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CENTERPIECE

FOCUS ON: MARKETING

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SEGMENTING AND TARGETING AUDIENCES

BY JIM ROYCE

When we talk about “targeting audiences,” does the term mean the same to everyone? Twenty-five years ago, before computers helped us more easily track various segments of our target audiences, it simply meant that we had a general understanding of our current audience — including who was not participating and who we thought should be a part of it. Once we understood how to reach each segment, the marketing plan and mix were designed to create a subscription or ticket offer with effective and responsive promotional devices, such as brochures, advertisements or other sales methods. Simple? Yes. It helped many marketing directors focus on key segments — breaking them down even further into interest groups — and design sales methods based on a variety of levels to engage consumer attention and action.

The basics of “targeting” have not changed. We continue to build marketing campaigns targeting large numbers of people we know will respond, and at the same time, attract people who are floating around the periphery and may want to come in to see what the excitement is about.

What has changed is our ability to provide service to our many targets. Target marketing has evolved into “relationship marketing,” which requires a keen understanding of the consumer’s desire to have some type of relationship (frequent or occasional) with our organization and our ability to keep a wide variety of those relationships engaged. For instance, the relationships and expectations of long-term subscribers are very different from people who have just purchased season tickets and have never subscribed to anything before. Avid single ticket buyers may enjoy their “picky” choices, but they may never commit to a subscription season. And don’t ignore why a first-time single ticket buyer may never come back — he or she may have a surprising reason on which you can capitalize. Building on relationships with our patrons is a long-term investment. Like friendships, marketing plans need provisions for nurturing, generating sparks, resolving conflicts and the ability to move on once the relationship is over.

Marketing *Centerpiece* Curator: Jim Royce, Director of Marketing & Communications, Mark Taper Forum/Ahmanson Theatre. Copyright © 2002 by Theatre Communications Group, Inc. All articles reproduced by permission of the authors. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form, or by any means, including photocopying, without written permission from the publisher or author. Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 355 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 697-5230, fax (212) 983-4847, website: www.tcg.org. Ben Cameron, Executive Director; Joan Channick, Deputy Director; Christopher Shuff, Director of Management Programs; Rachel Ford, Management Programs Associate.

Beth Brooks, Seattle Repertory Theatre's Marketing and Communications Director, recently grappled with the issue of how to look at her theatre's audiences and then put a human face on the "segments." What's unique about Seattle Rep's effort is the involvement of more than just the marketing staff in their approach (see the article that follows).

In 1983, Michalann Hobson wrote an article about making the marketing plan work. It was included in an anthology, *Market the Arts!*, edited by Joseph Melillo and published by FEDAPT (the now defunct Foundation for the Extension and Development of the American Professional Theatre). My dog-eared copy of the book is still a prime reference. Ms. Hobson included a chart that is as vital today as it was when she compiled it. She encouraged her readers to adapt it to their situations and fit a version of it into their marketing plans. It is worth revisiting from time to time; particularly now as the recession forces us to refine our marketing efforts.

This *Centerpiece* includes a version (see chart at left) you can use to start discussion about various consumer groups, who they are, where to find them, what sales methods to use and then what offer might attract their attention. As you target each group with a specific promotion, keep a strong record of what worked and what could use a refined strategy the next time.

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AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT: WHOSE JOB IS IT?

Since receiving a Lila Wallace Reader's Digest grant in 1999, we have been engaging in a variety of conversations about developing audiences and building participation at Seattle Repertory Theatre. In the education department, we discuss how to develop our qualitative assessment skills as a staff in order to improve school programs. The communications staff grapples with a decreasing subscriber base, an increasing number of single ticket buyers and the process of simultaneously developing "new" audiences while reinforcing the "old." As the reporters for our Lila Wallace grant, the development staff has the opportunity to reflect annually on our activities, but they are not always an integral part of creating and participating in the activities.

Last spring, we determined that the biggest problem with all of this "talking about audience development" was that the conversations were happening separately in each department. Rather than seeing audience development as a program, or even as a series of programs, we realized that it was more of an "ethos" for the organization — a way of approaching the work in each of our departments. "Audience development," we declared, "is everyone's job!"

Mapping Our Audiences, Part 1: The "Pentad"

Deciding that something is "everyone's job" is terrifyingly close to saying it is "no one's job." Not wanting to allow our ethos to fall through the cracks, we created an interdepartmental team, led by the directors of communications and education, with strong connections to the development and artistic directors. Immediately, we decided to identify our current strategies and then determine where we needed to add new ones. "We'll make a list," we thought. "How hard can it be to inventory everything The Rep does to communicate with our audiences?" we naively asked. Soon we realized that the format of the list would dictate how useful that list would be. And since it would be time consuming (the process ultimately took three months); we wanted to make sure it was *extremely* useful and complex enough to capture the breadth of our activities.

Fortunately, the education staff had been working with a consultant, Mary M. Lloyd, Ed.D., on qualitative research methods — including the creation of a matrix of education programs using the "dramatistic pentad¹," which was comprised of five components:

- ❖ **Act:** What is done?
- ❖ **Scene:** When or where is the **act** done?
- ❖ **Agent:** Who performed the **act**?
- ❖ **Agency:** How did s/he perform the **act**?
- ❖ **Purpose:** Why was the **act** performed?

¹ Burke, K. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1945.

We added a sixth column — “evaluation” — to identify how we were currently assessing the success of each act of communication. Deceptively simple, the language of the pentad was perfect for a theatre organization. The format leads easily to evaluation by examining the “ratio” of these elements — a combination of principles that determine the motivation behind human action. For example, we can ask, “Is the person (‘agent’) performing this act the most effective person to be doing this?” or “Given our purpose, is this the best place (‘scene’) for this act?”

We then added one more element to our version of the pentad — the “audience” — and we were *almost* ready to begin filling in the blanks. Our list needed depth to express the different levels of commitment from our audiences. Inspired by preliminary Rand study findings presented at the 2000 Lila Wallace conference, we identified three levels of participation:

1. Introductory: programs designed to encourage people to “try out” Seattle Rep.
2. Bridge: programs designed to create ongoing attendance, especially first-time subscribers.
3. Devoted Fans: programs to keep them devoted.

Mapping Our Audiences, Part 2: “What Do You Mean by That?”

We were then charged with “filling in” the matrix — as we called it — with information from each respective department. Procrastination soon set in, as each of us found it difficult to make time to create the inventory. After a couple of guilt-filled meetings, we addressed our hesitation directly. What was so hard about this activity? As we talked, we realized that each one of us thinks, talks and responds to our audiences in distinctly different ways.

- ❖ Development creates its audience development activities based upon the donor’s giving level and type of donation, not in terms of whether that person is at an introductory or devoted fan level. Reasons for giving are as varied as donors and not always based on passion for or knowledge of the theatre.
- ❖ Education works with students, and therefore, is concerned with developmental stages and whether or not activities are accessible and appropriate for a given age. When we say we want to target youth, the education response is “how young?” or “what grade?”
- ❖ Communications breaks audiences into two main groups — single ticket buyers (introductory) and subscribers (devoted fans) —and then further refines the groups by demographics and zip codes.

The matrix, as it stood, was unable to describe the complex subgroups within our audiences.

In Praise of Audience Segmentation

While all of this was progressing, the gods smiled on us; and our development department got a call from an MBA candidate from Yale University looking for a part-time summer internship. Steven Bridgeland, newly sprung from 10 years in the marketing department at Microsoft, walked into our project. After reviewing audience data (our own and other people’s), Steven created a first draft of our audience segmentation. These “types” were placed on a graph (see the center pullout, “Sample Page from Seattle Repertory Theatre’s Audience Development Map”). The horizontal axis represents the audiences’ *affiliation* with Seattle Rep, ranging from people whose entertainment choices include theatre, but are not partial to live theatre, to people who prefer Seattle Rep to other theatres. The vertical axis is the audiences’ *expectation* of enjoyment, viewed as a ratio of reward to hassle factors (e.g. parking, getting tickets, scheduling).

Our audience segmentation yielded seven types. We decided to create a “cast” of characters to understand our audience better. We arrived at these nicknames as a group, and this has greatly enhanced our ability to use the segmentation.

- ❖ Spontaneous Consensus — “Eva” — young, in her 20’s, makes decisions at last minute, runs in a pack of 4 or 5 friends.
- ❖ Special Occasion — “The Smiths” — couples, mostly married with children, “on a date,” theatre is a backdrop.
- ❖ New Fan — “Karen” — young to middle aged, looking for theatre over other forms of entertainment.
- ❖ The Trained Fan — there are two types of this segment: one is an “Arts Joe” who knows what he likes in theatre, and who will often choose a play based on his preference for the actor or playwright; the other is the “Issue Joe” who makes his decision based on an issue addressed in a play.

- ❖ Leaper of “Faith”— has had an experience with Seattle Rep that is positive and is leaping to some version of a subscription (usually a smaller, more flexible, introductory package).
- ❖ Unsatisfied Rep Fan — “Grumpy Gus” — a season ticket holder, but has an unmet expectation (possibly because of a poor customer service experience or has issues with the programming choices).
- ❖ Devoted Fans — “The Rites” — middle age and older, have been season ticket holders for a long time.

Steven was relentless (in a good way) in making us determine only one primary target for any given audience development effort. Ultimately, he relented (a little) and said we could choose a secondary target. We then went back to our matrix and separated the audience column into primary and secondary audience targets. With this last addition, we were finally able to complete the matrix.

Initial Insights

Having created this comprehensive list of our audience development activities, we are now developing our assessment questions and methodologies in order to determine how effective we are and where we need to fill in the gaps. We are sharing evaluation tools across departments in order to understand our audiences better. We are using both qualitative methods (formal observation, written reflections, phone interviews and focus groups) and quantitative methods (demographic information and charting the trends of subscription rates).

We have had the matrix — or Audience Map as we now call it — for about three months, plus the three months it took to create it, and we are already able to see two major themes emerging:

- ❖ First, we’re pretty good at introductions, especially via our school programs, and we are quite good at responding to our fans, but we aren’t as sure footed on the bridges. This issue gives us some interesting research questions:
 - ◆ What makes a “leaper of faith” *and* how can we sustain him once he has made that leap, before he becomes a devoted fan?
 - ◆ How do we identify the “initiators” and “influencers” within our New Fans (the ones who make the decision to come to the theatre, as opposed to coming as a guest) *and* how can we create more opportunities for our Trained Fans to recruit New Fans?
 - ◆ What is the impact of race and ethnicity on our segmentation model, and how does that effect our audience development efforts?
- ❖ Secondly, we realize that our definition of youth in our audience is rather superficial and ambiguous. We need to do more research to understand all aspects of this multifaceted group including:
 - ◆ Under 25: All can purchase tickets for \$10, this eclectic group includes teenagers in our school programs, younger patrons who are brought with a parent or adult friend, college students and those right out of college.
 - ◆ 25–35 years: How are we creating ticket deals to encourage a continued relationship with this group, possibly via membership or subscriptions? How are we building our volunteer base, as well as new donors, staff and board members?
 - ◆ 30–40 years: How are we staying in contact with these patrons as they have children and less time to come to the theatre?

Conclusion

The work we are doing is not simple or easy, but it is proving to be extremely valuable. Most valuable, however, is the shared understanding and responsibility for building passion and support for theatre throughout our organization.

*“Audience Development: Whose Job Is It?” was a joint effort that would not have been possible without the input of every person on the staffs of the education, communications and development departments of the Seattle Repertory Theatre. The article was written by **Andrea Allen**, Director of Education, with contributions by **Beth Brooks**, Director of Marketing & Communications, and **Dawn Rains**, Director of Development. Additional special thanks to Steven Bridgeland and Mary M. Lloyd, Ed.D.*

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MARKETING PLAN CHART

TARGET AUDIENCES Who do you have <i>now</i> ? Who do you <i>not</i> have? Who do you <i>want</i> ?	ACCESS & REACH Where can they be reached?	SALES TOOLS What can you use to get them to buy?	PLANS / PACKAGES/ OFFERS What will appeal to them?
Your Current Audiences Subscribers Members and Donors Recent Buyers Multi-Buyers Former Buyers Referrals from Buyers Their friends, co-workers, clients, family	Computerized Mailing Lists Email and Website At Shows Telemarketing Inbound Phones Box Office Newspapers and Radio Press	Direct Mail (personalized) Program Inserts Telephones Lobby Displays Special Events Tours and Seminars News coverage Newspaper Advertising Radio Spots Promotional Tie-Ins	Subscriptions, Memberships Single Tickets: Exclusive Advance Offer Discounts or Other Perks Cross-selling on inbound calls and at box office Exclusive access and priority services not offered to general public
Patrons at Other Theatres and Arts Organizations Professional Theatres Community Theatres Art Museums Opera Symphonies Arts Support Organizations	Mailing Lists Their Email Lists Open House	Direct Mail: personalized when possible Ads in their programs Special Co-op Events	Priority opportunity in advance of general public sale Special Discounts Introductory Ticket Plan Sampler Pack
Businesses and Corporations The community where you are located: Residents Businesses Chambers of Commerce Convention/Visitors' Bureau Consulates	Merchant Assns. or Councils Neighborhood Councils Corporate Concierges Mailing Lists Business Newspapers Networking Building/Residence Managers Personal Contact Speakers Human Resources Directors Employee Recreation Centers	Personal Selling Networking Direct Mail Advertising Special Event Participation Banners, Flyers Trade News Media Sponsor Door to Door Rec. Center Presentations Previews speakers at corp. functions Corp. Lobby Displays Employee Newsletters After Work Receptions	Discount Coupons Advance Priority Employee Benefits (discounts paid for by corp.), retirement or reward gifts Client Benefits Blocks of season tickets Free passes in exchange for services (lobby displays) Corporate Evenings
Professionals Doctors, Lawyers, Financial	Board Member Rolodex Lists Professional Associations Institutions Clubs Office Waiting Rooms (doctors)	Personalized Direct Mail Referrals from Board Members Brochure racks in waiting rooms (make sure they get restocked frequently)	Advance Sale Opportunity Employee Benefits or Rewards Retirement Awards Client Gift Certificates Discount offers for clients
Retail Businesses and Special Events	Department Stores Specialty Shops Mall Events Food Stores Hair Salons	Personal Contact Window Displays Posters Bag Stuffers Shopping Bags Mall Banners Billing Stuffers Personal Appearances Media Co-Sponsorships Brochure Racks	Shopping Bag printed discounts Discount Coupons Dept. Store Sponsorship Gathering leads for follow-up: Raffle drawings Event giveaways Large posters with coupon
People Attending Sports and Special Events	Parades Sports Events (at games) Street Fairs	Announcements Scoreboard Flashes Booths/Banners Personal Selling Team member attendance at openings Combo promotions with sport season ticket	Single Ticket Discounts Image Building Discounts on presentation of game ticket Limited Time Offers

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Book Stores Book Fairs A high proportion of people who read also attend the arts	Chains and Independents	Poster Displays (especially if connected to published work for sale at store) Special Events, Readings Bookmarks on counters Special Appearances	Discount Coupons Promotional tie-ins with published authors CD Promotion (Musicals)
Tourism and Hospitality Tourists who stay in hotels Tourists visiting friends (home stay) Frequent Independent Travelers Conventioneers Business Travelers	Tourist Mailing Lists Travel Press Travel Agents/Brokers Conv./ Vis. Bureau Hotels Airlines Amtrak Chamber of Commerce State / Local Office of Tourism Hotel Racks	Press Release Direct Mail Conv./Vis. 800 number Tourist Web Sites Tie-ins with restaurants and hotels In-room promotions Table Tents Restaurant Place Mats In-flight / bus video	Advance Discounts Hotel concierge hotline service Hotel/Room/Show and restaurant/show packages Travel agent wholesales for frequent business travelers
Networking to Spread the Word Hotel Concierge Hotel Sales Staff Hotel Management Restaurant Managers Taxi Drivers & Dispatchers Rental Car Companies Hair stylists	Concierge Associations Hotel Mailing Lists Unions Convention Ground Operators Local American Express reps for restaurant promos Trade Associations	Personal Contact Direct Mail Offers Telemarketing	Free tickets for previews Discounts for friends Concierge Hotline for guest ticketing
Educators High School University	Schools Unions College Publications PTAs Special Interest Departments	Direct Mail / Mail Drops Teacher Lounge Displays Feature stores in press Personal Contact Telemarketing Teacher Training Events	Subscription Special Discounts Free tickets as preview for group sale Special night deep discounts Seek union sponsorship Free study guides for groups
Alumni Associations	Alumni Lists Publications Alumni Meetings Board members as alums	Direct Mail Speakers Feature stories in press Telemarketing	Subscription Group Discounts Special event and benefit or fundraising opportunities
Students as Individuals	Teachers PTAs Drama Clubs/Classes CTG Discipline Lists Dorms Student Centers Communal Centers Fraternities/Sororities	Mail Drops Speakers P.L.A.Y. Performances Campus Displays Student Sales Reps Movie Trailers Event Tie-Ins	Group Discounts Passport Friday night mixers/events Rush Tickets Student Pick-Six Pack Deep discount on subscriptions Stand-by free tix openings and previews
Gen-X and Young Professionals Downtown Midlevel Managers Singles	Ad Agencies (for youth retail) Apt. Complexes Clubs Singles Clubs Movie Theatre Lobbies Internet	Retail Tie-Ins (Macy's, Gap) Mall Events Apt. Complex Display Radio Tie-Ins Telemarketing Movie Trailers	Deep Discounts "Six packs," "ten bucks for anyone under 25," etc. Special Offers Affinity Nights Mixer Opportunities Image Building
Clubs and Associations Civic, Social, Religious	Civic clubs Country Club Members Religious	Professional Publications Club Newsletters Speakers at meetings	Group Discounts \$? rebate for "each subscription sold" Priority Opportunities Dinner/Show Opportunities

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Home Buyers/Renters Local Relocation Newcomers to area	Real Estate Agents Relocation Agents Newcomer Publications Building Managers	Brochures/Coupons	Introductory Discount Offer
Families/Kids	PTAs Clubs and family networking Churches McDonald's Youth Centers	Direct Mail Personal Contact Newsletters Family/Parenting publications Fast Food (in-store)	Family Series Family Pack Discounts Add-on tickets to current subscriptions to bring their kids Children's Price Discounts Free Pre-Show Workshop
Entertainment and Media Industry Actors, Tech and Management Advertising Agencies	Unions Trade Publications	Direct mail Publications Announcements Posters Equity Hotlines	Deep-discount subscription or other discount offers Preview and first-two week discounts Opening night invites for celebs or ad agency execs.
Commuters	Radio Metro Promotions Rapid Transit Promotions Ride Share Programs	Bus Tail Posters Bus Cards Radio Buys Agency Distribution	Bus Tail Image Poster Bus interior card with discount coupon Radio Media Giveaways Free tickets for freeway "sign-alert" call-ins Commuter Pool Discount
Filmgoers	Film Theatres	Trailers Lobby Displays	Image Building Special Discount Offers Free Passes for Employees
Organizations: Women's Groups Sierra Club/Environmental	Agencies Group Leaders Membership Political and Comm.	Personal Contact Telemarketing Direct Mail	Member Newsletters Special Offers
Diversity Senior Citizens (low income) Latino, Asian, African American Gay / Lesbian Indigenous people Disability	Community Organizations Professional Organizations Social Clubs Churches Rec. Centers Social Service Agencies Ind. Living Centers Schools Group Leaders State/Local Government	Community networking through professional counsel Group Telemarketing Personal Contact Telemarketing Direct Mail	Subscription or single ticket Audio Described (low vision) Interpreted (deaf) Special Event Discounts Networking Opportunities Group Discounts Free and low-cost tickets to selected performances and previews Stand-By Lines Rush Tickets Pay-What-You-Can Nights

Sample Page from Seattle Repertory Theatre's Audience Development Map

Develop and Maintain Programs for Our Devoted Fans to Keep Them Devoted							
At this level, people are consistently coming to The Rep or are making a significant contribution (monetary, volunteering, encouraging others to attend). We want to ensure that these folks continue to feel stimulated and to bring in new people. Again, tools from Introductory and Bridge may also be applicable for this group.							
ACT	Primary	Secondary	SCENE	AGENT	AGENCY	PURPOSE	EVALUATION
What is being done?	Audience	Audience	onsite or offsite	List artist and dept.	how/methods	be succinct	ideas....
Vehicles for Communication: Making Sure That People Stay in the Loop and See the Perks of Being in the Know							
Signatures, Literary Journal	Rites	Faith	Sent to 9 play subs.	Artistic staff; publications	Writers solicited to write about season	To provide in-depth literary analysis of plays	Subscriber surveys; comments from readers
Subscriber perks	Rites	Faith		Communications staff & box office	Part of sub. packages; varies on packages	To encourage subs. to bring new fans	Subscriber surveys; renewal rates
Customer Service: "What ever it takes"	Rites	Gus	Onsite	Box office and front-of-house staff	Face to face and on the phones and email	Excellent customer service; healthy subscriber base	Anecdotal info. from staff, thank you notes etc.
Ticket Offers or Promotions: Designed to Keep Subscribers Seeing All the Plays and Bringing Friends/Children							
Renewals, especially 7 and 9 play subscribers	Rites	Faith	Onsite	Box office w/ support from comm.	mailings, telemarketing	maintain a healthy subscriber base	subscription report
Education Oriented: Designed to Go Deeper into the Artistic Process							
StageVoices	Artistic Joes	Rites	Onsite, rotunda	Theatre artist and an interviewer; Ed. & Aud. Devo. Associate	Artist interviewed by someone that s/he knows, places his/her work in context	To provide glimpse of artistic process; place the plays in context	Observation at event, questionnaire, end of season postmortem, artist response to the event
Drama Intensive	Artistic Joes	Faith	Offsite at Center House	Ed. Staff/director and interns	Generation of original play, presented at Center House	Explore acting/generative ensemble work in depth	Student and teacher evaluations; de-brief
Ballard TeenSpeak	Artistic Joes	Faith	Offsite in fall at Ballard, including performances	Ed. Staff/Resident TA	In small-groups, via consensus, create performance piece	To help students understand the phases and decisions of the creative process	
Summer High School Internships	Joes	Faith	Onsite	Education staff	HS students develop study guides & curriculum	To connect teenagers to org.	Self-assessments throughout process; video projects; ongoing contact

Sample Page from Seattle Repertory Theatre's Audience Development Map

ACT	Primary	Secondary	SCENE	AGENT	AGENCY	PURPOSE	EVALUATION
What is being done?	Audience	Audience	onsite or offsite	List artist and dept.	how/methods	be succinct	ideas....
Development: Creating Long-term and Higher Level Donors							
Elected Officials Reception	Issue Joes	Rites	Onsite	Govt. giving, special events, FOH, artistic staff, box office, SRO	Sat. matinee, sent invite w/ rsvp line	Thank govt. donors, provide more insight into the art	Track attendance, anecdotal notes on crowd response, follow-up notes, subsequent gifts
Fall Gala	Rites	Smiths	Offsite (Four Seasons)	Corp. giving, special events, devo. staff, production staff, Board	Save-the-date, invitation, sit-down dinner, dancing, gaming for 330-360	SRT- general fundraising for operating costs, companies- high profile fun event that allows them to show support of arts community while entertaining clients friends	Track attendance and level of tickets purchased, anecdotal notes on crowd response from participants and committee, repeat attendees
Stars & Stories	Karen	Faith	Onsite	Artistic staff & actors, corp. devo., special events, production & facilities staff, Board	Save-the-date, invitation, pre-show reception, scripted storytelling w/ actors, SRT staff, comm. leaders, invited cast party	SRT-fundraising event for education programs, onstage participants -- way to show their support of SRT, take an active role in the art	Ticket sales, accessibility & enthusiasm of the performers
Fashion Show	Karen	Smiths	Offsite (Paramount Theatre)	SRO, devo., special events, Bd. Members	Save-the-date, invitation, fashion show and lunch	SRO fundraising event for SRT	Ticket sales, press coverage of event -- what follow up do we do?