

The Kingswood Draw Experience

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The Kingswood Draw was a great experience. The learning curve was steep but that's when you make the best progress. There were many things I had to do that I'd never done before. I often had to think on my feet and make decisions on my own. I gained skills that carry over into all areas of life and am much more confident in general. As this was my first real job as an employee (having a boss) I had to keep track of my hours and be organised, which was something new to me.

It was really resourceful getting an inside look into the workings of EEA, because as someone with little experience in the field there were lots of questions I wanted answered.

Based on that very first meeting with Chloe, Ivan, Helen and Paul I had no idea what the actual event would look like. It was really interesting to see the ideas form and grow, then come into realisation.

Here are some of my thoughts and experiences being an assistant producer.

Some of the skills I gained on the project

Time management/organisation – At first I found punctuality quite difficult but once I realised that time management is just about organisation and preparation I started getting to places early and became more productive when doing tasks. It was important that I knew what was happening when, where, how and with who at all times. This meant staying in the loop of information and asking the right questions.

Emailing skills – Chloe gave me a lot of one-to-one help with emailing. Before the project I would write to people in a very cold and robotic way. I didn't know that you could add character while still being professional. Positive and honest emailing is a skill I will continue to use and work on for the rest of my life. It's essential to dealing with other people, especially in a creative field.

For example: Chloe got me to write a draft email to the schools inviting them to take part in the workshops. I wrote a very dry emotionless email thinking that I was being professional. Chloe got me to imagine I was the one receiving it. It sounded like one of the most boring events ever! We tried re-wording it but even the way I started sentences forced them to be dull. I'm definitely a lot better at emailing after that experience.

Sales/getting people involved/negotiations – Being good at selling ideas to people is a life long skill. Chloe gave me insight into her past experiences selling projects or ideas and gave me some tips and tricks. One very useful tool being putting yourself in another person's shoes and aiming the discussion down the route that's most beneficial to them. E.g. when getting the schools on board with the workshops we mentioned that it would be an amazing FREE opportunity for children to work with an international artist and do something they've never done before.

Distributing flyers/planning – It was my first time distributing flyers and as silly as it sounds I didn't feel confident going round and asking venues if I could put up a poster or handing them out to people walking by. I've definitely gained confidence from that. I'd also never created a distribution plan before which was a challenge because I had to budget the flyers for different areas then do research into which places would be more family friendly/artsy.

My worst moment

Chloe gave me the task of organising the distribution of flyers with volunteers. I created a plan for which areas we'd distribute first and prioritised the more important ones. I had myself and 4 volunteers from 10am-4pm to put the spinners on the flyers, distribute them throughout the Kingswood estate, break for lunch then distribute in Gipsy Hill, West Dulwich, Dulwich Village, East Dulwich/ Lordship Lane and Peckham. Looking back on it now I was being very optimistic. In the end we only managed to do the estate and a few parts of Dulwich. My main downfall was that I didn't copy Chloe into any of my emails or update her on my plans. If I had she would've been able to tell me it wouldn't work. I think it was a good decision to leave me to do it by myself because I learnt a valuable lesson. I agreed to do the rest of the distro in my own time, as it was my lack of communication that got me into the situation. Thankfully Ivan gave up some time and we did most of it in one day.

My best moment

When Chloe went away to New York I had to be the main point of contact and had to sort out a lot of things myself without checking first or getting guidance. I had to make important decisions and be very organised with what was going on. I kept a lot of notes, which helped me stay on task. I worked a lot of hours that week and felt a great sense of accomplishment when everything got sorted out.

For example: There was a problem with the community shop not having any publicity for the Children's arts workshops. I had to liaise with Jane and Helen to find a solution. We ended up changing the original flyer slightly and handing them out at the school workshops.

Also being there on the event day and seeing everyone enjoying themselves was really rewarding. Especially when the kids who initially didn't want to get involved enjoyed themselves so much they kept coming back.

Working alongside Chloe

Chloe is an amazing mentor. She knows just how much guidance to give without telling all the answers but without making it too difficult. There were situations where I needed to take the responsibility and make a decision and she let me. She also helped me with becoming self-employed. I was unsure of how to go about it and she gave me some great advice. It was really helpful because I needed to get my UTR to get paid!

Combination Festival and The Kingswood Draw

I don't think I could have done as well on The Kingswood Draw without first doing Combination. There were lots of things I'd already dealt with before and if I'd just gone straight into being an assistant producer without the Southwark Young Producers programme, it would have been too overwhelming. I learnt so much taking part in Southwark Young Producers 2013, but being mentored in a group is very different to the real thing. There's only so much you can learn without doing real work for somebody. I think some kind of apprenticeship programme might be a worthwhile investment.

I really appreciate Chloe choosing to involve me on this project because it was the kind of experience I needed.