



BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE

Enhancing engagement at your event and beyond

One of the most striking developments in modern society is the universal adoption of the smartphone. Apple's market-defining iPhone was released in 2007, ushering in an age in which all of us now carry more computing power in our pocket than NASA had available to them for the lunar landing in 1969. Ubiquitous and unavoidable, the smartphone and its larger cousin, the tablet, are always at our side, indispensable for business and essential for our social lives. So if every member of the audience at your event is carrying an internet connected touchscreen computer, why not use it to your advantage?



The concept of '**Bring Your Own Device**' is permeating quickly through the corporate and IT world. Savvy businesses have realised that not only do their employees already own the IT technology they need to do their job, but they've made a personal choice to invest in a particular device and are already familiar and comfortable with it. So why go to the expense of providing them with a new laptop or phone just for the sake of increased control? This thinking can easily be applied to events – why hire in special hardware for your attendees when they're already carrying something that you don't need to pay for nor teach them how to use?

Vox Populi

So how can all the Android and iOS devices in your audience’s hands be put to use in service of your brand and message? Through interactivity, inclusion and openness. Any opinion, impression, suggestion or question from any or all audience members can be collected, collated, displayed and acted on at a moment’s notice. Common uses for BYOD technology at events include snap multi-choice polls (Which option does the audience prefer – A, B or C?), instant collation and display of specific data (What’s your postcode? Answers displayed on a map) and questions from the audience to a speaker or panel. But the options don’t end there.

Getting instant feedback via BYOD from your audience has a number of benefits. Audiences that actively engage with a presentation by voting or commenting are more attentive and will retain more information than audiences that passively listen. Presenters that are adequately prepared to deal with crowd-directed structure will deliver content that is more relevant and interesting to their audience. Most importantly, data that is collected on audience’s opinions about ideas or products are an invaluable resource to your company and can be used for internal improvement or in marketing material.



Networking Session

If a smartphone or tablet can be used for any purpose from hailing a taxi to measuring your heart rate, how do you choose which apps or delivery platforms are best for your event? The key is simplicity; all smartphones have an internet browser and SMS capability. The quickest and easiest way to get them interacting is to use those universal gateways.

For example, Staging Connections run a web-based BYOD platform called Event Poll. Delegates open their browsers, log into a specific URL, vote on a question or write their own comments. The results of votes are instantly displayed via a branded template on the event’s screen. Even attendees who still have their ‘old reliable’ GSM Nokia phone from the late 1990s can still vote via SMS.

How to Ask The Question

Like any presentation technology, there’s no point using it just because it’s the latest thing. You’ve got to have a good reason to seek your audience’s opinion, and the correct context in which to place their answers. Questions should be very simple, with one part only. For multiple choice answers, each option should be distinct and even polarised, with no ambiguity. Buzzwords, acronyms and any other wording that isn’t universally understood should be avoided totally.

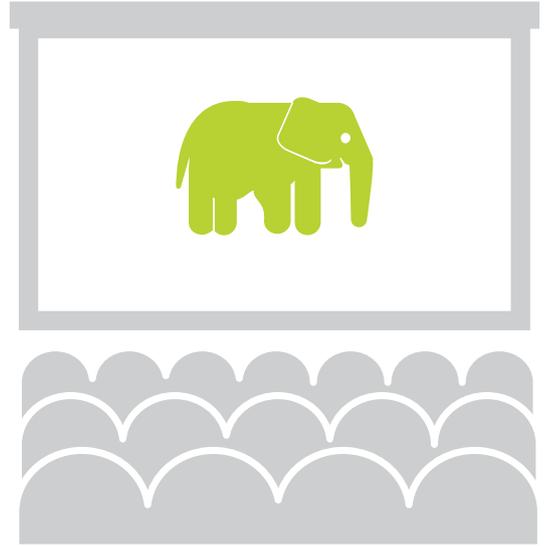
Be prepared with a response to each possibility in a multiple choice question. If you’re doing a product launch and have the confidence to ask how likely your audience is to buy this product, and the answer comes back ‘not at all’, you’re going to have to do some fast talking. While this is an extreme example, it illustrates that you should choose your questions carefully and be ready for your audience to respond in ways you might not have anticipated.



Bringing Your Audience With You

If you haven't ever experienced the old trick of how to make someone picture an 'elephant in Denmark', look it up now (we won't spoil the surprise here). It's a classic example of how to make engagement and interactivity with an audience work to your purposes. It's in some ways the opposite of data collection through interactivity – the use of leading questions to bring someone to understand your point. Sales professionals have long used the technique of 'yes' questions to close a deal; Do you hate having bad hair? 'Yes' Is it hard to fix your hair on the run? 'Yes' I've got combs here – would you like a red one? 'Yes'.

Using BYOD with this method allows you to introduce solutions to problems that your audience may not yet realise they have. If your event is internal training or a company retreat to get buy-in on sweeping cultural change, using interactivity helps people internalise the reasons behind changes to processes. It may even help you gain insight into any barriers or objections to adoption your employees have, which you can then address specifically.



The Event, Everywhere

BYOD extends way beyond the physical limitations of your event space. People who can't be physically present at your event can still experience and interact via webcast and social media. Twitter is the platform that has really come to the fore for these applications. Its communications are succinct, it's free, and it's available on all operating systems and devices. A remote viewer logging in to a webcast can address both delegates at the event and remotely by commenting with the appropriate hashtag, and even ask questions of presenters. But it's not simply a matter of promoting a hashtag via your company's account and watching the Tweets scroll across the screen.

Staging Connections run a software platform called Event Tweet that integrates all Tweets to a specific account and specific hashtag with the event's AV systems and webcast feeds. A moderator controls the display within the venue and on the webcast feed of all content, screening out any offensive or off-topic material. A branded, customisable framework for the Twitter content is displayed on the event's screens. It can even run sponsorship images and video at specified times, turning your AV from a cost centre to a revenue generator.

All Work and No Play?

After all of the probing, prodding, pushing and polling that a lively event entails, it's time to let your hair down. BYOD can just as easily be used for fun and entertainment as it can for gaining deep insight into your people's minds. If you are running a gala dinner, awards night or any other less formal event, there's a great range of playful uses for real-time polling and live Tweeting. With specialised AV staff on hand moderating content and creating new questions and responses on the fly, plus a witty compere, there's lots of scope for company and personality-specific interaction.

Do you have a red carpet entrance? Poll the audience for best dressed. Are you running a charity auction? Use the app for bidding – when people can see the bids go up in real-time on the screen, they get competitive! Who's got the best joke about our CEO? Tweet it to our hashtag – With moderation, you don't even need to be worried about the answers as you're in control! Who took the best photo on their phone during our event? Tweet it to us to win a prize. Peppered in with the more light-hearted uses of the technology can be questions that reward retained information from the main event; ask specific questions about content or product and the first person who Tweets the correct answer wins.

In Their Hands

Even with hundreds of audience members, BYOD interactivity is simple, low in bandwidth and easy to roll out in almost any venue. Event Engage tools have the capability to be run on a WiFi network or by using the user's 3G or 4G card with only a minimal amount of data usage. If you have any doubts about wireless or cellular network coverage, ask your AV provider about any connectivity issues they've experienced in your chosen venue. Even if the area is known as problematic, it's relatively easy and affordable to roll out extra coverage as need be.

Your audience will be more than happy to share information that is usually hard to get from them if you approach the use of BYOD with insight, care and attention to detail. New software and applications are being developed every day catering to this market, so talk to Staging Connections when planning your next event to find out what your audience can bring to you and how by embracing Event Engagement you can see a real impact to your event ROI.



Interested in adding extra dimensions to your next event? Contact your Staging Connections representative or call us on **1800 209 099** or email marketing@stagingconnections.com