

Introduction

It is often said that the rate of technological advances brought more social change to human society in the last fifty years than in the previous five-thousand. Regardless of whether this is true, it can be asserted definitively that the digital revolution that has occurred over the last decade or so has completely changed the world in ways that would have been unimaginable just a short time ago. Furthermore, it has had a profound effect on commerce, with every single business of every nature now finding itself having to compete in a global marketplace in which people all over the planet can be viewed as legitimate targets for one's custom.

The most tangible expression of this digital revolution is, of course, the Internet. It was unimaginable just decades ago that most people would have in their house a contraption that would enable them to connect with people all over the world, to access vast libraries of movies and music in a matter of seconds, not to mention all of the other opportunities and facets that the Internet offers us. All businesses with any sort of ambition must not embrace this technology if they wish to be successful. To ignore the digital revolution and the new economy that has sprung up from it is simply commercial suicide.

Museums have traditionally been viewed as businesses that are somewhat separate from the usual rules of business. If the notion of many industries is to pile it high and sell it cheap, this has been a world away from the predominant ethos in museums, which has been to offer a content-rich experience, with any commercial activity almost tacked on as an after thought.

However, in this digital age, in which there are many competing avenues in which for people to spend their time and money, and with the decreasing size of the globe brought about by modern methods of transportation, and a popular cultural lifestyle that is oriented on travel and consumerism, museums can no longer afford to be complacent about how and whom they attract through their doors. The need to work more efficiently, to have a carefully crafted business plan, and to efficiently target the biggest demographic of customers possible have become essential. Just because museums serve a worthy purpose it doesn't mean that they can ignore the prevailing trends of the marketplace and exist in a sort of bubble or vacuum. They are just as vulnerable to the vagaries of commercial enterprise and trends as any other business.

This can be looked upon as an unfortunate aspect of our modern existence, or it can be grasped as an opportunity. Which one of these paths is chosen lies entirely within the hands of the individual proprietor of a museum. You can either cling steadfastly to outmoded business practices, or recognise that many businesses that are in competition with yours will not be dealing with this transition very efficiently, and that if you manage it well then you have a serious edge over the competition.

Thus, this study will look at numerous areas that are important in growing your museum

business and sustaining it in these competitive times. It will look at how to maximise your presence in cyberspace, how to engage in efficient and effective market research that will grow your museum's potential, how to effectively brand your museum so that it appeals to your key demographic, how to organise your museum to keep people coming back for more, and how to run the operation efficiently to maximise profit, among other topics.

This is an essential guide for anyone running a museum who wants to know how their enterprise can not only survive, but prosper in the new economic age.