

# Gateway Ticketing Systems

## Case Study



## Faster Transactions Increase Attendance and Revenue for Seattle Aquarium

**Seattle Aquarium**  
Location: Seattle, WA

### Key Challenges

- Needed an upgraded ticketing system for newly renovated facility
- Required faster credit card authorization system to reduce lines and increase throughput
- Accounting and Point of Sale (POS) systems were managed separately and created opportunity for error
- Wanted to provide guests with a ticket instead of a receipt
- Needed to integrate ticketing system with The Raiser's Edge®

### Solution

- Install Galaxy Point of Sale to provide automated ticketing processing and minimal maintenance
- Accounting and POS centralized in one system reduces mistakes and increases efficiency
- Galaxy integrates with The Raiser's Edge for efficient data synchronization

### Business Results

- 35% increase in attendance in first ten months of new system launch
- Recouped initial investment within the first year
- Credit card transaction times 15 times faster
- Able to reduce business hours by 1-2 hours per day and still increase revenue

Seattle Aquarium, located on pier 59 in downtown Seattle, offers exhibits and programs designed to help people discover the marine life of the Puget Sound area. It provides a hands-on marine experience and conservation education in the Pacific Northwest.

The aquarium recently completed a two-year expansion effort that included adding 18,000 square feet to the aquarium, and installing two impressive exhibits: Crashing Waves and Window on Washington Waters.

### Inefficient Credit Card Processing Made Guests Wait

With the opening of a major new exhibit and a new entry way for the Seattle Aquarium, it was clear that it was time to upgrade to a new ticketing system. Because of the age of the previous system, credit card processing was sluggish. "The system we were using was an old version and the hardware was old too, so it started to wear out. Replacement of parts was expensive and some were no longer available," said Sue Donohue Smith, Guest Experience Manager at the aquarium.

Transaction times with the older system, which took an average of 45 seconds to process, translated into long lines and lost revenue. "Sixty percent of our guests pay by credit card, so there was always a line, and guests had to wait to enter."

### Gateway Chosen By Membership Society, City of Seattle After Cost Analysis

With Donohue Smith driving the process, a case study was done by the Guest Experience Manager. Cost comparisons with a number of ticketing providers were conducted to justify the investment in a new ticketing and revenue management system. Working with their membership society and the City of Seattle, a decision was made to go with Gateway based on the cost-value analysis. Galaxy had the features they wanted for an investment figure everyone could agree upon.

### Galaxy Processes Credit Card Transactions 15 Times Faster

Shortly after the new ticketing system installation was complete, it became apparent that Seattle Aquarium would be able to handle a higher volume of guests. Credit card processing speeds had improved significantly with the new Galaxy system in place.

"Galaxy's credit card processing was excellent, with speed of authorization at less than three seconds per transaction" said Donohue Smith.



### Galaxy Processes Credit Card Transactions 15 Times Faster (*continued*)

Lost revenue amounts to more than an immediate loss due to a lower volume of throughput. When guests become frustrated at long lines, they're more likely to not return, and this amounts to a loss of future revenue as well.

Seattle Aquarium was glad to be able to maximize their revenue potential by getting guests in the door more quickly with the new system. "Lines are short and guests are through more quickly than I imagined, even with the expected time savings. We don't experience the authorization bottleneck anymore. Processing credit cards with Galaxy (through VisaNet) will eliminate long lines and reduce the number of frustrated customers in the future," said Donohue Smith.

In addition to looking for faster transaction times, the Seattle Aquarium required a ticketing system that provided integration with their accounting system and with The Raiser's Edge to achieve optimum efficiency in tracking revenue and managing membership data. Other key features of Galaxy also helped the aquarium make the decision to go with Gateway. "Order Entry is great for registering self-guided visits and birthday parties. We're working to rid ourselves of our current system for managing group visits, and Galaxy offers all we need to do that," said Donohue Smith.

"The ability to create custom tickets is wonderful, and the reporting for cashiers at the end of shift is very useful to management. We can also see 'live' how our attendance is doing throughout the day," she said.

### Go-live Went Smoothly at Aquarium Grand Opening

"The acquisition of the new system was exciting, since we were moving to our new entrance for the grand opening," said Donohue Smith. "We were very happy to have the Gateway team here to assist us through the implementation and training. I was able to get this system purchased, installed and implemented in 58 days from signing the order to going live – that was challenging but validating at the same time. Initially we ran into some issues within the City of Seattle. They wanted to understand why and how we needed to move to Galaxy," she said.

"I could not have done this without the assistance of some key people at Gateway. Working with them through this process made it move efficiently and quickly from start to finish," she said.

### Results: Attendance and Revenue Up, Expenses Down, Investment Returned

With the new ticketing system in place, Seattle Aquarium's attendance increased 35% the first year. "I attribute a lot of this to the fact that we can get people in the door quicker," said Donohue Smith. "We also cut our hours back one to two hours per day when we reopened. Galaxy has paid for itself already, no question," she said.



Seattle Aquarium chose Gateway to provide ticketing and revenue management for their newly renovated facility.



*Window on Washington Waters* is a 120,000-gallon showcase exhibit filled with native Washington marine life.

**"The ease of customization is what I like the best about Galaxy. We can manipulate the system to see the reports we want and we can customize our tickets and receipts at any time."**

-Sue Donohue Smith,  
Guest Experience Manager

Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc., 315 East Second Street, Boyertown, PA 19512

Phone: +1-610-987-4000 . Fax: +1-610-987-4001 . [www.gatewayticketing.com](http://www.gatewayticketing.com) . Email: [info@gatewayticketing.com](mailto:info@gatewayticketing.com)

*Raiser's Edge* is a registered trademark of Blackbaud, Inc. Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc. is in no way affiliated with this product or company.

**Gateway**  
TICKETING SYSTEMS™