



What's the secret to more engaged attendees, more effective networking and more satisfied sponsors? Simple: A mobile app from QuickMobile. Just ask the Incentive Research Foundation.



Sector: **Association/Education** Devices: **iPhone, iPad, Android**

Highlights



390 participants



86% adoption



Average 75 active sessions per user



More than 340 total hours spent in the app – more than 1 hour per user!

IRF's annual Incentive Invitational combines business networking, first-class education, and best practices for the global incentives and recognition industry. This exclusive, invitation-only event draws a high-powered and loyal crowd to a different destination each year, where event organizers push the envelope in event design while sharing research and facilitating workshops on the latest trends in incentive and recognition events.

At the end of each year's event, organizers gather with their volunteer Board of Directors to brainstorm on how to outdo themselves the following year. In 2013, while lounging in the pool for creative inspiration, the team settled on gamification as the 'next big thing', and a great way to bring the 2014 theme – happiness – to life.

Overcoming the Obstacles

The event's audience has high expectations about their mobile experience; it comprises senior executives from around the world who are more than just comfortable with their smartphones and tablets. Event organizers knew there were risks associated with the chosen venue: the resort, Secrets Puerto Los Cabos, had opened less than six months prior, and Wi-Fi, while available resort-wide, had not yet been tested for such a large group. If the venue's network could not support the high level of data traffic that the app would need, the entire experience would be jeopardized.



The goals for the 2014 event were clear: to inspire greater connection among participants, to fully support the sponsors who make the event possible, to showcase the destination, and to demonstrate to participants what a well organized gamified experience should look like. Achieving these goals would be no small feat. For starters, there was the question as to how well a gamified event would be received by participants, and what impact it would have on networking and sponsor recognition. Second, there was the challenge of making sure the game – and how it worked with the event's mobile app – didn't cause people to spend more time on their mobile devices than they spent with each other. And finally, how does one actually go about gamifying happiness?

Outside of the game, the app had to ensure participants had easy, up-to-date access to all relevant event information. In order to make the most of the various workshops throughout the day, organizers also wanted to encourage audience participation through the app. Finally, it also had to give organizers an easy way to make quick announcements and add or change content on the fly.

Solution

The IRF turned to their incumbent mobile app provider, QuickMobile, for help in bringing the event – and the game in particular – to life. Lynn Randall, managing partner of Randall Insights LLC and Education and Content Consultant for the IRF Invitational, first met QuickMobile at MPI's WEC event in Orlando in 2012, and had since built up a strong and mutually beneficial relationship.

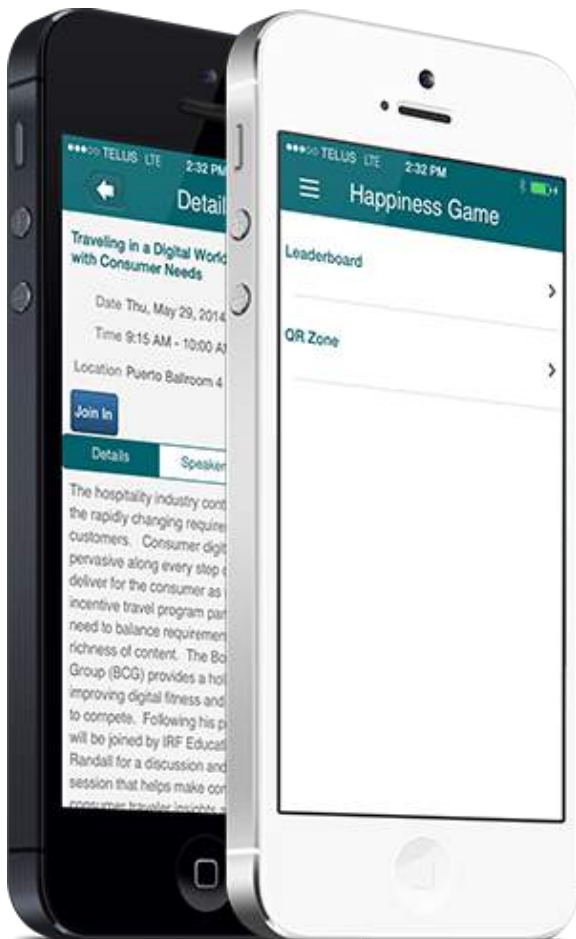
“QuickMobile guided us to an immensely successful first-time mobile app experience at our 2013 event,” says Randall. “We knew they had the creativity and depth of experience that we needed to make the 2014 app even more robust.”



Lynn Randall

Managing Partner, Randall Insights LLC

Education & Content Consultant, IRF Invitational



The IRF had two new requirements for the app: interactive live polling that allows speakers and participants to collaborate during roundtables and discussions, and of course the Happiness Game. For the former, QuickMobile offered its exclusive Join In component that lets participants respond to questions and submit comments in real-time right from the comfort of their mobile devices. For the latter, QuickMobile helped design a game that served as the locus for the event's Happiness theme.

Since both these new app elements required dependable Wi-Fi to work, event organizers worked proactively with resort staff to install a dedicated network for the event's main education day. This ensured that there would be adequate coverage and bandwidth wherever heavy app usage was expected.

Raising the Bar on Audience Participation and Response

The event's education day featured numerous sessions covering a broad range of topics. These sessions emphasized audience participation, relying on the mobile app to make it possible. Using QuickMobile's exclusive Join In audience response system, each presenter pushed out live polls to their audience, gathering responses and sharing results in real-time. Participants could also submit questions to presenters and share comments with one another. In total, there were 12 polls throughout the day, garnering more than 600 responses, and more than 45 comments and questions shared. This new approach to audience engagement encouraged much wider participation at the education sessions, resulting in more meaningful discussions and a more rewarding experience for participants.

Gamifying Happiness

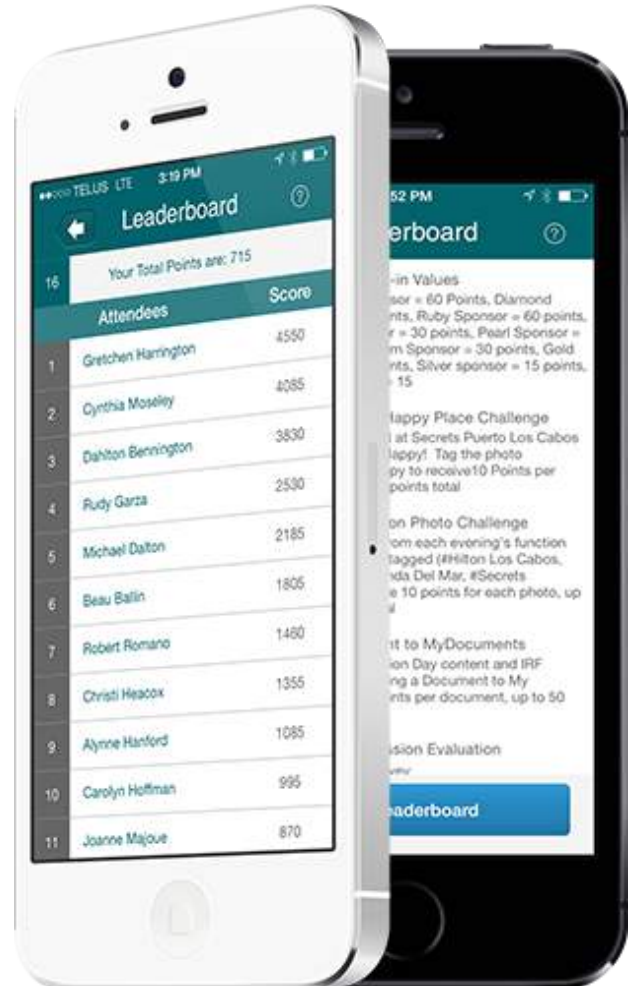
Why happiness as a theme? Research conducted by the Institute for Applied Positive Research and Michelle Gielan (one of the event's speakers) found that happy employees are more productive employees. And since it is usually the more engaged and productive employees who typically earn the privilege of going on incentive trips, the IRF made a direct correlation between happiness and incentive trips. The IRF based its approach to happiness on the *The Happiness Advantage*, a [book](#) by Shawn Achor. In it he recounts the advantages corporations around the globe are enjoying through the lessons learned from 25 years of research into positive psychology. The app's game would be instrumental in encouraging individual and collaborative happiness-related behaviors, and rewarding people for taking part in them. These behaviors included interactions with event sponsors – from taking photos in sponsor spaces to sharing information about their products and services – a powerful way of delivering value for sponsorship dollars

Randall and the QuickMobile team stuck closely to the prerequisites of successful gamification:

- Clearly defined rules
- Voluntary participation
- A reliable feedback loop
- Unwavering dedication to the event's stated objectives.

Event attendees earned game points by:

- Meeting a sponsor to scan a sponsor QR code
- Touring the property and sharing photos of your “happy place” at the venue
- Taking and sharing happy, joyful photos from each evening's function with a pre-determined tag
- Adding a “15 minutes of fun” note
- Adding a note outlining three daily gratitudes
- Tweeting about a fun activity
- Sending an encouraging or complimentary in-app message to other participants
- Saving educational or research documents to their personal briefcase
- Taking an in-app survey
- Adding sessions to their personal schedule
- Adding one of the IRF Board Members to their personal contact list



In just two days, participants earned more than 20,000 points, generating a leaderboard filled with competitive – and collaborative – spirit. People commented on how the game made them pay closer attention to their surroundings, the people they were with, and the people they were supposed to meet. The game proved to be a powerful tool for event organizers to encourage the kind of behavior they – and their sponsors – wanted attendees to exhibit.

More than just Adoption - Embracement

Hailed by IRF president Melissa Van Dyke as “by far the organization’s best attended show ever,” the 2014 Incentive Invitational was a resounding success by any account. The app was no different, garnering an adoption rate of over 86% (up from 66% in 2013), with users contributing more than 330 photos and completing more than 185 surveys. In total, attendees spent more than 340 combined hours in the app – that’s more than 1 hour per person over the course of the 5-day event, nearly five times more than 2013. Attendees at this year’s event didn’t just use the app, they embraced it.

Event organizers were thrilled with the app’s performance because they were thrilled with the feedback they got from attendees and sponsors. “We set a goal for making this year’s app more widely used than last year’s, but we never expected the results we got,” says Randall. “The Happiness Game had a lot to do with that, but we also know that our audience is increasingly comfortable with – if not dependent on – mobile technology. We couldn’t imagine not having an app at our event.”

Randall confirms that the event’s sponsors greatly appreciated the exposure the app gave them, and how the game motivated attendees to engage and interact with them in new and meaningful ways. Even during the event, her team was able to access the app’s analytics to see which attendee was doing what with vendor content – from adding vendors to a personal favorites list, to downloading documents, to tracking which pages they viewed within the app. Attendees at this year’s event didn’t just use the app, they embraced it.

“Having that level of insight into attendee behavior is virtually unheard of in event planning,” says Randall. “Not only did it give us a sense of where people were and what they were doing during the event, it gave us the metrics to prove value to our sponsors. If you’re a non-profit or heavily dependent on sponsorship, the ability to enhance sponsor packages via the mobile app is a tremendous opportunity.”



Lynn Randall

When you have a clear expression of your event's objectives, and a disruptive and innovative theme that fits well with the type of audience you attract, you're bound to pull off a successful event. When you make your mobile app a critical part of the overall event experience you're trying to create and you design it specifically to support your event objectives, you will ensure its widespread adoption and use. And through that, you will gain a deep, data-driven understanding of what made your event successful.

Randall asserts: "We still have a lot to learn about mobile technology. We feel like we've only just begun to discover what it can do to transform and elevate an event like ours. QuickMobile is such a trustworthy and supportive partner, and we know we can rely on their team to bring us new ideas, explore new opportunities, and continue to take advantage of all that mobile technology has to offer. Even when we're running around like crazy in the middle of the event, we can trust QuickMobile to make sure nothing falls through the cracks. We could not imagine a better event partner."

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