

“The Entrepreneurial Museum and the Wild Spirits?”

- Bring “entrepreneurial” is a state of mind, a culture, and one that is open to all institutions. The idea that a museum cannot or should not be commercially sharp and effective has long since passed.
- Of course, many museums, not only the independent museums like the ss Great Britain, assume that they need a good retail shop and a nice café in order to supplement their income. Is that enough, and what does a culture of entrepreneurialism mean?
- Sir Richard Branson: “I wanted to be an editor or a journalist, I wasn’t really interested in being an entrepreneur, but I soon found out *I had to become an entrepreneur* in order to keep my magazine going.”
- Anita Roddick: “Nobody talks of entrepreneurship as *survival*, but that’s exactly what it is, and what nurtures creative thinking.”
- So being entrepreneurial is about all about *survival*, and about *opportunity*. For an independent museum these are essential facts of life.
- Machiavelli said “Entrepreneurs are simply those who understand that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity, and are able to turn both to their advantage.”
- What is the essence of “entrepreneurialism? Kirzner said: “a person who spots and acts on opportunities”
- Schumpeter said: “Innovation and change come from “Wild Spirits”. – That is wild spirits running “commercial” charities/museums. In fact many of our best loved museums were founded by enthusiastic, and perhaps slightly mad, volunteers. Certainly the amazing rescue of the ss Great Britain back to England was a great example of “wild spirits” being entrepreneurial.
- There are clearly differences nevertheless between independent museums and the public, state-run museums. But being entrepreneurial is a state of mind, a personal culture of identifying and seizing your opportunities wherever they may lie, and it should be continuous and ongoing.
- “We know it when we see it but we don’t find it” in business plans, organisation charts, and job descriptions. Mark Twain: “I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one”.
- In some or many museums there is an ingrained mindset against entrepreneurialism. It is about trading and being commercial, they say. And that is bad, but remember the “Wild Spirits”! The source of creativity and adventure lies there.
- Studies show that the most successful entrepreneurs “are convinced that they command their own destinies” But the culture of many museums does not encourage this self-assured attitude, and does not allow people to flourish.

- How can museums be entrepreneurial without compromising their integrity? Answer: Don't make compromising decisions! (although bad management decisions will)
- So let's not be afraid. Instead let us empower our people and let loose the Wild Spirits!

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