Artifact Technologies

Bringing Place to Life

Veni, Vidi, Mixby! Behind the Scenes Planning a Location-Based Storytelling Experience for the GeekWire Gala

By Connie Rock

They came, they saw, they downloaded our app, Mixby. And we at Artifact Technologies couldn't be more pleased.

(Image: Adrienne Mills)

The brisk weather didn't stop more than 1,000 of Seattle's tech elite from convening on Wednesday night, December 3, at the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) for the annual GeekWire Gala. At the gala, the 2014 "Seattle 10" unveiled six foot by six foot cocktail napkins, on which each company's business ideas were colorfully and creatively rendered. We also toasted the top Newsmakers of the Year. The event provided an ideal opportunity for us to partner with GeekWire and MOHAI to create an intuitive, compelling location-based storytelling experience.

We're encouraged by the data we're seeing (more than 18 percent of attendees downloaded the app, generating approximately 1,800 views), and we want to share how we planned, created and tested this experience.

Our Goals

We designed our GeekWire Gala and MOHAI storytelling experience with four key goals in mind.

External goals: An intuitive, compelling experience for Mixby users
- Deepen event attendees' engagement with the GeekWire gala
- Showcase selected highlights from the diverse collection at MOHAI

Internal goals: Streamlined, efficient setup and deployment

- Road-test our beacon planning, placement and testing process
- Road-test our location-based storytelling app, Mixby

Three must-haves for enabling a great location-based storytelling experience

To provide Mixby users with a great experience, we needed to ensure that the following three elements were in place:

- **Conten**t that meets users where they are, providing valuable context and encouraging them to engage with their surroundings.
- **Beacons** that broadcast radio signals to enable smartphones and other compatible devices to determine their location relative to the beacons. As soon as users are within a specified proximity to a beacon, the Mixby app triggers a notification that new content is available to access.
- **The Mixby app**, which delivers location-based content. Users can engage with this content through likes, shares, and comments. They can also generate their own content by taking photos and uploading them to Mixby.

Content-wise, our team produced event-specific stories to highlight each of the businesses chosen for this year's Seattle 10 and to amplify the 2014 Newsmakers announcement at the gala. For MOHAI more generally, we created stories that were not only of special interest for the gala, but that highlight the rich collection of artifacts in several key MOHAI exhibits and exhibit areas. (If you have Mixby installed, go to MOHAI and check out the content we have there; much of our content will remain available until at least early January.)

After we created content, we needed to plan where to place beacons so that notifications are triggered at the right time as attendees approach key exhibit areas for which content is available in Mixby. Here's a look at our map.
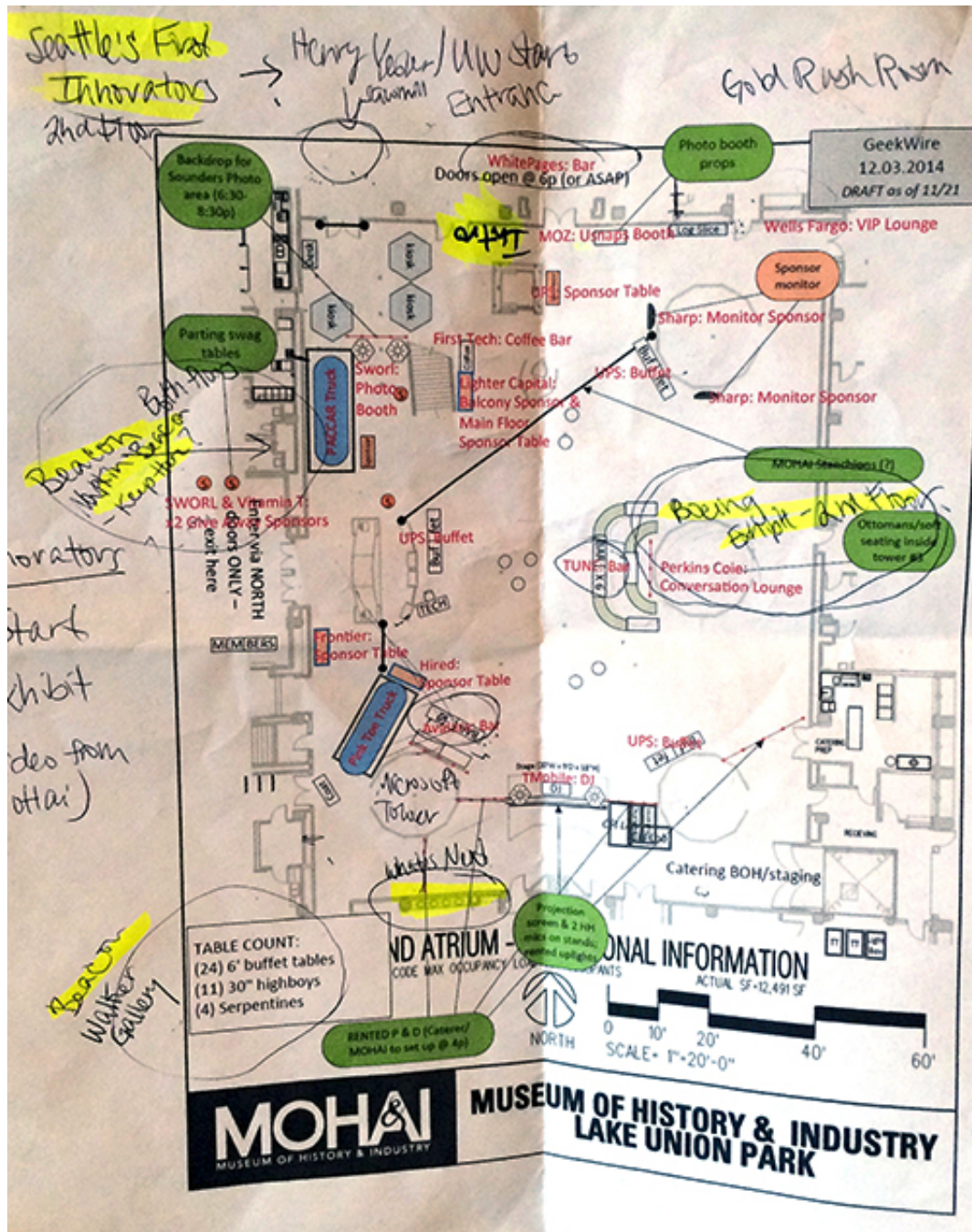

(Image: Connie Rock)

As you can see, there's a lot going on. The yellow highlighting indicates the areas where we decided to place beacons: Six exhibit areas in all, three on the first level and three on the second. Once we'd mapped out our beacon placement, it was time to visit MOHAI, with beacons, museum maps and mobile phones in hand.

Behind the scenes at MOHAI with our marketing and content curation team
MOHAI staff members Jackie Durbin, Director of Marketing & Communications, and Mark Gleason, Exhibits Manager, joined us, to help ensure that the beacons were placed in a way that met our needs, but that didn't interfere with valuable exhibit artifacts.

After Mark finished placing all six beacons throughout MOHAI, it was time for testing. To ensure that each beacon triggered the proper notification in Mixby when we ventured within range of that beacon, we approached each exhibit area where a beacon was placed and checked our phones to confirm at what point a notification was triggered in Mixby. We also made sure that the correct notification was triggered.

For example, on the first floor near the museum entry, we tested to ensure that the following notification was triggered.
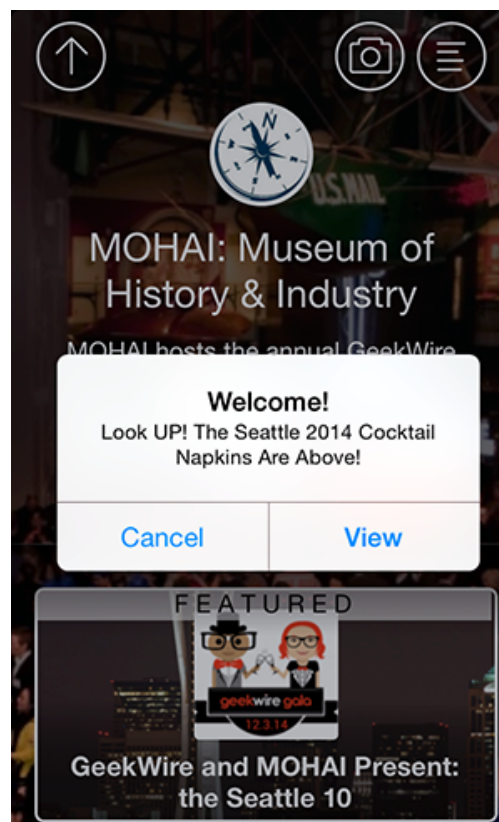
(Image: Adrienne Mills)

Occasionally during testing, we discover a beacon that triggers notifications where it shouldn't. As we tested our beacon setup at MOHAI, we encountered at least one case of a beacon notification being set to too large a radius, and one case of a beacon being placed incorrectly. To help minimize the chance of beacon mix-ups, we keep a list to note the numbers and locations of beacons, but mistakes do happen. This is why we test!

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