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The Buxton Festival Lifecycle: towards an
organisational development model for festivals

by Jennie Jordan

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Abstract

Festivals are a ubiquitous feature of contemporary Western society yet their production processes remain largely unexplored. Why do some festivals thrive whilst others limp along, and yet more run for a year or so then disappear? This paper applies a model of organisational development more widely used in the corporate world to a cultural organisation, Buxton Festival, that has been producing festivals since 1979. Adizes' corporate lifecycle framework identifies characteristics, and normal and abnormal problems, that are shared by companies as they are founded, grow, mature and then decline (Adizes 2004). If the model can be seen to work for not-for-profit cultural festivals, it could help leaders and funders to identify and avoid the crises that prevent them from becoming sustainable, successful events for their communities.

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Introduction

Festivals are an intrinsic and expanding part of the UK cultural landscape, they are also increasingly a focus for academic research, however, there is little written about them from a management perspective, and there are very few case studies available to researchers within the field. This discussion paper is the first in a series of research-based monographs that aim to start to fill this gap in our research knowledge. Buxton Festival was chosen as one of the first cases to be explored because it has managed to survive for over 30 years, producing a festival each year, and has remained both fiercely independent and entirely focused on the Festival itself. The questions this discussion paper seeks to answer are founded on the understanding that organisations, like people, grow and develop from birth to maturity and then decline and that the management problems they face are different at different points in this lifecycle, but recognisable across institutions (Adizes 2004).

The model identifies 10 stages in the life of an organisation from courtship through to death (see Figure 1). At each point organisations, as with people, will face specific, but recognisable developmental challenges, just as a child learning to crawl, or talk, or ride a bicycle has a unique approach. But as with a child, there are recognisable milestones and common hurdles that are well known to child development experts. Some of these barriers are life threatening, whilst others are just unpleasant or delay movement to the next stage. The life threatening crisis points for organisations are marked with a zig-zag line on Figure 1 and will be explored in detail in this paper. As with early identification of diseases, it is possible that anticipation of these critical moments and some understanding of why they happen may mean that managers are able to prepare for and sometimes avoid these times becoming major crises.

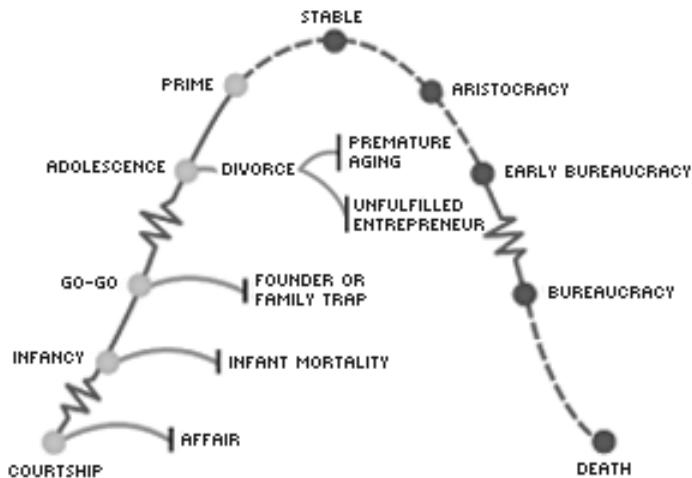


Figure 1: The Adizes Institute Corporate Lifecycle Model (Adizes 2006d)

During Courtship the Festival founders are exploring the idea of creating an event, developing a clearer vision of what it might be and why other people might be interested in it. As part of this process, others are drawn into as supporters and start to make a commitment to the vision. The potential problem for this point on the lifecycle is that, as there isn't a concrete event and the benefits of involvement seem a long way off, whilst the work might be quite intense, that other ideas and visions start to seem more appealing. Adizes calls this an affair, and as with an affair in a relationship, what it signals is a lack of commitment (Adizes 2006e).

Assuming the Festival manages to recruit and retain enough commitment, the next step is for the Festival organisation to be born and survive infancy. Babies, as any parent knows, are wonderful, but exhausting; endlessly fascinating, but delicate. They absorb huge amounts of energy and require constant vigilance. This is also true for Infant organisations. Take your eye off them for a moment and their existence will be hanging by a thin thread.

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The main dangers are a lack of food/cash and a lack of support as the dream runs into the wall of reality and all but the most committed disappear (Adizes 2006h).

This sounds grim, but the number of established and successful festivals does indicate that many organisations do manage to nurture their event and survive this phase. According to Adizes' corporate lifecycle model, firms that live on past infancy have done so because they have proven the value of their product or service within the market. There are enough people who now understand what this vision is to ensure that the core costs are being covered (Adizes 2006g). Adizes calls the next period Go-go and this covers the point in the lifecycle where children's are confident, growing rapidly and eager to learn. For those involved with organisations in the Go-go stage, this is an exciting time. There is a track record of success, people are interested in what you're doing, the team is highly committed and the organisation is growing, so new doors are opening for promotion.

If everything in the garden is so rosy, why should organisations worry? And this is in fact the problem underlying Go-go festivals. Founders are optimistic people who have a very clear vision. They have often had to take great risks to start the event and then to keep it going through often difficult times when there was no money, or sales didn't take off as they thought they would. And they have survived. This gives them great confidence in their own abilities. Go-go organisations are creative and seize every opportunity, so they grow. As they grow the systems that worked well when the organisation was small become stretched. Managers are recruited to take over parts of the business, but the founders are not really willing to let go. This is the Founders Trap (Adizes 2006g). Organisations might survive this by downsizing back to a manageable scale, or by replacing the founder with a professional manager in the end, but it can take a long time and there are likely to be casualties along the way; including, sometimes the company.

Assuming festivals make the transition to Adolescence we find organisations that are bigger and starting to show signs of being able to plan ahead. The fundamental features of Adolescence are conflict caused by

issues of power and control. As the professional managers who are now in place attempt to develop formal reporting structures and strategic planning systems the staff who enjoyed the Go-go phase with its risk taking culture and seemingly endless growth start to chafe and resist the new processes, which they see as restrictive and unnecessary bureaucracy. The result is that the entrepreneurial types often either leave (divorce) or try to accept the new approach and lead an unfulfilled existence. Too much restriction at this stage means that the organisations gains control, but loses its ability to take risks and becomes old before its time (Adizes 2006a).

Prime is the most successful period of the lifecycle. The organisation has matured, but is not yet set in its ways. It knows what it is doing and wants to do and has the systems and processes in place to ensure that new projects won't swamp it. At this point there are discussions about risk versus reward and both are taken seriously. The organisation can and does plan for the long term with confidence (Adizes 2006i).

From Prime onwards, the lifecycle sees organisations ossifying. Systems and processes run smoothly at first, but people forget why they are doing them. The focus on purpose and the vision that was such a feature of the early stages of the organisation's life disappears and takes with it the responsiveness and flexibility. Control over the organisation's finances is chosen over risk. Surprisingly, this does not lead to better forward planning as research and development are risky, so the Festival develops a safe programme that it knows will suit its existing stakeholders rather than programming new artists or artforms to attract new markets. Without this new blood both the organisation and its audiences decline (Adizes 2006b, Adizes 2006f, Adizes 2006c).

This paper will attempt to apply Adizes' lifecycle to the Buxton Festival to see if the analyses of the lifecycle stages are appropriate for a not-for-profit festival organisation. If they are, the lifecycle may be a useful tool for festivals to analyse their development and avoid some of the worst pitfalls and potential life-threatening situations.

About Buxton Festival

Buxton Festival is a not-for-profit arts festival in the 19th century spa town of Buxton, Derbyshire in the north west midlands of England that started in 1979. The Festival takes place in July largely in the town's historic Opera House designed by Frank Matcham at the start of the 20th Century. Its main focus is the production and presentation of rarely performed operas, although it also runs recitals, concerts and a literature programme in venues across the town.

The Festival is managed by a permanent staff team of three and is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It has a voluntary board of 11. The small size of the organisation compared to its impact on the local economy and the profile of the town nationally and internationally raises some questions about leadership – how has a micro-organisation co-ordinated the range of stakeholders necessary to create and sustain a £1 million-plus turnover and a three week festival of 140 events? What were the factors that drove it to act in the ways it did? What were the supportive dynamics and what were the hurdles and barriers? The case study particularly considers the periods of transition and instability, as it is the decisions taken in times of crisis that reveal an organisation's underlying values and provide the opportunity for us to consider whether this is an approach that should be emulated or avoided if we find ourselves in similar circumstances.

Although the case study focuses on leadership and organisational development and attempts to draw some general conclusions, it is important to remember that the events described took place in specific historical, cultural and economic circumstances.

Buxton Festival and the Courtship stage

Before any organisation can be born someone has to have an idea; a concept or a product or a service that he or she believes other people will want to buy or use. But that isn't enough on its own; for the founder of a company to be more than a sole trader he or she must persuade other people of the value of this idea. Adizes defines this stage as courtship, a period when the founder is convinced of the viability of the product, learns how to enlist support and starts to develop the shared vision that the various stakeholders will be able to commit to and will keep them going through the dark periods that are bound to follow (Adizes 2006e).

The culture and on-going success of any organisation is a reflection of the flexibility, determination, vision and attitude to risk of the people who created it and this leads us to explore the character of the founders, the product they hoped to launch and the nature of the market place into which they would be launching.

The problems one would normally expect to see during this stage of an organisation's development are similar to those one finds in the early stages of an important relationship: excitement leading to unwarranted assessments of potential, lack of detail, fear and uncertainty and a lack of clarity about what it is everyone involved wants to achieve. These are to be expected and are, to some extent, important. Without the excitement, energy would be lacking, without the fuzziness the vision would exclude potential supporters and stakeholders and without the fear there would be too much confidence and an unwillingness to consider the weakness and threats that might kill the company. Adizes also identifies abnormal problems that can lead to an early death for the idea before it has really started. These include a lack of commitment, a lack of action, too much interest on profits at too early a stage, and overconfidence (Adizes 2006e).

This section will explore the early development of Buxton Festival in the light of these potential problems and consider the impact they had on how it has developed over the subsequent three decades.

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By common consent, the initiator of Buxton Festival was Malcolm Fraser, Resident Director at Welsh National Opera from 1968 to 1976, and an ambitious opera producer and arts manager.

In 1976 Fraser had taken up a role at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and was out in Derbyshire on a day trip that included a visit to Buxton, then a run-down town in the High Peak which had been founded as a Spa town, but despite the local quarrying industry and light engineering had lost much of its *raison d'être* by the mid 1970s.

Despite its dilapidated state, with almost one third of its shops empty and the magnificent Palace Hotel under threat of closure, the town caught Fraser's imagination: here was a theatre, an Opera House no less, and a run of buildings along the side of the Pavilion Gardens that would make the perfect setting for the sort of opera festival he wanted to produce. And it was within striking distance of Manchester, Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham, all of which could be targeted for audiences. At this point the idea that had been brewing in Fraser's mind for a number of years found a home. He was going to create an international opera festival based in Buxton Opera House and drawing in international artists and audiences to watch productions of rarely performed works that they couldn't see anywhere else (Kennedy 1988).

For once a founder has an idea, he must use his overwhelming enthusiasm to woo supporters, they must believe that the founder's vision will help them to achieve their own goals, whether these are personal, professional or community-focused, in order to develop trust. Without this trust it would be impossible for the team members to maintain their motivation in the face of long hours of work and seemingly impossible odds stacked against them as they fight for investment, customers and for their belief in the product to be understood by the wider public (Adizes 2004).

Tuckman's Team Development Model (Tuckman, Jensen Dec 1977) supports this, contending as it does that teams need to move through forming, where the focus is on the leader (analogous to Adizes' courtship and infancy stages); storming, where the focus is on starting to share responsibility and develop processes (early and mid-Adolescence); and

norming (later Adolescence), where the rules for behaviour and interdependence become so embedded that they inform every part of the culture, before they can perform at their optimum.

In order for the various stakeholders to buy into the vision, it must be broad enough to encompass everyone's needs, but detailed enough to appear realistic and achievable. Fraser's vision was articulated early on: 'a unique, professional festival that produced operas that were seldom seen elsewhere'. This vision allowed professionals from the arts world to see the potential for career growth and community members from Buxton to see the potential for tourism and therefore business opportunities that such a festival might provide. It also opened up room for opposition amongst some of the potential stakeholders from the non-professional arts community in the town, who perceived a threat to their opportunities for involvement and influence in the town's artistic life.

The first person Fraser called was Anthony Hose, a colleague from Welsh National Opera. Hose suggested they involve his friend David Rigby, a business consultant who Hose knew from his time living in London who had since moved to Manchester. Both of them had professional development reasons for committing to the idea.

Anthony Hose, who became the Festival's Music Director, had worked with Fraser at Welsh National Opera and the pair had talked about the possibility of starting a festival together, so when Fraser called him and asked him to visit Buxton he responded immediately.

A musician and talented musical director, Hose's background included working at Glyndebourne and Wexford Festivals as well as Bremen Opera before he joined Welsh National Opera (Beaumaris Festival n.d.). The vision that brought the initial group together and sustained it through courtship, infancy and into its Prime is still quoted, unprompted, by the Festival's stakeholders today: to produce rarely performed operas to be seen in the unique environment of a listed Matcham theatre in a rural setting. It was this venue that meant that the next group of stakeholders needed to be courted.

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Adizes suggests that a founders are 'reasonably unreasonable'; passionate and determined, but not blinkered (Adizes 2004). Given the hurdles that were to face this group over the following three years, this seems a good description.

The culture established by this group, too, was of strong drive and a willingness to take risks. The fact that Malcolm Fraser and David Rigby had moved cities for work fairly recently – and that David Rigby had started to move from employment to self-employment – indicates that this was, largely, an entrepreneurial team.

The first hurdle that had to be jumped was to secure access to the venue. This proved to be difficult because, not only was it in a severely dilapidated, damp state, but the local council had leased it to Hutchinson Entertainments for the next three years as a cinema and were in the process of considering an application to brick up the proscenium arch to create an extra screen. Timing, here, was of the essence. It is not clear if the application would have been granted given that Buxton Opera House is and was a listed theatre, but the future of the venue was already under discussion so some doors in the town were ready to be opened with very little pushing.

The Playhouse Theatre, as it was then, was owned by Buxton Borough Council and was used by the various amateur groups, but was seen as an expense. During a run of Orpheus in the Underworld by the Buxton Opera Group the council decided to turn the theatre's changing rooms into storage space for the Pavilion's café, knocking a wall down in the middle of the run (Kennedy 1988). This crisis for the Opera Group brought them together in a campaign to save the Theatre that raised their awareness of the attitudes of the council, developed the social capital in the group and honed their negotiating and influencing skills. The political skill with which they persuaded the council to rent them the space at a peppercorn rent, the fundraising which allowed them to resource this and the organisational ability that helped them to set up the trust to run the venue meant that the community Malcolm Fraser found himself working with was well set up to support him in his battles to launch the Festival.

The social capital developed during this process was an essential factor in the success of the campaign to save the Opera House and launch the Festival.

As Anthony Hose acknowledges:

“you need local people who are in favour of having the event. Not everyone will be as passionate about it as others; when we launched the Buxton Festival, half the locals were very indifferent. Nothing will be to everyone's taste. But the other half was really enthusiastic, and full of energy and drive for it to succeed” (BBC n.d.).

And those who were enthusiastic had the skills necessary to campaign, raise funds and persuade the decision-makers in the local authority of the benefits.

In the early 1970s this thriving interest in the arts wasn't reflected on the local council though. They had closed the Pump rooms and the Spa and in the early '70s were in the process of closing the Playhouse Theatre. From this perspective Buxton Opera House was seen as a potentially expensive liability that required maintenance. Whilst Hutchinson Entertainments were willing to pay £1250 a year and accept the £80 a year that the council spent on its upkeep, the council was content; administratively this was a neat and tidy solution to a potential problem that they weren't keen to change. Culturally, this was a bureaucratic organisation that perceived change as a threat to the systems and processes they would argue were working well (Adizes 2004, Adizes 2006b). With their experience of festivals elsewhere, however, Fraser and Hose argued persuasively and determinedly that an Opera Festival would be a boon to the town's tourism economy that would help to fill hotel beds and develop a revenue stream from tourism businesses.

Two years before Malcolm Fraser's first visit, local government reorganisation had created High Peak Borough Council that took over the town council's responsibilities. This proved to be fortuitous for the Festival founders as the new authority incorporated members who had experience of tourism within the Peak District National Park, had policies of trying to

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save and develop attractions and hotels and understood the potential of the proposed developments to bring visitors to the town.

One of these councillors was Buxton resident and Playhouse Theatre trustee Ray Walter who was, in 1976, chair of the amenities committee. Walter had already been arguing that 50% of the town's rates were paid by hotels and other tourism-dependent companies. Fraser, Hose and Rigby convinced him of the potential tourism value of the Festival and enlisted his support in trying to get the lease from Hutchinson Entertainments.

Organisations at the courtship stage of development need to have an entrepreneurial culture in which opportunities are sought and grasped. This doesn't mean that there is no room for those with a focus on systems and process, structure and planning, but that the company does not yet have the maturity to cope with too much of this. Flexibility and growth are the watch words of the courtship phase and, on the whole, seem to have been the main features of the soon to be formed Buxton Festival and Buxton Opera House companies.

The synergy of Playhouse theatre members with the experience of campaigning who could see the value of the Festival to the town's economy, with local authority members with knowledge of the tourism trade meant that there were individuals in key roles who, once wooed and committed to the project, were willing to take personal and professional risks and became mainstays of the Festival and Opera House companies for many years to come.

The seeds of many of the future problems all organisations will face can be traced back to this point and one of the issues that has faced Buxton Festival over the years is rooted in the different interpretations of the vision that were made at this point. To Fraser and Hose, the Festival and the opera were the main object, as would be expected from professionals working within the opera world. To Walter and others, the restoration of the Opera House to be a year round resource for local people and draw for tourists to use hotel beds was more important. Clearly both groups understood the importance of the other side, and the shared vision has

sustained the commitment for over 30 years, but the tensions have become evident from time to time as will be explored later.

Buxton Festival and Infancy

For the Adizes model, infancy is the stage in which the commitment that developed during courtship moves into action – loans are taken out, jobs left, investors signed up (Adizes 2006h).

This section will consider the normal and abnormal problems that faced Buxton Festival during this period, including: a tendency to manage from crisis to crisis; stakeholders, in the shape of the local authority, being too close to allow the management to learn by its mistakes; some drift from the original vision to chase funding; and, probably the most important factor, lack of investment leading to sustained negative cash flows.

The normal problems facing any Infant company relate to its flexibility and size and are also a source of strength at this stage in its development. A lack of management depth means that the organisation has short communication channels; everyone knows what is happening and decisions can be made quickly. Few rules and systems mean that when opportunities, such as a new funding stream or product adaptation come along it is easy for the company to adjust. The heavy involvement of investors provides the founders with a source of expertise and support.

Abnormal problems are those that are either more appropriate to another stage in the organisational lifecycle, or are too difficult for the company to cope with on its own. Such problems include an overblown organisational structure that makes it impossible for the founders to make decisions quickly and easily; unsupportive investors who undermine the service or product, or the founders' self-confidence; the inability to sell to key customers or stakeholders; or a negative cash flow that continues for too long for the investors to sustain (Adizes 2006h).

In 1977 Fraser, Rigby and Hose started to think seriously about the management structure for their festival. The options included being a new

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independent company, or bringing in a management company with production experience and contracts elsewhere. The former was the riskiest, so they looked for a potential partner to help alleviate the risks and met with Ian Hunter, who had launched Bath Festival in 1948, led Edinburgh Festival from 1950-55 and being instrumental in the creation of the City of London (1962), Brighton (1967), Windsor (1969), Hong Kong (1973) and Malvern (1977) festivals (The Times 2003). The conversation was interesting, but it was apparent that had the partnership been established there would have been little room for Fraser and Hose to have the artistic impact or independence they wanted. The unanimous decision was taken to go it alone. It could be argued that this decision was the point when the founders made the fundamental commitment to the Festival that moved it from courtship to infancy.

Once they were truly wedded to the idea the founders had to make sure that they had the practical, action-orientated support of key stakeholders in the council. Without this, they would be unable to negotiate to buy back the lease on Buxton Opera House from Hutchinson Leisure Group. And without the Opera House the Festival was a non-starter.

When Walter, chair of the Amenities Committee, put forward a proposal to reopen the theatre, the result was a disastrous two for and 40 against. Walter did have support, though, from the Council Leader Keith Allman, so Chief Executive Glyn Jones persuaded Hutchinson Leisure Group to give up the campaign to brick up the proscenium arch and the lease by pointing out that the dilapidations bill at renewal would be horrendous.

With the lease available, two key actions were taken: Walter persuaded the Amenities Committee to vote through a small feasibility study grant to explore the possibility of refurbishing the Opera House; and two trusts were formed, one for the Festival under the chairmanship of Rigby and one for the theatre. The logic of two separate boards was not questioned, it seeming to be palpable to all concerned that the Festival's vision was international and broader than one venue, whilst the theatre was a year round resource for the town. It had two added advantages: the sources of funds for buildings are quite different from those for festivals and it

protected the Opera House from the financial risks that any festival, particularly one producing opera, incurs.

The feasibility study became more than just a symbolic action of support. There were many positives: Matcham's superbly designed theatre was largely intact, if run down, with a stage at least as big as Sadlers Wells and an auditorium that seated over 1000, meaning it would be possible to make it financially viable. But the orchestra pit was problematic; not only was it flooded, but it was too small for an opera orchestra. Hose insisted that the pit would need to be extended to seat at least 70 players and this looked problematic. Fortunately, Arup had designed the Snape Maltings Concert Hall at Aldeburgh and understood the importance of solving this particular conundrum. The solution proposed was for the stage to be cantilevered and the pit dug out, providing space for 68 musicians. Although expensive, it was the only solution that would allow for full operas to be staged in the venue without major constraints on the orchestration and for Hose and Fraser the vision had always incorporated high-quality opera performances. Rigby, like all successful entrepreneurs, argued that if the vision is strong enough and the product of high enough quality, the money can be always be found. Adizes argues that the need to source investment to support the vision is a defining symptom of the Infant stage (Adizes 2004).

Mayor Margaret Millican and the borough architect amongst others were opposed to the extra expense of digging out the pit. In 1977-79 the country was not only in the grip of an economic crisis, but a social one, too. Indeed, 1978 became known as the Winter of Discontent due to the number strikes (Simons n.d.). The crisis included a cultural divide, with opera being considered the preserve of the upper classes. For a politician to be seen to support spending money on the development of an opera festival at this stage would have been a brave move. Changing Millican's mind was important as not only was she mayor, she was also a leading hotelier in the town, so she was offered the chair of the Opera House Trust. Once she realised the potential economic benefits of the Festival in bringing in visitors she became a central figure in the venue's life, the success of the Festival and a major fundraiser.

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With the main stakeholders in place within Buxton, the next stage was to secure funding for the restoration of the theatre – for without this there could be no festival. In March 1978 the Duke of Devonshire agreed to be patron, and launched the appeal with a personal donation of £1000 (Kennedy 1988, McCoola 1984).



Figure 2: A 1978 fundraising leaflet

The importance of this fundraising campaign is hard to overestimate; it has created a culture of self-reliance. Buxton Festival has survived for other 30 years with very little public subsidy. Schein maintains that any group's or organisation's culture rests on a bed of shared underlying assumptions that develop as solutions to problems are tried and either succeed or fail. Early experience is therefore built into the decisions that are made later on (Schein 2004). In Buxton Festival's case, their early experiences of seeking investment were that they were unlikely to achieve much from the Arts Council or North West Arts and that local government may be supportive, but did not have much to spend. As a result, the Festival board has developed an understanding that fundraising is the responsibility of each individual member that is closer to the American model of arts funding where board members are recruited for their ability to fundraise, known colloquially as 'give, get or get off', than many British arts organisations are

used to, as well as a 'Members Circle' created in the summer of 1978 with the express purpose to 'meet socially and combine forces in fund raising (and support raising) ventures' (Buxton Festival and Opera House Steering Committee September 1978). This Members Circle has developed over the last 30 years into an important element in the Festival's resilience, as we will discuss later.

In 1978 the campaign secured £450,000 in European funding, and a further £50,000 was donated by Historic Buildings. This was almost enough to pay for the Opera House's refurbishment.

On 19th September 1978, the Festival trust reported that they had raised £40,000 from North West Arts and the Eastern Authorities Orchestral Association, the County and High Peak Councils, the British Tourist Authority and private sources. Although she was chair of the Opera House board rather than the Festival, Millican was also instrumental in introducing the team to Sir Spencer Le Marchant, then Conservative MP for High Peak, and a stockbroker with the London firm Messels. Le Marchant was immensely enthusiastic about the Festival, and extremely well connected into the wealthy communities of the 'Cheshire stockbroker belt' that lies to the south of Manchester just west of Buxton. Through Le Marchant, Rigby and Fraser were introduced to potential sponsors such as Saga, who owned the Palace Hotel.

Through these connections and an immense amount of hard work, the funding was raised; Fraser was contracted as Artistic Director for three years for the fee of £3500 and Hose as Musical Director for £2500 (Kennedy 1988). These nominal sums were suggested by Fraser and Hose and were a sign of their commitment. With the ambition to establish a national and international reputation, Scottish Opera's Janet Wharburton was appointed as Administrator and began work in the autumn of 1978.

In 1979 work began on restoring the Opera House to its former glory with a deadline of the 30th of July, which was to be the first festival's first night. To most people's astonishment, the restoration was completed on time, and to a standard that included specially woven carpets made to match a

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section that had been uncovered in one of the boxes and the original gas 'sunburner' light in the theatre's dome (Kennedy 1988, McCoola 1984).

Adizes' description of an Infant organisation is one that is driven, constantly looking for opportunities and action, but short of capital and in need of constant supervision from its founders. This is an excellent description of the Buxton Festival as it moved from fundraising for the refurbishment to putting on its first festival, complete with home produced opera. And, as it grows and develops, the organisation, like a toddler, tends to strive for things it doesn't yet have the skills to achieve. This makes them very exciting places to work and they tend to attract workers, whether paid or volunteers, who regularly undertake huge tasks and work way beyond their contracts. This, too, is an excellent description of the core festival and Opera House boards at this point (Adizes 2006h).

The Infant stage is also the first point at which the founders' vision is tested against the realities of the market place. Fraser and Hose's vision was of a festival that would produce rarely performed operas that would entice visitors to Buxton. It was of professional, high quality productions that would appeal to the international opera market. This coincided with Fraser's professional development as an opera producer and Hose's as a musical director. It was also a vision that the hoteliers of Buxton, sponsors and donors, too, liked. For those who had joined the campaign because they were involved in the town's arts scene and were hoping that a refurbished Opera House would be a space for them to perform, or that the Festival would be the start of the social and economic development Buxton desperately needed, the constant need for funding that is common at this stage may have appeared to give the donors and sponsors from outside the town an unwarranted amount of influence.

The development of a strong donor base amongst the Conservative stockbrokers of Manchester and Cheshire was also going to create a major barrier to securing public funding over the next decade. Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister on 4 May 1979 with a radical programme of cost reduction that was to bring her into direct conflict with David Bookbinder, who became Labour leader of Derbyshire County Council in

1981, on a hard left manifesto that meant when cuts were enforced by Government, he cut 'middle class services' rather than those he saw as supporting the working class (Bygone Derbyshire n.d.). In this context, an opera festival supported by a Conservative MP was unlikely to receive backing.

From the start the Festival was conceived of as being centred on producing and presenting rarely performed operas of artistic merit, supplemented with a wider programme of music, children's opera, drama and visual art elements tied together through a theme, this being an approach that Lord Harewood had pioneered at Edinburgh and which had become fairly standard amongst festivals at this point. The board also wanted to encourage fringe activities and a festival fringe company to broaden the range of events taking place so that tourists would have plenty to keep them occupied during their stay, even if the weather made enjoyment of the Peak District scenery difficult to enjoy (Buxton Fringe Festival n.d.).

There was a budget of £65,000, of which they had already raised £35,075 and the board agreed a programme of two festival productions Donazetti's Lucia de Lammermoor and Maxwell Davies' The Two Fiddlers, under the uniting theme of Sir Walter Scott as well as an ancillary programme that included drama from the Bristol Old Vic company, a concert by the BBC Northern Symphonia and a film programme, plus some fringe events. (Kennedy 1988).

The first Buxton Festival and the refurbished Opera House opened on 30th July 1979. Critically the Festival was a great success with full houses, and the crisis with its star performer having come down with the flu served merely to give the Festival its first front pages.

Despite the critical acclaim, sales, grants and donations amounting to £113,673, the Festival lost over £52,000, a debt that it was forced to carry forward in the form of an overdraft guaranteed by High Peak Borough Council, a loan from Derbyshire County Council and £15,000 from an anonymous donor. The need to invest in order to develop a market is not uncommon in newly founded companies, and what often differentiates the

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successes from the failures is whether they have enough capital investment to see them through this period. At this point, Buxton Arts Festival Trust had an overdraft, some wealthy supporters and the beginnings of some belief amongst the tourist trade in the area that the Festival could help their businesses, but no financial capital.

“Like a newborn baby learning to walk, performance in Infant organizations is inconsistent. Unexpected crises appear with little notice. Because Infant organizations lack systems, it's easy for them to get into trouble. Moving from one crisis to the next is normal.” (Adizes 2006h)

Despite the financial position, the board agreed that the Festival had been a great success. This self-belief, often despite evidence to the contrary, comes from the shared dream that the founders developed during courtship and is necessary in helping to overcome the early crises and problems caused by the chronic lack of cash that is common in growing companies (Adizes 2004).

Go-stop-go

The lack of financial capital behind the Buxton Festival was to grow into a major crisis during 1980.

At the September 1979 meeting, the board agreed to go ahead with a festival the following year and set a budget of £100,000 (meaning a fundraising target of £150,000). By March of 1980 they had raised nearly £82,000 and had sponsorship applications in to the Granada Foundation and North West Arts. ACGB took on Buxton Festival as a directly funded client, with a grant of £5000. The most the board could hope for, just four months before the Festival was £92,000.

Despite this, buoyed by the perceived success of the first festival the board carried on with their plans for two festival productions in 1980 and continued to invest in international auditions, as Fraser, Hose and Rigby were all convinced of the need to establish a reputation for quality (risk-taking in pursuit of a dream is part of the entrepreneur's modus operandi). The expenditure budget was £229,664, £100,000 more than 1979. In the Adizes model entrepreneurial organisations that are moving into the third growth stage are often fairly arrogant, having beaten the odds in getting the company off the ground in the first place and then having some success, despite the doubters, can make them believe that those counselling caution are simply nay-sayers (Adizes 2006g).

Themed around Shakespeare, the two operas included Hamlet by the little known French composer Ambroise Thomas, albeit with Thomas Allen in the title role. Allen had a recent triumph at Glyndebourne behind him and was beginning to be considered one of the best British baritones of the age. Fraser and Hose knew that they could not compete for the established names, but always had a keen ear for a talented newcomer and were willing to take a risk. The production was well received by the critics, who appreciated the opportunity to see Thomas' work.

The second opera was Berlioz's Beatrice and Benedict, a take on Much Ado About Nothing, produced for the Festival by Ronald Eyre, a theatre

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director who had not worked in opera before. Critic David Cairns entitled his Sunday Times review 'Miracle at Buxton' and the others unanimously agreed (Kennedy 2004).

Unfortunately, all this praise did not translate into ticket sales which, when combined with the on-going deficit and failure to control production costs, meant that by the second week the money had run out. Janet Wharburton, the administrator, called Rigby to tell him that they wouldn't be able to pay the staff.

After the performance of Hamlet on 5th August, having heard that they may not be paid, the technical staff called a strike and held a meeting on the Opera House stage. Rigby took a deep breath and went to meet them. He explained the situation; that the board were arranging additional finance and reassured them that they would be paid. Whilst still unsettled, the technicians dispersed, but did not agree to return to work without some evidence that the money was available.

An emergency meeting was called at Williams and Glyn's bank in Manchester for the 6th August, co-ordinated by Spencer Le Marchant. Present at the meeting were Fraser and Hose, Rigby and a stockbroker friend of Le Marchant's called David Hunter, plus the two local councils who had supported the Festival. Between them they hammered out a deal. The bank would extend its overdraft, on the understanding that it would be guaranteed by the two local authorities, a more experienced chair (Hunter) would be appointed and a Finance and Audit subcommittee would be established.

By the end of the second festival the deficit stood at £105,000. As with many Infant organisations that are starting to move into the Go-go phase there was a willingness to take risks, but very little control (Adizes 2006g) . The vision and quality, however, were largely applauded in the opera press and the consensus, once the immediate crisis was overcome, became that it had been necessary to invest to set a standard and approach that both positioned the Festival in the minds of audiences and has become part of the Festival's culture. The management literature largely agrees, arguing

that in the early stages of an organisation it is essential to focus on developing the product. The caveat is that successful companies develop products that fulfil the needs of their customers, and that there need to be enough customers (whether these are donors, recipients or purchasers) who see the benefits of the product to make it financially viable (Schein 2004).

Luckily for the Festival, their backers remained supportive. At this point one could argue that the Festival, having survived a major Infant trauma, and now starting to develop some systems and procedures to manage financial risk, was ready to move on to the next stage – expansion and growth, called Go-go by Adizes (2006g). However, the deficit was going to prove to be a major brake on the Festival's development for a decade and a half. Lack of capital is one of the most common causes of start-up business failure (32%), combined with starting a business in a time of economic recession (30%) (Lussier Fall 1996). Unfortunately for Buxton Festival, the 1980s in the UK were going to be difficult economically and divisive socially. These two factors were going to have significant impact on the Festival's ability to grow over the following two decades.

After the 1980 festival, it was clear that some changes had to be made to the Festival's operation if it was to survive; costs had to be reduced and income increased, particularly as the Arts Council decided to withdraw its direct funding. Adizes identifies this type of crisis as the start of the move from Go-go to Adolescence, the point at which organisations need to move from wild growth to a more considered position that gives a focus to its activities and starts to implement control systems (Adizes 2006a). For founders who have had a successful run, this might be a difficult time, as the new control systems that are introduced are, in effect, trying to place limits on their personal power.

In the face of Buxton's financial crisis, and under pressure from the bank and other creditors, several resolutions were taken quite quickly. Firstly the Festival would have a strict expenditure budget of £113,000, and would only produce one opera, plus a children's opera. Hunter insisted that conservative assumptions needed to be made about ticket sales (70%

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capacity for the opera, and 25% for the ancillary events). A fringe festival was encouraged to provide a wider variety of activity for visitors throughout the day without distracting the Festival from its main vision, a common problem with fast growing, Go-go organisations. A system of debentures, or guarantees, was established to allow wealthier patrons and companies to support the Festival and, possibly most importantly, the Festival Society was established, 'to provide financial security for the Festival through subscriptions, donations and fundraising' (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. n.d.). The debentures raised £16,000, which was supplemented by £20,000 from Derbyshire County Council and sponsorships raised the rest (Kennedy 1988). The result at the end of the 1981 festival was a small trading surplus of £15,818, but still carrying the bank's loan of £100,000 (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 1989).

In the Go-go phase organisations are growing fast, powered by the vision and energy of the founder and focus on grabbing every opportunity to sell. There is an openness in the best of these energetic teams that makes them exciting to be involved with and an underlying culture that says 'yes, let's...' and in which leadership is shared beyond the founders. The 'hot groups' who work in organisations that are growing in this ways can become very tight-knit and as deeply committed to the enterprise as the founders, often working long hours, with a complete focus on the task, role flexibility and a strong focus on quality. There are dangers to development and growth at this stage, though. Whilst the best leaders delegate and remain focused on the vision that was established and committed to during the courtship phase, the early successes can turn a Go-go organisation's head and encourage a belief that they can and should chase opportunities for sales or grants that are only tangentially relevant. Allied to a lack of financial and management systems that mean there is a lack of knowledge about costs and profitability, job descriptions or appropriate lines of communication and reporting, and the fast growing organisation is headed somewhere at great speed: where will be explored further in this chapter (Adizes 2006g).

At this point in its history Buxton Festival doesn't sit easily into Adizes' model. In some respects it is a Go-go organisation, poised for growth, with

Fraser and Hose wanting to take risks and try new things. But the disaster of 1980 had a profound effect in a number of ways. Rigby, whose attitude was 'we'll find the money', was replaced by Hunter, a more experienced business owner with a brief from the bank to look after their money. Whilst clearly supportive of the Festival, and a key member of the developing 'hot group', a change at this level was going to require some time before the trust that there was commitment to a shared vision could be established. There was also a new General Manager, Christopher Barron, a young and ambitious arts manager keen to make his mark in his first chief officer role and with a desire to establish a professional approach.

In addition to this, there is the financial handicap of the deficit to deal with. According to Adizes a 'Go-go organization is a company that has a successful product or service, rapidly growing sales and strong cash flow. The company is not only surviving, it's flourishing. Key customers are raving about the products and ordering more' (Adizes 2006g).

Arguably, from the press reviews (Kennedy 1988), Buxton Festival had a successful product and, if we include the fundraising effort, rapidly growing sales. But, because of the deficit it was carrying and the inability to persuade the Arts Council of Great Britain to support it financially, cashflow was always problematic and the management's wings were clipped in relation to the number of in-house productions they could stage, the riskiness of the programming, and expenditure on fees, staging and costumes.

The not-for-profit company structure, too, makes a festival of this sort sit uneasily in the Go-go model, as the founders are constrained by the board of directors who have the final liability. In other words, the volunteers are taking most of the risks, whilst having less knowledge of the product or market than the paid staff. This is likely to make them quite risk averse, the opposite of Go-go.

Festivals as a whole, because they show work for a few weeks a year, have a tendency to remain quite small in staffing terms, to keep costs to a

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minimum. This means that there tends to be a focus on individuals and personalities which can develop into a 'hot group', which Lipman-Blumen and Leavitt define as temporary groups with a strong focus on their task, an extraordinary work ethic, disregard for anything they consider to be bureaucracy and a tendency to come up with creative ideas or become stuck in competitive power struggles (2001). In an expanding Go-go organisation, there is always room for new ideas, for promotion, for entrepreneurial behaviour and risk taking, so Go-gos tend to exhibit many of the same features as 'hot groups'. In Buxton Festival's case this was certainly true of the relationship that grew up between the new chairman Hunter, Fraser, Hose and the two general managers employed consecutively throughout most of the 1980s, Christopher Barron and his successor Christopher Head.

In order to understand what happens next, it is important to have an understanding of David Hunter. As the only non-professional arts manager in this quartet, Hunter's role in the Festival was the least ambiguous – to look after the company's interests. The others were likely to have an eye to their career development, at least at the back of their minds. For an artistic director / producer, that means taking risks, hiring the best, establishing a reputation for exceptional quality that will get you noticed amongst your peers. Whilst not reckless, Fraser and Hose were both ambitious and put artistic excellence in front of finances for the first two festivals. With the appointment of Hunter the balance of power changed and the organisation should have moved into the adolescent role where risk taking starts to be balanced by planning and control (Adizes 2006a).

Hunter took the Festival to his heart, believing firmly in the importance of giving back to the community and put copious amounts of energy, time and money into ensuring that it thrived, writing to his numerous wealthy contacts to solicit donations, meeting with Barron and Head and the other board members and establishing systems and procedures that allowed the Festival to set realistic budgets. The County Council occasionally gave grants for theatre in education, but was at this time at loggerheads with the Conservative government and saw an opera festival as an elitist art form that they wouldn't really want to be associated with. Hunter concluded

that if neither the local authorities nor the Arts Council would support it, then the Festival would simply have to be more entrepreneurial. This is typical of a 'hot group'; if a system doesn't work for you then either ignore it or go round it (Lipman-Blumen, Leavitt 2001). To this end he established what was then called the Festival Society with a brief to raise money for the Festival. With about 200 or 300 members, the Society wasn't at this stage particularly successful at fund raising, but regularly booked group tickets, and gave the Festival a profile amongst the Buxton residents.

Other income generation approaches included lengthening the Festival to three weeks and broadening the scope of the programme to include film, literary events and small scale touring theatre. Not only would these events boost the theme for the year, they would encourage visitors for stay for longer and help to provide a 'festive' atmosphere.

Despite the financial squeeze this must have put on placed on their ambitions, Fraser and Hose accepted this new state of affairs because of the trust that developed between them: Hunter was more than an investor, or an imposition, he put his own resources where his mouth was and clearly had the Festival's best interests at heart. If there is a turf war between administration and the creative side then energy will be channelled into this instead. In Infant and Go-go organisations, there are no power struggles because it is clear where the power lies – with the founders. Once an organisation moves into Adolescence power starts to become dispersed. During the Hunter period, Buxton Festival entered a period that can best be described as early teens: individuals were given responsibilities and authority within clearly defined limits. Systems and processes were developed and adhered to. The on-going financial deficit that plagued the Festival throughout the 80s and early 90s ensured that this was necessary and Hunter had been brought in to oversee this. However, if the buck was going to stop anywhere, it was going to stop with Hunter, and everyone knew that. This reliance on the founder/central figure is a feature of Infant and Go-go organisations and can become a trap if the company does not create robust shared decision-making systems that can survive once the founder leaves (Adizes 2004).

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By the mid-eighties a modus operandi had been established, the core team was congenial and still enthusiastic, but the whole operation largely ran on a shoestring – budgets were set by the board at about Christmas when they knew how successful they had been in fundraising, for the following July's festival, including in-house productions and a children's opera. This ad hoc approach meant that planning was difficult and inhibited some income generation, such as touring, as the productions were agreed upon too late for most Opera Houses' scheduling. The lack of experience amongst the board and the general managers, who were talented but both young and from a theatre background, meant that no one really understood the opera funding picture, so there wasn't a strategic approach to programming that would enable the Festival to successfully apply to ACGB: no one asked, 'in what way might we scale our work to fit into established touring patterns', for example, and the regional arts board, whilst more supportive, lacked the funds to really help (Kennedy 1988).

Essentially, the Festival was reliant at this stage on a few key factors: Fraser's job at the Royal Northern College of Music, which gave him access to students who saw the opportunity to perform at the Festival as a stepping stone; excellent networking within the opera world by both Hose and Fraser to talent spot rising talent and persuade others to come on the cheap because of who they would meet and what they would see whilst there; and Hunter's networking amongst the affluent Cheshire/South Manchester set which meant they could lean on people for help in kind (the loan of storage space for sets from a contact in the trucking industry, for example), or financial donations.

As participants in most hot groups report, this was a vibrant, highly enjoyable experience for those involved. The question is – how sustainable was it? Could the Festival become an independent adult?

The Founders' Trap

The 'hot team' started to break up after the 1987 festival when Fraser was offered a job in the States and, feeling that the Festival was in need of a new artistic vision, as well as wanting a new challenge, resigned as Artistic Director. In 1988 Head left to direct the Bath Festival. Hunter stepped down as Chair after the 1990 festival and left the board six months later. Hose became Artistic Director from the 1988 festival (Kennedy 2004).

Young organisations generally rely heavily for direction on strong leaders who personally embody the vision. New challenges are being faced every day and the future is hard to predict, so decisions are made on the basis of instinct rather than rules and regulations and it is difficult to share this vision out too widely without the leader feeling undermined. Handy defines this as the power or web structure - with the leader at the centre of the web, feeling the vibrations and deciding how to react accordingly (Handy 1999). In order to grow and develop in the long term, decision-making needs to become more widespread, with policies and procedures in place to reassure the leader that managers will make 'good' decisions. Without this, the organisation will fall into the founder's or family trap in which the founder feels unable to let go and managers are not given the authority necessary for the organisation to grow (Adizes 2004).

The potential lack of focus caused by the General Manager also running the theatre had been resolved when the two boards appointed separate managers when Christopher Barron left in 1985. The administration had been streamlined since the 1980 crisis and financial control meant that, whilst the deficit had not been reduced, at least it wasn't growing. Hunter's creative approach to financing meant that by 1990 there a 900-strong Festival Society with a brief to fund-raise for the Festival; and two debenture schemes that gave the board access to working capital and the interest on the loans, as well as more traditional sponsorship and grants from local authorities. Total unearned income for the 1989 festival amounted to £138,575, only 16% of which was public sector grant in aid from High Peak Borough Council and North West Arts (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 1989). With no support from ACGB, donations and loans

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from a few key individual, including Hunter, continued to be essential and left the finances in a more precarious position than might have been expected after more than a decade, so Hunter asked Rigby to produce a business plan to identify a sustainable way forward.

Rigby's plan proposed that the Festival needed to broaden its product base by producing and presenting opera and other musical events for corporate entertainment, other festivals nationally and internationally, TV and radio and as touring shows, as well as for the Buxton Festival (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 1989). In 1991 this plan was put into operation when a tour to Valencia of the Festival's production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was planned. This move towards an organisation that is thinking ahead and trying to manage its environment rather than reacting to the opportunities that are presented is a sign that it is entering Adolescence; the time in the lifecycle when we start to think ahead and make considered choices about our futures. The risks at this point is that the parent – founder – refuses to let their child make its own decisions and they head into a period of rebellion; or that the parent lets the adolescent head off on its own without any guidance at all, and a the lack of direction becomes a lack of energy as the organisation forgets what its purpose is (Adizes 2006a).

At the start of 1991 the Festival lacked a chair of the board, any obvious support from the local community or the arts establishment in the form of the Arts Council, and should, arguably, have closed its doors. By this time, the local authorities were well aware of the economic benefits of the Festival to the town. Local hotelier Louise Potter had bought and refurbished the Old Hall Hotel in the early 1980s when she saw the potential of the Opera House and the Festival; Margaret Millican owner of the Lees Hill hotel was a mainstay of both the Festival and Opera House boards; and the Palace Hotel, which had been under threat of closure, was thriving again.

But, finding the right chairman to replace David Hunter was not going to be easy and so it turned out. The first person to be approached was Raymond Slater, a Manchester-based businessman who owned the city's Palace Theatre. Apparently interested in developing some of the buildings

in Buxton, including the Crescent, one of Buxton's original spa attractions, and the Devonshire Dome, a stable block built in the 1780s for visitors' horses and staff, which he hoped to turn into a major opera venue. There was ambitious talk of a five week festival for 1992, and Robert Huddie, chief executive of Carbolite, a mining-related company based in the nearby Hope Valley, the board's finance director, was asked to produce a number of scenario budgets. In the end, though, neither the chairmanship nor the development came to anything, as it became obvious that even with highly-ambitious fund-raising efforts the board would be unable to raise enough to support the plans. Eventually the board rebelled and Slater left the board in 1991. Lady Joan Haworth, a family friend of Hunter's became interim chair until Huddie was elected in spring 1991.

Meanwhile, the staff side of the Festival was also unsettled. Gordon Munsen had been appointed to take over from Head as General Manager. Munsen came with a strong theatre management pedigree but left in October 1989. His replacement was Graham Allum, who started in March 1990, having been General Manager at Kent Opera for the previous 14 years. Allum's appointment wasn't as successful as everyone had hoped with disquiet about the financial sides of the Festival growing. Cost control was a continual worry: the ongoing deficit and Slater's ambitious plans had exacerbated an already difficult situation and the Festival needed a manager with his eye firmly fixed on the cash flow. The turnover of staff and board made this almost impossible to achieve and led almost inevitably to a decline in the artistic output. The planned tour of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* had to be cancelled at short notice because of poor cost control, leading to a substantial loss effectively putting paid to Rigby's business plan (Kennedy 2004).

Reviews from the critics commented negatively on the quality of the 1990 productions – and the lack of funding. Opera magazine's editor Rodney Miles commented:

“The decline and, I fear, fall of the Buxton Festival is the most depressing possible example of failure of imagination on the part of funding bodies of every kind...I wonder after this year's effort

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whether it wouldn't be better to wrap the whole thing up." (Cited in Kennedy, 2004 p72-73)

This judgement was probably unfair on the Festival which continued to attract excellent artists of the calibre of Willard White and the gifted soprano Amanda Roocroft, fulfilling the talent spotting role the Festival had become known for, and the editorial was largely a rant about the Arts Council and Derbyshire County Council's lack of support, but it fed a growing feeling that it might be time for Hose, now sole artistic director, to move on. The adolescent danger of the Festival losing its focus appeared to have come true.

On taking over as chair Huddie brought a new approach. Like Hunter, Huddie threw himself into the role and spent time and money researching opera festivals such as Wexford, to try and develop a model that might work on all fronts for Buxton. Unlike Hunter who had been happy to let Fraser and Hose make the artistic decisions, Huddie felt that boards should have more control with artistic directors being appointed on fixed term contracts for a few years. This reduces the risk of an artistic director becoming too powerful and producing work that the board cannot finance or that doesn't appeal to audiences. The consequence of this was that Huddie had a meeting with Hose and asked him to step down.

With the opportunity to appoint a new artistic director and the replacement of Allum as General Manager by Susan Jarrett who had been the Festival's fundraiser, Huddie was starting to build his own team, which was complemented by advice from Opera North's Nicholas Payne and Lord Harwood and Jarrett's personal networks in the opera world and started to develop a new strategy. The demise of Rigby's business plan meant a rethink and Huddie and Jarrett developed a three-pronged fundraising strategy: the usual unsuccessful approaches to the Arts Council; a £450,000 application to the newly founded Foundation for Sport and the Arts (FSA) to relaunch a rebranded, upmarket festival; and a renewed focus on the Friends, who were given a space in the Festival office and support for events and communications leading to an increase in memberships, donations and ticket sales (Kennedy 2004).

Not all of this paid off – the FSA preferred to give money to capital projects, so rejected the full application, but did give £100,000 towards the 1992 festival - which, combined with the fact that High Peak District Council had converted its debts to grants sometime earlier and that the Duke of Devonshire agreed to write off a £40,000 loan, put the Festival in the best financial position it had been in since 1979.

There remained, however, the question of replacing Hose. Conscious of the importance of the artistic director's role, the board and Huddle in particular were anxious to ensure they recruited the best, so approached Jonathan Miller and Jane Glover. The latter, Musical Director of the London Mozart Players, accepted the post with a brief to programme the 1993 festival, the first time a festival director had been given more than a year to plan.

Buxton Festival and Adolescence

The defining feature of Adolescence, whether in people or organisations, is the obvious tension between planned, considered behaviour and emotional responses to immediate stimuli. And in both cases this is a function of a similar process; the need to move from a period of fast growth, to one of thinking and behaving more strategically (Bainbridge 2009). In order to do this they need to have a sense of what they want to do (purpose), what knowledge, skills and experience they will need and what they already have and, crucially, what they don't want to do or don't need to have, particularly if these things are costing them money or energy. Throughout Adolescence teenagers' brains actually lose grey matter as the unused or unproductive links are pruned away making an efficient structure that is ready for the challenges each individual is most likely to face. A similar process needs to happen in adolescent organisations as they learn to balance the risks they need to take in order to develop new products and respond to customer needs, with the control they need to exercise in order to avoid going bankrupt (Adizes 2006a).

This balance was at the heart of the next chapter in Buxton Festival's history.

At the board meeting in May 1992 Glover proposed a French-themed programme of Baroque operas, one of her specialities. Although the board were anxious about this – after all, Hose had proposed a programme featuring more Mozart at least in part because of the difficulties of attracting audiences for lesser-known composers, Glover argued that ambition would inspire audiences and sponsors and the board were set a fundraising target of £360,000, twice that achieved in 1990 (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 1989).

For an organisation to develop successfully, the vision, drive and energy that the founders brought to the project right at the start, and which have kept it going despite the various crises it has faced have to be communicated to the next generation and embedded into their decision-making processes. If the founders don't believe this to be the case, they will

not have the confidence to let go and will be too controlling of their teenager. Similarly, if the new staff don't feel that their suggestions for changes and improvements are being taken on board then they will become frustrated and leave. The key to avoid this is mutual trust (Schein 2004).

Unfortunately for Buxton Festival this trust appears to have been missing between Huddie and Glover. By August 1992, after a successful festival during which Glover had conducted a popular and critically acclaimed version of Rossini's *The Italian girl in Algiers*, cracks in the relationship were starting to appear. The fundraising target had risen another £100,000 and the board, led by Huddie, asked Glover to reduce the programme. Glover, however, was used to working with organisations that were better resourced and able to make plans further into the future (an aspiration for Buxton at this time) so had already started to talk to several artists and had signed some up. Reluctantly the board agreed to try and raise the £455,000 required (Kennedy 2004).

By the end of September, the relationship was at breaking point with conflicting expectations leading to Glover accusing the board of moving the goal posts, pressurising her to programme a more popular selection than she felt appropriate for a festival that specialised in producing rarely seen work and undermining the artistic excellence of the work by cutting the budget. Faced with this attitude the board agreed that they should try to raise more money. But by the beginning of November, the board felt they couldn't raise more than £175,000, £70,000 less than was required. When Glover was informed that the board had been unable to raise the money, she offered her resignation (Kennedy 2004). The conflict between effectiveness in achieving the vision and the administrative efficiency necessary to sustain it is a source of creative energy in a relationship of mutual trust. Without it the suspicions voiced by Glover that the board lacked courage and hadn't tried hard enough and the board's belief that her programme would bankrupt the Festival, were inevitable and made the situation unworkable.

Opera North to the rescue?

Without Glover or her programme the board had only six months if they were going to be able to organise a festival for July 1993. They considered three options: to try and produce two of their own operas, to co-produce two shows; or to focus their energies on producing one in-house and to buy in a touring production. It was unthinkable that the Festival would have purely touring shows if it was going to remain true to its purpose of producing rarely seen operas. With encouragement from the Arts Council, Huddie entered discussions with Nicholas Payne and Lord Harewood, the chief executive and founding chairman respectively of the Leeds-based Opera North.

Opera North jumped at the chance – Buxton was a good venue for a festival and running the Festival would be a useful second string to the company's bow at which they could try out rare operas with less risk than within the touring programme. What Opera North didn't realise was that the Festival board were adamant that they were not going to be taken over. Independence had been written into the organisation's DNA from the point in 1977 when Fraser, Hose and Rigby decided they didn't want to work with a partner. It was a decision that had been tested repeatedly throughout the 1980s, and had become a central tenet of the Festival's culture and an important reason for the commitment people felt to it (Schein 2004). This ability to keep their focus on the purpose helped the Festival to avoid the second danger of Adolescence, laissez-fair parents who allow their teenager to drift.

So, although agreement was reached that Opera North would co-produce both operas in 1993, tension was built into the relationship right from the start. This was exacerbated by the Arts Council, which had, an ambivalent attitude towards festivals. From their perspective, as they were already subsidising Opera North as part of their commitment to touring, the partnership appeared to resolve the problem very neatly.

The 1993 festival went ahead with a programme drawn up by Nicholas Payne of two operas, both produced by Jonathan Miller. Generally popular

with the critics, the shows played to good houses and the Festival was pronounced a success. But this was a festival that was, swan-like, paddling furiously beneath the surface. It ran a deficit on the year of about £90,000 – undoing the good work that had been done in reducing the debts. The General Manager, Susan Jarrett, left after the 1993 festival to take up a new job, and Huddie stepped down as chair in September as he was leaving the area for work reasons (Kennedy 2004).

Jarrett had professionalised the Festival's fundraising effort. With support from Louise Potter, the owner of the Old Hall Hotel opposite the Opera House, who later became the Friends' chair, Jarrett wanted to increase the numbers of festival friends as a regular source of donations and ticket sales so gave the Festival Friends office space and helped to create a systematic mailing list. Jarrett also encouraged events to support local businesses, such as the Festival Walks, and encouraged events at local hotels. So there were some green shoots. The number of friends started to grow, and better relationships were being developed with local business that might benefit from the extra trade.

On the artistic front, without the budget to appoint an artistic director, Opera North's Lord Harewood and Ian Ritchie were appointed to advise the board on artistic matters and, also from Opera North, where he had been an assistant administrator, Roger Taylor was appointed as General Manager.

As a result, the relationship between Opera North and the Festival deepened. Coming from a larger, more established organisation where roles are clearly defined, Taylor had not perceived the manager's role as being as focused on fundraising as the board expected it to be, so the financial situation did not improve. Producing opera is expensive and time consuming – singers and orchestras need to be booked, often years in advance, and then rehearsed, meaning that money needs to be spent on wages and rent with no guarantee that ticket income will be forthcoming. Fraser and Hose had both been excellent at spotting young, talented and relatively cheap singers because of their connections and other roles within the opera world. Without an artistic director, the Festival could not

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undertake this so had to rely on outside help. The result was a programme for 1994 that comprised an Opera North co-production and a Pimlico Opera show bought in. With North West Arts pushing for this as a long-term solution, and Opera North keen to develop work to premiere at Buxton before touring, it looked as if Buxton Festival's days as a producer of rarely seen operas was over.

At the end of the 1994 festival Taylor reported that the Festival had made a surplus on ticket sales, presented a budget for 1995 with a fundraising target of nearly £50,000 and suggested that the board hire a fundraiser. There was a widespread feeling that fundraising was a core part of the general manager's job description though, so Taylor, who was more interested in the artistic side of the job, left in September 1994. Jane Davies who came from a corporate management career with BP, but had a personal network within the opera world through her husband, replaced him.

When Davies took over membership was falling, probably as a result of the lack of home-produced productions, and there was a lack of clarity about the finances. Who should bear what proportion of the co-production costs, for example? There was little to be done about producing until the finances were resolved and that this would need better marketing, better relationships with the local community and the Opera House and a more sustainable approach to fund-raising (Kennedy 2004).

The need to find a balance between risk and control is a fundamental part of the organisational lifecycle (Adizes 2004) and Buxton had signally failed to do this ever since Hunter had left. The ups and downs it had faced must have made it a difficult partner to work with. From the Opera House's point of view how could you be sure how many days to leave free for the Festival each year? From the audiences' perspective could you be certain that the Festival would be offering you a new production or something you might already have seen on an Opera North tour? Funders and sponsors, too, could not be sure who they would be working with or what they would be supporting. The lack of management systems was starting to become life threatening.

The 1995 festival saw Opera North co-producing again, this time it was a premiere of a rarely performed work, so fitting Buxton's criteria in most respects. It was expensive, though, and rehearsal costs were poorly controlled. Combined with poor ticket sales, the Festival reported a £66,000 deficit – and, according to the treasurer, was in danger of trading unlawfully as there was a risk that they wouldn't be able to pay suppliers (Kennedy 2004). Whilst there were suspicions on the part of the Festival that Opera North had not shouldered its fair share of the production costs, it was Lord Harewood who persuaded the Arts Council Chairman Lord Gowrie to give a grant of £35,000 to the Festival as long as it raised the rest and undertook a fundamental review (Kennedy 2004).

The board raised the match funding, much of it from their own pockets. Buxton's boards have tended to follow the American 'give, get or get off' model, largely because the public sector has been reluctant to provide grants. They also started to consider the future and, with representative of Opera North, had meetings with both the Arts Council of England and North West Arts. The outcomes of these meetings were that the Festival was encouraged to apply for £50,000 a year for the following three years under the Arts Council's competitive funding process. Despite some warning signs – including negative reports on the 1995 operas from the Arts Council's assessors, a warning against taking the risk of producing their own shows again and a strong steer towards North West Arts as the first point of call – both the Festival and Opera North were confident that they would receive the funding from April 1996 onwards and planned on that basis (Kennedy 2004).

In November 1995, Lord Harewood and Opera North's General Director made their bid to take over the Festival, reiterating the case made by the Arts Council that the Festival lacked the resources to produce and needed the protection of a bigger company. Companies at the late stages of Adolescence, as at the late stages of Go-go, are vulnerable to takeovers by more established ventures that can see the same potential as the founders, but also understand how to establish systems and processes that will make the company less volatile (Adizes 2004). For Opera North, Buxton Festival would provide the perfect space to try out work for touring in the future.

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The Festival board was resistant. The belief that the Festival needed to produce unique product in order to attract audiences had been reinforced by their experiences over the previous two festivals of declining ticket sales (see Figure 3). Reluctantly, however, they realised that they really had no other options. They had to find £55,000 to reduce the deficit to a little over £10,000 and, with Opera North, applied for franchise funding to run from 1997.

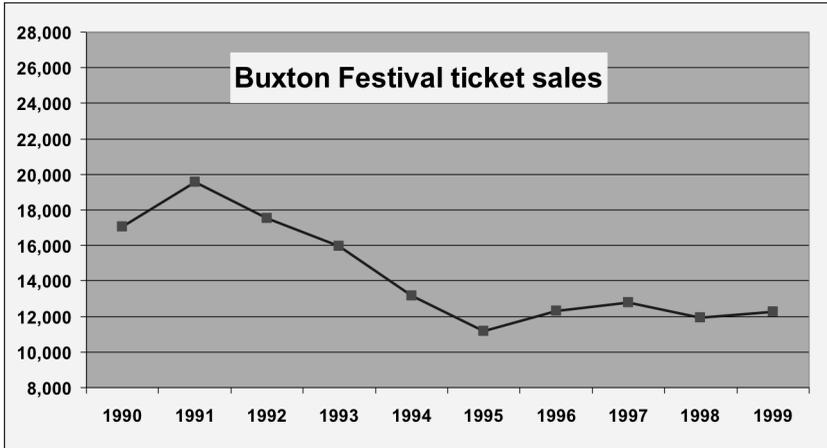


Figure 3: Ticket sales income 1990 – 1999 (Foley 2007)

In February 1996, with Davies on holiday in Italy, news came through that the Arts Council had turned the franchise funding application down because the Festival was not producing its own operas. Lord Harewood recommended cancelling the '96 edition as Opera North couldn't commit resources. Davies felt it might be possible to put together a programme of touring work. Using her personal contacts, she managed to cajole, persuade and coax two Irish companies to appear. Costing only £63,000, but with a wide ranging programme of recitals, orchestral concerts and jazz, the Festival was financially and critically successful. It was also more popular with local audiences.

Without the protection of a larger organisation, and still without substantial support from the Arts Council, the Festival realised it could not return to producing for 1997 – finally, administrative systems were in place

to make informed judgements about risk and reward. The Friends had now grown to over 700, mailing lists had been developed to enable target marketing and financial systems established thanks to Louise Potter lending the Festival her book-keeper, so that it was possible to predict that 50% of income would come from ticket sales, for instance. This ability to maintain a balance between focusing on what you do, how you do it and why you do it marks an organisation in its Prime – flexible, yet consistent and with clear, agreed aims and objectives (Adizes 2004). Buxton Festival in 1996 could not be described as such an organisation, as the financial position meant that it lacked the ability to control its own destiny, but the seeds had been sown.

By the time the board came to plan for 1997 it was apparent that the Arts Council was unlikely to provide significant support (it granted just £13,500) (Arts Council of England 1998). Despite this, the board decided that it was essential to start producing again, a return to the Festival's founding vision. The finances were still very tight, so the production was a triple bill of three 'reduced' operas and, in the absence of an artistic director singer Donald Maxwell was appointed as artist-in-residence. The move was generally welcomed by critics and by the select audiences who were still willing to attend after the chaos of the previous few years (Kennedy 2004).

By the 1998 festival Davies had managed to secure an increase in commercial sponsorship, but still no grant from the Arts Council. In light of this, the board started to consider other options for making the Festival sustainable, a change in approach which indicates that the organisation was starting to plan further ahead in an attempt to be less vulnerable, a sure sign of maturity.

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1998 was another transition point for a festival that had, against many odds, managed to survive for two decades. Whilst not affluent, the financial position was better than it had ever been and careful management had established administrative systems for accounting, marketing and recruitment that meant that it would be possible to have a change of general manager without the organisation falling into disarray and with its vision to be a festival that produced rarely seen operas still intact.

After four turbulent years, Davies decided to leave. Many credited her with having professionalised the Festival. The Friends, which had grown out of the original Festival Society, had worked closely with Davies and her team to increase the number of members and their fundraising potential. The town was more involved than it had ever been as a result of the community opera Davies had initiated. Marketing systems had been imported from the commercial world. Costs, too, were being controlled. The 1998 festival only ran for 10 days to ensure that the Opera House was used as fully as possible, as the rent was the same whether or not it was dark.

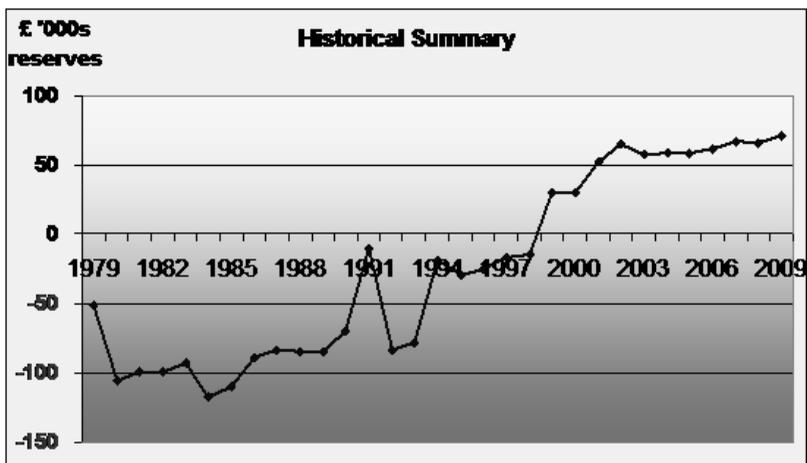


Figure 4: Buxton Arts Festival Ltd, reserves 1979 – 2009 (Foley 2009a)

Most importantly, the Festival was producing again. There was still not enough money in the budget to produce a second opera or to appoint an artistic director who could plan longer term, but 1998's artist-in-residence was Thomas Allen, the singer who had waived his fee during the 1980 crisis. Sales income was over target. Buxton Festival had learned that it was possible to survive independently, although it was not yet thriving.

Davies' replacement was Glyn Foley, a former music officer at the Yorkshire and Humberside Arts Board and a bassoonist who had played at the Festival with the Manchester Camarata. He started in November 1998 and inherited a festival that was entrepreneurial and starting to be efficient. The strategic plans to develop better relationships with the Opera House and High Peak District Council that had been developed in the wake of the Arts Council bail out in 1995 had not advanced very far and the Arts Council had given no financial support at all to the 1998 festival, so there was clearly still work to be done.

North West Arts increased its grant for the 1999 festival to £28,000 (Kennedy 2004), and for the first time the Festival made a surplus (see Figure 5), a pleasant bit of news for the new chairman, Roy Hattersley, who took over in October 1999.

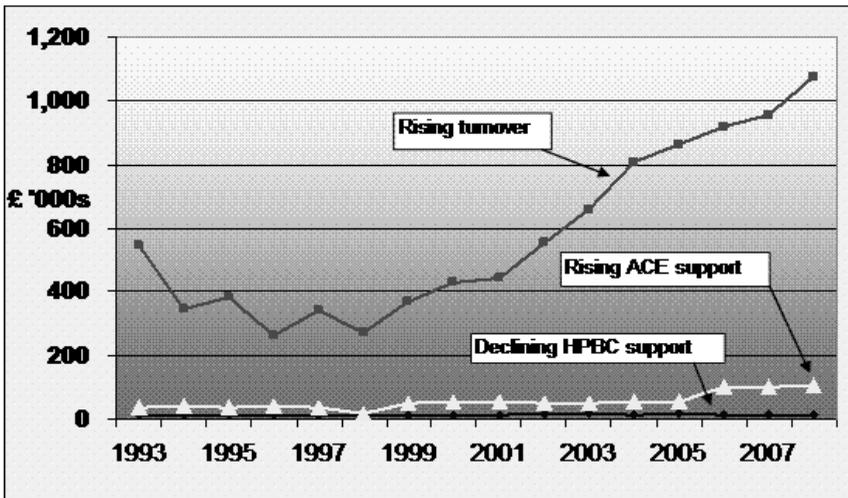


Figure 5: A Comparison of Income Sources 1993 – 2008 (Foley 2009b)

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Mature organisations are those that can maintain a balance between risk and control, innovation and administrative systems without either one dominating (Adizes 2006i). That is not to say that once an organisation hits its Prime there will not be problems and difficulties to solve, rather that they will be different. In Buxton Festival's case, with less immediate financial pressure, the board and management were able to start addressing some of the issues that had been bubbling under for a few years: its relationship with the Opera House and local communities; developing the Friends; and trying to establish some reserves to give the Festival the stability to make longer term plans.

One solution to better engagement with the local community, to improving turnover and increasing the reserves proved to be the literary events initiated by Roy Hattersley in 2000, Which are cheap to put on and popular amongst opera audiences, local people and the hoteliers who play host to the events (Maughan, Bianchini 2004b).

As well as the literary series, 2000 saw the start of opera talks and a recital series. This could be argued to be the point at which Buxton Festival moved into Prime: the recitals were expensive and, therefore, a risk that the board were anxious about. The new Artistic Director Aidan Lang argued that quality would be the key to success and Foley kept the costs to a minimum. The result was a series that balanced risk with control and made a small surplus (Kennedy 2004). A better understanding of the market place also marks the difference between Go-go and Prime, with mature organisations able to invest in creating new audiences rather than responding to immediate opportunities.

Cost control is a particular issue for festivals, which have very little sales income for most of the year, yet which must pay in advance for artists, rehearsal space, marketing, salaries and so on. For an opera festival this is exacerbated by the long lead times needed to book the more established singers. Since the turn of the century, Buxton has attempted to manage these problems in four ways.

Firstly, the Friends have become an important source of income as well as providing ticket sales. They have grown to over 3000 members and run holidays to see operas in Italy, France and New York as well as fundraising and special events. These events help to create a knowledgeable audience. In 2009 the Friends raised over £100,000 and 94% of this goes directly to support the Festival (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. Trustees 2010).

Secondly, the Friends have established a Foundation Trust that aims to raise enough from donations and legacies to form an endowment that matches the Festival's annual turnover (just over £1,000,000 in 2010) The Foundation supported a third festival production in 2010 (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. Trustees 2010).

Thirdly, by 2004, audiences had grown so significantly that it has become essential to book early in order to ensure your seat. In 2004 the opera production broke even on the first day of rehearsal.

Finally, whilst income from public sector grants accounts for less than a fifth of income, this is on a turnover that topped £1.2million in 2010 (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. Trustees 2010). Arts Council England's contribution that year was £110,480, with the rest coming from High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council (Arts Council England n.d.). This is a Festival that is operating strategically, integrating the needs to its various stakeholders with its own mission as an arts organisation and a charity.

In March 2011, the sea change in the Festival's relationship with the Arts Council that had begun in 1999 and developed in 2007/8 when it became a Regularly Funded Organisation (Arts Council England n.d.) was confirmed when the Festival became a National Portfolio Organisation, with a 3.8% uplift in its funding (Arts Council England n.d.).

The stabilisation of the Festival has enabled growth to occur. The 2010 edition lasted for 19 days and included three festival produced operas amongst its 140 events (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 2010). It is popular amongst local businesses, many of which see an increase in trade over the Festival period. About half of audience members stay overnight (Maughan,

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Bianchini 2004a). The town's reputation as a great place to host a festival has seen the annual Gilbert and Sullivan festival thrive, too (Gilbert and Sullivan Festival n.d.). It is hard to see how High Peak's economic profile as a centre for tourism and a thriving Knowledge and Cultural Industries Cluster with the proportion of working population involved in creative industries more than double the regional average at 10% (High Peak Borough Council n.d.) could have happened without the redevelopment of the town's historic buildings that started with the refurbishment of the Opera House for the Festival in 1979.

Conclusions

Buxton Festival has survived for over three decades and is now a thriving part of the town's cultural life and its economy. Does considering the Festival's development through the lifecycle lens provide us with insights that might help future festival's to avoid life threatening crises, or to at least minimise their impact?

Buxton Festival started in at a time and a place that many people would have defined as unpromising. Launching an opera festival – the most expensive of all of the art forms and one with an elitist image – in these circumstances looks almost foolhardy. Yet, the commitment to the Festival that was formed during this period has been tested and found to be solid. As with the storming stage of Tuckman's model, those early difficulties appear to forge strong common bonds. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this commitment-building Courtship stage. The key to successful relationships is that everyone feels that their views are important and that they feel the relationship is important. In business, this is the purpose of a vision. The vision that Fraser, Hose and Rigby articulated from the start, rarely performed operas, produced by the Festival, to entice audiences to visit Matcham's theatre and the town, has remained consistently there and known. It is tangible enough to feel achievable, but fuzzy enough for a wide range of stakeholders to see how it applies to them.

Infancy is the point at which the vision meets reality and in Buxton's case this happened with a mixture of victories and some heavy failures. Opening the venue and the first festival on time were important successes as they proved that the team could rally support and resources and could deliver. The second festival's financial problems undermined confidence, but lack of consistency is a feature of organisations that are starting out; they are ambitious, but often over reach their own abilities. This point is one of the life-threatening stages, as if there is not enough commitment, or not enough resources, then a festival will not continue past this point.

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The clash with reality is also a test of the vision. During Courtship the vision was vague enough for a variety of stakeholders to sign up to it. When there are real world decisions being made, some individuals and groups might feel that their interpretation of the Festival's purposes has been ignored and withdraw their support. This did happen for some Buxtonians who felt that the Festival was ignoring them in favour of an international profile and the tourism agenda. Fortunately for the Festival, the refurbishment of the Opera House was so clearly driven by the founders, and this was such an important asset for the town that the disaffected stakeholders were more-or-less satisfied.

Having survived Infancy, the Festival should have moved into the expansion stage. Go-go is defined by Adizes as the point at which 'a company that has a successful product or service, rapidly growing sales and strong cash flow. The company is not only surviving, it's flourishing. Key customers are raving about the products and ordering more. Even the investors are starting to get excited.' (2006g). There were elements of this in the Festival's 'hot group' atmosphere, the support it garnered from artists who played for little financial reward and the local tourism businesses who started to reap the benefits of extra rooms being booked. However, the on going deficit and the Festival's not-for-profit status, combined with a lack of support from the arts establishment meant that ambition was not matched by resources. No one working for the Festival or on its board understood what it would take to convince the Arts Council to fund it, a strategic planning gap that is similar to that identified in most Go-gos, but in the commercial world this is less important as there are profits to be made selling to customers.

The move to Adolescence is marked by an ability to start to plan ahead and by the company becoming more independent from its founders. This very rarely goes smoothly, as founders, like parents tend to either be too controlling, leading to rebellion, or too lenient, leading to a lack of focus. Buxton, with Huddie at the helm, felt that the board had let the founding artistic directors have too much control. The result was a rebellion that saw the Festival lose its artistic director altogether.

The Festival was always clear on its focus though and, despite immense pressure from the arts establishment, remained true to the initial vision of staging home produced rarely seen operas, even when it was unable to deliver this. The insights gained from repeated unsuccessful attempts to raise funds from the Arts Council, and their determination to regain their freedom from Opera North, meant that efforts were finally put in to forward planning and gaining some control over the financial situation. Once Opera North withdrew and it managed to survive, the Festival was, finally, professionalised and ready to move in to Prime.

There is a risk that is apparent here for not-for-profit festivals that funding bodies will have expectations about young organisation's ability to plan that are unrealistic. The pressure this might place on emerging companies is one that both funders and board members would benefit from understanding.

Organisations in Prime are considered to have a good balance between risk and control, that allows them to plan for the long term. Adizes also argues that they need to have a clear idea of their purpose and to be responsive to their markets (audiences and funders). It would appear that Buxton is currently in this position. The dangers to look out for are to do with it becoming less open to new ideas or situations, more repetitive and inwardly focused.

An understanding of the lifecycle amongst support and funding organisations would mean that their interventions could be better targeted at the specific needs of emerging organisations. The lack of funding for a growing organisation such as Buxton, which was in dire need of cash to support new initiatives during the early 1980s, nearly killed it off and certainly delayed its development significantly. The inconsistency the Arts Council showed during the 1990s at a time when the Festival was attempting to develop its administrative systems was also misguided and counterproductive.

The Festival has also diversified its income by having a sophisticated fundraising approach. The investment in the Festival Society (Friends) over

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30 years has paid dividends over the last decade, but it is important to note that from its initiation as a route to raise the money to refurbish the Opera House, the Society's purpose has been fundraising and campaigning. It is likely, too, that the near death of the Festival in 1980, and the lack of grants from the public sector have focused the minds of both the board and Friends on the need to maintain this approach. As it is individual ticket buyers and donors who still provide the majority of the Festival's income, it has never been possible to take this for granted, or to stop campaigning, and the board, staff and audiences continue to acknowledge this.

Lastly, the Festival has only been successful when the core team of artistic director, chair of the board and general manager have held a balance of power and trusted each other to have the best interests of the Festival at heart. When this exists, as it did in the 1980s and again since the millennium, the administrative, customer focused and artistic elements can be integrated and co-ordinated into a team that can achieve far more than might be expected from such a small number of people, a sure sign of a hot group and an organisation in its Prime.

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