

The Most Influential Advances in Event Technology

HOW TECHNOLOGY IS SHAPING EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS AND THE CONFERENCE INDUSTRY

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Reality: Technology isn't the same as it was in 2010.

The theory of **Big Bang Disruption**¹ accounts for a new type of product adoption: the vast majority now quickly embraces new technology.

It once took years to get a new product, a new feature, or a new technology off the ground and into the hands of mass users. Today it happens in an instant. It only takes a few top influencers saying something's a big deal, then suddenly, it's a big deal.

If you fail to adjust with the rising tides, you're going to drown.



WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR EVENT TECHNOLOGY?

IT MEANS YOU BETTER GET ONBOARD

Like it or not, attendees pick up new technology at lightning pace. The next big thing is already here and they've been using it. If it was at one conference and they benefited, they expect it at every conference.

Still, conferences and educational meetings are about human interaction and connection. Technology shouldn't be a distraction to that and should do everything to foster it. In fact, the primary goal of technology is to **increase communication** between attendees and provide them a platform to share ideas easily and effectively.

Communication, however, is not static, it's dynamic. Your event technology should reflect that. Every piece of event technology that you use for your conference or educational meeting should **update information with real time data**. It should keep the conversation going and adjust accordingly when changes are made.

When you invest in event technology, you expect a large number of your attendees to use it. These attendees are probably at varying levels of technical skill, though most of them are willing to try new technology if it's useful to them. To make sure attendees are hooked from the beginning and don't give up on event tech altogether, the software must be **intuitive and easy-to-use**. It must feel natural to use and avoid convolution.

All of these things together point to one overarching goal of event technology: **it must be available to everyone**. Event technology should be accessible on all devices and platforms, everywhere and anywhere. It must look and function the same way on all versions of the same software.

So...



Together, these are the goals of event technology.

Ensuring that your conference tech propagates these goals is the only way to ensure that all your attendees can get excited about your event and effectively use the technology you provide them. It's the best way to drive adoption and stay on point with the latest trends.

With the goals of event technology now established, let's take a wild ride on what is currently exploding in the world of event technology. These are the technologies, features, and products that are now disrupting the events industry. Get caught up, or fall behind.



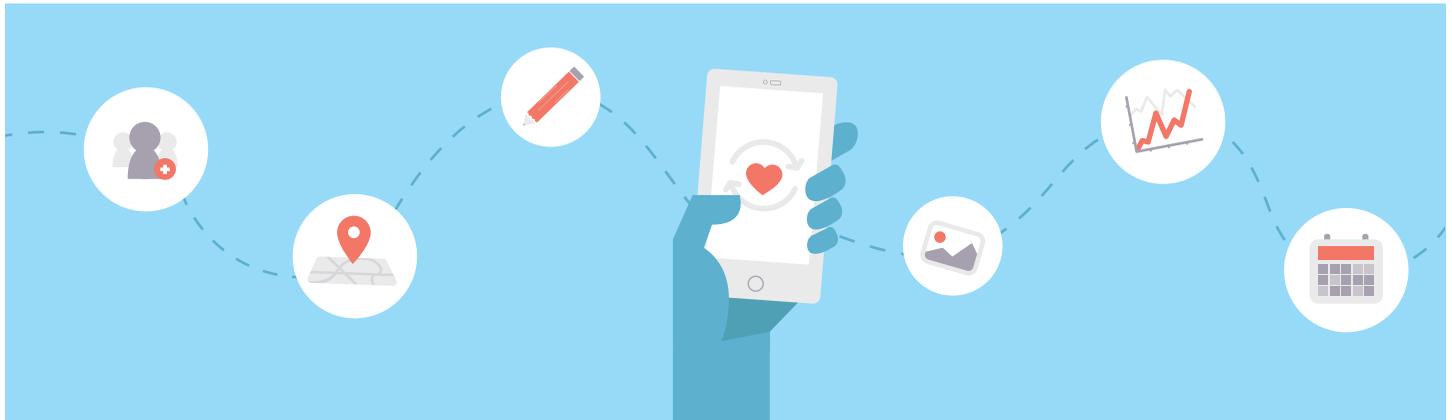
PLATFORMS, PASSWORDS, AND BRANDING... OH, MY!

DOES YOUR EVENT TECH EXPOSE THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN?

We'll start our journey on the yellow brick road. Dorothy isn't in Kansas anymore – she's in **Orlando, Chicago, or D.C.**², AND she's got a smartphone.

That means that first and foremost all your event's information must be available from one place and it must be accessible from the palm of her hand. Preferably this is packaged in the form of a native mobile event app or responsive conference website. What would be even better is if you had both. That way, there's no doubt she'll get exactly the content she needs in her preferred method.

Just because these channels provide your conference's content on different platforms, there's no reason that the channels should feel separate. It's a given that one password should work across both the gated content in the app and on your event website. The app should only require one log in and then be completely accessible by attendees for the best experience possible.



“Make sure your event technology is seamless across platforms and make sure it fits your brand...”

Any change made on one platform should be reflected across the board. If Dorothy decides to bookmark a session on the event website or online session agenda (aka Itinerary Planner) it should instantly bookmark the session in the mobile app. Likewise if she takes notes on presentation slides or in the app, she should be able to access these notes online, share them with colleagues, and print them out.

Her transition from app to website to floor plan and everything in between should also be flawless. She should never feel like she leaves your online domain. In this case, you don't want her confused, thinking, “oh no, we're not in Kansas anymore.”

The solution? You could always build an app, floor plan, digital poster gallery, and online event schedule in-house. Unfortunately that would take not only time, but also an exorbitant amount of resources. The next best solution is finding a vendor who can provide all these pieces for you. But it's important that they can build these tools to fit your organization's preexisting brand so that when a user opens the app or views the floor plan, they still feel like they're using your product.

Takeaway: *Make sure your event technology is seamless across platforms and make sure it fits your brand so attendees don't feel like there's an obvious 'man behind the curtain.' Find a vendor who can save you time and money by offering everything you need through one integrated system.*

THREE STRIKES, YOU'RE OUT

If you haven't already adopted event technology as part of your conference or trade show budget, you haven't even showed up to the ballpark yet. If you are on the playing field, there are three BIG factors that could make or break the game.



“(HTML5) was specifically designed to deliver rich content without the need for additional plug-ins.”

- W3C Website

PLUG-INS AND FLASH—STRIKE ONE!

The world has moved on. Plug-ins and flash technology are outdated and don't even work on most platforms now. HTML5 is now the leading force for creating any type of web-app.

HTML5 was developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the Web Hypertext Application Technology Working Group (WHATWG), two super groups dedicated to bringing the best and brightest together to build a better web. They had been working separately until 2006, when they decided to merge their projects to create a set of uniform standards that were applicable across the internet. These new standards called for a web that didn't require unnecessary plug-ins and unreliable add-ons.

According to **W3C**³,

(HTML5) was specially designed to deliver rich content without the need for additional plug-ins. The current version delivers everything from animation to graphics, music to movies, and can also be used to build complicated web applications.

This also ensures that HTML5 is cross-platform. “It is designed to work whether you are using a PC, or a Tablet, a Smartphone, or a Smart TV,” says the W3C website. No matter what device someone has, the same—or relatively similar—experience is delivered to them across the board.

Which leads to the next point...

DEVICE INCOMPATIBILITY—STRIKE TWO!

If your attendees can't access your mobile event app, interactive floor plan, or online itinerary planner whenever and wherever they want, you're going to run into some big issues. Today's world is mobile and demands instant connectivity.

"...technical performance and user experience & usability are much higher in native apps."

(RMIT University Study)

The amount of devices available to attendees is constantly on the rise and screen sizes vary greatly. Often we run into the advice that we shouldn't try to please everyone, or that we should target a specific audience. In this case however, it would be unwise to alienate a select few based on their device preferences. Your audience is your attendee base and you must do your best to accommodate everyone.

The majority of your attendees will have a smartphone that runs either Android or iOS. These users prefer a mobile centric experience and a native mobile event app can provide them with **unique features that a mobile-friendly, or responsive, website or web app cannot.**⁴

Furthermore, according to a study done by RMIT University, technical performance and user experience & usability are much higher in native apps. Native event apps offer an immersive experience that include everything from networking with other attendees and creating a personalized schedule around conference sessions to taking notes on presentation slides and exploring trade show vendors.

These apps are not crowded by extraneous features like a URL address bar, which takes up screen real estate and may **slightly affect user experience.**⁵

“...move away from plug-ins in favor of a comprehensive and universal system like HTML5...”

UNRESPONSIVE DESIGN—STRIKE THREE! YOU'RE OUT!

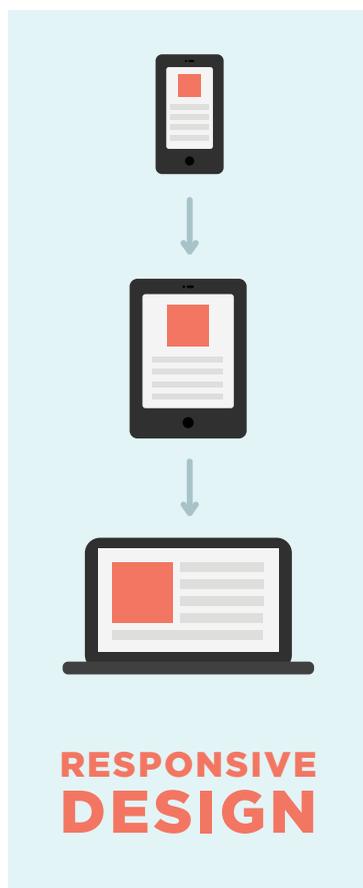
So what's there to be done about your attendees who aren't on Android or iOS? What about those who still use Blackberrys, or who have switched to Windows phones? You could invest in a dedicated native app for these operating systems as well, but your cost would dramatically increase to accommodate a very small group of your attendees.

There is an easy solution. Just because users prefer native apps and the majority of your attendees use iOS or Android, doesn't mean you should neglect a responsive website. A large number of web traffic (Over 17%!)⁶ is now from mobile devices and that number is **growing each year.**⁷ It's expected that by the end of 2014, mobile will overtake internet usage.

With a responsive design, people searching for your event will come to a website that is scaled for their screen no matter what device they're using, as if it's made just for them. An added benefit is that those Windows and Blackberry users can use your HTML5 event itinerary planner as a mobile web app that they can access from their browsers.

They'll be able to access your conference's session schedules, download presentation materials, view the floor plan, and much more, right from their phone. They won't feel alienated anymore because of their device preference. It's a win-win for everyone.

Takeaway: *If you want to knock it out of the park and hit a home run, it's important to move away from plug-ins in favor of a comprehensive and universal system like HTML5, provide the majority of your users with multiple options for content consumption so they can choose their preferred method, and ensure that your content is part of an online environment built to accommodate multiple screen sizes and devices.*



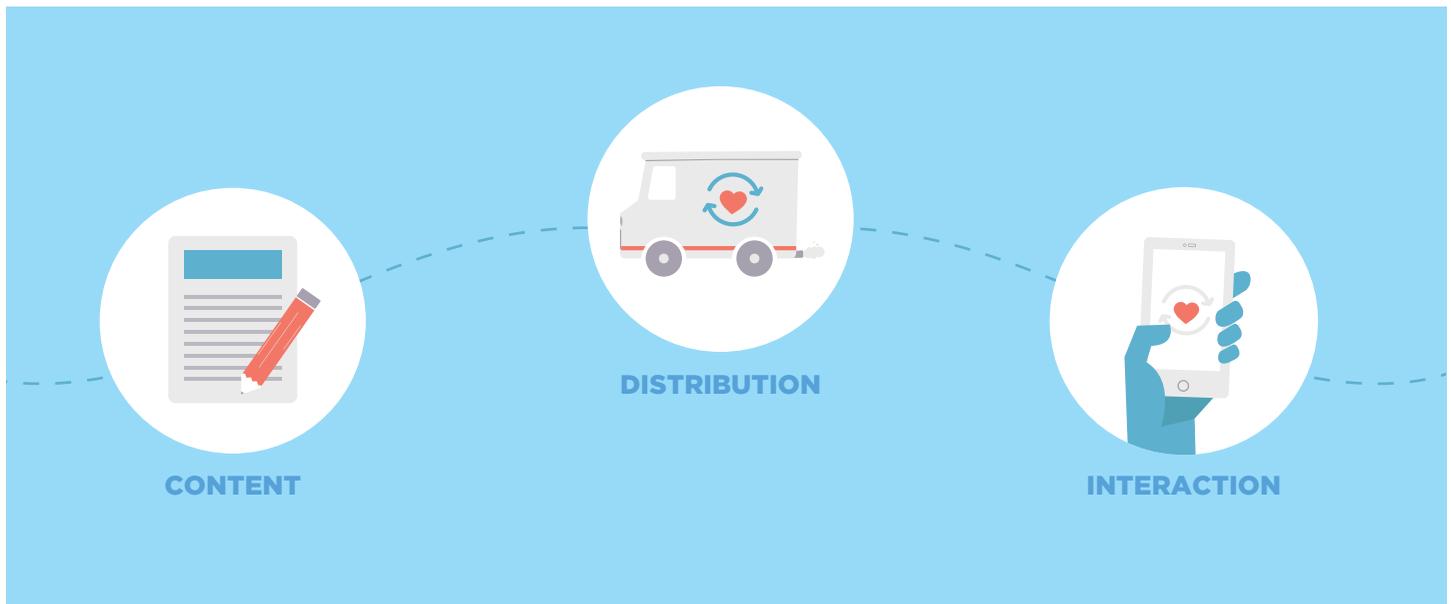


Content is King, Distribution is Queen,
**BUT INTERACTION
REIGNS SUPREME**

THE TRIFECTA OF A PERFECT EVENT

Let me clarify: content, distribution, and interaction are the trifecta of not only successful event technology, but successful events in general. In order to plan, organize, and host an event that attendees want to keep coming back to, you need to,

- a.** Leverage the talents of effective speakers to communicate your organization's purpose and theme at your conference.
- b.** Effectively distribute content from your sessions so that your attendees feel they've received the greatest ROI from your conference.
- c.** Create online and offline environments for your attendees to network and develop relationships with each other, while they engage with your content.



"[Content, distribution, and interaction] encompass the entire conference experience."

Having good content, a solid distribution plan, and a comprehensive platform for interaction is essential to ruling the conference kingdom with a golden scepter. Your members will be thankful to be part of an association that shows they care through action, by assembling great speakers, communicating benefits, and providing opportunities to get to know other members, sponsors, and vendors.

So, how can we leverage effective event technology to ensure that all these needs are met? What are the latest software developments in the industry that help meet these standards?

These three aspects of a good conference (content, distribution, and interaction) encompass the entire conference experience. From the very first bit of planning to what happens during and after the event, having a solid strategy that incorporates all these elements is key to your conference's success. This means that an all-inclusive system that helps manage and market your content from the first step of planning to the last stage of following up with your attendees is crucial.

An all-inclusive system should include:

- A simple way to **call for papers** & collect and review abstracts
- A **content management system** that simplifies collecting disclosure forms, session documents, presentation slides, sponsorship opportunities, booth selection and payment, and all other necessary materials from speakers and exhibitors
- **Event technology** (mobile event apps, digital poster galleries, interactive floor plans, conference websites, etc.) that pulls data instantly from your content management system without tedious app store updates
- Integration with attendee registration platforms
- A **conference schedule** that can be accessed from any device, and that allows attendees to build their schedule the way they want to (including the addition of personal events and plans)
- An **app with note taking capabilities** so your attendees can engage with speaker presentations
- **In-app networking** features such as an attendee list, photo sharing, and social media functionality
- Great **sponsorship opportunities** in your app, on your website, and on your floor plan
- **Email templates and a news feed** that can be updated and sent from your content management system to streamline communication with attendees before, during, and after the event
- An **interactive floor plan** that includes company logos and contact information so attendees can get in touch with vendors they've bookmarked on the trade show floor
- **Recordings** that are synchronized with speaker slides once the event has concluded so attendees can revisit sessions through the app or conference website, share important information they've learned with colleagues back at the office, and brush up on material they may have missed while at the conference
- **Post-conference surveys** and evaluations that allow you to keep your conference relevant to member needs, and allow attendees to print certificates of completion for CE courses your conference may offer.



"...[provide] a platform that makes it easy for attendees to network and share content online & offline."

The implications of an all-inclusive system like this are vast. But boiled down to its essence, this system allows you to effectively plan your conference and streamline your content collection and distribution, market your conference and the event technology your members can benefit from, provide a platform for attendees to access and share content while maximizing their networking opportunities and knowledge gained from each session, and keep the conversation going well after the event in preparation for your next conference.

Takeaway: *If you want your association's event to be crowned as an elite conference, you're going to have to make sure you're attracting great content (in terms of speakers and exhibitors), distributing that content to members effectively while communicating all the benefits attendees can take advantage of before, during, and after the conference, and providing a platform that makes it easy for attendees to network and share content online and offline.*



CONCLUSION

DON'T WASTE TIME OR MONEY - FIND YOUR ONE SOURCE FOR EVENT TECH

Technology has come a long way since it first made its appearance in the events industry. It's even unrecognizable from two years ago and continues to change at alarming rates. Attendees are now beginning to expect highly connected, digitally inclusive events that they can partake in not only on-site, but from anywhere at anytime online and offline.

Building a digital system that streamlines your event planning and adds tremendous benefit to your attendees has become a crucial part of every successful conference. With the speed at which software and technology changes and is adopted, you want to benefit from a provider that will constantly update their all-inclusive system so you don't have to waste time and resources building one yourself or dealing with multiple vendors.

About CadmiumCD



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CadmiumCD has spent the last fifteen years building technology for educational conferences and meetings. With an all-inclusive line of products and services, CadmiumCD strives to ease the conference planning and management processes for event organizers. Their fully integrated system includes abstract collection, exhibitor and speaker data management, attendee accessible websites & floor plans, mobile event applications, proceedings distribution, and A/V production.



WANT MORE?

CADMIUMCD RESOURCES

Check out some of our awesome resources for event planners!

The CadmiumCD Blog

www.CadmiumCD.com/CadmiumCD/news.asp

White Papers, eBooks & More

www.CadmiumCD.com/CadmiumCD/resources.asp

CadmiumCD Videos

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Social Media

Twitter: www.twitter.com/CadmiumCD

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