

Small Town, Big Prize: Building the Audience for the MostArts Festival

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Understand the inner workings of a local arts festival that draws national talent.
- Discuss the role of the community in a local arts festival.
- Describe the effects of multidisciplinary intersections of art.
- Recommend a target market, marketing strategy, and media mix.

Topics For Discussion

The Local Audience

The MostArts Festival is an annual weeklong summer piano competition, in which promising young talents vie for annual \$10,000 grand prize in the company of professional pianists. The festival takes place in the small town of Alfred, New York. Festival patrons are mainly local residents, and most are not conversant in classical music. With this in mind, MostArts Founder and Director Lisa Lantz has sought an educational bent to the week's events, incorporating workshops in the arts more broadly in areas that Alfred University has strength. The festival draws its talent nationally, but relies on the community for its success.

- What ideas has Lantz tried to attract community support? Poll the students to see which tactics seem most effective.
- MostArts Festival income derives mainly from local corporate and foundation grants, individual donations, and ticket sales, which have doubled over the past five years. Where could or should Lantz be focused if she were seeking higher income for the festival? How could state and federal sources of income play a role?
- As revealed in the case through credit card sales data, almost three-quarters of MostArts attendees come from the nearby area (within a 15-mile radius). Out-of-state patrons are no small group, however (**Appendix 1**). How could MostArts gather more information about their customers? What can be learned beyond their place of residence? What if patrons received a survey with their tickets? What could be asked in a customer survey? Ask students to discuss in groups the most urgent consumer information the festival could gather and use profitably for segmenting its audience.

- Local patronage is crucial to the festival's success. The case explained that Lantz does not perceive any competition to the MostArts Festival, but attendance is a major concern. What barriers might prevent locals from attending? How would you address those barriers to access?

Multidisciplinary Art and Social Change

Central to the MostArts mission is to advocate for cultural enrichment. The festival design accomplishes this on two fronts. Not only are talented piano students immersed in a professional music culture, but also the local community gains exposure to a variety of fine arts with an emphasis on classical music. During the piano competition, pre-professional pianists participate in workshops and performance opportunities alongside featured artists. These artists meanwhile model professional behavior on and off the stage. Orchestra members share housing with competitors at dormitories on campus, which encourages informal exchange. Similarly, the audience discovers a number of access points for classical music, ranging from informal, free samplings and post-concert mingling to unmitigated full-length concerts. To draw audiences who may not be interested initially in classical music, the festival offers events on a wide variety of fine arts topics.

- As the MostArts festival has evolved, Lisa Lantz has enlisted faculty from Alfred University's School of Art and Design to offer workshops in topics ranging from ceramics and glass-blowing to digital art and creative writing. What has been the effect of these tutorials on the principal musical offerings of the festival? What might be a risk of offering such a wide array of workshops?
- As the case mentioned, the piano competition emphasizes support of the young artists over a cutthroat environment. One of its first-prize winners even started a charitable music organization with fellow competitors following the MostArts Festival in 2016. How can the spirit among the competitors be leveraged in the branding and promotion of the festival?
- Social change more broadly is an important goal of the festival. What other ways can MostArts achieve social change? How can the impact be measured?
 - ♦ What are the potential pitfalls of a culture that relies on arts organizations to drive social change?
 - ♦ How does MostArts work around these pitfalls?

Marketing and Media

Lisa Lantz is focused on improving the marketing of the MostArts Festival with the goal of increasing overall attendance. Her advertising efforts for the past five festivals consisted of some posters, word of mouth, and announcements via social media. Lantz plans to double her allocation toward marketing and media to between \$10,000 and 15,000. The case builds toward a scenario around Lantz's decisions about marketing the festival with this budget increase. Invite students to compare their responses on a number of fronts related to marketing.

- What audiences should be targeted or micro-targeted? What are some of the solutions for dealing with university students who are largely not on campus during the summer?

- Lantz is invested to some degree in marketing the festival as a series of family-friendly events. Should this be the principal brand message of the festival? What other messages could be developed for other audiences?
 - ♦ How should the multidisciplinary aspect of the festival figure into marketing communication? How can events in the other arts be cross-marketed with the main musical offerings?
- During its first four years, the MostArts Festival relied primarily on social media and word of mouth for its advertising. With an increased budget, what media vehicles would be most effective for increasing attendance for the MostArts Festival in the year ahead?
 - ♦ What are the benefits and drawbacks to a marketing campaign principally driven by messages through social media?
 - ♦ Lantz is considering outdoor billboard advertising, for example. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of this medium?
 - ♦ How would an email or direct mail marketing campaign be structured? Encourage students to consider how these two media would differ in form and function.