



AMA CONFERENCE 2015

STAY CURIOUS



Birmingham Repertory
Theatre and The Library
of Birmingham
21 - 23 July 2015

Redefining, reimagining and reinventing our relationship with the public

AMA Conference Report 2015: The Marketing Essentials Breakout Collection

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The AMA conference 2015 brought together 650 inquiring minds to share ideas, insights and inspiration about our future relationships with audiences.

Conference Report written by:
Kate Feld and Nija Dalal

Introducing The Marketing Essentials Breakout Collection

The AMA conference 2015 brought together 650 inquiring minds working across the arts, culture and heritage sector to share ideas, insights and inspiration about our future relationships with audiences.

The keynote presentations were complemented by a range of breakout sessions that allowed delegates to look at the areas that interested them in more detail and at a level that suited them.

This collection brings you transcripts from our Marketing Essentials breakout programme.

Marketing Essentials were designed for those who are relatively new to the topics

and working at marketing assistant / officer level.

Further breakout collections are available from Strategic Sessions and the Advanced Arena.

Tweet @amadigital with your thoughts and responses to The Marketing Essentials Collection #AMAconf

Cath Hume
Head of Programme
AMA

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The Breakouts took place at Stay Curious AMA Conference 2015 at Birmingham Repertory Theatre on Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 July 2015.

Adapting your message to reach different target groups

Laraine Penson, Northern Ballet

Laraine: I am currently Director of Communications for Northern Ballet. We are based in Leeds. We are a national touring and international touring ballet company. We present stories through ballet. On our national tour we go to about forty different theatres. My team has a ticket sales target in excess of £3 million and the opportunity to reach in excess of 600,000 people each year through theatres all over the country. We have three scales of work. We have full length narrative ballets and a new middle scale tour - half the company go out on tour to smaller theatres to develop new audiences. Then three years ago we started our children's ballet, which is a bit different to our main stage but still bringing that quality of work to young children and their families.

We are also a full-service agency, as I'm sure many of you are in your organisations. We support our development team. We have a small theatre in our building, the Stanley and Audrey Burton theatre, which was new five years ago. We also support our learning team, our academy, and our dance school. In effect we work as a full-service agency across PR, marketing, digital website etcetera.

I wanted to start by thinking about where are you now and where do you want to be?

Those are two fundamental questions that I think are really good to start looking at when you begin any communications campaign - thinking about your aims and objectives and what you want to achieve. It may seem like we're going right back to basics but I think that's a really good place to start. Depending on where you are in the organisation, it's really important to understand what is expected of you. You need to know what your targets are and what your line manager or the people in your department or organisation expect you to deliver. I think the clearer you are about that, it will help you make choices. If you know where you're going, it will help you best decide how to get there. Also, once you've arrived where you're going, what will success look like when you're there? What are the measures of success?

The theme of today's conference is all about our relationship with the public, our audiences, so I'm going to make a few assumptions about you today. I'm going to assume that growing your audiences, engaging with the right audience, getting to know your audience better, deepening your relationship and your loyalty with the audience or variations on that theme, are an important part of your role.

If you're a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) then an audience development strategy is part of your funding agreement. We all agree that it's really important but how you go about that and how you resource it is different.

I'm also making assumptions about resources in that you don't have a bottomless pit and you don't have endless hours. Your time and financial resources are very limited and your role may be marketing or a variation on that work, or communications or PR. That role is growing and ever expanding with the ever-increasing range of communication channels that we have the opportunity to use these days. Digital especially can be perplexing and challenging and confusing. As much as these things can bring us new opportunities, they can actually make the place more confusing and overwhelming. This is when understanding where you're going and aims and objectives is really important. Working 'smarter' is something we talk about a lot and I'm sure you'll be familiar with SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. When you set whatever you have to do in terms of growing your audiences or whatever it may be, do you work across these and do you understand exactly what is being asked of you and where you're going?

Let's start at the present. Unless you're completely new, you'll have some sort of audience that you are working with. Knowing your audience and understanding them better would help you work smarter - the principle behind everything that I'm saying today. Understanding what your audience values will help you prioritise. Understanding their

interests and the kind of information they value and how they want to hear from you and when, will help your audience make informed choices about you. It will also help you make informed choices about your activity.

Google seems to sort of know what they're doing so this is their number one of their ten truths that you'll find if you google it:

'Focus on the user and all else will follow.'

Surely that's what we're here to do today: talk about the audience. If we focus on the audience and understand them better then actually they can lead us to where we want to go. For example, Northern Ballet is a national touring ballet so we have a very indirect relationship with our audience. We're not the point of booking generally so we don't hold our own data and rely completely on our colleagues in the theatre to collect that data, to analyse it for us and to manage it properly. We also have to negotiate with them for access to use that data.

One of our key business objectives has been to grow loyalty and retention of our audiences. One of the challenges of touring companies is that we go to Milton Keynes, for example, for one week a year and then they don't see us again until the following year. How do we keep that relationship going with that audience when we don't have that data and when they have loads of other things going on in their lives in that year between our visits? How can we expect them to be loyal to us when actually we are only there for one week a year? We have to be realistic about it, but that's been one of our challenges over the last five years.

One of our business objectives has been to grow our own database but that has been with limited success. Because we don't have that data, we have until more recently been making informed assumptions about our audiences. We have done that both from research that's out there, by Arts Council England for example, and from what we saw in the theatre and the research we've been doing. You can pitch up at any of the theatres we tour to and get a pretty good idea of who our audience is but we've also done research, evaluations and surveys.

We've been using that insight to inform all our campaigns but we didn't really think it

was enough. We were curious - as today's conference is all about - and we wanted to know more. We wanted to have more facts about our audience, which would inform our decision making and how we spend our time and resources.

We commissioned Experian to analyse three years of booking data for our audiences across our large scale tour, which is about fifteen different venues, and to create a Mosaic profile of our audience. This information gave us a lot of demographic information about our audience habits. It told us about them, their interests, their media buying, their communications preferences and we've used this information to tailor our campaigns and influence the choices we make, the work we prioritise and the allocation of resources.

For example, we know that 21% of our audience is Mosaic group 'Prestige Positions'. It came as no surprise to us as we could see them in the theatre but this was a fact based on evidence. This Mosaic group is important at all our venues. They are our main focus group and Mosaic give them names so this is Howard and Jane.



I'd like to introduce Howard and Jane who are very typical of our audience. 21% of them look like that but they look nice don't they so we welcome them.

We know that Howard and Jane are aged between 56 and 65, they shop in Waitrose and Marks and Spencer. They like to read the Telegraph, the Times and the Daily Mail. We may know a Jane and Howard. We also found out that there are 1.9 million households like them in the UK. There are a lot more Howards and Janes out there who may have the propensity - if we contact them in the right way at the right time and pique their interest - to come and see us. They are a good bet in terms

of developing our audiences or that particular audience.

Understanding more about Howard and Jane has helped shape our communication campaigns for that particular group. I said to my PR team, if you're going to write one press release and do one follow up phone call then please target the Times, the Telegraph or the Mail. We're happy to have extra coverage in the Sun - that's absolutely fine, it would be great actually - but that's where I want you to spend your time.

We focus a lot on direct mail and email because we know that Howard and Jane like to be contacted by mail and email. They don't have a huge propensity to take up social media. They're not on Twitter and Facebook generally.

I was fortunate to be a member of the first CultureHive Digital Marketing Academy, run by the AMA and supported by Arts Council England. I spent some time working with a mentor in terms of increasing click through rates and the impact of our emails. Understanding this group and how they fed into my digital strategy was really important.

Ultimately my driver is to reach that £3 million of ticket sales so it has helped inform our PR strategies, our digital campaigns, our partnerships and where we place our advertising. I'm not saying we advertise in Waitrose and M&S magazines only but we do take ads in car parks that are outside M&S and Waitrose to directly target that particular audience.

We know that they're not particularly active on social media but there are always exceptions to the rules. Some of our core audience, on some occasions, are on social media. They know that's how they get access to our dancers, to our company, to the exclusives and that's what we want to build and actually this audience is growing on social media. We know that and so we know to come back to them in a few years' time when they've grown even more.

What's important for us about Mosaic is that it's also the language of our sponsors. If you take this Mosaic profile to a business, they speak the same language. They work in Mosaic profiles, or Acorn and they understand what

that is. That has been really helpful in terms of presenting our audience data to potential sponsors.

It has also helped us to have discussions/ negotiations with our partner theatres. We can say to them 'we would really like to take out an ad in...' or 'we'd really like to do a press campaign around this because...' The theatres we talk to go 'oh really?' and they appreciate that we put the work into finding out about those audiences so it helps in those negotiations too.

I can also make arguments to my line manager and to the directors of the organisation to say I want more resources for x y and z because we know this about the audience and we think if we put our resources there we might get increased ticket sales. It has not just been useful for our communications campaign; it has actually been useful across the board.

Obviously this tells us a little bit about them and their demographic. I think what are really interesting though are the motivations about why people go to the theatre and why they go to see Northern Ballet. I'm really fascinated by the psychology of attending the arts and why we make the choice to go to certain things or not. There's a lot more focus on that now in the industry and a lot more resources. To balance our quantitative data analysis we commissioned some focus groups with Lisa Baxter from The Experience Business. She conducted some audience focus groups for us based in Milton Keynes, in Leeds and in Edinburgh. We spoke to forty people, which isn't a huge number of people, across five focus groups. What each of those groups said was so consistent it made a compelling case for change.

We spoke to people who go to the theatre but who do and do not attend performances by Northern Ballet. We found out some things that are interesting for the industry as a whole. We talked to people who came about why they go and see live events. They talked about captivation, the emotional engagement, and the talent and artistry of what they see on the stage. Some degree of familiarity was important to them as well so having previous knowledge of the company or the title was important. Coming together and having a shared experience with other people in a room

was also really important. Of course, so was the visual spectacle. I think you know that when you think about yourself but it's great to hear it from our audience and from not our audience as well. The audience also spoke about the sense of anticipation, the looking forward to the event, something pre-event and the transformative event itself and something of the enduring element after - the kind of afterglow of going to an arts event in a live theatre.

We've tried to capitalise on that by increasing that relationship and the length of time that we have a relationship with our audience. What we started doing and learning was very simple. We sent people who'd already booked an email a few days before they came to the theatre. It had a scenario with character profiles and other things that may help their understanding of or their enjoyment of their experience of that core piece, our performance. One of the things that I think stopped people coming to ballet was that they didn't quite understand. By sharing the scenario and the character profiles - this person looks like this and is this person - we were helping to avoid confusion for some people.

We've also done follow up emails afterwards, which we had been doing with evaluations and questionnaires. We've now got our dancers saying thanks for coming and we hope to see you next time. It just rounds off that experience of Northern Ballet. It also invites them to join our mailing list etcetera but it gives that sense of this is how we want you to keep thinking about us after the main event.

Our focus groups also told us what they thought was unique about our company, which was obviously really important to us. It wasn't anything that was new but it really focused in on what they were looking for. They told us that we create original ballet that's immersive, expressive, intense and dramatic. Great, that's what we think we do too! In comparison to ballet as a whole, they see Northern Ballet as fresh, less stuffy, and non elitist so that's their opinion. They also have a specific desire to experience classic stories from ballet, literature, opera and film in different contexts, as part of their process of cultural enrichment.

They talked about cultural banking and how every experience adds to their life experience

and their cultural experience, which is a real motivator for them going. This is great because our next new ballet is 1984, the George Orwell classic. That's quite a challenging title to put into ballet but this group, who probably might have read 1984, think 'oh how's that going to be done? That's going to add to my cultural engagement'. That will appeal to them, or at least we hope it will, so we did a little shift with our branding and really tried to focus on the emotional engagement with our company.

If you engage with people emotionally, they are more likely to want to engage with you long term. They are more likely to do something, book a ticket, so we tried to focus on images that draw on the heart strings. Sometimes you try to make them laugh.



This was for Romeo and Juliet and it was focusing on that tragedy and heartbreak. Based on that we did make some fundamental changes. The copy that we wrote focused much more on the experiential and the emotional - it's not always the easiest to do but we did take a long hard look at ourselves. Marrying together the Experian data and these audience focus groups, we found our audience voice and tried hard to add that in our communications campaigns and our activities.

It's worth asking the question - how often do we speak to our audiences?

As a team we went to the theatre one day and we just spoke to people. We asked 'how did you hear about us? How are you enjoying it?' We thought about how often we take the time

to go and do that, and have a conversation with the audience. To be honest it wasn't very often and we'd still like to do it more often.

How do you spend time with your audience, hang out with them, ask their opinion, test your work on them?

It's quite difficult to do. If, like us, you're a ticket organisation then you have a lot of booking information. If you're not then it's not quite as easy to find out information about the audience, especially from the stats, but there are ways to find out. I'm sure you can add to this list, extensively, but there are things such as:

- Analytics on your website
- Your social media platforms
- Analysis of interaction on your e-newsletters
- Face to face or email questionnaires
- Front line staff - their observations and feedback.

We've always been interested to speak to reception and box office teams to get any feedback from them about customers because they're front line. There are other ways you can find out information about your audiences and practical steps you can take to start collecting data. Perhaps part of something you can think about today is what you can do from today to start collecting data and understanding your audiences more. There's observational data and head counts. We used to just go into the theatre, look around and ask ourselves 'who are these people?' There is face to face audience surveys, collecting emails on the day of your event, following up with an e-survey or conducting vox pops and quick video interviews.

We do things with audiences at the end of the performance and say 'how did you enjoy the performance?' The idea is that somebody may watch and think 'oh, that person looks like me, I may take the risk' but of course we only include the nice stuff. You could conduct your own focus groups and then there's obviously Facebook. There's lots of information on Facebook and twitter and they've just introduced new analysis, new information. In a way there's so much information, maybe the question is more:

What do you want to find out? What is it about your audiences you want to find out?

It's partly about going into specific questions. It's also about going in with an open mind and asking what does my data that I have available to me, tell me?

A fellow on the first Digital Marketing Academy was Jen who worked at FACT in Liverpool. They did something really clever working with their mentor. They didn't collect their own data, and on their website they were running an exhibition called 'What type are you?' They did a handwriting test and if you filled in the form, it would tell you what type of handwriting you were and then you were invited to join their email list. I thought that was really clever - it was a nice short quiz that was fun and engaging and people like doing that sort of thing. They might have a high propensity to give you their data because they enjoy doing it. If you have a moment I'd urge you to go back onto their website. They have a new exhibition called Build Your Own and there are actually some pictures of some tools on there and they say 'what do these tools do, how much do you know about these gadgets?' I got five out of eight and I didn't know what they were. It's interactive, it's fun, it's clever and they ask you to sign up to their e-list at the end of it. I didn't do that but you may well want to hear more from FACT so again, are we more inclined? I may look forward to hearing from FACT because now they're in my head.

Every interaction for you is a chance to get to know your audience and also for the audience to get to know you better as well. Thinking about what you want to know, what are the questions you want answered that will help lead you on the path along collecting the data. There are also lots and lots of other resources out there that you might want to use and take advantage of. Take a look at the Audience Agency's Audience Finder; that should be interesting for the whole industry. There's also the CultureHive website, which has a huge number of resources on it. There's the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Culture Segments research, which is fascinating. Then Google, for example, have lots and lots of resources that give you a much broader non-cultural context about people's buying habits. There's

a lot of information out there if you don't have data yourself.

Now we understand a lot more about our audiences and the next step is to think about how they want to hear from you and why they want to hear from you. What's your message? I think when planning a marketing campaign it's essential to know who you're trying to reach in order to decide on the best channel to reach them. It's not just about the data finding audience, it's about understanding them as well. I'd be thinking about my audiences and where they hang out because I'd be wanting to hang out with them. People don't just hang out in one place.

Going back to Northern Ballet, five years ago we rebranded the company and the central idea behind our rebrand was show, don't tell. The adage a picture paints a thousand words is really true. We had a key objective, which was to grow the box office by 10%. In order to do this we had to reach audiences very quickly. We had to try and sell half a million pounds more tickets and we also had to experiment and try new things. We hadn't been particularly experimental and we wanted to be really experimental and there were new ways of doing that at the time. Obviously if you do what you've always done you'll get what you've always got. We didn't ever want to be challenged and we didn't think differently and we really invested in two new areas for us, which were digital communications and partnerships. Digital for us was about experimenting, about reaching vast numbers of people in a fairly cost effective way. Partnerships was about creating more of a lifestyle offer around our offer, with the added benefit of third party endorsement.

We talked before about our audience saying ballet's stuffy. We had to challenge those perceptions. We wanted to position ballet as something that is accessible and fashionable and we really focused on the lifestyle offer. Our target audiences were the core audience, other arts attenders, and cross over between the audiences in the theatre. We also focused on the Arts Council Audience Insights segments of 'Fun, fashion and friends' and 'Dinner and a show'. Why did we choose those segments? Well really we felt they were our

best bits. There were lots of them but these were culturally engaged people looking for something to do and they had some spare income.

'Fun, fashion and friends' were a slightly younger demographic than our audience. They'd look at ballet as something as part of their lifestyle and they'd be influenced by their friends and by the brands that they respect and admire.

The 'Dinner and a show' were slightly more typical of our audience but, presented with the right offer, they had the time and the money to spend on an experience.

We invested hugely in photography. That paid huge rewards from front covers of magazines to editorials. When we were ever asked by the press, 'do you have an image to go with that story', we would reply 'yes we do, here it is'.

Again, coming back to that 'show don't tell', we invested in film so we created our first trailer. I'm going to share that with you in a minute. We also released excerpts from productions once they were created. We felt that if you're trying to reach new people and grow audiences then showing them a little bit of what they might get and what they might expect may take the risk out of it and they'll be more inclined to think 'well ok, it looks good, it looks like something I might enjoy. I may spend £20 or £30 to go and see it.' We're investing more in shorter films now because with the growth of digital advertising, especially on outdoor sites, there are many more digital sites. Actually we found if you have movement then your advertising is more eye-catching. We're investing for 1984 in a short ten second trailer, which is specifically for digital advertising.

The first trailer I'm going to share is for Cleopatra. We had a very short section of dance, no costume and it was filmed at a launch event we did in London. The second film was from the Great Gatsby, which really took a giant step forward in terms of resource. It also appealed much more to that kind of lifestyle offer around ballet.



[View the Cleopatra trailer \(instrumental music only\)](#)



[View Great Gatsby trailer \(instrumental music\)](#)

Like them or not, those are two things that we did and could give to our theatres to basically show the audience what they might be getting. They position it more in that lifestyle, though the Great Gatsby was a little bit like an advert for whisky!

We also now, for all the ballets we create, commission rich content. That could be rehearsal images, behind the scenes interviews or Gatsby fascinating facts. We did interviews with the characters and also with the dancers and this was all available to be released regularly on social media. It drives them back to our website and we give it to the theatres that we tour to so they can release it regularly to their audiences too. We've got Joe the carpenter who made the Gatsby car with behind the scenes insight, which audiences love. They really like to get that insight into what we do.

Talking about partnerships, we held an event in Leeds targeting the glossy press and focusing on the 'Fun, fashion and friends' people that we were targeting. We ran it in partnership with East Coast Trains, Harvey Nichols, MAC Make-up and Doubletree Hilton in Leeds. We invited writers and editors from women's glossies - Red Magazine, Woman and Home and Hello magazine - to come up for a night in Leeds on us. East Coast Trains brought them up first class. They experienced beauty

treatments at Harvey Nichols, they watched a Gatsby inspired make-up demonstration by MAC and they had lunch at Harvey Nichols. They had dinner at our new HQ, toured our rehearsal studios, had a talk from the Artistic Director, watched a performance of the Great Gatsby in Leeds and stayed overnight at Doubletree Hilton.

None of that really cost us anything other than the partnerships and our time and it is time consuming. That event was attended by Hello magazine, Woman and Home, Good Housekeeping and The Stylist and achieved press coverage on all those websites. Later on Vogue also ran a feature on the Great Gatsby from the fashion angle and the design of it. From one tweet they said they had the highest audience response ever to a piece, which was great feedback back to our partners and it spoke directly to our 'Fun, fashion and friends' audience.

East Coast Trains also included a competition in their e-newsletter to over 2 million subscribers. They volumised our message about our new tour of the Great Gatsby massively for us and all we did was give them a couple of tickets included in that partnership, which was great.

We had preview pieces in Grazia, Hello, OK, Elle, the Stylist, Harper's Bazaar, Vanity Fair, Good Housekeeping, Marie Claire and Vogue. We also launched a dinner and ticket package with Harvey Nichols, which worked brilliantly in Leeds. We have a really strong relationship and that is something we try to emulate around the country - both trying to reach the audiences who go to Harvey Nichols, who we hope will have in-store shop cards and e-newsletters but it also speaks directly to 'Dinner and a show' audiences. It packages up for them that experience at the ballet and they don't have to work too hard to do it because we're giving it to them. That's been really successful.

This is some of the coverage we've achieved.



If you're thinking about digital, digital media allows us to reach and be in places where we actually would never have performed. We would never have been able to get into Vogue magazine so to be online was great.

Ultimately the strategy spoke actively and directly to our target audience on their terms and in a way that appealed to them. By working with partners we were able to have that third party endorsement, which I think is important to audiences. They want to hear from people who they admire and who will say, 'yeah that looks great, you should go and see it'. It's kind of a recommendation and it was hugely successful for us. The Great Gatsby did very well overall.

As a recap, we've talked about audiences and the importance of knowing where you're going - your aims and objectives. We've talked about how you might identify audiences, and examples of what we've done to reach new target audiences.

Now we're going to think about messaging. I don't think I have a lot of experience about messaging audiences but actually it's really important to think again.

I went to a session by Nan Sloane, organised by Dance UK, about lobbying. She is the Director of the Centre for Women and Democracy and she talked about effective messaging. Although this was for lobbying purposes, it really rang true with how we approached the messaging for our campaigns. If you type in effective messaging online, these kind of points do come up but this is what I learnt about effective messaging:

- It is a good message presented in the right way.
- It's a short statement, which conveys the essentials.
- It's 30 words or less.
- It has got to be short, truthful and credible.
- It has got to be persuasive, relevant and clear.
- It has got to be repeated and repeated again because normally someone hasn't heard your message so you have to repeat it until it starts to register with them.

I ask people where they heard about our performance and they tend to say brochure. Chances are they saw it in the brochure, then

saw some outdoor advertising, then read something about it in the press and it was actually their friend who said they were going to it and it was their friend that actually made them go. Where they thought they heard about it isn't necessarily always the case. Therein really lies the truth about what I think is effective practice. Using our creative marketing practice you can get your message across in different and striking ways, reaffirming again and again your proposition in really memorable ways. By understanding your audience you can say the right things, the relevant things that meet their needs and it appeals to their desires.

Consistent messaging across diverse channels equals engagement.

I don't know if you've seen the ads that Oasis have been doing about their drinks? They made me laugh and I think laughter is important. What is it they say? 'It's summer, you're thirsty, we've got sales targets' and it's really genius. It's targeted at 18-24 years old, and I'm probably more inclined to try it. It's very clever and very honest and people get it. They know about marketing these days. People know they're being marketed to and so to get your message across you have to do it either cleverly or funnily, in a way that appeals to their emotions. People are a lot more cynical than they ever have been, quite rightly.

Another thing that we've done - this is thinking about how you can get more resource by working in partnerships - is to approach the BBC about our new work around children's ballets. We said 'We're doing these ballets, do you want to do something?' We thought they may create some content or do some editorial around it. What they actually did was commission a television adaptation of our children's ballet for their CBeebies channel and that was great. It allowed us to reach millions of people and we did see a pick-up in bookings at the theatre after our production Ugly Duckling, the first one. They don't sell out everywhere based on the fact that we've got a TV programme now, but our learning team do great workshops and work really hard on that engagement - it's brilliant.

This allowed us to reach the whole country and internationally. The ethos of the company is about developing new audiences so that's

really important. They also created all these digital materials, like films and dress up things and how-to-do moves, which we didn't have the capacity to do. We linked through to the material on their website and we can share that with our audiences who come to us and hope it can come the other way too. What the BBC won't do is endorse commercial products so they won't help us sell tickets because that's not what they're about but we can make good use of the partnership and that has worked very well for us. That really came through just a well-timed and thoughtful communication and then a lot of hard work afterwards. Ugly Duckling won the children's BAFTA and then we've had Three Little Pigs and Elves and the Shoemaker. We're in discussion about our next ballet, the Hare and the Tortoise, for children later this year as well.

Seth Godin, who's a US marketing guru, talked about people and how 'they don't buy goods and services, people buy relationships, stories and magic'. In our industry we should be able to provide that in shedloads and I think we do but do we always get it right in the communication channels we're using in our messaging?

Thinking about communications channels now, there are so many of them it's really overwhelming but consider the medium to deliver your message. Think of the audiences' state of mind when they receive it. Don't take the audience out of the picture at any point because the state of mind they're in when they receive the communication from you is really important to how receptive they are. Think about the audience in their role and think about where audiences hang out because you want to be there with them.

We talked about the need to have multiple channels of communication because they don't just hear it the first time. Understanding what these channels do and who they reach is really important. It's as much about understanding the channel as it is the audience.

You've got cinema advertising, YouTube, video on demand, PR, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, direct mail, email - yours and other people's - outdoor advertising, posters, leaflets, theatre brochures, etcetera. Which ones do you choose and where do you place your resources?

Understanding the audience and understanding the platform is really important, but more and more advertisers are talking about audiences and not platforms. They're talking about understanding audiences and they all have huge amounts of data and research and information about audiences, which you can make use of. You should get a lot of added value from advertisers now, based on their understanding and their research about audiences. You could do all of that - a little bit of each, I suppose - but actually selecting the ones that reach directly into your audience and doing them really well is much more satisfactory than trying to spread yourself too thinly.

I've just got some statistics to go through. I'm sure you know this - I'm sure you do it - but the average Brit checks their phone fifty times a day. 18-24 year olds check their phone every fifteen minutes. 77% of adults have broadband in the UK but that still leaves 23% of people who don't so actually when we go to Norwich it can be a real problem doing digital because they don't have the broadband. 20% of viewers abandon videos within ten seconds so get your important message in first. Would I make any changes to my Gatsby campaign? Yes, I'd put the message at the beginning. That is what we have done for 1984. YouTube is the second most popular search engine.

There is lots and lots of information out there. What I do want to return to is that direct mail. We do a lot of direct mail for our 'Prestige Positions' segment so the old forms of communication are not dead by any means. We know 80% of direct mail was opened in 2011/12, 18% of adults keep mail, for reference - that's definitely our Prestige Position group. 56% welcome mail that gives useful information, 49% are more likely to open mail and packaging because it's intriguing.

We should be able to contact people through direct mail with a really exciting offer and information about our work because we're not selling insurance, we're selling experiences. We're selling little bits of joy and we should be able to package them up in exciting envelopes that make people want to open them. Direct mail can still be hugely effective for us. We don't have lots of money but if you do well and focus on your target audience group it can be really effective so let's not forget it.

There was a report by MTN London, commissioned by the Arts Council, which talked about digital audiences and engagement with arts and culture online. The overwhelming message that came out of this research, and it is online to go and read, is that people are predominantly using online to research into going to live events and whether they are for them or not. Social media is more about sharing the fact that they're going and discussing the work.

Looking to the future actually that's much more the way people see it going. It's much more about finding out about the live and physical experience than it is about pursuing it wholly online. Having said that the National Theatre are a brilliant example of the balance of information - getting you to go to the live experience as well as giving people the digital experience. There's a balance to be had and there's a lot of research happening at the moment about the effect of the cinema screening audiences on the live audiences, which obviously we're really interested in but I hope there's room for both and for us to work together.

A kind of warning but actually the internet represents a huge amount of cost and it doesn't always reap rewards in terms of additional revenue. Sometimes we look at digital and think 'right, that's where the bucket is, that's where the gold under the rainbow is' and that's not always the way. We're struggling to find ways of raising additional revenue beyond increasing tickets sales and that relationship with the audience by working digitally.

We tried some on demand advertising in Norwich. Really what we wanted to do was target people who watched Downton Abbey. We thought they were perfect. We couldn't afford television advertising so we did video on demand. It should have been a warning sign then but it's new and growing and we hadn't tried it before so we thought let's keep experimenting and we did. We ran a trailer of our Cinderella on there. It ran and people maybe went on to watch the X Factor on catch up tv, so great. On ITV it worked quite well. We had some quite good click through rates. We also ran it on 4 on demand and our ads ran alongside things like Made in Chelsea, Hollyoaks and Educating the East End, which

was not our target audience. We did not understand our communications channels properly to make this decision so it didn't work for us. I'm not saying it wouldn't. My hope is that those 102 people who clicked through are new people who may have now been to a ballet they haven't been to before. But I guess that's the warning isn't it? Experimentation brings risks and sometimes it brings rewards and sometimes it doesn't.

My last couple of points are about two-way communications. We all know that our communication with an audience is two-way so although we may be looking at communications channels, at any point in the day the audience can engage with you. They can go onto your website, they can call you up or they can go on social media. At every single touch point with you, tell them about you.

There's a book called 'Moments of Truth' by Yan Carlzon, who was former President of Scandinavian Airlines. He talks about the moment of magic that we should provide in abundance in the arts. He also talks about moments of misery - that I couldn't buy the tickets because your website broke down and I couldn't find the information I wanted and your front of house staff were rude. That shouldn't be an issue but that is a part of your role in terms of talking to your audiences and them talking to you. Don't forget that while pushing out your lovely messages that we've worked on brilliantly, actually they can get in contact with you at any point and that has to be part of that marketing mix.

What moments of magic do you find? What moments of magic can you give to your audiences as a gift at any particular time to help them and inspire them and make you a really easy choice?

As you know, every campaign should end with brilliant monitoring and evaluation. Often that can be the bit that falls off the end because there isn't the time and you're just onto the next campaign. We spend an awful lot of time at Northern Ballet on monitoring and evaluation. We look at the impact of the activity, the return on investment, box office analysis, audience surveys, the effect of press coverage, what was the messaging, click through rates and social media activity. We do this after every week in the theatre, pretty much after every

single performance if we're doing two nights. At the end of the season we do a round up and sit round the table and share all those findings with each other. We look at what we have learned, what we would do again and take forward, and what we would not do next time.

We have to have that moment to pause and reflect on our activity and learn from what we did, to help us make decisions based on evidence going forward. Managers listen to evidence-based decision making and also it gives us the capacity to test and learn - to test our work and try something new. It can be really overwhelming to think I want to do this new thing but I don't know how to get there. There are very small steps you can make on a daily basis to change what you do, to test what you do, and to do it differently. Evaluation is really important in terms of understanding your audiences and keeping intrigued and curious about your audiences.

Q&A

Q: I was really interested in partnership work. You have had some amazing successes obtaining strong partnerships that add a lot of value to your campaigns and I wondered how you initiate that strategy and what kind of questions you ask yourself at the start when thinking about the partnerships you want to engage.

A: We always start with the audience - who is that target audience and where do they hang out? It's always the brand line and that endorsement from the third party. Who would you really like to hang out with? You know what it's like if you're at school. If you want to be popular, you hang out with the popular kids. It really is starting from that point of who's got similar audiences to us and who may have the propensity to work with us because the partnership has to be two-way; otherwise it's not a partnership.

Start from the audience and understanding where they hang out. We do, in our survey, say 'what other organisations are you members of?' We noticed that a huge number are members of the National Trust and we also know from the Audience Finder research that National Trust members are a huge potential as a cultural audience. We've now established a relationship with the National Trust in the

north, not nationally yet. It really is those nuggets of information about our audiences that are out there and just a carefully worded approach. We're lucky that people do want to work with us.

Q. Michael Sherry, Courtauld Gallery: When you're tasked with increasing your existing audience and developing new audiences do you have any influence with the Artistic Director in the type of programming that you do and the sorts of ballets that would appeal to different audiences?

A: We're very fortunate that's kind of a constant conversation. When we rebranded five years ago we tried to develop the loyalty with Northern Ballet, but we had really limited success with that because people still choose based on the title. We like to think we are a sign of quality ballet and people come to see us no matter what we do and there are some but proportionately not enough. So yes, we have constant conversations about titles that might work.

What we've really noticed over the last couple of years is that what we thought would be guaranteed successful titles aren't! Other than Nutcracker at Christmas, there is absolutely no guarantee. Even that, in the competitive market place, isn't necessarily a guarantee anymore. What we do is look at titles like 1984. Artistically that is really important to do but we understand that's not going to have such wide appeal as the Nutcracker, for example. It's having that balance of work in the repertoire and I'm looking to continue that conversation because if we introduce new audiences to 1984, where do they go next? What repertoire is coming up next that they will go to? It's a constant discussion as it should be.

Q: At the beginning of the presentation you mentioned identifying Howard and Jane as your target demographic. When you were looking at your messaging, how did you go about convincing your creative team that actually they needed to communicate in a very simple and more bold and direct way?

A: That can be the hardest thing! By showing them how effective it is when they do. By taking small steps and saying 'look, you did this and this was the impact', and reporting back the results. That's why the tracking and the digital,

being able to track the success of something rather than someone seeing a poster outside, was one of the reasons we chose it. We start building that evidence to really change people's understanding of audiences and that's what it's about; it's about leading the way and taking their hand gently and saying 'if you do this, this will happen, let's do it and let's see'. Some people are open to that and some people aren't but the most engaged audiences want to have that technical language so think about how you harness them for that audience and then catch them.

Q: What was the response to your two videos? Were there the same number of people who clicked on them?

A: It's not massive in terms of much larger organisations but we've had about 25 - 30,000 clicks on those now. What's interesting is that we released the trailers and then we released for Cleopatra 'the making of video'. That was about five minutes with lots of information and that got about 3,000 views. We're not doing another 'making of' for that reason. We just didn't get the views.

Gatsby again got about 25,000 but then we also created a film afterwards of the actual production and that was even more popular. People will know that that's a trailer but we kind of want it to be like a film.

Q: Do you monitor the conversion rate from people who saw it? Is that hard to say?

A: We're not the point of booking so we know that people go to the theatre websites. We know yes, they were clicking through and the conversion rate was excellent - higher than average - but then we lose them so we are working with theatres to try to add coding on to complete that journey.

Q: Looking back to films - how about doing a ballet blooper reel?

A: We did a film, there was a trend going round a few years ago and it went all over the world. Our dancers dressed up in weird and crazy outfits to this piece of music, the Harlem Shake. We did that and the dancers did it off their own back. It wasn't a particularly high quality film but it was mental - not a proper representation of our company! It was crazy.

I'd love to do stuff like that but it comes down to that resource of making and being there when the bloopers happen because otherwise they happen in the place where you're not filming. But yes, I think people like to know when things go wrong. It adds jeopardy and that is emotionally engaging material.

Q: It breaks that barrier as well doesn't it, the mystique?

A: Yes, they're normal human beings who cock up like we do!

Q: About your videos, you mentioned the Gatsby one in particular was a step-up in terms of resources - time and budget resources. Are there things you were doing before that you cut in order to make the time and budget available for that?

A: Yes, we had to move the budget around a little bit actually. We were doing less outdoors so we did steal from one thing to the other. Also from the first one to the second we were able to argue for more resource because we said 'look, this is what happened the first time we did it.' Actually the cost of both films didn't change. It was about £5,000 for the trailer, the making of Cleopatra and then filming the production. The second time we didn't do the making of so actually it was about £5,000 budget, which I think is fairly reasonable.

Q: You talk about Howard and Jane being those sort of people who probably think the ballet is for them. What of people from different socio-economic backgrounds? I work in independent cinema and we struggle to get people who think independent cinema, world and documentaries are boring and not for them. Do you do work with communities to sort of encourage them?

A: Yes, could do. For audiences who may be hostile, putting up a poster is not going to do it. We do have an education team that go out and do outreach work but that's partly why we work in partnership because if you can talk to people who are in contact with those audiences and they say no, no, no, it's great, they're the people they can trust. They won't trust you, they trust them. That's working in partnership. That worked really well with 'Fun, fashion and friends'. There was a high propensity for that. Another way to tackle it, if you don't have those

education resources, is to find that person in that community who would work as your amplifier. That would be one way to try to settle that. It's not easy.

Q: When you send out emails for a survey, is that the box office that's sending that at the different venues or do you have access to that yourselves?

A: We have a range of relationships with the venues. We work with a lot of ATG venues and they have a format so we give them the content and they format it. Other theatres will let us have the data to send that mail as long as that's what we use it for and with our own branding. It does vary. What we have to acknowledge is that a lot of our audience have the relationship with the venue primarily so actually coming from the venue in a recognisable format isn't necessarily a bad thing even though that makes our brand step back. It's whatever's best for that audience. There's a variety and we do have a small email list that is growing.

Reimagining relationships with audiences through engagement with young people

Kate Andrews, Freelance Project Manager and Arts Marketer

Marcia Springer, mac Birmingham

Kate Andrews: Joining myself and Marcia Springer today are Olivia Brown, The Icing Agency Member, and one of our younger members of the project Joseph Hale. We also have from The Icing Agency Kiran Badyal and Lisa Mulgrave.

This afternoon we are going to be looking at a series of projects at **mac birmingham**. **mac** is an incredible place to work, learn, and experience. It really is a place where you can just walk in and be many things within that building and I am very privileged to say that I have worked with them for over a year and it really is a great place to work.

We are going to look at some projects at **mac birmingham**, the learning outcomes, the impact that's had, and the challenges. Then we are going to look at how the engagement with young people can enhance marketing, how young people can shift the public perception of an organisation. We're going to look at how you can support young people in your area to reimagine the conversation around culture. Then we'll explore relationship building and have a breakout so you can look at your own future planning.

First of all I want to talk to you about The Artists Rooms Project, which happened last summer and feels like a million years ago now. I was approached or actually applied for commission with **mac birmingham** for the Robert Therrien Exhibition and that is part of Artistry International Tour with Tate and ArtFund. It's an incredible tour of contemporary works throughout the country, which had engagement with young people at its heart.

mac wanted to do a project with young people that was going to be very different to other things that were happening both there at the centre and nationally with The Artists Rooms Tour. They wanted to build skills with young people in curation and interpretation but more specifically in creative marketing. They wanted young people to gain real world experience on

a national scale within a national project. They wanted to work within individual strengths of young people and allow the project to be truly youth led, enabling young people to engage with their own audiences.

I think from a **mac** perspective that was crucial that any investment was on quite a small group of young people but that it had impact much more widely with local and regional youth audiences. We wanted to encourage new conversation debates around youth arts and more specifically we want to ask the question,

'What is the role of young people in galleries in 2014?'

That question was asked of the young people and they developed that and went outside of the organisation and asked that question to many other agencies and organisations. They came up with their own case study document for that.

The project outcome involves these young people here and is one of the many art spaces in **mac**, used to drive the staff mad using all the corridors and everything.

The group created creative marketing for the wider project and campaign and signage throughout the building. It was their own audience development project. In itself it was all audience development but there was another way where they did their own audience development within that. They developed programmes and marketed their own sound, film and graphic design workshops, where they developed work with professional designers and artists. They did their own skills building and sharing.

All of the young people came with their own personal skills, so we made sure that it wasn't just a two way relationship. There were actually opportunities there for the young people to share their own skills within that group. We worked with creative interpretation, so we

gave them opportunities to make their own films inspired by Robert Therrien's work, graphic design and then their own installations. We really wanted to blur the lines between what's marketing, what's way finding, what's interpretation, what's curation and what's graphic design. It was a real mixture of different things within that project. They did their own creative writing, which then went onto the windows. They did their own social media campaigns and then finally during the summer they led their own public workshops and performances.

There is an incredible outdoor amphitheatre space at the **mac**, which has been there since the 1960s. It is a big concrete Greek amphitheatre, which is showing things like Ghostbusters and Jaws and things like that. It's also used for performances so we had a huge storytelling event where we lit bonfires and everybody sat around and did a story telling performance. It was incredible and fully youth-led and enabled them to bring in their own audiences as well.

Here are a few elements of the project:

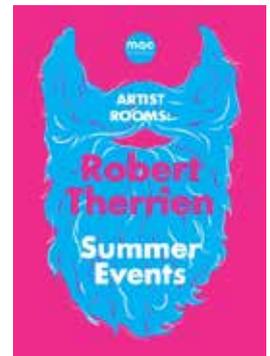


They created these walls around **mac** in order to sign-post people to the upstairs gallery to see the work but also to showcase their own work inspired by Robert Therrien.

There were sound pieces and photography and someone asking people during the months

before the exhibition opened to say Robert Therrien's name into a microphone. It was all mixed together and went onto a speaker. As you went up the stairs it did this sort of flurry of whispers of lots and lots of visitors saying 'Robert Therrien'. You would walk past it and look, literally as you were walking up the stairs. We worked on that before the exhibition and it was just something to encourage people to go up the stairs to go and view the exhibition.

The project was part art work, part interpretation, part marketing, part way finding signage: it was a really blurred line between all of those.



The images above are of the 140 character poems the young people did based on Robert Therrien's work. They were all vinyled across the Parkside entrance to the centre, which looked great and was very engaging.

We had a tiny door installed. When **mac** was built in 1962 there was a myth that the original architects wanted to put in a tiny door especially for children. This has been a myth or a rumour that has been going around and we didn't know if it was true, which was reflective of Robert Therrien's work. We thought we would have this tiny doorway built with a little door for children to go in and out of the space, to build on that storytelling.

The learning outcomes of that initial project were that the project allowed **mac** to take new risks with marketing interpretation because it was in this framework of learning. It is not that fear of 'Well we're professionals so what if we get it wrong if we do it in this way?' It's working with young people so I think it's an opportunity to take risks there.

We are very fortunate that the project is funded with extra art funding that came along with artist streams so it allowed **mac** to test this type of new project.

As I said before, it really blurred the lines between departments. I think within organisations we think of ourselves as curators or marketers. This is interpretation. These are very separate things and this allowed the public to have a new experience because they were able to physically experience pieces of artwork but actually they were there to interpret another artist's work.

It was a real world project and it was a national project too so they got to see the real world challenges of working with an international artist that is in Tate's collection. There are obviously a lot of rules and regulations around that and around filming and things like that. We didn't shield them away from those challenges. They had to work within those parameters. Like I said before, the art fund grants just really allowed the project to happen.

The considerations we had after this project, were

- How would all this messaging that we had built up from our Twitter account work after the project? We had done all this messaging and there was all of this stuff out there. How do these platforms work when the group go back to University or they move on to another project?
- We have set up a brand for this group. How does that continue on? What is the legacy of that?
- What are the legacies of the young people working within the project? What do we do with them now that they are trained and raring to go and are excited and they need new challenges, what do we do there?

I have to say **mac** are fantastically good because the Next Generation young persons' project is extremely good at then signposting those young people into new opportunities both internally and externally.

I think after that project we realised that the recruitment needed to be a lot more targeted. The initial group that we had, I would say, maybe wouldn't fit in arts marketing. I think they were much more likely to go in as artists or as curators. That group were not so interested in creative marketing; they were more interested in creating and practising their own work. I think in terms of the recruitment process, we just need to refine that next time

and that is just something that we need to bear in mind. If you are looking for a certain type of a young person to do your project be really clear because you can say it is a creative project and you might get young people who are just really interested in creating their own work and not interpreting somebody else's.

I am going to very quickly introduce the next project, which we are fortunate enough to develop from The Artist's Room Project. We had all this momentum left afterwards. I sat with Dan who is the Next Generation Producer and said 'what are we going to do now, this can't end with this enthusiasm, we need to continue it on?'

We decided to refine the project from before and create this new Creative Agency project. We recognise generally within the sector that there isn't enough hands on experience for young people with aspirations of working in arts marketing but haven't got on that first rung of the ladder yet. The AMA is great at this for people who are at the beginning of their careers but we were interested in the step before that. We wanted to offer something for young people who know they are interested in it - they might be doing their own events or making their own photocopy fliers and things like that - but they haven't necessarily got that hands on experience in a professional capacity.

We knew we wanted to achieve that in some way. That could cover PR, arts marketing, digital, events, audience research and evaluation. I was so surprised when we put this first group together because they were all getting really excited about data and audience research and evaluation. I thought they were going to do graphics and do digital and stuff, and they really wanted to get into the data side of it, which was fascinating to see. I don't think I was that excited about data.

We wanted to create the framework to give these new experiences to young people, with the main goal of ensuring that they are ready for future employment. That might be future employment within a communications role or they might find that they are more interested in the events side or something else. It is as important to me that they discover that actually that isn't for them but they really want to do this instead. Then we can signpost them and lead them into something else - maybe a different project within **mac**.

The Creative Agency project was set up and they are all 16 - 25 years and I would say really the group has been the more top end of that. It is more University and recent graduates that we take. Most of them have got existing skills within some kind of communication or some of them have just got an interest and come along. We have recruited through the now unfortunately non-existent IdeasTap, who are incredible people and they helped us to find those young people who are interested in the project.

We meet every week on a Monday night. Sometimes it's hard when it's really sunny outside and we look out of the window and everyone is eating ice creams but that Monday night is continuous. I really facilitate and support in all areas of arts marketing.

The members have taken on very specific roles. That has been the most important thing I think, to give them very refined roles that they can make their own.

The group has, since last October, supported the Next Generation Project and the Next Generation Learning Team - there are loads and loads of different youth projects. The group has supported cutting edge contemporary new artists, lots of stage innovation, lots of new social enterprises, illustrators and loads of digital work. They have also come up with all of their own activities and programmes as well.

Now I am going to pass you onto Lucy from The Icing Agency, which is the name of our creative agency. She is going to talk to you about the activity from phase one of the project.

Lucy Mulgrave: The Icing Agency started from The Creative Agency and our main struggle was trying to find a name basically to explain what we are.

It started within a short space of time with lots of networking and getting to know our fellow members, **mac** professionals and our Project Manager Kate.

We all realised that we had different skills and very different experiences and specialities. What brought us all together was a real passion for promoting art and culture in Birmingham, especially that of emerging artists.

In the beginning we created [our website](#), where we wanted to document our personal experiences through blogs as well as promoting our art projects. We also had our hashtag #Wecreateacrowd which became our motto as well.

The first major projects that we were part of were illustrative ones. Before that we had developed our one hundred thousand welcomes marketing campaign to assist Illustrated Brum and **mac** in collecting their welcomes. The project revolved around trying to collect one hundred thousand welcomes to the city. We assisted them by creating our travelling collection box, which we used with some designed postcards to collect welcomes with.



We took that all around the city: to **mac** obviously and then Frontiers Festival, and Flat Pack Festival. We went with the box and it became a very personal way of marketing the festival as we got to hear peoples' stories quite directly and people gave personal stories and welcomes to the city.

It also gave us an opportunity to attend the Next Generation Launch Party. There we also had our photo booth, which was probably the most engaging way of connecting to people as we asked them to tag people in their photos with a white board. We were able to share that on social media afterwards, connecting with people who weren't in the city and wouldn't always have heard about the project. That continued on long after just this one event.

The project as a whole collected over 300,000 welcomes, so way over the 100,000 marker. I think they were quite surprised and it was really good to know that we had a hand in that and had really assisted them in collecting those welcomes.

The next part of the project was a **mac** video,

which was a video advert that was used for film screenings and online as well. That was an advert for **mac** to advertise everything that **mac** is and how you can be **mac**. It was filmed over one evening, which was quite a mammoth task and starred some of our members. In making that video we learnt the importance of knowing our message and knowing how to communicate that to the artists that we worked with and how to put that across to our audience as well.

The final part of the project was our Welcome Party Event. That was a networking event for young people across Birmingham and the West Midlands who were involved in arts and culture. It gave everyone the opportunity to get together to talk about what they do and also to discuss a question that we thought was really important:

'How can we shout louder about arts and culture in Birmingham?'

The evening was a real success and there were so many passionate people with lots of passionate debate and discussions. We came up with some ideas and solutions as well, including creating a cohesive resource and encouraging communication between large organisations and small organisations. That information and all those conclusions were drawn together and we did interviews as well. Out of that we also, with two of our members Joe and Olivia, created Shout About Brum. They are going to talk to you about that in just a bit. We worked with Brum Polar Bears as well and that gave us an opportunity to network with them. That was all about working in association with another group.

Kate Andrews: Thank you so much Lucy. I know we were talking this morning about creating value outside of your organisation and I really feel like the welcome party that we had was really about that. It was about **mac** allowing and facilitating wider conversations about Birmingham's culture and promoting Birmingham's culture. It wasn't inward looking at all. It was very much about facilitating that conversation but it was very outward looking and I think that also reflects really well on the organisation.

The learning outcomes from that first phase really were that

- The specific roles were there to allow the young people to thrive but we needed to define that a little bit more.
- All activity needed to be planned ahead.
- We couldn't be reactive. It had to be proactive so we worked on a briefing basis like any creative agency would.
- All of the activity needed to be truly youth led to have an impact and that meant that I couldn't come into the project and put my own stamp of quality on things. That was a really big learning curve for me that you do need to take a massive step back and then be there to facilitate and create structure around it.
- Deadlines, when working with young people, need to be realistic and really flexible. Somebody who has got a role and is passionate and really excited about it one week might not return the next week. You need to be really flexible and simple in those expectations.
- Good communication between the project and marketing team is the most valuable thing you need and that should always happen but doesn't always happen because you are so running with the project. It is really challenging to make sure that communication is really solid and it is what we are going to talk more about in a minute.

I am going to pass you onto my colleague Marcia, who is going to speak to you from a **mac** perspective. I am coming from more of a freelance producer role, so over to Marcia.

Marcia Springer: I sort of echo what Kate's saying in terms of the relationship between the project and the marketing team like ours within **mac**. We're quite a small team and there are only four of us within the team and I am sort of the lead in terms of work with The Creative Agency. I also work quite closely with Dan Whitehouse who is responsible for our Next Generation Project for young people so we have got that triangle and that conversation needs to happen a lot of the time. If you don't meet regularly then it is quite hard to keep on top of what is going on. The onus a lot of the time is on the project lead because they are the link between the project and the young people themselves.

What we aim to ensure at **mac**, although the ethos to begin with was to offer arts activity to

young people, is that young people have the skills they need. We make sure that with all of the projects we have that there's an element of them actually leaving **mac** and having somewhere to go on to. That is quite important for us.

We have quite a long relationship with the young people that we work with at **mac** because they may go from one point to the other. They may then go out to another organisation and then come back. We try to keep that relationship open and then give them as many opportunities as we possibly can.

I think what's also a good outcome for us at **mac** is that we are already using some of the work that they have done in the building itself. We are now using the space that was used for the Rob Therrien exhibition for our marketing. We are using the windows of our terrace for marketing as well and so those are the things that have come through their project that we are now using within our marketing team. Their project was in the summer and Christmas that same year we used the windows for our Christmas production and we also used the walls for our Christmas craft market. The young people themselves can actually see how we are using their ideas or actually stealing them.

If young people can actually see that those developments that they have made are being used across the building then they are more likely to stay with us and our organisation. They will develop those ideas alongside us and moving forward.

At the moment it has been a positive experience for us but it is not easy. I know we are all busy but you have to find that time to meet with the young people and the project leader and those others to make sure that you are all speaking the same language, which always helps.

Kiran Badyal: For Phase Two of our project we created an arts and culture magazine and that was really exciting. We recruited new members and Kate really let us, in that recruitment process, select who we really wanted. We wanted a mix of people because we knew if we were going to make an arts and culture magazine, we needed lots of different skills: digital and journalists and all sorts.

We decided we wanted the magazine to be about emerging creatives because that is something that we are passionate about on the team and then we had to think of a name and that was really one of the hardest things ever to do. We had a list of thirty or forty names and we are on Google Docs just writing names out. We came up with Forge and we really liked the strength and the simplicity of the name and it was connected to the West Midlands industry or aspects of it.

At the moment we all have our own different personal roles. I am in charge of commissioning but I also have someone else who also works in commissioning so if I am not there she can always take over. But it is a bit more defined so we have website developers. We also cross over and do bits of everyone else's job when no-one else is here and so we have got a wide range of roles being built up.

We are launching in September and so we have loads to do. One of the challenges we have found as we start a new base and new audience is just how we go about that. We are learning lots and we have got the support of **mac** which is really useful.

We have had lots of workshops so not only are we gaining lots of practical experience we also are getting workshops. We had Sarah Gee talking about crowdfunding, which I didn't know anything about until we had that workshop so that was new.

We had magazines come in and enthuse us just talking about their journeys and how to work on a magazine and things that I never knew you could do so it was really useful.

Marcia Springer: There are many benefits of working with young people. They always seem to amaze me with the capacity that they have got for ideas. Now when we are working with them, and we tend to hone it in terms of who we recruit, we are getting the right people and we are now realistic about what they can and can't do.

I think there is a gap within a lot of marketing teams about knowing what young people like. We think we know what they like but I don't think you actually know until you speak with them. The young people we work with are actually out there speaking to their peers and

they can bring that information back to us at **mac** and can help us define how we market to young people. Although we offer a lot of activity for young people, there is a gap at **mac**.

Much smaller children are a lot easier. When you are thinking of late teens and twenties, it is a lot harder to know what they want and how they want it. Having a group of young people on our team who cannot fully represent young people but have an idea of what they like is an advantage to us as an organisation. They give a truer voice. I think we can guess what they like but then I guess they can explain that more and actually develop ideas around what it is that they want and how they want it.

I think also that working within a professional environment in an organisation like **mac** is a good example of them trying to work within different teams. The same can be said within our team. Although I am the Marketing and Communications Officer, generally working across PR, I have to work across different departments and the same is happening with them in their groups so they are learning skills. There are things that they are comfortable with and there are things that they are uncomfortable with but they are able to try new things. I think the fact that we have a very good project leader who is able to spot where those young people might be struggling and where they can excel really helps. Having them on board and a link between both has been a great advantage to us.

They are learning all the time. I think because our project leaders are freelancers they are out there trying to promote their own ideas as well and they will come to us with their own ideas. We are able to have that conversation with them and they have generally got their fingers on the pulse in terms of what young people might want to do and where the developments are in digital and things like that. Having an outside person come in is also an advantage to us we found.

There are challenges. It's quite hard for us in the marketing team to let go of things like branding. It is hard for us to say yes to an additional social media platform and all those things where people ask 'What will happen when the project ends?' I think the more that you work with the project leader - particularly one that has worked in arts marketing - they

sort of understand the reasons behind not having so many platforms and I think in turn that is a learning curve for the young people. They know that there are going to be restrictions. We are restricted; we have to deal with our board and our CEOs. That is then passed onto those young people because what we want to do is then give them enough skills so that they can go into another job and understand what those restrictions are. There's enough room for them to be able to develop their own ideas and be creative but they have to work within those parameters. We are not trying to give them an unrealistic idea of what the job looks like and how they can work within it. Most of them shine in terms of knowing what they can and can't do and why those restrictions are there. I think if you explain that, generally they're accepting of it.

We are also keen not to increase the expectations of the young people that work on our projects. We don't promise them things that they can't achieve or that we can't offer them. I am aware that someone from Tate is here and when we did the Robert Therrien project a video was planned of the items coming in and then we were going to film all the installation. We knew then at that point that we can't film those things because there were restrictions with partners and that will happen within your working life anyway. They were quite good at being creative and working around that so there was no video but there were other things in that place. They rose to the challenge and we all have to do that don't we? There are ways of getting around them if everyone is thinking creatively and working together.

Joseph Hale: As Lucy mentioned me and Olivia took The Welcome Party. At the end of The Welcome Party we had lots of feedback that this should carry on and when was the next event going to be happening.

I think there seemed to be a stereotype with people in Birmingham that they are slightly apathetic about what's going on. This welcome party proved that people wanted to improve what was happening in Birmingham and how the arts and culture scene was happening.

We decided to run a programme called 'Shout About Brum'. We came up with the name for this event with the hashtag that was originally used for The Welcome Party. It seemed nice to

rebrand it slightly away from what it originated from. It became a bit more of our own creation and, from the original party, we took it as a kind of test run. We were in a safe environment within **mac** where we kind of tested out how we wanted to create the event and then when we went onto the next event we looked at what we wanted to do better or we wanted to keep the same.

We thought it was better to keep the saying. The format was you went into breakout sessions, had to answer some questions and then all came back for an open discussion but with the original event the open discussion was with us. With the next event we introduced a panellist so we felt we were building on what we had already made.

Olivia Brown: In terms of Shout About Brum we decided to turn it into a collective for the Birmingham region to celebrate and improve our culture scene and establish the region and turn it into a culture hotspot. We continued the conversation from The Welcome Party on Twitter. We added additional things like looking at other cities for inspiration of what we could add to our culture scene, shouting about things that were already taking place and arts organisations already doing great things. It was on Twitter once we got our first collaborator, Birmingham Hidden Spaces. It is a joint initiative between RIBA and the Birmingham Post and they aim to improve public engagement with Birmingham's heritage by opening up buildings that were previously closed to the public, showing off the remaining traces of their heritage.

Our event with them was part of their Talk Series and we brought large arts organisations and small arts organisations and artists together to discuss how we can use city space and collaboration to improve the way we communicate our culture offering as a city. We used a similar structure to The Welcome Party with a large brainstorming in the world café technique and had a panel discussion with local organisations from both large and small sectors. They were Instagrammers, Birmingham, Arts Council Midlands, Sideshow Creatives and Urban Pivot.

From the event we found that major improvements to marketing the city were needed. There needed to be a brand that was more inclusive of everyone's views, not just the

large flagship organisations. From that event we gathered all the ideas that we collected and we are planning to pitch them to Birmingham City Council for their upcoming culture strategy in the next month.

In terms of building on the project, Shout Out Brum will be turning into a social enterprise. We are making use of the organisations that are already present in Birmingham to help us develop so that is the Creative Enterprise West Midlands and Young Creatives.

In terms of what other organisations can learn from our events, we found that more collaboration is needed - not only at a city level but across multiple regions in the UK. If a certain city is struggling with marketing but another one is succeeding at it they can share ideas and collaborate with each other. We also shared data in terms of audience research, what engagement practices work best and we developed a platform that is both digital and physical where that information can be shared.

One of the skills that we learnt from The Icing Agency helped us in terms of setting up Shout About Brum. That is one of the key things about projects with young people is giving them skills that they can take to their own projects.

Kate Andrews: Thank you, I just want to say that I can't even describe how proud and overwhelmed I am. These guys came to the project in October and now they walk into city council meetings setting the agenda for the conversation and it's incredibly powerful. You can empower your young people to go out there and speak about the culture of your city. What happens then is that will reflect back on your organisation and that will show just how vital that is for organisations to be doing that.

The last thing I am going to talk about is building strong relationships. Both Marcia and myself experienced some really big challenges with this project because we are so in the middle of it. If you are thinking of doing this work it needs constant communication between the project marketing team and then obviously at the strategic level as well. It's important to make sure that the work and the objectives that you are setting are being recognised both at senior management and board level.

In short, all the project management members

know your organisation's overall strategy and audience. You can't protect the young people and say we are going to do this fun and quick marketing project. They want to know the nitty gritty, they want to know the overall strategic objectives of the organisation because they want to know what they are doing plugs directly into a wider strategy.

Encourage other staff within the organisation to meet the group and help train young people. You know we had Sarah Gee who worked with **mac**'s fundraiser. She came in to meet with us for a couple of hours to talk about crowdfunding. Things like that use the resource within your organisation to plug in and do their bit.

In terms of the overall project objectives and the ethos, make sure that is fully communicated to everybody involved from the very beginning. Sometimes it can get a little bit confusing between our projects, my perspective, the commissioning department and marketing. Just make sure that everyone is on the same page. In terms of the objectives, agree sign off processes for the communications and everything from call outs for stuff. Everything's got logos and, because it is working with young people who are meeting once a week, we really have to agree those sign off cases and dates and things. We have to come to joint decisions about which platforms will be created, the purpose and how they will be managed. That is a real learning curve for us. We are really enthusiastic and we want to start loads of platforms for everything. The difference with this project and with other learning projects is the projects for us is the creative platforms. That is the project that is the learning outcomes.

The same with the other learning projects: Canon Hill Collective's medium is art and they create pieces of artwork so they don't really have a need to start a website or start a Twitter account. That is auxiliary to the project - whereas all of that auxiliary stuff, the website and print is our project. That's where we have had to come to a compromise so there has to be a little bit more leeway there. We are getting there.

I just want to talk about what's next. When we originally did the Artists' Rooms Project I thought that was going to be my commission

for the summer and walk away and go onto something else. I was very lucky that we managed to carry that on. Again I thought creative learning would be the project and it hasn't been and we come back for another phase and now the learning team have asked me to carry this project on but we need to develop it in a way that is both beneficial for the organisation and young people.

We are just creating ideas and one of them is potentially a mini AMA for young people. It would be an opportunity for young people nationally, who are interested in getting involved in arts marketing and communication, to come together at **mac** for a youth-led symposium. The actual symposium or mini conference will be organised, led and marketed by young people. That's where we are heading. It will be absolutely 100% youth led from the fundraising to evaluation. That will be the first phase and we have already done that all the way through.

Q&A

Q: Who were the young people who took part? Was it difficult to find 16 - 25 year olds?

A. Kate Andrews: We have had around thirty young people since last October as part of the project. Some young people might come just for a few sessions and then feel it is not for them. Others have sustained throughout. It is a really varied mix in terms of locations in the city and very diverse in terms of an audience and very diverse in terms of skills and experience. I would say it is generally the age group of between 19 and 25 but it actually wasn't very difficult to recruit because we were really fortunate to have IdeasTap as a platform. Those callouts went nationally and people got to apply through that but we are at a point now with the project that young people are aware of it and young people are approaching us to become members. We had a member drop out last week so we were able to invite somebody new to the project. We need to be able to have rolling membership really, instead of a start and finish point. We see it as people come on board as and when we are able to take on new members.

A. Marcia Springer: Initially at **mac** we worked, let's say two or three years ago, with other youth organisations where we didn't have an

organisation or as varied a group of young people. We had the young people that might have come from university and they were already tapped into the work that we did. We wanted to make it more inclusive than that so we built relationships with youth organisations that worked with young people who faced challenges. That enabled us to feed into their networks and then meet with them regularly. We were then offering them opportunities for their young people and it just snowballed from there. That's how we did it initially. Now a lot of people know what we do as part of our next generation programme. Young people are starting to come to us in that kind of way but it didn't happen straight away it happens over time.

Q: Is it funded? How does it work with the issues of young people working for free?

A. Kate Andrews: I am a freelancer so I get paid to facilitate the sessions and it is three hours on a Monday. Young people can come along and they are building their skills. They don't pay anything. It is fully funded through the core funding and I have very little budget so whatever I do, I have to stretch greatly. I go to Aldi on the way in to buy snacks. It is a very little budget, and the most of the budget is spent because I am a freelancer and if you can get somebody inhouse to do it for a few hours a week or a month, it would be much more cost effective.

That being said, we are going to be crowdfunding for some of the activity in the future so that is something. Don't underestimate the capacity that the young people can bring to your organisation.

A. Marcia Springer: I would also say I think the model that we have got where it is fully funded and we have got a project leader as part of the project is a really healthy way of doing it. If I was doing it I would still have my **mac** head on and I would still be scared to let them do stuff but if you bring an external person in who understands our organisation but also represents the young people, I think that is a healthier relationship. It is almost like you are an advocate for them and they are all at meetings as well. That relationship is healthier in terms of the project itself because I think me being on the project and leading the project would be a slightly different proposition for the

young people as opposed to having someone independent coming in and doing it.

A. Kate Andrews: In terms of internships, I totally get where you are coming from in terms of paid internships. It just isn't like that and it doesn't feel like that. In fact the project has allowed for people to go into paid employment and that is something that I see as part of my responsibility as supporting that. If they want me to look over their CVs or anything like that then that's my job to help them and support them and guide them into that next rung on the ladder.

Q: In a way it feels different to having paid interns because paid interns usually come in and they work for somebody else and they are fulfilling their project brief. This is an incredible experience in the fact that you get to dictate what that project is and how it works.

A. Kate Andrews: Yes I think it is about creating that structure and that format and just allowing freedom and chaos between those windows of the structure. That's how I feel I see it in my head but it is putting the trust in the young people as well. They come in and they sit down and they get the laptops out and they work for three hours and it is not the type of work that an intern would normally do. It is very much leading their own piece of work.

Q: I have to say it sounds amazing. I am from Birmingham and I haven't lived here for ten years and I got quite emotional when you were talking about going to the council. I think it is really exciting but from a venue point of view, because I work across marketing and education, my roles are split. Was this project created because you wanted to engage with young people for audience development or did you have young people that you wanted to work with?

A. Marcia Springer: I think because **mac's** over fifty years old and the ethos was around offering arts for young people. Over time it has developed. Just by talking to the young people we have now and through the projects that we have done and the conversations that we have with young people, we know that there is a gap. We know that they have skills and we know that they need skills in the sector that we are quite lucky to be working in.

I think that listening to those young people and then finding that money is what is needed. We knew there was a gap because the young people were telling us, 'This project is fine but I need to go for an interview and I don't know if I have enough skills to do it.' A lot of these projects have developed over time and now the young people are getting the skills and if they don't get the skills fully here we know where they can go up to the next level if we are not offering it. I think we have a responsibility to offer them what we can offer them but also to have an awareness, and it might be through the project leader or it might be from individuals that work at **mac**, that there are other opportunities. Otherwise you're just giving them something fluffy and then they have got to go home and then they have still got to find somewhere else to go to get a job. I think we have all got a responsibility to give them as many skills as possible and the confidence so that they start doing a lot of this for themselves and they thank you afterwards.

Q. I think it is amazing. I would like to know, from a marketing perspective, has it increased your levels of engagement with young people? Are you selling more tickets to young people and are more young people coming?

A. Marcia Springer: I think we have to think a bit more broadly. We are not selling more tickets to young people. We are getting more young people through the door and that is an element of the project as well. We're considering young people even more because we have got more young people around the building. We know that they are going out and they're talking to their friends about **mac** and a lot of young people don't have a lot of money so it is not as if they can go out and buy more tickets. If they can come to **mac** and there's a space for them then maybe when they get their job they come back to **mac** and they come to the cinema. We offer free activities and so cinema we do a two for one, so young people can come in and get two tickets for free on the first showing of each screening. There are things that they can do but they are not going to be shown in monetary terms. I think at this stage we just want more young people in the building. If they are able to talk to other young people and say '**mac** is quite welcoming' then we have ticked that box and we are also quite happy with that outcome.

How to have productive conversations with your audiences

Lisa Baxter, The Experience Business

Lisa Baxter: Having conversations is awesome. What we need to figure out is in what ways might we develop better, more productive or more meaningful conversations with our audiences. Obviously I am not going to show you how to do that in an hour and a quarter. I am going to give you lots of threes:

- Three important questions to think about
- Three important dos
- Three important don'ts
- Three useful techniques
- Three guiding principles

Hopefully you will come away with fifteen things that will help you rethink and reframe your conversations with your audiences.

First of all, over to you: why is talking and conversing with your audiences or communities important?

A: Because if you don't talk to them you put a programme together and how are you going to know if they are going to like it?

Lisa Baxter: Exactly, so you can learn from them and it can inform what you do. What else?

A: It makes them feel involved.

Lisa Baxter: True and what's the benefit of that?

A: That they feel that they can influence you, feel that they can respond or ask and then they are more likely to come and give you feedback.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, lovely. What else?

A: You are not doing something to them, you are engaging with them.

Lisa Baxter: What's the benefit of that?

A: Collaboration, you get better understanding.

Lisa Baxter: What else?

A: Relationship building, communicating two ways, you know who they are and you know more about them.

Lisa Baxter: Having conversations with people helps you figure out what you have in common so you understand where they place value in their lives to enable you to create value that meets their needs. Okay? It is really important to develop empathy, understand where they are coming from, and to share what you believe in to see whether they share your beliefs. If they do share what you believe in then obviously you are going to forge a much stronger relationship than if you just ask them about what they would like to see on stage and give it to them. That is more of a transactional relationship.

It is really important then to remain relevant, to build bridges, to empathise and to find what you have in common with your audiences.

The second question of the three important questions is what you might learn.

What kind of things do you normally ask about when you are having conversations with audiences or commissioning focus groups? What is it that you want to learn?

A: About your procedural strengths or weaknesses.

A: Really what they want to see.

A: If they like you as an organisation.

A: Simple things like how they heard about the event, so you can streamline your practices.

A: What transport they have used to get to

the theatre and if there were issues with car parking.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, what else?

A: What other things they do with their time.

Lisa Baxter: So you are showing an interest in them, nice one. What else?

A: I suppose what matters to them.

Lisa Baxter: Lovely, what else?

A: Who they are.

Lisa Baxter: What we are talking about now is what we might learn. It is not what we might learn about what they think of us. It is what we learn about them that can influence how we do what we do and the reasons why we do it. What we learn is all about them, their world, their goals, their communities, their lifestyles, and their humanity. We are, after all, in the business of the arts aren't we? We trade in human experiences. Therefore to create programmes, and engagement in programmes, that deal with human experience we need to understand the humanity of people we are creating these programmes for. Does that make sense to everybody?

Question number three is what are the obstacles that prevent you from talking meaningfully with your audiences? What's stopping you from doing that right now?

A: We're a touring organisation so sometimes the venue acts as a gatekeeper between us and the audience.

A: Capacity.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, very true. What else?

A: Not knowing the best way to go about it.

Lisa Baxter: Okay, so not feeling that you are competent enough to do it maybe or how to get started. What else?

A: You only ever really get the feedback from people who are engaged and want to give you feedback and there is a whole grey area of people that you don't hear back from.

Lisa Baxter: So what might you do about that?

A: I don't know, that's why I'm here.

Lisa Baxter: I'm actually not going to tell you how to do that bit. Let's open it up to the wisdom of the group. How do you access the people that you don't connect with at the moment in order to have a meaningful conversation with them? What might you do?

A: Find out who they are communicating with and adopt that method.

Lisa Baxter: What else?

A: Work with other organisations that are working with agencies that you don't have a conversation with.

Lisa Baxter: Anything else?

A: Work with communities that are under-represented.

Lisa Baxter: Lovely, lots of things that you can do.

I say this because we have an Australian member here. I have been running a programme in Australia for the Arts Council and I was working in Rockhampton. Rockhampton is kind of where the Great Barrier Reef is but inland and it is the capital of beef and has an incredible art gallery in it. It was my job to help them figure out how they could engage their audiences more meaningfully. They discovered that they only knew the 10% of their population that understood contemporary art.

When I asked them what they were going to do about it they took a whole day of creative idea generation to come up with the remarkable idea of having coffee mornings in their gallery. They came up with the idea of going out personally to the bowling club, the rudge society, the people who run the local shopping mall and inviting people into the gallery. They wanted to listen to what their lives are like and what is important to them in their communities and design relevance around that.

Just go up to someone and go 'Hello, my name's Lisa, thank you for taking part in this conversation, what I am interested to know about is...' and see what happens. You don't need a third party to recruit focus groups; you just need to put your shoes on, walk out of the door, find a connection and make the conversation happen.

Capacity wise, all you need to do is to decide to have one meaningful conversation a month. Hold it in your lunch-hour. Invite people in for coffee or go and see their world and talk with them. Whatever their obstacles are, find creative ways of undermining those obstacles that enable you to get out there. A conversation costs nothing, apart from tea and biscuits, or wine and canapés if you are that kind of organisation.

How does a productive conversation make you feel?

Think of some of the great conversations that you have had with people that you like or have just been getting to know here at the conference. How does it make you feel?

A: Valued.

A: Connected.

Lisa Baxter: Yeah. What else?

A: Important.

Lisa Baxter: Yeah, are those bad feelings?

All: No

Lisa Baxter: By having communications with your community you are gifting them those feelings and through brand association they are getting positive feelings about you. That's especially true if you do it genuinely rather than trying to fish for information.

What is it about a conversation that makes people feel so good?

A: They feel listened to.

A: You are interested in what they are saying.

Lisa Baxter: Yes. You can build trust. You might be challenged but in a positive way if it is a productive conversation. You can be positively challenged. You can be honest if it is a productive conversation as opposed to an unproductive conversation where people are hiding what they really think. There are all kinds of things that you can get out of a productive conversation.

What qualities do you need to have to create productive conversations?

A: Generosity and openness.

Lisa Baxter: What else?

A: A good listener.

Lisa Baxter: A good listener. Top tip for good listening, turn your head to one side and then if they are getting boring, just look away.

What's the theme of this conference?

All: Curiosity.

Lisa Baxter: That's what you need. You need to be curious about them and be a little more searching. 'What kind of theatres do you like going to?' 'Oh.' 'What kind of plays do you like?' 'What do you think about modern art?' 'Do you like our art?'

It needs to go a bit beyond that and the other thing that you must do is lack judgement. You need to be non-judgemental.

What tends to happen in the arts is we have a view of people who are like us, that like what we like but then there are people who like stuff that we maybe don't place value on.

I was doing some research for Leeds Grand Theatre on a rebrand a few years ago. Leeds Grand Theatre has a mixed programme and it has got Northern Ballet and Opera North at one end of the spectrum. Then it has some musicals and stuff like that. At the other end of the arty spectrum it has hypnotherapists and stand-up comedians. They literally had something for everyone and the cover of their brochure was all the different flyers of all the different things that they put on.

I won't go into what the branding challenge was - I think you have already got that one. When I spoke to audiences about what their feelings and emotions were around coming into The Grand Theatre, the people who saw Northern Ballet and Opera North talked about the other end of the spectrum being 'End of pier work'. The people at this end of the spectrum talked about the people at that end of the spectrum and called them 'Snobs'. Yet they understood why the programme needed it all.

We must learn not to judge what people value. If they like a hypnotherapist, that is cool because that is bringing value into their lives.

If they want to see a musical revival band, like the many we get at Halifax Victoria Theatre, people flock to see those because those shows create value for their communities. It is probably just not the sort of thing that we would associate ourselves with. Opera and ballet obviously in its own cohort creates value for people in different ways.

When people are talking to you, think about your body language: how you use your eyes, how you respond, whether you look surprised when they tell you something. All of those are give-aways about whether internally you're clocking them or judging them. You need to have very open body language and make sure you are absolutely fascinated in everything they have to say because it is intrinsically fascinating.

This is rich material that you can work with. Now we are going to talk about the dos.

The dos aren't about what you do when you are talking to them. It is what you prepare for the conversations. How you frame a conversation is really important because when you have a spontaneous conversation there aren't any rules. When you are organising a conversation, you are going out to someone to their place or if they are coming to yours it needs more control. It is not spontaneous and in order to get the best out of everyone, you prepare well for it.

These are really boring things but they are so important. The first is, you establish rapport.

Why do you need to establish rapport with the people that you are talking with?

A: You need them to want to talk to you.

Lisa Baxter: Yes. Say you are holding a conversation in your front of house with people in your parish who have never been to your venue before. They turn up and they are walking up to the foyer area and you are there. How do you think they might be feeling?

A: Intimidated.

Lisa Baxter: They might be feeling a little bit intimidated. Anything else?

A: Worried that they are doing the right thing.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, often saying the right thing. Anything else come to mind?

A: Uncomfortable.

Lisa Baxter: Uncomfortable or unconfident: 'I don't know why they are talking to me.'

What you need to do is to put them at ease. You need to shift them from a potential place of discomfort to a place of ease. There are some easy ways to do that: be there first and cater for their needs. Say 'Hello, welcome, thank you for coming.' Find something that you have got in common with them. Just make them feel receptive to being there. It is really important. The next thing to do is to tell them why they have been invited.

Why do you tell them why they've been invited? What is important about that?

A: It establishes a framework of what you are talking about.

Lisa Baxter: It establishes the framework. The kind of things you would say are:

- 'Thank you for coming here today and what we would like you to do is talk about...'
- 'You've been invited to take part because you are the experts and we want to find out all about what you know about this subject.'
- 'We want to know what we don't know. Your input will be extremely valuable in helping us to...'

Share whatever the goals of the conversation are and ask if anyone has any questions at the end of that.

The point about this is to make them feel well briefed, relevant and valued. Now they are comfortable and at ease. They know why they are there, they know how they fit into the bigger picture and they appreciate that they are being valued for what they have to bring. Now they are more ready to engage in a productive conversation rather than feeling a little held back, so number two do is to tell them why they have been invited.

The third one, because you do need to establish a framework, is you prepare some ground rules. These might be things like:

- 'Because we are talking in a group and I

am audio recording this session it would be really useful if you talk one person at a time. Otherwise when I listen to the recording I can't understand what people are saying.'

- 'There are no right or wrong answers. I'd invite you all to speak your truth; nobody is judging you here today so please talk about things in as honest and open a way as you possibly can.'
- 'All opinions are valid. I quite like it when people do disagree with each other but what's important is that you do respect each other's opinion and so if you do disagree let's just make a promise to ourselves that we will do it nicely. I don't want to be throwing anybody out today, we all agreed about that? Great, thank you.'
- 'We have a limited amount of time. As time is really precious, if you go off track and talk about your Uncle John's bicycle and it's not relevant to the things that we want to talk about I might just bring you back on track. Is that okay? Thank you.'

They know what the rules are. Now they are relaxed. They're at ease, they know why they are there and they know how to behave. Would you feel ready? Those preparations are very simple. After you have done it a few times it just comes as second nature. It is just good hospitality and it helps to establish rapport.

Now I want to talk about three important don'ts. The first one is don't ask lots of questions, especially closed ones. What do you think I mean by that?

A: Where there is a yes or a no answer.

Lisa Baxter: What is the problem with that?

A: It doesn't tell you anything. Well, it confirms something that we might already know.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, it is like a verbal survey. The conversation is not a verbal survey so we need to be a little more astute about how we get the conversation going.

Does anybody know what kind of stems or words you might use to ask an open question?

A: How, where, why.

Lisa Baxter: What is it about those words that open up the conversation?

A: It allows them to think for themselves.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, I couldn't have put it better myself.

It allows them to think for themselves. When you pace a conversation, the pause is very powerful. Give them time. When you say 'how do you feel about whatever...?' wait because those questions make people think. Something will come back that is very rewarding. Don't say, 'Oh how does it make you feel? Does it make you feel good? Does it make you feel excited? Does it make you feel emotional?' That is not going to cut the mustard.

We have got the who, what, where and all that malarkey. Let me try something out. How would it make you feel if I took you through some of these questions: 'What did you think of the show last night?' 'Who did you go with?' 'Why did you go?' 'How did you find out about it?' 'How does that feel?'

A: Clinical.

Lisa Baxter: Anybody else feel that?

All you're doing is creating a better verbal survey, but you don't sound as if you are interested in what they have to say. The whole point is you are being curious, you need to be fundamentally interested in what they have to say. You need to be more conversational and less inquisitorial.

Some alternatives might be:

- 'I am interested to know your reason for coming to this exhibition?'
- 'Could you describe what you were thinking while you were there?'
- 'Could you tell me what stands out for you from your experience with the museum?'
- 'In what way might we enhance the visitor experience while you're in there?'

You are showing from your stem questions that you really want to draw something out of them. You're not firing questions at them and that is another way of developing rapport.

Does anybody have any questions about that?

A: That's fine in most of those situations but if you were going to do a written survey they are all about 'What did you see?' 'How did you find

out about it?' How do you achieve balance?

Lisa Baxter: Well you put the closed questions in the written survey and you have a conversation in person. You can have both. There is no such thing as a perfect research method so you have to work within the limitations of each.

This is about conversations, this is about where you do less talking and more listening. You don't know what you don't know and if you don't give them space to speak you won't learn new things that you didn't know before. It is not about confirming what you already know; you can do that eloquently with a survey. Conversations are about finding commonality, discovering brand new things and figuring out what you didn't know to begin with. They're a voyage of discovery. It's not tick boxing; it is a completely different exercise.

Very simple, don't ask two questions in one. 'Which galleries have you visited recently and why?'

What happens with your mental processing when you are given a double question?

A: Confusing.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, you have to hold a lot of information in your head. It means that while you're trying to remember the galleries that you visited recently you are also trying to process something that is a bit more deep and a bit more feeling.

It is better to break down a complex question into a series of simple ones. You ask 'Can you tell me about the galleries that you tend to visit?' and then they will say 'I like to go to Blah.' You can then follow up with 'Oh what is it about that?' That's a nice conversation and you find out how they make their choices. You break down complex questions into simple questions, because it makes it easier for them.

Finally, you don't ask leading questions.

Anybody tell me what a leading question is?

A: Questions where you already assume you know the answer.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, any other definitions?

A: It implies a bias.

Lisa Baxter: Yes. It kind of infers a bias within the question and it normally involves a loaded word. A loaded word predisposes you to think in a particular way, so rather than answering the questions you are relating to the word. An example might be 'How enjoyable did you find the show?'

Where is the loaded word there?

All: Enjoyable.

Lisa Baxter: Exactly. What is the question actually asking? What do you think the impetus behind this question is?

A: It sounds like you want some statistics that say that 90% of people felt the show was very enjoyable.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, exactly. What you are also trying to find out is what their experience of the show was. You could change this to 'Can you tell me about your experience of the show?' That's neutral: no agenda, no loaded words and you get more honest answers as a result of that.

In terms of the don'ts:

- Don't ask lots of questions - especially closed ones. Have a few choice ones that invite a conversation.
- Don't ask two questions in one because they are holding too much information in their heads and their answers won't be as good.
- Don't ask leading questions because it is not about confirming what you think, it is trying to find a neutral platform where you can actually tap into what their thoughts are or their experiences are in relation to your value offer.

Q: When people have a pre-conception of what they want to hear and one person says that, how do you avoid sticking on that? Is there a danger that actually you don't hear the ten people that said something different? Is it about being open to that answer and not wanting to confirm your thoughts?

Lisa Baxter: OK, so I am desperate to know how exciting my exhibition was. You say 'I thought your exhibition was exciting.' I now feel

compelled to say 'does anybody else share that view?' What I would actually do is open it out to the floor and say 'What did you think of the exhibition?' The whole idea about holding an exhibition is to be sure that everybody's perspective is put into the mix. If one person says something then you open it out to make sure it is representative to the two, three, four, fifteen people that are taking part in that.

Now to some techniques.

How good is your memory? If I were to ask you to retrace your steps or remember the minutia of the last front of house experience that you have ever had, how accurate would that memory and that recollection be?

All: Not very good.

Lisa Baxter: Not very good because a lot of what we do is what we call automatic behaviour. Automatic behaviour is going to book a ticket, do this, do that, and into the show. All of that is patterned behaviour, which means that bypasses conscious thought. People are actually just going with the flow and not remembering but if what you want to do is improve your front of house experience then you need the detail. What you need to do is use something called prompts.

How does a prompter work in a theatre? What does a prompter do?

A: Reminds people.

Lisa Baxter: Yes, they forget their lines and someone prompts them.

You might have a question like 'What was your front of house experience like?' Then you might have sub-questions. 'How was the catering?' 'How was the ambience?' 'Could you find your way around?' 'Were the staff friendly and helpful?' 'Did you encounter any queues?' 'Did we manage that well?' You ask the overarching question and they give you an answer. That's called the top of mind answer. You want to know more so you deliver a little series of prompts, your pre-determined agenda. Just by prompting it you will illicit that memory in most cases.

This is about you digging into the detail of a particular experience or a particular feeling, the shopping list that you have that you need to tick off. Prompts are there to help people remember beyond the top of mind answer. With prompts you can go into greater depth and you can encourage people to think things through more fully.

Imagine the National Museum of John Doe. The National Museum of John Doe has implemented a new customer service programme led by volunteers who they have trained. The key things they had trained the volunteers to be are friendly, engaging, proactive, helpful, knowledgeable, visible and approachable. Those are things that you want to achieve in order for those visitors to feel comfortable and valued.

You decide to have a conversation with some of the people that have come. You might start off with 'What do you remember about the volunteers of the National Museum of John Doe?' They might say they don't remember much or they were fabulous. You get the top of mind, the impression, but then you might have some prompts like 'How would you describe their manner?' 'Did you feel that you could approach them?' You ask rounder, broader questions around a subject so that you are not leading them to use your words. They are not there to confirm whether they are knowledgeable.

Then there are probes. The thing about prompts is you are nailing something down on a pre-determined agenda. With probes, you are opening people up like a flower and you are giving them the floor; you're not prompting them at all. You won't know what you don't know if all you ask about is the things that you want to know about. You have to create a space with fresh insights to emerge. You want to hear their perspective of what is important to them rather than second guessing what the issues might be.

I was doing some work at The Regimental Museum in Lancashire. We were testing a whole family friendly overlay that we had been co-designing with some families. We were doing some face to face conversations and some observational research on camouflage.

At The Regimental Museum they had this great box with original costumes: World War One uniforms, World War Two uniforms, modern combat, desert combat etcetera. We had this great idea to enliven the experience by having these camouflaged backdrops. You could walk in front of it and mummy and daddy could take a picture to see how camouflaged you were and there was also a mirror so that you could see yourself camouflaged.

When we talked to them, we didn't say 'What do you think about camouflage?' We said to the kids 'What was the best bit about trying the uniforms on?' That is still a loaded question but anyway. They said 'I tried the World War One costume on and it was really scratchy. I can't imagine how they could have worn those, because they are so itchy, it really made me itch' or 'I tried the modern combat one on and it was really heavy, I just don't understand how they can go into war wearing these really heavy things.' Nobody mentioned the camouflage.

Later on we asked about the camouflage because we did want to cover all bases. They did like the camouflage but that wasn't the most impactful element of what we had designed.

We redesigned the interactive to primarily be about empathising with the soldier in combat and secondarily about camouflage with a space for a fresh insight to emerge.

If we are going to go back to The National Museum of John Doe, what you would say now is 'What do you remember about the volunteers at the National Museum of John Doe?'

'Well I really remember there was this guy who had a bit of a limp and he still tried to help us with our pushchair up the thing.'

'Oh tell me more about that, how does that make you feel?'

'Oh he was so helpful; he really went out of his way to help me.'

'What do you mean he was really helpful?'

'Well he saw us from across the room and he

started walking towards us as he saw us going towards the stairs because he knew that we were going to have trouble going up the stairs.'

'What's important about that for you?'

'Well it showed that he was looking out for us, he anticipated our needs.'

What you are doing now is not ticking off a pre-determined agenda of stuff; you are really trying to understand the story from the person's perspective. You are opening them up like a flower.

When you are doing a one to one that is how you might do the questioning. In a group context you can then say, 'Do any of you share these feelings or experiences?' 'Does this chime with anybody else?' 'Oh with you, oh that's great. Tell me about that.' Then you would move on to 'What about with the people for whom it doesn't chime? Tell me about your experience?' You open it out into the group so that you don't hone in on the one answer that you want to hear. You take the nugget of insight and you test it with the rest of the group. The importance of this is that it makes them feel involved with the conversation. You are not going, 'What did you think?' 'What did you think?' 'What did you think?' You can't do that in a conversation; you need to find ways where you can open it out so that everybody can feel that they can be a part of it.

I would like you to find a partner. We are just going to do a little exercise. Agree who is going to ask the question and who is going to answer the question. The person that is going to ask the question, you have got one of two questions that you can ask:

1. Tell me about the last time you were at the beach. What did that mean to you?
2. Tell me about the first live music concert that you ever went to. How was that to you?

'How was that to you?' is the second part of the question. 'Tell me about the first live music concert that you ever went to' and then the brief is to find out how it was out there.

You are going to use more questions like

'What do you mean when you say...?' You are going to open them up and really let them be immersed in their story and then you are going to figure out what you learnt about this person as a result of this. Off you go.

Group discussion

Lisa Baxter: How good was that? It's really good fun isn't it? There is a saying in Yorkshire, 'There is nowt so queer as folk.' People are intrinsically fascinating; you just need to give yourself permission to have a conversation with them.

That exercise is all about opening people up. Did you feel that you were really trying to find out more about them, rather than the other way around?

Never take an adjective at face value. When I run groups and people come up with an adjective it's a red flag because you don't know what they mean. An adjective means different things to different people in different contexts. Let's have a look at these: 'It was really exciting', 'It made me feel quite emotional', 'It was very interesting.' What's useless about these words?

A: It doesn't tell you anything.

Lisa Baxter: It doesn't tell you anything, well it tells you a little bit but it doesn't tell you enough. Every time you hear an adjective, ask another question: 'That's interesting, what do you mean by the word emotional?' 'What does emotional mean to you?' 'What does emotional mean in the context of what you are talking about?'

Qualify your adjectives, otherwise you will get a report that says 'Everybody thought the show was really exciting.'

I read a lot of research on peoples' experiences of shows and 'exciting' for one person is not the same exciting for another; everyone has their own back story, the back story to the adjective. You need to find the back story. Let me give you an example:

'Can you tell me how you felt when the show ended?'

'Oh I felt really sad.'

'Oh what do you mean by sad?'

'The show was so good I didn't want it to end.'
'The show had a sad ending that stayed with me.'
'The show reminded me of a sad time in my life.'
'I felt sad because I was going to miss the last bus home.'

Obviously sad means different things so whenever you hear an adjective please try and unearth the back story behind it.

In your partners, we are going to do another exercise, which is to try and think back to a time when you were really happy. Can you describe it to me? Describe is a good word where you can open up some rich language and then you can probe deeper for the back story.

The person who was answering the question in the last exercise is now the person who is asking the question in this exercise. You have got a few minutes. It is still probing and blossoming but this time every time you hear an adjective or you feel that it is significant you try and find out what they mean by that adjective.

Group discussion

Lisa Baxter: Stop. So how was that? Did you experience how an adjective is a portal into another world and it just takes you deeper and deeper into the story?

In a more sort of methodological way, if you explore adjectives what you are doing is clarifying intangibles. You are finding the meaning behind the intangibility of the adjective and it makes you go much deeper into the story. Treat each adjective like a door and walk through it then reflect it back if it is a group discussion.

To recap there are three techniques:

- Prompts to connect with people better, on your pre-determined agenda.
- Probes to invite people to tell their stories.
- Treat each adjective like a door that you want to open. Never take an adjective at face value.

Actually these are really called life skills at the end of the day. This is how you establish rapport with people by understanding where they are coming from.

Does anybody have any questions about that?

Q: Is it quite hard to record those answers because they are not set questions?

Lisa Baxter: No, I have a little audio recorder and there is a system of coding an analysis. You think about what the general themes are coming out of the conversation, how many people are saying those things and what you will describe those themes as. At the end I am going to give you a link because on my website I have some downloadables about how to run some focus groups and also how to conduct observational research. I have got some examples for people to have a look at but that will give you more of the nuts and bolts around that.

Now to the three guiding principles.

Be outwardly curious. You have now experienced the beauty of being outwardly curious rather than being self-obsessed. It is really important that you look outwards when engaging in conversations. I have found very few arts organisations that I have worked with who have a genuine interest in their audience. There is a belief that the world revolves around their organisation.

Let me tell you, there are very few people whose lives revolve around a single arts institution. That is just the reality of the situation but when a sector operates from this position, and I have been running groups for twenty years now, this is what they want me to ask:

- 'What do you think about me?'
- 'What is it about me that you like?'
- 'What is it about me that you don't like?'
- 'How can I make you like me better?'
- 'Do I need to change my clothes, or may be change my style?'
- 'If I do will you be my friend or maybe give me some money?'

Does that ring true? Oh yes. You end up sounding like a Billy No Mates at a dinner party. Would you want to make friends with that person? No, you would run a mile. Emotional intelligence tells us that if you really want to connect and converse with people, you need to show an interest in them first. You need to find the common ground to which you can then pull them closer to you.

All these 'me, me, I, me, my' need to go out

of the window. You need to forget your sense of self and find the other that is going on. When we don't get so caught up in our own self importance we figure out how we might fit into other people's lives. Rather than seeking ways to change their behaviour, we might find other ways to change ours, to make us more connected and relevant and connected and vital to a larger number of people in our communities.

The second nugget is context is king. Context is everything. How do you understand what a person is saying if you don't understand where they are coming from? A lot of my work where I am running focus groups is, 'I really want to find out the things that we have just been talking about.' 'Well I need to understand about the place, you know how they lived their lives, what are their goals, what is it that brings meaning into their lives?' You need to understand the context of the person first before you start going into deeper and more meaningful explanations.

Now does everybody have a piece of paper?

I would like you to draw a little time line from you as a baby to you now. Take a moment to reflect on four milestone arts events in your life and mark them at any point between birth and today. Take a moment to think about it. This is about you the person, not you the profession.

Now, with those four events - if you can only think of two or three that's fine - I would like you just to briefly jot down what happened. What was this event about? What happened at this event? Write down in one or two sentences the memorable elements of this event. As you are writing it down just try to recollect what it was like to be there, just put yourself in that moment. Now at each of these events can you just write down how it made you feel. Just two or three adjectives each, so that you can bring it back.

Looking at who you are now and where you are now, try and reflect on the ways these experiences may have contributed to who you are today. They may not have but try to think about how they influenced who you are today. They may have influenced your values or your interests, or choices that you have made in your life.

Has anything come to mind or occurred to you doing this exercise?

A: What do you value?

Lisa Baxter: What you value, could you tell us a little bit about that?

A: Ppretty much everything that is stuck in my mind is linked by much the same value. I remember they all made me feel a particular way and that's obviously made my values.

Lisa Baxter: Anybody else?

A: The two experiences are very different and reflect completely differently but they still figure in my life because there is part of me that likes quiet reflection and exploring and there's also part of me that likes adventure and excitement. I think for me as a person, I switch between the two all the time.

Lisa Baxter: Oh God, don't you just want to probe into that? Anybody else, anything that has occurred to you as a result of this exercise?

A: Mine are really memorable and some of them go quite far back and I think they have stayed with me.

Lisa Baxter: The imprint.

A: Yes.

Lisa Baxter: What we have been doing is just called 'A retrospective timeline'. It is a little thing that you can do to try and trap people's context to the relationship to whatever the subject is. Rather than just having a conversation with them, you are giving them time to reflect and to think about their broader context. That's probably in a way that they haven't done before, so that fresh meaning emerges that you share as the group. It is the pebble in the pond.

When you are holding productive conversations with people, sometimes in order to understand context or how people think or feel you need to try some different techniques and this is a really good one.

Wouldn't it be great if you tried this with different user groups in your constituent communities to find out what their relationship

with art is? Then you could figure out what your place in that map might be rather than just figuring out what they think about you. You get far more information using this than any kind of direct questioning. Understanding context is really important and this is an example of being creative.

I am a creative facilitator. I do creative thinking, I run creative workshops, innovation labs and all sorts of crazy stuff and it's fun. Why do boring stuff when you can have fun really? Don't just focus on words, give them an exercise.

While you are having conversations with people, give them time and space to create, explore, draw, paint and do timelines etcetera. Do picture cards of random things like fish, doors, heli-patterns. Say 'Of all these pictures, which one resonates with you when you think about our venue?' They might pick a fish and I have got one that's a telephone box. Everyone picks a telephone box. It makes no sense to me but it does to them because they are intuitively picking pictures that bypass conscious thoughts, that resonate with them in relation to your venue. Then you probe. 'Tell me about the telephone box.' Then the beautiful stories come out and you have a richer understanding of what is going on in the minds and hearts and souls or whatever of the people that you are trying to communicate with.

It is not just about productive conversations. It is about meaningful communication and if you are interested in this kind of stuff, here's some really good books:



In terms of the guiding principles then:

- Be outwardly curious
- Context is everything

- Try and find ways of being creative because it makes you more fun and it makes you a better brand touch point because you are supposed to be a creative organisations. Shake it up and see what people can do.

You don't need a degree and you don't need to have specialist focus group training. I used to be the gatekeeper: 'I do focus groups but you can't do it; I can because I know how to do it.' Sod that because I get all the good stuff that gets lost in translation because you haven't heard it directly yourself. Now I train people in how to do it so that they can have the direct contact with the audiences themselves.

I still do focus groups but I am trying to do less of them. If you are interested in any of this [go to my website](#). There are lots of resources on there so do have a look.

Q&A

Q: I have been learning about pitching quite a lot recently and I notice that quite a few of the methods came from that. I have always wondered how I would marry my marketing profession with incorporating pitching. I know that it can be a bit hard to do that slowly; do you have any advice on incorporating?

A: Just try it; just throw yourself in at the deep end. Try it with some friends first. It is like muscle memory, you build your confidence over time. Don't wait until you think you are ready. If I thought that I would do something because I was ready, I wouldn't be here now. I don't feel ready to do this but I have done it and I hope you enjoyed it. Just don't wait to be ready and don't hope for perfection. Tell people, 'I have never run a discussion group before but if you want to tell me at the end what you thought about it then please do.'

How to create an award winning marketing campaign

Sarah Ogle, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatre

Sarah Ogle: I am going to share with you a bit about Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatre, who we are and what we do. I am going to tell you about the consultations and communications processes that we went through and the audience insight that we developed at the reopening campaign itself. Then I am going to follow it through with some of what that learning gave us and how we are going to put that into practice today.

We are at the start of a journey now that we have got our lovely new building and there is much more work to be done. The two theatres have huge theatrical dynasties between the two of them - over 150 years of theatre history but their histories have reflected the histories of the city of Liverpool. When Liverpool's fortunes were a bit down in the 1980s, both theatres were a bit down on their luck as well and actually both theatres were closed during the early and mid 1990s.

In 2000 the city council and Arts Council England decided that the two should be run together as a trust and so the very snappy Liverpool and Merseyside Theatres' Trust was formed.

We are a registered charity and we are funded by the Arts Council and Liverpool City Council. Our joint Chief Executives - Artistic Director Gemma Bodinetz and Executive Director Deborah Aydon – were appointed in 2003. At that point we had just been awarded European Capital of Culture and the theatre offer in the city was considered to be the weakest link in the bid so we had to do something about changing that for starters.

From 2008, after radically changing the programme of work between 2004 to that period, we helped celebrate Liverpool as European Capital of Culture. That was instrumental in a change in the city because the city council realised that actually culture

was a huge driver of potential regeneration for the city. That still holds true today and so we are very fortunate.

In 2011, after years of planning, The Everyman closed. At the same time we celebrated the centenary of The Playhouse. We opened the studio and the new Everyman opened in March last year.

We stage classics from alumni returning in the great roles such as Pete Postlethwaite in King Lear or Jonathan Pryce in The Caretaker to re-imagining Moliere with Liverpool Poet Roger McGough. We did Tartuffe, The Hypochondriac and The Misanthrope and all three toured nationally. We also do new plays. We have commissioned crazy new musicals about night clubs in Liverpool to brave pieces of work about the changing city landscape in which we live.

While we are Liverpool focused, we want to be ambitious and create work that has a longer life and is seen beyond our city. A few examples of that have included Ladykillers, Anthony and Cleopatra, and Ghost Stories. Ghost Stories started in Liverpool and then went to the West End and Russia and Canada and then back into the West End. This is Kim Cattrall, a Liverpool lass who came and did Anthony and Cleopatra, which also went on to Chichester.



I am also going to give a quick plug to Dead Dog in a Suitcase, which was on as part of our opening season at The Everyman and is on tour this autumn. Do try and see it, it is the most amazing piece of theatre.

All of this is happening in a city of two extremes. Liverpool has been named the top UK city and third in the world for people to visit. Last week they issued another poll of 50 things to do before you die and a night out in Liverpool was number three. We are also one of the most deprived local authorities in the UK and so this is the context in which we work.

Our education, community and work with young people is actually vital to what we do and has to be in a city like Liverpool.



This photograph illustrates the very start of what has become our Young Everyman Playhouse programme or YEP. It is essentially a mini company of actors, writers, directors, producers, communicators and technicians, all under 26. That's a whole other story for another day or the bar later on.

This is The Everyman, our beautiful award winning building:



It is rather lovely and we are all very proud. The campaign itself actually started back in

2009 when the theatre looked like this.

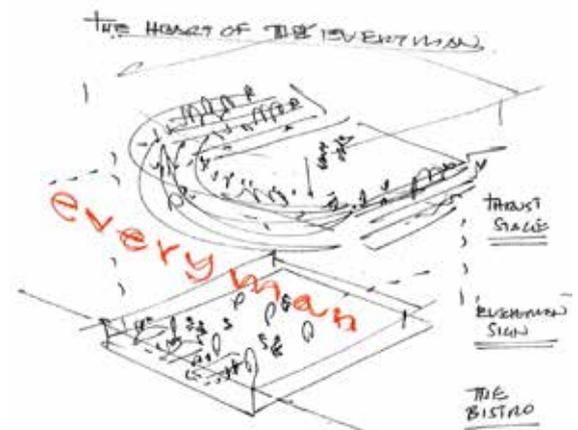


It was a bit tired and a bit sorry for itself. It was a former chapel and this is all a kind of false front. The chapel dated back to the 1800s.

We started in 2009 with some consultation with our audiences. We asked them to describe themselves and we asked them to choose two words that they thought encapsulated the spirit of The Everyman, past and present. We also asked them to describe in three words what they would like the future of The Everyman to be in 2014. A lot of those words really chimed with our own and fed into some of what we wanted: sustainable, green, young people. It was all about many of the things that we all hold dear to ourselves.

We also consulted with actors, writers, designers and directors and we did sessions, where we asked 'If we could keep anything what would it be?'

That all fed into the planning process and very early on our architect Steve Tompkins drew this:



This is a sketch about the heart of The Everyman and actually it is pretty much the things that we have kept: a basement bistro, the wonderful Everyman sign and then the Thrust Stage. Actually this is a lot of how we thought about the campaign. The Everyman as its name suggests is very much about every man and every woman and very much belongs to the city of Liverpool.

How do you prepare to take a building down that is much loved and much respected? How do you take your audience with you? How do you engage a new audience into what that theatre could be?

"The Everyman will always be more than the sum of its parts because its spirit is dynamic and evolves with the people and the times that nurture it."

"The more we understand you, the more we'll be able to build a theatre that reflects you, your children and your children's children."

"What has made this theatre exceptional is not the building but the people who have created work on its stages and come to see that work."

That's just a few quotes from what we were trying to achieve.

We decided that on our final weekend before we shut we would throw open our doors and let people explore the old building. We would let them see for themselves what we were going to do. It was a very moving day and we captured peoples' memories along the way. We created a short film and I am going to play that to you. It is only three minutes but I think it says it all and kind of illustrates where we started from.



[View the video](#)

Video: *Farewell, so long, farewell, so long. Farewell, so long. Farewell, so long. Farewell.*

Never mind the memories and ghosts of the past are less important than a new generation growing up to inhabit a new Jerusalem, which will inform the making of your own outstanding generation when you in fifty years' time are able to say who could have believed that it would lead us here.

We know The Everyman will be a new theatre, a new encouragement, a new entertainment. Everything a theatre could ever be. We know The Everyman will be a place where we can make a new history. We know The Everyman will be a place where impossibility is not an answer. We know The Everyman will be an incredible reflection of the city and its inhabitants. We know The Everyman will be for every man, for every woman. We remember this but we can't wait to find out what we don't know.

Farewell, goodbye, auf weidersehen, goodbye. Auf weidersehen, goodbye. Farewell, goodbye, it's time to go and so must I. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

Sarah Ogle: It still gives me goose-bumps that film, especially when the neon went out. I used to sit in meetings and cry as I thought of the theatre coming down.

I hope that illustrates from very early on the things that we were trying to do. The two people giving speeches weren't famous people. Stuart has been in the very first company since back in 1964 as a stage manager and then had become an actor. Whitney was one of our Young Everyman and Playhouse members and it was very important that we kind of passed the baton from the past and to the future. Some of these choices that we made from very early on, all helped continue throughout the campaign.

The audiences and communities we serve in Liverpool are really vital. In trying to think about what the new Everyman would be, we talked very much about people all of the time. Very early on in the design process when we were discussing how to shutter the glass façade of the building the architect came up with the notion, inspired by cathedrals, to 'make the architecture out of the people of the city'.

Instead of the Saints pictured in Cathedrals it would feature the people of the city. Our Artistic Director thought this would be a wonderful thing to do in Liverpool, so that's what we did. There are 105 people in the portrait and we took over 4,000 photographs.

It was a wonderful way to go out into the community that we serve to ask people to come and have their pictures taken. Some people had never walked into our theatre before but we happened to turn up in their community centre and they thought, 'Oh alright, I'll have my picture taken.' Now they come all the time but we also have regular audiences who appeared on there as well. It is a very wonderful thing.

The 105 also became a very important group of advocates for us. They'd come and see our shows and they were some of the first people through the building. When you have a capital project of this scale there are lots and lots of people that you need to communicate with. We had a lot of stakeholders: regular audiences, people who are donating to the campaign, funders, politicians, the theatre community we serve and anyone who may become one of those in the future. Communication with them was key.

Very early on we decided we would create a newspaper. We decided that this was a really good way of telling the stories that we wanted to tell. They were stories very practically of what it was going to look like, of fundraising stories, of how we were still going to be a seedbed of talent and were still going to nurture the next generation.

This is David Morrissey:



David started in The Everyman Youth Theatre and was in our final production of Macbeth

before we shut. He became a huge supporter of the campaign so we used the newspapers to communicate all of these messages. They didn't come out every month; they came out when we had something to say.

These newspapers became a really useful tool. They are relatively cheap to print, quite a quick turnaround and we could mail them to people, we could take them to events and we could distribute them around the city. They were also good for our funders to have so that when they were talking to people about the project they could show it off too.

We were also able to talk about fundraising, and obviously fundraising in a capital project is vital. We created the Everyone for the Everyman campaign, which was encouraging people to do something for The Everyman. We had a quiz team that went out to all the local quizzes to try and win money. They even ended up on Eggheads but they didn't win sadly.

We had a local, one of our audience members, who lives in the north of the city and would have bake sales and garden parties for us to raise money. Deborah, our Executive Director, even jumped out of an aeroplane - all in the name of The Everyman.

We wanted to create an Everyman for Everyone but how can you be a building for everyone? That is really quite difficult. How can you be all things to all people? What does a shiny new Everyman mean for the older sister down the road, The Playhouse? Should we still be The Everyman and Playhouse? Capital funding afforded us some money that allowed us to explore some of those questions and many more.

We had been using the Arts Audiences Insight model to try and inform our marketing planning. It kind of worked to some degree but around the same time Morris Hargreaves McIntyre had developed the Culture Segments model. We had a look at that and thought that could really be for us so we did some work on Culture Segments.

There are eight segments and it is quite a useful little tool. You can segment yourself, if you want to, on their website and you can read all the pen portraits.



We discovered actually that our audiences are very similar in their motivations at both theatres. We had a lot of people who were Essence and Expression. We also had a high level of brand equity so they loved us quite a lot. There was further potential with Enrichment and Stimulation who didn't have so much brand equity or levels of loyalty with us.

What use was all of this for our campaigns? It didn't tell us where these people might live if we wanted to find more of them but it gave our organisation a short hand for conversations. I think that can be quite important because sometimes with your artistic directors or programmers, it is quite difficult to have those conversations about audiences. This shorthand was something that we shared as an organisation.

For example, almost a third of our audience is Expression. There is a bigger market in our area too. They are a community focused segment. What would that mean for our campaign, if they were interested in our community and coming together? What would that mean for what the new Everyman might be and perhaps could we get them to be advocates and supporters of our work?

With a new theatre starting to take shape and getting to understand our audience just a little bit more, we needed to think about properly taking Everyman and Playhouse forward beyond opening. We needed to tackle the b word, brand. It can be a scary word to those artistic directors and programmers. They don't want their vision to be boxed and logoed up; they want it to be free forming.

We all know it's not just about the logo. It is every touch point that your customer comes into from how your print goes out and what your website looks like to how clean your

toilets are. They all say something about you and that's what the customer sees.

We used the research from Culture Segments for how we started to think about our brand and also about the new Everyman and Playhouse - the relationship between the two theatres. We did some more work and we explored across the company when we are at our best, what we could do to improve the audience experience, what we could do to prove our own working life and many other things.

As part of this process our Artistic Director was tasked with writing a manifesto:

'Joy beyond expectation.'

Essentially that's what we are trying to achieve. It is not about putting on happy plays all the time, like you might think. It is about going, taking our audiences that little bit further and going beyond what they might be expecting. This is actually the label on the bottle and the bottle actually has a list of ingredients and the six ingredients of our manifesto are:

1. Humanity
2. Brilliance
3. Dare
4. Forward-thinking
5. Here and now
6. Popularity

They all have to be present in everything that we do but they don't always have to be of equal measure. We have to think about this all the time when we are thinking of our work.

Deborah, our Executive Director, then went on to write a code of how we would work together internally and externally. Rule number one is we are here for our artists, for our audiences and most importantly for what happens when they come together. Our overriding priority in everything we do is always to enhance the art and the audience experience. Trying to be audience focused as well as artistically led is always a challenge. This is just one of a list of things and they also include touching on ambition, diversity, innovation, alliances, integrity, resources and income generation. I am thinking about the future of our art form, our city and our planet.

With these two pieces of work we started to interrogate our mission a little bit more.

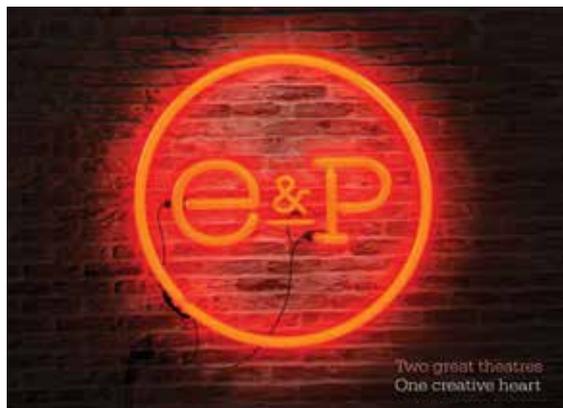
We started to think about the relationship between the two theatres and whether we should reconsider them as separate marketing entities. As we did this we realised that it had been ten years since Gemma and Deborah had started, we had produced 100 shows and we wanted to re-state ourselves as a single creative force. We realised that actually if we just focused on The Everyman, what would happen to The Playhouse? We were still performing there and it was still an important part of our programme and it is today.

This is our revised mission and vision:



I think the thing that is really important in this is that it is responding to time and place. Being in Liverpool is really important to who we are and what we are and that is really vital.

We created a new brand, which is this e&P.



We did brainstorm with our creative agency whether we should rename the company or what we should do. In the end we just stuck with e&P. It did have Liverpool under it for a while and it does when we go out of the city but in Liverpool we hope that this means something now to people. It is inspired by the neon that connects the two theatres. Both have neon signs on the front and The Everyman was

always lower case neon and The Playhouse was always upper case neon so we just combined the two. That was the new brand that we launched in November 2013.

At this point we hadn't announced how we were going to open and we hadn't announced our first production. Lots of people were asking and it is a tough question.

How do you open a new theatre? What should the show be? Will it be a lot of new writing? Shall it be a new play by a new Liverpool writer?

We did commission a number of Liverpool writers but the weight of pressure on creating that first show actually was quite tricky. Then we started to think, 'Well actually what has The Everyman done best?' We realised that when it had opened it had opened with a Shakespeare and when we shut we shut with a Shakespeare. We thought 'Well Shakespeare can take any criticism can't he? We'll just do a Shakespeare, it'll be fine, but which one should we do?'

We went for Twelfth Night, 'If Music be the food of love, play on.' After nearly three years since our finale we would have a 'play on' so Twelfth Night seemed perfect.



We were going to have a play on - hooray - and we wanted The Everyman to be a house of play. We wanted it to be somewhere you could come and enjoy yourselves. The beautiful thing about the final lines of the play is that it says, 'And we will strive to please you every day.' That felt a very important choice to make as to what we were going to put on for our first show.

At the same time as we announced our first show, we decided we were going to have an opening weekend. Lots of people had said,

'Who's going to open the theatre, is Julie Walters coming back?' We said 'No, that is not very Everyman.' We decided that actually we would bookend the finale with an opening weekend and that we would have another parade but this time it would start down at The Playhouse and we would bring the parade up through the streets to The Everyman. We would re-join the two sister theatres back together again.

It was a great opportunity to involve all our community groups. We worked with the Playhouse and we worked with the Liverpool Lantern Company who create huge outdoor lanterns and it was fantastic. That happened on Saturday night and we lit up the theatre and there were fireworks but we didn't open the doors and then the next day, we just opened the doors at eleven o'clock.

The aim of the project, once we started to think about the campaign, was to demonstrate that The Everyman was a go to venue. We wanted to make sure existing audiences would come back, we also wanted to engage new audiences. We used Culture Segments as a focus. We needed to make sure our stakeholders were reassured about their investment and we wanted to present the company's refreshed feel and mission.

We set ourselves a number of smart objectives:

Key metrics

- 1.3,000 to attend opening weekend
- 2.Opening production - *Twelfth Night* - 'sold out'
- 3.Over 70% seat capacity for the rest of the season
- 4.Positive local media – hyper, online, print, broadcast (20)
- 5.Positive national media – online, print, broadcast (10)
- 6.Positive trade press – architecture, theatre
- 7.Bespoke broadcast – 2 x TV plus 2 x radio
- 8.Awards – architecture, theatre, tourism
- 9.Speaker events – architecture, theatre, community
- 10.Visits to website and microsite
- 11.#DearEveryman messages > microsite, Twitter, Facebook
- 12.Reach and engagement on Twitter (to get us trending in Liverpool) and Facebook (increase reach)

We had numbers about how many people through on the opening weekend, we wanted our opening production to sell out and we wanted some positive local and national media coverage. We also wanted to get some awards and we did - hurrah. We wanted to be able to come to speaker events like this to

talk about what we had done. We wanted to increase visits to our websites and micro-sites and reach lots of people on Facebook and Twitter and all that kind of stuff.

We had all these things we wanted to try and achieve. We started with what we knew best, which is audiences and that felt like a big list of stuff to do. At this point, I should point out we are a team of ten and that includes the sales team and we were opening a Christmas show. We were trying to open a theatre, move office, put in a new ticketing system and help set up a food and drink offer. We were exhausted! We were thinking 'we have just set ourselves all these things to do, how are we going to do it?'

We had £40,000 to spend so we came back to our audiences and what we wanted to tell them. We looked at who our audience is - existing audiences and new audiences - and we broke it down with Culture Segments and different communities that we work with. We came up with lots of key messages for them. There was a lot we wanted to say, so how were we going to say it?

We used our insight matrix. We looked at all the different tools we had and we looked at how we would reach them and it allowed us to start to focus on what we might do. The thing we come back to is the four segments we had identified. Expression and Essence were very on message with us so we needed to be true to ourselves and what we think and we should hopefully be able to get some more Expression and Essence people along. We also needed to open our doors to new audiences so we decided to work towards the Stimulation and Enrichment audiences, which are both very different audiences.

We created a simple message framework based on the four segments and six messages:

	Essence	Expression	Stimulation	Enrichment
The Everyman is Back	x	x	x	x
Time to Celebrate	x	x		
Home Sweet Home	x	x		x
See you there		x	x	
#DearEveryman	x	x		
#PlayOn > Twelfth Night	x	x	x	

This is then fed into the whole of the creative

campaign and our press campaign. For a lot of people all we needed to say was 'The Everyman is back'. For some it was time to celebrate - particularly for Expression who like a good party. For some people we wanted to reassure them - particularly the Enrichment audience - that it was a home for them, that they could come and make themselves feel at home. The Stimulation audience, who just want to be a head in a crowd, will be fine. Then we looked at two things: we had #Playon to promote Twelfth Night and we had Dear Everyman, which I will explain shortly.

We had this message framework, which fed through everything. We had our matrix of the different things that we were going to do and then we started to feedback into the creative about what we were going to do.

We didn't have a lot of money and we needed to spend it as effectively as possible. We only had one chance at this to try and get it right. The campaign featured a great deal of outdoor advertising including bus panels on routes through and around areas we worked in with our communities and those identified with potential through using our Area Profile Reports.



You can see the messages. The creative is quite similar but there is a link through all of them. We used a hashtag. The problem with a capital project is that whatever you do, you have to have a whole host of funders and their logos and it gets a bit complicated.

We had bus panels and we had city dressing. We worked with the City Marketing Agency to use their city dressing sites. We still had to pay for them to be produced but they allowed us to put them around the city. We put them in key areas: transport gateways, up by the town hall, in key areas where we thought people might see them. Again, we made sure the messages were very simple.

We did some leaflets and posters and they were all slightly different. Again, we didn't need to tell Stimulation audiences too much. Enrichment want reassurance so we told them that Matthew Kelly was coming back in Twelfth Night. Matthew had been part of the original company and was a huge part of that history of The Everymen so we wanted to reassure the Enrichment audience.

We also thought we would add a bit of colour. This was quite a late addition in the end as the design of Twelfth Night was coming about. Gemma decided that she wanted a big streamer drop at the end with balloons and streamers and a kind of party feel so we decided that we would put that on one of the leaflets. Essence and Expression just wanted to know The Everyman is back and to be part of the party.



We also decided to use the same design for ads in newspapers and stuff. We created bespoke adverts in local and regional publications, again thinking about the segments. To make our money go further we did various deals so we could continue some ads throughout the opening season. Not everybody could come and see Twelfth Night and so we wanted to extend that, and we saw the shows in the season as points for the audiences as well.

Through all this collateral, I hope you will have noticed #DearEveryman and #NewEveryman and a QR code. We wanted to integrate a digital aspect to our campaign and created a microsite.

We were in the middle of creating a new website and actually had to pause that because there was too much work with everything else that was going on. The creative agency that we worked with said they could do a really nice little micro-site for a couple of grand and with that we could also collect Twitter messages. We thought that sounded brilliant so we did it.



The micro-site linked to the whole campaign. It scrolled through the main messages, you could send a Dear Everyman message through the micro-site to wish us well for the future or you could tweet and it would appear on that using the #NewEveryman hashtag. It also allowed us to keep the messages very similar to what we were trying to say. If you clicked on the Home Sweet Home you would see the kind of pictures of the seats and how comfy it was and all that kind of thing. Of course, when we built The Everyman we wanted to tell people how we had done it.

For the Dear Everyman - we did have an analogue version as well - we asked 'What do you want from the new theatre?' Since we had collected memories when we shut, we really wanted to encourage people to think about the future and what they wanted from the new Everyman. We used #DearEveryman and we collected comments across the opening few weeks of the building's life. It is really lovely some of the things that were said.



We used the analogue version at a series of test events. In the few weeks running up to opening, we had a number of test events, because you have to test the building. You need to know how people are going to move around it, you don't know if the toilets are all going to work. The first group of people through were our access forum so that was fantastic. They were great, they were really honoured. A couple of days later we invited the 105 portrait wall people along, our neighbours, our community forum, our educational forum and a few others. Some of the Young Everyman Playhouse (YEP) members also came along. We had a lot of fun that night because we had kept some people in the auditorium and some people in one of the new spaces making as much noise as they could to make sure the sound proofing worked. Then we did a mass toilet flush and then we had YEP members running frantically around the building to see if you could hear it in the auditorium. It was a lot of fun and they all felt honoured and privileged to be part of that before anybody else.

We did a night for our donors and the night for our donors turned out to be Valentine's Day. We thought that was a really nice way of saying thank you to the really important people who love the theatre as much as we do so we had them in on that night.

You have to do a civic and stakeholders event where they come and do their speeches and so we did that a few days before we opened. We didn't want the opening to feel civic and so we kept that separate. Through all of these events, we were testing the building and learning. We would have an event and in the morning we would go, 'Oh the signage didn't work, the flow of the building, dah, dah, dah.' They were useful things.

This is the opening weekend. I won't show you all of it but it will give you a flavour...



[View the video](#)

The voiceover is a lot of the alumni. We collected messages of Dear Everyman from some of the key people. One that had been part of that was Stephen Graham who had been part of the youth theatre:

'It was great as a young person - out there on the streets you always seemed to be in peoples' way and they were always telling you to shut up and be quiet and mind your place - to be in a place where they told you to speak up, shout and be a nuisance, be a creative nuisance.'

We had a rolling road closure. It was so exciting having motorbike outriders taking us up the streets. It rained. It was miserable.

It was a bit cheesy at times. It did allow us to bring together a lot of the community groups and people that we had been working with. The Everyman had given us an opportunity to kind of reconnect or re-establish and bring new partnerships in and start new relationships.

Deciding who to open the building was quite tricky and what we decided to do was just pretend it was business as normal. We didn't know at that point who was going to be duty manager that day but our stage door keeper counted down to the opening of the front of the building. We had a queue and Simon was counting down - the customers knew this was going on inside: ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one... Simon just opened the doors. The Everyman is now open.

One thing I should say is during those test events, we had let people Tweet and take photographs. The only photographs we were told not to share were photographs of the auditorium; we wanted to keep the auditorium a secret until this weekend. Then we let them go everywhere. There were lots of smiling faces and we gave them maps, which are architect drawn. Lots of old friends came back in and even Batman turned up. Everyone was so happy.

We have a space, mini-theatre, called Add One. That is where our Young Everyman Playhouse hang out so they took it over to talk about what they did. We got the young people to tell their story of what they will be doing and that sort of thing.

As much as I am going to miss the old one, I am going to get used to this one very quickly. The whole atmosphere and the buzz of the place is brilliant and it has enriched the new Everyman's spirit.

The messages were going right through all of our communications and we did badges. Don't underestimate a good badge.

So how did we do?

Evaluation is really important in anything that we do as marketers. Despite the rain, about 2,000 people joined the parade and there were queues on Sunday morning waiting for us to open. We had over 4,500 people through the doors, which is phenomenal really. We generated over 90 stories in the local, national and international press. Twelfth Night sold out, as did the final weeks of Hope Place and our Kneehigh Show that followed. We had 34,000 new followers to our website between 1 February and 1 April, which was the kind of period that we measured on. We opened at the beginning of March.

On Twitter, Everyman and Theatre trended on Twitter in Liverpool on the opening weekend. The new theatre is much loved by former attenders and new ones. It is like the old Everyman but better, which I think is a great thing. We did win the achievement in marketing award in the Promotions and Diversity Awards in the UK Theatre Awards and The Everyman is the best building in the UK because did I say we won the Stirling Prize? That was quite exciting.

That's it isn't it? Job done, we have won awards, we have got a beautiful building, audiences are flocking through the doors, and we have got our feet up in marketing. Life's a breeze.

Sadly not quite yet. We have started a journey and we are not there yet. It is The Everyman. The building of it has allowed us to really make progress in a lot of the ways that we wanted to. In terms of marketing, we have been building on some of what we have learnt and some of our approaches and I thought it might be helpful just to talk through a few of those now before we finish.

Before I do that, I want to share this quote with you. Tassos Stevens is from Coney and I heard this at a conference in York a few years ago and it stayed with me. Actually, it helped inform a lot of what we were thinking around the opening of The Everyman.

“The experience of an event begins for its audience when they first hear about it and only finishes when they stop thinking about it”

Tassos Stevens

[@tassosstevens](https://twitter.com/tassosstevens) [@agencyofconey](https://twitter.com/agencyofconey)

Who can remember their first trip to the theatre, their first gallery experience? So many of them stay with you and I think as marketers we need to think about the whole journey that could potentially be.

One of the things we did after The Everyman opened was we sent postcards to everyone who had booked.



This was the final scene and the curtain call. We did a little dance and there was a glitter fall and it was really lovely. We just put, ‘Thank you for being there,’ on the front and on the back we didn’t put any real selling messages. We just thanked people for being part of something quite special and reminded them that we were The Everyman and The Playhouse and we wanted them to come back and celebrate with us and we wanted to welcome them. We wanted to remind them that we would be striving to please them every day and so we sent that and what was really lovely is that a lot of people tweeted it. They shared it on social networks and stuff because we get so used to

emails in our inboxes and Twitter and social and dah, dah, dah that it’s a real joy to tangibly receive something landing on your doorstep. Actually it’s a nice little memento, which is good. I think it is on several peoples’ fridges and freezers at various places. We also did that with some of the other campaigns in the season.



‘Have you been yet?’ was a campaign that was aimed at the local audience around the neighbourhood. We thought, have they actually been yet? We should tell them. We did some door drops and again we used audience insight to check out which postcodes we should go to, although we kind of know where we live anyway. We did a discount and we thought, ‘Let’s give them an incentive because they have not been before.’ We told them a bit about the show and we told them that the show was about the locality in which they lived and they could come and have a bite to eat while they were there, and that was quite successful.

This is Dead Dog in a Suitcase:



We did some postcards and this linked into a trailer and stuff. We felt that The Dead Dog was the opportunity to engage a Stimulation crowd - the people who want to be there because it sounds interesting.

How many of you work in theatres and work with co-producers? How difficult is it to negotiate changes if you are not the lead partner on something? It can be quite a challenge!

We were so excited that we were working with Kneehigh on Dead Dog in a Suitcase but everyone just kept going, 'Kneehigh, Kneehigh, it's a New Beggars Opera, hurrah, John Gay, hurrah.' It doesn't mean anything to most people and that's what a lot of the print was. We asked if we could change it a bit and just overlap that a little bit with a question or something to intrigue people. So we did this campaign 'Did you hear the one about the dead dog in a suitcase?' We did that and that was quite helpful and it went through other media as well as postcards.

We started doing it more recently with The Playhouse as well, in terms of using the Culture Segments to drive our social. That is great when you are looking at sponsored links because you can actually promote posts. We looked at Educating Rita. I know if you are doing Educating Rita in Liverpool it is going to sell out but you kind of have to do the work to get the audience there. Liverpool's very much an Expression city and there is a lot of them in the audience and there is a lot of potential in the audience. We thought we would just keep sharing stuff. We shared a banner going up and it wasn't that exciting but it got a ridiculous amount of reposts and reached an awful lot of people.

Again, we didn't just focus on social. We took the learning from Culture Segments and that kind of targeted messaging right through to some of the press and PR work that we do. Enrichment was another target audience for us with Educating Rita because it is a classic, it's Liverpool, it's Willy Russell. For Enrichment, who want that reassurance, we wanted to get that message out. It is really difficult to get The Sunday Times to come and review anything in Liverpool but that was pretty much the number one priority for our Press and PR Manager. Yes he had a lot of other things and he got Willy Russell on BBC Radio Four and that sort of thing, but we thought 'If we can just get The Sunday Times, that would be brilliant because that's the reassurance that they'll need, that this is the production that they need to see'. We used the Culture Segments across all our activities: our press, our social, our print and all the disciplines in marketing.

A few things I hope you can take away with you today are:

- Know your audience and potential audience; don't just focus on the people you know on your database.
- Think about what else is out there.
- Understand their motivations and try to walk in their shoes.
- Try to imagine what it might be to come to your theatre or your gallery for the first time.
- Think about the benefits not the features.
- Take time to plan, set your objectives and evaluate. We are only as good as the evaluation that we do.
- Try to join up your campaigns across disciplines. Sometimes we get caught up in, 'This is the press bit, this is the digital bit, this is the print design bit.' Actually, if you weave all those things together they can have much greater impact.
- Be personal and be creative. Our little postcards aren't that expensive but they are quite personal and audiences are really liking them.
- Remember the power of telling a good story.

Q&A

Q. Dawn James from Tricycle Theatre: When you say that you segmented your audience using that framework, did you send something out to your whole database to fill out or how did you get all that data together?

A: There's a set of questions that Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM) have but we were also interested in the perceptions around The Everyman and Playhouse so it is a bit more bespoke to us. It went out to all our database, in terms of emails, and I think we got over 2,000 respondents back so it was a good number to work with. Those have just gone back into the database. I know it is a couple of years after we did it but we have been a bit busy so we are going to be able to use more of that to drive campaigns. We are looking at doing another set of research to get some more people segmented as well.

Q. Nadia Newstead from Soho Theatre: If you were going to do it all again, what would you do differently?

A: There are some very practical things that I would have done differently. We were afforded

as part of the capital project to invest in a new ticketing system and we only put that in during August/September of 2013, which was crazy. We should have done that the year before because what we were doing was trying to get used to working with that at the same time as trying to plan and deliver all the other stuff. I think practically the timing of some of those decisions on big capital investment things happened a bit late.

We probably would have had some of the branding discussions earlier. They were still only happening in the June before we opened in the March. When we have reflected on it, a lot of it has been about timing of things because you don't know. Every capital project is different. I went and talked to quite a few other venues who had been through capital redevelopment or were going through it and I learnt quite a lot from that process but it doesn't tell you how to do it. It just tells you things to look out for.

Q. Flo Carr from the ADC Theatre in Cambridge: I was just wondering how the audience numbers were effected at The Playhouse when you reopened The Everyman?

A: We made some programming decisions so we hoped that they wouldn't drop off and they didn't really. We had a couple of tricky shows but then you always get that. We are just starting to re-evaluate. We have got a year and a bit's data now so we are starting to re-evaluate. Do the audience cross over? Have we still got a Playhouse Audience or a new Everyman audience? We are looking at that and also the relationship between the two theatres again.

Q. Rhiannon Davies from The Audience Agency: I really like what you did with the personal touches and things like the postcards and stuff. Do you continue to do that?

A: Yes, to some degree. We are doing that for Educating Rita and we have got a lot of new bookers. One of the reasons we wanted to do it was to put the spotlight back onto The Playhouse with a big Liverpool show that we knew would bring lots of people through the doors. We did the kind of 'Thanks for coming' postcard to them and gave them an offer to try and come back. We haven't done the numbers

on that yet but yeah, we are kind of trying to do that.

It kind of comes back to the manifesto and the humanity aspect of that and the personal thing of that and we try and do that as much as we can. I think in a digital age it is sometimes quite nice to have something quite tangible. That was very true of our Young Everyman Playhouse actually when we were consulting with them very early on in launching YEP. We were kind of expecting them to want us to do all this digital stuff. We were planning an event and we said we would create an invite and did they want to make a film or something. They went 'Can we have some tickets and maybe a postcard that we can give to people to invite them?' They wanted that thing.

Q: How did you spread the word about the parade, was it through the press only or online?

A: It was a combination. We had, because we used a lot of our community groups and YEP, a lot of family and friends who came up to support. We did go out to the local press and on the radio and that kind of thing and we used lots of channels to promote that as well. We put details of the opening weekend and said 'Check the website for details on that' because when we announced it in November we weren't quite sure of the timings for things. We were still talking to the council about the road closures and all that sort of stuff, so we had to keep adding information.

Q. Alice from the Natural History Museum: Now a whole year has gone by, how do you keep the momentum going and how do you carry on having those big engagements within the community?

A: That is what we are trying to do. There are a number of things that we do like YEP perform in the park and that is an opportunity to go 'Hey this is the young version of The Everyman and Playhouse'. It's a good way of doing something in the community. Our education programme and community programme do a lot of that kind of deep engagement, in terms of kind of each show is different.

What we have been trying to do when we are planning a season, again using Culture Segments, is to think about segments and

think about our target audience groups. Rather than going 'Here's all the shows we are doing, come and see them', we'll go 'These are the audiences that we are trying to reach' and there are three strands to communities as we define it. There's our doorstep community - that's the local neighbourhood - there's young adults in North Liverpool and then there's older audiences in North Liverpool as well. We use those strands and the segments in those core groups to plan the season. We use kind of a matrix type thing and we are trying to join stuff up for people. We'll think about Expression and these are the things for them, and these are the things for these communities. Our Community Manager will go and do some work around that or we'll do some press to maybe support that and we are still trying it. It's not perfect yet.

We are just having a reflect as a company at the moment because it has been a bit of a whirlwind and we have learnt a lot and we have pretty much not stopped. We haven't stopped properly and sat down as a company to re-evaluate what we are now. We have got two theatres, we have got YEP and a food and drink offer but this city's changing and how do we now evolve for the next thing.

Q. Allison Gold from The Albany: How did you manage working with sister venues with your team? How did you split your time with the Playhouse and with The Everyman, especially during the redevelopment?

A: We did a number of things; we have never had a separate Playhouse team or a separate Everyman team. All our technical, front of house and marketing staff work across both venues. There were a couple of things that we did to give us a bit of focus while we were shut. Our then Press and PR Manager wanted to reduce her time to care for her daughter so she took a few days off and we agreed we would just pay her salary out of capital project and she would just do capital work for a while. She pretty much just focused on that from a press and PR perspective and things like the portrait wall, which was a huge undertaking in terms of press.

The other thing we did was to change how our assistants work in the team. We have traditionally just had a box office. We had some full time, some part time and some

casual staff. They are all brilliant and they were all producing and we didn't have too many empty seats and so we didn't need too box office functions and we wanted to try and keep some of the staff team. A lot of them wanted to move into marketing or press and so we changed how they work. We created four full time assistant posts and they became pretty much three days a week sales time, so box office counter and phones, and two days communications time. There are four kind of areas so one's a press and PR person, one's an audience and insight person, one works on print and design, and one's audience development looking after YEP and things like that.

That allowed us to be quite agile in how we worked because, as I said before, you can't plan it. You kind of have to evolve with it. We could have had the project stopped if they found something when they were excavating the old Hope Hall. You just don't know and we didn't quite dream it would be as big as it has turned out to be. Creating that agile team really helped.

Q. Catherine Farrell from the National Railway Museum: You mentioned a £40,000 budget earlier on. With big things like a city centre parade, how easy was that to stick to?

A: The parade had a separate artistic budget but it was only about £12,000. When we shut The Everyman our Artistic Director was like 'We will just do a production of Macbeth and that will be fine and that will close The Everyman'. I went, 'No, no, we have got to do more' and they said 'Well in that case the money is coming out of your budget.' A lot of the cost of the closing had come out of the marketing campaign for the budget but we knew then we could plan for it.

How successful is your marketing?

The eight metrics of marketing success

Libby Penn, Spektrix

Katy Raines, Indigo

Katy Raines: Hello, welcome. I am sure you will agree with me that this has been an amazing and inspirational conference so far - staying curious, being curious and, if you are anything like me, you will be starting to think about tomorrow and getting back to the office and what you are going to do with all these amazing ideas that you have come up with.

We are going to talk about how monitoring just seven things can ensure the health of your marketing and how you can use data now and for the long term. We've called these 'Our seven metrics of marketing success.' Apologies for those of you who thought it was eight. Seven is a much better number but actually we are putting a challenge out to you to come up with the eighth one at the end because I am sure when you get to the end you'll go 'Oh they have missed this and they have missed that.' It will be really interesting to hear whether you think there is a really key metric that we have missed in terms of marketing health.

Apologies also if you are not from a ticketed organisation because really the basis of this is, as you will see in a minute, all about having good customer data. If you are not capturing customer data then it will be hard to measure these seven things. Hopefully if you are not measuring them, you are starting to think about it.

Libby Penn: So let me tell you a story about Widow Twanky here.



One of our clients was selling their pantomime. They sent out their marketing campaign to their previous panto attendees as they had done year on year. After all, of course they knew that their panto audience was incredibly loyal with friendly faces that they recognised every year coming through the foyer.

When panto wasn't selling quite so well, they thought they should do a little bit of investigating. They called us at Spektrix - we are their ticketing provider. They said that our customer list tool must be broken because it was showing that people who had booked for panto that year had never really booked with them before.

We looked into that data in a bit more detail. We found that across the past five years of data the panto audience had mainly been made up of first time attendees. The data showed that our client's gut instinct had been wrong and as a result, they had wasted all of that marketing spend targeting an audience who were unlikely to come again. That's not the first time it has happened, nor will it be the last.

We are going to talk about how we are going to move on from making gut instinct led decisions and become a little bit more objective. In doing so, hopefully we will make more informed choices. It will mean spending our time and our resource much more effectively. Like our client and his assumptions about pantomime, without data you are just another person with an opinion.

Katy Raines: Before I was a consultant, I spent many years working in regional medium and large scale theatres as a Marketing Manager and later as a Marketing Director. I had come from a non-marketing and non-theatre background into that environment and started to ask loads of questions about the audience. When I talked to my colleagues,

it seemed like I was just supposed to know the answers to these questions. As well as feeling a bit silly, I was also quite intrigued as to how my colleagues who were sat there in planning meetings with me just seemed to be able to make decisions on things without any reference to any data or anything. At that point, I was just a bit jealous because I thought they had got this amazing gift that I hadn't got. Without years of experience to draw upon I was kind of in at the deep end.

I started looking for the answers for what I thought were fairly basic questions about my audience. Who were they? How often did they come? Where did they come from? How loyal were they? With the money that I was spending on the marketing activity, was it working? Was it actually having an effect? Was it driving loyalty? Was it bringing in more money to the organisation?

In those days a lot of this information was quite difficult to obtain. Box office systems were very slow and it was hard to get the information out of the systems. Either I had to go on special SQL training courses, which I wasn't very good at, or more likely I had to bribe a nerdy friend with pizza to come and sit with me in the office overnight and do the coding and get the things out. If I wanted to know how many customers there were just on my database, I would have to do this bit of SQL stuff and then leave a report running overnight while it churned through and counted up all the things. I would finish at work and get it running and then I would have to stick post it notes all over the computer to make sure the cleaner didn't switch it off. If I was lucky, the next morning I would come in and there would be a number flashing. I would go 'Yes' and I would write it down. Then I would know how many people I have got on my database and move onto the next question. More often than not it didn't work because the cleaner bumped it or there was a power cut or something. It might take me three nights to get that.

You get the picture. It wasn't easy but get the answers I did, one way or another. I started to use that information to drive the decisions that we made in the marketing team. At this point, I had no idea whether this was the right thing to do or not because this wasn't what my mates were doing. They just had this gift. I didn't admit this was what I was up to but funnily

enough we started to see audiences and sales improve by quite a lot. I started to have some confidence in my ability and that this kind of data driven approach might work.

When I got a bit more experience under my belt, I became the Marketing Director of the Theatre Royal in Newcastle in the late 1990s. At that point the theatre had just been put into special measures by the City Council and was threatened with closure unless we could turn it around in three years. Three years later we were regularly the top selling venue on a national tour. I believe they still are and I believe that this success was down to our understanding of customer behaviour and the use of customer data to drive marketing decisions.

Libby Penn: Enter gratuitous Brad Pitt slide.



So how many people here have seen the film 'Money Ball'?

I love this quote:

'It is unbelievable how much you don't know about the game you've been playing your whole life.'

As Katy was saying, that data started to reveal things about trends in her audience that she hadn't known before. For those that haven't seen Money Ball, it is an American film that tells us the true story of a baseball team who have had their funding cut - a scenario I think many people in this room are familiar with. As a result they were losing their best players and they were at the bottom of the baseball league. Enter Brad Pitt. His character was hired to win a major league but his budget was actually smaller than that of a minor league team. He decided he needed a new approach to make use of the limited money and resource that

he had. He turned to data and by analysing historic player data he decided which players to buy and by analysing his competitors' play by play data he decided which approach to take to the game. The outcome of course was that the team won a major league on a shoestring budget. Personally I think we all need to watch Money Ball and I think we all need to turn to data to inform our decisions and help us do a bit better.

Katy Raines: Well if it can work for Brad Pitt that'll do for me. If we are going to do better we do need to follow suit. Hopefully nobody here is making decisions purely on gut instinct but I certainly know of people within organisations who might be influencing you to do things the way they have always been done in the past. Our seven metrics are going to help you make those data driven decisions.

Libby Penn: We don't just think it is about finding those measures for your organisation. I think you need to set a benchmark internally as a point of reference to see how your organisation is doing year on year. You also need to be using benchmark data to look at the industry and to see how you are performing compared to the wider sector. This is where Spektrix come in.

We are fortunate enough to have over 200 clients in the UK. They represent well over 10 million transactions and over 1 billion website hits. Working with Katy, we thought we would take a look at that data and see what it could tell us about the performance of the sector. We wanted to start asking the question to see if it would help our clients to be a bit more objective and to do a bit better with the resources that they have.

Katy Raines: We have an advantage that we didn't have when I was working in a venue. For a start we have got box office systems that can give you the answer in a few seconds rather than overnight. I didn't have any idea - even though I could measure my own audience data - how that compared with other venues.

If you are going to get the best out of this, the ideal is to look at the benchmarks for each of the seven metrics that we are going to show you in a minute. Then look at your own performance and your own data and compare the two. I promise you that if you do that and

communicate what you find widely across the organisation and start thinking about that in your everyday marketing that strange things will start to happen - hopefully in a good way.

Which seven things are we going to choose to measure?

It is different now than it was twenty years ago. I was desperate for any data. Frankly you could tell me anything and I would have found a way of using it but now we are awash with data. It is not difficult to find out all kinds of things but what is difficult now is to know what is important.

Many of you will have seen a cycle like this before.

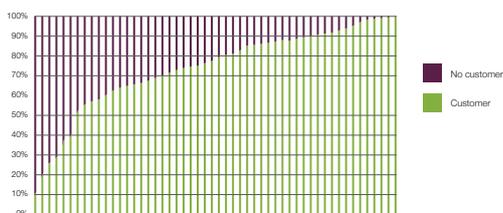


It is a classic customer relationship management cycle (CRM). The idea is that we move a customer from being aware of our product or our theatre, moving around into purchasing or attending. Then hopefully re-attending many times or becoming a member or a donor or an advocate for the organisation. Now all of your marketing activity - and arguably your social media and communications activity - will all map onto this cycle somewhere. We decided to find seven measures that also mapped onto this cycle so that you could be measuring the whole journey and not just a bit of it.

Libby Penn: We start in awareness. First and foremost we need to start thinking about getting the foundations right and the foundations fundamentally come from our data and from the customer. We need to know who they are, where they come from, what they have come to see and how often they come. It is not possible to answer these questions unless you are capturing the details from the customer when they purchase or attend.

Otherwise, like in the panto example that I talked about in the beginning, you are simply making it up as you go along.

Our first metric looks at the number of transactions that are capturing customer data. When we looked at the figures they were a little surprising and not necessarily in a good way. We are not capturing data for one in four of our walk up customers. I think that is kind of bad. That is a quarter of people that are coming along that we know nothing about and that we can't talk to. I understand that it can be hard. Incomings mean that you need to get people through the doors really quickly. Equally, I find it hard to believe that a quarter of your walk-ups are coming five minutes before curtains up. These people have expressed an interest in our programme, they have paid us money to come and see our shows and yet we have no idea who they are. Therefore we have no ability to market to them.



This graph here shows us that aggregate data but on an individual organisation basis. It has been anonymised but what it shows is a huge gap, a huge range of people capturing that data. In the top right corner, you can see that one of our clients is capturing about 99% of their customers' data, but in the bottom left corner one of our clients is doing so poorly that they are only capturing one in ten bookings with customer data. How can that be? Surely if it is possible for one organisation to achieve nearly 100% data capture then it is possible for all of us. I think all organisations need to be thinking about this data capture and they need to be finding a way to achieve these kind of statistics.

Katy Raines: The Prince's Hall Aldershot prioritise data capture working from the ground up. One of the most important things that they do is pull a report every week to look at all the data that has been added onto the system in the last week. They review their data every week and they identify any duplicates. They check all the data has been captured effectively and flag any incomplete records

with the Box Office because then hopefully when that customer comes in again they can complete the information with them.

Secondly, and I think this is the most important thing you need to be thinking about in data capture, they align the box office and marketing team around the importance and the key use of data. The box office staff are acutely aware of what the data is used for. We all ask our box offices, if we have box offices, to capture that data. How many of us actually sit down and explain how important it is, what happens to the data and how much it is worth?

I did an exercise with one organisation where we worked out for every customer that they didn't capture it was costing that organisation £100. That really galvanised the box office. It's also an opportunity for the box office to explain the data policy but also perhaps a bit about the organisation's mission. They explain what they are going to do with that data and how they are going to respect that person's privacy so it is an opportunity as well.

This is one of my favourites that Prince's Hall do. They say 'quick sales are a cardinal sin'. At the box office the staff know that they will have to account for themselves if they don't take a person's details. I haven't met the person that polices this but I am envisioning somebody with a big stick. Then finally they actually reward the customers for the data. When people book for a cinema screening they give them a £1 discount on the ticket price in exchange for adding themselves on the database. I am sure those of you who promote film will be saying, 'we can't do data capture because it's all five minutes before the film starts walk up stuff'. This is a great example of how an organisation turned what would typically be a quick sales scenario into an opportunity to encourage customers to give their data.

Libby Penn: With data collection the sooner the better is always the best answer - I can't emphasise that enough. If this is the foundation of your business, you simply can't build a house without foundations. If there is one thing that you do when you go back to your office tomorrow, run a report and see how many of your customer records have got good data associated with them and then start to build a strategy to plug that gap.

We are going to move onto our second metric, which is related to data capture but it's very important in its own right. That is permission to contact - that data protection opt in that allows you to communicate with your customers directly. While data capture is the foundation to understanding who your customer is, contact details are of limited use if you then don't have permission to talk to that person. Effectively no permission to contact means no relationship. We all know very well that it is not just a polite nicety; it is the law.

Our second metric looks at what percentage of our customers, that we sweated blood and tears to get into our venue, we can actually communicate with after they have been. I hate to be the voice of doom and gloom but the figures are not as strong as they should be. Four in ten of our customers simply don't want to hear from us. I find that really hard to understand that four out of ten people that pass through our doors simply aren't interested in hearing about our productions.

What can we do about it?

We looked at that individual venue data once again and there are some glimmers of hope. Some organisations are managing over 90% opt in rate, which is phenomenal, and yet once again we see at the bottom end of the spectrum that some people are only capturing information for one in five customers. What are the things that make the difference between those venues that have a 20% opt in and those that have a 90% opt in?

Katy Raines: Hull Truck were in a similar situation. I did a piece of work with them where we identified that of all the bookers on their database we only actually had permission to contact 50%. That isn't bad compared to the benchmark but it still means they cannot contact half of their customers. These were people who had actually booked and been. Email was a particular problem because only around a third of the bookers had opted in to receive email.

They decided to do something about it. Over the Christmas run of Cinderella they took over 1,000 telephone and counter bookings and 68% of those had previously had no email or no permission to contact. They worked with the box office and explained why capturing

data was important. I will show you some of the things they did in a minute but as a result of that they managed to get over half of those back with permission.

The first thing they did, as we said with Prince's Hall, was they spent time with the Box Office explaining the importance of customer data and what it was used for. I sat in a session with them where they did role play with the box office on how they were going to talk to a customer when they said 'I don't want to give you my data. I don't trust it' and all that kind of stuff. It was a bit weird and we had a bit of a laugh doing it but it helped.

They also tested the opt in question. How many of you have actually tested different versions of the online opt in question to see which one gets a better response? They did two different versions for a month at a time. The first one was 'Please tick to receive email and postal information from Hull Truck Theatre.' The second one was 'I would like to receive email and postal information from Hull Truck Theatre so I don't miss out on the latest activities and events, but I don't want to be bombarded.' I thought the second option would work better but it was actually the first. What's going on there? That just goes to show how wrong we can be if we go with gut instinct. I can't explain it, I don't know why, but the data confirms it. It might be the simplicity of it or the length of it. Word of warning here, don't just copy that and go and put it on your website please. You need to test it, because it will be different for your organisation and your audience.

They measured it every month and put a little chart on the box office walls saying 'How are we doing this month on data permissions?' The box office staff really liked that. They liked the chart and they liked the graph - they were probably nerdy like me. Then they rewarded the person who got the most number of opt-ins an extra day's holiday.

They also realised people need to trust you. If they are going to give you permission to contact them, they need to trust you with that data and so they developed a really simple but reassuring data policy that was easy to communicate to the box office and through the box office to the customer. It gave the customer the reassurances that they needed.

I have got a really nice example of this from The MAC in Belfast. They call it their data promise:



They make five clear statements:

1. You'll exclusively hear about shows, exhibitions, offers, jobs at the MAC and other news
2. We won't email you more than twice a month
3. You'll receive our season brochure in the post twice a year, at most
4. We'll ONLY send you information that we think is relevant to you & your interests
5. We'll always protect your personal information and never pass on data to a third party

They have put a data policy on the wall in the box office so that when somebody comes in and they are booking their tickets they can say to them 'would you just like to have a read of that and see if you are happy with that'. That saves the box office having to read out, 'Are you happy for blah, blah, blah', which they hate doing. The customer can just have a read of that and then if the person says 'No' they can then have a conversation with them at that point. Both of those organisations have seen their data permissions increase as a result of doing that.

Libby Penn: When we share our data with a business, it should be transparent and secure. We have all been on the end of spam emails, often from companies who we may suspect have got our data from a third party. As a result I know that I am cautious about opting into a company who I am transacting with. There are tools out there like unroll.me that are designed to get you unsubscribed from emails now. People just don't want to share that data for fear of spam in the inbox and I think the only solution has to be about us being better about communicating with our customers what we

are using their data for as we have seen with The MAC and with Hull.

Katy Raines: Before we get onto the third metric of email, I am going to tell you another little story of the olden days. When I started in arts marketing there was no email. I am that old. We had to print off and post letters to people, which cost a lot of money and our marketing budgets were small - nothing has changed there then. We could only afford to mail a few people about each production and that meant we had to be very selective about who to mail so we picked the best bets. There was no point us mailing people who weren't likely to buy a ticket because that was money wasted and we got pretty good at selecting the right people and then measuring the people that actually booked and learning from what worked and learning from what didn't. We could always improve our hit rate and again we would keep a note of what our hit rate was so that we were trying to up it all the time.

Then email arrived and it is so cheap to email so we might as well email everyone about everything all the time. We thought isn't it better that everyone receives the maximum amount of information about everything we do. As you know, most people don't open or read them so we had just better do it pretty regularly to make sure one of them gets read. Is that right?

Libby Penn: Well the average email opening rates for the sector are pretty poor. Only three out of ten across the industry are actually getting opened and so the majority of our messages aren't getting heard. I don't know about you but if I get emails so regularly that I don't open them then eventually I will either use unroll.me to unsubscribe me or if I have got the time, I will open it and unsubscribe myself. The more we send emails to people that aren't relevant to them, the more they will see us as irrelevant to them and they are not going to want to hear from us.

There is a slight glimmer of hope when we look at those individual venues. Some of our best clients are getting a 55% open rate. Personally, and I won't get into my rant on this one, I think we should be aiming for 100% open rate. Technology is such nowadays that you can be so targeted by time of day, by interests and by previous interactions with communications from

you that really even 55% isn't good enough. Is the answer sending out more and more untargeted emails so that we achieve the reach that we need to or is it sending fewer emails but becoming a little bit more relevant?

Katy Raines: Tobacco Factory Theatres in Bristol knew their email open rate was about 30% and they were not happy with that. They were not happy to accept that was the norm and they wanted to increase their open rates and decided to test so they used A B testing. I am sure many of you have used A B testing but it is nice sometimes to have the results quantified.

They had two different emails: Version A with lots of copy and Version B, which was stripped down and image led. They sent them to a small proportion of the list they were planning to mail to see which one worked better. B was twice as effective. Quantifying that is really useful so that when you get into those meetings and someone says 'I think they just need more information about that, and I just want to tell them everything about the production' you can say 'let's test it and see who's right.' Now they do all their email with A B testing and they are trying to increase that hit rate all the time.

Libby Penn: David Ogilvy set up the world's largest advertising agency so I think he knows his stuff. His quote 'Never stop testing and your advertising will never stop improving' is something I think we should all be learning from. Testing is a tried and proven approach for advertising for a reason. Let's take the learnings from a sector that has dedicated itself to maximising engagement and apply them to our own daily lives in our own venues.

We are moving out of awareness and into purchase. What is useful to measure here is basket size and the items and value size that you have when the customer checks out with you. It is a common concept in retail but not one that we always think about in the arts. If you think about it, it represents a key opportunity to get the customer to maybe double or maybe even triple their spend with you because you have got them right in front of you or at that point in your website.

Our fourth metric is 'What percentage of transactions are happening with just one thing, and that might be one event in the basket?'

Our aggregate data showed that 90% of people who are booking only have one thing in their basket. Surely this is a missed opportunity. We should be thinking about how we sell them just one more thing. That might be an upsell to a champagne package or ideally cross selling another show and, in doing so, dramatically increasing your frequency.

Katy Raines: One way of doing it is cross selling. That is the idea of selling somebody another event as well as the one they have selected, perhaps by recommending something else. We are all familiar with the Amazon, 'You might like this.' I am sure many of you have got that already on your websites but it clearly isn't translating into increases in basket size for some reason.

Derby Live tried to crack this and got really good results with their Life Saver deal. What is good about it is it kicks in at just two events. You are not asking somebody who has only ever been once to suddenly make a leap into five or six productions. The discounts kick in at two events and the more you book the more you save. It is also done across a wide range of shows and so there is a really good choice and there is no need not to do it. It is done consistently from season to season. It is something that customers become familiar with and they keep seeing and so customers might not do it this season but they might the next. I think that consistency is one of the reasons that this is so successful.

A lot of people package stuff up because they have got a lot of drama to sell - 'Oh let's do a drama package because we have got too much drama' - and then the next season there is nothing there and this gets people into the habit of looking for that.

The second way to increase basket size is obviously upselling - trying to sell additional products to enhance the experience that somebody is going to have. This is typically things like merchandising or catering. This is a really familiar concept in retail. I would like to know if any of you have been to W H Smith's recently and not been offered a cheap copy of The Telegraph or a massive bar of chocolate for about 20p. It is something that isn't used as much as it could be in the arts sector.

Battersea Arts Centre did something interesting

here. They wanted to increase their income from secondary sources such as food and looked particularly at the online purchase path to see if they could do anything with that. They focused on the moment at which somebody has got something in their basket and upselling people with one particular thing. It's exclusive and only available when you book in advance online so there is a real incentive for people to do it.

In January, before they started this approach, there was £390 in food orders online. In February it had gone up to over £1,000 just by doing that one thing in the purchase path. I think the key is obviously getting people at the right time but keeping people really quite focused and not offering so much choice that they are overwhelmed.

Libby Penn: Geoff Eisenburg made a good point when he said 'It is much easier to double your business by doubling your conversion rate than by doubling your traffic.' We all need to think a lot smarter about how we approach revenue and basket size. Of course we need to choose carefully what metrics we are measuring but there needs to be a strong focus on maximising income from the existing customers rather than constantly having to try and find new ones.

Katy Raines: Metric number five is response rate. Hopefully this is something that many of you are using, but how often do you tick things off your to do list and breathe a huge sigh of relief. Another email designed, another brochure sent: it is all about getting through the activity that we have got to get out there. How much time do you spend seeing which of those things has actually worked?

Not everything is easy or possible to measure, but some things really are so let's at least be measuring those. For example, of the 30,000 people that you sent the email to last week - hopefully segmented and targeted rather than mass emails - how many of them booked as a result? How many of the people you send your season brochure mailing to have actually booked a ticket?

If you know this information then you know where to spend more or less of your marketing money and you can stop wasting it. You know which of these customers are responding

to that method of communication and which customers are worth targeting and maybe which ones aren't and need another form of communication.

This is exactly what Clwyd Theatre Cymru did with their mailings. They segmented the people they sent mailings to by frequency. They pulled off the people that were regulars, people that were irregulars, people that only came once a year, people that had come for the first time within the last twelve months, and then people that were on their mailing list that hadn't booked a ticket or certainly hadn't booked a ticket in the last three years. They mailed those people in those segments, measured the response rate and compared it.

Segment		% response
Regulars	4 times+ per year	31%
Irregulars	2-3 times per year	11%
Once onlines	once only per year	1%
First timers	first time in last 12 months	1%
Mailing list only	not booked in last 3 years	<1%

It is not very surprising that the regulars outperform everyone else with a 31% response rate. What's interesting is that half of the money that they were spending was in the bottom half of this table. Once only attendees, first timers and mailing list only segments were where half the money was going and yet it was the 1% or less response rate. It really wasn't worth mailing those people at the bottom. so they decided to stop sending those people the season brochure. It saved them £30,000 a year but we didn't like to talk about it as savings because those people still need communicating with. We can't just ignore them from talking to them all of the time. That would only compound the problem so they gave themselves that £30,000 as a research and development budget to test different ways of engaging those other segments. They weren't getting a return on that money before so there was nothing to lose.

The Lowry used a slightly different method but also used response rates as their measure and compared different segments. In their research they used Indigo's 'Total Response Model', which looks at segmenting people by the type of work that people come to - not genres but type of work. They have mainstream bookers who book for popular

work like musicals, comedy and that type of thing. They have classical bookers who attend opera and ballet. They also have contemporary bookers who attend things like new writing and contemporary dance. They tested sending the same content to all segments against sending highly personalised targeted content to the individual segments. The purchase rate was three times higher for the personalised option. There was less information in those but it was more relevant.

I know some artistic directors have problems with this: 'I want everybody to see everything, it is really important they know the breadth of our work.' Okay so they know the breadth of your work and you got a 4% response rate. That's not bad but these people who received highly personalised content had a much higher response rate. The Lowry are still working on these to improve them but they have already achieved a 20% response rate.

The really interesting thing about this test was the growth difference was higher in the contemporary and classical segments. I think the reason for this is that in The Lowry's programme the majority of it is mainstream stuff. The contemporary and classical stuff, if you are putting everything in together, is hidden to those people so they see less of what they like. By pulling it out and just sending that it had a much higher response rate.

The response rate technique is really useful because you can compare the same thing across different segments.

Libby Penn: Knowing who your customers are is great but knowing how they behave is even better. If we can understand how our customers behave and how they react to different content and how this triggers their purchase behaviour then surely we can deliver higher performance marketing campaigns and drive up that much needed return on investment.

Katy Raines: Finally onto the loyalty bit of the cycle. We will start with frequency. How many people in this room know what percentage of their audience comes just once a year? If you don't know, let's have a guess. Do you think it is a quarter, half or three quarters? Who thinks it's a quarter? Who thinks it's half? Who thinks it's three quarters? Let's see what it really is.

Libby Penn: Three quarters - some of you were right. That is a shocking statistic. Are your audience really having such a poor experience that they are only coming once?

Katy Raines: Yet for the average sized organisation in our data set, getting those people who come once or getting 10% of those people who just come once to come just once more would equate to approximately £150,000 in additional income. Getting just 10% of them to come once more - surely that's achievable?

The New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich set themselves the goal of getting their once only attenders to attend at least once more. They identified people specifically that booked one show and sent them an email asking them to book just one more. Again, many of you have probably tried this. In my experience, a lot of people pull off the first time attenders and say 'They came to this show, let's just tell them about this show and give them an offer for this show and see if we can get them to come.' I think one of the reasons this worked so well for New Wolsey is that they offered them a range of shows with a discount on.

It wouldn't be a Katy Raines presentation, for those of you who have heard me before, without mentioning the morning after mailing. This is the idea of mailing or emailing somebody so that it lands the day after they have been to see something to try to get them to come and see something else.

When I worked with Jo at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle, we found if we didn't get those first time attenders back within the first six months, we would really struggle. You have to get them when they are still in that warm glow of having been.

The New Wolsey sent this email campaign out to target those people who had only booked one thing and asked those people to book just one more thing. They gave them a good range of shows and offered them a time limited incentive so there was an imperative reason to respond quickly.

Libby Penn: We all want our customers to be satisfied but loyalty is what we are after - people who come back time and time again and people who advocate for us. Loyalty doesn't just happen. You have to work at it and as we saw with the New Wolsey some

of that comes simply from asking and a bit of incentivising and then hopefully your customers will come back again and again.

We are moving to the final metric now, which is retention. This is the one that I am always surprised that hardly anyone measures. It is one of the most important measures of customer loyalty that I think you can look at. Retention is the percentage of your customers from last year that have returned this year. The benchmark is 31%. Less than one third of your audiences are coming back year on year. We are losing more than two thirds of our audience from 2014 to 2015.

When you are planning your next marketing campaign, think about this retention figure. If you do nothing about retention then fundamentally your marketing is having to be focused on capturing new audiences. We all know that it is more expensive to go out and find new customers than it is to try and retain existing ones.

Katy Raines: Retention is slightly different to frequency. Somebody could only come once a year but they have been to your panto every year for twenty years. That is actually quite a big lifetime value, isn't it? It is important to look at both.

I actually think that retention is the most powerful indicator of the health of your organisation's marketing. It measures your ability to keep customers from one year to the next and I actually think it is an indicator of everything else you are doing in marketing being done right. It is not a metric like the others where you can go 'Well there's the quick fix for that one.' This is the holistic one but actually I think increasing it by just 5% can actually make a massive difference to your income.

Theatre Royal, Newcastle has a retention rate of almost 50% compared to the 31% benchmark so they are doing really well compared to the average. How are they doing this? Well they are doing lots of things right. I am going to share some of the things that they are doing and you are all probably doing some of these but it is just a reminder of what it is about. It is hard work; it is about doing all of them and monitoring all of them.

They do triggered emails after the show - that morning after warm glow thing - asking people to engage on social media and recommending three similar shows that are coming up in the next twelve months. They do it in a soft way. They do my lovely first timer emails and letters with an incentive to re-attend quickly. They work closely with the front of house team to ensure they are as welcoming as possible and that has resulted in them being shortlisted for the TMA's most welcoming theatre award. They also work with box office staff, not only on data capture but to ensure that all the staff can talk about the productions. There is a real commitment there to making sure as many of the box office staff have seen as many of the productions as possible so they can talk about them from their own experience and in their own words. They have things like celebration packages and special ticket meal deals, which are really good at engaging those lower frequency bookers.

Finally, they don't over communicate with people. They are really careful about monitoring how much they send to people because they know that if you send people stuff too often that isn't relevant to them then they will just switch off and unsubscribe.

Libby Penn: Walt Disney got a few things right; it is one of the biggest brands in the world and I think a lot of that has come from his focus on loyalty and retention.

'Do what you do so well, and they will want to see it again.'

As Katy says, it is about making sure that everyone in your organisation is committed to giving your customers the best possible experience. That is across marketing, fundraising, box office and front of house. Even the cleaners should be evangelising your organisation and really giving the customers the best possible experience. I think it is a key ingredient for making sure your customers come back year on year and that lifetime value is more than just that forty pound booking.

Katy Raines: I went to stay in a hotel in the Lake District years ago and the hotel manager personally took us up to our room and said, 'While you are here for the next two days, it is my mission and my staff's mission to make sure that you come back again.' I really like

that because it was almost their single key performance indicator. Everything they did over those two days was concentrating on making sure that we came back again and we did.

There you have it, those are our seven metrics. I hope you thought of an eighth, which we'll be asking you for in a minute. I do honestly assure you that if you regularly monitor these things and you track them and you share them with your team and think about them, you will start to see and make changes that will make a difference. Basically, in conclusion, we are encouraging you to use your data to measure what matters, to inform your gut instinct and to ultimately make smarter decisions.

Q&A

Q. Jess from Birmingham Repertory Theatre: We've been talking recently about how to group our emails together. There were quite a lot of opinions going around that we couldn't just say mainstream, classical and contemporary and there were far too many different types of theatre that we have to offer. How do you go about grouping them? How many groups are too many groups? How many are too few? How do you present that?

A. Katy Raines: I think it really all depends on the capacity of what you can do. In an ideal world you would send every single person a different communication based on what you know about them but have you got the resource to do that? Certainly in The Lowry's case they have found broad groupings have been really helpful to them because they have also seen crossovers into genres within them. Within the classical bubble there are actually people who will crossover between classical drama and classical music that won't necessarily go to new writing, which is also drama.

It depends on how much product you have got. If you have only got ten shows a year then maybe you can be really very targeted on some quite detailed segmentation but if you have got 600 shows a year then you can't do that. It is a tricky one. My personal opinion is start off simple and test it and learn from it and then as you become able to deliver more then you can start to become more complicated. Start as you mean to go on. If you are testing

everything then you will soon know what is working and what isn't.

Q. Jess: Can I ask a secondary question as well about how to appease producers who want soulless emails for their shows to go out? How do you justify to them why we are going to include it with a few other shows at the same time?

A. Libby Penn: I think the proof there is in the pudding. It is about open rates. If you have got stats for a producer's soulless email that you have had before where the open rate and click through rate are lower then show them: 'here is one that didn't have much stuff in it and here is one that had multiple shows in it'. Prove to them that actually it is more valuable to actually present people with more content.

A. Katy Raines: I think it is difficult though because typically they don't care about what else you have got going on. They don't really care if they annoy your audiences, so long as they get what they need. Has anybody else got experience of that particular issue? I am sure loads of heads are nodding at this one. Has anybody cracked it?

A. Anonymous: They can't argue with the data. You show them the open rate is so low it is not worth us doing it. It is not worth me spending a half day doing it whereas it is worth me spending my half day doing this at this click through rate. How can they argue with that?

A. Katy Raines: I suppose the danger is if you do an A B Test, what happens if their show does actually outperform the other one? If you have got a strict policy that you only send out two emails a month and you've emailed customers about that one show then you then cut off opportunities. It is a really hard one to get right.

A. Anonymous: I was just going to add that communicating to producers is a two way street. If you send out a campaign that is primarily their show and then some other similar content that will attract similar audiences then they may benefit. It's not just about taking away from their dedicated campaign, it is adding to their campaign or bringing an audience to a show as well.

A. Katy Raines: Yes that is a good point and

I think the unsubscribe rate is quite a good statistic as well. If last time you sent an email for that producer you got a higher than normal unsubscribe rate from customers then it is quite a useful thing to tell them because once somebody has actually unsubscribed you can't email them about anything anymore.

Q. Libby Penn: Does anybody have any ideas for the eighth measure of success?

A. Eleanor from The Royal Exchange in Manchester: Probably just looking at the loyalty, the retention, and tracking through to final engagement. Wouldn't that be the end goal - people who are actively engaging with you artistically? We are able to attach lots of little notes onto our accounts so that we can effectively track people from their first data capture right through until maybe they become part of our young company and they are awarded some sort of fellowship scheme, or somebody becomes a patron.

A. Katy Raines: That is really interesting. I think you would have to define what you actually mean by engagement: it could be a member, it could be somebody donating, it could be a subscriber. That would be really nice, to have a target of what percentage of our audience is engaging with us in another way other than just coming to a performance.

Q. Vic from Sound and Music: We are the national organisation for music for the whole of the country. We are not a venue and we don't have a box office. We support composers, musicians and artists and we are looking to move towards an open data policy because the data that we do have isn't ours; it is our composers and they deserve to have that data. I have worked at ticketed organisations and venues and I would be really interested to know what your thoughts are about how that industry will start to share their data with the rest of the sector? Obviously the more you have, the more you learn and everyone will benefit. I know that it is a long way off but I wondered what your thoughts were on that?

A. Katy Raines: Hopefully it is not a long way off. My thoughts on it are that there are huge benefits to us sharing data with each other and with the performing companies that come to our venues. I think we use the language we use around it sloppily because I think

sometimes what we mean is analytical data - a picture of the customers - and I don't see any reason why we can't be sharing that now, and then. When some people talk about data, they mean names and addresses and email addresses and they mean contact information and ticket purchasing information and I think that's the bit that is highly regulated by law. I don't see any reason why we couldn't and shouldn't be sharing the analytical data with each other because we can all benefit from that but I think the personal data is a lot more problematic and there is lots of work being done on that.

I think the only thing I would say as an observation on that, following the Hull Truck example, is that if we make it too complicated for people to sign up then they won't. When we are having this debate and discussion on handing over personal contact data, I think we need to be grown up about it and say 'Well actually if we make that too wordy and complicated to tick all the legal boxes and then pass it over, are we actually shooting ourselves in the foot by not getting the data permission from the customer?' I think there needs to be some discussion around that.

A. Libby Penn: I also think it is about finding some standardised ways in which to share data. From what I hear from our clients and from touring companies I speak to, I think everyone is after slightly different data in a slightly different way and everyone is over stretched within their organisations. We need to collaborate and put all parties together and have a standard toolkit that makes it easier to share a shared audience.

