



Cultural Enterprise Factsheet

Marketing your Creative Business

Marketing is essential for an arts-based business or organisation to survive. It has two main functions; firstly, as a tool used to encourage people to buy your product or service, and secondly, as a process used by the customer to understand their relationship to the product you are selling/providing. For example, a film trailer provides the film industry with an opportunity to sell its up-coming features to a potential audience and allows the audience to decide if they coming would like to see the films being advertised. This factsheet is designed to help you start marketing your creative business.

Where to Start?

When you begin to start a marketing plan, it is easy to become distracted by the desire to move forward quickly and make marketing materials. Although websites and leaflets are common marketing tools, they can also be expensive mistakes if they are not aimed at your target audience or seen by the “right” people. Marketing can be as simple giving professional contacts a business card, providing them with the opportunity to contact you in the future.

Think carefully about how much money and time you want to spend on marketing before deciding what to do. If you are not sure about what will work for your business, think about the approaches taken by other companies, which do you think is effective? What style of marketing do you feel comfortable with? Are you good at selling to people in person, or would it be better to sell through a gallery or shop? How would your customers like to be approached?

A useful way to start to answer these questions is to define what your “brand” and your desired customer base. The following points will help you develop a strong base to work from.

Brand

For many creative practitioners, *YOU* are the brand. In other words, you need to define your professional persona; who are you? What are you selling? Is there a background to your practice? Who needs to know? Good examples of people who have created their own brand are Tracey Emin, Shani Rhys Jones, Bryn Terfil, Julian McDonald or Eddie Ladd.

All of these individuals have developed their professional name in a way that gives audiences a clue about what to expect. This relies on the fact that they present a coherent message to potential customers that runs through every piece

of their marketing. Even if your practice involves more than one artform or product, it is still possible to produce this coherent message; marketing messages for Bryn Terfil the Opera singer and Bryn Terfil the festival organizer both present the same image even though they are very different products.

Product

It can be hard to look at your product objectively, but it is important to identify its USP (unique selling point), the reason why someone would want to spend money on your product or service. What are you selling to your customers? Is it a product, ideal, or experience? What are you offering that others don't?

Place

Being able to place your product/service within the market is incredibly important for the development of a marketing plan and business as a whole. A ceramicist, for example, must have a clear idea of where their product sits on a scale of bespoke handmade products on one side, and Ikea on the other, as well as their position on the professional ladder – a recent graduate as opposed to a practitioner with twenty years experience. This helps to denote what you are asking your customers to buy into.

Are there other markets that you could look into? If you are a portrait painter, could you also paint homes, favourite views, produce work for restaurants and hotels? Would visiting trade fairs, craft fairs or festivals help you to find new customers? Have you asked for feedback from potential/existing customers?

Price

How much is your product or service worth? Pricing work is dependable on a number of factors, such as materials, overheads, time spent making a product, experience and reputation; however, it is also important to price your work correctly from a marketing point of view. If your product is expensive to make, you will have to appeal to an audience with high a disposable income. Is this reflected in your marketing?

Researching your competitors pricing structures will help you develop a sense of your place in the market and the viability of your work. Remember, at this point in your market research, you may find that your costs are too high, or you are not able to produce enough work to sustain your business.

Promotion and Networking

For many self-employed practitioners, their ability to network (in order to find customers and develop contacts with in the same or similar fields) can determine the success of their business; when you are working on your own from home, you have to build your own support structure. Questions to ask yourself include;

How will you reach your customers? Have you designed a logo? Do you have headed paper and business cards? Do you have a portfolio, catalogues,

postcards, images of your work, or a website? Have you developed a mailing list? Are you on other people's mailing lists? Is your business listed in the phone book?

These simple steps will help you to keep in touch with past and potential clients and enable them to see how your work is developing. Similarly, by attending screenings, private views, conferences and other events, you can make new contacts and keep abreast of current trends.

If you meet new contacts, don't be afraid to give them your business card or ask for their contact details. Follow up potential contacts with a short email or note the following week asking if you can add them to your mailing list. If your work is being sold through a gallery or agent, you should still maintain your own mailing lists as it is important to develop your own, personal contacts.

Press

Being featured in a local, national or trade newspaper or magazine is a fantastic way to gain free publicity. To generate interest, send press releases to selected press contacts when you develop a new series of work or reach a new stage in your business development, etc.

The purpose of a press release is to provide enough information and interest to capture the attention of its recipient and should be tailored to suit their needs, for example, focus on local factors for a local newspaper and be more general for a national paper, or focus more on technical points and use industry language for a trade journal. The technique of writing a press release, however, remains the same.

A press release should be no more than one side of A4 and have a clear, concise (and preferably attention grabbing) headline/project title. The first paragraph should contain Who, When, What and Where, which can be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Information should be as factual as possible and avoid any unnecessary hyperbole. Press releases should end by summarising the aim of the project/work/service, mentioning any sponsors involved with the project, and most importantly, contact details for further information. Always have a CV, statement or biog and high quality images (a decent size and at least 300 dpi) available as jpegs/tiffs (a number of print shops or photography shops will now transfer slides or photographs into digital images) prepared.

The timing of a press release is as important as its contents. A monthly magazine will usually have a deadline for copy a month before it is due to be released (i.e. a magazine going on sale on the 1st August will have a deadline of the 1st July. This means the writer or editor will want information by the middle of June).

When you are developing a list of press contacts, it is useful to make a note of their deadlines and try to send in information at least a week or two before the deadline.

To maximise impact, try to avoid clashes with high profile events. Would your play in a local theatre be attended and reviewed during the Eisteddfod? Consider significant dates that could help market your product; the opening of The Oman was delayed for three days to the 6th June 1976 because of the marketing potential.

Preparing a Marketing Plan

A marketing plan should be used on a regular basis to promote your work or service, as well as when you feel your business needs a boost. Every marketing plan will be different and should be geared to the kind of business you are / want to operate and the amount of turnover you can cope with.

Start by clarifying the following:

- Who are you?
- What work / service do you offer?
- If you have current clients / customers, who are they; children, writers, art collectors, tourists, etc
- Who are your target clients/ customers? How can you reach them? For example, what kind of magazines might they read? What events would they attend? This could help you focus where you need to advertise your business.
- What / where is your nearest competition?
- What is your USP (unique selling point)? How can you communicate it to clients/customers? Would it appeal to a specialist audience?
- What marketing and promotion strategies can you use?
 - Networking- go where your market is
 - Direct marketing - sales letters, brochures, flyers (but be aware of telephone marketing restrictions - www.tps-online.org.uk)
 - Advertising- newspapers, magazines, TV, Radio, specialist directories, Yellow pages
 - Editorial - articles in magazines & newspapers, TV and radio features
 - Press releases
 - Website (you will also have to set aside time to market your website)
- Budget - work out what you can afford, what you can do yourself and what you would have to buy in e.g. printers costs, web designers etc. It is important to be realistic about your own skills as a bad marketing job can have a negative influence on a business.
- Prepare a three month marketing timetable and use the results to identify which strategies are working, where your business is coming from, etc.

Set yourself achievable targets that make marketing easy rather than a chore, for example;

- Week 1; look at points one and two
- Week 2; work on points 4, 5 and 6. Investigate if e-commerce would work for your business
- Week 3; decide on what publicity material you would like to use
- Week 4; Prepare publicity material
- Week 5; check samples / proof read printed material
- Week 6 – 11; send the publicity material in stages (you don't want too much work coming in at the same time)
- Week 12; review your results and set a new marketing plan for the next 3 months

Final Tips

- Always have a portfolio, CV, images and press release ready
- Carry business cards with you at all times
- Follow up potential contacts with a short email or note the following week asking if you can add them to your mailing list
- Join mailing lists and e-bulletins
- Attend events, trade fairs, etc
- View all your marketing initiatives with an “outside eye”; how would a potential customer react? If you find this difficult, ask others what they think and use their comments constructively
- Marketing materials should not be static. If your work changes, so should approach to marketing the work

Resources

- You must have an email contact and internet connection
- Subscribe to at least one relevant journal and buy others on occasion. Subscription to a number of journals will also give you access to additional information on their websites
- Become a member of your industry's union, association or other professional organisations
- Use the industry facts and figure reports published by many professional organisations, the Arts Council, etc
- Use free listings and portfolio websites; there are a large number to choose from so select ones that compliment your work, target your desired customers/clients, etc
- Learn to use your desktop publishing tools to create high quality leaflets, brochures, headed paper, etc.

Further sources of information;

<http://www.artswales.org/publicationscheme.asp?pubcatid=47> – Marketing publications by the Arts Council of Wales. Hard copies are available on request

<http://businessseye.org.uk> – generic business advice is available online, along with information on training events and seminars

<http://www.aandb.org.uk> – developing partnerships between arts and business

<http://www.arts4cardiff.co.uk> – marketing databases and assistance in South

Wales

<http://www.sam-arts.demon.co.uk> – specialist books on marketing and the arts

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With special thanks to Martin Pollecoff (Marketing Consultant – 07802 338773)

Cultural Enterprise / Menter Diwylliannol

Chapter, Market House / Ty Farchnad, Cardiff / Caerdydd CF5 1QE

Tel/Ffon: 029 2034 3205

Fax/Ffacs: 029 2034 5436

Website/Gwefan: www.cultural-enterprise.com

Email/ Epost: mail@cultural-enterprise.com