Core Values

A survey of Box office practice and attitudes in Queensland, NT, Victoria & Tasmania

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1 Executive summary

Aplin Partnership worked in collaboration with the NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference Committee (most particularly the Chairman, Tim Roberts) to devise this primary research and analysis project to explore the attitudes and practices of Box Office Managers within Australia. In this instance, all Box Office Managers within Queensland, NT, Victoria and Tasmania were invited to participate.

The research took the form of:

- A detailed questionnaire which was emailed to participants (Jan – Feb 2010)
- 2 month long Mystery Shopper survey of participating venues web site email lists (Jan – Mar 2010)
- Specific comparison with 2 key relevant research projects from the UK
- Presentation of many key findings of the research at the 2010 NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference in Sydney where the presentation and handouts were designed to prompt and provoke informed debate during the conference amongst the attending Box Office Managers.
- This report

Of the 71 organisations invited to participate in the questionnaire 10% partially completed the form and 65% fully completed it, a robust response rate. Respondents represent a wide range of venues, from small regional to large capital city venues. There is very broad spread of key indicators such as number of customer records and tickets sold in a year, which indicates that the findings represent the views of Box Office Managers across the range of organisation sizes. All 71 organisations were assessed for the email list Mystery Shopper research.

The aims of the audit were to:

- Illuminate the current range of behaviours and alert Box Office Managers to best practice
- Provoke informed debate and re-assessment of habits
- Highlight wide variations in practice to enable organisations to compare, make more informed decisions and potentially identify where they need external support and training
- Highlight indications of different organisational culture and behaviours and identify some of the potential impacts
- Provide benchmark information for comparison and to inform decision making within the organisations
- Provide context and highlight key areas and make recommendations about how this best be supported
- Encourage improved collaboration and communication both within and between venues, which have been shown to have a significant impact upon the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations – for example the VAPAC initiative for box office managers, BOMNet
- Provide a report which can be used as an internal advocacy document to contribute towards the involvement of Box Office expertise throughout arts organisations
- Provide an overview of ticketing systems in use
- Highlight the impact of internet ticketing and the changes it is making to Box Office operations and priorities

Gathering of key specific pieces of information, views and data when compiled and benchmarked against other organisations provides a clear overview and insight into vital areas of practice. Aplin Partnership has identified the key items of knowledge, compiled the benchmark and at the end of this report, make a series of comments and specific recommendations to make the findings more pertinent and actionable.

Recent research in Scotland (2009 research undertaken by Aplin Partnership for Federation of Scottish Theatres, The Source project - to be made public in the future) has illustrated a wide variation in core competencies around monitoring and management in UK venues and undertaking a similar study in Australia has established that similar trends are occurring elsewhere.

1.1 Key ticketing system issues

There are a wide range of ticketing systems in use – but the significant majority (31) have Provenue Max. Whist there are a group of 18 organisations who installed their systems over 7 years ago, only 5 Box Office Managers in total reported that they were 'actively looking' for a new ticketing system.

Box Office Managers were asked if they were made aware of new features of their ticketing system after updates. It is unsurprising that many reported being made sporadically aware of new features, as supplying this information (some of which can be purely technical) in an attention grabbing format can be challenging. There does appear to be a marked difference between users of different ticketing systems – with all but two SABO users reporting that they are aware of new system features which would be of use to them.

There is a tendency to stick to the system functionality which was learnt during initial training and it is all too easy to miss out on subsequent enhancements and not take best advantage of the system. System suppliers actively encouraging take up of new features combined with peer discussion and exploration can make a big difference to this.

Information sharing can also be significantly enhanced by non-system specific user groups (for example the VAPAC BOMNet network)

1.2 Key housekeeping issues

By using open, unformatted questions the survey intended to illicit unmodified natural responses to key questions about the Box Office and system operation. The majority of Box Office Managers have key performance indicators at their fingertips and could use this information to assist their planning – however the number who do not is surprising, and it is not clear how evaluation and monitoring of progress are handled without this information.

Respondents were asked how they handled Lapsed or inactive attenders - 19 Box Office Managers had not considered this as a concept, but some had specific actions ranging from marking them as 'Do not Mail' to deleting them. It is recommended that Box Office Managers and Marketing Managers work together to plan between them how to monitor and manage current non attenders, and that deletion of customer records only happen after many years inactivity.

A total of 41% Box Office Managers reported that they either did not know what percentage of customer record duplicates they had, or that they had none at all. As duplicates are created all the time – a significant proportion as a result of internet ticket sales (Provenue Max creates a new customer record each time an internet booking is made, and for all other systems, it is apparent that customers regularly fail to use existing registration details and sign up again) – no system could have zero duplicates. It is recommended that all Box Office Managers accept the inevitability of duplicates and adopt a regular ongoing programme of de-duping. The impact for all analysis and mailing is so great that significant ongoing effort is justified

When Box Office Managers were asked "What would make your job easier?" there was a very strongly expressed response from 53% of respondents of - More Staff. This is clearly something at the top of many Box Office Managers mind and perhaps user groups could help explore why this is such a significant problem and the impact that it is having. This response was common between venues both with, and without Internet Ticketing offering.

> "*more resources (staff) – would write this 3 times if possible. More time to work ON the business rather than IN the business"*

1.3 Key internet sales issues

There is a huge variation in the percentage of tickets sold via the internet – with 25% not offering Internet sales at all, and 6 organisations selling more than 40% of their tickets via this channel. Trends from the UK and Australia show that when customers are offered a smooth, straightforward internet sales service they are increasingly taking advantage of it is significant numbers.

Only 20% of participating organisations offer Pick your Own Seat functionality online, which extensive research has shown makes a significant difference to the adoption of internet ticket sales. The research here also shows that of the 10 organisations selling 40% or more of their tickets in this way only 3 of them do not offer Pick Your Own seats. This is largely a ticketing system functionality matter, and it is hoped that a solution will be found speedily.

Box Office Managers were asked how their new season information was launched – Brochure first, Website first, both used together - to explore the organisation's key marketing focus. As a quarter of respondents do not offer the immediate call to action of internet ticketing functionality, it is not surprising that 39% do not use the web as their initial marketing launch pad. 20% of organisations launch their new season information via their website first and exploring how this percentage changes over time will be valuable – as a small number of less technology savvy organisations may get left behind.

1.4 Key mystery shopper email issues

In December 2009 Aplin Partnership attempted to sign up to email mailing lists at each of the 71 organisations invited to participate in the survey (although not all responded to the questionnaire), and between January and February 2010 all emails received were monitored.

31 organisations (47%) either had no website or a website with no email mailing list which could be found – this is very different from the UK, where all but a handful of organisations have email mailings lists.

Of those mailing lists which were joined, 23 sent useful information and 13 either sent nothing during the 2 month survey, or sent only registration & welcome emails.

Considering the speed, cost effectiveness and flexibility of email marketing this is a surprisingly low adoption rate. This rate is not as low in the UK. It is strongly recommended that organisations collaborate and talk to their system suppliers to share learning and explore how email marketing adoption could be increased dramatically.

1.5 Key place of Box Office issues

Box Office Managers were asked a very specific question about how 'valued' they felt within their organisation. 57% responded that they felt valued, whilst a total of 37% felt valued only sometimes or not valued at all.

The survey also included questions to determine how often Box Office Managers opinion and experience were sought in key decision making:

- Are you informed of special offers in advance?
- Is your opinion sought about special offers?
- Was Box Office consulted about your website? (if applicable)
- Is Box Office consulted about sales targets? (if applicable)
- Are Box Office told if targets are reached?
- Are you involved in the design of the brochure?

There was a correlation between Box Office Managers feeling 'valued' by their organisation and how much their opinion was sought. Years of research and observation by Aplin Partnership and others shows that Box Office Managers and their teams have a very accurate sense of the audiences preferences, behaviour and attitude. This is mainly gained because they spend almost all day, every day talking and listening to customers. When this knowledge is ignored by the organisation and decisions taken about brochure layout and design, website design, special offers or targets without reference to their opinion, it is at best a missed opportunity and at worst de-motivating

1.6 Next step recommendation

The issues identified above specifically concentrate upon areas for improvement – and it is important to note the high level of dedication, competence and good practice shown by responding Box Office Managers.

The survey and its interpretation could be easily run again to cover a wider geographic area, other Australian states and potentially New Zealand, which would further enrich the results.

There appears to be some polarisation of Box Office Managers and organisations in terms of adoption of new technology trends, internal collaboration and general housekeeping and system management. It is recommended that additional research be undertaken to create detailed case studies of a range of high performing Australian/New Zealand organisations. This should encompass a range of organisation type, size and location and include all the areas of activity explored in the survey.

It is proposed that these case studies explore key factors around:

- internal communication and collaboration
- training and induction
- day to day staff management
- strategic and tactical system management
- adoption and use of technology
- specific practical tips and advice

These case studies can be used to excite, inspire and guide all organisations (everyone has *something* to learn). The findings and their interpretation along with other best practice could be presented at conferences, written up into a guide (delivered online) and key support provided through training and non-system specific user networks.

2 Introduction

Aplin Partnership worked in collaboration with the NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference Committee (most particularly the Chairman, Tim Roberts) to devise this primary research project to explore the attitudes and practices of Box Office Managers within Australia. In this instance, all Box Office Managers within Queensland, NT, Victoria and Tasmania were invited to participate.

The research took the form of:

- A detailed questionnaire which was emailed to participants (Jan – Feb 2010)
- 2 month long Mystery Shopper survey of participating venues web site email lists (Jan – Mar 2010)
- Specific comparison with 2 key relevant research projects from the UK

The project was funded by, Arts Victoria, Arts Queensland, NARPACA, VAPAC and supported by the NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference to inform the session presented by Beth Aplin at the 2010 Conference. Comparison information has kindly been supplied by Dance Touring Partnership and Audiences Wales. Aplin Partnership particularly wishes to thank all the Box Office Managers who participated in the research.

2.1 Purpose of the research

Whilst cultural venues regularly meet to share experiences, very little specific information about the day to day facts and figures relating to ticketing processes are shared. This is partly because this information is not generally gathered and the value of many small metrics is not perceived as part of organisation strategy – and partly, simply because there is no established mechanism to gather and analyse the information.

The Aplin Partnership team individually have spent their careers supporting the ticketing function of arts organisations and have come to learn the value of periodic review and benchmarking. These underlying benefits have been magnified by the recent significant developments in technology. The full impact of internet ticketing is only now starting to become apparent and there is huge variation between arts organisations in their rate of adoption and optimal implementation of these technologies.

The last few years have also seen changes in management structures and chains of command – which have again had an uneven impact on arts organisations. Box Office Managers appear to have a tendency to be pigeon holed into a purely system management or customer service role. This leads to their huge knowledge of customer behaviour and opinions being overlooked throughout the organisation. Previous experience has shown that simply illustrating these missed opportunities and highlighting entrenched practices can have a powerful impact. Frequently Box Office Managers are not involved in wider management decisions due to common misunderstandings of the depth of customer knowledge they have in their heads and at their fingertips.

Gathering of key specific pieces of information, views and data when compiled together and then benchmarked against other organisations provides a clear overview and insight into vital areas of practice.

This report provides analysis of both an electronic survey open to all Box Office Managers within Queensland, NT, Victoria and Tasmania and a mystery shopper survey of email mailings lists to provide this benchmark intelligence.

2.2 Similar previous research

Aplin Partnership was asked to undertake a comprehensive research and analysis audit of Box Office Managers for 28 venues in Scotland as part of the Federation of Scottish Theatres project The Source.

The Audit provided information, drew conclusions and made recommendations which informed and strengthened the project in the following ways:

- Highlighted the wide variations in Box Office Management procedures and described current best practice
- Highlighted different organisational culture and behaviours, making recommendations about most effective in style of interventions for these different types of organisations
- Provided benchmark information for comparison and to inform decision making within the organisations
- Provided context and highlighted key areas to be explored in subsequent training
- Highlighted key areas, provided base level information and brought context to topics that required immediate support and should be considered for future training and development

Box Office Managers responded very well to the request for collaboration with a response rate of 89%. Feedback indicated the staff were delighted to be asked in-depth questions and felt that it gave them the opportunity to showcase their expertise and the vital nature of their role within their organisations.

The findings of the audit formed a cornerstone of the subsequent guidance offered to organisations. The research clarified the wide variation in practices and identified a variety of areas requiring specific support and training. The project team are currently considering publishing key findings from the audit and this will allow benchmarking of their Scotland wide findings against Australian findings.

2.3 External collaboration

The recent FST study, along with Dance Touring Partnership members research and many other studies and support provided by Aplin Partnership within the last 3 years have shown wide variation in many areas of Box Office management and operation. However there are clearly identifiable trends where groups of organisations experience similar challenges, and handle them in similar ways. Rapidly changing new technology options appear to be having a polarising effect – where some organisations are continually exploring new functionality whilst others are not changing and are now in danger of being left behind.

This benchmarking research will enable venues to:

- Compare their current practice
- Make more informed decisions
- Assess the impact of potential changes with other organisations who have already implemented them
- Identify where they need external support and training

Improved collaboration and communication both within and between venues have been shown to have a significant impact upon the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations – for example the VAPAC initiative for box office managers, BOMNet

Research has illustrated a wide variation in core competencies around monitoring and management in UK venues and undertaking a similar study in Australia will help towards establishing if a similar trend is occurring elsewhere.

2.4 Internal collaboration

Recent research and consultancy work by the Aplin Partnership has also highlighted that some organisations involve and consult with their Box Office team routinely to refine their decision making. The prolonged, detailed, one to one contact between Box Office staff and audiences is recognised as a valuable resource. However a significant number of organisations do not utilise this resource and are risk of making poorer decisions as a result.

The research has specifically explored some key areas of inter-departmental communication to assess how closely the Box Office expertise is utilised throughout their organisations.

2.5 Outcomes

The key findings of the research were presented at the 2010 NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference in Sydney where the presentation and handouts were designed to prompt and provoke informed debate during the conference amongst the attending Box Office Managers.

This analysis report will provide a lasting record of the findings, attitudes and outcome of the personal questionnaire and the Mystery Shopper email survey. It is anticipated that this can be used:

- As an internal advocacy document to contribute towards the involvement of Box Office expertise throughout arts organisations
- To provide comparison and benchmark information for Box Office Managers when making key decisions
- As an overview of ticketing systems in use
- To illuminate the current range of behaviours and alert Box Office Managers to best practice
- To provoke informed debate and re-assessment of habits
- To highlight the impact of internet ticketing and the changes it is making to Box Office operations and priorities
- To show the place, power and involvement of Box Office within their whole organisations
- More widely throughout the sector to inform marketing and management decisions.

3 Methodology and definitions

3.1 Constructing the questionnaire

Using its expertise in Box Office process and procedures, Aplin Partnership developed (and retains copyright of) a questionnaire to systematically/effectively/strategically gather answers and responses from the participating venues.

The questionnaire:

- was designed to not overwhelm Box Office Managers and then take them through an exploration of their knowledge and understanding of their role and their ticketing system.
- included a number of key indicator questions which were intended to highlight organisational traits and show the depth and breadth of internal communication.
- was a valuable exercise, which has been very warmly embraced by Box Office Managers and received very positive feedback

> *"Thanks for the opportunity to do this survey – I really look forward to the results. Many discussions have been held at BOMNET meetings regarding this...."*

The questionnaire was designed to appear logical and straightforward to the participating Box Office Managers in the following sections:

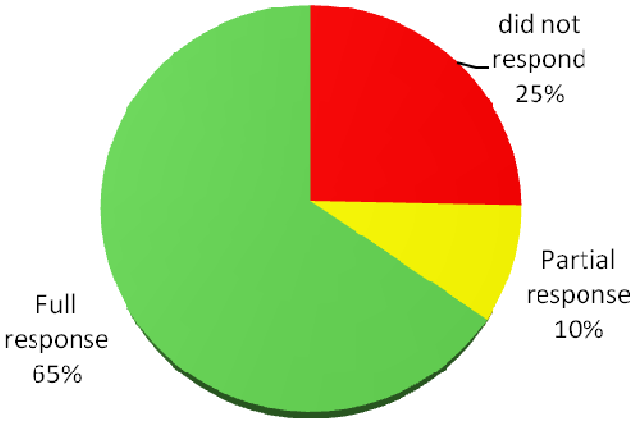
- 1. Introduction – An explanation
- 2. Your Venue – establishment questions about the respondent and their venue size, Box Office team size, no of tickets sold and opening hours
- 3. Your Ticketing System/Ticketing Solution – questions about their system, length of use, user groups, updates, hardware, no of tickets sold
- 4. Your System Guidelines – no of customer records, housekeeping practices, management of offers
- 5. Your Internet service – nature of internet ticketing service, % of internet sales, integration with web site, level of information available on the web site
- 6. Housekeeping – backing up, data management, sales targets, salaries, training requirements and key additional comments

However the findings specifically take responses in some different groupings to illuminate trends and provide clear narrative. Some key questions were specifically left open to have any form of response (text or numerical) with the aim of discovering the natural automatic response from the Box Office Manager.

3.2 Data capture methods

Introductory emails were sent out by NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference Committee members and supported by the funding bodies which was then followed up with a email invitation from The Aplin Partmership to complete a Survey Monkey questionnaire. Aplin Partnership is particularly grateful to Tim Roberts from ARTS Australia, Tina Rettke from Geelong Performing Arts Centre and Brenda Fehlberg from the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra for significant feedback in refining the questionnaire for the Australian industry.
All eligible Box Office Managers were reminded and encouraged to complete the survey by the mid February deadline. These significant efforts were rewarded with a 65% full completion response rate (10% partially completed the questionnaire, and where appropriate these responses were included), which considering that this was a lengthy self completion questionnaire, is very satisfactory and could be considered representative.

Figure 1: Response to survey



The Mystery Shopper email survey was undertaken during January, February and March 2010 when Aplin Partnership attempted to join the email mailing lists of 71 arts organisations (within Queensland, NT, Victoria and Tasmania). This was purely attempted via the organisations web sites.
The responses were logged and monitored for a 2 month period, and during this time the number and type of responses were analysed

3.3 Participating venues

The following venues participated in the Survey Monkey survey – either in full or in part. Please note that where appropriate, part completion data has been included in the findings.

NSW	Albury Entertainment Centre
NT	Araluen Arts Centre
NT	Darwin Entertainment Centre
QLD	Brisbane Powerhouse
QLD	Burdekin Cultural Complex Inc.
QLD	Empire Theatres Pty Ltd
QLD	Gladstone Entertainment Centre
QLD	Gold Coast Arts Centre
QLD	Ipswich Civic Centre
QLD	Johnstone Shire Hall
QLD	Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts
QLD	Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre
QLD	Mount Isa Civic Centre
QLD	Nambour Civic Centre
QLD	Queensland Performing Arts Centre
QLD	Redcliffe Cultural Centre
QLD	Redland Performing Arts Centre
QLD	Rockhampton Venues and Events - Pilbeam Theatre

VIC	Clocktower Centre
VIC	Darebin Arts Centre
VIC	Frankston Arts Centre
VIC	Gasworks Arts Park
VIC	Geelong Performing Arts Centre
VIC	Hamilton Performing Arts Centre
VIC	Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat
VIC	Williamstown Town Hall, Williamstown Mechanics Institute, Altona Theatre
VIC	HotHouse Theatre Ltd
VIC	Karralyka Centre
VIC	Kingston Arts Centre
VIC	Knox Community Art Centre
VIC	La Boite Theatre Inc
VIC	Latrobe Performing Arts
VIC	Monash University Academy of Performing Arts
VIC	Portland Arts Centre
VIC	Riverlinks
VIC	Upper Yarra Arts Centre

QLD	The Events Centre Caloundra
QLD	The World Theatre
QLD	Ticketlink - Cairns Civic Theatre
TAS	Devonport Entertainment & Convention Centre
TAS	Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
TAS	Theatre Royal (Hobart)
VIC	Ararat Performing Arts Centre
VIC	Arts Centre, Warrragul

VIC	Swan Hill Region Booking Office
VIC	The Capital
VIC	The Drum Theatre.
VIC	The Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre
VIC	Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre
VIC	Warrnambool Entertainment Centre
VIC	Whitehorse Centre
VIC	Wyndham Cultural Centre

3.4 Analysis of data

3.4.1 Confidentiality

All participating venues were informed at the start of the process that their responses would be held in confidence. The aim of this was to encourage the group to fully disclose their views without fear of them getting back to their organisation and that they had 'let the side down'. Most people who work for arts organisations are fiercely loyal and Box Office Managers in particular are often not used to discussing their views publicly.

As mentioned previously, some questions were specifically designed to elicit as honest and open an answer as possible as the aim of the research is to unpick real attitudes and behaviour. Clearly it is appropriate that whilst all the responses are explored to illuminate the differences in practice, it is reasonable for all these responses to be unattributed.

3.4.2 Nota Bene

It is critical to remember that all of the views and opinions expressed by the Box Office Managers during this audit are their personal perceptions and may not be widely held within their organisations.

3.4.3 Structure of the report

The report has the following structure:

- Overview of participating organisations
- Findings
    - Overview of Ticketing Systems in use
    - Housekeeping – attitudes, behaviour and day to day Box Office practice
    - Impact of the Internet
    - Findings of Mystery Shopper email survey
    - Place of the Box Office within their organisations
- Key recommendations and conclusions

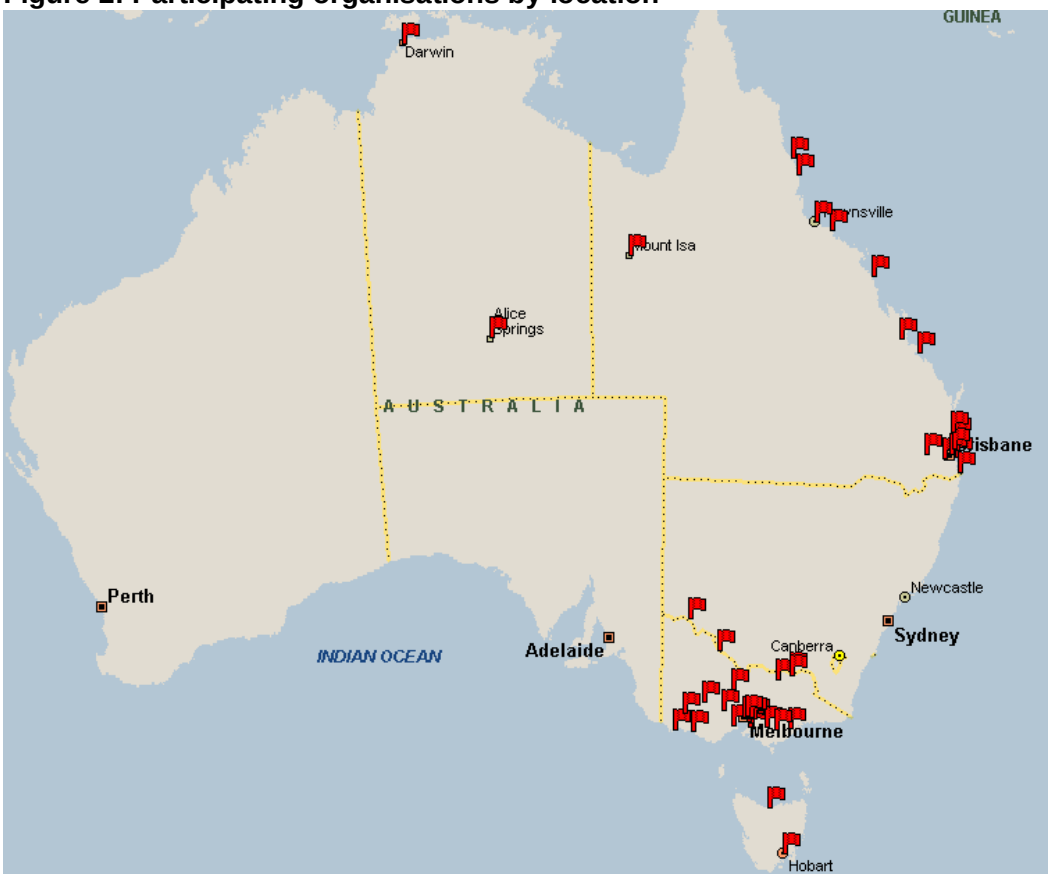
4 Findings

4.1 Overview of participating organisations

4.1.1 Respondents by geography

Of the total number and location of arts organisations across the participating states, those responding are spread evenly:

Figure 2: Participating organisations by location

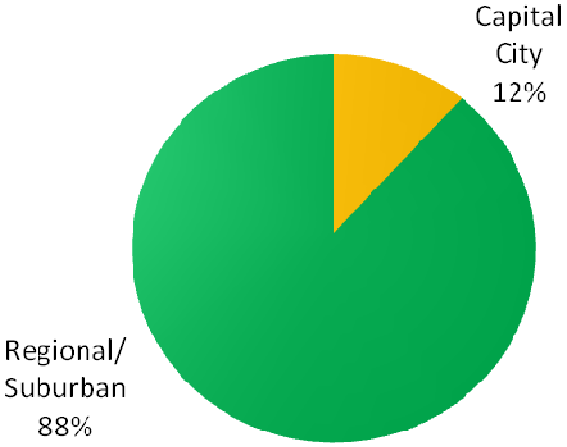


Participating organisations have also been categorised by type of location:

- Rural / Suburban: Strong local presence, without heavy competition from other close venues.
- Capital City: Operating in the centre of a big city with lots of competition from other venues

Figure 3 shows the split of responding organisations between these location types.

Figure 3: Location type of respondents



4.1.2 Respondents by size

Respondents represent a wide range of venues, from small to large national companies. There is very broad spread of number of customer records and tickets sold in a year, which indicates that the findings represent the views of Box Office Managers across the range of organisation sizes.

Figure 4: Number of customer records held on ticketing system

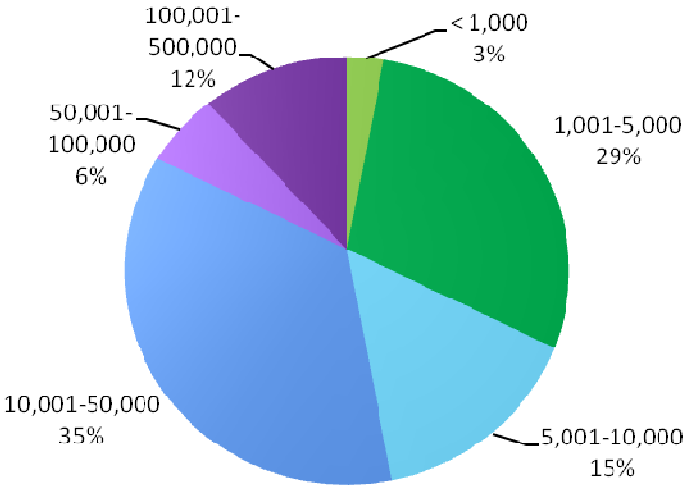
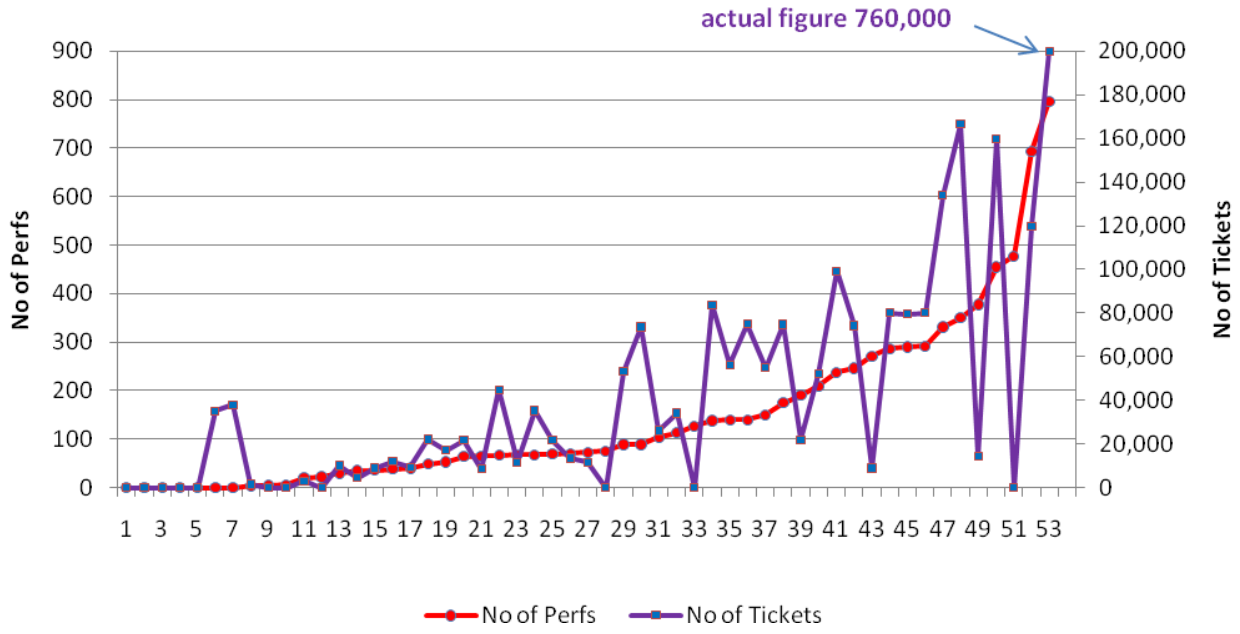


Figure 5: Reported number of performances & tickets sold within previous 12 months



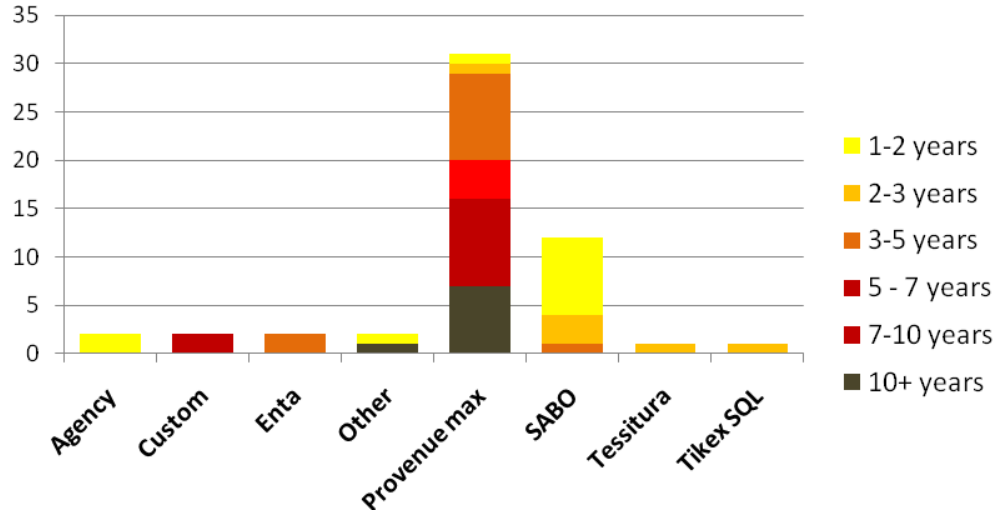
4.2 Ticketing systems

A review of ticketing systems in use and participants satisfaction was undertaken.

4.2.1 System in use

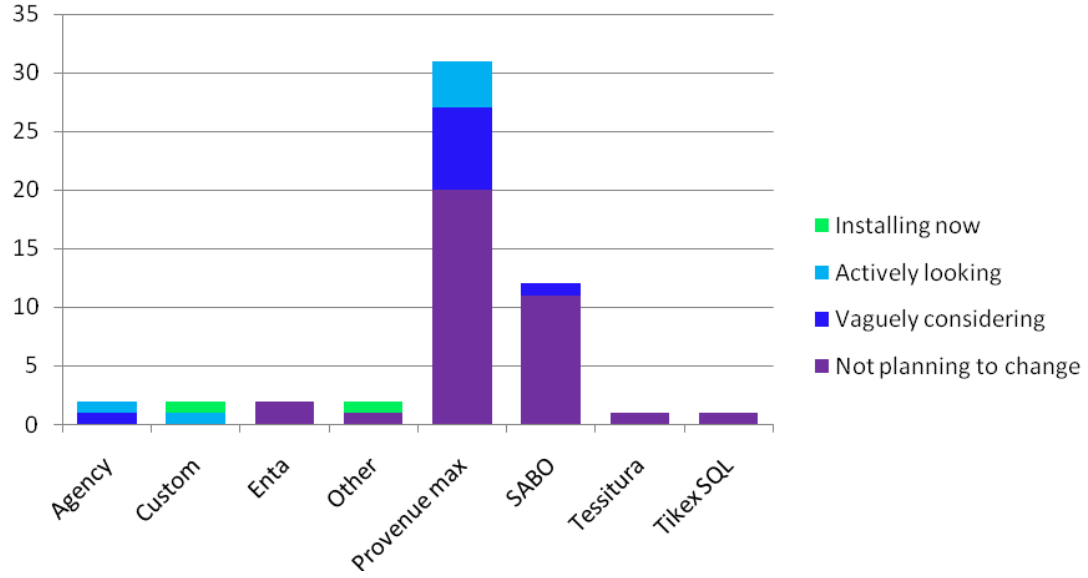
It is clear that whilst the significant majority have Provenue Max ticketing software installed, many implemented this system some time ago. Organisations purchasing more recently have mostly chosen other systems.

Figure 6: Ticketing System & years since installation



Box Office Managers were asked if they had any plans to change their ticketing system, and the vast majority did not have any stated plans to. Interestingly even for organisations who have the older Provenue Max only 4 are actively looking to change system.

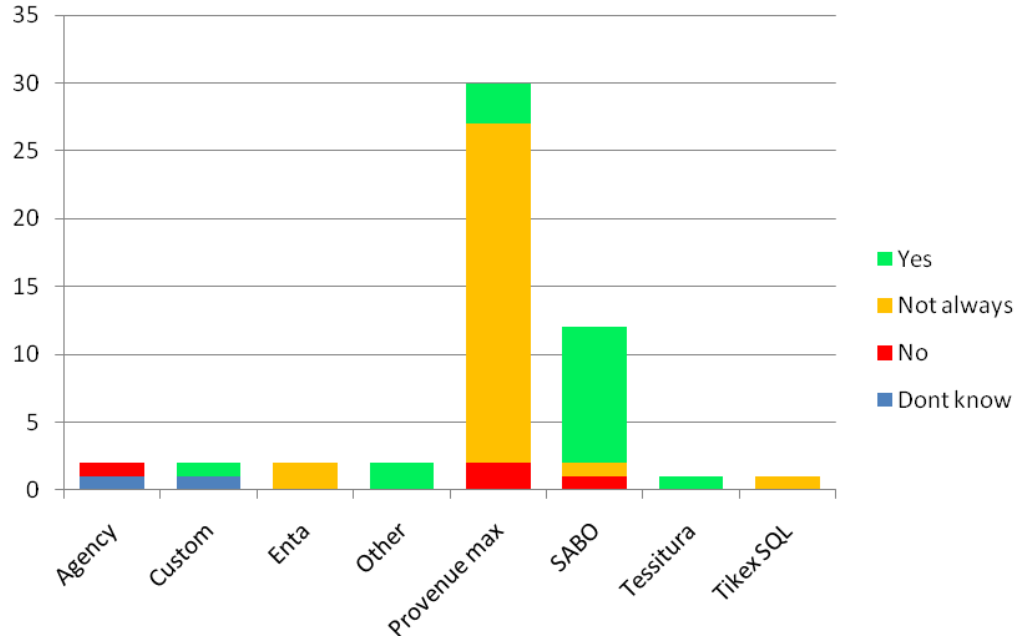
Figure 7: Plans to change system?



4.2.2 Sharing knowledge

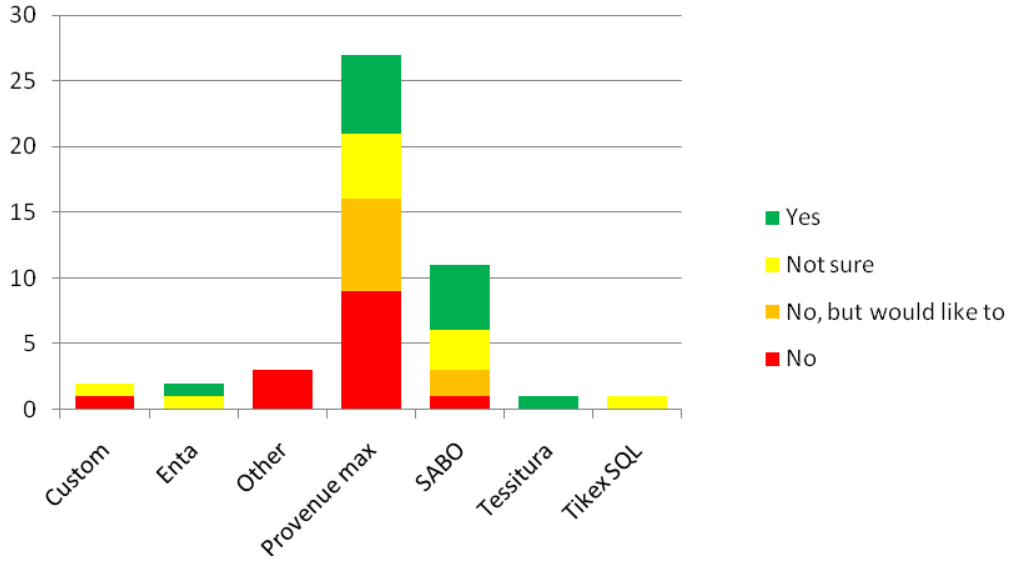
Box Office Managers were asked if they were made aware of new features of their ticketing system after updates. It is unsurprising that many reported being sporadically aware of new features, as supplying this information (some of which can be purely technical) in an attention grabbing format can be challenging. There does appear to be a marked difference between users of different ticketing systems.

Figure 8: Are you made aware of how new features may be of use to you?



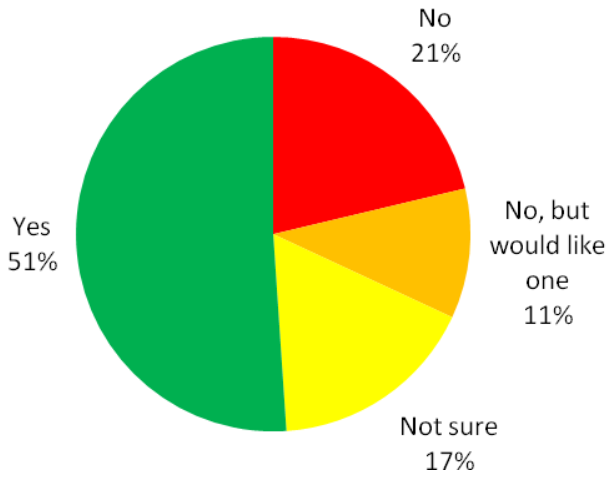
Box Office Managers were asked if they were members of user groups. Firstly, respondents were asked if they were members of a user group run by their ticketing system supplier. There is a very broad range of response and clearly a lack of clarity for the respondents who were 'Not Sure'. There appears to be a correlation between system supplier user group membership, and users being aware of new features.

Figure 9: Member of a Ticketing System user group?



There are also some strong non-system regional users groups, which have significant numbers of members and other Box Office Managers who would like to join one.

Figure 10: Non-system User group membership



4.3 Housekeeping

A review of key Box Office housekeeping activities was included:

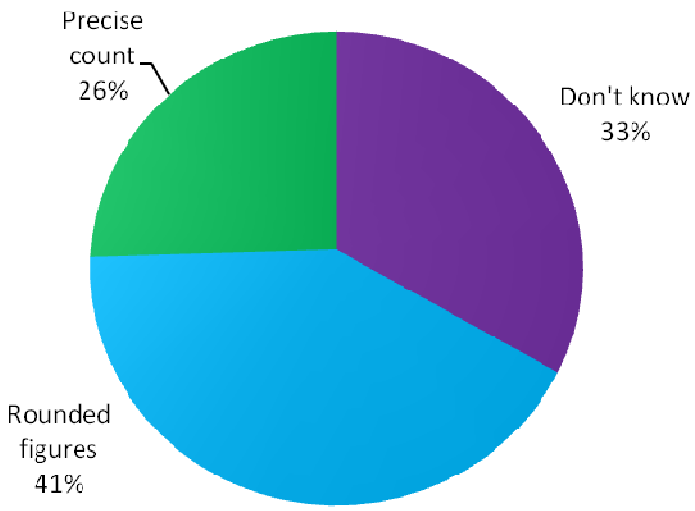
- To provide comparison and benchmark information for Box Office Managers when making key decisions
- To illuminate the current range of behaviours and alert Box Office Managers to best practice
- To provoke informed debate and re-assessment of habits

4.3.1 Knowledge about data held on the system

Through the use of open, unformatted questions the survey intended to illicit unmodified natural responses to a number of key questions about the Box Office and system operation. It is important to consider what knowledge is helpful for through management of the ticketing operation, and to benchmark the responses received.

7 Box Office Managers marked that they 'did not know' how many performances their organisation sold in the previous 12 months. 11 marked that they 'did not know' how many tickets were sold in the same period.

Figure 11: How many customer records do you have on your system?



Respondents were asked what for what percentage of ticket sales, they captured the customer name and address details. As a benchmark we have gained permission to show actual data capture rates from the Audiences Wales: The Knowledge research. Figure 12 is taken from Vital Statistics analysis of a wide range of venues in Wales in 2006/2007. The amount that the 'Quick Sale' option (sale without the option to attach a customer record) has been used is show in overlay.

Three venues show an actual data capture rate of 100%, this is almost certainly due to them attributing high speed door sales to a dummy 'Box Office' customer account, rather than to no customer account at all. Whilst many Box Office Managers see this as harmless, in fact it causes significant problems when undertaking subsequent analysis of the database. Frequency of attendance, location of customers etc compilation statistics will be skewed as a result of one dummy account having many ticket sales attributed to it.

Figure 13 shows the reported data capture rates by participants of this survey. The first 8 columns have no data as the Box Office managers did not know the figures for their organisation. It is also notable that 6 Box Office Managers reported a data capture rate of 100%. The Australia wide ADVICE project actual average data capture rate has been overlaid for comparison with the reported rate.

Figure 12: Data Capture rate Audiences Wales research 06/07

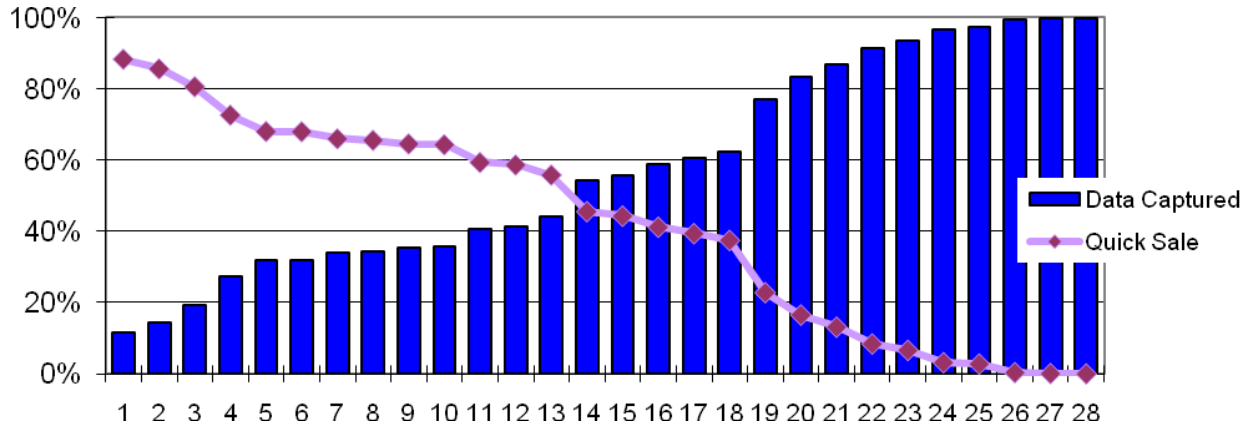
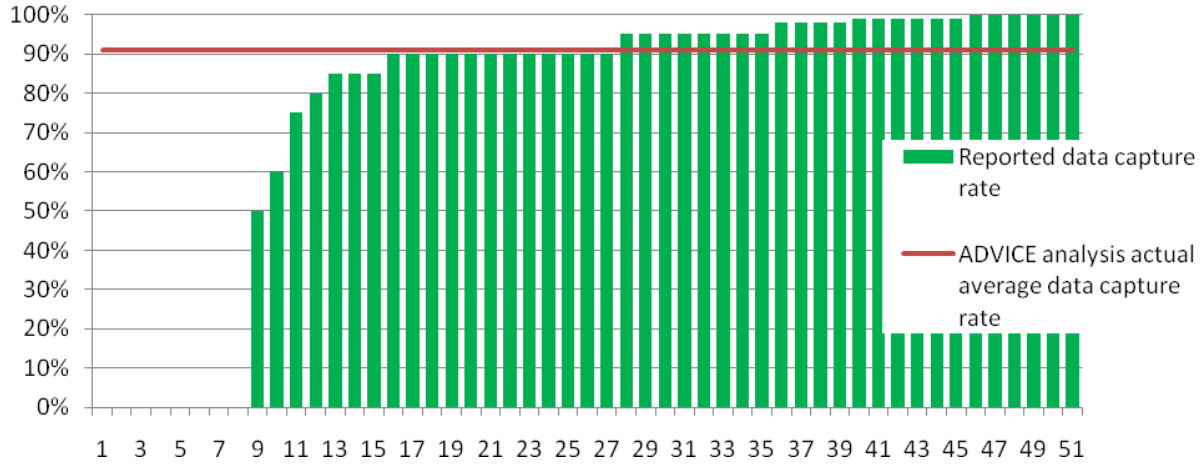


Figure 13: Reported data capture rate by participating Box Office Managers



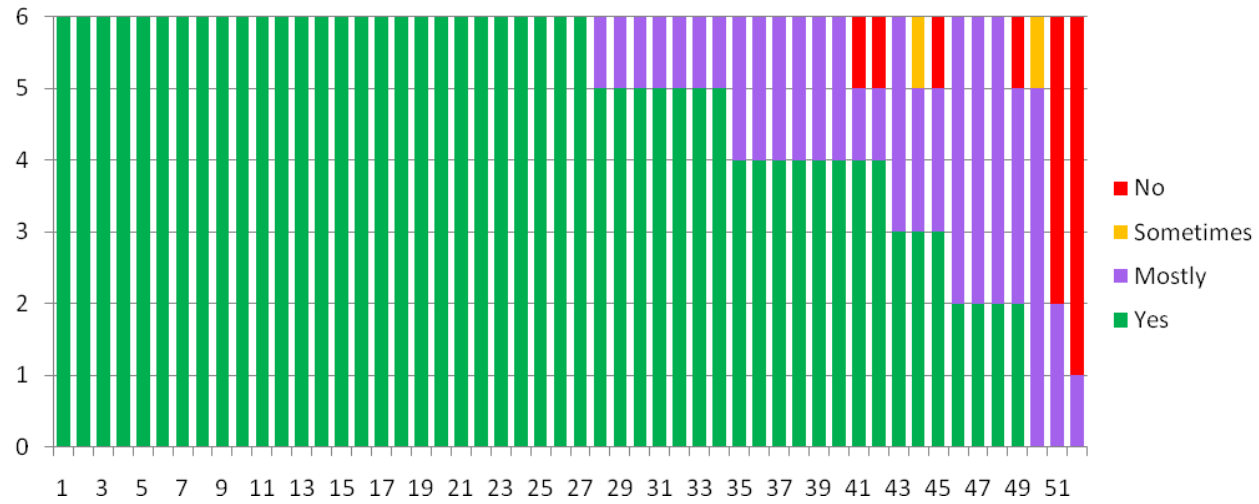
4.3.2 Box Office equipment & systems

Respondents were asked if their hardware was working well and if they had suitable technical support. Figure 14 shows how well Box Office Managers felt the following essential devices were working:

- Workstations
- Screens
- Ticket Printers
- Back devices
- Servers
- Credit Card devices

For the significant majority all key devices work perfectly well, or mostly work well. However a few organisations are clearly experiences major problems which must be interfering with the customer services they are able to offer and also present a significant risk to system stability.

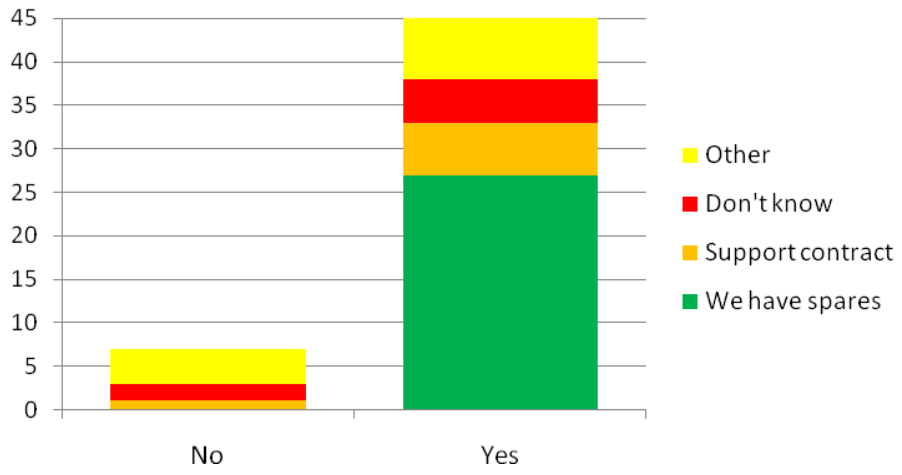
Figure 14: Key items of hardware working correctly?



Box Office Managers were specifically asked if they had 'enough' ticket printers, and subsequently asked what happened if a printer failed. This question? order was designed to explore what fall back procedures organisations had and if there was a discrepancy between 'enough' and robust fallback.

Indeed a sizable proportion of Box Office Managers who felt they had 'enough' did not have a robust plan of action.

Figure 15: Do you have enough ticket printers? What happens if one breaks?

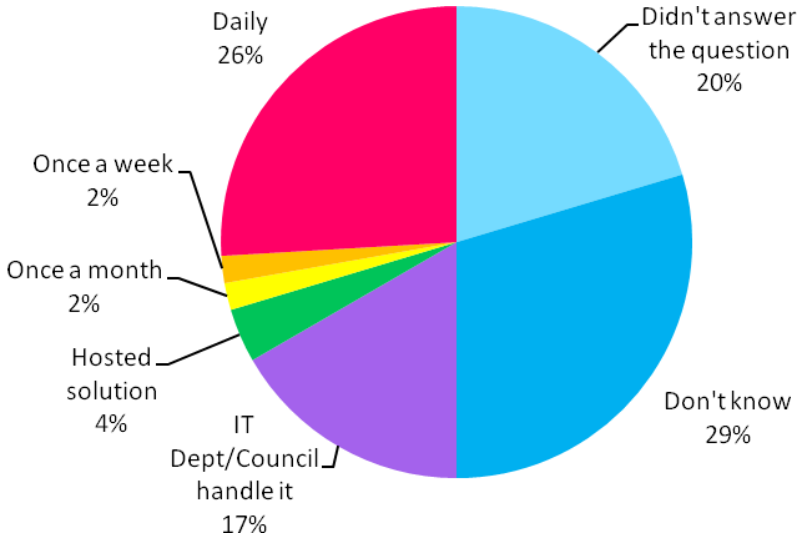


OTHER - *"We resort to printing door lists and using admit-ones"*

OTHER - *"We are in big trouble....."*

Box Office Managers were asked if backups of their database were kept off site, and how regularly this was happening, see Figure 16. A total of 49% of respondents either did not answer the question, or did not know the answer. 21% either knew their IT department handled it, or that they had an externally hosted system, managed and backed up by their ticketing system supplier. However 30% answered with specific details.

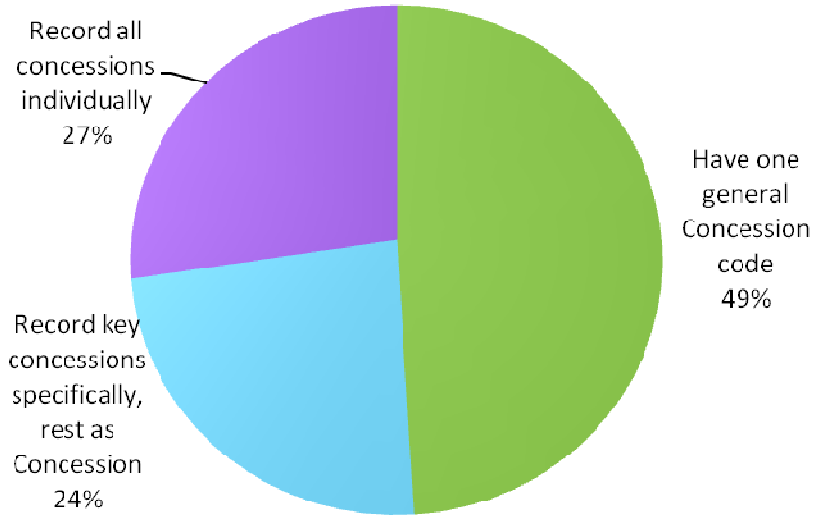
Figure 16: Are backups stored off-site? When/how does this happen?



4.3.3 Housekeeping practices

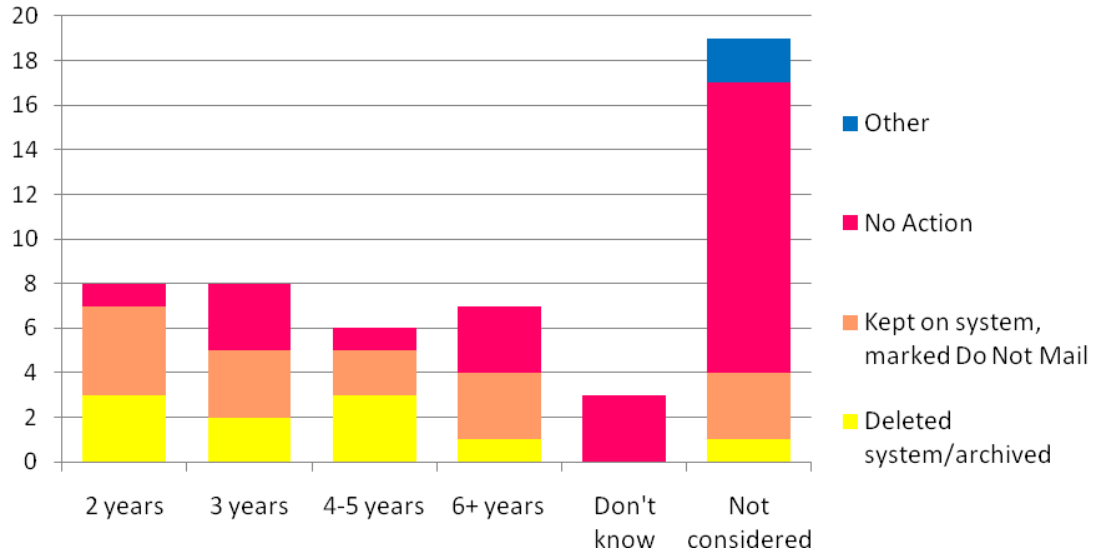
Box Office Managers were asked how they recorded the sale of concessionary tickets. One of the advantages of a computerised ticketing system is their ability to display and record many prices and codes with ease. There could be significance of monitoring the specific differences between Senior Citizens and Young People attending for example. Figure 17 shows the different ways Box Offices record concessions and what proportion record in each way.

Figure 17: How do you record Concessionary tickets?



Respondents were asked how long a customer record needed to be inactive before it was classed as Lapsed. They were also asked what action was taken on Lapsed customer records. 19 Box Office Managers had not considered this as a concept, but some had specific actions.

Figure 18: How long inactive before classed as 'Lapsed'? What action to you take?



Box Office Managers were asked how many duplicate customer records they had on their systems and what action they took to minimise them. The impact of duplicate records is significant as it alters the outcome of frequency and cross over analysis as well as clearly causing duplicate mailings to be produced – a tangible sign to audiences that a database is not in best order.

Figure 19: How many duplicate customer records do you have?

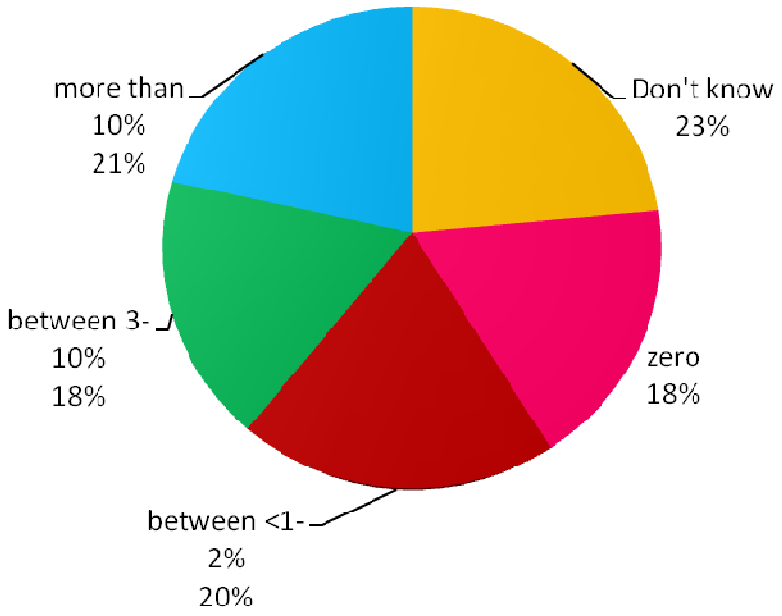
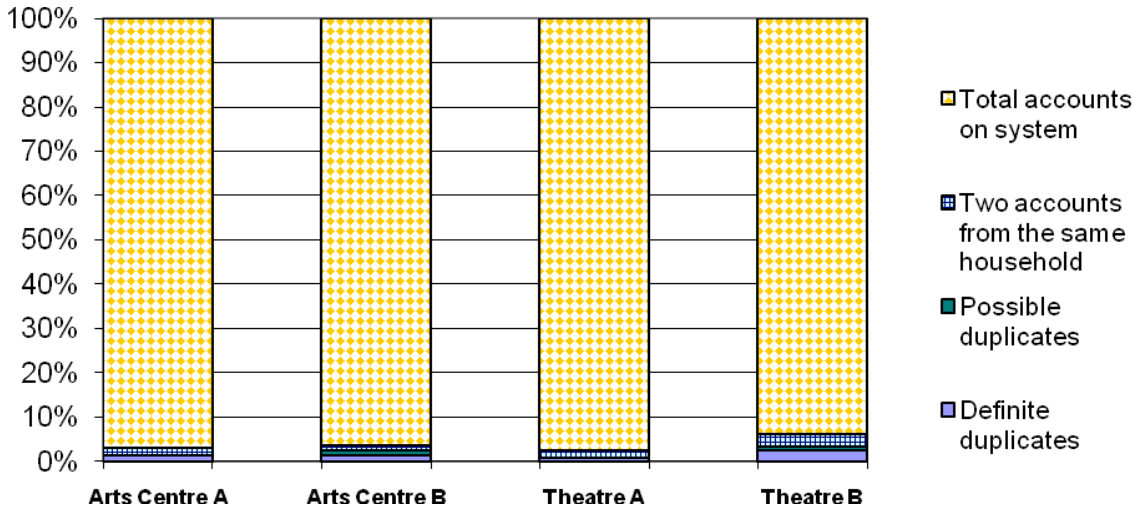


Figure 19 shows that there is great variation in the knowledge and estimated percentage of duplicate records.

Analysis carried out for Dance Touring Partnership explored the number and type of duplicates actually occurring in 4 UK organisations ticketing databases. It should be noted that all offered internet ticket sales, 3 using Provenue Max and 1 Enta. They all regularly ran de-duping procedures. Figure 20 shows that despite this regular maintenance, they had between 3% and 7% duplicate or same household accounts.

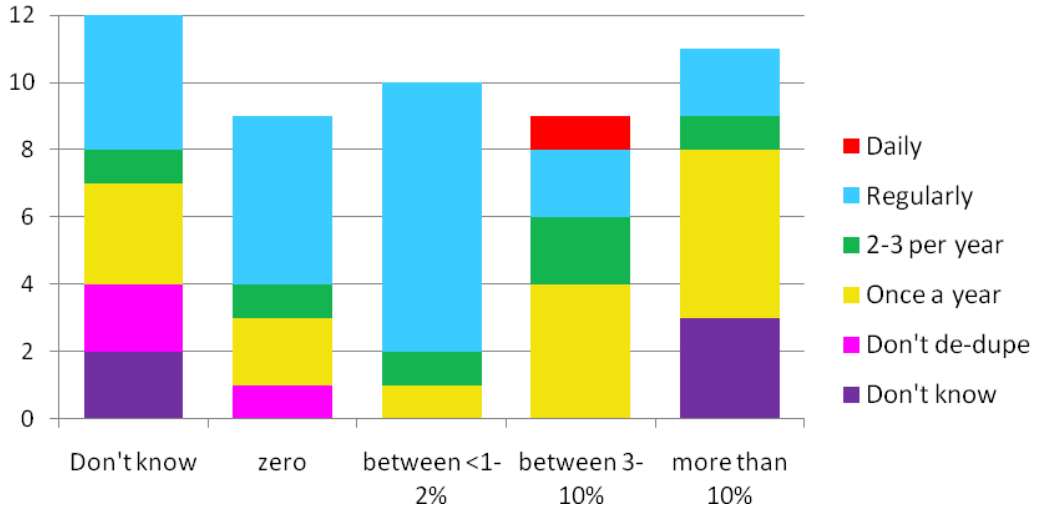
Figure 20: Dance Touring Partnership research 06-08: Duplicates as a % of total database



Box Office Managers were asked if they de-duped their customer database, and how often they did this.

Figure 21 shows some interesting responses, a notable number of organisations who de-dup once a year, a group who do not know how many duplicates they have and only one organisation who runs de-dupe procedures daily.

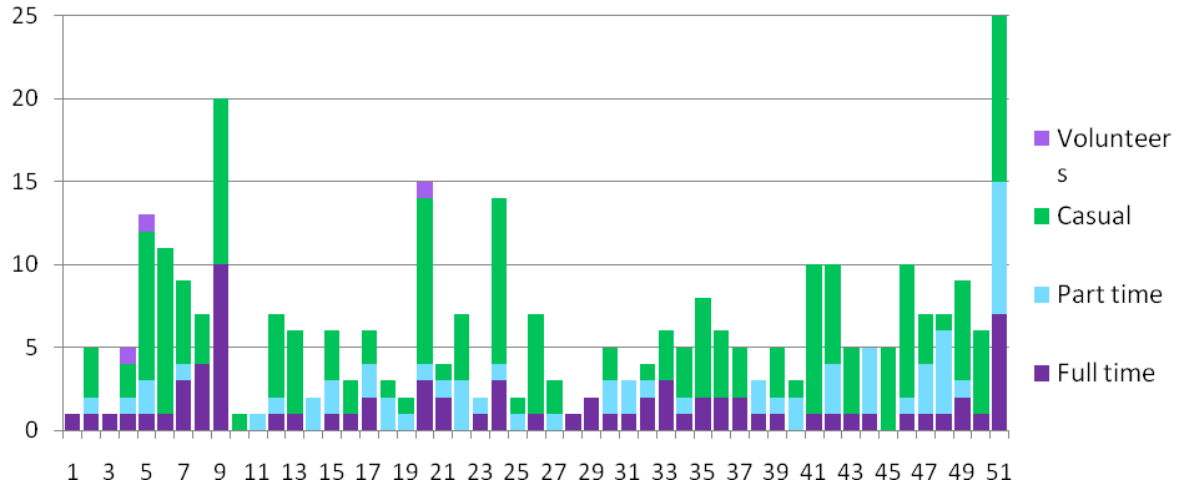
Figure 21: How many duplicates do you have? How often do you de-dupe?



4.3.4 Staffing requirements

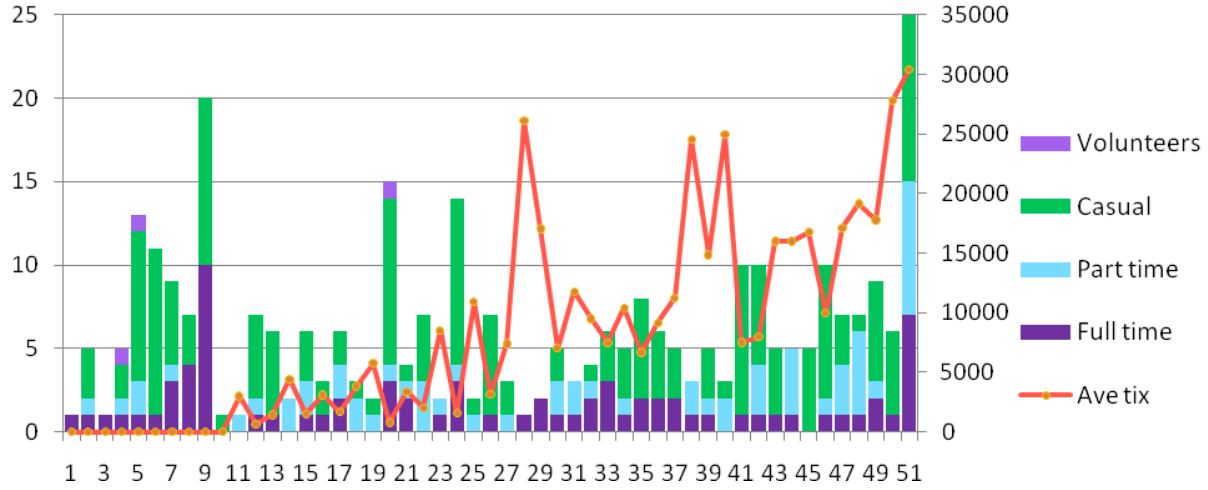
Respondents were asked how many staff they had in their Box Office and the employment type of these staff. 3 organisations have volunteer staff and 10 do not have any casual staff – using permanent full and part time staff instead.

Figure 22: Staffing breakdown – in number of tickets sold per year order



The breakdown in Figure 22 provides a useful benchmark. However when the number of staff is drawn against the total number of tickets sold per year in Figure 23, (please note that 10 left most organisations did not supply their total tickets sold per year) there does not appear to be a direct correlation – number of tickets sold per year, does not necessarily dictate the staffing levels required.

Figure 23: Staffing breakdown with average tickets sold per staff member



Box Office Managers were asked to list their opening hours during the week and weekends and when a performance was on. This research will enable organisations to compare their hours and consider their own practice. Figure 24, Figure 25 and Figure 26 show the various opening and closing times Monday to Friday, and highlight the very different practices.

Figure 24: Weekday opening times

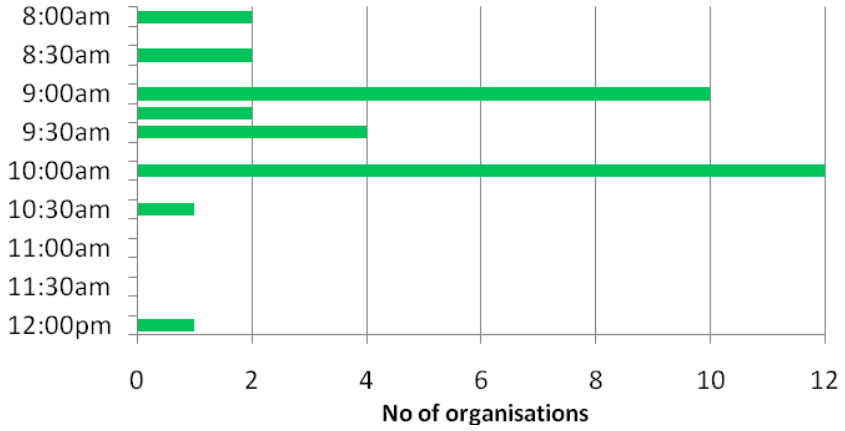


Figure 25: Weekday closing times when dark

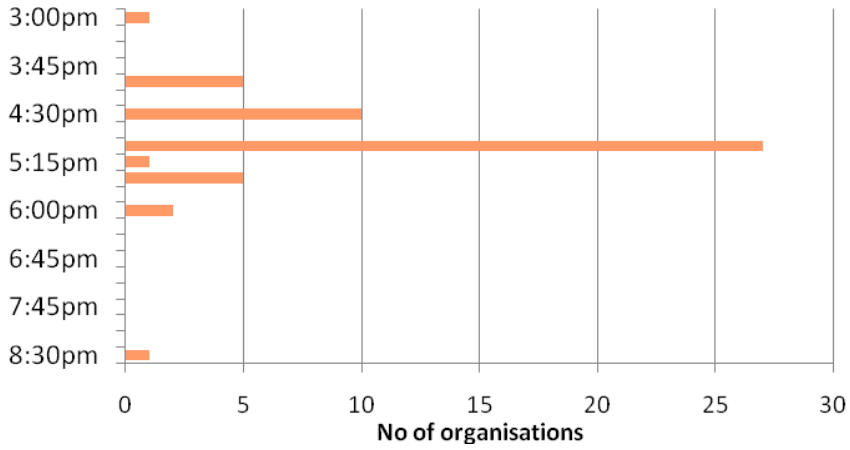
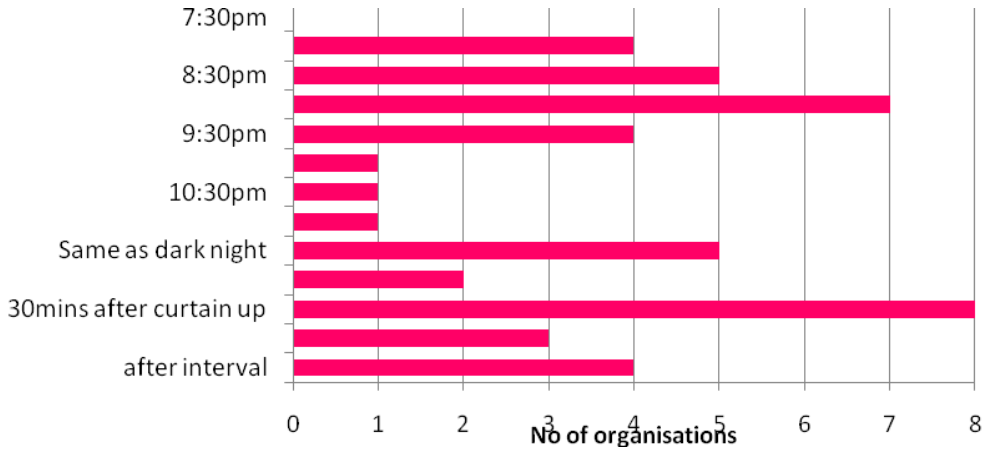


Figure 26: Weekday closing times on a show night



Respondents were asked what hours their Box Offices were open on a Saturday and Sunday. There is a great variety in hours and type of operation, with some organisations closing or only opening just around performance times – whilst others are open similarly to weekdays.

Figure 27: Saturday opening hours

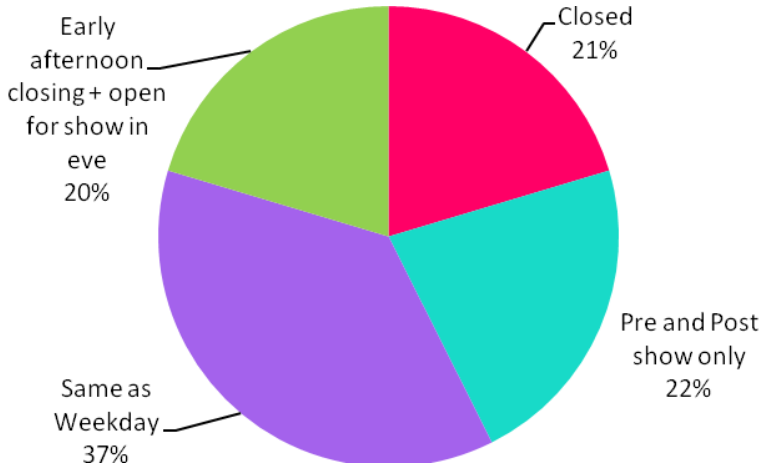
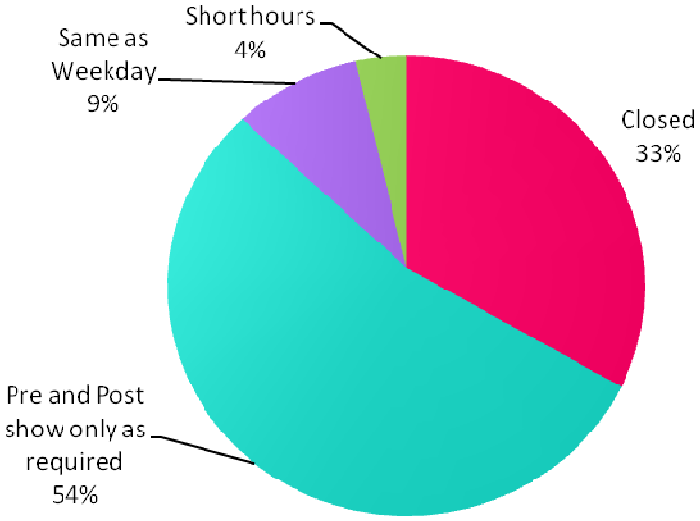


Figure 28: Sunday opening hours



4.3.5 What would make your job easier?

Box Office Managers were asked what 3 things would make their job easier, see Figure 29, and 53% said 'More staff'. This response was cross referenced against organisations who offer internet ticketing – to see if the lack of this service was a key cause, see Figure 30 – however all but 6 organisations already offer that service. The other responses bear out many of the other research findings about generally good hardware stability and relatively few Box Office Managers feeling the need to change ticketing system.

Figure 29: What would make your job easier? (first answer)

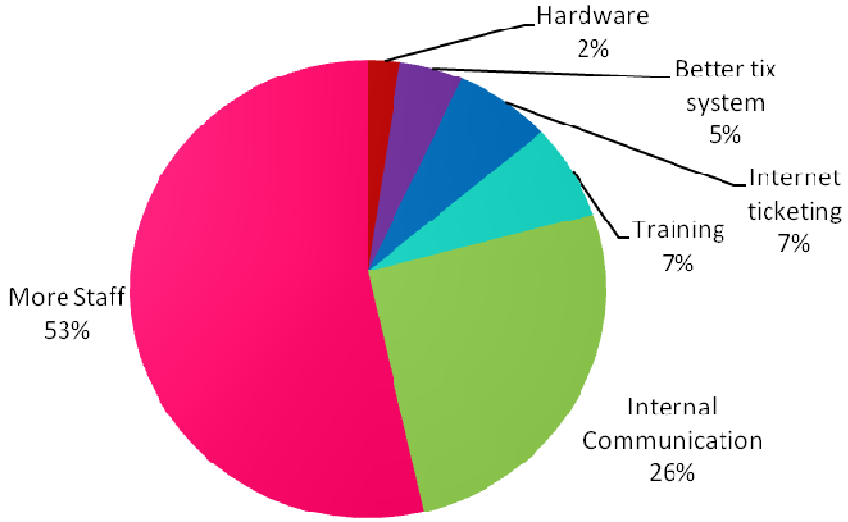
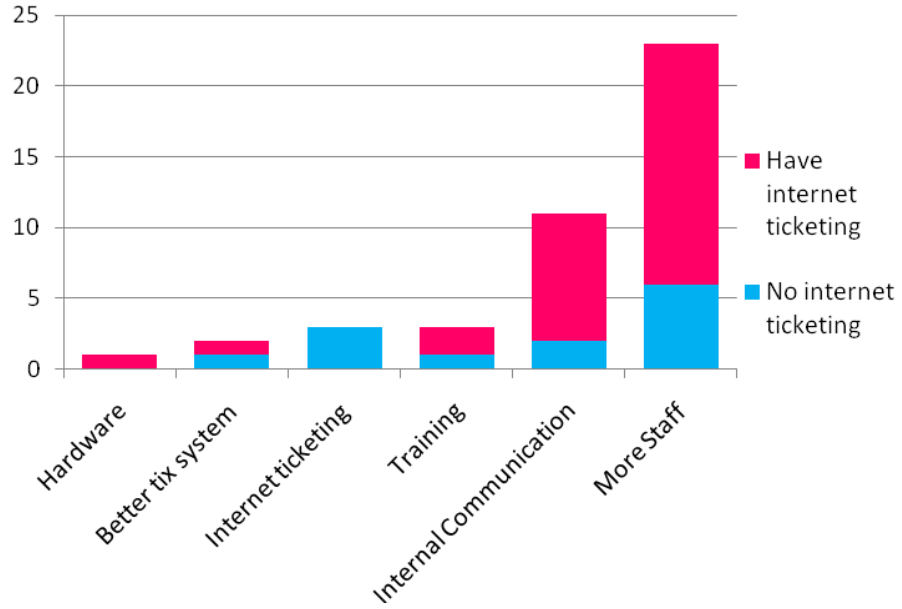


Figure 30: What would make your job easier? showing internet ticketing service



> "*Training, More staff, Networking*"
>
> "*Staff support, trust and training*"
>
> *"more resources (staff) – would write this 3 times if possible. More time to work on the business rather than IN the business"*

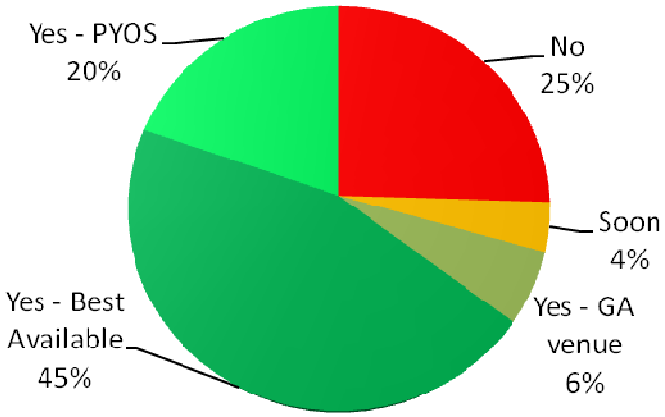
4.4 Internet sales

Respondents were asked about their web site services, particularly focusing on ticketing and information available.

4.4.1 Internet ticketing availability and take up

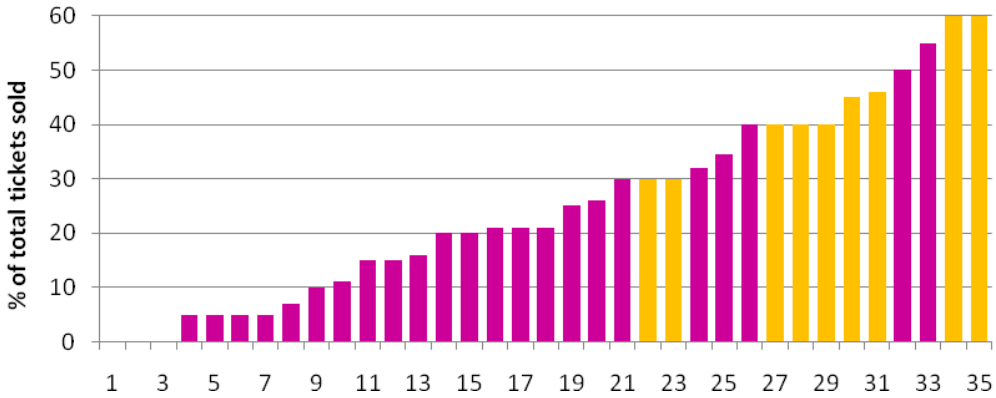
As Figure 31 shows, a quarter of the responding organisations do not currently offer internet ticketing at all. This is a surprisingly large number and interestingly not generally the first thing that those Box Office Managers identified as potentially being of help to them, see Figure 30. The large number of organisations offering Best Available seating is simply due to the current limitations of ticketing system functionality.

Figure 31: Do you offer real time internet ticketing?



Organisations offering internet ticketing were asked what percentage of their total ticket sales they sold via this channel. In Figure 32 the responses are listed in order, with organisations offering Pick Your Own Seat highlighted in orange. 3 Box Office Managers could not give a figure for internet ticket sales.

Figure 32: % of internet ticketing sales - with Pick Your Own Seat in orange



Box Office Managers were asked when their peak sales demand occurred for each sales channel (Phone, In person, Internet – where available). As 25% of responding organisations do not offer real time internet ticketing, it is possible to explore the difference this makes with a robust sample size. As Figure 33 and Figure 34 show there is similarity in the demand peaks for both Phone and In person sales, with the very notable exception of opening time phone demand for organisations with internet ticketing. This may potentially be explained by the customers viewing the websites in the evening after work - get very near to booking tickets, but then to wait until the phone lines re-open if there are higher booking fees via the internet, or lack of choice (i.e. Pick Your Own Seat). It is also notable how internet sales seem to perfectly mesh into opening hours.

Figure 33: Peak hours of business - organisations without internet ticketing

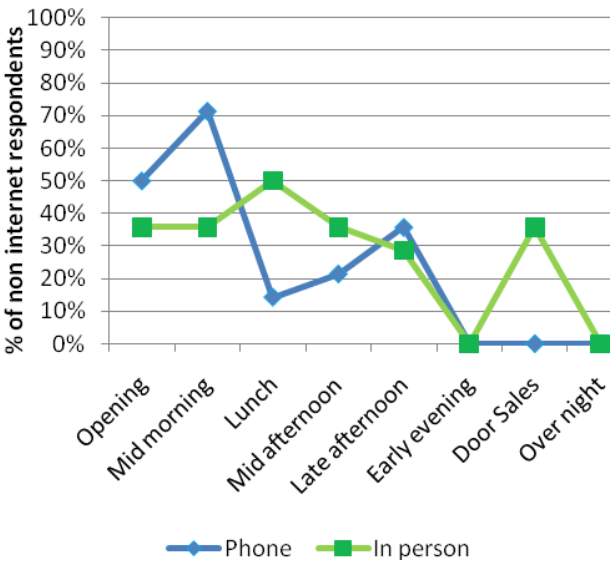
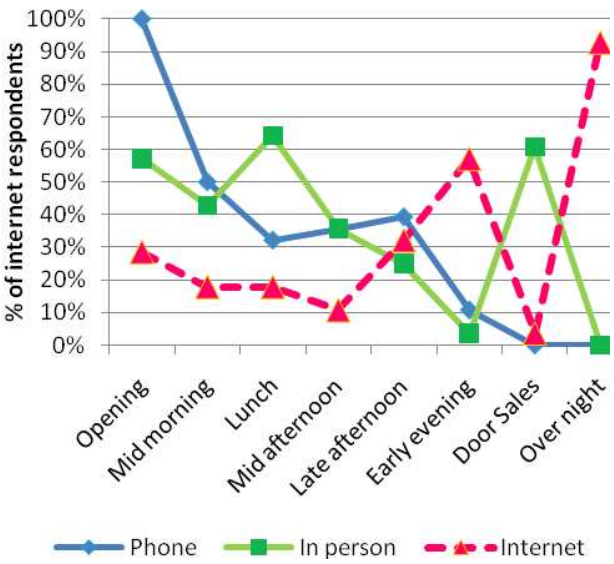


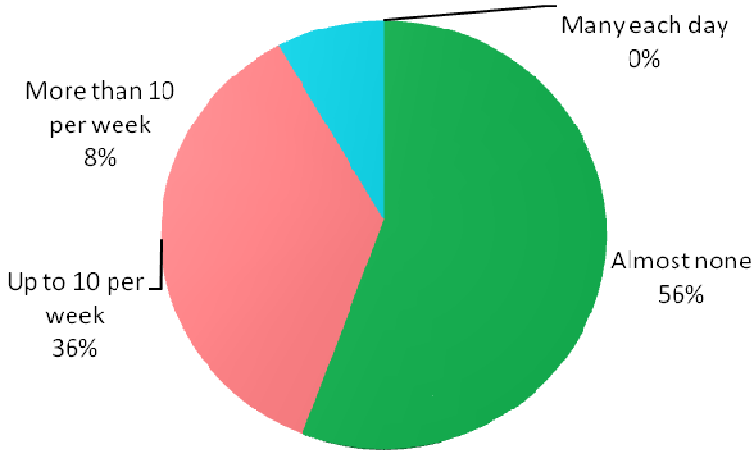
Figure 34: Peak hours of business - organisations with internet ticketing



4.4.2 Website housekeeping

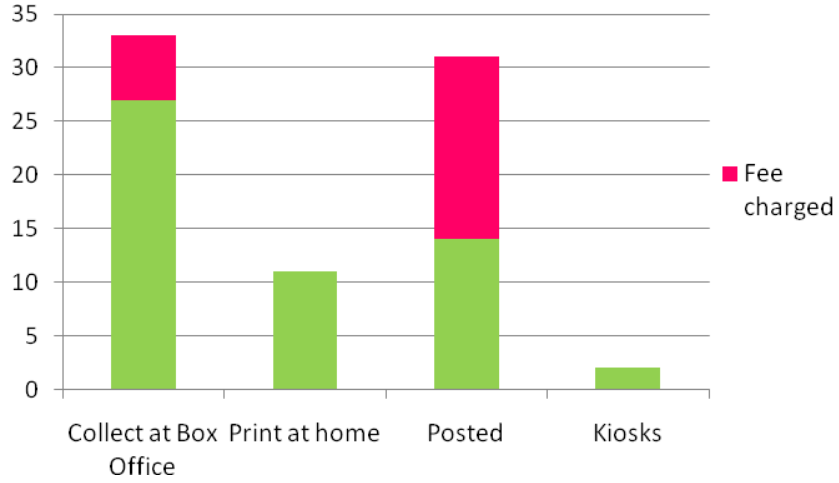
Websites generally are becoming more sophisticated and customers increasingly expect all business to offer fluid functionality. To test participating organisations websites, Box Office Managers were asked how often customers reported feeling stuck on their websites. The results in Figure 35 show encouragingly that very few organisations have web sites which cause customers to seek help.

Figure 35: How often are you contacted by people stuck on your web site?



Box Office Managers were asked what options they offered for internet ticket delivery and what specific fees are charged. All offer Collect at Box Office, most will post tickets and a smaller number are exploring more leading edge technology options with the aim of reducing staff time taken to service internet sales.

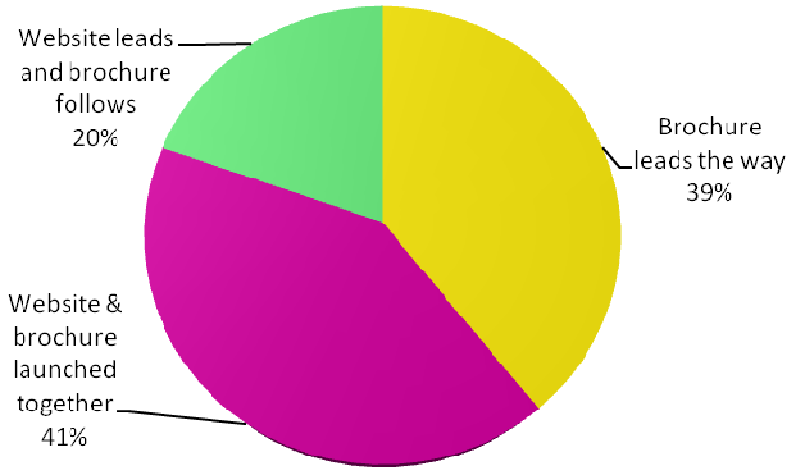
Figure 36: Internet ticket delivery options offered



4.4.3 Information available on the website

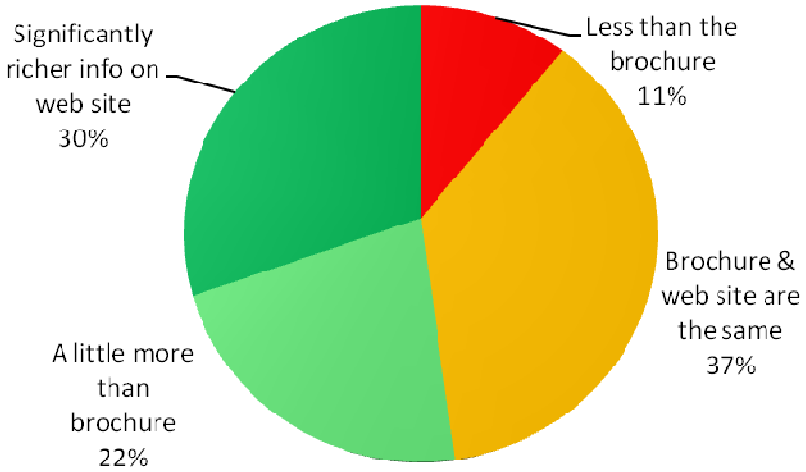
Box Office Managers were asked how their new season information was launched to explore the organisation's key marketing focus. As a quarter of respondents do not offer the immediate call to action of internet ticketing functionality, it is not surprising that 39% do not use the web as their initial marketing launch pad.

Figure 37: How is your new season information launched?



Respondents were asked what sort of information was put on their websites and how it compared to the printed materials. These responses and the quotes below again illustrate the clear bands of internet adoption from none at all, to deeply integrated and exploited.

Figure 38: What information is on your web site?



> *"Currently no website....."*
>
> *"We provide the brochure in .pdf format and generally link from our Now Selling page to the .pdf to provide details for those customers wanting more information"*

4.5 Mystery Shopper email survey

4.5.1 Initial signup

At the start of the Mystery Shopper email survey period, Aplin Partnership attempted to sign up to email mailing lists at each of the 71 organisations invited to participate in the survey (although not all responded to the questionnaire). Figure 39 shows that 31 organisations (47%) either had no website or a website with no email mailing list which could be found.

Figure 39: Results of attempting to sign up to email lists

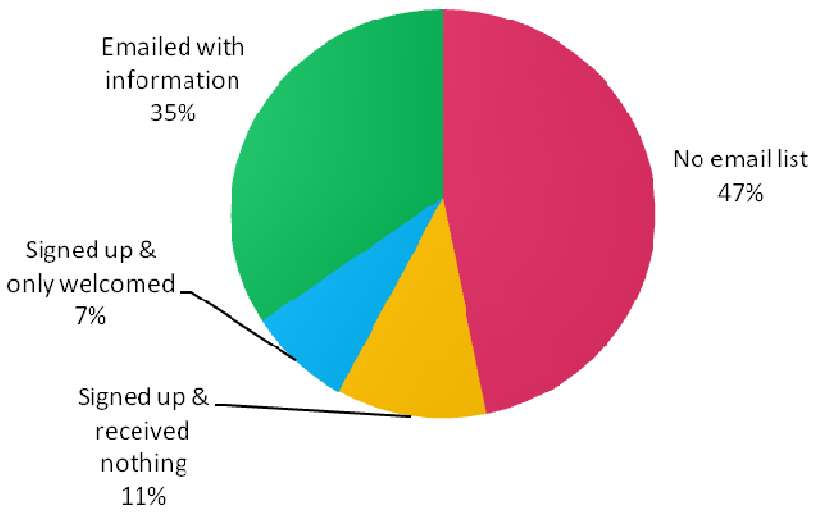
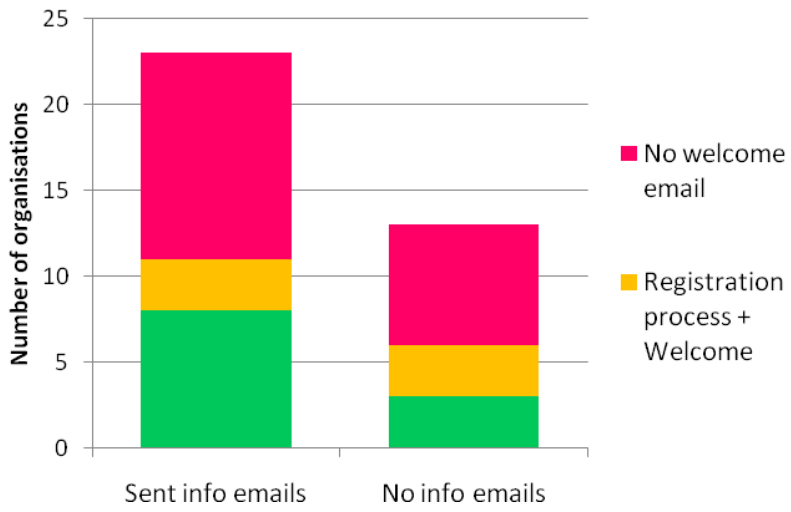


Figure 40 shows how organisations divide between sending initial 'welcome' emails, having a two stage registration process and not having any 'welcome' at all.

Figure 40: Breakdown of initial 'welcome' response



The ‘welcome’ response classification:

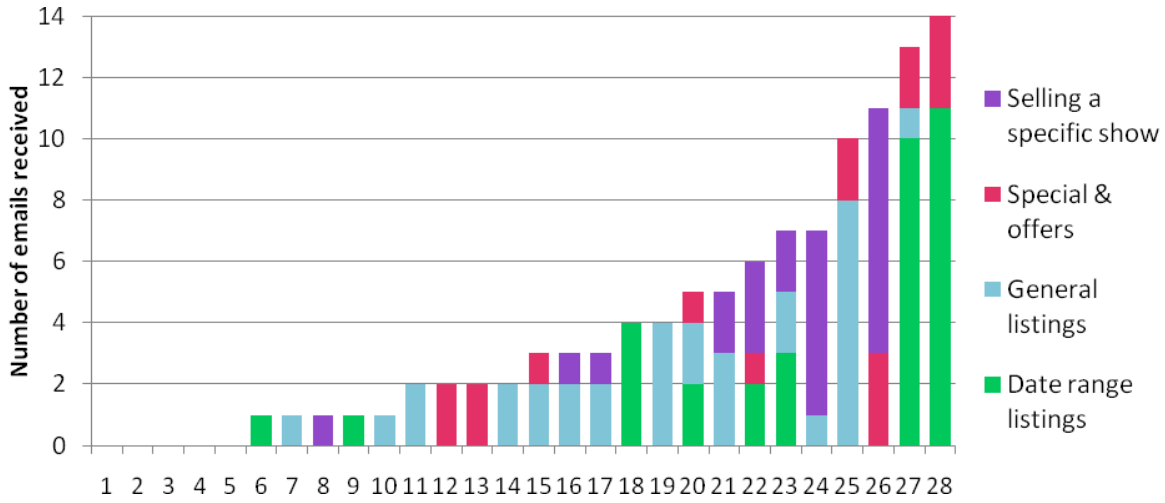
- Welcome email – One email was sent quickly, specifically to introduce the email service. This ensures that the member of the public know that they have completed the sign up process successfully and can be used to explain in detail what information will be sent and how to un-subscribe.
- Registration process + email - After entering email details on the website, a registration confirmation email is sent to the member of the public, which must be opened and a click through completed before the list is actually joined. In all cases a subsequent ‘welcome’ email was sent.
- No welcome email

4.5.2 Frequency and type of emails

Emails sent to the Mystery Shopper were categorised according to their content as described in the subject line. This being how most people decide if they will open the email or ignore it.

Figure 41 also shows the number of each category of email received in the 9 week survey. 4 organisations sent an average of more than one email a week and 11 sent more than 4 information emails during the period.

Figure 41: Number and type of information emails received



4.5.3 Comparison with Dance Touring Partnership research

A similar Mystery Shopper survey was carried out over a 2 month period in 2006 with 14 Dance Touring Partnership (DTP) members – 12 middle scale regional theatres and art centres around England and 2 London venues. All participating organisations had websites and 12 of 14 had email lists – although one was so hard to find, that it was missed during the survey.

Figure 42 shows that 5 organisations sent a ‘Welcome’ email, 4 organisations required the two step Registration stage, no organisation had both Registration stage and a ‘welcome’ email and 3 neither required Registration nor sent a ‘Welcome’ email. It is interesting to note that since the survey was undertaken in 2006, 3 out of the original 4 organisations have now removed the two step Registration stage.

Figure 42: DTP survey initial 'welcome' response

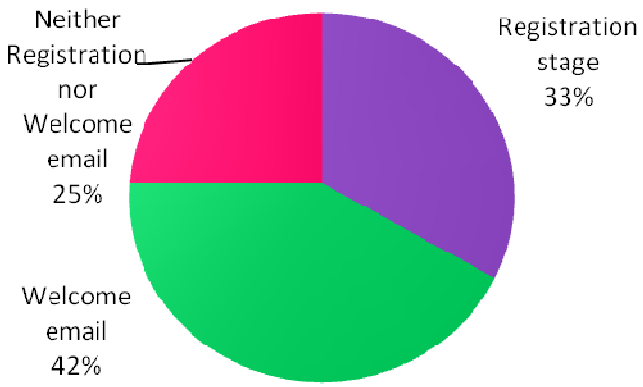
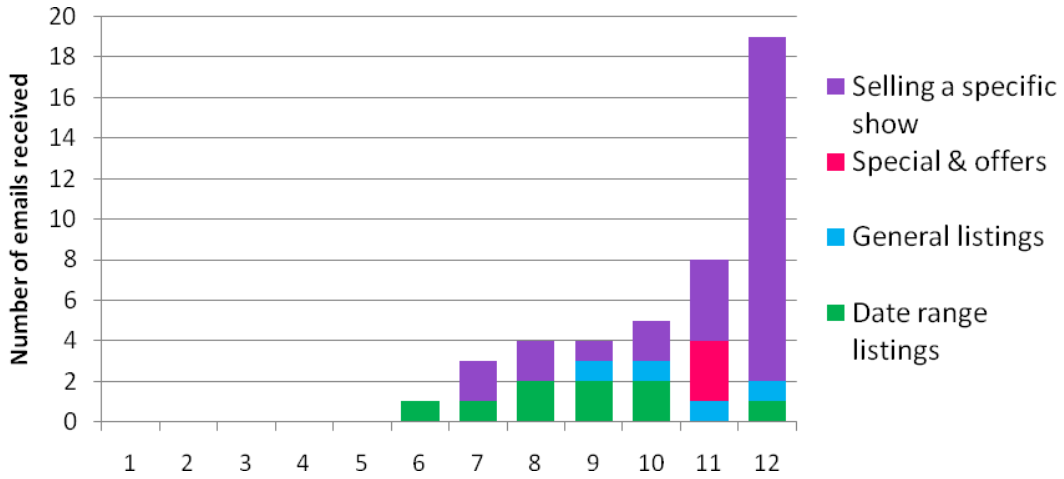


Figure 43 shows the number and type of emails received, 5 organisations sent no information emails during the 2 month survey, 5 sent emails between once a month and once a fortnight and 1 sent a stream of show specific emails.

Figure 43: DTP survey Number and type of information emails received



These findings are largely similar to this Core Values research – with one key difference, the DTP survey was undertaken 4 years ago and since then significant refinement of web sites, email lists and emails themselves have taken place – a process assisted by organisations reviewing research and benchmarking themselves.

4.5.4 Email subject line

It is clear (both from research and personal experience) that the contents of the email subject line can make a significant difference to the open and 'click through' rate for emails.
The focus should be upon informing the customer about how the email will benefit them – rather than an organisations' internal coding or unclear notes

For example the following email Subject lines are internally focused, or unclear about what is being sent:

SUBJECT	‘postmas. (3)The results of your email commands’
SUBJECT	‘eNewsle.OnShow eNews January 2010’
SUBJECT	‘Schedule Change’
SUBJECT	‘March Madness’
SUBJECT	‘.The Countdown Begins!’

Compared to the following customer experience focused subject lines:

SUBJECT	‘Easter holiday workshops for young people now on sale!’
SUBJECT	‘March at Gasworks Arts Park’
SUBJECT	‘Thanks for subscribing to the RPAC eNewsletter’

4.6 Place of Box Office within the organisation

4.6.1 Management reporting structure

In order to explore the relative seniority of Box Office Managers within their organisations, respondents were asked who they reported to. There are clearly some distinctions with council venues, where directly managed venues are part of a wider leisure service. However it is still possible to classify Box Office line managers as middle or senior level managers

Figure 44 shows that a total of 58% of Box Office Managers report directly to their GM / CEO or Council senior manager.

Figure 44: Who do you report to? Who does your line manager report to?

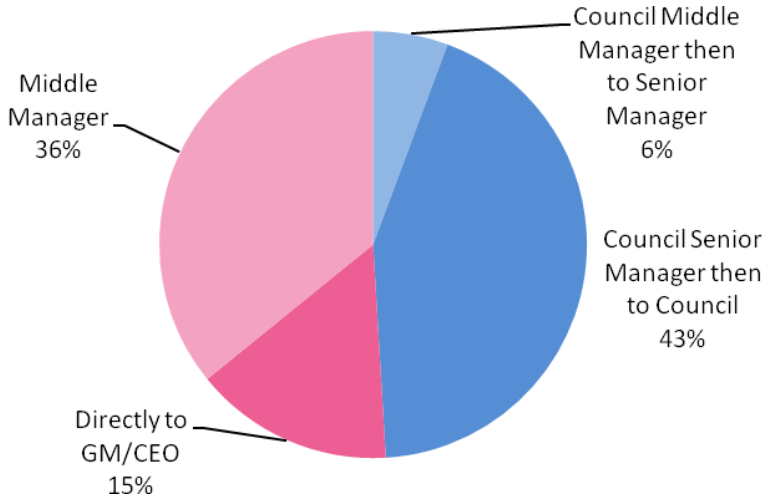
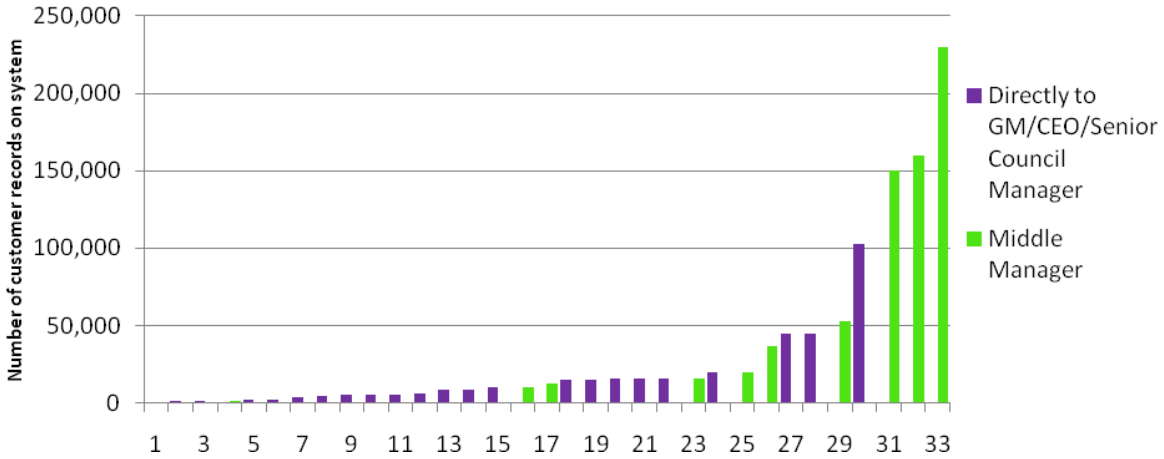


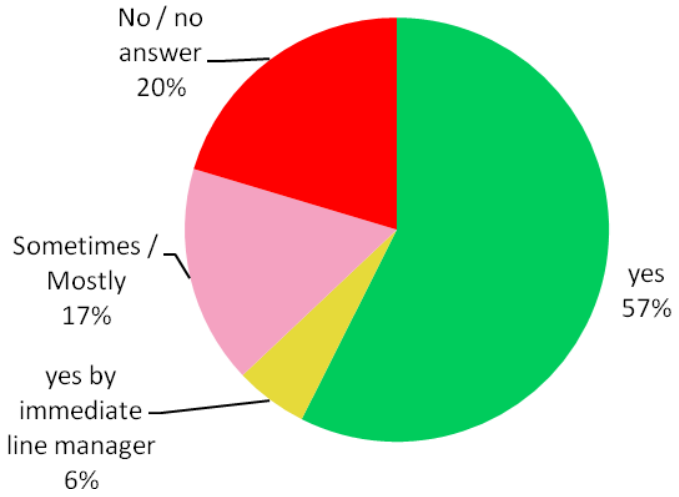
Figure 45 explores this further and examines the relationship between size of operation (for ease and clarity – taken to be the number of customer records held on the ticketing system) and who the Box Office Manager reports to. There is an understandable trend for larger organisations to have more layers of management.

Figure 45: Who is your line manager? by number of customer records on database



Box Office Managers were asked a very specific question about how 'valued' they felt within their organisation. As Figure 46 shows, whilst more than half clearly do feel valued – if we combine the tentative 'Sometimes / Mostly' with 'No / No answer', 37% are feeling distinctly undervalued or disenfranchised.

Figure 46: Do you feel valued by your organisation?



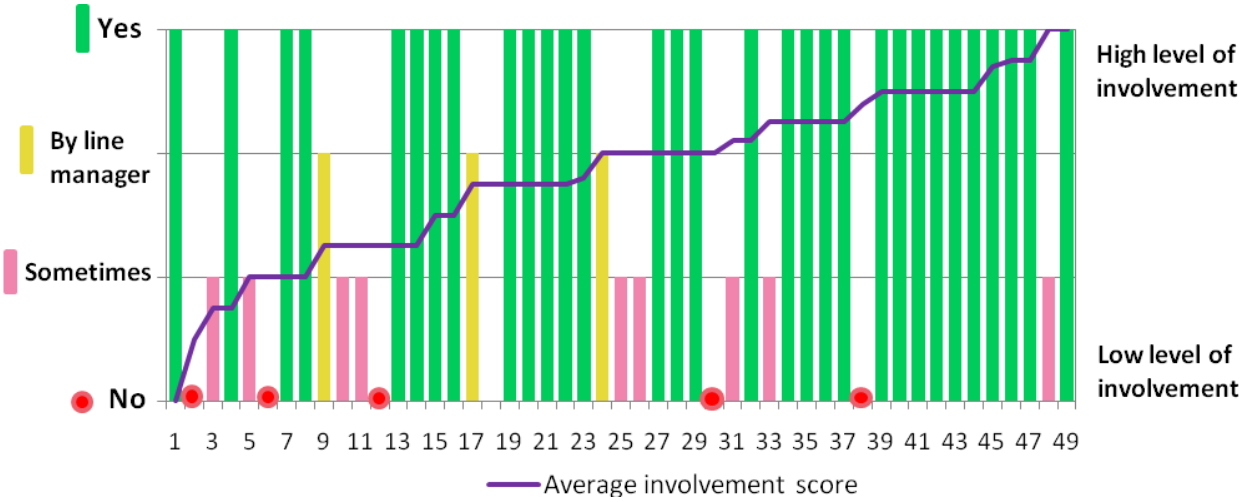
4.6.2 Box Office consultation

Respondents were asked if they (or their team) were informed and then consulted about critical day to day sales operation matters. This illuminates internal communication effectiveness and organisational culture very effectively.

Figure 47 plots the average 'consultation and involvement' score against how 'valued' Box Office Managers report feeling. The average 'consultation and involvement' score has been compiled from answers to the following questions:

- Are you informed of special offers in advance?
- Is your opinion sought about special offers?
- Was Box Office consulted about your website? (if applicable)
- Is Box Office consulted about sales targets? (if applicable)
- Are Box Office told if targets are reached?
- Are you involved in the design of the brochure?

Figure 47: Degree of consultation and involvement against feeling 'valued' by organisation



There is a visual correlation between the level of involvement of the Box Office Manager in wider organisational decisions and their feeling that their 'contribution is valued by their organisation".

The following figures display a breakdown of the individual questions which contributed towards the average 'consultation and involvement' score:

Figure 48: Are you informed of special offers in advance?

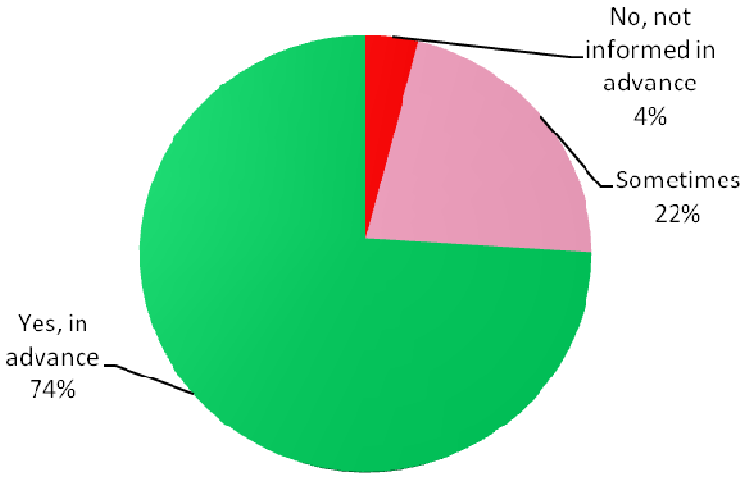


Figure 49: Is your opinion sought about special offers?

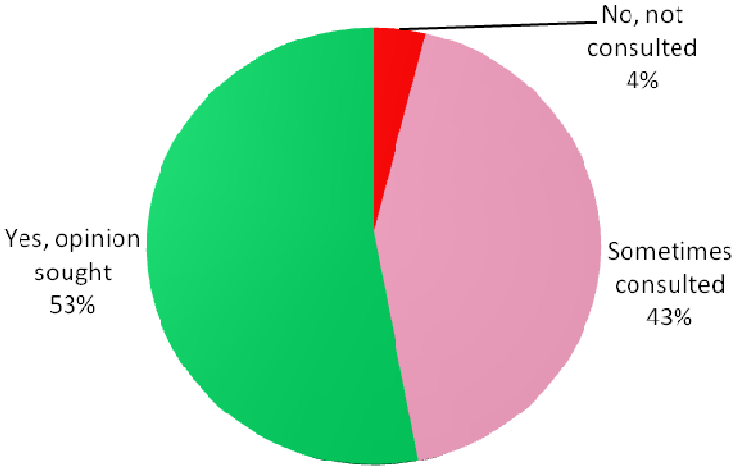


Figure 50: Was Box Office consulted about your website?

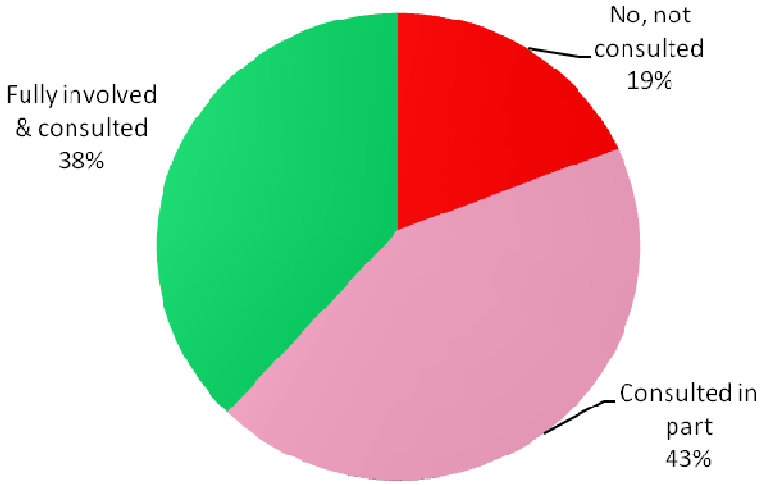
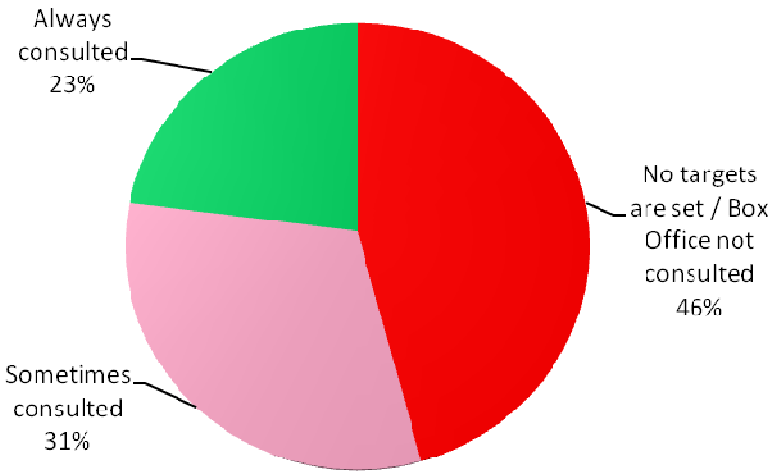


Figure 51: Is Box Office consulted about targets?



"A sold out show is always the target"

"We enter the budget against the concert in the ticketing systems, then all staff can see at a glance if we have reached it"

"This is more the domain of Marketing [department], however Box Office is consulted where appropriate"

"If ticket sales aren't ticking over, I'm always asking have there been any inquiries?"

Figure 52: Does the Box Office know when such targets have been reached?

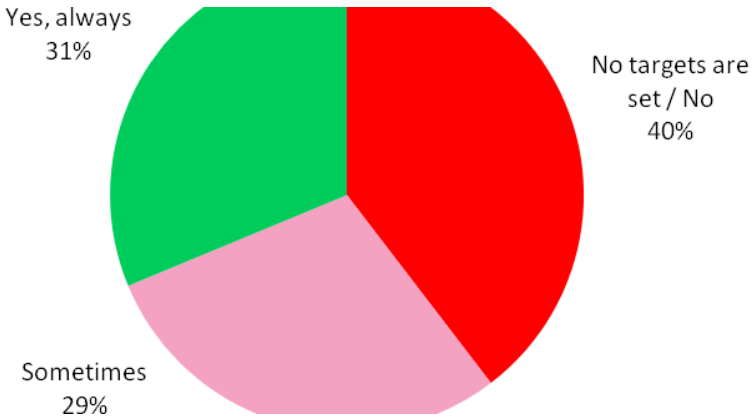
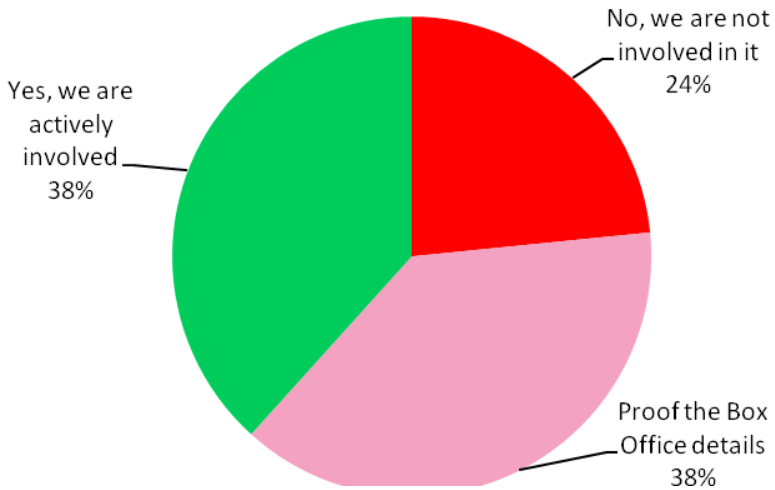


Figure 53: Are you or the Box Office involved in the design of your brochure?



4.6.3 Salaries

Respondents were asked to give an indication of the Box Office Manager's salary range, so a benchmark could be created. Figure 54 shows the variation in responses, 64% of the manager's salaries are between $40k and $60k per year.

Figure 55 shows this salary band against the number of customer records held on the ticketing system (responses missing the customer record total were excluded from this chart). Customer records total is being used as an indication of scale of operation. There is a very slight correlation between the two figures, but not enough to show cause and effect.

Figure 54: Please give an indication of your Box Office Manager's salary range

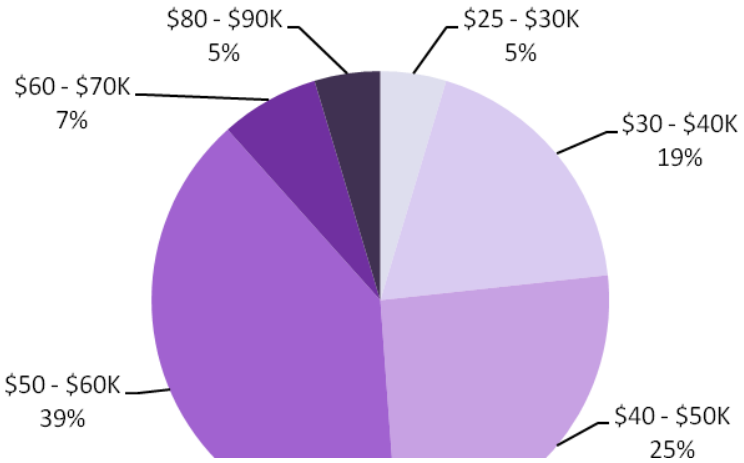
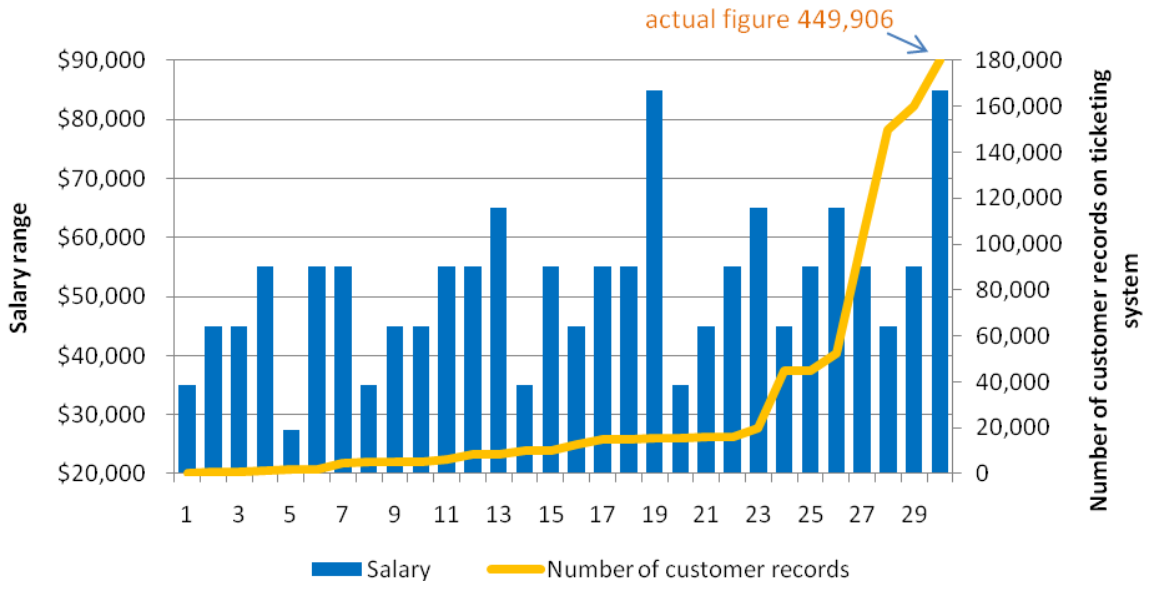


Figure 55: Box Office Manager's salary band against number of customer records



The rates of pay for casual staff were collected from respondents see Figure 56 and divided up by State. The numbers of organisations paying different Basic hourly rates has been shown and the number of organisations who pay a higher Penalty rate identified.

There is a much more even split between rates for organisations in Victoria, whereas the majority of Queensland organisations pay the middle rate. It is striking that proportion of organisations additionally paying a higher Penalty rate, does not vary by state nor by the basic hourly rate i.e. it is not just those organisations paying a lower Basic that pay a Penalty rate on top.

Figure 56: Basic hourly rate of pay for Box Office Casual staff

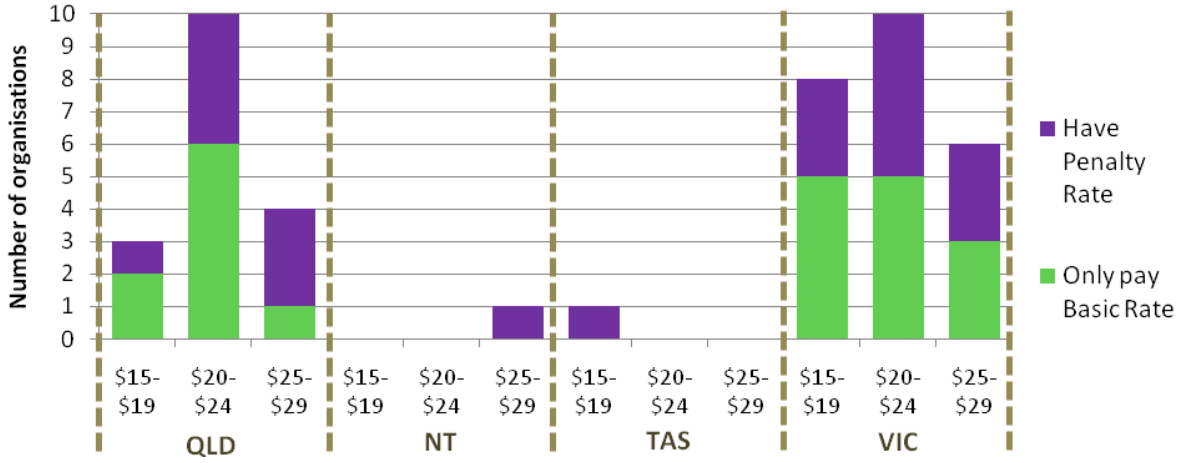
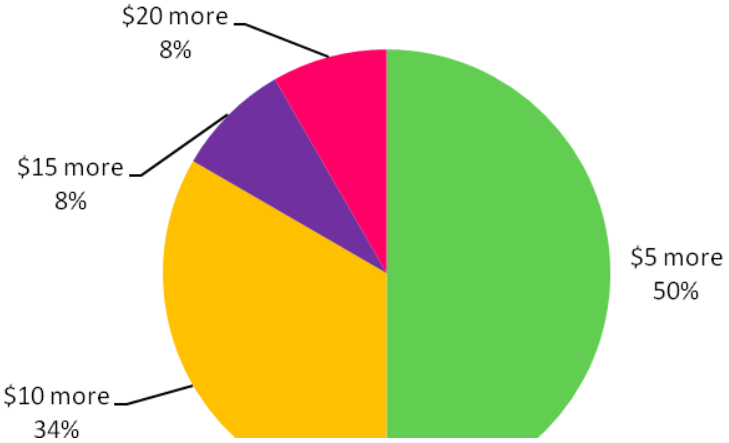


Figure 57 shows the size of the difference between the Basic and Penalty hourly rate paid to casuals across the range of respondents who supplied this information. There is a very wide variation in practice here.

Figure 57: Differences between Basic and Penalty hourly rate (where paid)



> *"[The two different Basic] Rates reflect two Bandings"*
>
> *"No penalty rate paid as there is a loading on their normal wage to cover nights, weekends and public holidays"*
>
> *"Only pay penalty rate on Sunday, [when we pay] at Double Time"*

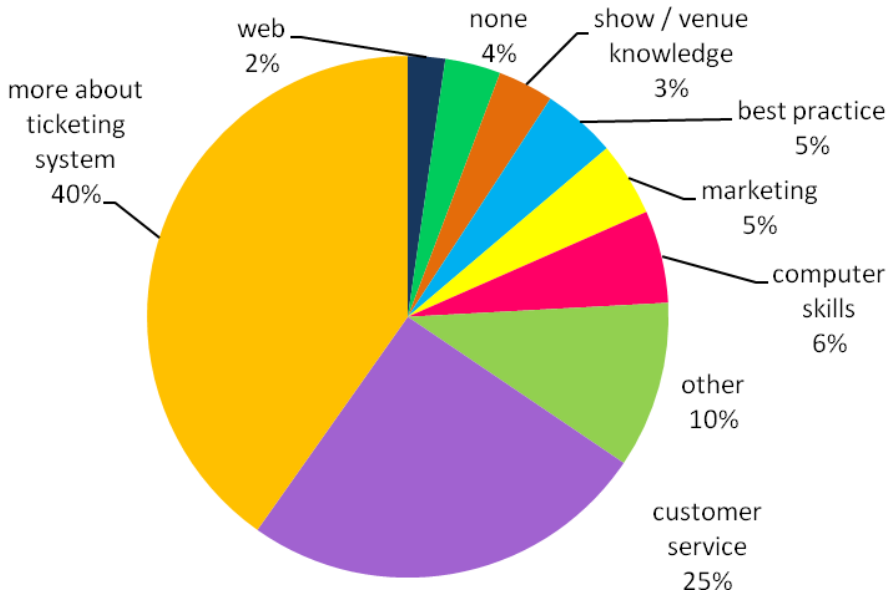
4.6.4 Training provision and wish list

Box Office Managers were asked about their organisations training plans. Figure 58 below shows that very few respondents felt that they did not know. It is interesting that whist nearly 80% have internal training programmes, only 50% have a specific training budget – it may be that much of the internal training program is delivered by other members of staff, or that money is found on an ad hoc basis when specific external training is required.

Figure 58: Do you have the following training plans?

Figure 59 shows the topics which Box Office Managers would like to receive training on. There is a clear demand for specific in depth ticketing system and customer service training.

Figure 59: Please list your top 3 training requirements



"[1] Regular "Tool Box" Meetings regarding errors in data input by all users of the ticketing system.
[2] Updated training by system provider to ensure system is best used.
[3] Training of casual staff to allow more productivity in the box office."

*"[*1] Customer Service [2[Ticketing System skills [3] Venue familiarity"

5 Comments upon findings

5.1 Ticketing Systems

- Whilst many organisations have reviewed and updated their ticketing systems, there is a group of over 15 organisations who have ageing systems which they installed 7 or more years ago, and ticketing systems of this age were not fundamentally designed to handle internet sales.
- Whilst only a small number of Box Office Managers report that they are actively looking for a new ticketing system, these organisations may require support to enable them to move to systems which meet their future requirements. The take–up of internet ticketing and email marketing will be constrained by the lack of Pick your own Seat and integrated email functionality.
- There is a tendency to stick to the system functionality which was learnt during initial training and it is all too easy to miss out on subsequent enhancements and not take best advantage of the system. System suppliers actively encouraging take up of new features combined with peer discussion and exploration can make a big difference to this.
- There is very high membership of non-system specific user groups (particularly in Victoria and specifically BOMNet) which is clearly very important to Box Office Managers (being in very time pressured roles where their physical presence is critical, Box Office Managers tend not to maintain membership of anything they do not regard as important).

5.2 Housekeeping

- The number of Box Office Managers who did not have essential facts regarding the number of customer records, duplicates etc to their fingertips was surprising and it is suggested that regularly keeping tabs on these facts would assist with monitoring of progress and planning for the future.
- It is proposed that all Box Office Managers are made aware of the implications of attributing high speed door sales to a dummy 'Box Office' customer records. It is also important that Marketing teams realise that with the best will in the world, in order to ensure that a performance does not go up late, a few tickets on the door will be sold without capturing the customer details (this may well be higher for venues selling cinema tickets). . Specific dual Box Office Manager and Marketing Manager training workshops can explore the options and implications for both teams.
- It is recommended that the small number of organisations with significantly failing hardware, speedily seek support to have equipment replaced or supported in a different way. Without which will clearly undermine the work of the Box Office.
- Considering the importance of backups and then storing these backups off site, it is recommended that all Box Office Managers immediately confirm that this is happening comprehensively on a regular basis. These are essential requirements and while such precautions are rarely required they are business critical.
- Aplin Partnership is surprised that only 27% of participating organisations record all concessions sales against the individual reason. It is recommended that Box Office Managers are encouraged to work with their marketing and programming departments to explore how this simple functionality of their systems could be best utilised.
- It is recommended that the practice of deleting the customer records of 'lapsed' customers – particularly when this kicks in after 5 years or less is reviewed. As years of research into customer behaviour builds up (it has been possible to record customer booking history since 1988) it is increasingly apparent that some customers re-attend after many years gap and do not regard themselves as in any way lapsed. Additionally hardware improvements mean that it is not so necessary to regularly 'purge' a customer database to minimise storage and maintain system performance. There is also an important difference between a customer database, and a customer mailing list.

- It is recommended that Marketing Departments and Box Offices ensure they communicate about their 'lapsed' customer policy and procedures.
- A total of 41% Box Office Managers replied that they either did not know what percentage of duplicates they had, or that they had none at all. As duplicates are created all the time – a significant proportion as a result of internet ticket sales (Provenue Max creates a new customer record each time an internet booking is made, and for all other systems, it is apparent that customers regularly fail to use existing registration details and sign up again) – no system could have zero duplicates. It is recommended that all Box Office Managers accept the inevitability of duplicates and adopt a regular ongoing programme of de-duping. The impact for all analysis and mailing is so great that significant ongoing effort is justified.
- The benchmark of staffing types is a useful comparison for Box Office Managers and there will always be a tension between using well trained experienced, but expensive staff - and casuals. With appropriately targeted induction and management many organisations take advantage of the flexibility and cost effectiveness of casuals whilst not sacrificing quality of customer service. Studies have shown that the gender, age and appearance of venue staff impacts upon customers sense of 'belonging' – they tend to feel more comfortable when they see staff who 'look like them'. For example if a venue was attempting to make young people feel more at ease, considering employment practices and location of recruitment materials which would enable students and young people to apply might be helpful.
- It is clear that a significant number of Box Offices close or offer very limited opening hours over the weekend, it would be valuable to explore how busy Box Offices are that open as standard with longer hours over the weekend. It may be that organisations who are closed over the weekend, will see a large rise in internet business (if they offer this service).

There was a very strongly felt response to "What would make your job easier?" with the majority of respondents first answer being "More Staff". This is clearly something at the top of many Box Office Managers mind and perhaps user groups could help explore why this is such a significant problem and the impact that it is having. This response was common between venues both with, and without Internet Ticketing offering.

5.3 Internet Sales

- The wide variation in percentage of tickets sold via the internet between different organisations highlights the potential for many organisations. It is important to note that when a smooth, straightforward service is offered, customers will take advantage of it.
- Only 20% of participating organisations offer Pick your Own Seat functionality online, which extensive research has shown can make a significant difference to the adoption of internet ticket sales. The research here also shows that of the 10 organisations selling 40% or more of their tickets in this way only 3 of them do not offer Pick Your Own seats. This is largely a ticketing system functionality matter, and it is hoped that a solution will be found speedily.
- The graphs showing peaks in demand for sales channels is based upon Box Office Managers opinion, and shows that there is an increasing internet sales impact of changing booking times and patterns. It is recommended that some analysis of actual sales patterns compared to opening times is undertaken, perhaps leading to refining opening and peak staffing times in the light of technology solutions and changes in customer expectations.
- As the volume of internet ticket sales increases, exploring delivery methods which do not take up significant staff time will become more important. Only 2 organisations have kiosks for self service ticket collection and only 11 offer Print at Home. It is recommended that those organisations share their findings and thoughts.

5.4 Mystery Shopper email survey

- Out of the 71 organisations to which Aplin Partnership signed up (or attempted to sign up) for an email list only 23 enabled sign up and actually sent information emails during the two month test period. Considering the speed, cost effectiveness and flexibility of email marketing this is a surprisingly low adoption rate. This rate is not as low in the UK. It is strongly recommended that organisations collaborate and talk to their system suppliers to share learning and explore how email marketing adoption could be increased dramatically.
- 12 organisations had email lists but either only sent welcome or registration emails or sent nothing at all. Clearly establishing an email list is one thing, and maintaining the flow of information another for some organisations. It is recommended that organisations themselves spike their email lists and actively monitor the outcomes.
- Requiring a two stage registration process in order to activate joining the email list is frequently regarded as old fashioned and cumbersome. There will always be a significant drop off rate, as users do not realise they must do the second step – which potentially leaves customers feeling that nothing has been sent despite their sign up. It is generally regarded as an outdated precaution as the public become more internet savvy and in other websites they use, experience simple, fast, one step sign up.
- Whilst many organisations are clearly hesitant to email their customers a small number have taken to it with gusto. It is suggested that organisations consider the effectiveness and potential un-subscribe rate if they email too frequently and with too many show specific offers or information. It can feel like bombardment. A number of UK organisations are starting to offer two different email sign up lists – which enables the user to chose between frequent regular communication, or monthly general overview communication. This clarifies what users are signing up to and has been shown to reduce un-subscribe rates. However, unfortunately it would appear that many (86%) of the respondent venues are in no risk of bombarding their email list subscribers.
- The comparison between number and types of information email sent with both this survey and the DTP survey shows clearly that organisations who send event specific emails, run the risk of swamping the subscribers.
- It is recommended that all organisations regularly emailing their customers, scrutinise their un-subscribe rates following periods of activity – this is a simple, crystal clear way of determining customer satisfaction.
- A significant number of the regular email subject lines started with the phrase “E-Newsletter” or similar, it is proposed that whilst this may be the internal classification, it is not so relevant to the customer and with every letter of the subject line being important, it is arguably redundant. If the Sender is the organisation name (which in all but 2 instances it was) then the customer will expect to be receiving news...the question is what does it contain and what time period does it cover. It is recommended that organisations compare their outcomes to see what works most effectively as email is immediately and directly measurable.

5.5 Place of Box Office

- The correlation between Box Office Managers feeling ‘valued’ by their organisation and how much their opinion is sought over customer facing issues is not surprising. Years of research and observation by Aplin Partnership and others shows that Box Office Managers and their teams have a very accurate sense of the audiences preferences, behaviour and attitude. This is mainly gained because they spend almost all day, every day talking and listening to customers. When this knowledge is ignored by the organisation and decisions taken about brochure layout and design, website design, special offers or targets without reference to their opinion, it is at best a missed opportunity and at worst de-motivating.
- Box Office staff are generally very shrewd at estimating eventual show takings, and have a very detailed knowledge about customers feelings about printed and web site marketing materials because customers tell them. It is recommended that this line of rich customer feedback be systematically gathered and work undertaken with Box Office to explore how they could expand this area of expertise.
- Box Office Manager’s salaries vary over a fairly wide range, but there is not a notable correlation between Box Office Manager salary and the number of customer records held on their ticketing system. It may prove useful for user groups to consider what factors are contributing to their salaries, particularly when comparing organisations of similar size and complexity.

- The rate of casual staff pay is very variable and does not seem to follow a pattern. Just because a lower basic hourly rate is paid, does not mean that there is a higher Penalty rate. The gap between basic and penalty rates is also noticeable. It is recommended that specific rates are compared and in particular the circumstances when penalty rates kick in. Some organisations are specifically not paying a penalty rate and presumably this impacts upon their cost of opening at weekends and evenings.
- Only 64% of Box Office Managers reported that their organisation's kept training records.

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Beth Aplin was brought out to Australia as a speaker for the 2009 and 2010 conferences by the NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference.

NARPACA TICKETING PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE

The NARPACA Ticketing Professionals Conference & Tradeshow has been hosted in four different cities over the six years it has been presented. The Conference attracts over 150 ticketing professionals from entertainment venues and organisations from around Australasia and South East Asia. The Conference runs over three days in conjunction with the Tradeshow for ticketing software and service vendors to demonstrate the latest developments.

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