



# Press Release

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## Theatre Communications Group Releases Two Reports:

- *Taking Your Fiscal Pulse—Spring 2010: Theatres See Signs of Stability*
- *The New Normal: One Year Later Conversations with the Field*

April, 2010—Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for professional, not-for-profit theatre, releases the report, [\*Taking Your Fiscal Pulse—Spring 2010\*](#), an analysis of data from the recent TCG snapshot survey of the same name. Conducted in January 2010, the survey measured recent financial trends in the field and marks TCG's third collaboration with the Association of the Performing Arts Service Organizations (APASO), the result of which was participation by 435 not-for-profit theatres and a greater sense of the state of the national theatre field.

“Working with the broader field (through APASO) as well as our member theatres gives us so much more information with which to understand the field,” said Teresa Eyring, TCG executive director. “These snapshot surveys and hands-on conversations with our members allow us to create and use existing response mechanisms to address current and developing situations. From our annual National Conference to the Fall Forum; and from the TCG Brain Bank (which is a peer to peer consulting program) to my blog, TCG’s relationship with its members needs always to be interactive and up-to-date in order to be productive.”

Bouncing back a bit from last year’s budget cuts and economic crisis, 67% of theatres whose fiscal year ended in the fall/winter months (Group X) and 71% of theatres whose fiscal year will end in the spring/summer (Group Y) indicate that they ended or will end the fiscal year similar to or better than their budget.

For the majority, theatres are holding steady or are seeing increases in attendance, as well as in revenue sources, which are derived from ticket sales (subscriptions, single tickets and holiday shows), ancillary income (rentals, concessions, advertising, classes, etc), foundation contributions, trustee contributions and non-trustee contributions.

Unfortunately, the majority of Group Y theatres are expecting to end their fiscal year lower than their budget projections in government and corporate support and Group X, who fared slightly better, reported lower government (44%) and corporate (49%) support.

“We are getting stronger, albeit very, very slowly. It has taken thousands of hours of effort, but we are gaining ground with larger audiences, in-kind donations of trade for building repairs, etc.,” says a survey participant.

Looking at expenses, the vast majority of theatres ended or will end their fiscal year on target or with lower expenses than budgeted—a positive sign. When asked about their concerns and priorities, individual giving/donor cultivation ranked number one, with 64% of survey participants reporting. Other top concerns include audience development (61%), board development (50%) and strategic planning (34%).

Regarding liquidity, 48% of the 435 respondents expected to encounter a cash flow problem this year with no budget group immune. Although fewer than half of the theatres responded to a question asking if they had trouble securing a line of credit from a bank, 74% of those that did respond had no troubles and 26%—50 theatres—did.

Even with the decrease in corporate investments and government assistance, both groups approach the next fiscal year with optimism as 73% (Group X) and 68% (Group Y) plan on increasing their budgets or keeping them the same.

“Despite all the numeric metrics, we feel good about the work that we’re doing and more unified in purpose than ever,” proclaims another respondent.

Coupled with *Taking Your Fiscal Pulse—Spring 2010* is TCG’s comprehensive report, [\*The New Normal: One Year Later\*](#) also being released today. The report is based on conversations between the TCG board and 175 TCG member theatres. Conducted in January and February 2010, the conversations focused on the field’s response to last year’s global economic crisis and where we are now.

The report asked four open-ended questions focusing on a holistic view of the field:

1. What short-term fixes did you undertake that will have/have had long-term impact?
2. What do you think the core challenge is in the coming three years for your own theatre and for the wider field?
3. What’s the most exciting thing you’re working on now OR what do you want to be working on but can’t?
4. Finally, a one-word answer: Are you in better/worse/the same shape now as at this time last year?

The good news: in answering about what shape they are in as compared to last year, the majority—70%—reported that they are doing better now. Those responses cut across budget size, geography and genre. However, progress does not come without a price, as staffs face decreases in size and increases in length of workdays, which cannot be sustained in the long-term.

For the majority, 2009 was a year of retrenchment, with nearly everyone cutting budgets and restructuring staff. Shows are smaller, so casts are smaller; rehearsal times are reduced; and

theatres are relying more on local talent. While making financial cutbacks, most also find themselves rethinking the art and finding new solutions instead of sacrificing.

For instance, the artistic director of a Group 4 theatre in the Northeast said, “2009 was the most challenging and most exciting year in my career in theatre. I don’t know how we did it. It was triumphant....On paper, we downsized ten percent; this year, we’ll go down an additional five percent. We made a decision early on not to sacrifice mission, integrity of the work or artists.”

Moving dramaturgical notes online, making a set out of shredded paper, transporting actors rather than housing actors and having the artistic director take on additional work, all contributed to electricity in the air.

Other worries indicated by phone tree participants include the need to diminish arts education programs due to lack of funding, how to replenish/replace funding sources, how to best engage in audience development and how to keep boards active without just asking for more money.

As one artistic director from New England said, “I think the challenge is not so different now than it has always been for theatre. We are dedicated to a dying art that will never die!”

For more information on TCG’s research efforts and reports including these two reports, as well as the Snapshot Surveys, *Theatre Facts* and other projects, visit the [Tools & Research](#) and the [Centerpieces/Special Reports](#) sections of the TCG website.

**Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, exists to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Its programs serve nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. As the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute, TCG connects its constituents to the global theatre community. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. TCG is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).