Engaging New Adult Audiences Through Programming

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Old North Church & Historic Site
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- Staff size: 9 full time employees, 35-45 part time hourly employees (during high season)

- Budget: ~ $1.5 million

- Overall visitation
  - Prior to paid admission: ~ 450,000 annually
  - After paid admission: ~ 200-250,000
Existing Situation, 2013

- No public programs ... at all
- Few repeat visitors
- Very little engagement with young professionals and “locals” (neighborhood, city, region)
Objectives

- Create and implement public programs
- Develop new audiences
Speaker Series

- 6-8 lectures per year program
- Smallest audience: 12 > Largest audience: 160
- Audience surveys indicate majority = repeat visitors
- Typically followed by receptions; sometimes followed by Community Conversations
- Wide-ranging topics such as:
  - Jane Franklin
  - Slavery and unfreedom
  - Women of the Quincy family
  - Architectural photography
  - Immigrant detention
  - Excavation results
Young Professionals

- Changing North End population | rise of Millennials
- Fear of waning interest in historic sites
- Solution: Highly Unique “One-off” Events
  - Sweets & Spirits – Chocolate & Rum Tasting
  - YP Meet & Greet
  - Boos & Brews
  - Game testing
Targeted Adult Programming

- Adults of all ages ... interacting together? Old North as a hot spot?
- Solution: Highly Unique “One-off” Events AND Interactive, Repeat Programs
  - Where There’s Tea, There’s Hope
  - Have a Beer with Paul Revere
  - Wild Women Chocolate & Wine Pairings
  - Founding Fashions: an 18th c. Fashion Show
  - Community Conversations
Thematic Planning

- **2017: The Boston Scape**
  - Boston as Mindscape
  - Boston as Seascape
  - Boston as Landscape

- Unit Theme Example:
  - Eat Like a Sailor | Dine Like a Captain featured public program
  - 2 lectures: shipping today, life in seaports
  - 2 online articles: drinking on ships, a pirate capture
  - 1 social media campaign: what role does water play in your life?
  - Retail products featured: nautical themed goods and clothing
Thematic Planning

2018: Occupation

- [oc·cu·pa·tion (äkyə'pāSH(ə)n/): the action or fact of living in a place]
- [oc·cu·pa·tion (äkyə'pāSH(ə)n/): a job or profession; a way to make a living]
- [oc·cu·pa·tion (äkyə'pāSH(ə)n/): the action, state, or period of occupying or being occupied by military force]

Unit Theme Example:

- Featured public program: panel (on the many jobs of Paul Revere) & progressive event with Paul Revere House
- 2 lectures: work and employment in colonial Boston (followed by a CC with BFIT) and career retrospective
- specialty tour: Celebrating Craftsmanship
- 2 online articles: the Night Watch in the North End, the “mechanicks” class of the colonial era
Implementation

- March 2014 – December 2018
  - 53 public programs
  - 2,139 visitors, 73% (average) of whom are repeat visitors
  - >$11K income

- Staff time

- Planning time

- Key windows of time
Audience Development

How can we attract specific audiences? Community partnerships!

1. Strategic alliances with other cultural institutions and organizations
   - Boston By Foot
   - Boston Society of Architects
   - Old South Meeting House
   - Congregational Library & Archives
   - Boston Preservation Alliance
   - Royall House & Slave Quarters
   - Chinese Historical Society of New England
   - Nichols House Museum
   - Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters
   - North End Historical Society
   - Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
   - City of Boston Office of Veterans Services
   - Leventhal Map Center
   - The Fireplace Restaurant
   - The KITCHEN at Boston Public Market
   - Paul Revere House
Audience Development

How can we attract specific audiences? Look in our own backyard!

2. New audiences from existing contacts:
   - College alumni associations
   - Museum professionals/colleagues
   - Other Freedom Trail sites
   - National Park Service
   - Historic homes
   - City offices
Challenges

- Funding!
- Promotion!
- Space limitation
- Telling our story / establishing ourselves as community resource
- In depth evaluation
- Reaching communities of color
Advice

- Start small
- Always connect to your mission
- Go ahead, try something out!
  - “Failure” is a relative term
- Partner with other organizations → collaboration is key
- Invite your younger staff or volunteers to host and be involved
- BOOZE
Remember to have fun and don’t take yourself too seriously!

Your visitors will follow suit.

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