



by Kahlil Ashanti

How to Leverage Technology to Find the Right Entertainment

The importance of solid and relevant entertainment programming is an often overlooked facet of a property's marketing strategy, and it's easy to understand why. With entertainment and marketing responsibilities stretching people thin, it can be a difficult task for anyone to stay abreast of how to locate the best entertainment for their needs. The workload has doubled, but the hours in a day remain the same.

The effective use of technology to better understand your entertainment choices is increasingly becoming a topic of conversation at gaming conferences across the country.

With so many responsibilities to keep track of, technology can be a great way to stay organized and informed about what's happening in both the entertainment and marketing worlds.

When it comes to booking the right entertainment, YouTube is the number one tool for a visual representation of what you're getting. Of course Google or a band's website is the first port of call for most people searching for an act, and there's no denying that a great website is an effective sales tool, but being able to see an artist on stage interacting with a crowd is a surefire way to understand what you're getting for your buck.

A Facebook fan page is a close second when it comes to finding that perfect entertainment fit for your casino. An act without a Facebook fan page is likely not engaging with their fans, and their ability to add marketing value to your equation is minimal. The most important thing to remember when perusing an artist's Facebook page is that the number of 'Likes' don't equal the depth of the engagement the band or artist has with their fans. Just because an artist has 10,000 'Likes' doesn't mean the 10,000 followers are paying attention. There are companies out there that actually allow you to purchase as many 'Likes' as you want. You want acts who are engaging their fans, because if fans are engaged they are more likely to spread the word and create buzz, and word of mouth marketing is a valuable commodity. Right next to the number of 'Likes' on any Facebook fan page is 'People Talking About This'. That's the number you're looking for. A good example is The Jets Band. They may only have 5,288 fans, but they have 1,531 talking about them. This means that about 30% of their followers are constantly spreading the news and stories The Jets post on their page. When it comes to booking an act, this is a valuable assessment not just of how much effort the band puts into marketing themselves, but how effective they will be at helping you and your marketing department get the word out.

While Facebook and YouTube are quite ubiquitous in their reach and effectiveness, some people prefer to begin with the band's website. The best way to analyze a band or an artist's

website in less than 20-seconds is to look for the 'Call To Action.' Simply put, what does the band want you to do when you visit the site? If you visit a website and you have no idea what the artist wants you to do, it's a good indicator that it's a poorly designed website, which means that not a lot of thought has gone into the artist's marketing strategy. If you visit a website and you instantly know what to do, whether it's 'buy my music', 'watch my video' or 'join my mailing list', then that's a great indicator that you're dealing with an artist who gets it. There will always be exceptions to every rule, and there are plenty of really expensive fancy websites out there, but a website without a clear and defined 'call to action' is like a restaurant without a menu. Artists don't have to spend thousands of dollars to design websites any more, so beware of excuses when it comes to the absence of a website.

Google is another obvious choice, and if you Google a band and their website is on the first page, they're doing something right. If you have to scroll seven pages in on Google to find the artist's site, you're losing valuable time and should probably consider an alternative.

There are many other social media channels to explore but YouTube and Facebook are great places to start because they democratize the currency of audience attention in a way that delivers value to your decisions. If you're wondering if people are really paying attention to a specific act, you'll find your answers here. A common misconception with a lot of the American Idol/The Voice type of acts is that because they're on television they must be a great investment for you. Arming yourself with the tools described here will help you avoid financial risk and heartache down the road. At the end of the day, you want to hire and invest in artists that invest in themselves.

Back in the day, these tasks were left to The Yellow Pages and the size of the ad you saw told you how important the band or artist was. The Yellow Pages have morphed into the Internet, and the ads are now living and breathing – the people who discover these bands and talk about them to their friends.

Although newspaper and television commercials haven't disappeared altogether, they will never have the power and influence they once enjoyed and technology continues to provide new and efficient tools to help you find what you're looking for. ♣

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