

Leading Through Pressure

A 2026 Framework for Arts Leaders

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CEO



At TRG Arts, we are true believers in the power of arts and culture to transform individuals and communities. We are a **disruptive, data-driven,** change agency focused on getting **recurring revenue** for our clients.



What we do and who we work with

Data
Center
Services

Facilitating
& Teaching

Charities &
For Profit

Visual
Arts

Governments
& Funders

Community
Networks

Consulting

Performing
Arts

Libraries
& Museums



We exist to serve.

Therefore, we say yes.

Therefore, we are everywhere,
doing everything, for everyone.

And therefore we are at risk.

Can You Afford to Be
Everything to Everyone?

*What is your organization doing
today...*

*...that if you stopped doing it
tomorrow...*

*...no one outside the building
would notice?*

The Three-Year Risk Environment



Inflation



Energy costs



Interest rates



Donor fatigue



**Political
volatility**

None of these are temporary.



Check-In:

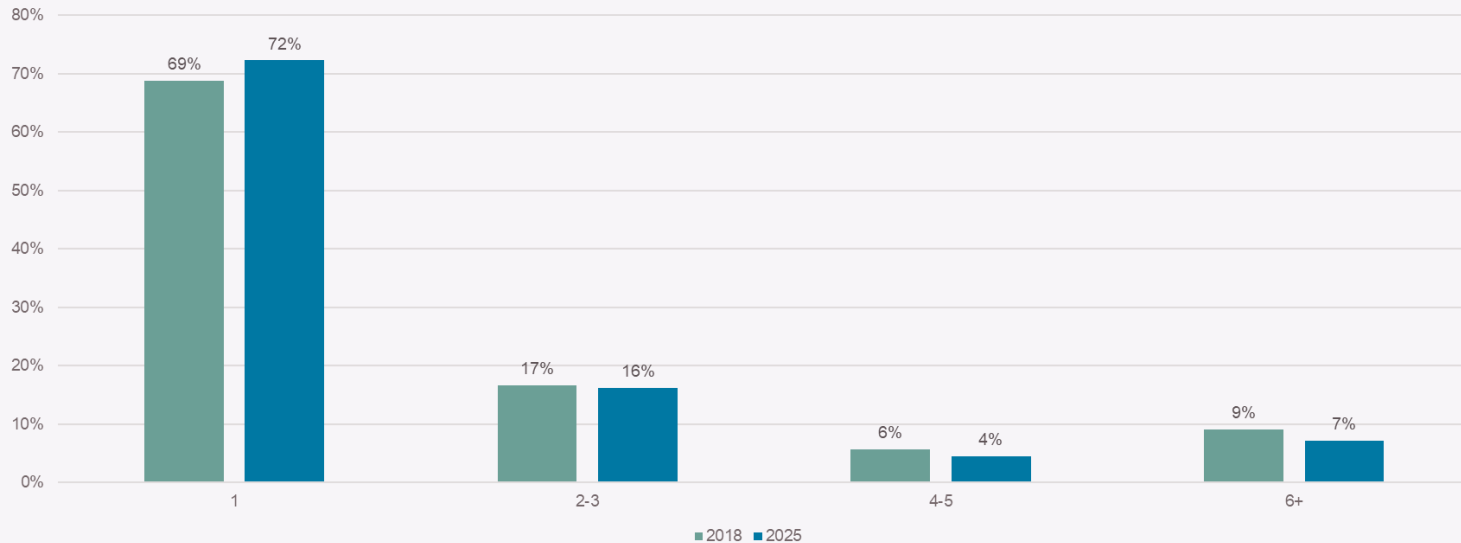
Metrics You Should Be Tracking, Today

What TRG's Benchmark Data Shows

Frequency Concentration

72% of attendees visit once

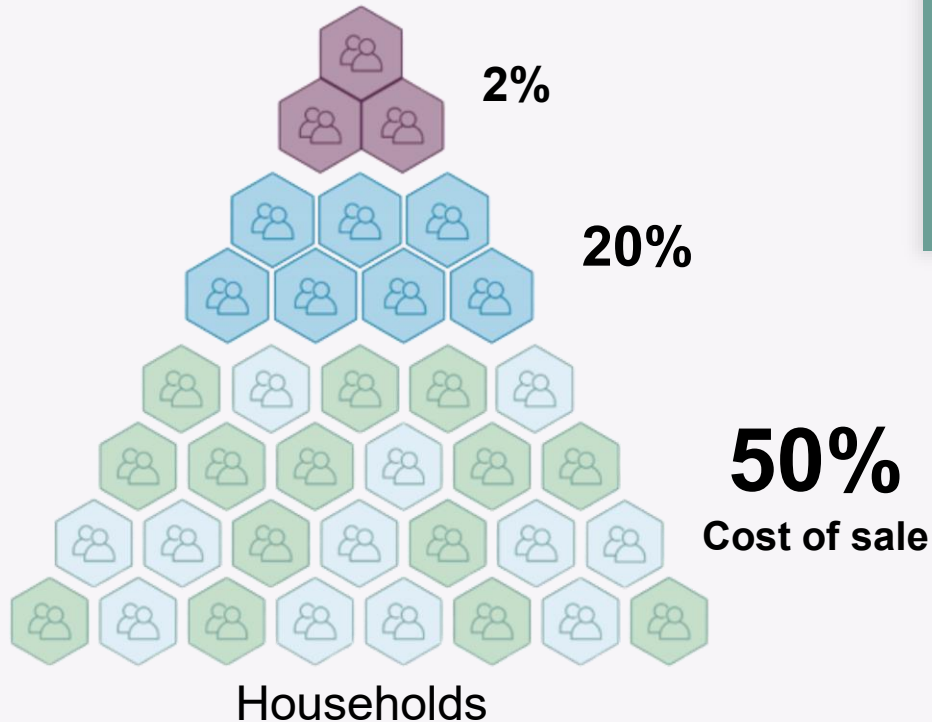
Most of your future revenue is sitting in a *small number* of relationships you are *under-investing* in.



What the TRG Client Data Shows

Cost of Acquisition vs. Retention

Retention Lowers Cost



Every dollar chasing strangers is a dollar not *deepening relationships* with the people who already chose you.

What TRG's Benchmark Data Shows

Program Proliferation

Region	2023	2024
United States	87%	87%
United Kingdom	109%	104%
Republic of Ireland	95%	107%
Canada	84%	93%

Number of performances compared to pre-COVID baseline (2018-19 average)

You are running more than you can resource. The math(s) is not subtle.

You cannot be
everything to everyone.

The next three years will not allow it.

What Leaders Are Doing About It

Three peer organizations.

Three different choices.

One common act: they *stopped* something.

Story 1

They walked away from new-to-file.

Despite sector pressure to chase new audiences, they chose to focus on retention, growing ticket revenue from 10% to 15–18% of total by loving the people who already love them.

*"Love the ones
who love us."*

They paused programs to fix the culture.

Rather than layering new strategy on top of an inherited workplace, they invoked a strategic pause on selected programs to rebuild the operating culture first.

*"Things can stop.
The sky does
not fall."*

They paused the heroic-CEO model.

Restructured C-suite by adding two senior leaders—a deliberate financial commitment that paused the CEO-as-everything pattern in order to scale capacity.

*Board leaders:
alert!*

What These Have in Common

- They named what they would *stop* or *pause*.
- They linked it to *revenue*, *margin*, and *mission*.
- They made the call *before the crisis* made it for them.

The *Pause-or-Stop* Matrix

Three lenses. One question. A clear next step.

Name the candidate.

Think of the program, initiative, audience segment, or activity that nags at you. The one you suspect is consuming more than it returns.

You know the one.

The Three Lenses

Score each 1–5. Add them up.



REVENUE

Does this generate meaningful revenue today, or a credible path to it within 24 months?

1 = Material, growing

5 = Flat, declining, symbolic



MARGIN

After fully loaded cost, does this contribute positively, or consume more than it returns?

1 = Net contributor

5 = Net drain



MISSION

Is this central to your mission as it exists today, not ten years ago?

1 = Mission-critical

5 = Adjacent, legacy, duplicative

Your Score Tells You What to Do



3–6

KEEP & INVEST

This is core. Strengthen it.
Stop diluting it.



7–10

PAUSE 90 DAYS

Strategic pause. Redirect the resource.
Watch what happens.



11–15

STOP

The case to continue is sentimental,
not strategic. Name the wind-down.

Pick one thing.

Score it honestly.

We will hear from a few of you.

I am going to walk you through the matrix now. Stay with me.

Name the candidate.

Think of the program, initiative, audience segment, or activity that nags at you. The one you suspect is consuming more than it returns.

You know the one.

Write it down. 90 seconds of silence.

Score it now.

REVENUE

1 = material, growing

5 = flat, declining,
symbolic

MARGIN

1 = net contributor

5 = net drain, no path to
break-even

MISSION

1 = mission-critical

5 = adjacent, legacy,
duplicative

Now add your three numbers.

You have a score between 3 and 15. Hold that number.

Type your *total score* in chat.

Just the number. Nothing else.

Let's Hear It:

- What is the candidate?
- What did the matrix say?
- Which lens was the hardest to score honestly?

Type in chat:

- 1) The name of the person you will talk to first.
- 2) And when.

That's your commitment. And that's the person whom you'll strategize with to ensure your team can make it happen.

#datadoesntdopeopledo

Protecting *your mission for the long term*
sometimes means *saying no in the short term.*

This is not retreat. This is leadership.



Executive Summit

The strategic retreat for
arts & cultural leaders

Upcoming dates:

- October 7-8, 2026 – Colorado Springs, USA
- February 11-12, 2027 – Manchester, UK
- March 4-5, 2027 – Colorado Springs, USA

*Don't leave the
hard question
in the chat.*

Bring it into a focused conversation.



Wherever your matrix landed, TRG can help you examine what's driving revenue, what's draining capacity, and where growth may be hiding.