The Art of Engaging Your Audience

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Introductions: Name, Organization, Pronouns, one interesting fact about a grandparent of yours
What can art organizations do for us?

- The “soft power” of cultural organizations as elite places of cultural consumption reflecting the dominant culture, influencing the populace. [audience as recipients]
- Art organizations as part of Civil Society – for the people and belonging to the people. [audience as creators]
Power Over

- Coercive power
- Leadership by authority, based on the dispensation of rewards and punishment
- Corporate or hierarchical decision-making power

Power With

- Coactive power
- Leadership by facilitation, of cooperative relationships based on intrinsic goals and core values
- More distributed, horizontal decision-making power
We recognize our responsibility to address histories of oppression and resistance that shape privilege and power related to race, gender identity, class, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, ability and national origin. We propose to work towards greater equity through these core values (1):

- **We support artists who empower others**, recognizing the capacity of artmaking together to make equitable places of community and reimagine oppressive structures.
- **We value relationships that last beyond funding cycles**, knowing that our shared commitment to a different future is long-term.
- **We share our work and our power**, acknowledging often unseen labor while distributing leadership and decision-making.
- **We honor solidarity with the marginalized and disenfranchised**, and work to center traditionally decentered voices with a sense of humility.
- **We recognize all forms of knowledge**, and refuse to rank expertise over experience, the universal over the local, and the absolute over the idiosyncratic. We favor inclusive, expanse, and generative zones of inquiry. (2)
- **We work towards nonexploitative, sustainable processes** and practices that reconnect us with the Earth and to one another. (3)
WE-Making: How Arts & Culture Unite People to Work Toward Community Well-Being
Theory of Change towards Social Cohesion and Healthy Communities
Metris Arts, PolicyLink, + the NEA
● Build and share power through community ownership: Strategies that center around community member co-design and co-creation, and that build community leadership

● Connect people across difference: Strategies that invite community members to collaborate and share experiences

● Include all types of community members: Strategies that encourage participation from parts of the community that might not otherwise participate

● Have a consistent presence in the community: Anchor spaces and organizations grounded in a community that can build on achievement over time

● Align with community change goals to reinforce desired impacts: Strategies that are reflective of community well-being goals.
Strategy: The Outside-In Approach
Advisory or Youth Councils

https://tyler.temple.edu/our-advisory-council
Funeral for a Home
Walker Teen Arts Council

https://www.instagram.com/walkerteens
To Consider

- Staff capacity
- Leadership commitment
- Making room in the curatorial/programming process
- Not setting up a hierarchy of programs
- Clear expectations
- Compensation
Strategy: Go to Your Audience
Auxiliary Spaces - LACMA’S Charles White Elem. Gallery
Pop-Up Spaces - Cognate Collective’s Market Exchange
Public Spaces
Digital Spaces
To Consider

- Staff capacity
- Tying it back to the institution - invitation
- Metrics for engagement
- Timeline and commitment
- Working closely with partners on mutual goals
Strategy: Culture Mapping & Strengthening Belonging
To Consider

- Long-term
- Open creative partnerships to consistently maintain
- Opening up the organization
- Core commitment
- Being nimble and responsive
Strategy: Opening Direct Lines of Communication
Text-based communication: Send Me SFMOMA

Bill Owens, ‘World Savings Opening Day, from the series Working (I Do It For The Money)’, 1975

Seydou Keïta, 'Untitled', 1949-1952; printed 1996
Social Strategies

- 30% self-marketing, 70% showing not telling your core values
- Short + engaging - tell people up front what you want them to do
- FB Live - and video, video, video
- IG and FB stories are a necessity
- Center the voices of the folks you want to cultivate.
Language Justice and Accessibility
Membership Platforms

https://www.patreon.com/18thstreetarts
Breakout Discussion
To DISCUSS:

● Which of these strategies resonated with you and your audience goals? How would you modify them to expand your audience directly?
● What other strategies that have worked for your organization could you share?
● What is the biggest barrier you are facing right now?