Case Study

Somerset House sees record success with new cloud-based venue management solution

Somerset House is a spectacular neo-classical building in the heart of London, sitting between the Strand and the River Thames. Famous for once holding the nations' national archive of births, marriages and deaths, the venue has been transformed over the last few years into a world class visitor attraction and centre of excellence for culture and the arts.

The venue hosts over 150 events per year including open-air concerts and films, contemporary art and design exhibitions, family workshops and in winter you can skate on London's favourite ice rink.

Key Challenge - Need for greater flexibility and mobility

Somerset House prides itself on its highly professional and efficient approach to venue management. Its team of venue administrators and sales executives had been using Priava's original venue management solution 'Events Perfect' for many years. Whilst this proved to be an excellent tool for assisting the team to book, manage and report on all its event-based activities, the venue was keen to explore how it could improve operations further with Priava's new cloud-based solution.

Events Administrator at Somerset House, Lucy Bailey, explains, "As a current user of a technology we were impressed with the overall capabilities of the product, however it did have some restrictions. For example if you were in the middle of doing something and the phone rang, it could be frustrating as you had to close what you were doing in order to log a new enquiry. We also wanted to be able to access the system from any location using any mobile device. This would provide greater flexibility for our sales team as they could check or confirm bookings enquiries, regardless of location."

Moving to the cloud – transition took place 'over night'

In April 2013, Somerset House moved to Priava's cloud solution. Lucy relates how the process went, "The changeover from 'Events Perfect' system to the new cloud-based solution was completely seamless. It more or less happened over night so there was no interference to our day to day operations. We had no 'down-time' during the migration and training took less than a day."

The Results – From "Improved the efficiency of our whole operation" to "supporting the sales team to improve their conversion rates"

Lucy talks about the benefits, "The cloud based solution is a major improvement on the previous product with each action taking a fraction of the time to complete. It has made our jobs much easier and improved the efficiency across the events team. Entering a new event is very straight forward and the software loads almost instantaneously. Compared to the older system it is far more intuitive, now takes far fewer clicks to create enquiries, turns provisional bookings into confirmed and generally manages events."

Improving conversion rates

"The remote access option has also been important in supporting the sales team to improve their conversion rates. So if the sales team are on the move, they can check and confirm bookings in real-time using mobile devices like an ipad. Using the reporting side of the system we can also provide lists to the sales team on priority enquiries to chase, which again helps us to maximise confirmed bookings." Another advantage of the new cloud based system is the ability to manage multiple events at the same time, without the worry of conflicts or existing diary commitments.

Lucy explains, " We typically manage around 12-16 events per month and ten of us have access to the system at any one time, so it is very important that we can multi-task on bookings without duplicating effort and have a system that has automatic checks built-in. The solution handles this very well and ensures that we can maximise the efficiency of both the team and the venue. There is also a notes area for every event which is really useful as colleagues can see the latest status and/or make additional comments."

Managing repeat events

She adds, "Often we have a number of regular repeat events throughout the year, so the solution really comes into its own here. With just a few clicks we can enter the event across multiple dates, without having to re-enter all of the same data saving many hours worth of work."

We've been providing effective venue and event management solutions for more than two decades. When you choose Priava, you are giving your business solutions to problems that are tried and tested.

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Customised reporting

Another reason why Somerset House was keen to upgrade was the ability of the new solution to be customised to meet their direct needs. One aspect that Priava is currently developing is bespoke reporting.

"Priava are creating a series of new report templates for the planning team that can integrate directly into the venue management system." says Lucy, "This vital document will enable us to communicate all the specific responsibilities of each event to the respective departments such as planning, security, housekeeping , visitor services."

Furthermore, according to Lucy, Somerset House was keen to improve the quality of their reporting with customised templates, and have the ability in the future to integrate the data in the Priava solution with their finance system. This will provide them with enhanced business intelligence that can be used to better manage the time and space available for future events.

Summary

The benefits that Somerset House has achieved through the use of the Priava cloud-based venue management solution so far include:

- Multi-tasking between duties – can open different tabs/windows simultaneously
- Sophisticated, yet easier and quicker to log enquiries or create a new booking
- Access from anywhere using remote devices such as tablets/laptops (supports Home Working)
- Saves time, as much faster than previous system – leads to faster ROI
- Better tracking of new enquiries & supports better conversion rate – turning 'provisional holds' into 'confirmed'
- Lower on-going costs including reduced in-house IT maintenance
- Customised reporting and templates that match the direct requirements of the venue e.g. Sales, Marketing, Financial etc.
- Training of new team members takes less time as product is more user-friendly
- Support for 'Repeat Events'
- Always have the latest technology (simply downloaded automatically)

Lucy sums up her experience with Priava so far, "The solution has exceeded our expectations. It is fast and efficient and we really like the ability to multi-task and operate remotely.
We are very happy with the support that we have received from Priava, they are always friendly and are always on hand, if we ever have a query on how to use a particular feature.