

IX. THE FESTIVAL CLOSURE

The closure of a festival involves three types of operations. In a spirit of friendliness, specific events can be organized for spectators and / or professional members and volunteers of the team. An evaluation approach leads to a reflection on the possibilities of improving the next edition from the assessment made by the team. Finally the question of document archiving is raised as well as objectives in terms of the memory of the festival but also of its promotional tools.

A. The end of festival events

According to a gift-counter gift logic particularly popular with non-profit companies, the organization of specific events at the end of the festival is part of a thank approach to stakeholder including public and organizing teams with their employees and volunteers. It is also about enhancing the valuation of the stakeholders' engagement by giving them an opportunity to feel pride for actions performed in a collective event.

1. The events for spectators

Of the 43 answers to the questions on the closure of the festival, 30% do not organize special event for spectators to mark the end of the festival.

MigrActions and VolterraTeatro offer their audiences a closure party. Answers to the questionnaire also highlight the offer of a festive event:

Festive evening (festival 5).

Celebration drinks or improvised games (festival 6).

People Closing Bal (Festival 13).

Evening event (festival 20).

There is always a huge party, and lots of different music concerts (Festival 23).

Photo report, free sparkling wine for a toast (festival 29)..

An evening and a public closure (Festival 38).

Closure party (Festival 61).

Closing performance, collective gathering, family day (festival 62).

Prize giving + screening (Festival 91).

Some answers design a specific performance program in line with the guidelines of the artistic and cultural project

Shows, readings, performances - closure programming is conceived in the same spirit as that of the three-week festival. The idea of choosing to finish a project with an associated artist can occur. It also happens that a project combining contemporary music and theatre arts is programmed for the closure for its festive and friendly "value added" (festival 1).

A full day of programming for 2012 and 2014 editions: Take away day and Cumulus day. This could not be done again in 2016 (festival 7).

Awarding best groups and performances of the foreign groups (festival 19).

Final show (festival 25).

A show in the main square - a public party (Festival 28).

Closing concert and party with local food (festival 31).

A show (festival 32).

Parties concert, big performances (festival 42).

Free concert (Festival 43).

The joint impro show with all artists (Festival 44).

Big, spectacular events, family events, open air events (Festival 45).

Closing evening: concerts, dance, participants (Festival 49).

Festival 9 sends a "thank-you information letter" to its spectators.

2. Events for the festival team

Several festival organisers who answered the questionnaire indicated their willingness not to separate the audience and the organizing team in the design of the final event:

Afterfest - the party that involves all the people who built the festival: artists, citizens, audience, cultural experts, journalists (festival 3).

Big closing event with participating groups (festival 18).

Closing concert and party with local food. Organizers including staff and volunteers, musicians and audience were gathered to celebrate (festival 31).

A meeting with all the actors of the festival with a T-shirt delivery for all of them (festival 36).

See you next time, a big party after the last showing of the festival. The staff and the volunteers participate to the same closing party (festival 41).

Most answers organizing specific events indicate a meal or a drink with team members and volunteers, such as during the first festival *Travessuras Culturais*:

Convivial evening around food (festival 4).

A collective meal with all the arts companies invited during the festival (festival 6).

Meal, party (festival 9).

Restaurant meal (Festival 14).

A drink (Festival 16).

Collective meal / evening (Festival 17).

Closing dinner (Festival 18).

There is always a dinner, before the party, with everybody (around 100 people) among members of the organisation, some artists and all the volunteers (festival 23).

Free drinks for everybody (festival 29).

We have a drink and some months after the event we have dinner with the core team (festival 34).

A meal (festival 36).

We usually organize a dinner or lunch. When high school students worked as interns we organized a party (festival 37).

Farewell dinner (festival 42).

Drinks & French fries (festival 43).

Meal or apéritif during the year (festival 52).

A meal offered and shared between the volunteers and the staff of the place and the association (festival 53).

Some are focused on the festive dimension of the event:

Popular bal - thanks party (Festival 13)

Day in catering (Festival 15).

Closing Day (Festival 20).

An informal festive evening (staff), an evening (volunteers J +7) (festival 32).

Volunteers-Party (Festival 46).

Dance party: Participants and volunteers (Festival 49).

A party for the staff (Festival 50).

Closing day party (Festival 61).

Party (Festival 91).

Some answers combine participation in a meal and organize a review meeting:

A meal or a night out and a report meeting later (festival 7).

We organise an assessment meeting and a party (Festival 58).

Collective meal, evaluation session, network activities (festival 62)

Finally three answers indicated organizing an evening without specifying the content.

B. Festival evaluation methods

According to a survey of David Gobeli and Erik Larson on 1654 project managers regarding barriers to project success in 1990, 32% of answers highlighted flaws in planning, 26% management problems, 12% of errors in the allocation of staff, 12% of blunders in setting the work schedule, 11% of the defects in the organization of operations and 7% of mismatches in project management⁸⁸. The objective of an evaluation at the end of a project is to diagnose the differences between the objectives and the observed effects of the actions taken to achieve them, and to reflect on possible measures to correct malfunctions or coordination defects observed.

Under what form the festivals perform their analytical assessment? Among answers to this question, 77% of festivals organize a team meeting to make the balance sheet and 23% do so through informal exchanges. The team meeting is usually conducted by midsize festivals (92% of answers in this category). The Carte Blanche team use informal exchanges for VolterraTeatro festival because of the size of their team and their organization of work in

⁸⁸ Erik W. Larson, Clifford F. Gray, *Management de projet*, Paris, Dunod, 2014, p. 537.

open space that lends itself to this type of exchange. The Centre Théâtre de l'Opprimé team organizes a review meeting of MigrActions. Each of these two teams are looking forward to improving responsiveness, particularly in communication and accompaniment of programming.

1. The types of balance sheet

François Mairesse distinguishes two methods of evaluation of the project after its completion: one on internal strengths and weaknesses in the conduct of this project, which can lead to interpersonal tensions to be avoided for this reason; the other is external, on performance indicators requested by public funding or private in return for their contributions⁸⁹. A continuous improvement approach requires an assessment on the achievement of goals set by the organization based on the resources used, on the dynamics of preparation and running of the festival, and on relationships with stakeholders. This assessment can be built from internal audits of the team but also from an external point of view if they are well aware of the constraints of organizational configuration in its environment. It is desirable to engage in a process of analysis of teamwork with its successes and coordination failures and not in search of individual responsibilities because of personal interdependencies chain to achieve a common goal. That is to bring more attention to organizational learning as individual learning to build useful methodological knowledge to increase efficiency⁹⁰.

The most common documents

Documents required for the external evaluation by funders are most frequently produced. Among answers to the question, all festivals have indicated to produce a balance sheet and 95% an activity report. 86% of them also stated to keep a compilation of press reviews with critics and published interviews. The issues around cultural journalists' opinions relate to the construction of media reputation, which influences in part the recognition of the aesthetic value of the programming by public authorities and peers. The rate is positively correlated with the size of the festivals (64% if the budget is less than 50 000 euros to 100% when the budget exceeds 250 000 euros). For VolterraTeatro a final press release is written and sent to all editors of national and regional press.

Less common documents

Spectators' opinions are minor in comparison with press reviews. Only 40% stated that they cared to make a compilation of the spectators' comment. The highest rate is for small festivals (45%), a level still below the press reviews, as it has been the case for 31% of festivals with a budget of at least EUR 50 000.

Documents turned to a self-assessment are also much less frequently identified by answers. 21% of the festivals declared using a methodological review, the average rate being higher for medium sized festivals (31%) and lowest for small ones (9%). A logbook is held only by 19% of festivals, this rate is the most important for major festivals (31%) and lowest when the budget is between 50 000 and 250 000.

The team meetings organized to evaluate the festival edition that just ended usually prefer an informal approach based on the stories and experiences than an audit in order to question the adequacy requirements and team accomplishments to the festival objectives during its course.

2. Use of balance sheets

⁸⁹ François Mairesse, *op.cit.*, p. 187-190.

⁹⁰ Voir Chris Argyris, *On organizational learning*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

An open question asked how the results are used to improve the organization of the festival in the following season. Most responses converge to a reflexive basis to improve coordination modes and operation of the festival. Some answers are specified with reference to programming choices.

The search for improved organizational effectiveness

Some have referred to the SWOT model of analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of an organization by placing it in its environment, enabling to understand the opportunities offered by it and the resulting threats to the viability of the organization:

SWOT Evaluation of previous editions (Festival 17).

We do a strength and weakness analysis and review it during the preparation of the next festival (festival 44).

Most answers which highlight the interest of greater efficiency for the festival's subsequent editions would refer to this model only implicitly:

Learn a lesson from past teachings during coordination meetings (festival 5).

The idea is to try not to make the same mistakes (festival 7).

During the board of direction meeting, weaknesses and areas for improvement are noted, commissions are in charge of improving the weak points (13 festival).

Analytical work on a summary board and a moral report for the general assembly by making a critical analysis position by position (Festival 14).

Implementation of improvements (Festival 16).

The record is available to the whole team, everyone made a return on its part of the job, what was positive and what should be improved (Festival 21).

We take note on what went wrong and what was good and we try to correct and come up with new ideas to improve everyone's experience for the next edition (festival 23).

We organize three meetings: technique, company, volunteers. Each meeting helps identify strengths and weaknesses which will be improved by the proposals agreed in a meeting for the next edition (Festival 36).

We usually consider the timeline, the results compared to the efforts made and try to collect ideas to improve those aspects that proved to be weaker (festival 37).

After evaluation, the points of improvement are taken to the respective work groups (programme, communication, ticketing, directors, administrators, etc...) to see how the cooperation and organization can be developed (festival 41).

All that is said is passed to the board of directors with the director or technical director and we seek to take them into consideration to improve (Festival 49).

Comparison and perspective over the last 3 years to focus on our weaknesses (eg. Development strategy for books in a theatrical library) (festival 53).

A reflection on deficiencies (Festival 57).

Point of reference for meetings on organisation and time-saving methods. When possible experiment new methodologies for organisation (festival 91).

The importance of volunteers' observations and collections was reported by two answering festivals.

A deadline is sometimes indicated for the balance sheet consideration before installing the next edition:

Six months before the next festival, we examine balance sheet documents (Festival 15).

A month before the festival, we take the elements back and seek to improve them on the spot (Festival 32).

Twice a year, all the members of the teams are invited for a team meeting and informational day. One after the festival to review; the other 6 months later, on the next edition's programme and the undertaken actions on public relations, communication, ticketing, etc. (festival 41).

Or not:

Documentation for the staff of the following season (festival 46).

Reuse for the following year (festival 61).

A reflection on the relevance of positioning

Some answers indicated to rely on the assessment documents to analyze their positioning and reflect on the evolution of programming choices, based on aesthetic criteria but also mercantile in some cases:

We analyse all the materials to understand how the festival's dramaturgy evolves (festival 3).

It makes it possible to understand our next artistic choices (festival 4).

On the next edition of the programming (festival 25).

Based on the nights that had more success and best profit (festival 29).

The reflection on the positioning may consider evidence concerning the promotion of the festival:

The press book is useful to negotiate for next editions (festival 18).

Visual and audio documentation helps the promotion of the festival; memos of the meeting and database ease the process in many different fields (logistic particularly) (festival 31).

The question of budgetary resources in the use of assessment documents is centrally posed by some festivals:

Preparation of grant applications (festival 9).

It always depends on the amount money that we have next year for the organization of the Festival (festival 19).

This is not the ideal country for the realization of a festival without institutional support. The festival has no money and what keeps us is respect for the art form that we promote. Many things go through personal strength that it implies. We continue on the basis of experience and common sense (Festival 57).

C. Archiving

Archiving documentation on programming entertainment venues has too often been neglected by the managements of these institutions. The appointment of a new director was marked by the desire to influence the programming choices willing to stand out *a priori* from the choices of his predecessor. This does not create favorable conditions for a conservation approach of previous artistic work. The intensified competition nevertheless led the players to change their

outlook on archiving which plays a complementary role in promoting the production and distribution of shows.

1. Archiving priorities

The MigrActions team said they keep leaflets, posters and pictures of the festival while Carte Blanche give priority to photos and videos taken during the course of events, consistent with the media effort to promote the festival.

Of the 39 answers to the question about archiving visual documents, archiving photos is the most frequently cited (64% festivals), followed by posters and / or flyers (41%) and leaflets and videos (39% in each of these two cases), news magazines (36%). In more detail, festival 37 states in its answer tactics of reports on the progress of the backstage side of the festival:

Photos of the different stages – arrival of the artists/speakers, etc., setting up of the stage and particularly funny moments with them, videos of each event and eventually small interviews to the companies.

Festival 91 also announced a similar tactic:

Day by day videos, interviews, films and related materials.

Festival 57 also highlights the promotion teaser in their archived items. Two festivals also indicate, in addition to photos, to archive viewers's comments. In one case, these are the comments left on socio-digital networks of the festival.

The activity report is announced by two festivals, one in addition to the balance sheet, the other with a press review. A large show festival says archiving show records and debates on the organization's servers and at the National Library of France.

2. Archiving modes

The VolterraTeatro team focuses on digital databases for storing audiovisual material and documentation of the festival while storing paper documents from previous editions of the festival in the local of the organizing association. Team MigrActions keeps photos in digital format, leaflets and posters in their paper and electronic files.

Among answers to this question, 45% of festivals organize a double storage in paper and digital format, only 42% use digital modes on their website, in social networks or digital files, and 13% are limited only to paper supports. Festival 9 stands out by editing a book.