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SPECTRA BUYING PARTNER AND 3-D TICKETING SPECIALIST BALLENA

Spectra, the ticketing arm of Comcast Spectacor, is buying a 3-D technology business that enables fans to view their seats before buying.

Spectra has had a partnership with the company — California-based Ballena Technologies — since 2010, which allowed Spectra to integrate Ballena's 3-D technology into its ticketing system.

The five-year arrangement was going so well that Spectra decided this month to buy the small company of 28 employees, some of whom work in Alameda, Calif., and the rest in Washington state, just outside of Seattle.

Terms of the acquisition were not available, but Dave Butler, CEO for Spectra Ticketing and Fan Engagement, formerly Paciolan, said all of the employees will join Spectra. He hopes to begin adding more staff soon.

The deal closed last week and it is expected to be announced this week. Ballena's chairman and chief executive, Rich Sherratt, will stay on as a consultant for the immediate future.

"We believe, focusing on what we've learned from the ticketing side, we can make use of this technology even better," Butler said. "The more we can integrate it into our day-to-day ticketing, the more successful it will be for the fan."

The original partnership between Spectra and Ballena put the 3-D technology into Spectra's ticketing system across about a dozen colleges at first. That number grew to 60 schools in the last five years. Spectra has 118 college clients.

The technology is especially helpful for schools that are reseating or relocating their season-ticket holders and going through season-ticket renewals. Schools also use the 3-D imaging for renewals and upgrades. Essentially, the 3-D imaging shows the ticket buyer the view from the seats that are being purchased, including the view of the field, the surrounding seats, steps, railings and every other aspect of the stadium in a realistic-looking image.

The technology was integral to TCU's reseating plan in 2012 when it reopened Amon G. Carter Stadium. The school put \$164 million into a complete renovation, but one of the byproducts was that every season-ticket holder had to be reseated, said Sean Conner, TCU's assistant athletic director for ticket operations.

"Reseating is a stressful time for staff and for fans," Conner said. "Some people may have had the same seat for 20 years or more and now everything's changing. Having that technology so that fans could see the view from their new seats helped ease the stress level."

At TCU, the online adoption rate by fans renewing season tickets was 70 percent three years ago and has since increased to 90 percent for this season.

Brigham Young went through reseating many of its fans after renovations to its basketball arena, said Clark Livsey, special events ticket manager. Now all of BYU's football and basketball season-ticket renewals are carried out by the buyers online using this technology, he said.

Conner said he'd also like to see the 3-D technology used for single-game ticket sales, as well as ticket sales for other sports.

Spectra said it would keep the Ballena brand as the name of the 3-D product. Most clients spend less than \$50,000 annually on the full Ballena product.

"We know that schools who use this technology ... their fans spend more for better seats and it drives incremental sales," Butler said. "The more information the fan has, the more likely to renew or upgrade their seats."