Deconstructing Beacons

Beacons are being used more prominently every day. Beacons, originally made popular by large national retailers, are beginning to emerge as a marketing option for small business owners. A beacon is a small device no larger than a computer mouse - in most cases much smaller - that communicates with a nearby smartphone. The purpose is to enable the delivery of relevant messaging to the consumer, providing context based on the consumer's physical location.

Beacons are a one-way communication channel that require businesses to install hardware, maintain consistent battery life on each beacon, and hope that consumers have Bluetooth turned on. Village Vesl requires none of this – no hardware, batteries or Bluetooth. Village Vesl can be utilized for public and private use, and the service isn't geographically limited in any way. Beacons have a limited range, typically no more than 50 yards.

Below are additional details about beacons that may help prepare you when meeting with prospective small business customers who are using, or thinking about using, beacons.

• Beacons require hardware, batteries and Bluetooth. Village Vesl requires none of this.

• Many beacon providers send only to Android phones. Android enables the transmission of messages to consumer devices using the device's location and proximity to the beacon based on a Bluetooth connection. This can be considered by consumers as unauthorized, intrusive messaging. Apple will not allow 'permission-less' messaging. Village Vesl runs without issue on both Android AND iPhone.

• Messaging delivered direct to consumers' mobile devices is highly personal. In the case of beacons, consumers may have very little control over the messaging, when they receive messaging and from whom. While Village Vesl sends messages direct to consumer devices, the service provides consumers with full control over the specific types of messages they receive. Consumers can adjust or restrict the type of messages they receive, opting to receive messaging only from specific businesses or turning off messaging altogether.

• In some cases, beacons require consumers to install a mobile application. This could mean a variety of different apps would be required to use beacons with different businesses, based on the vendor working with each individual business.

• Beacons are limited to in-store use by participating small businesses, restricting reach to consumers already on location. Village Vesl can be used on site but also to assist in the awareness or acquisition of new customers.

• Beacons do not provide a solution for service businesses that do not have a brick and mortar location. Village Vesl serves all businesses.

• Village Vesl allows businesses to leave unlimited messages in any physical location, both in store and elsewhere in and around the community. Village Vesl flags can be moved around, support images, and can be set with specific start and end dates. Beacons do not provide this flexibility.

• Village Vesl is multi-dimensional. Consumers can respond to Village Vesl messaging by asking questions, providing feedback, or gathering more information about the business from within the application. Beacons are one-dimensional and don’t enable a consumer dialogue.

• Beacon range is highly limiting. Most are restricted to the storefront or nearby street corner if used outdoors. The Village Vesl service can range up to five miles from each flag - and from any location - not just the distance from the actual beacon itself.

• There is no beacon solution designed to specifically assist or enhance the community as a whole. There's no community branding. No community-oriented mission other than to provide small business owners with a way to advertiser to consumers.

• Village Vesl licensees are the owners and operators of their businesses. They are local and live in their communities.

• Beacons are, well, beacons. Village Vesl is a comprehensive service that provides many features for residents and small businesses alike. Village Vesl is an evolving product that continues to iterate based on the emergence of new mobile technologies.