



# Focus on Community

## Case Study

How Farnham Maltings put the community at the heart of everything they do from fundraising campaigns to building an organisational mission.



farnham **maltings**



# Introduction

## Focus on Community

Farnham Maltings is one of the leading arts centres and theatres in the southeast of England. Based in South West Surrey with a regional, national and international reach, Farnham is a diverse organisation with a varied programme including live theatre, comedy, workshops, festivals, market days and much more.

What sets Farnham apart is their clear mission - which is central to the organisation's strategy, planning and thinking.

The Farnham Maltings mission:

*“we are committed to improving the quality of people’s lives across all the communities we work with”*

This simple but effective way of working gives Farnham a clear “why” for every action, plan or programming they commit to and helps them create a set of spaces where everyone is welcome. Each year over 400,000 patrons visit Farnham from diverse backgrounds, a range of ages, etc. as participants in workshops (learning new skills), as audience members (for theatre, film, dance) or as exhibitors in one of their craft festivals.

With the arrival of the pandemic Farnham needed to rethink their ideas of community engagement. How could they keep to their core mission with a global pandemic sweeping across the UK and the world? What could they do to strengthen their commitment to their community who may be struggling?

This case study will take you through how Farnham Maltings successfully built upon their mission of improving the quality of people's lives - and what were the outcomes. .

# Response to the Pandemic

## What did Farnham do when the pandemic first hit

With the pandemic - came of course lockdown, shut downs and the inevitable fear. The team at Farnham knew they needed to focus on their mission - even with the pandemic ranging.

*“we are committed to improving the quality of people’s lives across all the communities we work with”*

A logical question would be - well why? This is where Farnhams’ dedication to their mission and their deeper understanding of their community as a whole came into play. They knew there were many vulnerable and isolated people within the local community. Farnham being a hub for the community understood that they needed to keep to their mission and do what they could to help make people's lives better.

They understood that they as an organisation could extend their mission beyond arts and culture and be a true leader in the community.

### Lending A Hand in The Community

So, with a focus on the mission and a clear plan the team focused on helping the local community and in particular the vulnerable parts of the community during the pandemic. This meant, pivoting from arts and culture and workshops to offering services such as:

- Shopping and delivery for the elderly
- Setting up a share shop where people could share items with each other
- Delivery service for prescription medicine for those who could not go out

The first challenge for the team was size. The team at Farnham is small, but their goal was big. The team was able to very quickly engage the help of over 500 volunteers. Engagement of this size and speed speaks volumes of the work Farnham Maltings has been doing with the community over the years - and shows how eager people are to help.



## Creating Financial Supports

Early on in the pandemic Farnham teamed up with the local town council to create The Coronavirus Support Fund, which is still ongoing. In just two days, the fund raised £50,000 to help vulnerable people in the community. To access the fund, people from the community can apply, indicating a need whether big or small. For example, you can apply for a new fridge or even children's clothing. Each Friday, the fund team meets to approve applications, after which Farnham purchases and delivers the items to families within the community. To date, over 200 awards have been granted (up to a maximum of £300 each) to help purchase everything from cookers and school uniforms to washing machines and essentials. for families in need.

The Coronavirus Support Fund shifted Farnham's own perception - who they are and what they do in the town. This shift was critical in their understanding of their role - and value within the community. As a result of their good works within the community at such a critical time, the town itself also realised the importance of Farnham Maltings at the heart of their community and that core of what they can do and do for the area extends beyond just that of an arts centre.





# How Farnham Mitigated the Financial Burden

**The goal of Farnham Maltings community covid response was never about what they could get in return. They implemented these pivots because of they believed in their mission:**

*“we are committed to improving the quality of people’s lives across all the communities we work with”.*

There was no way Farnham would leave their community right when they needed help the most - and especially when they were in a position to help.

That doesn't mean that Farnham didn't find itself in a precarious financial situation. As with the rest of the sector, the closures were dire not just from the perspective of morale but also from a revenue perspective.

Farnham took advantage of every relief available to them to ease the deepening financial burden, using tools such the furlough scheme, accessing financial aid through the Culture Recovery Fund and unfortunately instituting staff pay cuts.

Running the numbers, they could see that even though they spent less and earned less and that they would be able hit breakeven after year - it still meant some valuable programmes and supports would disappear due to lack of funds.

All along, as the pandemic continued, the team at Farnham heard from the community, saying they wanted to help Farnham Maltings stay alive; they understood the value of Farnham in the community. From this Farnham began their Spring Forward campaign.

# Spring Forward Campaign and Learnings

## What Is Spring Forward?

The idea behind this fundraising campaign was to raise funds to ensure that Farnham Maltings could continue to provide full programming for their community once reopening was allowed. Without additional support, many programmes would be at risk.



## Be ambitious

For most fundraising campaigns, especially capital projects, it is easy to set a target. You know you need to raise £100,000 for a new roof for example. But for a project like this it can be trickier. How do you estimate, “help keep the lights on”?

At the start, the team decided on a target of £20,000. There was rationale for this figure, but they felt it to be a safe and achievable target.

However, when the team actually sat down and talked through the ultimate reasons for the campaign it became patently clear that £20,000 was not going to provide much support nor help them really work on their mission of “improving the quality of people’s lives.”

Ultimately, they decided on a much higher target of £100,000. While an ambitious sum to raise, it was a realistic sum too. This amount would enable them to properly support their mission. Gav, the director at Farnham said:

“We thought £20,000 was just a safe bet. £100,000 was going to be a real stretch but it would allow us to meet our mission of helping people. I thought it was a preposterous amount, but if we could get anywhere near that, it would be much better than the original target of £20,000.”



**Gavin Stride**  
Director at Farnham Maltings



## Do it In House

When the team were mapping out the campaign at the start, there were numerous discussions about which tools would be best to help them achieve their goal amount. Perhaps Just Giving had the best reach or Crowd Funding would allow them to push for higher amounts? After consulting with a very experienced fundraiser the team at Farnham decided to keep it simple and use Ticketsolve.

Why keep the campaign and platform in house? For starters, it was much easier to manage and tweak elements during the campaign. It also meant that customers could see that 100% of their donation went directly to Farnham Maltings. Using outside platforms, means part of the total donation goes to the service provider. Using Ticketsolve means that 100% of the donation went directly to Farnham and the team could build the donation ask into the customer journey during ticket purchase.

Here's how it worked: when a customer purchased a ticket online, Farnham was able to add an additional step into the customer's journey which showed the customer that Farnham was raising money.

With just this small extra addition to the customer journey, Farnham saw that of the 921 customers who left a donation using Ticketsolve, 651 of them donated through the prompt feature when they were booking their tickets.

**In other words almost 71% of people who saw the prompt donated!**

## Unexpected Donations

Farnham thought they would mainly get donations from audiences and the local community, but they were in for some big surprises. First there was the gentleman from Oxford who donated £5,000 because his wife was a big supporter and used to attend regularly in the past. Then there was a couple from County Durham who had fond memories of the building from when they visited years ago. And then one of their regular market stall holders donated £1,000 because Farnham Maltings is one of his favorite fayres that he sells at.





## Thank Everyone

Saying Thank You is part of any fundraising campaign. For Farnham the question was how to say thank you to different levels of donors. Moreover, was that the right thing to do? Of course, each donation would have a quick thank you, but should bigger donations get an equally big thank you? As they strategised, the team realised that this approach strayed from their central mission: “improving the quality of people’s lives across all the communities”. In the end, they decided to give a big thank you to everyone who donated regardless of the size of their donation. Whether £5 or £5,000, the most important thing was thanking the customer for the act of giving and not the amount they gave.

And customers embraced this strategy! Customer feedback was clear, they felt great after making a donation. This great feeling kept the donations coming, leading to customers leaving multiple donations with some donating on a weekly basis.

## Break The Mold

Most big fundraising campaigns are for the benefit of a capital project like new seats or for a building project like fixing a roof. Farnham wanted any money raised to go back into the organisation to help them be the best version of themselves, which in turn would have a profound impact on their work and help them carry out their mission “improving the quality of people’s lives”.

Show What Impact the Campaign Will Have

Next up was crafting the message and the ask. Farnham knew that since there was no specific capital project they could point to, they needed to show where each pound donated would go and who would benefit.

This is a strong - and ultimately successful strategy. Showing customers and the community what the donations would be used for and what impact donations have, made making the ask easier. Below is the breakdown Farnham used with customers.



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£	impact
15	cover the attendance cost of a participant at our dementia-friendly singing workshop
20	pay for a vulnerable young person to attend a theatre performance or workshop
25	cover the costs of a workshop session seeking to combat isolation and loneliness amongst older people in our community
50	underwrite the costs of providing space for a community organisation to hold their event in our building
500	offset the lost income from reducing seating capacity for a socially-distanced film screening





# Financial Benefits from Spring Forward , Plus a Whole Lot More

**Of course the big question is did all of this work? Farnham's Spring Forward Campaign raised £70,000 just 30k shy of their 100k stretch goal. This is impressive considering they originally only aimed for £20,000.**

The financial support is wonderful and means that Farnham can keep to their mission of "improving the quality of people's lives," and keep bringing value to the community they work in. But the campaign has done much more. It has shown them how valued they are in the community, how strong their relationships are and it reinforces that their commitment to their mission is spot on.

Farnham's honest and sincere good will to their community when things were at their lowest, meant when they needed their community - the community was there for them too.

This bond could only have formed if Farnham stuck to their mission. And going forward, this strong relationship can be built upon through membership schemes and other activities, of course with the core mission always at the forefront.

# Key Learnings

## Be ambitious - and fearless

There is no doubt that had Farnham chosen a goal of £20,000 or even £50,000 they would have likely reached that level given the strong relationship they had with their community. But instead Farnham chose to stretch and be ambitious and push for what they really needed - what would really make a difference, and that made a huge difference to the ultimate outcome.

## Messaging (as always) is Key

The mantra for good fundraising messaging:

- Be clear
- Keep it simple
- Show the impact

Simple and clear messaging is a must for every communication, but especially for fundraising campaigns. Talking around what you need, kind-of-sort-of asking for a donation are all just a recipe for your message getting ignored - or worse - leaving a bad perception amongst your patrons. Keep the message simple, clear and show how each and every pound no matter how small makes a difference.

## Use your internal systems

In some situations a crowdfunding or fundraising tool might make sense, but look at your internal systems. Not only could it save you valuable time and money, but will likely mean you can track and report over time much better than external systems. For example, in the case of Farnham, they used Ticketsolve to do their fundraising. This ensured that the ask was embedded in the customer journey. It also means going forward, Farnham can see what other engagement those donors have with them and they have the opportunity to do a lot more with those donors in the future whether that is a new campaign or memberships or something else.

## Expect the unexpected

Expecting the unexpected is probably the first thing you learn working in arts, culture, heritage or live entertainment!

There is a lot to take away from Farnham's example. At the core is that Farnham genuinely values the community they work in. They reflect this value in their mission and they breathe life into that mission by ensuring it is at the heart of every strategy, plan and action they take





# Thank You

We would like to thank the entire team at Farnham Maltings especially Gav and Niki for their help in putting this case study together. We are so proud to consider them an important part of the Ticketsolve community and look forward to helping them grow even more in the coming years!

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