

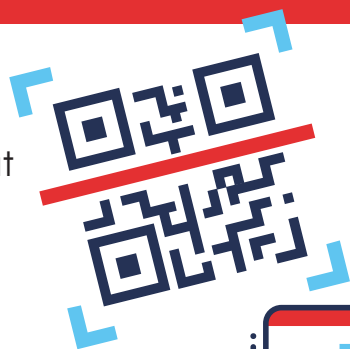


The Future of Ticketing



In the uncertainty of the pandemic, teams need data to deliver fan experience

If one thing has been certain about sporting events throughout the pandemic, it's uncertainty. Professional and collegiate-level sports leagues and teams have experienced unprecedented levels of challenge, from on-again/off-again games, evolving COVID protocols and questions on fan attendance. In the midst of it all, venues have wrestled with the right approaches to ticketing with an eye toward safety.



The result has been an acceleration of the contactless customer experience. The demand for seamless, technology-driven game days can trace its roots to the pre-pandemic era. But today — and heading into the future — it is picking up steam rapidly. From parking to concessions, to venue access and buying merchandise, the future looks contactless.

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AXS



Eight or nine months ago, the challenges of executing sporting events were not the same as they are today, according to Rob Sine, chief revenue officer at ticketing and data insights solutions provider AXS. "We couldn't have anticipated all of the challenges venues and teams face today, but the last year gave us the opportunity to maximize our solutions for any future," he says. "We have definitely hit the ground running."

AXS works with teams like FC Dallas, LA Galaxy, Las Vegas Golden Knights, LA Kings, Minnesota Timberwolves, Houston Rockets, and the USGA for their major golf tournaments to capture fan data for optimized fan experiences and increased team/venue revenues. This has meant engaging in a two-pronged approach, says Sine. "When the pandemic hit, we had to figure out how to support our partners, and how to support our partner's fans," he says. "This wasn't an either/or focus, but rather, dividing our attention in two directions."

For AXS team partners, this meant determining solutions to keep their fans happy and engaged, eager to return when games do. "Teams had to



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help their fans with refunds, postponements, and ticket values," Sine explains. "Teams needed a strategy to deliver comfort to their fans when it came to their tickets."

Putting itself in its partners' shoes, AXS determined where they could have the biggest impact. "We tackled the needs of current ticket holders, today, and also, what to expect when games return," he says.

Sine says that from his vantage point, future game experiences will provide both similarities and differ-

ences. "Many experiences from other aspects of life will translate over and feel familiar," he says. "Think of staggered entry for airplane seating, for instance, but in a stadium. Or socially distanced seating, which will be a new experience."

Overriding everything for the customer, however, will be that contactless experience. No more cash, no more paper tickets, and even the potential for biometrics systems like what we see in airports. "We're going to see an overhaul of legacy systems,"

Sine says. Everything about the event experience will instead reside on fan devices, which they will use to park and purchase food and merchandise.

Where making these changes pre-pandemic might have given customers pause, Sine says that now they will be welcomed and expected. "The payoff is that it will streamline the customer experience," he says. "Venues will have customer data and use that to upsell or identify better customer service. It will enhance the overall experience for everyone."

All the right tools to get back in the game



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Logitix



To achieve the vision of a contactless events, teams and venues must approach the transition both behind the scenes and with fans directly. Event management needs data to drive its actions, and fans need a seamless, safe experience in the stands.

Logitix, a one-stop shop ticketing platform, is helping sports teams and venues secure the information they need to make this happen. Greg Nortman, chief strategy officer, says that for teams and leagues, making plans has been the biggest challenge throughout the uncertainty of the pandemic. "Teams generally work off a manifest for planning their upcoming year's ticketing," he explains. "With no givens in terms of local and state capacity event regulations, planning is difficult."

Adding to the complexity is the fact that teams are struggling to define their ticketing "pods" or packaging. "In most cases, teams are going to be selling tickets in smaller groupings, but that's also constantly changing," Nortman says. "It could be limits of two tickets sold together, or

four or five, depending on the location and current regulations. That's a massive challenge for venues."

The end result is that the sales cycle is a far cry from its reliable nature of the past. "There used to be high demand for tickets when schedules release, and again as seasons approach," says Nortman. "That hasn't been the case over the past year because people can't plan or count on games going forward."

Take the Coastal Carolina/Liberty football game last December as an example. With two days until game day, Liberty had to pull out due to a COVID outbreak. BYU agreed to step into Liberty's place and travel to South Carolina, leading to a compressed sales cycle for tickets. Logitix crunched the numbers and determined that 66 percent of tickets were sold in the final two days before the event, with a price increase of 25.8 percent. This puts this game at the top of the leaderboard in terms of sales in a two-day period, according to insights provided by Logitix.

On a larger scale, last year's NBA season proved challenging for fans and teams alike. With the season starting, then temporarily stopping, and then the shifting the entire league to Orlando to form its 30-team bubble, no fans could attend games. Teams



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had to consider how to handle ticket refunds. For the most part, the NBA teams offered pro-rata refunds to season-ticket holders. Looking ahead to the 2021 season, NBA fan capacity will be reduced to 25 percent to 50 percent of the norm, depending on the venue.

Logitix helps teams work through these issues by collecting and analyzing data for dynamic pricing strategies. "We're helping teams scale up and return to business closer to

usual," says Nortman. "We're taking learnings from the NFL season and MLB World Series, for instance, and applying that to the NBA this year," he says. "Our core services of yield management and distribution are highly relevant in this environment."

The fan experience

When fans return to games en masse, success will be measured by one key factor: a safe experience. That means from the moment of ticket purchase to leaving the stadium parking lot after the game, fans will want a contactless environment. Teams will need to balance the fan expectations with a big surge in demand for live events when the pandemic ends, says Nortman. "Teams are going to need to optimize their inventory, strengthen the value of a season ticket, and give fans the positive, safe experience they demand."

Long lines for a half-time beer and popcorn will be a thing of the past. With the ability to order concessions directly from their phones, fans will get a quick, contactless experience and have time left to spare. Entering a stadium will also prove streamlined as they pass through scanners, using only their phones as proof of purchase, removing the need to hand off a ticket. The experience will leave them feeling not only COVID safe, but freer to spend more time watching the game and less time in queues.

Looking ahead, Nortman feels optimistic about how teams will optimize the customer experience. "The pandemic has allowed us to open channels and develop solutions for better pricing, distribution, and the value of a ticket," he says. "We're transitioning from an art to a science, and everyone involved will benefit as a result."



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