

# Street Papers

a guide to getting started



By Layla Mewburn and Timothy Harris



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## a guide to getting started

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This guide is produced jointly by the International Network of Street Papers and the North American Street Newspaper Association. Written by Layla Mewburn and Timothy Harris



# Street papers: a guide to getting started

## INTRODUCTION

Street papers are now a worldwide phenomenon, representing a global independent media movement sold in the streets of every continent. What are they and where did it all begin? A street newspaper or magazine is a publication that is sold on the streets by homeless, socially excluded or marginalised people. Street papers vary in their specific objectives, but all of them aim to provide homeless people the opportunity to work as well as giving them a voice. The common motto used is 'a hand up, not a hand out,' as providing work is seen as more sustainable than simply providing aid.



The first street papers began emerging in the late 1980s across Europe and USA. It wasn't long before people realised this innovative idea was easy to replicate in any country. There are now estimated to be well over 100 street papers around the world, with new ones emerging all the time.

So, do street papers work? It is estimated that over 38 million copies of street papers are sold each year. They provide employment for thousands of homeless people, as well as a path out of social exclusion. Street papers are not rocket science: they are a simple idea that has proven to be successful in providing a springboard out of homelessness.

National and international networks of street papers have been formed to provide a forum where ideas, editorial and working practices can be exchanged and where street papers can go for advice and support. There are national networks in USA (NASNA, see [www.nasna.net](http://www.nasna.net)), Netherlands, Austria, UK, Germany, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Most street papers belong to The International Network of Street Papers (INSP). You can find out more about INSP and contact details for street papers at [www.street-papers.com](http://www.street-papers.com)

Most street papers are committed to the values of placing the vendors' interests first, financial transparency, quality content, and being a voice of the poor. For a sample street paper charter, please see the appendix.

## Aim of this Guide

This guide is based on the methods and practices of the 'experts' who have started and run street papers themselves. It is a collaboration of examples, advice and suggestions. It does not aim to offer one blue print for how things should be done.

Indeed, the success of the street paper movement stems from our extraordinary diversity. This guide aims to reflect the experiences of street papers – both good and bad – in a way that can hopefully be learnt from and adapted in any country.

## **Further Assistance**

You can get contact details of different street papers from the INSP web site: [www.street-papers.com](http://www.street-papers.com) or by emailing INSP at [l.maclean@bigissuescotland.com](mailto:l.maclean@bigissuescotland.com)

If you are starting a street paper in North America, contact NASNA (the North American Street Newspaper Association) at [www.nasna.net](http://www.nasna.net) or email [rchange@speakeasy.org](mailto:rchange@speakeasy.org)

If you have any feedback or questions- about this guide or street papers in general, you can send them to INSP at the above email.

## **PLANNING FOR SUCCESS**

The saying goes: ‘if you aim at nothing, that is precisely what you’ll hit’. All organisations, no matter how small, need to have some kind of plan. Planning doesn’t have to be a overly lengthy process, but it essential if all people involved in the project are going to be clear and unified in what they are attempting to achieve and why. If you plan to run as a business, a non-profit organisation, a charity or an association, you still need to create some kind of business or organising plan, which includes a budget.



There are numerous books, web sites, etc available on planning, some of which are more helpful than others. Some of the best that are available are listed at the end of this guide. If you’ve never written a business or operational plan, try and read some of the resources or ask for advice from someone who has written them. There are plenty of template plans for non profit organisations accessible on the internet. You can always ask another street paper to see their plan and to go over the thinking behind it with you.

## **Who's at the Table?**

Planning should involve as many of the people who will be working on the street paper as possible (staff, board members, homeless vendors, etc). Shortcuts in planning that exclude key players are likely to become a problem later down the road, when people resist decisions that were never agreed upon. However, there needs to be a balance between inclusiveness and efficiency. Most papers find it useful to have a final authority who is able to make decisions.

It is also important to have in mind who the plan is being written for. This might be some or all of the following:

- For directors and staff of the organisation as a working operational plan to know where the organisation is going and what is to be achieved.
- For funders/ grant makers or as part of the fundraising process.
- As a legal requirement for setting up the organisation.
- To secure a loan.
- For advertisers/ sponsors.
- To explain to the outside world what you are about.

Invariably, the details of the plan will change soon after you start. Don't worry about this, as long as the mission and visions are clear to all from the outset.

### **Vision, mission and values**

- Vision is a description of a desirable future situation for the organisation's users and for the world at large.
- Mission is a succinct statement of the organisation's purpose.
- Values describe the underlying beliefs that the organisation holds that inform its policies and decisions.

A number of reasons to spend some time considering missions and visions:

- A good mission holds an organisation together.
- A strong mission should convey the core values.
- It gives a criterion to judge ideas and possible projects against.
- It gives focus to an organisation.
- It makes clear the boundary and limits of the organisation.
- It makes clear what is unique/ different about the organisation.

### **Writing a plan**

While there is no "one right way" to write a plan or operate a street paper, a business or operational plan could include the following:

#### *Executive summary*

Brief outline of mission, values and context. It should highlight the proposed direction, key benefits and make the case for the organisation. A one-page, three-minute read.

#### *Introduction and mission*

The mission statement in full. Explanation and duration of the plan.

### *The organisation's background*

- A brief history of the organisation. Its legal status and registered office. You need to include basic and factual information to help readers get a picture of your organisation.
- Status of the organisation: legal status, relationship to any parent organisation.
- Scale of the operation: where you work, what you do and who with.
- Size of the operation: number of projects, staff and turnover.

### *A summary review*

A short review of the organisation to date, if applicable. Stress key strengths, achievements and external recognition to date. Readers may expect to see some honest appraisal of weaknesses. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is often used to display this information.

### *Competitors/Allies*

Who else is doing what you are, and how is your effort related to theirs? Key competitors/allies are often other newspapers, homeless employment programs, and poor people's advocacy organizations.

### *Action plan*

What you actually plan to do with the street paper and how. Organisational outline and practices. Times, dates, sales, working methods, etc (basically the detail of how the street paper will work).

## **The Six Basic Stages of the Planning Process**

- |                |  |                                 |
|----------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Stage 1</b> | Clarification of the purpose and mission of the organisation.  |                                 |
| <b>Stage 2</b> | Information gathering.   |                                 |
|                | <i>Internal information</i>  | <i>External information</i>     |
|                | Where are we at?   | What will our future look like? |
|                | What works for us?   | What is happening outside?      |
| <b>Stage 3</b> | Identification of key assumptions, strategic choices and direction.  |                                 |
| <b>Stage 4</b> | Developing and planning an achievable strategy that includes a timeline and assigns responsibility for tasks.            |                                 |
| <b>Stage 5</b> | Making sure that you can achieve the plan and meet its costs.  |                                 |
| <b>Stage 6</b> | Showing that the organisation is capable of carrying out the plan and establishing a process for evaluation of progress. |                                 |

### **Ask the Experts Research & Planning**

“We created a three year business plan, which was very helpful although we exceeded our targets for one year by the end of six weeks. But the initial exercise was very helpful.”

“One of the main weaknesses of our organisation was our knowledge about business. At the beginning we had no business plan and we really suffered because of it.”

“We did create a business plan, but as soon as we started the project, the problems also started; then our plan didn't really work as it was different from the reality.”

“I really think we should have done more serious and better research, because we have made too many mistakes and every mistake costs money.”

“The research we did was helpful, but we could have started without it. The best research by far was learning from the already existing paper in London.”

“We visited the most successful paper we knew, The Big Issue in Scotland, and that visit helped us solidify many of the plans we had started out with. It's a good idea to see a successful paper in operation.”

“Perhaps the plan we started with wasn't elaborate or etched in stone, but of course we set down basic principles, how much we'd charge the vendors and the public, to what extent we'd go after subscriptions, what kind of advertising we'd accept. We definitely were guided by the overall plan, which we adjusted as we got underway.”

#### *Team*

Who in your organisation is responsible for implementing the plan and what are their qualifications?

#### *Strategic aims/ direction and future trends*

Statement of aims for medium term and long term. Also an outline of future needs of the organisation, addressing the issue of sustainability.

#### *Finances*

A detailed budget for the first year and some indication of finances in the medium term (see section below on money)

### **Research/ Information Gathering**

Some street papers carry out market research before they begin, but the majority simply do not have the resources to do so. You may be able to get a market research company to help you out, or you can simply do some basic research yourself. The main areas you will need to investigate include:

- The existing publications market
- Printing and production prices
- The homeless situation and homeless organisation networks
- Government policies about homelessness
- Public attitude to homelessness
- Funding possibilities

Most people who have started a street paper agree that visiting an already existing paper can be very inspiring and instructive. Seeing how something works in practice is often easier than reading about it. Most street papers are happy to have people visit them; some are even able to offer various forms of training. The street paper network in your area can help put you in touch with the paper nearest you. Some organisations have also found funding in the past for training visits. Even if you can't visit, then making contact with other street papers (by phone, email, etc) is invaluable.



## MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

The big question on everyone's lips when starting a street paper (and for many years after...) is 'where is the money coming from?' Some street papers start with a very small budget, while others begin with strong financial backing. Some have simply borrowed money from friends, others have secured bank loans, raised money from grant making bodies and some have planned the paper so all money can be made through selling newspapers. Whichever way you want to approach it, you will need to plan your finances.



You will need to plan:

- What approach you want to take to generating income: i.e. business activities, charitable fundraising, etc?
- Who you will approach for funding?
- How long do you want to have definite funding for before you begin (e.g. first month, six months, one year?)
- As an organisation, do you have objections to taking money from any source?

The more income streams you have, the less vulnerable you are as an organisation, so try not to rely too much on any one source. The following is a list of possible means of funding – both charitable and business. The list is by no means exhaustive.

### Charitable

**Grants** come from trusts, foundations (corporate and private), grant making bodies, etc. This includes grants from government bodies. They usually require a project proposal/ outline, which include a budget. Much foundation research can now be done on-line. Street papers bring in a considerable percentage of their income through this means, but it can be a time consuming procedure with a very uncertain outcome. Many grant-making bodies will only make decision on who they are giving money to once or twice a year. Some government bodies can also take a long time to decide. Foundation funding is best used to help start new programs and build capacity. Most foundations do not fund on-going operating expenses.

*The benefits of this kind of funding:*

- Considerable amounts can be raised and often one grant-making body will give a significant amount.
- Funding can be given for a long period (but usually it is for one year).
- The money does not have to be paid back.

*The drawbacks:*

- Grants are often one-off and is therefore not a sustainable means of income.
- It can be a very time-consuming process applying and waiting for decisions. Foundation funding is highly competitive.
- Sometimes the funding is conditional and has to be spent on specific areas. Many groups, in order to chase foundation funding, stray from their real missions.
- It can often involve a lot of paperwork, in terms of application and monitoring and evaluation reports.

**Private donations** come from individuals and are raised direct (i.e. not from a grant-making body). Properly developed, donors can be one of your most predictable sources of ongoing support. Some street papers run advertisements or campaigns in their papers asking readers to donate money. Donations should be carefully noted in a database and gratefully acknowledged. As you keep donors informed about your work through mailings, newsletters, and annual reports, they are likely to become greater friends and offer increased support as time goes on. A successful donor pitch leads with the heart but also appeals to the head. It includes a personal story, recent successes, exciting plans, and a direct ask.

**Fundraising events** are fairly good in terms of publicity, but can often take more effort and energy than the money they raise. It is a good way to get the local community involved especially if you can find a committed group of volunteers to organise events for you. It is always a good idea to consider the other benefits of organizing events (public profile, working with allies, thanking volunteers and donors, etc) because there is always a chance you will not make money. Events should be worthwhile for their own sake.

## **Business**

**Advertising Sales** is a tried and tested means of generating income amongst many street papers. Many street papers would argue that it is worthwhile investing in advertising sales staff as they may become the main income generators for your organisation. It will depend if there is a developed advertising sales market in your country and will also take time to develop. It will be difficult to sell advertising space until you have built a name and reputation for the paper. It also helps to have officially audited or recognised newspaper sales figures. Selling advertising space can be made easier with 'special' editions, for example a special edition on travel would make it easier to sell advertising to travel companies, etc. Some street papers also build a reputation for themselves as the place to advertise for a particular market, for example, job advertisements for the 'third sector'- jobs in charities, NGOs, non profits, etc. Some street papers also have advertising sales policies and won't accept some advertising from companies they feel to be unethical- it is helpful to be clear on what policies you may have from the beginning. However, advertising is a great way to build up relationships with the wider business community. If you

choose to put up a web site on your street paper, there is potential to sell advertising space on this as well.

**Sponsorship** is similar to advertising in that companies give money to sponsor a page, section, etc of your publication in return for their logo appearing somewhere in the publication. This can be a good way of targeting specific companies: for example, a music company, TV or radio station may want to sponsor the entertainment section of the newspaper or a food company may want to sponsor a cookery section. Some companies may also want to sponsor a product (e.g. CD, chocolate, tea bag, small book) to be attached to the front of your magazine-companies often try out new products in this way and can help boost sales.

**Merchandise** beyond the publication itself can range from books (collections of homeless writing, specially commissioned photography books, cookery books of cheap meals, city guides, ethical tourism guides) to CDs (street music, world music) to mugs, pens, Christmas cards and T-shirts. You need to be clear on who is selling the merchandise (the organisation or the vendor) and if this is legal (your organisation and vendors may only be allowed to sell printed material). Try selling a small number at first to see how it works before producing large quantities.

**Loans** can be used for capital for start up or for developing a new project. Regular banks will require financial plans and projections and probably some proof of your track record. There are also 'alternative' banks, credit unions and loan schemes which are more accessible to non-profit organisations. This will largely depend on which country you are working in. As a rule, loans need to be paid back, no matter how small the interest.

**Subscriptions** are offered by many street papers to those people living out with a region where the publication is sold by vendors. Some also offer corporate subscription services to the public and private sector, where a higher rate is usually charged. You can advertise subscription packages in your publication. Many street papers have used this as a means to raise capital for start up costs and the listed all the 'founding supporters/subscribers' in the publication.

**Production/ design services** are an option to maximize on the staff and set up you already have if you are already producing a newspaper or magazine. Some street papers have had success in offering production and design services to other companies, such as producing promotional materials and other publications.

### **Some financial case studies\***

*Megaphon* in Austria is fairly typical of many street papers in income generating activities. 43% of income comes from magazine sales, 30% from advertising sales, 13% from funding/ donations, 10% from Merchandise sales and 4% from other

*\*statistics from 2003*

### **The Golden Mean**

**Aggregate income sources  
for 20 street papers in 2002.**

Circulation Income:	44%
Ad Sales:	18%
Charitable Fundraising:	34%
Merchandise Sales:	1%
Other:	3%

## Ask the Experts

### Tips on Fundraising

“The primary initial sources of funding will be circulation, ads, subscriptions, and donations. Most foundations will want to see some sort of track record established before they start tossing out money, so don’t count on grants as start-up funding.”

“We were lucky in that we had a well-funded social-services agency (our own) behind us when we started. So the start up money was taken out of ‘employment project’ money and the like. Eventually, we found funds specifically earmarked for our operation, and then included advertising. But no funding is life-long and we keep looking.”

“We didn’t have any money. But since we were journalists, we had many contacts with different people. We went to a foundation and asked them for a donation to publish the newspaper. Since it was a new idea, and the cost wasn’t too high, they agreed to finance it. At first, we put some money (our own money) in to develop the pictures and we got some other donations such as cameras and a tape recorder. After the first newspaper was published, it was easier to have other partnerships and we stopped investing our own money.”

“We started thanks to some public funds and about 20% came from private donations. With the public funds we paid for all of the social projects. To keep the newspaper independent we tried to finance it from the beginning through money from newspaper sales. But to be honest, we couldn’t have started without the public funds.”

“We started with money from The British Council (about \$4000USD), and we also had money from private sponsors. The main operational money came from a private company. We are a private company, so we don’t receive money from foundations.”

“We invested a little money in the project ourselves and convinced friends to stick in a little as well. We invented a founding subscribers club and told the original members that they might not get their money back but enough were willing to back us to make something happen. We also attracted a sponsor for the launch of the first issue. It took us about two months to raise the money.”

sources. The income from merchandise comes from books (like street cookery books) and CDs (of street music, for example), etc which are sold by the vendors, with the organisation keeping a percentage to cover costs.

Established in 2002, *Hecho en Chile* is sold in Santiago by an average of 45 vendors every month (selling a total of approximately 5000 copies). The magazine is A4, full colour and from the outset, the organisation has focused on advertising sales as a major source of income. 90% of the Hecho en Chile’s annual income comes from advertising sales, with full time ad staff targeting local and international companies. Only 10% of income comes from sales of the magazine. The high proportion of advertising revenue is made possible by having a full colour stylish magazine and full time advertising sales staff, as well as good contacts in the business arena.

Started in 1991, *The Big Issue* in London now sells 122,000 copies of the magazine every week through 550 vendors. They make 60% of their income through magazine sales and 40% through advertising sales. This is the street paper with the largest sales and staff and has been gradually developed over the years using mainstream business models.

In North America, street papers tend to draw a larger proportion of their income from charitable funding. *Big News* in New York relies on 60% of its funding from grants and donations. 30% is made through magazine sales and 10% through advertising sales. *Real Change* in Seattle, with a circulation of about 20,000 every two weeks, also receives 40% of its funding from private donors, 20% from foundation support, and 40% from circulation and ad sales.

## SETTING UP AND THE LEGAL STUFF

Before you begin, you will need to decide what type of organisation you want to be. This may depend on your primary aims and also on the relevant laws in your country. For example, if you aim to be an organisation whose main focus is providing employment, then you may want to register as a company. This will mean that you function in every sense like a mainstream publication. However, it may be that in order to receive donations or grants in your country, you need to register as a charity or non profit organisation. Many street papers work as a combination of the two, having both business and charitable arms so that they can trade as normal publications, but also receive donations. In exchange for the tax benefits of non profit status, there are sometimes restrictions upon political lobbying. You will need to understand the law in your area.



There will be costs involved in establishing your organisation, which may include: legal registration, buying licences for vendors to sell, buying or registering the trademark of your name, charitable status registration, legal fees, etc

Some options for a legal structure:

- A company limited by guarantee, which is a non profit company with members rather than shareholders.
- A registered company- like any normal company.
- A charity or foundation- usually has to fulfil national criteria.
- A non profit association/ organisation.

You will need some kind of document outlining who you are, your aims and objectives. This is your charter or constitution. If you are planning to establish as a charity or a business, you will need to put together a board of trustees or directors. Boards set policy, bear financial responsibility for the organisation, and hire and fire the Executive Director. They do not oversee or manage daily operations. They range from a few people to sometimes more than 20, and can help to build relationships, raise money, and keep the organisation true to its mission.

### The People

*"The most valuable advice I got from anyone was from a veteran community organizer who said I just needed to start making decisions and go forward. She said that the project depended on me, that it was my responsibility, and I needed to make judgement calls, and if I tried to get some sort of community consensus before going ahead I'd probably either fail or never get started."* (Tim Harris, USA)

You will need a core team of dedicated staff and volunteers, who will have to put in long hours at the beginning. In the initial stages it may be that staff work for little

## **Ask the Experts**

### **Structure & Staffing**

*"We had no paid staff at the start and still have none – only volunteers and they are in great numbers (30)."*

*"I worked alone for the first 18 months."*

*"At the beginning we were two founders plus three part time journalists, one advertising person, one administrator and two distribution people. It was a team effort. In the early days we all did everything and worked until we dropped. We had a few volunteer staff but some of the freelance journalists worked for nothing for the first few weeks."*

*"We used a committee to build the paper. It was very hard to have lots of people to agree on things at the same time. Now only two or three decide what goes on."*

*"We started with two people. Now, including the volunteers, we are six. We work with one director and general manager, one editor and logistics manager, two (volunteers) who work with vendors, one designer and one editorial assistant."*

*"In the beginning we were two journalists working directly with the homeless and two other doing the production afterwards. Now we have a group of psychologists, journalists and teachers, who all work voluntarily."*

*"The secret was to keep the team very small at first."*

*"When we set up, all the team used their personal equipment – from home – and many still do."*

*"We got a generous donation of a brand new computer from a publicity company which was eight years ago and we are still using that same computer now."*

*"The essentials were phone, computer, printer. Essential software was Word, PageMaker and Filemaker for our database and tracking vendor sales, badges, etc. I convinced a supportive agency to pay our phone bill for the first six months and we had really cheap rent in another existing agency. The computer was my own, although we found it easy to get others donated later and eventually were able to get capital equipment grants for newer equipment."*

or no pay, until sufficient funding is found. However, it is important to distinguish from the outset who are paid staff and who are volunteers and aim towards paying staff as a priority.

The principal areas that should be considered for staffing are vendor operations, editorial and production, fundraising, ad sales, and program development and management, which may include some sort of social services delivery. Many papers begin with one or two people taking on all of these roles, and as resources become available job descriptions become more specialized.

Some street papers are run partly or entirely by homeless people. Street papers are, after all, for them. How and where you involved homeless people will depend on the overall aim of your organisation: whether it is primarily an employment provider, or a means of empowerment. Some organisations have committees of homeless vendors who have decision-making roles in certain areas, for example editorial committees and vendor services.

### **Space and Stuff**

It would seem that most street papers started very small in terms of office space and equipment. An amazing amount can be done with just a few essential items: computer, software, printer, telephone, basic office furniture. Many street papers have managed to get all of their equipment as donations. Often larger companies are willing to donate second hand computers.

Do not underestimate the value of having up to date equipment such as computers, phone systems, faxes, printers, and a server network. A solid technical infrastructure will save time and money in the long term,

and foundations often like funding capital equipment for new organisations. Don't forget to also adequately invest in training for your staff.

You may also be able to get office space donated from other charitable organisations. Some street papers start out in church buildings or based at other homeless organisations, and some even start from home. Wherever you start, you need to make sure your distribution office is easily accessible to the homeless, located in the city centre or near public transport. Ideally, your office should be near existing shelters, drop-in centres, or meal programmes.

## **THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE: THE VENDORS**

Given the scope – physical and geographical – of homelessness, it is very difficult to define who a homeless person is. Most street papers have their own parameters of who can sell the paper, including people living on the streets and people staying in temporary housing (at a hostel, with friends or family). Other street papers have a broader scope and are sold also by the long-term unemployed, people below their national poverty line and any other group they feel to be 'socially excluded.' It is important that your organisation is clear who can sell the paper and what criteria you are going to use to measure this.



Some street papers have involved homeless people from the outset, making the whole planning and organising process a participatory one. It is possible to have homeless people on the Board, or organised in a planning committee of their own. Some papers ask vendors to contribute to the paper, or help decide what the front cover should be: how you involve them and at what levels will depend largely on the aims of your organisation.

There is a simple equation that seems to work the world over in terms of street paper sales: the more vendors there are on the street, the more papers will be sold. It is in the interests of everyone to have as many vendors as possible selling to create the most visibility possible. As a rough guideline, from 20 street papers surveyed, the average number of vendors selling any one issue was 120.

### **Recruiting**

You simply need to get out there and tell homeless people about your street paper: this is much easier to do once you have your first copy printed. Initially, these one-on-one conversations and presentations to groups are essential. Do not think you will successfully recruit vendors by simply handing out flyers. Start at those places where homeless people usually go:

## Ask the Experts

### Working With Vendors

"We tried to research into how many homeless people would sell the magazine but this proved difficult. Everyone we asked said "Yes – when do we start – tomorrow?" When we explained it was some way off they said "maybe, if we're around!" You have to take a gamble on whether homeless people will turn up. They are living for today and do not plan ahead."

"We ourselves had our own homeless help agency in place — a drop-in centre where over 200 a day come in for services — so it was easy to have a start base. But as we've expanded, we've applied general guidelines anyone starting out would pursue- we went to the largest food lines and soup kitchens in the city and made our pitch. We had sales training sessions, brief orientations, presentations on the code of conduct — but pretty much simplified the idea as much as possible — a quick way to make money for the vendors-and set them out to sell."

"We simply went out on the street and talked to them. We also visited hostels. We asked them if they wanted to sell and they were only interested if it was happening right away. So, we gambled and enough turned up on the day to make it work."

"We contacted them in shelters, in the streets and at places where they usually go to get food and clothes. They went out to sell the paper on the first day: in the first month they would buy each paper for 5% of the cover price, like a sales/ launch promotion. In the second month, the price of the paper became the current one (25%) of the cover price."

"We knew a group of homeless who use to meet together in the main square. We went there, asked them if they wanted to join us, and we were patient in training them. It demanded a lot of our time, patience, courage, confidence (especially in making them confident of the fact that we would not exploit them or their image as others had done) and, most of all, it required that we believed it would work. They didn't necessarily believe it would work, as they had faced so much prejudice and violence. So when the first paper was published, they couldn't believe it."

"Treat people like people: every homeless person is a unique person and deserves to be heard, understood and respected in his unique demands. There must be rules for the group, but sometimes we have to think about their personal story to understand and to help them, and not to think about them as numbers or statistics, but as people."

- Hostels/ night shelters/ emergency accommodation
- Soup kitchens/ meal programmes/ churches that hand out food
- Other homeless organisations
- The streets

Talk to the homeless people, take flyers/ posters, etc and leave them where homeless people go. One of the best methods of recruiting new vendors is by word of mouth. Once you have a few stable vendors, they will become your most effective recruiters. Most papers offer free copies as a recruitment incentive to their vendors

### Training/ Organising

When homeless people arrive to sell the paper, the following should happen:

*Introduction/ chat/ interview:* Even if this is just 'hello' the vendor will be need to told about the paper, how it works, what the rules and regulations are. This is also the time to check they fulfil your criteria for being a vendor. This can either be done on-to-one or in a group. Some papers use social workers and have more extensive interviews to find out what the broader needs are.

*Code of conduct:* The vendor will need to sign something that states that they are abiding to the rules of your organisation. Mostly this is done using a code of conduct. You will also need to make clear what are the disciplinary actions that will be taken if they don't follow the code of conduct, for example, suspension, banning from selling. A sample vendor contract may be found in the appendix.



**Badging up:** The vendor will need to be given some kind of ID badge and number, which they should wear while selling the paper. This will help you keep track of who is selling what. It is a good idea to have a photo ID badge, so that the public can recognise the seller and see that they are legitimate. These can be made fairly easily. Lamination equipment is surprisingly inexpensive and creates durable badges. It is a good idea to change the badges fairly regularly to reduce fraud. Many papers use the annual badge renewal as an opportunity to gather demographic and other information about their vendors.

**Pitches/ turf:** Each vendor will then be told where they can sell the paper. Access to places to sell can be an extremely contentious issue. Some street papers work a system where every vendor is assigned a separate pitch/ turf/ area and they can only sell there (or shared with another named vendor). Some papers allow vendors to sell anywhere. Disputes can emerge between vendors about where they are selling, so it is good to ensure you have some protocol for who is allowed to sell where.

**Uniform:** Items bearing your paper's logo, such as baseball caps, T-shirts, bags, aprons, or vests, can help reduce the anxiety some people feel about approaching a stranger to buy a product on the street. These are not essential, but can often be cheap to produce and some street papers have found they help sales and bolster vendor confidence.

## **Monitoring sales**

It is a good idea to keep track of how many copies you sell, which vendors are selling them, and how often. Some papers have schemes that insist vendors have to sell a certain number of hours/ days or papers per week in order to encourage stability and regular sales. There is plenty of easy-to-use software/ databases around that can help with registration of vendors and monitoring sales.

It is also important to encourage and monitor vendors on the streets. If there are staff available, they can visit vendors on their pitches, deal with any problems, help them with selling techniques, etc. This is often done by a vendor who has been selling longer or an ex-vendor. This is also a great way to recruit new vendors.

## **Incentive schemes**

In order to keep sales up, many street papers use incentive schemes. These revolve around offering some reward for good sales, for regularly being on a pitch, for hitting targets, for good attitudes, etc. The rewards or bonus can be in the form of free or discounted papers, clothes, toiletries, training, etc.

## **Other services**

Some street papers are linked in with other homeless care provision and some provide services themselves for vendors. These services include:

- Medical, psychological and health services
- Employment and job-seeking advice

- Legal advice
- Free clothes, food, toiletries, etc
- Subsidised shops to buy the above products at reduced rates
- Training and education re-integration schemes
- Computer access and training
- Writing, music and art groups
- Sports groups
- Washing facilities

Some of these services are free, some are subsidised: some street papers believe it goes against the ethos of street papers as meaningful employment to provide these services free. Other street papers believe that services in their countries for homeless people are so bad, that these services are necessary. Many of the groups have been organised by homeless and ex-homeless vendors. They are not by any means necessary when starting a street paper, but many have found that they help in building a sense of community and team-work amongst vendors.

## **BUILDING A NEWSPAPER**

The style, content and layout of street papers varies hugely from country to country and you will need to decide which audience/ market you are aiming at and what you want to say. They range from A3 tabloid, black and white newspapers, to full colour glossy magazines. Broadly speaking, most street papers try to get some mix of the following:



- Social features (including homeless issues)
- News/ investigative journalism
- Entertainment/ culture/ arts
- Homeless writing/ art
- Lifestyle (sport, cookery, etc)
- Interviews (famous people, homeless people)

Street papers have all created a niche market for themselves as they can cover issues in ways mainstream publications can't. It is important to have a balance. Too much of any one area just excludes potential regular readers. Those papers with the biggest sales are those that have the broadest mix. It may be, however, that your main aim is to give a voice to homeless people rather than to help them earn an income, in which case your content will be determined by them.

Whatever you choose, try and stick with it and not make too many changes. Consistency in style, layout, and content matters. People like to know what to expect, and need to recognise the paper to keep buying it.

## **Printing/ circulation**

Decide on how regular you want your publication to be (most street papers are monthly) and stick to it: it will have a negative effect your vendors and sales if you don't come out at a regular time (the same day or date of each week or month).

Start small with your initial print run, but make sure you can order more. How many you produce will depend on the size of your city, the number of homeless vendors you have and the market. To give you some idea, some papers have started with 500, others with 25,000; somewhere in between is average. Circulation of established papers range from monthlies with circulations of 1,000, to weeklies that sell 400,000 copies per month.

## **Setting a cover price**

Decide on how much the publication will cost to the vendor and to the public from the beginning and make sure the price is on the front cover. Most street papers are sold to homeless people for 35-50% of what the vendor sells it on for. For example, a vendor will buy a magazine for 40 cents and sell it for 1 dollar/ euro, etc. The vendor should not have to pay more than 50% of the cover price for the paper. Ensure that your organisation is recovering enough from the sale of each paper to the vendor to cover at least printing and production costs.

## **Interacting with readers**

It is important to know who your readers are, what makes them buy the paper and what keeps them buying the paper. One way to do this is through a readership survey, printed in the magazine (although this can tend to bring only a positive response because your 'fans' are more likely to reply). Another alternative later down the line is to do market research to find out what are the reasons people do not buy the paper. Ways to achieve reader feedback might include:

- A letters page for readers views/ feedback- people can write, email or text (SMS) their views.
- Mail in surveys: provide vendors with survey postcards for their customers that have pre-affixed postage, and offer an incentive to the vendor for each card returned bearing their badge number. One paper that did this reported a 35% return rate.
- Competitions: Get companies to donate goods (CDs, drinks, books, holidays, etc) and run competitions in the magazine. This is a good way to get peoples contact details for fundraising campaigns.
- Website: If you choose to put up a web site it is a good mechanism for interacting with your readers.
- Vendor feedback: These are the people who talk most regularly to your readers. Ask them what they think!

## Ask the Experts

### Producing a Paper

“Really make a difference by trying to produce the best quality paper possible. Even if you don’t sell a lot, at least vendors have a sense of dignity and people respect them because they respect the paper they are selling.”

“The most helpful advice to me would have been to make the best magazine possible, so that people are really surprised by the high quality of the content and design. It makes the vendors proud to sell it.”

“At first we trolled the Internet for stories or writers we liked and got permission. We also contacted sources within the already established street paper community to “borrow” their stories. But from the first we never strayed from our central idea: print what we wanted, what interested us, and therefore make for the most interesting product.”

“Decide on a format for your paper and keep it, don’t change it too much. People like stability and a regular publication.”

“Unfortunately, we could not print regularly, so we lost a great deal of vendors. It took about 7 years to get into regular printing.”

“We decided from the beginning to have what we call 30-30-30. 30% of the content should be of social character, 30% should be cultural or fun and the rest should be fantastic photographs.”

“All the texts, articles and pictures are discussed with the homeless. They are the ones who produce the paper. For those who don’t know how to write, we use tape recorders and we simply write for them, exactly the way they think and talk.”

“We printed 25,000 of the first issue and it sold out. We just kept increasing the order every two weeks. Within six months (12 issues) our sales had gone up to 140,000 per fortnight! At the time our printing and production costs were at a minimum. Our problem was that we couldn’t believe the rate of increase and kept not ordering enough copies from the printer.”

## Advocacy

When street papers become involved in anti-poverty advocacy, their great strength is their readership. Street papers reach millions of people, all of whom are potential advocates for the poor. The most effective advocacy-oriented papers combine internet technology with their newspapers and use email newsletters along with their website to offer up to date information to generate email, letters, and phone calls to policy makers. A good database will also help keep track of potential advocates, and their interests and history. It is important to remember that entrepreneurialism alone will not end poverty.

## PRODUCTION

The advent of desktop publishing has placed newspaper production technology within the grasp of any-one with a personal computer. Having a strong grasp of basic layout and design principles, however, is essential for a professional looking publication. As one veteran street paper publisher said, “Just because anyone can produce a newspaper doesn’t mean all people should.”



At a minimum, one needs at least the following hardware and software:

- A computer capable of running up-to-date software.
- A laser quality printer. While printers capable of printing on 11x17 paper are expensive, most newspapers find this indispensable for creating proof pages. Buying second hand equipment is always an option.
- Page-layout software. PageMaker and Quark tend to be the industry standards.

- Image software. Adobe Photoshop is the standard.
- Word Processing software. For better or worse, Microsoft Office is what most people use and you'll have fewer file compatibility problems if you do as well.
- Adobe Acrobat. Most printers prefer to receive files for print in Adobe PDF print format.

Software, however, is useless if you do not know how it works. Many street papers are started by people who have experience in poor people's advocacy, not newspaper production. This need not be a barrier to producing a quality publication. While layout and production skills can be learned by almost anyone, your road will be much smoother if someone in your group already knows how. You may want to recruit staff or volunteers who have this skill.

Actual printing is nearly always done offsite by a professional printer with a web press. This equipment prints on large sheets of newsprint, which are cut and folded into newspapers. A typical web press will print, fold, and bundle tens of thousands of newspapers in a matter of a few hours. Needless to say, this is a very large, expensive, piece of equipment that few, if any, street papers can afford. The good news is that the print business is hyper-competitive, and if you look you will find affordable printing options. It is a good practice to seek print bids regularly to be sure you're getting the best price possible.

Street papers come in both the tabloid and magazine formats, although binding and cutting tend to make the magazine format more expensive. Other factors, beyond number of pages and size of the press-run, that will influence cost are paper quality, colour options, folding, and shipping and delivery. While some street papers have the resources as start-ups to begin with high production values, most begin with the most affordable options and grow. Many street papers have failed by beginning too ambitiously.

## **Making the Newspaper**

For most newspapers, production begins with the editorial stage, where articles are assigned, submissions reviewed, and material edited and massaged until ready for publication. Finished articles are then imported into the layout software and placed into the newspaper template. Once the pages are done, they are printed and proofed for mistakes. Corrections are made, and the final version is exported in PDF format and delivered or uploaded to the printer. Your life will be easier if you have a fast Internet connection, but many smaller papers make do without.

Having a great looking newspaper design will go a very long way toward establishing your credibility. Consider having a design professional, paid or volunteer, create the template for your newspaper. This will create the look and feel of a real newspaper even if, for the time being, you're doing your best to fake it.

## **Ask the Experts**

### **Strategic Relationships**

“We didn’t really have any relationships to begin with. Within the voluntary sector we weren’t in with the ‘in crowd’ and they viewed us with suspicion. We didn’t care – we were doing something new and worked directly with homeless people. The voluntary sector felt a little threatened, I think. We had zero relationship with the government. They were to blame for the problem but they didn’t bother us. The local politicians who hated central government were only too happy to oblige! We also had to quickly form relationships with the police. This improved over time as they realised what the project was all about.”

“Relationships with every other organisation possible are helpful because they can provide you, at the least, with resources that you can tell the public about in your publication. The times food is given out, or clothing, and what social services are offered. Sympathetic with your cause, they may offer additional necessities (office equipment) and amenities.”

“We believe the only effective way to fight poverty and social exclusion is to work together well: we all have that common goal. And working with other organisations also helps publicise the magazine.”

“We formed strong relationships with businesses in the community where the paper is sold. Most of them took advertising space in the paper. We explained that the vendors would no longer be begging for money in front of their businesses but would be selling a paper. They were, for the most part, willing to try and we managed to prove to them that crime rates would go down if they were willing to help us make it go.”

“We ran a street poster campaign which worked well. We organised a launch which also went well and we received loads of media coverage, which contributed to our high sales from the off. Having homeless people at the launch telling their own story really helped.

“Sometimes relations with other organisations are difficult because we have different points of view, but sometimes they are incredibly helpful because it is only together we can make a difference, through things like lobbying politicians.”

A template will also create consistency from issue to issue, a benefit your readers will appreciate. The template will also cut your production time dramatically. Producing your paper will be largely a matter of “pouring” and formatting text and photos.

Many street papers publish with a very small staff that is supplemented by volunteers. While experience will vary greatly from newspaper to newspaper, it will probably take at least 60 hours of in-house labour to create a 16-20 page tabloid. Unless you have a large staff and/or budget, it will be essential to recruit and maintain a reliable core of journalists, photographers, illustrators, and production volunteers. There are many good resources available on the subject of volunteer management.

For access to material published by other street papers, visit the Street News Service: [www.streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org). The content at this site is available for reprint by other street papers free of charge.

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND ALLIES**

It is important to have as many allies as possible when you first start out, without compromising your organisation or the homeless vendors. You will need to form relationships with people and organisations from public and private sector, the media as well as with other NGOs. It helps if you can locate a key contact person in each organisation who understands what your street paper is about. It is important in the initial stages to invest some time and effort in these key people and relationships: it can take a while for people to fully grasp what you are trying to achieve, but once they buy into the idea, you have a long-term friend and ally.

## Relationships with other media

Use any journalistic contacts for news and articles. Some media bodies will charge a fee, others may be willing to offer material at reduced costs. Publicising the street paper is important and most street papers have some kind of official launch. A launch can be a helpful place to get your message across to a large number of people at one time as well as saying thanks to those who support you. The media tend to warm to street papers as it is a new and innovative idea (however, they have also known to be hostile). The media always seem to be interested in the 'human interest' story, so it's good to have a vendor who is happy to talk to the press and you are happy to represent you. As they say, any publicity is good publicity.

## Relationships with other organisations

There is no point in re-inventing the wheel and there is already enough waste of organisations duplicating services amongst NGOs. If you know organisations provide services (like accommodation, food, medical, legal and social services) for homeless people, link with them and use the good ones for referral. They may also be a major source of new vendors. You may be able to use office space of already existing homeless care organisations and this will mean that you have vendors already on your doorstep!

You can use institutions like universities and colleges, etc as a recruiting ground for volunteers: journalism schools are always looking for work placements and most colleges will have some kind of community volunteer programme you can tap into.

Many street papers start from an opposition point to the government. However, you may have to form relationships with government or government bodies for registration, licences, funding, liaising with police, etc. This can sometimes be difficult as it may mean your editorial independence is compromised. Many street papers have found that with time they have built positive relationships with government bodies, which have had direct benefits for vendors.

## SOME FINAL WORDS FROM THE EXPERTS

People who have already set up and run street papers were asked the question:

**'What, if anything- would you do differently if you were setting up a street paper now?'** Here is what they said.

*"If I were starting a paper now, I'd research grants thoroughly, and write to dozens of possible initial supporters. I'd also seek out the copy shop and the Internet cafes and appeal to experts in various phases of production to offer their services. One thing I've learned: any personal reticence in approaching people for help should be disregarded, as it's not yourself you're putting*



*out there but the idea to help disenfranchised people, which makes it all the easier to ask for things.”*

*“I’d begin with a business plan, no matter how bullshit. I’d do market and reader research earlier in its history. I’d look for more foundation support earlier on. I’d be more aggressive about donor development earlier on (it took us 4-5 years to get our act together on this). I’d do better training and oversight with vendors. I’d begin with a fairly standard hierarchical model with an Executive Director and Editor (different people) at the top.”*

*“Because our sales shot up so fast it was clear that we had under-invested. In fact, the success of the venture almost destroyed us. So, more investment would have been important. We were simply being reactive to everything because we were under-resourced. If we’d had more people our planning would have been better. So, we needed more people and a longer term strategy but that’s easy to say in hindsight. We were enthusiastic and wanted to make a difference and just went for it. There’s no time for dithering around.”*

*“Think more beforehand. Study more of the already existing papers, and make a conscious decision about each aspect of operation. Not rush into things. Maybe be more modest at first. Print an even smaller edition, just to get one’s feet wet.”*

*“I prefer not to think about this. I prefer to think about what I can do differently to really help these people and make it worth every minute I dedicate to this work.”*

*“For sure, make sure we took a business perspective, not just a social one.”*

*“Many things: a better magazine, better commercially-minded staff, better legal advice, better logistics advice, and so on. But if you are worried about these things at the beginning, maybe you would think you never had enough to actually start. In the end, all you need is a lot of human energy and a capacity to work.”*

*“Concentrate on finding good volunteers that believe in what they do. Don’t try to use the paper to get a vicious opinion out or to get revenge on something or someone. Even if you are right, revenge will only cause you grief and disapproval from society.”*

*“My advice would be: get funding, hire professionals, but most importantly get to know the homeless men and women who sell the paper. It won’t work without loyal vendors. Be very straight with them, have clear rules that they’ve agreed on.”*

*“Make sure we were financially solvent and collaborate more with other non-profit organisations that work at all levels in the field. We certainly needed a business plan and more information on the Board.”*

*“We would try to involve the homeless people in the early stages of the project elaboration.”*

*“There is a saying: ‘not knowing that it was impossible, he went and did it.’ Believe in what you are doing, but be aware that you will need some psychological help. Sometimes*



*homeless stories are really, really sad and you will have to question all your values and thoughts. Don't try to do it by yourself, have people to help you. You don't need much money to start, if you don't think too big at the beginning. It is a process, to be developed step-by-step."*

*"Do better market research and train vendors with the help of professional social workers and psychologists."*

*"Seek more money in order to have some paid staff. If you leave this too long, you don't have time to find the funding."*

*"I would advise any paper starting up to speak to existing papers and find out what to do and what not to do."*

*"Make sure that the day has 36 hours."*

## **FURTHER HELP**

For further information or advice you can visit any of these sites:

- International Network of Street Papers: [www.street-papers.com](http://www.street-papers.com)
- Street News Service: [www.streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org)
- North American Street Newspaper Association: [www.nasna.net](http://www.nasna.net)

## **Some other resources**

- Free Management Library ([www.managementhelp.org/](http://www.managementhelp.org/))  
Complete, highly integrated library for non-profits and for profits, includes links to business planning, board development, fundraising, and much more
- Small Business Association Business Plan Basics  
([http://www.sba.gov/starting\\_business/planning/basic.html](http://www.sba.gov/starting_business/planning/basic.html))  
Excellent resource with business planning, marketing, and legal information
- Nonprofit Enterprise and Self sustainability Team ([www.nesst.org](http://www.nesst.org))  
NESsT believes that some Community Service Organizations can increase their long-term viability and independence through the use of entrepreneurial, "self-financing" strategies to generate resources that supplement philanthropic support from public and private donors.
- Changemakers.net ([www.changemakers.net/library/index.cfm](http://www.changemakers.net/library/index.cfm))  
"The site for social entrepreneurship world-wide"
- Action Without Borders ([www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org))  
Action Without Borders connects people, organizations and resources to help build a world where all people can live free and dignified lives.

- NGO Manager ([www.ngomanager.org](http://www.ngomanager.org)) (especially [www.ngomanager.org/dcd/2\\_Organisational\\_Development/Starting\\_an\\_NGO/](http://www.ngomanager.org/dcd/2_Organisational_Development/Starting_an_NGO/))  
Management tool and research for nonprofits worldwide
- Development Gateway ([www.developmentgateway.org](http://www.developmentgateway.org))  
The Development Gateway Foundation is an enabler of development. We help improve people's lives in developing countries by building partnerships and information systems that provide access to knowledge for development.

### Publishing specific sites

- Periodical Publishers Association ([www.ppa.co.uk](http://www.ppa.co.uk))  
PPA is the organisation of magazines and B2B media in the UK
- Magazine Publishers of America ([www.magazine.org](http://www.magazine.org))  
The definitive resource for the magazine industry
- Publishing Help ([www.publishinghelp.com](http://www.publishinghelp.com))  
Your Number One Resource for ideas, information and assistance.
- Business of Performing Audits ([www.bpai.com](http://www.bpai.com))  
A circulation auditing resource

### Books

- Lawrie, Alan (2001) *The Complete Guide to Business and Strategic Planning for Voluntary Organisations*, London, Directory of Social Change
- Hudson, Mike (1999) *Managing without Profit*, Penguin
- Swithinbank, Tessa (2001) *Coming up from the Streets: The Story of 'The Big Issue'*, London, Earthscan Publications
- Atton, Chris (2002) *Alternative Media*, London, Sage Publications
- Robinson, Andy, *Selling Social Change Without Selling Out*, Chardon Press, \$25.95 [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)
- Stern, Gary, *Marketing Workbook for Non-profit Organizations*, , Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, \$25.00 1-800-274-6024
- The Board of Directors, *Special Edition of the Grassroots Fundraising Journal*, \$12.00 [www.chardonpress.com](http://www.chardonpress.com)
- Klein, Kim, *Fundraising for Social Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, \$35.00 [www.chardonpress.com](http://www.chardonpress.com)

## Appendix A: CASE STUDIES

### Sustainability through Diversity

#### The Big Issue in Scotland, UK

The Big Issue in Scotland (TBIS) is straightforward in its approach to homelessness, working at the front line in its activities, pulling together the worlds of business and the voluntary sector. After its launch in 1993, the initiative was an immediate success, empowering homeless people by giving them the opportunity to earn an income and move on.

While the main aim is to help homeless people move back into society, TBIS has also succeeded in forcing the media and businesses to re-evaluate their attitudes towards homelessness and poverty. TBIS bridged the gap between diverse sections of society, choosing not to take the traditional route of an NGO. TBIS believes in people creating partnerships on every level, and it is these relationships which bring about change. TBIS is registered and works as a business, and has been financially self sustainable since it began, with a current annual turnover around two million UK pounds.

The Big Issue in Scotland has managed to become economically sustainable largely through two income sources: sales of the magazine and advertising sales. A great deal of effort is put into the product to make it more likely to sell: the magazine contains an eclectic mix of alternative entertainment, social issues, investigative journalism and lifestyle features that appeals to a broad base of readers, while striving to retain its unique edge. Investment was put in from the very beginning into competent and experienced advertising sales staff. Additionally, advertisers have been attracted to the full colour magazine format and average weekly sales of 40,000 copies.

TBIS has many initiatives that demonstrate the value placed on the vendors of the publication. A football team for vendors has been established and is linked in with a city league and is very active. Grand Central Union is a group run from the offices that takes vendors hill walking and involves them in other physical activities as a way to give them positive alternatives to drugs and alcohol. Big Issue at Work helps vendors find employment beyond selling the paper, by acting as a recruitment agency for external employment.

This extensive vendor support requires resources. To this end, TBIS has begun an endeavour of property development: buying a building, renting out space and selling when prices have appreciated. Maybe it's ironic, or maybe its fitting, that housing is what helps keep Big Issue Scotland sustainable. In this way, the



organisation does not operate as a charity. Only the International Department acts as a charity and raises funds to support new street papers.

While running a street paper as a business venture may not be possible in some countries, it has been a key to the success of TBIS. TBIS started small, with just a few staff and modest budget. As the number of vendors and sales of the magazine increased, the organisation was able to diversify into other areas of trading. However, it has been a challenge to strike the balance of developing new business activities to reduce financial vulnerability and keeping the organisation focused on the vendors.

*For more information contact Claire Black at [c.black@bigissuescotland.com](mailto:c.black@bigissuescotland.com) or see the website at [www.bigissuescotland.com](http://www.bigissuescotland.com)*

### **Incentives, Training, and Services**

#### **Novy Prostor, Prague, Czech Republic**

Novy Proster (NP) began publishing in 1999 and has reached a weekly circulation of 15,000. Their program of incentives and vendor support offers new skills to the socially excluded. These help vendors not only survive, but to live fulfilling lives and have quality relationships.



NP has found that providing material help is only worthwhile if it is not automatic or mandatory.

They have also found that if people become dependent on aid, their view of reality does not change and they do not move on. At NP, vendors learn to live in, not be protected from, the world.

The NP programme consists of three aspects:

1. A motivation system to encourage vendors to sell more through incentive schemes
2. Training programmes to help vendors develop key competencies. The training is not stimulated, it happens during everyday work.
3. Social services, which are unique for every client- individual help is offered when it is considered to be useful

#### **Motivation**

Example 1: its difficult to find a job in an ad agency after 20 years spent in the army.

Example 2: its hard to find any job after five years spent in an asylum.

NP distribution programme is based on the premise that income making opportunities should be offered to socially excluded people as well as a complete work experience. This means finding a work environment that acts like the actual job market. NP use internal sales incentives, coupons, access to certain privileges, money and different opportunities- much like regular corporations. NP maintains the social elements of patience, strong motivation and great personal effort.

### **Key competencies**

NP considers key competencies to be what enables people to live and work in society. The list of competencies and required social skills is dependent on work standards ranging from the culture of a country or even a region.

Emotional intelligence is important in adapting new skills, to be flexible, to communicate and negotiate, to cope with stress and crises. Those skills are not generally taught at school, therefore it is important to understand how to acquire key competencies and how to change and develop. Probably the biggest influences are family, school, work or even prison or other institutional homes.

### **Social Help**

NP offer social support to people on an individual basis. NP workers always search for different kinds of motivation and rewards to encourage vendors to sell the magazine. If a request for one person is repeated, it may become a standard for everyone until it no longer works, then it is changed.

At NP help is offered to more active vendors who want our services; for others, no help might be better. The existence of passive social services is important to NP. Staff are not responsible for the destiny of everyone who shows up. In this way, NP does not act like local shelters- there are rules and not everyone can participate. NP can only do this because shelters exist and NP is not peoples' last resort.

NP encourages vendors to be involved, but that doesn't mean passive people are automatically rejected – just the active ones are rewarded. Every day NP staff can be proud that our clients need no hand holding or parents. NP helps them to realise new opportunities, new challenges and achieve small visible results. They learn that personal success can still be achieved.

*For more information contact Dagmar Kocmankova at [projekt@novyprostor.com](mailto:projekt@novyprostor.com) or see the website at [www.novyprostor.com](http://www.novyprostor.com)*

## Supporting the Workers

BISS magazine, Munich, Germany

The mission of BISS is to help vendors themselves into full-time employment through selling the paper, job training, financial help and housing assistance. The paper began in 1993 and has a circulation of 35,000 per month. In order to help vendors progress through their programme, BISS has different stages of employment. The goal of this system is to help certain interested vendors become full-time employees as salaried vendors.



Stage 1: (approx 3 months) Vendors determined needy by the German public welfare act can receive a vendor card to sell the paper and are assigned a place to sell. Periodic checks by BISS staff find out whether and how often the vendor sells at his pitch.

Stage 2: (approx 3 months) Vendors become divided into one of two groups: those who use to BISS to make additional earnings (70% of vendors, who sell 400 copies per month or less) or those who sell BISS full time and are candidates for full time employment.

Stage 3: (for those interested in full-time employment) At this stage interested vendors attend compulsory meetings with social workers regarding debt, housing, family; and to remove or minimize difficulties. If the vendor decides he wants to be permanently employed, he must prove that he can sell 800-1200 copies monthly.

Stage 4: (first year) If the vendors sells 800-1200 copies per month and life experiences are clarified to the extent that they will not hamper sales, a date for permanent employment is agreed upon. Attendance at monthly vendor meetings is mandatory.

Stage 5: (unlimited time) A permanent employee must sell 800-1200 copies as a monthly quota. Just as before, he buys the paper for Euro 0.70 and sells it for Euro 1.50, keeping Euro 0.80, which is set off against his salary. Currently BISS offers permanent vendor employees salaries between Euro 1,050 and Euro 1,450 per month.

Local considerations: BISS operates in Germany which has an extensive and self-regulated system of social support. It also receives financial support from BISS readers and various donors who help finance this employment scheme.

*For more information contact Hildegard Denninger at [info@biss-magazin.de](mailto:info@biss-magazin.de) or see the website at [www.biss-magazin.de](http://www.biss-magazin.de)*

## **The Mouth of the Streets** **Boca de Rua, Porto Alegre, Brazil**

Boca de Rua (literally 'mouth of the streets') is produced and sold in the streets of Porto Alegre in south Brazil. Boca de Rua is a street paper with a difference: the quarterly newspaper is entirely written, produced and sold by homeless people.

The main aim of Boca de Rua is to give homeless people a voice, to let them tell their own stories in a way that other media doesn't allow. The newspaper was started in 2000 by a group of Brazilian volunteer journalists, and they facilitate the writing and production of the newspaper. The homeless people meet to discuss what they want in the newspaper in terms of articles and photographs every quarter. They then decide who is writing what material.



For those that cannot write, journalists assist by using a tape recorder and documenting what the homeless people say. They read back this material to the author and they make any changes they want to. It is a time consuming process- but it is important in not only giving the homeless people a legitimate voice but it also fosters dignity and self- respect. When the vendors sell the newspaper they are proud of their work. In a practical sense it has also encouraged learning: many homeless people who were illiterate before can now write their own material. The creative process builds confidence and gives a mechanism for the homeless people to express themselves.

The vendors do not pay anything for the newspaper: since they produce it, they are given it and then sell it on to the public, keeping 100% of the money as income for themselves. The vendors sell approximately 7000 copies every quarter.

Boca de Rua also provides other services, such as social workers, psychologists, health information, etc. These services and the organisation are entirely funded from charitable donations and the small group of volunteer journalists are responsible for raising this money.

There is nothing else like Boca de Rua in south Brazil. The homeless here have been treated with violence and prejudice. Those that work on and sell the newspaper have grown and developed in terms of their skills and their self esteem. The media turns to Boca de Rua for interviews with homeless people, and as a result the public have started to trust them more and to look at them in a different light.

*For more information contact Clarinha Glock at [clarinha@orion.ufrgs.br](mailto:clarinha@orion.ufrgs.br)*

## A Strategy for Action

### Real Change, Seattle, United States

Real Change is an advocacy-based street newspaper that brings together the values of homeless empowerment, effective organizing, quality journalism, and a solid non-profit business model. Founded in 1994 on a shoestring budget of a few thousand dollars, the bi-weekly newspaper now regularly employs more than 200 vendors to sell over 40,000 copies per month.



By virtue of their broad and supportive readership, Real Change has been able to build political support for a pro-human services and human rights agenda. While there are regular appeals to take action in the newspaper itself, readers are also invited to subscribe to an email newsletter that explains current anti-poverty legislative opportunities and offers options for effective action. This works in tandem with the Real Change website, which offers email templates for action letters that can be sent to the appropriate officials from the web page.

This combination of the newspaper, enewsletter, and website offers a means to reach and involve citizens and monitor the results. While there are several anti-poverty advocacy groups in Seattle, Real Change's unique strength is the ability to translate their readership into grassroots support for poor people's issues.

In 2001, Real Change built an *ad hoc* coalition to run a successful ballot initiative campaign to increase services for poor and homeless people. More than 26,000 signatures were gathered in two months to qualify the initiative for ballot.

Homeless and formerly homeless people are involved in the paper through participation in an Editorial Committee that informs the content of the paper. A vendor representative structure offers opportunity for peer training and support, as well as an appeals board for vendor suspensions and terminations. A homeless writers project, co-hosted by the Seattle Public Library, meets regularly to offer support for self-expression and resources for publishing.

Real Change's strategy of combining grassroots organizing with advocacy journalism has built a powerful institutional voice for poor and homeless people in Seattle. Their funding base is diverse and sustainable, and keeps them accountable to the readers and the vendors.

For more information, contact Timothy Harris at [rchange@speakeasy.org](mailto:rchange@speakeasy.org), or see the website at [www.realchangenews.org](http://www.realchangenews.org)



## Appendix B: INSP Street Paper Charter

All street papers, which are members of INSP, must adhere to the following street paper charter.

The charter of the International Network of Street Papers sets out the principles of the international street paper movement. These are:

A) Aiming to help socially excluded people (in some countries only homeless people apply in this category) help themselves, through providing them with the means of earning an income and facilitating their re-integration into society, through providing social support.

B) Using all post-investment profits to finance support for the vendors, the socially excluded or social business. Each paper supplies its annual accounts to an agreed independent organisation for the purpose of financial transparency.

C) Aiming to provide vendors with a voice in the media and campaigning on behalf of the socially excluded.

D) Aiming towards creating quality street papers, which the vendors are proud to sell and the public are happy to buy. This breaks the cycle of dependency through empowerment.

E) Aiming towards social responsibility in business in terms of editorial, staff, vendor and environmental policies. Aiming not to spend excessively on professional staff, with money being targeted towards vendors and vendor support.

F) Supporting prospective street papers that share a common philosophy and intend to sign the street paper charter.

G) That no charter street paper shall enter the established selling area of an existing charter member.

## Appendix C: SAMPLE VENDOR AGREEMENT

### Code of Conduct

- 1) Vendors must be sober while they represent Real Change to the public. Drug or alcohol use while selling the paper is not allowed. If you appear intoxicated or smell of alcohol, we will not sell you papers.
- 2) Please be respectful of others while selling Real change and while you are in the office. Abusive language or threatening behavior of any form is not acceptable. You represent Real Change, and reflect upon all of us while you sell the paper.
- 3) Vendors must wear their Real Change Badge in a clearly visible manner while they sell the paper.
- 4) The Real Change Badge, and the papers you buy, cannot be loaned or given to another vendor.
- 5) Do not fight with other vendors or panhandlers over turf. Either agree to share space, or find somewhere else to go.

Violation of this Code of Conduct, or of the rules described in the Orientation may result in suspension or termination. Repeated suspensions will result in permanent termination of all rights to sell Real Change or be involved as a member.

I understand that I am responsible for my own tax liability. Suspensions and terminations by staff may be appealed to the Vendor Representatives, but are in effect until overturned.

**I have read and fully understand the above Vendor Code of Conduct, and agree to remain within these guidelines while I sell Real Change papers.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Referring vendor # \_\_\_\_\_

Staff use only:

Vendor ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor Rep: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Layla Mewburn** is the former International Director of *The Big Issue in Scotland*, where she helped to set up and run street paper initiatives, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Layla also worked as the Secretariat of the International Network of Street Papers for five years. She is now based in Tanzania working for the international development agency ActionAid.

**Timothy Harris** is the founding Director of the *Real Change* homeless newspaper in Seattle, and in 1992 founded the *Spare Change* newspaper in Boston. Harris started his first alternative newspaper, *critical times*, in 1984, and has worked since as a journalist and poor people's organizer. He is a co-founder and current chair of the North American Street Newspaper Association.



We wish to thank and acknowledge the many street paper editors in the INSP and NASNA who have inspired and informed this guide.