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Website impact

Increasing sales with a mobile-first approach

Image courtesy of The MAC, Belfast

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"By taking a mobile-first approach and providing an outstanding user experience, we've increased ticket sales by 113%."

Lucy Liddell
The MAC, Belfast

The MAC, Belfast
Website development

The MAC, Belfast, is an award-winning venue in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter. It is home to all kinds of exhibitions, theatre performances, experimental works and endless goings-on.

We wanted our website to better reflect the MAC's brand and respond to users' needs. We teamed up with Eyekiller to create a site that would enhance the mobile browsing experience and offer a seamless booking process.

By concentrating on user experience and taking a mobile-first approach, we've achieved:

- 113% increase in ticket sales
- 128% increase in online sales on mobile
- 174% increase in revenue
- 209% increase in revenue on mobile
- 30% increase in order value
- 53% increase in web traffic
- 55% increase in new users
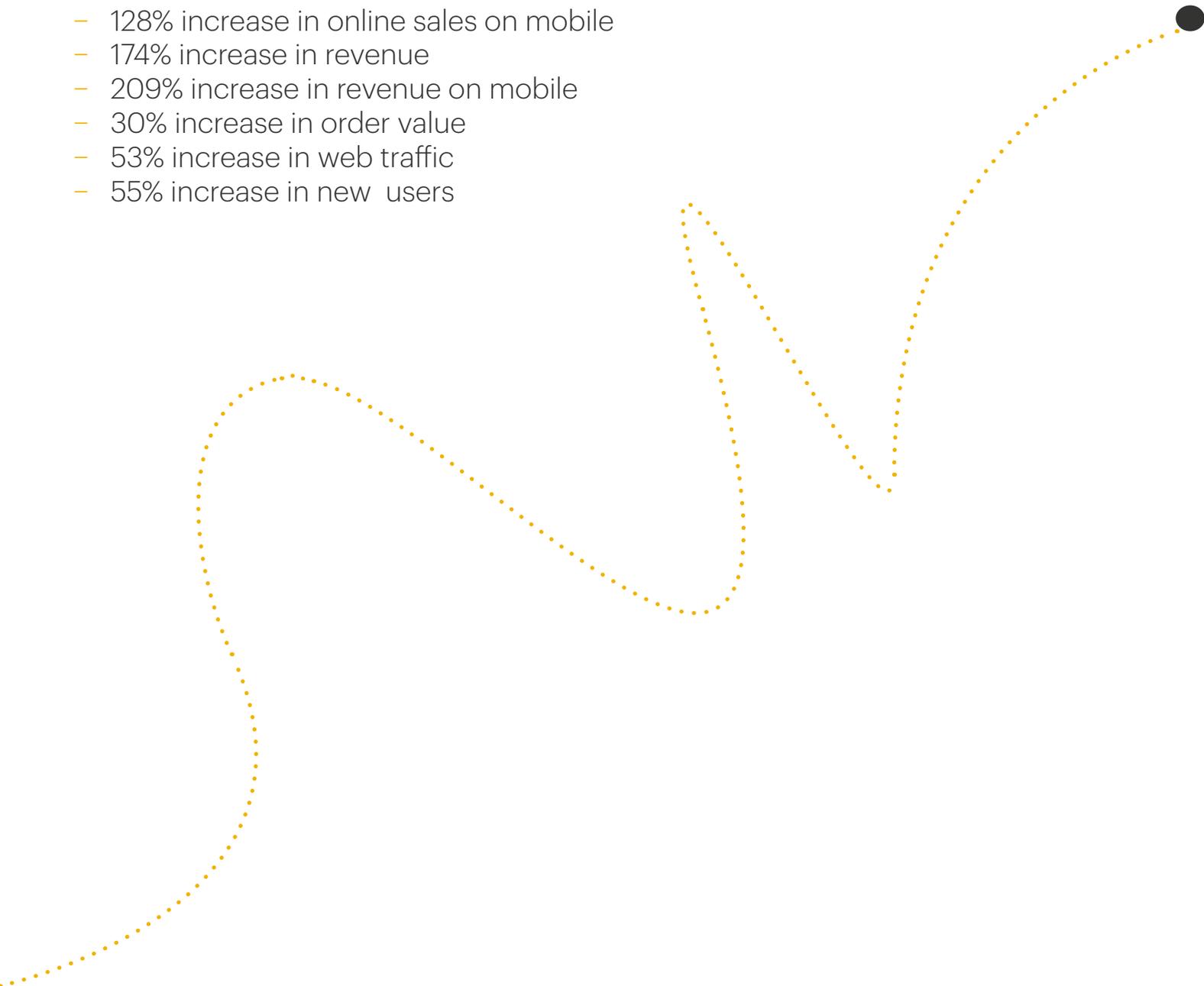
Getting the basics right

During the early stages of the project, Eyekiller ran user experience workshops with the team. We used post-it notes to list all the pages from the existing website and sort them into a content hierarchy. Eyekiller then turned that hierarchy into our new sitemap.

Before taking the design further, Eyekiller carried out Remote User Testing with MAC audiences. We wanted to test the basic structure without the visual design to make sure the language and sitemap made sense to people.

We used our e-news to share the link and invite people to join the testing. We offered tickets to a show as an incentive and received over 150 responses.

During the testing, participants had to complete a series of simple tasks. Tasks included buying a ticket for a live event and finding out about hiring a room at the MAC. Eyekiller tracked which links people clicked for each task so that we could make sure information was where people expected it to be.

Conducting user testing early on meant we were able to tweak the structure and get it right from the outset.
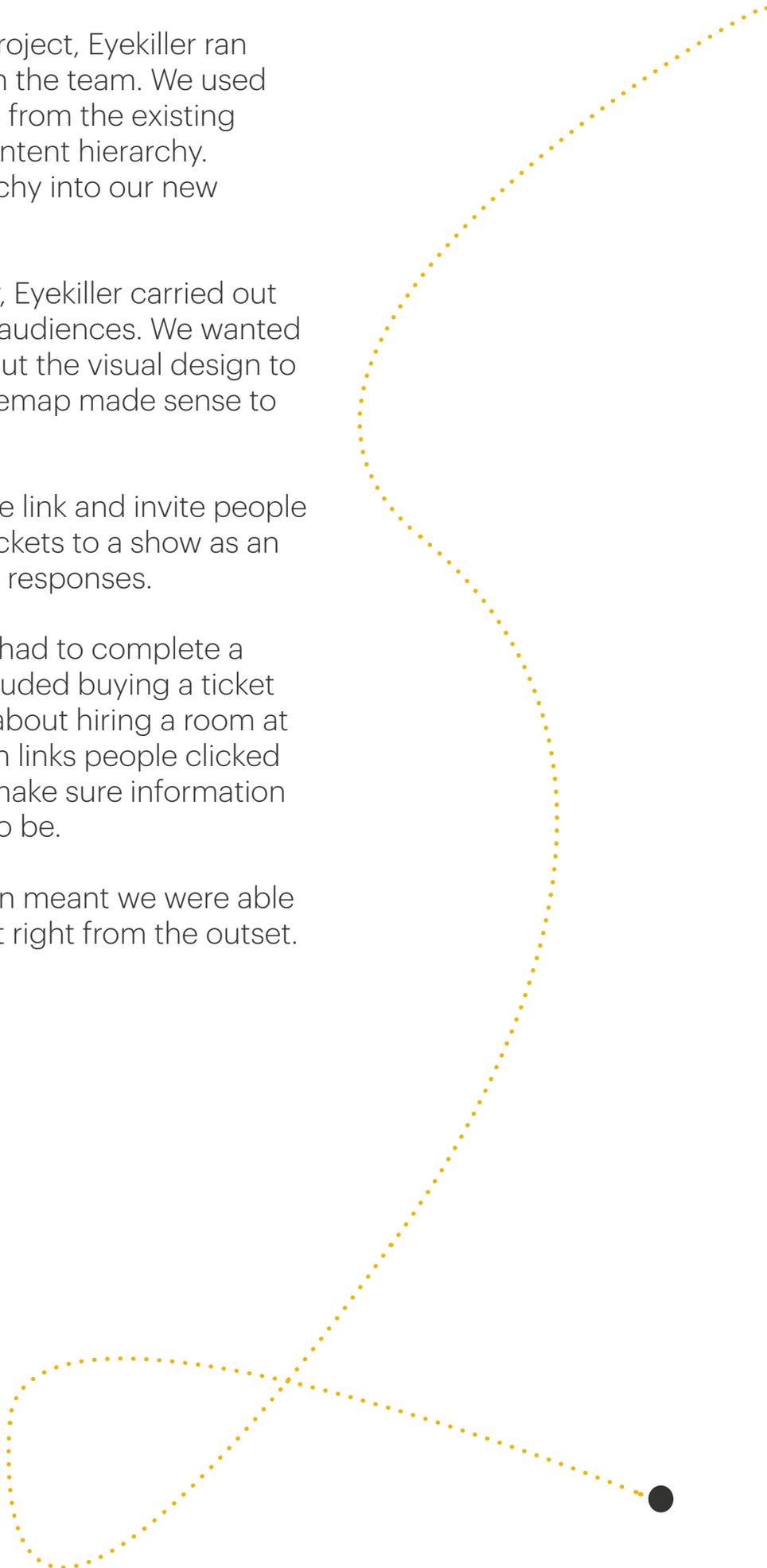
Mobile-first approach

65% of users access the MAC's website on a smart phone or tablet so Eyekiller took a mobile-first approach to the design. They began by creating low-fidelity prototypes, known as wireframes. This enabled them to focus on user experience, including the layout of content, calls to action and navigational systems. Once they were happy with the prototypes, they were then able to adapt them for desktop users.

We also adopted a mobile-first approach within the MAC team. We now look at the site on mobile devices during all website meetings, rather than on a laptop. That shift in mindset has enabled us to provide a better browsing experience for mobile users, resulting in a 209% increase in revenue on mobile.
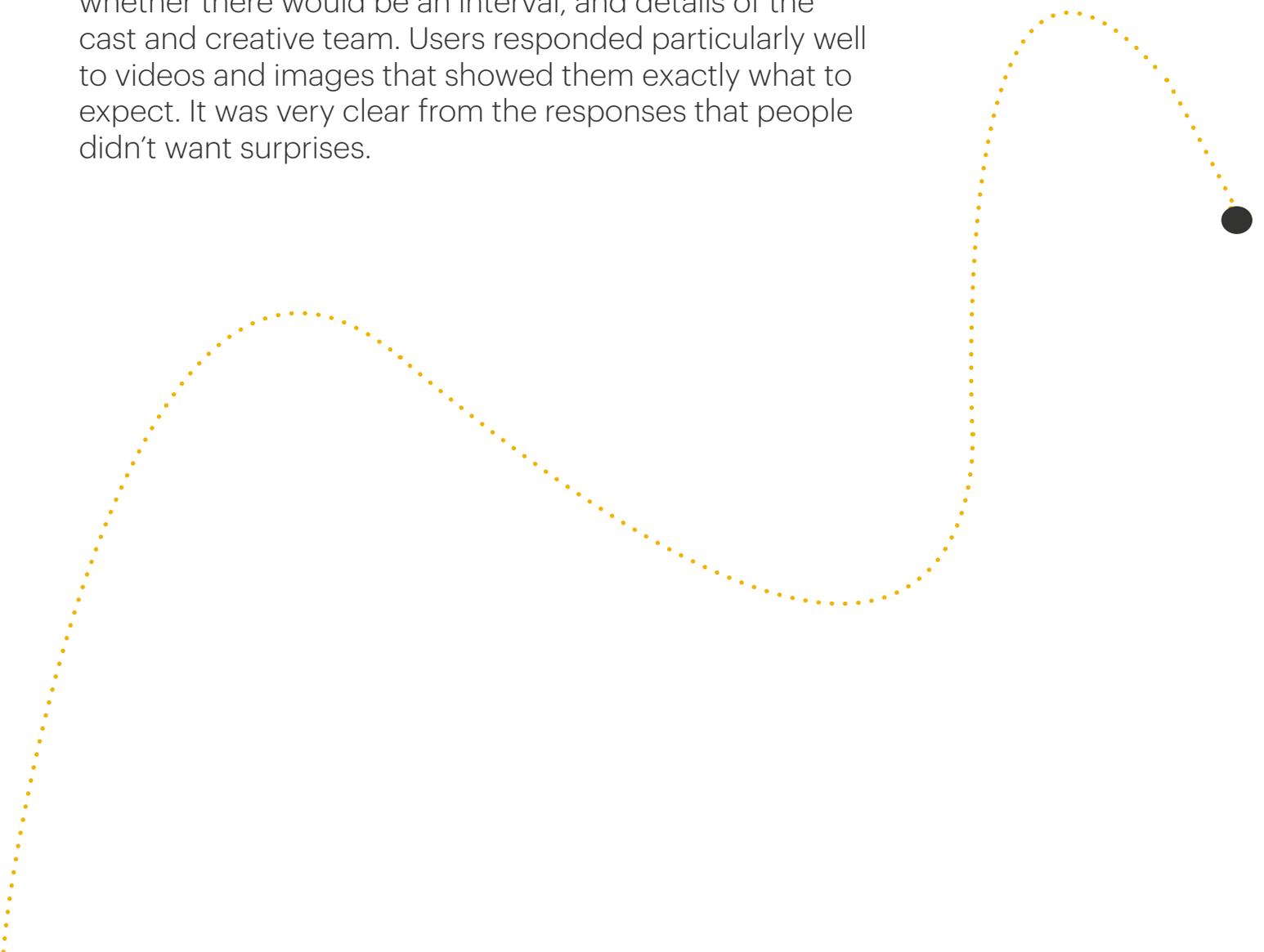
Prototype and post-launch user testing

During the prototype phase, Eyekiller carried out moderated user testing with a selection of our target audience. They tested both mobile and desktop wireframe prototypes and recorded and analysed the sessions to identify early areas for improvement.

Once we had launched the site we did further user testing through usertesting.com. Arranging it through a third party enabled us to reach participants who had no relationship with the MAC. We were able to specify the demographic of the testers and the type of device we wanted them to use. Participants would then video themselves using the site and give a running commentary of what they liked and didn't like.

The results of the user testing helped us shape the tone and content of the site. We discovered that people wanted far more information about shows than we had been providing. They wanted to know the duration, whether there would be an interval, and details of the cast and creative team. Users responded particularly well to videos and images that showed them exactly what to expect. It was very clear from the responses that people didn't want surprises.

Content and tone

We wanted to create a warm and welcoming feel to the site. We used the results from the user testing to tweak the language we were using and make sure it resonated with people.

On Eyekiller's advice, we created a Your Visit page to share practical information about the venue. On that page, we also created an editorial style section featuring different types of visit including Date Night, Friends' Night Out, and MAC on a Budget. We wanted to show that there is something for everyone at the MAC.

People spend more time on the Your Visit page than on almost every other page on the site.

Making it easier to browse

The main reason people use the MAC website is to find out what's on. We wanted to ensure that process was as easy as possible for our audiences.

Eyekiller spent considerable time testing and working with us to understand the diverse needs of our audiences so that they could build a suitable search function.

You can now search by event type, specific day, predefined date range or by user-defined date range. The search performs consistently across desktop, mobile and tablet.
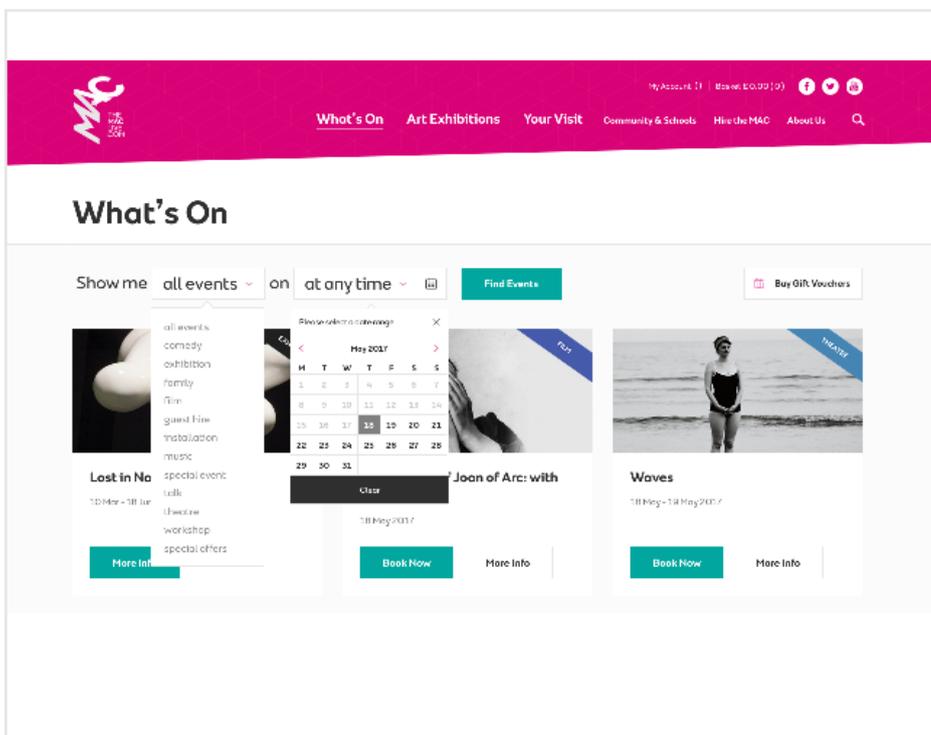
Recommendations

Keep to a methodical plan — Eyekiller planned everything meticulously to ensure that we kept to a tight timeframe. That meant we were able to bring the project in on time and on budget.

Remember it's never finished — There will always be things you can do to improve the user experience. Plan for ongoing investment and analyse how people are using the site.

Include as much content as possible — We were surprised by how much information people wanted about our shows. Share as much visual content as you can and try to include timings and casting details.

Test things — Don't assume people will know where to find things or respond in a certain way. Consult your audiences and potential audiences.

Consider using a User Testing service — It's a great way of accessing feedback from people who aren't already engaged with your organisation. The feedback can be brutal but it will help you create a better site.

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