

BRISTOL 25th & 26th APRIL 2013

Seminar for Outdoor Artists

Simon Day – Theatre Bristol:

Leonardo Project coming to an end.

Thanks to the project partners.

This afternoon is an opportunity to share skills and experience about social media to promote good practice, specifically in the Outdoor Arts.

Matthew Austin – MAYK:

One of directors of MAYK. Runs Festival 'MayFest'. Background in marketing. Teaches TMA course 'Essentials of Marketing'.

Provocation – 'social media *isn't* marketing'.

Social media is like holding a party – you invite people to come along and once they get there you show them a good time, hope that they will stay as long as possible, engage with the party and not leave.

Key – *inviting* people. Once they're there you may feel that you're no longer doing marketing, because they're already engaged.

Challenge – continue inviting people to party and make the invitation as wide as possible.

Mayfest focuses heavily on audiences, finding new ways to invite them.

Social media is one part of your marketing. Part of a toolkit of ways to communicate with potential audiences.

Who are your audience, who would you like them to be? How do you communicate with those people?

Social media can be a comfort blanket because it feels like marketing. But it might not be the best way to communicate with a particular audience.

In identifying a particular group, decide if social media is right for the group. If it's for older people, social media probably isn't right.

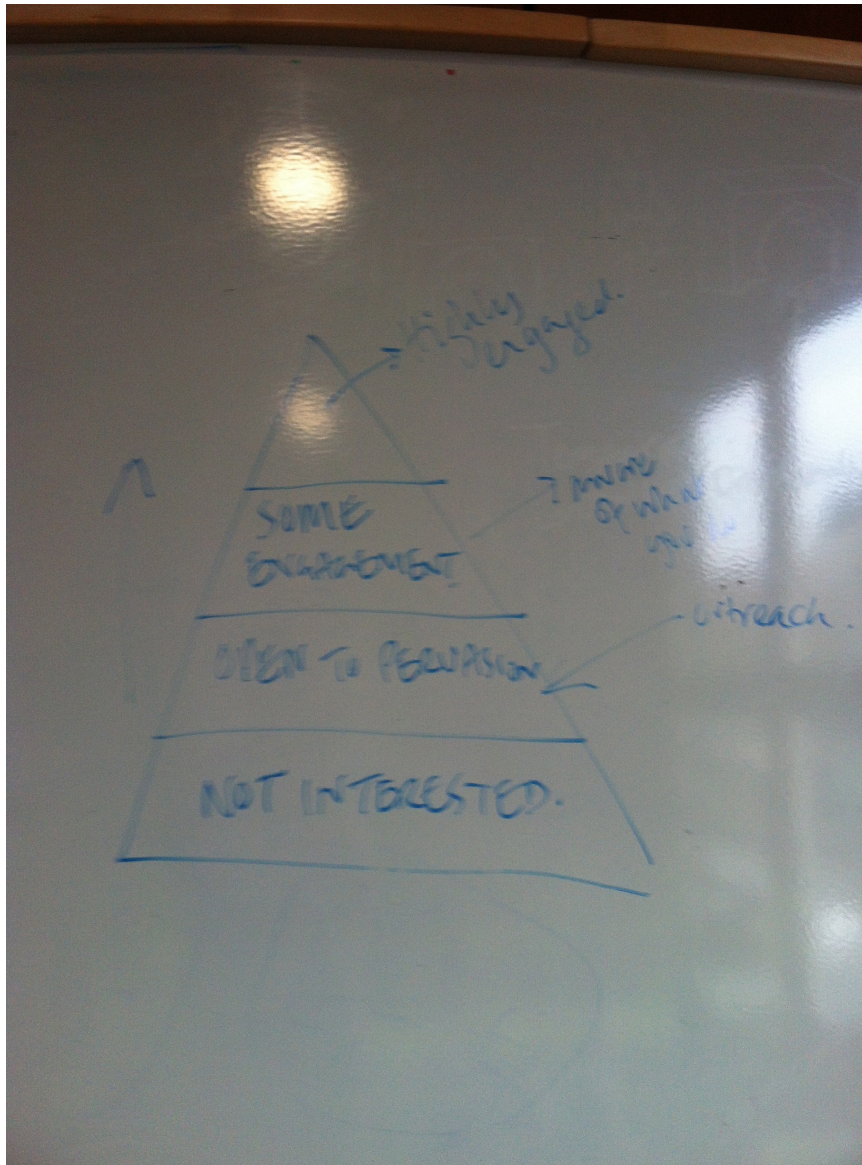
Tone of voice, method of communication – will this give you a return on the work you do?

If someone at you party wants to leave then you should let them go!

Twitter and FB may be easy to set up, but only use them if you can afford the effort put into keeping them going – need to have the resource to do that. Don't do it if you can't update it.

Twitter – circle of interest. Most people in your circle will already be interested in the things you're interested in. Challenge – make circle as big as possible. Find ways to get the message out beyond the core group, and people to share your content. You don't have to appeal to everyone.

Pyramid of engagement.



Bottom tier: Not interested - will never come.

2nd tier: Open to persuasion – reached through education, participation, outreach activity.

3rd tier: Some engagement – probably heard of you, seen a couple of your shows.

Top tier: Highly engaged – others that work in your industry, friends, supporters, donors.

Social media is the top 2 sections. The challenge is to expand into other sections, though you can almost rule out bottom section – you can't please everyone.

You want everyone to move up the pyramid.

Audience - Who they are, who do you want them to be? Tailor your content to each different group. Don't use it as a comfort blanket, find new ways to communicate with audiences.

Party invitation analogy: comes in different ways depending on your work. May invite people online, through the activity itself (if the project contains elements of social media), actual invitation – giving people something they won't get by buying a ticket or being on email list. Content has to be new and interesting and different. Not just sales!

Who are the buyers and users of this method, what are the aims? Objective – create loyalty to your brand. Less of a transaction, more creating extra content and ways of engaging. E.g. Mayfest – blogging. Blog is important – not for sales, for interest and engagement.

Quality, not quantity.

Question: Does blog increase audience?

Response: No

Question: Can media be a trap? Street theatre invites everyone anyway.

Response: Street theatre is visual and engaging, so maybe more appropriate for street artists is that audience tweet, take photos or video and share. Encourage people to create their own content. Can be used as advocacy for street arts.

Question: What's outside the triangle – people that write negative things. How do you engage with them? Might be an issue of taste or lack of understanding.

Response: Don't remove it (unless very offensive) – respond quickly and nip it in the bud. Invite them to contact you privately to talk about it. People should be able to say what they think. Be honest in your response. Do you draw people's attention to it? Spice Girls musical – 1 star review has become their marketing material.

Richard Headon, Artistic Director and Kate Morrison, Freelance Press and Marketing Officer – Desperate Men (DM):

January 2013 – ran 'Outside Online' (OO) – a live forum directed at the Outdoor Arts industry, not necessarily to members of public.

Context – DM working outdoors for 33 years. With age comes confidence. OO reflected Bristol – a collection of cells that we all collaborate with.

Collaborating with musicians, filmmakers, artists, and lately with Kate. DM have never had press officer before.

2012 – Culmination of Olympic project linked to sailing 'Battle for the Winds'. 5000 participants, 7 counties. Shows for 10,000 people on beach, 2012 people walked into the sea carrying flaming torches.

It was a big struggle for artists to deliver the Olympic projects – little money, everyone exhausted.

OO – wanted to find out what's happening in 2013. Is there any money? Any ideas? Aimed to start a conversation during the time when everyone is back in offices, not talking to each other. Also coincided with launch of DM film archive.

DM are elder statesmen of Outdoor Arts. OO showed that DM are interested in what's happening now and the future of outdoor arts. Agitating the community. Also talking to funders and media to show what DM are doing. Using social media not just to sell but showing what your organisation is doing and what you stand for.

Set up Facebook forum – easiest way because people are mostly on Facebook. Told people when it would happen.

3 hour live discussion. Lot of pre-promotion. Newsletter and individual emails. – it's not an easy way of attracting people, you still have to work hard and speak to people personally.

DM want others to take it over now. They started OO with too many questions because didn't know who would be joining in conversation.

20 people joined in. 147 posts.

Result of conversation? People put up their work as marketing. Some people don't tell what they're doing (due to funding issues). DM haven't had time yet to properly analyse.

Tweeted conversations as they went. Retweeted by Lyn Gardner (Guardian theatre critic). Engaged media were interested.

Overall aim – shows DM still relevant as a company, energetic, forward thinking. Event added to the perception of DM as a company.

Every project changes you. Outdoor Arts has to be proud because we're good communicators. There's an appetite for Outdoor Arts post 2012.

Question: Out of 20 people – how many were artists, arts council, etc?

Response: Artists included Whalley Range All Stars, Jeremy Shine, Neil Butler. Mainly artists and a few promoters.

Not best forum for Deaf and disabled artists.

Worked as an encouragement to artists. Felt more like a party than a twitter circle.

Question: You wrote provocative questions – would you recommend that? You may write to elicit a certain answer. Should it be more open to the forum to decide what they want to talk about?

Response: DM like provoking. Someone else may choose to do something different.

Choice of questions should reflect ethic of the company.

Provocations did get the conversation going.

Question: Is there a federation of street theatre companies?

Response: Yes - NASA.

Matthew Whittle – the Wardrobe Theatre:

Works as producer/director with Wardrobe theatre, Closer Each Day. Background in marketing.

What is social media and why is it important? 1 part of a marketing strategy. Important for online, getting more important day by day. In 5 – 10 years it will be even more so. Start engaging now otherwise you'll be left behind!

If people have heard your name they're just as likely to search you on Facebook as Google. If your Facebook page isn't updated and looking good, they'll switch off. Keep updated, and brand it the same as website so people can recognise you.

Link Facebook and twitter to website, and vice versa. Make it easy for people to find out about you.

People who don't know you are more likely to come across your work if you're using social media well. Friends will share.

Digital word of mouth - Cheap, easy to do.

BOV has 10,000 followers. They don't see every show. They have expressed a small interest, now grab their engagement to actually see the show.

Building audience – be patient. Play the long game.

Tweet once a day. Make yourself! Remind people that you're working and active.

Don't bombard people! Spread your tweets out, build slow momentum towards a show, not all in the week before.

Engage with the community. Interest your friends' friends.

Engage with other companies – audience will see that engagement and be interested in both. Approach companies you don't know personally. There will be overlaps in audience, sharing.

Twitter – follow people similar to you. They will then know who you are.

Use the @ symbol on Twitter, so people know that you're talking about them. (They receive an email to say that you mentioned them).

Find similar or aspirational companies, and observe how they're doing it. Mirror them.

Content – don't use just for sales! Inviting people to the party, so have personal engagement, allow people to see behind scenes, give them more than what's on the 'About Us' page of your website.

Be personal, engaging, intimate. How did rehearsals go? Post rehearsal photos, new bit of set, video, etc. Share your thoughts and reflections on your work and the work of others, be honest and open. Talk about things that interest and excite you, shows you're looking forward to.

Case study – Creative Producer and Marketing for Ablutions at Bristol Old Vic, FellSwoop theatre company.

6 months ago – got the show image. People need to understand what show is. Update FB and Twitter to pic of the show.

Over several months – FB and Twitter every day – photos, link to blog (updated every 2 or 3 weeks).

Every preview in radio, online or printed press – tweet in run up to it and post where the recordings/articles are.

If the show is an adaptation of novel – once a day tweet/FB a quote from the book.

Book publishers on Twitter – contacted them, then they began social media campaign too. Literature awards had twitter accounts. They retweeted.

Support each other with your network

Question: The difference between FB and Twitter. How do you link them because they're different.

Response: Can save time by linking them.

Twitter – 140 characters. Straight to the point. Be concise. No space for discussion. Facts and figures

FB – talk more widely, quote a review, start a discussion. Share photos and videos. More expansive and creative.

Question: How do you evaluate the success of social media campaigns? How many likes and retweets. Is it successful if people came? How would you know if people came via social media?

Response: Difficult to reference back to exactly why people bought tickets, but all you can do is encourage them to come, be confident in what you do and the ways you do it.

Kate Hazel

Diverse audience here today in terms of skills, experience of working in Europe, etc.

What qualifies me to talk about street art, buying and selling work in Europe.

No definitive answer to many generic questions, so it's good to have an opportunity to ask questions specific to you and your work.

Festival Director of Hat Fair (HF), Winchester, South East England. Began as busker's festival in 1974 – artists ask for money in the hat. – “hatting”. HF is the longest running street arts festival in the UK. Changed a lot. Still have a busking programme, but now through different European networks the scope and ambition of festival has grown, particularly over the last 10 years. Takes place first weekend of July every year for 3 days. Programmes artists from all over world, but particularly strong relationship with French artists through ZEPA. Works a lot with organisations in Northern France. Experience of ZEPA has given strong insight into similarities and differences between how work is created and sold in France, and vice versa.

Hat Fair – is the buyer. Can select a programme of work. Easier than being seller!

Alchemy Productions (AP)– Director. Allows to focus more specifically on certain companies and projects that don't sit within a festival. Works in Europe and the UK.

AP currently working with Maarten Verhoef and Denis Lafaurie on final stages of EU culture fund application - IOAL International Outdoor Arts Laboratory. Involves mobility, touring opportunities, artist development, creation of new piece of work with artist from 4 countries which will be developed and rehearsed in Australia.

General tips and advice:

- UK companies – translation and language. It matters! If you can't speak another language, do try! The effort goes a long way in terms of building relationships. Relationships start with language. Most UK companies successful within France have at least one fairly fluent French speaker in the company. Google translating an email – makes a big difference. Shows willing. Don't want to put up an immediate barrier. Try and make it as simple as possible from the start.
- French – UK doesn't have as much money as you! Lower your expectations when you tour in the UK. French standards are fantastic, but UK finds it difficult to provide same level – we're not subsidised in the same way in the UK. Not because we don't want to provide, we can't - please have an understanding of this.
- Fee and royalties. UK does not pay royalties. When French quote the cost, please include the royalties in this so we know the Global cost of the show.
- UK – give a price for one day for 3 shows. France and Belgium sometimes the price is per show. Sometimes this is not made clear.
- Know your audience, research the festivals. Don't try to sell the a show to an inappropriate festival.
- Building relationships – really important. If people know you and your work they're more likely to want to work with you. Personal relationships really help.
- Don't try to sell your show when you first meet someone! Big turn off.

- Research – find as much info out as possible about how a festival is funded. If you crack one partner in European network, it may open up 9 other festivals. Tell the festival how you fit into their funding priorities.
- Relationship and contact building is time consuming, so look for the key person who will be your advocate and will always sell your work at every network and meeting. Don't annoy that person!
- Terminology. France – street arts is common term. Holland – don't use the word 'street' – means a guitar playing busker. UK – outdoor arts, but also site specific. Tweak the terminology depending on your audience.
- France – look up National Centres for street arts, contemporary arts, etc. They are multi-faceted, will often have a main festival and associated events. Other European countries – showcase festivals are good but go to ones which programmers go to – GDIF, MintFest, Tarrega, but not Aureillac.

Question: What are the best publicity photos? Carnavalesque? Comic?

Response: ZEPA feel that English people want to make others laugh! Art as entertainment here, in France the Arts are mediums of poetry and politics. But UK work still sells in France – particularly small scale performances that entertain. Hard to find funding for political things in UK. Difference of how culture is viewed in this country, as opposed to France and Europe. UK – the Arts is an additional thing, France – culture at the heart of everything.

Question: Looking for booker for piece of children's theatre. People don't understand 'children's world'. Are there different networks for this work?

Response: Yes. Scandinavian countries good for touring things for children. Family friendly work, so therefore not targeted towards particular age groups. Small Wonders crosses networks. UK – try Llama Tree, Camp Bestival, Latitude. Spark Festival, Juice Festival – Newcastle, Imagine in Scotland. Starting to programme outdoor work as well as indoor.

Question: Is it worth getting a native speaker on board to create multi lingual performance?

Response: Depends how much language is in the show. Don't have to translate the whole show. Making the effort is worth it – the audience will appreciate it. What do you need to understand, but what can you convey with your passion and your body? If a French programmer wants you, they want you to be English! German and Spain will ask Dutch company to perform in English. Not in France! Making shows as visual and physical as possible will be more inviting to Euro Festivals.

Question: What's the attitude towards Disability arts within Europe?

Response: UK's at the top of the ladder. France is developing now. Holland – separate festivals for this. France – are there fundamental differences in understanding of equality that prevents discussion about targeted audiences? 5-6% of workforce has to be disabled, or the company has to pay a tax which is put back into helping disabled people. Does that law translate into visibility for

deaf/disabled artists? Generally – yes. Not sure about street arts. Likelihood of French booking disabled company? StopGap Dance company have performed in Amiens to fantastic response. Build the relationship so that they understand your needs.

Question: How is Hat Fair funded?

Response: Main funding – 3 year funding from ACE. (largest funder) INTERREG programme also fund – mobility of artists and producers. Small amount from local council. Difficult to get private funding. UK culture secretary wants us to be privately funded, but this is extremely difficult. Big companies only want to fund very high profile companies. Small organisations don't have the continued manpower to talk to private funders as much as would be required. In France – private funders can get reduction of taxes. 'Corporate Social Responsibility' in UK – again, difficult in terms of having the right person to tell the company why that funding opportunity is right for them

Question: Is there any change in artistic proposition for street arts?

Response: Without Walls – consortium which programmes work. They have many applications through open call – gives a good picture of the sector. A lot of Live Art – this is better subsidised than street arts. Bristol has a lot of site specific work. Also a lot of sound art, due to digital developments. KH – advocate for traditional street arts, not get carried away with 'new'. Good, solid street arts companies with everything in a suitcase. Feels like people are always looking for the new exciting thing. Need more small scale, tourable work. It's really hard to sell work and get commissions.

Question: What opportunities are out there?

Response: Local authorities are getting pots of money for specific things – opportunities for traditional street arts companies. Look at a show you've got then think about how that could be scaled up into a bigger idea with community involvement. Bristol – fantastic outdoor artists with no home. IOAL will work to create outdoor arts platform. Hope to work with Mayfest to expand their context of outdoor work. Hatters at Hat Fair can walk away with more money than the paid artists. This is only appropriate for specific hatting shows. Be wary of promoters who want you to work for free but tell you there will be promoters there. British Council – foot in the door – great. Really difficult to open the door. Can support European Festivals to invite UK artists.

Question: How do you choose your shows? Do you see them all or rely on a network of other people who've seen the shows?

Response: French programmers talk a lot in their networks. Relationship is important but quality of artistic work is as important. KH chooses work she likes, or audience will like, or if HF has a good site it will fit in. Tries to see things before, but also commissions new work, but will have seen that company's work previously. Also supports emerging artists – takes risk on a new company because they have potential. No call outs for festival. Programmes some through

ZEPA network, which uses criteria. Important to find people who will champion you. Some shows you fall in love with and doesn't matter what the costs or implications are. Doesn't see much of the hatting programme – those artists will be based all over the world. KH sees work at Tarrega, Edinburgh, La Strada – Graz, Chalon, Vivacity, Oeurl – Holland, Fete dans la Ville – Amiens.

Evaluation

- 2 different subjects –would only have come to the social media part. Social media was preaching to the converted.
- Not enough room to ask specific questions
- Speakers - unaware that street arts is very amicable world, already use street arts. They should have done some research
- Kate's talk really useful and specific, practical.
- 2nd part was too short. Needed more info from Kate.