

# Connect more directly with your audience

## Using Blogs for Theatre Marketing and PR

### What is success for a theatre PR campaign?

Top of the list has to be a loyal, passionate group of people who love what you do. They come to every show, bringing new friends with them every time, and tell anyone who'll listen how fantastic you are. They give you support in many other ways than simply buying a ticket and they are the key to your continued success.

You also want some more control of your press coverage, TV and radio and less reliance on the kindness (or otherwise) of critics. You want the best of this coverage to stick around on the web, so that whenever someone's looking for theatre in your area they see the glowing reviews of your productions and that you are just really, really cool. Many theatres also want to build a sense of place or purpose within their local community and to connect more directly with their audiences to fulfil a deeper cultural mission.

### What is a blog?

A blog is a dynamic web site that is easily and regularly updated. Blogs are characterised as a more informal space to share information and a way of creating a more intimate and meaningful connection with your audience. Most blogs allow comments from readers to encourage an online conversation to arise. Blogs can contain text articles, still photography, audio and video content.



### So how could a blog help you?

Blogs build buzz. By talking everyday about what you're doing with the production, and inviting people to comment and contribute, you're giving yourself a platform for building a community of people who are already engaged with you before you even try to sell them a ticket.

Blogs are also Google magnets – we can **guarantee** that your findability through Google will improve if we help you put a blog together. We can help you create a kind of collaborative production journal, where everyone contributes. Think "The Making of..." fly-on-the-wall documentary style, only on the web, and released in chunks as they happen, day by day rather than being stitched together after the show has closed.

### What do we have to work out first?

*Who will do it?* It is worth appointing someone as your blogger-in-chief, someone whose job it is to document some of what happens in the course of every day - maybe you could get a talented graduate student who has a love of theatre and who might do it on an intern basis for the privilege of being involved. Maybe your PR person should be doing this and nothing else.

The site will be richer the more people you can involve. It would be a mistake to just focus on the director's view, or an actor's, or the stage manager's, or the wardrobe mistress's – it is great to see all the facets as they come together. Real engagement with your audiences might mean that you also publish writing and other content from them too.

*What media will you use?* We think the barest minimum is text and pictures. You should also consider getting some video footage and some audio (rehearsal breaks, performances or interviews with people)

*How much of the life-cycle are you going to cover?* You could just cover rehearsals or from day 1 or rehearsals to opening night or all the way through from the initial commissioning meeting through to striking the set.

*Will you allow comments?* We'd strongly recommend that you do - this is where you start to engage with people and show them that you're real people yourselves, just trying to make a piece of art. You may get abuse - we all do - how you deal with it will be a measure of your success and we will give you help and support in getting this right.



*Who is already passionate and authoritative about this season's plays, their subject matter, your theatre?* These are the people that you want to draw into being involved. They may keep you on your toes from time to time, but they can also be a great help, because they already care. If they're already online, where do they hang out? Go there yourself and politely introduce yourself – again we can help with this.

### How do we go about it?

We can provide you with help in four main areas:

1. Setting up a new blog site and dealing with all the technical issues.
2. Providing initial content to get the site going.
3. Training your staff in producing content, or sourcing a talented site manager for the longer term
4. Navigating the known pitfalls of blogging so you can avoid the mistakes that others have made.

Blogs are already being used in big business to give a human face to corporations. The application of this technology to theatres is obvious, it's about telling stories and that's what theatre people do best.

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to see how we can help you engage directly with your audiences online

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