

Youth Arts QLD

www.yaq.org.au

August 2002

Established in 1989 by a committed team of youth arts workers, Youth Arts Queensland (YAQ) is the peak body for youth arts and cultural development.

Over this time YAQ has been providing professional support and industry development to youth arts and cultural development organisations, young and emerging artists, established arts professionals, community groups and clubs, youth workers and youth sector organisations.

YAQ has three major goals, networking, advocacy and knowledge development. It employs four fulltime staff but has employed up to 16 people depending on the number and nature of projects being undertaken.

We talked to Angela Ahern, Administration Manager, at the office on Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, an inner city suburb of Brisbane.

Who are your members?

Youth arts organisations, young and emerging artists, established arts professionals, arts and cultural development organisations, community groups and clubs, youth workers and youth sector organisations.

Do you have an established member base?

Yes, we have about 450 members.

Are you trying to attract new members?

Yes. Presently we are growing organically, but the more members we have the more impact we can make with improvements in this sector.

How will they benefit from your services?

Firstly by making it easy for members to tap into YAQ's national network. As with any industry your success depends on how easy it is for members to meet and work with the right people. YAQ members receive regular updates on what everyone is up to, invites to events and helpful referrals to its network. YAQ constantly lobbies government for continued support and recognition, and help to get projects off the ground.

Who are your competitors?

We are the only youth arts peak body in Queensland and Australia

How have you been successful?

For ten years YAQ has provided professional support and industry development to Queensland's youth arts and cultural development workers, young and emerging artists and people who work with youth.

How do you use digital technology in your organisation?

We make some use of a mobile telephone and we have an office PABX. We have four iMacs on a G3 server and two iBooks running OSX and Microsoft Office. We use MYOB for our accounts.

We are connected to the Internet by cable to the server. We moved to cable around June 2002 because we believe it is more efficient, cost effective and we are depending upon our Internet connection more than in the past. Because at the same time we went to cable we also commenced using on-line banking. We now do most of our payments via on-line banking.

We constantly use e-mail communication even between staff in the same office, as it keeps the noise down and is often superior to talking.

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Do you use a regular e-mail newsletter?

Yes, we send a weekly e-bulletin to all our members letting them know the latest on grants and funding, seminars and conferences, events opportunities and job opportunities.

Have you ever had problems with viruses?

No.

What measures do you take?

We have a virus scan in place.

How often do you back up your files?

We use the server for our backup and I backup MYOB to the server after every use.

Any other equipment?

The fax is used a little, especially for quotes and media releases. We have a scanner and digital camera.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes.

Do you have or are you connected to an Intranet?

No.

Do you use an Extranet?

No.

What is your Web site for?

To promote YAQ and its projects to members and prospective members. We have had the Web site since 2001

Is this a development of your existing operation or a new venture?

It is a development of our existing operation.

Do you host internally or externally?

Internally.

Do you make/allow transactions on your site?

No.

Do you collect information with forms/surveys?

No.

How do you manage/update the content of your site?

Web site content is updated weekly internally and project based content and design is updated quarterly by our designer.

How do you promote your site?

It is on all our stationery, electronic and hardcopy communications – weekly e-bulletins and YAQ news.

How much does it cost to promote your site?

The cost is negligible.

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Do you ask members how to improve your site?

Market research was undertaken in 2001 and a feedback mechanism will feature in the new site.

Do you have an existing member database?

Yes, we maintain it on Filemaker Pro.

Does your Web site capture new member information?

Yes.

What is the best way to get people to come to your site?

We are linked on associated Web sites such as Arts Queensland.

Did you write a plan before you started?

The Web site is an outcome of YAQ's strategic plan. There was a brief developed for the Web site by YAQ and a project plan developed by the designer.

Where did you go for advice?

Our designer and a community based organisation.

Did you do the work yourself or use outside contractors?

Both.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Very.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None.

What advice would you give someone else?

Use a good designer who knows about your core business.

What were the barriers to your digital project?

Labour intensive and cost.

Did everyone in your organisation support the enterprise?

Yes.

Do you know what technology is used in your organisation?

Yes.

Where can people find useful advice about the subject?

Talk to experts in the field you wish to know about. Research on the Internet.

Are the key managers up to speed with digital technology?

No. This is why we had to contract in professionals.

What are the benefits you are hoping for?

Less phone referral, cheaper for regional members, archive for good youth arts and cultural development practice. Increased awareness of YAQ, its members and projects and a tool for members to access information. Members can also promote themselves to gain employment and use the site for their own Internet space if they are unable to develop their own Web site.

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Are staff happy with what you have done?

Yes.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

To be patient, persistent and keep communication very clear.

Given what you know... would you do it again?

Yes, we need to offer a complete service and some but not all members like to use Web sites as a key communication tool.

What are you planning to do next?

Have a user friendly system for the staff. We are also increasing the capability of the Web site. We want an Extranet so that members with a password can download any previous e-bulletin and other information that we may make available.