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TECH

How to Leverage Technology to Gather and Use

By Dawn Reiss

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More than ever, conference attendees want a personalized experience tailored for them. Gone are the days where handing a business card and buying a drink is enough. That's why event planners are trying to learn as much as possible about their attendees by leveraging technology.

"We are far more demanding of our time and our cost of travel," says Anthony Miller, VP of strategy and business development, [ACTIVE Network Business Solutions Group](#), which has helped with events like [CISCO Live](#). "Organizers need to make sure they are giving the ultimate value to the individual." To do so, it's essential for event planners to "make it relevant, make it valuable and make it personalized," Miller says.

Here are few things you should do when planning your next event:

- 1. Communicate the value of sharing information.** How well an event planner communicates to attendees the importance of sharing information directly correlates to their access, Miller says. [ACTIVE's](#) technology asks attendees to tell them what topics and events they are interested in to then make suggestions on other relevant sessions, speakers and like-minded attendees.
- 2. Get buy-in to social media.** A quick way to gather attendee data is by leveraging social. Set up a green screen where a video or photo is taken when attendees show up to a conference check-in or trade-show booth. Attendees get to keep the photos or videos in exchange for giving up a name and email or connecting directly to Facebook or Twitter, where planners can find out more data rich information.
- 3. Monitor sessions.** What people sign up for what they actually attend can be quite different, Miller says, because friends can quickly influence session attendance. RFID chips in badges are still the norm, since many people are still hesitant to check-in to a session on their phones. That's why [NiceMeeting](#) now has software that helps presenters share their slides and presentations to attendees in real time with integrated polling and the option for attendees to push questions to the speaker in real time. Since all that interaction is recorded, event planners and conference speakers can track individual users.
- 4. Use a check-in app.** There are plenty out there, but [atEvent](#) is a built-in business card and badge scanner app that works through the attendee's device camera and captures lead generation information for vendors and event planners.
- 5. Head to the cloud.** Data-driven mobile technology companies like [DoubleDutch](#) help manage and promote event content with push notifications like schedules, event guides and other important paperwork via the cloud. With social functions tied to check-ins, organizers can do real-time surveys that poll attendees.
- 6. Use a dashboard with data mining software.** Once data is collected, the real power is in the dashboard of data mining software. The raw collected data about attendees and their activities are feed into a database that aggregates the information into lead generation. When event planners don't use it, they usually miss important information. That's why some organizers go for an integrated suite with a company like [ACTIVE](#) or [Compu Systems](#). "You don't want to just gather data for data's sake," Miller says. "You want to ensure everything you do drives value to the individual [attendee]."

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