

YELLOW SPRINGS KIDS PLAYHOUSE MARKETING PLAN

AAD610: MARKETING, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATION II

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PLAN BRIEF ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY AND MISSION

The mission of Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse (YSKP) is to cultivate the development of future actors, leaders, patrons and audiences and to enhance art awareness in our community through arts education programming and the creation of original multimedia theatre for youth. They fulfill this mission by providing quality theater and training for local youth, fill a niche in the Miami Valley and Dayton area theater spectrum focusing on original works that produce higher-level thinking and learning skills, require works to be threaded with contemporary social, cultural, historical, or geopolitical issues and modern media technologies, use artists from a multitude of disciplines, provide partial and full scholarships that enable all interested youth to participate, and produce sophisticated entertainment for all ages. YSKP was founded in 1995 as a summer theater program for youth in Yellow Springs, Ohio. In 1999 YSKP became incorporated and established non-profit status. Since 1997, YSKP has annually commissioned an original musical from regionally and nationally known playwrights. In 1999 a workshop program was developed to accommodate children under the age of ten and work to train future participants. In 2002, with an overflow of interested youth, YSKP expanded their seasons to include a second summer show and an outreach tour to Dayton and other regional audiences. Over the past twenty-one years, YSKP has brought in artistic mentors in the fields of media, music and visual arts. In 2004 they began a youth leadership program, enlisting older participants to mentor the younger ones. They also redirected their artistic goals to include creating theater that addresses issues of identity, conflict resolution and reconciliation for youth. Since its inception, over 1200 youth have participated in original productions with

some alumni going on to become professionals in theater and other fields of the performing arts.

SUMMARY OF MARKETING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There are three goals/desired outcomes associated with this marketing plan. First, there is a strong need to build a larger donor base outside of the parents of the participants.

Second, YSKP would like to bring in more youth from surrounding communities. Third, there is a very strong need to develop a stronger and more effective web presence.

PROPOSED MARKETING STRATEGIES

The three marketing strategies being proposed are a new social media plan including a timeline for various events. The second strategy is tabling at the Yellow Springs Street Fair in June and October of each year. Finally, the third strategy is to implement a new online ticketing system that allows individuals to purchase tickets ahead of time. This would allow attendees to opt-in to an email listserv/direct mail list and give the organization more information about who is coming to these shows and will provide the organization with an opportunity to market to a specific demographic in terms of participation and fundraising.

SECTION II: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN ANALYSIS: ECONOMIC TRENDS, CULTURAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Economic Scan: Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse receives funding primarily through grants that have been awarded to them from organizations such as the Ohio Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts and CultureWorks of Dayton. Grants also come from various private and community foundations including the Morgan Family Foundation, Yellow

Springs Community Foundation, Turner Foundation and the Springfield Foundation. In addition, YSKP receives corporate sponsorship from local businesses including The Meadowlark Restaurant, The Winds Café and Wine Cellar, Home Depot in Beavercreek, Ohio and YSI. Finally, the Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse has many generous individual donors who factor into the contributed income of the organization. There is also income from ticket sales, concession sales, and merchandise. In 2013, Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse has \$43,126 in contributed income and \$29,096 in earned income for total revenue of \$85,343.

ORGANIZATIONAL PAST AND PRESENT

In 2013, the Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse had total revenue of \$85343 and total expenses of \$92795. They did have net assets or fund balancing \$27863 that they were able to take from, leaving them with a \$20411 balance at the end of the fiscal year. Looking a few years back, this seems to have happened before; however there have been years that they spend much less than what has been budgeted. After speaking with the bookkeeper of the organization it seems that they are in generally financially healthy. They typically get anywhere between \$40000 and \$100000 in contributed income and around \$25000 to \$35000 in earned income every year. Most of their expenses go towards professional fees and payments to independent contractors. In the last few years it looks like the only expense that has changed drastically is salaries. With the artistic director retiring, the cost in this area has fluctuated. In 2011 it was \$46930, he left without a replacement so in 2012 this expense was \$3915, and now that he has been replaced the expense has gone back up

to \$24023. They seem to be pretty confident in the budget and there seem to be no budgetary concerns at the moment.

OTHER FACTORS

Based on their financial records of the organization, their earned income seems to be pretty steady. The organization has just reached its 20th anniversary and there are no competing organizations in the area, therefore the audience has stayed consistent and it has not been impacted greatly by any other economic factors.

DEMOGRAPHIC SCAN

Yellow Springs is a small town in Ohio with a population of about 3500 residents. Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse's participants are aged 5-19 or K-12. Though the program is available to individuals not residing in the village of Yellow Springs, the participants are primarily local. The age range of those participating in YSKP makes up about 18% of the population of the village. There are two ticket tiers; adult and student, with most tickets being purchased are adults. YSKP has never done a demographic survey but based on demographic information from the Census Bureau it is safe to say that most attendees are in their 40's and 50's, with this age range being the average of the population. Based on census information, nearly 50% of the population of Yellow Springs has at least an associate's degree with 75% of that number having bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and Ph.D.'s. Heavily education populations are more likely to show significant participation in the arts. Along with the population being well educated, it is also a fairly wealthy community for Ohio with the average income being around \$75000.

CULTURAL SCAN

The YSKP Board is made up of five individuals, all residents of Yellow Springs, and all with a background of involvement in the arts, specifically theatre. The staff consists of an Artistic Director, Bookkeeper, and Education Coordinator. The individuals on the staff are also local residents with strong involvement in the arts. The village of Yellow Springs is known for its strong sense of culture and dedication to the arts. Being such a small community YSKP often partners with other organizations to work with themes that might be going on around town. In the last few years, Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse has become much more involved in social media. They have a fairly active blog and active accounts on Twitter and Facebook, allowing them to stay more connected with their audience and participants.

ORGANIZATIONAL SWOC ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT, PRICE, AND PROMOTIONS CULTURAL PRODUCTS

STRENGTH: One of the only summer theatre programs for children in the region. Offers a unique mix of performances and classes allowing for a day-camp setting. Artists in residence are brought in from various locations, making each season a unique experience.

WEAKNESS: For each individual it is a significant time commitment, making it hard for people from other towns to be involved. The performances take place outdoors making this program extremely dependent on the weather. With the retirement of the original artistic director this last year, people have become tentative of the changes being made in the

program.

OPPORTUNITIES: In a community dedicated to the arts there are many opportunities for this organization to grow. With the musicals every summer being written or adapted by writers all over the country and world, a focus in on the town or region would be a wonderful opportunity for individuals in the community to become more involved. There is not a strong theatre program for adults in the community so partnering with the local community theatre to provide workshops and programming for adults would be a great way to get more of the community involved.

CHALLENGES: People in Yellow Springs don't do well with change making it hard for the organization to grow and possibly expand. It has also become more difficult to find new local and regional artists to participate in summer programming.

PRICING

STRENGTHS: There are two pricing tiers, adult and student, with adults paying \$7 and students paying \$5. This pricing is extremely cheap in comparison to other children's theatres in Ohio. For example, Town Hall Theatre in Centerville Ohio has three tiers of tickets, adults, seniors/students, and then children, with adults paying \$15, students and seniors paying \$13, and children under the age of 12 paying \$10. In order to increase attendance, the theatre offers one night where the performance is free to alumni of the program, and this is, historically, the most attended night.

WEAKNESS: With the tickets being so low in price, Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse relies heavily on grants and fundraising events to maintain their program.

OPPORTUNITIES: With the people of Yellow Springs having a relatively high average income, raising the prices of the tickets would not affect attendance much, if at all. In recent years, the high school theatre productions have almost doubled the cost of tickets with no significant affect to audience size.

CHALLENGES: Audience members might make assumptions on the quality of the show with such inexpensive ticket prices.

PLACE / ACCESS

STRENGTHS: All performances are held at the Antioch Amphitheatre in Yellow Springs. There is an abundance of free parking and it is a very accessible space. For local residents, it is most likely within walking distance from their homes. It is also a significant location on the campus of Antioch College and represents a location that is important to the village and its residents.

WEAKNESS: It is an outdoor venue making the event totally dependent on the weather.

OPPORTUNITIES: Finding other local indoor spaces in case of inclement weather and possible partnerships with other local organizations or businesses.

CHALLENGES: For 20 years the Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse has been associated with Antioch College and, specifically, with the Antioch Amphitheatre. Moving to a new location could potentially diminish the nostalgia of the organization.

PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS

STRENGTHS: YSKP is present on multiple social media outlets. During their summer season they use print ads as well as social media and word of mouth to promote their performances.

WEAKNESS: They rely too heavily on word of mouth to promote their events. They spend very little money on their printed media and have poorly designed posters as advertisement.

OPPORTUNITIES: Budgeting a bit more money for marketing and promotional expenses. Approaching organizations and businesses in other towns to advertise their event.

CHALLENGES: They do not have anyone on staff that specifically deals with marketing or promotion. The artistic director currently does this but is busy with running the entire program in addition to another full time teaching position at a nearby college so her time spent on marketing for the organization is not extensive.

SECTION III: SCHEME SPECIFIC MARKETING STRATEGIES TABLING

Yellow Springs is a small town in southwest Ohio with a population of approximately 3,500 people. Twice a year, the town hosts a one-day event known as the Yellow Springs Street Fair. This event has over 200 booths that focus on arts, crafts, and food vendors. There are also two music stages, a beer garden, and street performers throughout the town. In the last few years the Yellow Springs Street Fair has grown in size, exponentially, averaging around 20,000 visitors for the day. This would provide Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse with an excellent opportunity to not only fundraise by selling merchandise but also have one-on-one interactions with a large number of people outside of the local community and bring in potential new participants or donors. Not only could tabling be an option for this event but also having participating youth present one or two short scenes from the upcoming show at one of the two music stages or other performance areas would be a great way to advertise for upcoming productions.

DIRECT MAIL AND EMAIL

Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse only has one option for purchasing tickets and that is cash at the door. This is not only limiting people from coming to the performances but it is also not allowing YSKP to develop an understanding of who is coming to their shows as well as email and direct mail marketing and fundraising opportunities. This strategy would then, in turn, help to potentially broaden the donor base. This would require an online ticketing system to be used/developed, and iPad for credit card transactions at the door, and the printing and mailing costs associated with direct mailing.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The most underutilized resources for Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse are their social media

outlets. YSKP is fairly active across different media channels including their blog, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The YSKP blog is an extension of the website and is not updated nearly as much as their other media resources; it was last updated in February by the former Artistic Director. During the season, Facebook works as a marketing tool as well as a resource for those involved in specific shows, in case of schedule changes or other things that might happen. During the off-season, they tend to look back of previous seasons (#tbt) as well as using the page to thank donors, and keep the community updated on various news and events the organization may have. Twitter is updated more often than Facebook and works in the same capacity, with frequent updates about the organization or little blurbs about past performances. YouTube is not a resource that is used incredibly often but it was very prominent last year when YSKP celebrated their 20th season and they encouraged alumni to submit videos looking back on their experience. With only thirty-two followers on Twitter and not much action on their blog or YouTube, the social media aspect of the plan focuses on their Facebook page and Instagram. With over 600 followers on Facebook, this is their most followed social media outlet and in conjunction with Instagram they could do a much better job of marketing their shows, working in collaboration with other local businesses and organizations to market each other, and market their annual campaign and various fundraising events that take place throughout the year.

SECTION IV: IMPLEMENTATION

TABLING

The Yellow Springs Street Fair takes place on the second Saturday of June and the second Saturday of October. These dates work to the advantage of the organization because in June they are in rehearsals for their summer production and in October they are in the

early stages of their annual fundraising campaign. With a proposed budget of 500 for this event, it is a small time and monetary commitment. Parent volunteers, interns, involved students, and the artistic director could be among the people that run the booth. The event runs from 9am until 6pm and can be divided into three hour shifts. This is not only an opportunity to market the upcoming performance but also a great fundraising opportunity to sell merchandise, speak to potential participants from other communities, and reach out to a potential larger donor base. In October, there will be a stronger focus on fundraising since their summer production will be long over. This is a very cost effective way to market seeing as it is relatively inexpensive. Time would be volunteered so there would be no cost in regards to staffing the booth. The booth itself cost \$115 dollars to rent, which is well within a reasonable range and leaves \$385 to be spent on printed materials as well as any extra merchandise that could be ordered and sold. This equates to \$1000 total in marketing for the YS Street Fair.

DIRECT MAIL AND EMAIL

In order to develop a contact list for direct mail and email marketing, it is important that Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse first implement an online ticketing system. There are many systems that are available to small theatre organizations. Most of these systems charge the customer a 50¢ fee for each ticket purchased. The ticketing system I have chosen for YSKP to use is called The Little Box Office. There is no setup fee, provided online training and support, and an app that can be used. Most importantly, this would allow YSKP to collect customer details (name and email address), the customer could still have the option to opt out of the marketing database, YSKP could use this to collect custom information (how did you hear about us, etc.), customers could create a one-click Facebook post about their

booking as well as the ability to add it to their own calendar with one click. This also allows for a larger audience base to attend shows, since not everyone always has cash on them. The only cost associated with this company is that they take 4% of the overall ticket sales. Since the organization is already in possession of an iPad and the Square credit card reader is free (2.75% of each credit card transaction (at the door)), the set up of an online ticketing system would be minimal for the organization. With the new ability to gather more customer information, YSKP could set up a more effective email and direct mail marketing strategy. I suggest the following calendar for implementation for direct mail and email:

SEPTEMBER: Annual fundraising campaign begins.
Annual fundraising campaign announced and mailers sent to past donors, parents of participants, and community members

JANUARY: New Years mailers containing well wishes in the New Year and fundraising update sent to past donors, parents of participants, and community members

MARCH: Mailer sent out announcing spring fundraiser, summer production announcement, and audition information to past donors, parents of participants, and community members

JUNE: Mailers sent out to announce upcoming summer production to past donors, parents of participants, and community members

Each month there will be an email newsletter sent to past donors, parents of participants and community members. A quote for 1000 direct mail postcards printed with color on the front and black and white on the back and sent first class mail was \$544. With four mailers being sent out over the year that equals about \$2200 for direct mail marketing.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The great thing about social media marketing is that it is free and would have little to no cost for YSKP. The Artistic Director currently handles all social media including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and the blog that is very rarely updated. As mentioned before, this marketing plan suggests that Yellow Springs Kids Playhouse focuses primarily on Facebook and Instagram. If a posting schedule was implemented and only two platforms were used, posts could be more effective and done by either the artistic director or interns (who are required to be at every rehearsal). An example of the usage of these social media platforms is shown below:

	Facebook	Instagram
Who?	Parents, community members, donors, participants	Will primarily reach younger ages (participants), however, will be reached by others through Facebook
What?	Largest social network with high levels of engagement	Photo and short video social media site
Objective	Engage community members, parents, participants, current and potential donors. Show the personality of YSKP and share information regarding past, present, and future of the organization.	Use for pictures and short clips of fundraising events, office staff, auditions, rehearsals, performances, etc. Could be posted through Instagram but shared on Facebook as well.
Frequency	Five times per week at noon: Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday	Once a day is recommended although it should be dependent on events and activities
Message Type	Question, survey, poll, quotes, fill in the blank, competitions, updates on events (fundraising events, rehearsals, auditions, performances, etc.). Shares of Instagram posts.	Photos and short videos
Message Example	Monday: Our show this summer is inspired by Orwell's Animal Farm. Speaking of farms, here are 22 Goats Smiling at You to brighten up your Monday. http://www.buzzfeed.com/chelseamarshall/goats-smiling-at-you#.cf71w1K4p	Any day: Our kids are working hard in today's rehearsal! Check them out! *Insert photo or short video that would also be shared on Facebook.

SECTION V: EVALUATION PLAN

TABLING

In order to evaluate the success of tabling at the Yellow Springs Street fair, it will be important to see how many individuals stop at the table, how many sign up for newsletters, and how many make merchandise purchases. It will be a lot of counting and making note of who is being spoken to.

DIRECT MAIL AND EMAIL

Direct mail and email campaigns will be evaluated through response rate. For example, if a mailer is sent out regarding the annual campaign, simply keeping track of donations after that mailer but before the next could be one way to measure results. For online donations (available through the website) there could be a list of options one must check that describes how they were made aware of the campaign. This technique could also be used through online ticket purchasing.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media success will be measured through email newsletter subscribers, likes, followers/fans, customer feedback, comments and social media discussions, and traffic/analytics.