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### **Event technology – Key technology considerations for event organisers in 2011**

***As more and more festivals use technology to reduce costs and add value to the attendee experience Tom McInerney, events director at event technology and Wi-Fi specialist Etherlive, highlights five key technologies and considerations to help event professionals ensure their events go without a hitch in the New Year.***

- 1) Cashless payments. We are seeing cashless payments generating more and more interest at festivals and events, both Radio Frequency identification (RFID), and via smartcards and some smartphones. Benefits of cashless payments include reduced transaction times, less cash required on site at events, and customer loyalty – after all, no festival or event goer wants to spend more time than is absolutely necessary queuing and paying for drinks, they want to be enjoying all the entertainment on offer. So, to increase revenue and event loyalty, and reduce congestion, organisers should consider installing cashless systems.
- 2) Event specific apps. Smartphone apps have rapidly become a must-have alternative to the standard event guides. Not only are they available well in advance of an event, but they can be frequently updated both prior to and during the event with useful information to drive the users to particular promotions or elements of that event. Apps also have an interactive element allowing users to download music and information as and when they want – providing the Wi-Fi coverage is adequate. These capabilities mean that apps are an excellent way for event organisers to drive revenue and present further sponsorship and marketing opportunities, as well as maintaining immediate communication with customers. A top tip to ensure that apps can perform at their peak and not disappoint users is to provide a locally controlled Wi-Fi network enabling content to be downloaded directly from sites.
- 3) Radio Frequency identification (RFID) or smartcard systems. This technology has a wide variety of uses, and as well as being used for things like crew catering provision, has a myriad of uses in crew management, such as accreditation for working at height, booking out equipment and access rights. I am also certain that we will see this technology further developed to accommodate festival and event goers too, with wristbands to give access to specific areas and services such as VIP for example, and identify those eligible for additional products and services. Event organisers should ensure that they keep abreast of these developments and consider installing RFID technology for crew access for example, helping to reduce demand on security teams and help the smooth running of events.
- 4) Spectrum management. It is really vital that event organisers invest in spectrum management. As wireless technology become increasingly prolific at events, including general Wi-Fi, CCTV, ticket scanning, sound systems, and audio and video links, the impact they have on each other also increases. As many of these

technologies operate in the same frequency range, it is vital that good early communication and coordination is in place to ensure that there is no interference.

- 5) Increased bandwidth. Exhibitors, event organiser and attendees are using cloud based services such as Dropbox, internet based event management software and Google apps more and more will result in increased demand for internet access. Insufficient bandwidth will impact download speeds and in turn anyone using cloud-based services. It is really important to ensure that the event has adequate bandwidth available, and always better to provide more rather than not enough, otherwise you are at risk of leaving users frustrated and embarrassed.

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#### **About Etherlive**

A successful event depends on great performances. From WOMAD and The Green Man Festival to the Southampton Boat Show and the Three Counties Show, Etherlive is the one that makes IT work. Etherlive sits behind the scenes delivering reliable Wi-Fi internet, telephony, laptops, PDQs and interactive messaging. Whether in a field or a building, Etherlive makes connectivity simple.

**<http://events.etherlive.co.uk>**