

THE INDUSTRY INVITATION EXECUTION PLAN



INTRODUCTION

You've got a reading coming up. Or maybe a showcase, festival show, or some other production. And in order for your show and YOU to move to the next "stage," you need Producers, Investors, Agents and other Industry Pros to come.

And while we'd all love to believe in the *Field of Dreams* theory, just because you build it, does NOT mean people will come.

You need to invite them.

But not in the same way most people would invite them. Because you're not most people. You're a Pro.

You know that investing in a system and a process will guarantee you better results.

That's why you purchased this execution plan, which, when properly implemented, is guaranteed to get more Producers, Investors, etc. to see your show. And more people seeing your show means you have a better chance of your show moving on; and you quitting your day job, and writing, producing or whatever you want, full time.

Follow the checklist below. It's the same system I use for inviting Co-Producers, Partners and Investors to see my shows, so I know it works.

All that you have to do is follow the steps.

(And don't delay!) Industry Professionals are not only busy people, but they are also invited to many, many (did I say many?) productions. The "when" you invite your list is just as important as "what" you're inviting them to.

Now, let's get people to see your show.

STEP 1 – 8 WEEKS OUT “CURATING YOUR LIST”

The first step in inviting industry to see your show has nothing to do with inviting at all.

It's about targeting.

While you may think this process is about inviting people to your production, it's more specifically about advertising your production to a potential buyer. It just so happens that no cash has to change hands in this transaction (that is, until you get that fat "option" payment). The "purchase" in our advertising initiative is our target (The Industry Pro) RSVPing to your event, right? Nope, the purchase is the target ATTENDING your production.



The RSVP is like getting the target to the cash register. Getting them to attend is when that credit card gets approved.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves . . .

When planning any advertising campaign, the first step is to target which consumers are most likely to purchase your product (or come to your presentation).

We don't want to waste money or time (more valuable than money) by inviting just anybody and everybody. That's the most common mistake that non-Pros make.

Step one is to identify WHO you want to invite.

How?

Think like an advertiser . . . or a salesperson. Target the people most likely to "purchase" your product, which means ask yourself . . .

- Who has Produced, Invested or Represented shows similar to yours?
- Who has a personal and/or professional connection to you?
- Who has a personal and/or professional connection to your Director, Actors, Designers, etc.?
- Who is interested in the subject matter of your show?

Narrowing your list down will not only get more people to attend your production, but they will also be the people more likely to move your production or your career forward.

PRO TIP

Don't know where to start to find Producers who are interested in material or writers similar to yours? Make a list of the ten shows you've seen recently that you enjoyed. (And if you haven't seen ten shows recently, you need to get out there and see more theater!). Look up who produced those shows. And there's your list! If you've enjoyed a show, the probability is high that your taste and sensibilities are similar to the people who backed that production or that Author. Now all that remains is that you track down the contact information for those Producers.

PRO TOOL

Not sure where to find contact information? Use the Google Chrome Extension [Skrapp.io](#) to extract email addresses from contacts on LinkedIn. You may not be able to get everyone's email address, so connect with them on LinkedIn as an alternative.

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STEP 2 – 6 WEEKS OUT

“SAVE THE DATE”

Just like a wedding, the first invitation we’re going to send out isn’t going to invite anyone to anything. All that we’re going to do is let them know that your production is happening.

This is the first impression we’re going to make about your production. Now, you’re probably wondering, why don’t we just invite them now and skip the RSVP? Because sending a “Save The Date” now will give us a chance to send a different message shortly thereafter, because the information (“RSVP NOW!”) will be new.

As you’ll see, we’re going to remind our targets to RSVP several times in this process (just like advertising, it takes several impressions to influence a buyer), and the target is less likely to disengage from our “drip” campaign if the message is varied, even slightly.

Keep your “Save The Date” short and simple. I am a fan of a highly visual “card,” whether that’s sent through the regular mail or e-mail. Or better . . . both.



PRO TIP

The default choice for most people when inviting industry professionals to a production is email, which is understandable. It’s cheap and fast. However, ask yourself . . . would coca-cola ever rely solely on one form of media? Would they only buy TV commercials? Would they only buy billboards? What about Apple? No. The best advertisers know that what works best on a consumer is a “Media Mix,” or using several different forms of advertising to surround a potential buyer. This way, no matter where the target turns they see the product. TV, billboard, direct mail, Facebook ads, etc. That’s when advertising is at its strongest. And this goes for you too! Whenever possible, use different forms of “advertising” throughout this initiative. Send emails and postcards and Facebook messages and LinkedIn notes. Hand out flyers and put up posters. Industry professionals respond to advertising just like ticket buyers.

Therefore, as you put each step of this plan into action, use SEVERAL different forms of media to accomplish the same objective.

STEP 3 – 4 WEEKS OUT

“THE OFFICIAL INVITATION”

The official invitation should be sent out approximately one month before your first presentation. When thinking about what information should be included in the invitation, I always think back to my journalism class in college. Make sure you answer The Five Ws.

WHO

Who is in it, who's directing it, who's producing it, etc. Include as many names as possible. Why? Because the more names you have, the more likely an invitee might recognize one and want to attend because they are familiar with that person's work.

(In my online workshop, “How To Get Producers To See Your Show,” available on my exclusive online membership site [TheProducersPerspectivePRO](#), I discuss at length the importance of stacking your cast, crew, and creatives with people that will attract an industry audience . . . even if some of these individuals won't continue on with the project after the first presentation.)

WHAT

Of course, your “what” is going to be your title. But don't stop there. Make sure you indicate whether or not it's a new musical, new play, a revival, etc. Don't assume everyone knows.

The “what” of your invite should also include a tagline (or one sentence pitch or logline) that describes exactly what your show is about and what your audience can expect when they attend. Setting the right expectation is essential. You might think you want anyone and everyone with money or influence to attend your production. But that's not true! If someone isn't predisposed to enjoy your type of show, you don't want them there! They'll spread bad word of mouth. You'd rather they stay home.

Check [this blog](#) for more on how to create a perfect pitch.

WHEN

Producers, Investors and all industry types have super busy schedules. The dates AND times of your presentation or production are going to be one of the first things that your target looks for when they get the invite. And depending on how complicated their schedule is on that day, then they'll decide whether or not to make room for you and your show. So make sure the “when” is very prominent and easy to find.

PRO TIP

Many people ask me about including the running time of their presentation. My recommendation is **ONLY** include the running time if your presentation is 90 minutes or less. Anything over that can be a deterrent to making a reservation. While your audience may not mind sitting for a two and a half hour reading once they are in the seat, it's easier for them to say no if they know how long it is in advance.

WHERE

The location of your presentation is going to be directly related to the “when,” as your target is going to have to calculate travel time to/from their office/home to your presentation. Again make sure this information is prominent and located right next to the “when.”

If you don't know your location by the time of your “Save the Date” or even your invitation, make sure you at least include a neighborhood (e.g. Midtown Manhattan, West Village, etc.).

REMINDER: Your choice of location can have a huge impact on the attendance. See my online workshop on “How To Get Producers To See Your Show,” for the location strategies I recommend to encourage a high turnout from the right people.

WHY (OPTIONAL)

While I don't suggest you write a dissertation on why this show is relevant **NOW**, a sentence or two in your pitch line, or a reference to a timely article, etc. can help give your target an additional connection to the material and help them understand why they need to make time for your presentation.

Sometimes I will include a “why” in a note **PRECEDING** the invite. For example, if I was sending an email about a revival of *A Few Good Men*, I might say, “Hey XXXX, I'm doing a reading of *A Few Good Men* coming up. Super-timely. It's about a crime that occurs on Guantanamo Bay. And that location means something so different than it did when the play first premiered.”

Make sense? This is optional. And please use with discretion. Do **NOT** overload your target with reasons why you are producing/writing the play or musical. The point of the “why” is to answer why it's important to them!



In addition to the 5Ws, your official invitation must include a simple way for the prospect to RSVP. Use a website like [Wufoo](#) or Google Forms, to make it easy for your audience members to register their name, email address and the number of tickets they'd like for the presentation.

While you can ask your targets to respond via email, that's just another step for them . . . and remember, you're trying to make the "purchase process" (remember, you're selling something) as easy as possible. A one-click RSVP system, with a confirmation process so they know the RSVP went through, can increase the probability for a positive RSVP and that the RSVPer will actually show up to the event!

STEP 4 – 2 WEEKS OUT

“REMINDER #1”

You're a person who takes action . . . that's why you purchased this action plan. You see something that has value to you and you get it. You respond to people's phone calls, emails, requests for favors, etc.

Here's a news flash. Most people are NOT like you.

The majority of the folks out there are lazy. They don't respond right away . . . even when it is something they want! And if they are only so-so about it, well, then you can forget it.

It's this complacency that is the primary reason you don't just send one invite and pray people come. So many of my [consult clients](#) come to me after their performance, moaning about how many people came to see their show. And when I say, "Well, how many invites did you send," they always respond, "What do you mean, "How many?" I sent them one!"

Follow-up is the key to every sales process, especially this one.

Did you know that 80% of sales require 5 follow-ups to convert? But that most people fail to even get to a 2nd attempt?

But not you . . . you're different. You aren't going to be a "one and done" type of person . . . not in this process, and not in life. You've got lots of shows in you, right? That's going to mean a lot of follow up in a lot of different stages of the process . . . but especially when inviting people to see your show.

That's why two weeks before your presentation (or two weeks after your invite), you're going to send a reminder to your targeted list.

PRO TIP

Make sure you remove the people who have RSVPed already before sending this reminder. Nothing is more annoying than getting an invite to something you've already said you're going to attend.

The reminder should be a simple one. In fact, often I'll send just a simple forwarded version of the original invite with the following text:

Subj: Did you get this?

Hey FIRST NAME, just checking to see if you got this invite. Haven't gotten your RSVP yet and seats are filling up.

Can you make it?

Ken

P.S. The details are below. Just click the button to RSVP.

A FEW THINGS TO TAKE NOTICE OF IN THIS REMINDER:

1. I ask a question in the subject. Research shows that questions in the subject leads to a higher open rate of emails. The "this" is vague enough that it could be anything . . . from an invite, to a free lunch at a restaurant. That curiosity leads to higher open rates, which then leads to higher RSVPs.
2. I end the email with a question. Again, my research has demonstrated that ending with an open-ended question also encourages a higher response.
3. I mentioned that seats are limited. Scarcity is one of the strongest methods of persuasion we have. For more on scarcity and other simple psychological triggers that you can use to increase your response, read [*Influence* by Dr. Robert Cialidini](#).

PRO TIP

Don't be discouraged if some of these tips start getting you more responses, but those responses are "Sorry, I can't make it." That's ok! First, you've initiated a conversation with your target. That's a win! Then, it's up to you as the salesperson to lead the target somewhere else in your sales process (e.g. "Too bad, but we're doing another one on DATE. Can you come then?" or "So sorry you can't make it. Can I send you the script" or "Can I take you for coffee," etc. The possibilities are endless now that the lines of communication are open. All thanks to a simple reminder that most people don't do. But not you!

STEP 5 – 2 DAYS OUT

“REMINDER #2”

We’re getting closer now! You’re only two days away. So yep, you guessed it, time to remind those who have still not RSVPed again.

PRO TIP

When emailing people a 2nd or 3rd time, I recommend adding some “new” information – a press clipping, an article about your creative team or subject matter, etc. Don’t just recycle the same info each time. Give them another reason why they **MUST** come.

Another reason why we are reminding folks again is because I assume most people will be inviting your targets via email (and often through mass emailing software like Constant Contact, etc.) and what you may not be aware of is that just because you send an email doesn’t mean your target will see it.

We often assume that because we place an ad, all consumers see it. Not true. How many times do you walk to the kitchen to get a snack during a commercial break of your favorite TV show (or DVR skip right through them). Or how many times do you flip the page in a magazine and skip right over whatever ad was in print staring at you, begging for your attention?

Email is the same way . . . if not worse! In the email marketing biz, an “open rate” refers to the percentage of the people on your email list that open your email.

And it is never, ever, 100%.

In fact, a good email open rate is 30-40%. That’s good! That means 6-7 out of every 10 of your targets aren’t even getting your invitations! Maybe they are going to spam, or the dreaded “promotions” folder, or maybe your target is skipping them or worse, deleting them!

That’s why you’ve got to email several times . . . just to try to get one through. I think of it like shooting arrows at a dragon flying through the air. Keep firing until you hit!

PRO TIP

Since everyone else is emailing, I recommend that you try a different approach for the 2nd day reminder. Go old school. **CALL!** That’s right, pick up the phone and place a call. Even if you don’t

get through to your target, or get voice mail, you'll have made a much stronger impression that is actually much more likely to get to your target. Telemarketing still works. And don't worry, as scary as it may be to pick up the phone, I've never known anyone to die from it. It's not as frightening as it may appear. So just do it.

For Advanced Email Marketers: 2 Days before each reading (or sometimes the day before), I will also email all of the people who have RSVPed, reminding them that they have committed to coming. This will not only increase the chance of them attending, but they will also flush out anyone who is going to cancel who wasn't going to tell you now. While you may think that hearing about a cancellation is bad, it's not. It's good. Hearing early is better than not hearing at all, because it allows you to get someone else into the reading, and also opens up a line of communication with the individual, rather than them just not showing up.

STEP 6 – DAY OF “LAST CHANCE”

One of the primary reasons that industry professionals don't attend an event is that they have FOMO (“Fear of missing out”). They are constantly waiting for a better option. And since their schedules are always in flux, they are difficult to get to commit.

A last chance communication gives them one more opportunity to look at their schedule and see if they have an open window.

PRO TIP

In the “Last Chance” email, just like if I was a cruise ship about to depart, I'd get a bit more aggressive and say that if they can't make it, they should send an associate, or even only come for the first act! (And then your show will be so good they'll stay for the whole thing!)

STEP 7 – DAY AFTER “THE OTHER OPTION”

And you thought you were done. Oh no. You're never done. The day after I produce a reading or a festival and there are people on my list who I know did NOT attend? Well, I make them feel bad. ☺

Yep, I send a note telling them how amazing it was and include photos, videos, testimonials, survey responses, etc. The goal here is to make them feel like they had a chance to see the next *Hamilton* and they blew it.

And then, I give them another option.

This is where you'd ask the target for coffee, tell them you are dropping off the script/demo, let them know what the next step is that they will be able to see.

Why do you bother with this?

Even if they don't respond, an email like this will greatly increase the chance that they attend your next presentation of this show, or any show.

And you're in this for the long haul.

I hope you've enjoyed my "7 Step Industry Invitation Execution Plan." I guarantee that if you follow each step, you will without a doubt increase the number of people who attend your performance. And when you do that, you have a much greater chance of achieving all the things you want to achieve and more.

In this plan I've talked about what to do to get your targets to come to the reading. But what about the people who do?

Those are an even more important group of people in the sales process, as they are what we call a "qualified lead." Qualified leads are more likely to invest in your show, produce your show, and/or represent you. They have raised their hand and said, "I'm interested." What you do with them is even more important.

NEXT STEPS

To find out how to deal with these very important people, I strongly suggest you join a [TheProducersPerspectivePRO](#) and take our online workshop "How to Get Producers to See Your Show," which outlines what to do AFTER people attend your production or reading. As a member of [TheProducersPerspectivePRO](#) you will also have access to my list of Producer contacts, as well as contact information for theatre companies all across the country.

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE
A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND **PRO**

To join TheProducersPerspectivePRO visit
[*TheProducersPerspective.com/Join-PRO-Today*](http://TheProducersPerspective.com/Join-PRO-Today)