One man trying to bring Broadway into 21st century

September 15 2014, by Mark Kennedy

When John Travolta shocked theater fans by mangling the pronunciation of Idina Menzel's name at the Oscars, one person saw a gift in the slip—Damian Bazadona.

Bazadona, the president and founder of the advertising and marketing firm Situation Interactive, had been hired by Menzel's new show "If/Then" to create some buzz and here it came, one horrible syllable after another.

Bazadona and his team, already assembled in a conference room on Oscar night, instantly won the Internet by creating a graphic—"We Know Her Name—it's Idina Menzel"—and posting it on Facebook and Twitter, along with videos and content. People went nuts. "If/Then" got invaluable exposure.

It was a master stroke from Bazadona, whose business stands at the intersection of [technology](#) and [live events](#). Situation Interactive has represented some 100 Broadway shows, as well as The Metropolitan Opera, the Guggenheim and Major League Soccer, among others.

Bazadona and his team use technology to do everything from tempt potential ticket-buyers with special offers to giving them behind-the-scene videos to convert them into audiences.

With the new season starting, Bazadona sat down with The Associated Press to talk about the importance of Wi-Fi, Facebook and the future of

live entertainment.

AP: You've been part of a push to get theaters Wi-Fi ready. Why?

Bazadona: I'm of the school of thought that for Broadway turning relevant, we need to have modernized venues that match consumer behavior. Here's where Broadway goes off the rails and people get a little bit nervous: Your mobile device can and should be an enhancement to the experience itself. It doesn't have to be a deterrent.

AP: What? Don't turn off your phone?

Bazadona: A few things are happening that there's no way around. If you have your mobile device and you're connected on a Wi-Fi network, we are getting to a place—based on where you are sitting in a theater—where you could have a custom experience.

AP: Like what?

Bazadona: You could, based on where you're sitting, be able to pre-order a drink if you're in a premium seat. You could get a special video message. There could be a camera backstage where the cast says, 'Hey, thanks for coming!' You could think about seat upgrades. Let's say you're sitting in the back and you're getting free Wi-Fi and it says, 'Hey, there's a better seat 10 rows up from you.' Or 'Hey, you've been in this theater before, and because you're really great, we're going to upgrade you for free.' Technology could enhance the experience. To me, that's really exciting.

AP: Might digital help the chaos that often happens with buying tickets?

Bazadona: That's one of the things that really concerns me about Broadway. When people come to New York, we have this great thing

that makes people say, 'I need to see a Broadway show.' And then they look for a Broadway show and they're like 'Where am I going? Is this the right thing? Do I need a discount code?'

AP: There are more and more places to buy tickets. Is that good?

Bazadona: It's definitely going to get more fragmented, which doesn't make it better. There are going to be so many more websites. I think in the next couple of years, you're going to be able to see what the primary market is on a site and then see the secondary market options right next to it. Now that only happens in sports. It's good but it's also confusing.

AP: Has Facebook made marketing cheaper?

Bazadona: It's changed. Let's say I have a musical and I have fan page that has 100,000 likes. In the past, you'd be able to post a video to your 100,000 people. About 10-15 percent of people would actually ever see it because there's so much in everyone's news feeds. That number has gotten progressively worse. Now it's 1-2 percent. So if I have 100,000 likes, all that really means is there are 100,000 people I can now pay to talk to. The model has changed. It used to be free but now it's $5,000, $10,000, $15,000 per shot.

AP: If Broadway is to survive, what needs to happen?

Bazadona: We need technology to be fully focused on how to improve the live experience. Like: Get me to my seat faster, make the actors more excited, give me stuff that makes being in the venue better. I don't think live events are going anywhere. I've doubled down. This is my business and my life, but we're becoming irrelevant because we have to figure out how to remain relevant in peoples' lives. And technology is a part of that.

More information: Online: www.situationinteractive.com

Citation: One man trying to bring Broadway into 21st century (2014, September 15) retrieved 1 July 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2014-09-broadway-21st-century.html