

## Individual giving for small-scale organisations or alternative work

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## Introduction

Individual giving is not just for big organisations offering 'popular' art forms. David Byrne, Kate White and Jane Rice-Bowen will share their experiences of fundraising in smaller organisations offering contemporary art experiences.

David Byrne of New Diorama Theatre in central London will talk about his successful strategy for working with high-level donors and share the research and development they've been doing into how small organisations can encourage small-scale donations. The National Centre for Circus Arts will de-mystify getting to grips with making 'the ask' and making friends with high net worth individuals.

## Presentation

The New Diorama Theatre is based in London just off the corner of Regents Park. We support emerging theatre companies in the same way that the Royal Court supports writers we support a whole small organisation. We do that by presenting their work and we find work from all over the country – we go to festivals and we bring companies in and support them by giving them subsidised space and support and investing in their work but also through organisational development – helping them to set up properly. In the past year we've done six charity conversions, we helped them with their governance, we helped with their first fundraising, we helped them look at their business plans for the first time and we helped them to head towards a more sustainable future. A lot of organisations started off as students or as friends and we help them to make that transition to becoming a professional company that can sustain and look after themselves. The idea is that once they leave us they can take away the skills that they've learned, handle any relationships that they build and carry on using those skills into the future.

When I took over three years ago we were in a bad way as an organisation. We were split into two. We had the theatre building that I was in charge of programming and which wasn't our organisation's main focus while our main focus was producing and touring work for young people. We were arts council supported, we had been for many years, and the arts council took our money

away. As a longstanding organisation it threw everyone into a major panic. There were three things that I noticed. First, as an organisation, we had no friends. The day the money was taken away it was announced publicly – we got no phone calls of support. No other organisation phoned up to say ‘how terrible’ or even to get the gossip! We were really isolated. We had no donors, supporters or trusts and foundations. We were completely on our own. We had no spread of funders, the arts council were our sole supporter. We had zero in our Individual Giving column – we didn’t even have an Individual Giving column. When the board asked our then artistic director and chief executive to stand down and I took over we had six months to raise £100,000 or we would close. From a standing start that was an incredibly daunting, sleep-depriving challenge. What I’m going to talk about is ‘how we did it’. How we made ourselves more attractive to supporters, how we re-tooled the organisation from bottom up to make it better at finding individual givers and how we made ourselves more receptive to that and what we learned along the way. Fundraising has become my *Star Wars* ... it’s what I’m obsessed about and I go all over the country talking to small theatres and small theatre organisations and fundraising is always the thing that keeps us up past midnight talking about how we’re doing. Over the last few years it has been expected that we find our way with fundraising and attract more supporters to our organisations and I think that everyone’s got their own challenges and different ways of doing it.

I’m going to concentrate on Individual Giving but obviously there were other challenges such as attracting some season sponsorship, some business people, we needed to convince some trusts and foundations that artistically, while the work at the time wasn’t strong, it was going to be stronger and how we were going to do that.

There are three ways to find Individual Givers. You can either have a lot of rich friends already (which I personally do not have) – I know people who have had a network that they could tap into, they went to a very good school, there was an alumni that they could get in touch with – that wasn’t an option for us. We didn’t know anybody. They can however be introduced to you, people can bring them to you – people who might be interested in your organisation, people within your organisation might be willing to start that transaction. At the time we didn’t really have anybody who could bring us contacts like that. The first place that you would normally go is your board of trustees. On our board of trustees we had about seven people, most of whom had been on the board for thirty five years and the first thing I did when I took over was to meet them individually and find out if they had anyone that they might be able to bring along. Not a single one of them knew anybody that could help us! A lot of them came to performances and I asked when the last time they’d brought a friend to a performance and they mostly said ‘never’!

I think that because we'd got into such a rut and because it has been part of what they'd done for so long they simply turned up at the meetings but they didn't really want to shout about being a part of what we were doing. We had someone who was working in a Local Authority and they needed to be, as part of the Big Society Campaign, on the board of a charity – they joined *another* charity to declare that as the charity that they were supporting! We had a major problem with our board being slightly embarrassed to be part of the organisation. We needed to change that and tried to work out what their sensitivities were and how we could better get them excited and motivated into being a part of the organisation. We were very much an organisation that retrospectively looked back on everything that had gone on. The only time that we looked forwards was when we were looking at our budgets and deciding what to cut in order to move forwards. So, the first thing that we did was to stop looking backwards and to start looking forward at what we could do. That involved future planning in a way that we'd never done before. We moved ourselves from living hand to mouth with our planning and looking at most to a year in the future to looking three to five years in advance and planning really exciting stuff that would get everyone's juices flowing and tried to convince them that this was the best way of doing things. We decided that we'd take a short-term risk in putting in place a lot of artist support schemes that would get us really good artists. We thought we'd really take a risk and hope that if we invested a huge amount in the artists, even though we don't have the money, the money will come on board. I think money follows really good ideas and sometimes you have to take that plunge. Sometimes you need to show success before you can really get it. That started to really get the board excited and motivated about what we were planning to do. And then when the art started to come through – we're a very small organisation so we were able to do that quite quickly – 4-5 months into my leadership reign they started to get excited again about the organisation.

### **A change of fortune**

As an example of how much this changed our fortunes, there was an elderly lady who has now passed away, who had been on our board since 1976 and had never bought anybody to a performance or donated to the organisation. *She* came along to every performance and was really dedicated but in those initial conversations said that she knew nobody that could help. About eight months after I started she brought her long-standing best friend who is Lord Robbie Burns – International CEO of Santander and we got £30,000 on the spot! That went some way to plugging our hole and he is now a regular audience member who brings along his friends. I asked her why she hadn't told us and she said that she was worried about what we would do if she brought him along! I think there was a fear, since there was no real plan in place that we'd be asking him for

money and it wouldn't be appropriate or they'd talk about work that she wasn't all that thrilled about.

We also started to attract new board members and we now have twelve. We've proactively gone after board members from organisations such as the London Assembly, Deutsche Bank and UBS. We're working through a wish list of who is connected and who might be able to extend that network for us.

We've just answered a development call for the first time which is a smaller way of doing that – which is people from other arts organisations who have experience of giving and people from big, society clusters around London who might have those sorts of connections. We've got people from Royal Opera House, from big insurance companies etc. all of whom are helping to build our mission as we bring people along as part of that.

### **Organisational marketing**

A big part of this was investing for the first time in organisational marketing. Previously, we'd always spent our money and time on saying 'come to see the *show*' but what we did for the first time is invest in talking about what makes our *organisation* really great. Because we're supporting other artists and those artists come to us and then go on elsewhere sometimes it can be really hard to attract work directly for the art. I think that when people understand what we do and have a clear idea of what the organisation is for, then they're more likely to put their hands in their pockets and give. For example, we've just started asking for donations through our box office. We thought we'd try it for the first time – the 'opt in' questions – and we're really carefully monitoring where people are most likely to give us money. We have a season sponsor who's a big media company – 'the biggest in the world' according to their website – and they are very wealthy individuals but they lack in internal culture. So, we formed an amateur dramatics company with them. They have a lot of different media companies under one umbrella and because they're often in competition for the same accounts there's very little chance for them to interact at work. This gives them all a chance to come together and we do two week-long performances a year, we get fight choreographers for them and we teach them to do scene design and everyone really likes it. Tickets are £5 and we ask for donations of £1 and £3.

A week after that, we had the *Incoming Festival* – a festival of really young theatre companies all over the country. We did it with A Younger Theatre and tickets were also £5 and we attracted an arts-savvy and much younger audience. We got *no* donations for the media company performances. For the *Incoming Festival*, just one person in three did not donate which for us is an incredible insight into where we should be aiming our fundraising ask. We tried to work out why

that is the case and when we started talking to audiences from both, the *Incoming* audience, being more arts savvy were aware already of what we did as an organisation and the value of it. They were actually a very ripe audience for us – they were very aware, they'd seen the endless articles I write about all sorts of things, they've been on the website, they've really trawled through and they are very literate about it. They use phrases that they've read on our website, they've been elsewhere to see work that has been presented at the theatre and they go to arts festivals. What that told me was that when we're dealing with product we need to find a better way to articulate what we do. We've invested heavily in our organisational marketing and need to find out what our core values are and to really sell those. We're about to launch a membership scheme which is built around this although we've kept it very simple, very targeted just to those people.

### **A more social life**

We've tried to create a social life around the organisation as part of the organisational marketing. We've tried to find a way of holding events that bring all of our ideas together so that we can get our up close to our audiences and we can make the 'ask'. One of the big issues that we have with the Individual Giver is when we're actually going to ask them for the money – rather than leaving them to tick a box on our website. And, what are they going to get out of it? What are they buying? What are they *buying into*? We started holding parties for them with some of our bigger artists. An example of this is with Idle Motion – who is now one of our associate companies – who we first saw at Edinburgh but who we couldn't afford to bring in under our old regime. But we thought; 'we're going to invest in this, we're going to take the hit with the faith that we would attract some new audiences who really want to see this play'. We brought them in, we threw them two parties – on the first party night we just made the 'ask'. We said 'hello' to our audience for the very first time and we said that we are near to our target, there are sixty of you (audience members), this is what we're going to be giving this company by way of organisational support and we are short by about £1,500. We asked if any of them wanted to support a company to please leave their names at the bar or write a cheque. We raised £7000 doing that ... we knew none of those donors previously. It just shows that you never really know who you've got until you make that ask and you make the opportunity to do it. Interestingly, no one used the 'donate now' box on the website ... it was all done on the night. Having that opportunity to articulate what makes us special has been really beneficial for us. It's a loop. We found that by doing this really exciting season that costs quite a lot of money and really selling it well and selling what the organisation does, we attracted a whole load of new people as well as support. And they brought their friends the next time we did it. And then we did more marketing and they brought along more friends and more money came in. If you

do really good work and you're really clear about why it is valuable, what's good about it and why your organisation is really great ... it really does self-perpetuate. From where we are now, we've got long-term artistic plans, we know what we're doing for the next three years at least and we've got a really nice sketch of what artists we're going to be supporting. Because we're now looking at Individual Giving and know that people like to see what their support is doing for the programme of the same artists year on year – we're watching them grow, watching their ambitions grow – and our donors have really grown with it. With donations, Idle Motion were able to tour to China and across the UK. They're opening their brand new show with us in April next year – they were offered £10k by a big regional company – but they want to open it with us and we've already got people booking who are really excited about coming to see it. We've already booked a party for all the people who gave money previously to come and enjoy that. It really does build and build. We're better at clearly communicating with donors and we're better at structuring it – we only ask them for money when it's appropriate – once a year. So they know that they're going to be asked. I say to them 'I'd like to talk to you about what we've got coming up and how you might be able to support it. So people such as those from Santander don't have that fear that every time they come in the building we're going to swamp them with requests for cash. They understand what the transaction is and they understand what we're going to do and how it all works. There's now a whole organisation focus on fundraising – our board know exactly what they're there for and are really focused on how they can help us with what we've got coming up and what our genuine need is. I'm no longer panicking people by saying 'if you don't give us money now, we are going to close'. Nobody wants to invest in an organisation they think might go under even if they might help you but if they've got an affinity with you then they want to invest in something that's successful, they want to help us grow and help the companies we support to go on and do exciting stuff rather than just plugging the hole that seems endless. That's really how we did it.

**Jane Rice-Bowen and Kate White – Joint Chief Executives, National Centre for Circus Arts**  
**Kate**

Three years ago we had a fundraising team of one person. We historically managed statutory funding quite well, we had project funding from trusts and foundations that we were fairly successful with but we had no expertise or experience in Individual Giving at all. We will explain how we turned that around in a relatively short space of time, over three years, and we're going to share with you a tried and tested process; *How to Get an American Philanthropist to give you One Million Dollars in a few Easy Steps.*

**Jane**

It is true that early in 2013, after a successful bid for Arts Council England Catalyst Funding, I made a phone call that resulted in a member of the Getty family – the American oil magnates – giving our organisation £200,000 per annum towards core costs for three years. It's amazing how many people come out of the woodwork, when you have a little bit of success like that, and ask you how it's done. Not least, my first boyfriend from school who I'd last spoken to when he was asking for a mix tape back suddenly turns up as the trustee of a regional theatre – there he is on LinkedIn saying 'wow, I'd heard about this – how did you manage it?' We are ready to tell you the secret.

### **Kate**

Unfortunately, it's not really that easy. It's more about hard work and investment than any of you are probably going to want to hear. We're not about to give you a little bottle of something sparkly and say 'polish this and it'll work'. I'd love to but, we can't. There are however a few quick and easy steps that we believe anybody can take to really make it happen. So, I'm going to rattle through and tell you a little bit about who we are and what we do. We are the National Centre for Circus Arts and we used to be called Circus Space. (showed video about National Centre for Circus Arts)

These are the people who make it happen (opposite). On the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 we became the National Centre for Circus Arts – that's very significant. 'Circus' is a really difficult word – it's difficult for funders and it's difficult for people to want to give money to circus because it is so often a word that's used in a negative way. Becoming a 'national centre' gave us huge legitimacy which has allowed us to ask for things differently and to make different relationships.



We've been going for twenty five years and our building used to be a Victorian power station – our cavernous spaces were once used to generate electricity for the local area in Hoxton where we are based. We've spent over twenty years renovating it and it really kick-started the regeneration of the area of London that we are in. We now turn over something in the region of £2.6 million per year and we see over 1,000 people a week through our doors participating in circus activity.

That's through a range of activity: working with young people, families and professionals. We

#### **What we do**

- Recreational Activity

run a whole range of different support at different levels for different people. We employ forty full-time equivalent staff and we have around 120 specialist teachers as well. We are a registered charity and we are a company limited by guarantee. We have a board of trustees that has changed dramatically – we've been building it for the past few years in a very specific way. For a number of reasons we now have around twenty trustees making it quite a large board.

- Youth Circus (aged 2 ¾ - 18)
- Adult Programme (aged 18 +)
- Formal Education
  - BTEC
  - Foundation Degree
  - BA Hons Degree
  - Post Graduate Certificate
- Supporting Professional Development
- Creative Consultancy
- Commercial Activity
- Hires

### Funding and qualifications

We've got two statutory funders – Arts Council England, we're a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and their contribution is about 12% of our turnover. Our other statutory funder is the Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE) who support the degree and all the Higher Education work that we do – that's about 33% of our turnover when you add in student fees. Our youth and adult work generates income but we have a large number of bursaries and support available to young people. We run a BTEC qualification in association with our local community college which is a unique model in this country and an interesting way to work. Our BA degree and Post Graduate Certificate are validated by the University of Kent and we are part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama – a small group of 8 specialist institutions including RADA, Lamda, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, London Contemporary Dance School and others.

We also do a lot of work with professional artists. We give professionals space to create work in, lots of networking opportunities and we provide seed-funding for early-stage projects with support from Esmee Fairburn. We also run a creative consultancy which is something that generates quite a lot of income. We were creative consultants on an arena tour of *Batman Live!* a couple of years ago, in which, who knew it, Robin's family were trapeze artists. We've also worked extensively with film companies when they want to realise circus ideas. Very often, people come to us and say 'we want to create a devastating fatal accident' which isn't the best way to promote our art form but we do have the skills to make that happen very safely! We're currently working with the BBC on a new programme that's about to launch at the end of the summer around the '*Strictly*' format but using circus and gymnastics. That for us is a real step change because, on early-evening Saturday TV there will be circus artists and so hopefully, in six months'

time there will be people who can see their child is doing something that feels dangerous and risky like climbing the curtains and rather than being horrified they will say ‘you could be a circus artist like that boy Billy George who we saw on the telly’. In the same way as people can now identify by name ballroom dancers – we think that’s important for circus and for how we continue to raise our arts form’s profile. We do quite a bit of commercial work in our building, we have hosted IKEA’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, we do corporate workshops, we have weddings, bar mitzvahs and things that just feed into the bottom line but aren’t necessarily anything to do with circus at all.

We also have a suite of offices within our building where other small creative industries can start up and we are there to support that. We have a very mixed model of income. We probably could be termed as a ‘social enterprise’ because of our approach to making money and reinvesting.

We’re very, very ambitious – not really just for our organisation but for the sector as a whole. Circus is a young art form and it’s a very young sector and we believe that to enable the art form to grow we certainly can’t do it all within our building in Hoxton and it has to be broader than that. What we do have is a huge amount of expertise within our building, within our team that we can share among the other organisations that are just setting up and so that they don’t have to do the things that we have had to do over our 25-year history.

Basically, this is our business plan:

<b>A culture of circus in the UK</b>			
<b>Our mission</b>	<b>Our aspirations for 2013 – 2016:</b>		
<i>We will ...</i>	<i>To confirm our role as sector leader and continue pushing the boundaries of circus arts</i>		
Share the expertise held within our extraordinary team at the National Centre for Circus Arts to create a network of support for artists, organisations and audiences enabling healthy growth and development of the circus art form in the UK	<b>A</b> Formalise our role as the National Centre for Circus Arts in the UK	<b>B</b> Develop and deliver a network of City Youth Circus activity across the UK working to a progressive curriculum	<b>C</b> Develop our role as producers and move towards creating a high profile nationally acclaimed circus show

It’s quite straight forward – we don’t like to mess about. **A**, we’re going to ‘formalise our role as the National Centre for Circus Arts in the UK’. The term ‘National’ is protected – we had to apply to the government and we had to have it ‘bestowed’ upon us. What we’re working out now is how we’re

going to walk the 'national walk' to take the work to the wider sector. What we also want to do is deliver a network of city youth circus's across the UK. We run the London Youth Circus which is a progressive training model for under 18s which means that, young people at the top end of that programme, will train for up to ten hours per week with the ambition of entering the profession. What we never know however, at the point when we're recruiting students to our degree programme, is who *hasn't* applied – who's in Exeter or Newcastle who has never found circus and therefore just doesn't see it as an option – and that's really frustrating. What we really want to do is to roll out this network of youth activity so that it becomes something that is an aspirational part of the extra-curricular provision that happens in this country. The third thing that we want to do is to develop our role as producers. We're working on various co-productions and partnerships but what we really want to create is a really big show that has circus as its heart and that does for our art form what War Horse has done for puppetry. That's our ambition.

### **Jane**

That all sounds great Kate! But how on earth are you going to manage that given that all of the money has run out? It's obvious that we have to raise more money but that's easier said than done. We've been really good at securing statutory funding. We've had ACE funding, trusts and foundations, we're on the fringe of the City in London and very early on our founding fathers had made great friends with UBS and Slaughter and May (lawyers). They've always been very helpful to us – Slaughter and May have done our legal work for many years on a pro bono basis that has added up to many thousands of pounds over the years – but we've never had any money from any individuals and we started to ask ourselves 'why not'.

### **If you don't ask, you don't get**

First reason? We haven't asked. And if you don't ask, you don't get. We didn't feel comfortable about asking. It is fine writing an application and submitting it because you know that you're applying to someone whose job it is to give you the money, you don't have to look them in the eye and ask them for money. We just didn't feel comfortable about it – we weren't always confident in our product and our 'wow-ometer' is calibrated pretty high. Kate and I have the privilege of working in that building where we walk in every day and see extraordinary young people doing extraordinary things. Our office looks out onto the flying trapeze rig and to see someone fly past is a regular occurrence that we've become used to. We were confused about what it was we were asking for – what is 'the ask' – what do we need the money for? How on earth do you position yourself among other 'heart strings' charities? How can we go out and ask for money where Shelter is asking for money or Cancer Research is asking for money? Why would

people give money to *us* when there are all those other things? It became clear that the first thing we needed to do was to get our house in order and understand ourselves; who we are, why we wanted and needed to ask individuals to support us. We set about changing our culture and there were three key points within this:

**1. Being able to say ‘yes, we are a charity and this is why ... ‘**

We’d spent a lot of time hiding our ‘charity’ light under a bushel for a number of reasons. Partly because we thought that being a charity and articulating ourselves as charity that somehow our corporate partners might not think that we were up to the job. ‘Charity’ is a difficult word. There is the connotation that perhaps you’re not very professional, that you’re a ‘charity case’ and we were trying to position ourselves in a professional market, particularly to do corporate work where we were saying that we’re going to provide you with this excellent professional service, we’re going to charge you a corporate rate for it but also we’re a charity and we need support. So we had to shift this perception across the whole of the staff team making sure that we understood our *raison d’être* and our fundraising message. We also needed to build our confidence.

The second thing that we needed to look at was taking things seriously ...

**2. We take things seriously ... look at our risk register**

We needed to make sure that *everybody* began to take fundraising seriously – across the whole organisation – not just as a ‘bolt on’ or as a responsibility of the half-time person in the office that’s got fundraising written on it but that it is all of our responsibility and there’s consequences across the whole business if it doesn’t go well.

**3. We are all responsible for this and realise that it is a significant part of our job ...**

One of the things that we did was to put it on our Risk Register which goes to the board, is the responsibility of the senior management team and the audit team on the board. The risk was ‘failing to communicate that the organisation is a charity’. And if you fail to communicate that the consequences that we articulated were that if nobody realises we’re a charity, nobody will give and therefore we won’t have the money to do the activity that we’ve planned to do. That then makes everybody realise the seriousness of the situation – that we won’t be able to do the work.

Suddenly the audit committee, the senior management team, the finance team, the board all have a very clear responsibility for it in a way that it’s articulated. Especially those board members with a finance background and experience – it made more sense to them. We needed to articulate that we’re all responsible for it and realise that it is a significant part of our role and to spread the responsibility. It felt like it shared the load but you must still have clarity around leadership and accountability.

You need to understand the value of your work and you need to articulate that back to others. This should be routed in the fundamentals of your business plan, your vision, your mission and your values. It's really important that your business plan is clear and that it is understood by everyone in the organisation – not just the CEO or your Head of Marketing – by *absolutely everyone*. You have to try to look at it from the outside as well – see it through other people's eyes. When you say to people what you are

doing ... do they get it? We've distilled our business plan into three points – our vision is to build a culture of circus across the UK – and everyone in the organisation could tell you that. They know that there are the three pillars and it is National Centre, City Youth Circuses, Big Show and if you went into our organisation tomorrow and picked any member of staff I would wager £10 that they would be able to say that back to you. We've done a lot of detailed and time-consuming work to make sure that everybody understands that. You need to understand the impact of your work and this is about evidence, evaluation, data and case studies. We spend a lot of time trying to prove the benefit of whatever it is that we do. You're collecting data all the time. You're collecting data for Arts Council submissions and you have Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems but it's about taking that data and using it and formulating it so that it can help you tell the story that you want to tell.

### Telling the story

The next thing is 'telling the story' – you've got to construct a story that you want to tell, that you understand and that you can begin to tell it. Our story is that 'circus transforms lives' and that 'if young people get involved in circus it will have an impact on their physical well-being, it will build self-esteem, build creativity and they will potentially go on to be great artists making incredible work that will move people'. Also, if they don't go on to be professional artists they will have learnt so much about trust and risk and team building that they'll just be really good human beings and make a great contribution to society.

While you are telling that story you need the opportunity to practice it and tell it to other people – at home, at work, to friends, to anyone who will listen so that you can get your story

### We are a charity

- Understanding the value of your work
- Evidence- evaluation / data / case studies
- Telling the story
- Doing what other charities do :
  - Text giving
  - Donations for programmes
  - Online donations
  - Donations box

straight and you are ready for the moment to tell it when somebody appears who might be the game changer.

And then we started acting like any other charity. We looked around and asked ourselves 'what do other charities do'? Everywhere you go; on buses, on the Tube in London, everywhere you look there are charities asking you for money through a range of different ways – text giving was very popular for a while and we thought we'd try that out. We were doing a show outside the National Theatre as part of their *Watch this Space* programme where thousands of people show up but you have no way of engaging with them so we printed postcards to distribute throughout the crowd in order to explain who we were, to signpost them to our social media and to give them a text number. It was really interesting – it raised £67 – which isn't a million dollars but it's a *start* and made us realise that there are enough people out there who would, on their first encounter with us because we'd asked them, donate.

### **Donations for programmes**

For our student shows we'd always given out programmes for free and we thought that we should maybe start charging for programmes but then we decided to ask for donations instead. It changes the transaction and rather than saying 'you're a customer, will you buy this from me?' it will say 'here you go, we're going to give it to you but can you make a donation back us'. Suddenly you are churning people from being a customer in a transactional relationship to being a customer who is also making a donation. It's about looking at your relationships in different ways. We also started online donations and that's also been really interesting and actually motivated us to put more of our sales online. It has changed our relationship with the customer in a different way because we've seen the customer want to do it so we've given them more opportunity to buy and more opportunity to support.

We've installed a donations box. I remember as a child that my Grandfather used to support the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and in our local corner shop there was one of those boats that would rock about as you put your donation in it. I remember begging him that I could put money in that donations box. These are powerful things. You put money in the top of our donations box and it wiggles its way to the bottom. On a Sunday, when we do most of our youth work, there are families who can't get their kids away from the donations box as they want to watch the money drop down. It's a really powerful way of getting people to take that action. It's also a constant reminder to all of us as we walk past it that fundraising is at the heart of what we have to do.

We take it seriously. You're not going to do this unless you do take it seriously and are prepared to invest. If you are taking this message back to a senior manager or a CEO who expects you to come back from this conference with a magic formula that means you are going to bring in loads of money – I think you need to disabuse them of that fact ... it's OK but they need to know that they are going to have to put some money into it. It can't be done on a part-time job-share basis. We built a team from one person to three people. We have a Head of Fundraising, a Fundraising Manager and a Fundraising Officer. We've invested money in their training, sent them on courses to learn the theory behind all of this and the science around setting your targets and what you are able to achieve.

### **We take it seriously**

- Build a team
- Invest – to make money you need to spend money
- Set aside meaningful time to really talk about raising money and how this can happen
- It's a Board issue – 'give, get or get off'

We've set aside money for some research tools. There's an interesting research tool called *Prospecting for Gold* which you can run your data through for a cost and identify who your prospects are. It begins to identify who the people are that you might want to cultivate. It is a useful thing to do not least because when the data is returned to you, you may find that the serial complainer, who you've had a terrible relationship with for twelve years and who you've been dismissing is worth £5 million to £10 million! You suddenly realise that you might have, among the people who are your users or your audience, the Secret Millionaire and you've not looked after that relationship but it now enables you to say 'we're doing this and we think you might be interested. Can you help support it?' It made us take a good hard look at our customer engagement and make sure that we treated everybody in a way that if we suddenly discovered that they'd won the Lottery it would be OK to ask them if they would like to invest.

You need to set aside meaningful time to really talk about raising money and how this can happen and you need it at levels across the organisation including at the highest levels. Our fundraising team have regular time with us and our Director of Finance and we make meetings fun ... we have *Show and Tell* sessions at the end of meetings every Tuesday and this is in order to throw up fundraising ideas. It's about being creative, rising to the challenge and realising that you have lots of great ideas and that other organisations have great ideas that you can use and manipulate for your own organisation. As one person that's hard to do ... you need a group of people so that you can get creative and share ideas.

## It's a Board issue

Your board should be totally involved and there is an American mantra that if you are a member of a board; 'you give, you get or you get off'. We have come from being an artist-led organisation with a volunteer, skills-based board that had been there for a very long time and we spent a long time developing our board in a very structured way. There's now good governance so that they are on fixed terms, there is open recruitment and they know that when they are being recruited that one of the roles is to be an ambassador and a fundraiser. We've taken them from a position where talking about money and fundraising from board members was totally taboo to the point that they are all giving at a level they feel comfortable with. You need to find an ally or a champion who is already on the board or you need to get someone new who is willing to take on this cause. We have a guy who joined our board a few years ago who comes from a philanthropic family and had found circus through his work and then involved his wider family. He has been incredible in terms of catalysing the change of culture and the conversations on the board. You need to find someone who is willing to have those difficult conversations for you at that level because it is hard for a non-trustee to do that.

We wanted to make sure that everyone was involved and these are the activities that helped us to embed fundraising within the organisation. Everyone now understands that we are a charity and that we need to raise funds to carry out our work. And they all help people to practise making 'the ask'. Don't forget ... if you don't ask, you don't get.

### We are all responsible

- Making sure that everyone is involved
  - Christmas Raffle
  - Easy Fundraising
  - Night Rider
  - Jam Jar Army
  - Fortnum and Mason event

## Kate

We started with a Christmas Raffle which had two purposes. It was one of the first ways that we went for the board in a way that was to say 'you know, you don't have to be thinking about thousands of pounds but actually, if you could give us three bottles of red wine as a raffle prize, you've given something'. That actually took quite a lot of the sting out of the slightly more direct approach that was coming from our internal trustee who does stand up at every board meeting and says 'everyone's got to give money'. This was an easy way to 'get that'. The Christmas Raffle happens within our building and something really enlightening was to hear our Head Technician explain to some students negatively muttering about the raffle, that they were studying somewhere

that is a registered charity and that we have to raise in excess of £1.5 million per year to continue to deliver the work that we do which includes their training, and that this raffle is part of that. He got the message and could articulate it more widely within our community while we try to make sure that that message becomes embedded.

**Jane**

Everyone went out selling raffle tickets to their families, their friends etc. and every time they did that they were making 'the ask'. It was a really great practice for that.

'Easy Fundraising' was an online exercise where if you bought something from Amazon but you clicked through from Easy Fundraising, they would donate a percentage of your spend with them, to a charity of your choice. We registered as a charity for that and did a big push just before Christmas. We raised about £100 but at no cost to anyone. These things started to identify the competitive element and the more people who bought more of their Christmas presents via the Internet and generate more money for the organisation were pleased to see that they were top of the leader board on Easy Fundraising. It was another way of showing everybody that there are different ways to give money.

**Kate**

We also registered for the Night Rider event and several senior managers were all willing to cycle through the night. As an organisation we supported them and helped them to get the sponsorship that they needed. As staff members they took on the challenge of doing that and the rest of the organisation got behind them with trying to increase the level of sponsorship that they were going to achieve.

**Jane**

Jam Jar Army was an idea that we stole from *The Guardian Family* where a woman had been doing a good deed each day for a year and one of these deeds was to raise money for her local theatre by getting all of the kids to take home a jam jar and to come back in three weeks with it filled with donations from friends and family. All of those children were explaining why their youth theatre was important to them and why it needed supporting. We did it with our Youth Circus participants to raise money for bursaries for kids who couldn't afford to attend and it raised nearly £1000 in the first year that we did it. It was about getting all the parents to understand that we're a charity and that we fundraise and it gets the kids involved at an early stage.

**Kate**

The Fortnum and Mason event is something that is run with The Big Give. We were fortunate enough to be one of the chosen charities to have performers there for a couple of years. This project allowed our trustees to get really competitive with each other about who was going to buy the greatest number of tickets. The notion being that they would buy tickets for the event and The Big Give would double the amount by match funding and we facilitated that for them. This allowed our trustees to have a fun, champagne-fuelled night out but to also be saying 'I've got seven friends and I'm going to take all of them'. It's still at a relatively affordable level costing £50 and it was basically a 'lock in' in a posh shop trying lovely foods and drinking Champagne so it didn't feel like they were making a donation – but they were.

### **Jane**

Suddenly we all felt like donors. That we'd given something, that we'd done something good and that we felt excited about this. I'd read a book that I'd recommend called *Giving is Good for You* by John Nickson and in an article about it he'd written '*above all, I've learned that altruism is one of the most powerful human urges and, like our need for food and sex, is rewarded by good feelings. We're programmed to share, to give and to support each other and this has given us an evolutionary advantage over other species by encouraging mutual obligation. If we stop supporting others and our civil society, we're in danger of losing the plot. Those who I interviewed confirmed what I've always suspected – that decisions about philanthropy are deeply rooted in the emotions of those who give. Those who do not are missing out on the profound feelings of fulfilment. Even worse, the selfish are undermining the foundations of the civil society so many of us take for granted. The case for giving is made best by those who give and who are determined to make a difference and to put common good above self-interest.*

What we'd done through those donation processes was realise that people had something that they wanted to support, that people do want to give and that giving is a good thing and that we were ready to make the ask.

### **And then it happened ...**

We had a call asking if we could arrange some private trapeze classes. We don't do private trapeze classes. The team member who dealt with the initial enquiry realised that this person was coming from Los Angeles and that their PA had made the call. They didn't recognise the name but recognised that if someone had a PA and that they were coming from LA that they might be worth 'talking to'. She turned around and said; 'does anyone know the name 'Getty'? We realised that this was a wonderful opportunity and we arranged for Aileen Getty to come visit us and have trapeze lessons. She had a great time because everyone who comes to us has a great time.

At the end of her visit we took her on a tour of the centre, explained that we're a non-profit organisation, what we do and what are our ambitions. A week later her PA rang up to say 'Aileen had a lovely time and was really excited by what you are doing and that she'd like to make a donation of £10,000'. Aileen then came back to us a few months later and by then we'd been having some ongoing correspondence saying 'we're new to all of this fundraising stuff, can you help by sparing an hour of your time so that we can find out a bit more about philanthropy?' She agreed, we had a great meeting, she had another great trapeze class and she gave us £25,000. She then said that she was really interested in the organisation and that we should talk about how she could support us over a longer period and in a more strategic way and that we should go away and think about how she could do that. It felt like a real Fairy Godmother and three wishes moment for us!

Throughout the organisation we did a lot of talking and eventually the PA rang up and said that Aileen was waiting for us to talk to her and could we book in a call. We didn't know what it was that she'd be most interested in supporting – a big new project, a new building or did she want to 'cut a ribbon'. So we did some Internet research about her in order to find out what she might want to support and what it might be appropriate for us to ask for. Eventually we loosely rehearsed the whole thing around that what we really needed, which was simply money for core costs. The recession had hit us hard, we'd had a massive restructure and lost loads of staff, our staff had been on pay freezes for years and we needed to treat people better. In order to do that we needed money to go into our core costs so that we could start giving people pay rises. Aileen agreed at that one phone call to our request for £200,000 each year for three years. That wonderful result was arrived at because we had spent a lot of time already laying the foundations whereby it could happen. The moment of opportunity arrived and we were ready to take it.

### **Changing your culture starts with you**

- Be aware of how other people raise money and steal their ideas
- Read/ watch/ listen to everything you can about fundraising and how people are doing it  
There's a great TED Talk by Dan Pillota that I would recommend you watch: *The way we think about charity is dead wrong* which is about shifting the mind-set around giving.
- Give money yourself  
It's a game changer. How did you feel? How were you asked? How were you thanked? It helps to put you in the shoes of the people you are asking of.

### Some holiday snaps

This is at Eureka in Halifax ... a beautiful donor board. Each one of the apples and pears is for someone who has donated to them.



My step father had been chair of the local council and one of things he had to do was raise money. He'd raised money for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance and they gave us a behind-the-scenes tour. They had a really clear message – it costs £9,990 to keep that ambulance in the air for a day.



At Colchester Zoo – all the way round – they tell you about the conservation work that they're doing and have a simple message, a regular and simple 'ask' with a clear reward – here's a sticker!



### Kate

Three years on from where we started we had a party (played video of party, people feeding back their thoughts about National Centre for Circus Arts and the people working and performing there and communicating the organisational marketing message)

We'd learnt a few very important things before we got to this point in the last three years:

1. how to use our data and let that help us find out who are prospects are and really look at the benefit of doing that research.
2. how to cultivate prospects and how that's a long-term project. None of this is a quick fix.
3. the importance of saying 'thank you' and how to make people feel special.
4. a bit about the role of celebrity which was something that we really didn't expect.

### **National Centre's next steps**

- Deliver a national programme that supports and develops our sector
- Make long-term friends with everyone who came to our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala
- 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday campaign

I would sum up by saying that there are four main things:

**Research** – use your fundraising tools – find out who you've got

**Cultivate, cultivate, cultivate** – getting to know the organisation, the behind-the-scenes events and party projects

**Ask.** You've got to be really clear but 'ask'. And just as importantly ...

**Thank.** Else you won't be able to ask again.

### **QUESTIONS**

**Delegate:** How do you go about structuring your fundraising team to make your fundraising success happen?

**David:** It's about trying to work out exactly what it is that you are asking for. When you're working with a lot of other artists as well and you're having to work together to make the ask, sometimes you need to coordinate who is actually going to make the ask and then manage a relationship with a donor. If you've got someone who's coming into your building quite regularly you need to make sure that the path of communication is clear. We're a small, core team of three full-time members of staff and about four part-time. We basically worked out a 'pathway' of how we were going to manage it and feedback. With our trustees it was about getting rid of people who maybe weren't useful to us anymore and recruiting people who would be useful and would be a good fit in the culture that we were trying to set up. Our Chair works with the Clore Leadership and is a specialist in Boards so she knew exactly what we needed and how to manage the relationships between management and the board. We had to sit down as an entire team and work out what our roles within it would be and how it might work. It's easy for me as I'm also our Chief Exec and after

talking to people yesterday I get the feeling that those management teams might take a bit of convincing to agenda that change or think it is something to tie in with a part-time role.

**Delegate:** David, you mentioned throwing parties and got 60 people who hadn't attended before.

**David:** We literally threw parties after shows. People would come to a show and afterwards we would do free drinks and nibbles. When you're starting from nothing you need to find a way of capturing who you *have* got so we just invited them to come along and enjoy a party after the show. I would do a speech and in that week we did two of those. We now tend to do them after every production. We tend to an Open Party for an 'early-on' audience which is also a treat for the cast and crew who've been working hard and get a bit of a 'freebie', we do a party for the artist of the organisation – all the artists who've been involved in that season and we do a night for people who support the organisation – trustees, board and their friends. Creating that 'social life' has been really essential to us in capturing those people and giving us the opportunity to stand and talk to them. Audiences come and go so it's an ideal way of capturing them for a bit longer.

**Kate White:** At our Gala (attended by about 280 people) we made in excess of £100,000 net profit on the night and someone did comment that the mix of easy iPad technology enabling them to bid for things on a silent auction and copious amounts of alcohol was remarkably effective in raising money.

**David:** If people are having a good time they are more likely to give and they want to be a part of it. We don't have a culture of giving in this country ... people think that it's paid for by the government or the council ... they need to buy 'buying in' to something more and the social side of that we can all provide.

**Delegate:** (inaudible – something to National Centre about the number of trustees they have)

**Jane:** Because we get money from HEFCE and we're a small Higher Education institution and we have to have a number of sub committees and we have to be able to populate those sub committees. We have to have an Audit Committee, a Finance Committee, a Remunerations and Nominations Committee and the people on them all have to be different. We need to have a minimum of twelve and a maximum of 24 on our board. As we were beginning to develop fundraising we set up a sub-committee around development and the Gala. We then learned that when you are doing a big Gala, perceived wisdom is that you need to have a Gala Committee and on that you need to have around 30 people because essentially, each of them is going to buy a table. The development group talked to all of their friends and we ran the data and worked out who

was a prospect to invite to the committee. We worked with a consultant called Act IV and they were able to source some people for us as well.

**David:** We were also able to ask people for names we could use.

**Jane:** Jarvis Cocker is a friend of our Head of Communications and that's how we got to him. Ken Cranham is the dad of our Head of Academic Administration, and Lauren Cuthbertson who's a Prima Ballerina is a friend of a former colleague of mine who ran one of the ballet schools. We spend a lot of time in the office playing *Six Degrees of Separation* and trying to work out who we know who might know that person and how we can get to them.

**David:** We had Stephen Fry tweet about something that we're doing and it's the only time our business consultant ever phoned us excited about something. For us it doesn't mean so much but for them it's a real validation of what we did – it's something they recognise and it's a link to 'quality' that we don't maybe see it as.

**Delegate:** It's a different art form but we're in a similar situation in that we engage with artists and they're our main audience. We don't have a 'public' audience in the same way that we engage with artists. At the moment we're in the middle of a Capital Project where we're converting out library to 34 new artist studios and we've got to populate those studios. We've also got to manage the relationship with them and the community because we're taking over a much-loved building. You were talking about only asking people once and I was interested to know what your strategy is around that, at what point do you ask those people and do you have a plan for asking those people at different times depending on who they are?

**David:** I have a schedule because my job encompasses a huge amount of stuff so we have a part of the year which I use for Individual Giving activity. It's mostly because – I'm sure we've all got family or friends who ask us for things – if they feel that every time they come to the organisation – which we want them to do regularly, bring their friends and have a great time – if they feel that every time they come into our building we're going to ask them for money they're going to quickly get tired of us. There's always a time of the year – for me between September and December is my fundraising time – I have to do all our trusts and foundations bids personally and I've got a month set aside to be talking to our ten biggest donors about the up-coming year. We'll talk about how they're feeling about what they are supporting within the company and if they would like to do something else along with what their plans into the future might be. By the time I've done that I've also got an idea about what might happen in future years and where their interest is going to be. We are publicly facing as a public-performance venue and I suppose if you are 'closed' there will have to be other ways of trying to get people interested in what you are doing and to communicate

the value of that organisation and why they should want to give. With Individual Giving it's hard if it's 'hand to mouth' and much easier if you are working a year to two years in advance.