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## Feeling the Pulse of Arts Marketing in 2018

*Marketing for a touring Broadway show isn't easy. Here's how to appease the show reps, sell tickets, and spend efficiently with a marketing budget that makes sense for your city.*

We've all been there: Your boss wants more ads in the local paper. The show reps call from the other side of the country because their "friend" in your city hasn't heard a single radio ad yet. No one seems to be clicking through your email campaigns. And don't even start with Google Analytics and the targeted Facebook ads. You're the one with the marketing money in your hands, but what's the best way to spend it? Let's talk about your options, and I'll give some examples from the city I work in – Nashville, Tennessee.

### **Print**

Print advertising might seem a little old-fashioned these days, but the truth is that people TRUST printed publications. With the rise of the "fake news" phenomenon, consumers trust print far more than social media. Actually as far as the news goes, people trust print the most – more than television and radio. Kantar's 2017 "Trust in News" study showed that 72% of respondents trusted printed news while 69% trusted TV news, 68% trusted radio news, and only 33% trusted social media<sup>1</sup>. Admittedly, advertising and the news are separate entities, but it's important to recognize marketing as a bit of a psychological game to earn an audience. Creating a

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<sup>1</sup> ["Trust in News" Kantar \(2017\)](#)

positive association between your advertisement and something that consumers trust can go a long way. At the same time, you can't just throw an advertisement up in any old magazine and expect it to catch on. It is absolutely essential that you are constantly FEELING THE PULSE of the audience that you are trying to reach (HINT: this is going to be a theme in this article). Even if you've been living in your city for 20 years, talk to teenagers, young adults, musicians, professional, parents – anyone you can – about what local print publications they like to read. Pay attention to what free magazines fly off the racks outside hotspot restaurants and what people pick up to read from the coffee table when they're sitting down waiting to get a haircut. Here in Nashville, we have *Native*, *The Nashville Scene*, *The Green Hills News*, and *Nashville Lifestyles* to name a few. Each publication likely speaks to a different audience, so know those differences and use them to your advantage.

## **Television**

If you think that I was pushing it with the print advertisements, you might be rolling your eyes just looking at this headline. If you've ever tried advertising on television, you know it's

expensive. This along with the tedious invoices and difficult, uncertain timing decisions probably leads some of you to think that it's better to just forget about television forever. How many people even watch actual television anymore anyway? While it isn't growing nearly at the rate of digital, regular old television is still influential to a lot of people, and even more importantly, television creates an emotional connection with viewers that other platforms cannot (don't forget about that psychological game I talked about in the last section). According to the Video Advertising Bureau's 2017 report<sup>2</sup>, 85% of purchases are driven by the consumer's emotional attachment to the product or advertisement. Additionally, 58% of consumers think that television is the most likely place for them to experience emotional attachment to an advertisement, and at 62%, television produces the strongest advertisement recall in comparison to tablets, computers, and smartphones. Zenith's Second Quarter 2018 report<sup>3</sup> on its "Touchpoints Rate on Investment (ROI) Tracker" system confirms television's importance: "Television ads are the most likely to be seen and remembered, and to influence consumer opinion and behaviour...television is still the most

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<sup>2</sup> [Video Advertising Bureau 2017 Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Zenith Media Second Quarter 2018 Report](#)

important channel for recruiting new customers.” To sum it up: we may love the digital world, but television is still a heavy-hitter. And while those television channel invoices may be tedious, they provide us with the precious viewership numbers that show representatives love to see. Since television spots can be fairly expensive, inquire about trade deals and partnerships. Giving a few tickets to the station in exchange for a few advertising spots can go a long way and easily return the investment with good time slots. Additionally, local cable news channels often do ticket giveaways that can grab the audience’s attention and point it toward your event. As with any advertising medium, it is crucial to build friendly relationships with advertising representatives at television stations so that you’ll be aware of special opportunities.

### **Radio**

Similar to print advertising, knowing if and where to place radio advertisements requires feeling the pulse of your city and audience. Often, radio stations stick to a single, specific genre, so they can be a great way to connect to a narrower demographic. Another great thing about radio advertising spots: they’re usually fairly cheap. If you aren’t sure how your city

will react to radio advertising, you usually won’t break the bank experimenting, plus they’re fairly easy to produce. One great way to get the most out of radio buys is to make sure that your money goes toward visibility on all of the station’s platforms. Radio stations are more than just the AM/FM waves! Get on board with a radio station that regularly sets up a tent to DJ and promote local events. You can often find radio station tents or tables outside baseball stadiums on gamedays and at local festivals. Ask and see if some of your advertising money can go toward visibility at these events. Don’t forget that radio stations usually have websites with advertising space too! Radio stations are another great medium for partnerships. When you buy radio spots, ask if the station does any ticket giveaways. These are a great way to get listeners’ attentions.

### **Digital**

“Finally, the 21<sup>st</sup> century right? This is where you say forget all that other stuff and focus on Facebook?” Yes and no. As you probably already know, digital advertising is a huge, intimidating beast with many facets. It’s almost unfair to lump all the sides of digital advertising into one. Often, companies completely outsource their digital marketing to outside specialists. Tackling the world

of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Google Analytics, tagging, retargeting, etc. takes extensive technical training and is beyond the scope of this article. That being said, there are some fantastic and effective digital marketing steps that you can take without too much technical know-how, and I'll break them down into three smaller categories – email marketing, social media, and your website. Often this kind of digital marketing is done in-house, so make sure you're factoring this into your budget. If you are spending legitimate time and getting results from these base level digital marketing steps, bill the time during settlement with the show (as long as you haven't settled on some other agreement for digital marketing). These services sell tickets and should count toward your budget, and billing the hours ensures that they are a priority. These digital mediums allow for quick and easy access to the real goal in all of this – ticket sales.

**Email Marketing:** Does your organization send out a regular email newsletter with announcements and deals? If not, this is a great place to start out in the digital marketing world. Software like MailChimp is fairly user-friendly and allows you to build out professional looking email templates,

keep a database of email addresses, and track click rate data. Regular newsletters keep your loyal customers in the know. They alert subscribers to new shows and ensure that you stay in consumers' minds. Email marketing software is also a great way to test what your audience responds to. After you send an email out, many of these pieces of software show email open rates and also what parts of the email that the audience tends to click on. Pay attention to the way that you word the subject line – small details can make a huge difference. Email marketing is another medium in which experimentation is key.

**Social Media:** Make sure your organization is covering the major social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. And remember that just the simple fact that you have these pages doesn't cut it. Schedule a simple weekly plan for posting on your social media pages. Depending on the size and audience of your organization/venue, you might start with just two or three posts a week. Again, experimentation is crucial. Audiences love behind the scenes shots and other content that they can't get from just seeing a show. While well-kept social media pages alone work as excellent advertising, you can also pay

for social media platforms to “boost” your posts so that they show up as advertisements in potential new customers’ feeds. You can even pinpoint specific demographics, geographical areas, and people with aligning interests. Using related hashtags in your posts also heightens the chances of an interested consumer stumbling across your page while surfing and exploring their social media pages. Take full advantage of the advertising that you can get for free on these platforms. Don’t spend your precious budget in areas you don’t need to.

**Website:** Staying on top of your website may require a little more technical knowledge depending on the software that you use. Whether you or someone else takes care of the website, set aside a time – at least weekly – to make sure everything is up to date. Take some time after reading this article to try and objectively look at your website. So many sites are difficult to navigate and clunky, and with today’s user friendly web design technology, a bad website is pretty much unacceptable. Is your site attractive? Is your calendar of events easy to find? Is it obvious where consumers go to buy tickets? These are some basic website necessities that can make the difference between a ticket

sale and a lost customer. Of course, you can go much deeper with web design involving underlying code, but these are simple steps that you can take even without much technical knowledge.

### **Bringing it all together**

Balance is key if you want to market the arts effectively. Each of the categories in this article have value, and each has its downsides. Experimenting is essential and there’s no one clear-cut answer for selling tickets. Most importantly, take time to feel the pulse of your audience and city. Think of developing your audience and customer base as a long-term strategy that comes along with study and experimentation. Happy marketing!