

SPEKTRIX WORKSHOPS 2019

ACCESS TICKETING

Slides 1 & 2

This presentation looks at how to implement existing Spektrix tools to help make ticketing more accessible for everyone and create positive customer experiences online.

Being an access customer and having to pick up the phone or send an email in order to book tickets while everyone else gets the luxury of booking online simply isn't fair. Just making it possible for your access customers to buy tickets online is the very tip of the iceberg – we're also going to look at how you can make your access performances easier to find online, using dynamic content in dotdigital to give specific information to people based on their access requirements, and how you can improve people's experience *in your venue*.

That might sound like a whole heap of work, but never fear! There's plenty that can be done easily in Spektrix to make your venue much more accessible to everyone.

Slides 3 to 7

Let's kick off with a pop quiz:

Q. How many people in the UK identify as disabled?

A. 11 million. That represents about 1 in 6 people, which is an awful lot of people not to be catering for.

Q. What percentage of disabled people have experienced difficulty booking tickets online?

A. 82%. That's a potential 9,020,000 people to be having trouble getting at your lovely tickets.

The Purple Pound is the potential spending power of D/deaf and disabled people in the UK.

Q. But how much is the Purple Pound worth to the economy?

A. £249 BILLION!

Even if you look at this from a purely financial point of view, that's a LOT of money that venues are missing out on by not catering to a more diverse audience.

These figures came from Attitude is Everything, a fantastic, disability-led charity who support organisations in making what they do more accessible and inclusive for D/deaf and disabled people. Every two years, they publish a State of Access Report, examining the barriers faced by D/deaf and disabled people when trying to book tickets.

Slide 8

A good place to start is identifying your access customers and, handily, one of the easiest ways to do this is to let them identify themselves. When a customer creates an account with your organisation, why not make adding their access requirements part of the process?

Slide 9

The Nuffield Theatre in Southampton has an *Other Preferences* section in their account creation process, where customers can make their access requirements known. These are just some examples of possible

options, but they can include more venue-specific options. if needs be. Far from anything fancy, this *Other Preferences* section is actually nothing more than a humble Tag Group in disguise!

Slide 10

When you create a Tag Group in your Admin Interface in Spektrix, you can set it so that the Tags within it are available online by simply ticking the *On web* box when creating and/or editing it. These will then show up as an additional section of the Customer Record online, under *Other Preferences*.

Slide 11

When someone ticks one of these boxes, a Tag is created against their Customer Record.

Slides 12 & 13

Alternatively, you could add access requirements as Customer [Attributes](#) in your Settings Interface – Attributes are additional bits of custom information that are held against various concepts in Spektrix and Customer Attributes appear as part of the personal details section when customers create their account. These and Tags can be used to do all manner of wonderful things, including:

- Identifying access customers for your Front of House team
- Powering [Dynamic Content](#) in dotdigital campaigns
- Offering [Priority Booking](#)
- Unlocking specific seats
- Creating [Criteria Sets](#) for reports
- Giving access to particular Offers.

Slide 14

If you don't want to hold a customer's access requirements against their record, you've also got the option of using Order Attributes, also set up in the Settings Interface. An Order Attribute is collected when a customer processes their order and, handily, can be set on an Event level – so, if you only need to know someone's access requirements for a particular Event, you could use these.

Slide 15

If you have concerns about accessible seating being mis-sold when it comes to big names performing at your venue, you might decide that you want customers to identify themselves in person before these Tags can be applied to their record.

What we would generally recommend here is that you still allow people to self-identify any access requirements that won't give them access to, for example, locked accessible seating with online eligibility (which we'll be covering later), but will still allow them to have an all-round easier booking journey otherwise. If you're really not sure of the best way to go about that, have a chat with the Spektrix Support Team and/or our friends at Attitude is Everything.

Slide 16

Now that you know at least some of your audience base's access requirements, let's have a look at how you can make your access performances easy to find. Firstly, it's important to clearly signpost online when your access performances are happening. You've got a couple of options here, depending on what kind of Spektrix integration you're using.

Slide 17

The two different options you have are iFrames and API. Think of an iFrame as a window within your website, through which you see your Spektrix site. The API, on the other hand is a live feed of information from your Spektrix which allows you to create a custom booking pathway on your website.

Slide 18

Bolton Octagon use Event Instance Attributes to highlight online which performances are captioned, relaxed, etc. Then, through a clever bit of web design wizardry using the Spektrix API, they're able to give customers the ability to see either all performances, or just accessible performances for every Event they have on sale.

Slide 19

If you're using iFrame integration, that's no problem! We'd strongly recommend everyone have an Access Information page on their website for a number of reasons – to offer important info for access customers visiting your venue, for example – but you can also list all your access performances here, too.

The Royal Court have an awesome Access Information page. Firstly, it's easy to find – your Access Info should never take more than one click to get to from the homepage. It's simple to navigate, breaks things down by access requirement, gives full access details about the venue itself and includes a list of all upcoming assisted performances. Clear and easy to find information like this is a net benefit – after all, everybody wants to feel comfortable coming to the theatre.

Slide 20

As an aside: it's worth noting whilst we're talking about the Royal Court that *all* the videos they post online have captions; something often forgotten when making video content. We'd be happy to put you in touch with the marvellous folks at StageText if you'd like more information about learning to do this yourself, or to help you find the right person to do it for you.

Slide 21

Once a customer has found the access performance they want to book for, they then come to choosing their seats. You can easily use [Info Overlays](#) on a reserved seating plan for a particular performance that'll give customers additional information when they hover over a seat. You might already be using these to highlight seats with a restricted view or legroom – why not also use them to show which seats you'd recommend for caption users at a particular captioned performance, for example?

Slide 22

Similarly, if you're putting on a captioned event, you can also create a new [Layout Overlay](#) for a seating plan, using a different background image. This can highlight where the caption screens are in the space, allowing people to choose for themselves which seats are right for them.

Slide 23

You might already be using seating [Locks](#) to hold seats for ushers and such, or them to lock off your wheelchair accessible seats. But did you realise you can make locked seats available online to certain customers? Using Lock Type Eligibility, you can make these seats selectable by anyone who meets certain criteria - setting the eligibility for your locked wheelchair accessible seats to people with a specific *Wheelchair User* Tag or Attribute will allow them to unlock these seats online by simply logging into their account.

Slide 24

When a general user (i.e. a customer without that Tag or Attribute) logs in and goes to the seating plan, these locked seats will show up on the seating plan as greyed out and unavailable.

When someone who fits the eligibility criteria logs in online, the locked seats magically become available, showing up as stars – or, if you’ve named one of the locks Wheelchair and chosen *W* as its symbol, a wheelchair symbol – meaning these customers can have exactly the same experience booking online as all your other customers. No need to pick up the phone and speak to anyone.

Slide 25

If you don’t use reserved seating plans, you might want to consider the magic of multi-area unreserved seating plans. This can be especially useful for festivals, who might have a raised viewing platform for access patrons, but they’ll work for any unreserved plan and allow you to still lock off an allocation of tickets to those who’ll need them. Get in touch with the Spektrix Support team for more information about multi-area unreserved seating plans.

You could even create a [Customer List Schedule](#) that sends out an automated email to anyone who books these tickets, offering additional access information.

Slide 26

Much like with locked seats, you can also limit Offers to only be available to eligible customers – which means your Tags and/or Attributes can once again come into play and unlock a free Companion Ticket.

Using the Offers function, you can offer 2-for-1 tickets for customers to book their free Companion tickets online. You can limit the Offer to customers who fit a certain eligibility (for example, those who have a Tag that shows they require an Essential Companion) and also only permit one use of the Offer per customer per Event.

Giving away tickets isn’t always an obvious option, but this is just another one of these areas that highlights how a systemic change is needed. We’re talking about giving these tickets to *essential* companions, without whom these access patrons wouldn’t be able to attend. There might be pushback to this from promoters and producers, but this is one of those shifts in thinking that the sector really needs.

Slides 27 and 28

As a great example of best practice, Hull Truck make it really clear on their website what their access discounts are. They’ve created a downloadable step-by-step guide that carefully and thoughtfully explains exactly how to book online as an access patron, ensuring customers get the best Offers available, the best seats for their needs, and can book a companion ticket if needed. When it comes to your access info, the more detail you can give, the better.

Remember: it’s not about giving out freebies, it’s about getting people into your venue/festivals and making your offering as accessible as possible. If someone requires a free companion ticket in order to attend, they’ll either come with a free companion or won’t come at all. This seems as good a time as any to mention that Attitude is Everything’s report showed that the average ticket spend for disabled attendees of live entertainment is £48 and the average supplementary spend is £30.

Slide 29

Once you’ve found your access customers and enabled them to book their tickets online, why not start enticing them to do so with direct marketing that caters to their requirements and interests? For example: a beautiful dotdigital campaign highlighting that season’s upcoming access performances.

Slides 30 & 31

You can also send performance specific [Pre-Show emails](#), giving you the option to, for example, send an alternative version for a captioned performance. This can include general information about the performance for those who haven't self-identified as caption users, plus additional Dynamic Content that only appears to those who have.

Using Spektrix and dotdigital's integration, you can choose to have entire sections of the email that only show to bookers who have a particular Tag against their customer record. This is really useful for not bombarding those who don't need it with information, whilst ensuring those who do see everything they need.

Slide 32

Just as it's important that the booking journey is as free and easy as possible, your access customers' additional needs also need to be considered when they arrive at the venue.

Slide 33

Our friends at the Nuffield Southampton Theatres use a pre-show report, run daily, that highlights (amongst other things) the types of Locks held against an Event, as well as any access patrons attending that night's performance and their access needs based on Order Attributes given at the point of purchase. This gives the Front of House team a heads up about who to expect, allowing them to provide any additional help needed.

Slide 34

Another cool thing you can do is to create [Customer Groups](#) based on Tags - for example, you might make one called *Wheelchair Users* that everyone who's self-identified as a wheelchair user will be part of. This will show up in the Sales Interface for Box Office staff and can be set to show on Front of House scanners, making staff aware that they should direct the ticket holder to a particular area of the theatre. This is particularly helpful for performances with unreserved seating, as it allows Front of House staff to just scan and then guide people to the best seats for them without having to ask a bunch of questions.

Slide 35

If you don't use scanners, you can have an Order Attribute or Customer Attribute pull through to your ticket design - for example, the access Order Attribute of *Wheelchair* - so your Front of House team are aware when the customer shows their ticket.

If you're looking to help make sure your Front of House staff feel comfortable and equipped to assist your access patrons, Attitude is Everything and StageText both offer great support and training around disability awareness. In the end, everyone benefits from this - staff feel more confident and customers get better service.

Slides 36 & 37

In order to keep providing the best possible access offering, it's vital that you're able to report on previous events and learn from what worked - and what didn't. Using the Post-Show email tool, you can send an email a day or two after an Event, with a survey asking about customers' experiences and whether they made use of the captions (even if they weren't expecting to - you'll be surprised by how many people find them useful even if they wouldn't consider themselves a 'captions user').

You might also consider asking for any suggestions people have on how you might improve things - no one knows better what your access patrons need than your access patrons themselves.

Slides 38 to 42

If you're interested in learning a bit more about your access patrons' booking habits, you'll want the *Customer Behaviour Analysis report*, which is part of your standard suite of reports. Then comes the magic bit: create a Customer List of people who have particular Tags against their customer record, then run the customers on that list through this report to show:

- How far in advance people booked (slide 39)
- The sales channel through which they booked (slide 40)
- Which other Events they've booked for (slide 41)
- The Offers they used (slide 42)

Using this information, you can get to know your access visitors and build on your access offering. If, for example, you see an overwhelming number of BSL users are purchasing tickets for a BSL interpreted show you've got coming up, maybe it's worth putting on more interpreted performances of that Event!

Slides 43 to 47

So, let's have a look at some case studies, beginning with the Arcola Theatre in London, who recently moved to offering customers the opportunity to flag their access requirements using a Tag group that's available on the web.

Slide 45 shows what looks like this within their Spektrix, while slide 46 shows how it appears online, appearing as part of the account creation process after a customer's given their details, address and contact preferences.

Off the back of this, Arcola received a glowing tweet from a happy customer – saying that, even though they didn't have any access requirements of their own, it was the first time they'd seen such a comprehensive ask – and they were impressed enough that they gave the venue a donation!

Slides 48 to 51

Over in Hull, Danielle McLoughlin, Box Office Manager at Hull Truck Theatre, has done loads of great work on making online booking more accessible for everyone:

- Making their access page easier to find and use
- Adding access info to seating plans
- Enabling access tickets to be booked online
- Creating that How-To guide we saw earlier
- Crucially, getting customer feedback and making changes based on it.

The feedback Hull Truck have received off the back of this work has been great:

Once you're set up with Online Access, it is the easiest and quickest way currently offered within the city or anywhere else I know for booking accessible tickets."

"[The facility] actually encourages [me] to book more shows as I know I can do it online. I am currently considering at least 2-3 other shows next year."

It's also worth taking an opportunity here to highlight something which happens a lot: too often, access performances aren't 'sold' to anyone assumed not to 'need' them. You've probably heard stories of people being told, 'oh no, you won't want to come then, it's a captioned show' or similar.

Let's use captioned performances as an example: you'll find that even people who don't identify as D/deaf benefit from them. Not only does it mean people can attend the same performances as their caption-using friends and relatives, but everyone can get something out of captioning.

StageText worked with the Octagon Theatre in Bolton to put on captioned performances and record audience feedback: one performance was attended by 112 people, none of whom identified themselves as caption users. At the end of the show, 70 people – that's 63% of the audience – returned a card saying they found the captions useful.

Slides 52 to 55

If you're looking to get some more information regarding access, you'll be pleased to know there's loads of wonderful organisations who can help you:

- **Attitude is Everything** release their *State of Access* report every two years and can offer loads of support around making your venue and programming as accessible as possible. They're online at <http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk>
- **StageText** are a D/deaf-led charity who provide live theatre subtitling, training in best practice around captioning, advertise captioned shows and offer D/deaf awareness training. Their website is <http://www.stagetext.org/>
- **VocalEyes** provide audio description services, training and consultancy for arts and heritage venues – so not only for theatres, but also museums and other cultural venues. You can find them at vocaleyeyes.co.uk

Slides 56 & 57

Here the most important things to take away and start working from:

- **Consider the whole journey:** not just in-venue access, but the entire process from booking, through to attending the venue, through to communication after the fact.
- **Listen to your audiences:** they'll let you know if what you're offering is working for them or not. No one's going to get it all exactly right every time – so learn from your mistakes!
- **Organisation-wide change is needed:** it's one thing to make your online offer as accessible as possible, but what's ultimately needed is a shift in thinking; that theatre should be accessible to *everyone* and making it such isn't an imposition. This is vital.

Slide 58

Here's a few quick wins for you to consider:

- 5 minutes? Create Customer Attributes or a Tag Group that's visible on the web for customers to self-identify their access needs.
- 30 minutes? Set up online access booking using these Attributes, Tags or Memberships.
- 1 hour? Update your seating plans with access information using Info and Layout Overlays.

Slide 59

Please do get in touch with the Spektrix Support team if you've got any questions or want a hand implementing anything you've learned today.