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tech reporter

StubHub allows shows to contribute to MT&R

Several popular television programs have found a new way to raise money for the Museum of Television & Radio by selling tickets they normally give away for free in a way not possible without the latest Internet-based technology.

Shows including "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart," "American Idol," "The Price Is Right," "Dr. Phil" and "Real Time With Bill Maher" do this in a partnership with online ticket resale service StubHub.com, which handles the transactions.

Barbara Dixon, vp and director of the Museum of Television & Radio, Los Angeles, says some initial trepidation was eased quickly once the project got under way. "The networks were concerned that people would be upset at paying for something that other people got for free, or that they would have to give these buyers special treatment," Dixon says. "It turned out to be easy, and it's a way to provide something for the museum that doesn't require them to write out a check."

Jeff Fluhr, StubHub.com CEO and co-founder, always believed consumers would embrace the idea. "A ticket was free, but you'd have to wait on line and not be certain you'd get it," he says. "People like the guarantee so they can make plans. And the big difference is that the money is going to a good cause."

Working with StubHub.com helped ensure the process wouldn't be onerous for the network staff, Dixon says. "StubHub provides all of the outreach, which is great for us," she adds. "They take care of the actual retailing."

Participating shows decide the number of guaranteed seats and which specific dates they will provide. Fluhr says his company takes care of practically everything else.

"From the perspective of the seller, we really do the soup-to-nuts transaction including logistics, inventory management, money transactions and 24/7 customer service," he says. "We get a percentage for facilitating it, promoting it and marketing it."

At press time, most tapings cost \$25 for two seats together. Special event programming costs more — the highest price paid so far has been nearly \$3,500 by a pair of fans from Florida determined to be in

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the audience for the finale of "Survivor: All-Stars" taping in New York. Regardless of the price, StubHub.com takes the same undisclosed commission, and the balance goes directly to the museum.

"We're very committed to the concept of bringing television tickets to the consumer," Fleur says. "It helps the show by getting committed fans into the show, it helps the museum and it helps our customers get guaranteed tickets."

StubHub.com handles payments through integration with Verisign and Wells Fargo, accepting major credit cards, and delivers tickets – unless the networks would prefer to do so themselves – using pre-screened local couriers and Federal Express. Its proprietary systems are secure, customizable and scalable.

Although the revenue obviously is the most important part of the fund-raiser, Dixon said the relevance of the initiative is also valuable. "It's a way for everyone to make a tribute to television and to preserving the shows that are a significant part of the future," she says. "It's a wonderful way for fans to support the shows they love but also to support the Museum of Television & Radio."

By Chris Marlowe