



Some thought on 'Outreach'

Preparatory Paper for the My Generation thematic Workshop 14-15 May 2009, Glasgow

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Where do we begin?

A few years ago I was in Denmark giving a presentation on new approaches to learning. At the start of the session I explained that I was going to talk about the ways in which new technology was enabling us to create learning spaces in non-traditional environments – libraries, community centres, cafes etc. I was about to continue when someone raised their hand to ask a question.

“Why do you have to take the learning out to people? What’s wrong with the institutions where it’s already provided?”

Good question!!!

So, although not the aim of the workshop, we spent much of the time discussing what was wrong with the schools, colleges and other institutions that deterred some people from using them. And it made me realise that the starting point with an outreach-based approach is often acknowledgement that the service is failing to attract some of your potential users – for whatever reason.

Outreach...what does it mean to you?

According to Wikipedia the definition of Outreach is as follows:

Outreach is an effort by individuals in an [organization](#) or group to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organizations, groups, specific [audiences](#) or the general [public](#). Unlike [marketing](#), outreach does not inherently revolve around a product or strategies to increase [market share](#). Typically [non-profits](#), [civic groups](#), and [churches](#) engage in outreach.

Outreach often takes on an [educational](#) component (i.e., the dissemination of ideas), but it is increasingly common for organizations to conceive of their outreach [strategy](#) as a [two-way street](#) in which outreach is [framed](#) as engagement rather than solely dissemination or education.

For My Generation, there is a close link between two of our themes - Participation and Outreach. The excellent Urbact toolkit produced by Bristol and other partners talks about the importance of *low-threshold* approaches like Outreach activity to stimulate levels of participation and engagement amongst young people.

Initial discussions with My Generation partners about your case study ideas have helped provide a sense of what 'Outreach' means from you. In the box below some of the keywords from those discussions are set out:



Some food for thought

Considering outreach-based approaches provides challenges for commissioners and providers of services. It requires them to admit that the way things have been done in the past has not always worked. So it raises questions about how we understand our customer base and how we engage them in service design – issues which are at the heart of My Generation.

It also makes us consider where and when services are available. We cannot assume that if staff sit in their offices customers will flock to see them – particularly young people with barriers around confidence, language, and trust. Equally, we live in a 24x7 age where people expect services to be there when they need them – not Monday to Friday nine to five.

So, “Outreach” does what it says on the tin – taking services out to young people at a time and place that works for them.

It also means thinking about other factors that might influence their response to our approach. For example, what is going to hook them in: music; media; sport? Outreach is about making a connection and starting to build a relationship – so we need a ‘shop window’ to draw people in. And again, we need credible approachable people to be involved in this work.

What does this mean for the people working in these jobs? They have to be up for this agenda. They need energy, enthusiasm, ideas and a commitment to working with young people. They also need to be non-judgmental, open minded and willing to try new things. Again, these are characteristics at the centre of My Generation.

The opportunity we have

The Glasgow workshop in May will give us a chance to hear how the My Generation partners are taking this theme forward. On the first morning we will be exhibiting our wares in a ‘market-place’ activity which will allow us to browse the different approaches.

Each city will be given space to ‘exhibit’ their case study. Partners can choose how they do this but we have asked you to think about making this as lively and interesting as possible. Ideally, make use of visual images and digital content to get your message across¹.

¹ Please let us know in advance if you have any audio visual equipment or other requirements

Each city will have to allocate responsibility within your delegation for two roles. First, someone will have to 'look after the shop' a role which will involve explaining your case study to other city visitors. The second role is to browse the other market stalls to find out what the other partners are doing. You might want to switch roles so everyone has a chance to browse.

At the end of this session, you should have a clear idea what every My Generation city is doing for this theme.

In the afternoon we will get the chance to go out and do a bit of outreach ourselves. This will involve seeing at first hand how the Glasgow partners take their services into target neighbourhoods in the city. A number of young people who have used the service will be acting as our guides so there will be an opportunity to get their own personal perspective on this.

For this part of our event, delegates have been asked in advance to sign up to one of three groups. Details of these are provided below:

- Group 1: Intelligence led identification

Glasgow's outreach work is designed to tackle anti-social behaviour. The model is based on a principle of *intervention* not *enforcement* and in this group you will hear about how the service identifies and targets its clients.

The target group consists of young people in socially deprived neighbourhoods who are completely disengaged and involved in a culture of violence. The city's model uses state of the art intelligence to identify these young people in order to support their transition from anti-social gang culture to active citizenship.

The group will see the technology used to identify and target these young people. There will be an opportunity to hear from Police analysts and to understand the intelligence gathering that underpins the city's innovative approach.

- Group 2: Mentoring and person centred support programme

The target group are disconnected from mainstream society, living within a sub-culture characterised by anti-social behaviour, crime and aggression. There is a need to 're-socialise' them which requires them to be fully committed to programme participation.

This group will focus on the city's approach to this process. This will include the person specific assessment model and the delivery of the subsequent individual support packages. The emphasis is on changing behaviour and involves a range of partners delivering a service that includes core skills including literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Working with project clients, delegates in this group will have the opportunity to experience the client perspective through scripted role play.

- Group 3: Employability training

This group will have a chance to see how the third process stage operates. This will take place on site at one of the city's key training providers where work is done to equip clients with the skills and attitudes required for the workplace.

The group will hear about the links between the training offer and the city's key industry sectors. There will also be a chance to find out about the qualifications and skills young people acquire and the type of placement opportunities available to them.

These delegates will come away with a clear picture of the final steps in the city's outreach process.

Before you come...here's what we ask of you

So before you come to Glasgow, we have two requests of you. The first is to come prepared to tell your story – through materials which convey a clear image of what your outreach case study is all about. Ideally, these will be photographs, posters, video clips or presentations – but not just pages filled with words!

The second pre-task is to give some thought to the questions about the Outreach theme raised by our Glasgow colleagues at the last workshop in Patras. These included the following key queries:

- What's the starting point? (problem or solution)
- When do young people become leaders in the process rather than recipients?
- How adaptive are services to learning from the young and applying their knowledge?

- What matters most – organisational outcomes or impact?
- What does your city want to gain from the Outreach workshop?

So, it's over to you – and looking forward to seeing you in Glasgow in a few weeks time.

Eddy Adams

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