

GOAL

Provide a reliable and secure event WiFi experience for 300 devices in a unique conference setting. WiFi needs included downloading conference app, live polling, and demoing apps on tablets.

CHALLENGE

Event Farm chose a unique venue for their inaugural customer summit. Due to the venue's dated IT infrastructure and tricky physical layout / location, the Event Farm team wanted to engage an experienced event IT and WiFi firm to provide a temporary solution for its speakers, sponsors, attendees and event team.

SOLUTION

Trade Show Internet installed a point-to-point antenna on the roof of a nearby building - connecting the venue to a fiber-lit building in midtown Manhattan, over two miles away - to establish a dedicated 25 Mbps bandwidth circuit (download and upload). With this circuit installed, Trade Show Internet was able to provide temporary WiFi service that covered the venue's theater, stage, three studios, and lobby.

HOW TRADE SHOW INTERNET SAVED OFFLINE SUMMIT'S EVENT WiFi

By: Brian Pesin – Event Farm

If you've attended a [marketing conference](#) in the past few years, then you know how big of a struggle accessing reliable and quick Wi-Fi can be for you and your fellow attendees. You're not alone in this struggle; Wi-Fi consistently ranks as one of the most important conference must-haves for attendees, yet the experience at most conferences remains pretty poor.

Why are conference Wi-Fi experiences still so frustrating, when most attendees, organizers, sponsors, exhibitors, vendors and more assume that they'll have reliable wireless internet at the conference – and for that matter, in most of the public places that they go? [Event venues](#) are well aware that secure and speedy event Wi-Fi is critical to your conference's success, and that many companies will shell out whatever is necessary in order to secure reliable coverage, making it an incredibly profitable sellable service. However, [many event venues](#) initially installed their Wi-Fi coverage without keeping the increased needs of hundreds, or even thousands, of conference attendees in mind, so may not have the physical infrastructure or bandwidth needed to support such a large-scale event. If your conference venue falls into that latter category, you'll need to look externally for temporary internet bandwidth and networking solutions.

We ran into this exact problem when we were planning for the inaugural [OFFLINE Summit](#). After talking to a handful of different companies and providers, we stumbled across [Trade Show Internet](#), a company that provides bandwidth, Internet connectivity, and WiFi networks for trade shows, conferences, corporate meetings and outdoor events nationwide, thanks to a quick Google search – and we are SO glad that we did. Read on to learn how Trade Show Internet saved the day at OFFLINE Summit with their temporary internet and Wi-Fi solution.



Bandwidth at Gelsey Kirkland Academy

When we were originally looking for our conference venue, we toured a variety of spaces of different shapes, sizes, looks and feels before ultimately deciding upon the [Gelsey Kirkland Academy of Classical Ballet](#), located in between the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood. We immediately fell in love with the space, but knew that there were going to be some unique challenges with it, one of which was creating a reliable Wi-Fi experience for our guests. Asking attendees to download our [conference's mobile event app](#), engage in live polling, and [explore our experiential apps](#) on tablets would have been frustrating without a professional grade Wi-Fi network.

With 300 guests and a few tech exhibitors, we estimated we needed a dedicated 25 Mbps of bandwidth for our network. Unfortunately, due to GKA's specific location in Dumbo, their only source of internet was slow Verizon DSL with a maximum download speed of 5 Mbps – the FiOS service that the building had across the street hasn't yet made its way east on Jay Street, and the other local provider, Time Warner, didn't yet service that locale either. After a quick conversation with Verizon, we learned that it wouldn't be possible to temporarily boost bandwidth for a one-day event, so at that point, we knew we needed to look elsewhere.

Additionally, we learned that while Verizon Wireless's 4G speeds worked decently, AT&T's were another story, as many devices only received 3G speeds or a single bar of LTE service while inside the venue. So, while temporary mobile solutions wouldn't have been ideal for a group of 300 people to start with, we quickly learned that we couldn't even consider them as an option for our attendees.

The Search for Reliable Bandwidth and Wi-Fi... at an Affordable Price

Faced with a big challenge and a limited timeline, we leveraged a few connections we had with investors and former employees to try to hack together an affordable and reliable temporary internet solution for our first conference. Our contacts, Louis and Christine, helped us figure out early on that there were high costs for such an in-demand service, which posed an additional challenge for our organization and limited conference budget.

Louis was very helpful and knowledgeable about what we were trying to do. His company's quote was within our budget for the temporary Wi-Fi and networking solution at GKA, and initially thought he might be able to secure reliable bandwidth. However, once he looked into pricing options, he didn't find anything that we could afford; the bandwidth option alone that he recommended was more than our entire budget for the network (ie – bandwidth and Wi-Fi). It also didn't make sense to spend a significant amount of money on a temporary Wi-Fi network set-up that would have connected to the building's slow 5 Mbps Verizon DSL bandwidth.

Christine's options turned up short as well. We hoped to leverage her prior affiliation with us to secure a discount, but she ran into the same issues that Louis did – everything was just too expensive, even with a discount, for us to make it work. With our first-hand connections exhausted, we had to venture off into the world wide web to see if there was another company that would be able to help us out.

Introducing Our Event Saviors, Trade Show Internet and Ian Framson

We found Trade Show Internet with a quick search for "conference internet solutions," for which the company was the first result listed (good job on your SEO, guys!). After submitting a request for more info, we heard from Ian Framson, TSI's Sales Director. He outlined three options for our 300-person event in DUMBO:

1. A 4G Internet Kit, which can provide internet access for five to 15 devices and started at \$499 a kit for a three day rental;
2. A 4G Mega Internet Kit, which can provide internet access for up to 100 devices, starting at \$3,500 per kit for a three day rental;
3. Or a temporary bandwidth + On-Site solution, Trade Show Internet's premiere service, which combines a temporary point-to-point or fiber optic bandwidth circuit with their signature On-Site network engineering service, complete with on-site engineers to handle network setup, tear-down & support during all event hours. This service is professionally project managed and starts at \$10,000.

We were initially interested in the second option, the 4G Mega Internet Kit. However, after one of our last pre-event site visits, we figured out that AT&T's service wasn't reliable enough for good internet coverage, as we mentioned before. Since the 4G Mega Internet Kit relies on AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon, Ian unfortunately told us that this kit wouldn't work for our event, which left us with one final, and very expensive, option.



Fortunately, Ian and team came through, providing a truly stellar reliable Wi-Fi solution for our speakers, sponsors, attendees and team. Trade Show Internet provided us with a temporary network that was intended to cover GKA's theater, stage, Studio One, the lobby, and possibly Studio Two, providing Wi-Fi for the majority of the venue. They also installed a special point-to-point bandwidth antenna on the (taller) roof of a nearby building to establish a dedicated 25 Mbps bandwidth circuit transmitted wirelessly from the roof of a fiber-lit building in midtown Manhattan two miles away. We confirmed through speed tests the bandwidth circuit was pushing in excess of 25 Mbps (both download and upload), which was more than adequate for our number of participants. Finally, we had a reliable internet solution in place for OFFLINE Summit, and a huge weight was lifted off of our shoulders.



A Few Unexpected Surprises

As you may expect, we had a few unexpected surprises during the internet set-up and installation process. The first came a few days before the conference, when the landlord of the adjacent building unexpectedly decided that he was not willing to let us temporarily install the necessary antenna on his roof. This nearly put our whole operation in jeopardy, and nearly gave us a collective heart attack in the process.

Fortunately, Ian's team was able to quickly adjust the plan, getting in touch with the landlord of another nearby building on the other side of GKA, successfully negotiating roof rights to install the bandwidth antenna we needed.

The other surprises were much more positive. The temporary network that Ian's team installed at GKA was only intended to cover about 67% of the venue (due to our own budgetary constraint); most of Studio Three and all of Studio Four were not expected to have Wi-Fi access. However, because of the way that GKA is designed, the signal strength from the three enterprise-class Ruckus Wi-Fi access points set up in the dance academy was relatively strong throughout the entire venue. This was particularly important in Studio Four, where we had tables and chairs set up all day, as conference attendees could use this back room to answer emails and otherwise get caught up on work. Last, and perhaps most surprisingly, GKA's owner, Misha, got in touch with Ian and his team after our event to discuss installing a permanent high-speed internet solution at his academy, as he was impressed with the level of service and thought that they would be able to help due to his lack of other options.

Event pros, if you're hosting an event with hundreds to thousands of attendees, and are looking for a temporary network or increase in internet bandwidth, look no further than Trade Show Internet. We couldn't be happier with our new go-to provider, and give them the official Event Farm seal of endorsement. [Click here to visit Trade Show Internet](#) and see if their solutions may be a good fit for your upcoming event.

Event Farm is an enterprise event marketing platform: invitation, guest registration, and digital activation designed specifically to promote brands and engage targeted audiences at events. For more information, please visit www.eventfarm.com.