# Candidate 2 (2:10pm)

### Transcript of Presentation and Q&A Session

*(Name of candidate and identifying information has been removed from this transcript by the request of the final candidates to preserve anonymity at this stage in the process.)*

**Liisa Spink**: Hello and welcome everybody, thank you for coming. My name is Liisa Spink, and I'm one of the co-chairs of the Executive Director search at TPS, along with Agastya Kohli. And I am here to do a brief intro. Today represents the end of a couple month process. We started this search in April. And one of the first things we did was do a survey of the members and see a meaningful way in which they could engage. And one of the biggest recommendations we had from them was they be involved in every stage of the process, so we had a member represented in the resume review stage, we had a member represented in the first interview panel, and for the final selection where are currently, we have a member forum with all of the members, and all of the feedback that you give and turn into us will then be turned into the final panelists for consideration for the final selection.
So, thanks to all the members for showing up today. For those who couldn't, because it is in the middle of the day, we are transcribing the notes from today, and we will be putting that out, along with an online survey for folks to fill out, as well. So, everyone will have a chance to participate if they so wish. So, if you know anyone or you want to push that out, please do so.
I would also ask that -- you'll notice that we put Candidate 1, 2, and 3 on all of the Eventbrite pages. That was due to candidates' request for anonymity at this stage. So, you will obviously know who the candidates are because you're here, but if you could keep the names off of social media until the final selection is made, that's a request that we request that you honor. So, there'll be a 10-minute presentation, which will be followed by a 10-minute Q&A which Agastya Kohli will lead, and then that's it. So, thank you again for coming today, and it is my pleasure to introduce to you [Candidate's Name].

**Candidate 2**: Thank you. Thank you all for coming today. I do appreciate the time that you have taken out of your day to come and hear me speak. I'm also grateful to be here and be presenting in front of all of you. As Liisa mentioned, I am hoping to keep my name as anonymous as possible throughout this process, just because I haven't been able to tell my team that I'm currently in the process, but if you have any questions about my current place of work, I'm happy to answer those.
Having said that, I do currently work for a mid-size theatre organization in the city, and I am the Director of Marketing and Sales for that organization. Throughout my time there, I have been responsible for re-organizing several of the departments to make them more cohesive and actually working together, as opposed to in silence, which tends to happen at organizations. But the experiences that I have that I bring to this particular position that I think are most important, is that throughout my career, I've really worked hard to build cohesive teams. I think that by working together, we are much stronger. And that goes without saying in theatre, ours is a very

collective and collaborative artform, and I think that sometimes we tend to get into our own spaces, and that is to our detriment a bit.

Having said that, I wanted to take a little bit of a look, as I was moving forward into the mission of TPS. TPS has a strong 3-tiered mission to promote the spiritual and economic necessity of theatre to the public, and to unify and strengthen the theatre community through programs, resources, and services. So taking a look at that mission, I wanted to take a look at how does that relate to member values? Sometimes member values and organizational mission don't necessarily line up. So, as I took a look at the member survey that happened in June, I found that the programming that was most important to our members looked a little bit something like this.

So that made me so, okay, great. Now, what are the top 3 programs that are most important to our members? And when I took a look at that particular breakdown, it made sense that the Unified Generals, space rental, and arts advocacy were going to be the top 3 priorities. And really overwhelmingly so, I will say. So, as it pertains to TPS then, it sends a message that these 3 priorities need to be the top 3 priorities for the Executive Director as they come in. What we also know, is that space rental and membership fees are the going to be the top two revenue sustainers for TPS. They account for more than 50% of our overall budget, but they also accounted for 67% in 2014-2015, which says that will be the place that we also need to make a priority for us to stay in the programming that is important to our members. So what does that mean? Where do we go from here?

So, I wanted to look at the programming potential because I do feel like at this moment, TPS has so much potential to really organize and draw the community closer together. At this time, with so many other things happening in the world, I think it's important for we, as an artform, to really come together as best as possible. So, taking a look at that programming, which is the fun part, I will say, I wanted to take a look at arts advocacy.

Space rental was actually the top priority for the members. But it sounds like, just given some of the research and some of the conversations I've had, that system is pretty well in place. Probably in need of some tweaking, but there's definitely some really solid structure there. So, I wanted to take a look at arts advocacy because it appears that not only is it one of the most important things, but it's probably the thing that's most lacking at this moment.

So I do think it is on the burden of the executive director to make sure we have a presence both locally and statewide, even nationally if necessary, to be sure that theatre-specifically is being represented fully in some of these measures that are being put forward.

Second, I wanted to talk about Unified Generals. I do, again, think this is a program that's working cohesively for a section of our members. But I don't that's working necessarily for the entire member-base. I would love to see us offer, actually, regional audition days for companies that exist outside Seattle, but also expand that type of event, so that we can actually include our technical theatre and our administrative staff, if necessary, to make sure they're getting those networking opportunities as needed.

The third thing is our new website. It's something that we'll have to take a look at pretty immediately. I do think the current website has officially come to the point where it's working

against us, rather than for us. And I think in this technologically-minded city, it's going to need to be a priority for this organization.

The final two programs are professional development and the services that are available to our members. This is something that's honestly going to need to come from you. I have to know what you all need in order to sustain yourselves and your organizations in the best possible way. But some of those things are professional development for those wanting to just advance their current talents or perhaps retool and move into a different part of the industry. But also things like tax and legal services for those smaller entities or individuals that currently don't have those kinds of programming available to them.

And the final thing is unifying our member base. It is only with a total buy-in of the members that we can actually move forward and actually uplift some of this programming and make sure that we are actually benefitting the programming and the members at large. So I would love to see us actually engage some long-time members, long-time theatre professionals with new, new-to-Seattle theatre professionals to make sure that we are as welcoming in our environment as we possibly can be.

So how do we do this? Because as we all know, with more programming requires more resources. So I took a look at the most obvious resource, and that was: the rental space and the membership. And not knowing exactly how much revenue is attributed to that rental space, I went ahead and dove deeply into the membership. The average membership level, for all the levels, including organizations, runs about $306. Based on the financials that I was taking a look at, it looks like we're only receiving about $220 per member. Now, that's across the entire spectrum. That means that some people aren't paying as much as perhaps they should, and some people are paying perhaps a little bit too much. So it's really important that we do a deep dive into those membership levels and make sure they're actually working for the broader spectrum. But I believe that if we just make sure we're attaining as much as an average as possible, across the spectrum, that could increase our revenue by $119,000.
Expanding on that possibility, increasing our membership by just 5%, which works out to just 75-80 members. We can increase the budget by another $15,000.
And by adding in a member donor option, which could create sponsorships for larger organizations to support smaller organizations or long-term members to support new individuals to make sure that everyone is able to experience the programming that TPS offers.
We could again, with just a $5 per month or $60 per year, we could increase our budget by $84,000.

So with an additional $200,000, I do believe we can unify our programming and get TPS the programming to reflect that strong 3-tiered mission statement that TPS already has. And with that, I just want to again say thank you, and I open it up to questions you might have, based on that information. Or anything else.

**Q&A**

**Q1**: It's no question that revenue must be increased and can be increased. Other revenue, to say is a weak spot in our portfolio is a joke. Historically, TPS has come up really short in terms of generating donations, grants, and corporate support. That's partially due to bad technology, but partially due to a lack of staffing or ineffective staffing. But this brings up another key issue that you brought up, and I want to bring up a little bit. TPS as a service organization doesn't have the public visibility, the public presence, the corporate presence, the corporate visibility to attract that level of support that it deserves from the profit-making sector, from the public sector -- they don't know who we are. They people that know who we are are people who are already supporting us through membership. The question is how do we tap into those significant resources on a regular basis in order to build the company.

**Candidate 2**: Yeah, it's interesting. I was just looking at the access to the different information on the financials, but there is a really small percentage in terms of donation level. Across the board, in terms of the overall fiscal picture for the organization. I do think that the first thing will be engaging a staff or a part-time staff person that can help with that type of integration because those professionals are actually the best at being able to identify how organizations fit together. Based on our mission, based on our work, based on what we're planning to do, and what we are currently doing, can actually fit into the mission and the values of the current programming at the various corporations and the foundations that exist in the city. So that's the first step. And sustainability in terms of membership revenue increases -- that would actually be the first step -- to engage that professional development person.

The other piece of that is actually going out into the community and talking to those individuals, and that would be my responsibility. It's making sure they do know what we do, and I will say, that we have a key position in this moment -- because I have seen organizations go from: where can they be visibly seen to what is critical need. And that's not to say that's happening across the board, there's still a need for corporations and organizations to have their logos visible, to make sure that they're being seen by the right entity of people. But that's not to say we don't have that right entity. And again, this goes back to the website and making sure that the website is the most professional-looking that it possibly can be. That is going to be key in how we can represent those corporations, so they also feel like they're getting something as part of their donation.

**Q2**: I was curious in your preparation for being a candidate, if you had spoken to Karen Lane, her perspectives on the strengths and challenges of the organization. If you did, what things did you take away from that? And if you didn't, why did you choose not to engage her? Thank you.

**Candidate 2**: I didn't. Partially because I don't have a personal relationship with her, and because… not knowing all of the details that surrounded both her leaving and the interim experience, I didn't want to necessarily open a door that wasn't ready to be opened. But I do feel like if I were to be the candidate chosen, that would be my first step -- would be to talk to her about her experience and just all of the institutional knowledge that comes with being with a company that long. Some of the ideas here maybe have already been tried and failed. But having some of that institutional knowledge going forward, we can identify what was tried and perhaps needs to be tried again, or what is clearly not in line with the mention, so we move to a new project.

**Q3**: I have a two-fold question. Are you a member of TPS currently or ever have been? And how do you engage higher membership if we're already struggling as young artists, I know for me -- I have not been an active member of TPS every year -- I only sign up when I want to do a general audition.

**Candidate 2**: And I would imagine you're probably not alone. The levels and the benefits don't necessarily appeal to the broader spectrum. I'd say the appeal mostly to those in the performing sector field, but I don't see much programming that appeals to really any of the others, to be perfectly honest. That's actually something that needs to be addressed because if we are going to be a member organization, and we are Theatre Puget Sound, then we need to represent the entirety because it's not Actor Puget Sound, it's Theatre Puget Sound. So, that's one thing.

I have been a member through my organization, which was really the only that I was able to be a member, which again leads me to the membership levels because I do think they're a little high, especially for new and emerging artists. It's just not attainable for them, especially if they want to be involved in the Unified Generals. So I do think there's some ways for us to rebalance those, make sure they actually are equitable across the spectrum, look at that student option, and see if we can make it not just a student option but something that also speaks to those that perhaps aren't able to be in a professional type of program at a college or other.

**Q4**: Hi. You talked a little bit about the rental program as a revenue generator. Could you talk about the benefits of that program beyond revenue?

**Candidate 2**: Sure. I mean, it's not lost on anyone how expensive space -- particularly rental space in Seattle is, despite… No matter what kind of organization you're looking for or space that you're hoping to rent. But I do feel that the space provides that unique unifier for our theatre. Especially this particular venue. It's such a beautiful venue for smaller organizations or larger organizations that are just needing perhaps a space that is more intimate than what they already have available. What I will say, in terms of having the space available, is that we are a community that wants for interaction. And so having these spaces available for the TPS members to just simply meet and mingle and talk about the issues that are important to them, I do think that that is unique in the area. So we are not just having to use some of our resources on just engagement with our members. That to me is the biggest benefit of TPS.

But beyond that, it's just simply what better way for me, especially, to meet the community at large, than coming into this space and see the work that they're producing.

**Q5**: Hello. I was thinking about what you were talking about when you said that TPS needs a dedicated development person in there to look at fundraising and grantwriting and all those things, and I agree with you absolutely. And I do think that TPS has long-tried and other producing organizations have tried, and kind of failed at having a consistent person, whether that person should be full-time or whether that person should be part-time, keeping that person, and I just want to know if you -- and maybe you don't -- but if you have any longer-term staffing structure, and if you do have any ideas about that, could you tell us?

**Candidate 2**: Sure. It kind of depends on what programs we decide are the most priority, and we want to take forward and which ones feel like they don't feel like they fit in with the mission

any longer. Or need to be put on hiatus for us to be stable, in order to take that on. I think many organizations make the mistake of thinking that more is more, when that just puts a strain on the staff, it puts a strain on the resources, and it just means you're doing more at kind of half-percentage. We're not doing anything really perfect. So, I do think it will mean we'll have to look at the programming spectrum as a whole to see what is actually possible to take a look at the most critical needs, as I mentioned. I mentioned the website quite a few times, I do not mean to be picking on the website, but I will say that it's something that is both an expensive change, but also something that is very much needed. So, that's going to be the first step: examining what is the programming, what are our priorities, then we can take a look at the staffing needs in order to make sure those programs are being executed to their fullest extent. Nothing is worse than coming in and saying, "This is what we're doing," then not doing it very well. Because I think people that are giving money can smell that from a mile away. You're programming in order to get the funds instead of seeking funds to reinforce the programming. And so I think it's important that we re-establish: what's the programming, how can we execute it most professionally? And then seeking those funds.

**Q6**: I would just ask, taking it in a different direction than what you would do, what appeals to you about doing this job?
**Candidate 2**: I came to theatre like many of us and found my place. I found my people, I found a group that made me feel like I had a purpose as cliche as that sometimes is. And I have also felt that we as an artform are not necessarily as community driven as we hope to be. And some of that comes from fear, and some of that comes from resource, or lack thereof. And some of that comes from not having that guiding entity to simply say, "It's okay. This is a space that's okay." And I think whether you are a $20 million organization or an individual who just graduated from college or is just on the street, I think you need a home base no matter what. And so I am really excited to bring, like I said, that knowledge of putting teams together, unifying organizations, really hearing and listening to all types of members from different places in their career and in their life, and really finding how we as an organization can be best for them. That doesn't mean we're going to do everything right. That doesn't mean the program that one member this is the most important might not be on hiatus for a year or so, but that does mean we are doing our best for the broader community of members. And that's what makes me really excited to be here.

**Agastya Kohli**: Thank you very much, we are at time. Thank you.