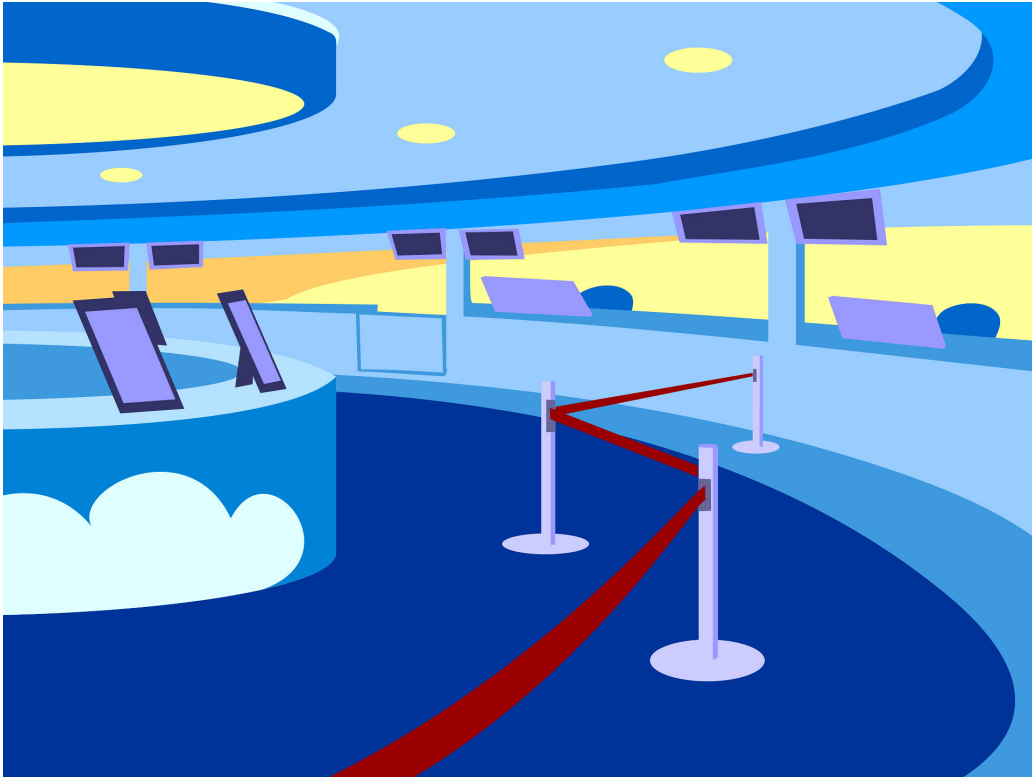


THE WAY FORWARD

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



**An interview with Joanna Read
Director and Chief Executive
Yvonne Arnaud**

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.



Taking technology one step further

What technology gives an arts organisation is the financial information to know what makes a difference.....”

Joanna Read, director and chief executive of the Yvonne Arnaud (theatre) pauses – with dramatic effect – before continuing with a telling example.

“Energy management efficiency isn’t now about campaigns to persuade people to switch off the lights when they aren’t needed, but mapping our usage, being able to make decisions which will enable us to better control costs and reduce our carbon footprint,” she explains.

“Of course technology is only as good as the information it can access and how you are able to manage the resulting data.

“So, for example, while the information has always been available about audience demographics and how many shows individuals have bought tickets for, I’m more interested in how technology can measure and monitor the demographic of a particular area to identify, if, for instance, more young couples are moving into our orbit, and whether that is something which should influence



Joanna Read



and affect our programming, with more family shows as a consequence of a community getting younger.

“Technology means we can respond to whether a show is selling as it should, and the ability to apply dynamic pricing gives us the means of maximising income, with real time information enabling us to adjust pricing based on actuality.”

“The question to really ask about emerging technology is whether it is going to better serve the interests of the customer,”



suggests Read. “Will it make the visit to the venue easier and more enjoyable?”

“For the customer, everything can be organised online – choosing their seats and buying the tickets, ordering a programme, a pre-concert meal, interval drinks. Information on parking can be a pop up when someone is making the booking and we can prompt them to look at other shows they might like to see as well.

“Although eighty per cent of our sales are online, people are frustrated if they can’t reach a real person to ask questions which could determine whether they book or not, so we maintain a box office presence from ten in the morning to when a show is about to begin, and the evidence is that it has helped sales by providing that option.

“The box office now doubles up as our reception, so it widened the role and responsibilities of its staff and enables us to be able to better afford the function.”

“Streaming a live show can reach a different audience who can’t get to your venue,” says Read, “and a theatre should explore that if it has access to the skills and equipment required, although filming and then streaming can be a more viable proposition. But I don’t think people will decide to stay at home and watch what we are offering online instead of going to the theatre.

“Being there in the audience is different from watching something on screen in terms of the viewing experience.”





The Yvonne Arnaud auditorium

While addressing artificial intelligence is in its infancy, Read has been evaluating its possible impact. “AI could identify those actors with the right experience or even potential for a role, but successful casting also comes from matching the chemistry between individuals. Can AI respond to the zeitgeist, picking up the mood of society or the thinking of a potential audience relating to a particular production?”

“Could technology one day in the future develop a robot to be able to play Hamlet? With real life actors, each individual performance during a run can be influenced by the way the audience responds on that particular night. That connection is something which takes place in that precise moment.”

www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk



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 Joanna Read 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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