Nave Strategies

CASE STUDY

Delaware Theatre Company

A full patron-revenue rebuild after the shutdown — subscriptions, single tickets, and disciplined pricing.

Strategy. Revenue. Systems. Built for small teams.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Patron retention · **Subscription rebuild** · **Dynamic pricing** · **Demand management** · **Seat-map scaling** · **Patron upgrading** · **Campaign architecture** · **Data analysis**

Delaware Theatre Company (DTC), a professional regional theatre, engaged Nave Strategies in December 2020 as the pandemic reshaped live performance. While the indoor theatre was dark, DTC served its community through 'Front & Center' — an outdoor series performed on the theatre's front steps — with Nave Strategies handling pricing, messaging, and marketing. From 2021-22, the work turned to full rebuilding, and the program climbed back toward its pre-pandemic strength.

WHY PATRON LOYALTY MATTERS



Retention compounds. Each step costs less to keep than the last did to win — and a deep, loyal base is what absorbs the shock when disruption inevitably hits.

OUR APPROACH

Across six seasons: outdoor community programming, subscription rebuilding, pricing strategy, and single ticket execution — every decision oriented toward sustainable patron revenue.

'Front & Center' (2021 & 2022)

- Priced, crafted sales messaging, and marketed the 'Front & Center' outdoor series in the summers of 2021 and 2022.
- Kept the organization artistically active and deeply connected to its community through the shutdown.

Subscription Rebuild (2021-22 →)

- Rebuilt the Full Series (5-show) and Choose Your Own (CYO) packages, season by season.
- Grew CYO into the program's fastest recovering tier.

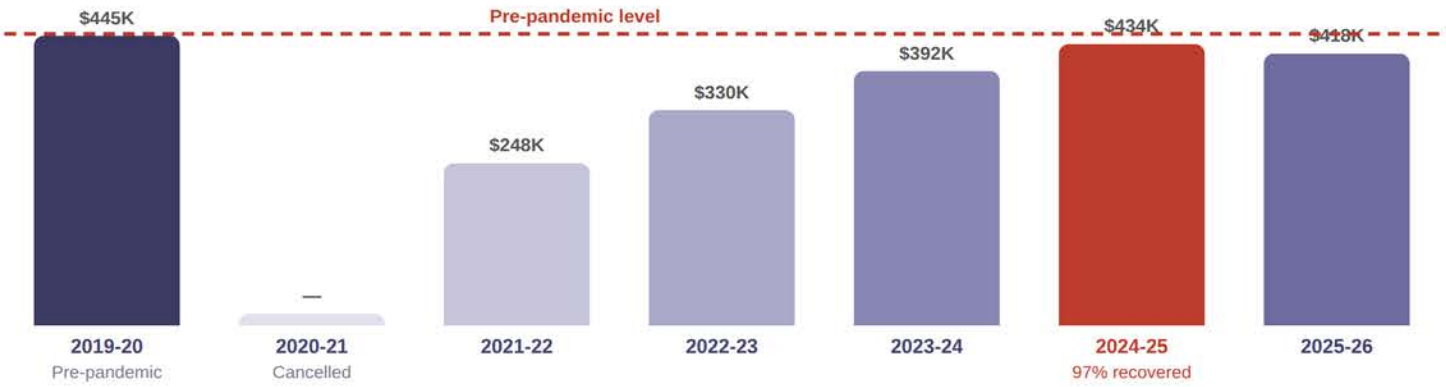
Pricing & Demand

- Consolidated from three price tables to one, eliminating day-of-week discounting.

Loyalty, Data & Campaigns

- Prioritized retention and upgrading to lower acquisition cost.

DTC lost its entire 2020-21 subscription season to the shutdown. Three seasons later it had rebuilt to 97% of pre-pandemic revenue — with CYO revenue surpassing its pre-pandemic level outright.



Total subscription revenue by season. From a standing start, DTC rebuilt to 97% of its pre-pandemic high in three selling seasons.

97%
of pre-pandemic revenue
recovered by 2024-25

+75%
Subscription revenue
2021-22 → 2024-25

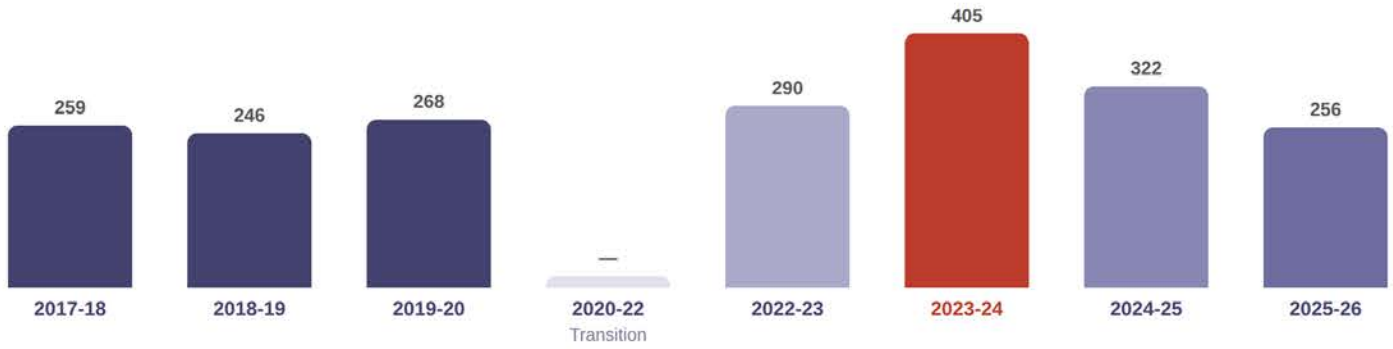
109%
CYO revenue vs pre-pandemic
2024-25 vs 2019-20

+12%
Revenue per Full Series package
2019-20 → 2024-25

Targeted New Acquisition Pathways

Segment	Pre-Pandemic Avg	Post-Pandemic Avg
Current CYO subscribers	18%	22%
Multi-show single ticket buyers	6%	10%
Recently lapsed subscribers (1–2 yr)	7%	11%

Conversion rates to Full Series subscription from three targeted new acquisition pathways. Post-pandemic figures reflect 2022-23 to 2024-25. In 2025-26, lapsed subscriber recovery fell from 13% to 7% — the segment most dependent on active outreach — detailed on the following page.



New Full Series subscribers by season. Post-pandemic acquisition exceeded the pre-pandemic average of 258 in three consecutive seasons, peaking at 405 in 2023-24 — when most theatres were still working to rebuild their post-pandemic audiences. The 2025-26 step back is detailed on the following page.

Single ticket strategy rested on a structural fix — consolidating three price tables to one — and layering dynamic pricing on top. The result: revenue at or above typical pre-pandemic levels, driven by a 34% increase in per-ticket yield.



Average revenue per single ticket, blended across pre-pandemic (2017-18 to 2019-20) and post-pandemic (2021-22 to 2023-24) seasons.

+34%
Revenue per single ticket
pre- vs post-pandemic

$50.68
Average single ticket price
post-pandemic seasons

3 → 1
Price tables
consolidated in 2021-22

Price Table Consolidation

Schedule	Premium	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3
2019-20 — Three Schedules				
Preview	$54	$44	$36	$29
Weekdays	$59	$49	$39	$29
Weekends	$65	$59	$40	$29
2021-22 Onward — One Schedule (All Performances)				
2021-22	$65	$52	$39	$29
2022-23	$65	$52	$39	$29
2023-24	**$70**	**$56**	**$42**	**$32**

Three separate schedules gave buyers a predictable discount path. A standard 17-performance run included 3 previews, 9 weekdays, and 5 weekends — meaning 71% of performances were priced below the weekend rate. Consolidation rested on a simple argument: every performance has equal artistic value. Zone 3 was held constant at consolidation, preserving an accessible entry point at every performance. Zone 1 was deliberately set between the old weekday and weekend rates — preserving a path for cost-sensitive patrons at a price that was a modest step above what weekday buyers had been paying.

With one price in place, inventory management sustained the perception of a full house. Dynamic pricing then activated at 70% capacity — adding $5 to all prices except Zone 3 at the 70%, 80%, and 90% sold thresholds in the 399-seat venue. Together, the approach lifted yield and tested the market's acceptance of higher prices.

BUILT TO ABSORB DISRUPTION

The 2025-26 season stepped back about 4% — not because of the strategy, but because of what surrounded it: a leadership transition, a box office staffing gap, and a ticketing system conversion, all without hands-on implementation support. The signal was specific: lapsed subscriber recovery — the pathway most dependent on active outreach — fell from 13% to 7%, back to its pre-pandemic baseline. Revenue held at 94% of pre-pandemic, 79% of Full Series subscribers renewed, and new Full Series subscriber acquisition fell to 256 — back to the pre-pandemic average — in the season without hands-on execution support.

79%

Full Series renewal in the most disrupted season

This is the case for loyalty strategy.

Disruption isn't a question of if, but when. A deep, well-tended renewal base is what kept a triple-disruption year to a 4% step back instead of a collapse. The strategy didn't prevent the disruption — it absorbed it.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Across the engagement, DTC rebuilt $688,330 in subscription and single ticket revenue above its post-shutdown baseline — on $48,500 in total fees.



Cumulative subscription + single ticket revenue earned above the 2021-22 post-shutdown baseline, vs. total fees ($45,000 retainer, 2020–24, plus a $3,500 subscription campaign in 2025).

≈14×

return on patron strategy

Roughly $14 returned for every $1 in fees.

The rebuild touched both revenue streams: subscriptions climbed back to 97% of pre-pandemic, and single ticket yield rose 34%. Together they more than repaid the engagement many times over.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Patron loyalty isn't only a growth engine — it's risk management. Disciplined retention and pricing rebuilt DTC's revenue toward its pre-pandemic strength and lifted yield on every ticket sold. When a hard year came, the loyal base built over those years held. That's what a durable program buys: not the absence of disruption, but resilience through it.

Ready to put your patron data to work?

Let's talk about what's possible for your organization — no prep needed, just bring your challenges.

Schedule a free call

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