

Project to develop the marketing capacity of voluntary arts organisations in Norfolk, 2005-6
Lead body : Creative Arts East
Final Report

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

The objectives of the project :

To provide small voluntary arts groups in Norfolk with useful marketing tools and techniques to promote their organisation, attract new volunteers, and develop audiences (in line with Objective 3.8a of the ChangeUp Norfolk VCS Infrastructure Plan).

The rationale for setting up the project:

One of CAE's strategic objectives is to provide support and training for the arts community in Norfolk and consequently the organisation has regular contact with over 50 arts organisations across Norfolk and provides two marketing services to these groups – distribution of publicity material through Arts Round-Up leaflet racks and access to the Artefax database of arts attenders who wish to be informed about arts events and activities. Through these activities CAE was aware of the need for marketing support, particularly amongst the smaller organisations which often lack marketing expertise.

One of CAE's strengths is its in-house marketing knowledge and expertise. However, CAE is not resourced to deliver regular marketing training and identified Change Up as an opportunity to develop a programme tailored for the specific needs of this part of the sector, which could be delivered in a limited time span and provide real benefits.

Match funding was provided by Norfolk Arts Partnership, a partnership between all eight Norfolk local authorities and Arts Council England East. It has a commitment to developing training for the arts sector and encouraging effective self-promotion by arts organisations.

Aims and objectives:

Research carried out by independent consultants, Cultural Intelligence, in 2002, and further consultation undertaken by CAE in Autumn 2003, demonstrated that organisations needed support with marketing in order to increase the number of active volunteers, and also the range and number of audience members. In September 2004 CAE ran a one-off marketing seminar. The evaluation forms showed that the seminar had sparked a great deal of interest and many people asked for more specific training in areas highlighted during the presentations.

CAE used this feedback, and anecdotal evidence, to define the aims and objectives of the project. It then assembled a group of freelance marketing consultants, each with a different area of expertise (media relations, print, research, marketing planning) and set them the task of designing an appropriate programme of three related workshops which would fulfil the aims of improving the marketing skills and knowledge of voluntary arts groups in Norfolk through training and mentoring, and develop a resource pack for future reference.

The aims and objectives did not alter over the life of the project.

QUANTIFIABLE BENEFITS

Achievements/outputs:

Between March and May 2006 a total of 83 individuals from over 30 local arts and voluntary groups attended 21 half-day workshops and 18 surgery sessions in seven venues across Norfolk. A full list of groups that registered for the workshops is attached.

A comprehensive Marketing Information Pack was created specifically for the sector by Daryl Moore of The Guild, one of the trainers, and was distributed to all workshop attenders.

Outcomes:

38 participants (45% of registered attenders) completed evaluation forms and of these 86% thought the workshops were 'very well delivered', and the other 13% thought them 'well delivered'. 82% thought the workshop handouts were 'very useful' and the other 16% thought them 'quite useful'.

From the completed evaluation reports respondents volunteered the following as an action they will do differently as a result of the workshops:

- *More focus on professional approach to marketing.*
- *Will not take the scattergun approach of old. I will focus on how to reach and keep the attention of new customers and get to know them and their interests.*
- *More focused planning and use of language.*
- *I will consider my target audience with more care.*
- *Have a clearer idea of content and who to target*

As a result of the programme 68% of respondents thought they would produce more effective print, 67% thought they would write better press releases, and 34% thought they would start a mailing list.

Lessons learnt:

- Do not offer 'free' training, better to describe it as 'fully-funded'.

- To avoid non-attendance ask organisations for refundable deposit, which is only cashed if participants do not attend, or fail to notify non-attendance in advance.
- Address the barriers to attendance created by timing, location of venue, days of the week and continue to provide a good range of options for participants.
- Provide separate sessions for those new to marketing and more advanced practitioners.
- Better to have shorter sessions (2 or 2.5 hours rather than 3.5hours).
- Focus on practical skills and techniques, and give out 'hints and tips'.
- Encourage networking aspect and collaborative working.
- Employ knowledgeable and inspiring session leaders who can share experience and give useful insights

Long-term benefits:

- At least 30 organisations will be more effective at publicising and marketing their activities and attracting new volunteers.
- At least 83 participants have gained a better understanding of the need for marketing planning and developed a range of marketing skills and techniques.
- CAE has developed a useful working relationship with experienced marketing specialists and session plans that can be easily re-vamped for future delivery.
- A comprehensive Marketing Information Pack has been produced which will be available through www.creativeartseast.co.uk and www.norfolkartspartnership.org. It may also form the basis of a Norfolk Information/ChangeUp Guide and be circulated more widely.
- Developed up-to-date contact list for future training initiatives.
- Closer relationship with Norfolk Arts Partnership

Added value

- Re-enforced CAE's role as a support and training organisation and developed links with a wider range of voluntary arts groups.
- Built links with other marketing specialists in the area.
- Identified main areas of concern for future training sessions – primarily about websites, direct marketing and e-marketing, event management, PR campaigns and the power of the image.
- Provided opportunity to pilot a new programme which can be delivered in the future.

Future activities

There are no immediate plans to continue this programme, although it may form part of a bid for BASIS funding later in the year. Other sources of support will also be investigated.

Groups booked on to marketing training sessions:

Tuesday Art Group
Weeting 21 Arts Co-operative
Westfield & Whinburgh Arts Group
Breckland Artists Group
The Wayland Partnership
Hellesdon and Sprowston Brass Band
Cley Poetry Circle
Garlic Theatre
King of Hearts Centre for the Arts
Hellesdon Players
St Lawrence's Centre, South Walsham
Norwich Society
Visceral Theatre
Warehouse Artists Studio
Norfolk Contemporary Art Society
Livewire Opera
Sprowston Heritage Group
Interface Project
Pulham Village Orchestra
Harleston and Waveney ArtTrail
Welborne Arts Festival
Harleston Festival
St Mary's Parish Council
Chet Valley Festival
Wymondham Music Festival
South Norfolk Operatic Society
Great Yarmouth Festival Committee
Quill Writing Group
ARC Artists
Gilbert & Sullivan Society
Trunch Concerts
Church Gallery, Cromer
North Norfolk Organisations for Visual Arts
Poetry next the Sea
Bognoggin Theatre
Great Yarmouth Choral Society
Singers Inspired
West Norfolk Artists Association
Castle Acre Artists