



## CASE STUDY

### NECA Adds an Extra Jolt to its Annual Convention and Exposition

*“We recommend a2z as a strategic partner in our tradeshow management and growth and the mobile app has been a huge factor in our success.”*

*- Beth Ellis, executive director of the NECA Convention and Exposition*

#### Overview

With a 100-year plus history, 119 national chapters and 13 international chapters, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) is the strongest global organization in the electrical construction industry. NECA’s annual convention and trade show draws more than 5,000 contractors and over 300 exhibiting companies. What began in 2012 as a move to keep pace with technology became an event “lifesaver” for staff and attendees a year later. With a 50% adoption rate for the ChirpE mobile app, NECA was able to avoid printing an addendum to the exhibitor directory and provide demonstrable value to the app’s sponsor.

#### Challenge

Two years ago, mobile apps were becoming a requirement for many events. Besides being able to disseminate information more quickly and easily to attendees, mobile solutions were being sought out as a complement to printed directories. NECA was interested in the benefits—increased functionality and lower printing costs—as well as ways to earn more sponsorship revenue.

In 2013, the association’s annual convention and exposition was held in Washington, DC. The dates happened to fall during the Federal Government’s shutdown, throwing a huge wrench into the activities NECA had planned in the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum. In addition, monsoon-like rains and news of a

**Total Event App  
Users: 1,007**

**Adoption Rate: 50%**

**Net savings from  
eliminating the  
printed directory:  
\$20,000**

**Easier to use the  
mobile app as a  
mechanism for  
updating attendees  
on changes to venue**

**Graybar extended  
sponsorship to 3  
events in 2013**

proposed massive protest from truck drivers threatened to disrupt transportation in and around the city.

### **Solution**

As an a2z customer, it was easy for NECA to expand the capabilities of the Expo Management and Conference modules and integrate the ChirpE mobile app into the technology mix. And, because so many attendees downloaded the app the first year it was offered, it was easier to use the mobile app as a mechanism for updating attendees on changes to venues (the Smithsonian event was moved 4 ½ days before the convention) and programming for the 2013 convention a year later.

### **Results**

In 2013, the ChirpE mobile app was available on iOS and Android devices, as well as Internet-enabled smartphones. It provided event participants with access to the real-time exhibitor list, interactive floor plan and session schedule along with planning and networking tools. The number of downloads indicates the app's popularity:

**Total Event App Users: 1,007**  
**Total Native iOS App Users: 693**  
**Total Native Android App Users: 290**  
**Total Mobile Web App Users: 24**  
**Adoption rate\*: 50%**

The ChirpE mobile app was an extremely effective way to keep convention participants apprised of the changes and disruption brought about by the shutdown, but the value of the app didn't end there. Because changes made to exhibitor information were instantaneous, the need to print an addendum to the exhibitor directory was eliminated.

The use of the ChirpE mobile app has expanded beyond the annual convention. NECA deployed it for their Executive Leadership Conference and National Safety Conference. Downloads of the app are growing and "if we didn't have the app, attendees would be upset," says Beth Ellis, executive director of the NECA Convention and Exposition.

A single company has sponsored the mobile app since it was implemented. Graybar, a leading distributor of high-quality electrical, communications and data networking products, was so pleased with the results, it expanded its sponsorship from one to three events in 2013.

Because of the success of the ChirpE mobile app, NECA is reviewing the value of the printed exhibition and conference directory. **"More [of our participants] are relying on the app. Because the mobile app can give you more information on speakers, sessions and exhibitors, it is more useful than the printed directory,"** Ellis explains. Although the print version has ads that help reduce production costs, the ChirpE mobile app is an excellent sponsorship vehicle. **The net savings from eliminating the printed directory and shifting to mobile is estimated at \$20,000.**