

WHAT MATTERS IN TICKETING NOW?

CREATED & EDITED BY DAVE WAKEMAN
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BOOKING PROTECT



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▶ FOREWORD

Over the last few years, as Booking Protect has grown in the live ticket sector, we find our partners posing variations of the same question:

“What matters now?”

This question is broad and can take on a very different meaning depending on your place in the customer’s journey.

In putting together this e-book, we have brought a global set of voices together to share their views on what is important to them now in selling and marketing tickets.

You’ll find that no two opinions are exactly the same.

We hope that you find something to inspire you, whether it helps you think of a new way of reaching your audience, a new way of delighting your customers, or a new way of expanding the impact of your business.

**- SIMON MABB,
BOOKING PROTECT**

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On many occasions, I am reminded of my foundational experiences in tickets at the Seattle Theatre Group, when I was hired because I had a “friendly face”.

Over time, I’ve seen the world of tickets change a lot, but the idea of what a “friendly face” means has remained steadfast in how I’ve viewed the world of ticketing. I think the ideas behind that comment still drive the most important aspects of tickets today and likely always.

First, what matters in tickets today is the need for us to put ourselves in the position of our customers and try to create encounters with our staff that lift our customers. To make them feel special.

Second, what matters is building a community around our events or our organizations, so that when a person sees that we are putting on a production, a tour, or an event, they know that they can trust that we are going to deliver something worth their attention.

Third, the idea of connection is as important as it ever was, if not more so. It is important that we realize that a show, a concert, a sporting event isn’t just a collection of individuals in a building, it is a community of people, sharing a common event that will never happen just like this again.

If I had to put a one-word answer to what matters in ticketing right now, I’d say: people. People have always mattered and that’s unlikely to change no matter how many times we ask the question.

**- DAVE WAKEMAN,
WAKEMAN CONSULTING GROUP**



In answering the question, “What matters in ticketing now?” I’m often reminded of one of the key ideas that has driven my success and my relationships in the ticketing industry and life: communication.

People are overwhelmed with messages, devices, and noise that distracts all of us from hearing the things that are important.

To me, this is a communication problem.

A problem that is accelerated by the ease of blasting out messages without intent, without consideration for what we want our audience to learn, know, or take action upon.

The thing that matters in ticketing now from my perspective is the idea that we need to do a better job of intentionally communicating the value of a night out, the ability to connect with our friends, colleagues, and families, and the power of the live event experience.

As we become more distracted and have more demands placed on our attention, the need to ensure that our messages are heard and our value is expressed in a meaningful way can be the difference between our shows and our events surviving and thriving in an always on demand, at your fingertips world.

**- CAT SPENCER,
BOOKING PROTECT**



As with anything in our culture today, ease of use and access matters most.

Having a seamless mobile platform is key to engaging buyers. That, coupled with reasonable ticket costs, particularly fees, drives the buyer's choice to buy from my competition or me.

Clearly, there is exclusivity in play whereby if I truly want to see a specific show, my hand is forced to buy through a specific ticketing organisation. However, since social media has saturated every area of our universe, I am hearing and experiencing less tolerance for exorbitant fees.

As much as our audiences and fans have grown accustomed to the typical "convenience charge", they are certainly becoming far more acutely aware of the extreme mark-up on such fees that many players are imposing. I actually heard that there are many who will simply choose to "miss the show" rather than rewarding greedy companies.

I think that our industry needs to look more holistically at what makes sense. The final outcome should make sense to the fan/buyer, the venue and the ticketing partner.

When one of those three pieces is missing or skewed, then it sincerely does not make sense.

- MELANIE LEIS

“WHAT MATTERS IN TICKETING?”

It all depends on your perspective.

Artist – *Have I been paid?*

Manager – *Have we broken percentage?*

Agent – *Where is the rest of the rider?*

Tour Rep – *Where is the catering?*

Promoter – *Have I reached break-even?*

Venue – *Have I sold enough F&B?*

Merchandiser – *What does the walk-up look like?*

Sponsor – *Will I get my backstage photo with the artist?*

Media – *Will I get to interview the artist?*

Box Office – *Your name's not on the list!*

Scalper – *I buy, I sell!*

Fan – *Why are tickets so expensive?*

**- TIM CHAMBERS, CONSULTANT
AND NON-EXECUTIVE ADVISOR**

“ Jayne had been looking forward to this night for months. Ever since she was a teenager, she had loved this band. She had seen them twice before; the first time was a 15th birthday present from her parents. The second time was their first “farewell tour” ten years later.

Eight years later, here she was once again dancing around her bedroom singing into her hairbrush as she got ready to experience the same giddy excitement as that 15-year-old girl all those years ago.

Working as a nurse and with two young girls of her own meant that Jayne didn't often get to do much for herself, but when she saw that they were reforming for one final tour – she knew that she had to go. On top of that she had received a £200 cheque from her elderly aunt who had firmly instructed she “do something silly” with it.

Other than her daughter's end of year ballet showcase, it had been a long time since Jayne had booked tickets. She had read how quickly their previous tour had sold out, so she was online early - credit card in hand. The queue online was already huge and when her turn came, she was too late. “No availability” was the message she saw.

In a panic, Jayne searched for tickets on Google. She was in luck: “limited tickets – last few remaining”. She clicked. It was a painfully slow process, but eventually she got them. Yes, they were a bit more than she had expected to pay – but it would be worth it.

Queuing outside the venue with her friend, they giggled with anticipation, fuelled by a cheeky glass of wine beforehand. They stepped forward to the front of the queue.

“Sorry, madam, these tickets are not valid.”

**- RICHARD HOWLE,
NEC GROUP**



Standing out in the marketplace:

It's very important to stand out in a crowded marketplace.

It's imperative that ticketing professionals set themselves apart with superior customer service, providing an easy planning process, delivering on promises, and having a product their clients, employees, and themselves see value in.

Timeliness:

People are getting busier and busier than they ever have been before. Being creative in messaging, taking advantage of customer attention, being timely, and knowing their buying habits are all very important. Gone are the days of calling an executive and luckily stumbling onto a phone call with them.

Technology:

Technology has advanced at the speed of light in the last 10 years. It can be a great tool to make your job easier, but you have to be careful not to overdo it. Finding the right fit for your sales stack and having an actionable plan is crucial. Thoroughly vet your options and find the right fit for yourself and really commit to a defined process. Different clients / prospects respond to different methods so having a well-rounded approach is vital for today's sellers.

**- GARRETT ROSH,
INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS**



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Clear and simple communication with our customers has never been more important than right now. We are having less direct conversations with our customers as our sales mix continues to evolve in favour of online and mobile devices.

On one hand, it has never been easier for our customers to find multiple apps with instant access via mobile sites.

On the other, we are trying to communicate increasingly complex options in the form of dynamic pricing, premium seating, hospitality and VIP add-ons and resale.

These options are no longer explained in person; instead we are presenting them to our customers on a screen a little bigger than their palm.

The success of a sales campaign can be greatly influenced by how effectively we communicate these options to our customers and how easily they can navigate and identify the session, seat and price that best meets their needs.

In a highly competitive environment, customers are easily distracted and will move on to another product through frustration.

What matters in ticketing is what matters to our customers. In many years of working in box offices, I found that customers approaching the counter had one of the following four queries:

- 1. When can I get the best seat?**
- 2. When can I get the cheapest ticket?**
- 3. When is the next available seat / earliest performance?**
- 4. I can only go on this date, what are my options?**

These are still the questions that matter to our customers and our challenge now is to help our customers answer these questions themselves with the information and booking processes we make available to them online.

**- ANGELA HIGGINS,
ANTIX MANAGEMENT**

“THE TREND TOWARDS CENTRALIZATION AND CONTROL”

Airlines know every customer getting on their planes. Hotels know all of their guests. Even Uber knows who is getting into its drivers' cars.

Why don't the stadiums, arenas, festivals, and venues know who's coming through their doors?

To the dismay of promoters and artists, paper tickets have long enabled anonymous flexibility in the marketplace. Fans have always been able to sell, transfer, and give away their paper tickets without consequence.

The rise of online secondary exchanges made the process even easier. The end result is a system where the original ticket purchaser and current ticket holder are not always one in the same.

It's a system where tickets have taken on the behavior of stocks, where few are privileged enough to buy at the IPO price, and the ticket is transacted multiple times at multiple market price points.

Digital tickets have existed for years as an alternative to paper tickets, but only recently have we begun to see a true shift towards digital-only solutions.

This shift comes with benefits and costs to the industry as a whole.

With digital only solutions, such as the NFL's exclusive agreement with Ticketmaster, fans are limited to where they can sell or transfer their ticket.

They may even be limited to whom and / or for how much they can sell that ticket. But, the advantage to the artist, venue, or the NFL in this case, is that they know who is actually coming to the stadium and can more easily provide a tailored fan experience while also providing a secure environment.

Centralization is not good for the fan.

Instead of building these centralized ticketing solutions to maintain control of and insight into the ticketing lifecycle, the industry should take a hard look at Blockchain technology.

Blockchain is a decentralized and distributed database that is well suited to circumstances that involve an actor (fans), a digital asset (tickets), and a transaction (buying, selling, transferring). While Blockchain is most notable as the foundation for cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin or Ethereum, there are companies, using it in the real world, to solve some of the major problems in the entertainment and ticketing industry: identity management, fraud, scalping, counterfeiting, and many others.

The ticketing and entertainment industries will continue to evolve and adopt new technologies, but they should advantage the content creators, as well as the true fans that just want to enjoy the show.

- STEVEN DOBESH,
TRUE TICKETS





I believe that the key areas that “matter” in ticketing are actually the same as they were when I began working in this industry almost 30 years ago.

They can be identified as:

1. Customer service
2. Use the technology available to provide the best possible transactional journey
3. Safety and security of purchases

Whilst the means by which we achieve these aims has changed, the overall aims are still viable and relevant.

Customer service has always been an area of great importance for our industry and over time has expanded to include ensuring that the customer expectations are met regardless of the way they associate with us.

Now every touch point must meet customer expectations including how each customer wishes to engage with them and manage the online, social media, email and other contact methods of the organisation to enable best practice.

Technology underpins everything we do as ticketing professionals, and each year new and advanced technology adds benefit to our systems and practices. But I find that sometimes, in the effort to keep up with what's new, we forget that the journey and the transactional path needs to remain simple and clear for our customers.

We must listen to the customer needs and respond by using the technology to improve the ways in which they consume our offer, communicate with us and purchase our products.

And finally, in an age where disruptive technology also threatens our security online, it is imperative we provide our customers with secure environments and adhere to data protection and privacy principles. Over time this has increasingly moved from being a physical threat to a virtual one, but the effect on our customers is the same.

I remember chasing away the 'touts' from our box offices as they attempted to buy large numbers of tickets only to go outside and sell them to the queue. Now the 'touts' take the form of bots and virtual purchasers and these can seriously threaten the veracity of our databases.

In addition, the on-sellers and secondary agencies masquerade as primary sellers and catch unsuspecting customers unaware, selling our products at huge mark-ups. Many organisations spend valuable time and resources to locate and cancel any of the transactions that were fraudulently obtained, but many others only find out when unwitting customers arrive to find their tickets are not valid.

Data privacy and protection has become a priority for our industry and adherence to the principles will also help to ensure that the customer is protected.

The changes of the past 30 years have seen the means of access, communication and delivery change but the essential aspects of our industry have not. We still aim to provide our customers with access to our products and services in the way that best suits them, providing them with information through their preferred channels and deliver them an experience that they will always remember.

**- JO MICHEL,
MICHEL CONSULTANCY**



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If we're looking to stay relevant and, if we're looking to matter to people today, we need to develop a culture of curiosity within our work and across our teams.

This is not about "how might we get more people to buy our tickets?"

It's about "what might we need to change to help people feel at home in our organisations?"

We need to ask, to listen, learn, and adapt.

Ask questions about them: their lives, their interests and values (not just ask what they think about us), to shape our ideas and explore what we might change.

Whose story or view might engage them?

How might we create a space where they feel they belong?

How might we reflect who they are in our programme?

What might they need to enable them to participate?

How might we overcome the things that are putting them off?

How might we become more visible within this community?

What might they seek to gain from a visit or from taking part?

**- JULIE ALDRIDGE,
JULIE ALDRIDGE CONSULTING LTD.**

“ARE TICKETS MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE TICKET BUYER?”

Two concepts come to mind:

The Millennial Fan:

When talking about millennial, it is always a good idea to keep in mind that 22-29-year-old fans will have different wants and needs than the 30-37 subset of this group.

While the younger segment will be focused on seating opportunities that provide them with the flexibility to visit with friends and come and go as they please, the older group will respond to a more traditional seating structure.

The biggest thing to keep in mind is the millennial buyer will want to buy tickets when and where they want, in an easy quick fashion, and will think mobile first.

Are your tickets easy to buy on a smartphone?

If they are not, you are falling behind the curve and missing the mark with the millennial buyer.

The Full Season Ticket Holder:

The secondary market has changed the way fans buy tickets, but has the primary market adjusted the way they sell?

At a recent mid-week late season MLB game I attended, about half of the 18,000 fans present were there to cheer for the visiting team and were clearly sitting in season ticket locations.

With roughly 3,000 seats available on the secondary that day, I found myself thinking: *why do we still insist the best seats are only available as a full season ticket holder?* What if we gave the buyer the option of cutting 10% of their games? Teams could maintain control of these seats in the primary market and may keep more home team fans in those best seats.

- KEN TROUPE,
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY



Breaking down silos.

The hub of ticketing for all live event venues is, of course, the box office. For many years, these box offices operated in a secret world, with large piles of cash, ticket stubs, and hard-to-use computer systems all crammed into secure bunkers, physically separated from everybody else.

In today's world, simply sitting in the box office and waiting for walk-up sales and processing those orders is not good practice. It is incumbent upon leaders of team / venue ticketing to be well connected with many different departments and entities both inside and outside of your organization. There are opportunities to maximize revenue and / or the guest experience at almost every turn.

Marketing – Working to establish presales, promotions, and upsell opportunities along with assisting in market research and data collection.

Booking – Ensure scaling is logical based the realities of the market and past history of how seats sell through in the venue in order to maximize the gross potential of an event.

Brokers – Contracting with a third party or parties can provide additional channels in which to market your game or event.

Operations – Staying in the loop about how certain aspects of the production or issues with the facility or grounds that may affect sightlines or impact the guest experience in any way.

Event staff – Maintaining open communication regarding ticket scanners and best practices in the event that a ticket is not scanning at the gate.

Ticket companies – Utilize all resources provided by the ticketing provider to be able to adjust scaling, pricing and seat inventory in a timely fashion.

Finance – Be sure finance is receiving all of the reports they need in order to properly account for all ticketing revenue so that there isn't any money left of the table (or owed) at settlement time.

Partners – Build great relationships between all partners of the box office; venues, teams, promoters, arts organizations, etc.

- GARRETT NOLAN,
LEVITY LIVE



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I don't really think anything has changed.

There's nothing new.

What matters in tickets isn't the tickets, it's the show.

The event, the attraction. Whatever the tickets are *for*.

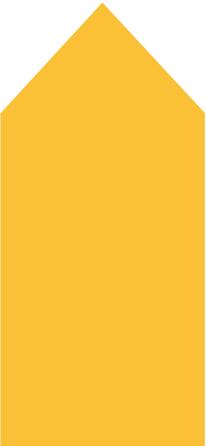
The better ticketing gets, the more it gets out of the way and, fades into the background.

One-day events will be like those Amazon Go stores, with pervasive surveillance and facial recognition and you won't ever notice yourself "buying a ticket". You will show up and when you get home your account will have been billed.

Bad ticketing stops people who want to spend their money on an event or attraction from doing so.

Good ticketing is invisible and frictionless, as far as it is practical or possible.

**- BEN CUTHOYS,
MONAD TICKETING**



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One of the biggest trends that we are focused on right now is reaching fans where they are and where they want to buy.

Making the buying process easy should be a top priority for all departments, even if it's not through your site.

A fan's experience starts when they call to buy a ticket or, in today's world, go online to buy a ticket.

We have to provide a positive first impression for any fans purchasing as the "front door" to the University.

This happens in a lot of ways in conjunction with different areas of technology. It's important to be efficient with technology uses and data to be able to reach out to fans where they are.

I know that if we can make it easy for our fans to purchase, they will respond.

**- RYAN KINDT,
TICKETS FOR LESS**

“ Flexibility.

I hear this over and over again, both from customers and from administrators.

For years, the standard model has been season tickets and single-game tickets.

Then mini-plans got added into the mix at some point.

While these all still get widely used, we've seen fans looking to bust out of these “handcuffs” and many organizations are starting to listen and accommodate their fan bases.

By creating a monthly subscription model, this allows an organization to account for incoming revenues on a monthly or yearly cycle, as well as giving fans the ability and freedom to pick and choose the events they want to attend and where they'd like to sit.

Sure, you might think people that purchase season tickets are your diehard fans but having season tickets (and knowing its unlikely you'll make it to every game) can be a job in itself and that can make it difficult to retain these fans and that revenue.

Providing more flexibility and buying options will theoretically keep those fans spending money with you over a longer lifespan.

**- MICHAEL HUGHES,
AUDIENCEVIEW**



Two words... instant gratification.

Just like everything else in the social media and technological age, patrons are like Veruca Salt from Willy Wonka: "I want it, and I want it NOW!"

We have to keep up with this by doing e-tix, mobile tix, simple and fast ways to purchase VIP or meet and greet packages, and much more.

You need direct links to purchase tickets on your website, any social media posts, any other online marketing so that customers don't have to go through multiple pages to purchase ticket.

We have to ensure that photos from VIP events are up on social media immediately.

Customer questions and complaints need to be resolved ASAP... through email, social media, and over the phone.

**- AMBER PATTON,
THE PULLO CENTER**





Response time.

Instant gratification.

Anticipation of customer / patron needs.

Keeping up with technology changes when your vendors are not maintaining pace.

Fee transparency.

Live chat.

Employee satisfaction / happiness.

Safety and security of our patrons.

Digital marketing. Data. Analytics.

The Hamilton Effect (if you are a lucky enough to have this blockbuster on your subscription offering).

Managing client expectations against customer / patron expectations.

Self-preservation.

**- LINDA FORLINI,
TICKET PHILADELPHIA**

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We have to maximize the WIIFY (what's in it for you) for prospective ticket buyers and become fan advocates.

With all of the options to consume sports and buy tickets now, why should customers care?

Today, sports properties are being outperformed by digital tech companies and the secondary market in pricing, convenience, and flexibility. So buying a ticket through the primary source has to deliver an even higher value than ever before.

Teams must listen to their fans and provide value, relationships and experiences that can't be found in the transactional world. People want to be part of something. They want personalized, social-media post-worthy experiences, and they want to feel their money is well spent.

It is incumbent on sports properties to not only provide these, but also articulate them well in their go-to market strategy.

A lack of proper resources, advanced planning and communication, or simply a lack of enough value to compete with other options in the marketplace hinders the primary side of ticketing.

It is harder to sell on the primary side and there's more at stake in creating sellouts and the virtuous cycles they create for sports organizations.

The primary side has to go first and it is harder to react to market conditions after the fact without fan scrutiny.

So, the consistency must be in the relationship with fans, the planning process, the value of the experience, and the communication of that value to the marketplace.

The best sports organizations are fan advocates; there is a feeling that the organization works for the fans. Constantly listening and responding to fan desires, effectively offering and communicating WIIFY to the fan base, and maximizing sales timelines and campaign roll-outs is what matters in ticketing now.

**- SCOTT TESTER,
LEARFIELD IMG COLLEGE
TICKET SOLUTIONS**

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In the arts, we do a pretty great job of producing amazing experiences in the auditorium.

We tell stories, move people and create magical moments for all ages.

But with the rise of Experience Economy and more demands on everyone's time, the thing that matters most in tickets now, isn't the ticket.

When a customer visits your venue there are hundreds of micro moments and opportunities where you can turn their visit into a truly incredible experience. Here are three areas you should invest in to create those experiences:



1. People

The people in your building are one of your most important assets. Recruiting the right people, offering them professional development and competitive salaries will directly influence your customers' experience. Nothing beats being greeted by someone who knows his or her stuff and is genuinely happy to see you.

2. Technology

Your customers' experience starts when they purchase a ticket and ends when they receive the post-show email thanking them for their visit. Investing in technology that can support the journey you want to take your customers on will enhance their experience well beyond what happens in the auditorium.

3. The extras

From programmes and pre-show dining to merchandise and interval drinks, the extras are where you can take a night to the theatre and turn it into something really special. Offering up-sells in advance will cut down on queues in your building, bring people closer to the art and turn a night at the theatre into something really special.

So what matters in tickets today? The ticket holder's experience. We've got the art sorted; it's time to focus our energy and resources on everything around the main event.

**- KATE MROCKOWSKI,
SUPERCool**



All of the hoo-ha around secondary in recent years, especially in the UK, has led me to believe that ownership of the ticket – and the perception that the holder has a ‘right’ to be able to trade, sell, pass on that ticket, as if it were a commodity – is the biggest red herring in the business.

I still hold that, to echo Harvey Goldsmith, the ticket is simply a licence of entry – not a commodity. But it is also a gateway to dreams – entry to a magical part of life where the holder can enjoy their chosen act, their favourite team, the critically-acclaimed play. This is an act of trust on behalf of the buyer – they put their trust in the brand, the act, the club – to deliver and take them away from their day to day, or to enhance it immeasurably.

Betraying that trust by not delivering on that promise for whatever reason – all drip feeds back into the next visit, the next purchase – or the lack of. Ticketing – often seen as one part of the process of putting on a show – is the bedrock of it all. If your guest goes away feeling that they were short changed then they may not make that next purchase.

So a ticket is a promise, and a handshake made that you’re going to have a good time.

What matters now is ensuring that your ticket buyers find it easier to make that leap of faith, that there are few hurdles in the way of them making that handshake. And to put it bluntly – as it’s a business – that there’s no obstacle to you agreeing to ‘take my money now’ when they passionately want to buy.

This relationship is to be nurtured, curated, nudged towards fruition – be they a first time buyer or a loyal and welcome return visitor. Make it a journey of discovery, less of a treadmill of boxes and forms and data capture.

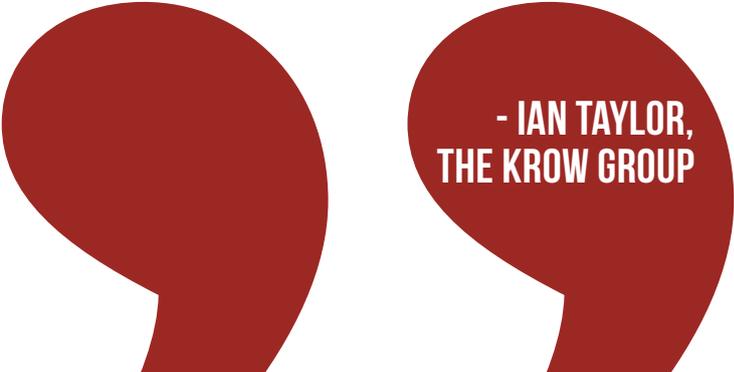
Make that promise first, gain that handshake and THEN start asking them questions; what else do you like, have you considered this also, and what would you like us to send you info about next?

And while they wait to experience the event, be it hours or weeks or months away – don’t forget them. They may be about to be a guest at a different event, they may be about to buy for another day, and they don’t go away just because you have their hard earned cash.

Talk to them, if they want you to. Make their experience as full as you can. Deliver and then some. Exceed on that promise.

It’s not about just the ticket system, the payment flow, the Blockchain gangs and the mobile firsts – that’s just a link in the chain. Think bigger and be in your guests’ shoes for the whole journey.

**Do all of that – they’ll be back.
I promise.**



**- IAN TAYLOR,
THE KROW GROUP**

“LEAVE NO DOUBT”

Leave no doubt in your client’s mind that they’re making the right decision. You can do this by being a good listener (or learning to be one) and then by brainstorming creative ways to go above and beyond.

It’s not a hard subject to grasp or even execute but it’s definitely easy to forget. Get feedback from your clients and create programs that completely take the guesswork out of the purchase. Think outside of the box and add value for customers that will exceed their expectations.

**- ZACH BROCKMAN,
MODESTO NUTS**





Papyrus or mobile entry?

In this world of technological advancements it is no surprise that the industry of sports and entertainment ticketing has gone through some pretty revolutionary changes in recent times.

Go back to Ancient Rome or Greece. When an event or special activity took place there had to be a way to differentiate between those allowed in and those not... a system had to be put in place. The item for passage just had to be something unique and descriptive enough to let the invitee know what, when and where the event was going to be held. Fast forward 2,500-3,000 years, and the desired goal of any ticketing system is still the same.

In today's world the method of distribution, and reception, is all that has really been changed.

Through that multitude of high tech changes in ticketing systems over the past 10-15 years, I wonder if we may have lost sight of their intended purpose in terms of what the patrons, guests and customers all really just want... admittance into something special. Sometimes it seems as though we are trying to outdo one another in how high-tech and efficient our ticketing system can be, as though it really matters to our end user... a person.

Particularly in the changing demographics and dynamics of our customers, this can be a concern. If you cater to an older clientele, then why force a new age technology that current younger guests are still just learning to use and contend with? Keep in mind your audience, and make sure you provide a great experience.

Concentrate on making them feel comfortable and ready to enjoy themselves - not whether or not they can download their barcode on their wristwatch.

**- FRED MATTHES,
NORTH CAROLINA FC/NC COURAGE**



Speaking solely from a customer service and fan engagement perspective, I feel there are two exceptionally important facets that are currently dominating ticket sales and retention, price and its value. Think about it, people can watch a sporting event from the comfort of their own home with no added costs.

So why go to a live event? Even more so, why invest in season tickets? More and more teams across both the collegiate and professional landscape are moving towards a membership and experience focused model when it comes to tickets.

Adding in experiences that can only be accessed as a season ticket holder (whether full or flex) shows a value far beyond the event itself. Being able to partake in a meet-and-greet with players from a favorite football team, serving as an honorary team captain for the hometown basketball team, or simply being able to park in the sponsored garage closest to an arena are all experiences that enhance the value of a ticket.

In this industry we can only control what happens outside the lines and I feel that you create a much greater yield when you focus on and improve upon the experience: the controllable.

**- NICOLE SULLIVAN,
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**





Artificial Intelligence, digitization, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, security concerns, and even Blockchain still make the list of technology trends for 2020.

Out of these trends and others, what are going to be the ones we are going to see in ticketing this year?

Facial recognition

Ticketmaster, the largest company in the ticketing space, has made a considerable investment in facial recognition technology.

While this controversial development remains unpopular among privacy groups, its many benefits cannot be ignored.

Security has proven the most impactful argument in favor of facial recognition software. Venue operators and event organizers use the technology to scan the faces of attendees and recognize anyone listed in a security database as a threat. Such software may have proven preventative in instances such as the concert shooting in Las Vegas, and did prove quite useful on Taylor Swift's most recent tour when every patron's profile was run against a list of known pedophiles.

Augmented Reality / Virtual Reality

Everyone has seen the cool seat buying experience where you are put in to the stadium itself and you can see what would be your view from any chosen seat in many different directions.

Whether it is putting a fan down on the field and in the middle of the action at a sporting event, or the ability to personalize what type of information you want to see pop up during a concert.

Adding these steps during the ticket buying process not only lets the fan see the view from their chosen seat location, but allows them to walk through getting in to a historical theatre and create pictures of themselves there before the event. They're more likely to share this with their networks, generating more buzz for the event. Whatever the use cases, we are just seeing the very beginning of the use of this technology within ticketing and events.



Distributed Commerce

According to a 2017 survey of 3000 urban dwellers, 64% of them look to neighborhood sites to find out what is going on around them.

Traditionally when a user wants to buy a ticket to one of those events, they would be taken to the primary ticketing platform event page and buy the ticket there. The trend now is not to take users away from the discovery site, or the original site where they found out about the event, but to rather enable the user to purchase their tickets right on that site, or via that mobile discovery app that they are comfortable with.

This “distributed commerce” process has been seen for years on sites such as Amazon, or eBay. The user has a seamless checkout experience; they are not taken away from their initial experience. The result is less cart abandonment and thus more ticket sales for both the discovery site and the primary. We will be seeing more and more of this seamless purchase process in 2020.

**- EMMY SPENGLER,
CEO, SOFTJOURN**



“ Twenty years ago, people got excited when they heard their favorite artist was coming to town. It became an event where everybody made plans to go down to the arena or mall ticket box office as early as possible to wait in line to get their tickets. Those tickets became souvenirs that many today still have as a reminder of the event.

Fast forward to today and that's all unfortunately gone. Instead, the announcement of someone's favorite concert coming to town brings the complete opposite.

There is no more even shot at getting tickets, but a depressed sense of whether a person even has a chance to get any due to bots and brokers.

Service fees that don't represent any extra service ring first and foremost in many minds, and the media announce "beware to all" for fraudulent tickets.

Prices continue to escalate, especially in the secondary market, and that once physical souvenir is being taken away and replaced with mobile tickets.

The industry has become so un-customer centric that many don't even attempt to purchase tickets to see their favorite events anymore and would rather stay home and watch it or something else on TV. Even a person being gifted a ticket can't receive it without going through a long and tedious registration process that ultimately can lead to multiple annoying and unwanted following email alerts.

It's time for that to change! It's time to put the fun back in ticketing!

Multiple ticket format options, lesser service fees, easier purchasing processes without registration, more equal distribution of primary tickets and putting customer-centric first are all necessities to what matters in ticketing now.

**- ALAN GEFLAND,
FAIR TICKET SOLUTIONS**



I was simply going to copy and paste the word *security* 300 times, but that seemed little childish, even from me!

The fact is security is becoming a bigger and bigger part of our everyday lives, whether we are at home, in the office or out having fun.

We are not simply talking about metal detectors at rock concerts or Plexi-Glass protecting Box Office staff. There is also an important matter of the security of the data we give when buying a ticket, from an AMEX number to home addresses.

Everyone always thinks about credit cards, some even mention identity theft, but if I have booked a family ticket for a four-day music festival on the other side of the country, my house is going to be empty, making it a crime opportunity to be burgled.

Okay, okay, so I'm being all doom and gloom.

However from implementing technologies to keep bad dudes out of our venues, to protecting the integrity of ticket exchange and the secondary market and insuring all customers' personal data. Secure common security has a massive part to play in modern day ticketing.

**- ANDREW THOMAS,
TICKETING PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE**



Truthfully it is the same fundamentals and principles that have always mattered.

Since we are competing for people's money and (even more precious) their time, finding ways to stand out in positive ways is more important than ever.

At any given point there we are probably just one option in a list of things someone wants to do on a given day or evening, so we must make the most of our opportunity.

The increase in software-related tools and services that allow for patrons to manage their inventory and avoid having to call between certain hours and get a hold of someone.

Yes, that has benefits on the ticketing side as well, but still it helps the consumer.

This can take the form of personalization and knowing exactly what to offer, or market to people.

Making people feel special is what has always mattered and keeps them coming back, and absolutely matters now.

**- RICHARD POWERS,
BLUMENTHAL PERFORMING ARTS**



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What matters in ticket sales now is getting the buyer before anyone else.

Geo-fencing does the work of the marketer, and is now available in addressable form.

That means that you can pinpoint exact addresses (up to one million households per campaign), which can then be targeted for a ticket buy ask. This hits every household member's cell phone with static imagery or video for up to 30 days, and equals out to about \$1,000 USD per 125,000 static impressions or \$1,000 USD per 78,000 video impressions.

Furthermore, by hitting these specific targets, you can see not only when they make the purchasing decision, but also create a convergence zone around the venue, thereby if the user with the mobile device crosses, that counts as a win for the marketer.

This is also a great way to hit other venues, by Geo-fencing them and guerrilla marketing their own patrons with your competitive content.

Mobile is not only the future, but also a mainstay with Geo-fencing. It allows for more buyers to see your content, as well as the ability to steal away competitor's fans by marketing to them without the opposing venue operator having a say in any of it.

**- TROY KIRBY,
THE TAO OF SPORTS**

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What matters most in ticketing right now is righting the ship from an ideology that does not scale nor provide ROI and then pricing for long-term strategy over short-term gains.

One of the issues is reaching customers at scale with strong ROI, such as Geo-fencing or building responsive websites.

Other basic strategies should include finding them where they want to be found.

Which is online!

Then presenting the correct product based on online profiling.

**- MIKE GUIFFRE,
STAGE FRONT**



It is all about customer experience.

We have to make sure customers have the best one, in every step of the process.

But every customer is not the same.

How do we know how to differentiate them, and still deliver the best experience?

I think right now we're living the best of times.

15 years ago, to make two different systems communicate with each other, would be a labor of Hercules.

Now it's just a matter of APIs or web services.

Instead of having a ticketing service, we have now an event platform, where all the players in an event connect.

The focal point is always the customer.

The basic steps are: login, choose an event, seat, price, payment, right?

There are so many valuable contact points with the customer, to add more experience to all the process, to create more value to the event and to the sponsors.

The steps could be: login with a social media account; choose an event; unlock new missions (sponsor spot here) to get freebies in the event; add drinks and food; add transportation; payment; tell friends.

Event platforms have to show customers appreciation.

**- ISABELLA BASIMELLI,
TICKET FASIL**





Technology works. Tickets get delivered, bar codes read, mobile tickets scan, electronic payments process. The sound and lights get turned on and the show goes forward.

What's broken is the process.

Fixing the process is what matters now.

Look at the major players: primary markets, secondary markets, speculative buyers, the infrequent consumer and the politicians and media scribes who leverage the tension between these groups to gain political advantage or a higher Q score. Communication is broken.

Imagine if there were to be real communication rather than just static.

We could appreciate the role that each of the segments contribute: Primary markets perform the impossible – delivering hundreds of millions of accurate tickets into a marketplace beset with peril: bots, stolen credit cards, unique stage layouts and individualized decisions to accept hard ticket, PFD, electronic, digital, mailed, express mailed or will call delivery.

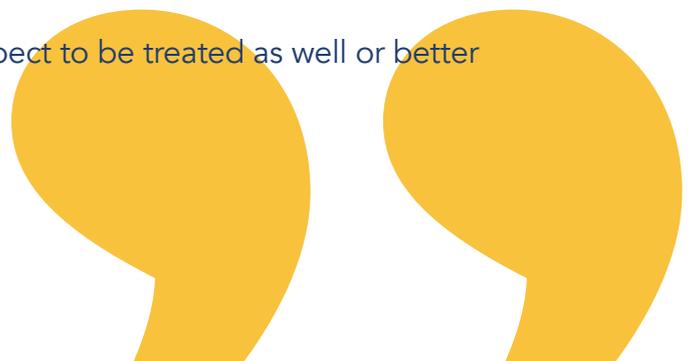
Secondary markets face the challenge of verifying the legitimacy of sellers in addition to managing the mélange of ways in which the tickets provided them by sellers were delivered. Secondary markets have the same issues of dishonest buyers including buyers who go to shows then claim they didn't in order to falsely seek a refund.

These markets also have to invest in the resources to process and rapidly fulfill sales to buyers who purchase tickets at the very last minute before an event begins hoping to grab a bargain. Third party app developers and software wizards build tools to manage the millions of tickets moving electronically around the world with a mere tap on a smart phone screen.

Finally, consumers have mixed expectations.

They want the freedom to choose a specific ticket which, but for the secondary market, would be sold out.

Those who infrequently purchase tickets expect to be treated as well or better than those who buy all the time.



Consumers celebrate their good fortune when tickets on the secondary market crash in price, but don't understand the converse is that high demand shows gather a premium.

Lastly, the media and the politicians who seek it attempt to reduce an immense and complicated market driven by massive investments in technology to a simple struggle between good and evil. It's a false narrative and only further widens the barriers between truth and perception.

Everybody in the ticket ecosystem has a role to play.

Almost every serious player works hard to maximize the experience for the consumers who attend.

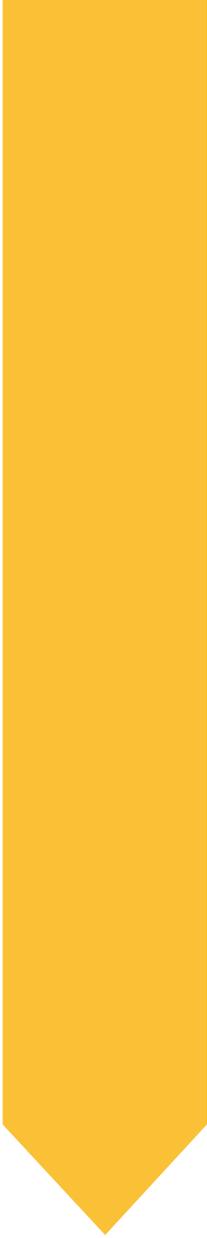
Each makes money in its own way, but all have serious capital at risk.

Add transparency to the process and perhaps we can remove some of noise.

With the noise gone it's possible that all the elements of the system can hear each other and thereby begin to heal a process, which is currently and unnecessarily broken.

**- ERIC FULLER, CONSULTANT, BROKER,
AND FAN DEVELOPMENT EXPERT**





What really matters now is that we give the people behind the scenes the right tools to be able to do their jobs more efficiently.

As suppliers, we need to stop expecting box office staff to use 'a quick workaround' to solve a problem and instead focus on giving them better tools that make their lives easier.

If we do that right, we can help venues to make faster decisions, work more effectively across internal teams and ultimately provide a better service to fans.

**- DAVID LYNAM, KAIZEN
TICKETING SOLUTIONS**



Revocable license vs. buyers' rights. Everything we're about to see begins and ends in the state courts where the definition of a revocable license to live events will shape the next decade in ticketing.

Technology is disrupting our industry at every level. Content providers and venues, under the guise of security and convenience, are taking back control of who is attending their events and that impacts on-sale (Verified Fan, market pricing, AXS on sale, dynamic pricing), secondary, and customer relationship management. How the courts define buyers' rights will impact:

- ▶ If a customer can transfer a ticket.
- ▶ If a buyer can resell a ticket, where and for how much.
- ▶ If a customer can lose their rights to purchase tickets or packages due to selling or use behavior.
- ▶ If a new venue can have total pricing freedom despite using public dollars to build.
- ▶ How tickets are sold to the public.
- ▶ How much information the buyer must provide the seller.
- ▶ How merchandise, add-ons and experiences are marketed to buyers.

All of these questions are only answered after the states define who owns the tickets and what buyer rights the government protects.

**- TONY KNOPP,
TICKETMANAGER**

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As the old basketball adage goes, “the game has been and always will be about buckets.”

When it comes to ticketing, little has changed as ticketing has been and always will be about butts in seats. However, what has evolved is how those seats are being filled.

Decades ago, the only way to see your favorite artist or favorite team was in-person at the venue. But now with innovation in consumption, we’re seeing artists like Taylor Swift stream her concert on Netflix or leagues like the NBA offering fans the ability to watch their favorite team, paying by quarter. With that, in-person attendance is under attack to some extent. I believe that knowing the identity of the fan, i.e. the consumer, is extremely important today and more important today than ever.

Like any good product or service, having a clearly defined customer and target market is valuable as it allows you to lower your customer acquisition costs, make marketing spend more effective, and deliver maximum value at scale. That’s why I believe that the key to ticketing in 2020 and beyond is in knowing who is in the venue, what brought them out, and what would make them come back. By focusing on identity, event organizers are able to better understand unit economics and demand as well as get early signals into potential dissatisfaction that will lead to attendance erosion.

As we have seen with many sports teams and event organizers, the secondary market has been deemed the villain, creating a black hole of attendance information due to the multiple channels that fans can procure tickets through. However, secondary markets can be allies in the future of ticketing as they know the fan identity (at least the buyer), the price that the fan ultimately pays, as well as the exact moment the transaction was completed. When you look at those data points, these marketplaces can help event organizers identify who is in the venue, know what price point they pulled the trigger, and also get a snapshot of the window(s) that fans tend to make their buying decision.

**- HAROLD HUGHES,
BANDWAGON**





In the mid part of the 20th Century more and more ticket agents started to appear on the scene, such as Keith Prowse, Ticketmaster, First Call.

All offered a full stack service whereby they would supply you with your ticket system and distribute your tickets on a global basis with hundreds of affiliates.

In London the biggest distribution partners were the hotel concierges selling thousands of tickets to guests. This still happens but on a much smaller scale. First Call and Keith Prowse had outlets at the hotels and partnered with anyone else interested in selling tickets such as the traditional tour operators.

Then along came the advent of the API sales of inventory, introduced into the West End by Andrew Sharp at **Enta** in collaboration with Laurence Miller the Commercial Director at **Nimax Theatres**, one of the largest groups of West End venues. This was an unprecedented success allowing agencies direct access to inventory without the need for manual allocations. A real-time report showing sold, opens and sales became the new norm.

Modern APIs now allow the full automation of this work cutting out the need for staff to load or mark back manually, while searching through the screens for the correct discounts and commissions to match.

Also, with the ability for the venues to have complete control over how their inventory is distributed and indeed closed off so no need for long mark back periods. The technology allows the venue to sell beyond the traditional ticket agents and tour operators in this digital age to affiliates such as Snapchat, Uber, Facebook, Hotels.com and Air BnB.

The concept is still the same. However, though using modern technology, the work is seamless.

**- KEN PAUL,
SEATGEEK ENTERPRISE UK**





While dating back to 2nd Century B.C. in Ancient Rome, where people first traded “tickets” to gladiator events in the Forum Boarium, the entertainment ticket industry has obviously encountered many changes over the last 2200+ years and continues to do so at a torrid pace today.

Instrument types, distribution methods, and public perception of the industry have all evolved significantly, especially since the onset of the Internet.

A once definitively segmented industry, where even fairly recently participants were defined as either being a “primary” or “secondary” market provider, has now begun to “blend” into one entertainment ticket market, as we are seeing long-time primary ticketing providers take significant positions in the resale market, while various exchanges, elite brokers and resale platforms are taking over primary ticketing duties for certain teams, venues and artists.

While this “blending of the industry” has its advantages, it also comes with some challenges and hazards that must be addressed.

One of these revolves around all industry participants working together to provide total and complete transparency to the consumer. This includes supplier transparency (initial provider vs. resale agent), pricing transparency (total cost vs. hidden fees at checkout), and distribution transparency (delivery instrument and method, as well as delivery date). This is critical for an industry that has grown to a combined value of \$61 billion a year (\$50 billion primary and \$11 billion secondary) and one that was built off relationships, to continue to provide elite levels of consumer experience to its clients – which, in the end, is what should matter the most.

**- DR. COREY GIBBS,
TICKET SOLUTIONS**





The Ticketing & Live Entertainment industry has had several pivotal moments over the last decades that have played an integral role in shaping it into what it is today (e.g. the birth of the internet, the invention of the first ticketing platform, industry trends such as variable and dynamic pricing, analytics and more). It is my opinion that the ticketing industry is currently once again teetering on the verge of change that may alter the fundamental basics of how we currently conduct business.

What am I talking about?

Mergers, acquisitions, rebranding initiatives and partnerships have become more frequent over the last five years than previous years. Organizations are now conducting primary ticket sales (selling a ticket for the first time) directly on the secondary market, while others blend the primary and secondary altogether by listing all tickets in the same location. Plus, new distribution channels and third-party providers – including some really innovative, must-have products and services – seem to be born (and wither away) on a regular basis.

As a result, as we continue to evolve there are more and more stakeholders involved, including staff members, executives, board members, talent, promoters, presenters, ticketing platform providers, a multitude of third-party vendors and, most importantly, the patrons; each with their own ambitions and goals.

Because of this, the answer to the question ‘What Matters in Ticketing Now?’ is extremely difficult to answer, as it depends on whom you’re asking and could change at any moment. However, it’s also the exact reason why, in my opinion, the highest priority for any organization should be coordinating recurring interdepartmental meetings to create and maintain a flexible, multi-year roadmap for all ticketing and related initiatives.

This roadmap should consider all future initiatives and ask *What’s In It For Me?* (WIIFM) from the perspective of each party involved. Doing so will guarantee that no decision is made inside a vacuum and, equally important, it will ensure that your organization continuously asks itself *What Matters In Ticketing Now?* and adapts as needed.

**- KELLY BRENNAN,
FUTURETIX**



▶ ABOUT DAVE WAKEMAN



Dave Wakeman is a writer, speaker, consultant, and teacher.

Dave's energy, ideas, and focus on getting to the nerve of a business are at the heart of his brand. His work touches the intersection of strategy, marketing, and ideas.

Dave is a keynote speaker and has spoken to audiences around the world on the topics of community, change, innovation, and strategy.

American Express and their Centurion Card Concierge have referred to Dave as the "best partnership person we know" and "the King of Tickets" for his ability to help navigate the complex world of global ticketing.

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