

The Ultimate Buyer's Guide

TO PERFORMING
ARTS SOFTWARE



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DO TECH TOOLS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Performing arts organizations like yours exist to do all kinds of things—delight audiences with stunning performances, challenge people's impressions of the world, inspire them, and even introduce them to new art forms.

Making sure your patrons have a great experience every time they interact with you is a really important part of making those things happen. Before they even take their seat, people have formed an impression of your organization. Those impressions are informed by how you promote your show, how easy it was to buy a ticket, and how you communicate with them before and even after the performance.

The technology you use to sell tickets and communicate with your audiences influences all of those things.

The right tech tools will shape the entire audience experience. They'll make it easy for people to learn about upcoming performances and buy tickets, and they'll make it easier for you and your staff to manage patron data and keep them coming back to your shows again and again.

In this guide, you'll learn about five different kinds of tech tools: ticketing software, event management tools, fundraising platforms, patron management systems, and website builders. You'll get an overview of what they do, why they're important, and what tools and features to look for while you're evaluating your options.

TICKETING SOFTWARE

How do your patrons buy tickets to your performances?

Most of them are probably going online to make those purchases. That's why it's so important for you to use ticketing software that makes the process simple and straightforward.

Good ticketing software will be handy for your staff, too. They should be able to handle ticket sales, process refunds or changes, and answer questions from your patrons—all from the same system.

Why Good Ticketing Software Matters

Each interaction a patron has with your organization helps set the tone for their experience at the show.

If someone has a hard time finding your ticket options, choosing their seat, making a purchase, or retrieving their ticket after the fact, they may choose not to attend your performance at all. If they power through and manage to buy a ticket, they'll have begun their experience with you on the wrong foot.

A smooth, easy process, on the other hand, will make it more likely that they purchase a ticket and less likely to be skeptical when they walk through your doors.



Important Features In Ticketing Software

No two organizations have exactly the same requirements for their tech tools, but these are features that you'll probably want to look for when you've evaluating your options.

Straightforward Ticket Sales: Your patrons expect to be able to buy their tickets quickly and easily on any device without being forced to download an app.

Box Office Management: Your staff should have access to tools that make it easy for them to handle sales, process refunds, and answer patrons' questions.

Custom Seating Charts: Set up your layout and let patrons pick their seats.

Mobile Ticketing & Scanning: Contactless check-in is fast and convenient for everyone.

Flexible Pricing Options: Look for a tool that supports early-bird discounts, promo codes, group pricing, and your own unique pricing structure.

Secure Payment Processing: Your system should support multiple payment types and protect your patrons' information.

CRM Integration: Capture patrons' information and use it to personalize and segment future communications.

EVENT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Do you run events outside of your regular performances?

If you offer workshops, festivals, behind-the-scenes tours, or other options for your community to connect with you, you'll need a good event management software. The ideal tool will support you while you create and promote your event, sell registrations, and communicate with your attendees.

Why Good Event Management Software Matters

Events are powerful! They're opportunities to get people excited about the arts and engaged with your organization. But they can also be a ton of work, so it's important that you get the kind of high-quality engagement from them that makes all that work worth it.

Similar to ticketing software, a good event management solution will make it easy for your patrons to learn about your event offerings and then register to attend. It'll also be useful to your staff as they track registrations and communicate with attendees.



Important Features In Event Management Software

Custom Registration Forms: Offer different ticket options, share important event details, and make the registration process quick and easy.

Centralized Event Calendars: Keep your community members informed about upcoming performances.

Flexible Pricing Options: This is a repeat! Like ticketing software, your event management software should support different ticket types, early-bird discounts, and promo codes.

Automated Registration Confirmations & Reminders: Another repeat! Your tech should improve attendance and save staff time by automating proactive outreach about your events.

On-Site Check-In: Like ticketing software, this should speed up the check-in process and track attendance in real time.

Secure Payment Processing: You should be able to accept multiple payment types and keep registrants' information safe.

CRM Integration: Capture registrant's information and use it to personalize and segment future communications.

Reporting & Analytics: Understand your community's preferences and track your progress toward your goals.

FUNDRAISING SOFTWARE

If your organization relies on fundraising in addition to ticket sales for revenue, having a good fundraising tool is going to be a big deal.

These systems will give you the ability to process donations, recurring gifts, and pledges, and they should do so in a way that your patrons and the rest of your community appreciates.

Why Good Fundraising Software Matters

Giving your supporters a great donation experience is really important! A positive experience creates a positive impression of your organization, makes people more likely to complete a gift, and sets you up to build an ongoing relationship with them. A bad experience, though, can have the opposite effect.

A good fundraising tool is important for your staff, too. When it's easy to create nice-looking donation forms, automate follow-up communications, and quickly report on fundraising activities, you and your staff will be more successful while also saving time.



Important Features In Fundraising Software

Customizable Donation Forms: Build branded donation forms that make the process of supporting your organization quick and easy.

Flexible Donation Options: Look for something that supports one-time donations, recurring gifts, pledged gifts, and other forms of generosity.

Integrated Payment Processing: Accept credit cards, ACH, PayPal, and other popular payment methods.

Donor Segmentation & Reporting: Identify fundraising trends, understand giving behavior over time, and track your progress toward your goals.

Unlimited Access to Tools: Look for a tool that includes the ability to spin up multiple donation forms to support different fundraising campaigns and segmented appeals.

Automation Tools: Send personalized receipts, thank-you letters, and updates without switching platforms.

PATRON MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

How do you stay in touch with your community about upcoming performances and events?

You probably talk to them in a few different ways. Some channels, like social media and advertising, can be really effective ways to reach large groups of people. But others, like email communications and direct mail, require that you have access to accurate information about your patrons and how you can contact them.

The software you use to manage your relationships with your patrons—commonly known as a “CRM,” which stands for Constituent management systems”—will make it possible to do that.

Why Good Patron Management Software Matters

All of the things you need to do to build a community will be easier if you have a CRM. Tracking people’s engagement with you, sending newsletters and other emails, promoting your events, and sending personalized communications all require that you have access to patrons’ data... and that’s exactly what a CRM does.

A good CRM will also simplify your reporting, track your revenue, sell and manage memberships, raise money, and more. It’s a big deal!



Important Features In Patron Management Software

Event Management & Ticking: The best CRMS for performing arts orgs have the kinds of event management tools we discussed above built right into the system.

Comprehensive Patron Profiles: Store and update information like contact details, performance and attendance, communications preferences, and more.

Audience Segmentation: Group your patrons by their behavior, preferences, or demographics, then use those segments for targeted outreach and communication.

Integrated Email Tools: Send newsletters and updates, promote performances and events, share updates, and deliver thank-you messages all from one place. You should be able to automate some of this, too!

Fundraising Features: Accept donations, track pledges, report donor impact, and analyze your community's giving trends.

Membership & Subscription Management: Promote things like loyalty programs or season ticket packages, communicate with members, and keep them engaged year after year.

Reporting & Payments: Process transactions, report on your activities, and track your progress toward your goals.

WEBSITE MANAGEMENT

Your website is the hub of your organization's online presence—it's where people will go to learn about you, find information about upcoming performances and events, buy tickets, donate, and otherwise get involved.

That's why it's so important that your website be both beautiful *and* functional. And the right tool will make both of those things possible!

Why Good Website Builders Matter

Your website should help you achieve a few really important goals. It should make it easy for people in your community to find you, learn about you, see your upcoming events, and get involved with supporting your work.

A good website builder with an easy to use content management system (CMS) will give you the ability to build and maintain a site that achieves all those goals without having a background in design or coding.



Important Features In Website Builders

Brand Consistency: It should be easy for you to apply your organization's logo, brand colors, fonts, and other branding elements to every page.

Drag-and-Drop Editing: Look for a system that makes it easy for you and your staff to build or update pages without needing technical expertise.

Options for Integrating Calendars: Integrating your content management system and your events management platform can save you and your staff a ton of time.

Mobile Responsiveness: Make sure your site looks great and is easy to use on phones, tablets, and desktops.

SEO & Analytics Tools: Help people find your organization online, read about you, and track how they engage with your content.

Accessibility Features: You should be able to use your CMS to ensure your content is easy to access and navigate.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN BUYING A TECH TOOL

Buying a new tech tool is a big deal, and the process can feel a little intimidating. Here's what to expect as you talk with vendors about their products and decide which is the best fit for you.

1

Research

You're doing this part right now! Have some internal conversations about the problems you want to solve with your new tech. As you do, make sure you consider your long-term goals, too, including goals you have for growing your organization. The perfect solution will be a great fit for your organization now and as you grow over the coming years.

Look at several different solutions and weigh the pros and cons of each. After you've identified a handful of potential tools, it's time to move to step two.

2

The Initial Contact

The buying process starts with you! Once you've decided you're interested in a tool or solution and have an idea of what you want, the next step is to contact a few different vendors.

Submit a demo request on your chosen vendors' websites or pick up the phone and give them a call. They'll ask you to provide some basic information like your name, your email address and phone number, your organization's name, and the best way to contact you.

3

The Discovery Call

Your vendors will usually ask to schedule a call with you to learn more about your organization and your needs. The length of these calls will vary based on the number of questions you have and what features interest you.

Expect to spend around 15 minutes on this conversation, but build a little wiggle room into your schedule if you have lots of questions. During the discovery call, your vendor will probably suggest a specific tool or solution that's the best fit for your organization, and they'll work with you to find a time to give you a guided tour of the platform.

4

The Demo Call

Now it's time to see the software in action!

Your vendor will walk you through a demo that will give you a feel for the platform's interface. Since this is a live call, the sales team member can tailor the demonstration to address your specific needs and highlight the features that will be most helpful to you. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

If you can, get others from your organization involved with the demo, too. Your executive director, bookkeeper, front of house manager, and even board members may be interested in this process. Including multiple people on the call who will use the tool in different ways will help you ensure you ask all the important questions.

5

The Trial & Comparison Process

Some platforms provide free trials or self-guided tours you can use to get a feel for how you'll use a particular tool on a day-to-day basis. During your demo call, ask about any opportunities to poke around the platform on your own.

Try making a list of pros and cons for each platform you're considering. Make sure others at your organizations are involved in this process, too!

6

The Data Review

This step is an important one if you're moving patron information, show details, or other data from one system to a new one! You'll work with your chosen vendor to start the migration process. You'll provide them with all of your current data, which they'll use to run a data analysis.

Depending on how difficult the data migration process will be, your vendor will help you decide if you can handle it alone or if you'll need the full or partial help of a consultant.

7

The Signing

You've found a tech tool you love and have a plan for implementing it. It's time to make it official! Your vendor will provide you with a formal contract—all you have to do is read and sign.

8

Training and Onboarding

Depending on how comfortable you are with your new tool, you'll probably want to get some training from your new support team. As you get your account set up, take advantage of any and all educational opportunities available to you.

Support articles and walkthrough videos are a great place to start. You may also have access to things like onboarding courses, webinars, or workshops that focus on specific tools and features in the platform.

If you're dealing with a big move or want personalized help, you may also want to consider purchasing dedicated one-on-one training or coaching.

9

Success!

You've found the perfect tool, gotten it all set up, and learned how to use it. You're ready to go—break a leg!

CASE STUDY: PACIFIC OPERA PROJECT USES TECH TOOLS TO BOOST FUNDRAISING BY 30%

Pacific Opera Project (POP) is an organization that brings accessible, affordable, and entertaining opera productions in Los Angeles.

Tickets sales for their productions account for around 40% of their revenue. The rest of their funding comes from fundraising and grants. They needed tools that let them handle ticket sales and fundraising alongside managing their donors' and patrons' information.

To achieve that, the team uses two tools: Arts People for ticket sales and Neon CRM for fundraising and data management. Since both are both part of the Neon One platform, they work together to give the POP team a complete view of how their community interacts with and supports them.

“Say I want to do a mailing to people who have never made a donation before, but who are very loyal ticket buyers and have come to at least six shows in the last three seasons,” said executive director Katherine Powers. “I can pull that report from Neon CRM using the data that’s coming from Arts People. It really helps us pull reports and helps us make fundraising segments.”

Their approach is working—using connected tech tools resulted in a 30% increase in fundraising for POP between 2023 and 2024.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

WHAT CAN YOU ACHIEVE WITH THE RIGHT TECH TOOLS?

Pacific Opera Project used their tech tools to sell tickets, manage patrons, and increase their fundraising by 30% in a year.

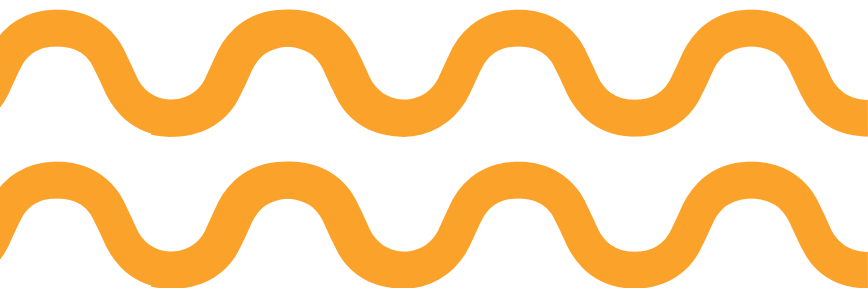
You can do the same thing!

See Our Performing Arts Software In Action

Neon One's platform includes the tech tools you need to build and manage your website, sell tickets, manage events, and engage your community—and you can do it all in one place.

Want to see it in action?

[TAKE A TOUR](#)



Bonus: Questions to Ask When Evaluating Tech Vendors

Not sure what to ask potential vendors? These questions will help you start important conversations about their products and how they'll work for you.

☐

Who is your software built for?

Make sure your vendor understands your organization and your needs. Try following up by asking "Who are your typical customers?"

☐

What are your contract terms?

Will you have to sign a multi-year contract? Can you switch at any time? Will they automatically renew your contract?

☐

How do we get paid?

How frequently will you get deposits from your vendor? How does that process work?

☐

How do ticket prices work?

Can you offer promo codes? Early bird discounts? Group pricing?

☐

Does this work on mobile?

Can patrons easily choose their seats on mobile devices? Will they have to download an app to make purchases?

Bonus: Questions to Ask When Evaluating Tech Vendors

☐

What about subscription options?

Can you design series, pick-your-own options, flex pass subscriptions, or membership programs?

☐

How do you handle online comps?

Can you accommodate comp requests for performers or sponsors? Is it easy for staff to manage them?

☐

What happens with canceled events?

How easily can the system handle refunds? Can it convert ticket purchases into donations?

☐

Can I design custom tickets?

What's the process for designing or customizing your own tickets?

☐

How does your database work?

Can you tell who's an individual and who's a group? What data do you collect?

Bonus: Questions to Ask When Evaluating Tech Vendors

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How can I communicate with patrons?

What are your options? Can you send emails? Text messages? How do you track engagement with your community?

☐

How does reporting work?

What can you report on? Can you build your own custom reports? Can you build a dashboard for easy reference?

☐

Are there fundraising options?

Can you create donation forms that support one-time donations, recurring gifts, or pledges?

☐

What else can I do?

Does the platform include other features, like volunteer management, grant tracking, or other functions you need?
