TECH TRENDS TO WATCH

BY DANICA TORMOHLEN,
editor-at-large

There's no denying that mobile continues to dominate tech innovations in the trade show industry. Just about every new product introduced in recent months has a mobile component. Today's show organizers, exhibitors and attendees want access to everything, everywhere.

Beyond mobile, show organizers are looking for solutions to help them engage exhibitors and attendees before, during and after the trade show. Industry suppliers are responding with a variety of new products and services from content syndication to e-commerce platforms.

What's trending in 2014? *Trade Show Executive* interviewed industry tech suppliers to find out. Here, we present our annual review of tech trends to watch and a roundup of the latest solutions to help organizers, attendees and exhibitors maximize their show experience.

WHAT IS TRENDING:

Suffering from Data Anxiety?

01 Focus on Ease of Use

Tech suppliers are enhancing the functionality of current offerings and rolling out new tools that are more intuitive and integrated across platforms. As major brands in our consumer lives continue to raise the bar, exhibitors and attendees expect the same seamless experience in their business lives. In 2013, most industry suppliers implemented single sign-on access to systems across all platforms.

"The No. 1 feature on most web sites is the back button," said Steve Gebhart, vice president, digital product development and client solutions, Global Experience Specialists (GES). "Ease of use is key part of GES's ongoing tech initiatives. We are looking at where users spend time and what they are coming there for. Even simple navigation changes can have a big impact on ease of use."

02 Automation, Automation, Automation

In 2014, shows will be able to take advantage of new tools that automate everything from marketing to content. New tech products can sift through vast amounts of data and turn it into usable applications for exhibitors and attendees. New-to-market companies, such as InGo, are rolling out products to capture qualified buyers through social networks.

For Hanley Wood's *Greenbuild,* about 1,000 attendees posted that they were attending the event on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. "That generated more than 450,000 social media impressions," said Michael Barnett, CEO, InGo. With one click,

users could also send email invitations to their social networks. On average, each social registrant sent 2.5 personal invitations for a total of 2,695, which generated about 80 new attendees.

Other companies are offering content automation products to extend the life of the event beyond the show days. In September, ExpoBee announced that *productronica,* a biennial international trade fair owned by Messe Munich, will be using its Industry Tracker. The service gives the show's 38,000 attendees the ability to remain engaged on a year-round basis via a personalized newsfeed each subscriber creates with content from any of the 1,200 exhibiting companies and 30 show categories.

03 Convergence of Technologies at Events

"The physical and digital worlds are converging," said Gebhart. A number of consumer brands are already capitalizing on this trend, and applications for the trade show industry may gain ground in 2014.

For example, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts introduced the MagicBand in 2013. Worn on the wrist, the MagicBand serves as a guest's room key, theme park ticket, access to FastPass+ selections, PhotoPass card and optional payment account all rolled into one. The MagicBand is integrated with MyMagic+, a web site and mobile app that allows guests to personalize their Disney experience.

"The sensors in the band cost less than $1," said Gebhart. "There are already sensors in phones that we can take advantage of. We are looking at how can we use

technologies like this to improve traffic flow, drive meaningful connections and enhance the experience at trade shows."

04 Increasing Bandwidth & Enhanced Networks

As the number of devices that exhibitor and attendees bring on site continues grow, convention centers continue to play catch-up. "The amount of bandwidth is growing exponentially — doubling every year," said Mark Haley, president, Smart City Networks. "When it comes to bandwidth, density is the key. There should be no more than 40 users for each access point."

In response, convention centers across the country are investing in infrastructure and networks upgrades. "When we

started at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando eight years ago, there were 145 access points," said Haley. "Now there are more than 1,000."

CJ5 Generating New Revenue Through Digital

Show organizers are finally generating a decent amount of new revenue from digital offerings. And industry suppliers continue to add new opportunities for sponsorships. For example, Digitell offers Syndicast, a product that can capture video conference content and stream it to multiple web sites. "We worked with *Practice Greenhealth* to produce a live stream feed from the conference to exhibiting sponsors' web sites," said Jim Parker, president, Digitell. *Practice Greenhealth* sold out eight sponsorship packages, which included Syndicast, for $25,000 each.

Other companies are making it easier to sell online sponsorships in real-time. For example, a2z Inc. has launched a product that will process sponsorship contracts and transaction online in real time. The software can be used to set up physical and non-physical assets. GES Interactive and Freeman's PLANTOUR allow exhibitors to view on-site sponsorship opportunities at most of the major U.S. convention centers and get the specs to create them.

Still others are hoping to help show organizers capitalize on the holy grail: e-commerce. In July, Balluun announced it will power Advanstar's Shop the Floor, an online marketplace with e-commerce tools for exhibitors and attendees at *MAGIC*. "We will be adding more Advanstar shows in 2014," said Peter Koch, CEO of Balluun.

CJ6 Location-Based Services in Convention Centers are Becoming a Reality

Trade show organizers have been asking for affordable location-based services for several years, and some suppliers are now offering it. The current infrastructure in most convention centers does not allow for close-range tracking, but private networks and venue tech upgrades, such as those in the works at the Las Vegas Convention Center, are making it possible.

WHAT IS NEW:

Here's a sampling of new technology products that have been introduced in recent months.

Freeman

In November, Freeman introduced enhancements to **PLANTOUR,** its web-based tool designed to simplify the event planning process and enhance the marketing of on-site sponsorship opportunities. PLANTOUR includes a new, responsive web design that improves the visual experience on all devices including tablets, PCs and smart phones, allowing users to identify and showcase sponsorship opportunities to potential customers anywhere, any time. The new enhancements allow show organizers to design and configure sponsorship opportunities including type, locations, price and availability, in real time. Freeman currently showcases more than 65 hotel and conference center venues throughout the U.S., and has the potential to double the number of venues in 2014, said William Collins, vice president of product development, Freeman. The new tool is part of the Freeman Technology Suite, which is free to Freeman customers. Contact William Collins at (214) 445-1000 or William.collins@freemanco.com

Experient

In December, Experient, a Maritz Travel Company, announced the launch of **social media insight study services.** Experient will collect, isolate and analyze social media conversations so show organizers can better understand attendees and their show experience through analysis of themes. The service will allow show organizers to identify attendee pain points and needs and respond in real-time. In addition, shows will be able to pinpoint detractors and influencers to attract and boost attendee registration and retention. "We can translate social conversations into strategic and competitive insights that will distinguish your trade show from the competition," said Steve Werntz, director, strategic accounts. "Shows will be able to make informed business decisions based on experiential data, not just intuition and web analytics." Reach Steve at (847) 996-5540 or steve.werntz@experient-inc.com

Ungerboeck Software Intl.

In February, USI is launching **Event Showcase,** an interactive event guide that's available across all devices — PC, tablet or smartphone. It uses responsive design technology and features enhanced functionality, including predictive matchmaking, interactive floor plans, and sponsorship and advertising sales. This tool allows organizers to handle their show's content in a single system. Exhibitors, floor plans, agendas, documents and social media feeds are accessible to attendees, presenters, and exhibitors across all platforms.

Show organizers can make updates and blast out announcements on their own. Analysis tools provide data to sales teams for upsell opportunities. Exhibitors can display products, market to attendees, upload videos and documents, and interact through social media. Before a show, attendees can access Event Showcase on their computers or tablets to view exhibitor content, choose sessions, set appointments, plan their agenda, review documents, and participate in social media activity. Attendees receive instant updates across all devices. Pricing is based on a flat rate per features licensed. Entry level starts at $4,500 per event, said Rob Hamlin, director of exhibition solutions, Ungerboeck Software International. Reach Rob Hamlin at (703) 256-2248 or Rob.Hamlin@ungerboeck.com
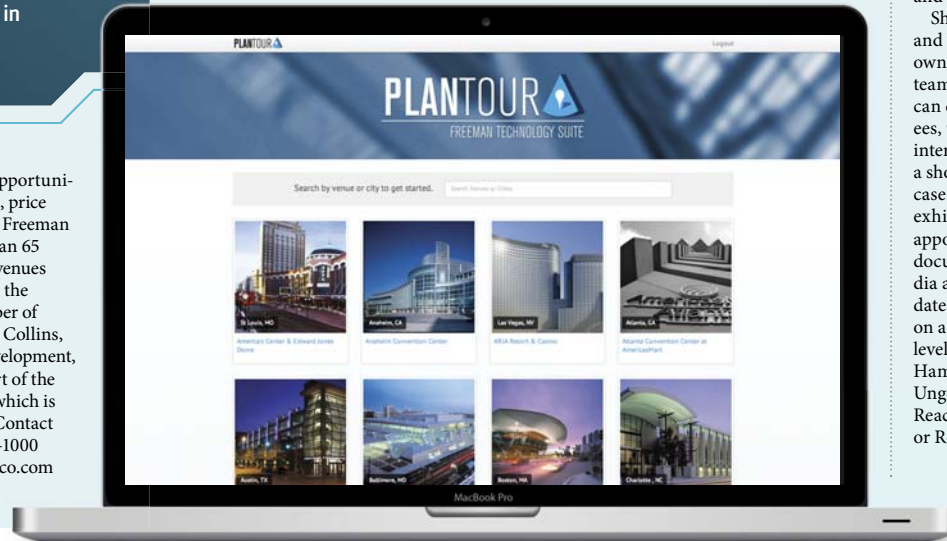
For example, Core-Apps deployed indoor location services and floor analytics at *International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition (ICUEE)* in October. Show organizers can view a heat map showing traffic on the show floor, based on time intervals. That information can be shared with exhibitors to aide in the sales discussions.

Using Technology to be More Responsive to your Audience

As social media usage continues to soar, some companies are looking to help shows engage and respond to their social media communities. For example, Experient launched social media insight study services in December. Major corporate brands, such as Ford and BMW, have already been using this technology developed by Maritz, its parent company, to gain insight into social conversations and make informed business decisions. These companies spend a significant sum of money to have this data gathered and analyzed, which would be cost-prohibitive for most shows. "It's new to our industry, but we've working with corporate clients on this for 10 years, said Steve Werntz, director, strategic accounts, Experient.

"For a test show with 20,000 attendees in October, we found that 36 authors had a social media reach of 6.5 million, primarily on Twitter," said Werntz. "What if you offered those 36 authors VIP access on site. Would it be worth the budget to reach these influencers?" Experient analyzed 46,000 social media mentions, which were grouped into 254 themes like programs, special events, brands, products, people, speakers, venues — to name a few.

Reach Mark Haley at (702) 943-6000 or MHaley@smartcity.com; Steve Gebhart at (702) 515-5949 or SGebhart@ges.com; Jay Tokosch at (410) 974-0505 or jay@core-apps; Steve Werntz at (847) 996-5540 or steve.werntz@experient-inc.com; Motti Kleinmann at at +972 54 4468103 or mottik@expobee.com; Peter Koch at (650) 576-3727 or peterk@balluun.com; Jim at (800) 679-3646 or jparker@digitellinc.com

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CompuSystems

CompuSystems, Inc. has rolled out several upgrades and new features in recent months. CSI launched Connect**ME,** a content management system for exhibitors in 2012, and the company integrated that content across all platforms in 2013. Connect**ME** offers exhibitors the ability to purchase enhancement packages to increase their online presence.

CSI has added new functionality to Event IQ, the company's data mining and campaign management tool for show organizers. Users can send their e-mail blasts and marketing campaigns directly from EventIQ. The prospect list upload functionality was also updated. CSI also rolled out the Qualification Manager, which allows show organizers to manage the registration qualification process electronically. The program contains searching, sorting and qualifying capabilities, along with the ability to view documents that were uploaded electronically by a registrant. CSI also added a new Exhibitor Widget that offers exhibitors a free and easy way to promote their booth, as well as show attendance, on their web site. Matching the look and feel of the show web site, an online banner displays the exhibitor's name and booth number and allows customers and prospects single-click access to the event's registration page. Reach Chris Williams at (708) 486-0780 or chris.williams@csireg.com

Convention Data Services

In December, CDS introduced a new feature to its X•Press Registration. Attendees can use the Apple Passbook app on their iPhone or iPod Touch to check in and register. CDS sends an e-mail registration confirmation to attendees who can add it to their Passbook by tapping or clicking on it. On site, attendees can scan the pass on their device to quickly and efficiently check-in and print their badges. The pass includes time and location information, and a reminder can appear on the device based on the show's start date. CDS plans to expand the program to include ticketed events and sessions. CDS rolled out the new feature at the *American Society for Cell Biology ASCB Annual Meeting*, which was held December 14-18 in New Orleans. The company will offer the product to all clients beginning in February. There's a nominal cost, which is based on the total registration package. Reach David Lawton at (508) 743-0155 or dlawton@cdsreg.com

Global Experience Specialists (GES)

In December, GES introduced new features for Expresso, the company's online management tool for exhibitors. Enhancements include event sponsorship opportunities, quotes for custom graphics and logistics, hotel reservations and freight notifications. Using a single sign on, exhibitors will access everything they need in one place and with one password. "We've designed Expresso to be quick and simple, like popular e-commerce websites, so our exhibitors have a hassle-free online experience," said Steve Gebhart, vice president, digital product development and client solutions, GES.

GES also rolled out new enhancements for GES Connect, the company's integrated, online planning tool for event organizers. Now with improved navigation, organizers can review and approve work orders, graphics and designs transfer orders from one show to the next; and set up customized sponsorship opportunities through the virtual venue tool. Sponsorship opportunities are automatically synced with Expresso.

In the First Quarter of 2014, GES is rolling out an exhibitor mobile app that will be integrated with Expresso. "On site, exhibitors will be able to request service, order last-minute items and complete an expedited checkout using the mobile app," said Gebhart. Reach Steve Gebhart at (702) 515-5949 or SGebhart@ges.com or steve.werntz@experient-inc.com
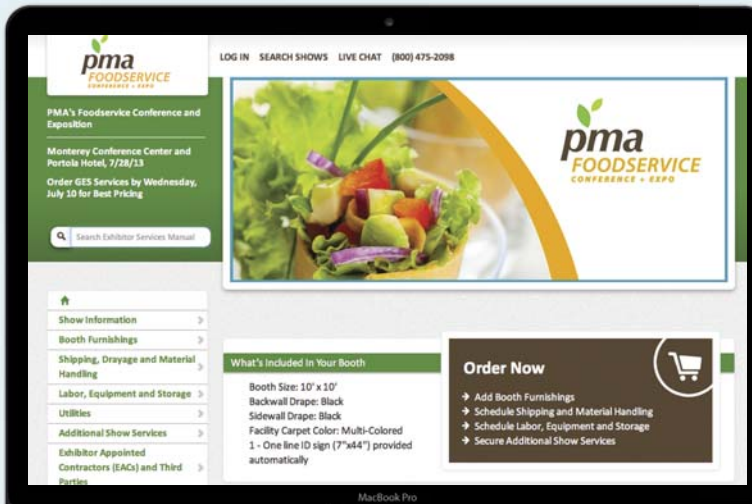
Core-apps

In December, Core-apps introduced indoor location services and floor analytics. This technology can provide event organizers with the ability to monitor and capture floor traffic, booth traffic, and provide indoor GPS on the mobile app's interactive floor map (showing a blue dot where the user is located). Show organizers can measure traffic on time-frame intervals, by booth, by show section and more. "It hasn't really been possible previously," said Jay Tokosch, CEO, Core-apps. "By setting up our own private network, we can now show you when someone is standing in front of a 10'x10' booth. It used to be 40 feet."

The cost is $10,000 to $12,000 per 100,000 nsf, which includes floor analytics and indoor location services in the app. "It is significantly less than RFID," said Tokosch. The service can track all attendees who have a smartphone that's turned on, even if they don't have the app downloaded to their phones. There are sponsorship offerings such as pop-up messages that invite a user into the booth. Reach Jay Tokosch at (410) 974-0505 or jay@core-apps

WHAT IS NEW:

a2z, Inc.

In November, a2z launched **ChirpE 365,** a native mobile app to extend the show's brand by engaging audiences year-round. ChirpE 365 is designed to facilitate the syndication of an organizer's complete suite of content. Supported on mobile devices powered by iOS and Android, ChirpE 365 also incorporates social media channels. "The fundamental difference between ChirpE 365 and other apps is that you don't have to start from scratch each year," said Rajiv Jain, CEO, a2z. The product includes analytics and metrics. The annual product license fee is $5,000, with a revenue share option.

a2z also launched the **ChirpE Mega Kiosk,** a large format wayfinding kiosk. "It's like a large iPad," said Jain. "Most users are accustomed to using iPads and iPhones, so it's easy to use." It's available in sizes of 40-inch, 55-inch and 70-inch. In November, a2z tested the product at the *IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) Attractions Expo* in Orlando, where the kiosks were placed at both main entrances. The kiosks feature interactive floor plans, product searches, show specials, sessions, room mapping, video and sponsorship components. Packs of four cost $25,000, with a revenue share opportunity. Reach Rajiv at (443) 393-2430 or rjain@a2zinc.net
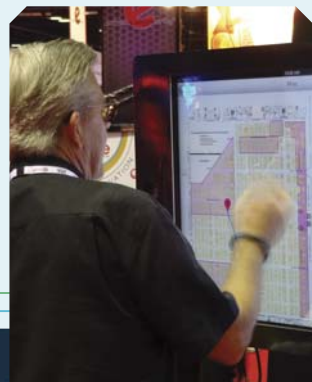
Balluun

In 2013, Balluun launched an **e-commerce platform** that facilitates commerce for attendees and exhibitors. Users conduct transactions from wireless-enabled devices, and the platform facilitates all sales digitally.

Last July, Advanstar announced it was partnering with Balluun to power its "Shop The Floor" offering for *MAGIC*. In October, the Toy Industry Association (TIA) announced it would use Balluun's technology to expand the value and impact of participation in the *American International Toy Fair*.

"Our technology will make it possible for exhibitors and attendees to better discover new brands and products, automate, connect and enhance their businesses to drive more sales efficiency and day-to-day business anywhere and anytime," said Peter Koch, CEO, Balluun. Show organizers pay a licensing fee and share in the transaction revenue generated. Reach Peter at (650) 576-3727 or peterk@balluun.com

Digitell

Digitell offers **live streaming** of conference content and **lead-gen programs** for exhibitors. "We've found that 86% of online attendees have never been to an event," said Jim Parker, president, Digitell. The company has streamed keynotes and education sessions for *Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) Scientific Assembly & Annual Meeting* for the last three years. In addition to the 20,000 conference attendees at the 2012 show, 6,900 physicians viewed the live stream online, and 29,000 CMEs were credited. The cost ranges from $15,000 to $25,000.

The *Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses (WOCN) Society Annual Conference* recorded all content and offered access online as part of registration. WOCN sold an exclusive sponsorship for the online content, and attendees had to visit the sponsor's booth to get a passcode. The sponsor asked qualifying questions before giving out the code, and 92% of attendees visited the sponsor's booth. Reach Jim Parker at (800) 679-3646 or jparker@digitellinc.com

InGo

Last Spring, InGo launched a **social marketing and analytics platform.** In recent months, several major show organizers — including GLM, Clarion, Hanley Wood and Emerald Expositions — announced they are using the platform. When attendees register for the event, they can send e-mail invites to relevant contacts in their LinkedIn network. InGo's platform uses key words to pull a list of relevant contacts who might be potential attendees. "In milliseconds, we can put the right names in front of attendees," said Michael Barnett, CEO, InGo. "Attendees won't take the time to look through their contacts to invite colleagues on their own." With one click, attendees can send e-mail invitations to their network.

"Users are sending an average of three invitations," said Barnett. "One of 20 invitations converts to a registered attendee." The new "Who's In" feature allows potential attendees and exhibitors to see who is coming to your event and to see who's in from their own social networks. Emerald Expositions is offering weekly prizes to users who get the most attendees. The cost is based per user. The average cost is about $5 per user, said Barnett. Reach Michael Barnett at (347) 422-7638 or mb@ingo.me

N200 Visit Connect

In October, Amsterdam RAI announced it would deploy N200's **Visit Connect** as a standard feature at all exhibitions organized by the venue. Visit Connect is a lead-generation software tool that gives exhibitors an easier way to attain and qualify sales leads and integrate data with their CRM systems. Exhibitors simply use smartphones to scan badges and qualify prospects.

RAI Exhibitions rolled out the product at *Safety & Security Amsterdam (SSA)* exhibition. "Our goal was to get 80% of exhibitors to use it, and 86% used it the first time," said Ids Boersma, managing director of RAI Exhibitions. Exhibitors collected an average 72 leads per exhibitor, for a total of 10,000 leads, said Boersma. RAI offers the first license to exhibitors for free and charges an additional fee per license. Show organizers can share in the revenue for additional license purchases. N200 is one of the largest registration and suppliers in Europe, with clients such as Reed, VNU Exhibitions, Clarion. Reach Ids at +31 (0)20 549 1212 or i.boersma@rai.nl

ExpoBee

Last year, ExpoBee launched **Industry Tracker,** which offers personalized newsfeeds for event communities. Users select specific topics and exhibiting companies to track, and the system automatically pulls the latest news from the sources into a dedicated, branded Web site, as well as the capability to send that content via weekly, bi-weekly or monthly e-newsletters. Show organizers place the news widget on their home page, which is fully show branded with custom banners for the web and e-news. Subscribers and users can see personal and archived industry news, as well as conduct searches.

There is a set-up fee of $20 per exhibitor for the first year, and $10 per exhibitor for following years. The "freemium" model allows exhibitors to upgrade to a premium membership for $95 per month, with a 15% discount for the annual membership. Premium membership allows exhibitors view attendees who are tracking their company, higher priority ranking for their news, and analytics on click-throughs, stories featured and read, and performance compared with companies in the same category and the overall vendor community. Shows get a revenue share for upgrades. Reach Kleinmann at +972 54 4468103 or mottik@expobee.com or Rick Dobson at (703) 546-0575 or rick@expobee.com. TSE