

Safe Venues | Performing Arts Center



Performing Arts Center Turns to Evolv Technology to Enhance Security and Improve Customer Experiences

Delivering Optimal Guest Experiences

In 2019, the operations team at a well-known performing arts center on the US east coast embarked on an initiative to reevaluate the center's security systems.

Hand wands had been in use at the performing arts center since they underwent a major renovation in the early 2000s. "Like many other performing arts centers, we see a push at the doors about 20 minutes before a show starts," says the director of the performing arts center. "Many have dinner plans beforehand, while others go directly from work to the show. This puts a huge strain on our security staff, who must process most of the audience in a very small window."

The result of this last-minute push before the show created long lines of patrons outside of the building. Beyond the frustration of waiting in a queue for 10, 15, or 20 minutes, the patrons were at the whims of the outside weather. "They would come to the show all dressed up, and they would need to stand outside in the rain and snow and endure the heat, cold, and wind," says the director. "It was not the show experience we wanted our patrons to have."

Doing away with security was never on the table. "Our executive staff and board of directors is very attuned to the security of our patrons and staff," the director observes. "But they also have a high priority on delivering optimal guest experiences."

Industry Overview

- Entertainment Sector
 - Public Venues
 - Theatres and Playhouses
 - Plays, Musicals, Operas

Solution Deployed

- 2 Evolv Express® Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI™
- Custom Engineering

Benefits Observed

- Improve guest experiences with touchless security screening
- Eliminate long-security queues during "pushes" before show starts
- Improve ability to detect weapons quickly
- Scale existing security team without adding more staff



Finding a Touchless, Frictionless Solution

The director of operations began an earnest search for an alternative security solution to enable screening at optimal speeds, eliminating wait lines and getting patrons into the shows before they start.

He settled on Evolv after speaking with several other performing arts centers that had implemented the solution. “There really isn’t anything like it in terms of the hardware plus software components,” he says.

“Maintaining a touchless, frictionless security screening solution that delivers an optimal experience to our patrons was critical—and Evolv passed our requirements on every front.”

Working with the Evolv team, the director determined that they needed two Evolv systems. The solutions engineer from Evolv went on site to deliver a proof of concept (POC)—assessing the placement and configuration of both systems based on their requirements. He also trained the six-member security team on managing the Evolv Express systems.



Better Detection: People, Process, and Technology

Built nearly a century ago, the performing arts center lobby presents various challenges for any type of security screening solution.

“One must have a keen understanding of the flow of guests in our lobby,” the director reports. “While the Evolv Express® system can process thousands of guests per hour, lobbies in performing arts centers simply do not factor this volume into account. In addition, these buildings were never constructed with security in mind. We wanted a vendor that would put skin in the game and not simply drop off the system and leave.”

One of the requirements the performing arts center specified was a concept of operation (ConOp). Drawing on the Evolv ConOps Playbook, the Evolv Solution Engineering Team worked with the performing arts center to relocate one of the systems to reduce the amount of traffic congestion. The Solution Engineering Team worked closely with the performing arts center to determine how guests flow into the lobby area. This included reviewing ticketing system data to determine when most guests arrived and through what door they entered.

"The assessment considered traffic flow related to everything from concessions to the bathroom to ticketing," says the director. "The solutions engineer studied our traffic flows and concluded moving one of the units would streamline screening," the director continues. "Our box office is on one side of the building, and the Evolv team recommended that we screen guests before they reached the box office. It made a big difference—both in terms of guest experience but also the efficiency of staff."

When it came time to training the security staff, the Evolv solutions engineer scheduled demonstrations of the system with the executive staff. "We wanted our executive staff to understand how Evolv Express works and how it will transform our guest experiences," the director indicates. "It is important to build champions of the solution with these key stakeholders," the director says. For training the security staff on the system, the solution engineer set up role-playing scenarios and worked with the director and his staff to document them as standard operating procedures. Part of the training process involves shadowing security staff and providing them with guidance and input.

"I am a former law enforcement officer, and I understand the limitations of metal detection systems," the director recalls. "Evolv Express detects smaller handguns that metal detectors typically miss—right out of the gate. This level of accuracy gives us confidence in the system."

Another aspect of the Evolv Express that excited the director is the Evolv Cortex AI™ software platform capability. "Security cannot be static," he says. "It must constantly learn and improve on its results. With Evolv Cortex AI™, we benefit from insights across all its customer base. This enables us to detect weapons and threats with great accuracy while eliminating false positives."

Anticipated Securing Screening Outcomes

Plans for going live with the new Evolv screening system were put on hold when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We were all set to go live last February but everything stopped in its tracks," the director says. "We have plans to reopen later in the fall and are very excited to see Evolv in action." The director anticipates significant benefits. Speed immediately comes to mind. "Compared to the prior hand wands, Evolv Express is more than 10x faster," he says. "Those 'pushes' we experience 20 minutes before the start of a show will no longer be issues—for us or our guests."



Better detection is also a big outcome. "Hand wands cannot detect all weapon types," the director notes. "With Evolv, we have much greater confidence that we're detecting them."

And, we can dial up or dial down the sensitivity level based on the circumstances." In just the first month of deployment, the performing arts center processed over 9,000 visitors with almost 1,000 flagged for some type of suspicious object. Nearly 20 of them turned out to be handguns, and another 85 were knives.



Space and resource optimization is something the director anticipates as well. “Our previous solution created logjams at the box office,” he says. “Guests would need to get their tickets and then go back out and return through screening. That is no longer necessary.”



User Groups and World-Class Security Screening

Throughout the pandemic, most performing arts centers have struggled to survive. Recognizing the power of networking, Evolv Technology launched virtual user groups that gave performing arts centers a chance to discuss strategies with their peers.

“We found these very helpful,” the director says. “Presentations and discussions focused on virtually every aspect of the performing arts center—not simply security operations. “We were able to glean some very helpful insights from peers across the country on what they were doing to cope. We really appreciate the leadership Evolv Technology took in setting these up.” There is a lot of anticipation on the part of the performing arts center and its patrons as its first show approaches in the fall.

“Our guests could not walk through security together before,” the director conveys. “With Evolv, families can go through together and couples can walk through holding hands. It will be an entirely different experience. It’s going to be a huge win—especially after suffering through the pandemic together—to offer our guests a world-class security screening experience.”

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