Arts Management &
Technology Laboratory

Making Data-Driven Decisions
For Marketing-Focused Outcomes

By

Christine Sajewski

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USING DATA TO MAKE DECISIONS

We are surrounded by data. In 2012, NTEN partnered with Idealware to gauge the use of data by nonprofit organizations. Of the 398 organizations that responded, 99% reported tracking some sort of metrics, but far fewer indicated actually using those metrics to make strategic decisions. Among arts organizations, only 26% reported that their decision-making processes are generally informed by data (Idealware 2012).

So why should arts organizations use data to make decisions? Rick Lester, former CEO of TRG Arts, explains that data has replaced guess-work and opinion-based decisions with knowledge to remove ambiguity and create an "assumption-free climate" (Northup-Simpson 2013). Data-driven decisions are highly customizable and metrics can be crafted that are specific for an organization's goals, yielding data that are quantifiable and measurable over a period of time. The analysis of such data is especially useful for marketers, who can use a collection of metrics to compare their organization's performance to others in the industry, identify strategies to continue, and determine tactics to change. Such

information can supplement annual reports and track the effectiveness of online campaigns.

Undoubtedly, the use of data is extremely valuable. But as the NTEN study discusses, numerous barriers exist in the nonprofit sector that keep organizations from using data effectively. While most arts organizations collect some form of information, many are still struggling to figure out what exactly to track, and more importantly, what to do with the data once gathered (Idealware 2012).

> "The average organization has easier access now to far more freely available data than ever before...but not all data is created equal. Different sources, researchers, or institutes use different methodologies to find their data"
> (Andrei and Bernard 2013).

Decisions can be made from data already at a marketer's fingertips, often from free reports or information the organization is currently collecting. Such sources include ticketing records, audience databases, social media channels, and website analytics. Internal data can be used to understand current audiences and find better ways to reach, connect, and develop them into long-

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term ticket buyers. The information these internal data sources provide is particularly beneficial for marketers looking for ways to develop and maintain current customers, improve ticket sales, and establish long-term audience relationships.

INTERNAL DATA SOURCES

When moving toward making data-driven decisions, arts marketers can begin by recognizing many of the different data sets generated internally that contain valuable information about their audiences. Will Lester, Vice President of Network Programs at TRG Arts, comments, "Regardless of staff knowledge, there is now an expectation that your CRM or ticketing system will give you all the answers. Personally, I don't know of any [systems] that are self-aware. The best systems on the market (and some are EXCELLENT!) still require someone to go in and mind the information" (Lehrman 2013). Marketers should leverage their ticketing data to understand facts about who is in their audience, regularly review social media and e-mail campaigns, and use web analytics to understand their site and the relationships present in the online realm.

The following figures provide a brief look at four types of data sets and the

corresponding information arts marketers can gain from them. Each set includes available resources, examples of guiding questions, and reports that could answer those questions.

TICKETING DATA

Examples	Blackbaud Tessitura
Basic Questions	Who is in my actual audience? Who is buying tickets?
Available Reports	Ticketing Records Audience Database (Patron's Edge, T-Stats)
Numbers	Current Audience Demographics Frequency and Quantity of Ticket Purchases

Ticketing data is valuable for understanding the facts and figures about the people in the audience. To better understand the data, marketers can refer to guides provided by an organization's software. Check out AMT-LAB's 2011 Ticketing Software Satisfaction Survey (http://amt-lab.org/ticketing/) for information on other service systems and resources.

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

Countless resources are available from social media websites themselves, various other sites, and blogs, along with news articles and reports. Watch e-mails and alerts for insights and tools from Facebook and

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Twitter. Be sure to review the AMT-Lab posts and white paper on Social Media management systems.

Examples	Facebook Twitter
Basic Questions	Who am I reaching? Are people engaged?
Available Reports	Fans/ Followers Post Activity
Numbers	Demographics of Fans Virality and Popularity of Posts Timing and Reach of Posts

E-MAIL SERVICE

Examples	Mail2 Constant Contact
Basic Questions	Is the campaign effective?
Available Reports	Distribution Heat Maps
Numbers	Opening Rates What People Click

Many people have written reports on best practices for email as a marketing tool. "Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits" is one helpful guidebook (Convio, Inc. 2010). Articles for small businesses, such as those found in Forbes, often include email marketing information that can easily be interpreted for arts organizations (Lee 2012).

WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Examples	Google Analytics
Basic Questions	Who is coming to and using my website? Where does visitor traffic come from? Is my site optimized for ticket sales?
Available Reports	Audience Acquisition Behavior Conversions
Numbers	Demographics and Geographic Location Length (time on site) and Depth (pages/ visit) Traffic Sources (Search, Other Sites, Social Media) Events (View video, download file, click link)

Google offers a special grant just for nonprofits that includes free access to additional resources including apps and ad words (Google 2013). Many people have also written reports recommending strategies to understand an organization's analytics. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits provides further insight and additional web analytics resources in the "Beginners Guide to Website Analytics" (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits 2013).

APPLYING DATA TO DECISIONS

Once arts organizations have identified data sets available to them internally, it is important to recognize that these channels

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do not operate alone. "It's critical that nonprofits discover how to effectively engage with their 'next generation' of constituents through new media channels.

At the same time, it can create yet another silo, further burdening nonprofit staff and causing organizations to miss opportunities to build relationships with their constituents," explains Heller Consulting (Heller Consulting 2012). How can marketers in arts organizations look at these multiple data sources, including social media channels, to conduct more meaningful analysis?

As a starting point, marketers can identify connections between their internal data sources and articulate goals for each relationship.

For most arts organizations, an important goal is to build audiences by motivating people to purchase a single ticket and then cultivating them to become subscribers. Often referred to as "moving up the ladder," marketers can utilize data to understand their current audience and "fans." NP Engage reminds organizations to "Know Thy Constituent" by being aware of their preferences and making their experiences with the organization feel unique (McCarthy

2011). Heller Consulting reinforces, "Constituent information is scattered across the organization. This is especially problematic when individual constituents engage with the nonprofit in multiple ways. Disparate data is difficult to keep synchronized" (Heller Consulting 2012). Combining the information across internal data sets is one simple way to send consistent and effective messages. The next section will delve further into an analysis of goals, reasoning, and examples of possible data set combinations.

UGLY DUCKLING BALLET

To help explain the many applications of data, Ugly Duckling Ballet Company, an imaginary organization, will be referenced as an example. Ugly Duckling is a small professional ballet company with 20 dancers and a $4,000,000 budget. Located in a small, city (population 2,000,000), Ugly Duckling sells an average of 1,300 tickets to each of its 10 performances.

The mission of the Ugly Duckling Ballet Company is to establish a lifelong appreciation of classical ballet in the community. Ugly Duckling Ballet aims to inspire future generations of dancers through live performances.

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Anna Avolvap, the marketing manager at Ugly Duckling Ballet, wants to find ways to utilize multiple data sets to improve her strategies and goals of connecting with audiences:

1. Increase Facebook engagement (likes, comments, shares) by 25%.

2. Improve E-mail performance by increasing click-through rates by 30% over the course of the next three monthly e-news mailings.

3. Increase ticket web ticket sales 20% through external online channels.

4. Create a clear online marketing strategy to drive ticket purchases towards a 15% increase.

HOW DATA SETS INTERACT

Many links between different data sets exist that can help to meet an arts marketer's goals. For instance, ticketing and social media data offer insights to position a message by recognizing the best engagement strategy. A marketer might compare ticketing demographics with social media audiences. Or by comparing ticketing purchases and website traffic, a marketer might be able to identify sources that lead to transactions. Ticketing data is particularly valuable as it offers a representation of the people actually sitting in the seats.

Idealware notes, "Targeting and defining your audience can help you decide on which communication channels to use, what kinds of things to post, and how you should be defining success. Understanding your audience should go hand-in-hand with goal setting" (Berry 2013).

Arts marketers might also look at links between ticketing and email as another way to learn about audience members by tracking what email campaigns appeal to each audience segment. Another data intersection occurs when web, email, and social analytics meet. The results can help marketers to understand the flow of traffic by comparing sources on each channel through and between additional sources. Understanding the recipient enables marketers to understand a more complete picture of trends and how different groups of people engage to create communications to "reach the right people, with the right message, through the right channel" (Bernard 2013).

TICKETING + SOCIAL MEDIA

Being conscious about an arts organization's online and offline audience can help effectively convert fans into ticket buyers and ticket buyers into fans. An organization may have an especially effective social

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media campaign drawing much attention and conversation, but is it really valuable if these audiences are not engaged beyond the news feed? To effectively create these discussions, arts marketers need to understand their social media audience and how this compares to their actual ticket-buying audience to best position themselves online. Idealware suggests looking beyond the transaction in order to engage in discussions. "Once new supporters notice you, they will hopefully be interested in learning more about your organization and becoming more invested in your mission" (Idealware 2013). Upon identifying the distinctions, arts marketers can find ways to utilize different social media channels to create the best engagement strategy that will drive ticket sales. It is key to understand what segment of your physical audience is in your social space to help you direct and build what engagement tactics work best for a particular arts organization.

Social media can be used as a "retention tool" to keep conversations going among audience members after performances by soliciting reactions to the experience or asking questions (Siuda 2013). For an example, see the Ugly Duckling Ballet Company scenario below. By analyzing demographics from the company's ticketing data, and combining that with information about social media use by specific audience segments, the company is able to devise more efficient engagement practices.

Another example comes from a study of college student audiences conducted in 2000 that found the lack of continuation after the performance to be a barrier to attending the performance at all. One student commented how he returned to his dorm after a symphony orchestra concert and wanted to talk about his experience, but his roommate soon lost interest and the conversation fell flat (Jacobs 2000).

> "Social media is an ideal space to follow-up after an event. Photos and videos of your attendees at an event allow supporters who didn't attend to see what they missed, and can help promote future events. Letting attendees post their own pictures, blog posts, and videos provides a way to share stories."
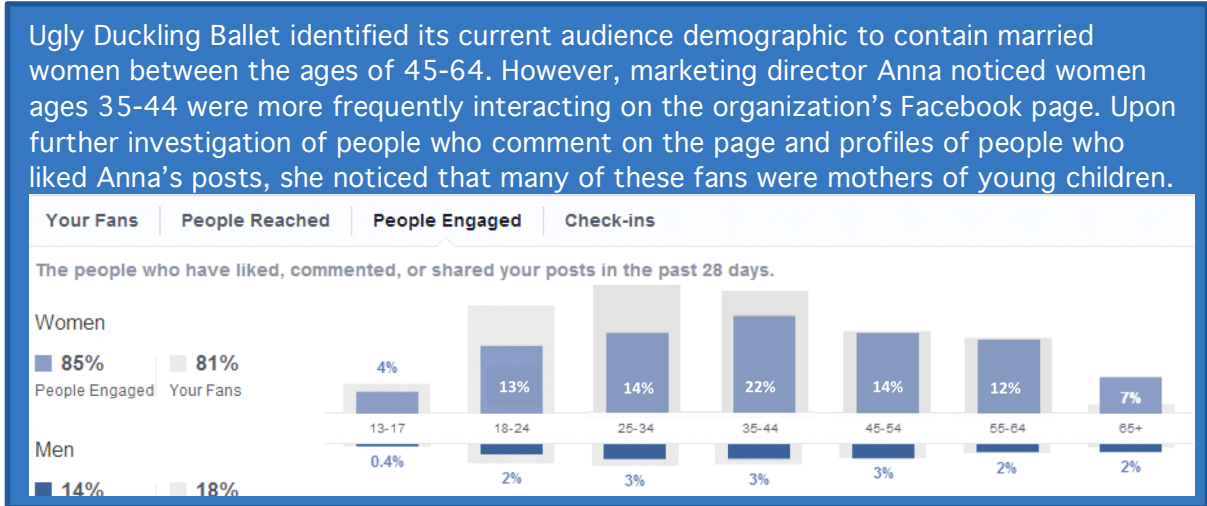
Arts marketers need to recognize the desire for engagement among attendees and build upon it to encourage patrons to attend future events. Though marketers cannot directly segment a particular target within social media as with e-mail, demographic data, post content, and timing can enable arts marketers to improve their strategies for effectively converting fans into ticket

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buyers (Berry 2013). Once fans are engaging more frequently on the site, marketers can establish a deeper commitment and appeal to them for buying tickets to other shows, bringing a group, subscribing, or even donating to the arts organization.

Ugly Duckling Ballet identified its current audience demographic to contain married women between the ages of 45-64. However, marketing director Anna noticed women ages 35-44 were more frequently interacting on the organization's Facebook page. Upon further investigation of people who comment on the page and profiles of people who liked Anna's posts, she noticed that many of these fans were mothers of young children.

Anna then began taking steps toward building awareness by targeting communications toward this particular audience. She made sure to feature posts about family-friendly events, like the *Swan Princess* meet-and-greet. After the event, she asked moms to tell about their budding ballerina's favorite part of the show and share their pictures.
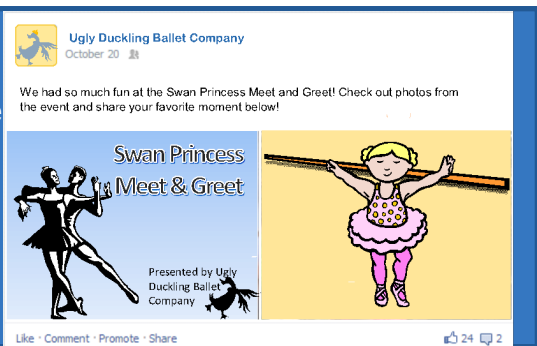
E-MAIL + TICKETING

Understanding the connection between an arts organization's ticketing data and e-mail system can help it segment audiences to better focus its e-mail communications. Interpreting this data enables arts organizations to become more "member-focused" and create a personal connection with audiences. As NTEN discovered, "It's become clear we need to operate in a truly member-centric way, but that we [currently] don't. By constantly bringing forward data about what our members want, need and are actually [using], we can no longer rely on anecdotes to make decisions" (NTEN 2013). Sending different messages to particular audience segments, such as subscribers or single-ticket buyers, is a common strategy, but further analysis can help marketers move beyond basic segmentation to focus on constituents

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interested in particular types of shows, specific venues, or who purchase at certain times of the year.

Ticketing and e-mail data provide different information that can be used congruently. As Idealware states, CRM systems provide a 360-degree view that "helps you treat each of your constituents as a whole person by allowing you to see how they've engaged with you in the past while also showing the many ways they relate to your organization" (Bernard 2013). Upon analyzing these data, arts organizations can divide their e-mail communications into categories based upon audience interests in media or content type. Finding ways to more effectively communicate with current audiences goes beyond sending messages to subscribers or single-ticket buyers to target smaller, more segmented groups. npEngage suggests engaging audiences using the "Amazon model" which recognizes, "If you like X, you might also like Y" (Beussman 2013). After sending messages to different segments, e-mail data will help to identify the interests of particular groups. Perhaps preview photos appeal to new ticket buyers, but multi-buyers want to learn more about shows with behind-the-scenes interviews. Each data set provides multiple metrics to interrogate. Regarding e-mail data, Convio discusses useful benchmarks for understanding e-mail data. For instance, open and click-through rates show the effectiveness of messages, while clicks within the e-mail message indicate the appeal of certain articles, text choices, and graphics. Response rates demonstrate even deeper levels of engagement between the reader and the organization (Convio, 2010). An example from the Ugly Duckling Ballet Company reveals how cohort analysis within email data helped provide data for changes that increased responses. (see diagram p. 11)

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Frequent Buyers: **New Ticket Buyers:**   **Subscribers:**

Anna noticed that subscribers and new ticket buyers had similar interests in behind-the-scenes previews and interviews with dancers. However, frequent ticket buyers primarily clicked on promotions for upcoming shows and hardly ever clicked on the other articles. Anna began sending a separate monthly e-mail to these frequent buyers that emphasized the season and events with a couple smaller links to the additional content.

WEBSITE + TICKETING

Comparing an arts organization's web analytics with ticketing data can help to understand how its website drives people to become ticket buyers. A post from WiredImpact mentions, "Many organizations place a lot of weight on website visits. But visits have little value in and of themselves. If your website visits went down 70% but your online donations went up 300% how would you feel? Probably pretty excited. What if your visits went up 300% but donations fell 70%? Probably not quite as thrilled" (Hartstein 2013). The same holds true for ticket purchases: is an organization's website not only effective in attracting new people, but also in converting them to ticket buyers? Idealware suggestions several possible tracking measures: Did it result in the number of attendees hoped for? Which channel was the most effective at driving conversion? Do people who are more engaged actually donate more? (Idealware 2013). Comparing web traffic with ticket purchases, marketers can work backwards to identify sources correlated with ticket purchases, such as digital ads on other websites or links posted by a local blogger.

Furthermore, by understanding the process of how people reach the website

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immediately before making an online purchase, it becomes easier to find ways to encourage new ticket buyers to become multi-buyers, and (eventually) into subscribers—and then ensuring that these click traffic patterns are clear and simplified. To conduct this type of analysis, NTEN recommends narrowing metrics to identify needs (are people doing internal searches for particular sections on the website that should be easier to find?), wants (are people frequently returning to particular information?), and motivations (what are the most common landing or exit pages?) (NTEN 2013). The answers will help to identify discrepancies between the number of ticket purchases and the number of web visits. When comparing these data sets, it is likewise valuable to consider traffic patterns on the website when offline or online events through other channels occur. Marketers can then determine what events drive the most traffic to site, and which of those visitors go on to purchase tickets (Tuttle 2011). Some visits may come from online sources—perhaps a local event calendar—that can quickly be identified through web analytics. Other visits may come from direct mail campaigns, which can only be tracked by comparing the estimated dates of when mailings should hit mailboxes to changes in traffic on the website.

When reviewing website analytics for the Ugly Duckling Ballet, Anna separated new visitors from returning visitors and then identified which sources were best for driving new and returning traffic.

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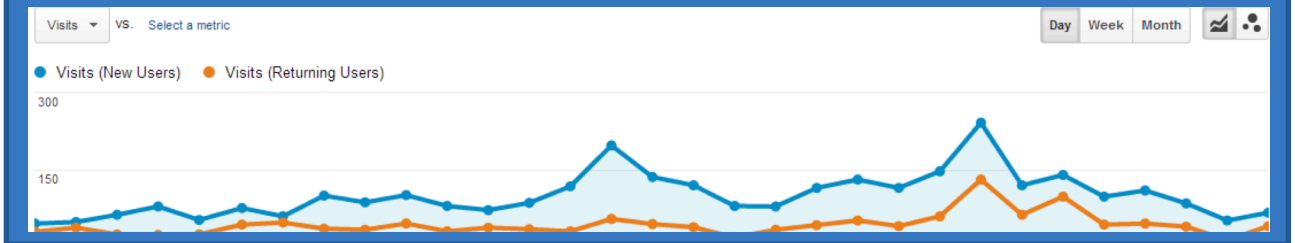
Source	Visits ↓	% New Visits	New Visits	Bounce Rate	Pages / Visit	Avg. Visit Duration	Engagement (Goal 3 Conversion Rate)	Engagement (Goal 3 Completions)
	4,453 % of Total: 11.22% (39,682)	69.68% Site Avg: 70.55% (-1.23%)	3,103 % of Total: 11.08% (27,996)	53.33% Site Avg: 51.78% (2.99%)	2.25 Site Avg: 2.46 (-8.28%)	00:01:52 Site Avg: 00:02:10 (-13.59%)	13.99% Site Avg: 16.38% (-14.58%)	623 % of Total: 9.59% (6,499)
1. Webbed-feet.org	535	43.74%	234	51.96%	2.33	00:02:01	12.52%	67
2. Facebook.com	436	77.06%	336	35.32%	2.45	00:01:45	19.72%	86
3. LeLAC.org	350	76.86%	269	70.29%	1.71	00:01:06	8.57%	30
4. JustDuckyBlog.com	277	38.63%	107	40.43%	2.43	00:04:45	16.97%	47
5. FlightlessBird.blogspot.com	254	77.56%	197	70.87%	1.48	00:01:09	5.12%	13

She then looked at the flow of events to see who was clicking on "buy tickets" and how people were interacting on the website. Her observations of "visitor flow" revealed that visitors who start on the home page tend to interact on upcoming performance pages, so Anna then made sure those pages are easy to find on the website.

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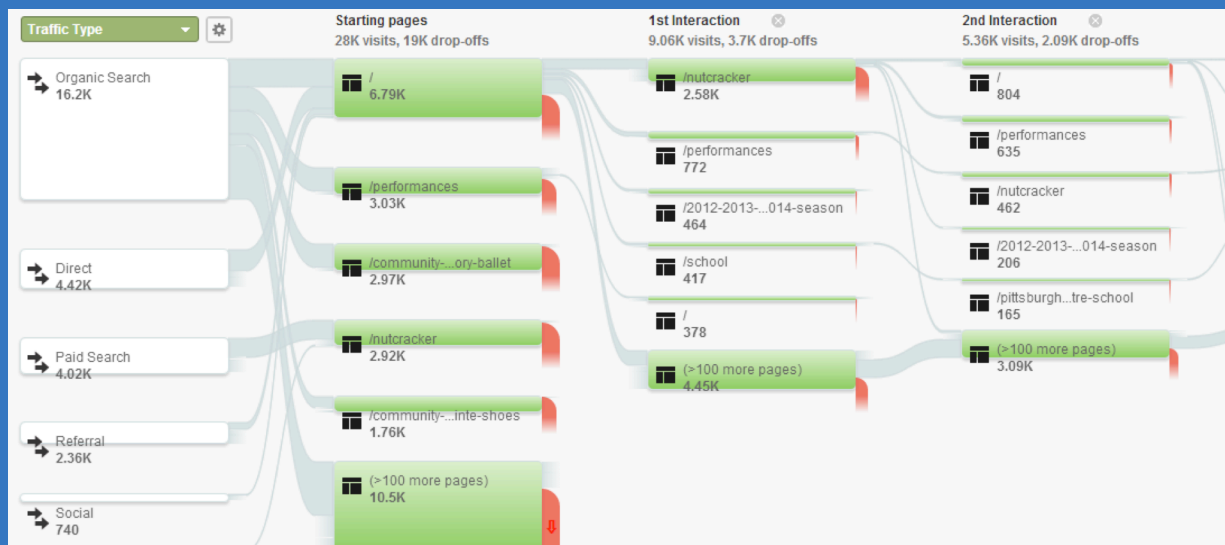
Ugly Duckling Ballet sent out a special direct mail campaign for its production of Swan Lake that promoted a new online deal. An email directing recipients to the same online deal followed three days later. Anna looked at the web analytics and noticed a larger peak after the direct mail postcard, and many return visits on the day of the email.
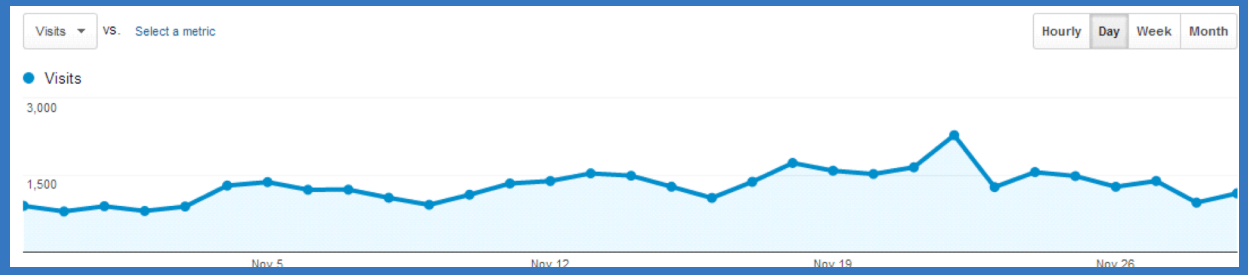
WEBSITE + E-MAIL + SOCIAL MEDIA

Data connections between more than two channels—such as website, e-mail, and social media data—do not have to be complicated in order to offer valuable insights into targeted communication strategies. Just as marketers target their traditional marketing, so too can they tailor messages in online channels to appeal to particular audiences. "As with direct mail, you'll improve response rates by segmenting your email file based on factors such as constituent interests, donation history, gender, age, length of membership or any other defining characteristic, targeting them with specific messages," Convio explains in its nonprofit e-mail marketing guide (Convio, Inc. 2010). Online engagement should be defined beyond commenting, sharing, re-tweeting, etc. to include those who purchase tickets and attend performances. Idealware explains, "It's all too easy to look at your number of followers as an end in and of itself rather than a means to reach your goals." These numbers should align with tangible outcomes such as attendance or donations. Idealware continues, "Counting the people who actively participate on one of your channels confirms that you're saying the types of things people want to hear, effectively encouraging them to be more involved" (Idealware 2013). Marketers need to analyze across multiple channels to determine strategies that will grow relationships.

In targeting audience preferences on different media types, marketers should leverage both communication and awareness. Numerous studies and reports are available detailing current demographics

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for each media channel; however, Idealware also emphasizes that marketers should look beyond the demographics of a particular channel in order to understand what an organization's unique supporters are actually using (Idealware 2013). Going beyond who is interacting on the website or social media, marketers should identify how they are interacting to make strategies as effective as possible. Perhaps subscribers and people ages 40-60 prefer e-mail, but single-ticket buyers and people 20-40 are more interested in social media. Identifying the flow of traffic from these sources to an organization's website enables marketers to recognize the most effective content— defined as that which leads to longer visits and deeper site engagement. While initially time consuming, understanding the interaction on and between e-mail, website, and social media channels can save marketers effort in the long run with an informed and therefore more influential strategy. Perhaps the website is more effective at calling people to action, but

email and Facebook do well at driving people to the website. A resulting strategy might involve building increased interest and constantly driving audiences from e-mail and Facebook to web content where ticketing information is easily accessible.

Pew Research also places value on measuring online profiles: "While building and maintaining websites and creating social media profiles help arts organizations serve their patrons and their mission, there is an ancillary benefit as well: being able to quantify traffic, visits, and the viral nature of campaigns" (Thomson, Purcell and Rainie 2013). Recognizing the flow of audiences from their first interaction with the arts organization—whether on the website, social media, or in an e-mail—to their increasing interest to their ultimate ticket purchase can help marketers identify the best way to direct current and future audiences along this targeted conversion traffic.

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CONCLUDING THE UGLY DUCKLING BALLET EXAMPLE (5 SLIDES)

To understand the relationship of Ugly Duckling Ballet's different traffic sources, Anna began by looking at her web analytics. She noticed few people were coming from her Facebook site, although the engagement on Facebook had been steadily increasing. She also recognized that e-mails brought more people to her website as seen from the November monthly e-mail data below:
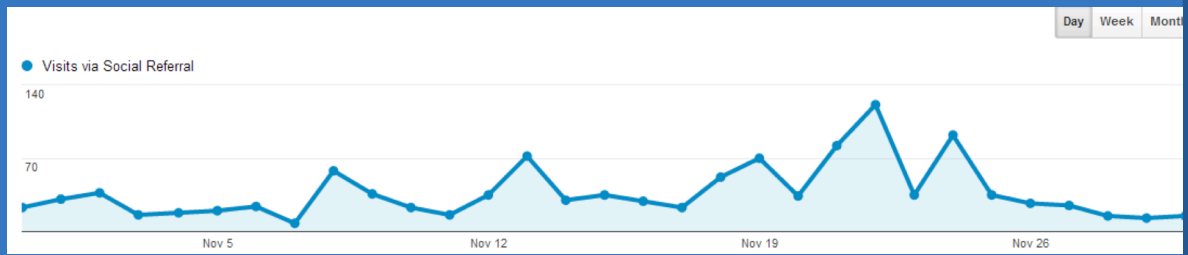

At the same time, Anna found that people were clicking to Facebook from the website, so she made sure to feature this link on every page of her website so that it was easy to find.
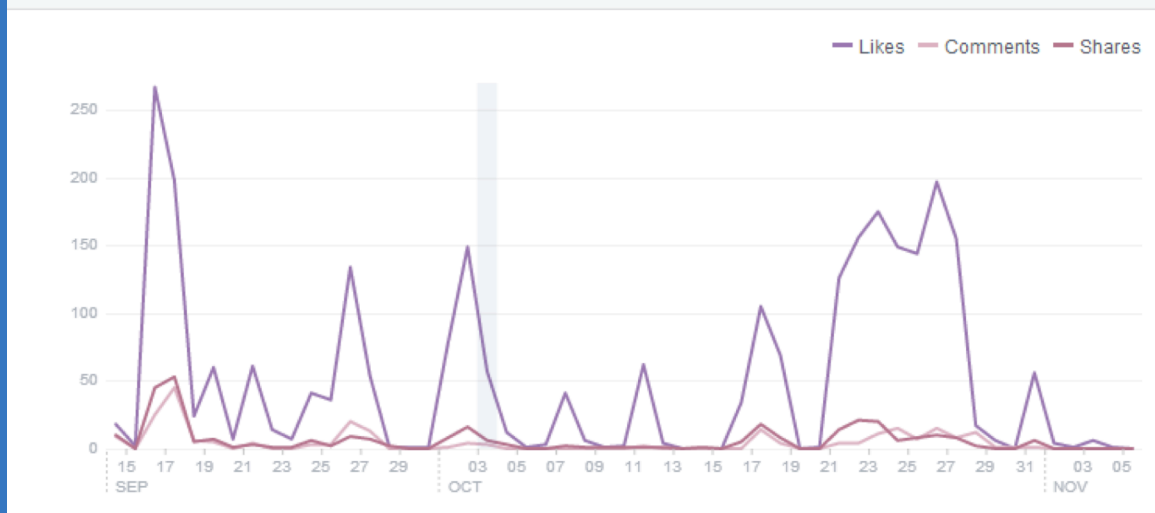
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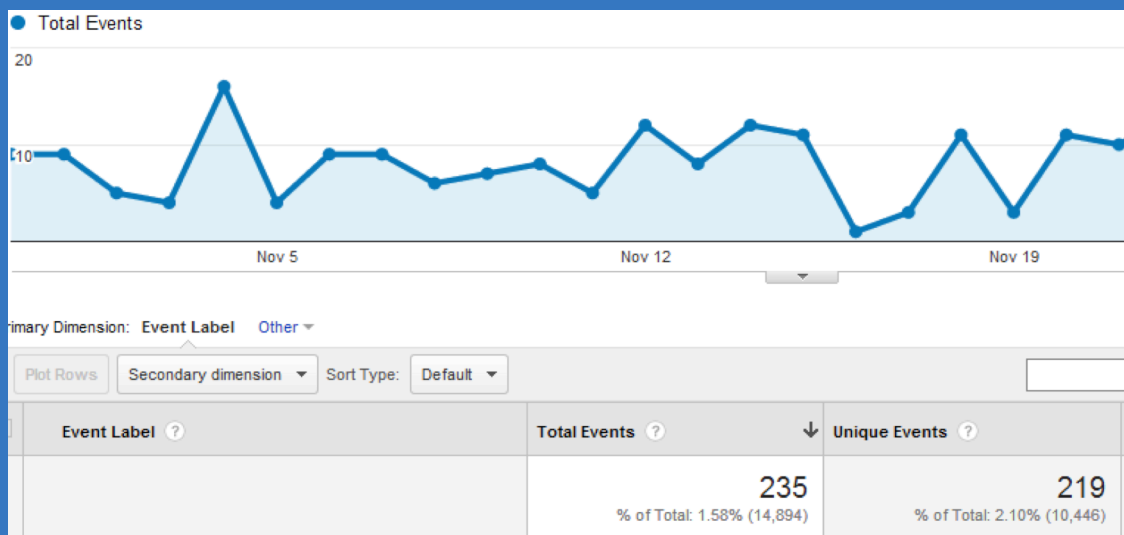
She next looked at traffic coming from different social media sources:

Anna adjusted her strategy to use Facebook as a source for engagement with current audiences by keeping conversations going after shows. At the same time, she featured website links prominently on her e-blast to drive them to the site for tickets, but to Facebook for conversations.

Recognizing that social media wasn't effective for driving ticket purchases, she began to use social media to build her email lists by encouraging people to sign up through a link on Facebook:

Ugly Duckling Ballet Company shared a link.
July 1

We're putting the finishing touches on our monthly newsletter! Watch your inbox for exclusive interviews with the principal dancers and a sneak peek backstage!
Not on the list? Click the link to sign up!

Sign Up for the News, Discounts & More from UDBC!
ow.ly

Like · Comment · Promote · Share   10
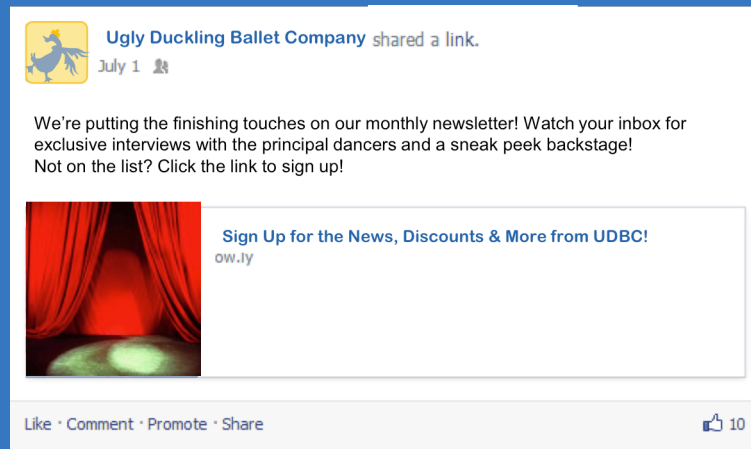
Thus, knowing email was best for driving ticket purchases, Anna was able to drive social media visitors to the email list to communicate with them and bring them to the website through e-blasts. At the same time, she encouraged new social visitors to come from the website and e-mails to engage.

SUMMARY

Arts marketers can gain significant value from analyzing data sets individually and the relationships between them. With 99% of arts organizations already collecting information about their audiences, marketers have the potential to use these data to make decisions to increase transactions and engagement. From ticketing to social media to e-mail and web data, marketers can begin to identify these resources within their organizations, establish questions about their data, and utilize available reports.

As marketers become comfortable spending time reviewing these data sets, they can move towards applying the information gleaned from them across channels. As Will Lester of TRG Arts states, "Let the numbers speak for themselves" (Lehrman 2014). In recognizing the implications contained in an arts organization's internal data, marketers can develop strategies to appeal to current customers, improve ticket sales, and establish long-term relationships with their constituents.

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C. Sajewski