



Near Field Communication Q&A

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International CES took advantage of near field communication (NFC) in a number of ways last month as part of a new registration process. Each attendee badge had a “tag” that enabled them and other participants to share information.

This is the first of a two-part series on what you, as trade show managers, need to know about the new technology.

What is NFC?

NFC is a form of wireless communication using two devices in close proximity to each other (within four or five centimeters) to form a connection. An electronic chip or “tag” is encoded with digital information; a tag reader, such as a smart phone, is able to access the information on the chip.

Example: Attendees with NFC badges don’t have to hand over paper coupons to get a discount. The vendor just scans their badges with a reader, and the discount the attendee is eligible for pops up.

What is the benefit of NFC?

According to, a non-profit that provides “accurate, factual information about the growth of near field communication,” the convenience factor is big:

“NFC provides numerous ways to make payments, retrieve information and even exchange videos or information with friends on the go,” according to the website.

They also provide some examples relevant to show participants:

- Swipe your smartphone at a cash register and instantly pay for lunch.
- Pass your phone over a friend’s phone to share pictures or videos.
- Wave the phone in front of a poster or display with an NFC tag in it to see information about what you’re viewing.

Are NFC readers easy to get?

Anyone with an NFC-enabled device can easily access information that is programmed to be captured by anyone (called “open”). The reader can be a tablet, smartphone or other device that meets the technology standards.

Example: A presenter can get the contact information of an attendee who asks for additional information simply by passing her tablet over his badge. The presenter can e-mail a document or text a link at any time.

Does this mean anyone can get my data?

Yes and no. Data that is open can be read by any NFC reader. But digital information can also be protected to limit access (“encrypted”) so that only readers with the correct code can decrypt it. The reader sends an “instruction” to set up a link between the two.

“The tag receives the instruction and checks if it is valid. If not, nothing occurs,” says NFC.org. “If it is a valid request, the tag then responds with the requested information. For sensitive transactions such as credit card payments, a secure communication channel is first established and all information sent is encrypted.”

Just as bar codes with basic information led to QR codes with lots more information, technology is once again transforming the way we access digital information.

But is NFC right for your event?

Watch for Part 2—NFC and You

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<http://www.expoweb.com/article/nearfield-communication-qa/>