

Stuart Brownlee, Partner, sbworks

Beyond the to-do list: cost-effective community engagement

Stuart is a chartered librarian and a partner in sbworks, a Highland-based research and training consultancy. He worked for twenty-six years in local government, most recently as head of Libraries and Archives with the Highland Council based in Inverness. Stuart is currently working with Hi~Arts to help deliver a Scottish Arts Council funded audience development capacity building project across the Highlands and Islands.

In this seminar he shared some of his experiences from his work in this area. It challenged delegates to consider what needs to change to grow your audiences, visitors and participants, looking in particular at the marketing planning cycle approach and the importance of gathering quality information to help make informed decisions about your marketing activity.

Beyond the to-do list

Stuart started by listing some of the phrases that had been discussed already during the day and that rang bells with him:

- Bleeding onto the streets
- Creative audiences and creative communities
- Surprise Audiences – it's a Highland trait for people to turn up at the door, with shows not starting until the audience arrive. There's a need to persuade people to book in advance, to avoid disappointment
- Journeys – in the Highlands and Islands a whole range of journeys have been explored, to work towards a memorable experience for audiences
- Attitudes – a lot of this stems from the attitudes of the individual organisations/venues. In the Highlands and Islands this may be a village hall or an established arts organisation.
- The whole organisation – the whole organisation needs to develop a business-like approach to developing audiences
- Genius of space – Highlands and Islands have a huge amount of 'genius of space'
- Knowing your audiences and knowing who's not coming and why. Even in remote communities, elderly people are scared of going out in the evening, perhaps because of lack of street lighting or a fear of young people who are resident at a local school during the week
- Collaboration and teamwork – with the outside world and within your organisation
- Tailored experiences
- First class experiences
- Exceeding expectations
- Have fun – why else are we doing what we do?

This seminar would look at the following areas:

- The Highlands and Islands' Audience Development Capacity Building (ADCB) Project
- The Marketing Planning Cycle 1 – 'what needs to change?' worksheet and group discussions
- Case Studies from the ADCB Project
- The Marketing Planning Cycle 2 – 'the promise of a memorable experience' group exercise

The Highlands and Islands ADCB Project Background

The ADCB Project Report was prepared during 2004/5 and was commissioned by the Promoters Arts Network in the Highlands and Islands, representing about 100 mainly voluntary promoters, including a range of venues and local authority arts officers. It was set up to encourage touring, particularly touring theatre and is supported by the Scottish Arts Council. Heather Maitland worked alongside Stuart on the project which is due to complete in 2008.



Organisations involved in the ADCB Project were:

- Promoters Arts Network (PAN)
- HI~Arts (part-funded research)
- Scottish Arts Council (part-funded research)
- Highland 2007 (funded by the Scottish Executive) (part-funded research)

ADCB Involved:

- 5,250 miles travelled
- 1,230 hours invested
- 32 performances attended
- 2153 audience participants formally surveyed
- Nearly 1500 responses received (nearly 70%)
- 19 promoters engaged with directly
- Over 1200 telephone interviews
- 2 major street surveys carried out
- Informal surveys carried out relating to a further 33 performances

Both formal and informal methods were used, through observation surveys, exit and entry surveys, formal questionnaires and informal dialogues during intervals. An important part of the work was speaking directly to and listening to what audiences said.

Hi~Arts is the Highlands and Islands Arts Development Agency. It's an arms-length body which develops and sets the parameters so as to enable arts to flourish in the Highlands and Islands and more recently has developed a heritage role as well. It is at the core of the infrastructure of arts development in the Highlands and Islands.

The catalyst for the ADCB was Highland 2007. It was investing a lot of money into the arts in the Highlands and Islands and there was a concern to ensure that people knew what was being achieved in return for this public investment.

Inputs of the ADCB Project

- 2 Day Strategic Marketing Workshop – held at the Strathpeffer Pavilion, involving 22 participants, from Groups A and B (see below), led by Heather Maitland
- One to one consultancies for Group A organisations with Heather Maitland
- Online marketing benchmark survey
- Online Tip Sheets i.e how to be family friendly, how to work with tourists etc.
- Regional Guides – information for touring companies on B&Bs, transport infrastructure etc
- 10 3-hour roadshows –122 participants, who each received a workbook with worksheets to use

Participants in ADCB were broken down as follows:

- Group A – Scottish Arts Council-funded organisations with marketing expertise in-house
- Group B – next-level of organisations, with buildings but without in-house marketing expertise
- Group C – Voluntary promoters, working individually within committees etc.
- Group D – Festivals, including Tartan Heart, Rock Ness etc

Geographical areas covered in the roadshow included Atlanta, Stornoway in the Western Isles, Orkney, Caithness, Murray, Inverness, Skye, Cairngorms, Aviemore and Fort William. Areas that still need to be covered include the Isle of Bute and Shetland Islands.

Outputs

A whole range of area profiles were produced for a range of organisations so that they could use the information to help plan their work appropriately.

Information on the drive times of audiences, taken from ‘the booth’, an online ticket selling agency, was provided. This online resource gives venues and promoters information on where their audience comes from, and so the information could be plotted on a map to help venues know who and where to target and which local media to use in promotion.

	B	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Arts Council Area Profile										
2	Postal Sectors Numbers Report										
3	Universal Hall, Findhorn (60 minute contour, Normal Speeds)										
7	age										
8	Postcode Sector	Total Pop	Adults (15+)	Females (15+)	Males (15+)	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
9	(Defined Area)	133,031	108,303	55,240	53,063	7,808	6,849	18,786	20,502	18,479	14,377
10											
11	AB38 7	1,950	1,605	833	772	96	74	239	283	300	250
12	AB38 9	2,200	1,756	901	855	103	81	263	297	324	302
13	AB55 4	2,006	1,646	845	801	102	73	232	302	262	290
14	AB55 5	5,164	4,272	2,202	2,070	310	247	638	754	717	566
15	AB55 6	1,625	1,296	650	646	94	59	174	256	261	219
16	AB56 1	8,136	6,572	3,463	3,109	473	406	1,076	1,132	991	880
17	AB56 5	1,690	1,364	666	698	87	50	197	261	247	212
18	IV 1 1	562	519	236	283	31	79	139	87	60	54
19	IV 1 3	1,451	1,220	625	595	92	45	102	222	271	233
20	IV 2 3	10,947	9,047	4,757	4,290	678	712	1,727	1,719	1,558	1,098
21	IV 2 5	5,143	4,088	2,096	1,992	245	245	699	881	819	555
22	IV 2 7	10,075	7,989	4,055	3,934	682	663	1,598	1,650	1,425	899
23	IV 3 5	7,300	6,168	3,343	2,825	374	388	951	1,027	930	832
24	IV12 4	4,917	4,118	2,173	1,945	285	247	452	723	784	565
25	IV12 5	6,273	4,987	2,571	2,416	332	251	765	978	863	754
26	IV30 1	5,127	4,459	2,332	2,127	209	258	798	691	671	570
27	IV30 4	7,899	6,238	3,176	3,062	421	403	1,339	1,229	896	763
28	IV30 5	4,776	3,859	1,862	1,997	551	168	610	789	586	490
29	IV30 6	8,002	6,353	3,231	3,122	531	454	1,305	1,192	1,142	803
30	IV30 8	4,838	3,884	1,904	1,980	276	230	607	830	780	503
31	IV31 6	7,466	6,118	2,859	3,259	487	584	1,328	1,208	867	684
32	IV32 7	4,542	3,701	1,934	1,767	257	149	483	704	713	545

Audience Base

This was for the benefit of the many small community-based activities and organisations, to try and help people move away from selling tickets on the door. It's a downloadable database for those who can't afford box office systems. It gives people tools that they can use in the best way for them to start getting more information from their audiences. The organisers can input information themselves or they can put it onto a laptop and ask visitors to input their own details during the intervals. Hi~Arts can then do more advanced work on the database, producing mapping of the information etc. It's free for people to use and moves away from paper-based work and individual excel spreadsheets that are out-of-date and help improve the management of information. Audience Base is about to be launched.

- The ADCB workbook was also produced, introducing practical strategic marketing planning
- An introduction to audience development theory
- Networking / sharing ideas and best practice

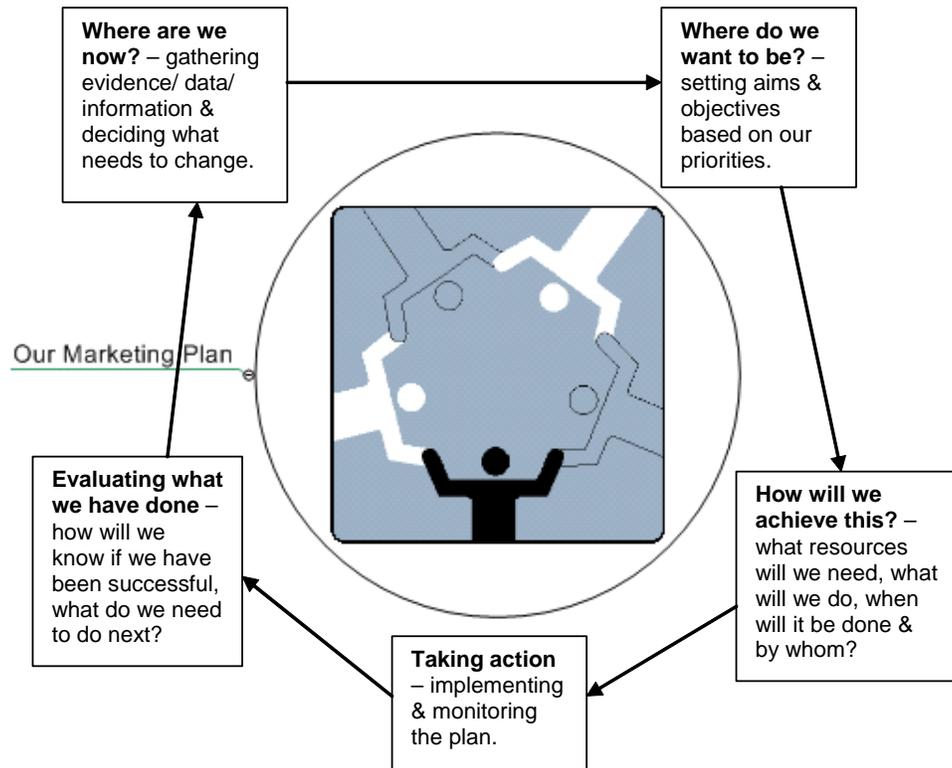
Feedback from participants

'Really useful to analyse operations within the structure of the 10 steps & Marketing Plan. Stimulated lots of new ideas and made me write them down. Will take workbooks back to entertainment sub-committee and devise proper plan with them'

'To take away and use the toolkit presented on the course. To increase audiences, increase pay for artists. To develop and improve the experience of visitors to the venue'

The Marketing Planning Cycle

The Marketing Planning Cycle was produced for people and organisations in groups C and D. It was about trying to integrate marketing actions into organisational and business development.



Skye Festival, as an example, started off very low-key but is now branded as the Biggest Smallest Festival in the World. The people involved spent some time thinking through their marketing planning cycle, and decided the Festival was about attracting visitors, bringing money into the economy and improving quality of life for local people. It gives promoters the confidence to start to take action. Most AMA members will already know this and be doing this but for some smaller H&I organisations and venues this was a change in attitude and a move to thinking in a more business-like way.

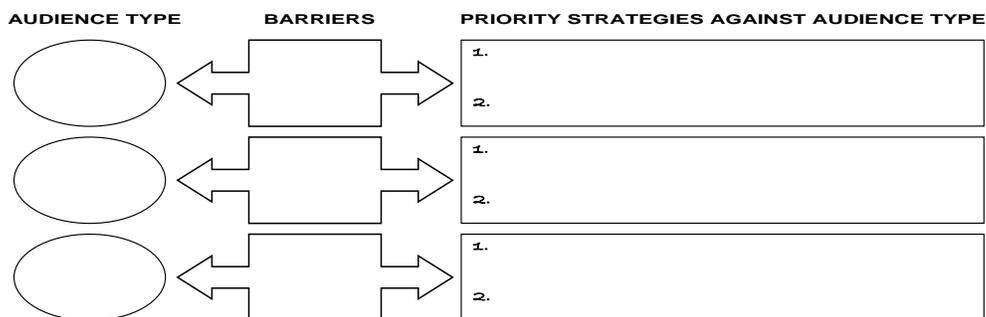
The ADCB Workbook

You can download this workbook (as a pdf file), print it out and hand write your responses. There are also MS Word versions of the eight worksheets available for download, which you can use to type in your responses. This is available for anyone to use from www.hi-arts.co.uk/audiences and any feedback is welcome.

It's called '*Beyond the to-do List: turning promotion into great marketing practice - ten steps for success*' and covers:

1. Why, what, who, when and how?
2. Mission and Vision
3. Key Types of Audiences – what information is available?
4. SWOT it!
5. Arising Strategies – TOWS it!
6. Key Outcomes & SMART Objectives (Actions)
7. Big Decisions – what needs to change to grow your audiences – strategies for success
8. 5 Minute Marketing Plan and Marketing Activity Template
9. 'The Promise of a Memorable Experience'
10. Developing Resources & Feedback

Looking in more detail at Step 7: Big Decisions – what needs to change to grow your audiences – strategies for success



This diagram can be used to outline audience types you want to reach, barriers to their engagement and what you can do to address these barriers. Stuart asked delegates to have a go at completing the sheet, with their own organisations in mind, taking just a few minutes to get initial thoughts.

Ideas that came out of the group work included:

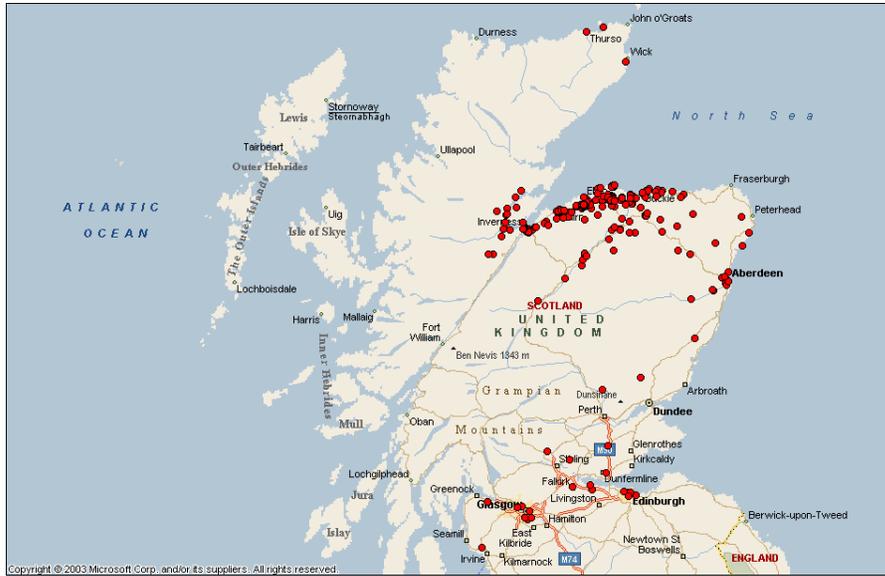
- The Young Vic are trying to engage students of American Literature for a performance out of term-time and this could be done through Facebook, MySpace and/or through a student representative scheme
- A TIE theatre company based at The Citizens Theatre, Glasgow is looking to engage local residents from The Gorbals area and this could be done by hosting a car boot sale in the car park, with refreshments available, so as to get local people coming along to the venue, addressing potential fears of going to a venue that might not be seen as being for them. Additionally, the company could go to people's own spaces and start conversations with people about the venue and the work they do.

Case study – www.thebooth.co.uk

The Booth is an online ticket selling agency for the Highlands and Islands and an audience development tool, which enables organisations to learn more about their audiences. The database holds the following kinds of information:

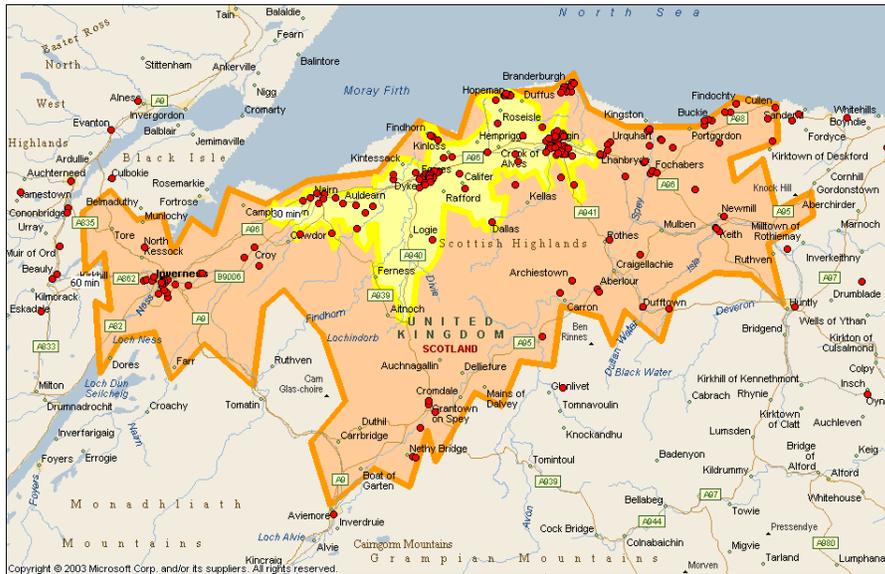
Order Num	Transaction Date	Event	Event Date	Quantity	Total Price
7311	23/03/2006	City of Inverness Highland Games	22/07/2006	1	1
7102	11/03/2006	Callanish, Storned	24/03/2006	2	8
5123	14/11/2005	Tchaikovsky String Quartet from Moscow	25/11/2005	2	20
4789	21/10/2005	Hot Pursuit	22/10/2005	2	16
3460	08/08/2005	Ross Noble 05	08/08/2005	2	20
573	24/02/2005	Shopping for Shoes	14/04/2005	2	10

You can then look at where your audiences come from:



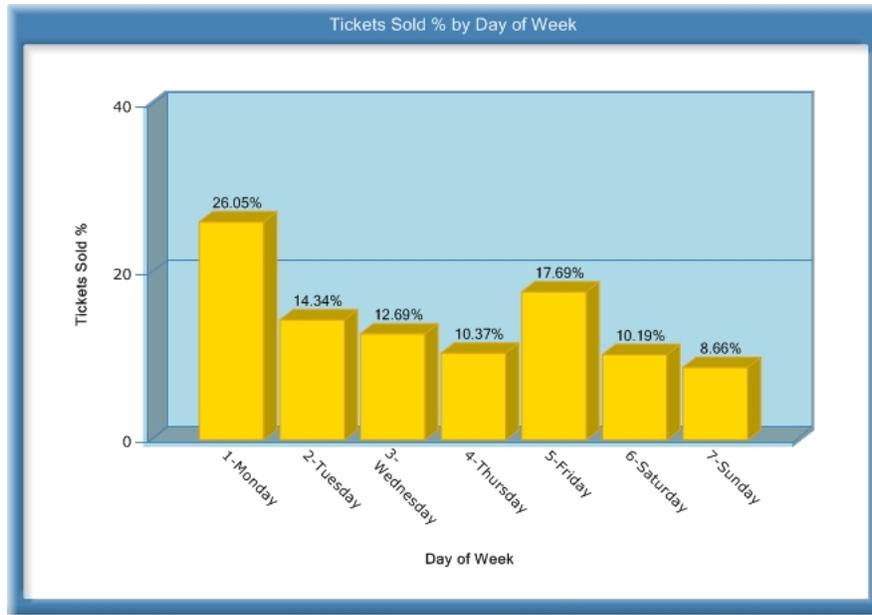
Each dot represents ticket sales in those areas.

You can also see how far they're prepared to travel. This represents the 30-60 minute drive times:



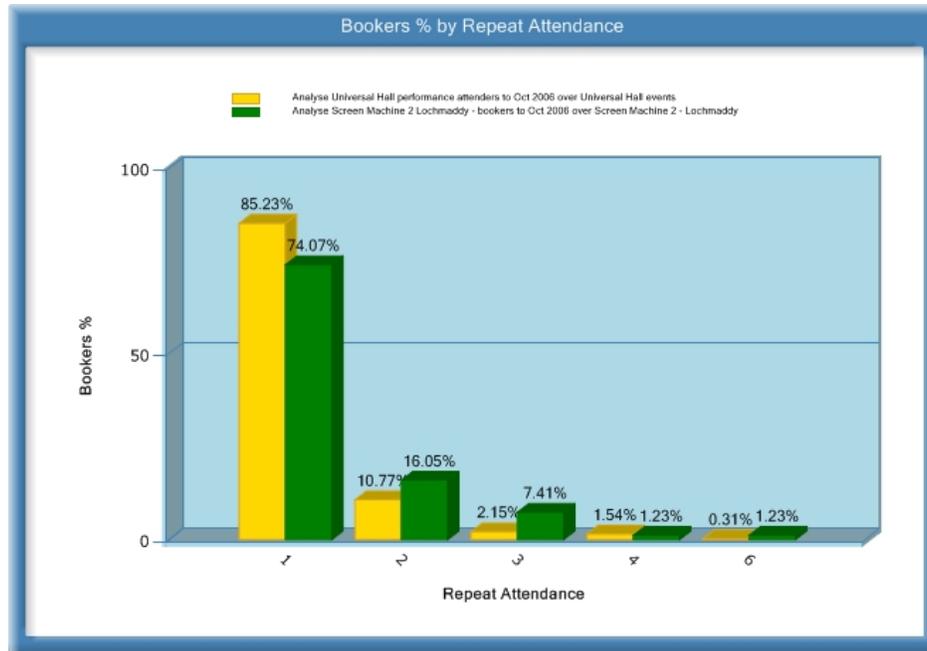
This then helps venues in knowing what places to focus marketing on.

Information also covered when people bought tickets, with most people buying tickets on a Monday.



Most tickets are sold in advance, so people are prepared to book ahead.





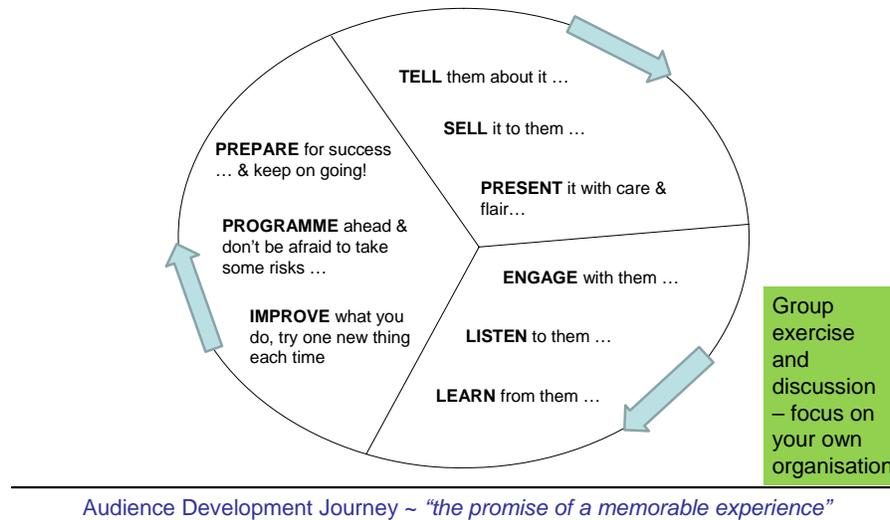
The venue learnt from this information that audiences often only came once to the venue and so actions were needed to encourage repeat attendance.

From all this information, area profiles could be drawn out, which looked at attendance from specific postcode areas, what people came to see, what age groups saw what, what methods they used to book tickets and the different socio-economic groups using the venue. This information can then be used to make decisions.

One venue, a village hall, was reliant on one person to promote events so as to raise money for the hall, so this research was very valuable in helping her in doing her job. Getting different types of information on its audiences surprised the venue when it highlighted that lots of tourists to the area came to see a show whilst visiting. It also helped the venue to think about outlying areas and how to attract audiences from those places.

The team at Hi~Arts provided the necessary information on postcode areas, from Arts Council profile reports and the venue could then look at the population of that area, socio-economic groups, ethnic groups etc and think about targeting those people. This data is now being used for practical action.

The Marketing Planning Cycle 2



To ensure people receive a memorable experience, Stuart emphasised the need to make contact with people, even if it's just talking to them in the foyer at the end of the show. It's important to listen to what audiences say, learn from that experience and try just one different thing for each event. You also have to accept that there will be failures but planning helps prepare for success.

Delegates were given a marketing planning worksheet from the ABCD Workbook and asked to complete this with their own organisation in mind. People were asked to think about the elements in the marketing planning diagram when looking at what their organisation could do.

In conclusion

Delegates were encouraged to go online, look at the workbook and give feedback. When all else fails, don't panic and use the workbook.