

EAST information sheets

03 Project management + contracts

Introduction

An important part of an artist's career is the ability to interact with institutions when necessary but alternatively to be able to work independently. This worksheet will introduce you to two areas where your independence means you have to carefully manage yourself in order to protect and further your career: **project management** and **contracts**. This worksheet will cover these two areas and help you maintain control over your career.

Project management

As an artist, you may reach a point in your career in which your creative output may exceed a simple transaction (e.g. selling a painting or performing in a play). This might be organising an independent exhibition or performance or even managing a month-long residency or complex project/commission.

Organising an event takes careful planning but the benefits can be rewarding:

- It allows you to control presentation and display your creativity on your own terms.
- Showcasing your own work can further your sales and profile at same time.
- Your employability may increase from your gained experience of admin/organisational roles. These new skills will look good on your c.v. and help you with further applications for funding or employment.

Organising a solo project can be very demanding. It may be advisable to work with a group of like-minded people. Working with others can create important alliance and experience of other practices. Your work may also benefit from the interaction with other

artists. Working with others shares the load and allows a wider range of skills in the group. But be careful: friends may let you down; others enthusiasm may decrease for various reasons; and, ultimately, you may end up picking up the pieces alone. Choose your associates carefully. As with all business projects it is wise to have a project leader. If this is you leading with a clear head in an organised manner will gain you respect and minimise argument and the risk of your projects failure.

We will break down the basics of project management into 4 areas: planning; budgeting/funding; promoting; and follow-up.

Planning the event

Careful planning is the key to a successful event. Initially, try and answer these 5 questions:

WHAT? What are the aims, objectives and intended audience of the event?

WHO? Are you a group or is this a solo project?

HOW? How will you select participants for your event. What are the criteria? Will you invite proposals or negotiate commissions? Will it be a closed exhibition?

WHERE? Do you have a particular venue in mind?

WHEN? Try and work out deadlines. Do you have a date in mind?

In addition to these questions start thinking about budgets/funding and marketing ideas.

Another important consideration is your alternative arrangements if things don't go to plan. Do you have alternative venues in mind? What if your budget is cut in half? Always try to have a plan B.

Budgets

See also EAST worksheet 04.

Managing a budget is paramount to managing a successful event. A well thought out budget, realistically priced to the last penny is your key to funding. It is important to price everything, including your time (see EAST worksheet 04) and

'freebies' as in-kind sponsorship. Any budget should include a 10% contingency fund. Keep an eye on your budget and re-evaluate as necessary. You may end up working for nothing but the last thing you want is to be paying for the event.

Further information

For a more detailed look at a budget breakdown look at Arts Council England's information sheet 'Organising an Event' - section 1.4 Budget. Available at www.arts.org.uk

Funding

Together with your carefully crafted proposal and realistically prepared budget you can now approach organisations for funding. This may be:

Public grants: E.g. arts funding, regional funding

Charities: You may need you to be a charitable organisation yourself (see EAST worksheet 02) but is worth researching.

Private/commercial sponsorship: This may include money but is more likely to be 'in-kind', i.e. drinks for an opening or exhibition space/lighting. This is where your contacts come in.

Sales at the event: Works (if applicable), catalogues/programmes, cds, dvds. Don't rely on this unpredictable income.

Secured funding should be placed in a separate bank account in the name of your event of organisation. Alternatively an institution (e.g. art centre) could act as banker to receive the funds/sponsorship for you.

When you know how much you will get - be prepared for it to be lower than you forecast - adjust your budget, reset any deadlines, organise the troops and get ready to promote your event.

Promoting

See EAST worksheet 06.

Send press releases for print press, radio, tv, etc. well ahead (magazines

require longer) and follow up a couple of weeks before the event. Try and target the person at the organisation in order to get a response. When phoning try and assess interest and don't be too pushy.

Send invites two weeks before. If you feel your mailing list is lacking try approaching an organisation in order to include yours with theirs. Include all those you sent a press release, everyone you approached for funding, other artists and friends and family. It may be an idea to leave some on the front desk of local galleries and to visit openings the weeks before and hand out your invites.

Follow-up

Document your event as soon as possible when it is at its best. Funding may require a report for a final payment. If not, it is still good practice to produce one in lieu of your next project/application.

Contracts

Where money is involved the law is there to make sure everyone involved is protected. A contract sets out terms to which everyone will adhere to by consent. In your artistic career confidently dealing with contracts shows you mean business. Using contracts can ensure you get paid and ensure your customer is aware of what to expect from you. It is of course vitally important that you **read and understand any contract that you sign. If you are unsure, or disagree, with any point do not sign.**

Briefly, contracts are used to:

- Provide a clear written record of what has been agreed, between whom, and when.
- Show that the parties all understand the terms.
- Define rights, liabilities and responsibilities of all parties (i.e., you and your customer).
- Record delivery dates, prices, payment terms (and the consequences of

breaching those terms).

- Make the ownership of work clear, and protect moral rights and copyright.

To protect yourself it is a good idea to provide your own contract for others you will be dealing with to sign. Get hold of a standard-form contract that you can adapt to your particular practice. Ask a friend or associate to look at their contracts for example. Or you could try acquiring standard-forms from The Artists Information Company (www.a-n.co.uk) who provide a contract-building toolkit (this requires a £30 annual subscription but allows access to other very worthwhile resources) or approach a visual arts specialist law firm such as Briffa (www.briffa.com).

The basics of contracts

- If you make an offer that is accepted, a contract has been made. If the offer is rejected, there is no contract.

- If you make an offer and withdraw it before it is accepted, there is no contract.

- If you make an offer, you cannot withdraw it once the other party has accepted it unless the other party consents to the withdrawal, since a contract has been made.

Further information

The Design Trust provide an excellent 'handbook' on their website which though tailored to designers can be useful to all arts. The section on contracts provides excellent information on professionally dealing with contracts. www.thedesigntrust.co.uk/chapter13.htm