What does a visitor focus mean for an organisation, what strategies are used and what kind of leadership

David Anderson

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Vienna
Q. Who is this gallery development for?
A. It is for the Curators of the British Museum

‘Q. Our public funding will be severely reduced next year. How should we raise money?
A. We should close Front of House (the public galleries) so that we can continue to research our collections.
Q. What do the public want?
A. The public do not want to be educated

Q. What kind of museum are we?
A. We are the last true museum in the United Kingdom

Q. Why did you decide to work in a museum?
A. I did not work in museums to become a social worker.
The Museum had many strengths in 2010:

- Seven national museums distributed across Wales
- Significant curatorial expertise in art, natural sciences, archaeology and social and industrial history
- Some world class researchers among the 130 collections staff
- A family spirit among many of the staff
- Close relationships between our smaller national museums and their regional communities
Amgueddfa Cymru – Images of the Main Hall
The Museum also had some challenges:

- An organisation run more for the benefit of us as staff than for the public
- An archaic museum philosophy – including curatorial autonomy
- Lack of vision of the Museums’ public purpose
- Lack of systems – ineffective in some delivery
- Lack of external funding
Amgueddfa Cymru 2010: Challenges

- No women in senior positions
- No decision making process
- Director and senior managers never met as a team
- Flagship new capital project – St Fagans – was significantly behind schedule
- Imminent financial crisis was not being addressed
Amgueddfa Cymru: Senior Management 2010

Total: 6 men, 0 women
Amgueddfa Cymru: Senior Management 2017

- Director General
- Director of Gallery Development & Visitor Experience
- Director of Learning & Participation
- Deputy DG and Director of Finance & Resources
- Director of Collections & Research (job share)

Total: 3 women, 3 men
Vision: Inspiring People, Changing Lives

Purpose: Inspiring people through our museums and collections to find a sense of well-being and identity, to discover, enjoy and learn bilingually, and to understand Wales’ place in the wider world
Community engagement
Our five commitments to the people of Wales are focussed on:-

- Making a Difference to Wales
- The Museum Experience
- The Digital Experience
- Learning and Creativity
- Participation and Inclusion
A Different Philosophy

Key strands of this Philosophy:-

- Cultural Rights
- Integrated Learning throughout our Service
- Deep Participation
- Everything Based on Research
- The Whole Person: Head, Hand and Heart
Key strands of this Philosophy:-

- Different narratives about the history of the Museum
- Strong partnerships with other organisations that share our objectives – from street charities to universities
- Building up international networks with like-minded organisations
This has been a bruising experience for staff and senior managers alike:

- Restructured all curatorial, education and other back-office staff
- Reduced numbers of those staff by nearly 40 (out of 300) – all by voluntary redundancy
- Increased basic pay of Front of House staff by c. 10%, but removed weekend allowances
PCS Strike at National Museum Cardiff
The Museum Management faced the biggest public sector
strikes in Wales in the last 10 years. Contributing factors:-

- Close relationship between trade unions and Welsh
  Government
- Communitarian traditions
- Tradition of management avoidance of conflict not followed
  on this occasion
- Long term financial and reputational costs
Exhibitions and Learning

- Expanded exhibition programme – attracting 120,000 extra visitors per annum
- The biggest provider of learning outside the classroom in Wales – 200,000 school children, 600,000 children and adults in family groups
- Leaders in UK on research and action on culture and poverty
Exhibitions and Learning – Dino Babies
Research: Curatorial and Educational

New developments:-

- Appointed a Head of Research (a Professor of Sociology)
- Created a Research Department
- Formed a Research Advisory Committee
- Encourage curators and educators to win external research funding
Research Curatorial and Educational
Research Curatorial and Educational
New Income Streams:

- Significantly increased fundraising from trusts and foundations, lotteries, corporations
- Investment in new experiences
- Increased research income
- Investment funds from Welsh Government
Income Generation – Wedding in the Main Hall
St Fagans was founded 70 years ago on two very radical principles:-

- The life of every person matters
- People, not institutions, are the carriers of culture
St Fagans National Museum of History
The first Director of St Fagans, Iorwerth Peate, said St Fagans should be a mirror held up to Wales, in which the nation can face truths about itself.

No matter if the images are light or dark, this mirror offers social hope. As the past was different from the present, so the future can be different, and perhaps better, than today.
We have the ambition to create a distinctively Welsh – and globally significant – model of museums.

It should be one rooted in social justice and cultural democracy.
Corporate
Away Days
Volunteers
Open Days
Work
Placements
Work
Experience
Youth
Forums
Gweithdy - Workshop
Making history in museums is a thinking game

In a post–truth world, we all as citizens need, more than ever the skills of critical thinking and creativity that museums can champion.
Redeveloped Entrance Building
Wales is...
Multiple voices, opinions, questions, debates

New galleries
New gallery & workshop
Archaeological reconstructions
Reinterpreted historic building
A new welcome at St Fagans National Museum of History

The Main Building has been transformed. You can now enter the Museum through a new atrium, browse our new shop and enjoy our new café. It also includes the Weston Centre for Learning with activity spaces and a lecture theatre providing eight times more space for schools, family and adult learners.
Developing historical skills

History in museums can develop skills as well as knowledge... [It] is at least as much about the present as it is about the past, as much about how people feel as it is about what they know, as much about responses as it is about facts.

Gaynor Kavanagh, History Curatorship, 1996

All history depends ultimately upon its social purpose

Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past, 1978
A participatory national museum of history

“There is a difference between control and expertise...Content expertise matters. Content control shouldn't.”

Nina Simon

http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2008/10/future-of-authority-platform-power.html
In partnership, together stronger
Turning working processes into activity programmes
Through events and activities across the site, as well as the creative use of our collections, we have succeeded in providing opportunities to learn new skills:

**Volunteering** - The targets set for 2017-18 have already been exceeded with 871 in-depth volunteers and 1,258 casual volunteers participating in the redevelopment.

**Skills development** - 8 Apprentices, 7 Artists, 160 through placements, traineeships and skills based courses

**Community Participation** - 782 involved through forums, co-curation of displays and co-production of activities

**Public engagement** - 21,977 participating in activities and events
T-shaped curators needed
Paul’s story
“No museum...must come to a standstill.”

Iorwerth C Peate, 1948
Looking to the Future

Brexit threatens our relationship with museums in Europe.

Austerity looks likely to continue.

The United Kingdom – a colonialist concept born in the 12th century – is breaking apart. It is in existential crisis.
Brexit Cartoons

WE WILL STUDY THE RESULTS OF OUR SURVEY INTO THE BENEFITS OF A GOOD SUPPLY OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD JUST AS SOON AS WE'VE DROPPED OFF!!!
Victoria & Albert Museum
A number of retired museums directors from Europe and North America have recently experienced disappointment that, when they left, their museum quickly reverted to their traditional ways of working.

What should be done to ensure that change is sustained?