



## The New Age of Media

Well, after MUCH researching, talking with publicists and promoters, and attending conferences, a lot of what we once knew about how to media and the old traditional ways is out the window! Literally!!

Welcome to the New Age of Media! Hold on to your hats...and be prepared to be amazed! I sure was!

### Social Media...

For those not used to hearing this term (or for those of you who HAVE heard this term), Social Media basically means marketing and advertising on the web or internet.

Social Media and digital marketing is the NEW way to promote, market and get the information out to the masses. Almost every home has a computer and internet access...if not at home, for sure at work. People are web savvy and typically search for the information they are looking for on the web...NOT in the newspapers, on television or on radio! Those traditional days of getting the word out are fast departing. The main reason is...you can find ANYTHING you ever want to know about a particular thing on the web instantaneously! People read what's happening in the news online...as it happens...without waiting for the news to come out in print or hearing about it on the radio or seeing it on the television. Typically, you will find the latest, up to the minute information on the web BEFORE television or radio or newspaper.

Think about it. The WEB gets the updated information BEFORE the other traditional media sources do. That's a pretty powerful tool!

In a conference course I took on Social Media and digital marketing, one firm cited this example of the Power of Social Media...

IBM did a \$ 500 podcast online of its products last year...and generated more leads, exposure and sales than using traditional media sources. They estimated that they sold over \$ 200 million of their IBM products from their \$ 500 podcast investment. That's INCREDIBLE!! They *only* spent \$ 500 on a podcast advertisement to generate over \$ 200 million dollars worth of sales.

So what does this tell us?

- **People are information hungry!** They want to find out the information they are looking for and they want to know it NOW! The web, or internet, fills that need. The more information, the better...they wanna know!!
- **Being on the web or online gives Power of Real People** to deliver the message (eg Facebook, Twitter). Average people create raving fans through social networking. Real people have more credibility and quality!
- **People need to feel a part of something and to be interactive.** Allows people to provide their own input or feedback (eg Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). People crave interaction...to be connected with other members of the human race.

The web or internet is a HUGELY powerful tool and is not to be underestimated. If the IBM story is any example, we have to question "Why aren't we using this medium more?" It's quick, it's cheap (in most cases, free)...and you have access to MILLIONS upon MILLIONS of people!!

**CREATE YOUR OWN WEBSITE:** If you haven't already done so, create a web site for yourself. Make it fun and funky...something that would accurately display or convey your personality. Have pictures and/or film clippings of yourself and past shows. Have your contact information. Have a brief synopsis of current events/shows and a bio about yourself. Have reviews posted. Have a blog section where people can talk to you 'online'. Create a media page and post your media kit online so the media can download whatever they want, when they want.

If you are a serious artist, then take the time to do this! You can get some free 'web building kits' online...or to get even more fancy, you can hire a web developer to make one up special for you. If people are so information hungry and the web is THE fastest source for them to get that information, you really need to take advantage of this...there are literally MILLIONS upon millions of people surfing the web for information...and you really need to be a part of that!

**GET ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER:** I have to admit...I never got this whole Facebook craze when it first started. Or Twitter...big deal! But here's the thing...

People LOVE Facebook. People LOVE Twitter. People LOVE to follow blogs and having interactive online discussion forums. They feel connected to the world, their friends. They feel a part of something greater than themselves. Lemme give you an example:

Our National Security 'listens' to Twitter – ers...it's critical to them as they get up to the minute information and a finger on the pulse of what's being talked about by whom. Twitter is a good place to listen and it's becoming BIG. People are checking Twitter first when surfing for information, comments, reviews...you can get some really great marketing ideas and make some good contacts from Twitter!

In talking with some other publicists, they are also advocates of going online with these various programs. They found it's a quick and easy way to get the word out to the masses about what they're doing...and best yet, it's FREE! And interactive...remember people love to feel like they're a part of something. They are moving more and more away from placing ads and just advertising through Facebook and Twitter.

So if you have been hesitating about signing up for any of this, DON'T HESITATE ANY LONGER! Get on Facebook. Get on Twitter! Create a YouTube account and upload some pictures and videos. DO IT NOW! And remember to update/refresh your information as often as you can...interaction is the key. If you're not comfortable with chatting with people online or posting information about yourself, your shows and, well,...just ANYTHING in general...GET OVER IT! Using these free applications will get the word out MUCH faster and better than putting posters up around town or placing ads in papers. AND best of all...it's free or very low cost advertising that reaches millions of users! So get on it!

## **How to Media...Calgary style!**

After many discussions with various publicists, some of our local media...and discussions about what worked, what didn't, what's the new norm and what works in the city of Calgary...here's some cold, hard truths about media in Calgary.

### ***No more big Media Launches!***

Yep, you heard right! In talking with other publicists, we all found media launches to be hit and miss at best. Free food and/or drinks isn't enough to entice the media out if there's a fire happening on the other side of town. And let's face it...Arts are near the bottom of the barrel for what the media deem as 'news worthy stories'. Mainly because arts as a category isn't flashy or 'life controversial' to our everyday world...at least in the eyes of the public. Media love danger, power struggles, etc. They are into what I term as 'media pornography'...if it's not dangerous or sexy, don't write about it!

Let's face it...Fringe Festival shows do not have any 'big name draws' that are instantly recognizable...like Brad Pitt or Bette Midler or U2. It's sad that it would take a big name draw to almost guarantee a good media turnout but that's the reality. And even if you're well known in the Fringe circuit, you wouldn't necessarily be well known in the general public's eyes. Sad, but true.

One editor told me that while it's always nice to have free food as an incentive, if he's under a tight deadline crunch and he can access the information via e-mail or the web (which nowadays you typically can), then for him it boils down to a "*Why bother?*" As long as he gets the information he needs and the Media All Access Passes, he's happy.

So I've taken the leap of faith...I'm going to trust more on the social media connection and less on the traditional. Many of the media have tight deadlines and less and less time to run around for stories. If I can provide what they need immediately and easily that doesn't add stress to their lives, and keeps me and you accessible at anytime, I'm all over it! And I'll make sure they can have as many Media All Access Passes as they need so if they want to bring someone along to keep them company while they're viewing your shows and writing reviews, they can. My goal is to make the Fringe experience for the media as easy, as accessible, and as stress free as possible. Something that they've told me they would very much appreciate!

### ***Electronic Media Kits vs hard copies...***

The verdict is in! The media get tons and tons of paper in the mail. And tons and tons of e-mails. They simply don't have the time to read each one. And unless it's time relevant (as in something is happening in the next couple of days), it'll typically get filed into the recycling trash!

So the question comes....how do you make yourself stand out in the crowd?

After some discussion with our publicist and feedback from some of the media, we felt that the best thing for the media is to have the media press kits in electronic format. If you've never done up one before, here's what needs to be included: a synopsis of your show with a punch on the first sentence of your press kit that's snappy and eye catching, performer bios, reviews (if you've performed this show before...a couple to three max) and a couple of great photos (film and/or digital...TIFF, EPS, GIF or PDF format. 300 dpi ... publishing/high quality) from your show. Keep it clear, concise and simple! And if you have a website, include that in your electronic media kit too...having fingertip access to more information is never a bad thing without having to say too much!

Upload your high quality/high res images and press kit information into your file folder in the ***My Dropbox*** FTP site (I'll be sharing this with our media so they can pull your photos and press kits any time they want). As we talk to the media, we will be mentioning your shows...and while we're on the phone with them, or talking via e-mail, we want to be able to send out your information when asked at the click of a button.

If the media gets a hold of you directly, (1) let me know who, what publication, what they're writing about and when it'll be published so I can keep track of which media is responding to what and (2) ask the media if they would like your media kit...and e-mail it right out!

Which brings me to the next point...

### ***WHEN to Hit the Media...***

This is a big one. When does one start advertising themselves to the media that's the most efficient and time relevant?

Here's the skinny on Calgary...

Don't bother sending anything out to the media until AFTER the Calgary Stampede. Seriously! The Calgary Stampede is THE biggest outdoor event in Calgary and it always occurs the first weekend in July (usually the Thurs leading into the opening weekend) and runs for 10 days after that. If you've never been in Calgary during Stampede, here's what happens:

We turn into an All Western Cow Town. That's what Calgary is famous for. Rodeos, chuck wagon races, the Midway, exhibits, Grandstand Show, beer tents, bands...you name it! There's a HUGE parade through downtown Calgary the opening Friday, which most of the business in town give the morning off for their employees to go off and see the parade. You are NOT allowed to wear business suits. Jeans, western shirts, cowboy boots and cowboy hats are the acceptable attire. If you wear a tie...be prepared for it to be cut off by anyone who passes you in the streets! All the bars, pubs and restaurants are open to the wee hours with lots of beer flowing and country

dancing. Many corporations, grocery stores, strip malls, big malls, etc host free Stampede Breakfasts...where anyone can show up between 7 am and 10 am for a free pancake, hash brown patty and sausages. It's basically one BIG party for two weeks...very little work happens during that time and all the local media coverage and talk is about the Stampede, Stampede, Stampede! There was someone that moved up from the States to work for a company here in Calgary...and she started right when the Stampede was in full swing. She thought Calgary was the greatest city ever...no one wore business suits and partied all the time! It was quite the let down for her when she found out it's not like that all the time! ☺

So...knowing that it's no use to hit the media two months out because they'll not even give our stuff a second glance...and knowing that Stampede creeps in starting mid June and takes over EVERYTHING in the city until mid July...sending out any media releases or press kits beforehand is a wasted effort! It's like nothing else exists in this town but the Calgary Stampede. Not something we in the arts community are too thrilled to be so overshadowed by the Stampede but that's the way life is in Calgary! And we have to live with it!

Here's our CFF media publicity plan:

- We send out the Calgary Fringe big press release the Tues or Wed after Stampede ends. We let them know the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why), link to our website with the show information, quotes...and to get their media press kit with their Media All Access Pass, or to schedule an interview with one of our artists, to contact us.
- On the Fri, we contact all the media to ensure they received our press release, establish a rapport and see if we can hook them in to write/broadcast our story (either the Fringe or one of the artists).
- One to two days before Fringe opening, we send the media an advisory to remind them the Fringe is starting in two days.
- The Wed after opening, we send out another media advisory about the opening weekend stats, to outline what shows are coming up, and announce the Best of Fest Venue winners.
- The last Fri before we closed, another media advisory that it's their last chance to see the Fringe shows and here's what's playing.
- The Mon or Tues after we close, another media advisory of the stats and how well we did.

Pretty simple, hey? Throughout all of this, we will be diligently chatting it up with the media and setting up as many different media opportunities as we can! Use our connections and make them stronger!

What does this mean for YOU?

Well, you know that the Calgary Fringe will market and promote the hell out of the Fringe and you as much as possible.

Taking in consideration that the media does not want to be deluged with too much stuff that makes them want to throw up their hands and say "*Enough!!*" ... here's what we would recommend:

- **DON'T send out your electronic media press kit until the third week in July.** We would suggest you start ending them out the Mon *after* our Fringe press release. Hit up the media we've hi-lighted for you on the Media Contact List first, then filter down to the others. Your last sentence should say something like..."*I'll be in contact with you in the next couple of days to ensure you received this kit okay and to answer any questions you may have.*" or words to that effect.
- **DO follow up with a phone call a couple of days.** If you say you're going to contact them, make sure you do! We're narcissistic enough to think we're important enough that they'll contact us but the realities are they may be too busy to...or just plain forget! YOU need to be the proactive one here! The onus is on us to make THEIR lives easier, remember? Give them what they need without them having to remember to ask for it...and without having to think. Do the thinking and the work for them! Remember these words: **Be Proactive...Not Reactive!**

And that's about it!

I've addressed other methods on how to promote yourself on this Artists Bulletin page...in the meantime, I hope this all made some sense. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. See you soon!

Hugs,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michele Gallant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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