

How charities can create an end-to-end digital giving experience



How charities can audit their giving experience to improve how users can donate.

adaptable.

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Introduction

It wasn't so long ago that charity fundraising was all about sponsorship forms and collections in buckets. Thankfully, the Internet has vastly expanded the opportunities available to good causes, but there is plenty that charitable organisations can do to be creative and strategic in how they raise money through digital touchpoints.

Today, digital fundraising requires an integrated approach across all the digital channels available to you, so that you can better encourage engagement, grow your audiences, and expand giving opportunities as a result. This strategic approach can also help you take your reach beyond your local community and engage the generosity of a wider audience.

In this guide, we'll explore the key challenges to navigate around digital giving, how charities can audit their giving experience, and our recommended approaches on what can be implemented, or what you should be looking at to improve how users can donate.

The challenge: using digital to restore trust in giving

While the public sentiment to help those less fortunate than themselves remains strong, there remains a certain lack of trust of charitable organisations among the UK population.

Research carried out by the Charity Commission in 2020 found that public trust in charities has risen over the last two or three years. However, it has yet to return to its peak around 2014, before a number of scandals around the ways in which charities were operating and spending received donations damaged public confidence substantially.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic put another major obstacle in charities' way. With virtually no warning whatsoever, in-person fundraising activities were cancelled or put on hold, cutting off a vital revenue stream that many organisations rely on to survive. The pandemic put even greater pressure on charities to ensure that their end-to-end digital giving experiences resonated with the public, as it was their only way of keeping donations coming in.

Keeping on top of how charitable giving is evolving should be a continual process, so that both the charity and donors can benefit. That's why now is the time to assess just how well-connected and integrated your digital giving experience is, and ensure a tried-and-tested plan that encompasses every form of giving and fundraising is in place as soon as possible.

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The donation mix: every touchpoint you can hit

It's important to factor every possible source of donation into your strategy, in order to maximise the opportunities available to you. An ideal integrated digital giving strategy could therefore include most - or perhaps even all - of the following:



Single donations

one-off payments by debit or credit card, processed directly through your website via a payment merchant.



Recurring donations

monthly, quarterly or yearly donations, set up on the web for processing by a payment merchant.



Direct Debits

users enter their bank details and choose an amount, date and frequency for payments to be taken, which then continues until they cancel it.



Sponsorship donations

a recurring donation rolled into a sponsorship effort, often in exchange for a letter of thanks and/or a small gift.



Online shopping

using 3rd party platforms like Amazon Smile, where a % of a user's shopping is donated back to charity.



Memberships

individuals and companies can sign up online to make monthly or yearly payments, in exchange for a package of benefits.



eCommerce donations

ask customers to add a donation to their basket when purchasing gifts on your website.



Virtual gift donations

users can buy virtual gifts for someone, which can be sent as an e-card or as a physical card or gift by post. This can be built into a website through a bespoke implementation, or through an established third-party provider, depending on cost, transaction fees and customer experience needs.



Text message donations

enable quick donations via text, which are then taken from their monthly phone bill, or can send users a link to a site to make payment.



Celebration donations

to mark a specific event, donations connected to it can be made online (where the event can be specified) or through a collection box which organisers can order in advance.



Memorial donations

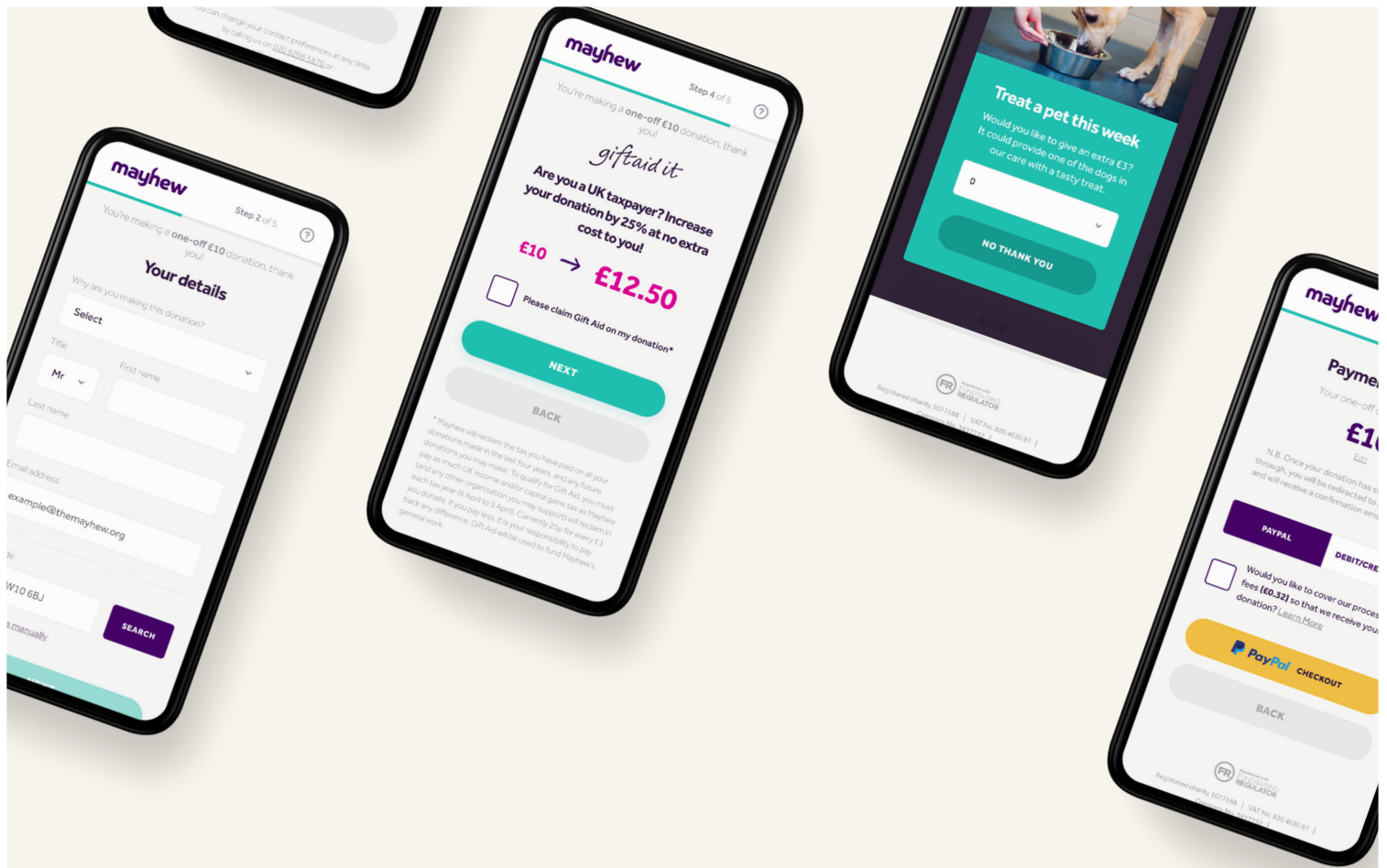
donations can be made in memory of someone through a one-off payment online, or through a collection box at a funeral or memorial event which organisers can order in advance.

The solutions: audit, develop, build

While every charity is different, there are three common solutions that can help you get your digital giving experience to where it needs to be.

Each one in turn represents a step towards an integrated ecosystem that leaves no stone unturned in generating donations, and in ensuring the ecosystem is practical and cost-effective for the organisation itself.





Auditing donations

Without knowing where all your digitally-sourced donations come from at the moment, it's impossible to understand how best to plan for the future. That's why it's so important to conduct a thorough audit of the current state of play, including:

- **Revenue generation:** work out how much has been generated from each touchpoint over the last three years.
- **Benchmarking:** attach those findings to each possible digital touchpoint (see previous section).
- **Operational costs:** compare revenue to running costs for each touchpoint to assess the value for money of each one.
- **Fundraising information:** obtain accurate data on fundraising, so that you can make informed decisions on which touchpoints should be prioritised.

Developing donation channels

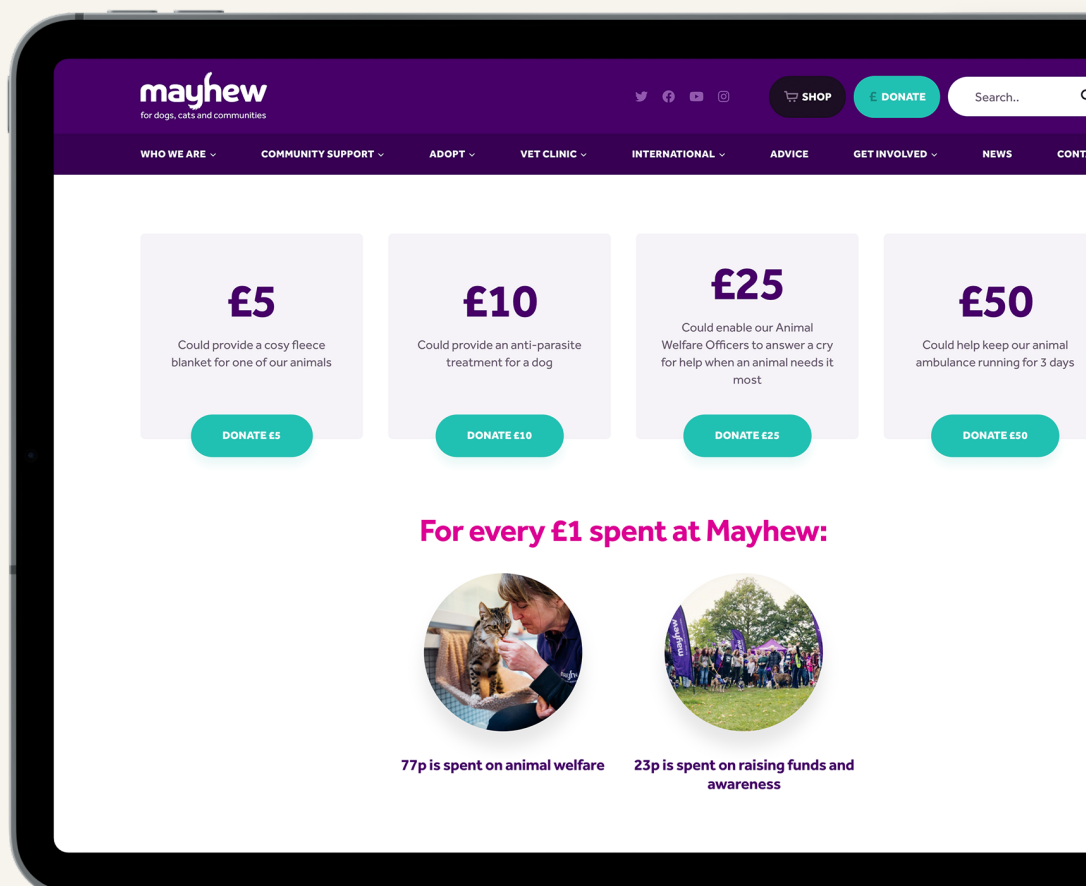
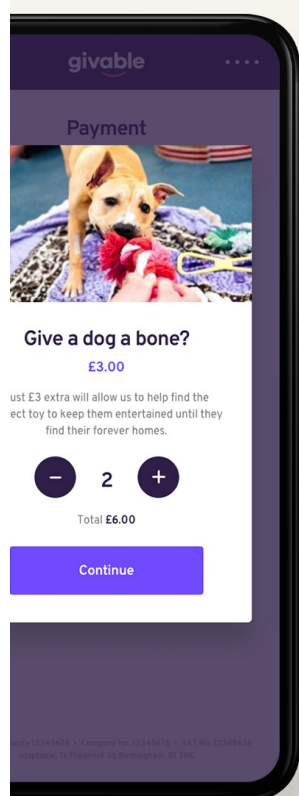
Once your audit has been completed and your key touchpoints have been identified, you can move on to consider how best to execute them.

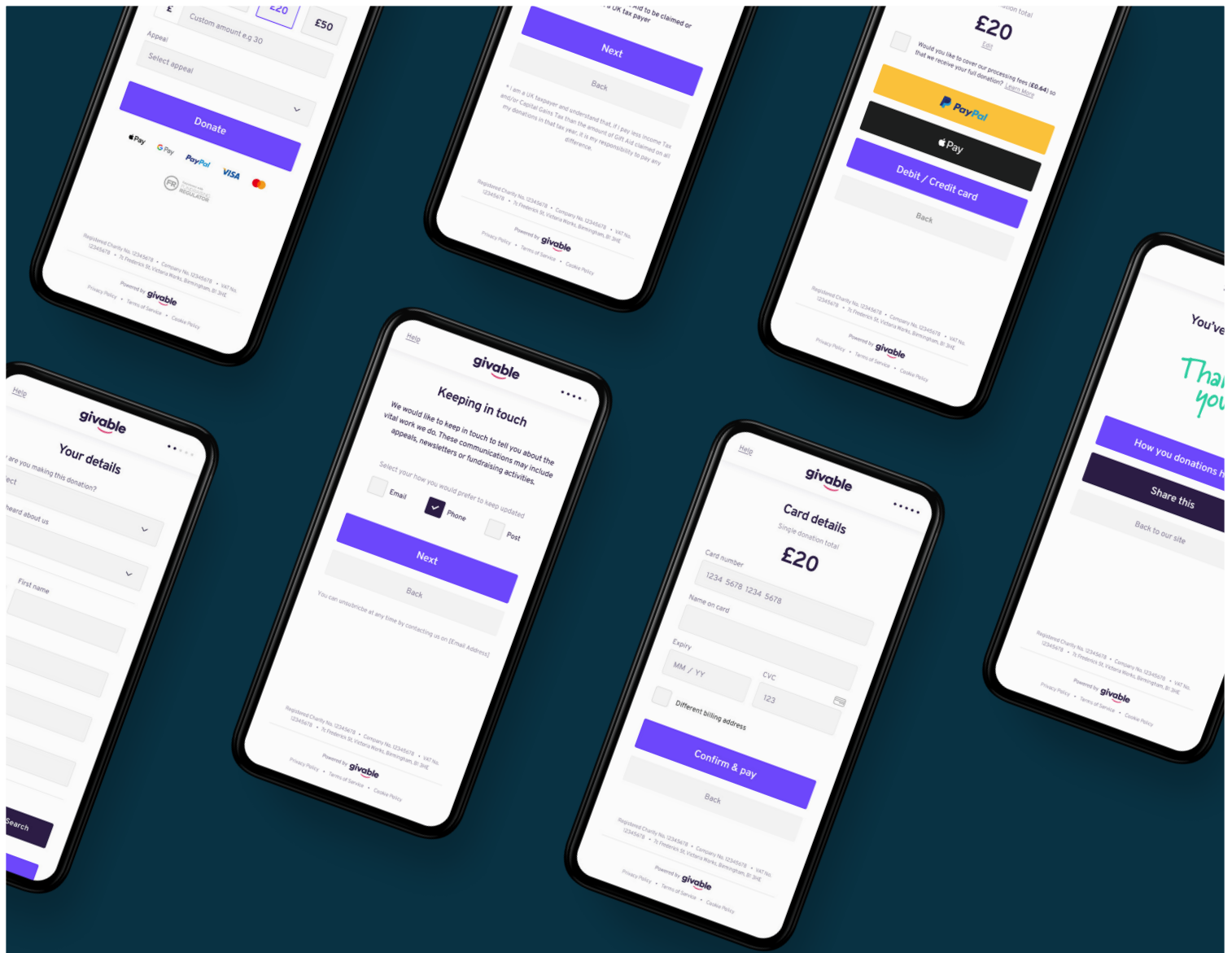
At this stage, it's critical that fundraising is treated as an investment in the organisation, both in terms of time and money. Some channels of fundraising will take more time and cost more money to implement than others, and all implementation decisions should be made in the context of delivering the best financial outcome for the organisation and first class customer experience for your users/donors.

Tactics to consider for each of your chosen channels can include:

- **Emotive content:** using effective copywriting for different user types and donation routes can play a big part in engaging a user's interest and bringing them into your donation experience.
- **Payment methods:** it should be as easy as possible for users to make a donation, so you should adopt as many different payment methods as is practical: debit and credit cards, PayPal, Apple Pay and Google Pay are must-haves. These methods should also be presented in a clear and transparent way to the user.
- **Customer relationship management (CRM):** all donation channels should feed into a central CRM, from which the distribution of tailored communications can be managed. This also supports easy management of donation revenue and reporting.

- **Upselling:** every donation is also an opportunity to apply alternative methods to encourage users to increase their donation. For example, the animal welfare charity Mayhew, working with adaptable, boosted revenue by more than 7% through upselling pop-ups that invited donors to 'treat a pet for £3' or 'add a flea treatment': 46% of donors added at least one of these upsells to their basket during this feature experiment.
- **Fee-covering:** asking donors to cover the payment processing fees that providers charge is a simple but effective way of increasing donation value. This should be run on an opt-in basis, and in our experience through extensive testing, 60% of donors choose to opt into fee-covering, representing a significant cost saving for the charities involved.

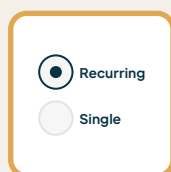




Building a donation funnel

Just as conversion funnels work in marketing, they're equally effective for charities in encouraging and generating donations. These work best when they take users on a digestible, pressure-free journey towards a donation. Funnels can be customised to suit differing donation routes that users choose, and can help ensure that users get a consistent and personalised way to complete donations if they return to donate again in the future.

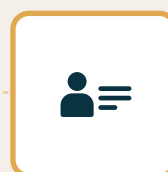
As an example of how funnels work, this is an example of the funnel that we at adaptable apply for one-off and recurring donations:



1

Donation amount and type

The user will select whether to make a single or recurring donation. We recommend presenting recurring as the default option, which users can easily change to single.



2

User details

The user enters their name, address, phone number and email address. This can be made easier by address look-up tools where entering a postcode fills out the rest of the address, and country selection that fills in the international dialling code for the phone number.



4

Communication preferences

The user selects the marketing and communications they are willing to receive in the future. Large tick boxes allow the user to negotiate this step quickly, and help you store their data accurately and securely.



3

Gift Aid

The user is asked whether they are eligible to select Gift Aid, and whether they want to do so. Clear visuals help explain to users the exact amount of the Gift Aid contribution and the difference it will make to the overall donation.

5



Payment

The user enters their payment details to complete the transaction. Presenting a widerangeof options – ApplePay, Google Pay, PayPal, debit cards and credit cards – helps complete a straightforward, transparent and user-friendly funnel.

Build it yourself

Pros

- ✓ Full control over the product you are building and your brand.
- ✓ Likely to receive the highest % of your donation controlling the commercials.
- ✓ Built-in custom email automations
- ✓ Can build in extra features without constraints on a 3rd party platform.
- ✓ You can funnel the data through an integration into any CRM.

Cons

- ✗ Longer process to research, plan and build a solution around your needs.
- ✗ You'll need to set up payment merchant accounts.
- ✗ You're responsible for managing security and monitoring.
- ✗ Higher upfront cost.
- ✗ You're responsible for data protection.

Off the shelf

Pros

- ✓ Quicker to deploy an off the shelf solution.
- ✓ A tried, tested, and proven donation process.
- ✓ Lower monthly payments rather than a higher initial fee.
- ✓ Platform security should be in place and tested.

Cons

- ✗ Design limitations, can feel separate to your brand.
- ✗ Locked into the platforms features & product setup.
- ✗ Likely to mean higher % fees on donation transaction.
- ✗ You'll be limited to the platforms payment merchant providers.
- ✗ Often taken off-site.
- ✗ May only allow certain CRM's to connect to the platform.

Summary: maintaining your strategy long-term

Once your digital giving strategy has been put in place, the key is to maintain it long-term, in order to encourage more donors to give, and to give more regularly.

Research from Network for Good has found that, on average, donors who make recurring donations give 42% more per year than one-off donors, so encouraging repeat donations is a vital part of fundraising.

There are several methods you can apply to encourage donors to make contributions again, including:



Thank you messages

every donor, regardless of donation frequency, should receive a thank- you message within 48 hours of their donation; this should be personalised or even hand-written (via a service like [Scribeless](#)) if a donation is particularly large or generous.



Informed contact

messaging (and especially personalised messaging) that tells them what their donations are being used for, and makes them feel valued and part of an important cause.



Suggest, but don't demand

gentle messaging that talks about the issues and sells the positives of increased donations is far more effective than 'pushing' or 'begging' for additional help.



Strike the right balance

email messaging at certain intervals, segmented to resonate with previous donors specifically, can be hugely powerful – but shouldn't be used too much, so as not to irritate the recipient.



Encourage monthly giving

all channels of communication should be used to promote a monthly giving programme, which can secure a regular stream of donations through recurring donations or Direct Debits.

All of the above points are simple, effective, and are practical for even smaller charities to implement, but can make a surprisingly big difference to generating revenue through donations.

A combination of organisation, multi-channel messaging and empathy towards donors' emotional drivers represents the best way forward for charities big and small.

Once you have a fully tried and tested live donations experience, signing up for Google's Ad Grants programme can give it an even further boost.

This programme gives up to £7,000 a month in search ad space on Google to qualifying non-profit organisations, and the difference it has made to charities all over the world has been substantial:

125%

increase in submissions for
We Care Animal Rescue's
animal adoptions in the
United States

100%

increase in monthly
website visits for India's
SOS Children's Villages

10%

of the UK's Samaritans'
donations were driven
online - totalling
£34,000



Once you've spent time getting donors on board with your cause, it's time to turn your attention to converting them into long term ambassadors. Focusing on supporter retention and engagement means that the effort you put into acquiring them in the first place isn't wasted.

But how can you grow your supporter retention rate?

Firstly, you need to get strategic with your communications. This is where you should work with your Communications team to create an onboarding process for new donors that will reaffirm why they donated to your cause in the first place and help them to get to know your charity better. This might include a set of emails, a postal pack or even a phone call from someone in your team.

If you're not sure where to start, you could create a donor 'journey map', this can help you to see all of the touch points that your supporters have with your organisation and establish whether there are any communications gaps.

A powerful tactic for transforming donors into ambassadors is to get them involved with your work without asking for money.

One way you could approach this is by asking them why they feel connected to the organisation. Your fundraising team could spend some time each week speaking to donors on the phone or emailing them to ask for stories about the charity – they might appreciate the support you have given them or a family member in the past, or they might feel particularly passionate about one area of your cause.

Why not collect these stories to use as part of a future campaign or appeal?”

Georgie Wishart

Georgie is a freelance content creator and former Senior Digital Officer at animal welfare charity, Mayhew.

Our digital offering

**adaptable: a digital studio
creating experiences that work,
for the people who matter.**

The ability to adjust to new conditions – that's the definition of adaptable.

Founded in 2013, adaptable started life as a humble duo. Their vision? A digital studio that creates experiences that work, for the people who matter.

Fast forward to today, and our talented team are delivering effective digital products for an ever-growing list of clients around the world.

We partner with forward-thinking businesses that know their digital can work harder for them, but need help to get there. From house hunters to dog owners, gamers to sports fans, we take a user-first approach to every project.

Adaptable is not just our name, we embody this core principle in everything we do for our clients – and ourselves. Always evolving, always learning, always moving. Let's talk.

Our services

Discovery

Complex digital projects can sometimes feel overwhelming. When projects aren't straightforward a well-investigated brief of business and user requirements is the best starting point.

Web Design

From UI mood boards to design style styles to fully prototyped UI concepts - our design process is an opportunity to create and refine a visual solution that helps your users complete what they came to your product to do.

Product / Software Development

Our team has the experience of tackling complex business problems with innovative product development that moves at speed with your ambitions and customer expectations.

Fastrack MVP's

Whether you're building a business case inside your organisation or have an important pitch with a pending deadline - our rapid MVP process will give you something tangible to start a conversation and make your investors take notice.

Web Development

Great digital experiences are powered by great technology. Our experienced engineering team builds solutions using the latest technology to keep your digital real estate effective, secure and seamlessly integrated.

Support

We support our clients with maintenance and support along with proactive monthly programmes of feature development, enhancements and user testing.

We'd love to build something amazing together!

This paper has been created by our Co-Founder, Dan Cooper. If developing a new or existing charity website is on your radar, you can book a free 30 minute project discovery call with us.



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