

3 FOR THE ROAD

BY ROB KNAPP

THREE GOOD IDEAS is all Paciolan President and CEO Kim Damron asked that attendees take away from Pacnet '19, this year's version of the ticketing technology company's annual conference for clients, vendors and staff.

That wasn't an outrageous request. The ticketing world is packed with topics, and the event Feb. 10-13, which drew about 750 people to Newport Beach, Calif., just a few miles from Paciolan's headquarters in Irvine, presented more than 50 sessions on breakthroughs of all sorts. Many were linked to the company's products and partners, but all of them spotlighted issues that the broader industry is figuring out.

Here are some ideas that speakers said had worked for them and their organizations. Feel free to take a few for yourself.

DO WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT

The University of Texas knew where to go when it wanted to create a better game-day experience. "It started with asking our fans what they wanted out of a University of Texas football game," said Drew Martin, the school's executive senior associate athletic director for external affairs.

"One of the things we heard was there's no real reason to be on campus before gates open, which is two hours out," Martin said. "So, what can we do to make it attractive to have fans come on campus early?"

Well, when in Austin ...

"What are the city of Austin's brand promises?" Martin said. "If you ask anybody, it's good food and beer, it's live music and it's tech.

"With a stadium with an infrastructure that dates back to the '20s in some of the areas, tech is probably going to be the third thing that I tackle. But good food and beer, we can do that. Live music, we can do that."

From that came Bevo Boulevard, a festival along the street on the west side of Darrel K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium that the school worked on with Learfield IMG College. It gave fans (and food trucks) a place to go and sponsors a place to activate. Beer prices are lower at the festival than they are inside the stadium, which Martin said was a hit.

To make the event more of an event, the school created a timeline of activities. UT mascot Bevo the steer walks down the boulevard temporarily named in his honor. An hour later, the football Longhorns show up, making their team walk to the stadium, Martin said.

Nearby, held on the giant circular lawn of the LBJ Presidential Library, is Longhorn City Limits, a concert series that welcomed headliners and opening acts before each of the home games in 2018. UT partnered with Austin-based promoter C3 Presents.

Making all this happen wasn't easy, Martin said, and in some cases required some additional creative thinking. Creating Bevo Bou-



Clockwise from top left: Wesley Cribb of Clemson and Lance Burnett of Stark RFID; Paciolan's Christian Lewis with Bob Burton, Derek Freeman and Brady Vossler of Nebraska; Robby Ray and Melissa Ramos of Cal-Irvine and Paciolan's Kate Hammond; Paciolan's Kim Damron during the opening session; Damron with athletic directors from a first-day leadership panel: Desiree-Reed Francois of UNLV, Jennifer Cohen of Washington and Heather Lyke of Pittsburgh.

levard meant shutting down a street that had been home to donor parking, and some donors had used those same spaces for years.

The school's solution? It created a valet parking service for the displaced fans.

GET HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Like the University of Texas, its rival to the south, the University of Oklahoma decided to put on an event last year, in this case a concert before the school's spring football game. It led the organization to a new way to sell tickets.

"We decided to make a change late in the process," said Patrick Nowlin, associate athletic director for ticket sales and operations, one that led to a "a perfect storm of circumstances."

"We decided in early January that we were going to book Trace Adkins," Nowlin said. "We needed to get a stage and we needed to get everything set up ... and the event's the first weekend of April."

The formerly free spring game would now carry an admission price to pay for the concert. Tickets for football season-ticket holders were \$5.

OU works with the Learfield IMG College ticket sales group, which suggested using group ticket platform Fevo to help sell the

tickets, but at the time Nowlin felt confident that he didn't need the help.

"By the time we got the go-ahead, it was three weeks till the event, and we had sold zero tickets to this thing," he said. "Now, like I said, this had been a free event. For the first time ever we are going to charge our season-ticket holders to come to this event. We have to pay for a concert, and we have to pull it all off within three weeks."

Fevo was brought in, and Nowlin was pleased with the results: The gate rose from 43,723 attendees in 2017 to 52,102 ticket buyers in 2018. That figure included 6,500 new buyers, 1 of 3 through Fevo.

Fevo was called on again to help maintain the Sooners' string of football sellouts after conference rival Baylor returned a block of tickets two weeks before their game in Norman. OU reached out to local school districts, and Fevo's social-media based system, which lets users take the lead by inviting friends to buy tickets and join a group going to the game, did the rest.

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Jacque Holowaty, Spectra vice president of client experience and ticketing, talked about how the company is filling space that's just



waiting to be used.

As the company tries to be creative with packaging meaningful experiences for concerts — something more than a lanyard and Row 3 on the floor, Holowaty said — it has discovered the press box, empty when

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concerts are in town and the tenant teams are elsewhere.

"We're going into basically unmanifested inventory," she said. "Let's put somebody in there, let's give them some food and beverage revenue, and let's fill every space that we can in our venues."

It's all part of meeting the high demand for packages. "People are wanting the package," she said. "They want the pre-show dinner, they want something more than a ticket," and it expands every year. Holowaty said Spectra is packaging when the Harlem Globetrotters, Pro Bull Riders and family shows come to town.

Speaking of families, high school graduations aren't moneymakers, since they normally don't involve rent or paid admission, but five Spectra venues are participating in a program that rents suites to families of graduates.

"We package in food and beverage revenue," Holowaty said. "We make it an experience for them to go celebrate their child graduating. Sometimes a couple of families get in, and you've got a bunch of parties."

The idea has caught on quickly — revenue has "increased drastically year over year," she said.

"We also sell flowers, I think, on top of that," Holowaty said. "We've gone into the florist business as well."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO LET GO

Interesting ideas expressed with confidence always sound great. But as Adam Flack, regional marketing director for Spectra at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, admits, "Not everything always works."

Flack, like one popular decluttering expert of the day, counsels that it's better to bid farewell to that which is not proving useful, and he was willing to provide a couple of examples at Wells Fargo Arena, part of the Iowa complex.

"I think we heard a presentation years ago at Pacnet about some loyalty program, so we jumped right in," Flack said. "We created a marketing plan for it; we really committed staff to it; we really tried to build that up. And at the end of the day, we saw a low adoption rate; we didn't really increase our ticket sales or our drop counts; and we were spending a lot of time for a very limited return. Maybe people in Des Moines, Iowa, weren't ready for that. Maybe we didn't have the right content or the right focus or the right rewards that they could earn, but ultimately we decided to abandon that program."

In another case, low turnout by club seat holders for minor league basketball games spawned a rewards program, but it lasted only a couple of years.

It's part of not being afraid to fail. Watch the numbers, Flack said, and if the idea doesn't take hold, try to discern the weak link in the plan and don't be afraid on. ▣

BUILD

COMING MASS ACCEPTANCE OF DIGITAL PASSBOOK DRIVES CHANGES IN TICKETING

BY ROB KNAPP

THAT

DIGITAL WALLETS ARE old enough that some of the most familiar have moved on from their original names: Apple Passbook, which made its debut in 2012, is now Apple Wallet, and Google Wallet has become part of Google Pay.

What's new is the level of enthusiasm that consumers, including ticket buyers, are showing for them.

E.J. Liao, who is vice president of product management for Paciolan after coming over from Amazon last year, noted that even three years after Apple came out with digital passes, adoption numbers were, well, passable in most cases, save some areas of relative strength such as airline boarding passes.

But 2019 looks to be when digital wallets will seriously fatten up, Liao said.

"This may be the year ... actually, let me restate that: I think this is the year," he said, citing a Juniper Research study saying that

usage with wallets has jumped significantly this year.

Bon Mercado, who manages strategic Google Wallet partnerships for Google, said many people grew accustomed to using digital wallets without realizing it.

"They were familiar with the Starbucks app, they were familiar with the Southwest app. They knew that their tickets were there, but they never considered it a wallet. It was just part of an app," Mercado said.

"I think there's a shift where people are realizing I can't have all these apps on my phone," he said. "More and more consumers are getting used to having a universal wallet in their phone that will hold multiple things."

It's good news for digital ticketing, where every click or tap that's required equates to "friction," and increases the probability that a

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Paciolan Chief Technology Officer Keith White gives a presentation.

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shopper won't become a buyer.

"Your payment capabilities are in your wallet now, your tickets are in your wallet now, you can put car insurance in your wallet, you can get into your hotel room with your phone instead of a key," Paciolan Chief Technology Officer Keith White said. "Eventually I see the day where your driver's licenses are going in there. The wallet, as far as being able to pay and getting into places and showing ID, it's going all digital, so we need to be ready for that."

Paciolan is opening up an integration model via a software development kit with select partners, starting with Sdearm Sports. The SDK, available this fall, will allow clients to enhance their mobile apps by selling and delivering tickets natively within their apps, much as airlines do.

In addition, Google Pay is newly available for customers on the Paciolan Hosted Merchant Services platform and can be used for both desktop and mobile web purchases. It will be incorporated into the mobile SDK.

Emily Kramer, a member of the Payment Partnerships team at Google, emphasized the convenience of Google Pay, which doesn't require card info to be loaded into your phone. "As

Clockwise from above: Nikki McCourt of Paciolan, Michelle McBride of Pittsburgh, Kendall Mayer of Oklahoma, Tyler Jon Kai of Tulane and Emily Boone of Miami; Jon Washington and Sean Ferrera of New Mexico and Bryan Goodall of Illinois State; Jill Krimmel and Brian O'Malley of StubHub, Deana Barnes of Paciolan and Brian Broussard of LSU.

long as the user is logged in to any Google property ... you can automatically start transacting with Google Pay," she said, as long as there is a payment cre-



THOUGHTS ON A COUPLE OF TECH TOPICS

Paciolan Chief Technology Officer Keith White used the Pacnet stage to address two hot tech topics in the ticketing business. Here's what he had to say:

Blockchain: "You hear a lot about blockchain. I've got a lot of companies coming to Paciolan and pitching this, that, and everything and wanting to implement blockchain. The question we really have to ask is, 'Is this hype, is this more press, or is there substance underneath it that we can actually use from a technology perspective?' And I would argue right now ... Blockchain in our space doesn't fundamentally move the needle.

"A lot of the companies that are looking at blockchain and using it are really talking about a digital wallet or a 'my account' with blockchain underneath, but if you build those and you build them right, you can question whether you really need blockchain. So, I think there's a lot of hype in this space right now.

"I think where we need to focus and where we need to execute is in the digital wallet space and treating the ticket as a true digital asset ... to secure the digital asset, there's a number of ways to do it, with or without blockchain."

Facial recognition: "The interesting thing about this technology is you could start to assess mood. You can start to assess in crowds the sentiment that's at the venue. Those are interesting things and interesting insights to glean.

"Obviously, facial recognition recognizes faces. The issue is, you've got to have the database with the face to match up against, so it's not realistic to have everybody's face that's going to buy one of your tickets in a database somewhere.

"But you could use it for VIP and in the case of credentials, where you really want to make sure the person walking in with the credential is that person ... so there's interesting applications of it, but I think it's pretty early and not directly relevant to entry at this point." — Rob Knapp

dential associated with that Google account.

The arrival of digital wallet use on a larger scale means more than quicker transactions for buyers. With increased use of digital passes, and the information attached to them, it also creates more marketing opportunities for venues and properties.

White noted an example from one client in which a fan would be scanned in at the gate and would receive an email. "So, you've got another touch point for fan engagement for folks scanning in," he said. "I could really see this going to push notification and text as well on the mobile device. You can offer upgrades, you can offer coupons, you could offer any number of experiences to your fans to continue to engage them."

Liao said it could also lead to a better answer to a seemingly simple question: Who is in the building?

"Today it's likely that you know one out of four people that goes to your event, roughly 25 percent," he said. "Would you like to know more about them so you can engage them at the event? ... That's what the digital passes will do for you. And here you can seamlessly share that pass to your friends. Instead of knowing just one out of four folks that comes to your event — eventually you'll know all of them." ▣



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MAKING

DATA EXPERTS SAY TAKING THE FIRST STEP CAN LEAD TO BIG DISCOVERIES

BY ROB KNAPP

THE

DATA CAN PROVIDE a ticketing operation innumerable ways to make itself better. Perhaps that's what makes data scary to some.

"For me, a few years ago, it seemed like this stuff was really, really overwhelming," said Mario Morris, chief financial officer and associate athletic director for the University of Wisconsin. "I love data; I've loved data since I was a kid; I like to process information, but there's so many solutions out there," citing all the companies and products in the field to choose from.

But Morris and two other data pros from university athletic departments said taking that deep dive into numbers had improved both their ticketing operations and other parts of their businesses.

"I think we're in a transformational time in college athletics with regards to data," Morris said.

For Ryan Gottlieb, associate athletic director for sales strategy and business intelligence at Rutgers University, using data more effectively started with implementing an advanced analytics platform as part of a recent renewal with Paciolan.

"To say this has been a game changer for us would probably be an understatement," Gottlieb said.

"Our data wasn't clean. It was all over the place," he said. "We had no real strategy, we had no real systems, and our thought process was we need to develop a road map."

That map led officials to the idea of re-examining how they look at potential football season-ticket renewals. "We identified 25-30 variables that we thought could affect the likelihood of somebody renewing their football season ticket," Gottlieb said, but they found they needed to rein in the process.

"We realized we were overcomplicating the hell out of this," Gottlieb said. Instead, "we came up with five categories that we wanted to

do a deep dive in to see how it was affecting renewal." The categories they chose were number of season tickets bought, scan data, consecutive years of purchase, year-over-year difference in season ticket purchases and priority points.

It led to a renewal scoring platform, available to sales reps, showing how likely an account was to renew. It also made Rutgers officials rethink their compensation for reps, after numbers showed some reps with lower renewal percentages had also been renewing larger numbers of the accounts least likely to renew.

With the shift, "We're celebrating renewing somebody that had a 1 score on our 1 to 5 scale, has been a one-year season-ticket holder (and) scanned half of their tickets the previous year, and that's a renewal worth celebrating," Gottlieb said.

Gottlieb said Rutgers plans to add data from surveys it does to its database. At Clemson University, where Matthew Cobb is director of business intelligence, data analytics and special projects for athletics, "We decided to look externally for data to bring in and compare to our ticketing and our donation data, to help enrich the data that we already have."

Incorporating three years of information from Fanatics, Clemson's merchandise-side provider, led to some interesting discoveries.

Clemson takes the Fanatics data, which includes physical and email addresses of buyers



Jason Heggemeyer of Illinois, Brad Wurthman of Virginia Tech and Paciolan's Craig Ricks.



Clemson cross-referenced data from licensed merchandise partner Fanatics with its own to produce new insights.

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and how much they spent on Tigers gear, “and we cross-reference it with Paciolan information.”

They found that the average Fanatics buyer lived 421 miles from Clemson. More important, the share of those buyers who had donated to Clemson’s athletic fund, were football season-ticket holders or had bought a single-game ticket in the last three seasons was below 10 percent in each case. They then could dial down to a 250-mile “driving distance” radius.

“That’s a lot of potential leads for IPTAY (the athletic foundation) and our ticket office to act upon,” Cobb said. “And that’s kind of the whole purpose of this is that we wanted to bring in all this information to enrich the information we already had.”

Cobb said the benefit of cross-referencing the data reached into other areas, including showing retail partners why it made sense to carry more product. He described how, using the data, the school could tell retailers how many fans lived near a particular store. “Look, there are almost 4,700 customers that live

within 15 miles of this store,” he gave as a possible example of that conversation, “and you’re only carrying two hats. So, you need to carry more product.”

Once organizations have tasted success with data analysis, the new ideas come quickly. Gottlieb said his school was looking at why the athletic department’s marketing emails were opened more often but clicked on less often when the user was on a mobile device. Morris is curious to see if scanned attendance is a leading indicator for paid attendance.

For those who are just starting their “data journey” as Morris called it, one key is to find people who will champion data in the organization.

Another is finding the right target for early efforts. “One thing we focused on was starting small and trying to get easy wins,” Morris said. ▣

NOTEBOOK

PACIOLAN PARTNERS ON INSURANCE WITH TICKETGUARDIAN

BY ROB KNAPP

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER Keith White announced during the Pacnet opening session that Paciolan had launched ticketing insurance through a partnership with TicketGuardian. White noted it would not only give buyers piece of mind but also might persuade prospective purchasers to hit the “buy” button.

Mississippi State University and the University of Colorado are among the first of Paciolan’s clients offering the insurance.

New- port Beach, Calif.-based Ticket-

Jamie Vosmeier led the delegation from the Fox Theatre in Atlanta as it accepted the Founder’s Award.

Guardian recently announced an \$8 million Series A funding round led by American Family Ventures and IA Capital Group, bringing its total funding to \$13 million.

STARS WITH A NEW TWIST

The annual Pacnet Star of the Year Awards expanded by a category, adding Event of the Year, and also inaugurated a new method of picking the winners. After Paciolan selected the finalists for each award this year,

the company handed the process off to its clients, who voted for the winners. At an event where community is stressed, it was a “great way to bring that all together,” said Christian Lewis, the company’s vice president of business development. Taking home awards this year:

FOUNDER’S AWARD

FOX THEATRE, ATLANTA, a Paciolan client since 2012, won the only award not voted on by clients, honoring the historic theater’s successful use of a variety of the company’s products. The Fox was first in its category to use the 3D seat map systems of Paciolan company Ballena Technologies. It sold more than 50,000 tickets in 2.5 hours for last season’s “Hamilton” run, and was No. 1 in the world in VenuesNow’s recent year-end Top Stops chart for facilities with capacities of 2,001-5,000, based on tickets sold.

STAR OF THE YEAR

LSU. The Southeastern Conference school won the honor for the work it has put into online fan experience. The school sells almost 90 percent of single-game football tickets online, integrated parking with tech company ParkHub and added Salesforce.com to its fundraising office.

EVENT OF THE YEAR

ELTON JOHN AT PPL CENTER, ALLENTOWN, PA. When John kicked off his farewell tour at the arena in September, it became the venue’s highest-grossing event at more than \$1.7 million. Tickets sold out in 23 minutes.

BREAKTHROUGH INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON. The Huskies were recognized for a digital marketing revamp with an eye on adding and keeping ticket buyers. A program directed at first-year ticket buyers helped boost their retention rate by 50 percent. (A snowstorm in Seattle kept most of the Washington contingent home, but Bess Hampsch, director of ticket services, was there to collect the award.)

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS. Total athletic ticket revenue for the Conference USA school in Denton, Texas, which signed on with Paciolan last year, was up 22 percent and scholarship fund donations rose 20 percent.

BROWN IN THE HOUSE

Among those on hand at the conference’s opening session was Greg Brown, president and chief executive officer of Learfield IMG College. Learfield acquired Paciolan, known for a short time while under the ownership of Comcast Spectacor as Spectra’s Ticketing and Fan Engagement division, in June 2017.

Learfield, long a power in college sports through its multimedia rights and sponsorship sales, completed a merger with IMG College in January.

FOUR FOR FOUR

In her opening address, Paciolan President and CEO Kim Damron celebrated a perfect College Football Playoff for the company: Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Alabama and national champion Clemson are all clients. ▣





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