



by Kell Houston

The Outside Entertainment Buyer

Many of you out there working with concert entertainment use the services of outside entertainment buyers. This would be a good time to educate everyone about what out sourced talent buyers really do and why they are so beneficial to your success. For those of you that buy your entertainment in house, this will give you cause to think over the advantages to working with an outside buyer.

There are many very good outside talent buying companies. They are usually made up of people that have been in the entertainment business in various forms, whether as agents representing acts, to managers, to ex-musicians, to ex-tour managers and road managers. As a group they are all very experienced entertainment people. Most of them attend numerous conferences all across the country, networking, speaking, seeing and meeting with major agencies and management companies. In this business, experience is very important; however, it all really comes down to relationships, track record and buying power. A qualified talent buyer has that advantage.

For example, a stand alone inside buyer for a casino has nowhere near the same advantages an outside buyer does in having access to inside industry business, new tours, pricing parameters, trends etc. A qualified outside talent buyer/company is working with casinos all across the country. Your inside buyer is usually wearing several hats in the casino and has no time to do the significant research, attend all the industry conferences and do the networking needed to be on top of the concert business. Additionally, how do you compare the buying power of one property verses a company that buys for numerous properties? An outside buyer knows the "real" price. An outside buyer gets to a yes or no answer very quickly and in most cases the answer is already in hand when the availability is presented. It's important to understand that an in-house or inside talent buyer does not have those advantages and will consequently miss a lot of that information.

So why is it that many casinos resist working with an outside talent buyer? Is it the misperception that it is too much of an expense? Is it a trust issue? Is it a licensing issue? Is it misunderstanding getting in the way? Too often decisions are made based on bad or inaccurate information. People do not fully comprehend that there is a cultural difference between the corporate mind set and the entertainment mind set. Corporate sees dollars and cents evaporating into thin air. They tend to look at things from a black ink and red ink perspective, but your

entertainment/marketing people are dealing with a lot of undeterminable variables.

Entertainment is not a black ink and red ink issue. Yes, there is a lot of money going through that department. The people in that department have to be accountable. Communication between corporate and entertainment must be clear. There is no book written with instructions you can pass along. It is sometimes very difficult to bridge that mind set between corporate and entertainment. The inexperienced buyer can easily cost your casino hundreds of thousands of dollars without anyone really understanding why. The outside talent buyer is a licensed and accountable expert in the entertainment business. They help your entertainment people. They are not competition and they are not coming in to take your job. Basically, they can save you a lot of money.

There are experts out there in all aspects of the gaming business. No one in their right mind would try to build a casino without financing, lawyers, architect firms, a general contractor, electrical people and numerous sub contractors to do the finish work. Almost all casinos contract with outside gaming business people to supply and stock the gaming floor with machines, table games, etc. You also buy your paper products, restaurant supplies, uniforms and on and on from outside vendors. The casinos always try to hire the experts. That is the best way for you to gain an advantage over your competitors.

Does your casino have a multimillion dollar budget for concert entertainment? Do you present more than one show a week? Or are you like most of the properties out there watching your budget and averaging a show or so a month? Then there are the smaller properties in more rural areas that may only do a few shows a year. Obviously when you are doing fewer shows, they become very important. Therefore the cost and the choice of artist are very crucial to your success. Getting fast answers and being able to respond quickly to opportunities when they come up is another important criteria, especially for the bigger properties with multiple shows.

The entertainment department is usually somewhere inside marketing and the person in charge answers to everyone. That translates to delays in all aspects of the decision making process, from the money being spent to the artist being chosen. Delays mean missed opportunities and missed opportunities mean higher costs and secondary choices. An outside approved buyer for your casino can help implement policies and procedures that will help facilitate

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the whole process of making offers for artists and putting the actual concert together. Outside talent buyers get answers quickly.

Getting fast answers is a two way street. Numerous times a casino has to sit on an opportunity for so long that it goes away and they lose a very good show at a great price. On the other hand, many casinos drag their feet and when they finally make the decision to move forward, they expect an answer in 24 hours. What is it about either of these scenarios that represent efficient business? Outside talent buyers educate and train your people. They will help bridge that gap between the corporate mind set and the entertainment mind set. The point is to simplify, clarify, communicate and create success,

one event at a time.

We are all in business to be successful. Success leaves clues and experience stacks the deck in your favor. The bottom line is to us all your resources internally and externally. Don't be afraid to work with the experts. Outside talent buyers that are experienced in Indian Country are on your side. You should see them at your conferences and you know they can't be there year after year if they are not doing good business. ♣

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Don't replace - REPAIR IN-HOUSE AND SAVE!

Buying Replacement Units!

Is your casino totally self-sufficient in repairing monitors, power supplies, bill validators and ticket printers or are you throwing away hundreds or thousands of dollars purchasing replacement units? While it is not exactly a "hidden" cost to your department, some slot managers simply accept the price of replacements as the "cost of doing business" while it progressively nibbles away at the casino's bottom line. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.

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About Randy Fromm: I am the publisher of Slot Tech Magazine. First published in 2001, Slot Tech Magazine is a monthly trade journal focusing on casino slot machine repair. I have been repairing electronics for the gaming industry since 1972. I really enjoy what I do and I love showing others how easy it can be. **No previous knowledge of electronics is required.**

For more information, including course offerings and complete pricing information, please visit the website at slot-techs.com



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