

Tips on Hosting a Successful Screening

Before the Event

Plan for how you will promote your event. Who is your audience and what sort of message would resonate the best with them? Consider working with a board member, family member or friend in that audience who could help you think about those messages.

Assemble the speakers for your post-screening discussion. The best panels are comprised of different experts from different fields who can speak authentically to both the message of the film and also to how lessons from the film can be translated down to their field. Board members, executives from partner organizations, and even donors can be great resources.

Spread the word. Use all channels to get the information out about your screening. Send out a press release to your local contacts, add the event information your website or blog, send emails to your subscriber list, and promote the event on social media.

Maximize your promotion with social media. Using social media sites like Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn provides more tools and avenues to promote your screening. Share the documentary trailer, stills from the film, and special event invites on your profiles and encourage your followers to share your posts, helping you reach new people with whom you've never interacted before.

During the Event

Have a road-map for your discussion. Knowing the makeup of your audience as well as the parts of the film that would resonate most with that audience is important. Have questions prepared in advance with your panel in order to keep the post-film discussion moving.

Be ready for anything. Things happen during screenings, and issues can arise with anything from audio/visual connections to travel delays for your panelists. Being ready to start a brief discussion during an unexpected interruption or mishap can smooth things over with your attendees and keep you heading towards success.

Know when to move on vs. staying on a specific point. As discussions evolve in your screening, you may find audiences or panel members getting stuck on a specific scene or theme. This is not necessarily a bad thing, and using your best judgment and reading the room can help you know when to gently move the discussion to a different topic or dive deeper into a subject that is engaging to your audience.

After the Event

Follow-up with your attendees. Thanking your attendees for being at your screening isn't only good manners, it's an easy way to keep in contact with your audience after the screening is over. In your thank you note you can include information about future events as well as any calls-to-action for your audience that came about during the discussion.

Share your experience. Now that you're a film screening expert, you have the ability to share not only lessons learned from your experience, but your expertise on the subject with your partners. If you connected with a business leader or other local influencer, connect with them and see if there are ways to make your screening go the extra mile by holding an event or discussion at their workplace.