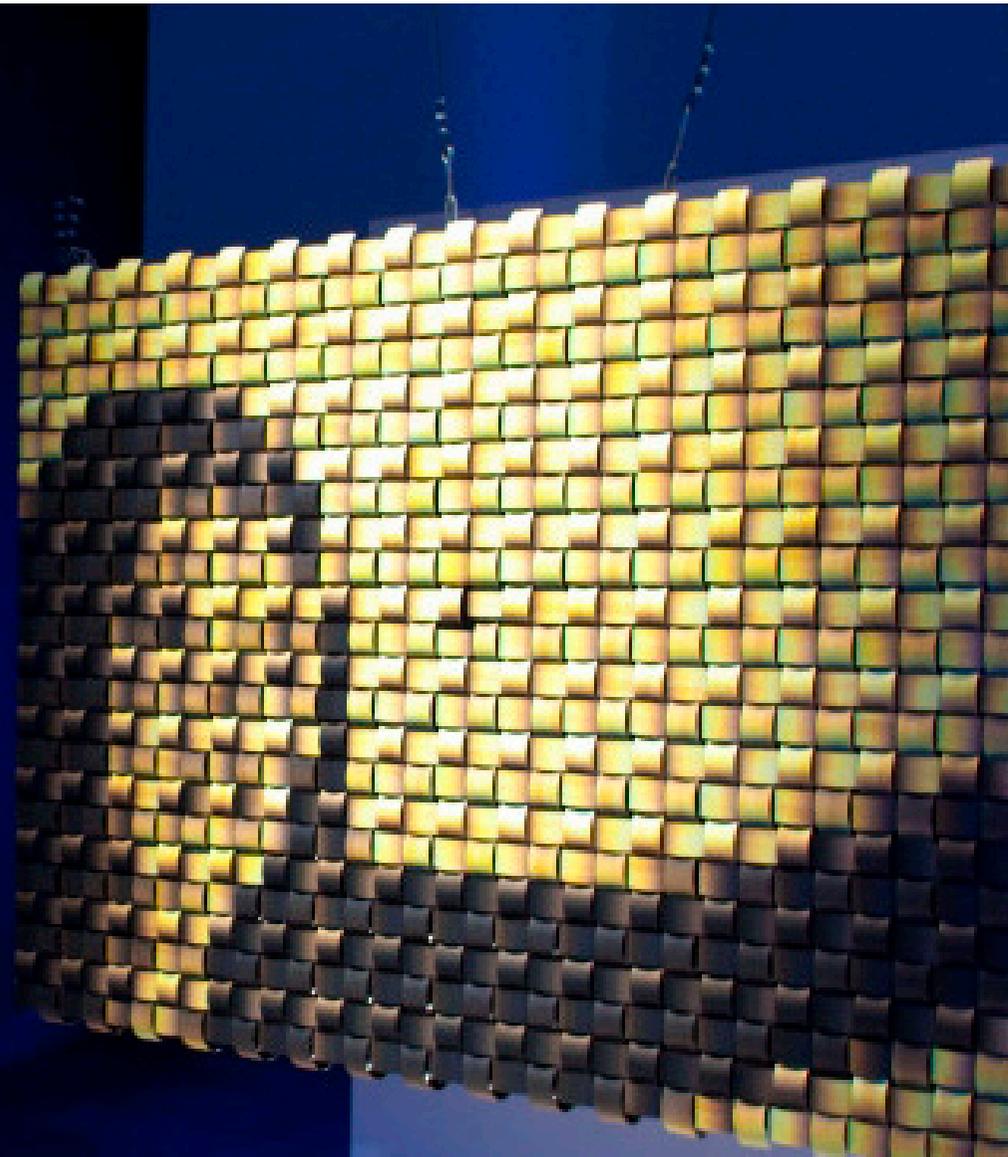# Arts &Business

Evolution of partnerships
Cultural collaborations in the digital age

By FreshMinds
Edited by Joanne South,
Research Manager,
Arts & Business

Foreword

Cultural collaborations are not new – indeed, understanding and stimulating them was the motivation that led to the creation of Arts & Business 35 years ago and has been the driving force ever since. But the advance of digital technology transforms the scale and scope of possibility that exists between the worlds of culture and commerce.

This report provides the context, sets out the opportunities, and details the pitfalls and potential for the future. It is the first of a series of insight and inspiration reports from Arts & Business on how the landscape for partnerships between brands, digital creative agencies, cultural institutions and indeed audiences is changing. We want to encourage you to think beyond your existing networks, points of inspiration, and consider collaborations with culture that can surprise, challenge and ultimately entertain.

If there was any doubt about the power of culture to communicate in the digital space then one only needs to look at how the digital pioneers are working with the leading cultural institutions to communicate new concepts and ideas. Google has worked with the Prado, whilst YouTube teamed up with the Guggenheim for YouTube Play. New tech kid on the block Layar recently partnered with Moma to try and connect with a wider audience for its augmented reality software.

But as this report shows collaboration can be a powerful tool for smaller, less established businesses and organisations, driving R&D, new product development, new revenue streams and building new audiences – with all of these benefits being open to partners on both sides of the equation.
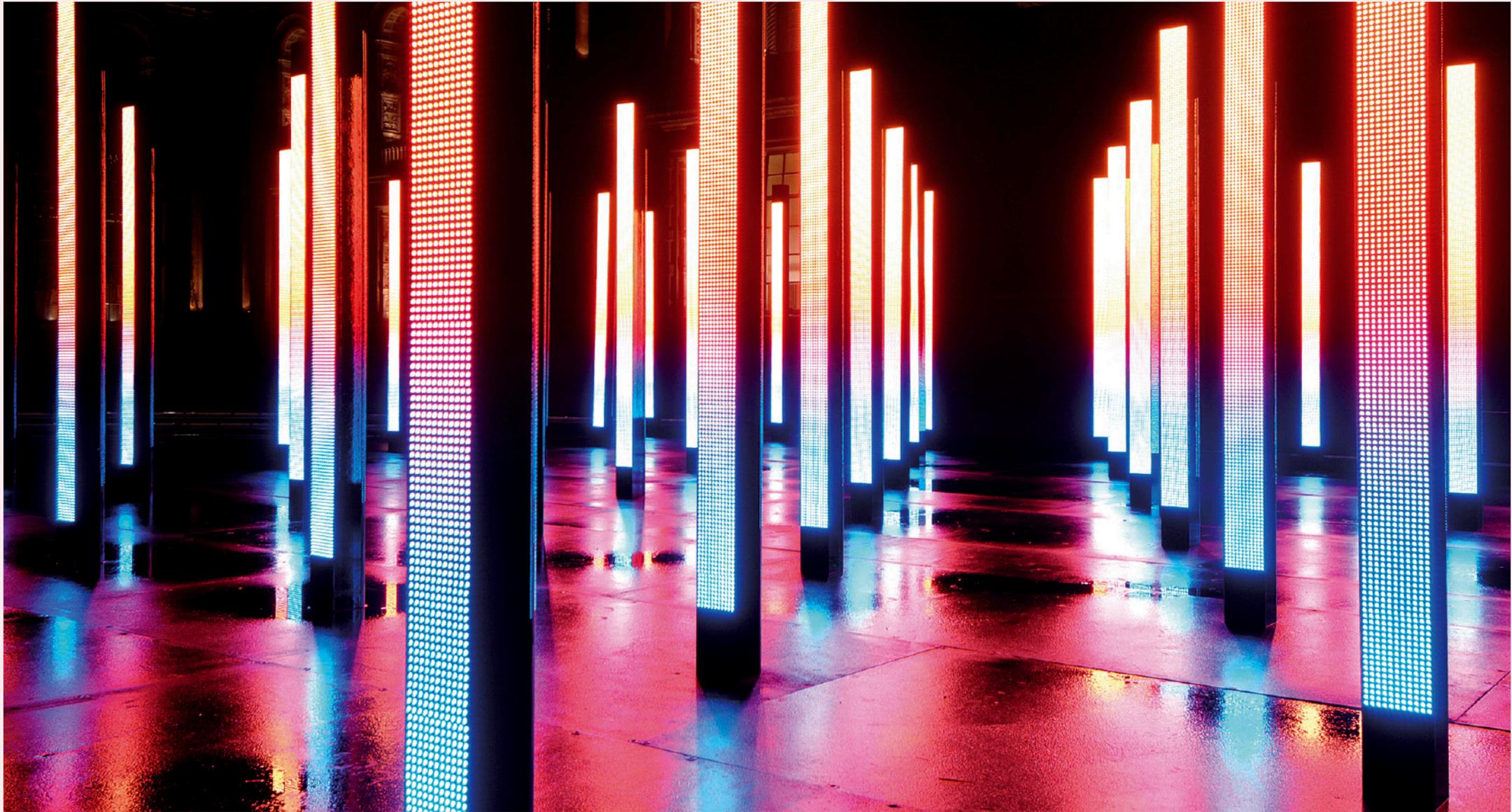
Our prediction is that these kinds of collaborations will grow and grow. As original, innovative and creative content increasingly drives communication between brands and consumers, culture will become an ever more appealing driver of that conversation.

In turn these collaborations will begin to transform the landscape between these different worlds, stimulating new business models, new creative hubs and new artforms, as we outline in Future Trends.

Pitfalls inevitably remain, as do challenges around issues such as intellectual property and ownership. Arts & Business's role in this is to learn from the best, to stimulate and initiate the greatest. We are open for collaboration. Are you?

To find out how we can help you please contact Natalie Melton on 0207 940 6423 or Natalie.melton@artsandbusiness.org.uk

Executive summary

Volume at the V&A. Photographer: John Adrian. Copyright: United Visual Artists 2006. Volume is a luminous interactive installation that responds spectacularly to human movement, creating a series of audio-visual experiences. The sculpture was created by United Visual Artists as part of the Playstation®season

Executive summary

Digital technology is re-shaping how businesses interact with the cultural sector in the UK. It is opening up fresh opportunities for engagement. It is driving a fundamental shift in how businesses and cultural organisations think about partnerships. Businesses are increasingly putting collaborative ways of working at the heart of their relationships to unlock innovative content and communication streams, develop new products and reach out to untapped consumers and audiences. Within this space, there is ample opportunity for new partners to exchange ideas in their fields of expertise and produce tangible and intangible assets that benefit them in the long-term.

Nature of digital technology partnerships

This report explores the nature of these partnerships by taking as broad an approach to digital partnerships as possible. It collects information about the benefits and potential opportunities for both businesses and cultural organisations wanting to collaborate in this space, as well as the challenges they are likely to encounter and provides guidance on the best way to manage these.

It builds on what is already known about well-publicised case studies such as the National Theatre's NT Live pilot, the Pervasive Media Studio created by Watershed and HP Labs, and Ars Electronica in Austria, to name a few. But innovations are happening in unexpected places and there is a great deal to learn from the partnerships highlighted in this report, which describe collaborations between organisations of various sizes, situated in many different parts of the UK and innovating in different ways.

Why the research is needed

Digital technologies are introducing new avenues for collaboration between businesses and arts organisations. Arts & Business wanted to gain a better understanding of this new partnership market, bring partners together to share experiences and provide support to others wishing to explore these types of collaborations in the future. The objectives of the research were therefore to:

- Understand current levels of engagement between the digital technology sector and digitally-enabled companies and not-for-profit arts and cultural organisations

- Define the benefits, opportunities and challenges that are emerging from these relationships

- Gain intelligence on how these partnerships may develop in the future.

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How the research was conducted

Forty qualitative interviews were conducted over two months with businesses, cultural organisations and in some cases artists – all of them involved in some form of digital collaboration. Nineteen partnerships are discussed in this report, with nine of them developed into in-depth case studies. Where possible both partners were interviewed.

The companies are not necessarily technology businesses, and the cultural organisations range from galleries to theatres, music organisations and contemporary arts centres. In all cases digital technology was embedded in the final outcome of the project, whether this was a website or software code enabling a work of art.

Businesses explored in this report include:

- Apple
- Axiom Tech
- BT
- The Co-operative
- CultureLabel
- Go2Give
- HP Labs
- iCrossing
- Lowtech
- Microsoft
- SmartLab
- Whitespace.

Cultural organisations that are explored include:

- Calvium
- Cornerhouse
- Dogwoof
- Cryptic
- FACT
- folly
- FutureEverything
- FutureLab
- Hide&Seek
- The Lowry
- Manchester Camerata
- Sound and Music
- Sounds of Progress (now called Limelight Studios)
- Watts Gallery
- Welsh Sinfonia.

There was an emphasis on not-for-profit cultural organisations but digital media social enterprises were also included. On the business side, although there was a focus on technology businesses, there are instances where we included companies that pursued a uniquely digital objective with their cultural partner, for example the online dissemination of films.

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New partnerships, new opportunities: digital media businesses and cultural organisations as natural partners

Businesses are developing an affinity for the digital arts in a society that is increasingly driven by e-commerce and see opportunities in artforms that sit closer to their business practices. For example, digital content generated in partnership with a cultural organisation can now be easily packaged and marketed across geographical regions – it need no longer be limited to a specific gallery or exhibition.

The interviewees continually highlighted how transactional models – in which a business or cultural organisation is simply hired to deliver a specific service (such as straight forward sponsorship) – may become increasingly unattractive to the more innovative partners in an operating landscape where interactivity facilitated by digital technology is becoming the norm and both partners are looking to reach out to dispersed audiences and consumers.

Product innovation to generate revenue for both partners

Though branding and communication remains an important aspect of the relationship between companies and cultural organisations, there appears to be a rich environment for the two to work together to develop products. A well-structured collaborative business model can create a productive research and development environment that brings together very different ways of thinking to create something new that can be taken to market. For cultural organisations the creation of new revenue streams is especially important because it enables them to diversify income streams and grow more independent of public funding.

Brands and reputations are enhanced

Partners leverage the excitement around digital technologies to build their brands and reputations with existing and new audiences. A number of partnerships reported putting digital media and education at the centre of their collaboration. These partners are taking a long view: technology businesses believe the creative learning environment stimulates learners in a way that might make them loyal customers in the future, while cultural organisations attract fresh audiences and generate income from additional footfall at their venues/events.

Communication with target markets can be widened and improved

Partnerships create a number of commercial opportunities for both partners. Rich creative content can be developed collaboratively which can appeal to one or both partners' target markets. Where collaborations are most successful, the two entities become strong advocates for each other's brands, further extending their reach into new markets. In some cases, communities of interest are being built using social media tools. These communities give cultural organisations access to each other's audiences, while the businesses that help set up the platforms can expect a return on investment through advertising and product development, reaching target markets and onward sales.

Learning and knowledge transfer is fostered

In a relationship where both partners work closely together, there are opportunities for staff to develop new skills and ways of thinking about how they do business / how they work with others. Companies report that their technical teams are often challenged to innovate in their field of expertise and individuals come away from a project feeling stimulated and reinvigorated. Cultural organisations are given the opportunity to learn skills

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such as programming, social media content management, online marketing and business strategy. Although this can happen with any partnership, it is interesting to note that technologists and engineers have reported benefitting specifically from the creativity of artists and arts organisations.

Collaboration not transaction

Digital technology is a means to an end, not the end itself. It may be central to the partnership in terms of delivering objectives but it ought to be part of a broader strategy. More important to the success of a project, is the ability to work collaboratively. Without the flexibility of such a relationship, partnerships often encounter difficulties and are short-lived. It is for this reason that special attention is paid to the nature of collaborative operating models (rather than transactional) below. Although relevant to non-technology partnerships too, this criteria is all the more pertinent when new technologies are involved and a phase of experimentation may be required.

Identify opportunities for collaboration

Companies and cultural organisations must evaluate their needs and the goals they want to achieve when deciding whether a simple transaction (i.e. payment for one specific service) is required or a full collaboration is appropriate. The two types of relationships must not be confused with each other. Finding and working with partners that have similar goals and interests is key for success in these types of innovative, mutually beneficial projects. Similarly, a sense of shared community and audiences can strengthen the relationship.

Don't be afraid to experiment

There is no rule book about how these partnerships should look or work. By their very nature, they need to be experimental and create an environment where that is possible. This also means that unexpected setbacks should be planned for (as much as possible through risk assessment and contingency planning) and allowed, including the possibility of the project not fully succeeding. Setbacks should be viewed as a natural part of the research and development process, provided valuable lessons are learnt and incorporated.

Make sure to develop a balanced relationship

Collaborations perform best in those instances where both partners bring assets to the table which will help a project to succeed. While cultural organisations often lack the technological expertise that digital companies provide, they are in a strong position to provide creative input, challenge development teams intellectually, pass on valuable information about how the cultural sector functions and how audiences interact. It is not just about the content but the experience around it and cultural organisations have important assets in this area.

Formalise the relationship but keep it flexible

Partnerships where the objectives are clear, timescales have been agreed and the responsibilities of both teams identified are more likely to achieve the expected results than those relationships where they have not. However, it is essential to collaborative work, especially where research and development is concerned, that both organisations adopt a flexible and experimental approach. Those relationships that are able to absorb setbacks are more likely to achieve a truly innovative solution to their business objectives than those that are inflexible around timings, budgets and goals.

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Make sure to communicate openly and frequently

The partnerships in which teams work closely together (preferably at the same site) are better able to understand each other's objectives, the challenges they encounter and work together to develop solutions. In this research, there was a correlation between partners communicating frequently with each other and the creation of long-term relationships. Where partners communicated often, the relationships tended to exist for longer than three years and multiple projects were completed. When communication was infrequent, disagreements about objectives often became polarised and irreconcilable, leading to short-lived relationships and the discontinuation of projects.

The pitfalls (and how to avoid them)

There are a number of pitfalls to collaboration in this space. However, few of these have to do with the digital technologies themselves.

Organisational memory is not protected

The teams operating in this space are often small and function on tight timescales and budgets. Very few of them keep a well documented record of strategic decisions made about the direction of their project. Yet a project can be significantly disrupted when a key member leaves, taking with them vital experience and information, causing project discontinuity. It is, therefore, essential that project managers are prepared for changes in staff and ensure that all information is adequately archived, particularly in those cases where similar projects are planned for the future.

Over-emphasis on branding

One of the biggest reasons why companies, especially large businesses, enter into partnerships with cultural organisations is to enhance their brands. However, too strong an emphasis on traditional branding, such as advertising and logo placement, can cause friction and stifle collaboration. This is especially the case in a digital marketing landscape, where audiences and consumers are shying away from one-way communication and demanding interactivity and co-creation.

A stimulating innovation or exciting digital content is therefore often more captivating for consumers than prominent advertising. By allowing an innovation to speak for itself, a deeper and more genuine relationship could be fostered with audiences; being what audiences/consumers are interested in rather than interrupting them.

Intellectual Property is a challenge

Intellectual Property (IP) is one of the leading concerns in this area because partners need to get the balance right between protecting their commercial interests and creating enough space for a free exchange of ideas. Cultural organisations often allow companies to retain full control of IP in exchange for valuable digital platforms and technical expertise, but this need not be the case.

It remains difficult to offer best practice guidelines because control over IP is often determined by the assets each partner brings to the relationship and what their strategic objectives are. With the growing prominence of open source culture, more open models of collaborating and sharing of the outputs should be considered. However, it is advised to agree IP terms before the launch of a project.

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The future of collaborations
Businesses and cultural organisations acknowledge that the digital environment is exciting and a hotbed for innovation. However, they are unsure about what the next 2-5 years will bring. Rather than predict what the next major shift in the technology will be, partners in this space are focusing on capitalising on the opportunities available to them now.

Technologies such as iPhone applications and online communities are rapidly gaining ground and those organisations that do not move with these changes risk losing substantial revenues.

Digital media will continue to drive collaborative business models

New innovations in digital media mean that businesses and cultural organisations will need to respond faster to the changing expectations of their target markets. If they do not, they risk losing business to competitors. Amplifying the sensory experience of online content is but one of many areas where businesses and cultural organisations are already innovating together. In many cases, the creative working models which cultural partners bring to the table help businesses unlock further insights into improving engagement with their customers.

Innovation hubs will grow around cultural organisations

Research and development is likely to play a larger role in the relationships between businesses and cultural organisations in the future. Signs already exist that show companies and products can be successfully spun-off from these collaborations. Innovation hubs can be especially important to cultural organisations wanting to expand funding streams and reduce their dependence on public funding and the advantages to the UK's creative industries could be substantial.

Seed money will be key

With public funding cuts, there is a strong imperative to secure seed money to support innovations that will be profitable and sustainable over the long term. Smaller partnerships are heavily reliant on third parties to provide capital for innovation and taking products to market. This seed money need not necessarily come from government sources; international examples show that investors are already exploring ways of bringing technology companies and cultural organisations together to create profitable businesses. Still, there may be room to create specific funds that encourage product development in collaboration with cultural organisations – funds that give the funding partner an opportunity to secure a share in the innovation's IP from an early stage.

Benefits to partners

Cao Fei, RMB City: Overview 02, SecondLife Video Still, Courtesy of RMB City © 2008. RMB City is an art community in the 3-D virtual world of Second Life and was realised by Beijing-based artist Cao Fei as a public platform for creativity.

Benefits to partners

There are real commercial opportunities in collaborating with cultural organisations on digital projects. The case studies suggest that cultural organisations are not only looking for a variety of tailored solutions to their needs but they are often uncovering new business opportunities which potentially have much wider commercial applications. The following is a detailed discussion of the most prominent benefits for businesses.

Building reputation and brand awareness in new markets
Partnerships with cultural organisations are a complex mash of opportunities and depending on the success of the partnership and the strength of the emergent relationship, the benefits of the association may last well beyond the completion of an initial project. Small businesses especially have reported that successful projects have converted their cultural partners into strong advocates who often actively showcase their work. These endorsements were also reported to lead to new business.

Developing business eco-systems

One major multi-national ICT company highlighted that they take a long strategic view when it comes to partnerships with museums. By making science and technology exciting in exhibition spaces, they contribute to the education of future scientists, potential employees and a society that is sufficiently immersed in ICT as to need its products. In other words, the company is seeding its own future and through well placed branding, the company hopes to ensure a life-long association amongst children between a positive scientific experience and their own brand.

Apple follows a similar approach through its partnership with Cornerhouse. The two organisations run training sessions for teachers and students on Apple computers, to encourage them to use Apple's applications and technology. The main thrust of the exercise is sales and building brand loyalty: by giving first-hand experience of working with Apple products in Regional Training Centres, the workshops provide sales opportunities to schools. In another collaboration, Apple supplied exhibition quality computers to Lovebytes, a digital arts organisation based in Sheffield, along with workshops on the use of its iLife application. Lovebytes then ran an exhibition on the computers, again exposing new audiences to Apple's latest products.

Benefits to partners

Creating a beachhead into new geographical markets

Seesound, a major Spanish audio-visual company, has for many years been trying to break into the UK market, without much success. However, its association with Sounds of Progress is beginning to change this. The company built a state-of-the art studio for the music theatre, while Sounds of Progress spoke at every available opportunity about the business' good work. The organisation has also been actively putting Seesound in touch with local authorities and councils, to build their benefactor's profile in the UK.

In a similar vein, the Canadian projector specialists Christie Digital has a long-standing relationship with FACT, which uses the company's equipment for large-scale installations and events. Christie then uses the events in sales pitches as case studies of what its technology can achieve.

Reaching new consumer segments

Businesses are also realising that creative organisations may already sit very close to the audiences they want to reach. The Co-operative engaged Dogwoof, which already had its own audiences committed to social issues, to help source and distribute ethical film documentaries. The result has been a series of highly successful co-branded films, one of which was Oscar-nominated. The films the two partners released not only appealed to The Co-operative's membership base, but reached out to more audiences with a high-impact message than could not be reached with its print publications alone.

For businesses to reach audiences, they first need to be identified. To this end, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems which track audience purchase behaviour is vital to any organisation. A digital technology company sponsored a CRM system for a gallery, not as a corporate social responsibility gift, but to build its brand in the arts sector. Though the software was free, maintenance of the system and hardware were not, which meant that the company could still generate revenue from the partnership. Although there were some issues with this partnership, the blend of in-kind sponsorship and transactional agreement did enable the partnership to work.

Loss-leader products to generate future income

So called loss-leader projects, such as the digital technology company's CRM system, are an opportunity for businesses to place their product within an arts organisation and recoup the initial investment through technological support over a contracted period. Where this becomes a partnership is when the cultural organisation helps in the development of the product, or offers to market it in return for discounted prices. Where cultural organisations have significantly contributed to product development, companies tended to waive support fees, with a view to recoup development costs through onward sales.

Benefits to partners

Creating a test bed for new products and taking them to market
A collaboration which has technology at its heart has great potential to lead to new innovations, insights and processes because two very different organisations with particular skillsets bring unique perspectives to the table. Such partnerships free up organisations from standard project delivery frameworks to take a more experimental approach, which encourages staff to push the envelope on what they have delivered so far. These new products can range from new software developments, e-commerce functionality and support for social media communities to more radical inventions.

"You get to work with creative people who can help you think through some of your business problems. I'm limited by the way I think as a person employed by Microsoft for years. An arts organisation will approach a problem so differently. The creativity that they add to business problems is fantastic."
– Director, Microsoft

As examples, Go2Give is now selling the volunteer management system it created in collaboration with The Lowry to other organisations that depend on volunteers. Axiom Tech invested time and money beyond the brief to help create Love Culture, an online community for culture enthusiasts, in return for the maintenance contract for the software, which is set to grow as other host organisations join the community.

By collaborating with a cultural organisation, businesses give themselves and their employees the opportunity to stretch their thinking, providing them with a chance to test new approaches, gain valuable experience and possibly develop a full product that is commercially sustainable.

Learning alternative work strategies
Not all businesses are at the leading-edge of social media and the Web 2.0 evolution; they are still trying to understand how they might leverage these new tools to grow their market share and reach new consumers. A partnership with an arts organisation that is well versed in new media can help an organisation accelerate learning. Though The Co-operative has a long history campaigning online and offline, Dogwoof's experience in marketing film and digital media has helped the company refine its understanding of digital audiences and how they interact with new technologies.

FACT believes that its commercial partners also gained fresh perspectives from working in conjunction with commissioned artists.

"Artists are restricted by time, money, lack of technology and expertise. That's what [our business partners provided]. In turn, they got the publicity, the knowledge transfer and feedback from artists into their organisation. These things take time and hard work, but the fresh perspectives they gained were invaluable."
– Ex-Director, FACT

Xerox and Eyebeam in the US are both excellent examples of how artists in residence schemes help companies tap directly into their creative power. Artistic residencies do, however, pose difficult decisions for the artist around intellectual property when they are only a salaried employee and cannot draw future income from their ideas.

Benefits to partners

Employee satisfaction and retention
When businesses move from a transactional relationship with a cultural organisation into collaborative work, they are exposed to radically different ways of working. Employees are encouraged to think and act outside of their comfort zone. Though this can cause some friction in the beginning, businesses have reported that, on the whole, it is a positive experience for the company and staff.

"Our software engineers were scared about the project at first and said that they didn't know how to do it, that it wasn't possible. It was a challenge to get them to think outside the box. Then everything turned out to be possible and we achieved everything we wanted to do."
– Managing Director, Go2Give

"The biggest benefit was exposing the creative team to a more diverse client team. It was something to get passionate about – and getting tickets to the performances enriched what we do and the experiences of our staff."
– Creative Director, Whitespace

"[Working with the arts], it does make you feel better about what you're doing. It's not just about the bottom line and making money."
– Director, Microsoft

By creating interesting work environments and opportunities for unusual interactions, companies can make staff feel highly valued and promote a workplace atmosphere that contributes to the brand.

Future trends

Granimator™ iPad app created by ustwo. Granimator™ brings together cutting edge artists, illustrators, designers and studios from around the world, giving users the opportunity to create design focused wallpapers on the iPad that can be shared.

Future trends

Introduction
Digital media continues to upset old models of engagement with consumers and audiences. User-generated content for example replaces how businesses historically developed and sold their products to the masses and how cultural organisations make "experiential content" available to their audiences.

"We view what we're doing in our partnerships as the start of a new medium. No one knew what to do with film at the beginning, but once a creative person got hold of it..."
– Creative Director, Calvium

As content becomes digitised and instantly accessible, the possibility of rolling it out to ever larger audiences is only confined by cost and technological limits. Businesses stand to learn a good deal from cultural organisations about how to make that content more exciting and engaging, i.e. by creating an immersive experience.

As for cultural organisations, digital evolution has meant a radical restructuring of what an audience is and how they are best interacted with and so new artforms in new media are appearing. The Victoria & Albert's recent exhibition Decode is just one of many examples of artists engaging with audiences through digital creations. This represents a measure of uncertainty for business and the arts, yet the organisations that pool their understanding of the different elements that make up digital engagement stand to gain a lot.

"There are masses of potential. The internet is changing the very nature of TV, which is leading to new forms of programming. Understanding the opportunities in this form – we'll need creative people to help with this. [With cultural organisations and business] digging tunnels from both ends, neither will fully understand each other's side of things – we need to work together."
– Project Lead, BT

"The mobile area is a new medium and the time is right now with technology being used in new ways [to create new products]. We're on the one hand moving what already exists into the mobile realm and on the other hand finding novel uses for it."
– Creative Director, Calvium

Businesses and cultural organisations that do not keep up to speed with the rapidly changing demands of their audiences and the technologies they use may begin to experience setbacks. Older communication channels may not yield the results they once did, competitors more deeply immersed in the digital space will gain market share with new products that hook online consumers. Des Gregory of Axiom Tech puts it this way:

"The landscape within which your product exists might change radically and make the product short-lived – you need to account for that."

The following are a few key areas where change is most expected, with some ideas on where the opportunities and pitfalls are.

Artistic endeavour becomes increasingly digitalised
With more and more artists beginning to produce digital works, it can be argued that artists and company researchers are meeting on common ground more often than they did in the past. As one digital arts organisation puts it:

"Advanced digital media technology is being demystified and made more accessible for the average person."

One respondent felt that as artistic endeavour becomes more digital it also becomes more agreeable to business, because its form sits closer to enterprise. The more digital artistic endeavour is, the more viable a channel it is for businesses to communicate with new audiences: a hybrid arts and digital technology company put it this way:

Future trends

"Digital works bleed between inspiring artworks and more commercial products."

An academic within a university research unit that supports curators making digital media art believes that the role of artists in these collaborations may change in the future. As their expertise in designing meaningful products and services becomes better understood, their skills will become more highly valued by business. A Director at Microsoft has a similar view:

"So much communication from companies is now virtual – emails, banners, websites – but it's very bland. Artists can help bring that back into the real world. It's an experiential thing that we lack so much at the moment."

Future collaborations between artists and businesses will thus depend on how willing and able artists are to position themselves at the coalface, as businesses work to become more authentic and experiential.

Collaboration is replacing centralisation

It is expected that there will be a number of false starts and failures in this relatively new way of working together, but commentators are optimistic that the value created by open digital collaborations will be worth the effort. NESTA's Hasan Bakhshi cites the National Theatre's NT Live experiment as one example of great success.

By devolving hierarchies and centralised control of expertise to a more egalitarian relationship, partners will free each other up to mix the best parts of technology and art. In doing so they will release constructive friction and innovation.

"Our [collaborative] partnership allowed us to focus on developing a product that was uniquely geared to our customer. The flexibility it gave us let us refocus on the needs of customers, which helps you build commitment to your product, which in turn translates to loyalty. And once you have that loyalty in place, you reduce marketing expenditure. You start to save money."
– Des Gregory, Director, Axiom Tech

Clare Reddington of Watershed suspects that new business models will emerge over the next few years, which will favour looser collections of people creating content and technology. In this environment:

" Different value chains will have to be explored. It is not just about knowledge transfer – creative companies can be as rigorous and appropriate for high-end research and development as academics. It is fascinating to look at co-production... Everything is much more open."

Innovation hubs will become entrenched

It is likely that collaborations between cultural organisations and businesses will create spin-offs, which will turn into innovation hubs where new technologies and products will be co-developed for commercial gain. This is already happening. Calvium was co-founded by an individual who previously worked at HP Labs to produce creative digital content with a variety of partners. FutureEverything and FACT are both consolidating collaborations with long-term partners and developing products as centres of innovation. At the moment it tends to be the larger, most entrepreneurial cultural organisations who are exploring this space, but it offers abundant opportunities to all enterprises, including SMEs.

Future trends

SmartLabs call these spin-offs hybrid labs and suggests that they are likely to have a longer lifespan than purely commercial labs, especially if there is public funding or partnerships with academic institutions involved. They need not be in direct competition with commercial enterprise; rather, they can facilitate product development, much in the way that MIT Labs partners with various businesses. Clare Reddington of Watershed says:

"Research partnerships make for better products, better than research being stuck in labs… testing technology and content with the public at a very early stage will be essential. It would work like an ecosystem, bringing together big companies and small companies and artists. It would look at the sum of all parts rather than individual relations."

Jeanne Bloch, a business consultant and artist in Paris, has advised on these types of partnerships as an expert in sustainability. She suggests that collaborative business models might increasingly include a three-way partnership between private investors, artists and technology businesses. She cites the example of an experimental theatre set up in Paris. A venture capital company brought together a group of artists and technology companies to build a state-of-the-art theatre as a commercial venture. Though that particular venture broke down due to a conflict of interest, she sees no reason why venture capitalists cannot take on the role of state funders in the future.

Seed funding for enterprise and culture
A number of commentators, from the arts and business, indicated that the continuing availability of seed money in the creative industries will be critical to the survival of innovations that emerge from collaborations. New products and services are being developed with clear commercial potential but, without funding, smaller businesses and cultural organisations will not be able to bring them to market.

"The main hurdle with [innovation in this space] would be support for research and development as a concept in the arts, because the technological and cultural partners cannot support each other on their own."
– Hasan Bakhshi, NESTA

These concerns were largely voiced by SMEs, which suggests that special funding specifically geared to product development in the arts may be one way to keep seed money flowing to innovations that have potential commercial applications. Larger businesses can also play a role in seeding by providing funds in exchange for a share in the intellectual property rights. This will ensure that products are brought to market and not shelved due to a lack of funds.

Conclusions
As digital media makes collaboration between businesses and cultural organisations more attractive and viable, real financial opportunities exist for the two to develop partnerships that focus on R&D and content that makes experiences ever more immersive and engaging. These opportunities exist for large and small organisations but they depend on how willing partners are to engage in an experimental relationship. To this end, the evidence suggests that well-planned open collaborative models with clear objectives and frequent communication can help mitigate risks and successfully support the goals of each partner.

Case studies

Photo © Jennifer Boyer 2010

Case studies
ITEM: FACT partners with businesses and artists

Pushing the boundaries of digital collaboration in the arts

Lessons:

1 A successful research and development programme can be set up with a cultural organisation facilitating collaboration between technologists and artists.

2 Such collaboration leads to a valuable exchange of skills: artists get access to complex technology and the expertise needed to realise their goals, while technologists get an opportunity to test the boundaries of their products and skills in implementing the requests of the artist.

3 An experimental framework that allows artists and technologists to work without the pressure to 'deliver' helps facilitate the innovation process.

4 Setting expectations and agreeing intellectual property early on in the process contributes to the smooth running of the collaboration.

5 Keeping an accurate record of the collaboration process can help facilitate important decisions later on.

Abstract

Between 2003 and 2006, FACT ran ten projects which brought together artists and technology companies within an innovative programme called ITEM. The programme provided a framework for artists and commercial partners to experiment and innovate with technology without the pressure to necessarily exhibit. The artists got access to the technology they needed to create their works of art, alongside valuable training in what the technology can and cannot

do, while technology companies got the opportunity to work in new ways with their technology and generate publicity at exhibitions. They were able to use the outcomes of their projects as a sales tool and tap into new ways of thinking about their products and what they might do.

The result has been such a success for FACT that the project ran longer than the 18 months originally planned. ITEM now forms the foundation of a more formal research and development programme that continues to test the limits of technology in artistic applications.

The project
The aim of the programme was to create a framework for collaboration between artists and technologists "to work towards common goals that would seek to define future trajectories of exhibition technologies". Technologists (including BT Exact, FeONIC, surroundAV and Onteca) and artists submitted ideas together or independently, and projects were selected based on their research objectives. Though no pressure existed to exhibit, many exhibitions did emerge from the partnerships, including Susan Collins and Paul Gillieron's 3D acoustic landscapes and Greg Byatt's acoustic acupuncture.

Objectives were different for each project, but these were set early on. Participants in the programme were required to attend a series of away days, in which common issues and goals were identified and agreed. Extensive three-way agreements regarding intellectual property were also articulated from the outset, with the view to placing as much as possible into the public domain. The premise of the agreements was that anything a partner brought to the project they owned, anything they took away from it was shared.

Case studies
ITEM: FACT partners with businesses and artists

Benefits for the business partners

The unusual ways in which artists wanted to use the technology and the demands placed on the technologists' skills to code and engineer the elements that would make projects work, led to new ways of thinking about the technology and what it could deliver. In at least two instances, the application which was created by the partnership was taken forward for commercial testing – a GPS tracker which let people know which arts events were on nearby and a 3D audio landscaping tracker which could potentially be built into home entertainment systems. BT took the learnings from its ITEM project and incorporated these into its Media Tools product, which was developed in-house with the help of resident artists.

Technology experts found the fresh perspectives of artists invigorating and appreciated the feedback artists gave on areas where a technology could be improved. The technology companies also benefited from the publicity which the ITEM conference and publication generated and could use the artistic collaboration in sales pitches to invigorate the image of their product.

Benefits for the cultural organisation and artists

Following these collaborations FACT realised that technology companies valued its input and the research it facilitated alongside artists. Artists are often restricted by limited financial resources and a lack of technical expertise when it comes to the technologies that are needed to test their ideas. By facilitating funding and creating the collaborative framework needed to get projects off the ground, FACT was able to provide an environment in which artists could test creative and technological boundaries. Key to the innovation process was an experimental approach which allowed for setbacks or even failures: there was no pressure to exhibit an installation at the end of the programme, though many successful exhibitions did follow. Knowledge transfer from technologists to the artists was also described as a major benefit to the artists.

Challenges

On occasions ITEM struggled to manage the geographically dispersed projects, with even relatively small administrative tasks, such as setting up terms and conditions, taking longer than expected.

Business partners also had to relax their expectations that projects would produce revenue immediately.

In the final years of the ITEM project, programme managers realised that learnings were not being archived as well as they had been in the first eighteen months. This meant that information about the research process and the outcomes of certain projects could not be shared as well as the programme would have liked to. None of these challenges, however, were described as major impediments.

Impact and outcome

For FACT, the major outcome of its collaborations over the last 12 years has been a strategic shift towards formalising the work it has been doing with technologists and artists in a research and development programme, since "it made us realise how many assets we have as a cultural organisation. We're not that different in skills to the big companies." BT has also described the work it has done with FACT as of strategic importance, stating that the future potential of such partnerships is massive:

"Working with technocentric thinking organisations like FACT … there are opportunities to create new forms of programming in a broadcasting arena that is rapidly changing."

Above all, the example illustrates how one organisation can place itself at the heart of multiple levels of engagement with audiences and businesses to develop a variety of products.[22]

[22] *This case study was compiled from three sources: an interview with a FACT team leader, an ex-director of the ITEM programme and the publication: Gillman, C. (2006). Research: the itemisation of creative knowledge. Liverpool: FACT & Liverpool University Press*

Case studies
Hide&Seek, HP Labs, Calvium and FutureLab

Technologists facilitate creative innovation in the arts

Lessons:

1 Large digital technology companies are partnering just as easily with cultural organisations as with other companies to test new software applications and extend their systems design expertise. A reputation for creative and innovative engagement can be built up in this way.

2 Collaborative partnerships can develop into successful spin-offs. Calvium was created by a former HP Labs team in order to commercialise their own creative ideas.

3 Partnerships with large organisations that are very particular about brand placement need to be carefully managed from the outset so that expectations are clear.

4 As digital arts installations continue to push the boundaries of what is possible with technology, more technologically advanced collaborations will be required. Digital technology companies are in a position to facilitate the development of new forms of art.

Abstract

HP Labs is Hewlett-Packard's research and innovation arm which has played an instrumental role in the UK developing a number of innovative digital arts projects in collaboration with cultural organisations. One well known example is the Pervasive Media Studio, a multi-disciplinary lab exploring and producing pervasive media content, which was formed by HP Labs, the University of West England and Watershed. The installation "The Last Will" created by Hide&Seek and the theatre company

Punchdrunk in collaboration with HP Labs is another example, as is FutureLab's Savannah. Though some of the HP Labs research teams have closed down, Calvium, a hybrid digital technology and cultural organisation, was successfully spun-off by former HP Labs employees.

Central to all of these collaborations has been HP Labs' provision of technical expertise and software to enable creative projects which otherwise would not have been possible. These collaborations have been an opportunity to test the capabilities of the company's software and systems engineers, while it has also enjoyed strong co-branding of successful projects and been able to commercialise some of the products and services developed.

The projects

Savannah, a PDA computer game that uses archived material from the BBC in an educational interface for children, was developed by FutureLab in partnership with HP Labs. For FutureLab, this was an opportunity to develop a new educational product that engaged children, while HP Labs would retain the intellectual property of the GPS mapping software, which would inform other similar products.

The main goal of the collaboration between HP Labs, Hide & Seek and Punchdrunk was to produce an installation that used similar mapping technology to give the audience a sense of movement between a physical and virtual space. For the cultural organisations, this was an opportunity to create a fresh installation that would appeal to audiences. Hide&Seek eventually won its

Case studies
Hide&Seek, HP Labs, Calvium and FutureLab

biggest commission from Warner Brothers as a result. For HP Labs, it was again an opportunity to test the capabilities of its coding in a different context and push the boundaries of what its products can achieve with a keen focus on future commercial applications of the technology.

Benefits for the business
For HP Labs, these partnerships are about product development and testing, as well as building the expertise of its technical staff. Because the organisation usually retains all the intellectual property on the underlying software, it is building up patented code which it can then roll out in later commercial versions of the applications. The ultimate aim is to maintain a competitive edge in its market. There is a CSR element to this work as well. HP Labs has built up a strong reputation for its collaborative work in the arts and co-branding is a significant element of this strategy, attracting high volumes of publicity.

Benefits for cultural organisations
Cultural organisations continue to develop new ideas for how to apply digital media in a creative space, but often lack the technical know-how to programme applications to create the desired result. Companies like HP Labs can facilitate high technology, high production value installations that would otherwise not be possible. Hide&Seek noted that:

"HP brought professionalism and vigour to the media design, and were pushing their own boundaries for innovation."

In this sense, cultural organisations can reap rewards from proposing a challenging project to a digital technology company which can drive innovation.

Challenges
HP Labs is a corporate business and as such works to more rigid timescales and development budgets than smaller organisations might. It is an approach that can easily clash with the culture of smaller organisations.

As with many other large companies, HP Labs is also very particular about brand placement. For this reason, it is highly advisable that organisations looking to collaborate with large, well-established brands iron out questions about intellectual property, branding and project timelines at the beginning of a collaboration.

Impact and outcome
HP Labs continues to have a close relationship with a number of cultural organisations and they develop new software applications to underlie these installations. Hide&Seek has gone on to do business with the likes of Warner Brothers, in large part thanks to its installation with HP Labs and Punchdrunk. FutureLab continues to collaborate with large digital technology companies to deliver creative educational tools - Enquiring Minds developed with Microsoft is a recent example. For the technology companies, the space remains an area where they can improve the strengths of their engineers and develop new products for sale.[21]

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[21] *This case study includes interviews with a producer at Hide and Seek, Creative Director at FutureLab and the founder of Calvium. The latter was a previous member of the HP Labs team that designed Mscapes.*

Case studies
Dogwoof and The Co-operative

A partnership immersed in ethical film

Lessons:

1 An alignment of brand and culture is critical to successful partnerships, as is the alignment of issues which motivate partners. In The Co-operative and Dogwoof's case, the two organisations found it easy to work together because both wanted to promote change and inspire action.

2 Two organisations with compatible skills can leverage each other's abilities and networks of stakeholders to achieve their objectives. Dogwoof widened their audience base by collaborating with The Co-operative. It was also able to leverage The Co-operative's network of campaigners and long experience of driving change. In return, The Co-operative has been able to refresh the way it engages with its members by doing something new, exciting and motivating.

3 Some creative organisations are more deeply immersed in new media and various social media tools than businesses. These organisations can help businesses expand their repertoire of tools to engage with consumers. Working with Dogwoof has helped The Co-operative make better use of technologies such as satellite broadcasting and social media.

Abstract

The Co-operative is one of the UK's leading brands. It is well known for its alternative business model and for tackling important social and ethical issues. The company, which has a long history of ethical campaigning, recently decided to use new, often untapped, communication channels to communicate its ethical positions to its members and the wider public. The aim was to generate enthusiasm, incite debate, motivate people to take action and drive change. It realised that film can bring campaigns to life in a way that other marketing channels often cannot.

The Co-operative approached social enterprise Dogwoof, a film distribution company which focuses solely on ethical and issues-based films.

Burma VJ, an Oscar-nominated documentary about the 2007 Saffron Revolution in Burma, is just one of many successful projects the two organisations have worked on together. The Co-operative provided funding for the marketing and distribution of the film, as well as its experience in campaigning and access to its contacts in the area of Human Rights. Dogwoof brought expertise in film distribution and social media to help spread the message of the film to a vast and engaged audience. The opening night of Burma VJ was broadcast live into 40 cinemas via satellite from BAFTA in London, attracting 4,000 people. As a result, The Co-operative was able to engage its members and non-members with a powerful call to action, while Dogwoof leveraged the well-publicised film premiere to drive high DVD sales.

Case studies
Dogwoof and The Co-operative

The project
For both partners, the collaboration was an opportunity to communicate with wider audiences and markets.

"Partnering with a company the size of The Co-operative is a vehicle to make the issues in our films as big as possible."

The Co-operative wanted to diversify the way in which it communicates its campaigns, which are often complex and motivate people to take action. It was felt that film could increase the impact of its ethical campaigns, particularly on younger age groups who are increasingly using digital content such as YouTube. Collaborating with an organisation that understood film, new media and the importance of its message was essential to The Co-operative.

Though Dogwoof was not actively seeking a partnership, the relationship naturally moved towards collaboration because the cultures of the two organisations and their objectives were so similar.

"The company is the type of brand that we want to work with; it doesn't conflict with the issues that we care about - that was a massive reason why we were open to the partnership; they genuinely care about the same things that we care about. We wouldn't be able to work with a company that didn't share those interests."

The partnership started out as a light touch agreement, in which The Co-operative initially agreed to support the premiere of Black Gold – a film about trade justice and fair trade coffee – and to hold special screenings of the film for its members. The relationship has since developed to the extent that the two organisations effectively co-distribute certain films – a partnership to this effect was announced at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. Both organisations work together to get as many people as possible to engage with the content, at film premieres and festivals or through the purchase of DVDs.

Benefits for the business
Hard-hitting films have become a high-impact tool sitting alongside The Co-operative's online activities and print publications. For the Co-operative, success is not measured by increased sales but by making more people aware of the necessity to campaign for change.

Dogwoof's experience in film and social media has helped The Co-operative to refine its understanding of new technologies and the way audiences interact with these. Satellite broadcasting of the premieres, branding on the films' websites and DVDs have also added to the company's campaigning arsenal.

"The films are an opportunity for us to show the depth of our campaigns and engage people who are already interested in the subject. We have found that it also has positive repercussions for the brand, as people engage more with us when they see us campaigning on the issues that they care about."

Case studies
Dogwoof and The Co-operative

Benefits for the cultural organisation
Dogwoof's partnership with The Co-operative has not only opened new channels of communication for a small film social enterprise, it has also learned from The Co-operative's long history of ethical campaigning. Its brand has also benefited from the association – the partnership has helped solidify Dogwoof's credentials as a leading distributor of ethical documentaries.

The Co-operative finances the marketing campaigns around the branded films, which allows Dogwoof to really generate publicity and get more people into the cinemas. The profits Dogwoof has been able to generate from many highly successful screenings have been injected straight back into the company.

Challenges
Though both companies noted that the difference in their sizes was an initial stumbling block, they maintained that issues were resolved through frequent communication and a mutual willingness to accommodate each other's working styles. The Co-operative noted, for example, that a small, highly adaptive organisation does not always take into account the time it takes to authorise a decision inside a large administration. Sharing a passion to drive change helped both organisations stay committed to the ultimate aims of their partnership.

Dogwoof feels that The Co-operative has not always taken into account the attention and increased sales that more controversial films might generate, but also acknowledges that not all documen-taries are suitable for its campaigns and brand. The Co-operative expands on this,

"the difficulty is finding the right film. There are many documentaries out there that have an important message but which are either not of the correct quality or stray off-message."

Impact and outcome
The success of the films which the two organisations have worked on speaks for itself. Burma VJ has received six major international awards and an Oscar-nomination for Best Documentary. Other films like <u>Vanishing Bees</u> and <u>Dirty Oil</u> have also been very successful. Extensive publicity of the projects in a variety of media has been an important brand-building opportunity. And because brand positioning is kept discreet on DVDs and film websites, compared to many other partnerships, they have side-stepped the brand placement disputes which other businesses and cultural organisations have encountered.

Both organisations believe the partnership is helping to reach their target audiences and that high levels of prominent publicity have been to their advantage; because of these successes the relationship is on-going.

Case studies
folly and Axiom Tech

Expanding cultural organisations' ability to engage audiences

Lessons:

1 Open, flexible and frequent communication is essential to tackling start-up challenges.

2 By offering reduced development fees and demonstrating a flexible, yet realistic, commercial approach, digital technology companies can acquire a share of the intellectual property of a product or secure valuable future maintenance and software support contracts in the cultural sector.

3 Cultural organisations need not always give up the intellectual property underlying the platforms that are built for them. Open source technology companies are uniquely valuable partners in this regard, and can be cheaper alternatives to patent-driven companies.

4 Customer Relationship Management Systems are becoming a business necessity for cultural organisations. But systems which help to expand the entire cultural sector are potentially even more valuable to the organisations that innovate in this field.

Case studies
folly and Axiom Tech

Abstract
folly is a digital arts charity that facilitates collaboration between artists and the wider public. It is particularly interested in how digital technology is creating new meaning in physical and virtual spaces. It commissioned Axiom Tech to provide an innovative social media application which enabled folly not only to track their own audience's engagement, but also audiences engagement with other cultural organisations.

The interface enables folly and any number of subscribing host organisations to gather intelligence about audience preferences and as a result provide more tailored content.

The project
folly wanted to move away from the notion that a cultural organisation has to be anchored in bricks and mortar. To do this it wanted to build a greater virtual presence that was not simply about one organisation speaking to one audience as Taylor Nuttall, Chief Executive explains:

"We believe we'll find that audiences don't align themselves with cultural organisations in a vertical and renewable way, rather they are transient. They don't feel 'this is my organisation' in the way that organisations say 'this is my audience'. There's very little data about how audiences interact online. Yes, we know how many hits, but how often does an individual come back and what other cultural websites do they visit?"

Love Culture allows users to select preferences on registration, which then call up targeted content every time they go online. It not only increases engagement with folly's existing audience, but also builds folly's understanding of the entire cultural eco-system in the North-West. The more 'host organisations' which embed Love Culture on their websites, the more information the system gathers about cultural audiences' behaviour. Having a better understanding of what audiences seek, away from folly and the other host organisations, will help them each develop even more targeted content and identify future collaborations between the cultural and commercial sectors.

Organisations that are already participating in the beta phase of Love Culture are: folly, Story Gallery, Duke's Theatre, More Music Morecambe, the Wizard Trust and The Hoar Gallery, Wordsworth Trust, Lake District Summer Music, AND Festival and Ludus Dance.

Key to this collaboration with Axiom Tech was its knowledge and experience of working with open-source technologies. folly at first began work on the project with another organisation, but the developers wanted control of all the IP. Realising its value folly pulled out of the agreement.

"I backed out because they wanted all the IP. Axiom Tech is local and we'd worked together in the past. They have social responsibility aims, think about the community as a business and have an open source ethos. They were the right solution for us."

Case studies
folly and Axiom Tech

Benefits for the business

From the outset, the project has been about developing a product that can be monetised. Axiom Tech has committed development time and costs to the project without billing in full, balancing that with the growth potential of the product. Though Love Culture is still in its beta testing phase, the company expects to generate revenue from all future maintenance and software support agreements as well as future development and spin-off projects. Axiom Tech is well positioned to do this as it handles the coding and technical project management in-house and has also invested significant effort in the non-technical aspects of the project such as future product strategy.

By working on this project, Axiom Tech has increased its expertise in social media. Project managing Love Culture has meant the organisation has learned new and innovative ways of using its skills of working with diverse technologies to deliver a tailor-made platform. Working in collaboration with folly has also raised the company's esteem in the cultural sector, as awareness of the project has spread and given it valuable experience and insight into how cultural organisations work.

Benefits for the cultural organisation

Customer Relationship Management Systems have been used to great effect by many businesses to gather strategic intelligence about the behaviours of customers. Social media has only extended the power of that information gathering process, in that it helps businesses understand the things that are important to their consumers beyond their purchasing decisions. It helps businesses improve on their products and eventually build market share through more targeted sales.

Cultural organisations are adopting similar technological innovations to learn more about what audiences want. Love Culture is a system that not only gathers information about what audiences want from folly and the other host organisations, it also collects data about which other organisations they interact with, and why. Through the community function, audiences also get to interact with each other, which over the long-term helps build loyalty to the product, the organisations hosting the application and the cultural sector in general:

"We're leading on something that has value to the entire cultural sector. Something this unique gives you a commercial edge."

folly and Axiom Tech have already generated free publicity for themselves by being invited to a number of conferences and symposia to discuss their innovation.

Challenges

Axiom Tech found it difficult at times to contain the costs of development, knowing that additional funding was limited. However, the company expected this to be a challenge and worked hard to be as flexible as possible to achieve what they wanted whilst maintaining a hold on commercial realities.

At first, folly found it difficult to allocate enough capacity to the project management side, but this was later resolved when contractors were hired in. Communication and setting expectations also proved a challenge at times, but both organisations reported that the trust they built up through day-to-day interactions was key to the project's success.

Case studies
folly and Axiom Tech

Impact and outcome

Love Culture is now in beta-testing phase with a handful of partners and is expected to be commercially viable. Des Gregory, a Director at Axiom Tech describes the unique nature and, likely impact of Love Culture once it is fully rolled-out to market:

"Normally social media engagement is between a single organis-ation and its audience, but in this case we have multiple host organisations. The Love Culture roll-out is more about expanding the environment in which the entire sector operates to create new opportunities, than organisations fighting over market share of the same space. The product isn't about promoting a single corporate brand and culture – it builds a common audience through driving greater communication in this space."

To date, more than 1,000 people have registered on Love Culture. Between August 2009 and April 2010 the website received 26,186 hits, which came from the websites of participating host organisations. Local authorities and tourism agencies have also expressed an interest in gathering data for their strategic priorities and the development team is currently working on standard and premium subscription models for them.[19]

[19] *Taylor Nuttall, Chief Executive of folly and Des Gregory, a Director at Axiom Tech have contributed to this case study. Further information was drawn from an April 2010 Love Culture member organisation update.*

Case studies
Sounds of Progress and Seesound SL

Leveraging strong CSR publicity to gain market traction

Please note: Seesound is the parent company of Vieta Pro which is mentioned in the above film.

Lessons:

1   Collaborating on an artistic product with commercial potential, like a music single, can generate revenue which partners can then use to fund other projects.

2   Developing a powerful public relations story that is unique to the partnership can help both organisations attract free publicity and turn these into business development leads. This need not necessarily be based on an innovation; the unique selling point can be a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) drive.

3   Corporate Social Responsibility in the arts can be a potent tool if a company does not yet have a strong brand in a certain market. Identifying a project that will generate the most buzz with the least capital expenditure is key before a business commits to an initiative.

4   In cases where international partners are identified, both organisations need to adequately plan for how to deal with the challenges that geographical distances impose. What tools can be used to facilitate the partnership? Does budget exist to meet face-to-face on a regular basis? Can the partnership work without teams in the same geographic location?

Case studies
Sounds of Progress and Seesound SL

Abstract
Sounds of Progress (soon to be known as Limelight Studios) is a leading provider of Inclusive Music Theatre, creating music in collaboration with musicians who have learning, physical and social impairments. A long-established cultural organisation, it has only recently gained its own premises with partial funding from the Scottish Government's New Arts Sponsorship Grant scheme, administered by Arts & Business Scotland.

A significant amount of capital needed to be raised to build the recording studio that would meet the most basic of technical specifications. Seesound SL, a Spanish audio-visual company, offered to build a state-of-the-art recording studio, specifically geared to the needs of musicians with impairments, in return for publicity and marketing in the UK. The department that worked directly with Sounds of Progress was Vieta Pro, SeeSound's audio team. The result has been a one-of-a-kind studio that is attracting widespread attention in Europe, a single written for Miss Scotland and aired at Miss World, and a dynamic collaboration in which innovative audio-visual studio equipment for those with special needs is being designed.

The project
With a shortfall in funding to build a professional recording studio, a mutual contact set up a meeting between Sounds of Progress and Seesound's export manager to see if there was an opportunity to collaborate. It was agreed that Seesound would build a professional recording studio that met the unique needs of impaired musicians. In return, the company would use the collaboration as a springboard for developing its position in the UK market and demonstrate its technical innovations at the studio to potential buyers using the studio as a product showcase.

To raise capital for the installation, the two organisations worked together to produce the single Brooklyn to Glasgow by Arkley Brown for Miss Scotland, which was eventually aired at the Miss World competition in 2009.

Benefits for the business
The proceeds of *Brooklyn to Glasgow* went to Sounds of Progress to help fund its facilities and the international exposure that Seesound gained from the collaboration was described as a huge success. This has been followed up by a series of high-profile press articles on the unique partnership between the two organisations. Sounds of Progress continues to introduce Seesound to local authorities and councils in the UK, in a bid to extend the company's visibility in the UK.

On another level, the unique demands of impaired professional musicians challenged Seesound to develop ever more innovative equipment and studio design. For example, a base drum kit is being designed for a musician without the use of his legs. The video monitoring system installed at Sounds of Progress magnifies the mixing desk for visually impaired musicians and sound engineers. These unique challenges are such that Seesound is looking at developing a type of innovation hub in partnership with Sounds of Progress, Yamaha and Roland to create other products in this niche market.

Benefits for the cultural organisation
The collaboration has given Sounds of Progress the vital recording studio it needed for its professional musicians. And *Brooklyn to Glasgow* has also raised the organisation's profile and the valuable work it is doing, including mentoring and educating people with impairments.

Case studies
Sounds of Progress and Seesound SL

Seesound also continues to offer technical support for the studio and is introducing the organisation to other audio-visual manufacturing companies. In this sense, it is working to raise the international profile of Sounds of Progress.[17]

Challenges
Sounds of Progress experienced administrative challenges collaborating with a much larger partner. In many cases, its staff had to balance multiple roles as creatives, business developers and administrators, which occasionally delayed timelines on the project.

Collaborating with the right type of organisation proved crucial to getting the project off the ground. Gordon Dougall, Creative Director at Sounds of Progress, stressed that without the endorsement and funding from Arts & Business Scotland it would have been difficult to get the project past its own board. Seed funding plays a pivotal role in negotiating partnerships at a higher level.

Though the physical distance between Sounds of Progress, in Scotland, and Seesounds' headquarters in Spain, created its own unique challenges – contracts took a long time to share, and issues emerging from the building of the studio could not just be shown to Seesound staff – this was not considered a major challenge.

Impact and outcome
The collaboration continues with the two organisations now focusing on innovation in audio-visual equipment for those with impairments. It represents a niche market for Seesound. Gordon Dougall, founder of Sounds of Progress says:

"We are developing products for a group of people who have the ability but no space to develop talent. There isn't any of this in the mainstream, so we aren't in competition with anyone."

The two organisations are also discussing an exhibition of Seesounds' latest equipment at the Sounds of Progress premises, which will showcase its products to potential buyers and hopefully expand its market share in the UK.[4]

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[17]This case study has been compiled from an interview with Gordon Dougall, Founder of Sounds of Progress.

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