



Royal Exchange Theatre Company

Agile access control for future-proofed security.



The Royal Exchange Theatre Company occupies a building once tipped as the 'largest room in the world'. Formally one of the world's centres for cotton trade, the site has been residence to the Royal Exchange since the 1970s.

The theatre company was in desperate need of an access control system upgrade. With their existing system having been installed in 1996, it was prone to crashing and losing functionality.

Sheralee Lockhart, Director of Business and Operations at Royal Exchange, explains: "Theatres are often behind other buildings in terms of technology due to the layout of the old buildings, the cost of upkeep, and the practicalities and funding issues around staying 'up to date'".

A loss of income through theatre closures during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic drove the Royal Exchange leadership team to use their resources in a more cost-effective way, with a decision to reconfigure the building to better suit their needs - which included an upgrade for their failing security system.

Robust access control and central building management

The theatre's insurance company recommended Gallagher Certified Channel Partner, The Black Box Group, as specialists in innovative, tailored solutions for buildings of historical interest. Together, The Black Box Group and Gallagher developed a solution to provide robust access control and central building management to control risk and improve business efficiencies across the Royal Exchange's main theatre site and their Swan Street building.

The solution utilises access-controlled doors centrally managed through Gallagher Command Centre - the intelligent site management software at the heart of Gallagher's solutions. Previously, the Royal Exchange required someone on site in a fixed location to operate the stage door - which was both time-consuming and expensive. Introducing mobile technology has allowed the team to be more agile, with the ability to remotely lock or unlock the door from anywhere through the Command Centre Mobile App.

The system offers increased visibility, and the security team can see who they are letting into the building. The team can also remotely lock and unlock all door points from the office, allowing the duty managers to grant cast and crew access with ease. Dynamically locking and unlocking doors would historically have had to have security provision.

Improved site safety for visitors, cast, and crew

Visitor access to the theatre is now an easy and straightforward process. Duty Managers can issue visitors, such as production crews, a live pass which will grant them access to specific areas and can be set to expire at 6:00pm. In the future, the site hopes to utilise mobile credentials for all visitors, eliminating the problem of forgotten cards.

The system also provides counter-terrorism security - a feature that was high on the list of requirements following the Manchester Arena bombing. In the unfortunate event of an emergency, staff can activate a lockdown, immediately securing all doors at the push of a button. Alternatively, all doors can be released simultaneously to allow a quick mass exit of all occupants.

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Sheralee Lockhart - Director of Business and Operations at Royal Exchange Theatre Company

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"I have always felt really confident that Black Box has been recommending what is right for the building and our traffic flow rather than trying to upsell systems off the shelf. We have developed an authentic long-term relationship and consider the team to be security advisors to the business and an extension of our team."

Gallagher believes in enduring partnerships that support certified Channel Partners like The Black Box Group to bring the value of their security solutions to life.

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