

# Social Advocacy: A Look Into How Broadway Activates Publics Beyond The Stage

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# Social Advocacy



# Social Advocacy As A Business Function

Defined as: “a **relational communication strategy** by which organizations **take stances on controversial, sociopolitical issues** to signal **shared commitment with key publics**”

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Social Advocacy emerged from two **public relations disciplines: strategic issues management and corporate social responsibility.**

- Organizations can be “social purpose natives” or “social purpose immigrants”
- Engage in “values-led activism” rather than “cause-related marketing”
- Success comes from authenticity, authority and prioritizing the triple bottom line

# Social Advocacy In The Modern Day (2020-Present)

## **Rededication to Racial Justice & Social Justice More Broadly**

- Spurred by the death of George Floyd, global resurgence in support of Black Lives Matter
- Group protest and individuals use of commercial power to show support for important causes
- Trends show consumers want tangible change and results from the companies they purchase from and interact with

## **Compounded Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic & Global Shutdown**

- New sense of what it means to take care of people: employees, friends, family, the world
- More time to critically examine operations within and across organizations, flagging room for improvement such as dei efforts
- Implementation and strengthening of pre-existing CSR, ESG and social advocacy programs

**Social Advocacy is not just  
for traditional businesses –  
It can be applied to other  
sectors**



# Application To Broadway



# History & Culture of Broadway and Social Justice

Waxing and waning of socially conscious content on Broadway

- World War I, *Show Boat* and the Great Depression
- Hammerstein and *The King and I*
- Transition from issue-driven musicals to concept-musicals
- Feel-good, introspection and corporate musicals

Balancing financial success, entertainment value and social commentary

Note: The term “**Broadway**” refers to musicals rather than plays, those that take place on rather than “off-Broadway” and those performed in New York City. **Broadway Industry** encompasses the greater professional theater world.

# Key Players & Decision Makers

Broadway Green Alliance

John Gore Organization

Theatre Development Fund

Playbill

Broadway Across America

Actors' Equity Association

## The Broadway League

Disney Theatrical Group

The Actors Fund

Nederlander

The Shubert Organization

Manhattan Theatre Club

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS

## Audiences

Broadway Advocacy Coalition

Jujamcyn Theaters

Broadway.com



# Broadway's Role In Social Advocacy Work

Question: Does discussing **socio-political problems** in the **content of a show** do enough to address the issue at hand; or do **additional efforts need to be** made off stage to effectively **change minds** and **provoke action**?

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**NO**

Proposed Roadmap for Success:  
**Role Model. Educate. Activate.**

## **Role Model.**

Do appropriate background research & be able to backup performance and choices,  
ex: casting

## **Educate.**

Provide supplemental resources in both the playbill and external materials, ex:  
website

## **Activate.**

Implement programs outside of the theater to show real commitment, ex: social media, pop-up events

# *Jagged Little Pill*



# The Campaign

## **Role Model.**

- I. Have proper authority on the issues at hand by not taking on more than you can chew
- II. Appropriately casting based on gender-identity and expression

## **Educate.**

- I. Provide adequate resources for those living with addiction, as well as survivors of sexual assault, including preventative information
- II. Share names and ways to engage in social causes discussed in the show, ex. climate change

## **Activate.**

- I. Host “Speak About It” events with community members regarding topics discussed in the show, ex. coming out
- II. Provide organization and mobilization handbook for student organizers and protesters



“let’s communicate! and  
how ‘bout we change  
the world while we’re at  
it!” – my twitter bio

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