



PROFILE

WORTHING THEATRES

Industry
Entertainment

Founded
1999

Website
www.worthingtheatres.co.uk

Category
B2C

Customer Since
2009

Film theatres utilise bulk SMS service to promote itineraries to customers

The Connaught Theatre in Worthing, originally called the Picturedrome, was built in 1914. For 20 years it was an early cinema, until 1935 when the Worthing Repertory Company outgrew its own premises and moved into the venue, bringing with it the name Connaught Theatre. In 1987 projection facilities were added and a full cinema programme now runs alongside the live shows.

In 1999 The Connaught Theatre and The Ritz (the original Connaught Theatre) came under the management of the local council (Worthing Borough Council), which decided to refurbish the venue and convert the Ritz into a permanent second cinema screen. In July 2010 it was brought right up to date with a digital 3D projector being installed. Both cinemas now offer the latest films, some film classics as well as the popular Saturday morning films for younger audiences.

The Challenge

The entertainment industry is extremely competitive with many different establishments and venues vying to attract customers. The Connaught and Ritz Cinema is no exception and needs to compete with other entertainment offerings in the area. Marketing is therefore a prerequisite, and making sure the message gets through is essential.

“We wanted to devise an awareness campaign and bring the cinema in line with lots of other cinemas, especially the larger companies,” explained the Film Officer, Connaught and Ritz Cinema. “Our aim is to make it as easy as possible for our customers to know exactly what is going on and let them know about the films that are on each week. Films are extremely frequent – they change every week – and sometimes we don’t necessarily get them confirmed until the week before. As a consequence, customers may not see our promotional material and be aware of what is on. Therefore, we wanted a quick and easy way to communicate with them.”

The Solution

In September 2009 Worthing Borough Council agreed that the cinema could exploit text messaging as a form of direct communication with its customers. The decision was made easier due to the fact that the Council already had an account with M:Science, using SMS Online for emergency communication with its councillors.

“When I came up with this idea I was informed that the Council already had an account set up and I was given permission to use it on a more regular basis. The Council still uses the text messaging service, but I am the only one with access to my personal contacts and the only one that sends out bulk messages. We decided that the

PROJECT

Objective
Develop an awareness campaign and promote film schedules to customers in order to compete with all the other entertainment facilities in and around Worthing.

Solution
Now uses the bulk SMS capabilities of SMS Online to issue alerts, reminders and promotional text messages to customers that have signed up for the SMS Service.



Business Impact
Number of customers opting in to the service is increasing every month, helping to increase attendances at the film viewings and supporting the marketing strategy.

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SMS Online has been described as being like Hotmail for SMS enabling users to simply send and receive text messages through a web browser. It provides users with default templates to draft messages and destination numbers for messages can be stored as 'Contacts' in either public or personal folders to enable them to be easily managed.

"I really like the templates option – I just overwrite the same template each week. Also, when I go on holiday and other staff members have to perform the task on my behalf I can just tell them to go online and use the template on a certain date – it's all set up for them. All they have to do is follow the guides that I've done and send it off."

The Results

Most people nowadays have constant access to their phones. People do have email on their phones but text messages are much easier to access than an email as you don't need to have an internet connection active to be able to receive the message.

"It's also short, sharp and to the point. With SMS you are restricted to 160 characters to get your message across. I think it's a good thing. People don't have to scroll down or go into something else to get the full information – they can look at it at a glance and see the information we are trying to communicate and make a decision on whether it is useful to them or not."

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"Because of the length that a text message is, sometimes you do have to think outside of the box – we never want to go over one message because that defeats the object in a way. Especially as messages sometimes don't come through at the same time – people will only get half of a film title – things like that – so we always keep it to the one text message. Sometimes you have to be inventive – maybe leave off things that are not as important or just be creative."

There are over 450 people currently subscribed to The Connaught and Ritz Cinema's SMS service and at least two to three people are signing up to it every other week.

"Strangely enough, when I send out a message we tend to get more requests for the service and more people registering. As our numbers are gradually increasing every now and then I suddenly realise that we don't have enough credits left on our account to be able to send the texts. However, M:Science is extremely accommodating and sorts it out for me. I can't fault any of the customer service at all. We do want to increase our usage, as I think it is a very valuable asset."



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