

How do you future proof your ticketing system?



TOR Systems, the UK's leading ticketing, booking and CRM solutions provider, is urging tourism and heritage companies to futureproof their ticketing solutions when procuring new solutions in the wake of the pandemic.

Organisations are adapting the way they work and have responded to demand for advance booking and changes in the audience requirements. TOR Systems is recommending businesses take a longer-term view to maximise the impact of the extra funding.

TOR Systems Business Development Director Sarah Bagg said: "Due to the epidemic, there has been great support for the industry through grants from Art Fund, Heritage Lottery Funding and the Cultural Recovery Fund to help organisations implement fundamental changes to the way they operate.

"However, the time-limited restrictions for many of these grants often leads to short-term decisions when, for crucially important ticketing and software solutions, time needs to be spent carefully considering how the system may need to adapt in the future," she added.

So just what is the best way to futureproof your business when procuring online ticketing and CRM solutions?

Carly Straughan, from QLINE Consulting recommends the following:

- Be sure of what you are selling and what additional products/services you might want to include in the future
- Think about each of your customers and what their needs are
- Consider the team and internal resources that will be required to deliver
- What's the vision for the company – how will this impact on the needs for ticketing?
- If you are looking to grow – you need a system that will meet the demands of the future, not just for today
- Consider the team – who will use it and what needs do they have.
- When looking at suppliers – find a partner that you feel you can grow with – you need a supplier that can help you identify ways to be more efficient and effective.

The last year has had a major impact for the tourism industry forcing an industry change that would have taken much longer to deliver organically. Smartphone users of all ages are now more accustomed to booking online and the benefits that come with advance purchase.

However, it's important to remember that not all potential customers will want to do this – some will still want to be spontaneous or telephone for information.

It's essential to take time to think carefully about the customer journey and how that has evolved and how the target markets are changing and what their expectations are.

How tech savvy are customers? – although the pandemic has expedited online ticketing and mobile use – who does that preclude and do you lose market share by moving to only bookable online, when some bookers want to call, or just turn up?

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TOR recommends some key questions to review before embarking on procurement for ticketing and CRM:

- **Longevity** – how long do you see this system being in place – what are the objectives for that period – what changes may occur during that time?
- **Team Players** (resource)
 - The success of a 'ticketing' system is that it delivers all that it needs to for all stakeholders – a good tender document will consider what's needed for – the customer, the accounts team, marketing, and all functions dealing with redemption - front of house, retail/catering
 - What resource is available in house – who is going to deliver the project to go live and beyond?
- **Service**
 - What do you need from the supplier – what expectations do you have for support and ongoing services?
 - Get to know the team; Team retention, consistency and high level of service. You get to know the person at the end of the phone – trusted relationship.
 - Will you be able to make use of customer events that the supplier hosts, which will allow you to learn from co-workers in others attractions using the same solution?
- **Functionality**
 - How are you evaluating the priorities of your requirements – what's most important and to who.
 - What are your compromises?
 - How much consideration have you given to the system/service supporting you into the future?
- **Cost**
 - How are you setting the budget for the system?
 - What supplier cost model is best for your business – heavy loaded upfront and annual subscription, or transaction based? What are the reasons for this and is it viable for the future growth of the company?
 - Will you be prepared to look at alternative pricing models for the right supplier?
- **Agility**
 - How have you considered the importance of the flexibility of a system, for in-house management to be able to deal with last minute changes/refund system/commercial opportunities, i.e spectrum of ticket types – day ticket, memberships, gifts and VIP packages?
 - How important is it that your supplier can respond quickly to your ever-changing requirements? Does the supplier's business model allow for quick decision-making, effective software development and efficient delivery?
- **Data**
 - The ticket purchasing moment is a key opportunity to collect valuable data on visitors. Technology partners need to be able to manage the data, but make it easily accessible to you the user, as it needs to be used to communicate in the future and help to manage relationships.

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TOR's real time integrated booking, ticketing and CRM system is known as Maxim. It supports museums, zoos, galleries, theme parks, castles, heritage sites and gardens by providing the very best in ticketing, membership, retail and catering and CRM functionality.

Hannah Monteverde, manager of Norfolk-based adventure park BeWILDerwood, said:

“For us, the key win for the Maxim solution provided by TOR Systems is the incredibly simple functionality for both customer and staff.

“This simple user journey means we are no longer swamped by calls from customers struggling to book tickets and our online ticket sales have increased massively.

“TOR offers support personalised to our requirements and it has been a great team to work with, adapting and adjusting to our needs.”

Maxim's core strengths are flexibility, stability, reliability, and speed and ease.

Sarah added: “Our long-standing client relationships are not just down to the system we provide but most importantly our honest and open approach to partnerships, the ability to listen and take on board feedback and our continued efforts to provide high quality support.”