Sell, Sell, Sell! Marketing 101 (They won't buy tickets if they don't know about your show)

When it comes to marketing your event, the only wrong answer is to assume that your target audience knows about the show and knows how to buy tickets. Any idea – no matter how apparently crazy – is a good idea. The key is to put tickets and marketing material in front of every possible person you want to attract to your event. Every school has different ideas, plans, and strategies, and they all can work. Furthermore, marketing these days is more about time than money. Free or extremely inexpensive options are everywhere, and they can (and should!) all be utilized.

First and foremost, flood the campus. Never assume any of your student body knows anything about your event.

Posters

Flyers

Door Hangers

Campus Wide Emails

Chalking

Table Tops

Campus Newspaper

Presence at Other Campus Events

Presence at Sports Events

Campus Radio

And this is just the start. Long story short: be everywhere.

For the public, you can use much of the same approach. Attack arts newspapers, radio (within reason), bookstores, record stores, clubs, bars,

community centers, etc.. All are good resources. You can also approach local businesses about sponsoring your event in exchange for promoting it. Again – no wrong answers!

Think about where your target audience is, and have a presence there. Where do they hang out? Where do they go find out about events? Find this out, and be there.

Think about where people are physically and digitally.

Radio can be an excellent resource, but be mindful about sponsorships and presenter rights. Radio is a very political issue with all artists. Furthermore, try to stay radio neutral if you can. The more stations you have involved, the more people will know about our event.

TV ads are a big question mark, mainly because in most markets they are very expensive. Furthermore, do you watch TV to find out about concerts? Again, there are no bad choices for marketing, but if money is tight, you might was to put TV on the back burner.

Online marketing is essential, and in most cases its very affordable. You should use Facebook ads at every school you can. Also make sure you are constantly posting on the sites, blogs, and fan pages for all the artists you are hosting. Use Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and any other mass media source you think your audience might access. If your students rotate posting messages, in a week there will be a ton of input and you will see feedback immediately. Most high schools and middle schools have Facebook pages as well.

Be creative when you market, and think of ways you can "trick" your audience into doing the work for you. For example, some schools run Pinterest scavenger hunts by placing clues in obscure locations around campus. Once you launch the campaign, its almost certain that your audience will the spread the word for you. People like to feel involved and people like to be the ones letting their friends know about something.

People also like to feel special, so create something to foster this feeling. A great way to do this is with VIP tickets. Create a limited window to buy "special" VIP tickets that get you into the show early, a free poster, or even entered into a meet and greet raffle. These tickets always sell because they make the event more personal and special for the ticket buyer.

In addition, physical ticket sales are also important in order to catch the impulse buyer. If someone walks past a poster in your student union, they should be able to buy tickets there: they might forget by the time they get home. You should sell tickets on campus, at area events, in bookstores and record stores, high schools, colleges, and anywhere your audience is. When arranging tickets sales at an off campus site you might need to give them a few tickets in exchange for their efforts, but why not? It doesn't cost you anything.

When it comes to accounting for physical tickets for remote sales, simply create a simple contract and have your contact sign for a block of tickets and agree to return all unsold tickets plus any money collected for tickets not accounted for.

You should sell tickets at any event you can have a presence at – sporting events, other smaller concerts on your campuses, etc. You can also create competitions to sell tickets. Maybe you could get area middle and high schools to compete to see who sells the most tickets. The school that does gets four free front row tickets. Again – there is no wrong answer!

In addition, get various organizations on your campus involved. Let them sell tickets, or let them compete for tickets. Also, you can also get them to do some of the marketing for you. Everyone has email lists, so you can approach countless organizations to send out emails in exchange for tickets. Being connected to this event could be a huge boost for countless smaller organizations. You can also approach your local chamber of commerce. Give them some tickets in exchange for an email blast. This will hit a completely different demographic and may create amazing results.

For email blasts, use a program like ConstantContact to create a nice, professional quality email that you can send out (its the program we use and its great!). Perception is everything, and you want your event to look as good as possible. Another trick is creating a VIP experience. Now more than ever, concert goers want to feel special and have an "experience." An easy way to do this to sell VIP packages or speed tickets. For example, create a limited number of tickets that are slightly more expensive that the others. If you buy these tickets during a special limited time, you get into the show 30 minutes early so you can get the best seats in the house. When you market this, market the experience, not just the show.

The key – above all else – is to put marketing material and tickets everyplace your target audience is. And there is no such thing as wasted advertising if it doesn't cost you anything. Its the time that matters the most – sitting down, figuring out who to approach, and then doing it.