

THE BIG TICKET QUESTIONS

Future-proofing technology for
arts & culture organisations

Eventbrite



HOW DO WE ENSURE OUR TECH KEEPS PACE WITH USER EXPECTATIONS?

Eventbrite

This thought paper was commissioned by Eventbrite and produced with editorial independence by REMIX.

Whether engaging with an arts organisation or a commercial leisure operator, as consumers we have the same high expectations from technology interactions.

We expect them to support the advances often taken for granted. From mobile ticket scanning to social purchasing, choosing our own seats or timeslots – to name just a few.

Similarly, we expect marketing and promotions to be targeted and personalised, with the data held by an organisation to be both accurate and used for providing insightful improvements to our experience.

So how can arts and culture organisations meet these high expectations with the limited budgets often available?

Eventbrite provides a hosted ticketing solution and approached REMIX to holistically explore this challenge, independently considering the costs, benefits and drawbacks of using third-party products such as theirs against building tech platforms in-house.

This paper starts by considering organisational objectives and cultures, before exploring consumer expectations and how these could be delivered.

From there we move onto considering technical challenges and opportunities, plus areas of functionality common to arts and culture organisations. We then ask whether it is possible to map a best-of-breed solution to address the typical needs of different types of arts and culture organisations.

We hope that this paper serves to increase awareness and debate about the different options open to organisations, and that you'll use this as a diving board for discussion and development with your teams.

Eventbrite are happy to provide more information on the services they provide – please see the back page for their contact details.

If you are interested in exploring this subject further with us, please contact us by email at hello@remixsummits.com and we would love to discuss it.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Technology components must be fit for purpose, improve with data insights, talk to each other, and adapt to changing consumer expectations.

CONVERSION IS KING

It may be painfully obvious, but ticketing solutions exist for one reason alone: to sell lots of tickets. Quickly, easily, and repeatedly. It is therefore essential to optimise technical solutions for this task on a frequent and ongoing basis.

Conversion optimisation is the task of making buyers out of browsers. It is important to optimise each of the following steps to maximise conversions from visits and increase the Average Basket Value:

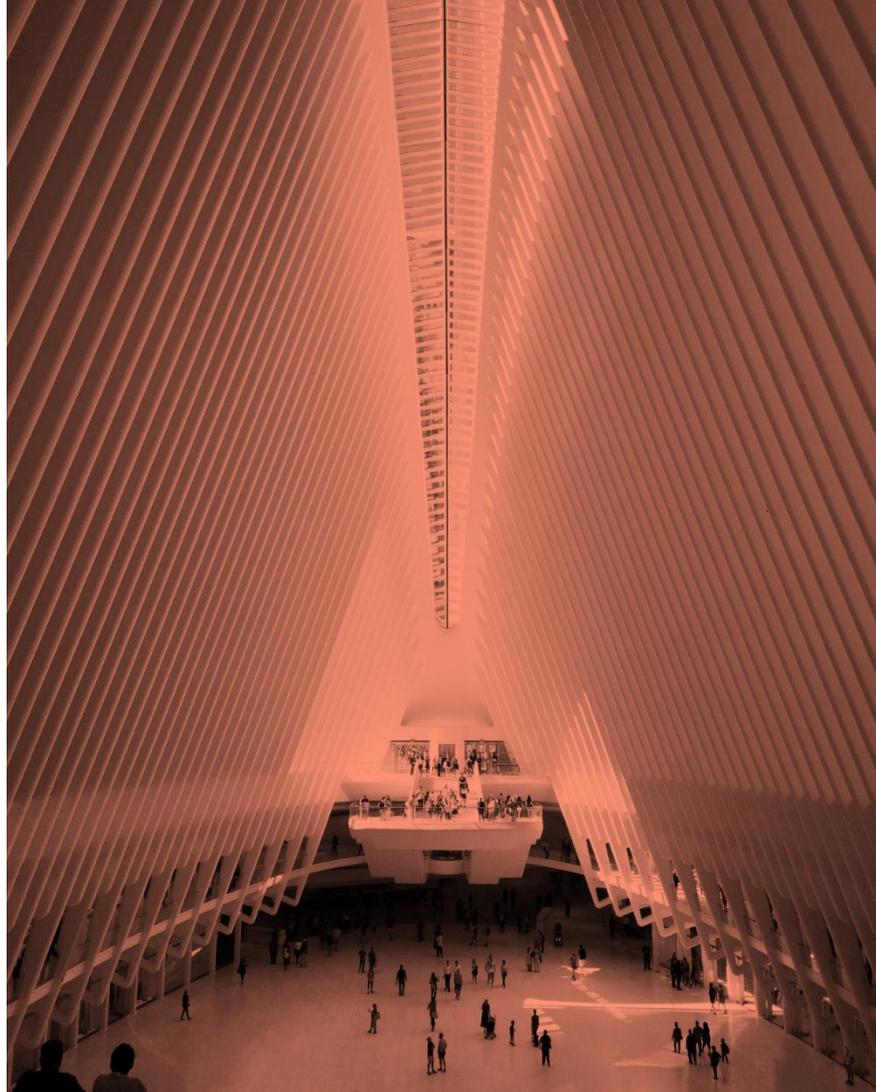
First, increasing the number and quality of digital visits requires effective marketing and communications, including social promotion and targeted advertising.

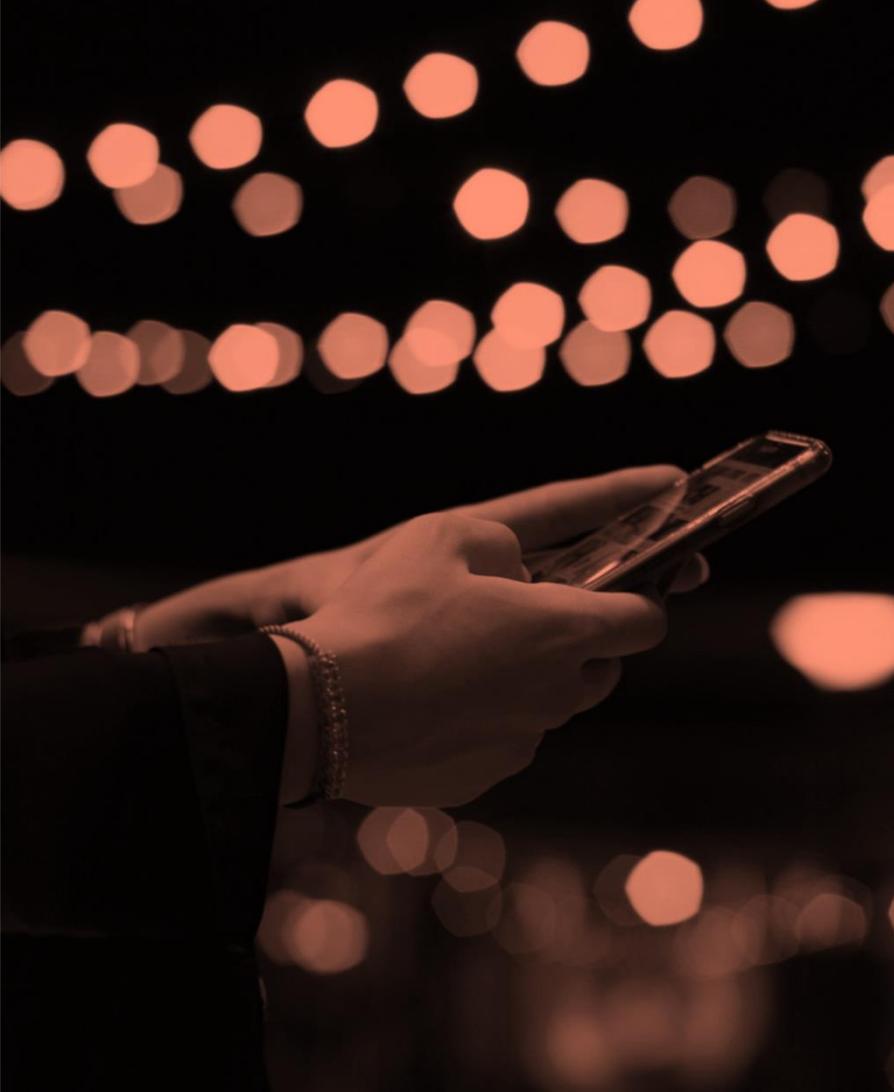
Second, convincing visitors to add

items to their basket can be improved through quality onsite merchandising, sales promotions and a clear path-to-purchase throughout the site.

Third, conversion into paying customers then requires an efficient and trusted checkout process.

Tickets are often an impulsive purchase, so anything that requires greater effort from users will have a negative impact on conversions.





A simple but often overlooked starting point is to compare your web or mobile experience with well-known e-commerce sites. How many clicks are required from arriving onsite to buying something? Do you need to register? Is it fully optimised for different mobile devices?

Suggestions to test may include:

- improved onsite merchandising (e.g. messaging, ratings, reviews);
- changes to the path-to-purchase, e.g. how users search and discover what is available;
- tactical promotions, including offers for repeat purchasing, cross-sells (complementary items) and up-sells (premium versions).

Improving online conversions requires organisations to design tests, analyse the resulting data and then respond. We should also work on the principle that changes may be negated or irrelevant just 3-6

months after changing them, so conversion optimisation is not a one-off task: it's an ongoing process that needs to be built into an organisation's capacity.

Organisations using this form of analytics tracking are faced with a huge number of metrics, with instant access and real-time updates. Analytics and user-tracking services are widely available, facilitating detailed customer insights and finely targeted social advertising.

Organisations must therefore balance this incoming quantitative data with qualitative insights from users, and make decisions based on these.

To convert more visitors into buyers, the experience of buying a ticket online should therefore be regularly optimised based on user data, behaviour analysis, and test results. This should occur on an ongoing basis to reflect changing requirements.

THE HOLY GRAIL? A SINGLE CUSTOMER VIEW

Arts marketers are well versed in the importance of customer relationship management. Technical solutions need to effectively facilitate these marketing strategies.

Creating a 360-degree view of a customer by merging data from ticketing, marketing and fundraising allows you to identify new sales opportunities. Such intelligent profiling helps identify targets – for example the loyal ticket buyer who hasn't yet become a member.

Similarly, emails are more effective when tailored to the buyer's personal preferences and past purchasing behaviours. You can track whether individuals respond more to seasonal e-newsletters,

launches or tactical promotions selling last-minute availability.

Once the behaviour of individual customers can be analysed, more effective segmentation becomes possible. This in turn makes it easier to cross- and up-sell based on success with similar users.

Cross-sells may include similar experiences, merchandise, related workshops or memberships, whilst upsells may include more expensive tickets or extras such as food and drink or backstage access.





In addition, those who subscribe to receive communications but do not purchase, and those who have not purchased within a set period of time, all require specific promotions, incentives and forms of engagement.

A typical customer lifecycle often involves a series of communications around both purchasing opportunities as well as standard membership communications. It is therefore essential that the frequency and content is personalised to prevent overload.

To facilitate this level of customisation requires a direct connection between:

- purchasing data, sourced from ticketing, e-commerce, physical box office and potentially third party partners; and
- marketing data, sourced from email and site analytics. Such data is usually managed within the CRM component of an organisation.

API's allow systems to communicate with each other, passing data automatically. Such integration between technology components ensures that this data transfer is seamless.

This maintains accuracy and data integrity, ensuring all components are constantly up to date.

It improves efficiency, saving the vast amounts of internal resource required for the simple administrative tasks of exporting, manipulating and importing spreadsheets between technology components.

It also enables an organisation to create automatic triggers that respond in real-time, for example by issuing targeted promotions when a user takes a specific action.

Ticketing solutions must not operate in isolation. They are most effective when integrated with marketing and fundraising data using API's. This enables organisations to create and target communications to individuals.

COMMON ARTS FUNCTIONALITY

Functionality requirements and priorities vary between organisations and artforms. Here we list some of the key commonalities to consider when judging between ticketing solutions.

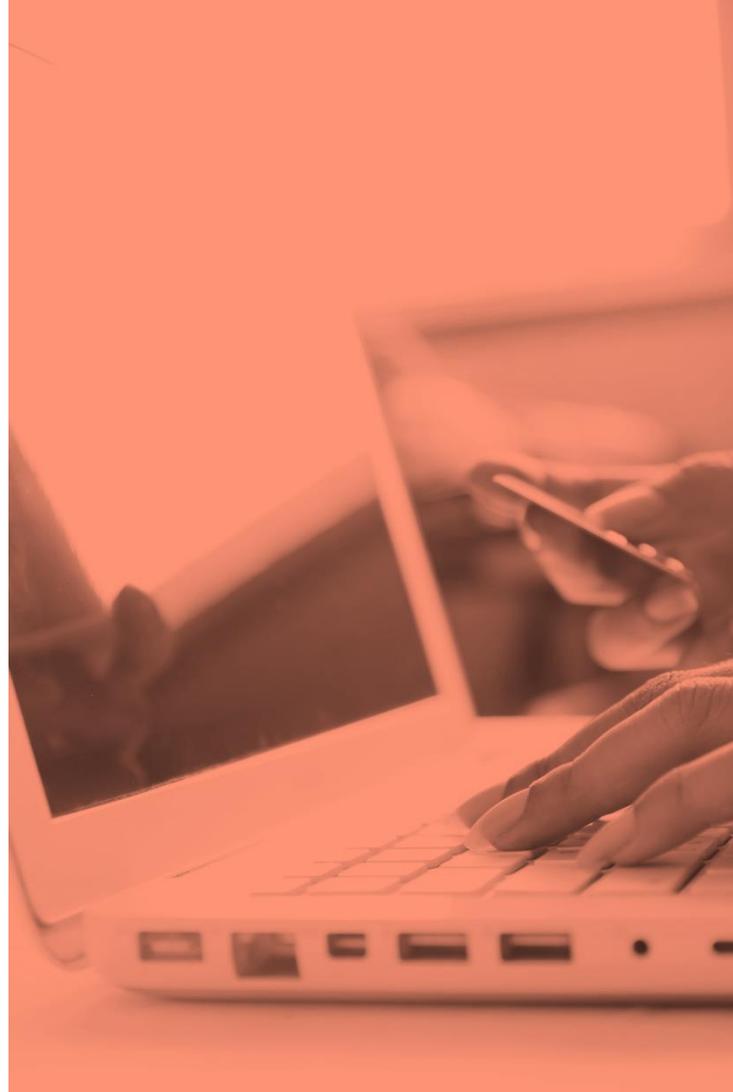
E-COMMERCE

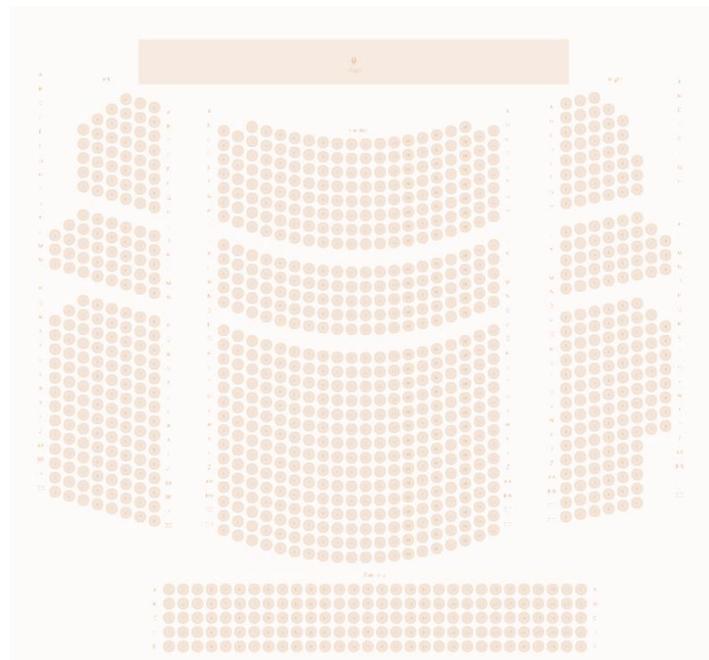
Ticketing and wider e-commerce can often be mutually beneficial for increasing cross-selling and upselling opportunities, for example through merchandise, books or related product sales.

The more complex the purchase, the less likely a conversion. It is therefore worth planning e-commerce and instore sales as part of a broader customer journey, after the initial ticket purchase.

SOCIAL

Social channels are critical for promoting events. They are also important for conversion, with users more likely to purchase when friends and colleagues do so. Functionality for social promotion and endorsement are high priority.





MEMBERSHIPS

Memberships are a very common source of support and revenues for arts organisations. Discounted or exclusive access to tickets is often a component of the offer, so need to be accommodated.

ONSITE BOX OFFICE

Almost all organisations offer onsite and digital channels for ticketing and shop sales. Solutions should be able to integrate data from Point of Sale systems and digital channels.

SELF-SERVICE KIOSKS

An increasing number of organisations offer self-service, kiosk options for purchasing tickets onsite. Whilst not essential, this reduces staffing resource and may reduce queues in busy periods.

TIMESLOTS

Enable users to select pre-set times for repeating events.

MOBILE TICKETS

Rather than issuing printed tickets, tickets using QR codes or similar can be scanned directly from mobile screens. This saves personnel, printing and postage costs whilst minimising waste and is becoming common in other industries such as travel.

SEATING CHARTS

Enabling users to self-select preferred seating, including at various pricing tiers to encourage upsells. It is important that systems are able to manage real-time updates across both digital and instore access.

FUTUREPROOF THE BOX OFFICE

Which consumer trends are shaping what users will expect from arts and culture organisations? Here we consider seven forces shaping the future of the box office experience.

TARGETED

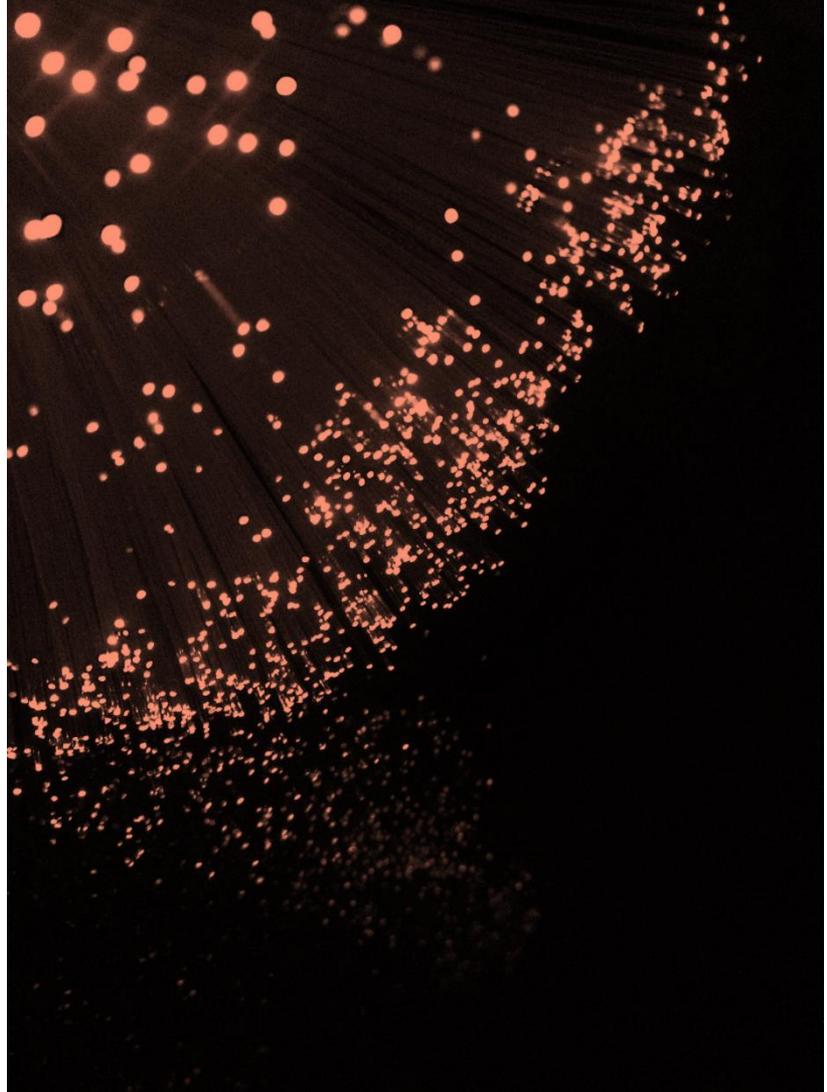
As we explored earlier, a single customer view enables organisations to target individuals with tailored offers, including cross-marketing with fundraising opportunities.

Taking this one step further, social targeting enables you to advertise to highly-focussed demographics with tools such as Adwords or Facebook. These replicate and amplify previous successes with similar groups.

SELLING 'EXPERIENCES'

Incredible experiences are the bread and butter of the arts sector. Yet when it comes to marketing unique experiences for gift buyers, the arts are strangely absent from popular gift experience sites.

How we package and sell arts events to new audiences is ripe for disruption. This includes bundling with food or drink, creating VIP add-ons, or innovative packaging.





DISTRIBUTED SALES

Few organisations have the marketing muscle to sell every ticket themselves. Tickets need to be advertised for sale through multiple channels simultaneously, including physical box office, online, partner sites and aggregators. This is a key consideration.

TICKET TO BRAND EXPERIENCE

How can your ticket become a gateway to a full user journey: pre-, during and post-visit? As a simple identifier, what are all the possible opportunities your ticket can unlock, from simple onsite promotions to digital scrapbooks? Tickets can track users within their visit, responding real-time to provide a truly personal experience.

PAYMENT TECH

Payment technology is undergoing major disruption, with the rapid growth of contactless and mobile

payments. Considering how and when we pay for events can create new opportunities for innovation in business models and data insights, in turn improving revenues.

MOBILE GIVING

New sources of revenue can develop by integrating philanthropy into purchasing and onsite experiences. Facilitating donations through mobile giving, or rounding up the pennies on a purchase, offer important new revenue sources.

ON DEMAND

Proximity marketing provides a significant opportunity for arts events. You can engage new audiences by ensuring that passing traffic is aware of your event, and can be easily converted into ticket buyers. Platforms that specialise in hyperlocal listings, or in late-availability promotions, can lead to new audiences – providing your ticketing systems can respond.

ARE WE A TECH START-UP?

One of the biggest challenges for technology owners in organisations is to ensure their platforms are fast, secure, continually optimised and regularly updated. Open Source software and Software as a Service (SaaS) may ease this task.

Organisations that build and maintain their own tech products and platforms in-house are effectively creating a new technology business: their unique technology becomes a source of competitive advantage.

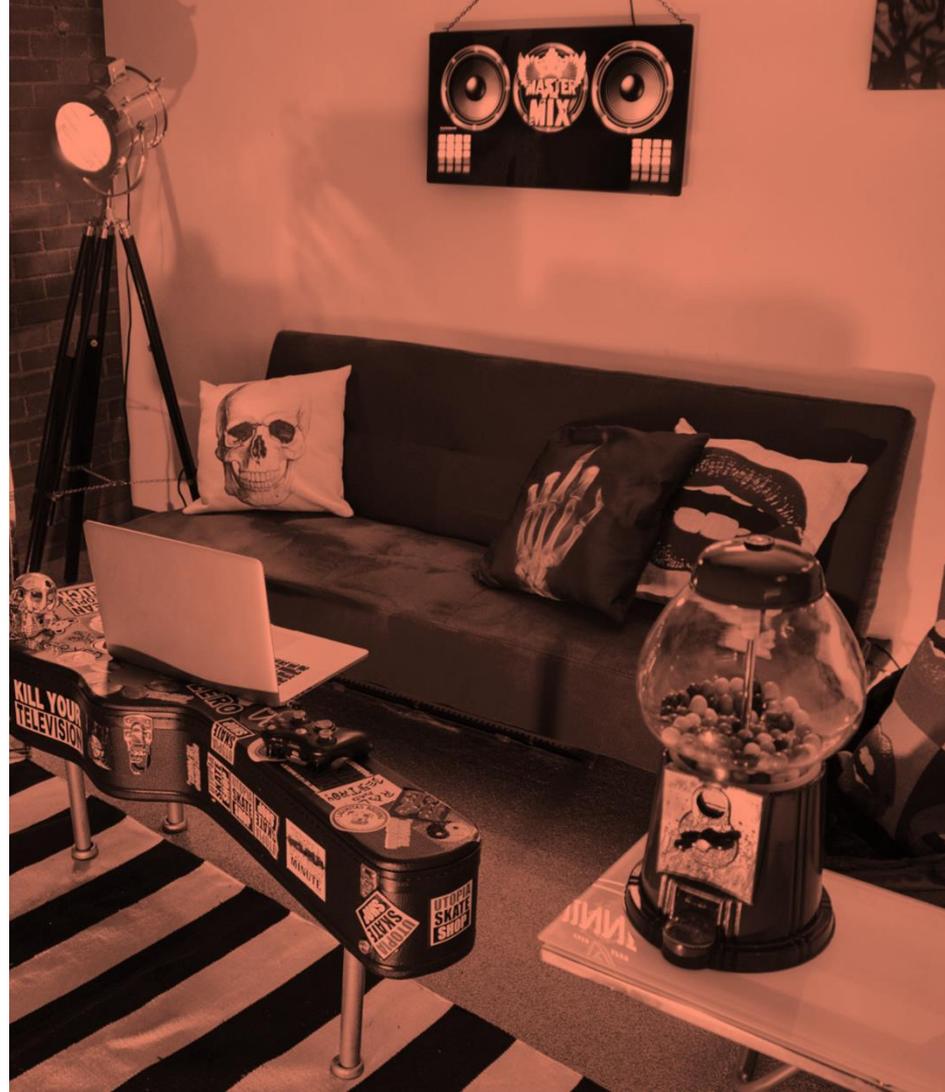
This is particularly useful where the technology is highly innovative, solving a problem in a new way, or creating a better solution to those that have gone before.

However, creating a technology business requires greater setup and

investment in technology, with a core focus on improving the product or platform, releasing updates and fixes, refining the user journey, and responding to both customer and competitor advances.

Innovative arts organisations with dedicated development teams are in short supply, partly because resource requirements and the necessary skills are often a lower priority for many organisations.

Instead, many in-house technologists and web agencies



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have responded to the wide availability of Open Source and SaaS technology.

Rather than developing from scratch, their task is often focussed on evaluating, selecting, customising and then optimising and updating pre-built components and add-ons to meet the organisation's needs. This incorporates much more strategy and systems planning than before.

UPDATES

Maintaining and updating software is mission-critical, firstly to respond to security issues and bugs, and secondly to respond to changing user requirements. The surge in digital crime means it is now highly dangerous (and often criminally negligent) to deploy a website without regular updates.

Fortunately, Open Source communities have transformed the landscape. There are many great examples of Open Source software for use at the enterprise level. For

Content Management Software (e.g. Wordpress, Weebly), Customer Relationship Management software (e.g. Hubspot), e-commerce (e.g. Magento) and beyond. In each of these cases, the full software can be downloaded, hosted on your own servers, and then customised and extended to your needs.

Common to each of these platforms are dedicated communities of developers testing bugs and extending functionality. This means each platform provides regular updates for security and functionality improvements.

Software as a Service, meanwhile, is a fee-based model in which all hosting, security, legislative compliance, development and updates are managed centrally by a third party. Platforms such as Mailchimp (email campaigns), Shopify (e-commerce) and Eventbrite (ticketing) use this model, giving organisations access to a specialised technology and optimisation expertise for monthly or per transaction fees.

EXPANDING FUNCTIONALITY

With limited resource, it is tough to prioritise updates and new releases of software in response to changing consumer expectations. 'Patching the bucket' year-to-year leaves little room to schedule and resource major improvements.

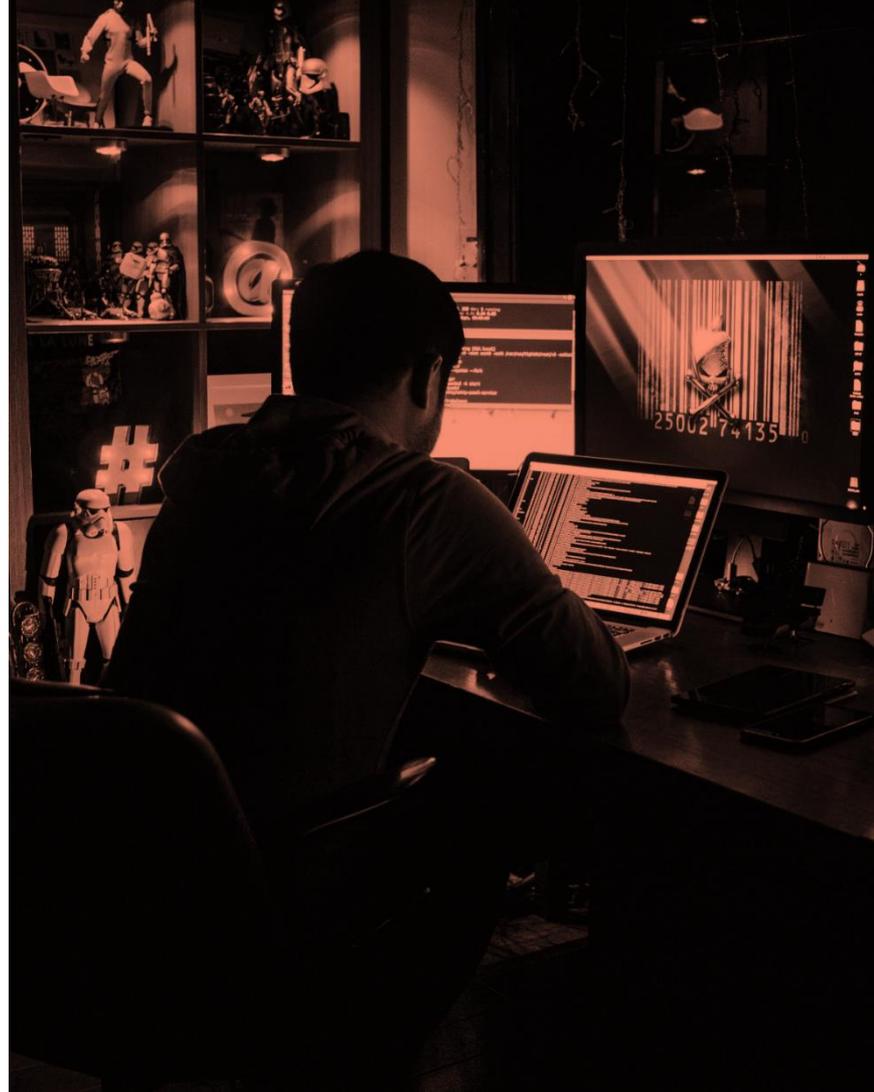
In Open Source communities, developers test for bugs and issue core updates, as well as creating extensions, add-ons and connectors. These enable new features to be bolted on with limited or no development required.

SaaS platforms also often encourage communities of developers to create additional extensions for their products.

Many of these extra add-ons provide off-the-shelf integration

between platforms. At a very basic level, for example, it is now relatively easy for your ticketing platform to 'talk' to your CRM system, updating contact, purchase and attendance details. In turn, your CRM can 'talk' to your e-mail platform, updating contact information and managing segmented lists.

This removes the need for spreadsheets to be exported, manipulated and then imported between systems, reducing





admin and saving substantial time and costs. It also means data is synchronised across platforms, improving data integrity and enabling the organisation to respond to information in real-time.

A further consideration when planning new tech systems is to look at the environment of add-ons around the system itself. For example, a ticketing system can be integrated with a CRM or email system, which in turn can be integrated with an accounting package or another platform.

Where direct integrations aren't possible, third party 'bridges' such as Zapier can be useful. This links data between various web apps, enabling data to be passed between them using workflows, and then sets automated processes to occur when triggered by certain actions. For example, an email with an attachment in Gmail can trigger the attachment to be copied to Dropbox and an alert added to Slack.

One of the biggest questions concerning integration is the level to which the user journey is seamless, i.e. do they get transferred from your own website to that of a third party?

Widgets allow for the simplest level of integration and simplifies compliance requirements for the organisation. They transfer the user to complete the checkout process on a secure third party site before returning them to the original site.

At a deeper level, passing data through API's require more in-house development but they are more flexible to meet exact requirements. Using transactional API's, the user isn't redirected to complete their purchase, but the transaction is still handled by a third party to create a seamless journey and minimise compliance requirements and costs.

By leveraging Open Source and SaaS communities, organisations can reduce the burden and cost of maintaining software and adding new functionality.

BALANCING THE COMMERCIALS

Designing a holistic technology solution for an arts or culture organisation is no easy task. However, it is important to consider all the costs involved.

BUILD

Are you setting out to build an innovative new platform? Do you want your technology product to be a point of competitive advantage and value for your organisation?

If so, software development allows you to build from the ground up; creating a better solution than those that have gone before. This requires an upfront capital cost for system planning and development.

If not, Open Source or SaaS are likely to provide the functionality you require with low to no capital costs. System design, customisation and optimisation are the key costs.

UPDATES

The launch of a technology solution is the start rather than the end of the journey. Frequent security updates are essential to help stay ahead of the rapidly-evolving landscape for digital crime, protect your users and meet your legal obligations.

Improvements resulting from optimisation tests, customer feedback and changing needs all need prioritising and scheduling.

Open Source and SaaS solutions provide regular updates for both security and user experience as part of their ongoing fees.

ADMINISTRATION

Without a well designed, integrated set of tech components, organisations spend substantial amounts of time and money on moving data manually from one platform to another using spreadsheets.

As well as personnel costs, this creates opportunity cost, as it becomes very difficult to respond to data insights in real-time.

Add-ons, extensions and API's all allow for communications between components, and automate triggers and actions, to eliminate this source of ongoing expenditure.

STAFF

A common concern is to ensure that administrative systems are easy to use and intuitive for a wide range of staff needs.

Induction and ongoing training for staff is a substantial tech-related cost for organisations. Making the admin interface a pleasure to use encourages rapid, deeper engagement to reduce training costs and deliver better results.

Technology developed in-house should rival Open Source and SaaS solutions, which often prioritise ease of use for admins as highly as for the consumer.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

TICKETING: EVENTBRITE

Conversion. Ticket buyers on Eventbrite are four times more likely to complete their purchase than on an average ecommerce site, according to research.

User experience. Emphasis on conversions; mobile tickets and sales; print at home; check-in app; social promotion, buying and sharing; 24/7 support.

Memberships. Gated area of own site for members, combined with API or ticket widgets. Use membership numbers as promo codes for multi-event discounts.

Box Office. Point of sale; RFID entry management and new integrations for kiosk management and badge printing.

Seating charts. Included, with award-winning design.

Data. Real-time reporting; support for self-service tracking pixels; all data can be exported and is owned by organiser.

Commercials. Free until a ticket is sold; three new pricing packages offering different levels of power and flexibility to suit your needs; fees can be passed onto customer.

Pricing: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/fees/>

Add-ons: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/spectrum/>

Whilst by no means an exhaustive list, each of the following platforms operate on either Open Source or SaaS models. As a result, the upfront cost is dramatically reduced, updates and improvements are provided on a frequent basis, and communities of developers are constantly generating add-on functionality in response to changing user needs.

Furthermore, each of these systems are able to talk to each other, and in turn can communicate with a wide range of other platforms to increase efficiencies, create opportunities to respond in real-time, and minimise costs. An indicative budget for each is provided below:

Customer Relationship Management. Kindful CRM [*cloud-based software perfect for non-profits and fundraisers*]; Hubspot CRM [*perfect for conferences*]

Content Management System. Wordpress [*perfect for conferences*]; Weebly [*perfect for music events*]

E-commerce. Shopify (SaaS) / Magento (SaaS or self-hosted)

Email campaigns. Mailchimp [*perfect for a range of events*]

Analytics. Google Analytics [*free*]

PROCUREMENT

When choosing tech components consider:

- Upfront development costs, plus ongoing updates;
- Hosting, insurance, security and compliance costs if self-hosting;
- Ongoing optimisation plans and costs;
- Staff induction and training costs;
- Administration and resulting opportunity costs;
- Your ability to respond quickly to changing consumption and purchasing habits.

FURTHER INFO

The ideas in this paper have emerged from many conversations between REMIX and partner arts and culture organisations of all shapes, sizes and artforms. You can learn more about the work of REMIX at www.remixsummits.com

Further resources to help support digital and commercial strategies are available from REMIX Academy at <http://remix.academy>

CONTACT US

If you have any questions on this area, or wish to discuss it further, please contact us by email at hello@remixsummits.com

If you're interested in learning more about Eventbrite, you'll find more information at <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/blog> or you can contact the team on **1800 820 172** to learn more about how they might be able to help with your requirements.