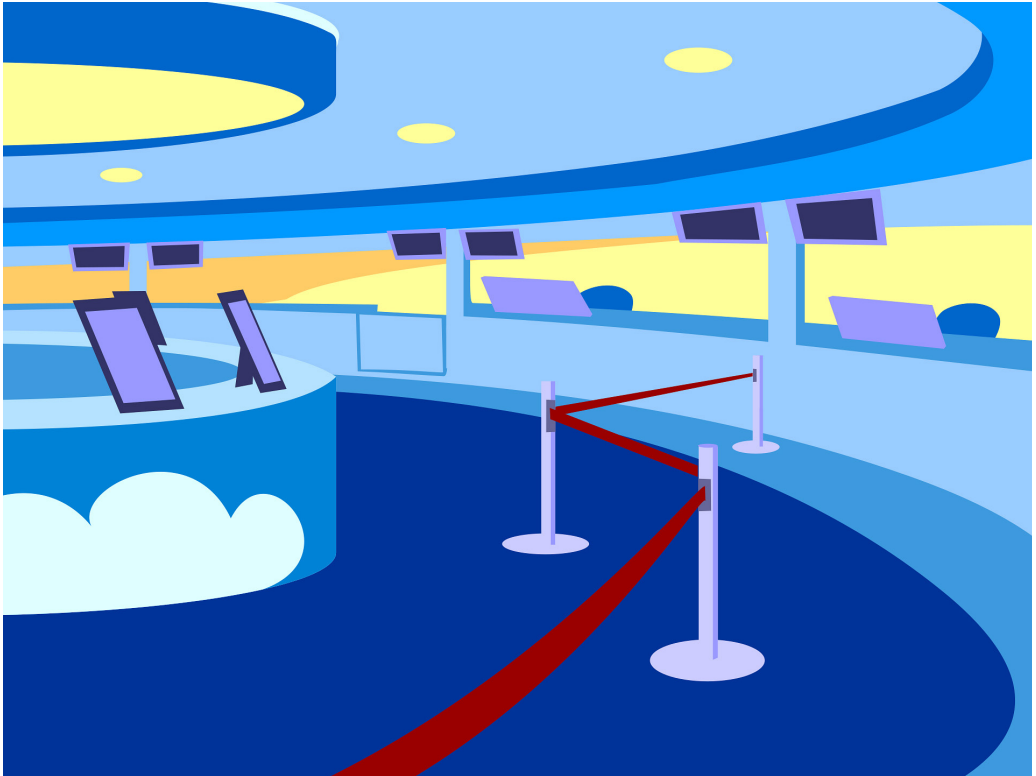


THE WAY FORWARD

HOW DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARTS IS HAPPENING 'BEHIND THE SEEN'



An interview with
Christopher Glasgow, Director
Perth Theatre and Concert Hall

Extract from a report commissioned by:



Powerful Accounting Software

Introduction

We're going back stage, or to be more precise, back office.

And instead of looking at the digital revolution in the arts through the prism of on-line performances and production values, let's look at the impact of technology in being able to transform the finance function and administrative tasks.

That's in terms of the use of data for strategic through to granular decision-making rather than score-keeping, at how the customer experience can be improved.

In a report commissioned by iplicit, the cloud accounting software company, to be prepared and published by DECISION magazine later this year, the chief executives and chief financial officers of arts organisations across the UK will be highlighting the issues, sharing their thoughts on the way forward.

This is one of the interviews to be included.



Using technology to provide clarity

“Not unlike other arts organisations, we have constant funding challenges,” observes Christopher Glasgow, director of Perth Theatre and Concert Hall. “But we made a deliberate decision to be more transparent so everyone here can see how their role has an impact on our finances, which we saw as an imperative.

“Our finance system is not only understood by those in accounting, but at every level people here are able to understand basic financial processes and concepts, which means we all realise we have an active part to play in the financial stability of the company.

“In an arts organisation, that understanding and clarity gives people valuable insight beyond their remit, that finance isn’t a stand-alone silo which really has little to do with their role unless that is their function.”

So not surprisingly, Glasgow doesn’t believe it’s enough for different IT systems to have the equivalent of joined up writing.

“People have to knit together as it were to take advantage of that,” he explains.





Christopher Glasgow

“Our box office staff help maximise revenue, for example in opening a dialogue with the finance team to see how we can make our venues more accessible to new audiences by providing transport for particular groups. That means there could be an opportunity to be able to apply for outside funding, which would then involve our development team.

“So integration isn’t just about systems talking to each other, but internal engagement, enabling the whole organisation to function as one team. We have two venues on the same street, yet that basic separation had caused silos in the past.”





Perth – concert hall

Technology is driving revenue generation for arts organisations, and Glasgow provides a simple for instance. “With our ticketing platform,” he explains, “if someone buys a seat a £10.50, the system gives them the option to round it up to £11.

“If that person is regularly donating, the system can bring them to the attention of our development team, who could invite them based on that pattern of behaviour to become a friend of the organisation which brings membership benefits, and for us an annual renewal.



“The ticketing system talks to the profiling software which can bring in survey data, so we can paint a rich and accurate picture. It provides us with an insight into every aspect of the customer journey and we are open with our customers as to why we need that information. It has resulted in people contacting us to say have you considered booking a particular show, because they feel involved.”

Founded in 1900, Perth Theatre is Scotland’s oldest repertory theatre, but data enables the company to add value to a pre-made show, an artist or a production coming to them as part of their tour. “They can work with our marketing as well as technical and production teams so we are able to suggest ways to pitch the event to our audience,” explains Glasgow. “So technology facilitates collaboration with the venue, the artist, and the audience.”

But there’s another example of technology being deployed for the greater good.

“We’ve developed the Perthshire Box Office, a community version of Ticketmaster, involving other arts organisations in our locale for mutual benefit,” says Glasgow.

“Its purpose is to increase accessibility. I would say twenty-five per cent of our population is over sixty-five and in rural areas. So we invested in tablets to facilitate box offices in other locations, such as the monthly farmer’s market, the museum and libraries.





Perth - theatre

“And with technology, we can take our city and project it to the international stage. We are twinned with Perth, Australia, and technology offers the potential for our audiences across the widest geographical spread in the world to share in arts events across our two cities.”

But then Glasgow pauses. “Nothing really compares with sitting in an auditorium when the lights dim and the curtain goes up,” he adds thoughtfully. “That’s where live performance will always have the edge.”

www.perththeatreandconcerthall.com



About iplicit

Providing a cloud-based finance and management software solution that allows multi-academy trusts to focus on what really matters. Tailored for those frustrated by on-premise legacy software, iplicit provides greater flexibility and enhanced levels of reporting, integrating with other cloud applications for a seamless migration path from a user's existing system, enabling organisations to 'step up' to next generation finance software without losing the functionality they currently enjoy. iplicit received the Accounting Excellence award for mid-market and enterprise software of the year in 2020, and the top product for enterprise accounting/ERP in the Accounting Web software awards, 2021.

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The interview with Christopher Glasgow was undertaken with Luke McKenna, specialist at iplicit in working with arts organisations.



About DECISION magazine

First published in 1988, DECISION magazine reflects the business lifestyle, the trials and tribulations, the hopes and aspirations of directors and managing partners responsible for businesses with a turnover of £5million and above.

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