

Why Businesses Sponsor the Arts

It could be argued that on the whole, a company's primary reason to exist is to make a profit, not provide funding for the arts! However, arts sponsors range from small, local businesses to large multi-nationals; the scale of support is equally varied and businesses choose to support the arts for a combination of reasons:

Reputation for good corporate citizenship

Every business wants to establish and maintain a reputation as an organisation which plays a positive role in society. This may involve activity on the local, national or international stage. Sponsoring the arts is one means to achieve this. It allows a business to benefit from the wider contribution the arts make to society and therefore enhances a businesses reputation as a supporter of worthwhile, important causes.

Build name awareness

The arts generate different opportunities for increasing awareness of a particular brand, product or business. The possibilities are enormous and range from the chance to support the programme at a prestigious venue to a community literature festival. In every case, a business can use arts sponsorship as a vehicle to raise their profile.

Direct access to a target market

The range of arts activity is vast, but individual programmes or events tend to attract a specific audience. This provides businesses with an opportunity to address a particular demographic group directly, for example people from a particular socio-economic profile or those based in a given locality. Many of these groups can be hard to reach through conventional marketing.

Enhance image

A business may sponsor the arts to build positive connections, attitudes and values in the minds of its target customers by linking the business with innovative and creative thinking.

Entertaining

An opportunity to provide corporate hospitality has in the past been a key objective for businesses sponsoring the arts. A sponsor may wish to entertain a combination of existing customers or clients; potential customers or clients; shareholders; staff etc.

Staff development

Businesses provide a range of different benefits for their employees which often go beyond the simply paying a salary. Encouraging employees to volunteer, for

example through schemes like Board Bank in which business people volunteer their skills and their time to sit on arts organisations' boards, can provide excellent personal and professional development.

Develop community links

The opportunity to develop links with the local community is important for many businesses. National or international businesses may sponsor local arts activity as means to establish routes into the local community. A local business may wish to sponsor arts activity to enhance its standing. Any new venture may sponsor the arts as a means to establish a reputation in the local community, for example, through education or community projects.

PR opportunities

Many arts events generate PR opportunities for the sponsor. Photo opportunities involving cast members or well-known artists are one obvious avenue to explore, but there are others too, such as using a company's products in performances. RIFCO Arts' partnership with HP Foods, for example, enabled HP's new product range through the Rajah brand to be promoted through the touring theatre show 'The Deranged Marriage'.

Access to talented people

Arts practitioners are renowned for imaginative, innovative ideas. Sponsors want to associate themselves with people who may bring new and exciting ways of thinking into their business world.