



MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO

C A S E S T U D Y

Nonprofit boosts underwriting revenues through compelling words, visuals...and music

BUSINESS PROFILE

Achieve the full underwriting potential

Nationally, almost one-third of adults regularly fit classical music into their lives, at home and in their cars, according to the Knight Foundation. Clearly, classical music is alive and well in the U.S. Yet, in 2001, this reality was not reflected in the level of corporate underwriting for Minnesota Public Radio's classical music programming, according to Mickey Moore, Senior Director of Underwriting Sales.

In 2002, Minnesota Public Radio launched the Golden Baton program to bolster corporate underwriting for classical music programming. Moore remembers the first presentation to prospective members, which occurred in October 2002.

"It consisted mainly of words on a screen, which we pretty much read verbatim. Potential advertisers did buy into the program, but more on its merits than the strength of the presentation, and many of them renewed their membership. As a result, we've grown the Golden Baton program every year."

Still, Moore knew that Minnesota Public Radio had only begun to tap into its underwriting potential. Thus began an ongoing quest to strengthen the Golden Baton presentation and how it was communicated. Moore brought in Joan Moser of Spoken Impact to assist in taking the Golden Baton presentation to the next level of success.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Infuse a good presentation with new impact

Spoken Impact's overall strategy was not to start from scratch, but to build on what Moore and her underwriting sales team had already accomplished. "They had a lot of good elements in the presentation," explains Moser. "So our discussion centered on 'how can we make it better?'"

In what Moore terms a "true collaborative" effort, Moser and the Minnesota Public Radio team brainstormed enhancements to the Golden Baton presentation. One of the first issues they tackled was the lack of a unifying concept.

"The previous presentation didn't fully capitalize on what was possible with the Golden Baton theme," says Moser. "Our goal was a presentation that would be totally unified around Golden Baton."

Moser also helped Minnesota Public Radio "elevate the concept of a membership program," says Moore. "Joan heard us calling it a membership program, but she didn't see us behaving that way. She really challenged us to make our corporate underwriters feel as if they were members of something special."

A major part of the joint endeavor included rehearsal presentations, in which Moser worked individually with each of the six presenters to shore up their delivery skills. "Her suggestions really made a big difference," declares Moore.



Each presenter added personal anecdotes of their experience with classical music, which made the presentation more "their own."

"People are loving it! This is great!"

"And often they were simple tips that just didn't occur to us. Each of us worked on different areas of our delivery."

Using a golden conductor's baton as a recurring image, the revitalized presentation incorporated a number of intriguing new or upgraded elements:

- **Dynamic supporting visuals** — A far cry from slide after slide of bulleted copy, the refreshed PowerPoint presentation made liberal use of animation, motion, and sound, including a rousing rendition of the "Hallelujah" chorus, all focused on capturing and holding the audience's attention.
- **Personal stories** — Moser encouraged the presenters to share an anecdote highlighting their individual relationships with classical music, thus making the presentation "their own" and establishing authenticity.
- **Powerful member testimonials** — In the average PowerPoint presentation, testimonials appear as written works on slides. For the Golden Baton campaign, presenters brought testimonials to life by recounting a conversation with a member. This segued into a recorded member testimonial, accompanied by his or her image on the screen.
- **Meaningful location** — From a brainstorming session came the idea of holding several of the Golden Baton presentations at a central venue for classical music: Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. Moore believes this setting made attendees feel special.

One final touch: Companies agreeing to join the program received an actual conductor's baton, inscribed with "Golden Baton" and the year of their participation. Besides bringing the baton symbol full circle, this gift further strengthened the sense of belong to a special community.

REALIZED VALUE

'Very happy with our return on investment'

It didn't take long for Moore to realize that the reworked Golden Baton presentation was truly something special.

"There was a lot more head nodding, a lot more leaning in, a lot more energy in the room," she recalls of sessions with prospective members. "A couple of times, people actually clapped at the end.

"You know, we didn't have a bad presentation before. It's the difference between something that was fine and something that was powerful...full of energy. During one of our presentations at Orchestra Hall, I remember thinking, wow, this is a blast! People are loving it! This is great! Also, for those of us who presented, it was a more positive, less draining experience."

From a financial perspective, Moore considers the investment with Spoken Impact an unqualified success. The answer in this case is self-evident, she maintains. Statewide corporate underwriting for this initiative grew from approximately \$750,000 for 2005 to \$978,000 for 2006. Greater Minnesota experienced the most dramatic gain, increasing from \$20,000 to \$180,000. In the Twin Cities, the growth was a substantial 11%.

"Overall, we saw about a ten-to-one return on our investment," states Moore. "We were hoping for some increase in underwriting, but this was much more than we had anticipated. We're very happy with our return on investment."

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To bring the classical music theme alive, MPR invited prospects to Orchestra Hall where they delivered their presentation



During the close, prospects were encouraged to become members and receive their own "Golden Baton"

