

Building the Foundations of HOME- Building Fundraising Capacity Quickly



Photo: provided by HOME

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In Spring 2015, HOME (Greater Manchester Arts Centre - GMAC) will open its doors to Manchester. A modern new arts centre in Manchester, the third largest in the UK and the largest of its kind outside of London.

HOME will offer something new and innovative to audiences. HOME, Our 6,000 m2 building will welcome 650,000 visits per year and will contain:

- Two Theatres T1 - 500 seat theatre and T2 -150/160 seat flexible theatre
- Over 500 m2 of 4m high gallery space
- 5 Cinemas - 160,000 visits per year
- Café bars & Restaurant
- Learning & participation activities – 17,000 visits per year
- Rehearsal and Digital Edit facilities

HOME, a merger between two much loved organisations and highly regarded organisations, the Cornerhouse and the Library Theatre, is an international centre for contemporary visual art, film and theatre. It will be a place where audiences, artists, filmmakers, actors and directors come to together to make, see, engage with and debate cultural practise and ideas with a unique cross art form programme.

The constituent organisations had a track record of successful fundraising, but not on the scale is required for such a large and diverse organisation. With a limited budget, the task was to increase income significantly, not only for the £25m capital build project, but also for the revenue projects to ensure the project has the best chance of delivering the highest quality of work, reaching as many people as possible and making an impact on the national arts ecology.

The appointment of a Development Director was the first step, but there was no additional budget to increase the Development Capacity through additional recruitment. As with other organisations, we decided to look within our trustee structure to assess what skills, networks, etc, we already had and how we could tap into this.

We then carried out a skills and experience audit on our existing group which helped us focus on the key skills and experience that was essential for fundraising. For us, we identified a particular gap in people with High Net Worth fundraising expertise and people who felt comfortable making the fundraising ask. We were heartened by the skills we already had in the team and grateful that we had a clear idea of what/who we needed to recruit to make the fundraising function within the organisation as robust as possible without spending extra money on staff.

Objectives

We needed to increase capacity within the organisation and specifically raise the remaining £1m of the £25m fundraising budget.

We were clear that we must be very specific with the members of the Development Committee and set out the following objectives as part of membership:

- Making a contribution to our appeal (if possible)
- Helping to identify and approach potential supporters
- Working together with the Development Team to cultivate potential supporters via special events, tours and meetings
- Where appropriate, help the Development Team make the ask for support
- Advocate for the organisation in the region and nationally

It was also important that we positioned membership as beneficial to those who participated. We were quite forward and specific about what we felt were the benefits of volunteering one's time to this project:

- Development Committee members find that making a contribution to the development and governance of the organisation is a rewarding experience in itself as well as the chance to be involved and make a difference
- Meeting artists, filmmakers and curators involved with the programme of GMAC
- Meeting members of the GMAC's audience
- Attending performances, exhibitions, events and film screenings
- Gaining a better understanding of the issues facing creative businesses such as GMAC.
- Having traction with likeminded supporters and other funders including the City and The Arts Council

Target Groups

This is a key part of the piece. Fundraising needs to be a much targeted practice. If the message is compelling, that's only one part of the story. The crucial bit is that the message gets heard by the right people and resonates. This is the reason we had to be very focused on who we wanted to include in our Development Committee.

Process

- 1) Identified need for extra fundraising capacity
- 2) Conducted resource scan and business analysis to see where extra fundraising capacity might be found
- 3) Findings reported to internal stakeholders
- 4) Decision made to set up separate fundraising committee is made
- 5) Strategy is developed to recruit committee with particular attention given to a clear articulation of committee member specifications and role requirements
- 6) Ask targeted members and enthuse them
- 7) Steward the group as you would a donor. They need to feel appreciated, supported and challenged.

Outcomes

We are in the final stage of fundraising and we have almost a complete, small but perfectly formed Development Committee with a varied set of skills. They've been instrumental in securing big chunks of funding for us- setting up key contacts, working with the CEO and fundraiser to see the ask through, etc.

Key points for effective practice

There are three key areas to consider when setting up a separate Development Committee/fundraising function with a significant role played by volunteers:

- 1) Clear articulation of committee role (in general and in relation to the Board of Trustees, guidelines, specifications and expectations is vital It's particularly important to be upfront about the role of giving and getting when on a Development committee.
- 2) A clear focus of the task set to the committee is absolutely key. Fundraising is not the core business of many of these volunteers and simplicity is helpful. Stating the ask/case for support plainly for everyone will be most effective and give people comfort when helping out.
- 3) Ensure that there are adequate support structures within an organisation to service a Development Committee. Keep the structure and focus tight so the committee does not use additional resource- which is the opposite of its intended purpose.

Conclusions and recommendations

Start early. Plan. Plan again. Give yourself time.

There is a lot of initial bureaucracy required when setting up a development committee. Documentation outlining the roles, guidelines together with written support documentation to help people identify and make the ask will be key. However, this does not mean that the actual implementation of establishing a development committee needs to be. Most people prefer fluid structures where they can meet with the fundraising team and prospects in their own time and work on the project when they have time. Setting strict meeting schedules with a lot of action/ minute taking can add additional work to the piece. The beauty of a development committee is, that when it works, it has the potential to be much more flexible than the Board which has a wider governance role.

Additional information

www.homemcr.org

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