

CONFERENCE TECHNOLOGY

Missing a marketing trick with guest Wi-Fi?

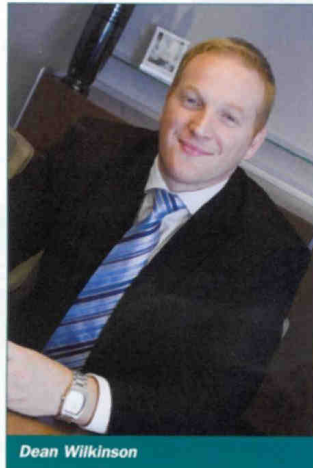
Sales director of Airangel, supplier of branded guest wired and wireless internet access solutions, **Dean Wilkinson**, says Wi-Fi is a must-have facility for conference centres, but for some it still presents a huge area of untapped marketing potential.

Airangel works with conference venues such as the Harrogate International Centre and the Birmingham NEC and ICC and we have seen that clever and innovative marketing strategies can offset some of the initial investment costs of Wi-Fi. In-house internet portals can be used to directly market a variety of services to delegates and visitors, perhaps highlighting an internal bar's location, restaurant menus or other special offers, thereby proactively cross-selling, driving revenues and showcasing your product to its full extent.

The Wi-Fi portal itself can be used as an additional customer service tool, providing links with outside firms such as taxi companies, restaurants and local hotels. There's potential to sell sponsorship or advertising on the portal itself and to work with brands which reflect the values of your event or centre. Adopting this approach will add additional value to your guest experience and, importantly, generate additional revenues.

Some Wi-Fi providers will present clients with a 'one size fits all' portal, often

advertising brands that don't complement your own and which might even include competitors. It pays to check with your provider that you can tailor the portal to suit your own business needs. You wouldn't let any local garage hand out flyers in your reception or put stands up in your meeting room without prior agreement, so don't let this happen with



Dean Wilkinson

your Wi-Fi either. Treat it as an extension of your dialogue with customers and control it accordingly.

Seize the moment

The data capture potential of the Wi-Fi portal is often overlooked but it provides an ideal medium through which to capture extra information about the visitors to your venue. Whether it's collecting straightforward company details or enquiring about peoples' interests, Wi-Fi can be used to refine and develop your marketing database and provide another means to build a relationship with your guests and customers.

Of course, venues must provide a

reliable, flexible and fast Wi-Fi system that can cope with high volumes of users, so choosing a provider that offers 24/7 support, is on hand to handle guest queries and offers a complete internet solution is a must. After all the costs of getting it wrong are enormous, no one wants their event remembered for the wrong reasons. A hassle-free service

'You wouldn't let any competitor hand out flyers in your reception or put pop ups in your meeting room, so don't let this happen with your Wi-Fi'

could mark you out from rival venues and result in further return bookings.

Traditional on-stand internet access has always been expensive and unreliable due to the vast amount of cabling required and the restrictions this can present. Wi-Fi removes that issue altogether and drives the cost down.

Business critical

The next 12 months will undoubtedly see conference venues work much harder to minimise costs, achieve stand-out and be smarter in their approach to doing business.

Wi-Fi is already understood as a vital service for guests, but now it should be seen as a business critical way to engage with guests, protect your brand and ultimately add to your bottom line.

www.airangel.co.uk