



C R E A
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**STRONGER ARTS
AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATIONS
FOR A GREATER
SOCIAL IMPACT**

CREATIVE
LENSES
CASE STUDY
**NIEUWE HELDEN
– NEW HEROES**

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Interviewee Wouter Goedheer, Managing Director

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Creative Lenses is a four-year project, running from 2015 to 2019, that seeks to make arts and cultural organisations more resilient and sustainable by improving their business models and developing their long-term strategic and innovation capacities.

To find out more about Creative Lenses and its publications, visit www.creativelenses.eu



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CREATIVE LENSES PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



NIEUWE HELDEN – NEW HEROES

Location Amsterdam, Netherlands

Website www.companynewheroes.com

Vision *'In a world where there is no longer one truth, one shared ideology and everyone must decide for themselves what he stands for and where he goes, there is more than ever before a need to truly meet and encounter each other... New Heroes creates moments in which you can encounter yourself, the other and the world... We create the common ground... places of connection, wonder, amazement, surprise, confusion and in the end: encounters.'*

Organisation type Non-profit

Main activities Company New Heroes develops and produces projects. Each project starts from a subject or a theme and aims to create a dialogue with the 'right' audience. Projects run for several years and contain multiple outcomes or 'products'. They have no fixed form, developing in line with what is right for that theme. This might include performances, podcasts, documentaries, exhibitions, etc. There are approximately 10-15 projects running at any one time.

'A new hero doesn't have superpowers, isn't immortal but knows this and dares to embrace it and make it his strength. The power of not knowing. We tell stories. We are triggered by urban environments and problems, and always try to find the human side, the human scale of things. We believe in the importance for people to be seen and heard.'

Introduction

2008 – Lucas De Man, Bas van Rijnsoever and Wouter Goedheer graduated from the theatre academy in Amsterdam (from different courses), with the urge to make art relevant to people. To not just perform for the same people, in the same places, but to reach a much broader range of society. Producing work in places where everyday people spend their time, where art can cause or evoke something.

They started to work in a range of public spaces, creating their own company called Nieuwe Helden (New Heroes) working within the Netherlands and Belgium.

New Heroes started to form a repertoire of past projects, outcomes and performances. Projects evolve and adapt for different contexts and audiences, but are kept simple in terms of operational requirements to enable them to travel. Work started touring across Europe.

2017 – Structural funding was secured to strengthen the business model. This came from the Performing Arts Fund NL, which provides support on behalf of the Dutch government, the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts, and the Bank Giro Loterij Fund.

2018 – International work expands including starting a tour in south-east Asia and preparing a performance for the USA.

Key income streams

1. Public funding	36%
2. Project income	33%
3. Sales of performances	16%
4. Co-productions	12%
5. Private funding	3%

Turnover 2017 € 1,247,895

Surplus/deficit 2017 € 3,500 surplus

Number of employees and volunteers

No-one is employed by the company. Everyone involved, including the directors, have freelance contracts. Projects only take place once a core amount of funding is secured. They then grow and are further enhanced and developed as additional income is confirmed.

The business model

Company New Heroes has adopted a networked business model. The right people are brought on board to contribute to each theme. Overtime, they have developed a network of over 200 makers, thinkers and creators who have come together in different formations for each project. Some will work with New Heroes just once, others multiple times, depending upon the needs of each theme.

Therefore, overheads are kept incredibly low. New Heroes doesn't have a theatre venue and no one, including the directors, has a permanent employment contract, everyone is employed on a freelance basis in line with the needs of each theme and project. This means that everyone must adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and approach,

collaborating to find projects, securing funding, and developing work in line with their vision and philosophy.

Regarding their working methodology, once a potential theme has been identified, they begin a process of research – interviewing people who have lived experiences and have different perspectives on that theme. This happens very early on and helps shape who might contribute as a creator on that project.

This crucial research phase also helps them to shape the purpose of the project, what difference they want it to make, and who that theme is for. This means that they sometimes sell performances to theatres and arts venues and engage traditional arts audiences, and sometimes gain project funding to enable them to perform in public spaces where specific types of people will be found, e.g., farms, political spaces, universities, banks, etc.

For example, a project entitled *'The Elderly and Desire'*, an intimate theatre play about aging and passion, started with months of bombarding elderly people with questions such as:

'Can you still fall in love at the age of 80?'
'Do the butterflies still feel the same as in your twenties?'
'Do you still have sex?'
'And how do people around you react to that?'

They spoke to psychologists, caretakers, activity supervisors and pastors, but mainly to the elderly themselves. All these stories

of past and present were turned into a performance filled with music, film, words and even a little dance here and there.

They adopted a strict door policy. This show is exclusively accessible for people over 65 or those who are accompanied by a person over 65.

'DON'T JUST COPY OTHER BUSINESS MODELS OR THE DOMINANT MODEL IN THE SECTOR. WE ARE CREATIVE. WE WORK IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES. WE NEED TO BE AS CREATIVE ABOUT OUR BUSINESS MODEL AND HOW WE WORK AS WE ARE ABOUT THE ARTISTIC CONTENT'



'START WITH THE ARTISTIC PURPOSE. TAILOR MAKE A BUSINESS MODEL THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU'

The drivers for change

As with all business models, this networked approach has presented several challenges:

1. As the organisation grew and became more successful, they were balancing the needs of multiple projects alongside one another which left less and less time for the research and development phase and for inspiring partners, creators and funders.
2. The research stage is crucial to the success of each theme. It provides insights, perspectives, stories, etc. It highlights who to approach as creators and contributors; it highlights who to engage as audiences, visitors and participants; and it highlights which organisations, funds or partners might provide the funding for the project.

This means however, that until they've secured the funding for a project there is no income. The research stage was initially carried out by the founders giving their time for free. As time went on, and family and other commitments grew, this became unsustainable and a new model was needed to support this part of their work.

3. Project ideas tend to be ambitious. They often identify the need for interdisciplinary work, innovative outputs, and digital activities, e.g., podcasts, online documentaries, geolocation apps enabling the content to adapt and evolve

as people engage in different places, etc. Content produced online is often expected to be free and this sort of work is therefore sometimes difficult to fund within the current model.

The solution

Developing income to cover core costs: Each project now has a line built into it to contribute income towards future overheads. In 2017, they also secured structural funding for the first time from the Dutch government. This provides vital unrestricted, non-project specific, funding to enable the research and development phase.

This has enabled the staff structure to now typically include:

- One artistic director and one managing director.
- Four core team members and three coordinators working across all projects.
- Five project managers, four creative producers and approximately 40 creatives (from photographers, to actors, to technicians) working on specific projects.

The coordinators free up Directors time to research ideas, to imagine and create, and to connect with partners and funders and inspire them to get on board.

Co-productions and partnerships:

Connection, partnership and collaboration have been key to making the business model work.

Diverse partners provide cultural, social, educational, technological, scientific and financial input, both locally and internationally. This enables them to broaden

the outputs and impacts of projects (including digital outputs).

Building on this they are now experimenting with co-productions to enable different types of projects to be developed.

Commissions:

The expertise they've developed in creative concept development and event production has generated additional opportunities for commercial income. Recently this has included developing an overall creative concept for TEDxAmsterdam, as well as hosting and presenting on the day. They also gain commissions to plan and deliver commercial events and festivals. This is a growing area of their work and is likely to enable future investment in other parts of their activity and ambitions, as well as building connections that could spark future projects and ideas.

The implementation

New Heroes has developed three 'business rules' to ensure everyone understands what needs to happen to maintain a financially viable business model:

1. Find the right partners for each project.
2. Who works gets paid – ensure that everyone is fairly paid for the work they do.
3. Don't spend money you don't have – create several budget scenarios or variations at the early ideas stage which enable the project to take place in different formats and at different

scales. Don't commit to anything, until funding is in place.

The results

- Since 2008, the founders, together with their network of creators, have made over 45 projects and over 30 urban actions in over 20 countries.
- Their projects have reached over 5 million people.
- They are now capturing the stories of how their work has touched and impacted upon a diverse mix of people.

Lesson learnt and advice

Think about *'what you want to make, and why?'*

'Find the right partners, creators and audiences.' Don't just maintain relationships or activities because they are there. Be prepared to stop. To grow. To shrink.

Don't just copy other business models or the dominant model in the sector. *'We are creative. We work in the creative industries. We need to be as creative about our business model and how we work as we are about the artistic content'*.

'Start with the artistic purpose. Tailor make a business model that's right for you.' What do you have? What might you add from new connections? Who is it for? Where might it be best to produce the work? Who might be the audience, the customer or funder?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Aldridge is a consultant specialising in business planning, marketing strategy, and organisational development. She works with a diverse mix of clients from across the arts, heritage and cultural sector. Supporting leaders and teams to devise new strategies to achieve their ambitions during a time of rapid change. Prior to becoming a consultant, Julie was Executive Director of the Arts Marketing Association (AMA) for well over a decade. juliealdridge.co.uk

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