

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND

PRO

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WELCOME

Hello Pros!

It's only been a month since we debuted TheProducersPerspectivePRO . . . but I feel like I've known you all forever. :-)

We've gotten a terrific response to the site and great feedback from so many of you. So thanks!

And we're already adding more resources to help you with your show/career/business/hobby and will continue to do so. In case you missed the email, we recently uploaded a list of regional theaters interested in new works (more specifically - the members of NAMT - the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, which sponsors a festival of new shows in NYC every year). That festival is hard to get into, but if you don't get in, that doesn't mean you can't market to its members on your own! Good luck!

Last month's webinar, What the @#\$% is Front Money and How Do I Get It?, is up in the archives, so if you missed the live version, make sure you check it out. It'll help you get that all-important cash you need.

If you have suggestions on how we can improve the site or specific resources that you're looking for, please email me at ken@theproducersperspective.com.

Enjoy the newsletter.

And go get 'em!

P.S. This month's webinar, How to Use Social Media to Sell Tickets, is on April 6th at 7 PM EDT. If you miss it live, it'll be in the archives the very next day.

UPCOMING EVENTS

4/6 @ 7 PM: Monthly Webinar: How to Use Social Media to Sell Tickets

4/15: Submission Deadline for the 4th Annual Davenport 10 Minute Play Contest

4/20 @ 7 PM: Literary Agent Workshop with Max Grossman

As a member of Pro, you're automatically registered for the Monthly Webinar! To sign up for other seminars or events, visit www.theproducersperspective.com.

LAST MONTH AT THE BROADWAY BOX OFFICE: MARCH MADNESS

March is one of the few months in our calendar year without a holiday. It's as if the government planned it that way to make sure we all had a one day break from the daily grind at least once a month. The only other months that don't are June and August, when people are vacationing anyway, and April, which usually has Easter and Passover.

And that Easter is what made this March special.



A very early Easter (March 27th) gave March the holiday that it so rarely gets (side note: as a kid growing up Catholic I never understood how the anniversary of an event like the death of a pretty important guy could move around in a six week period). Couple that early Easter with the usual Spring Break in the middle of the month (colleges and private schools mostly) and our March ended up a lot better than it could have been.

As you'd expect, the shows that benefit most during a month like this are the big family shows like *Aladdin*, which posted a gross of \$2,127,857 during Easter Week alone! Now that's the kind of gross all Producers would ask a genie for!

But since March stole April's holiday, one has to wonder if April's numbers will be depressed compared to last year. I'd predict that they will be . . . and the only thing that could prevent a down month would be strong sales in the first few weeks of April, thanks to the number of new shows opening before the Tony deadline of April 28th.

I'll let you know how it turns out next month!

Here are this year's March Broadway grosses and attendance as compared to the year before.*

This March's Broadway Gross: \$102,516,727
Last year's March Broadway Gross: \$114,111,398
Increase/Decrease: -10.2%

This March's Broadway Attendance: 1,039,812
Last year's March Broadway Attendance: 1,147,146
Increase/Decrease: -9.4%

*You can get the weekly grosses by subscribing to my blog or by getting the The Producer's Perspective app! Download it today in the iPhone or Android store!

MARKETING FOR PROS: THE EXPRESS ELEVATOR PITCH

Imagine you get on an elevator in a lobby somewhere and who jumps in, right before the doors close, but . . . me! We say hello, and right before I push the button for the 2nd floor I say, "So, tell me

about the show you're working on. What's it about?" What would you say?

Would you fumble for the words? Would you still be describing it long after I left the elevator after my short ride to 2? Or would you say nothing because you hadn't even thought about it before?

It's essential that all Writers, Producers, etc. have a succinct sentence that not only describes their show, but establishes the tone.

In Hollywood, they call this a log line, which Wikipedia defines as:

A brief (usually one-sentence) summary of a television program, film, or book that states the central conflict of the story, often providing both a synopsis of the story's plot, and an emotional "hook" to stimulate interest.

Ironically, I think that definition is a bad log line itself! Here's my definition:

A one sentence description of a project that succinctly and specifically describes why it is different than all others.

The most important part of the log line is not the plot. It's what makes it unique. Do you think *Hamilton* was pitched using the plot? *A Chorus Line*? *Les Miz*? (It would be easier to make someone read the novel than to succinctly describe that plot!)

Here are some examples of mine:

Altar Boyz: It's about a Catholic boy band, whose names are Matthew, Mark, Luke, Abraham and Juan.

Gettin' The Band Back Together: It's a Will Ferrell movie live on stage.

Alan Cumming's one-man *Macbeth*: It's like *Macbeth* SVU.

In those last two I used a device called "framing" where I incorporated a very popular or well known brand to help sell my own show. While this can be overused (the most famous Hollywood version of this approach was the log line to *Speed*, which was described as "*Die Hard* on a bus"), when done with the right project, it can be very successful, as it accomplishes two things simultaneously:

1. It helps describe your show and its tone.
2. It subtly assigns the success of the compared project to yours.



The second part is sneaky, isn't it? Well, it works.

Is the log line/elevator pitch the only thing you'd say to sell your show to me?

No. Obviously you have to be prepared to talk about it in greater detail. But before you can get a Producer, Investor or even Audience Member to listen to your complete pitch you have to get them intrigued. The log line, or Express Elevator Pitch, can do just that.

If you don't have one yet, take 15 minutes to write out five versions right now. Then test them on your friends. Watch their faces as you read them out loud. See which one makes them smile, nod, laugh, engage, etc. Bingo. You've got it.

Ready? Write.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

But the log line is the bait to get the Producer, Investor or Audience Member (yep this stuff works on ticket buyers too) to bite. You can reel them in with longer descriptions once you know you have them on the hook.

WRITING FOR PROS: HOW TO GET YOUR SCRIPT TO STAND OUT WHEN YOU SUBMIT IT

Let's start with my 3 Step Process to doing anything.

1. Ask myself what I want to do.
2. See what everyone else who wants to do the same thing is doing.
3. Do something completely different than everyone else.

It's pretty simple, but super effective.

I applied this formula to a question I got from one of my consulting clients recently who asked how she could submit her script to an Agent in a way that would get it to stand out.

(Side note: what I love about this question is that the client remembered that the key to marketing isn't just making your product good . . . it's making it better than all the other options available to your "consumer.")

Ok, that was the problem. So let's apply Ken's 3 Step Process.

We know what we want to do, so now we ask what everyone else is doing . . . what do you think everyone else is doing? (Another way to arrive at this answer is to ask yourself, "What's my first instinctual answer to this question?" which is usually the easiest/most status quo solution.)

In this case, what everyone else is doing is printing out a script on their laser printer. Maybe it's single sided. Maybe double. They'll throw a binder clip on it, or three hole punch it and put some brass fasteners in it.

And it looks exactly like you'd expect a work-in-progress hoping-to-be-picked script would look like . . . which means it looks like all the others in the stack.

But what if it didn't?

Here's an idea to make your script look different than the others and make it look like it's more ready for production.

What if you got it published?

And now you're saying, "Duh, Ken. I'd love to get it published. But none of the publishing companies want to take it yet."

True, true, most of those publishing companies (the Samuel Frenches and MTIs of the world) won't take a show until it has had some presence in NYC (or unless it has some other very marketable quality to theaters around the country).

But there's another publishing company out there that will take it right now.

Yours.

That's right, self publish it. Take your script and reformat it to typical Sam French size and style, get it to a site like Lulu.com and have them print you a few copies (on demand). It'll cost you a few bucks, but it'll make your script look like a thousand bucks.



Put a script like that in the hands of a theater company or an Agent or even a Producer like me, and it's going to stand out . . . which will make you stand out.

For more info on publishing companies, including what they look for when they acquire scripts, listen to the podcasts with Drew Cohen of MTI and Bruce Lazarus of Samuel French.

UPDATES FROM PROS

Here is what your fellow Pros are up to:

- Katherine Brann Fredricks and her collaborator Massimo Malavasi are preparing for the Planet Connections Theatre Festivity. Their show *NIX* will play 5 performances this summer!
- Ian Brown's show *Carnegie* was accepted into the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this summer!
- Peilin Chou is producing a show, *My 80-Year-Old-Boyfriend*, which just announced its world premiere in the 2016-2017 season at Merrimack Repertory Theatre!

Got a project update?

Let me know at ken@theproducersperspective.com

THIS MONTH ON THE PODCAST

Since I started the Producer's Perspective Podcast last year, the guest list has been a veritable who's who of Broadway insiders. As a member of Pro you're the first to know who I have coming up:

- Adrian Bryan-Brown - Broadway Press Agent
- Bruce Lazarus - Executive Director of Samuel French
- Stephen Flaherty - Tony Award-Winning Composer
- Meredith Blair - President of The Booking Group

Make sure to check out my blog each Monday to hear the podcast!

“**PRO QUOTE
OF THE MONTH**”

“If they don't let you in the front door, go down the chimney.”

– James L. Nederlander

RAISING MONEY FOR PROS: WHAT I DO WHEN SOMEONE SAYS NO . . . AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO TOO

If you're going to ask people for money, you'd better get used to people saying no. It's going to happen. A lot. In fact, I remember getting out of acting because I didn't want to deal with the rejection. Well, let me tell you, there are days when I feel like a chorus boy auditioning for the non-union tour of *My Fair Lady*. :-)

Yep, that's right, people say no to me all the time. It's part of the game. So your FIRST "to do" when someone says no to your request for money is to get used to it, and get over it. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll become the money raising machine that I know you can be.

But that's not all you do.

Most people have such a hard time asking for money that if they do eventually squeak out the ask and get a "No," they want to run away and hide and never show their face around that person again.

But that's the opposite of what you should do.

See, for me, when raising money a "No" doesn't mean "No," it means, "Not now."

Unless someone absolutely says, "Ken, I don't want to invest in this show ever, please never talk to me about it again, or even mention it to me or I will punch you in the face," I will 100% ask that person for money again. Maybe even more than once. I've had someone say no to me three times and then gotten a yes on the fourth ask!

Like I talk about in *Raise It*, raising money is sales. And sales is marketing. An old school marketing adage says that it takes 7 impressions before someone makes a purchase from you. So if you expect someone to say yes to your request for a several thousand dollar "purchase" with your first ask, you're smoking something that



used to only be legal in Colorado. Would you buy a car the first time into the showroom? Or a house on your first visit? How can you expect an Investor to write a check when they first hear about your show?

So your SECOND "to do" when someone says no is to put them on a "To Offer Again" list. But when do you make that second ask? Ahhh, now here's the important part. You can't just ask in a few days or in a week, or at some arbitrary time. I only ask a second, third or fourth time when I have new information. Perhaps a new cast member has signed on. Or perhaps we've booked our theater. Or perhaps we've had some cool new marketing partnership, etc. You get the idea. I use that information to demonstrate to the investing lead that the product is getting more valuable, and therefore decreasing the risk.

And after all that, I'll usually go out to every single person who has said no (yeah, even if someone said they'd punch me in the face if I asked again), for a "last call" before I close up the financing.

Getting a "No" doesn't mean the end of the process for asking for money. In fact, it's just the beginning.

So go out there . . . go get a bunch of No's. It could be the quickest way you get to Yes.

OVERHEARD IN SHUBERT ALLEY

Here are the rumors people are whispering about these days . . .

- Have you heard that *Hairspray* will be the next show produced on television by NBC? Well, word is a revival will open on Broadway soon after, less than ten years after the original closed.
- I heard that when Jesse Tyler Ferguson "went up" at the invited dress of his new show *Fully Committed*, he broke the fourth wall and said to the audience, "It's the dress rehearsal. I'm allowed to have one *Hughie* water cooler moment." Ouch. True. But ouch. (The audience went crazy.)
- I hear that a certain musical about a sassy young lady will finally be growing up and leaving town in September. And the show to take that flagship theater's place will have us all saying "Hello, Bette!"



Got a rumor?

Send 'em to me at ken@theproducersperspective.com.

ON THE BLOG

Just in case you missed it, here were the top read articles on the blog this month:

- What I learned from seeing a High School production of *Les Misérables*.
- TREND ALERT: What these 3, nope, FOUR, shows mean for Broadway's future.
- The ONE thing the Academy Awards MUST learn from the Tony Awards.

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