

MOVIE MARKETING THE BAREBONES WAY

A decade and a half ago, through our training institute we produced the publication, TWENTY NINE WAYS TO MARKET YOUR INDEPENDENT MOVIE. This publication is currently being updated and edited for it's third edition. In the meantime we have put together some of the 'cliff notes' and highlights that you might find useful.

A. FILM FESTIVALS

In the U.S. there are approximately 700 film festivals that range from a few hours to ten days. Most of these festivals will have an audience attendance of a couple hundred people. Only 20 film festivals in the entire U.S. has attendance into the thousands. Most of those are so competitive that only 1 in 20 and 1 in 50 of the films submitted are accepted. But if you have been lucky enough to have gotten into a film festival, how can you get the maximum marketing benefit from being accepted. Here are some suggestions and thoughts that might be helpful.

1. The marketing of your movie is primarily your responsibility not the film festival organizers. Their goal is to market the event. If your movie works well with that effort then they will give your movie some extra marketing attention. But on balance, your movie is just one of many and not the event itself. Why is this important? Because when planning your marketing budget and printing your promo cards, flyers and posters you must think efficiency for maximum marketing results.
2. Posters, flyers, postcards and a host of other printed material every year is sent to film festival organizers in the tons. That's great for printing companies but not necessarily that great for you. Why? Printing material only benefits you if it gets into someone's hands for them to read. When you send 500 flyers or a thousand flyers to festival organizers keep in mind they don't have the staff to deliver your material to potential festival attendees. Some festivals even ban postcards and flyers they haven't requested. As well you don't want 500 post cards or flyers sitting on a table at your movie screening that will be tossed in the trash when the festival ends. Send no more than 200 postcards or flyers to the festival. Send at least one standard size poster or the amount the festival director suggests or requests.
3. The media, television, radio and print should not be overlooked because you have been marketing your movie online. This doesn't necessarily require you to purchase lots of advertising. But it does require some judicious politicking. The first thing is do your homework. Google the names and addresses of the media outlets within 100 miles from the festival city. Some festivals will already have this info available. Once you have it, send an Email press release with three pictures and your poster to each and everyone of them. That press release should be no longer than one page that explains what your movie is about and who the writer, director, stars and producers are. Don't forget to include a contact phone, email address, web address and festival link. Be sure to address your email to the correct person, News Director, Show producer, editor, etc. Don't forget

to say thank you. If you have the skills you can accompany that news release with an interesting story about the movie that might focus on the star, or the writer, the production, an unusual event that occurred, a shooting location or how the story was born. Also, let them know if you're available for an in person, telephone or online interview. Be willing to share the interview time with other film makers. Be sure to invite the press to your screening. The more press material a news outlet receives the more interested they are in doing an interview at the festival location.

B. MARKETING HOOKS

Every product or service sold has built inside of it natural and manufactured "marketing hooks". Those things that make you look twice, think twice and then ultimately purchase. The 'natural marketing hooks' are the low hanging fruit in your movie making-marketing arsenal. They should be obvious but are easily overlooked. Here is a list of some.

1. **YOUR MOVIE TITLE**-If you have already made your movie you probably feel stuck with the title. In which case let's hope it's a good one. One that is easy to say and easy to remember. But bear in mind, here is where you should think like Hollywood. If their market research shows that a movie title turns off an audience they will rename the movie and replace the title with a new one. It is good to remember some titles are fabulous for books but stink as the title for a movie. If you're wondering if your title is right you can poll a viewing audience with a comment card. Don't be thin-skinned, they, the audience, will most likely comment about other things as well. Don't fall in love with your title, you might need to get a divorce from it. But since you have printed your poster and ten thousand promotional cards we will assume you are stuck with it, good or bad. So let's move to something easier to fix.
2. **YOU**-Major production companies hire an entire team of people called publicists to promote the movie, it's stars, director, producer and writer. Let's assume you don't have 30 million dollars in the bank and can't afford to hire anyone in your family, ie, little brother or mom to travel the globe telling people about your movie. So, your best bet is **SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION**. Notice, we said shameless, not shameful. This is where you get to brag but in a professional way. This is also where pictures of you on the set become invaluable. It is also the moment that you must sit quietly somewhere and create a **BIO** about yourself. What's a **BIO**? It's like a job resume but told in a narrative way. The way you would be introduced to a crowd when you are about to give the speech of your life. That Bio, with your picture is going to accompany every press release and is the second page of your press package or kit that you send when your movie is accepted in film festivals. This bio and picture will also appear on your website and your facebook page. Keep this in mind, don't make your **BIO** more than a single page. A half page with your picture is ideal.
3. **YOUR STARS**-Hollywood adopted into the industry right from the start the principles that had been used to fill concert halls, circus tents and sporting arenas, **CELEBRITY**. They also understood that if their stars weren't celebrities they had to turn them into one. They used

a very simple formula to do this, pictures. Pictures that showed them glamorous, sexy, exciting, daring, handsome and beautiful. This didn't mean that they always had the most handsome or most beautiful stars. They just told everyone they were. Beauty IS "in the eye of the beholder", especially if you plant the idea in the 'eye of the mind'. The right light, the right angles and the right look could turn the Frankenstein Monster into a Brad Pitt or Denzel Washington. Hopefully that's not who you're starting with but if you are choose the right light. Keep this in mind when looking for that perfect picture to promote your stars, what you are trying to achieve is the 3M EFFECT. If someone looks at the picture and says, "I'd like to meet this person", or they say, "I'd like to make love to this person", or "I would marry that person", you have a winning picture. Anyone of those three responses. If they say all three you have a potential super star in your movie. Press releases about them accompanied with their picture should not only be on your websites but should be sent to their college, High school and grammar schools and to their hometown paper. Their BIOs are also part of your press kit. You should be obsessed with every way possible to promote them.

4. YOUR STORY-Every genre of movie has fans. So, you should have a movie trailer that appeals to THEM. Actually you should have three movie promos or trailers. A 15 second, a 30 second and 1 minute. Nothing longer. Your 15 second 30 second movie trailer is what plays on your website. Your 1 minute trailer on your facebook account. You've seen enough trailers to know what a good one should look like.
5. YOUR LOCATION-The city, town, neighborhood, street, farm, rural road, church, cemetery barn, park, rooftop or soundstage you filmed at are characters in your movie. That's how you treat them when marketing your movie. Take time to find out the history of your location(s) and craft interesting, appealing and fun stories about them. These stories may be about 1. an incident that may be large or small, 2.a family that lives in the area, 3. a historical event, 4. an event that happens annually, etc. These stories plus pictures of the location and your crew or cast at them, play well in local papers and make great human interest stories on the local news channel.
6. YOUR ATTITUDE-Only a few months after the festival ends only you will remember what awards you won. Most other people won't. It's a good exercise for your humility. What people will remember for close to the rest of their lives, how you treated them. Be courteous, be patient, be respectful, be kind, be considerate, be appreciative, compassionate and be supportive of everyone you meet. You may have produced the most exciting movie in history, but people will care a lot less if you're a jackass. A big part of your marketing effort will be your day to day attitude. Don't whine, "complain, criticize or condemn. Any fool can do that, and most fools do". This is a collaborative business. Be a benevolent, open-armed, collaborator.