

Florida State Ticket Marketplace

**Gary Huff, Associate Director
Florida State University Athletics Administration**

Abstract

With the advent of digital ticketing - tying admission to events to a unique bar code on a ticket - Florida State University's Athletic Department entered in the secondary ticket market this year. The University started sponsoring its own ticket marketplace, FSU's Ticket Marketplace, where season ticket holders can resell their tickets to the general public and the general public can be assured that tickets purchased from this Web site are legitimate. FSU's Ticket Marketplace is set up to mirror existing secondary market models where both the seller and buyer are charged a percentage of the transaction so FSU will be able to cover its settlement costs to its vendor, Ticketmaster, Irvine as well as create an additional revenue stream. A winning situation for FSU and our sports fans!

Introduction of the Organization

Florida State University is known for its competitive athletics for both men's and women's sports. The men's program consists of baseball, basketball, cross country running, football, golf, swimming, tennis, and track & field. The women's program consists of basketball, cross country running, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track & field, and volleyball. Florida State University, the *Seminoles*, participate in the NCAA's Division I (Bowl Subdivision for football) and in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

Like many university athletic departments Florida State had relied for years on a “hard ticket” system for handling admissions to its athletic events. This system relies on issuing paper tickets for athletic events which are torn at the gate in order to allow only paying customers to attend the athletic event. In addition to the tickets sold by the institution itself, over the years a “secondary market” had developed from ticket holders who had decided to resell their unused tickets to the general public. This secondary market started out simply as people holding up extra tickets out side of the venue at the event, but in recent years had evolved to listing tickets on computer bulletin boards and eventually third party ticket brokers.

People buying tickets from the secondary market were always taking a risk that the tickets they purchased might be lost or stolen tickets, there was no way for customer to be assured that the tickets the were buying outside the ticket office were legitimate.

With the advent of digital ticketing -- tying admission to events to a unique bar code on a tickets meant that Florida State could now participate in the secondary market. The University now could sponsor its own ticket marketplace where season ticket buyers would be able to resell their tickets to the general public and the general public could be assured that ticket purchased from the University's secondary market were legitimate.

Design

Florida State's athletic ticket software provider, Ticketmaster, Irvine had already developed the concept of digital ticketing. The University was responsible for purchasing the hardware necessary to scan bar codes on tickets at its athletic venues, providing wireless access points at each ticket entrance and providing a server that would run the software necessary to keep track of the barcodes as they were scanned at the individual gates.

Implementation

In preparation for the arrival of digital ticketing, the athletic ticket office began printing barcodes on all athletic event tickets in the summer of 2007.

The University's Office of Telecommunications provided wireless access points at each of gates at the University's football, baseball stadiums as well as at the soccer/softball complex. They also linked the existing wireless access points at the "off-campus" basketball facility to the University network. The Athletic Department set up a Window's NT server to run the Access Management software. The department also purchased 107 handheld ticket scanners to be used at the gates at ticketed athletic events.

Benefits

With the roll out of Florida State's Ticket Marketplace, the University will now be an active participant in the secondary ticket market. By using this authorized system, buyers will be assured that the tickets they purchase through this Web site are legitimate. Plus buyers will have the ability to print the tickets they purchase on Ticket Marketplace at their home or office and will not have to wait for the seller to deliver the tickets via the mail, FedEx or meeting somewhere in person for the exchange.

Another advantage to implementing FSU's Ticket Marketplace is the additional fan base demographic information it will provide to the Athletic Department. We will now have access to valuable information on the people, who have been purchasing tickets through the secondary market in order to attend University sporting events. These people will become "hot leads" for attending future athletic events.

FSU is restricting the right to sell tickets on its Ticket Marketplace to current donors of the Athletic Department, which in return is an additional benefit of being a donor. It is hoped that this restriction will create incentive for ticket holders, who are not currently donors, to become a donor.

Because FSU's Ticket Marketplace is set up to mirror existing secondary market models where both the seller and buyer are charged a percentage of the transaction to facilitate

the transaction, the university will be able to cover its transactional costs to Ticketmaster, Irvine as well as create its own additional revenue stream.