

curator's research. Having a digital champion in each department is really useful to work as an ambassador for digital and the marketing department's work. They realised as they went on that they could end up just continuing to evaluate, and not actually implement anything that they found out, so it is important to know when to stop. Nothing is ever going to be perfect.

**Amy Clarke – Marketing Officer (Corporate), Royal Shakespeare Company**  
***RSC and social media***

### **Background to the RSC**

The presentation covered what the RSC has done with social media since she joined the RSC in 2008.

They did brand research in 2009 to see how much people recognised the RSC and where they sat in the cultural landscape.

- 82% of the UK population are aware of the RSC. This awareness rises to 87% amongst those of AB social grade
- Those of AB social grade and aged 16-24 are amongst those most likely to have seen advertising from the RSC
- 44% of the general population recognise the RSC logo, placing the RSC ahead of other theatre organisations
- 16% of the population have seen a production by the RSC This figure rises to 1 in 5 of those in social grade ABC1

They also investigated how they are perceived:

- The majority of the UK population perceive the RSC as: high quality, successful, entertaining, for everyone, admired, creative
- Amongst 16-24 year olds the strongest perceptions of the RSC are: high quality, successful and creative
- 40% see the RSC as upmarket
- More favourable and broader perceptions are to be found amongst ABC1s

None of this was a surprise.

### **New audiences target market**

Like most organisations, they have targets to meet. They strive for age equality: many of their audience is over the age of 44, so they try to attract those aged 16-44, particularly 16-24, for which they have launched a scheme called The RSC Key, which is a membership scheme for that age group.

They strive to achieve social equality, specifically C2s, and also improve the diversity of their audiences by attracting more BME audiences.

So those aims fit in with the use of social media, using it to attract those groups that are generally harder for the RSC to reach.

## **Social media journey**

This started in 2008: when Amy joined the RSC, there was a Facebook page and presence on MySpace and Bebo that nobody really knew about. So they started by scoping all the social media channels that were available at the time through desk research, identifying those that were most relevant to their target audiences. They didn't want to do everything at once, they wanted to focus on the ones that were going to pay dividends. So they started by moving from a Facebook group to a Facebook page, which offered more flexibility; they started a Twitter feed; they established a Flickr group; and a bit later they set up a YouTube channel. They got people a little bit interested, but they had to work hard in the marketing team to promote the channels internally, building awareness that the RSC was on these channels, and gain buy-in across the organisation. The RSC approach on social media is to be responsive to people to contact them – it's like a new customer service desk with people asking questions, giving feedback. They strive to be active, attempting to post at least one thing every day, sometimes more, depending on how busy they are and what they've got going on. The aim is to offer a glimpse into the life of the whole RSC – not just about the productions that go on stage: Amy's job is to market anything that happens away from the stage. They don't use social media directly as sales channels, but to deepen engagement, albeit it is always clear that tickets are on sale and how to buy them – but it's mainly about storytelling. They strive to be innovative and creative, with Such Tweet Sorrow as an example (covered in more detail later). Above all, they want to be fun, to counteract the upmarket, stuffy and unapproachable image, and the social media channels can capture new audiences that aren't so familiar with the RSC and counteract those preconceptions: they have a more relaxed voice, and try to talk about fun things.

## **Where is Matilda?**

They work collaboratively, using ideas from different departments and different members of the marketing team. This idea used a cut out that was used for a photo shoot (cost about £100 and now has had quite a life). They took it around Stratford and photographed it in about twelve different locations. In the week that they launched ticket sales for Matilda, they ran 'where is Matilda today', which peaked on Facebook with a lot of conversation about Stratford, people's places, about the show. It was easy to do and cheap, and really worked.

## **Working together**

On social media, they work with people who are not normally part of the RSC but are involved in productions. One example was working with Tim Minchin, who wrote the music for Matilda. He was on the up then, and had a lot of fans that the RSC were not going to otherwise reach. They worked with his fansite and his official blog. The RSC created lot of video content around Matilda, and whenever it was put on the RSC's YouTube site, the administrators of Tim Minchin's fansite and blog would embed it, and put it on his Facebook and Twitter pages. This was of course free and directed people to the RSC's YouTube page, getting more and more hits with each bit of video that was posted, creating relationships with people who had previously just had links with Tim Minchin.



## Measuring Success

They use GA to track visits to the website and traffic from the social media.

- For 10/11 Facebook is the website's fourth referrer, generating 18,000 visits and £4,500 sales
- Twitter has generated 6,500 visits and £2,500 sales

The initial investment was £300 for the Facebook page in early 2009, so it's an extraordinary return on investment.

## Questions

What do the audiences think of the presenters' companies' websites – what qualitative information has been gathered.

Hugh Wallace – They've done the standard online questionnaire. They also talk to their physical audiences, so there is a question about the website on the survey people are given when they leave the museum. It is hard to get those surveys back: there is really a type of person who fills in an online form. One of the big things for them is trying to look at the ways and means of finding out what a meaningful online experience is. All three of them are part of the Culture24 project, which is trying to get exactly that kind of information.

Amy – They do audience research for every production, and that always has questions about the website, mainly related to the booking experience. They've recently launched a new website, so there will probably be some more research done soon about the new site.