

Back from The brink: Smart Beacons & Reply - part 3

The Internet of things

There is no longer any mystery when it comes to what Smart Beacons are. After our first two papers, you will know that this indoor positioning system enables smartphone users to receive customised and highly-targeted messages directly to their mobile phones.

Technically, Beacons emit information continuously. When a smartphone's user approaches the device, the system linked to it identifies the precise position of the customer or the visitor and potentially who he/she is, so that it can ensure the right information associated to that Beacon is sent to the right person.

Strategically, it is a very useful tool which can create a better interaction between an organisation - a bank, a museum, an airport or a store, for instance - and their customers.

But where does Reply position itself within that market and what is its role?

Reply has been active in the field of new technology for some considerable time. In 2009, it created Concept Reply, an R&D Centre, which we also call an incubator of ideas. This in turn launched the Internet of Things (IOT) platform, named Hi Reply, in 2011 to develop systems allowing the connection of objects, whether smart or not, to the Web.

DIGITAL MEETS
PHYSICAL



PERSONALIZED
OFFERS

Based on these two experiences, and to take matters a step further, Reply then founded Hi engage in 2013, in order to focus solely on a comprehensive range of contextual marketing solutions that are designed to connect brands with their customers using the digital channel.

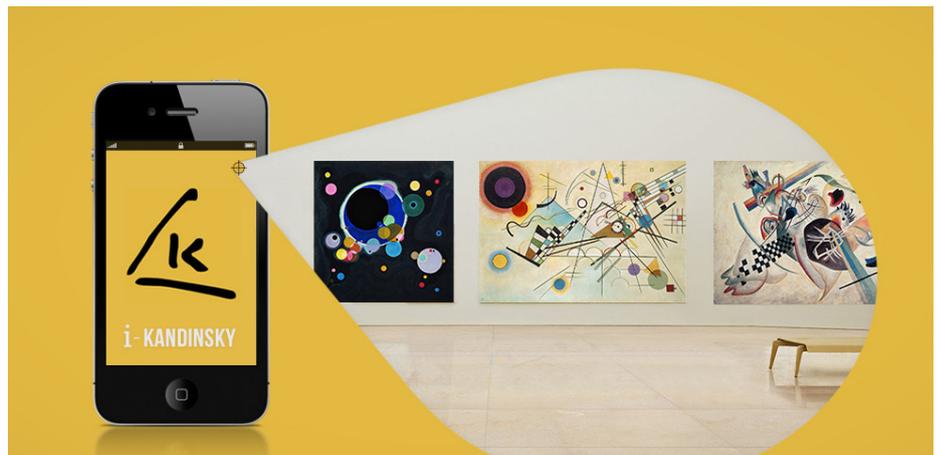
This development is based on the conviction that, from the retail to the financial sector, from museums to universities, the fast and ever-increasing development of technologies and the battle to attract and retain customers compel institutions to develop well-thought out and visionary strategies. And Reply is well positioned to assist them in formulating tactics and tools in this respect, so as to help them reach their objectives.

Reply's expertise can be seen through numerous projects on which the Group has worked. Here are a few which involve using Smart Beacon technologies.

New cultural experience

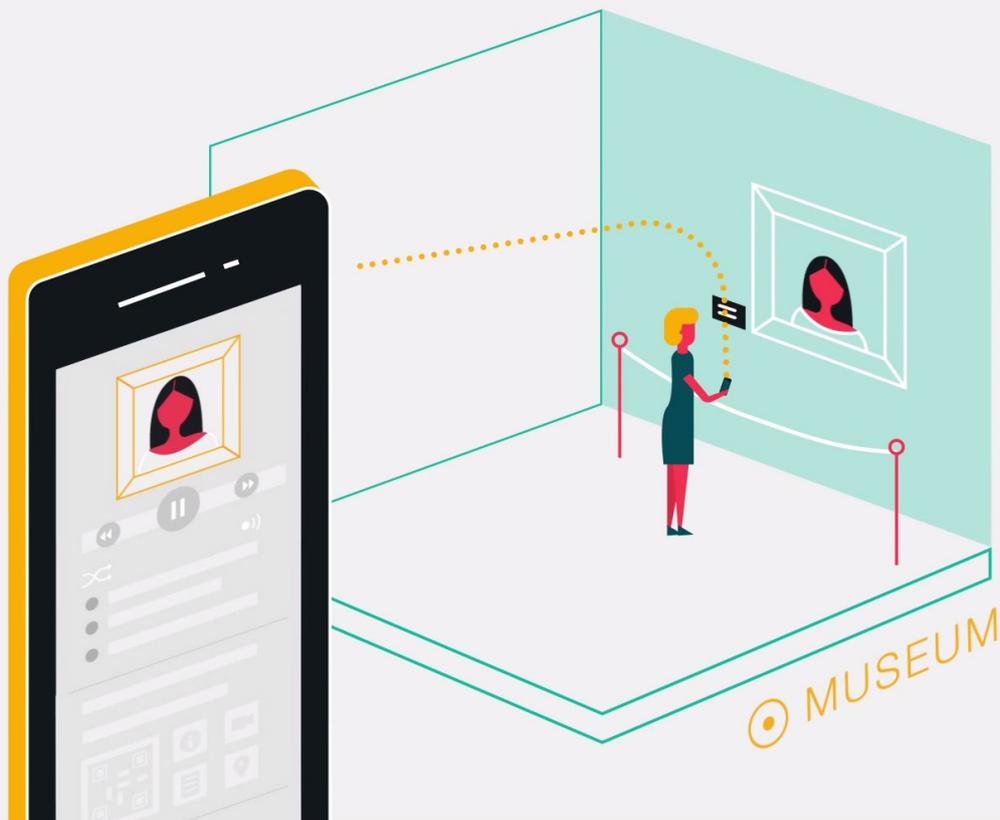
Museums are facing several challenges, such as capturing and holding people's interest in an ever-changing and entertaining world; or keeping up with an accelerating and diversifying art world and the multiplication of media and technologies. In this context, Giunti Arte in partnership with the Fondazione Palazzo Blu asked Reply to develop i-Kandinsky for the Pisa Wassily Kandinsky exhibition.

The objective was to open up a compelling new dimension to the exhibition and enable visitors to 'customise' their experience.



To do so, Reply designed an app which allowed visitors to receive information about the exhibited artworks directly on their smartphone. As they approached each painting, they would receive unique multimedia content on their phone, including an image of the work, a description and an audio commentary. No longer would they waste time trying to locate the right image on a barely-working audio guide; nor would they end up with a commentary which explained a nearby, but completely different, art work. The system automatically adapted to the visitors' immediate environment.

This service was made possible thanks to an app created by Reply especially for the project. Smart Beacon devices were placed at strategic points and visitors' smartphones programmed so as to detect Beacons' signals and to receive the relevant explanation at the right moment. To prevent conflicts between Beacons, Reply made sure that smartphones would only receive information sent by the closest device.



However, the application went further than that. As the life of an exhibition and its impact on visitors does not stop at the museum's doors, the system was designed to encourage art lovers to use the app outside the museum too. During the five months' duration of the exhibition, they could easily share what they had discovered with a friend while relaxing in a cafe, with their children or partner at home, with colleagues in the office or with students or a teacher at school, to name but a few examples. As an added incentive, people who installed the app received a digital coupon awarding 10% off the purchase price of the exhibition's catalogue via one beacon placed within the bookstore. Thanks to this immediate call for action direct to the customer's smartphone, the eventual conversion rate was 5 times higher than the average.

i-Kandinsky used technologies and components developed by Reply for Internet of Things' platform. The app was free to download and within five months, of the 83,000 people who had visited the exhibition, around 4,500 took advantage of the offer.

Marketing & information

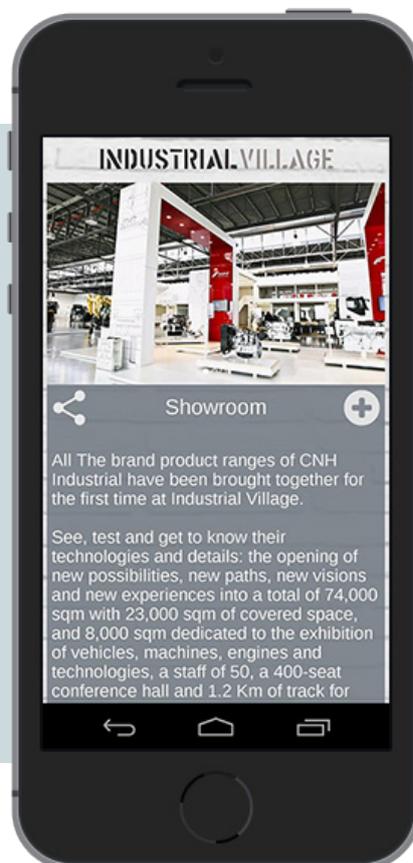
Another interesting project is the one developed for CNH's Industrial Village.

CNH is a global leader in the field of capital goods with proven industrial experience, a wide range of products and a worldwide presence. It has recently established a permanent exhibition located in Turin, which illustrates the history of industrial vehicles from the early 1900s to the present day. Throughout 2,000m² of exhibition space, visitors can view carefully restored vehicles, engines or other exhibits from leading brands such as Fiat, OM, SPA Magirus and Unic. To enhance visitors' experience, CNH took advantage of Reply's proximity and contextual marketing solution. Since the beginning of the year, they have equipped the exhibition space with 29 beacons which are continuously transmitting information about the items on show.



To make it work, Reply developed a completely customised app, from the graphics to the transmission devices. Thanks to this, when approaching each historic CNH display piece, visitors can now receive the information associated with it on their smartphones. The mobile application interacts with the special Smart Beacon emitters, making an audio, video and written description of the exhibit available. The system also allows the users to share their experience on the most common social networks and store content on their smartphone, so that they can relive their experience at the Industrial Village again at any time.

A third example is Reply's project for Pro Sesto Soccer Team Stadium in Milan, which enables sponsors to promote their products and pass on information. Reply's team placed both Bluetooth Low Energy Beacons (BLE) and ultrasound devices at the Stadium entrance to welcome supporters, initiate contact with them and share news about their champions and events. Not only that, in specific locations, where parents and children meet after workouts, the devices also send coupons and promotional messages direct from the sponsors to selected targets.



What's next?

Reply is now working on the implementation of Smart Beacon in bank branches. Together with innovative banking clients, we are convinced this small device can have a big impact on a bank's customers' experiences and, as a consequence, will:

- 1.** Improve the relationship between the bank and the client;
- 2.** Help to develop a customer-centric strategy;
- 3.** Win customers' loyalty;
- 4.** Allow branches and their staff to be more efficient; and
- 5.** Help banks to make the step towards the branch of the future.

In that context, we are also closely following the experiences of financial institutions in other geographies, including Asia/Pacific, Africa, North and South America: Combined with our R&D capabilities described above, drawing the lessons learned from innovators across the Globe help us accelerate the delivery of innovative and efficient solutions to our clients.

St. George Bank in Australia is a case in point. This institution has just started iBeacon trials in three of its Sydney branches. At present, the technology delivers a personalised experience each time a customer enters a branch by sending a welcome message and tailored information directly to their iPhone. Customers can respond to the message or cancel the interaction.

The purpose of the trial is to gain valuable feedback from customers to ensure the service both genuinely meets their needs and enhances their experience with the bank.

To quote George Frazis, CEO of St. George Banking Group: "The launch of the new technology forms part of an increased focus on delivering an innovative and customer-centric in-branch experience. The future of business will be in the ability to anticipate customer's needs, understand what matters to them and act on that knowledge to surprise and delight them. Our investment in iBeacon will help us to achieve that – and it has the potential to dramatically change the service experience in Australian banking."

And this is just the beginning. As we have shown in the second paper, 'Back from the Brink: Smart Beacons in bank branches', the potential of the device is impressive. It ranges from offering a personalised welcome to the customer to improving the waiting experience in the bank; from sending customised promotional offers to collecting branch-based data and much more.

About us

The logo for Reply, consisting of the word "Reply" in a bold, dark teal font, centered within a light teal rectangular border.

Reply

Reply specialises in designing and implementing solutions based on the new communication channels and digital media. Comprising a networked model of highly specialised companies, Reply works with Europe's leading industrial groups in the telco and media; industry and services; banking and insurance; and public-administration sectors to define and develop business models built around the new paradigms of big data, cloud computing, digital media, and the internet of things. Reply's offering includes consultancy, systems integration, and digital services.

The logo for Open Reply, consisting of the words "Open" and "Reply" stacked vertically in a bold, dark teal font, centered within a light teal rectangular border.

Open Reply

Open Reply is a Reply company that specialises in delivering creative and technologically innovative mobile brand and commerce solutions. From mobile web to native apps, on both smartphone and tablet, Open Reply fuses the best creative and technology to deliver conversations optimised for the mobile device that increase engagement and commerce conversions.

To learn more about **Beacons** contact **Reply:**

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