4 Communicating

1 Key principles

Theatre-makers are well aware of theatre's and the arts' potential to influence society in response to the climate emergency. But we can only do that if we're open about our own response and share what we're doing with our partners, stakeholders and audiences.

And we will only achieve the challenge of changing how we work, if we communicate closely with each other.

Good communication is essential in the challenge of making theatre sustainable. Theatres need to:

- Share with the public what they're doing to make the transition and work in ways that sustain the planet.
- Share with their own staff and partners how they're doing it, so everyone can work effectively together.

2 The Message

Communication about sustainability depends on clear messages to share:

- Theatres' values and mission, the priority they put on a strong response to the climate crisis, and their desire to bring audiences with them.
- How they plan to make their own work sustainable – which is vital to give credibility to the whole message – with clear, achievable targets rather than vague aspirations, e.g. 'We are on track to achieve Theatre Green Book Basic by December'.
- Stories of achievements and successes – for example, how a recent production achieved Theatre Green Book 'Intermediate' standard, or how a member of the technical team found a way to cut down on wasting batteries.

3 Getting the Message Across to Audiences

Audiences play a key role in theatre's journey to sustainability. So it's vital to share with them what you've achieved, what you're doing – and why. Getting your sustainability message across spreads the word, enhances your brand, and involves your audience in a shared initiative. Here's what to focus on:

- Create clear, consistent communications.
- Share your green charter or sustainability plan with your audiences. If you're targeting Theatre Green Book standards for productions, publicise it on ticketing and marketing material. Once you have reached a standard, use the self certification tool to get a logo and use it. If you have a Sustainability Plan for your building, advertising it might help fund-raising. Tell audiences about your Sustainable Operations standard, and explain how catering or marketing operations help achieve it.
- Good news stories work. Share goals, data, and accomplishments. Make a regular sustainability slot in your newsletters or social media, and include suppliers and partners in the narrative. Involve your audience directly by inviting audience representatives to environmental visioning days. Without overdoing messaging, look for the right opportunities to get stories across, for example on menus or programmes.
- Theatres have great outreach opportunities, and the power to communicate sustainability. You may want to align education work with school curriculums and sustainability awareness dates here: https://www.eauc.org.uk/environmental_dates_calendar.
- Involve audiences, for example by helping them with sustainable travel options (see chapter 9). You'll need to involve them if, for example, you want them to make more plant-based choices in the restaurant, or stop asking for bottled water .
- Social media, websites, programmes, tickets, newsletters and emails all offer opportunities to share your sustainability message.

4 Getting the Message Across Within the Organisation

A sustainable organisation involves everyone including the board, all staff and freelancers (see chapter 2 above) communicating effectively across the whole team.

Theatre-makers are busy. To make the transition as painless and swift as possible, you need to:

- Set clear goals and targets.
- Make sure information is available to everyone.
- Share where you are and what you have learned, honestly and openly.

Everyone has a role to play in making theatre sustainable. If you want to harness their energy and expertise, you need to keep them involved and enthused, with a clear sense of progress.

- Make sure you update on sustainability in company meetings and communications.
- Share the sustainability standards of the productions everyone is working on.
- Share targets and successes on your operations, and in upgrading your building.
- Make sure you credit the work, commitment and skill that goes into the transition to sustainability.
- Celebrate success.

5 Getting the Message Across to Everyone Else

No one can make theatre without the freelance artists, practitioners and actors on which the sector depends. Each theatre and company's transition depends on bringing their partners with them, keeping them fully informed, and providing them with the support they need, if you ask them to work differently.

Induction is the key to collaborative working. As partners join the team for a production or other project, make sure they know how important sustainability is to you. Make sure you've told them what you expect – not only in generalities but in detail. Make sure you've fully understood what that means for them – and provided the support or information that will enable them to participate in the journey.

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