

Advocacy to Agency: The Broward Center for the Performing Arts' Emerging Model for Systems Management

Catherine A. Carter, Vice President, Planning & Analysis
Broward Center for Performing Arts

David C. Prosperi, Professor
Florida Atlantic University

Mark Nerenhausen, President and CEO
Broward Center for Performing Arts

Elizabeth A. Hude, Community Programs Manager
Broward Center for Performing Arts

Catherine A. Carter was Associate Director–North American Finance, Procter and Gamble before joining the Broward Center in 2000.

David Prosperi has research interest in cultural economics and policy and focuses his attention on economic models of provision and organizational behavior and change.

Mark Nerenhausen has been President and CEO since 1998 and has over twenty-five years of experience in arts management.

Elizabeth A. Hude is Community Programs Manager, and has been developing programs since 2000.

Abstract

The paper describes an emerging management model in development at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts (Broward Center), in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The new model is based upon a change from a position of advocacy (the arts are important, support us!) to a position of agency (arts and culture are important assets to be utilized by all community sectors). The paper focuses on internal and external management innovations illustrated by four specific actions that capture the agency concept, particularly as it responds to current conditions in the South Florida region. Finally, theoretical and managerial implications of the Broward Center experience are extracted.

Keywords

Performing Arts Centers, Agency, Community, Systems, Strategy.

Introduction

Dewey (2004) describes the changing economic context for the arts and culture sector. Therein she describes four major systemic forces: (1) globalization; (2) changing definitions of what is art and culture; (3) changes in cultural policy that emphasize the interlinked roles of culture with *inter alia* education, community building, urban development, audience accessibility, and social capital; and, (4) changes in the overall funding pattern of the arts (including the possibilities of

mixed funding patterns and cross-subsidies). Paralleling her argument is the attention being focused on the role of arts and culture – very broadly conceived and definitely not focused on traditional fine or “high” categories – in the creative economies concept supported by the work of Landry (2000), Howkins (2001), and Florida (2002) and other more recent contributions by these and other authors.

So, both from outside and inside the traditional arts and culture sector, there is a new management model emerging. At its most abstract level, the new model calls for a **change in the role** that arts and cultural organizations and institutions play within the larger economic, primarily urban, context. More specifically, these institutions are transforming themselves from a role broadly described as “advocates” that are seeking to maximize (mostly governmental) funding to one broadly described as “agents” that are specializing in the management of infrastructure and resources necessary for the arts and culture to flourish. The focus on “agency” involves dimensions both internal (management of internal resources) and external (management of the environment). This paper describes how a particular arts and culture organization – the Broward Center for the Performing Arts (Broward Center) – is transforming itself and how it has emerged as a vital player in civic and economic leadership in South Florida.

This paper is organized as follows. The following section provides a brief review of the role of the arts over the past forty to fifty years, internal management innovations, new thinking about managing the external environment, and current developments regarding the role of culture in sustaining communities. We then define our research problem – to elaborate on the new model of arts management being developed by the Broward Center. These are then discussed in terms of strategic initiatives and responses as well as by examples. Finally, we draw the theoretical and management implications from both the literature search and the experiential evidence of the Broward Center senior management team.

The Policy and Literature Context

The purpose of the literature review is to define the theoretical and practical playing field in which the context of the Broward Center can be discussed. Within the theoretical discussion, we focus on both internal and external management concepts. The essential message, however, is that the new model calls for simultaneous management of the internal and external environments.

History and Context

The recent American history of arts organizations is reasonably well known. Prior to 1960, the “arts” were conceived in terms of high culture and produced for the elite. The great democratization of the 1960s saw huge increases in public funding by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This resulted in the creation of regional theaters, smaller museums, and community oriented programs. It also created a dependence on public funding that would later jeopardize the financial stability of large and small arts organizations. In the 1980s and 1990s, noting the economic benefits that the arts brought to the areas they served, cultural facilities were used as a tool for urban renewal. Across the country, facilities were built in specific communities and locations to encourage development and/or redevelopment. Although this trend continues, there is a new trend emerging. Arts managers have embraced their role in economic development and have redefined their value to the community. Whereas the community placed a premium on the physical facility in the 80s and 90s, today’s cultural

institutions have redefined the asset to include the facility but also the organization's programs and services as well as its *network* as a catalyst for economic development.

To be clear, this emphasis, that is, economic development, pertains primarily to arts organizations and community institutions *presenting* art versus the artists or arts groups primarily engaged in the activity of *creating or producing* art. Among the various arts organizations and community institutions, the emphasis in this paper is squarely on Performing Arts Centers (PACs). These institutions are among the largest arts organizations in the country and are uniquely aligned with the communities they serve – either formally (via funding or governance) or informally (as a “recognized” community institution). Furthermore, theoretical and academic concern with the role and management of PACs seems on the ascendant within mainstream arts management literature (e.g., Cutts, 2003, Nopper and Lapierre, 2005). At the practical level, informal groups like Performing Arts Center Consortium (PACC), which encourage the conversation, exist and thrive.

Internal Management

Mainstream arts management literature contains many models of internal management and innovation. The overarching theme of the “internal” literature is what the organizational development scholars call “systems management.” It is clearly focused on improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of arts and cultural organizations. This research has opened the door for a re-thinking of the internal management systems and move beyond traditional models. It guides us to consider, for example, issues of internal learning (Gombault, 2002), corporate identity (McLean, 1998), product market combinations (Leemans, 1999), brand development of venues (Colbert, 2003), values in strategic orientation (Voss and Voss, 2000), and the career paths of organizational leaders (Lecoutre and Lievre, 1999).

External Management

Glimpses of external management and innovation are also apparent in the mainstream arts management literature where the importance of stakeholder theory (Thompson, 2001), to articulating the contribution of the arts to the local economy (e.g., Brooks and Kushner, 2002, Markusen and King, 2003), and considering social objectives of arts programs (e.g., Gilhespy, 2001) are, among other concepts, promoted. What remain underdeveloped are models of external management that go beyond those based on “advocacy; tools and techniques of “environmental systems management” such as those explored by a series of studies including the works by Harvey, Fouts and Smith, Needles, and Rondeau in the first volume of the *International Journal of Arts Management*.

Arts organizations are adopting the notion of being pro-active agents in external systems management. Three conceptual ideas are apparent: (1) better understanding of the organization itself; (2) better understanding of the roles, values, and strategies of other organizations in the “environment”; and (3) strengthening network linkages among all of these entities. Scheff and Kotler (1996) have argued that the primary position of arts organizations must be one of strategic collaboration – an approach that utilizes business strategies for the sake of gaining support for the arts. This strategy focuses on collaborations and common goals within the industry.

Iansiti and Levien (2004, 2002) describe the business environment as an “ecosystem” and argue that any business (including arts organizations) must develop a keen understanding of its own role and placement within the greater whole. This thinking moves beyond the specific

organization and considers the surrounding industrial network within which the organization functions. McNicholas (2004) captures this notion for the arts community by arguing that “as dynamic complex adaptive relationship systems and learning relationships or learning partnership systems, strategic (arts and) culture and business relationships and partnerships reflect and adapt to complex social, economic and environmental conditions.”

Finally, Hacki and Lighton (2001) have shown that the “networked company” will perform better than conventional ones in both good and bad economic times. Their performance is based upon utilizing resources to “regulate” the impact of networks, thereby increasing productivity. Performing Arts Centers, for example, operating within a broader network are not only more likely to perform better but are also less vulnerable to reductions in public funding.

In addition to the published work, the concepts above has also benefited from other thought leaders in the industry and academic. Notably, Andrew Taylor, Director of the Bolz Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has encouraged the dialogue and helped advance the notion of systems thinking in the arts industry.

General Developments Regarding the Role of Culture in Sustaining Communities

In the general case, culture is part of a larger system including community goals. As communities develop, the arts find themselves connected to issues related to economics, urban development and redevelopment, and policy (Gray, 2002). Currently foremost of these are the notions of creative economics and the role of culture in creating the good city.

Two “manifesto-type” statements demonstrate this attachment. One voice is that of Charles Landry, a leading expert in urban renewal who says,

“The task of urban planners is to recognize, manage and exploit these <cultural> resources responsibly. Culture, therefore, should shape the technicalities of urban planning rather than be seen as marginal add-ons to be considered once the important planning questions like housing, transport and land-use have been dealt with” (2000, p.7).

Colin Jackson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts in Calgary states,

“The good city of the 21st century will be sustained on three policy pillars – economic, social and environmental. Cultural policy is the lintel, which connects the pillars. The challenge is to inspire and design processes and projects which change a city’s culture to one which values curiosity, learning, creativity, diversity and distributed leadership” (<http://www.memphismanifesto.com/thecreative100/>. Retrieved April 1, 2005)

While manifesto-type statements generate enthusiasm, there remains a paucity of conceptually robust empirical studies that fully demonstrate systems linkages or networks of interactions. Arts and culture are a component in a bigger economic ecosystem that includes retail, restaurants, hotels, businesses, services, schools, housing and transportation. Such a functional grouping has yet to be clearly, and verifiably, defined (but see Prosperi and Carter, 2005 for an attempt).

Research Problem and Methodology

This paper describes the change in positioning, from advocacy to agency, over the past 14 years at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts (Broward Center). We do this in three steps, as follows: (1) a brief history of the Broward Center describing its changing role; (2) a description of internal and external management innovations; and (3) a discussion of the emerging Agency role in the community articulated through a series of examples ranging from both internal improvements to consideration of the Broward Center as an instrumental force in the greater community.

The results presented below are the product of reflective explanation the strategic thinking of Broward Center senior management that is then filtered through the arts management literature as expressed in the *International Journal of Arts Management* and other “mainstream” sources.

Results / Analysis

History and Changing Role of the Broward Center

The Broward Center is located in downtown Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It features two auditoriums, the larger one seating approximately 2700 and the smaller one approximately 600. It has conference facilities. The Broward Center was created with Downtown Development Authority (DDA) bonds and was completed at a cost of \$53.7 million. It has had two presidents: William Farkas and Mark Nerenhausen.

History

Prior to the opening of the Broward Center in 1991, Broward County was thought of as a cultural wasteland. The first whispers of constructing a new performing arts center in Fort Lauderdale began in the late 1960s. The War Memorial Auditorium on Federal Highway was the only hall in town and staged everything from circus to boxing to the symphony. The community wanted a place to go where the opera was not tainted by the lingering scent of the 3-ring circus from the night before. Civic leaders spent the next twenty-five years presenting proposal after proposal only to be turned down by voters at the polls.

In 1984, a group of local businessmen together with the support of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) went before the Florida State Legislature to enact the Performing Arts Center Authority (PACA). A thirteen-member quasi-government board was created to “promote, construct and operate the Broward Center for the Performing Arts.” The Broward County Board of County Commissioners, Fort Lauderdale City Commission, Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors, the School Board of Broward County, and the Broward Performing Arts Foundation all appointed members to the board.

Around that same time, the DDA was charged with the revitalization of the New River Area. Once a prosperous downtown, the exodus of the masses to the suburbs following World War II left the area in a state of slum and blight. The DDA owned much of the land in downtown and donated the 5.5 acres to PACA – a value of \$5 million.

The Broward Center has since played a crucial role in spurring the revitalization of Downtown Fort Lauderdale and is considered a leader in the city's creative economy. Today the downtown

area is viewed as the cultural capital of Broward County and is known for its thriving commercial district as well as an abundance of luxury housing.

Changing Role

The Broward Center is a community asset that has produced benefits at each stage in its lifecycle. The earliest example is the initial planning and funding for the Broward Center. Capital construction was financed through a combined effort of the City, the State, the School Board, corporations, and individuals. These partners, public and private, were drawn together in an effort to enhance the image of the community, increase amenities, and spur economic development in an otherwise lackluster downtown. The realization of this vision not only resulted in a world-class facility, but also a strong public/private partnership that would be leveraged in support of many other subsequent community initiatives.

During the 1990s, as the building became more active, the economic benefit of the Center to the community became visible and quantifiable. Goods and services generated and consumed by Broward Center provided a significant economic impact as programming and patron activity increased. As a result, the surrounding land became more desirable as new amenities became available to serve theater patrons. This response is not uncommon. Performing arts centers are frequently planned to spur economic activity and even “turnarounds” in urban areas (e.g., Cleveland, Cincinnati). In recent years, the Broward Center has broadened its activities to include a more active role in economic development. This effort is described in more detail in the following sections.

Internal and External Management Innovation in the New Role

The Broward Center views itself and functions as a community asset. This notion stems from the organization’s mission statement

To be a leader in promoting artistic offerings to our increasingly diverse community with an emphasis on fostering a cooperative spirit to positively impact the local economy and community.

The way this asset is leveraged has evolved over time. In its current state, the Broward Center operates as part of a broader network and provides value by aligning itself and helping to deliver the goals of the community. This approach results from a combination of management orientation and environmental factors. This approach accomplishes two objectives. First, it supports community goals by delivering a number of innovative services and initiatives that bridge traditional institutional boundaries (i.e., business, art, and education). Using culture as the tool, the Broward Center has found ways to support international trade, reading aptitude, and economic development. Second, this approach should help to close the funding gap that currently exists for the arts. By aligning with the broader community goals, the Broward Center hopes to redirect funds from other high priority activities currently receiving a higher proportion of public funds and community support (i.e., education and economic development).

Internal Management

The ability to align with community goals requires a shift away from the traditional organizational structure. In order to support this innovative approach, the Broward Center has made significant changes in its organizational design, job descriptions, recruiting practices, and performance metrics.

The traditional organizational structure for a PAC includes a variety of functional areas that support programming, education, community, and fundraising activities. This structure remains intact at the Broward Center although it functions somewhat differently. In addition, the Center has also added a number of new “business lines” including economic development, decision support, and outside building management. The organizational design is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Organizational Design for New Role

Traditional PAC				New Business Lines		
Programming	Education	Community	Fundraising	Economic Development	Decision Support	Outside Management
<i>Competitive Advantage: Network/System/Relationships</i>						

In each of these areas, the Broward Center relies on its relationship with key partners, its unique position with the community, and its ability to leverage culture to accomplish its objectives. The examples included below demonstrate these linkages and actions to strengthen them.

The Decision Support business includes ticketing services (a shared service utilized by large and small arts groups as well as other event managers), consulting services, and analytical services to help the cultural community identify and build new audiences. The services provided by this business area help strengthen the regional arts community by reducing operating costs and increasing marketing effectiveness. In turn, a strong cultural community helps strengthen the region as an attractive destination for tourism, private enterprise, and workforce development while enhancing the quality of life for residents.

In order to support this structure, the Broward Center has created several unique positions. One example is the Riverwalk Arts and Entertainment Project Director. This individual oversees the public/private partnership and is integrally involved in the regions’ travel and tourism industry. Another example is the Vice-President, Planning and Analysis. This individual oversees the decision support “business” and is also responsible for aligning the organizations’ strategies with community plans.

The education, background, and skill sets of many staff positions are steeped in corporate and urban planning traditions. This not only helps the organization accomplish its objectives but it also helps establish credibility with community partners. An example includes the Community Program Manager. This individual represents the Broward Center at the Downtown Development Authority and other governmental agencies. She has an urban planning background and is able to identify opportunities for the arts in transportation, zoning, and housing.

Success at the Broward Center is measured more broadly than in traditional organizations. Because the organization is focus on system-wide results, internal management performance metrics include progress against partner objectives and an evaluation of the efficiency with which the organization was able to deliver those objectives.

External Management

Management of the external environment involves both direct marketing of traditional services as well as involvement in the policy processes within the community. The former is the more traditional role. This involves figuring out the market, pricing, advertising, and when needed, involvement in the policy processes. The second is more innovative. Involvement in the policy processes, as a player or a thinker of equal magnitude, puts the arts and the arts agenda in the forefront. This inversion of priorities or effort is the essence of the new role.

At a practical level, involvement in the policy processes of the local community includes members of the Broward Center management team, and most notably its CEO, serving and often providing leadership functions on the boards of the Downtown Council, International Business Council, Broward Alliance, Museum of Art, Concert Association of Florida, and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Lodging and Hospitality Association.

In addition, the management has been heavily involved in the broader community initiatives including Vision Broward (a county-wide economic planning process), the Broward Alliance (the county's economic development – business attraction office), the Broward County School Board, the Downtown Development Authority, transportation initiatives, other Cultural Partners including the Concert Association of Florida and the Museum of Art, and the Broward Workshop (an organization of the areas most senior corporate business leaders). Some of these activities are detailed below.

And, finally, active engagement in the networked system that describes the local policy environment results in unanticipated new opportunities. Included, by way of example, are new sponsors, new programmatic responses, and new professional collaborations.

Examples

Here, we describe four examples that demonstrate the emerging agency model for cultural and environmental management. The focus of this discussion is the alignment of these current activities with community (local, state, national, and international) interests.

Jobim

The Broward Center hosted, in March 2005, the International Premier of the symphonic works of the Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim, widely known as the man who wrote "Girl From Ipanema." Hosting an international premier is noteworthy enough, but the broader significance of this artistic presentation was the weeklong series of events and business forums leading up to the premier. The artistic event was leveraged with a more significant cultural exchange for the purpose of cultivating business between South Florida and their number one trade partner, Brazil.

Decision Support – Shared Ticketing Services

The Broward Center's shared ticketing service with the Museum of Art began in 2003 with the exhibit of Saint Peter and the Vatican: Legacy of Popes. Anticipating unprecedented sales, the Museum was in need of the expertise and equipment to handle sales, marketing and analysis. The basis for the agreement was to maximize the existing capacity of the Broward Center's ticketing system while eliminating the necessity to purchase and manage a separate ticketing system. Strategic networking designed to expand the ability of internal resources also improves

access to ticket purchasing. The results were strongly visible for both partners; the experience has led to the signing of additional service contracts for the Princess Diana and King Tut (forthcoming) exhibits. The shared ticketing system now includes a number of other partners including various education institutions and their “non-cultural” events (e.g., the annual Environmental Ethics conference).

Riverwalk a&e: The Arts & Entertainment district in Downtown Fort Lauderdale

Two examples demonstrate the Broward Center’s new role in cultural tourism. These are the Riverwalk a&e destination marketing project and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) trolley.

The Riverwalk a&e Consortium. The Broward Center was a co-founder, in 2001, – along with the Museum of Art, the Concert Association of Florida, the Florida Grand Opera, the Old Fort Lauderdale Village & Museum, and the Stranahan House – of the Riverwalk a&e Consortium. This consortium – of organizations directly involved in the cultural enterprise – functionally replaced a government-led group, Riverwalk, Inc., as the primary marketer of cultural activity.

In 2003, the consortium received a 3-year Cultural Tourism Program (CTP) grant from Broward County Board of County Commissioners and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitor’s Bureau to create a destination marketing campaign. The program, now in its second year, disperses an annual budget in excess of \$500,000. The CTP grant provides 274,100 in annual revenue – the remainder is provided by matching funds from the consortium members. The campaign, Riverwalk a&e is an extensive local, regional, national and international destination marketing and public relations program. The “destination marketing” and “public relations” programs successfully attract over 1 million ticketed visitors to Riverwalk the Arts & Entertainment District in Downtown Fort Lauderdale on an annual basis. These campaigns are engaged in dialogue with those consumers through broadcast media, business-to-business marketing, consumer initiatives, public relations, promotions, direct mail, and electronic media.

The quantitative outcomes of the Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment project are unprecedented. Since its inception, Riverwalk A&E has spent nearly 1 million dollars on national publicity, promoting Fort Lauderdale as a world-class Arts and Entertainment destination, and has generated in excess of 200 million media impressions. On an annual basis, the consortium partners are able to measure that the 1 million ticketed visitors generate more than 70,000 hotel room nights, equating \$378,958 in tax revenue. Given the CTP grant amount of \$274,100, the first year return on investment to Broward County from the initiative is \$104,858 or 137%, rendering the grant effectively self-funding.

The alignment of some of the Broward Center’s advertising resources with the other cultural interests in the local environment has created a power source with which it can now use to communicate effectively to larger funding sources. Riverwalk a&e has given a name and structure to what was already happening – the individual arts organizations were driving local tourism dollars. By organizing and branding the operation, Riverwalk a&e gained a voice to communication with the tourism industry and made the process of communication more efficient.

The Downtown a&e Line. The branding of Riverwalk a&e became an asset to another public project, the DDA trolley line. In May 2004, the DDA joined forces with Riverwalk a&e to launch a free downtown trolley line, operating on Friday and Saturday. The Downtown a&e Line concept joins the overall destination marketing plan for the Arts & Entertainment District, with

the key objectives to increase awareness of the trolley as a means for enjoying the amenities of downtown. By leveraging the existing brand and momentum, the DDA was able to access more potential riders on a greater scale and at a faster pace than if they marketed the trolley independently.

The strategic alliance with the DDA demonstrates the importance of engaging with “non-cultural” organizations within our environmental system. The cultural economy is contributing to local government initiatives rather than asking for support. In addition, the Broward Center has gained a voice and established influence with an entity providing transportation and enhanced its future role in delivering transportation services that could positively impact the Center’s future activities.

Broward Public Schools Reading Residencies

The Student Enrichment in the Arts (SEAS) program is a partnership between the Broward Center and Broward County School Board (BCSB). The relationship between the Broward Center and BCSB is longstanding and includes both capital and operating dimensions. When the Broward Center was initially built, funds were needed to complete the small 600-seat theater. The Broward Center went to BCSB and together they applied for the Public Education Capital Outlay Grant from the State of Florida. The grant was awarded and the funds, along with additional private contributions the construction of the small theater was completed. The PECO grant established a 40-year lease agreement with BCSB and today the theater is recognized as an outside resource classroom for the students.

While the PECO grant funded the capital project, funds were still needed to pay for programs. Money from a lawsuit against MacArthur Dairy was placed into an endowment account and the proceeds from the endowment were used to fund SEAS programming. The nature of the lawsuit was milk money – students had been overcharged for milk. By the time the lawsuit ended, there was little way of returning the money; therefore it was earmarked for student enrichment programs such as SEAS. As a result, each year over 100,000 students attend live, professional theater at no cost to their families for performance. Additionally, 50% of the cost for buses is subsidized through the SEAS program.

The Broward Center continues to work closely with BCSB to make sure programs throughout the school year are aligned with the desired outcomes for academic achievement. One program in particular is the Reading Residency program. In this program, reading curriculum specialists identified that three key components of reading – plot development, story sequencing and inference – could be directly advanced by dramatic enactment of a story. The specialist selected stories from the Basal Reading Curriculum for Grades 2 and 4 (Stone Soup by Ann McGovern and Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White). A professional theater company is contracted by the Broward Center and BCSB to perform each story over a four-week period. Every second and fourth grade student within the school district attends these performances. Then, reading curriculum supervisors, reading trainers, reading resource specialists and classroom teachers use the performance experience to improve plot development, story sequencing and inference skills. Appropriate pre- and post- benchmarking is used to evaluate the program. The program was designed in conjunction with assistance from a nationally acclaimed arts education integration expert from the John F. Kennedy Center Partners in Education Program, although lead roles in the planning and development are played by the School Districts Reading Curriculum Supervisors.

Conclusions

Performing Arts Centers must be viewed as a community asset that needs to be exploited or leveraged. This simple statement captures three interconnected concepts: the idea of internal image, the idea that organizations exist within specific communities and policy environments, and the idea that an organization's activities serve to identify and strengthen linkages within a networked system.

We began this paper by expressing a desire to describe the emerging new role, focused on agency instead of advocacy, of the BCPA. How prophetic this turns out to be, because the role continues to emerge. Constant shifts in the environment and needs for resources mandate vigilance. The new role – based on agency – is designed to capture these possibilities in the networked system.

Staffing decisions at the Broward Center have grounded the entrepreneurial or business model beyond simple shared service models. The results of improved internal efficiency has allowed some of the Broward Center's resources to be engaged on activities deemed more innovative than traditional.

The benefits to the community and to the Broward Center are manifest. Fort Lauderdale has enhanced its position as a cultural tourism destination of choice. And, the Broward Center has emerged as a stronger entity, both internally and externally as a creditable and respected member of the local, state, and even international arts and economic development communities.

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