



## case study

### National Theatre delivers a great performance with Dynamics NAV

*"I'm very impressed with our Dynamics NAV partner, Metaphorix, and in particular with their support system.*

*If we email them with a query or problem, they acknowledge it immediately and resolve it very quickly."*

**Liz Murray**  
Costume & Furniture Hire & Transport Manager  
The National Theatre

The Hire Department of the Royal National Theatre is based in Kennington, where all the costumes, armoury, props and furniture from previous National Theatre productions are stored in two large warehouses.

With thousands of costumes and ancillary items floating around their productions, greater control of the inventory was essential. That's when Dynamics NAV was thrust centre stage.

#### The Company

The Royal National Theatre, London, is generally known as the National Theatre or The National. Founded in 1963, it is one of the United Kingdom's two most prominent publicly funded theatre companies, alongside the Royal Shakespeare Company.

From its foundation until 1976, the company was based at the Old Vic theatre in Waterloo. It is located next to the Thames in the South Bank area of central London.

The theatre presents a varied programme, including Shakespeare and other international classic dramas, together with new plays by contemporary playwrights.

The National has an annual turnover of approximately £54 million.

The National Theatre's costume department has over 60,000 items of costume related stock and every time there is a new production, the designer and prop buyer will visit the warehouses to see what they can re-use.

The costume department also offers a costume hire service to other theatre companies, schools and colleges. The Hire Department has four permanent members of staff and one prop hire assistant.

#### The Challenge

The costumes and props had never been put on a permanent inventory.

Whenever anything was hired out to the National Theatre or external clients, a list of items was printed up but it wasn't recorded anywhere and no history was available.

It was a very repetitive, time-consuming process and it also wasn't a secure way of keeping track of the costumes and props.

According to Liz Murray, Costume and Furniture Hire and Transport Manager, they decided they needed a system to streamline the process and eliminate all the repetition.

*"After looking at a number of solutions, we selected Dynamics NAV, particularly for its integrated Inventory application, which could easily be modified. We didn't need the full accounting functionality, as our financial reporting is through the main National Theatre Accounts Department."*

#### The Solution

The National Theatre's Hire Department is now using Dynamics NAV to produce a permanent computerised inventory and streamline its hire out service, which was previously a repetitive, time-consuming manual process.

## CLIENT PROFILE — Royal National Theatre



The Royal National Theatre, London, is generally known as 'the National Theatre' or 'The National'.

Founded in 1963, it is one of the United Kingdom's two most prominent publicly funded theatre companies, alongside the Royal Shakespeare Company.

### Solution

Microsoft's Dynamics NAV

### Benefits

- Accurate tracking of valuable costume items
- Faster processing of hire transactions
- More efficient handling of incoming stocks
- Improved inventory processes

The Hire Department purchased Dynamics NAV, including General Ledger, Sales and Receivables, Inventory and Contact Management.

The Inventory application was customised to meet the Department's specific requirements by the Microsoft Gold Partner that sold the system to the National and helped to successfully install it for them.

The partner, Metaphorix, is based in Coleshill, near Birmingham and they came to the project with a reputation for quality installs and the ability to handle complex implementations.

The changes made to the Inventory module included a much fuller description of each item, essential to their type of stock item. An extended text facility was incorporated.

They needed to know the colour and fabric of the items and whether the props were made or bought. They also needed a description of the item's character, gender, condition, the period, the production it came from and the style.

All this was easily added by Metaphorix so that the system delivered the control that the National needed over its inventory of costumes and props.

### The Benefits

The Hire Department has been using the Dynamics NAV system since January 2000.

*"Every time someone comes in to hire, each item is barcoded and its full description is entered into the system, if it isn't already there",* explains Liz.

*"An order is then produced and is posted to an invoice. We then have a facility for checking off items as they're returned.*

*The system provides us with a history of the items we've entered into the system, what they've been used for and how many times they've been out on hire.*

*We're also including photographs so we can email pictures of the costumes and props, which is really useful if clients can't visit the warehouse in person. Contact Management is being used as our client database."*

Liz points out that staff are now able to make better use of their time as more and more items are added to the system.

*"It's an ongoing process because we have such a backlog of stock, but it means that staff aren't repeating work. Once an item is entered into the system, it's in there for good."*

Dynamics NAV is speeding up the hiring process and allows staff to spend more time with clients. It's also improving the security of costumes and props. For example, when people are returning the items, it's easy to check on the system whether anything is missing.

The Hire Department produces weekly reports to the National Theatre's Accounts Department. These include all the paid invoices during a specific time period and all the unpaid invoices.

Statements and reminders are produced and also reports of items that should have been returned and have overrun their hire period.

Overall, the Hire Department can't imagine how they coped before Dynamics NAV was installed. It's now the theatre group's MVP (most valuable prop).



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