

# The Rise of Mobile Event 2.0



# How Mobile Event Applications Improve Engagement and Change Attendee Behavior

It has been less than three years since meeting planners started to use mobile devices as a replacement for paper-based program guides. The rapid innovation and user adoption of sophisticated smartphone technology has certainly played a hand in this transition. Despite the emergence of mobile technology, however, the majority of events still use paper-based event guides and programs – that is all about to change.

This white paper will discuss the evolution of the mobile event application from 1.0 solutions, which started the industry movement, to Mobile Event 2.0, which fully embraces mobile's capabilities to create interactive and engaging experiences that change the way attendees participate in events. This paper will discuss the challenges of 1.0, as well as the rise of Mobile Event 2.0 and how meeting planners and organizers can fully leverage mobile technology to extend their event brands and positively impact attendee engagement.

## Introduction

We have all witnessed the rapid evolution of the Web. During the early days of the Web as millions of curious people turned to the Internet for information, using primarily news and email, we were still uncertain about what the future would hold for this new and emerging medium. During these early days of Web 1.0, users were limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them. Advance quickly into what became Web 2.0, delivering experiences supported by ever-increasing broadband speeds, through the rise of user-centric design, e-commerce and into the realm of social media. One may argue that the Internet has finally arrived and truly has become what it was destined to be: a world-changing communications channel for the seamless exchange of goods and information between people and businesses anywhere and at anytime.

That's not to say that the evolution is complete. However, with the current state of Web 2.0 today, from information sharing, user-generated content, video and multimedia, to improved simplicity and usability and convergence of other media like television, movies, music, etc.; it is fair to say that it now matters to more people than any other medium.



## The Web Metaphor vs. the Mobile Metaphor

The World Wide Web consists of an almost overwhelming amount of information readily available at users' fingertips. Most of the information is accessed through a web browser and a search engine. Up until recently, enjoying the Web and its volume and diversity of content was best done on desktop and laptop computers. Even today, powerful personal computers with large high-resolution monitors, sophisticated browsers and high bandwidth connections make web browsing a truly unprecedented multimedia experience.

In contrast, the majority of mobile devices, although very powerful in their own right, by necessity and practical utility, have much smaller screens and micro-browsers with few plug-ins and advanced features. Furthermore, the limited battery life of a mobile device typically requires that user sessions are shorter; involving less browsing and searching and more focused task-oriented sessions.

A mobile device's core function has always been as a personal, private communication device. Mobile users store private messages, voicemail, photos, music and much more on their devices. This is profoundly different than the web experience as most devices were not initially designed to surf the Web, and even if they did allow access, they were not designed to create a truly immersive experience like the

powerful multi-media mobile devices of today.

What really makes the mobile experience different than a PC, however, is the fact that mobile devices are always on, location aware and within arm's length of their owners virtually 24/7; attributes that also fundamentally define the relationship that people have with their mobile devices. These differences have profound implications on the delivery of a satisfactory mobile experience and require a new and distinctive approach to designing mobile applications.

## Correlation Between the Web and Mobile Event Applications

Like the Web, the mobile event applications industry has also gone through a transformation; although progress is being slowed by traditional template app developers, who like many in the days of Web 1.0, still think that the status quo is "good enough." Mobile apps currently being developed for meetings and events under the 1.0 umbrella are stifling innovation for an industry truly ready to embrace the full capabilities of mobile technology.

**The mantra of "good enough" did not work for the Web and will not work for mobile apps.**



Consumers and business users alike expect much more from their apps, integrating dynamic content, human interactivity and messaging, social networking and other advanced features. As well, high resolution displays, faster mobile processors, dynamic touch screens and improved graphics engines have vastly improved what can be done as demonstrated by the latest mobile gaming and productivity apps. Mobile app users now demand a more robust and engaging experience.

The core objective for meeting planners and organizers when it comes to planning and executing events is creating a truly memorable experience for attendees, exhibitors and sponsors. The metric for experience is engagement, which is defined by Forrester Research as “the level of involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence an individual has with a brand over time.”

With more than 1.8 million meetings in the United States alone, creating an engaging experience is critical to ensuring the viability and success of a conference or event. It can also be a key differentiator that allows one event to thrive while another fades away.

How do you get prospective exhibitors, sponsors and attendees to fully engage in the event; before, during

and after? Will embracing the next generation of mobile technology and applying lessons learned from the Web to mobile solutions help increase engagement?

## The Standard Event Program Guide

It has been less than three years since meeting planners started to use mobile devices as a replacement for the paper-based program guide. The rapid innovation and user adoption of sophisticated smartphone technology has certainly played a hand in the change. Yet, despite the emergence of mobile technology, the majority of events still use paper-based event guides and programs – this is about to change.

## Dealing with Change

The static nature of a printed program guide imposes many limitations and constraints on meeting planners. The quality, usability and effectiveness of a paper program guide vary widely from event to event. In any case, printing requires substantial lead times and significant effort for graphic design, content development, editing and copyrighting, printing and delivery. Once committed to print, any additions, modifications or deletions to the content are costly and difficult if not impossible. Updates



“We usually print a 100-page event guide, which is very non-green. QuickMobile’s app features all the same information, but is better because it can be updated in real time. Next year, I see this app replacing the print event guide completely.”

Laura Linton, Director of Marketing, Canada’s Venture Capital & Private Equity Association (CVCA)

or schedule changes are typically handled using a variety of complicated and cumbersome methods from program inserts and last minute changes on bulletin boards, to speaker announcements and greeter handouts. Regardless, the changes add costs and complexities to ensure that attendees, exhibitors and sponsors stay informed.

“Due to the success of our mobile app, we are no longer printing our 100-page conference program, and will be relying on our mobile app and a very small pocket guide for our main conference this coming November.”

Bruce Rosard, VP Sales and Marketing, PhoCusWright Research

### Unnecessary Costs

In addition to change and communications challenges, printing and shipping costs of event guides, updates and handouts can be a major expense for meeting planners and organizers. For example, a recent travel industry association meeting in Las Vegas produced a full color, 100-page program guide that cost in excess of \$75,000.

The associated printing and shipping costs for meetings vary tremendously based on the type of conference, but today are simply considered a cost of doing business. Tradeshows and large association meetings spend significant amounts on printed materials, and frequently send out advance copies of their event guides and materials to registered attendees.

While some of these printing and shipping costs may be incorporated in attendee fees or offset by sponsorship opportunities and advertising included in the guide, technology suggests there

are more efficient, cost effective and profitable ways to handle these efforts. Everything is developed electronically



before it is printed, which begs the question, “Why can’t it remain electronic if nearly everyone is already digitally connected?”

### Environmental Impact

Besides development, printing and shipping costs, creating and distributing paper event guides has a bigger environmental impact than most may realize. Imagine a 10,000-person event where organizers print and ship a 50-page guide to all registered attendees, exhibitors and sponsors. Extra guides are also printed for those that forget their programs at home. Every attendee at a conference or tradeshow has witnessed the absurd waste of paper as stacks of daily event guides, brochures, meeting memos, party invitations, brochures, magazines and other collateral remain across the exhibit hall.



Even for the events that encourage recycling, many of the paper guides, as well as event-related materials are simply discarded in the trash. Now imagine if the guides, memos, updates, flyers and collateral were never printed at all; rather they were distributed and updated electronically in real-time. How would that change the environmental impact of an event?

### Cost Allocation and Priorities

In today’s economic environment, managing expenses and reducing costs are important to all meeting planners and organizers and to the long-term viability of events. Effectively evaluating where to allocate limited resources is critical to ensure that event objectives are met and expenses are in line with budgets. If the event goal is to increase engagement and motivate attendees to participate, spending more on shrimp cocktails than on a mobile event app may not be the right priority. For event planners and organizers, establishing priorities with the end goal in mind will lead to more effective resource allocation.

# Mobile Event 1.0

## The Beginning of Mobile Event Applications

For event planners and organizers that embraced the first generation of mobile event apps, the experiences were a major step forward for the industry in terms of replacing paper, increasing efficiencies, and reducing costs and the impact on the environment. The user experience, however, was limited to generic, template-style formats with simplistic, featureless presentation of content. While the apps helped replace the paper-based guide, they were not designed to meet the primary objectives of today's meeting planners and organizers.

Event planners and marketers want to provide attendees with a greater overall meeting experience and to deliver maximum benefit and exposure to the conference sponsors. This includes everything from the food and beverages and the line-up of speakers, to the venue, educational opportunities, travel experiences and overall value to attendees equal to their investment in time and money. Providing attendees with information to find their way through the event in an easy and enjoyable manner is important to the overall experience. Helping them network, find sessions, personalize their schedule, take session notes, participate in activities, contribute to polling and surveys, stay informed and access social networking channels is critical to engagement. Equally important is the ability to brand the event and provide sponsors with opportunities to promote and gain exposure to the attendees.

Mobile Event 1.0 applications typically provide few opportunities for event branding. Because of their simplistic template style, branding may be limited to a simple splash page when the application launches or a banner at the top of the menu page. The other pages in the app typically include colorless, featureless lists of speakers, attendees and schedules. The experience is unappealing and implies that the attendee is only interested in the utility of the app and only the basic, essential information.

Apps produced using Mobile Event 1.0 methods are strangely similar to the days of Web 1.0 when it was difficult

to truly engage consumers and businesses due to a multitude of issues; such as bandwidth, presentation and content. The results are a poor reflection on the technological capabilities of mobile devices and the broadband networks that support them. It is time to move on and Mobile Event 2.0 applications are fully leveraging the power that resides in the palms of virtually every businessperson on the planet. Like the evolution of the Web, to increase engagement, mobile event apps must also evolve.



The smartphone has become an essential tool in the hands of the event attendee and more than 87% of business travelers now own and use one. Technology driving these devices has also improved, making it possible to develop custom applications that can brand events and engage event participants while positioning meeting professional and conference sponsors as thought leaders and innovators.

# The Rise of Mobile Event 2.0

The concept of Mobile Event 2.0 is associated with smartphone applications that facilitate greater overall participation, increased information sharing, branded human-centered design, and foster collaboration at conferences, trade shows and events.

## Information sharing and creation

Today's mobile users are much more social and use their smartphones for much more than making phone calls. They use their phones to create and share information via email, SMS, cameras, video and online through Twitter, YouTube and other popular online content-sharing sites and services. Mobile Event 2.0 embraces this trend by allowing meeting planners and organizers to distribute conference information through a tool that most attendees already have. This next generation solution encourages event attendees to capture thoughts, images and videos and then share them with other attendees, exhibitors and sponsors, as well as people that may not have had the opportunity to attend the event.

Enabling content creation and information sharing increases interactivity and engagement amongst organizers, attendees, exhibitors and sponsors while extending event branding outside presentation rooms and the exhibit hall.

Attendees who simply walked the floor or listened to speakers in the past are actually becoming part of the event by sharing perspectives, presentation content, images and videos that expand the experience for others.

## Human-centered design

The focus of Mobile Event 2.0 is about creating a more memorable experience and increasing engagement in the meeting or conference. Critical to this is a human-centered interface that is branded, easy to use and customizable.

Modern mobile technology allows for high-resolution color and graphics and enhanced user interactivity. In addition, back-end metrics can help meeting planners to understand how the app is being used and what features are popular amongst attendees.

With these capabilities and knowledge, mobile meeting apps can be designed to meet the needs and wants of attendees, extending and improving the experience from one year to the next.

As a result, template and text-based apps using Mobile Event 1.0 become obsolete because mobile app developers can now deliver an experience that is shaped by actual user interaction with a customized, attractive look and feel that encourages and rewards usage.



## Interaction and Collaboration

One of the core benefits of Mobile Event 2.0 is the ability to increase attendee interaction throughout the event with other attendees, exhibitors and sponsors. Unlike paper-based solutions or those developed with 1.0 capabilities, 2.0 applications are designed and developed from the ground up with a focus on increasing interaction and collaboration.

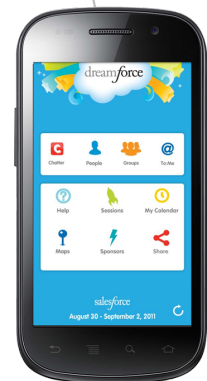
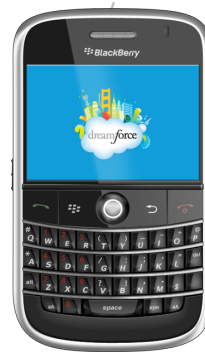
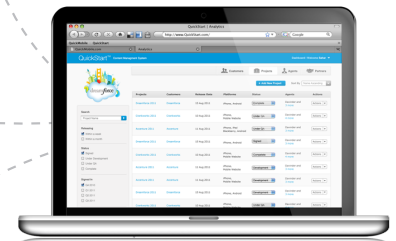
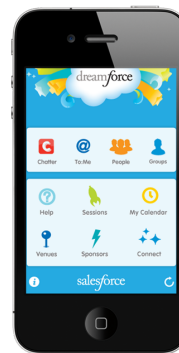
Whether encouraging networking with other attendees through built-in messaging systems and social networks, collaboration with presenters and exhibitors through content-sharing, polling and surveys, or interaction with event planners and organizers through games and mobile commerce, Mobile Event 2.0 is changing attendee behavior by creating a more interactive and engaging experience.

## Interoperability

Unlike earlier mobile event applications, Mobile Event 2.0 delivers apps on virtually any mobile platform, from Android to Apple iOS. With so many different types of phones and operating systems, delivering a consistent, seamless and engaging app experience can be a challenge. It would be easy for developers to exclude certain phones simply based upon popularity. Mobile Event 2.0, however, is inclusionary; creating solutions that are interoperable across multiple platforms including mobile websites. The more people are able to access and use the app, the more diverse and loyal the group of users that event planners are likely to develop.

So now that we have an understanding of the concept of Mobile Event 2.0, what does it look like? Why will it ultimately change attendee behavior and help produce the engagement that meeting planners hope it will?

The promise of Mobile Event 2.0 is a fully branded app that features full graphics and delivers a social and interactive experience. Attendees will embrace the app because it is familiar by design. They will continue to use it because it adds value to their event experience. The Mobile Event 2.0 app will provide several core benefits to meeting planners and organizers to improve and extend the reach of their events and drive participation and engagement; benefits that we will refer to as the seven pillars.





# Seven Pillars: Seven Benefits of Next Generation Mobile Event Apps for Meeting Planners and Organizers

## 1. Events become year round conversations

Meeting planners can use the mobile event app to inspire, engage and connect with audiences before, during and after events, making the one-day or weeklong conference or meeting the focal point of a year-long conversation. Mobile users are loyal to their communities and mobile apps, particularly ones that add value to their lives and overall mobile experience. Developing a solution that regularly delivers relevant, updated information and content, builds upon the previous year's experience and creates anticipation for future events is an app that will undoubtedly remain on the device.



## 2. Attendees generate content and continuously interact

Modern mobile event apps can turn events into more dynamic and engaging environments where attendees stop

being simply spectators. They become content creators and continuously interact and channel feedback through games, surveys, polls and social media.



The 2011 Green Meetings Industry Council conference in Portland, Oregon, was the first conference ever to incorporate gaming into a mobile event application. The game challenged teams to generate content using their smartphones and tablet devices to compete for points. Points were awarded for completing various tasks such as taking photos and uploading them to the mobile application photo gallery, attending sessions, answering surveys, blogging, tweeting, posting Facebook messages about their event experience and messaging other attendees. Teams were also assigned group case studies that required teams to research topics, answer questions and provide creative solutions to unique real-world challenges – all on the mobile event application.

“At cruise3sixty, we were coming close to running out of attendee guides. Seems some boxes were lost. The mobile application we developed included a full Schedule of Events, speakers, locations and schedule times. So, as we were registering attendees we asked if they had downloaded the application. If they did, we asked them to use it for the Schedule of Events rather than the printed version. It worked. We didn’t run out and life was good!”

Michael Pierson, MJPA President



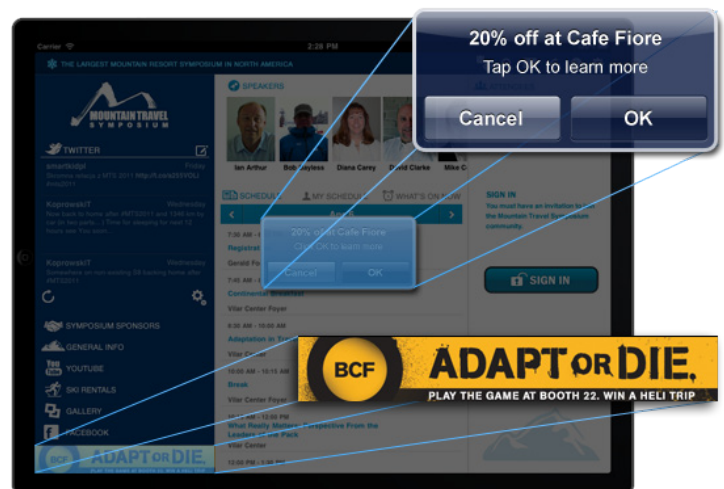
### 3. The mobile event application is a profit centre

Rather than the event guide simply being a cost of doing business, event organizers can approach the development of the app with a focus on using it to drive revenues. The mobile event application becomes a profit center rather than a cost center.

At the 2011 Mountain Travel Symposium in Beaver Creek, Colorado, event organizers sold a limited number of push notifications on the mobile event application to sponsors and community businesses to generate revenue. A local Italian restaurant took the initiative to send out a push notification to users of the mobile event application, offering a 20% discount off the entire bill throughout the conference. As a result of the proactive outreach, the restaurant was packed with attendees throughout the conference, leaving other restaurant owners scratching their heads.

Participating conference vendors were also offered the opportunity to upgrade their company and employee listings in the mobile event application. The enhanced listing provided vendors with better placement on the vendor list, and allowed them to prominently display their company

logos and highlight individual employees’ profiles. For a premium, vendors were also offered the opportunity to buy real estate on the rotating banner ad running on the event application home page, providing an instant link to the sponsor profile page or website that featured deals and promotions for conference attendees.



## 4. The user experience is branded to the hosting organization



Mobile Event 2.0 embraces the full graphical capabilities of modern mobile devices. The mobile event application is entirely branded to convey the unique visual identity of each hosting organization. Event marketers certainly understand the value of brand marketing and a mobile application speaks volumes to conference attendees about brand positioning as a thought leader, innovator and trusted content provider. Conference organizers would never consider attendee handouts that looked like a simple printed black and white spreadsheet, yet many 1.0 mobile apps offer little more as most of the content presented is bland and colorless. Mobile 2.0 in contrast uses all the multimedia, rich color, transition and animation capabilities of the device.

## 5. Attendees create a personalized, tailored experience

The mobile event application includes a human-centered design that can be personalized with attendee preferences.

The Microsoft TechEd 2011 conference allowed attendees to create a personalized conference experience using the mobile event application. Included was a “Like Minded” element that allowed attendees to access personalization features to specify a number of criteria, such as whether they wished to publicly display their profile information, personal session schedule and contacts list with others at the conference.



The application allowed attendees to upload their own photos, specify their home city and state, and indicate whether they would like to receive messages from other

attendees. Attendees could also

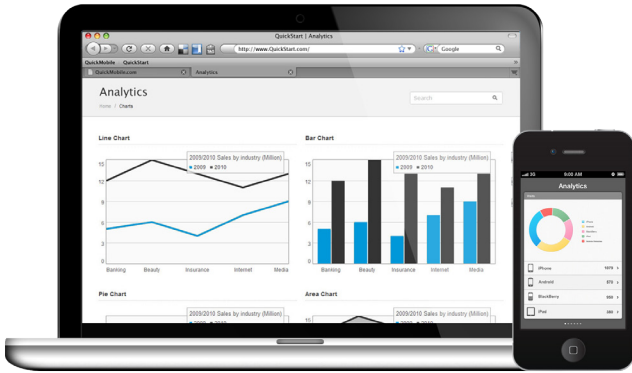
select from a list of vertical industries in which they were interested and enter any topics of interest in free-form text, such as ‘virtual events’, ‘video ads’ or ‘technology’ to be matched to like-minded people at the conference. In addition, attendees were given the option to create personalized conference trip reports by adding locations visited or of interest to a Bing map and then opting to share their trip reports with others.

## 6. Meeting planners have a single event management platform to modify content and view reports

As important as the experience is for users, the ability to quickly and easily manage the app is equally important to meeting planners and organizers. Mobile Event 2.0 applications are managed and viewed by the meeting

planner using a single web-based platform throughout the entire life cycle of the application, including the development of the application, content creation and management, and real-time analytics and reports.

Interactive applications and integrated analytics allow meeting organizers and planners to maintain information in real-time with their finger on the pulse of attendees' behavior and preferences. Understanding the interests of current, past and prospective attendees and what they are receptive to during the event and throughout the year leading up to the event will strengthen engagement and cultivate an audience year-round.



## 7. Mobile event applications are multi-event ready

Mobile event applications provide organizations with the ability to deliver multiple events within a single branded mobile application. Business Intelligence software provider QlikView decided to take its 25 city 2011 Business Discovery North America Tour to new heights with a single mobile application for all cities. Conference attendees simply download the QlikView mobile application and select the tour stop of their choice. Once selected, the mobile application automatically populates the road show data for that city, thus providing a seamless mobile event experience for all attendees. Going nationwide with a single mobile event application for the road show also helps QlikView increase its exposure, bringing attendees from across the country together using social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter and its own QlikView Community site.

Mobile Event 2.0 apps provide for extreme flexibility and scalability without sacrificing look and feel and the feature rich benefits of a sophisticated mobile conference application.



# Conclusion

Like the Web, the mobile event app has evolved from a simple information resource to a social platform for accessing and exchanging goods and services. The mobile event app started as a replacement for paper, delivering information in a simple, uninspired way. But as mobile technology improved, users have come to demand more from their devices and expect more from the apps that they download.

Leveraging the full capabilities of mobile technology allows event planners and organizers to create apps that focus on addressing their core challenge: producing events that deliver memorable and engaging experiences. This is the foundation of Mobile Event 2.0.

Mobile event apps built upon the Mobile Event 2.0 platform bring event organizers, attendees and sponsors together in a unique collaborative environment using innovative tools and technologies that are both ubiquitous and familiar to most participants. These tools drive attendee behavior, allowing them to interact with virtually every aspect of the event, including the people, businesses, venue and city where the event is located. Attendees become more than passive participants shuffling from the exhibit hall to presentation rooms. They are inspired to share their perspectives through feedback and content, connect through networking and social media, and engage by becoming active contributors that carry the event's brand and message beyond its scheduled days and physical location.

For meeting planners and organizers, Mobile Event 2.0 adds a new dimension to the overall event experience, extending their brands, inspiring participation, introducing mobile commerce and other revenue generating opportunities and arming them with a new set of tools to drive engagement. Peter Drucker once stated, "Quality in a service or product is not what you put into it. It is what the client or customer gets out of it." Mobile Event 2.0 places the emphasis on delivering higher expectations and a quality product that does more than simply replace a paper program guide. It fully leverages mobile technology to inspire change, motivate action and add value to events and all their participants.



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