

Support champions and influencers to counter staff resistance

Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales

Staff resistance to working in a participatory way is a common issue. Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales experimented with different ways of tackling this. Focusing on developing those staff who were reluctant to change was both time and labour intensive, and even with these investments some staff members were still unwilling or unable to change.

A more effective approach was to work solely with staff who had a passion or interest in working in a participatory manner. Time was spent more efficiently, as staff were not getting drawn into a barrier conversation which tends to be circular in nature and can obstruct progress. Staff who are already engaged tend to come with practical ideas and are keen to press forward. A group of positive voices creates a more fertile and supportive working environment for ideas to flourish. Staff with a positive approach to community engagement return to their own departments enthused with the work being undertaken; this has a ripple effect on colleagues who may have been previously disengaged.

This organic process of bringing staff on board has been far more successful than a mandatory approach. It was described by one member of staff using the analogy of a river. Participatory work is like the water, carrying the positive work and impacts with it. Staff who are unwilling to change are like rocks in the river; the water can't displace them so instead flows around them. Over time, the water wears down the rock, or as the current gets stronger it can eventually move the rock.

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Extract from: No Longer us and them: How to change into a participatory museum and gallery.

Available on the Our Museum resources website <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/>