Excerpt from University of Florida MBA Student Interview with CaFÉ Program Manager Raquel Vasquez

1. **What is the history of CaFÉ™? Who are the founders and how did you come up with the idea?**

CaFÉ™ or [www.CallForEntry.org](http://www.CallForEntry.org) is an online application management system and one of five software as a service (SaaS) programs developed by us here at [WESTAF](http://www.WESTAF.org). WESTAF (the Western States Arts Federation) is a regional nonprofit arts service organization dedicated to strengthening the financial, organizational, and policy infrastructure of the arts in the West. We launched CaFÉ in 2005, after developing a similar software called ZAPP® in 2004. With ZAPP, we created an online system that art fairs and art festivals across the country could use to manage submissions from tens of thousands of fine craft artists and handicraft artisans. CaFÉ was launched subsequently with a focus on handling artist submissions for all other visual art opportunities, such as juried exhibitions, public art commissions, photo contests, artist residencies, etc., making it purposely distinct from ZAPP.

2. **What do customers value most of all? Why do they use this service?**

As one of the earliest online application management systems for the visual arts established and managed by a nonprofit organization, our customers trust our service and product to help them affordably handle the application management and entry fee aspects of their art opportunities. Artists appreciate that it is free to sign up for CaFÉ and that it is a safe and secure way to submit applications to an abundance of visual art opportunities from one system. Organizations appreciate that we offer personalized service and support and that we have remained mission-focused and budget-friendly for 15 years.

3. **Why, in your opinion, has CaFÉ become the most successful "call to artist" platform?**
After surveying our clients year after year, we know that they value our reliability and consistency. Hundreds of artists and arts organizations are longtime, loyal customers. Artists trust us to host thoughtfully vetted art opportunities, and arts organizations trust us to deliver a service that is offered by an organization invested in the arts regionally and nationally.

4. How do you find your customers? What is your marketing and pricing strategy?

At CaFÉ, most of our customers find us, either because they have used CaFÉ as an artist or because they know of other organizations using CaFÉ. WESTAF also casts a wide net in the western region and beyond, and we’re known for our leadership in developing online services for the arts. As such, we have a vast network across the country that seeks to use our technology programs.

Pricing for CaFÉ has remained affordable relative to our competitors. As a nonprofit organization, our focus is on developing technology services for the arts sector and the arts field; therefore, we try to price appropriately so that arts organizations of different levels can have access to CaFÉ. This way cost is one less barrier to achieving efficiency in the call for entry process.

5. What are the challenges you are facing?

Right now, because of the pandemic, our staff has switched to working remotely. While we dearly miss the physical space that connected us to our team, I think this moment has helped re-energize the work we do by showing us how artists are not giving up, even though they may be struggling, and how they continue to be productive and still find meaning during these uncertain times.

6. How does CaFÉ help as a tool in decision making in the artist selection process?

Very early on, one of the catalysts for creating an online submission system was the goal to make applying to art opportunities a uniform process, with all applicants submitting the same number of materials and all organizations receiving the materials in a consistent and organized manner. This meant that no artist would submit more or less than was required and organizations could spend more time focusing on the review process with their committees and less time collating packets or chasing after artists for missing material. Before online submissions, the call for entry process was onerous and came with many disadvantages, especially during the transition from analog to digital. WESTAF led the way in advancing the process when we launched ZAPP and CaFÉ.
7. What are your plans for the company (extensions, add-ons, etc.)?

WESTAF is in year two of our 10-year strategic plan. As one of five of our technology products, CaFÉ is projected to continue growing and developing key services to meet the benchmarks we have planned out, and that is an integral part of the work we do in technology, advocacy, and cultural policy.