

FRIDAYS AT FOUR VOLUME ONE ISSUE 14

This Issue will recap some of the highlights of roundtables and workshops we attended at the IAFE Convention in Las Vegas.

SMART CARDS AND BAR CODE TICKETS

There continues to be a real buzz around the topic of smart cards and bar coded tickets. In 2000, when IAFE held their first roundtable on this topic, the table had less than 10 attendees. This year both sessions had over 40 attendees.

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of going to electronic systems and away from paper tickets. Giles Ellis from the Florida State Fair said they had gone out for bids on providing a system. After reviewing the bids, they did not move forward and now are in the process of a full upgrade of their grounds to become fiber optic.

A major discussion was on how to handle e-tickets if you have used them for concertgoers. The challenge is that most of the ticket holders show up fifteen minutes before the show. Delays in getting them in the house were discussed by one Fair that had gone to e-tickets. The challenge was the lack of enough hand-held readers to handle the demand.

On the carnival front, NAME, the combined carnival companies, has been using a bar-coded ticket at some of their shows. They continue to work out the logistics of the system. One Fair who works with NAME mentioned the desire for their Ticketmaster system to be able to work in tandem with the NAME system.

Also mentioned was how the unused value is handled. There was mixed opinion on whether the unused value should be returned to the customer or no refunds.

Another item was how do you handle multiple users of the tickets as now happens when a family divides up tickets purchased at the carnival window. Bar-coded tickets can also be individual stock, although the ability to buy one \$100 ticket and then split it up for use by other users is not there yet.

And of course cost always enters the discussion. Most who have used any kind of an e-ticket system mentioned they had found a company that provides the service, and their desire would be that a group of fairs get together and share the expense of a cashless system.

SELF SERVE KIOSKS

Much discussion centered on how to issue gate admit tickets and the ability to reduce the number of actual ticket sellers. One of the areas that was mentioned as a possible use for kiosks was to be able to show maps of the grounds, possibly printing the daily schedules, avoiding costly printing of excess daily schedules, and even the possible team up with a local bank to sell tickets at their off-grounds ATM locations. One Fair said that of all tickets sold this year 65 percent were purchased on-line and they are moving their investment to a focus on Internet sales.

FAIRS DARK ON SELECTED DAYS

There was a discussion of Fairs that had moved to closing the grounds on certain days during the run. One of the sessions talked about the California State Fair, they went dark for three Mondays during their run. The first year allowed the Fair to save on expenses.

The question that came up was how much was lost in revenues from gate, food, carnival and other areas by not being open. California State Fair plans to continue closing as the pros and cons need to be looked at over more than one year. Fairs that have done this already in California are San Diego, Orange County and Los Angeles.

THE NEW PRCA WORKING WITH YOUR RODEO

This session was a chance for Fairs to learn more about the changes on the horizon for the PRCA, The PRCA is going to reduce the number of events that will lead to qualifying prize money for the NFR Finals in Las Vegas. The strategy is to try and focus on getting less of the wash out factor by cowboys, who when they do not score at one rodeo move on before even appearing at that rodeo. Less is more as the PRCA sees it, and they have been trying to find ways to increase the quality competition at Rodeos. Another plan they are working on is to award performance points to encourage cowboys to be more marketable prior to and during rodeo events.

DISCUSSION FORUM COMMERCIALEXHIBITS AND CONCESSIONS

Many attendees were asking about how to deal with the many local non-profit groups that work at the Fair with food booths or commercial booths. One Fair manager (Iowa) said that at his Fair, he does not accept the word non-profit. He requires all vendors to work under the same standards and that for the ten days of his fair, all of the vendors are for-profit, they are all there to make money. He and others mentioned the challenge of non-profit groups that want to under price their food items, expecting they will sell more products. The suggestion was to set a suggested minimum price on food items.

Other issues discussed were the pros and cons of using scrip for food purchases. Most mentioned they were concerned about the loss of the impulse buy, or how to staff the scrip stations that would be required.

The end of Fair move out was discussed and how Fairs deal with final night release. Many discussed how they issue a release form for any vendors who leave the grounds. Any vendors that are paid vendors, must get a release form that until issued does not allow that vendor to leave the grounds.

Also mentioned was the Fairs that also go into a program that makes sure only persons that are setting up to work the Fair have access to the grounds.