



CASE STUDY

A Simpler Event Ticketing System in Katy ISD

How Vanco Events simplifies life for spectators and staff — and enables the Finance Department to keep up with growth without adding more staff.

On the edge of Houston, Texas, Katy Independent School District has been growing steadily since the mid-1990s. Across its 75 campuses, spectators flock to stadiums, fields, and gyms to watch well over one thousand athletic events each year.

Five years ago, people handed over their cash and received paper tickets — a labor-intensive process for the event staff, who not only had to prepare the cash box and tickets ahead of time, but also generate post-event reports and deposit the money.

Fine Arts and other departments used various online ticketing systems. Each department managed the ticketing process in a different way, which made it complicated for parents. “It was a lot of work for the person buying the ticket, and everyone who worked at different facilities had to know different ways of doing that. On the back end, dealing with the actual money and reporting was really the difficult part,” says Executive Director of Finance Jamey Hynds. “From the finance perspective, then the Accounting Department had to get involved with every event.”

As the district grew, so did the time required to process more ticket sales.

The Move To Online Ticketing

The Athletic Department began looking for alternatives to cash event sales, which became more urgent when the pandemic struck in 2020. They wanted something with a low per-ticket cost that would be simple for spectators to use. From a finance perspective, Jamey wanted something that would easily integrate with the other systems used by the district and did not require the use of a 3rd party payment processor.

Katy ISD had begun using Vanco for meal payments on campuses. Seeing the potential to bring all district payments onto a single platform, they decided to move forward with Vanco Events for athletics. "We looked at a lot of different solutions, made the decision to move forward with Vanco, and Vanco has worked with us every step of the way," says Jamey.

"We have gone overwhelmingly cashless, 100% cashless in many of our processes. From a risk perspective, from an efficiency perspective, and on the back end, it's amazing."

Jamey Hynds – Executive Director of Finance

Athletic Department Event Specialist Leonor Gutierrez agrees: "I think that Vanco did a great job of listening to our needs, and they met our needs." Vanco helped the team at Katy ISD anticipate possible issues as they coordinated with campuses. They also set up integrations with the other systems in the district, including their student information system, which syncs each student's information with Vanco. "We have had no issues with integration with our student information system. It makes it easy," says Jamey. The Finance department enters general ledger transfers based on daily reports from Vanco — a much easier process than entering each individual transaction for every event!

"We would tell them what our needs are, and they met them. We got exactly what we needed. We were able to learn as we were going. They learned as they were going, and I think we have a good relationship with them, just getting our needs and making this work so easily."

Leonor Gutierrez – Athletic Department Event Specialist



Results

The Athletic Department jumped into the deep end of the pool with their first event with Vanco Events: a 32-team volleyball tournament, held at multiple sites across two different school districts. Although it was a complex and challenging event, Assistant Athletic Director Kyle Green says it gave them confidence that the system could handle whatever they threw at it. "Hey, if we can pull this thing off, we can pull off any Tuesday night game. That won't be an issue at all. We worked through it fine."

That was three years ago. Since then, the district has largely gone cashless, ticketing every sporting event at held in the district — including their large stadiums and event centers — with Vanco Events. Several other departments, including Fine Arts, use it as well. "Deciding on a single online event processor completely changed everything Katy ISD does," says Jamey. "Every single one of those is handled through the same system, Vanco Events. Even though all of those sometimes have different needs, Vanco Events has been able to cater the solution for all our departments with online ticketing and vending needs."

Simpler for Spectators and Staff

The ticket scanning app is simple to use. "I rarely get a phone call at this point on game day," says Kyle, and event staff can typically perform any troubleshooting needed. "In some situations, we will have student volunteers that come in and scan tickets for us. It's a very simple process for them."

He says Vanco Events is also simple for spectators, who can purchase tickets in advance to send to family members or even add to their Apple Wallet or Google Wallet. "It needed to be user friendly. Any kind of change is going to be met with some resistance, and we wanted to make that as simple and as seamless as possible." Many fans purchase their tickets online once they park their car and begin walking to the stadium. "By the time they reach the ticket booth, they walk up and they show their QR code, they get scanned, and they really don't even break stride on the way into the game."

"We get a lot of positive feedback, not only from spectators but our staff as well. The comment 'It's so simple' comes back to us a lot. It's just so simple."

Kyle Green – Assistant Athletic Director

Jamey is a parent in the district as well as the Executive Director of Finance, and he loves that he can make all payments in one spot through Vanco, which the district has branded "Katy A+ Pay 'N Go." "I can go to one place and log in, and all of the meal payments, all of our event payments, everything from sporting camps to paying if we lose books, all those fees that my kids accumulate are in one place. It's simple."



Less Work, Less Time Spent

Kyle estimates that Vanco Events saves the district about two hours of work at every game on every campus. "When you look at the number of events that we host on campus, being able to give that time back is possibly the most valuable thing that we can do for folks that work in our school district." Event staff simply ensure the tablet they use for ticket sales is charged and select the correct game in the system.

When someone buys a ticket through Vanco Events, staff no longer must handle cash or generate reports after the event. "It is essentially setting up the events and scanning in tickets. They don't have to worry about the funding on the back end. All of that flows directly in," says Jamey. "We have removed the risk, we have removed them from having to deal with that, and that is more time back in the hands of our campus folks. That is more instructional time."

Reduced Risk

Jamey says they have wanted to eliminate the need for campuses to handle cash for a long time. "Moving cash around is expensive because we have to pay for trucks to pick it up each day. You also have the risk factor of simply having that amount of cash in any one place at any one time."

This also affects how events are staffed with police and security personnel, Kyle explains. "Prior to [using Vanco Events], if there was a cash box at the gate, we would put a security guard or a police officer there. We would escort them to and from, just to make sure that cash is secure. We have changed the way we allocate our security and police as a result of this. We don't necessarily have to tie them to the ticket booth at an event. Now that staff is free to roam throughout the facility. They can monitor the crowds a little bit better."

Financial Savings

"It is a pretty massive savings in time and money." According to Jamey, the cost to the district of using Vanco Events is far lower than the piecemeal of different vendors they were using before. "The savings is probably between 25 and 50 percent savings off of some of the vendors that we were paying before, by consolidating and going with a single vendor."

Easier Accounting and Lower Staffing Needs

Katy ISD's enrollment is growing quickly, and Jamey says the Finance Department is looking for ways to be more efficient. Vanco Events provides one such efficiency, allowing the ticketing and accounting for events to be managed by just one person in the Finance Department. "The amount of work that it has saved for our campuses, for our Athletics Departments, our Fine Arts Departments, as well as for our Financial Service and Accounting Departments, is massive," Jamey says. "We have not had to add personnel as the district has grown, and from my perspective, that is huge considering the number of transactions that are running through Vanco versus what we were doing before."

Jamey estimates that without Vanco Events, the district would need to add three to five full-time employees in the Accounting Department alone. But using the system, he believes they have the capacity to add many more events without additional staff.



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Jamey Hynds – Executive Director of Finance

Accounting records are more accurate, and they can have confidence that funds are deposited into the correct accounts. “From the ease of accounting, now we know that every single dime that goes through those events is going into the right accounts, and we do not have to get reports and transfer money. ‘Did it go into the right accounts based on which event was going on that night?’” says Jamey. “Now, we set up the events and we run a report, reconcile it, and upload it to our ERP system.”

From the start, the team in Katy ISD planned for the rollout of Vanco Events to be a three-year process, and they are right on track today. They continue to make small refinements and will soon introduce some impressive new offerings to the community, like season passes for football games. “I think it is on point,” says Kyle, speaking about the season passes. “It’s going to be exactly what we need.”

“It has been a game changer from our perspective,” Jamey shares, and says he is looking forward to the ongoing partnership with Vanco. “It really is that kind of relationship in that they are long term, and they care about what happens to Katy ISD. That makes a difference to us.”

See how Vanco Events can help with your next event.

Get Started!