

# Turning Patrons into Promoters at The Millwald

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When Executive Director Donnie Bales began using Audience Republic at [The Millwald Theatre](#), he expected it would add some efficiency to the theatre's marketing efforts. What he didn't expect was how quickly it would become a central part of the organization's audience-building strategy.

## A Plug and Play Platform

Donnie was struck from the beginning by how intuitive the platform feels. Within minutes of logging in for the first time, he was building lists, exploring segmentation tools, and setting up campaigns without guidance or training.

"It just seemed ridiculously easy to learn," he said. "I felt like I could pick it up within minutes. The whole platform feels like a no-brainer."

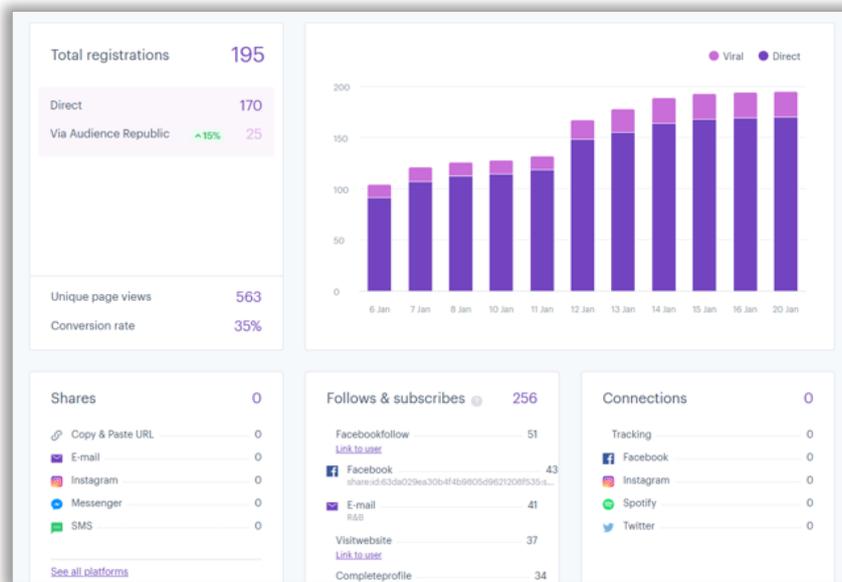
The ease of use had an unexpected side effect: it made Donnie *want* to spend more time on marketing strategy. In the past, marketing tools often slowed him down. He described The Millwald's former email platform, Constant Contact, as something that "always felt like a chore." In contrast, Audience Republic's clean layout and intuitive workflows encouraged experimentation and creative thinking.

"We're using this way more than we ever used Constant Contact," he said. "It just feels easy, and when something feels easy, you actually get in there and try new things."

## Turning Patrons into Promoters

As Donnie explored the tools, he quickly became excited about gamified campaigns. For a small-team venue like The Millwald, generating organic word-of-mouth is essential, and Audience Republic gave them a way to amplify it.

"The thing I was most excited to play around with was the gamification capabilities," he said. "I knew it could really upgrade our interactivity."



That proved to be true almost instantly. As The Millwald prepared to promote its family-friendly Puppy Pals show, Donnie set up a points-based contest that encouraged patrons to share, follow, and register for updates. The results surpassed anything the theatre had expected – selling nearly half the seats with **84% less in marketing spend**.

“People were sharing it all over Facebook, email, Instagram, and Messenger,” he said. “The organic really increased. It was everywhere.”



The momentum has continued with an upcoming Ruben Studdard performance. Audience Republic helped The Millwald capture more than 190 registrations well before tickets went on sale. Many users accumulated hundreds of points as they shared the campaign across multiple platforms.

## Faster Insights and Smarter Targeting

Beyond the viral impact of the contests, Donnie found immediate value in Audience Republic’s dynamic data tools. Before adoption, pulling buyer insights, identifying top spenders, or segmenting audiences took significant time and manual effort.

With Audience Republic, those tasks take seconds.

“I love seeing the top spending ticket buyers,” he said. “That was data I had never pulled before.”

Dynamic lists, in particular, changed how he planned and executed campaigns.

“It’s just been a huge game-changer,” he said. “The more people buy tickets, the more those lists update automatically—and that cuts down on so much work.”

The improved segmentation allowed Donnie to upload targeted audience lists into Meta and build campaigns that spoke directly to the families, returning patrons, or genre-specific ticket buyers most likely to convert.

## **Elevating the Patron Experience**

One of the most unexpected benefits was Audience Republic’s built-in SMS marketing capabilities. The Millwald runs a speakeasy experience that requires a password for entry—a detail that previously led them to explore purchasing a separate texting platform. Instead, they now use Audience Republic to seamlessly send the password to guests.

“It has saved us a ton of money,” Donnie said. “And it elevates the experience. People love getting the password texted directly to them... It’s absolutely helped us build stronger relationships. People feel taken care of.”

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## **Just Getting Started**

Although Donnie has only been using [Audience Republic](#) for a short time, it has already reshaped how The Millwald markets, engages, and communicates.

“We’ve had great success already,” he said. “And I feel like we’ve only scratched the surface of what we can do.”