



Brokerage: Marketing Cultural Activity to Schools

Focus group findings

February 2014

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Methodology

- x4 focus groups held at the AND offices
- Groups took place on 27th and 30th January 2014, lasting 1hr 45mins
- Groups segmented by :

	Intrigued Engagers	Cultural Commissioners / Cultural Eclectics
Primary schools	Group 1	Group 2
Secondary schools	Group 3	Group 4

- Respondents comprised a mix of:
 - Senior leaders, head of departments, and subject co-ordinators
 - Teaching subjects related to Art, Music, English/Drama or Dance
 - School types - academies, state, faith, independent, SEN
 - Inner and Outer London

Methodology



- Segments defined by their response to - *Which of the following best describes your school?*
 - **CULTURAL COMMISSIONER:** Our school offers a range of cultural opportunities and we have two-way engagement with CPOs – we regularly seek out, and are offered, cultural opportunities
 - **CULTURAL ECLECTIC:** Our school offers a range of cultural opportunities but we pick and choose cultural opportunities with CPOs on an ad-hoc basis
 - **INTRIGUED ENGAGER:** Our school offers some cultural opportunities for students but we would like to offer more and would like further guidance on how to go about doing this
 - **OTHER (not recruited):** Our priorities as a school lie elsewhere than in arts and cultural education. We rarely seek out opportunities for engagement with arts and culture providers and we tend to focus our energies and resources on other areas

Executive summary



- The schools taking part in the research all undertake a range of cultural activities, which tend to be **off the shelf**, based on **little or no relationship** with the provider and are often planned on an **ad-hoc** basis
- Teachers feel relatively confident in how they seek out new cultural opportunities – predominantly led by **past experiences**, **recommendations** from other teachers and general searching on **Google**
 - Marketing collateral has little resonance with teachers – the volume of material received means it often goes unnoticed, or is *selectively* passed on by various gate-keepers
- Across all groups, teachers spontaneously recognised the need for a centrally housed location to support their search for new cultural opportunities across schools – thus there was great support for the suggested **web portal brokerage model**
 - So long as it could guarantee all practitioners were ‘school appropriate’, had a good search and filter system, was frequently updated and offered other useful information such as availability of funding – it was felt a dedicated web portal would address any current perceived gaps in the cultural commissioning process and most importantly would save teachers valuable time



Understanding the current cultural commissioning process

Schools undertake a broad range of activities, influenced by a number of factors



Range

Schools undertake a **wide range of activities** – from in-school writing workshops throughout the year to off-site visits such as the Sky studios.
Most activities are 'off the shelf' – very few teachers had commissioned bespoke activities in the past and few could see the benefit in doing so

School type

Primary schools tended to be more similar in the type of activities they arranged compared to secondary schools, due to a slightly more limited range of activities for younger students and preference for hosting activities on-site, to decrease logistical issues with transporting younger pupils

Affluence

Several schools were committed to offering cultural activities which **would not require a financial contribution** from parents.
Unsurprisingly, the more affluent the school, the more activities offered to students.

Location

No differences were identified between the types of activities and location of activities that took place between Inner and Outer London schools. When going on off-site visits, many schools use the free transport available through TfL

Segment

Cultural Commissioners and *Cultural Eclectics* are slightly more engaged with the commissioning process and demonstrated more knowledge of the cultural activities available. *Intrigued Engagers* appeared equally confident with the process, and although there was a desire to increase the number of cultural activities, there was less drive to overcome time and cost limitations

Range of activities undertaken

Primary school activities

Off-site visits

- Museums (Natural History, Science, National Portrait Gallery, Toy, V&A)
- Cinema
- Theatre performances
- Golden Hind pirate ship
- Middleton House
- Shakespeare School Festival
- Puppetry seminars

On-site activities

- Dancing (Irish, Chinese, Bollywood, ballet, street)
- Impeyan animal visits
- Experiential activities linked to the curriculum (using dance and drama to teach the curriculum)
- Astronomy tent
- Art/painting workshops
- Drummers

Secondary school activities

Off-site visits

- Museums (Tate, British)
- Cinema
- Theatre performances (Globe, Southwark Playhouse, Donmar Warehouse, Riverside Studios, Almeida, West End shows)
- Links with theatres (Barbican, Lyric, Old Vic), galleries and orchestras (London Philharmonic) to allow pupils to work on a piece and present to an audience
- Archaeological sites
- TV studios (Sky)

On-site activities

- Drama workshops with actors/drama students from theatres, Shakespeare group or RADA
- Photographer-in-residence
- Painting workshops with artists
- Writing workshops (storytelling, poetry)
- Dance workshops
- Puppetry workshops (Little Angel)

There are a lack of pre-existing relationships between schools and cultural providers, and schools didn't express a desire for this either

- Many teachers did not feel that they had a relationship with cultural providers that involved working towards a mutual outcome, nor did they feel this was something they required
- Similarly, many did not feel they had an on-going dialogue with their cultural providers. Those schools which did, already tended to be very arts-orientated:
 - These schools were able to tailor programmes specifically to their student strengths, allow pupils to develop a direct relationship with an artist, have a richer cultural offering for their pupils and develop skills within their student body
 - These schools were able to identify the benefits from pre-existing relationships such that they could save teachers time in sourcing activities and reduce administrative burden (e.g. risk-assessment already completed).
 - However this additional knowledge didn't add further desire to seek out closer relationships amongst those without

Most cultural activities are planned ad-hoc

- Most activities are planned ad-hoc at the start of term (or become ad-hoc when providers become booked up)
 - Although some activities are planned in advance or recur annually, such as theatre and museum trips that *always* happen as a treat towards the end of term or the academic year
- Some teachers are aware that high-quality activities can be booked up far in advance, but still lack the time to devote to researching and organising activities
- For primary cultural commissioners/cultural eclectics teaching the creative curriculum, planning must be ad-hoc as activities are informed by pupil demand each term

It's hard in our school [teaching the creative curriculum] because two classes in the same year may study very different things. There is no curriculum map and the learning journey can be anything from two weeks to six. You haven't got a lot of time to organise something. Primary, Cultural Eclectic

Marketing materials often don't reach or resonate with teachers



- Primary school teachers didn't appear to receive the same volume of marketing materials as secondary school teachers
 - Some felt they were not heavily targeted by cultural organisations
 - Others only received marketing if passed on to them by a subject coordinator or school administrator, usually conducted in an ad-hoc manner
- Secondary school teachers felt they were inundated with marketing material – they received so much that most is binned immediately, else piles up and binned at end of term
 - Collateral needed to really stand out to make an impression on secondary school teachers
- Several teachers also expressed skepticism around the quality of organisations which had to advertise – they felt if something was quality, they should not need to promote themselves heavily, word of mouth through teacher networks should suffice

A lot of businesses recognise education is a huge market to tap into. I get lots of fliers, but most go in the bin – I don't even filter it...you cannot overstate the time constraints on teachers. Secondary, Intrigued Engager

You sometimes get people locally who'll give you hand-outs asking whether they can teach the kids something. Our school usually just discards that...it's usually a monkey-making venture and I think they are perceived as not as professional...I've been to lots of things with the children where the standard has been quite poor. Primary, Cultural Commissioner

Most teachers rely on a mix of Google and word of mouth to research cultural activity, and felt that a dedicated cultural/education website could be a very useful tool

Seeking out new cultural opportunities

- When starting their search for new providers or activities, nearly all teachers start their search by **speaking with other educators** (either at their school, teacher networks or friends) and through **searching on Google**
 - However, using Google can be a time-consuming process, with little quality assurance
 - Word of mouth provides quality assurance, but relies on strong teacher networks
- Secondary to this, teachers may find out about opportunities through a mixture of other resources:
 - Reviewing activities on other schools' websites for inspiration
 - Following up on marketing materials they have received
 - Arranging activities for pupils based on events they have personally attended (e.g. theatre performance)
 - In primary school, parents may offer to teach a specific art or dance

Identifying the gap

- Many teachers spontaneously expressed a desire for a resource or tool that collates all cultural activities around London in one central space. This tool should be easy-to-use, time-efficient and provide a measure of quality assurance in order to improve upon the current process

It would be helpful if there was a central place for all schools [to research activities]. They need a Time Out guide for schools. There isn't a news feed for all these places. Secondary, Intrigued Engager

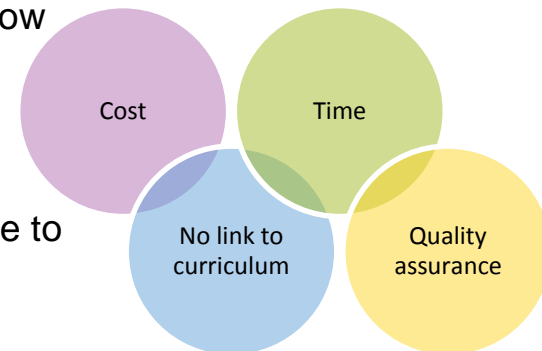
Teachers see the value in arranging cultural activities, but are frequently constrained by time and cost

- Teachers can clearly **identify the value** in cultural activities:
 - Allows pupils to get out of the school setting and see more of London/UK
 - Enhances the student experience by engaging in activities they might otherwise not be able to do
 - Useful reward mechanism
 - It's always been done, so teacher sees no reason to stop
 - Opportunities for cross-curricular teaching are a bonus to maximise the money spent on providers
- However, they need to **overcome several hurdles** in commissioning new activities:
 - Ensuring activity meets tight budget constraints and is not costly to parents
 - Time – ensure can fit within busy school schedule (teaching time, especially for exam subjects always takes priority); needed to organise activity; allow for administrative sign-off
 - Quality assurance, without a recommendation or assurance it's child friendly, teachers will not consider using it
 - If an activity is taking place during school hours, teachers should be able to justify the activity's relevance to the curriculum
 - After school activities do not require such justification, but if parents are asked for a financial contribution, it's important to be able to justify the educational value of the activity

Drivers



Barriers



Although teachers have flexibility in choice, they may need sign-off from a variety of individuals



The decision makers

- In general, both primary and secondary school teachers have a broad remit in the types of activities they can commission
- Provided the activity overcomes the barriers mentioned previously, the activity chosen is often a matter of personal preference
- Depending on the structure of a school, activities may need to get sign-off from any or all of the following:
 - Head teacher
 - Head of department / Subject coordinator
 - Business manager / School bursar

It is like working in a Kafka novel occasionally. Each house has a separate budget. Each department has a separate budget. It is jealously guarded so that there can occasionally be arguments about whether this comes out of x budget or y budget. Secondary, Cultural Commissioner

In the Academy in which I work, there has to be clear curriculum benefit and benefit to progress and that has to be justified on triplicate forms, signed and counter-signed. For example, if a member of staff in a department has an idea, it can be quite hard to get funding to get that trip okayed, unless they can show some direct benefit to the curriculum. Secondary, Cultural Commissioner



Evaluating AND`s Brokerage models

The web portal was the standout brokerage model and the ideal model created by teachers



Overall perceptions:

- This was the 'star' of all brokerage models – many teachers spontaneously suggested the need for a one-stop-shop online tool and had a clear idea of the features this model could contain:
 - Be a simple, searchable database of cultural providers
 - Be updated frequently (at least half-termly) and should not be dominated by large organisations - small, independent providers should also be included
 - Have great filtering capabilities, by:
 - Year Group
 - Subject area
 - Location
 - Cost
 - Quality assurance endorsement from organisations (e.g. Arts Council England, Craft Council) and fellow teachers. Some likened this to a Trip Advisor type system
 - Experience working with children (e.g. CRB checked, SEN experience)
- The web portal could be complimented by parts of the other brokerage models, such as: an email newsletter containing updates, commissioning guides providing 'how-to' instructions for new teachers and information about available grants and how to apply for them

It'd save a lot of time to have one central resource because currently we have to filter through a lot of useless information. Also, you can find exactly what you want very quickly. Primary, Intrigued Engager

The web portal was clearly felt to address the current gap in teacher needs



Benefits:

- A web portal overcomes many of teachers' current concerns around time saving and quality assurance, by:
 - Providing a central database of organisations, which can be easily filtered according to a teacher's specific needs, teachers can find providers quickly and in their own time
 - A teacher review system plus any professional endorsements would provide a 'word of mouth' element offering a measure of quality of assurance

Concerns:

- Frequency of updates – if the website does not feel up-to-date, it will cease to be relevant. Teachers need to be assured that relevant, up-to-date content is on the database
- Ensure the website has a user-friendly interface – it shouldn't feel clunky

Points to consider:

- **Marketing:** To ensure teacher awareness, the web portal needs to be marketed to a range of teachers and roles, such as head teachers, school administrators, heads of department/subject coordinators, as well as individual teachers
- **Frequency of updates:** To ensure the web portal feels relevant and reflects accurate timings
- **Newsletter:** A half-termly newsletter could support the web portal by reminding teachers of its existence, relevance and highlight new, unique or interesting activities
- **Cost:** Expectation that this was a free service to teachers. The core searchable database would be free but teachers understand they could be expected to pay when commissioning the activities

Overcoming the barriers faced by LONSAS



- We spoke with over 25 teachers, and only one had any awareness and experience of using LONSAS
- In order to succeed where LONSAS struggled, the web portal would need to be well-publicised with an easy-to-use interface
- Given many teachers described features similar to LONSAS, there was a sense that it may have been ahead of its time

I thought it was clunky. It was useful to look up artists working in specific areas. I found a street dancer in there who was absolutely brilliant.. I did find some stunning people on it... I thought it was good. I felt it was probably underused. I also felt it was poorly advertised around the arts world.
Secondary, Cultural Commissioner

The .pdf digest was of interest when coupled with the web portal, but of limited value on its own



Overall perceptions:

- As a standalone model, there was little interest in this. It felt time-consuming to read and would be difficult to locate relevant information if information was split by borough as opposed to activity-type

Benefits:

- Teachers could see the value in a half-termly or termly newsletter bringing cultural activities to their attention. As such, many felt this would be a natural compliment to the web portal

*It'd be nice to have a borough digest alongside the web portal so you could see what's happening on your doorstep.
Primary, Intrigued Engager*

Concerns:

- There was little consensus on the structure and format of the .pdf digest:
 - Some felt dividing the digest by borough would be of value, while others wanted to know of relevant activities regardless of location
 - Some felt that an email would be the best format to receive the digest, while others felt having something to flick through in the staff room would be easier

Points to consider:

- Web portal:** Several teachers felt the digest could be complimentary to the web portal as a newsletter update, serving to highlight unique opportunities and remind teachers of the relevance of the web portal
- Curator:** There were no strong views on who should curate the digest
- Recipients:** In order to maximise awareness, the digest should be made available to all those who sign up for it, plus heads of department/subject coordinators, and subject teachers

Commissioning guides could be of value to NQTs, but would be of little use to experienced teachers

Overall perceptions:

- Teachers could see the value of Commissioning guides for new teachers or those still undertaking training, but felt they had limited or no value to experienced teachers, given they already knew how to commission cultural practitioners.
- There was some perceived value in having them to act as an occasional point of reference on the web portal

Points to consider:

- **Teacher training:** Teachers suggested these guides could be a useful part of teacher qualification training, to build up knowledge in arranging cultural activities
- **Web portal:** In addition to this, the guides could be made available on the web portal as a point of reference
- **Funding:** There was a lack of awareness and understanding of external funding available to schools - a guide which explains where to go for funding and how to apply was perceived to have the most value for teachers

This might be handy at university level, trainee teachers would pay for it....but otherwise, I'm not a massive fan. Primary, Cultural Eclectic

The web portal should have advice on grants and funding. Primary, Intrigued Engager

The deluxe web portal had too many features to make it valuable to teachers



Overall perceptions:

- Most additional features of the deluxe model were felt to be unnecessary –teachers didn't feel they needed the extra support
- There was some difference between segments in response to this model. Cultural Commissioners had a more positive response – they could see the relevance of features such as a dedicated advisor, although in general did not see a personal need for these
- By comparison, most Intrigued Engagers felt the features of the deluxe model were an extra burden on their time and placed little value on them

Benefits:

- The free culture bus held some appeal, but many schools already receive free transport with TfL, so this wasn't an entirely necessary feature

Concerns:

- The number of features of this model made it feel expensive and too costly
- Several teachers felt the additional features, such as the networking opportunities and advisor, would take up large quantities of their time and thus had no value

The design of this overestimates how high trips are in the priority list for teachers. It's an add-on you might do to enrich a curriculum, it's no the central core. So this is just too much.

Secondary, Intrigued Engager

Cultural commissioning and cultural advisors were equally unpopular brokerage models

Cultural commissioning

- Overall, this model was not appealing to teachers
- It was felt to be too time-consuming and there was general disinterest in commissioning bespoke activities

Cultural advisors

Overall perceptions:

- This model did not appeal to teachers
- Several older teachers felt it was similar to the previous local authority system. Given it had been abolished, there was little buy-in towards the concept being revitalised

Benefits:

- A few teachers did acknowledge the benefits of having a cultural advisor, namely:
 - Professional knowledge of a wide variety of disciplines and networks of individuals to deliver them, which would save time for teachers
 - A cultural advisor could support the business case to a head teacher or business manager for a specific activity
- Despite the perceived benefits, few teachers would choose to use it as the benefits did not overcome time concerns and disinterest in bespoke activities

Concerns:

- Given the previous system had been abolished, the model felt unrealistic and too costly

Both the networks and branded networks models failed to address teachers' needs

Networks

- Overall, this model elicited little interest
- It was felt to be too time-consuming, irrelevant and would not fill any current gap in needs

Branded networks

Overall perceptions:

- Overall, teachers had little interest in this model
- It was felt too be too expensive (and similar to agencies which already exist)
- Teachers felt they would lack quality assurance at the network's inception
- Some teachers also had difficulty understanding the concept itself – they didn't understand it as an interdisciplinary agency but rather an organisation which would offer creative professionals from one discipline

Concerns:

- A handful of teachers also felt that cultural practitioners working for a branded network could lose their artistic edge – they valued arts professionals as independents and did not want to see them as part of a generic agency



Identifying other areas of opportunity

Teachers lack information and confidence in applying for funding



Lack of awareness

- Most teachers were unaware external funding exists to support their cultural activities and upon discussing the opportunity, many teachers expressed interest in knowing more and pursuing it
 - Those who had benefitted from funding, shared their positive experiences, feeling it offered the opportunity to provide superior cultural activities for their students

Constraints on applying

- Of those who were aware of available funding, some did not apply because of time constraints – the application process seemed too time intensive
- Furthermore, the perceived inconsistent nature of funding means the investment of time from teachers does not always pay off
 - One teacher shared an experience of receiving funding which supported a 3 day cultural event at their school. The funding provider underwent a re-organisation and the teacher needed to reapply the following year. They did not have the time or energy to re-do it, putting them off future applications

Moving Forward

- Teachers would like to be made aware of the funding opportunities available. Some felt the web portal would be enhanced by providing this information
- Teachers also need guidance on how best to fill out applications, to make the process as straightforward as possible

Teachers also suggested other ideas to improve cultural provision



Exhibition event

- One group of primary teachers suggested a one-day cultural event held at the end of summer term, where cultural practitioners and teachers could come together
- Cultural organisations could explain and/or demonstrate their educational activities to educators, and teachers could book activities on the spot for the following academic year
- By holding the event at the end of summer term, teachers would have the **time** to attend and could begin **planning for the year ahead**
- This would provide an opportunity for teachers to **become aware** of activities they might not otherwise encounter and allow cultural organisations to speak with educators directly

You can look at demonstrations, you can talk to people there, see how accessible it is for your kids. You can pick up pamphlets, so you can take stuff that is more applicable to you.

Primary, Intrigued Engager

At-school culture bus

- Another group of primary teachers suggested a 'culture bus' could visit schools, which would provide a range of activities or workshops for pupils to engage with (e.g. painting, drama, insects)
- These activities would rotate throughout the year and allow pupils to learn in a different environment, without having to leave the school grounds

A bit like the History off the Page but it would be in a bus that would just turn up with everything in it, and the children could go in and learn in the bus.

Primary, Cultural Commissioner

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