

MANAGING YOUR OWN MONEY

BY THE UNCULTURED

Part of
Producing Liveness in Interesting Times

the uncultured

If you're a producer, you'll spend a lot of time thinking about other people's bloody money. Will this fee be enough for you? How much do you need to earn a month for your rent? How can I lower your bank charges? How can I be a tight arse and manage this project budget really conservatively without negatively impacting the work/artist/team?

But you also need to think about your own bloody money too.

The problem is that a producer is often at the mercy of being invited into other people's projects, having a fee capped at an amount that doesn't look too high in the funding application and being expected to attend several (unpaid) meetings about potentially programming a particular work. But, within the portfolio of work that a producer undertakes, perhaps there is some room for understanding where and how energies can be spent so that we can have the same sort of handle on our own cash that we'd expect to have on someone else's.

The precarity of working freelance is in part driven by a feast or famine mentality - thinking 'let me earn as much as I can this month cos the work might not come next month'. However, if we can start a financial year by asking 'how much do I **need**, or **want**, to earn this year' we can aim to strategically plan accordingly.

We made a Financial Planner resource (you can **download for free** from our website with instructions on how to use it) that tries to get you to think about a target for how much you need to earn - for your lifestyle, overheads, mental health - and how you are going to achieve it.

How to set a target income

It's likely you've thought about full cost recovery for the projects you work on - where you cost out everything needed to make a project happen - and you can use this same method to work out your target income goal. How much are all your bills and living expenses? Have you remembered everything...every subscription, your childcare, insurance, everything?! How much do you want for clothes, haircuts, treatments? How much is your travel each month? How much do you want to save each month? Is that just saving or pension too? Basically calculate how much you need to live the lifestyle you comfortably want to lead. It might be that you look back at previous months' expenses, or spend a month calculating it in preparation.

Personally, we try to set a target so we can enjoy our lives. We're not meagre about recognising we both like a takeaway and face cream, but we also try to be realistic in relation to what we've earned before and that we probably won't earn a million quid a year just because that would give us a lifestyle we'd try our best to enjoy.

Once you know a target (that isn't just as much as possible please) you can try to work out routes to achieve it that take into account each area of your portfolio career.

| FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: BUSINESS PLANNING | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|---|----------------|--|
| Created by The Uncultured | | | | | |
| TARGET ANNUAL COSTS | | | | | |
| DESCRIPTION | AMOUNT | | | | |
| Target wage: | £32,500.00 | | | | |
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| Website | | | | | |
| Insurance | | | | | |
| Bank charges | | | | | |
| Software: zoom, Otter, etc | | | | | |
| Email/storage | | | | | |
| Childcare | £5,000.00 | | | | |
| Assistant Producer | £2,748.00 | | | | |
| TOTAL | £72,748.00 | <i>This is what you're aiming to raise to cover your Target Annual Costs</i> | | | |
| INCOME | | | | | |
| DESCRIPTION | TARGET INCOME | CONFIRMED INCOME | % COMPLETE | DETAIL | |
| Fundraising | £35,000.00 | £850.00 | 2.43% | | |
| Advisories + mentoring | £2,200.00 | £300.00 | 13.64% | | |
| Consultancy | £2,030.00 | £500.00 | 24.63% | | |
| Project producing: Artists | £18,250.00 | £14,500.00 | 79.45% | | |
| Project producing: Lead | £6,000.00 | £3,600.00 | 60.00% | | |
| Facilitation: projects, workshops | £7,368.00 | £2,000.00 | 27.14% | Series at XUni | |
| Odds and sods (pitching, templates) | £1,900.00 | £450.00 | 23.68% | | |
| TOTAL | £72,748.00 | £22,200.00 | 30.52% | | |
| TOTAL TARGET INCOME MINUS TOTAL TARGET ANNUAL COSTS | £0.00 | | | | |
| STILL TO FIND | | -£50,548.00 | <i>A negative number to show how far away you are from covering your Target Annual Costs. It will show as a positive number when you're covering more than your Target Annual Costs</i> | | |

Screengrab of Financial Planner resource

It's meant to be used as a living document, where you update it as new income/expenditure comes in or if you just had a bad experience with a project and want to swerve that sort of stuff for a while.

We know that lots of people do work because it brings them riches that aren't money such as satisfaction and joy - but in order to provide this example, let's imagine for a moment you need to ensure you reach your target goal because you won't survive any other way. If you spend hours and hours in your week on teaching, for example, but it's a very low percentage of your overall income then armed with that data you can think about how you want to change things - what sort of work you'd rather chase, say yes to, or what sort of pay increase you might need to push for.

Having a target and an understanding of how that target can be achieved can push us to try and earn more, but more hopefully it will push us to see where we can pull our foot off the gas and have a better work/life balance. The Financial Planner intends to show us which areas of our careers are providing more or less income, so that you can be more in control of how much more of that you'd like to take on in the future. It gives you the data (and so hopefully the power) to say no when you reach your target, or take on more knowing it's a bonus. It is intended to give us the agency to rethink the projects we take on so we're less financially focused and panicked, not more. If we understand our financial projections further than the next invoice hopefully we have more agency over our own trajectories.

Here's how you might want to use this resource:

Audit the work you did for the last complete financial year – split it all into categories and work out the percentages of how your year breaks down.

- How does this balance feel to you now? Does it match what it felt like?
- Are you happy with where you were putting your energy/time?
- Is there anything you want to do more of? Or do less of?

Use this information to plan your current/next year – first fill in confirmed work, then pencilled work, then make some estimations of what you think is possible in each category.

It's hard to plan as a producer, when a large percentage of your work is reliant on someone else's timeline and there can be lots of things out of your control. All the skills you have as a producer can be explored to enable multiple strands of income, and this could be used to bring in more cash where necessary. You can use this sheet to track how all of these strands come together.

Doing any of these tasks will probably also help you see that your day rate is too low and needs to be updated, so you might want to adjust that too while you're at it.

This work was commissioned by The Uncultured as part of their project, *Producing Liveness in Interesting Times*.

Producing Liveness in Interesting Times is a collection of writing, thinking and cheat-enabling works by Live Art and Performance Producers and Producer-adjacent arts workers who are working in the UK.

To explore other writings from *Producing Liveness in Interesting Times*, visit:
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The Uncultured (Ashleigh Bowmott + Laura Sweeney)
are arts independents working collaboratively
to produce, curate, facilitate and advocate.

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