

Agent API

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Matt started by talking about the agent and venue relationship. It's not a new concept and it's been working quite effectively for many years. However, there are quite a few outdated processes and concerns that need addressing in order to prevent the relationship from lagging behind innovations in other areas of the box office. With the agent effectively playing the middleman between the customer and the venue, some organisations may be perturbed with not being in control of the transaction and therefore the customers data. Venues love audience loyalty and the use of an agent could be seen to dilute the relationship a customer has with them.

There are two types of commission - inside and outside. The outside commission is placed on top of the ticket price whereas the inside commission is a discount on the face value of the ticket price retained by the agent. The concern with the latter is that the venue will receive a smaller total yield on the show. Organising allocations, marking back seats and reallocating tickets, requesting, retrieving and compiling sales figures are all laborious and time consuming tasks both for the venue and the agent. With allocations it can be difficult to successfully negotiate supply and demand.

However, working with ticket agents can make a really positive contribution to a theatre's audience and its revenue. There's a better way of working together that will benefit the venue as much as the agent. Technology obviously plays a huge part in this which is why we have developed the Agency API. It's a way for agents to access a venue's system via a live feed in order to sell tickets for your event. Unlike our competitors, the Spektrix Agency API uses an Open Access model which allows everyone to sell from the same seating plan. So unlike manual agency sales, where you would lock off certain seats and assign them to a specific agent, everyone is selling the same allocation.

API allows a much more flexible working relationship with agents by effectively turning them into an advanced web booker. Venues shouldn't panic because agents will only have the ability to *sell* tickets via the API and the venue decides which events they have access to. Any exchanges or refunds must be processed by the venue, meaning they are in complete control. In order to access the Agency API some development work is required from the agency's technical team but once this is done it is a relatively simple process to set up agents on your system. You do this by a combination of setting up Agent Commission Structures and assigning them to Customer Records

Each commission structure in Spektrix is made up of different Event Rules, which enables you to set a different inside commission for instances. The structure is then assigned to the agent's customer record along with an API credit limit, although it isn't mandatory for an agent to receive an inside commission at all. If both parties are happy for the agent to just charge their own booking fees, the inside commission can be set to zero in Spektrix. See slide 14 for a list (in no particular order) of agents who have already built an integration with the Spektrix API. Other agents are available but just bear in mind that it might take a little longer to get set up.

So what are the benefits? Well from a customer's perspective they get unrestricted access to allocations, meaning they don't have to go trawling through different websites to find the best seats as everyone is selling the same. This means they get to shop around for the best deal and have the freedom to choose any booking path they wish to get to the same goal. This in turn should produce a better, more consistent booking experience. The venue benefits are that they get to remain in the ultimate position of power. They also receive free marketing from agents driving sales through their channels to their own broader and wider audience. This in turn means exposure to more customers. Also the venue can ensure the best price remains with them.

There's no more time wasted on mark backs and reallocating tickets and no last minute mark backs resulting in empty rows or seats; because all sales are done in real-time you get instant reporting. So no more waiting for agents and sellers to send you're their figures before you can generate a total and analyse sales! Your team can then focus on more value-added tasks such as focusing on the customer's experience upon arrival and thinking of ways to embrace and engage with the newer, wider audience. You also have time to properly measure success, so if a particular event isn't selling very well, think about upping the inside commission as an incentive for the agent to drive sales harder.

The agent also receives benefits. Chief amongst them is that they have open access to the full seating plan, meaning they are not restricted to a small allocation right at the back of the auditorium next to the bins and the leaky urinals. They get to stay on sale too because there is no mark back procedure. London Theatre Direct recently saw an increase in sales of 600% due to their API strategy.

So customers, venues, agents, grandma, auntie Maureen, Tiny Tim – everyone's a winner baby, that's the truth.