

ARDENT RESOURCES

Self-promotion
using social media

From an online workshop delivered by Andrea Ortiz

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ABOUT

ARDENT RESOURCES is a collection of workshop notes, interviews, guidance and tips about working in Theatre. It is not intended as comprehensive advice or formal educational resource on which reliance should be placed; rather it collates various insights from people working in the industry that you can choose to incorporate into your own toolkit. Nothing should be taken as a representation or warranty as the correctness or fitness for purpose of any of the content.

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INTRODUCTION

This guidance offers a whistle stop look at self-promotion using social media. It's taken from a 90-minute online workshop that was given by Andrea Ortiz on 7th October 2020.

It doesn't cover everything you need to know about self-promotion and social media; think of it as an introduction with some useful hints and tips along the way to help develop your brand and showcase your talent.

GETTING STARTED

Work out what aims you want to achieve through your social media profile, such as to showcase your talent, network and find opportunities.

Think of it as building a digital CV and Portfolio.

Remember, social media is just one component of your career strategy that includes practice, training, reading and networking.

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CREATING A BRAND

Brand refers to the professional image you put to the public; it's how people see you and how you want to be perceived.

Your social channels and content should reflect the brand you've chosen for yourself.

Some people create high concept brands (e.g. highly polished, edited images, taken by professional photographers). This is quite difficult to maintain and usually needs a PR team. Something to consider when you have the profile and money.

A more relaxed approach is closer to how you would use social media personally; it has an organic, behind the scenes look. Well-known actors, who made their name before the digital age, use this approach to show their more relatable side.

The recommended content ratio is 80% high concept (e.g., production shots, headshots, going to auditions) and 20% more relaxed (e.g., hanging out with family, going to festivals etc).

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QUICK TIPS

There are two main ways in which you can grow your followers:

Organic growth

Word of mouth, shares, takeovers, collaboration.

Invite your friends and families/contacts to follow and like. Algorithms on Facebook and Instagram favour this type of growth.

Add social media handles to your CV, emails, etc.

Non-organic growth

Buying followers, spam followers and unfollow methods (e.g. follow 50 people per day then unfollow them the next week), take part in loops (group of accounts get together and send direct messages round) or competitions.

BE WARNED, platforms notice these non-organic growth tricks and might note your account as spam!

GAIN & KEEP FOLLOWERS

Once you have thought about your brand think about the practical steps to build, make and maintain your brand.

Think about when you want to post, who or what the post will focus on, what name you will use, what type of content you want to post and how much time and effort you can put into your social media presence.

Think about how the different platforms will fit together to reflect you and your work as a whole.

When you create your profile, make sure you choose a good quality profile picture that gives a strong impact from the beginning.

Use the biog section to describe what you do and who you are so that followers know what to expect from your page.

Good engagement from your followers is more important than getting high numbers of followers.

As long as you are clear in your aims, your plan and who you are targeting followers will stay because they know what to expect from you.

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QUICK TIPS

Have a loose structure (e.g. I can log on 3 times per week, or a couple of hours 1 day) to both really engage and post.

Don't feel pressured to be constantly online every day.

Don't just post on your timeline. Use stories and share other people's posts. Sharing other people's posts increases your curation credentials. Play around with short video, stories and images, social media changes everyday so play around and find what works for you.

Research and make a list of hashtags to help work out which are useful. You can also follow hashtags on Instagram, so find a few which are relevant to you.

Afternoon to evening is always a good time to post.

Create a bubble of 5-10 people who will be on hand to engage with your content (e.g. share, like, comment) whenever you post to help engagement and the algorithm. When you get comments on posts, make sure to reply even if it's a simple 'thank you'.

Encourage followers to turn on notifications

POSTING & CONTENT CREATION

Content might include pictures, videos, music, headshots, flyer image, productions shots, behind the scenes, links to blog from directors, press release, reviews, trailer, day in the life videos. Think creatively how you can repurpose material (e.g. stills from the video, teaser trailers). Think about how often you want/can post content.

The more people interact with your post the more it gets shown. In the first few minutes, Facebook will show to 10% of your followers. Depending on how it does with them, the circle gets bigger and bigger.

Social media platforms use an **algorithm** that notices and predicts behaviours, which means it works against any accounts that are spammy (e.g. the follow and unfollow, tagging lots of people on a post). It buries them at the bottom of the discover page or timeline. On the flip side, they reward accounts that are genuinely active. Facebook are pushing for the community feel (e.g. other actors, industry) so it rewards those accounts that are active and contribute to it by interacting with it. If you pay for ads, that uses an algorithm. As soon as you stop interacting, the algorithm will notice and push you down.

Hashtags

There are themed hashtags (e.g., #followfriday, #sharesunday) to help encourage people to post. It's easy to get spammy with using them; 10 is more than enough. Some prefer to add them in the comments of your post;. Balance which hashtags are useful for you (e.g., #actor will have 1,000s of posts so the content quickly gets refreshed). Balance out with less used hashtags so your post has a better chance of featuring in the discovery page.

Timings

Try out different times and go with what is convenient to you, your schedule and what your followers seem to respond to.

Insights will help show best times (which day and time followers are most active). Some platforms need more than 100 followers to access insights.

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QUICK TIPS

All platforms have paid promotion options.

Try not to post the same thing across all platforms, tailor your campaign. There should be a reason for followers to follow across all platforms, to expect different things from different platforms.

Think about 'calls to action' - what you want people to do following your post or tweet.

Most people experience social media via phones, so think about how it will appear on a smaller screen.

Videos should be around 1 minute before attention wanders; first few seconds important.

Keep accessibility in mind - use ALT descriptions on images and captions on videos.

SOCIAL PLATFORMS

FACEBOOK

- One stop shop to create a brand however it is used less.
- Feels more like a PR tool; has access to your data and that of your friends.
- Creates a more formal and polished brand; but business page has limited two-way engagement.
- Use as an Artist - E.g. like an interactive, constantly up to date CV (e.g. headshots, production shots, short clips, invite people to your shows, join groups).
- Networking - use personal page to friend and follow people; business page where people can follow you and make use of paid advertising.
- Network in different groups for actors and look for opportunities.

INSTAGRAM

- More visual.
- Use the live function for real time interactive videos; Reels function for making stop motion videos (a copy of TikTok basically!)
- Castings and opportunities are sometimes posted (though most use Facebook and Twitter for castings).
- Network - be part of the community and engage with other accounts.
- Direct messages (DM) are rarely answered.

TWITTER

- Least formal or polished platform.
- A big global conversation.
- Be deliberate in what you post. Tweets are like an elevator pitch due to character limit, although you can create a thread which is a continued train of thought broken into chunks.
- Wasn't designed to be as visual, but research does show visuals gain more attention.
- Artists use to share links to articles, websites, show notices, press releases etc.
- Can show more of your personality by joining conversations.
- Good for networking with individual directors, casting directors - e.g. DM or tag them into posts.

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QUICK TIPS

Vertical networking:

These are the people at the top of their careers - the influencers and gatekeepers!

Horizontal Networking:

People who are starting out, just like you. It's easier to get a response from people on a similar level and at the same stage of their careers.

If you see a production, you have a point of interest with the actors, directors, casting directors etc

Social Media Campaign:

The word campaign has roots in traditional advertising, so think of it as a 360 campaign, communicating a consistent message through all your marketing elements, that promotes something across all your different platforms.

SOCIAL PLATFORMS (Continued)

YOUTUBE

- Original video social media channel.
- Early days didn't have adverts, but now more heavily paid adverts.
- Recently ventured into films, live concerts, festivals.
- Good quality visuals and sound; there's a volume of content to compete with.
- Creative outlet that can showcase talent.
- Networking - a bit less interactive, but you can still follow and comment.
- Choose strong thumbnail that is simple and striking.
- Think about accessibility. E.g. captions.
- Think about a call to action at end of video - e.g. like, subscribe; tell them what you want them to do next.

VIMEO

- More curated than YouTube.
- Has paid subscription.
- Useful for sending videos/showreels to casting directors with a password protection.
- It elevates the quality of your submission.
- Not first choice channel for networking.

TIK TOK

- Newest social platform which took off during lockdown of 2020
- Short-form video content
- Less polished, more natural and open
- A good place to be creative, curious and silly



BEING SAFE

Verified accounts:

Look for the blue tick. The people behind these accounts have had to prove they are who they say they are.

Check who they are following and who follows them - do the lists align with the industry this person is in?

Check their posts - see who has liked and commented and look at the type of comments.

Check the company website and their links to social media.

Follow up opportunities that have been shared on social media by looking at their website or giving them a call.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

Social media is not real life; it's great that it's accessible to a lot of people, but this also means there are opportunities for exploitation and scams.

Be strategic and smart with the platforms.

Use social media wisely and in a way that suits you and your time; don't get caught up or lost in it.

Be safe - know your limits and boundaries.

Be intentional with your content and what you're sharing.

Make sure it always fits into your brand and who you are, what you want to put across to the world.

Build and be part of the arts community.

Try to make things as inclusive and accessible as you can; include as many people as possible.

Network - be open to meeting the right people to work and collaborate with (horizontal networking). Don't just go for people at the top of their careers.

Be patient; it doesn't grow overnight. It's a slow process.

The aim is partly about growing your followers, but key is growing the right followers in the right space.

Remember, there is a community for everything!

The speed at which new things get added, means you need to work on and encourage engagement to get your posts to the top.

The socials work both ways; make sure you follow and engage with other people's content.

Finally, be intentional in what you're doing - have a brand, a plan and engage.