

Wunderkammer Initiative: Community Career Exploratoriums



Sharing the passions of employers, tradespeople, schools, and manufacturers in engaging and inclusive spaces—to create a welcoming environment for marginalized youth and an empathizing experience for presenters that fosters the building of community, inspires a sense of WONDER, often leading toward next steps into career exploration, training, and jobs.

A NEW VISION FOR JOB FAIRS – AN OLD METHOD OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The problem with Job Fairs is they are simply **NOT FAIR**. All too often, job fairs and college expos are not safe places to ask foundational (and sometimes embarrassing) questions. There is an expectation that readied applicants impress the presenter rather than the presenter encouraging the attendee. This is particularly impactful with low-income, underrepresented youth. Often these students of color, have a history of quiet, systematic, dismissal and abuse while engaging with figures of authority. These talented youth will not excel in this environment.



Sundance Family Foundation will continue to drive change in the field of youth social entrepreneurship (YSE) and the traditional job fair model, using the YSE *Wunderkammer Initiative*: bringing to life curiosity, discovery, enthusiasm, and hope and dreams in youth; while inviting industry leaders to share their personal excitement for their field. Rather than pedal information—the outcome of a *Wunderkammer* is a burgeoning sense of **welcome** and **wonder**. The YSE *Wunderkammer Initiative* aims to bring about small-scale, practical skill/interest sharing sessions that lead youth to

daringly embrace passions about previously unexplored career paths. The ultimate goal is short term training that lead to livable wage jobs and enriched lives.

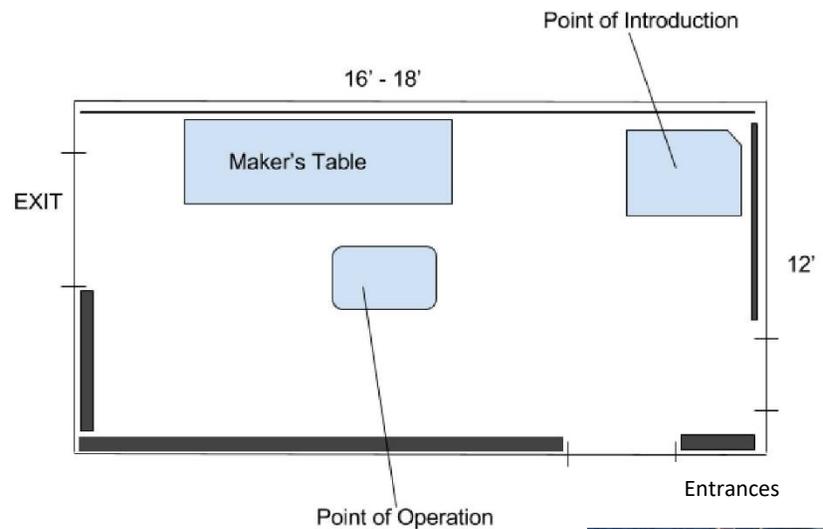
The *Wunderkammer* or (also called a Cabinet of Curiosity), was the BuzzFeed of the Renaissance. They were entire rooms filled with collected wonders from around the world. The *Wunderkammer* was an important change in how knowledge was shared. Before, “to know” something, one would have to rely on a recognized authority. However, the *Wunderkammer*, unlike a book or lecture, demands physical interaction and personal exploration—of the object directly. The Explorer is empowered to create their own understanding through personal examination alongside another caring individual.

The YSE *Wunderkammer* model is not simply a table with pamphlets. This is an opportunity for youth to not merely look at a robot, but to program one...and even accomplish a task—in a race with others, for example. This will be a space created by representatives from local manufacturers, area colleges, the trades, and training programs that invite the youth to a hands-on, interactive experience in a visually attractive setting—with an architecture that fosters a sense of belonging.



Architecture of Community and the Dynamics of Inspiration

The YSE *Wunderkammer* Initiative is sustainable, repeatable, and attractive to institutions. It can be fashioned with existing resources. The presenter intentionally invites the youth into a physical space to join in in a curated, engaging experience.



Here is an example of an existing presentation that was fun and exciting, and could easily be shaped to the *Wunderkammer* model. The presenters were sharing the medical advances of the company to introduce

this field to the 6th to 8th grade attendees. The biggest draw to the table was not the company information but an opportunity to make a rubber ball (silly putty ball) out of the powdered compound and water pictured here. At this booth, the youth were shown pacemaker technology, and introduced to the medical shunts that would be inserted in to an artery with the buildup of plaque. As they were explaining this process, the youth combined chemicals with water that resemble the plaque that can build up in the body. This presentation was packed with exuberant youth, while others booths pictured below were empty.



Both of these examples of mobile interactives could easily be expanded to the *Wunderkammer* model. The display to the left requires the participant to find the problem in a electrical system. The model to the right allows for the young person to actually do the wiring.



YSE *Wunderkammer* Initiative

Operational Assumptions:

- Everyone wants to be invited; everyone wants to share
- Youth engage with **personal authenticity** rather than **institutional authority**
- Power cannot share space without sharing itself—this inclusive sharing is itself anti-oppressive
- The historic methods of occupational and educational induction are rapidly growing ineffective
- Youth in certain zip codes of St. Paul and Minneapolis face 40% to 50% unemployment
- Manufacturing/Trades are facing a historic need for qualified workers
- A career in Manufacturing/Trades can be more accessible and beneficial to landing a livable-wage job, versus the debt/uncertainty of a four year college degree
- Wonder and excitement in learning have to be paired with practical action steps and sound guidance

Logistical Notes:

The space housing the *Wunderkammer* would be the same size as traditional job fair, but with fewer vendors. Each vendor would be given more space than the normal table and chairs. Additionally, as can be seen in the photo of a normal tech fair for youth, there is still a great deal of used space behind the table. This often thrown away space is a potential exhibit area for the *Wunderkammer*. The *Wunderkammer* offers nearly a 56 square foot area that provides an abundance of creative space, efficiency, and is cost-effective.



This initiative is dependent on partners that are willing to work with us to design a presentation that not only shares their passions and a glimpse at years of professional expertise, but also willing to engage in a collaborative, empathic exchange. Additionally, practical tools (scholarship info, employment timelines, phone numbers, etc.) must be shared to fuel these young new Explorers.

This holistic and easily replicated model lends itself to creating a new movement that gives underserved youth a pathway into never before realized career exploration.

Sundance Family Foundation is planning several events to test and refine our design concept. We hope you, and the communities you serve will join us.

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