



Leveraging Social Media to Market Your Show: 9 Tips for Engaging Readers and Creating Ticket Buyers by Laura Gagnon

Number One: Assess your team.

Is your director always on Twitter? Is your costume designer followed by thousands on Instagram? What about the actor whose phone is blowing up from Facebook notifications? These are the people that you want on your side on your social media campaign to market your show. Discuss social media early on with everyone who works on the show, both on stage and off. Let everybody know they can affect the success of the shows marketing; encourage them to personally support social media efforts in their networks throughout the entire production and performance period of the show. When you're deciding which of the dozens of social media platforms to market with, choose ones that are familiar to you and which your associates are also using. Facebook is the obvious go-to for a number of reasons including accessibility, flexibility and sheer numbers of users. Beyond that, determine the strengths and interests of your team members and play to them.

Number Two: So What Do I post?

After they've heard the show teaser and seen the poster or artwork, people want to hear the behind the scenes story; they want to see pictures of it as well. Backstage candids, video clips, rehearsal shots and after-rehearsal shots, as well as interviews, previews and reviews. All of these things are interesting to people who want to know more about your show and might be convinced to buy a ticket. What else?

The past accolades of your current cast and crew make good copy. Do you have an Award nominated or winning actor/designer/producer/etc? Showcase the people involved in the "process" of producing your show. Think about everyone and everything that is bringing something to your production and pick the best stories.

Number Three: Frequency, or How Much is Enough?

As in any conversation there are times when you'll have less to say than other times. It's alright if you slow the pace of your posts when there's less going on; no one wants to read the same stuff from you over and over, so don't do that. But at the same time don't forget about your social media accounts totally; check them for other people's activity even when you're not posting yourself. Interact on other people's profiles to stay in the game. The key is to build a consistent and lasting presence on social media that's there when you need it (more on that in Number 10). In the weeks running up to opening night you'll be posting a lot. Keep posts unique; you can repeat the same info but reword it, use different graphics, change things up. Plan your posts on a timetable a couple days to a week in advance so you can see what you're working with. But remember, with all these posts will come responses, which brings us to...

Number Four: It's a Conversation Not a Monologue

You've been posting up a storm, getting Likes and retweets and even comments. Now it's time to start responding and engaging.

Social media is just as much social as it is media and when someone opens the door to conversation by leaving a comment, walk immediately through that door. By engaging in conversation you create more opportunity to hit upon the thing that will make that person come

out to your show. People don't want to feel that you are marketing to them; they want engagement. If someone leaves a positive comment, no matter how brief, don't miss the opportunity to further the conversation. Always remember you're the moderator; you're in control and you're responsible for the tone of the dialogue. Keep your commentary positive and on topic (or close to it.)

Number Five: Meetups

Don't underestimate the value of creating Meetup groups in New York City. It's one of the best ways to transition online relationships between people with a common interest into real life activities that will generate ticket sales. Check whether discount codes or group rates are available to offer once the group reaches a certain amount of people. And of course promote the link to your group plus any incentives across your other social media networks.

Number Six: Own the Flow: Driving Social Media Traffic

Ultimately you're doing all this social media marketing so people will not only know about your show, but also buy a ticket to it. More established shows will work to drive online traffic to their website and encourage ticket purchases by including that URL in posts and tweets. If you don't have a website, consider using the festival's website URL or the URL of the Ovationtix calendar. (URL's that are overly long can be shortened on a number of sites such as ow.ly, tinyurl.com, bitly.com). Be careful not to use links that dump the reader on a home page or landing page when it's not obvious where they should go from there. If they have to spend too much time looking around for the next step you will lose them. Generally the fewer clicks a person has to make in order to purchase an item, the more likely the transaction will be completed. Particularly when you are linking from a page that already has all the information about your show (like a Facebook invitation) use the most direct link possible to the actual ticket purchase option.

Number Seven: Facebook and Paid Boosts

Is paying for Facebook boosts worth it? Yes, you can get good results for minimal investment if you tailor the audience preferences correctly, and broadcast the right kind of message. The right kind of message to post and boost is one that has a call to action. Don't boost the post about how great the songs are in your musical (even though that's a cool thing); boost the post about your tickets going on sale, and include that link to purchase. Boost the post about your show adding extra performances and again, don't forget the link. When you are setting up a campaign for a boosted post, think about who will be most likely to come to your show and adjust the campaign filters for age, location and interests accordingly. Alternately, choosing the "Friends of Friends" audience option can yield good results in that you are getting your message to friends of followers of your page, who logically might share the followers' interests. The downside of selecting that filter is you can't tailor this option further; your followers might have lots of friends that share their interests in independent theatre but they might all live in Los Angeles, and therefore not be likely to come to your New York show. Experiment with small boosts (\$10-\$20 at a time) to determine the effectiveness of different approaches.

Number Eight: Social Media Manager Dashboards

Even if you're only running on a couple different social media networks it can still get hectic. Having everything in one place can be immensely helpful for organization. Social media managers, like Hootsuite, give you an overview of your efforts across multiple networks by filtering your feeds onto one dashboard. In turn you can also post content from the dashboard to multiple networks at once in a single click. There's a great deal of flexibility in how you can set up a dashboard, and there's a certain amount of learning curve to both the set up and use. However if you're going to be running social media campaigns over the long run, it's worth the investment in time to pick one and learn it.

Number Nine: Building For the Long Term

The success of social media marketing depends greatly on how frequently and for how long you've been cultivating a page or profile or account. If you have 5000 followers you will have greater reach than if you have 50, it's as simple as that. Before you build a new Facebook page for the new play you wrote, consider creating a Facebook page for yourself as the playwright, and feature your new play on this page now. When it's time to market your next new play, your presence is already established and you just continue cultivating that page and building your following with the content about your newest and current production. Social media as a conduit for entertainment marketing is here to stay for the foreseeable future; a strategy that enables you to build on every new venture you undertake without starting over should be the goal.

Ready to devise and implement your own social media marketing plan? Call Laura for a free marketing consultation at 212-677-2565.