The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum Delights Visitors with Doubleknot
Registrations, reservations and administration are simplified with integrated suite of tools

About The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum
The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum engages children with hands-on learning experiences that spark imagination, pique curiosity, enhance creativity and develop problem-solving skills within a place of beauty, wonder, joy and magic. After several major expansions, the Museum now houses 55,000 square feet of exhibits and serves over 600,000 visitors annually. Over 60,000 children visit the Museum each year for curriculum-enriching field trips and an additional 25,000 children participate in the Museum's outreach programs that take place in area classrooms, libraries and hospitals.

The Challenge
The Museum sought a solution to manage registrations and reservations for a full slate of special events, members-only events, camps, scout programs, sleepovers, outreach programs and birthday party reservations. In the past, the Museum relied on custom-built software that met their administrative needs but didn't support evolving security requirements. The Museum then used a WordPress plug-in to manage registrations and reservations, but when an update damaged registration data, they knew they needed a secure, reliable solution that could support their diverse program requirements while remaining easy for visitors to use.

"We needed the ecommerce transactions to be safe and secure," says Carrie Hutchcraft, Director of Marketing and Development. "And, we wanted the administrative back-end to allow us to organize programs in way that's easy for us to manage and for visitors to use." Additional requirements were fine-grained control over staff permissions and access levels, and detailed financial reports about reservation and registration transactions.

The Solution
Chief Financial Officer Cheryl Darr led the Museum's search for a new solution. After developing a detailed list of requirements, the team researched several companies, and identified Doubleknot as a contender. When the team checked out Doubleknot's references, they heard positive feedback both for the product and the customer support. As a result of their research and evaluation, the Museum selected Doubleknot. Says Darr, "Doubleknot has the system that works best for our needs."

Beginning in April 2017, the Museum worked with Doubleknot's professional services team on overall administrator training and event configuration for programs including camps, classes, members-only events and sleepovers. As part of Doubleknot's turnkey services for reservations, professional services staff helped the Museum define their booking and pricing requirements, then built the availability calendars and reservations process for group visits and birthday parties. "The Doubleknot team was patient, understanding and supportive in making sure that we could meet our needs," says Hutchcraft.

The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum manages their popular camps, event registration, group and field trip reservations and birthday party bookings in Doubleknot.
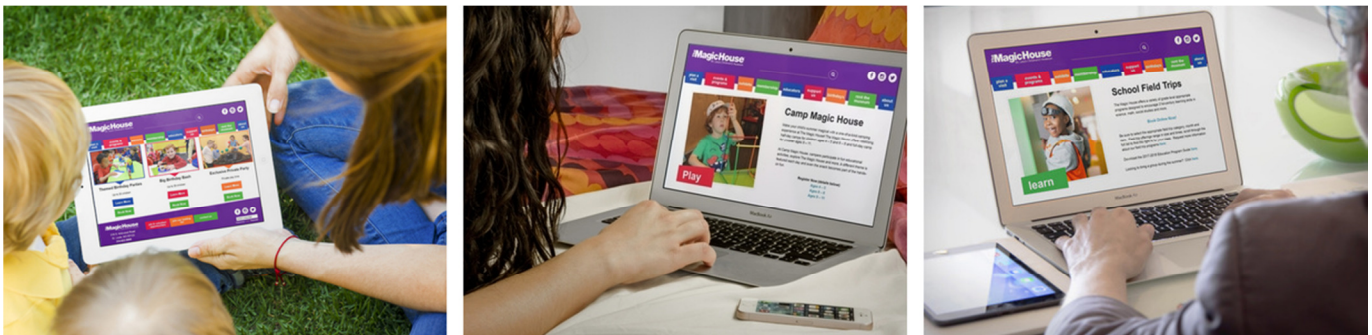
The Results

The Magic House reports that they are pleased with Doubleknot's flexibility and ease of use for managing registrations, reservations and payments for their programs.

Birthday Party Reservations and Payments

Birthday parties are popular at The Magic House, and the Museum offers many options for different party sizes, themes and programming. Online party reservations were launched in July 2017, and more than 300 birthday parties were booked by the end of that year.

Using the real-time availability calendar, families can research and book a party at their convenience with confidence that the time slot and options they selected are available. Doubleknot's capacity management ensures that families book a party option that can accommodate their group, and pricing options allow the Museum to charge a flat rate for a number of attendees and add a per-registrant cost for additional attendees if needed. Before checkout, custom forms collect additional information and promote party favors, additional T-shirts and other upsell items. Families pay a deposit online to complete the reservation, ensuring that the selected time slot is removed from the availability calendar.

To book a birthday party, families can choose time, date and party options from the online availability calendar, pay their deposit and receive confirmation at any time, including nights and weekends.

Doubleknot has also streamlined the way that the Museum collects payment on the day of the party. Previously, a staff member would take a parent out of the party room to a cash register elsewhere in the Museum to calculate the balance due and collect payment. The team now brings an iPad with the Sales Station app to the party room to update the number of celebrants, calculate the total cost, accept payment and send a receipt by email or text message. "Our staff enjoys using Sales Station in the party rooms," says Hutchcraft. "It's easy to update the number of kids and then collect payment without requiring a parent to leave the party."

The Sales Station app for iOS allows Museum staff to update party information and collect the balance due.

Field Trips and Group Visits

The Museum also sought to streamline booking and check-in for field trips and school group visits. With Doubleknot's always-up-to-date availability calendar, teachers and leaders can identify a program, date and time that meets their needs and book their reservation immediately without calling the Museum during the school day or submitting a form with several possible dates and waiting to find out which ones are available. When a group arrives, a staff member uses the Sales Station app on an iPad to update the total number of attendees on and collect the payment due, allowing the group to enter the Museum quickly.

Doubleknot can accommodate the different ways that schools and other institutions may pay for their visit. In addition to credit and debit cards, Sales Station allows the Museum to accept checks and other forms of payment. Says Hutchcraft, "For schools, we need to support a variety of payment methods. What's nice is that our teachers can pay with a check, which Square doesn't support." All updates and payments made in Sales Station are immediately and automatically reflected in Doubleknot's database.

Teachers and group leaders can book and confirm their field trips online, and pay for the number of attendees at arrival. Collecting payment with a Sales Station iPad ensures that groups move quickly into the Museum.

Event and Camp Registration

With more than 40 different summer camp sessions and scores of scheduled events and classes throughout the year, The Magic House needed their registration to be as flexible as their reservations. With Doubleknot, the Museum assigns different prices to different registrant types, offers member discounts and controls capacity for each event. Custom forms collect important data like emergency contacts, medical information and photography waivers, and a registration can't be submitted if the required forms and fields aren't completed.

Families can view camp information—including the number of spaces still available—and register on any device at any time.
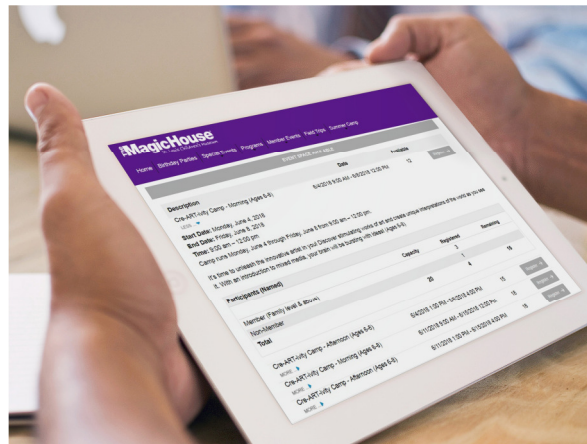
Meeting Administrative Needs

In addition to streamlining registrations and reservations, the Museum appreciates Doubleknot's administrative features, including:

- **Data security.** Secure registration and payment were one of the key drivers for the Museum's search for a new solution. The Museum expressed confidence in Doubleknot's enterprise-strength security: "With Doubleknot, we've always felt secure knowing that data won't get lost or compromised," says Hutchcraft.
- **Access control**. "As a large organization, we need to be able to control who can view or update data in different parts of the system," says Hutchcraft. Doubleknot's flexible permissions systems allows the Museum to control which staff can access different features and data, with six permission levels ranging from read-only to full administrative privileges.
- **Efficiency.** "There are great time-saving tools In Doubleknot," says Hutchcraft, including payment schedules, automatic billing reminders and Communications Center, the built-in email marketing solution. The Museum uses Communications Center to send scheduled messages and tickets to everyone registered for an event without requiring staff to create a query or export and upload a mailing list.
- **Financial reporting**. "Doubleknot reports provide us with the information we need," says CFO Darr. Dozens of standard reports can be customized with the built-in report writer, so the Museum can tailor reports to meet their needs.

Customer Support

Implementing a comprehensive reservations and registration system for a large museum like The Magic House requires significant planning, coordination and communication. Doubleknot's professional services team worked closely with staff to document workflow and business processes. "The Doubleknot team was so supportive," says Hutchcraft. "They were willing to work with all of our intricate requirements to make sure that we could meet our needs. [Team members] Brooks and Dan were patient, helpful and understanding."

Summary

The Museum reports that they're very satisfied with their Doubleknot solution. Says Hutchcraft, "Overall, I feel like everything has been wonderful. Doubleknot can handle the volume and the intricacy of our wide variety of needs. So many things are easier and our visitors have no complaints."

Both Darr and Hutchcraft are confident that Doubleknot will continue to deliver benefits in the future. "Doubleknot has worked really well so far," says Hutchcraft. "As we become more comfortable with the system, we can optimize the way we use it even more. So many things are already easier and our customers have no complaints." Darr agrees: "We're very pleased with Doubleknot."

Learn More

To learn how Doubleknot's solutions for online, POS and mobile sales and management can help your organization, visit hello.doubleknot.com or call us at (408) 971-9120.