

**National  
Theatre**

Celebrating  
five years of  
**Step Change**

step  
change



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# Five Years of Step Change

by Nick Starr, Executive Director of the National Theatre

Step Change was established in 2006 to address the lack of career development opportunities for talented individuals in the early-mid stages of their career in the arts. It recognises that there are limited opportunities for people from certain backgrounds to acquire knowledge or practical experience other than through their day jobs and that consequently people can become stuck on a particular career path with no conceivable way of getting the relevant experience in order to make the desired change. Five cohorts of participants have now emerged with a broader understanding of the industry, specific work experience and the invaluable advice and guidance of more senior arts leaders.

Step Change is not a course; it does not 'teach' participants how to become successful leaders/producers/artistic directors/marketers. Instead it provides space for personal and professional growth, alongside specific opportunities to develop and practise new skills. Key to the programme's success is the diverse group of individuals that make up each cohort. So much learning is achieved just by the groups sharing their own knowledge and expertise and supporting each other through the process.

Many alumni have now progressed to new roles or returned to their employers with new-found skills. Here at the NT we've seen several talented members of staff leave to pursue new ventures, but we've also gained a huge network of individuals who now feel able to apply for jobs here when they previously might not have done, and I'm sure the same is true for the partner organisations. Step Change was not designed to benefit any one organisation, but was created for the greater good of the arts ecology.

Looking forward, we intend to relaunch Step Change in 2014 with new partner organisations from around England.

# Talent Development in the Arts

by Graham Devlin

In 2005, a group of senior arts people from the National Theatre, Royal Opera House, Battersea Arts Centre and the Young Vic (later joined by Nitro) were discussing their shared perception that career development in performing arts management was haphazard and overly reliant on people being 'in the right place at the right time' with ready access to professional contacts. They concluded that promising individuals in the early stages of their career could benefit from a structured programme which developed their potential through a network of peer-organised, reciprocal relationships, involving both masterclasses and secondments in a range of organisations.

## **The Step Change programme, funded initially by ACE's Cultural Leadership Programme (CLP), was thus established to:**

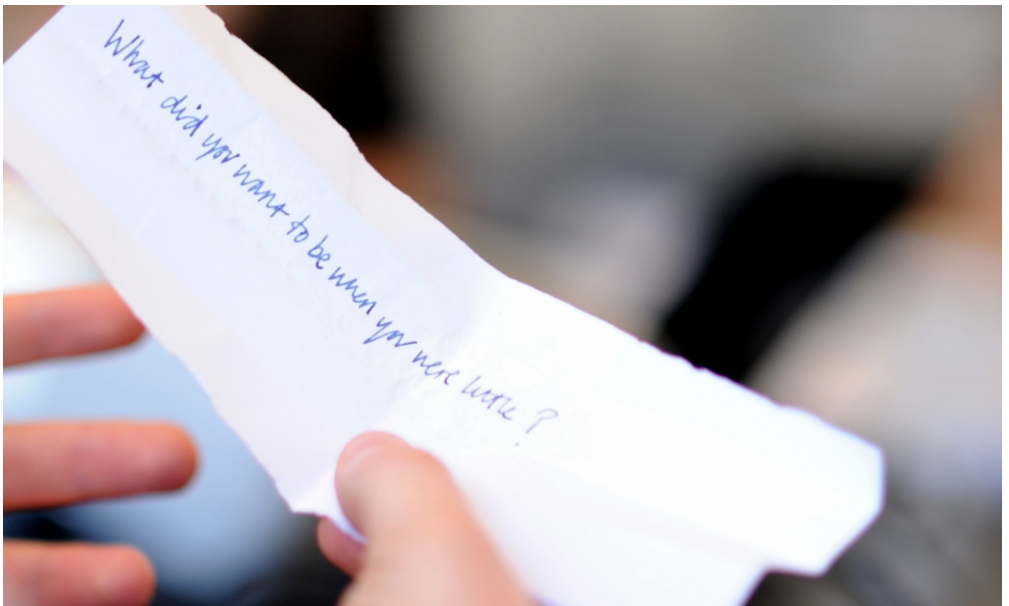
- broaden the possibilities for less experienced people within the founding organisations, who might not otherwise realise their management potential
- offer structured development opportunities to other early career individuals from different sized organisations and a range of backgrounds and cultures
- make the barrier between large institutions and small companies more permeable
- encourage a greater diversity in the workforce of the larger organisations and a better skill-base in the smaller
- provide a stepping stone for future leaders which might, in time, feed into and complement other initiatives such as the Clore Fellowship Programme.

The programme has now been running for five years. It has involved 81 participants (31 from the founder partners, 22 from other organisations and 28 freelance individuals), 21 of whom have been from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. 58 organisations have hosted one or more placements, 61 professionals have acted as mentors and the programme has been regularly reviewed both internally and through external evaluators.

From the outset, feedback from the evaluations was very positive. Participants, in particular, felt that Step Change had had a significant impact upon their professional lives, providing both opportunity and experience that would not have otherwise been available to them. In the words of one: *'Being on Step Change was an incredible, life changing experience for me. It enabled me to not only investigate different career paths within the arts whilst giving me the time and space I needed to decide on the right path for me, but it also provided me with the opportunity to make new contacts and secure an exciting new job at the end of it'*. It is also worthy of note that since Year 3, the programme has attracted increasing numbers of more mature participants – mostly either practitioners who have never had the opportunity for professional development at this level, or women returning to work after a career break to have a family. Recently, there has also been a significant increase in programme participants from specialist technical backgrounds who have been enabled to move into broader areas of theatre management – for instance, the Ballet Shoe Supervisor of the Royal Opera House and the Head Costume Buyer at the National Theatre.

Notwithstanding the satisfactory take-up levels and the enthusiastic response, there was a sense amongst the partners at the end of the first year that Step Change had more work to do in two areas of recruitment. First, it needed to attract more applicants from diverse backgrounds (especially given the programme's original ambitions). The partners have sought to address this issue by targeting recruitment through websites, networks and mailing lists focused on reaching BAME applicants, as well as by encouraging employers and senior figures within the arts to nominate such individuals. Perhaps most significantly, recruitment has benefited from word of mouth from previous participants who are the most potent ambassadors for the programme. Secondly, some smaller organisations initially felt reluctant to release key members of staff to participate in the programme. This seemed to become less of an issue as Step Change became more established and employers recognised that participants could bring back enhanced skills to their 'day jobs'. However, in 2009-11, the number of applicants from small organisations declined as the scale of imminent funding cuts became more apparent. This trend may require the programme to re-emphasise the potential organisational and individual benefits of participation.

Over its life, Step Change has evolved to broaden its reach as participants from many different backgrounds, experiences and cultures have worked with established 'mainstream' arts professionals. Both 'teachers' and 'taught' describe this experience as invaluable. After the second year, for example, one participant could say: *'Step Change was a great experience for me. I founded Ballet Black straight out of dance school, and as a result, had to learn each skill required to run a ballet company by trial and error. The Step Change masterclasses were an incredible source of information, a great way to discuss ideas and concerns with other people in similar industries, and a great confidence boost. I came away from them feeling that I could do anything.'*



After five years, it is now possible to take stock of what Step Change has achieved. It goes without saying that the external circumstances the arts now face are very different from those into which the programme was born. There are new social conditions such as demographic shifts and changes in consumer behaviour: above all of course, there is a new economic reality. Public funding cuts (at both local and national levels), profound uncertainties about the future of the two other traditional legs of the arts' economic tripod (philanthropy/sponsorship and earned income) and reductions in employment and training opportunities combine to make this a challenging period for all who work in the arts – particularly perhaps for younger practitioners seeking to carve out a cultural career within the context of a new emphasis on arts entrepreneurialism.

In these circumstances, it seems clear that Step Change's work is not done: indeed (in light of the winding-up of the CLP), it is probably more needed than ever. In an increasingly insecure future, the networks and knowledge exchange created by this sort of intervention will become of vital significance for career progression. For those from diverse backgrounds or with a 'zigzag' career path, Step Change can offer a (possibly unique) space for personal and professional growth. And the resultant pool of experience and talent will become an increasingly important asset. In time, it is to be hoped that the impact will be seen in the changing composition of the senior management of the arts.

**Finally, on a personal note, as one of those who took part in the early discussions, I'd like to salute the National Theatre's ongoing hosting and supporting of the programme. It is a terrific statement of the NT's commitment to developing the next generation of leaders in this sector and to making them more reflective of the many different communities that make up Britain today.**

# Overview of Programme (2012-13)

## March 2012

- 'Plan A' Introduction Session

## April 2012

- Individual Coaching Sessions
- Masterclass Week

## May 2012 onwards

- Personal & Professional Development Plan submitted
- Mentoring Sessions (one hour every four – six weeks)
- Secondments (40 days)
- Monthly Follow-up Sessions

## March 2013

- Evaluation Session
- Personal & Professional Development Report submitted



# Coaching

So much of Step Change revolves around self-directed learning; as a result, coaching has played an important role in Step Change since Year 2 when it was introduced as part of Personal Leadership session. By Year 4 it had become clear that participants needed time to think and dream before finalising their plans for the year; therefore the 'Plan A' introduction session was added, exploring what they wanted to achieve, followed up by individual coaching sessions in which participants pin down specific aims.

**'The coaching arena is a great processing space. I booked the Step Change year facilitating two group coaching sessions that allow participants to reflect on what they hope to get from the opportunity and what their next steps, post Step Change, might be. During the year I am on-hand with 1-1 coaching sessions for each participant. The Arts thrive on reflexivity, and such programmes help build that into its DNA.'**

Gaylene Gould, Coach and Facilitator

**'Gaylene encouraged me to think about what would be the top achievement/reward I want to gain from my work in the Arts. She also urged me to look at where I am now and how, with a slight shift of perspective, I can identify the seeds of future potential that have already taken root in my current situation. Above all Gaylene helped me to clear away doubts and fears, unearthing a positive creative energy that will sustain my work for years to come.'** Arne Pohlmeier (Step Change, 2012-13)

# Masterclasses

**'I finished the masterclass week on such a high. It was such a treat to be given the space and time to explore myself and career in a safe environment with inspiring people.'** Step Change participant (2012-13)

The masterclass week is programmed to give an insight into many different areas of theatre and arts management and to demystify areas that participants may previously have found confusing or alienating. Sessions are led by professionals working in those areas within the industry, rather than 'trainers'. This is vital on a programme like Step Change as it helps participants to see how people have grown into these roles and what sort of experience they bring with them.

## Masterclass sessions in 2012 included:

- Personal Leadership Skills
- Development & Fundraising
- Finance/Budgeting
- What is a Producer? (dispelling the mystery)
- Programming
- General Management
- Production Management



# Mentors

**‘... it was the mentoring that I found the most useful and which had the longest lasting impact. The chance to have a person you respect, whose opinion you value and whom you would like to love your work, evaluate you as well as your work has been of immeasurable benefit to me and my career.’** Kate Camiller (Step Change, 2010-11)

Being on Step Change provides participants with the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship with someone they admire and respect within the industry, often someone whose career they want to emulate. These individuals give their time free of charge and Step Change is very grateful for this philanthropic act.

Mentors are chosen for a variety of reasons – including age, gender, background, current or previous positions and level of authority – depending on what the participant hopes to gain from the relationship. Their role is to provide a sounding board, as well as to offer support and guidance based on their own individual expertise and experience.

## Mentors (2007-12)

Ushi Bagga	Jessica Hepburn	Rachel Tackley
Mark Ball	Jonathan Holloway	Katie Tearle
Hedda Beeby	Sarah Holmes	Gabby Vautier
Hannah Bentley	Veronica Humphris	Jenny Waldman
Louise Blackwell	Judith Knight	Fiona Walsh
Maria Bota	Cat Ladd	Dawn Walton
Kathy Bourne	David Lan	Peter Wilkinson
Ros Brooke-Taylor	John Langley	Denise Wood
Deborah Bull	Conrad Lynch	Griselda Yorke
Chris Campbell	Laura McDermott	
Hayley Carmichael	John McGrath	
Farooq Chaudhry	Lisa McGuire	
Paul Clay	Sally Manser	
Laura Collier	Eva Martinez	
Richard Couldrey	Tom Morris	
Felix Cross	Bridget Nicholls	
Mark Dakin	Abigail Pogson	
Alan Dix	Toni Racklin	
Matthew Dunster	Bernie Roberts	
Nelson Fernandez	Joana Seguro	
Rachel Francis	Jeanette Siddall	
Katrina Gilroy	Wendy Spon	
Emma Gladstone	Nick Starr	
Paul Handley	Emma Stenning	
Andy Hayles	Vanessa Stone	
Daisy Heath	Nick Sweeting	

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**There have been  
61 Mentors for  
Step Change**

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# Secondments

**‘The secondment gave me the opportunity to work for a completely new venue doing a completely different job to any I had done before. It allowed me in a short space of time to learn so much about how another organisation works and to do things that weren’t part of my job at the time. It also allowed me to meet a huge number of new people, and widen my knowledge of the industry, and my time there has opened so many doors since then.’** Eleanor Lang (Step Change, 2008-09)

The secondment is often the most exciting part of a Step Changer’s journey and is typically 40 days long, over a two-to-six month period. It allows participants to immerse themselves in an unknown organisation, undertaking an actual role wherever possible while at the same time learning about how the organisation works and observing leadership styles.

## Secondment Host Organisations (2007-12)

1927	LOCOG (London Organising Committee of the Olympic & Paralympic Games)	Soho Theatre
Arcola	Lyric Hammersmith	Talawa
Artichoke	Mark Rubenstein Limited	Tamasha
Arts Admin	Masterclass, Theatre Royal Haymarket	Target Live
ATC	Moreton Bates Arts Services	The Mayor’s Office (Culture Team)
Barbican	National Theatre	Theatre Royal Stratford East
Battersea Arts Centre	National Theatre Wales	Thick Skin
Bristol Old Vic	Northern Stage	Tricycle Theatre
Bush Theatre	The Old Vic	Trigger
Charcoal Blue	Paines Plough	Young Vic
China Plate	People’s Palace Projects	
Clean Break	Punchdrunk	
Crying Out Loud	RADA	
Deutsche Bank	Ridiculusmus	
Donmar Warehouse	Royal Court	
English Touring Opera	Royal Opera House (including ROH2 & ROH Thurrock)	
Fuel	Royal Shakespeare Company	
Gate	Sadler’s Wells	
Greenwich & Docklands Festivals	Salisbury Playhouse	
Headlong	Shakespeare’s Globe	
Hide & Seek	Sheffield Theatres	
High Tide	Shoreditch Fringe Festival	
Improbable		
Kim Poster		
Kneehigh		
LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre)		

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**58 organisations have hosted a total of 79 Step Change secondments**

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## Case Studies

Step Change is designed to be personalised, meaning each participant has a unique journey through the programme. For some the most important thing is the specific work experience gained through the secondment; for others it's having the space and time to work out how to reinvent themselves. The following case studies show how the basic structure of Step Change can be used and adapted in order for individuals to achieve their aims.

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**Ed Errington used Step Change to move away from a development-focused career trajectory on which he felt he had ended by accident. He quickly moved into general management, which gave him the experience he needed in order to become Executive Director of Fuel.**

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### Case study: Ed Errington

(Year 1 of Step Change, 2007)

Step Change was transformative for me. I'd been to drama school after university but I realised that what I fundamentally enjoyed was the process, making things happen. I joined the National Theatre's Development team to learn how fundraising worked. This was always meant to be a skill I'd learn rather than a career to follow, but after about four years at NT Development it became clear that my CV looked increasingly like I wanted to become a Development Director. I wanted to take stock and bring myself more in line with being a facilitator of shows.



I applied to Step Change with the intention of moving towards general management and secured two placements working alongside general managers – at the Young Vic and Soho Theatre. Both were small-to-medium sized organisations, but quite different in atmosphere, energy and the work they produced. My mentor was Ros Brooke-Taylor, General Manager at the Old Vic. She was down to earth, encouraging and challenging – exactly right for what I was trying to achieve.

During my placement at Soho Theatre I worked on *Walking in China Town* and gained hands-on experience working with the writer, director and production team and experiencing exactly how it all comes together. At the Young Vic I did much more observing and learned about contracts and how the organisation ran both as a theatre and as a building.

One of the most useful Step Change masterclasses was Sarah Preece's finance session, which goes from the ground up and is a perfect crib sheet, a valuable primer. Those three experiences together – hands-on working on shows, understanding how buildings work and the financial backbone of it all – gave me the tools to put it all into action. So when the General Manager role at Theatre503 came up it seemed just the right time to move.

Theatre503 was a small organisation so it meant being hands on and putting into practice everything I'd learned. It was unfunded so resources were scarce. It was possible to see the tangible effect of everything you did. At the NT every process is developed through different rooms in the building – at Theatre503 most things came across my desk in one way or another.

After four years at 503 I became Executive Director at Fuel and I'm sure that trajectory is entirely due to Step Change. My placements and mentor were very clear elements in a chain that enabled me to reach the role with Fuel.

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There have been 656 applicants to Step Change. Of these, 163 were offered interviews for the programme.

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**Both Tracey Gentles and Coco Jackson used mentoring and ‘time out’ on secondment to gain clarity and confidence, allowing them to return to and flourish within their current company.**

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## **Case study: Tracey Gentles**

**(Year 3 of Step Change, 2009-10)**

Step Change came at a good time because I had been at Clod Ensemble as Projects Manager for two years. My role involved working closely with Clod Ensemble’s Producers, Fuel, who led on the projects while I did the administrative underpinning. Looking back at this, it was a very informative experience, but at the time it was not fulfilling and not creative. I felt that I had limited networks as I was mainly sat at a desk not mixing with other people, and there were no opportunities for progression within the role. Previously I’d been working in Manchester where my career had been much more self-led – I was lecturing and had started my own theatre company. I moved to work with Clod Ensemble, because I felt I didn’t know much about the industry.



My placement was at Sadler’s Wells as Tour Coordinator, and I developed a brilliant relationship with the Producer, Emma Gladstone. The placement involved me going to Edinburgh on my own to support a show, proving I was trusted by the organisation. I found there was less of a spread of tasks within the placement, making it easier than the work I was doing at Clod Ensemble (i.e. scheduling, casting, budget management, fundraising, marketing etc). This highlighted my capabilities and the broad spectrum of skills I’d already built up, as well as the value of my current role.

During my time on secondment I shared with both Emma and my mentor Laura Collier my feelings of frustration that my previous experience wasn’t being reflected in my role at Clod Ensemble and I wasn’t being creative enough. Emma and Laura helped me find the words to talk through it, to move away from just being angry and frustrated and to articulate why I wasn’t happy and what it was I wanted to do. I was advised to leave the organisation if I was unhappy, but that made me realise I didn’t actually want to leave and that there was a way forward. I realised I hadn’t given my employers an opportunity to know how I was feeling, and also I really like the company’s work – which is really important to me.

When I returned to Clod Ensemble at the end of my placement I sat down with the Artistic Directors and explained how I was feeling, where I want to go and what interests me. They were very responsive and I was given an instant role change. This had its own difficulties to begin with because initially I was given lots of extra responsibility without any more support. Something switched and I realised that if I was going to make changes I needed to be in a position to implement change, so I started telling them what I needed. I started

to apply ways of working that I'd seen in other places and eventually my role shifted into Producer, and Fuel shifted into their current Associate Producer role.

Without having the distance of the placement, I wouldn't have been able to work through my frustration and I think I would have had to leave. It really needed me to step away and come back with new tools to make the change. I soon learned that the placement role wasn't what I wanted, but it was only by having that experience that I realised what I had in my role at Clod Ensemble, that it is the art that's most important and I'm not interested in climbing up the management ladder. As a producer of a small company you can build your ambitions into the company; I now know I'm feeding into the creativity of the organisation, not the artistic product (that's the AD's field), but where we take the product and why.

I'm still at Clod Ensemble and it's good! I'm now able to merge the administrative work I first did at Clod Ensemble with the creative artistic directing I used to do in Manchester. Now I instigate meetings about international work and put our company out there. The relationships and networks I have now are really strong and I'm now producing at the level I was aiming for.

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**'It could not have been easier working with Tracy. There were two really useful things – one was that it was for a defined project, over a defined period of time, and the other that she had initiative. She knew enough to dive in, and get going, so although some of the territory was new to her, she was used to working with artists and resolving issues calmly and confidently. In fact she got everything done so efficiently that I could relax too. Tracy – come back!'**

Emma Gladstone, Artistic Programmer and Producer, Sadler's Wells

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# Case study: Coco Jackson

(Year 4 of Step Change, 2010-11)

I heard about Step Change through Dawn Walton (Artistic Director of Eclipse and on the Step Change panel) when she was working at the Hackney Empire. I had been at Hackney Empire for six years and although I hadn't really thought of myself as a producer at that point, I was wondering about my future. Having been there since I was 17, I was beginning to feel suffocated by it all and felt I needed more strings to my bow. I wanted to know how other places worked and how the things I'd learned at the Empire could be used elsewhere.



The one-to-one coaching session at the beginning of Step Change totally changed my life. Someone was actually asking questions that I had to answer and couldn't bounce back. It helped me think about me for a bit, about what I wanted to achieve – something that I'd never really taken seriously before. It also helped me not to take things so personally. The whole Step Change journey was giving me space to be serious about what I wanted; it put me in the driver's seat. I couldn't just assume things would just fall into place one day; I had to make it happen.

The masterclass week was amazing. It was beautiful to be able to take myself out of my usual working environment and the roles I normally have. In my organisation I felt I was a driving force for somebody else's ideas; my role involved always thinking about someone else. In the masterclasses we were able to think about 'what does theatre mean to you and what do you want to contribute to it.'

A masterclass session with Nick Starr blew away all my misconceptions of the National Theatre. He was completely real and spoke to us on a level. He explained why he thought Step Change was important in ways that I'd never thought of before; it was very motivational, but not preachy. Before Step Change I'd never really understood the NT as an organisation; I'd always thought of it as the 'big guns'. Hackney Empire might seem large compared to some organisations, but next to the National Theatre it's tiny. I used to think of small organisations in terms of faces, but the NT felt like a big beast churning out production after production. I thought it wasn't for people like me from Hackney; I thought people would be too snooty, and that I'm maybe too ghetto, too streetwise for it, that they would never hire someone like me. But now I realise it's exactly the same, it doesn't matter where you are it's the same model. I remember walking into the NT and this preconception slowly being ripped away and realising 'theatre's theatre, people are people.' Now the NT is my breakaway space when my brain feels clogged up. It is where I come with a laptop or a book and a pen. I would never have thought I could just come in and sit here and write, but now I do. I originally contacted Vanessa Stone to pick her brain about how the Royal Court does what they do. I then sent her an email saying I'd love you to be my mentor – and she agreed. Vanessa is amazing; she's knows her stuff and is so clued up – she's what I want to be like.

I had a few issues with my first placement and it was great to be able to have honest conversations with Vanessa about this. Having someone separate from everything else in your life – to tell your biggest, baddest theatre secrets to – was amazing. I was able to say ‘I want to achieve this’ and she’d say ‘you should talk to this person.’ I still keep in touch with her as having that support system outside of your regular workplace is vital.

I love that I did Step Change and took the time out to understand what made me tick, career wise. Everything I learned and experienced during Step Change, I was able to bring back to Hackney Empire. I am now a completely different person in the way I work and the way I do things – I’m mature and I take charge. The break refreshed me and I feel I’ve earned my stripes. One colleague told me ‘You’ve come back with fire in your belly.’ Going back after Step Change made both me and my colleagues realise I am 26 years old. They seem to listen to my opinions more, though maybe it’s me actually voicing my opinions now, or a mixture of both. Now I’m an Associate Producer of Hackney Empire, which means more responsibility and is no longer just an admin role so it proves I want to do much more.



**‘Working with the Step Changers has become a training highlight of my year. It feels a great privilege to be working with tomorrow’s leaders. I enjoy the plentiful energy, enthusiasm, natural curiosity and passion the groups bring to their experience – a rich soup of determination and hope for the sector!’**

Deb Barnard (left), leader of the Personal Leadership and Coaching session during the masterclass week



**Experienced company stage manager Katy de Main used Step Change to explore a more family-friendly role within theatre and gain the administration and finance skills necessary to make a change.**

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## **Case study: Katy de Main**

**(Year 4 of Step Change, 2010-11)**

In April 2010 I finished working as a company stage manager and although I thought I had lots of transferable skills – people management and administration – I spent lots of time applying for jobs but didn't get anywhere. When I heard about Step Change I realised it could provide the practical experience I needed. Step Change gives you a period of time to think purely about what you need to do in your career for yourself, as opposed to for your employer. The programme's bursary makes it possible for freelancers to participate: I would not have been able to do it without that financial support and I am very grateful for that.



The introductory session with Gaylene Gould was a real changing point for me. I'd been thinking what I wanted to *do* practically on the programme, but this session made me realise that what needed to change was how I wanted to *be*. Gaylene got us to that point through a collage activity, which was a really nice way of approaching it because it wasn't logical – I was able to express something I hadn't realised about myself until this point.

Two of the masterclasses made a particular impact on me. Sarah Preece managed to make 'Finance' fun and showed there was nothing magical about it, just a way of telling stories in numbers. 'Leadership and Coaching' with Debs Barnard changed my view of what a leader could be and therefore what I could be as a leader. I'd been thinking about leaders like David Cameron and Winston Churchill – people who are nothing like I am – so I had major doubts about being able to consider myself as a management figure. We discussed the leadership qualities we appreciated and emulated – listening to people, fairness, empathy, generosity, efficiency, thoughtfulness – all characteristics I feel I've got or can develop, so I came out of the session feeling that I could be a leader after all.

My aims for Step Change were to understand finance and be part of planning a production before rehearsals start. I found the perfect placement working with Jo Crowley, an independent producer who does everything – general management, producing, administration, artistic support – for a variety of artists and companies. We talked about her projects, what I wanted to achieve, the hours I could work (around school times) and then tailor made the secondment to fit.

My role involved marketing a show at the Barbican, creating and running budgets, meeting the artists, going through the development process and talking about where they wanted to go with their projects. Although I loved this experience, I found it quite lonely to work with a sole person and found the level of engagement with the work frustrating – one production was happening in Switzerland and another was way off in the future, which makes it quite hard to see the fruits of your labour. I decided to undertake a second placement in a building, as I felt there would be more connection with the work. I approached my local theatre – the Lyric Hammersmith – and during talks with Imogen Kinchin (Senior Producer) came up with a four-week secondment supporting their production of *Ghost Stories* by coordinating the international tour.

One thing I had learned from a previous Step Change participant was to make sure you introduce yourself and get known around the building. So I met the Director of Finance and Administration at the Lyric and told her what I was doing and what I was looking for – this led to me getting a job as Finance Officer for three months. This definitely wouldn't have happened without Step Change: I wouldn't have applied for the job and they wouldn't have given it to me.

I am now Assistant General Manager at the Matcham Theatre (London Hippodrome), and although the role doesn't have a huge amount of finance responsibility, it is really helpful that I now understand how money flows through a building.

It's now two years since I applied for the programme and I've met all of my short-term goals. I feel more confident in my abilities, have a job that pays what I need, and also have an influence on the shape of the organisation I work for. I have achieved what I set out to achieve. This is obviously only the first step on this part of the journey, but who knows where it will go.

**Abdul Shayek and Samir Bhamra utilised the programme to gain producing and management skills in order to develop their artistic practice. Both joined Step Change while running their own companies and chose to undertake secondments with high profile companies in different parts of the country.**

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## **Case study: Abdul Shayek**

**(Year 2 of Step Change, 2008-09)**

At the point I got involved in Step Change I was running a company working with young people. I had started off as a performer, moved into directing, set up my company and then learnt about business and producing on the job. SC was an opportunity for me to engage and learn more about producing whilst keeping an artistic focus. My aim was to look at how artistic directors select commissions and how this is influenced by whether they run a theatre building or a non-building based organisation.



Step Change succeeded in opening up networks, giving me an opportunity to engage and connect with people who were more experienced. The masterclasses provoked some really interesting questions and confirmed for me that there are many different roads that lead to success and everyone does it differently. It was great to have the guidance of my mentor John McGrath, Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales. He had been my informal mentor since I met him a few years before, but this more formalised scenario meant a commitment on both sides.

I spent two weeks on secondment at Theatre Royal Stratford East, shadowing Kerry Michael, Artistic Director. Kerry was prepared to be an open book and let me sit in on everything – I attended board meetings, programming meetings and confidential discussions. This gave me an opportunity to really understand programming a venue and realise that buildings have particular needs. I learned that, as Artistic Director, the producing aspect was a constant consideration and finance was a real factor in some of the choices he made.

John McGrath then suggested I did a placement with him at National Theatre Wales (which was in its very early stages, not yet producing any work). This meant I got to work with a National organisation, but one without a building, giving me a comparison to TRSE. It was great going to Cardiff, spending time outside London and engaging with a different artistic scene that felt very subdued. Watching the model evolving was fascinating – there were real conversations happening and the question of ‘what the people of Wales want their National Theatre to be’ was constantly being asked. I came away with lots of interesting questions and learnt some important lessons. If a national organisation could do that, how would I respond to the local community if I was in charge of an organisation? What questions would

I need to ask? How would I take those responses and integrate them into the way the building functions and creates work?

After the placements it became clear that the fact I had a purely freelance background would hinder my search for a leadership role within an established organisation. I was offered the Creative Associate role at NTW, which felt like it could offer me so many more opportunities than staying in London would at that time.

The last two years have been amazing. It was hard adapting from working freelance to being part of a team, but it's been an incredible journey. The networks I've got now have increased massively, and I have been invited to international festivals, seminars and events to talk about the company. I will be sad to leave in April when my contract finishes, but I will be walking away feeling that I've been part of something amazing. I also now feel able to walk into a room and sell myself. I have contacts in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England – I can go to a host of places across the world and there is someone I can connect with in a professional capacity. This is so important for someone like me looking at the next stage of my career.

One of the big things about my Step Change was being able to make a shift from being someone who was a youth arts person but wasn't really getting into professional theatre. Step Change was the first step to get out of the box – I then had to be brave and get out of London. So now I've freelanced and started a company, but also worked for an organisation and had a desk. This strengthens any application I make in the future.

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Over five years, 81 people have taken part in Step Change. 56 participants were women, and seven were not based in London.

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# Case study: Samir Bhamra

(Year 4 of Step Change, 2010-11)

I'd originally applied for Step Change in 2008 but was unsuccessful – I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. When I reapplied in 2010 my thoughts were much clearer. In between my two applications I'd attended a festival in South Africa and spoken to loads of people about how they make theatre. I was inspired to gain more of an understanding of international touring and my ambition became to make work in an international context, looking at global cultures. I knew Step Change could help me explore this and provide support that I felt wasn't currently available to me.



I felt the aspiration I had for myself was much higher than colleagues in my region thought I could achieve. I perceived that I was viewed as one of the local community artists that needed their support, but that wasn't how I saw myself and I needed to reinvent myself through Step Change. A major part of my time of the programme was therefore about driving my ambition further than I had ever imagined.

The structure of Step Change – masterclasses, one-to-ones, mentoring and placement – allowed us to feel supported throughout the whole year, which was vital. If anyone questioned what I was doing it was objective and constructive, rather than because they were trying to stop me. Every part of the process was aligned to my goals and my ambition for my career. I learned a lot about myself during the programme, starting at the interview stage where I allowed passion to overtake my knowledge. But over the course of Step Change I came to realise that I might actually succeed better in situations where passion is more important than knowledge. One of the biggest confidence boosts throughout the year was learning about impostor syndrome – being able to put a name to the feeling I'd experienced for years and learning others feel exactly the same.

I had previously met Nelson Fernandez, and had floated the idea of him becoming my mentor because of his brilliant understanding of the Arts in many countries. Once I was on Step Change I was able to formalise this and it was great to know I was being mentored by someone who I knew cared about me and who I could share my journey with. His mentoring method was incredibly holistic and he successfully attacked the negativity I had built up about myself and my potential. He generously spent time looking at and challenging me on my funding applications. He also has a deep understanding of Arts practice and networking and invited me to many shows and events, introducing me to key people in the sector.

My placement at the Royal Shakespeare Company involved supporting Deborah Shaw, the Director of the World Shakespeare Festival. I am used to working independently, so it was very important to be seconded to an environment which was much larger than my usual business, so that I could experience what it was like to focus on one key area. I got to work on an international programme and learned about the type of conversations you need to have with artists, embassies and stakeholders to be able to achieve your vision.

Seeing Deborah fulfil the role of Creative Producer (rather than director) – overseeing all the productions from the different countries – I could see that influencing my career. The role she created for me allowed me to see how the RSC works as an organisation and how I might pitch myself to that organisation if I was to work for them. I gained access to confidential meetings and witnessed key decisions being made. Deborah also instigated a meeting with Gregory Doran which led to me shadowing him in the rehearsal room a few months after my placement.

Through the placement (and with Deborah's specific support) I made many other connections within the RSC which have led to some very exciting progressions. I met with the Head of Trusts and Foundations who gave me lots of tips and support and is an expert I can contact whenever I have any questions about this area. Deborah wrote a letter of support for Phizzical Productions' ACE application for a Bollywood-style production of *Cymbeline*. The application was successful and the piece produced in 2013 with additional support from Leicester City Council. The RSC's support is set to continue as they have committed to provide a member of staff from the Voice and Text department in rehearsals and during the script editing process. All of this was a direct result of Step Change: Phizzical wouldn't have a grant from ACE without the RSC's support, and I wouldn't have had the RSC contacts without Step Change.



**Having previously juggled casual work at BAC with freelance design work, a secondment with the Education & Community team at the Royal Opera House Production Park allowed George Moustakas to explore whether project management really was the direction in which he wanted to move.**

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## **Case study: George Moustakas**

**(Year 5 of Step Change, 2012-13)**

Before Step Change I was working as a freelance designer for theatres, galleries and museums, plus a duty manager at BAC. Both jobs felt quite stale, I didn't know how to progress and was quite confused. I had started looking into theatre education and was volunteering as a workshop leader with several organisations. I realised that I wanted to move forward with education as a career. Although this feels really clear looking back at it now, at the time I just knew something about the programme sounded right – I needed some sort of extra push, to help me realise my potential.



During my interview for Step Change I mentioned the Royal Opera House as an example of a prestigious organisation producing high-quality work whose education and community engagement programmes I would like to find out about. Throughout the first few months of being on the programme, the ROH and its new Production Park in Purfleet kept popping up in conversation with people I was speaking to about where I should go on placement. It is unusual to have a building focused solely on design with its own community engagement programme and so this seemed to be most logical step for me to take for my placement.

Most important to me was the type of community and groups that ROH Thurrock engages with. The groups they work with are based in Essex (not just schools or those already going to the opera in Covent Garden) where there are very few cultural opportunities. There is often a fear associated with the Royal Opera House, as some people are frightened by what they think the organisation and opera and ballet represent and decide it's not for them. I thought it would be interesting to see how ROH Thurrock addressed this problem.

After meeting with Gabrielle Forster-Still (Education Manager, Thurrock) we agreed on a placement that would provide me with a diverse set of situations, from planning and preparation, to delivery of workshops and exploring the legacy of the work. I really appreciate the time Gabrielle and her colleagues took in creating a tailor-made placement that suited me so well. I played a supporting role on various projects at the beginning of the placement to gain an understanding of the organisation and the work of the department. I then worked on the facilitation of a week of creative workshops, and this was the area that I felt most comfortable in. I focused on one project for the remainder of the placement and



I was given responsibility for creating and project managing an engagement programme alongside a photography exhibition at the Production Park. They allowed me to work things out for myself so that I had a really well rounded learning experience and gained a lot of confidence.

This experience has been definitive in me working out my next step, which is to become a workshop facilitator rather than a project manager. All the skills and experience I've gained from my time at ROH – project management, administration, liaising with schools – have been incredibly valuable and will inform and progress my work as a freelance workshop leader. I don't think I would have come to this decision without such a tailored placement as it would have been impossible to work out my strengths without this.

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**'Hosting Step Change placements has been a very positive and worthwhile experience for us. I was struck by the quality of participants and on both occasions they made a strong and lasting contribution to our work. They were very skilled, highly motivated and eager to learn, and very well supported by the Step Change programme.'**

Gabrielle Forster-Still, Education Manager (Thurrock), ROH Education Department

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# Full list of participants

## 2012-13

**Michael Ager**, Technical & Production Manager for Taking Part at the Young Vic.

**Alia Al Zougbi**, Freelance workshop designer & facilitator.

**Emily Benson**, Executive Assistant at the ROH.

**Sarah Botchway**, Principal at Reay Primary School.

**Lexi Bradburn**, Usher Manager at the ROH/Freelance director and choreographer.

**Daniel Daw**, Dancer with Candoco Dance Company.

**Johanna Duncan**, Creative Learning Manager for Aberdeen Performing Arts.

**Roger Dunn**, Freelance stage technician.

**Jane Fletcher**, Marketing Officer at the NT.

**Ben Gallacher**, Business Development Manager for Mykindacrowd/Freelance workshop facilitator.

**Sunita Hinduja**, Freelance company stage manager.

**Ashley Holtom**, Head Buyer, Costume Department at the NT.

**George Moustakas**, Duty Manager at Battersea Arts Centre.

**Dimity Nicholls**, Marketing Assistant at Watermans, Brentford.

**Arne Pohlmeier**, Co-director with Two Gents Productions/Freelance director.

**Katie Roberts**, Project Manager at Battersea Arts Centre.

**Madeleine Wilson**, Assistant Theatre Manager at Theatre Royal, Brighton.

## 2010-11

**Sâmîr Bhamra**, Programme Manager (p/t) and Creative Director for Arts Council England/Phizzical. Now Creative Director, Phizzical/Creative Director, London Asian Film Festival/Executive Producer, Let's Dance International Festival.

**Mark Bixter**, Box Office Duty Manager at the Young Vic. Now freelance producer.

**Kate Camiller**, Associate Producer at Opera Holland Park. Now Assistant General Manager, Old Vic.

**Steve Cartwright**, Prop Maker, NT.

**Jessica Denning**, FOH/Deputy Theatre Manager at Young Vic; Duty Manager, FOH at Kings Place. Now Admin & Studios Manager and Assistant Producer, Arts Admin.

**Lizzy Ferguson**, Production Department Coordinator at ROH.

**Coco Jackson**, PA to Creative Director/Learning & Participation Administrator at Hackney Empire. Now Associate Producer at Hackney Empire.

**Lucy Kerbel**, Freelance theatre director (in early stages of establishing Tonic Theatre). Now Director of Tonic Theatre, on attachment at NT Studio/ongoing work as freelance director.

**Katy de Main**, Freelance Company Stage Manager, Now Assistant General Manager, Matcham Theatre, Hippodrome.

**Shipra Ogra**, Producer for London Bubble.

**Jen Porteous**, Director of Simply Told Theatre.

**Rachel Quinney**, Technical & Production Office Administrator at the NT. Now Scheduling and Events Manager, NT.

**Richard Reid**, Artistic Director of Bap Theatre Company.

**Lucy Ryan**, Freelance development consultant. Recent: Part of STREB Production team, LIFT 2012.

**Dan Simon**, Artistic Director for The Oubliette. Now Head of Programming Theatre Delicatessen, Executive Director Interim Spaces Ltd.

**Alex Stamp**, Electrician at Everyman Theatre.

**Magdalena Ziarko**, Individual Philanthropy Manager at ROH.

## 2009-10

**Alton Brown**, Participation Assistant at the Southbank Centre (2011–12); Education Officer at the ROH (2009–11). Now Freelance arts project manager and an international athlete and coach.

**Tracy Gentles**, Projects Manager for Clod Ensemble. Now Producer for Clod Ensemble.

**Suzanne Gorman**, Soho Connect Director at Soho Theatre. Now Education Director at Soho Theatre and Artistic Director of Maya Productions Ltd.

**Yasmin Gurreebo**, Freelance theatre director.

**Hannah Kerr**, Communications Manager at the Jerwood Space. Now Project Manager for Fuel and freelance producer.

**Cat Ladd**, Ballet Shoe Supervisor at the ROH. Now freelance.

**Eleanor Lang**, General Manager at the Bush Theatre and General Manager for Y Touring. Now Executive Director for Free Word 2012.

**Elizabeth Moreton**, Producer, Battersea Arts Centre.

**Craig Morrow**, Artistic Associate at The Brewhouse Theatre & Arts Centre. Now Artistic Director at Lincoln Performing Arts Centre.

**Shaun Newport**, Festival Director for Pride London. Now Development Assistant for the American Associates of the National Theatre.

**Fiona Oram**, Stages Administration Manager & Deputy Head of Stages Operations, NT.

**Catriona Silver**, Lighting Technician at the NT. Now Administrator for Footprint Scenery.

**Tobias Sturmer**, Freelance Musician and Workshop Leader. Now Family Learning Workshop Leader and Co-Manager of Yaaba Funk and Director of Yaaba Education.

**Laura Sutton**, General Manager for Frantic Assembly. Now Co-Founder & Producer of ThickSkin.

**Ros Terry**, Company Manager at the Young Vic. Now Producer for Clean Break and freelance producer.

**Christine Twite**, Education Events Coordinator at the ROH. Now studying for a PhD in 'Cultures of Spectatorship in Contemporary Theatre' at Queen Mary, University of London, in association with Actors Touring Company.

## 2008-09

**Mukul Ahmed**, Studio Programmer for Tara Arts. Now freelance director/producer.

**Rachel Bagshaw**, Resident Assistant Director at the Young Vic/Training and Learning Projects Manager for Graeae. Now freelance director.

**Gemma Baxter**, Education Officer at the ROH. Now Step Change Coordinator at the NT/Education Manager at Garsington Opera.

**Stuart Bowden**, Freelance dancer.

**Li-E Chen**, Freelance Digital Designer, Artist and Director. Now Independent Artist/Curator – Studio artist at ] performance space [ London.

**Jason Ho**, Freelance

**Susanna Keeley**, Production Workshops Administrator, NT.

**Nela Milic**, Lecturer at Middlesex University.

**Cassa Pancho**, Founder & Artistic Director of Ballet Black.

**Jenny Paton**, Projects Manager for Fuel/Press and PR Manager, Lyric Hammersmith. Now Co-Director of Camden People's Theatre/Arts Advisor, The Wellcome Trust.

**Sarah Paul**, Freelance director/actor/producer. Now Producer at Granville Productions.

**Nadine Renton**, Freelancer. Now Co-Founder and Company Director of Euphoric Ink, 2010/freelance facilitator and writer.

**David Roots**, General Manager of Fevered Sleep; Marketing Manager at the Young Vic. Now Executive Director of Coney, 2012.

**Abdul Shayek**, Freelance Director/Artistic Director of Youth of Creative Arts (YOCA). Now Creative Associate of National Theatre Wales.

**Gabby Vautier**, Creative Associate, Directors Programme Producer, Producer and Audience Development, Two Boroughs Project Manager at the Young Vic. Now Programme Leader for Professional Development, Barbican Guildhall School of Music & Drama (Sept 11-Dec 12)/freelance producer.

## 2007

**Natalie Abrahami**, Artistic Director at the Gate Theatre. Now Associate Artist at Hull Truck Theatre.

**Richard Coudrey**, Capital Production Manager/Head of Space at Battersea Arts Centre. Now freelance production and project manager.

**Anna Silman**, Producer, LIFT Festival;

Special Projects Manager/Step Change coordinator,/Corporate Sponsorship Manager, NT. Now Development Director at the Young Vic.

**Carrie Cracknell**, Artistic Director at the Gate Theatre. Now Genesis Fellow at the Young Vic.

**Chloe Elwood (nee Naldrett)**, Associate Producer for Mark Rubinstein Ltd. Now Associate Producer, *War Horse*, NT.

**Ed Errington**, General Manager for Theatre503/Corporate Membership Executive at the NT. Now Executive Director for Fuel.

**Georgina Harper**, Freelance dance project manager/programmer. Now Producer for ZooNation Dance Company/Creative Director of MOVE IT Dance Exhibition and PERFORM Performing Arts Exhibition/Development Advisor for Big Dance and Creative Marketing Consultant for Consider This UK.

**Shelley Hastings**, Trainee producer at Battersea Arts Centre. Now Senior Producer at Battersea Arts Centre.

**Laura McDermott**, Trainee producer at Battersea Arts Centre. Now Joint Artistic Director of Fierce.

**Simon Magill**, Ballet Press Officer at the ROH. Now Communications Manager at the ROH.

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**‘It was such a privilege and pleasure to mentor Gabby Vautier during her time on the Step Change Programme.**

**The best mentor-mentee relationships are those where both sides get something out of the process and I can definitely say that my meetings with Gabby were a brilliant way to reflect on my own professional experience as well as supporting someone at an earlier stage of their career. Even more importantly she has since become a valued colleague and a friend.’**

Jessica Hepburn, Executive Director, Lyric Hammersmith

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**Harun Morrison**, Freelance director/  
Trainee producer at BAC. Now Joint  
Artistic Director of Fierce.

**Ria Parry**, Staff Director at the NT/  
Leverhulme Bursary for Emerging  
Directors at the NT Studio/Creative  
Producer at Watford Palace Theatre.  
Now Co-Artistic Director of Iron Shoes  
Theatre.

**Matthew Poxon**, Studio Assistant, at  
the NT. Now Studio Projects Producer  
at the NT Studio.

**Victoria Shaskan**, Education and  
Outreach Director, Collective Artistes  
Assistant Grant Writer at the ROH. Now  
Administrative & Development Manager,  
for Collective Artistes/Company  
Manager at Lewisham Youth Theatre.

**Katie Town**, General Manager at  
Candoco/Licensing Manager at the  
ROH. Now General Manager of National  
Theatre Learning.

**Suzanne Worrice**, Creative Programmers  
Project Co-ordinator at Oval House. Now  
Charity Coordinator.

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**‘My mentor – Jessica Hepburn, Executive Director of the Lyric Hammersmith – has been an incredible presence and role model in my life and career and we still meet regularly now all these years on. She guided me through leaving the Young Vic and starting a Freelance career, she aids me on decisions as my responsibilities become larger and I manage teams and mentor younger artists, and she makes me braver to make choices which I know I can do but don’t sometimes have the confidence to say I can. I am a strong advocate for mentoring and constantly meet artists to just listen (something Jessica taught me that is priceless).’**

Gabby Vautier, Step Change participant, 2008–09

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# Acknowledgements

Specific thanks to our partner organisations – Royal Opera House, Young Vic, Battersea Arts Centre, and Nitro – for supporting the instigation and development of Step Change.

Thanks also to the individuals that formed the steering group (spanning 2005–13): Deborah Bull, Felix Cross, Sue Emmas, Greg Jauncey, David Jubb, David Lan, David Micklem and Dawn Walton; without whose vision and commitment Step Change would not have flourished.

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- Employers who have supported their employees to take part in the programme
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- Masterclass presenters and facilitators
- Numerous individuals who have met Step Change participants for a 'cup of tea and a chat'
- Step Change alumni for being such great advocates of the programme and ensuring its continued success

**National  
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