



# Smart Phones

## How to Make them Smarter at Your Event

By Greg Flakus

Over the past three years, we have worked with a large music festival, the Oregon Brew Fest in Portland Oregon, and two arenas on projects that utilized the mobile phone to engage attendees while at the event or venue. We have heard from many events about how they might get into offering more than just a basic mobile application that duplicates the web site or provides a map of the grounds.

Through our experience we have found that there are three different objectives that an event should consider when working on making the smart phone part of the attendee experience. Each has its own goals and have increased software development and costs as you build the application. This article will review the three different types of mobile phone applications available.

### Basic Application

The Basic Application is an entry level application that allows you to duplicate your website, and perhaps show a map of the grounds on the mobile phone like on the printed program. Most events have moved to create some kind of application around this objective. The main goal is to allow the phone to become an information source for the attendee, with no extended features such as sharing with their friends, entering contests via the phone or buying food and merchandise etc. The application makes no effort to capture user information when attendees enter the site, and at best can track the number of users that went to the opening screen and visited the site.

### Advanced Application

This application takes the basic application and adds the ability for attendees to interact with the event and its sponsors. The App creates ways that by using their phone, attendees can scan QR codes (Quick Response Codes) and be offered entries to win something at the event and provide information that can enhance their experience at the venue or event that day. Attendees can also get more information about specific vendors in addition to other things that perhaps cannot be placed in the printed program due to space or other limitations, including links to videos and other offers. At the same time, codes can be created that also allow you to take an attendee to a sponsor's web page and even offer instant coupons that can be redeemed at the sponsor's retail locations when the attendee leaves the event. The event and the merchant can track the number of redemptions and can even offer a different discount for each day of the festival.

This application can also create a "tour the event" application where attendees use their phone to visit designated food, beverage and merchandise locations. The application keeps track of the tour stops. When attendees have visited all of the locations on the "tour" they come to a festival location and receive a prize and perhaps are even entered into a grand prize drawing. This can be helpful to an event as a feature they can offer to potential vendors for the event.

### Data Gathering and Social Media Application

The emerging trend in applications is to use them to allow your attendees to be recognized while on site and be given chances to win instant prizes and upgrades while present in real time. There is no more need to set up a ten by ten tent, have entry blanks printed up and ask attendees to take the time to fill out the entry forms. With one click of their phone on a QR Code, attendees can be taken to a landing page right on the phone that allows them to enter a specific drawing. And the best part is the event is able to capture the attendee's information as soon as they enter it, information that can include such valuable data such as: name, address, email, age in addition to asking a few questions such as: Did you attend last year? How many came with you today? How long has it been since your last car purchase? Did you purchase any wine in the past month? What is your preferred wine type (red or white)? When was the last time you traveled more than 500 miles for a vacation? Depending on the level of programming involved in creating the application, the amount of data you are able to capture is endless. Once the attendee enters their data, it is sent to a spreadsheet that your event or venue has access to in real time. You can reward attendees for entering instant prizes straightaway with such items as upgraded VIP seating at a music festival; a family ride pack, or tickets to an upcoming concert. At a recent beer fest, winners were able to access the VIP area where special one day only beers were being tapped and served.

Another feature that can be programmed into this application is the ability to share this instant win news with friends on Facebook. Once the entry has been shared on Facebook, the application is able to capture any friend that views the information and their Facebook details, in real time. This link can be tied to a sponsor's event area. For example, if you had PetSmart as a sponsor of your event, the Facebook sharing could also direct them to special offers for attendees at the PetSmart location at the event.

All this can be done without the need for printing, sorting and checking the entry forms to make sure all the information has been filled out completely, and then placed into a spreadsheet that is created for your access via a password that is unique to your event.

### The Bottom Line

At many of the conventions we attend, all of the venues and events are asking one question: Where is the RETURN ON INVESTMENT? This is the same as asking 'how do we monetize this at our event?' How will your investment in a mobile

phone application help drive more revenues? Below are three specific examples of how this can be done:

- **Vendor promotion on the phone via what are called push promotions:**

This allows you to contact vendors before your event and ask them if they want to be included as part of your mobile texting push promotion. For a daily fee or event fee, you will give them a certain number of text push messages.

- **Tie in with sponsors to co-promote their retail outlets:**

This can be done via your mobile phone contest by sharing the attendee information with the Sponsor.

- **Instant win sponsor:**

Tie in with one sponsor to pay for the instant win on-site promotion. The contest can be set up in a way that when the instant winners are notified on their phone, they have to visit the specific sponsor's tent or location to get their prize. You can set this to be done at random, a certain number per hour, or until a specific number is reached. This also gives your sponsor the ability to get added activation at the event, with samples or other merchandise.

Before you jump into the world of mobile applications for your festival or venue, be sure to research other events in your area that have gone mobile and find out what level of application they are doing, from the basic up to the data gathering and social media. The ability to interact with customers in a retail store on their mobile phone increases the likelihood of them taking action and making a purchase by 67% according to a recent study. There's no question that it is a positive step to take to create a mobile application for your event. You just need to determine what level is right for you, your event and your budget.

**Greg Flakus** is the President of GF Strategies, based in Vancouver, Washington. Since 1993, the company has worked with festivals, fairgrounds, arenas and stadiums to develop strategies that will increase revenues from food, beverage and merchandise sales. He was a founding member of the Washington Festivals and Events Association. If you would like to learn more about the platform we have available for use at your venue or event, contact us at +1-360-573-7027 or [greg@gfstrategies.com](mailto:greg@gfstrategies.com). You can also visit our web site [www.gfstrategies.com](http://www.gfstrategies.com)