Bringing People Together with Story

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http://greatstorybook.com/bringing-people-together-story/

This entry is part 4 of 4 in the series Community

Community

Community events are about bringing people together, and I feel strongly that story is something that brings people together as well. Story is how we imaginatively express and share our deepest emotions, our most treasured values, and our craziest hopes.

So this is extremely important, and if you want to know how to bring your community together and make people happy (with your stories), I'm going to tell you.

After the Big Event is over, there will always be those who don't want it to end.

This isn't about the writing **or** story structure**, it's about what you can do once you have a story – or at least a** draft of one**.**

About the term Community Belonging: bringing people together

You could just as easily use terms like Community Building or Community Organizing, but I feel like these words have lost their luster. They don't have the same meaning today as they did when first coined.

When it comes to the arts in particular, it feels to me more natural to talk about **Community Belonging**, because that is what the building and organizing is meant to create: the sense that we people belong together. We don't just live around the same space, we belong there, and we do things together to support each other – to make being there have meaning, to enhance our identities, to establish a sense of, "this is awesome."

> "We did this together, and that makes us awesome." That's the feeling of Community Belonging, and it's incredible when you get a glimmer of that.

In my town (my adopted town of Homburg, Germany), there are about 55,000 people from all over the world. I've personally noted about a dozen different languages spoken on the streets here. According to the town records, that number is closer to 30+ languages. So how do you bring these people together?

Pictures and stories. Of course!

An Arts Event Has 3 Goals: what a community event for the arts should accomplish

If you want to do something great with and for your community then organizing an arts event can bring people together in amazing and unexpected ways.

The event should do 3 things:

1. introduce your community to what it is you do,
2. showcase what other creative people in the area are doing, and
3. get people pulling together to bring more creativity and fun - to everyone.
    - This can inspire people with different strengths to *collaborate* with each other.
    - This can lead to *new programs* being developed, because the need will be apparent.
    - It can lead to new *friendships* that otherwise would never happen.

Why I Do This

The best times of my life have been at writing conferences, book events and other creative-oriented events. Why? Other creative people are there. My whole life, I've most of the time felt like I didn't really fit in anywhere. So I was nowhere, really. I had no sense of place because – where did I belong?

Over time, I found that I belong with creative people. When you find out that someone is creative, it's instantaneously exciting because you share something important in common. When you have a group of creative people all in one place, the air feels a-buzz with a special excitement.

We're all doing cool, creative things! This is awesome! Let's do creative stuff together!

And you just exchange and share that excitement, that creative energy, to get more done than you otherwise would be able to do. This is a gift I wish I could give anyone needing a little push – to get the ideas out of their head and *Out Into The World* in some form – be it a painting, a story, a song – Whatever!

That's why I love planning events like this, why I love going to events like this. It keeps me going, and I know it keeps everyone else going too. **It changes peoples' minds from *status quo* to *status mirus* (*mirus* = wonder).**

Why *You* Should Plan an Event

It's a stale cliché that artistic types or creative types are incapable of planning, of organizing – or really

doing anything that resembles a sense of responsibility. For the most part, that's absolutely true – of course. I won't **deny** it! (Are you crazy?)

But when you attend a Creative Event, filled with creative people and the people who want to support them - you see the exceptions. You get to talk to the creative people who are exceptional. And it will inspire you.

When you *plan* a Community Belonging, you won't just be an exception. You'll change your life. You'll enhance other peoples' lives and you'll know it because they'll talk to you about it for years to come.

Something like this – a shared special moment – it doesn't go away. It lives in all the minds and memories of the people who shared it with you, and because of that, it grows far beyond what you could ever plan. It is a shared well of inspiration, and we can all drink from it.

List of To-DOs

To plan a creative event for your community, here's the list of what you need to do. It really isn't that hard - you just need to ask people to show-up and do what they do best.

- Find a location. This is the first step and the most important. Many places will be happy to let you do your thing for free. Ask about a stage and microphone.
- Invite your creative friends to join you in this crazy little event. Ask them what they want to do.
- Have your friends invite *their* creative friends.
- Ask a handful of people (who can cook, preferrably!) to bring food for the event. It's a potluck.
- Those who can't cook can bring drinks and napkins!
- Track down a make-up artist to paint faces. Maybe organize a balloon seller, if possible. (I like balloons.)
- Have a few "Messy Art Tables" set-up, so that visitors can express their creative side too! People will happily pay a few dollars to do each craft project (to support your doing this).
- Get some musicians together to perform. As Plan B (and for breaks in-between gigs), have a DJ. If a band gets a paying gig on the same date, they'll probably fall away from your schedule.
- Invite dancers to perform, and jugglers, and poets and other crazy creative types! Give them a stage and an audience.
- Make fliers about the event available and have *everyone* distribute them. It should be a full-color PDF and something that can be easily printed on regular-sized paper (whatever size that is in your country).
- Send announcements, fliers or Press Releases to all the local magazines and newspapers. If you have a neighborhood paper, that's ideal! Don't be shy about giving an interview.
- Use Social Media Platforms to get the word out to any colleagues or friends of friends. Just because it's local doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't utilize the Internet.

All of this should be FREE.

- **Free entrance is a must** - and then people can pay for what they want to take home with them.

Otherwise, it's exclusive and no longer for the community.

- This event should not cost you, the organizer, anything more than the *cost of materials* you make available (i.e. the Messy Art Tables, copies of your book) - and maybe posters, if you feel that will help. Your costs should always be within budget, but something you feel can be reasonably recovered during the event.

Quick Note About Advertising

Most publications (especially those focused on supporting the community) will be very interested in helping you out and that often translates into free advertising. You don't even need to ask. Just tell them what you're doing, include the PDF of your flier, and see what happens. People like to help because they want to see this kind of great stuff happening.

What About You???

What has been your favorite creative event so far? Why? Write below, let me know - and if you have questions about how to do any of this, don't be shy about asking.

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series
Community
Be sure to check out the other posts:

<< Road Testing a Story Mock-Up

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