

The Full Experience - Case Studies from the Promoting Societies' Development Project

Studies show that customers are tending toward “experiential” events - their time is crucial, and they spend it based on the overall experience they will receive as a result.

What experience can you offer? This doesn't have to be about the performance alone or about extra costs. Pre-concert events, friendly faces, comfortable surroundings, participatory opportunities all contribute to the overall event. This can help provide an informal introduction to a performance as well as allowing the audience to meet with the artists.

Hexham & District Music Society

Hexham & District Music Society had booked saxophonist John Barker to perform in January 2005. Concerns were raised that as a young performer, he was not known to regular members, and that the use of saxophone would have a mixed appeal in a classical setting.

John Barker was contacted with the suggestion that he present a pre-concert talk on the history of the saxophone, discussing its mixed heritage from marching bands through the classical, jazz and other musical genres. It was hoped that such a discussion might prove an interesting “ice-breaker” for potential audience members. The talk was free, with a complimentary glass of wine offered to entice attendees.

In addition, a new flyer was designed based on the idea of simplicity - 3 colours, as little text as possible and visually catching. By coincidence, John and accompanist Timothy Sidford had recently produced an impressive range of publicity photographs.

The concert drew an audience of 130, of which 25% were first-time attendees.

Woking Concert Society

Woking Concert Society promoted a concert in May 2005 devoted to music written by women composers, both past and present. It was envisaged that this would be organised in co-operation with and support from local women's groups such as the Women's Institute and Mother's Union.

The Society was highly proactive in identifying their desires for the project process. Contacts were obtained for the Women's' Institute and Mothers' Union through web-based research and initial contact was made with the Surrey WI in early December 2004. A pre-concert speaker was identified by contacting the Royal Academy of Music to discuss the project. PhD student Briony Williams was specializing in women composers for her studies and was approached to give a presentation relating her studies to the event.

A designer was contacted to produce a range of flyer designs for the Society to choose from. In addition it was decided to offer a free interval drink as an incentive to potential audiences. All 500 flyers were posted throughout the locality. A web-advert was posted on the Making Music national site, and the Surrey WI posted a number of flyers to their membership (for a fee).

- The flyer presented new challenges in presentation for potential audiences, emphasising visual information.
- Contact with the Women's Institute and Mothers' Union was a first-step toward a potentially like-minded audience.
- Initial expectations proved rather optimistic and contacts will clearly need to be followed up further.