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Recreation and Innovation: Techweek Chicago 2013





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[Tech Week Chicago](#) 2013 was not a typical technical conference. There were hundreds of booths with people marketing their products and services in unique ways. There was beer pong, golf practice, free samples, even cocktails. Among other fun antics, there was a [Bing vs. Google Challenge](#), an entire room committed to a beer pong tournament, and occasional robots and people dressed up as robots mulling around.

The expo was able to combine work and play in an unpredictable yet organized way. It consisted of at least 100 booths of all different shapes and sizes. Some were tents with just information, others were lounges with couches, demonstrations and recreation. Someone who attended the conference would be able to go to these lounges and tents at the expo as well as attend conferences about the wide world of technology.

The tents at the expo featured phone apps, marketing, tech management, programming, social media, website development and more. One of the sponsors of the event was an app called [Yappem](#).

Yappem was launched at [South by Southwest](#) in March of this year. The app raised 2.5 million dollars before the launch then received an additional million, Keith Fenimore, chief marketing officer said. Yappem is a social media outlet that people can use to enhance their experience with products with incentives. Instead of purely endorsing the brands that are partnered or mentioned by the app, people have free-reign to say what they want about a product or brand. These posts come with rewards through a coin system. Users can write a post that mentions a product and receive coins that can be collected for missions that turn into real gift cards. Yappem's website was launched during Techweek.

Fenimore said the app gives brands the opportunity to have a conversation with consumers through the users broadcasting their opinions about a product, good or bad. He said Yappem isn't telling people to post certain things. Users can post whatever opinion they believe about a brand and these posts can be conglomerated into communities within the app. "It's communication in an organic way" he said.

Another booth there was Cheeky Chicago's lounge which consisted of a lot of pink, couches and a bar with free cocktails. [Cheeky Chicago](#) is a 360 degree social experience that's online and offline, Kate Nettenstrom, social media intern, said. She said they focus on being able to empower women and helping one another. They have frequent events in the city that can consist of free food, drink specials and being able to see the staff in person for a genuine experience. Cheeky Chicago has a [Cheeky Card](#), which gives users VIP access to events throughout the city.

A bright green and yellow lounge that was towards the front of the expo was [Big Marker](#). It's a company that creates a website for company's to easily communicate with one another. It's like Facebook but for professionals. Members can share the link to the site to other coworkers, use a bulletin, organize with a calendar and have instant video conferences. The video conferences can

share up to 12 cameras and over 100 can join the webinar with audio. It's a simple way to be able to communicate for nonprofits and small businesses in the most efficient way. They even have companies that use the service in Europe and Asia.

Walking towards the Summit Stage to go to the conference, one could sense an eclectic feel in the way companies presented their products and services. Some people were taking shots, others were playing ping pong, people were playing video games, and there was even a DJ booth teaching kids and adults how to work a DJ system and turntable.

The DJ system featured [Chicago's B96](#) radio station and the [Music Industry Workshop](#). The Music Industry workshop helps musicians, singers, DJ's and producers alike to learn how to hone in on their craft. Orville Kline, DJ at [Porn and Chicken Dance party](#) on Monday's at the Evil Olive at 1551 W. Division, is a part of the workshop and helps rising talents learn music technology skills. He said the workshop has been in business for 15 years serving the city of Chicago. Kline is a veteran DJ having performed at [Spring Awakening Music Festival](#) and [Electronic Daisy Carnival in Vegas](#).

Besides hands-on learning, the expo also had exhibits to exercise your networking skills and brain. On Saturday there was a hiring fair, and a continuation of the summits and conferences. The last summit of the day featured a panel of the [Well Tech Summit](#) with Ralph Gaines, the CEO of [beBetter Health](#), Jeff Hyman founder and CEO of [Retrofit](#) and Shradha Agarwal co-founder and chief strategy officer of [Context Media](#).

This summit was about the fact that people argue that with new technology comes less healthy consumers but this group thought that innovation enhanced healthy living. The group focused on the idea that workout plans can be personalized to one's needs online as well as working with social media. Agarwal said it was important to be able to recognize the audience one is working with in order to determine how to have a conversation about health based on their knowledge and needs. These groups are able to make personalized health scores and diet plans to help people who are obese find a way to fight the weight besides taking medication.

Techweek was able to create a venue for sharing of ideas and services in different learning environments. Whether one was sitting in a chair, trying out a website or playing a game, people were able to connect to one another through their passion for technology in innovative, unforgettable ways. See more photos of TechWeek Chicago 2013 here: facebook.com/NowYouKnowEvents.



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1. [Now You Know Events](#) / 07/09/2013

We loved your article. Great coverage of this incredible event.

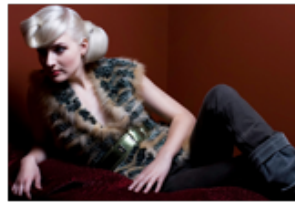
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