

The Big List of Theatre Marketing Tactics

If you've been following Sold Out Run for a while, then you already know how much I emphasize using a [marketing calendar](#) to organize the attack plan for promoting the show. Of course, you need to have some killer marketing tactics to flesh out your calendar. That's where this big list comes in.

Not all of these ideas will make sense for all productions, but I guarantee that you will find quite a few ideas here that are a great fit for your show – no matter what your show is about or where you are performing it.

There are also a handful of ideas included that focus on long-term marketing beyond the current show, but I trust you'll forgive me for including those in the mix.

So read on and start selecting tactics to populate your marketing calendar:

1. **patronize other theatres** regularly to see which of their shows are selling well – then look at how they marketed those
2. most links to online ticket sales are unwieldy and ugly, create a redirect using a link shortening service like Bit.ly – or better yet have ***yourdomain.com/tickets*** redirect to your online ticket sales service
3. leave (appropriate) comments on the online articles of your local arts journalists so they get to know who you are in a context where you're not asking them for anything
4. host/sponsor a **playwright festival**
5. offer a complimentary popcorn or soda on the night you know is going to have the weakest attendance
6. offer an **early bird discount** for the first 100 tickets purchased when your tickets go on sale
7. partner with an organization that accepts donations of food, clothes, or toys and have a night where people get free admission with their donation (use photos, videos, and press releases from this event to drive sales for all your other performances)
8. **strap a GoPro camera to an actor** during rehearsal for an intricate dance, fight, or flying scene and share on social media
9. create a video showing publicity or production stills with the actors doing voice over of their best lines
10. put a sandwich board out on the sidewalk with rotating taglines that say things like, "free cupholder with every seat" (assuming, of course, your seats have cupholders)
11. send an email or postcard to everyone who came to see one of your previous, similar shows and tell them why if they liked that one, they're going to love what you have coming up next
12. create a magazine ad – even if you never run it – because it will help you get clear on how to quickly, concisely convey your marketing message
13. have a night where your subscribers or best patrons can bring a friend for free and give them the royal treatment so they look like *rock stars* in front of their friends
14. hold a **press junket** with all the other local theatres where the press and arts bloggers can come get the scoop on all the upcoming shows at once

15. create a Foursquare special for a free drink and advertise it to your regulars
16. write down what you would do if you had an extra \$10k to spend on marketing, once that's done – and only *after it's done* – look at how you can do a leaner version of those tactics with your current budget
17. specialty printers online will create professional style trading cards for little league baseball teams – use these services to instead print **trading cards of your cast**
18. work with a nearby restaurant to create a special that's themed after the show and cross promote for each other
19. send an invite to social influencers and bloggers to have lunch with the director and talk about the show
20. write a letter to the editor of the local paper about why an issue that your show deals with matters to your community
21. create a ticket package with another theatre or arts organization where someone can buy tickets to an event at both places at a discount
22. call repeat visitors just to thank them for their patronage, and if the opportunity presents itself ask them what they'd like to see you do more of
23. offer free seat upgrades to regular patrons when available
24. create a short **podcast series** talking to cast members and the production team about the show
25. hold an open **Google Hangout** where the general public can meet the leads and ask them questions
26. instead of (or in addition to) postcards and flyers, print business cards to promote your show
27. print custom decks of cards with your show's art on the back and distribute to influencers
28. take out a **classified ad**: audience wanted
29. posters are great for store windows, but in residential areas create **yard signs** like the ones used in local political campaigns (at least, they are here in the U.S.)
30. do a 1-3 minute preview of your show right before the performances of whatever show is being produced at your venue right before you – just like a movie trailer
31. get a custom domain name for your show (i.e. www.nameofshow.com)
32. keep a production blog going for your show in the weeks leading up to opening
33. create a custom audience in Facebook based on your email list and run highly targeted ads to a [lookalike audience](#)
34. take your local arts journalist to lunch when you don't have a show in production just to get to know him/her
35. create a media contact list of all the writers, radio producers, bloggers, and social media aficionados who talk about theatre in your market
36. assemble a **digital media kit** with show art, contact information, publicity stills, pre-packaged quotes, the press releases, and anything else you think someone covering the show would need
37. offer tickets to the show to other local arts groups along with an explicit personal invitation to come see the show
38. create video postcards from the cast thanking donors and VIPs
39. record a **video tour backstage** showing how any dramatic scene changes, costume changes, or other technical elements of the show are pulled off
40. create a short exit survey you can email to audience members the day after they come to the show

41. grab a video camera and ask people in the lobby during intermission or right after the show what they like about it
42. prepare a 2-minute excerpt of the show (heavy on movement, not just talking) that you could pitch to local television shows
43. prepare talking points about your production and submit those to local radio show producers
44. pick a **hashtag** for your production and make sure the cast, production team, and everyone involved knows to use that hashtag when they post on social media to build momentum
45. if there's a technical element of the show that you could add with a little extra money (like a rotating stage or more advanced flight rigging) create a **Kickstarter campaign** to fund that specific add-on and use the campaign as a promotional tool
46. start a local Meetup group that acts as a **book club for plays** (make sure you give some love to other theatres around town, not just yours)
47. take your production team to the park, turn off all your phones, and spend 30 minutes talking about what makes this show cool
48. create a mastermind group to share marketing ideas with other similarly-sized theatres in faraway cities
49. join Toastmasters and become amazing at talking in front of people
50. if one of your performance dates falls on the **birthday of a regular patron**, offer them complimentary tickets for that date
51. create a door prize related to your show and present it during the curtain speech
52. if you have a cool poster, publicity still, or some other marketing piece that you're particularly proud of, create a behind-the-scenes video of how it was created
53. have some or all of your cast make public appearances in a basketball tournament, quiz show, open mic night, or anywhere they have a chance to introduce themselves and show off their skills
54. send a secret shopper to your box office to ask questions about your show and the venue
55. set up **Google Alerts** with the name of your show, the theatre, and your leads to monitor any new online buzz about them you might want to piggyback on
56. [create a video contest](#) where people can submit a YouTube video talking about the show
57. use social media to **plug all of the live theatre going on this weekend**, and be specific about who would really like each show (i.e. *if you love over-the-top slapstick comedy don't miss...*)
58. take pictures or video of the first table read when you get everyone together in the same room – who knows when you might use those on social media or as part of a larger marketing collateral piece
59. buy a domain to redirect to your best marketing piece (i.e. if I have a great promo video about a production of Hamlet here in Indy, I might buy the domain indyhamlet.com that points directly to the video and use that in all my marketing)
60. **send text messages** to SMS subscribers with immediate, short-term specials
61. selectively invite some folks to be a focus group for your show – which is a lot like a preview, but you'll get feedback and if you end up taking the feedback, those people feel a small sense of affiliate with your production

62. give people a free drink when they tweet a picture of themselves from the lobby during the show
63. set up an affiliate program for ticket sales where people earn a commission for bringing you paying customers
64. take the marketing director of another theatre out to lunch and ask what made last year's best attended show so successful
65. have an **honorary press campaign** where you invite a handful of people with no press affiliation to receive the media kit, receive comps, and have access to ask you questions about the show on the condition that they take a stab at writing a review (which you will then take care of promoting)
66. during your curtain speech, invite patrons to post an update about seeing the show (perhaps with your custom hashtag) before silencing their devices
67. write the ideal review that you'd like to see in the paper the day after opening, then work backward to figure out what needs to happen to get the right person to write that review
68. keep a "**morgue file**" of great marketing ideas that for whatever reason didn't work out this time that you can quickly refer back to for future productions
69. create a marketing budget – you don't have to spend it all, but know what you could spend if you had enough brilliant marketing ideas
70. offer some tickets to local organizations that do raffles or charity auctions
71. provide an optional **gift-wrapping service** for your tickets at no charge so that if someone wants to purchase them as a gift you provide them in an attractive display that is immediately ready to hand to the recipient
72. find a mentor that does professional marketing in something other than the arts
73. record your director talking about the strength of each of your leads and then edit together a video with the director's words over b-roll of rehearsal
74. pick up the latest issue of a magazine that appeals to your target audience and flip through the ads, looking for a image, message, or concept you can use in your own marketing
75. call a local business with a fair amount of employees and **speak to the HR department**, then invite them to buy a block of tickets for employees or VIP clients at a group discount
76. hide free tickets or other cool swag at local retail locations and restaurants (with their approval) and provide clues over social media to help your most adventurous patrons track them down
77. put a **fish bowl** in the lobby for business cards, and choose one randomly each month or production to get free tickets, a subscription, or an upgrade – then put the contacts from all the business cards on your mailing list
78. pick a paid tactic you were considering using and scrap it – use that money instead to get the **best photographer you can afford**
79. invite your social media followers to create captions for funny/shocking rehearsal photos
80. segment previous customers who have bought more than 4 tickets at once, and send them an invitation to use a special group rate
81. have a **performers night** on your slowest day of the week where local performers can bring in a recent program of a show they've been in for a discounted ticket
82. do a Google image search for posters people have used in other productions of your show for crazy, random inspiration

<http://soldoutrun.com/theatre-marketing-tactics/>

