

Toy or Tool? Eye Contact Meets Thumb Contact

How digital media is changing the way we network at live events

By: [Nancy A. Shenker](#)

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What is it? Name tags and business cards are still alive and well at events like networking gatherings, trade shows, and conferences, but digital media has taken center stage as a means of facilitating connections - before, during, and after these happenings. According to a study by PWC, 1.8 million business events take place per year in the United States alone. These events are attended by 205 million professionals.

Online registration is commonplace these days and barcodes are used regularly to expedite checkin at large venues. Be on the lookout for a wide range of new technologies to make finding and keeping in touch with prospects even easier - even at smaller gatherings.

What's the value? Rather than leafing through paper directories and collecting business cards, technology now enables guests to pinpoint who they want to meet at an event and download itineraries to their mobile devices. The "community" of people you meet can be saved and stored easily and quickly. Says David Adler, CEO of [BizBash](#), the leading trade media for the event planning industry, "I believe that event technology is still in its early stages. In the future, when you walk into an event, the organizer will know immediately who you are - like walking into the Cheers bar. Organizers will be able to personalize an experience and product selection for you and recommend who you should meet."

What's the downside? If you're not tech-savvy, learning a new app just for one event can be time-consuming and distracting. If you organize events and decide to incorporate technology into the event, be sure it has a real business purpose. [Bizzabo](#) describes itself as a social and digital platform for live events. They have already provided technology for more than 3,000 business events worldwide. Says Alon Alroy, Bizzabo CoFounder, "Having a cool tech product for your event is not the goal. It is a tool to help you achieve your event goals. Event apps should increase engagement, networking, and easy access to event information. Measure success by watching engagement metrics and not just downloads."

The bottom line: The next time you go to an event, check out the technologies the organizer plans to use. If you can spend a little time learning how to leverage them, they could save you time and money in the long-run and help you connect more easily with the right prospects. If you're organizing an event, consider incorporating apps into the visitor experience, but be sure they serve a purpose and that guests will benefit from them, with minimal learning time. Remember, you're offering a tool...not a toy!

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