

Thoughtsmith

CREATIVE THINKING FOR A CONNECTED WORLD

Culture Matters checklist

These are the elements of digital projects that in our experience are most commonly mismanaged. This is not an exhaustive guide to everything you need to develop digital projects or strategy. Each of these points could be a workshop in itself – do let us know if you need some help!

Audiences and Users

1) Audiences first

- Think about audiences and services first, presentation and technology later
- Understand who your audience is, what they really want, and how they operate
- Look at their consumption of media and retail if you can't afford deep market research
- Define who a service *is* for, and who it's *not* for
- Don't focus on technology for technology's sake
- Don't organise your website around your internal organisational structure

2) Design for basic human drivers

- Desire to communicate
- Responsiveness – human beings need reaction to their actions
- Flow – a state of engagement when we find ourselves 'in the moment'.
- People like to be told stories
- Inclusiveness vs. individuality (being part of a group)
- Choice and novelty – but not too much or it's overwhelming

3) Create compelling experiences

- Defined
- Fresh
- Accessible
- Immersive
- Significant
- Transformative

Technology and Processes

4) Involve technologists from the start

- Involve technologists and other specialists from the outset – co-invent, not specify
- Don't design a service in detail and then find a technologist to build it
- You need designers, editors and people who understand the business side, ideally sitting together
- Technologists who understand audiences are the most difficult to find

5) Storyboard

- Remember a digital project is rarely just a digital project
- Hand-drawn storyboards of the whole user-journey make it easier for a team to discuss ideas
- Defining the full service offering will help you understand barriers to use

6) Pilot the right things

- Services must not only delight users, you need to test they are scalable, replicable and sustainable

7) Plan ahead

- What happens when the money runs out?
- Your budget must include an adequate maintenance budget
- It's good to experiment but don't start new services if you can't sustain them

8) Iterate

- Iterative prototyping reduces the time between requirement-gathering and delivery
- Stakeholders can visualise and comment long before final implementation
- Don't try to get it right first time
- Don't be scared of 'beta' – just tell the public what you're doing
- Iterate before and after launch

9) Be found

- Maximise routes to content on multiple devices
- Make sure all your content can be linked to, forever
- Content should have easily understandable URIs which do not change
 - Guessable
 - Accessible (no odd characters, no numbers or file extension unless required)
 - As short as possible
 - Speakable
 - Writable after being left as a voicemail message
 - Not case-sensitive
 - Not include technical detail or reveal software mechanics
- You need to be able to say 'type this in (to your phone)'

Digital leadership

10) Digital strategy

- How does it support overall strategy?
- Don't confuse a neat idea with strategy
- A list of projects is not a strategy
- Strategy needs to include detail about delivery and the resources you'll need

11) Measure the right things

- Statistics vs. real engagement
- Be rigorous about costs and cost/user
- Be rigorous about usage statistics
- But don't allow these numbers be the only indicators of your success

12) KPIs vs. APIs

- Do you hold on to everything and expect people to come to you?
- Do you put things out there on partners' services and let people use them?
- Think about the cool things you (or others) could do with your assets
- And don't be too precious about ownership. Be part of the wider web

13) Build good partnerships

- Reach
- Reputation
- Revenue

14) Emulate digital leaders

- Ambitious
- Technophile
- Unsiloed
- Audience-led
- Agile
- Experimental

15) Balance your risks

- To fail to consider risk carefully is to fail to do the project properly
- A risk register shouldn't be a document you write to keep your funding body happy
- A risk register should be a living, breathing document – like a to do list
- What made you wake up in a cold sweat? That's what should be written down!
- The top risk is the thing you should be dealing with when you get in to work each day
- Not just about managing risk, about communicating that you're doing it
- Be very clear about what you mean by risk taking – which risks are OK, which aren't?

Final points

16) Don't confuse project management and editorial leadership

17) Integrate to be successful (with editorial leadership at the core):

- Content (rights, contracts)
- Audience insight
- Audience ownership
- Experience design (user journeys, storyboards)
- Design and information architecture
- Technology

18) Fiddle. Be curious!

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as facilitators and critical friends.**

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