Eventbrite

Use Your Live Music Data to Stay in the Black

A comprehensive guide for music venues, festivals, and promoters to save time, maximize marketing, and sell out events faster.



The art of data-driven decisions

Running a venue or music festival can feel like riding a roller coaster — blindfolded. You may get a rush of pure joy at the end, but the unpredictable turns and drops can rattle even the most experienced live music producer.

But what if the future of your business weren't so mysterious? What if you could get a real sense of your show's or festival's status with the click of a button? How would it change your business if you could be certain you'd cover your guarantees, and rest assured sales are on track?

The right data can change the course of your business. No more roller coaster — you can see for miles ahead.

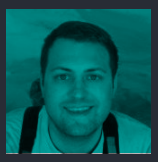
"Data is the closest thing we have to predicting the future," says Linda Chen, Eventbrite's Global Performance Marketing Manager. "Without reliable data, we're just guessing as to what's working."

Understanding your data doesn't have to be costly or time consuming. In fact, making data-driven decisions can actually save both time and money. As you'll read in this guide, Jacob Matthews, the former Director of Marketing for Republic Live and founder of The Why Co, used data to save team members 5+ hours per week while improving ad conversion by 20%.

Keep reading for advice from Jacob and other world-class live music experts on how to use data to:

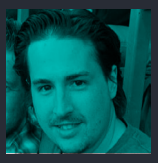
> Take back the hours you spend pulling manual reports
> Identify and improve your most effective marketing channels
> Reduce stress day-of with streamlined operations

Learn from industry-leading live music producers and data experts



Jacob Matthews

Founder of The Why Co, a marketing agency for live music events, and the former Director of Marketing for Republic Live



Adam Skuse

Senior VP at Starseed Entertainment and former Director of Operations and Technology for Republic Live



Duncan Wold

Head of Digital & Marketing at PianoFight, a San Francisco venue



Linda Chen

Global Performance Marketing Manager

What data can do for you

Music may be an art, but running a live music business is also a science. Here are the kinds of questions data can help you answer:

> How should we stock the bar for tonight's show?

> Is it time to start the show, or should the opener play a couple more songs?

> Are display, social, or search ads driving the most ticket sales at the least cost? Would those people have bought tickets anyway, or is it worth the spend?

> Did that radio ad actually drive any sales?

> If the show is in a week, how many tickets should I have sold by now to be on track?

> Will my emails perform better if I send to smaller, more targeted audiences?

> Is my team wasting time on manual tasks?

"It pays to be very data-oriented when you're answering questions about your business. Especially when you feel passionately about the art. When you focus on the data, you become more objective. It helps you to remove your own biases from business decisions, and ultimately it's a more fair way to treat people."

— Duncan Wold, PianoFight

The four levels of data mastery

You're wearing a lot of hats. Whether you're a venue manager running 30 events per week or a promoter trying to sell out a 30k+ festival, the last thing you need is another to-do list.

Luckily, making data-driven decisions doesn't need to take extra time. In fact, once you've learned to use your data to its full potential, you'll save time. How? By streamlining your entire process.

Here are four levels of data domination you can use to streamline your data, in order of difficulty. Stick with the simplest, fastest solution that still gets you all the information you need.

Level 1: Master your built-in ticketing reports

Ticket sales are probably your most important source of data. If you don't understand how many tickets you've sold and how, you won't be able to ask more advanced questions.

The easiest way to understand your sales at a glance is to use your ticketing platform's reports. These should help you understand if your sales are on track, which marketing efforts are driving the most sales, and where your buyers are coming from. With a few clicks, you can view reports by a single event, a single ticket type, or across events and ticket types. If you use Eventbrite, you have 24/7 online access to more than 15 different reports and chart views that you can customize for your needs.

When to use your ticketing reports:

If you only have five minutes to get the pulse on your business...
check your overall sales report across all your events, within the date range you care about.

If you're trying to figure out whether a radio, TV, or print ad made an impact...
check out your "sales by geography" report to see if there was a spike in sales in your target regions.

If you want to see whether interest in your event is growing...
check out your page views over time.

If you want to see which promoters are driving the most sales...
check sales by discount or affiliate code.

If you want to see how many early bird tickets you sold compared to full price, or if you've hit your goals for VIP sales...
check out your sales by ticket type.

If you want to find out what time most of your fans arrived...
check out event attendance by time.

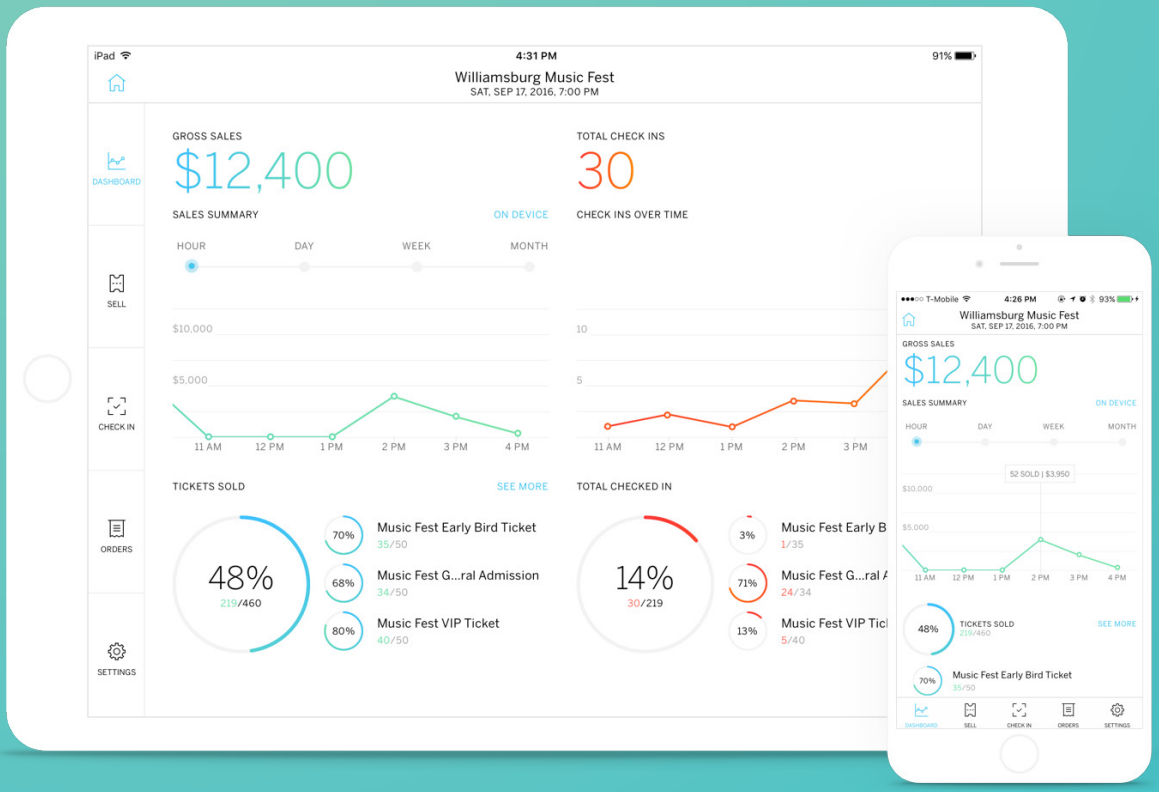
You don't even have to be at your desk to use your data. Mobile solutions like the Eventbrite Organizer app enable you to watch ticket sales live on your phone, and even stay up to speed with check-in data in real time. Having data at your fingertips empowers you to direct your staff from wherever you are, know your most important tasks from the moment you wake up, and always be connected to your network — even without WiFi.

Adding tracking links or a pixel to your ticketing website can help you get even more granular with your ticketing data. (A tracking link is a unique URL for each promotion you do for your event, and a tracking pixel is a bit of code that tracks visitors to your website.) That way, you can see exactly which ads drive sales, figure out how many times fans interact with your site before making a purchase, and follow visitors across the web to retarget them with ads.

"Promoters live and die by pressing the refresh button to see how many tickets we sell. That's the bottom line."

— Tom Russell, Governors Ball Music Festival

Eventbrite Organizer App



Level 2: Select your secondary data sources

"Data is everything," says festival marketing director Jacob Matthews. If you've mastered your built-in reports, you may want to pull in secondary sources of information about your business.

There are plenty of sources to choose from. Ticketing data tells you your income, but Google Analytics can help you understand your traffic flow. Email and social media provide insight into engagement, while point of sale systems, RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification wristbands), and beacons reveal what's happening onsite or in the venue. And that's only the tip of the iceberg.

But if you looked at every available source of data, you wouldn't have time to do anything else. So how can you tell which sources of data will provide the most insight? Ultimately, it depends on the questions you're trying to answer.

Your top data sources depend on your priorities as a business. For example, if you're focused on improving your marketing, Google Analytics data will help you understand the performance of different ads. If your priority is driving more sales at the bar during shows, your point of sale system data might be more important. And if your goal is to make sure entry to your festival flows smoothly, RFID or Beacon data might be at the top of your list.

Here's how Canadian festival promotion company Republic Live and San Francisco venue PianoFight use their most important data to keep the pulse on their business. (For specifics on how to use these sources to optimize your marketing and streamline operations, check out page 9.)

If you could only use three sources of data, what would they be?

Republic Live

1. **Ticketing data** to track progress selling out their festivals
2. **Attendee-specific data from RFID** to better understand ticket-buyers on an individual level
3. **Location data from postal codes** to go beyond where the ticket was purchased and see where fans actually live

PianoFight

1. **Ticketing data** to track progress for each show
2. **Point of sale system data** to track the bar and restaurant to their dollar goals
3. **Google Analytics data** to understand what drives the most interest for each show

Level 3: All of your data in a single system

Unfortunately, making sense of even just a couple sources of data can be a drain on your time. If you have multiple tabs open that you're constantly refreshing and cross-checking, it's hard to get the answers you need when you need them — not hours later.

That's why the most important step in streamlining your data is to sync your various data sources into one system. If you use a ticketing provider with an open API (Application Program Interface), you can link your ticketing back end with other systems. The best news? You don't need any technical experience to make it happen. (If you use Eventbrite, you can integrate your ticketing page directly with Google Analytics.)

Tools like Zapier (an app automation service) can pull data from your ticketing platform and all your other sources, including Hubspot, Salesforce, MailChimp, and more — and you don't have to write a single line of code. . You can then push this data into a reporting system like Tableau, where you can view your data sorted in as many ways as you can imagine.

You can also use Zapier to set triggers, so if something occurs in one app, the other app takes an action. For example, every time someone buys a VIP ticket, your mailing system could add them to a specific VIP mailing list.

"It's little things like that that promoters or venues don't always see as possible," Adam Skuse, Senior VP at Starseed Entertainment, says. "Other promoters saw it and asked how we did it. With Zapier it was easy, and the amount of integrations is pretty crazy. We could do notifications in Slack or Salesforce anytime someone bought a ticket. It's very affordable and accomplished everything we needed it to."

Level 4: Your own uniqely automated systems

If your needs go beyond what Zapier can automate, it's relatively simple to build your own programs that use your ticketing partner's open API. For example, Adam Skuse used a database management system called MySQL to sync with Tableau and their data sources. This does require coding experience, but if your team doesn't have this resource, consider contracting an engineer. They might invest a week in building a system for you — which you'll then use for years. (Sites like Fiverr, Upwork, and Freelancer can connect you with reliable engineers to get started quickly.)

While this method requires a bigger time (or cost) investment upfront, the potential benefits are enormous.

"The API allows us to build a little code robot that does relatively complex analyses and calculations, which would be very time consuming to do by hand," Adam says. "And it does them automatically every day, or every second. It's a time saver, and it lets you go way deeper with the data you have."

"When ticketing is one of your responsibilities, everyone requests data from you. There were weeks when I spent five hours just running those reports. With this system, I spent one week and created a means for people to find the data themselves. I'm saving anywhere from 2-4 hours each week."

— Adam Skuse, Senior VP at Starseed Entertainment

How PianoFight mastered their data

Duncan Wold of PianoFight came from an engineering background — so when he saw an inefficiency in his venue, he built a program that used Eventbrite's API to solve it.

The result? Three incredibly useful and creative programs that save his team time and money.

1. The Ticket Wizard

The "ticket wizard" is an app that generates a heat map of the month's ticket sales. That way, restaurant staff who don't have access to or don't use their ticketing system can see at a glance how busy they'll be. Using the heat map, the restaurant and bar manager can see how to staff and stock based on how many attendees they're expecting. A simple red, yellow, or green shade on the heat map has saved the team money on wasted food and bored bartenders.

2. The Reconciliation Wizard

This application streamlines PianoFight's settlement reports. It pulls in their show and financial data and can filter it by date range, online vs. at-the-door sales, total tickets sold, and the number of comped tickets. It then brings in the cost of rent, technicians, mic costs, and the specific profit share agreement for that show. It also stores custom reconciliation variables for deeper insights into gross and net revenue.

The result? Reconciliation reports that take less than half the time they used to.

3. The Twitter Bot

PianoFight also uses the API to monitor sales across all their shows and identify which are most likely to sell out soon. Once the bot finds shows that are selling out fast, it tweets from a designated PianoFight Twitter handle (@PFHotcakes) to let fans know to buy tickets soon.

Feeling inspired, but not an engineer? You could replicate many similar functions through Zapier, or contract an engineer to duplicate these short and impactful projects.

How can I use data to sell more tickets without breaking my marketing budget?

Now that we've covered the potential depth you can gain from your data, let's explore some ways to put your data to work. Here's how your data can help you up level your marketing and sell more tickets.

Chances are, you already have a method of calculating your marketing return on investment (ROI). But with a mixture of online and offline ads and incomplete tracking — not to mention manually measuring these elements across multiple events or campaigns each week — it's hard to know which efforts drove which sales.

So how can you discover which promotions are most effective for your business? If you have a limited marketing budget spread across multiple shows or multiple months, you need those insights to be spot on with your spend.

Here are three ways to make sure you're getting the most bang for your marketing buck:

1. Prove your campaigns are driving sales

Knowing your ad was delivered to thousands of inboxes or seen by hundreds of people feels good — but did it drive any revenue? To understand the value of an ad or email, you need to know if it's engaging the right audience.

Using data to prove your ad's ROI: Ad platforms connect you with a wide range of inventory (or ad units). The inventory's placement on sites, the volume of traffic to those sites, and the relevance on the site's content to your audience will all influence performance. Even the best of display ad inventory has very low click-through rates, so make sure your ads give you the best chance to sell more — not just to be seen more.

"Each week we look at the data and conversion metrics, then adjust our creative, placement of ads, targeting, and more," Jacob Matthews says. "In terms of conversion, we found that the data just doesn't support banner display ads."

Retargeting is one way to make ads more effective. By serving ads to people who've viewed your page but haven't bought a ticket, you can remind a self-selected group about your event. You can also target "lookalike" audiences on social media to surface your ad to people similar to your ticket buyers.

Not convinced retargeting will lead to more ticket sales? A three-day music festival in the southern United States and a three-day music and wine festival in California both saw more than 10x ROI on their ad spend by using retargeting and lookalike audiences.

Retargeting, Google Adwords, and Facebook Advertising are among the most standard ad services — but it's important to track their performance for your specific event to make sure they're working for you. (Find out more about tracking your marketing on the next page.)

Using data to prove the ROI of email: The same applies to email marketing. You want your show to be included in lists of upcoming shows that will go to hundreds of thousands of inboxes. But if most of those people delete the email without opening it (or worse, think of it as spam), you're not actually growing your sales.



"Think about your inbox and how many emails you get every day," says Eventbrite's Michael Timoney. "If I get an email from a venue in NYC and I live in California, why would I open it? You have to strike the balance between breadth and targeting. It's a middle ground that advertisers are constantly chasing."

Instead, use a very targeted email list or advertising platform. Jacob Matthews, for instance, uses extremely targeted email lists for their fans, segmenting by loyalty, VIP purchasers, and high-income areas. As a result, they see a 40-45% open rate and a 15-25% click-through rate on emails. (According to MailChimp, the average open rate for the music industry is 23%, with a click-through rate under 3%).

If you're investing in emails that send to a large, untargeted audience, continually monitor the open rate and click-through rate, and use tracking links to see how many actual tickets it sold as a result. You may be surprised by which sells more tickets — an email to a thousand targeted fans, or an email to a hundred thousand unengaged consumers.

2. Track everything, automatically

The best way to understand the conversion of your different campaigns is to use tracking links and pixels on your ticketing page. "We literally use a tracking link for everything," says Jacob Matthews. "Every artist tour page, every button on the website. Then we compare it to our data from Google Analytics."

Tracking codes give you visibility into which campaigns, keywords, and ads are driving the most traffic and conversions to your event. Most tracking codes assign anonymous "cookies" to your event page visitors, so you know which campaigns or ads they've seen and if they buy a ticket.

How to set up your tracking

If you use Eventbrite for your ticketing, you can set up tracking links, place a tracking pixel into your ticketing page's URL, and integrate your account with Google Analytics in your Manage dashboard. If you're using another ticketing provider, you may have to speak to your partner to get a pixel placed on your page.

Why are pixels so important?

"Tracking pixels enable us to track the conversion of an ad," says Michael Timoney. "If you don't use them, you'd spend a lot of money and might see new ticket buyers, but you wouldn't necessarily know what campaign drove them to purchase. So we rely on tracking pixels to understand that process and allocate budget to campaigns, keywords, and creative that perform better."

Most performance marketing channels require conversion pixels to measure performance — including Facebook or Search Engine Marketing (SEM) ads (like Google Adwords). But be careful — if you're using multiple ad channels, you may be inflating the success of your campaigns. This is why it's so important to integrate your various data sources in a unified web analytics system such as Google Analytics.

Imagine a fan sees an ad on Facebook and an ad on Google before purchasing. With both views, each ad fired a separate pixel and took full credit for a sale — taking credit for two sales instead of one. To avoid double counting conversions, you want each ad to be attributed with half of the credit for the sale.

"That's a trap some people fall into with advertising that may cause you to spend more on ads than they're worth," Michael says. "To de-dupe your performance data, you need to divide credit across all the channels someone interacted with prior to converting. So if you're running a multichannel ad campaign — Facebook, search, and display ads — you could use a web analytics tool such as Google Analytics to distribute credit across them."

"Advertising and retargeting don't do any good if I don't know they've sold tickets. With Eventbrite, we placed a tracking pixel on our checkout page, so I know which specific ads drove sales."

— Jacob Matthews, founder of The Why Co, a marketing agency for live music events

Google Analytics will automatically distribute credit across channels and campaigns when fully implemented, so you no longer have to rely on each ad platform's potentially duplicative reporting. To get started with Google Analytics, follow the steps in this article from Google.

Tracking offline marketing

Chances are, your marketing doesn't just exist online — and neither should your tracking. If you use third-party promoters who get a kickback on sales, you can use affiliate codes and give promoters a unique sub-user login to your ticketing site. That way, whenever a promoter sells a ticket through their link, the types of tickets they sold and their future commission is tracked automatically.

For instance, PianoFight uses affiliate codes for each of their performers. In one case, they saw that a show's traffic was coming from the performer's own site and their own promotion, because the act had embedded a ticketing widget on their site. Now PianoFight knows to encourage performers to embed ticketing on their site — and that this performer will bring their own crowd whenever they're booked.

You can even measure the impact of print or radio ads by looking at your ticketing system's geo reporting on purchases by IP address. You can narrow in on the specific area where ads were purchased and see if ticket sales increase in weeks with a concentrated marketing push.

3. Use control groups to drive incremental sales

Now that you're tracking exactly which campaigns drive sales, it's time to push your best marketing even further. Jacob Matthews uses control groups to test the effectiveness of new campaigns against their existing ads.

Using a control group to test your marketing can help you ensure your campaigns are driving incremental sales. Today, you might know that 100 people who saw your ad bought a ticket. But what if 50 of those people were planning to buy tickets before they saw the ad? That means the ad only sold 50 incremental tickets, not 100.

"We use hold-out groups to measure incrementality," Linda Chen says. "If we're advertising on Facebook, they look at users as clicks. So we take two groups, and we give one group a control ad that has nothing to do with Eventbrite. (We usually promote a local charity.) The other group sees our ad.

"After a certain period of time, we measure the conversion rate of each group. If the control group converted just as much as the group with ads — or close enough that the campaign had a low ROI — then we know it wasn't effective, no matter how many clicks it had."

Another way to drive incremental sales is to increase conversions — in other words, increase the percentage of people who buy after clicking on your ads. Let's say 600,000 people visit your ticketing page, but you only sell 30,000 tickets online each year. That's a 5% conversion rate. If you increased conversion from 5% to 6%, that would be 6,000 more tickets in a year. And if tickets cost $20, that's $120,000 more in annual revenue!

So, how can you increase conversion? There are three ways to improve your ticketing page:

1. Satisfy fans' curiosity before they leave the ticketing page. At Eventbrite, we've found that the most common sites fans visit after ticketing pages are Google Images and YouTube. Why? They want to see visuals of the event and listen to artists who are performing before they commit.

The problem is, some of these searchers won't remember to come back. By including visuals and video on your ticketing page, as well as an FAQ section, you can make sure fans aren't leaving your site to find more information.

2. Make it as easy as possible for fans to buy tickets. Make sure your ticketing partner is 100% mobile optimized, so it's easy for fans to buy tickets on their phones without pinching and zooming. Choose a ticketing platform with as few steps as possible between the "purchase" button and a completed order. Better yet, consider a ticketing partner that enables the entire purchase experience on websites where fans already spend time, such as Facebook.

3. Think about how fans are navigating from your event website to your ticketing page. How many clicks does it take to access tickets? If you have an intermediary page between your home page and your ticketing page, that extra step may reduce conversion.

Where on your website are you placing buttons? Buttons to buy tickets should be easy to access at all times — but you don't want an overwhelming number of them. For instance, if you host a music festival and have multiple ticketing options for your event, placing a separate button next to each ticket can be confusing for fans. Consider a single "Buy Tickets" button on this page to make it clear where fans should click.

To figure out which links are driving the most clicks, Jacob Matthews creates a unique tracking link for each button on festival websites. Looking at the results can help you learn which button position performs best and which buttons you can eliminate to make the purchase process more intuitive.

By using data to invest in ads that drive incremental views, as well as turning more views into sales, you'll be on your way to sold-out shows.

How can I use data to make life easier at the box office and the bar?

Now that you've used data to sell out your shows, how can you use data to make your operations more streamlined?

Save money by predicting staff and stock needs more accurately

There are few things worse than paying bored bartenders or wasting money by over-stocking the bar. Similarly, festival organizers dread watching lines pile up because of too many staff in the box office and not enough at wristband exchange. Luckily, you can avoid this by using your attendee data to staff and stock more accurately.



PianoFight's restaurant manager looks at their "Ticket Wizard" heat map of each week's ticket sales to find out how many bartenders and waiters he needs each night, and how much food to order.

"With our limited schedules and resources, having these tools made us more accountable in stocking and staffing the restaurant," Duncan Wold said. "It's made us able to produce bigger events and manage more shows and artists. Because we have this aggregate data, it's doubled what we're able to achieve with the time we have."

Other venues use demographic information to better stock the bar. A show attended by people in their 20s and 30s will likely have a different consumption pattern than a show for people in their 40s and 50s. If your bar manager isn't familiar with the act or their audience, this data helps them understand the demographic at a glance.

"We have dollar goals for the bar each night and week to keep things running smoothly," Duncan says. "We cross-reference when we do and don't hit those goals with what was booked that week and what attendance was like. You can see the impact of a successful late-night show, and how much additional income a successful 9:30 or 10:30 show can drive. We learned to open later night slots on Wednesday nights, which has had a positive effect."

To save your staff time and resources, get in the habit of comparing bar sales to which bands played each night. If EDM DJs tend to attract bigger spenders than hip hop performers, for instance, use that insight to inform your booking strategy. And if your bar manager isn't sure how many bartenders they'll need that night, tell them to take a look at your ticket sales. After a few weeks comparing the numbers, their connection will start to feel intuitive.

Save time by automating your vendor management and reconciliation processes

Using a data integration system like Zapier, you can automate many of the manual processes that waste hours each week.

"We automated the entire front-to-back vendor application and payment process with Zapier," Adam Skuse says. "It only took a couple of days to build the entire vendor advancing system, which was a process that manually took 20-40 hours to do per festival. And now it's on autopilot for every event."

You can also build your own simple systems, like Duncan did with PianoFight's "Reconciliation Wizard." After spending some free time to build the app, Duncan's partner now has show and financial data pulled in automatically for each performer. Reporting on reconciliations takes half the time it used to — which means performers get their money faster.

Untether yourself from the box office with real-time entrance data

"Eventbrite has helped us stay ahead of the curve by the sheer amount of data that is available to us. I get real-time stats on my computer and phone the second a customer checks in, which enables me to work from any location."

— Matt Whitlock, Entertainment/Marketing Director, Ruby Skye

A mobile app like the Eventbrite Organizer app can give you at-a-glance insights as the event unfolds. Festivals can use entry data to understand which entrance gates have bottlenecks and where to allocate staff. Venues can use this mobile data to decide when to start a show based on how many tickets are sold compared to how many people are there, and how many comped tickets holders are missing.

Having this data on mobile also gives managers insight into their room's status, even from across the country. With that data on your phone, you can check sales and check-ins in real time. So if doors open at 9:00, and you don't see any check-ins by 9:05, you can call and find out who's manning the gate and what's going on.

Getting started with mobile data is easy — just download your ticketing partner's mobile application and all of your data should be synced automatically. If you use Eventbrite, check out the Organizer app for:

> Gross sales per event to see your overall progress

> Sales by ticket type, hour, day, week, and month to track sales and see the effect of marketing campaigns

> Total check-ins and check-ins by ticket type to make sure VIP guests are entering quickly

> Check-ins by time and entrance to manage on-site staff

Don't put your data in danger

Now that you know how important your data is, don't put it at risk. To make sure you'll always have your data (and no one else will), ask yourself:

- [ ] **Do I have full access to my data?**

  Do you have 24/7 access to view and download your data? Or do you need to call someone to get a report?

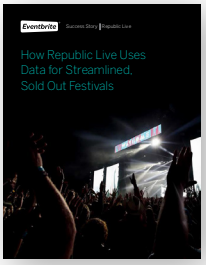
- [ ] **Do I own my data?**

  If your ticketing partner owns your website, they might own your email data as well. Make sure you wouldn't have to give up your entire database if you were to change ticketing providers.

- [ ] **Am I sure no one else has access to my data?**

  Don't let competitors borrow your business insights. If your ticketing provider owns competing businesses, make sure you know exactly who will see your data.

If you answered no to these questions, it's time to have a serious discussion with your ticketing provider. If that conversation doesn't change your answers to these questions to yes, it may be time to choose a new ticketing partner who prioritizes your data.



See data in action

To see an example of these lessons in action, download this case study from Republic Live detailing their data strategy. You'll learn how they drove marketing engagement at twice industry rates — all while spending less time on data.

"The typical promoter gets an email per day that shows them ticket counts. With Eventbrite, we get sales by day, by market, by promo, by province — that update in real time. We can roll up the data in the way that makes the most sense for us. With any other provider, I wouldn't have that flexibility."

— Adam Skuse, Senior VP at Starseed Entertainment

Eventbrite

Eventbrite powers ticketing and registration for more than two million live experiences each year, hosting the world's largest online selection of events. Organizers use Eventbrite to boost ticket sales, promote and manage events, and analyze results. Consumers use Eventbrite to discover exciting things to do and get tickets on a safe, easy-to-use platform.

To find out why hundreds of thousands of music events have chosen Eventbrite's platform, go to https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/academy/contact-eventbrite/ or give us a call at (855) 292-7905.