



# IACC

Exceptional meetings. Powerful connections.

# Guide to Conference & Meetings Internet

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## Getting the Basics Right

Our reliance on event internet is continually increasing as it is used more and more to communicate and interact with audiences within and externally to the conference or meeting.

This simple guide has been created to help you understand the basics and jargon used when discussing internet for conferences.

With the event planner and venue being knowledgeable in this area, asking the right questions, there will be less surprises and issues to deal with later down the line.

## Event Objective

Understanding the overall objectives of the event, knowing what technological elements are taking place should be a shared at the venue evaluation stage, that way the offer can be tailored appropriately. This includes the provision of internet and for every event, we should ask what the impact would be if there were poor or no internet access at any point. Would it simply be an irritation or is it critical to the success of the event.

## What Internet Related Services are Required?

Below are potential services related to conferences and meetings, using internet connections:

Email management	Slide sharing
Content streaming – including videos and music	Live streaming
Online participation of training materials with delegates	Feedback tool
Documentation upload or download	Event navigation app
Voting/Polling and Audience Participation	Online browsing

*This list is not exhaustive.*

Each of the above will require various levels of internet capability, while some tasks will work on the very basic supply i.e. Email Management, tasks such as live stream uploads will put greater stress on your service capability.

## Understanding Basic Terms

To navigate through the planning and preparation stages for internet there are some basic terms that every event planner and venue representative should know. Here are some to equip you better:

- Wi-Fi** Allows delegates with supporting devices to access an internet connection without the need for a wire. Laptops, tablets, smart phones and smart watches have the ability to connect to Wi-Fi.
- Router** The electronic box where the internet connection comes into the building. The router receives the internet via a wire (normally the telephone line close by) and then sends a Wi-Fi signal out.
- Wi-Fi Booster** For large venues or venues with outdoor space the number and location of boosters is important. These physical boxes pick up the signal transmitted from the router and 'boost' it, ensuring the signal is strong even if delegates are a distance from the router.
- Signal Strength** Often confused with speed, which is different. The signal strength is affected by the location of the router or booster to the user. The further away the weaker the signal, therefore the weaker WiFi.
- Speed** Also known as bandwidth. This is often the main question asked by event organisers as it is the subject of commercials from internet suppliers sales pitches around the world. The greater the speed the greater the potential, current speeds can range from 2mbs – 100mbps+. Mbps stands for *Megabits Per Second* and this is the unit in which internet speed is measured. The unit measures how fast the internet speed travels to the router and then out of the router. Having a higher Mbps number is the aim. Some of the tasks on the first page will only operate above a certain Mbps.
- Contention Rate** This is arguably more important than evaluating the venue by the number of Megabits Per Second, (Mbps), as it considers the speed when a large number of users are on the internet at the same time and the effects it will have.

**Upload & Download Speed** Speed is divided into two areas, Upload and Download speed. The most talked about is the download speed, people sometimes assume that the speeds are the same for upload and download on the same connection, this is very rarely true. The download speed is always greater than the upload speed. Download speeds will affect the quality of videos being watched via YouTube, the time it takes to receive emails on an iPhone and the time it takes to open a webpage on your laptop. Upload speeds will affect the time it takes to send a tweet, post a photo on Facebook and send a question via an event app such as Glisser audience polling.

The table below extracted from "The APEX Presentation Conclave – What is Bandwidth and Why Should You Care" will help you better understand download and upload.

**Number of Users** This could affect the speed of your internet, you will need to check with the venue IT team to determine what the capacity for users is on the venues internet infrastructure. The venue may have 50mbps download speed but if you have 1000 people all logged onto the Wi-Fi at the same time, it is unlikely they will be receiving 50mbps. Some venues have the ability to supply dedicated Wi-Fi for companies which is only available to a specific task. The earlier you know about the requirements the easier it will be to offer the correct service.

**Passwords** To prevent unauthorised access to Wi-Fi connections, it is best practice to have a user name and password/code set up. This can be given to delegates while on site.

**Hard Wired** For some meetings data protection is a priority and using an Ethernet cable will achieve higher security. Using an Ethernet cable, plugged directly into the laptop and the internet port in the room. This affects the flexibility for the user as they will need to remain within the cables length from the wall but it is undoubtedly more secure than a Wi-Fi network. Banks, legal firms, government agencies may require this option.

**Coverage** Are all areas of the venue covered by Wi-Fi? Some venues advertise 'available in public spaces', some offer 'full' coverage.

## How to Determine the Wi-Fi Needs

You should begin by finding out what the attendees and presenters' needs are regarding internet and include this information in the request to the venues you are considering.

**Tip:** *It is important that this information is shared before contractually committing to the venue and will allow them to adapt their proposal according to your needs.*

**Begin the process of compiling your shopping list by asking yourself the following questions;**

**Question 1:** What would be the impact on the event if there were slow or no Internet access during the event? The response to this question will determine the quality of the Internet service you need from the venue and any guarantees you will ask for.

**Question 2:** What information do you have from past similar events? Often there is much to learn from previous events, including identifying any issues that must not be avoided.

Demand for Wifi can come from everywhere and everyone within a group. The table overleaf, from the Apex Conclave, will help you evaluate your event internet needs.

# Drivers of Bandwidth Demand

Where is YOUR demand?



## Basic Information Gathering

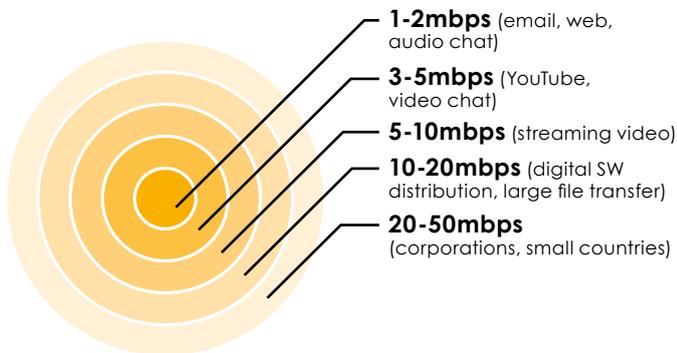
It is important that you know the answers to the following questions and can provide these to the venues with your other event requirements.

Internet & Wi-Fi	Requirements	Comments
How many participants are attending the event, including delegates, speakers and staff.		
How many devices will each participant be using at the event (i.e. smartphone, tablet, laptop)		
Is the efficiency of Internet infrastructure critical for the success of this event?		
List the purposes your delegates will be needing internet access for (i.e. audience polling, email, video streaming etc.).		
Known bandwidth levels from other events/experience.		
Is shared or dedicated Wi-Fi needed (maybe for security of data)		
Is technology support to be provided by the venue or another provider?		
Is venue support chargeable or included?		

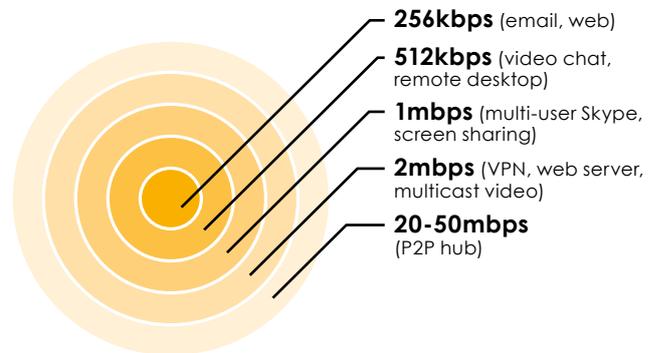
## How Do I Estimate the Bandwidth I Require?

Sometimes, we do not have prior data and information to hand to help answer this question and we need to calculate the minimum levels in advance. As an indication, the two tables overleaf will guide you through the process to estimate bandwidth by activity:

### Typical Download Bandwidth



### Typical Upload Bandwidth



Adapted from: <http://www.ctrl-shift.net/today/2011/how-much-bandwidth-do-i-need>

Each of the above will require various levels of internet capability, while some tasks will work on the very basic supply i.e. Email Management, tasks such as live stream uploads will put greater stress on your service capability.

## Bandwidth Requirements by Activity

User Group	Activity	Bandwidth Needed	Wired-Wireless	Considerations
Attendees	Email/web browsing	Low	Wireless	
Attendees	Social media / Skype	Low - Medium	Wireless	
Attendees	Mobile event app	Low – Medium	Wireless	Medium bandwidth suggested if event app includes video or a lot of content/picture uploads. Web apps generally require connectivity all the time to function. Native apps download and store content and refresh when connectivity is restored
Attendees	Web based training	Medium	Wired / Wireless	Discuss the capacity of the website you are using with the provider of that website
Attendees	Video to attendee devices / second screen	High	Wireless	
Attendees	Audience response / real time interaction	Low	Wireless	Ease of login is critical. Consider an open network and making everyone login at registration
Attendees	Large file transfers	Medium – High	Wired / Wireless	
Attendees	VPN	Low - High	Wired / Wireless	Bandwidth needs vary and can be high if large downloads
Attendees	Printing	Low	Wired / Wireless	Make sure wireless to wired printing works
Presenters	HD Video Teleconferencing	4Mb/s	Wired	The quality of the Internet connection at the remote end is just as important in order to achieve high quality video. Check if your video conferencing provider if you need a static IP. Upload dependent

User Group	Activity	Bandwidth Needed	Wired-Wireless	Considerations
Presenters	Cloud based presentations / Web casting / streaming (to offsite)	3Mb/s	Wired	Dependent upon how many simultaneous streams are being sent from the venue. Consider the remote audience and their Internet availability. Upload dependent
Presenters	Screen mirroring from a tablet	1Mb/s	Wired & Wireless	Network service discovery protocols such as Bonjour. services must be enabled on the network
Exhibits	Attendee Wi-Fi in the exhibit hall	See attendee section	Wireless	Interference on exhibit floors can be severe.....

## The Price Question: How Should You Buy?

Internet connectivity has a cost and its constant evolution adds to this cost. While you negotiate, be sure to always keep in mind the level of importance of The Internet to the success of your meeting. 3 things to remember:

- ➔ This is a rapidly evolving infrastructure that requires maintenance and updates so it adds costs.
- ➔ There may be human costs to meet on-site support expectations
- ➔ Costs may vary regionally or by country.

For larger events, over 300 delegates, it is common to use **bandwidth based pricing**. This would be a flat rate with a charge for total bandwidth, the equipment and staffing. You would have unlimited users/accesses within this bandwidth.

For smaller conferences and meetings or where the Internet is not vital **connection based pricing** per device and per user is common.

In IACC certified venues and other conference focused venues, Internet is often included in the delegate packages and at a high quality and speed which can undertake most event needs.

**Tip:** Contingency planning. Prepare a plan B if the Internet were to fail at your event.

## Questions Venues Should Ask and Meeting Planners Should Share Up-front

One of the top reasons why internet fails is due to an inadequate bandwidth. Detailed knowledge of an events needs is key to providing the right internet infrastructure.

Venue representatives and meeting planners should not feel uncomfortable when it comes to discussing internet. Professionally run venues will ensure their staff have good knowledge and ask the right questions.

Here are some key questions and information that should be known before a venue is contracted to run an event.

**The number of participants:** this may sound obvious but it is key to know how many people will be using the internet at the same time. Furthermore, they may not be the only attendees at the venue at the same time.

- ➔ Not only is the number of participants important but the **number of devices** they will be using. Today, it is rare if attendees come with only one device! Event planners should be specific with the venue about the devices that are going to be used by both speakers and attendees i.e. tablets, smartphones, laptops etc. You need to have a profile of the attendees: are they basic users or heavy social media users? Will they use Skype or Facetime during the meeting for example?
- ➔ Will the **use of Internet be critical** to the success of the event? Remember, each client is different and has a different objective for their event.
- ➔ **Past experience** is key: If the event ran before, what went well regarding internet and what did not? It is helpful to share bandwidth and device reports which have been received from the previous venue where the event was held.
- ➔ **Expected Use of the Internet:** there is a large difference between downloading your emails twice a day and following and interacting throughout the event through a smartphone or tablet for example. Once again it is crucial to know what your clients' needs are to tailor your proposals. Will it be low level usage, medium usage or high usage of bandwidth?

- This brings the question about the main screen **presentation/output itself**. Will it require the use of Internet? Will you show demos? Will you show any videos, streaming or **event holograms**? All these questions will help the venue provide the right solution and avoid any nasty surprises onsite.
- In the very least, venues should ask if the event has a minimum **bandwidth level**. If you do not have this information, meeting planners can always check the [Bandwidth Estimator](#) on IACC's website at IACCmeetings.com. It is vital that the venues client facing staff members know their property bandwidth and in different areas of the meeting space. They need to know at what point the maximum is reached? Providing additional bandwidth can be possible, but can also be expensive.
- **Shared or dedicated bandwidth?** It is important to ascertain whether the event requires a dedicated bandwidth or a shared channel. Dedicated internet may best suit large events or events (300+ attendees) with high bandwidth needs. Remember that shared bandwidth means every client will be competing for capacity but it may be satisfactory for some events.
- Is **dedicated IT/AV support** needed from the venue?
- For events where the internet is critical, it is recommended that a site inspection with the venue and clients IT specialists are present.

## Other Guides and Useful Information on Internet for Meetings and Conferences

### [IACC Broadband Estimator](#)

Use this simple free online broadband estimator to gain a basic understanding of the minimum Internet speeds you should be looking for a venue to provide for your meeting.

### [Corbin Ball & Co.](#)

Industry expert and futurist on event related technologies. Check out Corbin's extensive [meetings technologies links](#) on his website along with many tips and tools.

### [Negotiating the Internet Landscape at Hotels and Convention Centers: A Primer for Event Planners](#)

### [Technology and how to use it better](#)

### [AV Equipment Bid Worksheet](#)

This worksheet provides a bid sheet that can be emailed to AV companies. It computes the total daily unit total for equipment from the day-by-day totals entered. A unit cost can then be assigned by the AV company, and automatically calculating a total cost per equipment type. The sheet provides cells for discounts to be inserted, as well as for sales tax, staffing and delivery charges. The total cost is found at the bottom.

### [Corbin Ball's Tech Talk](#)

Subscribe to Corbin's monthly Tech-Talk newsletter.

## Industry Suppliers of Internet Related Services



Global providers of event production and venue and event related technologies.



Meeting planner registration software and conference app.



Glisser's award winning audience engagement software shares presentation slides to delegates' devices in real-time, then uses audience interaction – Q&A, polling, social feeds and private notes.



From our HQ in New Zealand and bases across the UAE and USA Showgizmo create apps for events throughout the world. Our apps are used by venues to connect with and promote to event attendees in their spaces, by planners to capture valuable real time data and by all participants to network.

## About IACC

IACC is the only global professional association in the events industry which represents small to medium sized venues focused on meetings, training courses and conferences. Founded in 1981, IACC currently has over 300 member venues in 23 countries in the Americas, Europe and Australia. Members of IACC adhere to a set of quality standards in meeting room design, food & beverage and service related standards giving meeting planners confidence in the venue delivering an exceptional meeting experience for their clients.

IACC is a non-profit corporation and charitable institution dedicated to promoting understanding and awareness of the meetings and events industry and to giving member venues the tools necessary to create an exceptional delegate experience and maintain a benchmark of quality within the industry.

[IACCmeetings.com](http://IACCmeetings.com)  [@IACCMeetings](https://twitter.com/IACCMeetings)



**CREATING  
INSPIRING  
EXPERIENCES**

On behalf of our more than 8,500 team members, we are proud to support IACC. Our highly trained staff is passionate about delivering exceptional experiences to help you tell your story. Our industry expertise and unmatched resources will bring your vision to life. Let's connect and inspire people – together.

[psav.com](http://psav.com)  
877.430.7728

