EVENT TECHNOLOGY REPORT

EM DOWNLOADS THE INDUSTRY'S TOP TECH TOOLS   THIS MONTH : **SOCIAL MEDIA**

EVERY CONVERSATION in the event marketing industry eventually comes around to technology. You want to know what tools are out there to make your jobs easier, make your programs more successful and most crucially, make your target consumers love you the most. We have heard your clarion calls for help and now, with this new monthly series, EM's own Ken Briodagh will collect and codify the hottest, newest, most interesting, best (and sometimes worst) technological doohickeys available to you. We'll even rate them for you on a scale of 1 ("Skip it") to 5 ("Do it now"). Each installment will focus on one genre, and this inaugural report focuses on social media.

SNAPSHOT WITH FACEBOOK PUBLISHER

We begin with a visit to the world of photo activations, but this time, we're bringing some new players into the process. Snapshot, created by eshots, puts the power directly in the hands of the brand ambassador to create an impression, promote key messages and give the brand a human face instead of just a techno-display. We'll tell you how, but first, the Facts:

Developer: eshots

Cost: Customized to each program

Social media channel: Facebook

Special needs: Brand ambassadors, special camera, Android-powered mobile device

Advantage: Personal touch, and super-secret data collection

Primary function: Getting branded event photos in the hands of consumers

How it works: It's deceptively simple. You send the brand ambassadors out into the throngs of eager target consumers. They grab some likely participants and take their photos with a specialty camera that transmits the photo immediately to the staffer's Android mobile device. They will then capture the consumer's email and put the pixels in motion. Minutes later, the consumer gets an email with the branded, framed photo and a call to action to post straight to Facebook and a drive to "like" the brand's fan page. The secret weapon is that all this Facebook interaction gives the brand access to the consumer's data directly from the platform's API. Non-intrusive and ultra-easy, even if it's a little big brother-y. Eshots says delivery rates are over 92 percent and retrieval rates are anywhere from 65 to 80 percent, with more than half of the consumers posting the photos right away.

Score: 3. We love this, but there's a lot of equipment and a few too many steps. The data collect is a golden opportunity, however, so seriously consider it.

BLOGGIE

And now, a brand new device, just unveiled at CES last month. Sony has given us the Bloggie Touch pocket video camera, specially designed to enable sharing of HD photos and videos via social media. Basically, this device can make your YouTube or Flickr (or whatever) channel the cozy home of your event programs, with little or no excess effort on the ground. All the details are coming, but first, the Facts:

Developer: Sony

Cost: $180 to $200 each, depending on the model

Social media channels: Any

Special needs: The device and the internet

Specs: Full 1920x1080p HD MP4 video and 12.8-megapixel photos on 8GB or 4GB of embedded memory, depending on the model

Primary function: Shooting HD photo and video. Duh.

How it works: The Bloggie is pretty, it has a three-inch diagonal touchscreen, which is average, and has almost no analog keys. It automatically adjusts for vertical and horizontal orientation, shoots video and stills and can do so simultaneously, though I don't know why you'd want that. The digital zoom goes to 4X, the lens is image stabilized and the software is pre-loaded with face detection technology that corrects exposures for best possible output. In short, creating content has been made moron-proof. About time. Posting, however, is less simple. It doesn't have wi-fi or cellular connection, so you have to connect the camera to a computer via USB in order to upload the content, edit it and post directly to Facebook, Flickr, Picasa Web Albums and YouTube.

Score: 2. It seems cool, but I have to ask why we need it. My Android can do all this and post from anywhere. And it's bloody expensive, too.

NUTSHELLMAIL (NUTSHELLMAIL.COM)

Next, we offer an efficiency tool. Why? Because the primary roadblock preventing company-wide love for social media integration is often the fear held by (some) executives that social media is little more than a productivity time-suck. NutshellMail is an email digest of your online communities, uniquely designed to alleviate this terror. I'll tell you how, but first, the Facts:

Provider: Constant Contact

Cost: Free

Social media channels: Almost all of them

Setup time: 20 minutes (at most)

Time spent on it per day: Depends on how long it takes you to read an email

Primary function: Automates reporting on social media

How it works: You create an account at nutshellmail.com, where you link up your existing social media channels. It supports Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Yelp, MySpace, YouTube, Foursquare and Citysearch, with Google+ on the way. Then you select the frequency of updates you'd like to receive (EM gets two per day), and wait. And that's it. Each digest will give you an update on all the pertinent new information from your fans and followers since the last one. And you can send it to anyone who needs to see it (or doesn't, but wants to). Constant Comment calls it social media DVR, and we can't argue.

Score: 4. Definitely worth a try.

FACIAL RECOGNITION

Here's something from the bleeding edge of new tech. It's been around for awhile in high-tech circles, but now it can be used to elevate social media from the adenoidal to the awesome. We gave it one of our inaugural EventTech awards, so you know it's cool, but first, the Facts:

Developer: Face.com

Cost: Free, or not, if you opt for a custom app

**Social media channels:** Facebook, Twitter

Setup time: It depends on what you want to do

Special needs: Some software development chops

Primary function: Automates Facebook and Twitter posts via facial recognition

How it works: It uses a proprietary technology and open API to recognize the faces of target consumers who take part in your photo activation experiences and automatically posts the photos to their channels (with permission, of course). Your developers need only sign up with Face.com and start using the API to make a custom app for your next program. Tasty. Coca-Cola did it in Israel with the custom FaceLook app, which it developed with the help of Promarket Group, and they did it so well, they won an EventTech award. The soda brand tested out the technology through a series of "Summer Love" events activated across the Promised Land that targeted teens. Teens registered for the events on Facebook and opted into the app. Once they arrived at the event, they could post to their Facebook page just by looking at a FaceLook kiosk. Simple as that. So cool.

Score: 5. Awesome now, and forward-thinking.
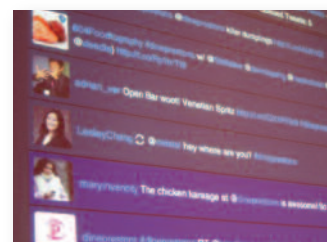
LIVE TWITTER FEED DISPLAY

And finally, something you've all seen before. Yes, I know I promised you new, but this one is important, because we're seeing more and more of it out there and I have a cool example. For those of you who don't know what it is, I'll tell you, but first, the Facts:

Developer: There are literally hundreds

Cost: Usually free, but I'm sure someone will charge you for it if you let them

Social media channel: Twitter

Risk: Letting it become just a moving bit of signage

Cool factor: Everyone likes to see their tweets on the big board

How it works: So, a live Twitter feed display, or "Twitterfall" if you're cool like that, is simply a big screen that displays a Twitter stream or search that allows all your attendees to see and be seen, digitally. Colombia-based dairy company Alpina created one of the coolest deployments in recent history last summer in order to introduce its ReStart Yogurt to women in New York City. The program was called the Wishes for Women campaign and featured the release of live butterflies representing wishes made for women as its centerpiece. There were several awesome activations, including live and virtual butterflies and much good feeling spread by all, but we're interested in the storefront live Twitter feed of the wishes for women being made in real time. More than 100,000 people interacted with the windows and that's a tasty yogurt of success (Inwindow Outdoor, New York City and Vitro, San Diego, handled).

Score: 4. Not innovative, but very successful. And easy to deploy. So easy. Ask your kids.

–Kenneth Briodagh