Bleu Station Beacons Propel Conference Sign-ins at MacWorld/iWorld

AT A GLANCE

The event
IDG's annual Macworld/iWorld conference is a high-profile event that showcases the latest Apple-related hardware and software technology.

Before
- Manual conference attendee sign-in
- Slow, inefficient, labor-intensive lines to issue badges
- Single-function badging, for gatekeeping only

After
- Automated, seamless sign-in using iPhones, Passbook, and Bleu Stations
- High interaction game play using beacons in the conference venue
- Deploying new technology, not just talking about it

Results
- Streamlined badging process, with no need to print confirmations
- More engaged attendees
- State of the art technology demonstration
- Positive social-media activity about the new technology and scavenger hunt
- Higher reported attendee satisfaction levels

International Data Group (IDG) is the world's leading technology media and events company. Its IDG Consumer & SMB unit publishes magazines and newsletters, both print and online, and runs enthusiast-oriented conferences and trade shows.

Through its editorial, advertising, and event channels, IDG informs buyers about innovative technology and accessory companies.

CHALLENGE

Over the years, conferences haven't changed much. Attendees register online, then stand in line when they arrive to receive badges that admit them to the conference floor and other speeches and presentations. It's a low-tech process in a time when everyone carries sophisticated smartphones.

Registration Challenge: How can we get attendees into the venue more quickly and seamlessly?

Technology Challenge: How can we introduce an unfamiliar technology in a fun, interactive way?

In 2014, MacWorld/iWorld decided to explore a new model that used a nascent technology the Apple world was buzzing about: Apple iBeacon-compliant Bleu Stations, tiny, configurable Bluetooth radios that broadcast micro-location proximity alerts to apps on nearby mobile devices. Macworld/iWorld had to deal with a set of logistical and operational issues, such as power provisioning and sufficient wi-fi coverage.

As MacWorld/iWorld Vice President Paul Kent put it, "We bring people to the show to see the latest and greatest Apple technology, so why not demonstrate the state of the art ourselves?"

"It's easier to demonstrate how effortless beacons are to use than to explain them. Bleu Stations helped attendees register more quickly, which was a value-add, but the Passbook-powered scavenger hunt really brought the technology to life."

Paul Kent
Vice President, Macworld/iWorld

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"Bleu Stations are great products; they just worked. But it was Twocanoes' technical acuity and creative thinking that made implementation so seamless. And we've just scratched the surface of what can be done commercially on the show floor."

Paul Kent
Vice President, Macworld/iWorld

SOLUTION

The Bleu Stations communicated with registrants' iPhones and validated their ID's for conference staff, who then issued traditional lanyard badges. At this point, the Bleu Stations were largely transparent to attendees, who simply received a Passbook confirmation instead of a printout. Attendees didn't need to download a separate app or take any action to enjoy Bleu Station benefits.

On the conference floor itself, attendees received clues about where to find posters on historical Macintosh models, such as "Apple's Twentieth Anniversary Macintosh." At each display location, a Bleu Station triggered a Passbook alert, and players scanned a poster-mounted QR code to receive a clue about the next location. After collecting all four codes within Passbook, they validated their successful hunt at the event support booth and were entered into a drawing for a MacMania cruise to the British Isles. Every winning player received a complimentary 90-day print subscription.

(On the drawing board: Beacon-enabled conference services, scalable beacon deployment tools, dynamic pass integration —all enabled by Bleu. Contact Twocanoes Software to learn more.)

RESULTS

Macworld/iWorld put a new technology to work, accelerating the sign-in process and enhancing the "fun factor" during the show.

- "Scan & Go" shaved seven seconds from 2013 average sign-in times. Multiplied by the number of attendees, this saved untold hours of staff time.

- Attendees loved the scavenger hunt. "It showed how two little-understood Apple technologies—beacons and Passbook—could be put into full production environments."

Looking back on the pilot experience, Paul Kent says, "The way we plugged this solution into such important parts of our event without hassle was remarkable. We learned that we can do something big and game-changing with a minimum of disruption to our business. We demonstrated new technology seamlessly, with little effort or cost to us, and the attendee satisfaction payoff was exponential."

Bleu Proximity feature	What it does	How it Macworld/iWorld benefited
1. Bleu Station	Hardware to broadcast micro-location	Enabled automatic sign-in and scavenger hunt
2. Bleu Setup for iOS app	Fine tune beacon behavior	Set distance triggers for individual Bleu Stations
3. Bleu SDK	Developer-level toolkit for beacon-enabling apps	Incorporated QR codes and messaging in scavenger hunt

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