

Good wi-fi maketh the conference, bad wi-fi breaketh it



By [Henk Kleynhans](#)

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Despite wi-fi being a relatively minor service in the grander scheme of a conference, where you may have excellent speakers, interaction and workshops, bad wi-fi has the power to make a good conference look really bad and poorly organised. And when the wi-fi doesn't work, negative tweets about the conference abound.

So why do so many events have abysmal wi-fi, despite there being plenty of [articles](#) and [white papers](#) on how negatively bad wi-fi can be for an event, and even [guides](#) on how to do it properly?

The solution behind good wi-fi is mostly a matter of experience and using the right equipment and the technology setup in terms of shaping, bursting, balancing etc. So why can't anyone simply pick up a manual, buy the right equipment, plug it in and provide decent wi-fi?

Well, two things: expertise and mindset.

Not the same

Expertise is not the same as experience.

Expertise is something a trained surgeon has. No-one in their right mind will let a backyard surgeon with zero qualifications operate on them.

Yet when it comes to IT, everyone seems to "know a guy" who can do it for you cheap. If you want IT to really work, you're taking a big risk if you hire someone without plenty of training and maybe a university degree or two. (Although not essential, a few years of university physics go a long way towards understanding and troubleshooting wireless signal problems).

But even more important than expertise is mindset. That mindset that most true experts seem to have of simply not accepting failure. The same mindset good surgeons have when they are fighting to save someone's life.

It's that mindset that makes exceptional teams and individuals constantly test, plan, practice and learn from every mistake - no matter how big or how small - chew on it for days afterwards and vow not to make it again.

So what's the secret?

Combine the right mindset with technical expertise and some solid experience.

And, if you're a conference organiser, be wary of the cheapest service providers. You wouldn't compare quotes from heart surgeons, so why then look for the cheapest wi-fi provider?

Ten dos and don'ts of conference and event wi-fi

1. Do: communicate with speakers and delegates
2. Do: dedicated access for speakers on a physically separate network.
3. Don't: use splash/login pages
4. Do: use the right equipment
5. Do: proper backhaul
6. Don't: underestimate costs
7. Do: test, test, test
8. Do: prepare!
9. Don't: EVER install a solution for a venue and say you can remotely support it
10. Don't: undercharge!

ABOUT HENK KLEYNHANS

Henk Kleynhans is founder and CEO of Skyrove, chairman of the Wireless Access Providers Association (WAPA) and serves on the Executive Committee of the Silicon Cape Initiative. He has also been named as one of "200 Young South Africans You Must Take To Lunch". Contact him on tel 0861 768 377, email him at henk@skyrove.com, read the Skyrove blog and follow him on Twitter at [@geekrebel](https://twitter.com/geekrebel).

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