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www.eno.org

at a glance

- English National Opera's ticketing system was preventing the organisation from getting the most out of online ticketing and posed a threat to future growth for the company.
- ENO implemented **The Patron Edge** and **The Patron Edge Online** and fully integrated them with **The Raiser's Edge**, which the organisation was already using.
- Ticket sales grew dramatically, with online ticket sales increasing to 50% compared to previous years.
- Information from multiple databases was integrated, providing staff with a 360-degree view of patrons.

Blackbaud software and services used by English National Opera:

- **The Patron Edge®**
- **The Patron Edge® Online**
- **The Raiser's Edge®**

English National Opera Grows Online Ticketing with The Patron Edge®

English National Opera is one of Britain's national arts companies. Based at London's largest theatre, the London Coliseum, the Company has been committed to world class quality opera sung in English for more than 70 years. From the adventurous *Nixon in China*, to popular favourites such as the *Mikado* and *On the Town*, ENO produces landmark experiences. ENO has redefined what music-theatre means and transformed the audience for opera.

The challenge:

After 13 years of using the same ticketing system, English National Opera (ENO) found that the system's limitations were preventing the business from growing. Although the incumbent system allowed customers to book tickets online, its popularity had been minimal because customers were unable to pick their own seats during online booking, discouraging and even alienating many potential online bookers.

Without any significant online growth, ENO was finding it impossible to initiate the type of enhanced online and digital marketing it believed was crucial to promote continued audience development.

In addition, ENO had no ownership of the online ticket sale process because the incumbent agent system was selling tickets on their behalf. As such, ENO also had no ownership of the data captured through their online ticket sales.

ENO's objectives in researching and implementing a new box office system were to begin with increasing ticket sales overall, through online sales as well as the box office.

In addition, ENO was keen to more fully exploit online marketing, especially using new digital formats and platforms. ENO believed that investing in digital and e-marketing would enable them to communicate with a broader audience not only through direct marketing, but also by advertising online, and by including their ads in other publications' e-bulletins such as *The Times* and the *Telegraph*. These marketing platforms are also more efficient and effective, delivering a larger potential audience for less investment.

As an existing user of **The Raiser's Edge®**, ENO's development staff members had built up a bank of information on ENO supporters, yet this information was often under-utilised by the box office, with a manual transfer of this information taking place approximately every three to four months. In the same way, information collected by the box office could not be readily accessed by development, meaning that neither team had a complete picture of its supporters' interactions with the organisation — a disconnect that ENO wished urgently to address.



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— Ian McKay,
Director of Marketing,
English National
Opera

the solution

In implementing a new box office system, ENO had a clear set of objectives:

1. Achieve an overall increase in ticket sales, particularly online
2. Grow online marketing
3. Maximise the benefits of its continued use of **The Raiser's Edge** by integrating development's database with the box office's, building a complete, 360-degree view of each patron or supporter

ENO issued a requirements document in December 2006 and, after short-listing two vendors, selected **The Patron Edge®** and **The Patron Edge® Online**. Fully integrating these with **The Raiser's Edge**, these solutions make up Blackbaud's comprehensive ticketing, marketing, and CRM solution.

the results

The Patron Edge and **The Patron Edge Online** have enabled ENO to achieve and even transcend its original objectives. Ticket sales have shown a marked increase, with online ticket sales rising dramatically.

“In autumn 2007, we achieved an extra 30,000 ticket sales compared to autumn 2006, despite an actual reduction in audience capacity,” said Ian McKay, director of marketing for ENO. “In addition, we now average around 50% of our ticket sales online per show, compared to 20 – 30% before going live with **The Patron Edge Online**. The view-from-seat functionality has undoubtedly aided this boost by giving our patrons the confidence to make their purchases in this way,” he added. Latest Company figures from the 2007-08 financial year are even more encouraging, with ENO averaging 82% paid attendance, the highest in a generation. In addition, the Company achieved a box office surplus of £720,000 — a Company record.

ENO's box office, marketing, and development staff now work from a truly integrated database, allowing them to gain a complete, 360-degree view of each patron, facilitating more tailored and targeted marketing campaigns than undertaken previously. “Prior to our implementation of a fully integrated system, our box office and development information stores were completely separate, with a manual transfer of information occurring every three to four months,” said Mr. McKay.

Now all ENO staff have live access to patron profiles, meaning they are able to segment ENO's audience better and therefore tailor marketing initiatives more appropriately to the relevant audience. “We are now able to create messages more likely to gain us reward in fundraising or sales income. Previously, ENO would send out quite generic marketing material, so fans of more obscure operas would receive information on and discounts for *La Boheme* or *On the Town*, and vice versa,” said Mr. McKay.

With more and more patrons and supporters using email for communication, ENO made a commitment to move more of its marketing online, and **The Patron Edge**, **The Patron Edge Online**, and their integration with **The Raiser's Edge** enabled them to do so. ENO now sends out weekly e-bulletins to subscribers, which — in addition to keeping supporters informed and supporting ticket sales — also drives traffic to the website. Increased online marketing has also

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significantly cut ENO’s direct marketing costs and enabled these funds to be redirected elsewhere. ENO has ring-fenced 30% of its budget over 2008-09 to be invested in online and digital marketing initiatives, and the Company will soon launch the first digital arts guide in the UK. (Go to www.eno.org/operaguide to view the digital Opera Guide.)

The integrated system has also transformed the flow of information across the organisation. Blackbaud’s integrated solution means that box office, marketing, and development are all able to record their interactions with individual supporters, building a complete picture of their activities. “Now when viewing bookings, representatives in the box office are able to see each visitor’s history, so will be aware, for example, if the visitor is a major donor and can treat them accordingly,” said Mr. McKay. “Similarly, development can view the booking and choose to make appropriate contact at the event or retrospectively by communicating with them after event,” he continued.

Implementing these new solutions prompted ENO to redesign and rebuild its website, crucial for an organisation focused on boosting online sales. “We now create microsites for individual shows, and for a recent season of *Carmen*, we allowed our audience to submit reviews online directly to its microsite,” said Mr. McKay. “**The Patron Edge Online** has enabled us to experiment with much more dynamic content, such as our recent live streaming of our *Carmen* production to our website and allowing users to download samples. BBC Radio 3 picked this up, and *Carmen* became the first streamed performing arts event in BBC’s history.”

ENO now allows its website users to manage their subscription schemes online, streamlining the process for the users, but also freeing up box office staff’s time. “Our subscription scheme allows patrons to book three visits to ENO at a discounted rate. Previously, these could only be booked over the telephone,” explained Mr. McKay. “Calls used to take up to 30 minutes, with callers enquiring about all the options available, then booking three operas for three dates — often with different seat requirements. Now this can all be done online, with users researching and making their choices online, at their leisure.” One third of ENO’s subscription sales are now transacted online.

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Please direct media enquiries to:

Tricia Ryan

Blackbaud Europe Ltd.

tricia.ryan@blackbaud.co.uk

020.7921.9648

In addition, ENO has introduced online discount promotional codes, both to continue supporting online sales but also to boost audience numbers for traditionally quieter performances or seasons, taking further pressure off the box office.

ENO is currently selling programmes and gift vouchers online, and plan to sell merchandise through its website in the near future also. Website users can also make donations to ENO online, as well as joining their "Friends" scheme — a host of features previously unavailable on the website.

"Blackbaud's cultural solutions have enabled ENO to meet all of its original objectives and more besides," said Mr. McKay. "Users of **The Patron Edge Online** have reported that it is incredibly easy to use, which is crucial for a venue of our size; at 2350 seats, the London Coliseum is the largest capacity theatre in London," he explained.

"In addition, every single deadline set by ENO to Blackbaud, or promised by Blackbaud themselves, was met. ENO went live with **The Patron Edge Online** on the day it was promised and planned for, and the deadline for our subscription functionality was met also," said Mr. McKay. "One of our board members, with much experience of technology companies, has commented that he has never known an IT project to run so smoothly or to deliver so reliably. The project was delivered not just on time but on budget — crucial for a performing arts company — even a national one."

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about Blackbaud

Blackbaud is the leading global provider of software and related services designed specifically for arts, cultural and not-for-profit organisations. More than 19,000 organisations — including English National Opera, Dulwich Picture Gallery, University of Cambridge, and Royal College of Music — use one or more of Blackbaud products and consulting services for in-house and online ticketing, marketing, Web site management, and fundraising. Blackbaud's solutions include **The Raiser's Edge®**, **The Patron Edge®**, **The Information Edge™**, **Blackbaud® Gift Aid™** and **Blackbaud® NetCommunity™** as well as a wide range of consulting and educational services. Founded in 1981, Blackbaud is headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina, and has operations in Toronto, Glasgow, London and Sydney. For more information, visit www.blackbaud.co.uk.