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My task is to relate these ideas to the arts world – to provide examples of some organisations in our field which are looking to their core values as a route to greater effectiveness and delivery of their vision.

There's a very powerful passage in the Arts Council England book called *Navigating Difference* about cultural diversity and audience development. It's a quote from Maddy Morton, and it enshrines for me a core principle of what we do:

'Anyone who thinks they can achieve a diverse audience by implementing whizzy schemes whilst leaving the core of the organisation intact is on a hiding to nothing. The only really effective way to change the make up of your audience is to first change yourselves.'

If we accept that then it follows that building and retaining audiences doesn't only involve the marketing team – it involves everyone in the organisation, the way we behave and express ourselves, and our values.

I could name organisations whose individual functions – programming, marketing, educational activity, the front of house operation – all work highly effectively, but because the people involved don't have clearly shared values which link to a well articulated audience and artistic purpose, they are not successful. In other words, it's not just about doing things right, it's about doing the right things together in the right way.

I'm going to tell you about two organisations, who are at very different points on a journey, and then I'll try to identify how any organisation can make these simple concepts work for themselves.

The Fierce Festival in Birmingham is a festival of contemporary live art which happens throughout the city, and in neighbouring cities like Coventry and Wolverhampton. The artistic director, Mark Ball, has been running it for almost ten years, and during that time it has changed constantly. The last three years have seen the most radical changes in response to the company realising that its vision could only be delivered by questioning every aspect of what it does – indeed questioning what it meant to *be* a festival of contemporary live art.

The early festivals were successful artistically, but there were moments when Mark found himself putting on experimental live art shows with 40 people in the audience, and that wasn't why he was in this game. He wasn't interested in reaching only die-hard fans – he wanted to reach larger numbers of different people. Although Mark is assiduous about collecting and interpreting audience data, he also has strong hunches. He believed – though he couldn't quantify it at the time – that there was a large potential untapped audience for the kind of work he was interested in putting on, but they weren't being attracted by the kind of experimental live art in studio theatre spaces he was using.

Key to Fierce's personality as an organisation is having a strong artistic identity, having a sophisticated understanding of the audience and those they seek to influence, and believing that creativity is inherent in everyone. They take their audience seriously and don't patronise them. Mark says this:

'Valuing the audience's experience is as paramount as valuing the voice of the artist because the two are interdependent'.

So as a result of this re-examination of their role, they decided to adopt a different approach – they aimed to provide what they call 'stop-you-in-your-tracks' artistic experiences, delivered in new places. Instead of those theatre-based shows reaching 40 people, they went for large scale, outdoor spectacle events and events in unusual indoor spaces. That's tough because finding large-scale live art work isn't easy.

The sort of things that they do now include last year bringing over Belgian artist Benjamin Verdonk's *The Great Swallow*, (read all about it at www.bbc.co.uk/birmingham/content/articles/2005/05/27/birdman_birmingham_feature.shtml) which was located on the outside of the Rotunda building in Birmingham's Bullring for five days.

It connected with people way beyond the standard contemporary art crowd. And it's not just live performance where they've been able to create this kind of response and engagement – the programme is now delivered across many different platforms – broadcast, podcast, and mobile – the ways in which you can interact with the festival are designed to meet the needs of a very diverse audience group.

The communication of the festival is also innovative and designed specifically around the needs of the audience and the artistic purpose: each event is recorded and can be downloaded from Fiercetv.co.uk on the day after the event. The printed brochure becomes less and less important as other platforms take over. In fact only 6% of the audience finds out what's on from the brochure – much more important are viral marketing: the festival employs foot-soldiers to go into bars and talk it up armed with print such as beer mats and postcards.

The festival has also invested in courting the ten key bloggers in the fashion, music and contemporary art fields. Treating them like valued journalists they invite them to the festival for a weekend, put them up in a hotel and spend time with them to understand their likes and dislikes. The results have been universally positive in terms of profile and awareness due to the independent, trusted comment which the bloggers have written.

Audience members are encouraged to send in their own videos, images and responses to the events, and these are uploaded onto FierceTV to create debate and constantly refresh the content.

Internally the organisation is not hierarchical – it has a flat structure, with all staff encouraged to use their own creativity: every member of staff takes the lead on the development of certain programme ideas.

So what's happened as a result?

Well attendance figures have certainly risen, not least because of the very public, spectacular nature of many of the events. In 2005 there were over 350,000 attendances in total, including those who witnessed *The Great Swallow*. But attendance has also gone up at the events which still happen indoors, in theatre spaces and elsewhere.

Fierce has also seen the average age of its audience fall – these must be some of the youngest arts audiences anywhere in the country.

Fierce age profile

16-24	39%
25-34	32%
45-54	21%
55-64	04%
65+	03%

How have they done it?

- by being clear about what they wanted to achieve,
- having explicit values which they communicate internally and externally
- valuing the audience - and audience data,
- knowing what they believed artistically, and
- getting the whole organisation working together and motivating it to achieve.

Mark has only one fear: have they become too main-stream? This year the RSC sought out Fierce to work with them on their Complete Works Festival – the only regional company to be asked to contribute. Next year there are plans to work with both Birmingham Royal Ballet and CBSO. Are they now part of the establishment?

Scottish Opera is definitely part of the establishment – or at least it was ...

In the last three years they've experienced huge change and challenge: there's been a highly political row about the level of their funding (and the funding of Scottish culture overall to boot) and their role in the life of a small nation. They didn't come out of it well – they lost their chorus, music director, most of their technical and senior staff teams, and of course quite a bit of media credibility.

In trying to create a new direction and plan for the company, the new team - including the director of external affairs Roberta Doyle (who is here so you can ask her yourself) is now engaged in changing the company's entire operation. But what they're doing isn't simply to respond to the political climate by becoming a 'community opera company' – which many called for.

Instead they have questioned what being a large scale touring opera company means in a small nation such as Scotland. They're planning to embark on a new business model which challenges the status quo for how an opera company funds, distributes and markets its work.

First, they're being anything but introspective. They're seeking out partners to ensure they're embedded in the wider Scottish musical tapestry – and I don't just mean classical music. Franz Ferdinand, traditional Scottish folk musicians and bhangra artists as well as James Macmillan are all relevant to their quest to become central to Scottish musical life once again. And they're resisting a trend towards the operatic equivalent of a McDonalds-type consistency where almost every new staging is a co-production with a European opera house, predictable in its style and aesthetics. How could they be a distinctively Scottish company if their productions look like every European company's?

Next they are developing a new model of how an opera company develops funding for its work: if public subsidy and investment is at standstill – or may even fall in the future – then investment in creating new works has to come from elsewhere. So they're looking to their audiences and corporate supporters to become fundamentally involved in the creation of new work through investment. Their earned income plans are ambitious, based in part on significant investment in marketing, meaning that the marketing function will become more central than ever before and the stakes will be higher too. The marketing and fundraising teams are going to have to stick their necks

out, delivering challenging, tangible outcomes not just in terms of ticket sales but in earned income overall – derived from merchandising, individual giving, commercial exploitation of the company's work beyond the box office and corporate support.

In getting buy-in from the internal stakeholders for this shift, the leaders of the organisation are devoting significant time to the process of identifying and sharing the company's values. And that's not just a series of flipchart sessions. It means living those values internally: for instance if the company has a desire to reach a wider range of people – to become more inclusive – then that means changing the way the company recruits and supports its staff – as well as what it says and does externally. Remember Maddy's quote from *Navigating Difference*?

Anyone who thinks they can achieve a diverse audience by implementing whizzy schemes whilst leaving the core of the organisation intact is on a hiding to nothing. The only really effective way to change the make up of your audience is to first change yourselves.'

Doing that quickly is key to getting and sustaining buy-in from the whole company and countering cynicism: people need to see change happen quickly – and of course that's doubly difficult in opera where the pace of change can be slow due to the elongated planning cycles inherent in the opera industry. So the pressure is certainly on.

The irony about the popular view of Scottish Opera as an 'elitist company' is that it already visits 140 communities a year throughout Scotland and – through its small and medium scale touring and national education work – has done for many years. This is what it must do in order to demonstrate its pan-national role – but that work has traditionally remained 'under the radar' – simply too local to make an impact nationally about the value and role of the company. But that's now changing, with an increased focus on celebrating their work beyond the central belt and the big theatres.

I don't want to give the impression that Scottish Opera has become a small-scale touring company – it still presents grand opera in the big theatres of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. And the majority of its income is derived from those dates. But by thinking about the needs of the audience and stakeholders it's found ways of delivering its work to new and different people.

This is something which is expected of no other national non-arts cultural institution: the Scottish national football team isn't expected to play on the shinty pitch in Tighnabruaich to prove its value. But because of the popular values ascribed to opera – elitism, difficulty, formality, expense, and general posh ness, it's choosing to challenge those perceptions by showing that opera can also be approachable, local, fun and informal.

Scottish Opera is embarking on a hugely exciting phase in its life: they've had to re-examine their whole ethos and reason for being in order to create a plan which can make sense artistically, financially and in terms of public support. At the same time they're having to repair the public image of the company.

So how will they know when they're succeeding? The obvious performance indicators will be ticket sales and income, levels of corporate support, and financial sustainability. But there are equally important, qualitative indicators too: buy-in from the internal stakeholders to the new model, maybe the First Minister of Scotland publicly backing the company – and a general feeling in the media and decision-making classes that Scottish Opera matters, and that it helps to define the nation of Scotland today – in

much the same way that the nascent National Theatre of Scotland has done already in its short life.

So what do we conclude from all this?

Surely any organisation can benefit from going through the process of fundamental questioning of its role and purpose, its values and model of delivery.

People can find change very challenging. And yet managed well, change can be really exciting. One of the easiest ways to ensure that people don't get left behind is to create working teams from across the organisation to consider issues beyond their normal jobs. It helps build trust and understanding of a change programme, and can help tap into people's creativity – not just yours or the curator's or the artistic director's, but the visitor services manager's, the box office assistant's and the café supervisor's.

And we need to make connections with our audiences, not just through direct marketing and an efficient service at the box office: ask yourself how you talk about audiences internally? Do you make it your business to get to know them – not just through market data but also personally, formally and informally?

But perhaps the most exciting thing for me to emerge from these two case studies, is a rebuttal of the traditional view that our artistic programmes could be so much more exciting if they were unshackled from the tastes and needs of the audience.

What Fierce and Scottish Opera show us is that in considering the audience in your thinking and planning, you don't diminish the value or importance of the art. Quite the opposite in fact: inspirational artistic experiences actually benefit from putting audiences at the centre of everything you do.