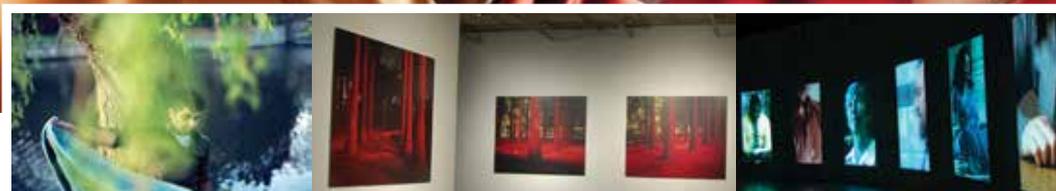# Ambitious Arts Organization uses PatronBase to support rapid growth

"The PatronBase solution has given us exactly what we wanted, shaped to our specifications and has helped us build and nurture our audience."

Becky Caffrey,
Visitor Services Manager,
QUAD

The Quad – Art Beat of Derby City

In a little over five years QUAD has become Derby city's hub for contemporary art and film. It is a multi-arts venue, focusing on visual arts and digital media, as well as a central space for events, business conferences, workshops and private functions.

Since its inauguration in September 2008, the venue has hosted over 300,000 visitors every year and has become a substantial contributor to the city's economy and an important part of its social fabric.

The venue runs training workshops and outreach programs in conjunction with schools and community groups, making the best possible use of available creative spaces. The QUAD team regularly goes out in the country screening films on large inflatable screens in big country homes, inviting local community members to the events.

QUAD is mostly self-funded, revenues being primarily generated through its vibrant and modern café, ticketing, corporate hire of spaces, with supporting contributions from the Derby City Council and the Arts Council England.

Ambitious new arts establishment

From the very beginning QUAD had big expectations to fulfil and the team was full of ambition too. As one of the best equipped arts centres outside of London, the potential was huge. "We were a new organisation in a new building looking to grow rapidly, and we needed an Arts management system / CRM at the very outset", says Becky Caffrey, Visitor Services Manager at QUAD.

"We needed a solutions partner who would be able to accommodate all of our specific needs and give us a solution that would grow as our organisation grew and we didn't want to get stuck with a system that wouldn't keep up", she says.

QUAD considered a number of other solutions in the market before choosing PatronBase. The brief was for software that would be adaptable, yet cost-effective. Becky says, "Apart from PatronBase, we looked at Tessatura, Databox, blackbaud and a few others. Cost was a major consideration, and the PatronBase team was able to offer us a lot more for our budget. The PatronBase team was acutely aware of our requirements - they developed their existing solution to cater for our specific needs and tie in closely with our day to day operations."

Collaboration in action

While many solutions require a lot of business process change to conform to a ready-made software structure, PatronBase allowed QUAD to reflect their existing approach. "I don't think we would've had as much flexibility as we do now with PatronBase with any other system. The great thing about working with them is that they keep developing and refining the system off the back of suggestions and feedback from their users".

Regular conversations between the PatronBase and QUAD teams led to not just the refining of the software solution but also presented some industry best practices to the venue management team that hadn't necessarily been considered before. "This engagement was more than just delivering a software system. It was matured into a consulting engagement, with the end goal being perfection of the operations at QUAD and a software solution that facilitated those processes and building in efficiencies everywhere", says Andrew Thomas, Managing Director PatronBase UK.

Using the PatronBase system, QUAD improved customer data capture and was better able to customise different experiences for different customers. "Over the past few years, a number of arts organisations have faced funding constraints, and working with PatronBase helped us identify a number of new revenue streams that add to our funding", says Becky.

Creative problem solving

"The PatronBase solution has grown a lot and is now completely different from what it was five years ago when we started out, which gives you a perspective into the development effort that has gone into it from both organisations. Even though it was doing everything we needed it to do in the beginning, the system works incredibly efficiently now and they've been constantly adding new modules and functionalities to it," says Becky.

The constant improvements have not just been in the software code. "Even the interface now is prettier, friendlier and it is a lot easier to train new people who are unfamiliar with the software."

The system is used by nearly everybody at QUAD, accessing different modules depending on their role within the team and security clearance. With real time inputs coming in from multiple modules in the cloud-based system, every team member has access to important information that helps improve their effectiveness.

For example, box office data is useful not just for ticketing staff, but ushers too can see advance show booking and make arrangements accordingly for wheelchair access or other specific requirements for the theatres they are responsible for, without waiting on instructions from the duty managers.

"We have a finance team of four who access the reporting module nearly every day, and other team members also have access to the reporting, marketing and other modules within the system".

The partnership continues to grow

The ease of configuring the system for QUAD, combined with the affordability of the solution was crucial as it directly supports the institution's ability to provide high quality experiences to its patrons at the lowest cost.

"They are a company that we've really enjoyed working with, the support is always very positive, very friendly and they are ever so patient with everything we ask of them. They understand our operations, constraints and frustrations. And one can always be sure whatever we're asking of them is going into their development pipeline. Sure enough, a few months down the line comes a message saying – 'isn't this what you asked for, well we've incorporated it into the system'".

Becky says the relationship with PatronBase has enabled QUAD to be flexible in its operations and the services it offers to the community. "The PatronBase solution has given us exactly what we wanted, shaped to our specifications and has helped us build and nurture our audience".