

Executive Director  
a-n The Artists  
Information Company

**Recruitment pack**



[www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk)

## About a-n

**a-n The Artists Information Company's mission is to stimulate and support contemporary visual arts practice and affirm the value of artists in society.**

Our focus as a membership body is on the conversations around the critical and professional environment for the visual arts amongst artists, art students, arts organisers, producers, educators and researchers. Within the Artists' membership, AIR – Artists Interaction and Representation is a voice for artists, leading strategic campaigns to improve artists' social and economic status.

Our research identifies the diversity of visual arts practices, community engagement, employment and careers, and contributes to learning within higher education and continuing professional development and informs cultural policy.

We thrive on continuous development and recognise that collaboration, partnerships and networking are vital in realising our own ambitions and those of our communities of interest. We're a distributed, UK-wide organisation with a keen eye on international horizons. We make bold decisions that move us forward, fostering innovation and embracing risk.

Founded in 1980, a-n The Artists Information Company is a non-profit distributing limited company. As an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2012-15, we receive grant aid of 25% of turnover, that with sales of memberships, subscriptions, advertising and professional and commission-based services ensures our stability and business resilience.

## Milestones in innovation

A significant strategic visual arts organisation with a UK-wide and international perspective, a-n has in its 33-year history proven it has the drive, energy, creativity and skills to deliver innovation, through its programmes, partnerships and in infrastructural and business development. This is vital to the well-being and sustainability of contemporary producers of art – to the visual and applied artists, their promoters, commissioners and employers and to educators and advocates, as well as to arts audiences and the public.

Our milestones in innovation are summarised below.

<p><b>2013</b></p>	<p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> – a-n, Axis, Artquest and DACS consortium achieves Arts Council Catalyst funding to develop The Artists Fund – light touch support for artists at points of transition.</p> <p><b>FORECASTING</b> – Vision 2020 – mapping future environments for, and characteristics within, contemporary visual arts practice.</p> <p><b>DIGITAL</b> – substantial investment in online infrastructure enabling visual arts community of members to connect, converse and collaborate in development of relationships and practices. Prototyping for dedicated platform for HE and student careers and employment.</p> <p>Total membership 18,500</p>
<p><b>2012</b></p>	<p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> – ceased publication of a-n Magazine after 32 years to achieve more flexible, personalised relationships with a wider range of practitioners and enablers.</p> <p><b>DIGITAL</b> – launched a-n News online as a beta site: a fast-paced, daily updated news and ‘alternative insights’ on contemporary practice.</p> <p><b>ARTS ORGANISER MEMBERSHIP</b> – includes access to affordable Professional Indemnity insurance and legal advice.</p> <p><b>CAMPAIGN</b> – substantial investment in independent research and advocacy to ensure good practices in public exhibitions and commission of artists.</p> <p><b>FORECASTING</b> – ‘Vision 2020’ – new landscapes for visual arts practices and audiences.</p>
<p><b>2011</b></p>	<p><b>DIGITAL</b> – ‘How to use social media’ – video series of a-n Practical guides.</p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> – our infrastructure to foster innovation enabled by adopting a ‘virtual collaborative workspace’ and communications platform.</p>
<p><b>2010</b></p>	<p><b>DIGITAL</b> – moving image platform incorporated onto <a href="http://www.a-n.co.uk">www.a-n.co.uk</a></p> <p><b>‘SOCIAL NETWORKS’</b> – interactive Forums on <a href="http://www.a-n.co.uk">www.a-n.co.uk</a></p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> – new licencing income strands secured.</p>
<p><b>2009</b></p>	<p><b>ARTISTS’ MEMBERSHIP</b> – AIRTIME – partnership enabled CPD for UK artists and new graduates.</p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> – new income strand – commission on Artists Insurance Policy.</p>
<p><b>2008</b></p>	<p><b>ONLINE</b> – <a href="http://www.a-n.co.uk">www.a-n.co.uk</a> with platforms throughout for user-generated input, content development and customisable Online Jobs and Opps service focused around Good practice.</p>
<p><b>2007</b></p>	<p><b>ARTISTS’ MEMBERSHIP</b> – Public and Products Liability insurance free to Artist + AIR members.</p>

## Milestones in innovation continued

2006	<p><b>ARTISTS' MEMBERSHIP</b> - AIR Artists Interaction and Representation - a 'modern, hybrid' solution to artists' representation and professionalism.</p> <p><b>INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP</b> - for arts organisers, curators, advisers and researchers.</p> <p>Total members and subscribers 12,000</p>
2005	<p><b>WEB 2.0</b> - platforms for interactive information-sharing and user-centred collaboration - blogs, listings and reviews.</p> <p><b>FORECASTING</b> - Future forecast inquiry into artists' future needs and resourcing including Interactive web-based think-tank on artists' future workspace.</p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> - new income strand - JISC licence sales to HE institutions.</p>
2004	<p><b>CPD</b> - APD (Artists Professional Development) and NAN (Networking Artists' Networks) - networking core to artists' continuing professional development.</p> <p><b>ONLINE CPD</b> - interactive online toolkits for artists' contracts, development and training needs analysis and fees and payments.</p>
2003	<p><b>ONLINE</b> - dynamic contacts, content management publishing system (Knowledge Bank).</p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> - 'pay-wall' on <a href="http://www.a-n.co.uk">www.a-n.co.uk</a> - subscriptions for online and printed services.</p>
2000	<p><b>CPD</b> - Fast forward new graduate conference programme.</p>
1999	<p><b>ONLINE</b> - second website, material from Artists Handbooks and other publications.</p>
1998	<p><b>ONLINE PUBLISHING</b> - first simple website launched.</p>
1997	<p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> - cease Handbook publishing for web platforms.</p>
1996	<p><b>FORECASTING</b> - Round midnight inquiry into the future of the visual arts.</p>
1990	<p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> - judged "exemplar" by Arts Council, gained £74K Incentive funds, for series of 15 Artists' Handbooks.</p>
1989	<p><b>ONLINE</b> - initiated first "multi-media" artists' database (pre-internet), and established Axis as an independent charitable trust in partnership with Leeds Polytechnic.</p>

## About this post and the 'ideal' candidate

**a-n The Artists Information Company seeks a successor to Susan Jones, not a replacement. a-n seeks to embody flexibility, adaptability and fleetness of foot, deliberately mirroring the sector served by its mission. This will be reflected in the role, remit and characteristics of any future Executive Director. We are not looking to maintain the status quo, but to continue the evolution.**

We want someone who can take a-n forward from September 2014, after a period of handover working alongside Susan Jones, leading it in these complex and often contradictory times, in their own way, and with their own vision, skills and imagination. S/he will be credible, articulate, able to convince others and able to draw together the insight of a-n's network of staff, freelancers, board, advisers and partners. S/he will also be curious, challenging to themselves as well as others, and not always sure they have the best answer. (We hope they'll know some of the best questions though.) They'll be able to surprise us.

In terms of the key external constituencies the ideal candidate will be able to be credible and influential both within the business and with partners in:

- Knowing and forecasting VISUAL ARTISTS AND STUDENTS
- Knowing and predicting EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS
- Knowing and influencing POLICY MAKERS AND SHAPERS

Within a-n the company or business, the ideal candidate will be innovative in leading the team around:

- Artistic direction – eg areas of focus and collaboration, sector development and partnership, advocacy for the value of visual artists and their practice
- Brand direction – eg developing the a-n brand across multiple digital and 'in real life' platforms, establishing the brand with its various audiences such as artists, students, policy makers, employers, FE/HE and partners or collaborators beyond the arts
- Business direction – eg strategic direction setting, development of existing and new products and income streams, judging when to retire products and services, coaching senior staff and overseeing strategic staff development.

The ideal candidate will be able to rise to a number of challenges or opportunities in addition to the factors mentioned above:

- The a-n challenge/opportunity: a-n will continue to be about high impact ideas for its constituencies, seen through but in a continuous development mode, where things are tried, some succeeding more than others, most achieving through a number of iterations
- The leadership challenge: articulating what a-n is and what it stands for, both internally and externally, whilst following a highly successful long-term leader
- The business challenge: especially income generation – 61% of income in 2012/13 came from members, 24% from grants.

The ideal candidate needs to have a genuine affinity with the culture and values of the organisation and an absolute passion for artists and their contribution to society, alongside a good knowledge of the arts ecology and a sense of its future scenarios. S/he will be able to demonstrate an entrepreneurial energy, attitude and tenacity and the ability to develop imaginative solutions to 'wicked problems' through collaborations and partnerships, and by developing the skills of all staff within the organisation.

a-n's 'offer' to its members will remain central to its mission, so s/he will bring a creative understanding of how a networking/membership organisation can operate, creative financial thinking to ensure the company capitalises on business opportunities and partnership working and an eye for detail and results as well as ideas generation.

The company is also working to identify new business models and opportunities in order to further diversify earned income strands and improve its financial resilience.

## Application process and time-scale

**To apply for this post, please write telling us about yourself and how your experience, ideas and aspirations are suitable for this post, relating them to the Job Description and Person Specification.**

Applications should be no more than **5 A4 pages total** (12 point minimum), and must also include a CV of no more than 2 pages, as well as names and contact details of 2 professional referees. (Please indicate if you do not wish us to contact referees prior to interviews.)

**Send us this in a single PDF document, accompanied by a completed Equality and Diversity monitoring form (download <http://bit.ly/ANMonitoringForm>).**

In the subject field of the email, please write 'Application for Executive Director Post' followed by your name eg 'Application for Executive Director Post – Chris Someone'.

Applications should be sent to Mark Robinson, [mark.robinson@thinkingpractice.co.uk](mailto:mark.robinson@thinkingpractice.co.uk). Applications not in PDF version, or longer than 5 A4 pages including a maximum 2 page CV, will not be considered.

**The deadline for receipt of applications is 5pm Monday 13 January 2014.**

Shortlisting will be completed by 26 January.

If you would like to an informal discussion about the role before making an application, please contact Mark Robinson of Thinking Practice, working with a-n to support this process, Jayne Knight, chair of the board or Susan Jones, Director. Their details are as follows:

**Mark Robinson**

**T** 01642 606755

**E** [mark.robinson@thinkingpractice.co.uk](mailto:mark.robinson@thinkingpractice.co.uk)

**Jayne Knight**

**T** 07540669035

**Susan Jones**

**T** 01207 543893

**E** [susan.jones@a-n.co.uk](mailto:susan.jones@a-n.co.uk)

First interviews will be held at a-n's offices in London on **6th and 7th February 2014**. (Shortlisted candidates will only need to attend on one of those dates. Please tell us if you have a preference, although we cannot guarantee to be able to accommodate requests.)

Second interviews, for candidates taken forward after the first interviews, will be held in Newcastle over **27th and 28th February 2014**, beginning on the afternoon of the 27th and including discussions with board members and sessions with staff.

## Executive Director Job Description

### Purpose

The Executive Director provides leadership for the organisation that enables it to achieve its mission of stimulating and supporting contemporary visual arts practice and affirming the value of artists in society, through advocacy and information.

This involves leading a dispersed team of the 'a-n people network' that melds a core of permanent staff – many working part-time and remotely - with a vibrant mix of freelance contributors, advisers and specialists to collectively deliver business and artistic objectives in a fast changing, complex, uncertain and unpredictable operating environment, being entrepreneurial and innovative in developing new products, partnerships and ways of providing information and advocacy, influencing networks within visual arts, arts and culture more broadly, Further and Higher Education and other relevant policy areas, and ensuring knowledge and finance are manipulated to achieve goals and aims. The Executive Director leads on the setting and articulation of the evolving mission, developing the relationships and work to deliver it, including with the membership.

### Main responsibilities and duties

1. Leading business and vision planning, evaluation and review processes which involve board, staff and stakeholders as appropriate
2. Ensuring successful realisation of all the organisation's programmes in keeping with strategic priorities, achieving key results for the organisation
3. Identifying and leading strategic partnerships and business developments
4. Developing processes and organisational culture which assimilate and predict cultural and financial trends and influences, bringing this intelligence to bear on developing and deliver the mission and the company's sustainability
5. Working with board and staff to continually adapt and improve our business model and operations to meet the challenges of a complex and changing environment
6. Representing and advocating for the company's role and values to artists, the visual arts and wider publics including stakeholders
7. Developing positive relationships with a-n's membership and activities which address their diverse needs
8. Advising the Board on matters of organisational policy and strategy and ensuring all agreed policies, procedures and systems are embraced by staff
9. Overseeing financial and operations management whilst ensuring legal and financial compliance
10. Line management and development of senior staff, and oversight of staff development, communications and relations
11. Any other duties as deemed appropriate by the Board.

### Line management responsibilities

The Executive Director directly manages the Head of Programmes, Head of Communications and Partnerships, Finance Manager and Operations Manager.

Responsible to the Chair of the Board

### Terms and conditions

The following is a summary of the key points of the Terms and Conditions of the role, which will be set out in a contract/in the Employee Handbook

### Salary

The salary band for the Executive Director is £44,563 to £58,944. Starting salary will be agreed depending on experience.

### Working hours

The role is envisaged as a full-time permanent role, of 160 hours per calendar month, although given the nature of the role, the post-holder is expected to devote such time as is necessary to fulfill the role. a-n is committed to flexible working for its employees. Consideration will be given to applicants who wish to work shorter monthly hours where this supports their other professional development or personal commitments. Many staff are part-time, with some retaining outside interests including their own artistic practice. Overtime payments will not be made, however time off in lieu may be available to cover any exceptional hours worked. The Executive Director must be able to work irregular hours where necessary, including evenings and weekends.

### Location

a-n is a distributed organisation with staff working in multiple places, including office bases in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and London and remotely from their existing base, in the UK and currently in mainland Europe. We are open to proposals of where the new Executive Director might be located. The company invests heavily in progressive communications using off and online platforms to support this and the degree of knowledge sharing essential to achieve cohesion and targets. The role of Executive Director is essentially a peripatetic one, although staff and team development also requires regular and significant time with teams. A typical week might include meetings in Newcastle, London, and elsewhere, plus multiple internet-enabled conversations with staff in multiple sites. Significant travel is expected. The Executive Director will be comfortable and even thrive on this kind of flexibility and must be able and willing to undertake regular national travel.

### Holidays

34 days pa including bank and public holidays.

### Pension

a-n does not currently have a pensions scheme or contribute to individual personal pensions. An organisation-wide approach to pensions is to be developed for the company as a whole.

### Probation Period

A probation period of 6 months will apply to this post.

### Period of notice

3 months will apply to both employer and employee.

## Person specification

### Knowledge and experience

1. Exceptional critical understanding of the environment for the company's work and the cultural, economic and social policies and professional frameworks that influence and shape contemporary visual art and culture
2. Exceptional empathy for and understanding of the needs of visual artists at all career stages and across the diversity of practices, and of their value to society
3. Significant experience of leading strategic partnerships and collaborations to deliver against mission
4. Experience of taking an entrepreneurial approach to gaining and maximising income and return on investment, using resources to capitalize on new markets and a range of business opportunities
5. High-level understanding of how to drive market recognition and brand in competitive markets in the cultural or policy sector
6. Experience of leading and motivating a distributed team of specialists within changing business environments, successfully delivering against performance indicators and targets
7. Ability to build, maintain and then share relationships and networks that support the organisational mission and goals
8. 5 years experience of senior management, including direct involvement in key organisational decisions at a management level with knowledge of board level.

### Skills

1. Demonstrable ability to translate strategic developments and ideas into effective tactical financial, organisation or artistic plans
2. Demonstrable ability to be influential in professional networks and respected by peers
3. Demonstrable ability to foster co-learning and knowledge sharing, to ensure that creative ideas and imaginative solutions flow from both internal and external relationships
4. Excellent people skills, especially the ability establish effective and positive relationships with a wide variety of people and diverse organisations
5. Excellent interpersonal skills, appropriately and effectively using the wide range of communications techniques and virtual platforms available within the company.
6. High levels of understanding of the role of virtual, user-generated platforms, web, social media and digital technology within arts and culture
7. Ability to be a persuasive communicator and spokesperson for the visual arts and artists in all formats - eg written reports, public presentation and in interviews
8. Demonstrable research and analysis skills for cultural intelligence-gathering and advocacy campaigns
9. Ability to work collaboratively to find imaginative solutions to difficult situations.

### Personal characteristics

We expect all who work for a-n to be:

#### Creative thinkers

- Stimulated by operating in a fast-changing, complex and unpredictable world
- Proactively engaging with uncertainty and risk, ambiguity and difference
- Thinking holistically and systematically, recognising the value of research, and learning from self-evaluation and environmental analysis
- Searching for the best and most imaginative solutions at all times
- Able to make, identify, appraise and capitalise on artistic and commercial opportunities
- Capable of defining and monitoring one's own working processes and maintaining the momentum and drive to see projects through.

#### Wider world aware

- Genuinely interested in the continually changing ecology of the arts and visual arts practice
- Open to researching and seeing connections between other industries and practices and our work
- Active contributor in the development and realisation of our work
- Influential in professional networks and respected by peers
- Persuasive communicator when reflecting us to others.

#### Valuing artists

- Knowledge of the diversity and complexity of contemporary visual arts professionals and the environment for practice
- Awareness of the breadth of contemporary artists' practice including in different geographical locations and the variety of art forms, approaches and contexts employed.



## Person specification continued

### Personal characteristics

#### Team workers

- Excellent communicator who derives enjoyment from sharing knowledge and developing ideas that are collectively owned
- Committed to collective working across a virtual network of experts and innovation hubs
- Proactive participant and analyst within strategic development, debate and decision making
- Embracing collaborative approaches and the stimulation of challenge when meeting our performance indicators
- Flexible, multi-tasking and self-managing in meeting priorities.

In addition we would expect the Executive Director to demonstrate the following practical and leadership characteristics:

#### Inspirational leadership

- Personal integrity, honesty, initiative, drive and determination
- A commitment to continuing to develop themselves and their team
- Restless innovation on behalf of artists and what they can achieve
- Models teamwork by working effectively with others
- Energizes others to embrace change, communicating key priorities and benefits whilst ensuring delivery against goals and positioning for future challenges.