



## Organisation Transformation Grant Case Study

### SISTIC - Shared CRM Platform

Company : SISTIC  
 Theme : Doing More with Less  
 Website : [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg)  
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#### Project Overview

SISTIC, one of Singapore's largest ticketing agency, created a shared customer engagement and marketing automation solution (referred to as "CRM system" henceforth) that is integrated with SISTIC's own data, so that arts groups who are clients can have an integrated multi-channel customer engagement platform without having to pay a hefty price for their own CRM systems.



#### Challenge

SISTIC noticed that many arts groups faced similar strategic and productivity challenges in marketing. Most of SISTIC's arts and cultural clients' marketing channels (website, emails, social media) were managed independently, and not integrated with their ticketing data. As a result, their arts clients were unable to have a deeper view of their customer's journeys across these touchpoints for effective marketing.

While there were ready solutions available in the market to cater for this, these solutions were not as seamless as they were not integrated with SISTIC's ticketing data, and it did not make commercial sense for most arts groups to invest resources in a more costly and sophisticated marketing automation tool. Even if they did, they would not have the bandwidth or expertise to operate it in-house.

#### The Vision

A customer engagement and marketing automation solution (or "CRM system") as a shared service that is integrated with SISTIC's own data, so that arts groups can have an integrated multi-channel customer engagement platform without having to pay a hefty price for their own CRM systems.



#### Outcomes in a Nutshell



8 pilot partners onboarded on the Customer Engagement and Marketing Automation system provided by CRM vendor, Braze



71% of partners agreed that the Braze platform is easy to use and navigate (based on survey)



86% of partners agreed that Braze allows them to perform more advanced marketing activities (based on survey)



71% of partners agreed that integration with SISTIC saves time with contact list management and marketing campaigns

#### Impact

Created access to a more sophisticated marketing tool that is integrated with SISTIC's data, to help arts groups streamline and improve marketing efficiencies. SISTIC wanted to give their clients the ability to consolidate customer profiles, track customer journeys, and send personalised and segmented messages at the right time to the right patrons – in short, help their partners achieve their marketing objectives; be it awareness, engagement, or conversions.

The project was a vision that had been waiting in the wings for 2 years - the fact that it had now been finally realised through the OTG, gave the SISTIC team a thrill of satisfaction. "We are really grateful to NAC for the grant. [The CRM system] will be a game changer in the longer run for the arts groups," said the SISTIC team.

### 3-2-1 Learnings

"SISTIC's teams were here to advise and translate the technical jargon to layman language."

#### 3 Must-Dos

Things you must absolutely get right

- Set clear expectations of your requirements and the timeline, especially when coordinating across many partners.
- Engage external parties or vendors with relevant expertise to guide people through the technical aspects of systems integration.
- Build trust and rapport through constant open communications, such as regular status updates and check-ins.

#### 2 Do-Next

Critical next steps to sustain the effort

- Develop a pricing model and document workflow, to scale for Year 2.
- Optimise full capabilities of CRM system – gather more use cases, potentially unlock features such as vendor/donor/artist management and loyalty programmes if feasible.

#### 1 Do-Differently

What they wished they had done differently from the start

- For very technical aspects of the project, the SISTIC team discovered it was better to make a collective decision on behalf of everyone; after all, having worked with the arts groups for so many years, SISTIC was already familiar with their business requirements. "Our partners would just turn around and ask us for our recommendations anyway," said Meilin Chan, Marketing Lead for SISTIC. "So we might as well short-cut the process to simplify the work required from our partners."

#### Challenge

Through on-going client engagement, SISTIC learnt that most arts groups had several pain points in managing their marketing efforts with the limited resources on hand. They typically used different ready and non-customisable solutions to address each marketing channel (e.g newsletters, website, social media), which operated in silos. For many arts groups, it was not commercially viable to invest in a sophisticated CRM and marketing tool.

At the same time, clients also needed to leverage SISTIC's marketing assets and ticketing data to engage audiences of their shows. Clients depended on their SISTIC account representative to manually download an audience list and then upload this data to their own marketing channels. As one could imagine, this was a cumbersome process with time lags that meant lost opportunities in real-time marketing. Arts groups had not considered integrating all the various channels due to knowledge or resource constraints, and as a result they were unable to get a full view of the entire customer journey for more impactful and effective marketing.

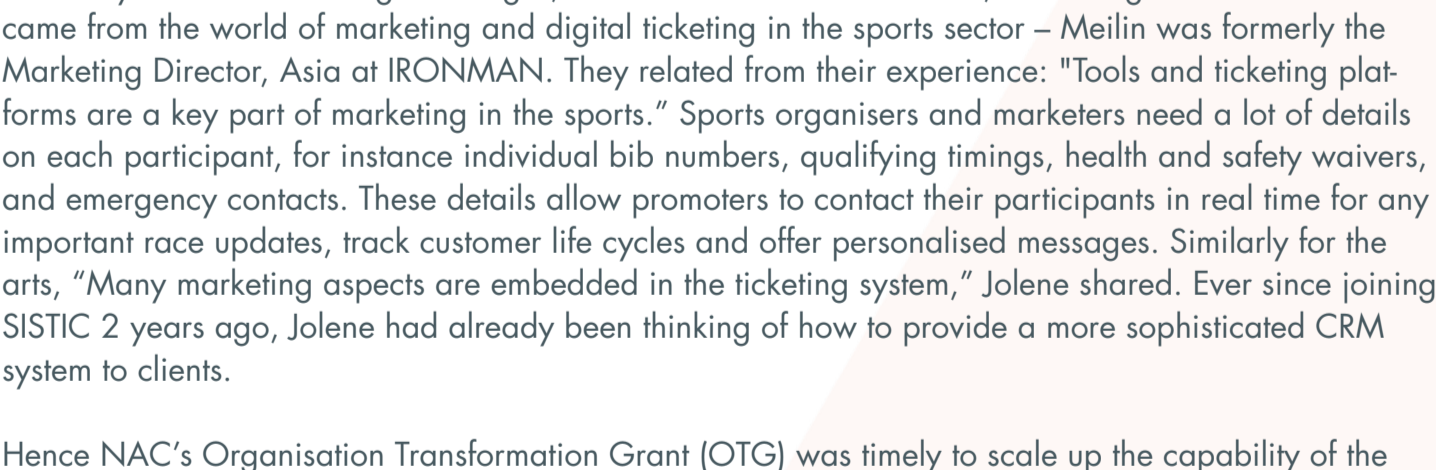
#### The Vision

Having access to a more sophisticated marketing tool that is integrated with SISTIC will greatly help arts groups streamline and improve marketing efficiencies. SISTIC wanted to give their clients the ability to consolidate customer profiles, track customer journeys, and send personalised and segmented messages at the right time to the right patrons – in short, help their partners achieve their marketing objectives; be it awareness, engagement, or conversions.

For a while now, SISTIC had been exploring the feasibility of providing their clients with a shared service - a CRM solution with a one-time integration with SISTIC's own ticketing cloud and data warehouse, so that arts groups can have an integrated multi-channel CRM platform without having to pay a costly price for their own customised solutions. "We wanted to empower them to be self-sufficient with the best tools and practices, and up their marketing in scale and sophistication," said Jolene Tan, Head of Business Development, Data and Marketing.

#### The Journey

**Discovery. Learning-by-Doing. Overcoming Challenges.**



#### System

"We always have on-going discussions with our clients and partners, and through those we've identified early on their marketing challenges," said Jolene and Meilin Chan, Marketing Lead of SISTIC. Both came from the world of marketing and digital ticketing in the sports sector – Meilin was formerly the Marketing Director, Asia at IRONMAN. They related from their experience: "Tools and ticketing platforms are a key part of marketing in the sports." Sports organisers and marketers need a lot of details on each participant, for instance individual bib numbers, qualifying timings, health and safety waivers, and emergency contacts. These details allow promoters to contact their participants in real time for any important race updates, track customer life cycles and offer personalised messages. Similarly for the arts, "Many marketing aspects are embedded in the ticketing system," Jolene shared. Ever since joining SISTIC 2 years ago, Jolene had already been thinking of how to provide a more sophisticated CRM system to clients.

Hence NAC's Organisation Transformation Grant (OTG) was timely to scale up the capability of the arts sector. After receiving the grant, SISTIC secured the participation of 8 arts groups: Ding Yi Music Company, Orchestra of the Music Makers, Sight Lines Entertainment, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Singapore Symphony Company, TheatreWorks, and Singapore Lyric Opera.

SISTIC organised a one-on-one interview session to understand how each executed their marketing activities and to conduct requirements-gathering. In addition to confirming the pain points already listed above, SISTIC uncovered the following additional insights:

- The partners mainly utilised their website, newsletter and social media channels as their main channels of communication with their fans and patrons.
- The partners did not conduct any advanced audience segmentation for email campaigns.
- Size of the partners' databases varied, with most ranging in the low hundreds up to tens of thousands. Their databases comprised subscribers who signed up to their mailing list through their websites, post-event surveys or opt-in data from ticket buyers through SISTIC.
- Most of the partners had a lean marketing team, with the largest team size at 3-4 personnel. One of the partners outsourced marketing activities to freelancers.
- There was inertia from the participating arts groups to switch or consolidate efforts in a new marketing tool, even if the benefits are apparent, due to lack of technical and marketing expertise.

"CRM systems can be pretty technical and complex to understand, and most arts groups just didn't have that kind of knowledge," said Jolene. "There was a lot of discovery at the initial technical onboarding phase," recounted Jolene. "Majority of our arts partners had concerns due to lack of technical background – what's a DNS? How do I set up an SSL? Unless they have an IT person in-house, they would typically fall back on vendors and faced substantial limitations in their tech and marketing knowledge." The SISTIC project team knew immediately that 2 things would need to happen if their transformation were to be successful.

First, the CRM system would need to be intuitive and easy-to-use. The team stipulated the following features as key criteria for selection of a system:

- User friendly and intuitive UI
- Ability to measure key campaign metrics in real time
- Integrating key marketing channels (Emails, Web Push, Mobile App Push)
- Orchestrating multi-channel automated campaign through Canvas
- Easy-to-use segmentation tool
- Ability to track user behaviour on email, website and mobile app and send out targeted personalised marketing campaigns

Ultimately, Braze was selected as the CRM vendor.

Second, SISTIC would have to dedicate resources for onboarding, technical assistance and training. They appointed an official Braze implementation partner, Verticurl, to train and onboard users to learn to use the system and hired extra headcount to support their participating partners through integration. A real challenge was in coordinating the timelines across 8 partners, who were stretched in headcount and whose resources were focused at that time to managing safe social distancing measures during the pandemic.

Within February and March 2022, the project team managed to complete the following: technical requirements gathering from the 8 partners, onboarding on email and email campaign set-up, data import, set up all the personnel access accounts, training for partners and technical integration with SISTIC, with UAT. "The benefit for partners to work with SISTIC and Verticurl was that we were able to translate technical jargon to layman language that is more relevant to their business," said Meilin.

In its future plans after the trial period, SISTIC intends to offer the integrated CRM solution on a subscription-based pricing to their clients and partners. Noting that there are other cost-efficient platforms, SISTIC is determined for this tool to remain competitively-priced and affordable for smaller arts groups. "This is not a revenue stream for SISTIC; we are operating on a cost-recovery model. The main aim is to provide greater value to our clients," affirmed Jolene. "Our clients don't have the resources and expertise in marketing, but SISTIC has the scale to offer a centralised marketing resource."

#### Reflections

Recounting their experiences of the transformation journey, Jolene and Meilin admitted to at times being "worried that we would not meet the milestones", due to the sheer challenge of coordinating across so many partners. The key was constant and open communication; the SISTIC team was careful to set clear expectations of requirements and timelines, gave regular status updates to their partners, and had check-ins well after the integration to see how their clients were taking to the system.

Importantly, the personal relationships that the SISTIC marketing team had built up with their clients over the years held the project together. Through this project, they also got to know new partners well. Ironically, even though several of their partners had their own parallel OTG projects during the same period and hence bandwidth was even more limited, this bonded everyone. "There was a sense of camaraderie, of 'we're in this together'. There was an environment of trust and mutual respect for each other's timelines," said Meilin.

Reflecting how this project was a vision that had been waiting in the wings for two years, and now finally realised through the OTG, gave the team a thrill of satisfaction. "Yes, this is finally happening now," smiled Jolene. "We are really grateful to NAC for the grant. [The CRM system] will be a game changer in the longer run for the arts groups."

**This project has been supported by NAC's Organisation Transformation Grant. For more information and resources on NAC's grant schemes, please visit:**

<https://www.nac.gov.sg/>