Case Study:

Wi-Fi innovation to build community around place

Retail malls need to go digital in a way that drives physical engagement of people with place. The Krowd innovates this opportunity through Wi-Fi.

The 2017 terror attacks in the UK were an impetus for innovation. The UK Government and Office of Security & Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) decided to reach out to industry to help make crowded places safe. They put out a call to industry to compete to 'Improve Crowd Resilience'. 67 entrants were whittled down to 2 main winners and 5 small research grants. Krowdthink, developers of the Krowd platform and app, were one of those winners with a bid called *"Making the crowd a participatory threat sensor and responder"*. The technology has rapidly expanded to broader community and service delivery capabilities too.

Guildhall Shopping & Dining Exeter, a leading retail mall, were an early adopter seeking to trial the technology. In fact the first retail mall outside of London to do so, helping to drive further value around facilities management, community development and venue service delivery, by recruiting the crowd to help keep itself safe or keep the venue well maintained.

The role of Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is deployed by most venues as a means of enabling visitors to connect to the Internet. What Krowdthink does instead is to think about Wi-Fi as a public intranet, capable of being layered with service value specific to a venue. The foundation is a simple messaging platform for visitors to the venue, connecting them all together, like WhatsApp, except for connecting people on the basis of place rather than acquaintance, recognizing the commonality of place defines common purpose or interest. The Krowd is 'instanced' around a venue by recognizing the Wi-Fi made available freely to the venue's visitors.

The venue is then enabled to manage that Krowd instance and layer additional services. Of course it can be used for marketing, but what the OSCT sought from the bid was the idea that the venue security team could be made accessible to any member of the public at the tap of an app, whilst also enabling the security team to

group message the crowd to keep them appraised of safety and security issues; like a digital PA system.

Similar services were then added to enable the crowd to directly report issues of facilities management, such as repair and cleanliness or disabled service need or similar. In short, Wi-Fi became the vector to connect venue visitors directly to the venue staff with no more than a couple of taps in the app.

Venue Value thru Wi-Fi and the Krowd

Community

The Krowd instances a digital community around a place which Guildhall Shopping & Dining are fostering. They start by requiring direct staff to use it, then to drive it to shop staff to use as a simple way of connecting to the mall management services and then once a vibrant (500+) user base is created of committed staff forming the foundation of community, Guildhall Shopping & Dining will roll out to the public. What is critical about the Krowd is that it's built on a trust model that assures users of their personal privacy within the platform. It is not a data profile and tracking tool, but solely a platform for localized digital engagement.
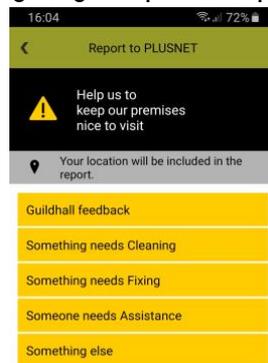
Security & Safety

Simple things like assistance in finding a lost child are key attributes of the KrowdSafe service that connects security to the public. Yet at the same time the public can be nudged to be more alert to more sinister issues like hostile reconnaissance or unattended packages too. The interface is facilitated through a simple alert button, click and select your issue and you are done – but now security knows the issue and can respond directly to the individual. The security team is enabled with a toolset called KrowdSafe that allows them to manage these alerts.

Cleanliness & Repair or Individual Assistance

The real day to day issue of running a large scale venue is keeping it usable and giving the public a positive experience. However, who knows who or where to report an issue? Maybe a phone number to ring on a notice board, but who wants their contact details shared this way and is likely to be near enough the message board when needed? Instead tap a button, select the repair or cleanliness issue and you are done in a few moments in 2-3 taps in the Krowd. Venues worst detractors and brand damagers are those that complain to their friends instead of the staff that can respond. KrowdedPlace vectors their concerns directly to those responsible who can respond and message back when the issue has been addressed. Need staff assistance to clean a spill? Tap the app. Need disabled assistance to navigate the venue? Tap the app.

The Marketing Opportunity

By delivering customer centric services this way you foster a constructive venue based community. The platform itself is opt-in and all in it are peers. So when the venue or its tenants use it to promote their services too, it is contextual and relevant, yet no personal data profiling or tracking was done to enable this communication. So in an increasingly legally constrained world the Krowd enables marketing that is community based that the public opts into because they get other service value as well as community value in which they often help one another too.

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