

## NAMT BREAKOUT SESSION CO-PROS & COMMERCIAL ENHANCEMENT

1. Know what you want from the enhancement or co-production
2. Work with theatres/artistic directors you want to collaborate with, respect their opinion and who will bring value to the production. (SF)
  - for both the NFP & producers, the art must lead in finding a partner: what work does the show need? What is the goal of the next step? Who is the right partner (and where is the right audience/community) to achieve those goals?
  - both parties must have open and regular communications and clarity on expectations — to facilitate blending teams, division of work, managing the budget, problem solving, etc
  - you're in this for the long game — don't get greedy in the short term at the expense of compromising the project. Balance current needs with an eye toward building a lasting piece of theater.
  - co productions are a win win for surviving turbulent times. Sharing expenses, marketing audiences, programming. (LF)

These 'best practices' are from the regional theatre perspective. (EC)

- \* Make sure that both you and your commercial partner have the same core values and vision of what success means. Have that conversation early on. You need to trust each other — and like working together as that will get you through the tough times.
- \* Be brutally honest about what your theatre can do and what it can't do, what your theatre would spend on a typical production and what will need to be enhanced. Don't pad your production budget, but don't be afraid to say you can't take on unexpected costs as things change. Update financials frequently and communicate if there are issues. Bad news only gets worse by not communicating it.
- \* Find ways to involve your donors, your Board members, your volunteers and your all of your staff (not just staff leadership, artistic, and production). The more skin in the game these people have understanding the creative process of developing a new show and getting excited by the opportunity, the more invested they will become in the outcome - resulting in funding for both your theatre and the commercial producers, in volunteers who provide extraordinary time commitments in unexpected areas of need, and staff who stay positive despite the inevitable challenges of new work creation. (EC)

1. Make sure all decisionmaking parties want to do the same show. Designate producer point person(s) and make sure that is someone(s) you know and trust.
2. Allocate sufficient advance planning time to make the necessary arrangements, understanding that regionals have to announce their shows substantially in advance.
3. Consider whether you can and are interested in producing the show with little or no enhancement if the commercial producer/co-producing theater is unable to meet their full obligations. Do you have a potential back-up plan?
4. Educate and prepare your audiences as well as staff, board members and donors to appreciate developing a new work or an innovative revival of an existing work.
5. Be realistic as to what contribution your theater brings to the production and the value of the arrangement to your theater.
6. In both situations you need an experienced general manager to anchor the project. Check out all pre-existing contractual obligations and union requirements.
7. For commercial enhancements the future participation for the regional theater varies within certain parameters based on a number of factors in each instance.  
Each project should be evaluated as to what the future participation for the theater should be-remembering that billing credit is important and not a money issue.
8. Remember that your greatest contribution is to the development of the show- book, music and lyrics before a discerning theatergoing audience. (MSB)