

Exploit your distinctiveness

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For us, our distinctiveness is size. We are small.

We are excited about being small,

we are not going to apologise for it,

we are going to ride it as far as we possibly can.

And for us, that means looking at,

I look at coffee shops as models.

I always think about the fact

that no small coffee shop says

"We are like Starbucks, we're so close to being like Starbucks."

Instead they say,

"We are not like Starbucks.

We are more personal,

we are more community oriented

we have something that's more special for us, for you

and we don't want to be professionalised

or commoditised in a way that leaves

our unique advantage on the table."

And so for us, being small means

being really personal in how we thank people.

It means when an artist comes to us

and says, "I would like to do a project

where I cut out hundreds of pieces of metal into fish

and we invite visitors to come in

and bang scales on the fish with hammers

and then we'll hang it all up as a sculpture".

I can just say yes, I don't have
any paperwork I have to do,
we can just give people hammers and go.
When somebody calls me and says,
"I have a couch that attaches to a bike
and it has lights and music
and I would like to bring it down to your museum
and drive people around town at your next event."

We can just say yes and have this kind of spontaneity
and energy that comes from being small.

One of the best examples
of how we've been able to exploit this
is the pop-up museum programme.

Which in a lot of ways is a very small programme.

All that happens is we set up some tables
we invite people to bring some objects and some stories
and it just exists for a couple of hours
and then everybody goes home.

But for us, pop-up museums have been a really great way
to exist in lots of places in our community very quickly.

To set up a tent and be able
to have a pop-up museum on surfing right by the beach.

To be able to have a pop-up museum on Chinatown
in an area of downtown
that used to have a Chinatown
and now has nothing there any more related to it.

Or to even do one in the back of a church,

to invite people to share their stories
in their yard, after the service is over.
We are always looking for these lightweight ways
to invite participation in ways
that can scale throughout our community.
So that somebody can call me and say,
"Hey, I'd like to do a pop-up museum."
And we can say great, let's sit down
for 30 minutes, we'll explain everything
we'll give you the kit, go ahead and do it.