

**Arts Marketing Association**  
**Mission Possible**  
**Day event incorporating AGM**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007**  
**Sadler's Wells, London**

Report of the day

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## Introduction

*Mission Possible* was an opportunity for delegates to dust the cobwebs off their company's mission and vision statement, transforming it from a forgotten manuscript into a mandate for actively engaging audiences and visitors.

This day event, which incorporated the Arts Marketing Association (AMA) AGM, included presentations and debates about the way that arts organisations can be both vision led and audience focused. It investigated what this might mean in practice and how such an approach could help to create, retain and engage audiences and visitors.

## Welcome

Simon Drysdale

**Chair of the AMA and Director of Impact Print Display, London**

Simon welcomed delegates to Sadler's Wells reminding them of the brief for the day. It is about looking at how we create vision and mission in our organisations and the way that marketers can be involved in that process. How do we co-ordinate, integrate and agree our mission? And how do we do this with realism and common sense and therefore create 'Mission Possible'?

As marketers we naturally want to ensure that the audience is a focus of attention and therefore of our mission. However, it's crucial that we don't spend a great deal of time trying to please everyone, spreading ourselves too thinly and ending up not achieving much.

Therefore, good old fashioned action points and clarity about what we want to achieve are required.

So, what's the point of it all? Giving us some ideas on where to look for some answers is guest speaker Diane Ragsdale.



## Keynotes

### Diane Ragsdale, Andrew W Mellon Foundation

#### ***Being a 21<sup>st</sup> -century 'social-profit' organisation starts with having a 21<sup>st</sup> -century mission***

Diane Ragsdale is associate program officer for the performing arts programme at the Andrew W Mellon Foundation which provides \$19m a year to arts organisations in the USA. Before joining the foundation (in 2004) she was managing director for 'On the Boards' in Seattle, a presenter of avant-garde and experimental music, theatre, dance and new media work. She has worked on several major arts festivals such as Bumbershoot, Womad USA and the Sundance and Seattle Film Festivals. In 2002 she was one of 40 arts leaders in the US to receive a fellowship to attend the first *Executive Programme for Non-profit Leaders* at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business.

This presentation was a challenge to delegates to consider whether their organisation has a market or mission approach, or whether there is an internal agreement about what it means to be mission-led and audience or visitor focused?

Diane Ragsdale prefaced her remarks by saying that her views were personal and should not be taken, necessarily, to be the views of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. They also come from a decidedly American perspective but, just as US arts organisations have much to benefit from hearing UK perspectives, so also might these ideas and examples from the US be valuable to delegates here.

#### ***'The arts are not for the privileged few but for the many'***

In 1963, the philanthropist John D. Rockefeller III proclaimed

*'the arts are not for the privileged few, but for the many. Their place is not on the periphery of daily life, but at its center.'*

While we have come some way from the elitism that characterised the arts in the US at the turn of the last century, we are nowhere close to achieving Rockefeller's vision.

In 2006, Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, said,

*'... the primary issues facing the American arts at present are not financial. They are cultural and social. We have a society in which the arts have become marginal. We have created a university system that has developed a way of discussing and presenting the arts, which is exclusive rather than inclusive. We have created civic identities in which the arts too often play little or no part. The great crisis in American culture right now ... is the dwindling of younger audiences. We are not producing another generation of people who attend theater, opera, symphony, dance, jazz and other art forms. Most of these audiences have declined in the last decade, some of them precipitously.'*

This is a sobering, but accurate, picture. Rather than seeing 'a great crisis,' however, arts organisations have been attributing their greying and declining audiences to the lack of time, money, or maturity to participate. The evidence would appear to indicate otherwise. A good portion of the Baby Boomers have sent their kids to college, have plenty of grey hair on their heads, know the difference between a Malbec and a Red Zin, and can pick out a fine triple cream brie, but despite displaying considerable evidence of disposable income, leisure time, and maturity, are still not showing up for symphony performances or the ballet.

Studies have indicated that Americans have more leisure time than ever, but they are choosing to spend it differently. Boomers are engaged in time intensive activities like gardening, re-modeling their homes, learning to play the guitar and making the perfect paella. And they are, in fact, engaging in arts and entertainment activities. They are programming play lists for their iPods, taking photos with their digital cameras, and at 55 years-old they are still going to Paul McCartney concerts, and shelling out big bucks to do so.

And the 'digital natives'? They are creating their own videos for YouTube, building avatars and living in Second Life, and tuning in with their moms and dads and siblings to watch *American Idol* or *Survivor*. They are writing Harry Potter blogs and maintaining their MySpace pages. And they are creatively engaged and satisfied by these experiences.

About 12 years ago, I was teaching 'Intro to Theater' at a small university in the rural state of Idaho, known mainly for its potatoes. On the first day of class each term I would ask the 100 or so students to raise their hands if they had ever seen a professional theatre performance. About 10 hands would go up. I would then say, '*Raise your hand if you would like to see one.*' 15-20 hands would go up. I would ask of the remaining students, '*Why wouldn't you want to see a play?*' The answer was generally, '*I've gone this long without seeing a play, and I don't feel like I'm missing anything.*'

Many US arts organisations seem to be consumed with finding new marketing tactics and strategies: Should we stream pod casts? Produce videos for YouTube? Have a MySpace page? Scrap the season brochure?

But this isn't simply a digital divide. We're dealing with a massive and profound cultural change that has been evolving over the past two decades, driven by demographic change, globalisation, technology, and many other forces. So what's the key to survival in this brave new civic space?

### **Deep survival**

In looking for answers I turned to an expert on survival, Laurence Gonzales, who wrote the book *Deep Survival*, which (according to the jacket cover) '*illuminates the mysteries of survival, whether in the wilderness or in meeting any of life's great challenges.*' Gonzales spends an entire chapter examining how people get lost in the wilderness. He explains that the way we get around in life is by forming and following mental maps: literally pictures in our minds of particular areas or routes. Gonzales says getting lost is simple. '*All you have to do is fail to update your mental map and then persist in following it even when the landscape,*' (i.e. the real world), '*tries to tell you it's wrong.*'

Edward Cornell, a scientist who studies the behaviour of people who get lost, once said to Gonzales, '*Whenever you start looking at your map and saying something like, 'Well, that*

*lake could have dried up,' or 'That boulder could have moved,' a red light should go off. You're trying to make reality conform to your expectations rather than seeing what's there. In the sport of orienteering, they call that 'bending the map.'*

Gonzales says that *'admitting you are lost is difficult because having no mental map, being no place, is like having no self,'* and consequently, everyone who dies in the wilderness dies of *'confusion.'* Gonzales describes five stages that a person goes through when lost, which correlate with Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

***bending the map =  
trying to make  
reality conform to  
your expectations***

Gonzales says, *'In the final stage, as you run out of options and energy, you must become resigned to your plight. Like it or not, you must make a new mental map of where you are.'* Not where you wish you were. The final stage separates the quick from the dead: it's not about helpless resignation, but rather a pragmatic acceptance of – and even wonder at – the world in which you find yourself. *'To survive,'* he says, *'you must find yourself. Then it won't matter where you are.'*

Arts leaders appear to be *bending the map*, working from mental maps from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when (at least in the US) many of them were formed. Their subscribers, donors, and funders also appear to be working from mental maps that are out of date. The world has changed but our missions have not.

### **Putting more on the autopsy table than the season brochure**

To survive the culture change, we need to accept that:

- (1) it's real and here to stay – at least until the next revolution
- (2) to solve the mystery of why 30-year-olds won't buy tickets to the symphony, we need to put more on the autopsy table than the season brochure.

Arts organisations need to find themselves and rethink why they exist. Claire Gaudiani has proposed that we replace the word 'nonprofit' with 'social profit,' as in 'social-profit' organisations. I like this idea because it reminds us that arts organisations exist in order to create value for society. Being a 21<sup>st</sup>-century 'Social-Profit' organization starts with having a 21<sup>st</sup>-century mission. Yes, we need innovations in marketing; but more importantly, we need innovations in mission.

We've spent four decades building supply and capacity in the arts in the US, on the assumption that this was the best way to increase impact. We've professionalised and grown our staffs and created hierarchical corporate structures; we've built bigger and better facilities; we've tripled the number of organisations and the size of their operating budgets, the number of programmes, exhibits and performances they offer, and the number of seats in their halls. And what has been the consequence?

I attended a retreat with leaders of a dozen orchestras about two years ago at which one leader lamented, *'I feel like I'm the Captain of the Titanic, and there's an iceberg ahead, but rather than being on top steering the ship I'm in the bowels shoving coal in the furnace. I'm*

*afraid if I stop shoveling coal we'll run out of steam, but I know that if I don't start steering the ship soon we're going to hit an iceberg.'*

One of the consequences of uncontrollable and unsustainable growth is that it creates very hungry organisations and puts arts leaders into permanent self-preservation mode, making it very difficult for them to navigate the iceberg that's threatening to destroy their institutions.

What's the iceberg? I think it's the fact that arts organisations can't easily explain to people why they matter.

**being a 21st-century  
'social-profit'  
organization starts  
with having a 21st-  
century mission**

We can shovel coal and secure money, build our organisations and make our companies as excellent as they can be, but none of it will matter *if we don't matter* to people in our communities. As the Knight Foundation report *The Search for Shining Eyes* noted, '*outstanding music and the memorable performance of it is not, by itself, sufficient to develop large numbers of new audience members.'*

So what's an executive director of an orchestra who feels like the Captain of the Titanic to do? I once interviewed Stanford Professor James A. Phillips, Jr. about his terrific book, *Integrating Mission and Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations*. I asked Phillips what he would say to a world-class orchestra whose audiences were declining and deficit growing. He said,

*'If you are an orthodox orchestra, the reason you are losing audience members (from your viewpoint) could be that the world is not good enough for you. But art really exists only in relation to audiences and their experience, particularly the performing arts. So if a symphony is seeing declining audiences, then the questions are: Would you sooner close your doors than change what you do? What is it that's important to you and why? You cannot, however, answer these questions without considering your need for audiences and/or enough people willing to subsidize you. And the fact is the number of people willing to subsidize something that is narrowly enjoyed may diminish over time. At which point, you will need to be prepared to go out of business.'*

He added, however, that there is another option as '*there are organizations who are redefining their missions in relation to people.'* This is easier said than done.

### **Mission creep**

Not only are growth and impact not the same, or necessarily correlated, but growth that cannot be sustained can cause an organisation to compromise its mission. Desperation for resources makes an organisation more likely to pursue funding opportunities that are inconsistent with its mission, the inevitable result of which is *mission creep* – 'the blurring of the organisation's mission over time as it seeks to take on activities outside the scope of its core competencies.'

In order to sustain increasingly expensive operations, arts organisations have turned to stretching, compartmentalising, and mortgaging their missions: developing off-mission programmes that will appeal to foundations and government agencies on the one hand, or

more commercial programming that will appeal to the mass market on the other. This compartmentalisation of mission is abetted by the hierarchical corporate structure that organisations have been encouraged to adopt, which puts *making the art*, *balancing the budget* and *understanding the community* into three different silos, and creates competing measures of success between these departments.

This is crazy. It's as though arts organisations have developed multiple personality disorder. We cannot redefine our value in relation to people without first integrating the various aspects of our organisations and our missions and having clarity ourselves about why we exist.

In an ideal world, funders would be sensitive to industry structure, respect the core competencies of organisations, understand the impact of restrictive project support over time, and their efforts would promote dynamic stability within the arts ecosystem. On the other hand, arts organisations must have the discipline to say 'no' to money that pulls them off mission. It's a Faustian bargain: go for the money, but know that bit by bit you may be losing ownership of the mission of your organisation and with it your capacity to adapt and be relevant to your community. Furthermore, while money might keep an arts organisation going, in the same way that being on a resuscitator is really not the same as being alive, having your doors open is not the same as having impact.

**existence does  
not equal impact**

So how do we measure the impact of the arts on people, if not by the mere existence, or even growth, of an organisation?

In his book *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins talks about a new configuration of marketing theory that he calls 'affective economics,' which seeks to understand the emotional underpinnings of consumer decision-making. He says that commercial entertainment companies are beginning to realise what their fan communities have been saying for a long time: that it is the loyalty and quality of your customers' engagement that is important. Jenkins quotes Coca Cola CEO, Steven J. Heyer: *'We will use a diverse array of entertainment assets to break into people's hearts and minds. In that order. We're moving to ideas that elicit emotions and create connections. Because the ideas which have always sat at the heart of the stories you've told and the content you've sold ... whether the movies or music or television ... are no longer just intellectual property, they're emotional capital.'*

The book says that on Coke's website consumers can share their own personal stories about their relationship with the product, stories that get organised around themes such as 'romance,' 'reminders of family' 'childhood memories' or 'times with friends.'

Jenkins also introduces the ideas of Kevin Roberts, the CEO Worldwide of Saatchi & Saatchi. Roberts argues that the future of consumer relations lie with 'Lovemarks' (as opposed to 'trademarks') which are more powerful than traditional 'brands' because they command the 'love' as well as the 'respect' of consumers.

These companies are talking about love and connections between people. They've co-opted our territory. And they are selling soft drinks! Along with HBO, they are beating us at our game. These companies are smart because they understand that emotions and connections between people are strong and that consumption exists within a social and cultural context.

Arts organisations need to understand this context and figure out a way to assess their progress in *making great art that matters to people* – as evidenced by increased enthusiasm, frequency of attendance, the capacity to talk about one's experience, the desire to share the experience with others, the curiosity to learn about the art form and the ideas encountered, the depth of emotional response, the quality of the social connections made, and the expansion of one's aesthetics over time.

There is a real danger if we continue to conflate growth of the operating budget, economic impact, or commercial success, with creating meaningful impact on individuals and on society. Oskar Eustis, artistic director of The Public Theater in NYC and one of the leading thinkers in American Theatre recently wrote,

*'Over the [past] 30 years, the American non-profit theater has been operating in an economic environment that increasingly has valorized the market as the primary, almost exclusive way of measuring value. As a result, many of the leading non-profit theaters have blurred the line between commercial and non-profit work. Even when they have been most brilliant and successful, there has been a real cost, a narrowing of the social and artistic agenda, and a diminishing of the vigor, bravery, diversity, and importance of the American theater.'*

Eustis is not arguing for *art for art's sake* – there's not a theatre in New York that is interested in being more socially and intellectually relevant than The Public Theater. If there is a continuum with *art for art's sake* on one end, and a commercial agenda seeking nothing more than *derrieres in chairs* on the other, artistically virtuous work that is intellectually and socially relevant happens somewhere between these extremes, and *it* is the work that matters to people.

I want to highlight a few examples:

### **Los Angeles Philharmonic**

While attendance has declined precipitously at many major orchestras in the US over the past several years, the LA Philharmonic has been playing at near capacity. The LA Phil's programming has been described by the press as *'modernist-leaning and often inventively theatrical,'* and the *'envy of music lovers across the country.'* The *Times* writer, Allan Kozin views the transformation of the LA Phil under Esa-Pekka Salonen as a *'lesson in how to update an august cultural institution without cheapening its work.'* The article notes that despite the assertion from other orchestras that new music doesn't sell tickets, the LA Phil sold 93 percent of its tickets in 2006 (a much higher percentage than many leading orchestras in the US these days).

Salonen was not an overnight success in LA. In the *Times* interview, he admits that he *'started off maybe a little harshly'* at the Phil and that he *'wasn't really having a dialogue with the audience.'* That he was *'doing the 'medicine' thing.'* He talks about having come from Finland where *'there is almost no diversity'* and then landing in LA. He says he realised over

time that his *'rigid Northern European ideas were not necessarily valid in a culture that has such a 'degree of diversity'*. He adapted. Achieving intellectual and social relevance requires the participation of our artistic leaders *with* our marketing directors. This isn't something that can be managed by marketers or outreach directors working in their silos.

The article says that Mr. Salonen's success provides a foolproof recipe for any orchestra: *'All it needs is a charismatic conductor with fresh ideas and an openness to new musical currents; a concert hall that people want to go to and that musicians like to play in; programs that treat music not as a museum culture but as a lively continuum; and a management and board willing to support experimental urges.'*

Easy, right?

### **New York City Center**

In 1943, New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia dedicated City Center as *'a people's theater, making the best theater music and dance accessible to all audiences.'* By the turn of the 21<sup>ST</sup> century, however, City Center no longer appeared to be fulfilling this mandate. When Arlene Shuler joined the organisation she was committed to revitalizing City Center as *'a people's theater.'* She created the *Fall for Dance Festival*, an event you may know because of the partnership with Sadler's Wells.

It's a ten-day festival which features showcase performances by established artists performing landmark works, alongside emerging and mid-career companies. All the tickets are \$10. When the festival was launched in 2004, the ticket price was almost revolutionary in NYC. In its first season it sold out the entire festival before opening night. In 2006, its third year in existence, City Center sold 14,000 tickets the day they went on sale and sold out the entire Festival (27,000 tickets) in under one week. 72% of festival attendees were attending for the first time and 25% had never or infrequently attended dance. Not surprisingly, 72% also indicated that the \$10 ticket price was the strongest motivating factor in their ticket purchase.

*Fall for Dance* has had an enormous impact on City Center and on the NYC dance industry and market. It has generated enthusiasm for dance and has spurred attendance at dance performances around the city throughout the year. More than a few organisations in the past year or so have followed City Center's suit and lowered ticket prices dramatically.

Combined with effective programming, marketing and outreach, all have seen an exponential increase in attendance and a diversifying of their audiences.

Because I know ticket pricing may be discussed at this conference, I want to sidebar for a moment on this topic. I am not advocating that arts organisations lower their ticket prices across the board. *Fall for Dance Festival* is designed as a gateway event, and is priced accordingly. Having said this, in the US over the past several decades there has been an exponential increase in ticket prices that has made it difficult for all but the wealthiest Americans to make the arts a meaningful part of their lives.

In September 2005, Peter Dobrin published an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that focused on the ticket prices at the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1975 – 2005.

Tickets in 1975 ranged from \$2 to \$8.50. *'Adjusted for inflation today the \$2 ticket would be \$7.50 and the top ticket price would be just over \$30.'* I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the top ticket price at most orchestras in the US is well over \$100. Dobrin notes that in 1975 the *middle* price of tickets was especially accessible for the *middle* class. Not so today. If you are middle class you are probably opting for a new CD or a movie ticket rather than a ticket to the symphony or theatre. Unfortunately, these exponential increases, which far exceeded the consumer price index, were driven less by demand and more by the tyranny of the *earned-to-uneared income ratio*.

For decades there has been a working assumption that arts organisations in the US should achieve a certain percentage of their income from ticket sales (with theatre this has typically been approximately 60%). As expenses grew, organisations inflated their ticket prices in an effort to maintain earned income at a certain level. This is yet another example of using the wrong output to measure the success of an organisation. Completely illogically, in recent years, organisations have continued to raise prices even as their audiences were declining.

Many organisations in the US are now examining their ticket prices and a few have started hiring experts to help them create more effective pricing strategies. A few are trying the 'airline pricing' model and some are going for across-the-board decreases and then endeavouring to make up the difference through individual contributions. As individuals make up the majority of contributed support in the US, this model could be viable. In an ideal world, organisations would maximize both revenue and access. Easier said than done; this is an area where perhaps the US and the UK could share research and learning.

Enough about ticket pricing. I'd like to share a couple more examples of organisations that have redefined their missions in relation to people ...

### **Center Stage Theater in Baltimore, MD**

When artistic director, Irene Lewis, arrived in the early 90s at Center Stage Theater in Baltimore Maryland, a city whose population is 80% African American, the theatre was producing works primarily by white playwrights, performed by white actors, for white audiences. Irene Lewis astutely observed that Center Stage was not serving the larger community of Baltimore, and so she rallied her staff and they made the commitment to change that by programming 2 to 3 plays (out of 6) each season by African American playwrights or about the African American experience. Irene Lewis also set a firm rule that in all of the promotional ads and brochures that Center Stage produced, at least 30% of the people shown had to be African American.

The new direction of the theatre was not immediately embraced by its longtime patrons. Many of them were angry and more than a few cancelled their subscriptions. Center Stage took a financial hit. Despite the challenges and risks, Lewis persevered and over time replaced all of the subscribers it initially lost and then some. Today, the African American plays in the season generate the highest attendance and revenues, and the audiences at Center Stage are incredibly diverse. It took 15 years to get there.

Irene Lewis understood that Center Stage couldn't claim to be serving the community of Baltimore if its work was not relevant to the 80% of the population that was African American. And if you define 'outreach' as systematically reaching audiences beyond conventional limits,

then what Center Stage was doing in changing its programming was outreach, again, not as an activity *on the side* run by a separate department, but central to the artistic mission.

### **Elizabeth Streb – S.L.A.M.**

Finally, choreographer Elizabeth Streb, who describes her work as wrestling-meets-ballet, gymnastics, and circus, has been asking questions that challenge accepted assumptions about dance for more than 20 years. About ten years ago, she says she observed that the only 'public' thing she did was invite strangers into a theatre for a ticket priced \$25.00 – \$85.00. She decided to re-make the where and how of making her work and in 2003 she opened a garage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

**demystify the  
process by bringing  
private creative  
activity into the  
traffic of everyday  
existence**

In four years she's turned that warehouse into a true community cultural centre. How did she do it? For one, she opened the doors and let people come by anytime – to watch rehearsals or just to use the restroom. She added popcorn and cotton candy machines and let people walk around and eat food during the performances. She started noticing that people wanted to get in on the action, so she put in a trapeze and started to teach people how to fly.

In four years, her school has grown from 10 to 40 classes per week for pre-schoolers, elementary and junior high school students, and adults, and enrolment and tuition income has increased ten-fold. Education and access are now core to the mission of STREB. The organisational materials state that the company's approach seeks to demystify the process of making art by bringing the once private creative activity into the traffic of everyday existence.

What do the LA Phil, City Center, Center Stage, and Streb have in common? For one, their artistic leaders were deeply involved in their transformations. Second, they do not behave as if achieving artistic virtuosity and being relevant to the community are competing or mutually exclusive goals.

The impact these organisations are having on their communities is intentional and palpable, it is increasing over time, and their communities recognise them and support them as a result. Finally, all of these organisations had the courage and willingness to adapt. The ability to adapt is critical to surviving disasters, and is a characteristic of high-impact organisations.

An October 2006 special report in *The Economist* on innovation notes that if you visit Wal-Mart's headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, you will be greeted by a plaque that reads, '*Incrementalism is innovation's worst enemy! We don't want continuous improvement, we want radical change.*' We will never be able to navigate the new civic space using old mental maps. In the face of the culture change, almost all businesses are radically re-thinking their value in relationship to their customers, and so must we.

How? Here are five ideas:

### **1: Go cellular.**

In 2005, I read an article in *The New Yorker*, by Malcolm Gladwell (author of *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*). The article was called 'The Cellular Church' and was about Rick Warren, head of one of the most successful mega-churches in the US. The way these churches maintain a 'sense of community' as they grow very large, says Gladwell, is by creating 'a network of lots of little church cells – exclusive, tightly knit groups of six or seven who meet in one another's homes during the week to worship and pray.' The church has thousands of volunteers who are charged with getting to know each member that walks in the door and getting that new member plugged into a small group, formed around shared hobbies and interests – knitting, quilting, mountain biking. These cells effectively function as social networks, fueling deep friendships between church members.

People who are in small groups are more likely to show up at church on Sunday, stay a member of the church longer, and give more money. These mega-churches are succeeding because they understand that for most people, it is the social connections they form as an aspect of going to church that in large part drive them to attend and donate. Without the small group, going to church with 5,000 people could feel pretty impersonal. Probably a lot like going to a concert hall with 1,800 people.

Arts organisations need to foster small-group socially-driven arts participation and help people connect with one another. Why not have an army of volunteers who get to know individual patrons, make them feel welcome, help them meet others, and talk with them about the performances?

What else could we do? Well if we want to attract younger patrons, I think we need to turn our physical and virtual spaces into places where people can commune with each other and with artists. Let's start with our lobbies. Our lobbies need to be more than holding pens. A kiosk with a pot of coffee and a tip jar, or a 'mini-bar' with \$8 beers stuck in the middle of a cramped or cavernous room with grey walls, no comfortable seating, harsh lighting, no music, nothing to engage with visually, and that shuts down after intermission, isn't going to cut it anymore, particularly with the younger generation. Lobbies could be living rooms, galleries, bookshops, internet cafés, and great bars. We need to create spaces that promote dialogue with and between patrons, as much as spaces to present artistic events.

Center Stage in Baltimore, mentioned earlier, has a new 'GenNext Initiative.' In the past year, they've remodeled their lobby in order to create a more relaxed and social environment. They've also hired a GenNext Coordinator who produces events – parties with performance art and fashion shows – as a way of attracting younger people to the building. They are not yet focused on trying to turn these partygoers into subscribers. The parties are paying for themselves and Center Stage considers them to be highly successful events in and of themselves.

Rethinking our physical spaces is not enough, though.

Patrons also need virtual spaces where they can connect, explore, and share their thoughts. Like Coca Cola, arts organisations need to allow their websites to be used by their patrons to create community, to write about their experiences with the art, and share what they love with others.

## **2. Sample and share.**

The rule on the Internet is: sampling is free. You can listen to an entire CD before you purchase it. In order to reach broader audiences, arts organisations need to create free and low-cost opportunities for people to sample and share their art through mediated and live experiences with others. I'm sure you've all read about the new strategies of the Metropolitan Opera: Digital downloads, performances streamed in Times Square and at movie theatres across the US, DVD's, digital radio, etc. Since implementing its new strategies, the Met experienced its first ticket-sale increase by season in six years and there were 88 sold-out performances in the 2006 season, up from 22 in the season prior. They sold 323,751 tickets for the high-def broadcasts of operas in 400 movie theaters around the world. At \$18 each in the US, they earned \$3 million.

All of these new media strategies were complemented by free dress rehearsals and a supply of \$20 tickets at every performance. Very few organizations have the budget and reach to enter into business deals on a par with the Met's and these particular strategies grow from their size and position as an internationally-recognised leading brand in their industry. Nevertheless, most arts organisations could capitalize on the capacity for mediated experiences to reach new audiences and deepen relationships with existing audiences.

In October 2006, I went to a fantastic concert by the American Composers Orchestra, which by and large does new and experimental compositions. I experienced a terrific new Brad Lupman composition, accompanied by a great video by a New York company called Boom Design Group. Unless you could get to NYC on October 13, 2006, there was no way for you to hear and see this piece. And yet, if the ACO had put the recording of the piece, with the video, on their website, and allowed people to experience a 3 minute sample for free, or download the whole piece for \$1 or \$2, I would have emailed everyone I knew the day after the concert and said, *'go to the website and check out this piece – it's fantastic.'*

And the fact is that if I e-mail them and tell them to buy it, it's going to mean a lot more to them than if the ACO does. And if the premise of Chris Anderson's *The Long Tail* is true – that the future of culture and commerce lies not in creating blockbusters but in creating and mining niche markets – then the ACO might be amazed at how many people around the world would pay \$2 to download that new music and video piece that they currently cannot access any other way.

This is not about top-down control from arts organisations; it's about allowing patrons to be active participants in our sites and turning them into devoted fans and catalysts for participation by others - in other words, driving word of mouth. When the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis presented the group GobSquad a few months back, they were amazed to find that one of their young patrons went home that night and made a video response to the piece and posted it on YouTube. They began thinking, *'How do we fuel more of this?'* which is exactly the right question to ask.

### 3. Embrace the Pro-Am Revolution.

In the 2004 pamphlet *Pro-Am Revolution, How Enthusiasts Are Changing Our Economy and Society*, Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller write:

*'Pro-Ams – people pursuing amateur activities to professional standards – are an increasingly important part of our society and economy. For Pro-Ams, leisure is not passive consumerism but active and participatory ... The 20th century witnessed the rise of professionals. In one field after another, amateurs and their ramshackle organisations were driven out by people who knew what they were doing and had certificates to prove it. The Pro-Am Revolution argues this historic shift is reversing.'*

The internet has given everyone with access, the tools to create and distribute their own art. Arts organisations could become sources of content that could be re-purposed by amateur artists. Or they could invite pro-am artists to submit artistic work that could be displayed on their websites as a way of building community – and, who knows, maybe even finding new talent or programming ideas. Some organisations are testing this concept already.

For an exhibit of an avant-garde multimedia group called The Residents, MOMA in NYC curated 11 videos. These videos were created by the general public in response to an open call. The top 11 videos were then posted on YouTube and the public was invited to weigh in and vote for their favorites. From the public feedback, MOMA ultimately determined which videos to screen at the museum. This is a great example of unleashing amateur creativity and public participation.

What about patron as pro-am critic? If the consumer has achieved taste making status anyway, then why not elevate seasoned patrons to the role of reviewers and encourage them to write reviews, posted as blogs on your websites? Prior to joining the foundation I was the managing director of a Seattle-based organisation called On the Boards that presents avant-garde music, theatre, dance, and anti-disciplinary performance art from around the world. With the help of Doug McClennan at ArtsJournal.com, and artistic director Lane Czaplinski and I started what is believed to be the first patron review blog in the US in late 2003. It's been incredibly successful.

Patron reviews not only give your organisation critical information about what patrons are thinking, but help patrons build community and improve their capacities to process, discuss and understand what they have experienced; in other words, develop cultural literacy. It also promotes alternate viewpoints from those espoused by the local critic; let's not forget that art is subjective, after all; and, in the absence of a review, a patron review is a strong substitute for satisfying those 'latemovers' who need to hear what people think before they will buy tickets. And they may trust your patron reviews more than they trust the local critic, anyway.

#### 4. Be arts concierges – and filter!

One of the greatest challenges for consumers created by the internet is having too many choices; people are bombarded with information. Consumers increasingly expect customisation, and for retailers to understand their preferences and market to them accordingly. Recommender sites understand this. Arts organisations, on the other hand, really don't. We are terrible at helping patrons make smart, satisfying purchase decisions.

Arts organisations tend to tell the public *'We've got 8 or 18 shows this season, and they are all fantastic (!!)*' Well, they may all be pretty good, but they are not all the same, and by not helping patrons find the play that they are most likely to enjoy seeing, there is a greater likelihood that they will either choose none of the above; or not have an enjoyable experience. And at \$50 or \$80 a ticket (or more) it's a risky purchase.

**arts organizations  
are terrible at  
helping patrons make  
smart purchases**

Arts organisations need to get beyond transactional experiences and become arts concierges. We need to become responsive, reliable, and trusted friends who help patrons make decisions about what to see, who to invite, and where to go for dinner beforehand.

In much the same way as Amazon uses collaborative filters to make recommendations and the online dating service Eharmony uses surveys to gather information and match people up, arts organisations could collect data on patrons and develop a sophisticated recommendation system. Coupled with patron review blogs these tools could help patrons make more informed decisions, and perhaps even entice patrons to try performances they might not otherwise have sought out - at your organisation, or at another in town. But doing this on a single organisation's website is just the beginning.

#### 5. Aggregate supply and demand

Imagine this idea scaled for an entire city. What if all the products from all the arts organisations in London were aggregated by a site called 'LondonCultureClub.org' and you could get a periodic e-mail in your inbox making personal culture recommendations to you about everything that's happening in your city. And what if this aggregation of products and customer data meant that all the arts and cultural organisations in London could collaborate to allow Londoners - and tourists who belong to the CultureClubs in their home cities - to create customised subscriptions or vacation packages? To create horizontal packages bundling artistic experiences across the product lines of the various organisations? 'A Masterworks package' an 'An Avant-Garde package' 'A Wholesome Family Entertainment package' a 'Hot Art with Cool Parties package' etc.

By bundling horizontally, one play in your season, or one exhibit in your museum, could appear on hundreds of niche packages. And what if these packages weren't limited to non-profit fine arts organisations? What if they included nightclubs, commercial theatre, films,

gallery exhibits, books, CDs and other entertainment? Blasphemy? In fact, why not tie a site like this to Amazon, or NetFlix, Public Radio, TV, or Cable?

What if because you bought a ticket to a play through a site like this, you could automatically get an alert when the play was being discussed on your local public radio station? What if the interview was automatically downloaded as a pod cast to your device of choice, or emailed to you? Andrew Taylor and I started brainstorming a concept called Amazon-Live a year or so ago (you can read Andrew's blog on [artsjournal.com](http://artsjournal.com)). What if, because you bought a particular Shostakovich CD, Amazon alerted you when a piece on that CD was going to be played by your local orchestra? What if you were one click away from buying a ticket? What if bundling with a commercial product drove more people to your organisation?

In 1992, sociologist Richard Peterson coined the term Cultural Omnivore to describe the tendency of Baby Boomers and others to develop tastes for everything: high art and pop culture and everything in between. We may have a generation of cultural omnivores out there, but we've made it difficult for them to feast because we've created silos between non-commercial and commercial entertainment, and between the disciplines of music, theatre, dance, opera, and the visual arts. Why not help these omnivores find their ways from *Six Feet Under* to the playwright Adam Bock? In the minds of the consumer, it's all culture.

By maintaining our 'separate and better than others' status the arts could be losing their spot at the banquet. We can aggregate supply and demand for culture and grow the pie for everyone or we can have turf battles. If we choose the latter, I fear that HBO, *American Idol*, book clubs, cooking, knitting, gardening and home improvement, and now Coca Cola, will continue to beat us at our game.

There is no formula for how we engage people in the new civic space. The answer is not 'hardware + software + \$10 tickets.' But to start, we need to create new mental maps that recognize and accept - and even delight in - this profound culture change in which we are immersed.

be prepared to go  
out of business  
OR  
redefine your  
mission in relation  
to people

### **Discard the hope of rescue**

I want to recap a few points:

- Organisations interested in being survivors – who want to thrive and prosper in the future – must discard the hope of rescue and adapt their missions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Arts organisations cannot define the value of art in a vacuum. As Professor Jim Phills said, '*Art really exists only in relation to audiences and their experience.*'

- To those organisations that are struggling Phillips says, *'Would you sooner close your doors than change what you do? If so, you may need to be prepared to go out of business.'* Or there is another option. You can redefine your mission in relation to people.

We need to have a relationship with our communities and we need to connect people with artistic experiences that *they* value.

I've talked about some new, perhaps even impossibly new, ideas. I want to end, though, by sharing a 60 year-old idea from Lewis Hyde. In his 1945 book, *The Gift*, Hyde says

*'the art that matters to us - which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living, however we choose to describe the experience - that work is received by us as a gift is received. Even if we have paid a fee at the door of the museum or concert hall, when we are touched by a work of art something comes to us which has nothing to do with the price.'*

Hyde says that whereas *'the commodity moves to turn a profit, the gift moves to the empty place. It turns toward him that has been empty-handed the longest, and if someone appears elsewhere whose need is greater it leaves its old channel and moves toward him.'*

The American writer, philosopher and publisher Elbert Hubbard said, *'Art is not a thing; it is a way.'*

We must forge the way with art. We must redefine our missions in relation to people. It is not acceptable to have transactional relationships with our patrons and merely to create artistic experiences and sell or give them away without regard for the capacity of people to receive them and find meaning in them. We must understand that audience development is not about *derrieres in chairs*, but rather about brokering a relationship between people and art and people.

Perhaps it's time for us to stop waiting for people to find us, to understand us, and instead find *them*; seek to understand *them*; break into their *hearts* and *minds* - in that order.

Thank you.

### Questions

Simon Drysdale: *this idea of being affective is fascinating and we have heard similar things from Alan Brown and John Knell at the conference this year. But, this is long term, requires investment, serious change. How do you answer the people who say – in the meantime I might go out of business?*

DR: There are a number of arts organisations in the US who are having a dark night of the soul and realizing that they need to change course – but this change is difficult. In his book, *'Innovator's Dilemma'* Clayton Christanson essentially says that the larger an organisation gets, the more beholden it is to its capital markets and the more difficult it becomes to innovate. Over time organisations pay more and more time to their largest customers, but ignore everyone else. In arts organisations if you change just enough to satisfy your established audience year after year there is the risk that another organisation could come along and target those 30 somethings you've been ignoring all the while and put you out of business in the long run.

You can't innovate incrementally. The underlying impulse needs to be radical. The radical shift is in attitude; it's not necessarily about making large investments in risky financial ventures. Furthermore, the staffs of arts organizations need to get out of their departmental silos and create change together.

Richard Whitehouse, Dance Umbrella: *What is the first question which you should ask in order to redefine your mission?*

DR: It has to be 'why do we exist?' In the US, and maybe here as well, we have got very good at professionalizing the writing of mission statements. I read hundreds of mission statements and almost are completely mind-numbing – because they aren't really mission statements, they are scoping statements [statements of scope]. This is an idea that Jim Phillips talks about in his book, *Integrating Mission and Strategy in Nonprofit Organizations*.

A mission statement needs to demonstrate why anyone should care about the organisation. Why should your staff come in and work for less money than they could make elsewhere? Why should people donate money to you? Why should government support you? Why should anyone show up?

When organisations peel back that question and get to why they exist, that's where the meat is and it can be quite clarifying.

## Virginia Tandy, Director, Manchester City Galleries

### *From being about something to being for somebody*

Virginia Tandy is Director of Manchester City Galleries where she has overseen a £35m expansion and refurbishment, opening to great acclaim in 2002. Her previous roles have included being director of Cornerhouse, Manchester's international centre for contemporary art, film and publishing and the base of the UK's leading visual arts publications distribution company. She has also worked in the North West office of the Arts Council of England, led the creation of Manchester's cultural strategy and heads a national women's leadership network for museums. She was recently elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and in October 2006 began a two year presidency of the Museums Association.

### **Museums are about people**

The approach: *'from being about something to being for somebody'* was a phrase which originally came from Simon Weil (based at the Smithsonian in the US). It encapsulates what Manchester City Galleries (MCG) is trying to do through its holistic approach to managing the organisation and serving its users and visitors.

This presentation is about three things:

- Nature of museums and the relationship they have with their audiences
- The reinvention of MCG as it came out of a major lottery funded development
- Special way that MCG has improved its relationship building with users and visitors

There was a museums conference recently which had as its title: *'Are museums about objects or stories?'* which is an interesting question. Perhaps it is more accurate though to talk of museums being 'about people'. This is not just a question of visitors or staff but also because someone has found it or made it and someone else has decided to put it in the museum.



It's worth remembering that museums are about people and consider why it is that people come to a museum. What is at the heart of a museum visit?

We need to be honest about why people use our organisations. They may have other motives than the high ideals we subscribe to them. Reasons for visiting may be:

- Learning
- Entertainment
- Enjoyment
- Inspiration
- Social time with friends and family

Do our users come away with a good impression of our organisations? What is your abiding memory of a visit to a museum or theatre? Is it the smell of chlorine, the unreadable labels, grumpy staff, dirty toilets or lousy food?

Our aims to provide inter-generational delight can be seriously undermined by these sorts of experiences.

What are your institutional values? If you want to get everyone helping to make the institution successful there are a number of fundamental things you need to get right.

- How much does your staff know about the organisation's performance and their part in improving it?
- How do you deal with complaints?
- How do you use market research to inform programme choices?
- How do you apply art form expertise to secure the success of your organisation?
- How much are you willing to change to meet the needs of your visitors?

### **Manchester Art Gallery**

A capital project provided an opportunity to start from scratch on:

- determining key groups of visitors
- deciding how to target key visitor groups
- looking at what to offer them in order to ensure a successful visit



For example, some things could very simply be delivered, but hadn't been done before, such as providing a map for visitors so that they could find their way around the site.

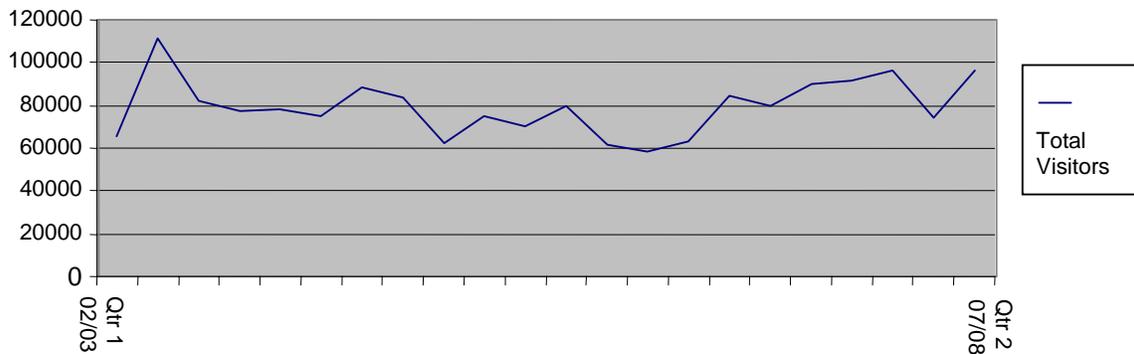
This was the approach which was required in order to deliver this:

- Creation of a multi-disciplinary management team which included head of education, finance, catering etc as well as programming/curatorial team
- Establishment of multi-disciplinary teams which are responsible for managing both permanent displays and temporary exhibitions
- Greater respect for visitor services and visitor orientation. Before closure, the visitor services team had a different staff room and didn't come to the Christmas party. It was a very separate team. Integration of the department into the rest of the organisation was crucial to improving visitor relations. There has also been real success in seconding visitor services staff into back of house positions. Some have gone on to have their positions secured permanently.

- Recognition that staff are not typical of your visitors
- Visitor orientation has been reviewed, improving not only the number of visitors, but also the general circulation of people.
- Opportunities for visitor feedback. Through this for example, it became clear that the toilets had been so discreetly positioned no one could find them.
- Market research to track progress and inform the future. This has directly resulted in a family friendly project each summer which has been popular.
- Performance management and reporting

## Result:

### Visitors per quarter since April 2002 Manchester Art Gallery



Immediately after the capital re-development there was a big surge as people wanted to come and see what had changed. This coincided with the Commonwealth Games, which saw an increase in the number of visitors looking for things to do between the big events which they were attending.

This was followed by a plateau which seems to be typical of capital re-developments. It became a strong call to action, demanding that MCG address the issue of its reducing visitor numbers. However, the change in approach (as outlined above) combined with a proactive programming policy turned the graph upwards again.

### Making friends and influencing people

As a result of 'Renaissance in the Regions' money, MCG has been able to think more strategically about activity and target markets

MCG wanted to make a real difference in terms of relationships with schools in Manchester. Only a third of places at workshops were taken by schools in Manchester and those that were coming only attended the workshop and then went away again – there was no continuity or depth to the experience. In order to achieve this, there were three key points to consider

- Start where they were and offer something they need
- Be willing to change in order to deliver it
- Track progress to demonstrate impact

The result was an educational initiative called MAGPIE (Museums and Galleries Project in Education). The premise was that basic skills (e.g. numeracy and literacy) could be improved through museum and gallery visits. All the art galleries and museums of Manchester worked together on the project.

MAGPIE ensured that the museums and galleries went on the journey together with the schools. It challenged the museums and galleries to rethink how good their education work was because of the closer involvement of teachers.

Longitudinal research has demonstrated impact – 50% acceleration of writing skills at KS2. In a city such as Manchester, where illiteracy is running at 30% this is a key outcome. It's making a real change to peoples' lives.



Virginia Tandy left the delegates with a challenge to consider.

- If you want to be the art and soul of your town or city, how much are you willing to change to get closer to the audiences you want to reach?

## **Katherine Zeserson, The Sage Gateshead**

### *Integrated public engagement*

Katherine Zeserson is Director of Learning and Participation at The Sage, Gateshead and has been part of the organisation's evolution since the mid 1990s when she began working with both of its founding partners, Folkworks and Northern Sinfonia. As part of The Sage's portfolio she has been responsible for three ground-breaking national programmes: REFLECT (Creative Partnerships co-mentoring programme), Sing Up – the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme and Vocal Force, a national workforce development initiative for singing leaders. She is also a musical director, voice coach, trainer and performer, most notably with Mouthful, a four piece a cappella vocal ensemble.

#### **What is the point?**

There is a head of steam building up around the question of 'what is the point of us?' and 'what is the best way of building and delivering values in our communities?'



(All images: Alex Telfer [photographer])

This presentation is based on the work of The Sage Gateshead and looks at the following points.

- What The Sage is and how it came to be this
- The way in which work is delivered
- The way the business plan works – what are the challenges and difficulties?
- The next stage of 'the experiment' - what is the future of The Sage?

The Sage, Gateshead is a vision about music and that music is expressed through a building and programme. The Sage was created in an area of profound industrial collapse in the mid-80s, part of a landscape of the post-industrial north east of England. This left the region with a serious challenge. In 1984, unemployment was at 40% in Gateshead. It had a reputation, as JB Priestley put it in the 1930s, as 'the squalid backyard of Newcastle.'

In 1989, the leader of Gateshead Council said that no-one would say this about Gateshead again and it is true that the external vision of the area is now very different.

Several factors came together to make this happen. The 1996 Year of Visual Arts took place in the North East, the development of funding for capital through the lottery was a strong impetus and the Arts Council of England brought together key stakeholders around a planning table. There were also several music organisations such as the Northern Sinfonia looking for a new home.

Meanwhile, there was a problem retaining musical talent in the region; there wasn't much of a motivation to stay and there was a severe lack of music venues of any type.

The key partners in the The Sage development: Northern Sinfonia, Folkworks, Arts Council England, Gateshead Council all had different perspectives, but were willing to change and adapt their visions to make a joint vision for The Sage. They needed to decide how they were going to change and what they would bring to the project.



One of the consequences was a holistic approach towards learning, participation and performance. This integrated vision was underpinned by a single purpose to transform the region with and through music and culture, combined with a commitment to access and inclusion.

Structure followed the vision. The building was designed in response to the brief so that values were enshrined in the venue. For example, the music education centre has its entrance in the middle of the main concourse because it is central to the ethos and values of the organisation.

The concourse itself is open from 9am to 11pm (with slight seasonal variations) and it is open and free – with the aim of it being like a 'town square'. You can come and be at the centre of the life of the building and observe and experience all sorts of music making. During the day, it is possible to sit on level 2 of the bigger auditorium and watch whatever is going on, whether it is a band or orchestra rehearsing or the lighting being rigged. All of the teaching and learning rooms have glass strips in the doors so that people can peep in and see what's happening. The overall message is that 'making music is normal'.

### **Integrated bottom line**

This approach presents a business model challenge, as the economics of the different types of activities have been funded very differently. The individual purchases of audience and participatory members, the 'bulk purchases' and service agreements of funders and the

engagement of sponsors and corporate donors all work differently. To bring in the different types of resources, with their various requirements poses a challenge to ensuring a holistic, non-segregated and inclusive approach to the whole enterprise.



The Sage's answer is an 'integrated bottom line'. About 34% of turnover comes from the two main funders – Gateshead Council and Arts Council England – with the remainder being the responsibility of the organisation to generate. This is done in three main ways:

1. Ticket sales and enrolments
2. Bulk purchase – essentially for the learning and participation programme – from service delivery contracts and specific grants
3. Corporate donations, sponsorship and commercial trading (car parking, catering etc)

Each producing department is required to set a budget which makes a surplus on project activity which then goes into a central pot along with other parts of un-hypothecated income. This allows the bottom line to be 'equalised' between departments and activities. It also encourages an integrated management model; the two Performance Programming Directors, Director of Building Services, Director of Learning and Participation [KZ], Finance Director, General Director and the Director of Marketing and Development all have equal status and recognition within the organisational structure.

The integrated management model is evident in the way the Front of House experience and Marketing and Development are managed and delivered. Inspired by Lucy Bird, it means that *customer relations are customer relations*, regardless of whether you are talking about the donor you are cultivating or the person who comes in to buy a ticket or your local authority which is buying into the music education service.

This means that customer relations, front of house, catering and marketing are all included in one department so as to ensure a consistency of ethos and values. The customer service team work across the whole venue – in Box Office, Bar, Stewarding etc - and individuals are trained and deployed in all areas. In addition, all performers are treated equally well, whether they are a famous orchestra or a local school. Everyone has the same access to technical facilities, staff and space, only dictated by the needs of the performance balanced against the budget.

John Holden recently investigated this model (commissioned by a combination of stakeholders), in order to ascertain how well the consistency of delivery works. He concluded that, broadly, The Sage had succeeded in this aim (conclusions available on the Demos website: 'Hitting the Right Note').

There were two key things that he pulled out as being important for this approach to succeed:

- *Clear sense of moral purpose.* This is about being very clear about the contribution which it is the duty of all staff to make – which keeps out distractions.
- *Critical mass.* One management, but 550 staff and several contracts, stakeholders and partners. It is easier for The Sage to achieve critical mass because it is a large organisation, but smaller organisations could achieve this through partnership and collaboration.

### **Challenges**

There are, naturally, challenges in achieving this vision.

- Resourcing – sustaining excitement and interest both externally and internally.
- Balancing the feel of a small organisation with the impact of a large one.
- Ensuring that the organisation stays ahead of the game – ‘getting out more’ – refining the model and continually trying to answer the question ‘what is the point of us?’

On this last point, delegates were left with their own challenge:

- What do we contribute to our community, why should they care, what’s the point of us?
- If the answer is not obvious then who do we need to go to find the answer?

## **Lucy Shorrocks, Welsh National Opera**

### ***Taking risks together***

Lucy Shorrocks is Director of Marketing for Welsh National Opera (WNO). Previously she has trained as a journalist, worked for commercial producers in the West End, a touring theatre company and two touring ballet companies before setting up City Media which had clients such as the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Ballet, Edinburgh International Festival and the Glasgow Art Fair. At WNO she has been responsible for the successful launch and development of WNO's subscription and the introduction of the £5 ticket for all WNO performances at the Welsh Millennium Centre.

[Unfortunately, due to bereavement, Lucy Shorrocks was unable to attend. The outline below has been compiled, with the assistance of Jo Taylor (WNO), from the original notes and powerpoint which were kindly forwarded for this report.]

### **Welsh National Opera**

Welsh National Opera is a touring company based in Cardiff, with 60% of its funding coming from Arts Council England and 40% from Arts Council Wales. It is a large organisation but the principles set out here are equally true on a smaller scale.



Birmingham is important to WNO as it is the only place outside Cardiff where it performs for three seasons a year. It wants to be considered as more than a touring company in the city – and the city has excellent cultural provision (Birmingham Royal Ballet at the Hippodrome, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Birmingham Opera Company to name but a handful of examples). Therefore Birmingham has a strategic importance in everything the WNO does.

One of the things that differentiate WNO from other opera companies is the approach and work of 'WNO MAX'. WNO MAX is the reconstituted education department which also has the dual brief of maximising the resources of the company.

WNO has a full time chorus and orchestra, creating significant overheads, but MAX's job is to scrutinise schedules to find chunks of time when people aren't being used. The opera 'Hansel and Gretel', for example, does not have men in the chorus, so MAX created a piece called 'Twenty Men Singing' about why men sing, which toured to small and mid-scale venues. WNO was in two places at the same time.

### **City songs**

'City Songs' is a piece of work which was created with 250 children and young people from four schools in Birmingham. These young people worked with a poet to create the text for a new song cycle which was set to music by a composer. Citizenship is a strong part of the piece and the exploratory work saw them visiting different parts of Birmingham (Bourneville, Back-to-Back Houses etc). Including singing, animation and speech, City Songs was

performed by the young people alongside a professional opera singer, musicians and the full WNO Orchestra.

Four months of work culminated in two performances – one matinee for schools and one early evening show for friends, family and the public.

### **BUT**

There was no way that City Songs could be mounted as an additional part of the week in Birmingham (on top of five main house evening performances).

#### *Meaning:*

WNO made a decision to replace a mainscale show (Carmen) with this performance. It meant facing a loss of income in the short term (Carmen would have brought in considerable ticket income) – but the choice was made to sacrifice short term income for potential profile, positioning and income in the future.

Birmingham Hippodrome also had to commit to the partnership as they too would lose income from a main scale show (as well as secondary income)



Both organisations were keen to work in this area. WNO needed to demonstrate its value and position beyond being a touring company passing through the city.

Therefore WNO had to believe it was a risk worth taking and a short term loss worth the investment in the medium – long term.

### **What happened?**

- A post-show panel discussion with arts and educationalists in the city was set up
- The matinee started well, successfully reaching a schools audience
- The same was not true for the evening show, where audience figures were a real concern. Despite a brilliant press campaign and robust marketing activity there was an advance of about 100 (compared with Carmen on 1,500)
- The marketing teams of both organisations had several ‘why are we doing this!?’ conversations. At times it seemed like it was draining marketing resources (particularly in staff time) which could have been used to greater effect elsewhere. The impact of marketing an additional product to a wider audience as opposed to another Carmen was significant.

*But finally...*

- 1,400 people attended the evening performance
- The audience behaved completely differently from regular audiences. This gave WNO lots to think about in terms of audience development. For example, people openly talked through the overture and there was lots of photo taking and recording on mobile phones. Although everyone within WNO said they were committed to this kind of work, some did struggle with the reality. Recording or filming would normally have been prevented as it would have meant renegotiating Orchestra rights
- It was patently evident (and exciting!) how new these people were to this environment – not just to opera but to the theatre in general
- The participants are now involved in other work with the Hippodrome. Afterwards all audience members who experienced City Songs were written to and thanked for their support. WNO and the Hippodrome can't wait to invite them back.
- The panel discussion was well supported with people demonstrating a real appetite for this kind of work.

**Concluding thoughts**

- Feel more comfortable taking risks
- Budgets are choices
- Our jobs are to connect arts and audiences. This is why senior marketing people need to think about running organisations – as marketers we are responsible for generating and sustaining income, managing staff and negotiations – a perfect skill set for leadership.



[During Keynotes in Conversation (see below), there was also discussion about Open House, another WNO initiative].

Photos: Neil Bennett, Kirsten McTernan, Clive Barda, Johan Persson, Brian Tarr.

## Keynotes in conversation

### Diane Ragsdale Chaired by Simon Drysdale

This session was an opportunity for delegates to ask further questions of Diane Ragsdale and to debate the issues raised within her keynote presentation.

[For the purposes of this report, some points and questions have been combined and/or summarised to provide a concise and readable record of the discussion]

The main themes which emerged were:

#### Artistic integrity and audience perspective

- *Is it about telling people about the work and why it is important or asking them 'what is it you want from us?'*

It's less about asking people what they want and more about understanding who they are so that it can inform what we do and enable us to engage with them well.

So, in the case of Center Stage in Baltimore, they looked at the characteristics of their local community. It was 80% African American, but the work on stage had been predominantly 'white' in orientation and the audience correspondingly so. There was a huge local audience which was 'under-served' and this informed their decision to diversify the programming mix and re-examine the marketing strategy.

It's insufficient now simply to put the work up on stage and wait for something to happen. We need to do more, to enable people to find pathways and to develop cultural literacy. Understanding our audiences enables us to deliver this better.

Sometimes it's about tailoring the product, on other occasions it could be about changing it more fundamentally. The Met, for example, is changing the way it is presenting its work – in terms of what appears on stage and the way it is distributed – through its worldwide cinema showings.

It's hard work, because it needs to be done with integrity.

- Good programming and knowledge of our own audiences have to go together because we can't hope to replicate exactly what works in one place in another. This is a problem which touring companies, orchestras etc face all the time, because in one place their work fits beautifully and in another not so well. Putting together the right sort of partnerships is vital so that work is placed in appropriate venues.
- *Should we make assumptions about our audiences – especially potentially patronising ones about diversity. E.g. just because 80% of a local community is African American it doesn't mean they want to see only African American work.*

This relates very much to the theme of the day, because it should not be tokenistic or about making assumptions. It needs to be about understanding who your community is, and what they care about. At Center Stage, they wanted to serve the 80 percent of the population that was African American and who were not coming to their

productions. The reason they made sure that print was representative of the local population was in order to assure that African Americans were being made welcome and understood that this was 'their' theater. These things needed to work together—in this case it was about programming and marketing working together.

*Monitoring the ethnicity of audiences – how is this done?* Audiences London has researched this and provided guidelines. It's about transparency – 'we want to know so that we can improve the service' – and about making it part of a range of questions

### **Change and the mission**

- *How do you convince the organisation – artistic director/board etc that programming change is required to increase or diversify audiences rather than putting up lots more posters?*

We need to put more than the season brochure on the autopsy table because it requires more than cosmetic changes to the marketing strategy. The attitude of 'we know best' and we are just going to tell you this in a louder, longer, more frequent or more sophisticated way, may have worked to some degree in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but if our arts organisations are to flourish in the long term they have to have better awareness of their audiences and adapt their artistic vision accordingly.

Getting our curators/artistic directors on board is difficult. Often, change only comes as the result of crisis or impending crisis so 'don't waste a good crisis' as a recent report on innovation in the Economist stated. Change is hard so people will put it off as long as possible – which is why it can need a crisis to force the issue.

Rather than letting it get to crisis point, if we are talking about internal persuasion it could be about opening up the channels of communication with the audience and letting them make the point for you. What do they think? What do they say? And rather than endlessly asking our own audiences, why not talk to some of those who don't show up at all.

- Many organisations are not aware of the danger of 'mission creep' – the way they are blurring their missions to meet short term needs. The more desperate you are for resources, the more you adapt to meet funders'/donors'/corporate criteria and the more it pulls you away from your original mission so that you lose sight of why you exist in the first place.

*How do you stay afloat while pursuing a long term strategy such as this?*

*And how do you satisfy funders and foundations when you are stuck in a long term agreement?*

Change at 'On the Boards' was not pretty for a while. The organisation was in crisis and some tough decisions had to be made (such as slashing the budget and reducing the number of staff) in order that the longer term success of the organisation could be served. It was necessary to return to the primary reasons of why the organisation existed and what audiences valued about it – which in this case was its

innovatory/cutting edge approach to the art. We also secured working capital from board members, which was key.

Obviously, you shouldn't be foolish about this for the sake of being tough – you need to be smart and clever about your business. Make sure you meet your long term commitments unless you have a good alternative source of finance.

*Given the points about mission creep, how can funders influence organisations to meet policy needs?*

It's not very effective to force an organisation to change with money. Frequently, short term funding has the opposite effect than that intended – with people pursuing a project, often creating inflationary pressure on the organisation to keep meeting its needs and then, when the funding finishes, not being able to embed the work in its mission.

That is not to say that there shouldn't be a conversation between funders and clients about their long term priorities and funding policy. The problem comes if the conversation is very proscriptive and makes inappropriate demands on an organisation which doesn't have the core competency to deliver. It would probably be better to find an organisation which does have the competency and fund them, rather than forcing change on those who can't.

### **Impact and value**

- *How do we measure social impact?* Alan Brown has done some excellent work on this [see reports on AMA Conferences 2006 ([www.a-m-a.org.uk/images/downloads/PortionFour.pdf](http://www.a-m-a.org.uk/images/downloads/PortionFour.pdf)) and 2007 ([www.a-m-a.org.uk/images/downloads/Conference07FILEONE.pdf](http://www.a-m-a.org.uk/images/downloads/Conference07FILEONE.pdf)) for presentations by Alan Brown on impact and value] based on his 'value architecture'. Currently he is working with the Major University Presenters in the US, on a huge market research study which looks at the 'fundamental' reasons why people participate in the arts.

It puts people on a continuum – looking at deep motivations for attending – which will have consequences for the way in which we ought to market to them. It enables us not only to measure value but to get closer to what the value really is. The headline findings will be announced in January 2008.

### **Online communities**

- *What happens if we open ourselves up to the audience through online channels such as blogging and online forums and they unleash a torrent of criticism. How do we deal with managing this feedback?*

If you were to receive a torrent of criticism it might be worth asking if there is something important which needs attention!

However, it *is* about managing it well – when setting up a patron review blog for example, pick your bloggers. Find the people who know your organisation and what

they are talking about. Interestingly, blog reviewers seem to be very responsible and take their job seriously.

It is also possible to respond to blogs through comments.

*Are we not giving megaphones to the people with the loudest voices? Comments might not be necessarily representative of the audience and therefore is it not dangerous to set policy based on their perspectives?*

Again, it's not so much about 'finding out what people want' but about understanding the audience better and tapping into their thinking. Who is in your community? Who do you exist for? Who could you be meaningful to?

Successful organisations seem to be very clear about whom they want to reach and the way in which they interact with the organisation's core values.

## **Virginia Tandy, Katherine Zeserson and Jo Taylor**

### **Chaired by Beth Aplin**

This session was an opportunity for delegates to ask further questions of Virginia Tandy and Katherine Zeserson and to debate the issues raised by their keynote presentations. In the absence of Lucy Shorrocks (see presentations above), Jo Taylor also provided an introduction to a WNO project and took part in the remainder of the conversation.

[For the purposes of this report, some points and questions have been combined and/or summarised to provide a concise and readable record of the discussion]

#### **Jo Taylor – Welsh National Opera: ‘Open House’**

Open House was a project which took place over four days in summer 2007. It included a range of free events, most of them participative or unusual happenings such as ‘Guerrilla Opera’ – in which people would appear to be having an argument in a public place like the bar but then develop it into song.

It wasn’t programmed in the usual way but as part of a massive exchange between staff within the WNO – 250 people including the performers. Everyone did a job which was not their normal one - a stage manager might be working on the marketing for example.

People were taken out of their comfort zones and many questioned the value and purpose of the initiative. It was a challenge to persuade some, such as members of the chorus and orchestra, to take part. Standing by and watching someone else do your job is also not easy.

The project had some amazing outcomes. Friendships were developed, cross-departmental working has improved and understanding of the organisation increased. There is even an online version of the community on Facebook and Open House had such an impact on the press officer that she left to become Artistic Director for another company.

#### **Discussion**

- This sort of project can have unexpected outcomes, with people deciding they might pursue other areas of work and it can be threatening for some staff to open things up and ‘let go’. However, the rewards are worth it because staff come to understand and care more about the whole picture.
- Working in front of house / in visitor services can provide greater understanding of audience perspectives such as what it really means to be a family with young children trying to negotiate their way around a gallery. It reminds us that most of the people using the venue or gallery are not like us.

It can also be enlightening for some staff to discover what happens at a different time and place – such as office based staff working at the weekend or in the evenings – or coming into contact with different sets of customers.

- Evaluation is important so that initiatives are properly rounded off and people are given the opportunity to get things off their chest.
- There need to be some boundaries set and the heads of department need to be able to veto things in case they plan to do something completely bonkers or outrageous.

- More than usual time is required for planning such a project to make it successful
- In the Open House project, everyone was allowed to choose what they wanted to do. They weren't entirely sure what they were taking on but it did allow people to take the degree of risk with which they were comfortable. The directors all took part.
- Audiences can influence and inspire staff. At The Sage, a feeling of community has grown up from some unlikely sources – such as staff working on weddings or community hires within the building.
- Expectations of staff can be raised so it is important to do this with integrity and be prepared to deal with the demands which might arise as a consequence. At WNO everyone is expecting Open House to happen again next year as a matter of course.
- Crucial to the multi-disciplinary teams and integrated bottom line is equity; a sense of equal status between departments which then filters through to everyone. Budget forecasting for example [at The Sage], is discussed from an early stage and shared and the problems are discussed as part of the whole picture rather than in isolation.
- Don't use restrictive release of knowledge as a power tool or to control people. By sharing knowledge and ambitions, staff can see how everything fits together and why certain things might be possible and others not. They are then able to work together across the organisation to make things happen.
- An indication of how well this works is in the rate of staff retention and the way that people move or are promoted through the organisation. You can also see it in the way that people work together, the contributions they make and even how hard they work – because it stimulates ownership.

There are other indicators – for example meetings becoming shorter and operations smoother because staff are talking and dealing with matters between meetings.

It should also be evident from the messages which the audience sends – both explicitly in terms of compliments etc and the way in which they are happier to spend time in the building because of the excellent atmosphere created.

- It is important for change and development to be carried through properly throughout the whole organisation and not to do it in a tokenistic way. The values have to be lived and there needs to be a solid commitment from the top. Damage can be done if you raise peoples' expectations and then slap them down again afterwards.
- Making mistakes is fine because that's how we learn.

Beth Aplin ended the session with the challenge forwarded by Lucy Shorrocks which related very much to a key point of the discussion. If we want change from the top, how do we ensure that arts marketers reach the top? What do we need to do to encourage ourselves and others to make these steps?

## Seminars

### Ivan Wadeson, Arts About Manchester

#### *How to balance your vision with your audience development strategy*

Ivan Wadeson is Chief Executive of Arts About Manchester (AAM), the audience development agency for Greater Manchester, which has fifty member arts organisations ranging from The Bridgewater Hall to Castlefield Gallery. He is responsible for the business planning and strategic development of the organisation including partnership development and management of relations with funders and key stakeholders. Prior to this he has also been Head of Marketing at Sadler's Wells and Marketing Director of the Royal Exchange Theatre. He is currently on the boards of the Everyman and Playhouse Theatres Liverpool and Network, the national network of Audience Development Agencies.

This was a personal commentary on the relationship between audience development and mission, informed by the views of a range of practitioners from different sectors, aiming to prompt delegates into their own evaluation of this relationship.

Ivan introduced his session by remarking that the theme followed on naturally from the keynote of Diane Ragsdale. He proposed to cover four main areas:

- Revisit an earlier presentation on the relationship between Marketing and Audience Development
- Assess how current practitioners view the state of their mission statements
- Provide views of the relationship between audiences and mission
- Suggest practical ways to explore this within your organisation

#### **1. Revisiting 'unpacking the baggage'**

In November 2004 at the AMA's 10th birthday one-day conference, Ivan made a presentation called 'Unpacking the Baggage'. It looked at the trouble with defining *audience development* and relating it to marketing. It was inspired by these quotations:

*'I wish the phrase would disappear from the lexicon. It gets in the way. It does more harm than good.'* (from a director of an audience development agency)

*'Audience development is a frequently used term within the subsidised arts sector....it is remarkable, therefore, how much of the research on the topic concludes that there is considerable confusion about what it means....'*

(Researching Audience Development: Literature Review  
Heather Maitland, Arts Research Digest 31)

Part of the problem is that this is not just an audience development definition issue it is also a problem with 'marketing' and 'arts marketing' as well. So, at that presentation, delegates were provided with four examples and asked to vote about whether they thought they were arts marketing, audience development or neither. The result was that there was absolutely no consensus in the room.

There isn't shared understanding about what is meant by audience development although the Ansoff Matrix is a useful model, which, even at the very first AMA conference in 1995 was used by Gerri Morris and Jo Hargreaves to help explain the term.

	Existing	New
Existing Products	1. Market Penetration	2. Market Extension
New Products	3. Market Development	4. Diversification

Whether or not you agree with it, audience development has come to mean boxes 2, 3 and 4 and we've got lazy about using marketing only to mean selling existing product to existing audiences. This separation of meaning is to large part reflected in practice itself whereby audience development is an activity undertaken by different people in different ways from those undertaking a core marketing operation.

And this is the problem. By trying to separate arts marketing and audience development it has the potential to stop marketing managers from thinking about those three boxes. If it's called something else then it might be someone else's problem (like education).

### **Back to mission**

A jargon buster's definition of mission:

Why an organisation or project exists and the broad effect that it wants to have. A summary of the overall difference it wants to make.

- The mission statement or overall aim is also usually just one or two sentences.
- It describes the people, situation or problem a project or organisation want to make a difference to. It also describes the particular difference the project or organisation wants to make.
- As with a vision, the aim may take a long time, be very general or very specific. It is not what a group will achieve specifically this year, or next year, but the thing they ultimately want to achieve.

First of all, though, what about your mission statements?!

Ivan then asked everyone to write down their mission statements in 30 seconds

Most took the full seconds to write something down.

Arts About Manchester's mission statement is:

***'MISSION, VISION AND ORGANISATION AIMS***

***Mission***

Arts About Manchester is dedicated to developing the ability and capacity of our members to increase access to the arts for all; we do this by providing support, collaborative services and projects to members and partners; and increasingly by engaging with residents and visitors through targeted campaigns.

Our focus is professional arts events in Greater Manchester, principally delivered by our members, but delivering this mission will involve partnership working with a range of organisations including community and participatory arts sectors, touring companies and as part of the Audience Alliance with regional agencies and organisations.'

Following on from DR's keynote, this looks classically like a scoping statement rather than a mission statement. Maybe it needs some work!

Delegates were asked to consider 5 questions in relation to their missions.

1. How many people in your organisation do you think could recall your mission statement if asked?
2. When do you think you will next review your mission statement?
3. Who wrote your mission statement?
4. How satisfied are you with your mission statement?
5. What is the relationship of your mission statement to your users, visitors, audience if at all?

Similar questions have been asked of chief executives and artistic directors at a range of arts organisations in the North of England. It wasn't a scientific study and doesn't represent the 'state of the nation'. However, it is an interesting snapshot.

The questions and results were:

Does your organisation have a mission statement?

Yes 11      No 2

If not, please explain why

*'Not relevant'*

*'They are sooooooooooooo 20<sup>th</sup> century'*

How many people in your organisation do you think could recall your mission statement if asked?

Less than 10%	3
11-25%	1
26-50%	4
51-75%	2
76-100%	1

So the majority think that less than half the organisation can recall the mission statement.

When do you think you will next review your mission statement?

Within the next 12 months	3
In the next 1-2 years	5
In the next 2-3 years	0
In the next 3-4 years	1
In the next 5 years or more	1

Many organisations were thinking of doing it soon, one had a mission statement which was enshrined in an act of parliament and therefore was restricted in how often it could be changed and one reply said that it didn't need to be changed in the immediate future because it was: '*General enough to cover any eventuality*'. If there was a link, it was to business planning cycles.

Who wrote your mission statement?

Myself	1
Senior Management Team	7
The Chair or Board Members/Trustees	1
Consultants	0
A Cross-section of Staff	1
My Predecessor(s)	0

*'Staff and Board awayday with approval from funding partners'*

*'It tends to be an organic process with everyone chipping in – then I will distil that into something, float it and amend/accept accordingly'*

There did seem to be a sense of ownership and it tended not to be imposed. Although it was ADs/CEOs who were replying – did their staff think the same thing?

How satisfied are you with your mission statement? What would you change if anything?

*'Very'*

*'Reasonably satisfied, although there is always room to edit the words'*

*'Satisfied at the moment but that will change'*

What is the relationship of your mission statement to your users/audiences/visitors if at all? Does it reference them in anyway? Are they aware of your mission? Should they be?

*'None. It's an internal working document only. Our purpose and principles are communicated through our programme of activities – managerial language has no place in our engagement with audiences'*

*'Yes it is devised to be inclusive and to address our needs. Yes we include it in print'*

*'Our statement is visitor-focused but I expect few visitors are aware of it'*

There was very little consensus on this issue. Interestingly, even though some said that it was used in their marketing communications, a quick survey of their websites and print showed it was not easy to find. However, there are some organisations – particularly big public sector ones which do have their statements up front for the public – a good example being the BBC.

What value do you think a mission statement provides for an organisation?

*'A key sentence that acts as a beacon to navigate by and a filter to put projects and ideas through'*

*'Keeps focus, enables us to monitor decisions against it, reassures funders and staff members, provides a 'high bar' for us to reach'*

*'It provides a stake that all of us are tied to'*

*'It sets out what business you are in so very valuable'*

### **Relation of audiences to mission**

Two propositions:

*Every arts and cultural organisation has a symbiotic relationship with its audience/visitor/user therefore its mission MUST include/reference these people.*

*It is not about balancing your mission with your audience development strategy but about INTEGRATING the two*

### **Mission statements and metaphors**

Responders to the questionnaire frequently used metaphors to describe their mission statements.

*A beacon*

*A filter*

*A high bar*

*A touchstone*

*A rallying cry*

*A succinct explanation*

But, who is the mission statement addressing?

Some guidelines about forming a mission statement from the commercial sector:

What questions does your mission statement answer?

What business are we in? (*A succinct explanation*)

What do we want to achieve? (*A high bar; a touchstone*)

What inspires us? (*A rallying cry*)

What is our target market?

The next two examples are not epitomes of mission statements but they are ones which work well for the organisations, give a clue as to why they exist and refer either directly or obliquely to audiences.

The mission for Inner City Music and the Band on the Wall project is and has always been:

*'To enrich people's lives by enabling them to access, enjoy and participate in the best musics of many cultures in a stimulating, social and conducive environment'*

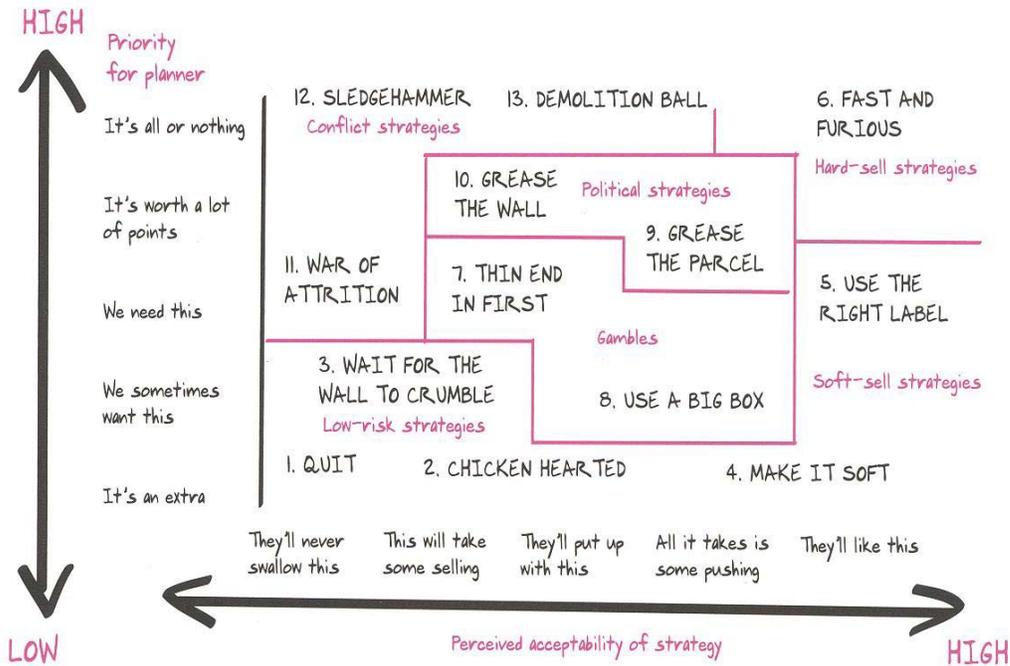
The mission for Nottingham Playhouse:

*'At Nottingham Playhouse we make work that is world class, made in Nottingham and as diverse as the community we serve'*

Some brief, but practical suggestions of taking your mission statement forward.

First, it has to start with your business plan. There's no such thing as a model business plan but it is important to consider how you will incorporate audience development as part of this. Positioning audience development requires that it is considered as **Philosophy**. This requires an organisation to:

- Recognise and understand how audience development relates to each department/role
- Have an organisational culture that promotes a collaborative approach to working
- Have systems in place that facilitate cross-departmental and if relevant cross-service working to ensure a coordinated approach
- Have an audience development champion to oversee a holistic approach and drive the agenda forward



The above table of strategy is a way of mapping what you want to do – in this case delivering a parcel through a wall. It is written about in more detail in Stephen Cashman's AMA book on marketing planning: *Thinking BIG!* It's similar to force field analysis in which you look at different resistances which you might come up against when trying to persuade people of the validity of your ideas. (You can order *Thinking BIG!*, cost £10 + P&P, from the AMA, e-mail [matt@a-m-a.co.uk](mailto:matt@a-m-a.co.uk))

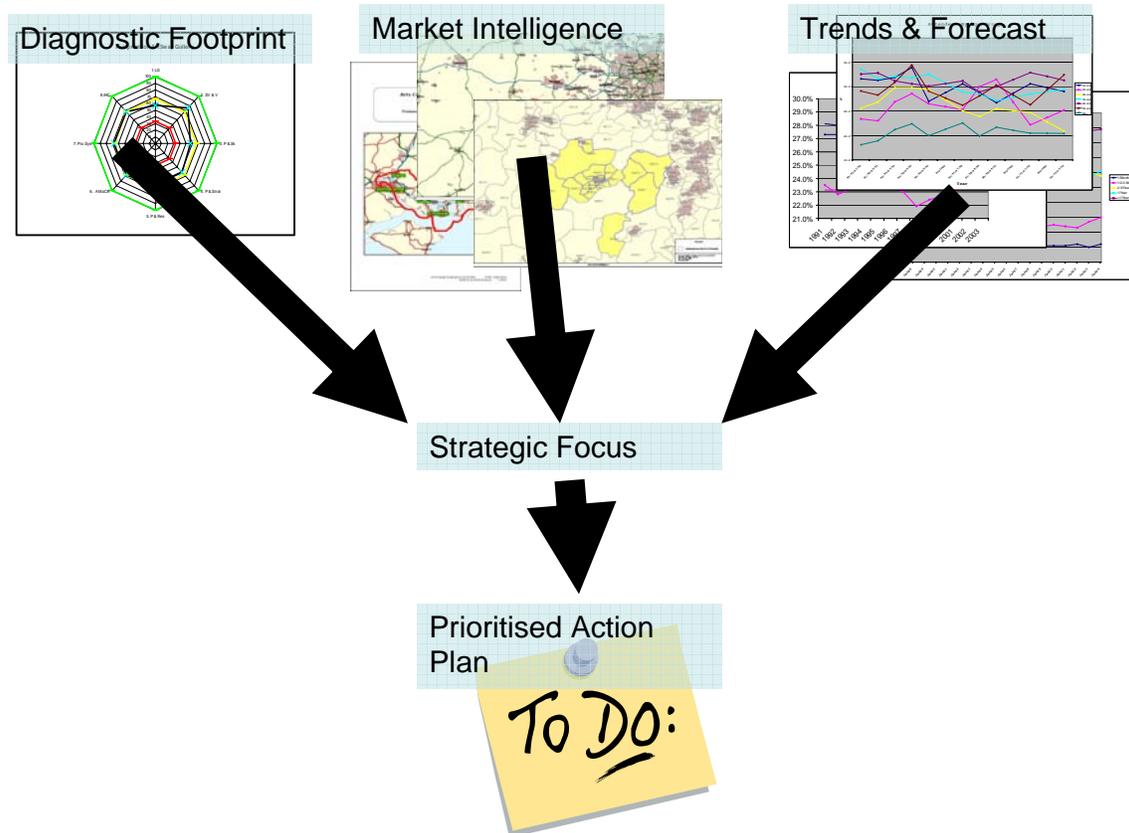
In directly relating this to mission, an interesting example is Audience Development South East's 'Holistic Excellence in Audience Development' developed from an original idea by Roger Tomlinson and developed by James Gough and Stephen Cashman [James Gough, AMH, 01962 846026, [james.gough@hants.gov.uk](mailto:james.gough@hants.gov.uk)].

They are using it in a project called SE21 in which they are working with twenty-one organisations in the South East of England.

It's a diagnostic project to promote sustainable and excellent audience development practice which recognises that this is related to everything the organisation does, including the culture of the organisation. It's grounded in solid management theory.

By creating the best circumstances and elements then using them in the best combination they can deliver the best results and outcomes in audience development.

This is represented in the diagram below ...



First, they get the organisation to decide which type of organisation they are. They then use a 'diagnostic tool' which they take the organisation through – a series of questions – out of which they create a diagnostic footprint. This is then combined with market intelligence about the organisation and its catchment and look at trends and forecasts providing a sense of how well the organisation fits in its environment.

From this, they are able to refresh the strategic focus of the organisation and make a 'to do' list – a prioritised action plan.

In the diagram below it is possible to see an example of the way this might work out for one organisation in practice.



Part of this involves developing a strategic focus which provides a structure for the way in which they can do this. E.g.

*'Using your skill and judgment complete the following to make a statement of your vision'*

The Theatre Chipping Norton will be:

For:

That:

By:

Which thus becomes,

The Theatre Chipping Norton will be: A HUB OF ACTIVITY

For: THE TOWN and THE 30 MILE AREA AROUND IT that everyone feels like coming to

That: LISTENS TO THE COMMUNITY, OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES, & CREATES / PROVIDES ENTERTAINMENT / PARTICIPATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

By: PRODUCING AND PRESENTING WORK as a RESOURCE for PEOPLE, INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE & ARTISTS

This approach above would seem to chime with the jargon buster definition of 'mission'. Slightly adapted therefore, this could be:

Why an organisation or project exists and the broad effect that it wants to have. **A summary of the overall difference it wants to make [and to whom]**

- **It describes the PEOPLE, situation or problem a project or organisation want to make a difference to.** It also describes the particular difference the project or organisation want to make.
- As with a vision, the aim may take a long time, be very general or very specific. It is not what a group will achieve specifically this year, or next year, but the thing they ultimately want to achieve.

### **In summary**

Your mission has to be appropriate to your organisation and environment. In doing this, consider

- What business are you in?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What inspires you?
- Who is your target market?

And,

- make this part of your business planning cycle
- create an internal dialogue
- do an analysis of forces of resistance
- think about the parcel through the wall strategy
- find out more about models of excellence in audience development

## **Hardish Virk, Multi-Arts Nation**

### ***Audience Development Essentials***

Hardish Virk has been an audience development consultant for over 15 years. This has included work on Birmingham Repertory Theatre's production of *The Ramayana*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Bombay Dreams* and The Lion's Den production of *Township Stories*. He has also led Birmingham Arts Marketing's Black and Minority Ethnic audience development project and has worked with Arts Council England and the British Council in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. He is currently on the Advisory Board on the Public Service Agreement 3 for the DCMS and speaks widely at seminars, training workshops and events in Europe.

In this session, Hardish Virk talked about three key elements of audience development; research, tools/methodologies and sustainability. It was an opportunity for delegates to learn how best to engage diverse communities and audiences through tailored marketing.

#### **Audience development**

As a result of being involved in audience development over a number of years Hardish has realised how much this is influenced by organisational development, which is especially relevant for today's theme of 'Mission Possible'. This particularly relates to the need for those organisations to have an awareness of their communities (for example regarding their ethnic diversity) in order to do good audience development work.

Much of the subject matter of the session has been built on the experience of developing culturally diverse audiences; however, the principles can be applied to a range of audience development scenarios.

When talking about audiences, this refers to a wide range of people interacting with your art or organisation: 'traditional' audiences, customers of any of your services, and the participants of programmes.

#### **Social marketing / (new) audience development**

Social marketing is an approach which

- Uses 'non-traditional' methods of marketing
- Is based on understanding the community of people you are targeting, taking into account their needs and social and cultural backgrounds
- Involves tailoring a (social) marketing/audience development action plan in relation to that understanding so that those communities can be turned into audiences

Social marketing is necessary because we have a responsibility to make our work accessible and standard or received ways of marketing have frequently not been successful in delivering audience diversity.

There are three key areas which are fundamental:

- Research
- Tools and methodologies: these can be quite straightforward, but it is about making them specific to the people we are trying to reach
- Sustainability: without the right research, tools and methodologies, sustainability is hard to achieve.

The essential components of this approach are

- Adequate human resources and realistic time - which come from integrity and commitment to the overall aim
- Partnerships – necessary to build trust in the community and to enable better returns from your resources

### **The process: research**

The process begins with an audit. Often, organisations are not aware of their existing strengths – what are the available human skills and resources – how can these support the project? What is the commitment of the whole organisation – is everyone involved? What and who are your existing partnerships? Can you build on these or reconnect with groups that have historically but not recently been involved? By utilising existing resources and building on knowledge, it is more likely that you will achieve sustainability.

Following this initial stage, it is then necessary to ask – which audiences and why? Why are you undertaking this specific initiative? There might be a specific cultural connection with the work or maybe there are political/funding reasons or you might have realised that your audience is not representative of your local community.

Then you are ready to do more specific research, beginning with making use of publicly available information (census, local authority etc) to learn more about the communities you are hoping to reach. This helps you to understand and identify the potential market: its size, diversity and location.

To support this process, you can then work with voluntary organisations in the locality to understand more qualitatively, the needs and attitudes of the relevant communities. In the case of The Hawth in Crawley for example, it was discovered that many people hadn't heard of 'The Hawth' even though they had been attending the Mela there each year. There was a job of local recognition, but in practice it was a simple connection to be made. It enables you to move beyond the assumptions we might make about groups and communities.

This needs to be authentic accurate credible information, which is followed up with action. A complaint of ethnic minority groups is that they are often being consulted but that no action is apparent as a result.

[Delegates were split into four groups to look at the ways in which they might put together a research plan for four different case studies]

## Process: tools and methodologies

The research described above is fundamental to adopting the best tools and methodologies.

- Print:
  - Design/language. If the object is to engage specific cultural community groups it is important to be aware of what are appropriate and not appropriate images and language. This is not about compromising the artistic vision.
 

HV often spends two months in discussion with artistic teams and designers before anything is started. Print should have full addresses of venues – find the space. Take time to make sure you understand how images are likely to be received, even down to the cultural significance and associations of certain colours.

Tone and terminology within copywriting also needs attention. For example, a much used word - 'exotic' - has negative connotations for some people.
  - Distribution. Not just about distributing print cold, important to use distribution teams to engage with people at the same time. It's about developing advocates, explaining what you are doing and why and enabling good word of mouth to spread. It's also part of the research process – finding out what's happening and what people are thinking.
 

A5 leaflets and A4 posters work especially well.
- Direct mail: sent out predominantly to community organisations that are trusted and well networked. Occasionally, it is worth thinking about producing newsletters in different languages, but be sure you know what you are doing.
- Press and media: build relationships with culturally specific press and don't be drawn into spending a great deal of money on advertising. They are always keen to find good stories.

## Sustainability

- Sustaining the community engagement: put the work of your initiative to good use. Develop the relationships and show you are genuine about what you are trying to do.
- Long-term: audiences continuing to engage your services. The most difficult aspect is the development of long term relationships with venues because often you will be able to attract new audiences through a specific product. Get to know your audience, listen to them and continue to broker dialogue.
- Partnerships are an important aspect of sustaining audiences:
  - Community/voluntary groups
  - Sponsors or funders
  - Networkers
  - Artists
  - Ambassadors Scheme

Sustainability is only possible if an organisation as a whole commits to developing and sustaining new audiences. It means directors of the board, front of house staff and everyone. This requires internal partnership work so that there is internal sharing of resources and knowledge.

If people inside the organisation do not take ownership of this area of work you are not going to get anyone outside to do so either.

Audience development needs to be an important part of the organisation's business. Marketing and audience development staff need to be equipped with the right information and included in discussions that inform the mission statement.

Audience development can make the mission statement relevant to your most important future stakeholder – your audience.

## Delegate list

Jane	Macpherson	Almeida Theatre Company
Julie	Aldridge	AMA
Helen	Bolt	AMA
Annabel	Busher	AMA
Katherine	Dimsdale	AMA
Neil	Parker	AMA
Matthew	Gatehouse	AMA
Anna	Upward	AMA
Rachael	Easton	amh
James	Gough	amh
Diane	Ragsdale	Andrew W Mellon Foundation
Ivan	Wadeson	Arts About Manchester
Paul	Kaynes	Audiences Central
Sarah	Boiling	Audiences London
Penny	Mills	Audiences London
Katie	Whitehurst	Audiences London
Tim	Baker	Baker Richards Consulting
Craig	Astley	BALTIC
Victoria	Dadd	BBC National Orchestra Of Wales
Suzanne	Hay	BBC National Orchestra Of Wales
Jane	Woodman	Beaford Arts
Chilina	Madon	Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre
Georgina	Biggs	Birmingham Royal Ballet
Samantha	Eaves	Birmingham Royal Ballet
Jessica	Bevan	Chichester Festival Theatre
Howard	Buckley	Chichester Festival Theatre
Laura	Eastwood	Chichester Festival Theatre
Richard	Whitehouse	Dance Umbrella
Sally Ann	Lycett	De La Warr Pavillion
Ana	Gaio	City University
Jonathan	Goodacre	Gusto Arts Management and Consultancy
Simon	Reilly	Hackney Empire Theatre
Alex	Walker	Harris Museum & Art Gallery
Beth	Aplin	Henderson Aplin Partnership
Pam	Badwal	Impact Distribution & Marketing
Emma	Clements	Impact Distribution & Marketing
Simon	Drysdale	Impact Distribution & Marketing
Gemma	Gibb	Imperial War Museum North
Lara	Gisborne	Kettle's Yard
Kate	Carpenter	Pacific Road Arts Centre
Paul	Holliday	Pacific Road Arts Centre
Ann	Wells	Pacific Road Arts Centre
Sarah	Chapman	Lighthouse
Tom	Butler	London Calling Arts Ltd
Sean	Chapman	London Calling Arts Ltd
Tom	Hunter	London Calling Arts Ltd
Andrea	Jones	London Calling Arts Ltd
Jamie	Marrable	London Calling Arts Ltd
Andy	Williams	London Calling Arts Ltd
Barry	Wilson	London Calling Arts Ltd
Virginia	Tandy	Manchester City Galleries
Andrew	McIntyre	Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

Geri	Morris	Morris Hargreaves McIntyre
James	Page	Muse
Charlene	Katuwawala	Norfolk & Norwich Festival
Torgny	Andam	Ny Musikk
Hild	Borchrevink	Ny Musikk
Kristin	Danielsen	Ny Musikk
Caroline	Carter	Open Air Theatre
Michael	Garvey	Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Ceri	Jones	Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
William	Norris	Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Barbara	Chalmers	Perth Theatre & Concert Hall
Stephanie	Moore	Rambert Dance Company
Craig	Titley	Rambert Dance Company
Nicola	Christie	Random Dance
Helen	Dunnett	Royal Northern College Of Music
David	Stark	Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Gemma	Okell	Salisbury Arts Centre
Mark	Atterbury	Shape London
Taryn	Ozorio	Shape London
Jo	Dereza	South West Arts Marketing
Fiona	Pearce	Stage Entertainment
Rhian	Hughes	Tara Arts
Jennifer	Woodward	The Bridgewater Hall
Deirdre	Malynn	The Cochrane Theatre
Lis	Jennings	The Cogency
Alex	Robinson	The Cogency
Janice	White	The Cogency
Fiona	Brown	The Fitzwilliam Museum
Paul	Dyson	The Goldsmiths' Company
Amanda	Stucklin	The Goldsmiths' Company
Rita	Mulvey	The Lowry
Danielle	Chidlow	The National Gallery
Ioannis	Ioannou	The New Art Gallery Walsall
Hollie	Latham	The New Art Gallery Walsall
Emily	Till	The Sage Gateshead
Katherine	Zeserson	The Sage Gateshead
Mike	Findlay	The Wellcome Trust
Jo	Kirby	Theatre Royal
Victoria	Allen	Theatre Royal Plymouth
Alice	Cooper	Theatre Royal Plymouth
Claire	Hucker	Theatre Royal Plymouth
Marianne	Smith	Theatre Royal Plymouth
Mike	James	Unity Theatre
Alix	Hearn	Watford Palace Theatre
Brigid	Larmour	Watford Palace Theatre
Phil	Gibby	Welsh National Opera
Jo	Taylor	Welsh National Opera
Nick	Boaden	West Yorkshire Playhouse
Su	Matthewman	West Yorkshire Playhouse
Jo	Day	Wiltshire Music Centre
Howard	Sherwood	Consultant
Hardish	Virk	Speaker