

## Blast Theory Communications Manager

Recruitment pack, February 2021



A Philadelphia citizen walks in *Spit Spreads Death: The Parade* (2019) in honour of a 1918 flu victim.  
Photo: Tivern Turnbull

*“Since the mid 1990s, the group [has] followed the trajectory of the development of media, with their acute and in-depth psychological analyses. I would call them the most contemporary media-poet of this age.”*

Soh Yeong Roh, head of the Selection Committee for the 2016 Nam June Paik Art Center Award

Blast Theory creates interactive art to explore social and political questions, placing audience members at the centre of our work.

Led by Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj, the group draws on popular culture, performance, technology and games, often blurring the boundaries between the real and the fictional.

In virtual and physical spaces from pubs, canals and abandoned warehouses to libraries, museums and apps – we go to unexpected places to make our work accessible to everyone.

### **Where we're going**

After a five-year period of intensive work on ever larger projects – *Karen*, *My One Demand*, *Operation Black Antler*, *2097: We Made Ourselves Over*, *Bloodyminded*, *Spit Spreads Death: The Parade*, *GIFT* – the artists spent time in 2020 to reflect and develop new ideas. This was already part of our plans, which made it easier to adapt to the pandemic.

We were recently selected to lead a team to develop a creative concept for Festival UK\*2022, one of the largest cultural events the country has ever seen. If commissioned, we will deliver a £7m project in 2022.

With a strong reputation and financial position, we are about to make a step change in our communications with a strong focus on audience insight and audience development across all platforms. Our commitment to inclusion and underrepresented voices will feature strongly in our future work.

## **The role of Communications Manager**

You will join us at this exciting and pivotal point in our history. You'll play an important role in delivering the new communications strategy, making sure it responds to audience needs and the company's objectives. Audience development and communications (both via organic reach and promotional activity) are a strong focus for the company over the next period and we're willing to invest to achieve our ambitious goals. We'll encourage and support you to develop your skills professionally as part of this.

You'll work closely with Business Director Anne Rupert and Director Matt Adams (who is also one of the Blast Theory artists and founders of the company). You will be supported by a brilliant and nurturing team: Blast Theory's in-house skills include graphic design, video editing and production as well as software development. Audience insights and analytics are a cornerstone of the new strategy and we are looking for candidates who have specific interests and skills in this area.

## **About you**

You might be a freelance comms professional looking for more stability. You might have a keen interest in the arts, currently working in the commercial or charity sector and looking for a new challenge. Or you might be coming from an entirely different direction where you can demonstrate your skills in communicating and building a following.

We do not expect you to have experience across all aspects of the job description and person specification. Even if you feel you don't tick every box, please apply. We will support your professional development in areas that you are less experienced in, building your confidence and making sure you feel part of the family here.

## **Our ethos**

We strive to provide a warm, welcoming, creative and collaborative environment. Regardless of how busy it is, we all have lunch together in the studio and we often have visitors who join us. We don't have a rigid hierarchy and you will interact with decision makers in the company, often in a relaxed and informal way.

It's important to us that we take care of each other; we have an ongoing organisation-wide dedication to individual support and professional development, including a distinctive sabbatical policy. We currently have a gender-balanced staff ratio (including at senior level) and encourage the empowerment of employees and volunteers.

It's important for us to offer a workplace that is accessible and designed to help you succeed. We care about mental health and will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your needs.

## **Our work**

Blast Theory was founded in 1991 by a group of friends who worked at the same cinema. Since then, the group has grown to a team of nine.

We have collaborated with the University of Nottingham's Mixed Reality Lab for over 20 years which is, to our knowledge, the longest and most productive partnership between a university and group of artists anywhere in the world. It has yielded 12 new works, four BAFTA nominations, the Golden Nica for Interactive Art at Prix Ars Electronica and over 40 academic papers of international significance. This dialogue between scientific and artistic research forms a core thread of Blast Theory's practice.

Our business strategy supports innovative art practice and ensures that the company has the resources to deliver a creative and visionary programme. The company has been regularly funded by Arts Council England since 1994 and is a National Portfolio Organisation. Additional sources of funding come through a mixed economy of grants, commissions, consultancy, earned income and philanthropic giving. Blast Theory is a charity led by Chair Anthony Lilley OBE.

Since 2004 we have worked in research partnerships with the BBC, British Telecom, Sony and Nokia among others. Our relationship with the commercial sector includes being represented by the Creative Artists Agency and work with the BBC, Channel 4 and Microsoft.

Blast Theory has won many international awards including an International Mobile Games Award and three Lovie Awards. In 2016 we were awarded the Nam June Paik Art Center Prize in recognition of the group's exploration of new boundaries in art.

Internationally, Blast Theory's work has been shown at the Tribeca Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, the Venice Biennale, ICC in Tokyo, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney Biennale, National Museum in Taiwan, Hebbel Theatre in Berlin, Basel Art Fair and Sonar Festival in Barcelona.

### **Our studio**

We are based in a former Victorian ice house overlooking Shoreham Harbour, in Portslade, Brighton. Designed by award winning architects Block, our building has been developed to act as a meeting point for artists, scientists and industry to collaborate, research and exchange knowledge.

We rent out two studios, run an international Residency Programme, frequently mentor emerging artists and practitioners, and (when restrictions allow) run occasional talks, workshops, showings and public tests.

We have two studio dogs: Greta, who can be described as over-friendly, and puppy Juno. They are well looked after by their owners and interaction is optional! If having dogs around is a problem for you, please let us know when you apply so we can consider your needs.

Like most people, we are currently mostly working from home. We use Slack and Zoom to stay connected and have a 15-minute huddle each morning to say hi and discuss the day's priorities. We can provide any tech that you need when working from home. Our studio is spacious enough to allow effective social distancing.

The studio is on one level. Access is via a series of stairs (with a continuous handrail). We have an accessible toilet and can arrange wheelchair/level access during office hours via the yard to the rear. Please let us know about any access needs when you apply so we can discuss these with you.

### **Equal opportunities**

We're an equal opportunities employer and encourage applications from people who are less represented in our sector: particularly people of colour, those with disabilities (including 'invisible' disabilities or neurodiversity such as dyslexia or autism), and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

While we recognise that there may be some restrictions that apply to specific disabilities, we'll try our best to make reasonable adaptations to accommodate your needs. If you have access needs, please email [info@blasttheory.co.uk](mailto:info@blasttheory.co.uk) with details so we can:

- Support you to make an application in a format that suits you (video, audio or phone)
- Make reasonable adjustments if we invite you to interview (for example short breaks during the interview; a longer interview slot with more time to respond; large print documents available; assistance to access the building; or something else).

### **Application procedure**

Please send us:

- A **cover letter** (no more than two sides of A4). We will be using a scoring system to assess applications so please make sure you show clearly how you meet the essential skills and experience for the role. All relevant experience is valid, even if gained outside a professional context (for example through personal projects, or volunteering).
- Your **CV** (no more than two sides of A4). Please include all relevant skills and experience as well as any links to successful campaigns or relevant projects you have worked on.
- A completed **Reference & Disclosure form**
- A completed **equal opportunities monitoring form**. Please note this form is completely anonymous and will not be read with your application.

Please upload these documents and complete the relevant forms via our SurveyMonkey form here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CommsMgapplication>.

You are welcome to apply in a format that serves you best, such as audio, video or via a phone call. If you prefer to apply in a different format please contact [dan@blasttheory.co.uk](mailto:dan@blasttheory.co.uk) for more details.

Applicants must be aged 18+ and have the right to work in the UK.

### Key dates

Applications due: 17 March 2021, 12 noon (strict deadline)  
Interviews: 25/26 March 2021  
Start date: ASAP after appointment

We will email shortlisted candidates with an invitation to interview on Friday 19 March. Regardless of whether you are invited to interview, we will email you to let you know the outcome of your application.

As part of our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion we will offer feedback to any job applicant who self-identifies as being a person of colour; from a lower socio-economic background; or with a disability. In giving you feedback we will pay close attention to your strengths and identify areas for improvement, offer concrete actions and, where relevant, support to address these. This is regardless of whether we invite you to interview.

### Terms and conditions

Hours: Full-time  
Salary: £28,000-£30,000 per annum  
Annual leave: 20 days' holiday per year plus bank holidays  
The studio is closed between Christmas and New Year which is additional paid holiday  
Period of notice: Two months  
Office hours: Normal office hours are 10am-6pm, Monday to Friday  
Reports to: Business Director  
Location: Blast Theory's studio at 20 Wellington Road, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 1DN  
The role may involve national and international travel.

### Job description and person specification

#### Purpose of the job

The Communications Manager is responsible for:

- Developing and implementing Blast Theory's communications strategy, in consultation with the Director and Business Director
- Delivering effective, engaging, tailored content across Blast Theory's channels (website, newsletter, social media) to attract, retain and grow audiences and build Blast Theory's brand
- Using analytics and audience insights (via Google Analytics and social media analytics) to test, review and adjust the strategy on a regular basis
- Leading on content marketing and other promotional activity to build brand awareness and grow audiences, working with consultants and delivery partners where required
- Overseeing asset production and managing comms interns, assistants and freelancers where relevant

#### Principal tasks

##### Strategy

- Develop and implement Blast Theory's communications strategy in consultation with the Business Director and Director, making sure it meets the objectives for the company
- Segment audiences for Blast Theory communications, defining messaging and channel strategies for different groups as required
- Set a communications strategy for each project with comprehensive targets to be delivered within agreed budgets, in agreement with the Business Director
- Use audience insights and analytics to review and adjust the strategy on a regular basis
- Bring an imaginative and vibrant communications viewpoint to the development of new work and the Blast Theory brand
- Identify how different communities engage with Blast Theory and put in place ways to address barriers to access and engagement

## Audience development and analytics

- For each Blast Theory work or strand of activity:
  - Identify how relevant audience segments will engage
  - Plan a campaign strategy with clear objectives and targets, incorporating any requirements from partners or external stakeholders
  - Implement the campaign strategy working with the Blast Theory team and/or with commissioned agencies, freelancers or partners as required
  - Track campaign performance versus targets (for example by making sure that page/source tracking is integrated or that goals and conversions are set up within Google Analytics)
- Set relevant goals and conversions in Google Analytics and integrate Google Data Studio for effective reporting
- Review social media analytics and integrate the best tools to track performance
- Keep abreast of new tools and trends and make recommendations
- Regularly deliver actionable insights based on analytics and work with the team to deliver them
- Report regularly to the team and Board

## Content

- Identify how different audience groups engage with Blast Theory and identify communications tactics and content to build these relationships
- Work with the artists to create content that reflects the richness of Blast Theory's work and extends and enriches Blast Theory's reputation
- Create a confident, relatable and distinctive tone of voice to invite in new audiences and increase audience engagement
- Deliver tailored content for all channels (website posts and blogs, newsletter, PR and social media)
- Ensure that communications and content are accessible (for example by using closed captions, image descriptions etc.)
- Engage the wider Blast Theory team to produce tailored visual assets for all channels

## Website

- Increase audience acquisition and organic traffic in line with the objectives agreed in the communications and business strategy:
  - Develop and implement an effective SEO strategy to increase organic traffic
  - Use the Google Ad account to drive audience acquisition
- Regularly audit website content and performance and lead on redevelopment as needed

## External relationships

- Manage comms relationships with external partners and commissioners
- Procure and manage agency and freelance support where required, for example web development, advertising and PR
- Lead on Blast Theory's relationship with Audience Agency and other relevant stakeholders, industry bodies and networks

## Promotional activity

- Run paid for social ad campaigns as required
- Develop influencer and hashtag discovery strategies to reach new and diverse audiences and deliver agreed campaign objectives
- Identify profile raising and publicity opportunities for Blast Theory's works and the three artists, including awards and media engagements - working with the Business Director and external PR where relevant
- Track promotional activity undertaken by the artists to identify any impact on audience behaviour, and feed recommendations back into promotional planning
- Support PR activity including writing press releases, liaising with press, setting up interviews, creating press packs etc.

## General

- Communicate strategies clearly to the team, building internal buy-in and enthusiasm to achieve our targets
- Represent Blast Theory at network events and conferences (we will support you to build your confidence if you are less experienced in this)
- Line manage interns, volunteers and assistants as required (ditto)

## Deliverables

Key milestones and deliverables will be agreed between the Business Director and the Communications Manager separate to this Job Description.

## What we're looking for

We do not expect you to have experience across all aspects of the job description and person specification. Even if you feel you don't tick every box, please apply. We will support your professional development in areas that you are less experienced in, building your confidence and making sure you feel part of the family here.

When you write your cover letter, please make sure you demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria for the role. We'll be using a scoring system so this will make it easier for us to assess your application. You can include experience gained outside of a professional context (for example personal projects or volunteering).

Please also make sure that you tailor your CV to the specific requirements of the role. Please include links to successful campaigns or relevant projects you have delivered.

## Essential skills, knowledge, interests and personal qualities

- Writing clear, engaging copy for a range of audiences
- Strong organisational skills and an ability to prioritise your workload and meet overlapping deadlines
- Strong understanding of social media channels and audience engagement
- Knowledge of email marketing techniques and tools (we use MailChimp for our newsletter)
- Attention to detail and high standards
- Thinking strategically
- Adaptable and quick learning
- An interest in data and audience insights
- An understanding of and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
- A good knowledge of and interest in communications and marketing trends
- Interest in and knowledge of visual art, digital media, film and contemporary theatre

## Essential experience

- A proven track record in a communications, marketing and/or press role (ideally, we would like to see around three years' experience; if you have less than this but can demonstrate experience across relevant projects, please do apply)
- Running effective cross-channel campaigns, with proven impact
- Running effective social media and Google Ads advertising campaigns
- Building and managing external stakeholder relationships
- Line management (this can include volunteers and freelance staff)
- PR campaigns and PR activity
- Digital audience development (for example increasing web traffic, social media following, newsletter subscriptions and audience engagement)

## Desirable skills

- Writing clear and engaging campaign briefs for suppliers, partners and colleagues
- Content Management Systems (we use WordPress for the Blast Theory website)
- Google Analytics, Google Data Studio
- SEO

- Social media analytics
- Google Ads and Google Ad Grants
- Adobe Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator
- Video editing (for instance Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro)
- Public speaking, presenting or training

Desirable experience

- Engaging influencers to develop new audiences
- Communications for fundraising campaigns
- Procuring agency relationships and managing service agreements with agencies and freelancers
- Working for an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation
- Media partnerships
- E-commerce

*“Since forming in 1991, (Blast Theory) have spun together artistic and scientific concerns into an extraordinary practice comprising site-specific research projects that turn the place of presentation into a space for role play.”*

Frieze