

THE TABLETS HAVE TURNED

Exceeding flavor-of-the-month status, tablets have turned into an essential item on exhibitors' tool belts and, in effect, are changing the way the industry works. But how can you put these techno tablets to use in your next exhibit? Here we outline five functions for which these portable PCs are perfectly suited.

By Kelli Billstein

We've all had that breakthrough moment: We realize that a shortcut exists, that there's a faster, more efficient, or simply better way to go about accomplishing a task. Whether it's finding an alternative route to avoid the congestion of rush-hour traffic or programming our DVR to record "Mad Men," the discovery can be transformative. In the world of trade shows, the tablet is provoking those aha moments. By using tablet technology, companies are streamlining their programs, often saving time and money - all while earning cool points and demonstrating that they are keeping pace with the latest and greatest tech tools.

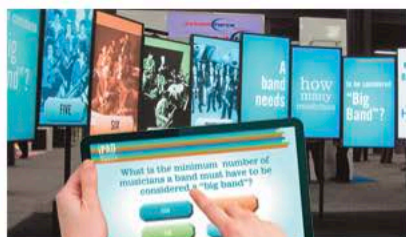
Since Apple Inc.'s iPad made its debut in April 2010, the hype around tablets has grown from an excited murmur to a clamoring din. It wasn't long before other tablets such as the HP TouchPad or the Samsung Galaxy Tab were released. Last year at the International Consumer Electronics Show alone, more than 80 new variations on the tablet were launched. To paraphrase Wall Street Journal columnist Martin Peers, the last time tablets got this much attention, they were being carried down Mount Sinai by Moses.

It's safe to say that, unlike Apple's clunky 1987 Newton which resembled a pimped-out fish finder, today's tablets are more than just a passing fad. And as far as the trade show industry is concerned, this technology is becoming embedded in exhibitors' marketing arsenals faster than you can chirp to your co-worker, "There's an app for that." Here, we explore five ways that pad-based PCs are being integrated into the trade show environment along with examples to help inspire a few tablet-based tactics for your next exhibit.

Portable Playtime

Say the magic words "How about a quick game?" and eyes that were once glazed over light up. In-booth activities such as games can jumpstart participation, work as icebreakers and conversation starters, and brand your booth as the "fun exhibit" almost by default. Tablets, with their easy-to-navigate, intuitive touchscreens, are something that most attendees can pick up and use with little instruction. As such, they lend themselves quite nicely to interactive games.

Blue Telescope, a New York-based firm that specializes in developing interactive media experiences for its clients, incorporated tablets into its booth at EXHIBITOR2011 with an iPad-based music quiz. The company's 20-by-20-foot exhibit comprised a 24-foot-long semicircle displaying 12 LCD monitors, which synchronized with six iPads. Attendees could initiate a round of quiz questions by picking up an iPad, which acted as a remote control, and begin the music-trivia challenge. Questions such as "A band needs how many musicians to be considered 'big band'?" appeared alongside corresponding images on the LCD monitors, prompting users to respond to the multiple-choice options via the iPad they were holding.



Blue Telescope used tablets to engage attendees with an interactive music quiz.

"This was set up as a casual type of game that you could start and stop whenever," says Patrick Snee, creative director at Blue Telescope. "The iPads were great because they were so lightweight and facilitated a casual form of interaction." At any given moment, sales reps could assist attendees in pausing the music quiz to check out Blue Telescope's portfolio, which had been preloaded onto each iPad. Thus, the iPads played multiple roles. "Tablets are something that most people are comfortable with," Snee says. "They're tools that people can easily see in their own exhibits."

Global Experience Specialists Inc., an exhibit- and event-services firm, recognized the value in tablets on the trade show floor, too. The company used tablets in its 10-by-20-foot booth at the 2011 Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association show in Las Vegas. Compared to GES' bygone in-booth activities, the tactic of using tablets proved to be a undeniable game-changer, so to speak.

"We're always trying to keep our finger on the pulse of the latest and greatest technologies, and obviously the iPad is one of those," says Terry Campanaro, vice president of client relations, healthcare, at GES. "We know that the iPad offers attendee intrigue, which draws traffic. It's also a lightweight convenience that allows for more personal interactions on the trade show floor."

To capitalize on capturing those more personal interactions with iPad-ogling attendees, GES developed an interactive personality quiz, which it uploaded onto an iPad2. The quiz featured questions like, "If you were stranded on a desert island and were granted one simple wish, what would you ask for?" The questions appeared on the tablet's screen above a series of five multiple-choice options. When the quiz was over, the GES staffers used the iPad2's camera feature to snap the attendee's picture. From there, on-site GES graphic designers visually interpreted the attendee's various answers using thumbnail icons associated with the multiple-choice options, ultimately creating mosaic portraits of participants. One portrait, for example, might be a melange of the following images: clasped hands (to represent a caring nature), a light bulb (to show innovation), an hourglass (to signify prowess under pressure), and a thumbs-up icon (to denote positivity).

"Attendees were intrigued, so our booth was always packed," Campanaro says. "Some were just interested in seeing the iPad2. Others saw the mosaics and wanted to participate in the activity. It was a fun learning experience for everyone."

Show and Tell

Sometimes the attendee-to-staffer ratio is just too high to facilitate constant interaction. When attendees have to play the waiting game for some one-on-one attention, informational stations are a quick save, offering convenient ways to learn fast facts. In a way, these stations are like self-serve buffets, spread with an exhibitor's product and service info. But attendees won't want to chow down on a company's offerings unless the display looks enticing.



Audi of America Inc. displayed tablets loaded with stats about its new vehicles, allowing attendees to peruse the information at their leisure.

A tablet could lure the most stalwart of luddites to tap, scroll, and skim through its virtual pages, so seductive is its interface. As such, attendees have a tendency to gravitate toward these silicon slabs when they're spotted on the trade show floor. It isn't a bad idea, then, to upload troves of pertinent product and company information for attendees to peruse at their leisure.

At the National Association of Realtors show, Bank of America Corp. did just that. With the help of its exhibit house, Jack Morton Worldwide, the company set up two iPad listening stations in its 60-by-70-foot booth. Each listening station contained three iPads, which were secured to island countertops and accompanied by headphones. All six tablets were uploaded with recordings of speakers that were presenting at the conference. Attendees could get comfortable in one of the high-top chairs situated in front of

each iPad, put on a pair of headphones, and tune in to the presentations they may have missed.

"The iPads were easy to use and they were the best way to give attendees access to all the offerings of the conference," says Cynthia McArthur, vice president and account director at Jack Morton. "By simply touching the screen, they could sort presentations by day, topic, or track. It was a successful setup that we were quite pleased with."

Audi of America Inc. used a similar approach adding tablets to its booth at numerous auto shows around the country in 2011. To showcase its A8, A7, and A6 vehicle models, Audi set up four displays in its booth space, each featuring iPads. Instead of flipping through page after page of paper literature filled with model specs, attendees could self educate at the iPad display stands, discovering at their own pace the nitty-gritty details of the vehicles they were most intrigued by. They could even play with the vehicles' all-wheel drive maneuverability by using the iPad's tilt function, and an animation video demonstrated how the Audi A8's night-vision feature worked. If attendees were particularly tempted by the sassy set of wheels, the iPads offered the option of arranging a test drive at the attendee's nearest Audi dealership. The tablets on display worked well for Audi considering the number of casual end-user attendees that go to auto shows, not necessarily wanting to be sold to, but nonetheless curious about new vehicles on the market.

"We decided to use the iPads because Audi wanted to enhance attendees' experience at an auto show," says Andrea Santilli, Audi marketing event specialist. "We wanted to give a good introduction to our brand and all the vehicles, but also offer more detailed information to attendees who were more familiar with Audi. iPads are a great tool to do that with. It's one of those things - if you don't have it, you're behind. In order to stay ahead of the curve, you definitely need a tablet."

Impact Unlimited Inc., a Dayton, NJ-based provider of brand communications for meetings, events, and exhibits worldwide, clued into the benefits of using tablets as part of its booth display, too. At the 2011 Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association show, the company literally spelled out its services with the help of iPads. To reiterate its theme "The How of Wow," Impact Unlimited clipped 30 iPads to the wall of its 10-by-20-foot booth, creating the word "wow." Each iPad contained a separate solution or product portfolio that the company offers its clients. Attendees could pull a Vanna White as they walked along the wall, detaching individual iPads to delve deeper into a particular solution or product.

"Nowadays, if I say iPad, my clients purr," says Stephen Mapes, vice president of creative design services for Impact Unlimited. "These devices draw attention and create spectacle, but we're also proving that iPads can be used to convey informational messages with real value."

Leading the Way

"Ask any sales rep at a trade show - they're on the floor to get leads. It's the most important part of trade shows," says Shayna Metzner, director of sales and marketing at NewLeads, a lead-retrieval systems and software company based in Oxnard, CA.

Metzner's job at NewLeads is to simplify and maximize her clients' systems for harvesting and following up on leads. For her, tablets are a no-brainer means to reaching that end. By uploading her company's software onto a tablet, Metzner can give sales reps a multifaceted, mobile tool for lead retrieval.

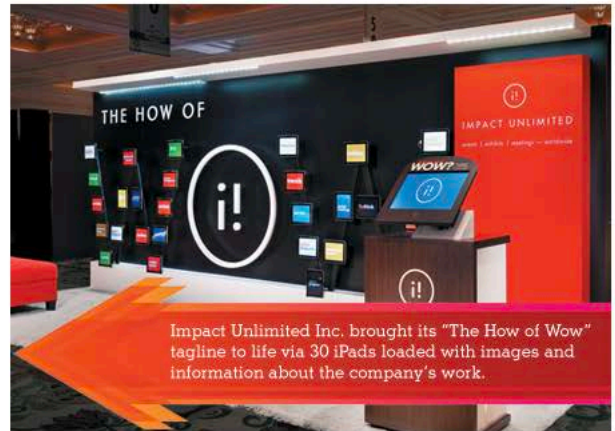
"The iPad solution has ultimately driven our market and doubled our business," Metzner says. "It's hot, it's sexy, and we don't have to explain what it is. Everyone knows what it is, and everyone wants one."

NewLeads is a cinch to use with a tablet. Staffers can take a handheld, mobile badge scanner in one hand and a tablet uploaded with NewLeads software in the other, and hit the show floor. Sales reps can float around their booth space, scanning badges to pull up a lead's information, which appears alongside the sales rep's preset qualifying questions. With technology so mobile and fluid, that lead-retrieval process becomes a more personal interaction - one that attendees will surely remember.

"Back in the old days, people were using stationary hardware like laptops and freestanding kiosks," Metzner says. "Booth reps were tethered to their lead system, and that was a barrier to facilitating a conversation. Now we have this sleek, wireless iPad2 that really is a flippin' game changer."

Free to roam where they wish, their trusty tablet lead retrievers at their sides, sales reps can take trade shows to a whole new level. By tapping a touch-sensitive screen, reps can qualify a lead while simultaneously sending e-literature to attendees' e-mail inboxes.

"Today, it's all about the sales reps," Metzner says. "You give them an iPad, and suddenly they have accountability. Once you have that hip, cool device, you're going to take more leads and better leads. At the end of the day, this is what exhibit managers want: more leads."



Seeking more leads and better metrics is what led Jennifer Van Dyke to use tablets as a part of her company's lead-retrieval system, too. Van Dyke is the marketing coordinator for Southaven, MS-based Terex Corp., a manufacturer of telescopic cranes and other equipment. Working in an industry that Van Dyke characterizes as a "good old boys network," using tablets as a tool to gather leads was quite a leap. She turned to PRMconnect Inc. for the lead-retrieval software called "Leadature," and put the new technology into her sales reps' hands, hoping the tablet would streamline the dusty pen-to-paper system they'd relied on in years past.

Pimping Your iPad

To better integrate tablets into your exhibit, think about mixing and matching some of the following accessories.



HyperJuice Stand: This lightweight stand has two rubberized soft touch slots to cradle your iPad. While resting in these slots, the tablet recharges its battery juices, extending battery life up to 16 hours.



MultiDock: This 18-inch-tall unit from Griffin Technologies can fit 10 iPads with protective cases in separate charging bays for simultaneous charging and syncing.



BookArc: If you're looking for a holster that's as hot as your iPad, your search ends with this pewter swoosh of a chic stand. The stylish BookArc offers four different viewing-angle options for maximum versatility.



SamTab: The Samsung Galaxy Tab docks into this full-sized 83-key keyboard. With the SamTab connected in the portrait position, it's easy to hammer out an e-mail or large block of text. The keyboard also features connections for a charger and speakers.



Armodilo Display Stand: This stand is a protective display housing for tablets used in trade show booths. The black-powder-finished aluminum unit is 46 inches tall with an extra-wide, weighted base for enhanced stability.

"We're selling a new way of managing leads, collateral materials, and measurement," says Dean Hills, a digital strategist at PRMconnect.

When Terex exhibited at the 2011 World of Concrete show, it did so with iPads in the hands of its staffers. The Leadature system allowed them to capture and qualify potential leads into a centralized database, send electronic literature, and track how much time customers were spending on any given online page or link found via the e-lit.

"Picture a sales guy with this homemade book that he's put pricing and brochures in. He brings it to the trade show and it's like his little sales bible," Van Dyke says. "I had to gently tell my sales team to let go of the book. Using the iPads instead, we looked hip and happening. They brought us to the forefront of technology. Additionally, they allowed us to cut the costs of printing literature as well as the cost of shipping and drayage. Plus, they liberated the sales reps from the paper literature they'd been holding in their hand."

Van Dyke noted that using the tablets in the booth made her sales team much faster, too. Speaking with potential leads, a sales rep could respond to questions more thoroughly by pulling up real-time pricing on construction equipment. This was a resounding improvement over the weathered and coffee-stained pages of the old sales books they'd grown so accustomed to in the past.

Donning Demos

If George Foreman simply told people how his electric grill worked, it's unlikely he would have become a household name. Instead, he tied on an apron and showed TV junkies across the country how they too could grill a panini. On a trade show floor, it's a good idea to follow Big George's example and offer a demonstration of how your product works. But what if, unlike an electric kitchen appliance, your product is too complex and large to take on the road?



Philips Consumer Lifestyle's Sonicare brand used tablets to demonstrate its electric toothbrush at work.

Creating a custom application to demonstrate your product or service on a tablet is something exhibitors are picking up on. A demo that takes place on a tablet's touchscreen not only presents a company as tech savvy, but the app-demonstration option also cuts costs on shipping and drayage if you have expensive heavy equipment to demonstrate.

Kaon Interactive Inc. is a Maynard, MA-based experiential-marketing agency skilled in custom creating apps for its customers. Kaon might, for example, build an independent product model for a client who manufactures medical devices. With the product model downloaded onto a tablet PC, the client now has ease of mobility to attend trade shows and can easily demo the device.

"With this new platform, we can tell complex stories in an engaging way," says Gavin Finn, president and CEO of Kaon. "By building virtual product demos for a tablet, we've eliminated the need for the actual product. Now we can create photo-realistic models and heighten the level of interactivity via the tablet touchscreen."

Leigh Reeves, senior manager of operations for the dental professional channel with Philips Consumer Lifestyle, has worked to develop the company's Sonicare brand at trade shows and corporate events. For her, tablets have been a good vehicle through which to demonstrate the company's dental products and, in turn, have sparked more conversations and increased product comprehension among attendees.

At the American Dental Association show, for example, Reeves used HP Slates to demonstrate a laser procedure on a patient's gums using Sonicare equipment. After viewing the demo, attendees admitted that the procedure didn't seem so scary. They appreciated being able to view it on that crystal-clear tablet screen instead of merely talking through the logistics of lasers slicing and dicing. Reeves also used the tablets to show media files of people brushing their teeth with a Sonicare electric toothbrush beside that of a competitor's. The demo offered a convenient side-by-side comparison. "A picture is worth a thousand words, especially on a tablet," Reeves says. "The graphics and the immediacy of it create a really effective way to increase sales to dental professionals."

While demonstrating dental products can be challenging, demonstrating high-tech glass' capability to sustain 700-degree temperatures while on the show floor is pretty much impossible. That's why Karen Elder, marketing manager at Schott HomeTech North America Inc., was so thrilled about using tablets in her company's booth at the 2011 Hearth Patio and Barbeque Expo. Elder had an app custom created for her company's Schott Robax brand, an extremely heat-resistant, transparent ceramic fireplace glass.

The booth featured three iPads, each containing a slide show of Schott Robax ceramic glass, videos, and the app demonstrating the glass' selling points. One video, for example, showed how Schott's product can withstand dramatic and sudden shifts in temperature. Normally, glass will shatter when taken from a smoldering-hot environment and suddenly exposed to ice-cold stimuli. The video on the iPad showed Schott glass heated to 700 degrees followed by total submersion in liquid nitrogen - the glass didn't so much as crack. "It's always difficult for us to do demonstrations because it involves fire and glass breaking," Elder says. "The iPads gave us a way to demonstrate our product's selling points on the show floor while getting attendees to interact with those selling points."

Another video in which Elder used the iPads was a 3-D animation of how heat transfers through glass effectively and evenly. The animation showed the difference between an open fireplace system and a closed one, such as Schott's. Tablets in hand, attendees didn't have to imagine the benefits of Schott's product; they could see how heat filled a room more effectively with the company's ceramic glass.

Elder explains that exhibiting can be challenging for companies that sell "ingredient products" (products that are components of a larger system or product). How do you bring those ingredients to life on the show floor? For Schott, tablets app-solutely offered a solution to that conundrum.

"Once attendees got a chance to see the demos on the iPads, they discovered things they didn't know about our glass," Elder says. "The big success story here is that attendees were exposed to the other things that make this glass important."

During the fifth century B.C., ancient Greeks used worn stones affixed to wooden tablets to do arithmetic. We know this archaic device as an abacus. You don't see too many abaci on the show floor today; most of us have made the switch to calculators. And so it goes - the evolution of gadgetry and tech tools. Tablets, too, offer a way to leapfrog into a faster, more streamlined way of working.

When it comes to conducting surveys, tablets practically jump up onto exhibit managers' laps and beg to be used. Small enough for a staffer to tuck under an arm, or carry in a handbag like one of Paris Hilton's small dogs - the tablet is the apex of portability. It allows for surveys to be conducted anywhere on the show floor. And considering their convenient size, tap-and-scroll usability, and electronic metrics calculation, tablets streamline what can oftentimes be an arduous procedure.

Gabriel Haas, account manager at Orlando, FL-based SmartSource Computer and Audio Visual Rentals, encouraged his customers who were orchestrating the Trauma, Critical Care & Acute Care Surgery (TCCACS) conference to use six iPads for surveys.

The conference was for medical professionals wanting to stay on top of advancements in the industry, while simultaneously gaining continuing-education credits. In order to receive credit for the sessions in which they participated, attendees had to complete surveys on the show floor. The survey questions asked for attendees to rate their overall satisfaction with the conference and provide feedback on conference speakers.

APPLE OF MY EYE

In 2010, Apple Inc. sold 15 million iPads — a number that tripled in 2011. So successful was the splash of the iPad into mainstream culture that, in most conversations, the word "iPad" will function as a placeholder, referring to the brand-neutral category of "tablets" at large. But with the advent of so many other tablets, does the iPad still hold sway over the minds and pocketbooks of consumers? Considering the gold rush-era momentum surrounding tablets, Apple's got some real competition climbing the ranks. Here are five other tablets vying for consumers' attention, along with dimensions and price estimates based on each unit's MSRP.



HP TouchPad: Made by Hewlett-Packard Development Co. L.P., this tablet features a 9.7-inch crystal-clear LED backlit screen. Though thicker and heavier than an iPad, it boasts a bigger processor and packs a louder punch with its audio system and speakers. Available in 16GB (\$280) or 32GB (\$300).

Kindle Fire: Amazon Inc.'s tablet, the Kindle Fire, displays content on a 7-inch color touchscreen and utilizes Amazon's own cloud-accelerated Web browser. Users of the lightweight Kindle Fire get the bonus of free cloud storage for their Amazon content. Available in 8GB (\$200).

BlackBerry PlayBook: All the features you loved about your BlackBerry device slide seamlessly into this sibling, which offers a 7-inch touchscreen. It also features a 3 megapixel camera on the front, and a 5 megapixel camera on the back. Available in 16GB (\$250), 32GB (\$250), and 64GB (\$300).

In the past, Haas' client, the TCCACS, had used paper surveys. This time, Haas asked a colleague to write a software program that allowed the attendees to complete the survey online. The data would be captured electronically via eight HP TouchSmart computers with printers set up at kiosks. Attendees were instructed to complete their surveys and print out their certificate of completion. Knowing a bottleneck effect would surely ensue, Haas brought six iPads to the registration desk and, like a newsie shouting "Extra! Extra!" to the crowds, he informed attendees they could complete their surveys in this manner, provided they didn't mind receiving their certificates of completion via e-mail instead of getting a hard copy on the spot.

"A lot of people were excited to try the iPad," Haas says. "Using it saved attendees the time of having to stand in line for the kiosk, so the iPads worked out really well."

While using tablets as a crutch to conduct surveys was a quick and smart solution for Haas, the launch of tablets rang out as the hallelujah of solutions for companies like Red Bank, NJ-based Exhibit Surveys Inc., an independent market-research firm. Over the past 40 years, Exhibit Surveys has followed in survey-technology trends, making the transition to stationary laptops and PC terminals as soon as the technology was available.

"I jumped on the iPad bandwagon as soon as I could," says Joe Federbush, vice president of sales and marketing at Exhibit Surveys. "To me it was instant: We need to be using these for on-site surveys and exit surveys."

Federbush immediately saw how iPads could improve his clients' trade show programs. For one thing, these tablets were compact and light, making it easy for staffers to stand with them for hours on end. (The iPad has about a 10-hour battery life.) Tablets also offered another advantage - mobility. Forget shipping paper or supplies for a stationary survey setup. Tablets could simply be uploaded with a survey app, and they were ready to go. Besides these obvious benefits, iPads had the allure of hot-off-the-press technology. "Oh, is that the new iPad?" booth visitors would ask by the dozens. Surveying has never been this easy; staffers almost had to beat off overzealous attendees with a wooden stick.

"Attendees are intrigued by the device," Federbush says. "But you can't let the excitement of the iPad jeopardize the quality of the research. You still have to make sure those quality-control checks are in place."

While he endorses the tablet as a time- and money-saving gadget, Federbush points out a few important holdups he's noticed in his dealings with tablets. First, staffers should screen attendees before walking them through a survey to weed out the bug-eyed technophiles who are only interested in the tool and not the information it's measuring. Second, exhibitors should bear in mind that Wi-Fi in a convention center is iffy; Federbush recommends looking into a survey app that doesn't require Internet access. (Exhibit Surveys uses iSurvey, another Apple product.) Staffers need only upload the app onto the tablet, store the survey data, and download the completed surveys onto their servers after the show.

But these are minor speed bumps for Exhibit Surveys. For the most part, using tablets to conduct surveys for its clients has been a godsend. Federbush notes that the sharp increase in his company's business since it started using iPads only served to emphasize what he already knew: Tablets are a survey's best friend.

The Last App

Adaptable and multifaceted, tablets are indeed game changers for the exhibit industry. Although they haven't been in the hands of marketers for more than three years, tablets are already transforming how industry professionals approach trade shows. Could we ever go back to a time when tablets didn't simplify work and add some PC panache? By facilitating vivacious in-booth activities, interactive info stations, educational product demos, quality lead captures, and more efficient survey tactics, the tablet is the Swiss army knife of exhibiting.

If you're still struggling to figure out how a tablet can work for your booth, iPads remain one of the most popular giveaway items on the show floor. **E**

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EXHIBIT PROMOTIONS

Giveaway Items

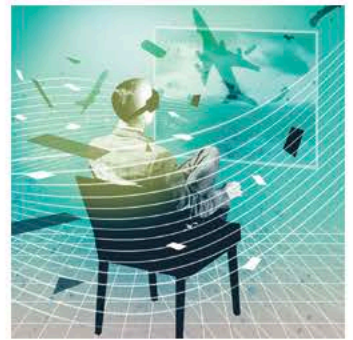
We asked 10 industry experts to share their opinions and advice on trade show giveaways.



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