



Case study



Houston's Toyota Center Scores With Evolv by Delivering an Improved Fan Screening Experience

Toyota Center

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NBA TEAM: Houston Rockets

SIZE: 6 city blocks

OPENED: 2003

EVENTS ANNUALLY: 110+

CAPACITY: 18,055

WEBSITE: www.toyotacenter.com

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Improve ingress and move guests into the arena quickly and efficiently
- Migrate from cumbersome legacy walkthrough metal detectors to a faster screening technology
- Balance providing fans with a fun entertainment experience and improved security posture
- Deliver a screening experience that is more family and fan-friendly
- Maintain consistent security posture and fan experience across different types of events
- Minimize security screening footprint in the arena

Solution

People

- Evolv Sr. Account Executive worked with the Toyota Center team to understand their requirements and align the Evolv deployment accordingly
- Evolv Solutions Engineer worked with Toyota Center to configure the location for each Evolv Express® system deployment
- Evolv Customer Success Manager trained the Toyota Center team on Evolv Insights® and MyEvolv Portal and worked with them to configure custom reports
- Evolv Customer Success Manager delivers ongoing support and management

Process

- Toyota Center security team completed online training through Evolv Academy and on-site training before Evolv deployment
- Toyota Center security team has access to on-the-spot training on the Evolv Tablets

Technology

- 8 Evolv Express systems
- Evolv Insights

Outcomes



Screen over 1 million people annually



Provide a security screening process that fans find easier and less invasive



Deliver more fan and family friendly environment where fans and kids feel safer once they enter the arena



Create a more modern screening experience that does not require divestment of all personal items



Reduced negative fan survey responses to security ingress experience



Kept security screening consistent across different types of events at the venue



Minimized security screening footprint at arena entrances

A More Secure Experience for 1M+ Guests Annually

The Houston Rockets are one of the most iconic franchises in the NBA, known for their fast-paced style of play, passionate fan base, and commitment to excellence both on and off the court.

The team's home arena, Toyota Center, hosts not only Rockets games but also a wide range of concerts, shows, and other events throughout the year—more than 110 annually.

With a seating capacity of surpassing 18,000 and hosting over a million guests annually, the Toyota Center faces a complex challenge in ensuring the safety and security of everyone who passes through its doors. In today's world, this challenge is more pressing than ever as venues must navigate a constantly evolving landscape of threats while also meeting the high expectations of modern fans for a seamless and enjoyable experience.



Evolv empowers us to focus on both our fans' experience and their security. With the help of Evolv, we're constantly learning and improving how to give our fans a great ingress experience while keeping them as safe and secure as possible."

- Doug Hall, GM, Toyota Center



A Balancing Act Between Security and Experience

Doug Hall, who has served as the General Manager of Toyota Center since it opened in 2003, understands this balancing act very well.

Fan expectations have grown over the years as the cost and demands for entertainment dollars increased," he observes. "The events of 9/11 were certainly a game-changer for the sports industry. Since then, because of international terrorism and acts of aggression, fan awareness and expectations for security have increased further. When it comes to security, people's expectations are generally reasonable. Just as everyone expects to pass through TSA screening at the airport, they also understand they will go through security screening in sports and entertainment environments. But with advances in technology, they expect to do so in a seamless manner."

As the pandemic subsided and sporting events returned to normalcy, the Toyota Center recognized its existing security screening process did not deliver the fan experience the organization sought to convey; specifically, screening was intrusive and could produce long security queues. "Ingress was always a concern for our facility, being able to move fans into the building quickly and efficiently," Hall says, "Fans want expeditious, efficient, and as friendly a security screening process as possible."

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Selecting Evolv and Laying the Groundwork for Deployment

Hall and his team embarked on an investigation of alternative security screening approaches.

Evolv connected with Hall and his Security Department to provide better insights into the technology, showcasing its capabilities and limitations. There were several aspects of Evolv that the Toyota Center liked. "Our focus was primarily on screening speed, though we also recognized the importance of its state-of-the-art technology and the ability to optimize the efficiencies of our security staff," Hall explains. "Keeping our fans secure and safe while improving their experience was at the forefront."

With upwards of 500 fans seated close enough to reach out and touch a player, which Hall describes as "inside the Hockey Dashers," the NBA has very stringent policies in place. While Evolv has been used in other sports for many years, the evaluation and approval process for the NBA took longer. Thus, when the NBA approved the use of Evolv Express systems mid-2023, Toyota Center was ready to proceed. "We had already laid the groundwork with the Evolv team and knew we wanted to implement the Evolv systems immediately after the NBA approval was granted," Hall recalls. "We really appreciate Evolv's efforts to get us ready to move forward when approval was granted."

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Evolv System Delivers “As Promised”

For deployment, the Evolv Solutions Engineer worked with the Toyota Center team to position each Evolv Express system, and to train the security team on how to operate them.

Each Express system was positioned for optimal efficiency. For the launch of the Express, the Toyota Center team selected a date in January of 2024. “We did not want to wait until the offseason,” Hall notes. “We wanted to get two-thirds of the NBA season under our belt with the Express so that we could improve how we operate it in advance of next season.” In preparation, the Toyota Center team completed online training through Evolv Academy, the company’s learning management system. They also underwent onsite training with the Evolv team before the launch.

To comply with NBA security policies, Evolv Express systems are used for primary screening, and walkthrough metal detectors are used for secondary screening for those who alert on the Express. When the Evolv systems went live in January 2024, Hall described feeling anxious. “Any time you bring in a new technology into a facility like ours, you’re going to have some anxiety,” he describes. “We had seen how Evolv works in a proof of concept and knew what to expect. The team, as a result, was not nervous. But we did have a feeling of anxious expectation; we were excited about the improved experience the Express systems could give to fans.” It was very fulfilling to Hall and the rest of the team to see the free flow of fans walking through the Express the first day they went live. “The technology delivered as promised,” he says.

“Ingress was always a concern for our facility, being able to move fans into the building quickly and efficiently. Fans want an expeditious, efficient, and pleasing security screening process as possible.”

- Doug Hall, GM, Toyota Center

Evolv Insights[®] Provides Post-Game Guidance

During the deployment of the Evolv systems, Christy Granovski, Evolv's Customer Success Manager, worked with the Toyota Center team to configure Evolv Insights to produce reports after each event at Toyota Center.

"I worked with the team to help ensure they were trained on how to use the MyEvolv Portal as well as Evolv Insights analytics," she comments. "This included the configuration of standard Evolv Insights reports around traffic flow and items detected at each Evolv Express system. These post-event reports tell them how many people are coming in, when, as well as how many and what types of threats were detected."

The MyEvolv portal enables the Toyota Center team to all data in a single platform, which can be accessed their desktop or mobile devices. "The Evolv mobile app enables them to access information from anywhere," Granovski adds.

Consistent Security Screening Across All Events

The Express helps enable Toyota Center to deliver a more consistent security screening process across all event types—whether a Houston Rockets game or concert.

This was an important requirement for the team going into the deployment. "People have similar expectations regardless of what event they are attending," Hall says. "They don't want to see one process at an NBA game and another process at a concert or other type of event. This can lead to confusion and inefficiencies."

A Decline in Negative Responses Equate to Positive Fan Feedback

Hall notes that it was interesting to observe the response of fans.

"We track fan experience for ingress, and we had a significant number commenting on how long it took to get through before and how it could be intrusive," Hall notes. "Those complaints were reduced significantly when Evolv was implemented. No comments equate to positive feedback in this case. That said, we still got some comments such as, 'This was different,' or 'This was really cool.'"

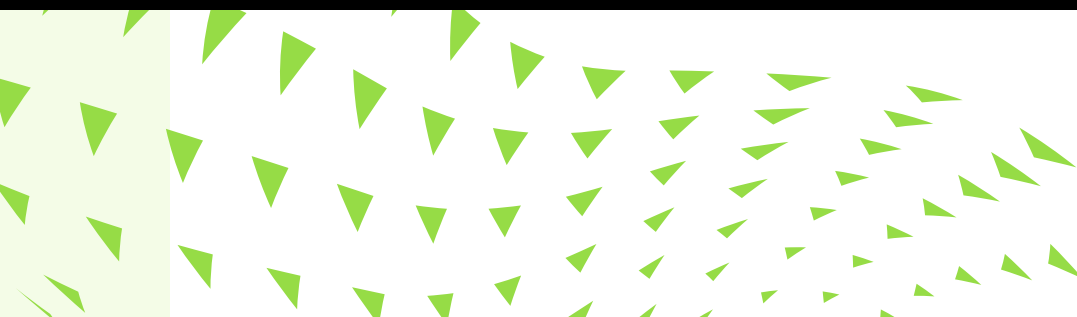
When Granovski took her daughter to a Houston Rockets game at Toyota Center a few months after deployment, she found her daughter's reaction to the Evolv technology interesting. "We walked through the Express side by side and no one stopped us to ask us to divest everything from our pockets or bags," Granovski relates. "We then stood off to the side of the Express lane, and I explained to her how the technology works."

Knowing she is bringing her daughter into a secure environment is extremely important to Granovski. "When I take my daughter to a basketball or baseball game or concert, I want to know she is going to be in an environment that is as safe as possible," she says. "I know that is the case when we come to Toyota Center."



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- Christy Granovski, Customer Success Manager, Evolv Technology





Great Technology, Great Relationship

The Toyota Center team remains quite impressed with Evolv since deployment.

“The technology has been great, and we continue to learn how best to use it,” Hall conveys. “In addition to consistently delivering a fast screening process for our guests, it provides our staff with operational efficiencies. Plus, when it comes to the relationship, we are quite pleased. Evolv didn’t simply drop the technology and leave. Their team is here for the long term and is focused on our success.”

As the Toyota Center looks to the future, the organization is excited about the ongoing partnership with Evolv and the potential for even greater innovation and optimization in years to come. “Evolv empowers us to focus on both our fans’ experience and their security,” Hall sums up. “With the help of Evolv, we’re constantly learning and improving how to give our fans a great ingress experience while keeping them as safe and secure as possible.”

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info@evolvtechnology.com +1 781.374.8100

