Kate Sanderson, Freelance Consultant with **Jon Bradfield, Marketing Manager, Out of Joint** and **Laura Arends, Marketing Campaigns Manager, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse**

Long distance relationships – jointly developing relevant communications

Kate Sanderson started her marketing career in insurance before moving into the arts. After a spell as marketing manager at an arts centre in Lincolnshire she moved to the West Yorkshire Playhouse where she worked for nine years, being promoted to director of communications and managing a team of 25. Since 2006 she has been a freelance consultant and professional trainer. She is director of TMA's Essentials of Marketing Course (Druidstone), directed the first Druidstone Northern Ireland and set up the TMA's new Strategic Marketing course. She is currently managing a series of benchmarking projects involving 50 UK organisations for ADUK.

Jon Bradfield began his career at Birmingham Royal Ballet and is marketing manager for Out of Joint, the new writing touring company. He also looks after marketing for Crouch End Festival Chorus which performs regularly at the Barbican and has done marketing and graphic design for productions at the Drill Hall and Southwark Playhouse and for Two's Company.

Laura Arends is marketing campaigns manager for Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse. She began her career as communications sabbatical for Kent Students' Union before spending a year in Sicily teaching English and Drama. After three years working in sales and marketing for the international logistics industry she joined the Everyman, originally as marketing officer. She is the CIM arts ambassador for Merseyside Branch.

In this seminar they looked at how touring companies and venues can work together to make the best use of information about audiences to inform their marketing strategies.

Long Distance Relationships

or… how can a touring company and a venue work better in partnership and use data to inform their marketing and develop audiences?

Being honest about the relationships between venues and/ or companies could be characterised as 'Sometimes we're good, but when we're bad, we're horrid…'

This was illustrated by some venues' comments collected by the speakers:

> *'To be honest, their work's so crackers that I'd be very cautious about encouraging our core audience to see it'*
>
> *'They ring me up about the figures every Monday and my heart sinks when I see their number come up. I have been known to hide in the loo.'*

This contrasts sharply with how some companies perceive the relationship with venues:

> *'I always make a point of visiting every venue on the tour for a planning meeting'*

'They send me a report every Monday so I never have to stalk them for the figures. Not like the ones who are always 'away from their desks' '

On the plus side, some venues and companies do work in partnership:

'I always try to see their work earlier in the tour so that I know what we're selling'

'We see this company as a really good way to generate new audiences which cross over to other bits of our programme. They have a real strategic importance to us'

'We have a 'post mortem' meeting with the company after the show and it's great to find out what worked - and what didn't'

The point these quotes make is:

- We don't always make the best of working together
- We don't always pool the information that we have

Make a start at better partnership now!

The team asked delegates to partner up and discuss these three points for ten minutes:

- What information do you share at the moment?
- How do you share it?
- How does it help you to develop audiences?

The points made were:

- Formalised relationships that build on good informal partnerships work well
- Understanding the venue's aspiration and mission allows the company to understand the 'fit' better between the two
- Marketing packs work when produced by the company – venues can't ignore them
- Good relationships are not just between company and venue, but venue and venue – they can swap ideas and approaches
- Touring companies that share information with other touring companies can often progress and work together
- Sharing the best practice and encouraging everyone to follow this is still a key issue
- The issue of Data Protection often comes up when touring companies are coming into new areas

The team agreed with this point particularly presenting additional information on this issue:

Data Protection is often used as a reason for not sharing information, but this is not the case:

- Look at www.aduk.org for information and suggested wording for contracts and an extensive report by Heather Maitland and Pam Henderson with case studies

The report shows that good working relationships and trust work far better than legal documents. The successful examples in that report are those who talk to each other. It is often the case that venues are more able to use the data they collect, so touring companies do need to develop a relationship with venues to make the most of data sharing.

Long distance relationships: from the company point of view - Out of Joint

Out of Joint shared the process and outcomes of the way in which they work with Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse.

- Out of Joint is a touring theatre company dedicated to the development and production of new writing
- Founder/artistic director is Max Stafford Clark
- Out of Joint has premiered plays by David Hare, David Edgar, Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker, and first time writers such as Mark Ravenhill, Stella Feehily and David Watson
- Reputation for political, hard -hitting, socially relevant drama
- Also occasional revivals, such as an African set, Idi Amin - inspired Macbeth, and the forthcoming The Convict's Opera
- Core funding from the Arts Council.
- Most deals with tour venues are based on a guarantee to the company

Out of Joint's audience is…

- Young, cool, and funkier than your audience
- Different from other theatre audiences
- Cleverer and more switched on
- Left-wing
- Very loyal – they only come to our shows. And wear badges with our logo on

(Source: unrealistic self-image)

Joking aside, it is very easy to want to believe that an audience is just like this, but is it true? Out of Joint found out, as a result of working closely with Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse.

The challenges of touring

Touring has some particular challenges, not least of which is that it is at least one step removed from (most) of its audience members. It has to rely on the venue to act as mediator between company and audience.

Other challenges include:

- We don't take bookings and don't (automatically) have direct access to previous bookers
- We only come to any given theatre a maximum of twice a year, then for only a week at a time
- Programming a tour is complex and involves matching available touring weeks to available venues… inevitably some of these will be more 'suitable' to the show than others
- Touring often means we can't attract 'name' actors
- New writing means no-one's heard of the play before, or, sometimes, even the writer

Out of Joint knew the following things about its audience which was based on telephone research undertaken during *Talking to Terrorists* (2005):

- High awareness of Out of Joint or Max Stafford-Clark
- Very high recall of the production (whether attended or not)
- Yet: highly promiscuous (theatrically speaking…)
- Widely varied about what they consider 'good theatre'

Mosaic profiling of audiences reveals the following primary catchment areas and the social make-up of our audience

	Leeds	**Oxford**	**Coventry**	**B'ham**	**Manc**
Symbols of success	23%	41%	32%	31%	19%
Suburban Comfort	23%	12%	18%	22%	17%
Ties of Community	14%	3%	8%	12%	17%
Urban Intelligence	15%	23%	15%	9%	20%
Grey Perspectives	8%	7%	9%	9%	7%
Rural Isolation	5%	7%	8%	4%	2%

Out of Joint also knew that:

- Theatre sales reports can show what kind of prices, concessions and performances are popular
- The company can see what their audiences look like (and hear what they sound like) at their performances
- Theatre marketing teams can share their knowledge
- New cross-company research will show habits of the company's London audience

What this actually meant for Out of Joint was:

- High brand recognition among frequent theatre-goers at regular venues
- Some people do read (and learn) season brochures from cover to cover
- Audience make-up varies from place to place, but probably isn't very different to the general audience at a given theatre
- Brand is a selling point
- Knowledge informs marketing copy and images
- Informs better dialogue between venue and company
- Understand what Out of Joint's competition is
- It allows the venues to 'do the talking' for the company

For Out of Joint, the self reflection and process continues:

- What are the gaps in knowledge?
- How can they better use their knowledge to build audiences?

<u>Long distance relationships: Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse</u>

- Two theatres with chequered histories brought together in 2000
- New Artistic and Executive Director appointed 2004 to launch new programme
- New programme increased audiences and received critical acclaim
- One artistic programme across two venues with a split of Produced and Touring work
- Work with touring companies and theatres across the UK and internationally
- 2008 programme celebrating Liverpool European Capital of Culture

Everyman:

- Established in the 1960's
- training ground for actors such as Pete Postlethwaite, Julie Walters, Matthew Kelly and Jonathan Pryce
- Iconic institution well-known in the city for its edgy and anarchic history
- 397 seats, thrust stage
- Now predominantly produces new plays by Liverpool writers and receives work from physical theatre and new writing companies
- Beer and Jeans

Liverpool Playhouse:

- Originally a Victorian Music Hall
- Established as a theatre in the 1920's
- Repertory theatre which included actors such as John Thaw, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Redgrave
- 637 seats, proscenium arch
- Three seating levels and price brackets
- Now produces mainly classic work with a twist and hosts touring work of classic plays or larger scale new work
- Heels and Wine

What does Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse know about their audiences?

- The majority fall into Symbols of Success and Suburban Comfort Mosaic types which is the same for both the Everyman and the Playhouse
- A small group of core bookers attend both theatres, with most regular bookers attending either the Everyman or the Playhouse
- It's not necessarily different types of people coming to each theatre but they are looking for a different experience from each venue
- Audiences are sensitive to time of year, subject matter of the production, and whether it is a 'known quantity'.

Out of Joint in Liverpool

- Out of Joint has been a regular visitor to the Everyman and Playhouse for the past five years
- They have moved between the two theatres with varying degrees of success:

The Permanent Way	Playhouse
Talking to Terrorists	Everyman
The Overwhelming	Everyman
King of Hearts	Playhouse
Testing the Echo	Playhouse

- Out of Joint work is popular with schools, many of whom take up workshops with Max Stafford Clark
- Out of Joint audience mirrors LEP core audience
- Symbols of Success and Suburban Comfort are the two most popular MOSAIC types
- Breakdown of King of Hearts and The Overwhelming shows that when the company moves between theatres it attracts different sub-sectors of these two MOSAIC groups
- The most popular MOSAIC groups: *The Overwhelming*: Sprawling Subtopia
  King of Hearts: Provincial Privilege
  Both are sub-sectors of Suburban Comfort

- Crossover with other productions at the Everyman and Playhouse is predominantly with Classic theatre and not new writing or even previous Out of Joint productions

- Moving venue to the Playhouse affects sales in several ways:
    a. Smaller number of student bookers
    b. Increased number of OAP bookers
    c. Sustained number of bookers
    d. Increased ticket yield

- LEP can sustain the numbers but it is difficult to develop the audience at the Playhouse. This may be due to the new nature of Out of Joint's work which often doesn't have an element that is known to a Liverpool audience

- Audiences expect Out of Joint's type of work (and actively seek it out) at the Everyman where the atmosphere is more informal and ticket prices are lower

Working together

- Campaign Planning meeting between LEP and Out of Joint
- Marketing Pack from Out of Joint
- Internal campaign planning
- Campaign Plan written and sent to Out of Joint
- Visit to see the production if possible
- Regular communication of sales figures and campaign updates
- Post production report and de-brief

How data and sharing analysis can help

- The team can inform the programming department of the impact on sales of time of year and place

- Analysis helps company and venue understand the audience and tackle the challenge of place

- Understanding the audience helps the team to develop communications that speak directly to the audience they ARE attracting and not the one they think they are

Back to the future

- The audience for Out of Joint's work in Liverpool is older and more conservative than previously thought.

- LEP should look at targeting more of Classic theatre attenders to develop the audience at the Playhouse

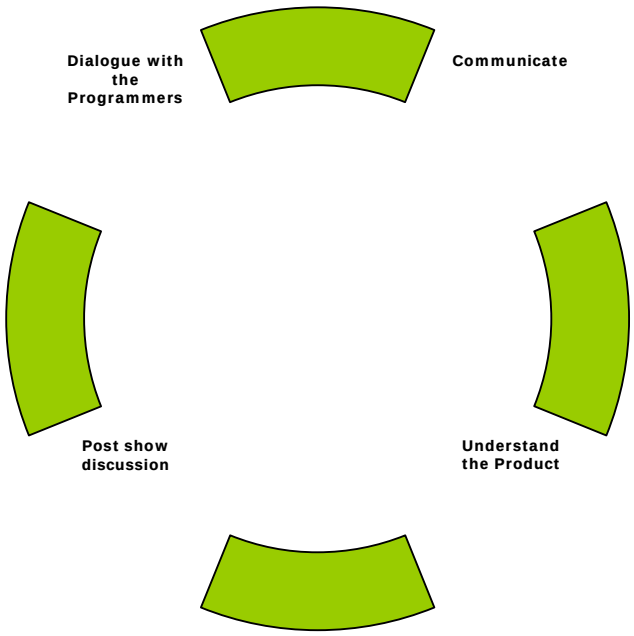
- LEP will need to develop more targeted and specific ways of speaking to this group to reach more of them

The team need more analysis to reveal…

- What the Out of Joint audience come back for
- Retention rates of (LEP) retaining Out of Joint first time attenders
- The size of the audience that is loyal to Out of Joint
- Whether the same people are travelling from one venue to another
- Assessing how big an influencing factor subject matter of the production is

In Summary

The team presented a visual summary of what the process had allowed them to do, so that there is continuity, consistency and integrated reflection and dialogue.



And there's still more to learn…