



Data Works Sheet: Path

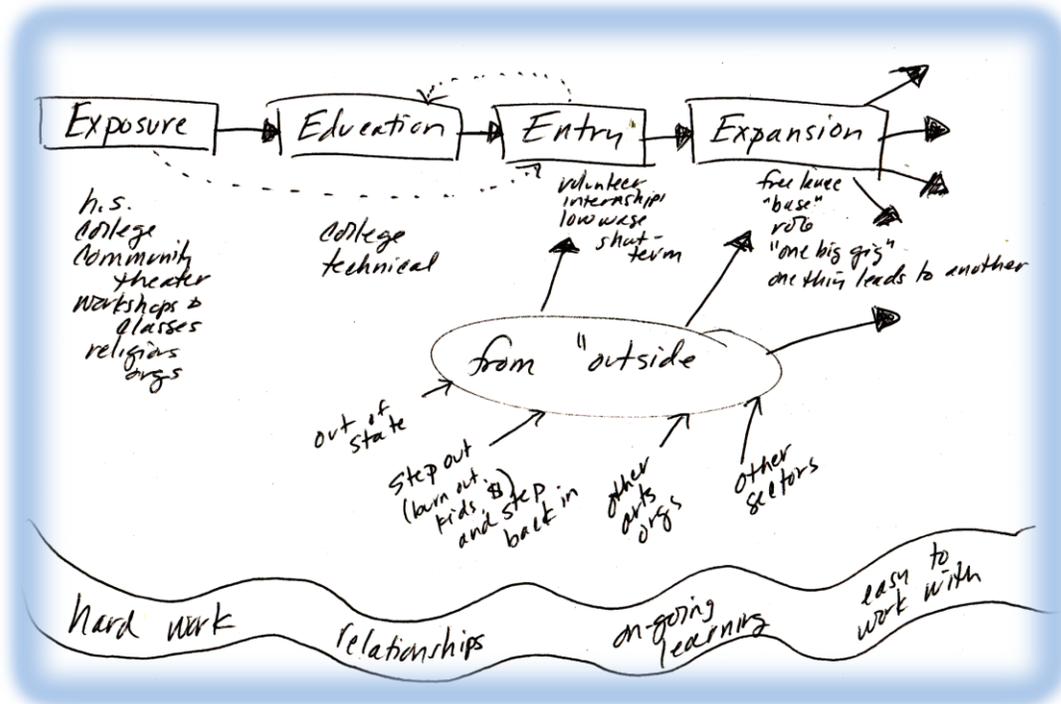
using survey data to launch reflection, discussion, and action in Minnesota theaters

We asked ... How did you get where you are now in Minnesota theaters? What were the pivotal moments of change and growth? Who helped you along the way?

People said ... A lot. Almost 300 people shared their path stories, some in great detail. While every path was different, patterns emerged across the stories in four distinct phases.

- *Exposure:* that first time they saw what went on behind the curtain and got involved as a theater maker or supporter. This was often through a high school or college theater program, a community theater, a religious organization, or a theater-based class.
- *Education:* the time of initial training. Key to this are the teachers/instructors/faculty who taught them. People say they keep in touch with them for networking and advice.
- *Entry:* those low- or no-paying entry-level experiences were often described as a critical time to learn, get exposure, and make connections.
- *Expansion:* one thing leads to another. The paths diverged here as people specialized in one role, moved into project-based work, or launched into different tasks at a theater.

People who arrive in from the “outside” came in mainly to the entry or expansions phases from out-of -state, other arts organizations, other work sectors, or came back after stepping out.



Woven through the responses were four themes on what people do to move along the path: **1. Work hard 2. Build and maintain relationships 3. Keep learning – from peers, experience, and formal training 4. Be easy/good to work with**

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 the [PAHRTS Toolkit](#).



Also interesting ...

- Many described the people who helped them along the way with great gratitude and appreciation. For some, there was one key mentor to whom they return for advice and encouragement. For others, the list of people was long and the specific gift from each detailed. Most often listed were professors and teachers, artistic directors, technical directors, and directors.
- Deep gratitude was also expressed for the theaters where people were given a chance or were encouraged to grow and learn. Particular theaters were listed and the list included all types – large and small, focused on a particular cultural group or theater style, professional and community. Particularly for people in production roles, unions were also cited as being helpful.
- In addition to formal training, people identified many ways and places they continue to learn. This included on-the-job training by supervisors or peers, saying yes to new things even when not fully ready, cross-training, working outside the sector, and creating their own opportunities.

Thoughts and Questions ...

... for Organizations

- Have you hugged a theater teacher/ instructor/ professor today? They are the ones who people cite as key to their exposure to the world of theater. How can you support their work?
- Do you know the paths of your people – where they came from and what they want to do next? Do you keep connected with former workers?
- Are you recruiting/hiring from one type of path or phase of the path? If so, where else could you look? See the Hiring section of the PAHRTS online Toolkit at <http://www.pahrts.mntheateralliance.org>
- Do you look for people from the outside – out of state, other arts organizations, people who have opted out for a bit, or from other sectors? What could that perspective bring to your organization?
- Is your organization one that people cite as one where they are/were supported to learn and grow? If not, what could you do to become one?

... for Individuals

- Where are you on your path? Where do you want to be? What support do you need to move forward and where will you find it?
- If you are not feeling successful or wish you could be doing more work or better work, how are you doing with the four key actions people identify as moving them along the path? Do you:
 - **Work hard?**
 - **Keep learning – from peers, experience, and formal training?**
 - **Build and maintain relationships?**
 - **Work well with others?**
- If you are feeling successful, what can you do to look back on the path phases and help someone else move forward?

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.
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?

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 the [PAHRTS Toolkit](#).

