



BY DANICA TORMOHLEN,  
contributing editor

# 9 Tech Trends to Watch in 2012

In 2011, cloud computing, mobile and tablet technology, geo-location apps, and voice-activated search were all the rage. Expect these technologies to gain more momentum in 2012. And there's already no shortage of new tech products and upgrades with applications for the trade show industry. There are products to enhance attendee ROI, track your exhibitors' spend, extend the reach of your show, and help you make more informed business decisions.

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**WITH ALL THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

available, some questions remain: Which ones will stick? Where should you invest your time and resources? Which technologies are just plain cool and which ones will truly be adopted? *Trade Show Executive* interviewed industry tech suppliers to find out what's hot now and what's next. Here, we cut through the hype and provide you with the key tech trends to consider when planning and budgeting for your tech needs in 2012 and beyond.

## 1 Mobile integration and optimization is key. Let's get started.

it: Laptops and desktops are so last year. Mobile technology is where business and personal use has grown, and it's heading in that direction for the foreseeable future. Most tech executives we interviewed told *Trade Show Executive* that mobile is the single biggest game changer in this industry — and just about every other industry — that we'll see in the coming years.

As the tablet market continues to explode, more and more shows and industry suppliers are moving toward mobile optimized web sites using HTML5 to accommodate these mobile devices.

"Mobile is a trend that we will continue to see for the next few years," said Brian Scott, chief information officer for Experient. "We are going to have to think about the user experience and adopt new standards for how trade shows use mobile. Users have different expectations for what's acceptable on a computer, smartphone and tablet."





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decisions — is giving way to the forward-looking approach of following the data.

And there's plenty of data to follow. According to a recent white paper by IBM, we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day — so much that 90% of the data in the world today has been created in the last two years alone. IDC predicts that the volume of digital content will grow to 2.7 zettabytes (ZB) in 2012, up 48% from 2011.

"It's all about the data," said Scott. "Our customers are looking at data consolidation and management. Interoperability is becoming more and more important, but cost, efficiency and effectiveness are critical challenges. To address these issues, we've built application and data interfaces that talk to each other."

## **2** “Big Data” will drive growth in business intelligence (BI) tools. The *InformationWeek 2012 Business*

*Intelligence, Analytics and Information Management Survey* shows that the old practice of following the money — using lagging financial indicators to guide a company's



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# African Exhibition Industry: Reality, Potential, Access and Needs

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become a highly significant trend over the next five years.

For example, some shows are selling sponsored treasure hunts. Attendees visit exhibitor booths to pick up badges or codes to win prizes. "Shows can do a new product treasure hunt or by product segment," said Jay Tokosch, CEO, Core-Apps. "For some shows, attendees had to watch a product demo to pick up a code or take a marketing poll to get points. Exhibitors typically pay \$3,000 to \$5,000 to participate."

For the 2011 *Metropolitan Cooking & Entertaining Show* in Washington DC, show management collected nearly 7,000 email addresses using SMART-reg International's Text-2-Win Scavenger Hunt. "Attendees had to text their name and email address to participate," said Arnie Roberts, president and CEO, SMART-reg.

**4 Mobile apps will continue to grow.** Last year, just about every industry supplier launched a mobile app component to their suite of products and services. Plus, adoption rates soared in 2011 as usage among exhibitors and attendees continued to grow as they became more comfortable with using apps for both business and entertainment. According to Gartner, there will be more than 70 billion mobile application downloads from app stores every year by 2014.

Mobile apps will be more affordable for more shows with the introduction of do-it-yourself (DIY) solutions, such as GenieMobile.

**5 Attendees are ready for more interactive technology.** In 2012, you'll see more attendee tech solutions that facilitate on-site networking, meetings and activities. "We've seen a big shift in attendee behavior and demographics in the last two years," said Rajiv Jain, president of a2z Inc. "Attendees are asking for more interactive technology so they can better plan and engage with shows."

In the past, matchmaking technology was a complicated and time-consuming process for attendees, which led to low participation rates. "Today's solutions have a user-friendly interface and seamless design that offers a better user experience and increased participation,"



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said Pat Fallon, vice president of business development for CompuSystems, Inc.

In addition, new networking applications, such as PresdoMatch, are making it easier for attendees and exhibitors to participate. "If it's not content rich, people aren't going to use it," said Dave Einzig, CEO, IndustryConnect, whose company works with PresdoMatch. "Automating the process by pulling profiles from LinkedIn, PresdoMatch makes it much easier for show participants."

**6 Increasing bandwidth and demand must be taken into consideration.** While a handful of convention centers are now offering free basic Wi-Fi coverage throughout their facilities, a greater number are moving toward offering free Wi-Fi in concourses and lobby areas but continuing to charge in the exhibit halls and meeting rooms to help defray the costs of increasing tech demands on the system.

"It's not unusual for attendees and exhibitors to have two or three Wi-Fi-enabled devices," said Mark Haley, president, Smart City Networks. "And they're using them for more than just email and surfing the web. They're streaming video and downloading large files. It can overpower the network."

What does that mean for show organizers? "Plan ahead for your show's on-site tech needs," said Haley. "We're trying to educate show managers and users that there are limits to technology. Show managers need to understand the pros and cons of each facility, know the areas in the facility that may need to be augmented, and determine if they have enough access points."

**7 Simplifying the user experience.** Industry tech suppliers are focused on simplifying the user experience for show managers, attendees and exhibitors. With so many tech solutions and features, it can be overwhelming for users. That can lead to low participation and high drop-out rates.

"When attendees participate in virtual events, they don't want to figure out what to do and where to go," said Scott Kellner, chief marketing officer, INXPO. "I think we'll see a trend toward simplifying the front and back end interfaces."

To further simplify the user experience, show managers are asking for single log-in access to make it less confusing for exhibitors and attendees. Industry suppliers, such as GES and IndustryConnect, have launched portal sites that are customized for individual shows with one-stop access for exhibitors and attendees before, during and after the event.

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# What's NEXT

**GPS Mapping for Shows**

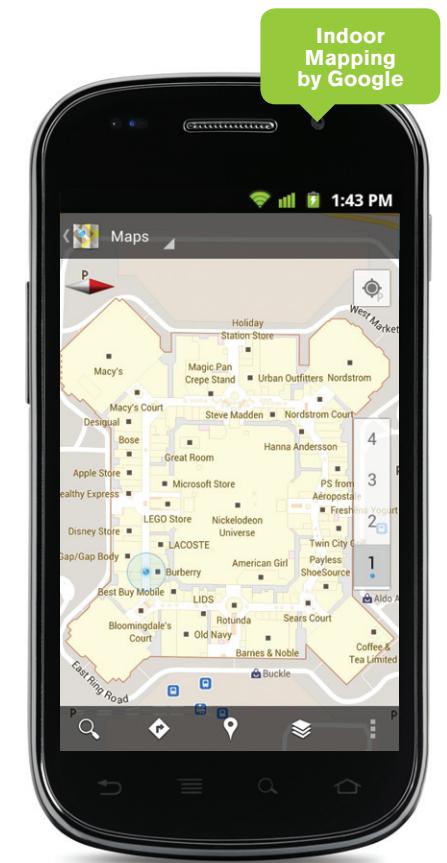
For the first time in the 45-year history of the *World Ag Expo*, nearly all of its 2.6 million gross square feet of space at the International Agri-Center in Tulare, CA, will be mapped using a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). The annual *World Ag Expo*, which will be held Feb. 14-16, is expected to attract 100,000 attendees from 70 countries.

*World Ag Expo* partnered with Topcon Precision Agriculture (TPA), a global positioning technology provider for precision farming, to provide its GNSS survey equipment to map the grounds. The new technology will replace the antiquated method of physically measuring and marking space for more than 1,400 exhibitors. Since *World Ag Expo* began in 1968, the show has been marked by volunteers who spent weekends measuring space by hand.

**The new GNSS technology will replace the antiquated method of physically measuring and marking space.**

GPS mapping will reduce the amount of time and labor required to prepare for the show. With the completion of the project in 2013, all of show's outdoor exhibit space will be precisely marked.

Reach Liza Teixeira at (559) 688-1030 or [Liza@FarmShow.org](mailto:Liza@FarmShow.org)



**“While there are already companies that offer indoor positioning, it can be expensive and not very accurate. With Google jumping in, it will probably become a reality for trade shows sooner rather than later.”**

**Jay Tokosch, CEO, CORE-APPS**

**8 Indoor positioning systems may gain traction.** Foursquare and other location-based apps gained momentum among consumers last year, but typically these services haven't been as useful in the trade show environment because they can't zero in on specific locations within a building, such as a booth or meeting room.

But that could change soon. Late last year, the new Google Maps 6.0 version introduced a key new feature — indoor mapping, which is currently only available on Android smartphones. With this version, users can easily locate themselves and find places indoors such as restaurants, restrooms and stores. Google already offers maps for 18 major airports, including Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta, Chicago's O'Hare International and the San Francisco International Airport.

"We are already in talks with Google," said Tokosch. While there are already companies that offer indoor positioning, it can be expensive and not very accurate. With Google jumping in, it will probably become a reality for trade shows sooner rather than later, said Tokosch.

Reach Brian Scott at (240) 439-2290 or [brian.scott@experient-inc.com](mailto:brian.scott@experient-inc.com); Jay Tokosch at (410) 974-0505 or [jay@core-apps.com](mailto:jay@core-apps.com); Pat Fallon at (708) 486-0781 or [pat.fallon@compusystems.com](mailto:pat.fallon@compusystems.com); Rajiv Jain at (443) 393-2430 or [rjain@a2zinc.net](mailto:rjain@a2zinc.net); Steve Gebhart at (702) 263-2705 or [SGebhart@ges.com](mailto:SGebhart@ges.com); Mark Haley at (702) 943-6010 or [mhaley@smartcity.com](mailto:mhaley@smartcity.com); Scott Kellner (312) 962-4878 or [skellner@INXPO.com](mailto:skellner@INXPO.com); Dave Einzig at 800.288.1440 ext. 702 or [dave@industryconnect.com](mailto:dave@industryconnect.com); Terry Mullin at (714) 389-5378 or [tmullin@viridistor.com](mailto:tmullin@viridistor.com); Alan Blank at (650) 319-7233 or [ablank@guidebook.com](mailto:ablank@guidebook.com); Arnie Roberts at (650) 565-9200 or [arnie@smart-reg.com](mailto:arnie@smart-reg.com)

## Product Roundup

BY DANICA TORMOHLLEN, contributing editor, and HIL ANDERSON, senior editor

**HERE'S A SAMPLING OF PRODUCTS** and services that address the top tech trends for the trade show industry in 2012.

In December, **a2z** launched the **Chirp attendee acquisition widget**, a plug-and-play component that enables exhibitors to promote their participation at your event from their own web sites. Attendees can register for your event and add the exhibitor to their personalized expo plan without leaving the exhibitor's website. *Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo* (AAPEX) has already signed on to use this tool for its show later this year.

"When we asked our customers, they said 50% to 60% of attendees were brought in by their exhibitors," said Jain. "Show organizers were asking for a tool that leverages exhibitors to increase attendance."

In December, **CompuSystems Inc.** launched **ConnectME Advantage**, which provides automated functionality that matches attendees to exhibitors during the registration process based on demographic information. All of the attendee's registration data, appointments and show agenda are synced in real-time and viewable on their registration dashboard, ConnectMe mobile app and on their personal calendars.

ConnectME, which includes a mobile app for attendees to view on their smartphones and tablets, features appointment-scheduling functionality. "We have built an eco-system around our dashboard technologies," said Fallon. "The registration dashboards for both attendee and exhibitor are fully integrated and communicate to the attendee and exhibitor apps in real time."

In December, **Core-Apps** introduced an **Exhibitor Module** and **Member Direct**, an association app. The exhibitor module includes lead capture that al-

**Expresso by Global Experience Specialists**

**Mobile for All.** Most industry suppliers introduced new mobile apps to enhance the exhibitor and attendee experience in 2011. For example, CompuSystems introduced an integrated solution for attendees while GES launched an online exhibit planning, ordering and management tool.

Expect more of the same in 2012.

Customer demographics to develop targeted lists for direct marketing," said Scott.

The annual licensing fee is \$20,000 for Experient customers and \$30,000 for others, with an initial set-up fee of \$10,000 to input the data and configure the system. Since the product was launched in December, several customers, including the *National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)* Show, *Solar Power International*, and *ad:tech*, are going live in February.

Last Fall, **GES** launched **Expresso**, an online exhibit planning, ordering and management tool. Since then, 500 shows have used the system. "It's a portal site with a single log-in for exhibitors pre-show, at-show and post-show," said

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Gebhart. "Exhibitors can place all orders online, print shipping labels, check package status, and download key deadlines to their Outlook or iCal calendars."

"We are trending at about 30% for exhibitor usage," said Gebhart. "Some shows are as high as 70% to 80%. We saw a dramatic increase from 2010 to 2011." GES has launched an awareness campaign to educate exhibitors on how to use the tool.

**“Technology is only as good as the amount of awareness and participation it receives, so with all of the great tools available today, it is more important than ever to aggregate them in to one seamless and easy to promote access point.”**

Dave Einzig, CEO, INDUSTRYCONNECT



**Guidebook** aims to lower the barrier of entry for trade shows and events that want to offer a mobile app but don't have a large budget or a staff of web developers. Guidebook creates guides to shows that include schedules, maps, exhibitor lists, social media, and more features. The guides are hosted on Guidebook's dedicated app. Because of this platform approach to development, Guidebook can offer its solution for anywhere from free to \$5,000, said Jeff Lewis, Guidebook's CEO.

The look and feel of Guidebook is the same as an app created specifically for a show, but because Guidebook's app is already listed on the Apple and Android app stores, it only takes two days to create and post a guide. In its first year, Guidebook created guides for more than 1,000 shows.

**IndustryConnect** offers the **Trade Show Digital Media Suite**, a program that creates a single user experience for the various online and mobile tools for trade show participants. "Technology is only as good as the amount of awareness and participation it receives, so with all of the great tools available today, it is more important than ever to aggregate

them in to one seamless and easy to promote access point," said Einzig.

One of the first deployments will be for the **WINDPOWER 2012** event. On one online splash screen interface, the program highlights the show's social media, exhibitor directory, networking environment, session and event planner, social media invites and newsreader.

In December, **INXPO** deployed **VX Platform 10.4**, the latest release of its online events platform. The upgrade includes new features for social networking, mobile access, language localization and third-party integrations. "The key component is an updated webcasting platform," said Kellner. "The event organizer can easily stream live content and support live discussion with this platform." These capabilities are also available on mobile devices.

Founded by a team from LinkedIn, **Presdo** offers **Presdo Match**, an event social networking application, **Presdo.com**, a social scheduling application. Presdo Match provides trade shows with an invitation-only social network for attendees, exhibitors and sponsors so they can find each other based on matching interests, as well as communicate and coordinate face-to-face meetings at the event. Rich profiles are merged from LinkedIn and event registration information.

A number of shows – including **Solar Power International**, **WIND POWER**, **InfoComm International**, **Hanley Wood's World of Concrete**, and the **Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE)** – have recently signed on to use the product in 2012.

**Smart City** recently introduced **tiered Wi-Fi service pricing** as an option at more than 35 convention centers nationally. "We offer free basic Wi-Fi coverage in public spaces such as lobby areas so guests can check email or surf the web. However, we do not recommend using it to perform critical business functions," said Haley. "You can upgrade for \$12 per

day, and exhibitors pay a flat rate of \$99 per day in the exhibit halls."

In addition, **Smart City** offers **EventPath**, an integrated convention district network in Orlando, FL, between a convention center and participating hotels. The 2011 *Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference (I/ITSEC)* used EventPath to provide attendees with remote registration at three nearby hotels. About 1,000 attendees checked-in remotely via kiosks conveniently located at the Peabody Orlando, the Hilton Orlando and the Rosen Center Hotel.

**ViridiSTOR** offers the **Green Box Solution**, which allows exhibitors to upload their sales materials into the USB device that is issued to each attendee when they pick up their name badge. When the attendee stops at a particular booth, the



USB is inserted into a port in the exhibitor's designated Green Box and the digital information is instantly transferred from the Green Box to the flash drive.

ViridiSTOR touts the Green Box as an obvious boost to a show's sustainability credentials but show managers will also be able to sell Green Box as something that will reduce exhibitors' shipping and drayage costs and a high-profile sponsorship opportunity. **TSE**

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