

Shared success

Janina Mundy reflects on how working together is the dream ticket

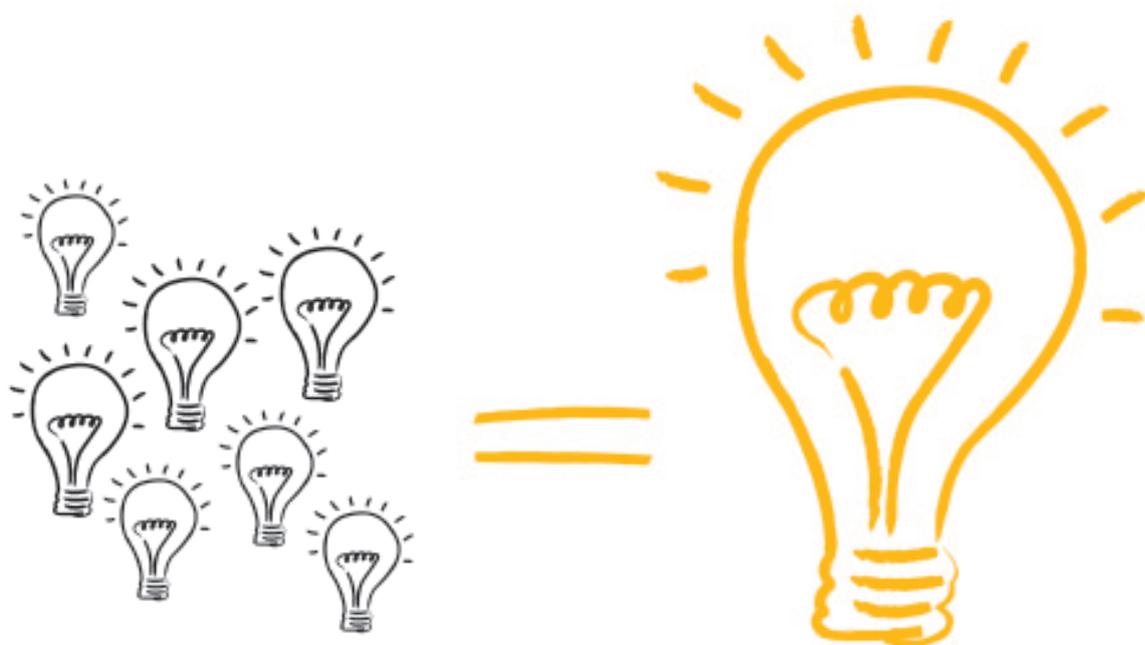


Illustration by Sugarfree

Given the loving nature of arts marketers, it's hardly surprising there's always been a collaborative approach to the way we work. However, over the last year or so I've definitely seen an increase in a more 'joined-up' approach to arts organisations working together. Collaboration seems to be the buzzword recently, and we at The Lowry are doing it more and more and seeing the benefits. I'm not sure if it's a reflection of the recent funding cuts – the idea that we have to work together to make a little go further – but partnerships and relationships are developing, and it's not just about saving money.

Long gone are the days of rivalry, the position of 'that's my audience – hands off!' Collaboration in Manchester now involves data

swapping, inviting other venues to come to each other's press nights and tweeting and retweeting each other's news as a matter of course. At The Lowry it is also not just confined to Salford Quays and Greater Manchester – we really see the benefits of working in similar ways across the North West; and as a receiving house it's not uncommon for us to talk regularly to venues across the country, resulting in joint national marketing campaigns or simply creating a forum for debate.

All of this can help us achieve attendance and financial targets, as well as raising awareness of our theatres, galleries and museums

to new audiences; but now we're taking it a step further, we're also sharing our ideas, skills and manpower. We've opened our eyes to the bigger picture – by working together we can offer our audiences a stronger package, something to be proud of in their own community and make them want to come back for more.

At The Lowry we are involved in a number of collaborations, and not just with other arts organisations.

The Museum and Galleries Consortium consists of marketing teams from each art gallery and museum who meet regularly, not just to talk about sharing resources, but to programme events that will engage with audiences in a



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more interesting and innovative way; an example being the Manchester Weekender that sees The Lowry curate a cabaret night in its galleries for the Manchester Weekender's launch, which coincides with the opening of 'Adolph Valette: A Pioneer of Impressionism in Manchester' exhibition.

Other ventures include working with two major arts institutions in Manchester, The Royal Exchange and The Hallé, on a brand new production of the musical 'Wonderful Town'; The Lowry providing the venue, the Hallé the music and the Royal Exchange the direction, taking us on a much bigger adventure than just sharing data. The Quays Consortium, consisting of The Lowry, Imperial War Museum North and Lancashire County Cricket Club, to name just a few organisations in the partnership, work together to market The Quays as a destination for tourists and groups; and with the recent move of the BBC to MediaCityUK, a brand relationship has suddenly arisen. The Lowry is working closely with them to programme a whole day of free dance activities around a new CBBC TV programme which aims to raise awareness of dance and 'get all ages moving'.

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So when the BBC Philharmonic found themselves without a marketing manager and a small team not long before the opening of their 10/11 concert season at The

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Bridgewater Hall, it made complete sense that they should look elsewhere to make themselves more sustainable.

A key remit to The Lowry winning the marketing contract was to increase ticket sales, raise awareness of the orchestra with other classical music concert attendees in Manchester, and increase attendance from Salford residents, as well developing a more effective spend to support increased marketing activities. Quite a tall order, but in the year we've been working together – and I say 'working together' as it's very much a two-way relationship rather than us working for them – sales for the 10/11 season were up by 8% on 09/10, with the 11/12 season already 20% ahead of sales the same time this year.

It was the economies of scale offered by The Lowry that was a crucial factor for these financial and audience increases, in a number of ways. The Lowry's strong team of 11 staff is high on the list; we've not just offered more manpower but also a wealth of expertise in each marketing discipline. We've been able to execute tried and tested ideas for quick results, as well as simply having a larger number of people available to create a larger number of ideas. We've offered costs savings through The Lowry's service providers and therefore a more effective marketing spend. For example, the increased quantities of direct mail, distribution and media space booked (on- and offline) qualifies us for cheaper rates

which we can pass on to the BBC Philharmonic. We have the ability and resource to research various printers for the best quality and price; in the case of the BBC Philharmonic we've chosen a local company that suggested buying all the paper in bulk, resulting in a significant saving which can be spent elsewhere.

The BBC Philharmonic is also gaining access to our groups, Twitter followers, high frequency bookers and Our Lowry (Salford members scheme) etc., presenting them with offers and new experiences, so we believe we benefit too. Through this relationship The Lowry is able to offer more to our own audience and local community, embracing the bigger picture by offering a wider access to arts and culture in Greater Manchester.

With collaborations come whole new worlds, new ideas and new exciting projects. Long may it continue. ●



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