

Your Own “Magic” Theater

(Tips to 2-walling or 4-walling I’ve picked up over the years . . . that might work for YOU!)

2-walling = Partnership with a venue or building owner

4-walling =YOU rent and run the whole business

WHY-

1. I hate driving
2. Especially in Atlanta!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
3. No load in and load out
4. Little set-up
5. I can control the setting and enhance the experience.
6. I’ve always wanted my own theater 😊

The GOALS-

1. To improve my show for adults and families to help me improve my fundraising shows.
2. To give me legitimacy in marketing to other adult groups.
3. To get other shows.
4. To make a little steady income in my overall business. – emphasis on “little”

What Can I offer?

1. One-person Show
2. Close-up show
3. Illusion Show
4. Parlor Magic
5. Dinner Theater
6. Puppetry show
7. Ventriloquist Show
8. Mentalist Show
9. Combination Show
10. Comedy Show . . . the list goes on.

What are People Looking for

1. Something to do after dinner.
2. Date nights
3. Entertainment at a resort town . . . or YOUR town.
4. Something Different to do.

5. Something to do with their family.
6. Something to entertain the kids . . . and not bore the parents.
7. Clean, Family-Friendly Entertainment . . . that's affordable.
8. A Solid-GOOD SHOW . . . in my case a funny show they can take their kids and grandma to.

WHERE – Location/location/location

Find a venue people will come to and give it 2-3 years to grow.

Find a location where folks feel a bit trapped and are looking for entertainment.

Have a short term contract to begin with

Here's a list of possible partners:

1. Partner with a Hotels
2. Marriott is open to shows
 - a. Talk with Activity Director
 - b. Go through their Food and Beverage Department
3. Conference rooms (often vacant)
4. Presidential Suites
5. Restaurants – Banquet Rooms or Conference rooms
 - a. Talk with the Food and Beverage OR Head Chef
 - b. They will love your guests because they are guaranteed to leave on time so it frees their tables... turning the tables is important.
 - c. Chef can also provide a limited menu for your “Dinner Show”
 - d. During peak season, you may be able to do 2 shows a night...
 - e. Venue may be able to offer dessert or drinks following the show.
6. Comedy Clubs on off-nights.
7. Look for HIGH END resorts, restaurants, hotels and tours.

2-walling in a Hotel

8. Bring in business for the hotel.
9. Perhaps a banquet room in the hotel
10. 50 – 90 seats
11. Keep it intimate
12. You might offer different shows on different nights – comedy, improv, magic, mindreading, hypnotist.

Why might restaurants need you?

1. Increase turnover of your tables
2. Costs you nothing.

3. Will add to your profit.
4. Set you apart from the competition.
5. Make money off “Show Only” customers
6. Dinner/Show customers helps to fill the restaurant
7. You can ask restaurants for a discounted package of dinner/show which will entice the “show only” customers to eat dinner too. To do this, you may need to inflate the “Show Only” tickets.

Marketing and Promotion

1. **Trip Advisor** – Very important for reviews
 - a. A theater is a location that is stable
 - b. People look at the top 5-10 things to do . . . and that’s what they do.
 - c. NOTE- Trip Advisor typically requires 6 months of dates on your calendar on your website and ticketing service.
 - d. We became the number one show in Dahlenega . . . because we are pretty much the only show in Dahlenega. But it’s a very touristy place.
2. Thank you letter to each ticket buyer . . . ticket sites capture emails – ask for reviews.
3. Customer service – consider offering a 100% refund if they are disappointed
4. Blatantly ASK for 5-star reviews (in routines perhaps)
5. Hand out card with QR code for Tripadvisor or google review site
6. Talk with Concierge at resorts . . .
 - a. make friends.
 - b. give them tickets.
 - c. send info as PDF so they can print it- customized to different resorts
 - d. Send an email to them every so often.
 - e. Offer discounts for their guests.
 - f. Coupon Codes that work with your ticketing site . . . use different codes for different marketing partners so you can track where the folks are coming from.
7. Chamber of Commerce – grand opening, ribbon cutting, free short show for chamber members.
8. Time Shares or others who want incentives to get people there.
9. Give a free ticket for every 20 people your promotional partners send.
10. Take photos at each show and put on Facebook and Fan page on your website
 - a. Ask guests to share their photos from your facebook page with their friends
11. Create buzz – Radio, newspapers, Interviews
12. Google Ads
13. Facebook
14. YELP
15. Comp Tickets – “Paper the town”
16. Tour agents – can help sell tickets, give them 20% commission. They often sell tickets directly to their customers and pay you the NET amount.
17. I haven’t found rack cards very helpful, but posters around town have some impact. You have to update the posters every couple months.

18. In restaurant – have a banner up and table cards on the tables... promotes your show AND promotes your private party business.
19. One suggestion is to work with the venue on a marketing budget . . . Have the venue pay it up front and then take it out over the following year.

Theater tips

1. 60 – 100 seats is good.
2. Gives lots of participation opportunities.
3. 30 – 50 seats can work too . . . especially for closeup or parlor magic
4. Comfortable Chairs – Wider chairs are better
 - a. I like to have chairs that will hook together, but can also be separated and moved if necessary
5. Remember handicapped needs.
6. LED lighting is now very standard and easy to install and program
7. Get the Tech help you need . . . if you can't do it, pay for it to be set up properly.
8. Make the environment special
 - a. Great lighting, sound
 - b. Comfortable seating
 - c. Temperature of the room
 - d. Decorations, photos, memorabilia, etc.

How to price show

1. \$20 – \$150 . . . who is your audience and what is your market?
2. Student Tickets
3. Kid Tickets
4. VIP tickets
 - a. Special seating
 - b. Meet with Magician after the show
 - c. Special gift (magic kit)
5. If you are in a vacation location – they will pay more.
6. One recommendation is that if you can't charge at least \$50 . . . you should have MORE seats.
7. Charge a price that allows room to discount for kids, military, and seniors.
8. I offer an early bird special discount . . . encourages folks to buy their tickets early . . . I use 3 days early. This helps me feel confident that folks are coming to the show.
9. I cancel if I don't have a minimum of 8 tickets sold by 3PM.

Show ideas:

1. Preshow – the show begins when they first arrive
 - a. Music

- b. Lighting
 - c. Atmosphere
 - d. Give them a GIFT – free drink or trick or coloring book for kids
 - e. Preshow announcements
2. Welcome to the show – introduce your self – tell your story
 - a. If you say “Hello”, it’s a show
 - b. If you don’t say “Hello”, it’s an act.
 - c. Who is this person, where are you from, why are you doing this, why should they care, why then need to like you.
 3. Do something different . . . a different trick, or a different approach
 4. Audience participation
 - a. Try to have one person from each group help in the show.
 - b.
 5. Tell A Story . . . preferably YOUR story.
 6. Empower the Audience and the volunteers . . . make them the hero.
 7. Frame your show – to provide value. Audience members have to go through “frames” to get to your show... High End. Ie. Special Entrance, close up magic experience before your stage show, secret setting, etc.
 8. Focus on the RELATIONSHIP – the effects are secondary.
 9. I play 5 characters and have a good bit of schmaltz in the show, but it’s all for fun and the audience picks up on this quickly and joins in the fun. By the ending comedy straight jacket escape, they are cheering!!
 10. Be likeable, available, and meet the people...
 - a. I greet them when they arrive
 - b. Lead each party to my “Magic Emporium” and offer them a free soda or water because “people tend to get a bit thirsty about half way through the show.”
 - c. I then show them to their seats, but encourage them to look around.
 - d. If we are waiting on more groups of folks to arrive, I’ll often ask the early arrivers where they are from and show a close-up trick or two. If I have a host or hostess (and I try to have one when I have a large group) I spend my time showing closeup while folks arrive in the theater.
 - e. My goal is for everyone to feel like friends by the end of the show.

Staff or Personnel

1. ONE man theater . . . is it possible? Absolutely.
2. Tech staff . . . or can you or you and your assistant do it yourselves.
3. Assistant
4. Another performer?
5. Host/Hostess/Concessions/Merch
6. Other??

Some Final thoughts and Tips – Things to keep in mind if you decide to try this.

1. Do you have a good show? This is vital and important. Your show needs to be rock solid, especially if you are also trying to handle other aspects of your theater business.
2. Are you ready to run a business like this?
3. Do you have theater experience? You can get help with technical issues, and other aspects of the business and it's best to outsource the areas you aren't great at . . . and focus on the parts of the business that you know best.
4. It will cost MONEY. This is not a get rich quick deal. It's not even a get rich slow deal.
5. So... write a true business plan, then double or triple the expenses and start up costs of the equation and divide the income side by two- factor in the possibility of a problem like COVID . . . and if it still seems like a good idea, go for it.
6. And finally – don't forget that YOU will have to be at the theater for all the shows . . . is that going to work into your life schedule? Make sure you schedule vacations, date nights, family dates, and all your other business commitments. It's not easy touring during the week, performing 2 shows on Saturday and then having to show up to perform your theater show on Saturday night . . . then get up on Sunday to sing in the choir on Sunday morning.
7. Remember to seriously ask the WHY questions before you get into this.

Other Resources:

www.DahlongaMagicTheater.com

Facebook Group – Association of Magic Theater Owners – has weekly zoom meetings.

WellAttended.com – offers a good podcast.

Ticketing sites you might consider.

1. Wellattended.com – Ticket service that is good and not too expensive. – I've used it.
2. Eventbrite – More pricey, but helps promote your event- I've also used this.
3. Vendini.com – Has a cost to set up, but can work well
4. Shawn Farquhar recommends Ticket Tailor ... <https://get.tickettailor.com>
5. Thundertix.com