

Conference Planners Use BlackBerry to Manage the Details

Business challenge:

Every year, a small group of independent contractors comes together to plan and implement a technology conference that attracts more than 2,000 attendees. Each contractor is self-employed and fulfills an important role in the conference process for their client. Roles include: staging, show management, registration, entertainment, food and beverage planning and tradeshow delivery. The challenge for each professional is making sure all the elements they manage work seamlessly within the overall context of the event. Being in touch with each other and their suppliers is a priority.

Solution:

Each conference professional began using BlackBerry®, for themselves and their teams, within the first year of this annual technology conference. The primary uses are email, calendar, contact information and phone – although each user can point to unique ways that the BlackBerry solution helps them to do their jobs more effectively.

For example, the team in charge of installing the main stage and tradeshow booths is under constant pressure to meet deadlines – for deliveries, construction and installation. Their jobs require them to be onsite at the venue 12 hours per day. Since the conference is staged in a large facility, with deliveries received several floors below, the chances of meeting face-to-face are limited. This staging team uses BlackBerry to follow up on service orders, trucking information, site contacts, and stay in touch with each other. One team member reported gaining about four hours per day in productivity, from never being out of touch with his team, or his clients.

"BlackBerry increases my response time to emails dramatically. I use it heavily while traveling. During set up and tear down of tradeshows, you are onsite for a minimum of 12 hours per day without access to email or your laptop. My BlackBerry allows me to stay informed and in touch with all my clients and the PIN feature allows ongoing communication with my team."

*Mike Kotsos, Account Manager
The Taylor Group Inc.*

Another team manages the overall logistics of the conference, from ensuring guests have rooms, to VIP arrangements, food and beverage planning, registration, and hotel coordination. They also benefit from staying in touch with each other on email and cell phones, and report a dramatic improvement over relying on laptops and dial-up connections for reading email. The hotel they work with is also on BlackBerry, which means sales and conference people are always available to them. In one instance, BlackBerry overcame the problems of noise and congestion in a crowded area where VIP transportation was located. The area was so loud, no one could use cell phones, but email on BlackBerry made sure that messages could be sent to the home office and the transportation company to manage limousines.

Company:

Group of Independent
Conference Contractors

Employees:

Companies ranging from
1-50 people

Location:

North America

Environment:

Microsoft Outlook

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*Jene Schumacher, President,
The Meeting Source Inc.*

"My BlackBerry allows me to travel and stay in touch with the people I need to work with to make the conference happen. At the conference, it really helps that the hotel uses BlackBerry because we have important messages flying back and forth during weekends and vacations. It is often easier to reach people by email than by phone. With a BlackBerry, you can leave a long message and outline exactly what you need, so your contact is prepared when they call you back."

*Jene Schumacher, President
The Meeting Source Inc.*

The team in charge of producing the stage show and managing speakers also reinforces the value of communications on-the-go. The built-in phone functionality is a benefit because, while traveling, there is access to contact information and important emails. But this team has found it easier to coordinate speakers at the last minute thanks to BlackBerry. Most speakers are asked to email their presentations a week before the event, but with today's schedules many CEOs find it difficult to meet those kinds of deadlines. With a BlackBerry onsite, the production team can receive PowerPoint slides once they arrive at the venue. Although this tightens their timeline, it does benefit the speakers, who are VIPs, and require some flexibility.

"I love that the BlackBerry is so easy to use – that you can seamlessly move from email to phone functionality. In two or three clicks I can speak to anyone from my address book. I value that when I'm on-the-road I can find missing information in Outlook, just in case I forgot to bring along a detail. It's especially beneficial that I can reroute files to wherever I am, so I can access them."

*Cindy Williamson
Video and Business Theatre Producer*

Benefits:

The conference planners that come together for this technology conference may function independently, but with BlackBerry they are connected as one vitally efficient unit. Teams find BlackBerry helps them work more productively, save time, come up with work around solutions, work faster in deadline-driven situations and serve the client and its customers better. BlackBerry is a business tool that they all say they could not do without, not only to ensure that this conference runs smoothly, but so that they continue to address their other clients' needs while away from their offices and onsite.

*For additional BlackBerry case studies, success stories and customer quotes,
please visit www.blackberry.com/go/success.*

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*Cindy Williamson,
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