



Data Works Sheet: Factors Why People Stay or Leave

*using survey data to launch reflection, discussion,
and action in Minnesota theaters*

We asked ...

Think of the theater that you have been affiliated with the longest. How important were/are each of the following factors in your decision to **stay with the theater?**

And we asked ...

Think of the last time you left or chose not to return to a job/project/role at a MN theater organization. How important were each of the factors in your decision to **leave or not return?**

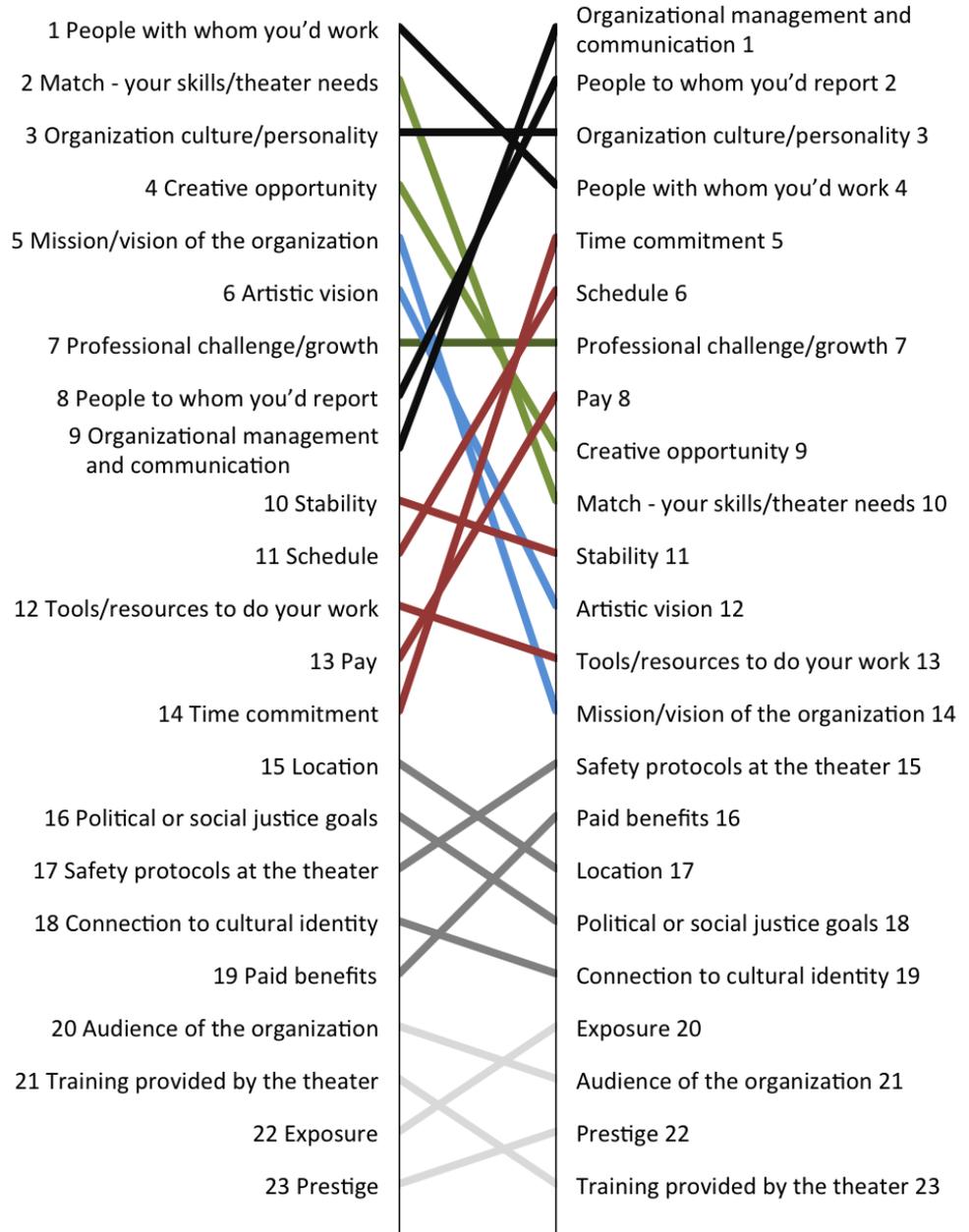
People said ...

Factors related to **people** were the highest ranking in their decisions to leave or stay with a theater. (See the ones with black lines.)

The ladder to the right shows the rank of the factors for the stay and leave questions.

Lines connect the factors in their ranked positions on the two lists with colors indicating factors that are similar, both in terms of factor type and rank pattern.

Rank of Factors Selected as “Very Important” to STAY to LEAVE



Source: The PAHRTS (Performing Arts Human Resources Toolkit Series) survey, funded by the Mardag Foundation and developed by a [Minnesota Theater Alliance](#) steering committee and consultant [Rachel Brown](#) was conducted in August 2015. Over 400 people who work in MN theater – in production, creation, and administration roles—responded to the 34-question survey. As a pilot study, this data is NOT representative of the field as a whole but provides a starting point for discussion and more research. For more information, see <http://www.pahrts.mntheateralliance.org>



Breaking the data down ...

- The factors very important to most respondents all dealt with interpersonal issues – who they work for or with; organizational management/communication; organization culture/personality.
- Creative opportunity, organizational mission, and artistic vision were also ranked high as stay factors, which makes sense given we're talking about people in theaters! Note how these are higher on the stay list than they are in the leave list.
- Factors in the middle (red line) or bottom (grey lines) of the ladder are still very important to many people, but are likely more impacted by individual perspectives and situations. The factors become more or less important to people, depending on where the person is in their career, the particular type of work they do, financial or family needs, location, and artistic values or expertise.

Thoughts and Questions ...

... for Organizations

- Thinking about the mission and artistic vision of your organization, which of the factors do you hope are the key reasons people stay with you? When people leave (they all eventually do), which factors are the ones you hope most impact their decision?
- What are the factors that really did influence the people that left your organization recently? What is motivating those who stay? If you don't know, find out. If these questions uncover issues, address them.
- If possible, use those motivations as you negotiate with staff or contractors, helping align the work roles and compensation with what is most important to them at the time.
- Resources may be tight but the possibility to improve interpersonal relationships is without limit. What can you do as an organization to be a place where people stay (or for contractors, return) for the people – how they manage, communicate, work together, and create an organizational culture?

... for Individuals

- Think back on your own experiences staying with or leaving theaters. What factors motivated you in those decisions? Have they changed over time? What does this tell about what you value and what drives you in your theater work?
- If you are looking for work in a theater (or for different work), what factors are most important to you now? Target your search to include theaters that share and support the factors you value.
- When negotiating, either for a new job or for changes to an existing one, consider the range of motivating factors and incorporate them into your strategy to create the best-fit between your work and values/needs.

Leaders: How to Use this Data Works Sheet in Your Organization

1. Examine the data yourself and reflect on your responses to it.
2. Explain to staff the background of the data and its purpose – to help organizations improve management of their most important resource, the humans!
3. Ask staff to respond to the questions themselves. Let people keep their responses private.

See the following page for a list of the factors to use for this step.

4. Together, review the data presented in this Data Works Sheet. Given your organization's context, what is surprising? Obvious? Different? Affirming? Challenging?
5. What practices can you, as individuals and an organization, change to address the issues raised through these reflections?

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What are the top factors that are “very important” to you as you decide to STAY at a theater or to LEAVE it? What do you think others working in theaters would select? Are there other factors you would add to this list?

STAY

Think of the theater that you have been affiliated with the longest. How important were/are each of the following factors in your decision to STAY with the theater?

LEAVE

Think of the last time you left a job/project/role at a MN theater organization. Or, if you completed a project and decided you would not choose to work with them again. How important were each of the factors in your decision to LEAVE or NOT RETURN?

1. Mission/vision of the organization
2. Political or social justice goals
3. Connection to cultural identity
4. Organization culture/personality
5. Creative opportunity
6. Artistic vision
7. Professional challenge/ growth opportunity
8. Match between your skills/experience and the needs of the theater
9. Pay
10. Paid benefits
11. Time commitment
12. Schedule
13. Stability
14. Audience of the organization
15. Location
16. Prestige
17. Exposure
18. People with whom you'd work
19. People to whom you'd report
20. Organizational management and communication
21. Safety protocols at the theater
22. Training opportunities provided by the theater
23. Tools and resources to do your work
24. _____
25. _____

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