



The Art of Selling Out

A Beginner Guide to Marketing Your Show



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Your Magic Number is 254

There are 254 seats for sale at the Fergus Grand Theatre.

As far as theatre sizes go in Ontario, 254 may be on the smaller end of theatres, however, our theatre size does reflect the size of the community – meaning you are working with a smaller demographic to market your shows and sell tickets to! The Township of Centre Wellington has a population of approximately 30,000 and growing rapidly. One common piece of feedback that the theatre is “I didn’t know this show was happening” – which is why we stress the importance of effective and proactive marketing.

This guide has been prepared to assist you in promoting your event at the Fergus Grand Theatre.

The Simple Marketing Plan

The following marketing plan is a great way to familiarize yourself with marketing basics. It is very simple, and by no means represents the pinnacle in arts marketing, but includes industry best practices wherever possible. This plan is a compact, durable list of things that you should think about when staging an event at the Fergus Grand Theatre and has been built by your colleagues; fellow producers, presenters, businesses, and organizations that have graced the stage at the Fergus Grand Theatre over the years.

This plan is a living document, which means it’s regularly updated to reflect new challenges, opportunities, and information. In today’s world, marketing and communications have become more important to staging successful live events than ever before.

This marketing plan includes three steps:

1. Identification
2. Creation
3. Execution

Step One: Identification

Step one identifies what your show is all about, outlining key information like:

- Name of event
- Brief description (100 words or less)
- Who’s putting it on (i.e., name of producer, presenter, producing company, etc.)
- When (dates and times)
- Where (Fergus Grand Theatre, 244 St. Andrews St West)
- Tickets and how to get them
 - Ticket prices (all-inclusive, final prices)
 - Box office phone number: 519-787-1981
 - Website: fergusgrandtheatre.ca
- Time (days between now and the show)

- Budget (even if it's \$0, or "as little as possible)
- Other Information (i.e., celebrities, trigger warnings, recommended ages, etc.)

Next, it is important to identify your target audience segments. Thinking your show is for "everyone" is a common marketing mishap – just because it is appropriate for everyone doesn't mean everyone will be interested in the type of genre you're performing. Audience segmentation helps you identify the groups of people who are most likely to be interested in your events (i.e., demographics, geography, behaviour, attitudes, etc.)

Finally, put it all together and create a document with:

- All your need-to-know information.
- A description of each of your target audience segments.
- A statement of value:
 - What will people who come to your show get from it? How will it make their life better? What will they gain? Try and be specific as possible.
- Any other information that you feel you need:

A study of all community theatre productions done at the Fergus Grand Theatre between 2014 and 2016 found that 53% of audience members were attending because they were a friend or family member of someone involved in the show. That means that the majority of ticket sales came from internal marketing of cast/crew members spreading the word! This statistic is something to remember when you may be focusing a lot of time on digital marketing and not seeing your desired results.

Step Two: Creation

For many, this is the fun part! Getting to turn your creative abilities and passion for your performance into marketing materials. This involves simply taking the information gathered in step one and using it to create your marketing materials (posters, flyers, press releases, etc.) and creating a list of what you are going to use them for and which marketing channel they will be directed to.

When it comes to marketing materials, there are many choices – both online and offline – and new channels are being created all the time. By no means do you need to create every single material out there, but here is a list of some of the materials theatre clients have used over the years:

- **PRINT:** Poster, Flyer, Press Release, Postcard, Business Card, Program Stuffer.
- **DIGITAL MEDIA:** Animated GIF, Website, Blog Post(s), Facebook Event, Instagram Stories/Posts, Online Event Posting.
- **PHOTO/VIDEOGRAPHY:** Production Photos, Video.
- **MERCHANDISE:** Coasters, Placemat, Custom T-Shirts, Automotive Stickers.
- **EMAIL:** E-Signature/E-Blast.
- **LOCAL MEDIA:** Radio Ad, Interview Talking Points, Newspaper Ad.
- **OTHER:** Elevator Pitch, Road Signs, Parade Float, etc.

Deciding which materials to create isn't easy, and it can be ongoing work – a poster that might work really well in 11 x 17in print might look too cluttered in a Facebook newsfeed, so you may need to create a smaller material that is similar to your poster, but much simpler. Things like live-streaming five minutes of rehearsal time to getting a call to be a fill-in on a morning radio show aren't necessarily things that can be prepared in advance, so it is important you have your "need-to-knows" on hand to be ready to make the content up on the spot. The materials you create will, to some extent, be dictated by the channels you use (see list below).

Recently, a few clients have been experimenting with lawn and road signs to advertise their shows. Be aware that the Township of Centre Wellington has a Sign By-law, which states where, when, and if you are allowed to put up a sign of any kind. Before you go and spend any money getting signs printed, make sure you're familiar with the By-law. We wouldn't want you to spend your marketing budget on resources you may or may not be able to use.

The above list of marketing materials does not include what you need to provide staff at the theatre. The theatre has no mandate or budget to promote client events on their behalf, but we do as much "in-house" publicity for clients as we can. In order to provide us what we need to help you best, we've created a [Copy and Graphics Guide](#) as an accompaniment to this Guide. Please refer to it for the most up-to-date specifications for our in-house marketing needs.

Marketing channels are simply the places where your materials will be put to work. They could include:

- Poster/flyer distribution
- Print ads
- Targeted stuffing (example, ads in mail/envelope)
- Radio & Television
- Email
- Website & Blog
- Social Media
- Flash Mobs
- Word of mouth/Talking to friends and family
- "1-off" marketing opportunities

This list is a starting point, and these are many of the basic must-have marketing materials that virtually everyone staging an event at the theatre should be using. Don't be afraid to get creative and think outside the box. The more you know about your target audience, the better you'll know how to reach them.

Step Three: Execution

The final step in your marketing plan is execution – the process that turns your marketing strategy into action. While a well-laid marketing plan "sets the stage", the marketing landscape is ever-changing. Whether it's emerging social media trends, shifts in consumer behaviour, or updates in search algorithms, the execution phase must be adaptable. Being rigid in your approach can lead to missed

opportunities and wasted efforts. Your marketing plan should be a guide, not a strict rule to follow.

When it comes to distributing marketing materials through various marketing channels (both discussed in further detail below), learn to balance technology with human interaction. There are various technology-driven tools available that can handle repetitive tasks like sending emails and/or posting social media updates. However, relying solely on automation can rob your marketing strategy of human interaction and building personal connections. Balanced marketing execution marries technology with personal connection, ensuring that your performance remains relatable and authentic.

Marketing Materials

Posters

A good show poster (or flyer) should contain the following information:

- The title of your event
- A striking, eye-catching image
- Date and time of your event
- Location of your event (i.e., The Fergus Grand Theatre)
- Ticket Price(s)
 - We strongly suggest you advertise the final, all-in ticket price of your event, i.e., fees and taxes included. Being transparent about total costs is a more honest, respectful way to complete the transaction with your customers.
- Where and how to get tickets (i.e., website)

Poster design best practices:

- Bigger is not necessarily better – 8 ½” x 11” posters go in more places than 11” x 17”. The image should be the star of your piece, use text sparingly – and use a good-quality, high-resolution image.
- Pay attention to legal requirements. Royalty information must sometimes be displayed on posters, and make sure you have permission to use any image. If there are images of real people on your poster you may need to secure a written waiver to use their likeness. Just remember to look into these things before you start. Mistakes can be costly if you have to reprint, and in a worst-case scenario, you could lose the rights to perform your show altogether.

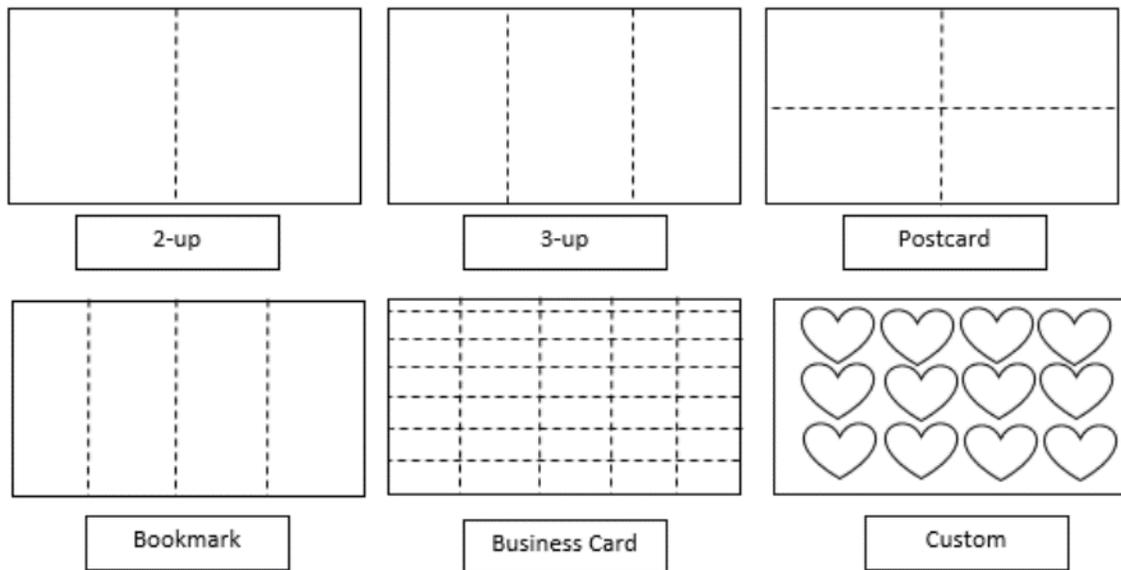
Flyers

- Flyers should contain the same essential information as their corresponding posters and should be created by the same graphic designer in a similar style. You should, however, make adjustments to fit the smaller size and different shape – a poster simply shrunk to fit may look misshaped, and may be hard to read.
- The most common types of flyers FGT events tend to use are referred to in the printing industry as “2-ups” and “3-ups”. A 2-up is simply two pieces of the same copy placed on a single 8 ½” x 11” page in landscape and then cut in half. A 3-up is the same except it is three pieces of the same copy on a single 8 ½” x 11” page in landscape cut into thirds. Both sizes are a good choice

since they stuff easily into programs and don't get hidden in tall brochure racks. They are also small enough to leave in a pile on a table.

- While flyers are inexpensive to produce, it is still a good idea to gauge as closely as possible how many you will need for both economic and environmental reasons. Remember, after your event these marketing pieces will no longer be of use to you.
- The Fergus Grand Theatre has a flyer rack where you can display your flyers. Feel free to drop some off as many patrons come in to look at them while visiting or waiting for a show to start.

Common Flyer Configurations:



Social Media

We encourage all promoters to interact with the Fergus Grand Theatre's social media accounts to help reach a larger audience for your shows. Follow @fergusgrandtheatre on Facebook and Instagram to keep up to date with what is happening at the theatre.

We also encourage you to create and share content for your shows on social media. The Fergus Grand Theatre will attempt to share your content within our social media schedule, though it is not guaranteed. Please keep in mind that, due to the Township of Centre Wellington's Social Media Policy, the theatre **cannot** post your content to our accounts, we can only share the content that you post to your own accounts. The shows that you see the theatre post directly about is our own Presenting Series, curated by the Theatre Coordinator.

Here are some social media best practices:

- Create a Facebook Event for your show:
 - Include your show title, date, time, a brief description, image (1920 x 1080 px), price, and ticket link.

- Add the “Fergus Grand Theatre” as a co-host, which ensures that your event will appear in the theatre’s Facebook Event listings.
- Facebook Posts:
 - Tag @fergusgrandtheatre
 - Posts with photo/video increase engagement.
 - Photo size: 3:2 ratio for maximum space
 - Vertical: 500 x 750 px
 - Square: 500 x 500 px
 - Horizontal: 1080 x 550 px
 - The average attention span for a social media user is 8.25 seconds. Keep the text in your post brief (1-2 sentences).
 - Be sure to include any links to tickets after the text.
 - The Theatre does not interact with Facebook Stories due to low engagement.
- Instagram Posts:
 - Photo size:
 - (Recommended): 1080 x 1080 px
 - Vertical: 1080 x 1350 px
 - Horizontal: 1080 x 608px
 - Tag @fergusgrandtheatre
 - Geotag Fergus Grand Theatre or Fergus, Ontario
 - Hashtag #FergusGrandTheatre
 - Tip: Post your hashtags in the comment section on your post so that your photo description does not become cluttered. Ensure hashtags have relevant keywords.
- Instagram Stories:
 - These posts only last 24 hours – tag @fergusgrandtheatre in your stories so we are able to share them to our story.
 - Tip: you can create “highlights” on your Instagram profile where you can permanently save your Instagram stories.

Press Release

A press release, no matter where it is being sent, should utilize a number of industry standards and best practices. It should:

- Feature your company logo at the top.
- Beneath the logo, justified to the right, the words “For Immediate Release”.
- A brief, direct, informative headline.
- Be written in the “inverted pyramid” formula, with the most important information in descending order of importance in the paragraphs below.
- Content should be 1.5 spaces, in sans serif, 12-point font, and written in complete sentences using plain language so it is understandable by an average reader.
- The press release should be a maximum of one page long, including contact information at the bottom.
- At the bottom of the press release, you should indicate the end of the press release by the “◆”

sign or by “-30-“. Below that state your name, title, phone number, and email address. Offer feature interviews, photography sessions, or anything else unique to your event.

Since you’re not paying for a press release, there is no guarantee that the publication you’re sending it to will actually run it. However, there are a few things that you can do to increase your chances:

- Make sure the press release would work if they ran it verbatim – without making any changes. Sometimes, publications will do this to save time.
- Proofread! Double-checking your work and having a second person look it over before sending it off is beneficial.
- Keep it brief and direct. Avoid flowery or academic language, technical jargon, humour, or creative metaphors.
- Include one or two photographs. Each photograph should be attached to your email separately, and each should be clearly and succinctly labelled (don’t just leave the camera’s default). You should also attach an additional document entitled “Suggested Cut Lines” in which you provide a caption that could be placed under each photograph. Be sure to mention the name and date of the show in each cut line, if nothing else.
 - Watch out for legal traps – you may have to credit the photographer or people in the image in a cut line, depending on your event.

Other Marketing Materials

Elevator Pitch

- This is a description of your show and why it matters, and it’s something that should be “so short that you could recite it all in a ride up an elevator.” Get all the key information into your elevator pitch, and then memorize it.

Radio

- Radio ads are fairly similar to elevator pitches, but timed to either 15 or 30 seconds, depending on the spot. Radio content should always be written at least double-spaced for easy reading on live air. If you are doing an on-air interview, you’ll have to make things up as you go along, so it is important to prepare ahead of time for questions you may be anticipating.

Online Content

- Standard style rules for web-based writing apply – brief, succinct copy, in-line hyperlinks, with the writing supported by lots of visuals. The tone can be a bit more conversational, but you still want to use personal pronouns sparingly and maintain a polished, professional image in line with your company’s branding.

Photographs

- Images should be clear and professional, and you should have permission (ideally in a photo-release contract/form) from anyone in the picture to use their likeness in a public context. Basic photo editing is fine, but don’t go over the top. Current trends suggest that having a high-resolution, filter-free image goes over better not only on social media but with publications too. If you are using a hired photographer, keep in mind that they will often have written in a contract that you are prohibited from editing their images.

Video

- Video content has become increasingly easy to create. Best practices evolve quickly in this area – it ebbs and flows between short-form and long-form content every few years. Always review the information and advice offered by the platform you are planning to post on (i.e., Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.).

Swag/Merchandise

- When you're creating merchandise materials (i.e., T-shirts, baseball caps, mugs, etc.) to promote your show, make sure that it's professional looking and aligns with your brand/branding, and is actually an "added-value" that will result in ticket sales.

Marketing Channels

There are plenty of different marketing channels to distribute your marketing materials through – every channel has its purpose, but not all have to be utilized. Use what is best for you and your performance. The following section delves into a local approach to marketing your performance as opposed to industry standards.

The Township of Centre Wellington (Fergus, Elora, Belwood, and the surrounding rural areas) has a population of approximately 30,000. There is approximately another 60,000 people in the greater Wellington County area (Arthur, Erin, Mount Forest, etc.). Centre Wellington has a few larger neighbouring cities that are great to incorporate into your targeted marketing and are all under an hour's driving distance of the theatre.

- City of Guelph: population of approximately 135,000.
- Waterloo Region: includes the tri-cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, averaging a population of just over half a million.

According to the Fergus Grand Theatre's geo-tracking via ticket sales, the average ticket sold at the theatre is to someone residing within Centre Wellington, or within a 15-minute drive of the theatre.

Poster and Flyer Distribution

In an increasingly digitized world, paper posters and flyers in public spaces are still an effective way to market performances and generate ticket sales. Posters and flyers should be distributed throughout the community, wherever they will be accepted. Make sure your distribution team is armed with not just posters and flyers, but also with tape, tacs, staplers, sticky tac, and/or anything else you can think of to help them put up posters. Your distribution team should be cheerful and outgoing, cleanly attired, and ideally working in teams of two!

You should always ask permission to put up a poster before doing so, if the location is staffed, you may be required to leave the materials with them and they will disseminate them. Here is a list of locations in Centre Wellington that are "local-hubs" and would make for a great location to distribute your print materials:

- Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex
- Elora & Fergus Tourism Information Centre
- Victoria Park Seniors Centre
- Post Offices (Elora & Fergus)
- Libraries (Elora, Fergus, Guelph, Puslinch, Rockwood, Hillsburg, Erin, Arthur, to name a few)
- Storefronts in Downtown Elora & Fergus
- Banks
- Lions or Rotary Club locations

The above list is not exhaustive but will give you a good starting point. We recommend looking into the community and finding places that may relate to your target audience to distribute your materials.

Print and Digital Publications

The Wellington Advertiser is a newspaper that has a loyal readership throughout Wellington County, with free distribution to approximately 40,000 homes each week. The publication has a dedicated Arts and Entertainment page, where it will run press releases and print ads for plays, concerts and other performing arts events taking place at the theatre and other events throughout Wellington County.

Costs of print ads vary depending on the size of your ad, we recommend getting in touch with the Wellington Advertiser directly for more information:

- Phone: 519-843-5410
- Email: news@wellingtonadvertiser.com
- Address: 905 Gartshore St, Fergus, Ontario

EloraFergusToday is an online news site that is dedicated to providing local stories written by journalists who live and work in the community. The online publication usually picks up on local media releases and has a daily email blast that goes out to subscribers of the publication. To learn more about this publication and what may be available to you, we recommend reaching out directly:

- Phone:
 - Advertising: 226-779-1717 option 2
 - News Desk: 226-779-1717 option 3
- Email:
 - Advertising: advertising@elorafergustoday.com
 - News Desk: news@elorafergustoday.com

Media List

We recommend and find value in building a list of media contacts (both online and offline, TV and Radio) within a larger radius surrounding the Fergus Grand Theatre. The Theatre has its own media list in which we send our Press Releases and media images. The below media list is not exhaustive but will give you a good starting point if you are unfamiliar with the Centre Wellington area:

Media Outlet	Name	Email
TELEVISION		
Cogeco - Television	Andrew Robillard	Andrew.robillard@cogeco.com
CTV	Natalie Vanrooy	Natalie.vanrooy@bellmedia.ca
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE		
Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce	Brock Aldersley	brock@cwchamber.ca chamber@cwchamber.ca
BIA'S		
Fergus BIA	Fred Gordon	fergusbias@gmail.com
Elora BIA		coordinator@elora.info
NEWSPAPER		
Wellington Advertiser	Editor	editor@wellingtonadvertiser.com news@wellingtonadvertiser.com jshuttleworth@wellingtonadvertiser.com
	Joanne Shuttleworth	
Elora Fergus Today (Digital)	Keegan Kozolanka	keegan@guelphtoday.com news@elorafergustoday.com
RADIO		
Grand 101	Austin Cardinell Scott Jensen	austinradiocardinell@gmail.com scott@thegrand101.com

In addition to building a list of local media contacts, we recommend building a generic media list that relates to your target audience and is specific to your event. This could include artists' fan clubs, publications that cover the specific genre or subject matter of your event, or public locations (i.e, arts centre) that relate to your event. At the very least, building a generic media list should gain you a spot on the contacts calendar of events, free listings board, or an upcoming events e-bulletin.

Radio

Centre Wellington has a radio station: **The Grand 101.1**. The Grand is a community station that has become a focal point for individuals, businesses and community organizations to get the word out about their events. If you are interested in more information, we recommend contacting the radio station directly:

- Phone: 226-383-1011
- Email: info@thegrand101.com
- Address: 540 Garafraxa St. E, Fergus Ontario

Freebies and 1-offs

Essentially, 1-offs are free, or inexpensive marketing opportunities that many of the Theatre's performers take advantage of:

- Listing your event on the Township of Centre Wellington's [Calendar of Events](#).

- List your company in the Centre Wellington Business Directory.
- Complete a Google Businesses Listing for your event.
- Not-for-profits can post show information on Cogeco, and in some newspaper listings (i.e., Wellington Advertiser).
- Contact local retirement communities (Heritage River, Pine Meadows, Maple Leaf Acres) along with retirement homes (Highland Manor, Wellington Terrace) and the Victoria Park Seniors Centre and see if anyone is interested in organizing a group outing to your event.

Again this list is not exhaustive – if you have used a listing aside from the ones mentioned above, please let us know so we can add it to the list.

Additional Opportunities

- **Program Advertising:** Selling ad space in your event program is technically not marketing but sales. This can be a great way to make a little extra cash for your production, but keep the number of ads reasonable: the program is still about your show!
- **Flash Mobs:** A technique we've seen used in the past by local groups. Make sure you have flyers to hand out and that you have the venue's permission beforehand.
- **"Commercials":** you may be able to partner with other upcoming shows at the theatre to offer a sneak peek of your event at their event. Think of it as a variety show where you can offer a 5-minute piece of entertainment that includes the dates and times of your event. Other events in the community can also provide you with advertising opportunities if properly prepared and done as a form of entertainment.
- **Senior's Lunch:** The Victoria Park Seniors Centre offers a weekly lunch for seniors in the community, and they are often willing to host entertainment. As always, be sure to have posters/flyers to hand out!
- **Personalized Advertising:** custom posters featuring an individual or group can be great if that said individual/group has a place where they can post it and people will take notice (i.e., water cooler at the workplace).
- **Southern Ontario Live Music:** poster listing and creation website. To learn more, contact:
 - Phone: 519-787-8746
 - Email: livemusicevent.swo@gmail.com
 - Website: www.ontariolive.ca

In-House Marketing – Fergus Grand Theatre

- A TixHub listing for ticketed events. Will be included in the "Gallery View" on TixHub.
- Full box office and front-of-house services (ushers, concessions, house management).
- Inclusion on the Township of Centre Wellington's digital signs in Fergus and Elora 30 days prior to your event.
- Inclusion on the digital signs outside the theatre and in the lobby.
- Inclusion in The Grand Fan, Fergus Grand Theatre's patron newsletter.
- Inclusion in the Centre Wellington Community Guide (subject to print deadlines).
- In-house space to place flyers.
- Program stuffing of flyers preceding events.
- Promotion to walk-in customers looking for upcoming event information.
- Periodic inclusion of our brochure in newcomer packages and other information packages,

subject to availability.

- Any other “one-off” opportunities (media interviews, reports to Council, speaking invitations, etc.) that we use to promote the theatre and its events.

Word of Mouth/Family and Friends

If you’re staging a community event, word-of-mouth advertising to family and friends is essential to your production’s success. You should take the time to train your cast and crew to get into the habit of selling tickets. They should have the “elevator speech” memorized, including the box office phone number and theatre’s website to communicate to friends and family. In addition, get your cast and crew to carry around posters and flyers with them to hand out to friends and family, at school, work, places of worship, etc. Teach them how to buy tickets online via computer and mobile, so they are able to walk anyone through how to purchase a ticket. Most importantly, make sure that everyone involved in the show is communicating enthusiastically about it.

Genuine word-of-mouth “buzz” about a show is the hardest kind of marketing to get, but every once in a while, a show will take off and the tickets will sell themselves. This means your hard work has paid off, and your marketing efforts have gone beyond you, and have taken on a life of their own. Enjoy that feeling!

Digital Marketing Channels

While traditional marketing channels are still effective, digital marketing has become too important to ignore. Every production should have a digital strategy, and producers should be willing to invest time, and where carefully considered, money in using a wide variety of digital tools. At minimum, a digital marketing campaign should include the following components:

- **Company Website:** There are many free website templates available, but keeping your website up-to-date is essential. The website should contain a direct link to buy tickets for your event (which is the link to your event on our website).
- **Facebook Page:** Not a personal page, but a business page for your company, and make building engagement a priority. For each production you do, create an event – and make the Fergus Grand Theatre you’re co-host!
- **Instagram:** Especially beneficial if your production includes striking visuals. You can also take advantage of “Reels” to show sneak peeks and tidbits of your performance.
- **Tag-Line:** a dedicated tag line for outgoing emails that includes the event link.

Other social media platforms like LinkedIn, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, etc. may be of value to your event, but only if you know your audience is both on these platforms and looking for content you might have to offer. Blogging can also be a valuable tool, if you’ve already got a dedicated following and have lots of interesting content to share, but it should also be coupled with your activities on social media (and having the blogs available on your website, too!). A social media management tool (i.e., Hootsuite, Sprout Social, etc.) can be handy for pre-scheduling posts and keeping track of what you’re doing on several sites – it can even generate reports to give you a snap shot for post analytics! Genre and event-specific platforms (see “Media Lists” section above) can also form part of your digital content strategy for a particular show.

In addition to the information above, here are some external marketing guides and event links:

- [The Big List of Theatre Marketing Tactics](#)
- [10 Good Marketing Techniques for Community Theatres](#)
- [Visit Guelph Wellington](#)
- [Guelph Today](#)
- [County of Wellington](#)
- [Township of Centre Wellington](#)
- [Elora Fergus Today events](#)

In Conclusion

Arts marketing is an ever-evolving field, with new trends and products launching every day. Just like your own marketing plan from production to production, this marketing best-practices guide is a living document, constantly changing to update and include more collective wisdom of the industry in general and the Fergus Grand Theatre client community. If you require more information, please don't hesitate to reach out to the theatre directly at:

Eric Goudie | Theatre Coordinator
egoudie@centrewellington.ca