

## Premier Exhibition Center Revolutionizes Operations With Rendezvous



John ("JR") Robertson is enthusiasm personified when it comes to ASB Showgrounds, New Zealand's premier exhibition center. His passion for driving business efficiencies and improving the customer experience have seen the Showgrounds move from a strongly entrenched manual booking system into fully automated event booking software – with great results all round.

Auckland's ASB Showgrounds employs 26 staff across the workshop, accounts and administration, marketing and management teams. The Showgrounds itself is an exhibition center but has in recent years also hosted functions, events and large-scale sales. With on-site catering and their newest 5,500 sqm pillar-less pavilion able to seat 3,500 at a black tie dinner, the Showgrounds have substantially expanded the opportunities available to clients.

This, coupled with 1,200 parking spaces and competitive pricing, gives the Showgrounds an edge over many potential competitors. Some of the best known events hosted at ASB Showgrounds include Big Boys Toys, Auckland Home Show, Christmas Gift Fair, and the Royal Easter Show. Showgrounds clients range from events companies to retailers and to music promoters. With the high level of activity the venue experiences, the need for an effective booking system was critical to the organization.

### The Paper Chase

When Robertson started at the ASB Showgrounds as Sales, Marketing and Entertainment Manager, the event booking operation was entirely paper based and run by one person. With a single book to record pencil bookings and confirmations, and a spreadsheet summary manually produced on a daily basis, there was little transparency and no access to data outside the office. Often insufficient information was captured, presenting considerable margin for error and of course, its efficacy was highly dependent on just one person.

### The Move to Automation

Robertson's background had been with large, Japanese-run corporations, so for him the use of low-risk software solutions to automate and improve business processes was a logical step for the company. After looking at several available options, he elected to present Rendezvous, a booking solution exclusively sold and implemented in New Zealand by Savio Solutions, to the Board of Directors.

Commenting on the selection process, Robertson says: "What I liked about Rendezvous event booking software was that Savio gave us a lot more information than the other vendors, and were quite willing to spend as much time with us as needed. With Rendezvous, I think probably the most attractive feature was the fact that we could build things within the system for ourselves. Savio were so committed to their belief that Rendezvous was the right product for us that the sales consultant even came to the presentation to the Board."

### A Fast Rendezvous

The implementation time for Rendezvous event booking software was quick, and the users at all levels quickly adapted to the intuitive but structured nature of the solution. Nicola Harris, Marketing and Operations Coordinator, is the acknowledged Rendezvous super-user for the ASB Showgrounds. With only a half-day's training, and no prior experience on a comparable solution, she achieved a rapid grasp of the system and its capabilities, and now trains other users within the organization. Savio are always available for additional support if needed, and Robertson and Harris are both in agreement that the ongoing relationship with Savio is a strong one.

### Benefits Abound

A number of the Showgrounds staff access Rendezvous remotely at will and can provide clients with up-to-the-minute, on-the-spot information. Clients appreciate being able to make instant decisions based on that information, or to check up on, confirm or alter catering or other requirements. "If someone makes an enquiry," says Robertson, "even on a Saturday or a Sunday, I can still go on to the server and click in and say 'Yes, we can do that date for you'. Now that's efficient, and clients are just delighted."

Another issue not effectively managed by the paper-based system was ensuring customer contracts were always signed off within a set time frame, so the space and date could be firmly allocated or released for other potential bookings. With Rendezvous, contract-signing deadlines are automatically flagged in the system, and alerts are sent out reminding administration staff to make sure these are signed and deposits paid, or cancelled within the agreed dates.

All client emails are generated directly through and stored in Rendezvous, as is all other contact information. With requisite fields needing to be filled, requesting or entering crucial information is always covered.

Visibility of information has been another benefit for the Showgrounds, with reports being generated in moments, as opposed to hours. The benefits of transparent and readily accessible data have been substantial. "Our reports are telling us about our occupancy to a dollar," says Robertson, "and that's what we wanted. It's letting everyone in their respective areas know what they need to do."

He continues: "We do add-ons and it's all put on the invoice, or a quote can be done through the system. It makes your job easy, and double bookings are a thing of the past. I believe our investment in Rendezvous will pay off. We've become efficient, we get more bookings, and most importantly, we're not losing bookings."

### The Perfect Solution

Peace of mind has been a major benefit for the team at the Showgrounds, with each team now having full visibility of their own commitments and being able to plan and deploy resources well in advance. Rendezvous event booking software requires best practice to be applied, so ASB Showgrounds' internal processes were realigned to ensure the benefits of this were maximized. A consistently high level of service and client satisfaction is now possible with vastly increased efficiency in terms of follow-up, closure of bookings and the ultimate delivery of the event.

With Rendezvous in place at ASB Showgrounds, Robertson can truly say he's a happy man. "It's the best decision I've ever made. Rendezvous event booking software is perfect for us."