

MANAGEMENT AND THE ARTS

Chapter 11

Marketing and the Arts

Chapter Overview

Connecting an arts organization to people and helping people connect to an arts organization can be a very satisfying accomplishment. Sustaining what should be a mutually beneficial long term relationship takes careful planning, continual communication, and engaged listening on the part of the arts marketer.

This chapter will give you an overview of the general concepts and practices of marketing with a focus on how marketing arts experiences needs to be carefully crafted to produce maximum impact often with minimal dollars.

It is also a fact of organizational life that the people involved in successfully marketing arts programming are under a great deal of pressure to produce. The creativity and imagination that goes into creating engaging performing arts events or museum exhibits needs to be matched by the marketing leadership and staff in their quest for audiences or members.

Marketing Principles and Terms

One definition of marketing is that it, “*is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society as a whole.*” (AMA, 2013)

For an arts manager an important part of this definition is “value for customers.” An arts marketer is primarily engaging people with marketing activities related to an *experience* which will hopefully become a set of positive memories. Other than a ticket stub, a program or a book, there is not a tangible object for the customer to take away from a performance or exhibit.

The value to that “customer” can be highly subjective, but effective arts marketing can help enrich that experience if the marketer understands why the organization is doing x or y program and relationship of the programming to the mission. This part of the marketing process is critical to building the long term relationships with the arts customer.

Marketing Principles and Terms

Within the marketing process, matching needs and wants help drive the customer connection to the arts organization. The assumption is that human beings are driven by a host of needs and wants. People may feel the need to socialize and connect with other people in public gatherings such as a performance or exhibition, but they also may want to satisfy this need by going to a flea market sale on a weekend.

One of the many challenges faced by an arts manager is connecting and communicating to people who have an interest in the kinds of experiences being offered. As we go through life we acquire preferences, tastes and interests in a whole host of activities which can include attending and or participating in arts events. It is common to find arts marketers promoting “first-timer” events related to their programs to bring in new audiences.

Successful arts marketers quickly grasps the notion that promoting an evening at the opera to an opera lover requires different approaches than promoting an evening at the opera to perspective opera goers.

Marketing Principles and Terms

Central to effective marketing is understanding the **exchange process**. This process is embedded in the definition of marketing when speaking of “value for the customer.” For the exchange process to work each party must find something of value and benefit. The concert pianist finds value in performing and being applauded by an audience and the audience members benefit from enjoying the faultless musicianship of the performer and the engaging repertory of the concert program.

To ensure this happens time after time, the art organization needs to engage in developing and implementing **strategic marketing management** which is defined as the *“process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the performance of marketing activities and strategies, both effectively and efficiently.”*

Strategies, as we discuss in chapter 5, are a set of choices you make to focus resources on achieving an outcome. The organization may have an overall marketing plan, but have a very specific strategy to increase its audience base among 25 to 40 year olds.

Marketing Principles and Terms

Over the last 150-plus years as we have moved to a consumer-driven society, we have seen an evolution of the approaches in advertising, selling and marketing goods and services to people.

The **Product Orientation** approach to engage with customers was driven by the notion that “consumers will favor those products that offer the most quality, performance and features.” The assumption is that as long as you’re offering a quality product, people will want it. In fact, consumers have so many choices among high quality products this approach can have limited impact.

The **Sales Orientation** approach assumes that since “consumers show buying inertia or resistance that have to be coaxed into buying more.” This approach relies heavily on advertising much of which is general and not specific to any one group of consumers.

The **Customer Orientation** approach starts with understanding the needs of customers and then uses that information to communicate with them. Rather than tell and sell, the marketer is crafting messages through the marketing materials to perspective arts audiences that are designed to engage them with a range of experiences offered.

Marketing Mix – Putting Your Marketing to Work



The arts marketer typically works within a framework called the **marketing mix**. The experience being offered, at various prices, the venue, and the range of promotional activities are carefully considered based on a good understanding of the various market segments engaging with the arts organization.

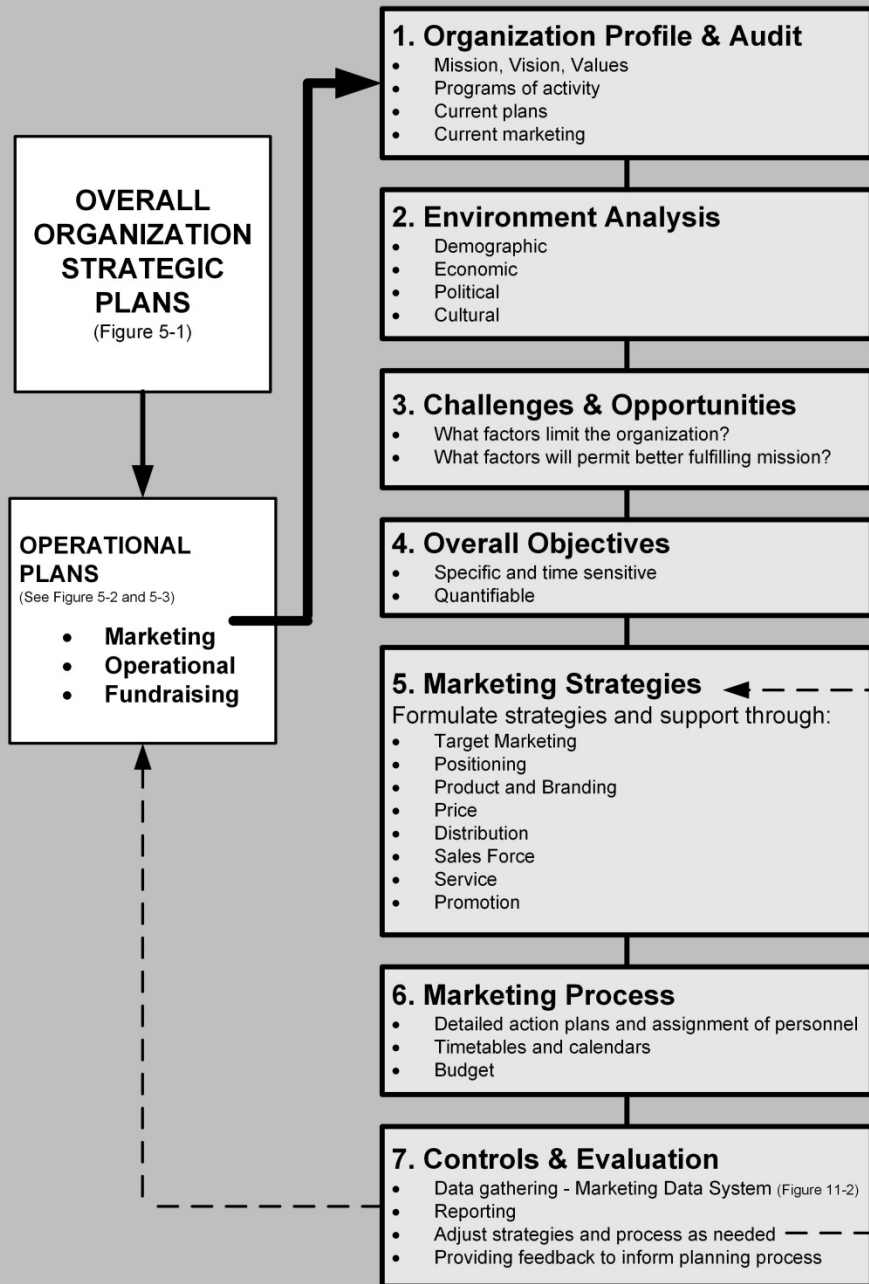
The most effective marketing mix depends having on a clear understanding of why the program is on the schedule and then communicating its value from the audience's perspective.

MANAGEMENT AND THE ARTS

In order for the arts organization to maximize its often limited resources to promote and advertise its programming, a well developed marketing plan is needed. This planning process mirrors the approaches taken when doing the strategic planning for the whole arts organization.

Market research and collecting and analyzing historical sales data are important activities in the planning process. Understanding the education and economic demographics of the community can help focus the plan. Meanwhile, the organizational strategic plan may be directed toward developing new audiences from underserved communities.

Marketing Planning and Process



Marketing and Public Relations

Marketing, as we have seen, is focused on the long term exchange process with performing arts subscribers, single ticket buyers or museum/heritage members or individual attenders. Even if the museum has free admission, the marketing efforts are directed toward an exchange process that includes some kind of payment expected for membership.

Along with marketing, arts organizations are very engaged with another exchange process: fundraising and development. Fundraising relies on using variations on the marketing mix to bring donated income to the organization.

Public relations, on the other hand, is focused on a broader array of audiences or “publics” who could be of benefit to the arts organization. Achieving visibility for the arts organization through its public relations activities needs to be just as strategic as the other plans of the organization. Building public awareness of the impact of the arts organization helps connect it to its community and the community of arts organizations.

Marketing Data and Core Strategies

Creating a comprehensive feedback system that gives the arts marketer a

a better chance to adjust the marketing plans in the execution stage. There are multiple points of engagement with audiences and patrons that can prove helpful in decision making.

Since the competition for discretionary entertainment dollars is so intense, having a **niche strategy** (targeting a segment of the community) along with a **differentiation strategy** (experience the arts – it's different) is important.



Managing Awareness to Attendance

The marketing process requires constantly monitoring and managing of a generally complex process of engagement with potential audiences or members. There are multiple points where the process can be disrupted.

