

PRO ACTION ITEM OF THE MONTH

MARKETING HACK: A CHEAP WAY TO TEST EVERYTHING

A new Broadway musical can easily spend \$1mm to \$1.5mm on advertising before the show even opens, and then another \$100k-\$150k per week after opening!

And with that much money going out the door, you'd be surprised how little our industry tests its advertising.

Testing your ads is one of the main principles of marketing anything (see some other great rules from one of the pioneers of the art of ads here), but still, it's not part of our M.O. We should be split testing subject lines, email copy, direct mail pricing, and so on and so on. Instead, we go off of our hunches and cross our fingers.

Why? Is it because things have to happen so quickly on Broadway? Is it because we're not thinking long term when we open since so many shows don't make it past six months? Is it because the media that we buy doesn't make testing easy?

Yes, yep and oh yes (attention media – I'd get cracking on not only allowing us to test, but making it affordable for us to do so – because it helps you, too).

I try to test everything I do. And just recently I found a quick and cheap way to test subject lines, ad copy . . . and even titles of shows! So I thought I'd pass it on to you.

What is the new marketing hack?

facebook®



Facebook ads have gotten so good, and allow you to put so little down (and also target a specific demographic), that you can quickly split test any two ads you like as often as you like. And you don't need an advertising agency to do it.

For example, before you spend \$1200 for a Telecharge email blast, you can spend \$10 split testing two Facebook ads with the same headline and see which gets more clicks. Take that winner and use that headline as the subject line for Telecharge, and your open rates are bound to increase.

Confused about which title you should use for your new musical? Sure, ask your friends. But you could also split test a Facebook ad, and again, see which gets more clicks. Bingo, you've got some data on which one attracts the eye . . . which would then hopefully attract the wallet.

Since our industry doesn't like to test, I'm doing it on my own, and you should too.

I know some of you are thinking that testing things like titles and even some advertising copy is overdoing it. "Theater is an art. We're not selling laundry detergent here."

True, true. But the funny thing is, in some ways, I wish we were laundry detergent . . . because people actually have to have that. It's essential for the function of their lives. Theater and all art is much more optional, which makes it that much harder to sell . . . which makes testing even that much more important.

And even though we're in the art business, there is something essential that we all have to remember, even if it makes us feel a little like a laundry detergent salesman.

We're not marketing shows to get people to see them. We're marketing shows to get people to buy them.