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Marketers target new demographics with recent campaigns

Executives with the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts had a hunch: More patrons would take in the arts – even in a recession – if reached with the right marketing message.

So, marketing executives ramped up their outreach, targeting new demographics, ages and cultural communities with e-mail, social media and grassroots campaigns. The result: New audiences are attending shows, and ticket sales have grown.

"We decided to be a marketing machine," declared M. John Richard, the center's president and CEO, who said he demanded more – and smarter – marketing soon after his 2008 arrival. His hope was to build new audiences with any available marketing medium – so long as the campaign was "razor-focused" on the mission of building audience share.

Changing times call for creative marketing to boost sales. With the combination of social media, like Twitter and Facebook, and e-mail and text marketing targeting various audiences, marketing executives can boost awareness of marketing campaigns and grow user groups.



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For the Arsht Center, the medium and message have changed. The center began grouping its programs into series – the Masterworks Season, Jazz Roots, Broadway Series and the popular Celebrity Chefs series. This helped drive new subscriptions among previously untapped groups.

The reach for a wider cultural, ethnic and demographic audience mix was not a departure for any campaign, noted Andrew Goldberg, the center's VP of marketing. The season already includes performances reflecting Miami's diversity, he said. Shows like "Fuerza Bruta" and "The Harder They Come" appealed to specific audiences who may not have been part of the theatergoing crowd in years past: 20- and 30-somethings and Caribbean audiences, respectively. The Jazz Roots series targeted baby boomers. "Fuerza Bruta" sought the social media set, who were targeted with Twitter and Facebook. The center also launched Free Gospel Sundays.

The campaign's success extended across various groups and events. Aggressive marketing behind same-day ticket sales outperformed expectations by 200 percent, officials said. In another effort, the center targeted sales for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, which had sold only 200 tickets for five performances. In six weeks, the campaign resulted in more than 10,000 tickets sold. Some 7,000 peo-



Goldberg

ple who attended those shows noted it was their first visit to the center.

Another e-mail campaign proved effective. At 12:30 p.m. on Sept. 29, the center sent an e-mail blast to patrons, announcing the opening of this year's Free Gospel Sundays series. Three hours later, all 1,800 tickets had been claimed. When Richard decided to host a free viewing of President Barack Obama's inauguration at the center, some 4,500 people showed up – after first reserving tickets online.

The campaign revealed that targeted communications, using media embraced by the specific audience and appealing to those groups' specific tastes and interests, can boost recipient acceptance.

"The challenge was tapping into those audiences and selling tickets to patrons who were not used to buying theater tickets, let alone during a recession, and creating buzz about the shows," Goldberg said. "The strategy was simple: By driving people to the center for the first time and providing them with a memorable experience, you essentially create a patron for life."

GENERATING AWARENESS

Campaigns can vary. MedVance Institute, a health care career training company in West Palm Beach, hosted Scrubs for a Cause. The effort enlists area leaders and celebrities to add their own personal design touches to medical scrubs worn by MedVance students, which were showcased at VIP receptions. The events generate donations for local charities and

awareness for MedVance via online, broadcast and print media coverage. Exposure was tracked at a publicity value of more than \$106,000.

"We rely on these types of creative endeavors to turbo-charge the momentum and generate increased exposure," said Richard J. Schechter, director of marketing with MedVance Institute.

At the Miami Downtown Development Authority, a new DWNTWN marketing campaign seeks to appeal to area residents to create a sense of cachet for downtown living, as well as to attract residents and visitors into downtown after hours. Marketers created a text/mobile marketing campaign for a recent concert series, and later expanded the program to cover other events. The DDA also promotes its events using public relations, traditional marketing and a Facebook fan page with almost 600 fans, said Robert Geitner, senior manager of marketing and communications at the DDA.

"This has helped build enthusiasm for things taking place in downtown," he said, "and has added another layer of viral communications to help generate buzz about downtown Miami."

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