



Case study



Boch Center Gives Evolv a Standing Ovation for Keeping Patrons Safe with Evolv Express®

Boch Center

Wang Theatre

ORIGINALLY OPENED: 1925

CAPACITY: 3,500

LOCATION: Boston, MA

FOUNDED: 1988

PERFORMANCES: Theatre, Opera, Classical and Popular Music, Comedy, Dance, Broadway Musicals, and more

WEBSITE: www.bochcenter.org

Shubert Theatre

ORIGINALLY OPENED: 1910

CAPACITY: 1,600

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Deliver great customer service while bolstering security posture
- Minimize lengthy lines that wrapped around neighborhood businesses
- Avoid late curtain calls that incurred overtime work and pay
- Dramatically reduce nuisance alarm rate
- Streamline secondary checks by identifying location of suspected threat
- Reduce number of separate security systems to manage
- Reallocate superfluous security staff at security screening ingress points

Solution

People

- Worked with Boch Center team to train existing staff and develop training program for onboarding new security personnel
- Coordinated with Boch Center to brand Express towers
- Provided ongoing technical support

Process

- Evolv Engineering Solutions team assessed traffic flow and shared deployment configuration best practices for Express systems at specified entrances
- Coordinated with Boch Center to update ConOps Playbook to include Express system setup, deployment, operation, and troubleshooting

Technology

- 4 Evolv Express® Dual-Lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights®

Outcomes



Shrank security screening footprint from 11 metal detectors to 4 Express systems



Reallocated around 12 security staff per show from security ingress to other areas in the venues, a 64% reduction in staff required per system



Reduced nuisance alarm rate 7-fold, approximately an 80% reduction from metal detectors



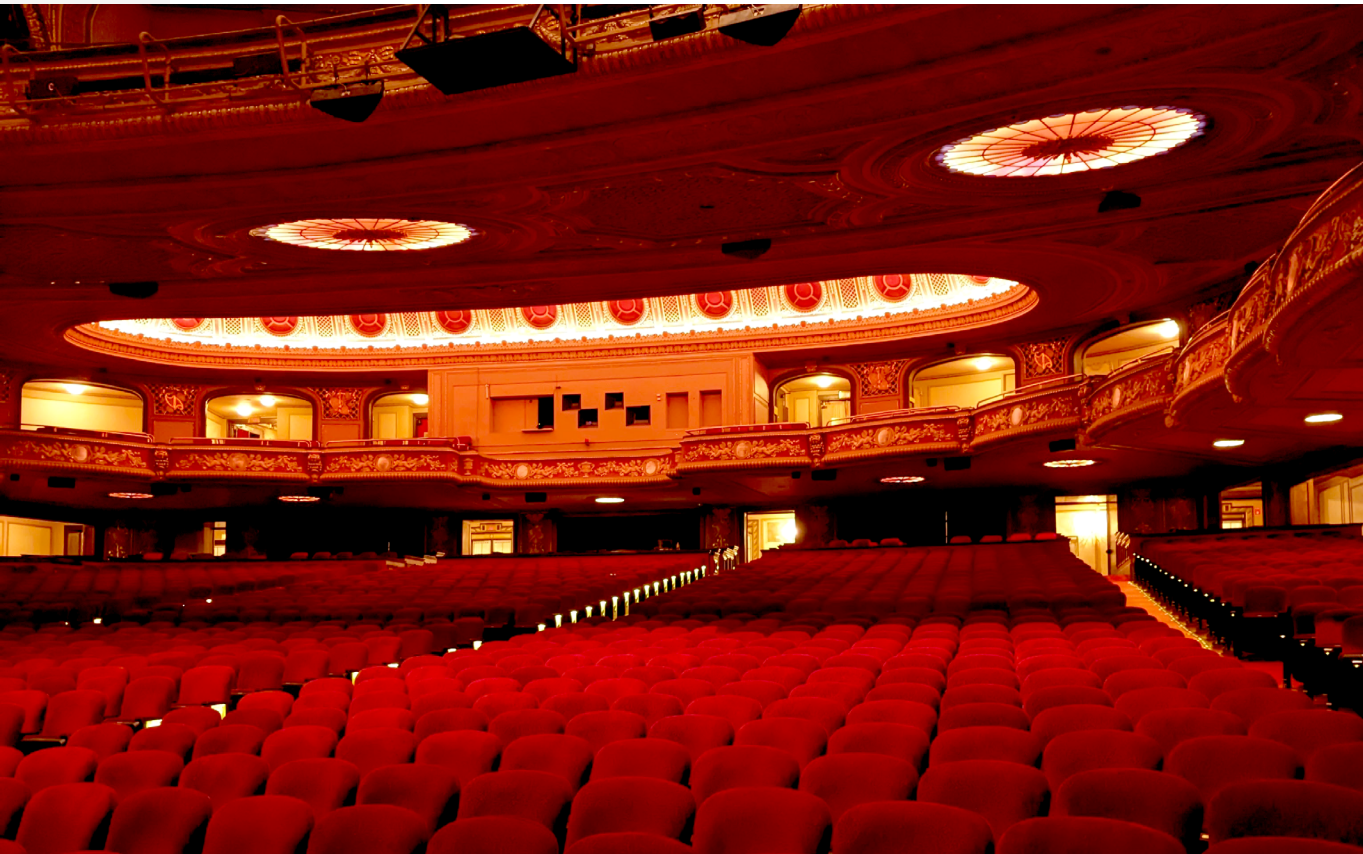
Minimized security lines that took up to 15 minutes to navigate



Improved customer experience with seamless primary and secondary security screening processes



Simplified training of security staff on security ingress processes, improving personnel satisfaction and engagement



The iconic Boch Center is no stranger to sold out shows. From classic theater, operas, musicals, comedy and more, they are the place to be to see a show in Boston. A historic reputation and show-stopping lineup means the lines outside their venues would always wrap around city blocks, which not only proved to be a security threat for patrons, but also negatively impacted the theater experience and affected local businesses. On their opening night with Evolv, the Boch Center was apprehensive about how well the system would work in addressing these issues, so commonly seen with traditional metal detectors. This apprehension was quickly relieved. Eric Neill, Director of Theater Operations at the Boch Center recounts, “when we opened the doors, patrons started streaming through the Express lanes and proceeding to ticketing. The lines faded away. Within 15 minutes, there was a positive vibe across the entire staff in the building.” Since that first show, Neill has been able to quickly and efficiently bring patrons into the theater, while also maintaining positive relationships with surrounding businesses.

Customer Service Is the Top Focus at Iconic Boston Venue

Eric Neill, Director of Operations at the Boch Center, comes from a family of performers and grew up in the Boston area.

Over two decades ago, he had an opportunity to begin working at the Boch Center and jumped at the chance. “I enjoy seeing people entertained by hearing and seeing performers tell stories,” he says. “I wanted to be part of that moment and do what I can to enhance their experience. Being able to manage the theaters where I came to as a child so many years prior is a real pleasure.”

When Neill first came to the Boch Center, there was limited security in place. “There wasn’t a structure when it came to detection—whether security monitoring by security guards or metal detection,” he recalls. “Over the past decade and a half, we’ve seen a transformation in physical and cyber security, from implementing IT security to different cameras.”

Throughout that transformation, the primary focus of the Boch Center was customer service. “When we look at security, it must be viewed through the lens of customer service,” Neill explains. “Security means being able to come into one of our venues and not worry about your safety and enjoy the show you came to see.”

Long Lines Exposed Customers to the Elements

When the Boch Center began to institute a security regimen, it began to have a negative affect customer experience.

Implementation of walkthrough metal detectors at the Wang Theatre and Shubert Theatre detrimentally impacted customers.

The long lines outside the Boch Center caused by the slow, invasive nature of metal detectors were a real problem. “We had lines wrapping around other businesses and sidewalks,” Neill relates. “Having customers exposed to the elements as well as potential threats like car rammings was something we needed to address. Not only did we want to get them into the building for their safety, but we wanted to give them time to explore the facility, purchase food and drinks, get some merchandise, and go to the restrooms before the curtain call. We had lines about 15 minutes long that stretched down the street and around the block.”



Negative Effects of Long Lines on Local Businesses and Overtime Pay

Local businesses were frustrated with the lines that formed outside of their stores.

"We produce around 250 events per year between the Wang and Shubert," Neill notes. "This resulted in lines outside of area businesses on a consistent basis and we received frequent complaints." Each time there was an event, these lines would block entrances and patron access to neighboring businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and local healthcare facilities.

The negative repercussions of the long lines also affected those attending the theater itself. The Boch Center had to delay show start times as customers were unable to get to their seats before curtain call, even if they arrived on time. Beyond being frustrating to the patrons, this also led to staffing problems. "If you have a two-and-a-half-hour show that gets delayed for 30 minutes, it goes right up to the three-hour mark—which creates an overtime issue," Neill comments. "We were paying overtime for everyone involved in certain shows because of the ingress delay. We needed a screening solution that would get everyone into the venue and in their seats so the curtain could be called on time."

The inability to get customers into the Boch Center in time also prevented them from visiting merchandise shops and getting concessions. If the theater or performing act wanted to see revenue from these shops, purchasing would then need to be available after the show. "We had to keep some shops open after the conclusion of shows so customers could purchase merchandise," Neill says. "This was unfortunate because we had to keep retail and other staff later than both they and we wanted. Because staff worked overtime, this resulted in higher costs for the Boch Center." In the end, the long lines formed by metal detectors were impacting both patron and staff experience, as well as the bottom line of the Boch Center.

“Regular patrons come up to us and thank us for implementing the system. They appreciate our investment in their safety as well as commitment to ensuring their experience at the Boch Center remains positive.”

- Eric Neill, Director of Theater Operations,
Boch Center





The Iconic Lincoln Center Influences Boch Center on Taking a Chance on Evolv

Neill was first introduced to Evolv when he went to New York City to see a display of the Express system at the Lincoln Center in 2019.

"I not only saw a significant improvement in security posture but also the customer service, where interactions between patrons and security staff was minimized in comparison to our metal detectors."

Afterwards, Neill and his team completed extensive research on Evolv and by the time the pandemic hit, they were in deep discussions with the Evolv team, looking to address their foundational ingress issues. "Evolv provides us the ability to improve customer experience while streamlining operational efficiencies and enhancing security efficacy," Neill describes. "Evolv gives us a screening process that concurrently reduces the footprint consumed by security ingress."

First Night with Evolv Gets a Standing Ovation

With the decision to purchase Evolv Express systems for the Wang and Shubert theaters, the Boch Center needed to wait until the pandemic subsided and the theaters could be reopened.

"We deployed Evolv in time for the first show after the pandemic lockdown," Neill says. Evolv Solutions Engineers assessed traffic flow and shared industry best practices for positioning the Express systems at both theaters for optimal throughput and efficiencies. Evolv also worked with Neill to train his security personnel before the go-live date.

The Evolv team was on site when the Express systems were first deployed. "Having the Evolv team there was really nice," Neill relates. "We had a backup available in case we encountered any problems or ran into any questions."

"The first night when we went live with the Evolv systems was the show directly after the pandemic, and it happened to be a comedy show that was sold out," Neill remembers. "It was at the Wang Theatre. Before we opened the doors an hour prior the show starting, we already had some really long lines outside. And because we reduced our security deployment footprint with the Express, we had gone from eight doors to two doors for entrance. We frankly were a little concerned, as we didn't know how it was going to play. Immediately, when we opened the doors, patrons started streaming through the Express lanes and proceeding to ticketing. The lines faded away. Within 15 minutes, there was a positive vibe across the entire staff in the building." A vibe that, according to Neill, has not changed since the implementation of Evolv at all of their shows.

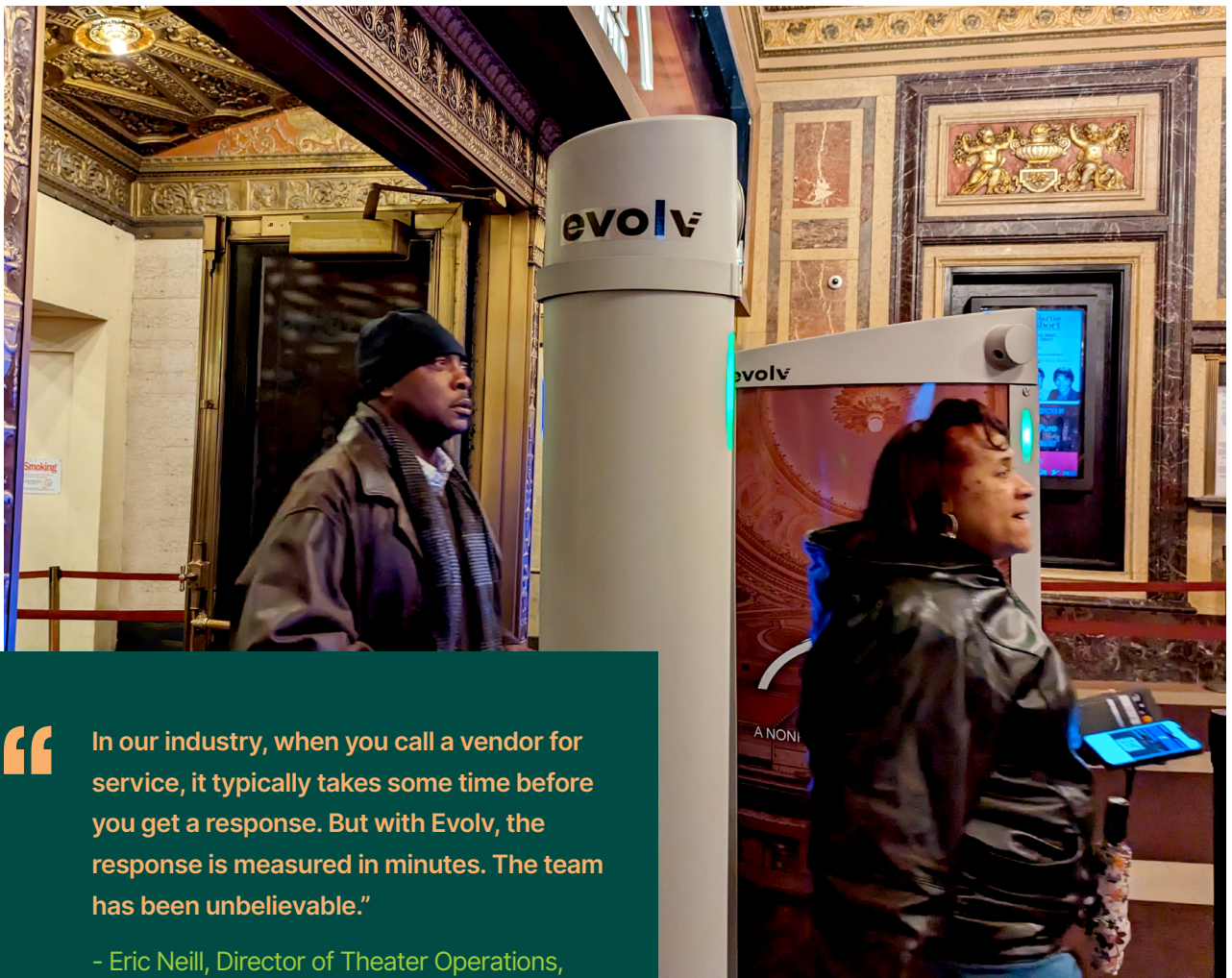
Evolv Invests in the Boch Center Deployment

Neill describes that the relationship with Evolv has been unbelievable.

"It's been so much more than I could have ever imagined," Neill says. "The Evolv team has been onsite for multiple trainings and helped us get really comfortable with the Express system before we rolled them out."

The relationship with Evolv is different than those Boch has with other vendors. "Evolv has really made a positive impact on our team with their continuous engagement and support for what we're doing," Neill says. "Evolv is invested in making our environment at the Boch Center safe and secure."

Unlike some other vendors, they didn't sell a solution and then walk away from it in the hope that everything worked out for us. They've been here from the start—just like they have been with their other customers across the country."



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In our industry, when you call a vendor for service, it typically takes some time before you get a response. But with Evolv, the response is measured in minutes. The team has been unbelievable.”

- Eric Neill, Director of Theater Operations,
Boch Center

Evolv Offers Streamlined Training and Reduces Operator Error

Security staff turnover and retention challenges made it difficult to train new incoming personnel.

Operator error was a significant concern with walkthrough metal detectors when new staff was onboarded. This too has gone away with the implementation of Evolv.

"The Evolv team helped us to implement a training program for new staff that subsided these concerns," Neill says. "The Express system is very easy to use, and thus the training is seamless. For secondary screening, the red box on the Threat Resolution tablet simplifies the process for the security operator, who now know exactly where to look on the person's body or in their bag."

Tapping Evolv Insights® for Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

Neill and his team like the data insights they get from Evolv Insights.

"We're working with the Evolv team to leverage the analytics on a regular basis," he says. "Understanding how quickly we can get our customers into the building, the times when they arrive, what variations in flow rates exist per different shows, and threats detected are all important factors for us. We even plan to use the data to determine how many Express lanes to open and the number of security personnel we need to manage security ingress. All this will translate into further cost savings for us."



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Long Lines Wrapping Around Neighborhoods Disappeared

The elimination of security lines wrapping around neighborhood sidewalks and businesses improved the Boch Center's security posture and relationship with neighborhood businesses.

"We're right on the city street," Neill relates. "Our lines were impacting area businesses. However, this all changed with the deployment of the Express. We've gotten very positive remarks from area businesses. They are very happy to have those lines removed from in front of their doors. The transformation also prompted various discussions with those businesses that wanted to know how we were getting customers into the Boch Center so quickly. One business even thought we had cancelled a show because they didn't see anyone standing in line outside."

No lines wrapping around the surrounding neighborhood meant the risk of a security event taking place there is also minimized by removing soft targets.



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- Eric Neill, Director of Theater Operations, Boch Center



Dramatic Reduction in Security Systems and Ingress Security Personnel

The Evolv Solutions Engineering team assessed traffic flow at both the Wang Theatre and Shubert Theatre upon deployment.

“With the metal detectors, we utilized six front doors and two side doors at the Wang,” Neill says. “At the Shubert, we had three walkthrough metal detectors. Working with the Evolv team, we determined that we could reduce the eight metal detectors at the Wang to two Express dual-lane systems and the three metal detectors at the Shubert also to two Express dual-lane systems.”

Going from 11 walkthrough metal detectors to four Express systems enabled the Boch Center to reduce the number of security staff managing security ingress—a 64% reduction. “We went from at least two security staff per metal detector and several more in line control for each area,” Neill explains. “For the Express systems, we have two security personnel for each lane. In all, when you include the line-control reductions, we are able to reallocate around 12 security staff from security ingress to other areas in the Boch Center.”

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Positive Experiences Reported by Patrons and Staff

The Wang Theatre was recognized in 1990 as a National Register of Historic Places.

“Patrons who come to see a show, as a result, do so with the expectation of being taken on a ‘ride’ and experiencing a top-of-the-line security system is part of this experience,” Neill notes. “From the moment they touch the door, we need to have the very best customer service in business.”

The ability to pinpoint the exact location of a threat through the red box that appears on the Flow Control and Threat Resolution tablets is part of this experience, according to Neill. “This has had a positive impact on our staff as well as customers,” he says. “In particular, not needing to pull guests aside and hand-wand their entire body, with security staff starting at the floor and then working their way up on a guest has been a big plus.”

Neill points out that security screening checks was a huge problem with the walkthrough metal detectors. “On any given night, we had upwards of 80% of our customers flagged for secondary checks,” he says. “This was a big complaint by security staff. We’ve reduced this seven-fold, and this includes nights when we have a lot of big jackets and umbrellas that can cause higher alarm rates. Metal items that are a nuisance but set off the alarm in traditional metal detectors don’t set off the alarm for the Express systems. It’s just ‘heaven’ for our security staff as well as customers.”

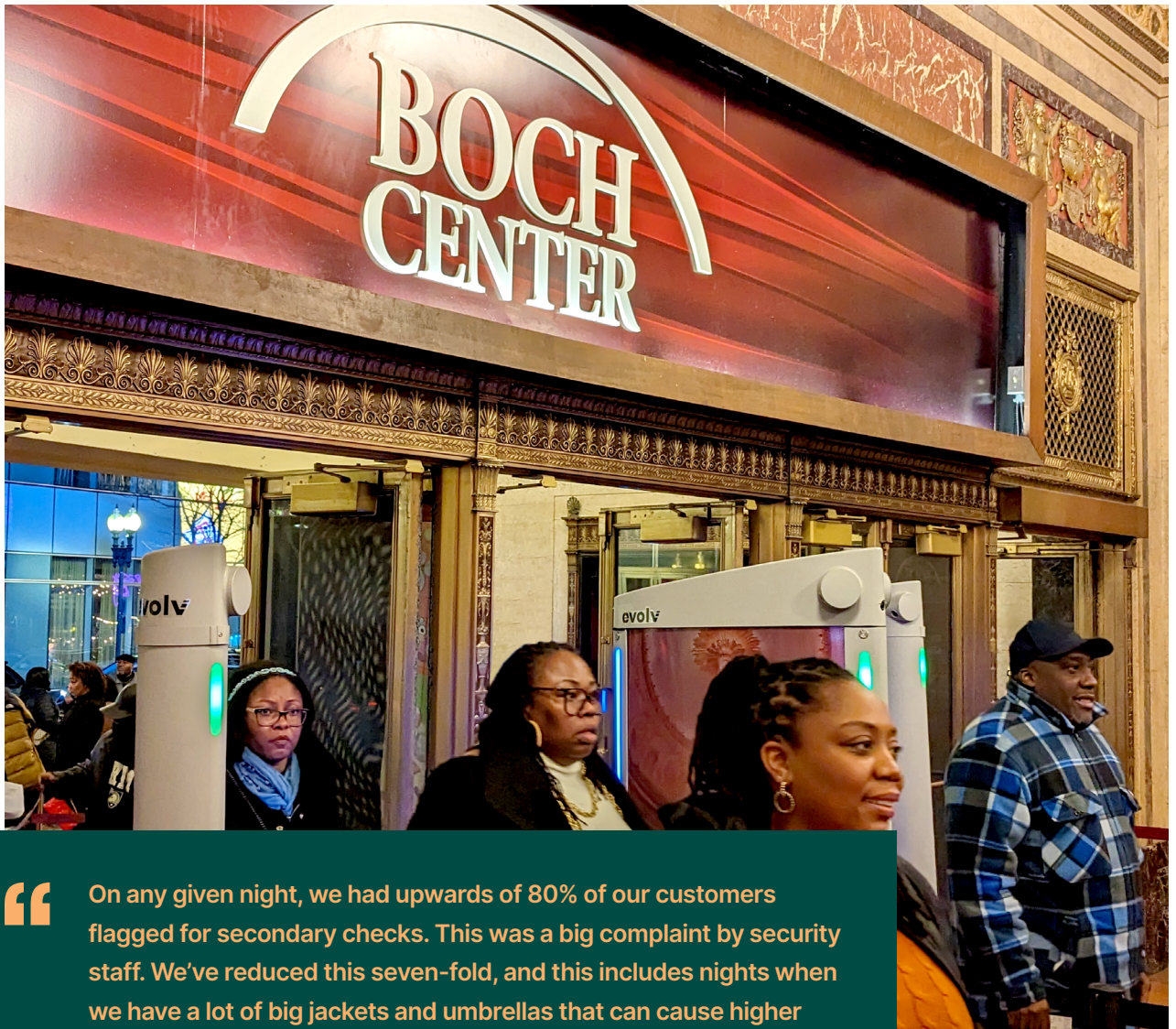
And because security staff don’t dread managing security ingress, Neill has seen a dramatic improvement in staff retention. “Security typically sees pretty high turnover rates,” he says. “But with Evolv, we’ve seen a substantial improvement.”



Boch Center Serves as Role Model for Local Public School

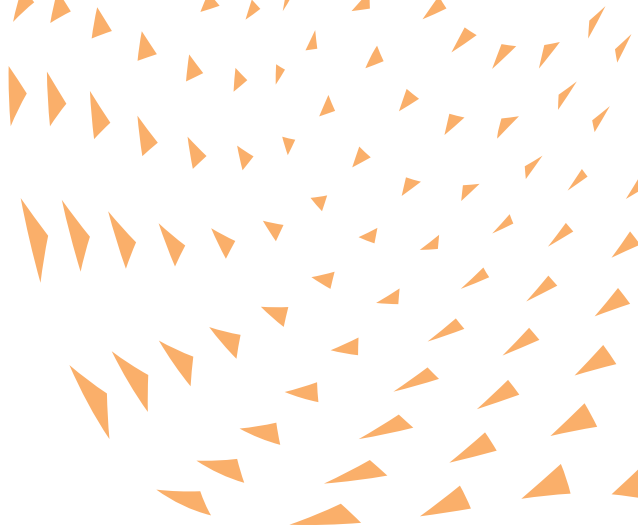
Neill is especially enthusiastic when it comes to advocating for Evolv to the surrounding community and businesses in Boston.

“People just don’t always grasp the possible use cases for Evolv,” Neill asserts. “Performing arts is just one of many. I was explaining to one of our employees, who also works for a public school, that we have no lines with Evolv. He came out to see it for himself. We had some long lines piled up before the opening of our doors, and he was astounded that they just evaporated away. He went back to his school and advertised it as a solution for all the kids coming off the buses on the premise that the kids would not need to wait in the snow and adverse weather conditions. And this is just one of many use cases for Evolv across various industry sectors.”



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Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work or play.

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