

TEDxBerkleeValencia – June 21st 2014

Culminating Experience Reflective Report

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Operational Project: TEDxBerkleeValencia

Initial Role: Marketing Department

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Berklee
college of
music

Valencia Campus

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TEDx

BerkleeValencia

x = independently organized TED event

21st June - Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía

Descriptive Summary of the Project

Technology, Entertainment and Design: **TED**, a non-profit organisation, has been devoted since 1984 to spreading ideas in the form of maximum 18-minute talks. Having begun as a converging point for these three topics, the success of this initiative has made TED conferences cover almost every topic nowadays, in more than 100 different languages. On the other hand – again in the spirit of ideas worth spreading – the **TEDx** program was created featuring local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience.

“ TEDx is a platform where people can **share their ideas** with people from different backgrounds. ”

Living in a creative hub such as **Berklee College of Music**, the fit seemed perfect. Having obtained the license to organise our very own first **TEDxBerkleeValencia** event, enabled us to take advantage of TED’s well-positioned brand, giving our community many possibilities and advantages. Staff and students were given the chance to audition to be a speaker, sharing their own creative and innovative ideas, hence stimulating their own selves while generating

awareness among the Spanish community for Berklee Valencia. TEDxBerkleeValencia has been the perfect opportunity to combine and cross promote both brands, hopefully becoming a precedent that will add national and international exposure. TED and TEDx videos have millions of views online, meaning the marketing potential for Berklee Valencia and its community is huge.

The theme chosen by the curators was *Creative Catalyst*, empowering a broad range of subjects to be exposed, and stimulating the students and staff's creativity even further. The initial intention was to explore the creative challenges that shape ground breaking innovations in different disciplines such as the arts, science, sports, and business. The selection of speakers was based on personal stories, ideas and fascinating contemporary examples that drive our society towards new, undiscovered challenges. As mentioned before, the chosen theme fit perfectly with Berklee's mission statement and reputation as a state-of-the-art educational institution, as well as attracting professionals from different fields based in the creative arts such as music, films, art, design, dance or innovative business models and entrepreneurship.

TEDxBerkleeValencia took place on Saturday 21st June 2014, in harmony with the World Music Day. Although the venue wasn't confirmed until last minute, we were lucky enough to rent the Aula Magistral in the Palau de Les Arts Reina Sofia, part of the *City of Arts and Sciences* in Valencia. The Aula Magistral is a 370 capacity venue, located in an ideal cultural environment, which obviously helped us generate the awareness we were after. The show was intended to last over 4 hours, but amazingly we were done before schedule. Over 300 attendees had the chance to listen to 13 international speakers and 4 performers from 9 different countries, with very different backgrounds but a common passion: creativity. Illustration, film composition, videogames, dance and percussion, were some of the subjects covered.

The Process

Probably due to a lack of experience in event production, the initial roles were not established in a coherent way, meaning I am unaware of the criteria applied to select each member and the tasks assigned, but the team building was not solid enough, making the whole process even more challenging and sometimes even tense. The team was put together around November after the core members interviewed all the candidates and assigned roles, splitting the team into 3 departments: Artistic Direction, Marketing and Production.



I believe this division might have caused confusion at the beginning when dividing tasks, as the boundaries were never defined, nor was there an official hierarchic structure to follow. These details might seem unimportant, but a good, solid structure is extremely useful communication wise. Weekly meetings were held during the initial phase, but most of the members had little to do, and information did not flow transversally. Spending time in an inefficient way is exhausting and highly demotivating, being difficult to regain later. During this initial anarchic phase, we started shaping the event.

My colleague Cristina Domínguez and I, were in charge of the Marketing Department, although our actions were very limited due to the lack of information and transparency between the team. An initial marketing draft was planned, though our target customers were defined before the venue was decided. We had to adapt and draft a plan with the ideas we potentially wanted to develop, and the whole marketing strategy (including social media) was again not solid at all. Obviously, the average consumer at the Palau is very different than that at the Rambleta (another possible venue). As time went by and meetings were being held, the concept of the event remained unclear, at least for the marketing department. We developed and implemented several basic strategies to generate awareness, such as printing posters and having a team photo shoot, distributing flyers and shooting promotional videos.

While trying to be proactive, Cristina and I brainstormed and researched several things such as potential sponsors, possible gifts for the attendees, promotional tools, t-shirts, as well as the logo design and image guidelines. Unfortunately, due to the lack of structure, these tasks ended up being taken over by other members of the team.

Human beings, especially ambitious ones like those in our community, need to work, be active and constantly motivated. This human factor was a huge issue during the development of the project, as the meetings began too early and too many people were involved since day one. This led to confusion and demotivation, which ended up with our own underperformance as the result.

As the time came closer, the team dynamic was not positive, making the process harder and less attractive for most of us. As it was clear that the initial structure was not working, the roles executed by each team member were redefined.

My specific role as Marketing Manager faded away as other demanding tasks regarding the production of the event increased. Although I was able to play around with the website and create content taking SEO into account, I tried my best to keep the team spirit up and working

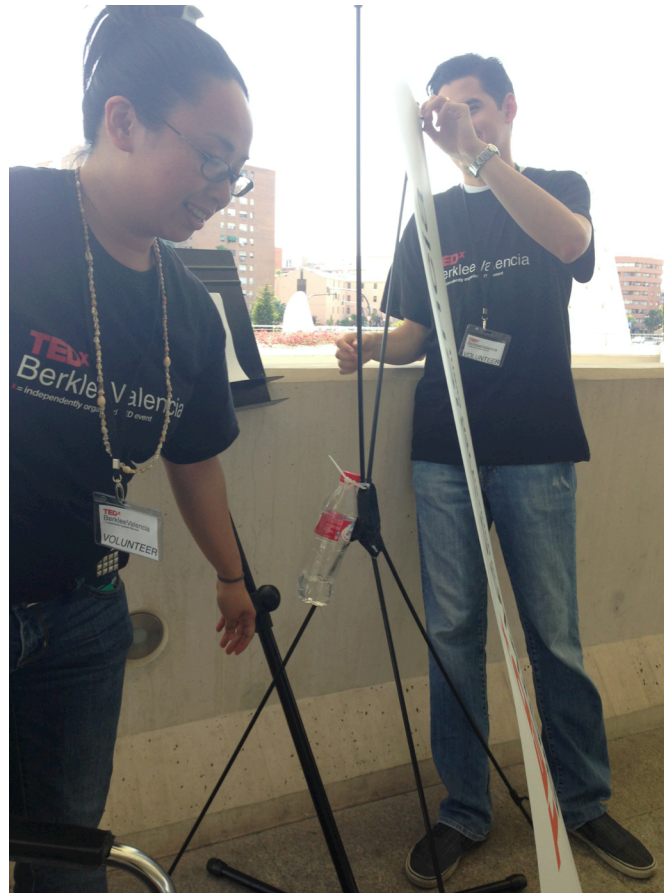
as the day approached. Due to my previous experience having to build an international team of interns, I was able to pick up certain signals that were not positive at all for the project and the development of each member.

The structure of the team was readapted in a way, as more demanding tasks appeared that didn't fit into any specific category or department. Having dealt with producing other similar events, I figured out that the whole project I first had in mind was not going to happen, so I readapted going from Marketing Manager to “miscellaneous multi-tasker” or in other words, producing an event. Supervising content creation, folding t-shirts or picking up the heavy linoleum became daily tasks, as well as taking over part of the social media management. Alexandra Morancy did her best as our Community Manager but had obvious limitations, as she does not speak Spanish nor have a network in Spain.

Finally, the ticketing had to be managed. The chosen platform was *Ticketea*, which has many advantages and innovative widgets to provide analytics and information post event. If the idea is to repeat TEDxBerkleeValencia each year, having this data is crucial for future success.

And after several months, the day arrived. I had to miss the general rehearsal that took place on June 20th, for I was dealing with the list of attendees (some invited, some VIPs and some general admission), as I was on the actual day of the event. Coordinating the registration table and solving any unexpected issue in creative ways.





On the previous picture we can see two of our volunteers, Manuel Delgado and Vanessa Barabad, trying to deal with the wind blowing our posters away, using a bottle of water!

Results

TEDxBerkleeValencia was definitely a huge success, having in mind that it was the first ever TEDx event hosted by Berklee and run by students. Not only were all the objectives accomplished, but also the event was sold out. Exact numbers are yet to be analyzed, although the venue looked beautiful and for the first time I was part of an event that finished almost half an hour before schedule. All the comments we've received have been positive, meaning we have probably managed to set a precedent in Berklee Valencia, for which I'm proud.

Obviously, results are aligned with personal expectations and project expectations, which are not the same. Personally, even though the event was a huge success for the audience, I did not appreciate the tension and lack of good vibe that was in the air mainly due to miscommunication and rushed organization. It is a shame, for it was the first experience for many of the team members, and I would like them to have a good memory. Projects like this always end up happening and well perceived by the audience, but the journey should also be remembered as a good one.

On the other hand, I would not recommend 4 students relying on TEDx for their Culminating Experience, as there is not enough space for everyone to develop and frustrations appear, when comparing experiences with the rest of the students.

Next Steps

TEDxBerkleeValencia didn't end on June 21st for many tasks are yet to be done in order to turn this event into an on going one in Berklee Valencia. A thorough data analysis about attendees is yet to be done, in order to create a database containing all the information gathered from the ticketing. Ticketing sales should be studied to try and determine which marketing strategies were most effective. The website should be improved, maybe even redone using a better template or an actual programmer to avoid the technical limitations we faced. All the content that was generated on the day of the event has to be uploaded on the website and on social media, so that the fan base we've developed does not disappear and lose interest for following editions.

Creating a guide for future TEDxBerkleeValencia editions would also be helpful for future generations, as they wouldn't have to cope with issues that are expensive and exhausting. I would probably also recommend a "post event collective team reflection" of some kind, so that the experience and effort – challenges included – are not in vain.

To the date, the exact number of attendees hasn't been established, as I need to go over all the lists to make sure there is no mistake. Meeting the Financial Manager at Berklee will be an important step, to make sure the invoice from ticketing is correct and all the information legally required is provided.

Contribution to the discipline and profession

There is no doubt about how TEDx events contribute spreading ideas within different communities around the world, and I am proud to have taken part in doing so. We made the students participants, allowing them to apply and have their time on stage to share their ideas to a general public, while generating awareness about Berklee Valencia in Valencia and Spain. Obviously a lot is still to be done, but as I mentioned at the beginning of my reflection, the cross promotion born by the union of these two entities is definitely a positive thing for the Entertainment Industry and any curious human being. The range of theme possibilities TEDx provides is immense, aligning perfectly with Berklee's role.

On the other hand, speakers involved will have new material to promote themselves and the chance of gaining tremendous awareness due to the number of views TED videos have online.

Impact on the Student Completing the Work

As mentioned before, adapting was a crucial part of my experience during the process. Any experience in life teaches one a new lesson, and in my case I definitely validated the previous ideas I had about team building and team management. Dealing with human beings is not easy if the organization is not previously defined, turning an amusing process into frustrations and tensions, which aren't worth it. However, it has helped me understand that the "start-up" in my professional career is over, at least for now.



