Audience1st Customer Management & Ticketing System

Quick Fact Sheet  
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# Why Audience1st: *Reconnecting Community Theaters With the Community*

According to Theatre Communications Group’s *TheatreFacts 2005,* the majority of small 501(c)(3) nonprofit theaters rely on nonrevenue income (primarily donations) for 50-60% of their operating budget.[[1]](#footnote-0)§

In other words, when you sell your first ticket to a new customer, that should be just the *beginning* of your relationship with that customer. Yet most low-cost third-party ticketing solutions stop there, with no easy way to track customers across purchases, keep track of customers’ buying histories, target repeat buyers for donation campaigns or special recognition, or target email campaigns at patrons with specific buying patterns. Your performing arts company needs to build and maintain *ongoing* relationships with your *community* of patrons.

Like many small nonprofit theater companies, you probably also rely on your website as a means of delivering timely information to prospective patrons: Are there tickets remaining for tonight’s performance? Has the run been extended or extra performances added? When is closing night? If you’re like most small theater companies, you have to manually update this information as your production schedule changes, and even worse, you have to field phone calls the night of the show—at the busiest possible time—just to answer the same question dozens of times.

In contrast, *Audience1st* integrates your own ticket sales, third-party ticket sales (such as Tix Bay Area ½ price tickets and Goldstar Events™), box office reports, calendar and ticket availability information (which can be easily exported to your own web site), attendance statistics, donor management and followup, online donations, and support for email marketing campaigns, all in one Web-based system. And it even provides an optional “automated phone information” line for your patrons that relieves you of answering common questions about show dates, ticket availability, etc., automatically using the information you’ve already entered.

# Target Users

*Audience1st* was developed specifically for the needs of nonprofit community performing-arts organizations:

* Extensive functions for donor tracking and email campaigns integrated tightly with ticket sales and box office operations
* Easy to train volunteers: the box office agent’s user interface closely follows the patron user interface, so your patrons can easily become volunteer box office agents
* Easy to segment volunteers: a separate, one-screen, streamlined user interface for walk-up sales (at the box office) makes it easy to train volunteers to sell tickets at showtime without training them in the other administrative features required for telephone sales
* High degree of automation around ticket sales, phone-based information and sales, reporting/bookkeeping, and box office management, to minimize human resources needed on your end
* Every action is audited, making it easy to figure out who did what and when (preventing customer complaints from degenerating into “he said/she said”)
* Frees you from separately establishing and maintaining relationships with credit card payment processors and merchant accounts—money just appears in your organization’s regular bank account on a regular basis, with no transfer fees
* As an add-on, our inexpensive design services, which include *free Web hosting for your site*, let you focus on your core business while making it easy to display a Web site that automatically integrates *your* publicity photos and *your* breaking news, allows *your* patrons to leave comments about *your* shows, includes automatic up-to-the-minute ticket availability information, allows you to quickly assess how many people are visiting your site and how they’re spending their visit time there, etc.

Feature Overview (🗹=feature coming soon)

# Fast, Low-Overhead Setup and Operation

* Provided as a hosted service, so all you need is a Web browser. Audience1st can be tailored to match the look and feel of your venue’s site (“powered by”) rather than appearing as a totally different site to the patron.
* Basic setup takes just a day or two. We can import your existing patron list(s) from Excel or other sources for an additional fee.
* We handle online credit-card processing (Visa, MC, Amex, Discover) and do regular EFT’s to your venue’s bank account so you have fast access to revenue. Our transactions are processed securely through Authorize.net, one of the best-known payment gateways.
* Patron and purchase databases are backed up nightly and replicated. Credit card information is neither stored in any form nor retained across transactions. Our Web site security complies with Authorize.net’s merchant requirements and the CISP (Card Information Security Program) guidelines for electronic merchants established by Visa™.
* All ticketing and donation categories can be setup with account codes, making it easy to generate reports for use with QuickBooks™ or other bookkeeping products.

# Flexible Ticketing

* Set up multiple ticket types and price points for each production. Per-performance overrides are possible if you want to offer special tickets, promotions, etc. for selected performances only.
* Set up, redeem, and track “promo codes” that reveal special prices.
* Any type of ticket can be capacity-controlled and have start sales/end sales dates that override the defaults for the production (allowing, e.g., a “preferred” group of patrons to have early access to ticket sales, or allowing a time-limited promotional ticket price).
* Holdbacks (such as for group sales, TBA Free Night of Theatre, etc.) are easy to do on a per-performance basis.
* All actions are audited so you can tell who entered what transaction, in case a customer claims a discrepancy.
* Comps can be added to customer accounts by boxoffice staff. Different types of comps (professional, performer, media, etc.) can be tracked separately and capacity-controlled per performance. “E-comp” codes can also be given to customers who can then redeem their comps online later.

# Customer Convenience

* Customers can self-purchase online with a credit card or you can have orders entered by your phone staff on behalf of a customer.
* Works with mobile Web browsers (Palm Treo, BlackBerry, Apple iPhone, etc.), so customers can even buy tickets on-the-go (and you can check sales on-the-go).
* Automated voice information system (based on TellMe™ Studio technology) automatically tells callers whether tickets are still available for tonight’s/this weekend’s performances. Record prompts in your own voice or use automatic speech synthesis provided by TellMe™.
* In the future, an automated voice-response system will let telephone-only customers self-purchase with a credit card.
* Email confirmations to customer are automatically generated for any account transaction.
* Comments can be added to any reservation by customer or staff, at time of purchase or after purchase (e.g. special seating needs, guest of honor, etc.)
* Seamless integration with external ticket vendors, including GoldStar.com™, TixBayArea half-price tickets, and others. Audience1st automatically intercepts “will-call list” email from external vendors (or you can manually upload a will-call list) and integrates it with the master will-call list, recording the revenue appropriately and releasing unsold seats back to general inventory.
* “E-Tickets” feature allows generation of secure codes that can be redeemed for tickets or comps online or by phone, suitable for electronic and paper gift certificates, raffle prizes, etc. Gifts can be tied to a specific recipient, a specific performance or subscription series, both, or neither.

# From Box Office to Back Office

* The phone staff see the same user interface as patrons, so it’s easy for a patron to become a phone staff volunteer.
* We know that the box office just before a show can be a crazy place. A streamlined day-of-show interface supports walk-up sales, last-minute cancellations/no-shows/ date changes, subscribers who show up unannounced and want to be accommodated, and other box office scenarios. We’ve seen them all.
* Walk-up sales can be cash, check, or credit card (if you have a credit-card processing machine)
* Alternatively, with one-time purchase of a MagTek™ credit card swipe, you can process “card present” credit card sales for walk-up customers with *no additional equipment and no relationship with a credit-card payment processor.* (Requires a computer with USB port and Internet connection at the point of sale location.)

# Sell Subscriptions, Bundles & Other Products

* Virtually any kind of subscription is possible, including per-show, restricted to specific performances only (e.g. “Matinee Series”), flex pass (vouchers valid for any performance), individual series, or one of everything.
* Subscribers are easily called out in sales reports, will-call lists, etc. so you can single them out for special treatment if you wish. Multiple types of subscription seasons are possible and you can distinguish whether a particular series “qualifies” the patron for Subscriber VIP treatment or not.
* Subscribers can make and cancel their own reservations online with no fee (at your discretion) and no box office intervention.
* Certain non-subscription tickets can be made available to subscribers only; for example, subscriber-only VIP access to a special event, or “guest of subscriber” discount tickets for subscribers to bring friends to the show.
* Non-subscriber “bundles” let you offer tickets such as “family packs” where a bundle of tickets is purchased for a single price.
* Support for collecting revenue for other products, such as tuition for courses and other special events. Each product offered for sale can be distinguished as to whether it requires separate fulfillment, e.g. mailing an item to the customer, vs. “will-call” fulfillment only. Reports can be run to indicate which orders still have fulfillment outstanding.

# Email Campaign Integration

* Arbitrary queries can be used to select any subset of customers (e.g., “all customers who saw show X” or “all customers who have made at least 3 purchases in the past year”).
* Any report can be exported to Microsoft Excel™ or any program that can parse CSV (comma-separated values—the format accepted by most third-party email campaign services and direct-mail processors).
* Built-in integration with the open source package PHPlist to do the actual email campaign. PHPlist contains sophisticated features such as rate-limited sending and per-domain throttling to avoid triggering false “spam” alarms at most ISP’s, trackback of number of unique opens, support for multiple different mailing lists, etc. We handle the email for you—you just create the content.
* Separates opt-out of paper mail/postcards from opt-out of email, to save you money on printing and mailing. Mailing lists can be exported directly to Excel™ for printing labels or sending to direct-mail processor.

# Donor & Prospect Management

* Customers can donate online at time of purchase; donations received by mail or in person can also be recorded by staff.
* Donations are tracked and tied to customer record along with ticket purchases, giving you a comprehensive view of patron behavior over time.
* Tracking of whether acknowledgment letter has been sent to patron.
* Sophisticated donation reporting allows exporting of selected donors to Excel™ for further analysis or mail-merge with a donor letter using Word™.
* Prospects for more aggressive giving can be linked to additional contact information (employer, relationship to theater, etc.) and to individual visit reports, to track relationships with individual patrons over time.
* (Optional) staff-only access to raw SQL database allows you to write arbitrarily sophisticated read-only queries, allowing a “power user” on your staff to generate custom reports of arbitrary complexity.

# Optional Automatic Staff Notification by Email

* When a donation is received that needs to be acknowledged
* When an order is placed that requires fulfillment by mail
* When a “follow-up visit” with a potential donor is approaching
* When a show sells a threshold number of tickets
* When external ticket sales information (e.g. from GoldStar Events™) is received and automatically integrated into will-call lists

# Integration With Your Own Website

We’d be happy to discuss hosting your site for you (see below), but if you already maintain your own site, it’s easy to integrate Audience1st features into it directly.

* Entire site design is controlled by CSS (cascading stylesheets) markup, so you can match your existing site’s look and feel. For an additional fee we can provide design services to help you match the look to your other communications.
* Your branding, logo, etc. will appear on marketing & order confirmation emails.
* Up-to-the-minute ticket availability information is provided as a standard RSS feed, which requires zero extra configuration when integrated into standard content-management systems such as WordPress, Joomla, Drupal, etc. Your patrons can get up-to-the-minute ticket availability information online, without phoning in.
* Calendar feed allows your Website to show up-to-date calendar information for upcoming productions as embedded HTML. The feed can be subscribed to from Apple iCal or Microsoft Outlook 2003 or later, or rendered by any module or plugin of your Web content management system that understands the standard vCalendar format.
* For additional fees, we can design your website around the popular WordPress™ system, install the plug-ins that provide up-to-date ticket information and performance calendar, teach you how to maintain/update the site without needing to know HTML, and even host the site on our servers.

# System Requirements and Pricing Model

**Back office functions** require Internet Explorer 6 or later, Firefox 1.3 or later, or Safari (any version), on any platform supporting those browsers, and a broadband connection to the Internet. (The system will work over dialup, but it’s not recommended.)

**Walk-up sales** support Internet access at the point of sale. The Walk-up Sales screens are optimized for dialup or even cellular phone modem, in case you don’t have a broadband (DSL or cable modem) connection at your theater. If you don’t have Internet access in the box office, you can also enter walk-up sales figures offsite after the box office closes.

**Patron-facing functions** such as ticketing and self-reservations work even with older browsers such as Microsoft Internet Explorer 5 and Netscape 4.

**Pricing** is based on number of tickets sold. Our goal is to keep our fees to $1 per ticket plus 3% of the transaction fee. (Many theaters will find this less expensive than just the cost of setting up your own credit card processing.) Every month we take your gross revenues, deduct our processing fees, and transfer the rest via EFT to your organization’s operating account. *When customers make online donations accompanying a ticket purchase of any kind, the $1 processing fee is* ***not*** *applied; you pay only the credit card processing fee.* We’d be happy to discuss specific pricing with you and come up with estimates based on your predicted or historical sales and donation trends.

# Features Not Supported At This Time

*Cash-based accounting only:* Cash-based (not accrual-based) accounting is assumed in all financial reports generated by Audience1st. Per-production accounting reports reflect single-ticket revenue only, not the realized amortized value of subscriber vouchers redeemed during the run.

*No outsourced phone sales:* accepting telephone sales is the venue’s responsibility. We can provide telephone staff training for an additional fee.

*No reserved seating:* currently Audience1st handles only general-seating venues. This will change in the future.

*No printing on ticket stock:* Audience1st emphasizes an electronic ticketing/will-call scenario. Coming soon, customers or the box office will be able to self-print tickets on a standard printer. However, specialized ticket printing hardware is not supported at this time.

# Save Hundreds of Dollars on Your Site Design & Hosting

A1 Patron Systems can also host your venue’s Web site and help you design it to match your organization’s graphic identity. We provide design and setup services billed by the hour. Hosting is included with these services.

We can setup and host your site as a WordPress™ site with a number of A1-specific enhancements. The best part is that once it’s set up, *your staff can maintain the site without learning HTML and without needing to involve us or any other external Web designers.* Simple Web-based editing suffices for day-to-day operations, including posting the latest news, adding photos, making files available to your patrons (e.g. PDF files of your marketing documents), etc.

We will configure your site as follows for a one-time setup charge:

* Layout, colors and theme that match your organization’s graphic identity
* Basic pages for “About Us”, “History”, “Support Us”, “Get Involved”, etc., with text and pictures provided by you
* Structured to make it easy to add reviews, latest news, Now Playing/Coming Soon, special events, recent photos, ticket availability, etc.; no HTML or Web skills required to keep site up-to-date
* Site will be hosted under YourVenueName.org (or whatever your current URL is). We can help you get a URL or use your existing one.
* Hosted at a Tier 1 datacenter by HostingRails.com, in Dallas, TX.
* Integrated “Photo Gallery” support linked to a Flickr™ account (which we can set up for you) and a built-in “plug-in” that lets you display recent photos on every page, with links to online photo albums of your productions.
* Support for hosting video and/or sound clips of your venue’s work.
* Support for allowing your customers to leave feedback, comments, etc. on your site, if you wish.
* Integrated “upcoming ticket info” allows real-time ticket availability information for upcoming shows to appear on any page of your site, including a link that takes the patron to a purchase page pre-populated for a specific production and/or performance date. (This feature is also available free for you to integrate into your separately-operated Web site.)
* Unlimited number of email forwarders, allowing all of your staff to receive email at *MyAddress*@*MyVenueName.*org.
* The content of your site is backed up to a reliable offsite location nightly.

1. § Source: http://www.tcg.org/tools/facts/, statistic based on theaters with annual operating budget under $500,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)