

16. Innovation Award

INNOVATION AWARD

PRIDE COMMUNITY NETWORK & The Pride Media Centre

The dream....

With growing competition, political uncertainty, restraints on marketing budgets, pressures on funding providers and the rise of influencers, bloggers, social media platforms and other roads to market; Pride Community Network realised that it needed to implement a fresh, innovative and exciting approach to its finances. It could no longer rely on traditional radio revenue – mainly advertising – and needed to think bigger and more long term.

We had an ambitious business plan to grow and be a brand leader and to develop a strong community outreach programme and therefore needed multi-revenue streams to secure our business and deliver our future plans.

In September 2018 we took the bold decision to transform derelict BBC studios in Gateshead, over 17,000 sq ft, into the Pride Media Centre. The building, which hadn't been occupied in over four years, was in need of major redevelopment however we realised this would be an exciting new business and media hub for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT+) community and our many allies.

It would also be the first of its kind in the UK.

Not only would Pride Community Network be based at the centre, we would also offer a suite of offices, studios, performance spaces, podcast suites, cinema and recording facilities to hire out to members of the community and our allies, many of whom were embarking as a business start-up and needed support and encouragement to take that first step.

The aims of the Pride Media Centre would be ground breaking as it worked to connect the diverse LGBT+ community to opportunities and resources, supporting their vision in a safe and supportive environment.

Our plan for the centre was to:

WORKPLACE

- Establish the first LGBT+ business and media centre in the UK which will be the focal point for the LGBT+ community
- Support fledgling businesses with a strong mentoring and support network by removing barriers that can hold members of the LGBT+ community back, so they can go as far as their hard work and talent can take them

- Engage with the transgender community to develop a programme that will break down barriers in the work place
- Provide year-long training and work-experience programmes for long-term unemployed members of the LGBT+ community with a view to full-time employment at the end of the programme
- Provide equipped office space with marketing and communications support including radio and video production

OUTREACH

- Engage with hard to reach members of the LGBT+ community by providing an outreach service for those that currently feel excluded, vulnerable or isolated
- Engage with the 16-25-year-old group that need support or a safe space to explore their sexuality and encourage entrepreneurship
- Deliver education and awareness programmes through seminars and focus groups held in the centre
- Partner with businesses and organisations to deliver a support service that promotes best practice amongst their workforce to support LGBT+ employees through a programme of seminars and workshops
- Work with schools and colleges to promote LGBT+ diversity and promote inclusivity

BROADCAST

- Provide a home for Pride Radio 89.2fm and Pride Radio Scotland (DAB), its diverse range of programming and a space to develop its volunteer scheme
- Be the creative base for the Pride World Media network and Out and Proud TV
- Develop online and video/digital broadcast
- Foster relationships with the wider community to build bridges through active engagement using outdoor broadcasts
- Introduce training programmes for volunteer presenters and those interested in radio
- Provide an authoritative voice to public and private sector businesses and organisations on LGBT+ issues

It was a bold vision but one we knew we had to deliver.

The reality....

We put in place a fast-paced campaign to raise funds through regeneration grants, community donations, sponsorship and commercial revenue. In three months, we raised £100,000. Work started on transforming the building in December 2018, we welcomed our first tenants in March 2019 and the centre was officially opened in May 2019 by Lord Michael Cashman CBE.

In June 2019 we signed our final tenant to the centre giving us 100% occupancy. We now have 16 businesses renting space and generate additional income from studio hires.

We also employed a business development manager to oversee our sales strategy and repackaged our radio offer to reflect a changing market.

The outcome....

Pride Community Network now has a strong financial future. Through innovation, entrepreneurship and determination, we have regular income including advertising, sponsorship, office rentals, hires, outdoor broadcasts and promotions. We can now plan for long-term growth.

Our Outreach Work programme is in development. We have transformed a former double decker bus into the Pride Radio Bus, complete with a radio studio, sofas, café and staging. The bus has already broadcast from Pride events and visited schools and colleges in the north east.

We are working with regional and national LGBT organisations and educationalists to develop a two-year outreach programme for primary schools through to further education; and working to support the older community, particularly those who feel lonely and isolated in hard to reach areas. This will be funded by Pride Community Network through its new revenue streams.

In under a year, we have totally transformed the way we generate revenue, established our brand and increased our community engagement.

When other regional networks have gone national; Pride Community Network, through innovation, passion and determination, is broadcasting out and proud serving its community with pride.

www.pridemediacentre.co.uk

