

Seattle Opera Goes Digital with DocuSign to Streamline Internal Workflows

- Contracts that took more than a month to complete now take minutes
- Countless hours spent sending reminders and correcting errors have been drastically reduced or eliminated.

Summary

It's been said that necessity is the mother of invention. The Seattle Opera needed a new and better accounting system, but had no idea how reshaping that process would end up reinventing the entire organization.

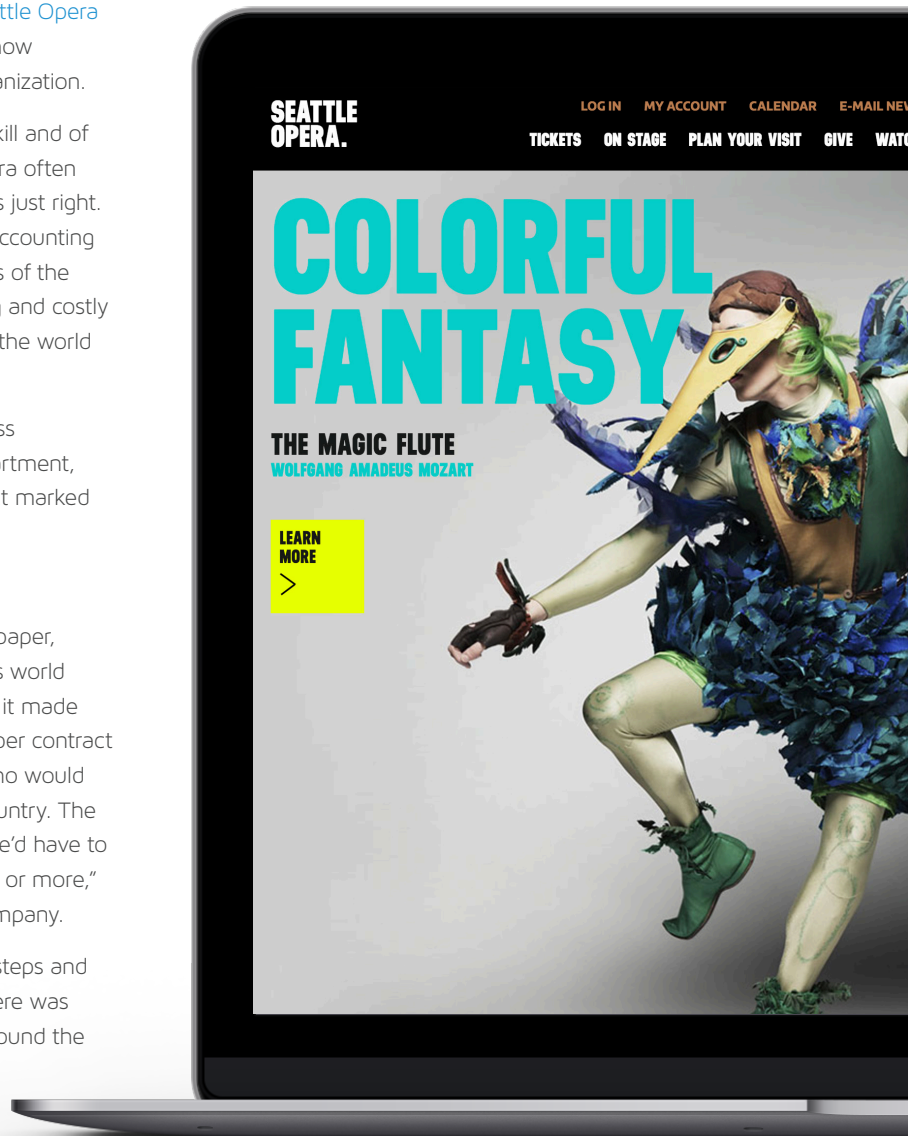
Putting on a great performance requires teamwork, planning, skill and of course, the best talent from around the world. The Seattle Opera often works years in advance of a performance to get all those pieces just right. Performer contracts are an important part of the process, but accounting and a thriving education department are also important aspects of the company. But all three required a complicated, time-consuming and costly paper dance – and not the type of dance that regularly earned the world renowned dance company standing ovations.

The company decided to transform digitally to become paperless organization. They decided to start small, in the education department, and give digital with DocuSign an audition. What happened next marked an efficiency turning point for the organization.

The Challenge

The Seattle Opera was buried in paper. Every process involved paper, especially securing top performers from around the world for its world renowned performances. Not only was paper burdensome, but it made processes exceptionally slow. "We would send performers a paper contract in multi-color form, which we would first mail to their agent, who would then mail it to the performer, often in a completely different country. The performer might sign it – or – come back with questions and we'd have to make changes and re-send it. That process could take a month or more," says Marissa Betz-Zall, CPA and CGMA of the Seattle Opera Company.

The overall office workflow was complicated, involving several steps and several people. Paper made workflows dramatically worse. "There was a lot of paper in the office – color coded contracts – floating around the



Results Achieved

- ✓ Performer contracts are completed much faster and with better efficiency
- ✓ A significant transformation in office work-flow
- ✓ Near elimination of paper in a once heavily manual process

office. It wasn't uncommon for ten or more people having to sign any given contract. Getting work done just took a really, really long time," says Betz-Zall.

Managing archived paper contracts proved challenging, as well. The Seattle Opera often begins work on a performance years in advance. Contracts are sent and signed, but once a particular show is ready for curtain opening, contracts signed long ago need to be retrieved. Locating those contracts was difficult and problematic.

Solution

Significant change occurred when the Seattle Opera updated their accounting system. No longer did the organization need to track and store massive paper files to work around their accounting system. "We could now make a full digital transformation with DocuSign. We hired a consultant to move to a much broader and bigger electronic transformation powered by DocuSign," remembers Betz-Zall.

"DocuSign was the perfect fit for the Seattle Opera. DocuSign offered better features, a more user friendly solution for our staff, performers and customers, and the price point was more attractive," says Betz-Zall.

The switch to digital was strategic and was executed incrementally for the Seattle Opera. "We started out small with DocuSign, achieving quick wins first in our education department. Then we rolled DocuSign out to finance and any department that interfaced with finance, including for employees approving expenses. And now, we use it across our entire organization for all our contracting," explains Betz-Zall.

Results

DocuSign has had a dramatic impact on the Seattle Opera. The system interfaces perfectly with the organizations new accounting software, and was fast to deploy and very easy for staff to begin using.

Tangible results were almost immediate – and significant. "With DocuSign, anyone in our office can quickly and easily send a set of contracts to ten or even twenty recipients within the Seattle Opera and beyond. DocuSign is so efficient and so easy to use that we get contracts back complete in minutes instead of weeks or months," exclaims Betz-Zall. "We love that we can now track the process from start to finish with complete visibility. We can see our DocuSign envelopes and know exactly where they are in the process and who needs to review and sign next. We can send a reminder if we need to hurry the process along. And there's no losing the document in someone's stack of papers," she adds.

The ease of use and efficiency that DocuSign has enabled has

"By incorporating DocuSign we have revamped everything. We have reevaluated our whole operational patterns. We are looking at the entire workflow – even if it doesn't involve electronic signature – and are making positive changes. Our digital transformation sparked a larger internal change in the way we do things to be more efficient."

– **Marissa Betz-Zall,**
CPA CGMA, Seattle Opera Company

extended beyond the walls of Seattle Opera. The Seattle Opera now uses DocuSign to get parent permission for children to visit the Opera on school field trips, as well as work contracts with individual contractors and other vendors.

"The Unions are very happy too. We asked if they would like to embrace digital signatures. When we told them we had converted to DocuSign, they said, "Actually, you send us massive packets of paper contracts all the time. We would love to go digital. You'll save us a ton of time scanning, reprinting and managing all those big files of paper," exclaims Betz-Zall.

But probably the most significant ROI for the Seattle Opera is the complete reimaging of the way things get done in the office by going digital with DocuSign. "We've cut out a lot of time for things like follow up and reminders because DocuSign automates it, making it a lot easier for our people. They don't have to waste time going to the post office. And we're seeing fewer errors due to issues like mistyping information from paper contracts and people working from an old contract when there is a newer version," says Betz-Zall.

What started as an incremental trial of DocuSign's Digital Transaction Management (DTM) platform and eSignature service quickly spread throughout the entire organization, leading to a total revamping and streamlining of workflows and processes. "We've expanded our use of DocuSign to even more sensitive documents like W-9s because the solution is proven in terms of security and privacy. Our next step is to expand into HR which includes other sensitive documents that contain information like SSNs and payroll payment details," concludes Betz-Zall.

About DocuSign

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