



case study

Dynamics NAV given standing ovation by Royal Exchange Theatre

“Dynamics NAV is an extremely user-friendly and flexible system that enables us to have instant access to up-to-date information, saving a great deal of time and aiding our decision-making.

Our Microsoft Partner, Metaphorix, is most professional. They have a good understanding of our business requirements and are very responsive to our queries and needs.”

Barry James
Director of Finance
Royal Exchange Theatre

As part of a major capital refurbishment programme after the IRA bomb damage in June 1996, the Royal Exchange Theatre needed a new software system.

Although it is a registered charity and not in the business of making a profit, the theatre needed to keep very tight control of costs to determine the success of productions. That's when Dynamics NAV stepped out of the wings, into the spotlight.

The Company

Established in 1976, the Royal Exchange Theatre is one of the largest subsidised repertory theatres in the UK, with an excellent reputation for producing classics as well as new plays.

Situated in the heart of Manchester, the theatre contains some of the most unusual and attractive spaces in the North West.

Convenient for all major road, rail and air connections, it is also within walking distance of several of the city's top hotels. It is well situated for a wide range of cultural attractions, sports facilities and quality shopping.

The theatre itself offers a varied programme of plays, concerts, and other special events, which provide the ideal opportunity for you to enjoy a tailor-made theatre entertainment package including catering.

The theatre's auditorium is a seven-sided, glass-walled capsule, literally suspended from huge marble pillars situated in the Great Hall of the Exchange.

The unique design means all seats are less than nine metres from the circular stage giving great views from all angles.

The Challenge

On Saturday 15th June 1996, at peak shopping time on Father's Day, a 3,000lb bomb exploded in Manchester city centre, injuring more than 200 people and ripping the heart out of the city's main shopping and entertainment district.

Soon after, the Royal Exchange Theatre began a major refurbishment project – essential to repair the significant damage done as part of the IRA bombing campaign, which reached its height outside the Arndale centre on that fateful Saturday morning.

The Royal Exchange received emergency funding for relocation into a mobile theatre and temporary office. It was then given major capital funding from the National Lottery and Arts Council to rebuild their shattered home.

Getting the Royal Exchange Theatre back on its feet, and reopened in its original venue after such a massive blow, came to symbolise the entire regeneration of Manchester city centre after the havoc wrought by the bomb.

The Royal Exchange Theatre was rightly regarded as the jewel in the region's crown.

The work required to rebuild the theatre was massive, and so was the help given – an award from the Lottery totalling £25m.

To mastermind the refurbishment, the Royal Exchange went back to the original architects, Levitt Bernstein. Inside the main theatre space, the clarity of the design was reinstated with sound, lighting and flying systems upgraded, plus new air conditioning.

In the public spaces of the grand hall, bars, cafes, shops and entertainment areas were reinstated – all dramatically revealed by a new lighting scheme.

Backstage, similar far-reaching improvements were effected in dressing rooms, rehearsal, sound recording, office and backstage support spaces, squeezed into the perimeter of the building. Importantly, a new 100-seat studio theatre was commissioned in place of the workshop.

Finally, the regeneration was completed by the installation of new systems to cover bookings, the box office and accounts. The theatre decided that they would look for an integrated solution to replace and improve upon the old RITA accounts software and stand-alone payroll system.

The Solution

After looking at a number of systems, the Royal Exchange selected Dynamics NAV Financials (then known as Navision), which was purchased at the end of June 1998.

The team they chose to help them install it was Top 10 UK Microsoft Partner, Metaphorix. They had a reputation for quality and the ability to handle complex projects.

The reasons for the choice of Dynamics NAV included the way it could 'cut and slice' the views of information about theatre departments and projects. In addition, it was Windows-based in line with the box office system and had the ability to cope with the future requirements of the theatre.

The Royal bought a Dynamics NAV Financials solution with integrated General Ledger, Sales & Receivables, Purchases & Payables, Cash Book and Payroll applications.

Payroll went live in September 1998, handling the pay for up to 250 permanent and part-time staff, with everything else up and running in mid-November in time for the theatre's grand reopening on 28th November that year.

CLIENT PROFILE — Royal Exchange Theatre



The Royal Exchange Theatre is one of the largest subsidised repertory theatres in the UK, with an excellent reputation for producing classics as well as new plays.

Solution

Microsoft's Dynamics NAV including Finance and Payroll

Benefits

- Easier reporting
- Flexible analysis
- Data drill-down
- Improved production costing
- Reduced manual processes
- Greater accuracy through automation of key processes

The Benefits

The installation of the Microsoft solution delivered a number of very important benefits for the theatre.

According to Barry James, Director of Finance at The Royal Exchange, the main benefit of Dynamics NAV is the ease of analysis and flexibility in being able to analyse expenditure either by total expenditure, department or project.

"Not only are there the detailed account codes for different areas of the operation such as payroll and overhead income, but it's possible to analyse income and expenditure by departments.

We can break things down into cost centres, such as the education department, marketing department and wardrobe. We can also analyse income and expenditure by project, which is enormously important.

I guess that many operations have a fixed number of projects, which are constant. But, being a theatre, we have nine main house productions and other productions in the studio each year, which we treat as separate projects.

With Dynamics NAV's flexibility, we can set up a new project for each new production and then analyse the income and expenditure, not only by department but by a particular project."

He also finds that the on-screen analysis is excellent and extremely easy.

"If I want to find out how much we've spent over a particular period or have a breakdown of expenditure on a particular project or department, I can get that information very quickly on the screen without having run off a report.

Additionally, there are very good drill-down facilities to enable interrogation of information on the screen."

On the reporting side, the Royal Exchange has been helped by its Microsoft partner, Metaphorix, who have developed various reports within Dynamics NAV that are unique to the theatre.

They include detailed production reports showing costs, which are very useful for the Production Manager so that he can see what is being spent on any production as it's going along.

These production reports incorporate commitments, which is particularly important for the Royal Exchange as a producing theatre, making and building its own productions. The Dynamics NAV bespoke reports, particularly on the production costs, are very helpful in this respect.

On the Payroll side, they have an interface to the Nat West Bank, enabling them to send information electronically to the bank for BACS payments. This saves a tremendous amount of administration and paperwork.

Overall, the theatre staff feel that the Dynamics NAV solution thoroughly deserves a standing ovation.

For more information about our products and services, please call: **01675 432400**, email us at: sales@metaphorix.co.uk or visit our website: www.metaphorix.co.uk