

Lancaster's Music Hall

User Needs

Introduction

We need a new system for our venue to improve how we handle information and minimise the manual processing. This new system will need to provide for a number of different facilities for the various staff within the business. Our needs are broadly divided into the following three areas:

- Booking of shows, management of the venue calendar and usage of the venue's spaces
- Booking of films or meetings into 'gaps' in the calendar, booking of large groups for shows
- Booking of tickets for shows and films, management of the seating plan, checking of tickets

These areas are not exclusive and all areas work together to ensure the business runs smoothly and upholds the values and principles of the owners.

The following sections provide explanations from various team members in the different areas about what they need from the new system.

The Music Hall Venue

Lancaster's Music Hall has:

- The Main Hall
- The Small Hall
- A Rehearsal space
- Five other rooms of various sizes for meetings etc.

The Main Hall has seating for ~370 people across the stalls and balcony for live shows. When films are being shown, only the stalls are used which is ~285 people. The Small Hall will seat up to 100 people for theatre in the standard layout. Both main venues have flexible seating and can be used for dinners etc.

Tasks and Needs

Operations

The operations team works mainly behind the scenes and is responsible for running the venue and supporting the shows and meetings.

Calendar

The Operations Manager (Jacqueline) has overall charge of the Music Hall's calendar. She is responsible for ensuring the venue is used to the maximum and works with shows etc., that wish to book our venue, to ensure they have the spaces they need for the appropriate times. Further, she ensures the wider operations team are aware of the required configuration of each space and when this needs to change.

The calendar is shared with the Box Office and Marketing so that tickets can be booked and so the Marketing Team can schedule film presentations into any gaps in the Main Hall.

Bookings

The operations team will work with clients to support them booking the venue. This may be a simple booking for a meeting space with tables and chairs for a few hours, to the whole venue for the run of a large show.

A client can have a booking that extends over a number of days. Within this booking the client may require different rooms and configurations, all of which are recorded in the calendar for the spaces to ensure there are no clashes and the rooms are setup in time.

Spaces can also be held for a period of time, but must be contracted 28 days prior to the start of the booking. The costs for a booking are calculated as part of this process.

Seating

The base seating configuration of the venue is confirmed and managed by the operations teams, but the Box Office team will review this to ensure no seats are sold with a restricted view. They will also confirm if any changes are required to meet accessibility needs of patrons.

Running the venue

The operations team is responsible for running the spaces of the venue on a day-to-day basis. To help with this, daily sheets are produced which detail what spaces are in use, when, by whom and what configuration is required.

Tracking

The Operations Manager is responsible for keeping track of income from both the hire of the venue and sale of tickets. As part of the agreement with the client, none, part or all of the ticket sales revenue is payable to the client (and is thus offset against their bill). They also keep track of the venue usage on a chart to compare with previous years.

Reviews

The operations team is responsible for checking and replying to reviews of the venue and passing along reviews of the shows to their clients. Lancaster's uses an online review website to achieve this, but it is a manual process to add the shows and collect the reviews. An API is available and we would like to make use of this.

Box Office

The Box Office team are responsible for patrons and other guests coming to the venue and act as the main point of contact for all guests coming to see a performance etc.

Ticket Sales

The Box Office manager (Muhammad) is responsible for the sale of all tickets and keeping records to pass to the operations teams as part of their accounting. The whole team can sell tickets for the various shows and films, but only the Manager and his Deputy (Ana) can offer refunds.

The box office will handle sales of up to groups of 12 but larger groups, such as schools, colleges and universities are handled by Marketing. Groups are considered as a single booking for multiple seats, which may or may not be located together. A booking can only for a single show or activity.

Lancaster's offers discounts for various reasons, such as NHS or Military personnel, disabled guest with a carer and people from the local area.

The manager is responsible for providing the details of ticket sales and revenue to the Operations Manager for their records. They also maintain a chart of ticket sales to help the team identify busy days and availability quickly.

Online Ticket Sales

Lancaster's also sells some tickets for shows online via a booking website. The manager or deputy will add the shows to the site and select which seats can be booked online. When a booking is made, they update the box office records so that these seats are not sold by the team. This website has an API which we'd like to make use of to reduce the workload of managing bookings.

Seating

The Box Office Manager or Deputy will review the seating configuration for each show and ensure that any seats with restricted view are removed from sale. Some seats can be sold with a slightly restricted view, but this must be reasonable as to not overly impact the enjoyment of the performance.

The box office can also sell any seats in row A or L as a wheelchair space, along with the first and last seat of each row. When a wheelchair is required, an adjacent seat must be removed.

Guests

The Box Office team are responsible for checking guest tickets for performances and directing them to their seats. They also greet and direct people attending meetings or other activities in the venue.

Marketing

The Marketing Team handle the advertising of the shows and the venue as a whole. They pass any enquiries for shows or larger booking onto the Operations Teams. Smaller booking, such as a single meeting room can be done by the marketing team based on the calendar, provided the operations team has not reserved the space and the booking is within three weeks.

Films

The Marketing Team will use the venue calendar and look for where they can add additional activities, such as showing films in the Main Hall. If the Main Hall is empty, then the marketing team can book a film showing on that day. They use a website to order films which provides them as list of the titles available from which they choose and state how long they need it. They track the cost of this against the sales of tickets from the box office.

When a film is being shown, only the stall can be sold. The marketing team update the calendar so the box office can sell the tickets.

Group bookings

The marketing team are responsible for making group bookings of over 12 people. They liaise with the box office to hold rows for groups and finalise the booking. The marketing team can hold several

rows while they confirm group bookings. Like with the 'Friends' seats, these cannot be sold by the box office, but these can be held by marketing longer than the 'Friends' seats.

Schools, Colleges and Universities

Marketing also works with local schools and educational institutions to support their work in the arts. They offer reduced price tickets to the students studying theatre or film and the staff of these institutions. They also arrange tours of the venue, so that students can see the venue in actions while shows are setting up. No fee is charged for the tours and these are based on the setup days of bookings with operations.

Advertising

The marketing team maintain a list of 'Friends of Lancaster's' which is a group of regular patrons who pay a small subscription to have priority access to tickets and seats two weeks prior to the show being sold by the box office and for one week once the tickets are on general sale. The team will send regular reminders to this group about the upcoming shows and handle the booking in collaboration with the box office. For this purpose, the best seats are held from sale by the box office for one week after the tickets go on sale.

The team also keeps track of how many tickets are booked by the 'Friends' to compare with previous years.

Meetings

As with films, the marketing team look to maximise the use of the space. If a room has not been booked or reserved by the operations teams then marketing can sell this space to clients. Marketing can only book spaces three weeks in advance. They then notify the box office so they know to expect the people.