Appendix 10: Delivery Partner Consultation

* 1. Introduction

Delivery Partners were involved in ‘Back to Ours’ in a number of ways in terms of project development and delivery. These included:

* Acting as consultants for the programme development;
* Commissioning artists as part of the festival programme;
* Providing staging and lighting support;
* Providing first aid and emergency medical support; and
* Providing front of house and live festival delivery support.
  1. Delivery Partners

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| --- | --- |
| Partner | Description |
| China Plate Theatre | China Plate is an independent theatre studio that works with artists, venues, festivals and funders to make original, exciting theatre that plays with form and has narrative at its heart. |
| Revolver Promotions | Revolver Promotions is a company that books and promotes primarily live music acts. |
| HPSS | HPSS provide stage sound and lighting for all types of events. |
| North East Medical Services | North East Medical Services provide first aid cover and medical cover at events. |
| Front of House Managers | Freelance Front of House and Event Managers were hired to ensure smooth live delivery of events and coordinate volunteers. |

Consultation with Delivery Partners was undertaken post-festival 3 after the planning for festival 4 was complete. An in-depth interview was undertaken with two of the key Delivery Partners over the phone, and a post-event survey carried out online with three respondents. The template for the interview and surveys can be found in Appendices 11 and 12.

The focus of this research was to undertake two types of evaluation:

* + 1. **Process Evaluation:** motivations; involvement in the development and delivery of the project; key learnings, successes and challenges; and the effectiveness of the partnership with Hull 2017 and the broader team.
    2. **Outcomes Evaluation:** response to the festival and its concept; skills and knowledge development; confidence working on similar events in future; collaboration and partnership development.
  1. Process Evaluation

In order to inform the planning, development and delivery of future projects, a series of questions were asked linked to the process of ‘Back to Ours’. These concentrated primarily on:

* + 1. **Motivations:** What attracts delivery partners to get involved in projects such as ‘Back to Ours’?
    2. **Project development and delivery:** What variety of ways were delivery partners involved in the development and delivery of ‘Back to Ours’?
    3. **Learnings:** What were the key learnings taken from working on ‘Back to Ours’?
    4. **Partner performance:** How did they feel Hull 2017 performed as a partner throughout the course of their involvement and how could this be improved?
    5. What was it about “Back to Ours’?

Delivery Partners had varying levels of involvement in ‘Back to Ours’, with some having a high level of input into the development of the project and its artistic programme, with others stepping in during the live delivery of the festival.

Although principally each individual / organisation was asked by a member of the team at Hull 2017 to be involved, there were a variety of other motivations for getting involved, such as:

* Previous positive working relationships with members of the CPT;
* Interest and support for the concept of the project;
* Significant experience and expertise relevant to the project;
* Opportunity to raise the profile of the company.

*“We’re really keen to make and present work to a broader range of people than the theatre aficionados and the arts aficionados.”*

*“I just think the ethos is excellent.”*

Hull’s ‘UK City of Culture’ status appeared to be a significant factor for some, however one partner said that it had no influence on their decision to take part in the project. When asked on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is 'Not at all' and 10 is 'Completely', how much did Hull being UK City of Culture 2017 influence your decision to be a partner on ‘Back to Ours’:

* 1 out of 3 scored 0
* 1 out of 3 scored 6
* 1 out of 3 scored 10

It was suggested that Hull’s status would support the success of ‘Back to Ours’, as audiences had been exposed to more arts and culture events, therefore were likely to be more open to trying something new. One Delivery Partner felt that the ‘Back to Ours’ project was a great way to capitalise on this:

*“Hull 2017 have enabled 'audience habits' to build, because it's taken place over a year long programme…It felt like a great opportunity to capitalise on something that would otherwise take a very long time.”*

* + 1. Hull 2017 Partner Performance

Feedback on Hull 2017’s performance as a partner was extremely positive, with some Delivery Partners specifically mentioning the Artistic Director of the festival as a driving force and an ‘essential’ part of the team.

Delivery Partners that were involved in the planning and organisation of the project felt that the Artistic Director’s level of knowledge of the local community was a real asset to the project.

*“The knowledge and groundwork that Lou [Artistic Director] had built up around those audiences was really deep and genuine.”*

All Delivery Partners felt that they had developed effective relationships and good levels of communication with the Hull 2017 Team, which enabled the project to run smoothly.

*“We've built up a great working relationship with the Back to Ours team where both parties have a deep understanding of how each other works and the complexities of the festival as a whole.”*

*“The time, effort and attention that the BTO team have put into the festival so far is fantastic.”*

Although Delivery Partners were very satisfied with how the project was managed on the whole, one partner felt as though their contracting process was overly complicated and that their role within the project wasn’t well defined.

*“Our contracts were overly complicated in its formality and under defined in its actual role.”*

* + 1. Venue Feedback

One Delivery felt that they had developed strong relationships with staff at partner venues, which aided the efficient delivery of the festivals. Another felt that the Venue Partners ‘went above and beyond’ what was expected of them.

*“As part of the festival we've also built up a solid working relationship with the staff at the venues, which helps make the process more efficient from the festivals point of view and ours*.”

*“They just went above and beyond what would normally be expected and ensure that all of the requests were fulfilled.”*

Delivery Partners gave positive feedback around the venues themselves and felt that the range of spaces available enabled them to be flexible with the programme, ensuring that every act was appropriate for the space.

“*I couldn’t pick out and problems or faults with the venues I’ve worked at.”*

*“Well I think there is on-going a degree of flexibility in the range of venues available. So I think good spaces were found for everyone in different ways.”*

*“I think we always try to match the artist to the venue prior to booking it all in, just to ensure that everything fits the place.”*

* + 1. Programming

Those Delivery Partners that were involved with the programming of ‘Back to Ours’ gave positive feedback around the variety of acts billed.

*“It was such an eclectic and fantastic programme.”*

One Delivery Partner felt that programming a popular band alongside theatre and dance gave an extra ‘kudos’ to art forms that some might not have considered otherwise. They went onto explain that having a well-known act within a programme reflects positively on the rest of the acts, boosting their reputation.

*“Our place is very much theatre and dance, but being programmed by a really significantly well known band, I think gives an added level of kudos to work which could be seen as experimental, so I think it’s a very helpful way to programme as we go forward.”*

It was also said that programming theatre within a non-traditional performance space created an exciting new experience for audience members.

*“Something like Joan in a shopping centre on paper, a transgender interpretation of a classic French historical story, doesn’t add up. But the realisation of it was a really brilliant collision of contemporary culture and really accessible performance style.”*

One challenge of the ‘Back to Ours’ programming according to Delivery Partners, was the tight turnaround between festivals, which meant that artist confirmation was often last minute.

*“I think we all as a team had to run on very tight deadlines to get artists secured.”*

*“From a venue programming point of view, a lot of people programme at least 6 months ahead, so availability is difficult when you’re looking quarterly rather than 6 monthly.”*

* + 1. Working with artists

Those involved in the development of the programme felt that it was important that acts fully understood the aims and objectives of the project. There was a sense amongst Delivery Partners that all artists involved in ‘Back to Ours’ were supportive of its concept. Partners also believed this support for the concept was helpful when communicating about the capabilities of the venues and any limitations they may have as non-traditional performance spaces.

*“We only really wanted artists who could buy into the ethos as well.”*

*“My sense is that they [the artists] embrace it rather brilliantly.”*

*“The great thing was that we all knew the ethos of the festival, so there was nobody who in any way felt like the venues didn’t live up, because we’d fully explained what the venues were.”*

One Delivery Partner felt that it became easier to explain the concept of ‘Back to Ours’ after the first festival, as they had built up a portfolio of videos and images to support the description.

It was generally felt that most artists had to adapt their work to fit their venues to some extent. When asked whether they felt this was a challenge for artists, one Delivery Partner suggested that this was dependent on their level of experience working in community venues in the past.

It was suggested that the music acts in particular were used to playing much larger venues, but were happy to adapt their performance due to the comprehensive technical specifications that the venues could provide.

*“The majority of the artists that we got playing, kind of do play much bigger venues than what we were offering, but I think it was the fact we were able to send them comprehensive technical specifications, we were able to show that it was a very strong team working on it, I think that was a big USP for us when being able to secure these artists.”*

* + 1. Technical and logistics

Delivery Partners felt that the technical and logistics of the festival were well managed and delivered overall. It was also suggested that the production quality and specification helped to get potential artists on board with the festival.

*“The production far outweighed the size of the venue, which was one of the things that enabled us to entice the artists there.”*

Delivery Partners involved in the technical planning and delivery understood the need to be flexible due to the wide range of venues with different facilities and capabilities. This flexibility was also important when responding to any last minute challenges, for example when one of the artists arrived to the venue late with unsafe and untested equipment:

*“So things like, Ceri Dupree arriving very, very late and with a really quite shambolic technical approach, which is really difficult for production management to deal with, because suddenly you’re looking at health and safety for really terrible equipment, with nobody available to pat test or quality check, and no time to sort it out. But I think that the flexibility of the team, the production team, has managed to still protect the atmosphere and the environment of the work, as well as everybody’s safety.”*

Although it was acknowledged that a lot of thought had gone into the planning and delivery of the festival, some Delivery Partners felt that the complexity of the schedule was challenging in terms of the number of performances and venues involved. When asked what was the most challenging part of ‘Back to Ours’, Delivery Partners responded:

*“Managing a reasonably high turnover of shows in a short space of time which for the most part, move venues each day.”*

*“Organising numerous staff over a number of locations and ensuring the right resources at the right time in the right place.”*

* + 1. Marketing

It was generally agreed that the marketing materials for ‘Back to Ours’ were visually effective, as they were appealing across a broad age range and a variety of art forms – something Delivery Partners acknowledged was a difficult task.

*“That was always going to be a tricky thing to be able to produce something that would appeal to broad age range, because on one part of the brochure you’ve got films or you’ve got puppet shows, and then you’re also trying to sell a gig. But the way it was laid out, the way that the keys were used to show the menus, yeah it was just really good, aesthetically it looked really, really good.”*

*“I think the branding’s actually been brilliant. I think the design has been fantastic.”*

Delivery Partners suggested that certain aspects of the marketing could have been stronger from the outset, for example the direct engagement with communities and the level of visual presence in the local area. It was generally felt however, that this improved as the project developed.

*“ In the run up to the first Back to Ours, I went to a café near the school where there was a show on and there were no posters and no flyers and nobody knew what was happening. But I think the regional marketing leads learnt as they grew.”*

*“I think the direct connection to local audiences didn’t start off brilliantly, but again, that’s kind of inevitable because you’re growing with the project.”*

* 1. Outcomes
     1. Skills and knowledge development

3 out of 3 Delivery Partner survey respondents said that they had both gained new professional skills and developed existing ones as a result of working on ‘Back to Ours’.

2 partners said that they had gained or increased skills or knowledge in health and safety and community engagement. Other skills and knowledge areas selected were:

* Project development
* Project management
* Audience development
* Marketing and / or social media
* Production and / or technical

In providing reasons for these answers, partners said:

*“Staff have had to develop their project management skills and communication skills especially when dealing with venues that have little or no technical knowledge.”*

*“Working as part of such a strong team has really developed my Project management skills and the festival overall has made me look at what is possible artistically and creatively within the communities of Hull.”*

*“The events allowed our staff to be exposed to differing audience types and gain confidence dealing with people in a controlled and non threatening environment.”*

One partner also said that working on ‘Back to Ours’ had helped them expand their client base and access new opportunities.

*“Working with Production Managers who have events outside of City of Culture, has given us an opportunity to expand our client base and access new events.”*

* + 1. Legacy

All Delivery Partners expressed an interest in being involved in ‘Back to Ours’ in the future, stating that they found working on the project to be an enjoyable experience.

*“Loved every minute of it. It was fantastic.”*

*“I’d just say I’m very proud to be part of it.”*

*“I think specifically, we’d be really keen to work in Hull because it’s been a really great place to work over the last year.”*

One Delivery Partner also said that they were likely to continue to work with some of the venues that they had been introduced to through the ‘Back to Ours’ project.

*“I’m sure we will suggest things to [Freedom Centre Venue Partner] in the future and keep that relationship going regardless. And William Gemmel as well I think is – depending on whether the management has changed again or not, I’m sure we will look at taking work there, separate to Back to Ours in the future as well.”*