

Publicity Handbook

NewSouthWales University Theatrical Society

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Introduction

In these days of growing home theatre, DVD and internet movie entertainment, audience numbers have been dwindling across all forms of live theatre across all demographics. In light of this change publicity can no longer be seen as just an after thought. Publicity needs to be an integral part of the production from the inception, allowing for traditional forms to be used and cemented in the theatre goers mind and also new and innovative styles of publicity to be explored to entice non-regulars.

Where to Begin

In this document we present a range of activities which a publicist for a NUTS play may like to carry out. We aim to present the individual activities and also an overall philosophy for carrying these out. You may choose to do less than these but we encourage you not to cut back too much, creating good publicity is about creating presence and to do that one needs to be getting the word out as much as possible. There is no such thing as too much publicity for a NUTS show!

The first step to creating good publicity for a show is creating a publicity team. Ideally publicity shouldn't be run by just one person, the role is too large and this will mean too much responsibility falls upon the producer to pick up the slack.

Breakdown of a NUTS Publicity Team

Having one person handle publicity for a show is no longer acceptable for even a Studio One production. At the very least two people are needed and ideally three. Ideally, the roles required for a publicity team are:

- Publicity Coordinator
- Graphic Designer
- Publicity Assistant

Depending upon the nature of your show, other roles can also be incorporated, for example shows are increasingly using a dedicated web designer.

Publicity Coordinator

The role of the Publicity Coordinator (PC) can be thought of as project manager for the publicity team, the leader of this group. The idea here is to remove all direct tasks from the shows producer. The shows producer and director should be left to provide high level direction and to approve the final work of the team.

It is very important from the outset that the director and producer of the show understand the value of the PC. They should be seen of a similar standing to the show's

Producer. Make sure the PC is loved and respected because it's a big and important role.

It is the role of the PC to define the tasks to be carried out by the publicity team at a very early stage of the production, create a timeline for the events and then make sure these tasks are carried out. The PC needs to revise the tasks which are presented below and determine which are relevant for the particular production and how they will be carried out. A calendar of weeks till show day should be created, and a timeline set with all relevant deadlines.

Once the timeline has been developed, it is the job of the PC to make sure the relevant people on the publicity team are carrying out their jobs to complete these tasks. In general this will involve breaking down each goal into a series of subtasks and provide these to the relevant person. To what level these are broken down depends on the experience of the members of the publicity team. If the graphic designer is relatively new to NUTS, they may need each task broken down into small more finite goals rather than just "get posters to me by this date".

By defining all tasks at the very start of the production process and setting strong deadlines, each member of the publicity team knows exactly the effort they will need to contribute toward the show and will allow them to manage their own time better. People generally work much better when all their jobs are given to them upfront and tasks are not "lumped" on them in the final weeks. This strategy also gives publicity team members more ownership over their own tasks.

Graphic Designer

The role of the graphic designer is to produce electronic copies of all publicity material needed for the production. Ideally the graphic designer will have some experience in the area, but a general knowledge of how to use Adobe Photoshop or an equivalent program is all that is required. It is the graphic designer's job to design the materials requested by the Publicity Coordinator, generally providing the work in electronic form.

It is important the graphic designer can stick to the deadlines given to them by the PC and also be open to comments and suggestions by the producer, director and PC. Often the director will have a strong idea of the design and the graphic designer will have to liaise with the director to determine these requirements. It is generally recommended that the graphic designer use one, fairly standard, design and adapt across the different forms of publicity, this gives the materials a greater consistency and enhances the effectiveness of the message.

NUTS has its own font type, which is provided in this publicity pack and is easy to install. As we want NUTS to have a running feel about all of its shows, the font is designed as a visual cue for others to identify the material as a NUTS promotion. Thus, the font should appear somewhere on all publicity material. In some cases, if your show

has a specific design concept that this font does not adhere to, you only need use it for the “NUTS Presents...” wording, or simply just display the NUTS logo.

For other materials (such as fliers, programs etc) we ask that font be used more liberally where possible. If using the font to any degree is not within the scope of your publicity concepts, please contact the Publicity Officer to discuss its necessity. We also have a watermark that we'd like you to use as a background, if your publicity theme allows for it.

Publicity Assistant

The Publicity Assistant role generally involves supporting the Publicity Coordinator in completing the tasks involved. This may involve leading poster runs, teaching people how to make glue, or organising rosters. Basically, the role entails completing whatever tasks need doing that the PC has seen fit to delegate.

Publicity Tasks

Below we present some of the tasks your publicity team will need to carry out for each show.

Initial Tasks

Before you begin the very first items which should be created are a show “blurb”. This is standard text which can be given to anyone who will listen: emails, publications, flyers etc. It's very useful to have one handy as different groups will often request this of you at short notice.

Also, produce a 100x141 graphic of the site and submit along with the blurb to the NUTS secretary for inclusion on the NUTS homepage.

This blurb will also be used in NUTS emails which go out each week. If you have a special requirement or notice to be displayed in the NUTS email, send this by the Sunday afternoon of each week to ensure it is included. If an urgent email needs to be sent out, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required to do so.

The “Must-Have Items”

It is important to note at the outset that NUTS has some rules about things that must be included in *all* publicity materials. These are the following:

- Either the NUTS logo, or “NUTS Presents...”;
- The Arc logo;
- The show website (usually www.nuts.org.au/showname, see below);
- The venue and show dates and times;

- Details of any sponsors; and
- For shows where performance rights are paid and there is a required copyright notice, that copyright notice *exactly as specified*.

Because these are all so crucial to a show's publicity material, before sending anything off to be printed or distributed, you must send proofs of all promotional materials to the NUTS Publicity Officer for approval. They will generally approve things very quickly, and will never make changes unless you agree to them first, but be sure to allow 48 hours turnaround for this; while the Publicity Officer will endeavour to get approvals done as quickly as possible, there may be a problem, or they may not be able to get to a computer immediately.

Posters

Creating and placing posters is one of the most fundamental parts of publicity for any NUTS. While many argue that the number of people who stop and read posters are dwindling, posters do provide a very direct source of show information for those walking around campus. Having posters up all over campus provides a show a "presence" on campus.

Creating the posters is a job for the graphic designer. While the design of the posters is up to the graphic designer, in general they can be created in A4 size and printed in this format. Experience has shown that using the photocopier to enlarge a poster from A4 to A3 generally works very well. Posters can be printed at home on A4 and brought in or printed through the computers in the Arc Clubs Resource Room.

Once you have the master poster, you can store it in the NUTS pigeon hole (the "N" one) which is in the Arc Clubs Resource Room. Generally it doesn't matter if you print off posters for one run, or enough for several days. There are, however, a few relevant considerations here:

- Availability of A3 paper in the photocopier. If there is colored paper in the machine you might like to print off several poster runs worth and keep leftovers for another run. Colored posters always do much better than white posters. If you have to do white you can try using a thick black border in your graphic design, this gives your poster a sense of definition on overcrowded poster boards;
- If you have slots in your poster roster where no-one has access to the photocopier, you will need to print off enough to cover the next few runs so there are adequate posters.

It is important not to hand out the PIN number for the photocopier to too many people in the production. Ideally just the PC should need to know this however don't let policy get in the way of practicality.

Making glue is also a very important part of postering. The PC needs to make sure that the NUTS bucket and brush as well as a supply of corn flour is available so the people conducting each poster run have everything ready to go. Ideally, these items will be left somewhere where they are easily accessible to those who need them, but ask the Clubs Coordinator at the Arc if there's somewhere things can be stored before just dumping them in the Clubs Resource Room. Corn flour should be purchased by NUTS for each show. NUTS has a store of corn flour in the costume store and before each show the publicity officer will contact the shows PC and arrange to hand over some or all of the corn flour. If you get stuck, most supermarkets have corn flour for 80 cents a bag and this does two complete runs.

There is a good guide for making glue on the NUTS website, however the general principle is as follows

- Place half a bag of corn flour in a bucket.
- Add the smallest amount of cold water required to form a thick, but not lumpy paste. Stir lots.
- Once you have this thick paste add a small amount of boiling hot water and stir. Stir lots and lots. Add a bit more hot water and keep on stirring. The hot water will cook the corn flour and it will start to go thicker. Add more hot and keep stirring. If you have achieved a good consistency but need more volume, add cold water instead, then a bit of hot.

NUTS and Studio Four share a kettle to provide boiling water, get in touch with the NUTS Publicity Officer well before you want to start publicity to find out how to access it.

After this is done, go and put up some posters! It is the job of the PC to get availabilities for cast and crew and create a poster schedule. Make sure all the required tools are available for poster runs, people will get annoyed if there is no corn flour or the bucket is missing and soon abandon their effort. Also, Facilities rules dictate that we may not cover more than one third of any poster board at any time. When doing a poster run do not cover more than a third. Also remember that if another NUTS show is also advertising that the one third is for NUTS in total and not just for your show, you need to be considerate. If multiple shows are postering at the same time there should DEFINITELY be co-ordination between the publicity parties.

There are also unwritten rules about postering manners. During times when NUTS and one of the Revues are promoting simultaneously, NUTS generally posters on the left third of boards, and Revue the right third. In general try and poster over other posters and not rip them down unless absolutely necessary. Be kind to Arc posters, and to other society posters within a day, poster wars are not cool. On the other hand, if a non student body as put up a poster, feel free to rip it down and then stamp on it multiple times.

Thought needs to be given by the PC into postering timelines. The two weeks before a show are very crucial to campus presence and one poster run needs to be done per day, going up to two per day for show week(s). Shows may also consider using “teaser” posters weeks before the show starts, anywhere up to 6 weeks before, posters can be created which hint to the show and create interest. These can be put up in limited numbers around campus.

Poster Run Schedules

It is not the job of the publicity team to put up posters all on their own, it is the job of the entire cast and crew. About a month out from the show, the PC should email the cast and crew for availabilities for promotions. In general two poster runs per day are done in show week and the week before. If you have a campaign which starts before this, stick to one per day to save paper and not wear your troops out. The two per day are generally done around 10 and 3 although these are flexible.

When cast and crew email you back, use a spreadsheet or something similar to record availabilities and then come up with a schedule. Try and put at least two people on each run. Also ask everyone if they have ever done a run before and if they can make glue. It pays to put on someone experienced with a newbie so they can learn and also so they can make the glue.

You must keep reminding people about poster runs, email the schedule out twice a week and, where possible, send a reminder email the day before their slot. For crucial days (like Monday of show week), you might send a reminder sms.

On Campus Publications

Blitz and Tharunka present a major publicity opportunity for shows on campus. Blitz will provide us a listing in the “What’s On” section for each day and often they also give us the weekly interview also. Tharunka do not have a regular spot however they will often insert a small article. It pays to contact these publications very early. The deadline for Blitz is twelve days before (always a Wednesday) the magazine is released. Getting an article into Tharunka is more difficult, and publication is somewhat more sporadic, so get in touch with them early.

Other University Societies

If you hang around the Arc Clubs Resource Room often enough you will meet representatives from other clubs. Become chummy with these people and see if they can include a plug for the show in their newsletters. Also, be sure to get in touch with the NUTS Vice President to ask them to do a “shout out” for your show at the Arc Clubs meeting a fortnight out from the show opening, this can be a great way of encouraging groups from other clubs to come see your show.

Programme

The programme is the item which audience members are handed when they purchase their ticket from the front of house.

For most NUTS productions, photocopied programmes are sufficient. As with posters, this means the graphic design needs to lend itself to this form of media.

Programmes generally have the following sections

- Cover: Show art, small blurb
- Inside more information about the show
- A message from the director
- Cast / crew list, optionally with photos and bios

It is also compulsory to include the following blurb about the spaces we use:

“For information on hiring venues and rehearsal spaces from the School of English, Media and Performing Arts please go to <http://media.arts.unsw.edu.au/> or phone 9385 5684.”

The programme should also prominently display www.nuts.org.au

NUTS programmes are generally two double sided A4 sheets. Glossy printing is quite expensive, and usually only done for larger productions.

T Shirts

Shirts are quite easy to order. The first step is to find the shirt sizes from the cast and crew. Then get a quote and check back to ensure everyone is happy with this price- take care to ensure you only order for those who want them, or else you may end up out of pocket! Our main provider at present is Esther Norman on 0412 568 120, or via teesbiz@ozemail.com.au. The graphic designer should design the shirts, ideally the front should be a simplified version of the graphic used for other publicity materials, and the back should contain the details of the show.

Try not to make the graphics too intricate as the shirt printer has some limits. Esther is generally fine to accept images in Photoshop form. JPEGs are also fine but they often lack the resolution required. If a shirt design can not be printed Esther will generally inform you although she may not pick up typos or other mistakes.

Esther will generally give you a week or two's grace on payment because of the good reputation of NUTS. Please do not abuse this, NUTS committee will not subsidise shirts, producers must pay themselves or obtain money upfront from cast and crew.

Obtaining shirts isn't really hard and they should be obtained two weeks before performance date. This allows the cast and crew plenty of time to wear the shirts around for good publicity and as a nice memento for all involved in the show.

Flyers and Business Cards

It is always recommended that you have a small publicity item, such as a flyer or a business card that cast and crew can carry around with them and hand out to friends as they see them. These are also very useful for handing out at gates at the start or end of the day, or outside the Library at lunchtimes.

Flyers are the cheapest method of doing these. Flyers can be designed to a size so that 4 or 6 can be fit to one A4 page, and then printed and cut up in the Arc Clubs Resource Room.

Business cards, while more expensive, have been found to be a particularly effective form of publicity material, as they are very conveniently sized for fitting in people's wallets, and look more professional than a simple flyer. 500 full-colour business cards will set your show back around \$90, and so are affordable even for the smallest Studio One production. Larger shows may choose to use postcards instead for an even more professional look, however are generally out of financial reach for smaller shows, as even a small run costs close to \$300.

If other NUTS shows are playing in the weeks preceding your production or indeed other on campus productions, you can ask the producer of that show to put flyers in their programmes for your show.

Websites

These days having a show website is proving more and more valuable. This means that the remainder of your materials can focus on just getting people to the website, rather than all the way to the box office.

To which level you choose to take your website is up to the individual publicity producer and indeed the skill of the graphic designer. Some designers are very good at images however have limited HTML skills which makes assembling the site together. If a designer only has this skill set you might use the resources of NUTS to find someone who has some simple HTML ability; the designer can provide all the graphics and a mockup of how the website should look and the extra person can just assemble these.

The content of the show's website is largely up to the publicity team, feel free to be as creative as possible however a few broad guidelines should be followed

- We need to mention NUTS and display the NUTS and Arc logos;
- Remember to thank any show sponsors;
- Cast and crew lists are a nice thing and are motivational; and
- Show dates/times, ticket prices should also be available.

NUTS has an online booking system which is designed to allow a different set of graphics for each show. The general idea is that a show website, in whatever capacity it is built, has a link to the bookings system. Please consult with the NUTS Publicity Officer for help in setting this up. They will ask you for a set of HTML and/or images to use and then provide back to you a URL which will become the “booking” link on your site. They will also provide you with a link to the admin section so producers can check bookings each night.

NUTS has web hosting available where show website should be placed. Show websites need to be hosted on www.nuts.org.au/<showname> to provide consistency and also to allow later archiving by the Publicity Officer. If for technical reasons a shows website can not be hosted on the NUTS server, a static HTML version of the site must be given to the NUTS Publicity Officer post show. The interactive elements do not need to work however we require this for archiving purposes. The NUTS Publicity Officer will be able to help you putting the website on the NUTS server.

Shows are encouraged to use the domain name www.nuts.org.au/<showname> as this keeps consistency and also demonstrates visually this is a NUTS show. Shows are however free to register their own domain name e.g. www.showname.org. The easiest way to do this is to go to a domain seller such as <http://cheap-domainnames.com/> where “.org” domains can be registered for about \$11AUD. Once the rights have been bought, there will be functionality to enable “domain forwarding” which sends people on to www.nuts.org.au/<showname>.

Electronic Scrolling Sign

The electronic scrolling signs which are at the north-west and north-east corners of campus can display show information. It is best to organize this several weeks ahead as this is quite popular. To organise a promotion through these signs, email esign@unsw.edu.au. They ask that you limit the length of your message to 18 words or less; generally a message will be “*NUTS Presents: <show name>, <show dates> <venue>, bookings <show website>*”. If you are selling alcohol at a major production please contact these people first as this may breach their rules.

Tickets On Library Lawn

You may be able to book a table stall outside the Library or the Quadrangle for lunchtimes to take ticket bookings and help promote your show. The best times are generally 11 till 2 each day. Generally we just take ticket bookings here rather than

cash, if you're interested in doing paid tickets contact the NUTS Treasurer. Library lawn sales work best with 3+ people, make sure you take up a bunch of posters to put up around the table and also make up a few simple ones stating "Book Here" etc. Also consider arranging for actors to perform in character. If you will be handing out flyers to passersby, make sure that you target people you know in particular as word of mouth is a very strong tactic. Try and not talk to your friends for too long. Invariably you will create a small congregation of friends around the stall, make sure they all stand to one side to keep it welcoming and open.

Free Tickets

Consult with the NUTS Publicity Officer but in general a complimentary double pass can be obtained to use at a well attended event like bar trivia. It's a cheap and easy way to get a plug, make sure you talk to the organisers a week or so in advance and state for the tickets you'd like to get up and give a quick 60 second spiel.

Word Of Mouth

One of the strongest ways to get information about your show out is to make sure everyone in the cast tells everyone they know about it. Inside of NUTS circles, you can be guaranteed that with a reasonable sized cast and crew, a surprisingly large amount of people can be appealed to.

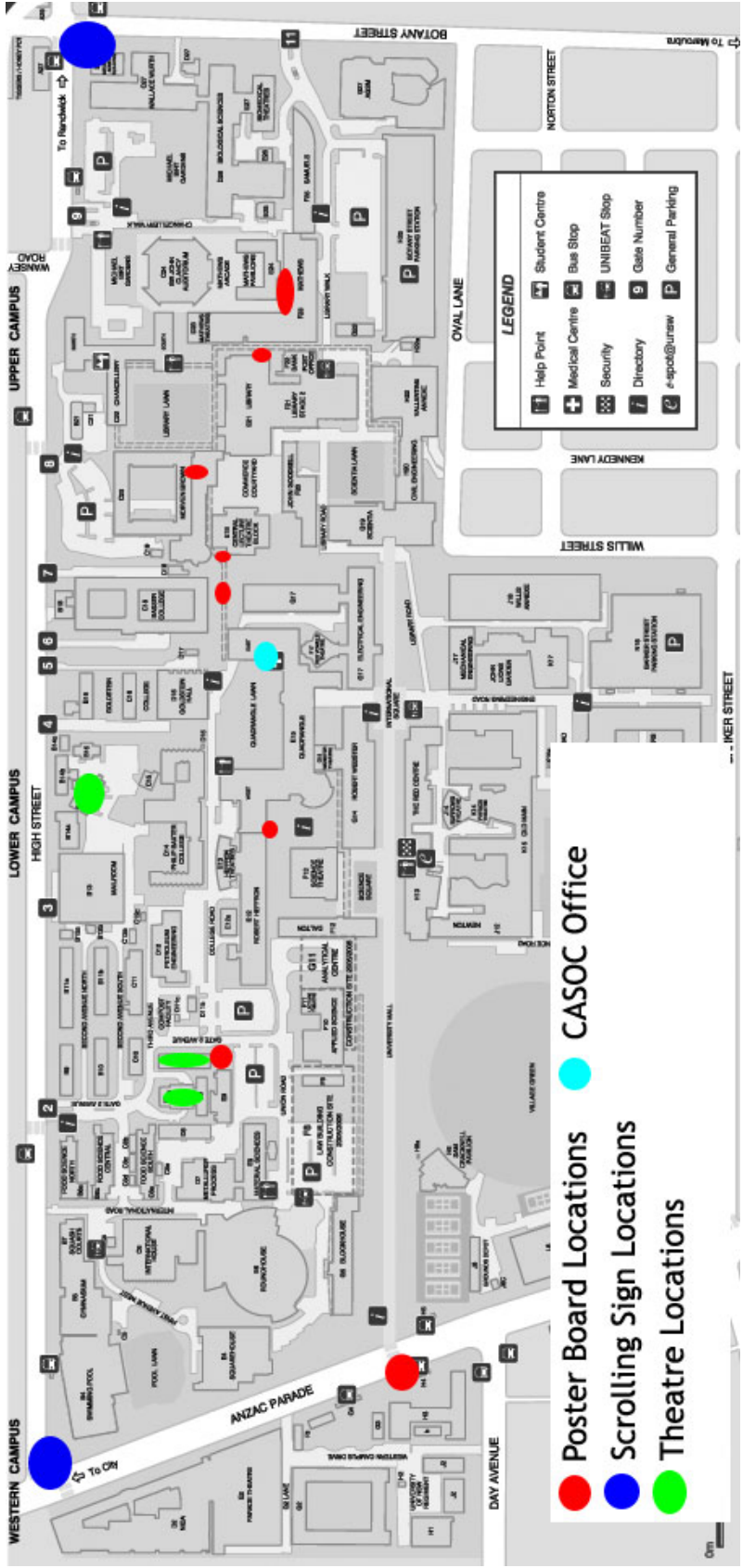
Make sure all the easy things are done, contact the NUTS Secretary and put notices on the website nice and early, make sure the show is being actively talked about on the NUTS forums, add it into your email signature. Make sure cast and crew are talking about this to as many people as they can. Mostly people are happy to hear about a new show on too, they like that they have been personally told. If the cast and crew are enthused they will tell everyone they know about the show and these people will also become enthused.

Conclusion

The role of publicity is very much underrated and often relegated to the final weeks of a show, which obviously is a major disappointment when audience numbers are low. The role of publicity is very important to the show and the Publicity Coordinator needs to be very active from the very beginning. When a plan is made, the steps mapped out and the timeline more or less followed, the job of publicity is no longer such a strain and producers very good results. A good plan will also ensure that there is much less stress in show week, as most of the hard work has already been done.

Good luck, and don't forget to get in touch with your friendly NUTS Publicity Officer if you have any questions or require any extra assistance!

Appendix A: Publicity Map



- Poster Board Locations
- CASOC Office
- Scrolling Sign Locations
- Theatre Locations

LEGEND

- Help Point
- Medical Centre
- Security
- Directory
- e-spot@unsw
- Student Centre
- Bus Stop
- UNiBEAT Shop
- Gate Number
- General Parking

Appendix B: Sample Publicity Timeline

Below we present a sample timeline for publicity on a NUTS show. This is to demonstrate that the timeline does not need to be complicated, rather the emphasis is on having one in the first place and that every member of crew who has a part to play, has buy-in and agrees that this is an acceptable and reasonable target.

Studio One Café Publicity Timeline

Tasks to be carried out:

- Posters
- Programme
- T Shirts
- Flyers to be used by other NUTS shows
- Website
- Scrolling Sign Outside Uni
- Tickets On Library Lawn
- Poster Run Schedule

Week 5: 4th April

Week 6: 11th April

Week 7: 18th April

FIREFace Opens.

Deadlines

- Flyers for FF program
- Poster: “New café opening soon....”
- Place poster design onto www.nuts.org.au/cafe

Week 8: 25th April

- Continue with “new café...” posters
- Contact Esther, inform her about shirts
- Website Design begins

Week 9: 2nd May

- Submit T Shirt Design to Esther
- Begin T shirt design
- Begin postering cast and main design

Deadlines

- Posters for cast and one “main” show poster, light postering, one or two per board per day, possibly just using tape

Week 10: 9th May

- Receive shirts from Esther

Week 11: 16th May

- Submit text for red scrolling sign to Facilities
- Continue postering cast and main

Deadlines

- Website Go Live

Week 12: 23rd May

- Red scrolling sign go live
- Create poster run schedule for cast/crew
- Full scale poster runs begin, focus on main poster now

Deadlines

- Skeleton programme finalized

Week 13: 30th May

- Programme finalized

Week 13: 31st May

- Programme printed
- Possibly sell tickets on library lawn