



CASE STUDY

Case Study Analysis Part I – Environmental Scan

I. Economic Scan

Contributed Income:

Overview for the last fiscal year (June 30, 2014-2015)

Individual Donations: \$73,186

Government Grants: \$26,180

Sales of Inventory: \$15,520

Program fees: \$19,822

Organizational economic past and present –what is the general financial health of organization, any budgetary concerns?

The Holter has had a lot of financial trouble as of late. Since 2009, they have lost half of their membership--going from over 1,000 to an estimated 500 as of September 2015. They blame the previous donor database program, however, there were many contributing factors over the years. They now find themselves in the position of trying to reach out to new donors or rekindle previous donors that may have dissipated in participation.

They have had a lack of grants and fundraising funds coming in, which they've tried to compensate with cutting expenses. However, it has not been enough, and they were looking at the deficit for the 2016 fiscal year (still in progress) to be \$60,000 to \$80,000. They auctioned off a Charlie Russel bronze to raise money to meet expenses through 2015, and then began dipping into the endowments.

After reviewing their report from the last fiscal year, it looked like they have put more effort in programs, and have been gaining more income from fees. It's education programs worked with 4,587 students and 3,000 adults in the last year. They've also been renting out the facilities considerably more, which has also helped generate more income.

Are there other economic factors that influence the organization's situation (touring trends, competition and other outside variables)

Much of the arts related sales are very seasonal in that part of Montana, with most of the inventory sales happening in the summer and winter months. These times have the heaviest tourist increases in the region.

II. Demographic Scan

What is the general audience or make up of the participants?

Most of the members of the Holter Museum consist of older (40+), white, adults. This is the average age of most of the population in Helena, and also the average age where there is money available to donate to, or purchase, art. Both of these aspects are common in the Western part of Montana.

Any trends in sex, age, heritage, or education with participation level?

They tend to focus on adults, with most of their openings or events being inclusive of a wide age range. They have figure drawing sessions every week, they hold regular "Paint and Sip" programs (which includes wine and paint/drawing), both of which are possible for any age of legal adults. That being said, they also offer programs such as their "Use-Eum" program, which is youth focused. First Friday art walks are also very popular there, which brings in anyone (individuals and families) that might have an interest in art or just getting out in downtown Helena.

How do national trends compare to the organization's demographic trends?

Helena has a very low unemployment rate, resting about 3.8%. This is lower than the state average of 5%, and significantly lower than most of the country. There is also no sales tax in the state of Montana (the rest of the country is averaging at about 6%), which can be quite persuasive to tourists looking to buy art.

III. Cultural Scan

What is the culture of the organization and the board?

The board consists of 10 directors, consisting of mostly white, female professionals in the Helena community. They have a range of arts related professions, with the exception of a few. The staff consists of 10 positions, including: operational manager, development director, museum store manager, Assistant Curator & Collection Manager, Community Outreach Coordinator, Curator of Education, Education Assistant, Finance Director, Store Associate.

What local cultural elements or social values encourage participation?

The Holter is in the unique position of being the only contemporary art museum in the immediate vicinity, so it gains a lot of support from community members. They also offer a wide range of classes and workshops for all ages.

What leisure trends influence the organization?

Despite being the state capital, Helena is still smaller than the neighboring college towns. It doesn't offer the same amenities as Missoula or Bozeman, and therefore there are less opportunities in general for ways to spend leisure time--especially places that can cater to all age groups. With all of the different type of programs, workshops, and events, the Holter does a good job of offering a variety ways for people to spend their time regardless of age. Plus, regular museum attendance is always free, which can help with normal visitation.

What popular culture elements influence the artistic offerings of the organization?

The museum does tend to focus on contemporary art more than anything else, but they do have a number of traditional western pieces in their collections. Their work definitely leans more towards traditional "fine" arts (with a stronger emphasis on 2-D works) than any new multi-media or digital art. However, their main exhibition hall features a lot of traveling exhibits that offer a huge variety of media and subject matter.

How has the organization responded to the technology culture?

I think there has been a struggle to keep up with new programs and demands, particularly in the most recent years. Cost has been the largest factor, especially as they have continued on a consistent decline financially, but their staffing, training, and communication has also been an issue when it comes to technology. They have recently updated inventory systems, POS systems, and donor database software, but not all of the staff knows how to use these things, which is a problem for such a small staff.

IV. Other Environmental Elements

Generally, Montana is a relatively conservative place, and I think there will always be some wariness of censorship or neutrality on difficult topics--particularly in such a small community. Also, the fact that having any sort of business related to art in the West puts a lot of pressure to produce typical tourist expectations of "Western Art."

Another aspect that I think they will struggle with continuously, is that the majority of the population is 40 years old and higher, and there is not an increase of younger populations outside of college towns. They will eventually struggle with having to refresh their donor base, and attempting to reach out to a younger population that isn't there.

Case Study Analysis Part II – SWOC Analysis

SWOC Analysis: Holter Museum of Art

a. Cultural Product

Strengths: The Holter does a good job of bringing contemporary art to a place that would not traditionally endorse a deviation from the traditional expectation of Western art. They offer a variety of media and topics, and they try to find a balance between new and relevant subject matter. They also offer a variety of different art programs and workshops that are accommodating to a variety of ages--from child to adult.

Weaknesses: They are serving a very small community of a very limited demographic, and while they have increased the number of workshops (figure drawing, Paint and Sip classes), they seem to be in a rut with educational programming.

Opportunities: As the Holter continues to improve, the staff should seek to try new educational programs. They should always be striving to improve and create new opportunities for them to engage their community and fulfill a need.

Challenges: Their staff seems to be under a considerable amount of stress and workload as they continue their reorganization, so this would put a lot of pressure on the education team to design new programs, get approval, find funding, apply for grants, etc, when it is unclear if they actually have that time with the projects they already have going on.

B. Pricing

Strengths: The Holter is a non-profit, but they do have two galleries and a gift shop.

Weaknesses: Most of their inventory sales don't seem to come from any of the original artworks, rather reproductions--such as cards, prints, etc.

Opportunities: They have great connections to local artists, and most of those have some sort of representation in their gift shop at any given time. They are constantly looking for new and up-and-coming artists that they can feature for any amount of time either in their galleries or gift shop. This will help create a more diverse price range that could suit the interest of a broader audience.

Challenges: There is always going to be a stigma when it comes to buying art, where not everyone believes that the product is worth the price--regardless of the fact that many of the things offered are original, one-of-a-kind, and were labor intensive.

C. Place (Access)

Strengths: The building is located right off of downtown Helena, which makes it an easy walking spot for the First Friday Art Walk, or just an easy place to stop by while you're visiting downtown. The building is also completely wheelchair accessible.

Weaknesses: There is no actual parking lot for the museum, and most of the street parking is on a hill. This makes it extremely difficult to get to in the winter time, if you are looking for handicap access, or even if you have to make a delivery.

Opportunities: There has been some new housing developments very near by, which can increase incoming traffic.

Challenges: Being downtown, they don't have a lot of room to grow in their space (not that they have the funds for another renovation any time in the foreseeable future), and are limited by the surrounding structures.

D. Promotional Efforts

Strengths: They are very consistent with promoting new programs at the museum, and do well with keeping the general public knowledgeable about dates and times through traditional news media, social media, and email. They are also very conscious about including community partners on any promotional information.

Weaknesses: They have very inconsistent branding throughout all of their show promotions, and their website needs some work--the current exhibition isn't even listed on the front page.

Opportunities: They are really trying to keep gathering feedback from members and the general public on events, and they have a great opportunity (especially as they continue to recover from their financial crisis) to take feedback on other aspects of the museum as well--including show posters, outreach, and their website.

Challenges: Like many museums and art non-profits, they don't have a lot of funds. I know that they had to bring in an outside source to help them switch their website host from a very outdated system which cost money. This also means that they couldn't really afford to bring in a professional to work on graphic design. The staff there also wears many different hats, so the person working on the design work may not be an actual designer, and are unfamiliar with how to keep branding consistent throughout promoting not only the event, but the museum in general.