

#### Editorial Board and Staff:

##### Editor:

*Mark S. Nagel*  
*University of South Carolina*

##### Associate Editor:

*John M. Grady*  
*University of South Carolina*

##### Consulting Editor:

*Peter J. Graham*  
*University of South Carolina*

##### Editorial Review Board Members:

*Rob Ammon—Slippery Rock University*

*John Bennett—Venue Management Association, Asia Pacific Limited*

*Chris Bigelow—The Bigelow Companies, Inc.*

*Matt Brown—University of South Carolina*

*Brad Gessner—San Diego Convention Center*

*Peter Gruber—Wiener Stadthalle, Austria*

*Todd Hall—Georgia Southern University*

*Kim Mahoney—Industry Consultant*

*Michael Mahoney—California State University at Fresno*

*Larry Perkins—RBC Center Carolina Hurricanes*

*Jim Riordan—Florida Atlantic University*

*Frank Roach—University of South Carolina*

*Philip Rothschild—Missouri State University*

*Frank Russo—Global Spectrum*

*Rodney J. Smith—University of Denver*

*Kenneth C. Teed—The George Washington University*

*Scott Wysong—University of Dallas*

# JOURNAL OF Venue & Event Management

## INTERVIEW

### Larry Martin, Vice President, Sales-Sports

**Mark S. Nagel**  
University of South Carolina

Founded in 2009, ScoreBig (ScoreBig.com) is devoted to helping sell the 500+ million live event tickets that go unsold each year. The company provides an opaque, arms-length channel to liquidate unsold inventory at reduced prices, while mitigating the risks typically associated with transparent discounting. The company enables consumers to purchase tickets at a discount price if they are willing to make certain concessions in exchange for savings (such as not being able to choose an exact seat location and/or delivery method). JVEM discussed the past, present and likely future of ScoreBig, as well as the evolution of the sport-ticketing marketplace with Larry Martin, ScoreBig's Vice President of Sales for Sports.

Q  
A

#### Can you first discuss your career path?

Upon graduation from Law School and passing the New York Bar exam, I dove into sports by enrolling in the Sports Administration Master's program at St. Thomas University in Miami. At the beginning of the program I was placed in an internship for an ATP Tennis Tournament in South Florida, where I received my first exposure to corporate sales and sponsor contract activation. Upon completion of the tournament, I had an opportunity to take a season-long

internship with the HEAT Group (Miami HEAT/AAArena). At the HEAT, my first project was working on market research surrounding the development of the new arena. The project allowed me to get access and network with the executive team. As the season went on, I moved into the Corporate Sales group, where I focused on selling sponsorship packages for the Miami HEAT Family Festival Charity event. Upon successful completion of the Family Festival, I was offered a full time position at the HEAT in the Community Relations (CR) department. During my time in CR I handled player appearances, memorabilia requests, kid's camps and also managed the HEAT Charitable Foundation and the creation and launch of HEAT Academy. After a number of years in CR, HEAT President Eric Woolworth offered me the opportunity to start a new department that focused on data, data management, CRM, analytics and research. At that time, the only other teams focused on these areas were the Portland Trailblazers and the Atlanta Hawks. Recognizing the opportunities to utilize data and e-mail, we grew the department and established a business plan to compliment and service sales, marketing and service. Once we had executive buy-in, the group migrated to the marketing division and I became the Senior Director of Marketing overseeing Database Marketing, Analytics, Research, Internet Services and Advertising.

After several years of running the marketing group, I was approached by Rich Maradik and Jay Graves, two entrepreneurs who had founded a database marketing software company called SmartDM. SmartDM had just been acquired by Acxiom Corp and they presented me the opportunity to run their sports marketing consulting group that oversaw their relationships with over 30 teams around the country. At Acxiom my primary role was to consult the sports clients regarding how to maximize the technology to hit their sales, service and marketing objectives. After two years with Acxiom I was recruited by Adam Kanner, Scott O'Neil and Chris Heck to work for the Team Marketing and Business Operations (TMBO) division at the NBA. Initially brought in to focus on relationship marketing, I eventually was responsible for working with all NBA, WNBA and D-League teams in the areas of ticket sales, ticket operations, inventory management and new technology. In addition, I also served as the primary liaison to the NBA's primary and secondary ticketing providers including Ticketmaster, Tickets.com, Paciolan, Veritix, StubHub and TicketNetwork.

After three years with the league, I was presented the opportunity to join Adam, who had moved-on from the NBA to found ScoreBig.

Q  
A

### **Can you briefly describe how the ticket marketplace has developed?**

We have certainly come a long way. I was fortunate during my time at the Miami HEAT to play a role in how the Internet and e-mail altered the way we communicated and sold tickets to consumers. As we became smarter acquiring and engaging customers, we also recognized the opportunities around variable ticket pricing (VTP). VTP has since evolved for many teams and events into dynamic pricing where changes in supply and demand can immediately impact the price.

Q  
A

### **How have most teams utilized VTP and dynamic pricing?**

The sports industry has and likely will continue to be season ticket driven for a variety of reasons, but more and more teams understand that setting an "accurate" price provides numerous benefits to the organization. While most people have viewed dynamic pricing as a means to extract additional revenue from "higher end" sales, dynamic pricing can also help move lower-demanded inventory, which can attract customers who might not otherwise purchase. However, for teams that utilize downside dynamic pricing to attract customers, there is tremendous risk of potential backlash from existing cus-

tomers, negative impacts on the brand and even more danger around cannibalization of full price sales.

Understanding this dilemma, ScoreBig provides a place for teams and events to sell tickets below retail price without the potential backlash that such discounting would normally elicit if posted directly on a facility's website or other transparent marketplace. Attracting customers to purchase unused inventory not only helps the facility put people in the seats, but it also increases ancillary revenues from concessions, licensed merchandise sales and parking.

## **Q When a customer visits ScoreBig, how is it different than other websites?**

**A** We offer our members an opportunity to purchase tickets to events at a price below retail—in some cases a significantly reduced price—if they are willing to work within our parameters. We utilize an “opaque” system that requires consumers make certain concessions to get a deal. When a member visits ScoreBig, they cannot see how many tickets are available, the location of the seats or the specific prices we are willing to sell the tickets for. They can pick the price they are willing to pay and then our system determines if we can provide tickets at that price.

## **Q What have customers at ScoreBig reported about their experience? Are you seeing repeat customers?**

**A** Customer feedback has been incredibly positive. A recent survey of members in March found that 88% of people surveyed planned to return, 79% planned to refer a friend or family member and 76% plan to purchase something in the next six months.

## **Q Has the recent economic slowdown “helped” ScoreBig since so many consumers now are “bargain shoppers?”**

**A** The recession has certainly brought the spotlight to the issue of unsold inventory, but this problem has existed in live event ticket entertainment for decades.

## **Q What specific duties do you perform at ScoreBig?**

**A** I currently oversee the sales group that secures sports, music, arts/theater and family show inventory for the site. We acquire tickets through relationships with both the primary and secondary marketplace. Another important aspect of my role is to work with established clients to improve our services.

## **Q Is it difficult to develop relationships with teams?**

**A** The fact that our opaque marketplace is built to protect the value of the brand, preserve the integrity of full price tickets and prevent cannibalization of full price sales has been extremely well received by the industry. The initial success of our model has

helped potential clients see the benefits of a partnership that can help balance the objective of filling seats, while also maximizing revenue and protecting the core ticket base.

**Q What are ScoreBig's plans for future international expansion?**

**A** Our current ticket inventory resides exclusively within the United States, but we do have plans to expand in the future.