Case study

Developing a new website
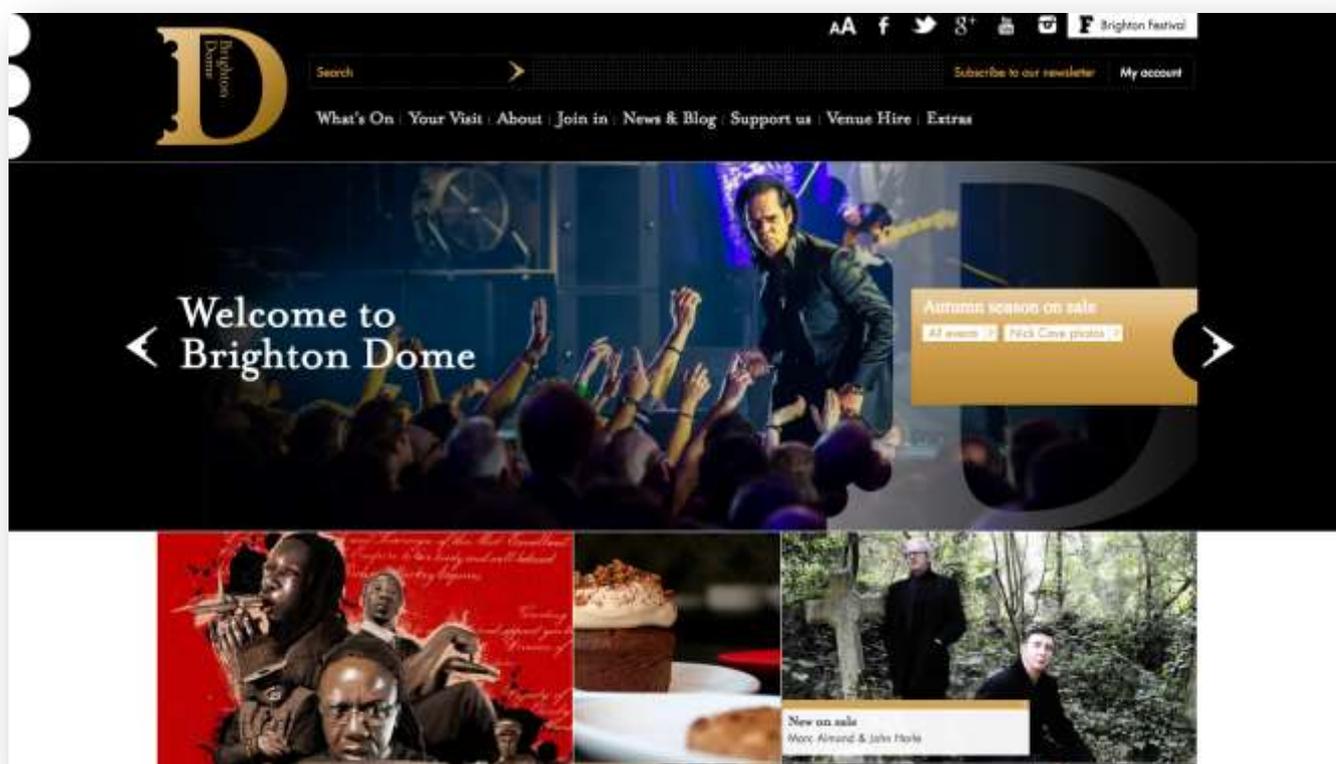
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Supported by

Created and managed by

In partnership with

Background

Brighton Dome is the major arts and cultural provider in Brighton and Hove. As custodians of a Grade I Listed building that was formerly the stables and riding school for George IV, we occupy a unique position on the Royal Pavilion Estate at the cultural heart of the city. We are an arts charity that offers high quality performance across all art forms year-round, an active programme of creative learning and participation and is a key conference destination.

Each May we also produce Brighton Festival; a high-profile, three-week international producing and commissioning arts festival. It's the largest annual multi-arts festival in England, second only in the UK to Edinburgh. Considered 'the defining moment in the Festival year' (*The Guardian*), Brighton Festival brings a national and international audience to the city.

Our total annual audience reach exceeds 500,000. Our aim is to continue to grow our engagement with visitors.

In 2011 we acknowledged that as our organisation is growing with pace, our digital platforms were in need of redeveloping and future proofing for the next 5 years. This project ran alongside a CRM project and complete rebrand.

Objectives

There were a number of key objectives for the new website namely:

- **Be inclusive:** we wanted our online presence to be inclusive and to deepen the level of engagement with our audiences and our programme.
- **Be a leader:** help us to achieve our corporate aims to be a leading provider of the arts in the South East.
- **Be entrepreneurial:** create a website and email system that functions as core revenue channels as well as a hub for cultural and learning references.
- **Be creative:** as a cultural destination, our website needs to look stunning and inspire creativity.
- **Be alive:** integrate offline and online. Bring the venue and physicality of our performances alive via the use of digital technology.
- **Be current:** look to be future proof and allow for change in this fast moving environment.

Process

We did a call for tender then spoke to 8 agencies. We then refined the list of agencies to tender to 4. They received our full brief with appendices and were asked to present ideas at a pitch.

As part of the development process we consulted internally with different departments (to identify their needs and wants) and we also ran user focus groups.

Following this we chose our digital partner and engaged in a full scoping project to clearly identify our needs and deliverables. We ran this project in phases – the first being Brighton Festival, then Brighton Dome.
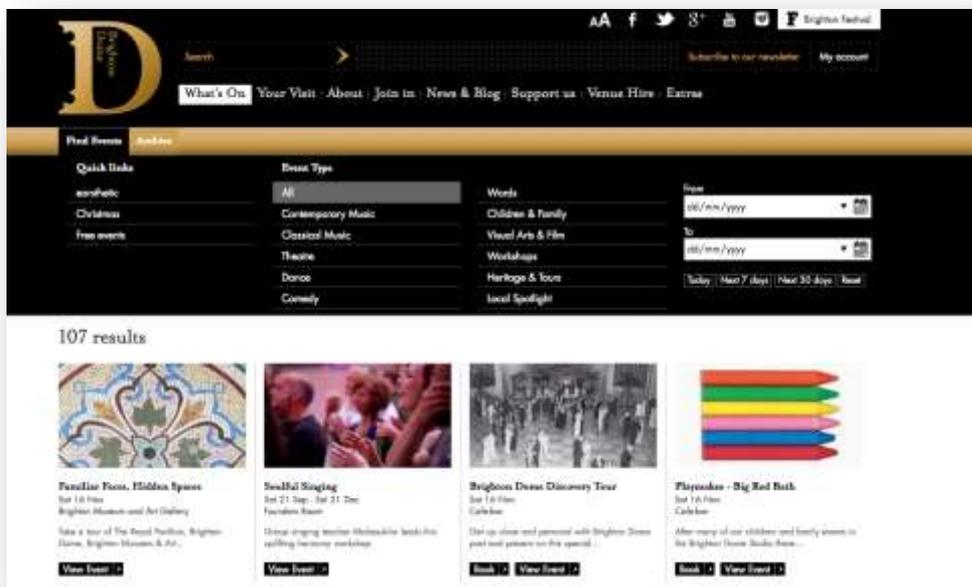
Key recommendations

- Consult your whole organisation – the website belongs to everyone in the organisation not just marketing
- Write a very clear brief for pitching
- Choose your digital company carefully – are they financially stable, do they have good connections and client lists, do they understand the nature of your business
- Allow yourself time! It take at least a year to complete a through redevelopment of your website for medium sized organisations
- Be future proof – digital technologies change way too fast!

Outcome

- During Brighton Festival we saw 271,500 visits by 164,000 unique browsers (up 21% from 2012) and online bookings provided 53% of total festival ticket income (up 7% from 2012).
- Brighton Dome online bookings are going strong and are also up to 60% online sales.
- We are also able to sell merchandise online
- Members now mainly purchase online
- Audience feedback has been overall well received. Surveys suggest that people find out about our events mainly from the website – 25% (our marketing strategies are more and more online these days)

Further information:

Brightondome.org
Brightonfestival.org