

An Introduction to

# Knowing and Growing your Audience

Adapted by the AMA from a Prosper delivered webinar  
**Julie Aldridge Consulting**



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“ The secret to knowing and growing your audience is being really curious about people. Not just who they are. But what they’re interested in, what they value, and why.”

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# Knowing and growing your audience\*

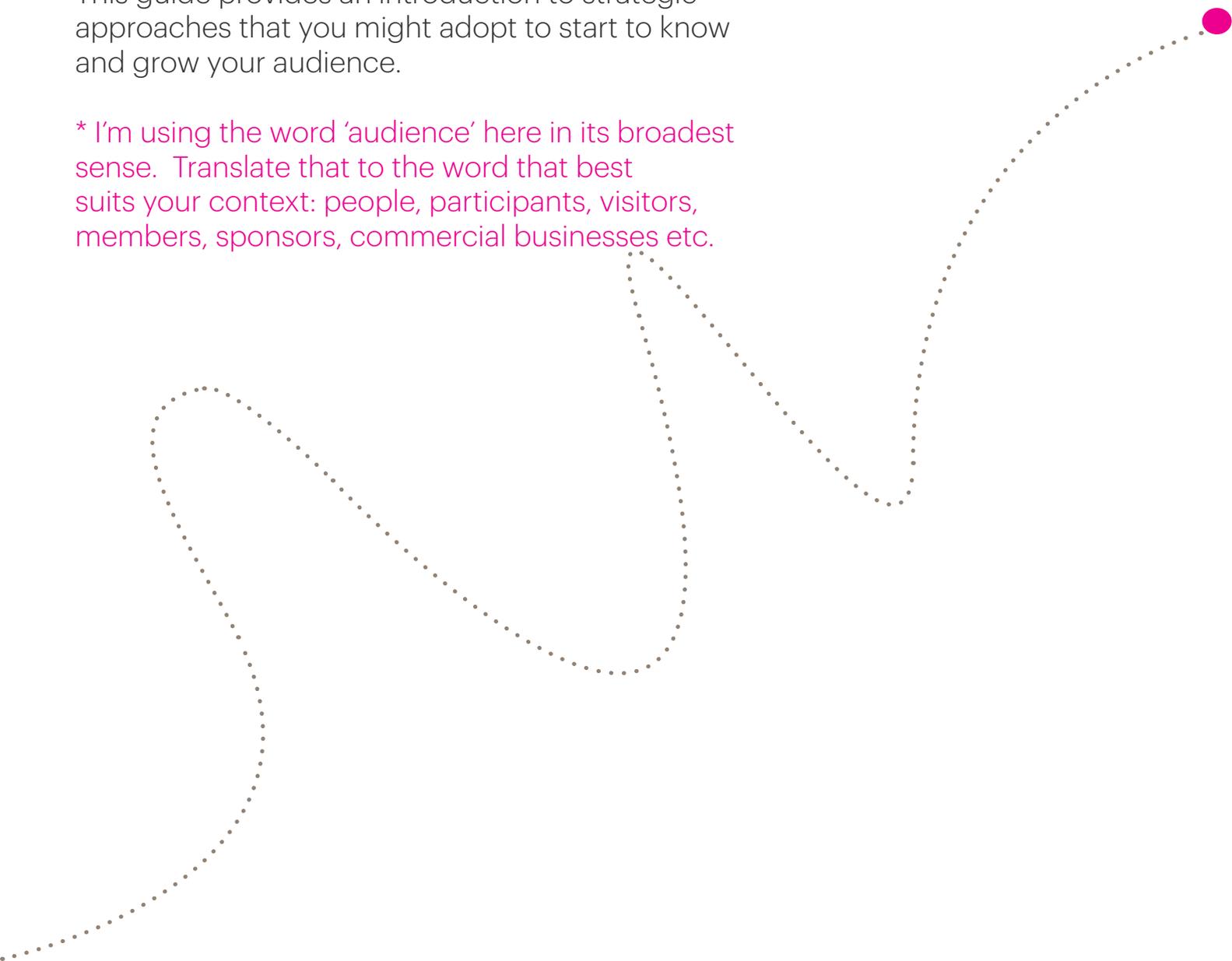
## a strategic approach

The secret to knowing and growing your audience is being really curious about people. It's about knowing who your audiences and potential audiences are. And it's about getting to know them as people – what are they interested in, what do they value, and why?

Finding out more about your audiences' interests and motivations will help you capture their attention in this busy world. It will help you understand which of your events they might like to get involved in and why so you can create more effective campaigns.

This guide provides an introduction to strategic approaches that you might adopt to start to know and grow your audience.

\* I'm using the word 'audience' here in its broadest sense. Translate that to the word that best suits your context: people, participants, visitors, members, sponsors, commercial businesses etc.

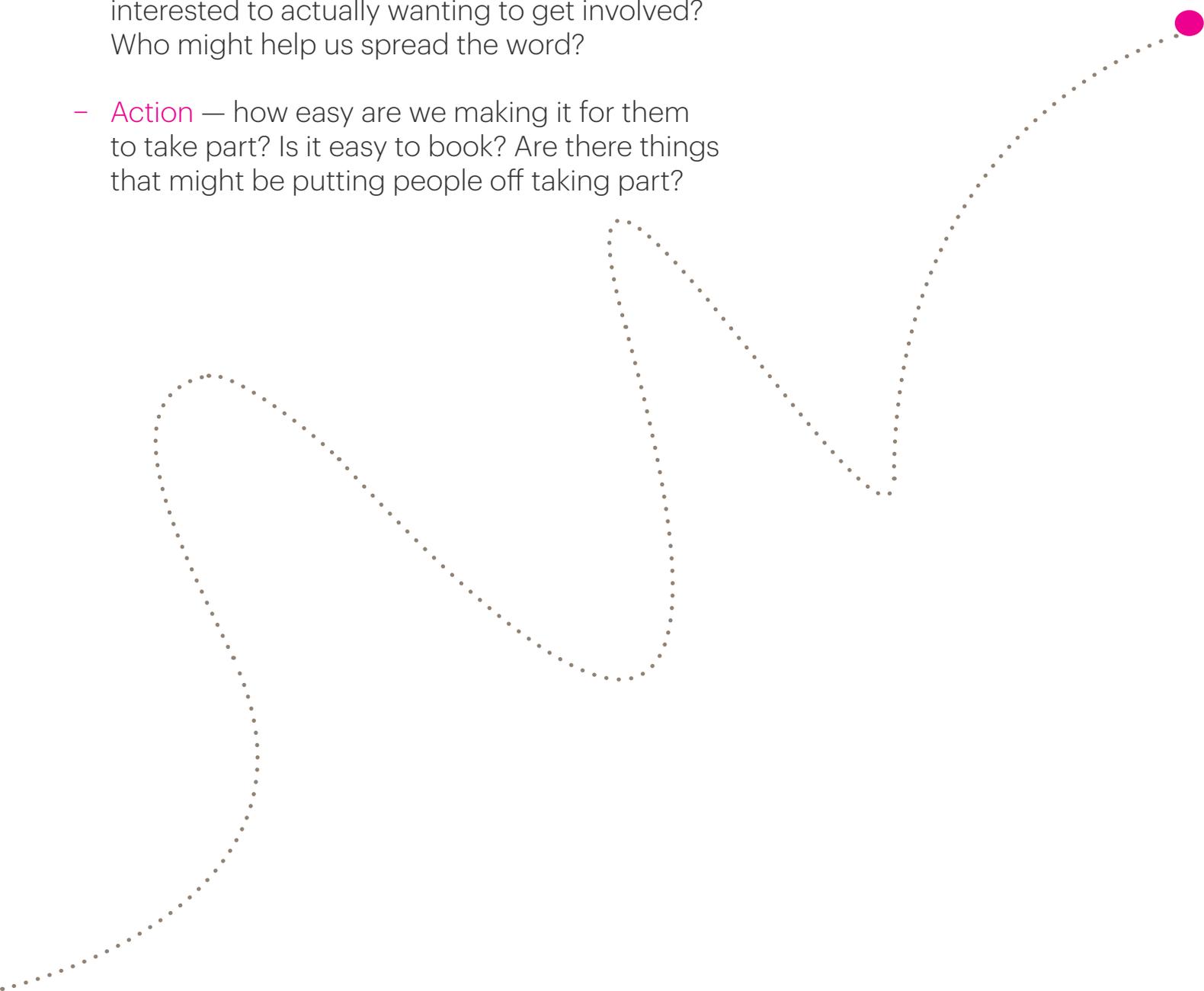


# AIDA

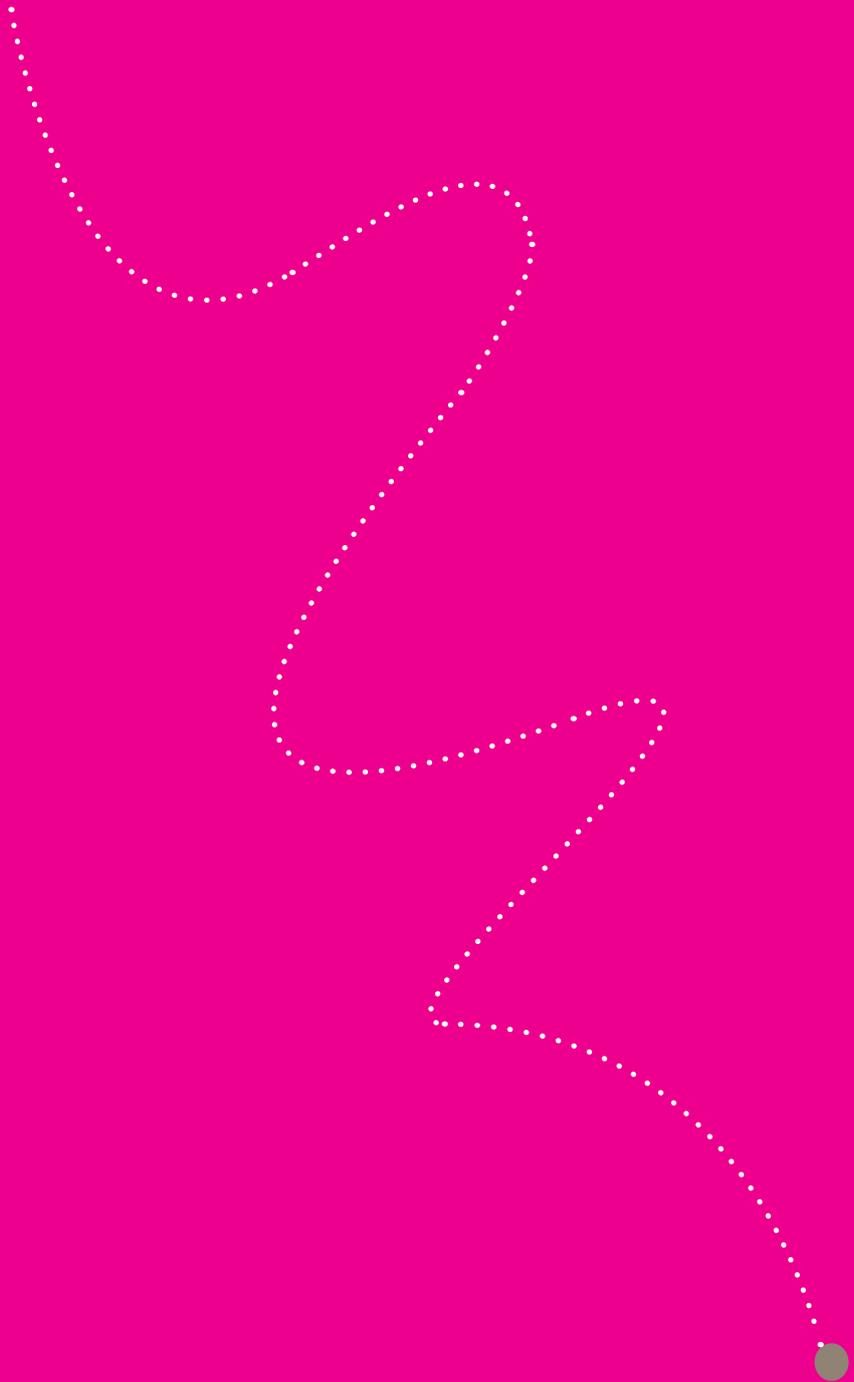
## 4 principles of engagement

There are four principles to think about when creating a campaign to engage people:

- **Awareness** — when you think of the people you would like to engage with your work, how aware are they of what you're doing? What do you need to find out about them to decide how best to grab their attention?
- **Interest** — what message will help you show that what you do is of great interest to them? Do they know what the experience will be like in advance?
- **Desire** — how do we move them beyond being interested to actually wanting to get involved? Who might help us spread the word?
- **Action** — how easy are we making it for them to take part? Is it easy to book? Are there things that might be putting people off taking part?

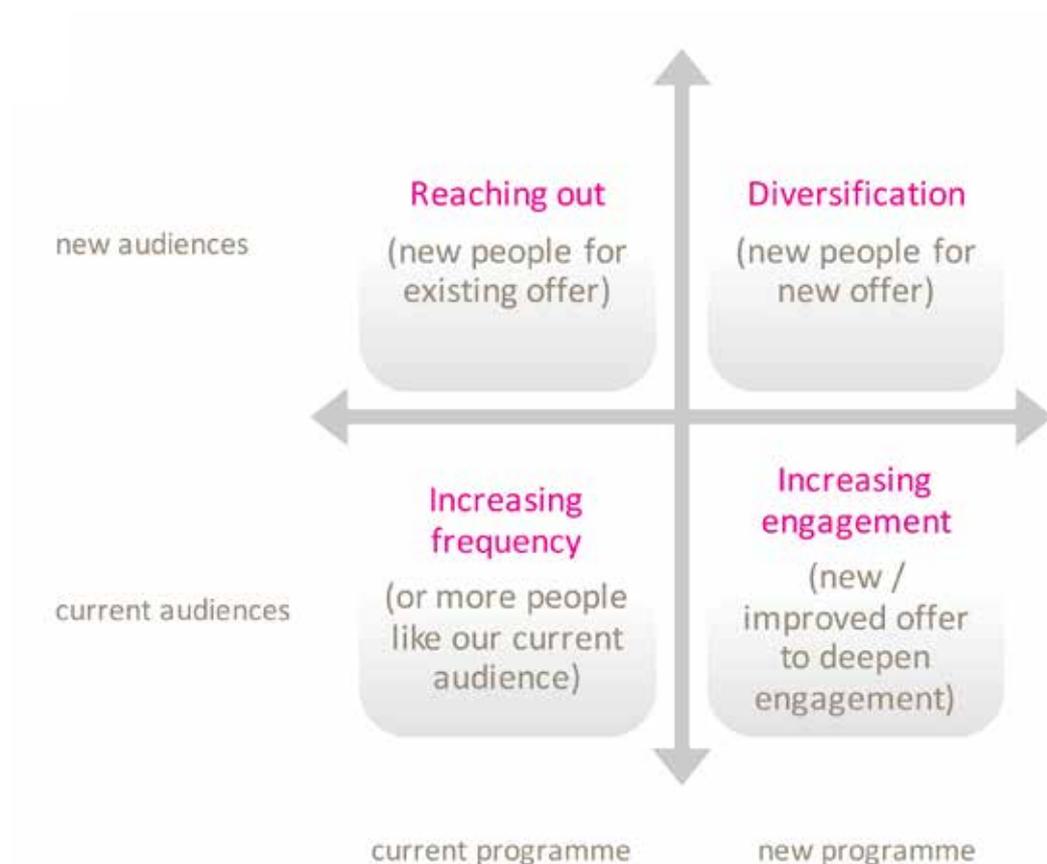


# Audience Development Strategy



# Audience Development Strategy

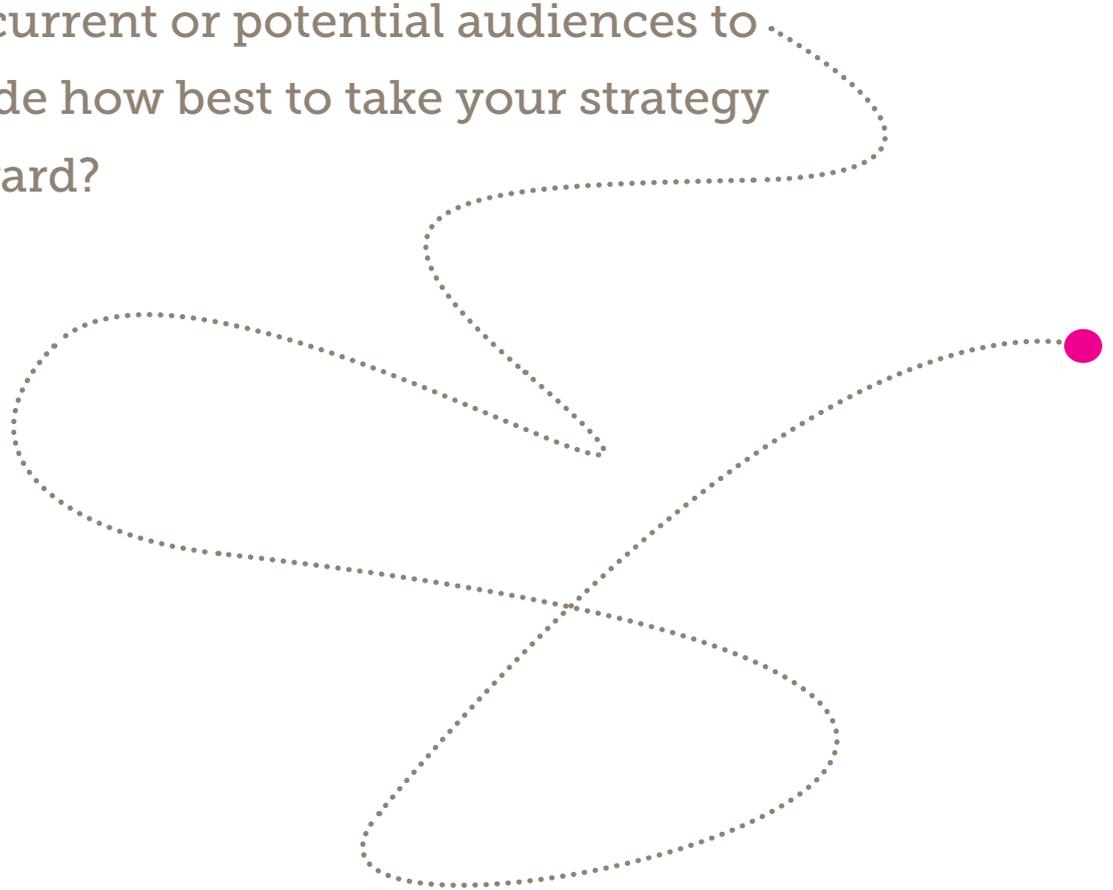
Consider which of the following four strategic directions will form the focus of your audience development plan.



As you read more about these approaches in the next few pages, think about which of the four strategic approaches might be right for your organisation.

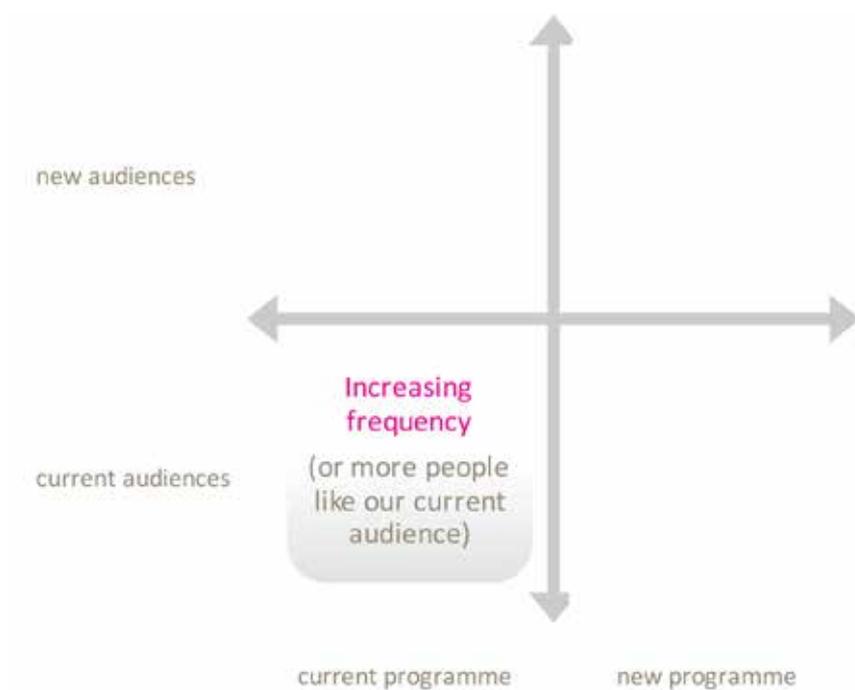
# Think about ... what you might need...

What might you need to find out or ask current or potential audiences to decide how best to take your strategy forward?



# Increasing Frequency

## developing current audiences



The first strategy is about getting current audiences to come to what you're doing more often, to experience more of your current programme.

- How might you encourage current audiences to come back?
- What do you know about why they visited or took part?
- What do they think about your work?
- How likely are they to come back?

It's often reported that it is six times more expensive to get someone to come for the first time than it is to get someone to come back.

If you are looking to drive income generation, exploring how you might drive greater frequency of engagement is a good place to start.

## Case study #1

### New Wolsey Theatre

The New Wolsey Theatre team were doing a lot of work to grow their audiences but their total audience numbers just weren't going up.

They contacted TRG Arts to do a preview of their Box Office figures. They discovered that actually they were really good at getting new people to come for the first time.

- 4,927 households made their first visit to New Wolsey Theatre in 2014 - 2015
- Only 25% of those were coming back again

They concluded that there was huge potential for increasing retention and getting people to experience their work more often.

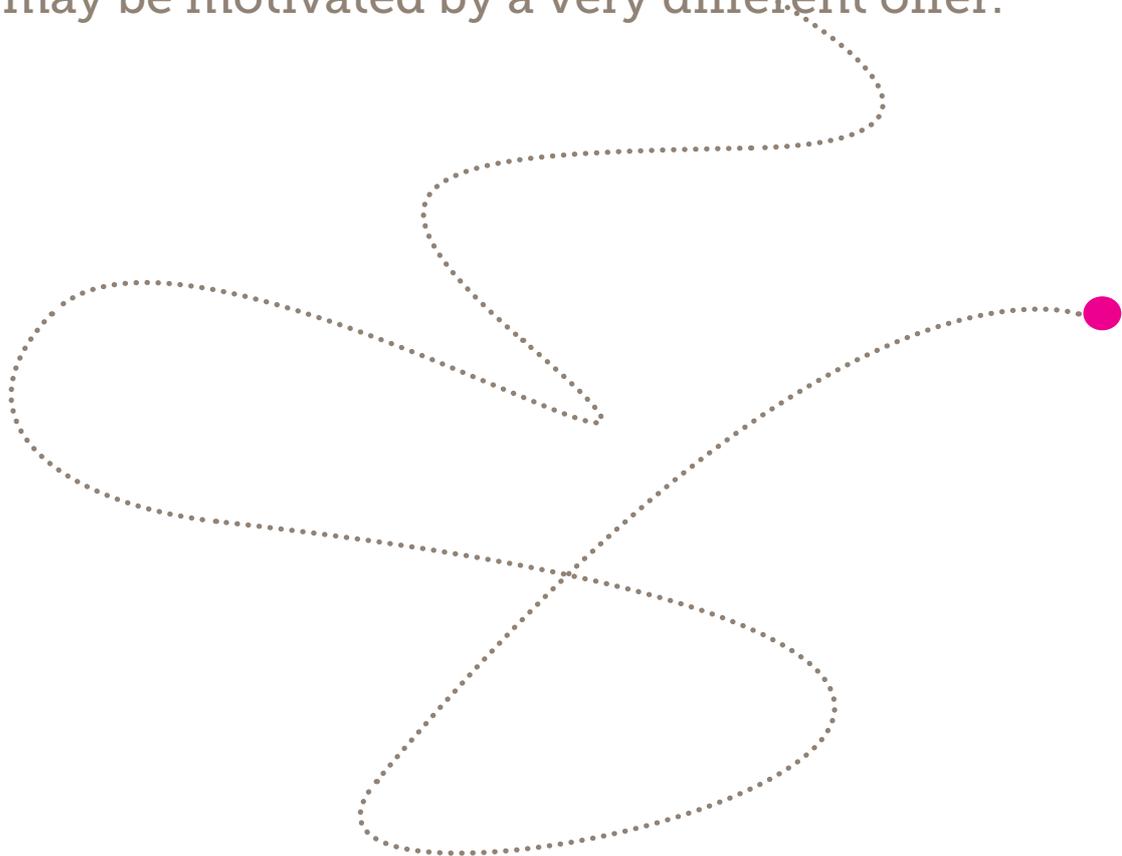
What they did was quite significant. They restructured the team, retrained all of their staff and launched a series of communications. They didn't just think about the point at which someone was booking or coming and experiencing their work; they thought about how they could build relationships on an ongoing basis. They considered what they might talk to them about at different stages of that journey to find out more about what they are interested in.

When they started the work 1 in 12 people were returning. Now 1 in 6 people are returning.

**Find out more in the write-up on [TRG Arts' website](#)**

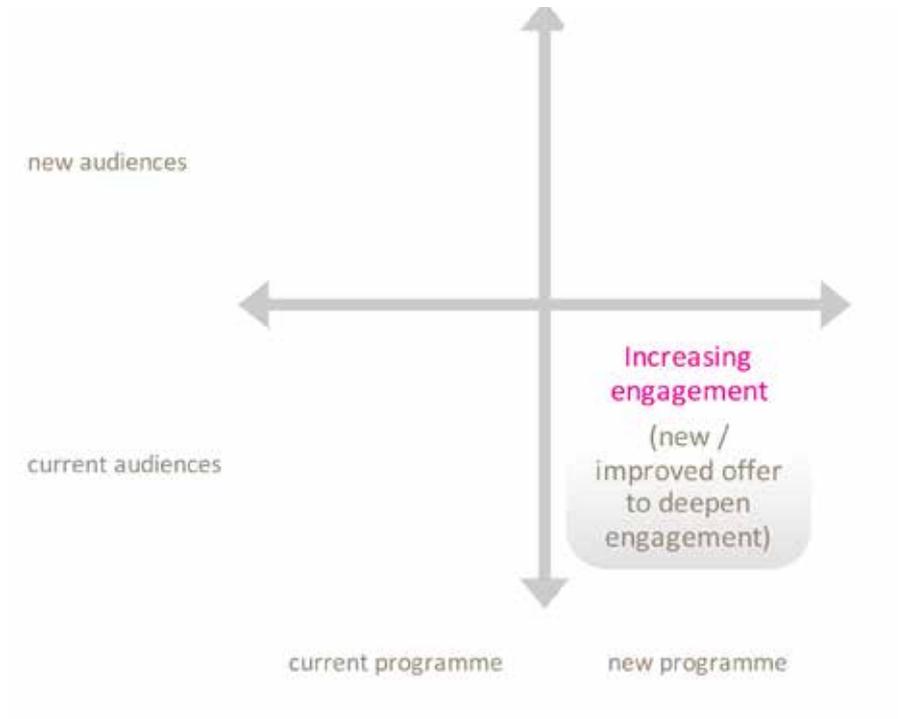
## Think about ...

Increasing frequency may also be about getting people similar to your current audiences to attend. If you already have lots of family audiences, for example, how might you find out what they love about what you do and share this with other potential family audiences. Reaching more of the same is much easier than targeting new groups who may be motivated by a very different offer.



## Increasing engagement

new improved offer to deepen engagement



The second strategy is about increasing engagement with current audiences by changing what you're doing. This might be artistic changes, new programme elements or it could be developing a wider visitor offer.

- What type of experience do people want to have with your organisation?
- Do they want to have more connections with one another?
- Do they want to participate more in your work?
- What changes could you make that might get people to come back more often?

## Case study #2

### Beamish Museum

Beamish is an open air living museum, which tells the story of everyday life in the North East of England. Their exhibitions are permanent so they need to think of ways to keep things fresh and ensure there's always a reason for people to come back. Adding in new attractions over time has been key to this, along with a year-round programme of events and festivals, while making sure that they're visible in local communities to remind people that they've got things coming up.

The museum acquired a 1950s caravan, which they take to venues such as community events, local heritage fairs or shopping centres. This give museum staff the opportunity to engage with local communities and enables people to try out some of the things they have on offer. It takes the museum to them. Importantly this highlights developments in the £18m Remaking Beamish project, along with future events and festivals throughout the year.

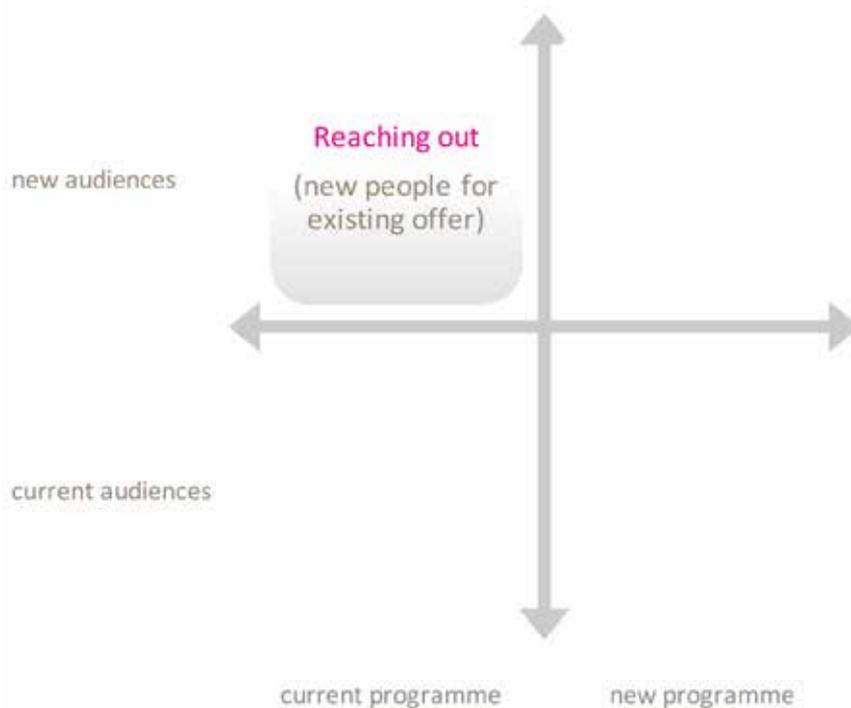
They've introduced an annual ticket so you pay once and can come back as many times as you like. That has had a huge impact on reaching out to audiences.



Image courtesy of Beamish Museum

## Reaching out

new people for existing offer



The third strategy is about raising awareness among potential new audiences, helping people see that what you offer is relevant to them.

- How aware are people about your organisation?
- What are their current perceptions and are those perceptions accurate? If they attended your organisation would those perceptions change?

Often focus groups with non-visitors show that people vaguely know about the organisation. They are sort of aware of the work, but are zoning it out. There are so many marketing messages in the world today that your communications just become white noise. This strategy is about actively inviting people in. Sometimes people say 'well nobody has ever invited me'. It sounds obvious but people are often open to persuasion if only someone invited them to join in. How are you making it clear to people that what we currently offer could be of value to them?'

## Case study #3

### Haus Musik

Haus Musik is a sub-brand of Tafelmusik, a Canadian Baroque Orchestra.

They wanted to explore how they might reach younger audiences without changing their position of being a top quality baroque orchestra. They decided to launch a new series of events – still performing classical music on period instruments, but in a stand up bar which provides a chance to socialize with one another and meet the musicians. They work with young directors from Toronto's indie opera scene to make each concert an immersive experience.



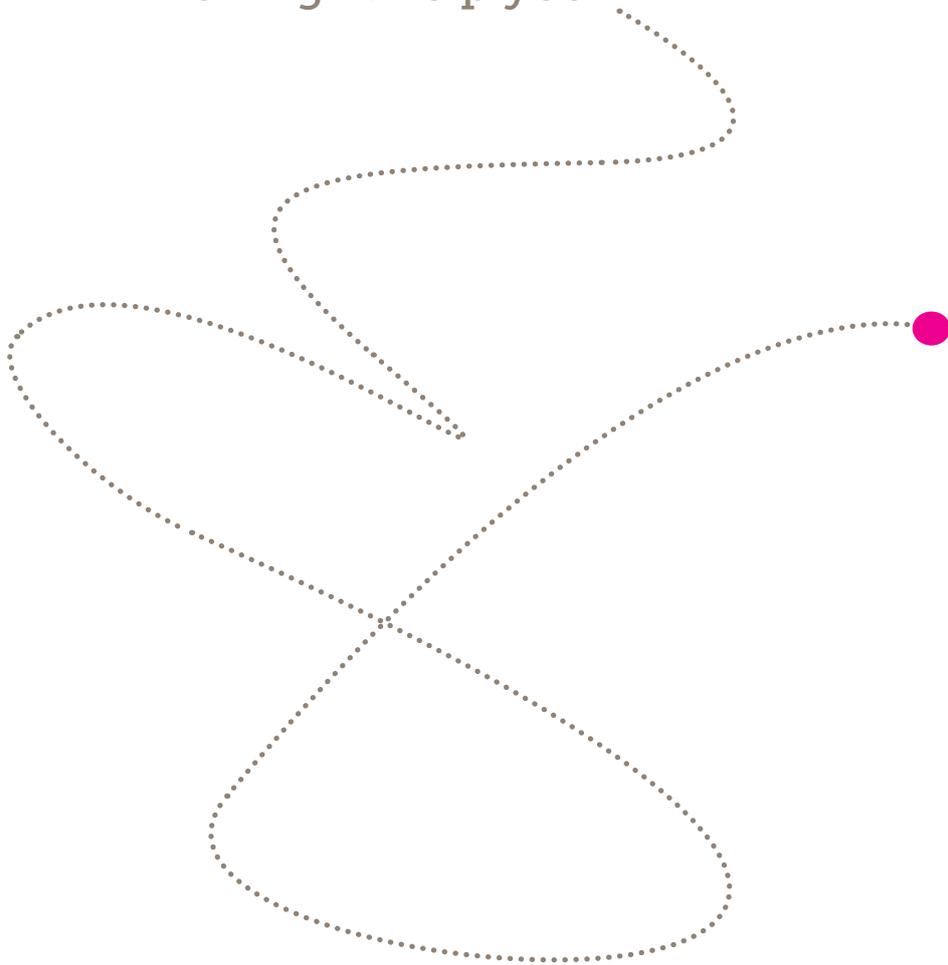
Image courtesy of Haus Musik, Dahlia Katz Photography

# Think about ...

How might you reach out and get people involved?

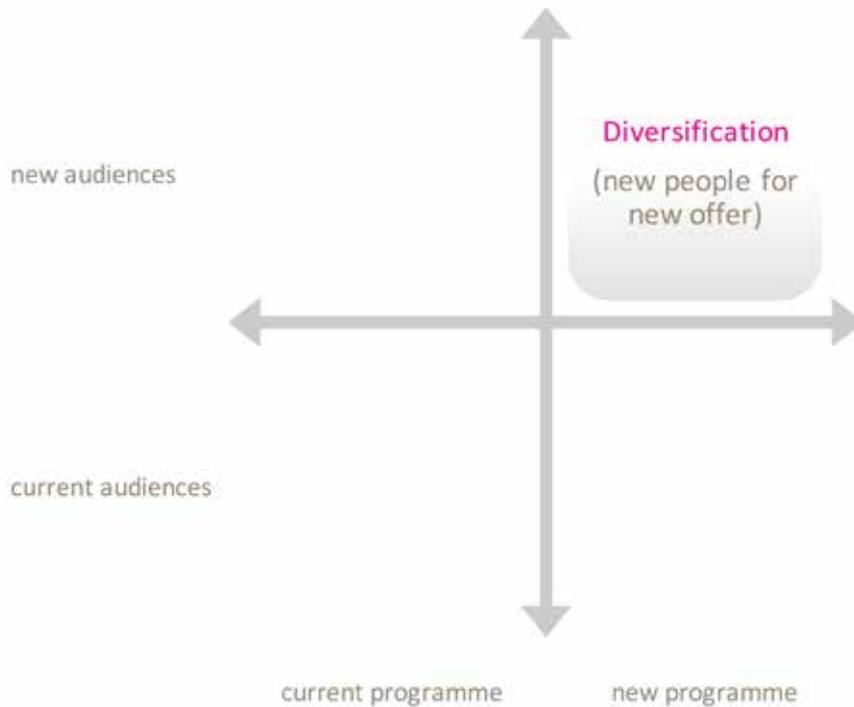
Do you need to change or communicate differently to make people realise your work is relevant to them?

Who might help you?



# Diversification

new people for new offer



The fourth strategy is about reaching out to new audience groups by creating new experiences that clearly signal that 'this is for the likes of you'.

Diversification is often the most expensive and challenging of the four strategies but it can also be the most rewarding.

## Case study #4

### Cardiff Story Museum

Cardiff Story Museum runs Dinky Dragon events once a month to reach out to young families. The museums and galleries get transformed into a toddler play zone. They have play, rhymes, stories, detective trails, craft, music and lots of different activities.

They added these events in, following conversations with local families about what they want and how the museum might play a more meaningful part in their everyday lives.



Image courtesy of Cardiff Story Museum

#### Note

Cardiff Story Museum is a tiny museum with only a handful of staff so you don't need lots of resources to do this kind of thing. They have dedicated themselves to public consultation just by chatting to and getting to know as many people as possible. They've set up focus groups and advisory panels.

# Think about ...

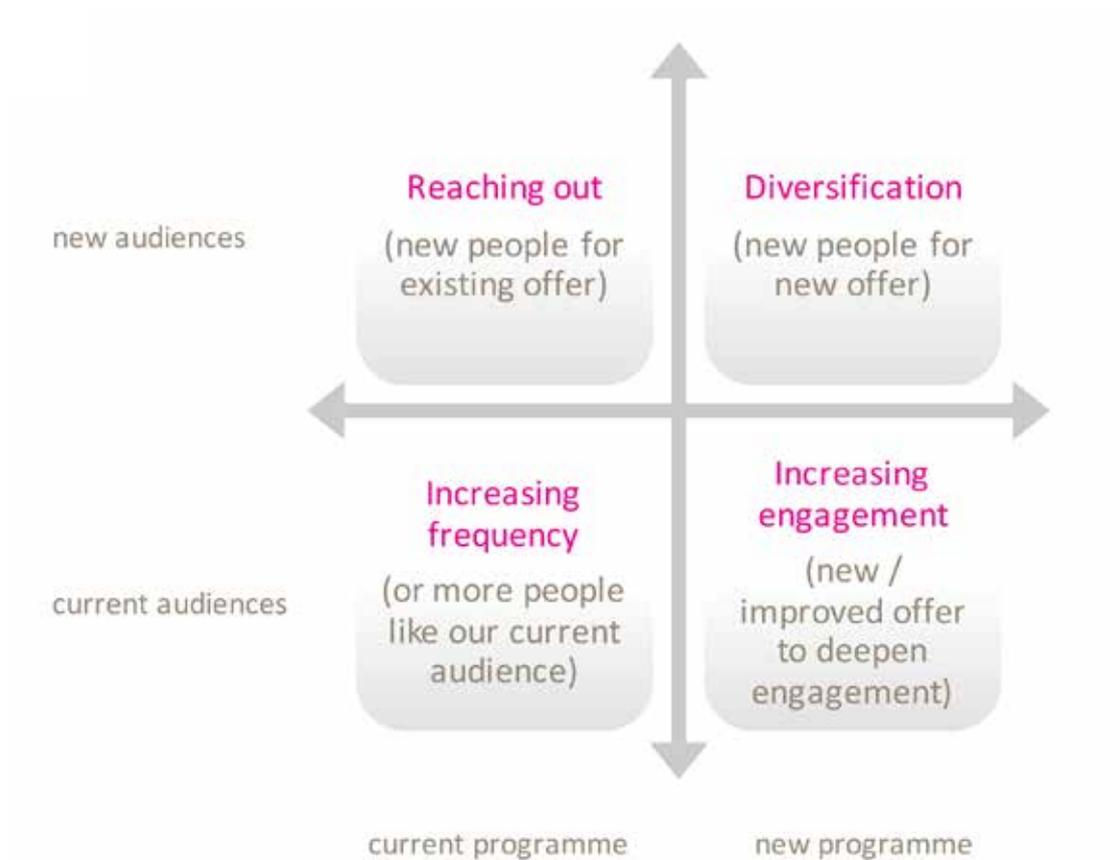
How are you signalling that this is for the likes of me?

Whose stories are being told on stage or in your exhibition spaces?

How might you create a space where people feel at home immediately?



# Audience Development Strategy



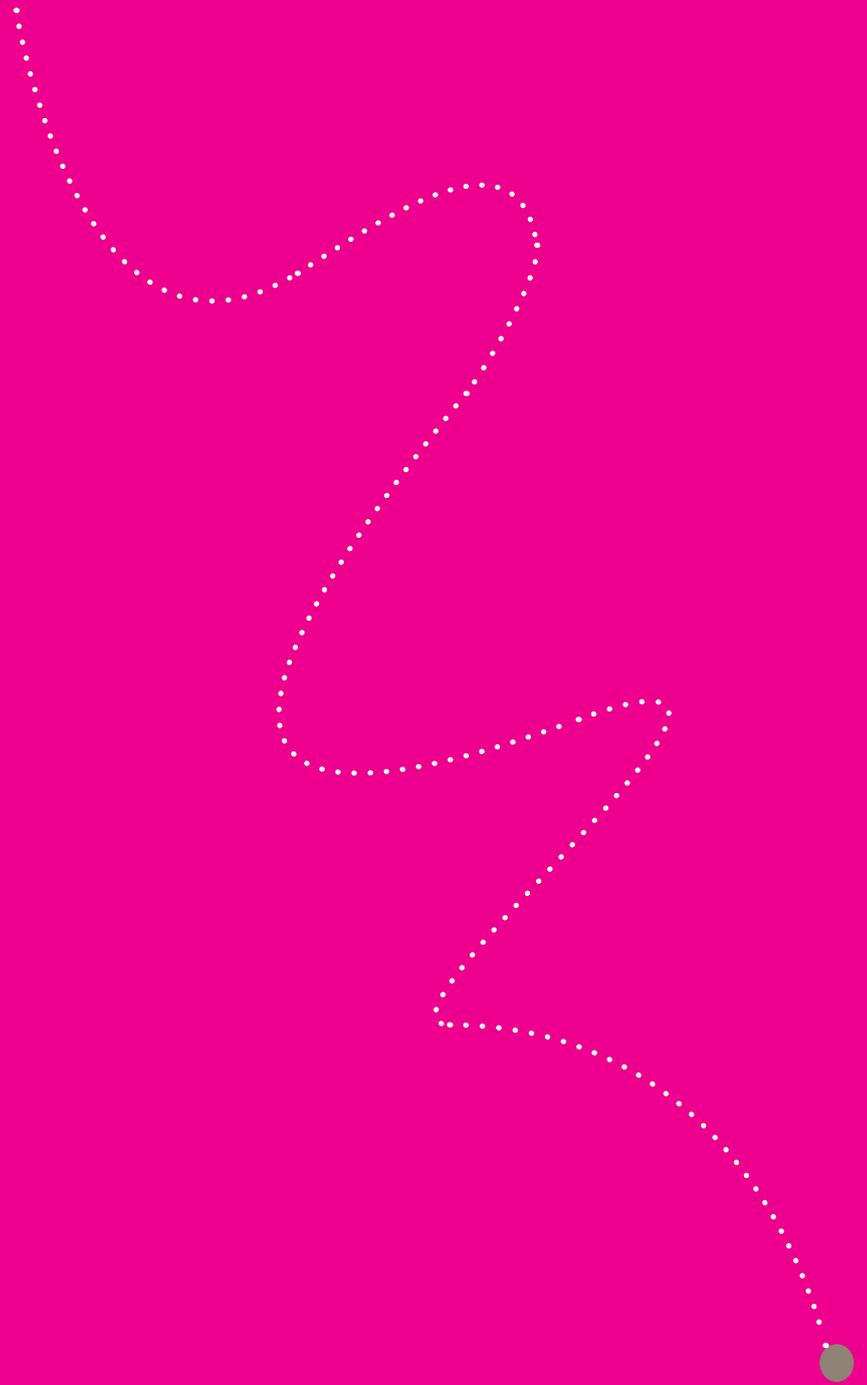
There are many different ways in which you can deliver each of these strategies. To help you decide on your approach start by thinking about:

- Why does your organisation exist?
- Who do you exist for?
- What impact do you want to make for people?

With those things in mind, think about which approach is right for your organisation at the moment and what you need to find out to deliver that strategy.

Whichever direction you go for, the next step is to find out more about your current and potential audiences to inform what campaigns you do under that headline strategy.

# Understanding your current and potential audiences

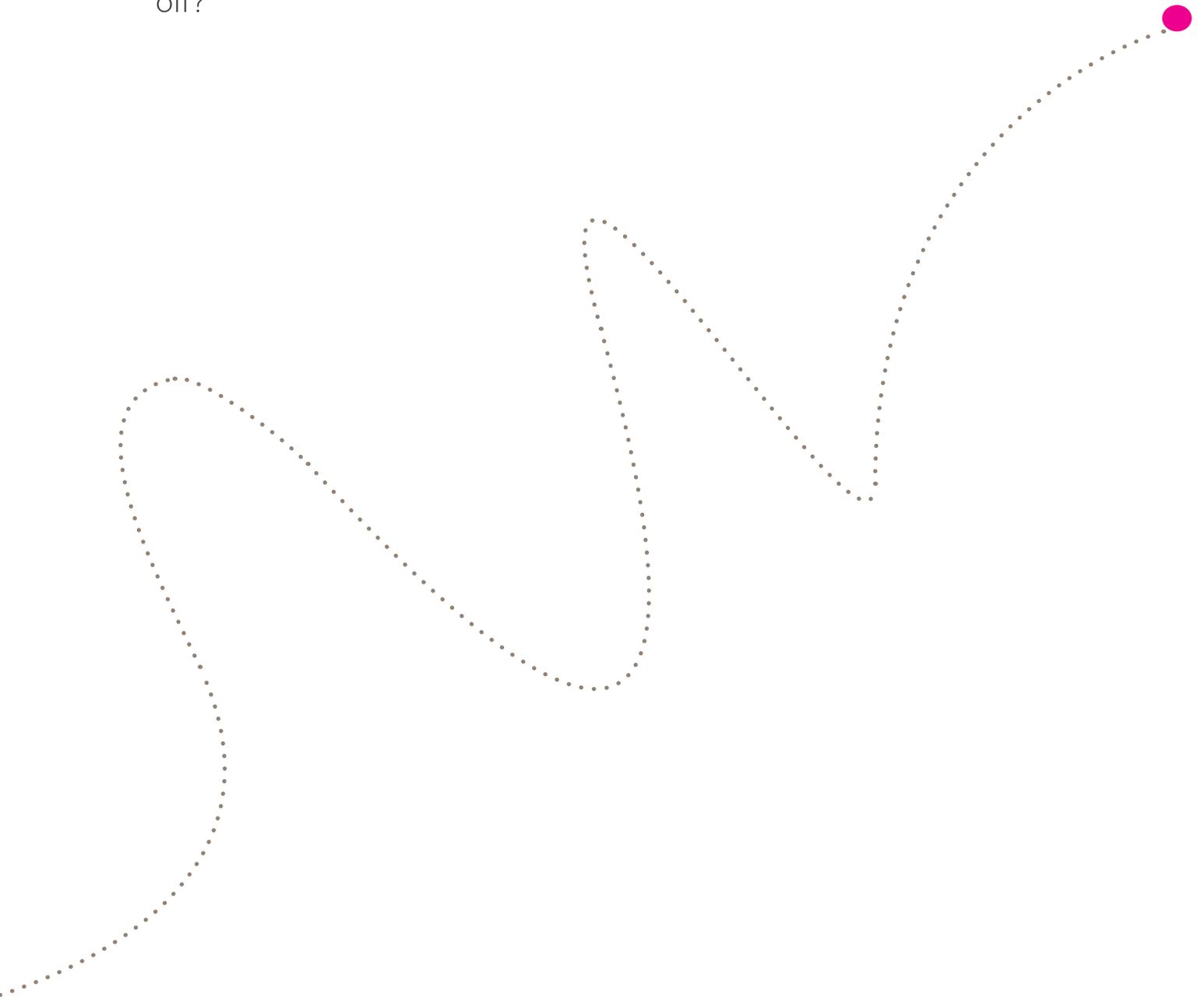


# Developing Insight

## Getting to know your audiences

There are a number of things you might want to think about when trying to gather insight about your current and potential audiences:

- **Who** — who are your audiences now and who would you like them to be in the future?
- **How many** — is there potential for growth?
- **What** — what are they interested in and what might encourage them to engage more?
- **Why** — why do people come at the moment or if they don't come what might be putting them off?

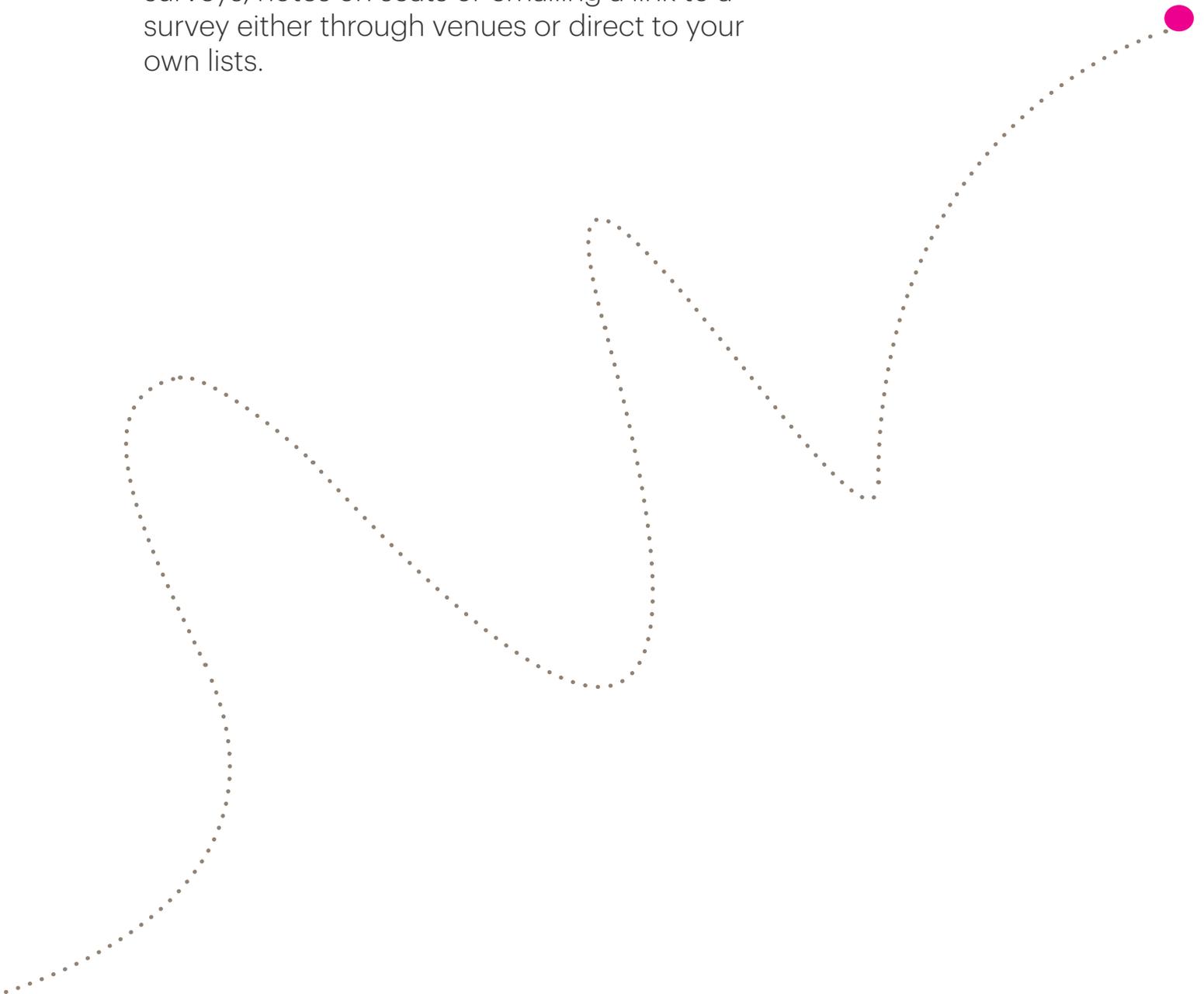


# Current audiences

## Who and how many?

There are lots of different ways you can find out about your current audiences:

- **Box Office systems** — Use your database to find out information on who is attending already, how many people are attending, how often etc.
- **From venues** — If you are a touring company, agree the data that you want from the venues you're touring to and review this insight collaboratively.
- **Surveys** — For non-ticketed or other types of activity, you might want to think about exit surveys, notes on seats or emailing a link to a survey either through venues or direct to your own lists.



# Potential audiences

## Who and how many?

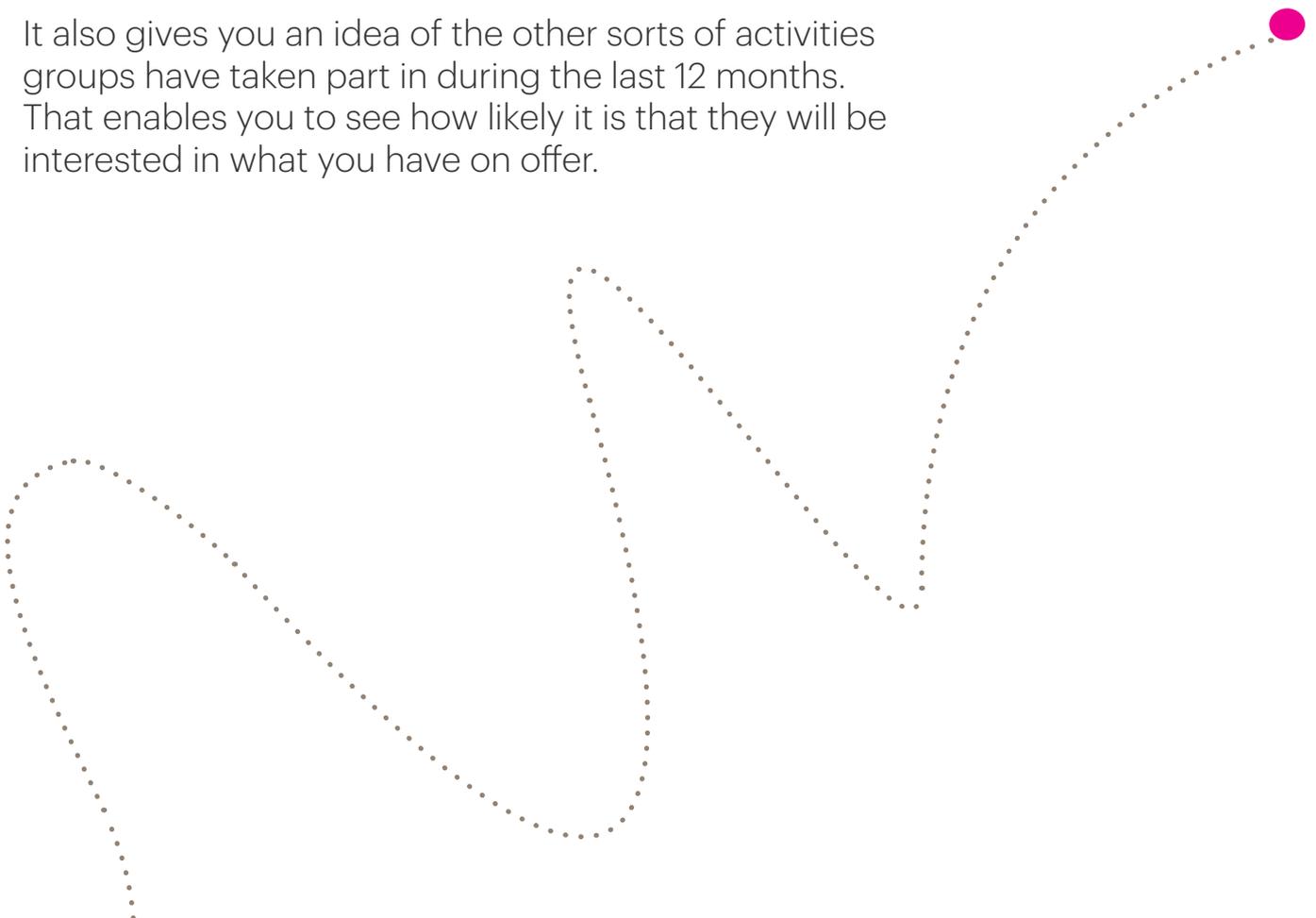
To find out more about who your potential audiences might be start by getting hold of an Area Profile Report from **The Audience Agency**. You can get a standard one from The Audience Agency for £125 + VAT.

The Area Profile Report will give you the total number and percentage of the population within your target area broken down by population, demographics, and engagement level.

The reports are based on Census data. They give you an idea of the number of households within a 30-minute drivetime of your venue. You can find out more about who they are in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and other factors.

If you're doing a lot of work with a particular audience, such as older people, then you can see whether you've reached saturation in your area or whether there's potential for growth. It can help you set realistic targets for your plans and strategies.

It also gives you an idea of the other sorts of activities groups have taken part in during the last 12 months. That enables you to see how likely it is that they will be interested in what you have on offer.



# Current and potential audiences

## What and why?

Understanding who the potential audience is will only tell you so much. You need to find out what people might be interested in and why.

- **Observe what people do** — this may, for example, involve setting up trial events in order to observe people's behaviour.
- **Ask people** — you might ask people what they would be interested in or what they think or feel about something. That helps you understand attitudes and values.

There are benefits in doing a little bit of both. People will often say one thing and do another so it's good to do a trial before putting all your eggs in one basket. Likewise, if we only look at what people are already doing we might miss out on other things that they might be interested in. If only we asked.

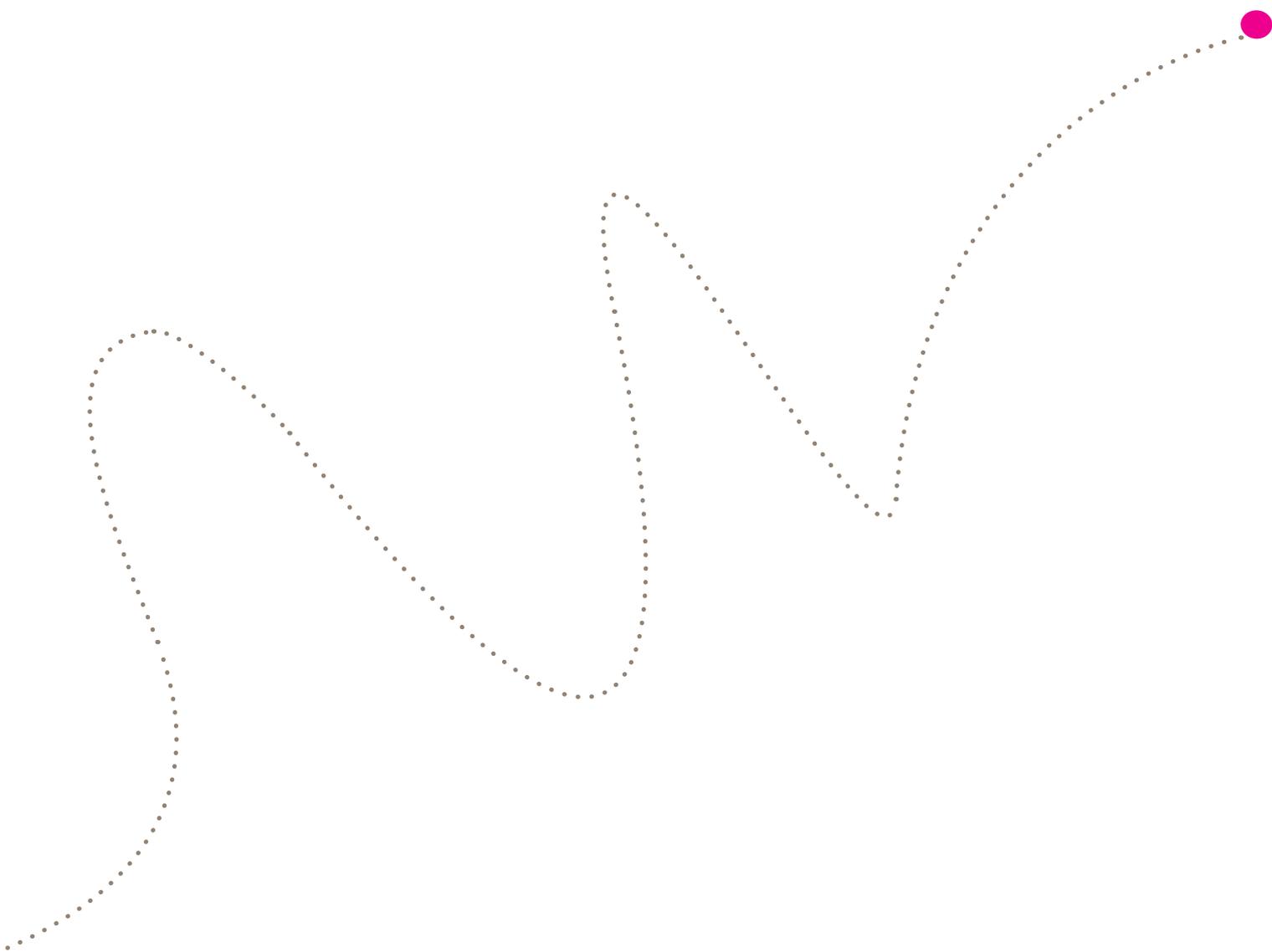


# Direct vs Indirect

## How to get answers

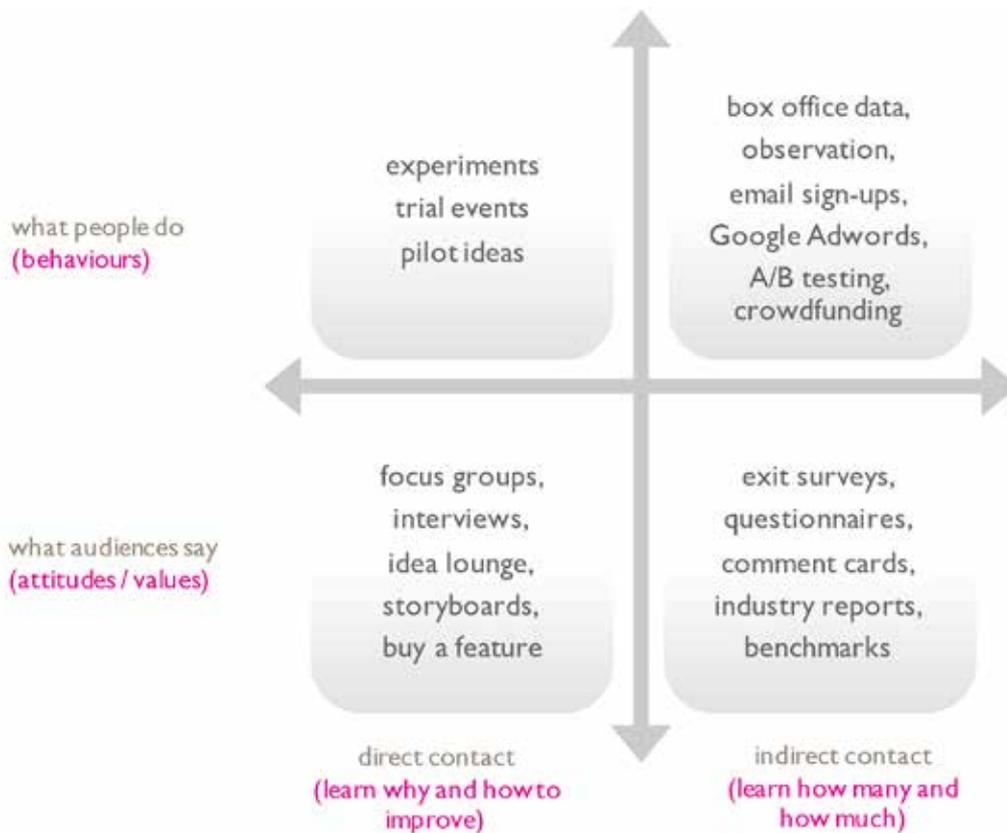
It's good to be curious about what people do outside of engaging with your organisation. You can find this out by:

- **Asking them directly** — this gives you the opportunity to probe and find out why they think that or how you might improve things in line with what they're saying.
- **Asking them indirectly** — this takes you out of the equation and avoids biasing their answers through making assumptions about what they're saying or through them wanting to please you. You might do this through online surveys, for example. A survey will tell you how many people feel something and how much they feel it. You can ask a lot more people in a survey than you can in person.

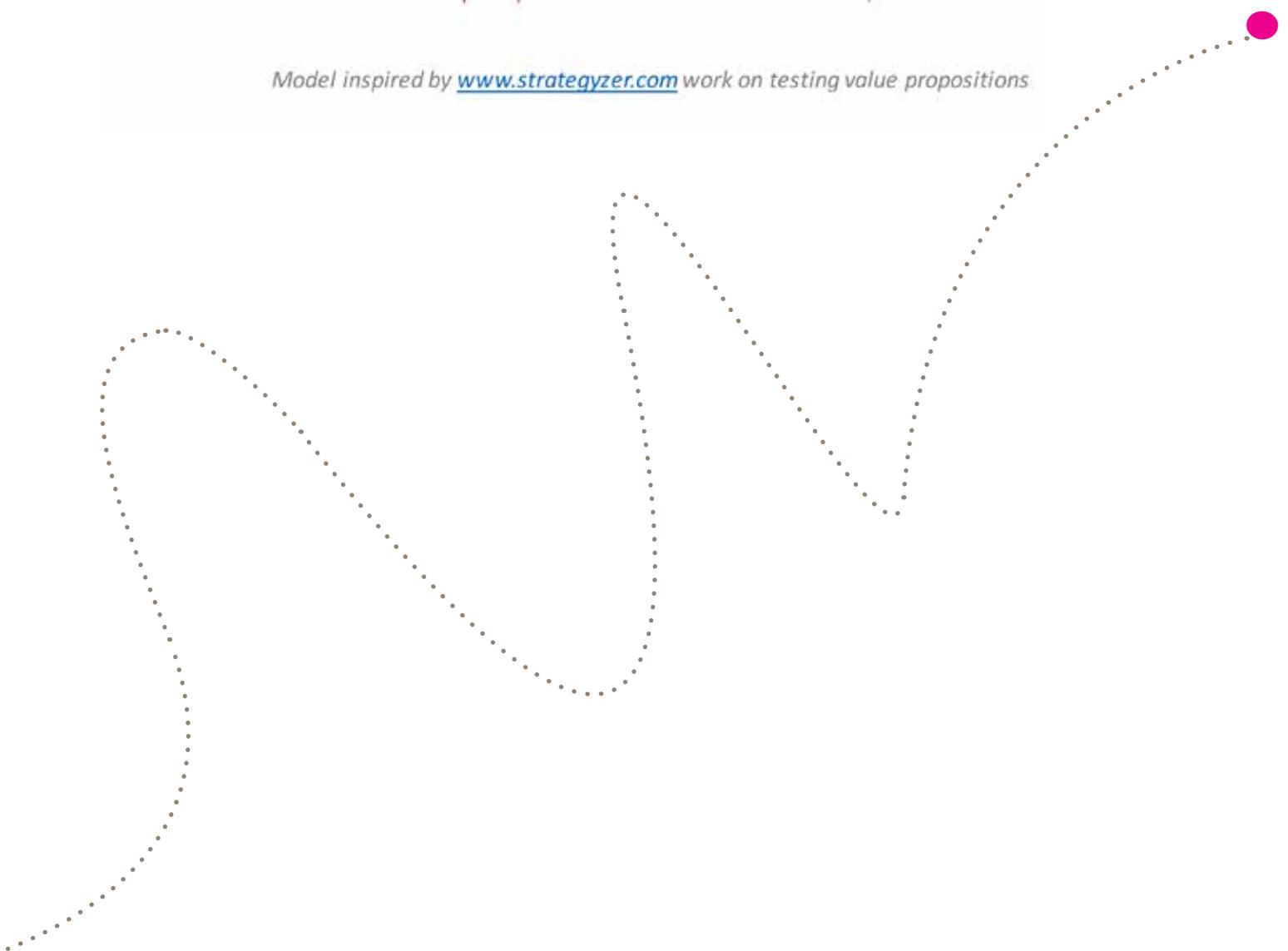


# Research methods

## A simple overview

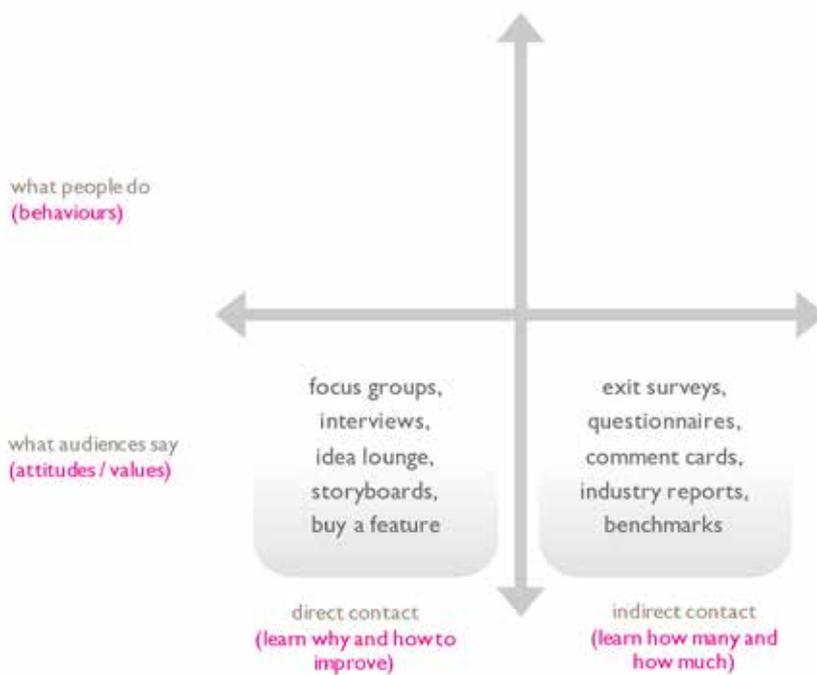


Model inspired by [www.strategyzer.com](http://www.strategyzer.com) work on testing value propositions



# What audiences say

## Attitudes and Values



There are lots of ways to find out what people think or feel about something. People often jump straight to surveys or questionnaires. They are probably the most familiar. Two ideas in the above diagram that you might not have come across before are:

- **Storyboards** — this is a no cost way of prototyping a new idea before you spend any time or money on developing it to make sure you're heading in the right direction.
- **Buy a feature** — you give people play money and they can spend it on one of a number of features that you are thinking of introducing. It allows you to see which of those 3 - 5 features they are most interested in and why.

### Top tip

Don't just ask about your organisation. Ask what people like to do in their spare time, what they get out of that and why they choose it. You might pick up on things that you wouldn't otherwise identify if you only asked about your organisation.

## Case study #5

### The Idea Lounge

Penn Museum in the US created an area in their space called The Idea Lounge where they share plans and ideas. It's an area where people can go and vote, using magnets, for ideas that the museum team are showcasing in the space.



#### Top tip

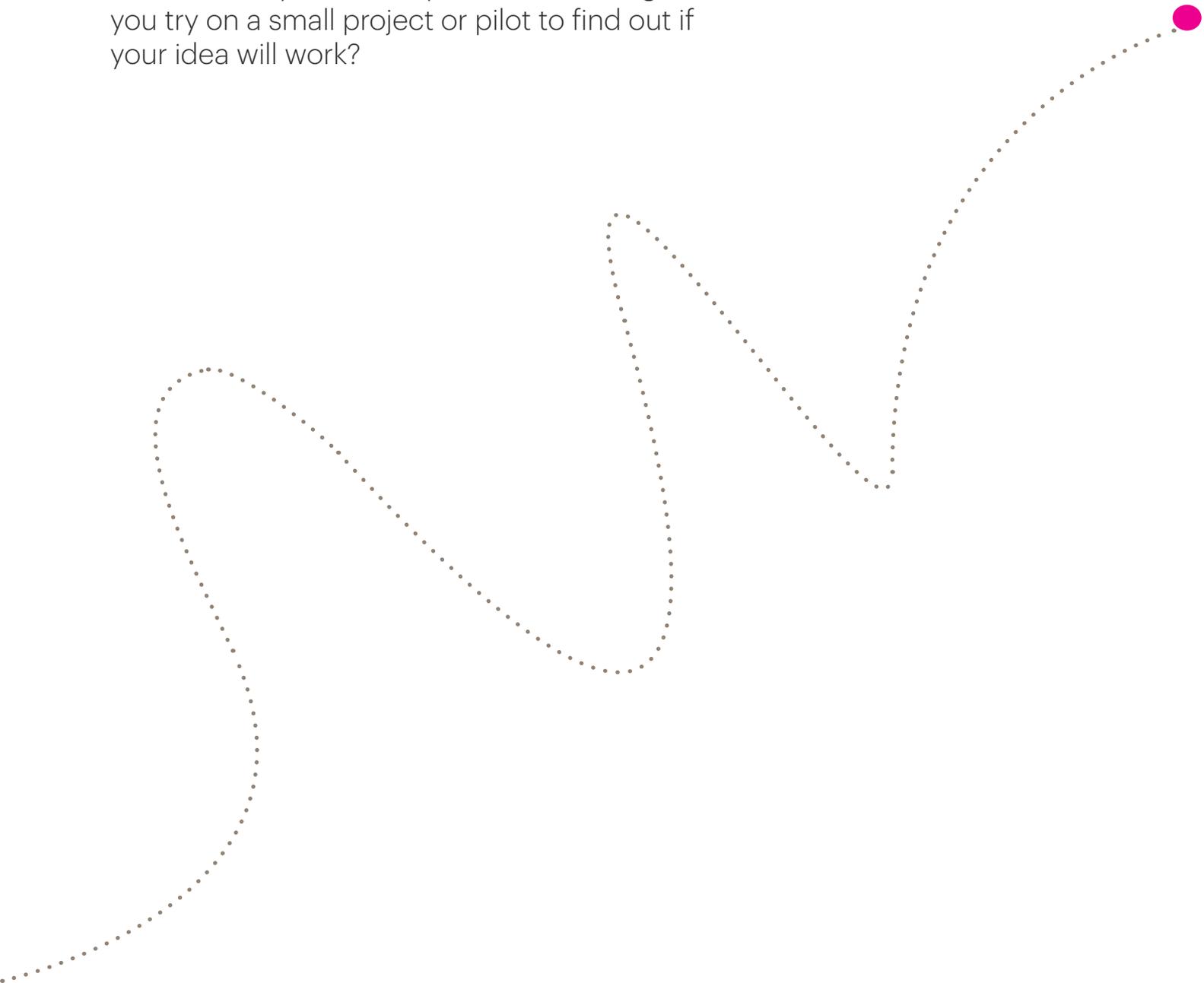
Be creative about how you test ideas with your audiences and potential audiences.

# What people do

## behaviours

There are various ways to look at what people do:

- **Box Office** — you can look at what people have done in the past by reviewing box office data.
- **Interaction** — you can observe how people interact within your projects or at events.
- **Register interest** — you can ask people to register interest for a future project and see how many people are interested enough in the project to go to the effort of doing that.
- **Experiments, tests and pilots** — how might you test some of your assumptions? What might you try on a small project or pilot to find out if your idea will work?



# Think about ...

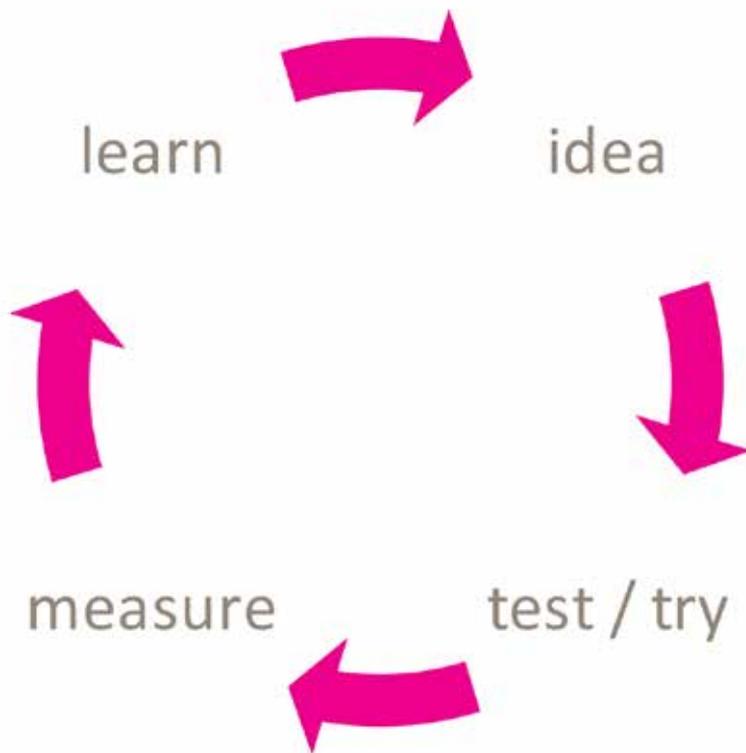
What experiment could you run to test your approaches to reaching out to new audiences?



# Experimenting

## Learning

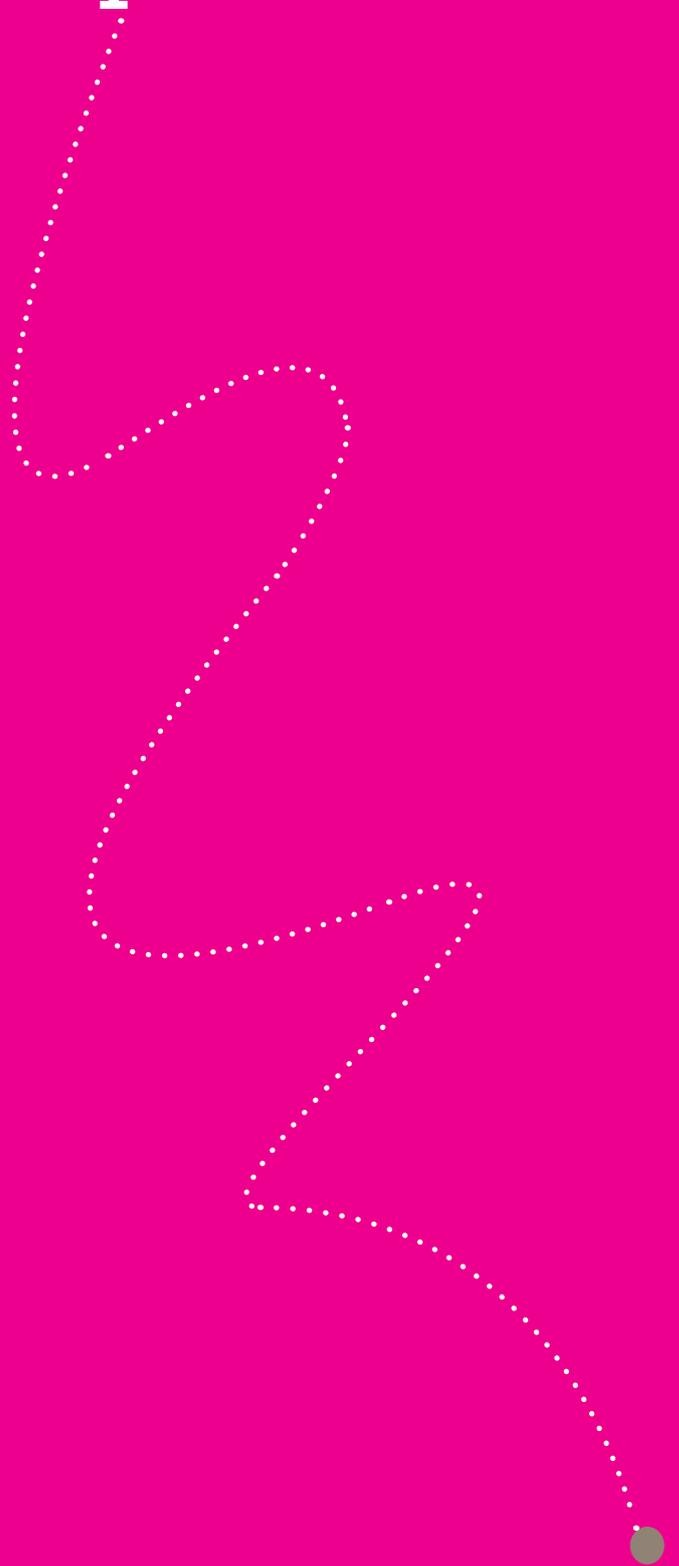
Testing is about learning; it's not about passing or failing. Set up your test so that the aim is to learn something.



- What's your idea?
- What do you want to try and test?
- How will you measure that?
- What do you want to learn?

That might then lead into a new test / pilot, or potentially a roll out of the idea.

A quick recap



# A quick recap

## 5 things to remember

- **Who** — it's about finding out who your current audiences are and where there is potential for growth.
- **Why** — develop insight into why they are engaging now and why might encourage them to engage more in the future.
- **How** — sketch out ideas as to how you might best meet those needs in line with your organisational vision and mission.
- **Test** — test and try ideas out before you...
- **Strategy** — develop an audience development strategy to support your business model and vision.





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