



THE TOP TENS Ten ideas to help you grow your business at TIFF

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Twelve years ago, I took a leap of faith and started **NKPR**, a public relations firm that now operates offices in Toronto, New York and, soon Los Angeles. When I look back at the key areas of growth for my business, the Toronto International Film Festival is certainly at the top of the list. Not only does the annual event contribute almost \$200-million to the local economy, but this exciting and busy time in the city is a tremendous opportunity to showcase our clients to the world.

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Here are 10 things I learned over the past decade of growing my business and maximizing the incredible opportunity that takes place during the festival:

1. Take advantage of opportunities presented to you.

Nine years ago, a client asked me to organize a gifting lounge, a showcase to get their products in front of celebrities. Not only had I never done one before, but we were scheduling this during the busiest time of year for our target audiences, media and celebrities. Would we be able to deliver what our client wanted? We did, because we had a charitable component, and leveraged client relationships to provide something unique. I overcame a fear of failure and this chance opportunity – the IT Lounge – is now a staple of the agency's business.

2. Work backward from the end result.

This mode of thinking contributes to a healthy client relationship. Determining success together minimizes mistakes and makes managing expectations easier. If, during TIFF, we establish that a client's goal is coverage in a specific media outlet, our efforts are focused on achieving this goal. Eliminating distractions helps you deliver what's been promised.

3. Know your audience.

You need to understand why you're doing what you're doing and who you're doing it for. The key questions to

ask yourself are: Who are you doing this for? Will they care? Is it for your internal or external audience? Be specific about your target demographic. That is what's going to push your business forward. If you don't ask yourself these questions, your efforts will be haphazard.

4. Lead by example.

To be a leader, you need to create things that are unique to you and your interests. Success won't be found by simply mimicking what others are already doing. What sets us apart during TIFF is that we're hyper aware that it's all about the people we're putting together at an event. A successful event is less about where the flowers are going and more about how it's going to feel in the room.

5. Integration is key.

It doesn't matter how well an event is planned if we haven't figured out, among other things, who our audience is, put our own spin on the proceedings or made an effort to get our message out. Maximize the business opportunities you have by working more efficiently – have your individual efforts complement each other.

6. Be authentic.

Giving back has always been a priority for me and I'm proud to work with clients who feel the same. Our key to success is to partner with charities that are meaningful to us and align with our clients brand DNA. It's the same with the portrait studio. The reason we did photography is because I personally love photography and want to support photographers. You can't develop something successful from nothing. Find what's 'true' to your brand.

7. Embrace social media.

People who thought social media was a passing fad are now scrambling to catch up. Social media gives you the power, capability and ability to amplify your message. By embracing it, we now have almost 12,000 followers on Twitter, a significant number in Canada, and are no longer solely reliant on others to spread our messages.

8. Make opportunities unique to you.

CIBC Run for the Cure is a good example of supporting a cause that is unique and meaningful to the organization. More than half of CIBC workforce is female and this cause is very appealing to both external and internal audiences. Therefore, it is a big success and in 2013 alone, run for the breast cancer cause raised \$27-million. So ask yourself: What's the opportunity? Do you care about it? Will your audiences care? Are you passionate about it?

9. Know when you need to evolve a concept.

Over the past 50 years, Dove has evolved from a brand known for soap to a brand known for a commitment to real beauty. They've evolved within a cluttered consumer category to tailor their messaging to focus on natural beauty, appealing to different ages, races and demographics, and were one of the first to use real women in their campaigns, and spark authentic dialogue about beauty. Aim high, it's what helps you and your business grow.

10. Empower your team.

Leading a winning team is not about telling people what to do, but about empowering them to have their own successes and failures. With the grand scale of the film festival, everyone on my team has their own roles and responsibilities, and each employee has a vested interest in the team's overall success.

Natasha Koifman is the president of NKPR, a PR agency she founded in 2002 in order to combine her two passions: shining a spotlight on stories of substance and supporting causes that are making a difference around the world.

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