CLICK! digital expo

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CLICK! Digital Expo Project Report

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Regional Development Australia
An Australian Government Initiative

Queensland Government
1. SUMMARY

The CLICK! Digital Expo, a free one-day event, was convened by Regional Development Australia Brisbane and held on Monday 12 November 2012 at the Sofitel Brisbane Central. The aim of the Expo was to help small and medium-sized enterprises and not-for-profit organisations “survive and thrive” in the digital economy and leverage the benefits of the NBN. It featured 42 exhibitors of digital tools, technologies and services, 40 seminars by digital and industry experts, three ‘invitation only’ sessions organised by Expo partners, and a keynote address by IT industry leader John Grant, Managing Director of Data#3. There was also an all-day program of product demonstrations by exhibitors and roundtable discussions on a variety of digital topics hosted by the Business Success Group.

In addition to funding from the Australian Government, the Expo was supported by Platinum Sponsor the Business Success Group (the local Digital Enterprise provider), and Expo partners NICTA, the State Government, Brisbane Marketing, QMG and Small Business Solutions. The event also received non-financial assistance and support from Reading Room (a leading Australian digital agency), Data#3 and Microsoft.

Marketing for the event included: a dedicated Expo website with an online registration facility for attendees; extensive digital marketing (PDF flyers) through the networks of RDA Brisbane, other SEQ RDAs and our Expo partners and working group members; a newspaper campaign in the two weeks leading up to the event; a PR campaign for print, radio and TV; Social Media marketing; and an unaddressed direct mail campaign through Australia Post to approximately 11,000 business addresses in the Brisbane area. A printed Event Guide featuring profiles of all exhibitors and the seminar schedule was available online, and printed copies were distributed to all attendees at the door.

A total of 579 registrations were received via the Expo website, plus an additional 192 registered for ‘invitation only’ sessions via Expo partners (771 in total). Based on the number of Event Guides distributed at the door, actual attendance was estimated to be just over 600 (approx. 80% of total registrants).
2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the CLICK! Digital Expo was to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) realise the power and potential of the digital economy. The Expo focused on the capacity of online and technology-based solutions to improve productivity, reduce costs, connect more effectively with current and future customers, and create new revenue streams. Our aim was to provide enterprises with the motivation, knowledge and contacts to create or further develop their online presence and business models, and ensure their long-term survival.

3. FORMAT

The Expo ran from 8.30am to 5.00pm, and featured the following elements:

- **42 exhibitors** of digital tools, technologies and services ([click here](#) for a complete list with links to all exhibitor websites).
- A **welcome address** by Senator The Hon Stephen Conroy (pre-recorded) and **NBN roll-out update**.
- A **keynote address** by IT industry leader John Grant, the Managing Director of Data#3 and Chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission.
- **34 streamed seminars** (beginner, intermediate and advanced) on a broad range of topics including: Social Media; online privacy and security; website design and development; e-learning; search engine optimisation; digital marketing; Cloud workflows; App development; mobility and mobile analytics; trademarks and IP; and digital accounting.
- **Two special 45 minute seminars specifically for the NFP sector** covering marketing and fundraising for NFPs and connecting to communities in the digital age.
• **Four general seminars** open to businesses and NFPs at all knowledge levels, covering Cloud technologies, digital strategies, the Telework revolution and the importance of understanding customer experience.

• Three additional ‘invitation-only’ sessions held in conjunction with Expo partners:
  o Digital Economy Forum for Industry Associations (Queensland Government)
  o Brisbane Marketing Digital Audit Results Media Launch (Brisbane Marketing)
  o Why Digital? Audit Results panel discussion (Brisbane Marketing).

• **Demonstrations of new products and services** by exhibitors in a dedicated demonstration area running throughout the day.

• **Round table discussions** on a range of digital topics hosted by Expo Platinum Sponsor the Business Success Group.

Please see attachment 1 - Event Guide for full details. (The Demonstration and Round Table Discussion schedules are also attached as a separate document).

Although the event was free, for planning purposes potential attendees were asked to register to attend online at www.clickdigitalexpo.com.au, a dedicated website for the Expo. Two registration prizes were offered as an incentive (both prizes were training courses from Small Business Solutions). Registrants were asked a series of questions to identify their knowledge level of the digital economy based on their current level of engagement. Registrants were then provided with a colour code recommendation of green, yellow or red - representing beginner, intermediate or advanced respectively - via their registration confirmation email. A total of 579 registrations were received through this process. Based on the information received, three streamed programs were designed and colour coded for each knowledge level. The morning program of sessions was repeated in the afternoon.

Just prior to the event, all registrants were sent a reminder email with a link to the Event Guide, Expo transport and parking info and their seminar colour code. It should be noted that the colour coding was provided as a guide only, and attendees were completely free to make their own seminar choices on the day, with the only restrictions being on ‘invitation only’ sessions.
4. **KEY MESSAGES**

There is urgency for SMEs to review their business models and explore newer, better and cheaper ways of operating, including new ways to reach, interact with and service their customers and communicate with their own staff. This will enable businesses to stay “ahead of the curve” and ensure their long-term survival and prosperity in the digital economy. NFPs can also reap the benefits of the digital economy by increasing their productivity, finding new and effective ways of marketing their services, interacting with their clientele and building their spheres of influence.

The opportunity to engage in the digital economy is available now with the roll-out of the NBN enabling additional capabilities or enhancements.

5. **ATTENDEES**

The target audience was SMEs and NFPs, with a goal of attracting at least 500 attendees. Types of NFPs targeted included Chambers of Commerce, business and industry associations, charities, employment service providers, and education and training organisations. The primary focus was on attracting prospective attendees from within the Brisbane Local Government Area, however the South East Queensland (SEQ) RDA network was utilised to broaden the reach to enterprises from the entire SEQ region.

A total of 579 registrations were received through an online registration process for the Expo. An additional 131 registrations were received for the Brisbane Marketing Digital Audit Results Media Launch and Panel Discussion, and a further 61 registrations for the Queensland Government Digital Economy Forum for Industry Associations, bringing the total to 771 registrations overall.
Size of organisations represented based on number of employees

Attendance representation from the various RDA Regions
Industry Representation

- N/A
- Transport / Shipping / Logistics
- Engineering
- Manufacturing / Operational
- Legal
- Mining / Oil / Gas
- Administration
- Science
- Healthcare / Medical
- Trade Services
- Marketing
- Beauty
- Consulting
- Advert/Media
- Government
- Real Estate Property
- Community/Sports
- Automotives
- Construction/Architecture
- Retail Fashion
- Human Resources
- Primary Industry
- Accounting/Banking/Finance/Insurance/Super
- Hospitality/Tourism/Travel
- IT
- Sales
- Education & Training
6. **BUDGET**

The Expo was run with a total budget of $110,890 made up through a combination of partner contributions, exhibitor fees, Federal and State Government project funding and a contingency covered by RDA Brisbane operational funding. Total expenditure amounted to $100,181. Part of the small profit of $10,709 will be used to trademark the CLICK! branding with the remainder being transferred to the CLICK! Digital Expo 2013 project budget.

**Income breakdown**

- Exhibitor Fees: $10,000.00
- Partner Contributions (Sponsorship): $16,490.00
- Federal Funding: $24,400.00
- State Funding: $43,000.00
- RDA Brisbane Operational Funding: $10,000.00

**Expenditure Breakdown**

- Venue (inc AV & catering): $28,972.00
- Booths & Internet: $39,537.00
- Marketing and Promotions: $20,403.00
- Printing: $5,219.00
- Working Party and Resource Expenses: $1,176.00
- Miscellaneous: $4,874.00
6. STAKEHOLDERS

RDA Brisbane convened a working party to assist RDA Brisbane staff with the strategic planning of the event. The working party consisted of representatives from the following organisations:

- Australian Information Industry Association
- Brisbane Marketing
- Brisbane City Council
- Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts
- Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
- Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE
- National ICT Australia
- RDA Moreton Bay
- Rype Ideas
- Small Business Solutions.

7. BRANDING, MARKETING AND PROMOTION

RDA Brisbane engaged its Marketing Contractor, Sandy Mikami, to provide valuable guidance in the marketing and promotion of the Expo and to undertake the design and preparation of all marketing collateral.

The title, **CLICK! (Connect, Learn, Innovate, Create and Kickstart your digital future) Digital Expo**, was selected by the working party from a series of designs prepared by the Marketing Contractor based on ideas gathered from the working party.

A dedicated website [www.clickdigitalexpo.com.au](http://www.clickdigitalexpo.com.au) was developed and launched five months prior to the event. The website served as a one-stop-shop for sponsors, exhibitors and attendees. In the months that the website was live in the lead up to the event, it attracted just under 10,000 hits, plus a further 2,400 post-event hits to date. (Presentations from the Expo and photos were posted on the site after the event, and info and links for Expo exhibitors and speakers were maintained.)
Dedicated email (info@clickdigitalexpo.com.au), Twitter (twitter.com/RDABrisbane), LinkedIn (linkedin.com/groups?gid=4569245) and Facebook (facebook.com.au/ClickDigitalExpo) accounts were also established for the Expo.

A Sponsorship Prospectus (see attachment 2 – Sponsorship Prospectus) was prepared five months prior to the event and circulated through the networks of the working party members, RDA Brisbane database, SEQ RDAs and other RDA Brisbane contacts such as the Australian Information Industry Association, the Government Industry Business and Information Network (GiBIN) and the Logan Office of Economic Development.

Email marketing was used extensively, with a variety of PDF flyers (see attachment 3 – Promotional Flyers) circulated through all available networks such as:

- Australian Institute of Management
- Australian Information Industry Association
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Chamber of Commerce Industry Queensland
- Logan Office of Economic Development
- Redland City Council
- Working party members (including sending newsletters and alerts to their databases)
- State Government databases
- Government, Industry and Business Information Network (GiBIN)
- NBN Co
- National Telework Week Network
- Queensland Manufacturing Industry Solutions
- Global Entrepreneurship Week
- Sponsors
- Exhibitors
- SEQ RDAs.

We also leveraged off the Social Media pages of Expo partners such as the Brisbane City Council and Brisbane Marketing.

RDA Brisbane Chair John Shepley wrote to Federal MP’s, State Members and Councillors requesting their support to promote the Expo to the businesses within their electorates. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane promoted the Expo at all appropriate events that he presented at and provided a foreword for the CLICK! website.

An unaddressed direct mail campaign (full colour, DL size leaflet) to 11,000 Brisbane businesses was undertaken through Australia Post (see attachment 4 – Australia Post Flyer), and advertisements were run in five suburban newspapers over two weeks prior to the event (see attachment 5 – newspaper advertisements). Media releases were also distributed to all local print media, radio and TV.
The Expo was promoted at relevant events in Brisbane including the Brisbane Innovation Scorecard Luncheon, Brisbane City Council Digital Engagement Workshop, AIIA Lunch with Steve Wozniack (Apple), Brisbane City Council Small Business Workshops and Local Chambers of Commerce Events.

The event itself was supported by point-of-sale collateral including the Event Guide (distributed at the door), a CLICK! Digital Expo banner featuring all sponsor and partner logos, posters and in-room AV screens listing seminar schedules, and maps/directional signage.

8. OUTCOMES

Following the CLICK! Digital Expo, a survey was conducted through Survey Monkey of the registered attendees to evaluate the effectiveness of the event. A total of 106 attendees responded to the survey, representing 18% of all website registrants. Of the 106 respondents, 74.5% were from an SME and 25.5% were from an NFP. Respondents were asked to rate their answers to the questions between 1 and 5 (1 being poor and 5 being outstanding). Some of the key findings are represented in the graphs below.

Q. I increased my understanding of the opportunities for my business/organisation through attending the CLICK! Digital Expo (1 being poor and 5 being outstanding).

Q. I became aware of the importance of reviewing the whole of my business/organisation including having a Digital Strategy (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding).
Q. I obtained a better understanding of
a) social media
b) digital marketing
c) cloud technologies
d) website and search engine optimisation

Q. I became aware of innovative technologies that could transform my business/organisation (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding).

Q. I obtained information from Exhibitors that will assist my business/organisation (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding).
Q. I found opportunities for creating future business opportunities for my business/organisation (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding).

Q. Did the CLICK! Digital Expo meet your expectations (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding)?

Q. We wish to evaluate your overall experience in attending the CLICK! Digital Expo (1 being poor, 5 being outstanding).
9. LEARNINGS

- The Expo was scheduled to coincide with National Telework Week, but Monday was the only day available at the chosen venue (or any Brisbane venue) for that week. Feedback from attendees indicates that a day other than Monday would be a more suitable day for a future Expo, and this should provide a significant boost to future attendance levels.
- To maximise registrations, the Event Guide should be available on the website as early as possible (at least two weeks prior the event).
- Of the approx. 600 attendees, the overwhelming majority arrived in the morning, and only one person arrived after 3.00pm. While many attendees left to have lunch and then returned, the morning seminar sessions were much better attended than afternoon sessions, and the exhibition area was deserted by 3.00pm. It is recommended that seminar sessions only run until 2 or 3pm at future events, with a simplified program so there are not too many concurrent sessions.
- Due to expense, catering for attendees was not available at the event, and attendees needed to leave to have lunch. On-site catering for attendees would be preferable to encourage them to stay for as long as possible.
- Email marketing and direct mail marketing (Australia Post unaddressed delivery to business addresses) proved to be vastly more effective than newspaper advertising in suburban papers. (This was easy to track as the registration process asked registrants how they found out about the Expo). Note however that Brisbane is a large metro area, and that newspaper advertising may provide better results in regional areas.
- Gaining media coverage for an event such as this in a metro area is exceedingly difficult; securing a media partner for any future event would be an ideal way to get around this problem.
- All speakers were expressly asked not to use the seminars as a “sales tool” for their particular enterprise, but to offer more generally applicable information. However some attendees noted that sales pitches did creep into some sessions. To ensure the credibility and impartiality of the information provided at the Expo, this needs to be guarded against.
10. NEXT STEPS

Project staff are investigating options to trademark the CLICK! branding so that it can be used by other RDAs and organisations.

The RDA Brisbane Committee will decide at its January meeting whether to host another Expo in 2013. RDA Brisbane is represented on the Brisbane Digital Strategy Steering Committee. Project Staff will liaise closely with the Brisbane Chief Digital Officer to ascertain if there are areas identified in the Strategy that could be addressed through another Expo.