



Beacon Technology – What is it and will it work for your event?

Today's event attendee relies heavily on their mobile device to check email, stay in touch at work and maintain connection with family and the world at large through texts, alerts and social media. Because of this, conference mobile apps and mobile alerts have become increasingly popular at corporate and association conferences and events. While the on-site conference printed guide remains a staple, the mobile app is a great companion and offers another "on the go," real-time channel of communication. With beacon technology, event apps are even more personal and powerful. Beacons work in conjunction with your conference mobile app to deliver location-based specialized messaging and content.

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Beacons come in different shapes and sizes. They are usually small devices (think palm of your hand) that can be placed under tables, behind signs, in purses and pockets and on walls. They can be programmed to deliver pop-up content, specific messages and alerts to an attendee's mobile device when they are within a set distance of the beacon.

What can I do with it?

Meeting Expectations has used beacons in several ways with its clients. Below are a few sample methods on how beacons can improve your conference communications and processes:

1. **Welcome messages:** Set up a beacon at your registration area. A simple greeting of "Welcome to the conference! The next few days are going to be jam packed with events and we are so glad you here" can be an effective way to say hello, set the mood and greet your attendees. When they enter the conference venue doors, this message can pop up on their phones. It's a delightful surprise. (Likewise, a well-placed beacon en route to the airport can offer a grateful farewell and let them know how much their participation was appreciated.)
2. **Information messages:** Set up a beacon near the entrance of your tradeshow area. In some mobile apps you can link content to the beacon message. When the attendee approaches the entrance of the show area, you can have a map message pop up: "The tradeshow floor is a 40,000 square ft. area designed to show you the latest technologies and products. Use the mobile app map to discover it all! (Link to map in the mobile app.)"



3. **Sponsor messages:** Beacons are a great way to highlight your top sponsors and can even be sold as part of a sponsor package. Place the beacon inside the tradeshow floor in specific locations to draw attendees to certain areas: “Visit Star Partner in booth 305. They are having a giveaway at 1 p.m.!”
4. **Logistic messages:** Sometimes attendees need a little reminder about events and where to go. If the layout of the convention center or venue is confusing to attendees (even with signage and maps), use a beacon to show them the way. Place the beacon near the elevators or stairs: “The keynote speaker is at the top of the stairs, take a left and enter the North Ballroom.” Or “Lunch is being served in Room 22B – walk straight ahead through the double doors.”
5. **Crowd control:** See the crowd is going in one direction and you want them to head to another on the exhibit floor? Put the beacon in your pocket or purse and walk through the crowd: “Special announcement in booth 1400. Light refreshments and snacks will be served.” We’ve used this roaming beacon method and the results were instant. The sponsor went from an empty booth to a busy booth packed with potential leads in minutes.
6. **“Uh-oh, need to smooth this over”** messages: Let’s face it, sometimes issues pop up that you didn’t anticipate: a change of speaker, a last minute high profile sponsor comes in or even a misspelled name or change of time in the program guide. Use beacon technology to get out a message out in minutes. Simply place the beacon in a high traffic area: “Join us for Kelly Smith’s can’t-miss session on Marketing and Social Media now located in Room 131 B at 10 a.m.”

Great ideas, but how do I know what type of messages I need and where the beacons should go?

Meeting Expectations is here to help. Our event technology team and marketing team work in tandem to figure out a plan that works best for you. We understand that each conference is different, each area of the conference has a specific purpose and each day of the conference can have a different focus. We work with you to understand your complete event and provide technology applications for your corporate, sponsorship or association needs. We also know that things happen on the fly and are skilled at creating “in the moment,” on-site solutions (see number 4, 5 and 6 above). Let our team help you decide how beacons could be part of your next event.

How can beacons work at your next event?

Please contact us at info@meetingexpectations.com.



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Mastermind Sessions

What Are They and How Pop-Up Learning Experiences
Drive Attendee Engagement



Essentially a mastermind session is a pop-up learning experience powered by crowdsourced information and spontaneous participant interaction. “Great,” you may be thinking, “What does that mean?” We like to think of Masterminds as a “disruptor” to traditional conference education and networking, breaking through the monotony of a typical PowerPoint presentation format. Here’s a look at the process of creating a successful mastermind at your next conference.

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Mastermind Sessions 101

Mastermind sessions use a bottom-up learning style – topics are selected by the attendees and content is created by them on the spot. The session lacks a strict structure and can inspire an environment of change and collaboration. The session, consisting of 5 to 15 individuals, includes a facilitator or “mastermind” with extensive knowledge in the overall subject area. The facilitator is present to guide the conversation by encouraging everyone to participate and can also note any takeaways for the participants.



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Selecting the Topics

Prior to the conference or during the conference, participants can be polled on mastermind topics. These topics represent their viewpoint and unique perspectives, giving the attendee an active say in the content. And often, the topics may include subjects an event committee would not have thought about.

Selecting a Facilitator (the Mastermind)

An essential element to this format is having a strong knowledgeable facilitator and overall subject matter expert. The facilitator can be selected from conference speakers, conference registrants or be invited to the conference as an industry leader. Being a facilitator means understanding the balance of influencing the discussion while not taking it over. They are meant to steer the group through a positive peer interaction flow. Because the focus is on active and collaborative learning, the facilitator can let the attendees select the topic and encourage an expert attendee to lead the discussion.

Structure – or Lack Thereof

The sessions are informal – usually chairs are set up in a circle and placed in several spots in the venue. Why? It lends itself to the nature of the event. Participants can come and go as the 45-minute mastermind session takes place in the lobby or exhibit hall. As we've mentioned, mastermind sessions can be planned out with participants knowing the topic before they take a seat or completely spontaneous with the topic being selected by an attendee at the start of the event. A mastermind session does not have to take place in one physical spot, it can take place through any number of online meeting platforms, increasing the variety of participants and the chances of having a skilled mastermind subject expert present.

Is it for everyone?

Someone who is new to the concept might be skeptical of an open process that appears to have little structure and relies heavily on attendee participation; but today, there is a constant struggle for mindshare and attendees expect an experience of full immersion – not one that is static and one dimensional. Mastermind sessions appeal to individuals that are seeking out solutions and best practices for innovative topics including policy change, technology challenges and creating unique opportunities. The discussion is sparked by the group dynamics and can lead to insightful debates, new perspectives and event strong partnerships.



And Finally...

The format puts power back in the hand of your conference attendee and serves as a reminder to why they are attending the event in the first place: for growth, education and connection with individuals facing similar challenges. The unique interactions they share with each other are what make events memorable and meaningful.

There is much more to discover about launching Mastermind sessions. If you'd like to learn more and talk to us about creating pop-up learning sessions, please contact us at info@meetingexpectations.com. We can't wait to get to started on "disrupting" the format at your next event.



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