

Beaumont Street Studios

Background

Beaumont Street Studios (BSS) is a not for profit community-based music and media production and training company. It was established in 1985 by the Huddersfield West Indian Association. The founders, responding to the lack of music facilities available to young people in the African-Caribbean community, acquired one-off public funding to set up a small recording studio in a local community centre.

Although initially a time-limited project an early decision was made to develop the project into a permanent and self-sustaining organisation. The basic principles behind this development would be the cross subsidy of local community activity from commercial income, the application of music and media activities to social, economic, employment and regeneration initiatives, and the maintenance of professional and commercial standards across both commercial services and subsidised community activity.

By following changing demand from both customers and community users, and in response to the convergence of media technologies and practices, the company has diversified into a range of activities and services which cover music, video, multimedia and radio, as well as developing business start-up and SME support provision. BSS is also delivering a number of regional Employment Service contracts within the New Deal, an running an ongoing portfolio of EU funded partnership projects.

“Beaumont Street Studios has inspired others in Huddersfield to start a business in the town. 15 years ago people needed some convincing that it was feasible to establish a successful creative or media business here”.

Peter Jones

Director

Mission

The underlying theme of BSS's work over its 16 years of existence has been the application of music, media and arts activity to local economic and community regeneration, and to the personal and vocational benefit of individuals. It undertakes this through the development and provision of services to the community, the generation of jobs and wealth, the support of creativity and talent, improving the image and perception of the area, promoting the importance of the cultural and creative sector in public sector regeneration initiatives, and by focussing on the practical rather than the politically fashionable.

Culture

The company is a not for profit Company Limited by Guarantee with a voluntary Board of non-executive directors. Board members are drawn from the local African-Caribbean community. The board meets quarterly and oversees BSS' company policy and strategic direction.

The company culture is described as one of individual responsibility, informality, trust, creativity, entrepreneurship, self-motivation and tolerance of risk and error. Management is informal with flexibility a key goal. Whilst bureaucracy is kept as far as possible to a minimum, the company has long experience of managing administratively demanding UK and EU funded projects, is an Employment Service Approved Provider, a City and Guilds and Open College Network Approved Provider and maintains all the necessary quality assurance and audit standards.



Funding

As BSS undertakes a wide and varied range of publicly funded arts, media, regeneration and business development projects it is not over-reliant on one specific public funding stream which gives it great flexibility of action. All publicly funded work is delivered under contract and the company receives no core funding.

Premises

Beaumont Street Studios was based, until recently, in the Media Centre in the centre of Huddersfield, with its main recording studio located nearby. It has recently moved into 4,000 sq. ft. of self-contained office and training space but remains close to the centre of the town.

Activities

Current activities fall into the following strands:

- **Music** – recording studio, record label, music publishing company.
- **Video** – generally small-scale and community production.
- **Radio** – community production and local broadcasting under restricted Service Licensing.
- **Multimedia** – interactive media production in the public and “third sector” market.
- **Training** – wide range of music, media and Information Communications Technology (ICT) courses, from basic skills to City & Guilds. Most training is publicly funded and free to participants.

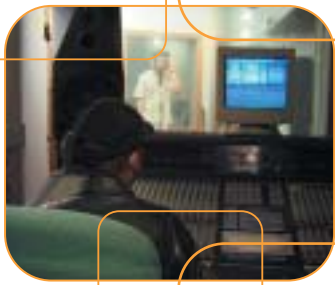
Examples include basic Information Communication Technology and media skills training (European Social Fund, Learning Skills Council West Yorkshire funded), media production training through local African-Caribbean heritage research (National Lottery funded, AFRICA, SPACE) local partners and business start-up training (MIDAS course, ‘Catalyst’ creativity programme, Objective 2 funded).

- **New Deal** – Various programmes under New Deal focused on one-to-one specialist mentoring. Includes New Deal for Musicians in the Yorkshire and the Humber region and generic mentoring services and the provision for the New Deal for creative industries in Kirklees and Calderdale.
- **Commercial services** – Music and media production and facilities hire.
- **Funded projects** – Currently includes work with children excluded from school (with the Rathbone Trust), Making Waves – a major sub-regional Youth Music programme (National Foundation for Youth Music), ICT awareness CDROM for EU textile SME’s (EU Leonardo programme, MYCCI) and combating workplace discrimination (ESF, LSCWY)

“The best thing has been learning about different aspects of the business from experienced, knowledgeable musicians who help you to succeed. Being given targets and goals makes you work and strive to get further in your career”.

New Deal for Musicians participant

Audio recording facilities, Beaumont Street Studios.



Training Programme Example

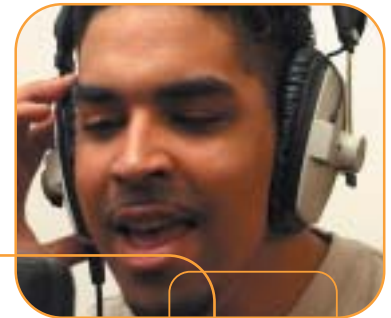
The BSS approach to creative sector business development focuses on entrepreneurial skills. This is illustrated by its 'Catalyst' creative thinking programme.

'Catalyst' is both a course and an interactive programme available on CD-ROM. Its fundamental purpose is to promote and motivate growth-orientated creative thinking in management while also providing a practical mechanism for the generation of new business ideas. The programme is focused on the production of ideas relevant to the user's business while at the same time introducing them to new ways of thinking about their company and its development.

The user is guided and supported through a series of interactive exercises and thought processes. These are organised into five sections:

- 1 Modelling the business
- 2 Identifying the challenges
- 3 Defining the challenges
- 4 Generating ideas
- 5 Evaluating ideas

Initially the main output for the user is the final list of ideas that is created. More important in the longer term is that managers are taken through a supported and structured process which equips them to generate more and better ideas in the future, and which encourages them to attach greater importance to the generation of ideas within the business.



New Deal for Musicians

Growing the creative sector

The company has 19 full-time and two part-time employees. The company regularly draws on a network of roughly 35 regionally based freelancers as technicians and trainers, and regularly sub-contracts specialist production work to local suppliers. The company provides a number of tailor-made business support services to the creative industries. These include:

- New Deal for Musicians scheme (NDfM). This Employment Service contracted scheme offers support to people on the New Deal who wish to pursue employment or self-employment in the music industry. The scheme involves the management of a network of professional industry advisors covering the Yorkshire and Humber region. The advisors provide ongoing one-to-one vocational advice to New Deal clients on such issues as marketing and business management and practical links to people working in the industry. To date over 800 people have taken advantage of this service.
- New Deal for Creative Industries (NDCI). This new pilot scheme, which is contracted through the Employment Service Innovation Fund, provides a specialist professional advice and mentoring service to New Deal clients wishing to gain employment or start businesses in the creative sector. The scheme currently covers the Kirklees and Calderdale area.
- EU funded programme. BSS is also providing specific creative sector development services through its European-funded business support programme. Two learning programmes have been developed specifically for entrepreneurs in the creative sector. MIDAS provides a peer group learning opportunity for people at the planning stage of starting a new business and "Catalyst" is a structured creative thinking process and CDROM based toolkit which promotes the importance of creative thinking and provides a framework for its management application.
- Support for the region's musicians is also provided by BSS's record label and publishing company. After being dormant for a few years the record label has been re-established and can now offer international release and licensing of product and publishing in all territories. The label is run as an intermediate labour market scheme and thus provides fixed term employment, industry experience and specialist training to New Deal recruits. As such it is the first music industry project of its type in the country.

Community development

BSS has been delivering access and vocational training in the arts and media for over ten years. Training is designed to compliment rather than duplicate other providers and focuses on offering accessible learning and personal development opportunities to harder to reach groups. Courses are designed to address issues of personal development, basic skills, encourage individual creativity, provide qualifications (Open College or City & Guilds) and often serve as an initial step towards further training and employment. Courses are linked to practical group outcomes, for example much of its current training activity is designed to encourage local take-up of services provided by the newly established network of community ICT centres established through the UK Online initiative.

Company's Challenges

According to the company's Director it is a constant challenge to operate and thrive in a fast changing, technology-based and city-focussed market, and against a background of ever restructured and often politically driven funding regimes.

A challenge in its community and regeneration orientated work is felt to be the relatively new public sector interest in the creative sector, and the resultant number of new agencies and organisations entering the field.

Future plans

The company aims to continue to develop at a regional and national level. It is preparing for the eventuality of having to become even more commercially focused as the field of public sector activity becomes increasingly crowded. BSS feels no specific requirement for support of its activities. In terms of its publicly funded services it asks only for a "level playing field and a focus on delivery and effectiveness" from funders.

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