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# Planning a Year End Formal

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Senior Thesis

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### Supporting Art Through Celebration

Art is an ever-changing mode of expression necessary to the well being of humanity. It allows audiences to gain insight into the souls of the artists, in turn bringing communities of various cultures together. Art unifies and inspires audiences all over the world. In four years of studying dance at Western Michigan University, I have found the art of dance to be an incredible mode of unification for those around me. I have witnessed its power first-hand in experiences with guest artists and working with peers as our connections grow deeper through the creative process and social events we experience together. Through those experiences, I have learned that the power of art is supported through its celebration. My studies in event management have allowed me to understand more fully how important it is to provide the community with opportunities to support the arts through celebration. Combining art and event management in the creation of a year-end Orchesis Dance Society Formal is an example of how the community can support art's power through celebration.

Orchesis Dance Society's mission is to promote student involvement, leadership opportunity, and community attention through dance events. These qualities are held to a very high standard, and are actively implemented with every event. Within my role as president of this registered student organization, I have established a position in the department as not only a leader, but also an entrepreneur of new events. With the help of my background in event management, Orchesis hosted a year-end formal in order to support their mission of promoting

student involvement and community attention through the power of art. The event was designed to allow students to relax with their fellow classmates, whilst simultaneously celebrating how their art brought them together the past year. Since local community members can only support art if they are provided the opportunity to do so, the year-end formal was the perfect chance for them to get involved and witness the power of art first-hand. Another major opportunity Orchesis offers to celebrate art is their annual concert. During this concert, students' works are displayed for all of the public to enjoy. Through this performance, the community can feel the unified quality art creates in its audience, as they leave feeling connected to the artists and inspired to create as well. Without the ability to support experiences like this, the power art has on the public would otherwise be overlooked.

The year-end formal hosted by Orchesis Dance Society was an elegant event meant to demonstrate the power of art through its celebration. Its mission is to support Orchesis, and art within it gain visibility and support. This event allows the community outside of the Department of Dance to become invested in the organization and, in turn, attend more events in the future. By hosting the 2018 Formal, students are provided with the opportunity to get involved with the organization, meet new people, and experience what art can do for the community; these all support the mission of Orchesis and meet the goal of celebrating art through provided opportunity. Along with the attendance of Orchesis members, community members of Kalamazoo county and WMU will join in on the fun and enjoy what the organization has to offer this night and many other nights to come.

Putting together a formal at such a caliber as this grants a hands-on look at how event management benefits the power of art. It provides the host organization with incredible amounts of visibility through marketing tactics and inclusion of the community. This attraction to the

organization will allow for an increase in attendance to art events, therefore exhibiting the power of art. The event requires equal participation of all members of Orchesis board, specifically the President and Special Events Committee in order to create a night of unity and celebration. The night includes an open dance floor for attendees to demonstrate the power art has to bring communities together. Along with this Orchesis has a poster board with photos of our events posted at the entrance of the event and apparel being sold on the first table guests see. This allows for members and non-members to get a little taste of what Orchesis has to offer outside of this year-end event.

Orchesis is a non-profit organization that raises funds off of yearly fundraisers and show benefits. Money raised from all events is directly deposited into the Orchesis Dance Society checking account. The treasurer follows these deposits and any withdrawal or spending throughout the year to create an annual budget. This budgeting process helps determine how much money can be expended on what based off of the previous years' earning versus spending. From this information an estimate of the possible profit and expense of any event can be made in order to deem it worthy. An analysis of the yearly budget is necessary in determining if Orchesis could afford to hold an event like the year-end formal. The budget shows that though the formal is not a break even event, hosting it is feasible due to the opportunity it provides the community to celebrate art through Orchesis.

In the annual budget, Orchesis is expected to make a total of nearly \$7,000 off of various fundraisers, a yearly concert, and apparel sales. Instead, in the last two years the budget increased to nearly \$10,000. After reviewing the invoice and ticket sales from last year's formal, the overall cost to Orchesis of hosting a formal was nearly \$2,000. This means that the extra \$3,000 made within the last few years can be budgeted towards the event in hopes of gaining

more visibility for Orchesis and demonstrating the power of art as an outcome. These benefits will lead to more donations and participation in future events that help to fund the organization. It is deemed beneficial to Orchesis to host an event like a year-end formal because it is allowing for student involvement and community attention through a dance event, the mission of the organization. Students volunteer to help with the execution of the event and then attend it with guests who were not previously involved with the organization. This benefit of community involvement with WMU students and members of the Kalamazoo area through the event greatly outweighs the drawback of the cost because the more people that are involved with the organization, the more financial support it receives and the more power art has on those involved.

One of the most crucial parts of a successful event is the marketing. Customer satisfaction, relies in large part on the ability of the organization to develop a relationship appropriate to the specific demographic they are geared towards (A Practical Guide). This means that in order for an organization to really meet the needs of their audience, they must both advertise within the guidelines of their mission while also appealing to the general demographic. The demographic for those simply attending, though, differs from the demographic of those volunteering to help put it on. Volunteers are solely members of Orchesis board while attendees could be anyone from WMU and the surrounding Kalamazoo area. In order to determine the appropriate approach to advertise the year-end formal and find volunteers to help execute it, a tool from my event marketing, Event Marketing Principles course, from Professor Deborah Droppers, was used. She provided an empty table to fill in that will demonstrate how Orchesis determined the demographic for the year-end formal.

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Attendees</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>
<i>General Age</i>	<i>The attendees for the event will be approximately 18-23 years of age.</i>	<i>All of the volunteers are members of Orchesis Board. They are ages 19-22.</i>
<i>General Educational Level</i>	<i>College students affiliated with the Orchesis Dance Society, Department of Dance, or friends of members.</i>	<i>The general education level of the volunteers are current college students.</i>
<i>General Income level</i>	<i>They have minimal income because they are full time students.</i>	<i>The general income level is minimal as full time students.</i>
<i>General Geographical Area</i>	<i>Most currently reside in the Kalamazoo area and attend Western Michigan University, but some will come from various states as they are friends or family of WMU students.</i>	<i>All volunteers live in or near the Kalamazoo area.</i>
<i>General Family Status</i>	<i>Most have parents, siblings, significant others, and friends in the general area that would be willing to attend the event.</i>	<i>Most are from families in the states of Michigan and Illinois. All currently reside in Kalamazoo, though.</i>

This table analyzes the participants of the event in various aspects of their life in order to get a clearer understanding as to what may appeal to their aesthetic and gain their attendance. By reviewing both the attendees and the volunteers, it was determined how better to advertise the event. For example, in requesting volunteers to decorate, make and sign contracts, or contact entertainment, an appeal to their psyche must be made. This means an incentive may be necessary to draw the participation of board members based on their inner needs. As opposed to the participants, in which incentivizing their participation will not suffice, we needed to do more.

Appealing to their aesthetic through advertisements of the event, and providing the opportunity to witness the power of art through celebration, will be two necessary components to gaining the participation of the community. Analyzing the demographics of volunteers and attendees gives insight as to whom the organization is trying to get involved and how best to do that.

Once the demographic of the target audience is considered, tactics for marketing and promotion of the event have to be determined. A questionnaire from Professor Droppers in the Event Marketing Principles course helped decide what features would work best for Orchesis's specific audience. As follows...

***Distribution- what geographical areas will you focus on and how far will people come to participate?***

*The geographical area that we are specifically focusing on is the Kalamazoo, MI area. We are specifically targeting the dance community of Western Michigan University, as this event is being held to celebrate the successes of Orchesis since the beginning of the year. We do not foresee people from very far away coming to participate unless they are accompanying a student of WMU as a guest, however, we hope to gain community involvement in order to increase participation from further distances in years to come.*

***Advertising and Promotion- how will traditional, non-traditional/social media tactics complement your strategies?***

*Non-traditional/social media strategies will allow us to reach the younger generation (college student) audience with which Orchesis Dance Society is most involved. We will utilize facebook and instagram in order to advertise the event itself and ticket sales, etc. Snapchat will be used as a day-of tactic in order to document the event as it is happening and review our following as the night goes on.*

*We will use traditional strategies like posters in hallways, locker rooms, and local buildings in order to create a more personal relationship with the attendees before and during the event. Prior to the night we will hang up posters throughout the Department of Dance to advertise what we are offering and when we are offering it. During the formal we will converse with participants to receive feedback regarding any successes or changes that may need to be made.*

***Customer Service/Hospitality –***

*To be able to meet the needs of our attendees, it is our goal to keep them consistently updated about our event through our own Orchesis Dance Society social media and hard-copy advertisements throughout the Department of Dance.*

This form is helpful in determining what specific tactics are necessary for advertising our event and the process as to how to use those chosen tactics. After using both of these forms from Ms. Droppers, it is clear that our target audience is generationally more adapt to social media ads and we need to advertise to in a way that will reach them best. This target audience is geared more towards social standing, therefore social interaction through electronic media. With that in mind, and attention to Orchesis mission of community involvement, advertisements via social media platforms, extending through the Orchesis profiles, students profiles, and Department of Dance profiles, will reach audiences that we desire. Creating an interactive Snapchat filter specific to the night of the event, a Facebook event where students can find updates, and weekly Instagram reminders are ways to get the attention of the audience to which Orchesis extends. All of these techniques will help improve the attendance of the event because they appeal to the target audience. Marketing strategies can be used to speed up the ticket-buying process and incentivize audience members to attend. For example, for attendees who purchase their ticket(s) prior to a week before the event, they can be entered into a drawing to win apparel at the event. This not only gives the attendees an incentive to purchase their ticket(s), but also creates a conversation, creating a relationship with them possible attendees.

After an in-depth analysis of the year-end formal, it was determined that it directly correlates to the mission of Orchesis Dance Society whilst also serving as an example of an opportunity given to support the power of art. The power art has on a community is seen in the increased attendance of the community at the formal, a nearly double head count from the



previous year. In addition, a measureable goal for this event is the budget with which Orchesis has to work. The cost of the formal to Orchesis does not compare to the benefit it has on the recognition of the power of art and the increase in involvement of the organization. In order to determine if the event was successful, a detailed analysis of the expense and participation is to be done. It was deemed successful when a 25% increase in followers via social media platforms was noted since advertisement of the event went public. The year-end formal allows for participants to support Orchesis through purchases of tickets and apparel while also supporting the power of art.

In addition to this, the formal ended up serving nearly 100 attendees. 50% of those attendees were people not associated with the department of dance or Orchesis Dance Society previously. This means that the formal provided Orchesis with increased visibility by 50%. In just one event, Orchesis already gained more of a following than it had from years of hosting events. Along with this the overall cost to Orchesis was nearly \$2500. This price was about equal to the expected outcome of the event and is worth it due to the increase in visibility that was found.

An event like a year-end formal for Orchesis Dance Society benefits the organization as a whole through increased visibility and understanding of the power of art. It provides those already involved with friend-raising through the strength of art within the community attending and provides Orchesis with visual appreciation from public participation. By staying true to the mission of the organization, the formal testifies to the power of art and the necessity of its celebration through provided opportunity. The power of art is seen in the unification of the participations of the year-end formal and the increased following Orchesis Dance Society found.



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