

Arts Audiences

Tour Marketing Resources

5. Essentials of...

Effective PR

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Introduction

This resource forms part of the training commissioned by Arts Audiences from The Audience Agency to support touring companies in receipt of The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon funding to tour during 2015. It is one of 6 resources designed to cover the Essentials of Tour Marketing, and is accompanied by a workshop session held on 7 October 2014 in Dublin.

The full set of 'Essentials' resources includes:

1. Effective information exchange with venues
2. Marketing planning
3. Understanding audiences
4. Top tips for copywriting, images and messaging
- 5. Effective PR**
6. Local engagement and networking

How to get the most from this resource

- Refer to your learning log and consider your current levels of experience and knowledge in this area and your personal objectives.
- Allocate some time to reading the resources
- Do the exercises where relevant and useful
- If you want to know more refer to the reading list
- Use the template/s to start formulating your plans
- Fill out your learning log (how confident do you now feel in this area?)
- Refer any comments or questions to The Audience Agency or save them up for the workshop session

Key areas of skill/competence

This resource will help you to:

- Develop an understanding of your organisation's communication needs
- Recognise the principles of PR
- Write a media strategy (for on and offline communications) with key messages
- Write a media plan for implementation

Exercises and Templates

- A media plan template

Further reading and resources

A guide to marketing your production on tour By Heather Maitland and Jenny Traynor © Arts Audiences 2010 available at www.artsaudiences.ie

Marketing and Touring: a practical guide to marketing an event on tour by Heather Maitland © Arts Council England 2004 available at www.artscouncil.org.uk

Arts Marketing Association The Marketing Map © AMA and Ros Fry available through Arts Audiences

<http://culturehive.co.uk/resources/public-relations-and-the-media-an-introduction-for-arts-and-cultural-marketers>

Further resources are also quoted throughout

Principles of PR

Public relations (PR) is how a company interacts with the public, maintains ties to its community and gets important information out to audiences and stakeholders. It is also about managing reputation - building relationships and goodwill amongst audiences and stakeholders. Finally it involves managing crises which might affect the company's reputation.

Effective PR involves doing research, thinking expansively, and staying connected to the media. For a company this will mean keeping the media and stakeholders informed, even when the company is not so visible. It might also mean developing a role as a 'thought leader' or a voice representing a certain constituency, which will make the organisation a reference point for journalists.

PR could involve any of the following, press releases, speeches, interviews, becoming an active member in professional and local organisations, events or stunts, making videos, access to previews/rehearsals, web broadcasts, blogging, social media interaction and direct mail pieces. In fact PR is increasingly about 'content production' whether for on or offline distribution.

As with all communications, it is important to think about target audiences and who you would like to influence, the messages which will be effective to engage them, which media you would use (which match the message and the target audience) and how you might evaluate the impact of this work.

PR is not one way - it is a dialogue and a conversation, so we should also be prepared to respond, not only to journalists' requests but also to those who interact with us on social media, by email or comments and feedback at our events.

Don't forget that your stakeholders are also an essential resource for PR. They should know about your work and will be keen advocates - whether this is your staff team, the artists and organisations you are working with, funders or friends and relations. Make sure in the first instance that these people who are closest to you all the information and tools that they might need to be your advocates. Provide them with images, video, sound and information in the right formats, so that they can do your job for you. Whether they are currently working with you, did so in the past or are about to, they will be happy to support your work.

A Media Strategy

Media Local and regional media coverage is one of the most important ways of reaching wider audiences - but only if you get off the arts and entertainment pages. Your colleagues may be excited by a review in the national press but it won't necessarily increase ticket sales. If you are working with a PR consultant, make sure they focus on the local and regional press as well as the nationals.

Promoters usually have good relationships with local journalists but still rely on companies to provide the stories that will get their production into the papers.

Selecting media

Consider what your target audiences might read or use for information, and take a broad view of media and who might influence your audiences:

- National print/online media - which sections, which magazines
- Local print/online media - which sections
- Radio local/national - which programmes, when, which presenters (usually an online element too)
- TV local/national - which programmes
- Magazines - which - lifestyle, special interest, news, events listings etc.
- On and offline what's on and listings
- Recommendation sites - TripAdvisor, tourism etc.
- Blogs by influencers, of a special interest, subject interest
- Social media for related organisations, influencers or celebrities
- Student publications
- Sector, industry membership or support organisations, arts or artists networks

And consider what they might be looking for:

- News items
- Local interest
- Photography
- Photo-stories (see Heather Maitland 2010 for ideas)
- Video
- Sound - interviews or music
- Features
- Reviews

- Listings

Photography

Think about where your images might appear - what shape - landscape or portrait, what size - thumbnail or larger, black and white or colour. Consider the quality of re-production on and off line so that your images still look sharp and distinct. Think about what the caption would be to go with the photograph. Consider what would be of interest to the particular reader or target market - a particular performer, a particular exhibit, a detail or costume.

Provide the stories

Find potential local and regional stories by asking your company members and colleagues if they:

- have a local connection: where were they brought up, where did their first boyfriend or girlfriend live?
- had an interesting job before getting involved in the arts: bomb disposal expert, snake keeper at a zoo?
- have an unusual hobby or collection: Elvis memorabilia, spiders, parascending?
- have a life experience they are willing to share: getting their shape back after becoming a mother, recovering after a car crash?

Think about your organisation, Is there:

- an anniversary?
- a superlative: the biggest..., the first..., the longest...?
- a big number: 50,000th ticket buyer?
- anything of topical interest?
- an interesting research finding: 49% of dance attenders are men?
- Talk to venue staff and regularly read the local press from around the country to familiarise yourself with the kind of stories that get covered.

Heather Maitland (2010)

Start a conversation

PR is as much about a dialogue as providing information. Be prepared to respond to editorial, blog posts or social media posts.

Also, consider whether there is an opportunity for debate or discussion around your production. It could be around:

- The subject matter
- A new or different way of presenting work
- The role of the artists
- Responding to recent news or events
- A particular perspective held by one of the creative team

Such discussion or debate may be triggered in response to something already written ie. online reviews or features or you may instigate it through placed editorial or social media channels.

Be clear about who your spokespeople are, brief them and if necessary provide some more formal training on how to write think pieces, or blogs or use social media.

Gaining Media Coverage

How do you get your local papers to write about your activity? How do you get your local radio station to come down and interview you? How do you get people talking about your activity on Twitter?

What all media outlets want is a story. The type of story they want depends slightly on the media channel - for instance, radio needs sounds to record rather than images to look at, blogs may want a more local angle and to discuss how your activity impacts your local community.

The main elements of a story are usually much the same:

- 1) it needs to have something new or different about it
- 2) it needs to be interesting
- 3) for local media in particular, there needs to be a local angle

For a really compelling news story, think TRUTH:

T = timely/topical - what other news can you link to?

R = relevant (to the media outlet/audience)

U = unusual

T = trouble (journalists will pull out any controversial issues so be prepared for this)

H = human interest - why would you stop and read this story?

This puts you in a very good position. Your activity can provide all of these, from striking images, interesting videos for online publications, to artists talking about themselves and their work, as long as you present it in the right way.

How to use press releases

- Write your template press release (see below for top tips) - and do a few different versions, for different audiences and different media
- Research relevant media and find the names of the journalists who might be interested in your work
- Check the deadlines for publication of the media identified
- Rehearse your 'pitch' ie. reasons why covering your event will be of interest to the media's readers
- Write them a letter, email or call them focusing on your pitch
- Follow-up by sending the press release or provide any other materials requested
- Follow-up with another phone call, and another if necessary
- Provide any additional materials requested
- Arrange interviews and/or photo-call
- Follow-up with the same media, next time you are in the area

Top tips on writing a press release

There is more on how to write a press release in Heather Maitland's guide 2010 and also some quick tips here:

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/information-funded-organisations/promoting-your-grants-arts-activity/gaining-media-coverage/writing-a-press-release/>

A Media Plan Template

Key Message/s	Target Audiences	Timing	Media Channel

Contacts

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London SE1 3ER

Manchester Office

Green Fish Resource Centre

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Northern Quarter

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