

An integrated offer

Louise Amery explains how Aberystwyth Arts Centre is working with online specialists Tincan and ticketing system supplier PatronBase to fully integrate its website, social media, e-marketing and online sales

Aberystwyth Arts Centre serves an important role in the Mid Wales region, attracting over 750,000 visitors a year. A department of Aberystwyth University, it operates year round and has a theatre, concert hall, cinema, performance studio, major art galleries, arts education spaces, a popular café, bars, bookshop and craftshop. Over 500 individual events, thousands of courses, exhibitions and 850 cinema screenings are promoted each year, and we provide a comprehensive programme of festivals which draw audiences from across the world.

We want to communicate effectively with our ever increasing online audience including on Facebook, Twitter et al. However, all these activities operate in relative isolation to each other, and we need to feed them into a central Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track the business success of initiatives or campaigns; and then use a Content Management System (CMS) and website, to provide a personalised and interactive experience for individual visitors. Our project's main aims are:

- **Integrated Ticketing:** an improved online ticketing offering, selling seats off the plan, with a more meaningful, consistent and shorter ticketing pathway for online sales and users and more personalisation
- **A new CRM solution:** in particular greater potential to personalise important aspects of the user experience – more efficient online account management all the way through to recommendations based on ticket history
- **A new CMS solution:** other online features and functionality we intend to exploit going forward include: Image Galleries, an Online Shop (for merchandise, products, online memberships, etc.), greater provision of Rich Media, integration of organisational social networking channels and Multi-Site Management potential
- **Future Proofed:** the system must be extensible – able to grow and be improved on a regular basis, and to incorporate new technologies when appropriate as they become available.

A major challenge is to provide a tailored approach for our customers that works for the individual but which can be managed by a relatively small marketing team, who are also juggling ten thousand other jobs. The project has taken careful planning, starting by working with the Ticketing Institute to select a new ticketing system, PatronBase, through to

developing the web brief with Tincan. A key part of this involves using an open source CMS platform (Drupal), which means we can benefit from the huge array of features and modules it offers, be confident in its extensibility and know that as a CMS powering upwards of 10 million websites we won't have the locked-in issues other proprietary systems bring with them.

We're now 'live' with PatronBase, and phase 2 of the project is to deliver the website in early 2012. The end system will enable us to concentrate on delivering a positive and personal service to all our visitors – and with us managing the system, rather than the technology managing us! Watch this space ...

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