

ACTIVATING INNOVATION & ARTSFWD

TWO YEAR REPORT



NOVEMBER 2011 – NOVEMBER 2013

Over the last two years, we've been working to move the dialogue about innovation from the margins towards the center of our field. It's our belief that doing so will contribute to a resilient arts sector that brings value to our lives and communities.

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Creating a centralized hub for information about innovation in the arts:



51 BLOGGING FELLOWS POSTS

54 GUEST POSTS

37 RESOURCE POSTS

Tracking the progress of innovation projects:



18 INNOVATION STORIES

27 SUMMIT TALKS

26 AUDIO POSTCARDS

Fostering dialogue about innovation among arts organizations & across the sector:



1 INNOVATION SUMMIT

2 ONLINE CHALLENGES

2 IN-PERSON EVENTS

OVERALL, THIS PROJECT HAS GENERATED



160K

VISITORS



470K

PAGEVIEWS



\$1M

REVENUE

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COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

IN TWO YEARS, WE GREW FROM NO COMMUNITY TO:

10,077

EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

14,216

VIDEOS WATCHED

21,571

VISITED 9 OR + TIMES

10

BLOGGING FELLOWS
WROTE ORIGINAL POSTS,
COLLABORATED IN COHORTS,
AND LED ONLINE DIALOGUE.



Y1

1,022

Y2

3,425



Y1

452

Y2

1,185

VISITORS



Y1

22,925

Y2

142,918



Art Museum Directors

@MuseumDirectors



@ArtsFwd @oaklandmuseumca we are enjoying catching up on the summit videos. Really important conversations going on there!

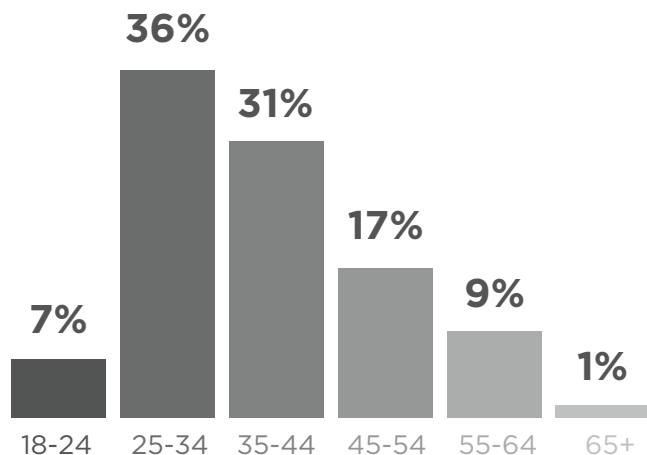


Gaurav Mike Bawa

@GauravMikeBawa



What do ppl think of mandatory admission prices for @metmuseum ? @ArtsFwd @ArtsEdTechNYC @clydefitch @ArtsJournalNews #artsreach



In 2011, we launched ArtsFwd.org, a website that would serve as a hub for information and resources about innovation in the arts and culture sector.

It featured a blog, Innovation Stories, and a podcast. In the first year, we had 35,000 visits to the site and our stories were viewed 9,000 times.

Then, we set out to test new approaches that used the platform and beyond to engage our community more deeply, share a greater diversity of stories, foster meaningful dialogue, and cultivate resources to support our Activating Innovation work.

[Here are the four prototypes we undertook:](#)

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PROTOTYPE #1

BUSINESS UNUSUAL INNOVATION STORY CONTEST



Can we transform ArtsFwd from **producer of content** to a **platform for sharing**?



A contest where we invited arts organizations to submit their **Innovation Stories** and asked the public to vote to determine a **Winner**.



17 Organizations submitted stories

28k Votes cast

5 Finalists selected by 4 judges

1 Mayor mentioned the contest on Twitter

Portland Art Museum wins for their project "Object Stories".

We learned that personal invitations are a powerful strategy, as most of the contest submissions resulted from our team's outreach. We also found that public voting is highly engaging; the number of votes dramatically exceeded our expectations. This type of online, time-constrained event created significant traffic on ArtsFwd.org. Most importantly, we learned that although the contest was exciting and shared valuable stories with the public, it was a relatively passive engagement with the field and generated little substantial dialogue.

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PROTOTYPE #2

BUSINESS UNUSUAL NATIONAL CHALLENGE



Can we transform ArtsFwd from a **platform for sharing** into a **platform for collective problem solving**?



A **multiphase online event** where we invited arts organizations to submit their **Innovation Stories** and asked the public to vote to determine the **Finalists**.



33

Adaptive challenges entered

75k

Votes cast to determine 5 Finalists

400

Ideas crowdsourced

Boston Children's Chorus wins and receives a package of facilitation and grants worth \$35,000.

We learned, again, that personal invitations and voting were effective methods for gathering submissions and connecting visitors to ArtsFwd.org. However, in this instance, we found that our site was not equipped to handle the volume of voters visiting daily. Also, allowing voters to vote once per day created a burden for our Finalists, which we had not anticipated. We also received feedback that the competitive nature of the Challenge seemed to be inconsistent with our aim to serve the field. In the face of setbacks, even very public ones, we learned that sometimes we have to stick the course, and other times we have to be prepared to pivot mid-stream.

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PROTOTYPE #3

IN-PERSON EVENTS



Can we engage the ArtsFwd community offline at local events that **dive deeper into the content and core ideas on the site?**



Two public events hosted at EmcArts offered knowledge sharing and skill-building opportunities for arts practitioners interested in innovation and adaptive change.



5

Skills shared

65

Attendees

Attendees were deeply engaged and reported that they walked away with practical tools.

We learned that there was significant interest from our local community for in-person events, and that attendees were attentive and engaged. In addition, these events served as an effective opportunity for EmcArts' staff to practice facilitation techniques in a real-world setting. However, they also required a great deal of preparation and training to ensure that the events would be as high-quality as other EmcArts offerings. The prototype left us with questions about the sustainability of doing in-person events with our current staff capacity.

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PROTOTYPE #4

NATIONAL INNOVATION SUMMIT



Can we **bring together leading innovators** from around the country to **learn from each other** and **integrate virtual participants**?



The first National Innovation Summit for Arts and Culture in Denver, and its attached Virtual Summit, which extended the experience to participants all around the world.



250 Participants from 63 organizations

27 Livestreamed talks

6 Interactive workshops

1,500 Participants joined virtually

We learned that this type of large-scale gathering has a high impact. 94% of the on-site Summit participants and 100% of the Virtual Summit participants reported that they found the experience relevant to their work, and would attend a similar national gathering in the future. Of all the on-site sessions, the Talks were recognized as the strongest contributor to participants' main takeaways, though the Fishbowl discussions, Workshops, and Arts Experiences all had substantial impact as well. There was sound evidence that both on-site and virtual participants gained new understanding of innovation in the cultural sector, ways that it can be applied, and strengthened their personal network in ways that can support this work.

What's next?

Building on the learning from our first two years, the Activating Innovation & ArtsFwd team is deep in the process of setting the course for the future.

We're asking ourselves: How might we create opportunities for deeper learning? How might we integrate ArtsFwd with the rest of our work at EmcArts? What does a sustainable model for Activating Innovation & ArtsFwd look like? How do we better understand and meet the needs of our community?

Overall, these first two years have been a time of experimentation, learning, and growth. Now, we're exploring how to connect more deeply with this community that embraces innovation and adaptive change as essential to the future of the arts and culture field.

As our next steps come into focus over the next several months, we look forward to sharing them with you on the blog at ArtsFwd.org. We invite you to share your thoughts about how ArtsFwd can better serve you in the future by completing this short survey: <http://bit.ly/ArtsFwd2Year>

Best wishes in 2014,

The Activating Innovation & ArtsFwd team at EmcArts Inc.
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