

# cheat sheet



## INTERNET AND WIFI SERVICES

According to Mark Harvey of PSAV, as little as five years ago, you could estimate the number of WiFi devices on site would be equal to the number of attendees. However, with the explosion of not only laptops but smart phones, iPads, and other gadgets, now each attendee may represent three of four devices that access the Internet. Here's what you need to know to deal with the exponentially growing demand for Internet/WiFi access.

BY LINDA C. CHANDLER

## TRADE SHOW USES FOR INTERNET AND WIFI

- Attendees access in hot spots, cyber cafes or throughout a venue to check their email, surf the Web or access show Web sites, such as schedules, maps and appointment planners, available online.
- Education/meeting rooms/general sessions/training labs may need access for presentations.
- Exhibitors for need it for demos and keeping up with email.
- Press and bloggers who need to file stories or post live feeds.

### What Exhibitors Need to Know

- WiFi is not usually suitable for critical in-booth presentations or demos. Dedicated lines are preferable for both security and stability if you need access to streaming video or other applications that require a lot of bandwidth.
- Exhibitors need their own electrical service, network interface, browsers and programs for security and virus protection for their computers.
- Discounts apply if orders for Internet or WiFi services are prepaid in advance. Exhibitors may save from 10 to 25 percent just by knowing what they need and making the earliest deadlines.
- Similarly, exhibitors waiting until they're on site to place orders can expect to pay extra for late installation at their booths. Prices may range from around 20 percent over the regular deadline price to almost 50 percent of the early bird fee structure.
- Unauthorized, or rogue, wireless devices may cause issues with speed and reception.
- It's important to talk to the provider about how you plan to use the Internet in your booth and get a recommendation for how much bandwidth you need. Under-ordering by multiple booths can stretch the limits of the service and cause problems for everyone.

### What Organizers Need to Know

- Talk to the salesperson or CSR at the facility to learn what services are offered and who actually supplies them. Most large facilities' "in-house" tech people are actually subcontractors. Some issues pertain to the facility's infrastructure but others are supplied by the service provider. Know who the go-to person is.
- Ask if there will be a full-time on-site tech rep to service your show, which is preferable to just a customer service desk phone or a cell number where exhibitor clients have to leave a message.
- Some facilities have permanent WiFi capacity throughout the building. Others have partial coverage and must install temporary access spots to achieve complete coverage. Find out where the permanent spots are to determine where additional access should be placed.
- Free or for-purchase WiFi access in selected hot spots is now available to attendees in many convention facilities; however, peak demand (at break times, for instance) and too little bandwidth may cause people to be

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kicked off their connections. Association shows may opt to “buy out” the facility’s wireless network to provide access for all members/attendees for a flat rate that can be negotiated and sponsored. However, consumer shows may or may not want to provide free wireless to attendees.

- Individual wireless access can run to \$30 a day in some situations. (Some providers charge by the 24-hour period and some charge according to the actual time the user is connected.)
- Dedicated bandwidth for meeting rooms and the exhibit hall avoids interruptions.
- Journalists expect wireless access. If your show is media heavy, you should plan for their transmissions of photos, stories and blog entries.
- The service provider should be able to monitor and track people using unauthorized devices that cause interference. If an offender is identified, the building’s tech rep and/or the show organizer should address any violation of terms in the contract.

## Considering Costs

- Plan ahead and know your own needs and technical requirements for producing and running the show—streaming video for a general session, for example. It’s easy to overestimate your needs, especially if your service provider can move bandwidth around to accommodate needs in different areas at different times. Find out if that’s possible and your cumulative use may be less than expected.
- Look for facilities/service providers that charge by the amount of bandwidth you use rather than by the number of connections.
- If you plan to sell a sponsored buy-out for WiFi access, be sure that the provider can give you a customized portal, or splash page, where your sponsor can be featured.
- Not all presenters need Internet access. Find out which ones do, and group them in

the same meeting room(s) to avoid paying more than necessary.

- Some facilities’ charges are based on the duration of the show; others have a first day rate and then lower rates for successive days.
- Know your audience. Pricing hinges on the estimated bandwidth based on the number of users. High-tech audiences tend to use more.
- Ask for deals that bundle computer rentals, cyber café set-ups and IT services.

## Rules of Thumb

- When the show is over, ask for usage reports and build a history of your Internet and WiFi use for future planning, just as you do for F&B and other elements of the show. Tracking actual use can save you money in successive shows.
- High-definition video, such as you may want to use for a keynote presentation to be broadcast to a Web site, requires four times more bandwidth than standard video. ■

## MEET THE EXPERTS

**Lara Fitts Gamache**, Corcoran Expositions, Inc., 312-541-0567, [www.corcexpo.com](http://www.corcexpo.com); **Mark Haley**, Smart City Networks, 702-943-6000, [www.smartcity.com](http://www.smartcity.com); **Matt Harvey**, PSAV Presentation Services, 847-222-9878, [www.psav.com](http://www.psav.com); **Deborah Tuton**, Rhode Island Convention Center, 401-458-6000, [www.riconvention.com](http://www.riconvention.com); **Mark Wisness**, Arlington Convention Center, 817-459-5000, [www.arlingtontx.gov/acc/](http://www.arlingtontx.gov/acc/)

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- WiFi Buyouts: Decoded, 09/2009
- Eight Ways to Make Your Event Blog and Twitter Friendly, 03/2010
- What a Blogger Wants, 04/2010

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