

From output-led to cause-led

Andrew McIntyre reflects on the benefits of having a cause-led manifesto to inspire agile leadership and increase organisational resilience

Over the past decade, many cultural organisations have returned repeatedly to the task of redrafting their *mission* and/or *vision* statements. It is not unusual for us to have created several versions of these. Even then, most statements don't manage to articulate our true vision – how the world will be different if we succeed – but instead they mainly define outputs – what we will do and what will be the reputational gain of doing it; usually recognition for excellence.

Repeated attempts to rewrite our vision using the same orthodox process and to author a statement in the same narrow format often fail to transcend this output-led approach.

What is required is a richer, more powerful articulation of *why* we do what we do – a *cause*. The dictionary defines a cause as 'the socially valuable principles, ideals and goals to which we are dedicated' and offers the use case of 'making common cause – to unite in a joint effort; work together for the same end.'

This is so much more inspirational and so much more appropriate to us than the tired old mission and vision templates we've inherited from local authority and commercial business planning. If we are simply trying to run our activities with a little more focus and

efficiency, then maybe a traditional mission statement will suffice. But if we want to engage with the world, leave our artistic mark, make a cultural impact or have ever used the word 'transform', then nothing short of a cause will do.

And, while the old mission statements were prized for the fewest words possible, a cause may take us a whole paragraph. And, while we're being expansive and inspirational, why not let our cause really breathe, write a whole page and call it a *manifesto*? Manifestos are written by people trying to change the world. Surely that's us?

This new type of statement needs a whole new way of producing it. We've developed an inclusive and creative process using a 'Big Bang' workshop for as many staff and stakeholders as possible. It generates, triages and

analyses dozens of big ideas, fundamental values, beliefs and principles, distilling a set of essential statements that fuel debate about our direction. It then challenges the leader to write and proclaim their manifesto. This combines the strength of crowdsourcing, the inspiration of leadership and the shared ownership of collaboration.

This *cause-led manifesto* approach creates a sense of common cause and a common language to discuss that cause. It inspires agile leadership guiding the organisation towards that cause. And, ultimately, this inspirational focus sharpens our business plan and increases our resilience as we tack and gybe our way through the difficult headwinds in pursuit of our common cause. ■



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