

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND

PRO

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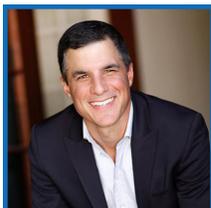
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WELCOME

Well, Pros, it's officially fall.

And while we say goodbye to the warm summer temperatures (and all the tourists who populate Times Square), we say hello to the new Broadway season as a whole bunch of new shows start previews.

I love the preview process. And if you can find a way, I'm a big advocate of trying to see shows in previews (especially those written by writers you respect), and then coming back again after the shows open to see what changes. As a Tony Voter, I'm not supposed to see the shows before they open, but when I was in college . . . boy oh boy did I do this a lot, and I learned a ton. I much preferred seeing the show once in previews and once after opening from the balcony both times, rather than pay the same amount of money to sit in the orchestra just one time.

The preview process is one of the most difficult for all members of the team . . . Directors, Writers, Actors, Producers, Ushers . . . everybody! And it's so educational to see what those talented people do based on the audience's response, their own gut, surveys if they are doing them (and they should be), and more. I sometimes play a game called, "What would I change?" I even used to take notes and see how many times I was "write!" :-)

So this October, try something different . . . pick a show that you were going to see and go once during previews and once after opening.

It'll prep you for when you're on Broadway and in previews with your own show.

Happy fall!

Best,

Ken

UPCOMING EVENTS

10/5 @ 7 PM: Monthly Webinar: How to Market Your Show with no Money

10/25 @ 7 PM: Meet an Agent Workshop with Ally Shuster

As a member of Pro, you're automatically registered for the Monthly Webinar!

To sign up for other seminars or events, visit www.theproducerperspectivepro.com.

LAST MONTH AT THE BROADWAY BOX OFFICE: THAT SUCKING SOUND IS SEPTEMBER.

September sucks. It just does.

The only good news is that this year, it didn't suck as badly as previous years!

September is notoriously one of the worst months of the year for Broadway shows, as it is for so many industries out there. (Want a restaurant reservation or a cheap vacation? September's the time to get it.)

Both Broadway and Off Broadway shows have started a few promotions which help inject a little juice into the grosses (Broadway Week and 20at20, respectively). Those grosses and the fact that the Jewish holidays fall in October this year, helped give us a lift when you compare the grosses to last year at this time.



Broadway probably would have done a bit better, if it wasn't for that Superbowl in September we had called The Presidential Debate. Whenever there's that kind of international spotlight on an event, it's hard to get a consumer's mind on anything else.

Usually October picks up, especially because we get Columbus Day weekend right in the middle of it. And while I do expect things to rebound, with the aforementioned holidays and two more debates (plus the VP debate), I'm not too bullish on the fall on Broadway.

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

This September's Broadway Gross: \$110,680,470.48
Last year's September Broadway Gross: \$106,965,375.00
Increase/Decrease: +3.47%

This September's Broadway Attendance: 1,091,112
Last year's September Broadway Attendance: 1,052,891
Increase/Decrease: +3.63%

*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: LIKE ME, FRIEND ME, FOLLOW ME

We all know that social media marketing is an important-essential part of any marketing campaign. But which platform(s) should you use? It seems like every day there's a new latest-and-greatest social media outlet getting promoted. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat . . . what's next?

People tend to focus on social media because they are "free" and also because it's easy to execute and easy to see results. All you need is a quick quippy post and boom, it's out in the world. It gets liked, you get followed . . . but do you sell tickets?

And by the way, social media marketing isn't free.

It costs a lot . . . in time.

And time is the most valuable resource of all.

So when you're designing your social media marketing for your show or for yourself, you have to decide how much time you're going to focus on all of these options. Should you be spending time on every single platform? Is that what's going to sell you the most tickets? And how much time will this take away from your other marketing initiatives?

I find that most social media campaigns are spread too wide . . . over way too many platforms. Nowhere is that more evident than when I get an email blast or a piece of promotional material from a show (or any product for that matter) and at the end there are multiple social media calls to action.



Friend me on Facebook
Follow me on Twitter
Subscribe to my YouTube Channel
Follow me on Instagram
Follow me on Snapchat

I mean, with all those choices, you know which one the consumer is going to make? NONE.

Conventional marketing wisdom says that advertising should have one call to action . . . so why are we promoting 17 different social networks and distracting the consumer from the main message in the material?

That's why I advocate concentrating your social media marketing on one platform. It's ok to have the other platforms, but let them be "franchises" of your main account. Imagine this at the end of a piece of promotional material:

Friend me on Facebook

Now that has a chance of getting clicked, right?

Which platform do you choose? Well, that depends on you and your show and what audience you're trying to reach (here's a tip - the newer networks tend to skew younger).

But whichever you choose, overweight your efforts on one network, and you'll see much greater rewards.

Or, you can do what I do.

I focus on one . . .

WRITING FOR PROS: WHY YOU SHOULD GET ACTORS INVOLVED IN YOUR SHOW EARLY

One of the quickest ways I can tell if a writer is inexperienced is if all the dialogue for all of the characters sound the same.

It's hard for a writer to establish a unique "voice" for a character if that character is not anything like him or her. And often, the default for the new writer is to just write dialogue that sounds like how he or she would say it.

But of course, unique word choice, pattern of speech, etc. can be what defines a character, which is why it's essential all of your characters speak differently.



That ain't easy.

Some writers I know like to do research to help find their character's voice. I know one writer who was writing a play about a prostitute, so she hung out on a street corner known for solicitation, and listened to the real characters that came and went. Another sat in a police department for 8 hours straight just to soak up "cop chatter."

One of the ways that I find the voice of characters is to invite actors into the process early. And here's the hot tip: I give them the script . . . but without punctuation . . . without ellipses . . . no dashes . . . not even capital letters. I don't want them to have any notion of where the emphasis should be. This forces them to make choices about the character on how they would speak. I let them add their unique voice to the character, which is guaranteed to be different than mine.

And when I'm really stuck, I'll have the actors improvise a scene to see how they speak when they are in the moment, and not confined to any idea of how the scene will resolve. You know, like real life! This helps ensure that I'm not inserting only my vocabulary into the character's vocabulary.

Many folks think that actors were meant to just say lines. But if you invite them into your process early enough,

they'll help you make those lines sound like they are being uttered for the very first time.

And isn't that what plays are supposed to sound like?

UPDATES FROM PROS

Here is what your fellow Pros are up to:

- Bridget Dennin's new play *Shades of Blue* will make its NYC debut in the Midtown International Theatre Festival in November.
- Actress Lauren Santana just landed a manager and agent in Los Angeles.
- Todd Allan's new musical *Love and War* will have a reading in NYC directed by Broadway vet Danny Goldstein.

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:

- Lynne Meadow - Artistic Director of Manhattan Theatre Club
- Bess Wohl - Drama Desk Special Award Winning Playwright
- Joe DiPietro - Author of Tony Award Winning Musicals
- Randy Weiner - Playwright and Creator of *The Donkey Show*
- Beowulf Boritt - Tony Award Winning Set Designer

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



PRO QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Entrepreneurship is living a few years of your life like most people won't, so that you can spend the rest of your life like most people can't."

-Anonymous

RAISING MONEY FOR PROS: THE CHECK IS IN THE MAIL BANK!

There's nothing like getting a "yes" from someone when you ask them for money. Oh, it feels so sweet, am I right? Raising money is hard, so when someone says they're in, it's a cause for celebration.

Heck, when I was raising that \$5 million bucks for *Godspell* from hundreds of different investors, I played Miley Cyrus' "Party in the USA" every time someone said yes.

Yep, when someone says yes, it's time to party.

Or is it?

You should be proud of what you've done when someone agrees to write a check for your project. It shows respect for how you've sold it. It shows respect for your project. And most importantly, it shows respect for you.

But a yes isn't the same thing as getting the check.

Then, and only then, is the investment secure.

I've seen too many beginning money raisers come up short on their raise because they failed to account for the inevitable few folks that drop out of an investment after they've said yes. There is always attrition. Of course, it's your job to try and prevent it (getting documents signed quickly, making it easy for the investor to understand the execution instructions, etc.), but without a doubt you'll lose someone on every project you do. It just happens.

What do you do to prevent coming up short?

Over raise. Yep, that's right. You heard me. If the raise is \$5,000,000, I've got asks out for a lot more than that. Since raising money for the theater is such a risky endeavor, it's rare to have greater than a 10% conversion rate when asking



people for money. So, if you put out asks for \$5,500,000, odds are you'll land at the \$5mm.

Many first timers will only ask for money until they get to \$5mm in offers. And they're shocked when they raise \$4.5mm. (And often these investor reversals of "yes" to "no" come late in the process, so you have limited time to make it up.)

What do I do if I do go over?

Simple, my raise turns into a first come, first served scenario. The investor that gets back to me the quickest, wins. And if I've still got too much money coming? It doesn't take much to talk an amount down from an investor. Since it's so high risk, most investors are ok with reducing a bit.

Never count an investment as 101% in until the check is in your bank and the paperwork is in your files. If you continue to be aggressive well after you have commitments for your capitalization, you'll always end up with a nice cushion.

OVERHEARD IN SHUBERT ALLEY

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

- You know that bunch of temporary shopping booths in that parking lot on 46th and 8th? Their days are numbered. Plans are being drawn for a new Broadway Theater on that spot.
- There are three new attractions set to land in Times Square in the next 12 months . . . and none of them are Broadway shows. The NFL, Nat Geo, and another are all setting up shop with "experiences" . . . will they take away Broadway audiences?
- You know what did take away Broadway audiences? This summer's Radio City New York Spectacular. And some high-powered producers weren't too happy about it . . . especially because Radio City was given permission to sell tickets at the TKTS booth!



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 last month:

- Why There Could be a Drought of New Material in Theaters Around the Country, Nope, World.
- When was the Last Time THIS Happened?
- Back to School and a Bloggin' Change!

Make sure you don't miss a single blog. Subscribe today or download the iPhone or Android app.

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