Next Gen Registration

What You Need to Know About Registration & Lead-Retrieval for 2016

BY DANICA TORMOHLEN, editor-at-large
TECHNOLOGY changes but the art of connecting remains

CDS has developed the most sophisticated suite of acquisition and engagement tools that deliver on our fundamental commitment of connecting people and driving events.

Stop by Booth 432 at Expo! Expo! to discover CDS’ unique event solutions and ask about our new game-changing registration platform which launches sites in half the time with live updates.

Connecting People. Driving Events.
Over the last two years, beacon and I-beacon technology has made it possible for shows to gain some insight into traffic flow for the event overall, but neither technology offers specific information about attendees and their demographics.

“We have researched near field communication (NFC) and beacons, but they are too cost prohibitive for a large show,” said Jim Pittas, senior vice president for PMMI, which produces PACK EXPO International/Pharma EXPO, which ranked No. 4 on last year’s Trade Show Executive Gold 100. “Using the smart phone as an identifier is obvious but only useful for us if we can identify whose phone it is and the accompanying registration information to that specific phone.”

Will there be a day in the not-so-distant future where shows can track every attendee to see where they are going and how long they are staying?

2014 was dubbed by some as “Year of the Wearable,” but the market really took off in 2015 with rollout of the Apple Watch, which began shipping in April. The International Data Corporation (IDC) estimates that 3.6 million Apple Watches sold in the Second Quarter of 2015, behind the market leader, Fitbit, which sold 4.4 million units during the same time period.

One of the key features of wearable technology is its ability to connect to the Internet, enabling data to be exchanged between a network and the device. The global wearables market is expected to reach a value of $12.6 billion by 2018, more than 10 times its value five years prior, according to Statista.

Wearable technology will soon hit the trade show industry when Experient rolls out eventBit, a wearable Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) transmitter that adheres to an attendee badge, at the International Association of Exhibitions & Events (IAEE) in December.

“A couple of major shows have already signed on to use the technology in 2016,” said Mike Godsey, senior vice president, market development, Experient. “We can track not only the volume but also the specific attendee. Show organizers will have access to the actual behaviors of each attendee. Imagine what that can do for exhibit sales. We can give them 100% coverage throughout the event. That has real revenue possibilities.”

Wearable technology may or may not be the wave of the future in the exhibition industry, but there’s no denying that new technologies like this could offer shows hard data into how customers are interacting with events in real time.

This feature article offers a glimpse into what’s on the horizon for registration and lead retrieval in 2016. What’s working now and what’s hot in 2015? Trade Show Executive talked to leading show organizers, as well as registration experts, to get some insight on the latest techniques and technologies that are trending.

Data Dilemma

As a show organizer, your most valuable asset is your database. How do you protect and control the integrity of your registration data? For Josiah Taulbee, registration director, UBM Advanstar, the answer was bringing some of the registration process in-house.

Last year, his team created a registration platform that works within Salesforce, the customer relationship management (CRM) solution that the company uses. In 2015, Taulbee rolled out the platform for a number of major trade shows, including MAGIC-August and MAGIC-February, which ranked No. 7 and 8 respectively on the latest Trade Show Executive Gold 100, as well as Licensing Expo, which ranked No. 90 on the Gold 100. Taulbee points out that this platform is currently only used by the former Advanstar shows, not across UBM’s event portfolio.

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“We used a Salesforce solution to create a registration environment internally so the data can be managed within,” said Taulbee. “The data never leaves the system. It is only passed to the registration vendor at the time of the transaction when the badge is ready for printing.” The shows still work with a vendor to provide equipment and lead-retrieval, he said.

While most shows probably aren’t looking to develop registration platforms in-house, this approach exemplifies just far show organizers are willing to go to protect this valuable asset.

"The good news: Today’s show organizers have access to more data about their customers than ever before. The bad news: The data may not be in a usable format that’s easy to respond and react to. As shows and organizations collect more and more data, this balancing act will only get more complex. “Clients are looking for ways for all vendors to help them make decisions using data,” said Chris Williams, president, CompuSystems. “The trade show industry is behind other industries when it comes to using big data. We believe business intelligence and data analytics tools will play a huge role in next five years. We bought a business intelligence (BI) tool that will help show organizers use real data to help with decision-making.”

Better, Faster, Smarter

A number of registration companies are deploying new platforms that will make it easier for show organizers to make changes — either on their own or quickly through their service rep. “Today, it requires programmers,” said Williams. “In the future, it can be done by non-programmers.” CompuSystems is rolling out its new platform in 2016. “It’s been in the works for a while. We started from ground up so it’s an entirely new platform.”

Convention Data Services (CDS) is also deploying a new platform, which will make setting up new registration sites faster. “The speed to build had to be faster. We will be able to launch new pages in about half the time we did before,” said David Lawton, executive vice president, sales, CDS. “We have rolled it out to a handful of clients so far, and we are switching over the rest of our clients in 2016.”

Reg on Demand

An increasing number of shows are using multiple registration sites at hotels, airports, shuttle buses, monorail stations and other locations. In addition to the traditional on-site registration areas, multiple registration sites can help to reduce wait times and long lines at the convention center.

“Penton is implementing mobile registration carts at all shows,” said Dickson. “Being able to service people quickly is important. Since many people register online and have their bar codes, they are ready when they get to the event, so we want get them through registration quickly.”

Using cloud-based solutions, instead of local servers, makes this possible. “We can set up registration anywhere,” said Lawton. “We’ve seen a big increase in clients offering registration in other places besides the traditional registration counters.” For example at this year’s Solar Power International, CDS deployed line busters using handheld devices and remote registration at hotels. Of the show’s 14,000 attendees, 3,000 printed their badges in their hotel lobby. About 70% of the 160 events CDS will service in 2015 will use line busters and 30% are using satellite locations, said Lawton.

At PACK EXPO Las Vegas in September, PMMI, The Association for...
Packaging and Processing Technologies, offered a remote express badge site for the first time at the monorail station. “It was only for people who had registered in advance and just needed to pick up a badge,” said Pittas. For PACK EXPO Las Vegas, 75% of attendees registered in advance and got their badges mailed prior to the show while 16% registered prior to the show but too late to get badges mailed in advance and 9% registered on site.

“Earlier this year, at PACK EXPO East in Philadelphia, we had express reg scanners where an agent walked around the convention center lobby to scan a confirmation and print the attendee’s badge. It worked really well, but that is a much smaller show so crowd control is not nearly as challenging as PACK EXPO International or PACK EXPO Las Vegas,” said Pittas. “For PACK EXPO International, our goal is to get the most badges in the hands of attendees before they get to the show, so they never need to go to registration.”

Mobile Usage
More and more attendees are registering via mobile devices. “Mobile registration started taking off last year,” said Lawton. “During the first six months of this year, 37% of registrations came via mobile device vs. 24% during the same period last year. I think that number will continue to grow in coming years but eventually will probably plateau.”

Experient is also seeing more registrations come via mobile devices. “The trend in accessing the Internet has shifted from desktop to mobile, and we are seeing the same trends in

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how people are accessing our sites," said Jeff Fugate, senior vice president, sales and marketing, Experient. "Part of this trend is enabled by our ability to support the user through true responsive web technology. We are seeing close to a 50% growth in mobile/tablet usage of our web sites vs. last year."

**Pricing Trends**

When it comes to budgeting for 2016, show organizers can expect to spend about the same on registration year-over-year for the same service. "During the recession, prices were going down, but now they’ve stabilized," said Williams.

The show organizers that TSE spoke to agreed. "Our registration budget is relatively flat," said Dana Wuesthoff, CEM, senior director, event services & technology for the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM). "But there were exceptions." For one show this year, AEM opened registration earlier and offered exhibitor group registrations by appointment. "We changed the experience so we had more staff, which increased our costs but added more value."

Shows may incur higher costs with multiple registration sites, due to increases in staffing and equipment. "More distributed registration areas require more people, and costs can tend to go up," said Fugate. "At the same time, we are becoming more efficient through technology, so some of those things tend to offset."

All and all, 2015 has been a growth year for most registration companies. In 2015, exhibitor spend was up, said Williams.

In the not-so-distant past, vendors were concerned that their revenue mix might shift as exhibitors moved away from hardware rental to lead-retrieval apps. "The model is the same," said Williams. "The more we can generate from lead-retrieval, the less the show organizer will pay in registration fees. That has not changed."

Others agree. "Lead-retrieval is not dead yet," said Ivan Lazarev, owner, ITN International. "I thought our lead-retrieval revenue would go down significantly as we moved away from hardware rental. I was wrong. Show management will still get a subsidy."

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**Software as a Service (SaaS).** For some shows, registration may be moving towards a SaaS model. In fact, N200 reports that 2015 has seen many of its clients embrace its Visit SaaS platform. "Today, clients such as UBM, i2i, Hamerville, VNU, easyFairs and Amsterdam RAI are all saving time and money by in-sourcing the key skills and knowledge that, in the past, they had to rely on registration companies to provide," said N200’s Cunningham.

**More Data Analytics Tools.** Many reg companies offer some business intelligence and data analytics tools, but that is expected to increase in 2016 and beyond. CompuSystems is rolling out business intelligence tools in its new platform that will launch in 2016. "Show organizers will be able to create custom reports and trend analysis comparing shows on their own," said Williams.

**Smaller Footprint for Registration.** As more shows use distributed registration sites, suppliers say some shows are already scaling back their on-site registration areas. "You need a footprint for registration, but you only need it for first day or two," said Penton’s Dickson. "We are looking at how we can transform the space to something else."

**More Attendee Features and Benefits.** Using its new eventBit, Experient will offer an attendee justification report, which will provide data on exhibitors visited, as well as functions and sessions attended. "It’s never been possible before," said Fugate. ITN is already offering similar functionality through its Interact event app. "Attendees can use the app to read other people’s badges, poster tags at sessions and much more," said Lazarev. "It includes a timeline of every transaction at show. The attendee trip report builds as they experience the event. UBM sends ad-sponsored trip reports to attendees after the show."
Meh. Who wants that? My registration provider takes care of all my requests, and I don't have to touch a thing.

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Predict what your attendees really want on the floor.

Attendee demographic information is often incomplete. During the registration process, a buyer may have said they’re interested in a particular product. Yet on the show floor, that same person visited 12 booths offering a completely different product. Learn the buyer’s actual needs and recommend other booths to visit . . . in real time.

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