

THE ARTS MARKETER'S



SURVIVAL GUIDE

HOW TO SURVIVE,
ADAPT, AND
THRIVE AS AN
ARTS MARKETER.



JIM HOSSLER

The Arts Marketer's Survival Guide

How to survive, adapt, and thrive as an arts marketer.

www.amsurvivalguide.com

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Don't just survive your job as an arts marketer. Thrive in it.

Why do you work as an arts marketing professional?

You do it because you love the arts.

You do it because you want to be a part of something bigger than yourself.

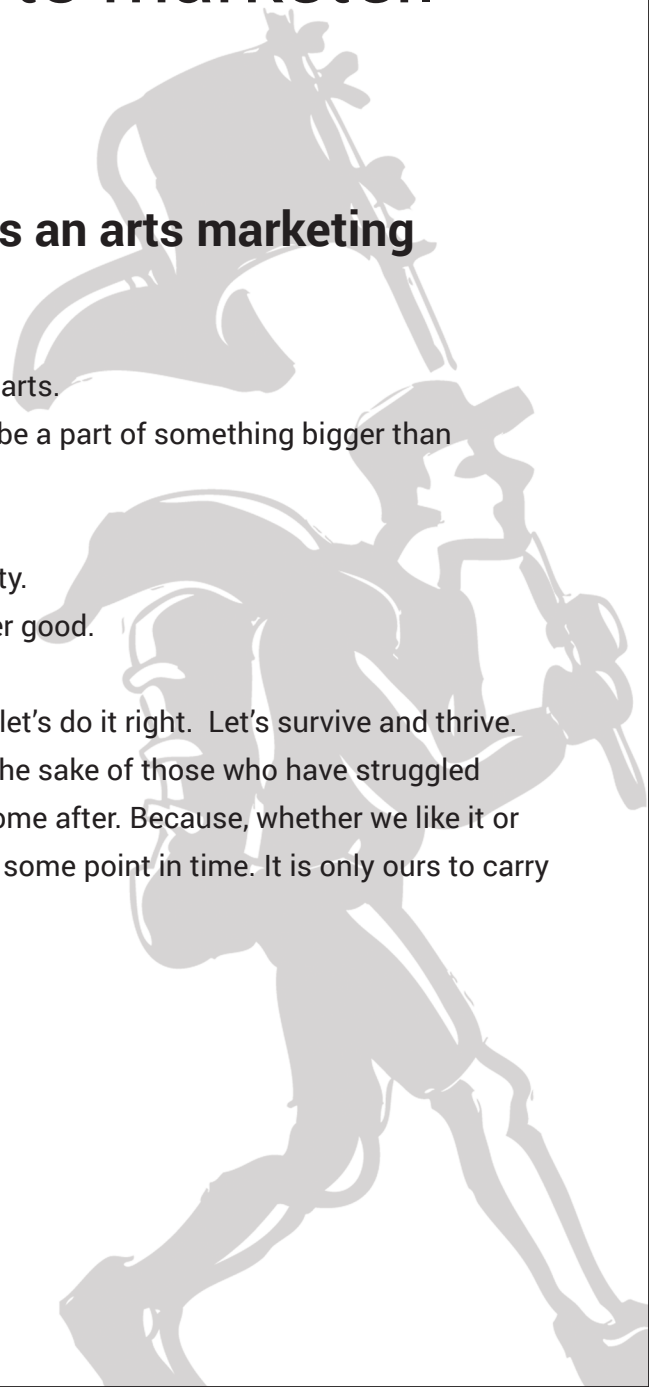
You do it for the money?

You do it to contribute to society.

You do it to enhance the greater good.

But, if you are going to do this, let's do it right. Let's survive and thrive. Not just for our own sake, but the sake of those who have struggled before us and those that will come after. Because, whether we like it or not, we will all pass this flag at some point in time. It is only ours to carry for a little while.

So let's carry it well.



This is book is **NOT ABOUT HOW TO MARKET THE ARTS**, although there is some of that in it. There are already plenty of books on that topic.

This book **IS ABOUT HOW TO BE AN ARTS MARKETER**. What is your job? What is the proper mindset? How do you survive the day-to-day and really own your position?

The best part, though, is that in the process of learning how to be a better arts marketer, you will actually become better at marketing the arts.

My intent is not to turn you against those in management above you.

Quite the opposite.

My intent is to help you adapt and become a better arts marketer. I want to make you more efficient and to help focus your energy on those initiatives and processes that actually matter to the bottom line. My goal is to change your mindset about the opportunities you are given within the parameters of what your board and management want to achieve.

I have been involved in marketing the arts as a volunteer, committee member, vendor, full-time staff member and outside consultant. I have seen it all from every possible angle and each and every institution faces a mix of the issues outlined in this book.

You may not be dealing with all of these issues, but I guarantee, if you are reading this, you are dealing with many of them.

I hope this guide helps.



You are not responsible for the survival of all art everywhere!

This point is key to your survival. If you take nothing else from this book, please absorb this statement.

This job can sometimes make you feel as though the survival of all art everywhere rests on your underpaid shoulders. THIS IS NOT TRUE!

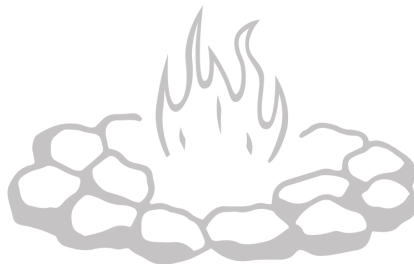
Your job is to compel enough of the right people to experience the experience of your institution over and over and over. Nothing more, nothing less.

The core of your job is foot traffic.

By-product: if you do your job well, and if all others like you do their job well, you collectively will be ensuring the survival of all art everywhere.

So, now what?

Realize that your mountain just got a lot smaller. Use the saved energy to re-invigorate yourself and your staff to become the most effective arts marketing team your organization has ever seen.



Act as those we promote.

Does anyone else find it ironic that our institutions, governed by reverence, tradition and status quo, are created and sustained as the platform to showcase the ideas and expressions of some of history's greatest disruptors? These were the people who spoke out against the very same establishment mentality that we now wrap them in.

The people on our walls and in our galleries were the outsiders. They were the rebels. That is why they are remembered today!

Shouldn't that give us license to be unique and creative in how we present their work and ideas to society? Shouldn't that give us license to be creative and disruptive?

Shouldn't we honor them in the same way? Shouldn't we do everything we can to make sure their work is enjoyed for generations to come?

Shouldn't we act as those we promote?

So, now what?

Let's break the rules, disrupt, be marketing mercenaries and back-room creatives. Let's be rebels, let's be marketers.

The time for playing nice is over.



'No' is a life saver.

'No' can save your life. 'No' can save your career. You have to learn to say no. I know it's hard, but it is necessary. Not every request that comes your way needs to become a project.

You are a marketing professional and you were hired for your marketing expertise. If you think the latest request doesn't warrant your time or your team's time, or won't produce the desired results, then say no.

So, now what?

You need to make decisions with your organization's best interest in mind. Everything the organization comes up with for you to do isn't always in its own best interest.

Your job is to say no. That is why you are there.

Sometimes you will provide alternatives, but sometimes you will just say no.

It's ok.

People will not like it at first, but their respect for you will grow as you help them make tough, smart choices.



Play to Win. Don't play to just not lose.

We should be striving to exceed expectations, not just meet them.

We should fund-raise to smash the goal, not just reach it.

We should market to fill the house, not just sell enough tickets to break-even.

Unfortunately, we are forced to work towards the **lowest survivable outcome**, not the **best possible outcome**. The lowest survivable outcome, is the minimum achievement that will allow you to keep your job.

Why? Because our job security is tied to meeting goals that are not specific enough, not well supported and not achievable within the constraints we are given. The lowest survivable outcome is usually all you have the time, energy and resources for.

What if we could expect the best possible outcome? What if we could aim to succeed wildly? Don't you want that?

So, now what?

Demand it.

Demand that your goals and expectations be clearly defined. Demand to be given the proper resources to achieve those goals. You have to figure out the language to use that will most inspire your management to create the environment in which you can succeed wildly.

You have to do it. No one else will.



Resist the non-profit mindset.

The non-profit mindset keeps you from progressing as a marketer. The non-profit mindset says that we should do things on the cheap because we don't currently have the money and we won't ever have the money to do them well. Even if we did ever have the money, we shouldn't spend it on something as frivolous as marketing. The non-profit mindset puts you in 'thrift' mode. I am all for being fiscally responsible, but 'thrift' and 'fiscally responsible' are not the same things. Not even close.

The hard part is that this attitude most commonly comes from the board! Marketing is the first thing to get cut if budgets need trimmed. Really? Do the business people that make up your board run their own business this way? NO.

So, now what?

You need to be the person most resistant to the non-profit mindset. You need to be the one staff member (besides finance) that understands what it takes to succeed. Being a non-profit doesn't mean you have to be cheap. It just means the financial end goal is different. But how you get there is the same as a for-profit business.

Your communications budget is important. Advocate for as much as you can get. Less is not more no matter what anyone tells you. But you need to know what to do with it.

Find a mentor or consultant from the for-profit world marketing sector and ask for advice. If they offer to donate their time to you. Say no. Pay them for it. It will be worth it.



Rebuttal Translated

Rebuttal: "We don't have budget for that."

Translation: "It's not that important to us. Because anything that is important to us, we find money for."

Expected to perform like Curatorial, but treated like Accounting.

You are expected to perform like the curatorial department, but are judged and treated like the accounting department.

You are asked for new, fresh, and inspiring ideas, like the Curatorial department is for exhibitions. But your results are judged like the reports from the accounting department.

Have you experienced this scenario: If a program or exhibition is well attended, that means the Education or Curatorial departments did a great job on programming. But, if a program or exhibition is NOT well attended, then that means the Communications department failed to get people there.

Hmmm, doesn't seem quite right or fair. If the programming is bad or if no one is interested in the exhibition, it doesn't matter what Communications does. No one will come. Not your fault.

So, now what?

This, at the end of the day, is an arts marketer's struggle in a nut shell. I wish there was a straightforward answer. All I have is a direction to send you in. Aim for the best possible middle ground.



Not everyone is a potential customer.

To think otherwise is arrogant and short sighted.

I know this statement is somewhat controversial. But as marketers, we need to understand that, **while art is for everyone, an art museum isn't**. There are certain people and groups of people that will never set foot in a museum no matter what you do.

We need to stop wasting so much time and effort on the people who won't ever be customers, and instead focus on reaching the people who should be but just aren't.

Do you think that brands like Nike, BMW, or Banana Republic see everyone as a potential customer? NO. So why do arts organizations? Yes, the arts have universal qualities that could be enjoyed by everyone, but it is not like we are selling water! Everyone needs water, not everyone needs the arts!

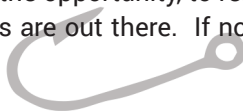
The arts are a lifestyle choice just like a car, or clothes, or a watch. We need to do more lifestyle marketing. In fact, you are not even marketing art, your are marketing your organization and how what you have to offer can fit into the life people are creating for themselves.

You may be thinking "wait a minute, everyone knows and loves Warhol and Rembrandt and Beethoven, all we have to do is put the information out there and everyone familiar with it will show up". And you would be wrong. There is a difference between being familiar with something (knowing the tune or describing what it looks like) and actually buying a ticket to sit in a seat to enjoy the performance live, or to walk through a door up to a wall and look at it in a frame.

That is the fundamental flaw in the mentality of an arts organization - that the concept (aura, spirit, essence) of 'the arts' is not separated from the business of the arts. You must separate the concept from the institution you are trying to promote, from the product you are trying to sell.

SO NOW WHAT?

Ask for the information, or for the opportunity, to really know your customers. Who attends and why? The metrics are out there. If not, the tools to measure are out there.



Avoid the 'relevant' trap.

"We need to stay relevant."

You hear this statement in many different industries, but it seems especially prevalent in the arts world.

'Stay relevant'? Really? Do we know what that even means? Don't you have to actually 'be' relevant in order to 'stay' relevant?

The idea of 'relevant' is usually substituted in place of an actual plan. It is spoken out of fear that if we don't keep up with culture, our organization will die.

Here is the trap: Trying to 'stay relevant' becomes a never ending culture chase. A chase for whatever is 'hip' and 'cool', right now, and how we can shoehorn our institutional initiatives into that form.

Here is what relevant really means: Staying important to the people to whom the arts are important. And your job is to increase the size of the group of people to whom the arts are important.

So now what?

You need to have the confidence in your skills and the clarity in your goals to help steer projects and initiatives away from just chasing culture. Or, towards those tools or mechanisms that do make sense for your organization and the people you serve.



Great returns await the institution willing to market disruptively.

I believe great returns, in both earned revenue and fundraising, await the institution that is willing to market disruptively.

But disruption is a mindset, not just a one-off campaign.

The arts world is a 'same old same old' marketing landscape. Each organization uses other organizations as an excuse to keep doing the same old boring marketing. "Well, they did it like this, so we have to." Really? Shouldn't it be, "well, they do it this way so we should do it a different way"!

Are you willing to stand out? How do you differentiate your product in your market? How are you exciting your current donors/customers and attracting new ones? How do you get people to talk about your organization? How do you get people to share something about what you have to offer?

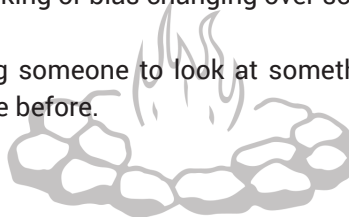
Disrupt.

So, now what?

Disruption can mean so many things. Sometimes it can mean an idea or initiative so outrageous that people are forced to pay attention. But sometimes, it is a simple tweak that can create an impactful moment of engagement.

Here is my definition of disruption: Creating an attention spike that is outside of what your efforts normally produce by juxtaposing something shocking, surprising, thought provoking or bias changing over something ordinary.

Or, more simply: Causing someone to look at something in a new way, or see something they didn't see before.



The most effective marketing is the on-site experience.

If we give people an unforgettable on-site experience, and make it easy for them to tell others about it, they will do a significant amount of marketing for us.

Is there someone on staff dedicated to on-site experience? Or, at least on-site experience is in their job description? If not, the old saying of, "if everyone is responsible, no one is responsible," is definitely at play.

If everyone owns on-site experience, then no one will own it. Someone has to have the authority and the directive to make sure that the on-site experience is as fantastic as possible.

Visitors will spread the **good** word for you if you have a great experience. Conversely, they will spread the **bad** word if they have a bad experience.

Make sure it's good.

So, now what?

Traditionalists plug your ears: communications specialists should be in charge of on-site experience. You or someone on your team **NEEDS** to be involved in the design and implementation of on-site experience. Everything a customer sees, hears, touches, or walks through, is communicating something to them. All of those experiences are 'touch points'. You are a communication expert. 'Touch points' isn't just a marketing term. You should have a say.



Rebuttal Translated

Rebuttal: "We've never done it that way."

Translation: "Please don't rock the boat. We can't remember where we put the life preservers and it would take too long to look for them."

You are not a firefighter.

How many of us have said, "I feel like all I do is put out fires." Sound familiar?

Unfortunately it is very familiar and very true. But this isn't what you signed up for. Your job description does not include firefighter anywhere in it.

So, now what?

Wearing multiple hats is ok, but you will know it has gone too far when you find yourself wearing a hat most of the time that isn't in your job description.

If this is happening to you, revisit your job description and work load with your manager. Ask for clarity on the roles of everyone on your staff. Get those items in writing and consistently refer back to them when you are tasked with something outside of those parameters.

You may feel like you aren't being a team player, but any coach will tell you that each player on the team needs to do their own job FIRST. Only then should they pitch in on other tasks.



You are not a drive-thru design shop.

No one in your organization should be allowed to just roll by, request something and then expect that it will be provided regardless of whether you have the capacity for it or not. (Not even your Director or CEO)

You must lay out a project request procedure. That procedure must include time-line minimums and priority stipulations.

You need to be a strict gatekeeper. Well, you may have someone on your staff that functions as the gatekeeper for projects, but you must be the procedure gatekeeper. You have to make sure the procedures are followed by everyone on the staff from the top to bottom.

Everyone, even your CEO/Director needs to know that the rush order project he or she just gave you will only get done at the expense of another important project.

So, now what?

Present your project request procedures to you Director or CEO to get their buy-in. Once you have that, request that they be the one to send out the mandate to the entire staff. The directive to follow the project request procedure must come from the top.

Then, it is up to you to make it work.



“Because we’ve never done it that way” is exactly the reason to do it that way.

If I had a nickel for every time I heard “because we’ve never done it that way”...

This statement also comes disguised as, “that’s not how we do it,” or “that is not industry standard practice.”

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

If we want to see changes happen in the arts world, we have to change how we do things. Especially when it comes to marketing. It’s that simple.

So, the next time you ask “why not?” and the response is, “because we’ve never done it that way,” that is your cue to do it exactly that way!

So, now what?

It is easy to say, but not easy to do. I know. But you need to be okay with not being liked. You need to be comfortable pushing boundaries and stretching the patience of your management. You need to be willing to risk presenting ideas that go against the traditions of your industry and organization. It is the only way to generate real growth.



Don't preach to the choir.

If your marketing ideas resonate with traditional arts professionals, don't do them.

If your marketing ideas are rejected by traditional arts professionals, do them.

Confused yet? Here's what I mean.

If you only put out ideas that your management team and other arts professionals resonate with, you will end up marketing to people who already love your product and will already be inclined to engage. But if you can come up with ideas that arts people resist, the chances are good that those ideas will resonate with people who are not your core audience and will lead to new people in your door.

Here is another way to say it: If you want to grow your audience, then you have to speak to people who aren't already in your audience. They don't speak the same language. If they did, they would already be your audience.

So, if you look at how we in the arts world do marketing, this concept should mandate a radical shift in the ideas we push forward.

We have been preaching to the choir for far too long!

So, now what?

Look at all your marketing material, from your imagery to your language, is it full of industry speak? Would it make an arts lover comfortable or uncomfortable? If you answered comfortable, it's time to make a change. Your ideas should generate attention from the people you want to attract.



The curse of 'possible'.

Well meaning arts professionals like us want to put out as much information as 'possible' in order to attract as many people as 'possible' and engage them in as many different things as 'possible'.

That's a lot of 'possible.' And it can be overwhelming.

It leads to information overload for both the communications team and for your patrons.

It happens on websites, in brochures, rack cards, emails, etc.

How do you resist? Simplify. Or at least give people fewer options in the beginning and let them lead you to what they are interested in.

So now what?

What is the right balance?

The 'sweet-spot' is to present just enough of the right information in order to move someone from 'not interested' to 'interested' and from 'interested' to 'engaged'.

And, yes, that is possible.



Rebuttal Translated

Rebuttal: "The board will never approve it."

Translation: "We don't know how far we can push them. They scare us and we want to keep our jobs."

Don't neglect phase 2.

Phase 2 rarely happens.

Why? Because we neglect it. And this applies to any kind of project that has a phase 2. (website, marketing push, educational program, facilities renovations, you name it) We neglect to plan for it. We neglect to budget for it. We neglect to staff for it.

Phase 2 is where the new **___fill in the blank___** becomes ingrained in the organization's DNA.

Phase 2 is usually where the real progress and efficiencies become exponential. But we never get there. This is a very important point because the success of a project is not just about what can be created or started. The success of a project is determined even more by what can be maintained and sustained.

Ever wonder why that new program never took off? Or why the new project management system never made a difference? Or why the long term marketing push didn't produce results?

Yep, phase 2 was neglected.

Changes, adjustments and additions WILL happen. Plan **for** them and plan **on** them.

So, now what?

Be the voice for phase 2. Advocate for the long term survival of your projects. Speak up in meetings and make sure phase 2 line items are included and protected in your budgets. Figure out how to illustrate the savings in time or in dollars that only phase 2 can generate.



In 'principle' vs in 'practice'.

Agreeing in 'principle' is very different than agreeing in 'practice'.

If your management team says they want to do disruptive marketing, make sure they are prepared to support it and fund it.

Be careful of those who always agree with you in 'principle', meaning they believe the same way you do in a meeting, but will then be an obstacle to you in 'practice', when it actually comes time to execute the idea.

So, now what?

Make sure the decision maker actually agrees with you in practice. No one else matters.

It can be difficult to make the case for what will happen if you DO disruptive marketing. It is an unknown at this point for your organization. So, make the case for what will happen if you DON'T do disruptive marketing. That is known.

What will happen if you DON'T do disruptive marketing? The organization will continue to generate more of the same. That is your angle.



Today is better than tomorrow.

The long term approach to information is short sighted.

As an industry, we do a really good job of disseminating information about the future. Our websites, brochures, and rack cards are full of future dates, times, and things that will happen.

But we are terrible at letting people know what is happening today, right now. **If the goal is to get people in the door, information about today is way more important than information about tomorrow.** Especially online!

Why are we more interested in the potential of someone entering our doors next month than we are about getting someone in the door today?

Good foot traffic today helps make next month possible.

Make sure you are connecting your patrons with what is happening today. Make your organization feel alive and create the sense of "I'm missing something right now".

So, now what?

It can be as simple as listing today's hours on your website homepage and keeping them current. Not just a general listing of the museum hours Tuesday through Sunday, but **today's hours**. Are you open right now?



Clicks speak louder than words.

Know your analytics and adjust accordingly. Clicks don't lie.

If you do not already have analytics tracking set up on your website, do it right now. Site analytics are an unbiased report about what your site visitors are interested in. It can also tell you a great deal about the way they understand what you do and what you offer.

Arts organization websites are too often structured to reflect the institution's org chart. The navigation is set up in the same silos that the staff are. That structure makes sense to people inside the organization. But what about people outside of it? Isn't that who the site is for?

We can't assume a linear journey through the website.

So, now what?

Be prepared to pull apart your site navigation and rearrange it to create a truly connected user experience. Analyze your analytics to tear down your silos and present navigation or content options in ways that make sense to your site visitors.

Listen to the clicking, it won't lie to you.



Learn from the most common questions your front desk is asked.

Talk to your audience engagement staff. Find out the different questions people ask at the front desk. You might be really surprised.

If the most common question your front desk gets asked is “Where’s the bathroom?”, you have an **experience design problem**.

If the most common question your front desk gets asked is “Where’s the art?”, you have a **purpose problem**.

If they get asked about the hours, make the hours more prominent. If they get asked about your store location, make directions to the store more visible.

You get the idea.

So, now what?

This is an opportunity for you to step up and affect change. Do the research before presenting ideas on how to make improvements. Actually talk with the customer facing staff and have them show you numbers. Once you have numbers, present your recommendations for making changes based on those facts.

Facts are hard to argue with.



Rebuttal Translated

Rebuttal: "That will never work."

Translation: "I don't have the capacity to think outside the box right now. I am struggling to just keep up with what we currently are doing."

Tame the information beast.

You are a beast tamer (well, you at least have to act like one sometimes). And that beast is called information.

In fact, your job isn't even about art. The art actually gets in the way. Your job is information: details, times, places, dates, descriptions, attributions, and more.

Instead of fighting the information beast everyday, tame it and make information work for you.

How? By understanding how information flows into and out of your department and developing a system (rules, procedures, etc.) to tame it.

So, now what?

First, you need to know where the bottlenecks are in your current information flow. Then, determine if those bottlenecks are people based or timing based. Next, decide if those bottlenecks can be either bypassed or if you can spread out the responsibilities.

If it is because of timing, trace the sequence back step-by-step. Are there points along the way that are causing the backup in the flow of information? There are opportunities in every situation to alter the sequence or timing. You just have to keep peeling back the layers of time until you get to the core of the problems. Once you are there, use a system of rules, procedures, checks and balances to get information flowing in a manageable way.



Return responsibility to the source.

Each department has it's own set of information it generates and is responsible for. Dates, titles, descriptions, times, prices, etc. And they should stay responsible for each and every one of those pieces of information all the way through to it being published.

But there is this weird hand-off that happens by which responsibility is given to the Communications department to care for and validate each piece of information. The problem is, sometimes that information changes at the source. Those changes seldom get communicated back through the channels to the Communications team.

Mistakes and errors are the by-product of such a system. (along with a lot of unnecessary stress)

It shouldn't be this way.

So, now what?

It is not your responsibility to make sure all of the departments in your org finalize their own information. That is on them. Your responsibility is to take the finalized information, craft it, shape it, and present it in such a way to attract attention to it.

Communications will craft it into a brand consistent and cohesive message once it is submitted. But getting it to that point shouldn't be your responsibility.

An intelligent, user friendly data collection system (website CMS?) needs to be the central repository for all information. Each department should have the responsibility and the authority to make sure their information is accurate. Grant department representatives access to the system with the directive of keeping that information up to date.



Outsource, outsource, outsource. The future is at stake.

You don't have to do all of your design projects in house. In fact, you shouldn't do it all in house.

Utilizing outside resources allows you to leverage others in order to plan further ahead.

Work with vendors on contracts longer than just one project. That creates the opportunity for them to look ahead to the same project next year and start planning for it now instead of rushing to complete it later.

So, now what?

How do you maintain brand standards and your visual identity? By developing strong yet flexible guidelines. Decide which elements of your brand are truly important and non-negotiable. Then, you need to be the brand keeper.

Find the creative talent (agency or freelance) in your area and start with a test project. Use a small event or initiative to see what kind of design/creative chops your chosen vendors have. You have to give them the space to bring you new ideas. If you hold on too tight, you decrease the likelihood that they will come up with something new and fresh.



Empower your team, but cut ties quickly if someone isn't performing.

Letting someone go is never easy. But it is always necessary if that team member isn't performing. Your institution may be a non-profit, but that doesn't mean it is a rehabilitation center for sub-par creatives.

So, now what?

Talk to your HR department to find out your organization's policies and procedures for hiring/firing. Keep up communication with your managers and HR Director to make sure people-problems aren't surprises to them. Take the yearly reviews seriously and don't be afraid to be blunt and honest with your staff about their performance.

Don't wait for the annual review to address concerns. Just like it shouldn't be a surprise to HR, it shouldn't be a surprise to your staff member.

They are a reflection of you.



'More often' is better than 'better'.

Communicating with your patrons 'more often' is better than fewer communications that are seen as 'better'.

If you are forced to choose between producing a really good piece of communication 4 times a year, over a lesser quality communication 12 times a year, choose more often.

The more often you can get information in front of your customers, the more likely they are to remember, plan and participate.

So, now what?

Utilize the information you already have to generate more communications. Figure out how you can rearrange your budget to fit in these frequent touchpoints. Most of the time, the money can be found with the reduction of just 1 major communication piece.

It will be worth it.



Rebuttal Translated

Rebuttal: "Why can't that be done by tomorrow"?

Translation: "I don't really understand what you do or what it takes to do it. So, instead of trying to understand, I will just push harder on you to get my project done".

Internal Communications is like Institutional Daycare.

As a communications professional, have you been given the responsibility of solving your organizational internal communications problems?

Well, here is what I have found out about internal communications problems in the organizations I have worked with: **Internal communications problems are rarely ever about information. The people who need to know something will eventually know it. The problems are almost always about how someone feels when they find out that they didn't know something.**

The problems arise out of hurt feelings. Like kids at daycare.

Staff feel disconnected, undervalued and disrespected when information 'seems' to be withheld. This is where the 'they' comes from when relating to management. " 'They' don't tell me anything. 'They' keep secrets and don't include me."

So, now what?

Don't try to create an environment in which everyone knows everything. It's not possible and not necessary. The solution is to figure out how to make people feel appreciated and connected. Create an information system that releases the right kind of curated content often enough and accessible enough to make the staff feel plugged in. Based on the content you create, you can actually use this system to change the organizational culture into one of positivity instead of mistrust.

If you can make the staff FEEL connected, you won't need to tell them everything. They will be ok not knowing.



Committees Schmittees.

Death by committee is a real thing. I have seen committees kill good projects, promising initiatives, enthusiasm, staff morale and much more. They mean well, and have committed to helping your organization, but have not been given the proper leadership or direction to play the role they were intended to play.

So, now what?

Pick your battles.

It is not your job to build overall consensus. Your job is to make your organization stand out. You will be forced into committee duty, but you need to discern when and where to expend your resources (time and energy).

If you feel that you can truly affect positive change through a committee you are on, then be engaged. If it is evident that the committee will just spin your wheels, participate but don't engage. I know this sounds awful and sacrilegious, but your time and energy are wasted in these situations. If money or other tangible resources were being wasted, your management would put a stop to it real quick. Why doesn't the same attitude exist when staff time and energy are being wasted?



PR should rock the boat, not calm the waters.

PR is usually tasked with calming the waters. But PR should be used to rock the boat.

Waves are better at generating attention than smooth seas are.

Stir up trouble. Rock the boat. It will produce results. The key is, how do you rock the boat without sinking it. That is the fun part.

So, now what?

Be intentional. Add 'boat rocking PR' to your marketing plans. But don't do it in a vacuum. Recruit your leadership and a few key board members and bring them 'in' on your plans. Let them know what is going to happen and assure them that the garnered attention will generate results that are in line with the organizations goals.

Rocking the boat will look different in each community and for each initiative. It's up to you to figure out in which direction to start rocking.



Why exhibitions are the least important and the most important projects to work on.

Exhibition ticket sales generate a very small portion of earned revenue or revenue in general. But, they are what makes the museum feel alive. People contribute to an alive museum. People want to be connected to an alive museum.

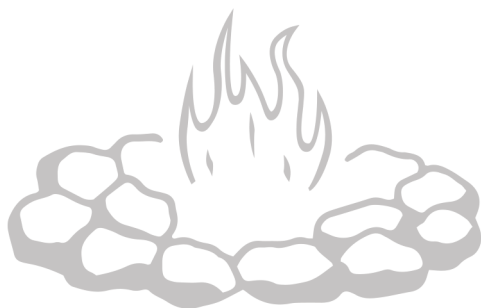
If you can get your head around the fact that you put effort and energy into exhibitions in order to generate excitement and interest in every other part of the museum, you will see the need to make sure your exhibition material is top notch.

So, now what?

How do you put the right kind of effort into exhibitions to make sure people pay attention and attend?

It all starts with your exhibition identity design and marketing.

I recommend outsourcing the identity design and marketing of your major exhibitions. Receiving something from your museum should excite people. It should ignite them with wonder and intrigue . Unfortunately, in-house design teams are weighed down with traditions and expectations of the past. That is why I suggest using an outside designer or team. They can bring ideas to the table that are not influenced by those restrictions. Hire the heavy hitters in your area. Let them loose on these important projects. The benefit will be evident.



Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

The other arts organizations in town should be your closest allies. Know what the other arts organizations are doing. Know what their purpose is. Know their plans and what is important to them.

What could you do together to raise the profile of the arts in your community? If you can make more people aware of what you collectively have to offer, you all win. Yes, some of these new customers may choose another arts organization other than yours, but that's ok.

You should also be rubbing shoulders with marketing professionals from for-profit businesses as well.

What if you all got together, decided on a shared direction, developed a collective budget, and produced great creative? You could succeed together. And if you can get local businesses involved....the sky is the limit.

So, now what?

Start by making a list of the truly influential cultural organizations in your area. Are you regularly meeting with at least the people on your same professional level in those organizations? Have you introduced yourself, or in some way made yourself known, to the Directors and CEOs of those organizations?

You can't collaborate with someone if they don't know who you are.



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