

## One Point Summary Report

### Women's Studio Workshop Brainstorming Session February 18, 2016

#### **Attendees:**

#### **For WSW:**

Ellen Alexander  
Ann Kalmbach  
Rachel Myers  
Lauren Walling

#### **For HBSCNY:**

Susan Becker  
Charles A. Moran  
John O'Donnell  
John Prufeta  
Ilona Theodora Rand  
Michele Sachar  
Douglas Wu

#### **Ellen Alexander:**

#### **In order to build an effective board that strategically meets the needs of WSW, we must:**

- **Identify categories needed to advance WSW's mission**
  - Be creative and think outside our usual framework
  - Diversity in skill set/contribution is important (e.g. curator, artist, philanthropist, lawyer)
- **Create a persuasive sales pitch for potential board members**
  - What makes WSW board special, exciting, interesting
- **Craft strategies for targeting potential members**

- Determine board financial contribution

## **Increase revenue**

- Have a broader approach to new sources of revenue
- Become more creative in selling artists' books (e.g. subscriptions series)
- Consider artistic output beyond books
- Reach out to high capacity donors/philanthropists with naming opportunities that support WSW's mission (e.g. Agnes Gund Residency for Women)

## **Bottom Line:**

Think big!

WSW is special and as John O'Donnell says....we don't have problems...just opportunities!

## **Susan Becker:**

The greatest gift that Ann as founder and executive director of WSW can do is to articulate the vision for WSW. What are the 3 -4 key items that define what WSW looks like in three years? This includes nailing a date for her last day of work and legacy celebration party. Roadmaps and execution steps will become very clear once the end game is defined.

Remember -- Figure out what kind of house you want and separately decide how you will finance it.

I would interested in:

1) Reaching out to Keith Fox, CEO of Phaidon Press and see if he would talk to Ann, Ellen or Lauren

2) Reaching out to Bertina Ceccarelli, Executive Vice President, Global Resources at Wildlife Conservation Society -- an HBS grad in NY who has made a career in

working with boards, fundraising, ROI initiatives for corporations with giving programs, etc.

3) Potentially work with Ann and others in the group to document the three year plan (vision, roadmap)

### **Ann Kalmbach:**

It was interesting to me to see how a functioning advisory group/board could operate. The conversation, engagement, and strategic thinking that was going on was both exciting and enlightening.

I am from the think big/aim high school, and while I think WSW does that with service to artists, I think that our current board does not work at that level and has dragged down, sometimes thwarting our efforts to reach out. Reimagining selling an investment in WSW's residency as THE women artist's residency (which I think we already are) worthy of significant institutional investment was exactly the kind of thinking I want to engender on a new board.

Learning that a board wants to have fun, mingle with the rich and famous, add a line to their resume for their own corporate advancement, share expertise, and learn something was very valuable.

The practical way of looking at how to build a board based on skill set was again reassuring of our efforts to outreach and underscores our innate knowledge that we need a national board.

Working with executive women in the tech world was an exciting idea, we have never considered.

### **Charles Moran:**

Last evening produced a rich list of substantive, ad hoc ideas to address the short and long term challenges of WSW. The challenge is to winnow and focus a subset of those ideas, that are consistent with the history/core values of WSW, into a strategy FULLY supported by the staff and those you are trying to attract as Board Members (including advisory boards -lesser involvement) all the way to reduced involvement of "friends of ASW).

I recommend that you have clearly articulated criteria for each of these groups (financial, talent, name, ...) and most importantly the value they get from ASW. The friends group, for example, may just receive the minimum to keep them connected for a lifetime and be a bench for other kinds of involvement.

This should all be driven by your vision for WSW and consolidated into a 1 and 2 year strategy. You should evaluate yourself on dedication to the outcomes and ingenuity in overcoming shortcomings to the strategy as you pursue these outcomes. This will provide a clarity to those you are trying to attract to your vision (something that may be more connective than others asking for a involvement) and determine what things you will exclude from your workload to free up more time to execute your plan.

### **Rachel Myers:**

WSW must create invigorating profiles that would serve to excite potential board members, regenerate revenue ideas, and work towards partnerships that center on WSW's areas of expertise as well as other areas that are necessary to building our reputation. In order to attain our goals and to continue our growth through transition, these new ideas must meet at the intersection of visionary thinking, grounded practicality, and clarity of intention.

All of this work revolves around thinking big and aiming high. It is so easy for us to slip into "small thinking," focusing on problems, and losing our spark because of day-to-day operations demands. We know that WSW is an incredible place and we need to communicate that in an exciting way when asking for funding, when recruiting board members, and when promoting our core programming, like the residencies and internships. We need to refocus on celebrating what is unique and vibrant about WSW.

### **John O'Donnell:**

WSW is nearing a "generational change" in management, from the founder generation to the professional management generation. WSW should fully conceptualize and internalize the organizational differences implicit in this hand-over.

Some thoughts to aid in this transition are:

- The founders should set a clear date now for their final “day at the office,” whether 2 or 3 years hence. Do not delay this decision based on how things are looking at the time. Make the call now to retire at a specific time – “June 30 2018,” for example, or “end of fiscal year 2019” - and ensure everyone on staff knows and respects that date.
- With their departure date in mind, it is paramount that the founders have a clear vision now for the staffing and infrastructure in place at that time. Build a consensus with the board and staff on that vision. Once consensus is achieved on the vision, then it will be the founder’s main responsibility between now and then to implement that vision – and to disengage from the daily minutiae of operations along the way, so that their departure leaves no gaps in the daily operations. In this case, it seems that establishing a “Board for the Future,” and possibly building an endowment, might compose those main objectives. Use the upcoming retirement as the reason to launch your first endowment capital drive – as a way for the outside world to recognize and applaud the founders for their major contribution to “female empowerment,” or “gender equality in the arts,” or “building the world’s most exclusive women’s artist retreat program,” what-have-you.
- Remember that only your internal people know your internal problems. External observers focus on your outward signs of success, which are impressive in this case.
- Leverage your success factors to build stature, prestige and cachet by attracting a higher level of organizational talent. Leapfrog into who you wish to become, by acting like it now.

For example: You have the ability to offer an incredible weekend workshop/retreat.

1) Find a very high profile female artist who will donate one weekend of their time to you as your guest and keynote artist. Don’t ask them for money, or a freebie artwork, or a continuing commitment of time - just ask for one weekend as your guest, during which they will make one formal presentation to your other guests during that weekend, in addition to showing up for Saturday dinner and Sunday brunch.

2) Market that weekend to ten high-profile corporate women – Presidents, Senior VP’s, Board Directors only. Sell them (for a high price!) the opportunity to mingle with the artist and other high-ranking execs for a weekend at a

beautiful countryside art retreat. Consider that you are selling bragging rights to name-droppers, so charge a lot of money.

3) Give everyone a tremendous and unforgettable weekend – great food and wine, great art workshops which let them create things, great networking with people they want to meet, and great gifts (your own products, of course!) to take home, along with lots of high-end, limited edition, cool logo clothing they'll start wearing to impress their friends. You're charging a lot of money, so use it to treat them well.

4) Rinse and repeat. This is how you become the next TED. It worked for them, it will work for you.

- Do not allow any organizational inferiority complexes to blind you to the fact that you have a compelling story to tell the highest level of philanthropically minded people – especially women – in order to gain both their direct support and their introductions to others on their level.

Remember: You can look any billionaire in the eye and say you are not only the largest publisher of artist books in the world, you are also the world's preeminent women's art empowerment program. Successful people want to associate with successful people – not losers - so don't act like poor cousins who need a hand-out. Act like gracious winners who are generous enough to let the suits into your "success space" to play a different – and more fun - game than their normal corporate lives allow. That's what will make them want to play with you.

### **John Prufeta:**

My advice is to focus near term (2-3 years) on four main arenas:

- **Build the Board – Focus in on Money Raisers, Domain Experts, and Artists.** I'm not at all feeling bound to bring in "locals" given the desire to go "International". They are conflicting themes. I agree re women majority, but remember philanthropy rules re "Men donate, Women Bequeath"
- Build, Protect and Leverage the IP
- Product/Service Building to Generate Substantial Revenue. The best 501c 3's build products and sell them. Don't rely solely on DONORS.

- Create Global Distribution Channels
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Some people I can help reach regarding Board and/or Donors and/or Partners:

Florence Davis – President and CEO Starr Foundation (her office is right next door to me)

Scott Havens, CEO Bloomberg Digital

Jennifer Li - CFO Baidu

Larry Gagosian

Dasha Zhukova – Philanthropist and World-recognized in art circles, Founder of the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art (her husband, Roman Abramovich is my business partner)

Julia Solovieva – General Director, Google (HBS 2001)

I'll also be happy to help WSW build the **Board Recruiting Package, which I view as central to the recruiting process.**

### **Theo Rand:**

1) Never forget the WOMEN.

This is the spring from which your mission, your people and your passion flow. I heard and saw nothing to suggest you have moved away from this organizing principle in any way, and yet I note that it is so obvious it may be easy to forget on occasion.

This does not mean "no men allowed". We live in a world of "He for She", and support for good work can and does flow across all boundaries of gender, race and imbalance of privilege. Invite them in and show them your work. And keep your board 51% women- it will make sense to them, too.

2) Build "caché" around your internship and residency programs.

(You have already found how interns can bring you wonderful rewards.) The reputation of the residency and internship will have positive ripple effect throughout the organization: that is your core business and your mission. Douglas and others have suggested terrific institutions and people to reach for. I suggest here only two small practical ways to begin:

a)The Subscription: a practical, low-cost way to begin to build buzz among interested collectors with some disposable income. Begin with a reasonable price for your beautiful product and build loyalty. You can raise the offer and the price at a later date. I might suggest 4 items per year: two books and two prints. Then offer the other two books in a personal letter to subscribers as an additional purchase. And mail them your special event invitations with an invitation to visit the workshop.

b)Someone suggested it and it didn't get shouted out: give some prints as donations to select fundraising auctions for institutions you want to talk to. For example: the students at Miss Porter's School run an auction to help fund their class gift each year. They get wonderful donations. A print would stand out and might be a low-cost easy way to get the word out in a community of strong women alumnae. I would guess that Brearley and others do the same.

2-1/2) **The Board: separate out the idea of the board as a source of financial support and the idea of its being an effective source of expertise, guidance and governance.** You have a very effective and dedicated Board Chair. Build on that strength and **choose a group of people who represent the grid of ideas and expertise you want and need going forward. And then use them. And set a minimum commitment that is realistic and meaningful to your organization.** \$5K was your number. I like that, or something like it. It leaves you room to ask for contributions to specific campaigns. You can make it clear that you will expect those, but they can choose the amount. Some will give to the building, others will give to the endowment, and others will bring you their friends. It's all good.

Your mission and the work are compelling. Your people are also compelling. I agree that you don't have problems, you have opportunities.

Best of luck.



## **Michele Sachar:**

My main advice would be to think about each opportunity with the audience that you are trying to reach. In other words, put together your offering in a way that would appeal to that audience's sensibilities and needs. Whether it is to offer art education to regional private and boarding schools or to create curated books and prints to individual art collectors through a subscription service, keep in mind which audience you are approaching and create a tailored approach. You may think of this as a **product** and **marketing** around that product to create a desire on the part of the customer to purchase your product.

To break into new donor base, consider San Francisco/Silicon Valley, Seattle and Los Angeles.

**San Francisco/Silicon Valley/Seattle.** Focusing on the female executives who are successful, wealthy, and upwardly mobile, you can appeal to their pride as successful women to highlight how they can help WSW. You may even approach this group with a new revenue opportunity, a workshop offering to some tech companies such as Google, Survey Monkey, and Facebook, among others. In this workshop, you would approach the Human Resources department that deals with employee satisfaction by creating a program for the executives and their children. This way, you could introduce yourselves to your target board members while making money for the organization. Again, consider the marketing aspect. To the tech company, you are creating a valuable and unusual experience that they can provide to their senior employees. When you speak directly to these executives, consider what they may gain from involvement on the WSW Board – art knowledge, impact, and an entrée into the art world that they may not have obvious access to otherwise. Their participation could satisfy their aspirations in the art and education world, their potential desire for art acquisition, as well as having the cache of being on a non-profit board.

**Los Angeles/Hollywood communities.** Focusing on the female executives in film and television, who are successful, wealthy, and have a strong voice in the media and public relations worlds. Some examples are Patricia Arquette, who was so vocal on national TV about equal pay for women, and Shonda Rhimes, as well as the more successful behind-the-scenes executives and media companies. In addition, there are young actresses who are moms and who are vocal about creating strong role models for their kids. A workshop may help engage these actress moms and their networks. When you approach this community, consider that they are natural influencers and focus on the women's aspect.

## **Lauren Walling:**

Although each participant offered a unique angle or perspective, each was consistent in the big picture which is that the Women's Studio Workshop has a lot to offer to anyone involved in any aspect of our organization. Staying present to this reality will allow us recruit talent and teamwork in all areas of our work.

## **Douglas Wu:**

1) Consider expanding the artist-in-residence program for women (perhaps a new branding/ naming opportunity) to a world-class institution along the lines of Breadloaf for writers. This might enable WSW to go to existing and new donors, particularly foundations and corporations, for a bigger ask. If successful, this might enable WSW to raise an endowment and obviate the need for annual donations from individuals to sustain programs.

2) Generate revenue from education. Take advantage of proximity to boarding schools such as Hotchkiss, Berkshire, Millbrook (farther away Taft, Deerfield, Kent, Suffield, Salisbury) to offer specialty courses in paper making/ women's art studies/ bespoke book making etc. This might generate revenue that could alleviate pressure from annual fundraising to fund the operating budget. In addition, it could raise WSW's profile as these schools have large endowments/ operating budgets and national and international reach. Many of these schools also have campus museums/ galleries that have rotating exhibits/ lectures. If this is of interest, I know way too much about New England boarding schools.

3) Target proximate affluent communities such as Millbrook, Sharon, CT and environs, Onterora for events/ exhibits/ fundraising events/ donors/ board members. One example might be an event on the eve of the Millbrook Polo Match using a venue such as the Dyson Millbrook Vineyards as a draw.

4) Consider hiring a development officer (perhaps a part-time one whose remuneration is commission based). In particular, if there is interest in pursuing number 1 above, the targets would likely be foundations and corporations interested in advancing women studies/ women in the arts and willing to write larger six and seven figure checks.