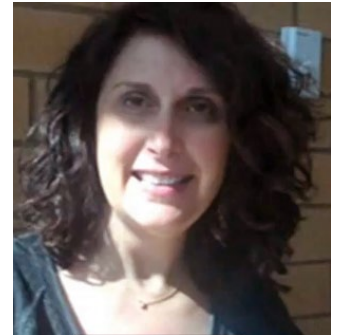




Marketing Means More than Facebook: Focusing on Fundamentals

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Social media tools are fun, hip, sexy, cheap and easy to use. It's not too surprising that arts organizations are quick to embrace the ever-evolving world of social media. While I believe a social media presence is almost always necessary, when I work with an arts organization or get asked a question about social media tools, my first response is to ask some key questions such as:

- Who is your target customer?
- What is your current message?
- What are your competitors doing?
- Are you trying to reach a new market segment?
- What are you trying to accomplish?

More often than not, I get incomplete answers, if any. When that's the case I need to break the news that the organization needs to put on the brakes, take a breath and spend some time focusing on the fundamentals. Why? Regardless of how cool and affordable these new social media tools are – if they don't advance your marketing objectives or support your brand they don't make sense for your organization.

What are fundamentals and how do you find them?

While all marketers will remind you that marketing is not an exact science and there (usually) aren't any silver bullets, the more knowledge you have of your marketplace, your organization, your target customer and what you want and or need to accomplish, the more successful your marketing efforts will likely be.

As you develop a marketing plan, you'll naturally focus on the fundamental information for your organization. Not only will the marketing plan become your map for capacity and audience development but it will also provide you with a foundation of essential knowledge to better serve your arts organization.

"Would you tell me which way I ought to go from here?" asked Alice. "That depends a good deal on where you want to get," said the Cat.

- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), novelist and poet.

Lewis Carroll's adage about planning is still true in our 21st century world of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. While marketing plans don't need to be literary classics, they do need to include key topics:

1. Situation Analysis

Where are we now? This section reviews your current business situation and highlights the fundamental facts for your group. It includes an evaluation of key consumer trends as well as your organization and its product(s), pricing, distribution, current audience and communication messages. The Situation Analysis should also include a competitive analysis where you evaluate your advantages and disadvantages. The information you learn in this section will provide the guidance for your organization's marketing efforts.

2. Marketing Objectives

Where do you want to go? How do you want to move your arts organization forward? Objectives need to be measurable, actionable, and realistic for your organization's financial situation.

3. Marketing Strategies

How will you achieve your objectives? Strategies can be based on product, price, place or promotions. Who are you talking to? Who is your target audience and can you define them with demographics and psychographics?



What is your message? What benefits do your product(s) offer? What messages resonates with your target audience? Have you captured a unique position in the marketplace? Does this support your organization's brand? The fundamentals that you define in the Situation Analysis will help guide your decisions here.

4. Tactics

How will you reach your target(s)? When you consider potential marketing tactics, remember that it's important to reach your audience in different environments at multiple times. But, most importantly, ask yourself if the tactics that you are choosing make sense for your objectives, your audience and your product.

5. Budget

How much will it cost? Your marketing budget will help you set your parameters for your list of tactics. Are you spending at least 10-20% of your revenues for marketing? Remember, if you're a brand new organization or introducing a new program, it costs even more to build awareness.

6. Action Plan and Evaluation

Can you execute your plan with your current resources? The action plan section will focus on getting the work done and harnessing the necessary time and people to make it happen. How will you know it worked? Evaluations are key to every plan. When will you review it and how will you judge its effectiveness?

While writing a marketing plan might not provide the immediate gratification of setting up a Facebook Fan Page, the plan will guide your decisions and provide you with an important blueprint for your organization's growth. You'll make more insightful and strategic decisions with the fundamental information you've learned. You'll know how to better communicate to your target audience - you'll know whether to place a print ad in an upcoming arts program, give away free tickets on that Facebook Fan page or whether your organization need to create a major presence on next month's hot new social media marketing tool. (Foursquare or Ning, anyone?)

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