

Key Ticketing Trends to Drive Success in 2017

Richard Hilton, SecuTix Head of Customer Success for UK and Ireland, predicts the key trends and challenges facing the ticketing industry over the coming twelve months. Is he right? Let the discussion begin!

1. END OF THE HOSPITALITY AND TICKETING SILOS

Traditionally the ticketing and hospitality departments within an organisation were very separate, the result being that operationally there was very little integration between the two. The same could be said for software solutions. There were ticketing platforms offering no hospitality options whatsoever and at the other end of the spectrum, bespoke hospitality systems with absolutely no ability to do ticketing. But that's all changing, in the main because of two key factors.

"... the line between ticketing and hospitality is being blurred"

Firstly, due to the economic climate, businesses need to streamline and it's both costly and time-consuming to have two departments performing similar tasks, alongside two separate systems. Secondly, the line between ticketing and hospitality is being blurred and that's down to a dramatic shift over the last four years in the profile of the hospitality customer.

We are seeing a decline in corporate bulk buying of hospitality packages and an increase in individuals wanting varying degrees of hospitality and VIP experiences. Take a football club: they may offer a ticket with a free pint; the next level up is a ticket with free pint and a burger; another tier is a ticket with a free bar and so forth. This changing landscape has forced the need for a hybrid solution combining both ticketing and hospitality.

As a result, those working in live sport and events will be looking to save costs and integrate their processes by considering platforms like those we offer at SecuTix that can marry the two worlds.



2. DEMOCRATISE 1-TO-1 MARKETING

Personalised marketing is a trend that will continue to gain momentum across many industries in 2017, none more so than ticketing. There is now an expectation from customers to receive tailored deals, personalised brand messages and one-to-one marketing communication. However, the ability to do this well has often been the preserve of large businesses who can afford external CRM companies, enterprise solutions like Microsoft Dynamics, and the resource in-house to manage all this.

"There is now an expectation from customers to receive tailored deals, personalised brand messages and one-to-one marketing communication"

2017 will see smaller businesses getting in on the action, offering more personalisation thanks to systems like SecuTix Audience Management (SAM) which creates strong two-way integration with CRM systems and is simple for in-house teams to use. Clients can build html emails in the tool, create static or dynamic lists of people and send out automated email campaigns. It can also be linked to individual promos, sending out unique

CASE STUDY: UEFA OPERATIONS

Back in 2013, UEFA's Revenue Operation's Department recognised the need to streamline their ticketing and hospitality systems.

"We found ourselves with four separate systems and databases: one for Euros ticketing, another for Champions League ticketing, and then two different hospitality systems to cover Euros and Champions League. It was clear that a more efficient way of working was required," said Philippe Margraff, Head of Revenue Operations at UEFA.

"With all data and CRM for both ticketing and hospitality in the same place, we now have a holistic view of fans..."

The situation was costly in terms of resource, time and outsourcing to third parties so UEFA ran a tender process out of which SecuTix was appointed. The SecuTix system was first used for the 2015 Champions League and Europa League Finals and, following that success, for the UEFA EURO2016.

The implementation of the SecuTix system brought greater flexibility and control. This was a key success factor in filling the stadia with fans from all over the world at all 51 matches. The system successfully handled hospitality orders and all the complexities that come with that (VAT breakdowns, invoicing requirements etc). And because it's one system, UEFA could easily move around inventory between hospitality and ticketing.

Returns of hospitality tickets has always proved problematic, but now it is an easy process to take back inventory and trigger further general sale ticket availability.

Opportunities for upselling to fans based on their ticketing data increased and the full control over the inventory allowed selling until the very last minute.

"This flexibility has made a huge difference" commented Margraff. "With all the data and CRM for both ticketing and hospitality in one place, we now have a holistic view of fans and those insights play a fundamental role in our fan engagement strategy for future tournaments." ■

single-use codes that are directly targeted to individuals. This means that smaller events and sporting clubs can integrate ticketing with CRM technologies to build stronger relationships between their brand and customer, ultimately driving sales.

3. INTEGRATION OF FEATURES

CUSTOMER FOCUS: SARACENS RFC

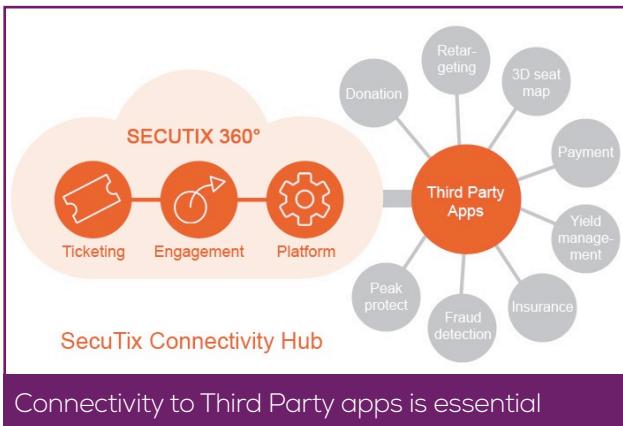


Andy Duckworth, Chief Commercial and Marketing Officer at Saracens, has been using SecuTix 360° software since the start of the 2016/17 season and explains the differences it has made to personalised marketing.

"We now have an integrated system with extensive promotional flexibility that has completely changed the way we operate"

"It's fair to say that in the past our one-to-one marketing was a simple process with limited functionality but we now have an integrated system with extensive promotional flexibility that has completely changed the way we operate."

Saracens can now run campaigns that in the past they could not execute. One is the Allianz First Fans. This is for Saracens supporters attending their first ever game. The very next day they receive images of the day and a timebound discount code for their next match. Conversion rates are good but more importantly it adds value to the experience and shows that the club cares about its fans. ■



Connectivity to Third Party apps is essential

Integration will be a top priority for live events and sport organisations in 2017. Everyone wants to deliver the best fan experience and so organisations are looking to work with the best-in-class solutions that are right for their business. However, they are coming up against barriers. There is nothing more frustrating than being told by a partner that they can't have their chosen solution because their system isn't flexible enough to integrate with it.

"Clients will want to integrate with interactive 3D seat maps, cancellation insurances, Yield Management..."

Customers and organisations should not have to put up with a second-class experience simply because 'computer says no'. Technologies are changing at a fast pace and ticketing clients want

to incorporate new systems in order to offer the best customer journey. Our priority should be to help our clients by being more flexible.

The SecuTix platform is to offer API based integration with other software solutions using industry standards REST/JSON and SOAP/XML. We can either research and offer the best in breed systems or integrate with existing ones our clients have chosen to work with. It could be interactive 3D seat maps, cancellation insurances or Yield Management analysis. All our applications are available through APIs allowing us to connect with third party applications and conversely third party applications to connect with our ticketing platform. The ticketing industry needs to adjust and innovate in order to realise all of our clients' visions.

4. MOBILE FIRST

Mobile optimization is not new, but our industry needs to start thinking mobile first. Why?

Because research shows that over 70% of UK customers use their mobile first to browse the internet and that e-commerce sales through mobile are on the increase.

For example, 75% of visitors to UEFA's website are from mobile. However, our industry is playing catch-up in this area. 2017 is time for our industry to wake-up and catch-up when it comes to mobile.

CASE STUDY: 3RD PARTY INTEGRATION

Saracens moved to SecuTix at the start of this season because they wanted integration.

"We have a huge responsibility as a club to fans and want to deliver the best fan experience we can both in our physical stadium and in the 'virtual stadium,'" explains Andy Duckworth, Chief Commercial and Marketing Officer for Saracens.

"But frustratingly other partners wouldn't integrate with the solutions we wanted, telling us we had to work with their systems only. But those systems weren't always good enough. When I have a problem, I want to work with a partner who will help

me solve it, not just try to sell me their products or limit me to their functionality."

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SecuTix's integration first way of working is proving to be a flexible solution for Saracens. The club wanted to use Pacifa 3D maps as part of the customer journey and SecuTix simply plugged it into their ticketing software. And in the future when Saracens

play matches at Wembley or Twickenham, SecuTix will integrate with the respective stadium mapping systems when selling tickets online, meaning the customer experience is world-class from start to finish. The result is an immersive, seamless customer journey for Saracens fans.

"The SecuTix relationship has had a really strong start," added Andy. "In the first 3 months of working together, season ticket sales are up 4% on budget, hospitality 12% and match by match sales are up 14%. A big part of the increase in the latter we believe is down to the improved user experience." ■

5. LOTTERY PROCESS STEPS UP



Crashes, slow payment process, poor customer experience have been common complaints of the lottery process. But we're seeing this change now with new technology.

For big events like the EUROS, even when it's a lottery and timing of ticket application doesn't matter, people still rush to be the first ones to put their request in. That combined with the rise of bots is making management of the load a real challenge. Before we started working with UEFA they had suffered from this. In 2012 when the lottery portal for the EUROS launched, it crashed. At one point a portal was down for over a day. By EURO2016, SecuTix had worked with UEFA to address the issue and as a result when 25 branded portals went live on the same day, there were no crashes.

There are also improvements being made to the operational speed of the lottery process. In the past, card details were being charged on a one-by-one basis so it was ridiculously time consuming. We now have a multi-threaded system to charge cards to make the process faster.

For the public lottery for the EUROS, there tends to be around 11 million ticket request for 1 million general public tickets. In 2012, the lottery process took 10 days, compared to just one day four years later. Operational savings were made in time and effort to run the lottery. The fast communication of results also improved the customer experience.

Lotteries are fair, quick and simple processes and if done well, we can expect to see them being used much more for heavily demanded events and fair distribution of tickets.

6. SPOTLIGHT ON SPONSOR TICKETS

Just as we track tickets sold to the public, we are now seeing a move to monitor the distribution and usage of tickets allocated to sponsors. Traditionally, just one contact name at a sponsor would be recorded for the large bulk of tickets the company received. The event organisers or sport

club would have no visibility over how these tickets were used or who used them.

We are now seeing a requirement from both organisers and sponsors for a better system to manage large orders of tickets and their distribution. SecuTix built a specific portal for UEFA to do just this. How sponsors use their tickets for every venue, for every match can now be monitored, action can be taken to avoid empty seats and everyone benefits from the captured data on who used each ticket.

CONCLUSION

Things are changing and fast. Ticketing clients are reorganising their internal structures, looking to save costs and clamouring for detailed data on their customers. In turn, the customer is demanding better marketing on different platforms and expecting first class experiences. What does this mean for the ticketing industry in 2017? Big data and big visions will force us to reassess our role, explore areas traditionally outside our remit and become more flexible. There is a brilliant opportunity for us to no longer be just suppliers of a product but a true partner working alongside clients to achieve their vision. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Hilton has recently taken the role as Head of Customer Success for SecuTix, a Swiss based SaaS Ticketing and Hospitality Solution. Prior to this, Richard spent the last three years working for UEFA where he was responsible for the internalisation of Ticketing and Hospitality operations for the UEFA Super Cup, UEFA Europa League Final, UEFA Champions League Final and UEFA EURO 2016. Richard's background previously, as a senior member of the white label Ticketmaster team, has meant working on many large scale projects both domestically but also internationally. Having been involved in large scale events in over 10 countries, multiple currencies, multiple languages and multiple genres; Richard's expertise is wide spread – from small events where effort is needed to sell tickets, right through to having to manage incredible demand for a low amount of inventory.



For more information, please contact

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