A horizontal bar with a colorful, abstract pattern in shades of red, blue, and green.

Loyalty Concept Exploration, Part 2: Analysis of Experiments with New Customer Relationships

**Research Commissioned by National
Arts Centre**

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Table of Contents

Overarching Observations & Analysis	4
Inventory of Customer Relationship Models	13
Advance Commitment Ticket Bundles.....	14
LA Opera, Subscribe & Save.....	18
Phoenix Theatre Company, The All Access Pass	19
Super Secret Arts, Monthly Membership	21
St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Recurring Concert Membership Program	23
Steppenwolf, Black Card	25
Woolly Mammoth Theatre, The Golden Ticket	27
Woolly Mammoth Theatre, QUADS	29
ZACH Theatre, ZACHXP.....	30
Affiliation Products	32
Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts (AMFA), Social Pass.....	37
Blumenthal Performing Arts, Club Blume.....	38
Cirque du Soleil, Club Cirque.....	40
Glyndebourne Opera Festival, Under 40 Membership	41
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), LACMA Local	42
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Mia Membership.....	44
Museum of Photographic Arts, MOPA Crew	46
National Museum of Women in the Arts, NMWA Virtual Membership.....	48
Phoenix Theatre Company, Ambassador Membership	50
Roundabout Theatre Company, Rewards by Roundabout.....	52
Santa Cruz Shakespeare, SCS Membership.....	54
Stratford Festival, Ontario, Canada.....	56
Educational Products	58
Harvard University, Classic Works.....	62
Jazz at Lincoln Center, Swing University	64

Opera North, Leeds, From Couch to Chorus	65
Orlando Museum of Art, Stroller Tours.....	66
Phipps Conservatory, Culinary Art Classes	68
San Francisco Ballet, Ballet 101	70
Taking Sondheim, Stephen Sondheim Affinity Group	72
TED, Manhattan, TED Membership.....	73
Accessibility & Trial Products	74
Lincoln Center, Fast Track.....	78
Lincoln Center Theatre, LincTix	79
Phoenix Theatre Company, Ambassador Tix	81
Steppenwolf, Red Card.....	82
TheatreSquared, Lucky Tix.....	83
Woolly Mammoth, Pay What You Will Tickets	84
Woolly Mammoth, Stampede Seats.....	86
Brooklyn Museum, 6-Month Introductory Membership	87
Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, Try Us Out Tickets	88
Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, Teen Scene	89
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MFA Citizen	91
Social Connection Platforms.....	92
ClassicCard, ClassicCard App	94
DICE London, DICE App	96
OperaMeet, Rome, OperaMeet App	98
Digital Products	100
BalletX, BalletX Beyond.....	102
Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Live	103
School of American Ballet, Ballet Connoisseurship On Demand.....	104
Tafelmusik, Ontario, Digital Series Pass	105
Expert Interviews	106



Overarching Observations & Analysis

This research takes stock of new and different practices amongst arts organizations to engage customers in mutually beneficial relationships. Its purpose is: 1) to categorize the types of new and different customer relationships or product bundles being offered; 2) to see where experimentation is and is not being done; and 3) to gain a sense of the kinds of products, bundles and relationships – beyond subscription – that hold potential for engaging a larger share of the public.

The findings from this analysis are part of a larger study commissioned by the National Arts Centre (Ottawa, Canada) to investigate the idea of loyalty and build a basis in logic for investing in new kinds of customer relationships. Other strands of research included a literature review on loyalty frameworks, and a quantitative survey of National Arts Centre ticket buyers on the topics of taste, affinity and loyalty.

We recognize that subscription and series ticket products are valued by many patrons and organizations, and will continue to be a part of the marketing landscape for the foreseeable future. Our focus, however, is on *relationships other than subscriptions*, as the appeal of subscription as a product has been ebbing for many years. As the sector does everything imaginable to stem the tide, we foresee a future where subscription is one of a number of relationships that performing arts organizations offer to their constituents.

While many of the experiments covered in this inventory pre-date the Covid-19 pandemic, the pandemic only accelerated the need for innovation and experimentation. Some organizations have recovered to pre-pandemic sales levels, although many have seen a downtick in advance commitment products and an uptick in individual ticket sales. We should not think of this research solely as a response to atrophied subscription sales, however, but rather as a forward-looking contribution to critical thinking about the kinds of products and relationships that will speak to the next generation of arts attenders.

We made considerable efforts to uncover new and different types of products, bundles, and relationships through networked interviewing and various public appeals. Ultimately, we selected 46 individual case studies to feature, although many more practices are incorporated by reference.

Any effort like this is necessarily incomplete and limited to what we could learn about through desk research. We hope this report will cause others to step forward and contribute to the body of learning, and will embolden still others to undertake new efforts to design and implement new products and relationships.

The observations that follow draw from our research on new and different marketing practices in the field, and on our interviews with thought leaders.

Types of Products/Bundles/Relationships

- The research uncovered several distinct categories of products, bundles, and relationships that merit further investigation. They are:
 - **Advance commitment ticket bundles** – often, these are ticket vouchers that must be redeemed at a later date for an actual seat, sometimes framed as memberships, but, in practice, are more like subscriptions on a payment plan
 - **Affiliation products** – often using the language of membership; most revolve around transactional benefits, although some aim to build a sense of community amongst members
 - **Educational products** – paid educational experiences
 - **Accessibility and trial products** – offers that serve to introduce new people to an organization’s programming, on the theory some will convert to regular paying customers
 - **Social connection platforms** – software tools that facilitate attendance in social groups; some also serve as event discovery platforms; other social functionalities are planned
 - **Digital products** – relationships designed for those who cannot attend in-person – built around streaming programs and other digital activities

A curious condition of stasis

- Overall, there is a **sector-wide dearth of experimentation** with new models of loyalty and customer relationships. While many organizations have evolved artistically and creatively, they have not evolved in regards to the relationships they offer the public. The subscription model, which gained popularity in the 1970s, still holds a vice grip on the entire US arts sector, unlike the UK where the migration to memberships and affinity groups happened long ago. In fact, the business models of many US arts organizations have come to revolve around subscription – the way

seasons are planned, the way fundraising and sponsorship campaigns are organized, the way cash flow is managed, etc. While some are bold enough to acknowledge that the subscription marketing model is one of the structures that perpetuates inequity in nonprofit performing arts organizations, few have suggested alternative relationships that would be more democratic. In short, many of the performing arts organizations in the US and Canada are addicted to subscription. This might be attributed to the decentralized nature of the sector and the “lack of slack” for rigorous experimentation. Or, it could be due to the sheer power of entrenched practices to persist. Regardless, this addiction has had a dampening effect on serious discussion of alternative relationship models, although this may be changing as the seriousness of the situation becomes clearer. Fortunately, a small but determined cadre of organizations are seriously committed to developing new and better customer relationships.

Centering customers’ needs

- Nearly all of the products, bundles, and relationships we found attempt to motivate and reward frequent attendance. By centering frequency of attendance, these models struggle to transcend transactional forms of loyalty (discounts, perks, parking benefits, etc.). While many organizations ([Woolly Mammoth](#), [ZACH Theatre](#)) try mightily to inject more relational value into subscriptions (e.g., “surprise and delight,” excellent customer service), they are, fundamentally, transactional. The implicit theory is that frequent attendance leads to institutional loyalty. Of course, this often proves to be true, although it is sometimes unclear in subscription relationships where the affinity lies. Regardless, the “frequency=loyalty” theory centers the organization’s needs, **but addresses the needs of only a tiny proportion of patrons’ needs**. Flipping the value proposition such that customers’ needs are centered, instead of organizations’ needs, is arguably the most important task at hand.

Problematic language

- The terminology our sector uses to describe customers **is transactional, hierarchical, and flawed** (e.g., “single ticket buyers,” “multi-single ticket buyers,” “subscribers”), and may be limiting in terms of how we view and consequently engage with the public. While these terms are intrinsically neutral, in practice they’re used in a way that connotes a customer’s value to an organization in a very commercial sense. The whole construct of “the marketing funnel” or “the donor

pyramid” perpetuates a damaging institutional psychology in which new patrons, the moment they arrive, are put on a marketing conveyor belt that is a one-way ride towards subscription. If they fall off the conveyor belt, as most do, they join a vast sea of “oncers” or infrequent single ticket buyers who are inconsequential to the long-term success of the organization. They are immediately framed as contributing to the **problem of retention**, instead of framed as an asset. This is deeply problematic from a public value perspective. In reality, “oncers” are just as passionate about the art as dedicated subscribers, and their experiences are just as legitimate and fruitful from a mission delivery standpoint as those of subscribers.

Universal points of entry

- While there is nothing morally wrong with rewarding your best customers, **our entire sector caters to the needs of only the most dedicated and well-resourced customers**. There are some notable exceptions, however, including a number of membership models that aim to welcome newcomers to an organization’s programs ([Brooklyn Museum](#), [Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati](#)) and discounted ticket bundles ([Woolly Mammoth](#)) and social platforms ([ClassicCard](#)) that make it convenient and economical for young adults to attend. In fact, the rise of “Under 35” programs ([Lincoln Center Theatre](#), [Phoenix Theatre Company](#)) over the past 10 years is a real bright spot in the evolution of marketing practice. Every organization’s marketing practice should include structured points of entry for newcomers, both in terms of marketing points of entry and programmatic points of entry.

Do we even know how to communicate with people when we’re not selling?

- Nearly everyone we spoke with seems to agree that **performing arts organizations need to learn how to communicate with audiences “on a different channel” (i.e., apart from when they’re selling)**. But few could cite examples of non-sales communications initiatives, with some exceptions (e.g., [World Ballet Day](#), now in its 10th year). Social media, especially, is used as a sales channel rather than an engagement platform when, in reality, many of the people who follow arts organizations’ social media feeds don’t even live in the same area. Regardless, they continually receive ticket offers. Arts organizations are so focused on selling tickets that they’ve somehow missed the point of public engagement – forging relationships with a much broader cross-section of the public that is interested in the art but unable to come to performances except occasionally – or never.

Affinity for the art form necessarily precedes loyalty to the organization

- For years, we've been harvesting customers whose tastes have been cultivated by the education system and reinforced by sociocultural and class norms. As this system breaks down further and further, **there are fewer and fewer customers in the marketplace primed to enter into loyal relationships with arts organizations.** The research suggests we have much more work to do to define relationships that introduce and familiarize people with the art, but are not premised on frequent attendance. We found several excellent examples of media projects that engage arts-interested folks without a sales pretext, including [the Object podcast](#), produced by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and [CirqueConnect](#), a video library of original content from Cirque du Soleil. In both instances, the goal of the content is to entertain and educate. While both of these media engagement projects have the potential to spark interest in attending the organizations' programs, this is not the goal.

Relationships built around learning are almost nonexistent

- A good deal of research suggests that ticket buyers at all levels of frequency, not just subscribers, are interested in learning more about the art form(s). Their aesthetic tastes, background in the arts, cultural reference points, level of adventurousness, and preferred learning modalities are as complex and idiosyncratic as their DNA. They are on a lifelong journey through the arts, whether they're aware of it or not. To propel them through this journey, they may draw from the live program offerings of many different organizations ([Jazz at Lincoln Center](#), [Phipps Conservatory](#)), as well as an array of digitally recorded content ([Harvard University](#), [TED](#)). Meanwhile, arts organizations keep trying to convert low-frequency buyers into higher frequency buyers, when **their first interest might not be attending more programs, but learning more about the art.** The research uncovered a number of arts-related educational products – some offered by educational institutions and only a few offered by arts groups – but we were unable to find a single arts organization offering a membership program centering adult education. The near-exclusive focus on ticket selling has marginalized education to a secondary or peripheral position in many arts organizations. For adults, educational content typically comes in the form of printed programs and pre-performance talks – all necessarily prefaced by ticket-buying. Those unlucky souls who can't make it to live performances – many of whom

experience challenges of one sort or another – are simply out of luck when it comes to learning. They missed the boat. And, thereby, organizations habitually forfeit a world of opportunities to engage a broader public in our missions.

Memberships as a platform for holding taste, affinity and loyalty

- The pace of experimentation with membership programs in North America is picking up, although the research revealed a great deal of unhelpful ambiguity around the use of the term “membership.” Some organizations use the term “membership” to describe ticket access programs. Others use membership as a baseline or gateway relationship that offers members privileged access to tickets and other benefits. Still others use membership as a vessel for social ambitions. Very few organizations offer memberships or affinity programs that are not sales-related ([Cirque du Soleil](#)), although we found several erstwhile attempts to make transactional memberships ([Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts](#)) more relational (i.e., to help members feel like they’re part of a “community”). In practice, this is difficult to achieve, and a temporary manifestation of loyalty, at best. The major advantage of membership, of course, is that it doesn’t require one to commit in advance to attending. Rather, most organizations use memberships as a **low-threshold means of capturing affinity** for the organization – a sort of prospect pool ([Minneapolis Institute of Art](#)). For members, these relationships can offer a helpful intermediary step along the continuum from awareness to allegiance, in that they allow people to affiliate with an organization without making any commitment to attending ([National Museum of Women in the Arts](#)). In essence, these memberships allow people to say to an organization, “let’s be friends” and see where it goes from there.
- Purchasing a membership is one way that people express affinity for an organization, but there are other ways. Most notably, we think about the many ticket buyers who make small gifts to an organization over the course of a year – perhaps adding a small amount to a ticket order, returning unused tickets, or responding to a campaign solicitation with a small gift. In many cases, these individuals **do not even consider themselves to be “donors”** as the benefits they get by virtue of making a small gift are indistinguishable from the benefits they get as a frequent ticket buyer. While higher level donors get all sorts of special treatment, would it not make sense to auto-enroll lower-level donors in a membership program, if only to help them understand that they’re in a relationship with the organization by virtue of

their gift? Too often, the sole result of a small gift is an acknowledgment letter and a lot of emails asking for more money.

- From a theoretical standpoint, memberships can serve another, important purpose in that **they allow affinity to accrue to objects other than the organization**. Conventional thinking about loyalty centers the institution as the sole object of interest and receptacle for loyalty. But we know from the research that many different objects hold affinity. People can hold feelings of affinity for disciplines, genres, artists, instruments, aesthetic movements, composers, choreographers, playwrights, tonalities, spaces, formats, and, of course, specific cultural traditions. These are the real building blocks of taste and affinity, as understood through the humanistic lens of lived experience. An individual's tastes in dance, for example, might be characterized as a constantly changing portfolio of affinities for dancers, choreographers and companies, styles of dance, diasporas, spaces, etc. Membership programs or affinity groups, especially when they are centered on learning ([Museum of Photographic Arts](#), [Talking Sondheim](#)), hold the potential for organizations to create **vessels for affinity where it naturally lies** (e.g., a group of people interested in learning more about Indigenous theatre, or hip-hop dance, or the harp). The possibilities for building affinity are endless. Yet, there is a short-circuit in logic at the level of marketing practice. Affinity programs for objects other than the institution are generally not seen as a priority. Consider, for example, why more theatre companies don't encourage audience members to follow the work of playwrights or directors after their work has left the company's stage.
- We did not find any membership programs that hold affinity for adventurousness – membership programs that cultivate and support people who like to be on the cutting edge of art and ideas. Given the strategic importance of adventurousness to arts organizations, and in light of the reversion to 'safer' fare wrought by the pandemic, we see this as an obvious void in the landscape of customer relationships. Arts organizations that want willing risk-takers in their audience need to bring a new consciousness and intentionality to fostering adventurousness through affinity groups or membership programs designed specifically for this purpose.

Leveraging social value

- In taking a holistic view of customer relationships, we would be remiss in not looking carefully for products, bundles and relationships that: 1) lower social barriers to attendance ([Woolly Mammoth](#)), and 2) heighten social fulfillment ([ClassicCard](#)). We've long known of the powerful and naturally occurring sociology of arts

participation, but struggle to find examples of marketing programs that reward people for bringing their friends. Arts organizations, historically, leverage social value through 1) social formats (e.g., cocktail hour preceding a concert); 2) discounts on additional tickets for subscribers; 3) group sales discounts; 4) volunteer groups and young professionals groups that aim to create a sense of camaraderie ([Blumenthal Performing Arts](#)); and, 5) the interactions that happen before the performance starts (e.g., greeting your seat neighbor), at intermission, and afterwards, if any. Some organizations have integrated social spaces such as lounges and bars into their facilities (e.g., [Steppenwolf](#)) specifically to create more opportunities for social fulfillment. In reality, most audience members have only minimal social interaction with people outside of their immediate party. They arrive just before curtain time, scurry to the restroom at intermission or wait in line for a drink, and then leave immediately afterwards. While they may have a collective experience with several thousand other people, the formats we offer audience members generally do not intentionally foster interaction between and amongst audience members who do not know each other.

- In terms of sales techniques and customer relationships, we focused our research on a small number of smartphone apps that facilitate attendance in small social groups ([ClassicCard](#), [OperaMeet](#)). Technically, these are not ‘relationships’ but technology platforms ([DICE](#)). Regardless, they address a key barrier to attendance (i.e., no one to go with) and allow individuals who lack the social context to activate attendance within their own household to more easily find social context within their friendship network. These apps also serve another critically important role in that they allow for in-app “event discovery.” Within the app you can: (a) find out what’s on, and choose an event; (b) organize a group to go with; and (c) acquire tickets. This is a powerful simplification of the purchase decision process. It also offers a hopeful ray of light in an otherwise depressing narrative of diminished efficacy of email marketing, print advertising, and broadcast media advertising amongst younger consumers. Additional functionalities might strengthen the utility of an app, such as:
 - Automated calendarization of selected events (i.e., to set reminders for yourself when you want them)
 - Group interactions and group communications so that affinity groups organized around artists, formats, styles, etc., can form within the app
 - Scrapbooking of past events, such that the app holds the memory of past arts experiences
- Importantly, these apps provide a tool for “Initiators” – people who enjoy organizing social groups for their friends – to do what they naturally like to do. Our research

suggests that around 15% of ticket buyers self-identify as Initiators. Are they the next generation of “influencers” for arts organizations?

Summary

Results from this inventory will be synthesized with results from the literature review on loyalty frameworks and the exploratory survey of NAC ticket buyers to generate overarching implications for developing new and different products, bundles and customer relationships.

Our key takeaway from the inventory is that the vast number of products, bundles and relationships offered by arts organizations are grounded in an outdated notion of “frequency=loyalty” that ignores the many ways that humans naturally develop tastes and affinity for the arts. A significant re-tooling is implied.

The landscape of loyalty – how people form emotional relationships with products and people – has changed and will continue to change. With the advent of technologies like social media platforms and streaming services, consumers can quickly and easily form relationships with artists, genres, and other objects of interest, especially when they are well branded (e.g., Taylor Swift).

Arts organizations used to understand themselves as *gatekeepers* to the arts in their communities. Now, though, consumers have access to unlimited programming options through digital content. With a few subscriptions to arts-focused streaming services, the threshold for accessing content has been all but obliterated. Many consumers, however, feel overwhelmed by the proliferation of choices, and are unsure of how and where to focus their precious time and attention – whether live or digital.

Thus, the need for arts organizations to serve as *gateways* into the arts is as great as ever. Through a new set of relationships and technology platforms, arts organizations can once again serve as the trusted guide through the arts that they once were, but in a radically more democratic way.



Inventory of Customer Relationship Models

This research aimed to systematically describe and categorize interesting or new customer relationships in the performing arts sector. Our field of vision was predominantly the US and Canada, although several models were sourced from Europe. The object of our analysis was a cross-section of sales offerings, relational experiments, educational products, and digital platforms.

At the highest level, this inventory is subdivided into six categories of distinct offers and relationships. These categories emerged during the research process and were consolidated and refined as more practices were discovered and categorized. Each category begins with an overarching summary that includes a category description, examples of specific products that fall under the category, and a narrative analysis of the category.

Under each category we provide succinct case studies illustrating representative offers and relationships in that category. Each case study follows the same basic structure, including: organization name, product name, a description of the offer or relationship, key features, and a few thoughts on what value the offer or relationship delivers to customers. Where possible, we describe the program's level of success and current status, and also note similar products.

The overall goal of the analysis was to methodically scan and reflect back to National Arts Centre what offers and relationships performing arts organizations are offering their customers, and what value they provide in return. Note that some case studies might fall into two or more categories (e.g., a virtual educational product could be categorized as both educational and digital). In such cases, we chose the category that captured the product's primary purpose.



Advance Commitment Ticket Bundles

Category Description

Customer relationships that fall into the Advance Commitment Ticket Bundles category require a customer to purchase either a ticket voucher or a bundle of ticket vouchers in advance, which then must be redeemed at a future date. Technically, what's being sold is a seat license (i.e., a right to a seat), not an actual seat with a fixed location. Inserting a redemption process between the initial sale and the eventual use of the product complicates the process but also allows for an element of flexibility which some consumers value a great deal.

Many organizations have opted to use the language of membership to describe this type of customer relationship. Functionally, however, these products are more or less just a more customizable or flexible version of the traditional subscription product. The payment options for these products varies; some organizations require customers to pay an annual fee, while others charge their members on a month-to-month basis a la Netflix.

The high degree of flexibility built into these memberships is what differentiates them from other subscription packages. Buyers not only have the ability to decide the day and time they attend a performance, but they can also choose their seats for each performance. Some organizations also allow their members to attend a show more than once. Cancellation, exchange options, and additional discounts vary by organization, but most memberships come with some additional perks.

Product Features

- Guaranteed access to a certain number of shows per season
- Flexibility to decide which shows to see and when to see them
- Varying flexibility to choose seats
- Ability to re-book or exchange tickets for no extra charge
- Discounts on additional tickets
- Discounts on other products, such as merchandise, food and beverages

- Invitations to special events (e.g., behind-the-scenes tours, members-only events, etc.)
- Access to concierge services
- Auto-renewal
- Cancellation rights

Summary of Product Types

Within this category, there are several distinct subcategories, as described below.

- **Advance purchase season ticket voucher** (i.e., a redeemable voucher bundle that guarantees access to one seat for every show in a season)

Example: [Wooly Mammoth's Golden Ticket](#)

The Golden Ticket is a Willy Wonka-inspired advance purchase pass with a high degree of flexibility built into it. For one flat rate, Golden Ticket holders can attend nearly all of Wooly Mammoth's programs. Throughout the season, they can choose any date and seat for a given production subject to availability. They can decide to reserve their seat well in advance or at the last minute. Golden Ticket holders also have the ability to come back and see the show as many times as they want. If need be, they can exchange their tickets without incurring any fees or upgrade charges. Other perks include a discount on additional tickets, invitations to special events, and access to a concierge via email.

- **All-access season pass** (i.e., in exchange for monthly payment, members have the ability to claim tickets to shows in advance or at the last minute)

Example: [St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's Concert Membership Program](#)

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) offers several monthly membership options that range in price between \$5 and \$20 a month. The program is rooted in SPCO's commitment to making concerts as accessible as possible for its community. Members gain access to an unlimited number of concert programs in a given season and can cancel their membership at any time. Members can claim tickets either online or by phone and select their desired seats at the time of redemption based on availability.

- **Advance purchase ticket voucher bundle** (i.e., ticket credits redeemable for future shows)

Example: [Steppenwolf's Black Card](#)

The Black Card membership consists of a pre-purchased, six-ticket voucher bundle. Similar to a transit card, members pay a flat price in advance and then decide how to use their vouchers throughout the year. They can use a single voucher to see six individual shows, use two vouchers to see three shows, or decide to use all six vouchers at once by taking five other people to see one show. Black cards are good for one year from purchase. Three price points are offered: 1) a Preview price (\$120 for six); 2) a Weeknight price (\$240 for six); and 3) an Anytime price (\$360 for six), which incentivizes sales for slower selling performance dates. Any remaining credits on an expired Black Card will be considered a donation to Steppenwolf, which simplifies accounting. Benefits like discounts on beverages, merchandise, and invitations to special events are also included in the Black Card membership.

- **Auto-Renewal Subscription** (i.e., opting into an automatic renewal subscription and receiving additional membership benefits)

Example: [LA Opera's Subscribe and Save](#)

The Subscribe & Save program is an automatic renewal program that current LA Opera subscribers can opt into at no additional cost. Subscribers who do join can choose to cancel their automatic renewal at any time. To ensure subscribers are not taken by surprise, they will be notified that their subscription is set to renew 30 days in advance. By participating in this program, subscribers receive an additional 15% off their season subscription. Upon joining, they automatically have access to additional benefits like priority entrance, priority concession service, invitations to backstage tours, and other special events throughout the season.

Discussion

For the most part, these are transactional relationships (e.g., subscription on a payment plan), but create value by cleaving the customer decision process into two steps, thereby lowering a barrier to attendance:

- 1) Do I want to commit to seeing a certain number of programs (Yes/No); and

2) If “Yes,” When, and with whom, do I want to go

We note that some organizations are attempting to add a layer of relational value to these products (e.g., concierge service; educational programs) in an attempt to foster a deeper sense of loyalty.

The most innovative aspect of this product/relationship category is its flexibility. Unlike a traditional subscription, these advance commitment ticket bundles allow customers to make last-minute decisions and tailor their arts-going to their ever-changing schedules.

Arts organizations that have implemented flexible programs are seeing year-over-year growth. They have also found that these flexible options are more attractive to younger audience members and are the predominant package new customers are now choosing to buy.

By introducing these new customer relationships, however, they find they are not cannibalizing existing subscribers, who mostly stick with their existing subscriptions to ensure they get the same, fixed seats for each performance.

To help avoid decision paralysis, some organizations are streamlining their subscription options. Some have gotten rid of more traditional subscriptions altogether, while others are moving to only two subscription offerings – one that is flexible, and one that is fixed.

LA Opera, Subscribe & Save

Product Type

An automatic renewal program that rewards participants with a discount on their existing subscriptions and qualifies them to receive additional perks.

Product Overview

The Subscribe & Save program is an automatic renewal program that buyers of either the Classic 6-Opera Package or the All-In 13 Show Package can choose to opt into. There is no additional cost to joining this program, and subscribers can cancel their automatic renewal at any time. To ensure subscribers are not taken by surprise, they are notified 30 days before their subscription is set to renew.



By participating in this program, subscribers receive an additional 15% off their season subscription. They also receive benefits like priority entrance, priority concession service, invitations to backstage tours, and other special events throughout the season.

Motivation & Value

The Subscribe and Save program came about in response to feedback LA Opera received from its subscribers. This program enables LA Opera to keep fixed prices low and create a more seamless and convenient renewal process.

Known Results

Because the Subscribe & Save program has allowed LA Opera to cut down on its marketing costs, those who opt into the program save around 34% on their season tickets.

Key Attributes

- Automatic subscription renewal
- Additional discount off of subscription package
- Access to additional benefits
- Ability to cancel at any time

Phoenix Theatre Company, The All Access Pass

Product Type

A fixed-fee monthly membership that grants access to unlimited theatre in a given season.

Product Overview

Since 2018, the Phoenix Theatre Company has offered an All Access Pass that gives pass holders the ability to see a show whenever they want and however many times they want. For \$39 a month, they get access to regular season shows as well as the company's Festival of New American Theatre.

Passholders can choose to book their seats to a given show months in advance or at the last minute, and they can exchange their tickets an unlimited number of times for free. They are required to make an initial commitment of one year (12 months), after which they can cancel anytime.

Additional benefits of the All Access Pass include 25% discount on additional single tickets and a 20% off of concessions, merchandise, and at the ArtBar+Bistro. Pass holders are also invited to the Artistic Director's Series and have the opportunity to take a behind-the-scenes VIP Tour.



Motivation & Value

All Access Pass was created to provide fix-seat subscribers with a more flexible alternative.

Known Results

This program did not take off as expected. They learned that what these subscribers valued most about their subscription was the fixed seat selection, a feature the All Access Pass or their other flexible subscriptions do not guarantee. This prompted them to pivot and reinvent the program in 2020.

Key Attributes

- Ability to see a performance multiple times at no additional cost
- Flexibility to book at any time before the performance
- Flexibility to choose a different seat for each performance
- Free ticket exchange

For their 2019-2020 season (the theatre reopened halfway through the year, transitioning to outdoors), fix-seat subscriptions made up a little over half of the subscription sales (54% to 46%). During the 2021-2022 season, these numbers were inverted, with 60% of subscribers choosing one of their more flexible plans, a central one being the All Access Pass. Because of their flexible subscriptions, the Phoenix Theatre Company's subscription rate has bounced back to what it was before the pandemic.

Similar Models

At the beginning of their 2023-24 season, Pittsburgh Opera introduced a monthly subscription called the Opus Pass, which closely resembles the All Access Pass. The main difference is that Opus Pass holders can cancel their subscription before the 12-month mark.

Super Secret Arts, Monthly Membership

Product Type

A fixed-fee monthly membership that grants access to unlimited an assortment programming.

Product Overview

Super Secret Arts opened in March 2022 in Gowanus, Brooklyn. It closed four months later. However, during its short tenure, the theatre offered a \$25 monthly membership that gave members unlimited access to the theatre’s programming. In addition to mainstage productions, members also had access to “a nightly assortment of events, from live music to improv and sketch comedy, from cabarets to open mics and other experimental works.”



As long as there was space available, members could attend a show or event as many times as they desired. An additional benefit included the option of bringing a guest at a discounted rate of \$15.

Motivation & Value

Super Secret Arts was interested in experimenting with how theatre was funded. The idea behind this Netflix-like membership model was to make theatre more affordable for audiences and more sustainable for its makers.

As founding artistic director Toby Singer put it, “there was very little talk about the economic reality of theatremaking...so it got me thinking about, essentially, what would a theatre company look like that could break with the traditional modes of arts funding?”

Key Attributes

- For a monthly fee, members can attend a performance or an event as many times as they want

Known Results

The theatre permanently closed in July 2022.

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Recurring Concert Membership Program

Product Type

A multi-tiered monthly membership that grants access to unlimited concerts in a season.

Product Overview

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) offers several monthly membership options that range from \$5 to \$20 a month. All of their memberships grant the members access to unlimited concerts in a given season. Both their Introductory Concert Membership and their Club 2030 Membership (for attendees between the ages of 19 and 39) are \$5 a month and provide one ticket per member for a seat in specific sections.



Their Monthly Concert Membership is \$9 and is virtually the same as their Introductory Concert Membership but for returning attendees over the age of 40. The Monthly Gold Concert Membership is \$20 a month and gives members the added benefit of being able to access any seat. Finally, their newest membership is the Two-Month Concert Membership at \$18. This membership is a trial membership and is marketed as the perfect gift to give to a friend or family member. It gives the recipient unlimited access to SPCO concerts for any two-month period of their choice during the season, September through June. All memberships can be canceled at any time. They can also be set up to automatically renew year after year.

Key Attributes

- Flexibility to book at any time before the performance
- Flexibility to choose a different seat for each performance
- Can cancel membership at any time without penalty

Motivation & Value

SPCO's membership program is rooted in its commitment to making concerts as accessible as possible for its community. The purpose of the membership is to provide patrons with an affordable and flexible way to attend concerts without requiring advance commitment.

Known Results

It is unclear the financial impact of their membership program.

Steppenwolf, Black Card

Product Type

A multi-tiered advance purchase ticket bundle that provides buyers with the flexibility to choose how they redeem their ticket vouchers.

Product Overview

Steppenwolf's Black Card is one of the oldest examples of the advance purchase ticket bundle model. Since the pandemic, they have revamped this program in order to make it more accessible.

Presently, there are three bundle options, each consisting of six ticket vouchers. All Black Card holders pay a flat price in advance and then can decide how to use their ticket vouchers throughout the year. For example, a patron can use a single voucher to see six individual shows, take a partner and use two vouchers to see three shows or decide to use all six vouchers at once and take five other people with them to see one show. All ticket vouchers can be redeemed either online or by phone. At the time of redemption, cardholders are able to select their desired seats. Black Cards are only good for one calendar year from the date purchased. Any remaining credits on an expired Black Card will be considered a donation to Steppenwolf.



All ticket vouchers in the Black Card bundle are heavily discounted; however, the amount depends on the Black Card membership type. *The Preview Black Card* consists of six \$20 ticket vouchers (\$120 total) that enable a cardholder to access only preview shows. *The Weeknight Black Card* consists of six \$40 ticket vouchers (\$240 total) that enable a cardholder to access all weeknight (Tuesday – Thursday) shows. *The Anytime Black Card* consists of six \$60 ticket vouchers (\$360

Key Attributes

- Ability to use six ticket vouchers in whichever way is most convenient
- Can redeem a ticket voucher any time before the performance
- Ability to choose a different seat for each performance
- Unlimited exchanges

total) that enable a cardholder to see any show at any time.

Additional Black Card benefits include a 10% discount to Steppenwolf's bar, coffee shop, and gift shop, member pricing at select theatres through the [National Stages Program](#), a 20% discount to Café Ba-Ba-Reeba, and exclusive invitations to special events.

Motivation & Value

The impetus behind the Black Card was to meet potential buyers where they were and provide them with a membership that gave them the agency to decide how they preferred to interact with the Steppenwolf. After the pandemic, Steppenwolf lowered the price of the Black Card to make it more accessible and updated its messaging to focus more on the communal aspects of theatergoing. Ultimately, Steppenwolf is incentivizing theatergoers to opt into buying a ticket voucher bundle over buying a single ticket to each performance they want to go see.

Known Results

[Within three months of launching their new marketing campaign, Steppenwolf sold as many Black Cards as they had in 2019.](#) Steppenwolf attributes its success to both the flexible nature of the Black Card and the new messaging behind its reboot. As of the 2022-2023 season, Steppenwolf's advance purchase ticket bundles (both the Black Card and the Red Card) [only made up 15% of its overall subscriptions and a small percentage of its overall earned income.](#) However, these plans are becoming more popular with younger purchasers and therefore, Steppenwolf hopes that these subscriptions help them expand their audience.

Similar Model

[Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati](#) has a five-ticket voucher Flex Pass that functions very similar to the Black Card.

Woolly Mammoth Theatre, The Golden Ticket

Product Type

An advance purchase fixed series ticket voucher, framed as an on-demand “all-access pass” with an emphasis on flexibility.

Product Overview

In 2020, Woolly Mammoth replaced its Flex Pass program with The Golden Ticket, a Wily Wonka-inspired advance purchase pass with a high degree of autonomy and flexibility built into it. Like a gym membership, Golden Ticket buyers make a one-time purchase and then can attend nearly all of Woolly’s programs whenever they so choose. Using their Golden Ticket, they can choose any date and any seat for a given performance as long as there is availability. Furthermore, Golden Ticket holders have the ability to come back and see the show again as many times as they want. They also have the ability to exchange their tickets without incurring any fees or upgrade charges. Golden Ticket holders also have the ability to use their Golden Ticket like a traditional subscription if they prefer.



Buyers can choose between two different price tiers, \$375 and \$250, to lower the barrier of entry. There is no difference in product. All Golden Tickets give the holder access to six or seven shows per season. Providing a more accessible option reflects Woolly’s vision to be inclusive of as many people as possible and allow for a deeper level of ownership and relationship with the organization. For the 2020-2021 season, Woolly found that 72% of Golden Ticket buyers purchased the full-price Golden Ticket.

Key Attributes

- Ability to see a performance multiple times at no additional cost
- Flexibility to book at any time before a performance
- Flexibility to choose a different seat for each performance
- Free ticket exchanges

Other perks of The Golden Ticket include 20% off additional tickets, invitations to special events, access to a concierge email, and exclusive offers to other theatrical

performances. The biggest limitation to The Golden Ticket is that it is non-transferrable and, therefore, can only be used by The Golden Ticket holder.

Motivation & Value

One of the motivations driving the creation of the Golden Ticket program was for Woolly to find a way for them to engage with the high number of repeat single-ticket buyers and convert them into subscribers. By making theater-going more on-demand and flexible, Woolly Mammoth believed it could capture the interest of patrons who were already coming to multiple performances every year. While still an advance purchase product, the Golden Ticket encourages buyers to engage with the organization on their own terms.

Known Results

During the 2020-2021 season, the conversion rate of traditional subscribers to Golden Ticket buyers was not as high as Woolly had hoped. However, as this new program was launched during the pandemic, the organization continued to be optimistic about future participation in the program. By its 2022-23 season, Woolly Mammoth regained 83% of its pre-pandemic subscription sales.

Similar Model

Although now defunct, the Center Theatre Group's former passport membership closely resembled the Golden Ticket. For a flat annual fee, members could choose what shows they saw and when they saw them at a discounted price.

Woolly Mammoth Theatre, QUADS

Product Type

An advance purchase ticket voucher bundle with flexible redemption.

Product Overview

The Quads is a discounted pre-purchased bundle of four tickets. The cost of each Quad bundle costs \$150. Unlike a traditional ticket bundle, buyers have the autonomy to choose how they use the four tickets. They can use the tickets individually to go to four different shows, attend two different shows with a companion, or attend one show with three other people.



Motivation & Value

The Quads ticket voucher bundle is a cheaper alternative to the Golden Ticket yet still incentivizes bundle ticket buying behavior.

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Model

There are several other organizations that offer pre-purchased ticket voucher bundles. Tafelmusik in Ontario, Canada, has a [“Chose Your Own”](#) ticket bundle subscription. The Phoenix Theatre Company has four options, [the Campus Pass](#), [Big Six Pass](#) and [two Flex Passes](#). Each one varies in flexibility and includes slightly different benefits.

Key Attributes

- Ability to four ticket vouchers in whichever way is most convenient

ZACH Theatre, ZACHXP

Product Type

A fixed-fee monthly membership that allows buyers to attend unlimited shows and events at the ZACH.

Product Overview

At the beginning of 2021, the ZACH rebooted its membership program with the creation of the ZACH



Experience (ZACHXP), a monthly membership that allows buyers to unlimited shows and events at ZACH. For \$39 a month, ZACHXP members get early access to free tickets and can go see that production as many times as they want. They also have the autonomy to decide when to reserve their seat, either well in advance or right before a show. Ticket exchanges can be made for free until 48 hours before a performance.

Members can cancel their subscriptions at any time. However, in order to avoid a penalty or paying a fee, they must commit to a 3-month membership (90 days) before canceling. ZACHXP memberships are non-transferable and can only be used by the original purchaser.

Additional perks include free parking, exclusive 10% off bar purchases, merchandise, and additional tickets, invitations to members-only events, and discounts at surrounding bars and restaurants.

Key Attributes

- Early access to tickets
- Ability to see a performance multiple times at no additional cost
- Flexibility to book at any time before a performance
- Flexibility to choose a different seat for each performance
- Can cancel without penalty
- Additional, non-theatre related perks

Motivation & Value

When the ZACH decided to reboot its membership program, it targeted patrons who bought more than one show per season as well as lapsed subscribers. The ZACH wanted to create a more holistic experience and not simply another discount ticket program. The name, the ZACH Experience, gets at this commitment, as does its many non-theatre-related perks.

A huge perk of this model is that the payment structure benefits both the ZACH and its members. Members have the ability to spread the cost of an entire season out, and the theatre can rely on consistent cash flow throughout the year. The cost of sale is also much lower, as almost all of the advertising for ZACHXP can be done through digital campaigns.

Known Results

In a September 2023 JCA webinar, Greg Garcia, Associate Director of Marketing, reported that over the past two years, the ZACH has seen promising results. 33% of ZACH Theatre's revenue came from ZACHXP in 2022, and in 2023, it jumped up to 49%. The theatre is hoping the ZACHXP membership will make up more than 50% of its revenue this coming year. Currently, ZACHXP members make up 25% of Zach Theatre's overall membership base. 90% of all new members choose the ZACHXP membership.

Similar Model

Theatre Wit has a similar monthly membership model. The main difference is that it offers three different tiers targeted at individuals, couples, and students.



Affiliation Products

Category Description

These products are rooted in willful association and affiliation, and most of them use the language of membership. Aside from these two core components, they vary greatly in design and purpose. Some are purely a pretext for virtual engagement, while others are organized around in-person activities. Some are free programs, while others are paid. Of the organizations that require their members to pay, payment plans vary as well. Some are on an annual payment plan, while others are month-to-month.

These membership programs include an array of perks. The most common feature is “pre-sale ticket access.” In fact, some organizations report that customers buy their membership solely for this coveted perk. This is particularly true for organizations that present more popular shows and artists. Thus, affiliation programs run the gamut from pay-to-play hierarchical association schemes that gain access to transactional privileges to more altruistic affiliations that are mostly relational, not transactional.

Product Features

- Early access to ticket sales
- Free admission to special programming (i.e., special exhibitions, show previews, pre-and post-show chats)
- Access to virtual programming
- Free or discounted tickets
- Early admission
- Ability to re-book/exchange tickets for no extra charge
- Discounts on other products, such as merchandise and beverages
- Invitation to exclusive events (e.g., VIP receptions, galas, etc.)
- Access to lounges
- Recognition in Playbill
- Magazine subscription

Summary of Product Types

Within this category, there are several distinct subcategories, outlined below.

- **Accessibility Memberships** (i.e., membership programs that are accessible to everyone and offer benefits to both paying and non-paying members)

Example: [The Minneapolis Institute of Art's MIA Membership](#)

The MIA Membership is a multi-tiered membership program that provides special discounts and benefits at all levels. Even if a member opts into a free membership, they will still have access to special discounts on merchandise and benefits such as free tickets on member days. Overall, the museum offers seven membership tiers with more and more perks added to each of the tiers.

- **Philanthropic Memberships** (i.e., donations on a monthly payment plan, tied to a membership scheme)

Example: [Stratford Festival's Membership](#)

The Stratford Festival is a sliding-scale donation-based membership with the choice to pay on a monthly or annual basis. This philanthropic membership comes in five different levels, each including a unique set of benefits such as access to pre-sale tickets, invitations to pre- and post-show chats, and admittance to VIP lounges. Members can join at any time and are charged on a monthly basis. The membership begins the month the donation was made and expires one year later.

- **Event-based Memberships** (i.e., memberships that revolve around and provide access to regularly scheduled social events)

Example: [Arkansas Museum of Fine Art's Social Pass](#)

The social pass is a year-long membership for people interested in engaging with the museum through events and other socially oriented programming. The Social Pass is for those who are more interested in the social aspects of engagement with the museum. For \$37 a year, a Social Pass holder can attend exclusive membership events and special exhibition preview parties and receive surprise museum discounts. Social Pass holders receive all their event invitations and surprise discounts via email.

- **Virtual Memberships** (i.e., memberships for those who are not local)

Example: [National Museum of Women in the Arts' Membership](#)

The NMWA Virtual Membership is a fully virtual membership intended for those who can't visit the museum often but want to be a part of the museum's

community. The Virtual membership costs \$60 and members have the option of opting into automatic renewal. Members can tailor their communication preferences by choosing which e-newsletters they receive and self-reporting to the museum their areas of interest. They also gain access to all the museum's virtual programming and are subscribed to the Women in the Arts magazine, which they can choose to receive physically via mail or exclusively online. Finally, members receive 10% off of all merchandise in the NMWA Museum's shop.

Example: [Cirque du Soleil's Cirque Club](#)

- Cirque Club is a free online membership program focused on disseminating information and digital content about Cirque du Soleil. By joining Club Cirque, members will be first to hear about news updates and get access to presales, invitations to special events, and special discounts, all via Cirque du Soleil's newsletter, "Your Monthly Dose of Wow." Members also have access to the digital platform, CirqueConnect, which houses exclusive video series, podcasts, and photos. This affinity program is notable in that it is not constructed around in-person attendance. It is truly a vehicle for expressing brand affinity.
- **Leadership Development Memberships** (i.e., memberships that are for younger adults interested in board experience, becoming donors, etc.)

Example: [Phoenix Theatre Company's Ambassador Membership](#)

The Ambassador Membership program is for adult patrons under 40 who are passionate about theatre and want board experience. There are two options from which potential members can choose. For \$39, members get unlimited access to The Phoenix Theatre Company performances (1 ticket per membership, per performance), invitations to a show preview (up to 2 times a year), tickets to their ambassador-only social events, and the ability to bring a guest for free to Friends and Family nights. For \$70, members receive all the benefits of the \$39 membership as well as one ticket to the theatre's gala, an invitation to two VIP receptions, and two Open Night parties per year.

- **Reward Memberships** (i.e., reward programs through which members accrue credits or "points" to redeem for tickets)

Example: [Roundabout Theatre Company's Roundabout Rewards](#)

Rewards by Roundabout is a point-based reward program through which members receive five points for every dollar they spend on tickets to a Roundabout production. Subscribers and single-ticket buyers alike can join

Rewards by Roundabout. Roundabout Subscribers and Contributors at the Donor level (\$750) and above accrue points at twice the standard rate. There are no fees or stipulations. Once enrolled, a member will earn points for each ticket purchase at Roundabout. Once they earn a certain number of points, patrons can redeem them for free tickets to any Roundabout production. To qualify for a free Broadway ticket, members need 3,500 points. For a free off-Broadway ticket, they need 2,000 points. And for an Underground ticket, members need 1,000 points. Members can review the points they have accrued or redeem them for free tickets by logging into their Roundabout Theatre account. When redeeming their points for a free ticket, members can purchase an additional companion ticket. Upon checkout, they will be given the best seats available. A member's points expire 30 months from the last qualifying performance they attend. Roundabout has an accrual limit of 10,000 Rewards points.

- **Young Professionals Groups** (i.e., club-like memberships for young adults who are interested in the arts and support the mission of an organization)

Example: [Blumenthal Performing Arts' Blume Club](#)

Club Blume is a free social group for young professionals between the ages of 31 and 40 who are passionate about theatre and want to support the mission of Blumenthal Performing Arts. There are no dues or membership requirements. Anyone between the designated age range can join by signing up on the Club Blume website. Membership perks include invitations to pre-show mixers, free networking events, and discount offers. Essentially, it is a free trial membership offer.

Discussion

Affiliation Products rely heavily on the language of belonging and collective ownership, but most struggle to move beyond transactional benefits. The promotional language suggests that by signing up, potential members will be a part of a larger community of like-minded people (e.g., “join our club” or “[a] membership that is all about you”). What that looks like in practice, however, is fairly nebulous. The main incentive for becoming a member seems to be economic in nature, despite the references to “community.” Some organizations highlight the transactional benefits of affiliation products, while others avoid mentioning them altogether. Even with free membership programs, some still advertise economic perks. Overall, it is unclear how successful these Affiliation Products are in getting their people to feel like they’re part of a larger group with a common cause.

Most of the experts we interviewed seem to favor the membership model over the subscription model, as the design better lends itself to meaningful engagement that is not solely focused on selling. However, there is room for improvement, especially when it comes to helping members cultivate relationships with each other and with the institution.

Affiliation products built around rewards programs (e.g., a membership program that allows you to accrue points or credits for future tickets) is another customer relationship subcategory we found nearly absent of examples, Roundabout Rewards being the exception. Although this type of relationship produces one of the weaker versions of loyalty (i.e., “mercenary loyalty”), it is curious that so few arts and cultural organizations use the rewards model given its high level of public acceptance in other product categories (e.g., airlines, credit cards).

Young professionals groups seemed to be more common in the 1990s and 2000s, but we found only a few active groups today. Perhaps some were abandoned during the pandemic. In any case, there are real questions about how to engage people in social groups in ways that create authentic bonds.

Finally, we see great promise in virtual memberships that create value for institutional supporters who do not live locally and cannot attend live programs. We suspect that many cultural organizations have significant social media constituencies that are non-local, but still continue to use social media as a marketing channel for live programs. Virtual memberships, therefore, will be more relevant to larger organizations with large social media followings, organizations that tour and accumulate constituents who live outside of their home city, and those that have worldwide brands.

Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts (AMFA), Social Pass

Product Type

A fixed-fee annual membership for people interested in engaging with the museum through socially oriented programming.

Product Overview

The Social Pass is for museum-goers who are interested in the social perks of being a museum member. For \$37 a year, a social pass holder can attend exclusive membership events and special exhibition preview parties and receive surprise museum discounts. Social pass holders receive all their event invitations and surprise discounts via email.



Motivation & Value

The Social Pass came to be as a part of a larger reimagining of the museum’s membership model. Through this process, AMFA identified a need for a membership option that allowed guests to interact and enjoy the museum on a purely social level.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Low-cost annual membership
- Access to exclusive events and parties at the museum
- Surprise discounts on other museum items

Blumenthal Performing Arts, Club Blume

Product Type

A free social group for young professionals who are passionate about theatre.

Product Overview

Club Blume is a free social group for young professionals between the ages of 31 and 40 who are passionate about theatre and want to actively support the mission of Blumenthal Performing Arts. Anyone between the designated age range can join by signing up on their website. Membership perks include invitations to pre-show mixers, free networking events, and various discount offers.



Motivation & Value

Club Blume is essentially a free trial membership that allows younger patrons of the arts to establish an ongoing rapport with Blumenthal Performing Arts. Like most young professional groups, the overall goal is to spur future attendance and donations to Blumenthal Performing Arts.

Key Attributes

- Free to join
- Invitations to social and networking events
- Various discount offers

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

The Philadelphia Orchestra has a similar young professionals group called [Young Friends of the Philadelphia Orchestra](#). It is free to join. Members get access to discount tickets, presales, and members-only events where they can meet each other, musicians, and special guests.

Steppenwolf's [Young Adult Council \(YAC\)](#) is an affiliation group for teens. Members have the chance to share their perspectives with Steppenwolf and help the theatre curate programming.

Cirque du Soleil, Club Cirque

Product Type

Cirque Club is a free online program that focuses on building brand affiliation for Cirque du Soleil.

Product Overview

In 2023, Cirque du Soleil launched its Club Cirque, a free online program for “the ultimate Cirque du Soleil fans.” By joining Club Cirque, members will be the first to hear news updates and get access to presales, invitations to special events, and special discounts, all via Cirque du Soleil’s newsletter, “Your Monthly Dose of Wow.” Members also have on-demand access to the digital platform, CirqueConnect, which houses exclusive video series, podcasts, and photos.



Motivation & Value

Coming out of the pandemic, Cirque du Soleil was in financial trouble and knew it needed to diversify its revenue streams. It decided it needed to become more than a live, in-person circus. Since then, it has worked to build products such as Club Cirque that are vehicles for disseminating and amplifying its brand. Club Cirque is a foundational piece in a larger puzzle of how Cirque du Soleil plans to transform itself from an in-person performing arts organization into something larger that is more sustainable and less material.

Key Attributes

- Receive monthly informational newsletter
- Access to digital platform housing exclusive content
- Accesses to pre-sales
- Social discounts
- Invitations to special events

Known Results

No known results.

Glyndebourne Opera Festival, Under 40 Membership

Product Type

A membership program for young adults who want access to this exclusive Opera festival.

Product Overview

The 40 and Under membership is a paid membership for young adults ages 16-39. For 70 pounds per year, members get access to priority booking, which significantly increases their chances of securing tickets to this exclusive opera festival. Members also receive a 50% discount on two festival tickets and are automatically subscribed to the Glyndebourne Opera Festival's members magazine and email newsletter.



For members interested in becoming future Associate Members, they can choose to put their annual Under 40 membership fee towards the Associate Member one-time joining fee of 500 pounds. Under 40 members can also simultaneously join the free Under 30 membership program.

Motivation & Value

The Under 40 membership is Glyndebourne Opera's newest membership and was created to make the opera festival more accessible and attractive for patrons between the ages of 30 and 40 years old.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Access to Priority booking
- A 50% discount on festival tickets
- A subscription to a member only magazine and newsletter

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), LACMA Local

Product Type

A monthly membership focused on connecting people and creating community through bi-weekly meet-ups.

Product Overview

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) created an alternative membership designed to help people engage with each other through attending LACMA programming.

LACMA Local members had access to art-inspired hangouts that the museum hosted every other Saturday, and members could participate in as many events as they liked. The event time and programming varied from week to week, although all of them revolved around arts and culture and encouraged active participation. Occasionally, programming had a small admission fee that supported the cost of food, beverage, and art supplies involved.

Museum members could add a Local Membership to their regular museum membership for \$25. New members could join a la carte for \$40.

Motivation & Value

LACMA Local was the museum's response to its visitors' desire to have programming at the museum that fostered community rather than provided benefits. It was created to complement the museum's other programs and memberships.



Key Attributes

- Access to bi-weekly events that fostered connection and center community

Instead of targeting a certain age group or demographic, this membership was for anyone who “likes LACMA and is interested in forming bonds with other people who are into LACMA.”

Known Results

This program began in 2016 and appears to have been discontinued in 2018. It no longer exists.

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Mia Membership

Product Type

A multi-tiered membership that provides special discounts and benefits at all levels.

Product Overview

The most unique aspect of the MIA Membership is that each membership tier – including the free one – has a variety of benefits associated with it. Furthermore, each level takes into account the potential activities and interests that type of member might be interested in.



Members who join for free still enjoy benefits such as 10% off any café purchase, free tickets to special exhibitions on member days, and insider news and information. Overall, the museum offers seven membership tiers with more perks added to each membership level.

Motivation & Value

The Mia membership program accounts for all types of members and focuses on their potential needs and wants. The language the museum uses to describe this program suggests that MIA wants its members to feel like they have some personal ownership of the museum. By making its starting membership free, the museum is signaling that anyone can become part of the MIA community and does not have to make a financial commitment in order to affiliate with the museum.

Key Attributes

- Anyone can join for free
- Discounts at all membership levels
- Free tickets on member days
- Access to insider news and information

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) has two similar customer relationship models: its [annual pass program](#) and [AGO Membership](#). Its pass program consists of a [Free Annual Pass](#) for visitors ages 14-25 years old and a [Low-cost Annual Pass](#) for all other visitors. This annual pass provides unlimited access to the museum and is only \$5 more than a single entrance ticket to the museum. Its AGO Membership is like the MIA Membership in that it is a tiered membership program consisting of nine different levels that all have a variety of benefits associated with them. However, the unique aspect of the AGO Membership is that all members have voting privileges at AGO's annual general meeting.

Museum of Photographic Arts, MOPA Crew

Product Type

An affordable monthly membership focused on interest-based programming.

Product Overview

In May 2015, the Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA) launched a flexible membership program that aimed to attract the upcoming museum enthusiast who is looking for an active, participatory membership.



Potential members could choose from several different membership options. For \$5 a month, a member could be a part of the Photography Crew or the Film Crew. For \$8 a month, they could get an All-Access Pass that allowed them to be a part of both clubs.

A distinguishing feature of this interest-based membership program was that members did not have to commit to a standard annual membership but instead had the flexibility to choose month to month whether they wanted to continue to be a part of a “crew.”

Motivation & Value

The stated purpose behind the MOPA Crew was to design an affordable way for MOPA’s audience to choose how they wanted to be a part of the museum. While it did not supersede the museum’s traditional membership, it did give members a chance to get involved in a hands-on fashion and explore their personal interests.

Key Attributes

- Focus on interest-based programming
- Flexibility to cancel at any time
- Ability to choose between different artform-focused memberships

At the time, this was the museum's solution to attracting younger audiences who wanted more than a traditional membership and to be involved in contributing to the cultural community in San Diego.

Known Results

This program was discontinued and no longer exists.

National Museum of Women in the Arts, [NMWA Virtual Membership](#)

Product Type

A virtual fixed-fee membership intended for those who can't visit the museum often but want to be a part of its community.

Product Overview

The NMWA Virtual Membership is one of seven memberships that the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) has on offer and is intended for those who would like to support and be involved with the museum but cannot visit often. The virtual membership is the lowest membership tier and costs \$60 per year. Upon sign-up, members can opt into automatic renewal.



Virtual members can tailor their communication preferences by choosing which e-newsletters they receive and self-reporting their areas of interest. They also gain access to all the museum's virtual programming and are subscribed to the Women in the Arts magazine, which they can choose to receive physically via mail or exclusively online. Finally, virtual members receive 10% off of all merchandise in the NMWA Museum's shop.

Motivation & Value

Since the majority (~65%) of NMWA members live outside of the DC area, the museum decided it needed to create a membership option that would allow it to engage with and sustain its members who don't live close to the museum and only visit on rare occasions. In collaboration with JCA's arts marketing consultants, NMWA came up with this new virtual membership option.

Key Attributes

- Tailored newsletters that reflect members stated preferences
- Access to exclusive virtual events
- Magazine subscription
- Discount on museum store merchandise

Known Results

This membership program launched at the end of October 2023, so its results are still unknown.

Similar Model

The London Library has a [Remote Access Membership](#) that provides full access to the library's collection and the other membership benefits but without the use of the library's physical space.

Phoenix Theatre Company, Ambassador Membership

Product Type

A fixed-fee affiliation membership for adults under 40 who are interested in board experience.

Product Overview

The Ambassador Membership program is for adult patrons under 40 who are passionate about theatre and want board experience. Potential members can choose from two options. For \$39, members get unlimited access to The Phoenix Theatre Company performances (1 ticket per membership, per performance), invitations to a show preview (up to 2 times a year), tickets to its ambassador-only social events, and the ability to bring a guest for free to friends and family nights. For \$70, members receive all the benefits of the \$39 membership as well as one ticket to the theatre's gala, an invitation to two VIP receptions, and two Open Night parties per year.



Motivation & Value

The Phoenix Theatre Company created the Ambassador membership to engage younger audience members and to give those interested in taking a leadership role a chance at gaining board experience.

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

The [LCT Angels Program](#) is Lincoln Center Theatre's philanthropic affiliation program for young adults ages 21-44. To join this group, members ages 21-39 need to make a donation of at least \$250 or more to Lincoln Center Theatre. For members ages 40-44, they are required to make a donation of at least \$500. By joining this group, members receive complimentary house seats and invitations to fun parties and behind-the-scenes events.

Key Attributes

- Membership for adults under 40 interested in board experience
- Free ticket to each performance
- Invitation to performance previews
- Access to variety of social events and VIP receptions

Generation Roundabout is Roundabout Theatre Company's new donor cultivation membership program for anyone who is 40 and under. The group is explicitly marketed as a group of the theatre's next generation of philanthropists. To join, members have to make at least a \$200 donation to Roundabout Theatre Company. Benefits include invitations to exclusive events, discounted tickets, and the opportunity to get more involved with Roundabout theatre.

Roundabout Theatre Company, Rewards by Roundabout

Product Type

An opt-in program that rewards its members for buying tickets with points that they can then redeem for a free ticket at a future date.

Product Overview

Rewards by Roundabout is a point-based reward program where members receive five points for every dollar they spend on tickets to a Roundabout production. Subscribers and single-ticket buyers alike can join Rewards by Roundabout. Roundabout Subscribers and Donors at the Contributor level (\$750) or higher accrue points at twice the standard rate.



Once enrolled, a member will earn points for each ticket purchase at Roundabout. If a person joins up to three days after attending a performance, their tickets will also qualify them for rewards. After a member earns a certain number of points, they can redeem them for free tickets to any Roundabout production. To qualify for a free Broadway ticket, members must earn 3,500 points. For a free off-Broadway ticket, they must earn 2,000 points, and for an Underground ticket, members must earn 1,000.

Key Attributes

- Receive reward points for every ticket purchased
- Free tickets earned through reward point acquisition

Reward members can review the points they have accrued and/or redeem them for free tickets by logging into their Roundabout Theatre account. When redeeming their points for a free ticket, they can also purchase additional companion tickets. Upon checkout, reward members will be given the best seats available. A member's points expire 30 months from the last qualifying performance they attend. Roundabout also has an accrual limit of 10,000 Rewards points.

Motivation & Value

Similar to an airline's rewards program, Rewards by Roundabout incentivizes ticket buying and rewards its members for doing so with the occasional free ticket. Although anyone can join this program, only a frequent ticket buyer will accrue enough points in a reasonable amount of time to take advantage of the free ticket reward.

Known Results

No known results.

Santa Cruz Shakespeare, SCS Membership

Product Type

A multi-tiered membership that can be paid on a monthly or annual basis and has unique benefits associated with each level.

Product Overview

The SCS Membership is a four-tiered membership program that can be paid for on an annual or monthly basis. All memberships are tax-deductible and have a variety of different benefits associated with them.



The Friend level (\$50/year or \$5/month) is the lowest membership level and gives members advanced access to ticket sales plus 5% off each regular-priced ticket. The Patron level (\$125/year or \$12/month) has the additional benefits of early admission into the theatre, recognition in the playbill, and free ticket exchange. The Player level (\$250/year or \$25/month) has the additional benefit of one sweet treat coupon that can be redeemed at The Grove concession stand. The Ensemble level (\$500/year or \$50/month) has the additional benefits of 10% off each regular-priced ticket and one parking coupon per car per show.

Motivation & Value

With unique benefits at every level, Santa Cruz Shakespeare's membership program ensures that it has something for everyone. Members can choose the SCS membership level that best fits their needs. Furthermore, having both annual and monthly payment plan options provides SCS members with an additional layer of membership customization.

Key Attributes

- Tiered membership with unique benefits at each level
- Access to pre-sale tickets
- Discounts on regular-priced tickets

Known Results

In the summer of 2023, Santa Cruz Shakespeare (SCS) reportedly hit 114% of its box office goal before the summer season finished. SCS attributed its success to a lot of different factors, including its audience and donors knowing exactly what they were seeing and supporting.

Similar Models

Lincoln Center and BAM also have multi-tiered membership programs that offer unique benefits at each of their membership levels.

Stratford Festival, Ontario, Canada

General Membership

Product Type

A multi-tiered, sliding-scale donation-based membership with the choice to pay on a monthly or annual basis.

Product Overview

This philanthropic membership comes in five different levels – Friends (\$75-174), Ambassadors (\$175-349), Benefactor (\$350-674), Associate (\$675-1,099), and Sustainer (\$1,100-1,499). The monetary range option allows members to choose a specific dollar amount that they want to donate.



All the levels come with its own set of unique benefits. Access to pre-sale tickets is one of the most popular benefits and is also one of the biggest draws for new members. Other benefits include pre-show chats, post-show chats, discounted tickets to select shows, events and dinners, and access to lounges with complimentary drinks.

Members can join at any time during the year and are charged on a monthly basis. Their membership officially begins the month they make their donation and expires one year later. Members typically purchase and renew their memberships during the festival's pre-season on-sale period in early November.

Motivation & Value

This membership model provides a steady cash flow to the Stratford Festival throughout the year while also giving donors the flexibility to choose what benefits best suit them and when and how they want to use them.

Key Attributes

- Sliding-scale membership
- Flexibility to choose when to begin membership in a given year
- Ability to use benefits throughout the year

Known Results

In a JCA Webinar from September 2023, Director of Membership Ceairy Free said that when Stratford Festival shifted its language around becoming a member from being benefits-driven to being more mission-driven, they found that more people renewed their memberships even if they could not attend the festival that year. As of 2023, the festival reported having a high membership renewal rate. Although members make up 9% of ticket buyers, they purchase 20% of all the festival's tickets.



Educational Products

Category Description

The educational products compiled in this inventory represent avenues for people to explore an interest and express enthusiasm for a particular art form or artist through the act of learning. They vary in structure and formality. Some are [one-off classes](#) or [seminars](#) that happen over the course of a season or year, and some are repeated year after year. Others take the form of learning activities organized around a live artistic program. Since the pandemic, most of these educational products have an online component. Very few are strictly in-person.

Product Features

- Topical focus (e.g., art form, genre, artist, specific artwork)
- Distinguished faculty
- Curriculum
- Self-determined and self-paced educational experience
- Combines entertainment and learning
- Facilitates social-connections through learning

Product Type

Within this category, there are several distinct subcategories. Each bullet point calls attention to one such subcategory as well as exemplifies one actively used customer relationship.

- **Classes and seminars** (i.e., classes that can be taken individually or sequentially in the form of a seminar. These educational products are offered both online and in-person.)

Example: [Harvard University's Classic Works](#)

Classic Works is a collection of five online courses on classical premieres that can be taken individually or collectively as a seminar. This five-class series was adapted from Professor Thomas Forrest Kelley's "First Nights: Five Performance Premieres," a core course at Harvard University for 21 years. Then as now, the course considers five famous pieces in the Western classical canon. In each

course, participants will learn more about the cultural significance of the piece and the historical circumstances at the time of its premiere. These virtual classes are designed to be taken over a four-month period and are roughly 3-5 hours' worth of coursework a week. Participants who sign up for all five courses receive a discount.

Example: [Jazz at Lincoln Center's Swing University](#)

Swing University is a collection of in-person and virtual classes for jazz enthusiasts on all things jazz. Classes cover a series of topics like jazz history, jazz artists, new and classic tunes, and listening methods. All classes cater to jazz enthusiasts of all backgrounds and levels and are taught by musicians, composers, authors, scholars, and industry experts. Attendees have the option of buying a single class, signing up for an entire course, or buying an All Access pass. Pass holders not only get access to all 55 classes offered during the term, but they are invited to weekly Zoom office hours, weekly Zoom listening sessions, and Zoom movie nights. They also receive a 15% discount on Jazz at Lincoln Center's streaming app and digital subscription, [Jazz Live](#).

- **Live Educational Events** (i.e., online and/or live programs of an educational nature)

Example: [TED Membership](#)

The TED Membership is essentially a donation-based membership and an outlet for TED enthusiasts to show their appreciation and support for the parent organization of TED Talks and TED events. Members can opt into either a yearly or monthly membership. The suggested donation amount is \$50, but members can ultimately decide how much they want to pay. All memberships automatically renew either on a month-to-month basis or an annual basis, depending on which payment plan they choose. If a member wants to cancel their membership, all they have to do is cancel their automatic renewal. Member benefits include exclusive virtual events with TED Speakers, ad-free TED podcasts, and special deals on new TED offerings.

- **Social-educational programming** (i.e., while educational in nature, these types of events are also a way for groups of people to get to know and form a bond with each other)

Example: [Orlando Museum of Art's Stroller Tours](#)

The Orlando Museum of Art's Stroller Tours are a family-friendly educational program that gives parents the opportunity to see the museum and potentially meet and connect with like-minded people. On select Wednesdays each month, the Orlando Museum of Art (OMA) welcomes infants, toddlers, and their caregivers into the museum for a one-hour tour and discussion. Each tour focuses on a specific art form, artist, or theme that transcends different art movements. Adults must register in advance and have the option to register for one or multiple sessions. For non-members, the price of admission is \$15 (which covers one adult and up to four children). For current members, admission is \$5.

Example: [Phipps Conservatory's Culinary Art Classes](#)

The Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offers different types of culinary classes throughout the year. Each class is a stand-alone class that is two to three hours. Classes are organized thematically around a food group (e.g., Indian Cuisine, Vegetarian) theme (e.g., Baking with Herbs, Fall Comfort Food) or food item (e.g., Pasta, Medicinal Mushroom) and are taught by a chef or subject matter expert such as a farmer, herbalist or dietitian. Class prices vary from \$30 to \$85 and are dependent on the class topic and ingredients. There is a separate price for active Conservatory members, which is between \$5 and \$10 less than the non-member price. During the pandemic, these classes were offered virtually. Now they are offered only in-person. All classes take place at Botany Hall Kitchen located on the Phipps Conservatory campus.

Discussion

While this collection of educational programs and products varies greatly in terms of design, the products are unified by their mission to provide adults with an outlet to express their interest in learning about and enthusiasm for a particular subject matter, whether that be an art form, artist, format, or idea. These products provide people with an alternative way of engaging with an institution that does not revolve around buying tickets. The fact that there are few examples of educational memberships, therefore, is somewhat surprising and indicates that customer relationships centered on learning are an underdeveloped strategy for engaging the public and cultivating affinity.

The majority of educational products we uncovered are unique in the sense that there aren't many other examples of similar types of offerings. However, many of these programs are generic in nature (e.g., an online course on classical music) and, therefore, could either be replicated or licensed. Organizations interested in introducing more educational products should focus on creating or tailoring programs that meet the unique needs and interests of the community(s) they are trying to serve.

Creating opt-in affinity groups that offer people an outlet to learn and discuss a particular educational idea or theme (e.g., an instrument, dance choreographer, or musical composition) might be one way of achieving this goal. Another might be to license a more generic educational product, such as a seminar on the history of Ballet, and then find ways for local dancers and choreographers to participate and add to it.

Harvard University, Classic Works

Product Type

Five virtual courses on classical premieres that can be taken individually or collectively as a seminar.

Product Overview

This five-class series was adapted from Professor Thomas Forrest Kelley's "First Nights: Five Performance Premieres," a core course at Harvard University for over 20 years. Each one explores in depth a famous piece in the Western classical canon. Participants not only learn more about the cultural significance of the piece but also have the chance to contextualize and understand the historical circumstances at the time of its premiere. These virtual classes are designed to be taken over a four-month period and are between 3-5 hours' worth of coursework a week. If a participant signs up for all five courses, they receive a discount on the entire seminar. Each course can, however, be taken one off.



Motivation & Value

Through these courses, participants have a chance to contemplate how a pinnacle performance has changed over time and explore its significance and relevance then and today. Moreover, these classes are accessible and allow anyone who is interested in opera, classical music, and performance art to learn more about it. This collection of virtual courses is exemplary of how an arts organization might further engage its most enthusiastic audience members.

Key Attributes

- Five, self-paced courses
- Courses can be taken individually or collectively as a seminar
- Accessible learning format

Known Results

No known results.

Harvard University, ArtsThursdays

Product Type

A weekly free event that promotes access to the arts.

Product Overview

Since January of 2023, every Thursday, a Harvard art institution opens its doors to the community and offers free performances, exhibitions, and lectures.

A staple of this series is free access on the final Thursday of the month to several pinnacle arts and culture intuitions like

the Harvard Art Museums, Harvard Museums of Science and Culture, and the Carpenter Center. This expanded access to the museums was inspired by the popularity of last year's monthly *Harvard Art Museums at Night* program.



Motivation & Value

This series gives the local community access to Harvard's vibrant museums and showcases all of the different artforms found around campus. By design, it promotes access to the arts and provides opportunities for community building and engagement.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- A free weekly event that takes place at a Harvard art institution
- Free entry to any art museum on the last Thursday of the month

Jazz at Lincoln Center, Swing University

Product Type

A collection of in-person and virtual classes on all things jazz.

Product Overview

Jazz at Lincoln Center's Swing University offers engaging virtual and in-person classes on jazz history, jazz artists, and new and classic jazz pieces. All classes cater to jazz enthusiasts of all backgrounds and levels and are taught by musicians, composers, authors, scholars, and industry experts. Attendees have the option of buying a single class for \$15, signing up for an entire course for \$24-80, or buying an All-Access pass for \$440 for non-members or \$374 for members.



All-Access Pass holders not only get access to all 55 classes offered during the term, but they are also invited to weekly Zoom office hours, weekly Zoom listening sessions, and Zoom movie nights. They also receive a 15% discount on Jazz at Lincoln Center's streaming app and digital subscription, [Jazz Live](#).

Motivation & Value

Swing University allows those who are passionate about jazz to further their learning and understanding of the art form. Moreover, the structure of the courses provides students with the opportunity to form connections with one another and become part of a larger community of jazz enthusiasts. The website also guarantees that taking a Swing University class or course will improve a person's overall concert-going experience.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Virtual and in-person classes on different aspects of the jazz artform
- Additional Zoom events
- Discount on a Jazz Live subscription

Opera North, Leeds, From Couch to Chorus

Product Type

A three-week virtual course on operatic repertoire that culminates in a live-streamed concert.

Product Overview

From Couch to Chorus is an online course that brings choir enthusiasts from all over the world together for three weeks to learn an operatic repertoire. The course culminates in a live-streamed concert that all participants can attend and sing in.



From Couch to Chorus is open to everyone from beginners to experienced choir-goers, and participants can choose to pay what they want for the course. Each session is an hour in length and is closed captioned.

If a participant lives in or near Leeds, they have the option to attend an in-person, side-by-side rehearsal with the Chorus of Opera North and also attend the finale in person at Howard Assembly Room.

Motivation & Value

The course began in November 2020 as a way for Opera North to engage people and help them feel less alone. The opera felt this course would be a fun way to engage people stuck at home and help improve their well-being.

Known Results

In its first year, it had over 4,00 people from all over the world sign up.

Key Attributes

- A virtual course that teaches operatic repertoire
- Hour long classes for three weeks
- Culminating livestreamed concert with the Chorus of Opera North

Orlando Museum of Art, Stroller Tours

Product Type

A family-friendly educational program that gives caregivers the opportunity to see the museum and connect with like-minded people.

Product Overview

On select Wednesdays each month, the Orlando Museum of Art (OMA) welcomes infants, toddlers, and their caregivers into the museum for a one-hour tour and discussion. Each tour focuses on a specific art form, artist, or theme that transcends different art movements.



Adults must register in advance and have the option to register for one or multiple sessions at a time. For non-members, the price of admission is \$15 (which covers one adult and up to four children). For current members, admission is \$5.

Motivation & Value

The OMA stroller tours program is a way for the museum to interact with caregivers of small children who might not be able to get to the museum very often. These tours not only give caregivers the opportunity to enjoy and engage with art, but they also provide them with the chance to connect with other people who are at the same stage of life. Although they are not advertised as community-building events, these tours can and do act as a conduit for adults to form new relationships and find community.

Key Attributes

- Regular scheduled educational programming for caregivers with small children

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

The [Brooklyn Museum](#) and the [Guggenheim Museum](#) also offer stroller tours that are very similar in nature.

Phipps Conservatory, Culinary Art Classes

Product Type

A series of culinary art classes that teach participants new ways to prepare food.

Product Overview

The Phipps Conservatory offers different types of culinary classes throughout the year. Each class is a stand-alone class that is two to three hours long. Classes are organized thematically around food groups (e.g., Indian Cuisine, Vegetarian), themes (e.g., Baking with Herbs, Fall Comfort Food), or food items (e.g., Pasta, Medicinal Mushroom) and are taught by a chef or subject matter expert such as a farmer, herbalist or dietitian.



Classes prices vary and can be anywhere from \$30 to \$85 depending on the class topic and ingredients used. There is a separate price for active Conservatory members, which is between \$5 and \$10 less than the non-member class price.

During the pandemic, these classes were offered virtually. However, now they are only offered in person. All classes take place at Botany Hall Kitchen located on the Phipps Conservatory campus.

Key Attributes

- In-person culinary classes for both members and non-members
- One-off classes and that are two hours long

Motivation & Value

The Phipps Conservatory is dedicated to providing enriching programming for its community. Through its culinary class, the conservatory strives to help its visitors discover new ways to prepare food that is both good for them and the planet. For those who are interested in taking a class but are unsure which one to sign up for they can get personalized class recommendations from the conservatory staff.

Known Results

During the pandemic, the conservatory's virtual cooking classes attracted people from all over the country. These classes were a way for people to connect with their friends and family that they otherwise could not see. Since the pandemic has subsided, the conservatory has discontinued its virtual programming and now only offers in-person classes. Many classes sell out weeks in advance.

San Francisco Ballet, Ballet 101

Product Type

An educational program for adult ballet enthusiasts.

Product Overview

San Francisco Ballet (SF Ballet) offered Ballet 101 from 2009 to 2012. This five-part seminar was a ballet appreciation program that gave adult enthusiasts a chance to learn more about the art form and engage with ballet masters and company dancers. As a part of the course, participants were also given a facility tour and had the chance to take a beginner ballet technique class.



Motivation & Value

SF Ballet created Ballet 101 as a way to engage with committed ballet enthusiasts who wanted to learn more about the Ballet and nurture their love of the dance form. The course was also designed to showcase the talent and knowledge of SF Ballet in a classroom setting.

Known Results

According to Cecelia Beam, SF Ballet's adult education coordinator, the first few years of the course were well attended, but over time it became harder and harder to sell. SF Ballet had difficulty attracting new attendees and found that the same people kept taking the course. Although this specific course has been discontinued, SF Ballet still offers [one-off ballet classes for adults online and in person.](#)

Key Attributes

- An opportunity to learn about Ballet in a hands-on manner
- Access to experts and SF Ballet company dancers
- Invitation to see SF Ballet facilities
- Chance to take a beginner ballet class

Similar Model

The School of American Ballet also offers adults a chance to learn about ballet through its [Ballet Connoisseurship](#) program.

Taking Sondheim, Stephen Sondheim Affinity Group

Product Type

A virtual affinity group focused on engaging with the works of Stephen Sondheim.

Product Overview

Talking Sondheim is an independent affinity group founded and led by Gail Leondar-Wright. She is not only a Stephen Sondheim enthusiast, but has studied



and taught his works for many years. Through the Talking Sondheim website, interested participants can connect with Leondar-Wright and sign up for the group's newsletter to learn about the periodic webinars and virtual classes she holds on an assortment of topics related to Stephen Sondheim. All webinars are free and open to the public.

Motivation & Value

The Talking Sondheim affinity group provides Stephen Sondheim enthusiasts a way to connect with each other, dive deeper into Sondheim's individual works, and examine his overall legacy.

Known Results

Based on the endorsements found on the Talking Sondheim website, the webinars are well-received and appreciated by the group's members.

Key Attributes

- A virtual affinity group that allows people to engage with each other and the work of Stephen Sondheim
- Curated webinars and virtual classes

TED, Manhattan, TED Membership

Product Type

A donation-based membership that provides members a way to show their appreciation for the TED organization.

Product Overview

The TED membership is a donation-based membership and an outlet for TED enthusiasts to show their appreciation and support for TED, the parent organization of TED Talks and TED events. Members can opt into either a yearly or monthly membership. The suggested donation amount is \$50, but members can ultimately decide how much they want to give. Memberships renew automatically either on a month-to-month or an annual basis, depending on the payment plan a member chooses. If a member wants to cancel their membership, all they have to do is cancel their automatic renewal. Member benefits include exclusive virtual events with TED Speakers, ad-free TED podcasts, and special deals on new TED offerings.



Motivation & Value

The TED membership gives TED enthusiasts a tangible way to willfully associate with the organization and support its mission.

Known Results

According to the TED website, membership contributions help keep TED Talks accessible and free for everyone.

Key Attributes

- Pay what you will donation-based membership
- Invitation to attend live and virtual events
- Ability to listen to podcast episodes ad-free
- Special discounts



Accessibility & Trial Products

Category Description

The purpose of both accessibility and trial products is to grant either a person or a group of people access to an arts organization's programs, typically by lowering the cost barrier to entry. A key component of most of these products is heavily discounted tickets. In one instance, access takes the form of priority entrance by way of reservations.

The majority of accessibility products target a specific group (e.g., 30 and under, students, teens, etc.) that an organization has identified on the theory they'll attend more frequently if given greater access. Other, less common accessibility products are ones that rely on individuals self-determining their accessibility needs (e.g., pay what you will) or ones that guarantee access to a sold-out show or event.

While trial products are often low-cost or free and therefore accessible, they are only that way for a finite amount of time. Trials are rooted in the idea that if you get rid of the barrier of entry and let someone try something for a limited period of time, once their trial is up, they will switch over to paying for that product. The focus of trial products is less on making something accessible as it is giving them a taste of something they then won't want to give up.

Product Features

- Heavily discounted or subsidized tickets
- Pre-event reservation to ensure access
- Last-minute buying opportunities
- Discount on the overall price of the product
- Limited in length of time, expiration dates vary

Product Type

- **Self-determined Discounts** (i.e., access is provided to anyone who decides they can't pay full price)

Example: [Woolly Mammoth's Pay What You Will program](#)

For every single performance, Woolly Mammoth offers a handful of Pay-What-You-Will (PWYW) tickets. The concept is simple: Woolly Mammoth puts on a show, and ticket buyers get to decide how much they want to pay to go see it. Woolly Mammoth created its PWYW program in 1987 in an effort to make theatergoing more financially accessible. For the next three decades, the first two preview performances of each show were entirely PWYW. In 2017, Woolly Mammoth moved the PWYW program onto Today Tix's ticketing platform, making the PWYW program even more accessible. During the 2021-22 Season, it decided to expand the PWYW program to include 28 seats for every performance. PWYW seats are scattered throughout the theater to ensure that ticket buyers have the chance to experience a performance from some of the best seats in the house. The response to the expansion of the PWYW program was overwhelmingly positive. Woolly Mammoth cites the program as helping them build one of the youngest and most diverse theater audiences in D.C.

- **Age-based Discounts** (i.e., discounts for a specific age bracket or group under 30, 21-40 etc.)

Example: [Lincoln Center Theatre's LincTix](#)

LincTix is Lincoln Center Theatre's free membership for young adults ages 21-35 years old. Upon joining LincTix, members can purchase one \$32 ticket to each new LCT production at the Beaumont and Newhouse Theaters and on Broadway and two \$30 tickets to each new LCT3 production at the Claire Tow Theater. Members also have the option of attending free post-show parties. A limited number of LincTix are available for every performance. Members are emailed when LincTix tickets go on sale for each new show. All seats are sold on a first-come, first-served basis, and availability is not guaranteed. LincTix members may purchase seats with other LincTix members but are not able to purchase seats next to regular LCT Members or the general public. Each ticketholder must be present to pick up their tickets and will be required to show an ID with proof of age and identity. LincTix tickets may not be resold and are not transferable. There are also no refunds, cancellations, or exchanges.

- **Guaranteed Access Programs** (i.e., guarantees you access to shows/events you might not otherwise have access to)

Example: [TheatreSquared's Lucky Tix](#)

Lucy Tix is an advance standby ticket purchase that provides access to sold-out shows. For each sold-out show, a certain number of Lucky Tixs are set aside. With a Lucky Tix, a person is guaranteed at least standing admission. However, if there are empty seats, ticket holders will be upgraded. Seats are assigned at showtime by the house manager in the order in which Lucky Tix was reserved. Lucky Tix can be purchased online or at the box office. They are \$15 per ticket.

- **Trial tickets** (i.e., discounted tickets for new buyers)

Example: [Ensemble Theatre's Try Us Out Ticket](#)

Residents of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana who have never purchased a ticket from Ensemble Theatre qualify for newcomer tickets, two tickets for \$15 apiece. Termed "Try Us Out" tickets, they are valid for the first two weeks of any performance and are subject to availability. They can be purchased over the phone or in person.

- **Trial Memberships**

Example: [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MFA Citizen](#)

New US citizens living in Massachusetts can receive a free one-year MFA Citizen membership to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In order to receive this special membership, naturalized citizens must sign up and show a photo or copy of their naturalization certificate at any MFA ticket desk within one year of their naturalization ceremony. MFA Citizen members receive two free adult and four free youth (ages 7-17) general admissions per day, two \$5 general admission guest tickets, four free special exhibition tickets, and two \$7 special exhibition guest tickets.

Discussion

Our research uncovered a smorgasbord of accessibility and trial products. The majority of arts organizations have at least one or two on offer. The predominance of these products indicates that institutions see inherent value in providing these services and recognize that without them segments of their audience might not be able to access their

programming. The design of accessibility products suggest that their sole purpose is to facilitate access. Whether they also foster feelings of affinity is unknown.

While accessibility products are less common, they are also a way for certain groups of people to access an organization, even if it is for a limited period of time. Trial products, on the other hand, are less about providing access and more about cultivating affinity and bringing new audience members into the fold of an organization. By their design, trial products assume that once a person's trial is over, they will likely upgrade to the real product rather than give it up altogether. In order for this assumption to hold true, however, a person must develop some level of interest in or affinity for the organization during the trial timeframe.

Lincoln Center, Fast Track

Product Type

A reservation program that grants priority access to the popular Lincoln Center Presents events.

Product Overview

Fast Track is a reservation program that grants priority access to Lincoln Center Presents events at the David Rubenstein Atrium. While these events are free, admittance is limited and the event venues tend to fill up fast.

Fast Track reservations open every Monday at noon for that week’s events. Booking a Fast Track reservation allows attendees to enter the “Fast Track” priority line and cut in front of general admissions until right before the event begins. Because of the limited availability at each Lincoln Center Presents event, it is recommended that attendees arrive at least 30 minutes before the event starts. If the event venue reaches capacity before someone with a Fast Track reservation is able to enter, they will be given priority entry as space becomes available. Anyone who joins Lincoln Center’s [Friend of Lincoln Center](#) membership program automatically qualifies for Fast Track reservations for all applicable Lincoln Center Presents events.



Motivation & Value

By allowing people to reserve a spot in an event’s priority line, Lincoln Center is providing people access to an otherwise potentially inaccessible event. Simultaneously, the very existence of this product points to the exclusiveness of these events, potentially making admittance even more desirable.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Ability to gain priority access to popular Lincoln Center Presents events

Lincoln Center Theatre, [LincTix](#)

Product Type

A free membership program for young adults that gives them access to cheap tickets.

Product Overview

LincTix is Lincoln Center Theatre's free membership for young adults ages 21-35 years old. Upon joining LincTix, members can purchase one \$32 ticket to each new LCT production at the Beaumont and Newhouse Theaters and on Broadway and two \$30 tickets to each new LCT3 production at the Claire Tow Theater. Members also have the option of attending free post-show parties.

A limited number of LincTix are available for every performance. Members will be emailed when LincTix tickets go on sale for each new show. All seats are sold on a first-come, first-served basis, and availability is not guaranteed. LincTix members may purchase seats with other LincTix members but are not able to purchase seats next to regular LCT Members or the general public.

All tickets can be purchased online or at the box office. At checkout, LincTix members are asked to enter their 6-digit LincTix ID that they received upon sign-up. Each ticketholder must be present to pick up their tickets and is required to show proof of age and identity. LincTix tickets may not be resold and are not transferable. There are also no refunds, cancellations, or exchanges.

Motivation & Value

The LincTix membership ensures that young adults can access world-class performances at Lincoln Center Theatre for an affordable price.



Key Attributes

- Low-cost tickets
- Ability to buy tickets with other LincTix members
- Invitations to post-show parties

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

Talfelmusik's [Talfelscene Membership](#) is for young adults 35 and under. By joining, members can buy tickets for \$20 to Talfelmusik concerts, attend lounge parties, and access free drinks and other special offers.

Barrington Stage Company's [BSC40](#) is a free under-40 membership for young adults ages 18-40. Members can buy \$30 tickets to Barrington Stage Company productions.

Glyndebourne Opera Festival's free [Under 30 Membership](#) gives its members priority booking to Festival performances and first access to Standing Places for every performance. Members can purchase 30 pound tickets for selected Festival performances and 45 pound tickets for the best available seats to selected performances.

TIFF's [Under-25 Free Pass](#) gives 20-somethings two complimentary tickets to all regular-price Cinematheque screenings, access to exclusive ticket and subscription pre-sales, special discounts on concessions and merchandise, and access to purchase single tickets to the TIFF Festival.

For \$5 a month, young adults ages 18-39 years old can join [The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra's Club 2030](#), which gives them access to an unlimited number of SPCO concerts in a given season.

Phoenix Theatre Company, Ambassador Tix

Product Type

A low-cost ticket to weekday performances for adults under 40.

Product Overview

Adults 40 years old and under have the option of buying up to two tickets for any weekday performance (Tuesday – Friday) for \$29 a ticket. Buyers must show a valid photo ID in order to pick up the tickets or purchase them directly from the box office.

If someone is already enrolled in [the Ambassador Membership](#), they automatically qualify to receive Ambassador Tix.



Motivation & Value

Phoenix Theatre Company's Ambassador Tix program is a low-cost ticket option that enables young adults to attend weekday performances and thereby ensures that they can attend shows for an affordable price.

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

[Woolly Mammoth's 30 & Under](#) program is nearly identical. Anyone 30 years old or under can purchase tickets starting at \$25 for any available performance.

[Hiptix at Roundabout](#) is Roundabout Theatre's low-cost ticket program for theatergoers ages 18–40. Participants have access to \$30 tickets for all Roundabout shows, plus receive invitations to great parties.

Key Attributes

- Low-cost tickets for any weekday performances

Steppenwolf, Red Card

Product Type

A low-cost advance purchase ticket bundle for people under 30 that enables buyers to choose when and how they use their heavily discounted tickets.

Product Overview

The Red Card is for students and young professionals under 30 access to theater at a low cost. Similar to the Black Card, Red card pass holders pay a flat price of \$99 in advance for six ticket vouchers and then can decide how to use their credits throughout the year.

An additional benefit of the Red Card is that pass holders have the opportunity to attend networking sessions and other exclusive events. The website does not go into detail about what types of tickets Red Card holders have access to (in terms of dates and times). It does mention, however, that ticket vouchers can only be redeemed online.



Motivation & Value

By offering twenty-somethings tickets at a price that better matches their budget, Steppenwolf is incentivizing them to become regular theatergoer and giving them a way to become a part of the Steppenwolf community.

Steppenwolf's hope is that by the time a Red Card holder reaches their 30s, they will naturally transition into becoming a Black Card holder.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Low-cost tickets
- Flexibility to use their six ticket vouchers however they choose
- Flexibility to book at any time before the performance
- Flexibility to choose their seat for each performance
- Unlimited ticket exchanges

TheatreSquared, Lucky Tix

Product Type

An advance purchase standby ticket that guarantees attendance to a sold out show.

Product Overview

For each sold-out show, a certain number of Lucky Tix is set aside thus ensuring a buyer can see a show even if it is sold out. Lucky Tix can be purchased online or at the box office. They are \$15 per ticket.



Motivation & Value

With a Lucky Tix, a person is guaranteed at least standing admission to any show even if it is sold out. However, if there are empty seats on the floor, ticket holders will be upgraded to those seats. Seats are assigned at showtime by the house manager in the order in which Lucky Tix was reserved.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- A standby ticket that guarantees access to sold out show

Woolly Mammoth, Pay What You Will Tickets

Product Type

A ticket buying program where the buyer gets to decide how much they are willing to pay for their ticket.

Product Overview

For every single performance, Woolly Mammoth offers a handful of Pay-What-You-Will (PWYW) tickets. The concept is simple: Woolly Mammoth puts on a show, and ticket buyers get to decide how much they want to pay to go see it.



Woolly Mammoth created its PWYW program in 1987 in an effort to make theatergoing more financially accessible. For the next three decades, the first two preview performances of each show were entirely PWYW. In order to get PWYW tickets, however, potential ticket buyers would have to line up outside the theatre up to two hours ahead of time. In 2017, Woolly Mammoth moved the PWYW program onto the Today Tix's ticketing platform, making the PWYW program even more accessible.

During the 2021-22 Season, they decided to expand the PWYW program to include 28 seats for every performance. PWYW seats are scattered throughout the theater to ensure that ticket buyers have the chance to experience a performance from some of the best seats in the house.

Key Attributes

- The buyer decides how much they are willing to pay for a ticket
- Access to every performance
- Seats scattered throughout the theatre

Motivation & Value

Woolly Mammoth's PWYW program is a part of the organization's long-standing commitment to make theatergoing accessible to every member of their community.

Known Results

The response to the expansion of the PWYW program was overwhelmingly positive. Woolly Mammoth cites this program as helping them build one of the youngest and most diverse theater audiences in D.C.

Similar Models

The Zach Theatre has a [Pay What You Will week](#). For the first week of each new show, it offers 50 PWYW tickets.

TheatreSquared's [Lights Up! For Access](#) enables audience members who sign up for this program to receive free, \$1, or \$10 tickets to its shows.

Woolly Mammoth, Stampede Seats

Product Type

Low-cost tickets that go on sale two hours before a performance.

Product Overview

Stampede Seats is the name of Woolly Mammoth’s rush ticket program. For every performance of its mainstage productions, Woolly Mammoth reserves ten balcony seats to be Stampede seats. Tickets go on sale two hours before showtime and cost only \$20 per ticket. Stampede seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis and can only be purchased in person at the Woolly Mammoth box office.



Motivation & Value

This last-minute, low-cost ticket-buying opportunity is an important aspect of Woolly Mammoth’s overall commitment to equity and inclusion.

Known Results

Similar Models

A multitude of performing arts organizations have their own version(s) of the rush ticket. [LA Opera](#) has a rush ticket program for both adult seniors and students. [Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati](#) and [Roundabout Theatre Company](#) have both general rush ticket and student rush ticket programs. [Blumenthal Performing Arts](#), [Lincoln Centre Theatre](#), [The Phoenix Theatre Company](#), and [The Zach Theatre](#) all have student rush ticket programs. [The Kennedy Center](#) offers rush tickets for students, young professionals, and active military members through its [MyTix](#) program.

Key Attributes

- Low-cost tickets
- Ensures that last-minute ticket buyers can get seats to a main stage show

Brooklyn Museum, 6-Month Introductory Membership

Product Type

A six-month trial membership.

Product Overview

For museum-goers not ready to commit to a full-yearly membership, the Brooklyn Museum offers two different 6-month trial memberships. The membership is \$39 for an individual or \$64.99 for a couple. These membership options are only available to new members.

Trial members have access to almost all the benefits of a full member, namely free addition to ticketed exhibitions. They do not include the full member benefit of a one-time use parking pass.

Motivation & Value

This affordable trial membership is a way for the Brooklyn Museum to entice and welcome individuals and couples who are interested in becoming a part of the museum's membership community.

Known Results

No known results.



Key Attributes

- 6-month trial period
- Access to all museum membership benefits

Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, Try Us Out Tickets

Product Type

A discounted ticket program for first time buyers.

Product Overview

Residents of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana who have never purchased a ticket from Ensemble Theatre can purchase their first two tickets for \$15 a piece. Termed “Try Us Out” tickets, they are valid for the first two weeks of any performance and are subject to availability. They can be purchased over the phone or in person.



Motivation & Value

Try Us Out Tickets is a way for Ensemble Theatre to potentially attract and engage new audience members from the surrounding regions.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Low-cost tickets for first time buyers

Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, Teen Scene

Product Type

A subscription program that gives teens access to live theatre and the chance to learn more about the theatre-making process.

Product Overview

Ensemble Theatre’s Teen Scene enables teenagers who are either enrolled in grades 9-12 or are between the ages of 13–19 a chance to attend live theatre and also learn about what goes into making a show. Due to the mature language and/or content of some productions, teens must have signed permission from their parent or guardian to join. Teen Scene costs \$75 per person.



However, they do offer payment plans, and scholarships are available.

Subscribers receive one ticket to the first Sunday matinee of each of the season’s five subscription shows. A 30 to 90-minute post-performance discussion with cast members and theatre artists is also a part of each of these shows, and snacks are also included. Subscribers also have the option to purchase an additional \$20 ticket to a Teen Scene show if they would like to bring a parent or friend with them.

Motivation & Value

Teen Scene is intended to deepen young audiences’ appreciation and understanding of live theatre. By design, this program encourages teens to interact with the theatre in a hands-on way, namely by facilitating discussions with cast members that allow them to share their opinions, critiques, and questions about each show.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- One ticket to first Sunday matinee of each of the season’s five subscription shows
- Post-performance discussion with cast members
- Food and beverages included

Similar Model

Roundabout Theatre's [Hiptix High](#) is a low-cost ticket program for High School students between the ages of 14–18. It's free for teens to join and allows them to buy \$10 tickets to all Roundabout shows.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MFA Citizen

Product Type

A yearlong trial membership for new US citizens.

Product Overview

New US citizens living in Massachusetts can receive a free one-year MFA Citizen membership to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In order to receive this membership, naturalized citizens must sign up and show a photo or copy of their naturalization certificate at any MFA ticket desk within one year of their naturalization ceremony. MFA Citizen members receive two free adult and four free youth (ages 7-17) general admissions per day, two \$5 general admission guest tickets, four free special exhibition tickets, and two \$7 special exhibition guest tickets.



Motivation & Value

MFA Citizen membership was established in 2017 in order to introduce new Americans to the museum and provide them with an opportunity to make new connections within their community.

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Models

[The Art Gallery of Ontario](#) offers a similar product called the [Canoo Cultural Access Pass](#) which provides new Canadian citizens and permanent residents free admission to the museum for one year.

Key Attributes

- Multiple free general admission tickets
- Multiple free special exhibition tickets
- Discounts on additional tickets



Social Connection Platforms

Category Description

As the name connotes, social connection platforms facilitate small group attendance and reward patrons who invite their friends to live programs. Functionally, they are event discovery apps that foster social interaction. All of the social connection platforms uncovered in this research take the form of a smart phone app. They all enable users to access relevant information and connect with each other all in one place. Therefore, even for those who might be uninterested in their social features, these platforms are still extremely useful as they consolidate all the information a person might want about an event in one place.

The social aspects baked into each of them allow users to engage with each other and can help facilitate small-group attendance. These social features take the form of rating and leaving reviews, sharing event/ performance wish lists, and chatting with other people using the app.

Product Features and Functionalities

- Ability to easily find essential event information in one place
- Engage with other users by adding them as friends and sharing event wish lists
- Ticket acquisition through the app
- Chat feature
- Connects to Spotify, enabling a curated recommendation list based on listening history and habits

Product Type

- **Social Apps**

Example: [ClassicCard App](#)

The ClassicCard app allows Berlin's classical music institutions to reach younger audiences and promotes socializing in small groups. The app features over 150 classical events from 10 different Berlin-based organizations and facilitates discount ticket buying for people 30 and under. The cost of a single membership is determined by the member's age. So, if a member is 27 years old, they'll pay 27

euros. All ticket prices are heavily discounted – up to 90% off. Members can purchase up to six tickets per transaction and have the opportunity to purchase a companion ticket for a non-ClassicCard member at regular price. Additionally, the ClassicCard app has several social features that allow members to interact.

Example: [OperaMeet App](#)

OperaMeet is a social network and app for opera lovers who are looking for a way to connect with one another. By way of the OperaMeet app, users can find information about a particular opera, make new friends, and interact with each other in the app. Over time, and with repeat use, the app learns a user's taste and suggests shows they may be interested in seeing that are in close proximity to them. However, the app does not support direct ticket buying, and users have to contact the box office directly to purchase tickets. The app does have several social components built into it, which suggests it is particularly focused on being a social network for opera lovers. Users have the ability to contact each other through the app, find nearby shows, and even share their geolocation with one another.

Discussion

Although there are only a few known products in this category, they deserve to be called out from the other customer relationship models due to the fact that they are providing a service that is, by and large, otherwise missing from the inventory. From a theoretical standpoint, of course they are not customer relationships, but rather technology platforms that allow for event discovery and facilitate social interaction around arts attendance. But there is ample opportunity for loyalty to accrue to the app, as with any technology that consumers learn to like. In turn, this may open up new avenues of audience development and more advanced forms of institutional loyalty.

With its potent blend of event discovery features with social functions, these platforms have the potential to revolutionize how people find out about, and attend, arts events. Initially, we see these apps as serving two segments: 1) adults who are not in relationships and require social context to activate demand; and 2) influencers or “Initiators” who instinctively like to organize outings to cultural events for their friends. In the future, these apps may serve a more general audience if they provide a convenient means of event discovery and in-app ticketing that consumers find more convenient than other ticketing acquisition pathways.

ClassicCard, ClassicCard App

Product Type

A social app that allows Berlin institutions to reach younger audiences and promotes socializing in small groups.

Product Overview

The ClassicCard app was created at the behest of leading arts intuitions in Berlin and was a direct response to the decline of the ClassicCard Membership, Konzerthaus Berlin's last-minute paper membership. The app version of the ClassicCard membership now features over 150 classical events from 10 different Berlin-based organizations and facilitates discount ticket buying for people 30 and under.



All members must verify their age when they join by uploading an official ID card. The cost of a single membership is then determined by the member's age. So, if a member is 27 years old, they will pay 27 euros. A month before their membership is set to expire, a member will receive an email reminding them to renew it.

All tickets are heavily discounted – up to 90% off. Members can purchase up to 6 tickets per payment transaction and have the opportunity to purchase a companion ticket for a non-ClassicCard member for an additional 5 euros. Once a ticket is purchased via the app, it cannot be refunded. The only exception is if the performance is canceled. If a member successfully refers a friend who then purchases a ticket, they will receive a 5 euro credit.

Key Attributes

- Over 150 classical events featured
- Heavily discounted tickets that can be purchased in the app
- Detailed event pages
- Several social features that instigate small group attendance

Additionally, the ClassicCard app has several social features that allow members to invite friends and interact with one another. Members can easily invite and add their friends to their “community,” which enables them to buy tickets together in the app. They can also create “wish lists” in the app and share them with their friends. This feature provides members with an easy way to let their friends know which events they are interested in attending.

Each event in the ClassicCard app has its own page. At the top of the page is information on the event type (i.e., opera, ballet concert), run time, rating, and the address of the event venue. The next section shows the number of people attending and the number of people interested in attending the event, as well as the event program and/or event description. Further down the page, the dates of the event, the price of the event, and the artists involved are listed. At the very bottom is a sharing feature that allows members to share the event on multiple platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.). There is also a place where they can leave a rating or a review of the event.

Motivation & Value

The impetus behind creating the ClassicCard app was to attract more young people to Berlin-based organizations’ events and venues. They began by working with the tech company easy-connect to survey young people and ask them what they would need to get them to go to more cultural events. From the data they gathered, they were able to identify two main barriers: young people didn’t know who to go to events with, and they didn’t know what to expect from the event. easy-connect then created the ClassicCard app to directly address and lower these two barriers of entry.

Known Results

The ClassicCard Membership is now 100% digital and can only be used in the ClassicCard app. Over the first nine months, membership increased from 2,000 registered members to over 12,000. 65% of those who download the app become registered members, and of those registered members, 76% use the app on a monthly basis. Over 40% of members have friends on the app, and over 50% of members bring at least one person with them to an event. 35% of members use the app’s wish list function, and 1,200 people so far have rated a show on the app.

DICE London, DICE App

Product Type

An event discovery and ticket-buying app with social features built into it.

Product Overview

The DICE App allows arts and culture enthusiasts to discover events in their area, buy tickets, and invite friends to join them. The app is free and anyone can create an account using either their email or phone number.

In the app, users can search for artists or shows in their area (or another city if they manually switch their location), discover new events based on format or timing (e.g., festivals, comedy, tonight, next seven days), get event information, invite friends, purchase tickets and even create a calendar invite to share with others. Users also have the option of connecting their Spotify account to the app, enabling a curated event recommendation list based on listening history and habits.

Like the ClassicCard app, each event has its own page. At the top of the page is the event's basic information (i.e., event name, date and time, and location) and a top track that users can listen to in the app. Underneath the music listening feature is an "Invite Friends" button that gives users multiple ways to share the link with their friends. Further down the page is more detailed information about the event and a map of the venue's location. Below that, there is a place to enter a discount code, a link that will automatically add it to a person's calendar. At the end of each page is a "Buy Now" button that enables a user to buy tickets in the app.



Key Attributes

- Robust event discovery system
- Ability to buy tickets in the app
- Social features that facilitate event sharing and group ticket buying
- Curated list of event recommendations

The DICE app also has a separate tab that is dedicated to several social features. At the top of this section, users can add friends and follow artists and venues. Once they add three friends, the app will show them what they're interested in and will suggest shows they can see together. Users can also create groups where they and their friends can add events and vote on which ones they should go see together.

Motivation & Value

The DICE app is designed to provide a holistic event discovery and purchasing experience. Since its inception in 2014, DICE has been working to help people find more events they love in the most hassle-free way possible. Their goal has always been to “[break] down barriers that get in the way of a good time and [create] a fairer and more inclusive industry in the process.” DICE created the DICE app not only to make it easier for people to experience live events together but to create memories and find community along the way.

Known Results

40% of DICE sales come from the app's discovery system and push notification system which lets fans know about shows going on near them.

OperaMeet, Rome, OperaMeet App

Product Type

A social network and app for opera lovers.

Product Overview

The OperaMeet App was founded by musicologist and critic Valentina Anzani and her brother Simone Anzani, the founder of Vibe&Sound, the host of the Opera Meet website

The app launched in Italy in July 2022, advertising itself as the “first social network for opera lovers.” Using the OperaMeet app, users can find information about operas, learn more about performances in their area, and make new friends with other opera lovers.



After a user downloads the app, they can create a personal profile that is akin to one found on a social networking platform or dating app. Over time and with use, the app will learn a user’s taste and suggest shows they may be interested in seeing. However, the app does not directly support ticket buying and so users must to contact a box office directly to purchase tickets.

The app does have several social components built into it, which suggests it is particularly focused on being a social network for opera lovers. Users have the ability to contact each other through the app, find shows near each other, and even share their geolocation with one another.

Motivation & Value

The creators of the OperaMeet app wanted to provide opera enthusiasts a way to not only find information on operas but to connect and meet each other.

Key Attributes

- Enables opera lovers to connect with each other
- Hosts a compendium of information on operas
- Facilitates easily finding nearby opera performances

The language used to describe the app suggests that it is just as concerned about providing users with information about operas as it is about helping them make potential friends or meet potential partners who are also passionate about opera.

Known Results

No known results.



Digital Products

Category Description

The pandemic gave rise to a plethora of digital products, from live webcast platforms to digital libraries holding a year's worth of archival footage.

Since then, arts organizations have realized they can easily make digital products by putting their extensive recordings behind a paywall and then charging a small, usually monthly, fee for on-demand access. Some digital products are advertised as standalone products, while others are marketed as complementary to in-person subscriptions.

Product Features

- On-demand access
- Ability to watch and rewatch archived concerts and programs
- Access to behind-the-scenes footage and interviews
- Live webcast of concerts
- Convenience of watching a production from wherever you want

Product Type

- **Digital Platform** (i.e., a digital platform that allows viewers to access archival content and also enables them to stream live performances.)

Example: [Jazz at Lincoln Center's Jazz Live App](#)

For \$9.99 a month or \$99.99 a year, Jazz Live subscribers can access a library full of Jazz at Lincoln Center content whenever they want. In addition to housing an extensive video archive, the Jazz Live platform also supports live streaming. Subscribers can tune via webcast to Jazz at Lincoln Center season and weekly Dizzy's Club programs.

- **Digital Subscription** (i.e., a digital advance purchase ticket bundle that permits subscribers access to a set number of live, webcast concerts)

Example: [Tafelmusik's Digital Series Pass](#)

The Digital Series pass is essentially an advance purchase ticket bundle to three livestreamed concerts. With the digital series pass, subscribers can watch three concerts live from anywhere they want such as the privacy of their own homes. The pass costs a flat rate of \$120 and allows viewers to watch the concerts in real-time and rewatch them. Additionally, subscribers have access to expert-led lectures and other bonus content. Buyers have the option of buying the digital pass as a standalone subscription or adding it to their live subscription.

Discussion

As the pandemic subsided, many digital products fell by the wayside or were discontinued altogether. Of the few that remain, they seem to be for the organization's most die-hard fans who are willing to pay for access additional content.

While some digital platforms have the capability to host live events, most are glorified digital warehouses for recordings of live programs and behind-the-scenes content such as recorded interviews and Q&As, and audio clips. While some digital products have an educational angle to them, most are conceived as alternative-format performance products, not content for audience development or educational engagement. The value they provide ultimately lies in the convenient access they provide to patrons who cannot, for whatever reason, attend in person.

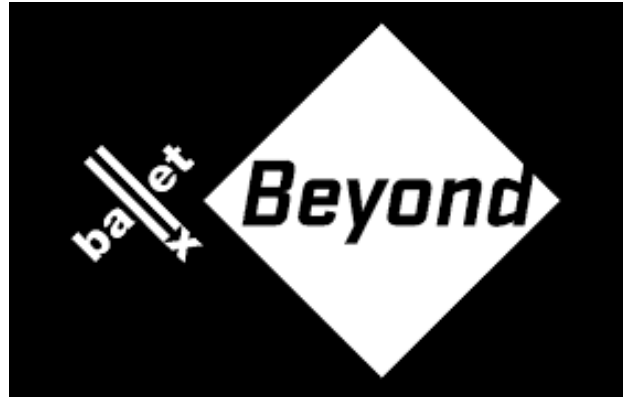
BalletX, BalletX Beyond

Product Type

A monthly streaming subscription that offers on-demand access to a variety of ballet content.

Product Overview

Created early in the pandemic, the BalletX Beyond originally had two subscription options: the Basic Plan of \$15 a month or the Plus Plan at \$30 a month. Three years on, only the Basic Plan is still on offer. By subscribing, viewers get on-demand access to world premiere films, both short and featured, behind-the-scenes videos, photo galleries, Q&As, and special dance projects.



Motivation & Value

Created by BalletX co-founder Christine Cox, the original motivation to create BalletX Beyond was to provide a virtual venue to showcase filmed versions of original BalletX performances and allow for the community to continue to be involved with the organization. Since the pandemic, BalletX Beyond has evolved into a more traditional, virtual subscription that provides BalletX fans additional content and information about the organization and its artists.

Key Attributes

- On-demand access to archival and evergreen content
- Ability to watch content from anywhere

Known Results

Within 6 months of its initial launch in September 2020, it had 711 subscribed. At that time, virtual subscriptions made up 45% of their earned revenue from the company's regular performance series. While it is unclear what role it plays in BalletX's current season revenue, the fact that it still exists as a subscription option is noteworthy.

Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Live

Product Type

A monthly digital subscription that provides access to both live and recorded content.

Product Overview

For \$9.99 a month or \$99.99 a year, Jazz Live subscribers can access a library full of Jazz at Lincoln Center content whenever they want. In addition to housing an extensive video archive, the Jazz Live platform also supports live streaming. Subscribers can tune in via webcast to Jazz at Lincoln Center season and weekly Dizzy's Club programs.



Motivation & Value

Jazz Live is another pathway for jazz lovers to engage with Jazz at Lincoln Center. For those less inclined to attend in person, this subscription gives them the opportunity to still enjoy live jazz performances. Subscribers can access Jazz Live on a phone, tablet, or TV, enabling them view Jazz at Lincoln Center content from wherever it is most convenient.

Known Results

No known results.

Key Attributes

- Webcast live performances
- Access to archival and evergreen content
- Ability to watch content at any time

School of American Ballet, Ballet Connoisseurship On Demand

Product Type

Recorded ballet seminars that can be rented and then watched on demand.

Product Overview

Ballet Connoisseurship on Demand is a compendium of 26 recorded adult educational classes created by the School of American Ballet (SAB).



The seminars explore a variety of topics, ranging from the history of the Ballet to technique to master choreographers. All the seminars can be accessed through Vimeo On Demand and can either be rented individually for \$20 or all together for \$100. Sessions can be rented for up to three months before they are automatically returned.

Motivation & Value

SAB's Ballet Connoisseurship On Demand is a digital extension of their Ballet Connoisseurship program, which provides both seasoned balletgoers and newcomers alike the opportunity to enhance their appreciation and understanding of ballet. By digitizing these seminars, SAB is ensuring that a broader audience has access to this high-quality educational programming.

Key Attributes

- On-demand access to ballet seminars on a variety of topics
- Ability to watch and rewatch content during rental period

Known Results

No known results.

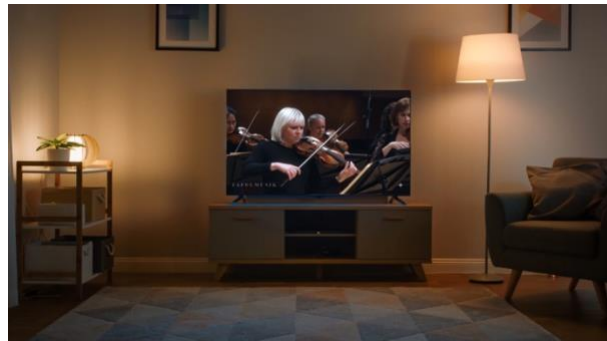
Tafelmusik, Ontario, Digital Series Pass

Product Type

A digital advance purchase ticket bundle to three live-streamed concerts.

Product Overview

With the digital series pass, subscribers can watch three concerts live from the privacy of their homes. The pass costs a flat rate of \$120 and allows viewers to watch the concerts in real-time as well as rewatch them. Additionally, subscribers have access to expert-led lectures and other bonus content. Buyers have the option of buying the digital pass as a standalone subscription or adding it to their in-person subscription.



Motivation & Value

The digital series pass provides viewers access to high-quality concerts from the comfort of their homes. The series tagline, "lush concerts from the very best seat in your house," speaks to the convenience and ease Tafelmusik is trying to sell to and instill in potential buyers.

Key Attributes

- Three livestreamed concerts
- Ability to watch and re-watch concerts on demand

Known Results

No known results.

Similar Model

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra offers live-streamed concerts.



Expert Interviews

Introduction

To supplement and contextualize our inventory of experimental practices, we conducted several in-depth interviews with experts in order to delve deeper into key questions and topics that emerged as a result of our desk research into various types of customer relationship models. Through these conversations, we set out to explore:

- Ways to instill loyalty that are not dependent upon frequency of attendance
- How learning can play a role in introducing people to an art form and/or building deeper customer relationships
- How arts organizations might further stimulate small social group attendance

Interviewees included:

Cecelia Beam, Faculty, San Francisco Ballet School

Eric Nelson, Vice President, Global Partnerships TRG Arts

Jim Royce, Independent Marketing Consultant (retired)

Robert Sweibel, Founder & President, Sweibel Arts

Steven Roth, Independent Marketing Consultant

Rosie Siemer, Founder & CEO, FIVESEED (membership consultant)

Wolfgang Graf, Co-founder & CEO, easy-connect.io and **Sophie Garzon-Lapierre**, Head of Business Development & Marketing, easy-connect.io

Each conversation proved to be a singularly rich discussion. What follows is a summary of the cross-cutting themes that emerged from these discussions collectively.

There is a dearth of experimentation

We asked several of our interviewees if they knew of any truly experimental or radically new customer relationship models, however, none of them could come up with an example. One interviewee stated he was disappointed by the continued lack of experimentation and suggested that arts organizations have always found it difficult to experiment on the institutional side as this type of experimentation has never been a part of the culture of a lot of arts organizations. We heard that in today's environment, organizations are more hard-pressed than ever before, and many don't have the bandwidth, fortitude or executive support to try out radically different customer relationships.

Frequency isn't the only determinant of loyalty

While our research into the design and makeup of customer relationship models unveiled that arts organizations, by and large, determine a customer's loyalty based on their frequency of attendance and/or total spend, the experts suggested that frequency is not, and should not be, the only determinant of affinity or loyalty.

Although there is a correlation between a person's institution loyalty and their frequency of attendance or repeat visitation, a person's self-perceived loyalty is influenced by a variety of factors. Our interviewees cited a sense of belonging, feeling satisfied with an experience, and great customer service, as specific components that might influence a person's sense of affinity or loyalty.

Experts stressed that arts organizations should not use one monolithic indicator (like buying a membership or subscription) to determine whether a customer is loyal. One interviewee said that what loyalty looks like varies depending on the institution (e.g., are they a large performing arts center or a small regional theatre?). Two others stressed that loyalty looks a little different for different types of customers. A visitor might still feel a sense of loyalty or affinity for an institution even if they visit infrequently. Furthermore, one expert said that there are customers who might attend frequently and donate to an organization but still opt out of a subscription or membership for whatever reason.

Membership seems to be a better container for relationship-building

The membership model was viewed favorably among several of the interviewees. One expert cited this model as being inherently more flexible and, therefore, more attractive to younger attendees.

Another expert said that she thought that performing arts subscriptions (even the ones called memberships) often lacked the relationship-building aspects – communication, programming, and member events – that are central to museum memberships. Even the language she said (i.e., “subscriber,” “season pass holder”) does nothing to signal a connection between the individual and the organization in the same way that the language around museum membership does.

This expert added that while museums have not cracked the code to engendering loyalty, they are beginning to look at different pathways towards engagement and are considering whether membership may not always be the best path for certain people.

Understanding your audience is key

In three different discussions, experts stated that segmentation is critical for an organization as it will help them better understand who is visiting and how to best engage with them. One expert stated that a customer relationship should start with knowing who your customers are and why they are interested in you. Only after gathering this information should arts organizations create products and programs they think might appeal to them.

On a similar note, two interviewees mentioned a need for programming for “non-superusers” – audience members who only show up once or twice a year. Instead of trying to upsell individuals and funnel them into a subscription or membership pipeline, organizations should instead focus on meeting people where they are and engaging with them at their preferred level of engagement. In order to do this successfully, organizations will need to start talking to their audience segments differently. As one expert put it, arts organizations need to shift their focus to both customization and personalization in order to serve customers throughout their entire lifecycle and adapt to their ever-changing preferences.

There is a need for communication that doesn't revolve around selling

The need for targeted communication that does not revolve around selling was an issue that a majority of our interviewees brought up. Every one of them feels strongly that arts organizations aren't using their communication channels correctly. Two interviewees both said that there was a need for communication that was not sale-oriented but instead engaged with people on purely an emotional level. One expert described this lack as a “big black hole” and said that instead of telling him about their next anniversary, an organization should be focused on getting him emotionally and intellectually invested. They should be using “emotionally explosive” language, he stated. Another expert said that arts organizations should be focused on enveloping him with stories that would spur him on and want to get involved. Although not all communication channels are suitable for this type of storytelling, two different experts mentioned podcasts and videos as being ideal mediums for more emotive and story-oriented communication.

Another source of inspiration could come from museums. While the very nature of a museum lends itself to not having to constantly sell a product, our museum expert told us museums are still in constant communication with their audiences. Instead of focusing on selling, they focus on ensuring their audience knows about their upcoming programming, special experiences, and perks that the museum currently has on offer. Furthermore, she said that this type of communication is more oriented to relationship building, unlike messaging solely focused on selling.

There is untapped potential in engaging with people around learning about an art form

Among all our interviewees, there was an overall enthusiasm for cultivating educational opportunities as an alternative way to interact with audiences. They were in consensus that educational or learning opportunities were a largely untapped area of engagement and would appeal to both infrequent and frequent buyers who were passionate about an art form and wanted to learn more about it.

Furthermore, educational opportunities would provide alternative pathways to engaging with people regardless of whether they have previously bought a ticket or product from an arts organization. Some experts surmised that communicating about educational opportunities might be an alternative and effective way for organizations to keep top of mind. A universal takeaway from these conversations is that educational opportunities

could be an alternative way to create a shared experience that also provides people with a safe environment to engage with people they don't know.

Arts organizations need to make it easier for people to attend in small social groups

For many customers, decision-making around going to a cultural event is a multi-lateral process which is to say that many will only attend a live cultural event if they can find someone to go with them. However, sector-wide, we still lack the tools to help facilitate small group attendance and reward the influencers/initiators who bring people with them.

Our conversation with Wolfgang and Sophie of easy-connect focused on their work to solve for both of these problems. Through their ClassicCard app they are helping Berlin-based arts organizations to reach under 30s and help them discover their events and easily facilitate small group attendance. Since the apps launch in May 2022, it has proven to be a success; the data they have gathered shows that if people have a means of inviting people to arts and cultural events, they will take advantage of it.



CULTURE IS PLURAL