

Marketing Strategies for Live Events: A Conversation With Victoria Cairl

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In the ticketing and live events industry, staying ahead with innovative marketing strategies is key. [We had the privilege of speaking with Victoria “Vic” Cairl, a trailblazer with over 20 years in the industry](#) and founder of [Table 7 Strategy](#), where she has implemented creative marketing strategies to help her clients. In this interview, Vic shares her wealth of knowledge, drawing on her vast experience to provide insights applicable across the live event spectrum.

You have done so much in your career already and have an impressive track record. Could you tell our readers a bit about your journey in this industry?

My journey began over two decades ago, and I’ve been fortunate to work with so many excellent organizations; Disney Theatrical, The Metropolitan Museum, Lincoln Center. Each role taught me the importance of understanding the audience, adapting to technology, and the art of storytelling. I was inspired to create Table 7 Strategy, where our mission is to help more people experience theater and live events, and my team and I have been doing that since 2019.2. High Customer Adoption Rates

Let’s dive into those strategies. Where is the best place to start when a person is understanding their target audience?

It’s critical to look beyond the obvious. For instance, if your target audience is just “theatergoers”, we need to say, “theatergoers PLUS”. On Broadway, that can mean bringing in a celebrity with broad appeal, like casting Jessica Chastain in *A Doll’s House*. Now Jessica’s fans, who might not typically buy tickets to a play, want to check it out.

But obviously not every production can cast a celebrity. So, think about the content of your show and who else it could appeal to. *Olympica* is a play about an artist, so I want to think who may have an interest in visual arts, specifically modern art. Now I can reach a fresh audience by targeting ticket buyers at art museums, galleries, etc.

My advice is to think about your niche audience. What is the additional interest here? Is there some other audience who might be excited to come see this show based on the subject matter?

And then once you have a good sense of who is coming to your show, you need to think about what your ticket-buying experience is like.

An area we know well. Can you elaborate on that?

The ticket buying experience is pivotal. Once when working with a ticketing client I clocked NINE steps from clicking “buy ticket” to the actual point of purchase. That is too many. You need to pretend to be a customer and walk through your purchasing process. If I’m on your website and find a show I want to buy tickets to, how long until I’m entering payment info? Really time it – it is important to know what your customers experience.

Someone at the box office understands all the intricacies, but make sure that everyone from your marketing department to your artistic director has gone through and physically understands what it’s like. Because you can have the best ad campaign in the world, but if somebody gets to your site and they’re unable to figure out how to buy, or it’s a miserable experience, you will have a million abandoned carts.

Speaking of carts, let’s talk about pricing strategy and discounts.

Absolutely. It’s about understanding the value proposition.

Not a single person I know who bought a ticket to Taylor Swift complained about the price. Sure, it was expensive, but they were willing to spend to be in that stadium with Tatay. It was worth every penny. Ultimately, you must ask, “Does this amount feel correct?”

So maybe you’re looking at a huge price, like *Cabaret*, for example, will be opening on Broadway in the spring. Tickets to sit on stage-level as if you are in the Kit Kat Club are very expensive, but it’s an experiential show and you feel like you’re really inside the club. I’ve seen it in London, and it was absolutely amazing. I would pay a certain dollar amount because that is a full-on experience and I will get my money’s worth.

Conversely, maybe your show is brand new. One of the shows that we’re working on here at Table 7, which you should all check out, is *How to Dance in Ohio*. It’s a very exciting new musical. What we’re finding is that people are curious, but it doesn’t have a ton of buzz backing it up, so we offer seats from \$99.00, which people are willing to pay to find out.

If you ask the people who bought early tickets to something like *Dear Evan Hanson* or *Wicked*, they’re very proud of the fact that they got a \$99.00 seat snagged somewhere in the beginning of those runs because you’re not necessarily going to get that opportunity again.

As you’re thinking about pricing, you don’t immediately have to go to the discount bargain bin. Really think about the price that the average person would be willing to pay to try something new or have a completely experiential experience.

Hopefully those people buying \$99 tickets will get to brag about it someday. Other than pricing strategy, what are some marketing

techniques to create buzz?

Word of mouth is so powerful, and how do we share with our friends? Before I went and saw *Six*, I probably saw the ending number 600 times on TikTok and Instagram. Although we want audiences to keep their phones off during the performance, many productions now are allowing and encouraging audiences to film the finale or encore or curtain call. They want people to post those videos and tell their friends and followers how much fun they had.

What else do we see? Those Playbill selfies. How many pictures have you seen of the Playbill (or any program) held up with the stage in the background? People share about their experiences, so once you get them to buy a ticket, provide opportunities for them to spread the word. *Once Upon a One More Time* had all those fun photo-op frames in the lobby, *Spamalot* is giving out Burger King-style crowns, *Here Lies Love* handed out disco ball necklaces... these are great examples of inexpensive marketing strategies. Help your audience make a memory.

Another fun idea is to do special events or theme nights. I know *Here Lies Love* had some special performances where Fatboy Slim did a DJ set after the performance. When we worked with *On Your Feet*, we boosted ticket sales the last two weekends by offering a free dance lesson with some cast members after the show. When Table 7 worked with Geva Theater, they did a dress-up night during their *Wizard of Oz* run – that's a fun easy way to create a special experience for the audience.

Geva also does this cool thing called "Prologue", which I think is brilliant. A lot of venues do talkbacks after the show, but these happen before the show. Once a week, a member of the creative team will talk about an element of the show, like the lighting designer will tell you some things to look for. It's fun to feel like an insider when watching the performance.

One of our clients out in California is holding a contest for local songwriters to come and entertain audiences pre-show, because *Beautiful* is about a young songwriter. We're hoping this attracts some cross-pollination because someone might just come to check out the music but come back and buy a ticket.

If venues have the space, I encourage them to create opportunities for a communal experience. Host a cocktail hour for networking, or singles' night speed dating before a show!

Hah! That's a fun idea. We know ticket sales see a boost once the show announces a closing date. What are some other ways to create a sense of urgency?

Regardless of how long your show is running, remind people that time is limited. Single-ticket buyers [as opposed to members or subscribers] might hear a good review and go, "Oh yeah I meant to see that". Post a countdown of how many days are left to buy a ticket.

One effective method is limited time offers. A flash sale might sound silly, but they work. For *On Your Feet* we offered a special ticket price in honor of Gloria Estefan's birthday, which only lasted that day. If someone has been meaning to buy a ticket, that sense of urgency can get them over the finish line.

You've promoted such a wide range of events. How do you approach messaging for different age groups?

Each demographic requires a tailored approach. For older subscribers, we focus on familiarity and loyalty. For younger, busier audiences, it's about excitement and convenience. Balancing these approaches has been key.

Any final words of wisdom?

It's all about storytelling. We remind our audience about the unique, unforgettable moments they'll experience. Each performance is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, which resonates with people of all ages.