



by Bob Galombeck

## Key Components When Starting an Entertainment Program

If you've never had an entertainment program at your property and are considering one, there are several areas to think about in advance. Some are very obvious and others perhaps not. The whole idea is to knock off as much as you can ahead of the game. Once you start making offers, getting shows confirmed, start the marketing process, and begin show advance work, everything gets very hectic, so it is a lot easier if most of your front-end work is already in place. Following are some of those key components:

**Establish a working guide for an annual budget and calendar of dates.** You can always adjust as you go. Do you want any holiday shows? Are there any VIP private events planned that may block out the room from being available? Will shows just be on weekends or will you consider Thursdays or Sundays where more routed options could be possible? Do you want Friday shows to start later than Saturday shows because of the work week? Should you go dark any particular months?

**Identify your demographic.** What genre is best to cater to: traditional country, adult contemporary, R&B, comedy, EDM, etc. Does your demographic tell you to stick to one genre of entertainer or perhaps mix it up? Are you willing to take some risk to draw a demographic that currently is not a large regular customer base, such as an Asian show? Entertainment can help expand your demographic.

**Know your key internal entertainment personnel?** Do you need to hire an entertainment director, marketing concert specialist, internal production crew to run stage, sound and/or lights, etc.? Who will review and ultimately sign artist contracts? Have a contact sheet produced in advance of all key personnel to be included with all artist contracts.

**Outside partners.** Are you going to contract out the production and staging or do you want to be self-contained from the start with an adequate inhouse system? Will your concert marketing work be done in-house or contracted out? Are you willing to buy third party ad materials, or will you create everything internally? What radio is in your area that can help promote the event? Are you going to book internally or use an outside buyer?

**Establish your ticketing plan.** There are plenty of companies out there who will offer you ticketing services. See who offers the best deal for setup and convenience

fees. Who tells you that you ultimately own your customer database used to promote shows? Selling tickets in house is an option, but is often more restricting and time consuming.

**Get a venue addendum in place.** This document will accompany your offers and lay out what your property's bigger provisions are. Provisions on jurisdiction, force majeure events, indemnity clause, insurance, radius clause, etc. are all well worth spelling out in advance of your first artist offer. Your property is probably not on the radar of agents if you are just starting out, so it is good to spell things out. Your addendum can be reviewed and amended as you go easily enough.

**Determine your advertising plan.** When do you want to start the marketing process – once an offer confirms or wait until you have a contract fully executed contract in hand? How soon before a show do you want to announce it and then go on sale to allow enough time to develop your ad materials and promote?

If you are not familiar at all with an artist rider, it would be good to get your hands on one in advance and look it over to understand what artists typically want. These riders are not cast in stone. They are up for amending and negotiating. Here are some basic rider examples and questions to ask yourself to help formulate your program:

**Meals and hospitality** – Will you give out vouchers or meal cards for your onsite restaurant? Will room service be an option for star artists? Will you consider catering vs. non-catering? Will you provide alcohol, bus stock, etc. that is typically listed in the hospitality section of the rider?

**Ground transportation** – What types of vehicles do you have and are you willing to contract out the ground if necessary when luxury SUVs or even limos are requested? Do you have a standard 15 passenger van that can typically accommodate most ground transportation?

**Electrical** – Can you provide shore power to artist buses so they do not have to use their onboard generators continually while onsite?

**Labor** – For artist load ins and outs, do you have the staff to provide internally or will you leave that to the production company to provide?

**Comp tickets** – How many are you willing to allow for artists and will those be in your top tier seating or not?

**Meet and greets** – Where will you do these? Do you have a property banner, photographer, etc.? Many artists want to do meet and greets close to the backstage area and not go any real distance for this.

**Credentials** – Will you have your own credentials that artists must use for their backstage guests, meet and greet attendees, etc.?

**Payment** – Can the artist cash their day of show check at your property?

**Artist merchandise sales** - Will you take a percent of sales or give the artist 100%, are you willing to provide a seller when needed, etc.

**Buyouts** – Are you willing to do buyouts on any rider items if that is an option presented? Buyouts may include hotel, ground, meals, hospitality, and gear carried by the artist to the show.

When making your first offer, it is a good idea to detail it out as much as possible so there is less back and forth trying to gather up enough information before it is presented by the agent to management. If your offer confirms, the agency will then have most all the information they need already to transfer to the contract you'll receive. Some of the main elements besides your date and offer price to consider would be time of doors and show, length of show, sole headliner or support act considered, capacity, ticket pricing per tier, gross potential, artist comps, merchandise deal, meet and greet request, announce date, on-sale date, and an expiration date for the offer itself. You may also want to put a few of the special provisions from your venue addendum in the offer itself just to re-iterate those items, such as no alcohol provided, radius clause, any insurance requirements, etc.

Every property does things differently. There is no real standard that everyone goes by. You will have to determine what works best for your property and personnel. ♣

*Bob Galombeck is Vice President and Talent Buyer for Houston Productions. He can be reached by calling (612) 388-9825 or email bob@houstonproductions.net.*

**1 FOR THE MONEY**

For advanced, reliable access to cash, Ever-i is always on the money and always an asset for your property.

**EVER-I** 

G2E BOOTH #1150  
ever-i.com

The advertisement features a man and a woman celebrating next to an Ever-i cash machine. The man is wearing a black polo shirt and glasses, and the woman is wearing a red top. They are both smiling and holding stacks of cash. The background is a vibrant green with yellow and orange light streaks.