

Ghost Light Communications:

Supporting Societal Health and Wellbeing by Empowering Community Arts Organizations

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Summaries and Conclusions

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I have always been a storyteller. I began ballet at age four, expanded into choir and community theater by age ten, and later earned an undergraduate degree in musical theater. I also enjoyed a professional acting career that spanned over a decade. My younger self never even considered leaving the world of arts and entertainment. However, toward the end of my time as a professional performer, I became emotionally and psychologically bruised, broken, and lost—not because of the work, but due to the systemic malfeasance of an exploitative, manipulative, and toxic industry. In 2018, I cut ties with the industry forever— or so I thought.

Through my master's studies at Gonzaga, and especially through conversations and relationships with my faculty mentors, I have been able to navigate a healing journey back into the arts world, which I not only love but need in order to be my fully realized self. Dr. Hazel, Dr. Hayes, Dr. Cunningham, and Professor Bruner, I cannot begin to thank you enough.

It was Dr. Hazel who said, "You're not done with it; you're just coming back to it on your own terms." Now, with a fully developed business plan, strategy, and timeline for the launch of Ghost Light Communications—my own company that will fight the toxic systemic practices that once broke me by empowering the voices and stories of underserved arts organizations—I can think of no truer words ever spoken to or about me.

Theoretical Grounding and Ethical Scope

The theoretical grounding and ethical implications of my capstone project, Ghost Light Communications (GLC), are deeply intertwined with the work's overall purpose: supporting community arts organizations and promoting ethical storytelling and civic engagement. Borden's (2010) theory of

Journalism as a practice, grounded in MacIntyre's virtue ethics, emphasizes that professionals in both journalism and the arts have a moral duty to act as community communicators, promoting values that benefit societal well-being. Artists, like journalists, are moral custodians who shape public discourse and help individuals actively engage in civic life. This ethical framework is critical for GLC's mission to support and empower smaller arts organizations in Utah, where larger companies dominate public visibility and funding, often perpetuating unethical practices such as exploitative labor, racial misrepresentation, and lack of diversity.

GLC aims to address these ethical issues at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, the project seeks to challenge entrenched ethical infractions within Utah's arts community. The most concerning infractions include the exploitation of artists, lack of diversity, and censorship of cultural narratives. These systemic issues are particularly challenging for a new business like GLC to confront, as some established organizations may directly conflict with its values. Challenges and limitations lie where ethical dilemmas arise and determining if GLC may have the opportunity to encourage positive change, or if refusal of service to organizations that violate GLC's core values is a more healthy and appropriate course of action. At the micro level, GLC will directly engage with organizations to promote ethical storytelling through transparent communication, ensuring that all marketing materials and narratives authentically represent the artists and communities involved. GLC will also remain committed to listening to diverse perspectives, particularly from underrepresented groups, to ensure its communications reflect cultural integrity and promote empathy and understanding.

GLC's approach is grounded in ethical accountability, prioritizing both artistic integrity and community health. Through collaborative and respectful partnerships, GLC intends to uplift small arts nonprofits by offering affordable marketing and digital strategy services while maintaining a clear commitment to transparency, diversity, and inclusion. This ethical framework will guide the organization's work and its interactions with arts groups, ensuring that all content produced is aligned

with each organization's missions and values, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive, empathetic, and socially responsible arts ecosystem in Utah.

Lessons

This process has helped me identify and bridge gaps in my plans for Ghost Light, but I believe the real lessons will come in the first year of business. That first year will be truly telling, and I expect more informed revisions to emerge during, and as a result of that time. The services, pricing model, hours dedicated, and number of clients I can sustainably serve all seem doable in theory, but I know things rarely go exactly as planned. I anticipate some components exceeding expectations, as well as some valuable lessons that will require a return to the drawing board heading into year two.

Limitations

I foresee two categories of limitations for Ghost Light's future: macro systemic limitations and micro capacity limitations.

The macro systemic limitations, which I term "ghost" limitations, are challenges that cannot be effectively addressed through direct or blunt communication. These include issues like exploitative labor practices, racial misrepresentation, and lack of diversity. Such limitations are not easily confronted outright and will likely require trust-building and strategic dialogue over time to influence healthier perspectives and foster ethical practices.

The micro capacity limitations, or "light" limitations, are more straightforward to identify, define, and address. Many of these will likely become apparent once Ghost Light is launched. Anticipated challenges include determining how much time can be sustainably dedicated to Ghost Light while maintaining my full-time responsibilities at PBS Utah; setting a manageable number of clients across primary, secondary, and mission markets (see Ghost Light business plan) to ensure a balance between

service quality and equitable compensation; and navigating the learning curve for new software and tools.

Future Facing

In the "Timeline to Launch" section of the Ghost Light Business Plan, June 2025 is identified as a key milestone for revisiting the plan. By this time, I intend to reassess and refine the strategies, objectives, and deliverables outlined in the initial draft. This period allows for adjustments based on insights gained since the plan's creation, ensuring it remains responsive to current market trends and operational realities.

The process will involve evaluating the feasibility of outlined goals, updating the timeline where necessary, and incorporating any new tools or methods that may enhance the business's launch strategy. This step is integral to ensuring the business plan reflects both the needs of the creative community and my capacity to execute it effectively.

By July 2025, the website, social media channels, and services will go live, marking the official launch of Ghost Light. This timeline emphasizes intentional preparation and adaptability, aiming to establish a strong and sustainable foundation for success.

References

Borden, S. L. (2010). *Journalism as practice: MacIntyre, virtue ethics and the press*. Routledge.