

Eventbrite

How to Create a Winning On-site Logistics Strategy



The gates open. Seconds later, eager fans stream past check-in. Last-minute buyers quickly purchase tickets, and happy attendees join their friends inside the event. And at the end of the event, everyone flows easily through the exits and heads home.

It sounds perfect, right? It is, but painless event entry and exit doesn't happen automatically. It's a huge accomplishment for your team, and it requires a thorough on-site logistics strategy that begins many months before your event.

If you're reading this, you probably know this all too well: When it comes to events, we have to expect the unexpected. In this guide, I'll share the best practices I've learned ground support for thousands of music festivals, food festivals, and conventions as Eventbrite's head of field operations.

There is no set "formula" for on-site logistics— every festival is unique. A music festival held in below-freezing temperatures, such as SnowGlobe, needs to build a plan around the limitations of technology in cold weather. A festival held in a city, like BottleRock in Napa, CA, needs to anticipate local traffic and event regulations.

While there's no one-size-fits-all approach, there are three main steps to any successful on-site logistics strategy. And despite what we call it, this strategy requires a great deal of off-site work.

The three steps for a successful on-site logistics strategy:

- 1. Identify your requirements:** Determine the right solution based on your event's unique needs.
- 2. Choose your resources:** Build the infrastructure for your on-site solution, from technology to staffing.
- 3. Execute:** Execute the solution you've built using day-of best practices.

Step 1: Identify your requirements

Eat See Hear is an outdoor movie festival that screens at five locations across Los Angeles. Each venue needs a unique on-site strategy to accommodate movie screenings as well as food trucks and live music. The event director visits the venue as early as possible to identify requirements and create a site map that includes everything from the entrance to food trucks to the 70-foot movie screen.

Like Eat See Hear, a festival's on-site strategy is dictated by its location, how it can accommodate the main attraction(s), and the number of attendees. To build a successful on-site strategy, you should start with a solid grasp of these requirements.

During this process, involve all departments that will be impacted by your on-site strategy. This includes your site operations, production, box office, power and IT, and ticketing provider teams. The day of your event is hectic enough — taking this extra step will help minimize confusion between teams.

There are five sets of requirements that will significantly influence your on-site strategy:



1. Event location/venue requirements:

Every event site comes with its own set of requirements. Familiarize yourself with each requirement and document how you will address each of them clearly. Doing so will help you more easily plan the rest of your on-site strategy.

Is your event urban or rural? If your event is in an urban setting, you need to be more concerned with regulations and permitting. To ensure you're compliant, you'll need to dial in with several city departments. You may need to pay for police overtime or be prepared to give the police capacity counts on a regular basis to assure them you aren't creating a dangerous environment. Rural events tend to have a little more flexibility, especially when they are "green field" sites. These sites have no infrastructure, so you can design and build to your own vision.

Is the venue indoor or outdoor? For outdoor venues, planning around the weather is a must. You may need shades for sun, tents for rain, or structures to block wind. You may also need to bring your own power source. For indoor events, make sure you've taken lighting, fire codes, and heat or air conditioning into account.

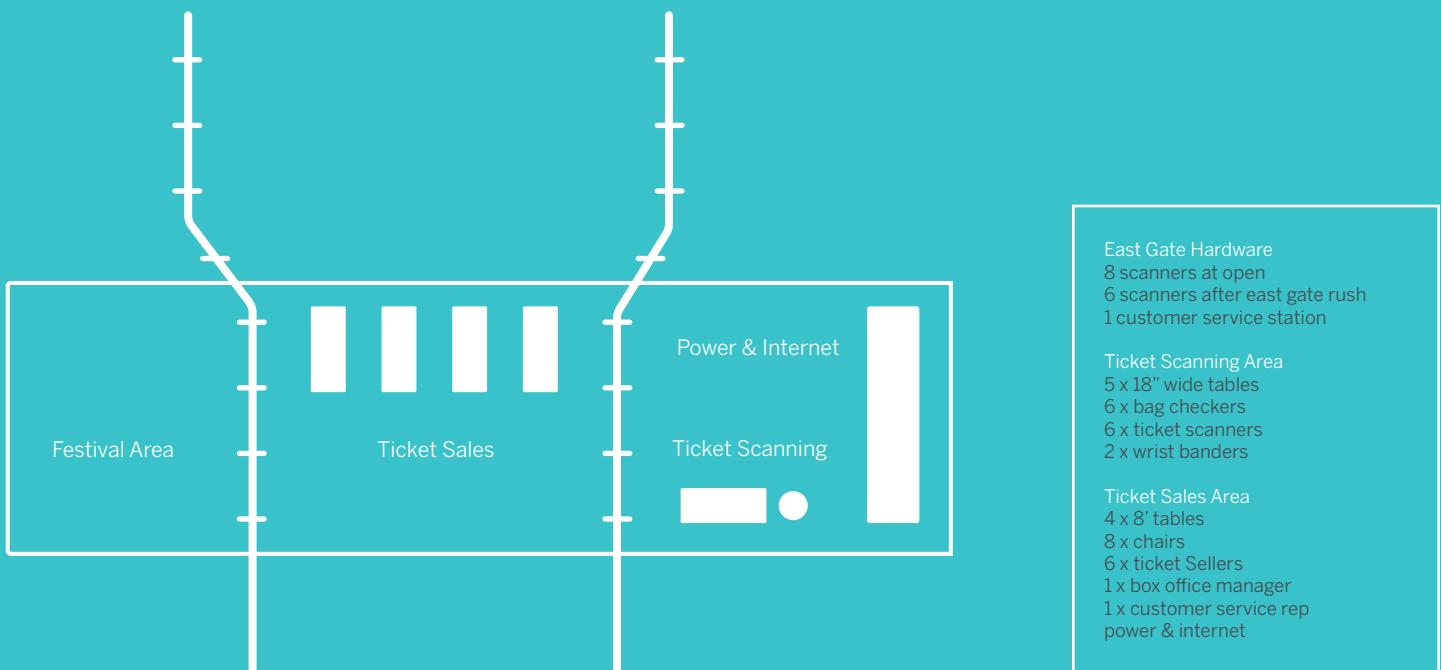
Are your entrances pre-set structures? If your entrances are fixed structures or doorways that cannot be moved, your gates should lead to these entrances.

What's the traffic and parking situation? Plan your parking operations early and thoughtfully. Traffic patterns can significantly impact entry operations. Conduct a site visit in advance to observe the flow of how vehicles will access your venue. Employ a professional parking or traffic company if your event is large or operationally complex.



Brite Tip:

Here is an example of the level of detail you will need in an operational or a site map for your gate and box office. If possible, build your map to scale. This will help your gate and box office builds be more accurate and efficient.





2. Attendee flow requirements:

Once you're familiar with the layout of your event site, you'll need to decide how attendees will flow through it. Your answers to each of the following questions will help you set up a site that allows your attendees to enter — and move around — with ease.

How many attendees do you have? This has perhaps the biggest impact on your site operations. The more attendees you have, the more staffing, attendee lanes, and gates you will need to accommodate them.

When will attendees arrive? If you have data from previous years, use it to understand how attendee volume changes throughout the duration of your event. This will help you better forecast staffing and infrastructure needs for future events. We also recommend creating a separate entrance for staff and vendors. This lets them bring supplies in and out of your event without getting held up in the chaos of the attendee line.

How are you validating attendee credentials? For multi-day events, you need a system for managing attendees who will return the next day. Otherwise, it can become confusing to manage tickets or wristbands that have already been used once. There two ways you can achieve this:

1. Exchange multi-day tickets for a wristband that can be visually checked each day. To prevent fraud, security needs to confirm that the wristband has not been tampered with upon arrival on subsequent days of the event.
2. Use RFID technology to issue scannable wristbands to patrons. Then, have them scan in each day they arrive at the event. RFID wristbands are extremely difficult to duplicate, resulting in a near-zero risk of fraud.



3. Site entry requirements:

Your entry experience is largely influenced by your venue's number of gates and the number of lanes per gate. Make sure you nail this number down by considering the following factors:



How many tickets do you plan on selling at the door? If your goal is to sell a high volume of tickets on-site, increase your number of lines dedicated to on-site sales. This will help you maximize last-minute ticket sales and avoid the risk of turning potential buyers away. It will also help get paid ticket holders in the gate faster.

How long will check-in take? If you anticipate check-in to take longer than a few seconds per person, create more gates and lanes to reduce the amount of time fans spend in line. Check-in time is driven by the speed of your equipment as well as the type of verification you are providing to attendees — be it wristbands, printed tickets, or lanyards. For example, Eventbrite scanners can handle approximately 1,000 attendees per hour. This number will vary depending on staff competency and the environment they are scanning in.

How many entry points do you have? Each entry point helps alleviate traffic bottlenecks. If you increase the number of entry points, you can decrease the number of lanes at each gate.

Do you have GA or VIP tickets? Will you be offering VIP tickets? If so, make sure there is a separate entry point and dedicated staff so you can deliver that experience from the moment your VIPs arrive.

$$\begin{aligned} & (\# \text{ of lanes}) \times (\# \text{ of attendees processed by a single device per hour}) \\ & = \text{maximum flow rate} \end{aligned}$$

Use the formula above to calculate the maximum number of attendees who can enter your event each hour. Compare this to your overall attendance to get a sense of how long it will take to get all of your attendees inside.

If you have detailed data about your flow rate from the previous year, you can use it to minimize staffing costs. Compare your estimated flow rate to your previous year's peak flow rate. If you anticipate your attendance to remain stable and a higher flow rate relative to prior years, you may be able to remove a lane and save costs.



4. Point of sale requirements:

You work hard to get merchandise, food, and beverages on-site. Make these purchases as easy as possible by taking the following points into account.

How will you accept payments on-site? Will you be accepting cash or credit? If you are accepting cash, make sure you have a secure location to store it and a method of managing reconciliation. If you are accepting credit cards, make sure that your internet connectivity extends to the areas where sales are happening. Your ability to accept payments easily has a direct impact on your bottom line.

Where will you accept payments on-site? Keep transactions processing swiftly by setting up solid infrastructure and staffing at each point of sale. If you want the flexibility to move your point-of-sale locations from one place to another, use mobile payment technology. Eventbrite enables on-site sales from anywhere in your event, via smartphones (cell-based connectivity) and iPads (WiFi).



5. Customer service and box office requirements:

The location of your customer service booth is critical, especially if you're selling tickets on-site. An improperly placed customer service booth — or box office — can create serious bottlenecks in your line.

Where will you position your customer service booth? To avoid any risk of tying up your lines, position the customer service booth just outside entry, away from entry and sales lanes. Don't place it inside your venue, or you will have to bring people inside your event to solve their issues.

Will your box office be a trailer or a tent? While costly, trailers are far more secure. If you expect a large amount of cash sales on-site, it's worth the extra cost to ensure your cash remains safe. If you're using a tent, select one with walls to minimize the risk of theft and provide protection from the elements.

To make sure you're maximizing ticket sales, try to have one window for every 500 walk-ins you anticipate. This will ensure that you capitalize as much as possible on last-minute sales.

Are you offering payment plans? If some of your attendees have only partially paid for their tickets and are on payment plans, anticipate some level of confusion at the gates. Some attendees may have forgotten that they didn't pay the remainder of their ticket, or might not have brought enough cash. An extra window dedicated to this can help.



Brite Tip:

Your box office and customer service desks should be separate and clearly marked. You don't want sales to be held up by customer service issues, which often take much longer to resolve.

Step 2:

Choose your resources

Maker Faire, a global festival of innovation and creativity, welcomes as many as 100,000 people over two days. To ensure a smooth customer experience at the gate, Maker Faire equips staff with high-speed, secure scanners. When large crowds of pre paid ticketholders arrive all at once, staff are able to walk down the line with the scanners, validating tickets. This speeds up the entry process once ticketholders reach the gates.

Like Maker Faire, you can achieve a seamless entry process by thoughtfully setting up your technology and event team. Start the planning process as early as possible — at least three to four months prior to your event. This will give you enough time to vet and secure staffing and technology resources. There are two important types of resources to secure:



Technology Resources:

Get prepared with the technical resources needed for each gate by checking the items on the list below. All equipment should be delivered to your event at least one day in advance so you're able to test and modify as needed.

Internet:

- **Make sure you have a local network:** Even if your venue has internet, it's important to have a local, private network solely for your ticketing equipment to use. This can be a hard line (wired ethernet cable) or WiFi. Keep in mind that public WiFi networks can be extremely slow, and you need your devices to sync with the latest check-ins to avoid fraud.

– Avoid relying on cellular networks: Even if your scanning devices have access to a nationwide cellular network such as Verizon or T-Mobile, it's not a recommended practice to use it. Cellular networks tend to be slower, so check-ins might take longer to sync across devices. Particularly with large festivals, cellular networks can get slammed. Instead, the best practice is to have your own WiFi network.

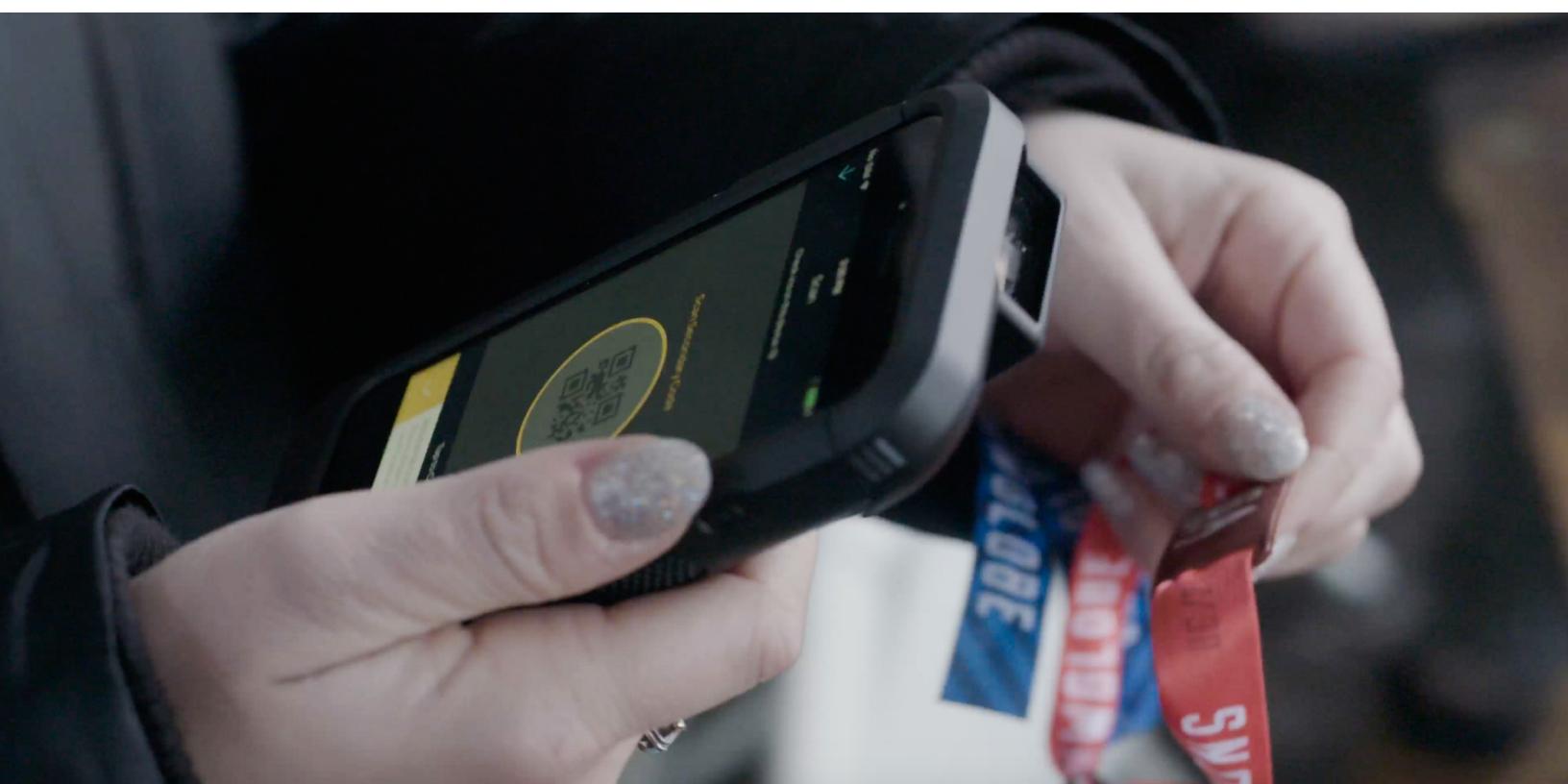
Power: You need a direct power source for WiFi and your ticketing equipment. An inconsistent power source can disable your WiFi (and hence your ticketing equipment).

On-site technology: A solid ticketing provider should offer features that make event day seamless and problem free.

– Ticketing platform: When you're considering registration partners, go with a tested and proven platform and on-site logistics team. Ask your provider about their plans for making your event run as seamlessly as possible. Look for a provider with deep entry management and customer service expertise. When your event has tens (or hundreds) of thousands of attendees, you'll want a provider that is prepared to turn chaos into calm, no matter the scenario.

– Powerful scanner technology: When it comes to large-scale events, you need on-site technology you can trust to handle high volumes of attendees fast. For example, Eventbrite scanners can complete 20,400 scans on one charge and up to 17 scans per minute. With about five hours of performance from one device, you'll avoid needing to swap out devices in the middle of a busy entry period. A speedy solution is critical, especially during your busiest entry times.

– All-in-one solution: Your ticketing solution should do more than just manage sales and entry. It should also help you handle hiccups with customer service, such as transferring tickets or issuing refunds. On the day of, you'll want these tasks to be accomplished as quickly as possible to keep lines moving and customers happy.





Staffing Resources:

Once you've chosen your technology, make sure you have the right people in place to use it! Your staff and volunteers — from ticket scanners to security guards to supply runners — are extensions of your brand. Empower your operations team with the information, technology, and authority they need to solve problems and provide great service.

Leadership: Start by designating one person in charge as the primary gate or box office manager. This leader should have prior experience managing a box office or gate. Give your manager the most in-depth training available on your check-in technology. This way, should issues arise, you have one point of contact to answer.

Rush strategy: When do you expect a rush of attendees? Plan for extra staff to accommodate your peak traffic hours. Then cut down lanes and staff as the day goes on to minimize your costs.

Check-in process: Create many small jobs so each staff member can focus on accomplishing one key task quickly and efficiently. If you require “wearables” — such as bracelets, badges, lanyards, or hand stamps — separate ID distribution and scanning into adjacent stations. Wrist-banding can take twice as long as ticket scanning. It's best to have two dedicated wristband volunteers per ticket scanner to keep things moving.

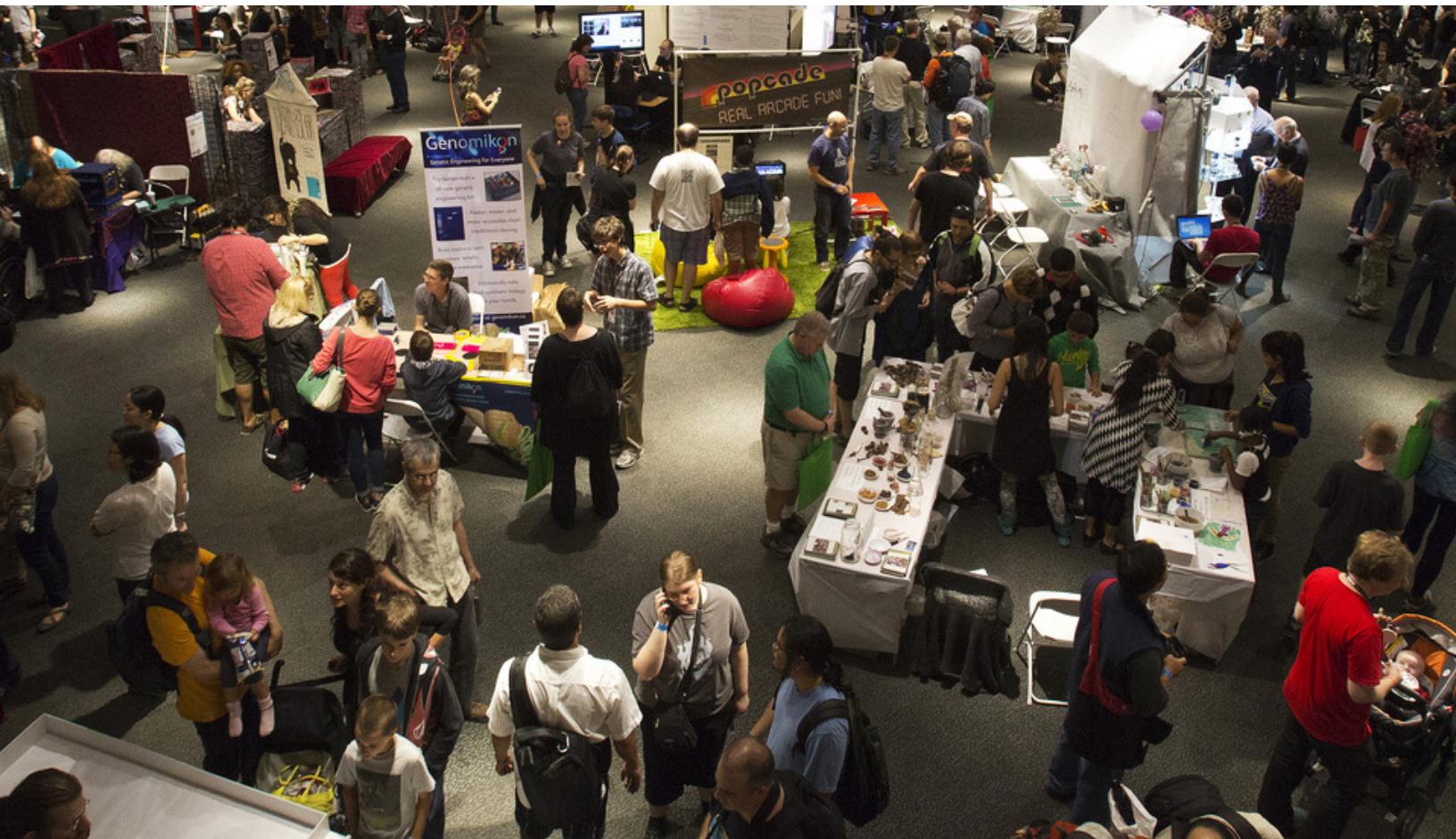
Safekeeper for valuables: Designate a trusted staffer or volunteer to manage this inventory and oversee that portion of the operation. This will reduce your risk of theft and loss.

Escalation path: For every area that may have issues during your event, assign a dedicated point of contact. This includes your box office, IT, ticketing, and power. Then, inform all department leads about how to escalate each type of issue. For larger events, consider putting a small team in charge. This team can communicate escalations to the appropriate department and log them so you can track trends in problems to improve how you handle them in the future.

Breaks and shift changes: To keep staff happy and fresh, make sure you build in time for shift changes and breaks. While length of shifts and breaks vary depending on the employer and the jurisdiction, they should be comparable to a standard workday. If your event is taking place in somewhat extreme conditions, like heat (Coachella) or snow (SnowGlobe), be extra cautious about giving staffers time to unwind and get comfortable between shifts.

Your security and scanning staff are sometimes the only event representatives your attendees will meet. It pays to make sure these people are happy, excited, and proactive in helping your attendees. An excellent entry experience is the first step in an excellent event experience.

The exit plan: Make sure your staff knows how to turn an entrance into an exit for emergencies and the end of the show. Don't just wing it. Attendees might be willing to tolerate bottlenecks when they enter your event, but they won't be happy with jams when they're tired and trying to get home. More importantly, creating a viable exit is a safety necessity in case of an emergency. While the process varies by venue and entry point, entrances are generally optimized for mass exit by removing obstacles like bike racks and gates.



Step 3: Execute

Solid on-site execution is crucial for the SF Vintners Market. This semi-annual wine festival needs to quickly and efficiently handle crowds by the thousands. At entry, each line is staffed with three volunteers. The first person is a security guard who checks IDs. The next person scans tickets with an Eventbrite mobile scanner. The third person gives attendees wristbands or hand stamps. Each team member is responsible for only one task to focus on and execute repeatedly.

When the rubber hits the road and fans start streaming in, you'll need to keep an eye on a lot of things at once. Your ability to quickly respond to the ebb and flow — and make in-the-moment decisions to manage resources — is essential to your success.

The big day has finally arrived and your staff is raring to go. Here are the final finishing touches to make on-site so the day goes as smoothly as possible. Build in plenty of time and allocate resources for each of these items so all of your careful planning pays off.

Provide tech training. The amount of time you will need to train your team on the check-in process depends on the type of technology you will be using. If you are using an easy-to-use event management platform like Eventbrite, allocate 15-20 minutes just before opening to train your team. That way, your instructions are fresh in staff members' minds.

Enable communication. Issue walkie-talkies to all key departments. Then give each department its own channel for communication. The ability to communicate quickly and easily on the ground is critical to keeping your event running smoothly. Your team needs to be able to coordinate and solve problems the moment they arise.

Create a funnel. To establish order and alleviate bunching as fans approach the venue, use stanchions or barriers to create an entry “chute” that leads to your check-in point. Start the chute as far back as possible. Then, adjust the amount of zig-zagging fans have to do based on the amount of traffic you’re experiencing.

Position line barkers at the beginning. Make entry as fast as possible by using line barkers to direct attendees to the correct lanes, prepare them for the security search, and tell them to have their tickets and IDs ready. If you allow multiple attendees to use one ticket, make sure the ticket holder doesn’t go through until everyone in the party is there. (Designate a separate gathering spot for groups so they don’t hold up the line.)

Watch for bottlenecks. Train your management and frontline team to keep an eye out for potential backups at each lane. Eventbrite customers can use real-time gate counts generated by the Eventbrite Organizer mobile app to quickly identify gates that have bottlenecks.

Put security first. It takes longer to do security checks than it does to scan tickets. Perform security searches before ticket scanning so there won't be a backup between the two stations.

Know your security intensity. Family-friendly events like food and beverage festivals typically only have a light bag search and do not require much security infrastructure. Music festivals usually have much more thorough searches. They require more staff, lanes, and tables and trash cans to confiscate that are not allowed in the event.

Give fans a place to “pitch in.” Place amnesty boxes ahead of the security search lanes to give attendees the opportunity to discard illegal or illicit items.

Know your reporting needs. Determine your reporting needs prior to your event and put a system in place to monitor the key metrics, including check-ins over time, total event attendance, and walk-up ticket sales. Your law enforcement partners, venue management, and medical teams may all have different reporting requirements. Share your reporting requirements with your ticketing partner and operations team well in advance of the event so your team is prepared to produce reports quickly if requested. A strong ticketing partner should be able to provide a clear visual display of this event data.



Brite Tip:

Provide abundant and clear signage so it's easy for fans to know where to go and what to do once they've arrived

- Remind fans of rules and forbidden items as they approach the gate
- Create signage that answers basic questions about where to find concessions, restrooms, and first aid
- Have box office signage and lane signage (when applicable) to ensure attendees get in the right lines

At the end of the day, nothing ever goes exactly according to plan. But with a well-built strategy, you'll be flexible enough to meet unexpected challenges as they arise. You'll also be equipped to proactively address issues before they become big problems.

Feeling overwhelmed? We're happy to help! Simply call (855) 292-7905 to find out how Eventbrite and our experienced field operations team can help you on the ground at your next festival!

Eventbrite

Eventbrite powers more than two million live experiences each year, hosting the world's largest online selection of events. Built with a focus on reliability and scale, the platform serves hundreds of thousands of event organizers, including Tribeca Film Festival, BottleRock, Maker Faire, Wanderlust, and many more.

Organizers use Eventbrite to boost ticket sales, promote and manage events, and analyze results across multiple sales channels: web, mobile, point-of-sale, and a growing distribution platform. Consumers use Eventbrite to discover exciting things to do and get tickets on a safe, easy-to-use platform.

To find out how you can innovate with Eventbrite and grow your event, visit www.eventbrite.com/blog/contact or give us a call at (855) 292-7905.