



National Independent
Concessionaires Association, Inc.

“Promotions
That Make a
Positive Impact”

Presented by
**National Independent
Concessionaires Association**

Compiled by **Rey O'Day,**
NICA Executive Manager of Councils

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At the suggestion of the *NICA Past Presidents Committee*, *NICA Members*, who travel to numerous Fairs every season, were asked to note the Fair promotions they experienced that had a positive impact on the event. This handout was compiled based on those examples. It is by no means a comprehensive list of the many promotions Fairs offer. It is simply designed to give the reader a variety of ideas and options to try. Whenever possible we have listed the Fair at which the promotion took place so you can contact them for more information.

We have defined “*Positive Impact*” to mean:

- *Increased attendance.*
- *Increased revenue.*
- *Increased quality of life in the community.*

In addition, we have organized the promotions into one of six categories:

1. *Gate Promotions*
2. *Gate Plus Food Promotions and/or Ride Promotions*
3. *Parking Promotions*
4. *Community Promotions*
5. *Company/Group Sales Promotions*
6. *Sponsored Promotions*

Gate Promotions

Free Before Noon

Used to increase the Fair's lunch crowd. (*Porter County Fair, IN*)

Free before 3:00

Used to incentivize guests to come early on weekdays. (*Stanislaus County Fair, CA*)

\$5 after 5:00 or \$5 before 5:00

Used to increase weekday (*Monday-Thursday*) attendance or evening meal purchases.

Opening Day

\$1 opening and closing day (*New York State Fair*). Other Fairs have “*free*” opening day until a certain time like 2:00.

Be a Kid for a Day

All ages \$10 instead of \$15 sold online in advance. (*The Big E, MA*)

Military Appreciation Day

ID required for free admissions.

1. *Active duty/retired military personnel*
2. *Dependents of active duty military personnel*
3. *Veterans (no dependents)*

Senior Days

Age 60 and over \$12 (*instead of \$15*) Monday - Thursday.

We Care

Free cans of food or non-perishable food items collected at the gate in exchange for free

admission on one weekday; food usually goes to local food banks. Different variations can use school supplies, lightly used coats, and blankets, etc.

Gate Plus Food Promotions and/or Ride Promotions

Two-for-Tuesday

\$2.00 gate, \$2 rides and \$2 food items. Boosts attendance and food gross on what would be a slow weekday. (*Indiana State Fair*)

Graze Days

Every Thursday from 11 – 4:00 Each vendor offers at least one snack-sized item on their menu for \$3.00. (*New Mexico State Fair*)

Food Sample

Provide a \$3.00 food item sample on one Weekday only until 3:00. (*OC Fair, CA / Central Washington State Fair*)

Passport to Savings

Concessionaires submit coupons to be in a free coupon book that is handed out at the Fair to help drive Guests to stands (*San Diego County Fair / Stanislaus County Fair, CA*) In this example it is free to the Concessionaire. There are other models where the Concessionaire pays to participate and/or the Guest pays to have a coupon book.

Pre-Fair Tasting Event

“On the evening before the fair opens the fair invites sponsors, VIPs, media and board members to a hour taste testing event.

Concessionaires give free samples so the word gets out about the fantastic food at the Fair.” (Elkhart County Fair, IN) Other Fairs host a media morning event in order to receive press about upcoming food at the Fair. (*San Diego County Fair, CA*)

Carload Night

When a car arrives, the Fair counts the number of people in the car with a seat belt buckled on them and provides the driver with a slip of paper with that number on it. The driver takes it to the box office and pays up to \$65 for up to seven people. Once in the Fair they go to the ride ticket booth to receive their free ride wristbands. This Fair entrance and rides promotion makes a weekday night as good as a Friday night! (*Indian River County Firefighters Fair, FL*)

Pay one Price

Promotion with Carnival to pay one price for admissions and rides.

Parking Promotions

Off-Sight Parking

Partnership with Mass Transit Authority (MTA). MTA used grant money to pay for express busses at nine park-and-ride hubs. Rides cost \$3 and delivered Guests right to the Yellow Gate. Fair discounted a \$14 admission to \$4 on Saturday and Sunday. Goal is to incentivize Guests to park in off-site lots on days when the Fair cannot accommodate everyone who wants to come to the Fair. (*OC Fair, CA*)

Community Promotions

City, County or Regional Day

With proof of residency, Guests receive a significant discount based on the city, county, or region (*i.e. valley*) in which they live. Often a parade, honored guests, or local performers (*i.e. marching band, chorale groups*) are part of the celebration. (*LA County Fair, CA*)

Company/Group Sales Promotions

Company Meeting

Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative is mandated to hold an annual meeting. It chose to hold it at the County Fair. Attendees paid regular \$8 gate price, signed in at the meeting place to receive a \$10 discount on their next bill, attended the meeting and then received \$25 in "Fairbucks" to spend with specifically selected Vendors. Coop reimbursed Vendors twice during the Fair for the Fairbucks they received during the Fair. Positives: **Bryan Berguson, Director of Member Services** wrote, "*Their annual meeting has now quadrupled in members attending with forty times as much to do and see at the Fair from our old venues and we've lowered the cost overall for the event.*" Fair Vendors had a guaranteed piece of business during a Fair that experienced four days of rain. It was a win/win for everyone. (*Troy Fair, PA*)

Employee Picnic

Hackney, wholesale food distributors, purchased admission tickets so it could hold its annual employee appreciation picnic at local county fair. Fair provided \$5 "*Hackney Dollars*" to the employees to spend with Vendors and a gathering area by a stage. Fair reimbursed Vendor for the dollars they accepted. (*Hillsborough County, FL*)

Company Picnic

Amazon had a company picnic where they provided \$30,000 in "*Fairbucks*" for employees to spend on the closing Saturday and Sunday. (*Indiana State Fair*)

Sponsored Promotions

Under 12 Free

Obtained sponsor to underwrite free admission for children less than 12 years of age. (*Jackson County, WA / Placer County, CA*)

Gate Sponsored Hours

Local businesses sponsor certain slower hours of the Fair to increase attendance with their loyal customers.

Comments

"The key is driving people away from the weekends."

— **Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe, Virginia State Fair CEO**

"Promotions that are effective incentivize guests to come at times when the Fair is less busy. Look at attendance patterns hour by hour to learn where you want to move attendance to or from. It is a basic yield management concept."

— **Kathy Kramer, OC Fair CEO**