



Amplifying audiences through digital campaigns

AMA Conference talk
2025

Overview

We'd like to start with a simple idea: amplifying voices isn't just about identifying an audience and hoping to reach them. It's about more than good intentions.

It requires **intentional strategy** - deep listening, thoughtful research, careful planning, and, crucially, a willingness to adapt and evolve. It's about building real, lasting relationships with communities: not just speaking to them, but with them.

We'll be sharing a few examples of recent work that bring this to life - projects where digital strategy has helped organisations not only connect with more people, but to do so in an authentic way.

- Our first example is **Museum of the Home** and how they reimagined their online presence to reflect and engage the diverse communities around them.
- We'll explore the work of **Gary Clarke Company** and their efforts to make contemporary dance more accessible and relevant to new audiences.
- And you'll learn about **Cardboard Citizens**, who use theatre to empower people with lived experience of homelessness, and how digital tools have helped expand their impact.

MUSEUM OF
THE HOME

GARY
CLARKE
COMPANY

↑ ↑ cardboard
citizens
EST. 1991

Audience research and intentional planning

We're going to start by discussing audience research and intentional planning, because success doesn't just happen by luck.

At the core of any successful outreach strategy is audience research. That means not just guessing who your audience is, but genuinely taking the time to ask, observe, and listen. Focus groups, surveys, analytics: these are tools we can use not only to gather data, but to gain understanding.

When you're planning any kind of digital campaign, the last thing you want to do is make assumptions about your audience. We need to **build trust**, and that starts by doing the groundwork to understand our audience's needs, preferences, and barriers to engagement.

Let's explore how this played out with our work for the Museum of the Home. **They are the only museum of the home in the world**, a place to learn how we have lived in the past, explore how we live today, and talk about how we can live better together.

As Liberty, Director of Communications at Museum of the Home, says: *"Across Museum of the Home's galleries, public programmes and digital channels, they're amplifying the voices of communities that have made up East London history"*.

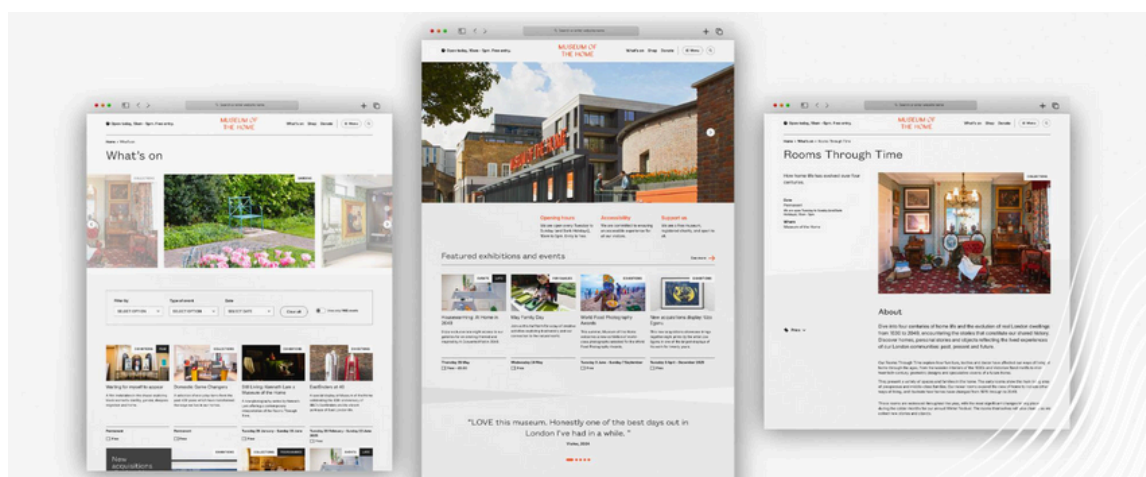
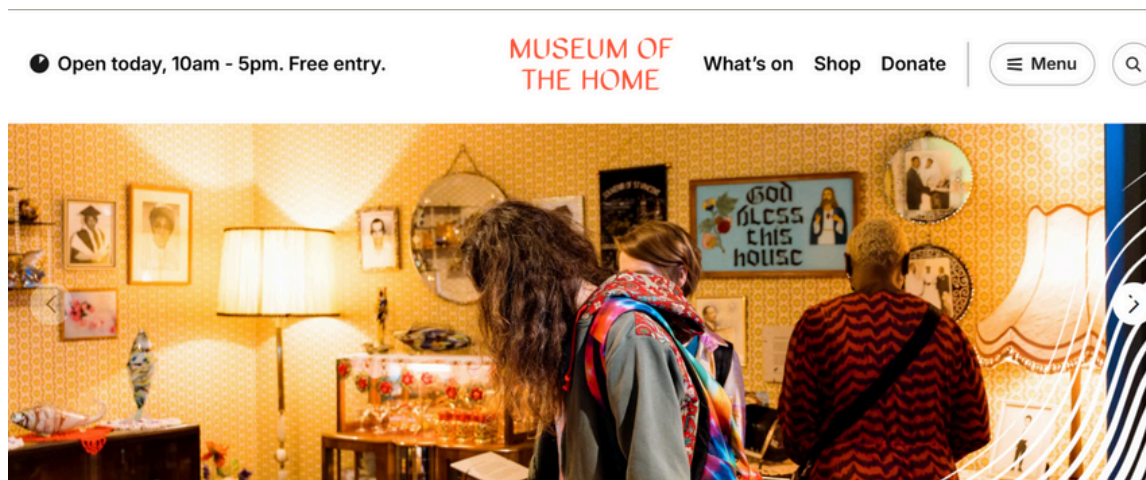
These voices within their community were integral to helping reimagine the Museum's digital role, which is why we undertook extensive audience research, in the form of an **internal audience persona workshop**, to understand their different user groups.

We also ran focus group sessions during the discovery phase of the project, when producing the wireframes for the site, and during the design phase.

With the output from these workshops and focus groups, Museum of the Home was able to better understand how users experienced their website.

This led to a shift in their digital presence, ensuring that the functionality and content of the site reflected the needs of all who visited the museum.

We'll be referring back to Museum of the Home when we share how design and audience research come together, but for now, we would like to share a few snapshots of their brand-new website:



The important takeaway we'd like to share from this example is that the data you capture through research, workshops, and focus groups **is only useful when it leads to action.**

That brings us to **setting goals** and **measuring progress.**

Once you've gathered audience data, you need to know what success looks like for you. If you're trying to amplify the voices of your audience, think about: **are you aiming to increase engagement from underrepresented communities? Improve accessibility? Change perceptions of your organisation?**

Be specific, and track your audience analytics over time. Of course, this is an open-ended measurement; you can take audience research as far as you like. To start, we suggest looking at the capacity you have within your team and working together to build out your audience plan. To begin with, this could mean simply looking at your Instagram analytics more regularly, noting down how your audience does, or doesn't change month by month.

A great example of using data more deeply comes from our work with Gary Clarke Company, a pioneering, award-winning dance theatre company, who use their platform to tell stories from the LGBTQ+ community.

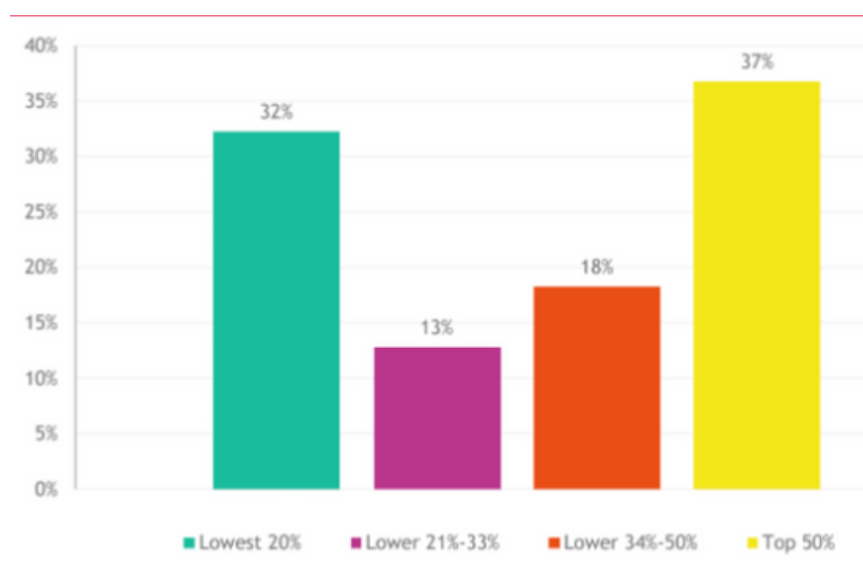
Their latest production, DETENTION, explores the impact of section 28: a piece of largely hidden legislation from Thatcher's Conservative Government in 1988, which 'prohibited the promotion of homosexuality', forcing people from the LGBTQ+ community into a place of secrecy, fear, and shame.

We invite you to [watch the trailer](#) just so you get a sense of the work they do. **Please note that there are some flashing lights in this video.**

Let's move on to explore how Gary Clarke Company uses audience data to inform their strategy.

In 2023, Gary Clarke Company ran a tour called WASTELAND. At the time, we worked with [The Audience Agency](#) to analyse Gary Clarke Company's tour audiences, giving us insights into how socio-economic factors influenced engagement with the show. Now in 2025, we're doing the same for their DETENTION tour.

Here a breakdown of audiences from the 2023 tour. On the left, you've got audience members who watched DETENTION who typically have low engagement with the arts, compared with those on the right who have high engagement.



As the 2025 tour isn't yet finished, the new results are not available, but by comparing these findings from 2023 with data that comes in from their 2025 tour of DETENTION, we'll be able to assess what's changed and adapt their digital outreach accordingly.

This is about being responsive, not just gathering data once and moving on, but revisiting and rethinking based on what the numbers and stories tell us over time. We've seen time and again that when organisations commit to understanding their audiences on a deeper level, the result is more meaningful, long-term digital engagement.

Here's a quote from Annabel Dunbar, producer at Gary Clarke Company, explaining why tracking audience data is important to the company.

*"Gary Clarke Company's **DETENTION** is built on the back of - and informed by - 10 years of audience development, designed to engage new and retain/build existing audiences. **Crucially, this work is underpinned by research findings, which inform next steps and ensure the approach remains fresh.**"*

The word '*fresh*' sums up what we're trying to convey when we emphasise the need for consistent, measured audience data. **Audiences evolve and grow in different ways over many years, and for your strategy to align with their needs, you need to evolve alongside them.**



When working with our clients, we recommend refreshing audience research on a regular basis - ensuring that new insights are fed directly into their marketing and outreach strategies.

Audiences change. Communities evolve. And your approach needs to evolve with them.

That doesn't mean you need to run expensive focus groups every week! But what you can do is regularly check your platform analytics to see who's engaging with your content and act on those findings.

Audience research and insight are continuous processes that help you stay **relevant, responsive, and, most importantly, inclusive.**

Strategy building

Once we've done the research and we've taken the time to understand our audiences - what's next?

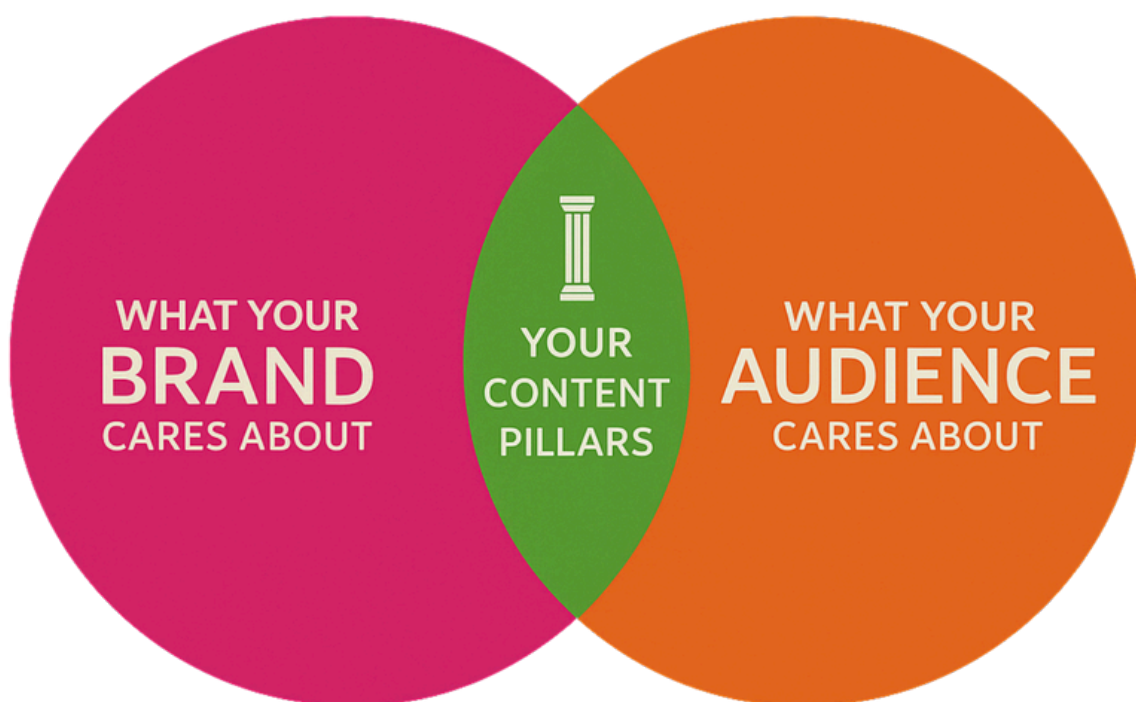
We move into strategy building. Mindful, audience-led strategy that helps you to connect with your audiences on a deeper level. It's about developing content and messaging that resonates, because it reflects what people actually care about.

One of the most effective tools we use at HdK is building out **content pillars** - core themes that guide storytelling across digital platforms.

These pillars don't come from brainstorming in a vacuum. They're created from **real conversations, real needs and voices, and understanding the stories from your communities.**

As the image below demonstrates, content pillars are what bring together what your brand cares about, with what your audience cares about.

In other words, content pillars are the main themes or topics that form the foundation of your content strategy.



If you haven't used content pillars before, here's a quick example.

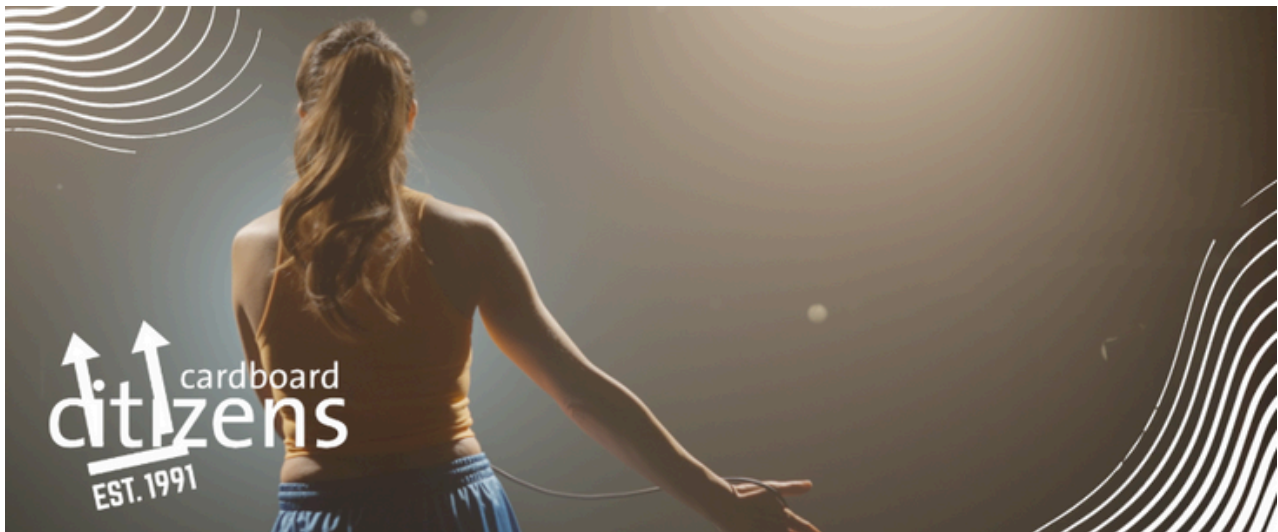
If you ran a small, sustainable café situated within an arts organisation, your content pillars might look something like:

- Your coffee and menu highlights
- Sustainability work
- Community and events at the café
- Art featured in and around the space

All the content you then share from this café would align with one of these pillars, **helping ensure consistency, clarity, and relevance in your messaging.**

We run **collaborative workshops** with our clients to help co-create these content strategies.

Recently, we helped Cardboard Citizens rethink their strategy through one of these workshops.



Cardboard Citizens are one of our neighbours in Hoxton Works. They're a theatre company and charity that create work with and for people with lived experience of homelessness, poverty, or inequity.

They use theatre as a tool to explore social injustices, empower individuals, and stimulate positive change.

Since they moved to the building, we've been fortunate to build a great relationship with their team, and they're now our chosen charity partner, meaning we work with them on both paid campaigns and pro bono projects.

To give you a sense of what they do and how they work to amplify diverse voices, we invite you to [watch the trailer](#) from their award-winning and highly moving film series, **More Than One Story**. This series was produced last year in conjunction with The Big Issue.

Every actor and many members of the crew who worked on this film series have experienced homelessness themselves. This project was an opportunity for them to explore and reflect on their own lived experience.

You only get a quick taster of the films in the trailer, but having watched them at the Barbican last year, we highly recommend watching the full series on [Cardboard Citizens' YouTube channel](#) when you can.



Earlier this year, we facilitated a **content strategy workshop** with the CEO, Comms & Audience Development teams at Cardboard Citizens, brainstorming how to effectively use each platform to reach their audiences.

From that session, we developed a set of content pillars that reflected not only the needs of the people they serve - those with experience of homelessness or insecure housing - but also a strategy that would be informative and engaging for their donors and supporters.

From this session, Cardboard Citizens settled on four content pillars to use moving forward:

- Public work
- Advocacy
- Citz Members
- And what they refer to as 'Principals', relating to donors/ fundraising/ partners

With these pillars in place, we were then able to better support Cardboard Citizens in developing their more recent campaign, More Than One Story: The Anthology. The anthology leads on from their More Than One Story film series, bringing the stories of those with lived experiences of homelessness into a published book, which will be launching later this year.

[This short video](#) shares what they have to say about some of the work we do with them.

If you're interested in fine-tuning the themes around your content, we've created a takeaway document for you to use about content pillars, which [you can download here](#).

Below, you'll see a few comments from users on Gary Clarke Company's Instagram, to give you a sense of how they engaged with the accounts.

"I'm 58 and it felt beautifully present. It made me remember a lesson learnt and forgotten: gay men and miners joining forces to fight the system. I wish that lesson were replicated today."

"I loved it. It was like some kind of beautiful therapy and validation."

"I laughed and cried and felt everything in between"

"The storytelling is honest, raw. Both the company cast and all your extraordinary, brave, heroic community cast members in every city perform it beautifully and from the heart. Solidarity."

We could share more examples, but the volume and vulnerability of what was shared on the Gary Clarke Company account was incredibly moving. People felt seen and connected through the performance, and that resonance is what made this campaign impactful.

It doesn't just stop at messaging. A truly inclusive strategy must also translate into your digital platforms - your website, your email campaigns, and your social media.



You should be referencing your **social media strategy** every time you plan content, evaluate performance, or prepare for a campaign.

It's not static: It's a living resource that should evolve alongside your audience.

To make things easier for you and your team, start by making sure you know where the document is saved! Once you know that, make sure to keep it to 2–3 pages. That way, you're not wasting time digging through a 30-page document to find the essentials.

If you do need a longer version for internal stakeholders or to consolidate everything in one place, that's fine. But make sure the *key elements of your strategy* are stored somewhere that is quick and easy to access - clear, concise, and without the fillers.

Digital strategy is the bridge between research and action.

When built thoughtfully, with your audience at the centre, it can help you create digital content that will enable your audiences to feel represented and seen.

Design and copywriting

We've talked about research, and we've talked about strategy. But how do we bring that strategy to life?

This is where **design and copywriting** come in. It's an essential part of how we communicate with audiences and encourage them to speak back to us.

No matter how great your strategy is, unless it's visually and verbally clear, it's pretty useless. If people can't quickly understand what you're trying to convey, or if the user journey of your website is confusing, they'll disengage.

Audiences generally want to understand what your organisation stands for, what you're offering, and whether it's for them. And they want that information to be **accessible, both in terms of design and language.**

That's why we always refer back to the audience research and strategy when designing websites and writing content.

What are the pain points people have identified?

What language do they use to describe their needs?

What barriers are they facing - technically, culturally, financially, emotionally?

Design and copy need to work together to address those challenges head-on. Especially if you're looking to effectively amplify the voices of your community.

Take our social media work with Gary Clarke Company, for example.

As previously mentioned, the production featured a community cast with lived experience of the show's themes. Rather than presenting their stories from an outsider's perspective, we focused on elevating their voices through short-form interviews, direct quotes, and behind-the-scenes content.



We also used **strategic digital partnerships** with LGBTQ+ organisations, such as Switchboard and Lesbians and Gays support the Miners, which became a key part of our approach.

With their support, we were able to share content that we wouldn't have otherwise had access to.

This genuinely resonated with audiences, and these historical photos of activist groups created a deeper sense of relevance and connection.

This didn't require a massive digital overhaul. Here, it simply meant crafting copy that was accessible and included all important information.

It may seem simple, but small, considered changes to copy, thorough research into the topic at hand, and making sure language is clear and accessible, can make a significant impact.

When designing graphics and videos for Gary Clarke Company's social media, we kept the broader context of the tour at the forefront. We understood that the audience was diverse, from LGBTQ+ communities and contemporary dance enthusiasts, to those engaged by the historical themes woven into the performance.

Practically, this meant alternating the focus of content regularly. By doing so, we aimed to engage all facets of Gary Clarke Company's audience and ensure they felt seen, valued, and included.

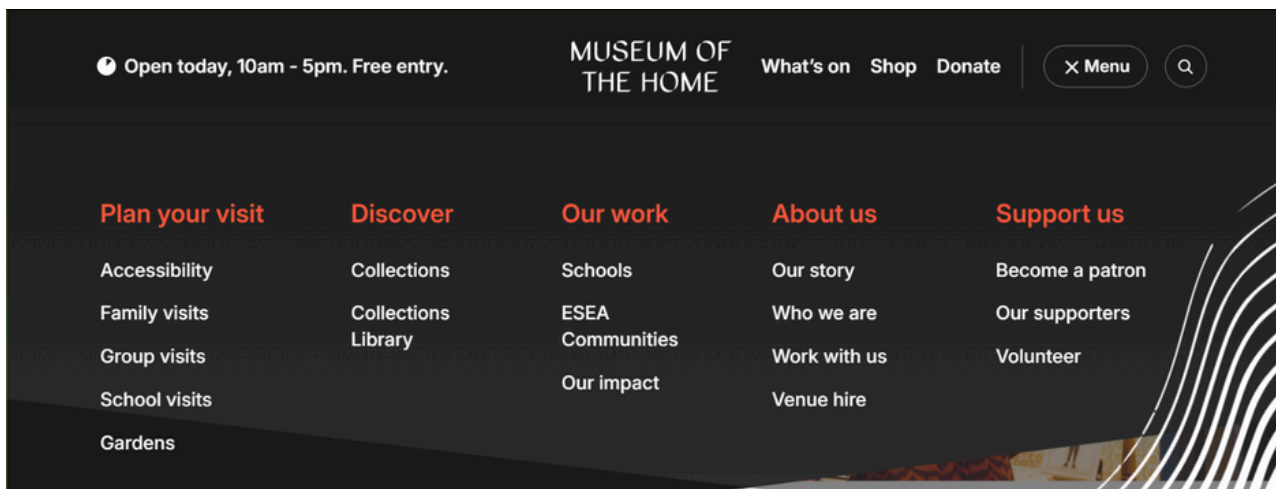
What about **web design**? How can your audience's voice help to create and design accessible spaces?

Well, with Museum of the Home, the audience research that we touched upon earlier played a significant role in shaping the final website design. During the Discovery and Design phases, our team closely considered the insights gathered.

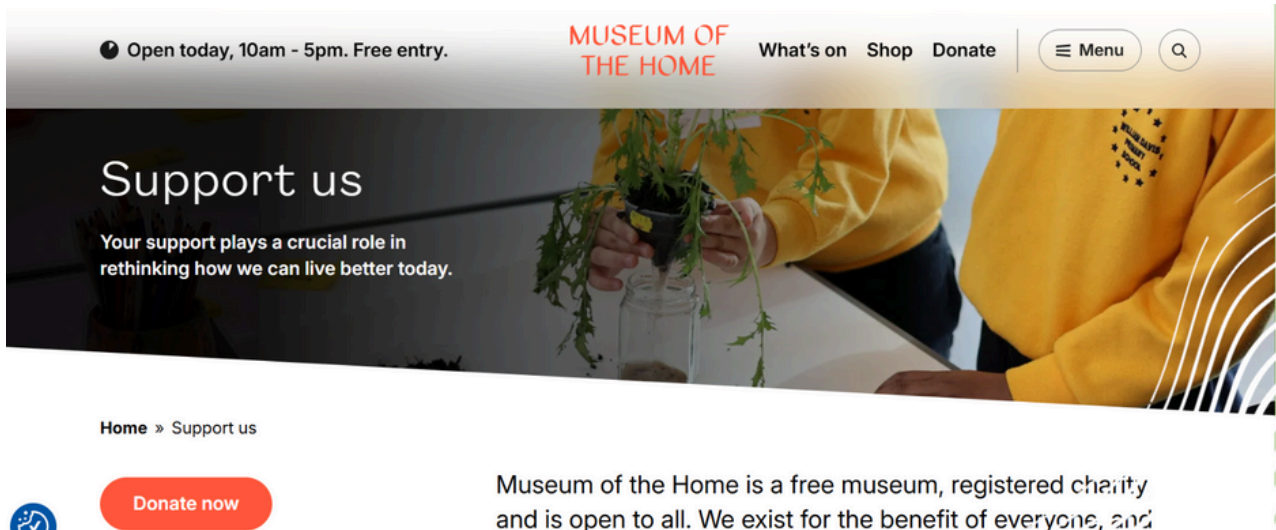
One valuable piece of feedback revealed that the proposed navigation bar was overly complex, leading us to revisit and simplify its design.

By simplifying their website's navigation, reorganising content based on common audience questions, and removing unnecessary layers, we made the **user journey quicker, easier, and much more accessible**, especially for those new to museums or less confident with digital tools.

We also stripped the navigation of any unnecessary, overwhelming colours or buttons, ensuring that people would be able to get to the pages they need, quickly and easily.



Likewise, for pages like the 'Support Us' page, we carefully considered the feedback received and implemented straightforward but impactful changes. For example, simply repositioning the 'Donate Now' button to make it more prominent significantly improved visibility.



When asked about the new website design, Liberty, Director of Communications at the museum, shared:

“Our galleries reveal objects, artworks, images and personal testimonies to encourage and challenge different ways of thinking about domestic life today. We needed a website that could host these stories in a fun and accessible way — stories from our collaborators and communities in Hackney.”

The website has been redeveloped with two major areas of focus: to improve ticketing and purchase journeys for users, and to increase our output of quality content for all — on a platform that can support user engagement.”

This redevelopment has ultimately enabled the museum to expand its production of high-quality, engaging content for a broader audience - aligning the site with the museum’s mission and values, and amplifying the stories it shares across digital platforms.

This is where thoughtful design and copywriting come into their own: they exist to serve the people who use them.

When grounded in audience research and aligned with strategy, good design and copy don’t just look or sound good, they improve reach, deepen impact, and strengthen your platform’s ability to represent, include, and empower the communities you care about.

Conclusion

Amplifying voices doesn't have to be complicated.

By consistently making small, but impactful, changes, your organisation can elevate the voices that matter most, helping you reach the audiences you want to connect with.

Reaching those audiences isn't accidental. It's the result of research, careful planning, and a deep understanding of who they are and what they need. Data-led insights can guide not only your messaging, but also how you design and deliver content in ways that genuinely resonate.

When your digital presence reflects the voices, experiences, and needs of your community, **that's when real connection happens.**

We are

HdK

