

# How to Incorporate New Tools and Technologies into Events and Tradeshow



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## Where Technology and Meetings Meet

As the cost to travel goes up, the importance of in-person events also goes up immeasurably. Gone are the days where executives gather quarterly to discuss last Quarter's results. Now, meetings are strategic gatherings that must move the business forward instead of merely talking about the business' past.

These meetings need to be technologically savvy in order to fulfill the demands of the business.

In-person voting can now be achieved quickly, easily and within the sometimes restrictive bylaws of a corporation with the help of Audience Response Systems.

Strategic "working sessions" can be easily put together using iPads or other tablets where ideas can be generated on the spot, edited and ultimately agreed upon with the help of PowerPoint presentations that can then be revised and augmented throughout the meeting.

Educational conferences need to be the best bang for one's educational buck given that budgets are tight so, these meetings need to be technologically advanced incorporating the instantaneous "chatter" of social media.

Also the use of hybrid meetings is very much on the upswing...using technology to combine the forces of those on-site individuals with those connected to the meetings with only a laptop offsite. Hybrid meetings allow visual connections through video and the exchange of ideas with online conference "centers" displayed on screens.

Green Meetings are not just a catch-phrase but truly achievable these days with smart use of technology and event planning know-how. Go green or stay home should be the motto of event planners heading into the future.

Embracing this technology takes some forward thinking on the part of meeting planners. This eBook should give you some substantial ideas on how to use all the technology that is available in the rental marketplace.

## The Future of Events

Now let's take a look at where event planning is heading including clever use of tweets and taking interactivity to a new level. All of these "future" thoughts really are here and now with the help of an event solution company, you can take advantage of these trends.

### Social Media (Linking, Friending and Twittering, oh my!)

Social media is going to have the most significant impact on event marketing and participation for 2012 and beyond. Establishing a Facebook Event Page and Fan Page will help in the establishment of viral marketing for your event.

- Creating a LinkedIn Group for pre- and post-event promotion and discussion will help build energy about the event and let networking carry on long after the meeting is over.
- In addition, LinkedIn allows a planner to establish an event and invite prospects to the event.
- Creating a Twitter group can allow attendees to communicate real-time during the event and allows the feed to be viewed on Plasma displays, kiosks, or iPads at the event.

### Audience Driven Interactivity: Presenters as Facilitators, not Lecturers

Break-out sessions at conferences are going to be more like a movie that has a sketchy outline, but the plotline hasn't been fully developed.

The attendees are going to drive the discussion to where they want to go, not where the speaker is, which requires flexibility.

Interactive tools such as iPads, Tablet PCs, Audience Response Systems, and smartphones are going to allow the audience to send instantaneous feedback to the speaker, respond to questions, and assess the mood in the room.

The best presentations will end up being those that take on a life of their own...allowing the audience to drive the content instead of the content being driven by the speaker's PowerPoint presentation.

### Up-to-date Information, 24/7

In today's dynamic digital world, participants want to know what is going on, when it is happening. Any changes to schedules, cancellation or rescheduling of programs, weather alerts, or social get-together ideas can easily be broadcast and displayed on kiosks, through Twitter, Facebook, or other mobile applications.

No more waiting for information, meeting attendees demand it now!

## Hybrid Meetings

Partly live and partly virtual, meeting planners are going to be coordinating more and more video streaming to participants who cannot or do not have the budget to travel. It is a “win-win” for the planner because they will receive an increase in revenue stream that possibly wasn’t there before by charging a fee to participate via the Web.

## Green Meetings

No longer a “nice to have” with meetings, participants and planners alike are interested in reducing the amount of paper, plastic, and carbon emissions associated with meeting costs.

USB drives and Tablet PCs will replace binders, china and glass will replace plastic and Styrofoam, and participants will look to alternative modes of transportation and carpooling to meetings and events.

Tradeshaw booths will be stocked with iPads, Tablet PCs, and Kiosks instead of brochures and giveaways.

## ROI Measurement in a Digital World

By tracking “tweets”, installing Google Analytics, collecting email addresses, and/or implementing a Pay-Per-Click (PPC) marketing strategy, it is going to be the wave of the future to generate reports on Internet activity and track it back, ultimately to attendance at an event.

## Ways to Save Money using Technology



### 1. SAVE MONEY ON STAFFING – Set up registration as a 24/7 self-serve enrollment using kiosks

Kiosks are free-standing computer units, enclosed in a casing that has a processor and touch screen display unit. Kiosks can save organizations money because they allow access to vast amounts of information, such as event agendas, registration, check-in, and support, all from one location.

Kiosks can also be a source of up-to-the-minute information. They are like an additional member of the event team, but they don't require training, recruitment, or breaks. In fact, they are available to attendees 24/7, because they are self-serve.

Kiosks also save on paper costs, because most forms can be filled out onscreen. They can be set up to accept credit cards, thus allowing for walk-in registrations at events.

Kiosks work well at a tradeshow booth because they can loop video, photos, and allow tradeshow traffic register for a giveaway.

### 2. Save Money on data collection/survey polling using Audience Response Systems (ARS)

These handheld radio-frequency keypads allow interaction between the event planning team, audience, and speaker. They are used to gather answers to questions, feedback from evaluations, or testing of knowledge.

ARS can save money because there is no printing or shipping of forms, event organizers do not have to spend hours or days deciphering and tallying surveys, and they provide instantaneous and accurate data collection that can be analyzed on the spot or archived for future use.



### 3. No Printing of Registration Forms/Questionnaires

By using kiosks and ARS devices, you can make up-to-the minute changes to forms, questionnaires even the agenda (Adding a speaker? No problem. Make the edits, upload the document and see the update immediately). Plus, you can save your printing budget and have current information readily available at your attendee's fingertips with these technology tools.

### 4. Get rid of binders and conference notes

Use iPads to allow attendees to browse presentations, take notes and then send them all back to the office via email. Your attendees will love not having to carry a big binder home and the speakers will love the last minute ability to shift and adjust their presentation.



iPads look like a notebook and can run approximately 300,000 applications, and can be easily accessed sitting, standing, or walking. iPads save planners money because the entire conference and tradeshow can be loaded onto the unit. They eliminate paper and binder costs; reduce the need to print sales collateral for the exhibit booth and/or maps of the tradeshow floor.

iPads can be an extra tradeshow salesperson, running video, photos, and collecting email addresses. iPads are Wi-Fi accessible, thus allowing users to direct questions to a speaker, access all Social Media platforms, and customize meeting applications.

## Cool Ways to use iPads

iPads are the “coolest” technology out there for meetings today. There are so many ways to use this cutting-edge technology making your event “hip”, green and fun.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

**Conference and Exhibitor Guides:** No more conference binders to ship to the event! The agenda, speaker presentations and videos, tradeshow maps, products and services can be all in one place, the size of a thin notebook.

**Replacement of Laptops:** Instead of having attendees lug their laptops to a conference, event planners could offer attendees the use of an iPad while at the event, and have sponsors and volunteers available to show them how to use the technology. iPads weigh a little more than 1 pound and can easily be used sitting, standing, or event walking. They have a long battery life, too.

**Sponsorships:** iPads allow for a whole new way to market and gain sponsors at an event. Video clips can act as commercials and be integrated before or after a speaker bio or presentation. Sponsors can have their

name and logo on the actual iPad. The uses and applications are endless, especially in a large conference and tradeshow.

## DURING THE MEETING

**Taking Notes:** Attendees can make annotations, with their finger, over the PowerPoint presentation or they can type up notes with a virtual keyboard. Either way, the notes can be emailed to the attendee's work computer after the presentation for further review and follow-up. In addition, participants can import documents, create to-do lists, or initiate a mind mapping application.

**Speaker Q & A:** iPads can be placed on tables and attendees can enter questions to the speaker real-time. The event organizer can rank the questions and the speaker can either email or tweet responses to questions that did not have time to be addressed in the session.

**Interactive Demos:** Tradeshow Sponsors can use the iPad in their booths for creating demos of their products or services, running games or quizzes on the unit, and allowing the Booth personnel to easily gather email addresses and upload those to the CRM system at the corporate office. Because the iPad has a great speaker system and HD graphics, it is perfect to highlight products or venue properties.

**Navigation of the Building and/or City:** The iPad has a built-in GPS system that creates a blue dot where a person is standing and moves as they walk. This can be overlaid with the map of a convention center. In addition, if a person is looking for an address of a restaurant, the iPad can bring up step-by-step directions.

## AFTER THE MEETING

**Portable Hotel Concierge:** Because it is Wi-Fi and Internet ready, restaurant and city attractions can be easily brought up on the iPad. In addition, attendees can see the reviews and make informed decision about what to do and where to eat.

## Event Time Savers: How Technology can help

Saving time is often as important as saving money. Both resources are in short supply and the onus is on the meeting planner to assure the meeting attendees that things go smoothly and efficiently. Here are a few ways how technology at your next event can be real time saver.

### Mobile Event Applications

These “apps” provide the full event experience from scheduling to networking to maps and surveys, sometimes as an all-in-one application. Many of these tools empower attendees with interactivity and allow tradeshow exhibitors to connect with the right people at the event.

At [www.meetingapps.com](http://www.meetingapps.com), an event planner can scan hundreds of iPad applications that are categorized by need. The Android Tablet PC applications are coming soon to this website. An example of an iPad technology application is Ootoweb ([www.ootoweb.com](http://www.ootoweb.com)) which gives the event planner, all in one application:

- Event Registration and Attendee Management
- Room Block Management
- Marketing Tools
- On-site Tools
- Payment Processing and
- Reporting Capability

### Self-service Kiosks

Now you can check attendees in, take payments, provide agenda and speaker information, act as a guide around the city, and allow Internet and email access, run sponsor videos and many, many other applications. These units save time because they can be accessed 24/7 and the touch screen navigation tools, make it intuitively easy for participants to navigate to the right application.

### Audience Response Systems

This is a great way to engage an audience with very little set up time. These units can poll the audience members on new products or services, survey the attendees about the event and/or speaker, and test their knowledge. No papers to hand out, collect, tally or report. It is all completed with one little unit in the palm of the attendee’s hand!

Plus, attendees can see the results and act on them (remember waiting for the survey results or research reports to devise next steps? Those days are gone).

## Online Software and Email Blasts for Registration

Lots of tools online can be used to cut down on printing and mailing of invitations. A few of the platforms available, some free and some fee, are: Evite, EventBrite, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Cvent. Constant Contact is an email blast system that can connect an email to the social media platforms.

## Online Hotel Review Sites

Now, you don't have to be surprised when you get to an event. Modeled after TripAdvisor, these sites provide peer reviews of meeting facilities by and for meeting planners. The two currently available are Meeting Universe and Review Events, but more will continue to emerge as this online space grows.

## Microsoft Word and Excel Spreadsheet Templates

Don't reinvent the wheel. If a spreadsheet or word document has been thought of for an event, it's probably now available as an event planning application including conference agendas, hotel room assignments, attrition calculators, food and beverage budget trackers and break even analysis. Corbin Ball has a great many of the resources listed on his website at [www.corbinball.com/tipstools](http://www.corbinball.com/tipstools).

## Web Analytics

Tracking tools can help planners gain insights about traffic to their online meeting registration site. Event planners can see what pages attendees are spending time on, how long they spent on the website, and what percentage actually registered for the conference with up-to-the-minute results instead of waiting for checks and forms to be mailed in. The use of early bird offers can be adjusted according to response and instant discounts or up sells can be added depending on registration

## Greening Your Event: Good for Your Image, Great for the Event

### RETHINK, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, and RENT

“Greening” an event or meeting involves all aspects of the planning process, including a detailed collaboration of everyone, from planner to supplier, from venue to attendees. Below are some tips to make your next event much greener, thus improving your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and image.



#### Audio Visual

- Use Kiosks for digital signage, advertising, and sponsorship promotion instead of a printed program
- Eliminate or limit paper. Instead rent Audience Response Systems for surveys, feedback, or training purposes. Rent iPads, Tablet PCs, or laptops and download the prospectus and sponsorship information onto these devices.
- Renting AV equipment is earth friendly. It promotes the element of reuse.
- When contracting equipment, rent local. Locally-owned companies stimulate the economy by creating local jobs. In addition, by renting local there is no shipping or long-haul trucking of equipment, thus reducing carbon emissions.

#### Room

- Use cloth tablecloths and napkins.
- Choose centerpieces that can be taken home (i.e., potted plants, fresh flowers, or fruit).
- Ask that the hotel NOT put out pads and pens at every seat.

#### Food & Beverage

- Have the caterer or hotel use china and glass; no disposable items.
- No bottled water; the bottle usually ends up in a landfill because most people throw the bottle away even when there are recyclable containers in view. Have pitchers of water, juice, or aluminum cans of soda available.
- Set up recyclable disposable bins next to the garbage and encourage its use often.

#### Transportation

- Reduce carbon emissions by encouraging and participating in carpooling.
- Let attendees know of all the alternative ways to get to the meeting and post those ways, with phone numbers and website, on event host's website.
- If appropriate, encourage cycling and walking to event or during free nights at a conference.



## Why Rent vs. Buy Interactive Technology

When considering the rental of audiovisual equipment versus purchasing, there are many factors to evaluate. If the technology is not in use every day, it may benefit the company's bottom line to rent. Here are **four questions** to answer when comparing the rent vs. buy scenario.

### **First, how often are individuals in the organization giving presentations?**

If it is every day or several times a day, it may make sense to purchase the technology. However, if it is once a month or less, or the presentation schedule is very sporadic, it probably makes better sense renting audio visual equipment. Many of the interactive technology tool rentals can be negotiated on a daily or weekly rate.

### **Second, what is the back-up plan?**

What happens should the projector bulb burn out or the PowerPoint presentation equipment fails? When an organization does not have a need for multiple projectors or laptops and does not have audio visual staff to support the presenters, renting the presentation equipment can ensure the quality and serve as back-up (if the equipment should fail). Plus, onsite certified technicians know how to replace and repair equipment effectively and efficiently.

### **Third, what is the total cost of ownership (TCO)?**

This must be considered when buying a substantial piece of hardware or software. How much is that next lamp bulb going to cost? When is it likely to be replaced? What happens when the equipment is damaged prematurely and needs replacing right away? What about keeping up with technology improvements such as 3D Plasmas, 4G iPad or Tablet PCs? With AV rentals for an event, those long term maintenance, repair, and technology obsolescence costs are not the company's to worry about.

### **Fourth, what about storage space and transportation costs?**

Storing kiosks, screens, wireless audio response systems, all take space and must be stored in a secure setting to prevent theft. Who is going to set up, tear down, store and inventory the equipment? When traveling to different offices and customer locations, audio visual equipment will add considerable weight and bulk to the traveling entourage. If flying to a location, event planners may need to carry on some of the equipment for fear that it may break during transport or be stolen.

Audio visual rentals, on the other hand, are brought directly to the event location by the event rental services company. The rentals are handled with care and packaged in the highest quality containers which ensure the absolute minimum of potential damage to their moving parts.

Having the capability to make quality presentations is definitely standard operations for many businesses. So before investing in audiovisual technology, make sure to take into consideration the questions as noted above.

## How do Locally Owned AV Companies compare to National Vendors?

In general, locally-owned and operated audiovisual companies have more time and energy vested in the region they serve from their employees that live and work in the area to supporting the community. There are, however, different considerations to factor into your decision when deciding to use local AV Companies vs. National Vendors. Some of these considerations include pricing, speed, reliability and reputation.

### **Are the Audio Visual products of the same quality?**

Yes. Most AV companies rent the same equipment. A national vendor does not necessarily mean higher quality equipment; it just means they have a lot of that type of equipment.

Sometimes renting through a national vendor makes sense when timing and a large volume of products are your priorities. For example, renting iPads for a large conference can be handled by either a national or local vendor, depending upon product availability and reliability of vendor.

### **Can a client save a lot of money by going with a national contract?**

That depends. A national firm may need to ship equipment all over the United States, and this fee needs to be calculated into the rental charge. If AV technicians need to travel long distances and stay onsite, mileage, hotel, and meal charges are added to the client's bill. The client needs to factor all of these charges into the equation. Many times, in the long run, the local firm is less expensive.

### **Will a live person from the company take the time to talk to the client?**

Yes, but with a local firm, the response time is usually guaranteed within the same day. With a national vendor, it may be more difficult to locate the right "live" person.

If your event has a lot of details related to AV rentals then, using a local company that will have a skilled technician familiar with the event from the start of the process may be optimum. Also, local vendors usually have a better familiarity with local venues which will help immensely in the coordination and ease of the event.

### **Are local firms and national vendors licensed, bonded, and insured?**

Yes.

### **What other services do local rental companies specialize in?**

In addition to renting AV equipment, the local firm can consult on the best equipment for the meeting or event, make creative recommendations, provide layout designs, install, support, and teardown all equipment, and be onsite with certified AV technicians during the event.

## Why Partner with SmartSource Rentals?

### Here are the Top Ten Reasons:

1. Over **25 years of experience** and customer **satisfaction**
2. **Same Day Response** on Quick Quote or ability to engage in **Live Chat**
3. **Cutting-edge Technology** with a very deep inventory of the most popular brands
4. Project Management **Consultative Services** with a knowledgeable sales team, certified AV technicians and experienced project managers to equal a fantastic event, prior to and when on-site.
5. **Flexible rental periods** (1-day, 1-week, 1-month or longer) to meet specific needs
6. **Local presence in 21 major metro areas** provides reassurance that we are only minutes away to service the event with more inventory, support, or staff
7. **National Presence** of Total Technology Rentals
8. **Customized event technology rental packages** to meet budgetary requirements
9. **No-worry guarantee** on last-minute adjustments to equipment rental needs
10. **Licensed, Bonded, and Insured**



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