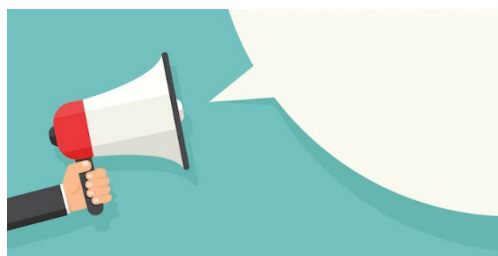


## Promote Your Theatre—and Your Next Show

**Picture this:** it's the closing night party for your latest production. The cast and crew are buzzing, every seat is filled, and you've just smashed your ticket sales goal. Even better, you didn't burn out getting there.



Sounds like a dream, right? Well, it's not. With the right theatre marketing strategies—ones that don't break the bank or monopolize your time—you can make it a reality. This guide is designed to help build awareness, attract donors and volunteers, and pull in audiences for your next production—and all those to come.

### Laying the Foundation

Begin with your theatre's marketing fundamentals—the bedrock upon which your strategies are built. Nail these, and they'll provide the rest of your efforts with a huge boost.

#### Step 1: Define Your Audience

Your audience isn't just a generic group of theatregoers—it's a diverse mix of individuals with unique needs, preferences, and habits. The better you understand them, the more effectively you can market to them.

Here are the key questions that you can ask about your audience:

- **Who are they?** Are your audience members families with kids, young professionals seeking something different for date night, or retirees eager for a thought-provoking matinee?
- **Where do they spend their time?** Do your audiences spend time browsing Instagram or Facebook? What about TikTok? When they're out and about, do they frequent community events or enjoy dining at local hotspots?
- **What motivates them to attend?** Are your audience members drawn to the story, the spectacle, or the sense of community?

Use past ticket sales and campaign data to identify patterns. Are certain shows more popular with certain demographics? Use this knowledge to segment your audience into groups with similar preferences and behaviors like “family-focused” or “date night.”

## Step 2: Establish a Strong Brand

Branding isn’t just about what your theatre does—it’s about how it makes people feel. A strong brand captures your theatre’s personality and ensures you stand out in a crowded arts market.

The three key elements of any successful brand are:

- **Visual Identity:** Logo, color scheme, and typography should be cohesive and recognizable.
- **Tone & Voice:** Are you quirky and playful? Or sophisticated and refined? Your brand’s tone should reflect the kinds of shows you produce.
- **Audience Connection:** Speak directly to your audience’s values. If you cater to families, emphasize fun and bonding. If your shows are avant-garde, focus on creativity and innovation.

Keep your branding consistent across all channels: website, social media, email newsletters, and printed materials.

Use professional-quality imagery in your marketing. Whether it’s graphic design, production photos, headshots, or venue shots, clear and polished visuals make a huge difference.

## Step 3: Set Clear Goals

Goals help you prioritize your efforts and allocate resources wisely. They provide a benchmark for evaluating success and learning what works for future productions.

Marketing without goals is like a production without a clear vision behind it—mostly a waste of everyone’s time. Your goals should give your efforts purpose and a way to measure success.

All of your goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Ambitious, Relevant, and Timely). Some good examples of SMART goals for a theatre marketing campaign include:

- **Ticket Sales:** *“Sell 500 tickets for our spring production by March 30.”*
- **Social Media Engagement:** *“Increase our Instagram followers by 20% this quarter and achieve an average engagement rate of 5%.”*

- **Community Outreach:** *“Partner with 10 local businesses for cross promotions this season.”*

Go a step further and think beyond short-term goals. How do your immediate objectives (partnership with a local business) support long-term growth (that business sponsoring a show two years from now)?

Once your goals are locked down, create a simple one-page marketing plan outlining your audience, branding strategy, and goals for each production to serve as your roadmap.

## 19 Creative & Affordable Theatre Marketing Ideas

Alright, now let’s get to the good stuff. These ideas are designed to pack a punch without requiring a LORT-sized budget. Whether you’re tech-savvy or leaning on good old-fashioned community connections, there’s something here to inspire you.



### Digital Tactics

The internet is your stage, and digital tools let you connect with audiences like never before. From social media buzz to personalized email campaigns, these strategies help you promote your shows where your audience already spends their time—online.

#### 1. Audience Email Segments

Not all theatregoers are the same, so why send them the same emails?

Create segments based on ticket-buying history, attendance frequency, or preferred show types (e.g., musicals vs. dramas), and then tailor your messaging and email campaigns to speak directly to these different groups.

For example, You can send exclusive pre-sale invites to loyal patrons, family discounts to those who attended your children’s theatre, or reminders to first-time ticket buyers who haven’t returned.

By segmenting your email lists, you can deliver personalized messaging that speaks directly to your patrons’ interests and habits, helping you sell more tickets and build stronger connections.

#### 2. Social Media Challenges

- Social media thrives on participation, and your audience is eager to engage if you make it fun. It creates buzz, spreads awareness, and gives participants a sense of ownership in your production.

- You could launch a dramatic monologue competition or a challenge to summarize a Shakespeare play in 60 seconds. Encourage followers to record themselves delivering a line from your show with a branded hashtag.
- Sweeten the pot by offering free tickets to the best entries or featuring winners on your theatre's social media.

### **3. Behind-the-Scenes Content**

- Audiences love an exclusive peek behind the curtain. It humanizes your production and fosters a deeper emotional connection. Share rehearsal bloopers, cast interviews, set designs, or costume previews. You could also go further and create a short Instagram Story series—"Countdown to Opening Night"—showcasing daily snippets leading up to the big day.
- You could even start a short-form podcast where you discuss upcoming shows, interview cast and crew, or share anecdotes from past productions.

### **4. Livestreams**

- Bring the energy of your theatre to the digital stage with live content on platforms like Instagram Live, Facebook Live, or even TikTok. It's interactive and gives your audience a real-time connection to your production.
- Host a Q&A session with the director, live-stream a snippet of a rehearsal, or offer a virtual backstage tour. Announce your live streams in advance to maximize attendance.

### **5. Digital Influencer Partnerships**

- Leverage local influencers to reach new audiences. They'll lend credibility to your production and expose your theatre to their followers.
- Identify local bloggers, Instagram personalities, or TikTok creators who are passionate about the arts and whose audience aligns with your target demographic.
- Invite them to a dress rehearsal or opening night and encourage them to share their experience.

### **6. User-Generated Content**

- Turn your audience into your most enthusiastic promoters by encouraging and sharing user-generated content.
- Encourage patrons to post photos or videos of their experience and tag your theatre. Feature the best submissions on your social media or offer a small incentive like a discount code for future shows.
- Not only will this serve as authentic word-of-mouth advertising, but it will also build a sense of community with your audience that's worth its weight in ticket stubs.

### **7. Incorporate Audience Participation**

- Ask your followers to vote on elements of your show (e.g., promotional poster designs or which character to feature in a video).
- It will engage your audience directly and make them feel invested in the production. Just make sure that you give them set options to choose from and are ready to follow through on whatever they decide.

## 8. Run a Countdown Campaign

- Create a social media series leading up to opening night. It will build anticipation and keep followers engaged in the days leading up to the show.
- Post something new every day, like sneak peeks of props, lines from the script, or a countdown with cast photos. You can even add a countdown timer to your website.



## Grassroots Approaches

Sometimes the best marketing doesn't involve fancy tech but heartfelt connections. Grassroots strategies tap into your community's spirit, helping you build local buzz and foster authentic relationships that fill seats and win hearts.

## 9. Community Partnerships

- Teaming up with local businesses for cross-promotions will create mutually beneficial relationships and introduce your theatre to new audiences.
- Try partnering with a nearby restaurant to offer a "Dinner and a Show" package or display each other's flyers.
- You can also reach out to local coffee shops, bookstores, or boutiques for collaborations—arts-friendly spaces tend to welcome these partnerships.

## 10. Pop-Up Performances

- Take your production to the streets. Have actors in costume perform short, scripted interactions or hand out postcards in high-traffic areas like parks, shopping centers, or farmer's markets.
- This will capture attention, generate word-of-mouth buzz, and make your theatre company stick in peoples' minds. Record the performances and share them on social media to extend their impact.

## 11. Flyering 2.0

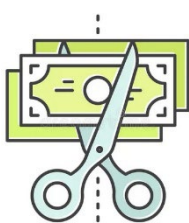
- Flyers are still a low-cost way to reach a local audience—you just have to make sure that people will actually find them interesting instead of just throwing them away five minutes after they get them.
- Modernize the humble flyer for today's audience by creating bold, eye-catching designs with QR codes that link directly to your ticket sales page or a teaser video.
- Distribute your flyers at events where your target audience is likely to gather, such as festivals or local fairs.

## 12. Volunteer Ambassadors

- Tap into the enthusiasm of your community through volunteer ambassadors who can spread the word about your shows through social media, local networks, or distributing flyers.
- Ambassadors bring authenticity and a personal touch to your outreach efforts. Offer them perks like free tickets or exclusive merchandise in exchange for their time and support.

## 13. Leverage Local Media Outlets

- Pitch your show's story to local newspapers, radio stations, and TV networks. Focus on unique angles, such as how the production ties into the community.
- Local media coverage provides free exposure to a broad audience. This is an option where success or failure is really out of your control—but it's always worth a shot.



### Low-Cost Traditional Strategies

Classic marketing techniques still have a place in the theatre world, especially when they're affordable and easy to implement. These tried-and-true methods help you reach your audience in tangible, meaningful ways without stretching your budget.

## 14. Experiment with Discounts

There are a number of different ways you can use discounts to boost ticket sales. Some of the most common ones include:

- *Group Packages:* Create discounts for groups of 10 or more, like corporate outings, school trips, or family gatherings. It will attract larger audiences and simplify the sales process for these groups.

- *Season Subscriptions*: Reward frequent patrons who buy tickets for your whole season ahead of time with perks like discounted tickets, priority seating, or exclusive invites. It not only encourages repeat attendance, but it also builds long-term relationships with your audience.
- *Early-Bird Discounts*: Provide discounted tickets for those who purchase during the first week of sales. This creates urgency and drives early revenue to help fund later marketing efforts.
- *“Pay-What-You-Can” Nights*: Designate one performance where patrons can pay whatever they feel is fair. This method increases accessibility, draws in new audience members, and generates goodwill in the community.

You might want to try them all to see which ones work best for your audience.

## 15. Guerrilla Marketing

- Think outside the box with unconventional guerilla advertising tactics that spark curiosity and conversation.
- Use chalk art on sidewalks to promote your show or hang mysterious posters with a single line of dialogue and a QR code.
- The key thing with guerilla tactics is to keep your stuff playful and aligned with your theatre’s tone.

## 16. Community Noticeboards

- Take advantage of public noticeboards in local spaces like cafes, libraries, gyms, and community centers to spread the word.
- It’s free, easy, and reaches people who are already engaged in their community.
- Include a compelling visual or hook to make your flyer stand out—see the “Flyering 2.0” section for more on that.

## 17. Partner with Schools

- Offer discounted tickets for students or work with school drama clubs to create educational tie-ins with your productions.
- If you want to go a step further, you can host a special “Student Night” with a post-show Q&A featuring the cast and crew.
- This practice builds goodwill and exposes students and their families to your theatre. After all, this is the next generation of theatregoers.

## 18. Host an Open House

- Invite the community to step inside your theatre by offering venue tours, meet-and-greets with the cast, and exclusive ticket discounts.

- It's a chance to build personal connections and excitement for your next show. You can try adding extra interactive elements, like a photo booth with costumes from past productions.

## 19. Collaborate with Other Arts Organizations

There is strength in numbers.

- Partner with local dance companies, galleries, orchestras—or even other theatre companies—to cross-promote each other's events.
- Co-host a special event, like a performance followed by an art gallery viewing.

## Your Success

You've put your creative and budget-friendly marketing strategies into action. But how do you know if they're actually working?

These *key performance indicators (KPIs)* help you gauge the effectiveness of your efforts:

- **Ticket Sales:** This is your ultimate success metric. Track total sales, sales by channel (online, box office, phone), and sales over time. Understanding when and where tickets are purchased can help you identify the most effective marketing channels.
- **Email Engagement:** Email is a powerful tool for theatres. These metrics reveal how compelling your subject lines and content are by showing the percentage of recipients who open your emails and click on links. Test different subject lines or layouts to see what drives the most engagement.
- **Website Traffic:** Your website is your virtual box office, and these metrics show how effectively it's driving ticket sales. Keep track of your total visitors, page views, and time spent on your site. Pay special attention to your ticketing form.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments, clicks, and follower growth) show how well your social media content resonates with your audience. Keep an eye on which types of posts (photos, videos, behind-the-scenes content, etc.) generate the most interaction.

Tracking your progress ensures you understand what's resonating with your audience—and where to focus your energy next time. Think of it as your post-performance review for your marketing efforts.

And remember: Don't just focus on the data—celebrate your victories, big and small, from smashing your ticket sales goal to receiving glowing feedback from a first-time patron. These moments are proof that your hard work is paying off.