

5 WAYS TO GET YOUR OFF BROADWAY SHOW TO WORK



OFF BROADWAY IS DEAD.

I've heard that from so many people in the last five years (irony in my use of that phrase, intended).

And the good news is that it's not dead.

Is it sick?

You betcha.

And to extend that metaphor, if you had someone that you cared about, someone that you loved, that was sick, maybe even dying, would you just take the standard prescribed care if your loved one wasn't getting any better? Or would you try every experimental drug and treatment to try and bring your friend back to his or her former self?

That's what I thought.

Here's how you can overcome those challenges with your show.



HERE ARE 5 TIPS
ON HOW AND
WHY TO PRODUCE
YOUR SHOW
OFF BROADWAY.

CHALLENGE THE ART FORM

There's no question
it's harder to produce
Off Broadway than it was
when I started.

But there's no
question that's why it is more
important than ever we all
continue to do it. It's a place to
challenge the art form.

It's a more accessible place to
produce.

Now we just need to find an
easier way to make a profit.

But I have
confidence in you.

1 UNIQUE ISN'T A CITY IN CHINA

In today's Off Broadway climate, your show has to be so unique that it can't just stand out from the crowd. It has to JUMP out from the crowd and say, "Look at me! I'm not like any of the others!" Different gets attention from ticket buyers and even more importantly, from the press. Remember that full page article/review that *Sleep No More* got from the *New York Times* when it arrived in town? Or take a look at *Blue Man Group* or *Stomp* or even *Tony n' Tina's Wedding* – before their debut no one had seen anything like it.

MAKE IT A TALKABLE TOPIC

2

Your Off Broadway show isn't going to be able to afford television commercials, or other major media buys, which is why it needs to be about or involve "talkable topics." You have to be able to get attention from the press. You have to let them advertise it for you. Maybe that's in the subject matter or maybe it's because it includes a new form of storytelling (*My First Time* was the first example of Theater 2.0 and got an article in *The Times* as a result – and people thought it was a review – and it sold more tickets than the review).



3 IT'S A SPRINGBOARD

It is rare that a show sits down for a long and profitable life Off Broadway in today's times, which is why you need to have other potential paths for you to follow if you aren't one of the lucky who sustains an Off Broadway run. Could you go to Broadway? Are you branding for a tour? For subsidiary rights? Doesn't matter to me, but it better matter to you. Investors are savvy about how hard it is to recoup Off Broadway, so when you're raising money, it's essential to provide them with your potential off of Off Broadway.

4 WHO CARES IF THEY CALL YOU CHEAP

When an agent wants more money from me for doing an Off Broadway show, you know what I say? "Name one Off Broadway show that has recouped its investment in the last 20 years." They usually can't. Why? There are only a handful (and yeah, I'm proud of the fact that three of them are mine). If you're producing an Off Broadway show in today's times, you've got to, got to, GOT TO keep your operating expenses as low as possible. Remember, you're not producing a mini Broadway show. You're producing an Off Broadway show and all of the players on the team have to sign up for that experience. Otherwise, they shouldn't do it. Some of your expenses will be out of your control (advertising, union rates, etc.) which is why you have to control the others. A recent stat showed that 89% of all commercial Off Broadway shows close within six months. Get past the six months and you've got a great chance at success. Remember, production budgets don't close Off Broadway shows.

Operating budgets do. (And don't be afraid to negotiate with your theater or anyone else on your team – you never know what they might do.)



5 ONE PERSON CAN AND MUST DO THE JOB OF TWO

My first Off Broadway show was *The Awesome 80s Prom* and I was the Producer, the GM, the Groups Sales Agent, the Box Office Guy, oh and I wrote and directed it too. Broadway shows have big staffs, but Off Broadway shows have to be lean and mean. You can't afford super big teams. Yes, you will need help, but keep your staff lean. To save money, yes, but also to save time. See, Broadway shows are like giant steam ships. You put 'em in the water, and they are off . . . and they hit the iceberg or they don't, and there's not much you can do to turn 'em once the audience has chimed in. Off Broadway shows are like rowboats. The good news is that one guy with a paddle can turn 'em. The bad news is they sink a heck of a lot faster. That's why you can't have big teams that take longer to make decisions. Slim down the fat, and make your team lean.