5 Benefits of Mobile Wayfinding Solution for Every University Campus

Wayfinding solutions have increasingly become an invaluable tool on university campuses around the world. With practically all new students owning an internet-connected smartphone, it's the perfect time for colleges and universities to replace printed campus maps with digital mapping and wayfinding solutions that are up to date 24/7.

Wayfinding term is relatively new when it refers to a solution that covers both indoor and outdoor areas. Traditionally it was GPS for outdoors and physical signage for indoors. During the recent years of advanced technology development, indoor positioning solutions have matured to the point that they can now pinpoint reliable X, Y location coordinates inside buildings. As a result, with the combination of indoor positioning and GPS, commercial indoor-outdoor wayfinding solutions have arrived!

In this article, we will discuss the benefits and critical components of mobile wayfinding technology. It is the second part of our article series that explores higher education digital campus applications and solutions. You can read the first part here.

How can mobile wayfinding solutions help students?

If you have ever spent time on a sizeable 10-building university campus, you must agree that there is often anxiety in just finding your way to your next meeting/destination and getting there on time. Where, again, was the Admissions office? Finance office or Guidance Counselor's office? And the Edison Lecture hall?

That is where new indoor wayfinding solutions come to help: they enable students to navigate their daily life with lower levels of anxiety. Knowing your location on a large campus, and knowing where everything and everyone else is, makes life easier. It's like Google navigation outdoors; it is certainly easier than driving and reading a paper map.

When you open the mobile wayfinding app, it shows your location, indoor or outdoor, within a few feet of accuracy. When you type in "Edison Lecture hall," it will suggest you the best routing, through the floors and buildings, with the estimated time to destination.

Five benefits of using wayfinding solutions at the university campus

1) Reduce student anxiety

- Even before the first visit to the campus, students can use the wayfinding app in virtually navigating the campus, buildings, floors, and rooms, to familiarize themselves with the campus environment, for a better student experience right from the start. It also enhances the university's public image as a progressive adopter of the latest digital technology.
- When at the campus, the wayfinding app displays all points of interest visible on the campus map and makes them searchable via a directory. No more guessing or asking for directions multiple times. All contextual campus information is available in your pocket! From any location on campus, you can enter where you're heading, and the app takes care of the rest.

- For every day special situations, wayfinding solutions can provide rerouting around construction areas, broken elevators, escalators or hazardous areas
- Accessibility guidance – wayfinding app provides help in finding the best routing for wheelchair access, and other tools to comply with the accessibility regulations.

2) Visitor services

- Reducing time to communicate directions for visitors and service providers
- Mobile wayfinding solutions let you copy the location of the destination with one click and send it as a mobile text-link to friends, parents, or even to a pizza delivery guy, to make sure he shows up at the right building and door!
- Faculty members and facilities managers can send similar text links with routing info, to outside contractors who need to know the service locations on the floor plan level.

3) Safety and emergency situations

- Wayfinding app can provide safe routing to building exits during an emergency
- Students can send their location coordinates to first responders, and enable location sharing with friends and family members, so that their whereabouts can be identified at any time.

4) Find a colleague

- Some wayfinding software solutions allow employees to Opt-in to share their on-site location with their colleagues and teams.
- Facilitating spontaneous meetings or conversations, and arranging meetings based on location becomes easier than before.

5) Room and desk booking → New level of space efficiency

- When wayfinding information is integrated with the University's space reservation calendar, it makes it very easy to find the nearest free study room or meeting room and book it on the fly.
- This also improves the campus facilities' utilization rates, as all available rooms become visible on the wayfinding map – and, in turn, supports better monetary return on institutions' real estate investments. Increased efficiency allows universities to reallocate entire buildings to be rented out to startups and corporations. A good example of this is the Aalto University that was able to [refurbish its second largest building entirely as office space](#).

Critical components of a best of breed wayfinding solution

There are several alternative ways of implementing a wayfinding solution. And because the comprehensive solution requires multiple system components - indoor positioning, digital mapping, mobile app, cloud connection, calendar integration - some vendor solutions tend to be more reliable than others.

To help you in selecting the best performing solution, here is our expert team's checklist of the critical factors and specifications of a campus wayfinding solution to be purchased in 2020:

- **Seamless Indoor + Outdoor experience**
  - The same wayfinding app must be able to provide seamless routing and navigation between rooms, floors, buildings, and remote campus areas.

- **Indoor positioning with BLE beacons**
  - There are different ways to calculate location indoors. The easiest, the most cost-effective method, and the smallest interference to other IT networks is to use commercial matchbox-sized BLE beacons. These beacons are attached, typically with double-sided tape, to critical locations inside buildings, to provide location fix for mobile phones.
  - The best practice location beacon deployment today does not require "field calibration" during the installation. You should be able to take beacons from their shipment box, attach them to the numbered locations, as marked on the floorplan drawing by the vendor – and then it should just work!

- **Easy Map Editor tools**
  - It should be easy for staff members with no IT skills to update the digital campus maps to accommodate small changes and create points of interest, using simple drag and drop. It should not require an outside contractor to perform this daily maintenance work.

- **Integrated solution**
  - Digital maps and the wayfinding solution should have been integrated into one platform, already before the deployment – preferably by one vendor.
  - If the indoor positioning and digital maps come from separate vendors, the user experience can be compromised, and the deployment will easily turn into an IT system integration project that will take a bigger budget and longer time to implement.

Want to learn more?

If you want to know more about how wayfinding solutions can help your students and learn about different optional features and pricing - please get in touch with our wayfinding experts today and read more at https://steerpath.com/smart-campus.