eggs that rewarded closer exploration. *(As a theater kid, there is nothing I love more than set dressing.)*

Storytelling with serious depth.
Every layer added to the Zafran Comics universe, from displays of rare collectibles and custom merch to a bespoke, full-length comic book created by a real illustrator. The commitment to human craft made the storytelling feel authentic rather than manufactured.

Personalization worth keeping.
The Pokémon card photo booth experience turned attendees into characters within the world. My custom “Ashlyn Firepixel” card became my most prized possession, a perfect example of personalization creating emotional value.

Immersion down to the details.
Nothing felt superfluous or incidental. The environment, artifacts, interactions, and takeaways all reinforced one cohesive story, with masterful world-building executed all the way through.











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GOLD MEDAL



Dropzone AI Diner

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What I Loved

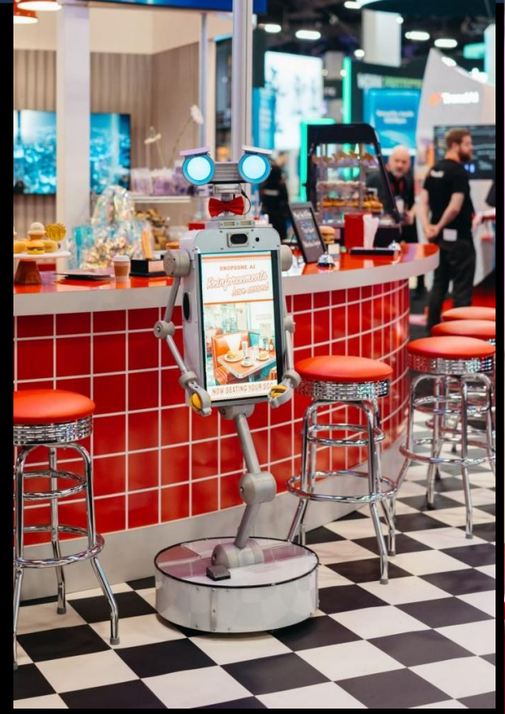
Total commitment to the world.
Every detail reinforced the classic 1950s diner world. From the neon and checkerboard floors to the stools, booths, menus, and staff uniforms, every aspect helped
create an immediately recogni-zable, transportive sense of place.

Form and function became one.
The concept shaped the actual functionality of the booth. Diner booths became semi-private demo spaces, counter seating supported conversation and hospitality, and every functional requirement felt naturally integrated into the environment.

Merch and hospitality that belong.
Diner mugs. Food-shaped stress balls. Churros. Even the takeaways felt native to the world rather than obligatory branded swag, extending the story into what attendees ate, touched, and took home.

A concept with stopping power.
After generating buzz in a smaller footprint at RSAC, the idea scaled into an undeniable Black Hat presence. From the marquee overhead to the tiniest tabletop details, it was cohesive, memorable, and exceptionally well executed.











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HONORABLE MENTION



Frame Deepfake Art Gallery

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What I Loved

A clever medium-message connection.
Lenticular was the perfect technology for a story about deepfakes. Familiar images shifted before your eyes to reveal altered realities, making the medium itself part of the message.

A gallery with a sense of humor.
Frames, picture lights, and painterly overhead graphics convincingly established the gallery setting, while the artworks rewarded a second look with funny, audience-fluent reveals, like an eye-rolling Mona Lisa joining the all-hands call.

The concept carried through every touchpoint.
Even the demo stations incorporated lenticular sheeting, extending the visual idea beyond the artwork and into the product experience.

Storytelling that worked from the aisle.
I could understand the premise, discover the joke, and have a meaningful moment with the brand without ever stepping inside the booth. In a business hall competing relentlessly for attention, that level of immediate legibility is powerful.











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04

Giveaways

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Michael Scott would love Black Hat

Swag is a big thing.

Without repeating the giveaways i’ve mentioned previously, here’s the top 3 most unique swag items i encountered.



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HONORABLE MENTION

Cubot

Primary





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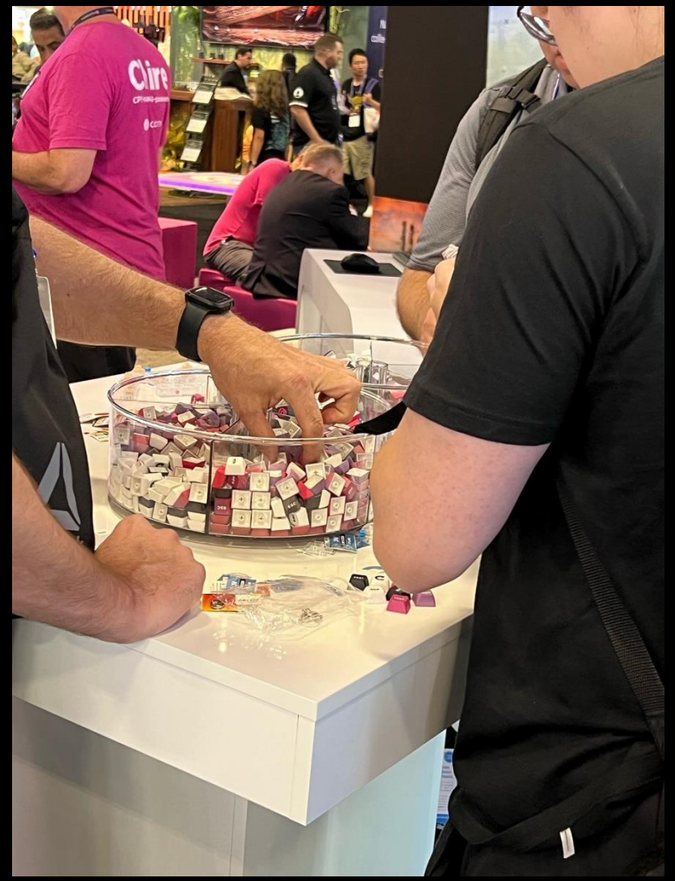
03

Root/OT Keycap Fidget

Claroty







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02

Blind Box Figurines

Ox Security



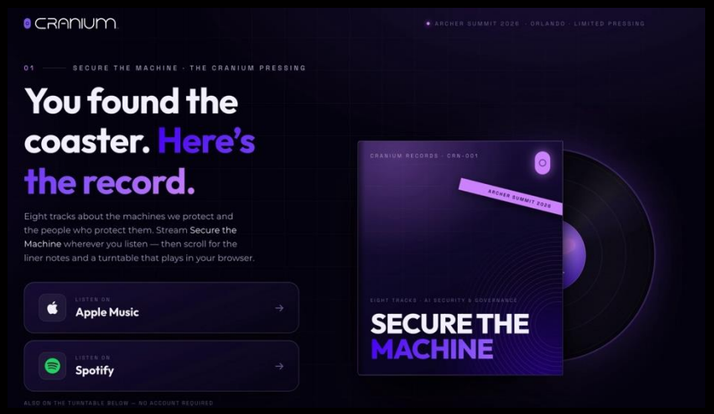


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01

LP Vinyl Records

Cranium AI











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Thank you



for joining me in exploring the
furthest reaches of cyberspace.



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