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Concierges share their favorite
places and recommendations

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The capital city of Dutch Country
mixes urban and rural appeal

PREPPING FOR THE POPE
An A/V pro relives the World
Meeting of Families Congress

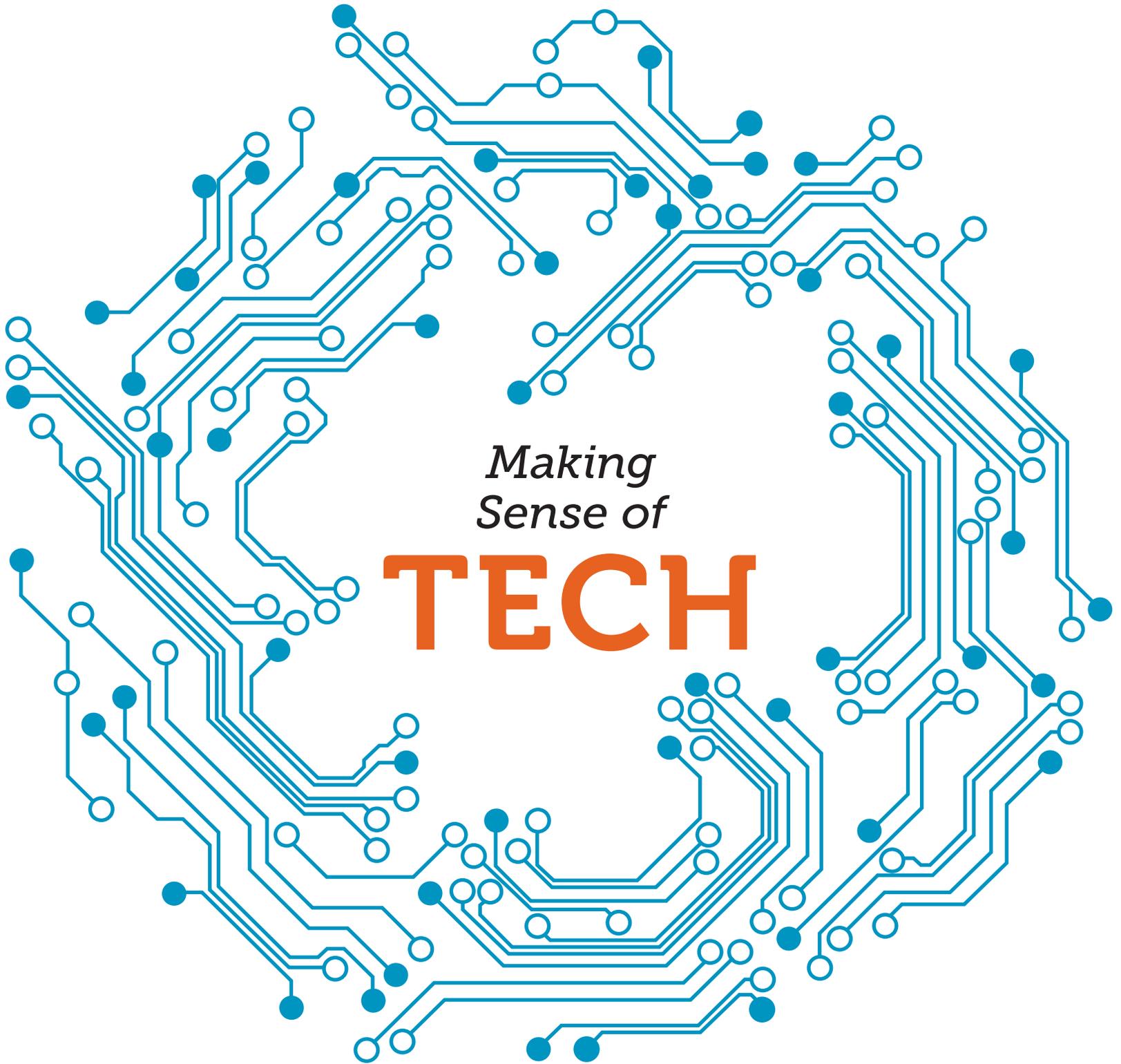
pennsylvania meetings + events

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LET'S TALK

TECH

*4 local companies connect
and simplify the industry*



*Making
Sense of*

TECH

FOUR COMPANIES have just the tools to make meetings and events easier and more effective.



BY CAROLEE NOURY



Meeting and event applications seem to enter the market in floods, often via the app store of your choice. Many products are created to lessen tedious work. The exciting, high-paced meetings and events field has offered plenty of demand for exactly that. The tech market's high level of competition offers benefits for planners. For one, companies work to make their products indispensable, while dedicating resources to customer happiness (because they aim higher than satisfaction). In addition, there's a keen focus on making their software as relevant as possible by continuously updating it based on customer feedback.

The flip side, of course, is that there is an overwhelming selection. Finding the right fit can be an exhausting cycle of trial and error. To save you some time, we spoke with four Pennsylvania-area technology companies to offer the insider perspective of their rave-worthy meeting and event applications.

EVENTUOSITY: Event Management Beyond the Spreadsheet

Eventuosity is event management software created from the marketing industry experience of CEO Justin Panzer. "Everything we do is intended to automate, standardize and improve efficiencies," he says. "In a sector that tends to focus on attendee engagement, we have the planner in mind."

The software offers user-friendly, intuitive operations that go beyond the confines of the typical event spreadsheet. It is designed to maximize return on investment and to minimize the time each task takes from start to finish. "Eventuosity allows planners to connect all the key elements of their event," Panzer says. "For example, inventory items of any type can be allocated to a team member and both can then be assigned to a specific time in the event."

Users can work together through the application,

each from their own device to give immediate updates on tasks, assignments, costs, deadlines and other planning activities. "Events don't happen in the office," adds Panzer. "There are so many things happening at once, all over. Eventuosity is there, wherever you can access the app or a browser. It makes all that remote work easier on our people."

Organizers appreciate the streamlining. Panzer says his customers often describe Eventuosity as the all-in-one software they hoped existed, but hadn't been able to find. "Another part they love is the reports, especially for task status and budgeting," he says. "Instead of tracking tasks in spreadsheets or pulling financials together after the event, all data is updated in real time and able to be shared easily. Event managers can more easily take action on things that may have a significant impact on the success of their events."

JUJAMA: Networking and Relationship-Building for Today's Wired World

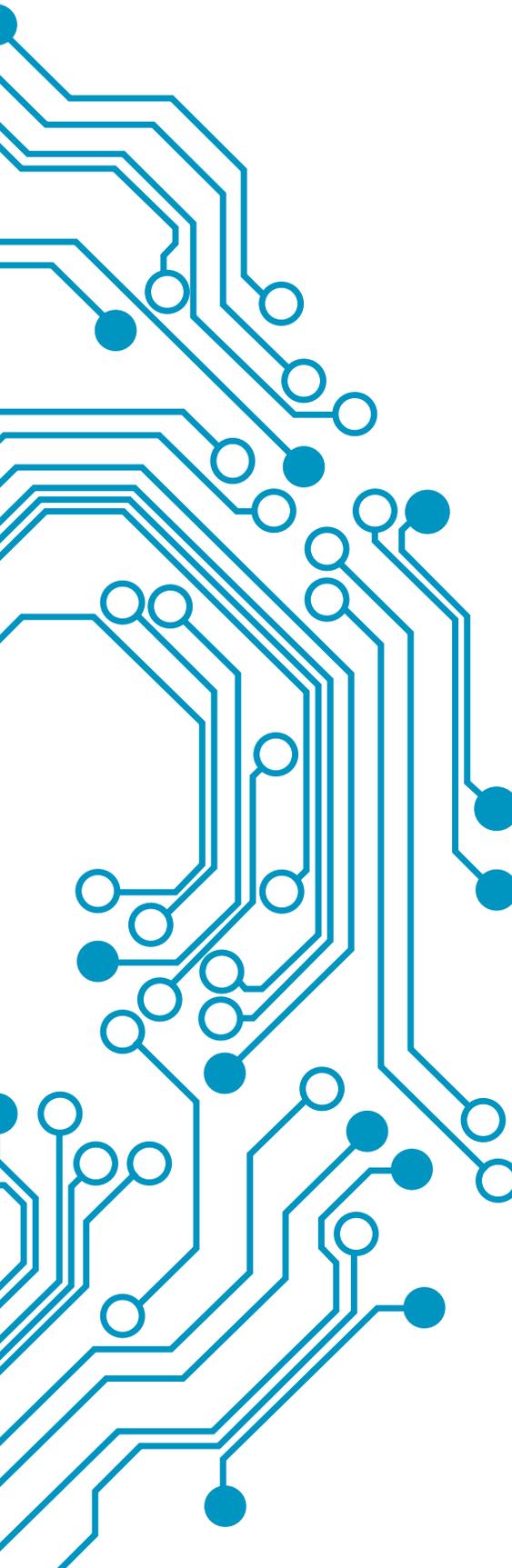
JUJAMA is a networking tool for conferences that launched in 2009. The team utilized its significant event experience to build an adaptable platform that goes far beyond getting attendees connected. The system, accessible by app or browser, offers event registration and networking before, during and after the event. Beyond that, attendees can read fellow registrants' bios, arrange meetings prior to the day of the event, participate in a social feed specific to the event and read programs and other meeting materials. JUJAMA's focus on improved networking opportunities includes options for attendees to add documents and even video to their profiles. The team listens to the needs of its conference organizers, and is constantly innovating the system.

"People attend conferences and meetings to stay informed, but equally important is the ability to make connections and forge relationships to grow their busi-

EVENTUOSITY

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—Justin Panzer, CEO, Eventuosity



nesses,” says JUJAMA President and CEO Nadia Dailey. “We make that as easy as possible. It’s our goal to give attendees more of a return. Part of this is creating efficiencies in the process, like eliminating the need for notes scribbled on the back of business cards.”

Dailey also expresses a desire to make the process less awkward, by offering an alternative to blind on-site introductions. “Instead, guests get to see one another’s faces before the event,” she says. “Since meetings are connected directly to the people they meet with, attendees can go in and make their own private notes.”

Push notifications allow planners to remind participants of important events and inform them of any changes. Feedback response rates are better in the moment, and JUJAMA has you covered there, too. In-app surveys make that a breeze. Speakers who choose to poll the audience through the program can get real-time results displayed during the session without any special hardware.

Want to impress your event sponsors? Consider the many choices for including sponsor highlights, logos and special messages right in your event application. And it is *your* event application, because JUJAMA customizes the software to the host’s brand and specifications. Dailey says that is a particularly well-liked feature: “The app pays for itself through the increased offerings for sponsors. Since guests log in before, during and after the event, sponsors get more visibility for longer, especially if the conference organizers opt to keep the community open year-round.”

EVENTUPON: The Super Community Calendar

EventUpon is a web-based community calendar that lists regional events all over the U.S. for networking, business, technology, nonprofit sectors and beyond. “We offer an event ecosystem,” says EventUpon Executive Chris Baeckstrom. “It has benefits for hosts, attendees and people who want a calendar of events on their websites. We support both

sides of events, offering services to event hosts and attendees.” Event organizers can use the service to promote meetings beyond their companies’ and clients’ own websites.

This is a feature Campus Philly Director of Partnerships Jennifer Devor appreciates. “Campus Philly is a nonprofit that connects college students to Philadelphia so that they stay after graduation,” she says. “By hosting EventUpon on our website, we show college students the incredible and diverse business communities we have within the Greater Philadelphia region while also sharing our own events.”

Users sign up with LinkedIn or by creating an account. The program makes it easy to save, share and import meetings to your own calendar. Not sure if you want to attend a particular event? No problem. You can opt for a reminder email to allow you to decide later.

For those who’d like more guidance, EventUpon has volunteer curators (follow them to see their selections) and an event recommendation engine which pulls entries related to your interests. Both offerings are popular, due at least in part to the calendar system’s rapid growth. Baeckstrom reports there were over 6,000 events for Pennsylvania alone in the final quarter of 2015.

The EventUpon team is looking at the best ways to make event organizers’ jobs easier with all the data it has assimilated. “We’re working on a way to share the information event planners need most, like speakers and sponsors prospects,” Baeckstrom says. “Planners could look at similar events to get ideas for their own. Once it’s available, they could also use the database to find local photographers, venues, caterers and so on.”

EventUpon hosts a quarterly Convene the Conveners meeting where discussion leaders support event professionals in sharing their tips and successes. “It’s very popular because our audience members appreciate being able to share their own strengths while getting tips from peers with expertise in other areas,” Baeckstrom says.



An event held at Quorum in Philly and listed in EventUpon.

EVENTUPON

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—Chris Baekstrom, executive, EventUpon

YORN: Attendee Interactions on the Next Level

YORN (Your Opinion. Right Now.) is a combination data and communication platform accessible from any internet-enabled device. Information can be collected from whomever you want (attendees, customers, staff, speakers, etc.), whenever you want. YORN can be integrated with any customer relationship management (CRM) software or electronic medical records (EMR), allowing users to match respondent feedback with selected data, or it can be used alone. Brief comments, ratings and polls are easily collected using a web link, which means no sign-ups and no downloads. Though YORN is primarily used in healthcare, it has regular clients in the meetings and events industry.

Following researched-backed guidance from the YORN team, response rates from attendees have topped 80 percent for certain events, according to Vice President of

Operations John Gassenheimer. “We provide a fast, easy way to engage attendees with each event,” he says. “We give them an open text box for questions and comments. Followed by the simple question ‘why,’ it’s amazing just how excellent a picture that feedback provides. It almost seems too simple, but it works quite well.” Built-in analytics provide additional insight and the opportunity to take action to improve experiences during the event.

Asking for immediate feedback can mean the difference between collecting invaluable insight or getting none at all. Another benefit of YORN, according to Gassenheimer, is that frustrations are shared directly with the business, rather than on social media where posts aren’t always accurate or truthful. “You can also take questions and comments directly from the audience without the pitfalls of an open mic, such as someone who runs on and on or goes off topic,” he says. “Event staff can moderate the feed and send the useful question right to a tablet for the speaker. It’s incredibly easy to use.”

For meeting organizers still using paper surveys, YORN is a greener alternative that also eliminates the need to collect and compile the data. The platform does all of that for you, providing a score to show how effectively you are converting participants to promoters of your business and/or event. “YORN has been instrumental in helping engage our membership at our events and made our programs run more smoothly and efficiently,” says Antonia Timberg, vice president of programs and events for the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. 

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