

LOCATION-SPECIFIC ADVICE SUPPLIED BY THE CROWD



WORK & LIFESTYLE

Both [Aardvark](#) (now owned by Google) and the more recently debuted [Quora](#) are a testament to the fact that some questions are still better answered by human beings rather than by search engines. Bringing that concept to bear on the location-based arena is [Crowdbeacon](#), a website and mobile app that lets users get location-specific advice in real time from local, human users. The brainchild of New York-based Squeaky Wheel Media, Crowdbeacon is “a location-based service focused on providing relevant, localized communication and information to users based on what they need and where they are,” in the company’s own words. Users begin by downloading the free [iPhone app](#) from Apple’s App Store. If they don’t have an iPhone, they can use the website instead. Then, as they go about their daily lives, they can tap fellow users for whatever local information they need, whether it’s where to find the best burrito in town or which bar has the best happy hour. When users sign up with Crowdbeacon, they choose one category that they are willing to answer questions about in their hometown — nightlife, for example. Then, when a related question arises from another user, Crowdbeacon’s notification system alerts those who signed up for that area to see if they can help. Not just individuals but also local businesses can participate — in the latter case, they can also select keywords they’d like to be notified about. A flower shop, for instance, might choose “roses,” “peonies” and “free delivery”. Either way, notifications are currently delivered via email, push, sms and voice. And since there’s no guarantee that the human responses will answer the question adequately, Crowdbeacon integrates the top results from Yelp, Foursquare and Wishpond as well. Users who respond often and well are rewarded via a location-specific ranking system; businesses, needless to say, get potential leads. There’s no doubt location-based apps are here to stay, but the incorporation of subjective advice in a geolocated way is intriguing. Who will help Crowdbeacon expand to other mobile platforms — and other parts of the world? (Related: [Location-based service helps hotel guests connect offline](#) — [Location-based messaging for neighbourhoods](#) — [App delivers location-based info from drivers to drivers](#).) Spotted by: Rachel Patterson

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