

Move on Up

How Test Drive and TelePrompt develop audiences

We all want to attract new audiences and we all want our current audiences to attend more often. Test-Drive and TelePrompt are two schemes that do just that. They are not only affordable, they are actually profitable. They are not only practical, they are proven to be successful, the result of several years development and refinement.

Imagine your audience are on a giant ladder. At the top of the ladder are your Members or Friends. Just below them are subscribers and below them, in turn, are regular attenders, irregular attenders, lapsed attenders and so on down to the non-attenders beneath the bottom rung. Audience Development is about getting all these people further up this ladder, whatever their starting point.

Test Drive does this by persuading potential attenders on to the first rung of the ladder. **TelePrompt** does it by activating infrequent attenders, turning them into regulars. Both schemes work by not only providing the initial push needed to move people up the ladder, but supporting them so they stay there and move on up.

And the schemes really work. We have witnessed, first hand, remarkable results at the Hallé Orchestra, Buxton Opera House and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. We've since helped 40 other theatres, museums and art galleries implement the schemes. Why not try them yourself?

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ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC

THE LADDER OF FREQUENCY & ENGAGEMENT

VHF Attenders



Frequent Attenders



Regular Attenders



Infrequent Attenders



Non-Attenders

	MEMBERSHIP
	SUBSCRIPTION
	CRM
	TELEPROMPT
	TEST DRIVE

< **Membership:** *A Sense of Belonging*

Many organisations have well-developed membership or friends schemes. Well-documented elsewhere, they hold people at the top of the ladder.

< **Subscription:** *Forming Habits*

Although there is a trend for subscription schemes to be more flexible and responsive, they still have the ability to form and sustain habitual high levels of frequency. Again these are well-documented.

< **Customer Relationship Management:** *Retention, Frequency, Crossover*

We spent about 6 years developing Test Drive and TelePrompt. We've attracted thousands of new attenders and turned them into regular attenders. But between there and subscription all there seemed to be in the arts marketing tool kit was mailing, mailing and more mailing.

So we've spent the past 2 years developing a Customer Relationship Management approach to retain attenders, increase their frequency and encourage them to try new things. Using cutting edge *data fusion* techniques to overlay behavioural data from the box office data with socio-demographics, geo-demographics and attitudinal psychographics we can undertake powerful, segmented marketing.

< **TelePrompt:** *Activating Infrequent Attenders*

Research with 40 AMA members found that up to 95% of arts print read by the target audience fails to persuade them to book. Our print works well for those at the top of the ladder, but as you move down the ladder, its effectiveness drops to almost zero. We devised TelePrompt to do the job that print doesn't. TelePrompt is a free telephone information service, tailored to the needs of 'Cautious Gamblers' giving them the confidence to attend more regularly.

Simple to set-up and operate, the scheme quickly breaks even. At Buxton Opera House, every £1 invested produced £3 additional income at the box office.

< **Test-Drive:** *Persuading First Timers*

There are 6 million empty seats every year in the UK. That's £80 million in lost revenue. Art galleries and museums stand almost empty for much of the week. We devised Test Drive to use this spare capacity as a valuable resource to enable non-attenders to try the arts for free. Performances are offered free, exhibitions with added value.

This is not mere altruism. Typically, 30-35% of these first-timers are retained as regular attenders. Where ticket income is involved, most schemes produce a profit within 12 months. We've taken 40,000 people through Test Drive so far. That's 13,000 new, regular, full-price attenders. And 15,000 others who are more likely to attend infrequently. It works.

Test Drive *Persuading First Timers*

Empty seats are a precious resource.

There are 6 million empty theatre seats each year. If sold, they would be worth £80 million, unsold they are worth nothing.

There are many more than 6 million potential attenders. We have not managed to persuade them that attending will meet their needs.

What could be more persuasive than actually attending a performance?

Giving these 'Cautious Gamblers' free tickets for our empty seats costs little from the marketing budget and nothing at the box office. But this is not 'papering', it's strategic.

The free Test Drive is followed by rapidly decreasing discounts and rapidly increasing commitment. Typically...

- 30-35% return and pay full price.
- Over 40,000 people have been through Test-Drive.
- Over 13,000 have been retained.
- Many more say they may return in the future.
- Most schemes make a profit within a year.

Taking Test Drive Further

Test Drive was initially developed to attract the most likely potential attenders into the arts. However it can have other applications...

- **Social Exclusion:** At Buxton Opera House the scheme has been successfully tailored to attract socially-excluded rural audiences (it will take up to three years to make a profit).
- **Lapsed:** Elsewhere it's been used to re-attract lapsed attenders (making a profit in only three months).

Objective	Don't	Do
Get the right people	Broadcast free tickets offer – it alienates current attenders and attract freeloaders.	Screen potential attenders by phone to establish qualification and genuine interest. Consider explaining the scheme to current attenders and ask for their help.
Make them feel welcome	Assume new attenders know where you are.	Give full directions, send a map, give details of transport and parking, arrange parking.
	Assume they understand the routine and etiquette.	Explain the format of the evening, timings, intervals (even when to clap); remember basic things like cloakroom and interval drinks.
	Leave them to fend for themselves.	Set up a welcome desk or have welcome staff in the foyer. Complimentary drink and/or programme.?
Make them feel important	Devalue sense of occasion.	Make them feel like VIP guests with valuable tickets.
Reassure them	Arrange ticket pick up on the door - they won't come	Send tickets out in advance with a personal welcome letter.
	Assume they know the play, writer, actors etc.	Send them a specially written 'facts About Show' sheet so they know what they're going to get.
Choose the right play	Offer tickets for the show even regulars won't attend	Choose accessible 'entry level' shows even if this means you've only got a few spare seats
Choose the right seats	Sit them in the gods.	Give them the best available seats in the house.
Follow up promptly	Let people's initial enthusiasm wane.	Follow up with a letter and a new offer.
Identify the best leads	Try to retain everyone – it doesn't work	Make offers that demand a commitment – e.g. '2 shows in 2 months for £6' or a reasonable financial outlay '£3 off next show'. These offers will sort out the definites from the maybes.
Give people a 2nd chance	Assume failure to take up first offer means no interest	Make a 2nd offer to those who didn't respond first time.
Then cut your losses	Give people a 3rd chance.	Spend your money on the plenty more fish in the sea that have more potential.
Get feedback	Assume you know how people reacted to the experience.	Ring a few up, send out some feedback forms, listen and learn.
Evaluate	Just keep going or just stop.	Use feedback and box office data to track, measure and evaluate impact – then REFINE!
Make it viable	Give them seats you could have sold – turning away current attenders is the opposite of audience development and financial suicide.	Set aside only the number of seats you know will be free. Just 10 seats at each performance could be 1,500 a year.
Make it manageable	Bite off more than you can chew with an over ambitious scheme.	Start small and grow if you can. Test-Drive is scaleable – it makes money with 10 or 1000.
Administrate it properly	Let lists get out of hand.	Code respondents on the office box database and manage the leads efficiently.

TelePrompt *Activating Infrequent Attenders*

Typically, half the attenders on a database only attend once a year.

Research shows that they generally get the brochure and the mailings but that these don't persuade them to book. They tend only to book for major shows or ones they already know they'll like.

TelePrompt is a free information service to activate infrequent attenders.

Patrons are telephoned periodically and given a menu of shows about which they can order more information. The information sent is written to be more persuasive.

TelePrompt uses a deliberately 'soft sell' approach designed to build up a trusting relationship. Typically...

- 70% of patrons join the scheme.
- Calling them can *double* participation rates.
- Attendance keeps on rising in response to calls for up to 3 years.
- For every £1 invested, patrons have spent £3 at the box office.

Taking Teleprompt Further

The original Teleprompt programme, run by Helen Dunnet at Buxton Opera House, concentrated on delivering just the information people requested. However the programme could be developed further...

- **Added Value:** Exclusive open days, backstage tours or pre-performance talks strengthen links.
- **Introduce a Friend:** Provide incentives for participants to introduce new people.
- **E-Prompt:** Convert seasoned Teleprompt patrons to cost-effective e-mail.
- **Crossover:** Encourage 'entry-level' attendances at other types of productions with incentives.
- **Frequency Packages:** Multi-buy offers to increase frequency.

Objective	Don't	Do
Get the right people	Call people who live 50 miles away.	Call people in the catchment area.
Keep it legal	Dive in without informed consent.	Ask for telephone consent as Q1 in the call if you don't already have it.
Explain the scheme	Assume people will want to join – the scheme is unusual and they might worry there's a catch.	Use a clear, reassuring script that allays their fears – people are then very positive.
Build a personal rapport	Be an anonymous voice reading from a pre-printed script.	Introduce yourself and make sure it's you that calls this patron next time round.
Record their preferences	Just tell everyone about everything every time.	Find out what they're interested in and tailor the info to their interests.
Solicit feedback	Just transmit info in one way – from you to them.	Encourage dialogue, ask questions, get feedback, comments and suggestions. Record what they say and act on complaints.
Arrange the next call	Call again out of the blue.	Agree when you'll call them again.
Dispatch the info quickly	Wait until there's enough for a batch mailing.	Send the requested info 1st class next day.
Keep it soft sell	Check up whether they went to any of the shows you told them about last.	Check the box office records. Ask for feedback on the info you sent.
Confirm their continuing interest	Just keep calling.	Positively confirm that they still want to be part of the scheme.
Develop their interests	Always just tell them about things they already like.	Suggest and recommend shows that you think they might like.
Move people off the scheme!	Call them forever.	Aim to move 50%+ onto e-prompt info by e-mail. Suggest others might be OK on own two feet.
Try to deepen relationships	Limit the relationship to occasional calls about single shows.	Sign letters from the caller, invite members of the scheme to open days and special events, move onto loyalty cards and first time subscriptions.
Evaluate scientifically	Just monitor the bookings of those called.	Establish a 'control group' of similar patrons and measure the 'uplift' caused by TelePrompt.
Evaluate qualitatively	Just judge by statistics.	Get feedback from staff who call – they are listening to the audience and you can learn a lot from these debriefs.

Get your audiences moving on up...

Enough pilot schemes, time for action!

Over the last few years, £millions have been spent on audience development pilot schemes. Both Test Drive and TelePrompt have benefitted from this funding. Both have produced sound principles, clear guidelines and proven success.

The whole point of funding pilot schemes is that the successful ones get widely adopted. These two schemes are very successful.

Would you like to adopt them?

Test Drive and TelePrompt could be undertaken by any venue and they work for every artform. Because these schemes deliver audiences and extra income in the short-term, there is no need for grant funding. They can and should be built into normal revenue budgets and become part and parcel of everyday arts marketing.

We can help you if you're thinking of starting Test Drive or TelePrompt.

> If you would like a quick chat to find out about how Test Drive and TelePrompt have worked in a venue then contact **Helen Dunnett**:

Tel: 0151 210 2895 **Fax:** 0151 210 2902 **E:** helen.dunnett@liverpool.phil.com

Post: RLP Philharmonic Hall Hope St Liverpool L1 9BP

> If you would like help and advice on actually setting up the schemes, then contact **Andrew McIntyre** who can offer anything from a day's consultancy to help you run the schemes in-house, to a full-service, dedicated team to find, screen and deliver Test Drive attendees and a telemarketing team to run TelePrompt for you.

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*Both Helen and Andrew can also tell you about the
Customer Relationship Management programme referred to on Page 3.*