



## **A culture of research ~ bringing research into your day-to-day practice**

Katie Anderson, Marketing Director – Warwick Arts Centre

Introduced and chaired by Katy Raines, AMA board member and Partner, Indigo-Ltd

Katie has worked as Marketing Director at Warwick Arts Centre for over 10 years. Previously she was Head of Marketing at Oxford Playhouse and in marketing positions at Birmingham Rep and Sherman Theatre, Cardiff. Warwick Arts Centre is one of the largest arts centres in the UK based at the heart of the campus of the University of Warwick in Coventry. The programme at Warwick Arts Centre is diverse and eclectic, ranging from the best UK and international theatre, prestigious orchestras and big-name comedians to music gigs, experimental studio work and accessible work for children and families. In addition it is the home of the Mead Gallery, a distinctive space exhibiting works by the UK's best contemporary visual artists.

### **Katie Anderson, Warwick Arts Centre**

This is going to be an outline of what we've been doing about bringing research into our day-to-day operation at Warwick Arts Centre over the last couple of years. I've been at Warwick for around ten years and in that time it has changed quite a lot with various teams and continues to have an extensive programme.



### **ABOUT US**

We are one of the largest arts centres in the UK and have six venues; a 1,400-seat concert hall, two theatres – one of 550 seats and one of 150 seats, a full, free-to-attend gallery space, a new studio / education space and a cinema. We have a programme that includes:

- Theatre, dance, circus, family work, music, comedy, classical music, films and visual arts,
- 500+ performances and 700+ film screenings a year,
- 230,000 tickets sold (Box Office £1.8 million),
- 17,500 gallery attendances,
- estimated annual visitors 800,000+.

We were founded in 1974 and will be celebrating our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday next year. Our turnover is around £5.5 million and our main funders are University of Warwick (£1.3 million) and Arts Council England NPO (£500,000).

## **STRENGTHS**

We are based in the middle of the university campus on a beautiful Greenfield site, are well-funded by the university and are a part of what the university does – increasingly so. We try to tie ourselves closely with the university's ambitions and have linked strategies in an ambitious crossover with the university. We have an excellent, well-respected, wide-ranging and diverse programme and are surrounded by young keen students and university staff. Although, we have fewer students than you might imagine, coming to see our work. We have a loyal and interested risk-taking audience and pull our audiences from a large catchment of the West Midlands and beyond.

## **CHALLENGES**

As well as being one of our strengths, being in the middle of a university campus is also a challenge. We have little passing trade as it can be hard to find us and hard to get through. It can be bureaucratic and there are often all sorts of rigmaroles which leads to frustration and difficulty in getting things done – talking to security about signage, directions, car parking. We don't have any control over our food and drink operation as they, like us, are separate university departments.

We programme our events programme in university term time and have three, ten-week seasons. We run a Christmas show over Christmas vacation but currently, which is quite nice in July and August, we don't have any live programme and we don't have anything for about four or five weeks over Easter. At that time we become a conference venue for the university and our technical and operations teams run those conferences for them. This week is graduation ceremony-week at the University of Warwick and it changes completely, has a different feel – our beautiful, 1,400-seat concert hall changes to an exam hall and then transforms again for the graduation ceremonies.

We are not university core business and although we have an education team we are not about education. Increasingly, we have to justify our grant from the university in terms of return on investment – it's like dealing with two versions of the arts council! Tuition fees have gone up to £9,000 per year and we have to justify value for money, what we do and how we contribute to the university's core business.

## **2011 – THE YEAR OF *TRANSFORM***

In 2011 we had a shift, a bit of a change, and we were really lucky to have a successful bid to Arts Council England for £1.3 million which was all about improving resilience and commercial potential. It was to enable us to shift our organisational focus and to more clearly define ourselves to audiences, stakeholders, funders and potential donors and therefore positioning us as a robust 21<sup>st</sup> century venue of choice. We had been working to a model that was very '80s and 90s' and we needed to move on from that and become more audience focused.

### **THE TRANSFORM PROGRAMME**

£1.3 million sounds like a lot of money but a much of it was spend on an outstanding capital venture – we had our main hall refurbished in 2008/9 and had successfully fundraised for it but there was some money outstanding. We were hiring equipment which didn't make us very robust or resilient because the money we were making on a concert would be used up by the equipment hire. So a large proportion of the grant bought technical equipment for the hall in order to make us more robust for the future.

We created a new business plan and marketing strategies and did organisational development and succession planning. The management team have been in place for quite a long time, some of them are heading for retirement and we need to plan for the future – it sounds awful but is realistic. We would also like to become more of an artistic and commissioning venue which is a real key difference and a real shift that we've had quite a lot of success with. Increasingly, Warwick Arts Centre will either commission or test work that's been done with new theatre companies along with some music as well. We have a three-year fund whereby we can, for instance, commission artists to test out their work. Because we do quite an experimental theatre programme we've been doing showings of work in progress and getting work tested on audiences and asking them to respond. We're selling them as events quite cheaply but they're actually coming in and having a two-way dialogue with audiences. Companies then develop their work, take it out and come back with a fully-fledged piece of work in the future. It has been very interesting and real shift in the artistic vision. Because we don't want to ever stand still we have done some feasibility studies with regards future plans for a massive capital project. It could involve a lot of 'knocking down and rebuilding' and it is still at the feasibility stage but could be very exciting.

The audience research part of the overall grant amounted to around 0.4% but we've done a lot of audience research and testing the contemporary – the artistic vision is all about us being a *contemporary* arts centre and we wanted to test whether that was robust and resilient enough to

be a commercial model. We've also been testing our brand and actually, this was 2011 and only this autumn are we going to have new brand guidelines so, it takes a long time.

## **TRANSFORM ACTIONS**

We had some key actions and one of those was to create a new post; Head of Programme and Audiences. With the shift in responsibility and the management structure he is now in charge of all our programmers and in charge of marketing. That wasn't the case before and I think this echoes what Owen Hughes (Wolff Olins) was saying in his keynote about bringing audiences into focus. There was a real split between artistic and marketing before but that's changing now with the new senior management team; our Director, Head of Programme and Audiences and Director of Planning and Operations. I report to the Head of Programme and Audiences, as does the film programmer, the gallery curator, the education director who programmes the family work, and, so does our director who programmes classical music and dance. I work very closely with Head of Programme and Audiences but also with the Head of Operations and Planning and it's all about the teams working together to deliver excellent customer experience. The difference with the Head of Operations and Planning is that she works in an outward-facing way with university departments and that's one of the things that we've tested with research and I'll come on to in a bit.

Our programme has a firm emphasis on contemporary work – there are a few things that come from elsewhere but largely all the work is contemporary. We are moving into artistic commissioning and seed work which I mentioned previously and with which we've had some outcomes that I think are going to take us forward in an interesting way.

Universities are funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) which is like their arts council. HEFCE have a strong set of criteria for universities to apply for funding and therefore get them up the research rankings. One of the things they've recently introduced is that they score universities on their impacts and 20% of their funding is dependent on that. It has freaked out the universities because they've suddenly, a bit like the arts, got to say what the impact of what they do within the education environment is on the outside world. It's a bit like our sector with audience development. We've had some success recently and we can see this growing in that we've managed to say to some university departments; 'we've got a really amazing artistic project, if you help fund that artistic project and it has something to do with your subject area, albeit vaguely, what you could say is that this contributes to your impact score'. A recent example of that is [Theatre Rites](#), a children's theatre company who have done a site-specific work in London, which is coming to us in the autumn, and which was co-commissioned by Warwick University economics department, us, the Barbican and CREATE. It's a piece of work for children

called [Bank on it](#) and is about the banking system and how we made it through the financial crash. It's site specific and takes you on an interactive journey and story that explains to children the financial crisis and why they are living in the times that they living. We are excited that we helped to commission it – it's had amazing press and reviews in London, is coming to Coventry and then Warwick Arts Centre in October. It was given £40,000 by the economics department of the University of Warwick and they can then say that one of their impacts was that they brought in a certain number of children and young people to something that they helped to make happen. It's another potential form of funding for us.

Our focus on research is about having a stronger guide to decision-making and data-driven information in response to existing and new funders. It is increasingly what I do and I find out relevant information about our audiences and have it available for people so they can make informed decisions and say; 'yes, that's what we're going to do'.

## BRINGING RESEARCH INTO THE DAY TO DAY TRANSFORM – THE RESEARCH ELEMENT

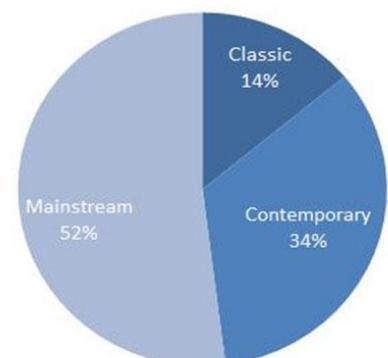
We did a comprehensive market research programme in 2011-2012 including:

- Marketing audit
- Market assessment
  - ... where we are sitting with everybody else
  - our peer venues and key organisations
- Quantitative research – division of programme / loyalty and frequency of bookers
- Testing the contemporary programme
- Later (at the end of 2012) – qualitative research and audience / non-attender interviews



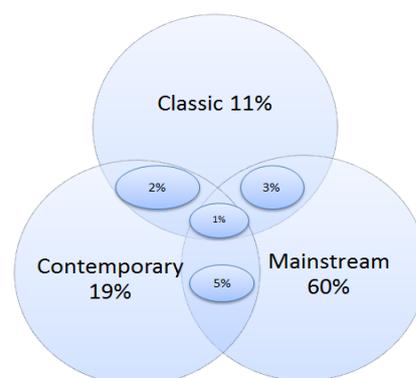
We now divide our programme up into; classic, mainstream and contemporary. We don't do it by art form and this has now been adopted throughout the organisation along with the finance manager reporting on this as well. Roughly, mainstream includes; comedy, popular music, family work and rock and pop. Classic includes; classical music – we do a 10-concert series, opera and any classic plays but we don't do very many of those any more. Contemporary is: contemporary theatre, contemporary music, visual arts, world music and dance. It's a

Warwick Arts Centre programme  
by artform 2012



growing proportion of our projects. We have to have that as our model because mainstream, and classic, is where we bring in our surplus. While we have a contemporary programme, we need our family show, our Christmas show, our rock and pop and comedy to keep the balance in the books. This chart shows our audience break down and where there is crossover (opposite):

Before we did this we always had the aspiration that we needed to drive people into the full experience of Warwick Arts Centre and to make sure that they experience everything under our roof but we've now shifted that thinking and understand that people will choose between what we've got on offer. If they want to



Using the Indigo Total Audience Model

come to see comedy, so be it, that's fine and it will then be about driving frequency through comedy and also I would say that once we've got them into our building there are ample opportunities to see the range of events on offer. We do segmentation like this in terms of data, the way that we communicate with them; with brochure and emails etc. You can see that there isn't loads of crossover – I wouldn't be surprised if there's not a bit of 'staff' in there (although we did take out 'comps'). There's a slight complication in that our cinema programme runs all the year round yet our live programme does not – that chart shows just the live programme. Our cinema programme is mainly Art House and independent films.

You can see that we get large proportions of income from the mainstream and the classical programme – the most valuable to us is the 'classic' because they pay more for their tickets.

## WHAT WE DO NOW

This is what we do now and is built into our day-to-day working. I'll be honest and say that when we had our marketing assessment in 2011, one of the things that we got pulled up on was that we weren't doing enough research. So, we've redressed the balance. We have a **segmented approach to data analysis and all our communications** and we talk in terms of mainstream, classic and contemporary. Every August we do **quantitative research** – an annual data analysis which analyses frequency and loyalty and we've got some KPIs to deliver for the arts council about frequency of attenders. They're really hard-to-meet KPIs when you start adding in economic factors and consider that people probably can't afford to come several times and might just choose one special event. We are doing on-going research which is like delivering a story over the long term and the annual data analysis happens each August and we'll have an evaluation ready for in September ready for the new season.

We did some **qualitative research** last autumn and gained some interesting findings. We went out onto the streets and were interviewing people who fulfilled the criteria of a 'classic' and a 'contemporary' audience and asked about their motivations, what they do now, whether they know Warwick Arts Centre and even with just the small samples, the findings do show how you might have to shift your thinking in order to deliver changes and to match the expectations of potential customers.

We also carry out **experience surveys** which I'm mainly going to talk about today and we make sure that we **embed the contemporary, classic and mainstream segments** in our day-to-day operations.

## DATA IMPACTS

I think that the impacts of this are far-reaching and it really has come into the day-to-day working of the organisation i.e. audience research does have to go to stakeholders, we do have to report back to our funders, it does get reported back to our senior management team and then on to programmers and staff. We have staff days and box office ask to see the results as they like to see the charts and the way that it encapsulates what they do on a day-to-day basis. But, most importantly, is that we've had to bring it into improving

relationships with franchises and non-overseen teams and improving customer services. When we do our experience surveys and our customer feedback forms, nearly all the comments are about food and drink or about car parking. These were all things that we said we couldn't control because they're different departments but actually, those customers coming into the arts centre don't know that the line management of the café/bar or the restaurant or the car parking is someone else. They're just coming to see Warwick Arts Centre and, if they've managed to make their way onto campus, driven a great loop around it to find a car parking space, walked into the foyer, found the box office and bought their tickets they really don't care about who's in charge of what. It needs a more holistic way of looking at it and what we've done is to use the research to feed back to conference, food and drink, retail and security departments.



## **EXPERIENCE SURVEYS – HOW THEY WORK**

What we've been doing for about six seasons now is to identify eight to twelve events per season that balance between the segments; mainstream, classic and contemporary and send out an email with a link to a standard survey to chosen audiences in that week or a day after event. It is a standard survey that is run on Survey Monkey about their experience of Warwick Arts Centre and we usually get a high response rate. We then do is a six-monthly evaluation, benchmarked by Indigo Ltd, and with which we can test responses.

### **THE SURVEY COVERS:**

#### **The audience experience of the *venue***

- Box Office
- Food and drink / purchases and ancillary sales
- Car parking
- Toilets

Then, because so often the event is rated by the programmers and by the artistic team at the organisation as being a 'fantastic show' what we've included is a section to find out the audience experience of the event:

#### **The audience experience of the *event***

- Star ratings for events
- Prices / value for money

Sometimes a show might not turn out to be that great but people will forgive it if they've had a good night out so it's about trying to build in that overall standard of customer service and looking after people. We ask the audience to give their star ratings for the event and whether they think it was value for money.

I send the survey email from my Outlook account. We've tested it through an Outlook account and also through a designed email but we get a much better response when it comes from an Outlook email because people have got the impression of real engagement with somebody at the arts centre rather than an 'advertising' email. The survey doesn't cover reviews and personal views of the event but we've added a note at the end to say 'if you want to write a review then please do and we will ensure that it goes back to the company or the artist / musician'. People really seem to like that as it gives them a connection back to the event that they've seen and has also stopped people from emailing me back with reviews and getting me into conversations which, while lovely, was very time consuming. We can also link to future events that we think they might like and encourage feedback and comments on websites and social media.

We have an open policy around commenting on our website – we don't police it or moderate and we've had some positive feedback about that.

## EVALUATION

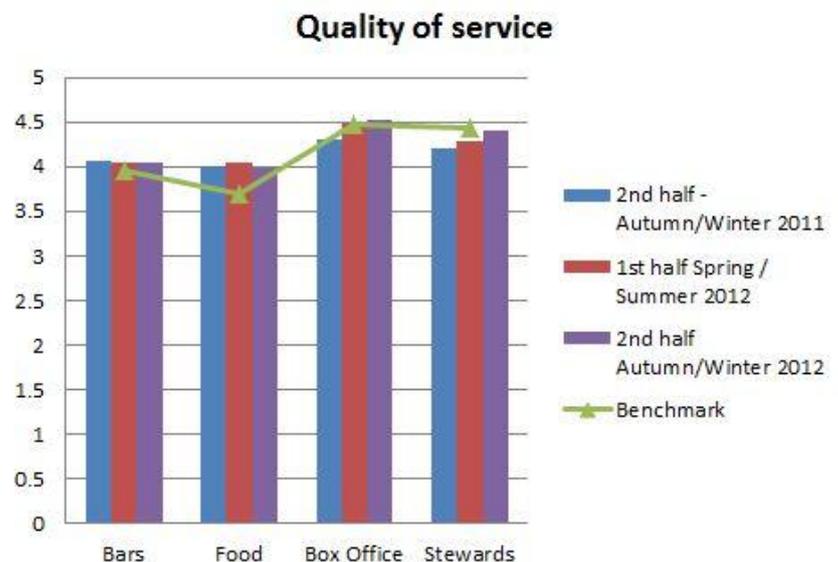
We look at **performance against performance/season** and the **key differences in motivations/expectations between the three audience segments** and then we do benchmarking against similar organisations.

Anybody can do this survey and apply it to your own organisation but we choose to do it with Indigo as a similar survey is done by about 15 other organisations and we can set a benchmark to see how we are performing in comparison. Also, we can start to identify any key differences and what different motivations there are.

We can have an on-going assessment of say; what the operations teams get; front of house, box office, security etc. whether they have positive/negative scores, we can test improvements and make recommendations. So, if people are saying that the phone isn't being answered quickly enough we could put certain things in place to argue that at certain times of the year or at certain times of the day when box office is busy we need to increase staffing etc.

## FINDINGS 1

We show the data in these charts and include the benchmark (the green line). Customers love Box Offices and as you can see they are up there with stewards and rated higher than 'food' and 'bars'. You can see that we under perform a little bit on 'stewards', we're doing OK on bars and food at the moment and steady with box office.



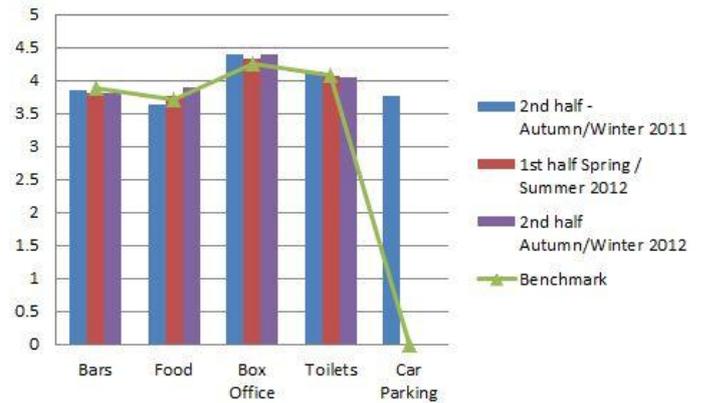
They're all quite high scores though – we only give them the opportunity to score out of 5 so to get 4 / 4.5 isn't too bad I don't think. These graphs and this way of presenting the results is useful for reporting to food, drink and retail – it's a language with which they are familiar and does therefore have impact with them.

**FINDINGS 2**

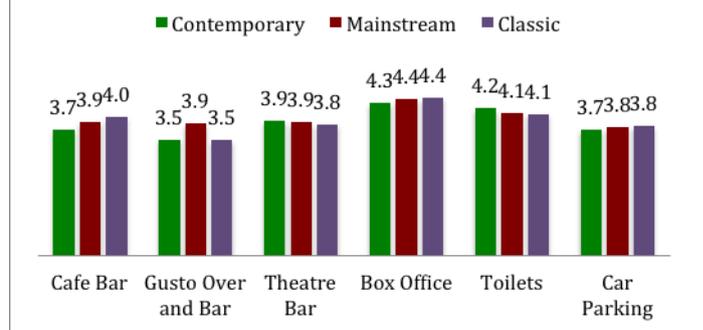
This shows the 'quality of facilities' over three seasons. We're the only ones who test 'car parking' which is why the benchmark shows like that and we've done that deliberately because we'd had so many complaints about car parking. It is free after 6pm but the university put barriers on the car park and even though you haven't paid anything, you need a token to put in the barrier to get out – instead of just leaving the barrier up. It is a struggle to get them to *leave the barrier up!* So, this is a way of articulating that to the university. Box Office love their scores and they are better than average.

We also track what the on-going scores are across different seasons and you can see that car parking is getting marginally better. You can see from this graph what each segment likes. We've had problems with our classical music audiences over the food facilities. It's not what they want – it's too casual and they want more formal dining. It's really hard to deliver formal dining when it's a university restaurant focusing on pizzas. We've worked with Gusto and they are starting to do more formal menus on concert nights because that 'classic' audience want a different thing. We're trying to shift ways of thinking so that they are starting to understand about what arts audiences as well as university audiences are looking for.

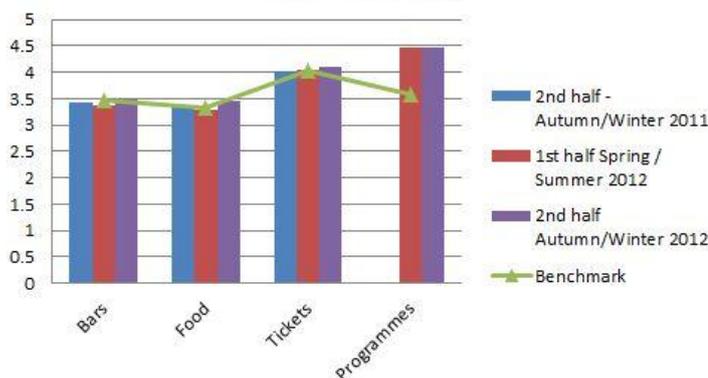
**Quality of facilities**



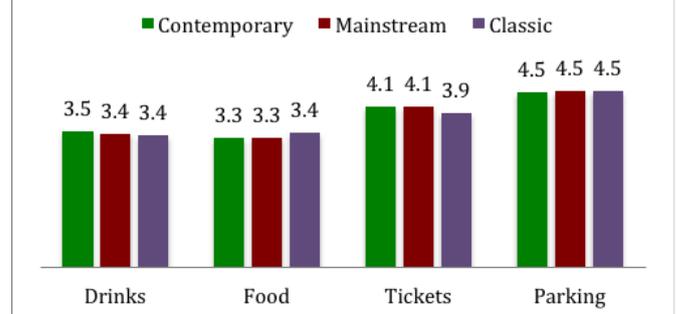
**Quality of Facilities**



**Value for money**



**Value for Money**

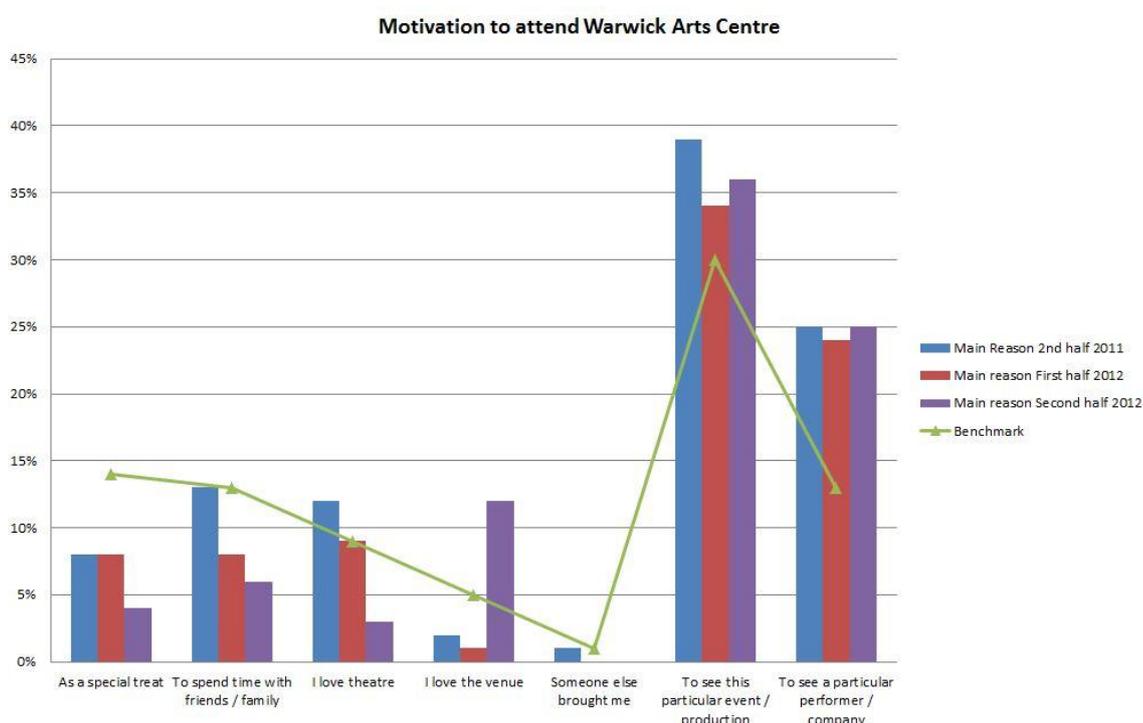


## FINDINGS FOR PROGRAMMERS

We can talk to programmers about **audience motivations** and the research **tests the contemporary programme** and **assesses loyalty and brand**. It can influence me to decide **how we position and present our programme in communications**. For example, in our contemporary programme we'll quite often have a not-well-known theatre company presenting a piece of work that's never been seen before so, in our branding, we try to make the name of the theatre company come through as stronger than the show. I know there's nothing really high-tech about that but it's the thing that we find sells contemporary theatre. Going back to **impacts – bad show / bad experience?** People might forgive a bad show but they don't necessarily forgive a bad experience.

### FINDINGS 4

The reasons: *to see this particular event / production and to see a particular performer / company* come much higher than the benchmark. We fall down on as *a special treat –*



we're not getting those 'dinner and a show' people in which I think is down to the nature of our programme. We also don't get too many who state a motivation is *to spend time with friends / family* but we do get a high number of people who state; *I love theatre*.

What we therefore try to do with our brand values is say that; 'Warwick Arts Centre as a destination is a brand that you can trust – you might not have heard what's on tonight but – give it a go and you'll have a good time!'

When testing by strand, 44% of the contemporary audience came to 'see the production or exhibition', along with 54% in the classic strand. In the mainstream programme, 43% come to 'see a particular performer, company or artist'. In comparison, just 16% of the mainstream group state

their motivation was to 'have a night out with family/friends' – 14% in contemporary and just 6% in classic.

We also tested people's feelings on shared experiences and the artistic experience. The research shows that the contemporary audience are more likely to be motivated by the challenge of the show and personal resonance / emotional connection. It is a slightly more intellectual way of experiencing culture whereas the 'good night out' people don't necessarily want that depth and level of engagement.

## **COSTS**

- There is a nominal annual fee of £500 for the benchmarking.
- Survey Monkey subscription (optional)
- Time to write a weekly email via Outlook
- Benchmarking report every six months
- Survey example at: <https://www.research.net/s/SamplesurveyAMA>

## **THE FUTURE – to be continued ...**

- **On-going evaluation / bench-marking**
- **On-going sharing of results**
- **Leads into / supports organisation-wide CRM strategy**

One of the things that we've started working on is this on-going CRM strategy which is about working more closely with university departments and with people that deliver what our audiences expect from Warwick Arts Centre. That should mean that we will be in closer alignment with the university who have appointed CCSG – a Campus and Community Services Group that is all about delivering a better experience for people that come onto campus and people that are already on campus. If we can position ourselves as key to that then it guarantees our longevity and what with the way that funding is at the moment that, with a few other things that we are doing such as the artistic commissioning and the impact studies will hopefully make us more resilient for the future.

- **On-going action plans as a result**
- **Evaluation tool – used in funding applications**
- **Can use email to on-sell future events – working into more finely-tuned e-communication strategy**

## QUESTIONS

**Delegate:** Do you need something special, a plugin, on Outlook to use it to send out surveys?

**Katie:** No. We extract the data from our box office system, we use email permissions, so if they've said 'yes' to email communication, which we strongly encourage in our box office, I'll extract the data, put them into a bcc file and send them out like that.

**Delegate:** ... and there's no problem with the data being encrypted? I thought there was a problem with sending marketing information out via Outlook.

**Katie:** In terms of bookers these are not large numbers so, it depends how big your venue is but the largest survey we've done was to about 220 people. I sent that out in three goes separated into three spread sheets of under 100 each.

**Katy Raines:** Other people are sending it via bulk email tools.

**Katie:** For our normal email campaigns we use *Campaign Monitor* which is built into our website – but we've sent these surveys out from there and we don't get such a good response.

**Delegate:** I have a question about the segmentation of your programme into the different groups; classic, mainstream, contemporary. Can you explain a little more about that? Coming from a theatre background it's quite interesting to see. Is there a crossover between theatre and music etc.? Does that restrict you?

**Katie:** No. It works really well for us because we did something similar before we worked with Indigo Ltd when we put in our new box office system in 2009 in that we classified everything with the AD:UK classification system. This was slightly amended for us because we have so many events a year there's no way, when we're doing marketing or pulling out data that we can remember every single event so we have a very fine-tuned, three-tier system classified by event type and show type. We have a top level which is theatre, dance or classical and then there's a second level, so theatre will be divided into classic play, experimental play, contemporary play, new work and then things like dance will be divided up into ballet, contemporary dance and so on. When an event goes on sale in our box office, it is classified so that we can say 'let's target everyone who comes to contemporary circus' and so we applied that and put them into the model. We did make a judgement call and say; 'ok, classic plays are going into classic along with orchestral music but in contemporary we are going to put experimental work, contemporary classical music and so forth'. We use those initial codings to follow the Indigo model.

**Katy Raines:** You don't have to do that if you haven't got your events coded, you can just classify your events as; classic, contemporary and mainstream. We call it the Total Audience Model

because it finds that somebody who attends contemporary drama is more likely to attend another contemporary piece of work like dance or music than a classic drama. Similarly, if you look at things by genre, trying to get people who attend Shakespeare to attend a piece of new writing is really difficult. But for somebody who attends other sorts of contemporary work it is much easier to persuade them to attend. There's around 10% of people crossing over between those different types of work. We've done this with around 20 different venues now and that's quite typical. It's rarely more than 10% in the middle and yet there can be some high frequencies going on within that and crossing of genre but within the contemporary bubble or the classic bubble. The other interesting thing with that is to then lay the demographic information on the top of that and we find that they are actually quite different sorts of people. And then you layer on the attitudinal information and there are different attitudes but they are consistent within the bubble. It's interesting that contemporary audiences have a more similar demographic to each other and attitudes to each other as do classic audiences.

**Katy:** It does get quite complicated but is really fascinating.

**Katie:** It can work very simply at the top level so it's a good place to start and then you can get more complicated as you go down but get used to using it. The great thing about Warwick is that they're using it for all their financial reporting now as well. They know now that the contemporary work doesn't make them any money, we kind of knew that before, but now they can see where the value is in terms of which shows are the Cash Cows etc. It is becoming a joint language across departments.

**Katy:** We're all talking the same language and while there is still some work to do we're getting there and it is easier to get things through.

**Delegate:** I'm interested in how you share the information within the organisation practically. Do you do presentations to staff? How do you do it?

**Katie:** With box office I'll simply go along and show them the findings as part of the box office meeting. Before *Transform* I didn't manage the box office as that used to be managed by the operations department but around 2009 the box office came under my management so they therefore also report to the Head of Programme and Audiences. We're much more aligned and we've done physical things such as putting a desk for the box office manager in the marketing office and the assistant box office managers also have 'admin time' and we've worked with the organisation to explain that the box office systems are so sophisticated now that loads of admin work now needs to be done as well as all the coding of the shows. They can then see why I'm asking them to add extra fields when they are loading an event because it is contextualised. I also

go to retail meetings and feed back to our Head of Planning and Operations who is really championing the CRM approach. Because our Head of Planning and Operations works closely with the university admin team, the CCSG etc. she can pass that on to them as well. The funny thing is that the university is also working in this way now.

**Delegate:** We're doing the same surveys and one of the questions we ask is for the recipient to 'star rate' the performance. Do you ask that as well? How do you feed that back to programming and how does it then influence their planning decisions?

**Katie:** I'll be honest – I don't think that does influence their planning decisions. They still want to have control over artistic vision but they do receive the 'star ratings' – they're quite high scores so they're not unhappy with them. Some of the surveys we send out are for experimental works or works in progress and so programming will try to justify the scores and I'm not saying that's perfect and it won't ever be because we will never be a commercially-led organisation, we will always be artistically led so they will continue to commission artists on the basis of artists.

**Katy Raines:** Have you ever had a situation where they've thought the show was really good but the audience haven't? Or the opposite? Are they surprised sometimes when they see these results?

**Katie:** I think audiences are more generous with their evaluation of a production than programmers. I can't remember any massive 'turkeys'. I think that if we had a show that was a terrible dud we probably wouldn't send out the survey. That probably sounds awful and like we're adjusting the figures but if we have a show like that we get plenty of feedback and audience response from all the normal channels.

**Delegate:** I work for a music venue in Manchester City Centre so we've got a very different offer. When we do email surveys and I have some queries around the amount of people who respond and whether there is a particular type of person who responds to surveys and is there a silent majority who just don't take part? We incentivise some of our surveys but there's always a concern that it is a particular type of person who answers them. And second, which I suspect doesn't apply to you, we also have a significant group of people who buy on the door such as on a Club Night and in terms of data it's difficult to track that information. It means that we're trying to balance our face-to-face surveys with email which can never quite balance because of the time currently allowed to do them both. I suppose I'm interested in those who don't respond as well as those who do.

**Katie:** I agree with you and it is just one part of the overall research – you don't take everything from that and it's that model where there's quantitative, experience surveys, qualitative and all of that. We collect masses of data. We have a high 90's percentage of data capture so the second bit doesn't really apply to us and even on door sales, unless unavoidable or it's very late, we do capture data. [Turns to Katy Raines:] I'm going to ask you about the people who don't respond because you have to have an approach to this, don't you?

**Katy:** Theatre Royal Newcastle do the same survey, face to face, on clipboards at the end of the show and because there's only about five questions it is really quick and enables them to redress the balance in terms of the people they haven't captured. Someone in the venue then puts the answers into the survey tool. One of the things that we're going to be working on is making sure that we don't email the same people over and over again with this survey and if they've answered it once in one year they won't be asked to answer it again in that year so that we always try to get to different people and make sure that it is a good spread.

**Delegate:** I'm just wondering if you have a specific research question that you wanted answering with your survey? Was there something in particular that you wanted to find out or was it more about improving visitor service generally?

**Katie:** We wanted to test the hypothesis that; 'people will forgive a poor show if they have a good experience' and really try to embed that into the organisation. There was too much focus on 'that was a great show' while we were getting feedback telling us that 'it took me 15 minutes to get out of your car park' or 'I didn't get served in the restaurant until twenty past seven'. That wasn't happening all the time but we were getting that feedback so what we wanted to do was make a better experience for customers and feed that back to slightly harder-to-influence teams. This summer there's an on-going familiarisation of the backstage areas at Warwick Arts Centre and we're all sharing in tours and going around to all the areas that we don't know. I'm going to go in the cupboards in the restaurant and have a look at the kitchens and the catering teams are going to come and look backstage etc. It sounds really basic but it has never been done and so we're all trying to get to know one another as various teams rather than just components of a building. I think the survey is just one little bit of that.

**Katy Raines:** I think as well that when you started the *Transform* programme there was a desire to understand contemporary audiences in isolation and what we said together was that actually it is about the difference between *that* audience and the other audiences is what's interesting. Not just that 75% read the *guardian* – that doesn't mean very much other than 'they read the *guardian*'. What *is* interesting are the differences, particularly the motivations of why the

mainstream people are coming for a 'good night out' or a social occasion rather than the contemporary audiences who are much more driven by the event itself or the performing company. You can write your marketing copy differently and communicate more efficiently with those audiences if you understand those differences. There were a lot of assumptions being made about contemporary audiences and about non-contemporary audiences and I think it really helped to see some of those differences.

**Katie:** It has changed some of the ways we do things and ideally, we'll end up with ideas for what we can do to engage a potential new contemporary audience and we are in a good position at the heart of the university campus – we have got the demographic profile close to us in order to accommodate that but then we need to get it from the wider area as well. That's the next stage to do – we can obviously identify students but we can't actually identify university staff. There are over 4,000 university staff and they do attend but I can't say currently how many of them are coming. I need to find a way to identify them and flag them with their motivations and reasons for coming. That's going to be one of my next jobs. We don't give them any discounts so they simply buy the regular tickets.

**Delegate:** I'm interested in how you feed back to people who feed back to you. Every so often we might get a negative Facebook comment or Tweet and we will have a conversation about how to deal with that. We want people to say what they think but we feel like they've paid for our service and we should almost apologise. When people are filling out your survey and they say anything negative do you respond to them personally?

**Katie:** Yes, but hardly ever. We do get vehement views and it's very easy for people to write comments as there's no moderation on our website so they could do a massive splurge about how rubbish a show was. I can only remember that happening once or twice. Often, if it is a strong reaction, someone else will have a strong opposite reaction and respond so you don't then need to do anything and you will get other people answering for you. If something's gone wrong, such as a technical issue or similar then we might pass that information back to the company or circulate it to the appropriate departments.