

# TECHtrek

## Technology's Slow but Steady Trek into Trade Shows

### A Look at Some of the Latest Innovations

BY RENEE DI IULIO, SENIOR EDITOR,  
NEWS & DIRECTORIES,  
AND SANDI CAIN, NEWS EDITOR

**T**he trade show industry has been traditionally slow in fully embracing new technologies, even as they have been the venues for the technology's introduction. Show organizers often wait until a new service has been proven before adopting it internally or offering it to their clients. If a technology is adopted too soon, it could do harm through unreliable service or cost overruns. But some show organizers are early adopters, blazing a trail that others will soon follow. Here's a look at what's new and what is catching on in the trade show industry.

*Continued on page 28*

Continued from page 27

## Facilities: Energy Management, Conservation and Use

Energy conservation seems to be driving many of the changes in convention center architecture and management. Energy management systems are increasingly sophisticated, allowing engineers to run entire buildings from one console—or even from home during an emergency.

More buildings are incorporating sustainable design processes, in which technology will play a role. “LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] provides many opportunities to apply technology,” says Donald Grinberg, FAIA, principal architect and director of convention center architecture, with HNTB Architecture. Examples include waterless toilets and solar-generated electricity. Moscone Center has a solar array on a portion of its roof, notes Grinberg.

Convention centers are also incorporating more self-service kiosks. These can assist with airline check-in, city information and event registration. “Las Vegas provides kiosks where users can obtain their boarding passes for most airlines,” offers Grinberg as an example.

Other advances increase functionality, though often at a price. Hydraulic lifts and risible seating need a high-level of multi-purposeness to justify the cost. These have been most often seen in Europe. One innovation that Grinberg’s notes is glass that changes from transparent to dark with the touch of a button. “There is an electronic system inside the glass, but it’s expensive,” he says.

## Lead Retrieval: Collection and Fulfillment

Expense can be worth it if the cost justifies the returns. Unfortunately, low lead follow-up can negatively impact exhibitor returns, and industry research suggests that 80 percent of all trade show leads are handled improperly. Numerous lead-gathering and tracking systems are on the market but after that, companies

often drop the ball. Responding to leads is often outside the exhibit manager’s control and in the realm of sales. Leads to Sales, Inc., attempts to fill this gap, offering lead fulfillment directly to exhibitors.

Another new tool is reverse lead retrieval, and several companies offer variations of that tool. CompuSystems, Inc. offers BuyerConnect; J Spargo & Associates, Inc.’s system is titled expointeract!; and SMART-reg International, Inc. offers Show Floor Detective—Who Swiped Me? These services put follow-up in the hands of the attendee, allowing them to see in which booths they had their badges swiped. Some of the systems deliver the information through email;

others use the Internet. SMART-reg offers exhibitors the option of adding podcasts (taped at the show), video files and/or literature links.

These programs have thus far been well received. CompuSystems’ Paul McCaffray, executive vice president and COO, notes an average of 35 percent of email respondents open the message, and 50 percent use a service.

Regardless of the follow up, exhibitors still typically aim to collect as many leads as possible. Wireless tools have been developed to broaden lead capturing capabilities. Mobile units for use in the exhibit or at networking events can help to gather relevant information through

Continued on page 30



SMART-reg’s Show Floor Detective is a reverse lead retrieval service which allows attendees to see who they visited on the show floor.



Continued from page 28

conversations. "Using Bluetooth technology, we can support multiple portable devices in the booth, linked to one printer or laptop," says Dave Frey, director of communications and partnerships with J. Spargo.

The information can be directly imported to data management programs, while upgrades to USB makes it easier to physically transport the information collected. "The USB memory drive is light years better than floppies or CDs because it has more storage, is more portable and has reusability," says McCaffray.

## Marketing/Sponsorships: The Wow Factor

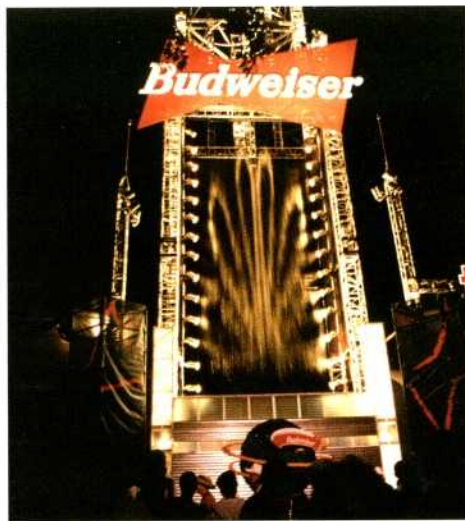
Technology marketing tools seek to achieve similar wow capability. The CW Allen Group launched three such products this year: the 360-Degree Theater,



Interactive marketing is more effective, according to Charles Allen.

H2Ovation and Ground/Wall FX. Designed to draw and hold attention, they provide excellent sponsorship opportunities. The 360-Degree Theater is a circular, rotational LED display, with a small footprint and hi-definition quality commercials. H2Ovation delivers marketing messages, including three-dimensional logos, with water. Ranging in size from 4 feet to 50 feet, the technology can be used to create text, pictures and kinetic images. Ground/Wall FX is an interactive audio/video display—an experiential presentation, according to Allen—that permits viewers to interact with the dynamic visuals displayed. The system projects an 8' by 10' image onto the ground or a wall, which is monitored by state-of-the-art motion sensors. A wide range of templates is available.

"People are more receptive to marketing messages when enjoying themselves," notes Charles W. Allen, chairman and CEO. The systems are meant to be fun,



H2Ovation creates attention-getting images using water.

creating an experience and stimulating the attendee. They are also meant to be fiscally responsible, generating revenue for the organizer. Allen notes many shows adopt a multiple-sponsor model for these tools. "A lobby location is used, and several exhibitors can benefit from the added exposure at a reduced cost," says Allen.

BDMetrics Inc. and Rovion, Inc., have partnered to bring a similar wow to event web sites. With Face2Face Keywords, exhibitors sponsor a keyword on the event web site's search engine. When a visitor to the web site searches that keyword, an exhibitor spokesperson walks onto the screen (there is no traditional TV-type box around him) and delivers a targeted message. Attendees can click from there for additional information or to schedule an appointment at the show. The opportunities for sponsorship are as broad as the industry's vocabulary. "Once you start thinking about how many keywords there are, the opportunities expand," says Len Ostroff, Rovion's CEO.

A similar service is available for show organizers themselves. With Face2Face Tradeshow, the show organizer executive can walk out onto the screen and greet the attendee. In addition to providing a more personal type of interaction, the tool can also deliver justification for show attendance.

BDMetrics and Rovion handle all of the video production, editing and compression, as well as hosting and serving. "The service is completely seamless for the attendee, exhibitor and show organizer," says Ostroff.

## Registration: Roaming and Tracking

Registration services have typically required that the attendee put forth the effort—visiting the web site, searching for seminars and exhibitors, checking in at the registration desk. Technological advances in this area serve to bring registration and related services to the attendee.



CDS' Onsite Wireless Will Call permits roaming registration.

One of Convention Data Services' (CDS) hottest products is its Onsite Wireless Will Call. Show organizers can use the device to allow staff to roam the registration area, printing badges and/or



David Lawton, CDS

conducting surveys in real-time. The handheld unit can search for a registrant by any field in the database, including name, organization and membership number (if the organizer is an association). It is

Continued on page 32



**Providing Fail-Safe Registration  
& Lead Capture Solutions with  
Passionate Customer Service**

**Call Today!**  
**888-999-9169**  
**[www.SMART-reg.com](http://www.SMART-reg.com)**

Continued from page 30

designed for speed, able to print 10 badges per minute.

Organizers can use the unit to reduce wait times during rush periods, encourage greater interaction with attendees and exhibitors and generate revenue. The mobile device offers new sponsorship opportunities, such as shirts on the wire—less will call providers.

SMART-reg has debuted Agenda Printing Kiosks, where attendees can access the events for which they have registered and print out their calendar.

will use the service next year to provide pre-registered attendees with this data more quickly, at the same time keeping

these guests out of registration lines.

Self-serve badge-printing kiosks can provide similar benefits, providing faster service and sponsorship opportunities. “Organizers can get more people on the floor in a shorter amount of time,” says McCaffray.

Organizers can also increase participation in events by matching them to exhibitor interests. CompuSystems can work with the organizer to develop a registration survey that will elicit an attendee’s objectives; the software then matches those interests with related education and exhibitor offerings. “If we can make it easy for attendees to see what is available, they will embrace it more,” says McCaffray.

In turn, show organizers are becoming more interested in tracking their attendees. Knowing where they spend their time can help to justify programs and improve offerings. Companies have been experimenting with RFID, but its expense has limited its use. In the meantime, CME collection stations are beginning to track conference attendees. SMART-reg does this using RFID.

J. Spargo will debut CEU/CME real-time collection stations this year. Attendees scan their badges as they enter and/or exit sessions. The system, which is integrated with the registration database, tracks their credits. J. Spargo’s Frey expects this real-time capability to redefine the way the way these programs are handled. Organizers benefit through immediate credit tracking, and can reduce the resources needed to mail certificates after a show while increasing customer satisfaction through immediate delivery of certificates onsite.

SMART-reg has debuted a similar service, using RFID to track attendee credits.

## PR and Buzz

Immediacy is also important to the media—perhaps more so. In response to the needs of a show’s journalists, PR Newswire has launched MediaRoom ShowCase. The service allows exhibitors to create standalone web sites that target the audiences they want to see at the show.

The exhibitors can build and edit the site themselves, using simple interfaces. Up to 15 files in multiple formats can be uploaded, including text, broadcast and multimedia content. Beta users cited the unique, branded URL and the ability to make changes as features of the system they valued.

Services also exist to track press mentions. *The Hollywood Reporter* used Nielsen BuzzMetrics to track the products getting the most attention by consumers prior to the recent *International Consumer Electronics Show (CES)*. The technology examines consumer-generated media (CGM) for online “buzz,” including online discussions, opinions, experiences and recommendations.

## Communications: Video Services, More Bandwidth, Free Wireless

Wireless and web casting are two services increasing in use now that they have penetrated the market. Smart City offers web-casting services to its clients through a partnership with iStreamPlanet Company. According to Keith McNeely, Smart City’s director of operations for the Las Vegas Convention Center, more exhibitors take advantage of the service than show organizers. He suggests the tool can be used to broadcast segments of the show and serve as outreach or a revenue generator.

As this tool catches on, the company is researching new services, such as IP [Internet Protocol] video and VoIP [Voice over IP]. “Everyone talks about VoIP, but in reality, many of them are not using it when they come to a show,” says McNeely.

The advanced services, particularly video, require more bandwidth, and

Continued on page 34



### Agenda Printing Kiosk

Tap your Badge to see your Agenda!



Personalized Agenda for:  
Arnie Roberts

Day	Event	Room	Description
Mon 8:00-9:00 am	8:00 am	103	SMART-REG: Mobile Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training
Tue 8:00-9:00 am	8:00 am	113	Firehouse Quick Drive: Rescuing Trapped Firefighters, It's Every Firefighters Job!
Tue 8:00-9:00 am	2:00 pm	102	Rescue Workshop
Wed 8:00-9:00 am	10:00 am	104	Evidence-Based Disaster Triage: Increasing Survivability without Piling God
Wed 8:00-9:00 am	4:00 pm	108	Water Emergencies
Thu 8:00-9:00 am	10:15 am	201	"Proceeding The Next 100": Solutions For Safety & Effectively Searching Your
Thu 8:00-9:00 am	12:00 pm	208	Rapid Intervention Teams: Mowdy, Mowdy, Mowdy - Is Anybody Liferling?
Thu 8:00-9:00 am	8:30 pm	102	SMART Medical Overnight
Fri 8:00-9:00 am	8:00 am	108	Self Storage Facilities: Are They Any In Your Response Area?
Fri 8:00-9:00 am	2:00 pm	301	When Learning Gets in the Way of Education



Attendees at shows with SMART-reg's Agenda Print Kiosk can print their classes at self-service kiosks.



At the Great American Trucking Show 2006, SMART-reg wireless bridges closed the gap between networks.

*Continued from page 32*

organizers have been increasing their demands over time. McNeely notes that bigger shows can order 18MB or even 25MB of bandwidth.

Hard wiring is still important, even as wireless use increases. "Wireless does not yet serve everyone's bandwidth requirements," says Grinberg. IT consultants are beginning to look at enhanced category 6 wiring, which can carry a broader band signal.

Wiring can be expensive, however, particularly for larger shows. To help defray the costs of physically traversing a large space, SMART-reg offers clients wireless bridges. The pole-mounted devices can bridge a distance of 5 miles in the U.S. with a clear line of sight. SMART-reg clients have used the bridges to wirelessly integrate two conventions at the same center, to link outside demonstrations to the show network and to connect separate registration areas.

In the meantime, the wireless fee or free debate continues. "Boston has started offering wireless free to its occupants, which might signal a change in wireless as a profit center," says Grinberg.

## Security: Screening and Safety Precautions

Technology is changing the way safety and security are addressed in the meetings and trade show industries as well as in other facets of business.

Sniffex, Inc. of Irving, Texas produces a hand-held multi-explosive detection device that operates from distances of up to 35 feet (100 meters) and can detect all nitrous oxide-based explosives. It can be used to sweep large quantities of cargo or freight, cars and parking lots or entire buildings, including stadiums and arenas. It operates by 'sniffing' out nitrous oxide radicals using an interference field pattern. It can locate explosives through

concrete, brick, metal or soil.

The 1.3-pound device includes an antenna that rotates in the direction of the explosive or weapon as personnel walk the area with the device. It takes just a couple of hours of training to become proficient in its use. Attendees of a safety and security conference in Southern California last year were able to learn the basics in just a few minutes.

Chicago-based Dietze Enterprises Inc. has developed an RFID wristband for trade show participants that includes a chip embedded with customized information about the attendee. Vaughn Dietze said it can be adapted to include emergency medical and contact information about the attendee as an extra security precaution for participants who don't speak much English, who run in show-related marathons or who head out for a round of golf during the event.

Users can read or write to the chip, so data can be updated. The wristband can only be read from a distance of about six inches, he said, alleviating concerns about skimming data. The wristbands are reusable, simply by placing a new chip inside.

Secured Entry/Event Screen, Newport Beach, Calif., provides a digital walk-through security system that distinguishes banned items from ordinary items like car keys and displays where the items are concealed on a computer monitor. The person being screened need not empty pockets or disrobe for the screening to be effective. It also can be used to protect proprietary information by preventing attendees from bringing cameras or

**Donna Lewis**  
**Diabetes**  
**Taking Insulin**  
**Allergic to Penicillin**

Dietze Enterprises, Inc. has developed an RFID wristband for trade show participants that includes a chip embedded with customized information about the attendee.

recording devices into a session.

Secured Entry has an affiliate, EventScreen, which mounts liquid-crystal displays at the walk-through sensors to show video and advertising to the guests as they're being screened. Ticket and credential scanning options can be integrated into the walk-through system, providing real-time information for crowd management. As people are scanned, their images are captured on the screen, making it easier for registration personnel to create a personalized badge by the time the person is through security.

The system has been used at the Golden Globe Awards and the GRAMMY Awards for several years. Last year, the company provided services at the *Volkswagen North American Dealer Meeting*, the *United Jewish Communities General Assembly* and the *California Tourism Safety & Security Conference Tech Expo*.

These shows are just some of the early adopters of new technology. Others will come, and technology will continue its slow and steady trek into trade shows.

Reach Charles Allen, The CW Allen Group, at (205) 981-9354 or [charles@cwallengroup.com](mailto:charles@cwallengroup.com); Vaughn Dietze, Dietze Enterprises, at (312) 329-9073 or [Vaughn@leadretrieval.com](mailto:Vaughn@leadretrieval.com); Richard Erschik, Leads to Sales, at (847) 956-9944 or [erschik@leadstosales.com](mailto:erschik@leadstosales.com); Dave Frey, J.Spargo & Associates, at (703) 679-3972 or [dave.frey@jspargo.com](mailto:dave.frey@jspargo.com); Donald Grinberg, FAIA, HNTB Architecture, at (617) 933-3277 or [dgrinberg@hntb.com](mailto:dgrinberg@hntb.com); Tom Karren, WingateWeb, at (866) 224-3211; David Lawton, CDS, at (508) 743-0155 or [Dlawton@cdsreg.com](mailto:Dlawton@cdsreg.com); Paul McCaffray, CompuSystems, at (708) 344-9070 and [paul.mccaffray@compusystems.com](mailto:paul.mccaffray@compusystems.com); Keith McNeely, Smart City, at (702) 943-6043 or [kmcneely@smartcity.com](mailto:kmcneely@smartcity.com); Metin Odemis, Secured Entry/Event Screen, at (949) 753-0110 or [info@eventscreen.com](mailto:info@eventscreen.com); Len Ostroff, Rovion, at (410) 356-8680; Arnie Roberts, SMART-reg, at (650) 565-9200 or [Arnie@SMART-reg.com](mailto:Arnie@SMART-reg.com); and Lee White, Sniffex Co., (972) 868-9102 or [lee@sniffex.com](mailto:lee@sniffex.com).

## Multi-tasking with Software

As technology advances, it multi-tasks as often as we do. End-to-end event management software has evolved to create a lot of planning and management efficiencies. Systems continue to incorporate new features designed to ease the show organizer's workload.

WingateWeb offers two solutions that incorporate registration, event and online tools: the WingateWeb Conference offering, designed for events with large conferences, and the WingateWeb Event Console, for smaller events held with more frequency. Both solutions work together.

WingateWeb uses an open architecture, which allows organizers to more easily make changes within their event system. "We have designed the system so the organizer can self-administrate, for instance adding registration codes or changing classrooms," says Tom Karren, WingateWeb CEO.

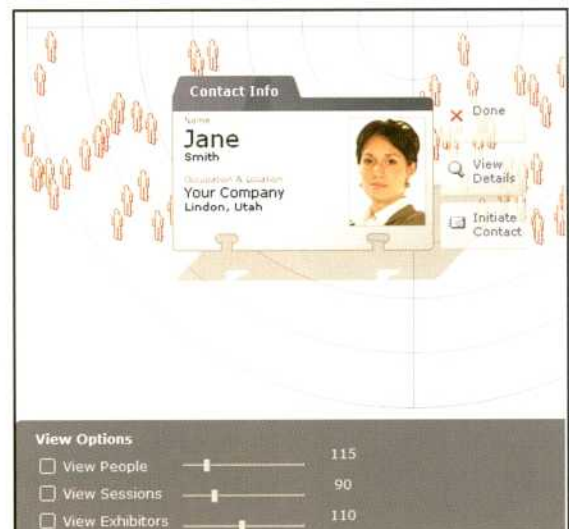
In addition to more efficient planning, organizers can also access their data more easily, without having to combine spreadsheets or data sets. The company recently debuted advanced event analytics, designed to permit more intelligent mining of registration data. Organizers are able to examine web site traffic, registration data, session scheduling, session attendance, lead retrieval, and ROI reporting.

New attendee interaction tools named WingateWeb EventLink, will add broad social networking capability. "The goal is to allow attendees to connect in interesting ways," says Karren. Once a connection is made, the software offers tools for discussion groups, vir-

tual sessions or live meetings. The tool will also integrate with smart phones to enable audience response systems and attendee interaction.



WingateWeb's Tom Karren shares innovations that include advanced analytics, social networking and open architecture.



WingateWeb has debuted a social networking module to increase attendee interactive capabilities.