

Venues Today

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VENUESToday

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

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Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. VT Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Linda Deckard just returned from the INTIX Annual Conference in Boston. Look for coverage here and in the February magazine. Managing Editor Natasha Emmons just returned from IAAM's International Stadium Management Conference in Tampa, Fla. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or to subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"If people can't help, they will hide." — Debbie DeMars, employee training consultant on preparing staff to answer questions

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VENUE NEWS

Dennis Scanlon, Sarah Jensen, Eugene Carr, Roger Tomlinson, Mark Cohon, Randy Vogel



INTIX PANEL EXPLORES TICKETING IN 'WEB 2' WORLD

BOSTON — A new world is dawning, dubbed Web 2, in which the terrestrial database driven to a Web site to buy tickets becomes an interactive database where the seller knows what the customer looks at and tailors the Web site to respond to the character of the individual visitor. It will be interactive and ever-changing, said Roger Tomlinson, independent consultant and partner, ACT Consultant Services,

Cambs, U.K., who moderated a panel on 21st Century Systems during INTIX here Jan. 10-13.

The consensus was that the Web has changed from a publishing model to an agent model, he said. The Web will sell, not just host. It might put some of the excitement back into the transaction.

"The experience of buying a ticket used to be a live event itself," said Dennis Scanlon, Ticketmaster, who recalls camping out at the box office with cash in his pocket, something he would never let his own children do.

And it was only 10 years ago, December of 1995, that Ticketmaster sold its first ticket on the World Wide Web. "That first person bought one seat. We called to congratulate

him and ask him why he bought on line. He said, 'I don't like talking to people and I don't enjoy talking to you' and hung up."

Those two memories tell the story of change in a dramatic way, Scanlon pointed out. The public has a tremendous appetite for new things and ticketing has to catch up. "The most powerful force in this industry is inertia," Scanlon worried. "You have a more powerful voice than ever before in getting to the patron."

Scanlon sees two major issues in play: ease of use at all levels of the ticketing experience and pricing. "This conference has been about pricing," he said of the INTIX gathering. "The industry is going through a revolution and the traditional models are changing."

The third issue is the consumer experience, including notifications and alerts. "Look at the noise we deal with," Scanlon said of the typical consumer today. The general age group buying tickets is 25-50 and they are predominantly female. They want ease of use, value and security, he said.

Mark Cohon, president and CEO, AudienceView Software, noted how everyone plays around with the Internet today, from Google to MySpace to Yahoo. Consumer behavior is changing. More and more people are on-line. The Rolling Stones could have sold every one of their UK show tickets on line and it's cost effective, Cohon said.

Today, everyone wants control of the date, the consumer experience and the service charge, Cohon said. That leads to control of the brand.

That's fine if the organization is prepared to make changes and has the know-how, Cohon said. In four years, AudienceView has built a client base of 60, representing 85 venues, he added. "They all want a software program that can grow." The program needs to adapt when a company like Mobiqu offers barcoding on cell phone tickets. Interfacing is critical, which is why Cohon believes "we're seeing a much friendlier Ticketmaster now."

But it's important to remember there are "so many failed CRM systems out there," Cohon said. "We teach our customer to use the data."

NEC (National Entertainment Centre) in the United Kingdom, an AudienceView client, sought personalization above all else. They are about the brand and even go so far as to have links on their site for the bands and for Ticketmaster if patrons choose to go there for tickets, Cohon said.

Randy Vogel, Mesa (Ariz.) Arts Center, remembered the early 90's in the performing arts center world, when Ticketmaster and BASS Tickets controlled ticketing. When he opened the \$98 million Mesa Arts Center, it was a new game. He is a presenter of 60-70 shows a year and has 10-15 local user groups. "I had to forget the 90s," he said. "Technology is more stable than it was."

Vogel had to have control of the service charges, especially for some of the local user groups who couldn't afford a big cost. And he wanted running reports. "I can settle a show in 10 minutes now," he said of the versatility of the system chosen.

When going through the bid process, Vogel recommended buyers "get every company out of your head." It's not just forgetting the 90s, it's forgetting the relationships, and the history, and starting with today's list of needs. He wishes there were a way to mask the company name when evaluating proposals.

Gene Carr, Patron Technologies, had a clear message – ticketing will morph into marketing. His company specializes in e-mail marketing. His wish list is short – interfacing with any and all ticketing company software. He thinks that day is coming with Web 2.0, the new generation on the World Wide Web.

“Investors in Internet technology have woken up,” Carr said. “My perspective is that in the next five years, your ticketing system will be a marketing system...It’s incumbent upon the industry to make the systems open and friendly.” He recommended buyers of ticketing software read the fine print. Exclusives and limitations are “Old World thinking,” he said. “Demand the system be easy to use and integrated.”

He has lost sales because the ticketing supplier would not allow Patron Technologies to work with a client. “The relationship needs to be yours,” he said. “The technological nirvana is one that meets your needs and meets the ticketing company’s needs.

Sarah Jensen, Jazz Lincoln Center, noted 50 percent of their programming is for high school students who are very Web savvy. The sales pitch has to be very interactive, but at the same time, she needs to run reports and do analyses.

Jack Rubin, Tessitura, a member of the audience, agreed a major change is taking place in ticketing. People’s needs are changing. Dave Lowenstein, UCLA, said his institution switched to Ticketmaster because of the onset of Web 2. “We needed to bring our technology up to date and drive forward and we want to close our phone room. We want to get out of that business.”

Another audience member declared with the move from Web 1 to Web 2, barriers are breaking down quickly. There is a viable effort to bring about fantastic interfaces. Jensen agreed, noting users don’t realize where the data is held. “It doesn’t matter and they don’t need to know.”

The long-discussed concept of industry standards to help ease the transition to Web 2 was brought up as something INTIX might spearhead and invest in. Vogel suggested that might make developing RFP’s easier. Tomlinson later added that INTIX might define some protocols. Interfacing could then lead to data sharing, as they do in the U.K. Carr called the free flow of information in the UK “rather staggering.” The Bureau of Vital Statistics publishes total ticket sales for entertainment and sports regularly. In fact, the Birmingham (England) Arts Council counts on those statistics to develop audiences in their region. Conlon suggested INTIX could determine best practices.

Scanlon said Ticketmaster will spend millions of dollars on technology so customers will have the tools they need. “There are functionalities we built that you have available. You may not know it.” He suggested step one would be to find out if you are using 100 percent of what’s already available.

Pull out the manual, he suggested. “Hit F1 and go to help.” He suspected there would be a lot more there than is being used. Look at how many people use only a fraction of Word, Tomlinson said.

An audience member suggested it would help to define someone’s role as the champion of the software. They will then teach others. — Linda Deckard
Interviewed for this story: Roger Tomlinson, 011-44-1954-210766; Dennis Scanlon, Eugene Carr, (212) 271-4328 ext, 111; Mark Cohon, (416) 913-6181; Sarah Jensen, (212) 258-9898; Randy Vogel, (480) 644-5778

Example of an event block plan (HOK)

Intermediate and final venue plans are much more detailed than the original block. Construction and implementation on site can take two to four months.

"The master day schedule is more about the operation of the site," Keas said. "It always comes back to security it seems like. ...If you don't have tight perimeters, you're going to have a lockdown. ...It's hell to get stuff into the stadium after a lockdown, so tell your guy who brings the hot dogs or whatever to be there before the lockdown."

Planning for the Olympics took HOK six or seven years, while the Super Bowl is done in one year. "It's not a fair comparison because it's an annual event, you know what's happening," Keas said. FIFA World Cup takes a minimum of two years of planning, with permanent renovations, if necessary, taking up to five.

Decommissioning and restoring a site after an event can take two to three months.

It's also important to include the entire community in a celebration when a large-scale event comes to town, offering live activities during the event, Russ Simons, principal, HOK Sport, pointed out. "Rather than [leaving them] helpless and at home — and their money at home — it's important to create an environment where they feel included.

"The pressure on non-game revenue is so great that we're purposely designing those capabilities for things we've never done in the past," Simons said. — Natasha Emmons
Interviewed for this story: Jeff Keas, jeff.keas@hoksve.com; Russ Simons, (615) 345-9137

Coming Soon - Our Spotlight on FLORIDA VENUES!

In our **APRIL** issue, we spotlight the sunshine state and find out what keeps customers coming back for more. We'll highlight the top money making venues and look at what new venues are in the works.

This will also be our 2nd INTIX quarterly issue, full of advice and firsthand reports from attendees and award-winners at the INTIX convention in Boston.

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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

PACQUIAO FIGHTS HIS WAY TO THE TOP

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to **Venues Today** e-newsletter. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since Dec. 28, 2005. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today**:

15,001 or More Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales*: \$2,589,400; *Event*: WBC International Super Featherweight Title: Manny Pacquiao vs. Erik Morales; *Venue*: **Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas**; *Attendance*: 13,255; *Ticket Range*: \$500-\$50; *Promoter*: Top Rank; *Dates*: Jan. 21; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 2) *Gross Sales*: \$982,884; *Event*: Billy Joel; *Venue*: **St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.**; *Attendance*: 14,906; *Ticket Range*: \$75-\$39.50; *Promoter*: Fantasma; *Dates*: Jan. 12; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 3) *Gross Sales*: \$657,123; *Event*: Aerosmith; *Venue*: **Charlotte (N.C.) Bobcats Arena**; *Attendance*: 9,090; *Ticket Range*: \$125-\$42.50; *Promoter*: Live Nation; *Dates*: Jan. 12; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 4) *Gross Sales*: \$518,655; *Event*: Motley Crue; *Venue*: **The Palace of Auburn Hills (Mich.)**; *Attendance*: 7,798; *Ticket Range*: \$125-\$15; *Promoter*: Palace Sports & Entertainment; *Dates*: Dec. 31; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 5) *Gross Sales*: \$408,628; *Event*: Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue*: **Bradley Center, Milwaukee**; *Attendance*: 13,128; *Ticket Range*: \$45-\$23.50; *Promoter*: Live Nation; *Dates*: Dec. 29; *No. of Shows*: 1

10,001 - 15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales*: \$416,160; *Event*: Hilary Duff; *Venue*: **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance*: 9,263; *Ticket Range*: \$47.81-\$34.77; *Promoter*: House of Blues Canada; *Dates*: Jan. 21; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 2) *Gross Sales*: \$219,837; *Event*: Martina McBride, Warren Brothers; *Venue*: **Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, Ind.**; *Attendance*: 6,078; *Ticket Range*: \$44.75-\$36.75; *Promoter*: Police Productions; *Dates*: Jan. 20; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 3) *Gross Sales*: \$133,955; *Event*: WWE Smackdown; *Venue*: **Wachovia Arena at Casey Plaza, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.**; *Attendance*: 4,016; *Ticket Range*: \$42.50-\$22.50; *Promoter*: WWE; *Dates*: Jan. 3; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 4) *Gross Sales*: \$87,885; *Event*: Bill Engvall; *Venue*: **The Arena at Gwinnett Center, Duluth, Ga.**; *Attendance*: 2,832; *Ticket Range*: \$33.75; *Promoter*: Outback Concerts; *Dates*: Jan. 6-7; *No. of Shows*: 4
- 5) *Gross Sales*: \$78,914; *Event*: Harlem Globetrotters; *Venue*: **Mark of the Quad Cities, Moline, Ill.**; *Attendance*: 5,096; *Ticket Range*: \$75-\$16.50; *Promoter*: Harlem Globetrotters; *Dates*: Jan. 2; *No. of Shows*: 1

5,001 - 10,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales*: \$802,675; *Event*: Miss America Pageant; *Venue*: **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance*: 15,210; *Ticket Range*: \$95-\$25; *Promoter*: Miss America Pageant; *Dates*: Jan. 17-21; *No. of Shows*: 4
- 2) *Gross Sales*: \$214,974; *Event*: Ricky Martin; *Venue*: **Nokia at Grand Prairie (Texas)**; *Attendance*: 2,994; *Ticket Range*: \$86-\$41; *Promoter*: AEG Live; *Dates*: Jan.

19; No. of Shows: 1

3) Gross Sales: \$146,340; Event: Gretchen Wilson; Venue: **Nokia at Grand Prairie (Texas)**; Attendance: 3,430; Ticket Range: \$45-\$35; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Jan. 18; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$102,475; Event: Newsboys; Venue: **Budweiser Events Center, Loveland, Colo.**; Attendance: 4,160; Ticket Range: \$35-\$18; Promoter: Timberline Productions; Dates: Dec. 29; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$73,474; Event: Arenacross; Venue: **Sovereign Center, Reading, Pa.**; Attendance: 6,343; Ticket Range: \$491-\$24; Promoter: Mike Kidd Entertainment; Dates: Jan. 6-8; No. of Shows: 3

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$5,697,799; Event: Radio City Christmas Spectacular; Venue: **Bob Carr Performing Arts Center, Orlando, Fla.**; Attendance: 107,681 Ticket Range: \$59.50-\$29.50; Promoter: Florida Theatrical Association; Dates: Dec. 9-30 No. of Shows: 48

2) Gross Sales: \$1,788,150; Event: Nutcracker; Venue: **Auditorium Theatre, Denver**; Attendance: 36,083; Ticket Range: \$107-\$10; Promoter: Colorado Ballet; Dates: Nov. 26-Dec. 29; No. of Shows: 30

3) Gross Sales: \$859,995; Event: Cats; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 20,806; Ticket Range: \$55-\$20; Promoter: Theater of the Stars; Dates: Jan. 17-22 No. of Shows: 8

4) Gross Sales: \$857,721; Event: David Copperfield; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 21,747; Ticket Range: \$43-\$27; Promoter: Copperfield Touring; Dates: Jan. 14-15; No. of Shows: 5

5) Gross Sales: \$841,212; Event: Mamma Mia; Venue: **William Saroyan Theatre, Fresno, Calif.**; Attendance: 15,649; Ticket Range: \$55-\$35; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 17-22; No. of Shows: 8

Compiled by April Stroud, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

Mark Meyerson, Rebecca Gordon



BOX OFFICE PROS LEARNING TO LIVE WITH FAN CLUB PRE-SALES

BOSTON — Long will call lines the day of the event, loss of service charges, no cooperation and poor customer service were among the litany of complaints box office personnel have about Fan Clubs handling ticket pre-sales for more and more concerts and events. On the other hand, the consensus was Fan Clubs will only become more prevalent and the key is to find a way to co-exist.

“Our company lost \$500,000 in rebates last year,” said Rebecca Gordon, senior director of ticketing, House of Blues

Entertainment, on the subject of fan club ticket sales. "A lot of people did not make bonus. But it's the new model. We have to deal with these people night of show, manage it all and take care of the holds."

Gordon and Mark Meyerson, senior director, Sales/Business Development, Musictoday, moderated the free-for-all discussion on the growing phenomenon that sees fans visiting the artist's Web site to buy show tickets. Some of these fan clubs are quite small and unsophisticated; others are making it a business. It requires a lot of box office support to make sure the ticket buyer is served, and generally there is no reciprocation for that work. And, never, if ever, does a Fan Club administrator show up at the box office to take care of the customer. "We'd like a little love back our way," said one member of the audience at the INTIX conference and trade show here Jan. 10-13.

Jason Mastrine, TicketsWest, helped start SCI Ticketing for String Cheese Incident, and he thinks this all comes down to brand management. Third party ticketing is a loss leader and now it has morphed into ticketing companies like Musictoday that have created a business out of pre-sales and fan clubs. He suggested the rebate issue is a weak one because "who says you're entitled to a rebate when the artists doesn't know about it?"

Some fan clubs are charging \$1 a ticket. Most have a membership fee. The box office doesn't get any of that, but if the question is asked, usually at the venue general manager's urging, the box office looks like the bad guy, picking on the little fan club, one ticketing professional in attendance observed. But it does happen. When the question was put to those in attendance at this breakout, half raised their hands indicating some venues do charge some fan clubs. It comes down to the contractual agreement.

Cole Marley, Musictoday, noted that fan clubs have no right to the ticket and can't make a deal with the venue. It belongs to the act, for whom they work. "We've offered pre-sales with a box office fee. It's up to the artist. Everybody is right."

Sometimes the artist counters that the venue can get its money from parking instead of the ticket, Meyerson said.

But the buildings are already living off those ancillaries, Gordon said. The band is taking 90-95 percent of the gate. Concessions and parking are all that's left, and "maybe a couple of people had to be fired last year. Some of my buildings have a band cost of 110 percent."

Meyerson is of the opinion that the market will correct itself, shaking out the small and incompetent. He has heard the fan club mantra that "we are helping you sell tickets," but those are the easy tickets to sell, the first 10 percent. It's the last slow-moving inventory that needs to get into fans hands. "How about helping us sell the back of the house?" he suggested.

The whole issue comes down to the value of a portal and the way tickets are sold these days, Meyerson said. Ticketmaster used to be the place to go. Now, the average 17 year old will Google it; he'll type in The Academy Is and go to the Web site that comes up.

Respect from all parties will help a lot and respect for exclusives is also important. It's a business, said Donna Dowless, XoXo Media and Ticketmaster. Meyerson agreed that respect is key. He just worked with Tom Petty, who is very involved in all aspects of his business and who likes to handle his own marketing and ticketing. "I was the one

saying 'shouldn't the promoter do that,'" Meyerson said, laughing. Petty wanted his own fan club database to get a shot at the pre-sale, all in the same place at the same time to make it fair. And Meyerson found out House of Blues was going to run a pre-sale before the artist's pre-sale. The artist, in fact was third in line behind HOB and Best Buy. And HOB had issues sharing its customer data with the artist who wanted to build his database. And it's not just HOB, it's most promoters. To the artist, that seems very strange, Meyerson said.

Asked what fan clubs really do other than sell the first 10 percent, Meyerson said Petty's fan club sold up to half the inventory last year. Petty placed ads, did radio spots and PR.

Musictoday doesn't have any plans to put any money into the venue's pocket. "We have a portal," said that company's Cole Marley. "Anything we collect is the property of the arts."

One audience member noted it would be easier if fans clubs made sure the venue's or ticket company's Web site was linked on their Web site for future sales after they are done selling their 10 percent. Generally, he found no bounceback after the fan club sale was over. And it would be nice if the link is big and bold. And that would be a service to the fans.

Another concern is getting the correct information from show time to parking to venue rules to ticketbuyers dealing with fan clubs. The venue has to work with fan clubs to make sure bad information isn't out there because the venue will have to deal with the consequences.

Fan club ticketing is so pervasive now it's almost passé to talk about it, one audience member suggested. VIP packages are the new hot topic. Everyone can make money there and there is more opportunity. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Rebecca Gordon, (323) 769-4764; Mark Meyerson, (323) 848-9822

MARKETING

Patrons arrive for Phish Big Screen concert



MOVIE THEATERS HOLD PRE-COACHELLA ON-SALE EVENT

Prior to 2006's Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, music fans across the country will have had the opportunity to experience highlights and performances from the festival's first six years with the world premiere concert documentary film entitled 'Coachella'. This one-night event, held on Tuesday, Jan. 24, is presented by National CineMedia and Goldenvoice, in association with Network LIVE.

The two-hour documentary was to be broadcast simultaneously in 115 movie theaters in 55 markets, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, Atlanta and

Seattle. Directed by Drew Thomas and produced by Goldenvoice, a division of AEG, the film contains performances by a number of artists, including Bjork, The Flaming Lips, Morrissey, Oasis, Pixies, Radiohead, Red Hot Chili Peppers and The White Stripes, plus guest appearances by Beck and Josh Homme. The film also featured interviews with Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival performers and fans.

The documentary premiere was marketed by radio stations in 16 major markets, which held ticket giveaways to the theater event, said Skip Paige, vice president of Goldenvoice, a West Coast concert promoter and creator of the Coachella Festival. "We also reached out to our huge Coachella fan base and promoted the event with theater trailer ads," he said. Attendance figures were not available at press time.

Partnering with National CineMedia for the big screen documentary event provided a unique marketing opportunity for this acclaimed yearly festival. "This is an opportunity that would otherwise not be available to us. Most movie theaters don't find concert film documentaries attractive, so we had trouble getting a distribution deal. This partnership was a perfect fit," said Paige. "The Coachella film was shown in high definition and with surround sound, so we were really taking advantage of today's new digital theaters. We got out to a lot of markets we wouldn't normally hit."

Created in 2002, National CineMedia (NCM) is a venture of AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA Inc. and Regal Entertainment Group. The company develops pre-feature entertainment; cinema and lobby advertising products; comprehensive meeting and event services; and alternative forms of entertainment content for approximately 13,000 screens operated by its owner theater circuits and other theater affiliates.

NCM has held 36 "Big Screen" events since June of 2002, including live simulcast concerts of artists such as Korn, Tom Petty, Bon Jovi and Brooks & Dunn, in addition to DVD premieres by a number of top performers, including The Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, Bruce Springsteen, Green Day and Keith Urban.

The goal of these presentations is to turn local movie theaters back into the local community event theaters that these venues were years ago, said Dan Diamond, vice president of digital programming for NCM. "We want to drive people to the theaters on non-peak movie nights. These are unique, one-night historic events in theaters," he said. "We can create a national event, but get a local feel in the movie theater where like-minded fans can get a performance they can't get anywhere else. In addition, the artists and promoters get excited about the opportunity to promote the kick-off of a tour or a DVD release."

When the company first launched, the events, which included live broadcast performances by Korn and Tom Petty, were only available in limited markets. "The consumer response in these markets was off the charts," said Diamond. Once installation of its DCN technology is completed in Cinemark theatres this year, NCM's network will comprise approximately 11,000 digital North American theatre screens in 150 markets, able to reach 525 million movie patrons annually.

Other past Big Screen events included a reunion of the band Yes, where they performed an acoustic show to launch a new DVD, and a Titanic documentary that featured a live Q&A session with director James Cameron, Today Show anchor Katie Couric and actor Bill Paxton.

Events can be broadcast simultaneously in up to 300 theaters, but Paige said typically between 100 and 150 theaters choose to broadcast each show. "There is more of a demographic cross-pollination, because it is not just loyal fans that go to these events.

These shows create an opportunity for artists to expand their fan bases and expose their music to a wider demographic," he explained.

It also offers a more economical opportunity for fans to attend concerts, with ticket prices ranging from \$10 to \$20. The Coachella documentary tickets were priced at \$10 in advance or \$12.50 at the door.

Coachella will be held this year at Empire Polo Field in Indio, Calif. on April 29 and 30. This year's lineup and ticket prices will be announced on Jan. 25. Tickets for the 2005 festival were \$80 for a single day and \$150 for a two-day pass. — Lisa White
Interviewed for this story: Dan Diamond, (303) 792-3600; Skip Paige, (323) 930-5700

Left to right: Victor Kluck, Debbie DeMars, Diane Ozzolek, John Drum and Chris Lamberth



EXPERTS OFFER EMPLOYEE-RETENTION TIPS AT STADIUM CONFAB

TAMPA, Fla. — Enthusiastic employees who reflect well on a venue don't happen by accident. They need to be encouraged, rewarded, appreciated and allowed to have fun, according to a panel

of experts on training and retaining for better customer service at the 4th Annual International Stadium Management Conference held here Jan. 12-14.

It's most important to cover an organization's mission and culture and to set expectations on the first day of training new employees, according to Debbie DeMars, an Orlando-based consultant previously with the Walt Disney Company. "It's about greeting people, being able to answer their questions, serving people, giving them a heartfelt goodbye when they leave."

Trainers need to be chosen from the existing workforce carefully, she noted. "Enthusiasm helps a lot in choosing trainers."

And she suggested supplying all employees with "cheat sheets" to answer patron questions. "If people can't help, they will hide."

Chris Lamberth, director of Business Development for 360 Architecture, is also a Disney alum. "One of the mantras was if you don't know the answer, find the answer," he said.

Diane Ozzolek, director of Event Services for the National Football League (NFL) Houston Texans, said she treats her staff to all sorts of activities. "If they're having fun, they'll do a good job," she said. "It's really just making it a good environment to work in."

One stadium-wide party includes the cheerleaders, mascots and members of the team. "It's much more of a pep rally."

Many changes have been implemented at Reliant Park in the three years it's been open

due to suggestions from Ozzolek's Employee Advisory Board, she said. "They meet monthly to discuss what makes Reliant Park a good place to work and what makes Reliant Park a not so good place to work."

Ozzolek doesn't rotate staff around to different positions so that they can become comfortable in just one position. Parking passes and uniforms are important, she said. "We ask if it is easy for people to work here and do we give them a reason to want to work here."

As far as finding good talent in the first place, Ozzolek puts out queries to season ticket holders and holds a job fair.

John Drum, director of operations for the NFL Arizona Cardinals at their under-construction stadium in Glendale, said he tries to instill ownership, loyalty and pride in the service employees are providing. "My challenge is going to be to get these people to be rabid Cardinals fans and great advocates for the team."

He recommends enabling employees to make decisions on their own based on patron needs and behavior. "You see people burning a hole looking at their ticket like it's going to say, 'Go to the right, go to the left.'"

Drum also recommends a focus on children to grow future business. "It's doesn't repay in a year or five years, but it's really important years down the road."

But, in terms of employees, older workers are great morale builders for youth, he said. "Their shift starts at 4, but they're there at 3:15 telling old war stories." Seminars and meetings will keep all ages current, though, he added. Young employees teach older employees things they know, such as how to use Scantron forms.

"It's breaks the gap before they get out there side-by-side," he said. "It's good to have that balance."

Consultant Victor Kluck, LearnWare, Minneapolis, said the new generation can be difficult to train in a classroom because they want instant gratification, so the best approach is to get them out on the job for field learning. "Putting them to work, actually using real-world knowledge is very important."

Kluck also uses a program dubbed "Fun Police," where he sends anonymous employees out to find out where the customer experience is lacking and figure out how to fix it.

He also runs a program that teaches employees about their jobs in a competitive "game show" format. "An engaged learner is a learner that will be putting emotion into the learning."

These game show educational programs can also be run on the Internet, allowing new employees to complete the lessons at home and have their scores sent to the trainer.

But, in the end, the person the employee comes into contact with is his or her immediate supervisor. That person can make or break the experience for an employee, and employees' biggest gripe is that they don't get praise. Kluck's suggestion: "Just a pure 'thank you' to everyone." — Natasha Emmons

Interviewed for this story: Victor Kluck, (612) 904-6878; Debbie DeMars, (407) 810-3272; Diane Ozzolek, (832) 667-2134; John Drum, (623) 215-3115 Chris Lamberth, (816) 472-3360

WEB-BASED MEETINGS ARE GROWING TREND

Nimlok, a Niles, Ill.-based exhibit and display solutions provider for trade shows, ironically is offering its clients a series of free Web-cast training — “Webinars” — in 2006. The service was successfully test-marketed by Nimlok last year, with 180 participants tuning into a Webinar on measuring results from trade shows and 165 participants signing up for a Web-cast on selling trade show exhibits.

“These free Web-casts are being positioned as a value-added service for our clients,” said Michael Kotyuk, director of marketing for Nimlok.

Wainhouse Research, an independent market research firm in Duxbury, Mass., recently conducted a study of 100 marketers and found that 61 were replacing in-person events with Web events.

Nimlok works with Web-cast provider WebEx Communications, based in Santa Clara, Calif. On an average day, more than 30,000 meetings take place over the WebEx MediaTone Network; on a busy day, that number can exceed 150,000.

“We provide a range of real-time collaboration services for Web seminars, online selling, collaborative meetings, technical support and training,” said Colin Smith, WebEx’s director of public relations.

However, Smith emphasized that this technology is not meant to replace in-person events. “When you talk to marketers, they use these Web services to do marketing events that they couldn’t easily do otherwise, whether because of logistics or costs. These Web-casts fill a gap and help companies be smarter about using in-person events,” he explained.

WebEx’s Event Center is designed to help companies hold large-scale Web events. As part of its services, WebEx offers an automatic e-mail management system that tracks the number of participants and provides automatic lead scoring after the event.

“Web-casting allows companies to share data, like presentations, applications, movies and video. It also offers voiceover IP and teleconferencing capabilities. To do a presentation for 1,000 people, all that is needed is a computer and a Webcam,” said Smith.

Nimlok’s Web-casts feature presenters who speak and use Power Point presentations over the Web. “Participants simply log into a Web site and call into an 800 number,” said Kotyuk. “The visual portion is pushed over the Internet. Participants can send instant messages to ask questions throughout the hour-long presentations.”

Benefits are that participants don’t have to travel and can log onto Web-casts at their convenience. Nimlok’s seminars are archived for 90 days, so interested clients who have a conflict with the live presentation can tune in to the Web site or watch a CD at their convenience.

Smith said costs for Web-casting are dependent on the audio that is needed. “We can do an event for 200 people for \$1,000. Our services start at \$75 per user per month and single events average between \$1,000 and \$1,500 with audio per event,” he said.

“Because this technology is so affordable, we can hire great talent for these Web-cast presentations,” said Kotyuk. The company has planned five Web-casts this year on Pre-show, At-Show & Post Show Promotions; Selecting the Right Trade Show; Advanced Return-on-Investment Techniques; Cost Saving Measures and Trade Show Budgeting; and Exhibit Staff Training. “We promote these presentations through snail mail, e-mail and on our Web site.” — Lisa White

Interviewed for this story: Michael Kotyuk, (800) 233-8870; Colin Smith, (408) 566-5694

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SHORT TAKES

LIVE NATION TO MANAGE WEMBLEY ARENA FOR 15 YEARS

Live Nation (NYSE: LYV) has signed a 15-year agreement to manage and promote Wembley Arena in London. Live Nation subsidiary, Hamsard, brokered the deal with developer, Wembley London Limited, a subsidiary of Quintain Estates and Development PLC. The announcement coincides with the arena's extensive \$60 million refurbishment. Wembley Arena will re-open in April. Historically, the venue hosts more than 200 concerts and events annually.

Contact: Live Nation Communicators, (310) 867-7000

DEVILS MAKE DEADLINE; ARENA A GO

The New Jersey Devils have posted a \$100 million letter of credit with Newark, N.J., which means construction on a new hockey arena downtown can commence. The projected opening date is 2007. According to the *Newark Star Ledger*, plans call for an 18,000-seat, \$310 million arena. The city will cover \$210 million and has already invested \$25 million to clear the site. The Devils financed their guarantee through CIT Group Inc

Contact: New Jersey Devils, (201) 935-6050

FLORIDA STATE FAIR PUBLICIZES HEALTH STEPS AGAINST BACTERIA

In response to growing concerns about possible infections from pathogenic bacteria such as E. coli and Salmonella, which can be carried by farm animals, the Florida State Fair, Tampa, is making a more concerted effort to educate the public about ways they can easily protect themselves while on the fairgrounds, including publicizing long-established fair policies. They will make a public announcement of hand washing policies for both employees and patrons that come in contact with livestock throughout the fair. During hands-on demonstrations, guests are encouraged to wash their hands at the hand washing stations as well. Bi-lingual signage will be prominently displayed at all animal exhibit entrances and exits reminding participants to wash their hands after touching the animals. In addition, other attendants will verbally advise guests to visit the hand washing stations after leaving the petting zoos.

Contact: Florida State Fair Media Center, (813) 621-7821

DWYER TAPPED FOR ORANGE COUNTY PAC AFTER A YEARLONG SEARCH

Terrence Dwyer has been named president and chief operating officer of the Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, Calif. He had been with Alley Theatre, Houston. Prior to moving to Texas in 2004, he was in the Southern California marketplace, though, as managing director of the La Jolla Playhouse for 12 years. He'll be moving back to assume his new post April 20. As president of OCPAC, Dwyer will be in charge of a diversified, \$35- to \$40-million annual budget. In September, he will oversee the launch of the new \$200 million Segerstrom Hall. He replaces Jerry E. Mandel, who resigned in late 2004.

Contact: Orange County Performing Arts Center, (714) 556-2787

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