

# Chapter 1

## Welcome to the World of Pop Ups

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Counting the reasons to pop up
  - ▶ Researching pop ups
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**T**ake a look around, and you see pop up cinemas and pop up cafes, pop up shops and pop up workspaces. And even those establishments that have been around a long time may suddenly have the word pop up in front of them. What's going on with this pop up phenomenon?

In this chapter, you discover what pop ups are and why they've become so popular.

### *Just What Is a Pop Up?*

So what separates a *pop up* from other projects? To truly qualify as a pop up, a project should:

- ✔ Use an empty or under-used space.
- ✔ Be time-limited, with clear start and end dates.
- ✔ Not aim for permanence.
- ✔ Be designed for demountability and ease of removal.
- ✔ Have the potential to transfer to a different site.
- ✔ Be in some way exclusive, distinct or special.

EXAMPLE



## Pop up in action

Adidas opened a series of pop up shops across Europe. They used empty shops and were based around a simple set of steel-framed furniture and freestanding lights, which employees could put up and

take down in one day. The locations weren't announced to the public, but carefully chosen individuals were invited using social media sites. The secret stores only sold two styles of Adidas's most desirable shoes.

Pop ups have been around a long time, in one form or another; they're very much a movement that started with artists looking for temporary space to exhibit work, hold stage shows or create studio spaces. And good pop ups still need a bit of creativity.

Throughout the years, most major towns and cities have things happening that you could call a pop up. Take London. You could draw a line from Shakespeare's reuse of the old gatehouse of Blackfriars Monastery straight to Camden's Roundhouse, which was used in the 1960s for theatre and music happenings. In South London, Brixton Art Gallery ran from 1983 to 1988 in an old carpet showroom.

More recently, Space Makers worked in 20 empty shops in a market just around the corner. Many of these businesses started as pop ups, but have become more permanent over time.

EXAMPLE



Some very famous people started out this way. Tracey Emin ran a shop in Bethnal Green for six months, with fellow artist Sarah Lucas. Called 'The Shop', it sold a range of products they'd designed and manufactured, and the pop up led to Emin signing with a major art dealer.

While London has boasted high-profile pop ups, others have existed around the world and are part of the wider movement of reusing old buildings. Think of Andy Warhol's Factory in

New York, the Musée du Louvre in a former palace in Paris or the mass of buildings in Berlin used as cafes, art galleries and nightclubs.

More recently, pop up has gone from being something creative people do to being something mainstream. Re:START, a pop up shopping mall in Christchurch, New Zealand, came about after earthquakes destroyed existing shops, with the aim of starting the regeneration of the city.

Shopping centre owners Westfield now dedicate space to pop ups in all their centres worldwide, and they're used by luxury travel brand Kuoni, designer Cath Kidston and even BMW (to promote its Mini brand), for example.

A range of businesses you'll be familiar with already use pop up shops:

- ✔ Halloween shops
- ✔ Firework stores
- ✔ Christmas markets

## ***Making the Pop Up Decision***

Pop ups offer many benefits to lots of types of business. Although artists were the first to recognise the benefits of pop ups, all business sectors, from small and home-based businesses to global brands like Reebok and Disney, widely use them.

You should pop up if you:

- ✔ Don't want a high street shop all year round.
- ✔ Want to do something different.
- ✔ Have enough people who'll come to your shop.
- ✔ Want to test out your ideas before committing big resources to a project.

## Comparing pop up shops with traditional premises

Taking on any commercial premises comes with certain responsibilities, so why choose a pop up over more traditional locations?

In both situations:

- ✔ **You must sign an agreement for a set period and commit to paying rent, rates and utilities for that time.** The agreement is between you and the landlord and gives you both rights and responsibilities in law.
- ✔ **You need to fit out the interior with equipment, furniture and fittings.** Any equipment you use needs to be to a good standard, well-maintained and, most importantly, safe.
- ✔ **You must staff the premises and manage those employees.** Your employees also have certain rights and responsibilities, so you need to be aware of the laws regarding the use of employees or volunteers.



Even if you expect to only employ part-timers they too have rights, perhaps more than you may expect. Ever since The Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 was introduced in the UK, part-timers have progressively had their employment rights brought into line with those of full-time staff.



Check out Liz Barclay's *Small Business Employment Law For Dummies* to help keep you on the straight and narrow.

Obviously, a pop up shop reduces some costs by being a short-term let and open only for a short time (see Table 1-1). Other costs, such as furniture and fittings or marketing, may actually be higher because the cost isn't spread over a long period of time. Of course, this generalisation isn't necessarily the case, and you can find lots of creative ways around that problem.



Don't forget that any saving is offset by reduced sales income from a limited period of opening.

**Table 1-1 Pop Ups Versus Traditional Shops**

<i>Pop Up Shop</i>	<i>Traditional Shop</i>
Short-term tenancy, low or limited rent	Long-term lease; rent-free periods may be available but rent will rise
Business rates and utilities to pay	Business rates and utilities to pay
Temporary interior, furniture and fixtures	Full shop fit-out
Limited direct sales	Ongoing sales and regular customers
Fixed-term staff, high induction costs for short-time working	Permanent staff with regular responsibilities

## *Counting the advantages of pop ups*

So why pop up at all? The answer is that pop ups aren't usually a straight rival to traditional retail; their goal is to do something different. More often than not, sales are only part of the reason for opening a pop up.

Essentially, pop ups are useful for business because they can:

- ✔ Provide a space for businesses that don't need year-round premises, for example, seasonal shops or online retailers.
- ✔ Offer a chance to test or prototype a new business model.
- ✔ Allow market research of a new product, range or service.
- ✔ Give a product, range or service an attention-grabbing launch or increase its profile.
- ✔ Reinforce an existing brand and its customer loyalty.

## *Online meets the real world*

One special thing about pop ups is that they give online brands a space to meet the real world.

EXAMPLE



## Do you have a copy of . . . ?

Ministry of Found was a secondhand record shop, opened as part of a viral ad campaign for Yell. A much earlier campaign for Yell's predecessor, *Yellow Pages*, saw an old man phoning secondhand bookshops, enquiring about a book called *Fly Fishing* by J. R. Hartley. The sign-off was him giving his name to the bookshop owner who had a copy – J. R. Hartley.

This 1983 campaign was updated to mark Yell's move into digital, with a

dance music DJ called Day V Lately trying to find a copy of his single, *Pulse and Thunder*. As part of the campaign, Yell opened a pop up shop in London, selling secondhand dance music. Day V Lately could be found in the store, as could his single. The pop up gave the TV campaign valuable media coverage and helped to spread the brand virally online.

Brands like eBay, Amazon, MySpace and Yell have used pop ups to market and promote their services so that they have a presence in the real world. These companies weren't focused on sales figures; they were all more interested in reinforcing their online presence and increasing their web sales.

At the other end of the scale, many tiny online sellers are using pop ups to increase their sales. People who sell from home are increasingly coming together with other traders to sell from a shop for a short period of time.

## Doing Your Research

However great your pop up idea is, it's probably not innovative – it's almost certain that somebody has done it before you. Previous examples include pop up gardens and parks, pop up shopping malls and independent shops, pop up cinemas and theatre shows, pop up cafes and restaurants and pop ups that pretend to be real shops when they're actually just marketing stunts.

Reading up on past pop ups is an essential part of the process and can help you shape and refine your plans. Any plan is

based on assumptions, and research helps you make good assumptions.

Research shows you some good ways to achieve your aims, helps you be realistic about what you can achieve and also stops you from repeating mistakes other people have made.



Time spent on research isn't wasted; it means less time correcting mistakes in your plan further down the line. When a big company does something wrong, it has time, resources and finance to carry on. If your time, resources and finance are more limited, mistakes may mean the end of everything you've worked for.

## *Avoiding common mistakes*

Here are five common mistakes (and how to fix them):

- ✔ **The wrong location:** Being off the high street, even if only a few metres away, can mean low footfall. Visit the location, watch and count how many passing customers you might get. Think about how to increase footfall while you're open.
- ✔ **The wrong look and feel:** Making your shop look cool is important, and it must match your brand and customers. Find the balance between bohemian and high-end retail and play with the temporary nature of what you're doing. Look at how successful retailers present their stores and take inspiration from their style.
- ✔ **The wrong opening hours:** Staffing your shop is the biggest commitment you'll make. Open at hours that match local traders and footfall patterns. Make it clear to visitors when you're open and when you're closed.
- ✔ **The wrong atmosphere:** Your shop needs to be welcoming without being overpowering and pushy. The right layout of furniture, fixtures and fittings and a clear brief for staff will help find the right balance. Again, look at the welcome you get in successful stores.
- ✔ **The wrong marketing:** You need to reach the right customers to match what you're doing. Too glossy and corporate can be off-putting if you're running a community project, and you can't be too scrappy if you're selling a high-end product like art.

## Finding the information you need

Most people who've run pop ups are more than willing to talk and share their experiences. If you find a pop up shop that's similar to your idea, get in touch and ask for advice.



A number of websites are dedicated to the pop up phenomenon and are a great short cut to find out about pop ups past and present:

- ✓ [www.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk](http://www.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk): Features regular write-ups of pop ups across the UK.
- ✓ [www.londonpopups.com](http://www.londonpopups.com): A listing site for pop ups in the UK's capital, updated weekly.
- ✓ [www.popupspaceblog.com](http://www.popupspaceblog.com): A look at pop ups and the issues surrounding them.
- ✓ <http://popupcity.net>: A blog about shops, mobile pop ups like food vans and other temporary projects.

The media have fallen in love with pop ups, and their articles often give valuable insights into what pop ups are really like and what they really achieve.

If you can't find anything in print, don't forget to do online research. Most projects pop up and then down again without any formal documentation or evidence they ever existed. However, in this social media age, everything leaves some legacy, often in the form of a blog, some short films or a page on a social networking site.

Of course, search engines are a good place to start finding those breadcrumbs. Commonly used phrases include: *Pop up shop*, *Pop up store*, *Pop up restaurant*, *Pop up*, *Temporary shop*, *Meanwhile*, *Meanwhile space* and *Meantime*.

You can also find up to the minute information using Twitter. Search for the hashtags #emptyshops, #popupshop and #popuppeople.



Try to use alternative search engines as well as Google – for example, type *pop up shop report* into Google and then into Bing, and you get very different results.

## *Asking for Help and Support*

A number of organisations have been working with pop ups for a while, and they all try to provide help and support to people starting their own pop ups.

These organisations are all small with limited time and resources, so do make sure the answers aren't available elsewhere and that you know exactly what you want when you approach them:

- ✓ Check the organisation's website first to see whether the answers are available.
- ✓ Read any documents, such as reports or guides.
- ✓ If you can't find an answer, get in touch and be specific and clear about what you're asking.

### *Empty Shops Network*

[www.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk](http://www.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk)

Set up by Revolutionary Arts, this project aims to freely share resources, provide example projects and act as a focus for finding new uses for high streets. You'll find good information here, as Revolutionary Arts has been running pop up projects in shops, churches and public spaces across the UK since 2000.

### *Renew Newcastle*

<http://renewnewcastle.org>

This project aims to find artists, cultural projects and community groups to use and maintain empty buildings in the Australian city of Newcastle until they become commercially viable or are redeveloped. Renew Newcastle has inspired similar projects in other cities across the world, including Leefstand (see next section).

## *Leefstand*

<http://leefstand.wordpress.com>

Renew Newcastle (see preceding section) is a direct inspiration for this project in the Netherlands, which has worked with a number of organisations in Rotterdam to create inspiring new uses for empty shops.

## *3Space*

<http://3space.org>

With a portfolio across the UK, 3Space is effectively a letting agent for not-for-profit and charitable organisations. 3Space is developing resources to help people run pop ups.

## *The Meanwhile Project*

[www.meanwhile.org.uk](http://www.meanwhile.org.uk)

Led by the Locality (formerly the Development Trusts Association), The Meanwhile Project began as a UK government-funded response to the problem of empty shops. The Meanwhile Project works with landlords to save them money until more commercial tenants are found.