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Music Fans Tell It Like It Is

The weather is getting warmer, and music is moving outdoors. The concert festival season is upon us, and the same as in any other business, customers can provide a wealth of information about how to keep the industry alive and well.

[C3 Presents](#), a marketing and talent management firm that produces popular music festivals like Lollapalooza and the Austin City Limits Music Festival, believes word of mouth is powerful. So an essential part of the firm's marketing strategy is to improve the overall concert experience in order to get people talking.

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By making continuous operational improvements based on customer feedback, C3 Presents' goal is to positively influence fans' perceptions of the events with the hope that they'll tell friends and family. "Word of mouth is by far the number one way that people say they find out about the events," says Michael Feferman, director of brand development at C3 Presents.

Fan input is what drives satisfaction and word of mouth, Feferman says. The company used to rely on post-concert surveys to collect customer feedback, but in 2005 C3 introduced onsite surveys to gain a better understanding of fans' experiences. Now, the company uses a blended approach of onsite and post-concert analysis. Arturo Coto, CEO of Inquisite, which provides the Web-based software and data application to enable the onsite surveys, says that real-time feedback portrays a more accurate representation of customers' views than post-event surveys do because concertgoers' opinions are top of mind.

To facilitate the onsite surveys C3 erects tents throughout the festivals where its staff can intercept fans to ask them questions. Upon completing the five-minute questionnaire, participants receive a bottle of water -- a sought-after incentive when spending the day in the hot sun. The questions range from basic demographic inquiries to personal experience questions. The company also asks the Net Promotor Score question: "Would you recommend this event?" C3 surveyed about 500 fans at the Austin City Limits Music Festival and at Lollapalooza in Chicago's Grant Park during the 2006 shows. "Our philosophy is that the most important thing is to create a phenomenal experience for the people," Feferman says. "This customer feedback will enable us to improve events year to year."

Call to action

Case in point: At the 2005 Austin City Limits Music Festival, 65,000 concert goers battled record-breaking 108-degree temperatures during the mid-September festival. As a result, a high percentage of people complained about the swirling dust clouds and lack of cooling systems.

C3 Presents didn't want that negative experience to dampen fans' attendance at future shows. Working with the City of Austin, the company installed an irrigation system in Zilker Park, the show's venue, to increase the amount of grass. C3 Presents also doubled the amount of shade with more tents, stocked triple the amount of bottled water and tripled the amount of misting machines for 2006. The investment for the concert producer totaled hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition, the City of Austin shared the cost of the \$1 million irrigation system.

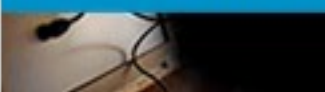
Feferman says the number of people in 2006 who said that the concert organizer did a good job at supplying heat relief rose 63 percent from the previous year and 96 percent of people said they would recommend the event to a friend. The success has prompted C3 Presents to bring the onsite surveys to an October country music show called Big State, held in College Station, TX. "We are so focused on providing all of our customers—the patrons and sponsors—with what they want," Feferman says. "We're proud that we can provide them with a really good experience."

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