

CASE STUDY

# Cigar City Brewing Takes Customer Experience to the Next Level with Vendini

Cigar City Brewing isn't your typical brewery. The legendary beer company is as well known for its craft beers as it is for its festival. When the brewery held its first annual Hunahpu's Day, it was just a small special release party for the Hunahpu Imperial Stout, an 11 percent beer with notes of chocolate, coffee and cinnamon. "It morphed from being a small release inside the brewery, to spilling out into the parking lot a little bit and then taking over the whole parking lot. So it's grown rapidly." The brewery's Director of Customer Interactions Chris Lovett says the event's growth outpaced their capacity to manage the number of patrons. "As interest in the the beer spread, that couple of hours and those 60 people ballooned to at one point nearly 10,000 people showing up to Hunahpu's Day," said Chris. That was when the annual gathering reached its highest capacity ever and when the brewery decided to make it a ticketed event.

The brewery's team never thought Hunahpu's Day would transform from a bottle release party to a sold out beer festival where patrons "can not only pick up the beer, but also sample craft beers from around the world." Beer enthusiasts come from far and wide to Tampa, Florida where Hunahpu's Day is held each year. The company's Director of Marketing Geiger Powell attributes the success of the festival to word-of-mouth. "The beer itself is highly proclaimed. Once we told people that the only way to get [it] was at this event, now there is a built in reason for everyone to come."



**COMPANY**

Cigar City Brewing  
[cigarcitybrewing.com](http://cigarcitybrewing.com)

**TYPE OF EVENTS**

Cigar City Brewing's annual 'Hunahpu's Day' beer festival draws over 3,500 attendees from around the world each year.

**SUMMARY**

Cigar City Brewing set out to find a ticketing solution that offered RFID technology. In Vendini, they found a team that not only gave them access to the technology they needed, but a partner that works with them onsite to shorten lines and gather data they can use to deepen customer interactions.



In 2015, Vendini partnered with Cigar City for the first time to provide solutions to the logistical issues they've experienced with other ticketing systems. "There were a combination of technological failures and customer service failures with the previous ticketing providers that we went with. That got me hunting for a new partner. One of the pieces that I was looking for when I decided to go with Vendini was the integrated RFID technology, so that I could combine our ticket sales and limited release beer sales into one," said Chris.

### Technology & Customer Experience

The use of RFID substantially decreased wait time as patrons entered the event. "In the past we scanned physical tickets and the entry line took a little over an hour and 15 minutes. This year, I clocked it at 22 minutes," said Geiger. Reducing the amount of time it took patrons to get into the event was especially important since Hunahpu's Day is a five hour festival. "At the end of

*"At the end of the day it was all super smooth."*

*- Geiger Powell, Director of Marketing, Cigar City Brewing*

*"Working with Vendini offered access to technology we never used before."*

*- Chris Lovett, Director of Customer Interactions, Cigar City Brewing*

the day it was all super smooth," he continued. The only complaint customers had was that they wanted to be able to buy more beer, not a bad problem to have.

In addition to helping with the flow of people, the implementation of the RFID wristbands substantially improved security and cut down on scalped tickets, an issue the festival faced in the past. "Another ticket provider we used [only offered] print at home tickets. That year, we had a couple hundred people enter with forged tickets, that somehow scanned through," Chris explains. The CCB team says using Vendini's platform provided the security necessary to reduce ticket fraud. "I wanted to crack down on scalpers and opportunistic people who didn't care about our beer, or our festival," he continued. That extra layer of security provided by the RFID technology is one of the reasons the brewery says they will partner with Vendini again.

According to Chris the technology provided by Vendini also made it easy for the company to deepen customer interactions. The brewery has spent some time looking for a long-term partner and says they have found that in Vendini. "For the first time we will just do the same thing over again and again," said Geiger. The next Hunahpu's Day will be the second time Vendini provides ticketing services for the famous brewery, and the continuation of what is sure to be a long lasting partnership.

### Customer Service & Support

While technology and customer support were top priorities for Cigar City, finding a professional partner was also on their list of must-haves when searching for a ticketing provider. "Well I did the same thing with this that I do with everything else. I made a list of must haves, wants, and cannot haves. And I listed out attributes that I was looking for in a ticketing partner," said Chris.





*“I was looking for a partner that had a professional approach... and values customer service as much as we do here at the brewery”*

“I was looking for a partner that was professional, honest when there were mistakes, took critical feedback and worked with it, but also told me when I was asking for something unrealistic. Vendini is a true group of professionals that make my life substantially easier.”

Another important component of the partnership between the brewing company and Vendini was support before and at the event. “The rollout and onsite support was

amazing. I felt like the Vendini team was an extension of mine when they were working with our customers at the festival,” said Chris. “We’ve always had a very customer focused approach; Joey our founder has always had a great understanding of the importance of customer service.”

Cigar City Brewing’s customer centric approach is something their patrons have come to expect, and Vendini’s support made it easier for them to deliver a fully integrated customer experience. “I like that Vendini is all inclusive, you could do ticketing, wristband fulfillment and onsite support. This is a value add so I don’t have to find a source for each. I could go to Cindy or Spencer and say I want to do this too and they’d be like, oh perfect we have a partner that does that, here they are.”

*“They were absolutely stellar.”*

*- Chris Lovett*



Photos by: The Portos  
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Vendini makes the business of live events simple. We designed our all-in-one system to help organizations easily promote events, take donations, and leverage mobile ticketing and customer insights to deepen experiences with their audiences — and ultimately sell more tickets. Vendini is based in San Francisco, CA, with offices in Petaluma, CA, Los Angeles, CA, Boston, MA, New York, NY, Knoxville, TN, Vancouver, BC and Gualdo Tadino, Italy. To learn more about Vendini, please visit <http://www.vendini.com>