

## **Find A Solution 2010: National Youth Choir of Scotland**

### **FINAL REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Firstly, we are extremely grateful to everyone who has been involved in this placement - all of NYCoS, Culture Sparks, the SRC and the Glasgow Settlement Fund. We have had a thoroughly enjoyable time which has been invaluable to our current studies and future employment prospects. Undertaking this research has not only allowed us explore the world of marketing, but critically analyse the inner workings of an arts organisation.

We soon realised just how large and diverse an organisation that NYCoS actually is. This discovery was vital in helping us to understand our project brief. Their work entails much more than just the flagship youth choir but is fundamentally based in music education. From this, stems numerous and varying projects that all pose different challenges and rewards.

In this final report we hope to summarise the project itself and provide a quick overview of the main findings from the five different research areas we attended to.

#### **2. Project Objectives**

When we first began the project, our initial brief was rather different to the one that we finally based our research upon.

After our first meeting with Dianne Grieg at Culture Sparks, it became evident that it would be more beneficial to pursue in finer detail a comprehensive marketing audit. This would, by default, feed into some of the previous objectives and aid NYCoS in developing their audience based on statistical facts and figures. However, it did unfortunately mean that we were unable to look into the development of relationships with alumni, which was one of our initial objectives. This was certainly an area that we were looking forward to investigating, and one which we know NYCoS were keen to get to the bottom of. Yet in order to produce a marketing audit with enough detail to be a useful tool and reference point for NYCoS in the future, we needed to give it our full attention. It was agreed that it would have been extremely difficult for us to undertake an investigation into alumni without first completing this. Our research and analysis relating to the marketing audit took us right up to the 6<sup>th</sup> August, and the end of our designated 8 weeks.

#### **3. Resources and Method**

We began our project by interviewing each member of staff in the NYCoS office. This gave us a chance to understand the organisation from more than one point of view, and gave us time to get used to the office and the people who we would be involved with over the following 8 weeks or so. We familiarised ourselves with tools such as Google Analytics, and started to make observations about NYCoS's marketing activities.

As the project got into full swing, we worked increasingly from home, but having regular meetings at the NYCoS offices to chart our progress and to receive advice on how to continue.

We largely used the internet for our research, as well as drawing upon the experience and knowledge of those around us. Below are some of the main internet resources used, as well as alternative methods of gathering and analysing information.

- The Taking Part Survey (online)
- The Census (online)
- Google Analytics (online)
- Websites of other arts organisations
- Arts Council website – [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com)
- The Chartered Institute of Marketing website – [www.cim.co.uk](http://www.cim.co.uk)
- Our own experiences and observations
- Experience, observations and data provided by the NYCoS staff
- Information from meetings at Culture Sparks
- Interviews with staff at similar organisations
- NYCoS annual reports
- Questionnaires given out at the concerts we attended, and also from last year

On all tasks we split the workload in two. This meant that we were both involved in every aspect of the project and have finished with a full understanding of the end result.

#### 4. Findings

We believe that we have produced several elements of a marketing audit that are well researched and provide a firm base for NYCoS to work from in future projects. They can easily be updated, and clearly signpost areas where there is further scope for development. A summary of the different sections completed follows, detailing the key findings from each:

##### ○ **SWOT and Actions**

**Key Strengths:** NYCoS possess a strong and well respected reputation for their education work and various choirs. This is founded on an extremely high standard of creative leadership from Christopher Bell, education consultant Lucinda Geoghan, and other project leaders.

**Key Weaknesses:** There is a lack of consistent customer data which hinders marketing planning. Problems with branding also hinder NYCoS's ability to work to full potential. A lack of a continuous relationship with alumni and givers means that funding opportunities are being missed.

As explained earlier, one of our initial objectives was to look into this point specifically, but in the end it was the first set of objectives that we concentrated on.

**Key opportunities:** Technological advances provide new ways of communicating with audiences and raising brand awareness. Scope for increasing individual giving is also an opportunity that should be pursued.

**Key threats:** The current economic and political climate present the largest threats to NYCoS, giving rise to uncertainty and having negative implications for fundraising.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Target repeat attendees of concerts who are not already Friends, as it is evident that they have a significant interest in NYCoS. Develop a plan of action on how to better attract alumni to the Friends scheme.
- To combat data inconsistency, implement a uniform system for gathering customer data, which ensures that all marketing needs for information are met.
- Develop and implement a brand strategy that combats each of the problems discussed. In order to advertise efficiently, especially within the press, it would be beneficial to make the NYCoS brand easier to understand, as there is sometimes confusion amongst the press as to NYCoS as an organisation and NYCoS as the flagship choir.

○ **PEST**

**Political:** Although it is still unclear as to what effect the new coalition government and subsequent budget cuts will directly have on NYCoS, local education authorities are already beginning to cut music budgets, posing an initial threat for the operation of NYCoS area choirs. It is also interesting to note that there have been ten Ministers for Culture since Scottish devolution.

The recent merger between Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council to create **Creative Scotland** can be seen as a major opportunity to change the way NYCoS is funded. Although an initial meeting has taken place between the Chief Executives of NYCoS and Creative Scotland, the details of how the merger will affect funding and working practices within NYCoS will become more apparent with time.

**Economic:** The economic climate has somewhat affected corporate giving and has certainly increased competition for funding from the government and trust funds.

**Social:** Changing values in society may begin to change how NYCoS advertises and programmes concerts and educational work, for example, changing religious views, and the growing popularity of spoken Gaelic amongst politicians.

**Technological:** Digital marketing is something that should be taken advantage of by NYCoS, especially considering the limited marketing budget. Social media provide a platform for communicating with a very wide audience, although it may not suit every targeted segment. As highlighted by mosaic profiling, there are some groups who prefer to be contacted by post, and will therefore be less receptive to digital marketing.

- **Marketing Mix Analysis:** This document has room for expansion and further investigation. However it does address each of Vicky's main marketing activities, looking at how effective each activity is. Areas that have potential to be changed or improved are highlighted, as well as the areas that are working particularly well (such as word of mouth and editorial and local press coverage).

- **Market Environment**

**Questionnaires:** The majority of people who answered the questionnaires either in 2009 or 2010 had attended the concerts as they knew someone performing, had been to a NYCoS concert before, were female and aged 46 or above. Although the questionnaires may be helpful as unofficial guidelines, there have not been enough responses to generate accurate and usable statistics. In order to ensure more responses NYCoS could ensure that Christopher Bell mentions to the audience the importance of the questionnaires and asks them personally to fill them in. It could also be helpful to entice the audience with a prize draw.

**Taking Part Survey:** Information taken from this survey includes attendance and participation levels for arts events within Scotland, regional variations, online usage and audience profiling. NYCoS's market share can be calculated as 3% of the Scottish adult population (the number of those who attended chamber music recitals). The type of audience that is most likely to attend participate this type of event was found to be in the AB social group, over 45, and have a degree. These trends can be confirmed as appropriate for NYCoS by the Mosaic profiling attained by Culture Sparks.

- **Comparative Analysis**

We began with the intention of conducting a competitive analysis, but as we progressed, we decided that a 'comparative analysis' was a more apt description as it does not include all the elements of a classic competitive analysis. In essence, we have looked at organisations we consider to be competitors and through our own observations and interviews with staff members, we have compared and contrasted their marketing and fundraising functions with each other and with NYCoS. This helps to give NYCoS an idea of where they stand, compared to their competitors.

Some people we talked to over the phone and others said it would be easier if we emailed the questions, often because they needed to consult a few different members of the team. We didn't get as many responses to our questions as hoped, but the people who we did talk to were very helpful. As a result, the information provided is not an exhaustive study of the competition. However it can still be regarded as a useful document which can provide a rough benchmark for NYCoS, and perhaps provide them with some different points of view on marketing which will help in future planning.

Key points gathered from this task include:

- A common difficulty in attracting corporate sponsors.
- A common interest in the further development of social media tools, in the near future. A feeling that, to maximise effectiveness, a designated social media officer is needed, so that more time can be spent developing and maintaining this side of marketing.
- A feeling of ownership and involvement are as important as concrete benefits, if not more, in attracting and retaining 'Friends'.
- NYOS, probably the organisation most similar to NYCoS who we interviewed, find Spotify a very useful medium – something to consider making use of in a similar way.
- The recession has not had a particularly large impact on marketing, since most arts organisations had limited budgets to begin with.
- NYCoS has a particularly low marketing budget in comparison to organisations including NYOS and SCO.

## **5. What we have learnt**

Over the course of this project we have learnt not only how to complete a project such as this, but many other invaluable skills which we can carry through our studies, and to the workplace when we leave University. Key points are listed below:

- How to undertake a SWOT and PEST analysis, as well as other elements of a marketing audit. How this is used by an organisation and how to tailor the classic audit framework to your organisation's needs.
- That a project will not always follow the direction originally planned, and that it is not a problem if objectives are adapted to suit the situation as it changes.
- How an arts organisation works from a business point of view, and how this is different to a commercial organisation.
- Current external and internal issues affecting arts organisations.
- Report writing skills.
- In the future we feel that given a set of objectives, we will be able to arrive quicker at a plan of action and a starting point, and be able to recognise and coordinate key resources more independently.
- To back up our work with evidence as far as possible. This produces more useful documentation which gives rise to more credible recommendations.