

**Audience
Development:
strategies,
campaigns
and tactics**

There is a lot of debate about audience development, what it is and why we do it, but currently very little in the way of publications or published guidelines.

Arts organisations are defining audience development by doing it. We can learn a lot from looking at how other people do it and what they achieved. This toolkit refers to case studies which you will find elsewhere on the site, but of course there are many more on www.newaudiences.co.uk

The bottom line is we all need audiences, most of us need more audiences and believe the work we do should have a wider audience. So, above and beyond our marketing strategy, we need a plan to develop the audiences we already have and find and retain new ones.

This toolkit aims to give you a one-stop guide to tackling your organisation's audience development needs, highlighting the must-have tools, offering information on the process and flagging up possible pitfalls. It is a big topic, so there are also handy references to more reading you can do.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>What do we mean by audience development?</p> | <p>Definitions</p> <p>Don't get bogged down in definition, but use the common themes from these examples to establish the fundamental principles. What matters is how you apply audience development tools to the work your organisation does and - most importantly – to the people you want to reach.</p> <p>Audience development is about making an organisation-wide commitment to engaging with people, whether or not they are currently your audience, and developing long-term relationships of mutual respect and benefit with those people. Eastern Orchestral Board</p> <p>The term Audience Development describes activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, and to help arts organisations to develop on-going relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution. 'Audience' encompasses attendees, visitors, readers, listeners, viewers, participants and learners. Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England, 2004</p> <p>Audience development is a continual, actively managed process in which an organisation encourages each attender and potential attender to develop confidence, knowledge, experience and engagement across the full breadth of the artform to meet his or her full potential, whilst meeting the organisation's own artistic, social and financial objectives.' © Morris Hargreaves McIntyre</p> <p>Audience development is a planned process which involves building a relationship between an individual and the arts. This takes time and cannot happen by itself. Arts organisations must work to develop these relationships. Heather Maitland, The Marketing Manual</p> |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Key Principles of Audience Development</p> | <p>5 principles to apply to your audience development strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think long term • think organisation-wide commitment • think existing audience and potential audience • think ongoing process, not short term projects • think plan, evaluate, review and plan |
|--|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>What should the audience development strategy look like?</p> | <p>10 headline prompts for the strategy process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Organisation-wide commitment – involve your colleagues; board support is vital – especially if you are planning some radical changes in the organisation 2 Identify key people and use their expertise – some or all of them will need to carry out the work 3 Set a reasonable timetable – it’s a long-term plan, so take time to gather the right information – but | <p>10 suggested section headings for the strategy structure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduction: a snapshot of your organisation – potted history, purpose, artistic policy, aims. Include, briefly; <i>Aspiration</i> What do you hope to achieve? <i>Inspiration;</i> Why do you think this is possible? <i>Means/money;</i> What resources do you have? <i>Support;</i> What other resources do you have? 2 Vision: At the end of the plan, what difference will be visible? | <p>Top Tips</p> <p>Remember, objectives should always be SMART:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific • measurable • actionable • realistic • timelined <p>Collaborate. What are other local organisations doing? Are there opportunities to work together to develop audiences in your area? Would working together add value for your target audience?</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>don't get analysis paralysis</p> <p>4 Fix a completion date for the plan, and include a timeline and milestones – it needs to be a useful working document</p> <p>5 Identify the big issues for your organisation – artistic aims, mission, income targets, aspirations, constraints</p> <p>6 Consult the business plan – if your organisation doesn't have one, it will be hard to define your audience development priorities – but funding agreements will also be vital</p> <p>7 Don't forget your current audience – what information have you got about them and what do they think about you? How will they view any changes?</p> <p>8 Identify the audiences you want to develop and why – don't do it just because it's a good project – ensure you have planned the follow through</p> | <p>3 Aim and Objectives: the aim is the overview and the objectives define the specific results you need to achieve to fulfil the aim</p> <p>4 Timetable: your plan is likely to cover 3 – 5 years. Don't tackle too much at once. Put ambitious objectives in Year 3 and onwards.</p> <p>5 Action Plan: no need to list every task, outline the main work needed to achieve each objective.</p> <p>6 Assign responsibility: named contacts make it a valuable reference tool for colleagues and avoid confusion about who does what</p> <p>7 Resources: human and financial - in-house, source externally, funding required?</p> <p>8 Monitoring and Evaluation: your objectives – what do you need to count, record or measure to say whether you have achieved them? Leaving this section until you've done the work is tempting ... but fatal.</p> <p>9 Risk Assessment: not a complex technical procedure, just a note to say that</p> | <p>Try peer group assessment. Don't be shy - swap strategies with a trusted colleague from another organisation and benefit from a detached assessment and extra ideas for your strategy. Return the favour!</p> <p>Good Sources of Further Information</p> <p>Further reading: A Guide to Audience Development by Heather Maitland is published by ACE and is free. See publications at www.artscouncil.org .</p> <p>See how others do it: the AMA website has a range of case studies from telemarketing to online development; many home in on specific target groups. You need to be an AMA member to access this section of the website. www.a-m-a.co.uk</p> <p>One of the legacies of the New Audiences Programme is a wealth of information including case studies and project outcomes. Go to www.newaudiences.co.uk</p> <p>Case study links</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | <p>9 Be realistic – don't let the process get bigger than your organisation's resources</p> <p>10 Keep the strategy short – it's more likely to be used if it is succinct and to the point – make the required actions clear</p> | <p>you've thought about what might go wrong and how you'll carry on if it does</p> <p>10 Appendix: any background information that's useful to have but would clutter the main document – research you've consulted, budgets that underpin your resources, business targets that informed the aims and objectives</p> | <p>Buxton Opera House</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>How should a campaign be developed?</p> | <p>Each audience development objective will require one or more campaigns to reach the identified audience group(s). The strategy is the overview – each step or project then needs its own plan.</p> | |
| <p>8 steps to a successful campaign plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Involve the people who are going to do it 2 Identify the audience group(s) you are trying to reach 3 Choose the method(s) by which you will reach them 4 Identify resources required and whether they are in place 5 Identify the tools you need | <p>Do you know enough before you start? What ideas do colleagues have to feed into the plan? How does this work fit with their other responsibilities?</p> <p>Gather as much information as you can about your target audience. You need to know about their preferences, habits and values so that your approach hits the right buttons.</p> <p>If you are approaching lapsed or new customers, do you know enough about why they don't attend now? You need to overcome barriers and negative perceptions. Can you really see your organisation through their eyes?</p> <p>Do you know where to find your target audience and</p> | <p>Check resources and tools</p> <p>Draw up a short briefing note for all staff and volunteers – so that anyone who takes a call about the project can answer confidently. A poor response to a first-time caller/visitor will stop them coming any closer to you. Dead.</p> <p>Funding required? Check the criteria – is your project a match? Will funding be in place before you need it? Can your project weather delays?</p> <p>Is your box office system up to the job? Do you need technical help to set up this aspect? Are the front-line staff geared up for the extra care and effort they will need? Do they know what to do?</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| 6 Agree detailed action plan and timetable – work backwards from the date the work needs to be completed | how to reach them? The tried and trusted methods you use with your regular customers may not be appropriate for others – you may need some innovation to reach them. It may well involve building partnerships with other organisations. | Is your background information robust? Do you need to commission special research about the people you want to reach? |
| 7 Check your monitoring procedures | | Can you manage the campaign activity without neglecting day-to-day marketing? |
| 8 Schedule progress meetings | | Do you need specialist input eg text messaging expertise, data profiling services? Have you costed and sourced this? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Examples of tactical approaches | Remember, audience development is a long-term and continuing process. Every campaign, project and tactic should be geared to achieving the aims and objectives outlined in your strategy. | |
| Five Ideas for Tactical Approaches | | Possible Outcomes |
| 1. How Frequent is Frequent? Take a close look at your frequent attenders. How often do they really come? Use box office data and/or an in-house questionnaire. | Talk to them about the likelihood of attending more often. Use their responses to creative initiatives to encourage them to do so. | You adjust your definition of frequent as a result of customer feedback. You successfully increase attendances by your most loyal customers. |
| 2. Check the Labels Does your organisation talk about 'a drama audience' and 'a dance audience'? Examine sales histories to see what people attend in a 12 month period, and see how many people have such well-defined tastes. | Re-asses your segmented mailshots – are you delivering to customer preference or restricting choice? | You refine the way you segment audiences You achieve success in encouraging customers to try different things. You re-organise the content of your postal and e-mail mailshots. |
| 3. Adding Value | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Do visitors to your gallery stay 5 minutes when you would like them to stay 30? Think about developing a more significant relationship.</p> | <p>Talk to a sample of visitors (on different days and at different times) and get their ideas about why people don't stay longer</p> | <p>Implement their ideas to add value to a visit. For instance: comfortable chairs, audio guides, activity sheets for young visitors, better coffee and cakes, a mini art library, guided tours, exhibition guides written in plain language.</p> |
| <p>4. Never Mind the Message, it is the Messenger that Counts When planning an approach to a hard-to-reach audience, think about alternative ways of delivering your message. Use different media and different people</p> | <p>You might make use of community representatives or arts ambassadors to increase the credibility and validity of your message and find out why people don't stay longer. Tip: 'A Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors' by Mel Jennings, published by ACE explains how you can recruit people to go out and sell the positive benefits of your organisation.</p> | <p>You have new people coming to your venue/activity. You learn more about their particular needs, perceptions and attitudes through the communication process. They feel comfortable and confident because the initial approach felt right.</p> |
| <p>5. Come Again? How frequently do you manage to find new people who come once or twice and then disappear?</p> | <p>Do some research to find out why they didn't make you a 'habit'</p> | <p>A better understanding of how it takes for you to get to 'loyalty'. An understanding of 'grazers' and how you might work with other organisations to meet their needs collectively.</p> |

Tips

- Don't invite people to attend and then never contact them again.
- The things that put off people from attending can be physical, practical, lack of information, or even their own perceptions.
- Think about value for money. Is what you are spending and the number of people you are reaching an effective use of resources? Is it a worthwhile investment for a long-term return?
- Think right through from strategy to campaign to tactic. Are you contacting the right people about the right sort of activity and in the right way?
- Testing your plans can save time and money later. Consult colleagues, customers, friends, artists, teachers and ask them to comment on your plans.

Using audience development tools in social inclusion initiatives

Perhaps this is where audience development and marketing really part company. Marketing is often about putting bums on seats, increasing visitor levels, achieving numerical targets. Audience development can have other goals which may reflect the artistic and social aims of an organisation. Social inclusion initiatives can focus on government, or regional priorities, targeting specific hard to reach groups with the aim of benefiting society as a whole

Ways in which audience development can assist social inclusion

Across the board commitment means the whole organisation is focused on achieving something which may be fairly ambitious and therefore needs a high level of investment and resources.

Medium to long-term activity allows incremental development and results. This type of work doesn't often have quick wins.

Ongoing monitoring enables you to react and adapt if necessary.

In-depth knowledge about target group(s) means strong

Tips for planning work with social inclusion objectives

Partnerships are usually key to achieving success. Use them to bring specific expertise to the work or open up routes to your target audience group, and to plan larger-scale projects which bring the target group into contact with a range of services, organisations and opportunities they have not experienced before.

Shared aims are important for successful partnerships. You can't really tackle social inclusion on your own.

You may have to develop new measures, and timelines for success; social inclusion initiatives are rarely about getting you new core attenders, and certainly not in the short term

Social inclusion work is often attractive to non-arts funding sources, for instance, regeneration, heritage, social services, tourism agencies.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>awareness of participants' needs.</p> <p>Realistic timetables and goals underpin work which can be time-consuming and expensive and needs the long-term view.</p> | <p>Don't be afraid to seek help with social inclusion work. Disability organisations, local authority departments, government agencies like Sure Start, can offer direct help or valuable contacts and mean that your work is more likely to have a real and lasting effect and make a genuine contribution to tackling exclusion</p> |
|--|---|

Summary

Performing arts issues

- Focus upon a particular art form or embrace all performing arts – a lot will depend on who you want to reach.
- Receiving venues may require co-operation from touring companies.
- Have you an appropriate supply of the relevant product? It can be difficult to develop your audience for contemporary music if you only host two performances a year.
- A lot of performance related audience development requires collecting data. If you don't have a computerised box office system, you'll need to find alternative, reliable methods.
- Borrow tactics from other art forms. For instance, if you need new ways to promote content, why not ask performers for contributions as well as using press reviews.
- Productions with long runs can offer better flexibility for campaign work than

Participatory arts issues

- Barriers and motivations for participating can be quite different than those for spectating.
- The dynamics of your event will be affected by the mix of participants, so think about target groups in these terms.
- Ensure that artists and workshop leaders are aware of and involved in your audience development aims. They may need to tailor activities to the needs of a particular group.
- First time attenders may appreciate extra guidance and customer care. Have you told them what to expect, what they will be doing and who with?
- A lot of participatory work is traditionally created for young people. If you are aiming for adults or mixed groups, be explicit about this and promote the benefits from all points of view.

Visual and media arts issues

- In the past it was thought that audience development was more difficult for the visual arts due to less direct contact with attenders and lack of box office data. However, lots of imaginative projects in recent years have proved it is possible to achieve excellent results.
- If you offer free entrance or are not based in a regular venue, you need to find ways of building a list of regular and potential customers. It could be through competitions or sending out follow up information to events. Audience development without customer data is nigh-on impossible.
- Use loyalty schemes to overcome the lack of box office data. A simple card that records visits and rewards 5 in a year could be all you need.
- The joy of visual art is visual impact. An image speaks a thousand words whether on print or online. Use it.
- Join up with other organisations to offer added value. A special preview for playgoers might benefit you both.
- Research communications methods. If you are seeking audiences for video installations, will they

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>one or two night stands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have to use one-night productions for audience development, remember to consider the implications in your evaluation ie no choice for audience. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed age participatory activity can be a powerful tool for social inclusion and regeneration projects. | <p>respond to a leaflet or is a text message more likely to grab them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think creatively about where to find new audiences. People who enjoy web art may be technology fanatics rather than arts attenders. |
|--|---|--|

| Short-term impact | Medium-term impact | Long-term impact |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Offer your most regular attenders another reason to stay in touch, eg a Newsletter, a subscriber evening.</p> <p>Use an in-house questionnaire to identify 5 ways in which your organisation could be more welcoming.</p> <p>Remember to relate all short-term initiatives to your strategic objectives!</p> | <p>Take time to gather information about your target audience groups. If you are commissioning new research, be sure you need that information and can't get it elsewhere</p> <p>Some of your objectives should measure results over 12 to 18 months to gain accurate pictures of customer attendance patterns. Even increasing the attendance frequency of your regulars will take this long.</p> <p>If resources are small, start with your existing customers. The results can be very rewarding and much cheaper than seeking totally new customers.</p> | <p>Long term aims can be achieved by taking small steps each year.</p> <p>Audience development requiring specially devised events and activities or a change in artistic policy needs long term planning.</p> <p>Attracting new audiences should be measured over at least 2 to 3 years. An enthusiastic response to your first approach is not proof of a new regular attender!</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>For anyone to try</p> <p>Introduce customer comment cards and get staff to encourage customers to use them. Use the feedback to review relevant aspects of your operation and plan improvements to the audience experience</p> | <p>For more experienced practitioners</p> <p>Plan an open day that provides added value for your current audience and a warm welcome for newcomers. Work with artistic and education staff to programme special mini-events and front-of-house staff to develop customer care.</p> | <p>May need specialist input</p> <p>Find out what prevents non-attenders from coming. Design a series of events and activities specially for them, tell them in their language use images of people like them and also peer endorsements to make your offer appropriate to them. Document the results over two years.</p> |
| <p>Legal and ethical issues</p> <p>Disregard the Data Protection Act at your peril. If your organisation holds data about individuals, computerised or manual, you must be registered with the Data Registrar. You must also put in place systems that protect the data in your possession. You need to understand how you can collect and use data legally. The 1998 Act is designed to protect individuals but not to stop you contacting your customers. The Data Registrar can help with any questions you might have. Meanwhile, bypass legal speak and arm yourself with a copy of Roger Tomlinson's guide to the Data Protection Acts, published by the Arts Marketing Association and available from SAM's Books.</p> <p>The Disability Discrimination Act is now law. It has implications for audience development work in a number of ways including physical access and the ways in which you communicate to customers. Your Arts Council England contact will be able to point you towards appropriate information and advice.</p> <p>If your organisation works frequently with young people, it should have a Child Protection Policy in place. Again, your Arts Council England contact can provide advice. Be careful to consider any permission you may need to seek from parents and carers when communicating directly with children.</p> | | |
| <p>Cross reference to reports and other resources</p> | <p>Heather Maitland's Guide to Audience Development A Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors' by Mel Jennings, published by ACE New Audiences web site: www.newaudiences.co.uk www.a-m-a.co.uk Sams Books: www.sam-arts.demon.co.uk</p> | |

Author: Louise Cogman. Format © Duncan Sones Associates