

Soho Theatre puts health centre-stage with Equipsme

Soho Theatre is one of the UK's most innovative producers of new theatre, comedy and cabaret. As a forward-thinking business they chose Equipsme for all their 90+ workforce.



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Soho Theatre has been supporting new theatre, comedy and cabaret from the West End and beyond since the 70s, providing a stage for acts at the beginning of their career who go on to become household names, including people like Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Mae Martin.

The pandemic has put the arts under enormous pressure, but despite – or perhaps because of it – the charity and social enterprise decided looking after the health of staff was a priority. And when they were looking into private health cover, Equipsme just seemed to fit.

"With theatres reopening after a challenging year, it felt like an important time to look after the people making a living in the industry, and keeping it going," says Catherine McKinney, Head of Finance and Administration. "So we picked up conversations about health insurance as a way of supporting our employees, at a time when everyone is more conscious of the need to take care of themselves."

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Isobel O'Flanagan is the Administrative Assistant for Soho Theatre, and is responsible for day-to-day HR support – and running the Equipsme scheme. She adds: "When we followed it up, Equipsme just seemed to make sense. The cover and the price were exactly what we needed - and it's been so intuitive to use. You can see everything on one page and it's really straightforward to set up, make amendments, and keep on track. The lunch and learn training was a great introduction for everyone, and the support team couldn't be more helpful. It makes my job as administrator very easy!"

Isobel continues: "We have 90+ staff and we wanted to get as many of them as possible on cover – including the bar staff and front of house staff on minimum hours contracts. We've done it so that everyone gets the GP plus cover as soon as they finish their probation period, and after two years' service they move up to Level 2 cover, which includes diagnosis and treatment."

"So far it's been really well received. People seem to be pleased that they've got that option. We all love the NHS, but we know it's overstretched and underfunded. Now we've all got some back-up."

The organisation also chose to add stress support to their package. Isobel explains: "The industry has obviously been a really stressful place recently, but just being an adult in the world has been pretty stressful for so many people this last year. We don't want people going off with stress because we don't want that for them as individuals, nor for us as a business, because it means we're losing talent from our workforce."

Soho Theatre has managed to ride the wave of Covid with its head above water by turning its spaces into film sets, working with partners like Amazon Prime Video on content and developing its Soho Theatre On Demand digital service. Their activity, and its success, helped them secure a grant from the Culture Recovery Fund - and that's helped them keep going through the pandemic and into a new programme of performances as restrictions have eased.

Catherine concludes: "We want to continue welcoming audiences, artists and creatives to our building, and producing new theatre, comedy and cabaret. Supporting our employees is essential in doing so, and Equipsme is helping us achieve that."

About Soho Theatre

Soho Theatre is London's most vibrant producer for new theatre, comedy and cabaret. They pursue creative excellence, harnessing an artistic spirit that is based in new writing roots, the radical ethos of the fringe and the traditions of punk culture and queer performance. They value entertainment, accessibility and enjoy a good show. During their temporary closure due to Covid-19 they relaunched an online platform Soho Theatre On Demand, which hosted the phenomenally successful live recording of Fleabag and recently released the critically acclaimed Typical and Sunrise. They've partnered with Amazon Prime Video (UK) for a three-series deal, bringing existing and new comedy shows to the platform and are also working towards the opening of an exciting second venue, a "local theatre with a national profile" in Walthamstow.

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