

# Wham bam, no thank you NAMS

## BACKSTAGE

BY CHRIS HODGKINS

the arts in the UK.

The same applies to internal analysis which should be a detailed examination of the key features and capabilities of the arts and should cover objectives and strategies (if any), structure of organisations, finances, marketing, production, personnel and capital equipment - eg theatres, arts centres etc. The internal resources represent the strengths and weaknesses of the arts.

A serious analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and the arts would reveal the key strategic issues that are of 'central and crucial importance to the survival, development and prosperity of an organisation (the arts) and the extent to which it is able to obtain, allocate and control its resources in such a way as to take advantage of the changes that go on in its environment and avoid or overcome the the arts they pose' (2). That same analysis would also help answer two decisive questions: "What is the business doing now?" and "What should the business be doing?" (2). Neither question has been sensibly addressed by NAMS.

### Goals

From the analysis and the key issues flows the business of setting the mission statement - ie stating the organisation's basic function in society in terms of the products and services it produces for its customers and setting goals and objectives. Goals are defined as the intention behind decisions or actions. For example, a goal would be to increase attendances or earned income. An objective is a goal stated in measurable or quantifiable form. For example, the goal is to increase earned income, the objective is to increase

transportation to reach the destination. What can be done? The answer is to halt the current exercise in its tracks both at national and regional level and send in a team with the right expertise to develop a real and achievable strategy for the arts. If the strategy calls for restructuring then the arts will have to bite the bullet.

If the current wretched process continues its madcap way then the arts in Britain will end up with an unusable strategy that will be impossible to 'fit' to, or which will be unable to work with the existing structure of regional strategies.

Failure to resolve this issue will result in an even greater waste of scarce resources as strategy and structure begin to become inexorably unglued.

(1) Exploring Corporate Strategy, Johnson & Scholes 1988.  
(2) Competitive Strategy, Porter 1980.

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The National Arts & Media Strategy (NAMS) has already provoked such comments as Silence of the NAMS (Arts Management Weekly June 11, 1992) and 'The good, the bad and the execrable' (Brian Sewell, Evening Standard, June 4).

This was added to at the NAMS meeting at Imperial College last month, organised by the National Campaign for the Arts (NCA), where Robert Hewison (Sunday Times, Radio 3 Third Ear) observed that Towards a National Arts & Media Strategy was full of 'pious hope,' and David Pratley - NCA Chair - in a burst of optimism remarked that there were some useful ideas that could be developed and it was a step forward from the Glory Of The Garden.

It's going to be tough for the arts in the UK, for pious hope with some useful ideas do not make a National Strategy for the Arts.

Towards a National Arts & Media Strategy was distilled from 44 discussion documents that are of limited analytical use. It is doubtful whether any of it can be rejigged into a meaningful and purposeful strategy for the arts in Britain.

The approach to developing this strategy has been flawed from the very start; firstly, restructuring took place contrary to accepted management principles; and secondly a strategy committee was established that is notable for its lack of professional expertise in strategy formulation.

Strategy development and management has three main elements: strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategic implementation (1). Towards a National Arts & Media Strategy has seemingly ignored these crucial elements.

The aim of strategic analysis is to form a view of the key influences on the present and future well-being of the arts, and therefore on the choices that will have to be made. An understanding of the external environment is vital - ie the political, economic, social and technological environment in which the arts exist. A prime example of the lack of analysis is that the NAMS document reads as if the ideology and culture of Thatcherism haven't existed. A further example is that NAMS is against Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), doubting that it is 'the best way forward for the arts or local communities.' To pretend that CCT might somehow disappear, or will have no impact on the arts, is dangerously naive and exposes the lack of real political and economic analysis.

The NAMS document has yet to get to grips with the external analysis, which is precisely to expose the opportunities and the arts that face