

Growing Pains

How do you retain your 'Fringe' edge as your festival grows?
How does the growth of a Fringe affect its spirit?
How to maintain your entrepreneurial spirit.

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Expert: Greg Germain, President, Festival OFF d'Avignon

Session Notes

This session was meant to spark thoughts about how to maintain your Fringes' uniqueness and to remind ourselves what sets it apart from a programmed festival. Festival OFF d'Avignon has kept its edgy spirit despite its size and long established history. They have done this through their alternative performers, the city they are in and the voluntary work force. They also create a Fringe village, with a Spiegeltent and high street of activity.

Observations

It can be more difficult for larger Fringes to retain their edginess than smaller ones but it is important as we grow to remember our roots and why the Fringe was planned in the first place.

Fringe festivals are built by entrepreneurs; they think outside the box and build great things on very little resources.

How do we keep our edge? Fringe directors do this every day but we may not always realise they are. Think about why we started and the mission at this time in our minds during planning and developing periods.

Is it our responsibility to keep the 'spirit' or is it the performers?

The edge is about keeping Fringe Festivals independent and keeping their integrity.

Why are Fringes different? Sometimes it can be because it is in the opposition to something.

Artists have the opportunity to meet new audiences in an innovative way. They are affordable, open access; they offer shared risk to the city, the administration, the venues and the performers.

Does corporate sponsorship compromise a Fringes' edge? Maybe, but they need resources to support the artists, particularly now it is important to get in new funding streams.

What's the tipping point of losing the edge? Is it corporate control of content? We are very much affected by our financial environment. This includes the costs of venues, printing, day-to-day running costs, travel, wages etc. This can affect a festival's growth.

Keeping communications growing helps Fringes grow.

Entrepreneurial spirit isn't about money for Fringes it's about ideas.

Nurture the free and accessible events this will filter through to box office sales.