

Getting Past “It’s Not For People Like Us”: Pacific Northwest Ballet Builds a Following with Teens and Young Adults

Instructor Guide for

Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) prioritized building teen and young adult audiences and deepening access to ballet. Read to find out how an overhaul of PNB’s communication plan, website, and social media strategy, coupled with the development of programs increasing access to ballet for this target audience, overcame misconceptions about ballet and resulted in thousands of teens and young adults attending PNB performances.

Key Themes & Subject Areas

- 1. Marketing and Brand Identity Misconceptions** - How do you market to the audiences you want to reach? Is your current communication strategy reaching all of your target audiences? Why or why not? How do your visual brand elements speak for you? Does your website attract the audience you actually want to reach and support your brand’s objectives?
- 2. The Power of Video** - The power of video was harnessed by PNB to increase familiarity and approachability towards the company and ballet as an art form. Data has revealed to PNB that familiarity helps ticket sales by breaking down the fear of not knowing what to expect before attending a PNB performance. Read to find out the decisions made for video content creation and how they sparked the interest of teens and young adults.
- 3. Making New Audiences Feel Welcome and Included** - The executives at PNB worked hard to ensure inclusiveness permeated PNB’s culture at every level: from the box office staff to the ushers on-site, even putting an ad in the program to notify season ticket holders why they were seeing so many teens in the audience and encouraging conversation. PNB took strides to increase the feeling of inclusiveness for its new audiences and it paid off.

Teaching Concepts

1. Discuss PNB’s **formula for conversion** on page 52 that includes both offline and online marketing efforts to reach the under 25-year-old audience. How many times do you see a promotion for a company or event before you purchase a ticket or buy a

product? How might this knowledge influence the ways in which you market to potential ticket buyers?

2. Examine the role of PNB's in-house videographer on pages 31-38. Consider their goals for **digital content creation** and how PNB thinks creatively towards developing videos that build deeper relationships with its audience.

3. **Research findings** from focus groups with teens and young adults informed the components of PNB's new **engagement strategy**. How did the four engagement strategy themes emerge across the research efforts? What surprised the staff? Identify steps the PNB staff took to make sure they captured a helpful level of detail from which to pivot as an organization.

4. The partnership with Seattle art access organization, TeenTix, gave PNB a platform through which they were able to reach thousands of teens. PNB offered heavily discounted day-of-show tickets via TeenTix to get teens in the audience of PNB performances. What other strategies were implemented to retain these teens as fans of ballet? Discuss how each phase of the **teen audience experience** was fine-tuned to create a welcoming, engaging, and fun atmosphere for this target audience.

Further Digital Resources:

- Teen Tix
- The Pointe Program at Pacific Northwest Ballet