

Reading Rep Audience strategy

2025 – 2028

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Reading Rep audience strategy, 2025–28:

a route map for growth.

This strategic plan has been created following a programme of team workshops, ideas sessions and coaching led by Julie Aldridge Consulting Ltd.

In line with the ambition of the team, the plan has a particular emphasis on growing audiences for produced work.

It's designed as a playbook – a tool to spark thinking and guide action towards RRT goals. A working document to play with and enhance overtime.

Please read alongside the following documents created for this consultancy:

- Audience Strategy Action Plan
- Segmentation Guide
- Audience Insight Audit

For a quick read:

please explore the **key points highlighted in red** throughout.

Vision and mission

VISION: to enhance civic pride and put Reading on the national cultural map.

MISSION: to transform lives through theatre.

This audience strategy tells a story of aspiration and growth towards that vision:

It has been designed to provide a route-map for audience and income growth in line with the artistic plans:

**to achieve a step change in marketing and audience growth
to match the step change in programme and venue expansion.**

Context

Reading Rep was founded in 2012, by Reading-born Artistic Director Paul Stacey, with just £500 and an aspiration to create exceptional, inclusive theatre.

As a disabled practitioner, Stacey founded Reading Rep to break down barriers to accessing theatre.

That founding principle continues to define the company's ambition – **to create world-class theatre for everyone.**

Reading Rep produces reimagined classics, West End-quality musicals, fresh new writing, and innovative adaptations.

The work has garnered national critical acclaim, touring regionally, nationally and internationally – while remaining rooted in the community it serves.

The company is growing. It's becoming a producing powerhouse – creating bold, brilliant work from scratch in Berkshire's largest town.

Accessibility is central to Reading Rep's work, and 10% of all tickets are given away for free to those who can't afford them.

Engage, an award-winning outreach programme delivered in partnership with community partners such as Reading Libraries, Reading Borough Council, Reading College, the University of Reading, and the NHS, ensures anyone, no matter their background, can access the arts.

The reputation for RRT as an accessible, inclusive theatre is growing.

Income from box office, fees, bar sales and workshops has grown considerably since the opening of the new building in 2021 (see audience insight audit). There is now an ambition to accelerate this growth, establishing Reading Rep as a nationally significant producing theatre.

This aspiration drives this plan.

Audience Ambition



THE STORY OF OUR AUDIENCE AMBITION – IN THREE YEARS TIME ...

Reading Rep is no longer a hidden gem!

**The Theatre has developed a strong reputation for
producing exceptional theatre in the heart of Reading**

READING
REP
THEATRE

SEASON
2025/26



"EXTRAORDINARILY ORIGINAL MASTERPIECE"

WHATS ON STAGE

READING
REP
THEATRE

THE AUDIENCE AMBITION – IN THREE YEARS TIME ...

Audience Ambition

Widely known for our creative storytelling

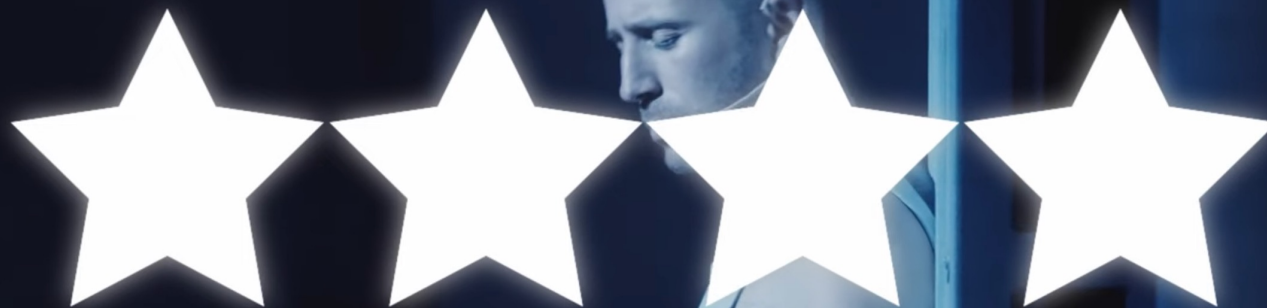
A woman with long dark hair, seen from behind, stands in a dark room. She is wearing a dark, sleeveless dress. The room is dimly lit, with vertical beams of light filtering through the air, creating a dramatic and mysterious atmosphere. The background is dark, with some vertical lines suggesting a window or a doorway. The overall mood is somber and evocative.

“HEART STOPPING THEATRE”
The Telegraph

**Reading Rep is much loved
across Reading and beyond**

READING
REP
THEATRE

SEASON
2025/26

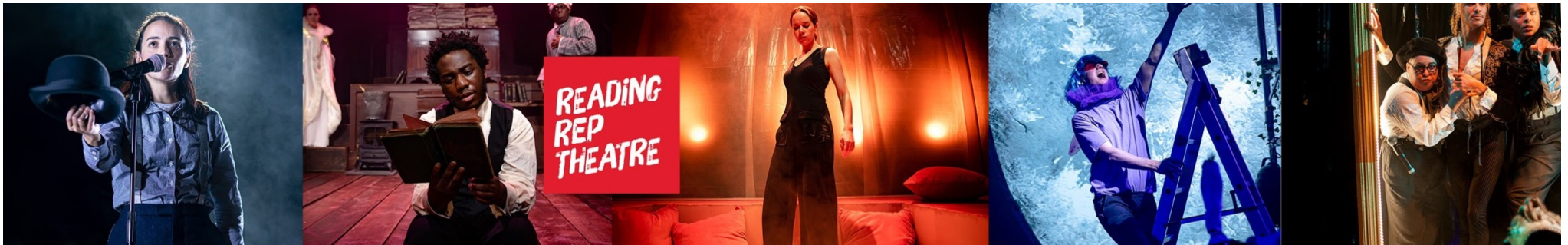


"GORGEOUS"

THE STAGE

Shows become a hot ticket for audiences

The FOMO is real !



THE AUDIENCE AMBITION – IN THREE YEARS TIME ...

**The Theatre is engaging people of all ages, reflecting the local demographic,
a younger audience on average compared to your typical regional theatre**

READING
REP
THEATRE

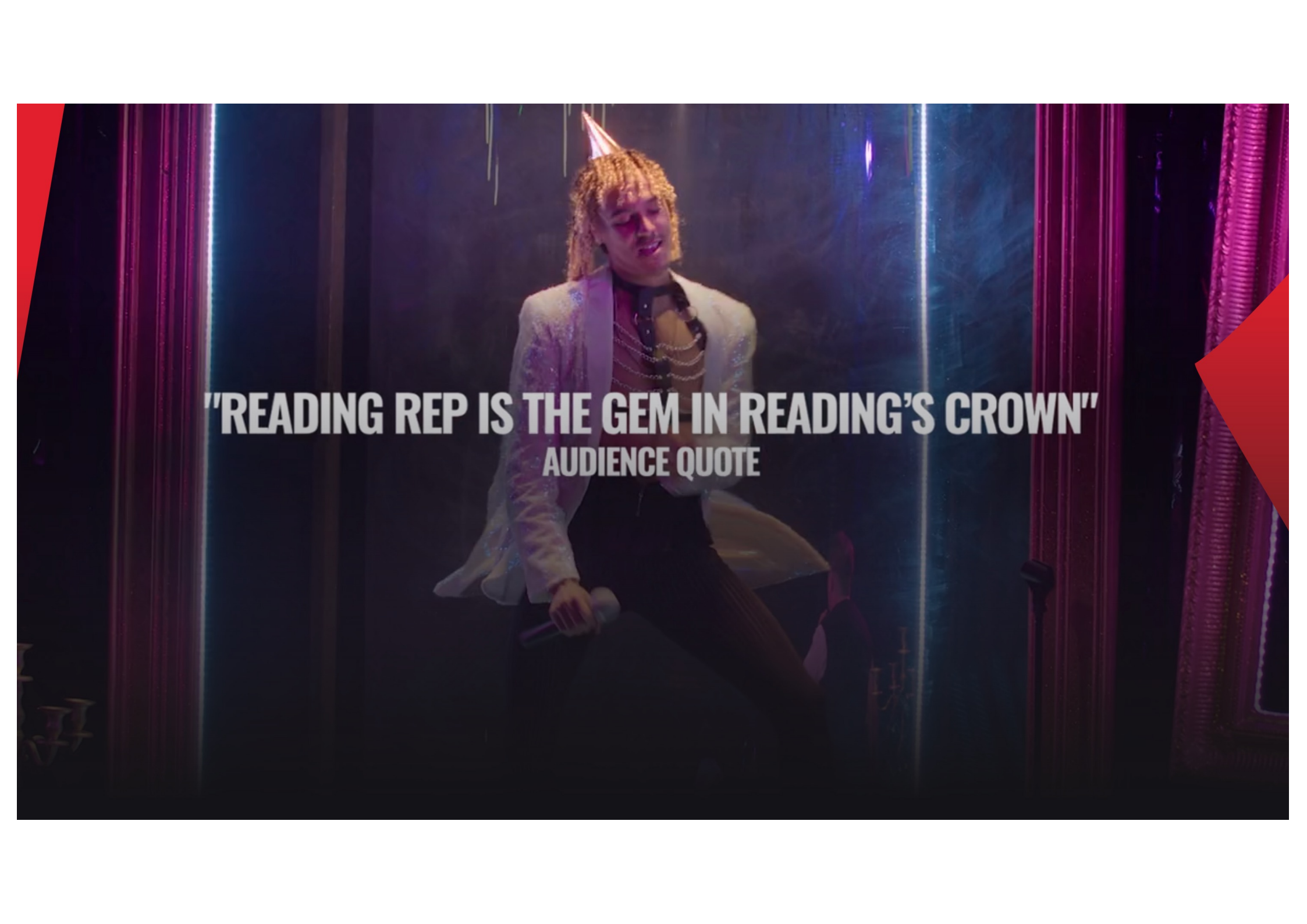
SEASON
2025/26

"AUTHENTIC AND HUMAN"

MUSICAL THEATRE REVIEW

READING
REP
THEATRE

**People are following, and invested in,
the journey of the Theatre and our founders
They share in our ambition**

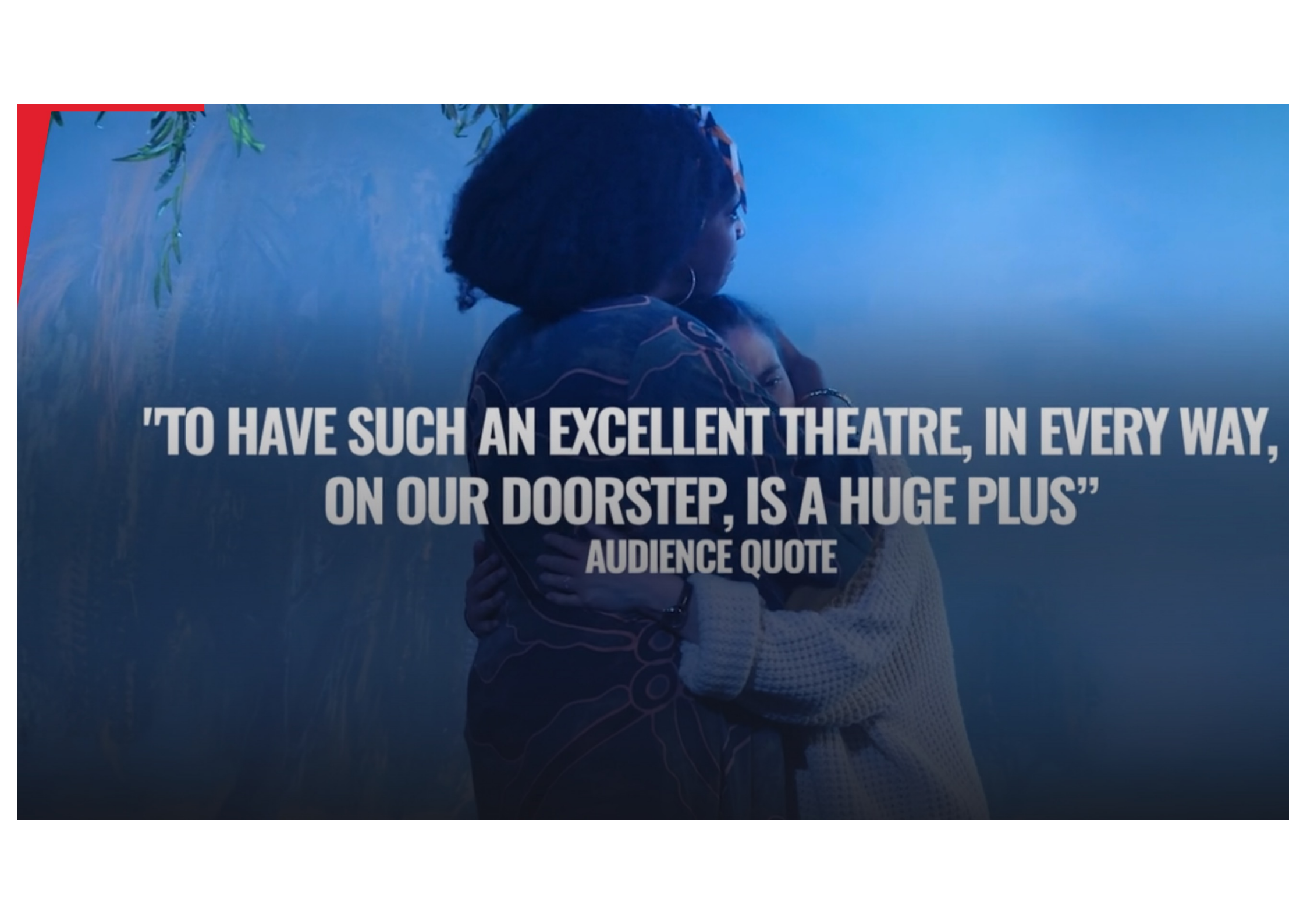
A person with curly hair, wearing a shiny, light-colored jacket and a party hat, is performing on stage. They are holding a microphone and appear to be singing or speaking. The background is dark with blue and purple lighting. The text "READING REP IS THE GEM IN READING'S CROWN" and "AUDIENCE QUOTE" is overlaid on the image.

"READING REP IS THE GEM IN READING'S CROWN"
AUDIENCE QUOTE

Local audiences feel proud that Reading Rep is their Theatre

They support and champion the venue

They boast to their friends that they're part of it!

A woman with dark curly hair and a headband is seen from the back, hugging a young child. They are standing in front of a large mural of a tropical waterfall. The scene is bathed in a soft blue light. The woman is wearing a dark patterned top, and the child is wearing a light-colored sweater.

**'TO HAVE SUCH AN EXCELLENT THEATRE, IN EVERY WAY,
ON OUR DOORSTEP, IS A HUGE PLUS'**
AUDIENCE QUOTE

THE AUDIENCE AMBITION – IN THREE YEARS TIME ...

Audience Ambition

Our audience feels like a community

They're part of something special

Something creative, social, aspirational



THE AUDIENCE AMBITION – IN THREE YEARS TIME ...

An ambition of a world-class theatre

A producing powerhouse

With accessibility at its heart

READING
REP
THEATRE

SEASON
2025/26



"I URGE YOU TO CATCH
IT IF YOU CAN"

WHATS ON STAGE

READING
REP
THEATRE

***'We want RRT to feel essential.
For the excitement to permeate the walls.'***

Key strategies to achieve this ambition

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- A strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre in the heart of Reading
- Widely known for our storytelling
- RRT feels essential
- The excitement permeates the walls
- People are following, and invested in, the journey of the Theatre
- They share in the ambition

- Shows become a hot ticket!
- Audiences reflect the local demographic
- A younger audience on average compared to your typical regional theatre
- Audiences feel proud of their Theatre
- Becoming supporters, champions, and advocates

WHERE WE ARE NOW

- Great reputation for education and outreach,
- but less well known as a producing venue
- Much loved by current audience
- but a hidden gem – a need to grow profile locally and nationally.

[See Audience Insight Audit for detail]

- There is a small, and slowly growing, email list and social media following (see page 52 and page 63).
- Audiences average 37% capacity in 2023 – 2024.
- Campaign planning and capacity for delivery is limited.

[See Audience Insight Audit for detail]

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

- **Developing RRT brand strategy** (see page 30) – **to build visibility, reputation, and interest** in the organisation (not just for individual shows).
- **Launching a series of evergreen campaigns:**
 - 'Discover incredible stories' (page 33)
 - 'Creating new theatre (and working out loud)' (page 36)
 - 'Meet me at the theatre' (page 42)

Which work together to create a world that people want to feel part of.

- **New campaign planning process** (page 66)
- Building **deeper understanding of** current and potential **audiences** (page 27 and page 87)
- Developing and testing **messaging that resonates and converts** (see page 89)
- **A more strategic approach to PR** (page 59)
- **Growing reach / profile** e.g. socials (page 56)
- Investment in advertising (page 60)
- **Significantly growing the email list** (page 55)

Capacity building to enable this ambition

From 2025, RRT is investing in additional capacity to build on the strengths and success of the existing team:

- Senior level freelance PR and marketing support, collaborating with the existing head of marketing
- Freelance social media content production
- Freelance social media advertising campaigns
- Outsourcing the distribution elements of outdoor campaign plans

This will enable RRT to amplify the impact of campaigns with a particular emphasis on:

- campaign planning and management
- enhancing the impact of the early stages of the campaign (significantly increasing the impact of advertising, PR, print distribution, and social content).
- budgeting and forecasting campaigns to ensure ideas are reaching enough people early in the campaign to avoid firefighting as the show approaches.
- and experimenting, testing, evaluating, and continuously learning as a team, to gradually build ROI and impact.

The short-term goal of this investment:

- practical support that frees up time to **focus on growth of ticket sales** for upcoming productions (prioritising the produced work in the first instance)

The long-term goal of this investment:

- ensuring much needed additional capacity to **expand public awareness and interest in RRT**. Earning greater attention for the Theatre as campaigns build.
- connecting with potential audiences, many for the first time (growing contacts – email lists and social media following, partners and distributors etc.)
- shaping brand perceptions, building interest and enthusiasm among those discovering RRT for the first time (sharing the brand messages through stories, visuals, copy, video, adverts etc.) locally (across Reading) and nationally.
- reinforcing memories and reminding current audiences of great experiences.

Audience profile:

**Understanding audience
values and motivations**

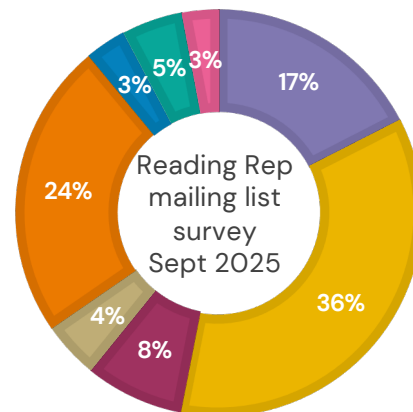
Audience profile

CULTURE SEGMENTS, RRT

■ Essence ■ Expression ■ Affirmation ■ Enrichment
 ■ Stimulation ■ Release ■ Perspective ■ Entertainment



[Base 4557]



[Base 309]

A 2025 survey of the Reading Rep mailing list indicates:

The Theatre is successfully reaching Expression audiences – a people-focused audience who love to share great Theatre with friends and family. This is an audience that Reading Rep will celebrate, hold close, and continue to grow.

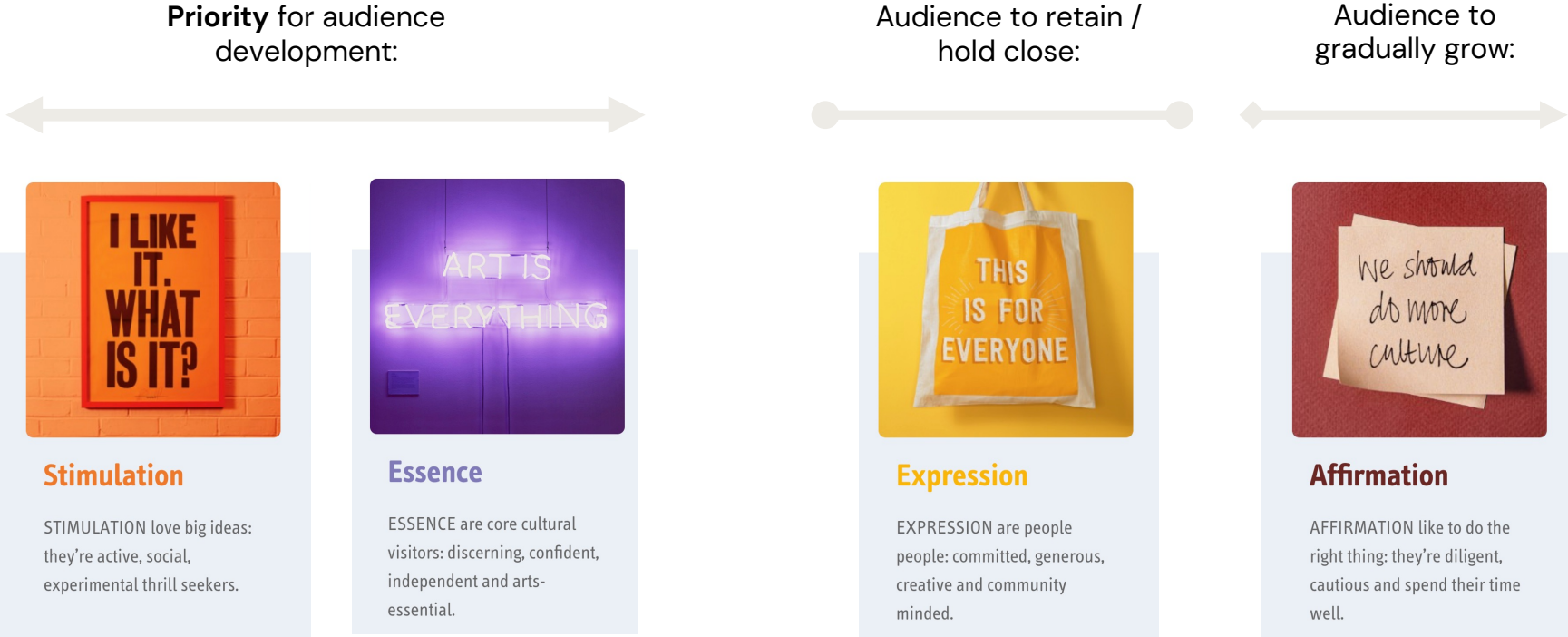
There is also potential to grow the reputation for quality / story / ideas to resonate with two other theatre-loving audience segments who are already starting to build connections with Reading Rep – Stimulation and Essence audiences.

By far the largest segment within the audience research undertaken in 2025, is the community focused **Expression** segment (36% of survey respondents)

The second largest segment within the audience research undertaken in 2025, is the ideas focused **Stimulation** segment (24% of survey respondents)

The third largest segment within the audience research undertaken in 2025, is the quality focused **Essence** segment (17% of survey respondents)

Target audiences:



[See Segmentation Guide for full details]

AIM one:

**Developing an irresistible
(and aspirational)
brand profile**

Brand is the ... 'Expectations, memories, stories and relationships that create value.' (Seth Godin)

2026 – 2027: defining the RRT brand

This strategic plan uses the following statement taken from the 2024 Annual Accounts as a work-in-progress definition of the desired brand

***'a theatre of national significance and quality,
while remaining deeply rooted in its local community:

a local theatre with a national reputation'***



This fits well with the quality-focused Essence audience and the community focused Expression audience.

Consider how to add a dash of Stimulation flair to make it more distinctive and unique to Reading Rep.

BRAND STRATEGY: STEP ONE: defining the brand

2025 – 2026: defining the RRT brand

Note – due to budget limitations, brand was only lightly explored within this consultancy.

Before the end of 2025, the Directors will be creating an inspiring brand model for RRT. This would outline:

- the **expectations** that RRT wants people to have prior to attending or getting involved.
- the **memories** RRT wants people to take from their experience of the Theatre.
- and the **stories** RRT hopes people will share about their time with the Theatre. What RRT wants to become known for.

This will build on ideas that emerged from the audience ambition workshop:

- Creating an expectation for exceptional theatre: ***'to become widely known for producing exceptional theatre'***
- Becoming known for incredible storytelling: ***'a place where you discover great stories'***
- Building people's trust in RRTs ability to deliver a unique social and theatrical experience
- A sense of excitement: ***'the excitement permeates the walls'***
- An anticipation for the work ***'bold and original voices have a home at Reading Rep'***
- And for the Theatre a ***'creative', 'social', and 'aspirational'*** venue that people want to champion and feel part of.
- People will feel invested in, and **share in our story** and aspiration to create **exceptional, inclusive theatre,**
- Theatre that puts Reading on the cultural map
- ***'Theatre made of, with, and for the people of Reading'***

A mix of Stimulation and
Essence values at the
core of the brand

Expression / people focus

See the next few pages for a starting point for ideas to experiment with

Discover incredible stories.

Discover incredible stories.

The first evergreen brand campaign and key message is designed to position the theatre as an expert storyteller and a champion of great stories. This is the place where you can discover incredible stories.

New stories. Important stories. Unforgettable stories.

Stories that have something to say. That spark thought / debate.

Stories that move you. Stories that inspire. That bring joy. That enable you to escape to another world.

Stories that you already know and love – but with a new take. Better than you've seen before.

2026 – 2027: Expand on this idea / test / experiment / play with concepts to bring it to life

- Use the campaign planner (see page 66) to create an ongoing campaign built around this message and delivering stories within the campaign.
- Include PR, social, marketing and creative staff in the campaign planning.

Ideas to consider within this:

- Work with a member of the creative team to identify lines within upcoming productions that might resonate and have meaning to people today.
- Select lines from stories that reflect the world today, or that fit with key holidays, or resonate with specific moods / moments.
- (With relevant permissions from writers / actors) Create a storage bank of text (lines from plays, mini stories etc.) / images / video / sound clips e.g.
 - Identify lines / mini stories to share as text e.g. in bold font on posters or display screens, as captions or hooks on social posts etc.
 - Create a project plan for the next e.g. six months, to gradually film actors performing some of those lines / mini stories (some in productions, or at press nights, some within rehearsals, perhaps some filmed on location across Reading?).
 - Film staff, partners, audience members, writers etc. delivering some of the lines / mini stories.

Use the campaign storyboard to map creative ideas to communicate the idea of '*discovering an incredible story*' across a year-long campaign, integrating mini stories within the campaign itself e.g.:

- Create a short, dynamic reel / video – show the range of exceptional storytelling RRT has produced across a mix of past and / or future shows
- Include as snippets of content on social media (see page 56).
- Feature across different channels e.g. email newsletter, social media, website highlight, brochure, digital screens in the venue and / or across Reading (budget permitting) etc. with the 'Discover an incredible story' messaging.
- Building over the three years to a collection – a chocolate box of unique cultural experiences and brilliant storytelling for audiences to pick from.

Embed the message of RRT being 'a place to discover incredible stories' within:

- Briefing documents – ensure storytelling is at the heart of all creative briefs (design, video, photography, social media, advertising, etc.)
- In PR – identify great stories to share / hint at, including those that are known and much loved, and those that are bold and new
identify creative ways to demonstrate that Reading Rep is an expert storyteller e.g. **tell stories on social media** or on digital screens.
highlight the range of exciting stories that appear throughout the season / year: reimagined classics, West-End quality musicals, fresh new writing, and innovative adaptations.
- In campaign planning sessions for individual shows – how might we build interest and intrigue in the story within this piece of theatre?
- How might we hint at the idea / theme / story within this work (before and after cast are announced) without giving it all away?
- Create video and photography content to **showcase a selection of strong characters** from throughout the year or season.
- Consider how design and clever use of headings might help highlight the theme of the story / the big idea / the mood or emotion of each production within the brochure and on the website. **Presenting the season as a collective of great stories to discover** and unlock.
- Capture social media content to show a collection of stories and / or characters that captured the mood this year.
- Explore ways to **champion incredible storytellers**.
- Experiment with storytelling on social media – **perhaps even creating a fictional story that plays out over several 'episodes'?**
- Further down the line, experiment with storytelling via other channels e.g. an RRT podcast?

Creating new theatre.

Creating new theatre. (the story so far).

The second evergreen brand campaign and key message is **designed to humanise the brand, building trust, rapport, and credibility**. Positioning the theatre as an innovative organisation led by people you know and want to support.

Inviting audiences to join us in Our Story. Our ambition and aspiration to create an incredible theatre from the heart of Reading.

This is a **‘building out loud’ campaign**.

It starts with the founder’s story and encourages people to follow and get involved with our next steps.

2025 – 2026: The founder’s story

- Create a series of video, social and newsletter content that tells the founder’s story. Content / posts will gradually build to show e.g.
 - Where it began – how can we create a nationally significant theatre with a starting pot of £500?
 - The vision / ambition. Why did you feel passionate that this theatre was needed?
 - What happened? What hurdles did you face? Who helped you?
 - Tell the highs and lows of creating a new theatre.
 - Where are you now? The hope / the current excitement.
- Connect with the dream of what’s to come – a vision that people want to be part of.

‘Founded in 2012 by Reading-born Artistic Director Paul Stacey with just £500, the company has grown into one of the UK’s most exciting producing theatres’ (Source: RRT website)

‘As a disabled practitioner, Stacey founded Reading Rep to break down barriers to accessing theatre. That founding principle continues to define the company’s mission: to create world-class theatre for everyone.’ (Source: RRT website)

Creating new theatre. (the story so far).

- Present the content as bite-size episodes appearing in the newsletter, via social media, and perhaps on the website (or teased there to encourage sign-up, followers and subscribers?).
- Episodes that people want to come back for more of.
- Creating engaging hooks to draw people in.
- Establishing characters that people care about (building into the next campaign – see next page).
- Work with a creative lead to storyboard and direct the content to ensure it's on the same creative level as the productions.
- That it's engaging to watch.
- Aim to get people invested in the story and you as characters!
- Show your ambition and connect it to those of lots of other people – inspire people through *shared* aspirations.

Developing an aspirational, social brand that people feel part of and invested in.

Differentiating from other local venues.

Creating new theatre. (and building it out loud).

2026 – 2027: the Reading Rep story as it unfolds

Develop the founder story campaign into an informal, documentary style series of content, that follows the next chapter of your story as it unfolds.

Newsletter subscribers, social media followers, perhaps YouTube subscribers, and website visitors can **follow a series of content** that takes people on a journey to

discover how bold, brilliant work is being created from the heart of Reading.

- Content ideas to play with / develop / test:
 - ‘Episode one of our journey to become’ Share a bold hope / aspiration.
 - And then tell the story of how you’re trying to get there – highs and lows.
 - ‘Come with us as we create bold, brilliant stories from scratch’.
 - Create a unique series that shows how a production is made from the initial conception to production.
 - ‘Discover how bold, brilliant work is created in the heart of Reading’.
 - Episodes might include the costume design, press night, opening night, view from wings, quick changes / positions, stage managers track etc.
 - Then later, perhaps showing the work that goes into enabling it to tour or transfer.
 - ‘What is ...’. A series that demystifies what goes into the making of a professional theatre.
 - An introduction to the different jobs within the theatre.
 - Show how RRT is working with some of Reading’s (and the world’s!) most exciting creative minds.

Creating new theatre. (and building it out loud).

- Present it as episodes of content. Perhaps in slightly longer form on YouTube and in short, bite-size form for Instagram / TikTok and in the newsletter.
- Some might just be photo with text. Some might be video e.g. the set going in, with voiceover or music added. Some might be vlog style.
- Discuss in advance – what stories are you willing to share? – intentional choices to create great storylines.
- Storyboard and celebrate the journey e.g. produced at RRT, loved by local audiences, transfers to London, tours across the UK etc.
- Establish a recurring lead character that people want to follow (Paul?).
- With additional characters that join from time to time to show how a broad mix of people are involved in the process of creating exceptional theatre.
- Characters that **keep the story fresh and interesting and help connect Reading Rep with people and brands that they know and trust.**
- Celebrate staff, artists, partners, media and influencers to contribute as side and guest characters, to share, and to collaborate on social media throughout the process – co-producers, writers, actors, influencers, designers, local partners, etc.
- Involve them in storylines, perhaps also in fun challenges / trends.
- Work with a writer on some of the content for this? Show highs and lows to tell an interesting story that engages viewers.
- Not just behind the scenes in rehearsals or photos of community activities (but do include those!)
- **The story / documentary of creating and running a bold, ambitious new theatre.**
- Storyboard a rough sketch for this campaign before it begins.
- Creating an outline story that people will care about.
- Adapting and responding to real life events in the Theatre as it rolls out and adapting as you learn how audiences respond.
- Explore ways that the audience / viewer can get involved in key moments, to discuss and to share and inspire content.
- Track what people respond to and feed back into planning meetings. What are people liking / commenting on / sharing / supporting?
- Marketing / social media staff to identify hooks that engage at the start and *during* the videos.
- Creating a story people will connect with, repeat, and share with others.
- Providing transparency like this will give people a reason to care, to feel like they know the team, and that they champion it's success.

Creating new theatre (and building it out loud).

2027 – 2028. Embed this messaging within:

- PR strategy – identify and pitch ideas to mainstream and local media as the story rolls out.
- Which media might be interested in the story of what it takes to create and run a bold, ambitious new theatre?
- Website content – showcase this message and story on the website encouraging people to follow / subscribe / join us on the journey.

Longer-term this might lend itself to sponsorship / local partnership ideas? Working with people / brands that want to associate themselves as supporting the aspirations of the Theatre.

Creating new theatre (and building it out loud).

2027 – 2028. Community breakfasts / BBQs / lates:

Create opportunities to connect, hear updates, and contribute to ideas.

- As part of the spirit of working out loud, invite audiences, local business, creatives etc. to contribute to events hosted by the Theatre where they can hear more about plans, discuss challenges, and share thoughts about the future of the Theatre.
- Gathering new ideas and support for upcoming activities and events.
- The team might initially need support from a community consultation expert / facilitator (create a brief for this which includes some of the team learning some simple techniques to make this sustainable).
- Tie in with focus group / qualitative audience research perhaps? (See page 87).

Meet me at the theatre.

Meet me at the theatre.

The third evergreen brand campaign and key message is **a social proof campaign**.

Designed to **emphasise the atmosphere at Reading Rep – social, creative, a place to connect and spend time together**.

This will meet the needs and values of Expression audiences for **creating shared memories** at the Theatre with friends and family.

It will also meet the needs and values of Stimulation audiences for **unique cultural experiences that they can enjoy with other people**.

While building potential audiences from the Affirmation segment, **developing pride across the community** for their aspirational Theatre.

An exceptional theatre that they can share with one another. That affirms their identity.

Create a campaign plan that builds overtime for these three audiences **inviting a broad mix of people to 'meet' at the Theatre** e.g.

- A video series that follows different people meeting and gathering at the Theatre for a unique cultural experience
- Show different people walking up, arriving, curtain going up, experiencing shows, laughing, crying, cheering, standing ovation, drinks in the bar, discussion afterwards etc.
- Make a list of all the moments that make the experience for different people.
 - A couple on a first date
 - Colleagues visiting after work – drinks and a play or a work celebration
 - An adult bringing their mum with them for a memorable night out together
 - An anniversary treat
 - A group of friends meeting up for a great night out
 - A family day – one they'll remember forever
 - People meeting for a 'late' show or 'after party'
 - Friends meeting and getting creative together on an Engage programme
- Host special events with invited guests that people can 'meet' at the Theatre – fundraisers, one-off moments, etc.
- See also page 48 re. shifting 'press nights' to 'launch nights', creating launch parties and inviting a mix of interesting people and voices to discover and share the Theatre.

Meet me at the theatre.

- Develop social media and email content to celebrate local creatives involved in productions (writers, performers (professional and community), directors, set designers, staff etc.).
- All the people that meet at the Theatre to create something special.
- Creating exceptional theatre 'with' people from across Reading.
- Experiment with a 'meet us at the theatre' poster series – photos and messages from people across Reading who are involved in RRT and its productions.
- An email series (perhaps a regular heading within the main email newsletter) highlighting creative opportunities available through the Theatre.
- Trial creative offers e.g. 'bring a friend Friday's' (for example).
- Website content (endorsements, video clips, etc.) to show how the Engage programme impacts participants of all ages – how special the experience is, what they would say to others thinking about taking part. The friends they've made doing this. Etc.
- Website / YouTube content – 'Mini masterclasses' as tasters for the Engage programme (adult as well as younger groups)
- Meet the workshop leaders. Meet staff.
- Ideas from the team included – how to warm up your voice, build a prop, or write a scene.
- An advocacy video (or short series) spotlighting young participants in ENGAGE and Summer Schools, sharing what the Theatre means to them and inviting others to join them.
- Perhaps even a fictional series of 'characters' who 'meet' at the Theatre (?!). A storytelling social media series (cinematic in style, characters appear more than once, we get to know them, stylish editing, slightly self-deprecating in tone) e.g.
 - The engineer (a character fascinated about how Theatre is made)
 - The new couple (a first date, then a second ...)
 - The college reunion etc.

The full brand story.

BRAND STRATEGY: STEP THREE: communicating the brand externally

**The three initial ideas for evergreen campaigns work together to create a world that people want to feel part of
[a world of incredible stories, led by people they feel they know and trust, in a social, creative, exciting place that they want to spend time in]**

2026 – 2027: enhancing photography and video content

- A **quick-win** way to start to **showcase the full brand story** will be to **enhance photography** to use across a mix of channels (outdoor displays, website, socials, email, print etc.).
- Reviewing existing material and commissioning / capturing new photo and video content where there are gaps to **ensure visual representation of the brand messaging and each line in the audience ambition** (page 6) but with particular emphasis on imagery that shows these three core values.

Creative

Storytelling focus.

Imagery that shows the creative people behind the making of a professional producing theatre from every angle – actors, directors, set design, sound, lighting, writing, filming, photo shoots, etc.

Engage programme – photos that feature the workshop leaders, show the talent within the group etc.

Social

Photos that show the atmosphere before, during, and after events.

The mix of people enjoying the Theatre – particularly young adults (differentiate from other local theatres and add to the existing family / community images).

The bar, the rehearsal room, the interactions between people.

Aspirational

Photos that demonstrate the vision and ambition.

Launch night photos (press night with invited guests).

Photos that demonstrate RRT is developing and celebrating creatives and creative minds.

Creating world-class theatre from the heart of Reading.

BRAND STRATEGY: STEP TWO: consistently delivering on the brand

2025 – 2026: enhancing brand experience – brand audit

- Once the brand model and messaging has been agreed (see page 32), **a brand audit** will explore ideas for enhancing the current offer and experience to deliver brilliantly in line with the brand every time someone comes into contact the Theatre.
- This will **involve staff from right across the organisation** and will include **reviewing the degree to which every touchpoint delivers on the brand for audiences and other stakeholders**.

e.g. reviewing the range of programme, the website, engagement activities, backstage experience, the welcome / foyer, etc.

to what degree does this touchpoint – enable people to ‘discover great stories’?

to what degree is it – ‘creative’, ‘social’, and ‘aspirational’?

how does it help people become ‘invested in’ and wanting to ‘share our story and aspiration’?

[taking each line from the brand model in turn]

- As a team – celebrate and reinforce the touchpoints / programmes / communications etc. that already fully represent the agreed brand.
- As a team – highlight activity to adapt / enhance to continue to do this better.
- Actions from this process can be added to the action plan spreadsheet for this audience strategy (with short, mid and long-term actions including where fundraising may be required to implement changes).
- It’s not anticipated that the brand review will lead to design or logo adaptations, but it may include updated guidelines and tone of voice to ensure consistency.

STRATEGY: STEP THREE: communicating the brand externally

2026 – 2028: a brand video

- In addition to the campaigns emphasising different elements of the brand story, develop a full brand video which shares all four messages.
- Carefully pitched to balance Stimulation / Essence values (with a touch of Expression), this will be designed to create buzz and interest in what's to come, driving visitors to the website, to social media, and to the email newsletter to discover more.
- Create a long list of places to feature all (or just part of) the video e.g. via the website, social, email, partnerships, in cinemas, outdoor advertising etc.

2026 – 2027: season launch parties and open nights

- Host season launch parties:
 - A celebration of the work and the creatives behind it
 - Welcoming people in as part of the anticipation
 - Social, creative experiences – people mingle, chat, feel part of a shared story
 - Bar open, music, wraparound events to create atmosphere, buzz, intrigue
 - Developing pride and support for this innovative Theatre
 - Providing ways to make it easy for people to capture the moment and share with friends, family, and followers – something both Stimulation and Expression audiences will love to do.
- Reposition press nights as launch nights and reimagine who is invited to these to spread the word among press, but also among influencers, bloggers, vloggers, podcasters, innovative brands, community leaders, etc.

2027 – 2028: enhancing the brand (taking it to the next level)

Explore creative ideas to continue to build an enticing Stimulation-led brand, with a high-quality Essence finish. Expanding this strategy (once the basics are fully established) in 2027, to captivate audiences. For example:

- **Integrate programme elements of surprise** – a secret theatre strand of work or activity for those able to discover it?!!
- **Innovative partnerships or collaborations**, featuring interesting stories / cultural voices – guest events (online and / or in the Theatre)?
- **Guest stories** (online and in the Theatre)?
- Showcase Reading Rep working with a diverse mix of creative people with inspiring points of view?
- Highlight awards, reviews, tours, and transfers to signal quality and credibility for Essence audience?

AIM ONE, BRAND – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

ARE WE SUCCESSFULLY RAISING PROFILE AND ENHANCING PERCEPTIONS?

Measure of success	Actuals 2025	KPIs/targets 2026	KPIs/targets 2027	KPIs/targets 2028	
KPI: % of audiences / stakeholders who agree or strongly agree that ' RRT is a place where you discover great stories '	n/a	[add % target]	[add % target]	[add % target]	Add to surveys from 2026
KPI: % of audiences / stakeholders who agree ' RRT produces exceptional theatre '	n/a	[add % target]	[add % target]	[add % target]	Add to surveys from 2026
% of audience who agree that ' RRT leads the way for culture locally '	[add from Indigo survey?]	[add % target]	[add % target]	[add % target]	An Indigo Share question, average for the sector = 80%
% of audience who agree that 'RRT is important to our local community'	[add from Indigo survey?]	[add % target]	[add % target]	[add % target]	An Indigo Share question, average for the sector = 91%

Measure brand perceptions in annual audience surveys, post-show surveys, and via quantitative and / or qualitative research with potential audiences.

Consider also undertaking sentiment analysis if budgets allow – using keywords and filters to monitor how people are talking about RRT online.

Note: metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

KPI = key performance indicator, to be reviewed and discussed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team.

All other metrics feed into achieving these KPIs – to be reviewed and discussed regularly by the executive director and marketing staff.

AIM ONE, BRAND – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIs:

The following measures are available due to use of MHM's Culture Segments mini tag-tool.

- 'Emotional Brand Equity' (EBE) measures **how connected someone feels to the Theatre**.
- EBE provides a score for each person across dimensions such as trust, loyalty, preference etc.
- The survey also includes questions that measure **propensity to donate and propensity to join the membership**.
- Each person who answers the survey will be given a high / medium / low score that you can use to target potential members and supporters.
- 'High propensity to follow' means if RRT recommends they try something new within the programme, they would be likely to follow that recommendation.
- It gives you a strong indicator of **the degree of trust in the brand** and the **openness to explore the wider programme**.

Measure of success	Actuals Sept 26	KPIs/targets Sept 26	KPIs/targets Sept 27	KPIs/targets Sept 28	Notes
% of audiences within the Stimulation segment	24%	25%	27%	28%	A priority segment for audience development
% of audiences within the Essence segment	17%	18%	19%	20%	A priority segment for audience development
Average Emotional Brand Equity (EBE) score	54	57	60	65	
% with a high propensity to follow	24%	24%	25%	26%	
% with a high or very high propensity to donate	15%	15%	16%	17%	
% with a high propensity to join	6%	6%	7%	9%	

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AIM two:

**Growing connections – potential
audiences that RRT can contact directly**

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS:

Once RRT has people's attention, the goal is to encourage people to sign up for further information.

We know it can often take multiple messages and campaigns before someone decides to book. If we don't have their contact details the initial investment of time and budget capturing their attention is likely to end there.

This strategy outlines plans to double the number of people signed up for email communication from 6,537 by 2028 (see page 62).

Enabling quick, targeted communication with many more fans, regular attenders, and those interested to hear more.

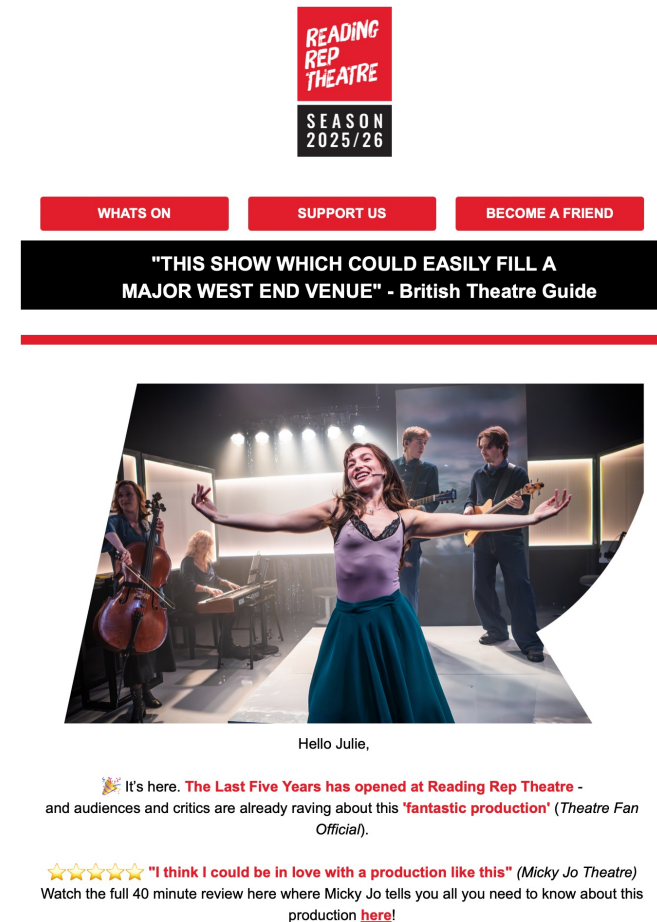
The content of communication – emails, social media, print etc. from RRT is explored further in aims three and four (see page 88).

The strategy focuses on increasing the reach of:

- Email communication (page 53 – 55).
- Social media (page 56 – 58).
- PR / media coverage (page 59).
- Advertising (page 60).

Expanding the pool of people interested in hearing from RRT about upcoming productions.

Building email lists from those where awareness and interest is growing, providing a vital opportunity to contact those people again.



READING
REP
THEATRE

SEASON
2025/26

WHATS ON SUPPORT US BECOME A FRIEND

"THIS SHOW WHICH COULD EASILY FILL A
MAJOR WEST END VENUE" - British Theatre Guide



Hello Julie,

🌟 It's here. **The Last Five Years** has opened at Reading Rep Theatre - and audiences and critics are already raving about this 'fantastic production' (Theatre Fan Official).

★★★★★ "I think I could be in love with a production like this" (Micky Jo Theatre)

Watch the full 40 minute review here where Micky Jo tells you all you need to know about this production [here!](#)

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: significantly growing the email list

2026 – 2027: testing what works

- **Continue to encourage newsletter sign up via the website.**
- This is working well for RRT. Subscribers are growing quickly thanks to the use of a ticket discount offer available for people signing up earlier in 2025.
- **Create offers** available for a limited time. Schedule in four different offers per year and test what people respond to e.g.
 - Repeating the ticket discount offer over a specific timeframe.
 - A welcome gift for those signing up during a particular timeframe e.g. access a recording from a past show?
 - An invite to an exclusive evening?
 - An invite to a dress rehearsal?
 - A talk from the director? Etc.
- Promote the offers on the website, in confirmation emails for bookings, and via social media e.g. via Instagram and TikTok Stories.
- **Tailor communication for bookers** – ask to opt in to the email at the point of booking.
- Anyone not yet on the mailing list will receive a confirmation email encouraging sign-up
- Anyone still not on the mailing list will receive a reminder in the pre-show email
- Remind again in the post-show email encouraging completion of the survey.
- **FOH** – training for staff re. why people might want to sign up for the newsletter, when to encourage this and how to make it really easy for people to do (can the team do it for them via a tablet in the foyer?)
- **QR code** – add a QR code to a display in the foyer – with a clear message to encourage signing up (test different messaging).

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: significantly growing the email list

2026 – 2027: testing what works

- **From social media:**

- Add a clear link in bio to the newsletter on each platform that RRT is active on – considering how to make the link feel compelling.

- **From partners:**

- Share an upcoming event or special offer in partner newsletters and encourage people to sign up to your newsletter for more e.g. in a 'from our friends' type section.
- Agree email swaps e.g. send a solus email to their mailing list in exchange for you doing the same for them. Include a clear CTA to sign up for more.
- Provide valuable guest content for someone else's newsletter in exchange for promoting your sign up.
- Consider local businesses with newsletters, other arts organisations, community groups, Substack newsletters from individuals etc.
- Identify podcasts / blogs / Facebook groups to appear in – offer something valuable (e.g. an interesting talk for their podcast) in exchange for you promoting the newsletter, include QR codes at events to make it easy for people to sign up

[See also page 95, enhancing the email content and strategy].

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: significantly growing the email list

2027 – 2028: amplifying what works

- **Review effectiveness of the experiments to grow the newsletter subscribers in 2026. Repeat / expand / adapt / stop as appropriate.**
- **Amplify via advertising:**
 - The message / reason to subscribe will be key to getting a good response from any paid ads. Test the offers (see page 53) and / or copy about why people might sign up via the website copy / social media / partner emails before paying for adverts.
 - Experiment with Meta ads with a CTA to sign up to the newsletter – perhaps in the run up to a season launch. Explore the potential with a small investment first. Adapt and amplify (or stop!) in line with the response.
 - Experiment with advertising in other newsletters to promote the Reading Rep newsletter.
- **Roll out use of the QR code:**
 - If sign up via the QR code is working in the foyer, experiment with other places to share this e.g.
 - In the brochure
 - On postcards distributed via local partners
 - On drinks coasters in the café. etc
- **Add social proof (important to Expression as well as the Affirmation audience who are conscientious decision makers)**
 - Add a note to the website to say something like 'Join our community of 10,000 people'
 - Add quotes / endorsements from other subscribers saying why they love the Theatre and why they welcome others to subscribe
- **Experiment with referrals:**
 - Encourage audiences to share the newsletter with friends and family – add a link to make sharing easy.
 - Experiment with incentives to maximise the response to this (if successful, consider undertaking training and / or exploring software to amplify this from year three).

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: growing the social media reach and following

This first step in the social media strategy is to increase the number of people who **see** RRT content (reach).

Step two builds engagement with digital content and step three drives conversations / sales (see page 99).

2026 – 2027: SEO strategy on social media

- SEO optimisation will continue (supported by Becca and Adam therefore not outlined in detail here) especially for the channels that prioritise this e.g. TikTok, YouTube, and increasingly Instagram.

2026 – 2027: social media experiments – awareness building content on social media

- At least 1/3rd of the content shared on social media will not be about sales, but instead about providing content that delivers value for audiences.
- That shows why Reading Rep is special and why you might want to follow / watch content.
- This content will be designed to provide bite size stories – supporting the brand ambition to become known as a place to discover incredible stories.
- Experiment with providing short clips from shows (not necessarily upcoming shows, explore the archive – identify interesting clips / stories to share).
- Use the dry humour that Reading Rep captions are starting to develop to link the line from the play with something that people might be thinking or feeling today.
- Experiment with the creation of storytelling style content to showcase Reading Rep as a place to discover great stories.
- **Following the above experiments, review social media insight, develop content pillars in line with brand strategy and segmentation.**

(Staff training is taking place September – November to support with this, combine ideas with those of the freelance social media producer to enhance the content pillars on the next page).

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: growing the social media reach and following

A starting point – to be further development by RRT digital / marketing staff

Strategy	Content pillar	Content ideas	Link to brand
Grow reach / connections	Discover incredible stories	Experiment with storytelling reels and videos (see page 34 – 35) Share stories – clips from past and upcoming shows, with hooks to make the clips feel relevant to today (dry humour in captions?)	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre Become known for our storytelling Creative.
Build engagement (know / like / trust)	Creating new theatre	Series: the founder's story (see page 37 – 38) humanising the organisation, building rapport, sharing our dream Series: creating new theatre (and building out loud) – a series of content that develops over social (see page 39 – 41) Behind the scenes – celebrating the people who make shows happen Featuring – the cast / director / writer / set designer / stage manager etc. (fascinating insights, new perspectives, creative voices)	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre. Aspirational. Inclusive theatre. In the heart of Reading.
Increase bookings / sales	Meet me at the Theatre	Providing a taste of what's on offer – sample the programme and feel the social / escapism benefits of a night at the theatre. Trailers for shows – intriguing people about the story. Series – 'meet me at the theatre' – invitations to meet friends, family, characters, special guests, staff etc. (see page 43 – 44).	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre. Social.

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: growing the social media reach and following

2026 – 2027: partnership approach to growth on social media

Collaborate with partners with highly engaged following to create and share engaging content beyond RRT followers e.g.

- Using the campaign planner (see page 66), the team will explore who might help reach new audiences (in person and online) for each upcoming production.
- Meet with lead creatives (co-producers, actors, writers etc.) to plan collaborative posts.
- Meet with local partners (community groups, businesses, cultural venues, etc.) to identify shared objectives and plan fun, collaborative posts.

Who might Reading Rep collaborate with to align the Theatre with people / brands that target audiences know, like, trust, aspire to, are inspired by etc.?

Who might help reinforce the creativity, imagination, aspiration and social benefits of the Theatre?

Who might help reposition the Theatre as a place that people might want to spend time in?

2027 – 2028: experiment with influencer campaigns

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: expanding PR to reach and engage target audiences

2026 – 2028: a more strategic approach to PR

Additional capacity is being introduced to enable a more strategic approach to PR and communications.

A key goal will be to expand the reach and impact of PR activity both locally and nationally. This might include:

- Reviewing / building a media database for RRT.
- Identifying publications and media contacts that might resonate with the values of RRT.
- Those that might be best placed to help reach Stimulation and Essence audiences. (Note – MHM have resources to support with this).
- Discuss the brand campaign ideas (page 33 – 44), and explore potential stories, journalists and publications to target to support the messaging and raise awareness of the profile that the team wants to establish.
- Set up notes or tags in the database to identify preferences for each media contact e.g. format, types of story that interest, lead time required etc.
- Research potential digital media contacts e.g. influencers, podcasters, bloggers etc.
- Agree priorities / aspirations for coverage – journalists / media / publications / podcasts / influencers to target for coverage in the coming year.
- Integrate PR aspirations and goals within each event campaign.
- Integrate PR aspirations and goals within each brand campaign.
- Consider where the target audience for that campaign might be looking? Who might influence them? (refer to the MHM notes for initial ideas).
- Which might best support the messaging for that campaign?
- Agree who to invite to press nights / launch nights.
- Ensure good stewardship e.g. a member of staff should be available to talk to them about upcoming work, provide what they need to enable interesting coverage, and to identify potential for future features / stories.
- Set up tracking processes to review the effectiveness of PR campaigns and spend (for individual campaigns and for the year as a whole) to include: number of local and national contacts, number of approaches made, attendance at press nights, coverage secured etc.
- Set up tracking in Google Analytics to review the effectiveness of PR referrals e.g. the percentage of people who discover the site via media links who then go on to book, or to join the newsletter.
- Include a question in post-show surveys to review where people heard about the event – track number of people reporting PR coverage influencing their decision to attend.

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: growing reach via advertising

2026 – 2028: advertising strategy

- Two types of ad will be placed with tracking taking place to review which to amplify from 2027:
 - 1) **Brand awareness building ads** promoting key brand messages (see page 30)
 - 2) **Sales focused ads** to promote individual productions to target key audiences (in line with plans for each production – see page 66)
- The key for success will be ensuring audience-focused messaging. See campaign planner (page 69 – 70, 73 – 43, and 77 and the Segmentation Guide).
- Track ROAS and note learning for future campaigns (see page 79).
- To enhance the local outdoor advertising strategy, RRT will experiment with working with an out-of-home advertising partner.
- Starting with Panto, a series of experiments will take place over the next couple of years (trying different types of advert for different events) to test
 - a) which locations have the best response rate, and b) which format gets the best results.
- This might include advertising in taxis, on buses, on billboards, in cafes / restaurants / shops, cinema / cultural venues, sports events etc.

Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of all advertising activity – roll out / amplify / cut back as appropriate:

- Ask where people heard about the show in feedback forms and track responses.
- Use QR codes on some posters / ads and track the use.
- Set up tracking in Google Analytics to review the effectiveness of ad referrals e.g. the percentage of people who discover the site via links from digital adverts who then go on to book, or to join the newsletter.
- And track the dates when outdoor advertising appears to explore whether there is a surge in box office or website visits soon after.

2026 – 2028: social media ads – purpose to drive awareness and reach

- Continue to prioritise awareness building / reach as goals for the social media ads.
- Focus on enhancing organic content, testing what works with current followers / audiences, then amplify the reach of that effective content via paid ads.
- Develop a mix of ads to promote productions as well as those that are evergreen / brand communications.

Note – paid ads weren't explored in any depth as part of this review because there is a freelance consultant looking at how might social media ads might be enhanced to drive greater income and ROI [amend this page and add their recommendations to the action plan].

GROWING AUDIENCE CONTACTS: growing the number of records tagged with Culture Segments

RRT aims to get a minimum of 20% of its mailing list tagged with the Culture Segment tags by the end of 2028 to start to enable more targeted email communication and to improve audience insight and campaign planning.

2025 – 2026

- A survey is being sent out to all current mailing list subscribers and via social media to encourage people to complete the survey.
- Upload the results into Spektrix to tag the records with their Culture Segment (as well as with their propensity to join score to promote membership).
- Integrate the Culture Segment questions into the sign-up for the mailing list via the website to capture the segments for new subscribers.
- Add a note to the bottom of every email newsletter encouraging those who haven't already completed the survey to fill it in.

2026 – 2027

- FOH staff to use tablets at key events – support people to fill in the survey and explain why they might want to.
- Staff to use tablets at Engage programmes – discuss why they might want to fill it in and support participants to do so as part of the session.

2027 – 2028

- Consider doing a Culture Segment quiz via social media – paying MHM to help you create characters that represent the segments – fill in the quiz to 'discover which lead character you are'.
- Share on social media, on the website, and via partners.
- Encouraging sharing.

AIM TWO, GROWING CONNECTIONS – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Measure of success: EMAIL	Actuals May 2025	KPIs/targets March 26	KPIs/targets March 27	KPIs/targets March 28	Notes
KPI: number of people with permission to email	6,537	[add here]	[add here]	13,000	Double sign up by 2028. Already grown to 7,431 by Sept 25!
% of website visitors who are signing up for the newsletter	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
% of new bookers who are signing up for the newsletter	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
% of email subscribers completed the Culture Segments survey	n/a	5%	10%	20%	Approx. 300 email subscribers had completed the survey by Sept 2025 (approx. 4%).

Measure of success: PAID SOCIAL	Actuals [Insert date]	KPIs/targets March 26	KPIs/targets March 27	KPIs/targets March 28	Notes
Paid social – total reach	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Discuss and set targets with Becca (see below)
Link clicks	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Discuss and set targets with Becca (see below)

Given investment in digital advertising is a growing part of the marketing budget at RRT, monitoring the ROAS (return on advertising spend) will also be considered carefully on a campaign-by-campaign basis (the revenue generated by a specific advertising campaign relative to the amount spent on it).

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AIM TWO, GROWING CONNECTIONS – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Measure of success: SOCIAL MEDIA REACH	Actuals (average reach May 2025)	KPIs/targets March 26	KPIs/targets 2025-27	KPIs/targets 2027-28	Notes
Average reach per post Instagram	3.6k	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Ave. number of people who see each post.
Average reach per post Facebook	770	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Ave. number of people who see each post.
Total followers: Instagram	3.5K	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Total followers: Facebook	3.8K	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Total followers: TikTok	1,003	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Experimenting / gradual growth during this strategy, aim to expand more significantly from 2027.

See also: social media engagement metrics (page 101).

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AIM TWO, GROWING CONNECTIONS – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Increasing the total number of people who come through to the website to discover more is an output / goal for this aim (e.g. from ads, socials, partners / referrals, PR etc.) and is set as a KPI below.

Monitoring the way people discover the website should help the team look at what's working within this aim, what to do more of, and where to try something new. You may also want to track visits to specific pages that you want to draw attention to?

Measure of success: WEBSITE	Actuals March 2024 – March 2025	KPIs/targets March 2025 – March 2026	KPIs/targets March 2026 – March 2027	KPIs/targets March 2027 – March 2028	Notes
KPI: total users to the website	49,418	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Number website sessions via email	54*	[monitor growth in year one – see note]	[set target once GA4 is reporting accurately]	[set target once GA4 is reporting accurately]	*The UTM tracking may not have been set up – looks too low? See: https://www.onefurther.com/blog/how-to-fix-campaign-tracking-in-google-analytics-4
Number website sessions via organic social	9,021*	[monitor growth in year one – see note]	[add here]	[add here]	*Double-check the Google Analytics set up.
Number of website sessions via referrals	3,063	[monitor growth in year one – see note]	[add here]	[add here]	*Double-check the Google Analytics set up.

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AIM three:

**Growing audiences for
produced work**

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY:

Aim three (this aim) and Aim four (see page 88) seek to collectively drive a 15 – 20% increase in box office income.

And an 80 – 90% average capacity for productions.

RRT produced work / co-produced work is a vital part of the programme generating approx. 70% of total income from tickets sold in 2023 – 2024 (see audience insight audit) and is therefore the priority for this aim.

2025 – 2026: embedding the audience-focused campaign planning process

A campaign planning tool (see next few pages) has been developed to enable the Theatre to map out compelling campaigns.

The process has been designed to place the needs and values of audiences at the heart of the campaigns to increase relevance and impact.

Staff will develop:

- Campaign plans for each produced show
- Campaign plans for each season launch
- Evergreen campaign plans

Others will follow as time allows e.g. visiting shows, engage, membership etc.

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

STEP ONE: the audience discovery session

Marketing and artistic staff will meet to explore the audience for the upcoming production discussing e.g.

- What is the show / production about?
- What's the story?
- Discuss the theme / story / mood / emotion that you might emphasise and play with.
- How might this contribute to RRT's reputation as an exceptional storyteller?
- What will it be like? What's the style of the show? How will it make people feel?
- Why does this story matter today?
- How did the idea emerge? Why is RRT programming this?
- Who might be involved in the creative development of the programme?
- What elements of this production might we explore for each brand campaign? Etc.



AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Audience discovery session (cont.)

Consideration will then turn to discussing the audience:

- Who might this show be for? Who might love this production (or activity / opportunity / campaign)?

[Add the psychographic segment/s – see Segmentation Guide]

[And any demographic groups that this production targets]

- What do we know about this audience? What do they value and need to get involved?
- What might their pains and gains be?

[See the segmentation guide for psychographic insight to contribute here]

[Add further insight about barriers and needs of your target audience demographic]

Note, the majority of campaigns should be designed to appeal to Stimulation and Essence audiences, with some tailored messaging for Expression.

Occasional campaigns may also target others e.g. Affirmation (a long-term goal for growth), Entertainment (particularly for panto), and Release.

CAMPAIGN PLANNER

STEP ONE: GOALS / PURPOSE OF THE CONTENT

This campaign planner has been designed as a flexible tool to help you scope campaigns to engage people with projects, membership, exhibits etc.

You won't need every section for every project, pick and choose the elements to help depending on the goals of the campaign.

EVENT / CAMPAIGN:

WHO ARE WE TARGETING?

[Add a note of the target Culture segment/s - duplicate the planner for each segment]

WHO ARE WE TARGETING?

Describe the target audience demographic

WHAT MIGHT THEY BE LOOKING TO GAIN?

WHAT MIGHT THEIR PAINS BE?

JULIE ALDRIDGE CONSULTING

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Audience discovery session (cont.)

- What might we want people to do as a result of the campaign?

[agree goals / targets for the campaign]

[Do we have anything we want to learn about audiences through this campaign? If so, also set a learning goal here]

- What do we want people to think and feel as a result of the campaign?

[Note – this isn't what we want them to think of the production, It's what do they need people to think and feel when they see or experience our communication to want to get involved?]

[Refer to your notes on what matters to the target audience – the pains and gains].

CAMPAIGN PLANNER

STEP ONE: GOALS / PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN:

What do we want people to **DO**?

[add any key targets / KPIs here]

What do we want people to **Think**?

[when they see / interact with the campaign]

What do we want people to **Feel**?

[when they see / interact with the campaign]

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Audience discovery session (cont.)

Using the Culture Segment insight (see Segmentation Guide) alongside information from community consultation (see page 87) the team will discuss ideas for core messages and visuals.

- Explore your initial ideas for message / benefits:

[What might this target audience need to hear or understand?]
[What might resonate?]
[What message might help reassure or address their pains?]

- Consider the way the campaign might help support or contribute to the evergreen brand campaigns at this stage i.e.

- Discover incredible stories
- Creating new theatre
- Meet me at the theatre

- Explore your initial ideas for visuals (including video content):

[What photos / images / visuals might grab attention and appeal to this segment?]
[What kind of image/s might communicate the gains listed on page 68?]
[What might we include in video / images to show the benefits that this target audience is looking for and how this production will deliver brilliantly on them?]

Note – this is idea generation not planning detail at this stage.

STEP ONE: DISCOVERY / PURPOSE

DISCUSS IDEAS FOR MESSAGE / BENEFITS:

[ideas about the messages / benefits - what might this target audience need to hear / understand? - to inform copywriting beyond the meeting]

EXPLORE VISUALS

[what photos / images / visuals might grab attention and appeal to this segment?]

Both as main image and through the campaign]

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Audience discovery session (cont.)

- **Who might enhance our reach and / or impact?**

[Add initial ideas for people to SHARE the story to best reach the target audience e.g. which media might we approach, which partner email newsletters, blogs, podcasts, etc. might we seek to appear in, where might we prioritise advertising? Etc.]

[This is discussed at this stage to gather ideas and note potential contacts / routes in from the wider leadership team before marketing staff work up the storyboard]

- **Who else might help us reach people?**

[Add ideas about who might share information on behalf of RRT who might invite people to get involved as the campaign builds?]

- **Whose voice might influence our target audience?**

[Add ideas about who the target audience might listen to? Who might we approach for quotes, endorsements, stories, interviews, vox pops? etc.]

For Stimulation focused campaigns:

- **Consider interesting partners to connect with each story** e.g. food and drink suppliers, community groups, social media influencers etc.
- **Who might support with wrap around events or promotions within the venue?**

STEP TWO: WHO MIGHT HELP US?

WHO MIGHT ENHANCE OUR REACH AND / OR IMPACT?

[add initial ideas for people to SHARE the story to best reach our target audience eg. which press might we approach, email newsletters, adverts, etc.]

WHO ELSE MIGHT HELP US REACH PEOPLE?

Add ideas about who might share information and invite people to get involved as the campaign continues e.g.

artists
venues
past participants / audiences
networks
social media (name the person)
local businesses / shops / cafes
arts, culture, heritage orgs
local events
community groups
Access networks / groups
community ambassadors etc.

WHOSE VOICE MIGHT INFLUENCE OUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

Who might the target audience listen to?

add ideas for people to approach for quotes, endorsements, stories, interviews, vox pops etc.

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Agreeing the direction of travel for the campaign:

- **Senior Leadership Team will agree the direction of travel for the campaign at this stage.** This might include:
 - Who the campaign is for
 - Targets / what success might look like
 - Learning goal/s
 - The key message or benefit to focus on.
 - Something to explore further within copywriting and campaign storyboarding (in line with the artistic ambition for the production and the needs and values of the target audience)
 - Priorities – partners to explore for potential collaboration / contribution to the campaign and who might approach them
 - Ideas for integration with evergreen campaigns will be noted
 - Total budget available (note, the full breakdown of the budget will be agreed after stage two)
- **Briefing documents for any freelance / outsourced work may start to be scoped at this stage** (although most will be finalised and shared after the storyboard is agreed) e.g.
 - Design
 - Photography / videography
 - Advertising production
 - Social media content production
 - Press freelance activity etc.

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

STEP TWO: the campaign storyboard

Marketing and executive staff (together with ideas from freelancers working on PR, social media and advertising) will explore potential ideas for each stage of the campaign

- This is a 'story' board – can you follow the story / audience journey over several months, from first hearing about it through to building their interest, reminding them, and encouraging them to book – what is the story that will gradually build? What are the messages people will see along the way?
- Colour-code the campaign plan to read the story for each of the agreed segments.

ATTENTION	
How might the start of the campaign grab attention from the audience segment?	
What ideas do we have? What HEADING might we create to grab their attention?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to first grab their attention?	
What ideas do we have? What IMAGE/S might we create to grab attention and / or show them it's for me?	

INTEREST	
How might the campaign then build their interest?	
What ideas do we have? What benefit should we highlight to get them interested?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to tell them a bit more about the event / opportunity?	
Who might influence our target audience? Whose image / voice / quote should we include to show our target audience that this is for them?	

DESIRE	
How might the campaign spark a desire to attend or get involved?	
What ideas do we have? What might make this opportunity desirable to our target audience (what message or image or content will address their gains?)	
Where might our target audience be looking? Which channel shall we use to tell them to remind them of the opportunity and build desire to get involved?	
Who might influence our target audience? Whose image / voice / quote should we include to inspire and excite people?	

ACTION	
How might the campaign make it easy for people to book / take action?	
What ideas do we have? What message might convince them to take action?	
Where might our target audience be looking? Which channel shall we use to make it easy for them to book, get involved, donate, or buy?	
Who might influence our target audience? Whose image / voice / quote should we include to convince people to get involved?	

STEP TWO: the campaign storyboard

Ensuring a powerful message that builds through the campaign will be key.

Gradually positioning RRT as a place where you can discover incredible stories.

This idea should be integrated into each campaign.

Messaging for the campaign will focus on the values of the priority audience segments (See Segmentation Guide).

Helping to create a compelling, vivid picture of the value of this production in a way that resonates with audiences today.

[Notes below are examples from staff workshops exploring campaign ideas for the Last Five Years:]

Essence

"Critically acclaimed. Intimate. Beautifully performed."

"A masterclass in musical storytelling from award winning Jason Robert Brown."

"A modern classic, brilliantly reimagined at Reading Rep."

Artistic credibility –
"A revered score by Jason Robert Brown, known for his musical complexity and lyrical depth."

Stimulation

Inventive storytelling –
"Told in two timelines. Performed with just two actors. Minimal. Smart. Different."

Affirmation

"Make time for something meaningful this week."

Reflection –
"Art that speaks to where you are in life right now."

Resonates –
"This is the kind of story that stays with you. Theatre that means something."

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Use the campaign storyboard to scope ideas to bring one or more of these messages to life

- Add the message/s in the first row
- Add the channel they will be shared through in the second row (where might audiences see this message? – consider how many people you need to reach and add to the channels / partners to reach them as appropriate)
- Add ideas about what imagery, endorsements, etc. will be used on those channels to create a compelling piece of communication at each stage

ATTENTION	
How might the start of the campaign grab attention from the audience segment?	
What ideas do we have? What HEADING might we create to grab their attention?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to first grab their attention?	
What ideas do we have? What IMAGE/S might we create to grab attention and / or show them it's 'for me'?	

INTEREST	
How might the campaign then build their interest?	
What ideas do we have? What benefit should we highlight to get them interested?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to tell them a bit more about the event / opportunity?	
Who might influence our target audience? Whose image / voice / quote should we include to show our target audience that this is for them?	

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Where might our target audience be looking? Which channel shall we use to make it easy for them to book, get involved, donate, or buy?	
Who might influence our target audience? Whose image / voice / quote should we include to convince people to get involved?	

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

The attention phase of the campaign plan will require the most creative thinking over the timeframe of this plan.

While the email, mailing list, and social media lists are growing (see aim two), the number of people that RRT can easily reach and make aware of upcoming productions is too small achieve the targets for productions.

Key to reaching new audiences will therefore be getting the messages out beyond the usual suspects to help people across Reading and beyond see what might be in it for them.

An investment into capacity building to enable this has been made.

This will enable:

- Senior level support on communications – what is the core message that might capture the imagination of our target audience?
- A greater focus on **PR campaigns** at this stage of the campaign – amplifying the reach locally and nationally.
- A greater focus on **digital advertising** at this stage of the campaign
- A greater focus on **social media content** production at this stage of the campaign

In addition, RRT will seek to grow its networks of supporters and advocates.

Building on the ideas created in step one (see page 71) e.g.

- Which newsletters, podcasts, blogs, magazines, outdoor spaces etc. might we advertise in at this stage (and at the each of the next few stages of the campaign)?

Where possible, the artistic and marketing staff will collaborate to find creative ways to build marketing assets at this early stage in the campaign e.g. access to writers, directors, set designers, cast etc.

ATTENTION	
How might the start of the campaign grab attention from the audience segment?	
What ideas do we have? What HEADING might we create to grab their attention?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to first grab their attention?	
What ideas do we have? What IMAGE/S might we create to grab attention and / or show them it's 'for me'?	

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Think about the message for this stage of the campaign as the 'hook'.
Before you have images / cast, focus on text and storytelling.

What might earn attention and capture the imagination of the target audience?

What might stop people in the street when they see a poster? Stop them scrolling on social media? Or capture their attention when they see an advert / news article about the event? A few initial ideas (that don't require cast to be announced yet!) include:

- A storytelling hook e.g.

An intriguing line from the play – something that makes you wonder what happens next.

A message that shocks or is unexpected.

An emotional caption – something that shows the way this production will make you feel.

A life-changing moment for the character.

Something that sparks intrigue about a character etc.

- A relevant to everyday life hook e.g.

'Theatre for when you're feeling ...' or 'Theatre for when you need ...'

'The magic of theatre at Christmas' – make it feel a vital part of their celebrations.

List words that epitomise the magic of a trip to RRT at Christmas and then capture a series of images and video to demonstrate this feeling, e.g. the lights, atmosphere, food, music, joy, costumes, sparkle, jokes, fun etc.]

- Commission an illustrator or designer to capture the mood visually (before you have photos / video of cast)
- Hint at the drama from the costume designs or set designs. Etc.

Play with lots of ideas.

Test early in the campaign before rolling out e.g. through A/B tests, email link clicks, social media reaction etc.

ATTENTION	
How might the start of the campaign grab attention from the audience segment?	
What ideas do we have? What HEADING might we create to grab their attention?	
Where might our target audience look for information? Which channel shall we use to first grab their attention?	
What ideas do we have? What IMAGE/S might we create to grab attention and / or show them it's 'for me'?	

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: enhancing the campaign planning process

Project managing and monitoring campaigns

For each campaign, following idea generation, the team will agree which of the ideas to take forward.

The agreed priorities and targets will be entered into a spreadsheet as a project plan for the campaign (see spreadsheet shared separate to this plan).

Once drafted, sense check the campaign and enhance where required:

- Revisit what you wanted people to do / think / feel at the start of the campaign. What might be enhanced to deliver on that?
- Check the measures of success i.e. how many people do we expect to book / get involved following each stage of the campaign?
- Does the total predicted at the bottom of the spreadsheet exceed the minimum target? If not, where might we enhance or adapt the plans?
- Refer to past campaigns and insight known about ROI for different channels – where might we need to add more activity to reach our goals?

The project plan and targets will be reviewed throughout the campaign and adapted as required.

- Continuing to use financial trackers where there is a key financial target for a campaign.
- Holding short marketing meetings at the end of each stage of the campaign – are we achieving the targets so far, what's working, what are we finding from our experiments, what might we adapt in the next phase?

Evaluating the campaign

- Establish team reflection sessions to review campaigns and capture learning for future events.
- Start with a quick recap of the goals / targets – who did we want to reach, how many / range of people? How did we plan to reach them? Etc.
- Then use post-its to quickly gather ideas from across the group e.g.:
 - What worked well?
 - What did we learn?
 - What might we try or do differently in future?
- Review the following and add to the post-its:
 - Did we achieve the financial and number goals for this campaign? (report from Spektrix)
 - Have we attracted the range of audiences we hoped to attract? (comparing the goals set with the findings from post-show surveys and / or CRM analysis)
 - What did we learn from our experiments? (refer to the learning goal set during the planning phase e.g. testing copy for different segments)
 - Which channel/s worked well to raise awareness? (ask where people heard about the event in the post-show surveys and combine findings with insights such as ROAS for advertising campaigns, % of video viewed for trailers, open and CTR for email, Google Analytics – set up tracking of bookings so that you can see which channel prompted the website visit that led to the booking, etc.)
 - How satisfied are audiences? (review ratings from post-show survey, plus feedback to a question about whether it delivered what they expected from the communication). Etc.

AIM THREE, AUDIENCE GROWTH – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Measure of success	Actuals July 2024	Actuals 2025	KPIs/targets 2026	KPIs/targets 2027	KPIs/targets 2028	Notes
KPI: Total tickets sold (total)	11,546	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
KPI: Total bookers	2,930	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
KPI: Total income (tickets)	£189,185	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Leadership team set a target to grow box office income by 15 – 20%.
Average ticket yield	£14.58	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Average group size	3.13	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Average capacity sold (produced work)	37%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	80%	
Total tickets sold (produced)	5,682	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AIM THREE, AUDIENCE GROWTH – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Measure of success	Actuals 2023 (survey not carried out in 2024)	Actuals 2024 – 2025	KPIs/targets 2025–26	KPIs/targets 2065–27	KPIs/targets 2027–28	Notes
KPI: Grow % of respondents to the annual audience survey aged 18 – 55	48%*	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	72%	Note – respondent levels were low in 2023. Margin of error wasn't reported, but is expected to be high. Adult population of Reading aged under 55 is 72%
Grow the number of bookers from Reading	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	RG postcode for bookers as reported in Spektrix
Grow number of bookers from outside of Reading	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
Continue to give 10% of tickets for free every year to those who can't afford them.	10% (2023 – 2024)	[add here]	10%	10%	10%	

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: Visiting Companies

Visiting productions at RRT have varied significantly in the past in terms of total tickets sold and income generated.

2025 – 2027: Nurturing ‘borrowed’ audiences via taster events

Some visiting shows have effectively brought their own audience. For example, big name comedy stars like Aakash Gupta (who has a huge audience that can easily be reached via social media – 4m followers on YouTube and 1.6m on Instagram for example) sell out very quickly and require very little marketing from RRT. For these productions there isn't need to produce a full campaign plan (unless programming a particularly long run).

As audiences are effectively ‘borrowed’ i.e. they attend as fans of that visiting company or performer, rather than as fans of RRT, instead of putting a campaign plan together, a simple project plan will outline how best to:

- Welcome those engaging for the first time – exploring ways to show (not just tell) people before, during, and after the event what else they might enjoy.
- Encourage new audiences to sign up to the email mailing list.
- Start an ongoing relationship by encouraging a second visit (see page 102).

2026 – 2028: Grouping visiting events for campaign planning

Visiting productions from companies that are less well known (particularly to the RRT audience) will need a marketing campaign plan and budget and may require a longer lead time for promotion.

The programme / marketing staff will discuss at the start of the season which events might need most marketing support and consider how these might be grouped into campaign plans to save time e.g.

- A campaign plan for comedy events visiting RRT this season
- A campaign plan for families this season
- A campaign plan for the Guildford Shakespeare Company and Orange Tree Theatre events. Etc.

Consider how each might integrate and be supported by the evergreen campaigns (page 33– 44).

With limited budgets, marketing for visiting shows is likely to lean heavily on creative use of email marketing (see page 95 – 97) and collaborative marketing activity (online and offline – see page 58 and 71).

AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: NT Live

NT Live events have recently been added to the programme enabling RRT to offer Reading *'the best of British Theatre at a theatre near you.'*

This is starting to bring in small amounts of income and audiences. Currently achieving between 34 – 44% of capacity.

2026 – 2028

While priority is given to the produced work campaigns, smaller campaigns for NT Live events will be shaped and tested from 2026.

These should consider how to emphasise:

- The story – NT Live events often have powerful stories / themes. Consider how to emphasise the story and the emotion within campaign messaging to capture the imagination of audiences.
- Star names and NT brand.
- Social proof – how might we amplify UGC from audiences across the country (with permission)?
- Using high quality marketing assets created by the National Theatre. Reposting social media content. Repurposing email etc. in line with agreements with NT Live.
- How to make the night out feel special – showcasing the joy of a night at the theatre, here in Reading.

2028: As email lists and social media lists grow, the potential for developing large audiences for NT Live, co-productions, and visiting work will also grow. It's therefore anticipated that this part of the strategy (visiting work and NT Live) will be developed further from 2028.



AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: Engage

2024 – 2025 marks 10 years of RRT's Engage programme of workshops, projects and performances for and with the community of Reading.

Engage programmes are included on the website and within emails and social posts. But the team aren't currently producing campaign plans to think more creatively and strategically about how to promote these opportunities.

As capacity builds in 2026, light-touch campaigns will start to be created to further build the audience for Engage programmes.

The need for this will soon start to grow – the Engage activity is expanding with programmes targeting new age groups being planned.

2027 – 2028: focusing campaigns on Engage

This will be expanded from 2027. Campaigns for each strand of Engage work will be developed (starting with junior / intermediate youth theatre and adult classes):

- Positioning / messaging – helping people understand what Engage is and why it matters.
- Communication – helping people quickly see which opportunity is relevant to them across the different strands of support – who is this for?
- Enhancing understanding of the impact of each strand of Engage – capturing stories about how this work is making a difference to people and in what way.
- Images / visuals / endorsements – showing (not just telling) people why they might want to get involved.

Ensuring people are aware of the fantastic breadth of theatrical and creative opportunities on offer at RRT and how they can get involved.



AUDIENCE GROWTH STRATEGY: Membership

2027 – 2028: focusing campaigns on membership growth

The 2025 audience survey has highlighted strong potential to grow the membership.

- Executive team, development staff and marketing staff will **review the benefits of membership in line with the target audience segments** (note this isn't necessarily suggesting a review of the scheme, but it is suggesting a review of the messaging to ensure it feels compelling to a broader range of RRT audiences).
- Marketing and Development staff will work collaboratively on step one of the campaign plan to help shape this. (Use the segmentation guide to support with this).
- Marketing staff will then create a campaign storyboard and plan for:
 - **Member recruitment** – helping people understand what membership at RRT is, how it supports the organisation, and how they might benefit. This should start with a simple campaign targeting those tagged on Spektrix with high / very high 'potential to join' scores.
 - **Member engagement** – reviewing newsletters, emails etc. to increase take up and engagement with opportunities from current members.
 - **Member renewal** – creating a series of communications to remind people what they gain from membership and to encourage renewal.



Research / consultation

The audience insight audit and the subsequent workshops and coaching sessions informing this strategic plan highlighted insight gaps to be addressed through research and consultation over the timeframe of this plan, this includes:

- ROI – what's working well, where might we tweak activity to maximise the return on budget and capacity?
- Audience motivation / values – why are people attending / what do people need to hear more about?
- Potential audience – awareness levels, perceptions, values, where do people look for information about what's on, what might need to change to reach and engage more people?

To address these gaps, RRT has already:

- Implemented Indigo surveys on a regular basis to gain insight into existing audience behaviour and how this compares to benchmarks nationally.
- Improved questions about where people heard about the event (in post show surveys) to inform event evaluation and ROI – analysis will be available on this shortly.
- Adopted Culture Segments mini-tag tool and sent a survey to existing audiences to test the assumptions about which segments the Theatre has already, to track growth overtime, and to explore propensity to follow / join / donate (see Segmentation Guide).

From 2025 – 2026:

- Enhance regular monitoring of campaigns to start to track ROI more effectively (see page 78 – 79).
- Set up a regular reporting process for SMT to review the KPIs highlighted throughout this strategic plan.
- Add updates to the action plan spreadsheet as required to respond to new insight.
- Identify how to fund required research / consultation from 2026 (see next page).

Research / consultation

2027 – 2028:

- **Plan and commission qualitative research to explore the needs and values of potential audience in more depth** e.g.
 - Focus groups with potential audiences in the Stimulation and Essence segment (ask people to complete the ‘golden questions’ in advance to identify those in these segments). Focus group facilitator to explore factors such as brand awareness, perceptions, where people look for information, etc. Enhance brand and campaign plans in light of the findings.
 - Community consultation – e.g. breakfasts, BBQs, lates etc. (see page 41).
 - Creative consultation and / or focus groups with community groups / key target audiences currently underrepresented (and potentially underserved) at RRT e.g. students, d/Deaf and disabled communities, local families etc. (see audience insight audit for current engagement levels) – explore awareness, perceptions, what might be missing in Reading that RRT could offer to support their needs, etc.
 - Website research – tailor a digital survey to find out more about people using the website. In particular, work with a research / digital audience expert to learn more about the perceptions and needs of website visitors aged 25 – 34 (the largest segment by age on the website, but a relatively small segment in the audience – what might need to change / be developed to encourage more of these website visitors to get involved?).
 - Membership research – focus groups or survey with potential members i.e. frequent attenders not yet joined and / or those with high ‘potential to join’ scores via the Culture Segment survey who haven’t yet decided to join – exploring awareness and perceptions of current scheme, attitudes to different styles of copy / benefits, testing ideas to enhance the scheme etc.
- **Plan and implement experiments to test ideas that emerge following the research** – what might need to change or be developed to matter more to more people?
- Update plans and strategies throughout this document for 2027 onwards in response to the things you’re learning.

AIM four:

**Growing engagement,
building audience relationships and income**

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: **developing audience-focused copy, messaging and communications**

2025 – 2026: adapting the style of writing, content, and communications to become more audience-focused

- Copywriting and creative storytelling through copy will become ever more important at RRT, particularly in the early stages of campaigns before the set / cast / costumes / visuals are created.
- Copy works well for Essence audience and staff have developed great understanding of how to write for Affirmation audiences (a priority for growth)
- In this first year, there will be an emphasis on **embedding the Culture Segment approach and practicing writing / developing content that delivers on the values of the priority audiences** (see page 28 –29 and the Segmentation Guide) e.g.
 - Shaping messaging and content (video / socials / design / ads / PR / emails etc.) to appeal strongly to the needs and values of Stimulation and Essence audiences.
 - Thinking strategically about when and how (and to what degree) to integrate messaging to hold close the community / people focused Expression audience (36% of respondents to the audience survey so far)
 - And how and when to prioritise messaging for the conscientious Affirmation segment (8% of respondents so far and a potentially underserved audience with great scope for growth).
 - **Marketing and digital staff will experiment with tone of voice / communication style focused on the Stimulation audience as a priority, exploring:**
 - style and tone
 - titles and subtitles
 - benefits that are highlighted
 - images used
 - calls to action etc.
 - **A key focus will be on building intrigue and curiosity for the idea / theme / emotion – thinking through the lens of a Stimulation / Essence audience member** (see Segmentation Guide).

2026 – 2027: learning from experiments

Developing a fascination about how our Stimulation / Essence audience (and to some degree Expression and Affirmation) respond to different messaging:

- Why might people read / view / clickthrough / get involved / attend?
- Why might people care? What message should be emphasised?
- Review open rates (to test subject lines),
- Clickthrough rates (to review copy and style of emails, socials etc.),
- ROAS (to review copy and style of adverts)
- Page views and journeys on the website (to review copy, style, calls to action etc.)
- Video and reel watch time (to review storytelling and style) Etc.
- How might the audience needs (gains) be placed at the heart of our copy?
- How might we develop content that demonstrates our creativity and positions RRT as an exceptional storyteller?
- How might the brand messages be integrated (sometimes subtly, sometimes less so) within every campaign and across every channel?

2026 – 2028: adapting core communication channels

The revised tone and style, along with the agreed brand messaging (being finalised in 2025 – see page 32) e.g., 'a place to discover incredible stories', will then be applied across every channel.

- Updating website copy and content.
- Updating email templates (see page 95 – 97).
- Experimenting with new social media content (see page 99 – 100).
- Reviewing the season brochure and other printed material (see page 92 – 94).
- Enhancing campaign messaging and content (see aim 3)
- Updating signage, outdoor advertising etc.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the website

2026 – notes from workshops with staff re. how to enhance the website (to be built on from 2026) include:

- Retain the large, high-quality images (perfect for Essence audiences)
- Brief graphic designers on the core audience segment for each show (likely to be mostly Stimulation / Essence) to ensure compelling main images.
- Enhance content on individual events pages shows the benefits of produced work to the Stimulation audience e.g.

- Show (through headings, copy, images etc.) how the work brings something inspiring / new
- Show how RRT is working with some of the world's most exciting creative minds.
- Hint at how the work addresses the big questions of our time etc.
- Explore how to position events as unique cultural experiences that they can have with other people e.g. if doing 'Romeo and Juliet' – how is this an exciting new development / twist / relevant to today in a way that they won't have seen before?
- Add a food and drink image and link to events that are likely to appeal to a Stimulation audience e.g. for comedy nights add photos to show the atmosphere, drinks at the bar etc.

[See segmentation guide for tips on writing for each segment]

2026 – 2027: following the brand development work (see page 32) update the website to tell the brand story for RRT and why someone should get involved e.g.

- Update the video on the homepage
- Update the about us section
- Enhance the membership / supporter copy and story – why might someone want to give (link to brand and segmentation – audience values) Etc.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the season brochure

2025 – 2027: review and experiment with the season brochure content

The season brochure has been redeveloped in 2025 to ensure audience-focused copy, clearly highlighting audience benefits / 'gains'.

As budgets allow, experiment with two covers (or a clever way of making the front and back equally a cover?!) e.g.

- The cover on the right should appeal strongly to quality-focused Essence (a core, priority audience) and conscientious Affirmation (an audience to grow):
 - clearly this is a moving, impactful production
 - from a 'world-class' quality theatre
 - with great reviews / credibility
- Could there be an alternative version for Stimulation audiences (the second largest audience represented by the survey in 2025, and an audience to grow to enable the future ambition for the programme)? e.g.
 - emphasising creative, inspiring, bold new storytelling
 - encouraging discovery (Stimulation audience will love that they are discovering Reading Rep before it's fully established – make that feel special and unique)
 - showcasing the social atmosphere / vibe etc.

[See the Segmentation Guide for more on this]



AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the season brochure

Credibility of writer / composer / partners should appeal to Essence audiences.

These new headings at a glance indicate the emotion / style of the production. This will help newer audiences understand what it might be like and what they might gain – great for growing the Affirmation audience.

Continue high quality imagery for Essence audience.

Continue to experiment with how to spark intrigue for Stimulation audience through imagery.

Including Paul's note on why this has been programmed will appeal to Essence who look for credibility for the event.

Continue to experiment with copy balancing Stimulation and Essence audiences – the idea / the creativity / the inspiration / the quality etc.

19 SEP - 12 OCT '25

MUSICAL | **ROMANCE** | POWERFUL STORYTELLING

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY **JASON ROBERT BROWN**
A co-production with The Barn Theatre and Theatre Royal Bath

“A BEAUTIFUL AND TRULY IMPACTFUL MUSICAL”

Written by a Tony award winner, brought to life with an acclaimed score and interweaved with the butterflies of new love and the sting of a separation, *The Last Five Years* is a moving and thoughtful musical that will have you laughing one minute and full of emotion the next. **Jason Robert Brown** has crafted a musical that cleverly explores the rollercoaster journey of two New Yorkers as they navigate their five-year marriage. Starring Martha Kirby (*Evita*, *Bot Out Of Hell* and *Grease UK Tours*) & Guy Woolf (*Cher Show*).

“Our first ever Musical Theatre production at Reading Rep and I couldn't be more thrilled to see this raw, moving and deeply human tale come to life on our stage. **Paul Stacey** ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

TICKETS
from £19.00 - £34.00
See website for more pricing info.

- £5 tickets for under 30's from Fri 28 Nov - Tues 2 Dec. Use code 30UNDER.
- Groups of 10 or more get £4 off their ticket price and free organizer seats.
- Discounts for Families Use code HIFAMILY
- Accessible Performances Inc. Relaxed, Captioned, BSL Interpreted and Touch Tours

BOOK ONLINE! 
boxoffice@readingrep.com | 0118 370 2820

“Full of heart, humour, and magic, this uplifting version of Dickens' classic brings joy to audiences of all ages - whether it's your first time or an annual tradition. **Paul Stacey** ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

“NOW CHRISTMAS HAS OFFICIALLY STARTED!”

Reading Rep he air - nd Palmers Scrooge on the ghosts et to Come y discover Step into nning journey

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BOOK ONLINE! 
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AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the season brochure

2026 – 2027: review the season brochure content

- Review the design / style of the brochure in line with stylish Stimulation and high-quality Essence audience values.
- Continue to connect ideas from the 'Creating new theatre' brand campaign, which focuses on the Founder story and aspiration for the future.

Copy is designed to target Essence and Stimulation audiences.

[with a dash of Expression / Affirmation values!]

Welcome

Welcome to Reading Rep's **2025/26 Season** - our **biggest** and **boldest** yet.



This year, we're presenting bold takes on classic stories, powerful partnerships, and world-class creative talent. From **Noël Coward** to **Jason Robert Brown**, from festive favourites to thrilling new collaborations, this season captures everything that makes Reading Rep special.

Following a landmark year where our productions toured across the country - including a transfer to the **Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh** - we're continuing to prove that Reading can be a powerhouse for exceptional theatre.

We know that for many, Reading Rep is still a hidden gem waiting to be discovered. So if you already love what we do - bring a friend. And if you've never been before, this is your moment. Pop down

to King's Road, enjoy free parking, and experience shows every bit as extraordinary as the West End - at a fraction of the price.

We're working with some of the UK's leading venues, including **Theatre Royal Bath**, and we've got exciting casting announcements still to come. This season reflects how far we've come and where we're headed next.

Whether you're joining us for the first time or the fiftieth, I can't wait to welcome you through our doors.



Paul Stacey
Founding Artistic
Director & CEO
Reading Rep
Theatre

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the use of email

2025 – 2026: adaptations are already being made to email content in line with the brand and segmentation strategy

- Continue to test and review headings, subject lines and copy – prioritising copy and content for Stimulation and Essence audiences.
- Ensuring a high-quality feel (Essence) and a stylish design (Stimulation).
- Track open rate, click-throughs, shares, and feedback to test how effective content is proving to be and to continuously improve.

2026 – 2027: Newsletter

- Experiment with integrating storytelling elements within the newsletter e.g. featuring a snippet of the Founder story (Creating New Theatre brand campaign), or a storyline playing out on social media (for example).
- Integrate headings for each of the three brand campaigns (once messaging is agreed)
 - Discover incredible stories
 - Creating new theatre (and building it out loud)
 - Meet me at the theatre

2027 – 2028: Newsletter

- Start experimenting with tailored versions of newsletter content for the three core audience segments (once there is a reasonable number tagged on the database):
 - Stimulation
 - Essence / Affirmation
 - Expression

WHATS ON

SUPPORT US

BECOME A FRIEND

'I WANT THIS PERFORMANCE TO FEEL LIKE A GIG'

- Hal Chambers, Director



Hello Julie,

There are nights at the theatre that make you laugh, make you cry, and send you home humming a tune. And then there are nights that reach into your own story and quietly rearrange how you see love. **The Last Five Years is one of those nights.**

Told from two directions at once - Jamie's story moving forward and Cathy's moving back - Jason Robert Brown's modern classic takes the messy, luminous truth of a relationship and lets us live it from both sides. The result is intimate, electric and, at times, devastating. This revival proves why *The Last Five Years* is a modern masterpiece.

We have a lot to share from the rehearsal room in today's newsletter,

- interviews with the director,
- a chance to hear some of snippets of songs fresh from yesterdays rehearsals
- and interviews with the cast!

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the use of email

2025 – 2026: setting up a welcome email

- Set up a welcome email for anyone signing up to the newsletter.
- Keep the content short. Show people that they have joined something special by signing up for emails.
- Encourage them to immediately clickthrough to the website to explore what's on offer. While people are feeling keen enough to sign up for emails, now is a good moment to encourage them to look at what's coming up!
- Include a link through to interesting content shared on social media e.g. to a series where they can 'discover incredible stories',

2027 – 2028: developing a tailored welcome email

- Automate three different welcome emails – one designed for Essence / Affirmation audiences, one designed for Stimulation audiences, and one designed for Expression audiences. Discuss with MHM how to automate this when people sign up so that they get sent the right one.
- For anyone in another segment send them the Essence / Affirmation welcome email.
- Include a message and link in this email to encourage those who haven't already to complete the simple Culture Segment survey so that you can find out more about them and enhance the quality of your emails.

2027 – 2028: a welcome video

- Experiment with including a video at the start of the welcome email. A short, casual welcome from Paul and Nick explaining what people will gain from the email newsletter. Consider the content to showcase the brand – to show great storytelling, to introduce exceptional, inclusive theatre.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: enhancing the use of email

2025 – 2028: email strategy for produced and co-produced work

- Each produced show will have:
 - An announcement / teaser within season launch emails
 - **An announcement email / teaser email (solus campaign) – targeting Stimulation and Essence audiences – to build awareness and intrigue**
 - A highlight / feature in at least one monthly newsletter
 - Mentioned lower down in at least one other monthly newsletter
 - **Approx. three further solus emails – one at each core phase of the campaign**
 - Pre-show email tailored to the event
 - Post-show email with a link to a survey and a very short highlight of other things bookers might enjoy

**"I WAS ALWAYS THE GUY FALLING HARD IN LOVE -
AND IT ALL GOING WRONG!"**

Our director speaks candidly about why the piece resonates so powerfully now - about time, ambition, and the tenderness of two people trying to hear each other above the noise.

Our director on why this show hits different in 2025...



I WANT TO HAVE THAT EXPERIENCE!

AIM FOUR, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, EMAIL – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIs:

Measure of success	Actuals 2024 – 2025	KPIs/targets 2025–26	KPIs/targets 2065–27	KPIs/targets 2027–28	Notes
Average email open rate	43%	45%	45%	45%	This is already good – maintaining it as you grow the list will be the key
Average click rate	3%	4%	6%	8%	

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: growing social media engagement and conversion

The second stage in the social media strategy (see page 56 for the first), focuses on engagement. Building a community of digital fans for Reading Rep. See next page for a starting point to inspire content plans.

The approach here is to focus on developing content that helps people get to know, like, and trust the venue.

2026 – 2027: developing social media engagement

- Experiment with the founder story campaign (see page 37 – 38), track and review reactions from audience overtime as this builds (likely to take some time to develop a following so test over several episodes)
- Experiment with the share in our story series (see page 39 – 41).
- Continue to enhance behind the scenes style content to help people get to know the theatre.

2026 – 2027: developing a content storage system to speed up editing and enable more engaging posts

- A regular task for at least one member of the team will be to gather a suite of potential content (rough cut edits – great lines from a play).
- Storing them with tags to identify the theme / idea / story in the clip so they're easy to find and share when key things happen in the world around us e.g. to quickly find a line from a play that links to a theme that's in the news, or a line that will make people laugh, or something joyful and entertaining when the world needs it most, or something that has a strong POV on a theme everyone is talking about etc.
- Start to also create a portfolio of b-roll content. Tag with themes e.g. 'sparkle', 'technical', 'curtain raising' etc. So that reels can quickly be edited to incorporate a mix of images from across the Theatre to illustrate stories or points of view.

2026 – 2027: converting social media viewers / followers into real life audiences

Encouraging people to get involved either digitally or in person. This might include sign up to the newsletter, engaging with taster activity, buying tickets, participating, purchasing membership, donating etc.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: growing the social media reach and following

A starting point – to be further development by RRT digital / marketing staff

Strategy	Content pillar	Content ideas	Link to brand
Grow reach / connections	Discover incredible stories	Experiment with storytelling reels and videos (see page 34 – 35) Share stories – clips from past and upcoming shows, with hooks to make the clips feel relevant to today (dry humour in captions?)	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre Become known for our storytelling Creative.
Build engagement (know / like / trust)	Creating new theatre	Series: the founder's story (see page 37 – 38) humanising the organisation, building rapport, sharing our dream Series: creating new theatre (and building out loud) – a series of content that develops over social (see page 39 – 41) Behind the scenes – celebrating the people who make shows happen Featuring – the cast / director / writer / set designer / stage manager etc. (fascinating insights, new perspectives, creative voices)	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre. Aspirational. Inclusive theatre. In the heart of Reading.
Increase bookings / sales	Meet me at the Theatre	Providing a taste of what's on offer – sample the programme and feel the social / escapism benefits of a night at the theatre. Trailers for shows – intriguing people about the story. Series – 'meet me at the theatre' – invitations to meet friends, family, characters, special guests, staff etc. (see page 43 – 44).	Strong reputation for producing exceptional theatre. Social.

AIM FOUR, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIs:

Measure of success	Actuals 2024 – 2025	KPIs/targets 2025–26	KPIs/targets 2026–27	KPIs/targets 2027–28	RivalIQ social media benchmarks 2025 (non-profits)
Instagram – engagement rate per post by followers	0.004%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	0.046%
Facebook – engagement rate per post by followers	0.01%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	0.56%
TikTok – engagement rate post by followers	0.11%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	3.04%

See also: social media reach metrics (page 63).

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

AUDIENCE FREQUENCY / RETENTION STRATEGY:

The audience insight audit revealed that in addition to growing the number of people booking, there is also potential to build the frequency of engagement.

Spektrix data for the last two years shows that 11 – 12% of bookers visited twice within the same year (346 bookers).

The percentage attending 3 or more times had increased slightly to 6% (169 bookers), up from 3% in the previous year.

Small improvements in these figures can have a significant impact on total tickets sold and total income generated.

Strategies throughout this report are expected to play a role in addressing this e.g. brand development to build trust and excitement about the Theatre along with enhancing campaign planning, enhancing the use of email to communicate with regular attenders and fans, enhancing PR, advertising and social media strategies etc.

2026 – 2027: Regular process – first time attenders (produced work):

- Continue to show trailers within the Theatre foyer for upcoming productions, particularly for those events with high numbers of first-time attenders.
- Continue to profile upcoming events people might be interested in to include in post-show emails.
- Create a CRM report to identify first time attendees after each main production.
- Create an email template – send an invite to visit again with a discount or voucher (see experiments on next page) – highlight relevant upcoming events.
- Create an email template – automate a reminder email as the discount nears its expiry date.

2026 – 2027: Teddy Bear Story Time bookers

- Teddy Bear Story Time (stories for under 5s) has been very popular and is helping to creating a pipeline to feed the youth theatre.
- Consider how to offer tasters of other things coming up that bookers might be interested in while in the Theatre for Teddy Bear Story Time.
- Create a CRM report to identify bookers for Teddy Bear Story Time who haven't yet done anything else with the theatre.
- Ensure box office and website bookings are encouraging sign up for email so that you can mail them after the experience.
- Create an email template – send an email outlining other things coming up that they might be interested in including youth theatre and family shows.

AUDIENCE FREQUENCY / RETENTION STRATEGY:

2026 – 2027: process – regular bookers:

- Create a CRM report to identify regular bookers who are not yet members.
- Create an email template – thank them, add something they might not know about RRT, mention membership – and why this is of value to regular attenders, and provide ways for them to show their support or to make RRT part of their identity e.g. merchandise, encouraging UGC on social media etc.

2026 – 2027: Regular process – lapsed bookers:

- Create a CRM report to regularly identify lapsed bookers (there are currently about 3,000 lapsed bookers, those who have been to see a show but not returned within the last 12 months where the company has permission to email them).
- Create an email template – send an invite to visit again with a discount or voucher (see experiments on next page) – highlight relevant upcoming events.
- Create an email template – automate a reminder email as the discount nears its expiry date.

2026 – 2027: for each of the above three groups, experiment with:

- Do people respond more if there is a discount / offer?
- E.g. a discount off a second show or a voucher for food / drink?
- Test to see if this is needed and if the ROI makes the offer worth including.
- Does a postcard / print work more effectively than email?
- Set up an experiment to test the ROI, does the extra response from print (instead of email) make the added time / cost worth it

2027 – 2028:

Experiments will take place in year one of the plan, be reviewed in year two, for amplification / changes / roll out from year two onwards.

AIM FOUR, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, RETENTION – MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND KPIS:

Measure of success	Actuals 2024	Actuals 2025	KPIs/targets 2026	KPIs/targets 2027	KPIs/targets 2028	Notes
KPI: satisfaction: % promoters (net promoter score)	88%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Indigo research reports an average NPS of 75 for the first six months of 2024 – 25 for the 40 venues they surveyed
Audiences who booked for just one event	82%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Spektrix frequency report.
Audiences booking for two events within the year	12%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Spektrix frequency report.
Audiences booking three times a year or more within the year	6%	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Spektrix frequency report.
% of panto bookers who go on to book for a second production	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
% of Teddy Bear Storytime bookers who go on to do something else at RRT	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	
% of lapsed bookers who rebook in the current year	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	[add here]	Lapsed – last booked over 365 days ago

All metrics within this plan will be reviewed and updated each year to ensure they are realistic, while providing stretch and driving ambition for growth.

Creating a world that people want to feel part of

A world of incredible stories and exceptional theatre

Led by people we feel we know and trust

In a social, creative, aspirational Theatre that we want to spend time in

Prepared by Julie Aldridge Consulting Ltd.
September 2025

In consultation with staff at Reading Rep

Julie Aldridge Consulting Ltd. helps
creative and cultural organisations to
consider how they might matter more to
more people.

<https://juliealdrIDGE.co.uk/>