

# FILLING THE SEATS

## Ticketing: The New Age

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**SPECIAL REPORTS**

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Each article in this issue is also found on our website, MusicalAmerica.com, in the [Special Reports](#) section.

## Introduction

Ticketing used to be the end of a long chain of events designed to get butts in seats. Sell the ticket, fill the house, put a plus sign in the earned-income column. End of story.

Not anymore. As Roger Tomlinson points out in his article, [Ticketing Is Getting Personal](#), ticketing used to close the sale, but now it can be the launching pad for patron communication and recognition—often mobile and personalized—leading to greater customer loyalty and higher sales. Since 80 percent of event tickets are now sold online, customers' personal data is there for the taking. So the single ticket buyer is a potential subscriber, donor, volunteer, newsletter recipient, etc. He can also generate new customers when he alerts his Facebook friends to his purchase. Nothing like personal endorsement to make a sale.

It's the new age of ticketing, enabled by technology and often referred to as Customer Relations Management (CRM). And ticketing is on the move: 44 percent of arts marketing emails are opened on smartphones, and 36 percent of online sales come from smart phones.

Our goal here is not so much to dazzle you with numbers as to bring you up to speed. What kind of ticketing system should you buy? Should it be in house? How should it be staffed? Is it better to have a web-based system or one that uses special terminals? And to whom should your box office manager report? Operations? Marketing? Finance?

Of course, the more bells and whistles a system has to offer, the higher the price. Small organizations that can't afford such sophistication can still have access to it, however, by forming partnerships, or umbrella organizations, as Brett Crawford points out in [How to Get the Most Out of Your Ticketing Investment Dollar](#). Author Dave Brooks offers a few points on how to move inventory (including "forget the app") and on how to determine the right ticket price at the right time for the right event (hint—it's all in the data). Brooks also takes a look at the ongoing battle over paperless ticketing, now banned in New York but still being debated in other states across the U.S.

Finally, our resident consumer psychologist Ron Evans explains how people's need to conform has enabled social media to become a valuable sales tool. Small wonder that we titled his article, [Buying a Ticket Is a Social Event](#).

Regards,

Susan Elliott  
Editor, Special Reports



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*- Danny Feldman, Labyrinth Theater Company*

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# TICKETING is getting PERSONAL

## and changing beyond all recognition

It's been some time since ticketing was just about putting "butts in the seats." Whereas ticketing used to close the sale, it now has the potential to start the marketing and sales process, initiating a chain of patron communication and recognition—often mobile and personalized—and leading to greater customer loyalty and higher sales.

The arts and entertainment sector is behind in this domain. A tracking study in 2012 by [GroupofMinds](#) found 44 percent of arts marketing emails were opened on smartphones. Analysis of browsers by theaters for online sales has shown as much as 36 percent coming from smartphones.

With most of today's major ticketing systems, it is possible to treat patrons as individuals, personalize messages to them—to *relate*. It's a practice known in the trade as Customer Relationship Management (CRM). To enter this world, start thinking of "winning hearts and minds," and ask yourself two questions:

1. The customer knows and remembers what his relationship is to you; does your organization remember what its relationship is to him?
2. If you contact the customer on his smartphone, you are reaching him personally; is your message relevant to him, specifically?

The effects of CRM were reflected last year at an industry-wide conference ([INTIX](#), in San Antonio, TX), when, in an unusual keynote,

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nine ticketing company CEOs stood up to say that their systems were now about interfacing with customers through all channels—web site, social media, smartphones, and so on. Yes, systems need to deliver a great ticketing product on the back end, but it is the front end that is key now.

The likes of Ticketmaster have been hemorrhaging business for years, as venues choose to relate to customers directly, usually by switching to their own systems, such as [Tessitura](#). At any scale, the preference has been to have direct control. Ticket agencies' high fees and multiple charges are also challenging to explain to customers in the current marketplace; they can be a deterrent. Even [Live Nation](#) (See Social Media=Ticket Sales) is running promotional "fee-free" days or adding the term "inclusive" to its prices.

## SOCIAL MEDIA = TICKET SALES

### Concerts

- 30%: ticket buyers influenced to attend a concert by a Facebook post
- 30%: used social media to invite friends to attend concerts with them

### Sporting Events

- 14%: ticket buyers influenced to attend a game by a Facebook post
- 20%: used social media to invite friends to attend events with them

### Overall

- \$82 vs. \$51: average ticket price for social media purchasers vs. all other buyers
- Buyers using social media links bought their seats earlier

Source: LiveAnalytics (Ticketmaster's research arm), May 2012

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## CAPTURE **THAT** DATA

***Getting personal means getting the customer where he lives***

Even the smallest and most under-resourced of organizations must collect, at a minimum, the name, mailing address, phone number, and email for every individual who walks through the door, advises Rick Lester, CEO of [TRG Arts](#), a marketing consulting group.

“There are a surprising number of small organizations that only collect email addresses,” he explains. “An email address can’t be matched up to a human being, and it can’t be matched up to a snail mail address. And it’s that snail mail address that provides the gateway into the thousands and thousands of demographic and psychographic attributes.” —RT

## The 360-degree Customer View

The 360-degree view of each customer puts an end to separate databases for the online newsletter, the mailing list, and various campaigns for membership, subscriptions, donations, sponsorships, and so on. Combining them all into one list with ticket purchasers enables organizations to track their interactions with customers at all touch-points and really understand their behavior. This is the foundation for “getting personal” with customers.

This growing awareness of the social aspect of ticket-buying has caused system-suppliers to enable purchasers to Tweet their attendance details or post them to Facebook with a deep link so their followers or friends can buy tickets to the same event. What is often called “word-of-mouth” is actually equally important *before* as after an event.

## Box Office as Data Manager

The democratization of ticketing, with the ability to make purchases through many channels, does rather put customers in


control, buying what they want, when they want, and how they want. Some box offices are not happy about these trends. But the walls around the box office are falling down, not least because their managers are now seen as data administrators, guardians of that “database of truth,” and are often included in the marketing and/or development departments. (See Capture that Data) As one manager described it, they must now “forensically interrogate the database” to find out why customers attended the last show and what might motivate them to attend the next.

## The Smartphone Cometh

With all these methods for customer contact and sales, the smartphone—or the tablet on the sofa—becomes key. This is where all the interaction takes place. The challenge for the organization is that it might operate inside Facebook, or on Twitter, to name just two options. With the customer in control, he can “pull” the content he wants and your organization can “push” content specific to him and, ensuring it is presented correctly for the window view, make the experience personal. For instance, you wouldn’t send the same message to subscribers as you would to single-ticket buyers.

Many organizations avoid asking customers to log in until they have viewed What’s On and are ready to complete a purchase. But the smartphone only requires the user to log in once, ever, even if the user is navigating from his Twitter or Facebook account. The login goes straight to the organization’s database for customer records and profiles, making it possible to send back content that is relevant to him personally. Most systems also let customers see their booking history, past and near future, and to manage their account for updating.

With ticketing systems this personal, you can add value-added services to the ticket purchase, such as vouchers for program books, interval drinks, parking, and so on. Alerts can be sent to people asking if they are interested in an event, perhaps sent after 70 percent of tickets are sold, or if it is coming up next week. Alerts can extend to traffic disruption expected on their route before a performance, or offers at specific restaurants for a late table booking.

Clearly we have moved way beyond the scenario of the box office clerk serving a queue of customers. Technology, used smartly and creatively, enables organizations to be more open and accessible to their customers in a way most customers appreciate. Win their hearts and minds and they will be your fans. 

# 5 STEPS to Choosing the RIGHT SYSTEM

## A complex process made simple(r)

By Roger Tomlinson

Choosing the right ticketing system that also enables marketing, social media, web sales and customer relationship management can be a daunting task. Manage it in-house or across the Internet? Small or large? What features? How much to pay and what will be the return?

"To eat an elephant, take one bite at a time," commented General Creighton Abrams about how to win a war. It can certainly seem like a battle to choose a ticketing platform, and it's best to break the whole process into pieces. Here are five steps to success.

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### ROGER TOMLINSON

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### STEP ONE: Information Gathering

Find out what's available. Invite the main suppliers (See [Choosing the Right Ticketing System](#)) to demonstrate their systems to you. It doesn't matter whether you think you can afford them—you need to know what is "state-of-the-art." Some will visit, some will give web demos. Ask them for contacts at similar size and scale organizations to yours that are using their system. Focus on "joined-up" solutions where lots of functionality is in one piece of software.

Talk to people in similar scale organizations to yours—not just the box office, but marketing and development. What are their marketing and fund-raising practices? Which system do they use? What works well or doesn't?

Visit the ticketing and system suppliers' conference run by [INTIX](#) where the main suppliers are gathered in one place; ask questions. *[One-day passes as well as full-registration are available. Next conference is in January 2014.]*

Convene a brainstorming session with staff: What do we do now? What can't we do? What would we like to do? What do we think is coming up in the future that we should be able to do? What kind of relationships do we want with our ticket purchasers?

Try a "focus group" with some invited audience members—infrequent attendees as well as the regulars. What do they think about how you market to them, relate to them, sell tickets to them? There are specialists in audience and visitor qualitative research who can help you with this [e.g. [Wolf Brown](#)]. Summarize what you learn and share it with staff. Remember, "not all the brains are under one hat."

*continued on p. 7*



# DO YOU WANT TO **JUST** SELL A TICKET? OR DO YOU WANT **MORE?**



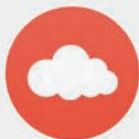
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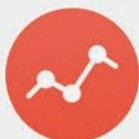
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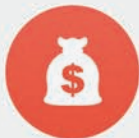
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## STEP TWO: Specification

Having done your internal and external research, you can now identify what you need.

Compile a functionality specification list. You can write your own, or use the ones in Figure 1 (below): [The Ticketing Institute](#) provides a few online tools. Some organizations come up with over 300 criteria.

**Rate the specs:** How important is each function to you? Three good categories might be Essential, Desirable, Useful.

Be precise in the parameters for your solution. How many tickets per annum do you sell, over what sales seasons? What is the value of your ticket sales? What percentages are online, on the phone, and at the box-office? What staff do you have to handle each? How do you deal with subscriptions, membership and/or loyalty schemes, group sales, sales promotions? If you wanted to go with a terminal-licensed system, how many would you need, and how many of the staff should be able to access each?

Reporting is crucial. Print out the reports you currently use to give to potential suppliers so they can see what you use and what you want.

**In its 2011 Ticketing Software Satisfaction Survey, Technology in the Arts asked respondents to identify which software functions are most critical in a ticketing solution; the most frequently selected attribute across all budget sizes was online sales. Credit card processing, which was the most popular function in its 2009 survey, moved down to the second most-selected attribute.**

### Most frequently selected attributes:

1. Online sales (91%)
2. Credit card processing (90%)
3. Seat mapping/reserved ticketing (82%)
4. Custom reporting (78%)
5. Multi-user (multiple sellers logged in at once) (77%)
6. Customer support/tech support (77%)

### Least selected attributes:

1. Mobile integration (24%)
2. Demand-based pricing capability (37%)
3. Barcodes/gate control (38%)
4. Ability to print images or logo on ticket (38%)
5. Social media integration (40%)
6. Security features/ticket forgery prevention (41%)

## STEP THREE: Request proposals

Circulate Requests for Proposals to many different suppliers. Make sure to include your functionality specification list, the parameters of your business operation, and current reports.

Ask suppliers to match their capabilities to your specification list. A five-point scale works best:

- **Met** = the system can do it now
- **Next Version** = the system will do it within the next six months
- **Work-Around** = the system can do this in another way, perhaps multi-step
- **Development** = the system will require development to deliver this; the supplier should indicate whether this is customized development (probably chargeable to you) or on their own development list to be delivered in the future
- **Not possible** = the system cannot (or the supplier will not) do this

Match cost to functionality. No two ticketing system suppliers charge in exactly the same way. It is best to compile a “five-year cost of ownership” to enable a fair comparison between those that charge “up-front” and those that charge “as-you-go.” There are multiple elements to consider:

1. In addition to the software and any add-ons, what do you have to pay in year one to get started, including:
  - a. Training
  - b. System configuration and commissioning
  - c. Web site integration and social media interfaces
  - d. Data migration
2. What are the annual recurring costs, such as software licensing fees, hosting charges, software support, and maintenance (or support network membership costs)?
3. What are the service charges for using payment gateways—e.g. credit card processing software—and quick-addressing software to look up mailing addresses, etc. where there is a pay-as-you-go element?
4. What are standard “call-out- charges” for additional training, technical support, system configuration, etc.?

Figure 1

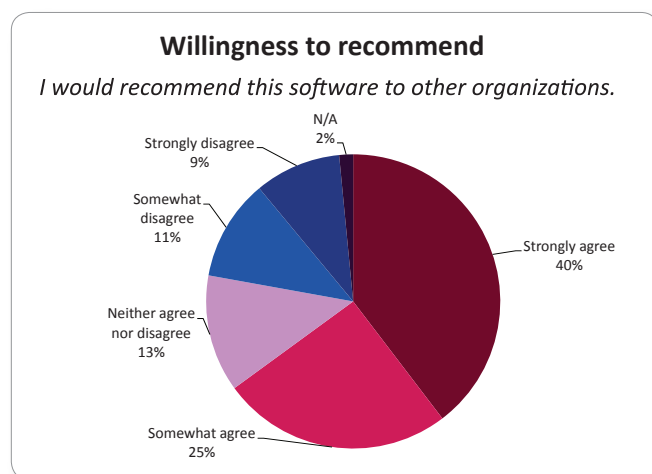
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## STEP FOUR: Scoring and evaluation

This is “mission-critical” and demands the involvement of your whole team. It should not be delegated to one person. Follow these procedures:

- If a number of suppliers can match your Essentials, then look at Desirables. Is there a clear high scorer? Rank the suppliers' scores.
- Calculate the five-year cost of ownership from the price submissions. Obviously what you can afford is crucial, but systems may have different functionality in relation to their price.
- Choose your top three suppliers.
- Invite No. 1 for a day-long evaluation session. This is not a demonstration. You are in the driver's seat. Ask them to show you their system doing what you want, in detail. Make sure all members of your staff are involved, perhaps coming and going for the parts relevant to them. Don't forget to spend some time on reports. At the end of the day, after that supplier departs, have a de-briefing with the team: satisfied? If not, invite No. 2 for an evaluation session. Keep going until all staff are reasonably satisfied.
- You now have a “preferred supplier.” Review its customer service and support capabilities. Figure 2 below shows a surprisingly small number of users who are willing to strongly recommend their systems. The devil is in the details. Talk to others. Do the experiences of different venues show a general picture of the quality of service and support? Hopefully you will be reassured.



**Figure 2.** Reprinted with permission of [Technology in the Arts](#), a Research Initiative of Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University.

## STEP FIVE: Implementation

The last step can be the hardest in practice. This is where project planning and your staff resources make the biggest difference. No matter the size and skill of the supplier's team, it has to show you how to use the system to satisfy *your* needs.

You need a contract. Your preferred company usually has a standard one. You can waste time with lawyers and money trying to re-negotiate terms; just make sure to check for onerous clauses. Obvious point perhaps: they are not going to indemnify you for their failures.

The contract usually comes with a “scope” or “statement of work” setting out what they will deliver and when. This is not a formality. Check that it includes everything you want. Try getting your functionality specification list as a deliverable. Watch out for additional costs. Make sure everything reflects the details of the bid and the sales process.

Allocate resources. If the box office manager is to be the project leader ensure that he/she is fully deputized for the duration; include the need for extra staff and extra hours in the start-up phase.

Schedule an all-inclusive “kick-off” meeting to make a project plan. Big decisions are needed on areas such as data migration, web site integration, and social media interfaces, so put key personnel in charge. Set clear agreed-upon milestones and dates, assign responsibilities for each task.

Schedule regular progress-review meetings. Plan the necessary training. Some systems now train only the trainers so key staff, once trained, must train the rest of the users.

Plan your go-live sequence. Is one system shutting down as data and sales are transferred to the new system? Or is there some “parallel-running” in which current events mature on the old system as they happen, and new events go on the new system? Check any switch-over website connections.

Go live. The really interesting part starts as you learn to work smarter on your new system.

### NEED TO KNOW THE BASICS?

[The Story Behind the Battle Over Paperless](#)

[Where Should Ticketing Live in My Organization?](#)

# CHOOSING the RIGHT Ticketing System

## The MAJOR Players



*Not all systems, or their suppliers, are the same*

By Roger Tomlinson

There are literally hundreds of so-called ticketing system suppliers, ranging from major national and international companies like Ticketmaster to regional and local ones. They can vary from the comprehensive “software solutions” types such as Tessitura to the basic browser-based web ticketing services or re-sellers from Ticketmaster down.

It is almost impossible to compare these (despite my editor’s prodding to do so). Most recognized ticketing systems can offer the latest must-have technology—just look at the rush to deliver social media integration. It may be stating the obvious, but “buyer beware” and make careful cost comparisons.

### CATEGORY ONE: The major suppliers

These systems offer state-of-the-art comprehensive functionality; they also provide a platform for interfacing with other software solutions and databases—SQL is ubiquitous—and serve as a one-stop-shop for customer interfacing in all areas, such as e-marketing, social media, web sites, loyalty schemes, memberships, subscriptions, and fund-raising.

There is a higher price tag for this—for generally larger supplier sales, support, and service teams, with a high level

of knowledge about the operating environment in user organizations.

Tessitura is seen as the not-for-profit exemplar, and has a [huge body of satisfied users](#) around the English-speaking world. [See [Capture that Data](#)]

It does have serious competition from other international systems, however, including:

- [AudienceView](#) (Toronto, Canada), with over 550 users. (See [Capture that Data](#))
- [ENTA](#) (Baton Rouge, LA), which drives arts and entertainment organizations in 24 countries.
- [Tickets.com](#) (HQ in Costa Mesa, CA) also in multiple countries, with a variety of solutions.

There is also a big following for systems that can meet high-specification demands:

- [Paciolan](#) (Irvine, CA) has a long list of clients from sports to the performing arts.

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- [Vendini](#) (San Francisco, CA) aims at an inclusive lower price; in the arts. Its clients range from high schools to Broadway theaters.
- [Choice](#) (Boulder, CO) created a system for the needs of the Toledo Symphony Orchestra and now has over 250 users.
- [Theatre Manager](#) from Arts Management Systems (Calgary, Canada) is a long-term survivor that, like Tessitura, never charges per-ticket fees, has a large user base, and offers comprehensive functionality for arts organizations.

The advantages of all these are the great software functionality, the user base and user-group conferences, and the constant up-grade path, with continual development of the software and regular releases of new versions. The only disadvantage is the relatively high cost, in most cases worth it for the broad functionality, and the need for “intelligent users [in-house] for intelligent systems.” Watch out for the implementation process—be sure that the scope of work delivers what you want.

## GUIDEPOSTS TO TICKETING LINGO

### What is the difference between a ticketing system and a ticketing-system supplier?

The ticketing system is the software, which may or may not be the same as the supplier. For instance, Blackbaud is a supplier; Patron Edge is a system it offers.

### What is the difference between a ticketing seller and a ticketing re-seller?

When there is an event, there is a primary ticket-inventory holder; he will need some kind of system to control that inventory. If a company such as Ticketmaster manages both the primary inventory and sells the tickets, it functions as a ticket seller. If however, the event presenter wants to manage its own inventory and have an outside agency sell the tickets, then that agency is a re-seller. Ticketmaster is often also a re-seller because organizations maintaining inventory provide an allocation to Ticketmaster.

### What is SQL?

SQL stands for Structured Query Language. SQL is almost ubiquitous as the server software architecture on which ticketing systems and their databases run. In theory, databases running on SQL can inter-communicate.

### I know SRO stands for Standing Room Only, but what is SRO in ticketing language?

SRO is the name of the TopTix ticketing system; they only use the acronym.

### What is CRM?

CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management, which most major ticketing systems now provide.

### What is a “browser front-end system?”

A browser front-end system is simply the term to describe a ticketing system that doesn’t need additional software beyond the browser. It is fairly common; the only problem is, if your Internet connection fails, you don’t have a ticketing system. —RT



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## WEB SALES AND THE DAWN OF “CONVENIENCE FEES”

It was Fred Rosen, the man who made Ticketmaster ubiquitous, who invented the “convenience fee” for online sales. Since the online ticket sale is an entirely self-service transaction, it is, for event presenters, the cheapest way to sell tickets. The “convenience fee,” and the other charges online ticketing has spawned, enables re-sellers to earn extra dollars from the ticket sale. Legal investigation has demonstrated that these are not in fact “service charges” but simply another way to take more of the consumer’s dollar.

That the practice has been widely adopted has in fact changed the business model for venues and impacted their relationship with attendees. The book, *[Ticket Masters: The Rise of the Concert Industry and How the Public Got Scalped](#)*, by Dean Budnick and Josh Baron, tells it all, revealing the “gotcha” strategies of the likes of Ticketmaster, Live Nation, StubHub, and their competitors.

Customers prefer simplicity. Straightforward, inclusive pricing makes it much easier to know how much an event is going to cost and whether or not to attend. If a venue and its producers or promoters want to take slices out of the ticket sale, then these should be “inside” the inclusive price. —RT

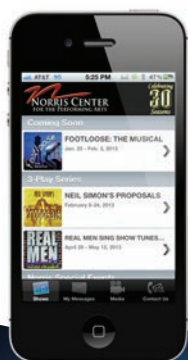
## CATEGORY TWO: The Challengers

These suppliers may not have as broad a user base as those in Category One, but all bring something different to the table and work closely with their users. Many challenge the orthodoxies of ticketing:

- [Blackbaud](#) (HQ in Charleston, SC) with its Patron Edge (system known by some as TopTix SRO, which develops the software for them) adds ticketing to its international portfolio of fund-raising and arts management software solutions, though some users say the interfacing is not as seamless as they would like it.

- [TopTix](#) (Kamiel, Israel) also supplies its SRO Version 4, which represents the next generation in software development for ticketing in terms of openness and interfacing with the customer.
- [Seat Advisor](#) (San Diego, CA) has clocked up a large number of users internationally for its web-based, browser front-end system on a pay-as-you-go basis, though it faces competition from a whole series of me-too web system suppliers. The advantage here is who started first, because generally the more users, the more sophisticated the system, as more tools are added to meet different clients’ needs. In this case, watch out for the costs—they can add up to the same or more than the Box One suppliers if you sell at high volumes.
- The enterprising Gene Carr of [Patron Technology](#) (New York, NY) is another challenger with his ticketing and CRM-based solution built on [Sales Force](#). PatronManager CRM gets it right by marrying intelligent CRM with the distribution of the work-load at a task level. Without any synchronizing with other products, this kind of solution is recommended from the small scale right on up, sold on a per-ticket fee

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model, which many organizations—and their ticket purchasers—find helpful.

- [Agile](#) (Hermitage, TN) emphasizes an attention to detail and a well-honed focus on understanding users' unique needs. Its Venue Manager Pro offers a great range of key tools.
- [Easyware's Total Info](#) (Chicago, IL) is an integrated solution bringing a series of tools together dedicated to the not-for-profit sector. Suited to those with a high sensitivity to cost, it publishes its cost up front, so you know exactly what

you'll have to pay, in advance. Managing the databases and information needs with a comprehensive ticketing solution, this is a high-specification but affordable solution.


These suppliers are all in the business of achieving customer satisfaction, helping people work smarter, enabling venues to thrive as well as survive in these challenging economic circumstances. Expect a range of ways to pay for the system and ensure the company understands your operating circumstances.

### CATEGORY THREE: The Rest

This is a big group, comprised of both time-served survivors and start-ups. The chart on page 14 lists quite a few suppliers with only one or two users. Some of the older ones have left their product restricted to just ticketing, but they are up against the newer web-based ticketing services with a huge range of solutions and prices. To be clear, if you look at the likes of [EventBrite](#), you are not looking at solutions comparable with those in Category One or Two. Yet the kinds of fees charged can add up significantly, for both the organization and the ticket buyer.

- [TicketFly](#) (San Francisco, CA) aims to go beyond this, joining up the marketing, social media, and ticketing functions into one tool on a single platform for promoters and venues.
- [Ticketbud](#) (Austin, TX) aims to disrupt this marketplace with what it calls "greed-free ticketing" by offering an Internet ticketing service capped at a total cost of \$99 per event.

- Many ticket agents are hard to define in any box: [Ticketmaster](#) offers various services and software solutions, though their Archtics system, originating in sports, seems to have fewer fans amongst performing arts users.
- For those with only the most basic requirements, there are systems of a completely different ethos, such as [Brown Paper Tickets](#).

The danger in this Category is whether these suppliers actually offer competitive solutions in terms of their functionality from a marketing and CRM perspective, as well as ticketing. They can often cost more than total solutions in the other categories, though there are exceptions. There is a huge range of choice, and it can't be said often enough: buyer beware. 

## NEED TO KNOW THE BASICS?

[The Story Behind the Battle Over Paperless](#)

[Where Should Ticketing Live in My Organization?](#)



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**Building Long-Term Patron Commitment**

**National Arts Marketing, Development & Ticketing Conference**

**New York City  
NYU Kimmel Center  
March 21-23, 2013**

# TICKETING SOFTWARE Usage

The following table displays the number of Technology in the Arts's survey respondents using each software system, either as a primary or a secondary ticketing tool. (Systems with no responses are not included.) Though a few systems comprise a large number of survey responses, the data still suggests a wide range in use by the field. "Other" systems included ticketing systems not on our list, software systems not designed specifically for ticketing (such as PayPal and Microsoft Excel), and custom systems.

Software Tool (used by respondent as either a primary or secondary system)	Number of users*	Software Tool (used by respondent as either a primary or secondary system)	Number of users*	Software Tool (used by respondent as either a primary or secondary system)	Number of users*
Admission - a division of Ticketmaster	3	Paciolan	10	Ticketmaster: Archtics	9
Agile Ticketing	3	Patron Technology	19	Ticketmaster: Vista	4
AstorStreet Smartware	2	PatronEdge by Blackbaud	19	TicketMeister Pro	1
AudienceView Ticketing	21	Printtix USA	11	TicketOps	1
BOW and/or BOW-net by Canadian Theatre Software	1	ProVenue or ProVenueMax by Tickets.com	39	Ticketpro	1
Box Office Tickets	3	Radiant	4	TicketReturn	1
Boxxo	1	Reservatech	1	TICKETsage	2
Brown Paper Tickets	16	RTS - Ready Theater Systems	1	TicketScene	1
Choice Ticketing	28	SABO by Seat Advisor	86	TicketSolve	1
Click4Tix	1	SeatYourself	1	TicketsWest	2
Enta	1	SellingTickets	1	Ticketweb	2
eTix	1	ShoWare by VisionOne, Inc.	6	Tick-It! Trak Pro and/or Tick-It! 2K+	2
Eventbrite	64	ShowClix	4	tix.com	19
Eventim InHouse / ShowSoft	1	Siriusware	4	TixHub	3
EZTicketLive	1	Smartix	1	Toptix	1
Folio Box Office by Martech Systems	4	Spektrix	5	Total Info by Easy-Ware	12
Front Gate Solutions	3	Tessitura	262	TyTix	4
Galaxy by Gateway Ticketing Systems	4	Theatre Manager by Arts Management Systems	148	University Tickets	9
Gate 13	4	Thundertix	3	Vendini: TicketAgent or Ticket-Line	20
HandyTix	1	Ticket Force	4	WebTix and/or WinTix by Center Stage Software	75
InstantSeats	1	Ticket Turtle: Basic, Premier, or Pro	8	Custom-built systems	41
Lexi	1	TicketBiscuit	1		
MIVA	1	TicketFusion	1		
New Concept Software	3	TicketGuys	1		
OmniTicket	2	TicketLeap	7		
OvationTix by TheaterMania	10	TicketmakerVantix (ATMS)	3		
		Ticketmaster Classic	23		

\*Because respondents do not represent a true cross-section of the arts and culture community, this data cannot be used to infer market share.

Overview of Results

2011 Ticketing Software Satisfaction Survey

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# Buying a

# TICKET is a SOCIAL Event

By Ron Evans

*A consumer psychologist  
examines the impact of social media on ticketing*

Remember when it seemed revolutionary to sell tickets online? Web sales are still a major improvement over the old days, reducing staff time in the box office, easily filtering choices for customers, and enabling a transaction at any time of day or night. Today, many organizations sell as many as 80 percent of all tickets online.

In the early phase of web sales, buying a ticket was a solitary experience: go online, choose the seats, put in the credit card, and receive an email confirmation. Patrons could not see what others were purchasing (other than to see what tickets were going fast as fewer seats became available). Today, people are used to sharing their activities with their friends on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. Buying a ticket now has the potential for social-media interaction. New statistics prove the increasing impact of the trend:

- Consumers are 71% more likely to make a purchase based on social media referrals
- 90% of people believe brand recommendations from friends
- 70% believe consumer opinions (from total strangers)

See [71% More Likely to Purchase Based on Social Media Referrals](#).\*

So social networks are an increasingly effective sales tool. But why?

Human beings are influenced by a complex web of social norms. Consider: the embarrassment of applauding at the end of a piece of music when nobody else is, the pressure to face in the same direction as everyone else on an elevator, the desire to not be the one who eats the last donut in the box (some people feel

so uncomfortable with this, they will break the donut in half and leave a half behind). People seek to “conform,” and are more comfortable doing what they see others do, in life, and—in the 21st century—on social networks.

Imagine that “John” has just purchased a ticket to a new musical (let’s call it *South Atlantic*). The ticketing system asks him “Would you like to share this purchase on Facebook?,” and John clicks on “yes.” In John’s news feed, a new post goes live, telling his friends that “John has just purchased a ticket to Friday’s performance of *South Atlantic*— would you like to join him at this performance?” Friends who click “yes” will be given the opportunity to buy a ticket to the performance John is attending, which in turn will generate a post to their friends, and so on. The built-in personal endorsement has vast marketing benefits, particularly as compared with generic audience marketing.

Several systems offer the ability to connect to social media, but there is still a great deal of experimentation, and nobody has discovered the perfect formula yet. Should the post to one’s social networks be automatic? Should patrons receive an incentive to post their ticket purchase or if a friend purchases a ticket? Ticketing-system suppliers are dealing with these issues in a variety of ways; I have grouped them into four “flavors” of social-network ticketing.

**Flavor 1:** Pre-purchase share icons on the event page. Likely the most frequent implementation, this method allows people to easily share a ticketing purchase with their friends, via one-click social share buttons. The link to the run of the show is shared, but without relationship to a specific date, performance, or friends. This is the equivalent of just giving the friends the URL to the starting ticketing page for the show.

\* Source: Nielsen Advertising Global Report, July 2009; Channel Advisor report on Facebook ecommerce, June 2011; The Guardian, August 2010



**RON EVANS**

Ron Evans is a consumer psychologist, and principal consultant at [Groupofminds.com](#) Arts Marketing Consultants in Sunnyvale, CA. He helps arts organizations increase their understanding, appreciation, and frequency of attendance through innovative uses of technology.

continued on p. 16

## Social Media Integration: Four Flavors

### Flavor 1:

Share icons on event page, pre-purchase



Likely the most often seen implementation, allows people to easily share a page with their friends, but isn't related to a purchase or specific friends. Just makes sharing easier.

**If this is your ticketing systems' method:** Tell your patrons that they can share the main ticketing purchase page that lists the full run of the show with their friends, and share it yourself via your own social channels.

**Flavor 2:** Ticketing system shows aggregate comments. Users visiting the ticketing page can see the activity of all purchasers; they may be strangers, but the effect is the social-norm "bandwagon," driving purchases "since everybody is doing it." This "wisdom of the crowd" approach is similar to Amazon reviews.

**If this is your ticketing systems' method:** Message your patrons to visit the page and see all the people who have

## Social Media Integration: Four Flavors

### Flavor 2:

Ticketing system shows aggregate comments



New users visiting the page can see the social activity of strangers. Creates desire via a "bandwagon" effect, could help drive purchase "since everybody is doing it." "Wisdom of crowds" similar to Amazon reviews, but by more trusted sources with faces.

recently purchased tickets. This can also create the impression of a scarcity and influence people to buy now, before they are all gone.

**Flavor 3:** Auto-share of purchases, during the purchase. Users are asked to share the actual date, time, and venue of a specific performance with their own personal network of friends. This deepens the social connection, acting as a personal testimonial by the purchaser.

### If this is your ticketing systems' method:

Ask customers to share their specific purchase information with their friends. Provided that your system can track additional sales from a social share, consider creating a small incentive—a free cookie at intermission can do wonders.

## Social Media Integration: Four Flavors

### Flavor 3:

Autoshare of purchases - during purchase

#### Social networking

Put social networking to work for you

Social networking is the basis for how we use the Internet today and affords event organizers free and low-cost ways to market events and sell more tickets when used intelligently. In Ticketing does just this by integrating tools to allow promoters and ticket buyers to quickly and easily distribute event listings to their friends, families and coworkers using any of the popular social networking and viral marketing engines available on the web.



The #1 marketing resource for your events is your ticket buyers. We give your patrons easy and convenient tools to market your events to their networks of friends, family and associates.

Users allowed to share their actual date, time, venue, etc. with their own personal network of friends. Deepens the social connection, allows others to decide to go with you (or not). Purchase acts as a testimonial by the purchaser, which could encourage friends to buy once someone they know has bought.

**Flavor 4:** Share purchases and sit with your friends. The most advanced method, this allows users to actually see a picture of each of their friends who have purchased a ticket, and where they are sitting; this way they can sit with their friends, or join a group attending.

**If this is your ticketing systems' method:** Advertise it as a side benefit to the ticket purchase; people want to sit with their friends. And for people who are "on the fence," it further encourages a sale.

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To cap the full potential of social sharing, savvy marketing and box-office staff should keep three things in mind:

1. Research the capabilities that your current ticketing system offers. If you are not sure, call and ask. Let your provider know that you are interested in these features; ask for best practices of other organizations that use their system.
2. Pay attention to the social sharing capabilities of other systems when you purchase tickets for yourself. People who work in arts organizations attend a lot of performances. Encourage staff to be aware of what other ticketing systems allow them to do socially.
3. Ask your ticketing supplier about new functionalities. If you see features in another system that you want in your own, ask your supplier if they will be coming soon. If not, why not? What will they be providing that is a better solution?


### Social Media Integration: Four Flavors

#### Flavor 4:

#### See where your friends are sitting, join them



Via social connect, users can see where their friend(s) are sitting, and choose seats nearby (or as far away as possible). :) Allows groups of people to assemble with each person purchasing his/her own ticket. Introduces scarcity for limited seat availability near your friends, which drives ticket sales.

Sharing ticket purchases is a powerful sales tool. Best practices have not yet been set, but you should know your system's capabilities, and keep an eye out for new methods as they evolve. The "virtual testimonial" has incredible value, and should be cultivated and encouraged wherever possible. 

## SOCIAL MEDIA = TICKET SALES

### Concerts

- 30%: ticket buyers influenced to attend a concert by a Facebook post
- 30%: used social media to invite friends to attend concerts with them

### Sporting Events

- 14%: ticket buyers influenced to attend a game by a Facebook post
- 20%: used social media to invite friends to attend events with them

### Overall

- \$82 vs. \$51: average ticket price for social media purchasers vs. all other buyers
- Buyers using social media links bought their seats earlier

Source: LiveAnalytics (Ticketmaster's research arm), May 2012

## NEED TO KNOW THE **BASICS**?

[The Story Behind the Battle Over Paperless](#)

[Where Should Ticketing Live in My Organization?](#)



# Ticket Pricing

## TECHNOLOGY replaces the CRYSTAL BALL

By Dave Brooks

If you  
want to know  
what to charge  
and when,  
look to the  
data

How much are tickets to see *What a Feeling: Flash Dance, the Musical* at the Houston's Hobby Center? Well, it depends when you buy them. Grab them when they first go on sale and you'll get the best price; wait until the show is 70-percent sold, and the price goes up \$5. Wait until it's 75 percent and you'll pay \$10 more. In fact the price goes up \$5 every time venue capacity increases five percent.

It's a system used by David Greiss at Theater Under the Stars (TUTS), the presenter of *What a Feeling...* at the Hobby Center. Improvements in TUTS's [Paciolan](#)-powered ticketing system have made it possible to automatically change ticket prices; in the past, they were adjusted manually—a huge headache for box office staff.

Thanks to technology, it's now possible to adjust prices in real time; high demand on sales can lead to big incremental revenue boosts—often in the six figures. At the same time, box-office professionals can collect valuable data at the point of sale [see [Ticketing Is Getting Personal](#)], enabling them to filter out the white noise, accurately predict future trends, and allocate marketing resources accordingly.

Tools like social media and data mining, using special algorithms and formulas, have replaced intuition, gut feeling, and general records of past buying patterns to price new shows. Plus, data-driven results can present a more compelling argument for the board of directors.


"If history shows that the majority of tickets for this type of show move two weeks out from the performance, then there's no need to worry about slow ticket sales four weeks out," says Steven Roth of the Pricing Institute, an independent consultancy that offers arts organizations solutions for pricing their tickets.



### DAVE BROOKS

Dave Brooks is a writer based in Los Angeles, where he is managing editor of *Venues Today*.

"And the bulk of advertising can be spent when demand is strongest, as opposed to when consumers aren't yet paying attention."

Most importantly, data-based pricing helps organizations understand the perceived value of their different products with their consumers, and the difference between price and value—"if you argue value over price, you win more often than not," Roth says. 

### PRICING TIPS FROM AN EXPERT

- "You don't want to raise prices when demand peaks, you want to raise prices before they peak," says Steven Roth, president of [The Pricing Institute](#). The best way to predict a demand spike is to compare current sales to historical trends from similar performances and look for patterns that might indicate an upcoming spike.
- "Where people chose to sit is extremely important and says the most about their buying habits." Roth believes that by watching the way different sections fill up you can better gauge real-time demand.
- "Raising the price of the best seats makes all of the other seats more valuable." Studies have found that consumers associate more value with tickets that have wide disparities in price, says Roth. A \$100 mezzanine ticket earns a higher demand rating from consumers when the next price level is \$250 for the orchestra, as opposed to orchestra tickets priced at \$150. The wider the gap, the more likely a consumer is to believe he/she is getting a "better deal"—and the more valuable the higher priced tickets appear.—DB

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## FIVE TIPS FOR SELLING MORE TICKETS

With today's crowded media and entertainment landscape, arts organizations have a difficult time making their messages stand out. Here are a few low-cost ways to sell tickets faster—and smarter.

**1. Skip the app and build a mobile-enabled site for ticket sales.** During the app craze of 2011 and 2012, many arts groups invested in mobile apps that sparkled with cutting-edge design and unique content, but didn't offer much in the way of functionality. Apple has millions of apps available, but most people use only a handful. A smartphone with different apps for each theater or concert hall can be clunky; better to focus your resources on a web site that is clean and simple to use on a mobile phone. By building a digital strategy around a mobile-based web site, you can gain a higher engagement rate—anyone with a phone browser like Safari or Chrome can access the site. And studies show consumers feel safer making credit card purchases over web sites than on independently developed mobile apps, which can suffer from security holes.

**2. Look for brand ambassadors on social media.** No one can market your events like your biggest fans. Center Theater Group in Los Angeles has created a social-media app that helps consumers broadcast their recent ticket purchases. "We've taken it a step farther and developed a calendar app for Facebook to help friends organize visits to one of our theaters," said Dave Alton, chief information officer at Center Theater Group. "Eventually the organizer can decide the final date, and individuals can reserve tickets next to each other, using their own credit cards to make a purchase."



**3. List your inventory on "opaque inventory" sites like ScoreBig.** Discounting last-minute tickets often has a double negative effect—it conditions the consumer to wait to buy, and it angers loyal consumers who purchased tickets in advance at full price. Sites like ScoreBig, created in 2011 by former NBA executives, allow producers to offer discounted



last-minute tickets to a massive database of consumers who have opted in for weekly emails. ScoreBig's sales team strikes deals with hundreds of show producers, rock promoters, and sports teams, purchasing ticketing inventory below face value. That inventory is then marketed to fans who signed up to be on ScoreBig's email list, or have purchased tickets from ScoreBig in the past. Sites like [Travelzoo](#), [Goldstar](#), and [Google Offers](#) all offer similar services and can be a new avenue for customer growth.



**4. Score new leads with a point-based CRM system.** Thanks to the Customer Relationship Management software that is rapidly infiltrating major ticketing systems, groups can know more about their customers than any time in history. The trend of using digital tools to gather customer data on everything from purchasing history to donor habits will surely continue in 2013. Carnegie Hall has developed a CRM tablet app that alerts key staff when a patron scans his ticket at the door. It displays the price of his ticket so a sales representative or development officer can see what he paid for it. This in turn helps the sales representative to come up with the optimal pitch for a season renewal or a membership upgrade.

**5. Understand the customer life cycle and time your messaging.** Faced with a declining renewal rate and a drop-off in single-ticket purchases, the team at the Chicago Symphony decided to dive deep into their box-office data and "flag people in our accounts and see where they are in their life cycle (relative to their relationship with the orchestra, that is), whether it's to thank them for their support or ask them to recommit," said VP for Strategy and Special Initiatives Kevin Giglinto. Renewals for first- and second-year subscribers went from a low of 45 percent to a high of 80 percent in 2012. —DB

# how to get the **Most** out of your Ticketing **DOLLAR** *It's very simple, really:* **COLLABORATE**

Ticketing systems come in all shapes, sizes, and price ranges. For most organizations, the sophisticated high-end systems are out of reach. But there are a few ways to take advantage of their features without breaking the bank.

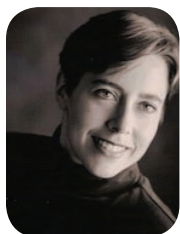
By Brett Ashley Crawford

## Umbrellas

Umbrellas are legally distinct corporations (nonprofit or for-profit) that provide administrative services to a number of arts organizations; they can also be large arts organizations that incorporate other, smaller ones. Partnerships, on the other hand, bring multiple organizations together without the oversight of a single governing institution.

The Kennedy Center does its own presenting and producing but at the same time serves as the umbrella for the National Symphony, the Washington National Opera, and the Susan Farrell Ballet. The Center is a 501(c)(3) that provides administrative services, performance and office space, and technical support for its resident organizations. It also handles all ticketing, from hiring box-office staff to buying ticket stock to licensing and maintaining software (Tessitura).

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust (PCT) is a different kind of umbrella, overseeing and providing services to members of the city's 14-block arts and entertainment/residential neighborhood called the Cultural District. PCT owns, manages, and/or leases the theaters and art galleries in the district and in some cases acts as a co-presenter. Its Shared Services Department handles bulk purchases of office essentials, negotiates health-care benefits, maintains a shared database, launches joint marketing efforts, and takes care of all ticketing. PCT is the world's largest multi-organization user of the Tessitura platform.




### BRETT ASHLEY CRAWFORD

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## Partnerships

Partnerships come in a variety of ways, but each strives for a common goal. A small children's theater company might be the perfect partner for a large, multi-genre general presenter. On the other hand, an all-music partnership might fail for reasons of competition or lack of clear objectives. (Or it might succeed: See Pittsburgh Music Alliance.) For-profit organizations can partner with nonprofit ones, arts and non-arts partnerships can work as well. There are risks, however, as Chris Walker outlines in his article [Arts and Non-Arts Partnerships](#). "At stake are reputations, constituent relations, organizational missions, and investments of time, money, and expertise if a project does not go well."

A partnership might be as simple as sharing one data administrator among multiple organizations that use the same ticketing software. Few arts groups with budgets of under \$10 million need a full-time data administrator, and even fewer can afford one with the appropriate expertise.

When organizations collaborate through partnerships or umbrellas, they benefit from the "all boats rise" theory. Competition doesn't have to be an issue: Studies show that people who attend more than one event per year are inclined to attend many. 

## PITTSBURGH MUSIC ALLIANCE

The Pittsburgh Music Alliance (PMA), is a data-sharing partnership among the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, Chatham Baroque, Pittsburgh Camerata, Pittsburgh Chamber Music Society, and Renaissance and Baroque (R&B). Formed in 2011 with a three-year grant, the PMA strives to grow audiences for all five organizations through shared data. Not only have ticket sales increased across all five groups, but an artistic cross-fertilization has yielded programs of intersecting themes to deepen the shared audience's relationship to the music. —BC





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## In the Next Issue...

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*Coming 2 April 2013*

**Research: Finding the funds**

**The Ask: Getting the funds**

**Tracking/counting the funds**

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