



Cultural Enterprise
E-bulletin Evaluation
July 2005

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1 Introduction

The Cultural Enterprise e-bulletin is a free, weekly publication which started in 1999. The e-bulletin is a digest of news, information and opportunities which are relevant to self-employed practitioners and small businesses working within, or offering advice to the creative industries in Wales.

The e-bulletin is received by over 1,350 subscribers weekly.

2 Aims of the evaluation

- To find out what the subscribers think about the format of the e-bulletin
- To find out what the subscribers think about the content of the e-bulletin
- To find out what outcomes (if any) arise from subscribing to the e-bulletin
- To ask subscribers their opinions on future developments and to find out what they know about other Cultural Enterprise services.

3 Method

During December 2004, subscribers were given the option of responding to an evaluation questionnaire (see appendix a). The questionnaire was accessed via a link from the e-bulletin to a webpage. Subscribers were given the option to respond over four weeks. Once a subscriber had responded, the link to the questionnaire did not appear and subscribers were unable to answer more than once.

To encourage the subscribers to respond, a prize draw was linked to the completion of the questionnaire. The prize was a one year subscription to a creative industries related publication.

A total of 151 responses were collected, accounting for 11% of the total subscribers.

4 Summary of the results

Language of the respondents

The questionnaire was available in both Welsh and English. Three respondents chose to answer through the medium of Welsh.

4.1 Format

Question 1 enquired about the format of the e-bulletin.

97% of respondents agreed that it was simple and straightforward to sign up to the e-bulletin

96% felt that e-bulletin is concise

92% agreed that the format is easy to follow

When offered a choice of a monthly, fortnightly, weekly or less frequent e-bulletin, 71% said they would prefer the e-bulletin to remain a weekly publication.

Respondents were asked whether they would prefer plain text or HTML. 54% stated that they preferred a plain text document, and 41% preferred HTML version. Comments received included the following:

- “[The] content is fine but awkward to navigate because of the plain text format. Also, I find it very bland visually and without a direct link to each, the individual categories are unconstructive” and
- “The simplicity of an email format, which might seem unsophisticated, has actually proved the most accessible way of getting information.”

It would be possible to address these issues by providing a choice of HTML and plain text formats. The HTML bulletin would reflect the simplicity of the plain text document with the addition of a hypertext linked index and links back to the index, providing additional navigation options.

4.2 Content

Question 2 enquired about the content of the e-bulletin and its usefulness to subscribers.

93% agreed that the e-bulletin provides them with new and useful information. 89% feel that it is useful as an ongoing tool, 59% said the information helps with their business and 56% agree it helps with their creative practice. In terms of relevance to the individual, 23 % felt that over half the e-bulletin is of direct relevance to them each week.

This suggests that the e-bulletin is used by subscribers as a means of keeping abreast of opportunities and news within the cultural industries as a whole rather than as an art form specific resource. This is corroborated by the following comments:

- “As the operator of a craft centre, I am on the periphery of most of the activity covered by the bulletin but find it a valuable insight into what others are doing elsewhere”
- “It provides me with info that would take me hours to find on my own – not everything applies to me but some do”
- “I am a figurative painter and a mother of 3 therefore a lot of the conferences/residencies are not practical for me. Currently I use your service for submission and competitions and for my partner’s music”

When asked if there were specific topics which they would like to see more information about 13% responded saying they would like to see more information on “theatre and dance”, “textiles”, “photography”, sponsorship and networking.

It may be possible to provide more information on these subjects however it is not possible to ensure that the e-bulletin is 100% relevant to 100% of the subscribers at all times.

38% and 40% respectfully feel they want to see adverts for other client’s services and products and over half the respondents also indicated that they would like more information on opportunities based in the UK and on an international level. 74% of respondents stated that they would like to see more job opportunities in the e-bulletin.

Overall, however, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement “I like the e-bulletin as it is and do not want it to change” 41% agreed and 44% disagreed.

On the issue of the bilingualism, 27% requested more bilingual items. Cultural Enterprise has in the past sought to find funding for the translation of the e-bulletin. This has not been possible and the policy has been to include bilingual information where this available and where the opportunities are aimed at Welsh speakers.

The responses indicate that there is no need to radically change the editorial policy of the e-bulletin. It may be possible in future to develop additional services in response to the wider needs of the subscribers, for example, a jobs bulletin.

4.3 Outcomes

When asked about why they subscribe to the e-bulletin, 91% of respondents indicated that they do so to maintain their general awareness. It is also used as a source of information on training, legislation, and funding. In all cases, respondents were more interested in information relating to the creative industries rather than business, for example:

74% were interested in Creative industry training opportunities
58% were interested in Business related training opportunities
58% were interested in marketing opportunities
56% were interested in Creative Industry funding opportunities
54% were interested in other funding opportunities
51% were interested in commissions
54% were interested in new legislation affecting the creative industries
26% were interested in new legislation affecting business generally
58%) were the most popular reasons for subscribing, with funding opportunities

These responses indicate that the e-bulletin should concentrate on information of direct relevance to the creative industries and less on general business issues.

Subscribers also use the e-bulletin to inform others, colleagues and friends, about opportunities relating to their field. In total, respondents estimated that they pass the e-bulletin and/or selected items to 187 people¹.

37% of those surveyed have used to the e-bulletin to make new contacts or collaborate with partners
30% have attended conferences
28% have attended a course or undertake training
26% feel they have improved an existing business
15% have used the e-bulletin to secure funding and promote their work effectively
10% have used it to apply for a residency or commission.

Those who have not yet had the opportunity to use the information in the e-bulletin to improve their practice or business tended to assume that they would do in the future:

- “We have only been receiving the bulletin a short time, but we’re confident that it will help us in many ways” and
- “I occasionally find information in the bulletin which might assist me in the future to secure funding for my projects”

¹ This figure was calculated by adding the number of people respondents estimated passing the e-bulletin on to in an electronic and paper format.

While 56% of the respondents stated that they subscribed to keep informed about creative industries funding, 15% had managed to secure funding as a result of something they had read in the e-bulletin.

Respondents were asked about the other sources of information which they use in conjunction with the Cultural Enterprise e-bulletin.

A-N magazine 23%
ACW e-bulletins 15%
Arts Training Wales 8%
Creft (ACW) 7%
Crafts 7%
Voluntary Arts Wales 7%

Where material for the e-bulletin is sourced should therefore be kept in mind when selecting entries and crediting the information sources could help minimise repetition by enabling subscribers to avoid reading the same item twice - although we can not stop other organisations using our e-bulletin to inform their own publications!

When asked to rate the e-bulletin:
33% agreed that the e-bulletin is good
42% agreed that the e-bulletin is very good
15% agreed that the e-bulletin is excellent.

4.4 Other

In the fourth section respondents were asked questions about their awareness and use of other Cultural Enterprise services along with questions about other services Cultural Enterprise could provide in the future.

85% knew that the e-bulletin is archived on the website.
60% knew about the information service and 29% had actually accessed the service
61% knew about the Mentoring service and 18% had actually accessed the service
74% knew about the website and 43% had actually visited it
56% knew about the Information Centre and 13% had visited the centre
41% knew about the consultancy service and 7% had accessed the service

The figures for actual use of the Cultural Enterprise services are low, however, only a small percentage (25%) of the subscribers are actual clients of the Cultural Enterprise service. This may be an area for consideration when marketing the service.

Question 4.3 asked for the respondent's opinion on the idea of developing a forum facility on the Cultural Enterprise website.

83% were in favour of a forum

74% thought it should be used for building networks

42% thought it should be a marketing platform for Cultural Enterprise client's services

32% thought it should be used to develop supply chains and joint marketing initiatives.

Few people commented on the focus and use of the forum, however, those that did were split between the desire to "share intellectual capital" and a concern that it could turn into a "moaning shop".

As the vast majority of respondents are in favour of a forum, Cultural Enterprise will investigate the development of such a service. A strong editorial policy would need to be established and, as is common practice with most forums, we would reserve the right to remove material. It is also worth considering the development of different threads of discussion, for example, networking, help and advice, adverts, services and events, job listings, and perhaps even a designated "moaning shop"!

Comments and Responses

- "I sometimes wonder how information is gathered – is it just what is sent in? There seem to be certain areas that are very strong, e.g. film and new media. Maybe if CE was more proactive there is more information in other fields too?"
- "Opportunities mainly for South Wales, can we have more information for North"
- "It's a good initiative but is not reaching the growth sector of the over 50s"

Cultural Enterprise gathers its information from a wide range of publications, e-bulletins, and websites, as well as directly from organisations and suggestions made by clients. The aim is to include information that is relevant to all of the creative industries, either by including information relating to a specific field or by including entries relevant to a wide range of fields. The policy of proactively sourcing information will continue to ensure that the service meets the needs of the widest range of clients. Subscribers are welcome to make suggestions if they feel the e-bulletin is not meeting their needs.

5 Conclusion

On the whole, the e-bulletin is a well received and is an appreciated source of information. This is illustrated by some of the comments:

- “I find it v.useful to keep informed and aware of opportunities for visual arts, part of the ‘tool box”
- “I seriously think it is an excellent source of a wide range of information”
- “Life is a lot easier with it – it would take me weeks to gather all that information myself”
- “I think it is an extremely useful service that the rest of the UK could benefit from”

From the responses Cultural Enterprise will (subject to the availability of resources):

- 1 Investigate the possibility of providing a HTML option for readers
- 2 Provide information on how to find out about job opportunities
- 3 Continue to provide information which appeals to the widest range of clients while also addressing the needs of sector specific readers.
- 4 Investigate the development of a forum
- 5 Market Cultural Enterprise information and mentoring services to the e-bulletin subscribers
- 6 Continue to include bilingual entries when a translation is provided