Rescheduled SPARK Event – "Theatre in the Digital Age"
Monday, March 9, 2009 at 7:00pm
At Amaryllis Theatre Company/VSA Arts of PA
The Playground @ The Adrienne, 2030 Sansom St., Philadelphia, PA

Notes taken by Cara Blouin, Office & Events Intern
for the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

I. Welcome remarks – Stephanie Kish, Director of Annual Giving, Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

A. *Alternative Spaces & Funding (Monday, April 6 @ 7pm)*
At the Prince Music Theater, 1412 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA
Rehearsal and performance space is at a premium in this town, so where do you go when everything is booked? AND what are some additional ways to fund this new endeavor? Join us as we peek into some alternative spaces and funding sources for the industrious theatre artists.

B. Spark Festival (June 2009)

II. Expert Panelists

A. *Laris Kreslins (Lime Projects)*
Email: laris@limeprojects.com
Twitter: @lkreslins
Web: http://www.limeprojects.com

- *Lime Projects* is a multi-faceted consulting and project management agency. Lime helps to plan and manage a fully-integrated marketing strategy that combines interactive and viral web technology with traditional ground-level tactics; to connect with people in ways that matter. Lime has helped clients conceive and manage award-winning campaigns that include: Research & Strategic Development, Project Planning Viral & Social Media Management, Game/Product Development, and Strategic Planning

B. Elle McComsey (Director of Web Marketing & Development, Alfred Angelo)

- Elle McComsey started her career in web marketing in New York City at the height of the Dotcom boom in 1999. She cut her teeth at iBeauty.com and moved on to work with well-known brands Calvin Klein and Clinique. After collecting loads of great makeup, Elle moved to publishing to launch Primedia's American Baby Magazine's website and online community. While at American Baby, Elle developed one of the strongest and most trafficked mom and mom-to-be communities on the web. With some great NYC experience under her belt, Elle was hired at Dansko Footwear as their Web

Queen. Her experience with women-focused products was key in launching their interactive and socially-aware marketing campaigns on the web. After Dansko, Elle signed on to Alfred Angelo as their Director of Web Marketing + Development.

C. *Colton Perry (Senior Vice President of Technology, Net Plus Marketing)*
Email: cp@netplusmarketing.com
Twitter: @coltonperry
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- Colton comes to NPM with a career's worth of brilliant web-based technological expertise in his pocket. He started his career at AutoTrader.com, moved on to work as the Web Architect at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and prior to joining NPM spent three years as the VP of Interactive Technology at Ogilvy. Colton has a strategist's eye for the Next Big Thing, combined with a deep understanding for the ways that new technologies can be pushed to exceed. At NPM, he leads the technology, web analytics, SEO, mobile marketing, email marketing, and social media practices. Colton is a big reason why NPM clients are not only among the first to use great new technologies, but also among the first to get smashing, measurable results from their innovations too.

III. Discussion with Panelists- Moderated by Michael Osinski, Producing Artistic Director, Flashpoint Theatre Company

A. What is the effectiveness of print media in a digital age? Is print still effective/necessary?
   1. Print can still be viable, but marketers should consider how to get the most for their money. It is difficult to track the return on your investment.
   2. The value of postcards should not be underestimated.
   3. Companies should make use of the pdf or jpg form of their postcards and flyers by making them available online and to others for posting.

B. Is it possible to effectively run your company without a web presence?
   1. Almost all panelists agree that a website is necessary in almost all cases.

C. What is the best free marketing tools?
   1. Video distribution - Use tubemogul.com to for wider, ad free distribution.
   2. Make use of **Google Docs** to keep information consistent between all people who are collaborating on a marketing project.
   3. Monitor your user reviews on sites such as yelp.com. **Google Reviews** encourage audience members to review your show online. These present the opportunity to follow up with those who have had negative experiences.
   4. Use **Google Reader** to follow how others are speaking about your work.
   5. **Twitter** can also be used to create relationships online.

D. Things to consider when beginning digital marketing

1. Companies should have a basic **Facebook** page, and a basic user review page. They can then be choosy about what aspects of digital marketing they want to focus on.
2. Letting your online presence slide has a negative impact on marketing, so only begin work with social media that you are prepared to keep up. Be careful about what the medium is saying about you.
3. Digital marketing is about relationships. Focus on using the technology to create communities.
4. Philadelphians should take advantage of the existing relationships in the community and use digital media to enhance them.
5. Integrate all of the places where you have an online presence and link that to your face-to-face community.

E. How long will Facebook be a viable marketing tool?

1. Facebook offers an older demographic, more features than social networking sites like MySpace.
    i. Facebook also allows you to tightly target your audience, to ask for help, and make those individuals a part of your community.
    ii. Facebook ads are inexpensive and can be highly targeted.
    iii. Facebook Pages allow you to track various usage rates – this function is not available currently for groups.
    iv. Linking to actors and encouraging conversation about productions on Facebook makes people feel included. Actors can use these links to market themselves
2. Marketers should be aware of digital rights on social networking sites to maintain control of their content.
3. Panelists recommend creating a page for your company or theater, but not for individual productions.
4. Ask audience members to join your Facebook page at the production, and actively ask for reviews.

F. How can online presence be used to bring audience in?

1. Avoid over-saturating targets with information about their group. Limit communication to two or three emails before and during the production.
2. Create a sense of urgency when asking people to buy tickets, including limited-time sales or limited sales of low price tickets.
3. Marketers can update Facebook and Twitter regularly without worrying about over-saturation.
4. Companies should strive to be seen as experts in their fields and as a source of information by spreading the word about other, similar companies and productions.
5. Create content that people will want to pass on to others
6. Optimize social media by making your content portable. Resources like Addthis.com, Sharethis.com, digg.com and live **RSS feeds** make it possible to share your content easily and some allow you to track how your information is being passed along.

IV. Q & A with the Audience

A. What is RSS, and how it can be used to make content portable?
    1. RSS allows users to subscribe to your content, meaning they'll see every update automatically.
B. What is the best way to put video on the web? Is a video podcast valuable for a theater?
    1. Flash video provides the best quality video for the web. QuickTime and MP4s are also good, but YouTube may be easier to post to and help keep costs low.
    2. Use tubemogul.com to make sure you are reaching your maximum audience.
    3. Include your website on all content so people can get back to the source.
    4. Panelists are skeptical about the return on investment of video podcasting. A better use of resources may be trying to market through existing podcasts.
    5. Trailers have become popular for theaters recently.
C. How can social networking groups expand to include non staff members and friends?
    1. Encourage all members to network and bring other people in.
    2. Look for useful partnerships (such as partnering with a charity and offering a large donation if they can help you sell out the house).
    3. Broadcast where you are by putting urls and links in every place that you have a presence, including in the theater and on programs.
    4. Reach out to other companies and become friends with them. Talk about others on the site and acknowledge when people in the network do something positive for you
D. What are the basic things that every company should have?
    1. Make sure you have the most complete information available before going out to people.
    2. Make sure you are thick skinned and ready to hear what people have to say about your work.
E. How can people who are not online be brought into your online community?
    1. Become aware of where your audience goes online. Companies should target people by how they behave and meet them there.
F. Other useful resources:
    1. www.eventful.com will shoot your event to all event pages.
    2. www.ping.fm will help you manage your social networking sites.
    3. www.tweetdeck.com allows you to monitor keywords among others' tweets.
    4. www.pyk.com lets you share video over iPhone.