



WHOLE NEW BALLGAME

Challenges and Opportunities in the **COVID-19** Sports Ticketing Landscape

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Prepared for:

Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment

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INTRODUCTION

2020 has brought the **unprecedented challenge of COVID-19** to the professional sports landscape, but as highlighted in our 2017-2018 Ticket Report, also produced for Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE), with challenge comes opportunity. Despite current shutdowns now is the time for innovative thinking to solve this new challenge and drive revenue-generating loyalty from fan bases when games resume. In our 2017-18 Ticketing Report we shared best practices around 1) The Secondary Market 2) Personal Seat Licenses and 3) Pricing. In the COVID-19 landscape of 2020 this Summary Report will focus on the new reality as it applies to: **1) Attendance 2) Revenue and 3) Retaining Season Ticket Holders**

WHY READ FURTHER?

In short, because we've done what you don't have time to, which is research and conduct interviews with more than 150 teams across the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, MiLB, AHL and ECHL in order to uncover some of the best ideas, solutions and approaches to the challenges in the 3 categories listed above.

THIS REPORT IS JUST THE START

In addition to this COVID-19 Report, teams we interviewed or visited between June 2019 and January of 2020 will be sent our **Full 2019-2020 Best Practice Ticketing Report** which includes the best ideas to support: 1) Attendance 2) Revenue and 3) Season Ticket Holder Retention in the new pro sports reality beyond COVID-19.

VIRTUAL DISCUSSIONS ON ZOOM

This report is intended to highlight issues, and spearhead thinking on solutions in the COVID-19 landscape. That said, we recognize this public health issue is an evolving challenge, with new information arriving daily, thus we **will be inviting teams** to join our [Virtual Discussions on Zoom](#). Discussion topics will include: A) Best ideas to retain Season Ticket Holders B) Attendance concerns and solutions C) What are you doing for your Season Ticket holders during COVID-19? D) The New Secondary Market: What's just happened & what does it mean? E) Why should teams take over their secondary market? Why shouldn't they?

When you confirm your attendance please send your biggest pain points (any issue) due to COVID-19, and your best solutions for the discussion topic. Furthermore, we'll also be **pursuing additional ideas and topics to discuss** in this continuing series, so please share anything you'd like us to raise on future discussions.

SUMMARY REPORT

ATTENDANCE

Challenges: Many fans will be uncomfortable and fearful in crowds. Fans are facing an economic downturn (business and personal) and are concerned about the optics of spending money to attend games. TV has become a safer alternative to view sports. The adjusted schedule might conflict with preferred alternatives, such as other sports in their regular season, family visits or summer holidays. The interruption of the sports pattern has been adjusted to, and alternatives have been found.

Solutions: Team logo masks and gloves. Abundant hand-sanitizer stations. Healthcare workers onsite. Healthcare workers in seats. Testing stations (if available). Social distancing best practices. Gradual attendance measures. Food preparation measures. Transfer adjustments and payment solutions. Surprise and Delight upgrades and future tickets.

REVENUE

Challenges: Games are being cancelled. Games are no longer affordable for companies and individuals. People are fearful of large gatherings. There are negative optics around spending money and not being socially responsible. Sudden financial insecurity. The belief that players won't be ready to be top performers.

Solutions: Teams can take actions that generate positive optics and minimize the risk of looking greedy, including athletes and Sr. Executives taking financial cuts similar to those their fans are having to take at work. Extend payment terms. Dynamically price the season to recognize hesitation with the early games. Allow fans to credit tickets towards future games if they get cold feet. Highlight safety measures being taken.

SEASON TICKET HOLDERS

Challenges: Season Tickets are no longer affordable as budgets for tickets are often the first personal or corporate cutback. The optics of spending money on sports during a recession. The belief that tickets will be less desired and therefore a bigger headache to place. The belief that Season Tickets will be viewed as a luxury symbol. The ability to obtain tickets on a needs basis on a downward pressured secondary market. A negative taste from how the teams handled COVID-19 impacted staff, executives, or players. A fear of being in crowds.

Solutions: Highlight the scarcity of location or availability in the long game. If you're lucky enough to have a waiting list, broadcast that number to let scarcity assist in retaining your existing base. Teams without a Season Ticket Holder waiting list will need to Teflon (fill the season ticket offering with real intangibles) to recognize that location, price and expected commitment in the short term will likely all favour the secondary market.

NEXT STEPS

Invitations will be sent, to those interviewed for the full report, to take part in our first Virtual Discussion in the **week of April 13th**. To respect everyone's time, this discovery session will be 20 minutes or less, three time slots for each topic, the group size will be capped at 4 teams per call. Learning's from the 3 or 4 weekly topics will be sent out end of day Friday EST each week to all Virtual discussion participants involved that week.

For more information on Virtual Discussions, contact Chris Kelly (details on Cover Page).

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