

Table of Contents

3 The Need for a Mobile Event App

5	Content	What about the basics?
8	Engagement	How do I keep attendees from falling asleep?
16	Usability & Stability	Will it crash at the worst possible time?
19	Return on Investment	Why is this worth my money?
22	Planner Practicality	How will this make my life easier?
25	Security & Support	Does the app provider have my back?
28	Determine the Right Solution	

29 Find Your Partner in CrowdCompass



The Need for a Mobile Event App

It's hard to believe because we're so reliant on them now, but mobile apps have only recently become a must-have for event professionals all over the world. And as the event industry continues to evolve at a rapid pace, a simple fact has become clear: Event attendees don't just want a mobile event app—they expect it. Innovative mobile event apps are making events more efficient, more engaging, and more trackable than ever before.

Going mobile at events creates a more engaging, more unique experience for attendees.

Personalized scheduling, simple attendee-to-attendee messaging, and lasting social connections allow event-goers to build their own event experiences.

A mobile event app is more than a fun bonus for attendees; it's a smart economical choice for planners in all industries, helping them attain dramatic printing cost savings (as much as 85%)¹ by eliminating the need for costly printed programs and brochures. A number of top companies expect to completely eliminate their printing needs by using apps over the next few years.

And with attendees relying less and less on printed programs, they're quickly becoming industry relics. With new features and capabilities powering the next generation of mobile event apps and adoption rapidly increasing, you can't afford to remain analog.

The Cost of Choosing the Wrong Mobile Event App

If you're searching for a mobile event app, you won't have to go far. There are numerous options to choose from, so many that it can be overwhelming. With seemingly identical interfaces and similar features, how could you possibly choose? By looking under the hood and figuring out what features are really going to propel your event forward, you'll see that not all mobile event apps are created equal.

Ranging from freemium/low-cost solutions to full capability, multi-event apps, determining what you need for your conferences, tradeshows, incentive events, meetings, and more is no easy task. And launching a sub-par or underperforming app can reflect poorly on your event and frustrate already stressed attendees.

Sorting through the choices to find the best option depends not only on your organization's needs and objectives, but also on finding the right app for your event-goers. This guide will help you determine what your organization and your attendees need out of a mobile event app, and make an informed decision that will facilitate an enriching experience and set you up for success.



Content

What about the basics?

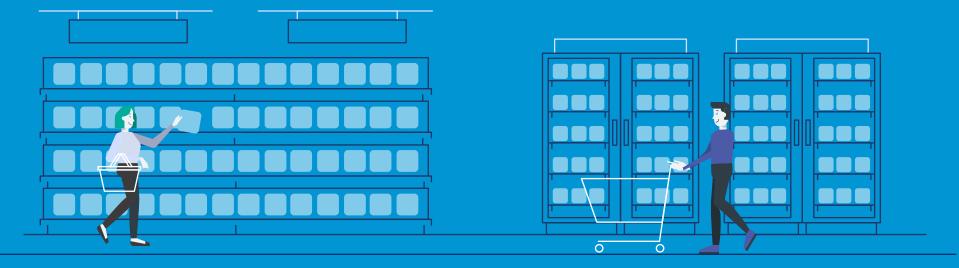
In order for your attendees to navigate a fast-paced event, they need their content all in one place. A mobile event app should provide schedules, maps, exhibitor and sponsor profiles, speaker bios, session-related content, and more to attendees—all in the palms of their hands.

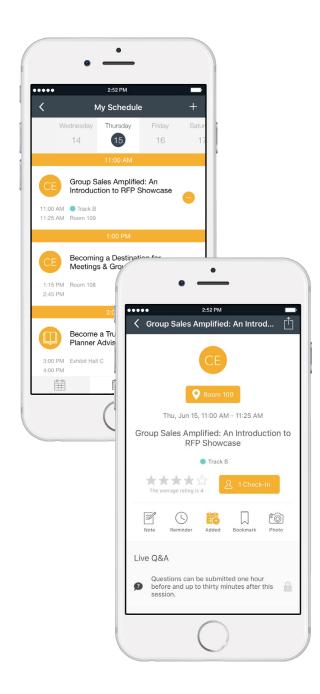
Managing that content can be overwhelming for planners, and knowing which content to consume can be overwhelming for your attendees.

Uploading, organizing, and updating content is one of the most tedious and time-consuming parts of event planning. At a minimum, your mobile event app should make your content management easier and faster.

When you're on-site at your event, you need to be able to make last-minute changes to schedules, speaker information, and more, and be confident those changes reach the appropriate people. Consider this scenario: The event you've been planning for months is finally here. You've painstakingly organized and printed out schedules for every attendee, but one of the keynotes went 30 minutes over the scheduled time, wreaking havoc on your entire schedule. You can't magically make changes to your perfectly printed schedules, and you have no way of reaching all the attendees. Your attendees, speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors alike are all frustrated with the seeming lack of organization.

The following event-app features can mitigate these issues, leaving you with more time for value-adding tasks and streamlining any last-minute schedule changes.







Templates + Bulk Updates

Templates aren't a unique feature, but many providers offer complicated templates that make updating difficult. For example, you may have to upload the sessions, then upload the speakers and manually connect the two. And, when you want to update content, you either have to do it manually or re-create the entire spreadsheet. The provider you choose should allow you to upload multiple pieces of content on the same template, keep a consistent format, and allow you to re-upload the existing template for bulk changes—ultimately saving planners from hours of data input.



Live Updating Features

Events aren't static; they dynamically change and grow. Printed programs leave little room for last-minute changes such as a speaker dropping out or a canceled evening event. Often an event app will offer updates that sync every 15 to 30 minutes, or worse, require users to manually sync the app. But you know with an event's tight schedule that 30 minutes can cause attendees to miss out. The event-app solution you choose should give users a seamless experience and make updates instantly.

Should important changes happen during the event, push notifications provide a valuable way to ensure users are notified. And with user segmentation, you'll only notify those who the updates pertain to so as not to spam your audience. This way you can inform your VIP attendees with changes to a special event without notifying the entire conference.





Smart/Customizable Content

Although your event is reaching a specific audience, each person that attends is unique. They're going to different sessions with different goals and takeaways, and the content provided by your app should reflect that and speak directly to each person's needs.

The app provider you choose should allow you to easily segment attendees with personalized schedules, tracks, and tags. The templates provided should include these segmentation options as well. (Trust us—manually customizing content will drive you nuts.)

Schedule Integration

You work hard to provide a robust offering of speakers, exhibitors, workshops, and networking events, and you want your attendees to get the most out of the sessions you've provided. But managing a packed schedule can be tough.

A mobile event app should make the process easier with customizable schedules to keep attendees on track. Make sure the solution you choose doesn't require users to reselect their sessions once they've downloaded the app. Lighten their load by prepopulating their personalized schedule in the app with the sessions they chose during registration.

Content runs your event. Without it, no one knows what's happening where, and you miss many opportunities to interact with your audience. Here are the key questions from this chapter—and some new ones—to enhance your attendees' experience.

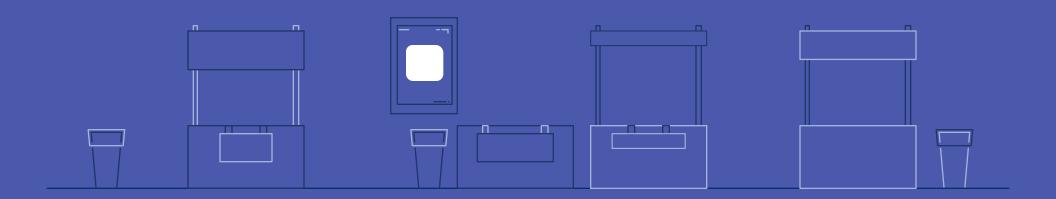
How to organize their schedule is the second most overwhelming stressor for event participants, with the check-in process topping the list.²

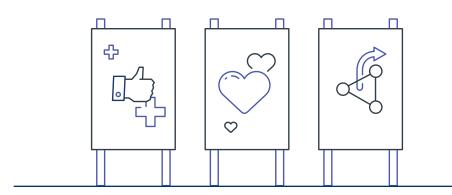
- ☐ What content/features can be segmented to provide the most personalized experience?
- ☐ Can personalized schedules sync to the native calendar on any mobile device?
- ☐ Does content sync across multiple devices?
- ☐ Does the app provide an interactive map?

Engagement

How do I keep attendees from falling asleep?

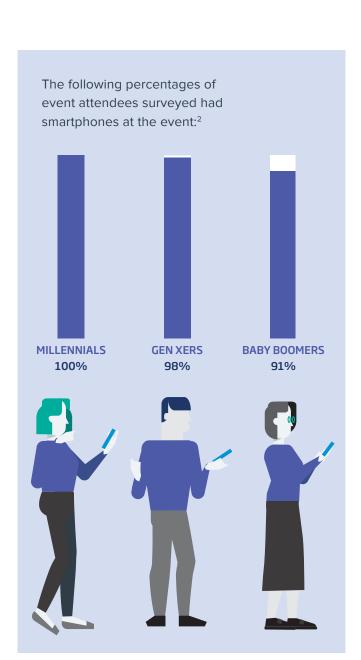
Getting people to your event is only half the battle; engagement is what truly dictates your event's success. Make sure your guests get the most out of every session by providing them with easy ways to engage with speakers, exhibitors, and with each other.





Attendee Engagement Features

This makes the travel and the time away from work and family worth it. Through social media, polling, live question and answer sessions, and more, you can give them the return on investment (ROI) they expect and pique their interest for future conferences and events. A mobile event app can help; look for the following features and capabilities in your next solution.





Engagement Across Generations

Mobile app usage has broken generational barriers, so even though you think Baby Boomers may be wary of new technology, they're more adept than you realize.

It's up to you, however, to make sure you're using the right mobile solution to deliver value to your attendees, which means packing the app with content and activating all the engagement features available to you. A good provider will give you a wide range of engagement features so you can reach every generation. For Millennials, social network integration may be the most valuable tool, while push notifications may keep Gen Xers on schedule. Look for an app that can provide consistent engagement opportunities throughout your event.



Social Media Integrations

Social media powers some events while others remain internally focused. No matter where you fall on the spectrum, a mobile event app should put you in control. Make sure your app provider offers flexible options to meet the needs of your events and puts you in the control seat.

With social media entwined in our business culture, event apps should allow for users to connect their social media profiles for easy posting, hashtag tracking, and connecting with other attendees. As an added benefit, look for an app that can pull aggregated social feeds into the app for easy viewing for the less technically-savvy users, or even project the social feed live at your event. Make sure you're in control with social monitoring features that give you the ability to remove posts from the in-app feed that don't fit with your event messaging.

If your event is less focused on outside social networks, you should have the ability to turn off social media integrations, while still allowing attendees to comment and connect natively within the app. That way you can still facilitate attendee interactions through photos and comments in a more controlled environment.



Networking Capabilities

Networking is often the top priority for event attendees, and the right event app should reflect that and facilitate easy connections. It should also act as an electronic business card, with a profile photo, contact information, and any additional profile notes the user would like to add.



of event attendees say that inperson networking opportunities have a positive impact on their event experience.²

Messaging is a great value-adding feature for users. A solution should provide attendees with an in-app texting-like feature to enable communication—no phone numbers or email addresses needed. Don't be fooled by apps that don't provide native messaging; some simply link to outside email communications.

You should also consider how attendees find each other to connect. With large events, simply posting a list of attendees can be overwhelming. A good provider will allow planners and attendees to sort attendee lists by region, industry, or company.

Through search features, event-goers are more likely to find meaningful network connections.

Social network integrations are equally as important for connecting attendees. Your app should easily allow attendees to follow each other on various social media channels for long-term benefits.

Additionally, to help attendees continue to foster these new connections, an app should allow users to export new contacts after the event.

Creating long-lasting value is essential to keeping attendees coming back year after year.



Native Application Defined

A native app is one that has been developed for a particular device and, in most cases, can work with no internet connectivity. This differs from a web app, which works via a web browser on a smartphone but requires a cell signal or Wi-Fi connection to function.



Session-level Engagement Tools

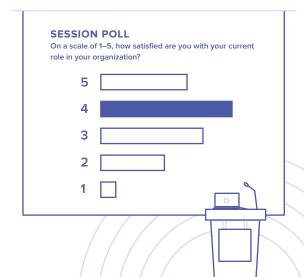
Professional development is the #1 reason people attend events.¹ Event apps can help them get the most out of individual sessions and give them all the information at their fingertips, which they've come to expect. If you can't stop attendees from using their mobile devices during your event, you should use it to your advantage. Amp up your event with on-the-fly interactivity.

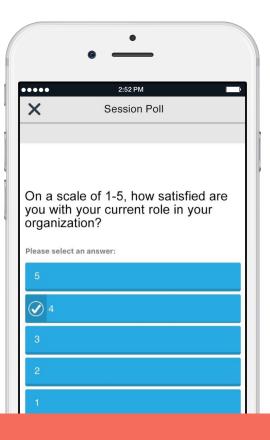
When looking at providers, take a close look at the session engagement opportunities, like in-app Q&A and polling, allowing speakers to immediately engage with attendees. Native, in-app polling during sessions can push attendee engagement to new levels, enabling event organizers and speakers to instantly gauge audience sentiments and embed real-time results in presentations, creating a more connected and social event experience.

Beyond interactivity, there's a tremendous opportunity to make content more digestible and actionable. Things like taking notes (and being able to export them!) or viewing the presentation or handouts on their device (and save them for later!) helps to enhance their experience.

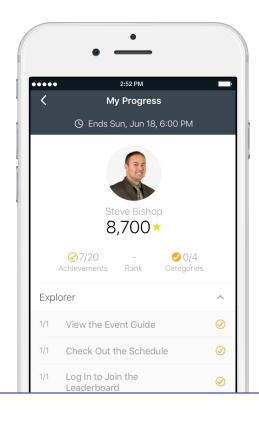
When looking into mobile event app providers, don't just check a box for session-level features. Dive deeper and ask questions specific to your event's needs.

Finding these answers can not only save yourself time, but will ensure that attendees get the most out of theirs in each of the sessions they attend and are able to use and share the content long after the event is over. Touches like these can keep your audience coming back.





- ☐ What will the attendee experience look like?
- Can speakers manage their own polls?
- ☐ Can the results be embedded into the PPT presentation?
- ☐ Can the app help enable Q&A?





Gamification

People are motivated to complete quests and don't like to leave tasks half finished.

The right mobile event app should consider this internal motivation and use it to drive attendee engagement and encourage actions you'd like them to take, such as social sharing, visiting a particular booth, or filling out a survey. We call this gamification.

The mobile event app provider you chose should allow you to create fun and exciting challenges to get your guests to interact with your event in new ways. With in-app games, attendees can complete challenges, earn points and badges, and win prizes. Getting attendees in the door is good, but getting them to interact with each other and the event is better. Make sure the app you select simplifies the engagement process so that attendees leave feeling like their time and effort was worth it.

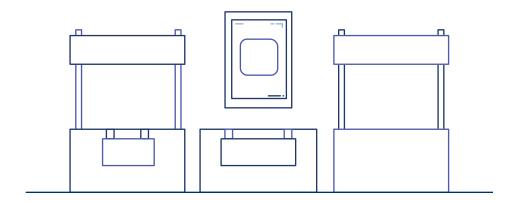
Use these questions to narrow down potential app providers.

What to ask

- ☐ How does the app reach across multiple generations?
- ☐ What kinds of networking features are available?
- ☐ Does it integrate with social media networks?
- What type of session-level engagement does it provide?

Gamification Defined

The application of typical gameplay elements (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically used as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service.



Exhibitor Engagement Features

Attendees aren't the only audience you must consider when creating an event. Sponsors and exhibitors often power your event through booth or sponsorship opportunities, and they have their own goals and ROI measurements to hit.

The provider you choose should be committed to delivering features to help you pitch mobile sponsorships and also offer valuable engagement. And if those features can save you time by allowing exhibitors to manage their own interactive profile? It's a win-win.

Look for these features in your next mobile event app.



Beacons

Exhibitors rely on booth visits to build business relationships, and your attendees are often overwhelmed by the size and scope of your event and may miss the opportunity to make important connections. You can solve this problem with beacons.

Beacons, sometimes called iBeacons, are devices small enough to fit in the palm of your hand that can be attached to a desk, wall, or doorway, and send out a low energy Bluetooth signal. When an attendee has your mobile event app installed and Bluetooth turned on, a message will appear on their device when they pass by a beacon. This message could be a simple, "Welcome to the event," or it could direct them to content within the app such as a session detail page.

Location-based beacons are a great way to grab an attendee's attention as they walk by an exhibitor's booth, enticing them to stop and interact. This is a smarter, more tactical way for attendees and exhibitors to engage during your event.



Lead Gathering

Gathering potential leads is a high priority for these important event exhibitors, and a mobile event app is a great way to help facilitate networking. When looking at providers, make sure to look closely at their lead-gathering capabilities. It should be easy and simple, and provide seamless lead retrieval from exhibitors' smartphones or tablets. And be wary of simple contact exchanges. Look for an app that allows for you to scan attendee badges and easily export them for further action. Better yet, see if the app allows a tradeshow manager back in the office to grab the leads even before the sales reps come home, leading to faster sales.

Not only should exhibitors be able to gather leads through the app, but they should also be able to qualify them immediately. This quick action lets exhibitors see the ROI of your event, further proving its worth.

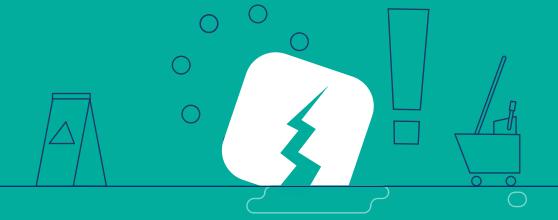
For a better sponsor experience, and to generate more money for your next event, ask your potential app providers the following.

- □ Does the app have lead-collecting and qualifying capabilities?
- ☐ How can it facilitate engagement with sponsors?
- ☐ What additional sponsorship revenue opportunities does the app provide?
- ☐ Does it provide locationbased notifications?

Usability and Stability

Will it crash at the worst possible time?

Having all the bells and whistles is great, but when it comes down to it, how usable is the app? There are no features that can offset a clunky user experience and untimely crashes. Keep these things in mind when vetting an app provider.





Reliability

We have to say it: You only have one chance to make a great first impression. If your attendee's initial experience when opening the app is poor, you risk them never opening it again—or worse, it could reflect poorly on your event and your brand. Many providers claim their event apps are intuitive, interactive, and dynamic, but the fact is, many have limited functionality, which can lead to frustrating experiences. Your potential partner should offer an app that provides a complete experience across all platforms, including a native app for Android and Apple iOS devices, and support all other devices through a web app with HTML5.

HTML5 Defined

A language used for structuring and presenting content on the web. It is the fifth and current version of the HTML standard.



New Feature Rollouts

Although even simple apps have already bested their printed counterparts by leaps and bounds, consistent updates and new features can wow your audience with advanced capabilities. The provider you choose should be constantly innovating and providing you with new features. You may even get features you never knew you needed (ahem, beacons anyone?).

Providers who have committed to being the best in the industry love to talk about their release cycle, so be sure to ask. Imagine getting new features every 2–3 weeks that can help you reach your event goals, or even improve upon them. And the best realize they don't know it all, so they ask their customers for help, crowdsourcing questions like, "What features do you need to get the highest ROI at your events?"

But they have to work, too. The providers you talk to should be able to tell you how often they release new features, what kind of testing goes into these releases, and what their history of performance has been.

Does your prospective provider have the technology and development staff to support your growing needs? We've seen how mobile has energized and changed the face of events forever, but there are always new challenges and hurdles to overcome. Your event needs will change and grow over time, and a mobile app provider should have the capacity to keep up and the vision to prepare for industry and market changes. Find out how large their dedicated technology and development staff is and how they plan to improve their mobile offerings over time. It's important to know what an organization has done in the past and determine whether they have the aptitude to not only maintain their product and provide the value you need, but also offer you solutions you may not have even thought possible.



Are They Experienced?

New mobile event app providers are popping up everywhere, but those that rise to the top have the resources to build and establish new features to keep up with the rapidly changing event industry. And newer companies often don't have the resources to provide appropriate support and can leave you hanging the day of your event.

Will you have help when you need it the most? Quick email turnarounds are important to keep your momentum going. Also, make sure they offer support beyond email, and that you can call them to troubleshoot problems in real time. Additional resources are an important factor, too, such as tutorials, user guides, web-based communities, and more. Ensure they offer 24/7 support and multiple ways to get information.

Think of it this way: You wouldn't hire a first-time audiovisual team to provide equipment for your biggest event of the year. You want your app provider to be experienced and a trusted partner you can turn to should any issues arise.



Are They Stable?

How long the company has been around is important, but how long they're going to stick around is even more so. Choose a company with the backing to stay afloat. The last thing you want to do is choose a provider that is here today and gone tomorrow.

Beyond shiny features and cool capabilities, you need a mobile event app provider to give you the peace of mind that it will run without a hitch. Choosing the wrong provider can reflect poorly on your event, and nothing should dull your event's glow. Make sure to ask these questions before selecting a provider.



- ☐ What type of testing and quality assurance process does the app go through?
- ☐ What level of uptime is expected?
- How often do you roll out new features?
- ☐ Do you specialize in apps for the event industry?
- ☐ How many apps have you created?

Return on Investment

Why is this worth my money?

Nothing proves the ROI of a mobile event app like hard numbers. Your provider needs to offer the metrics to prove your apps' worth to your event partners, sponsors, and your own leadership team. Without these metrics, your mobile event app will just appear as another expense on the budget line, and your ability to monetize it will be in serious jeopardy. The backend of your app should have dashboard functionality to track the metrics most import to you, your sponsors, and your stakeholders. Namely, downloads and use statistics. The right mobile event app provider will give you measurable savings and revenue opportunities in the following ways.



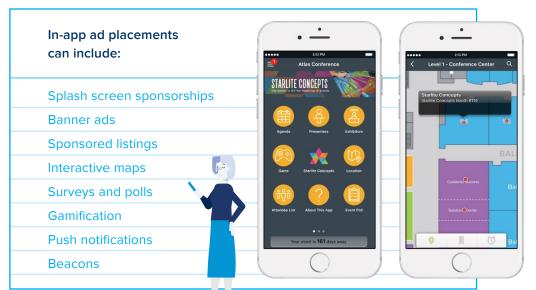


Increase Sponsorship Opportunities

The right app provider can even give you the opportunity to offset the cost of the app by offering additional sponsorship opportunities. These can be simple push notifications, banner ads, or even gamification and splash screens.

Programs and brochures only live as long as the event they support; sometimes their lifespans are even shorter. Your app provider should have the functionality to help you dramatically increase your sponsor levels with year-round engagement and advertising opportunities, providing multiple channels for sponsors to connect with your audience.

Verifone, the global leader in secure electronic payment solutions, used CrowdCompass to secure more than 22 sponsors for their event, and generated a 140% return on investment. This made it possible to provide Samsung Galaxy tablets for its nearly 300 attendees (with the app preloaded) to ensure full adoption.







Reduce Costs

The right mobile event app can save you more than just printing costs (which are significant in their own right). From easy uploading and push notifications to social media integration, an app can save you countless man-hours.

When you're spending part of your budget on a mobile event app, you want to make sure you're getting your money's worth. Look for an app that can not only cover your expenses, but provide additional revenue opportunities for your event. Ask these questions when vetting a possible provider. Leading fitness company Beachbody switched from paper handouts to CrowdCompass' mobile event app and saved \$38,000 on a single event.

- What kind of metrics and reporting does your app provide?
- What clients have seen sponsorship success?
- What tools do you have to help me sell sponsorships?
- How will this help me reduce my overall costs?

Planner Practicality

How will this make my life easier?

As wonderful as mobile event apps are for users, they should be equally as helpful to planners. If an app is merely there to give planners another thing to update, then it's not worth the investment. When looking for a provider, make sure to keep these helpful features in mind.





Uploading Content

Your time is precious, and anything you can do to spend less time tackling mundane tasks and more time managing your event is worth trying. Importing content from another app or tool is the easiest option, but manually uploading content should be just as painless. Make sure the app provider you choose has easy to understand templates that can be uploaded in bulk, so you don't have to start from scratch.



Live Updates

With events constantly changing, it can be difficult to keep everyone informed. Whether a speaker cancels at the last minute or an attendee wants to register the morning of the event, you need the flexibility to make changes on the go. But not all mobile event app providers will cater to your needs.

The easiest way to identify if a provider will meet these needs is to have them walk you through the process of making these updates. Ensure nothing is hard coded, which would require you to resubmit to the app store, and determine what attendees would need to do (if anything) to receive these updates in real time.

These seemingly minor features can truly set your mobile event app apart. A good provider will allow you to update content, graphics, schedule push notifications—whatever you need—on the fly (and maybe even have a mobile content management system [CMS] to help).



App Integrations

You already use many different programs and systems to plan and execute your event, and with technology's rapid evolution you're likely to use a lot more in the future. Don't duplicate your hard work by manually inputting your content. Find a provider that can integrate with your registration system to easily upload sessions, attendees, speakers, and personalized schedules. That way, you only have to make changes in one place, and it'll update across the app in real time.





Event/Session Feedback

Feedback isn't new to planners. Many of you have been using feedback surveys for years, either with physical feedback cards or online surveys. But in reality, you're going to get the most accurate and actionable feedback in the moment. While most apps provide in-app surveys, few move beyond general critiques to give planners valuable insights.

Since you likely have multiple sessions, tracts, and segments of attendees, make sure you can customize feedback surveys to target these groups. And real-time results can enable planners to make in-the-moment adjustments to give attendees the best experience possible. Something as simple as a temperature change can completely shift your attendees' experience.

Ask providers if surveys are a native experience so that users don't have to battle a spotty Wi-Fi connection to complete it—something that can drastically reduce completion rates.

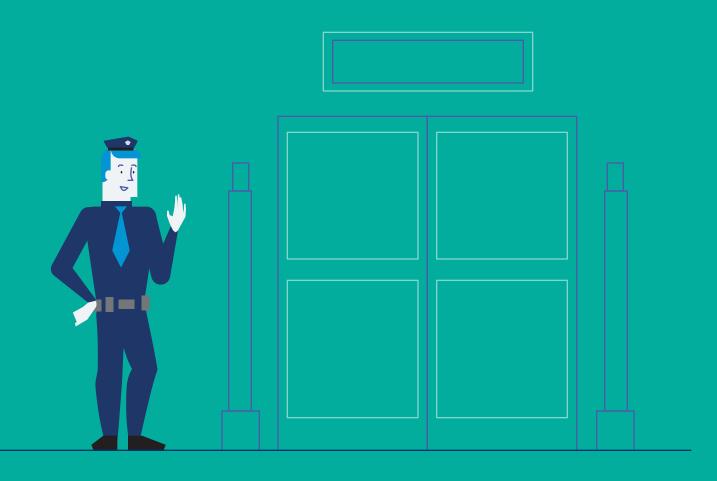
Ensure a mobile event app is making things easier for you, not one that creates days of additional work. In order to make your life easier, ask these questions of your potential provider.

- ☐ How easy is it to make live changes?
- ☐ How long does it take updates to reach attendees?
- ☐ What apps or software integrate with the mobile event app?
- ☐ How will the app collect event feedback?
- ☐ Can surveys be applied to multiple sessions without having to recreate it each time?

Security & Support

Does the app provider have my back?

When entering into a new business partnership, it's important to have the comfort of security and the assurance that your new partner will be there when you need them most.





Support

Support is key—possibly the most important thing to consider when selecting a provider. Flashy features are great selling points, but will the app provider be there to support you when you need it? Will you be stuck sending emails to the black hole that is the support address, hearing back days later?

Make sure to ask these tough questions of your potential provider in order to gauge their level of support.

What to ask

- ☐ How many people are on your support team?
- ☐ What is the average response time?
- ☐ What hours do you provide support?
- ☐ What other support resources are available to me (online resources, video tutorials, success groups)?

This last question is especially poignant, since many events happen on weekends and late into the night. A provider that only provides support during the traditional 9–5 workday won't be much help for your last-minute needs.

Beyond simple availability, a truly good support team will not only be there when you need help, but will set you up for success. Your mobile app vendor should be a partner in your endeavors, and offer you the tools and training to know your app inside and out, and the should provide rich resources for managing your app. A dedicated account manager and customer success manager should be available for non-emergencies, and you should be consistently notified of any and all app upgrades and enhancements or outages.



Data Privacy

Data privacy is always a concern when considering using a mobile event app. It's important to identify the level of privacy and security apps can provide not only to planners, but to users as well.

Ask the following questions to determine the level of security and privacy offered to attendees.

What to ask

- ☐ Can I hide events that I don't want other attendees to see?
- ☐ Can they lock the event contents behind a password?

Beyond privacy settings, event data should also be protected. Determine the level of security an app provider offers on the backend to safeguard user and event information.



Security

You want to ensure that no private information is leaked through your app, so it's important to discuss the operational infrastructure with your potential mobile event app provider. Ask these questions to determine the level of security an app provider offers.

What to ask

- ☐ How often is data backed up?
- ☐ Where is the data stored? Are these locations redundant?
- What kind of monitoring is happening to immediately address security breaches?
- ☐ When was the last audit and what is the fault tolerance?
- □ Who has access to my data?
- ☐ What kind of physical and network security do you offer?

Your potential provider should respect your privacy, your attendees' privacy, and your clients' privacy and be committed to protecting your privacy through policy compliance. If an app provider does not offer a public privacy policy available for your review, you should reconsider working with them.

Determine the Right Solution

The sheer volume of mobile event app providers can make selecting one an overwhelming experience, but knowing the right questions to ask and what to look for can help you narrow down the field.

Ultimately, the right solution depends on your needs and the needs of your attendees. It should help you facilitate valuable engagement, boost your bottom line, and reach your long-term goals. Most of all, they should be a valuable partner in making your events successful now and in the future.





Find Your Partner in CrowdCompass

CrowdCompass by Cvent creates awesome mobile event apps that increase attendee engagement and produce a strong return on investment. As the premier event app developer, we provide mobile apps for conferences, tradeshows, meetings, and events that range in size from 50 to 50,000 attendees.

See CrowdCompass in action

Download a trial app today.

Sources

- "The Momentum of Mobile Event Apps," 2015, CrowdCompass, Event Marketing Institute
- 2. "The Event Effect: What's Really on the Minds of Your Attendees?" 2016, CrowdCompass, Edelman

