Case Study
May 2018

How Monad Ticketing is helping Shetland Arts boost online sales

Streamlining and simplifying ticket sales and purchasing in a multipurpose, multi-venue arts centre

Shetland Arts is a cross-artform charitable trust in the Scottish Islands. The company runs multiple venues – a two-screen cinema, a music hall, galleries, cafes and remote events in the community and other islands – as well as a yearly festival for folk musicians. Occasionally external agents and promoters can access the system to sell tickets to other community events.

Monad Ticketing is a cloud-based SaaS box office solution designed to prioritise online sales and meet the needs of the modern box office. It's simple to use, flexible to set up, and works fast, integrating with other applications to provide a fully-featured suite of functionality.

Getting started and going live

Shetland Arts had engaged the Ticketing Institute to help them find the right system for their needs. The team chose Monad after using the functionality builder to draw up a shortlist of systems with the required features and face to face demonstrations in Edinburgh. Shetland Arts CEO Graeme Howell, who is described as having a general enthusiasm for trying new things, was attracted by Monad's simplicity and flexibility.

After demonstrating the system in Edinburgh, Monad CEO Ben Curthoys travelled to Shetland to deliver training to administrative and box office staff. According to Lauren Doughton, Marketing Manager at Shetland Arts until May 2018, little initial training was needed – especially for front of house workers, who work

with a user interface that's almost identical to what the general public sees on the website – but establishing that initial contact with the support systems in place was valuable.

Shetland Arts moved from Tessitura to Monad in the final quarter of 2016. Initially, go-live had been planned for January 2017; however, circumstances intervened. An unexpected withdrawal of services from one of their providers meant that this had to be brought forward by a month.

Despite this change to the schedule, both Lauren and Ben described the transition as a "pretty seamless procedure": the first version of the new Shetland Arts site went live in December 2016, one month ahead of schedule.

Using the system

Shetland Arts makes regular use of Monad's folder structures to organise its events by category, and tags events with particular attributes (such as events aimed at children or captioned cinema screenings). They automate their marketing communications through the integration with MailChimp and keep track of their complex system of venues via Yesplan. The What's On functionality is used to help promote unticketed events in their café and gallery spaces.

For its film screenings, Shetland Arts uses Veezi, an application developed specifically for use in independent cinemas. Ben custom-built an integration between the two, so that Shetland Arts could continue to benefit from the cinema-specific functionality in Veezi and then import it directly into Monad without any need to manually input data.

Reporting

Certain reports – particularly sales return by event – are automatically sent out to all staff daily. Lauren also highlighted the following reports and functionality as being particularly valuable to Shetland Arts on a regular basis:

Financial reporting and Excel export, which makes it easy for the finance department to crunch numbers as needed.

• The "folder setup detail" report, which allows users to check that the system is

being set up correctly and quickly identify the source of a technical problem.

• The "seating list by show" report, which provides a useful failsafe in case the Internet goes down (a sadly regular occurrence in the Scottish islands) and access to the database is temporarily lost.

• The custom reporting functionality, which Shetland Arts has used to automatically create lists of emergency contact details and medical information for when children and young people visit the venues on school trips.

Support

In the past, Shetland Arts had found that systems built for larger companies added layers of complication that tend towards the impractical for smaller arts centres. In Monad, they saw a smaller business might be willing to work closely with them to make sure the system is suitable for their needs.

In practice, this is exactly what happened: Shetland Arts communicates frequently with Monad – sometimes on a daily basis – and there is plenty of scope to ask whether the system can be set up to do something in particular. The answer, says Lauren, is usually yes; otherwise, there is a discussion about how practical it would be to include that particular thing in the system's functionality.

According to Lauren, Monad's support is "like having more people on the team". She describes it as "a brain that understands what we do but is removed enough from the day-to-day to give useful feedback".

User feedback

When asked what impressed her most about Monad, Lauren highlighted its flexibility. She also likes how intuitive the system is: it's easy to set up events, with plenty of scope for nuance.

> **"There's a lot of power for such a small system. We've not yet found anything that it won't do".**

"Doing new things isn't as frightening as it used to be," Lauren adds. Since switching to Monad, she has more confidence that she can try a fresh approach and capture different data – and if she has questions or runs into a problem,

she knows she can count on a friendly and knowledgeable support team.

Front line box office staff who had been working there at the time of the switch were struck by how different it is from other box office systems, but were able to start using it very quickly. Those who arrived after the Monad site went live also picked it up very quickly, and Shetland Arts' training overhead has diminished. This is particularly important in a location where many box office staff are seasonal workers.

Staff have received particular positive feedback from audiences about the ability to pick their own seats, which the previous system hadn't allowed. Above all, Lauren says, the Monad site is seeing much more use.

> **Improvements to online sales through Monad:**
> • The volume of online orders from the Shetland Arts online box office doubled within the first month after go-live.
> • In April 2018, half of all orders were made online.

Monad in action: Fiddle Frenzy

Fiddle Frenzy is a festival where folk musicians can attend workshops and classes, each aimed at a different instrument and skill level. Depending on whether they purchase a "Half Frenzy" or "Full Frenzy" pass, participants can book several workshops for different skill levels and instruments. The pass also includes priority access to a concert on each evening of the festival, and transportation to, from, and across workshop and class locations.

Because Tessitura forced its venues to adhere to a rigid structure and hierarchy, Shetland Arts had not previously been able to manage bookings through their ticketing system. Instead, customers purchased a "Half Frenzy" or "Full Frenzy" pass, and details were arranged manually once the transaction had been processed. Since this process was so time-consuming and labour-intensive, Monad worked with Shetland Arts to make this work through the ticketing system itself.

Purchasing tickets to Fiddle Frenzy is now possible through a combination of the

membership and package functionalities. Purchasing a ticket confers a membership status on the customer and triggers the package completion process, which takes them through each step of the booking process. At checkout, they then complete custom forms which capture transportation preferences and additional information.

This new system has both simplified the customer's booking experience and greatly reduced the administrative load associated with organising Fiddle Frenzy. Shetland Arts also runs annual festivals of film and literature, for which the same membership status-based booking system is used.

What's next?

The team at Shetland Arts is currently working with Monad to establish rural ticketing points at tourism centres, gallery spaces and local shops. This is designed to expand access to Shetland Arts events across remote areas of the Scottish Islands, particularly for young people and schools.

A variety of new membership types are also in the pipeline and, with an increasing data pool, the marketing department at Shetland Arts is looking at ways to maximise the potential of the customer segmentation functionality and integration with MailChimp.