

## Keynotes in conversation

### Justin Spooner and Matthew Shorter

Chaired by Jo Taylor

This session was an opportunity for delegates to ask further questions of the keynote speakers, Justin Spooner (JS) and Matthew Shorter (MS), and to debate the issues raised.

*Jo Thompson, London Symphony Orchestra: At what point do you get involved in the project?*

MS: It's different for different projects. Using the Heart n Soul project as an example, we came in at the beginning to help raise funding. So, weirdly enough we had to create a plan to get the money that we knew was basically wrong but had to do that to get the funding. Then when they were successful we revised what was to be done. For that project we played a digital co-ordinator role. It's becoming more common in projects I've noticed. Especially when there are cross-disciplinary teams it needs someone to hang on to the project and stop people panicking.

Sometimes when it's digital strategy, it's after an organisation has tried to create its own strategy and we come in after they've found they don't have enough time resources to do this or they could do with someone from outside the organisation to help keep order or to be a more objective eye if there are internal political issues.

JS: The short answer is at all and every point in the process. We've had to push to be involved in strategy in the past, where we've been brought in to re-design a website for example. It can be the execution end of things. A year ago we worked with ITV to help develop their new news site. That was an outlier for us because we were working on someone else's strategy. We're trying to angle ourselves to be more involved in the concept and follow-through and we like to be held accountable for strategy. On the other hand, it's not good for organisations to become reliant on you, they need to take it forward themselves.

*Katy Raines (Indigo Consulting): For a lot of arts organisations, digital sits with marketing and they're not generally given permission to think any broader than selling shows and putting things on the website. What do you think should be the first steps in encouraging them/the organisation to think in broader terms about digital strategy?*

JS: One thing that we often think about is content and we invite organisations to think of themselves as content providers more broadly. So, for example, if you are about dance and performance it doesn't seem like a huge step to think about how this can be taken on another step to provide content for the site. If you frame the question in the way of providing digital content to help convince audiences that they might like to come to this performance, that seems to be the way to do it; to hold the mirror up to what they are doing. We're reaching a point where many arts organisations know

how to sell tickets efficiently, so the question is posed – what is the next stage? If we are subsidised, do we have a responsibility to make our content available more widely? In terms of brand – are we articulating our brand clearly? Articulating your brand clearly online cannot be about saying things about yourself. Showing things about yourself is as much about the past as the future. If you are a ticketing machine, as soon as the event has happened it's gone from the digital world. So one of the things we get into early on is the legacy – what are you going to capture and how does it fit in to your wider remit?

MS: We've had this as a challenge a number of times. Digital might be part of digital but marketing is not seen as having a senior place in the organisation – it's regarded as a service component and this has an effect on digital. The way we loosen this up is by talking about everyone being content creators and playing a role in creating the experience for the customer.

One of the ways you can demonstrate this is by looking at the User Journey. The user journey might start with the point where they don't know you at all, then they become dimly aware of you and then they might have a recommendation from someone they trust – and that could be on a digital platform - and then they do a search but they end up somewhere else. But six months later another opportunity arises, but this time there's a content offer – there's a two for one offer and the price is exactly right and they ask a friend but they do that digitally. That's before they've even got to the point of buying a ticket and coming to the venue. You can say – *'look at how all these points on the journey had a digital component - we need to have multi-disciplinary teams to make sure that these experiences are the right ones.'* Trying to make the problem more holistic helps – and we can try to force this.

*Rob Lindsay, Birmingham Royal Ballet: In my experience the problem has been a disconnection between digital and marketing. This can be frustrating because it should just be part of marketing strategy.*

RS: We've just finished working with the BBC home page search and navigation team. One of the things that came up were the different ambitions about how people jump from one thing to another – some saw it as desirable that they hop from one genre to another – but actually it was pointed out that marketing could be about a user navigating around and noticing something that they might come back to later. This brings us back to a holistic view. It might be behaviour in the future – they don't have to go there immediately.

*Nicky Webb, Artichoke: We produce big free events. I started off in theatres, opera houses and festivals and I was obsessed with selling tickets. It was only when I started doing things that were free and the tyranny of the box office targets went away that it became clearer that marketing is not only about selling tickets it's about relationships. I'm interested in the idea that it might be about selling a ticket but it*

*could be some way down the line. Surely what we are doing is forging relationships which become ever stronger and it can be quite liberating.*

JS: If I was an arts marketer I might be worried that the scope of marketing is being reduced. It's coming down to whether the call to action has been acted on – you are now successful and that's because if you work in an arts organisation you might have people taking risks with the programme and they see what you are doing as validating that process. So you become a cog in the validation process and it's anxiety making. The reality though, is that it's about a continual refreshing of relationships. Every time you put a poster up on the side of the road you are refreshing the relationship.

On the Auto Trader website there's an interesting function called 'check the car history'. This is not provided by Auto Trader but another organisation. It's an advert. The way it works is that you are suddenly struck by doubt and it's the well-placing of this piece of functionality that makes it successful. It's the start of a new relationship. It's a spark point.

*Claire Eva, Tate: I'm interested in the way that people use digital services and then adapting what needs to change. We've been working with MHM for several years so we have lots of research – motivational segmentation, culture segments and demographics - so when we are working on our marketing campaigns we are very clear about who we are targeting. However, there's a gap between the research we have on our physical users and on the website users. So when we analyse the website we are looking at things like bounce rates, page use etc, but there seems to be a real mystery about who these people are and when we do online surveys they seem to be people on our mailing list and we're not capturing overseas users or people using the site more generally. Are there case studies in which you have been successful in being able to identify the people using websites – as pen portraits for example – or do you have advice more generally?*

JS: The pen portrait is important. Even if it is for everybody, it is only one person using it at a time. You have to come off the fence and try and imagine something about that person, even if you don't have the data. Then we imagine how they might behave.

MS: I was doing a workshop with people working in radio. So we were working with Vanessa Pheltz who has this very early morning show to see if there could be some extra components added. We developed some personas as part of this – for example the 'working mum' who is up very early. It was based on who they knew listened and then this was built on by imagining how it worked. So, she has the radio on in the background and she is trying to connect with the adult world. It was difficult for her to do anything there and so we looked at the idea of sparking interest during the programme and then providing tools during the day for them to interact. Vanessa is especially interested in words and new words so we ended up developing a

competition for people to create new words. So this was built on the development of the relationship with this audience member.

Ideas work at the level of one person – you can't develop things in a person-less way. They were very pleased with this because normally these sessions apparently consist of the team coming up with ideas in a relatively random way.

We use personas quite a lot – instead of thinking a campaign around such and such a person, let's map out the sort of journeys that users are already going on and see where they are broken. It's an improving process based on evidence and imagination.

*CE: On the Tate website the conversion element is relatively limited but there's a vast amount of material based around learning for international audiences but then we don't have any measurement about who those audiences are.*

MS: When we were working with the City of London we had to look at who they wanted to reach but weren't. We used personas, using any pieces of data we could find. If you have enough different people in a room with different skills and knowledge bases you can use this as a composite creates something more useful.

JS: One of the enormous challenges is the range of jobs that the City does, from collecting rubbish to looking after cemeteries to stimulating economic development. Looking at the user group elements, sometimes you have to recognise that different parts of the organisation need to be represented.

*Jo Taylor: you can follow activity on the website but it doesn't tell you why they do anything so you have to use some kind of methodology to understand motivation otherwise you will make really wrong assumptions.*

*CE: ... and how do you know that the people who are using a particular section of the website is the demographic that are looking for? User testing is usually carried out in a rather fake environment.*

MS: You need to work out in advance what the question is. So supposing you are looking for an international audience? You need to look at the real world metric that might give you that answer – how many people are Tweeting about you in a foreign language perhaps. It's not perfect. There aren't measures for everything and you can't track it all. What you can do is look at some indicators and then make a trend analysis of whether you are achieving what you want to. As far as I am aware you can't directly track in the way you are suggesting at the moment.

JS: At the BBC, we have used 'AB testing'. So you set up a platform that is serving one set of people and another platform serving another set of people. Then you compare and contrast.

*Steve Crossan, Google Cultural Institute: Much of what you are saying is interesting. It's my impression that arts organisations are well on the way to embracing the idea that digital is not something separate. They have a mission to get this work to an audience and there is now a range of digital tools which can be used to accomplish this. At the same time, we're in a challenging financial environment, especially in relation to arts funding. There is a great deal of fear and anxiety around this. So, what are your high level impressions of what digital can bring to this situation?*

MS: This is not a direct answer, but very often we work with organisations asking them - *what is the simplest way of doing this?* And there could be some easy ways of using Twitter for example. We shouldn't lose sight of how simple and inexpensive some digital tools are – it doesn't have to be a hugely expensive operation.

JS: We might ask what the most ambitious way of doing it is – in a perfect world. Somewhere in that process a fresh idea might come out which can be used simply. The sense is doing one good thing.

*SC: That sounds sensible, but what is your sense of how the funding situation might affect the development of digital elements like downloadable apps with QR codes and video demand etc – the things that people are expecting?*

MS: The South African Broadcasting Company does not have much money. We were working with them on cost effective ways of delivering content. As we worked through the process we were able to use all sorts of free ways of delivering content. You can say for certain in the next couple of years that there will be more ways of delivering on demand and video-like content to more devices than ever before. This might not correlate with revenue. In fact it might correlate with lack of revenue because you have an incredibly diffuse audience over a huge range of devices all looking at material on different platforms with an all out war going on for the rights.

At the same time we have organisations like Medici TV which hoovers up rights from classical music festivals that take place in the summer. What they've done is – *'aha, no broadcaster seems to want these rights, we can aggregate them, buy more for less and then build a subscription on top of the whole thing.'*

Many organisations are going direct to consumers. They used to have relationships through broadcasters. The platforms are going direct and getting cheaper to be on. There are now layers of business around this which you go to and pay for material to go out on several platforms. You might not get the return on this at the moment.

JS: I would also go back to the idea of emergence. We're keen on structured data. If you are creating a really meaningful framework for your content and the data around the content you may well be positioning yourself well for this content to be used by yourself or someone else in the future – something that you might not anticipate yet.

MS: A practical example of this is the way in which the Smithsonian Institute and MOMA have structured their sites so that there can be ease of transfer between both. It takes a whole new attitude to make this okay; developing relationships rather than thinking as competitors.

*Samantha Howard, Imperial War Museum North: I've just finished the CIM Digital Marketing Diploma. The Diploma helped me to understand that success could mean a customer engaging with you online; however, I am still evaluated mainly in terms of physical footfall to the museum so there is a contradiction of objectives.*

MS: There are several nuts to crack here – like how do you know if you are tracking the right person right through. Is it the same person in all their different manifestations? There is no easy answer and at the moment there isn't a business model that will provide that sort of infrastructure. In the future, if funders measured success differently it might change. Arts organisations might club together and try to create a system that lies under all of this. Over the last three or four years the Arts Council has been trying to grapple with the problem over what should be measured. It's further complicated by the fact that this is UK money and many online beneficiaries might be global. The BBC has had a similar problem, having a huge international appeal but funded by the British taxpayer. So there is a lot of geo-locking down to prevent some of its content not being used outside of the UK. However, if digital success is a key part of what you are aiming to do then it's important to argue this back to the people that fund you.

*SH: I've just launched a video trailer and it was difficult to know how many views we should expect to get. So with this material from Afghanistan we guessed that 5000 views in six months might be a good benchmark, but we've already had 6000 in one month.*

JS: I remember from my time with Radio 3 that because graphs often go up we just thought the graph should be going up some more. Then when some 'plateau-ing' happens that's a bad news story. Physical buildings have a sense of limitation because otherwise you'd have a health and safety issue but online you don't have that – though the BBC used to have that problem because the more success it had in video delivery the more expensive it was for them to deliver it. So some success was a real pain. But that sounds like enough to me – tell them that's enough.

*Rachel Piggott, Glyndebourne Opera: I want to say something about the relationship between physical and digital experience. I've only been in the arts for two years and before that I was in destination marketing. It was a surprise to me that digital seemed to be regarded as very different in the arts – like the label 'new media' suggests. In destination marketing we would often think through the day that someone might go through, thinking about what we would do at different points. Digital was just a different part of this and could be included in the journey. In our organisation we have the creative director, production director, casting director and a financial director and*

*I would ask you to consider who/what is missing there. One consequence is that there is a difficulty of integrating the digital experience. We now stream some of our material and we've had debate about the implications of this, but the truth is, it never replaces the real experience of the opera. All of these things work together. You can see the opera at the cinema for £15, but that won't detract from you having the once in a lifetime experience of going to Glyndebourne for £300.*

JT: One of the learnings that I am taking from this is that if we are talking about audience relationships and delivering experiences surely this is so important that it can't be left to the marketers. Those around us need to be involved and that may be the way that this idea is shared.

JS: It's about how you present the problem. We cut out of our presentation earlier a point about being careful what you measure. Is 5000 views enough? How can you determine that? What is success – is it numbers or is it about certain production values? Engaging the senior managers around that discussion is vital. If it's clear why you are doing it and what you are trying to achieve the measures should follow on from that.

*CE: I was wondering if you might have talked a bit more about that this morning – in terms of content strategy. Instead of putting in everything that you can, what should you use as content and why? What are you trying to achieve with each element?*

*RL: This relates to something that happened to us in which a choreographer told us that we were showing 'too much' of what they were doing. It seemed bizarre really because it was abstract – we weren't giving away the plot.*

*Catherine Bell, Hans de Kretser Associates: do you have any case studies of successes – successful campaigns that hang together?*

JS: What is a success? It sounds like you are talking about people who have met their targets that they have set. For me, at the moment, I like projects which have a sense of excitement, trying to push something a little bit rather than thinking 'I need a page on Facebook'. We all engage with the web, we don't engage with 'a project' – it's something that solves a problem for us, sometimes one we didn't know we had. So Rachel [Coldicutt] was involved in the creation of the Twitter Opera which enabled people to be touched in a different way by opera – something modern and traditional at the same time and that is part of the excitement of the times we live in.

MS: BBC Springwatch asked people to send photos of their back gardens as part of a mass watch. They started using Flickr to put up pictures of unknown birds that people could identify, but what happened is that there became an 'arms race' of photos becoming fancier and more impressive. These beautiful pictures were then re-integrated back into the website at no extra cost.