

Turnstiles: Marketing for Event Managers

By Sean King

#Whippersnappers Too: Tales from the Frontlines of Multi-Generational Marketing; Reaching Millennials, Boomers and Zombies?!

Thanks to the fine folks at IFEA, I was able to present a seminar at the most recent Annual Conference in Pittsburgh entitled #Whippersnappers: Marketing Community Events in Today's Multi-Generational World.

In the course of the presentation and subsequent post-talk follow-up, I was asked to provide additional real world examples of multi-generational marketing. It's my pleasure to share three brief examples from my recent work on a niche marching music event, a summer music and food festival in a medium-sized city and America's oldest Halloween parade in that same city. All three of these events did not have huge media budgets, but rather insisted that we be creative to reach millennials, boomers, zombies and more.

For this edition of *Turnstiles*, we're going to take a slightly different approach and provide easily digestible nuggets of information rather than a traditional narrative. I'm hoping this type of format works for you and can serve as a blueprint to break down the different audience segments you reach and allow you to analyze the methods you use to reach your audience.

Event #1

Drum Corps: An American Tradition – Philadelphia, 4th of July and a tradition-rich, ticketed drum and bugle corps competition. Perfect mix right? Not exactly. Far too many summer, holiday events happening in the City of Brotherly Love meant we needed to focus specifically on our core audience and the subsets of that audience through marketing, promotion and media.

Segment: Alumni

- **Generation:** Early boomer
- **Key Approach:** Concentrate on the social connections and powerful memories of their youth. The first step was to identify networkers and leaders from years gone

by. The creation of a pre-event Alumni Party allowed for attendees to rekindle old friendships and meet new friends who had participation in common.

- **Media:** Facebook and personal email
- **Takeaway:** Even after 40+ years, the basics of high school cliques are still at work and can be used to help drive attendance at any event by using social connections and bringing folks together for their own enjoyment in the backdrop of your event.

Segment: High School Students

- **Generation:** Young Millennials
- **Key Approach:** Promotion of a Text 2 Win contest for tickets to the event. 30,000 text votes were cast for an entire high school band to win free admission to the event. The investment of the free tickets was more than offset by the word-of-mouth benefits gained throughout the teenage universe we were trying to reach.
- **Media:** Text messaging
- **Takeaway:** 95%+ open rates on text messages is too irresistible to avoid. For those who want to reach the teen demographic, research is needed to find a cost-effective solution to outbound text messaging and in-bound tracking, but once you have your plan in place, the results are definitely worth the investment.

Segment: Families

- **Generation:** Generation X
- **Key Approach:** Promotion via Mommy blogs to reach mothers and decision makers within families to arrange an outing to the event.

- **Media:** Blogs
- **Takeaway:** Every little bit counts and the extra few hundred tickets sold and interest generated through this influential channel helps create momentum towards our ultimate goal. If you are promoting a niche event, there's a good chance a subsection of a larger audience will have interest in attending your event. However, don't spend too many resources on every small segments, make sure your investment will provide adequate ROI.

Event #2

Blues, Brews and Barbeque – The City of Allentown, PA (pop. 100,000), in cooperation with its Main Street Chamber of Commerce program, organizes and promotes a one-day free music and food festival each June for the community at large. After experiencing incremental growth over its first several years, the past few years have seen significant increases in attendance by incorporating a mix of social and traditional media.

By breaking the audience segments into "blues," "brews" and "barbeques," organizers have been able to target three demographics of music fans, craft beer lovers and foodies. While these are not specific generational segments, the tactics used to reach them are similar, and the demographics of the generations align themselves in unique ways.

Segment: Blues

- **Generation:** Late Millennials and Young Gen Y-ers
- **Key Approach:** Reaching out to the performing group's fan bases and

entertainment publications to promote performances by regional music acts that headline the music festival.

- **Media:** Music/entertainment pubs and websites, Facebook and Twitter.
- **Takeaway:** Music is the ultimate connector and tapping into the loyal fan bases of popular blues bands through Facebook and Twitter helps drive attendance. Seeing the festival as a sum of its parts, breaking down several channels to reach each audience's affinity allows you to benefit from their attendance at your festival and the additional revenue gained from food and beverage sales, vendor fees and sponsorships.

Segment: Brews

- **Generation:** Millennials and craft beer fans
- **Key Approach:** By focusing on the brew aspect of the festival, the typical "good time" crowd who enjoys a large festival or party scene will put you in their calendar when the main focus is on the brews. Additionally, a niche market of craft beer fans will be sure to attend solely because of their passion for beer.
- **Media:** Social and regional food/beer/wine periodicals, websites
- **Takeaway:** Never underestimate the draw of a good time in a festival atmosphere. Momentum means everything and if you've had success drawing large crowds in the past, you should find success building on the shared experience. However, the shared experience transfers similarly to those who may share the same passion, in this case beer, and the opportunity to share a communal experience allows fans to meet others with the same passion.

Segment: Barbeque

- **Generation:** Generation X and Boomers
- **Key Approach:** Reaching out to foodies and families. Using the local and regional blogs and tapping in to the social networks of food fans, particularly barbeque, provides for ways to promote the event and spur people on to attend the event with friends and family.
- **Media:** Social media and niche blogs (food) and supplemented by food pages in traditional media
- **Takeaway:** Similar to the craft brew messaging, the foodie message allows attendees to take part in an event based on a passion of theirs and enjoy it with new and old friends alike. In recent years, chefs and eating establishments have become like musicians in cultivating a following, and if promoted correctly, more and more people will line up for the food at your event.

Event #3

America's Oldest Halloween Parade
– Founded in 1905 when the Marine Band marched through the streets of Allentown, PA on their way to a rehearsal and young children fell in line wearing costumes, the oldest Halloween Parade in America had fallen on hard times recently. The number of participants, and in turn, the number of people attending the parade had been dwindling recently, as had been the overall entertainment quality of the parade.

In order to reposition the Parade, several programmatic decisions were made to improve the product including pre-and post-parade events, expanded marching band invitations and an emphasis on contemporary dance ensembles. Decisions were also made to increase the marketing and promotional component of the community parade to restore its glory as a signature event for Band City USA.

Segment: Zombies

- **Generation:** Millennials
- **Key Approach:** Connecting with a high profile regional amusement park, Halloween party stores and attractions. Additionally, tapping into the current infatuation by young people about all things 'zombie', it was a natural tie to lead the parade with a Zombie Walk at the perfect time of year.
- **Media:** Strategic partnerships, Facebook
- **Takeaway:** Tying into an element that is currently in the mainstream public conscience is always a good start. When it can be thematically tied into your event and leveraged for additional participation and entertainment value, it is a win-win for everyone. Explore all opportunities, no matter how far-fetched, in order to engage the different generational and audience segments.

Segment: Young Families

- **Generation:** Generation X and Y
- **Key Approach:** Partnering with the main radio stations in the area for a widespread pro bono advertising campaign led families to line the streets for the parade. Enlisting the morning team of the most popular Top 40 station created an avenue to reach the largest amount of young families, specifically those with children of trick-or-treat age.
- **Media:** Traditional mass media
- **Takeaway:** Thanks to Sirius, Spotify and the many options for listening to your music, local Top 40 radio still provides an unequalled way to reach the mass audience for an event attended by the general public. From the media's point of view, aligning themselves with a community event is one of the few advantages they have over pro-

grammed, web-based music delivery. Take advantage of it!

Segment: Multi-cultural, inner city families

- **Generation:** Young Latinos and their families
- **Key Approach:** Incorporating popular, local hip-hop dance groups, programming has been able to drive participation and attendance.
- **Media:** Local Hispanic media, grass roots word of mouth
- **Takeaway:** By appealing to the substantial Latino population in Allentown, the audience by this segment at the parade has grown proportionally. Hip-hop dance companies have become a popular feature in the community and by tapping into their families and members of their loyal following, spectators have been driven by the opportunities to see their favorites participate in the parade.

As you can see through these brief examples, there are as many solutions as there are members of your audience. In the end, we are always to be looking at creating the most effective way for us to deliver what seems to be a personalized message, although it is done in a 'mass media' way through all of the channels we have available.

The paradoxical phrase of 'individual mass marketing' could not be truer in today's media and marketing world. We wish you well on finding ways for you to solve your challenges on the way to sold-out, standing room only events and great experiences for your audiences!

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts or feedback, please email me at sking.aspire@gmail.com or visit www.artsarketingblog.com. I'm happy to speak with you about the challenges you face reaching a multi-generational audience and devise some solutions to help you. Also, I'll be posting additional trials and tribulations from my experiences in order to rid the world once and for all of inefficient and ineffective marketing.

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