

A few of our favourite fans

Laura Greenfield looks at using your database of attenders to find the donors to help support your organisation



The people who donate money to your organisation are among your most devoted fans. Your donors don't just care enough to buy tickets: they care so much they are happy to pay 'over the odds' to do so.

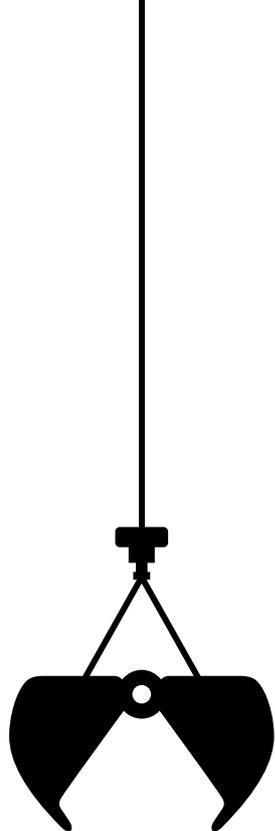
Donors tend to share some key characteristics: they are loyal, engaged and enthusiastic. At the moment it seems as though almost all arts organisations are attempting to identify new potential donors, and being able to pinpoint the audience members who share these characteristics is an ideal starting point. These groups are the most likely to sign up for regular giving or membership if you ask them and while more people will always say 'no' rather than 'yes', focusing on the people in this group will give you the best chance of success.

If you can identify individuals who are not only dedicated but also wealthy, then you have a pool of prospects that may be able to make major and transformative gifts. In 2012 Arts Quarter surveyed 126 arts organisations and found that 3.4% of the individuals in their databases had personal wealth (not including the value of their homes) of more than £1m (*Increasing Individual Giving to the Arts*

www.artsquarter.co.uk/reports.html). These individuals are likely to be able to make or influence donations of £5,000 or more if cultivated well. While only a small proportion of these people will ever make major donations to your organisation, this is still a very promising statistic. For example, if your database has 150,000 people in it, you would only need 0.034% of people to donate £5,000 in order to raise £250,000.

Many organisations have an amazing but under-used resource for identifying the devoted and wealthy audience members who are likely to become their next donors. Ticketing databases contain a huge amount of information on audience behaviour and preferences, and even on their wealth.

Michael Nabarro, Co-founder and Managing Director of Spektrix, says: 'Identifying major donors among your audience base may feel a bit like finding a needle in a hay stack. But your database is one of the key tools you have to shrink that hay stack. Ticketing systems typically provide a set of tools to allow marketers to segment their audiences, and these tools are often underused when it comes to fundraising.'



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The data available from organisation to organisation can vary hugely, and of course no-one has a tick box that allows you to segment by ‘enthusiasm’ or ‘loyalty’. Despite this, every database should contain some information to allow you to make conclusions about these characteristics, as illustrated below. While data on wealth might initially seem even more limited, there should be some information to guide you, as well as the option to augment your existing data with ‘wealth screening’.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN LOOKING FOR YOUR MOST DEDICATED AUDIENCE MEMBERS:

How often do they visit?

How often do your most enthusiastic audience members visit? Once you have worked out the ‘peak’ attendance for your organisation, you can segment based on this data.

For a gallery with quarterly exhibitions ‘peak’ attendance may be four times per year, as most people will only visit each exhibition once. For a theatre with a different production every week, four times a year might be relatively low. Attendance levels will also vary based on location: in the centre of London people can split their

time between many venues, but in a rural area they have limited choice.

How long have they been coming to your venue?

You may have audience members who have been visiting for decades – maybe since your venue or organisation was founded. In fact, for almost all organisations, some audience members have been visiting for longer than data has been collected about their visits. Nonetheless, it can be a key indicator of loyalty. While attendance may drop at different times of life (for example, if someone has young children or has mobility issues) this does not necessarily mean that enthusiasm has dropped.

Are they signed up for your mailing list?

Your most engaged audience members will want to know what’s going on, and may even be signed up to multiple mailing lists (for example, both post and email, or mailing lists for both dance and drama). You can also look at how often people open the emails, and how often they click through to find out more. If information about memberships or donations is included in newsletters, these click throughs will be particularly relevant.

By asking these questions, you should be able to identify the people most likely to become your new members, regular donors, and even major donors

Do they make small donations or buy extras regularly?

If you ask people to make small donations while buying tickets online, look at the individuals who choose to do this every time they buy a ticket. Better yet, look at those who choose to donate more than the suggested amount. Alternatively, look at people who always choose to add on merchandise, like programmes or play texts.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN LOOKING FOR YOUR WEALTHIEST AUDIENCE MEMBERS

How expensive are the tickets they buy?

Audience members who always sit in your most expensive seats or buy your premium tickets are more likely to have the capacity to donate than those who take advantage of standby or restricted-view prices. An audience member's total spend per year may also be significant. Like everything else, this will vary from organisation to organisation, but anyone who spends more than £1,000 a year on tickets seems like a strong prospect.

Where do they live?

You know your local area, and can identify where the most expensive house are. You could look for people in particular postcodes or boroughs, or even on particular streets. You can also cross reference addresses against Land Registry data through websites like www.mouseprice.com and www.zoopla.co.uk in order to find out property prices.

Have they been identified as wealthy?

It is possible pay to have your database 'wealth screened'. This involves matching the people in your database against a 'wealth intelligence database' of people with the capacity to give or influence donations of £5,000 or more. You pay to find out who the wealthy people in your database are, but you can usually get a free summary report to start with. This service is offered by a number of organisations, including Prospecting for Gold (www.prospectingforgold.co.uk) and Arts Quarter (www.artsquarter.co.uk). While there are costs involved and the information provided can only be used as a guide (the wealth databases are not infallible) it can be a helpful tool to identify major donor prospects, and perhaps kick start a major giving programme.

By asking these questions, you should be able to identify the people most likely to become your new members, regular donors, and even major donors. Your ticketing database can then continue to support you as you begin the process of cultivating your prospects, providing valuable information on the exhibitions or productions they enjoy, when they like to visit, and even how far in advance they like to plan ■



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