



SHARE Museums East
**Museums
Marketing
programme
2011-2012**

 **SHARE Museums East**
a network of know how

Supporting excellence, resilience and
cooperative working in museums
in the East of England.



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Some comments from participants

“(marketing) advice helped me to approach the planning of future activities for groups in a different way to how I would usually work. This was extremely helpful in terms of allowing us to develop a ‘menu’ or suite of activities that groups will be able to choose from in the future. This should make things more streamlined and sustainable from a delivery point of view, whilst also enabling us to maximise future income in this area. Income from group bookings will be an important part of our business plan going forward.”

The Higgins, Bedfordshire.

“This work has had a major impact on the marketing strategy because of the contribution from a marketing professional who knew about museums in the region when we had no existing in house expertise. It is worth pointing out that previous marketing advice from a non-museum source has proved less effective. The ability to discuss and evaluate all aspects of key marketing activity has undoubtedly had an impact throughout the Heritage Service. Not least has been the shift in focus to provide a taste of the range of events in the promotional leaflet along with the rest of the joint ticket offer, as opposed to a long list of the events in the year. This has triggered a different approach with an emphasis on keeping information simple but accurate.”

St Edmundsbury Heritage Service, Suffolk.

“This work has helped the museum to achieve some of its main aims and objectives in its 2011-2015 business plan. Helen has helped us to return to our core values and learn how to communicate this more effectively and be confident in advocating what we do well. Providing a designer’s brief has helped understand how to communicate with advertising and design agencies. The new site plan and welcome leaflet has had great impact and very positive comments.”

Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum.

“It has been refreshing to work with a marketing professional with direct museum experience, who was able to challenge working practices and look at the museum afresh. It is clear that this is an important (City) Museum in the eastern region but has simply not featured on the radar up till now. I now have a plan and some simple tools to change that!”

Chelmsford Museum

“This project has impacted on my own professional development. I am more confident that I have tools to cope with increasing demands to make more money and increase visitors with less budget/ staff etc.”

Welwyn Hatfield Museums Service, Hertfordshire.



Summary

The SHARE Museums East marketing programme was run as a pilot project in 2011/12 as part of the Renaissance funded East of England Museum Development programme. In the past, a number of museums across the region had taken part in a postcode data collection project and had their data analysed using Experian’s Mosaic consumer classification.

This provided participating museums with an audience profile. However, for a variety of reasons, few museums were able to take the data forward in a way that influenced internal programming and marketing. The aim of this project was to use audience data to develop marketing and events programming. This included having an up to date set of postcode data analysed. The project brought a small cohort of museums together. They each had access to five days of specialist marketing support. One county museum group was also supported through this project with a half day training session, surgery and dedicated phone access to a specialist for a set number of hours.

Overall, there were four specific elements to this project:

- Investment in Mosaic analyses of postcodes provided by participating museums. This included a feedback session from Experian.
- Provision of bespoke marketing support from Helen Mitchell, a freelance Arts and Heritage advisor and Project Manager.
- A small grant enabling each participating museum to undertake a focused and specific piece of marketing work informed by the audience profiling.
- The aim of all SHARE Museums East projects is to provide resources not just to participating museums, but also the wider museums community. As such, the final element of this project was to produce a

list of marketing ‘top-tips’ to enable other Museums to focus their marketing efforts more effectively. These tips are included at the end of this report.

The museums that took part in this project were diverse, comprising local authority and independent organisations, and a county group made up of largely independent volunteer run museums.

Overall, the programme highlighted a number of things. Firstly, within all but one of the museums that took part in this project, there is a lack of dedicated marketing support or expertise. This confirms that there is a need to support museums to develop their own skills and knowledge. The project also highlighted that the approach taken, i.e providing specialist bespoke support, can provide a legacy enabling a museum to take marketing forward in a more informed and structured manner. The project also highlighted that although an individual museum’s marketing requirements are different, there are a number of general issues that arise across the board. It is the general, recurring issues that have informed the ‘top-tips’ section of this report.

Finally, this pilot project was undertaken in 2011/12 and subsequent to the completion of the work, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, who manage SHARE Museums East, have successfully gained funding to continue running museum development services for the East of England. Over the coming three years, marketing support will be informed by this pilot. Further information on museum development in the East of England can be found on the SHARE Museums East website (www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk).

Natasha Hutcheson
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 SHARE Museums East, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
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SHARE Museums East

Museums Marketing programme 2011-2012

Including a 'Marketing Top-Tips' section.

Helen Mitchell
Arts and Heritage Advisor
and Project Manager
Norwich



Introduction

The SHARE Museums East marketing project was conceived of as a four-pronged approach to supporting museums in the Eastern region with marketing through;

- investment in mosaic analysis of post codes provided by each museum.
- provision of bespoke marketing support through a freelancer.
- a small grant to deliver some specific projects with the freelancer.
- creation of marketing 'top-tips' crib sheet for museums.

The aims of the project were:

- To learn more about the current state of museums marketing in the Eastern region.
- To explore how to improve marketing and marketing development in museums.
- To improve sustainability in participating museums.

The project objectives were:

- To deliver marketing programmes for six museums/museum services and one museums' group.
- To develop for each museum a programme that met immediate needs and led to sustainable improvements in marketing.
- To provide grants to support delivery of specific marketing activities.
- To boost marketing in participating museums through direct delivery by a professional freelancer.
- To provide professional development for key staff through close working with and mentoring by a professional freelancer.
- To obtain good value for money from the investment.

- To record and evaluate activity in a final report.
- To identify common weak points and to create and make available a list of 'Top Tips' to help strengthen and provide focus to marketing for museum staff.

Methodology

Recruiting the museums

Museums were invited to apply to be part of the programme. The selected participants comprised two independent museums, three local authority museums services and one museums group;

- Bedford Museums Group (with a focus on its independent museums in particular)
- Bury St Edmunds Museum Service, Suffolk (local authority museum service managing Moyses Hall and West Stowe)
- Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum, Cambridgeshire (independent museum)
- Chelmsford Museums, Essex (local authority museum service managing Chelmsford Museum, the Essex Regimental Museum and Sandford Mill, Science Education Centre)
- Museum of the Broads, Norfolk (independent museum)
- The Higgins, Bedford (local authority museum service developing a major new museum formed through the amalgamation of one museum and two galleries)
- Welwyn Hatfield Museums, Hertfordshire (local authority service managing Mill Green Museum and Welwyn Roman Baths)

A freelance contract was put out to tender and Helen Mitchell, an Arts and Heritage Adviser and Project Manager with a specialism in museums marketing and wide-ranging experience of working with museums in the region was appointed.



Mosaic analysis

Museums were asked to collect and supply a set of visitor post codes. These were analysed by Experian to provide information on visitors' demographic and lifestyle characteristics, and on travel and drive time to show catchment area.

Representatives from the museums attended a morning presentation by Experian. The presentation comprised an introduction to mosaic analysis and a presentation of the findings for each museum. Museums subsequently received a copy of the presentation and an Excel spreadsheet to allow data to be interrogated.

Early on it became clear that several of the museums were un-sure how to use the Mosaic data supplied. It was decided that, for four museums, the freelancer would provide a digested analysis of Mosaic findings with simple and practical recommendations on how to use the data.

Specialist marketing support

On the same day as the Mosaic presentation the Regional Museum Development Manager and freelancer held half hour meetings with staff from each museum. The intention was to talk through existing arrangements for marketing and, together, to make an initial diagnosis of help needed. Previously the museums had also sent through publicity samples.

Three to five days time was allocated for each project. The freelancer scheduled work in consultation with the museums and spent a day at each museum undertaking further fact-finding, discussions and close-working. The programme was subsequently delivered remotely with the freelancer developing a close working relationship with a lead member of staff over the phone and by email. The work of the freelancer was overseen by the Regional Museum Development Manager.

Grants

£5000 was set aside to support some of the development projects that the freelancer would be working on with the museums. The grants were not initially promoted to the museums, so were an 'added extra'. Decisions on the allocation of grants were made two months into the project, by which time the freelancer and Regional Museum Development Manager had a good understanding of the needs and potentials of each project.

Evaluation

The freelancer and Regional Museum Development Manager worked together on the report. Individual museums were invited to check over material relating specifically to their museum and asked to answer three standard questions relating to impact on museum marketing, impact on the organisation and sustainability and impact on professional development. They were also invited to read through and comment on the report before final sign-off.

Findings

Although the work undertaken at each museum was specific, the project did highlight a number of recurring issues. The final section of the report provides a series of 'top-tips' aimed at supporting museums more generally in terms of marketing development.

Museums marketing in the Eastern Region

The project reinforced existing perceptions that many museums in the region do not have professional marketing staff and lack marketing expertise in general. Marketing is often undertaken by volunteer committee members or may be just one part of the single curator's responsibilities. In local authority museums marketing support is often in part provided through the council's communications team, with the risk of;

- procurement requirements leading to weak design and poor print quality



- instead of having dedicated websites, museums being part of the local authority website. This limits how information can be organised and presented and can make updating slow.
- press releases having to go through slow internal approval processes and museums being hampered in developing relationships with journalists
- well-meaning local authority staff who lack museums or cultural sector experience mis-advising museum colleagues.

Only one of the participating museums had a dedicated Sales and Marketing Officer. The general scarcity of marketing resource contrasts with other regions where larger museums in particular, whether independent or local authority, often have dedicated marketing teams with skilled and experienced staff.

To a greater or lesser degree, common areas where help was needed included;

- branding and identity
- copy writing
- design - briefing designers, and managing and getting the most from design contracts
- distribution
- photography
- PR and communications
- product development (events and activity programmes that meet audience needs and museum objectives, and are sustainable)
- Marketing strategy and strategic planning
- websites and social media (with The Higgins as a notable exception)

Symptoms included ineffective use of marketing budget and staff time, weak publicity and poorly attended or cancelled events. In terms of general operational planning, the lack of marketing input led to an increased risk that audience needs and interests would be neglected.

Improving Museums Marketing

Programme strengths

- Increased capacity and directly strengthened marketing by injection of professional expertise and grant aid to deliver specific tasks.
- High standard of delivery for programme tasks and high output.
- Decisions on grants were taken from an informed position and based on a holistic assessment of needs and potential.
- Grant-aided projects were linked in closely with other work happening as part of the project.
- Having the freelancer manage tenders for and negotiate contracts with designers increased value for money obtained and long-term impact.
- Not being prescriptive meant projects could be exactly tailored to meet individual museum needs.
- Designs, copy, databases, strategic planning etc were devised with legacy in mind and for use over 2-4 years.

Programme weaknesses

It would have been good to have created an additional opportunity for museums to come together at the end of the project to discuss the programme, share achievements and insights, and reinforce learning.

Levels of experience in volunteers and staff who attended the marketing training event for Bedford Museums Group varied greatly making the event hard to pitch.

Cpd For Museums' Professionals

The programme shone a light on marketing for key staff over a sustained period (1-3 months), raising its status on their agendas and providing responsive and targeted personal development and support in a light-touch way.



Mentoring was provided alongside delivery of actual tasks combining learning and building confidence with production of new or improved publicity and other materials and resources.

Case Studies

Bedford Museums Group

A roster of activities was devised in response to specific requests from the museums. This comprised;

- Museums Marketing Day including a basic introduction to the principles of marketing, illustrated introduction to Facebook and Twitter, feedback session on individual museum leaflets and a led discussion exploring joint working in the Group.
- Report summarising Bedford Museums Group discussion.
- Post training session remote feedback. This was taken up by Leighton Buzzard Railway (website feedback) and John Bunyan Museum (advice on press releases plus detailed discussions with Curator leading to re-write by freelancer of museum leaflet).

Bury St Edmunds Museum Service

A grant was provided to pay for design of a new leaflet and photography. Creation of the new leaflet triggered reviews of pricing and product and led to a holistic strengthening of several areas of marketing and the securing of additional local authority investment by the Heritage Manager.

- Audit and recommendations leading to re-shaping and strengthening of events and activity programmes at Moyses Hall and West Stow.
- Action Plan on developing Bury's 'Heritage Ticket' scheme and new copy for the website.
- Research and production of detailed leaflet distribution plan.
- Production of new leaflet combining Moyses' Hall, West Stow and Bury Heritage Ticket. The freelancer provided brand values and design brief, wrote copy and managed the design process.
- Half-day mentoring and discussion session with the Heritage Manager looking at product development and pricing.

Chelmsford Museums

The museum visit, which included a session with key staff, highlighted the urgent need to clarify and strengthen strategic thinking and marketing for Chelmsford Museum, Essex Regimental Museum and Sandford Mill. A grant was provided to develop a corporate identity for Chelmsford Museum.



- Drafting of vision, aims and objectives for Chelmsford Museums and its three sites.
- Production of annual plans with detailed supporting notes for Chelmsford Museum, the Essex Regimental Museum and Sandford Mill.
- Support and mentoring for the Museum Manager focussed strongly on the need to clarify for audiences the different natures of the



three sites and in particular to raise the profile of Chelmsford Museum, locally and regionally, as Chelmsford's and the service's main museum.

- Drafting tender documents and managing the tender process for the new corporate identity. Briefing the design agency and managing the design contract for Chelmsford Museums.

Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum

Timing of this work coincided with production of the new leaflet where support was clearly needed. The museum was working towards applying for major development funding and needed to strengthen its communications. A grant was provided to design and print a new welcome leaflet and site plan to improve on-site visitor communication.



- Research and production of a Communications Plan.
- Research and production of a detailed Distribution Plan.
- Short paper with recommendations on pricing, membership and links to English Heritage.
- Half-day mentoring session co-writing with the Museum Manager a press release, invitation letter and fact sheet to support PR around the opening of new play area.

- Half-day mentoring session co-writing main leaflet plus remote support on providing feedback to the designer during the design process.
- Copy-writing and managing creation of a Welcome Leaflet/Site Plan to improve visitors experience of the site, provide on-site marketing, encourage people to 'like' the museum's Facebook page, and to solicit feedback. The brief included production of a suite of new illustrations to support future marketing

Museum of the Broads

Analysis of museum visitors through Mosaic inspired the ideas behind two simple marketing campaigns. A grant was provided for design and print of publicity, with design building on visuals created during a previous marketing development programme, keeping costs low.

- Norfolk residents campaign. Copy writing and design management for new A4 poster. Plus research and production of poster distribution plan.
- Broads holiday-makers campaign. Copywriting and design management for a 2-sided A4 flyer to go in folders on cruisers and cottages on the Norfolk Broads, promoting Museum of the Broads in tandem with the Broadland village of Stalham where it is located.





The Higgins Museum and Gallery, Bedford

Bedford Museums was in the midst of a major redevelopment bringing together three previously separate cultural venues; Bedford Museum, The Cecil Higgins Art Gallery and Bedford Gallery. Support focussed on creation of a marketing strategy for the new cultural venue; “The Higgins”. Additionally, specific mentoring and advice was provided in branding, press releases and product development.

- Wide-ranging planning and discussion session with key team members looking at product development, pricing and income generation.
- Advice and support on the name of the new museum and on the development of a corporate identity.
- Advice and support on development of the events and activities and group bookings programmes.
- Drafting of a marketing strategy for The Higgins. This included a review of general and marketing aims and objectives.

Welwyn Hatfield Museums Service

Welwyn Hatfield Museums Service has a relatively generous marketing budget. Attention focussed on helping staff use funds more effectively and combined provision of support and advice on specific areas of publicity with drafting notes towards a marketing strategy.

- Copy writing for new main leaflet and baking course flyer. Included wide-ranging discussions around events planning and promotion.
- Provision of advice on photography including guidelines and consent forms.
- Provision of detailed notes towards a Marketing Strategy including new aims and objectives for the two different sites.



Museum Marketing Top Tips

These are for museums with limited in-house marketing resource or expertise and are intended to help museums avoid some of the most frequent marketing pitfalls and identify areas to prioritise.

Photography

Amateurish or poorly chosen photographs will at best have no impact and at worst, put potential visitors off. Invest in photography and it will bring alive your leaflets, website, social media and press coverage. One investment will provide images you could use for 3 – 4 years.

Leaflet

Even with the growth of new technologies and digital media your leaflet is still your ‘calling card’ in the world and needs good copywriting, photos and design. It is worth investing in getting your leaflet right.

Be honest about the level of in-house skills and seek outside expertise if they’re not sufficiently strong. Your investment should be seen as having an impact over 3-4 years as you will only need to make minor changes during this time, which will be very cheap or even free to do.

If you use a designer and it is recommended that you do, ask them to provide you with the “creator application” files, (typically, InDesign or Quark) and supporting images etc, on disc and find a cheaper designer to do updates. You may even find someone who will do simple updates for you for free.

Distribution

Invest time on the computer in planning distribution. Use Excel to set up separate spreadsheets for different types of distribution and link them to a summary sheet with a running total which will give you your print run for the year. Alternatively, Just make lists and tot up the numbers.

Think about how far people may travel to your museum, what kind of people may visit and the kind of places they are likely to pick up leaflets to help plan their leisure time (other museums or tourist attractions, TICs, libraries, pubs, garden centres etc).

You will need to use a variety of methods of distribution including paying specialist providers, libraries (which have their own county networks) and your own distribution by post or by hand/car

Events and activities

Schedule events and activities a year ahead. This will give you sufficient time for ideas to develop, links and plans to be made and promotional opportunities to be taken.

Avoid organising ‘one-off’ events, which take more resource to promote and develop, unless they are important celebrations or anniversaries. If you give structure to your events and activities programme (eg family activities every Wednesday during school holidays, talks third Friday of the month etc) it will be simpler to communicate and easier for the public to become familiar with.

Use your main leaflet to give an indication of the range of activities on offer and where to go for more information (website, Facebook, e-bulletin, by phone). If you include any individual events, make them your main events only, the ones where you intend to attract your largest audiences.

Think about who events are for and how many people are likely to attend. Match the level and type of publicity you use to your target audience.

Databases

It’s important to build contacts and networks. You need databases for this and Excel is simple and easy to use. You could either have one list and flag people, or separate lists for different types of contact. Three key lists to have are; communications (advocates, opinion formers and



partner organisations); media (press, websites, e-bulletins and blogs); event and activity partners (freelancers, organisations and groups). Be methodical about keeping these lists up to date and keeping in touch with people on them.

Digital media

Three great pieces of software that are easy to use and free are MailChimp, SurveyMonkey and blogs. Use MailChimp for email marketing and to manage your email list. SurveyMonkey allows you to create your own web-survey and crunches the figures for you too. Blogs are a quick and easy way for you to share text images, videos and podcasts and can also allow visitors to leave comments. They compliment your website and support social media eg Wordpress.com and blogger.com.

Social media

Facebook is excellent for communicating with and building loyalty from your core audience. Use it to share pictures, news and events and to ask for feedback. It's quite quick to set up and, on an on-going basis, doesn't require much effort. Make sure posts are interesting or useful and keep them regular. As few as two to three posts a week, or even as little as one a week, is plenty.

Twitter connects you with like-minded individuals and organisations through posts of no more than 140 characters. Before starting tweeting you may wish to 'follow' others to see how they use Twitter. It's dynamic, sociable and fast-moving, and thrives on more frequent input than Facebook. A big benefit is the opportunity to make new connections when followers 're-tweet' or favourite your tweets, and the ease of coming across and connecting with new and interesting people.

Website

You need to be able to update your website in-house, either through a simple CMS (content management system) or by using free software such as Wordpress or Joomla. Appoint one person as your webmaster. Encourage them to empower trusted colleagues as deputies so the site isn't too dependent on one person.

As well as basic computer literacy, web masters need to be good copywriters, clear thinking and visually literate.

Organise information simply and clearly and keep key information very brief. Don't feel that you have to give a full description of what's on offer.

On your home page, build in one or more sections that change regularly so that the site feels up-to-date eg next events, blog or twitter feed.