



Roaring Deals

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Research

The Roaring Deals promotion was part of a long-term strategic economic development initiative launched in 2011, when the Downtown Dayton Partnership (DDP), a nonprofit business advocacy and marketing organization, and its public and private sector partners began implementing the Greater Downtown Dayton Plan. A long-term strategic blueprint for the future of Dayton's urban core, the plan also is an economic development strategy for the Dayton region, as research shows urban redevelopment increasingly is linked to a region's overall economic health and quality of life.

One of the key strategies identified during the development of the plan was the need for more cross promotions between downtown's arts venues and restaurants and retailers. In response, the DDP began a strategic effort in early 2011 to develop the type of cross-promotional campaign called for in the plan.

As downtown's largest arts presenter, the Victoria Theatre Association (VTA) was an obvious partner. The VTA was presenting the Broadway blockbuster Disney's *The Lion King*, with the show's month-long summer run expected to play to sold-out crowds. With all the excitement surrounding the show, the DDP determined it was the perfect fit for a strategic cross promotions campaign that could be used as a model for future similar campaigns. In addition, the VTA was extremely willing to partner with the DDP and help market the campaign.

Planning

The DDP looked at cross promotional campaigns executed in other cities and determined those focused on offering arts patrons discounts were most successful. Those campaigns were used as models for what was dubbed Roaring Deals, playing on *The Lion King* theme.

The goals of Roaring Deals were to:

- encourage visitors to extend their time downtown, perhaps by having dinner before a show or grabbing a drink afterward
- promote the variety of businesses located downtown to arts patrons
- help create a positive and enjoyable experience for *The Lion King* patrons that would translate to a more positive overall perception of downtown Dayton

The strategy was to leverage the anticipated media coverage of *The Lion King* to also promote downtown as a dining and entertainment destination. Benchmarks for success also were set, and the goals were to:

- have at least 20 downtown businesses participate in Roaring Deals
- conduct a post-promotion survey of participating businesses with more than 60 percent reporting positive results on their business
- create at least three promotional items to support Roaring Deals

The target audience for this promotion was patrons of *The Lion King*. However, the DDP hoped to also reach the wider arts-going public with a message that there are several dining and retail options downtown. The hope was to remind arts patrons that downtown has numerous arts and entertainment options.

The DDP established a budget of \$2,050 for this project. In addition, the VTA was able to contribute \$300 of its marketing budget from Disney toward the project for a total project budget of \$2,350.

Execution

To launch Roaring Deals, the DDP and VTA hosted a meeting for all interested downtown businesses and organizations. The DDP called key restaurant, bar and retail owners to encourage them to attend. Those efforts paid off, as attendance was strong. At the meeting, VTA staff showed a video about *The Lion King* to give business owners a sense of what the show is all about. The DDP then presented attendees with some ideas for ways they could participate in Roaring Deals, such as offering a drink special, discount to ticket holders or themed menu item.

After the meeting, the DDP began collecting information from downtown businesses about the discounts and specials they would offer as part of Roaring Deals. More than two dozen businesses representing a wide array of businesses, from restaurants to health clubs to art galleries, participated.

With solid participation from businesses, the project's focus shifted to promotion. The following promotional materials were created for Roaring Deals:

- a web page listing all participating businesses and their deals
- a brochure listing all participating businesses and their deals widely distributed throughout downtown
- 2-by-3 foot posters that were hung in the lobby windows of key downtown buildings
- a flier for *The Lion King* program books

In addition, the VTA provided official *The Lion King* show posters to participating businesses, and the DDP printed stickers for the bottom of the posters listing each business' deal. Participating businesses also received goldenrod cocktail napkins and balloons with information about Roaring Deals to use and display. The DDP also created a Roaring Deals graphic that was given to participating businesses to use in their own promotions.

The link to the website was heavily promoted on both the DDP and VTA Facebook pages. Roaring Deals also was promoted, with links to the website, in multiple e-blasts from the DDP. The VTA also promoted it in an e-blast it created specifically for *The Lion King* ticket holders.

Roaring Deals also received a great deal of media attention, including in Dayton's two major print outlets, the *Dayton Daily News* and *Dayton City Paper*, as well as on all three network TV stations and in electronic media. The strategy of leveraging media coverage for the show worked well, as Roaring Deals was mentioned in nearly every media story about *The Lion King*.

Results

In the end, the DDP met all its goals for Roaring Deals. In addition, the project was completed at less than half the project budget, with a total expenditure of \$1,055.33 — nearly \$1,300 less than the project budget, in large part because of negotiating nonprofit rates with suppliers. This allowed the DDP to reserve funding for other downtown promotions.

Post-project survey results also show success. Almost every participating business completed a survey about Roaring Deals. Nearly 70 percent of participants reported business was better or excellent during the promotion, and 80 percent reported that the promotion generated new business.

The DDP and VTA both felt the Roaring Deals promotion was highly successful and enjoyed by visitors and business owners alike. The two organizations are planning a similar promotion for 2012 to build on this success.