

## FailSpace: The Five Facets of Failure interviews

### PROCESS TRANSCRIPT

Kayo ([00:01](#)):

I think a bad model, which is used all the time is an artist gets some money to do a project in a community they've never been to, and then goes to the community and says, okay, I've got this money to do a project here. What shall we do? It's often how funding works and projects are structured around it. I think funders have kind of set the tone for a lot of bad practice that goes on because of what we ask for, how we ask for it, who the calls go out to, and that kind of thing.

Jeremy ([00:42](#)):

Yeah, and I hope it didn't sound like I was blaming the artist because I don't think it was the artist's fault. I think it was absolutely structural. It was that we'd commissioned the wrong artist. Ultimately as the commissioner, as the producer, part of your job is to make that relationship work. And I think we had...the project was too outcome forecast. The community group hadn't been involved in the commissioning of that artist. The timetable was too short, the expectations were too high. I think we felt that we were trying to do something quite radical and exciting by matching this particular artist - who was an amazing artist - with this group. But actually there wasn't, it felt like they were being done to, and it didn't, there wasn't the time and the nurturing in that relationship to enable that project to work.

Arthur ([01:50](#)):

There was some of the things around these big consortiums that became incredibly difficult. These people are in one place, so they must therefore work together. Just because we are all based here, it doesn't necessarily mean we have a relationship, or even much in common. And then I think there was this thing of right, you've got three years to change this and then we'll cut your funding in half, and then we'll cut it in half again. That I think has left... that is incredibly difficult to manage the expectations around the project when the ground is changing so quickly. People get used to project being a certain way, and...you know.

Rita ([02:49](#)):

I remember feeling that I hadn't been properly briefed on it, doing my best to present and be in, what felt like really being taken apart by the members of the board. And this is a long time that this is, I dunno, 15, yeah at least 15 years ago. And feeling really hurt

by it and feeling failure in a lot of different ways, feeling that I'd been failed by more senior people in that organisation, feeling myself a failure, feeling that I had emotionally reacted. So it's one of those meetings, and I'm sure we've all been in them, but when you go, I need to not cry, I need to not cry, I need to not cry. And you're just crying and you're obviously crying and you're feeling just really, really upset. And I think at that point in the organisation, there was quite a lot of examples where people were getting upset and it wasn't unusual for people to be in the toilets crying, kind of thing. It was not a good culture. Certainly no one in the organisation came to me afterwards and said, right, shall we talk about what just happened there? It was certainly, if it was anything, I think, I was left to own that failure.

Rita ([04:15](#)):

Another failure I think is about not continuing relationships. So we get these nuggets of engagement with a family, but we just never have the time to continue that on. For example, we had a trip with families going down to a children's theatre festival. One of them was a family where the mother had suffered from domestic abuse and had left the family, but still reliant on the husband for her travel to get anywhere. The other one was from a Muslim background, but very much cut off from her community. And then you had another one who suffered quite a lot with agoraphobia and anxiety and very much the children were her carers. We brought them together from these very different lives, but still very similar in the sense of being on their own and looking after the children. So we brought them down to the festival and I was there with them. I brought my son because I thought, well, I'm a mum too and I wanna bring my son to see this theatre show. I think I also wanted them to see that I wasn't just an arts person, I was a mum too. And by the end of the day, the mothers were chatting, their children were doing the workshops. My son and one of the little girls were holding hands and they were all playing. And on the way back, one of the daughters had fallen asleep with a little clay thing in her hand. And the mum goes, I would've been at home in the house all day today, and they would've been on their iPads. And look at her. She's exhausted and she's happy and she's holding that. It's all precious to her. And I love this. I could feel this buzz, I could feel this buzz with mums like me. And I said, right, okay, let's do it. And we are doing it again, but we're doing it two years later. Where will we be in two years' time? I think the failure for me is the ability as a team to just kind of stop and pause and say, let's not do what we were planning. Let's just do more of this stuff. Let's just really work with that group. Let's fill the bus. Let's go in three months' time. Let's go in another three months' time. So I think for me, I always feel that we failed those families because we haven't engaged them again.

Liam ([06:53](#)):

Often the problem why you've been failed by other people when you are an employer or a freelancer and you're putting a team together, you need to accept part of the blame, you know? Something is failed, but the person should never have been appointed or should never have been asked to do a particular thing. So in a way, when that kind of failure in a work situation happens, you have to recognise your own contribution to it. What could have been done in the process to avoid this? Sometimes the problem is just simply a wrong appointment. There is... the procedures for appointing people I know quite rigid and not necessarily leading to making the best appointments. I think that is one of the most common causes of failure, in my experience.

Laurie ([07:56](#)):

I mean, without being too brutal about it, I really, almost on a daily basis, I wonder if it's really worth the commitment that I have as a volunteer to try and do this because more of the conversations that I'm having are about negative things and issues. And in my opinion, a lot of those conversations that I'm having really shouldn't be happening because it's, if people had done what they said they would do, or if things had been simpler or clearer, none of it would've happened in first place. And so it feels really demoralising and really difficult when you're trying to do something, which is amazing, which is spend lots of money in a deprived area to do good for the local community and residents. I found it shockingly difficult.