

Survive and Thrive Case Study



Researching & Developing an Entrepreneurial Board: The Galleries of Justice Museum in Nottingham & National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL) in London and Nottingham

Aim: The Egalitarian Trust currently governs both The Galleries of Justice Museum and the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL). Survive & Thrive diagnostic activity revealed a need to strengthen the Board at a pivotal time of potential change and succession planning; principally at the role it currently fulfils in supporting the Chief Executive, Tim Desmond, with strategic planning and fundraising and brokering new business opportunities. The aim of research activity is to explore a model whereby the Board can engage much more fully with the future direction and continued sustainability of the organisation.

Method

By working in partnership with Cultivate, the organisational development agency for the cultural sector in the East Midlands, a best practice example of entrepreneurial board management and development was cited at Ellis Island, New York. Ellis Island similarly explores the theme of national citizenship which is a priority for the Egalitarian Trust as they seek to establish NCCL at national level. Dialogue was established with Stephen Briganti, The President & Chief Executive Officer of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island



Galleries of Justice, High Pavement, Nottingham

Foundation who explained that the organisation receives no government revenue funding and instead, much more than the UK, it is the role of the Board and CEO to broker fundraising relationships. Central to the success of this model is to ensure the right skills and contacts are present on the Board so as to effectively drive the organisation to achieving its mission. To this end, the US governance structure is often much larger, with established sub-committees driving organisational developments in marketing, fundraising or strategy and programming. To some extent the Egalitarian Trust already has this approach with the governance of two organisations (museum and NCCL), but there is a need to refine this approach to the detail of the US model. Stephen was keen to share some key points in achieving an entrepreneurial Board and whilst being sensitive to cultural differences.

Key Points for an Entrepreneurial Board

- 1) The Chairman needs to be a 'go-getter', either give themselves or get others to give by opening doors*
- 2) Succession planning is essential for the Board to bring in 'new blood' and with them new fundraising contacts*

- 3) *New Board members need to be recruited with the understanding they will need to adopt fundraising targets*
- 4) *There needs to be an understanding that Board Members need to make personal donations as well as achieving fundraising targets or at least contribute commercial skills directly leading to income for the organisation*
- 5) *Explore the full history / assets and mission of your organisation to communicate and attract new board members*
- 6) *American Boards are much larger than British ones and members are high ranking individuals who join with the specific purpose to bring in funding and in return benefit from association with the charity*

Stephen Briganti explained 60% of his time is spent on fundraising with the Board for the Foundation, whereas at the Galleries of Justice only 10% of the CEO's time is involved in this activity- a clear way to make a difference

- 7) *Americans have a greater sense of philanthropy and pioneering spirit whereas British Boards tend to see their role as more passive and responsible for governance*
- 8) *American culture is direct and straight forward which makes the fundraising 'Ask' more acceptable for trustees and funders*
- 9) *The emphasis is more on productivity rather than attending Board meetings, as the main focus is on fundraising trustees are more dynamic and business orientated*
- 10) *Ascertaining each individual interest in your product is crucial to sustaining their commitment, especially as 'giving' is a requirement of Board membership*
- 11) *Explore using part of any investment towards future sustainability, noting that the UK is often more focussed on the here and now without a longer-term plan, such as paying to an endowment*
- 12) *Explore the board retention policy of 'Give, Get, or Get off', if trustees do not achieve their fundraising targets they are politely asked to leave*

Evaluation and Outcomes

Following the discussion, Tim Desmond has been working with existing Board members with legal expertise and Cultivate, to revisit the model, look at the potential 'ask' and undertake a skills audit for future recruitment and as part of the Survive & Thrive programme. It is intended that any restructure and forward planning will be a combination of the US and UK models of governance - a pilot for the region and potentially nationally within the sector. The evaluation will be how far this approach and restructure carries the organisation forward and in the further development of the NCCL.

"Trustees are vital to achieving sustainable funding for the organisation; they must 'give or get' funding as part of their role, in addition to using their business understanding to govern the organisation." Tim Desmond, Chief Executive, Galleries of Justice and National Centre for Citizenship and the Law

Conclusion and Legacy

As we move into a new economic environment where there is less of a role to be played by public funding of charities it is essential that we change the role of trustees and develop the British approach to philanthropy. This will be a particular challenge to charities outside London who have more limited networks.

The legacy of this particular period of research is in the new relationship between the Egalitarian Trust & Ellis Island, New York and Cultivate. This in itself offers greater support to the Chief Executive which is also a key role for any strong governance structure. It has also helped to shape a potential succession plan and clear role for the current Chairman, who will continue to support the organisation moving forward – offering contacts and direction during a period of entrepreneurial change.

For further information about our Organisational Development services please contact us.
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