



Programme Outcomes

New Stream Capacity Building Intensive (2012–2014)

A Business to Arts Partnership with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management

From 2012–2014, the DeVos Institute, in partnership with *Business to Arts*, led a two-year teaching and consulting programme to support 23 Irish organisations in artistic planning, fundraising, marketing, strategic planning, financial planning, and board development.

Participating organisations included performing and visual arts presenters; multi-disciplinary arts centres, festivals, and service networks; and arts-based organisations serving youth, older people, and individuals with disability. The scale was national, engaging organisations from Clare, Wexford, Limerick, Tipperary, Dublin, and beyond and would build on the achievements of the first two years of operation of the *New Stream* programme by *Business to Arts*.

Programme Structure

Following a rigorous application process, fifteen organisations were selected to participate in Year One of the training. As preliminary programme results were positive, the programme was extended and an additional eight organisations were invited to participate in Year Two. The programme consisted of three elements:

- 1 – **Group Intensives** in core subjects including artistic planning, fundraising from individuals, fundraising from corporations, programmatic and institutional marketing, board engagement, and strategic planning;
- 2 – **Online Master Classes** with senior Institute advisors, offering participating organisations feedback on their work in a peer-to-peer setting; and
- 3 – **One-on-one consulting** tailored to the specific, local conditions of each participating organisation.



Programme Context and Goals

At the programme's outset, the dominant concern was the **impact of the recession** on organisational finances. The majority of organisations had experienced recent, substantial reductions in both public and private funding. Many had encountered parallel losses in earned revenue (from ticket sales, class fees, etc.). As a result, several had limited the frequency and scale of their programming.

As participating organisations entered the programme at varying levels of capacity, the organising partners recognised that the programme was unlikely to yield universal results, especially under difficult economic circumstances. Notably, some were large and based in affluent urban centres; others were smaller, in cases settled in rural environments with less apparent access to philanthropic resources.

It was well-understood that, as a result, the training would require that **universal best practices be balanced with rigorous localisation**; what worked in Ennis may not work

in Clonmel, and, quite certainly, accepted practices in the United States would not translate uniformly into the Irish context. These risks were accepted by the organising partners as well as participating organisations. Likewise, the limits of a two-year programme (with multiple organisations joining mid-way) were acknowledged: organisational habits accrued over years (or decades) prior to the programme would not give way overnight.

With these parameters in mind, the Business to Arts/DeVos Institute programme nonetheless set out an aspirational course of action. The programme would focus both on **hard skill development** (practical tools in fundraising, marketing, etc.), but also, perhaps most importantly, on **organisational culture change**.

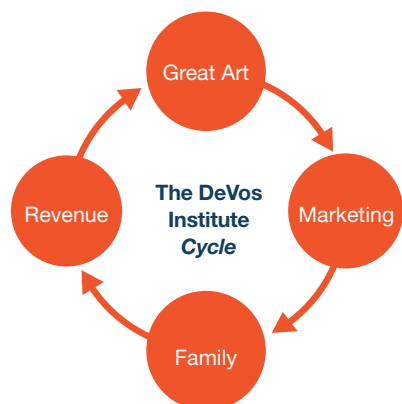
Towards a New Business Model

Virtually all participants recognised that a **shift in the way of doing business** was required to ensure organisational resources were better insulated from any future, additional loss—or significant reduction—of dominant funding sources. Hoping to regain—and surpass—recent losses, virtually all organisations sought new paths to increased revenue—both earned and contributed.

The means to this outcome, which the Institute defines as “**revenue diversification**,” would be varied, as would the scale of change achievable in varied contexts. However, all were vested in the effort.

The Intensive’s training thus asserted that, to survive (and ideally flourish), participating organisations must:

1. produce consistently **superior art and services**;
2. **market** that art (performances, education programmes, exhibitions, etc.) aggressively;
3. build an increasingly **diverse “family”** of funders, donors, ticket-buyers and other “buyers” of its services;
4. assertively convert the goodwill of that “family” into financial **resource**;
5. **re-invest** that resource in even more impactful art and services the following year.



Where needed, that resource would also divert to essential investments in **capacity** (human resources, systems, and fixed assets) to maximise long-term potential for sustained growth.

The DeVos Institute programme argued that this “Cycle”—which requires, above all else, a long-term approach to planning—would likely demand a **fundamental shift** in the way some organisations functioned. Above all: as beneficiaries of substantial public subsidy, most organisations had assumed a roughly 10-month planning cycle tied to the annual public funding schedule. Most organisations have historically learned the level of support available from public sources less than a year (and often just months) before their seasons were to take place. This system has had profound implications for the manner, and timeframe, in which organisations have planned their programmes. Without question, it had limited the time available to market offerings and seek new sources of funding in support of that work. Instead of a “virtuous” cycle, many were stuck in a “cycle in reverse” (less marketing led to fewer vested “family” members, which led to less private financing, which led to less art the following year, and so on).

Therefore, virtually all participants recognised that in order to:

- do better work with more impact,
- market that work competitively in an increasingly crowded marketplace,
- surround that work with an increasingly diverse family drawn from an increasingly distracted (and financially-hesitant) public, and
- in the absence of capital to dramatically increase operational capacity

successful organisations would require **more time** than a 10-month artistic planning cycle would allow.

The Challenge

The central question, therefore, was: would participating organisations find a way to break this short-term pattern, which hindered marketing efficacy, fundraising potential, and, the quality and scale of services they were able to offer?

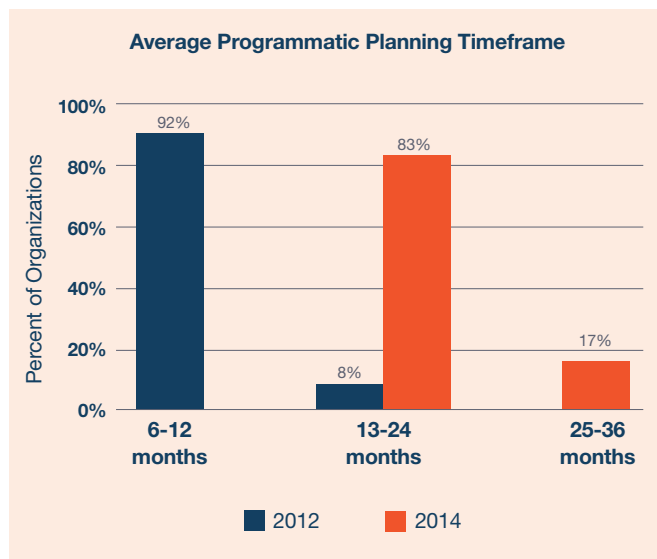
Would they come to view fundraising not as a standalone, “necessary evil”, cut off from the “real” work of the organisation, but as a function to be integrated throughout the artistic, marketing, and board development processes?

Below are the first results of the two-year initiative, which begin to answer these questions and isolate key remaining challenges to be addressed in the years ahead.

Artistic Planning

Organisations are planning programming further in advance.

- The number of organisations planning their artistic programming less than one year in advance—a threat to effective marketing and fundraising—decreased by 92%.
- The number of organisations planning their artistic programming more than two years in advance increased by 17%.
- 100% of reporting organisations lengthened their artistic planning timelines.
- Amongst Year One participants, planning timeframes increased by an average of four months (or 50%, from eight months to twelve months) in the first year alone.
- **Following the programme, no organisations reported planning less than 12 months in advance—a fundamental culture shift illustrating a break from an annual planning cycle dictated by the schedule of public funding.**



“We moved from a fairly chaotic schedule with numerous overlapping exhibitions to defined seasons around a theme that relates to the museum’s mission as a research institution.”

Why this outcome matters:

Long-term artistic planning is the necessary precedent to successful marketing and fundraising, especially for organisations with limited financial resources. The shorter the planning timeframe, the less likely organisations will identify new audiences for bold or innovative work and the less likely they will engage new funding sources. The longer the timeframe, the more diverse is the ‘menu’ of investment options available to corporate and individual donors, which often prefer to ‘target’ their giving toward projects of personal or corporate interest. (A short-term planning cycle limits the

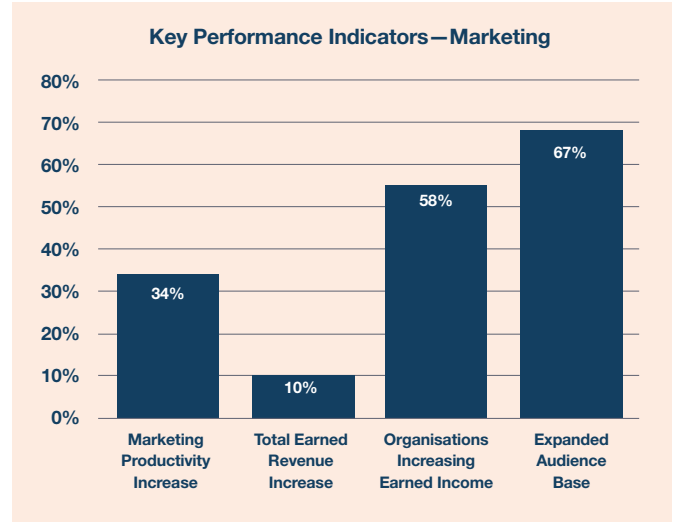
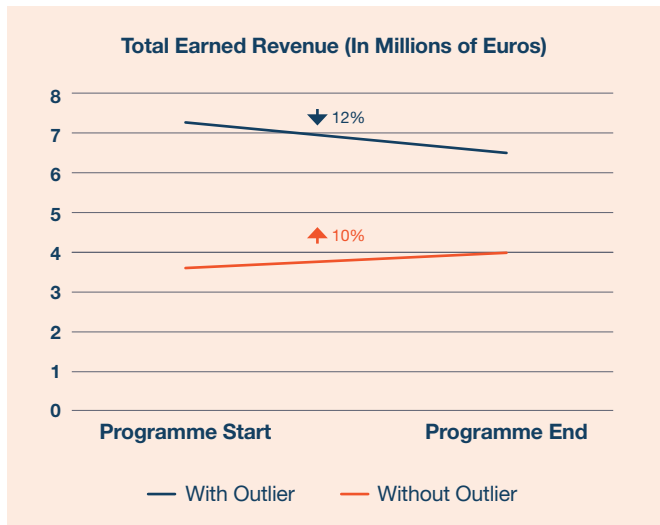
number of investment options to the current year). Complex art forms (opera, major museums, international festivals) simply require more time to secure the best artists and art works, especially when organisations are competing for artistic resources on an international scale. Thus, the Institute asserts that organisations that plan **three years in advance** are best positioned for fundraising and marketing (and, ultimately, artistic) success. For this reason, while additional gains in this area are required, **initial advances in long-term artistic planning amongst this cohort are especially promising.**

“Advance planning of our artistic programme has become a priority. We have gone from annual planning to planning almost two years in advance. Our goal will be to increase advance planning to three years in 2014 and to produce a financial plan for at least three years in advance to help us plan our funding goals.”

Marketing

Most organisations improved the productivity of their marketing effort, resulting in an increase in earned revenue (box office receipts, merchandise sales, rentals, etc.).

- 58% of responding organisations **increased their earned income** during the two year period. Total earned revenue increases amongst this group equalled €387,677, for an average increase of 54% or €55,000.
- As a result of a €1.5 million decrease in earned revenue at one organisation due to the discontinuation of a one-year line of business, total earned income for the cohort decreased by 12%. Excepting this anomaly, however, the cohort's total earned revenue *increased* by 10%.
- Amongst reporting organisations, marketing **productivity** (total earned revenue divided by the number of staff members devoted to marketing) **increased by an average of 34%** or €25,562 per organisation.



A majority of organisations increased the reach of their programming through enhanced marketing and outreach.

- 67% of organisations reported that enhanced marketing practices led to an **expansion of their audience base** beyond their traditional constituency, a key indicator of engagement, community impact, marketing effectiveness, and financial diversification.
- In the first year alone, reporting organisations **increased the number of constituents served by an average of 8%**, or 4,500.

While productivity increased, organisations struggled to add staff capacity in this area.

- 36% of organisations reported an increased number of staff in this area; the same percentage reported a decrease in this area. 27% reported no change. There was a net loss of one job in this area during the two-year period amongst the cohort overall. Inadequate staffing of marketing operations remains a liability for many in the cohort.

“Directly thanks to our participation, we now have an Institutional marketing plan for the organisation. The programme was vital in the implementation of the new communications strategy.”

“We have learned much from ‘The Cycle’ approach. While we are a small organisation, our fundraising and institutional marketing efforts are now targeted in tandem with spikes in our programming. We have found this methodology successful.”

Why this outcome matters:

While the programme placed a strong emphasis on contributed income, earned income (from ticket sales, fees, merchandise, etc.) remains a critical indicator of financial health. 58% of organisations reported an increase in earned income (and, at an average rate of growth of 54%, that increase was meaningful); however, returns were not universal and, as such, this remains a major growth opportunity for the cohort. A 34% increase in marketing productivity signals increased staff efficacy in this area; the impact of more refined

strategic planning and a longer planning time-frame can be seen here. However, a restriction in actual staff time in this area indicates that organisations may be “leaving money on the table.” For many, an investment in human resources in this area may be required in order fully capitalise on this culture shift; in other words, some will likely need to “spend money to make money” in this area. Nonetheless, improvements in this area laid the groundwork for a more energised “family,” the results of which have begun to show in the following area of focus: fundraising.

“We have started planning for a far more sustainable future with a focus on marketing our offerings and linking our very considerable skills and resources to a larger audience and family than we have at present. If we weren’t engaged in the programme, we would have little chance of realising our ambitions.”

Fundraising

The cohort increased both the number of individual donors contributing to its organisations, and the actual revenue contributed from those donors.

- Among respondents, annual revenue contributed from individuals **increased by 66% (or €149,666 year over year) in the aggregate, and by an average of 57% per organisation.**
- Among reporting organisations, the total number of gifts from individuals increased by 664 (from 4,182 to 4,846), or by an average of 60 donors per reporting organisation. **This represents a 16% growth in the number of individual donors amongst this sample group.**



- Using respondents as a representative sample, **the total projected increase in gifts from individuals across the cohort of 19 Year Two organisations is €236,969.**

- **45%** of reporting organisations created a major donor programme for the first time, or substantially strengthened an existing programme.

Organisations increased the amount of contributed revenue from corporations and foundations.

- Among respondents, total contributed revenue from corporations and foundations **increased by 24%**. For those that did increase giving in this area, the average increase was €11,496.

“I feel we have had a complete attitude change. The ethos has shifted. For the first time, I actually feel hopeful about us managing to make a successful pitch. I feel fundraising is now considered to be a collective responsibility and there is more trust between the board and executive and development staff. We have always worked as a team but we have a clearly outlined strategy and all of our attitudes and ambitions are now more closely aligned.”

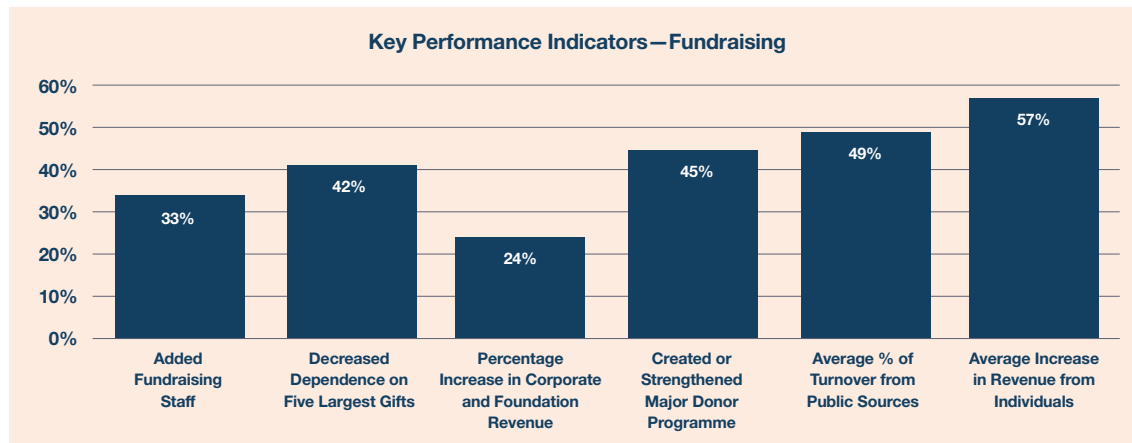
Many in the cohort took strides toward donor diversification by increasing the number of funding sources, and decreasing dependence on top funders, a key indicator of financial health.

- 42% of reporting organisations decreased dependence on their top five largest gifts as a percentage of their total contributed income. The percentage decreases ranged from 2% to 69%.
- Taken as a whole, the cohort decreased its dependence on top 5 sources of funding by an average of 5%.
- The average percentage of total funding coming from government sources stayed relatively even at 50% in 2012 and 49% in 2014. Organisations reported a 1% increase in funding in this area over the duration of the programme. However, for nearly half of reporting organisations, the percentage of annual turnover coming from public sources decreased (by an average of 4.4%).

One third of organisations increased human resources dedicated to fundraising efforts.

- 33% of organisations reported adding an additional staff member partially or exclusively dedicated to fundraising since starting the programme.

“The successful launch of our new American fundraising initiatives in the United States, including the formation of a dedicated U.S.-based development committee, netted significant funding in our first year at the effort.”



Why this outcome matters:

The programme focused heavily on the development of individual giving programmes as a necessary first step towards financial diversification. The creation or strengthening of major donor programmes by 45% of participating organisations is mirrored by a parallel increase in giving from individuals. While the portion of total turnover coming from individual philanthropy remains relatively modest, strong percentage gains in this area suggest that the cohort’s progress in long-term artistic planning and marketing

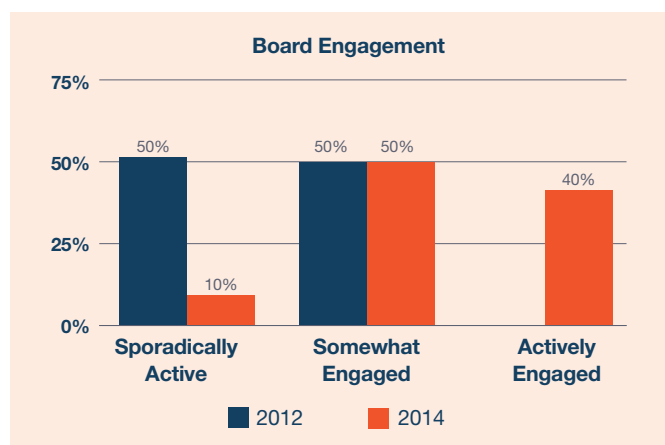
productivity—together with an increase in hard skills required for solicitation of gifts from individuals—has begun to take root. A succession of years with similar results would begin to fundamentally alter business structure, pointing organisations toward true financial diversification. However, a great deal of work remains to be done in this area, as giving from public sources still represents a full half of the cohort’s revenue. At a time when the future of public subsidy remains uncertain, organisational reliance on this source for 50% of total operating support demands continued attention.

“Our increased ‘family’ has really appreciated special events, backstage tours, and chances to meet the artists. The programme helped us identify what ‘assets’ we have that can help develop people’s connections to us, and in turn, create extra sources of income for the company. As a result, donors to our organisation nearly tripled.”

Board Engagement

Organisations reported a significant increase in board engagement.

- Organisations reporting an “actively engaged board” increased by 40%, while those reporting a board only “sporadically” involved dropped by the same.
- 45% of organisations reported an increase in the number of board members actively engaged in a project on behalf of the organisation.



However, few organisations reported an increase in giving from their boards, and, overall, the cohort experienced a net loss of 8% in philanthropic contributions from board members.

“A London-based board member hosted and underwrote a prospect dinner, which has resulted in 1 donation received and 2 donations pledged to date (value of €16,320) with other follow up still in progress.”

“We have begun to expand our board and develop their role as income generators and fundraisers. They are very engaged with the programme and the organisation.”

“The board has become more engaged in the fundraising. Firstly, all members have become patrons at one level or another, and secondly, several members have either ‘made the ask’ or opened the door for the staff to ask.”

Why this outcome matters:

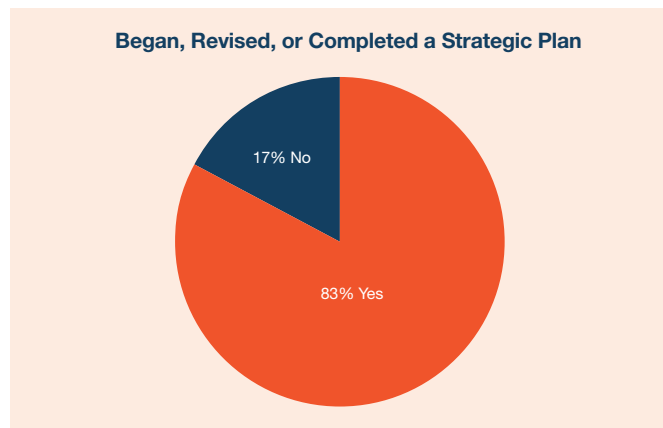
Board engagement (how to productively utilise the time, energy, connections, and talent of a member) received substantial attention throughout the course of the programme. Strong progress was made in this area, with a majority of organisations reporting a shift from a “sporadically” engaged board to an “actively” engaged board. However, significant opportunity remains to encourage a turn toward effective board giving programmes in an environment where this has not historically been a requirement, or even an expectation. While there is room

for discussion as to how the fundraising requirements of Irish boards will evolve, the American model suggests that a generous board (or a board that is able to facilitate the generosity of others) remains fundamental to successful fundraising, and would even question whether staff should engage in a time-intensive manner with a board that cannot meaningfully contribute to the bottom line. While fraught with political and social ramifications, board development—particularly in the transition of the relationship from “advisory” to “philanthropic”—represents perhaps the greatest area of potential (and remaining need) for participating organisations.

“We engage our board members in more specific ways, particularly in order to harness their support in relation to fundraising and individual donors. We are going to host our first donor event and have adopted a new practice for an annual fundraising event. We are revamping the existing individual donor platform as well as making corporate and high-end approaches.”

Strategic Planning

83% of participating organisations began, revised, or completed a Strategic Plan.



“We have also produced a new strategic plan that has been part of our two-year process with New Stream. The support of the DeVos Institute programme has helped us shape and dissect our organisation to produce a solid strategy with all staff involved.”

Why this outcome matters:

A strategic plan enables long-term communication both internally and externally—most importantly with potential donors, artistic partners, and board members. For example, several managers in the current cohort were able to leverage their long-term plans to broker conversations with donor prospects about multi-year pledges to support key artistic programmes. For organisations contemplating complex capital, staffing, or infrastructural transitions, a thoughtful plan is an absolute requirement. As such, a strong emphasis was placed on strategic planning throughout the intensive,

from an early discussion about the centrality of organisational mission as a planning tool, to the final seminar, in which the Institute provided a summary of 12 essential planning tools required to successfully expand funding beyond public sources. Organisations that cannot make the time to plan will often—in the long-run—spend more time, and more money, achieving fewer results than their more disciplined counterparts. Those without a coherent, integrated plan will almost certainly fail to inspire others to increase the scale or timeframe of their support.

“The programme has led to a complete shift in mindset within the organisation. We are now thinking holistically about our artistic programme, marketing, fundraising, and family growth. Some practical outcomes: an institutional marketing plan, forward planning towards our 50th anniversary in 2016, and a part-time staff member dedicated to fundraising.”

Four Principal Remaining Challenges

1. Certain organisations remain uncomfortably reliant on government funding. Even for the most “successful” participants, aggressive diversification must continue.

“We have a 5-year plan in place and routinely have planning days for both staff and board. Unfortunately, for projects beyond 12 months, the plans are largely aspirational and notional due to the funding cycles in Ireland.”

“70% of funding comes from a single government-funded source. The current economic climate is very difficult and traditional sources of sponsorship and funding are unable and/or unwilling to support or commit to long-term and meaningful support.”

“Our donor base is growing and has increased a lot in the last year, but there is a huge amount of room for growth. We are still heavily dependent on our Arts Council grant.”

2. While some have stepped confidently into the “new” philanthropic environment, a true culture shift toward active fundraising, especially from individuals, will take time.

Fundraising represents, for many, a fundamental culture shift. Asking for support—especially from friends and colleagues—does not come naturally, even for the most experienced fundraiser. Continued support will likely be required to condition managers and board members for this “new” way of resourcing their organisations.

“The proposition we are selling is compelling, but a combination of lack of experience and a difficult economic climate have made raising funds very hard. Understanding and developing relationships with donors is a learning curve.”

“There is limited capacity both in number and in terms of knowledge, expertise, and confidence to solicit donations from other sources. When there has not been a culture of ‘making the ask,’ it is a difficult behaviour to adopt and enact.”

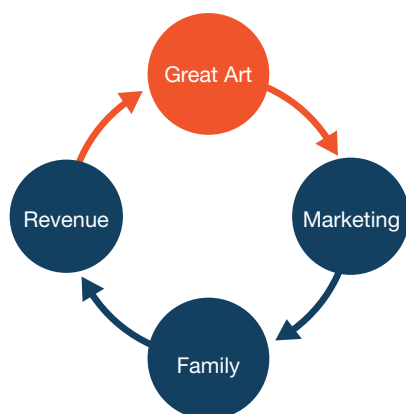
3. Building adequate staff capacity remains a challenge for many.

While most organisations have made significant strides in planning, an inadequate level of capitalisation is in place for most organisations to truly flourish within expanded marketing and fundraising schemes. An increased level of funding focus in this area is required.

“We have an individual and corporate membership scheme which is well-supported locally and a dedicated member of the team to look after this. However, her hours are limited to two mornings a week due to financial challenges for the company. We would invest more time and money if we knew the return would be greater. New Stream has reinvigorated everyone’s belief and enthusiasm for this.”

4. Boards must continue to adapt to the new reality of their organisations: advocacy will no longer be enough.

Results from the Business to Arts/DeVos Programme have proven that board members are willing to increase their level of engagement when an adequate advance-planning structure is in place, and when that structure is joined by concrete, enjoyable options for involvement. But, by and large, this engagement has not converted into an expanded philanthropic presence in the life of most organisations. In coming months and years, staffs and boards will need to work together with urgency to determine whether the financial composition of their current board is adequate to the long-term challenges (and opportunities) facing their organisations. Where individual largesse does not exist, an active programme to solicit gifts from others (in-kind and monetary) must substitute. The most sustainable organisations will doubtless be those with boards that embrace this role with vigor in the years to come. For many, this will represent the most significant area of culture change required, and can be expected to require ongoing encouragement from funding partners, the Arts Council, and sectoral leaders.



Business to Arts
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DEVOS INSTITUTE
OF ARTS MANAGEMENT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Business to Arts/DeVos Institute Case Study— The Abbey Theatre

Integration of Marketing and Fundraising Efforts

The Abbey Theatre, the national theatre of Ireland, was founded in 1904 by W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. The Abbey Theatre commissions and produces new work and creates discourse and debate on political, social and cultural issues. Over the years, the Abbey Theatre has nurtured and premiered the work of major Irish playwrights and currently maintains the only full time Literary Department in Ireland.



Photo by Ros Kavanagh

The Abbey Theatre's Mission

Creating a world-class theatre that actively engages with and reflects Irish society: We place the writer and the theatre artist at the heart of the Abbey Theatre.

The Challenge—A Shifting Business Model

Since 2009, grant aid received from the Abbey Theatre's major stakeholder, the Arts Council of Ireland, has been cut by over 20%. Recently, it decreased from €7.1million to €6.5 million.

A resulting reality was that the Abbey Theatre was required to increase its effort to engage and cultivate private sector donors. At the same time, it was clear that internal resources available to build the fundraising effort were limited. A strategic approach was required to leverage the efforts of the marketing department to create institutional visibility in order to support the membership and major donor efforts. In particular, it was vital that Abbey Theatre staff worked together to ensure a high level of efficiency between the fundraising and marketing departments—the two “public faces” of the institution. Within a large institution such as the Abbey Theatre, this would require a significant change in working culture. There was not a euro or moment to waste.

A. Strategy One—The Integration of Marketing Activity with Fundraising Activity

Evaluation

As a part of the Business to Arts/DeVos Institute process, the Abbey Theatre immediately commenced an audit of its current fundraising and marketing programmes.

It found that while marketing activity to sell tickets (*programmatic* marketing) was very strong, significant improvements were required around its efforts to promote the theatre as an institution on the whole (*institutional* marketing). It was determined that a relative lack of focus on the image of the institution overall had limited its efforts to fundraise. Its changed circumstances would require a thorough renewal of this process.

Abbey Theatre senior staff determined that a strong institutional marketing message would moreover assist in the retention of current donors, re-igniting their interest and re-enforcing the message that the Abbey Theatre, as an organisation, is of international relevance, “un-ignorable” and worth investing in.

Integration of Marketing and Fundraising Efforts

Using the DeVos Institute’s *Cycle* as a platform, senior marketing and fundraising staff created a joint organising tool—a simple Excel spreadsheet—to ensure that its improved institutional marketing efforts would be adequately leveraged for fundraising purposes.

While relatively new, this tool has enabled a systematic approach to linking its institutional marketing and donor cultivation efforts:

- For each month of 2014, Abbey Theatre marketing staff identified a clear key message, punctuated by a series of discrete institutional marketing efforts (a special event, announcement, high-visibility outreach performance, press push, debate series, etc.).

- Fundraising staff sought opportunities to leverage each institutional marketing effort for cultivation purposes, often by creating a segmented, high-access experience for prospective and current donors. With awareness that, in order to influence a prospect to the stage of making a gift, a high level of attention is often required, this aspect of the Abbey Theatre’s development effort has evolved into a highly-focused approach to key individuals who can make a significant financial difference. These “game changers” receive a sustained effort over a substantial period of time.
- Cultivation efforts are targeted toward the specific interest of the “game changer.” For example, the organisation ensured that socially-motivated donors were invited to high-profile, “exclusive” social occasions like season launches and opening night performances, while “status”-driven donors gain access to artists, theatre leadership, influential board members, and other “power brokers.”

Strategy in Action

In January 2014, the Abbey Theatre closed its doors for three Mondays, and took its production of *The Risen People*, a play about the 1913 Lockout, into various communities around Dublin.

Of note, the work was performed for inmates at Wheatfield Prison, the first such performance in Abbey Theatre history. This performance was also a prime example of what the Institute would signify as an institutional marketing event; it was a performance, yes, but also a strategy designed to drive home the Abbey Theatre’s commitment to stimulating debate and engagement through work of social relevance.

The startling and uncommon undertaking of a performance in this setting was enough for the marketing department and development department to turn the moment into their advantage.

Abbey Theatre Planning Template to Integrate Marketing and Fundraising Efforts

Month of Activity	Interest Group Targeted	Audience Type Targeted	Donor Type Targeted	Programmatic Marketing Plan	Artistic Event Utilised	Institutional Marketing Event Utilised	Story / Message Promoted through Event	Fundraising Activity tied to the Event	Status of Event
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The Outcome

The marketing department immediately secured prominent press coverage, including the front page of the *Irish Times*, notice in the *Irish Independent*, and on RTE Radio 1's Morning Ireland, to name a few. **Ticket sales jumped 15% over the previous Tuesday**, and helped drive the fourth best day of sales over the course of *The Risen People* on the Abbey Theatre's mainstage.

The development department likewise leveraged this institutional marketing opportunity. Several key board members were invited, one of whom described this event as "the real work of the national theatre in action", which had a "profound impact on the lives of citizens". As a result of their attendance, newly invigorated, these board members (both donors themselves), identified two new prospects for the organisation, one of which has already become a meaningful donor—a future "game changer" in their own right. Lastly, a corporate partner attended and immediately extended its relationship for another year.

At a second performance of *The Risen People* at Larkin College, the development department further leveraged the enthusiasm of its board, engaging yet another member to an extent that the individual hosted a subsequent cultivation dinner, resulting in two additional new donors to the Theatre, as well as an invitation to submit an application to a new potential funding partner (a charitable foundation).

Therefore, from these two events, the Abbey re-invigorated several key board members and a corporate partner; secured three new major donors; and opened the door to a new, potentially long-term funding relationship.

The senior team has a similar strategy in place for the remainder of 2014.

The Takeaway

This coordination of the marketing and fundraising efforts represented a major turning point in the productivity of these two essential functions. For the first time in the institution's history, the two departments are "thinking as one", with the ultimate goal of expanding its "family" of donors and sponsors.

This event was a key example of the Abbey Theatre delivering a strong external narrative to the wider community through an institutional marketing initiative. This did not cost the organisation any money, and yet was featured in important national publications, yielding huge national interest.

The event showcased the quality and relevance of the Abbey Theatre programming to its invited guests, but also presented potential donors with an exclusive opportunity to see the impact of the Abbey Theatre's mission in action in an unconventional community setting.

In an effort to create as many genuine, intimate and exclusive events as possible for the continued cultivation of its family, the Abbey Theatre will continue to play to its strengths, using its programme and the resources close to hand to create institutional marketing and cultivation opportunities.

B. Strategy Two—Renewing the Abbey Theatre's Membership Programme

Evaluation

Simultaneously, as part of the audit conducted by Abbey Theatre development staff at the onset of the Business to Arts/DeVos Institute programme, Abbey Theatre leadership determined that an equal investment in the **cultivation and stewardship of its members**, or lower-level donors, stood to deliver exponential results.

Whereas the Abbey Theatre understood the potential upside of this effort, at the time, its membership programme could not have been characterised as truly unique or high-profile. Additionally, limited financial resources could be devoted to its overhaul. But, in order to diversify the sources of revenue upon which it could rely—especially in a troubled economic climate—Abbey Theatre leadership recognised that entry-level gifts could not be overlooked. An effort that leveraged the institutional marketing effort and utilised staff time sparingly, but delivered strong results, was the resulting mandate.

Making Membership Truly Special

As a consequence, the Abbey Theatre determined to re-structure and re-brand its *membership*:

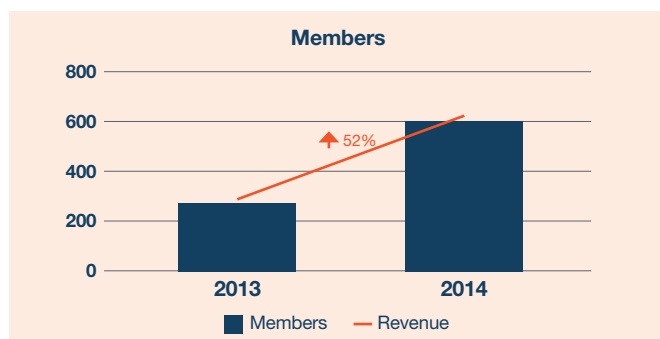
- 5 levels of support were created, ranging from €25 to €500, making membership more accessible to a wider public.
- The *Membership Campaign* was resourced internally involving an integrated effort between the Abbey Theatre marketing department and the sales and customer service department.
- The team embraced a culture shift toward treating *members* as *family*—even internally referring to members as “family” following the re-brand.
- The membership was given increased visibility and physical presence in the theatre through re-branded brochures, posters, and a pop-up membership desk.
- The programme was featured in programmes and on the organisation’s website, and on the “Thank You for Coming” triggered email that all audience members receive post show.
- Audience members who attend three shows now automatically receive a personalised email promoting membership.

Additionally, in order to provide low-cost, high-impact benefits for members, the development staff utilised institutional marketing resources as cultivation opportunities, such as:

- An exclusive *Members* visit to the cutting room of the costume department.
- Identifying key artists, directors, and designers to do pre- and post-show events with members.
- A special, “Women at the Abbey Theatre” event showcasing the talents of staff members and the history of women in the development and success of the theatre.

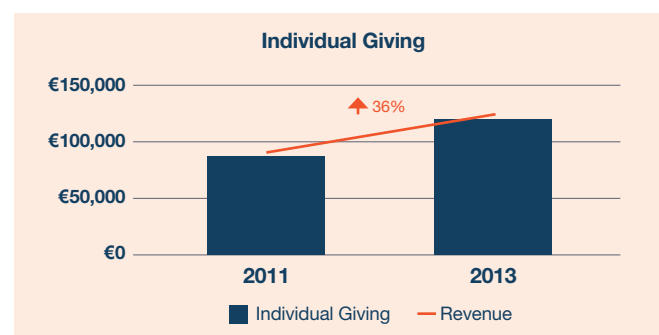
The Outcome

In one year, the Theatre more than doubled its membership base, from **304 in 2013 to 615 in 2014**. This represented a **52% growth** in membership income.



Additionally, 17% of the 189 membership renewals in 2013 increased their giving from one level to the next.

During the same period, **total individual giving grew from €88,575 in 2011 to €120,636 in 2013**, representing an **impressive 36% increase since the beginning of the Business to Arts/DeVos Institute programme**.



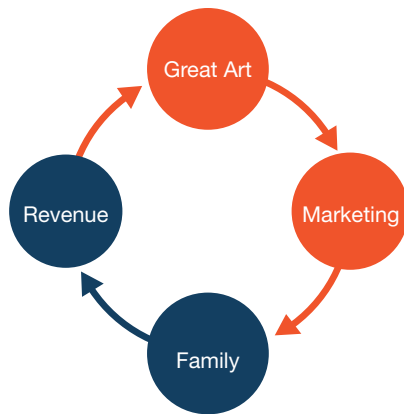
Summary

In a moment of financial difficulty for the nation overall, the Abbey Theatre recognised that in order to survive, it would be required to adapt to the need to develop more support from a broader base of donors. This led to a fundamental re-thinking of the relationship between two primary internal functions: marketing and fundraising.

Senior leadership understood—and took action upon the realisation that—for the Abbey Theatre to substantially increase gifts from individuals, it needed to adopt a holistic approach to its fundraising effort, starting with the alignment of its marketing and fundraising priorities. It became quite clear that without a full-scale coordination between the two departments, an adequate response from the development department would likely cost more than it would produce.

By utilising the assets produced by the marketing effort, the fundraising team has been able to create real traction around the development of new entry-level and major donors.

While this work is far from complete, a substantial culture shift has taken place, one that will position the Abbey Theatre for even greater advances in the years to come.



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Business to Arts/DeVos Institute Case Study— Wexford Festival Opera

Major Donor Fundraising

Wexford Festival Opera (WFO), in southeastern Ireland, began in October 1951. Founded by Dr. Tom Walsh, WFO is celebrated internationally for its dedication to re-invigorating neglected, rare, and unusual operas performed by predominantly emerging and undiscovered talent. Together with three mainstage productions each year, the 12-day annual festival offers a robust programme of morning events, lunchtime recitals, concerts and late night events.



The Festival's Mission

A unique festival, enabling local, national & international audiences to indulge their passion for unjustly neglected opera, with a programme of supporting events at the time of the festival and throughout the year, all presented to the highest professional standards, while providing access to, and a platform for, new and emerging Irish and global talent.

The Challenge—Moving Beyond Public Funding

Historically, like so many cultural organisations, especially those with a national remit, WFO relied substantially on public funding and box office income. In the wake of the recent recession, however, it became clear that public aid and box office revenues were likely to stagnate (or decline), and that a new approach to fundraising was required. For WFO, this challenge was augmented by the fact that opera, as a form, requires a long-term planning approach in order to contract the best artists, designers, and directors. As a result of the annual nature of public funding, WFO artistic planning had largely taken place on an annual basis, leaving little time for the development of truly transformational work requiring more than 12 months to plan, fund, market, and produce.

Two Key Strategies

To confront these dilemmas, WFO decided upon **two primary mechanisms** to increase private-sector engagement, namely from corporations and individuals:

- A. An enhanced **“major donor” scheme** (for higher-level individual and corporate gifts of €10,000 and above)
- B. A U.S.A.-based **special event campaign** (especially to engage new donors and patrons, both individuals and corporations)

The intended result was a greater level of financial flexibility and durability. On the one hand, fundraising from individual and corporate sources can take place on a schedule that extends far beyond the annual constraints of public funding. As a result, WFO would be able to plan with confidence further into the future, increasing the likelihood that its work would produce greater impact and attract more diverse audiences.

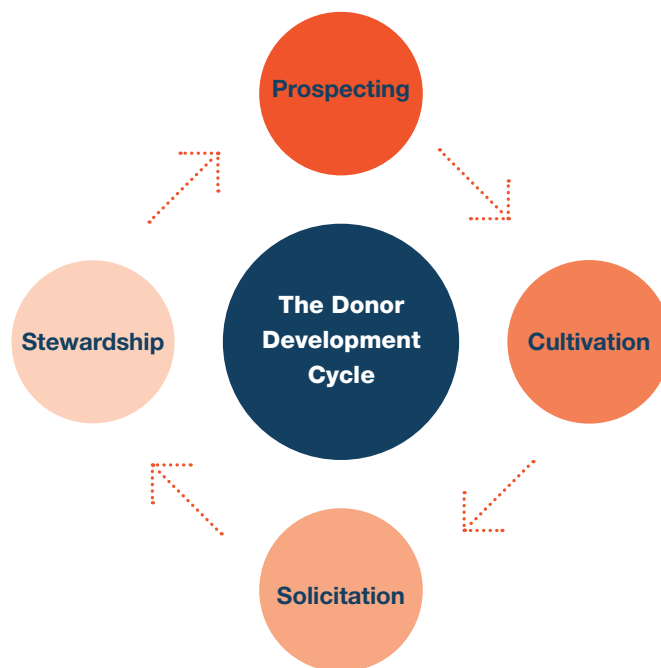
On the other hand, these strategies would decrease WFO dependence on public subsidy and market-driven income. WFO would continue to make a strong case that it deserves (and needs) support from the public sector, as a leading cultural event with an international brand and major contributor to national cultural tourism. But, at the same time, it would add new, substantial sources of contributed income from a diversity of sources, decreasing the impact that the sudden loss or decrease from any one source would have on its overall financial durability.

A. Strategy One—An Enhanced Major Donor Scheme

Threats

At the onset of the New Stream/DeVos Institute Programme, WFO evaluated its existing *Friends and Major Donor* programmes (annual fundraising schemes focused on “entry-level”, and “high-level” donors, respectively). Leadership determined two top-level threats:

1. The level of care paid to current donors—or what the Institute refers to as donor *stewardship*—required improvement. This deficiency was a result of both a lack of priority and a lack of dedicated manpower. The new environment—of stalled non-voluntary income sources—required an increased investment in this area, especially as more organisations were competing for the same donors.
2. The structure of the programme itself was insufficient. The programme’s benefit levels and incentives were not positioned to maximise revenue.



Action Taken

The Festival adopted a new approach to the cultivation of its “family” of donors, friends, and partners, taking every opportunity to understand their giving interest and ability. An investment was made, in particular, into the *prospecting*, *cultivation*, and *solicitation* functions of the donor management process.

Prospecting

The Festival quickly expanded its list of potential donors, or *prospects*, with the ability to make a major gift. These prospects were drawn from its lists of repeat ticket buyers; special event attendees; entry-level contributors; the personal and professional networks of key members of the organisation; and existing major donors. Prospects entirely new to the WFO network were identified through a rigorous research and evaluation phase.

Cultivation

Top-level prospects were assigned a strategy comprising carefully-selected cultivation events that utilised annual artistic and institutional marketing assets. These assets included dinner with artists, VIP access within Festival events, preferred seating, and special events for donors during the Festival itself and at other times during the year—both in Ireland and abroad. Each prospect was assigned a relationship manager to assure consistency of approach.

Solicitation

Critically, the process of giving was *personalised* through a new structure of giving. WFO began to offer donors bespoke options to fund a *specific* function within the WFO season. Categories of giving included:

- Cast Sponsorship (with access to the cast of WFO productions)—€5,000
- Short Work Producers (including credit for serving as a “producer” of a new, short-form work)—€10,000
- Evening Opera Sponsors—€25,000
- Associate Producer for Evening Opera—€50,000
- Senior Producer for Evening Opera—€200,000

The Outcome

The results from this effort were astonishing.

Between 2011 and 2013, WFO generated €465,484 in **new, increased revenue** from major gifts. Gifts from major donors increased in value by an overwhelming 81% from 2012 to 2013 alone.



Major gift revenue represented 3.2% of the Festival's total income in 2012; it represented almost double that, or 5.6%, in 2013.

Approximately half of the donors in this period were new to WFO, representing a major expansion in the diversity of WFO's funding base, a key indicator of fundraising health.

The Takeaway

This outcome was enabled by a culture change in how the Festival looked after its family of donors. WFO tailored its solicitation strategy toward proactive “asks” based on specific individual interests. Stewardship was emphasised, nurturing warm, authentic, and meaningful relationships with donors based on mutual interest.

Additionally, WFO cultivated “leadership” relationships with key major donors. Later this year, a leading, six-figure donor (towards WFO's Presidents' Circle Major Gifts campaign), will host a prospect introduction event in his home with existing donors and key prospects.

WFO's major gift goal for 2014 is €375,000. To achieve this, it is currently working on a growing list of major donor prospects.

B. Strategy Two—Developing income from Abroad

Over the years, WFO has developed significant connections with its audiences abroad, primarily in the U.K., the U.S.A., and Europe.

Following a fact-finding trip to the U.S.A. in 2009, WFO set upon the deliberate development of a presence in the U.S. fundraising market.

Action Taken

Value Proposition

WFO understood that in order to successfully fundraise in a crowded philanthropic environment, one with many local organisations vying for the same dollars, the Festival would need to illustrate an unique value proposition to U.S.-based prospects. After considerable environmental analysis, WFO established the following, unique selling points to define its presence in the U.S. market:

- **Discovery**—WFO's programme focuses on the discovery of little-known work, including that of American composers and co-productions with American opera companies.
- **Emerging Talent**—WFO acts as highly-regarded international platform for emerging opera talent from the U.S. Many, now-prominent American artists (some touring worldwide) made their international debut in Wexford.

Influential Network

To jumpstart the fundraising process in the U.S., WFO approached a trusted friend and long-time supporter of the Festival: leading Irish-American philanthropist, Loretta Brennan Glucksman. In 2012, Ms. Brennan Glucksman hosted a launch event to concretise the Festival's presence in the U.S. The event was attended by over 50 key individuals, comprised WFO's established U.S. connections, together with potential future ambassadors and prospects of the Festival.

Galvanizing Mechanism

In January, 2013, the Festival formalised the *American Friends of Wexford Opera*, made up of 12 U.S.-based members. Ms. Brennan Glucksman agreed to serve as Honorary Patron and Shane Naughton, a leading NYC-based technology investor and entrepreneur, was named Chair. The objective of this Committee was to identify U.S.-based prospects; ultimately it yielded more than 500 prospects and potential honourees for the Festival's inaugural fundraising gala in September 2013.

In its pre-gala communications, WFO promoted the fact that the evening's proceeds would fund one of the upcoming season's operas—a rare production of an opera brought back to life. (The work subsequently won the Best Rediscovered Work award at the International Opera Awards.)

And, that June, the Irish Consul General hosted the launch of the American Friends of Wexford Opera, to introduce prospects to the inaugural New York Dinner Gala, further coalescing a body of support around the effort.

The Outcome

On September 19th, the Festival hosted its first Gala dinner in the U.S. at New York City's Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

The evening featured an elegant dinner, speeches, live music, and a remarkable performance by the spectacular American Soprano, Angela Meade. Ms. Meade had made her European premiere at WFO in 2010, and has subsequently become an established presence in major opera houses throughout around the world, reinforcing Wexford's credentials as an incubator of emerging American operatic talent.

196 people attended the event which grossed almost \$300,000 for the Festival. The vast majority of the people who attended the gala were **new to the Festival**, with the exception of two pre-existing *Friends*.

The majority of the gala attendees had never attended the Festival in Wexford.

Tables were sold at the \$10,000, \$15,000, \$25,000 and \$35,000 levels, and seats sold at \$750 each. The Festival also placed pledge cards on each table, offering guests of those who purchased tables the opportunity to donate to the various costs associated with bringing the American artists to Ireland for last year's Festival. That effort alone raised over \$7,000 on the night.

The Takeaway

The Festival will produce another New York City Gala in September 2014. **This year's target is \$400,000 (€295,000)** which will fund WFO's European premiere of a Pulitzer-prize winning opera by an American composer. It retained all U.S.-based committee members, and grown that body by three equally well-connected new patrons.

All of last year's attendees, including those invited by people who purchased tables are being targeted to attend and support this year's event.

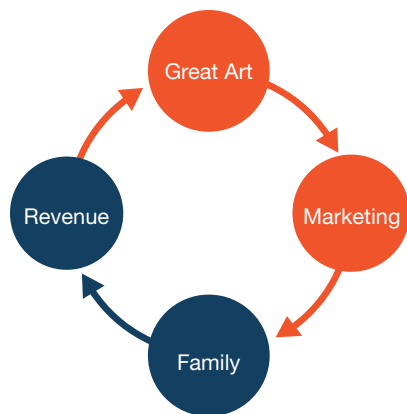
The Festival has vigorously encouraged Gala attendees to visit Wexford in an effort to further develop its relationship with these prospective donors, and expand the Festival's international audience.

Inspired by the success of the Festival's U.S.-based fundraising committee, the organisation has recently established a similar mechanism in Ireland. This committee, known as the National Development Council, will consist of existing donors and leading friends of the Festival, and will be tasked with acting as advocates and ambassadors for WFO in Irish funding circles and facilitating introductions to major, Ireland-based donor prospects.

Summary

Wexford Festival Opera identified a pressing need to expand the number of sources on which it would call, financially, in the years to come. Two primary mechanisms—a major donor campaign and a U.S.-based special event—formed the bedrock of its response. The result—the addition of over 200 new donors and over €560,000 in new income (in just three years)—speaks to the promise of this effort.

While this amount would not yet offset a serious decline in public subsidy or stalled commercial revenues, it has allowed WFO, rather, a longer-term approach to planning its art and, as a result, more creative flexibility. Whereas its planning in 2012 was limited to less than a year by the annual funding cycle, a more diverse set of resources has provided WFO leadership the confidence to work much further in advance, setting in motion a virtuous cycle of artistic, marketing, and fundraising potential.



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Business to Arts/DeVos Institute Case Study— The Ark

Building “Family” through Membership

The Ark was founded in 1995 as part of the Irish Government’s regeneration of the Temple Bar area of Dublin as the city’s Cultural Quarter. The Ark was chosen as a descriptive title which neatly encapsulated the spirit of the mission of the building: safe, adventurous voyaging. The vision for The Ark fired the imagination of many funding bodies, and attracted many visionary corporate partners. With their support and through the support of grants from the Arts Council of Ireland, Dublin Corporation, the Department of Education and the Ireland Funds among others, The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children, opened its doors in September 1995.



The Ark’s Mission

The Ark creates original cultural programmes for children in a purpose built venue in the heart of Dublin. We seek to achieve the highest standards of arts practice for children aged 2-12 through performances, exhibitions and workshops with leading Irish and international artists. Our work evolves through partnerships, touring and research as well as professional development workshops for teachers and artists. The Ark aims to facilitate access to its work for all children.

The Challenge—Building The Ark’s “Family”

Evaluation

At the onset of the Business to Arts/DeVos Institute programme, The Ark identified the need to build its “family” of donors, partners, and supporters. As with many cultural organisations, it found itself overly-reliant on too few, major sources of revenue. The loss of one major source would have a deleterious impact; the loss of two or three major sources could effectively cripple the organisation.

After a period of evaluation, Ark leadership determined a primary way to achieve this goal of resource diversification was to enhance its *Ark Angel* membership scheme (a multi-level annual giving programme).

At the time, this programme encouraged philanthropic donations at multiple levels in exchange for benefits, primarily free tickets to events. The starting point for *Ark Angel* membership was €125.

However, Ark leadership sensed that a shift in structure and strategy could significantly increase both *revenue*, and the *value* of this programme as an engagement tool. Beyond the revenue a larger membership roster would bring, the Ark desired a closer relationship with its members. Therefore, leadership set itself on the task of determining the changes required in order to achieve both goals.

A. Strategy One—Launch a Powerful, Entry-level Membership Scheme

Low-cost, High-value Structure

The first action taken was to lower the threshold for involvement; at the relatively high entry level of €125, Ark leadership sensed it was “leaving money on the table”, especially in the context of an economic recession. Recognising that the goal of any membership is to engage patrons with whom the institution can subsequently build a more intimate relationship—even if the initial buy-in is relatively low—the Ark set about to re-structure the lower end of its giving programme with the ultimate aim of building an increasingly diverse, financially potent family over time.

As a result, The Ark established a *Family Membership* at the more modest price of €60. Even as the financial threshold for engagement decreased, benefits were re-structured to provide increased value for the patron. Those benefits were designed, however, to cost the organisation little to provide but offer a high level of “insider” engagement with the organisation. These low-cost benefits were “experience-based” (providing access to special experiences rather than actual physical goods with real cost to The Ark) and were designed to produce a high margin, even though the purchase price was relatively low.

New benefits included:

- Priority booking period for all programmes throughout the year. *(Free to provide).*
- Unlimited, free access to Ark exhibitions. *(Free to provide).*
- 20% discount on tickets. *(Free to provide).*

- Regular free access for members’ children’s best friends. *(Free to provide).*
- 10% discount at the Irish Film Institute’s Cafe Bar (next door to The Ark). *(Free to provide).*
- Members-only communications with advance information on members-only special offers and events. *(Free to provide).*
- A Unicorn puzzle welcome gift. *(Very low cost to provide).*

The screenshot displays the 'Types of Membership' section on the Ark.ie website. It features a table with five membership tiers: Family (€60), ArkAngel (€125), ArkAngel Gold (€250), Guardian Angel (€500), and Guardian Angel Gold (€750). Below the table, the 'Family Membership includes:' section lists benefits such as priority booking, free access to exhibitions, a 20% discount on tickets, and a Unicorn puzzle welcome gift. A call to action 'Become part of The Ark's family with your family' is accompanied by a graphic of three interlocking hearts. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'BUY MEMBERSHIP' and 'GIFT MEMBERSHIP'.

Ark.ie

Marketing

The Ark also understood that in order to build the membership roster, it would need to create a culture shift within the organisation, activating all Ark personnel and access points as ambassadors on behalf of the membership. This strategy included the development of:

- A dedicated membership page on *The Ark.ie*.
- Updated print materials.
- Training for Ark personnel in the details of the membership, especially welcome desk attendants and other public-facing staff.
- Inclusion of membership information on every online event page.
- Membership-specific posters and postcards around and outside the venue.
- Inclusion of a flash mark on all print material for major programmes, highlighting the benefits or discounts available to members.
- Utilising press contacts to push the membership as an ideal Christmas gift.

The *Family Membership* was launched in October 2012.

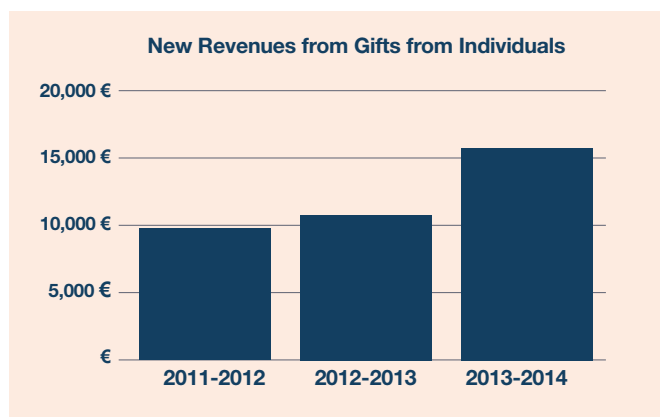
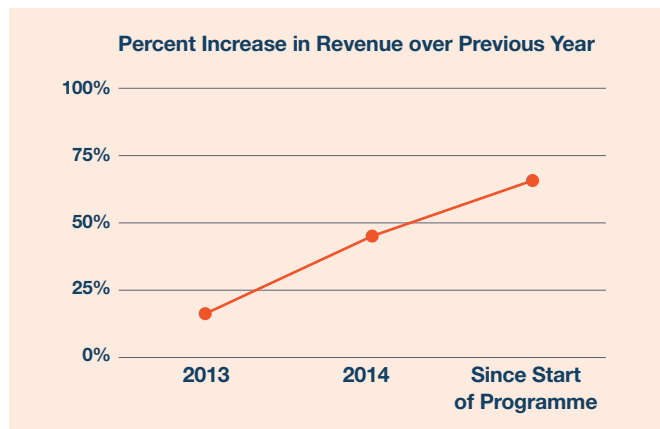
The Outcome

The year one goal for the *Family Membership* was to sell 100 memberships. The Ark surpassed this goal, selling 110 memberships in the first twelve months.

Since the launch of the *Family Membership* programme in 2012, the organisation has sold 181 memberships.

Overall, this figure represents an increase of 14% in individual giving from 2011 to 2012, and a further increase of 46% from 2012 to 2013.

Year	Individual Giving	Increase on Previous Year		Increase since start of Programme	
2011-2012	€9,823				
2012-2013	€11,194	€1,371	14%		
2013-2014	€16,360	€5,166	46%	€6,537	67%



B. Strategy Two—Creating an Authentic Bond to Encourage New Members to Renew Again and Again

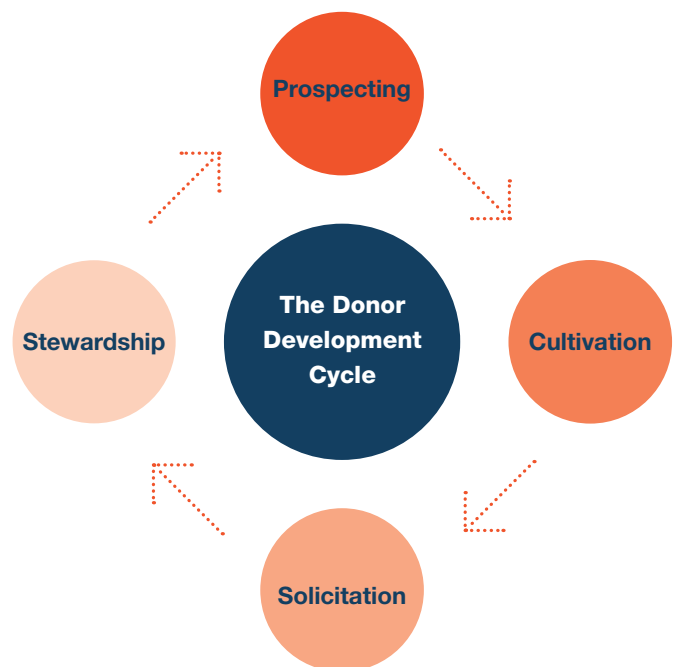
The December following its launch of the *Family Membership*, The Ark offered the membership at a significant discount to readers of a local newspaper, marketing the membership as a Christmas gift for friends and family.

Initially, the offer was successful, selling 63 *Family Memberships*.

In the fall of 2013, The Ark contacted its 2013 members to encourage a renewal in 2014. A vast majority of members solicited through direct contract with The Ark's programme and staff chose to do so.

However, *none* of those solicited through the Christmas promotion (mostly as gifts from friends) renewed.

As a result, The Ark discovered a fundamental law: to ensure a high level of renewal, an equally high level of effort was required *following* the purchase of the membership, in what the Institute refers to as the *donor stewardship* process. An authentic bond was required to achieve a reasonable level of confidence that The Ark could count on member support in subsequent seasons; simply because a family enrolls in year one does not mean it will renew in year two.



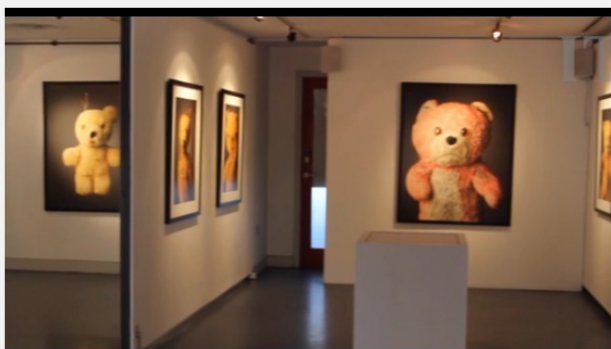
The Ark knew that a culture of customer service, or *stewardship*, had to be taken more seriously. The Ark quickly set upon a path to enhance this effort.

Additionally, Ark leadership realised it stood a higher chance of renewal success if it focused on acquisition of new members through high-touch, high-impact interactions; it would place less emphasis on one-time promotions.

A key strategy was developed: The Ark would **actively leverage highlights in its annual programming** to promote the membership.

The Ark quickly identified *Teddy Bear Story*, a 2014 blockbuster exhibition in partnership with the V&A Museum of Childhood, as a key opportunity. It would time its solicitation of potential members to capitalise on the enthusiasm created by this bold, transformational exhibition and the institutional marketing used to promote it in the press, through special events, and a high-profile partnership.

Members of **The Ark's Family Membership** scheme get in to *Teddy Bear Story* as many times as they want for **free**. A family of four would only have to visit 3 times to save the equivalent of the €60 membership fee! [Join today to activate the benefits.](#)



Ark.ie

Over 10,000 patrons attended the exhibition. Seizing the opportunity, day in and day out, The Ark pushed membership aggressively, through multiple vehicles, including:

- Poster, postcard and email campaigns, outlining the benefits of free entry to the exhibition, and other benefits.
- Up-selling the membership through the Box Office to patrons purchasing tickets.
- A targeted e-mail campaign thanking patrons for their participation, and including a retrospective offer where The Ark offered a discount on *Family Memberships* equivalent to the amount they spent on their *Teddy Bear Story* tickets.

The Outcome

The *Teddy Bear Story* campaign enrolled 52 new *Family Members*, and encouraged 4 renewals, resulting in increased revenue of €3,030. The effort successfully replaced the majority of lapsed “discount campaign” members.

The Takeaway

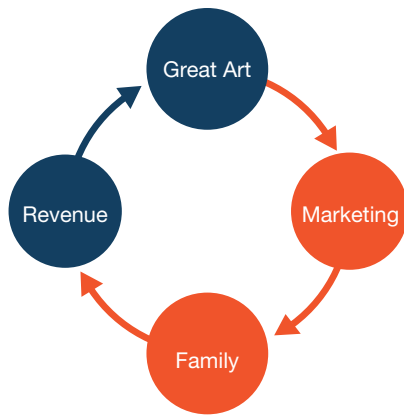
While the number of memberships sold through the newspaper offer was high, The Ark struggled to develop an authentic relationship with these patrons.

A new strategy—to solicit at the height of the “enthusiasm cycle” created by great art and aggressive marketing—proved, through the *Teddy Bear Story* campaign, that a well-timed campaign leveraging the artistic programme can be just as successful as a newspaper discount. Time will tell whether this bond proves to be lasting, resulting in a higher rate of renewal.

By the end of 2014, the Ark’s target is to retain 200 family members; by 2015, that goal increases to 300.

While revenue from this programme is still relatively modest, its significant growth in one year alone argues forcefully for the future impact of a properly-resourced effort.

With the aim to diversify the number of financial sources on which it calls for support, The Ark’s emphasis on individual giving offers a promising snapshot of a business model on the move.



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Business to Arts/DeVos Institute Case Study— Clonmel Junction Festival

Long-term Artistic Planning and Fundraising



photo by Jonathan Ryan

Clonmel, in County Tipperary, is a semi-rural town with a population of approximately 22,000.

In addition to presenting a wide range of Irish and International theatre, music, circus and dance, Clonmel Junction Festival (CJF) prides itself on nurturing and empowering ambitious, emerging, Clonmel-based artists. Since its founding in 2001, the Festival has actively sought to engage its

community through an extensive *Participation Programme*; this effort has integrated several thousand young people into its projects and performance schedule.

CJF has run each July since 2001. In that time, it has doubled in duration, from a 5- to a 10-day festival. It now features over 70 music and theatre performances each summer.

The Festival's Mission

Clonmel Junction Festival is working year round producing, presenting and promoting arts events in the Clonmel region of South Tipperary, culminating in an annual 10 day festival each July that celebrates the Arts, and the life and times we live in.

Challenge—A Short-Term Planning Cycle

The bedrock of the Festival's funding model is the support it receives from the Arts Council of Ireland. As this funding is decided on an annual basis, CJF had, by default, adopted a culture of short-term planning; how could it plan its art in advance when it would not understand its budget until months before the season began?

Financial prudence appeared to require a reactive, 10-month planning cycle; as a consequence, it was rare for CJF leadership to plan beyond the Festival's fiscal means in any given year. The result was that little strategy informed the Festival's programme from one year to the next.

The New Stream/DeVos Institute Programme invited CJF leadership to challenge this paradigm. The programme argued that without a longer-term artistic plan, CJF stood little chance of identifying—much less engaging or soliciting—a more diverse donor base. Without a broader funding base, CJF would continue to rely on increasingly unpredictable sources. It would almost certainly struggle, year after year, to fund more ambitious work. And, without innovative work to challenge and surprise its audiences, and create awareness beyond Clonmel, CJF would likely stagnate.

As such, CJF found itself in a dilemma: how to break free from a short-term cycle, subject to the annual variations of public funding, without assuming an intolerable level of risk? How would it controvert this “cycle in reverse?”

A. Strategy One—Long-term Artistic Planning

CJF embraced this notion, and set about planning five aspirational but achievable and mission-driven projects for the period of 2013–2015. It did not know *everything* it would do three years in advance; but it set down on paper, and started to discuss with friends and supporters, the *major* projects it would pursue. This was a “leap of faith”—but one CJF leadership knew it could not afford *not* to take.

This shift provided CJF, for the first time, with the leeway to conduct true prospect research, to identify a thoughtful approach to donors, and to cultivate a more broad base of support for projects of a scale and a complexity that a shorter-term planning cycle simply disallows. The “bet” was

that this longer-term view (and larger-scale thinking) would inspire others to see CJF and its programming in a different light—one worth funding at a more substantial level.

CJF's challenge would be to balance this increased programmatic appetite with the reality of its fundraising progress. CJF leadership understood that it would always work against the fundraising odds, given its distance from Ireland's major financial capitals (and its attendant financial elite). At the very least, this longer-term approach would afford CJF the *luxury of time* to plan, prospect, cultivate, and solicit at a deeper (and perhaps more patient) level than its urban counterparts.

B. Strategy Two—An Extended Fundraising Timeline

However, CJF leadership realised that planning was not enough. It knew it must develop compelling “mechanisms” or (donor programmes) that could compete with the benefits and sponsor visibility provided by its larger, more affluent urban competitors.

It decided upon an effort to make its fundraising programme more *flexible* and *personal*. While it had an existing *Friends Programme* through which to solicit annual donors, this “one-size-fits-all” approach would be unlikely to attract more substantial gifts. Additionally, this one-year programme disallowed a conversation with potential multi-year donors.

CJF realised that in order to encourage larger gifts, it would need to offer donors a personalised, high-touch way to engage directly with work that moreover appealed to their specific interests.

A Renewed Solicitation Structure

Following a full review of current fundraising mechanisms, the Festival made two structural changes:

- It introduced a *Commissioning Patrons* programme for individual donors at an increased level of giving: €500 and €1,000. This programme promised participants a role in the development of a new work during the 2014 season (access to rehearsals, premiere seating, credit as a commissioner, etc.). Until then, CJF's *Friends Programme* only offered three levels of giving: €100, €300 and

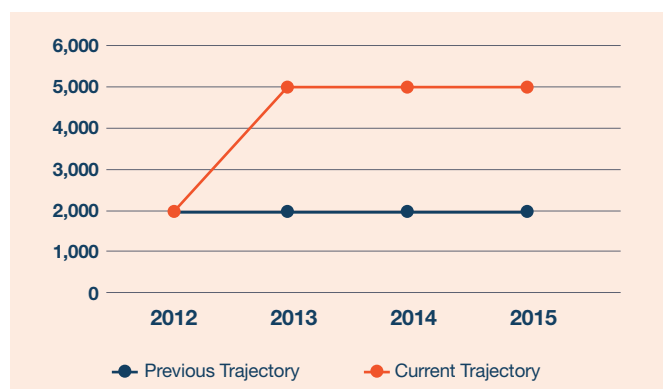
€500, with “one-size-fits-all” benefits. While necessary, the *Friends Programme* could not accommodate an individual’s personal interest in the development of a specific project. CJF now had the justification to “up the ante”, to solicit at a higher level, given the scale of vision allowed (perhaps for the first time) by its long-term planning approach.

- It likewise re-structured its corporate *Sponsorship Programme*, introducing a three-tiered programme: €5,000, €10,000 and €15,000. Additionally, this programme would function as a multi-year mechanism, allowing sponsors to pledge support for up to three years. In previous seasons, Festival sponsors were generally contributing on a one-time basis, at between €2,000 and €10,000.

The Outcome

A number of significant outcomes have resulted from the introduction of a long-term planning approach paired with new fundraising mechanisms.. The most significant results include:

- A sponsor who had, for 10 years, contributed €2,000 each year, made a three-year, €5,000 p.a. commitment (for a total of €15,000). This 150% increase in giving from a single donor marked an important turning point for CJF: it had proven that a long-term approach to artistic planning provided parallel freedom to stage a legitimate approach to high-level donors in a multi-year context.

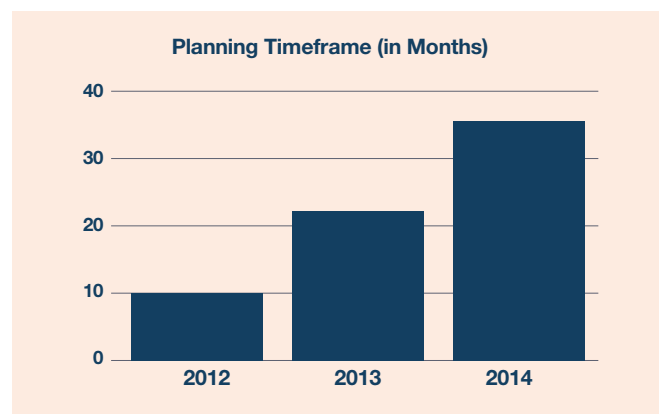


- At the introduction of the *Commissioning Patron* programme, three long-term, €300-level Festival *Friends* increased their gifts to the €500 level. It became clear that in the absence of a higher-octane “ask”—which provided donors with the ability to sponsor the development of a new work—CJF was “leaving money on the table.”

- The Board of Directors responded actively to the introduction of the *Commissioning Patron* programme. Although not all were able to join at the €500 level themselves, they utilised this improved structure to approach a group of new, high-level prospects from within the Clonmel community. As a result, 3 new Commissioning Patrons were solicited, with a total yield of €4,000 towards the 2014 programme.

In sum, Clonmel increased its gifts from non-public sources by over 150% in its first year alone.

Out of the five projects planned from 2013–2015, one was realised in 2013, two will be realised in 2014 and one is in place to be part of the 2015 Festival. **As of today, each of these projects has the necessary financial resources in place to secure their place in the programme.**



The Takeaway

In 2012, CJF leadership recognised that without a culture shift, it would likely never break the mould of a 10-month planning cycle. In addition to the stress this placed on the artistic planning process, this short-term approach had taken its toll on the psyche of the organisation. How would it ever achieve greater artistic quality and community impact when there was rarely time to react, much less plan for the future?

The process of long-term planning is now integral to the Festival's mentality. Both staff and Board are aligned around a series of short-, mid- and long-term planning goals. A "menu" of projects is available to any interested "investor", and these conversations are taking place years, not months (or weeks) in advance of the season. Already, substantial portions of the 2015 programme have taken shape and two projects are in place for 2016.

CJF coupled the increased confidence of its artistic planning process with an increased rigor in its fundraising effort. Mechanisms linked directly to the artistic process (the *Commissioning* programme) provided personalised, exciting opportunities for donors who wish to be involved with CJF in a deeper way. Clonmel's relatively remote location, and assumed lack of access to individuals of affluence, has not hindered this effort.

While the sums raised to date may be modest, they have made a significant impact on the budget of this regional festival, and greatly inspired the planning confidence, and artistic impact, of this impressive undertaking.

What appeared impossible just two short years ago may just be the ticket to a brave new chapter in this Festival's bright future.

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