



## **MAXIMISING PROMOTIONS AND PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES IN DANCE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This is a guideline for maximising your marketing activities – particularly promotions and publicity opportunities – and complements the DANZ resource “Marketing Tips for Dance”.

Due to tight production costs you will be looking at ways to get the most from your money and particularly the budget set aside for marketing and promotional purposes. While some publicity or editorial media coverage can be obtained for “free”, it is important to understand that this type of publicity is not guaranteed as it depends on external factors beyond your control whether or not it runs. In contrast, advertising (adverts, posters, flyers) is a more assured form of publicity because you pay for the placements – whether ads in the newspaper or posters pasted up around town. Therefore, when planning your marketing activities try to have a balance and mix of both paid and free activities so that you know you are covered.

Your overall marketing plan and activity will be shaped by your available resources – your know-how in this area, your time and commitment to put to it, and how much money you have to spend. Ideally, it should include a mix of advertising, media publicity and communications, promotions and social media.

Not every event is the same, of course. There will always be some special requirements peculiar to every event. This guide, therefore, provides a generalist approach to marketing with ideas to help you maximise your time, budget and activities in this area, so you can concentrate on other aspects of getting your event together. Any specifics in regard to your event that you would like to discuss, can be done so with a mentor via DANZ.

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## **KEYS TO SUCCESS**

Here are the keys towards helping ensure success with your marketing, promotions and publicity activities:

### **Resources**

Evaluate what resources (human and physical - such as time, financial) you have available that you can utilise in your marketing, promotions and publicity. Be creative about your resources – brainstorm and evaluate what is realistic and achievable.

It may be a good story angle about the show you are staging. Or maybe some amazing images or a fun promotional event that gets arts journalists along and generates some added publicity. Consider how much budget you can set aside towards marketing, and how much time you have available to put towards managing your marketing activities. For example, it is no good embarking on a Twitter campaign if you cannot keep up with sending out new and engaging tweets at regular intervals to followers.

### **Capability**

Be honest about your capabilities - how much can you physically manage and what level of know-how you have to implement your marketing activity.

If you are managing the production or technical side of your show, chances are you will want to engage some assistance to manage the marketing aspects. If there's a particular area of activity, such as media publicity or a promotional event, that you want to do but don't know how, then speak to someone who is experienced in this area for ideas or help. Find a mentor. Ask another performing artist to help you with your marketing and in return you help them on their project.

### **Planning**

By planning well ahead (up to six months out at least) you will have a roadmap for the rollout of all your marketing, promotions and publicity activities. This is important so you can see when activities will take place and complement each other.

Keeping your plan simple and easy to implement is a good idea. You may want to be on the television news, but the time involved in achieving this may not justify the three minutes of coverage it yields. However, a story in the daily newspaper will take less time and still reach a wide audience. Based on your available resources and capability choose a smaller number of activities that reach your target audience and do them well.

## **Timing**

As part of your plan, timing is important to the rollout of all your marketing activities. Too early and it gets lost, too late and you might miss out on audiences.

Think of three stages – pre-publicity, impending opening and post-show marketing and publicity.

Think about the type of activities and when you can expect to get maximum benefit from each. For example, if you can only afford one round of poster distribution then schedule this at time when other activity is quiet, to maximise publicity coverage. Media coverage is likely to run in the month and immediate week leading up to your opening, so planning a poster and flyer distribution before then spins out the time your material is in the marketplace. After the event, utilise reviews and audience feedback to promote future performances.

## **Targeted Activity**

It pays to think about (and know) who the audience is for your event. Understanding what media or places these people respond to or attend will mean you can target your marketing activities through these channels to reach these people directly, and this will help use your precious resources wisely.

## **Budget**

Allow some budget for marketing and promotions. Think strategically and cleverly about how you can maximise the money you have by cross-activity – such as staging a preview event which might attract your target audience, the media and creates a publicity opportunity.

## MAXIMISING YOUR TOOLKIT

Here's a basic definition and breakdown of various marketing tools and categories to help you decide on what will be best and most effective for your circumstances. More in depth details about each category follows.

- **Advertising** – most costly as it includes paid artwork and placement of advertisements in print, radio, television and online.
- **Printed Materials (posters, flyers, postcards and banners)** – cost effective form of advertising your event and can be used for displays as well as through various distribution channels.
- **Media publicity** – generally “free” and involves News and Features editorial coverage and event listings, across a range of media.
- **Promotions** – some cost involved depending on your event and how it lends itself to promotional activity. Might include a teaser campaign, competitions, ticket or merchandise giveaways, retail promotions and preview performance opportunities.
- **Online, E-marketing, Social Media** – can be done cost effectively, but needs to be targeted and managed.
- **Events and Leveraging** – this includes special events such as networking opportunities, launch or preview events. There can be opportunities to leverage off sponsors or funders who have networks that may be useful.

## ADVERTISING

Advertising can be an expensive way to promote your event as it involves paying for artwork to be created to a set of specifications and the placement of the finished ads.

The best way to maximise your ad spend is to ensure you target the right media for your target audience. If you can secure some editorial coverage to complement your advertising, then that maximises your spend even further.

If you have the budget to advertise then it could be worthwhile speaking to a media buyer first to help you target the right media placements for your budget and your target audience. Alternatively, you can identify the media that your target audience would respond to, and negotiate special rates with the media's advertising sales team directly.

Print (newspaper, magazine), billboard, radio, television and online advertising can be very costly, but you may be able to negotiate a good deal with some individual suppliers incorporating a ticket giveaway and/or some editorial coverage. Also think strategically about advertising in a publication that sits around for a week in cafes, versus a daily newspaper that becomes tomorrow's recycling.

The glossier the media, the more expensive the advertising!

Consider:

**A single print advertisement** with an eye-catching image, event title and essential information – date, time, place, bookings website. Also do not forget sponsor or funder logos if applicable. If possible, try to afford full colour for maximum impact.

**Creating a print advertisement** so that it can be used for multiple performances or venues – simply change the date/time/venue details to suit.

**Utilising the artwork across other materials** – such as posters, flyers, e-advertisement. This ensures consistency and reinforces the image with the event in the mind of the consumer.

**Creating an emailable version of the advertisement** which can be easily sent out or forwarded. Ask your network to forward it to people they know who may be interested in your event. Offer a ticket giveaway promotion (be prepared to monitor it) to the first 30 respondents.

**Timing placements** so they run in advance of when your event takes place. If you have the budget, consider running ads in two phases – first burst 5-6 weeks out, and then 1 week out and during the week of your opening.

## **PRINTED MATERIALS (Posters, DL-flyers, Postcards, Banners etc)**

Posters, flyers and postcards can be a relatively cheap and cost-effective way to promote and advertise your event. There are upfront costs for artwork design and printing (the larger the volume, the cheaper the printing gets) with opportunities for mass reach through retail outlets, cafes and libraries, via displays (indoor and outdoor) or as part of a mailing (through funder or industry networks such as DANZ).

There's likely to be costs for **distribution** through an agent such as Phantom Billstickers. It can be worth doing this because it means your material is well spread. They will often do a deal for you on printing the posters and can advise on quantities to satisfy the rollout. If you decide to do distribution yourself be careful where you do drop-offs and ask permission to leave your materials – particularly at retail outlets. Some places will only take materials from official distribution agents and may bin any that are “unofficial”.

**Banners** can be cost-effective because you can often get multiple use out of them over time simply by wiping and cleaning information and applying new artwork at a later date. There is a one-off upfront cost to get a banner canvas made and then costs of artwork and application, and depending on site, hanging.

There are some well located banner placement sites around most cities, and it is worth checking with your local council about where free and paid sites are, and the availability and terms for accessing these sites. Most sites have to be booked well in advance and specify minimum banner standards. It is worth paying for quality in regards to banner materials (fabric, fasteners, ties) because depending on sturdiness and where it hangs in relation to potential damage from weather or vandalism, will impact on ability to recycle it in future. As most banners tend to be bulky, think about where you'd store it in between times, to minimise damage.

Consider:

**Maximising your ad spend on images and artwork** for posters, flyers or postcards (and banners), so that it is consistent and complements any print advertisements you might be doing.

**Use a professional designer to do the artwork.** A designer should provide a professional-looking product and supply the material in the right file formats ready for printing. They should know about layout that is clear and communicates what your event is about visually and with key information, in about 20 seconds of viewing. If cost is an issue, approach a graphic design student to help as a project. Be clear about briefing them with what information needs to be on the materials.

**Use one strong image**, over multiple images. Include key information about where and when your event is happening, how to get tickets, and a reference for more info such as a website. (It is easy to miss some details so get someone not involved with your event to double-check that all the information is there and that it is clear).

**Use black and white or two or three colours** rather than full colour, if cost is an issue. With a good design a couple of colours can have as much impact as full colour.

**Use a DL-sized flyer as an A4 poster** if budget is very tight. This can display the show image and key information on one side, and fuller blurb about the show on the reverse. This can be folded into a flyer ready for mailing or left flat at A4 size for indoor poster display. (Note: DL size simply means an A4 page folded into three, landscape – so you end up with three panels on each side. The name refers to the DL sized envelopes that fit this size of flyer perfectly ready for mailing!)

**Digital printing** is a cheaper option and very cost-effective for small print runs than the traditional offset printing methods (that is, through a printer) which are usually geared towards larger print runs, making smaller jobs more expensive. Be mindful of the quality of the finished product from digital printing as depending on where its printed, it can end up looking blurry or “cheap”. This may also depend on the design and colours used on the material. Ask for samples of previous print jobs to give you an idea of the quality.

**Print posters on inexpensive paper stock**, particularly for outdoor paste-ups. You may be able to supply the poster artwork to your local distribution agent (such as Phantom Billstickers) who can run off the posters for you as part of their deal to do the paste-up.

**Print flyers or postcards on high quality paper stock.** The visual look of the flyer coupled with the feel of a heavier paper weight says a lot about the quality of your event. Flyers and postcards also have a better chance of still looking good sitting in display stands or counter tops, or upon arrival through the mail.

**Two rollouts of poster and flyer distribution** – one at six weeks out from your opening, and a second wave about a week to 10 days out. If you cannot stretch to two rollouts, go for a single blitz about four to five weeks out.

**Utilise postcards by mailing them out** to contacts or giving a pile to funders/sponsors for use. This also promotes their association with your event.

**Ask sponsors or funders** if they would be prepared to include your flyer in any mail outs to their networks that they may be doing. This is usually free of charge and can help them promote their association with you as well. Just remember that you will need to ensure you have sufficient flyers in stock to accommodate this.

## **MEDIA PUBLICITY**

This is generally regarded as “free” editorial coverage in print (newspaper, magazine), radio, television and online channels. It includes News and Features stories, as well as event listings.

While editorial coverage is “free”, organising media publicity will involve your (or someone else’s) time to prepare materials for use by the media well in advance. It will also involve you chasing up your approaches, arranging and doing interviews - which are most likely to take place in the few weeks leading up to, and during the week itself, of your event. Bear in mind that this is likely to be a stressful time for you so by being targeted about which media you want to speak with to maximise publicity coverage, will also mean that you are not wasting your time on interviews that have minimal impact.

If in doubt, don’t do an approach or commit to an interview that you can’t fulfil. It is not good practice to pull an interview – particularly at the last minute when a journalist has already committed to and scheduled your story. They will remember you for this!

Consider:

**Ensuring your messages are clear, simple and consistent** across all materials you produce. Ideally, have 3 key messages that you want to get across about your event and keep pushing those at every media opportunity.

**Having a short (100-200 word) blurb about your event**, including date/time/venue and where tickets are available. This can be sent to event listings publications and websites – such as Wotzon, North and South magazine, etc.

**Preparing a one to two-page media release.** Think about a short and catchy headline. In the first paragraph introduce the news angle and key information. (A journalist will not read beyond the first paragraph if it doesn’t tell them what the release is about).

**Keeping your language clear and factual.** Using emotional language, lots of adjectives or advertising speak is not appropriate for a media release and is unlikely to get take-up from a journalist.

**Pulling together other relevant background** about your company, choreographer and performers (such as bio notes). Compile this together with your media release into a single, emailable document – a media kit! This serves as background to your event, which can help a journalist with their angles and eventual coverage.

**Including images** that are both “arty” and if possible, “newsy”. Be careful that the images are high enough quality (resolution) to be reproduced at a good size, but not so large that the email is too large to send! It is worth paying a good photographer to shoot some images so that you can use them with the blurb for listings purposes and

with the media release. A news-style photo needs to have a “news” angle with it, so think beyond the artistic side of your event – such as a fashion angle – and send that out with a caption and short media release. Obviously send your images to print or online media, but also to other non-print media because a picture gives them an idea of the look and feel of your show that words may not describe.

**Sending your release out** by cutting and pasting it into the body of the email and then attach the full media kit and images. Follow up with a phone call a day or so after you’ve emailed this, to check it arrived and to arrange a time to discuss some coverage options.

**Compiling a distribution list of key media** including arts and lifestyle journalists that you intend to send material to. This takes a bit of time but you can find out who is who by ringing the media organisation, introducing yourself, asking for their email details and checking on the deadlines for material (very important!). Never leave a message and expect a return call – try them again later. Don’t ignore the weekly community newspapers and monthly magazines – these have longer shelf life than daily metropolitan newspapers but generally have longer lead times for material.

**Working out your angles in advance** so you can readily suggest a particular angle to particular media, as a way of hooking them in to potential coverage. Be open and flexible to a journalists own angles or interests. Think about both Features and News angles. A Features angle may be an interview with the choreographer or lead dancer based on the work and/or themselves. A News story is shorter, usually a secondary feature of your event and should include a captivating image.

**Thinking strategically about radio approaches.** For example, getting National Radio/Radio New Zealand coverage is harder to secure and likely to yield a shorter interview but covers a diverse, wide ranging listenership. However a longer interview on Radio Active or George FM for example, might reach your target audience more readily. Provide to interviewees a list of key messages that they take to the radio interview as a prompt. This should include dates and venues of performances. You will be surprised how you can “suddenly” forget the basic, but most important, information in the heat of the moment when on air!

**Offering “exclusives” to obtain coverage.** If you do this, stipulate a deadline for their decision to get back to you on whether to take it up. This is so that you can offer it elsewhere if they decide not to cover it. Once you’ve agreed an exclusive angle with a journalist, don’t go and offer the same angle to someone else - otherwise you run the risk of losing the coverage altogether from both media (not to mention the mistrust this creates).

**Using ticket giveaways as a “carrot” to help secure editorial coverage** - but before doing so think about who this media’s readership or listenership is (does it match your target market?) and the longevity of the promotion or publication (one week, one day or one hour?).

## **Stages of media publicity rollout:**

### **Pre-publicity – 4 to 6 months out**

- Prepare a plan that prioritises and marries up media with tailored angles that you have available. If this includes a strong enough angle for a national monthly magazine (such as North and South or Metro), speak to them about their interest in coverage. Ensure your talent is available to do the interview!
- Send the short blurb and images to event listings publications and online event sites.
- If you have time, a short media release previewing what's to come can also be sent out targeting national and local media.

### **Impending opening – 6 to 8 weeks out**

- Send your media kit and any images by email to key arts/lifestyle journalists.
- Follow up your email by calling key journalists about their interest in covering News or Features story angles.
- Be clear about what you can offer exclusively.
- This list is likely to be newspapers, weekly publications and radio features programmes (such as Arts on Sunday/Radio NZ) – rather than monthly magazines as deadlines will have passed for these.
- Organise invitations to any previews and/or to reviewers from key media outlets – get a guarantee that the previews/reviews will be scheduled to run in exchange for tickets.

### **Week to 10 days leading up to opening**

- Follow up, confirm and schedule media interviews. This can take a bit of time to organise and do so be mindful of how many media approaches and interviews you schedule in this period.
- Have interviewees lined up and briefed on what messages you want them to convey in their interview.
- Send information to television newsrooms – and be prepared to exhaustively follow-up your approach and set aside a chunk of time for filming a story. Offer either a dress rehearsal or preview filming opportunity as a way of easily maximising filming time.

### **Post opening night**

- Collate any early reviews and use these to help promote other performances via social media (both yours and others) or the venue(s) in which you are performing.

## PROMOTIONS

These can cost you your time and some budget depending on what your event lends itself to and what you decide you can manage. Whatever you decide, ensure a clever gimmick doesn't cause you bad publicity!

If you can't pull a promotion off well, reconsider whether it is worth doing at all. Be strategic about activity such as ticket giveaways, or utilizing your performers for performance opportunities. Ensure you maximize every opportunity to reach as wide an audience as possible with promotional activity.

Consider:

**A media “teaser campaign”** using a clever, engaging inexpensive gift that attracts attention with specific groups, such as arts journalists. Ensure it's got some relevance to your show otherwise the point and connection to the event, gets completely lost. This could be scheduled at around the same time that your media kits and information is going out or shortly thereafter.

**Tickets or show packages** are easy promotional giveaways through the media. They usually complement an interview or story on your event, or can be used as a straight advertising promotion in some publications. Be careful and discerning about where you place ticket giveaways, and treat the tickets like cash so you don't devalue them with an over-supply of freebies.

**Competitions run in newspapers, online or on radio.** Getting listeners to answer questions rather than simply ring or write in to win, helps promote interest around your particular event.

**Retail promotions** which may include a display, ticket giveaway and possibly a performance snippet if the retailer is open to this and has available space.

**Displays and performance opportunities** at public venues (such as libraries), malls or business clubs (such as your local Rotary). Most of these opportunities will be for free however you'll likely have to book them in well in advance.

**Tap into networks of social or business organisations that you may have an affiliation with.** You may consider an email competition promoting your event and ticket sales, or a performance preview to a sponsor or suppliers' staff as a way to create word of mouth buzz.

**Ask your existing loyal audience or followers to “bring a friend” or help promote the event for you.** This can easily be done via an ad-email that you can send out with details about the event, for forwarding on. Give your followers an incentive to bring others along – offer them a free ticket to your next show, for example.

## **E-MARKETING, ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

This area of e-marketing encompassing online and social media, can be a very cost-effective way of reaching both your target audience or a more general audience about your event. However, it does rely on you being able to keep up with the technology and supplying regular updates so that news is fresh and engaging. If you can't reliably work the social media or online community in marketing terms, then seek a professional to help you.

Consider:

**Sending out an email (with undisclosed recipient list!) to your network.** This is a simple thing to do and can reach a lot of people quickly. It can also be forwarded on, and you can ask sponsors/funders to send it to their networks – provided it acknowledges their support and looks professional. The email should carry basic information about your event including venue, dates, times, booking info, prices. You may want to offer a special “early bird” deal to your network of loyal followers via email. Keep it short and sweet – and preferably within the top of the screen to prevent readers having to scroll. Insert an image to give it a bit of colour – but ensure the image file size isn't too large so that it prevents receipt into in-boxes!

**Putting an “advertisement” line on your email address signature.** Another easy thing to do, and a way of keeping your event top of mind whenever people get an email from you. Simply have title, dates, venues, booking info.

**Tapping your own networks' and affiliated organisations'** (such as DANZ, Creative NZ or the Big Idea) social media or online tools to get information about your event out. You would need to supply them with something like an e-advertisement that is easy to release and unlikely to cause any issues for them.

**A Twitter campaign** – in show, after show, tweeting last-minute seats offer.

**Setting up a Facebook or other social media page for your event** – providing updates, engaging exchanges of ideas and conversation, creating a weekly blog or count-down to your event, uploading visual snippets of rehearsals or part of the behind the scenes activity.

## EVENTS

Staging promotional events can be a costly exercise, but if you can incorporate other benefits such as some media publicity as part of it, then it can reap rewards.

Putting on a promotional event doesn't have to be expensive, but it should in some way be relevant and tie with the theme of your show. It's also likely to include some form of hospitality – so food and beverage need to be considered. You can't expect people to turn up and not give them anything!

You may be lucky enough to have a special donor, sponsor or funder who is willing to host a preview event for you. This gives them an opportunity to cement their association with you as well as helping you promote the show.

Whether you are on your own or with another host, think carefully about what you want to achieve and how you are going to stage it. If you can't do it well, then reconsider if doing an event in the overall scheme of your marketing activities is really worth the time and effort. Will it help you to publicise your show and put “bums on seats”? Or is it just a free drink?

If you do go ahead, think strategically about its place in your overall marketing plan, timing, venue and guest list to maximize the opportunity.

Consider:

**Scheduling the event into your plan and activity calendar.** Think about doing it about 2-3 weeks out from your show to capture early media/news attention, get word of mouth going and generate some “buzz”. Avoid holding it in the week leading into your show – you'll be under too much pressure then to take advantage of it as a marketing opportunity.

**Staging a preview or a cast meet-and-greet** based around a relevant publicity angle. This does require a bit more thinking and money to make it worthwhile and to attract the guests you want, but themed well could create a positive publicity opportunity.

**The venue.** Cost will possibly play a part in venue selection however think about getting the right location for the event based on access, parking and time for people to get to/from the venue at a particular time of day. This will have an impact on attendances alongside the time of day you hold the event.

**The guest list includes** key arts media (they may or may not come, depending on the time of day and their interest generally), potential sponsors or donors, your current sponsors/donors, arts VIPs and venue management where you are performing. All these people should be able to assist you one way or the other with word of mouth, promotional activity.

**The time of day you hold an event.** This will impact on who can and can't attend. A breakfast or lunchtime event can yield quite a good attendance particularly from the business community – however it will mean an early start for you and the performers, An early evening drinks function can also work well – but be careful it doesn't drag on costing you a fortune all night. Early in the week is generally a better option for people than later in the week, too. Avoid long weekends and school holidays as well.

**Keeping it short and sweet.** An event of 1-2 hours should suffice. This will give ample time for arrival, short speeches, a performance snippet and networking.

**Having an order and run-sheet** so everyone knows what they are doing and when. This creates order and ensures the event goes smoothly – just like a show!

**Make it fun!** Include a quiz, a ticket giveaway or prize for a business card draw (this also enables you to collect people's details for your database). Include a short performance snippet (venue permitting) so people get a taste of what the show is about. Perhaps have the choreographer or designer give a short (very short) talk about their vision, what people can expect. If a sponsor or donor is hosting the event, they are likely to want to speak as well. Most importantly, pump those ticket sales.

## TOP TEN TIPS FOR MAXIMISING YOUR PROMOTIONS AND PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Plan** – well in advance, up to six months out from your event happening.
- **Capability and Resources** – be realistic about what you can do and commit to, where you have available resources, your level of know-how in implementing marketing activities, and what budget you can afford to maximise the opportunities.
- **Activity** – be clear about what activities you can do and manage within your resources (human and financial). Look at clever, inexpensive ways to maximise your spend, reach your target market and obtain good coverage.
- **Timing** – plan all activities across the period up to six months out. This will give you a roadmap which will keep you on track. Be prepared to review and tweak this at regular intervals. Look at the three stages of media publicity roll-out, and plan any other activities around that.
- **Budget** – ensure you have committed some budget to marketing. Don't rely on "free" publicity via the media to get you the coverage you want as there are innumerable external factors that can impact and influence this. Cover yourself by embracing some paid activities – such as posters and flyers.
- **Messages** – ensure these are clear and consistent across all your marketing tools.
- **Media** – tailor your angles and target your media approaches so that you have a better chance of reaching your target audience for your event. Be mindful of what you can manage – especially in the few weeks leading up to your event.
- **Materials** – ensure these are engaging, informative, concise and include images across all areas (advertising, media, online, social media).
- **Promotions** – make them fun and engaging and try to get some additional publicity out of these activities.
- **Networks** – utilise existing networks that you may have an association with. They may be willing and able to promote your event through their own channels – such as flyer mailings, emails, or even staging a promotional event for you.

## **Author Biography**

**Sahra Grinham, rhubarbPR**, is a public relations consultant based in Wellington. Her recent experience has focused on not-for-profit organisations mostly in the arts and health sectors. Her interests are in strategy, planning, relationship management, positioning and creative ideas within the spectrum of marketing toolkit - PR, communications, promotions, marketing, events and sponsorship. Sahra has worked in both the public and private sectors, as well as in the advertising and hospitality industries locally and abroad. Most recently she was involved in high profile communications and social marketing campaigns for a prominent New Zealand public sector organisation and with a leading arts organisation managing a significant sponsorship portfolio.

She has owned and operated two small businesses – a successful boutique catering business and currently, rhubarbPR – so has a good understanding of what it takes to maximise marketing opportunities. Sahra has served as a DANZ Board Director and is an active mentor and trainer on public relations, marketing and sponsorship development.