

Involvement in leadership

National Theatre Wales is a theatre
but not based in a theatre; a theatre without walls.

We put on shows all over Wales,
some in theatres, most of them, to be truthful,
outside of the theatre and we run projects
with those communities all over Wales as well.

TEAM is many things, but what I always try and define it as
is a network of people who represent National Theatre Wales
in their community.

But also have a say in how
National Theatre Wales is run
by feeding to the organisation
and make decisions where best
and how the organisation is run.

I think at the centre of what we do,
our aim is to develop leaders,
leadership is a real kind of core value in what...
or the core idea within TEAM.

I think there are two main ways that we work with people
around leadership within TEAM.

I think I would categorise the first one as decision makers.
So decision makers is really when you are inviting people
in your wider community to be part of the decisions
that you make as a company
whether that's around programme,
whether that's around policies,

whether that's around strategy,
whether that's around staff appointments.

So you're inviting people
into those decisions which very often,
in traditional organisations
are at the points at which
the organisation gets closed off
and it delivers a kind of
smooth face to the world.

I think once you start involving
participants and wider community
in those decisions you present
a very different face to the world.

I think it's often the thing that organisations
are most cautious and nervous about
and yet is most exhilarating when it happens.

The second area, and I think particularly
important for us with TEAM because we're a relatively
small-core organisation, is around leadership.

So that's developing people,
people's confidence and capacity,
in terms of making their own projects and work happen.

So for us at National Theatre Wales,
covering a whole country with a small team,
that kind of leadership by TEAM members
across the country is really, really important.

But in general it's probably the thing

that ultimately is going to have the most social impact, in terms of this work, because it is about people being able to go off and do things in their own communities.

If there's a third one, I'd say that the third one is around advocacy and spreading the message. So, often with once this kind of work with communities develops the people who've been part of that development become by far the best advocates of the work far better than I could be, or any staff member could be in talking about what we do and why we do it.

Because actually those participants embody really the story that we're telling.

The involvement of TEAM members and TEAM panel in not only artistic decisions, but also in a way, I guess artistic outreach, or finding out who's out there is an element that's been growing, particularly in the last year.

So we've started to invite TEAM members to our monthly ideas meetings where staff talk about things that they've seen and artists we might be interested in.

So we'll usually now have two TEAM members come to those meetings and they'll also feed in ideas that they've got about artists that NTW could be working with.

As part of that, also, we can sometimes identify artists or companies that should come in for what we call a creative visit; where the company presents its work to staff, to TEAM members, to other members of the wider NTW community.

And, increasingly, we're asking TEAM members to be part of all of that input and decision making.

So ideas meeting, as with board of directors, is one of those crucial forums for NTW, where the future gets made, really.

The things that we might be doing two or three years from now are starting to bubble up.

So we felt it's really important that TEAM becomes part of that element of the company as well as maybe the more dignified, strategic levels, as well.

TEAM panel is a group of usually around 11 or 12 members of the bigger National Theatre Wales team.

They're often people who've worked with us for a little while who've maybe started off as participants or helping out on the marketing of a project and then went on to run their own projects.

And we use them, in a way,

as a kind of additional

board of directors for the company.

So they help us to steer and guide the company,

make decisions both about what TEAM does

but also input into bigger company decisions

like the programme and like the strategic plan.

And there are now always two members of TEAM panel

present at our board of directors meetings as well.

And they're given equal import

with the members of the board

around commenting on ideas

that I might have things to do with the company,

on policies of the company and even on the finances.

When, say, John, or Phil George, our chair

has come to a TEAM panel meeting

they speak about everything;

programming, when we're talking

about what year for a programme

they'd come and chat to a panel.

What kind of work should we do,

what kind of areas should we focus on,

basically everything which the organisation

kind of thinks about strategically,

TEAM panel have input into that.

The main way, at the moment

that TEAM get involved in governance and policy

is through attendance

of TEAM panel members at board meetings.

So at the same point that our board of directors

would get to look at policies

and get to look at strategies,

TEAM panel members will also

get to look at those things

and they're encouraged to go back

to the whole of TEAM panel

and get their input, as well,

and we share papers.

I think there are possibilities going forward

for us to go to TEAM panel

more often with policies

at the point that we're developing them

and when we're thinking about them.

So one policy, for example,

that we're working on at the moment

is around diversity, and how we reach the next stage

in terms of cultural diversity

within the organisation

and within the work that we do.

That might be a really interesting point

to go to TEAM panel and say,

"What's your input into this policy?"

Not at the point that we're taking it to board

but at an earlier stage, when we're starting to formulate it.