

Moving Forward with Vision: Arts Management with Strategic Strength

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Why is being in the Arts so difficult?

-It is hard to improve productivity so our costs go up. (ex. One you make a dance you can't perform it the next year with fewer dancers.)

-There is a ceiling to our earned revenue. Once a theater is build you know exactly how many tickets you can sell—no more.

When money is tight here's what NOT to do:

-Don't cut programming. Stay fresh. This is why people give you money.

-Don't cut marketing. Make sure people know who you are.

-Don't just raise prices. Keep with the rate of inflation.

What are good cost saving ideas?

-Partnerships with other arts organizations

-Fundraising

-Cut ego marketing. (Do you need a full page ad in the New York Times?)

Artistic Planning

****Start planning your programs 4-5 years in advance.**

- A longer planning period makes the art better and your product is your best marketing.

-Fundraising is easier when you have more time to find the people who are interested in the project.

-Listen to your potential funders and give them a choice (or help match them) to one of the the many programs you are working on.

-Future projects increase the possibility for revenue without an immediate expense.

- More time allows for thoughtful marketing.

-For touring purposes presenters want to know what you'll be performing a few years out.

-Multi-year program planning allows for more balanced seasons. Plus you'll be able to achieve more of your projects by organizing them over a few years.

-If you have to be duller one year you can still brag about projects a few years out.

-You can still be flexible but have a structure to work with.

-Funders love early discussion.

-Not working only in the now encourages bigger dreaming, and bigger projects are easier to fund than smaller projects because they get people excited. (Bigger does not necessarily mean bigger production costs but rather bigger concepts.)

-How do you make the shift to multi-year planning? Allows for a one year transition and start with just one big project in an out year. Start setting some time aside to devote to discussion/planning of future projects.

-Don't plan with the slot mentality. (ex. Christmas slot, children's slot, 4 slots a year, etc.) Keep your programming dynamic.

- Talking about the future is energizing for staff.

-Not all brainstorming has to be done in a meeting. Creative energy lies in informal communication.

Marketing

There are two types of marketing, Programmatic (to sell tickets) and Informational (to promote your image.) Informational is important because it has the potential to lower your programmatic marketing expenses. Building your image helps sell tickets and attract board members.

-Posters work best for projects that are easily understood or known. (ex. Nutcracker)

-A project that requires more explanation also requires more marketing.

-To collect contact info from audience members create a raffle.

-You can't afford to market to everyone so focus on the marginal buyer, not everyone and not your core group.

-Make a list of about 200 people who could make a difference and market all your good news to them.

-Involve celebrities. They are usually generous with their time, and less with their money.

-A good way to test which marketing strategy is working best is to give out a different telephone number for each strategy.

Board Management & Development

-Your board is not a place to vent. Come to them with ideas and solutions. You need their confidence so they will feel inspired to connect you with their friends and associates. Do market to your board.

-On difficult issues deal with your board one-by-one.

-Treat your board like donors.

-Seek people with influence and affluence.

-Consider creating multiple advisory boards. (Ex. the Friends board, which is only responsible for connecting you to their specific community.) A board member can manage one of these other boards.

- Strengthening your board is the quickest way an individual donor base, and fiscal strength.
- Having non-for-profit people on your board is problematic because they have their own fundraising to do.
- Board members must have an interest in your organization and its success.
- Study other organizations your size and discover what their boards do for them.
- Don't always go for the top executives at corporations. A young (and aggressive) executive may serve you better.
- Diversify your board so you don't have a clique that can easily fall apart.
- Don't just tell your board that they have to keep fundraising. Connect board members to a specific project. This builds their investment and enthusiasm.
- Add new board members in clumps and meet with them alone and as a separate unit before introducing them to the existing board. Let them build their own ideas and get excited. This will bring energy to the board.
- Determine if term-limits make sense for your board. Reasons to get rid of term limits: Great board members you want to keep forever and bad board members you should be happy to let go of at any point.
- Make sure your board has volume so when people leave it isn't a huge upset.
- Be open, honest, and upfront with your board. Make sure you have an orientation session. Have a minimum financial contribution and get a commitment upfront.
- Board members (and donors) want public thank yous.
- A corporate marketing person on your board is not very useful. They have a different style.
- Consider having mini-performances at your meetings. Remind your board what your mission is really about—art, not money.
- Meeting should happen 4-5 times/year. It is better use of their time to have them helping outside of a meeting.
- Elected officials are ok but not recommended for boards. Most don't have the time. Do feed them lots of information, however.
- Meetings are not the place to start a discussion. People's first reactions are not helpful.
- Check in periodically with board members and prepare them for meetings.

Creating a Mission Statement

- Ask: Who do you want to serve? What do you want to achieve? Where are you trying to do it? Not, How (programs) are you going to do it?

-Your mission should be concise, complete, clear, and coherent (Be realistic—are you really creating “world-class” art?)

Strategic Planning

-You cannot have a good plan unless you have a clear mission.

-Success is whether you have achieved your mission. It’s not making money and it’s not just existing.

-Your mission is a management tool. Ask, “Does X fit into our mission?”

-No planning retreats. Good planning takes time and should occur over a series of intelligent discussions, allowing time to collect relevant data.

-Don’t waste time going somewhere else when you have work to do at home. (Will a performance in Prague build your home season?)

-Asses what it takes to be successful by analyzing your peers, buyers, substitute products (ex. t.v, youtube) and ask yourself if you have it. If you have it, how do you keep it? If you don’t have it how do you get it?

-Identify the steps for your strategy, who is responsible for each step, and the date it will be completed.

-Be able to plan quickly and be flexible.

Fundraising

-Move away from depending on the main funders.

-Most money comes from individuals.

-One time funders (for specific projects) are ok.

- A bad economy is not an excuse. Money is out there. Approach your funders with the understanding that it is a difficult time for them too. Attempt to keep them in the loop even if they can’t match their contribution from the prior year.

-Attract donors with things that don’t cost money, such as attending a rehearsal.

-Religion and education receive the most money because people have a passion for their community. Create a buzz and instill passion in your supporters.

-Recommended reading: [Conducting a Successful Fundraising Program: A Comprehensive Guide and Resource](#) by Kent E. Dove