



TECH BEAT



By Michael J. Shapiro

[More than One Way to Skin a Mobile App: PointsMap](#)

(Online Tools, Trade Show Technology, Apps) [Permanent link](#)

There's a gaggle of developers out there who can build a mobile app for your event, and at a very wide variety of price points. I've just checked out a demo for an online tool that presents an interesting alternative. It's called [PointsMap.com](#), and it's made by [Video Ideas Productions](#), a Chattanooga, Tenn.-based company that's been doing web design and multimedia production for more than 20 years. PointsMap, which is built in part on the Google Maps framework, is a relatively new addition to their product line.

PointsMap provides customized maps at a hosted URL, and at first glance appears to be a slightly souped-up rebranding of Google Maps. But stick with their [online demo](#): Things get more interesting. Customizing a local map with attractions, restaurants, hospitals and the like is good for starters, but PointsMap also allows you to go inside the buildings in question, to see an interior layout as well as any media those businesses choose to make available. Think downloadable menus, reservation links, brochures, photos and videos, and links to websites. PointsMap content is automatically optimized for mobile devices, including Apple's, if that's what you're using to view it. The relevance for trade shows and conventions is pretty straightforward: PointsMap can deliver maps not only of the interior exhibit hall but also of the surrounding area, and feature the hotels, restaurants and venues that you wish to include.

Revenue opportunities are built into the platform. For instance, you can charge

exhibitors to upload media that will be associated with their booth space on the map. Essentially they pay for a personal administrative access code to their booth, and they can then upload whatever brochures, videos or links they like. Hotels or other venues can do the same, if appropriate. Company president and co-owner Jerry Waddell is extremely flexible with pricing models. One approach would be that the event organizer pays a set-up fee (and monthly hosting fee, if appropriate) and then sells the access codes to the exhibitors. Or, says Waddell, the organizer could agree to market PointsMap to exhibitors and sponsors, and let PointsMap handle the sales opportunities. In that case, the organizer may pay nothing for the service. (Generally, pricing is dependent on a variety of factors, most significantly event size and bandwidth requirements.)

The platform appears robust and offers a great deal of interactivity. "But," you're probably thinking, "it's just a bunch of maps, right?" Not exactly, and here's where it could take the place of an event app: Those viewing the site on a mobile device see a table of contents and a search field. Using those tools, an attendee can go directly to whatever information has been uploaded, without necessarily navigating to it via a map. For example, you can upload keynote descriptions, schedules and speaker information to be associated with the grand ballroom on your venue map, if that's where those events are taking place. Using the search field or the table of contents, an attendee could then directly access the keynote schedule without actually selecting the ballroom on a map.

It's a slightly different approach to getting event info on a mobile device, and in some instances could potentially be a bit awkward, but it presents some interesting possibilities. The biggest caveat is that it's still untested in the meeting context -- but that will soon change. Waddell's team currently is working with the League of American Orchestras to build a site for the group's June conference in Minneapolis.

PointsMap sites can be accessed by any device with a browser and an Internet

connection. Of course, the biggest potential drawback with that is the same as with any web-based mobile app: The user experience is completely dependent on the quality of the venue's Internet connection. But if you already know you'll have great Wi-Fi coverage, you may want to check out the [demo](#) for more info.

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