CASE STUDY

FROM CORKS TO CLICKS SIP, SCAN, CELEBRATE!

The Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival, is a prominent event in the food and beverage industry. It offers a wide variety of wine, scotch, import beer, premium spirits, and gourmet food samples from local restaurants and hotels. The festival, which started in 1998, has grown significantly and now attracts over 15,000 guests from across Western Canada each year.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival - Trade Show Digitization

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Website:

rockymountainwine.com

Industries

Hospitality, Food and Beverage Retail

Business size

Major Festivals (15,000-50,000 attendees)

Services

Digital Transformation Consulting, RFID Solution Deployment, Customer Journey Mapping, Data Analytics & Insights, Custom Software Integration
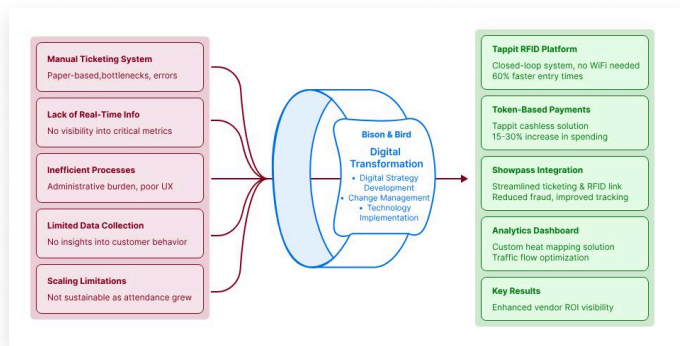
Software

RFID Tracking Systems, Cashless Payment Solutions, Point-of-Sale (POS) Systems, API Integration Services,

Introduction

At Bison & Bird, we specialize in guiding businesses through digital transformation journeys that drive tangible business outcomes. One of our recent success stories involves the **Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival**, a premier event in Western Canada's food and beverage industry.

This case study documents how we helped transform the festival experience through strategic implementation of **RFID technology, modernizing their operations** and **enhancing the overall attendee experience**. Our approach didn't just digitize existing processes—it reimagined how the festival could operate in the digital age, creating new revenue opportunities while controlling costs.

The festival, which began in 1998, has grown to welcome over 25,000 guests annually from across Western Canada. As the event expanded over the years, so did the challenges associated with managing such a large-scale operation with traditional methods. Our partnership with the festival organizers, **Dunollie Castle Productions Inc.**, demonstrates how the right digital strategy can transform even well-established events into more efficient, data-driven, and customer-centric experiences.

Diagram showing the Bison & Bird Digital Transformation process. On the left (challenges, in pink): **Manual Ticketing System** — Paper-based, bottlenecks, errors; **Lack of Real-Time Info** — No visibility into critical metrics; **Inefficient Processes** — Administrative burden, poor UX; **Limited Data Collection** — No insights into customer behavior; **Scaling Limitations** — Not sustainable as attendance grew. Center: **Bison & Bird Digital Transformation** — Digital Strategy Development, Change Management, Technology Implementation. On the right (results, in green): **Tappit RFID Platform** — Closed-loop system, no WiFi needed, 60% faster entry times; **Token-Based Payments** — Tappit cashless solution, 15-30% increase in spending; **Showpass Integration** — Streamlined ticketing & RFID link, Reduced fraud, improved tracking; **Analytics Dashboard** — Custom heat mapping solution, Traffic flow optimization; **Key Results** — Enhanced vendor ROI visibility.

Research Methodology

Our approach to this project began with comprehensive research to understand both the client's specific needs and industry best practices. We conducted:

Stakeholder Interviews

In-depth interviews with key stakeholders including from the client team

Field Observations

Field visits to understand the physical layout and logistical challenges

Technical Assessment

Analysis of the festival's existing operational workflows and pain points

Employee Assessment

Assessment of employee technology comfort levels to gauge change management requirements

Industry Research

Review of industry research on RFID implementation in event management

Process Review

Evaluation of multiple RFID solution providers including Intellitix, WRSTBND, and Tappit

This multi-faceted research approach ensured our recommendations were grounded in both the client's specific needs and proven industry solutions.

Challenge

The Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival faced several interconnected challenges that were limiting growth and operational efficiency:

Manual Ticketing System

The festival relied on a predominantly paper-based ticketing system that created significant bottlenecks during check-in. This not only led to long wait times for attendees but also required substantial staffing to manage entry points. The manual nature of this system made it prone to errors and provided no opportunities for real-time data collection.

Lack of Real-Time Information

Without digital systems in place, festival organizers and vendors had no visibility into critical metrics like real-time attendance, popular exhibit areas, or traffic flow patterns. This information gap made it impossible to make data-driven decisions during the event to improve the attendee experience.

Inefficient Operational Processes

The manual nature of many festival operations, from entry to food and drink sampling, created inefficiencies that impacted both the attendee experience and the bottom line. Staff were often tied up with administrative tasks rather than focusing on enhancing the guest experience.

Limited Data Collection

The festival had minimal insight into customer demographics, preferences, and behaviors. This lack of data made it difficult to tailor marketing efforts, improve vendor selection, or enhance the overall festival experience based on actual customer interests.

Competitive Pressure

As other festivals began adopting digital technologies, Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival risked falling behind in delivering the modern, seamless experience that today's attendees expect. This competitive pressure made digital transformation not just desirable but necessary for continued success.

Scaling Limitations

The manual processes that had served the festival well in its earlier years were becoming unsustainable as attendance grew. The operational model was not scalable without proportionally increasing staff and costs.

These challenges collectively pointed to the need for a comprehensive digital transformation that would address immediate operational pain points while positioning the festival for future growth and enhanced attendee experiences.

Approach

At Bison & Bird, we developed a strategic, phased approach to the Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival's digital transformation that balanced immediate operational improvements with long-term strategic goals.

Discovery and Assessment

Digital Needs Assessment: The organization scored 2.95 out of 5, slightly below the industry average of 3.19, placing them as a "Digital Intermediary".

SWOT Analysis: We found strong branding and loyal attendees, but challenges like manual processes and lack of data insights.

Technology Comfort: Team members had mixed digital skills (rated 1–4.5 out of 5), so we adjusted training accordingly.

Customer Journey Mapping: We mapped the full attendee journey and found areas to improve the digital experience.

Solution Design

Vendor Selection: We compared options and chose Tappit for its offline-ready, token-based system with the lowest cost.

Customer Focus: The solution improved the full attendee journey — fast entry, contactless payments, and better post-event follow-up.

System Integration: We planned how to connect RFID with the existing Showpass ticketing system for a smooth rollout.

Change Management: Since people are key to success, we built a training and adoption plan to support staff through the change.

Implementation Strategy

Phase One - Technology Testing

• VIP-only implementation as a controlled trial

• Configuration for show tracking

• Employee workspace customization

Phase Two - Full Deploymen

• Complete RFID system implementation throughout the festival

• Integration with Showpass ticketing

• Comprehensive vendor and staff training

• Development of reporting systems

Phase Three - Experience Enhancement

• Customer information dashboarding

• Development of a customer portal for personalized insights

• Feedback integration for continuous improvement

Industry-Specific Solutions

Our transformation strategy for Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival included several industry-specific solutions tailored to the unique needs of a large-scale food and beverage event:

Token-Based Payment System

Closed-Loop System: Functions without requiring internet connectivity, ensuring reliability in crowded venues

Tokenized Transactions: Allowed attendees to pre-load sampling tokens onto their wristbands, eliminating the need for cash handling

Vendor Simplification: Simplified accounting and inventory management for food and beverage vendors

Vendor Dashboard

Real-Time Metrics: Provided vendors with immediate feedback on visitor numbers and engagement

Comparative Analytics: Enabled vendors to benchmark their performance against historical data

Marketing Optimization: Supplied data to refine marketing approaches for future events

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Business Impact

Our digital transformation initiative delivered significant business impact across multiple dimensions for the Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival:

Operational Efficiency

40% fewer staff needed for ticketing/check-in

60% faster entry times

Manual reporting eliminated

Customer Experience

No paper tickets – smooth movement

Shorter lines, more time enjoying the event

Personalized tasting recommendations

Revenue Growth

15–30% higher spend per attendee

Reduced losses from untracked samples

Better vendor & sponsor retention

Long-Term Value

Easy to **scale with growth**

Stronger **position vs. competitors**

Foundation for **future digital upgrades**

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Key Insights & Roadmap

• Our experience confirmed that approximately 66% of digital transformation success depends on human factors rather than the technology itself
• The varied technology comfort levels among staff (ranging from 1 to 4.5 on our 5-point scale) required tailored training approaches for optimal adoption
• Executive sponsorship from festival leadership was critical to overcome initial resistance to change

Forward-Looking Roadmap

Enhanced Analytics (6-12 months)

• Implement predictive analytics to anticipate attendee behavior and preferences

• Develop AI-driven recommendations for optimal vendor placement and festival layout

• Create dynamic pricing models based on real-time attendance and engagement metrics

Phase Five: Extended Engagement (12-18 months)

• Develop year-round mobile application for continued customer engagement
• Implement loyalty program integrating festival attendance with local restaurant and retail partners
• Create virtual tastings and events between physical festivals to maintain community engagement

Long-Term (18-24 months)

• Evaluate potential for geographic expansion with reproducible digital infrastructure

• Explore specialized mini-events targeting specific segments (e.g., craft beer enthusiasts, wine connoisseurs)

• Consider licensing the developed technology platform to other festival organizers

Conclusion

Our partnership with the Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival demonstrates the transformative potential of thoughtfully implemented digital solutions in the event industry. By addressing specific operational challenges with tailored RFID technology, we helped modernize a beloved festival while preserving its core character and enhancing the experience for all stakeholders.
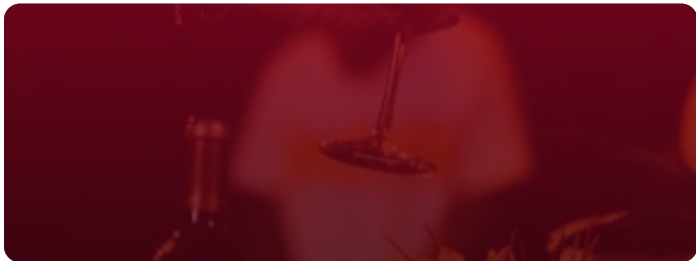
Key Achievements

- Thorough research of client needs and industry best practices

- Attendee-first design for better user experience

- Phased rollout to reduce risk and improve step by step

- Smart integration for added value across systems

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long-term success.

+1 (587) 330-5509   support@teambisonandbird.com   www.teambisonandbird.com