

Public Engagement Case Study

Bright Club (University College London)

Bright Club aims to reach out to a certain cross-section of the 'public' – members of the public aged 20-50, individuals and groups currently that are not linked to the university, but who take part in cultural events. The project is facilitated by UCL and One Green Firework, a comedy promotions company. Each performance is compered by a professional comedian and closes with a musical number. 4-6 UCL researchers (staff and PhD students) perform 10-minute sets about their work in an amusing way.

What was your experience of putting on the programme?

'Bright Club has surpassed what it set out to achieve, and both audiences ('... a fantastic concept') and performers ('the most fun an academic can have at work') have given incredible feedback. No-one really understands Bright Club until they've been to one. Then they love it and come back for more.'

How did you access/interest your intended audience?

'Bright Club is marketed through a mixture of social networking online (the Facebook group has over 500 members), word of mouth, and inclusion in listings such as Time Out, The Evening Standard, Spoonfed, Chortle etc. Flyers are printed and distributed to the performers and to local comedy venues. We have put on 8 events so far in a venue with a capacity of 80, and usually have 65+ paying customers.'

How were the students involved trained?

'Our participants are a mixture of research students and staff. We have experimented with a mixture of different training regimes. Performers will typically spend time training with a professional stand-up comedian, as well as gaining advice and training on what is expected/works for the Bright Club. Ongoing advice and the chance to try out material are provided. Recordings of performances are also given to the performers for evaluation.'

What did the students get out of the programme?

'Inexperienced performers regularly go on from bright Club to performing at other public events, and even experienced performers admit that Bright Club improves their skills. The key is that this is training with an immediate outlet, meaning that skills are developed in a more fundamental way than they would be by training alone. Networks have been established within and across institutions, departments, groups and individuals. This network allows for the sharing of good practice and to celebrate the project's achievements.'

For further information please visit:

The Bright Club website www.brightclub.org

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