
Running a Box Office Template

Determining Ticket Prices

To determine ticket prices, most promoters add all of their expenses, which include venue rental and staff, advertising, and production/talent costs. They divide the total expense by the total number of seats they have to sell to determine the lowest amount that they can charge for a ticket. The goal in pricing a ticket for most events is to cover all expenses plus make a profit.

For example:

Scenario 1

\$17,000 Production Costs
 2,000 Venue Rental and Labor
 1,000 Advertising
 \$20,000 TOTAL

You have 2000 seats to sell
 Based on a sell-out, you would
 sell each seat for more than \$10

Scenario 2

\$17,000 Production Costs
 2,000 Venue Rental and Labor
 1,000 Advertising
 \$20,000 TOTAL

You have 800 seats to sell
 Based on a sell-out, you would
 sell each seat for more than \$25

Other factors to consider:

How much can the market bear?

Do some research: what is the average ticket price for a live performance in this venue? If the average ticket price is usually \$15, then in the above scenarios, you might want to adjust your prices accordingly.

General Admission or Reserved Seating?

(This may be a moot question if the venue you are using has box office services that you are required to use.) If the venue has no authorized ticket seller, you may choose from the following options to sell tickets.

Definition: **General Admission** - no assigned seating

Usually all the prices are the same

Does not require special printing of tickets (an added cost and added headache in accounting for ticket sales)

Does not require knowledge of the venue in order to sell tickets (will make it easier for many people to sell tickets)

Definition: **Reserved Seating** - selling assigned seating

Prices of tickets may vary

You can charge more money for better seats and also control where people sit (i.e., for VIPs, etc.)

Requires special printing of tickets

Requires knowledge of the venue. Sales usually are done with maps so that seller may show buyer seat location. Sales are usually done in one location.

Are some of the seats in the venue markedly better than others?

You can charge different prices for seats. Are the seats all on the floor, do they slant up, are some upstairs? Adjusting prices of seats based on their proximity to the stage is called "scaling" the house. This will require selling Reserved Seating.

Printing Tickets

Printing your own tickets to the performance may not be necessary if you are using a venue that requires using their box office services. Tickets are used for two purposes: to control the number of people legally allowed in a facility and to account for the performance sales.

If you decide to sell your own General Admission tickets:

General Admission can most simply be sold with roll tickets that can usually be purchased at any office supply store. You can also generate some nice looking tickets on a computer, but you should number them. Numbering tickets makes it easier to account for the money later on.

General Admission tickets can be given to many sellers. You need only to keep track of which seller got which tickets. If a certain number of general admission tickets are lost, then you can easily replace them.

If you decide to sell your own Reserved Seat tickets:

There are several companies that print tickets. (One of the largest providers of tickets is Weldon, Williams, and Lick. You can contact them via the internet.) You would need to provide a map of the venue or a list of the fixed seats to the printer. Reserved Seat tickets are not easily replaced if lost. Therefore you should not allot tickets to multiple sellers. The sale of these tickets should remain in a central location. This does not mean you have to create a box office—only that all the tickets should stay together. For example, you could sell tickets at a school, local bank, different locations, etc. during advertised hours.

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| ■ see Template and Sample Box Office Statement and Sample Balance Sheet for Tickets |
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