

## **WFA INTERVIEWS NEW INDUSTRY PARTNER – FAIRS MANAGEMENT INTERACTIVE**

**WFA:**

So what's new at Fairs MI?

**Steven:**

Well, we came back from the Convention in Reno with quite a bit of good solid feedback from Fairground Managers. And we have already implemented several suggested features into our programming. The Members have such a strong intuition for what they want for a "next step" from technology. All I had to do was demonstrate how the Site Planner works and the industry folks I met just took it from there. Not once did I hear a request for a "whistle, bell, or spinning star" (...that's what I call the useless features that look super but don't actually accomplish a real task).

**WFA:**

...And you now have more new features for Fair Managers?

**Steven:**

Yes. We have a new Measure Tool. You can use it on the WFA's open Interactive Fairs Library site ([www.fairsmi.com/westernfairgrounds](http://www.fairsmi.com/westernfairgrounds)). In addition to straight line measurements...you can now measure Fairgrounds in the library on any angled distance, and calculate square feet areas.

We also met with several Managers that explained that independent Event Managers and Show Owners managed much of their interim events schedule...and that the Fairground leased the space. I spoke with several Members about this, but had recent conversations with Paul Gillingham of Cal Expo...he has a unique perspective because of his extensive drafting and fairground/event planning experience. After about an hour meeting with Paul, I could really see how this could work even better. And we took all those ideas and made it happen last week. So now with a few clicks...Fairgrounds can provide Independent Organizers a limited access to the Site Planner to design their event layouts, sell exhibitor/vendor space, and publish individual Attendee Sites.

**WFA:**

Attendee Sites?

**Steven:**

With every subscription you not only can plan your Fairground and Events on an administrative level, you can publish specific events, or facility tours to our Attendee sections, that allow open access by the Public to public information for events or other promotional uses.

**WFA:**

How many California Fairs do we have online in the WFA Interactive Library?

**Steven:**

As of the end of January, 40. Plus at least a dozen others outside California. But we intend to have all the WFA membership online before we are done. It really doesn't take

much from the Fairground organizations to get started on creating a Site Planner subscription. And it doesn't take much to change or update a Fairground's Site. We created a subscription for Ray Malerbi at Calaveras. We didn't have an Aerial ourselves available, so we used a satellite photo source. It looked good but was out of date. Ray provided the best aerial they had available, but decided to take a new aerial for us to use. The results are spectacular. (Just go to the WFA Online Library and look at the Calaveras section. It speaks for itself.) But the point is...revisions, edits, and replacements are easy for us to provide...**the cost to a member is zero, with their paid subscription.**

**WFA:**

And what has surprised you most about this project?

**Steven:**

Well first the Maintenance and Engineering uses everyone has seen with Fairs MI. Originally designed as an events management tool...now fairgrounds issues like expansion, encroachment, construction, utility mapping, maintenance, grants proposals...and other non-event uses we can provide, seem to be one of the most important considerations. I understand we will be working closely with the CDFG and the CCA so that everyone can communicate together on these considerations.

**WFA:**

Some still think that this type of technology is for only the larger Fairgrounds, with larger staffs and IT departments. Do you agree?

**Steven:**

No. **Actually, just the opposite.** The smaller fairgrounds have the limited staff, finances, and time. They are constantly called on to do more with less. Yet many of the issues faced by larger fairgrounds are faced by smaller also...just on different scales. I think in general, there is an unfair perception that larger organizations can always throw more money and more people to solve their challenges. This is not accurate of course, in that the larger fairs have a much more complex operation and budget to manage. And Fairs MI tools do simplify and communicate complex venue organization. But for smaller venues...maximizing the interim events schedule, planning and promoting events, designing expansion proposals...all of this can be done quickly and "in house".

**WFA:**

Any last words?

**Steven:**

Thanks. Thanks to everyone for the welcome we received in Reno. And for the opportunity to work with such dedicated industry professionals. Every time we get a chance to provide a demo, in person or by phone, we get an education.

Oh! And I want to add we are already planning to extend the uses Fairs MI tools to Service Members. But I'll talk about that in our next conversation.