

Commercial in Confidence



# Investors in People Review Report For

ARC Theatre

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On behalf of Capital Quality Limited

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## Introduction

Arc Theatre was first recognised as an Investor in People in March 2004. This was the first post recognition review against the current Standard.

Arc Theatre has operated for over 20 years, offering theatre based projects and solutions to education and industry.

### ▶ **Benefits gained from using Investors in People**

The Chief Executive commented that the Investors in People Standard had been useful as a framework for checking that processes and policies were in place. Recognition as an Investor in People continues to be particularly important for contracts.

### ▶ **Executive Summary**

Arc Theatre is one of the most fabulous organisations that I have had the pleasure to assess. I would urge them to apply for recognition as a Top 100 Best Companies to work for. It exceeds Level 1 of the Standard in many areas, notably learning and development opportunities, leadership and management, people feeling included and valued, people feeling that they contribute and make a difference, and induction. It might be useful to use Profile as a framework for further development.

### ▶ **Areas of particular strength or effective practice**

The following is a list of good practice characteristics or features found during the course of the site visits. These are recognised as being of good practice or exceeding the requirements of the Investors in People Standard: -

- there is a very clear and powerful vision, underpinned by deeply held values
- the culture is inclusive and transparent, and this is very evident in their approach to business planning
- the support that staff and freelancers receive in relation to their learning and development is generous, and highly professional
- the inclusion of freelancers in their own development is reported to be unusual in this industry
- the leadership of the CEO and the Creative Director is inspirational and highly effective
- people have huge respect and regard for the leadership and management of Arc Theatre
- people feel very valued, included and involved and have great loyalty and commitment to their work, and to Arc Theatre in particular
- the induction of new starters is excellent, as is the support for people taking on new projects
- there is a fully embedded understanding of the benefits and impact of investment in people
- the ongoing commitment to continuous improvement is undoubted

► **Areas where development could be considered**

These represent areas found during the course of the site visits where the organisation might consider improving. Actions are not necessary to meet the Standard: -

- Arc has an annual Staff Development Plan that fully identifies its learning and development needs, and the activities planned to meet those. It could benefit from more specifically describing the costs of its wide range of formal and informal activities
- whilst the board members are undoubtedly skilled and knowledgeable, it might also be useful to formally identify any development needs that may have
- it could be useful to explicitly define and describe the characteristics of what makes the leadership of Arc Theatre so effective, and to share this with potential staff and freelancers, and clients
- the CEO has enormous responsibilities, and might benefit from some one to one support from an external coach
- The amount of time spent mentoring, training, and supporting people's development is not fully costed: it would be beneficial to do this
- as noted, it could be useful to use Profile as a framework for further stretch and challenge

► **Assessment Findings**

**Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation**

*An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation*

**1. A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood**

- *Top managers make sure the organisation has a clear purpose and vision supported by a strategy for improving its performance.*

Arc's purpose is to be seen as leading edge in the market, to attract clients and partners who wish to transform communities, and to continually evolve and innovate.

Stated as a vision this reads: " We want Arc to be the Number 1 Theatre for Change in the UK, and the company of choice for clients seeking real impact around transformation and change."

Its mission is " To make outstanding theatre and stories that engage and inspire learning and to work passionately in the fields of social justice, diversity, organisational and individual development and creativity, through our theatre projects, programmes and participatory work" .

The strategy for improving Arc's performance is outlined in a three year business plan.

- *Top managers make sure the organisation has a business plan with measurable performance objectives.*

The business plan is a clear, comprehensive document with defined performance objectives.

- *Top managers make sure there are constructive relationships with representative groups (where they exist) and the groups are consulted when developing the organisation's business plan.*

There are no representative structures, therefore this indicator does not apply.

- *Managers can describe how they involve people when developing the organisation's business plan and when agreeing team and individual objectives.*

Arc has a deeply inclusive culture. It recognises the wide diversity of its people and calls upon their individual experiences and views when planning the development of its business.

- *People who are members of representative groups can confirm that top managers make sure there are constructive relationships with the groups and they are consulted when developing the organisation's business plan.*

There are no representative structures, therefore this indicator does not apply.

- *People can explain the objectives of their team and the organisation at a level that is appropriate to their role, and can describe how they are expected to contribute to developing and achieving them.*

People are easily able to explain the objectives of their work projects and those of Arc because of the total transparency of the planning, business development, appraisal, briefing and review processes. They are involved in regular away days, and invited to participate in 'circle time' and a range of exercises to help clarify future aspirations and actions.

## **2. Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives**

- *Top managers can explain the organisation's learning and development needs, the plans and resources in place to meet them, how these link to achieving specific objectives and how the impact will be evaluated.*

Arc has an annual Staff Development Plan that fully identifies its learning and development needs, and the activities planned to meet those. It could benefit from more specifically describing the costs of its wide range of formal and informal activities.

- *Managers can explain team learning and development needs, the activities planned to meet them, how these link to achieving specific team objectives and how the impact will be evaluated.*

Managers link their learning and development activities to achieving repeat business, and team targets for new business. The impact is evaluated through appraisals, team meetings and away days.

- *People can describe how they are involved in identifying their learning and development needs and the activities planned to meet them.*

People said that they are involved in identifying their learning and development needs through appraisals and / or ongoing one to ones. They described a range of activities which included: rehearsals, external training courses, shadowing, coaching and

mentoring, co-working and planning, networking with other practitioners, and self development.

- *People can explain what their learning and development activities should achieve for them, their team and the organisation.*

Examples people gave included: project management, understanding emotional literacy, advanced acting techniques, understanding diversity, improvisation skills, and knowing how to facilitate forum theatre.

### **3. Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people**

- *Top managers can describe strategies they have in place to create an environment where everyone is encouraged to contribute ideas to improve their own and other people's performance.*

As noted, Arc operates a highly inclusive and transparent culture. It recognises that all individuals can contribute to the Development of the business, and therefore actively encourages them to contribute ideas, suggestions and innovation.

- *Top managers recognise the different needs of people and can describe strategies they have in place to make sure everyone has appropriate and fair access to the support they need and there is equality of opportunity for people to learn and develop which will improve their performance.*
- *Managers recognise the different needs of people and can describe how they make sure everyone has appropriate and fair access to the support they need and there is equality of opportunity for people to learn and develop which will improve their performance.*

The managers in Arc have an advanced understanding of the need to differentiate learning opportunities, and have a close working knowledge of the needs of all individuals, including their freelance workers. They ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have appraisals and / or quality one to one time for the discussion of their needs. The business plan and the staff development plan identify the needs of individual staff, and the cohort of freelance workers. Whilst the board members are undoubtedly skilled and knowledgeable, it might also be useful to formally identify any development needs that may have.

- *People believe managers are genuinely committed to making sure everyone has appropriate and fair access to the support they need and there is equality of opportunity for them to learn and develop which will improve their performance.*

People totally believe that Arc is genuinely and equitably committed to their learning and development.

- *People can give examples of how they have been encouraged to contribute ideas to improve their own and other people's performance.*

Examples people gave included:

*"We are all encouraged to think creatively, and to come up with ideas for the brand."*

*"I have been to several away days and meetings with the board and Arc."*

*"They are incredibly open here, and are constantly striving for new ideas. Although they are very successful, they are not complacent, and like to keep in touch with all the issues, and with young people."*

#### **4. The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively, are clearly defined and understood**

- *Top managers can describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively, and the plans they have in place to make sure managers have these capabilities.*
- *Managers can describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to lead, manage and develop people effectively.*

Arc delivers leadership and management development activities to other organisations, and the managers have a fluent understanding of what constitutes effectiveness. They role model this in their own organisation, both through their own continuous development, and through their values and behaviours. Examples they gave of what is required of them included: understanding situational leadership and related leadership styles, delegation, clarity, direction, fairness, inclusivity, empowerment, feedback, and motivating others.

Managers role model the values of Arc. These are passion, intuition, integrity and being pioneering.

*"We are passionate about the world we live in and developing projects that challenge social injustice, foster community cohesion and communication, and encourage personal, community and organisational responsibility."*

*"Intuition means having a sense of what is going on underneath things, a hunch that might go against the flow, a connection with people and organisations, and a way of seeing and acting upon it."*

*"Integrity means acting with honour and at all times and keeping our promises. It means being brave and speaking from our authentic selves, even when it might seem dangerous."*



*“ Arc is prepared to tackle new subjects, bringing them to centre stage, challenging and provoking new thinking and solutions....”*

- *People can describe what their manager should be doing to lead, manage and develop them effectively.*

People know what they can expect from the managers. Their examples were congruent with those cited by managers, and also included high levels of one to one support, training, and open communications.

### **Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation**

*An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people*

### **5. Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people**

- *Managers can explain how they are effective in leading, managing and developing people.*

Examples given by managers included: ensuring that they understand people's learning styles, and giving them roles which accord with those; identifying people who have the potential for leadership; and, developing people to understand and experience the values of Arc.

- *Managers can give examples of how they give people constructive feedback on their performance regularly and when appropriate.*

Feedback is fully integrated into practice at Arc. For example: after each project there is a debriefing process that includes discussion, and written feedback 'notes'. Managers carry out site visits to performances and workshops. On an ongoing basis people receive feedback though being shadowed or observed, at appraisals or in one to one discussion and reflection.

- *People can explain how their managers are effective in leading, managing and developing them.*

Examples given by people included: being taken on with no acting skills and being trained from scratch; being given opportunities to help write new scenarios; and, being afforded copious amounts of training, mentoring and 'love.'

- *People can give examples of how they receive constructive feedback on their performance regularly and when appropriate.*

People are delighted by the amount of feedback they receive. Arc is a true ‘talking organisation’ and has a constructive and developmental approach to giving feedback, which people say happens ‘on a daily’ basis informally, and through appraisals or one to ones and team dialogue on a more formal basis. They noted that feedback also comes from colleagues, clients and that, as well, they are invited to give feedback to managers.

## **6. People’s contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued**

- *Managers can give examples of how they recognise and value people’s individual contribution to the organisation*

Managers genuinely value their staff, freelancers and board members. The culture which I experienced and observed was one in which managers and people work together in mutual respect and a passion for each other and the work that they do.

Appreciation is also expressed through valuing people’s experience and ideas, celebrating success, social events, sharing client evaluations, offering new opportunities, and regular face to face, phone or e-mail thank yous.

- *People can describe how they contribute to the organisation and believe they make a positive difference to its performance.*

People have very high levels of commitment to their work and fully believe they make a difference to the performance of Arc.

Examples they gave included:

*“I am so proud that the work I do affects people’s lives.”*

*“Arc has very high standards and attracts people who share its values. I believe my work with Arc has helped me make a difference to young people.”*

*“We run a very effective office, and have good processes not only for the freelancers, but also for our clients.”*

- *People can describe how their contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued.*

People were unanimous in their praise for how managers and colleagues appreciate and value them. Examples included:

*“They (managers) are very advanced human beings who have extraordinary people skills. They make us feel completely valued – which is rare.”*

*“ We all work together as a team, as a family and enjoy and appreciate each other at a deep level.”*

*“ Even though I only work for arc on a part time, contractual basis my ideas and thoughts are welcomed.”*

## **7. People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making**

- *Managers can describe how they promote a sense of ownership and responsibility by encouraging people to be involved in decision-making, both individually and through representative groups, where they exist.*

As noted, Arc operates an extremely inclusive culture. Promoting ownership and responsibility is a “normal part of everyday business both in strategic and operational issues.” People are involved in all aspects of planning, creative thinking, team troubleshooting, testing decisions, and the expressions of views and opinions.

People are encouraged to take on new responsibilities e.g. working closely with the board, leading workshops, facilitating forum theatre, writing scenarios, and directing productions.

- *People can describe how they are encouraged to be involved in decision-making that affects the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation, at a level that is appropriate to their role.*

People are impressed by the open and consensual culture of Arc. There are “ no secrets”, opinions are consistently sought and listened to, and managers are willing to adapt ideas and plans when they receive new insights or creative suggestions.

- *People can describe how they are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for decisions that affect the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation, at a level that is appropriate to their role.*

People are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Core staff can make decisions about fees, contracts and bookings. Freelancers have responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of their work, and take seriously the values of Arc.

## **8. People learn and develop effectively**

- *Managers can describe how they make sure people’s learning and development needs are met.*

Managers ensure that people are learning and developing through the appraisals process and ongoing dialogue with individuals and teams. During rehearsal or

projects, managers discuss and observe learning. The staff development plan tracks progress against planned activities and expected performance improvements.

- *People can describe how their learning and development needs have been met, what they have learnt and how they have applied this in their role.*

Examples given included: having a range of advanced IT skills; being able to facilitate forum theatre; being trained as an actor; and, understanding a range of current social issues.

- *People who are new to the organisation, and those new to a role, can describe how their induction has helped them to perform effectively.*

People who are new to Arc receive a supportive induction. They have the support of 'buddies', and new actors have longer rehearsal and training. Everyone is taken through the brand, vision and values of Arc. People who change roles are given one to one mentoring or training from the relevant manager.

People speak very highly of the levels of support that they receive, and cite this as unique in the industry.

## **Evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation**

*An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation*

### **9. Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation**

- *Top managers can describe the organisation's overall investment of time, money and resources in learning and development.*

There is a training budget for external training for core staff. All actors and workshop leaders are paid for rehearsal and training activities. The amount of time spent mentoring, training, and supporting people's development is not fully costed: it would be beneficial to do this.

- *Top managers can explain, and quantify where appropriate, how learning and development has improved the performance of the organisation.*

Examples included: being up to date with government initiatives and social issues; keeping up to date with child protection, diversity and health and safety; having high levels of respect in the market; and, the retention of and repeat business (75%) from clients.

- *Top managers can describe how the evaluation of their investment in people is used to develop their strategy for improving the performance of the organisation.*

The evaluation of the investment in people informs future business planning, and staff development planning.

- *Managers can give examples of how learning and development has improved the performance of their team and the organisation.*

Examples included: effective project management; less reliance on accountants; an increased range of techniques for the behaviour management of young people; an amazing ability to identify and work with challenging social issues; very positive feedback from clients; less experienced actors developing their skills; and, having excellent and trustworthy facilitators.

- *People can give examples of how learning and development has improved their performance, the performance of their team and that of the organisation.*

Examples included: understanding financial systems and procedures; understanding how to write bids and proposals; improved time management; the ability to build and manage the website; and, high levels of motivation and job satisfaction.

*“ We tend to attract people who feel, act and think passionately.”*

*“ We are a virtual community – the freelancers support each other.”*

*“ We have trained a lot of actors. Some are doing superbly well, but still want to work with us.”*

*“ We like to play together, and to balance this with the business.”*

*“ We are in tune with the dynamics of a changing world.”*

*“ We punch above our weight.”*

*“ This is a loving, caring environment- we have an amazing telepathic understanding of each other. A lot of human stuff goes on.”*

*“ People are at the heart of Arc. We get lots of love and tangible commitment from them.”*

*“ Everyone is very professional.”*

*“ Arc is a very successful company.”*

## **10. Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed**

- *Top managers can give examples of how the evaluation of their investment in people has resulted in improvements in the organisation's strategy for managing and developing people.*

The managers noted that their investment in people is matched to Arc's need for an excellent, consistent product. They tailor the rehearsal and training needs of any project to individual capabilities and experience. Therefore, the approach to the development of people is flexible and adaptable. As the business expands more people are encouraged to take up project leadership roles.

- *Managers can give examples of improvements they have made to the way they manage and develop people.*

Examples of improvements made included: developing reporting systems with team leaders; using text messaging as the preferred method of communications; and the setting up of a members' web page with available projects and their details.

- *People can give examples of improvements that have been made to the way the organisation manages and develops its people.*

Examples given by people included: clearer briefings and supporting information; regular updates and time management reminders; and, increased opportunities for leading teams.

### ► Recommendation and Next Steps

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for Assessors by Investors in People UK, The Assessor is totally satisfied that Arc Theatre meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard.

Subject to the Recognition Panel endorsing the Assessor's recommendation, the Investors in People recognition is granted indefinitely, with a proviso that reviews take place no greater than 3 years apart. The organisation should discuss the timing of the first review with the Adviser.

### ► Options for your next Review

#### **Investors in People Profile**

Investors in People Profile is an optional service for organisations where, instead of a conventional post recognition review or assessment, organisations can choose to be measured against the Standard and compare their performance with other Investor in People organisations. In addition to all of the usual benefits of Investor in People Recognition, a Profile Review will give clear guidelines for continuous development, provide an in depth look at your strengths and weaknesses and highlight areas of good practice. Profile is a premium product and the assessment requires a higher financial investment.

#### **Internal Review**


Internal Review is a flexible review option available to all Investor in People organisations. It was introduced because recognised organisations identified that they wanted more involvement and ownership of their post recognition reviews. Internal Review works on selected principles of quality assured self-assessment and must be conducted with the full involvement of CQL. We develop your people to a nationally approved standard, providing you with an internal resource to enable you to monitor your own performance, target your resources appropriately and participate more fully in the review process.

#### **Promoting continuous improvement**

CQL offers an integrated advice and assessment support service, as well as workshops, surgeries and networking events to promote continuous improvement and maximize the benefits of working with the Standard. Details of the support available to you can be found on: -

Internet: 

[www.cqlgroup.co.uk](http://www.cqlgroup.co.uk)

Telephone: 

0207 016 1925

Email: 

[info@cqlgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@cqlgroup.co.uk)