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volume four ~ issue ten

Welcome to our October *E-Marketing Organization of the Month*, featuring The Irish Repertory Theatre, the only American theater company dedicated exclusively to the production of Irish plays.

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Managing Director](#)

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#### Featured Client: The Irish Repertory Theatre

**PatronMail Client Since:** 2004  
**Starting E-List Size:** 11,555  
**Current E-List Size:** 9,178



Patrick A. Kelsey,  
Managing Director

[The Irish Repertory Theatre](#) is the only year-round Off-Broadway theatre company in the U.S. devoted to bringing Irish and Irish American works to the stage. Founded in 1988, the company moved in 1995 to its permanent home in Chelsea enabling regular scheduling for both a Main Stage theatre and a smaller studio theatre space.

Producing about five shows per year as well as a reading series and an ongoing education and outreach program, the theatre is currently in the process of purchasing their Chelsea home with the aim of securing a strong future for Irish and Irish American works in NYC.

Managing Director, Patrick A. Kelsey, oversees the majority of the business and administration work for the theater, wearing many hats. This includes collaborating closely with his colleagues to make sure that all marketing efforts are covered.

#### Q & A with Patrick A. Kelsey, Managing Director

**The Irish Rep is run by a small staff - and without a Marketing Manager. Tell us how the administration operates and who oversees the marketing strategy and e-mail marketing.**

The Irish Rep employs ten full time staff. Founders, Charlotte Moore & Ciaran O'Reilly oversee the artistic and production efforts while I serve as Managing Director. Seven other personnel fill in the rest of the functions. We are a very lean organization.

Although there is no one directly responsible for Marketing, Charlotte and Ciaran help guide the organization's marketing while our Membership Manager, Eric Scott, doubles as our in-house graphic designer taking care of all print advertising, postcards, posters, brochures, programs, etc. I handle the balance of the marketing with TV, Radio, and Internet. Essentially, we work as a collaborative body and are constantly bouncing ideas off one another. Regardless of our individual functions, we work as a team to cover everything.

**Because you are limited in time and resources, what marketing initiatives do you rely on the most and why?**

We are always looking for the return on the marketing investment. Our operating budget is \$1.9M and we dedicate \$236K to marketing expenses, spending nearly \$4K on e-marketing efforts. Our print dollars focus on listings and Irish newspapers and we have a great relationship with our TV and Radio partners. We always aim to market our upcoming show during our current shows to keep the audience coming back. The last component is internet marketing.

Both an outside company and I manage our Web site, depending upon the level of updating that is needed. Because I also manage all the business needs of the Irish Rep (human resources, IT,

facilities, finances, events, etc.), I have little time to learn HTML coding to manage our e-mailing efforts. But PatronMail has made the creation and distribution of e-mail blasts very easy which is of vital importance to us since time, resources and advance planning are so scarce!

**Tell us more about your e-marketing and list-building efforts. What is your standard e-mail practice and how is it working?**

When we first began our internet marketing efforts, we had practically no e-mail addresses (really!)... but once the staff had pulled their individual lists together (in time for our first upload to PatronMail), we had over 11,500 names! Through opt-outs or bounce-backs we lost a chunk of these names. Now that we are finally working with a clean list, we're working to build it up again with individuals actively subscribing.

Each e-mail we send contains a variety of features and information - much like our printed programs. The purpose of our e-mails is to highlight the Mainstage show, but they also convey other important information about the theatre like upcoming studio shows, our reading series, gift certificates, membership etc. We typically send two e-mail blasts per production - one is sent when the show goes on sale and the other when the reviews come out.

I think the best example of our online success has been the *New Works Reading Series*. In order to keep the Series feasible, it is promoted only through our Web site, printed program and in each of our e-mail campaigns. We have had such an outstanding response to the Series that we've had to move it to our larger space to accommodate all the patrons!

**Unlike most repertory theaters, you market all your events one-by-one, with no advanced sales at all. E-mail must impact this in a significant way, right?**

Absolutely! We currently handle all ticket purchases and reservations at the theatre and we know that when an e-mail blast is released, we are going to see a spike in calls or walk up business. Instead of planning our entire season in advance, our productions are produced and marketed one at a time throughout the year so our communication strategy is often fairly last-minute. An e-mail is frequently the first notification of our upcoming production that our patrons will receive. A direct mail campaign usually follows but having e-mail as a direct pipeline to our patrons helps to quickly 'jump start' the sales. Without e-mail, we'd be waiting on the Postal Service, which sometimes does not deliver our bulk mail until well after the show has closed.

Although less than one in six of our current patrons actually has an e-mail address on file with us (something we are working to change), those that have received our e-mails respond very positively. When we offer a discount, they regularly print the e-mail and bring it to the box office.

**You have big plans for further incorporating online technologies into your overall marketing and ticket selling operations. Tell us what you have in mind for the next year or two.**

Like many theaters, we have an older patron base that is used to mail and phone transactions. However, our objective is to begin catering to those that are comfortable with technology (a growing number!) by allowing them to: (A) buy tickets online; (B) manage their membership; and (C) contribute or donate from the comfort of their home all year round, at any hour, day or night!

Selling 31,000 tickets annually, managing a membership of 2,000 and all the other contributions with our lean staff is definitely a challenge. Having introduced e-mail to complement our Web site and online activities is only the first step. When the audience response reaches the stage where we can begin to pull back on our direct mail efforts, we know the time will be right to take the next step to implement online transactions and account management.

**The Irish Rep is in the final stages of an exciting capital campaign. Tell us about the theatre acquisition and the role has e-mail played in the campaign.**

Since 1995, the Irish Rep has made it's home in a leased theater in Chelsea. With many notable Off-Broadway theatres losing their spaces to real estate development, it has become critical for us to secure our own home. Our capital fund-raising effort, *The Campaign for a Permanent Home*, has secured a number of leadership commitments towards our goal of \$6M and we are now very close to reaching our goal. Securing ownership of the theater will allow long-term institutional planning, audience development, and consideration of new initiatives, including touring, transfer productions, and expansion of our education programs.

We include information about our capital campaign in all our e-mails so that readers can then link back to our site for additional material about the drive. It has been an integral part of getting the word out to potential donors, while informing our regular patrons that we are working hard to improve the theater's future.

Don't miss the Arts Reach National Arts Marketing Conference 2006 in New York City.

**November 17-19, 2006 at New York University's Kimmel Center**  
*presented in collaboration with INTIX, The International Ticketing Association*

The theme of this year's conference is *Building Your Organization Through Strategic Marketing*.

Join executive directors and board members, as well as marketing, public relations, membership, and development professionals from all cultural and science education disciplines for valuable information sessions, workshops, one-on-one consultations, and networking opportunities.

Patron Technology President, Eugene Carr, will be among the presenters.

View all of the conference offerings at [www.artsreach.com](http://www.artsreach.com).

Space is limited and will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

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**Watch for the next edition of our *E-Marketing Organization of the Month*  
coming November 28, 2006.**

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