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LIFESTYLE

The need for India to build a workforce in the arts sector is crucial: Trishla Talera

With commerce and industry chambers recently setting up an arts and cultural task force, the need for India to build a workforce in the sector is crucial. The arts and cultural management sectors in India do not offer any degree programmes yet," says Trishla Talera.

Written by [Dipanita Nath](#) |

Published: November 10, 2019 3:48:41 am



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Trishla Talera

When Trishla Talera was setting up TIFA Working Studios, a Pune-based arts organisation that supports experimental works, one of her first hurdles was to build a competent team. “Most of the applications we received did not have the experience and skill sets we were looking for,” she says. In India, arts is considered a vocation driven by the ‘Muses’ rather than a profession that requires the same skill sets as any other industry, such as people management and planning. TIFA Working Studios now has a robust internship programme to mentor young professionals to make them industry-ready. The latest endeavour is titled ‘003: License to Skill’ and will focus on analytical skills, time management and communications. It is scheduled for November 10, from noon to 7 pm, at TIFA Working Studios. Talera, director of TIFA Working Studios, talks to Dipanita Nath about skills in the arts industry. Excerpts:

What is the demand for qualified arts management personnel in India today?

The arts and cultural sector is rapidly growing in India today. With commerce and industry chambers recently setting up an arts and cultural task force, the need for India to build a workforce in the sector is crucial. The arts and cultural management sectors in India do not offer any degree programmes yet. This leaves a large skill gap, which this workshop aims at. The workshop will equip young participants looking to enter the sector and prepare them with skills that are critical to the sector. Most art and cultural managers are trained either as artists or enter after their liberal arts education, neither of which train them in these “life skills”. Arts & Culture Resources India (ACRI) is a platform dedicated to the growing sector nationally through its chapters, now in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Pune.

Are the techniques of managing time, staying organised, solving problems analytically and communicating effectively different in the arts sector than in the corporate sector or other industries?

The core skills required are similar to other industries. However, the workshop provides specific case studies and scenarios which the arts sector has to deal with to train the participants. This workshop is part of a year-long series of presentations and seminars for arts management supported in Pune by the British Council.

How have you designed the course on skill development in the arts field?

For this workshop, we have partnered with Skillephant, a young company focused on training in soft skills across sectors. We, Rashmi Dhanwani and I, have worked closely with them to create this course for the arts industry. The workshop is happening in Mumbai on November 9 and Pune the next day. Since Rashmi and I both run our own arts organisations and have experience in the sector, we have chalked out specific situations for the participants to learn and understand the work culture and situations that may arise.

How did you acquire the skills to run an organisation? How do you upgrade yourself, given the lack of opportunities in the country?

I went to Savannah College of Art & Design in the US to study fine arts and, since my programme was flexible, I was able to study and learn a wide spectrum of skills ranging from business to public speaking. It was only when I returned to Pune did I see this urgent need for an arts and cultural organisation in our context. A lot of my learning in the initial years was through doing events, shows and festivals. I was lucky to have some great mentors who guided

me and shared their learning and best practices. I was awarded the Art Think South Asia Fellowship in 2017, a one-year fellowship in India and Germany, where I completed my arts management research with Savvy Contemporary, Berlin. There is a constant need to upgrade your skills, no matter the sector. I routinely attend conferences and workshops to learn about new movements in the sector and international benchmarks for programmes.

What is the aim of TIFA in the short term and the long term?

TIFA Working Studios is a multidisciplinary platform for creativity and culture by Evolving Culture Foundation. We believe our country can be more than technicians for the world as here the arts offer strong value propositions for us to think creatively and about our current issues, and offer innovative solutions.

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