Giving student’s a HeadStart

Prior to Fresher’s week, the university runs a weeklong induction event called HeadStart to help onboard students from “Widening Participation” backgrounds transition into higher education. This includes students from underrepresented groups such as students in care, those that have mobility issues and mature students, to name a few. Now in its 11th year, Charlotte Thackeray, HeadStart Officer, is responsible for the event and is part of the Academic Skills Team (ASK).

During the event, the ASK advisers run study skills sessions and students are grouped based on their college for a more personalised outlook on what lies in store for the rest of their academic year. The programme is externally funded; therefore, the team is challenged to constantly prove the effectiveness, impact and worth of the event. HeadStart is vital for making an excellent first impression of the university to the students and their parents. Charlotte comments “HeadStart is an externally funded scheme and looks to improve the retention of new first year and foundation students who are eligible to attend”

Why Cvent?

ASK had previously used a free mobile event app. However, the app was more of a “nice-to-have” with no interactive elements and as a result, was
Charlotte was delighted with the Cvent Customer Success (CS) team during the implementation of the app. “My dedicated CS was great at taking me through anything I needed throughout the week, and the 24/7 team was excellent! Having support at any time of the day was invaluable”.

CrowdCompass by Cvent met Charlotte’s requirements and offered features beyond her expectations. “I could see Brunel using features like the beacons, in-app testing and surveys and the maps function was so much better than anything else we saw” Charlotte states. The number of features CrowdCompass offers meant the app had the scope to grow over the next two years and could adapt to changes in demand. Also, Charlotte noted, “The app was invite-only and the ability to put up privacy notices was impressive in helping us tackle GDPR and safety concerns”.

The app became an integral part of the event with an adoption rate that was almost 60% higher than expected. The features excited the students and faculty alike. Students benefited from a personalised experience, with fresh ways of discovering the university and interacting with one another. “The beacons and map functions worked amazingly well for the scavenger hunt, and the few students that decided not to download the app were left with app envy” adds Charlotte.

The ability for parents to download the event app was also a great asset to promoting HeadStart week and helped to alleviate their concerns. Charlotte states “We needed to interact well with the parents, and CrowdCompass gave them an insight into the students’ activities during the week”.

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**Ease of use**

**Excellent support**

**Highest mobile adoption**
For students who couldn’t use the phone app, the desktop and iPad versions were crucial to enable them to remain engaged and take part. Pre and post event surveys throughout the week were completed electronically for the first time using the app saved Charlotte “at least half a day’s work from typing up paper surveys which was tremendous!”.

An impressive experience

The app was a hit throughout the university. Charlotte recalled “My line manager and Head of Department loved it and joined in by downloading and using the app. The ability to showcase the campus using maps with droppers and even building floorplans greatly helped the students and the in-app messaging made it easier for students to build relationships.”

The app reduced stressed and confusion during this busy week for both the students and the ASK team. It had higher adoption rate than the team had ever had for a mobile app with a 78% uptake and the combination of the event and the use of the app gave Brunel a real USP compared to other universities.