

Case study

Tweet seats

An interview between **Katie Moffat** and **PJ Prokop**, Director of Marketing and **Caitlyn DiPompo**, Marketing Projects Coordinator from Providence Performing Arts Center



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/)

Published 2013 on [CultureHive](http://CultureHive.com), a place to discover and share best practice in cultural marketing

Supported by



Created and managed by



In partnership with



Background

We heard about Tweet Seats at an industry conference and decided that it would be fun to try it out at the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC) in Rhode Island, US. The idea is that there are special seats within the auditorium that are given to individuals who tweet about the show they are watching, throughout the performance. For various reasons, mainly related to available resources, we don't maintain a blog and so Twitter is an important platform for us as a tool to raise awareness of new shows and events. It's also a key way in which we engage in dialogue with our customers. We felt that tweet seats would be something that was likely to help further raise the profile of the venue and introduce us to new cross section of people who may not yet have visited. Mainly though, and originally, it was simply an experiment, we like to try new things and tweet seats seemed to have the potential to be very interesting.

Process

We designate around 15 seats at the back of PPAC as our Tweet Seats. Individuals can apply for one free ticket to a show in return for tweeting about the performance. We have clear guidelines about what they should and shouldn't do. For example, they're required to dim the screens on their phones and asked not to reveal any major plot aspects, we also talk to them about not using inappropriate language.

We have a core team of PPAC Tweet Seaters that we recruited through social media. There wasn't a formal process for this but once they'd applied, we looked at their individual profiles in order to get a sense of whether they seemed a good fit for the Arts Center, what kind of content they were tweeting, what sort of following they have and so on.

Ultimately it's the producers of the individual shows who make the decision as to whether or not to allow tweet seats at their show but the vast majority of them are happy with it.

Key Considerations

PPAC Tweet Seaters are not working for the organisation and we do not control what they say, there is of course an understanding that in return for a free ticket they will abide by some simple guidelines but we don't tell them what to tweet, that's left entirely up to them. We're often asked whether other audience members react negatively to the Tweet Seat program, whether we've had complaints about it being distracting but honestly because of the physical location of the seats and the fact that they dim their screens, the vast majority of visitors don't even notice that it's happening. And even when other audience members are aware of the fact that we have tweet seats, we rarely get complaints.

Outcome and future plans

It's still very much something with which we're experimenting but we've been very pleased with the results. The individuals we use have a real skill at tweeting interesting content about the shows and they're always enthusiastic about it. Usually they will come to an opening night and I guess this gives them the kudos of being able to share updates about an event or show that will be new to their followers. There's definitely been lots of buzz about the program; we've had a huge amount of interest from the media and have trended on Twitter a few times.

Going forward we are planning to have more regular meetings with our tweeters, so that they're not just involved on the night itself but perhaps are given access to information about that season's forthcoming shows.

We just launched the North American tour of EVITA; and in advance of the production's debut, one of the show's producers, Hal Luftig, graciously provided PPAC Tweet Seaters with tweets about the production's early stages, rehearsals, and opening night. This was an interesting and fun way for our Tweet Seaters to interact on Twitter, and this could be applied to a variety of different situations.

PPAC Tweet Seaters will always remain independent; it's an important distinction that they work with us, not for us but we think it would be valuable to build and grow the relationship. We're also considering how we might run a special promotion with the Tweet Seaters and this would additionally help us to more accurately gauge the direct impact of Tweet Seats on ticket sales.

We are beginning to collect more information on a show-by-show basis about the impact of Tweet Seats, and how to further improve the program.

Overall I'd say that tweet seats have been extremely positive for PPAC and I'd certainly recommend to any performance venue to give it a shot.

Further information

<http://www.ppacri.org/>

@provpacri