

Meeting Notes From Appleton Assembly Training Session

(Led by Dr. Joel “Batman” Zaritsky and Frank Monaco)

- **Topic Title: Purpose and Format of the Meeting**
 - The session is an interactive discussion focused on fundraising for assemblies and sharing practical ideas.
 - The session centers on fundraising strategies using shows and partnerships.
- **Topic Title: Show Structure and Fundraising Goals**
 - Use a cyclical show formula: low-key opening acts by less-experienced members and a strong closing with a major illusionist (e.g., Ryan Dutcher). A creative ending with a crescendo, such as a live animal act, can also be effective.
 - An MC is crucial to control flow, manage changeovers, handle emergencies (prop failures, venue issues), and keep the audience engaged.
 - Set clear goals based on venue capacity and geographic area, with the primary goal being fundraising.
- **Topic Title: Performer Management and Vetting**

- To avoid overlapping effects, it's important to know what each performer plans to do.
- A process is needed to vet new or unknown performers to ensure quality. A suggested approach is to have them do a run-through of their act at a meeting, which can also serve as a critique session.
- Performers must respect their allotted time ("tight ten" or "tight fifteen"). To enforce this, require performers to film and time their acts during rehearsals, conduct a full show run-through, or use a countdown clock.
- Not all performers need to be on the main stage; some can perform in the lobby before the show or during intermission.
- **Topic Title: Show Content, Length, and Scheduling**
 - Show length should be around 90 minutes. An intermission of 15-20 minutes is recommended if selling merchandise, concessions, or running info booths.
 - For family shows, a 2:00 PM start time on a Sunday is ideal. Evening shows can start at 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM, considering local demographics.
 - To add variety, consider including related arts like juggling. "Geek" or sideshow acts should be used with caution, especially for family shows.

- It's acceptable to have different performers for matinee and evening shows to match the audience.
- **Topic Title: Partnering with Organizations and Venues**
 - Partnering with organizations like schools, the D.A.R.E. program, churches, synagogues, AARP, and Red Hat Ladies is critical for promotion, ticket sales, venue access, and resources.
 - Example: A partnership with D.A.R.E. and a middle school filled an 800-seat theater through their marketing efforts.
 - Day-of ticket sales can be strong; expect last-minute audience behavior.
- **Topic Title: Revenue, Splits, and Venue Negotiations**
 - A typical revenue split with community theaters is 50/50, but 60/40 (in the assembly's favor) is excellent if achievable.
 - Venues aim to increase per-person spending via concessions and merchandise; align the show structure with the venue's revenue models.
 - A 166-seat theater at \$20 per ticket with three shows can generate significant funds. Sunday afternoon shows with \$25 tickets can fill venues in 55+ communities.

- **Topic Title: Program Books and Sponsorship**

- Program books are a high-impact fundraising tool, generating substantial funds through local business ads. Students can canvass businesses for ads, with prices like \$25 for a quarter-page.
- Schools can often print the program books in-house. A 60/40 revenue split (60% to school, 40% to assembly) is a good model.
- When approaching businesses, sell support as "advertising" (fully deductible) rather than a "charitable deduction" (which is limited and less practical for small businesses).

- **Topic Title: Social Media Strategy for Event Promotion**

- Use Facebook events and pin them to the top of the page.
- Low-cost boosts (~\$10) on Meta platforms can reach 10,000–15,000 people. Post to every local community and event page.
- Short-form content performs best. The recommended Instagram graphic size is 1080 by 1350 pixels.
- Share posts across Instagram and Facebook, and repost to Stories manually. QR-enabled banners can help track referrals.

- **Topic Title: Club Funding, Administration, and Benefits**
 - Fundraising can cover SAM national dues for performers, club dues for active contributors, support 4–5 lectures per year, an annual barbecue, and other member-focused activities like road trips.
 - Registering the assembly as a nonprofit with a bank account streamlines finances. Follow up with the treasurer (Frank) for guidance on state-level registration.
 - Be mindful of compliance when funds exceed ~\$10,000, as this may attract increased scrutiny.
 - Fundraising promotes magic in the community and provides training opportunities in stagecraft.
- **Topic Title: Performer Insurance**
 - It is preferred that each performer carries their own insurance. The SAM offers member insurance for around \$200/year for up to \$1 million in coverage, available through the member home section of the SAM website (PEEP insurance). One-day options are also available.
- **Topic Title: Assembly Visitor Policy**
 - A shared rule is that visitors may attend meetings twice before needing to become a member. Lectures do not count toward this limit. Visitors

must be members of the same national organization.

- **Topic Title: Magic Demonstrations and Props**
 - **"Frankie's Card Trick":** An algorithmic deck routine was demonstrated. The effect relies on a specific dealing and counting process. A video of the performance will be sent to attendees who request it.
 - **Two-Card Pouch:** A DIY prop made from two cards and rubber cement was shown for revealing a bill or prediction. Construction and handling techniques were explained.
 - TCC wallets/props were distributed to attendees.

Next Arrangements

- Identify and approach potential co-producers (schools, D.A.R.E., churches, synagogues, 55+ communities).
- Define the show lineup, including an MC, using the cyclical format (openers to a strong closer).
- Plan the show length (target: 90 minutes) and decide on an intermission (~20 minutes) based on venue needs.

- Negotiate the venue split (target 50/50, explore 60/40) and clarify the concessions/merchandise strategy.
- Develop a program book plan with ad tiers and a revenue-sharing agreement (e.g., 60/40) with the co-producer.
- Create and pin a Facebook event, prepare Instagram graphics (1080x1350 pixels), and schedule cross-platform posts.
- Coordinate promotion with partner organizations (Rotarians, JCs, AARP, Red Hat Ladies).
- Establish ticket pricing (e.g., \$25 for Sunday afternoon shows).
- Plan concessions and merchandise (“back of the house” sales).
- Provide performer training sessions on stagecraft and time management.
- Contact the national administrator (Mano Rodriguez) to request SAM “Join Us” banners with QR codes.

- Attendees to email or text Batman to request the card effect performance video (delivery in ~1–2 weeks).
- Speak with Frank (treasurer) regarding nonprofit setup and state registration requirements.