

HEARING ENVIRONMENT TRAIN



ABSTRACT

This concept train is fitted with individual cars that provide an entertaining and educational journey into different sound environments. The train will travel to high-traffic locations, inviting people to step inside for an aural treat. Rather than focus on the challenges and effects of hearing loss, the train will help people appreciate the way hearing enhances their quality of life. The Hearing Express would offer visitors a one-of-a-kind “ears, eyes, and hands on-experience of hearing in our world.”

In cooperation with regional railways systems worldwide, the free public exhibit would be housed in 4-6 train cars and be adapted to reflect the local language and culture. The train will roll into central train stations in participating markets and open for public tours over a two week period. Weekends will draw families and general public; weekdays will be devoted to tours by school groups.

Designed for high educational and entertainment value, the mobile exhibition will give visitors an experience much like a three-dimensional storybook. Videos, interactive games, and headphones will help visitors discover how hearing enhances the quality of our lives. Visitors will also gain a better understanding of the ways in

which untreated hearing loss impacts people by experiencing sound simulations in a variety of everyday scenarios.

To engage visitors in the full scope of the exhibition, each visitor will be issued a “passport.” Visitors obtain stickers as they stop at each exhibit “destination” on the Hearing Express.

The topics showcased in the train will range from fundamental questions about hearing, the importance of hearing as a sense, and hearing loss prevention for all. The train will also showcase the newest developments in hearing loss technology including hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Dedicated exhibit areas will also deliver a fun, interactive tutorial on different types of ears (humans, cats, dogs and other animals) and allow visitors to experience sound simulations using specially programmed species-specific headphones.

Individual anatomical ear models will illustrate ear functionality and compare healthy and damaged hair cells, i.e., comparing a healthy ear with that of a rock musician (who never used ear monitors) to emphasize the importance of hearing protection.

RATIONALE

Mobile exhibits are an extremely effective way to educate and spread awareness of complex subjects. Gunther von Hagens’ *BODY WORLDS* exhibit has been on display worldwide for ten years. To date, more than 34 million visitors have viewed the exhibit in cities across Asia, Europe, the United States, and Canada.

While less conventional, train exhibits have been used successfully to educate the public. A Siemens science and innovation train toured 60 German cities in less than a year. In Berlin, the specially painted train exhibition drew everyone from amateur scientists and workday commuters to backpackers and schoolchildren. More than 500,000 German passengers took part in the exhibition.

The same train exhibit also travelled to India and China. The joint Indo-German multimedia exhibition attracted 2.25 million “passengers” in eight months.

GOAL(S)

- Create broad public awareness of the science of hearing, healthy hearing practices, and hearing loss and its impact

- Equip people with hearing health knowledge and good hearing skills that they apply to their everyday life experiences

EXECUTION

Preparation (1 year)

Apply for a national or international innovation or science/education grant to fund the project

Work with a major railway lines (such as Amtrak, Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français, or Japan National Railways) to develop a train-centric exhibition that can be adapted to railway cars in different countries/railway systems

Enlist sound engineers, technology experts and multi-media designers to create the interactive exhibit

Create takeaway support materials for exhibit visitors including a “passport” to obtain stickers at each “destination” on the Hearing Express exhibition

Develop a comprehensive advertising/promotional campaign for a national launch of the Hearing Express

Create a customizable local market “stop” advertising/promotional campaign kit for use by local markets

Design a train travel schedule that maximizes general public reach via stops in high-traffic, high-profile destinations

Select country for year 1 “pilot” tour; line up year 2 and beyond destinations with the goal of tours in US, Europe and Asia/Australia by year 5

Implementation (year 1)

Stage national media “ribbon cutting” to launch the Hearing Express Tour

Enlist railway, tourism and hearing health care VIPs to endorse the Hearing Express and generate media excitement

Stop for over two weekends at each location to maximize opportunities for the general public to tour the train

Schedule full weekday schedule with school groups in each market

Promote “stops” in each market through local tourism bureaus, schools, civic groups, hearing health care organizations and local hearing health practitioners



In select markets, plan gala preview fund-raisers for local hearing charitable organizations/advocacy groups

DELIVERABLES

Develop traveling exhibit prototype

Identify country for first tour and outfit dedicated train cars

Book Hearing Express Stop in a minimum of 15 markets year 1

Reach 75,000 - 100,000 visitors in year 1