Eventbrite

How Distributed Commerce is Transforming the Ticketing Industry
Want to binge watch a brand-new show? Need to get to the airport, fast? No time to go to the grocery store? No problem. In a few taps, you can instantly indulge in the next hot Netflix series, catch a private ride, or have groceries delivered to your door.

It’s no secret: we’ve become a society that expects immediate gratification, with new businesses finding new ways to get people what they want, instantly. **And why should events be an exception?**

That’s the idea behind “distributed commerce” — a purchasing model that makes tickets available where event-goers already spend their time, and allows them to buy wherever they discover your event. Say, for example, that you’ve posted your event to Facebook to reach more potential attendees. Eventbrite’s distributed commerce partnership allows people to **buy tickets to your event and access their ticket, without having to leave the platform.**
Why is this matter? Because each additional step in a checkout process results in a 10% decrease in transactions. So not only does distributed commerce allow you to reach new potential attendees, it helps you sell more tickets by eradicating extra steps.

It’s a win-win for organizers and event-goers alike: You sell more, and they easily discover and purchase tickets to events they wouldn’t know about otherwise. And as more forward-thinking businesses embrace distributed commerce, those that fail to deliver consumers a more seamless discovery and purchase experience will be left behind.
To understand more about how distributed commerce will continue to transform the ticketing industry, we sat down with four key players leading the charge at Eventbrite.

Read on to discover how Eventbrite’s approach to distributed commerce is transforming the ticketing industry, and what it all means for you as an event organizer.
How does a distributed commerce strategy benefit event organizers?

Our mission is for organizers to sell more tickets and build successful businesses on Eventbrite — and we lean into any strategy that helps create success for our organizers. Opening up the ecosystem is a no-brainer. It's one of many ways that we drive ticket sales for our organizers — they’re able to reach audiences they may have not known about, and in a much more targeted way than buying an ad.

It's more efficient for organizers, it's more targeted, and it's less expensive. It yields higher conversion rates, because more people will actually buy tickets. For example, on Facebook, we already see a 2X conversion of ticket buyers when they're shown a relevant event in their Facebook news feed, and can buy tickets right there — versus having to go outside of Facebook to buy that ticket.

What role does data play in distributed commerce?

Data helps us answer the question: how do we put those great live experiences that are quality, that are relevant, that are compelling, in front of the right buyer at the right time?

Data is essential to understanding where event-goers are spending their time online, and what their interests are. If you don’t understand which events are hyper-relevant to which audience, you can’t execute on a
distributed commerce strategy. Modern-day consumers expect to only see information that’s relevant to them — that’s the backbone of the ad industry. So if an event isn’t relevant, event-goers won’t click. Our data infrastructure allows us to actually connect the dots for them to help organizers sell more.

**What does this movement towards distributed commerce say about the industry as a whole?**

The people who are going to succeed are thinking about those critical intersections where sellers and buyers meet, in secure environments that provide delightful experiences. We’re pushing the industry to be more open, and more consumer-centric — two things that historically have not been the case for ticketing.

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What is distributed commerce, and how does it relate to events?

Julia Hartz

Distributed commerce is a newer form of marketing that propels our organizers’ events directly into the newsfeeds, apps, and inboxes of their potential attendees. Our goal is to get your event in front of the right customer at the point of discovery and enable easy transactions; distributed commerce is that vehicle.

The cornerstone to a successful distributed commerce strategy in ticketing is rock-solid technology. Eventbrite has built our technology in a flexible, accessible way to allow for continued innovation. The second piece is partnership — we’ve created a strong foundation that our partners can build upon in order to give our organizers best-in-class solutions for everything they do, from MailChimp’s email service to Salesforce’s CRM.

The final piece of this is accessibility. Where other ticketing companies have historically been very closed, we’ve thought about things differently. We’ve created open landscapes where other services have created walled gardens. So, through our focus on openness, partnership, and accessibility we’ve been able to drive a truly unique and valuable distributed commerce solution. Consumers can actually complete their purchase on a partner site in a few clicks, delivering on that need for instant gratification.
Round Table

What is distributed commerce, and how does it relate to events?

Tamara Mendelsohn

If you think back to the beginning of ticketing, people would line up at box offices. They would even camp out overnight — that’s a huge labor of love for people to get access to events. Tickets were mostly only available at the venue itself. But as technology and the industry evolved ticket sales began to be distributed to other locations. When I was growing up, we’d buy tickets at Tower Records. Phone sales became possible and later kiosks in retail locations. Then, with the advent of ecommerce, you could go online to a website and get tickets from the comfort of your couch. But for the most part, you knew about the event beforehand, from a friend or a poster or the radio. You had to know what you were looking for.

Distributed commerce changes that. It brings events that you might be interested in to the places where you’re already spending time online. Events are surfaced in the context of what you’re doing online — whether it’s on social networks like Facebook that show you events your friends are attending, or in apps like Bandsintown that tell you when your favorite bands are coming to town. Now, you can actually discover events that you’re interested in, without having to know that they were happening beforehand. Distributed commerce technology enables someone to buy the ticket from within the online experience that surfaced the event — without any redirect back to the ticketing site. So we’re at this really interesting point in time where suddenly event discovery is becoming much more integrated, seamless, and personalized.
Round Table

What is distributed commerce, and how does it relate to events?

Pat Poels

When I was at Ticketmaster in the late 80s, people used to line up at the box office to get tickets. After that, the industry shifted to a physical distributed commerce model. You could buy tickets at Tower Records, other record stores, or at venues — all physical locations. Then, ticketing moved online and became somewhat concentrated again: tickets were all bought through specific transaction hubs.

Now, we’re seeing a new model of distributed commerce emerge online. This is similar to the physical “expansion” we saw in the late 80s: people will be able to buy tickets wherever they go online. So instead of distributing ticket-buying across physical locations people frequent, we’re distributing ticket-buying across digital locations.
Round Table

What is distributed commerce, and how does it relate to events?

Matt Rosenberg

Distributed commerce is about being able to sell where people are already spending time online, and where they’re most comfortable.

People spend time on sites they trust. They go there because they’re comfortable with the content, comfortable with the experience, and comfortable with the brand. If they discover an event there, they’re comfortable purchasing from there. So forcing them off that trusted site pushes them out of their comfort zone, and can create a level of mistrust or doubt. To get the highest conversion possible, sellers should sell where their consumer is most comfortable instead of sending them to a different environment to complete their purchase.

From a practical standpoint, distributed commerce drives conversion by making the buying process more convenient. Instead of introducing incremental steps that cause customers to drop off, why not close the deal right there and then? Why push them somewhere they didn’t ask to go when technology can enable the purchase to happen in that same website? By reducing friction in the buying process, distributed commerce helps drive more ticket revenue to organizers.
Find out how distributed commerce will transform event marketing as we know it.

How can distributed commerce help organizers grow their events?

It’s often hard for event organizers to know where to find a new audience. Distributed commerce is an easy testing ground for them, because their event is automatically put in front many different types of audiences. And organizers have access to the data to see where that event is having the most traction. Is it a Facebook audience? Is it a Bandsintown audience? Is it a Goldstar audience? Those answers can inform their marketing and future promotional activities, because they help them understand where pockets of potential attendees can be found.

All of that data flows seamlessly through distributed commerce partnerships, and that’s a big advantage for organizers. They can actually see all the information as if the transaction was happening on their ticketing platform instead of on a partner site. That’s way more data than they would get if they simply put an ad on Facebook.

“Now, you can discover events that you’re interested in, without having to know that they were happening beforehand. We’re at this really interesting point in time where suddenly event discovery is becoming much more integrated, seamless, and personalized.”
How will Eventbrite’s distributed commerce strategy help organizers sell more tickets?

We do as much as we can to help organizers sell more tickets by helping them reach new audiences — and engaging those audiences on their behalf. So we’re going to be looking to expand the number of partners we work with, and the number of places where Eventbrite inventory shows up. Upcoming partnerships with Goldstar and Bandsintown are good examples.

We’ll also be looking at tools that give Eventbrite organizers more control over the experience. Goldstar and Bandsintown both have the added benefit of giving organizers that control; they can add additional discounts on Goldstar or put additional promotional power behind the way their events show up to the Bandsintown audience. That’s really how our near-term distribution strategy will help organizers sell more.

The ticketing industry has traditionally been fairly closed; what are the benefits of moving towards a more open ecosystem?

It benefits attendees because they find out about events that they are excited to attend, reducing those terrible moments when you find out about an amazing event after it’s already happened. And it benefits organizers because they sell more tickets. In addition, we believe that the more brains on a problem, the more innovative solutions you’ll get. We believe that there are partners out there, and other technology companies, that can all work together to create something really powerful. The combined potential is far greater than what anyone could create on our own.

So, this openness is really a call to foster innovation for the whole industry. The end goal being the ability to create solutions that are far superior for both organizers and attendees. This spirit of collaboration, innovation, and openness is core to Eventbrite’s DNA.
Looking back, what do you see as the most impactful change in the way events are ticketed?

Definitely advancements in mobile. Attendees can buy and keep tickets on their phones, and organizers can sell tickets and track sales from their phones. This will continue to evolve. At Eventbrite, we’ve found that staying ahead of mobile trends means rethinking the way products are built. When it first became evident that mobile adoption would continue to grow at unprecedented rates, we started to make some big shifts in how we approached product development for mobile. Instead of thinking about how we could build a desktop experience and adapt it to mobile, we approached solutions with a mobile-first mentality. The companies that approached product development in this way emerged as the leaders in their respective industries, and we were proud to be the leader in mobile for the ticketing industry.

What’s the biggest problem that distributed commerce solves for organizers?

The biggest benefit of distributed commerce for organizers is incremental ticket sales. It’s one thing to get in front of people who were already going to buy tickets, and making that process easier. Distributed commerce actually takes that a step further — it makes it possible to get your event in front of new people, who wouldn’t have known about your event otherwise.
As we build and improve our product for organizers, how does distributed commerce inform Eventbrite’s strategy?

Our vision is to have a product that anyone can easily build on, so that we can give our customers the best experience possible. Distributed commerce wouldn’t be possible if we hadn’t built the hooks for mobile applications and API-driven transactions.

Eventbrite’s open API allows partners like MailChimp or GoldStar to build on top of our product so we can offer organizers best-in-breed extensions. This openness is what has allowed us to continue to innovate with initiatives like distributed commerce.

Essentially, we embrace partnerships that give our organizers the best tools out there for growing their businesses and that make it as easy as possible for attendees to buy tickets. When it comes to distributed commerce, this means helping organizers gain incremental ticket sales by keeping their customer right where they are — from discovery through purchase.

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How did the partnership with Facebook evolve?

We’ve been working closely with Facebook since 2008. In fact, we were the first partner of theirs to integrate with Facebook Events. There are over a billion people on the platform, so there is huge potential for organizers to reach new audiences.

Like Eventbrite, Facebook is a very consumer-centric and mobile-first platform. When we first launched our partnership with them, we agreed to create a simplified version of our product. We wanted to make the experience as easy as possible for the buyer within the environment where they’re discovering events.

This integration encouraged us to think more about the consumer experience first: how can we make their purchase experience as painless as possible? Of course, by answering this question, we were able to craft a checkout process that ultimately benefits the organizer with more incremental ticket sales.

The Facebook team understands the incredible power and potential of live events, so it was a no brainer for our partnership to evolve into distributed commerce.
Round Table

What do you see for the future of distributed commerce?

Julia Hartz

At Eventbrite, we’re focused on helping people find events, buy tickets, and access the event in any way they prefer. We are not only bringing events to consumers where they are online through distributed commerce partnerships, but we’re also committed to providing a central repository of live experiences that people can visit to easily purchase tickets. Ultimately, we want to make it as easy as possible for people to get out more, experience life, and forge meaningful connections with others — and being an open platform will help us do just that.

Tamara Mendelsohn

The near future could involve virtual assistant technology. Imagine you ask, “What should I do tonight?” These systems will be connected to Eventbrite and understands all of your preferences and be able to respond, “Here are three options for tonight that I think you might be interested in.” Virtual assistants will be able to help schedule your social calendar and how you spend your time. But who knows what’s next! We will be wherever that is — whatever that next thing is that helps people manage their time or inform them of what’s going on in the world around them. Distributed commerce is all about being in those places at the right time with relevant ideas and recommendations for things to do. That’s the ethos of it, and whatever the technology mechanisms are, we’ll be a part of that.
Round Table

What do you see for the future of distributed commerce?

Pat Poels

Ten years from now, I hope that Eventbrite will be recognized as a trusted source — that when you see “powered by Eventbrite,” whether it’s on Eventbrite.com or elsewhere, you know it’s both a safe and easy transaction. We’ll still have that central repository of events — the place to go when you’re looking for something to do — but we’ll also be everywhere else. And anywhere someone sees an Eventbrite event, they’ll automatically associate it with being trustworthy.
Can you talk about Eventbrite’s partnership with Facebook and how it fits into a larger distributed commerce strategy?

Over 1.2 billion people around the world use Facebook everyday to check in with their friends, read the news, and find things to do. They view the platform as a trusted site. So if you want to reach the broadest audience possible, you want to be on Facebook. And to sell the most tickets possible, you need a tech-forward platform that allows you to complete transactions in the Facebook environment.

Unlike most other ticketing companies, our integration doesn’t require a redirect back to our site to complete a ticket purchase. Why should it? Why should you force somebody to a different website to complete their purchase? It’s disruptive. It’s unnecessary. And it decreases conversion. If you want to have a pure-play distributed commerce strategy, you have to complete the transaction on Facebook — and we’re the only ticketing company that does that.

For distributed commerce to work, you need three things: a product or service (or an event!) to actually distribute, an API or some other way for partners to easily plug into your platform, and an open approach to partnering with best-in-class tech providers. Eventbrite’s technology is built in a way that can integrate very easily with lots of different
providers — so our strategy doesn't start and end with Facebook. We’ll be extending across a number of different categories and geos to give our organizers the broadest reach.

At the end of the day, you want to develop a solid ecosystem of leading partners through which you can distribute events.

**How does this thinking ladder up to a larger move towards mobile?**

A strong mobile strategy is not only important, it is essential. People engage with Facebook and Google more on mobile than on desktop now, and those are just two examples of how the trend lines have crossed. They’re searching for things to do, and making decisions about which events to go to, all from their mobile device.

To be a legitimate event technology platform, you must be mobile-first. Otherwise, you’re not servicing the needs of your organizers or their attendees, and you’re crushing your conversion rates (and not in a good way). We do everything we can to help organizers optimize their marketing spend to get as many attendees as possible to participate in the experience they’re building — so they can reinvest back in their business. We are an event management platform that enables our organizers to grow, and to fulfill that promise, we have to deliver on mobile.

Essentially there are two things we consider as it relates to mobile: ensuring Eventbrite properties (our websites and our apps) offer the best mobile experience in the industry for attendees and professional organizers alike, and, working with leading mobile-first platforms to make sure our events are discoverable and available on their websites and mobile properties.
Consumer experiences are becoming increasingly more personalized. How does distributed commerce contribute to that trend?

We live in a world where consumers expect highly personalized, customized experiences. iPhone apps are a great example of how technology is allowing us to configure our own experiences based on individual preferences. Similarly, major content providers like Spotify and Bandsintown are creating mobile app experiences that are highly personalized.

Our job is to understand who our organizers’ attendees are, what their preferences are, and then optimize the introduction of events based on what we know. Sixty million people buy tickets from us or register for events on our platform each year, so we’re well-placed to advise professional organizers about how to grow their business.

Distributed commerce partnerships allow us to meet consumers where they are online, while they’re actively discovering events, and provide them with a consumer-centric (AKA simple) purchase experience. Our partnership with Bandsintown is a great example of personalization and distributed commerce: A fan indicates which artists they’re interested in seeing, Bandsintown alerts them when the artist announces shows in their city (or suggests shows of similar artists they may be interested in), and they easily click to buy tickets without ever having to leave Bandsintown.

A strong mobile strategy is not only important, it is essential. People are searching for things to do, and making decisions about which events to go to, all from their mobile device.
The fan is happy because not only was it easy to buy tickets, they also discover new artists and never miss out on their favorite shows. And the artist and venue are happy because they get tickets into the hands of fans, selling more tickets with an easier checkout process.

**Who do you think is doing personalization and distribution exceptionally well?**

Retargeting technologies do an exceptional job of selling through personalization and distribution. Once you’ve expressed interest in a product or service, it follows you wherever else you go online — in many cases replacing advertising that was non-customized.

I think we’ll see more and more genre-specific sites doing it particularly well — capitalizing on their data and segmentation knowledge to offer up recommendations that would provoke joy in the consumer. Imagine, for example, that you’re on NFL.com looking at headlines on the Chicago Bears and you’re reminded that they’re playing in a huge game against the Packers in three weeks. Then NFL.com offers you a package that includes airfare from whichever city you’re in, plus a hotel and seats at the 40-yard line. That could transform a consumer’s experience by making their planning super simple.

Our open API gives us the ability to move towards these highly personalized offers and experiences. One day soon, we’ll be able to bundle event tickets, hotel, and travel into an offering and pull it all through the API. The way we’ve architected the Eventbrite platform actually allows us to do this in a way other ticket or registration platforms can’t.
More and more events are embracing distributed commerce to deliver consumers the discovery and purchase experience they’ve come to expect. These forward-thinking events will see better ticket sales today — and more successful businesses tomorrow. How will you adapt to the new landscape of event ticketing?

To learn more about how Eventbrite can help you take advantage of distributed commerce to grow your business, check out eventbrite.com/blog/contact-us or talk to an event expert at (866) 902-2531.
Eventbrite brings the world together through live experiences. More than 700,000 organizers used Eventbrite in 2017 to drive ticket sales, promote and manage events, handle on-site operations, and analyze results across multiple sales channels.

Powered three million events in 2017.

Grow your event
More than 200 million tickets were issued in 2017.

Simplify your planning
Promote, manage, and analyze your event from any device.

Impress your attendees
Delight with ease of purchase, convenient ticket access, and speedier entry.

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