

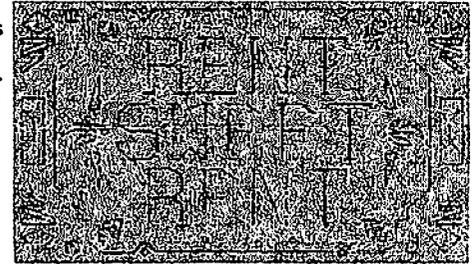
MARKETING YOUR VENUE FOR RENTALS: 7 PRACTICAL TIPS TO CONNECT WITH NEW RENTERS

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Is earned revenue from outside rentals something your arts organization is looking to increase? Do you find yourself as an arts marketer being tasked with marketing space to renters for special events, performances, and more? Alongside your other responsibilities this may seem overwhelming, but promoting your rental space can easily be integrated with your marketing strategy.

In my role as Director of the Spaces program at Fractured Atlas I help venues connect to renters through online marketplaces nationwide. I see lots of fresh marketing ideas within a wide spectrum of rental business models. I also see a lot of missed opportunities in connecting to renters online. As with the rest of your organizational marketing, sharing great visuals, clear, catchy language, and user-friendly web content is key. Marketing your rentals is also a great exercise in adopting your consumer's perspective. In this post I'd like to share a few practical ways to more effectively market to NEW renters. This begins with seeing things from their eyes.



- 1. Think like a NEW renter.** If you are looking to increase your current rentals revenue you can't rely on word of mouth alone. To attract new renters it is important to first pause and consider their point of view. They are shopping around many different venues and haven't yet experienced the vibe or community that makes your venue unique. Craft a succinct summary to communicate these 'intangibles' to renters (don't just repurpose your 'About' statement). It matters to new renters just as much (if not more) than the amenities, size, and tech specs of the space. Think about it like online dating. What type of person are you primarily looking to attract? What can you communicate about your venue to make a good match?
- 2. Rentals webpages are first impressions.** It makes sense your website focuses primarily on your programming, rentals are a side thing. However, new renters are likely to click thru to your website from search results. Chances are high your rentals page will be their first entry point. Take a look at your current rentals web page what information is missing for a first introduction?
- 3. Think of photos as a site visit.** What do you show a new renter when giving a tour in person? What amenities and other spaces do you highlight? What makes the biggest impression? Photos of the building, entrance, and signage help a new renter feel more familiar with where they (and their guests) will be arriving. Photos of the bathroom (seriously this type of thing really helps), and changes in lighting from day to night are also useful. It is pretty standard for rentals to be marketed with just a photo of the space empty or photos of past events. However, in attracting new renters, casting your net for visuals much wider is the way to go. Rental photos are the remote site visit that leads to increased interest in booking your space.
- 4. Name drop.** Renters definitely are interested to know what, if any, high profile companies have rented your space (even if it was just that once, many years ago). When appropriate, sharing those names as an indirect testimonial can make your venue stand out in a renters mind.
- 5. Publish range of rates.** Venues often make the mistake of not publishing any rates. This is a missed opportunity. Rates matter A LOT to renters. It is how they narrow down their many options in a competitive marketplace. Remember that rate isn't the same thing as price. Rates are how you further target rental referrals with your marketing. It is far better for you to target renters with budgets in the right range, than loose referrals because renters assume rates are too high or it's just easier to reach out to a venue who has published rates. Does that mean you still can't offer a special deal, or come way down on rates for the right opportunity? Heck no, there will be times that makes absolute sense. But those exceptions are special and not what you are actively marketing to bring in the dough. Don't take the easy way out and just publish "Call for rates". Strategically communicate your desired rate. A sliding scale of rates is to be expected, and it is helpful (on both sides) to know the starting point up front.
- 6. Consider sharing availability.** Think about how much time renters spend calling around for availability at multiple venues. Because this is such a "pain point" for renters, it is a genuine marketing opportunity for your venue to stand out. Understandably communicating up to date availability is a choice that may not be right for every venue. But, if you are looking to drastically increase your rentals a calendar is a powerful way to visually represent what is available as options. You don't have to share details of your bookings or internal programming in order to share available rental times. Google calendar, for example, is a free online calendar which can be embedded and has a setting to hide details of events and only show time as blocked out. Sharing availability is definitely an inexpensive marketing tactic that can be leveraged to increase targeted referrals and bookings. I've seen this be highly effective, especially in newly opened spaces or venues that are seasonally dark.
- 7. Virtual tours.** For those of you considering producing virtual tours and videos targeted at renters, here are 3 very different examples to inspire and get your marketing brain juiced. When viewing these videos I encourage you to not compare whether or not the type of venue is similar to yours but rather take in the approach of communicating with new renters. These approaches can be applied to any type of discipline, venue, and location:

Gibney Dance Center: Runtime 5:50. Gorgeous production value, very kinetic camera work, the renter gets a chance to emotionally connect through out the virtual tour.

LINE

LATER

SPARK

05:51

HD

Stage Left Studio: Runtime 5:12. Geared towards folks self producing their own shows as a rental, this video is a virtual tour that highlights the flexibility of the space and answers a lot of questions up front that a producer and design team would have.



Davenport Theatrical Enterprises Runtime 3:02. Short and humorous welcome video featuring a regular renter. Definitely communicates the young vibe of this new space. Example of a DIY video that doesn't require hiring a videographer.



Each of the virtual tour examples does an excellent job of thinking from the perspective of a new renter. They answer questions both practical in nature (who, what, how, when) and inspiring (why renting these spaces is an excellent experience). This approach is effective regardless of the medium. If you are considering creating an online listing for your rental spaces, a webpage, or a printed brochure, the key is to think from the perspective of the primary type of renter you are looking to attract. Understand what their experience is when looking for rental space and identify any barriers you can remove to make that experience better. With this approach you'll start to field more rental referrals in no time.

"Rent Sweet Rent" Illustration by Devin Rochford from Bloomberg.com