

Royal Albert Hall

Royal Albert Hall secures future revenues with managed hosting platform



About the Royal Albert Hall

As a registered charity, the Royal Albert Hall is financially self sufficient and receives no funding from central or local government. The building itself was built to fulfil the vision of Prince Albert of a 'Central Hall' that would be used to promote understanding and appreciation of the Arts and Sciences. The Royal Albert Hall is a Grade 1 listed building and has been in continuous use since it was opened in March 1871. The multipurpose building hosts not only music concerts, but also exhibitions, public meetings, scientific conversations and award ceremonies.

The challenges of online ticket sales

The Royal Albert Hall's website is one of its most important assets, providing a crucial ticket sales channel for the Hall's event promoters. The website currently experiences 3.5 million page impressions and 300,000 unique visitors each month. Online transactions now account for more than 50% of the Royal Albert Hall's overall ticket sales, which is a major development from the past when tickets were predominantly booked through the Box Office call centre.

One of the main challenges is to keep the website running smoothly, as activity can spike significantly in response to the availability of tickets that go on sale for popular events in this 5,000-capacity venue. Crispin Gray, Head of Information Systems at the Royal Albert Hall explains, "Throughout the year we experience show-specific spikes in web traffic which we can't prepare for as it is not always predictable when tickets for a certain event will go on sale. The Royal Albert Hall hosts major artists throughout the year and we often experience huge demand for tickets that are in short supply."

"We were struggling due to the limitations of the technology we were using and it no longer made sense for us to continue to do this on our own and continually worry about internet capacity and hardware upgrades."

"We have been extremely impressed with Star and feel that we have the capability we need in place to meet our specific needs, now and into the future."

Crispin Gray, Head of IS, Royal Albert Hall

The limitations of hosting in-house

It was necessary to improve the Royal Albert Hall's capability to cope with the large demand of on-sale tickets and the only way to do this cost effectively was through automation, but the existing website technology could not scale appropriately. The website had always been hosted internally, so this had to be reviewed in order to deliver the required levels of resiliency. The decision was then made to seek a better way to guarantee the user experience and effective operation of the site, despite the regular spikes in activity.

Crispin continues, "We started experiencing more challenges as the website was unable to cope with the large demand we were generating as people shifted to buying their tickets online. As soon as tickets for a popular event went on sale, the website infrastructure would come under immense pressure, and would often struggle to meet customer expectations. Unfortunately, we were struggling due to the limitations of the technology we were using and it no longer made sense for us to continue to do this on our own and continually worry about internet capacity and hardware upgrades."

Securing future revenues

As part of a larger strategy to undertake a complete website rewrite, implement a new architecture and migrate key parts of this infrastructure to a managed service provider to host the website, the Royal Albert Hall is now able to effectively engage with customers as the e-commerce platform gives more opportunities to cross-sell or interpret customer and transactional data from the website. The customer experience is greatly enhanced, as the website no longer folds under pressure and is able to cope with large amounts

Call: 0800 915 6916 | **Visit:** www.star.co.uk | **Email:** info@star.net.uk

of visitors booking and paying for tickets.

The Royal Albert Hall now benefits from a managed service that includes a hosted website and hosted server platform for the e-commerce site, which includes the facility to deliver a queuing system, which means that the website will continue to operate smoothly while large numbers of people are simultaneously booking tickets.

Star has been granted PCI DSS accreditation for several hosted services, and as the Royal Albert Hall deals with large amounts of online card transactions and customer data it is critical to have a PCI DSS compliant service.

Crispin concludes, "We have been extremely impressed with Star and feel that we have the capability we need in place to meet our specific needs, now and into the future. I'm delighted that we have found a provider with which we can do this without compromising our existing internal systems or risking our customers' online experience."

"I'm delighted that we have found a provider without compromising our existing internal systems or risking our customers' online experience."