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Unlock the True Value of
Mobile Event Apps



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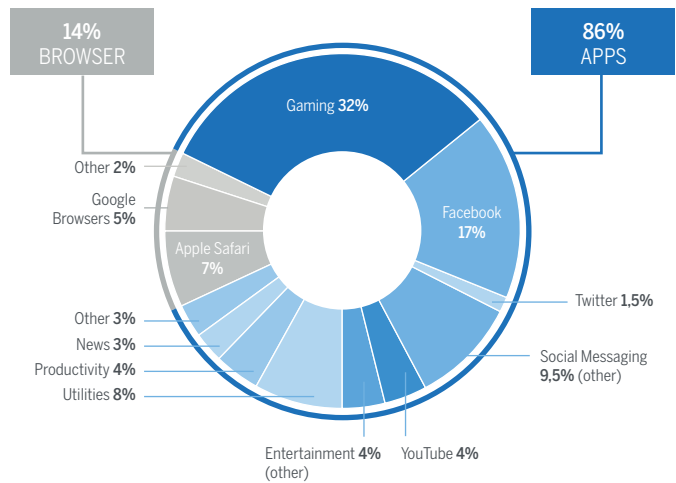
Mobile Event Apps: Past, Present and Future

Mobile technology is an essential part of our daily lives. Tasks that once took a lot of time and effort can now be done within minutes right from our device. Data shows that mobile users now use apps more than their internet browsers.

For the meeting and events industry, mobile apps have become a standard component at events. The surge in demand for virtual and hybrid events has created an increase in the number of virtual platforms and attendee engagement solutions on the market. According to [Fortune Business Insights](#), the virtual meeting software market will be valued at \$41.58B by 2027. But determining which platforms align with the goals of a meeting program, company policies, and budget can be daunting. *“Meeting planners are certainly the ones best suited to carefully curate the technology, as they understand attendee engagement and all of the elements that make a successful meeting, but with so many new virtual event solutions, I can see how they could be overwhelmed and potentially overlook the tried-and-true event app,”* said Arnab Mukherjee, Director, Attendee Experience, American Express Meetings & Events.

Because mobile event apps have been traditionally considered as augmenting in-person event experiences, rather than functioning as central engagement platforms, some meeting owners may feel they are unable to justify an investment in mobile technology. It's true that for some events, mobile apps may not play an important role. But with so many virtual events now on the calendar, attendees are expecting an enhanced experience. Embracing and integrating mobile event technology into an overall event strategy can help to deliver great attendee experiences—and make events more resilient to future interruptions.

TIME SPENT ON iOS AND ANDROID CONNECTED DEVICES



Source: Flurry Analytics, ComScore, NetMarketShare

The real challenge for meeting owners today lies in taking advantage of the full value of a mobile event app.

Understanding how mobile technology has evolved will help them to determine the role of mobile event apps, clarify misperceptions, and ultimately raise engagement for events while maximizing their technology investment.

“Without the natural connection of face-to-face interactions, driving engagement in a virtual environment is more important than ever, and event apps were built to do just that.”

Arnab Mukherjee, Director, Attendee Experience,
American Express Meetings & Events

Mobile Event Apps Before COVID-19

In the past, mobile apps at in-person events provided attendees with access to basic event content, such as the agenda and list of speakers, and interactive experiences like polling, Q&As, and social networking. Apps were understood to be a powerful tool to quickly and cost-effectively capture event data, but that function was more often than not treated as an afterthought rather than a critical element of the event itself. Meeting owners mostly used apps for their basic functionality and, in many instances, may not have meaningfully integrated apps into their overall event experiences.

Mobile Event Apps Today

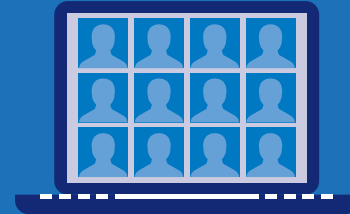
Engaging with employees and clients will always be a critical driver for businesses, and meetings and events are crucial for that to continue, even during periods of disruption. It is not a question of “if” a meeting is going to happen, it’s “how.” Planning meetings that meet safety requirements and are effective, whether virtual, hybrid, or in-person, remains the goal of meetings professionals.

The industry has had to mature quickly over the last year and a half to meet the challenge, and many meeting planners have noted that they’ve faced a steep learning curve. The technology already existed to execute virtual and hybrid meetings; COVID-19 just accelerated the innovation and adoption of these technologies. Milton Rivera, Vice President, Global Business Development, Global Client Group, and APAC Region, American Express Meetings & Events, explains, “*Everyone understands this was a monumental shift. But once you digest that, you can accomplish the same outcome, just in a different way.*”

We have already seen large virtual corporate conferences from companies such as Microsoft, Salesforce, and the Consumer Electronics Show. But as our [2021 Global Meetings & Event Forecast](#) showed, lack of engagement was one of the top three challenges of virtual meetings in 2020, with 18% of meeting professionals citing this as a reason for fatigue or disruptions. This is where mobile event apps come in.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS PRONE TO DISRUPTIONS AND “FATIGUE”

Top 3 challenges



40%

Lack of
experience

32%

Technical
issues

18%

Lack of
engagement

Source: 2021 Global Meetings & Event Forecast

Case Study: INTER[action] 2020

At the end of last year, our ninth annual global employee meeting and supplier showcase event, INTER[action] 2020, pivoted quickly from a three-day in person event to a two-day virtual program (with some in-person components), bringing together over 750 employees from 26 countries and 200+ supplier attendees from 65 organizations, over nine time zones. The event consisted of a supplier showcase, general sessions, award celebrations, education, focus groups, well-being activities, virtual and face-to-face dining experiences, and more.

With a strong networking component, the event included a mobile event app to both encourage networking and drive engagement. Attendees spent over 71,100 minutes using the app, shared more than 1,000 photos with over 6,000 comments, and exchanged over 9,000 contacts. We were able to use the app to identify our most popular sessions, which were determined by the level of engagement based on which sessions drove the most user interaction, including session views, photo and comments posted, etc.

ENHANCE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

Events are meant to be immersive experiences, even if they're virtual, and one way to achieve that today is by delivering important content on multiple devices, both in advance and during the event, for a true multi-screen experience. Some mobile event apps now support video streaming, facilitate direct interaction with other attendees during presentations, and also give access to social features to foster networking. Attendees can message each other during the event or post content through an app's social feed. The closer an attendee is to the action, the more enhanced their level of interactivity becomes.

While the educational aspect of an event is important, networking has been cited by many attendees as a primary reason they attend an event. According to a 2018 Cvent/Edelman study titled "[Inside the Mind of Event Attendees](#)", over 70% of event attendees surveyed across the United States, United Kingdom and Germany, viewed networking with other attendees as a key part of the professional event experience. Whether they share tweets and Facebook updates or have a lengthy conversation over a cup of coffee, attendees agree that they learn more from having a conversation than they do from any other aspect of a conference. Providing a mechanism to have those conversations is considered one of the most important features of a mobile event app.

NETWORKING

is also a key component to attending, both professionally and socially, as most attendees have made friends at professional events.

70%

say they learn something new at every event that makes their job easier

90%

of respondents say the last event they attended was a valuable time investment

Source: 2018 Cvent/Edelman study



PROVIDE INSIGHTS

From a meeting owner perspective, mobile event apps are powerful tools that provide real-time attendee engagement data as well as insights to measure return on objectives and/or investment for a virtual event. Engagement data from app features such as polls, number of social wall posts including likes and comments, and content downloads can help event owners adjust on the fly. With new access to a wealth of in-app engagement data, event owners can automatically measure and demonstrate success, make more effective budgeting decisions, and improve overall program outcomes.

In summary, mobile event apps may not be seen as an obvious platform to supplement a virtual event, but apps are rapidly growing in use, are becoming highly preferred by some attendees and when intelligently applied - with a tailored mobile event app strategy to best suit the event's specific needs - can significantly improve the event experience and increase engagement.

Mobile Event Apps in a Hybrid World

As we emerge from fully virtual and considering the growth in technology innovation within the meetings and events industry, mobile event apps are set to become an integral part of hybrid events, where a portion of attendees will meet in person with attendees tuning in virtually. According to Gerardo Tejado, Senior Vice President, Global Value Development and General Manager, American Express Meetings & Events, *“It will be more important than ever to offer attendees options—namely, do they want to attend in person or join your meeting virtually. Before, there used to be a stigma around those attending an event virtually vs. those attending in person, where those virtual attendees may have felt excluded. With a hybrid event, it will not be about exclusion but choice. Some may not want to attend in person, for their own reasons, and will expect a robust virtual component.”*

CONNECT YOUR IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL ATTENDEES

Hybrid events provide companies with the opportunity to greatly extend their meeting’s reach, grow their audiences, and become more accessible to people around the world. Imagine a scenario where attendees, whether they are in-person or virtually, can connect simultaneously and experience the same event. The virtual attendee uses the event’s virtual platform, but can also message and connect for a 1:1 call with an in-person attendee using the mobile event app. The in-person attendee can share insights they gathered from a local session, or photos from an

offsite dinner in a different time zone. They can exchange comments, ideas, and content, and even join discussions with different groups of attendees using the app.

The possibilities are endless once the experience of an event connects with social media and real-time data. Both virtual and in-person attendees benefit from the fact that the event now has a greater reach and has grown its community. Most importantly, a mobile event app can allow virtual attendees to feel that they are truly taking part in the event.

According to Michael Balyasny, Founder and CEO of Attendify, an event app partner of American Express Meetings & Events, *“We live in an engagement economy, where getting and keeping a client’s attention is the biggest challenge. Nowhere is that truer than when running virtual events. Planners have to overcome all the distractions and competing priorities that attendees face when joining from home, and the right technology can make all the difference. As we transition to hybrid events, delivering content and networking experiences seamlessly on any device, from desktops and laptops to mobile devices will become an even bigger advantage. Technology is becoming the connective tissue that brings together in-person and remote attendees and makes them feel like they’re part of a single event community.”*



In Perspective

The lessons we learned from 2020 are transforming the way we do business and run meetings and events. Incorporating virtual and hybrid events into your event program will be critical for now and in the longer term. One lesson we have learnt from the past year, is that we must not only embrace new technology, but need to also be creative and use existing technology in innovative ways to enhance attendee engagement and the experience overall.

As we expand to more hybrid event formats, it's important to recognize how mobile event apps can connect both in-person and virtual event attendees around the world effectively. By integrating a mobile event app at your next event, you can both individualize the event experience for every attendee and foster collective engagement, ultimately resulting in stronger attendee satisfaction and a better return on objectives.



For more information please visit www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com and www.attendify.com



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