

Inside Cast & Crew: Entertainment Payroll for Music Tours, Festivals, Venues ... and More

An Interview with Todd Dyer

Todd Dyer is Senior Director of Venues, Music Tours & Live Events. He has been working in the sports and entertainment industry for 25 years and in the entertainment payroll business since 2014. He joined Cast & Crew in the company's acquisition of CAPS Payroll in 2016. Recently, he discussed his role at the company, the integration of Cast & Crew and CAPS, the industry's evolution over the years and what he loves most about his job.

Learn more about Todd and his day-to-day activities ...

How do Cast & Crew and CAPS jointly address the needs of the entertainment payroll industry?

Cast & Crew and CAPS each serve as employer of record payroll service providers to the entertainment industry. While Cast & Crew has historically concentrated in film and television payroll, others are entirely unique to CAPS.

Music and entertainment tours, theaters, stadiums, arenas, convention centers and music festivals make up this category. There are a great many challenges when it comes to these verticals that aren't seen in film and television, and the integration of the two companies has served to bridge the gap.



How are entertainment tours unique in terms of their payroll needs?

Entertainment touring consists of various back-end administrative challenges because of the many locations the productions perform. One of these is the need to process multi-state tax withholding and remittance for the performers and crew members on the tour. This is a critical component of the touring world, and one that often gets overlooked.

As an artist or production travels across North America, in the eyes of the state and occasionally the city that the show is performing, the performers and crew are considered to be working in that respective location. Because of this, the production is required to pay taxes in those respective locations. Our role is to remit and withhold employee taxes on everyone's behalf, allowing not only the production crew to focus on what matters most, but allowing greater efficiency so business and artist managers have greater bandwidth to develop their artist clients.

Is it only the withholding taxes that are the challenge?

No. Workers' compensation is equally important as there are many different statutory requirements. An artist with his or her own third-party policy would be faced with audits and registration requirements, and would have to prepare for greater obstacles if the tour went abroad. With Cast & Crew or CAPS, no matter where the tour goes, the coverage is intact.

This doesn't only apply to massive, world-renowned touring acts, but even a solo act with a two-person crew needs to have a skilled professional watching over the finances.

Is this different from live events, venues or festivals?

In some ways, yes. Music festivals, live events and venues have their own unique challenges.

It can often require a small army of people to ensure a festival goes off without a hitch. From back of house production, to front of house guest services and security, and everyone in between, all employees need to be onboarded and covered alike.

With any festival, we are working with a crew that is there for a short period of time, typically in a "pop-up venue." And often, we provide services to thousands of staff.

All employees need to fill out a W-4, I-9 and a direct-deposit form, among a slew of numerous other forms. We provide the digital resources necessary to get all those employees onboarded so that the festival organizers don't have to chase after people and paperwork. It's much more efficient, especially when the employee can access all of his or her information remotely and in the cloud.

Is workers' compensation a challenge, as well?

Absolutely. Workers' compensation can be a major pain point for festival organizers and venue managers alike. There are numerous risks for a carrier or broker to take on with such a limited time a festival is active. We not only absorb that risk, but we also manage claims throughout the process. This is especially important when the festival begins to strike and load-out because it may no longer have someone local to assist with those claims.

Of course, a lot of this plays out with our venue clients as well, be it a large stadium or a small theater. With these clients, there are a lot of part-time, seasonal and hourly staff, and sometimes there's a union component to it (and yes, we take care of union withholdings). For example, at the end of a venue's season, the part-time, seasonal staff often file unemployment claims. As employer of record, it is our responsibility to manage those claims, rather than our clients needing to do so.

What is it that drives your team?

Our philosophy is pretty straightforward: we are an extension of our client. We serve to make sure employees get paid on time and our clients are supported. With that, we also ensure all employees have a resource in us, ensuring that their questions are answered. We operate as an extension of our clients' brands by taking on much of the administrative minutia enabling our clients to deliver first-class events.

Serving in this function for our many clients has been the thrill of a lifetime ... knowing that we play a part in such high-profile events and productions is incredibly rewarding.

Todd Dyer is the Senior Director of Venues, Music Tours & Festivals at CAPS, A Cast & Crew Entertainment Company. He directs all marketing, business development and operational execution efforts for CAPS Payroll within the Entertainment Touring, Sports & Entertainment Venue & Festival marketplace.

2300 Empire Avenue 5th Floor Burbank California 91504 T 818.848.6022 www.castandcrew.com

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