



Doncaster
Enterprise for
Learning

Business Placement Case Study and Evaluation 21

Nicola from Hall Cross Comprehensive School visited Ascendance Rep on a business placement in October 2008.

Ascendance Rep is a dance and performing arts company.

Job Study - Education Officer

What does your job role involve?

I am responsible for developing, managing and delivering the company's education programme. I plan workshops including the teaching and delivering of them. I also do the funding applications and strategic development of education work. I project manage not just one off workshops but sustainable ones as well. I do the administration and teaching. Each day is different. I not only control how to get work but also the direction and the progression of the work.

What key skills are required for your role?

Skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are important.
For example:

Numeracy

Numeracy is required for budgeting and also managing the education budget and the freelancers.

Literacy

This is required for the administration and marketing of the company.

ICT

I use ICT for looking at CVs and communicating by email.

Working with others

I write emails and letters to build partnerships.

Communication

I work with professionals, schools, theatres, community centres and project managers and need to communicate effectively with them all.

What qualifications, training and/or experience did you need to enter your job?

It would help to train in arts administration. I had professional experience (equating to having a degree). My degree is in performing arts. I also have vocational training. I needed experience of working in community settings and with young people. I also have administrative experience and project management experience. I am CRB checked and have public liability experience and first aid.

What extra qualifications/training have you gained in your current role?

I had training for a fundraising application from the trustees and colleagues. I also was trained in how to write job descriptions for projects and appraisals. I also needed budgeting training and excel programme training.

I completed an oral history course which was linked to a Heritage lottery funding application

What are the working conditions of your job?

I work 37 hours per week and I am sometimes required to work in the evenings and at weekends.

I work indoors and outdoors and at various venues. I have done workshops in a playground and at site-specific outdoor venues, such as paths, cathedrals and some sculpture work.

I am responsible for risk-assessments, ensuring a safe working environment and that the class does not put people at risk.

What advice would you give to young people interested in entering this field?

Get as much experience in as many areas as possible. You need a lot of transferable skills. Look at 'Youth Dance England' guide to careers - yde.org.uk. You need to create opportunities for yourself and be proactive. Look at setting up a class and setting up funding. Go out and get teaching work. Talk to community organisations

Evaluation of the Business Placement

What did you do on the placement?

I shadowed the education officer and found out about many other roles within the organisation.

What knowledge about the organisation, its sector and its market place did you gain?

I gained an understanding of the structure of the organisation, and the work of the artistic director, education officer (whom I shadowed and assisted) and the part time administrator. Talking to each of these people helped me to see the differences in their roles and also how multi skilled each of them needs to be.

Through going out and assisting with a project in the community, I met the Chair of Upton Together community group who are working with Ascendance to develop a project for the young people in Upton (a deprived area in Leeds). Speaking to the Chair gave me an insight into how community organisations go about finding suitable dance teachers to work with the funding process that they need to go through to make projects happen. Through shadowing , I also gained a deeper understanding of the wide range of projects that the company work on, from medium scale touring with professional dancers, to working with special needs groups. I also learnt more about the policies and day to day requirements that a dance company need in place to operate effectively and safely.

Do you feel that the placement was a success? Please give reasons

Yes, the placement was definitely a success as I feel I have met both my personal and professional objectives set out at the beginning of the placement. It has been interesting to see the similarities and differences between how a dance education officer in a professional dance company delivers and plans sessions. There is, in general, much more emphasis on technique and creativity for creativeness sake . The sessions had a clear goal to work towards a performance. This was a very different environment from a school setting. I plan to use some of the practical activities in my teaching of contemporary dance technique. Especially interesting was reading through the

company business plan and applications to various organisations for funding. I hope to use this knowledge and understanding to make a funding application for a community based dance project at school. The skills of administration teaching, performance, budgeting communication and many many more are required to fulfil the role of education officer.

Could you suggest any improvements to the management of the business placement?

I think I would have found it very useful to have looked at the Doncaster Enterprise for Learning website before my placement. I am sure it would have helped in persuading my school that it would be worthwhile sending me on the placement. I felt that NALD were very willing to find me a placement in the specific area that I felt would be useful to me, although it took some time to filter through the private dance schools (i.e. evening classes for children) placement possibilities to find a professional dance company that would be suitable for a placement. I feel that this has been of great benefit to me and should a future opportunity allow, I should like to follow a different role in another dance company or arts organisation to continue to build on my new knowledge and understanding.

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