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for Scotland Yard Adventure Centre
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REFLECTING THE SPIRIT OF THE YARD: THE YARD ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11.



Executive Summary (217)

Scotland Yard Adventure Centre, known as The Yard, is an oasis in the heart of Edinburgh that provides indoor and outdoor safe play facilities for children with additional support needs and their siblings. It is a very small charity with a very, very small marketing budget.

Their Annual Report, as their primary communication tool, is their one big chance to communicate with their target audiences. This includes current and potential sources of funding, including local government, other NGO care groups and private and corporate contributors, as well as staff, parents and the media. Basically, all the people that they, as a charity, rely on to pay the bills and keep the facility going.

The Yard's 2010 Annual Report, designed by Tayburn, has had a massive effect on the success of The Yard. It has been instrumental in seeing funding increase by 16% (at a time when, according to the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 56% of charities in Scotland reported a decrease in income), has contributed to attendances at The Yard increasing to maximum capacity, has helped secure a first ever national charity partner and inspired key politicians to visit. It has also made everyone involved with The Yard, from the playworkers to the children who use the facility, feel good about themselves, and that's important too.

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Project Overview

Outline of project: key marketing/business objectives as bullets

The Yard tasked us with creating an innovative Annual Report that would convey all of their key reporting information, while doubling up as a 'door-opening sales tool' that could help them achieve their 2010/2011 marketing objectives, which were to:

- Increase funding against the backdrop of a challenging and increasingly competitive financial environment by presenting The Yard as credible, important, exciting and different from charity competitors.
- Increase usage of The Yard to maximum capacity by increasing awareness and understanding amongst their target audience and, ideally, by securing a first ever national charity partner.
- Increase staff morale by instilling all communications with 'the spirit of The Yard'. Within this, create an understanding of 'playwork' as a specialist field of child care with specific benefits for the children who participate.

Description: background and details of the service

The Yard is the only purpose built indoor and outdoor adventure play service for disabled children in the East of Scotland.

They provide an invaluable service, helping disabled children and young people with additional support needs develop confidence, self-esteem and life skills and giving them the opportunity to play with other children like themselves in a safe and inclusive environment.

The centre also provides support and respite for the families of the children who attend which helps ease the many difficulties that they often face.

The people who run The Yard are an incredibly enthusiastic and imaginative bunch of specialist playworkers who are able to reinvent everyday items such as bubble wrap and cast-off fabric as stimuli for creativity, learning and engagement. Their ethos is that every visit to The Yard should be invigorating and enjoyable.

Overview of market

The Yard and all charitable organisations are now operating in a fiercely competitive market. This is due to a number of factors coming into play simultaneously. Local authorities have in the past offered grants to deliver services for disabled children and young people. However, contracts for service delivery are now going out to compulsory competitive tender. Charities that had for many years worked in partnership with each other and had automatically had grants renewed are being forced to bid against each other and tender for contracts against other, often larger national organisations. Small organisations like The Yard are now competing therefore with much larger charities for work and the need to effectively communicate and present themselves as a viable professional body is crucial to their survival.

The second and equally important contributor to the increasingly competitive market is the significant decrease in voluntary income available. Applications to Trusts and Foundations can account for over 50% of a small charities income. Charities are competing year on year for a smaller pot of money and 56% of charities in Scotland have reported a decrease in income in the past year. The need to stand out amongst their peers when applying to Trusts and Foundations is therefore increasingly important. Last year BBC Children in Need announced a new grant programme for disabled children with the intention of making ten awards from a pot of £2 million across the UK. As a result 220 applications were received and following the review of the initial applications, 12 organisations were selected in Scotland to go to the final round. Following the review of second applications and collateral (in our case last year's Annual Report) The Yard was one of only two organisations in Scotland to receive a grant.

Communicating effectively therefore is the key not only to increased revenue from contracts and service delivery but equally from voluntary income generation through Trusts and Foundations approaches.

Project launch date

The Yard Annual Report 2010 was launched in January 2011

Size of design budget

Tayburn provided all of our services free of charge, and talked our illustrator, and printer friends into working for cost. In total, The Yard paid £3,500 for 1,000 copies of their 2010 Annual Report.

Outline of design solution (254)

Tell the story

We wanted to tell the story of The Yard: what they do, how they do it, and most importantly how it impacts on the lives of the children, parents, workers, teachers and volunteers who meet at and use The Yard. We wanted to share this in their own words, to convey the emotional attachment that those who interact with The Yard feel for it. And we wanted to do this in a fun way. Many charities in this sector rely on tugging on the heartstrings however we wanted to take a more positive approach by showing the fun and enjoyment that The Yard represents.

Capture the spirit

And we wanted to capture 'the spirit of The Yard' – the imagination, the textures, the fun and the energy. We wanted the Annual Report to be one of a kind, like The Yard is.

The quality of the design, and the enhanced production values delivered as a result of the generosity of the printer, portray a confidence and a credibility that few small charities could match.

To minimise costs we took most of the photography ourselves and staff in the agency even finished the printed documents off by hand.

Make the boring stuff fun too

Of course, as we were creating an Annual Report we were required to include certain information to meet regulatory and financial requirements and specific audience needs and this has been integrated into the design without having to break away from the playful tone of the document as a whole.

Summary of results

1. Increased funding by 16% at a time when 56% of charities are showing a decrease in income.

Since the launch of the Annual Report, The Yard has secured funding for 2011 of £369,439. This is an increase of 16% on 2010 (£309,033) and 23% on 2009 (£282,841). This has been achieved primarily through re-securing threatened local authority contracts but also by increasing funding from private charitable foundations. The Annual Report was the only promotional document sent to these organisations.

2. Increased usage to maximum capacity (and beyond)

The Yard is now at maximum capacity. In fact, due to increases in demand they have extended their opening hours from four to six nights per week and for longer each day and for the first time are open one Sunday a month.

3. Secured first ever national charity partner

The Yard has secured their first national charity partner, Whizz Kids. It's not a huge contract but it's a start. It gives The Yard confidence, publicity and it sends a message to other potential charity partners. The Annual Report was the initial contact with the charity.

4. Fantastic response from key local and national government officials and other NGOs

The Annual Report was sent to all MSPs and other relevant prominent public sector office holders and The Yard has subsequently had a number of high profile visitors, including Mr Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Ezme McCutcheon, Communications Manager for Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, said: **"..a fantastic project – to call it a document would just not do it justice. I see so many annual reports and this one has absolutely blown me away. It completely captures the diversity, energy and creativity of the children and young people and adults at The Yard. I'm sure everyone involved must be delighted. You have managed to pull off the nigh impossible: an annual report that will be read from cover to cover! Congratulations – it really is one of a kind."**

Hamira Khan, Chief Officer of Scottish Youth Parliament, said **"I recently received a copy of the Annual Report and am writing to say that this is the most creative/engaging document I have seen in a very, very long time. Congratulations to you and the Tayburn team for producing such a fabulous piece. If ever you're in the Holyrood area, please feel free to pop in and say hi. Wishing you all the best."**

Having close links with other related charity partners is vital to The Yard, and being seen by these other organisations as credible and interesting will help secure co-operation and funding:

Coleen Kelly, from Lothian Autistic Society, said: **"The Yard's Annual Report has shown itself to be highly innovative and imaginative in its presentation. The design is very tactile and made the reading of the report fresh and exciting."**

The report is also helping The Yard forge interesting mutually beneficial links with other not for profit organisations in Edinburgh.

Jen Wood, General Manager Edinburgh International Science Festival: **"We were delighted the CEO of The Yard chaired a high profile talk at this year's Festival. We are always looking to make links with different organisations working in the City and after reading their Annual Report it was clear that this is a dynamic and creative charity making a huge difference to the lives of disabled children and young people and one that we certainly want to be associated with."**

5. Increased staff morale

The Annual Report has had a fantastic response from staff at The Yard.

Ivan Harper, Senior Playworker, The Yard: **"I think the originality of the design reflects the originality of our ethos and imaginative/innovative service to disabled children and their families. The materials used are impossible not to touch and be intrigued by, much the same as would our children experience them in the playground."**

Paula Finnie, Volunteer Playworker, The Yard: **"The Annual Report 2010 is so innovative and truly reflects the nature of The Yard. The professional but creative production of the report epitomises the whole ethos of such a wonderful haven for children, teachers, carers and staff."**

Claire Coleman, Board Member: **"This year's Annual Report is truly a celebration of the outstanding work and the enormous fun which takes place at The Yard on a daily basis. The words and pictures reflect perfectly what a creative, inspiring and caring environment The Yard provides and how important it is to the lives of those who play or spend time there."**

6. Increased understanding of playwork

It was important to the staff at The Yard that we emphasise the special nature of the playwork that they practice.

According to Margaret Westwood, Secretary of the International Play Association, we succeeded: **"Like The Yard your 2010 Annual Report is truly one of a kind. This lovely document reflects the wonderful diversity of play and demonstrates the true value of skilled playwork to children and their families. On behalf of IPA I am happy to see that The Yard continues to demonstrate best practice for play world-wide."**

Other influencing factors

The distribution of the Annual Report has been the only promotional activity undertaken by The Yard during this year and therefore no other marketing can have affected the results as detailed above. We of course recognise however that all it can do is help people to notice and understand The Yard. The passion, commitment and professionalism of the management team are what really seals the deals.

Research Sources

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

