

Skill Toolkit

PARTICIPATORY METHODS PRESENTATION

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Performances, demonstrations, and exhibits offer creative ways to present information and communicate ideas. Engaging presentations can help people make a personal or emotional connection to an issue or problem.

THE STORY

Hong Kong is a city known for its impressive skyline and a buzzing urban scene. Non-stop urban renewal has not only shaped the space in which people live, but also the memories of those who live there. Hong Kong's street craftspeople have been repeatedly marginalised during the city's urban redevelopment. They have been left with few working spaces and are excluded from mainstream conversations about development, education and heritage. As a result, traditional craft industries, such as rattan furniture production, wooden cart making, and sewing work have become less vital to the emerging economy, further alienating those who possess these skills.

In 2002, Howard Chan and others founded the Community Museum Project (CMP) to address this marginalization and present traditional crafts as an important but undocumented form of local knowledge. The term 'museum' in the title refers not to a physical building where objects are stored and exhibited, but to a methodology that helps indigenous people create and showcase their ideas and experiences. An exhibition called In Search of Marginalized Wisdom demonstrates this process. CMP went to the Hong Kong district known as Sham Shui Po to document the traditions of the dying craft industry. Unlike a typical museum where artwork is selected and presented by an outside "curator" who creates meaning about the collection, this exhibition was designed through a process called "social curating". Community members including craftspeople, professional experts and leaders in business, education and government participated in the rediscovery of these traditional crafts. The research focused on interviewing artists and studying their materials, tools, production processes and spaces to understand how these crafts are created and the business operations that sustain them. Social curators learned that many of the craftspeople have adapted their practices to cope with limited resources to support their trade. For example, narrow workshops in back alley streets have led to cre-

ating goods in open-air stalls, utilizing those same public spaces to show-case products, and serve as a communal space for business meetings.

Initially, one of the main challenges of the project was getting the craftspeople to recognize the value of their own creations and knowledge. In many cases, they could only see the diminished value of their crafts as products for sale. However, as they shared their practices they began to see their work differently. Other participants shared memories of these objects as family heirlooms or recognized them as staples of urban living. Through the social act of presenting personal knowledge and experience, the craftspeople were able to recognize the significance of their creations in the life of the city.

An exhibition was based on photographs to document the crafts and to help others visualize the stories behind these traditional local arts. The photographs helped foster a deeper human connection to the needs and desires of various stakeholders whose lives are impacted by urban development. The exhibit traveled to shopping centers and public spaces, allowing more people – including pedestrians and shop owners – to gain access to these neglected stories, and discuss the prospect of losing a vital part of the city’s history and culture. The exhibition has allowed for new type of civic dialogue to take place. The Community Museum Project now regularly use presentations of photography, oral history, and storytelling as a starting point to discuss issues of concern and to organize action and change. Their presentations of local knowledge and stories have become a unique contribution to the urban development campaigns in Hong Kong.

◀ For more information
What Works? New Ways to Make Social Change, The Young Foundation
<http://findingwhatworks.org/2012/02/06/the-museum-method/>

Community Museum Project
<http://www.hkcmp.org/cmp/>

DESCRIPTION

Presentations include many forms of communication designed to dispense information to an audience of listeners and viewers. Presentations show-case ideas and issues that are important to an individual or group through creative modes of communication: the demonstration of a craft or skill, the performance of music or art, the display of objects, or the reading of creative writing.

Presentations are good ways to highlight the emotional aspects of issues and concerns that might not be easy to express. The message at the core of a presentation may have the power to persuade – connecting the audience with the presenter and encouraging them to also care about the subject. Presentations that are engaging, that draw people into the topic either through interest or disagreement, have the potential to influence the way people think and possibly to stimulate change.

Many forms of presentation can be combined to build knowledge, interest, and involvement. Supporting materials such as images and objects that bring a topic to life can be used to make a presentation more engaging for an audience.

Presentation	Performance	Exhibitions or Displays	Demonstrations	Readings
Form of Communication	Music Dance Drama	Art Objects	Crafts Skills	Creative Writing

DEVELOPING AN INNOVATION MINDSET

We often rely on talking and writing to share opinions and perspectives, but exhibitions, demonstrations and performances can build greater community engagement.

HOW TO

Step 1

Define the right goal

Many issues can be addressed through presentations so research the information or ideas that would benefit from public sharing. You may simply wish to share work created by community members to highlight neglected voices. Or you may wish to further explain an issue from multiple perspectives. Or your goal may be to inspire discussion about a topic. Determine what type of information you wish to share and more importantly, why. Presentations are usually feel good events that can effectively bring a community together, and that can seem like a reasonable end goal. However, make sure that your presentation will ultimately help your community to create meaningful social impact.

Ask questions such as:

- What is the core message that I/we wish to communicate?
- What do I/we know that others do not know? How would others benefit from information or knowledge that I/we have?

Use these related skills: [Question](#), [Survey](#)

Step 2

Define the audience

Consider your audience to tailor the information. Define a theme that reflects a common thread across the stories or objects. This theme will help to organize the conversation that will ultimately emerge. Create a hook, a compelling question, or a prompt to aid in the discussion of the issue.

Ask questions such as:

- Who is my audience and what do I want them to know?
- What is a compelling question or prompt that will engage my audience with this topic?

Use these related skills: [Network](#)

◀ Back to the story

Community residents in Sham Shui Po were excluded from public decisions about Hong Kong development. All around them, older parts of the city were being demolished. New residential and commercial areas were being built that neglected the history of traditional crafts and skills that helped to make the city prosperous. Artists and craftspeople spoke to Howard Chan of CMP about their grievances. Together they felt that Hong Kong residents would benefit from knowing more about the perspective of craftspeople who have unique knowledge of traditional local skills and products. They hoped that this might create a space in the emerging economy to support the work and services that they were able to provide. Specifically, they wanted to maintain work opportunities at the community level. They had skills that were well suited to the needs of the new economy but saw more and more industries moving jobs out of the community to far away factories. They hoped that a presentation documenting existing resources would unite stakeholders to build on the assets that already existed locally to generate more societal good.

◀ Back to the story

All Hong Kong residents needed to know more about traditional skills and local products and how diverse occupations can contribute to the cultural and economic life of the city. Despite the need for more comprehensive understanding among all city residents, there were rarely opportunities for people to exchange knowledge, experiences and perspectives. CMP wanted stakeholders in the community to see the need and hope that existed behind individual grievances over the way the city was developing. They hoped to do this by creating a forum to highlight the commonalities and differences that inform diverse positions on civic topics.

Step 3

Select exemplars and plan a showcase

There are many resources available to plan powerful presentations (see resources below). A basic plan is to simply share the examples with an audience in the form of a basic oral presentation and invite questions and comments. However, presentations can foster more meaningful exchange if they help to build social relationships between presenters and audience members. Human connection is based on empathy, caring, and respect. When information and ideas are shared with attention to these values, then responses are more likely to lead to complex understanding of problems and then solutions that address mutual ambitions.

Meet with potential presenters to select the best style of presentation to engage an audience with the core message. Work in collaboration to create criteria for selecting materials that will be showcased. Using these criteria, presenters may select exemplars of work that portray the themes that you wish to highlight. Before a final showcase, look across all of these examples to collectively analyze the message that is portrayed. Consider supplementing with additional samples or explanation.

Ask questions such as:

- What type of presentation will best highlight this knowledge and experiences you wish to share with others?
- What are examples of this topic and what does it say about the core message?
- What supporting materials will help make the presentation more engaging?

Use these related skills: [Create](#), [Dialogue](#), [Facilitation](#), [Space](#)

Step 4

Select exemplars and plan a showcase

Convene audiences who are interested, who can be advocates, or who have something to share about the topic. While oral presentations are typically one-way modes of communication, an engaging presentation will involve the audience by asking people to reflect on the highlights and share personal connections to the topic. Foster a discussion about next steps to act on what has been shared

Ask questions such as:

- Who will be interested in this information?
- How can a presentation emotionally connect the audience to the information?
- What does this information mean for the community? What actions might occur as a result of this presentation?

Use these related skills: [Facilitation](#), [Network](#), [Stewardship](#)

◀ Back to the story

CMP conducted visual research asking craftspeople to share art and artifacts that represented the traditional crafts and skills that are still practiced in Hong Kong. Their stories were captured through photographs of their tools and workspaces and interviews about their lives. The photographs and interview excerpts were exhibited in a public shopping center to engage a large audience of community residents, workers, industry leaders, and urban developers. They recognized that others who were not directly involved in the creation of the exhibit might also have stories to share, so the exhibition was planned to include audience feedback. Comment cards were designed to systematically collect responses to the ideas presented. These would eventually be displayed as a part of the exhibit.

◀ Back to the story

The CMP exhibit became a forum for discussing important themes about development in Hong Kong, such as the changing industrial base, the destruction of older residential communities for newer developments, and the absence of local voices and community based organizations from decision-making powers. Learning true stories about craftspeople helped to introduce the plight of traditional craft workers into mainstream conversations, and also encouraged other Hong Kong residents to share their experiences and opinions to inform public debates. However, these conversations did not change the direction of urban development because it did not engage those at the higher levels of government and economic power. CMP continues to unite residents across many sectors through public forums, but their ongoing goal is to create more influence so that more voices are included in the decisions that shape growth in cities.

LIMITATIONS

- Unlimited questioning may prevent projects from moving forward.
- Questions rub against power and some people maintain power by refusing to ask and answer questions. Therefore, there can be repercussions when questioning challenges power.

RESOURCES

- **People Make Parks**

A New York City initiative that aims to include multiple stakeholders in the design of better parks. Learn how to visualize and present ideas through these tools.

<http://www.peoplemakeparks.org/>

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