

Reflections on Resilience and Creative Leadership

Boosting Resilience

Survival Skills for the New Normal





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Image courtesy of Shahrokh Nael

Evelyn Wilson
Co-Director, TCCE and
Co-Investigator, Boosting
Resilience

Introductory Remarks

Reflections on Resilience: Setting the Scene

The key reason for publishing this series of reflections is to mark the end of the Boosting Resilience: Survival Skills for the New Normal programme - one of four funded by Arts Council England under the Building Resilience scheme - and to share some of our insights, challenges, tools and reflections with the wider arts and cultural sector. This small volume gives voice to many of the people who have been part of the programme, both participants and partners, and complements our online articles and videos as well as our more formal evaluation.

Boosting Resilience was set up to address resilience in relation to organisations' creative assets and intellectual property, and is a partnership between Cass Business School, TCCE and Manchester Metropolitan University. We've been working with a cohort of leaders from twenty-six organisations across the country from Autumn 2017 until now, as I write, in Spring 2019.

Through intensive residentials, Action Learning Sets, mentoring and other activities, the group

has been working to develop the potential of their creative assets and intellectual property as a means of generating value - cultural, social and financial - within and beyond their organisations. Our definition of creative assets was deliberately wide-ranging from the start. We followed the lead of MMM, who had already done great pioneering work in this area, and - as per their taxonomy of assets - we included: physical assets, such as buildings and spaces; people assets within the organisation and beyond; audiences, artistic projects, processes, methodologies and archives. We also included intangible assets such as networks, relationships, attitudes, trust, goodwill and respect.

As time went on though, things started to unfold, within the group and through the programme itself that for me means the notion of creative assets that we have ended with is arguably wider and richer than the one we started with. Some of these have strong emotional resonances: confidence-building, new friendships, the state of new awareness that can emerge through big life and work changes, for example. Then there's criticality and the ability to question assumptions, to constructively challenge, or sometimes even to just challenge without the niceties. There's also reflection itself as an asset. And yet it's so often the very thing we dissuade ourselves from spending our 'valuable' time on, seeing it as somehow less urgent than the core business of moving forward.

We might not necessarily think that the ability to share and exchange ideas is a creative asset per se, but I would argue that it is. We also might not recognise being able to draw a picture, write a poem, or pay attention to how your body is feeling as an asset. But again, we should. For all our notions of creative assets and how they might be articulated, codified and taught, the thing about this programme is that right from the beginning it took on a life of its own, and in no small part that has been about challenging and augmenting accepted definitions and methodologies. It has been generative and it has generated. It has widened the register of how we define both assets and resilience with considerable gusto.

These essays are a manifestation of that energy, that generation and that possibility. They weren't planned for at the start of the programme at all. We had a plan, and in time-honoured style we planned, more or less, to stick to that plan. But as a result of the cohort palpably having much to say - and yes, 'having stuff to say' is surely a creative asset too - it seemed important to create this space.

Sometimes we don't write that much about what we are doing, or why, beyond the usual mechanisms of funding bids, business plans, annual reports and marketing materials. We also perhaps don't evidence or bring to attention the many ways in which we share our knowledge experience and expertise. Many of the contributors here wanted to take the opportunity to write simply in order to do just that. They wanted to share advice, methods, know-how, reflections and provocations.

It would suggest that there is something in the very act of writing itself that has a deep and profound value for us as individuals and indeed collectively. Perhaps it's because it provides an antidote to a resilience rhetoric that tends to privilege bouncing forward over taking stock.

Writing can, when we let it, provide the opportunity to exercise a freer or more poetic licence than we often permit ourselves in the day-to-day round of being resilient, being busy, generating value. Taking the liberty to write, just for its own sake, comes through strongly in several of these pieces too, and I think we largely owe that permission to our colleague Professor Clive Holtham from Cass Business School, whose work on Creative Journaling was catalytic for so many of us. He writes compellingly about it here, as do several other contributors. And, as we know, things have a habit of revealing themselves more potently when we allow ourselves to take the occasional liberty.

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Aki Schilz
Director, The Literary
Consultancy

Commerce and Creativity: Facing the Taboo of Commercialising Creative Assets

Cost, price, value: in the arts, these are terms over which it can be too easy to trip up. In the commercial world, when we talk about 'cost', we are often understood to mean the cost of production. The 'price' on the other hand is the monetary equivalent a consumer is willing to invest in the product, with overall 'value' to the consumer including the experience they believe they will have with that product. For a business to work, the price must be higher than the cost; this is where profit is generated. But even within the profit margin, there is the less quantifiable, more alchemical quality of what something is worth, a quality which operates beyond the metrics of budget forecasts and consumer insight data. I wonder if it is fair to say that in the arts sector our understanding of the relationship between cost, price and value is often skewed. We make a business (and a healthy one: UK creative industries generate more than £100bn a year to the UK economy, at a rate of £11.5m per hour) commercialising creativity, yet when tasked with talking in any detail about money, it suddenly becomes very difficult to get straight answers. Money is still a dirty word. But why?

We don't talk about what we pay our artists, yet everyone knows artists are finding it harder and

harder to make a living: at last count, the average income of a professional writer sat at £10,500 per annum. We don't talk about what we pay our staff, and the lack of arts job transparency means there's no baseline to talk about fair pay with any degree of authority. The gig economy, while it has empowered a new generation of freelancers, has also created a buyers' market where undercutting competitors has become the norm. What might be a trade – of ideas, knowledge, stories – quickly becomes click-to-purchase. The more art feels like transaction, the more we erode its experiential value.

The democratisation of information means that old structures of gate-keeping are (for the most part rightly) being dismantled. In the power vacuum that remains, it starts to become difficult to assert oneself as an 'expert'. The irony is that we are living in an 'experience industry' boom. Consumers in a post-truth era are desperate not just for product but for authenticity, experience and process - hence the renewed popularity of artisanal crafts. But they're also well versed in driving a hard bargain, and – confronted with so many cut-price offers – who can blame them? We are the ones setting the market value, and frankly, we are doing a pretty crappy job at communicating the real value of what we do, what we produce, and what we champion. We produce industry report after industry report, but who outside of the arts reads these? Our theatre-goers, our readers, our audiences: these are the people we need to be better at communicating with, not only in general but also about what lies beyond the cost of production – what they are really investing in when they go to see a show, or when they come to The Literary Consultancy for feedback on their writing. The expertise. The skill. The requisite 10,000 hours.

Conversations about keeping end-user costs low on the grounds of increasing accessibility are valid, but the idea that that this aspiration is incompatible with that of making sure cultural producers are properly paid makes no sense to me. We must be able to create, and protect, high-quality, high-value art, and there must be mechanisms in place that mean this art is available to all. In TLC's case, if

our funding were to become unavailable, I would need to find a way either to replace our nationwide bursary scheme or invest our own money in it. The latter would rely on a certain level of commercial income, which in turn relies on appropriate commercial fees. When you buy a TLC product, you are investing in your writing, but you are also buying into an organisation that campaigns sector-wide about the value of literature, and offers high-quality feedback to all writers, including those facing barriers, financial or otherwise. This must include fair pay for our editors and staff. This is true of many organisations, particularly in the funded sector, whose funding responsibilities, and ethos, often include crucial sectoral campaigning.

The market hangs in a delicate balance, especially if we continue to undervalue both our arts and the artists in the machine, the artists who are the machine. I fear for a future in which society's understanding of the value of the arts balances a vague understanding that they are 'good' with a wider judgment that they are not an investment. The result? Further curriculum cuts, further cuts in subsidies, and a poorer case to government, and to society, that the arts matter. We will have lost, not retained, our integrity, the cornerstone of arguments that seem to insist the only ethical solution is to offer costs as low as possible to the consumer. Isla Wilson, founder of Ruby Star Associates, says:

"It is very easy to buy into the rhetoric about pricing and the arts and believe that valuing what you do is somehow selling out. If you believe in what you do, if you know that what you do is important and of value then your price should reflect that, otherwise the message you are sending out into the world is that even you aren't sure it is worth much. Price needs to be a measure of value to your buyer."

We work in an industry that claims to understand the value of its IP – the beating heart, in many ways, of our creativity. This is where the ideas are, the potential for innovation, the gorgeous glut of opportunities that creative minds bring to this incredible industry. But there is often a disconnect when it comes to understanding how to apply

"Here's the thing: the unromantic turning of the wheels is the very thing that allows that creativity to flourish. The best entrepreneurs, organisations, and crucially, investors, recognise this and provide an infrastructure which better rewards and sustains the value of the art itself, and all those involved in making it."

this business logic to the creative product in any commercial sense. Here is the thing: the unromantic turning of the wheels is the very thing that allows that creativity to flourish. The best entrepreneurs, organisations, and crucially, investors, recognise this and provide an infrastructure which better rewards and sustains the value of the art itself, and all those involved in making it. Stephen Page, CEO of Faber and Faber, has this to say:

"At their simplest most book publishers boil down to a filing cabinet of licenses. The IP belongs to the writer, and we license a limited range of rights, usually in return for an advance against royalties. The interesting thing about books is that we then set about creating a range of formats to generate the value we need in order to make the investment worthwhile - hardbacks, paperbacks, e-books, audiobooks, limited editions, illustrated editions. Publishers are cultural and intellectual businesses; treating the writer and their career as commodities tends to result in discontent and

sometimes failure. The cultural value of the books you publish, the relationships you have with writers, and the communities of authors that you establish, are as much a part of your brand and identity as the commercial success you derive from each book. Value in publishing is an alchemy of editorial, creative and commercial publishing skills, combined with long term cultural and authorial considerations. You have to be good at both.”

It is imperative that we find a way to have this conversation, with ourselves and with our audiences. This is what we do. This is how we value it. Want to buy this? This is what it will cost, for these reasons. This is valuable. This is valuable. This is valuable.



Image courtesy of Richard Kenworthy

Claire Malcolm
Founding Chief Executive,
New Writing North

Finding the Biting Point for Exploiting Your Assets

Assets are often thought of as physical things that can be hired and sold, or pure IP, the rights to which can be exploited. This framework is useful if your company is a clear producer of content, products or properties. At New Writing North, the development agency for writing in the North of England, we don't have such clear properties to exploit.

For a number of years now we have been trying new things in relation to creating new assets. In 2013, together with a commercial partner, we co-founded Mayfly, a micro-publishing company focusing on books by Northern writers. Two years on, after one or two modestly successful books, we have been able to return our original stake and generate £50K of profit, split between the partners. Since 2015, however, it has been more challenging to generate profit from Mayfly without investing heavily in staffing, which we don't have the resources to do.

Last year we were commissioned to create a new project, Digi_Transform, the aim of which was to offer writers support to develop their business in

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the field of digital. As part of this we commissioned a website-building system designed specifically for writers, and built fifteen sites. We are now looking at how we might commercialise or semi-commercialise this product and associated training.

Our main asset is intangible: the expertise and experience of our staff. Have we been commercially exploiting all of our skills in the best way? Might there be new markets for our expertise? Our other identified asset – one which has taken twenty painstaking years to develop – is our network: both the talented pool of writers that we nurture and support, and our wide range of contacts within the industry.

The assets that we aimed to exploit were our talent development skills, our programme design and training skills, our ability to spot innovation opportunities in our sector, and our understanding of what writers need balanced with what the industry wants.

We set forth on two parallel strategies – to explore and develop our relationship with publishers and to build relationships with universities.

Our work around Arts Council England’s Creative Case for Diversity chimed with growing

concerns within publishing about diversity and representation. To publishers we presented ourselves as an ally in the North who could help talent-spot, build projects with young people to encourage employability, and help to address issues of regional diversity. We also offered buy-in opportunities to some of our flagship projects such as the Northern Writers’ Awards.

Prior to embarking on this strategy we had developed our trustee base and had engaged board members from London who had strong networks in publishing. Our Chair and trustees opened many doors, endorsed the company, and were a fantastic sounding board for the development of our work with publishers.

We’ve achieved a great deal in a relatively short time and now benefit from a wide and substantial network of friends and supporters across publishing. We have partnered publishers on events, created a paid talent-scouting contract with a major publisher and established new partnerships for awards. We have also raised our profile significantly in this sector, have published articles in the trade media and participated in conferences. I’m now the ‘Northern correspondent’ for the book industry newsletter BookBrunch.

The work with universities has been more complex to achieve but potentially has longer-term possibilities. This year we have renewed our partnership with Northumbria University for five years, have been commissioned to design and write a module for the University of York, and have founded a book and audiobook prize with the University of Central Lancashire. We’re continuing to consider how we can develop more work and add value to the training of writers in this area.

Overall this work has generated around £40K of new resources and returned to us just under 50% as unrestricted funding. Our aim now is to see how we can develop our ongoing partnerships, widen our scope, and continue to be both a great partner and a good value investment for others.

Being alert to where you sit in the broader environment and what you can offer others is paramount. We have had to commit to raising the profile of what we do and to talking about how we do it to enable this change. We've also taken our staff and board on a journey, entering into dialogue about our mission, our purpose and our independence along the way. Sometimes we have made choices that were less commercial but which felt right for us.

So what lessons have we learned from this process? Firstly, we've learned how important it is to take the board with you and to allow them to shape and input the ideas as they develop, and to be realistic about the capacity of our staff while also pushing to see if there is space to attempt new things or to work differently. We've come to appreciate the importance of allowing staff to voice concerns and trying to work through issues openly and together. We've accepted that we need to invest time in nurturing new relationships and networks, and building up our profile in new places. We've learned to prioritise listening, and to find the right people to offer us guidance. We've learned to challenge ourselves to work in new ways and to explore our own potential for growth and change. Finally, we've learned how to navigate relationships with commercial partners carefully, taking advice from them as appropriate, remembering all the while that their aims and objectives might be different from ours, and trying always to identify our areas of shared purpose.

These, we think, are useful recommendations for any organisation like ours. Working this way will also present you with new decisions to make about risk, which may lead you into unexpected dialogue about how your company might change or become sustainable in new ways. The key is to find the biting point between mission and possibility that feels right for your organisation.



Image courtesy of V&A. V&A Collections and Curators class - handling session with the Gilbert Collection.
Demonstrating how the unique content and IP assets of the museum is harnessed through Academy programme

Dr Helen Charman
Director of Learning and
National Programmes,
The Victoria and Albert Museum

V&A Academy: Where Content Meets Commerce

“If you are interested in something, you will focus on it, and if you focus attention on anything, it is likely that you will become interested in it. Many of the things we find interesting are not so by nature, but because we took the trouble of paying attention to them.”

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*

This quote by management psychology guru Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi speaks to a critical aspect of professional resilience that I’ve developed across the course of Boosting Resilience: the ability to adapt to the needs of new professional contexts by seeking out and giving attention to new, compelling and challenging aspects of practice. When I signed up for the Boosting Resilience programme, the kind of resilience that was uppermost in my mind was institutional financial sustainability. Having worked for a decade at London’s Design Museum, and from 2014–2016 been part of the directorate team that mobilised the museum’s new premises in Kensington, the financial exigencies of a major capital project had instilled a hefty dose of business acumen into my professional practice. I was keen to explore and develop this further in a broader cultural and creative context.

The project that aligned with the Boosting Resilience programme involved developing a 'Design for Business' B2B (Business-to-Business) programme that would harness the content and facilities IP of the Design Museum to prototype a new strand of professional learning, centred on the value of 'design thinking' for business. This was a partnership venture with the Royal College of Arts' Executive Education business unit. The prototype workshops were delivered as a 'test and learn' opportunity with a Learning and Development team from a global financial institution, sourced through our events team. Truth be told, I found the most testing aspect to be the level of planning and the minutiae of delivery needed by the client. This proved to be somewhat at odds with the culture and ethos of our adult learning programmes: the client wanted a full day plan broken down into 15 minute blocks, with their own learning framework embedded into the material that I was supposed to deliver. After a couple of iterations we resolved this 'culture clash' between the ethos of museum learning and that of corporate learning and development by a co-delivery model.

This programme continues to be taken forward by the Design Museum as in spring 2018 I took up my current role as Director of Learning and National Programmes at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Here, my programme portfolio includes the V&A Learning Academy (soon to be rebranded as V&A Academy), an extensive adult learning profit centre for B2B and B2C (Business-to-Consumer) programmes which realises the extraordinary creative and cultural assets of the institution as the world's leading museum of art, design and performance.

Phase 1: A new strategy

One of the first actions I undertook for the Academy was to implement a strategy review, undertaken by a consultant with that potent mix of commercial and content expertise that you might think of when you think of, say, Google Academy, Guardian Masterclasses, and similar programmes. This included a review of current operations, assessing the potential for the Learning Academy to grow, current and future market conditions,

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and the current opportunities for – and barriers to – expansion. Methods used included staff interviews – with Programme Producers, Digital, Marketing and other teams – market research, and a staff workshop to map out priorities and future objectives. The strategic review covered all aspects of the Learning Academy's work: leisure learners, continuing professional development, conferences and study days across B2B (museum and heritage / creative industries / corporate sector) and B2C – lifelong learners who are seeking creative enrichment opportunities through art, craft and design workshops and art and design history courses drawing on the breadth of the V&A collection.

Undertaking a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) enabled us to identify the V&A brand's enormous potential strength in this market, with strong opportunities to reach new scalable audiences, diversify into new subject areas and deliver courses in multiple

locations and formats. Our draft strategy sets out four key priorities for the V&A Academy to deliver growth and profitability. First, we must develop a strong brand and set of values that cuts across all assets and deliverables. Secondly, we must move towards a unique creative learning style to give cut-through in an increasingly crowded market. Third, we will make sure that all activities are templated and scalable for ease of roll-out. And finally, we aim to reach new audiences and new markets with internal and partnership activity.

Phase 2: Test and Learn Activity

We are now embarking on a test-and-learn programme to establish audience appetite for scaled and new offers.

This includes several programmes. Firstly, we are developing a content pilot with a media platform focusing on a young male audience (18-34) to test engagement with our temporary exhibition on video games, Design/Play/Disrupt, and help us assess the potential for future collaboration. We are also testing learning video/audio content in the Chinese market via our licensing partner to assess in-region appetite for digital delivery. We are putting together a museum skills continuing professional development course running overseas to assess templated formats delivered away from the museum. There will be a trial of engagement with a new partner to target small creative businesses. We are partnering on cultural tours (our first tour, in March 2019, has now sold out). Finally, we are developing corporate creativity training in conjunction with our Corporate Membership team. The learnings from these will inform activity in 2019-20 under new leadership for the Academy, bringing a balance of sensitivity to content with commercial acumen.

Participating in the Boosting Resilience programme provided a launch pad for me to develop B2B activity in the cultural context. In my current work this is underpinned by the core tenets of V&A museum learning, which aims to inspire, enrich and empower learners. The uncertain external context betokened by Brexit, a decade of austerity and increasing competition in a

crowded market demand that such programmes speak with authenticity to the unique material and intellectual assets of the organisation. At the inception of the programme the language of profit and loss, return on investments and Joint Venture Partnerships meant little to me in the context of cultural learning. But now, having paid attention to the sweet spot where content meets commerce, I find myself increasingly interested in the manifold opportunities that the museum can generate to build its financial resilience. An area I was somewhat agnostic about has become increasingly part of my professional toolkit.

Selina Slater
Teacher and Coordinator,
Hull Music Hub

Exploring Creative Assets

Working for an organisation that has a long history, with a long serving staff team and an established reputation, has great strengths but can mean that the organisation is ill equipped to cope with change and adapt quickly to circumstances.

Hull Music Service provides music-making opportunities across the city of Hull. Working in most schools in the city, we provide fantastic opportunities for all children and young people in Hull to engage with music making. Most of our staff are teachers employed to provide specialist tuition for all levels of learning a musical instrument. Staff travel around a range of primary and secondary schools delivering whole-class instrumental lessons for beginners and small group or individual lessons for more advanced pupils, as well as running choirs or ensembles in schools and at the music centre.

As with all music services and hubs across the country, funding is tight. We are very lucky to still have support from Hull City Council, but with school budgets being squeezed, music provision is increasingly seen as a luxury.

Through the Boosting Resilience programme, we examined and explored how to define our creative assets and how they might be fully exploited. As an education service, our biggest assets are our workforce – our teachers who deliver the service – and our home in the purpose-built Albemarle Music Centre. By exploring and recognising our creative assets we are sowing the seeds for change throughout the organisation.

When feeding back some of the ideas from the Boosting Resilience residential, I asked staff to consider themselves as an asset and whether in their current role they were able to fully use their skills. Many staff felt that the specialism and wide skill set needed to do this job was not always understood by schools, and that often the reality of the job can make it hard to have a great impact on a school. It became apparent that often schools are unaware of the asset they have visiting their school – they have an expert teacher in a subject most primary schools don't have any specialism in. While the individual teacher may not be able to do much about this in their short weekly visit, as an organisation we can be much better at articulating the value of our creative assets.

For those of us working in music education our love of our subject and passion about the value and impact of music education seems obvious, but there can be a danger of complacency when as an organisation we assume that our customers – schools and parents understand this value too.

As an organisation, we have started to develop new ways of framing our narrative. We need to be able to communicate our message to children, families, schools, teachers, school business managers, executive head teachers of large academy trusts, the wider public in Hull and our hub partners. This means being able to articulate our impact from the hard data needed for funders to large public performances and more personal achievements of individual pupils. We are working with the council and using their segmentation data toolkit to understand and demonstrate our impact across all areas of the city, and this is informing decisions about where greater resources and provision is needed.

One new initiative is the launch of 'Albemarle Podcasts'. In an informal and fun way, we will share the day to day life of our organisation with our customers, audiences and supporters. Podcasts will include a day in the life of a music teacher, following rehearsals through to performance, special events with partners, children and young people's perspectives, and many more aspects of our service.



Image courtesy of Shahrokh Nael

Claire Pattison
Enterprise Fellow, Manchester
Metropolitan University Business
School

Reflection on Commercialisation in the Arts

For the past six years I have worked in the fields of entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation in the Centre for Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University, helping commercial companies grow their businesses and develop new products and services. This has necessitated a focus on – and a continuing awareness of – business growth, revenue generation and the commercialisation of assets. So, when I joined Arts Council England's Boosting Resilience programme as a project co-deliverer, I wondered if I could apply my entrepreneurial knowledge to the arts sector. How would this knowledge and expertise sit within the sector? Moreover, as the Boosting Resilience programme progressed, I increasingly felt that the participating organisations might not be fully exploiting potential commercial assets. They had programmes, products and services that could be commercialised but weren't being, meaning that they missed crucial opportunities to support a move towards greater financial resilience and lessen their reliance on grants and commissions.

With this in mind, we developed sessions around pricing, new product development and planning for the commercialisation of assets. We felt these sessions allowed arts organisations to explore commercialisation in a safe environment, with peers and expert facilitators who had taken arts-based assets to market before. In particular, the programme evaluation helped us to identify gaps in participant knowledge – what did they really need help with? As such, we designed our session to support the achievement of two programme objectives: to improve the capability of programme participants to identify and develop opportunities, in order to secure increased value from creative assets; and to support participants in applying their learning from the programme, improving the capacity of their organisation to better use creative assets and IP for adapting to economic change.

Our sessions encouraged participants to develop new commercial ideas – taking a prompt card featuring a phrase like “licensing”, “collaboration”, “events and experience days”, or “executive education and training”, and quickly thinking (without limitation or constraints) of a new commercial idea they might develop from each prompt. The next stage of this exercise created an understanding of the value of participants’ work, how to price it, and also whether or not to put resources into developing the new idea. The ideas that came from this session really excited me: they generated some great collaborative ideas, new ways of identifying potential income streams, and new understandings of how better to make use of resources that organisations already have.

The key lessons I took from developing these sessions and working through them with the participants concerned the application of commercialisation and innovation techniques to the arts sector. Through these sessions, it became clear to me that these techniques could be applied to spur organizations’ thinking about what commercial ideas they might be able to develop. “Most arts organisations have assets that could be commercialised, but perhaps the business-school language and framing of commercialisation – and indeed of income generation itself – is sometimes

“Our sessions encouraged participants to develop new commercial ideas – taking a prompt card featuring a phrase like “licensing”, “collaboration”, “events and experience days”, or “executive education and training”, and quickly thinking (without limitation or constraints) of a new commercial idea they might develop from each prompt.”

unhelpful in helping them realise this: a problem which in itself demands further reflection and study. In addition, it would be great to undertake further research into what commercial products and new offerings have been developed and launched since we delivered the Boosting Resilience residential and open learning programme. I know they certainly developed ideas for a several new products and services!

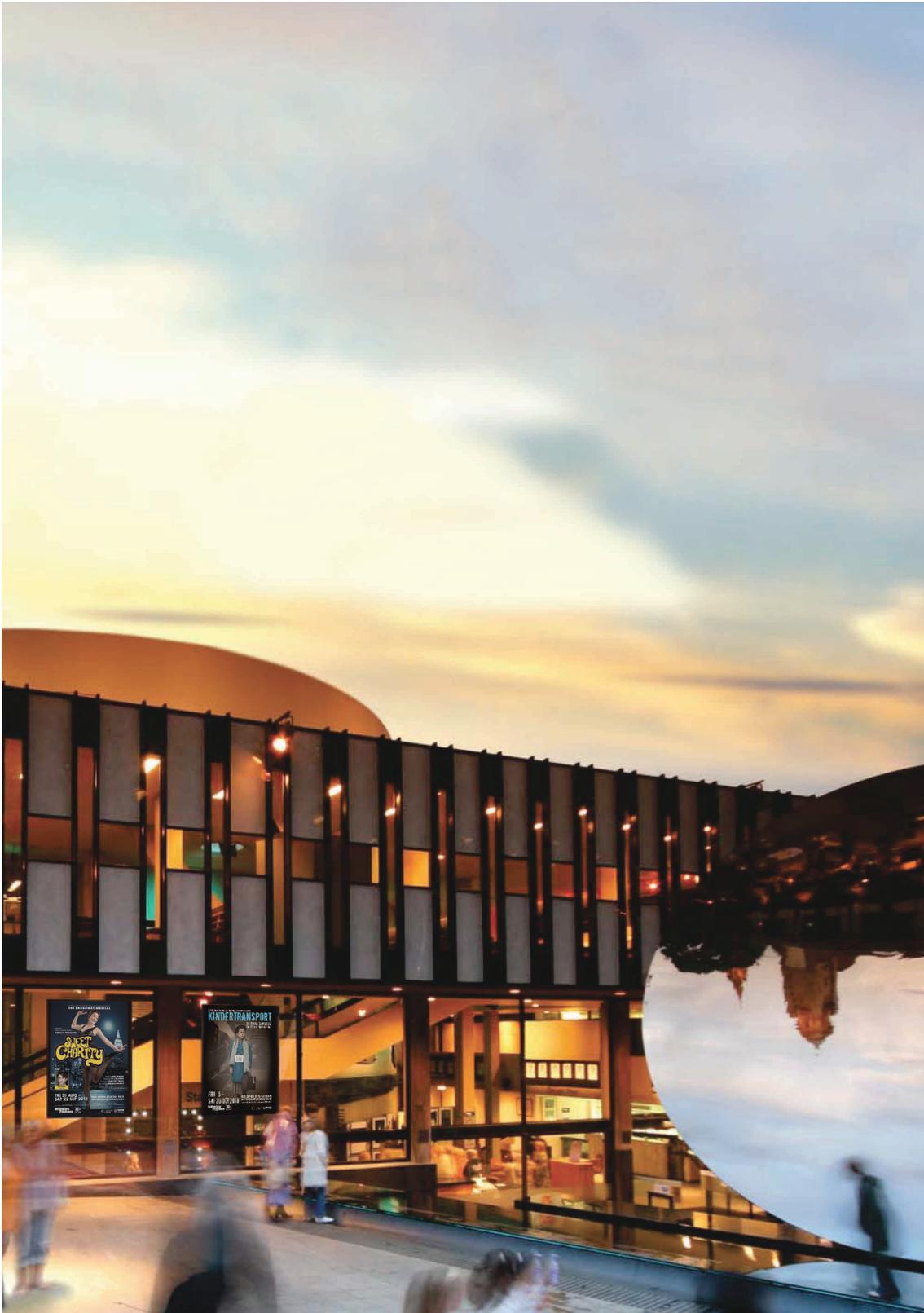


Image courtesy of Drew Baumohl. Nottingham Playhouse frontage.

Stephanie Sirr
Chief Executive, Nottingham
Playhouse

Sharing the Spoils: How to Ensure Theatre Gets its Fair Share of Return From Cracking Ideas

In the face of falling public subsidy it is essential that the subsidised theatre sector is recognised not as a free gift to the commercial sector, but instead but as a major creator of art for the wider market and a pre-eminent enabler of Research and Development. In its recent publication *Growing the UK's Creative Industries* (CIF, 2018), the Creative Industries Federation says:

“Government should ensure that creatives are fairly remunerated. It is vital that the UK maintains the strength of its Intellectual Property (IP) framework after leaving the European Union, and clamps down on IP infringement.”

The UK has a brilliant theatrical tradition and exports its work throughout the world. Theatre is a complex arena in which to recognise creative assets – the assumption that “the play’s the thing” pervades, when more properly it is “the production” that is the “thing”.

Working closely with artists at all stages of their evolution, it has become clear to me that a means

of identifying clearly what belongs to whom, who is responsible or able to exploit those assets, and how that exploitation is fairly remunerated, is vital for our sector.

Like the perishable lettuces that we are told will be in short supply post-Brexit, theatre is not an easily transferable commodity. For a production to see the light of another run beyond the first, there are considerable costs involved – rehearsal, haulage and overseas freight, new wardrobe, set amendments, and lots and lots of marketing. However, there is no reason that these mechanisms should remain impenetrable.

We are a sector where the ways in which you can be rewarded in profile and prestige are more sophisticated than those by which you are rewarded financially. And this needs to change. We need to amend a system in which the first night party is often a bigger budget commitment than the originating theatre’s return on their investment.

It is no longer good practice to simply accept the received wisdom that a move to the West End or a tour will necessarily cost “a lot”, or that the original creators of a piece should be contented with the tiniest grudging credit. Touring and large-scale productions do cost a lot, but so does making a show in the first place; if you allow for your hotel bill, you should also have to allow for the origination.

This appears predominantly a UK problem – whenever we tour overseas a clear budget line for originating production costs is acceptable.

We are creating a new generation of theatre makers who have sufficient understanding of IP protection to be wary of the ways they can be exploited down the line, but not quite enough practical knowledge to prevent that exploitation occurring. Artists and producers are at risk of losing out financially, and career-developing ‘next steps’ are being squandered.

When the end product is a piece of theatre, the version that is staged is, these days, generally a more or less finished product. There may be tweaks for a

“We are a sector where the ways in which you can be rewarded in profile and prestige are more sophisticated than those by which you are rewarded financially. And this needs to change.”

revival, for a tour or a West End run, but significant changes are rarely made or budgeted for. In a risk-averse market it is now rare that a project will be picked up for significant development by a third party.

Furthermore, when an artistic director of a subsidised theatre puts together a director and a script, that is an artistic decision. The wider creative team is then selected by the director herself with the agreement of the artistic director, and contracted and paid for by the company. In current practice it is accepted that the director has IP in the project, but not that the originating producer automatically does; and this practice is less likely to be accepted when the producer is operating in the subsidised sector. The expectation that subsidies are a general theatrical pot that is never replenished by the beneficiaries is outmoded, and poses a threat to our future financial resilience.

In a time- and cash-poor environment in which, nonetheless, the appetite to experience live theatre is increasing, it is crucial that we address this issue and come up with some new ways to recognise the full range of IP that is created by a project, and how to make sure that everyone involved shares in the rewards when one goes forward to extended exploitation. Only one project in fifty will warrant

such a future life; perhaps only one in a hundred will generate significant revenue. But when they do that revenue should be shared fairly, and the right to that needs to be enshrined.

Producing theatre is expensive – and risky. But it’s also one of the main drivers of tourism in our capital, and culture more broadly is the second biggest driver on the national level. And it is usually more risky – and more expensive, when you are a commercial producer – to create a project from scratch and without the input of an originating partner who at least has R-and-D’d your project, and at most is delivering you a project with great reviews, a great cast, a mass of digital collateral and an existing set.

It is heartening to see that Arts Council England has created the role of Director, Business Improvement & Innovation: this will hopefully signify a move towards to a much more rigorous approach. It is time for the sector and our representative bodies to work together to create change, in the following ways.

Firstly, we need to create a standard sector agreement for production between ACE-subsidised theatres and commercial producers that includes a requirement that the originating theatre participate in final profits. Secondly, we need a clear IP framework, scaled for differently sized projects and shared within the industry to enable us all to enter discussions with more confidence. Third, we would like to see the creation of a fund which sets apart a fraction of one per cent of all royalties generated by publicly-funded work (in this case work funded by ACE) to support the commissioning of new theatre productions.

We are custodians of public money, and most of us are charities. It isn’t acceptable to simply wave goodbye to future exploitation because the likelihood is small, or because conversations are too aggressive (as they sometimes are), or because the legal bigwig drawing up the contract is smarter than your own. If we viewed ourselves more as public investors and less as funders our business discussions would change for the better.

Prof. Ruth Soetendorp

Professor Emerita, Bournemouth University and Visiting Academic, Cass Business School, City, University of London

Does IP Grow on Trees?

With IP, lack of knowledge can be an overwhelming inhibitor to useful discussion. The Boosting Resilience program has been working to support arts and cultural leaders to foster better understanding of and confidence in utilising their creative assets as well as their IP rights. As we know, however, copyright, trademarks and design rights are less likely to generate excitement than inspire feelings of confusion, uncertainty and dread – especially when those intellectual property rights are at the heart of a new venture.

As an IP expert, I have spent much of my academic life teaching people who generate IP rights how to manage them. In my experience, it is in discussing and asking questions that learning really starts. But how do you know what to discuss, or what questions to ask when faced with an IP problem? Getting to grips with IP theory can be challenging for non-experts to say the least, but it is by no means impossible.

Following discussions with the Boosting Resilience team on how best to support the cohort in developing greater assurance in tackling IP issues practically, I developed a bespoke three-stage approach for the third residential. The first and second residential had offered a sound introduction to IP concepts and principles, so I was keen to do something that would build on that knowledge to enhance participants' confidence in handling an IP issue when one arose.

Consider other people's problems

Firstly, I encouraged people to look outside their own organisations to help process problems and put their own into perspective. I identified a suite of what I felt were pretty compelling, diverse and sector-relevant case studies to open up conversation and discussion on topics. They included: how Sydney Opera House is dealing with requests to use its building for advertising; how V&A dealt with licensing issues when staging the Frida Kahlo exhibition; and how Tate presented a pop-up exhibition at Bicester Outlet Centre.

Such practical and real-life concerns offer considerable opportunities to explore precisely the kinds of IP issues that challenge Arts and Creative industry IP managers. When Postman Pat's creator John Cunliffe died, his obituary was a sobering account of IP opportunities missed or disregarded. Discussing these scenarios gave participants a chance to test their knowledge, and sound out ideas for how better to approach IP problems, boosting their confidence in applying IP concepts to their own situations.

The value of personal accounts and case-studies

Secondly, the cohort was encouraged to share case studies of IP issues facing them. Interactivity and engagement were the driving forces that led us to consider working on real-life case studies, with five participants agreeing to draft up real scenarios based on intellectual property issues they were confronting at work. Some people brought to the table issues around commercialising their archives, for example. Others were most concerned with systemic issues.

Thirdly, the cohort was divided into small groups, each analysing one case study they'd been presented with, and came up with responses and recommendations. Before the work began, there was a group undertaking to observe confidentiality – what was said in the room stayed in the room – and that level of care carried through the task. At the end of their discussion, each group was joined by the author of their scenario to share responses and recommendations.

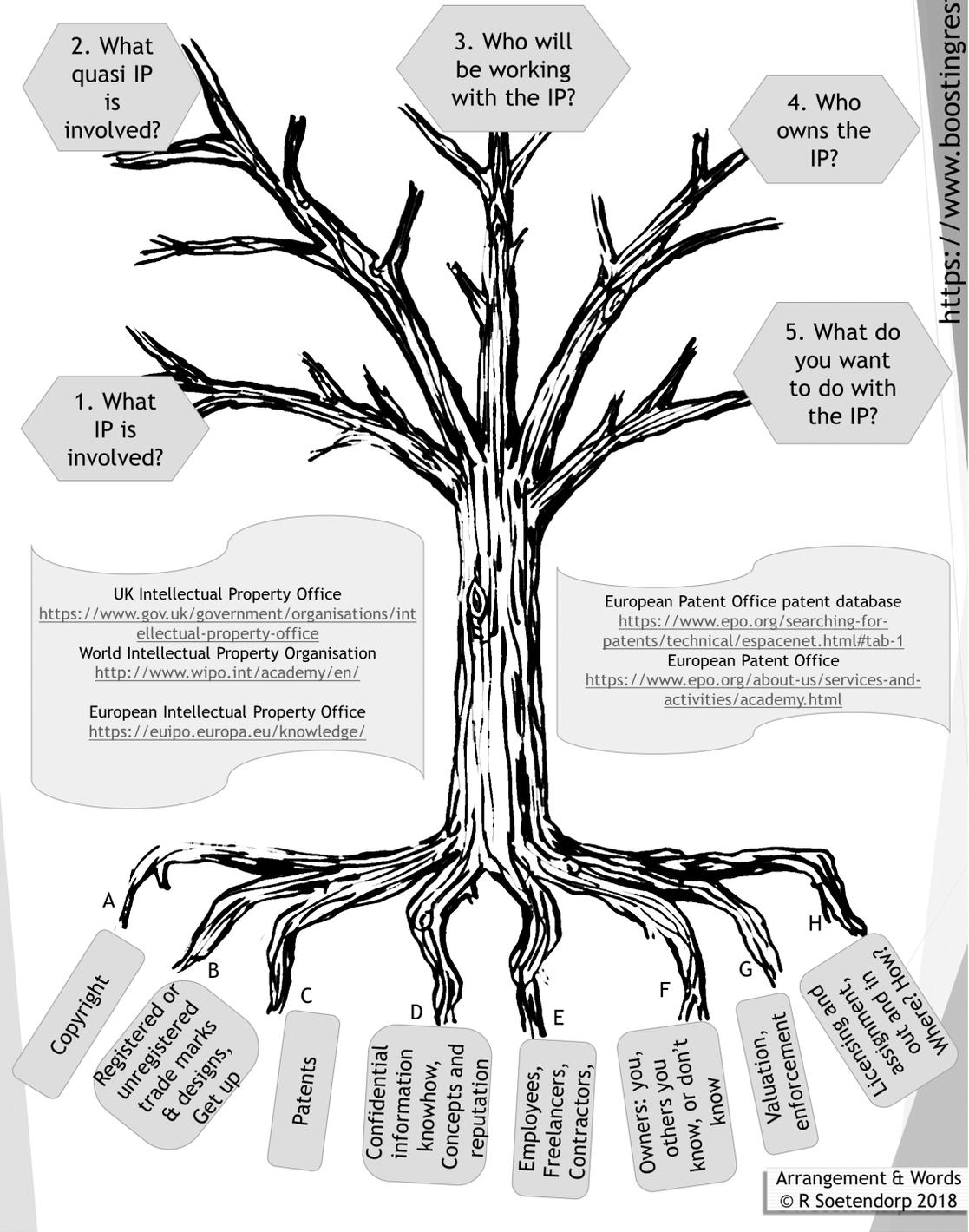


Image courtesy of the Boosting Resilience

Knowing what questions to ask

We can only find the best answers to IP problems by asking the right questions. To help participants structure their group discussion, they were provided with an 'IP decision tree' and an aide-memoire sheet explaining the technical terms involved.

The roots of the decision tree were labelled with the IP and IP-related legal concepts with which the participants were familiar from earlier workshops. The aide-memoire contained brief descriptors to remind them of the exact nature of those concepts. The tree's trunk hosted web resources from public UK and international institutions, for future reference. The tree's branches held five questions that are considered key to understanding the implications of a situation where IP rights are involved.

As a result, participants acknowledged that IP rights are complicated, that it is unrealistic to expect to be an expert in this area, that there is no shame in needing to seek further information or advice (from online resources, colleagues or professional advisers depending on the context). All agreed that asking the right questions was the essential first step to finding the right answers in any situation, and that using the IP management decision tree had helped their understanding of IP.

At least, they agreed, they were unlikely to end up like the creator of Postman Pat.

“When Postman Pat’s creator John Cunliffe died, his obituary was a sobering account of IP opportunities missed or disregarded. Discussing these scenarios gave participants a chance to test their knowledge, and sound out ideas for how better to approach IP problems, boosting their confidence in applying IP concepts to their own situations.”

Luke McDonagh
Senior Lecturer, City Law
School, City, University of
London

How to... Generate Revenue from Intellectual Property

The arts sector is founded upon acts of creativity, collaboration, curation and performance. But what are the legal consequences of these acts? Within arts organisations there is some uncertainty and confusion about what types of intellectual property (IP) exist, who owns the associated rights, and how best to generate revenue from IP.

Our advice is to get as much as possible in writing at the beginning of a project so you know what rights you have and for how long.

The Boosting Resilience programme is designed to help the sector develop new approaches to making the most of their creative assets and IP. Our second residential in Birmingham in March provided individuals with a 'check-in' regarding their IP needs, through rapid-fire feedback collected on luggage tags (reflecting the theme of 'the participant journey'), and one-to-one surgeries with Noam Shemtov of Queen Mary University of London and myself. From the evidence we collected in this way, we identified a number of barriers currently use of their creative assets.

1. Understanding copyright

Arts organisations make use of every type of work that can be the subject of copyright – musical works (compositions), artistic works (paintings, drawings, sculptures), theatrical works (plays, musicals), literary works (poems, novels) and photographs. However, several participants admitted they were unclear as to who owned the copyright to the works they possessed as records they held on ownership were often incomplete or missing.

Under UK law the author or creator is the first owner of the copyright in an original work, which arises automatically and does not require registration. The author (or joint authors) can then license or assign it to another party if they choose to. So a play may be licensed to a theatre company for a series of theatrical performances or a painting, drawing or sculpture may be sold to a museum or collector. Our advice is to get as much as possible in writing at the beginning of a project so you know what rights you have and for how long.

Clarifying what copyright works your organisation has rights to is the first step to generating revenue via publication, digitisation or licensing. Importantly, even if you cannot establish the owners of a copyright work, provided you follow the rules for orphan works, you can still generate revenues by utilising or licensing the work.

2. Understanding trademarks

Trademarks, the words or symbols that are used to distinguish an organisation's offerings, are more straightforward. Arts organisations should ensure they own the logos and brand names they use. Trademarks can be registered at the UK Intellectual Property Office for around £200. Even if your organisation doesn't register its brand name, the law can still prevent someone else from using your name through the law of 'passing off' (also known as 'unregistered trade mark' law), though this is a little more complicated and expensive.

Once a brand name is protected, the work of building or enhancing the brand begins. For some

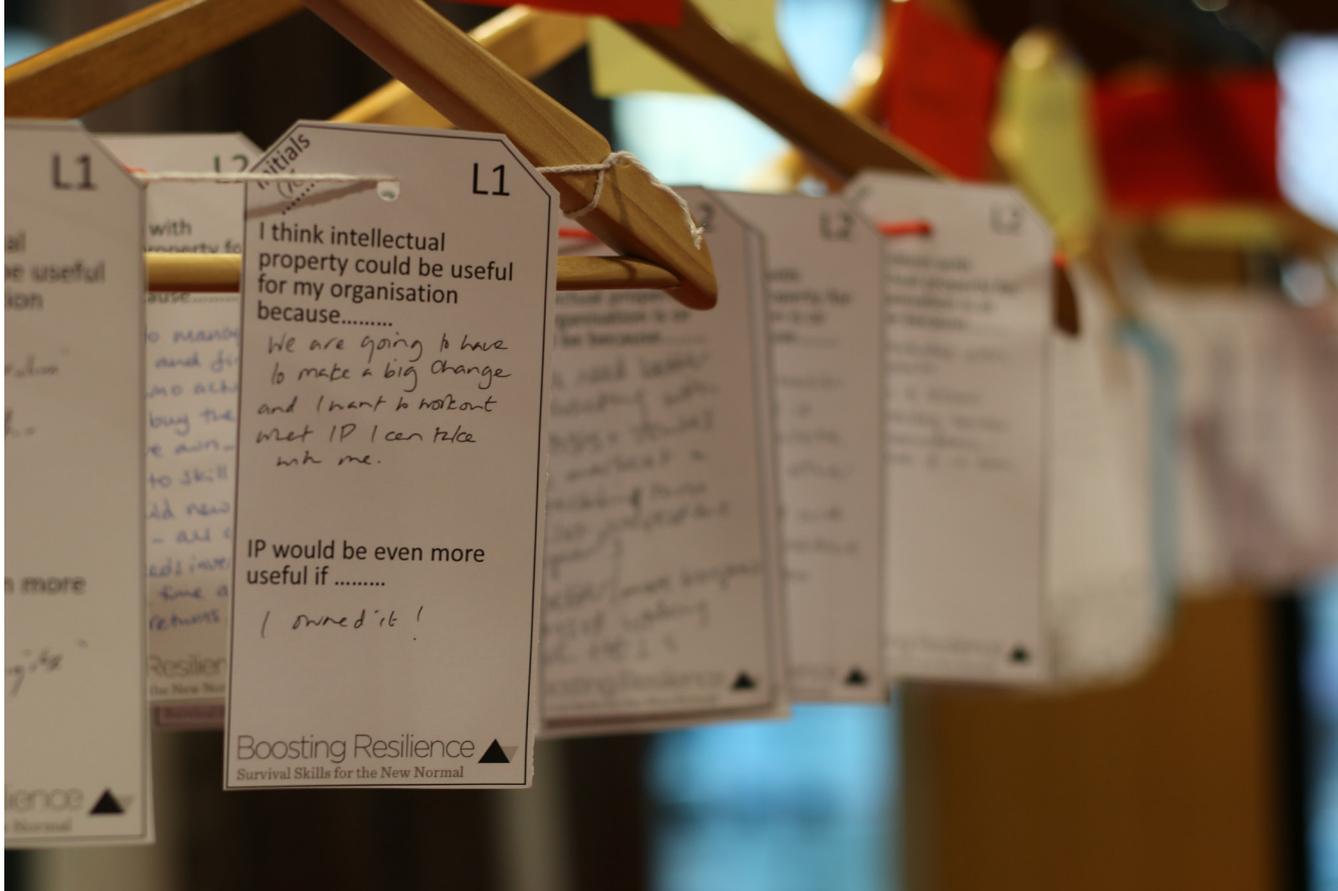


Image courtesy of Boosting Resilience

organisations this may be simply promoting their existing reputation. Many arts organisations in the UK already have worldwide brand recognition, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Tate and the Manchester International Festival, while others have extraordinary brand appeal within their fields such as Complicité or Punchdrunk in the theatrical realm.

Brand enhancement doesn't have to mean corporate partnerships or tie-ups, but if done well such deals can be mutually beneficial. For example, a recent three-way partnership between the Louvre, Jeff Koons and Louis Vuitton generated a lot of media attention.

On a smaller scale, one of our participants had organised to license a wide range of heavy metal music memorabilia for an exhibition that was moving from city to city within Europe, providing revenue both to the owners and the arts organiser.

3. Clarifying the ownership of joint works

In collaborative artforms such as theatre, music and visual arts there is often tension between the need to protect and the freedom to create. We advise making an agreement, ideally a written contract, between all relevant parties before the creative process begins. That should prevent disappointment or disagreements later on once a work has become successful. Furthermore, in an age of arts digitisation and user-generated content, clarifying what uses your audience and consumers can make of your works can prevent disputes arising. For more on this read the essay on arts, brands and user-generated content by Arts & Business.

Yet, some organisations and freelance creators do not like formalising the creative process for fear that it will inhibit their creative practice. This is a tricky problem. There is no 'one size fits all' model. Each organisation must weigh up the pros and cons with any partners and consider what the appropriate balance is from case to case.

“Allowing other artists and entrepreneurs to make use of your brand, copyright characters, images and set designs in imaginative and innovative contexts can reap rewards, but only if appropriate agreements are in place so that revenues are shared.”

Arts organisations don't always find the right balance. In 2004 a High Court battle over authorship and revenue-sharing was fought between the playwright Marie Jones and the director and theatre company who mounted the first production in 1996 of *Stones in His Pockets*.

More positively, in 2016 Lin-Manuel Miranda agreed to share a percentage of the *Hamilton* revenues with members of the initial cast, acknowledging their input during the workshop and rehearsal process.

4. Initial costs

In a world of scarce resources, can IP help to boost revenues? It can, if used wisely. Once you have identified the IP you or your organisation possess and have clarified any questions of ownership (by drawing up appropriate contracts with creative partners), you may then be in a position to generate revenue from your IP.

Doing so can often require initial investment, first in clarifying and compiling your IP portfolio, and second in promoting it. Arts organisations

and freelance creators must weigh up the initial investment costs versus the projected revenues.

Allowing other artists and entrepreneurs to make use of your brand, copyright characters, images and set designs in imaginative and innovative contexts can reap rewards, but only if appropriate agreements are in place so that revenues are shared.

Last year the owners of a pop-up bar in Chicago arranged the site to look like the set of the Netflix show 'Stranger Things'. They did this without a licence, which clearly violated trademark and copyright law, and led the producers of *Stranger Things* to send them a 'cease and desist' letter. This acknowledged the bar as a genuine piece of fandom, but firmly requested that it did not extend what it was doing beyond the initially planned six-week run without formally obtaining permission.

So, clarify what IP you have and who owns it, register your brand name as a trademark and make written agreements with your creative partners, employees and any freelancers to specify ownership and revenue-sharing. Then consider your resources to decide the best ways to promote your works and your brand, including partnerships with other bodies in the arts field or the corporate sphere.

This piece was originally published in July 2018 as part of Boosting Resilience's Editorial Partnership with Arts Professional magazine.



Image courtesy of Clive Holtham. Reflective Journaling in action on the Boosting Resilience Programme.

Prof Clive Holtham
Professor and Director,
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Cass Business School, City,
University of London

Reflecting on Reflections in Leadership

In 2005 a group of four professors at Cass Business School teamed up to create what was then a very innovative MBA module on “The Art of Management”. Though none of us had any art expertise, we drew on colleagues and experts who were able to help us all see management and leadership problems through the lens of the fine arts.

Keeping a reflective journal was a key part of this, and faculty members as well as learners kept journals that year, and some quite remarkable

reflective work has continued to be produced over the years. Over a decade later we have continually built on those early days such that reflective journaling can be at the very heart of key areas of leadership development, at all levels of undergraduate, masters, MBA and executive education.

In 2005 we had quite a basic view of the role of a reflective journal; since then we have understood the theory behind leadership journaling and gained many insights into how to help leaders to reflect. We are under no illusions about the barriers to this. The world which was already speeding up in 2005 is now swamped by instant digital communications, and perhaps worse, by mindsets of constant busyness to the point where some managers and leaders actually feel guilty for having a quiet moment to think. Through the whole of the twentieth century, management education was dedicated to the scientific study and teaching of management, which is fine for calculating the most efficient route for delivering parcels, but inappropriate when it comes, for example, to having difficult conversations with colleagues and stakeholders. Twentieth-century management education strove to find generally applicable formulae. These can be called SCSC (Stable, Certain, Simple, Clear), but the world of SCSC was crumbling already before both the 2001 financial crisis and then even more so the 2007/8 crisis. The real world had actually become

“In a VUCA context, leaders are put under particular pressure because they are always making decisions about shaping an uncertain future, frequently based not on ‘hard facts’, but actually often quite profoundly ambiguous data, which no amount of so-called big data methods can systematise.”

the opposite world, a world of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity). VUCA as a term was coined to describe the global political environment after the fall of the Berlin Wall. VUCA is not a wholly popular terms among consultants and academics, because it implies that their two-by-two grids and bullet-point formulae may simply not be fit for purpose any more.

Senior leadership has always had a VUCA element. I have just been reading a history of Alexander the Great, and on virtually every page he is grappling with all four concepts. In a VUCA context, leaders are put under particular pressure because they are always making decisions about shaping an uncertain future, frequently based not on ‘hard facts’, but actually often quite profoundly ambiguous data, which no amount of so-called big data methods can systematise.

What we have come to realise is that the everyday rituals of modern management and leadership have in fact evolved to reduce the emphasis on coping with ambiguity, and have often driven out

the physical and mental spaces that are vital not just for general-purpose thinking time, but more particularly for what we call “deep reflection”, the evolution of new insights and solutions. Bill Gates was unusual in disappearing during the summer for periods of reading and thinking. Richard Branson remains unusual among leaders for taking notes and writing down ideas on a daily basis.

As we have developed teaching and learning materials on reflective thinking for managers and leaders, we have been struck in feedback from them how much they value having an excuse or reason to spend time on quiet, private reflection and then using that time to brainstorm and articulate ideas that would rarely, if ever, have emerged from back-to-back meetings. Although they don’t always say it, we can also see that effective reflective journaling is in part about being able to be playful. There is a lot of talk in management education about “serious games”, which are important and have their place. “Non-serious playfulness” probably raises eyebrows, but is actually at the heart of generating of new insights and ideas. Reflective journaling seems to legitimise managers and leaders to devote a little of their valuable time and attention to the playfulness which is intrinsic to creative and imaginative thinking.

Although we use art-based approaches in our method, absolutely no artistic skills are required, nor are they developed. But our experience is that using an art-based approach leads to a very different approach than just writing words on lined paper, or in a digital word-processed document. Our aim is not to be artistic, but to stimulate artfulness in managers and leaders, which is of immediate organisational benefit.

In our Arts Council England funded project for leaders in some two dozen arts organisations, “Boosting Resilience”, we have been able to draw on innovations in learning from all three partners in our residential and online learning environments. Some of the most profound stimuli to shifts in thinking have come from the reflective journaling component. As researchers into journaling for leadership, we have not only developed useful

practical frameworks, but we also understand the obstacles.

In our approach, there is a major emphasis on starting and sustaining regular journaling. Reflective journaling is really only effective when it becomes a habit. That does not mean that a manager needs to write in a journal every single day. But it does mean that they need to be prepared, mentally and otherwise, to do so on any given day. By “mentally”, we mean the determination, the time management and above all the habit of prioritising time for the playful and insightful self, rather than being totally driven by busy-ness: by “otherwise” we mean that the physical place and the tools, materials and mechanics of journaling, must as far as possible always be to hand.

In just one half-day workshop we can address the barriers and promote the positive benefits of reflective journaling to a sufficient level that participants can start immediately. But to support more than the start, we then have a “follow up fortnight”, in which participants are assigned a small reflective task every weekday by email for two weeks following the session, to help embed that starting energy so that it can be sustained in the long term.

We have been lucky to have been able to share our distinctive workshop approach across both Europe and North America this calendar year. Regardless of nationality or background, there are always initial fears in both the unfamiliar mental act of deep reflection, and of the equally unfamiliar physical act of making a journal that is even in a small way art-based. But we are experienced in supporting leaders through those initial fears, so they can uncover reflective and imaginative qualities that modern organisational life tends to discourage.

“I have found the process of using marks, pictures and colour helpful in situations that require reflection including conferences, workshops and meetings. Drawing rather than writing has helped me listen and remember points much more effectively. I am also beginning to reflect on a deeper level, which

is in turn strengthening my own resilience.”
Catherine Rogers, Manager of Creative Leicestershire
and Chair of Junction Arts

“Clive’s course on reflective journaling allowed me to find new ways of expressing my ideas and, more importantly, my emotions on paper. I use reflective journaling to release and organise my thoughts so I can learn and use the insights I gain in my work. It is a deeply satisfying creative activity that helps me make sense of my experiences.”

Chandima Dutton, Director, Innovum Consulting
Ltd.

Amerie Rose
Co-Artistic Director,
Theatre Obscura

The '3 Rs' of Personal Resilience: Reflect, Relocate and Resource



Image courtesy of Evelyn Wilson

Deep reflection is something I have always done. In deep reflection I explore the hidden voices and bring them to the surface. I expose the programmes that are running behind the scenes. I discover the links between places, projects and people that, before I sought them out, sat in silence behind the obvious. I regain my sense of belonging within it all.

Yet it has always been something that I do in my stolen time: that retreat day I somehow allowed myself to attend on a week day; that midnight-to-3am burst of creativity; that long silent walk in unexplored lands with just my dog for company; that 'F*!k It All Day' when I just needed to bury my head in a pillow and not turn up for twenty-four hours. Until Professor Clive Holtham took a turn on the Boosting Resilience programme stage and introduced the notion, it never crossed my mind that this practice of Deep Reflection had a useful and in fact necessary role to play within my emerging leadership story.

Yet it makes perfect sense to those parts of me that engage with this honest and true work.

And thus, I am left with a not so simple question: why didn't it?

Well, I invite you to take one minute out, right now, to scribble down your immediate response to this question: Why not allocate company time to deep reflective practices?

I can feel your resistance. Resistance is to be expected. It is not an easy ask. Y/ours is precious time. So to soften that, let's look at our three 'Rs' and see what it is that I am beginning to steal back from my over-stretched work life.

1. Reflect

I have a plethora of half-filled journals and notebooks on my shelves. They are not diaries in the traditional sense; it is rare to find me recording

the daily events of my life. They are thought records, musings, brainstorm, laments. Sketches of my life experienced as existing beyond my day-to-day interactions with the tangible. Brilliantly varied, wonderfully insightful and... utterly useless as a tool to help me gain a better perspective on my current situation. Life moves so fast. That was yesterday's news.

And then Boosting Resilience invited me to try a different approach. Clive called it 'reflective journaling' and introduced it to the Boosting Resilience cohort through a short course.

To take part, I needed to allocate sufficient and appropriate time in my schedule over several weeks. This involved some harsh words with the part of me which said I was far too busy for this. I also needed to select and prepare a place for this work to happen. I chose an A5 sketchbook with thick pages and transformed its white pages into colourful potential spaces using paint washes and marks. The aim of this was nothing more than the denial of the blank page, and yet the act of preparing these pages had a profound effect on my relationship to the task. From now on, when I turned to a page I could see that something had already started and I needed only to continue.

Next, Clive gave us a structure. Each week there was a provocation – a statement, a picture, a question, instructions for an exercise. The structure offered an essential 'way in' and demonstrated how an abstract suggestion, when juxtaposed with a pressing enquiry, can lead our minds down new and insightful pathways.

The pressing enquiry I was reflecting on was my role within the company and the company's role within me. Over the duration of the course, I spontaneously mapped internal and external relationships, revisited project purpose, queried our brand identity, and considered the way I gather, protect and utilise resources. The process gave me permission to be brave enough to look below the surface, while providing protected time to better understand the subconscious processes affecting the conscious reality of day-to-day life.

“The extent to which we all instinctively resisted such exercises had me laughing out loud at times. The silent grumbles of, ‘Why are we doing this?’ were tangible if not audible. But it made total sense: ‘Why are we doing this? It’s not natural! ...Is it?’”

The last instruction was to go back through my journal, noticing emergent themes, changes of viewpoint, action points and so forth. This act of recapitulation, or 'harvesting', brought the past and the present together, enabling a quite literal turning of a new page. This concluding page would be easy to reference in future and was thus...utterly useful as a tool to help me gain a better perspective on my current situation. From here, I could plant seeds which were both relevant and necessary in optimising the relationship between me and my company.

And, much as we do with a tiny seedling when we plant it, I started to pay more attention to my physical environment and how I lived within it.

I am very fortunate in that my working week takes me to a variety of locations, offering me a diverse environmental diet. Slowly, over time, and through conscious redirection of attention, I have noticed that the very fabric of each place is unique and therefore makes me a niche offer. And so, on the quest to boost my resilience, I have learned to....

2. Relocate

I have often felt that I have little autonomy in where I do my work, because the majority of my time is spent doing on-site delivery. The lack of time to be a Director can be embarrassing and frustrating, but here's the fun bit. I noticed my frustration and took time out to do reflective journaling, exploring my relationship to the company and tracking my movements and locations over time. When I could recognise the niche offer of our office in town, office, and could see the (small) amount of time I spend in there, it directly reflected the amount of time I am able to focus specifically on leading the company. By recording my thoughts, I committed to the outcomes in a different way, allowing the need for change to fuel my willpower to evolve out of this uncomfortable situation.

There were other, more literal relocations during the Boosting Resilience course. A Qui Gung walking meditation led by Phil Shelby; a 'getting closer' walk with Ben Waddington, using magnifying glasses to explore the environmental intricacies of a small park behind our conference centre. Opportunities to take a different viewpoint on the situation. To let our minds shift into different operating modes. To be quiet.

The extent to which we all instinctively resisted such exercises had me laughing out loud at times. The silent grumbles of, "Why are we doing this?" were tangible if not audible. But it made total sense: "Why are we doing this? It's not natural! ...Is it?" It also made sense to the nerves and muscles that forced the laughter to erupt out of me over the irony of it all. "Why not?!", I laughed in bewilderment.

Well, it's quite simple really, and down to a matter of...

3. Resource

One year after the reflective journaling course, I have not succeeded in protecting time within my working week for any of these practices – but, on the other hand, I have not stopped stealing time

from the unprotected places in my life to meditate, to dream, to visualise. Even finding the time to write this piece has been difficult.

So, I carry my question forward again – why not? Well. Ours is not a core funded organisation, and every paid minute is related to one project or another. My voluntary hours are already full keeping abreast of the tangible elements of our directorship work, which remain unpaid. I am not paid to reflect, only to evaluate. I continue to squeeze meaningful reflective work into the all too familiar forty-nine minute rush to the deadline, which is one minute before it turns into the wrong day... just as I am doing right now, as I write this piece.

And I could write on, laying blame at the door of the other; be it economics, politics, academics, lunatics... But that won't change anything. Because ultimately this is down to me. If I want it I am going to have to fight for it. And to want it is to have the balls to take it. To value it. To protect it. To claim the right to delve deeper into the unknown.

So I now ask my question to the wider sector: why not take a risk on deep reflection? If you see a request for it appear in a bid, why not support the case for its importance? It is important because that time empowers that person to become more resilient. It is important because I suspect you would benefit from some of that time too.

Caroline Coates
Co-Director, Helen Storey
Foundation

Harness

She is a she.

She floats around always glamorous, eyebrows done, styled well, moving towards gothic. One day all cool Cate Blanchett, then next a comfy Olivia Coleman.

She runs late but does not care and in full flow she dazzles you with her wit, clarity, and those very white teeth. She knows her lines, when you don't.

Other days (no, forgive me, sometimes for weeks on end) she plays hide and seek. She goes on long holidays leaving you on the rocks and calling out to sea for her.

Looking under beds and behind bus shelters (where perhaps she is having a sneaky fag) she plays tricks like some naughty child or perfect, angelic infant with bow lips.

In the invincibility of first youth it does not matter where she is, or what she is doing. She can be that friend that pops up unexpectedly and sits down for a cup of tea, or something stronger, and a good old chat, even though you have not seen her for a year.

She leaves unannounced but you know in this first flush that she will be back and you don't call her. Why should you?

On low days you remember her eyes and her scent, and brood upon that other friend that took her away from you.

As time creeps on you start to notice you are missing her.

No, worse, you are jealous she is elsewhere and others seem to have her ear and her rough wisdom.

You find your search inhabits your dreams and you start to look in unexpected and silly places: old handbags, libraries, chip shops, in the faces and voices of loved ones. Perhaps, you hope, she left a glove behind and when winter comes she may sneak back in to find it.

Was that her in the park in that sweet moment when blossom forms and falls? Not her, she is far too fly.

An imaginary friend who can be cruel and pull your hair or laugh at your pimples. She can creep super-fast like a lizard on a hot wall.



Image courtesy of Caroline Coates

Don't be fooled, she is pulling your chain and this is crazy stuff.

When motherhood comes you are too busy even to breathe, full of your own wild adrenaline, abandoning trying to do anything well, even the dishes. So even if she came you would tell her to sling her hook because you need to sleep, as you hallucinate and anyway you would quickly forget what she says.

At five decades long and on a day of rare cooperation she sits quietly nodding, angling for your attention, behaving herself in some dull meeting where you are not really listening as you concentrate on staying awake and a bubbling rage that drives you forward.

(You can spring back yourself, thank you very much).

After this you don't see her for many months – she has gone away to sulk. When time comes for free travel on the Orange Line she is once spotted scrawling graffiti while hanging off a bridge, wearing a perfect and fully risk-assessed harness, winking at you over her shoulder, as you slide by slowly almost halted, by signals.

Then later is seen dining by candlelight in one of those new glass-fronted conversions in Balham where rather smug people seem to live.

Finally, you realise she is not a constant friend: but the dangerous one that everyone likes and appears to hold all the power.

(But she too has to work hard and is always on a restless diet).

Then one day on another late running train, or whilst changing sheets, you are visited albeit briefly by her (or maybe it's her older sister) and are dumbstruck, thankful, and maybe for a moment just feel a tiny bit brilliant that she noticed you at all.

For one second her elusive grease shines in your heart, polishing you nicely for the next day and if you are lucky it is strong enough to carry you even to the next.

And in that space between stations (where you so increasingly find yourself) you learn to simply watch, listen, and wait, as an ancient ornithologist looking for an eagle.

Kevin Rivett
Chief Executive Officer,
Calderdale Music Trust

Every Success Stands on the Shoulders of Failure

The title of this contribution sums up the overall philosophy I have adopted in my work as leader of a Music Trust. The ability to learn from past events can only be fully realised through having a clear reflective practice. My own reflective practice has been enhanced through the Boosting Resilience residential, through the application of Action Learning Sets, and through the further support of enlightening coaching on a one-to-one basis. The power of coming together and sharing ideas with like-minded people cannot be underestimated, and we have been able to observe an appreciable change in outcomes for our organisation in terms of workforce development and creative resilience.

The ongoing challenge for me as a leader and manager has been the necessity of constantly reinventing myself in response to the needs of stakeholders. While changing communication styles and the process of adapting to bespoke services have enhanced innovative development, being able to rely upon a creative, robust and professional team has been essential to the resilience of the organisation. The Music Trust Board have played the essential role of the 'critical friend', providing support and accountability.

In this present time of austerity in the arts it has become critical to use one's creative assets in the

most efficient and explorative ways possible; to gather around oneself people who share your vision in propelling the organisation forward; and to ensure sustainability through employing a diversity of skills and methodologies.

It is hard to imagine how I could lead or manage my organisation without coaching/mentoring. Recent events in our development have made it necessary to restructure both our thinking and its application. In place of our old habits and behavioural traits we needed to institute a more responsive and bespoke delivery.

For our organisation to be resilient it is essential for all involved to be consistent in representing the Trust: exercising energy, passion, quality, professionalism and total synergy of vision. It is through the practices of reflection, communication, team building, mentoring, coaching, and a detached but dedicated approach to all aspects of delivery that the organisation earns a respected place in music education.

The co-design of the hub is being deepened through the joint responsibility of providing a high quality music education for children and young people in Calderdale. This is particularly evident in the office environment, where creative input and challenge are becoming increasingly palpable. This can, I believe, be traced back to the initial coaching that the leadership team had on workforce development. It is worth noting that almost all of the core team are now new recruits, and that the recruitment process, (again, supported by coaching) has on two occasions led to a non-appointment. It is very clear that the organisation has set out its stall as regards the quality of the team.

Returning to the idea that every success stands on the shoulder of a failure, one can perceive a challenge as an opportunity and a weakness as a strength. Having the courage to drill down and truly understand the difference between perception and reality is paramount. The coaching process imparts clarity to any situation,

and induces a constant flow of self-evaluation - which in turn is very useful in helping any organisation think strategically about its planning. This enables the attainment of smart targets, and helps bring to light more reclusive agendas.

This last point is particularly relevant to diversity and inclusion, where there still appear to be more questions than answers. However, with the new peer-to-peer process (in this case, music hub to music hub), the three organisations involved are using the evaluation exercise to broaden their insights and hence their capacity to meet this need. We are in the process of challenging all delivery and processes within the organisation. What has emerged from this is the importance of exploring inside, outside and beyond.

Without the opportunity to engage in the reflective process, the Trust would have continued to be stalled; however, present indicators point to a gradual increase in all aspects of provision. The fundamental first step, for me, has been learning to challenge my own habitual behaviour and accept the results of feedback through consultancy: it can be difficult to stand back and not let personal feelings and attachments create a barrier to development.

We have also learned to look outwards towards the wider sector, while appreciating what makes us unique. We have researched music hubs that are more successful to ascertain our own new directions, but at the same time we hope that, through nurturing pupils' voices and creating a new and relevant vibrancy, we can set our own benchmark rather than having to look elsewhere for one.

This journey that the organisation and I are taking is very exciting and challenging. Growth doesn't come without some pain, nor without letting go of some previous ideas and habits. The Boosting Resilience residential has changed my perspective: the course has definitely had a major effect on me personally, and by default for the organisation and all stakeholders. I have

“In this present time of austerity in the arts it has become critical to use one’s creative assets in the most efficient and explorative ways possible; to gather around oneself people who share your vision in propelling the organisation forward; and to ensure sustainability through employing a diversity of skills and methodologies.”

only just begun to embed the knowledge and experience I gained there into my professional work. However, I feel confident we now have a new tool kit to support the organisation. There is a new normal emerging.

In the words of Winston Churchill: ‘Success is not final, failure is not fatal. It’s the courage to continue that counts.’

Good luck.

Suzie Leighton
Co-Director, TCCE and
Co-Investigator, Boosting
Resilience

Practising Reflection as Leadership

Being part of the team devising and delivering the Boosting Resilience programme has been a cornucopia of learning and inspiration for several different reasons. As well as engaging as a member of the project team, I have been negotiating the programme as a co-founder and director of a creative SME, and also as the chair of the board of directors of an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, the Jasmin Vardimon Company. In both these roles it has become clear that, in a time when we are buffeted on all sides by social, technological, political and environmental change, the only thing that isn't an option is doing what we have always done in the way we have always done it. But the innovation necessary to secure a resilient future in this VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment is taxing, and means that we all have to ask difficult questions and confront truths that are often uncomfortable. I've either worked for or been on voluntary or charity boards, in the arts or third sector, for more than twenty-five years; and Boosting Resilience has underlined for me how much more we trustees and non-executive directors can and should be doing to lead the development of resilient arts and cultural organisations. This also provokes the question of how we trustees should balance the skills development and time needed to do this against our 'day jobs', which are often demanding and poorly paid – answers on a postcard for that one please!

It seems clear to me that just being able to read quarterly accounts or an annual return isn't enough. As a trustee I know that I must thoroughly understand and be able to 'live' and question the organisation's business model and all its assets, to understand the areas of profit and loss, the risks that go with them, and where they sit in relation to the company's artistic or social mission, all with enough confidence to be able to do scenario planning with executive staff. I need to be able to ask searching questions and understand the long-term resilience implications of strategic decisions. This is not a role that can just be left to the treasurer! If an organisation needs to innovate and do new things, be they artistic, operational or organisational, it requires resources (time, money and people) that are likely to be in very short supply. It is realistic to suppose that to do new things, in the first instance at least, some old things might have to go, or at the very least be scaled back; and we need to lead the company to devise strategies to enable this.

As a trustee, particularly one from the arts and cultural sector, this probably won't be what gets you out of bed in the morning! It might well be an area where you feel that you might have to build your own capability and skills. Many of the tools that we have developed or used through Boosting Resilience (the 'octagon of assets', the 'IP tree', etc) will be helpful for trustees, providing useful tools (like Theory of Change) for working with executives on strategy. It is always a struggle to develop plans that continue to prioritise mission while creating the space for innovation. It is our role to be critical friends to staff in creating this space, and to equip ourselves to steer a clear path for the organisation.

But this role of being a 'critical friend' can't just be limited to business models and structures. Boards need to be much better at discussing the artistic or creative work of their organisation in a strategic way. This is much more difficult than analysing business models. The majority of us will have joined a particular board because we have a strong affinity for the creative work of a particular artist or company, and a strong belief in company mission, and see our role as a friendly, supportive and enabling one. I would argue that the most supportive role that you



Image courtesy of Jasmin Vardimon

“If we are to secure the legacy of the artists and organisations we support, we must find ways to have those thorny conversations. I have found the GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) model that we used to structure the Action Learning Sets in Boosting Resilience provides a good framework for open questioning and active listening, and is very useful for keeping discussion focused and strategic.”

can play, particularly in a small organisation, is to be a critical friend. One of the learning points that has come clearly through the Boosting Resilience programme is the importance of practicing reflection in leadership and developing resilient organisations. Opportunities for reflection tend to be few and far between in our sector, and by asking open questions and actively listening to the answers trustees can hold an important mirror up to practice. This can feel uncomfortable, because we tend not to do it very much; but there are crucial issues that must be planned for, including matters of succession, and the possibility of artistic or organisational failure. If we are to secure the legacy of the artists and organisations we support, we must find ways to have those thorny conversations. I have found the GROW (Goal, Reality, Options,

Will) model that we used to structure the Action Learning Sets in Boosting Resilience provides a good framework for open questioning and active listening, and is very useful for keeping discussion focused and strategic. Those of us who chair boards in particular need to reflect from time to time on whether we might be a block to resilient thinking or action ourselves - and it is certainly easier to do this within a neutral framework!

Throughout Boosting Resilience, I have been doing a lot of reflection on governance, risk and failure. If there is one thing that we have learnt through the programme, it is that the business of innovation, of making the changes you need to make in order to become more resilient - either organisationally or personally - is difficult. At some point there will be failure. It is inevitable, and you need to learn from it. As trustees, we have the responsibility of protecting the charitable objectives of the company, and ensuring that company and charity law are met. Part of this responsibility includes making sure the charity is a 'going concern', and to facilitate this in the long term business models will have to adapt, and companies will have to innovate. We also have to accept that new things will sometimes fail, and not only plan for and understand how to mitigate this risk, but be brave enough to acknowledge and learn from failure. In the funded sector, in particular, it is difficult to admit to failure. Will it undermine the funders confidence? Push you up the risk register or down the priority list at the next funding round? Will it add another layer of onerous monitoring? All valid questions, and this is where I think funders (with the exception of a notable few, of course) have a key question to address: if we want to build a sector that is enabled to boost its own resilience in authentic ways, to be even more enterprising, ingenious and successful, how can risk and failure be better supported?



Image courtesy of Dean Soden

Dean Soden
Artistic Director, 4Motion
Dance Theatre Company and
Loading Bay Café

Growing Pains: A Personal Reflection from Inside a Small Organisation

Running a small arts organisation is rewarding, but hard work. The growth of 4Motion Dance Theatre Company has allowed us to expand in exciting ways but with expansion come the inevitable internal struggles over control, decision making and finding ways to share responsibility that everyone can commit to. With two directors at the helm, we are faced with difficult decisions on how we divide the demands of the business and how we keep in touch with our original enjoyment and the fire of enthusiasm that made us want to be here in the first place. How do we develop in a sustainable and resilient way while keeping our core fundamental ethos intact?

Control of 4Motion as a company is in the hands of just two directors, Elaine and myself. Other people may have a say in what happens, but ultimately it is down to just two people to make difficult decisions on a vast range of subjects. In the early days of the company this seemed a much easier process, but as the company has grown in complexity, so our accountability increases - not only for the things that go right, but for the things that go wrong as well. I can appreciate that this is the way a business

must operate, but this was never in the forefront of our minds when we set up a creative company. We now find ourselves in the thick of constant decision making every day. This process can be exciting, and most of the time having this platform that we generated can be inspiring and adventurous. However, what we are finding more than ever is just how draining and stressful these decisions can be, and how much time they can take away from the core function of the business and the reasons we created 4Motion Dance Theatre Co. in the first place.

In 2016 we decided to take on our own premises, after a few years as a resident company in a local arts centre. A space came up locally, and although we knew it could be a huge risk, we took the leap. With no funding or financial support, we found ourselves in a space that needed some structural work to make it what we needed it to be. Luckily we received a local authority start-up grant [1] which allowed us to restructure the space on a basic level. With much excitement, but a pretty unrealistic business plan, we began to run classes in our space, let people know we were there and generally work towards the aspiration of bringing in some extra income from the venue.

It took about a year for us to realise that the plan we had put in place had perhaps been over-optimistic and for the reality of what we could bring in financially from the space to become more clear. We redeveloped our plan, seizing another opportunity in a disused storage space under the studio.

This space became the Loading Bay Café. The café gave us a shop front and community space that would hopefully help us achieve greater exposure within the community while also providing us with an extra revenue stream. Again, we allowed the first year to go past pretty swiftly before realising the impact of the ever-growing expenses from our venue. The café wasn't doing enough as simply a café, and staffing costs were killing us. We saw the potential for the café to double up as an evening/ events space for local musicians, food trucks, pop-ups and so on; and at the begging of 2018 the café took on this new and very exciting role, and

we began to be recognised as a venue as well as a dance and wellbeing studio. We began to find, too, that we had begun to slip almost without realising it into certain roles in the business. Elaine was running the business's educational aspects while I managed the venue and events.

So, while everything looks good at this point, we are also uneasy. While we have both had powerfully rewarding experiences in both sides of the business, we now find ourselves in another challenging position. We have begun to feel that we have neglected the core fundamental aspect of business: dancing, moving and creating. Elaine and myself have always known that to manage a growing business we would need to find time to take a step back, develop our staff base and avoid the temptation to take everything on ourselves. So here we are: the studio is busy and the café has a strong reputation for music, events and all things alternative in Windsor. But what do we do about the slipping middle compartment of the dance theatre business? Do we let it go? Do we find a way back to it?

Running events and having a busy studio is what is now potentially propping up the business financially; we are constantly pushing to keep the Café's event schedule full, as it makes a big impact on the slow cash flow that characterises our work with schools. The educational side has small profit margins, with seventeen members of staff, expenses, PAYE, VAT mounting, and cash flow virtually non-existent. We know that to continue our creative educational work we need both constant funding and to increase our presence within a larger catchment area of schools.

We have found ourselves at a crossroads, where we want to continue to grow the company – but at what cost? How do we keep a small company sustainable while bringing in enough revenue to pay the directors and make it worth the amount of hours we continue to put in? Is there a turning point at which cash flow ceases to be an issue? How do we build up our reserves when we are constantly chasing invoices and our own tail? How do we constantly push events for income without

over-staffing, or finding ourselves running and managing them all?

Both Elaine and myself have always been very close to 4Motion, and our personal life has always been very much entwined with our business. We are finding now more than ever that there are things in our home lives which also have a direct effect on how we move forward elsewhere: work/life balance, finances, personal goals. We find ourselves having daily conversations about cash-flow and other admin decisions. We feel we have had to demonstrate resilience over and over again to keep moving the company forward, while all the time trying to stay true to our roots.

Elaine has set up a home in Cornwall; I have a wife and two-year-old son. Twelve years ago it was just us, staying up late, making plans, rolling around in a dance studio and being creative. This is what led us to use these creative skills to make a living through teaching and performing. Now there is a lot more at stake. Our journey here has been incredibly exciting and rewarding, has taken us to other areas of the world and has allowed us to meet so many wonderful people. The company is growing, but as Directors we are financially worse off. We daily find ourselves unable to get through the ever-growing to-do list, full of tasks that we know are crucial for our development, exposure, income and success.

How can both directors live out their dream in a business that they have worked so hard to create and develop, making a living and building a sustainable creative company? In the end, is being resilient enough?

“Twelve years ago it was just us, staying up late, making plans, rolling around in a dance studio and being creative. This is what led us to use these creative skills to make a living through teaching and performing. Now there is a lot more at stake.”



Image courtesy of Junction Arts

Paul Steele
Managing Director, Junction
Arts

“Dig Where We Stand”: Using Theory of Change to Develop a Culture of Shared Purpose

A Junction Arts Case Study

As the Managing Director of Junction Arts, I have a responsibility to articulate our purpose as both an arts organisation and a charity in the clearest way possible, with the concision of an elevator pitch. This can sometimes be difficult when our activities lead to multifaceted outcomes. Junction Arts’ mission is to deliver magical and memorable arts experiences with the communities of North Derbyshire, improving wellbeing, building confidence and skills, addressing inequality and inspiring change. We do this through a series of place-based community arts projects and a programme of festivals and events.

Like most arts organisations our mission is both ambitious and broad, and at regular intervals during the past forty-two years we’ve found it useful to stop and take a reality check. Periodically, we ask ourselves two fundamental questions; how are we achieving our mission? And: is our mission still relevant and necessary to our communities?

We find it imperative to go through this review process collectively, as a Board and staff team, to help us develop and reassert our shared understanding. Over time there is always a natural churn of Board members, and sometimes also staff, so it’s important we all understand not just

'what' we do but the 'why' and the 'how' as well. As the poet and arts professional Mark Robinson writes in *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* (ACE, July 2010), a "culture of shared purpose and values rooted in organisational memory" is fundamental to organisational resilience.

I'm also fond of the phrase "digging where we stand", first popularised by the Swedish writer and historian Sven Lindqvist, and then later by the History Workshop movement in the UK. This phrase is linked to the idea that by researching and learning about their own history and the place where they live, individuals and groups can regain some control over their lives and their interconnectedness. As a community arts and creative heritage organisation, "digging where we stand" has become a central part of our philosophy, not just in our delivery within communities but also in our understanding of our own purpose.

With these thoughts in mind, and following my first Boosting Resilience residential – which introduced me to the Theory of Change (ToC) process and a number of different ToC models – we held an organisational review. At our annual Board and staff away-day, we split our mission into three claims or 'assumptions'. These were, respectively, that we deliver magical and memorable arts experiences; that we improve wellbeing, building confidence and skills; and that we address inequality and inspire change."

Armed with post-it notes, marker pens and A3 ToC templates, we split into three teams, each a mixture of board and staff members with differing levels of experience, to address each claim. Using the 'claim' as the end-point, each group worked backwards to identify the activities, outputs and outcomes (short, medium and long-term) that lead to the delivery of that claim within the mission statement; asking, for example, "What activities do we deliver that bring about outcomes for our beneficiaries that lead to the delivery of our mission?" This technique enabled us to really get under the skin of the organisation and also identify areas for development.

"As a community arts and creative heritage organisation, "digging where we stand" has become a central part of our philosophy, not just in our delivery within communities but also in our understanding of our own purpose."

Some group members initially found this process difficult. Digging down into the detail can be hard. As a sector, we sometimes struggle to clearly articulate how it is that we deliver on our ambitious claims. This is where ToC is really helpful. It gives you a framework within which you can scrutinise your organisation or project collectively. By going through the process, you develop a shared understanding of the activities that lead to the outputs and outcomes that deliver your mission. But crucially, it gives you the tools to make any assumptions explicit, and this is of huge value to a sector that operates in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) environment. Clarity of purpose is fundamental to not only surviving but thriving as well.

The three teams then imagined three individual beneficiary journeys. Using a simple storyboard technique, they mapped a participant journey through our programme, illustrating any change that took place. For example: "working on our 'This Girl Codes' project is how Sarah built confidence and learned new skills". Again, through this process we were able to develop a shared understanding of how we influence change and add credibility to the claims within our mission.

Junction Arts used the ToC process for our mission statement, but we can really see the value in using it on specific projects to make outcomes explicit and credible. Of the key learnings we derived from ToC that might be useful to other organisations, three in particular stand out.

Firstly, we found that mixed groups of staff and board members, with different levels of organisational knowledge and experience, often worked well: the 'newer' people were more confident about asking the difficult 'how' questions, and had fewer ingrained assumptions about what the answers ought to be. Secondly, we discovered that we could deal with a large part of people's initial trepidation about ToC by explaining early on the session that the technique is best understood as an ongoing process rather than a goal-directed solution. Finally, we learned the value of developing storyboards, which we found underpinned our ToC models and helped us ask those crucial 'how' questions.

The ToC process was incredibly useful, not only in making explicit how we have impact as an arts charity, but also in the renewed confidence shared by the Board and Staff of who we are, what we do and most importantly why we do it! We collectively did some digging and laid the foundations for our own culture of shared purpose.

Kat Bridge

Independent Producer, Curator and Consultant specializing in Dance and Performance

Where Leadership Lives...

Throughout my career I've worked alongside independent artists and their collaborators, with an ongoing commitment to fairness in remuneration, acknowledgment and opportunity. I have been taught well and often by the artists and freelance creative workers I've known, in particular about resilience and leading.

Last year I crossed the line from being a salaried co-CEO of an arts organisation to being a freelance producer, curator and adviser. The transition was pretty challenging but that's a whole other article!

Since being independent I have found myself without agency: no longer recognised as a leader, on the outside of the rooms where conversations happen and decisions are made. This is a situation I've observed with interest. In all honesty I didn't think I'd mind, that I was above a preoccupation with status. I was wrong! Over the years I've found it frustrating that as a sector we are primarily acknowledging and feeding leadership ambition for those who work within an already supported hierarchy. In many ways, I'd had enough of working in an organisation with the self-imposed limits of maintaining a standard structure and development.

Knowing both sides, however, is helping me make this conundrum more visible, and that's actually very useful. In the spirit of sharing, here are some emerging thoughts and questions to further the conversation about an expanded notion of leadership.

We could consider the self-employed as the lifeblood of the creative industries: 35%, considerably more than the 15% self-employed across the UK workforce as a whole. The subsidised culture sector is yet to find its equivalent to contemporaries in the fashion and design industry when it comes to 'independent influencers'. The organisation is still king (male monarch cited for obvious reasons). Many women are choosing to work freelance, for various and varying reasons. This in itself is telling, and may hold the key to considering a diverse, intersectional leadership future.

We consistently underpay artists and freelancers in our sector, and even when individual engagements are fairly paid, they rarely reflect the preparation or expertise required. Our recognised organisational leaders are relatively well paid. But how do we remunerate artists or freelancers with commensurate experience? I wonder how this, our most basic metric for assigning value, affects our self-identification as leaders and our sector's approach to acknowledging and supporting them.

Organisations often rely on or explicitly exploit the resilience of artists and freelancers to flex where they can't or won't. Borrowing terminology and processes from business has reinforced this dichotomy, leading occasionally to almost a derision or dismissal of art-makers. Often this freelance space is where creativity and innovation begin, flowing up to support an infrastructure of power and leadership. Yet those individuals often have little access to leadership training themselves. Some leadership programmes support artists and freelancers, but this requires significant investment in an individual's time and resources. You might think twice if you work for yourself.

Support for resilient leadership within organisations has received significant investment, but what is it actually doing beyond safeguarding the status quo? Is resilience just being used as shorthand for financial stability rather than determination, adaptability of spirit, creativity or integrity? (I might add that the Boosting Resilience programme certainly did not do this!) While job titles,

“Organisations often rely on or explicitly exploit the resilience of artists and freelancers to flex where they can’t or won’t. Borrowing terminology and processes from business has reinforced this dichotomy, leading occasionally to almost a derision or dismissal of art-makers. Often this freelance space is where creativity and innovation begin, flowing up to support an infrastructure of power and leadership.”

communication formats and practice evolve, we adhere to leadership structures and governance models from twenty-five years ago. We now need to look closely at leadership, understand where it lives and how to best support it.

What if...

...organisations didn't rely on the resilience and creative determination of artists and freelancers to make the almost impossible happen? Or what if they noticed when they did and learned from it, valued it as leadership and encouraged artists to own their part in the success?

...artists and freelancers identified themselves as leaders more readily, leading their own charge and

gathering voices in support of each other?

...we didn't think of leadership as simply belonging to organisations, but were to better acknowledge the creativity and adaptive resilience that independent artists and freelancers hone daily? Could this imbue new learning into trusted organisations?

...we considered the connection between value and leadership potential from the start, and paid artists the equivalent of a commensurate worker in the organisation engaging their services?

...artists were to say no if this didn't happen?

...within leadership we prioritised talent rather than spotting it?

...all Boards in the culture sector included at least one artist and one freelance independent creative worker?

...we had a more fluid, representative workforce and leaders? We all know that there is a need to support representative leadership; does it naturally follow that we should re-examine where leaders are and support them on their terms, rather than feeding another level of selection and hierarchy?

...we were to take a different view of career journeys through being confident that our sector will be less affected than others by the automation revolution? How then might we create different leadership opportunities?

...we didn't rely on organisations or funding bodies to make changes on behalf of independent artists and creative workers?

...we could imagine an extended leadership framework developed and managed by the freelance arts and cultural community?

I'm very aware of the people, both within and without organisations, attempting to transform our perceptions of resilient leadership. I lend voice to the discussion, developed through much discourse over the years with my peers. Some of the above suggestions are idealistic, some more pragmatic.

I consider them an opener for further debate.

My instinct is that the real work of the next decade will be to find different ways of supporting leadership in different places rather than relying so heavily on a monoculture of career progression and funding retention as the principal aims of cultural leadership. It's an issue that deserves our attention, so as to ensure that we can all better benefit from the ideas, the radicalism, the risk-taking and the humanity of our sector. If together we can make space for new ways alongside the tried and tested, it could just be the defining factor in our resilience.

Sara Jones
Senior Lecturer, Cass Business
School, City, University
of London and Principal
Investigator, Boosting Resilience

Concluding Remarks

Boosting Resilience: Survival Skills for the New Normal

So, what does it take to survive in times of change? To continue to deliver great work and high performance, amidst unprecedented levels of disruption and uncertainty? To just keep on going, even when times are at their toughest?

Throughout the ages, we have wondered at the ability of certain individuals and organisations to withstand trauma and upheaval, and asked ourselves how this is achieved. The concept of resilience has been explored by many great thinkers. Nearly two thousand years ago, the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius was contemplating the values of purpose and persistence, considering obstacles as opportunities for growth, and openness to change as a virtue. Much later, Nietzsche observed that 'that which does not kill us, makes us stronger', and more recently still Nelson Mandela is often quoted as reminding us to judge him not by his success, but by how many times he fell down and got back up again.

Today, as the world changes faster and faster, we are all experiencing a need for resilience in both personal and professional contexts, not only within our daily individual lives, but also on a national and global scale. Issues such as climate change, the largest global refugee crisis since World War II, and, here in the UK, Brexit, are just a few examples of the many challenges we face. Understanding and implementing the behaviours necessary to achieving resilience in the face of change and uncertainty has perhaps never felt more important than it does now.

Against this backdrop, it has been brilliant to hear the voices of today's leaders in the arts and cultural sector taking this thinking forward and developing our understanding of what it means to develop personal, organizational, and sectoral resilience in a way that can move us towards a brighter and more hopeful future.

Although the focus of the project has been on enabling organisations to make the most of their creative assets and intellectual property, a number of broader themes have emerged, as demonstrated by the articles in this volume. This has built both on the huge experience of the partners who have delivered the project, and on that of the individuals and organisations who have been part of the programme of residencies, action learning, mentoring and open learning that this has involved.

For me, the most powerful associations are with our experience of delivering the interdisciplinary Masters in Innovation, Creativity and Leadership at Cass. The Boosting Resilience programme has drawn on many of our arts-based and business-oriented approaches: to preparing students to use creative thinking to bounce back from challenging circumstances; to delivering innovations – social, cultural and economic – that enable organisations to bounce forward to make the most of new opportunities as they arise; and, perhaps most importantly, to maintaining that constant openness to reflection and learning that we believe is needed to survive and thrive in times of change.

It has been an enormous privilege to be a part of this project for the last two years.

I very much look forward to continuing the many collaborations and associations that have resulted – and to working together to imagine, design and develop a more resilient future for us all.

“Today, as the world changes faster and faster, we are all experiencing a need for resilience in both personal and professional contexts, not only within our daily individual lives, but also on a national and global scale. Issues such as climate change, the largest global refugee crisis since World War II, and, here in the UK, Brexit, are just a few examples of the many challenges we face.”



Image courtesy of Boosting Resilience

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Enormous thanks to everyone else in the Boosting Resilience team and cohort for all your ideas and support in bringing this publication to fruition and special thanks too to all our writers for taking time out to contribute to this publication.

