



Theatre Royal brings accounting in-house with Sage.

Client profile

The famous Theatre Royal first opened in January 1788 before moving to its present location where it re-opened its doors in February 1837. Since then, the Theatre Royal in Newcastle upon Tyne has become established as one of the UK's leading provincial theatres with an annual income of several million pounds. Presenting over 370 performances to around 310,000 people each year, the theatre is regional home to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), the National Theatre, Opera North and the Rambert Dance Company. Located in an impressive Grade 1 listed building on Grey Street, in the heart of Newcastle's historic Grainger Town, the theatre's business aim is to make a unique, positive and valued contribution to the North East's cultural economy by presenting a programme of top quality productions and other activities.

It is important that the theatre events programme appeals to as broad a cross section of the community as possible. And it achieves that through over 100 dedicated employees providing a first class experience to the many thousands of local people and tourists who visit every year. As a result, Theatre Royal has developed an excellent reputation for its welcoming staff, wide ranging programme of events, easy booking facilities and quality cuisine.

The challenge

Over the years, the Theatre Royal's constant growth in size and reputation placed increasing pressure on its administrative functions. For much of this time, the accounting operation and some parts of the administration had been outsourced to Newcastle City Council. 'However, it was felt that a system was needed which would better suit the

requirements of the Theatre', explains Pamela Dowds, Senior Finance Officer. 'One which featured a flexible reporting structure and easy access to relevant information.'

The solution

In order to achieve the level of flexibility and control needed, it was clear that a key element was to bring the accounting function in-house. 'By doing so, we believed we would improve overall efficiency through stronger financial control and integration of information,' says Pamela. 'Vastly improved access to relevant information would then lead to better decision making and use of our resources.'

The next step was to evaluate carefully the accounting software packages and resellers available in the marketplace. 'There were many to choose from but,

Solution Overview

- Software easily customised to meet the theatre's individual business requirements
- Sage's wide user base makes finding staff with the appropriate software knowledge much easier and reduces training time and cost.
- Software can support the theatre's complex business needs now and into the future
- Flexible and information-rich system
- Project implemented on time and on budget thanks to support from a local Sage Business Partner.

in the final analysis, we looked at just four packages and chose Technology Services Group (TSG) to help us in the process,' explains Pamela.

After an exhaustive evaluation process, Sage Line 100 was selected as a clear winner over the other offerings. 'This was the most favourable solution in terms of cost and compatibility with our Databox booking system,' confirms Pamela. Another major advantage of Sage Line 100 was its ability to handle our large transaction volumes. And throughout the process, TSG were extremely professional. Their people were friendly and helpful and willing to spend time creating solutions to accommodate our unique accounting needs.'

The benefits

Even though the Theatre Royal's accounting processes are quite specialised, Sage Line 100 provided a good 'out of the box' fit to business requirements from the outset. Implementation took several weeks while a project team, comprising staff from TSG and Theatre Royal, ensured all the necessary modifications were introduced before finally going live. And the few issues which arose, as with any IT project, were quickly and easily ironed out. Consequently, the implementation was achieved on time, on budget and to the required quality standards.

'One of the many benefits of Sage Line 100 is its ability to be easily customised to meet individual businesses' requirements,' confirms Pamela.

'Another benefit, often overlooked, is the wide national and international use Sage solutions enjoy. That means it is so much easier to find staff that can use the systems with minimal training. Not that the system is difficult to use anyway!'

In total, there are five Sage 200 Financials and Commercials users all based at Theatre Royal's offices and their main focus is on budgetary control, invoicing and purchase ledger management.

"By bringing the accounts function in-house we were able to strengthen our financial controls. Sage 200 Financials and Commercials has provided us with the flexibility we needed to suit our unique accounting systems. The reporting structures and improved information access have helped to improve efficiency and decision making."

Pamela Dowds, Senior Finance Officer, Theatre Royal

Having successfully implemented the new system, a decision was taken to upgrade to Sage Mid Market Solution (200 Financials and Commercials), Sage's latest business solution built on the .NET platform, and also purchase Sage Payroll. 'We felt that Sage 200 Financials and Commercials was an even better match for our complex business needs now and in the future as we continue to grow and change,' confirms Pamela.

Summing up the benefits, Pamela Dowds says, 'Sage 200 Financials and Commercials has provided us with the flexibility and control that we needed and has enabled us to make better use of our resources. As a result of highly flexible reporting structures and vastly improved information access, our decision making processes have improved substantially too.'

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The Sage logo, consisting of the word "sage" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, is centered within a dark green square. The square is framed by a thin, light green border.