

— A SPECIAL REPORT BY —

Trade Show Executive

REGISTRATION & LEAD RETRIEVAL

TRENDS

New technologies are offering
bigger data and better analytics

BY DANICA TORMOHLN, Editor-At-Large

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Since wearable beacons were introduced for trade shows nearly two years ago, a select group of organizers have embraced the technology. These early adopters have gained mountains of data about attendee behaviors on site, and show organizers are gaining insight to share with exhibitors that proves their investment is paying off.

While beacons are cheaper than RFID (Radio frequency ID), they do come with a higher price tag than badges with bar codes or QR codes. More show organizers are investigating their options when it comes to beacons, but most have waited on the sidelines while others explore the realities of the value of the information. Looking at usage analysis, it appears that associations are more willing than their for-profit counterparts to invest in wearable beacons.

In fact, one of the largest association shows in the U.S., CONEXPO-CON/AGG, deployed wearable beacons to all 138,000 attendees and exhibitors at the triennial trade show held in March in Las Vegas. The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) worked with its registration vendor, Experient, to install 8,000 read points across the 2.5 million net square feet of exhibit space. "Over five days, 1 billion data points on attendee behaviors were tracked," said Experient's Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing Jeff Fugate.

What are the pros and cons of wearable beacons? "The data," said Tricia Mallett, CEM, Show Director for International Construction and Utility Equipment Exposition (ICUEE) and World of Asphalt and Director, Event Services & Technology for AEM. "There's so much data you can gather, which is great. But at the same time, it takes resources to dive into the data and draw conclusions."

As data continues to drive marketing decisions and spending across all industries, trade shows are hungry for more data to bolster the value of their marketing medium. With attendee tracking, shows can gather behavioral data on site, which allows organizers to better develop personas and market

to specific segments, as well as make a better case for exhibit sales.

AEM is also deploying Experient's eventBit wearable beacons for the ICUEE Oct. 3-5 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville. "We are planning to implement beacons with all AEM shows going forward," said Mallett.

But just a fraction of all U.S. trade shows have implemented beacon technology. For example, of the 350 shows with which Experient has worked and will work with in 2017, about 20 trade shows used its eventBit, which was launched in December 2015. "Most are larger shows," said Fugate. "That number is up from last year, and we are expecting 30 to 40 shows to use eventBit in 2018." CompuSystems and Convention Data Services (CDS) are partnering with companies like TurnoutNow and Panvista to offer wearable beacons for trade shows. Hubvents is also a player in the beacon space.

What else is hot? *Trade Show Executive* takes a look at the latest trends in registration and lead-retrieval. We talked to leading show organizers, as well as registration vendors, to get some insight on the latest techniques and technologies that are trending.

Value vs. Cost

There's no doubt that beacons provide value for exhibitors and show organizers, but is the technology worth the additional cost? "Beacons can cost up to \$5 per person, and organizers could easily spend \$100,000 or more on a deployment," said Chris Williams, President of CompuSystems. He said almost every client is talking about it, but not a lot are implementing it yet.

Experient's beacons cost under \$3 and are dropping precipitously every year, just as RFID did, said Brian Scott, Experient's Chief Information Officer.

"Exhibitor engagement and ROI is a driving force for AEM, and we decided to make an investment upfront," Mallett said. "We have support from the top down." For all exhibitors who purchased lead-retrieval for CONEXPO-CON/AGG or IFPE, a co-located event, AEM

what's TRENDING

- **Remarketing.** As shows gather more attendee data, organizers are using new tools like Feathr to remarket to attendees. "We are remarketing not only for our shows, but also for our exhibitors," said Randy Field, Group Vice President and Customer Experience & Operations Technology for Reed Exhibitions. "We are able to target specific buyer segments, not just blast all attendees with booth promotions – instead we now message with information that is relevant. It's beneficial to both attendees and exhibitors, but the tools are still evolving."

- **Increased security.** In January, International CES will introduce photo ID badges for the first time. Attendees will not be required to get a photo badge in the first year, but that could change in the future. "Color printing technology is now available to allow this service to be provided," said CompuSystems President Chris Williams. Other vendors aren't yet seeing an increase in photo badges, but according to David Lawton, Executive Vice President of Sales for CDS, "we are seeing an uptick in checking IDs before giving out badges."

- **Enhanced functionality for lead-retrieval apps.** Suppliers continue to add functionality for lead-retrieval in mobile apps. "It continues to evolve as a product," said Experient's Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing Jeff Fugate. Earlier this year, Experient added usability improvements and capabilities. Exhibitors, for instance, can create in-booth surveys on their mobile devices. CompuSystems offers a product that allows the sales lead to go directly into the most popular marketing automation platforms in real-time.

- **Using data to sell.** Earlier this year, CDS added a lead-retrieval dashboard, where clients can see in real time how many leads exhibitors have captured, how many attendees were in the aisles nearby and what the hottest areas are on the show floor. Clients see the data in real time and can compare it to prior years. Show organizers are using this data during exhibit sales calls and consultation.



paid for the upgrade to the IQ Performance Package, which gave exhibitors:

- Detailed analytics on booth traffic
- Lead qualification via dwell time
- Information on activity around the booth: aisle traffic, booth traffic, demographics and more
- Real-time data to make booth staffing decisions
- Booth View: Allows exhibitors to view company names of registrants in their immediate area

“More than 50 percent of our exhibitors purchased lead retrieval, and all those were upgraded to the IQ Performance Package,” Mallett said.

While the technology is passive for attendees and exhibitors on site, it still requires a high level of communication and consultation to increase adoption, especially for exhibitors. AEM hosted webinars and worked with Experient to provide how-to-use consultation for exhibitors.

In addition to exhibitor data, attendees received a post-show email with a journey map of exhibitors visited.

“They can follow up with those exhibitors and share this information with their bosses to prove the value in attending,” Mallett said. “We only had a few attendees opt out.”

As shows learn more about attendees, organizers will be able to deliver more customized and personalized experiences. If you know what a certain attendee did last year, you can recommend exhibitors to visit, sessions to attend, and other like-minded attendees to connect with. “It changes the experience of the event, and attendees will be more likely to return,” said Scott.

Experience First

Registration is typically the first experience an attendee has with the show brand online and on site. For Reed Exhibitions, a RELX company, customer satisfaction with registration is most important. “Speed of the registration process is a priority,” said Randy Field, Group Vice



Massive Deployment. CONEXPO-CON/AGG deployed wearable beacons to all 138,000 attendees and exhibitors at the triennial trade show held in March in Las Vegas. Experient installed 8,000 read points across the 2.5 million nsf of exhibit space.

what's NOT

- **Mailing badges.** In the last decade, shows have cut back on the number of badges that are mailed and in doing so reduced costs on postage and waste from reprinting badges. “About 20 percent of clients mail a portion of badges, while 80 percent process all registrations on site,” CompuSystems President Chris Williams said. CDS is reporting the same percentage, and Executive Vice President of Sales David Lawton predicts only 10 percent of his clients will mail badges in 2018. Reed mails badges only to exhibitors or under unique circumstances when customers request them, said Reed’s Group Vice President and Customer Experience & Operations Technology Randy Field.
- **Too many registration questions.** Show organizers are focused on minimizing the number of questions asked during the registration process. “The challenge is finding the right balance between a quick online experience while still capturing the data we need to maximize the customer experience,” Field said. “We are making an effort to consolidate questions and focus demographic questions on personas.” Reed tries not to have more than 12 questions. “We have found a large margin of error in the demographics that attendees provide,” said Experient Chief Information Officer Brian Scott. “The more multiple choice options you give the less accurate the data is. We recommend no more than 12 to 15 options.”



President and Customer Experience & Operations Technology for Reed Exhibitions. “We measure customer satisfaction, and our satisfaction levels for the on-site registration experience are 85 percent or higher.”

That means convenience is key to enhancing the experience. “We don’t want attendees to wait in long lines,” Field said. “We want them on the floor. Our core focus is customer service.”

Reed has been working with its registration supplier, CompuSystems, and its contractor, Freeman, to build customized self-service kiosks equipped with faster printers. “We have developed what we feel is a game-changing multipurpose kiosk for our events,” Field said. “It’s environmentally friendly, using re-board, which is a lightweight, but very strong paperboard that has a tiny CO2 footprint to produce.”

With Freeman’s technology, Reed can print any design to spec on demand and then cut the flat board to create a custom kiosk design. It can be reused or discarded. “CompuSystems offers the guts to the kiosk, which include a beautiful 19-inch HD Samsung tablet and the latest color printing technology to enable a customer to walk up, scan and print in seconds — all powered by cellular technology and in some cases, running on battery power,” Field said. “This will help us reduce the footprint of registration, as well as find unique locations in halls, lobbies, hotel and airports.”

Reed tested a prototype of the kiosks at the Global Gaming Expo and Vision Expo in 2016. “When we added the kiosks, we found that 40-50 percent of attendees used them, and satisfaction levels went even higher,” Field said. The company officially rolled out the custom kiosks in September at Vision Expo 2017 in Las Vegas and plans to add more Reed shows in the coming months.

“Usage, evolution of the design and implementation will be driven by customer feedback,” Field said.

Repurposing Registration

In addition to speeding up the process, Reed and other show organizers are looking to reduce the footprint of registration so they can repurpose the space.

Shows are using the space for additional exhibits, sponsorships, social media hubs, association booths and more. “Since it’s the first impression of your brand on site, we would like to use that area for an experiential activity so attendees feel energized when they get to the show floor,” Field said.

“This is a trend we are seeing across many shows,” CompuSystems’ Williams said. “More clients are decentralizing registration.” That means registration is no longer primarily in one centralized location at the convention center. Many shows have added registration at hotels, airports, outside the convention center and even on shuttle buses.

As shows have moved away from mailing badges, processing a majority of registrations on site quickly and efficiently is driving the need for remote locations. “Ten years ago, 80 percent of shows mailed badges and 20 percent were processed on site,” said Experient’s Fugate. “Today, 80 percent of attendees are processed on site, and only 20 percent are mailed.”

Attendees seem to be embracing the convenience that remote locations offer. For the HIMMS Annual Conference & Exhibition (Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society), CompuSystems processed 7,000 registrations at the Orlando International Airport in March. CompuSystems is expecting to process 25,000 registrations at the McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas for International CES in January.

“It’s been effective,” Fugate said. “Many shows are finding higher utilization than expected, which has created bottlenecks in some remote areas and no lines at the convention center.” He said the next phase will include more communication with attendees about which locations are busy. “We’ve talked to one client about using displays at remote locations to show live video of different registration areas,” Fugate said.

“Remote registration is implemented at every show we work with,” said David Lawton, Executive Vice President of Sales for CDS. “We are using more and more handheld devices not tied to a counter.” He said 80 percent of the 180 shows CDS works with are using “linebusters”

- **The end of badges.** Can you imagine a day when your mobile device or watch serves as a badge? “It’s coming, but we aren’t there yet ... Exhibitors still want a visual identifier of who is a buyer,” said Reed’s Group Vice President and Customer Experience & Operations Technology Randy Field. “We need to start planning for it now. We believe the key is contact exchange, and some form of mobile technology will be the catalyst.”
- **Hiring data analysts, scientists & engineers.** In the coming years, the pressure will be on all organizations to more quickly deliver actionable analytic insights. “It’s a race to the moon in terms of data analytics,” said Experient Chief Information Officer Brian Scott. “We are seeing a cultural shift in a lot of organizations.”
- **DIY tools.** Smaller shows are already using registration software as a service (SaaS), but most larger events still want and need service from their registration vendor. “A big part of our future includes building tools that give clients the flexibility to do more on their own,” said CompuSystems President Chris Williams. “Our clients want service, but they also want to do more in-house.”
- **More mobile registration.** “A majority of attendees still don’t complete registration on their mobile device, but the number of those who do has been steadily increasing over the last two years,” said Scott. For some shows, 25 percent to 30 percent are completing registration through Experient via mobile, which he said is pretty high.
- **LR integration with beacons.** In December, Experient will launch SPOT, an eventBit feature within the lead-retrieval app. “Exhibitors can identify the type of attendees they are interested in meeting,” said Scott. “When those attendees are near their booth, exhibitors will get a notification via the SWAP, our lead-retrieval app.”

who can register attendees on the spot with handheld devices.

At SEMICON West in July, CDS processed and printed 3 percent of badges on shuttle buses from headquarters hotels to Moscone Center in San Francisco. “Linebusters offer a great sponsorship opportunity,” Lawton said. “Staff can be dressed in bright shirts and hats with the sponsor’s company name, logo and booth number.”

Better Analytics

“The biggest trend in registration is data-driven insights,” said Scott. “We are building a data analytics team and investing in training and personnel.”

All of the major registration companies are offering better data analytics tools. For example, CDS rolled out a new data warehousing and business intelligence (BI) tool this summer, after 16 months of development.

CDS clients now have access to city-specific historical data for their events and no longer have to create their own reports. As a result, they are able to compare attendance and revenue trends year-over-year using charts, graphics or dashboards. “Shows can slice and dice the data by demographics so they can personalize marketing to specific segments,” Lawton said.

For show organizers, automated features like these save time, money and resources. Early this year, CompuSystems also introduced a new BI tool, with all historical show data loaded into the system. “It’s all about the data and integration with marketing,” Williams said.

For Informa/Penton Exhibitions, CompuSystems has automated a process that used to take three registration managers an hour and a half each per week. “We can combine registration and financial data into dashboards so organizers can watch the trends and respond with the appropriate marketing strategies,” Williams said.

Unless show organizers want more customized reports, most of these new analytics tools are free for current customers.

Pricing Trends

Despite ongoing research and development spending by suppliers, registration

pricing is expected to be the same in 2018. “We don’t anticipate a price increase for show organizers,” said Lawton. “Exhibitors will typically see an increase of 2 percent to 3 percent every other year for lead-retrieval.”

CompuSystems and Experient also told TSE registration pricing will be flat in 2018. “The current model where lead-retrieval dictates the pricing is still in place,” Williams said. “It’s a bit easier to control the pricing for lead-retrieval.”

Pricing for beacons isn’t going down dramatically yet, but the technology is getting better and more accurate. “The main driver of costs initially are the tags,” said Scott. “As volume for us goes up, costs have been decreasing. It’s fair to say the tag cost has been reduced by 25 percent to 30 percent over the last year.”

Reed is budgeting to spend the same percentage on registration in 2018. “We are pushing our vendors on pricing and development,” Field said. Reed has invested in and deployed beacons at a handful of shows over the last two years, but Field said they aren’t ready to go all-in.

“We care first about ROI for the customer,” Field said. “BLE (Bluetooth Low

Energy) and NFC (near-field communication) technology is not cheap at a large scale, so we have to be selective where it delivers the most impact. We are adjusting and perfecting with each deployment, but we need to prove the technology before we maximize the investment.”

Reed believes the value is in the data to better understand its customers. “We are fortunate to be a part of the RELX Group, one of the largest data and analytics companies in the world,” Field said. “We leverage that resource to maximize our returns on data to ensure we garner a deeper understanding of our customers’ needs. If this technology provides value, it will be worth every penny. And we believe it will.”

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Custom Kiosks. Reed Exhibitions has been working with its registration supplier, CompuSystems, and its contractor, Freeman, to build customized self-service kiosks, which debuted at Vision Expo in September in Las Vegas.

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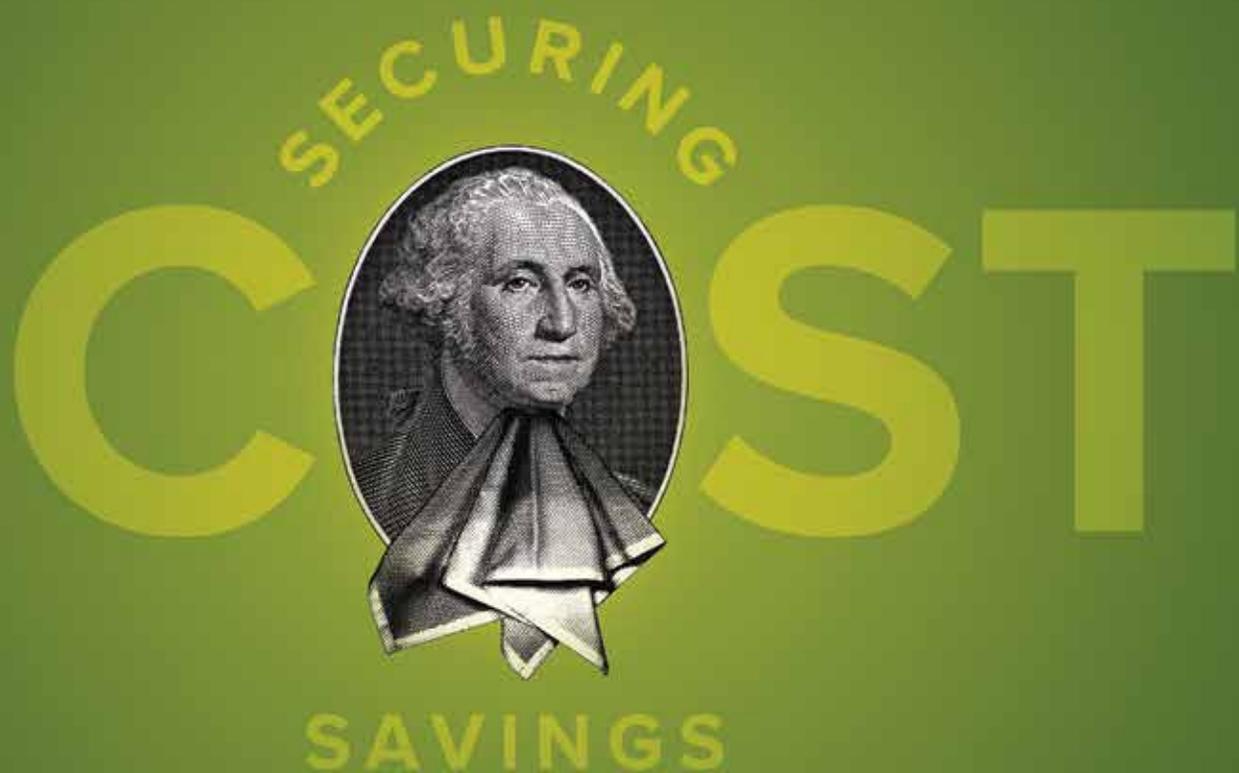
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