

Direct Marketing: email

Email is one of the most cost effective marketing methods for arts centres and arts organisations. If you have a ticketing system with a customer database, you are half way there. Make sure you collect customer's email addresses at every opportunity.

The best way to manage email marketing campaigns is through a system integrated with your ticketing system (for example [SeatAdvisor](#) integrates with PatronMail). Integration prevents double handling of lists and databases, which is required if you use one of the free tools such as [MailChimp](#). If your ticketing system doesn't offer an integrated solution, though, double handling is unavoidable, in which case MailChimp is one of the simplest tools to use.

The most effective email campaigns are **personalised**, i.e. individually addressed to each recipient, and start out "Dear John", rather than "Dear theatre-goer". (You should never use 'Dear theatre-goer'!) You should refer to their most recent relevant experience with you: for example, if you're emailing them because they saw a previous play similar to the event you're marketing now, tell them. Say something like *'because you recently enjoyed xxx with us, we thought you'd enjoy yyy. Like xxx, yyy is a play about etc'*

The **subject line** is critical. Avoid wording that could be spam (like 'have we got a deal for you'). Avoid generic subjects such as 'What's On' or 'Coming to XX Theatre in July'. Perhaps try something a bit cute, or ask a question – you want to intrigue people, grab their attention.

The **time and day** the email arrives in your customers' inboxes is critical. Most organisations promoting leisure activities find that emails arriving on a Tuesday or Wednesday morning are most successful. This assumes that most people are reading them as part of their working week, which won't be the case for all of your audience of course. Many theatregoers will be retired, home-based, or working part time. You should experiment with sending email campaigns on different days at different times, track the results, and see what works best for you and your audience. (Email services such as MailChimp and PatronMail can help you with this analysis because they track open and click-through rates.)

Keep the content **short and to the point**. Try to keep it all 'above the fold', i.e. one screen's worth of writing and no more. Rather than lengthy description, consider including a link to a teaser on YouTube (if available) to give people a taste of the event.

Include a **direct link back to the booking page** on your website (or your ticketing agency's website if you don't sell your own tickets), with a line saying 'book now for the best seats' or 'book before x date for your special early bird offer'.

Including a direct '**call to action**' like 'book now', and an incentive (like 'best seats' or 'early bird offer'), will increase the response rate.

Online resources

Tips to improve email marketing: <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/freestuff.html>

8 email marketing tips:

<http://www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/Editorial/Magazine-Features/8-Email-Marketing-Tips-47641.aspx>

Example email copy

This copy was written for a play that toured Victoria in 2012, 'The Flood'

Subject line: *"The Flood hits town <date/month>"*

Dear <first name>

Have your sandbags ready next month when **The Flood** comes to town for x night/s only.

As someone who enjoyed <relevant play title> recently/last year/etc, we wanted to make sure you had the chance to book early so you don't miss **The Flood**.

Bristling with dark humour and edge-of-the-seat performances by three of our finest actresses, **The Flood** is startlingly authentic writing, plunging audiences into the lives of characters so real you feel you know them; a web of family intrigue against the haunting Australian outback. Take a peek at this preview on YouTube: <link>

Written by Patrick White Award winner **Jackie Smith** and featuring **Maude Davey**, **Shirley Cattunar** and **Caroline Lee** (who you might remember from her performance in **Cosi** last year), **The Flood** is a theatre experience you'll be talking about for days.

If you book before <day/month> you get our early bird special, which includes your choice of complimentary pre-show or interval drink.

BOOK NOW <direct clickable link> to claim your free drink.

We look forward to welcoming you to **The Flood**.

Yours sincerely, ... (always have the email signed by a real person)