

GOING BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL

The budget is tight, funding sparse, and grant writing time consuming, but you want to do something that will generate interest in your organization and maybe create some additional income. Where do you begin?

Take Stock

First, take stock of the skills, talents, and availability of staff and volunteers within your organization. If you haven't already done strategic planning, now would be a good time. Determine strengths, capitalize on them, and note any need for improvement. Doing just this much may provide a road map that you can follow. When you see a direction, step back to make sure you will still be working toward the mission and vision of your organization as well as fulfilling the cause or meeting the need the organization was created to address.

Get the Public Involved

There are many strategies for engaging the public to get them to understand the creative assets of a community, attract their interest and invite participation. For instance, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance is creating the first ever "State of the Industry" survey and report for analysis and action. Many other organizations underscore the community emphasis in their programs such as educational activities, free performances, ticket discounts, public art programs, Web sites, marketing, calendars, newsletters, fund drives, or other services.

Some arts organizations are working to get the arts represented at other tables. As an example, the Lexington (KY) Arts and Cultural Council (LACC) needed a way to engage and expand its local giving base, especially among its major donors. It found the answer in its own backyard. Lexington is known as "The Horse Capital of the World" and the major donors of LACC were very involved in this industry. The President and CEO of LACC has gotten directly involved with equine organizations in Lexington which should result in more donors with more money to contribute to the arts. The horse community has also responded appreciatively when approached about doing special events to support the arts.

A get acquainted/fundraising strategy in communities hosted for businesses and corporations is a good idea. The “let us tell you who we are” session could be anything from a community picnic to a barbecue. Invitations could be sent out, brochures handed out as well as a printout of community based programming. The party is a community awareness event for the public to get acquainted with what the organization does for their community.

This effort to identify yourselves with local businesses should show them why it is good business for them to invest their donations in what you are doing, especially if your activities are enhancing the quality of life in your community. By making others aware of your work, you make it easier to receive new members, individual donations, organizational support, and enlist volunteers.

Oklahoma Creative Efforts

Guthrie

Last year the Harrison House Hotel was purchased by the Guthrie Arts and Humanities Council. Adjacent to the Pollard Theatre, the renamed Pollard Inn will supplement income for the theater and offer theatergoers the opportunity to make a night of it by staying next door in the bed and breakfast.

Tahlequah

In 2003, the Cherokee Heritage Center held non-profit nights for its renowned “Trail of Tears” drama. During the summer, non-profit organizations gave out vouchers in the community. The vouchers were to be handed in at the box office when tickets were purchased and exchanged for a coupon for a free bag of popcorn. At the end of the season, each non-profit organization was to receive \$1 for every voucher redeemed. In addition, the non-profit that had the most vouchers redeemed would win a free day’s use of the Cherokee Heritage Center’s facilities for a work picnic or fundraising event.

More Examples of Creative Thinking

It can be advantageous to also think and plan regionally. An organization in North Carolina called HandMade in America, Inc. has done a lot to promote regional North Carolina attractions. One book, *The Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina*, provides seven driving loops with almost 400 stops listed including studios, galleries, restaurants, inns and bed and breakfasts. Another book, *Farms, Gardens & Countryside Trails of Western North Carolina*, provides six driving loops with almost 500 stops including horticultural/agricultural sites, farm and garden

sites, restaurants, inns and bed and breakfasts.

In 2003, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its normally closed doors on Mondays to let members peruse blockbuster shows without the usual crowd for \$50. While the privilege was extended to help curtail a deficit, it also showed appreciation to its members.

When Broadway's ticket sales dropped after September 11, they went online to offer discounted tickets, dinner reservations, and other activities. Curtain times were also changed to 7 p.m. to accommodate local professionals.

Public Theater in New York last year was exploring the idea of recreating the mobile theater to go from community to community presenting productions of Shakespeare free of charge. Whether they would present it during the summer only or on an ongoing basis was going to be dependent on securing an underwriter.

Two events from the Illinois Parks and Recreation Magazine's article, "The Best Arts Programming Ideas" were: (1) The Deerfield Park District has marketed "Art Attack," a full palette of art-themed birthday parties for kids ages five and older. (2) The Carbondale Park District and Carbondale Community Arts combined football and art in an effort to market to a broader audience for their "Arts in

Celebration." They had a tent equipped with television screens and refreshments featuring the football game while arts programming of all varieties took place throughout the park. See more of these programming ideas at www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/ip970725.html

In order to engage young audiences, some organizations have introduced student ticket prices as well as educational programs.

A "Family Night" or "Family Series" can consist of selling tickets to dress rehearsals for a reduced price. Children can be allowed to meet the performers and take a brief lesson after the presentation.

Discounts for early booking and running smaller ads in newspapers more frequently is a way to counter audiences that they are less inclined to plan in advance or buy memberships as before.

Pooling resources can mean maximizing performance quality and fundraising opportunities. Partnerships and collaborations are a definite possibility even with non-arts organizations. They can improve community awareness of services as well as provide community outreach and involvement. As always, this approach has to be thoroughly investigated so it doesn't present more problems than it solves.

More ideas:

- For a play or exhibit that has a connection to another country, consider contacting persons or businesses from or associated with those countries as a means of spreading the word or as possible sponsors. If handled correctly, they might become long-term supporters.
- Form a mutually beneficial partnership between a membership organization and, for example, a restaurant. A patron mentions that they belong to the organization, they get a meal discount at the restaurant, and the restaurant makes a donation to the organization. The restaurant, in turn, increases its volume of customers. It's a win-win situation!
- Raise money for a cause or organization other than your own. It's good publicity and you get a crossover of volunteers who might want to continue helping you.
- Earn income from a commercial venture such as a collaboration between two theaters that rent the costumes they have both accumulated to schools, smaller theaters, individuals and others who need a costume for a short time.
- Create a wish list or "gift catalog" to publicize needs. Contributors

can purchase the items or give money to the organization for them to do so. If, for example, the need is for material for stage sets, consider having the list on file at the local hardware store and online at your Web site.

- Have an official sponsor or corporate partners for your event.
- See if your organization qualifies for any workplace charitable giving campaigns of companies or corporations in your area.
- Create an incentive for people to want to volunteer on your projects.
- Receive proceeds from the sale of certain products or from encouraging people to visit certain Web sites, etc.

According to research on the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds' Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation initiative, more people attend arts and cultural events in community spaces like schools, open air venues, and places of worship than in conventional museums, theaters, art galleries, etc. Of the audience participating in arts and culture, about one-fourth only do so in community venues. Understanding the reasons behind this might reach more new participants if

organizations are prepared to go where the people go to present their work. For further clarification see www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310795_venues.pdf

Conclusion

Hopefully, you now have a lot of creative ideas to prioritize. However, before proceeding, make a concentrated effort to connect with and include community people, especially those who will be a part of any project you are proposing. Don't spend time on something that is not seen as valuable to those you are proposing to serve. By involving the community from the start, you will get their input and support. Then, just do it!

Resources

The Oklahoma Arts Council's Community Cultural Development Program provides communities with the tools to develop and implement arts and cultural programs that make a positive contribution to the economic and social climate of Oklahoma. The Council provides on-site services to communities and to small, mid-sized and emerging arts organizations across Oklahoma. For more information contact Georgia Williams at 405.521.2931, ext. 228 or e-mail georgia@arts.ok.gov

New Business Ventures for Nonprofits Workshop, October 3-5, 2005, Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City, Kansas City, MO
For further information see www.tgci.com

Breakthrough Thinking for Nonprofit Organizations: Creative Strategies for Extraordinary Results by Bernard Ross, Clare Segal, call 877.762.2974 or see www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0787969087.html

Arts and Non-arts Partnerships: Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategies by Chris Walker www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311043_Arts_Nonarts.pdf

Generating and Sustaining Nonprofit Earned Income: A Guide to Successful Enterprise Strategies, Yale School of Management-The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures, Sharon M. Oster (Editor), Cynthia W. Massarsky (Editor), Samantha L. Beinhacker (Editor) and Bill Bradley (Foreword by) www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-078797238X.html or call 877.762.2974

Collaboration: What Makes It Work by Paul Mattessich, Marta Murray-Close, and Barbara Monsey, available from Americans for the Arts at 800.321.4510 or at http://ww2.americansforthearts.org/source/Orders/index.cfm?task=3&CATEGORY=RESOURCE&PRODUCT_TYPE=SALES&SKU=069326&DESCRIPTION=Resource%20Development&FindSpec=&CFTOKEN=63077057&continue=1&SEARCH_TYPE=find



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SBC Exceleator Grants

SBC Exceleator grants help nonprofit organizations to improve their ability to serve neighborhoods through technology and to build stronger communities. Grants can be used to cover costs for such things as data communications services, hardware, software, technology training, personnel and application development.

Deadline: June 15, 2005

Information: www.sbc.com/gen/corporate-citizenship?pid=58

Theatre Communications Group and International Theatre Institute Offer Travel Grants

The Theatre Communications Group/International Theatre Institute Travel Grants have been designed to support cultural exchange and artistic partnerships between theatre professionals in the United States and their counterparts in Russia and Eastern and Central Europe.

Deadline: October 28, 2005

Information: www.tcg.org/iti/travel_grant.htm