

TRU Takeaways: Marketing Panel

with meredith lucio (*Wild Bird Productions*) and matt sicoli (*blue vista 725*)

Meredith Lucio and I hope that you enjoyed the marketing panel discussion on March 28th, 2012. I would like to take this opportunity to recap and elaborate on some of the material we presented as well as some of the topics that were randomly discussed.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." While there are many definitions of marketing what is most important is to focus upon customer orientation with your product and the satisfaction of customer needs.

PRODUCT, MESSAGE, MEGAPHONE



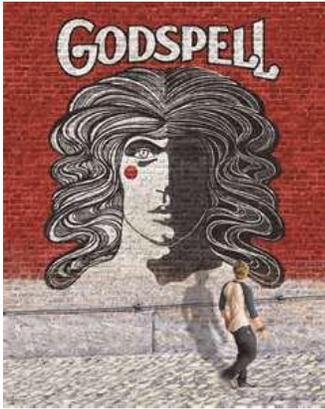
These three (3) simple words created quite a stir initially with the group but they are used as a form of metaphor to simplify the key components to help you plot a marketing plan. This is simply a different spin on the standard marketing mix (4 P's of Marketing: *Product, Pricing, Placement and Promotion*) and helps to establish a foundation for your new projects/campaigns.

Product refers to your actual goods or services and in the context of theater, is a culmination of a variety of components with your production, i.e. book, score, lyrics, cast, director, theatre location, First Preview/Opening Night date selection, logo, title treatment, copy, as well as pricing. Setting a price for your production, together with discounts, is an integral piece of your product.

Message refers to the "meat and potatoes" of your production. What is the story you are trying to tell? What sets you apart from other productions? Who are you targeting to receive your message? How does your production relate to the customer's needs and wants?

Megaphone refers to how your product gets to the buyer. It encompasses all of your advertising, marketing and promotions education (TV, radio, print, online, social media, etc.), publicity endeavors (press, stunts, etc.), group and individual sale outreach (group sales, street teams, etc.). These media channels through which you place your product, combined with your message, and nature of your production, establish your brand.

CREATIVE



Selecting an effective logo, title treatment and tagline/slogan is extremely important as it begins to establish your brand. Colors, text, etc. all play an important role in the decision making process. You need your production to emote as well as edify the consumer as to what the production is and what they might expect if they purchase a ticket. Be warned that even though an illustration may be appealing, it may not be effective. Some examples that we explored were *Godspell* (throw back with a modern appeal and mentions of composer from "Wicked" and "Pippin"), *Lysistrata Jones* (convoluted message), *Phantom of the Opera* (reboot/modernization of Phantom mask), and more.

BEWARE OF JAFAR: PERSONAL ADVISORS



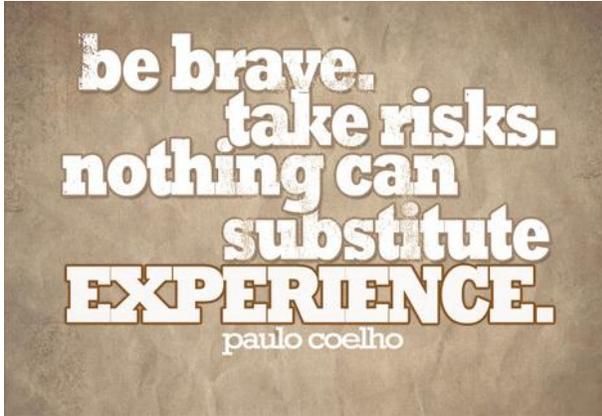
ABOUT JAFAR

In Disney's Aladdin, Jafar is the Grand Vizier of Agrabah, the Sultan's most trusted advisor and unbeknownst to the sultan, a powerful and evil sorcerer. He occasionally manipulates the Sultan into agreeing with what he says by hypnotizing him with a snake staff that he always carries. He tries to find Genie's lamp in order to take over Agrabah as its new ruler, manipulating several people, including Aladdin, into finding it for him. When Aladdin retrieves the lamp, Jafar betrays him instead of paying him and attempts to kill him.

Being a producer of a Broadway/Off-Broadway show, you will field a countless array of questions from your creative, advertising, marketing and promotions, press team and more. You will need to make important decisions and won't be afforded the opportunity to ponder or procrastinate on certain decisions when time is of the essence. Some producers seek professional advice and lean on industry executives to aid them with these decisions. While these Broadway/Off-Broadway gurus may boast years of experience, notify you of trends, etc. they may not be the best advisors. While they may not be seeking to take over the producer helm, they may not have your best interests in mind and may, in fact, be attempting to further

their own cause. Be advised that your personal advisor may not be as entrenched or invested in your product as you are.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS AND BE BRAVE



Producers may choose to take the standard course of action when advertising and promoting a show (approach theater goers, tourists, standard trade publications, radio, TV, etc.). But what happens when ticket sales are not being generated? Whether you've splurged on an ad campaign and spent an absurd amount of money or invested what little pennies you had to generate sales, sometimes the proverbial needle does not seem to move no matter what you do. It's easy to rest on your laurels and come up with a variety of excuses, e.g. "This is a great production, I don't know what's wrong with people" or "The marketplace

is too crowded. Everyone is clamoring for their share of the market and overloading consumers." Maybe you should take this opportunity to do some soul searching on your production. Maybe your message is not being received clearly due to ineffective artwork, copy, tagline, etc. While focus groups and surveys can certainly help in the early stages, once you are in rough waters, it's different to steer the ship towards clear skies. Now is the time for you to trust your instincts and be brave. Take initiative and be proactive. Interact with your fan base. Generate marketing stunts and campaigns that may receive press coverage. DO something.

TEASER CAMPAIGNS



We briefly touched upon teaser campaigns (cryptic, challenging messaging to advertise/promote a production in advance of a full scale campaign) and how effective they may be. Clearly teaser campaigns are most effective when the brand is already established (*Men in Black*, *Mad Men* photos above). Since your product and brand has likely not been

established yet, informing potential consumers about your production and its message is critical. Today's consumers are much more educated and judicious in how they opt to spend their time (not to mention their dollars). While you may peak their curiosity, they generally prefer to be educated on a product that they know little to nothing about. Make it easy on them to decipher if they are interested in the experience or not.

If you do decide to create a teaser campaign, make sure that all of the components (logo, tagline, flyers, website, actual production, etc.) are implemented properly and support one another. The brand message is an important part of this process and providing a gratifying "reveal" is vital.

OUTSIDE FORCES



Cruise ship passengers recount capsizing off Italy

By Laura Bly, USA TODAY Updated 1/16/2012 9:48 AM

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How could a leisurely cruise off Italy's Tuscany coast go so terribly wrong?



That's the question passengers, maritime experts and would-be vacationers are asking after the weekend's deadly capsizing and chaotic evacuation of the ultramodern cruise ship Costa Concordia.

The ship, which is 5 years old, cost \$570 million to build and has state-of-the-art navigation equipment. It struck a rock and keeled over in shallow water late Friday near Giglio, a tiny island about 18 miles off Italy's Tuscan coast, with more than 3,000 passengers — 120 Americans among them — and more than 1,000 crewmembers aboard. The ship had navigated near the dangerous reefs and rocks that jut off Giglio's eastern coast.

By [Orngorio Biongia, AP](#)

The luxury cruise ship Costa Concordia leans on its side after it ran aground off the tiny Tuscan island of Giglio, Italy.

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At the same time that the horrific capsizing of Costa Concordia's cruise ship (subsidiary of Carnival Cruise Lines) in Italy occurred, Carnival had launched a full blown outdoor ad campaign in Manhattan. We used this as an example that sometimes your production/advertising and marketing campaigns may face forces outside of your control. The best you can do is attempt to weather the storm.

"SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO BE HONEST"



Marketing/ad meetings are a smorgasbord of egos, ideas and concepts. Sometimes you have to be honest with your fellow producers, advertising and marketing team, etc. about your feelings on the title treatment/logo design, advertising/promotional campaigns, or that the production is heading in the wrong direction and gone off message. Fear of jeopardizing relationships, future business, etc. should not be the motivating factors. To coin Billy Joel's famous tune, "Honesty is hardly ever heard and mostly what (they) need from you."

ADDITIONAL NUGGETS:



KEEPING "THE COOKING COMMITTEE" COOKING

With the cost of Broadway/Off-Broadway productions rising, producers are often forced to work with a team of producers. But sometimes a meeting of the minds can be counter-productive and in order to appease everyone you please no one AND nothing gets done. Deliberation often leads to lack of execution which is something you and your team can't afford. Make sure you take steps to keep "The Cooking Committee" cooking by having a strong leader with a vision and making sure your voice, as well as all voices, are heard in a timely and productive fashion.

"FIRE THE GUN"



It's not easy to pull the trigger on advertising, marketing and promotional campaigns when selecting logo/title treatments, copy, faced with financial uncertainty, etc. You may experience many sleepless nights deliberating on what is the best course of action. However, it is essential that you "fire the gun" and commit to an action. Give it your best shot and maintain your integrity. If it doesn't work, you tried. There is no time or place for "woulda, shoulda, coulda" people on the producing or creative team. Action is imperative. Pull the trigger and fire...the...gun.