



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
ARRANGEMENT FOR A
CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING
ARTS CENTRE

APACA CONFERENCE

2014

BRIEF

Is there a recipe for success in the business of presenting? What are the magic ingredients that create value? Based on his vast experience both in Australian and internationally, and a recent research project commissioned by APACA, David Fishel, Co-founder of Positive Solutions, will describe the key management models and attributes of arts presenters that are cooking with gas.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

I'm going to be the guest speaker that conference organisers hate. In considering the question I have been posed (Is there a recipe for success in the business of presenting?) I'm going to assert that it's probably the wrong question – and set out to answer a better one. But you'll see why shortly.

There are two parts to my presentation - before talking with Tim and Jacqui. The first gives a personal perspective on how we define success in an arts centre, and what are the factors or ingredients which determine whether a centre is perceived as successful. The second dips into the findings from a survey of APACA venue managers and directors which Positive Solutions undertook a few months ago.

When Rick Heath approached me he was particularly interested in the issue of whether organisational structure of an arts centre – the governance and management arrangements which frame the centre's operations – are clearly linked to success. Is there a 'best model' for an arts centre. The survey was partly intended to explore this issue – as well as identifying other issues on the minds of arts centre leaders currently.

My view of successful arts venue management has been much-influenced by the arts centre movement in the UK – for two reasons. First, because that's where my formative professional years were spent – including as Manager of Battersea Arts Centre. Secondly, because the arts centre movement developed as an alternative to traditional theatre models.

There were two traditional theatre models – one where outer-London or regional theatres housed a producing company, and this company generated nearly all the work that took place in the building. It emerged from the regional repertory movement in the early twentieth century. The second was the receiving house where there was no resident producing company but a high proportion of touring product. Over time both of these models showed their limitations. The producing theatre was too often a reflection of one individual's cultural tastes – the Artistic Director; and the program was sometimes very narrow – which meant, in turn, that the audience was usually pretty narrow too. The receiving house was subject to the availability of good and appropriate product – and much of what toured had little or no connection with local communities. Both also suffered from producing a low level of deployment of the asset - with the public only in the building for a few hours a day. And both of these models seemed to be predicated on the assumption that art – or more specifically theatre – is good for you, and that the limit of the theatre management's responsibility was to make it available, at an affordable price. The arts centre movement was a reaction, and was intent on democratisation, in three respects: a broadening of the program, a broadening of the audiences reached by the program, and a broadening of the ways – other than as audience members – that the community could engage with the arts and with each other. That's why Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of SBC, recently described the arts centre movement in the UK as a 'political' movement. Jude's philosophy was itself born out of her experience in community theatre and community arts, and the philosophy travelled with her to the West Yorkshire Playhouse and now to South Bank Centre. Interestingly her comments were made at a conference held in the UK just a few weeks ago, which was examining, a little anxiously perhaps, the rationale for arts centres.

50 arts centre leaders came together from across the country for a conference in May. They were there to ask if arts centres really are important to the cultural, artistic and social life of our towns and cities, and to explore the challenges currently facing arts centre leaders and the opportunities for their future. The focus of the conversation was not on defining what an arts centre is but on exploring what defines a good arts centre. As Allegra Galvin from Folkestone Quarterhouse highlighted, arts centres are not intrinsically important.

Participation is at the centre of everything we do, and we are not constrained by artform at a time when these categorisations seem less and less relevant



They only work when they are at the centre of a community and matter to people, and they only make real difference when they bring artists into the centre of that relationship with audiences. Arts centres are then able, as journalist Honour Bayes put it: “To make culture the beating heart of the community.”

So the reason I am not answering the question I was asked but – like a politician – answering a different one instead is the arts centres are clearly not just in the business of “presenting”. In fact, if presenting is all or even most of what they do they are failing to fulfil their destiny, and they will not be perceived as valuable by many members of their community.

I note by the way the provocation offered a year ago by Ricky Bryan of CTC in his blog:

Australian Performing Arts Centres: How we failed and don't even realise it

“We have almost universally failed in our mission to be centres of creativity and culture for our respective communities and what's more, no one even realises this or even cares. . . you would be flat out finding a venue in the country that devoted any more than 15% of its activity to genuine community engagement programs - by this I mean the commissioning of local works, education programs, community outreach programs and the like. What should be the main game for Arts Centres has become the sideline, the thing we do when we have time and spare money.”

Harsh words.

In the last couple of months I've interviewed a range of arts centre leaders in Australia and a couple in the UK, and explored the concept of a successful arts venue, as well as examining the question of what they see as the leadership needs of such a venue. I shared some of this with delegates at a VAPAC conference a few months ago – so my apologies if this is second time round for you.

Some very consistent messages came through about the characteristics of a successful venue, and these do give us a clear view of what ingredients for success are. Here's a few of them:

What makes a great arts centre

- > Making work
- > Establish links into the community
- > Accessibility
- > Characters and stories in the region
- > Familiar spaces played upon and reinvented
- > Home-grown work alongside the touring work

“NORPA has been blessed by being a theatre company in residence.”

“The venue is often a big, ugly square thing. How do you make it more vibrant? Pop up performance. Live music. Post show talks. Whole evening experience, wrapping around the central performance. We're trying to make the venue a destination. But you also have to break out and be in different places. We have to work on multiple fronts.”

What makes for a great arts centre – what is 'great' about it

- > making work
- > taking time to establish links into the community
- > consider the community not only as theatre goers but sub communities and groups
- > accessibility is important
- > theatre – there's a ceiling on how many people will attend. We need to appeal to a broader constituency
- > Who are the characters and stories in the region – that are most interesting; and how can we work with them to tell highly relevant



- > I acquired this philosophy from considering What is Theatre. also having training in circus, community theatre, street theatre and similar popular forms. These influenced me
- > NORPA company has a record of creating spectacle – large-scale operative sized works (under Lyndon T). I'd also been doing large-scale work
- > A lot of people like to see their familiar spaces played upon and reinvented e.g. disused railway station

Examples of community engagement and audience development

- > Urban Theatre Projects – they take local stories and amplify them
- > Punch Drunk (UK) make theatre experiential, event-based not just about the narrative
- > DF – receiving house doesn't cut it then ?
- > JL – we're wrestling with this at NORPA
- > The old touring pattern is uninteresting
- > We need the balance of the home-grown work alongside the touring work
- > We have a large area, and vibrant (280,000 catchment). May not be as possible in smaller regional areas
- > It's effective to have both local and intouring
- > My Radio Heart – artists with disabilities. Season is selling so well, so this will spill over into demand for this show

What makes for a great arts centre – what is 'great' about it

- > We have emerging clarity on this – it's relevance and impact (for the community)
- > If it's sell lots of tickets it's 'relevant' but may not have impact
- > It's often linked to individuals – people who 'get it', especially within a local government-owned environment, where bureaucratic pull is very great
- > The need to have a very clear vision of what the place needs to be
- > Relevance? Giving a voice to our region, at its simplest telling local stories, reflecting issues of concern, reputation for great shows – I live in a community where you can see greats theatre (plus work on council corruption scandal or other relevant stories)
- > Local relevance but universal resonance
- > Impact – this is a big issue, how you evaluate this. Different frames for considering this
- > We're doing some branding benchmarking – how people feel about IPAC
- > We have IPAC and Merrigong Theatre – through perceptions of those brands we get a sense of our impact. But it's a difficult question, a lot of it is anecdotal (unprompted community responses)
- > Our strengths is we know our audience quite well
- > Starting to produce work changed our knowledge of the community greatly e.g. open readings attended by a sample of the subscribers – getting early feedback
- > 90% of our program is presenting other peoples' work – but Merrigong is signature work
- > Examples of community engagement and audience development
- > Stephen Champion at Bathurst – interesting work, long-term community engagement not just one-offs. Partnership with Patch Theatre Company
- > [put up SBC residents and other residents - you need partnerships, and ability to develop these] Multi-layered and over years
- > Best IPAC community engagement – working with the Disability Trust. Brought two strands together – community engagement and ??



- > Some is attached to programming e.g. Alzheimer's' linkage, but other elements are in the community and not directly connected to mainstream program e.g. drama classes in the community. These are not mutually exclusive – they're both part of the life of IPAC
- > [add Jim Beirne story]. Partly about how we define our mainstream season – it is partly about just giving off-centre work mainstream production values so it can stand up against other program elements

What makes for a great arts centre – what is 'great' about it

- > Vibrancy, connectedness and relevance to its community context – there may be many communities locally, and it has to know who it's aiming for
- > SAC nearly 40 years – and the first 'arts centre' of its kind in Australia (started as a 'community' and 'arts' centre – but evolved into the latter)
- > Want to attract the arts-interested but also people who want to use the building for other reasons
- > We call for EOIs on exhibitions – try to maintain an openness
- > Other arts centres – they're diverse. Overseas I tend to be in the larger metro centres e.g. Barbican; Artspace Toronto, org that owns a number of buildings and operates studios and live-work spaces, and runs programs in its various centres (not just arts, but food and other themes. CEO of Artspace believes in the mixed program, with a broad definition of cultural
- > We connect across our programs, avoid silos – artists in studios make work that is sold through the commercial galleries

Examples of community engagement and audience development

- > The Dance program connects through to youth-based Kickstart Arts, with the African refugee community, with TSO and hip-hop
- > one element feeds another, and grows it
- > community sectors that we would not normally get to are touched by these programs
- > normal TSO concerts would never draw in, for example, African community – but our community engagement work gives them these connections
- > Jamie at Kickstart and Kelley Drummond-Hawthorne (of SAC) are at the heart of this. Kelley spent 20 years in US/ overseas including Florida – this gave her breadth of experience and awareness of arts education possibilities
- > Co-creation – partnerships, see above, but also:-
- > We commission major exhibitions in Long Gallery. Usually projects start with CAST (contemp arts touring), which is peer assessment/interest – this creates opps to get work out of Hobart to rest of Tas and nationally
- > e.g. Made in China Australia – commissioned Greg Leong, going to 10 venues outside Tas. Interests us to see how communities elsewhere respond to locally-generated work – are they interested in the same issues
- > Testing Ground – Aboriginal-based
- > Can send documentation on Made in Ch and Testing Ground

Of course, I could quote many other venues around the country that are working hard and succeeding at broadening the ways in which the venue connects, and what this means for the range of activities which are organised – Bathurst, Frankston, Parramatta, Brisbane Powerhouse – and I'm only quoting ones with which I have some knowledge or familiarity. There'll be many others.

If there's great consistency in the perspectives on success factors there is also a consistency in what it means for the role of the arts centre leader. Let me cite first the perspectives of two arts centre leaders – Stephen Champion from Bathurst and Jim Beirne from Live Theatre in Newcastle – that's the UK Newcastle.

What is notable about listening to Stephen talk about his role is how much emphasis he places on external linkages. Community engagement is at the heart of Bathurst's approach, and Stephen summarises the key factors



in this as:

- > Relationships with tertiary/ education. BMEC has a Cultural Cooperation Agreement with the university (based on Wagga model)
- > Close relationships with RADOs – being on the board of Regional Arts NSW it becomes very clear how lucky we are in NSW that our touring has devolved to the regions; we really need to work very closely with the regional arts board but cherish the fact that we're separate. Working very closely with Arts Out West makes a huge difference
- > Cross-over between our programs so that they all feed into each other
- > Giving the community strong networks that gives them opportunity to feel connected

When I spoke with Rosemary from Salamanca a few days ago she used almost identical words to these.

Live Theatre in Newcastle has a fascinating 40 years behind it. On the banks of the River Tyne it is one of a handful of England's leading new writing venues – it originally started as a theatre producing only new work. But it now has a multi-faceted life as an arts centre as well, and with extraordinary diversity of activity, spaces, financing sources and partnerships.

www.beaplaywright.com launched in November 2010 and now has an active online community of over 100 budding playwrights from around the world learning the craft of playwriting. The philosophy of the course is not to provide a 'how-to' of playwriting, rather a stimulating environment where students are asked to think about their art and craft in a more intense way, to help writers find their own voice. Students on the [solo version](#) of the course which costs £95, work through the online modules, whereas students pay £495 for the [interactive version](#) of the course, which also offers fortnightly online discussions and practical feedback from experts at Live Theatre including a detailed critique of their final play.

The Broad Chare is a partnership between Live Theatre and 21 Hospitality Group investing a proportion of its turnover back into the work of Live Theatre. Opened in May 2011, The Broad Chare is a proper pub serving proper beer and proper food and was recently awarded a Michelin Guide Bib Gourmand. It is a new kind of 'old' pub: all the best bits of traditional inn-keeping, given a fresh, modern touch. It's warm friendly and welcoming. Housed over two floors the main dining area, with 56 seats, is situated on the first floor. Downstairs is the bar and separate 'snug' where snacks are served daily.

The Schoolhouse, located behind Live Theatre in Trinity Court is a new office spaces for creative businesses, forming part of a creative hub lead by Live Theatre. A total of five office units across three floors are available for small creative and digital businesses to rent. As a social enterprise income from renting the property will be channelled back into the mission of Live Theatre, supporting its artistic and educational work.

You need money. But money follows good ideas.

Jim Beirne, the CEO at Live Theatre, spends a great deal of time networking in the creative, business and political communities. He sets himself a weekly target for new face to face contacts. At a conference last year in Manchester I listened to Jim describe the pervasiveness, messiness and unpredictability of his networking efforts. You never know, he says, where each new contact is going to lead you, or what opportunities it might open up. Jim subscribes to the Jackson Pollock school of networking. Here's the image to use to describe his process:

Jackson Pollock image

Now, there are a couple of implications for the venue leader who is going to be active in partnership building and securing new resources and opportunities for their venue and their community. First, all the basic organisational functions have got to be properly covered. If your administrative, financial, HR, planning and technical house is not in order you can't spend all your time out and about – the organisational will collapse around you. Secondly, this implies proper support – ideally a capable No 2 – but in the absence of that a core staff team who can carry the load while the leader is out exploring new frontiers. Effective leadership cannot be delivered as a solo effort. It takes a team.

Other venue leaders have described dimensions of leadership beyond external networking and partnership building



“Leadership is something you have to take. I believe you can create leaders, but it has to be something you want badly enough to go and get.”

Leadership

- > Bold vision
- > Collaboration
- > Listen, respond but also lead from the front
- > Build a compelling story
- > Make decisions that are beyond what the audience knows it wants

Leadership

- > Don't let arts be silo-ed
- > Make connections
- > Be clear about the distinctiveness
- > Experienced staff who are sharing the drive to deliver
- > It takes time to make a difference

Nature of leadership – Julian Louis NORPA

- > People look to me for creative adventurous choices, and smart concepts for sustainability. Take risks, but balance with the business
- > I want to make more work and appeal to wider constituencies, thousands of people. No point putting loads of effort and only 500 people see it
- > Theatre needs to think about how it connects to larger groups

Nature of leadership – David Lloyd

- > Everyone has to come along – so leader needs to build collaboration
- > Need to communicate, and build a compelling story
- > Need to make decisions that are beyond what the audience knows what it wants
- > Listen, respond but also lead from the front
- > There needs to be a bold vision of what you can do
- > Think big

Nature of leadership – Simon Hinton

- > I take seriously my role as advocate for the art and artist
- > Resist temptation of making this secondary to business and infrastructure – keep the art in focus
- > Need to be clear about what is special about what happens in this building – a clear case
- > The reason independent works for IPAC is investment in managing the key relationship. We don't attend lots of meetings in Council – don't want to be treated as a CI middle manager
- > Speak passionately about what we do, and therefore influence – then people take us seriously
- > Need to be willing to change people

Nature of leadership – Jill Smith

- > a key role is to make sure you are capitalising on links across government, don't let arts be silo'd
- > in Geelong we have the 21 Regional Alliance which enables us to make connections across other stakeholder groups



- > arts and culture has to be seen as part of a new Geelong
- > local challenges in regional communities can divert attention from the arts
- > arts and culture is a business, like anything else
- > Leadership within the venue – we have a lot of casual staff
- > GPAC grew up as a community-based organisation, but needs to present a bigger picture, and think beyond Geelong. Because of the Agenda we have attracted some experienced staff who are sharing the drive to deliver the Precinct
- > For many people running venues the only product they see is ten minutes snips at Long Paddock, and that's small scale stuff, so they're afraid of it
- > Main criterion for buying a show in is cost – not audience or policy framework
- > GPAC made a decision to move away from that and work in partnership with major companies and present only the best – we don't buy much from Long Paddock these days. The quality of work is much higher – though still hard to get the audiences

Ask the question who has an artistic or programming policy. If not why not – it gives a structure for decision-making. Got to be selective to change the balance of work. Maybe the first step in leadership.

APACA SURVEY

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Respondents were asked to describe the mission or purpose of their venue. 43 people answered this question, four people skipped.

For the majority of respondents, the main purpose of their venue was to deliver high quality arts experiences and opportunities to the community. The other main themes to emerge were:

- > Provide a high-quality venue where people can see, present, and explore the arts
- > Contribute to the cultural, economic and social vibrancy of the region
- > Facilitate capacity building of local performers and organisations
- > Community hub/ public meeting space
- > Function and conference venue for a range of private, community and commercial activities

Comments from respondents included:

To enhance the quality of life in the region through the provision of a fit-for-purpose performing arts venue; services and events that meets the needs and aspirations of our community.

To provide diverse theatrical entertainment and superior event facilities and services to the community and surrounds, maintaining its status as the leading theatre and function centre in the region.

To be a cultural hub that produces and delivers programs that engage, enrich and excite our communities and audiences.

To facilitate capacity development of community live arts – organisations and performers.



INCOME

BREAKDOWN OF INCOME STREAMS

Survey respondents were asked to provide a rough breakdown of their main income streams for the last financial year (2013), indicating each as a percentage of total income.

CHANGING INCOME STREAMS

Asked to indicate if the income streams/ funding sources for their arts centre are changing, 51% responded in the affirmative. 49% said they were not. 35 people answered this question

- > Increased revenue streams from other sources (box office, hirers, success securing funding, commercial activity)
- > Reduction in local, state and/ or government funding due to economic insecurity, policy changes and other factors

State Government is changing its funding models. Sponsorship is drying up in the current economic climate.

Less commercial hire of the venue, more ticket sales but from a higher number of performances, no direct state or federal funding, need to consider better partnerships.

Slowly the government subvention is lowering and we have to become more commercial.

Increasingly successful at obtaining external funding.

SURPLUS

Asked if their organisation was allowed to retain any surpluses generated, thereby building accumulated reserves, 64% were not allowed to do this. 36% of respondents said that they were allowed to retain surplus revenue. 33 people answered this question and 14 skipped.

APACA Economic Impact 2013 – 33% said they could retain their surplus

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asked if they had medium to long term asset management/ capital expenditure processes in place, 61% of respondents indicated that they did. For 39%, capital expenditure was devised on an ad hoc basis and depended upon annual resources.

A number of respondents also provided additional comments, these included:

We are currently in strategic planning with governing body to put a clearer process in place.

We beg and sometimes we receive.

This is a change for us and a ten year capital works/ asset management plan is just starting to replace the ad hoc situation we have been in for the last four years.

We recently commissioned a Masterplan for the venue with a focus on capital maintenance and improvement.

Asset Management Planning is in place; however, available funds do not currently meet requirements to support the deliverables within the plan. Ad hoc decisions regarding expenditure are made based on areas of immediate priority.

Long term asset management plan exists but there is no guarantee of funding.



ASPIRATIONS

Respondents were asked about their aspirations for their venue/ organisation, in particular they were asked to describe the types of productions and events they want to be holding, both currently and in the next few years. 35 people answered this question, 12 skipped.

Some common themes to emerge included:

- > Increased venue hire (weddings, conferences, other functions)
- > Creation of in-house content
- > Greater capacity to co-produce works from/ with the community
- > Increased outreach/ community programs
- > Venue refurbishments/ renovations
- > Present larger scale programs
- > More festivals/ outdoor programming
- > Attract a broader audience demographic
- > Demographic-specific programming (i.e. for 20-40 market; for seniors; for children)

Other respondents provided overarching statements about their aspirations, including:

We want to be a true cultural hub where people want to come and have a good time. To do this we are expanding our target audiences through widening the appeal of our program.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

Respondents were asked to list up to four programs/ services that their venue currently provides that they do well. A large number of respondents nominated their annual season or program as a strength, with many commenting on the diversity of their programming.

WEAKNESSES

Asked to list up to four programs/ services they currently provide that could be improved, respondents gave a variety of responses. The most common responses are tabled below

35 people answered this question

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Respondents were asked to select the response that best represented the corporate structure of their centre. The largest percentage of centres were local government operated (62%). 11% were a company limited by guarantee and 11% were an incorporated organisation. The number of responses in each category is tabled below.

OPTION	NO. RESPONSES
Local government operated	23
Statutory authority	2
Part of an education institution	3
Business unit of a state or federal government department	1
Company limited by guarantee	4
Incorporated association	4



63% of all centres are owned by Local Government which also directly manages 80% of these centres. This equates to about two thirds of the entire sample being owned and operated by Local Government operated by Local Government

STRENGTHS OF CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Asked to describe the key strengths of their corporate structure, respondents gave a variety of responses.

Those that were local government operated nominated financial support, in particular having Council underwrite financial loss and predictability of cash flow, as the main strength of this arrangement. Other strengths included:

- > Employment security
- > Management/ strategic support from internal corporate services/ parent organisation, e.g. IT, finance, training and human resources
- > Building maintenance/ capital works
- > Strong support from Director/ CEO

Those organisations that were a company limited by guarantee or an incorporated association reported dynamism and professionalism, as well as independence and ability to manage their own organisation, as major strengths.

Our committee of management is dynamic and consists of a diverse group of professional people across a wide age range . . . the organisation is really strong and not limited by a parent organisation/ structure.

Not bound by Local Government act which enables us to maximize commercial opportunities (i.e. purchasing, sponsorship and acquisitions).

Not bound by Council policy, so more agile as an organisation with decisions being made quicker.

The two organisations set up as statutory authorities both cited autonomy from Council processes as a strength of their structure:

Autonomy, to some extent, from council process and red tape.

Autonomy from funding body.

Those organisations that were part of an education institution nominated financial security and partnerships with other university partnerships as key strengths.

University underwrites the finances of the Centre - so not running a cash-flow budget.

Very well supported by the institution. . . . [we are] seen as a very important player in the University's engagement strategy.

Partnerships with wide range of University departments.

WEAKNESSES OF CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Asked to list up to four weaknesses of, or areas of improvement for, their corporate structure, respondents gave a variety of responses. 35 answered question, 12 skipped.

For those organisations owned and operated by Local Government, having to follow Council protocol and processes was a significant weakness. Other weaknesses include:

- > Inability to undertake own branding and marketing
- > Counteracting negative or outdated images of Council
- > Lack of flexibility and speed in decision making
- > High degree of intervention
- > Politics



Arts centre does not always fit into the procedures and planning of Council system.

Council branding undermines market position.

Likely to be a higher degree of political intervention on day to day operations.

Local Councillors that drive you insane.

Those organisations that were incorporated associations and companies limited by guarantee, the reliance on strong organisational capacity and lack of established resources were potential weaknesses.

Structure is largely reliant on a quality CEO and Chair. Get this wrong and its game over.

Real danger of making policy up on the go or operating without key policies in place due to the fact that you don't have the same corporate history as an organisation as large as Council.

In addition, one respondent commented that:

Being a step removed from Council places greater pressure on the need to maintain positive relations with Mayor, Councillors and senior council officers to ensure that they are aware of what your organisation does.

Asked if their current corporate structure is the best available or most appropriate for their arts centre, 78% of respondents replied in the affirmative. 22% replied that it was not.

The IQ of a Board is much superior to that of elected Councillors - which causes challenges.

An independent board of management funded by Council would probably work better.

Incorporated association

It is the best model for performing arts centres as have power and autonomy. LGA owns the building so has a healthy vested interest.

Statutory authority

We need distance from government to gain control over rising, unfunded costs such as enterprise agreement, enforced suppliers of IT and annual reporting requirements out of step with an arts organisation of this size.

Business unit of a state or federal government department

An arm's length corporate structure would provide flexibility in a business based environment.

IDEAL CORPORATE STRUCTURE MODEL

The majority of respondents felt that the ideal model would vary depending on the type of organisation, its size, its art form, location and other factors.

My very real belief is that there is no one ideal model. Every venue must aspire to have the most supportive model and this will come about through identify the support the venue needs through a needs analysis. In house Council management can be highly supportive, but so can a Pty Ltd Co.

During my career I have operated under a Council department structure, a council department with an advisory board and as company limited by guarantee and my preference is overwhelmingly the latter. Whilst there are risks associated with autonomy, the benefits far exceed this. If the Board composition and staff structure are right then decisions are able to be made in a timely manner, artistic risk is able to be encouraged, commercial advantages can be maximised and philanthropic opportunities can be explored.

In 1993 Positive Solutions undertook a study for the UK government . . . [SLIDE]

The conclusion was that no one form of management was inherently better than the others - the same as the message that appeared to emerge from our APACA survey. Nevertheless, for reasons which were faintly glimpsed



in some survey responses I think the current dominant model of venues which are local government owned and operated – within direct line management procedures – may wane over the next few years or so.

I think there will be a continuing trend towards small government and a rising pressure to generate resources from third parties and new business streams – the trail blazed by entrepreneurs like Jim Beirne at Live Theatre. In the not-for-profit sector new forms of financing are being explored, an increasing attention to strong balance sheets and retained reserves is in evidence, and slowly but surely boards are becoming more professional, more strategic and more commercially capable. There may even be new legal mechanisms established which provide greater flexibility such as the ability to pay dividends – initial steps in this direction have been taken in the US and UK through the social enterprise and impact investing movements. And, of course, fundraising is becoming a normal part of the income mix for many arts organisations, venues included.

The current local government model makes many of these opportunities more difficult to access. There is likely to be increasing pressure for venues to be operated at arms length or completely independently.

Finally, I want to return to the ingredients for success.

I have emphasised that a successful venue will be advancing on many fronts, not only in relation to the product on the stage – and that we have to make our rhetoric about community impact and relevance real, it has to be visible and evident in where we spend our time and money.

I have asserted that the successful venue leader will be spending a great deal of her or his time outside the venue, making connections and garnering resources; and that a precondition is that there is a trusted No 2 or a senior team who has the capacity to manage the many routine/ hygiene factors that keep a building-based venue operating efficiently -- the fundamental industry skills – asset management, HR, technical support, financial planning and control, marketing, and so on.

Now I want to go all New Age and soppy. A further ingredient for success is not just respect but affection. For the team around you, the team reporting to you, and those to whom you report. Thinking back on my own experience, but also reflecting on those I've interviewed and worked with as a consultant, the high-performing teams and leaders I've known are not only positive, they like each others' company. Where fear or disrespect rule you cannot, for long, have a successful venue. The venue leader is not solely responsible for this – but without their encouragement and example – without leading from the front, and taking some personal risk this supportive culture is unlikely to develop.

Which brings me to why we all need to remember the fearless child in us.





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