Center Stage Software
1191 Luxton St.
Seaside CA 93955
P: 831.583.0641
F: 831.583.0643
www.centerstage.com

How to select a box office accounting program (and feel good about it in the morning)

We are frequently asked how our software is better than other software.

Here is a short list:

- The software was designed and built by box office people. This shows in a lot of small touches. Oddly enough, we seem to be the only company in this field that started out in a box office. Every other company is composed of programmers.
- It is easier to train people with our software. We hired and trained our staff to do box office work. We know the problems new people encounter.
- The reporting is far better than *anyone's* software. Yes, we do talk about this fact a lot, but we're proud of it. You can even create your own custom reports and save them.
- You can send data to other programs. We interface with Microsoft's Office Suite – and everyone else's too.
- Networking is already built-in. You don't have to pay extra. It really is multi-user. Two users can go to the same seating chart for the same performance at the same time. If they try to sell the same seat, the first user sells it and the second user receives a message – "seat already sold." Not every software program can pass this simple test.
- Our software costs less.

We are glad you are conducting some market research. As you are probably discovering, several companies offer similar products. Prices range from free (like our shareware) to $150,000 and more.

Here are a few hints to separate the wheat from the chaff:

Take a look at the sample reports these companies send out.

- Do they make sense to you?
- Do they make sense to your box office manager?

This is CRUCIAL. If the reports do not make sense, nothing else will. If the company does not send out sample reports, there probably is a reason. Cross them off your list.

Try the demo

Look at the flow of the program. Does it appear logical? Now, ask yourself the same questions that your customers will be asking. For example:

- "Who will I be sitting next to?" (Crucial for symphony and opera customers.)
- "Where was I sitting last season?" (Can you look up a customer's history a part of the sale?)
- "How much do the tickets cost for this night in this section?" (Can you get a list of the prices for one performance, and only that performance, during the sale?)

- "Are the seats any better on another night?" (How quickly can you bring up another chart for a different performance?)
- "Leslie gave me cash, George has a gift certificate, and I am paying by check. Is that OK?" (Can you enter sales with multiple payment types?)
- "Could you give me a receipt please?" (Can you give your customers a choice of receipts that you have customized?)

Now ask yourself:

- At the end of a day, can you run a report by day for all sales? Does it make sense?
- Can you "browse the report" and correct mistakes as you find them?
- Can you run a report by show, for a single performance?
- Are the donors included on the report?

Again, if the software vendor does not does not include a live demo, there probably is a reason. Cross them off your list.

Check the references. What do they say? Talk to (or email) several of them. Are their evaluations consistent?

The purpose of this procedure is to help you evaluate a piece of software. You will want to look at the product's functionality rather than brand promises.

Remember, your goal is to make everyone's lives better (including your own). The computer is a tool to do it.