

## **Staff responsibility**

Steve, Black Country Touring is a local arts organisation that's rooted in community participation.

But how do you ensure that your staff work collaboratively and all take their part in the participatory process?

Clearly, I think, you have to clearly set it out from the beginning, when people come in, that what you are trying to do is collaborative, so make people work together, make people share.

Most of us are freelance and do a lot of other freelance work.

One of the difficulties of freelance work is to tend to get used to being self-reliant and not relying on the support of other members of the team, because quite often you're working on your own.

So for all of us, sometimes, what we need to do when we come to work in the organisation is to let go of this, is to rely on, you know, our co-workers is to rely on other people, is to ask for help and support in advance.

So we have to learn that.

People like responsibility, people like to know that they can make their own decisions and they can... that they are responsible for them.

You know, and that's,

I think responsibility is a big word, actually.

So when we were talking earlier about,  
you know, when things go wrong,  
people are quite willing to put their hands up and go,  
"I should have done this,"  
or "I should have done that,"  
but that's how we learn.

By all of us talking about it  
we all learn at the same time,  
we can all learn from one mistake.  
So Janice, I've just heard from Steve  
how you can create the conditions  
for staff to take responsibility,  
but it must be frustratingly difficult  
sometimes to get everyone on board.

Can you help us with some  
of the difficulties leaders might face?

I think people sometimes  
don't want to take responsibilities,  
so they just... and they'll say  
"There you go management, sort it out."

And I find that really frustrating.

I also find it really frustrating when  
people talk about when you are working,  
your starting of a process  
and there's something that people  
have worked on with you

that they don't... they still...

because it is new and a bit scary,

or it's a direction that they are not comfortable with,

they'll then tell you it's yours still.

And I always challenge that:

"OK, I have got involved,

but I am not going to stand behind it, you stand behind it."

Part in trying to sell what I am what I'm changing differently

is trying to explain what I mean by 'strategic' as well.

When I'm saying that I want people to behave 'strategically'.

And I don't want that to then say,

"Well, I am paid at this level or I am on this grade,

therefore I can only do strategy."

Or "I'm at the bottom of the scale in terms of grading.

I can't work strategically."

No, it's not that, it's just that the responsibility for the delivery

of that strategy rests plainly with you so ultimately,

you know, where the buck stops,

that's why you're at a higher grade,

but the involvement and the thinking

that goes into that strategic

development comes from everywhere,

and comes from every level.

And you should be encouraging people

to be able to really push themselves

if they want to, even if they don't want to sometimes.

But you know, if you've got somebody

who's a brilliant learning assistant  
or a brilliant learning facilitator  
and they want to get involved  
and they want to develop this content,  
then give them the opportunity to do that.

If you're working with a job description  
that says that you'll do X on this day,  
or you will do Y only, and you can't do X,  
then people will stay in that box.

But it's about that responsibility and  
it's about saying to people,

"Open it up." But, yes,  
you ultimately have the responsibility,  
that's why you are at that grade  
and that person is at a different grade.