As with everything, although you’re working fast and in a temporary space it’s best to plan your marketing in advance. Get a big sheet of paper – draw up a calendar starting at least a month in advance of your project – and plot in your marketing activity week-by-week.

There should be three strands to your marketing; print, media and online. Use a different colour pen for each or use columns on your plan. Cross each item off when it’s been completed – it’s satisfying to do!

Checklist:
- Flyers
- Posters (adapted from flyers)
- Press Release
- Press email list
- Facebook group
- Twitter account

MARKETING:

Making Print & Distributing Flyers://

It’s not hard to design and print your own flyer. It can be a simple, black and white flyer photocopied at a local shop – or a full colour design, professionally printed. 5000 A6, postcard-sized flyers, printed both sides, should cost you around £100 and should be printed in about one week. If you don’t have design skills or can’t afford a graphic designer to do the job for you, use your creative skills and draw, collage or paint something. Photocopied collage always looks good, and has a punky urgency that matches the nature of many empty shops projects.

Flyer distribution list://

- Local shops and cafes, and especially barbers & hairdressers
- Tourist Information Centre
- Museum and art gallery
- Library
- Leisure centres & swimming pools
- Through letterboxes
- Local schools and colleges, who may help out and send flyers home with students

Make sure you distribute flyers about two weeks in advance, and top them up in the days before you open. Don’t forget to tell your neighbouring shops what’s going on: drop a leaflet in to them, and ask them to display a poster.
2010-01-15

The Empty Shops Workbook is part of the Meanwhile Manual series, a collection of guides for using temporary spaces.
www.meanwhile.org.uk
Produced by the Empty Shops Network and The Meanwhile Project
Based on research supported by the Revolutionary Arts Group, the Artists Information Company and Worthing Regeneration

made with www.bookleteer.com from proboscis
Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for the arts in England and has set aside £350 million of their lottery income as a fund to which artists can apply for grants to help them carry out artistic activities in empty shops.

The money is available through the ‘Grants To The Arts’ scheme.

www.tinyurl.com/qmu4

a-n the Artists Information Company://
a-n’s publications and programmes are designed to meet the professional needs of artists and the visual arts sector, identifying changing trends and new ways of working.

Funded in 1980, a-n’s Artists Information Company is acknowledged as a leading UK agency supporting the practice of visual and applied artists, and is perhaps best known for producing a-n magazine and the sister website. It is supporting the long-term work of the Empty Shops Network.

www.a-n.co.uk

Does The High Street Have A Future?://

It’s cheaper online, it’s easier out of town, it’s two-for-one at the supermarket.

The parking in town is expensive, the big stores have left anyway, and the streets are empty. Entertaining and enjoyable places to spend time. We need to change the way we shop - it’s got to be more than “buying stock and paying bills, are rising – while customers, hit by growing debt, bigger bills and lower income, are spending less.

But the high street does have a future. To find it, we need to look to the past but also to the future. The old fashioned high street, with local shops tailored to the market, is still a sound idea. Allied to the future of shopping as a leisure activity, and the high street may come back to life again.

The Meanwhile Project://

The Meanwhile Project is run by the Development Trusts Association (DTA), a network of 350 community-led organisations across the UK that create community assets - planners, service managers, businesses, local groups and communities - develop a clear vision, and actively plan to take advantage of new opportunities when the recovery begins. It recommends the use of empty shops by arts and community groups, and gave £3 million of government funding to 57 local councils.

www.meanwhile.org.uk

Support://

Looking After Our Town Centres://

This guide from CLG offers practical help which aims to make sure that town centres reach their full potential. It also looks further ahead, helping those involved in town centres - planners, service managers, businesses, local groups and communities - develop a clear vision, and actively plan to take advantage of new opportunities when the recovery begins. It recommends the use of empty shops by arts and community groups, and gave £3 million of government funding to 57 local councils in August 09.

www.tinyurl.com/ehpsw4

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INTRODUCTION

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‘Entertainment is really key to bringing footfall to shops’

Mary Portas

We need to revive, restore and ultimately reinvent our high streets, making them entertaining and enjoyable places to spend time. We need to recognise that the high street is a venue for events, an amphitheatre for family life, and make it a distinct place that’s worth visiting. And that’s where meanwhile use of empty shops comes in.

Dan Thompson

Empty Shoppers Network

Produced by the Empty Shops Network and the Meanwhile Project

Produced by the Empty Shops Network and the Meanwhile Project
Funding, Resources, Websites & Organisations That Can Support Projects://

New sources of support and funding pop up and disappear all the time (this is correct in November 2009!), so check out the ‘news’ section on some of the websites below, regularly check www.communities.gov.uk and don’t overlook the occasional local authority initiative. And consider getting local business to sponsor your project, maybe with a small amount of cash but also by donating goods or services to help.

If funding is proving difficult to raise for your own project, try collaborating with other projects or working with your local town or city centre initiative, or even BIDs (Business Improvement Districts – find out more at www.britishbids.info). Be enterprising in your project plan and try to clearly demonstrate how it could generate revenue itself.

Empty Shops Network://

The Empty Shops Network provides an online listing of empty shop projects across the UK, and keeps them in touch with each other using an email list to send occasional bulletins, and an email discussion group. It also produces practical resources, like this Empty Shops Workbook.

The network acts as a central point of contact and has handled enquiries from national media, as well as individual artists, arts organisations and local authorities. It has also acted as an advocate for the sector in discussions with the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), the Meanwhile Project and local authorities.

www.artistsandmakers.com/emptyshops

SUPPORT:

Produced by the Empty Shops Network and the Meanwhile Project

THE A,B,C OF EMPTY SHOPS:

This is a light look at the when, why and how of empty shops. It’s also an attempt to make it clear that not every project is perfect for an empty shop. These are special places, and the meanwhile shopkeepers are special people.

A. Embrace The Meanwhile://

Like the Buddhists say, it’s about living in the moment. Right now, there’s lots of empty space and all the experts agree, by the time I finish writing this sentence there will be even more. 1000 shops a week are closing. When we’re out of the current recession, there won’t be as much. Enjoy it while you can – more quickly, be agile, and think on your feet, or you’ll miss it. Grasp the nettle, grab the moment, and embrace the meanwhile.

B. Find The Character://

Using empty shops for temporary pop-up projects is about much more than getting an idea onto the high street for cheap. The best projects are celebrating the local, finding the distinctive, engaging with the character of empty spaces, exploring new ideas and exciting the neighbourhood. As such, they are useful for community groups, local authorities and central government wanting to address a variety of different agendas. These projects and the places have their own character – find it and embrace it, don’t try to make it look like everything else on the street – or like everything else you do, either.

C. Enjoy The End://

The success of an empty shop project may be measured in many ways. It can increase footfall for a neighbourhood, supporting local traders. It can raise the profile of a community event. It can bring together a new partnership, whether that’s a group of excited, inspired and engaged individuals or a working relationship between organisations and authorities. And it’s quite alright for a project not to work. Like Becket said, “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” Empty shops make great laboratories for new ideas and new businesses. And in a week, or month, or half a year it will all be over. Look forward to the end, it means it’s time to start planning a new project.

THE CONTINUUM:

Building On The Project://

Well done, you’ve reached the final chapter of this workbook. It’s time to share your empty shop with the world.

THE EMPTY SHOPS WORKBOOK

Planner's Richard Robinson and the Meanwhile Project

THE END OF THE PROJECT://

Let’s fill them with debate and discussion. Let’s make town centres about ideas and thinking. Let’s make town centres places for swapping and sharing, as well as spending. Let’s make them public, not private. Let’s make town centres about local business and local distinctiveness, as well as big business and branding.

Embrace the meanwhile.

Like Becket said, “Don’t talk about it, man, all you gotta do is do it.”
**Understanding Business Rates://**

Empty properties with a rateable value of less than £15,000 are exempt from empty property rates. For further business rate information visit www.meanwhile.org.uk

**Planning the Project://**

For your project to work, it needs to have a financial plan, which will help you make sure the funds you need are in place, and give you some outcomes to measure. Firstly, write out what your empty shop project will cost. List every expense –

- Materials to do the shop up
- Furniture, fixtures and fittings
- Printed publicity
- Paying for advertising
- Overheads like electricity, water and business rates
- (You can estimate these by asking a nearby shop of a similar size)
- Tea, coffee and biscuits for staff, or refreshments for visitors
- Toilet paper and soap, window cleaner and clothes

Add all of those up and you have a figure for your expenses.

Now work out the costs of staffing the project:

- Planning meetings, get-togethers and workshops
- Opening the shop
- Writing up evaluation and meetings afterwards

Even if you’re planning to work on a voluntary basis - keep a timesheet, even if it’s only a rough note to yourself. It’s a useful figure to know, especially if you decide to move onto a more professional or full-time basis later on.

Now write up all the money that’s coming in:

- Donations from the public
- People paying contributions to the project
- Small amounts of sponsorship from local business
- Grant funding from local authorities
- Meanwhile Project funding, Arts Council England grants or income from trusts and foundations. (See the end of this guide for more advice on funding!)

Your total income should exceed your total expenditure. You should be in profit!

Produced by the Empty Shops Network and the Meanwhile Project

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**OPENING AND PACKING UP://**

**Evaluation & Documentation://**

Just because you’ve packed up and locked the door, it doesn’t mean your project is over. You need to evaluate and document your project; for your own satisfaction, to show people when you’re planning your next project, and to add to the nationwide empty shops map. If you have worked with project partners or received funding, you may need to provide them with certain evidence and evaluation as well.

As with everything else to do with empty shops, don’t make your personal evaluation complicated, and keep it light-touch. It should include:

- How many people were involved: exhibitors or contributors, as volunteers, organisations, businesses and visitors?
- Your own blogs, and any other websites which wrote about your project
- Your project budget: what everything cost, and what money came in
- Any key media coverage, with a note of date and the author, including local newspapers, national press, TV and radio
- As many photographs as possible, ideally starting with an empty shop, through the setting up, to a full and busy space with people in it, and then an empty shop again
- Comments, from exhibitors, contributors, visitors, neighbouring shops, that stand out – record the negatives as well as the favourable ones, as these are more useful and help you learn lessons for next time.
- And write your own thoughts and feelings down: what worked, and what didn’t? Why did some things swing while others were stuck in a rut? Was the project too long, or too short? When was the highpoint, and what was the low?

Keep all of this in a portfolio or folder, to refer to when planning future projects.

And contact the national Empty Shops Network at: www.artistsandmakers.com/emptyshops to add your project to their growing archive.
When You’re Open://

To make the most of opening your space, you’ll need to:

- Make sure the space is clean and well-maintained.
- Have a clear and inviting entrance.
- Display any necessary permits or licenses.
- Have a clear and inviting entrance.
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Openings and Packings Up:

Try to collect details from visitors to build your own mailing list with a visitors’ book or a simple ‘sign up for our mailing list’ form near the door. Ask people to sign up or leave a comment as they’re leaving.

And make sure that visitors can take away your details too, by giving them postcards, business cards or a simple leaflet.

PLANNING THE PROJECT:

Getting In://

It’s really not hard to get into empty shops if you lay good foundations. You need to meet property owners, landlords, managers and letting agents.

Business networking is the answer. You’ll need to do this more than once; you’ll need to do it regularly; in fact, you’ll need to make it a normal part of your working week, at least until you’re established.

- Use search engines to find business networking groups in your area.
- Find your nearest branch of the Federation of Small Businesses.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce.
- Track down your town centre manager.
- Use Social networking web sites to find other groups.
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Once you have a contact name, ask for either five minutes to speak at a forthcoming meeting, or just to be able to attend a meeting as a guest. Turn up looking smart and professional and with business cards.

If you have the chance to make a presentation, keep it short, sharp and focused on the problem, and your solution. Don’t talk about the project itself, but about the benefits to the group you’re making a presentation to. In short, answer the audience’s only question which is ‘what’s it for me?’

After attending networking meetings, keep business cards and make a note of any personal information on them – hobbies, interests and so on – and try to keep in touch by phone, email or by meeting occasionally for a coffee.

If you can’t get into business meetings, it’s time for another approach: find the shops you like, note down the name on the estate agent’s ‘To Let’ boards and visit their office. Set up the meeting, and don’t mention that you want a temporary lease and no rent until you’ve met them face to face! Be prepared to answer all the questions in the ‘Planning Your Project’ checklist in this workbook.
Writing Press Releases://

Don't pay to get in the local papers - learn how to write a good press release. It's easy, and can be emailed to a large list of local news outlets at no cost.

When you're working on the high street, your presentation will be judged by higher standards than in community spaces. High street retailers spend a lot of time, money and effort 'merchandising' to make their shops look good – you can achieve similar standards on a budget by being creative and thinking sideways. If you don't, as well as building a good list of email contacts in the local and regional media (buy a couple of weeks' worth of local newspapers, pick up free magazines, and scour websites for email addresses), send press releases to the large free newspapers and local dailies in the area. It won't get good coverage: too long and it won't get read. And don't pay for local newspaper advertising. Go with a simple 'editorial'.

Add an attention-grabbing headline – a maximum of half a dozen words is ideal.

At the top of your press release, include the date and the words 'Press Release'.

Make it clear where the story ends and that any following information is additional.

Offer a good photo to match the story, and offer interviews or live broadcast ideas for radio and TV.

MARKETING:

Using Social Networking://

For the first time in the history of humankind, we have the tools available to make networks of friends and colleagues – to bring together those who share common ideas, interests and aspirations – in real time, around the world and at low cost.

Social networking websites include names you’re sure to be familiar with – Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and the older Friends Reunited. But there are many more, like photo-sharing website Flickr, the new site that lets you build your own networks Ning, teenage favourite Bebo and business site LinkedIn.

All of these let you build your own page to talk about what you do: and let people become your friends or followers to receive updates about what you're doing. They're usually free to use so they have a large number of users, putting you in touch with a large audience.

Pick the sites that best match the audience you want to reach, and spend some time building your page, adding content and inviting people to sign up. It's an investment in time that returns friendship and future colleagues alongside ambassadors for your project and a live audience!

Start by finding the Empty Shops Network at:

-  http://meanwhilespace.ning.com/
-  www.twitter.com/artistsmakers
-  www.tinyurl.com/dm54dc
-  http://emptyshopsworkbook.ning.com/

MARKETING:

Curating & Merchandising://

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