



Engage-Serve-Represent

October 9th Marketing Panel Discussion

Panelists: Anne Saxton, Bryant Lake Bowl / Barbette / Red Stag Supper Club

Dana Munson, Jungle Theater

Julie Ingebretsen, Ingebretsen's

Melanee Meegan, Peace Coffee

Introductions

Anne Saxton has been working for Kim Bartmann (Barbette, BLB, Red Stag Supperclub) for 4 years doing marketing & sponsorships, events, music booking, and organizing the block parties for each restaurant. Before that she was the asst. director of the Sound Unseen Film & Music Festival for 5 years.

Dana Munson is marketing director for Jungle Theater and an actor for Frank Theater. Like all good marketers, he puts his skills to work in an industry he loves.

Melanee Meegan is the Advertising and Marketing Coordinator at Peace Coffee and shares its commitment to fair trade partnership.

Julie Ingebretsen: Ingebretsen's meat market opened in 1921. Julie took over the gift shop in 1974 and has been a strong presence on Lake Street ever since.

Question: How do you use events to market your business?

Anne: Bryant Lake Bowl and Barbette host annual block parties. They are free to attend and generate goodwill with their neighbors. 4000-8000 people attend each party. They partner with the business community by having flea markets at the block parties. Businesses can participate in the flea markets for an affordable price that helps cover the cost of the event. They have a small marketing budget so look for low-cost marketing. They pair with other organizations to do marketing on a grassroots level. They hand out promo cards and make buttons. They also choose bands for the event that are good at marketing themselves – that way the bands are a greater draw for the event.

Dana: Jungle Theater holds multiple theme events throughout the year. Singles events are popular, with a party before the show, then the show itself, and a mixer afterwards. That way the show itself is a built-in icebreaker for everyone. Jungle partners with Lavender Magazine to hold “Lavender nights” for gay people. Another theme they’ve tried is young professionals’ night, which included a wine-tasting. They look for hooks that will get people to come back.

Question for Dana: How was the Jungle able to form the partnership with Lavender Magazine?

Dana: They worked through their ad rep. there, and the key was to keep on asking. Persistence is key, “wear them down.” For another promotion, they wanted to have a Bring Your Dog night for a show at the Pantages, and they kept hearing no, no, no, but then that no turned into a maybe, and it ended up happening.

Melanee: Peace Coffee has no brick & mortar location, so events are **the** key for them. They always have knowledgeable staff members attend all events. They focus on what they do, coffee, and don’t try to go in lots of different directions.

Julie: Ingebretsen’s events are a combination of inside and outside the store. Ingebretsen’s features local crafts, so they get those people in regularly for events. They also hold topical events and try to cover a broad range of interests. Julie attends as many Lake Street events as she can. Her name is the store’s name, so that is especially useful for increasing awareness. They donate to every silent auction they can, which is another cheap way to be visible.

Question: How do you identify your target market?

Melanee: Since Peace Coffee delivers by bike, they have used that to their advantage in marketing. They sponsor a bike team which is spread throughout

Minnesota. The Peace Coffee sponsorship gets noticed, and the bikers know about the company so they can talk about it when questions come up.

Dana: He uses different wording or different pictures when marketing to different populations. One thing they always keep an eye on is to make sure their bottom doesn't fall out if regulars stop coming, so they work to cultivate a new generation of regulars. If they see that someone hasn't come in a year, they'll send a "miss you" letter with a free ticket to a show. People like to feel like they're being paid attention. Jungle has had their season brochure inserted into the New York Times. It creates a good impression, and there's value in that. They also code all of their return mail envelopes, so they know exactly what their return is from the Times advertising and other sources. Their e-mail club, which started a few years ago, now has over 5000 names and is a big driver for website traffic.

Julie: Ingebretsen's core market is an aging Scandinavian population, so they're reaching out to younger shoppers now. They put on classes and other events to increase awareness in younger people about their Scandinavian heritage. Their website is used both for mail order and to increase in-town awareness. Many people now get the Ingebretsen's catalog in the mail and use it to find what they want to buy on the website. E-mail is a great, free tool. They advertise in print in Scandinavian publications, and also some community papers.

Anne: They find that the local community are the people who support them during the week, and reach out to them in the neighborhood papers. They are a member of Meet Minneapolis and use them to get the word out to Minneapolis visitors. Meet Minneapolis provides them with a list of Meet Minneapolis members that they can market to. They issue press releases to both local and national media to get noticed. Red Stag is the 1st LEED certified restaurant in Minnesota, which drew a lot of press.

Question: How do you track your customers? How do you know your website is valuable? Who develops it?

Dana: Jungle does periodic surveys of their audience. He doesn't offer any bonuses for completing these, just looks at the pure data. Survey Monkey is a good tool for online surveys.

They use tracking software to monitor website hits and see what drives traffic, the biggest factor being the e-mail list.

Jungle is now in the process of overhauling their site with a local web developer. Working with a web developer helps refocus on the fundamentals that make a

site successful. He's had to think about who the site is aimed for, what impression he wants it to give, etc.

Julie: Since Ingebretsen's website is used for retail, they have an easy measurement of its activity based on sales. Ingebretsen's is also using a local web developer, who will help them better track everything being sold online.

Anne: She uses a free program called Google Analytics to monitor website traffic. Online advertisers can also send you their click-through numbers if you ask them.

Melanee: 20% of Peace Coffee's sales are online. They pay a company a monthly retainer to make the website changes they want. They've posted video on the front page with the help of local fans who volunteered their time. They have a blog and weren't sure about its effectiveness because it doesn't get many comments, but through traffic monitoring they saw that it's the 3rd most visited part of the site. They have staff photos and even staff's pet photos on the site, to give it character and humanize the company.

Question: How much money was it to set up your site, and what business does it generate?

Dana: A few years ago, Jungle's website cost \$5000-6000 to set up, now he has \$10,000 budgeted. Put in perspective with the cost of their other marketing, it's a good investment, and is something that will be useful to them for years to come. About 10% of their tickets are currently bought online, and that number is growing fast.

Julie: Mail order is about 1/3 of the gift shop business. Their website redevelopment is costing more than she first thought but will be worth it.

Anne: They were able to work with someone they knew well for their last website, and the cost to them was only about \$1000. About 30% of their theater tickets are sold online, and they use a free site for that since their ticket prices are so low.

Melanee: Peace Coffee's retainer is \$2000 a month. Websites have gotten more expensive since the last time she looked into making one, and she's going to put out an RFP for a new one.

Text Messaging

ZoeAna Martinez: The Rail Station sends out monthly text messages offering a special deal to give those customers a special reason to come in. They offer an option to give your phone number when signing up for their e-mails.

Dana: Jungle has done this too. They've offered \$2 off tickets for people who show their text to the people running the box office. The text messaging software is handled through their ticket vendor.

Question: What's the best way to do search engine optimizing?

Chris Oien: The best way to do SEO is to get good quality links from your business and community partners and to put content on your site that people want to see. As an example, the web developer Lake Street Council is currently working with has "Minneapolis Web Design" in the title of their site, which helps increase their ranking for people searching that term. Using other, artificial ways to try to increase your rank can get you penalized in the long term.

Question: What makes your marketing unique?

Julie: Ingebretsen's has been around a long time so has a distinctive brand. They give cards to all their employees that offer 20% off a regular-priced item on a store visit. They did this because people always comment about how great Ingebretsen's is, and how they haven't been there in years. This gives those lapsed customers an incentive to come in. They've developed a rack card to give to Meet Minneapolis, who sends it as part of their welcome kit to visitors.

Anne: They always try to think outside the box. They're printed cards for free appetizers, drinks, or a game of bowling to entice people to come in. On the Web, they use MySpace, Facebook, and Flickr as free social marketing venues.

The LEED certification was good for a lot of positive PR for Red Stag. Their philosophy towards local food and farmers appeals to their target demographic and is a hot news topic.

Dana: Jungle includes a "hook" in every show, it's a matter of asking what this new show offers that will appeal to a new group you want to reach.

Melanee: Peace Coffee will be in the Star Tribune this weekend because of their new business expansion. It's a news angle about what in this economy is doing well. Their biking angle has gotten them in a lot of national biking publications. It's important to always have new stories to tell and be flexible in what you can do.

Joyce Wisdom: One thing that came up frequently at the last marketing panel was the importance of developing relationships with people in the media. When you speak to reporters about anything, be sure to get their contact info and give them a call when you have a story pitch.

Special message from State Senator Patricia Torres Ray

Senator Torres Ray is interested in legislation at the state level that addresses the impact of construction on small businesses. Small businesses are important to the well-being of communities, but they have not been as organized on the legislative level as the larger corporations have. She encourages the small businesses of Lake Street and other areas to come together and build coalitions, then to come to legislators with proposals for what the state can do to help them. Marketing funds and parking are the two areas she hears have the most need.