

Staff fears

I'm Loveday from National Museum Wales
and I just wanted to ask you a question
that returns slightly to Regisa's question
about the staff journey
and I just wanted to ask you
that, in regards to the changes
that did take place and the changes
to the general way of working within the museum,
did you experience or meet any fears, concerns,
negative attitudes within the staffing group?

For example, around working
far more closely with volunteers
in diverse and different areas
of the museum and engaging more actively
with different types of volunteers.

And if so, if you did experience any negativity or fears
or concerns, how did you address these?

Yeah, thank you for asking that.

Again, we had the benefit of the crisis.

The biggest fear people had
was that the museum was going to close
and they were all going to lose their jobs.

And so in the context of that fear,
a fear about what it might be like
to work with a, you know, a 12-year old
rock band seemed very small in comparison.

So, I think that many people were
focusing on those more primal fears,
which meant that they were more easily
able to navigate the change context.

I will say that I think one of
the things we had to address
most directly is fear of looking stupid
and I think that that's on an institutional level
as well as an individual level.

And it really has to do with kind of that sense of
'who decides whether my work is good or not?'

'Is that about my peers in the profession?'

'Is it about the community?'

'Who is it about?'

And so I think that, especially
in jobs where peer-perspectives
like curatorial jobs are so important,
we really tried to look at how we could,
and this was not very intentionally done,
but just celebrating in the new context as much as possible.

You know, kind of re-framing
what's good? What are we cheering for?

What we are we rewarding here?

So that people could see and could feel
those conditions being changed.

One of the things I did that am not sure

I would ever do again because now in retrospect I know

how much stress it caused.

The very first summer I came I said,

"You know, look, I know everybody

has a lot of work on your plates

and I don't want to be the Director

who comes in and says,

drop everything and do something new."

So what we are going to do is,

we're going to hire a whole bunch

of interns on this summer because we've got to start

generating some energy because we're in this crisis situation.

And when you feel ready and as you feel ready,

opt-in and let me know

and let's get you involved in these projects.

And so what happened was there was a staff meeting

a couple months later where there was a kind of mutiny,

where staff were saying,

"Why do the interns get to do all the fun stuff?"

And I realised that this was a great problem to have.

That if I had said to people,

"Hey, everybody needs to change how you're working now."

People would have grumbled and they would have been upset

or they would've internalised it, whatever.

But instead they saw that the value

and the energy was happening somewhere else.

And probably some of them were also afraid

that they were going to lose their jobs

to some 21-year-old intern.

But, they opted in and they said,

"We want this."

I will say we also did things

like we all moved into one room

which was really important being able to...

everybody to be together,

to have just a couple of goals

that were institution-wide goals.

Again, that was as much about getting out of crisis

as it was about changing our model

but obviously it supported changing our model,

that we all had to be in it together

and that we were building up.

I think also I had the benefit that

staff hadn't felt very trusted in the past

so there were a lot of ways

I could be successful in just saying,

"Hey, let's do this together."

And that created an opportunity

where there hadn't been one before.