

achieved in a short period of time.' The BBC Philharmonic realised its touring objective at the end of last year with three performances in China. 'They targeted two to three years to achieve that, and delivered it in 18 months! It's because they focused on what was needed to get there and developed a strategy based on that. Solutions Focus is about building upon what's already there.'

Strategy crafting aims to deliver competitive advantage by creating an ideal yet realistic vision of future achievement. 'It involves a process of discovering the future purpose of an organisation's business, and why it may have to change from the current objectives in response to present uncertainties.' The first step towards taking action, adds Woodings, involves building on what already works and incorporating current successes; recognising existing processes, resources and cultures that can be used to implement the strategy, and identifying business strengths.

Recessionary pressures on budgets and resources, he suggests, could open doors to unexpected collaborations with other music businesses. 'That could reduce the time needed for efficient development of new programmes. Because the world is so dynamic today, you have to be agile. It's a key word for me: to be agile in the business-place means you have to be ready to adapt to our ever-changing world. If we have an idea of where we want to go and are agile, then everything we want to do is focused on the solution. In building our strategy, we take small steps. My four-step strategy includes short-term and long-term objectives, with the former leading to the latter.'

Arts managers stuck for ideas on strategic directions might care to consider the matter of charitable donations. John Low, chief executive of the Charities Aid Foundation, believes that recession is the mother of invention for charitable organisations, arts businesses not least among them. He points out that while 20% of all donors give money to charities associated with medical research, only 1% give to arts charities. The latter percentage comprises a predominance of high wealth philanthropists. 'The number of people

giving to the arts is small, but two thirds of them are high net worth individuals. It is this lack of appeal to a wider range of potential donors that seems to me to be an omission right now.'

Low suggests that classical music organisations could make more of their status as registered charities, especially in straitened times. He argues the case for widening an orchestra's donor base to attract small amounts from supporters in its local community or regular audience. 'If you go to see Madonna, you wouldn't think for a second of making a charitable donation to the performer! But you might be open to thinking that an orchestra, opera or ballet company would appreciate your donation. That message doesn't feel as if it's getting through. It's almost as if the sector has become addicted to the low number of high wealth philanthropists, and has depended on quite big bungs from them. I don't wish to be insulting, but you do wonder if the sector believes that it is exclusive to a particular socio-economic group and that it seeks support almost exclusively from that group.'

It may simply be that soliciting donations from well-heeled individuals is easier for performing arts organisations than managing a campaign intended to raise small sums from the many. Widening the scope of fundraising to reach those who do not associate concerts or classical music or opera performances with charity sounds a lot of effort in pursuit of uncertain returns. 'It might just be valuable at this time,' John Low suggests, adding that museums and galleries already openly invite visitors to donate towards their costs. 'They say very clearly how much it costs to maintain their work and call on those who can afford it to make a donation. Those places make the ask and explain their financial situation. There has to be a mechanism for orchestras to do something similar. If they don't ask, people won't give!'

Supporting the arts in a recession will be uppermost in the minds of Dame Liz Forgan's audience on 24 April. The Arts Council's new chair gives the first keynote speech of her tenure at a seminar convened in central London by ACE in partnership with the Centre for Public Policy. The event's um-

brella title, Maximising the importance of arts and culture through the economic downturn, should cover practical as well as philosophical ground.

Alan Davey believes that skills learned and resilience developed in previous tough times should give arts managers the edge when dealing with present circumstances. 'Creative solutions will be required in this recession. I'd urge the sector to keep its eye on the interesting stuff that audiences want and really keep them engaged. We need to find ways of keeping the excellent excellent through this recession, so they continue to be excellent afterwards. When we came through the last recession, we had to repair. We want to make sure we do not have to repair to the same extent this time. Having got the orchestras into good shape, for example, we don't want to lose them or their sense of ambition. I want them to be even more ambitious in future.'

TOP TIPS

HOW TO SURVIVE THE STORM

LOOK to develop partnerships, where possible, with other arts organisations or service businesses, to reduce administrative costs and/or generate new creative ideas.

PREPARE for and expect tough times ahead. Religiously manage cash-flow; if necessary or possible, draw on existing reserves to close developing budget gaps.

MAINTAIN and develop relationships with existing sponsors, public funders and private donors, even if they are unable to renew financial commitments during the recession. Words of gratitude and corporate ticket offers are more likely to win back sponsorship post recession than indignant silence.

FOCUS on building and delivering your strategic vision now. Don't be deterred from long-term innovation in favour of short-term tactical reactions to loss of income.

RAISE public awareness of your organisation's charitable status and aspirations. Request donations from audiences and highlight that sums pledged by debit card automatically qualify for Gift Aid relief.

FEED information about your organisation's financial performance during recession to representative organisations and arts councils to aid their lobbying/advocacy work.

