Episode 4: Finding the right CRM and Ticketing for you with Adam Sykes

**James Akers:** Welcome to the fourth episode of the Digital Culture Podcast. This podcast is here so you can get to know us at the Digital Culture Network. Learn about our specialisms and how we can help you through your digital journeys.

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So, that all said, today's guest that I have is over in my rival region, really, because I'm over in Lancashire, over in Yorkshire, based in our Leeds office, is the wonderful Adam Sykes, our Tech Champion for Customer Relationship Management, which is CRM, and Ticketing.

**Adam Sykes:** Hello, I'm Adam Sykes, I've been with the DCN for one year as of three weeks ago, I'm based in Leeds, greatest city in the world, in my opinion.

**James Akers:** What makes it so great?

**Adam Sykes:** it's just good. A lot of great food, drinks. And yeah, it's all there.

It's so compact you don't have to walk five miles to get a good sandwich, it's right on your doorstep.

**James Akers:** Is it all about the food?

**Adam Sykes:** It's honestly just the best sandwiches in Leeds. Everyone should come to Leeds for the sandwiches.

**James Akers:** There are a lot of really cool, cultural organisations, aren't there, around Leeds and Yorkshire.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, 100% Leeds Museums and Galleries have about 12 sites across Leeds. There's theatres, there's tons of museums, tons of theatres, tons of, just lots of cultural things going on. They have beer festivals, they have film festivals, yeah. It's just where it's all happening.

**James Akers:** It's lovely, isn't it?

Recently I've been helping places like the Hepworth in Wakefield. Lovely, amazing organisation, on a dramatic river, flowing past, with, Digital Asset Management software that they’re doing things with, which is really exciting. And there's places like the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

**Adam Sykes:** Yes. I had a call with them last week, talking about all their ticketing. It's a beautiful park, it's a great place to go. I used to live in Wakefield as well and it would be my every weekend go do something because there's not that much to do in terms of, food and drink in Wakefield.

I would just literally walk to the Hepworth every Saturday or Sunday. Free entry if you live in Wakefield, which I did at the time, and it's just, there's always just some cool art, or a new exhibition, it's just, it's one of the most beautiful, art galleries I've ever seen, so, if you're in or around Wakefield, you're missing out if you're not there,

**James Akers:** Yeah, make a special trip, it's an amazing place to go. So yeah, Yorkshire does have some nice things then, fine.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, it is, it's alright, innit? God's own country, I've heard.

**James Akers:** I'm a middle-aged white man, in Preston, in the north west of England. I'm currently wearing a, I don't know, is it? Yeah, it's a purple, I've got a purple jumper on today.

**Adam Sykes:** It's a good jumper.

I'm a 30 year-old white man, red hair and beard, with brown glasses, black shirt, and a dark grey hat.

**James Akers:** Amazing. And so far on this podcast we've interviewed 75 percent now of our ginger contingent in the team.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, we are kind of overrepresented in the arts, I think. It's not often that you meet another.

**James Akers:** So, thinking about your job title, you have Customer Relationship Management and Ticketing. Unlike other Tech Champions, you've actually got two big areas there, haven't you?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, absolutely. It comes from both sides. I feel like ten years ago maybe it were, they were two separate jobs, but within the creative and cultural sector especially, I think it's become more one and the same a lot of the time. It's all around the data and the collection of that data and storage and how then you use it to market to other audiences or new audiences or the same audience again.

It's become really, really tied together. I'm from more of a ticketing background myself, but it's always included that CRM side of things as I've like moved up those ranks.

It's putting everything in that same place. Someone buys a ticket, their information goes into your CRM. You can email them from your marketing team, membership teams trying to get a new member. It all does tie in together in that one CRM being at the central part of things and then ticketing being a bit of the arm of the CRM to then pull all that data in.

**James Akers:** We'll go into more detail later on about the different options for ticketing and CRM, especially. I suppose my first question is, what's the benefit of having a CRM system in an organization?

**Adam Sykes:** Basically you're getting all that data. That data is so invaluable. It allows you to understand who your audience is and then be proactive in terms of your programming, your offering. Who's actually coming to your events, shows, performances, who are they, what do they want, and then you can make any decisions within the organization around that.

And it just sort of helps guide a lot of decision making. I feel like. A lot of decision making can often be a feeling. So it's, always so important to then look at the data and go, what's actually working and what's not working. And, are we talking to the right people?

Is there something in our marketing that needs to be better? Is there something in our programming that needs to be better? Or is everything going great and we're selling out and it's amazing.

**James Akers:** Yeah, I really back the use of data to inform those decisions in that way. Mentioning that, so data, what data is going into these systems? What does that look like?

**Adam Sykes:** It can be anything, depends on the organisation. Some might just need, we want your first name, we want your email address, sell you a ticket, on your way. And then, using that information in the CRM, they can then dig deeper, send follow up emails, do you want to hear from us about this, this, and this?

Others like, asking up front. Give us your address, your date of birth. I tend not to advise that route, because it's a lot to ask from someone for the first ever interaction they have with you.

Once they're in your system, what are their behaviors and what are their, habits in terms of how they interact with you as an organization.

They come see live music, but you offer workshops and crafts. You can then build that picture of them as being a person who's interested in live music and can tailor your marketing more specifically around that to those types of people. Rather than saying, come to our crafts fair, and you're basically just sending that out into a void if no one's bothered about your crafts.

**James Akers:** Yeah, if you're just sending the same message. It's all about segmentation of your data.

**Adam Sykes:** No audience is homogenous, it's not one person, it's made up of different people who want different things from you. as an organisation.

**James Akers:** And I've seen quite a few organizations use it for fundraising and targeting people in that way, because once you have that single record of a person in your system, you can then see the timeline over many, it could be many years, couldn't it? About that journey that they've gone on with you and then, when you want to move them on to different areas or different, memberships or donations or, long term it could be legacy giving. So that's when people pass on and give their money to you in their will.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, 100%. I think donations is a big one. Recently, a lot of organisations have started leaning more towards that as an income stream and they're then leveraging the data that they have to go down that route. If someone every week gives five pounds, that's a very consistent, donor, they really want to nurture that relationship because they're clearly someone who's invested and wants to, see the organization do well versus someone who, maybe 10 years ago gave a thousand pounds might be worth having a look at that and saying, hey, do you wanna give us another thousand pounds ten years later? So yeah, it's both ends of the spectrum, I think, and becoming a lot more common that way of using the data,

**James Akers:** Have you seen that in a trend? So, over the last 12 months in this role, have you seen people focus on donations and generating revenue in that way?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, absolutely. Museums historically have been a bit more donation side, but there is an actual trend of theatres and, operas, live music, leaning towards that. It's becoming a lot more common. This current era of, financial instability, it's leaning on these organizations to, make more decisions that affect their income rather than, relying on funding or just ticket sales.

A lot more places have had to go down this route.

**James Akers:** So, you mentioned there quite a few of those organizations are ones with ticketing, which we'll come on to in a bit. But what's the benefit of having a CRM system if you don't do ticketing? And where would you get the data to put into the system?

**Adam Sykes:** Museums, as I mentioned earlier, are a good example of that, because they don't often ticket, a lot of museums are free entry, you walk through the door, they have no way of knowing who you are, where you've come from, and why you're here, so a lot of the tactics around it tend to then stem from either in person, like surveying, We're literally just going to approach you in the museum and say, Who are you?

Why are you here? I'm going to write it down. Do you want to give us your email address? Which, can work for some, but not all. And then, in terms of having more bespoke events, potentially and gathering that data in other ways, either via, you know, we do have a paid event coming up, or,

 just straight up asking and saying on the website, sign up to our mailing list, we'll tell you about all the cool stuff that's happening. And then you've not have to actually sell them anything. All you've asked for in return is an email address.

**James Akers:** And it's such an important channel as Jacqueline, who is our email marketing Tech Champion, she keeps banging that drum of email marketing is still one of the most effective channels for you. If you can capture that email address, instead of doing organic social posts or advertising where you have to spend money, and competing against everybody else, if you get somebody into your system, you can then segment them and you can control that communication over a long period of time and introduce them to all the different things that you're offering and hopefully move them on into a place that you want them to be.

**Adam Sykes:** Constantly I'm referring people over to Jacqueline after they've spoken to me because they've got that data and a lot of the time these organizations they've been collecting it and they don't really have an end goal of what they want to do with it. It's just, Oh, you just ask for people's email address, right?

Like that's, that's how it works. But oftentimes we just send them the one, standard email, come see our stuff. But it's like what you said about segmentation, it's drilling into it a bit more and finding out who they are and what they want to see.

**James Akers:** So, somebody coming to you, they might have data everywhere.  I've seen some examples of that, lots of customer records in a spreadsheet or on, people's desktop computers. And if they want to move into a place, a central repository for all of their contacts and to streamline things. What's the first steps? What should they do initially?

**Adam Sykes:** So, what I usually advise is stop, put it all on one spreadsheet at least, at the very least. Stop having it saved in emails and, on someone's desktop who doesn't work here anymore and left six years ago.

If they just need a storage place for their customer data, that is one, you just don't get any of the other benefits of the CRM system. Consolidating that data number one, two is to then do a bit of a cleanse, figure out how useful that data is. If you've got data from 30 years ago, is that worth keeping?

Dose that person still exist? Do you even need to waste your time importing them into a new system if it's not going to be a useful data to have. Set, internal limits on, how long are you keeping this data, why has it been sitting around for so long with no one doing anything about it.

There's probably a reason for it.

**James Akers:** What are the risks for somebody having all their customer records in an Excel spreadsheet?

**Adam Sykes:** Well, it's obviously not very secure, is it? It's just a spreadsheet. Anyone can access it. Usually, if it's on, some cloud somewhere, it is personal data. You are obligated as an organization to follow General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant rules. You must keep everything secure in some way. Not everyone should be able to have access to it. The only people that should have access to it are the people who are going to use it. It's not just free for anyone to look up and find out where someone lives. I think it's so important to then start looking at a system that can do all of that for you.

Mainly just to save yourself some trouble as well. It reduces a lot of the manual side of things. That's the biggest conversation I often have is CRM should automate a lot of your day-to-day life. And if it takes more work to put all that data in, you're not using it right. If you're still having to manually input everything, it defeats the point of having a CRM. You might as well then just still have that Excel spreadsheet.

**James Akers:** You wrote an article, haven't you? Which is, whose CRM is it anyway? Or something like that?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, it's the first article I've written when I started last year, cause it's just such a big conversation that I've had both in my previous professional career, and then since starting here is I'm often talking to a marketing manager or

 marketing officer or someone, just I run the social media and I've been told we need to get a CRM. And oftentimes that will fall on someone's shoulders who's not actually responsible for that CRM. But because they started that journey, a lot of the times the organizations will just go, Oh, well, so and so knows about this, so I'm just not going to bother. I'll just send them an email and they can do it all.

So, it's really a big bit of a push to get people to take some ownership of it. It's not one person's CRM system, it should be the whole organization. Everyone should be agreed on what it's for and what data goes in there and why.

'cause at the end of the day, it's supposed to make your life easier. And if it's not, then something's gone wrong along the way.

**James Akers:** You help people through procurement, but also how to make the most of the platforms when they do have them in place, don't you?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah. Most of my conversations are around procurement, but then that leads to, those same organizations that I've spoke to then coming back to me and go, right, I've got a system actually. Now, what do I need to do with it? So it ties in slightly with your role with, data analytics, but obviously it's a lot more around in the system data.

Like I said earlier about segmentation, I've seen some beautiful, amazing dashboards that people have made, but at the end of the day, they're just beautiful, amazing dashboards that they've made. They don't really feed into the organisation's goals or why they're doing what they're doing.

**James Akers:** What a terrible waste of a dashboard!

**Adam Sykes:** Exactly. It looks great. It's got loads of colours, bar graphs and pie charts everywhere. The whole point of it should be you'd collect all this data. You need to be using that data to make any decisions around how the organization's running.

If you want to sell more tickets, if you want to get more people in the door, if you want to reach certain audiences, all of that is what the data is for. That's what's achievable through looking at your data and saying we have X, Y, Z number of people in our database. How can we reach a certain percentage of these?

Or how can we increase the response rate or the click through rates. Every single data point should have a goal attached to it, otherwise, you're just collecting it for the laugh. You're not, doing anything for it. You might as well just go out on the street and ask people what the names are and where they're from.

 It should all tie back into the reason that you have the system in the first place, which is usually, we want more people in the door, we want more specific demographics, we want more money even.

**James Akers:** I totally agree. Using data for insights and putting it as part processes is so important.

 In the last 12 months then, have you seen quite a few common CRM systems that people are choosing through that procurement process when they're moving to a new one?

**Adam Sykes:** A big question when it comes to procurement is cost usually, and there are quite a lot of CRM systems out there. And a lot of them they're not very tailored towards the creative and cultural sector, I'd say. A few things like Salesforce, which can be great systems, but they're not specifically engineered towards, smaller organizations.

So people get stuck in contracts with them and paying loads of money and not using most of the system cause it's not designed for their organization. So there is quite a few, I come across.

**James Akers:** It's good to have those wide range of options for everybody really.

**Adam Sykes:** Few other systems that I'd mention are GoodCRM. It's in the name, they're a good CRM. They've started rolling out their ticket inside as well, so it does tie in a bit there But just a very, very simple easy to use, can do all the basic things that you want it to do it's really, really accessible I think.

Then we've got Beacon, that's the one I like to shout about the most because it can do the most things without being a ridiculous price point. The membership system's really good, they hinge a lot around the marketing side of things. They started from a, charity point of view, so a lot of their functionality revolves around that. Again, like I said earlier about donations becoming a lot more common.

Having those built-in tools around, things like that, it's to help you make those jobs a bit easier.

**James Akers:** And is like, a price bracket we're looking at when it comes to CRM?

**Adam Sykes:** So it often comes in two different ways. You pay like a yearly fee on something. Or, it's the number of contacts in your system, they often bracket around that, if you've got, one to 500, it's a lot cheaper than 10, 000 to 50, 000.

And then others such as GoodCRM, depending on the number of users, so if you are a smaller organisation, that's where the price difference really makes a change. Because if there's only two people running it, you don't need to pay for thirty logins for a yearly fee, you can just be paying twenty quid a month or something like that.

It's a case of look at your organization, look at what you need from a system. Look at what you want to be able to do and then look at what you're actually can conceivably do as human beings and they have the time and the money and the staff to do it.

**James Akers:** I think when you're approaching new systems like that, it's trying to find organizations that you know of are using same systems and just have a chat with them to find out how using it, how they found your whole onboarding process.

**Adam Sykes:** 100%. You're talking to a salesperson, they're going to tell you that their system is the best system that exists, but you talk to the person who actually had to implement it and had to be on call with the support team at 9pm one night because it went down during a peak performance or something like that and they'll give you a lot more of an honest response I think.

**James Akers:** Yeah, definitely.

Thanks. That was really good talk through the different Customer Relationship Management Systems. And I suppose the other part of your job is ticketing.

So, in your definition then, what is ticketing?

**Adam Sykes:** Selling tickets mate. All we do is sell tickets that's what I always used to tell myself when I was there selling tickets. It's because we're not running a fire department. We're, trying to get people in for a show. If anything goes terribly wrong, it's fine at the end of the day.

It is that connection point between, people actually coming in and seeing the events that you've got on. If your ticketing journey, if your process of buying tickets is difficult, it's going to stop people and people aren't going to come to your show or whatever you've got planned.

I think it's such an important and often overlooked side. People always lean onto marketing and programming, if the events are good, people will just come. But if you can't physically sell them a ticket, How many times have people got frustrated just going through a website?

I think it's like 60 percent of people on online shopping drop off before they get to the checkout. That's in general, not just ticketing, but people will just give up and not carry through. It's such an important part to get right. Cause if you get it wrong, it can, it affects the money, right?

Like that's, the end of the day is why you sell a ticket is to make money, get people in the door and see some art and watch a show and do all these amazing things. But it's the lynchpin of it all, I think.

**James Akers:** For somebody coming into ticketing for the first time, it might be brand new, they've never done ticketing before, or they have an existing system to away from, or explore other options, how do you help them through that?

**Adam Sykes:** First of all I usually say. Are you happy with the system that you've got already? And usually it's a no. Actually, the very first question I ask is, Have you spoke to your current provider at all before you've come me? Because a lot of the times they haven't, and they've gone, Oh, I've got all these problems with this system.

Oh, you can just ask the support team and they'll fix them for you. So, that's usually the first step, is it might just be fixable and you might not have to spend any money and, it's part of your contract that you've signed is that they will fix all these problems for you and get things working.

 But should that not be the case should it be, we've had problems with them for two three years it's been a nightmare customers complain staff complain Again, it's and saying what are you trying to do?

How are you trying to get people in do you want to focus on online sales? Is it your in person side? That's lacking what is it that can fix what you're trying to do, and what you currently aren't doing. And then anything else that you want to add on top of that is always a bonus.

Again it's just getting people through the doors in the first place. So if you can't do that right, you're not selling tickets at that point. And also it's not all around selling by the way, I've said selling a lot. Free tickets also exist, and should exist. Look at it from a customer's perspective as well. Sit down and go through your ticketing process and you'll notice things as a customer.

There's certain things that make it easier for you. There's certain things that make it more difficult for you.

**James Akers:** And you've done a recent webinar, haven't you? On the ticketing journey and how to improve things.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, so I kind of went through every step that you could and should have covering everything and again, not one size fits all I'd say, some things work for some people but there is a general: let people buy their tickets is my big soundbite I'd like to say, is just get people from the start to the end with as little problems as possible.

If you can do that, then you can. Do any of the fancy things around it that you want, but just get that part right first and let people in, let them be able to get to the end and it not be a problem. Cause if it's a problem, oftentimes there, they might be a first time booker. If that's the first experience they've ever had with your theatre, with your, music venue, with your museum, it can just put them off forever and you can't ever get them back.

They've gone, you have no information about them. You don't know who they are. They've given you nothing and they've just decided it wasn't worth the time. And, can be a big impact on that first impression.

**James Akers:** So, if someone wants do it themselves, they want to have a system or they've got one. Are there common ones you see people choosing? Are there certain ones that fit certain types organisations better?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, absolutely. So, similar to what I was saying about the CRM, there is almost like tiers of things. If you want completely free, those exist. But there's a reason often when things are free, they're getting access to your data. They're getting percentages off of when you do charge for.

Nothing's ever completely free,  I suppose is the thing. There's always a catch of some sort. Then there is, a slightly higher tier where you're paying a yearly fee or a monthly fee or something like that. Things like TicketSource or Tixley or TicketSolve as well.

 But then you've got your higher, larger capacity, your big theatres for things like Spektrix or Tessitura

that's when it starts transitioning into a bit of a CRM system as well. You're paying us more money, but it's all kept within the system you can analyze that all within our reporting.

I'd say to a lot of organizations out there you don't need to be spending a lot of money to be able to host your events and sell your tickets.

**James Akers:** And there was a big change over the last 12 months, wasn't there with Eventbrite? They did free tickets, everyone used it for free tickets, and suddenly they dropped a fee on, was it over 50, how many people?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, a very low amount compared to what they used to be able to do. I think that was around when I started, actually, it was a lot of the early conversations I first had. If you are looking for an Eventbrite alternative, TicketTailor is my huge recommendation for that side of things, actually.

It, they really jumped on it when Eventbrite made that change.

**James Akers:** So, TicketTailor have a free tier do they?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, it's completely free for free ticketing and then any paid tickets are, a booking fee of some sort.

**James Akers:** Nice! That's good isn't it?

**Adam Sykes:**

**James Akers:** So, 12 months in the role, many chats with people, with CRM Ticketing. Do you have any, top tips people should think about when they're approaching these kind of things?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, so do your research, figure out what it is that you actually want. Don't just pick the fanciest and most expensive one. Don't just go with, oh, this is the big name, this is what I've heard is good.Do your research, figure all that out before you even start the process.

Speak to organisations, if you're a theatre, what are other theatres doing? What theatres do you go to as a customer that have a good ticketing system and when you buy tickets you think like this is quite easy and are on the opposite side which ones have really painful ticketing systems and journeys? Just do all of that research, and then you can start that procurement process. I'd also say once you've got that system and you're looking to, develop it further is don't be scared to just try stuff.

 A lot of people tend to, it's been like this forever. We just keep it all how it's running, how do you know if something's going to work? If you don't at least try it, try it, but also track that data that you're doing because you can't, again, you can't prove it if you're not writing it down.

Right? Scientific method.

 We want to try new pricing structures. We want to try a new seat map. We want to change it from a calendar view to a list. Anything that you want to try, just give it a go. It only has to be for like a couple of weeks. And you just see if it, creates an uptick in sales if it lowers it. You don't have to, go full in on one thing. You can do it on shows that only happen on a Monday if it's quieter. You don't have to take such massive swings. But, give something a try first before you just write it off as a, I don't want to explore that option.

Because you never know, you might stumble upon something that works amazing for you as a, an organisation and, you double your audience in two weeks or something like that.

**James Akers:** Well, that's the dream isn't it?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, well, if it was that easy, I wouldn't be working here!

The final bit as well, I just would like to say, is   to use all of that data. Like I've been saying the whole show, don't just collect it for a laugh, there's a reason why you've got it. There should be an aim or a goal that you're working towards with this information. Do you want to reach X amount of tickets sold?

Do you want a certain amount of new bookers this year? Every single bit should feed into what you're trying to do as an organization.

**James Akers:** With ticketing, have you seen any changes recently you want to highlight?

**Adam Sykes:** There's a lot been a lot of talk about dynamic pricing. I'm sure you we've all heard about it. Oasis, the controversy around that.

**James Akers:** Not the way to do it.

**Adam Sykes:** Probably not a great example. It's actually been going on for tens of years, like Pearl Jam in the 90's boycotted a large ticketing system because they didn't agree with, what they deemed predatory business practices. It's been a conversation that's been going on since, large giant tours have existed.

I just want to say that's not all of what dynamic pricing is. It can also be a good thing. Like you can say, it's quieter on Mondays, so why don't we offer cheaper seats? So it makes it more accessible to people who cannot necessarily always go out and experience arts and culture.

I used to work at a cinema when I was 17 and Monday 9am when you opened, it was retirees and students. Those were the only people you ever saw. Cause they were the only people around on a Monday morning. But the tickets were cheaper. They opened that barrier. Maybe people don't want to go out on a Saturday night. I certainly, as I'm turning 30 now want to sit at home on a Saturday night, I'd rather go out Tuesday or a Wednesday. So yeah, dynamic pricing, it isn't the dirty word that it's being painted at.

 I personally disagree with, a lot of the extreme examples. If you're setting a price, set that price. But, in terms of the word itself, it does apply to a lot of other strategies so I wouldn't discount it just because of the bad press around it currently.

 There is benefits and good ways to be using dynamic pricing.

**James Akers:** Any other shifts you've seen then across sector?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, there was a big, report two years ago now, it's 2025 now so 2023. There's a lot of new people who are being exposed to arts and culture than previously before. Over half of audiences were first time bookers. People who had never experienced arts, culture, never been to a museum, never been to a theatre, they deemed it, outside of their price range or a huge thing that you often hear is, I'm not allowed to go.

It's, not for me, it's for rich people or fancy people but there's just been a larger, trend of new people visiting the arts and culture. And I think a lot of it ties in with, post COVID, a lot of people wanting to go out more and experience things.

People aren't going out as frequently throughout the week, but they are going out and spending more money on bigger things. And I think that sort of ties into it a bit of, I normally just go to the pub and have a pint or two. But instead I go out on a Friday and I go to the theatre and spend a bit more money, but have an overall better experience than I would.

Because people are valuing the quality over the quantity a lot more, so I think that ties in with that.

So following on from that as well, there's a lot more regulation coming into place around fairness and transparency. Australia announced plans like November, 2024. Overall, not just within, ticketing and theatre but to stop businesses engaging in predatory shady business practices. Like hidden fees, dynamic pricing, subscription traps, you sign up and you're stuck paying for it for 12 months because you've signed a contract somehow.

Hopefully it trends out to a bit more worldwide because, as one of the biggest advices I always give is say all of you what it's going to cost at the top.

Don't let people get all the way to the end and go, oh, by the way, you're paying us seven quid extra than you thought you were. You lose the trust in you as an organization. People don't want to recommend you, they won't want to come to your shows anymore.

 I think it's a really good step in the right direction to, have a bit more openness around that and a bit more obvious to be able to make those decisions a bit easier.

**James Akers:** I think you mentioned some of that in the new article you've written around making ticketing accessible, haven't you?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, accessibility doesn't always mean, physical disabilities, it is around, financial barriers. So when it comes to accessibility in terms of ticketing, yes, you want to be able to offer, wheelchair spaces, quiet shows. But at the same time, there's a large portion your audiences or just the country in general that, are priced out of seeing certain shows and certain events and experiencing certain things that some people get to experience because, they have a bit more money or, have grown up in that life.So I think it's such an, equally important part of accessibility. Because that's the whole point around accessibility is everyone has an equal opportunity to, come to your venue and experience what you're offering.

**James Akers:** So, aside from doing your one to one calls and supporting organisations, writing articles, doing webinars, you do get out and about, don't you, Adam?

**Adam Sykes:** I do. Quite a lot actually, which is a double edged sword, I get to go out and see all these lovely cities and talk to these lovely organizations, but I'm on a train a lot, so it does get tiring after a while, but I'll always say yes to going out and meeting new places. Just come back from the REMIX summit last week, it was really cool, interesting. A lot of conversations going on about, the future of things, what the trends are, where people are leaning towards.

Recently just did a digital conference with Association for Cultural Enterprises. They did a ticketing at cultural venues online conference.

That was really, really handy. They talked a lot about the ticketing journey, which was really useful because I'd just done my webinar about all that. So going into there, I was like, I've got loads to say about this, great. I looked really informed.

And then, I'll be heading to the Ticketing Professionals Conference in March as well, so anyone listening to this recognises me from my dulcet tones, so come and say hi.

**James Akers:** Yeah, so it's the well dressed, ginger bearded man. With glasses.

**Adam Sykes:** Is that how you describe me?

**James Akers:** Yeah. I love your style!

So, before I wrap things up, I've asked everybody this, have you had any favourite cases or support over the last six months or so?

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, so one that came to mind when I saw this first question was Slaithwaite, which pronunciation wise it's spelt Slaithwaite, but pronounced Slough it.

**James Akers:** Well, I've learnt something new.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, exactly if there's any one thing that you get out of this episode is that Slaithwaite is pronounced Slough it. They have the moonraking festival it's essentially a lantern festival they do is their 40th year this year doing it. And I had the pleasure of speaking to them the end of last year just before Christmas they were completely like, we want to make it a big one for the 40th, tell me all about your ticketing systems, tell me what I should be doing.

And I've had two, three follow ups with them since, throughout that, until they launched, I think two weeks ago. But yeah, it's just been really interesting, it's not often that I get to speak the entire journey of a procurement. A lot of times people come to me and go, who do you recommend? And then they go on the way. This just felt very consistent. It was like every couple of weeks they were checking back in and saying, we've done this, can you offer your advice on the next part? And yeah, they launched it based on a lot of my advice, some of their own ideas and yeah, it's just, it's going to be really good.

It's just, a really cool organization that I've worked with and it's really cool, festival.

**James Akers:** So, it's been fantastic speaking to you today, Adam.

I think it'd be really nice we could do like a little maybe three takeaways.

**Adam Sykes:** Yeah, so top three is number one, take your time, make sure that you choose the right system is for you. The amount of times I've had a conversation and it's, oh, two years ago we went through this entire process. Just figure things out in advance. Make sure you're really making that right decision, whether it's CRM or ticketing or both.

Number two, it'd be, again, don't be afraid to try things. It's the only way that you can see what works and what doesn't, and it can make an absolute massive difference by having been able to prove it.

And then finally, I'd say to use your data to influence all of your decisions. Don't just put it in a filing cabinet or an Excel spreadsheet or someone else's emails.

**James Akers:** Brilliant. Thank you so much for joining us,

 for episode four of the Digital Culture Podcast with my wonderful guest, Adam.

**Adam Sykes:** Thanks for having me.

**James Akers:** If you want support from Adam, he's here for you, and he'll help you through the whole process of procurement and using one of these systems, whether CRM, Customer Relationship Management, ticketing system, or a third party, he's here for you.

**Adam Sykes:** Or just to talk about what the best sandwiches in Leeds are.

**James Akers:** If you're in a non profit, creative and cultural organisation in England, or you're freelancer, or an artist you get one to one support for free. It's what we're here for.