

BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN SUMMARY DOCUMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

Our Audience Development plan covers a two-year period from October 2006 – September 2008 and includes a review of the Grand's current approach to audience development, our strategic response for the future and key projects that will drive growth.

The process has been a collaborative one, in particular we have worked with Stephen Mercer, Marketing Manager, Paul Iles, Manager and Robbie Pendlebury, Access Officer.

2 REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

The following emerged as key themes from analysis of management information and primary and secondary research. These have been used to shape our future direction in relation to audience development.

Encouraging more frequent visits to the Grand and cross-fertilisation of audiences – in particular the Grand is looking to increase the frequency of attendance from the local population to reduce dependency on summer season.

Building on the foundations - our stakeholders continue to encourage engagement with several key target markets that the Grand has historically targeted and is committed to developing further – disabled and economically disadvantaged communities, young people and young people at risk. Our approach will build on engagement with these groups to sustain our relationship.

Tackle the barriers – there are physical, intellectual and knowledge barriers facing potential audiences for the Grand, including issues relating to travel, childcare and information.

Collaboration – collaborative audience development has already delivered results and the Grand should continue to support such initiatives in order to promote our offer as a whole and the heritage aspects of the building. In turn the Grand can act as a gateway to drive visitors to explore other cultural and heritage assets in the town.

New technology plus social networks– already a growing part of the Grand's tactical activity, these two strands of will play a stronger part in driving new audiences.

Communicate the benefits – the Grand has strong support and tangible benefits to articulate to people and this must be a central part of our communication strategy.

3 AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Based on the review of current activity and an understanding of the current barriers to audience development, RGA and the Grand Theatre have developed a series of audience development objectives to cover the period October 2006 – October 2008.

The Grand will continue its proactive work in marketing over the next two years. As a result it would like to:

- Increase achieved occupancy from 41% to 45% by 2008 – an additional 25 tickets per show and 21,360 additional ticket sales.
- From the additional 21,360 ticket sales a total of 3,000 people will be new to the Grand.
- The frequency of visits from Lancashire residents will increase from 2.85 times per year to 4 times a year by 2008.
- Increase the volume and value of media coverage each year by £25,000 and generate at least 2 national articles in a broader spread of national media including Daily Mail/Daily Express/Radio 2.
- Increase the number of website hits from 30,000 per month to 37,500 by 2008.
- Increase the percentage of on-line sales from 3% per annum to 8% by 2008.
- Increase the number of people with a disability visiting the theatre from 484 in 2005 to 600 by 2008.

4 OUR STRATEGY

The Grand Theatre brochure will remain a central part of tactical activity but the Grand will strive over the next two years to maximise the use of new technology, social network marketing and special promotional activity aimed at new audiences. Specifically, it will:

- Maximise opportunities to raise awareness of the Grand's activities via cultural industry and public sector networks to articulate the importance of the theatre in the life of the town and the social/cultural benefits that it generates.
- Maximise marketing opportunities to current core visitors to encourage repeat visitation and crossover between artforms.
- Maximise marketing opportunities for core loyal visitors to become ambassadors for the theatre and generate new visitors.
- Using price promotional activity to encourage trials of new artforms and to introduce new users to the theatre. (e.g. Student Stampede)
- Continue to develop programming strands and product to that attracts new audiences, in particular family friendly activities, those unfamiliar with the theatre experience and people with disabilities.
- Maximise marketing activity to businesses associated with the visitor market including accommodation providers, tour operators, taxi drivers and guides.
- Developing collaborative marketing activity with other key attractions in the town to drive new users to the theatre and encourage access to other cultural assets in the town.

5 TACTICAL ACTIVITY AND INITIATIVES

The Grand will continue with a wide range of tactical activity but key initiatives, already proven elsewhere in the UK and Europe, will be developed in order to drive new audiences.

The three key initiatives are:

Ambassadors Scheme –A total of 10 Ambassadors will be recruited from areas that have a high proportion of people from the C2DE grouping. Ambassadors will be provided with an introduction to the work of Grand and its people, activities and organisation. The recruited Ambassadors will already have a degree of authority in the community and will belong to some social networks. They will then be encouraged to build relationships with key groups and networks within their own local community. Each Ambassador will organise pre-arranged group visits to the theatre and a package of support will be provided to encourage engagement, including contributions to transport, a simple photo-story book detailing a tour of the theatre in pictures so that people can understand what to expect, free guides and discounts in bar. Ambassadors would be encouraged to initiate between 2 – 4 visits in a 12 month period. A remuneration package will be offered to each Ambassador including discounts, travel and refreshments.

Group Hug – 25 key group organisers have been identified that already co-ordinate 3 trips to the Grand each year with on average at least 250 ticket sales. The theatre will co-ordinate a thank you “Group Hug” for each individual and bring together the top 25 people. The “Group Hug” will consist of special goody bag gifts, including signed programmes/posters for the last season, a sneak preview of new season, refreshments and an opportunity to see extracts from forthcoming productions. Moreover each group organiser will be encouraged to be part of the drive to increase numbers and develop new audiences. A target will be to attract at least 5 new people to each group who have not been to the Grand before with a prize for delivering new attenders.

Test Drive- this is another successful campaign model that can be developed with key stakeholders. Blackpool Council is keen to encourage more people on low incomes to visit the theatre and this programme can be used to nurture such an audience. The model is simple and based on the idea that people are often more willing to try a product/service if they are given a risk-free trial. Extensive research and evaluation of such schemes in the arts indicates that an initial screening phase is essential to ensure that willing participants are recruited. If possible data should be supplied from the Council and initial telephone contact made to discuss the production and dates. A small group of new attenders are then personally assisted during their visit, provided with support material for the production and greeted on arrival and during the interval. The visitors are then nurtured with a follow-up offer and discount. However progress with this initiative is driven by developing good relationships with producers willing to participate in Test Drive and offer free/discounted seats.

6 RESOURCES

We have allocated a total of £153,577 based on the tactical activity described in this plan. As noted it does not include human resource costs (marketing salaries, benefits, recruitment and training) or office/administration costs relating to the marketing staff. At this stage a considerable amount of the existing activity will be undertaken by existing staff who have already begun the process of engaging with new audiences.

7 MONITORING AND EVALAUTION

The results of the audience development activity must be monitored to evaluate the plan's effectiveness and a review procedure implemented so that the plan is regularly updated. The following information will be used in that process:

- Ticket sales, numbers of bookers and repeat purchases.
- The number of customers added to the database and the quality of information (e.g. all records to be completed).
- Response to individual campaigns – ticket sales.
- Discounts/promotions – number of discount codes allocated including disabled people.
- Media coverage generated.
- Revenue generation.
- Annual audience survey to establish user profile and response to various aspects of the venue and marketing This could be completed on-line and managed in-house.
- An on-going review of competitors in the market (including new entrants), in addition to a parallel review of their pricing policy.
- Point of sale data collection.
- When possible all marketing tools to carry a response mechanism or means to calculate effectiveness.
- Acorn profiling of the database to monitor changes in penetration (2008)

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