

Grove Theatre
Customer Forum Minutes
Saturday 2nd April 2011 10.30am



Leisure Connection Staff Present;

Jo Ditch – General Manager
Natasha Ingall – Deputy General Manager
Claire McFauld – Sales and Marketing Manager
Holly Skinner – Sales and Marketing Assistant
Teresa Jones – Education Manager

(N:B staff comments noted by initials)

JD Thank you and welcome to customers attending the forum. Since the last forum the Grove Theatre have launched the summer brochure, re-launched the Friends Scheme and also seen huge success in the film seasons with 6500 customers attending film screenings in the last 3 months.

Comments:

1) Customer Comment – Why are there so many tribute acts being programmed?

JD – There is a market in the community for Tribute shows, as seen by the Grove Theatre's continued audience figures for these types of shows.

2) Customer Comment – Why does the theatre not utilise the use of the building, doesn't seem to be much usage on a daily basis when there are not shows?

NI – The Grove has a large amount of daytime usage within the venue. The foyer and function areas are used regularly for training courses, workshops, children's parties, youth theatre and dance classes. Also this summer the Grove will be holding its first Wedding Fayre and Arts & Crafts Fayre. The Grove Theatre will help to support local businesses.

Film is programmed around the theatre shows as the Grove is foremost a theatre, and film therefore is secondary programming. Wherever possible the Grove is filling every slot that hasn't got theatre programming with film. This summer the Grove is excited about showing some of the summer's biggest blockbusters in the film season.

TJ – A questionnaire was sent out with the new Grove Theatre brochure asking what type of class customers would like to see on Wednesday evenings as this is the only night that the function room is not currently used. The Grove had a lot of feedback with lots of different ideas on classes that could run.

JD – As well as our successful Barnstormers Comedy Nights that take place in the Upper Foyer, the Grove are in talks with some comedy acts from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival about performing for smaller audiences in the Upper Foyer.

- 3) Customer Comment – Some people still don't know about the Grove Theatre, and you seem to only get small sections of editorial in local papers, why is this?

CM – Unfortunately local papers have had their space cut in their leisure sections, the Grove does get show coverage, from press releases that are sent to media organisations, however due to these cuts the Theatre's editorial coverage does sometimes not stretch as much as the Grove would like. The Grove Theatre has a very good relationship with members of the local press and the press does give the theatre coverage where possible.

The Grove is working with the Chief reporter of the Dunstable Gazette and the Theatre will hopefully be getting a regular slot in the paper for our Summer Musical Project - The Likes of Us.

- 4) Customer Comment - Is it possible to get some 'brown attraction' signs for Grove Theatre?

JD – The theatre is still in continued discussion with the High Ways Agency and the council regarding improving signage to the venue.

CM – The Grove have advertisements going up on billboards in the town and surrounding areas. The Theatre hopes to establish a good relationship with the company that provides the billboard sites in order to help increase awareness of directions.

- 5) Customer Comment - Why don't you try afternoon films for the 'older' audience offering tea and refreshments? As I have seen this work at other venues.

NI – The Grove Theatre have programmed some classic films and shown these films in the afternoon with a tea/coffee offer, although there wasn't a vast take up on these films. This may be due to possible transport issues that audience members may have. The Grove will look to build business links with a transport company should this be a barrier to attendance. The Grove has mailing lists, which were contacted and are in the progress of contacting regarding upcoming matinee shows and films.

6) Customer Comment – Is it possible to get more live music in the venue such as Jazz musicians?

JD- Whilst live music is something the Grove is very interested in, it runs a higher financial guarantee than other types of performers which is much more of a risk than how the Theatre usually programmes.

Sometimes the venue is too close to other venues where the live music artists are performing and so will not perform at Grove Theatre as part of their tour due to contract clauses.

- A customer suggested the organization Jazz Services to contact regarding Jazz performers.

NI- The Grove is holding Grove Music Fest on Saturday 17 September as an opportunity for local musical talent to perform on the stage at the Grove Theatre.

7) Customer Comment – Why does your phone system have so many options?

NI – This was a new system that the Grove has decided to trial with the phones to try and make sure that customers who are booking tickets can get through to the Box Office and those customers who are calling for booking information, venue information or any other queries are also able to get through to the appropriate person.

The Grove will be looking into changing the phone system's options to make it more user friendly.

8) Customer Comment – I find ordering tickets using your website not to be the most effective way, as does not always provide all the available seat options.

JD – This is due to the website provider & ticketing system that the Grove uses. The venue is currently looking into different providers to improve the service on the website with the 'select a seat' option when booking tickets online.

9) Customer Comment – Why do some acts say meet us in the bar afterwards for a drink, but then the bar is shut?

NI –The Grove Theatre are always watching the customer patterns after shows to see if it is worth opening the bar afterwards as this has been trialed without great success. For example the bar was left open after a performance last week and only 2 drinks were sold however the Grove are always looking at this option. The Grove Theatre bar does stay open after community performances if the company/ hirer ask for it to be opened.

10) Customer Comment – Is it possible to put an answer machine system at Box Office for when it is shut?

JD – The venue finds that during the weeks commencing after a brochure launch especially, that the Box Office are extremely busy. Calling customers back could cause a problem, however customers are able to book via email & post if they do not wish or cannot book over the phone however the venue will look into an answer machine to see if it is compatible with the phone system.

11) Customer Comment – We used to be ‘Friends’ of the Theatre, however didn’t think the membership package was that strong, as certain elements such as the cloakroom couldn’t be used. Also it may be nice to hold Friends Evenings?

JD – The Grove Theatre also felt that the old membership scheme wasn’t as strong as it could be which is why the scheme has been re-launched in line with the new season brochure.

A Friends evening is something that the Grove will look into organising as part of the new scheme.

JD – Thanked customers for attending the forum today and their feedback. Also wanted to inform customers that the Customer Forums are just one way of being able to contact the Grove Theatre with feedback, they are able to contact the Grove Theatre via phone, email and letters.

-Ends-

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 6th July 10.30am