

# *Audience Experience Workshop*

BY **JAMES BUCKHOUSE**  
TWITTER **@BUCKHOUSE**  
WEB **TEAMCLASSICAL.COM**

Your audience experiences your organization long before the lights dim and far past the final ovation.

Inspired by the TED talk by Peter Gregson on the user experience of the performing arts, this free downloadable workshop adapts techniques from technology and consulting companies to help performing arts organizations take care of their audience.

Other industries map this path as an extended customer journey. Performing Arts organizations can borrow this process to create an extended audience experience.

In a way, every arts organization perpetually remains a start-up: new music emerges from the chasm of cultural shifts, new audience members catch the drift; new ideas tilt the emphasis from one approach to another; new means of distribution and communication mingle our lives and our art in a braid of narrativity.

So let's start! Let's start up a new approach to the arts that proves value and retains the best of the old traditions, but also celebrates the birth of art—the new and unnamed—and dares to iterate.

MONDAY AFTERNOON  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **PERSONAS**  
ACTIVITY **KICK-OFF**  
DELIVERABLE **GOALS**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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*“Start with a kick-off party.”*

*“...higher lifetime audience value  
and digital revenue”*

Schedule a week-long Audience Experience Workshop across your organization. Every department touches the audience experience, so try to include someone from each group.

Schedule a morning session and an afternoon session for each day with a closing event at the end of the week.

Start with a kick-off party. Have the Executive Director give a short speech that tells everyone directly that this effort matters and has her or his full support.

The team will do the hard work if they know why and how they will succeed, so state this explicitly.

The Executive Director and org leadership must paint a clear picture of the desired results: when the workshop ends, the teams will deliver back to the Executive Director a plan of action with clear next steps (marked on a calendar with clear ownership) that improves the Audience Experience journey to solve for higher initial ticket conversion, repeat attendance, lifetime audience value, digital revenue and donations. Map the success of the effort to three phases: Audit, Experiments, Results.

*Audit* is the assessment of the current experience journey. *Experiments* are the changes the team wants to try to improve the journey. *Results* are the outcomes of the experiments.

The final note from the org leadership should stress that this will be an on-going effort: the experience will be audited and updated with each adopted experiment and that the experiments will change with each set of results.

TUESDAY MORNING  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **PERSONAS**  
ACTIVITY **AUDIENCE JOURNEY OUTLINE**  
DELIVERABLE **OUTLINE AND FUNNEL**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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*“What does it take to bring someone back?”*

**SET-UP**

Ask your research team to come to the first work session with three general personas of your current audience. Your research team may not have enough data or even the right kind of data, but try to sketch out three types of people who come to your shows. Ask the team to discuss the personas and all agree on three for the workshop. Try to be honest with how people actually experience your product: don't just pick three fantasy success stories.

**ACTIVITY**

Create an outline that traces each step in the audience journey for your three personas, from first exposure, through the consideration phase, to the conversion and advocacy. Create branches for when people bail on your journey. What does it take to bring someone back? What is the path to return to your org?

**DELIVERABLE**

Fill-in all of the missing pieces of your outline to show all branching flows. Create a “funnel diagram” that shows how many people go in at each stage and how many come out for a single performance, a subscription, and a lifetime of advocacy. Get this data from your research team. If you don't have it, make your best guesses from ticket sales numbers.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **MAP**  
ACTIVITY **PHOTO TOUR**  
DELIVERABLE **VISUAL TIMELINE**

MONDAY	<b>TUESDAY</b>	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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*“See every step through the eyes of your audience.”*

**SET-UP**

Print out the outline and funnel and then map the journey to physical locations in your town. Prepare a route for a walking tour on your audience journey.

Next go on a tour. Get outside and physically make the journey as a small team. Start where you think first contact occurs, and then trace through someone’s interactions until you arrive at the show. Try to see every step through the eyes of your audience. You might see a glorious concert hall, but they see no parking. You might see an all-star line-up, but they see confusing materials where they can’t tell if the stars are performing tonight or another night, or even who actually is a star and why. Is the famous conductor on the stand tonight? You see a clean waiting area, but they see a long line to the bathroom and no way to get a drink during intermission.

**ACTIVITY**

Take a picture every aspect of the current journey—from the moment they first even think about your org through an event, to repeat attendance to lifelong advocacy (or abandonment). Collect all the pictures, along with the interwoven marketing materials you’ve made and construct a visual outline of the audience journey.

**DELIVERABLE**

Assemble the photos into a visual timeline of the audience journey. Do this as a physical print-out or a digital album.

WEDNESDAY MORNING  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **CHECK-IN**  
ACTIVITY **BEFORE AND AFTER**  
DELIVERABLE **AUDIT SPREADSHEET**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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*“A 15-minute wait for a glass of champagne delivers a poor audience experience and lost revenue.”*

**SET-UP**

Hot coffee check-in with leadership

Have your org leadership attend the morning session (if they aren't already attending the whole workshop). Have coffee and donuts and talk about the first day and bond as a team.

**ACTIVITY**

Look at the results from the visual audit of the journey. This will become the “before” picture of your current experience.

Next work as a team to identify all the areas where you can improve the experience.

For instance, are the bathrooms well stocked with paper towels that actually deploy? Soap? Are the lines in the right place for concessions? A 15-minute wait for a glass of champagne delivers a poor audience experience and lost revenue. Are the email retention campaigns aligned in brand and tone with the sales scripts phone calls? Are the schedules and notes for in-synch so that if someone says “never call me again” another sales person doesn't call from a different location five minutes later? Is it easy to park? Where do you put your coat?

**DELIVERABLE**

List these all on a board in a brainstorm, going around the room and adding in everyone's ideas.

Have one note-taker write it all down in a spreadsheet. After the brainstorm, assign a rank to the items in the spreadsheet for impact and ease (1 to 5). A great score would be something that has a high impact (5) and is easy to do (5). Add the ease score and the impact. Examine the results. Save the results for the upcoming Friday morning's planning session.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **OTHER INDUSTRIES**  
ACTIVITY **OTHER INDUSTRIES**  
DELIVERABLE **PASSIVE INTERACTIVE LIST**

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**ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)**

Another example

Turn a private balcony into a “conversation chamber” with a big clock and an usher. Have audience members engage in 30-second “lightening conversations” about the piece they just heard based on questions prompted by the usher. Have a second usher tweet the responses as anonymous quotes. After 30 seconds, sound a buzzer and bring in the next two people.

Think of all of the special places in your venue: views, balconies, walkways, statues, etc. that might be opportunities for a simple, social interactions: parlor games for interstitial moments.

*“...parlor games for interstitial moments”*

**DELIVERABLE**

Write down all the areas in your space for passive interaction before the show, during intermission and after. List at least three possibilities for each space. Finally, list out three more ideas that take place somewhere else (at a museum, at a bus stop, etc.).

THURSDAY MORNING  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **SOCIAL AUDIT**  
ACTIVITY **SOCIAL MEDIA**  
DELIVERABLE **CONTENT CALENDAR**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	<b>THURSDAY</b>	FRIDAY
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*“Temporarily re-org your marketing department as Social Brand Advocates”*

**SET-UP**

Thursday is dedicated to social media.

Temporarily re-org your marketing department as Social Brand Advocates.

**ACTIVITY**

Craft ideal new job requirements—such as all members of the team must be personally active in social media (at least 3 out of 5 of FB, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Quora), own a smart phone, have a blog, and tirelessly care about art.

Audit your social media presence. How does your brand appear on the major sites? Are you just on Facebook? Or also YouTube, Pinterest and Twitter?

Search for people who are active in your field on Twitter and see what they have to say. For Classical Music, try searching the hashtag #teamclassical on Twitter and see who’s talking about music, performance and venues.

An amazing way to track advocates in your area is to use the advance search for Twitter and limit the results by location. You can see who is tweeting about classical music, opera, ballet or theatre right in your area. If someone is a very active account, reach out to them and help convert them into advocates for your institution or organization.

Also check for active accounts in your areas that are not related to your org, such as popular restaurants or cafes. Cross-over between industries grows audiences for both. For instance, the art museum, @SFMOMA and the baseball team, @SFGiants regularly team up to drive attention to each other’s events. Consider creating an offer with your local café for after-show drinks or free tickets to the most active tweeters.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **SOCIAL AUDIT**  
ACTIVITY **SOCIAL MEDIA**  
DELIVERABLE **CONTENT CALENDAR**

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**SET-UP**

Map all brand advocacy campaigns and social media activity back to your audience acquisition funnel.

**ACTIVITY**

Examine your audience journey for the digital narrative created by your current materials and make notes for how each could be improved. Identify every place that a social media effort could help convert passersby into initial audience members and current audience members into subscribers or advocates.

*“For more tips: follow me on Twitter @buckhouse”*

The fastest way to create advocates for your organization is to give people something to re-gift. Social media for the performing arts perfectly aligns with the human need to pass along information that makes us look smart, interesting, generous, or kind. People want to pass along something that reflects well upon themselves, so don't tweet a link to a press release, instead tweet a little gift (such as a great article that helps people understand the value of your program, behind the scenes pics, videos of upcoming events, interviews with stars, rare images of the conductor's score all marked-up and ready to rock, etc.)

**DELIVERABLE**

You should have already mapped your social media activities back to your audience journey. Now create a list of all the additional moments that a social interaction would improve the audience experience.

Dream big! Could you make all scores available as interactive PDFs or iBooks? Could you offer videos explaining the program as free gifts when people buy tickets online? Why print a program? Why not instead project the program onto a video screen at the beginning of the show and email out links to digital materials afterwards, as a thank you gift and a way to drive return sales.



FRIDAY MORNING  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **REVIEW MATERIALS**  
ACTIVITY **PREPARE RESULTS**  
DELIVERABLE **FINAL PRESENTATION**

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**SET-UP**

You've had a tough week! Now it's time to bring it all together. Gather your previous results:

- Audience journey audit (written)
- Audience journey (visual)
- Audience development funnel
- Passive interaction locations (inside and out)
- Ideal job requirements for brand advocates
- Search results for active Twitter users in your field and your area.
- List of ideas for cross-industry interactions (SFMOMA/SFGiants)
- Content calendar with 50 ideas
- Audience journey (social media insertions)
- Audience journey (digital retention campaigns)

**ACTIVITY**

Collect your previous results and put them into a master list. Edit your audience journey to show all visual, social, passive, cross-industry, and retention additions.

Rank each addition for ease of implementation and expected impact. Map the expected impact back to your audience development funnel. Explore what happens when you increase audience retention by just a few percent. Decide which activities you want to attempt as an organization.

**DELIVERABLE**

Write up the results as a list of recommendations. For each item, include an assigned owner, estimated costs, and ship dates. Combine all the previous deliverables and this list into a presentation or PDF for executive board review.

*“Explore what happens when you increase audience retention by just a few percent.”*

FRIDAY AFTERNOON  
DURATION **ONE HOUR**  
SET-UP **FINALIZE PRESENTATION**  
ACTIVITY **PRESENT**  
DELIVERABLE **FINAL PRESENTATION**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	<b>FRIDAY</b>
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**SET-UP**

Finalize your presentation of results and recommendations between sessions.

**ACTIVITY**

Invite the entire organization to a team meeting to present your findings and recommended results. Give the results to your Executive Director and Board and allow them a chance to absorb the results without being put on the spot to approve or reject them.

Serve drinks.

**DELIVERABLE**

Your final presentation should include all of the previous deliverables, a list of recommendations, assigned owners, costs, and a calendar of ship dates.

Map the project to three phases: Audit, Experiments, and Results.

*Audit* is the assessment of the current experience journey. *Experiments* are the changes the team wants to try to improve the journey. *Results* are the outcomes of the experiments.

Book a review meeting with your Executive Director to review the recommendations and approve or adjust the plan.