

A guide to marketing your production on tour

By Heather Maitland and Jenny Traynor

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Arts Audiences: Build Your Audience scheme

In September 2009, **Arts Audiences** launched the **Build Your Audience** scheme, inviting submissions from arts organisations outlining projects where the services of marketing consultant, Heather Maitland, would be of assistance to them in a particular audience development initiative.

From submissions, three organisations were selected to receive free consultancy. This document, produced by Jenny Traynor of CoisCeim Dance Theatre and Heather Maitland, is an outcome from this process.

Arts Audiences is a partnership initiative of the **Arts Council** and **Temple Bar Cultural Trust**, further information about these organisations and this scheme is available at www.ArtsAudiences.ie

Introduction

Jenny Traynor, General Manager of CoisCeim Dance Theatre and Heather Maitland, consultant, worked together on the tour of Faun by David Bolger and As You Are by Muirne Bloomer as part of the Arts Council's Arts Audiences project.

The production toured to the following venues:

DATE	VENUE	NO OF PERFS	ATTENDANCE
11-23 Jan	Project Arts Centre, Dublin	14	1583
26 Jan	Town Hall Theatre, Galway	1	245
28 Jan	Source Arts Centre, Thurles	1	31
30 Jan	Garter Lane, Waterford	1	95
02 Feb	Cork Opera House	1	364
04 Feb	Backstage Theatre, Longford	1	131
06 Feb	Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoire	1	225
09 Feb	Dunamais, Portlaoise	1	77
11 Feb	Civic Theatre, Tallaght	1	115
13 Feb	Wexford Opera House	1	114
Totals		23	2,980

Why is marketing important?

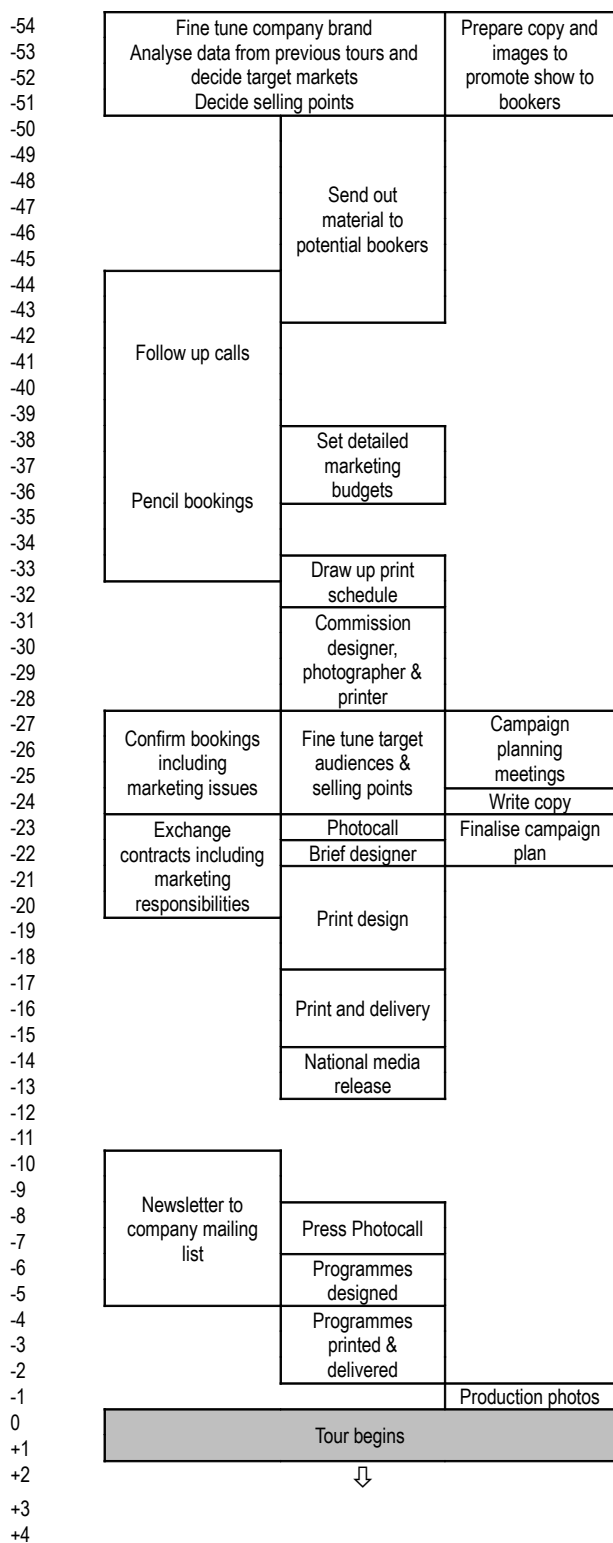
Of course venues and festivals are looking to book touring companies that produce high quality work that fits their artistic policy. But they are also looking for touring companies that produce work that will attract enough ticket buyers to meet their financial targets. Many are willing to take financial risks but these risks are strictly limited. Companies must not only convince promoters that their work is of a high quality but also that they can help them find an audience for it. Promoters are actively looking for companies willing and able to share the responsibility for marketing. Companies that do are more likely to:

- encourage the promoters to take financial risks on unfamiliar art forms
- get bigger audiences so new promoters will be more likely to book them
- have a strong core of promoters happy to invite them back each time they tour
- generate bigger audiences over time because of their consistent touring pattern
- have happy colleagues - no-one wants to perform to an empty auditorium.

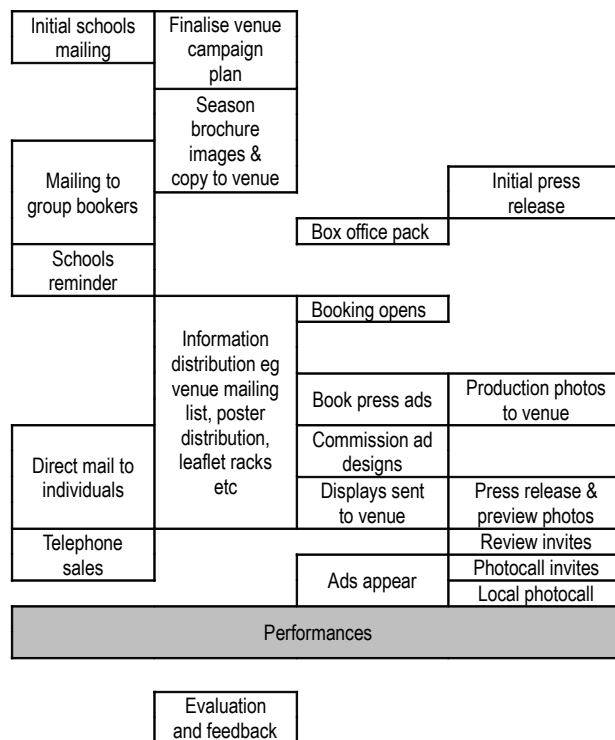
Marketing your production on tour: what to do when

Weeks

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE TOUR



ACTIVITIES FOR EACH VENUE ON THE TOUR



What is marketing?

Marketing is common sense. It involves thinking through the relationship between the arts event and the audience in order to:

- talk to the right people
- about the right things
- in the right way
- at the right time

What is 'right' will be different for each company. The only way to decide what is 'right' is to understand your existing and potential audiences and those of each of your promoters.

The promoters know most about their existing audience and the local community. You and your colleagues know most about your own work and the existing and potential audiences for the art form. Effective touring marketing involves pooling this knowledge.

Talking to the right people

The idea of talking to the right people about the right things is central to effective marketing. A one-size-fits-all message simply doesn't work. It involves making decisions about which groups of people you are going to prioritise and then tailoring what you say and how you say it to suit each group.

This means that groups must have something in common eg a common experience of your art form or the venue. This common factor means that if you talk to them about the same things in the same way they are all likely to respond. 'Young people' is not a target audience - there's a big difference between a 16 year old girl with Grade VIII cello wanting to go to university and a 16 year old boy who has left school, started his first job and just got engaged to his girlfriend.

Start with the people most likely to respond - your 'best bets'. Usually these are:

- people who have seen your company before
- people who already attend the art form
- frequent attenders at the venue

This is unlikely to bring in enough people - the evidence is that people in Ireland attend the arts much less frequently than we think (see below). So you now need to identify your next best bets. They could be attenders of a similar art form or people with a particular interest in the subject matter of your production.

To decide your target markets, you will need information about your past audiences and audiences at the venue. You can download a step by step guide to using box office data to understand your audiences at <http://www.theatreforumireland.com/model-contractsfact-sheets/>

You can also find a guide to researching audiences and visitors, including sources of existing information, on the Arts Audiences website <http://artsaudiences.ie/>

Developing new audiences

Although it is more cost-effective to market to existing audiences, many companies and venues want to develop new audiences. You could focus on existing arts attenders who have never experienced your particular art form or people who have never attended an arts event at all. Just as before, there are non-attenders who are more likely to attend

than others. People who don't think the arts are for them will need a significant investment of time and money to persuade them to try your event.

There are two sorts of new audiences. If arts organisations know what their existing audiences are like, they can find more of the same sort of people. They can also look at their audiences, compare them to the local community and see if there are any groups of people who are under-represented. The first group will need fewer resources than the second, as these potential audiences are more likely to feel positive about the arts and arts organisations have more information to help find them.

One way of introducing new audiences to your art form and your company is through participatory workshops.

WORKSHOPS

12 Workshops took place and were led in the main by Philippa and where possible with one-two performers. These were held in the following venues

- CoisCéim Studio, Dublin x 2
- Town Hall Theatre, Galway
- Youth Ballet West, Galway
- Waterford Youth Arts, Garter Lane
- Dance Course at Sallynoggin VEC
- Shawbrook School, Longford
- Elphin Community School, Longford
- Portlaoise Older people's dance group
- Portlaoise Youth Drama Group
- Tallaght Library
- Dance Course at Inchicore VEC

Total number of participants was 179

"The workshop was a good addition, however it didn't work for us. The product was not suitable for younger audience members and most of the dance practitioners in our catchment area are young kids. Workshop options have helped with other dance tours. "

Dermot O'Reilly, Source Arts Centre, Thurles

Four venues took up the opportunity to arrange between one and two workshops for groups within their localities. These were Backstage in Longford, Town Hall Theatre in Galway, Dunamais in Portlaoise and Garter Lane Arts Centre in Waterford. The other workshops were all directly co-ordinated by CoisCéim and were mainly within the Dublin area and surrounds.

Backstage and Town Hall Theatre in Galway appeared to gain most from the workshops they organised. While Dunamais arranged two workshops, audience attendance was roughly similar to the last time CoisCéim played there.

Attracting workshop participants and turning them into audience depends very much on how the workshop is "sold". What seems to work best is an offer of a free workshop to groups purchasing 10 tickets or more.

Talking about the right things

There is plenty of research about audiences which proves that people know much less about the arts than most arts professionals think. Here's an extract from Theatre Forum's overview of research into audiences in their resource pack for companies.

Audiences buying for more than one event a year attend a range of artforms at the venue. Of the total tickets bought by people who came to drama, for example, on average 45% were for other artforms.ⁱ

Audiences like seeing a variety of artforms and the range attended reflects the venue's programme. An important motivation is not the programme itself but that the arts centre or small venue provides a convenient opportunity locally in a comfortable environment.ⁱⁱ

Most frequent attenders have in-depth interests in multiple artforms or go to a range of events. Some occasional attenders have selective interests in a single artform.ⁱⁱⁱ

Audiences have very little or no knowledge of the majority of companies and do not even recognize their names. Rough Magic, Druid and the national organisations seem to be the only ones with a profile. Two thirds of questionnaire respondents had not seen the theatre company before, nine out of ten had not seen the dance company before, seven out of ten had not seen the music group before (not traditional arts). The exception is opera with four out of ten not having seen the company before.ⁱⁱⁱ

All this means your target groups are unlikely to recognise the names of any but the best known actors, choreographers, musicians and composers. Worse, they will feel they won't understand or enjoy the arts event if they are bombarded with names they have never heard of.

Potential attenders also feel confused and ignorant when publicity material for arts events uses specialised language. They need to know:

- what's it like?
- what's it about?
- how will I feel when I watch it?

Answer these questions clearly and only then start to describe other aspects of the work. This is not "dumbing down", it's simply communicating intelligibly.

Be persuasive. Imagine you are talking face-to-face with someone from your target audience to persuade them to attend your arts event. You are more likely to succeed if you see things from their point of view and give them reasons to attend, not facts. Talk about the aspect of the experience you are offering that is most important to them and then back this up with three or four other points. Different target markets will be interested in different things about your company and its performances.

Talking in the right way

There are dozens of ways you could choose to get your message across. The less time and money your company has, the more important it is to prioritise the methods that actually work. Different communication methods are more effective with different target markets so companies need to provide their promoters with more than one communication tool.

Talking at the right time

Data from the venue's computerised box office system will tell you when audiences book.

The most important tool for almost every venue is the season brochure. Missing this deadline, or providing ineffective copy and images, could cut your audience by 80%. Error: Reference source not found

Finding out about your audiences

To talk to the right people about the right things, in the right way and at the right time, you need to understand your audiences. You could collect the information through a questionnaire or you could ask venues on previous tours to analyse the data on their box office systems.

"We asked our past venues to find out:

- How often did ticket buyers for our show attend your venue in the past year?
- How often have they bought tickets for dance in the past year?
- What other types of events did they attend?
- How many child, senior citizens, schools, groups and other discounted tickets did they sell for our show?
- Had they bought tickets for CoisCeim Dance Theatre before?
- How many were first time ticket buyers at the venue so had come especially to see us?
- How far in advance did they buy their tickets?"

Download a step by step guide to using box office data to understand your audiences from Theatre Forum's website at <http://www.theatreforumireland.com/model-contractsfactsheets/>

Setting marketing budgets

The budget you need will depend on these factors:

- the size of venue: bigger venues have more tickets to sell and so need more marketing materials
- the type of event: new or challenging work needs more time and money spent on it
- past audiences: a company with a well-established audience at a particular venue will need to invest fewer resources
- the promoter's programme: if the promoter does not regularly present your art form or type of work, both you and they will need to invest more resources
- the financial agreement: the level of risk your company is taking will influence the time and money you need to invest but even if the promoter is paying you a fee, you still have a responsibility to help them find an audience.

The biggest cost to your company will be the time to carry out the tasks involved. Excluding salaries, most venues spend roughly 5% of their turnover on marketing while touring companies average around 9%.

Working with promoters

You are the expert on your art form and know your production inside-out. Your promoters have crucial expert knowledge about their audiences and the local marketing environment. You are a team - even if your offices are at opposite ends of the country. Good teamwork will bring bigger and broader audiences. It will also help ensure the right financial outcome for both sides.

What makes a good touring marketing team?

- a commitment by companies to the venues and audiences beyond their home base
- shared short and long term objectives
- an understanding and acceptance of those aims that are different
- an effective use of their combined resources of time and money to achieve these agreed aims, whether they are shared or not
- the sharing of information
- the rejection of "formula marketing" and an openness to each other's ideas
- clear and frequent communication
- long term commitments so that relationships between venue and company and company and audience can develop
- professionalism
- trust

"There was a good communication structure. We were kept informed on national media coverage and were able to put together a structured approach. There was a general feeling of working in the same team on this project. Flyers and posters were of a good standard and were eye catching. Publicity photos were good and production and rehearsal shots were made available as soon as they were done."

Dermot O'Reilly, Source Arts Centre, Thurles

Building trust involves:

- assuming nothing
- checking that your opposite number has understood you correctly
- agreeing everything in writing
- returning calls speedily

"People in partnerships feel guilty if they are getting more than they are putting in and unless they change their partner's behaviour, the partnership is as likely to break down as if they receive less than they are putting in."

Troy Cooper, 'The Psychology of Partnership', *Arts Marketing Association Conference, UK, 2001*, p21

The minimum for an effective partnership

The campaign planning meeting is the most important point in the relationship between company and venue and will affect what happens throughout. Both sides need to create enthusiasm, energy and sense of mission in their partner. Otherwise, to the venue, the company is just another date in the season and to the company, the venue is just another

date on the tour. Some small-scale companies visit each of their promoters for a campaign planning meeting. Where resources are scarce, this may not be possible but companies often hold a joint meeting for all their promoters. This planning meeting should be as early as possible.

All venues should offer the companies they book:

- attendance at a campaign planning meeting
- a positive attitude towards the company and its work
- information, especially hard data, about existing and potential audiences, the catchment area and local conditions
- a mailing list of core attenders
- an appropriate profile in the season brochure
- the ability to undertake additional, targeted mailings
- a local and regional press list
- advice and support throughout the campaign
- any available information, within reason, to help evaluate the campaign such as an analysis of attenders from the box office computer system

“My favourite venues are those where one senses a capacity on the part of staff to be able to talk about dance, about the company and to generate a sense of an event that the company is playing at their theatre. These venues also tend to have better luck placing advance features in their local press. On this tour, the regional venues who best succeeded in this were Cork, Galway and Longford. Galway in particular generally manages to secure at least one local radio interview and in Longford we even had a press reviewer which is unusual for a one-off performance.”

All companies should offer the venues and festivals that book them:

- an early meeting or lengthy telephone conversation to exchange information and plan the marketing campaign
- a positive attitude towards the promoter
- information, especially hard data, about existing and potential audiences
- suggested target markets
- suggested reasons why these different target audiences might want to attend
- appropriate images and copy for the season brochure, sent in good time
- appropriate material and links for the promoter’s website
- a sample direct mail letter appropriate for each of the target markets suggested
- appropriate quantities of appropriate print such as posters and leaflets
- press stories of interest to local and regional newspapers, including angles targeted beyond the arts pages
- access to images suitable for use by the media
- an information sheet for box office staff
- appropriate display material
- advice and support throughout the campaign
- any available information to help evaluate the campaign eg the results of an audience survey

“Because we asked our past venues to analyse their box office data, we were able to tell venues about our audience profile:

- More than half live within a 15 minute drive of the venue and in all but one venue, three quarters live within a 30minute drive
- Between one in five and one in three saw dance more than once in the past year, including our show, although this varied a lot depending on the venue
- In some venues, around half of the ticket buyers had bought for one of our previous shows but in others, this was around one in ten.
- All our ticket buyers were frequent ticket buyers at the venue, seeing at least five shows in the past 12 months.”

Box office information sheets

Make sure that front line staff have the information they need to sell the event to potential audiences. Provide a single sheet of concise information designed to enthuse and well as inform sales staff. It needs to be robust and stand out so staff can find it easily. Include:

- a 20 word selling sentence that sounds informal and natural when read aloud - include the key reason to attend
- a 100 word synopsis of the plot or content - again, it should sound conversational when read aloud
- a list of five reasons to attend your production
- a list of ‘the sort of people who will enjoy the show’
- the running time and the number of intervals
- suitability - give the detail the customer will ask for eg ‘some mild swearing but no f-words’
- anything the promoter must tell the customer eg strobe lighting or gunshots
- a sentence about the company
- quotes from audience members, if available
- a list of tour dates with box office telephone numbers

Campaign planning meetings

The company should tell the venue

- why they want to tour to the venue
- background about the company - its aims, artistic policy, key staff members and history
- information about the product including plot, style, subject matter, sets and costumes, music, key points about the composer/choreographer/author, audience reactions, suitability including any bad language or nudity, likely running time, whether it is a set text etc (venues see the lack of accurate advance information about the production as a major weakness in touring companies)
- where else you are touring to including the names and telephone numbers of the other venue marketers
- about your past audiences and audiences for the art form or type of event especially age, frequency of attendance and cross-over with other art forms
- the resources they have available
- about marketing ideas that have worked on previous tours to similar venues
- what marketing support you will be providing

“CoisCéim are always here to help and we usually have a specialist arts publicist on contract to assist in regional PR. However, sometimes it happens that we get a call two-three days in advance from a very worried venue manager about very low ticket sales. By this time it can be too late to do any further PR, particularly within areas where the local paper is a weekly edition and the next print deadline is passed. That said, dance is by far the poor relation as regards advance sales and we did in fact gain significant walk up at the venues where advance bookings were low.

When venues do get in touch a week or more in advance of the performance it often pays off to have our contracted publicist do a final push. I’m not sure exactly why this is - again perhaps its about being able to talk about the show and the company - or perhaps its just a different voice coming at it from a slightly different angle. To be fair to the regional venues in particular, they are continuously targeting the same few press outlets for many one-off events, sometimes playing within the same week.”

The company should ask the venue

- why they have booked the company and show
- factual information about audiences
- factual information about the size of the catchment area
- information about the local area including competing venues and their programme
- programming patterns especially for the relevant art form
- the target income and attendance figures achieved at the venue by similar product
- effective marketing plans for visits by similar companies together with the target and income and attendance figures achieved
- pricing patterns
- the season brochure
- the resources they have available

Agree:

- objectives - both shared and individual
- income and attendance targets
- the target audiences most likely to respond ("best bets") identified by cross over with other art forms, frequency of attendance including lapsed attenders, demographics eg newly retired, geography
- any additional audience development targets eg new attenders, young people etc
- the most effective marketing methods for communicating with *each* target audience (eg direct mail, editorial, print distribution etc)
- the appropriate tone of voice and single minded message for *each* target audience
- details of the agreed marketing activities (including details of press and media campaigns), deadlines, who will carry them out and who will pay for them
- which marketing activities are to be included in the contra (if applicable)
- the budget available from each partner - venues should allocate a specific budget to each event
- the design brief for production print
- print quantities and delivery deadlines
- photograph quantities including press and front-of-house photos
- final details of pricing including strategic discounts, subscription etc

- the date when booking opens (ie tickets go on sale) especially where the company is early in the season and the booking period may be squeezed
- the use of data from the box office computer system, now and in the future (where applicable)
- realistic strategies for name and address capture where there is no appropriate box office computer system
- realistic objectives for market research including desk research - agree the information you need as well as the methods you will use to gather it
- monitoring and evaluation strategies including market research
- a series of short-term activities to be held in reserve and only undertaken if bookings do not reach an agreed level by a specified date

You will also need to discuss arrangements (if applicable) for:

- getting sales figures from the venue
- overprinting details
- how the box office and other sales staff should be briefed
- education activities eg workshops, pre-performance talks etc
- display materials
- programmes
- other merchandise
- press tickets
- press drinks
- sponsorship requirements including tickets and corporate hospitality
- company tickets
- first night invitations
- first night party (if any)

“Following the collection of audience profile data, we convened a meeting for all venue managers/marketing and PR personnel at Project Arts Centre on 15 December. Six of the ten venues sent representatives to the meeting. We presented the results of the profiling reports looking at audiences at each of the venues. This led to discussion around other audiences who might be targeted for Faun and As You Are. (see page 9 for details). Apart from printed materials and photographs, we agreed to provide links to short interview clips with the two choreographers for the venues’ websites or front-of-house areas. The venues also agreed to try to arrange for marketing and/or box-office staff to see the show at Project, so as to enable them to be able to talk about the show when selling tickets at their venues”

Follow up

The company marketer usually writes up the campaign plan and an action list complete with deadlines and timescales based on the meeting. This must be circulated as soon as possible to all the relevant people. Check that you are clear:

- why each element of the campaign is being undertaken
- which target market it addresses
- which benefits are to be communicated
- what you are trying to achieve.

Set measurable objectives for each element of the campaign.

The company and venue should be in frequent contact to monitor progress and be ready to amend campaign plan as circumstances dictate. Both sides should make themselves

available to answer queries and return calls speedily. It is your responsibility to ensure that you communicate clearly and check that your marketing partner has understood correctly.

Monitoring and evaluation

A tour is not over until you have worded with your promoters to assess how well your marketing worked. Did you achieve your goals? Were the venues and festivals happy with the service you provided? It is also an opportunity to give feedback to promoters about the marketing support they gave you. Promoters find it useful to compare their achievements with other venues so share information about what happened across the tour.

The evaluation process should aim to gather a sensible amount of information about audiences. You should not make unreasonable demands of the venue, but it is in both sides' interest to see what worked so you can be an even more effective partnership next time.

It is also a good time to thank promoters for the time, money and enthusiasm they invested in marketing your production.

“The key challenge neither CoisCéim nor the venues have succeeded in cracking is how to elicit advance bookings. Our current thinking is that perhaps we need to access far more individuals and groups through advance workshops - and possibly to be in the location for a few days in advance of the performance. While CoisCéim can co-ordinate workshops in Dublin and the surrounds, we are very reliant on the ability of the venue to “sell” the idea of a free workshop + ticket to the show. Some venues on this tour, were not successful in accessing local groups within their areas, or as a matter of policy, don’t try to access local groups due to staff pressure etc. This is something CoisCéim will be looking very hard at for future touring and in the selection of presenting venues.”

Communicating with audiences

Words

Before you write, decide:

- Who are you talking to?
- What are they like?
- What are they interested in?
- What is an appropriate tone of voice to use?

Be persuasive, structuring the copy with:

- an opener that makes a connection between you and the reader: you could
 - ask a question
 - use active language
 - talk to them (use ‘you’)

- be a real person, not an institution
- grab their attention with something relevant
- use the words they would use
- reasons not facts or hype: turn facts into persuasive reasons to attend by asking yourself ‘so what’
- a ‘clincher’ at the end giving the most convincing reason to come along
- a simple, straightforward style: aim for a reading age of 12 to 14

Avoid:

- hype (magical, hilarious, award-winning, exciting etc)
- name dropping (you’ll put readers off if they haven’t heard of them)
- making everything sound the same (develop an individual tone of voice for your company)
- jargon like multi-media or physical theatre
- coded words like ‘challenging’ (audiences translate it as ‘hard work’) or ‘innovative’ (audiences translate this as ‘weird’).

Venues know best what will persuade their audiences to buy tickets for your production. So be flexible about the copy they can use in the season brochure. Provide a version with 150 words and another with under 100 words. To back this up, provide background information so that they can adapt what you have written to suit their audience. Include:

- a brief summary of the plot or story
- the performance style
- the subject matter
- summary of the content
- why the people might be interested in the composer/choreographer/author
- set and costumes
- likely audience reactions
- concise background information on the subject matter eg who was Nijinsky?
- whether it is an exam text

Readability

Make sure that audiences can easily read what you have to say. A quarter of Irish adults are functionally illiterate and another 30% can only cope with very simple reading material.^{iv} The Department of Health therefore recommends a reading age below 12 to 14 years for health information leaflets aimed at the general public and that is probably a good guide for marketing material about the arts.

CoisCeim’s copy for Faun had a reading age of 14:

To celebrate 15 years of award-winning productions, Ireland’s favourite dance company brings you:

As You Are

Who would you rather be: Superman or Clark Kent? We all want to stand out from the crowd - but are we willing to pay the price? In Muirne Bloomer’s quirky world, six extraordinary individuals are tested to the limit as they struggle for control over themselves and each other.

Faun

Nijinsky was worshipped as the greatest dancer of the twentieth century, but audiences rioted when they saw his first ballet, *L'après midi d'un Faune*. It is hard to tell what shocked them most, the bare feet, shameless sensuality or revolutionary dance style. Mixing Debussy's famous score with Queen, David Bolger explores how dance still reconnects us with our feelings and imagination. But if nothing shocks us any more, how can we ever really break free?

Use Microsoft Word to check the readability of your copy:

Click on **Tools**, then **Options**. Click on the tab marked **Spelling & Grammar**. Ensure that the box labelled *Show readability statistics* is checked. Click **OK**.

Now highlight the passage you want to check. Click on **Tools** then **Spelling & Grammar**. At the end of the spelling check, a box will appear showing you the readability statistics of the passage. Add 5 to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (equivalent to school year) to get the reading age.

There is an online tool at <http://juicystudio.com/services/readability.php>

Images

The most important communication tool is the venue season brochure so you need to ensure you have effective images to meet your venues' print deadlines. This almost always means commissioning photographs.

In collaboration with the director or choreographer, decide:

- What you will use the photographs for: season brochures, press, production leaflets etc
- What shapes and styles will you need?
 - Season brochures usually need squarish images with strong contrast and colours, an eye-catching dynamic and faces showing emotional content, even when reduced to a very small size. Check the shape of your venues' season brochures and see what kind of image might get your company's event onto the cover.
 - What shape will your posters and leaflets be: 1/3 A4 leaflets need tall thin images. Where will you put the essential information?
 - For the press, you will need both portrait shots to be used down one or two columns and landscape shots to be used across four or five columns.
- Which target markets you want to reach
- The reasons to attend that will be most persuasive for each target market
- How these reasons can be represented visually.

With the photographer plus the director, choreographer and performers, as appropriate, storyboard the images, creating rough sketches of how the images will work. This means the photoshoot will run smoothly, you will get the range of images you need and everyone will be much more likely to approve the results.

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.

“Eleven reviews were extremely positive with just one luke warm one from the Daily Mail. The View on RTE 1 described Faun as “... bone shakingly sexy ... playful ... amazing ... such a sensuous and beautiful experience to watch”

No doubt these reviews did help with our ticket sales but, business was slower than usual for a CoisCéim show and particularly for one which was so positively received not just by critics but also by audiences. Both Project and the regional venues felt there was positive word of mouth on the show, so I’m not really sure why sales didn’t reflect that even more.”

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.

Plan your media campaign by deciding:

- which media does each of your target groups consume?
- which pages do they read: education, social issues, local news? which programmes do they watch: breakfast, daytime, early evening?
- which media will be interested in what you have to say?
- which type of coverage will get your message across most effectively: news, features, photostories, reviews or listings?

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.

A press release is the best way to get a listing on the entertainments page or get a reviewer to attend the event. It can also get you news coverage. Write a template press release into which the promoter can slot the information specific to their own venue. This must be different in style and content to the press release for national media - local and regional journalists are interested in different types of story and are unlikely to have much knowledge of the arts.

Press releases

A press release is not the best way to get feature coverage or a photostory, and these are they types of coverage that sell more tickets. Instead, write a letter to a named

journalist which describes the story concisely and says why they and their readers will be interested in it. Enclose your press release to back this up. Provide your promoters with a template letter for each of the stories you identify.

Always send information to a named journalist. Find out whether they prefer press releases by email or on paper or both.

Style:

- No more than the equivalent of two sides of A4
- Make it short and snappy: short sentences, short paragraphs
- No jargon, no acronyms
- No hype
- Use headlines, spacing and bold typefaces to make it easy to read but avoid underlining as this is how sub editors mark up copy

Content:

- Sum up the story in the subject line and a short factual heading (don't try to be funny or clever - that's the sub-editor's job)
- Date at the top
- Target your story - only say things likely to interest the journalist and their readers
- Stay relevant: most biographical information belongs in a programme not a press release
- Include all essential information in the first paragraph - the five Ws:
 - **Who** will be doing it?
 - **What** they will be doing
 - **When** they will be doing it
 - **Where** they will be doing it
 - **Why** they will be doing it
- Key messages early - editors cut copy from the bottom up
- Include essential background information in Notes for Editors
- Never attach images as these clog up in-boxes

PR guru, Jim Fletcher, says

"Make your story dazzle! This opening paragraph contains the 5Ws:

People's Theatre's annual Autumn Tour will this year bring Sadie McGlumsheagh's new play "Down and Out", to Dunamais Arts Centre, from June 10th. The tour continues to 17 other Irish venues.

But it's so dreary. Here it is with some added sparkle:

As part of its Jubilee Season, Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaois, has scooped another 'first'. The world premiere is planned for June 10th 2010, of the play 'Down and Out', the new production from the pen of controversial community activist Sadie McGlumsheagh.

Homeless people from throughout the district have been cast as extras, and will add a touch of authenticity and relevance to the play, a modern day tragi-comedy about social exclusion, prostitution and drugs.

This will be the biggest tour ever by People's Theatre - 60 000 theatregoers will see the play at 17 venues up and down Ireland, from Cork to Bangor.

If you want anything longer than a listing, follow-up your release with a phone call. Journalists are highly unlikely to call you first.

Have your argument for coverage worked out beforehand and a copy of your press release in front of you. If possible, introduce a new piece of information at this stage as your trump card. Don't say 'Hello, have you got my press release': the journalist probably gets a hundred a day.

Photostories

A strong photostory is the most effective way of getting your message noticed in the local and regional press. But there must be a good story with a local angle behind the picture:

- performers doing something unusual at local landmarks
- involvement of local people eg a dancer doing a flexibility session for the local hurling team
- a dangerous or unusual stunt
- performers playing famous people where the resemblance is strong
- children, preferably being cute

Here's how to set up a photostory:

- Ask the performers to take part in the photocall, explaining exactly which papers you will invite and what the story behind the image will be
- Plan the style of photograph and the message you want it to get across
- Send out an invitation to the picture editor of the relevant local paper(s) and newsrooms two weeks in advance. The invitation should state clearly and briefly the story behind the planned photocall. Give the date, time and place of the photocall and a contact name and number. If the photocall is outside, make sure that you specify an easily found meeting place.
- Telephone the relevant picture desks and newsrooms the day before the photocall to check who is intending to come. This gives you time to cancel it if no-one is interested. If a major news story breaks, the photographer(s) may be needed at short notice to cover that instead. Make sure the performers know this.
- Ensure the performers arrive early so they are ready on time. Photographers have tight schedules and will not wait around.
- The performers will be anxious. Make sure they know exactly what will be happening.
- Greet the photographer(s) when they arrive. Make a note of their names for future reference. Give them a press release containing a brief explanation of the story behind the photocall, the name(s) of the performers and any relevant information such as box office telephone numbers. They will take this back to their sub-editors who will use it to write the caption under the photo.
- Explain what you intend the performers to do. Ask if this is appropriate. They will probably make additional suggestions.
- Control the photocall. Make sure the performers feel happy about any new suggestions. Act as go-between, explaining to them what the photographer(s) want them to do.
- The photographer(s) will probably have got what they want within 15-30 minutes. Check that they are happy with what they have. Thank them individually for coming to the photocall.
- Thank the performers.

Print

The point of leaflets and posters is not to reflect the artistic vision. They need to sell tickets by communicating effectively with potential audiences.

Most marketers believe that the season brochure is the best tool for selling to people who already have a relationship with the venue. Print produced by companies should therefore be targeted at audiences new to the venue. This means that the most effective images and copy are likely to be different as they are targeted at very different people.

Consider alternative formats such as postcards or beermats if these will be more effective than conventional leaflets in communicating with the relevant target markets.

Make these decisions in collaboration with the venues on your tour.

Posters: many promoters cannot find display sites for posters bigger than A3 or even A4 but these are too small to make an impact in the venue. Consider using digital printing to produce two or three A0 size posters for each venue then produce much larger numbers of smaller posters.

Leaflets: make sure your leaflets will fit into display racks - most slots are 1/3 A4 or A5. Drooping leaflets lose all their impact so ensure they have a vertical fold or are on thick paper (at least 135gsm). Important images or messages must appear in the top third.

Print delivered to the venues less than a month before the show is pretty pointless so create a print production schedule working backwards from the delivery date. Consult the designer and printer to ensure you have allowed for busy periods, bank holidays and extended closure periods at Christmas and Easter.

Always give your designer a written brief - there's a template in the appendix.

Websites

Your website is the perfect tool for reaching people who don't know you exist. But unless it is search engine friendly it will be invisible to all but your most fervent fans. Don't leave it to the web designer - it's a marketing issue:

- Use the Google Keywords tool to decide what keywords your target audiences will use to search <https://adwords.google.co.uk/select/KeywordToolExternal>
5,400 people in the UK searched for the term 'Nijinsky' in February 2010, 1,000 people searched for 'afternoon of a faun' but too few people searched for 'l'après midi d'un faune' for it to register. Just 73 people a month worldwide searched for 'coisceim dance theatre' but 1,000 people from Ireland searched for 'coisceim' in February 2010.
- use the metadescription on each page to persuade searchers to visit your website
CoisCeim's metadescription below was a bit too long and used too much jargon, so they have since rewritten it

CoisCéim Dance Theatre ★☆ - 12:14
CoisCéim creates and presents new contemporary dance theatre for national and international audiences. Underpinning the creation and performance elements of ...
www.coisceim.com/ - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

- use those keywords as metatags (this is information in the 'head area' of your web pages that a human visitor can't see but a search engine spider can). Ask yourself, are these really the words my target groups will be searching for? Metatags are much less influential than they used to be but they still play a role so don't leave them blank.

37 Words found in Meta Keyword tag : dance dublin contemporary modern dancing class classes lessons company studio school learn perform performance ballet jazz musical theatre hip hop ireland elderly older people access participation news hire lessons productiond dancer young movement Dublin Ireland active retirement

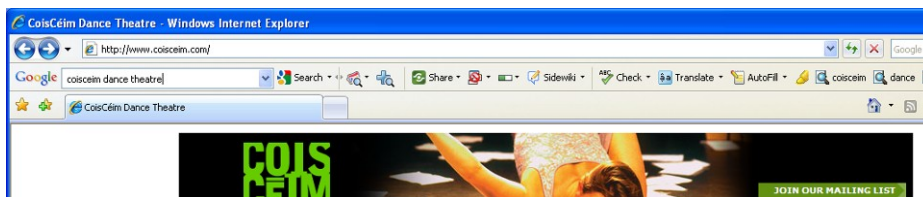
- keyword density: repeat these words throughout your copy to make sure those keywords count

Single word repeats

word	repeats	density	Prominence	word	repeats	density	Prominence
dance	11 T,D,K,L,B,A	5.31%	54.85	theatre	6 T,D,K,B,A	2.90%	54.80
coiscéim	6 T,D,B,A	2.90%	64.41	dublin	5 D,K,A	2.42%	44.63
classes	5 D,K,L,A	2.42%	57.85	logo	4 A	1.93%	2.68
ireland	4 D,K,A	1.93%	48.31	studio	3 D,K,L	1.45%	61.39
people	3 D,K	1.45%	72.88	participation	3 D,K,L	1.45%	61.58
young	2 D,K	0.97%	68.36	site	2 L	0.97%	31.64
search	2 A	0.97%	43.22	project	2 L,A	0.97%	31.36
performance	2 D,K	0.97%	79.10	older	2 D,K	0.97%	70.34

- create a concise title tag that sums up the page with the keywords first: what you do then who you are

As you can see below, CoisCeim's title tags consisted of the company name so they have now rewritten them:



Each page is a new opportunity to get someone to visit your website so the metadescription, keywords, metatags and title tags should be different on each. CoisCeim have rewritten the title tag on their education page below because people don't search for 'access and participation', they search for dance classes



You can check all of this on your website with either of these free tools:

www.ranks.nl

<http://websitegrader.com/>

Influencing word of mouth

Find the talkers

The talkers are the people who have the enthusiasm and networks to spread your message. They could be ambassadors you have recruited to a structured scheme, loyal audience members, bloggers or new audiences who have just had a great experience.

The challenge: To learn to identify the right core group and give them a topic that they are willing to talk about.

Give them topics that they are want to talk about.

Topics need to be clear, simple ideas. They must be linked to the messages you want spread and interesting to talk about.

Give them tools to facilitate conversation

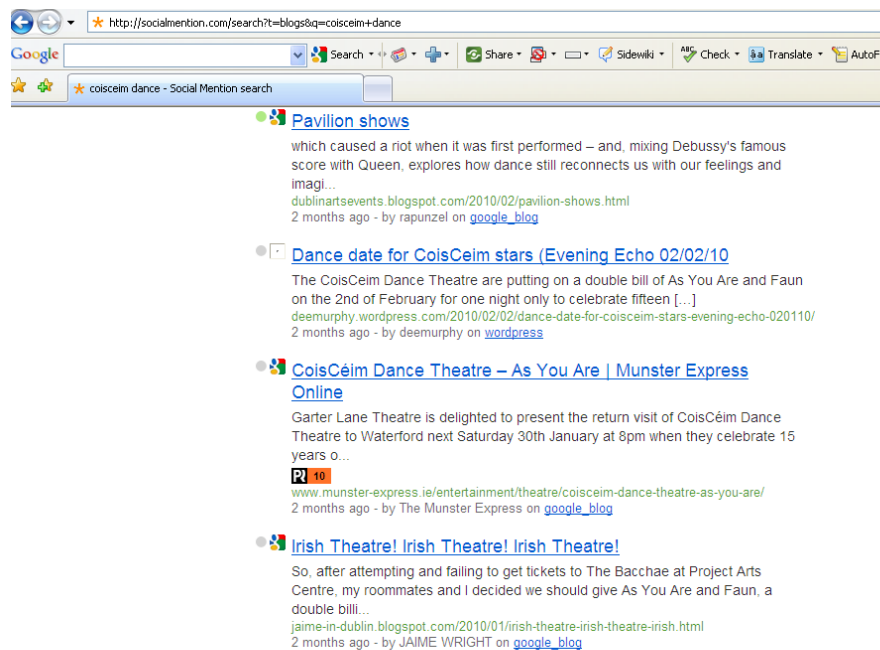
These are techniques and technologies that make it easy to spread messages: blogs, forums, forwardable stuff, online communities. Offline tools could include opportunities to meet, stuff that sparks conversation, a chance to see shows in advance, quoting them in print.

Take part in the conversation

Engage in a genuine dialogue so respond to messages, accept comments on blogs, participate in discussion boards, talk to audiences in the foyer, give talks to groups, answer that phone. You'll also need to deal fairly and honestly with negative feedback.

Keep track of what people are saying

Listen to conversations in the foyer. Listen to what people say to you when you give talks. And there are loads of online tools. Some, like [SocialMention](#) and Social Media Firehose, search for key phrases across a wide range of social media while Technorati specifically searches blogs and posts. Google Alerts monitors its own search network and will send an email when it finds a key phrase. Some social networking services have their own internal search functions like SearchTwitter and facebook's Lexicon. Jodange has downloadable widgets that analyse how people are feeling about a topic rather than just showing what they say. None of these tools are comprehensive so need to be used in combination.^v



Design Brief			
PROJECT TITLE:			
What do you want this piece of print to achieve?			
Describe the event or project:			
Who is the target market?			
What messages do you want to communicate to the target market?			
Main message:			
Other selling points:			
Brand framework (values, tone of voice, fonts, colours etc):			
Format (poster, stapled brochure, beer mat etc):			
Usage (distribution, mailing, leaflet rack etc):			
Size:		Colours:	
Quality feel:	Cheap 'n' cheerful / glossy 'n' glamorous?	Quantity:	
Delivery deadline:			
Other key dates:			
Design budget:	£		
Print budget:	£	Designer to buy print?	Yes/No
Funding credits:			
Images available (inc any compulsory):			
Project team:	Responsible:	Accountable:	
	Consulted:	Informed:	
Main contact details:			

ⁱReferences

- ⁱ *Audiences for the Performing Arts in Ireland in 2008*, Theatre Forum, 2009
- ⁱⁱ Public Communications Centre, *Touring Experiment: qualitative research '07 and '08*, Arts Council, 2008
- ⁱⁱⁱ Public Communications Centre, *Touring Experiment: Exit Surveys*, Arts Council, 2008
- ^{iv} National Adult Literacy Agency downloaded at http://www.nala.ie/index.cfm/section/Publications/ext/literacy_IrelandFAQ/ 29/3/10
- ^v Find out more from Susan Hallam's comprehensive overview of social media eavesdropping tools at <http://www.shcl.co.uk/blog/2009/02/monitoring-your-digital-footprint.html> and Clay McDaniel's selection at <http://www.marketingprofs.com/9/essential-social-media-listening-tools-mcdaniel.asp>