Modernised ticketing for the Townsville arts community proves successful

Townsville City Council

The City of Townsville in Queensland, Australia has a vibrant and active theatre and arts community. The Council has two premier theatres, the Townsville Civic Theatre and the Riverway Arts Centre. Both venues offer a range of entertainment and special events such as charity balls. The Council also manages a range of other facilities including stadiums, parks, beaches, community venues, theatres and galleries.

Dated system that couldn't keep up

The Townsville City Council's theatre scene was growing rapidly. Stephen Burgess, Ticketing & Front-of-House Team Leader, said they were in need of a new ticketing solution to keep up with demand levels. "Our ticketing system was starting to crash a lot and because we had expanded so much, the size of it was getting out of control. The pipelines used to get jammed up and the systems crashed constantly".

Prior to PatronBase, the Townsville City Council were using a very basic ticketing system that they had been using for 14 years. The system was old and cumbersome, and with no online capability it wasn't meeting their needs. "Our previous system was a basic DOS based system. You couldn't even use a mouse with it – it was keyboard only," explains Stephen.

The old system was also very limited with the amount of data and information you could put in and extract out of it, explained Stephen. Not only that, but the actual company that produced the software had ceased operations. "We could no longer contact them for support as they had closed up shop".

In 2009, the Townsville City Council amalgamated with their neighbouring council and inherited an additional 300 seat theatre venue. "The new venue was already using another system that was doing web bookings so we thought, we need to update and get a new system that will do both of our venues, and enable our web bookings to move with the time".

"The level of detail you can capture about a patron is very comprehensive. If you put a lot into it, you can pull a lot out of it."

Stephen Burgess,
Ticketing & Front-of-House Team Leader, Townsville City Council.

Modern, affordable, flexible solution

As ticketing is such a critical part of a theatre, the Townsville City Council required a solution that could keep up with their increasing demand, while providing a modern and user-friendly interface that met the technology expectations of today.

While the inherited theatre was already using a more modern ticketing system capable of online bookings, the Townsville City Council decided to explore other options to see if there were any better alternatives available.

The previous Ticketing & Front-of-House manager did some research and liaised with other venues. She also attended the National Ticketing Conference and came up with a short list of potential contenders.

They went through a vigorous selection process and evaluated several different systems. "We put each system through an evaluation checklist where we had all of our desired requirements that we put a score against", explains Stephen.

"There were a couple of systems that came out equal with PatronBase, but in the end, we decided PatronBase was the best choice. It was the economical option and it gave us everything we wanted and needed".

PatronBase hits all the right notes

The Townsville City Council has been using PatronBase since 2010.

The key features they were looking for were strong web capability, the ability to capture more information about patrons, and handle subscription packages. PatronBase delivered on all of them.

"Our main priority was the ability to take internet bookings. Because of PatronBase we now have the ability for customers to purchase tickets 24/7 online via our online ticketing shop, Ticketshop".

They also wanted to keep a lot more data about their customers. "The level of detail you can capture about a patron is very comprehensive." He adds, "If you put a lot into it, you can pull a lot out of it".

It was important for the new system to be able to handle their subscription packages. "Back when we implemented the system, we did subscription packages for our theatre season of shows, and the way PatronBase handled this aspect far exceeded our expectations".

Being able to import their old customer database into PatronBase was a bonus as they didn't have to start from scratch. "Not having to manually input all the data into the new system was a major benefit as it saved a huge amount of time for our staff".

Stephen commented on the flexibility and how it has improved efficiency at the Townsville City Council. "We love the freedom it gives us to create our own venue seating plan, and it's not limited - we can create as many new venues and seating plans as we want", "the system is very easy to use with a friendly user interface. Specifically, the box office module for basic ticket selling. Everyone's happy with it."

Since implementing the system there has been several upgrades and new features added such as the Layout Designer and Venue Designer. "The Layout Designer is a really good advance that we are thrilled with – it makes it so easy to create the design that you want on your tickets," he adds "the ability to easily customise and change the look of our seating plans online with Venue Designer is also a huge benefit."

The Townsville City Council has been thrilled with the service and support they receive from PatronBase "The support from PatronBase is always there when we need it. Brad is great at trying to find solutions and fix things when they're needed."

"PatronBase provide a very good system that exceeds our expectations. We can get everything we need from it, it has made such a positive impact on how we manage our venues".