GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

# THE FUTURE OF
# BELONGING &
# INCLUSION

"You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it."

**Grace Lee Boggs**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WELCOME

The Paradigm Shift is an opportunity to travel deeper down the rabbit hole to focus on a single macro trend. In each report we take a look back to look forward to see how the paradigm might change and what that means for you, your organisation, and your supporters.

**All framed within the lens of income and impact.**

CONTENTS

# FOREWORD

Every single one of us can probably think of a moment, a memory when we knew we didn't belong. Whether you had to hide your sexual orientation from your colleagues, or downplay your accent or religious beliefs to fit in.

**Whether you were excluded or othered because of your race, gender, experience, age or disability.**

The sense of belonging, whether at work, in our communities or even in our own families, has the ability to empower, to supercharge and to change the world.

Belonging binds people together as a collective force. And when we exclude others the impact can have repercussions and ripples that change the course of that individual or group's entire future.

Belonging is also the gateway to innovation. It has the power to liberate ideas. It can unleash creativity by creating a space where it's safe to take risks and be a more authentic version of yourself.

How charities design and innovate for belonging and inclusion - how we ensure beneficiaries and service users are in the writer's room - really can change lives.

**Welcome to the future of belonging and inclusion.**

**Daisy O'Reilly-Weinstock**
Director of Big Bets
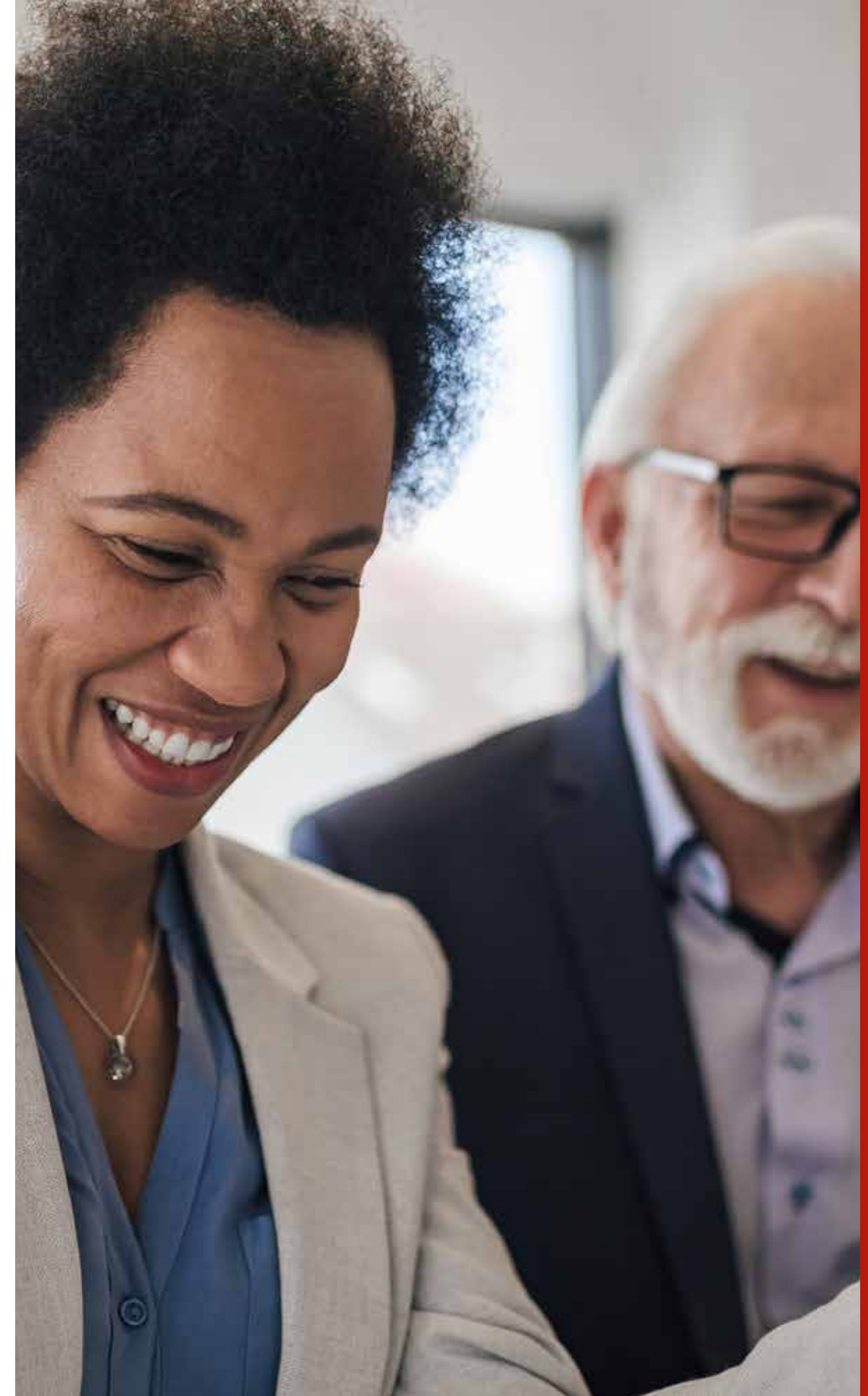
# DRIVERS OF CHANGE

# WHY BELONGING
# **& INCLUSION?**

→

The desire to belong is a
fundamental human need -
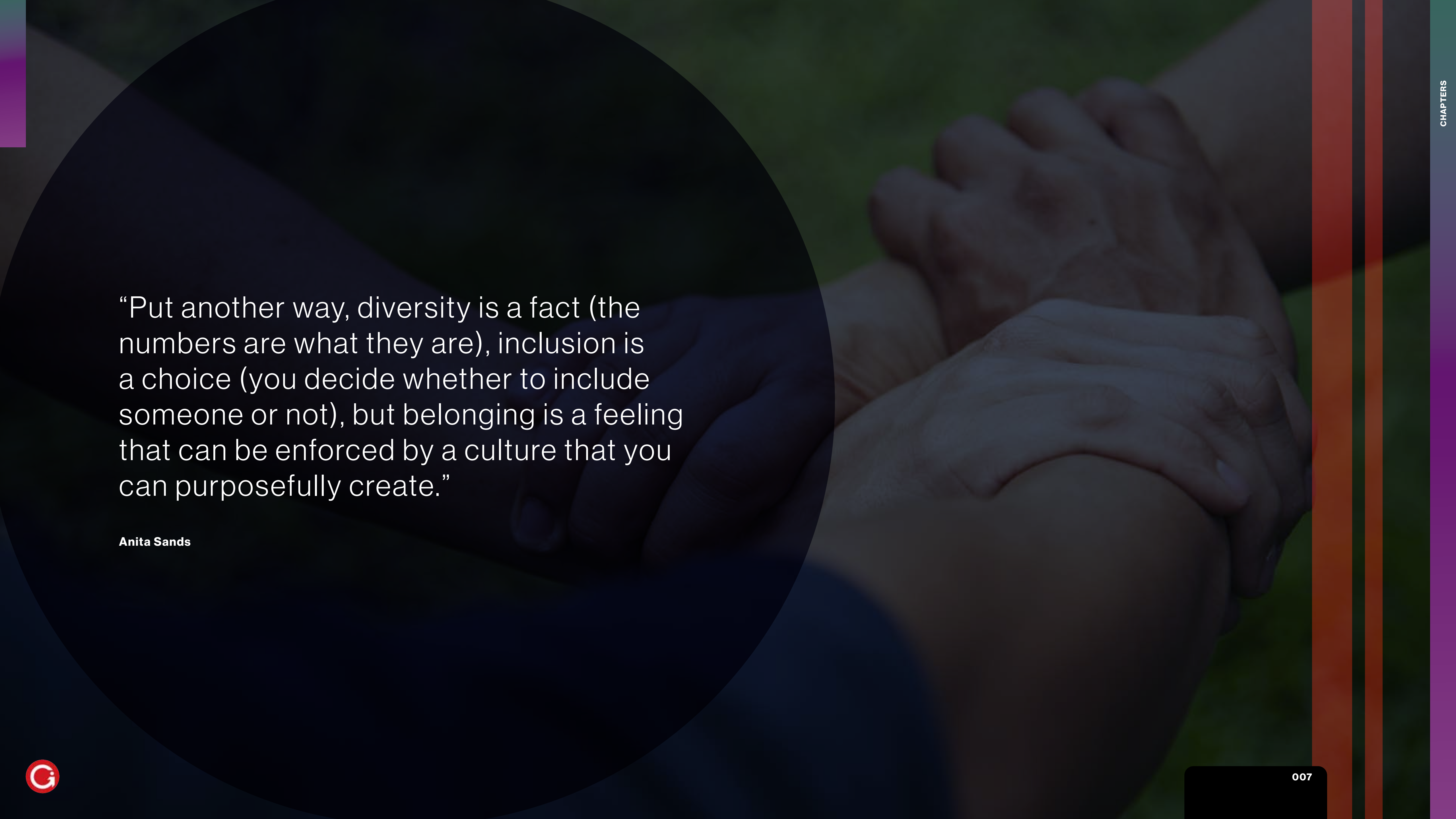to be accepted as a member
of a group.

**Whether it's family, friends, co-workers, devotees, or something else entirely, human beings have an 'inherent' desire to belong and be a part of something greater than themselves.**

But belonging is not a simple binary yes or no. To belong, or not belong, is a subjective experience that can be influenced by internal and external factors.

The pandemic both isolated and connected people across geographical and socio economic divides.

Yet at the same time **religious affiliation is declining**, we're facing a **epidemic of loneliness**, people are being displaced due to conflict, gentrification and climate change, and the promise of social media is now reinforcing rather than breaking down barriers between communities and groups.

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"Put another way, diversity is a fact (the numbers are what they are), inclusion is a choice (you decide whether to include someone or not), but belonging is a feeling that can be enforced by a culture that you can purposefully create."

**Anita Sands**

# DRIVERS
# **OF CHANGE**

→ In a year when the Collins Dictionary declared 'permacrisis' the word of 2022, there's a lot of conflicting forces driving change and impacting the future of belonging and inclusion.

**We've selected the 11 biggest macro influences and changes that are impacting how individuals and organisations can design, articulate and innovate around belonging and inclusion.**

If you want to use these drivers to kick start innovation now, we recommend combining them with the **dimensions of identity**.

Pick one identity and then work through each driver individually to see how that identity is being directly impacted by the driver of change.

# A GLOBALISED
# WORLD

# POST-
# COVID

**Populations are on the move.**

People are increasingly moving between cities, countries and continents, in search of potential careers, economic opportunity, or stability that they can't find elsewhere. Globalisation and the blurring of borders has created new avenues of migration.

Whilst the United Kingdom has always been multicultural (having historically seen large numbers of immigrants from its former colonies), net migration has been increasing since 2019 and now represents the **main driver of population growth**.

Communities are now having to learn how to cope with changing populations and new cultures. On the one hand, cultural exchange and new perspectives can lead to new ideas, innovation and tolerance. On the other hand, nationalism and culture clashes (real or otherwise) risk deepening social divides.

**Covid-19 shone a light on the best, and worst, of UK society. Communities came together to support the most vulnerable and protect those most at risk.**

We connected over online pub quizzes, virtual team activities and endless Zoom and Teams meetings. We made time for loved ones, whilst we confronted our own mortality.

But pandemic lockdowns also exposed inequalities in education, living standards, labour and health. School closures disrupted the learning of children, leading to lower attainment amongst the poorest. Mental health worsened for those groups (women and younger adults) who had poorer mental health pre-pandemic. Lockdowns and social distancing particularly reduced the ability of younger, lower-earning, and less

educated people to work.

As we enter the post-covid era, missed schooling and lower work experience could **push up inequalities**. The combined long-term implications of long-covid, high cortisol rates, lack of investment and paused screening programmes could see the NHS brought to its knees in months, not years. Whilst the positive community building seen during 2020/21 already feels like a distant memory for some groups.

Communities are now having to learn how to cope with changing populations and new cultures. On the one hand, cultural exchange and new perspectives can lead to new ideas, innovation and tolerance. On the other hand, nationalism and culture clashes (real or otherwise) risk deepening social divides.

# POST-
# **TRUTH**

# NEW
# **NICHES**

→

**In the wake of Trump's legacy of misinformation, distrust and fake news, widespread disbelief in conventional politics and scientific evidence is now the norm.**

It's becoming increasingly difficult to declare what is "true", and what isn't. Fake news has affected elections, referendums, and our response to the pandemic.

It continues to polarise people around the world. Unsupported beliefs have taken precedence over readily identifiable truths in discussions of health, science, and politics.

The rise of "influencers" combined with algorithmic funnelling has meant that opinions shared online can potentially **carry potent and real influence** - no matter how ill-informed, bizarre or incorrect.

**As trust and truth become increasingly fragile and decentralised - with Gen Z turning to peer-to-peer platforms like TikTok and Reddit for their news, information and facts, instead of old-school media - traditional social media is also becoming more fragmented.**

The TikTokification of online content is shifting content discovery away from a user's friendship networks towards something that's more algorithm-driven, resulting in consumers flocking to smaller, less-ad dominated platforms like Discord and Reddit.
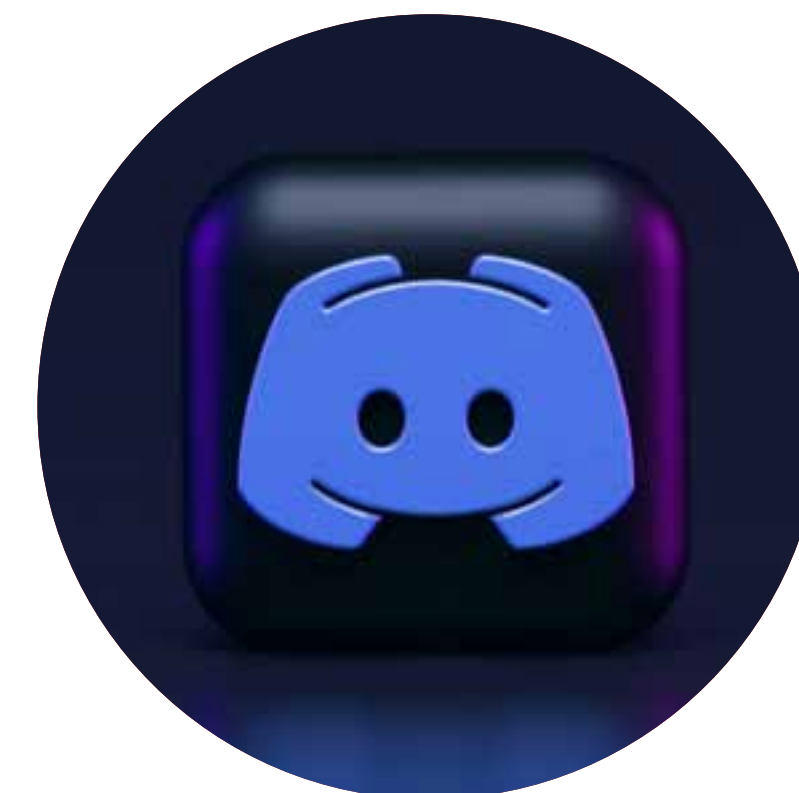
Combined, these new technologies and new trust models have fuelled a **rise in micro and niche communities and subcultures**, both online and IRL. From LARPing and tabletop gaming, to sub-groups about synesthesia and UFOs (Unfinished Knitting prOjects).

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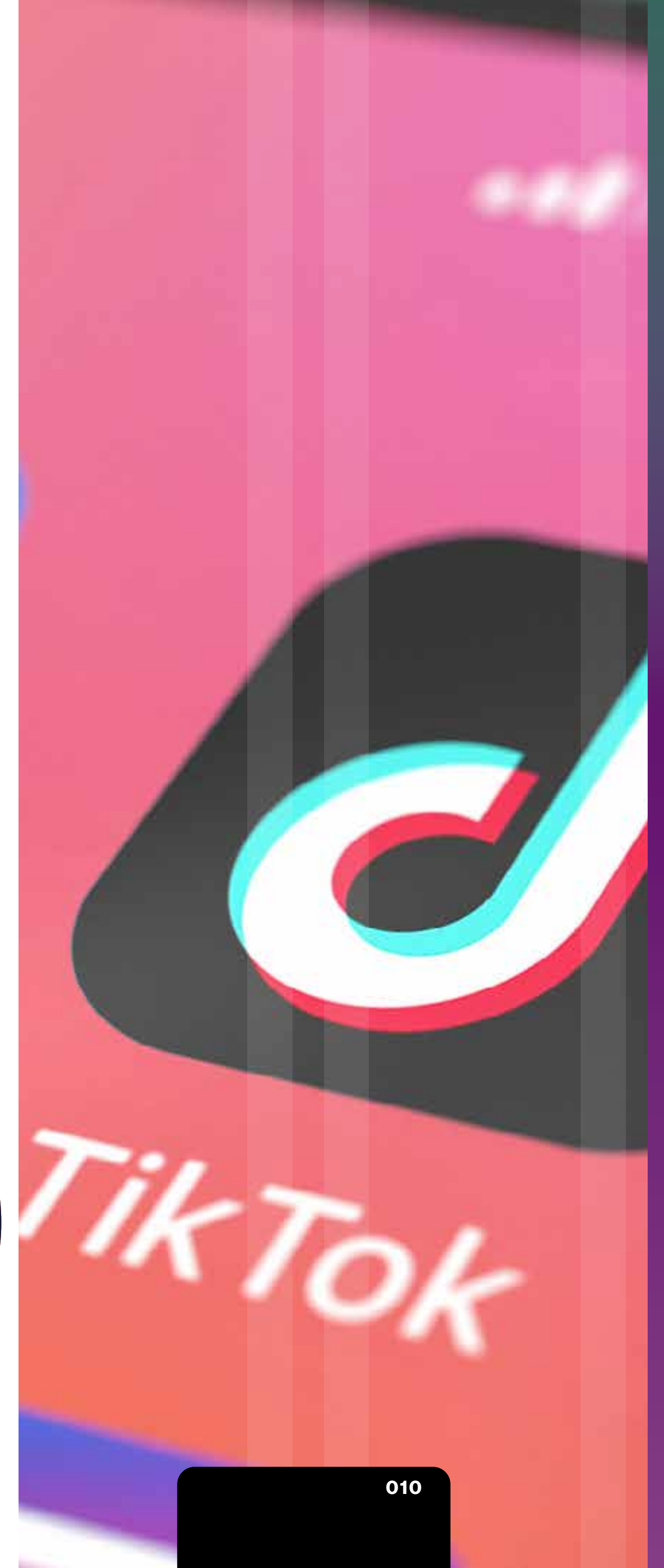
# RISE OF
# **EXTREMISM**

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The current political climate is marked by extremes. In the aftermath of Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency we've seen the rise of populist, nationalist and far-right politics in most European countries.

**Sweden's far-right party won a landmark victory, whilst a populist far-right party won Italy's general election.**

Closer to home, Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's catastrophic budget appeared to continue the conservative myth of trickle down economics, rather than actively **protecting the working class** from the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Whilst Truss and Kwarteng have been replaced by Sunak and Hunt, the crisis in UK politics continues to rumble on. Social divides are becoming deeper than ever, with no plan in place to tackle these issues, what is stopping us from reaching new extremes?
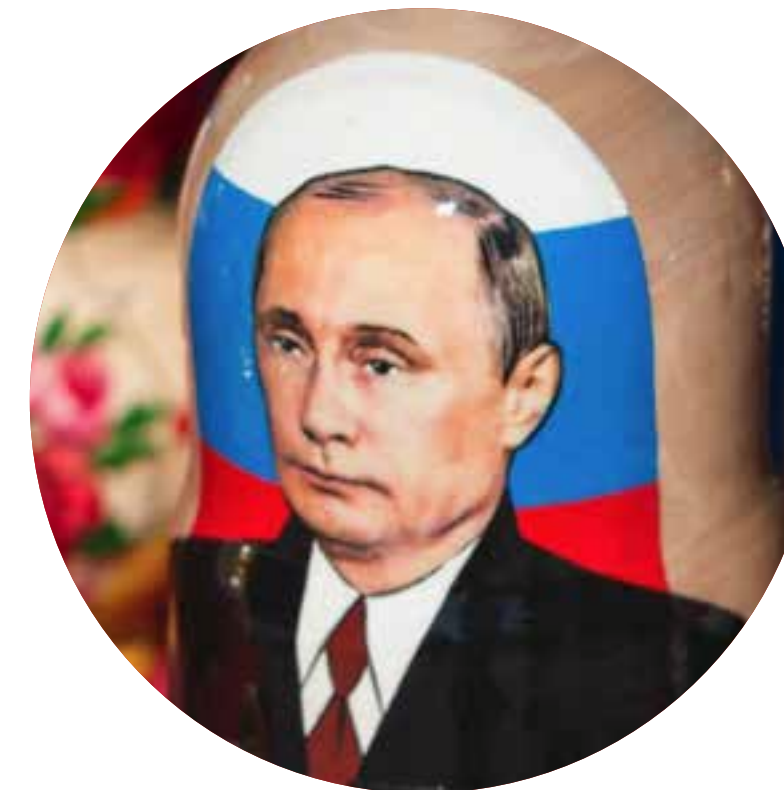
"We need to keep people fed. We need to keep them warm. If we get this wrong right now, then we get to the point where we start to risk civil unrest. When breadwinners cannot provide, anger brews and civil unrest brews - and I do not think we are very far off."

**Martin Lewis**

# THREATS
# **TO FREEDOM**

→ In the past year equality and freedom have taken a body blow. Around the world, the rights of women, LGBTQ+ people, and racial and ethnic groups are being challenged.

**Books are being banned from schools, whilst hate rhetoric and hate crimes are on the rise.**

Despite movements like BLM and #MeToo, we've seen the reversal of **Roe v. Wade**, a "**Don't Say Gay**" bill that is reminiscent of Don't Ask Don't Tell, and a crime bill in the UK that **borders on authoritarian**.

With Liz Truss' plan to repeal the Equality Act, it's clear this pattern stands to continue. Identity, self-expression and the freedoms many have been enjoyed for the last 2+ decades are under attack from an increasingly vocal and influential conservative minority.

# GLOBAL
# **PROTESTING**

# THE
# **WOKELASH**

→

**Protest movements are going global.**

We're in an era of new activism, with countless landmark protests happening over the past years.

With constant access to all the information in the world at their fingertips, people (particularly younger generations), are becoming more informed and involved in social movements.

From Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, to anti-mask and -vax marches and the Capitol Insurrection after Biden's election, groups across the political spectrum are standing up for their rights, and their opinions.

**The term 'woke' is at the centre of many of the fiercest political and cultural debates at the moment.**

Some people say being woke is a sign of awareness to social issues, others whip out the term as an insult.

Where once 'woke' was used to describe being alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice, now the term has been weaponised as part of the culture wars.

# WAR IN
# **UKRAINE**

# COST OF
# **LIVING CRISIS**

**For the first time in decades there is war in Europe.**

The European identity as a peaceful one that has developed past the need for war, has been challenged.

The image we have of refugees as 'other' is being challenged. Institutions like the European Union and NATO are being challenged, with people questioning the power of the bodies meant to protect them.

Over the coming years, during and after this conflict, Europeans will need to redefine how they see themselves fitting into the global community.

**For most Millennials, Gen X and Gen Alpha, they've lived through an unprecedented period of economic certainty and stability, with historically long periods of low inflation and low interest rates.**

Households who were previously getting by comfortably; switching providers, managing their budgets, are suddenly in a position where they simply can't afford to heat their homes and feed their families.

Escalating inflation, rising interest rates, fuel bills doubled from their 2020 figures (and that's with new government caps).

Brits are seeking leadership and change, at a time when the Conversative party was more focused on their own popularity contest. New radical movements like **Enough is Enough** and **Don't Pay UK** are stepping into the void, offering extreme alternatives to traditional politics.

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# END OF
# **AN ERA**

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The passing of Queen Elizabeth II brings to a close the second Elizabethan era. A period of great change and upheaval, but also surprising stability in the face of challenge.

**As King Charles III takes to the throne, the monarchy has to contend with not one, but potentially two independence referendums (Scotland and Wales) and a declining political situation in Northern Ireland.**

Plus an increasing number of countries planning referendums on whether to become republics, and challenges to the future role of the Commonwealth and its connection to the British monarchy.

How the modern monarchy chooses to navigate these pivots could well decide its fate as an institution.

## CASE STUDY

# THE QUEUE

## CASE STUDY

# WHAT IS IT?

Last month we saw thousands upon thousands of people line up to see the late Queen Elizabeth II lie in state, in what is now known as 'The Queue'.

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**With queue times lasting up to 33 hours, and the line snaking its way from Westminster all the way to Bermondsey, the world watched in fascination as people continued to join for days on end.**

"*Capitalism can best secure its future and win public support, the more its leaders are committed to purpose.*"
**Sam Knight, The New Yorker.**

# SO WHAT?

Whilst queuing may be a well-worn British stereotype; The Queue saw people joining from around the world, some flying in specifically to be able to join and pay their respects to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

**In the queue itself, people were handing out snacks, making new friends, or entertaining each other with songs and more.**

Of course, the majority of the people were there to pay their respects, but **many went out of fascination or the wish to be a part of something**.

With the death of a monarch that has served for as long as most people can remember, some people are looking for new things to unite under and new causes to drive them.

What we're taking away from this Queue is that millions of people are looking for community right now. As an organisation, now is the time to promote your cause by tapping in to this need.

# THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY

"Self-identification and how we identify ourselves is nuanced. Openly disclosing one's identity may be precarious, leading some to hide their identity and code-switch, or adjust behaviours, appearances, and language, among other traits, to avoid perceived negative consequences."

**Josh Loebner, global head of inclusive design at Wunderman Thompson**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WHAT
# IS IT?

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Belonging and inclusion begins with identity. It's how we represent ourselves, personally or professionally.

**Identity encompasses multiple dimensions. Age, race, gender, etc are often most central to personal identity and our current life experience.**

But there are also external and even organisational dimensions that can play a role in how an individual experiences discrimination, whether positive or negative.

To set the foundations for our sixth Paradigm Shift on Belonging and Inclusion, we want to outline the six dimensions of identity (race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity, disability, age, and socio-economic background) and how they are currently being impacted by macro trends and influences.

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

Each of these dimensions impacts our perspective in different ways. Understanding how identity changes our lived experiences is essential to creating inclusive products, programmes, and workplaces.

**These categories don't operate separate from each other, but tend to intersect and build on each other to create systems of oppression or exclusion.**

It's equally as important to recognise how these categories interact with each other as it is to understand how they operate individually. Because people do not fit neatly into categories (*however much we try to create segmentations to serve exactly that purpose*).

# RACE AND
# **ETHNICITY**

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Since the 2020 murder of George Floyd, race and ethnicity have been everywhere. The global outrage that followed translated into notable progress for the inclusion of underrepresented racial groups (URGs). However, two years later the question now is, is this progress meaningful and sustainable?

**Companies are becoming less strict on their own diversity schemes, and many have rolled back the marketing, product, policy, and innovation efforts they had made.**

Even more significant, is the fact that **hate crimes are on the rise**. Systemic racism and day-to-day racism are still prevalent across most countries.

Serious progress is needed to tackle the disadvantages experienced by BIPOC individuals across economic opportunities, healthcare and education.

These individuals are **more likely to be incarcerated**, **suffer from mental health problems**, **be passed over for promotions**, **receive inadequate healthcare**, and **felt the effects of COVID-19 more than other groups**.

With **higher productivity** in racially diverse workplaces, companies and charities are missing a trick by failing to include BIPOC voices in innovation.
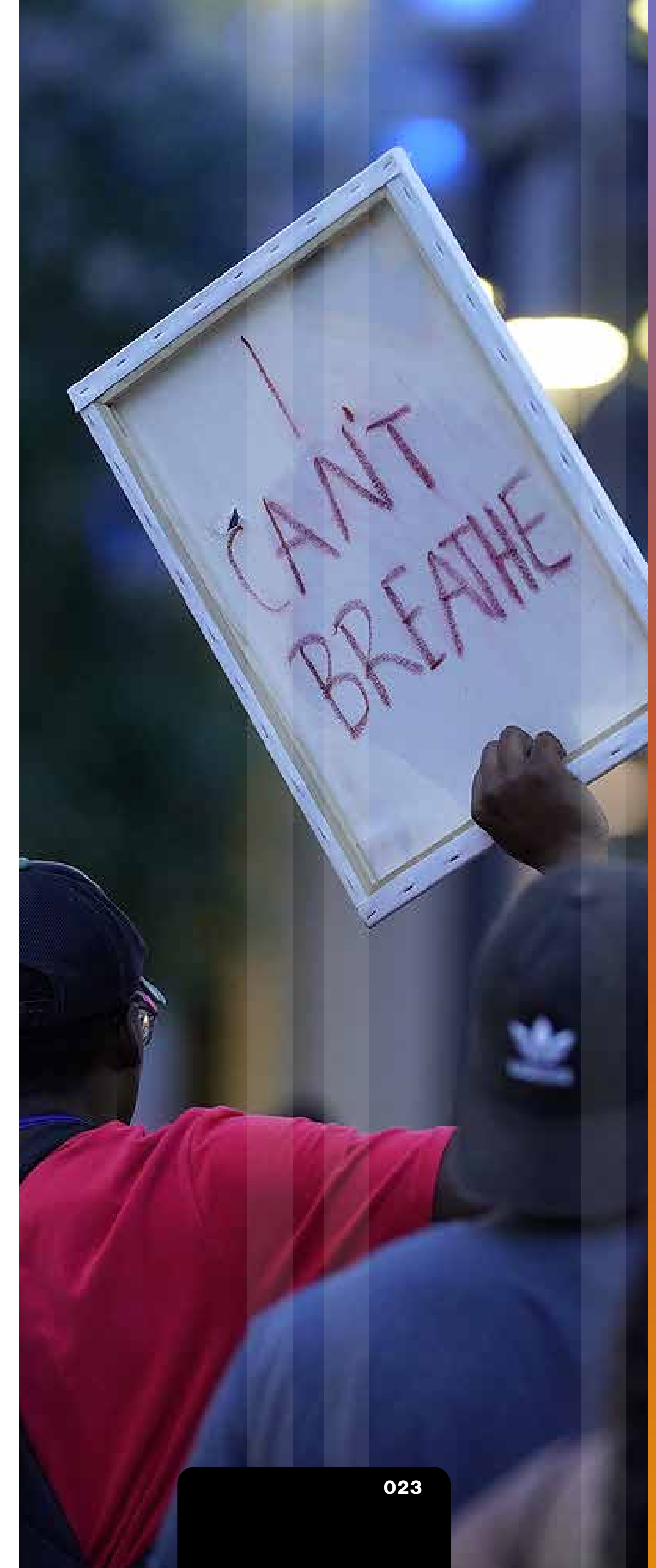
# SEXUAL
# **ORIENTATION**

→ Same-sex marriage remains illegal in the majority of the world, despite significant progress on LGBTQ+ rights. 69 UN member states still criminalise same-sex relations.

**In countries where same-sex marriage and relations are legal, these rights are in jeopardy, with bills like Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' law and Texan laws that prohibit gender-affirming care for trans children.**

At work, LGBTQ+ people tend to feel marginalised and feel pressured into code-switching to fly under the radar.

It's no surprise then, that LGBTQ+ people have **higher rates of mental health problems and face further medical discrimination**.

The majority of inclusive marketing takes place during Pride month, with very few marketers engaging with the community outside of this period, and often being accused of **rainbow-washing** and tokenistic support.

# GENDER AND
# **GENDER IDENTITY**

→

Similar to sexual orientation, the past decades have seen significant progress for gender parity, but this seems to be stalling in recent years (or in some cases, even regressing). Inequality remains present in workplaces, law, education and culture.

**The most glaring example of this is clearly the reversal of Roe v Wade in the United States, a landmark decision that risks the reproductive equality of people with uteruses, and may trigger similar regressions in other countries.**

Public spaces aren't safe for many women, trans and non-binary people alike, as evidenced by the **murder of Sarah Everard** last year, and the current protests over the **death of Mahsa Amini** for breaking Iranian hijab laws. 2021 saw at least 57 murders globally of transgender or gender non-conforming people, **most of which went unreported** (or misreported).

At work, the **pandemic reversed a lot of progress** that had been made in terms of economic equity. Millions of women were forced to leave the labour market due to the uneven burden of domestic work and childcare.

Reports also show that **sexual harassment in the workplace continues to be prevalent**, especially when working from home.

Transgender, non-binary, and gender-fluid people experience all this and more, with the number of trans people openly identifying at work decreasing **by over 10% in the past five years**.

Landmark case **Taylor v Jaguar Land Rover** (2020) highlighted just how important inclusive practices are when it comes to supporting people of all gender identities. Issues like **gender-neutral bathrooms** and **pronouns** need to be addressed. Achieving gender equity in the workplace means inclusivity for all sides of the gender identity spectrum, not just cisgender people.

# DISABILITY

→ Globally, almost a billion people identify as disabled - a number that is growing as people feel more comfortable self reporting, social stigma decreases and public spaces become more inclusive.

**Despite this rapidly growing demographic, few companies are tapping into the potential.**

Even in the workplace, **only 4% of companies include disability in their D&I** strategies, even though 90% of companies claim to prioritise inclusion.

Disabled individuals often report a **lack of workplace support** for their needs, particularly with the end of remote working in sight.

There's a growing market for making places, products and experiences more accessible and inclusive, that relatively few businesses are investing in as of yet.

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# AGE

**Whilst anyone can be a victim of ageism (younger people are often stereotyped as being inexperienced or immature, for example), it primarily impacts older generations.**

People aged over 50 tend to feel excluded from culture and society, and **left behind** in work places. They're also more likely to be passed over for promotions, and are often seen as 'past their prime' and therefore a poor long-term investment for companies. Brands tend to **exclude older generations from their marketing** and or promote inaccurate stereotypes of ageing.

This is a relatively untapped market and many companies and charities are missing out on potential revenue by neglecting older generations. If you'd like to know more about the Future of Ageing, find our last Paradigm Shift report **here**.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC
# BACKGROUND

**Class, income, education, location, and more, are all a part of socio-economic discrimination; maybe the most common form of discrimination today.**

Many of these categories are tied to other dimensions of identity. Low-income individuals typically experience low-quality work, limited progression opportunities and low mobility in the workforce, as well as lower standards of healthcare, education, living, nutrition **and more**.

The stigma surrounding low-incomes is high, and is challenging to address given the massive range of contributing and inter-related factors. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be prioritising innovation and designing for inclusion.
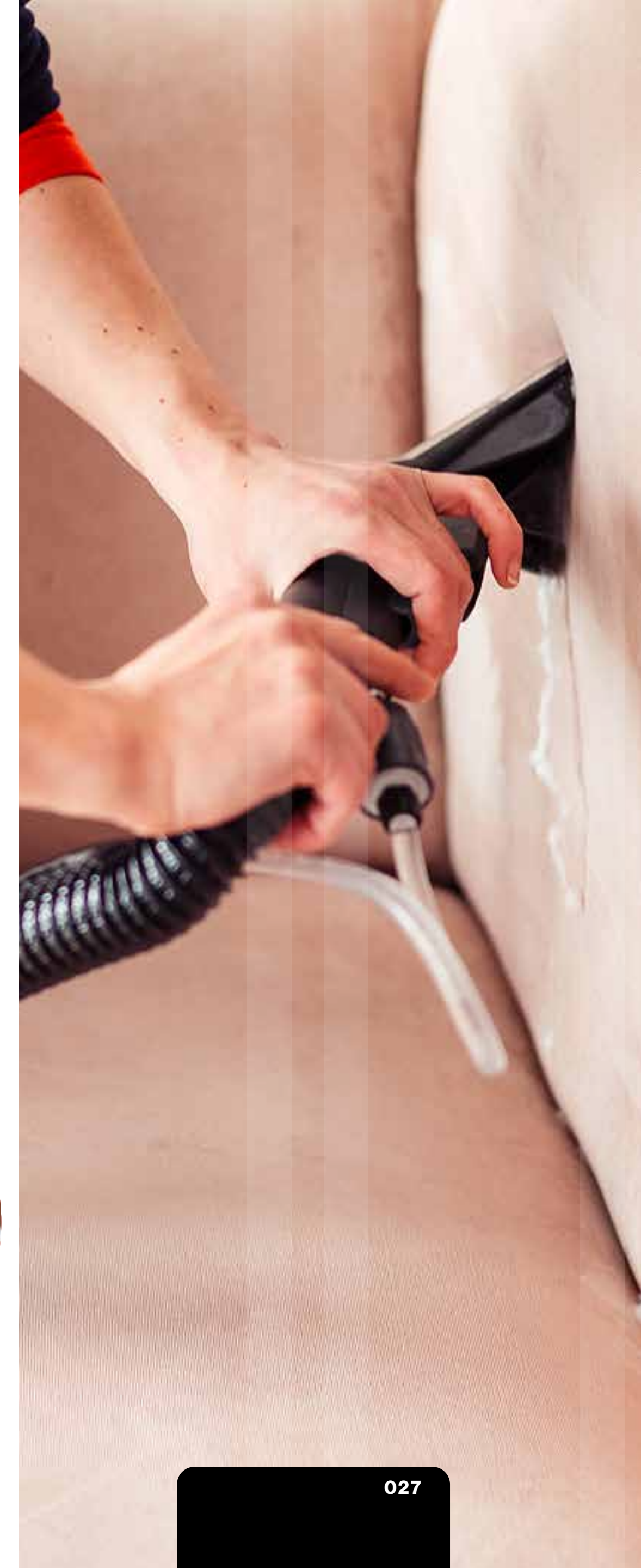
# REPRESENTATION MATTERS

"It's hard as a young person of a different ethnicity or background to look at the TV and not see anyone who looks like you. Representation is very important."

**Zendaya**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WHAT
# IS IT?

In a world that is so often centred on the 'standard' and has little room for deviation, representation can help break down barriers for marginalised communities.

**Sadly, a lot of the media we consume still lacks representation of many kinds. Too frequently media fails to reflect an accurate representation of the world back at us and, by focusing on certain demographics, it risks excluding whole swathes of society.**

Ultimately, if people don't see themselves reflected in the world around them, they risk internalising biases or boundaries.

If people never see others represented, they won't have the understanding needed to be part of an inclusive society.

**Representation gives us a tool for bridging these gaps and divides.**

People of minority groups often **struggle with identity development**, referencing the lack of media representation as negatively impacting their self esteem, and creating shameful relationships with aspects of themselves.

**Representing all dimensions of identity is key to validating people's lived experiences and reducing stereotypes**.

In a multicultural society, it's crucial for everyone's development to amplify the voices of all of us.

# WHY SHOULD
# **I CARE?**

→

## Business and/or marketing largely hinges on using ideas of community and belonging to engage target audiences.

**Representation allows organisations to cast a wider net across various communities and build more meaningful connections with more audiences. We're not just talking about a new EDI term, there's plenty of data to back up the importance of representation.**

Though relatively simple to implement, representation can have a huge impact. From diversifying casting for marketing and content, to ensuring your beneficiaries are represented in the writers room can change the narrative, direction and focus of innovation. Research shows that diverse teams are more likely to think creatively and be ahead of the curve.

From a financial point of view, representation allows organisations to cast a wider net across **various markets**, and engage valuable customer-bases that may feel excluded from mainstream products or campaigns.

Simply put: diversity sells. Recently, the median global box office has been highest for **films featuring more than 20% minority casts**. Over 60% of consumers are now **'belief-driven' buyers**, who choose what they consume based on their societal stances.

This is particularly important to young social media users, 87% of whom believe **media and advertising has to be inclusive in its representation**. On top of that, more than half of consumers are more likely to stay **loyal to brands they consider socially responsible**, and some minorities

are willing to **pay up to 20% more for a product they consider socially responsible**.

But watch out - diversity for diversity's sake, say **tokenistic** or inauthentic representation, won't get you far with modern consumers either. It's not just about the messaging - all of the touch points matter, including the team making the content, and the social impact derived from it.

Organisations that challenge themselves on representation have the opportunity to authentically represent their communities and tap into loyal and motivated supporters.

# SLICE
# **OF LIFE**

# MS
# **MARVEL**

**Whilst representation has increased in recent years, we've seen a clear pattern of adversity and struggle.**

Think of how many LGBTQ+ characters in film or TV die in their stories (so common it's become known as the '**bury your gays**' trope), or how **few rom-coms have POC main characters**.

Audiences are tired of seeing only the hardships of their identity represented and yearn for uplifting, 'normal' representation.

In response, we're now seeing an increase in 'slice of life' representation.

**The Disney+ TV show Ms Marvel has recently done this very effectively.**

Off the back of similarly successful slice of life representations like **Black Panther** and **Crazy Rich Asians**, Ms Marvel reimagines a well-known all-American superhero as a second generation Pakistani American Muslim immigrant.

The show has received **copious amounts of praise** for challenging the oppressed Muslim woman stereotype, and breaking Islamophobic ideas about Muslim immigrants in the US. Islam is neither glorified nor demonised, it just exists in some people's lives, and does not in others, just as it is in the real world.

The hope is that Ms Marvel will allow people to see themselves as having **'superhero' potential** in their everyday lives, and be an invitation for more content that authentically represents different aspects of community.

# SAINSBURY'S

# GOOGLE

**The most innocuous example of slice of life representation is simply diverse casts in marketing campaigns.**

British supermarket chain Sainsburys **featured a black family** for the first time in its 2020 Christmas campaign - not exactly revolutionary, but still crucial to normalising different cultures.

Predictably, there was swift backlash arguing that the campaign was not representative of a mostly-White Britain (ignoring the fact that all previous campaigns were all-White, also not representative of the multicultural country).

Sainsburys stuck to its guns and replied with a short but sweet statement reemphasising its aim to "represent a modern Britain, which has a diverse range of communities."

**The 2021 Google campaign 'Helping you help them' shows a migrant father with limited English skills using Google search to introduce his daughter to Australian football.**
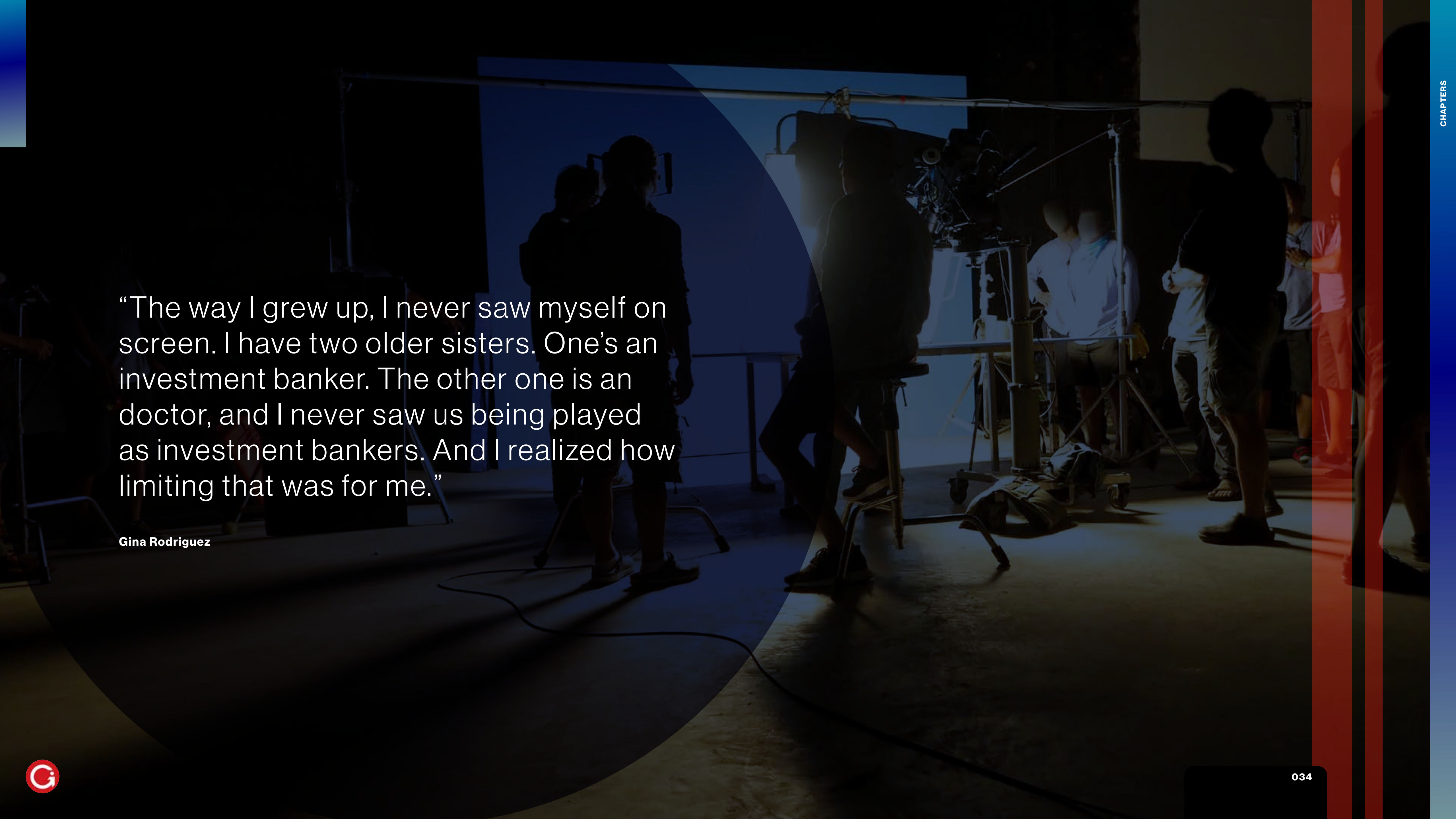
The ad shows the relatable day-to-day for many people, and was widely praised for reflecting both a universal experience of parenting whilst being a uniquely migrant experience at its core.

The ad does a wonderful job of tapping into both the importance of family in Australian society, as well as Aussie Rules as a community-building feature of Australian life.

By tying the two together, Google presents a heartwarming campaign that strives to break down barriers between migrant families and the communities they arrive into.
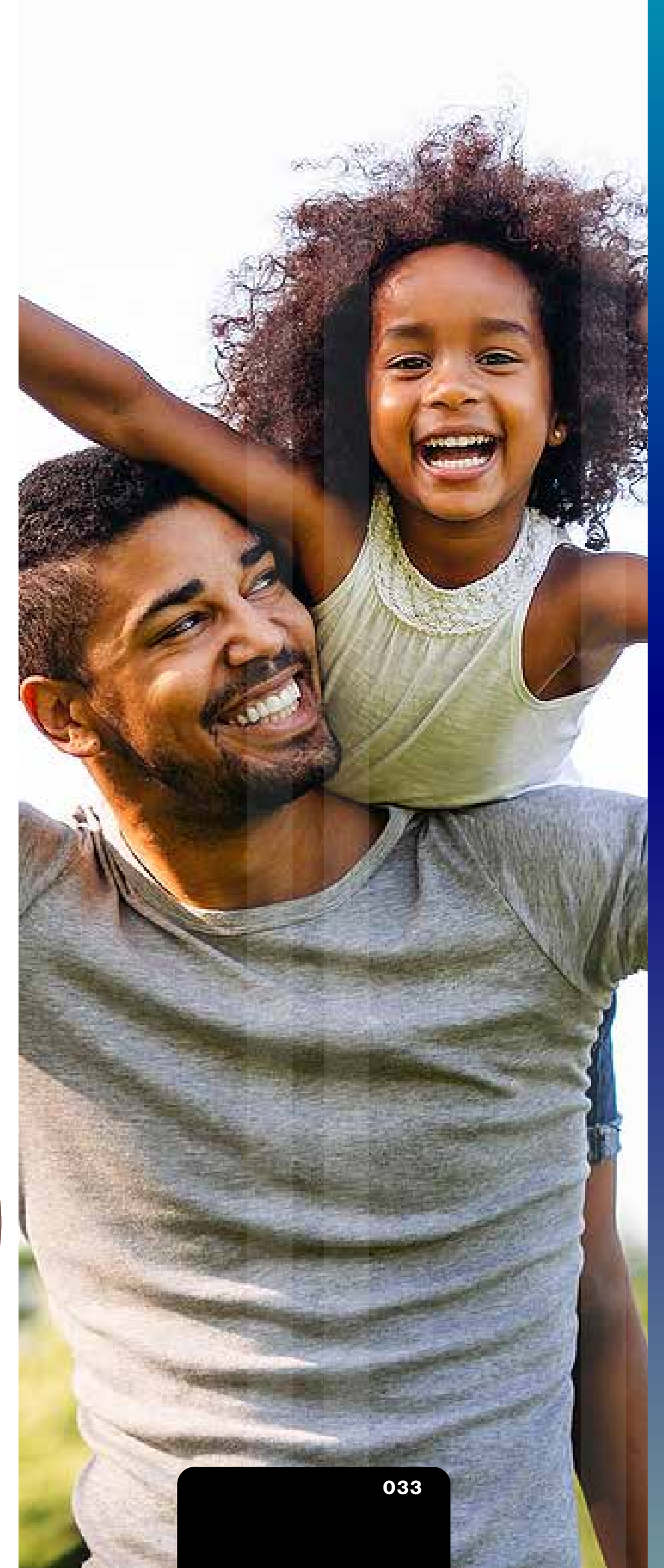
"The way I grew up, I never saw myself on screen. I have two older sisters. One's an investment banker. The other one is an doctor, and I never saw us being played as investment bankers. And I realized how limiting that was for me."

**Gina Rodriguez**

# IDENTIFYING
# **A PROBLEM**

# FRIDA
# **MOM**

→

**Other effective forms of representation identify a problem specific to a marginalised community, and centre their brand or marketing around solving this problem.**

Not only do these brands deliver social impact by offering real-world solutions to minority-experienced problems, they normalise the struggles by depicting them in their promotional materials.

**Postpartum recovery product brand Frida Mom recently received a world of praise for their 'fourth trimester' campaign.**

The campaign centred around a short film, which depicted the realities of breastfeeding and introduced its new line of breast care products.

The brand identifies the difficulty that many postpartum women have with breastfeeding. From raw or clogged nipples to engorgement and mastitis, the experience is incredibly hard for many women.

At the same time, there's a lot of societal pressure to persist, with formula being painted as a 'worse' alternative. As a consequence, many women struggle with helplessness and feelings of inadequacy throughout the process.

Many marketing campaigns directed at women's issues in this way tend to either sanitise or glamorise the experience.

With campaigns like **blue period blood** being the norm, Frida's stripped-back, realistic approach is a breath of fresh air. The ad racked up more than two million views on YouTube, generated over two billion earned impressions and quadrupled the traffic to Frida's website.

# FENTY
# **BEAUTY**

# ONLINE
# **REPRESENTATION**

→

**Few brands can claim they single handedly shifted an entire industry towards increased inclusivity.**

**Fenty Beauty** is one of the few that has had such a groundbreaking impact.

The launch of the makeup line with forty available shades (now fifty) shook up the makeup industry. Many brands before Fenty typically lacked products in darker shades and were formulated specifically for white skin textures.

Fenty's more inclusive approach put pressure on other cosmetic brands to follow suit, and generated €500million in sales within its first year.

Time magazine named Fenty Beauty the Best Invention of 2017, calling its "unabashed celebration of inclusivity" an "unprecedented spotlight on the need for diverse beauty products."

**Dove x Women in Games x Unreal Engine**

In 2021 it was estimated that people spend on average 7 hours online every day. In these spaces human values and cultural norms are embedded in the design and use of technology.

For example, many online video games let people create their own avatars, building on options based on professions and race (ie. elf, warrior, healer). The identity markers that someone picks for their avatar will build the character's qualities and appearance, each coming with their own strengths and weaknesses.

If you'd like to read more about what influences virtual identity-building, and what this means for the future of brands, read our article on **identity in the metaverse**.

**Research** has shown that characters that are female, or of certain races, tend to be statistically disadvantaged in video games. Typically, they are weaker, slower, or have fewer useful skills. On top of that, there's simply fewer options when looking to play as, for example, a woman.

In response, Women in Games, the game studio Unreal Engine, and toiletry brand Dove, have **partnered** to create a library of avatars compatible with multiple games, showcasing a more "authentic, diverse, and inclusive" representation of women and beauty in video games. Similar to other programmes looking to diversify avatar creation, the hope is that the representation will not only boost self-esteem amongst players, but also help minorities feel more included within STEM.

# KIDS
# **AND TEENS**

**Seeing representation from a young age onwards is the best way to not only boost children's confidence and ambition, but also help unlearn stereotypes before they're ingrained.**

More and more children's brands are becoming more inclusive, hoping to boost self-esteem of their young consumers when they recognise themselves on-screen or in the toys they're playing with. But which brands are driving this change?

# BARBIE
# **BY MATTEL**

**Ever since Barbie was launched, she's become an iconic image of 'femininity'.**

Recognisably white, blonde, thin, and dressed in pink, Barbie has been one of the most popular children's toys to have existed in the past hundred years.

However, seven years ago Barbie was a brand in crisis. Mattel seemed convinced declining sales were due to a failure to keep up with the times. The brand had seen multiple questionable pushes to diversify Barbie in the past.

From the making of 'Oriental' Barbie a decade after the global push to recognise the term as offensive, to the inclusion of BIPOC dolls exclusively as "friends of Barbie" rather than Barbie herself - these attempts were largely unsuccessful. The implicit message was simply: "**You can be anything, but only if you're white and blonde.**"

With sales in freefall, Mattel began trying to diversify in earnest, and is now one of the more inclusive children's toys available on the market. Barbie now exists in a variety of skin tones and hair fibres, body types, in a wheelchair or with a prosthetic arm, wearing a hijab, and more. Most recently, Mattel released Barbie with a cochlear implant and Ken with vitiligo.

The push was clearly worth it, as Mattel generated **$1.5billion** in revenue from Barbie in 2020. Beyond that, they're allowing more and more kids to end up with a doll that actually looks like them. Hopefully, children will learn from Barbie that they **can** be anything - regardless of who they are.

# SESAME
# **STREET**

→

Children's TV programme Sesame Street has diversity as its core aim, with much of its programme focussing on teaching children about diversity and inclusion. Although it's had a relatively diverse human cast, as well as multiple segments about diversity represented through muppets, the programme hit the news in 2020 for adding black Muppets to its lineup for the first time ever.

**Sesame Street combined the new addition with a town hall organised together with CNN, just weeks after the killing of George Floyd, called "Coming Together, Standing Up to Racism", where kids, muppets and experts discussed racism in child friendly terms.**

With its considered and well-researched representation, Sesame Street is miles ahead of other children's TV shows. Especially considering the added social impact that initiatives like the town halls have. Beyond the newly added black Muppets, there's plenty of other groundbreaking examples.

There's HIV+ **Muppet Kami**, who appears in the South African version and teaches kids that being friends with HIV+ children isn't scary, and **Julia, an autistic muppet**, teaching kids how autistic people communicate or process emotions.

The representation Sesame Street creates stands out because of their extensive research. Being able to authentically engage with the local contexts of each of their 30+ versions is a remarkable feat. As one of the most recognisable children's programmes to date, it's clear the strategy paid off.

# SO
# WHAT?

### 1. EXPLORE –
### UNEXPECTED
### COLLABORATIONS

Take inspiration from campaigns like Dove x Women in Games x Unreal Engine. Who can you partner with to promote the intersectional impact of your brand and mission? What unique asset or knowledge could you bring to partnership?

### 2. INVEST –
### DIVERSITY

Invest in diversifying your own team. There's no authentic representation without authentic voices coming from within. If you're trying to tap into new audiences, making sure you've got the necessary input is what will allow you to create real impact instead of tokenistic/mis-representation. We've said it before - *who is in your writers room?*

### 3. INNOVATE –
### THROW OUT
### THE TEMPLATE

There's no template for truly representative advertising. Real representation requires innovative thinking from the ground up every time. Consumers will know if you're being lazy, and they'll know if you're repackaging a campaign previously used on a different demographic. Representation leaves no room for lazy campaigns, lazy innovation and lazy creative.

### 4. ENGAGE –
### MARGINALISED
### GROUPS

Marginalised groups represent large parts of the market that are craving stories and products tailor-made for them. Identifying the right community and building a unique campaign could win you the loyalty of a whole new section of consumers. The key is building authentic representation with and for these groups **now**, before the market becomes oversaturated.

**CASE STUDY**

# IDENTITY IN THE METAVERSE

**CASE STUDY**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

## Identity in the Metaverse
In late 2021, Nike opened <u>Nikeland</u>, a metaverse version of its online store.

→

**Now, almost a year later, millions of people have visited the virtual space.**

Built in Roblox (not technically a metaverse, but the closest alternative we have now), *Nikeland* allows users to try on digital versions of its products, as well as incorporating some mini-games.

They've even released their first official Nike-branded NFT.

# SO
# WHAT?

*The metaverse isn't technically here yet*, but there's already plenty of speculation about what identity within it will look like. In theory, Web3 will represent a new way of existing online, beyond what platforms like TikTok and Instagram offer now.

**The metaverse will be built on blockchain infrastructure, giving its users greater ownership rights over their own data, making it easier to decide what information you share with others.**

**This will give users more influence over how they represent themselves online**,

and can even allow them to have multiple online identities (work, personal, social personas etc). All of these identities are separate from, but built upon the existence of a real-world identity.

Reports show that younger generations are seeing this as a new opportunity to **reinvent themselves**, and many already

think that digital items like clothing and artwork represent parts of their identity.

In the metaverse, **digital items will likely be fundamental to building identity**, just like material items are important in the real world. Without the same barriers associated with aspects of real-world identity, our **digital**

**personas will be able to realise goals that they were unable to in real life**. We'll be able to **find new communities**, beyond the ones that exist in the real-world.

*So what does this new way of building identity and community mean for brands and organisations? How can people choose to represent your brand in the way they represent themselves?*

**CASE STUDY**

# SO WHAT?

Although the actual metaverse doesn't exist yet, its predecessors are in full swing (though relatively unsaturated as a market).

→

**There's a million ways of interacting with new online identities and communities, some of which are already being explored, and some of which we won't be able to predict until the metaverse is actually up and running.**

The most obvious way that organisations can interact with people's new identities is through **Direct to Avatar (D2A)** transactions. This means turning real-life products into digitised versions of themselves, and **selling them to avatars**.

It presents a new platform for selling products, which is essentially identical to how an online or physical store works now, except the products are digital.

Companies and organisations that promote non-digitiseable products need to get a bit more creative. Any campaign in the real-world can be transplanted into the metaverse (think virtual billboards), but your real-life campaign won't necessarily translate into the digital space.
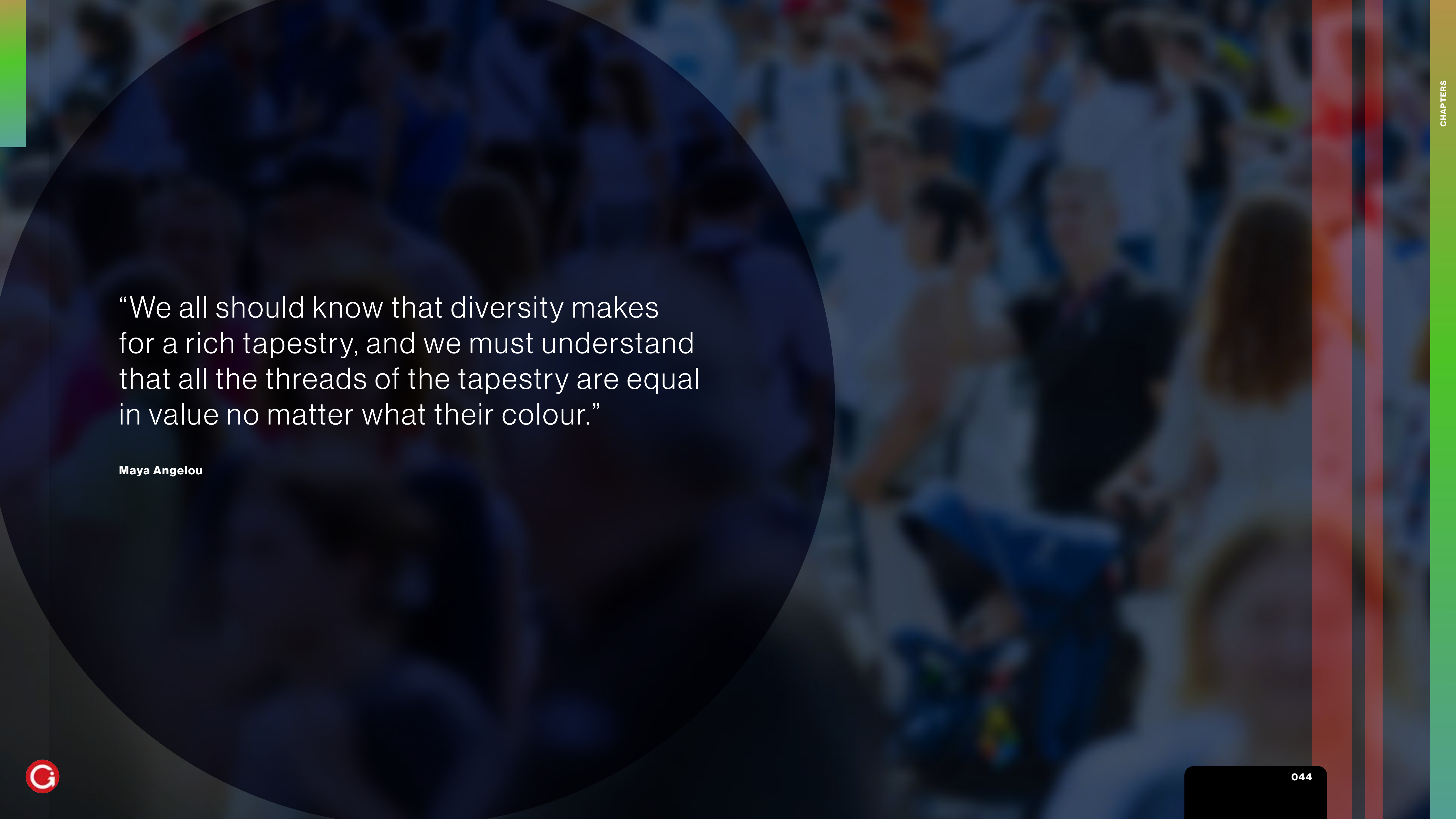
Virtual campaign events in the form of sponsored metaverse events, from **online games** to **concerts**, are ways to broaden revenue streams. Working with **AI-generated influencers** is the metaverse version of a brand partnership.

There's a million different ways, all of them a **new opportunity** to engage with younger consumers in what may become their primary social environment.

Organisations should look at the metaverse as an opportunity to go beyond what's possible in the physical world. **Now is the time for creative and bold thinking**.

# THE FUTURE OF EDI

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour."

**Maya Angelou**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

→

EDI, DEI, or even D&I. Whatever you call it, diversity, inclusion and equity are an important part of any workplace. It spans everything from finding the right people and talent to hire, to retaining them by seamlessly integrating them into the office.

**The Black Lives Matter movement lit a proverbial fire under employers to get their houses in order. Charities raced to implement EDI strategies, recruit D&I leads and convene round tables and working groups to discuss internal issues and challenges.**

But is the momentum on EDI already waning? Looking ahead to 2023, we'd suggest not. One of the biggest trends we're likely to see in 2023 is a renewed emphasis on creating belonging in the workplace, with some people even **floating the idea of DEIB(elonging) instead of DEI** - and, luckily, we cover exactly that **right here**!

This week, we're diving into the finer details of how to maximise the impact of your EDI programme.

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

The state of EDI in the third sector isn't where it should be. This year, a report by the Association of Charitable Foundations found that D&I is the area that organisations have the "furthest to travel" in, and there's still more middle class white women called Lucy working in the third sector than people of colour.

**Despite good intentions across the sector, a lot of current EDI programmes end up looking more like PR exercises and insurance policies.**

We don't want to think of EDI as just a series of buzzwords we throw around to look good to our employees, supporters, and stakeholders. The world is becoming more diverse, so we want our workplaces to truly reflect that.

In theory, EDI is meant to make sure that all our employees feel supported, welcome, and safe at work. In practice, it should mean the same thing. Of course, there's the added bonus that diverse and inclusive teams are more **innovative, creative, and productive**.

But EDI isn't just about having a diverse workforce for the sake of having a diverse workforce - it's about being able to understand and reflect the diversity of the world we're operating in.

How are we meant to design for a diverse world if we aren't equipped to fully understand the diversity of lived experiences?

Getting your own house in order - showing your employees that they belong - will give them a model to replicate for your supporters.

# RESTRUCTURE

→ In 2019, #CharitySoWhite sparked a country-wide conversation about institutional racism in the charity sector.

**The campaign, started by the self-appointed guard dog of BAME communities in the third sector, created space to have a much-needed discussion about ingrained racism that is a day-to-day reality for many employees, stakeholders, and supporters of the sector alike.**

And yet, in the three years since then, the sector **hasn't made much progress**. Even just a few months ago, Wellcome, the UK's richest charity, **was found to have let institutional racism "fester"** in their organisation.

The scale of change **that is needed is large** - archaic, divisive and discriminatory traditions drive many of the organisational structures, relationships between charity and community, the people and values that are considered important, the data we uncover, and much more.

Hiring a singular D&I lead (who is most likely underfunded and short on time) to fix all of this is a bit of a tall order. Pouring money into an EDI programme that stands alone next to the rest of the organisation isn't going to work.

It's going to take a concerted effort to restructure every aspect of the organisation, from where accountability lies, to transparency, workers rights, processes and practice, hierarchy, and **basically everything else**.

# SUPPORTING
# **IDENTITIES**

→

This is the <u>simple stuff we should all be getting right in the first place</u>. Globally, people are grappling with new dynamics of inclusivity and representation across the board.

**In a workplace, it's important we're ahead of the curve. This is where people spend a large chunk of their lives - it's important to make it a safe space.**

From having **adequate healthcare or mental health support for transitioning individuals**, to having the **proper accessibility programmes in place for all your employees** (and no, this isn't just making sure you have wheelchair access to your office, it's also making sure you have the **appropriate setup for neurodivergent employees**), you want to have the appropriate measures in place to support everyone across different identities.

And it's not just about supporting different identities at work, it's also about how you're supporting these identities in the services you provide, the way you interact with your supporters and stakeholders, and your values as an organisation. **The way you're supporting your own employees through EDI will reflect how you ultimately design for diversity, equity and inclusion**.

# SUPPORTING
# **IDENTITIES**

→

It's worth revisiting our article about the six dimensions of identity here, where we cover some of the macro trends and influences that are impacting how identity plays out in lived experiences. But, for your convenience, here are some of the key takeaways:

**1.** **RACE & ETHNICITY:**

As we mention above, the 2020 murder of George Floyd kickstarted a society-wide conversation about race and ethnicity, with some notable progress for inclusion of underrepresented racial groups (URGs).

Two years on, it seems that the progress **has not been sustainable**. **Microaggressions are common in charity working environments**, whilst **URGs struggle more with mental health problems** and **are often passed over for promotions**.

**2.** **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:**

At work, LGBTQ+ people **tend to feel marginalised and pressured into code-switching** - no surprise then that they face higher rates of mental health problems (**specifically attributed to work**).

With a lot of events focussed around pride month, it's important to remember that LGBTQ+ employees are LGBTQ+ all year round.

**3.** **GENDER AND GENDER IDENTITY:**

Gender and Gender Identity: The past decade has seen significant progress for gender equality in the workplace. Yet, the pandemic **reversed a lot of progress** that had been made. Uneven burdens of domestic work and childcare continue to force women out of the labour market, and sexual harassment in the workplace remains prevalent (**especially when working from home** - a new problem for the hybrid workplace).

Meanwhile, transgender, non-binary, and gender-fluid people experience all this and more, with the number of trans people openly identifying at work **decreasing by over 10% in the past five years**. This space remains in need of progress.

# SUPPORTING
# **IDENTITIES**

→

## **4.** DISABILITY:

The number of people identifying at disabled is growing, as people are feeling more comfortable self reporting. **But only 4% of companies include disability in their D&I strategies**. There's a widely-reported **lack of workplace support** for the needs of disabled employees, particularly as our understanding of disabilities grows.

## **5.** AGE:

People aged over 50 tend to **feel excluded and left behind in both society and work**. They're often seen as a poor long-term investment for companies - instead of the human beings they actually are. **Brands and organisations also tend to exclude older generations from their marketing**, and/or promote inaccurate stereotypes of aging.

## **6.** SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND:

Low-income individuals are more likely to **experience low-quality work, limited progression, and low mobility**; issues which are compounded when it's a generational pattern.

It's a challenge to address given the massive range of contributing and inter-related factors that can contribute to this problem, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be prioritising and designing for inclusion.

# AI IN THE
# **WORKPLACE**

→

AI in the workplace has gotten a bad rep over the past years. It should've taken the human bias out of hiring and office culture itself, but instead it's been shown to double down on this bias.

**In 2018, Amazon had to scrap its AI recruiting tool for being biased against women, and the Harvard Business Review famously found that AI recruiting algorithms have a strong anti-POC bias.**

AI replicates the data it learnt from, so if your office has a history of hiring white men with a degree from a Russell Group university, your AI is going to target exactly those people over and over again.

But expect this to be changing in the near future - in fact, **it already is**. Now that we're aware of these problems, we can start training AI to be consciously bias-free.

Expect to see AI used to identify patterns and potential biases within organisations instead.

For example, it can look at the language of your job postings (we already covered some of the AI softwares that do this **here**), the way your recruiting managers are talking during interviews, or the consistency of the goals you're setting for your existing employees.

Be warned though - with AI's previous biases already exposed, it's worth keeping a human eye on the AI.

# ALTERNATIVE
# CREDENTIALS

→

Stop hiring based on the university credentials of applicants. Do they really need a degree to be able to do that job?

**Most likely not - access to universities in the UK isn't _diverse or inclusive at all_, is a _poor metric of the job potential of a candidate, and is dropping in value_. Hiring based on university credentials is excluding a whole section of the talent pool, and is unlikely to do you any favours if you're genuinely committed to EDI.**

Think about it - jobs typically require a combination of hard and soft skills. Hard skills are easily testable beyond university credentials, through anything from pre-employment testing, job history or course accreditation.

The real value of a university degree isn't in the hard skills (most organisations teach their new hires everything from scratch anyways), it's in the soft skills: the people skills, team-working experience, etc.

But none of those soft skills are exclusive to university graduates. In fact, research shows students aren't actually learning these skills in university, and that there's a large gap between the soft skills employers expect graduates to have and the skills they actually have.

The bottom line: get rid of degree requirements and switch to skill-based hiring. Unless a degree is absolutely necessary, and most likely it's not, there's no reason to base a candidate's worth on a piece of paper.

# SO
# WHAT?

The third sector is not alone in still having a way to go when it comes to EDI. Charities remain marred by problems of internal discrimination, and the lack of successful diversity and inclusion in the sector is only going to serve as a barrier to design for diverse communities that desperately need the proper resources offered to them.

**It's going to take a lot of work to restructure the charity sector in a way that will actually be effective at combating the issues we're seeing at the moment.**

But when it's already tough to **prove the value of EDI internally**, this may seem like an incredibly daunting task.

On a slightly lighter note - we are seeing a real shift in society, with more people demanding accountability, transparency, and launching honest and open conversations about the difficult hidden topics we're afraid to speak up on.

Hopefully, in future, this will pave the way for a true rebuilding of the third sector.

In the meantime, consider how to make your EDI programme as extensive and broadly impactful as possible.

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# SO
# WHAT?

## 1. REBUILD –
## NOT JUST
## A STRATEGY

EDI is never going to work if you're funnelling money into a standalone programme, without feeding a commitment to its core pillars through to every aspect of your organisation.

Being truly inclusive isn't going to happen from one day to the next, just because you appointed a D&I lead. Making a true change takes a genuine commitment to rebuilding and reevaluating every aspect of your organisation bottom-up.

## 2. EVALUATE –
## GO OVER YOU
## HIRING PROCESS

The hiring process we're all familiar with is a relic from pre-EDI times.

The job descriptions, requirements, and pre-employment processes are all built on exclusionary practices - triple check the language you're using for unconscious bias, shift towards skills-based hiring instead of degrees or vague personality buzzwords, and consider how your pre-employment processes can be flexible and inclusive in their timings and requirements.

## 3. SIMPLIFY –
## BACK TO BASICS

It doesn't have to be complicated. EDI isn't about reinventing the wheel - it's about getting the basics right.

Go over your existing programme with a fine toothed comb to make sure it's up to date with the standards we've come to expect from a truly diverse workplace.

## 4. EXPERIMENT –
## TRY YOUR
## HAND AT AI

Yes, it's gotten a bad rep over the past years. But that's not to say that AI is completely useless in unbiasing your EDI programme.

There's plenty of software out there that can help you with creating an inclusive workplace - from unbiasing the language in your job postings to systematically rooting out patterns in your goal-setting and task allocation.

# FINDING YOUR NICHE

"You can't build a society purely on interests, you need a sense of belonging."

**Valery Giscard d'Estaing**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WHAT
# IS IT?

The time of broad appeal is over. Subcultures are the new demographics. **Subcultures are the new demographics**. In the past 3 years our lives have seen a complete overhaul.

**Covid lockdowns offered renewed perspectives on hobbies, habits, and ultimately, spending**.

We spent more time online, forced to look for connections and belonging in new places, and that search led us to discover belonging in new and unexpected communities (*sourdough starter anyone*?). It's estimated that roughly four billion people worldwide now use social media; a number that's increasing every day. But how we use these tools and platforms is changing. Where once

Facebook and Instagram offered us a window into the lives of people we had some degree (however distant) of connection. Now, those feeds are mostly populated with ads, suggested follows, spam and marketing content from brands. For the first time in its history **Facebook user numbers are declining**. Instead, **people are turning to new spaces in search of community and connection**, away from the noise of mass platforms.

This shift to niche or micro connections and authentic

engagement isn't just about online. Its as important IRL as it is in the digital - think book clubs, running groups, or your Saturday afternoon amateur football game. Online, **algorithmic curation-based platforms** like TikTok are giving micro-communities a place to thrive, becoming more niche than ever before. Instead of serving the highest rated or paid content, the algorithm pushes interests. Instead of broadly defined 'niches' like 'beauty', 'fitness', or 'fashion', we're now thinking K-beauty, charity shop hauls and knitting WIPs.
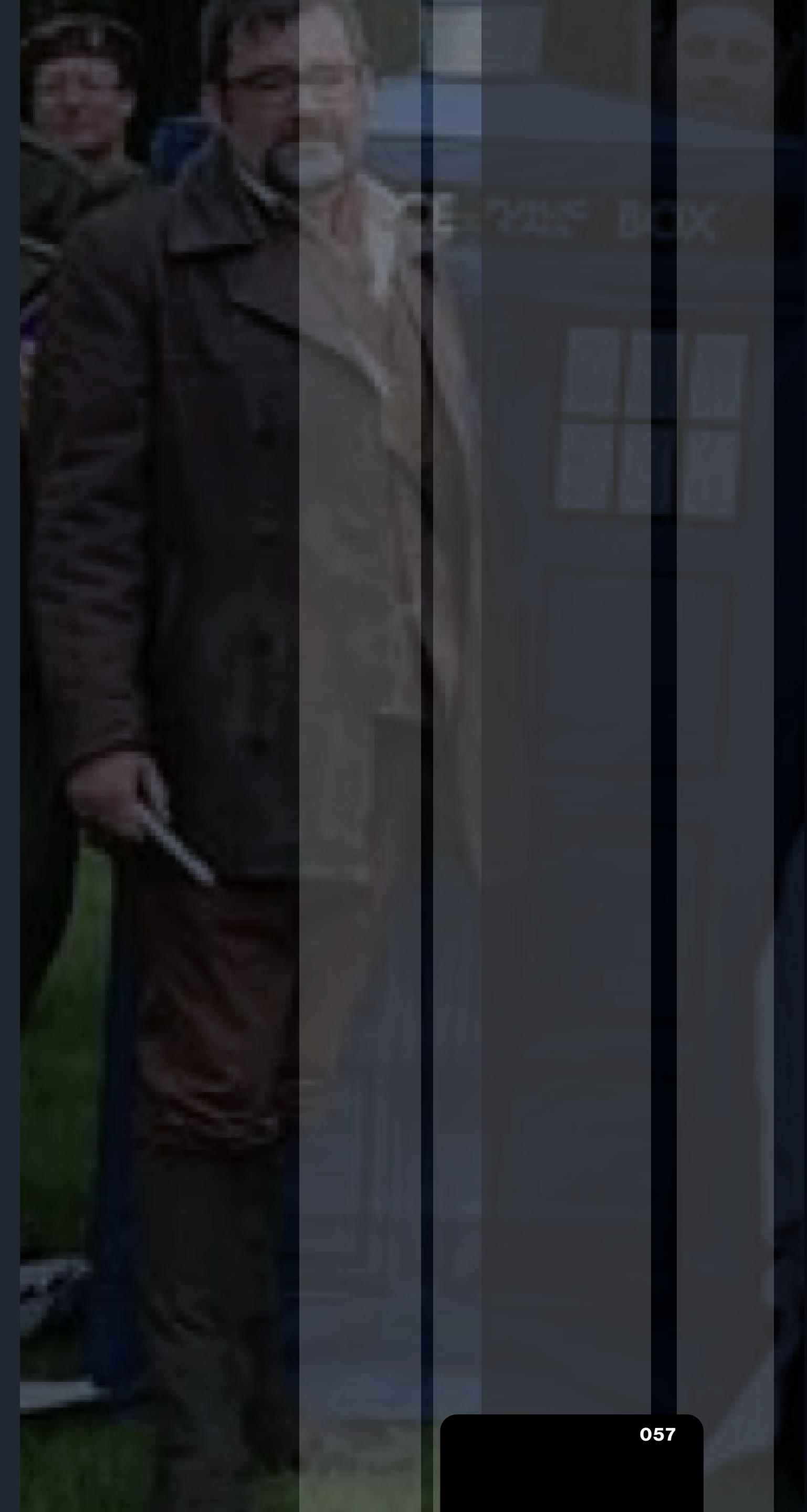
# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

Niche communities offer the opportunity to look beyond demographic assumptions and stereotypes, to consider motivation, passion and interest. Niches aren't binary. Niches can and do intersect, inform and build.

**Bottom line, the data doesn't lie - people want to engage with brands and causes they can trust, but they also want choice and options that reflect their individual interests and identities in terms of how they support or donate.**

You might have an attitudinal segmentation, but are you at risk of deploying it with a demographic sledgehammer?

What's exciting about all of this is the potential to innovate. Communities want to engage with you to design and create. They want to see themselves reflected in your cause, so why not invite them in to co-create? These supporters may surprise you with where they take things.

# 1. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

# 2. BOOK TOK

**Dungeons and Dragons is likely one of the most recognisable niche communities, having been around for decades.**

However, it has recently seen a revival, with 2020 breaking records for interest in the game. As people were forced to find new ways to interact with friends over the course of the pandemic, **the game's popularity has shot up** (potentially its pivotal role in Netflix series Stranger Things might have stoked the fire).

And unlike the stereotypes, this new popularity is not just amongst 20-40 year old men. The popularity of the game is relatively balanced across demographic segments.

Much of the game's growing popularity is taking place online, (potentially a relic from the pandemic), but IRL is growing. Search D&D on Facebook, Meetup, Twitter and more, and you'll immediately be directed to your local D&D gatherings, boardgames cafe or games workshop.

For those who do attend, the game can be a real outlet to showcase individuality, fantastical thinking, and strategy skills.

**If you're an avid reader, maybe BookTok (on TikTok) is the thing for you.**

Having amassed over **42 billion views by now**, the BookTok hashtag enables fans to post and discuss about new trends in literature.

It's a community like any other: there's inside jokes about certain books, cult favourites, and influencer-led trends. There's even sub niches for certain genres, although the mainstay of the community tends towards romance.

"TikTok famous" books have sold millions of copies this year, popular bookstore chains have started creating TikTok sections in-store, and hundreds of millions of TikTok users have been able to find like-minded people. If you're looking for the latest recommendation, a critical analysis of the book you were meant to read for your bookclub, or someone ranting about the characters in their favourite novel - BookTok is the place to go.

# 3. ANTI-
# **VAXXERS**

→ It's not all sunshine and rainbows in the micro-community world though. A niche can easily turn into an echo-chamber, and what happens when the echoing opinions are dangerous?

**For every positive niche that helps someone find belonging and community, there's a darker niche that has potential real-life harmful impacts.**

Take anti-vaxxers - any social media platform is host to rampant misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines and lockdowns.

Where on BookTok people may share their book recommendations, in an **Anti-Vaxx Facebook Group** people share their favourite homemade recipes to stave off the pandemic.

The problem with controlling these communities is of course the crucial question: who decides when a niche has gone too far?

And who decides which opinions are harmful and which aren't? When 40% of Gen Z's are using social media instead of Google as a search engine for their day to day information, sorting the good from the bad is becoming increasingly difficult.

# MICRO-
# **INFLUENCERS**

→ At the helm of niche communities are <u>micro-influencers</u>. These influencers have built their platform and voice within a specific community.

**Relationships based on common interests and trust.**

They may be small, but they're also mighty. When looking for influencers to partner, don't always assume that bigger is better.

Micro-influencers have a 60% higher engagement rate over traditional influencers, and, crucially, a 20% higher conversion rate.

Because users trust the influencer, they're more likely to comment and engage with their content, and ultimately spend their money.

On top of that, due to their smaller following, micro-influencers charge less than the average brand partner. (Not only is it more authentic, it's also cheaper).

# PENGUIN
# **RANDOM HOUSE**

# NEW
# **PLATFORMS**

→

**Publishing company Penguin Random House has partnered with multiple micro-influencers in the book community on TikTok.**

The influencers create content about Penguin books, using the #BookTok. When users click on the hashtag, they'll be directed to a page with additional information on the book, as well as other videos by micro-influencers about the same book.

Through this collaboration, Penguin is able to capitalise on the organic content that already exists within the community and streamline the customer journey towards purchase.

**Maintaining a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram used to be enough for social media engagement.**

But if you're looking niche, then head over to the new kids on the blockwhere the micro-communities are thriving. Most notably, with over 1.2 billion monthly active users and a push into e-commerce, media buyers are already saying TikTok should be a **staple of a marketing budget**.

Beyond TikTok, platforms that cater to specific niches are also on the rise. From **Letterboxd**, the social network for film buffs, to **Behance**, a network of creatives owned by Adobe, there's a platform for every audience out there.

# WATTPAD

# UNIQLO
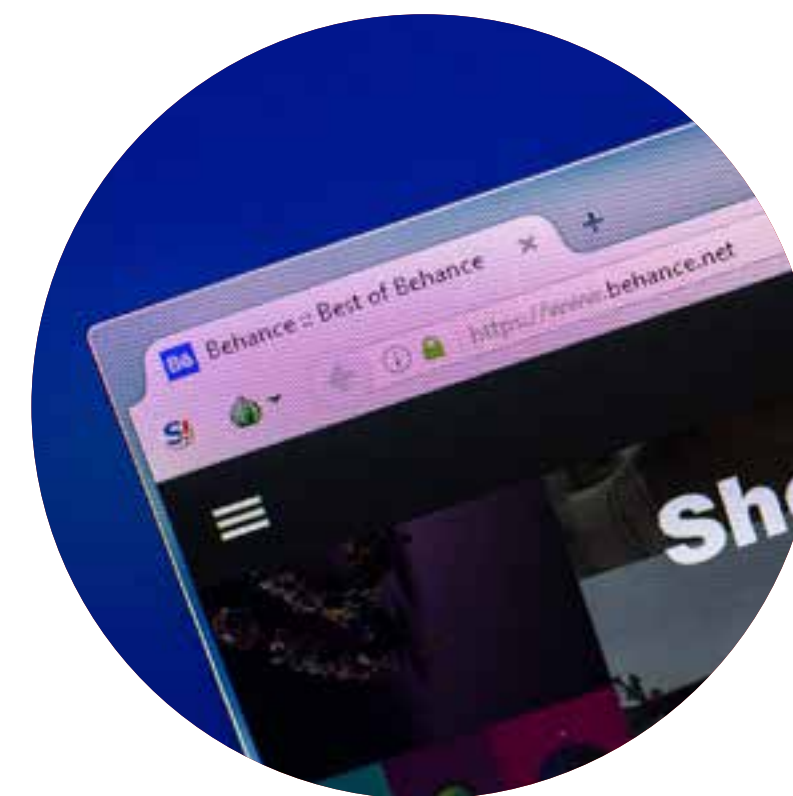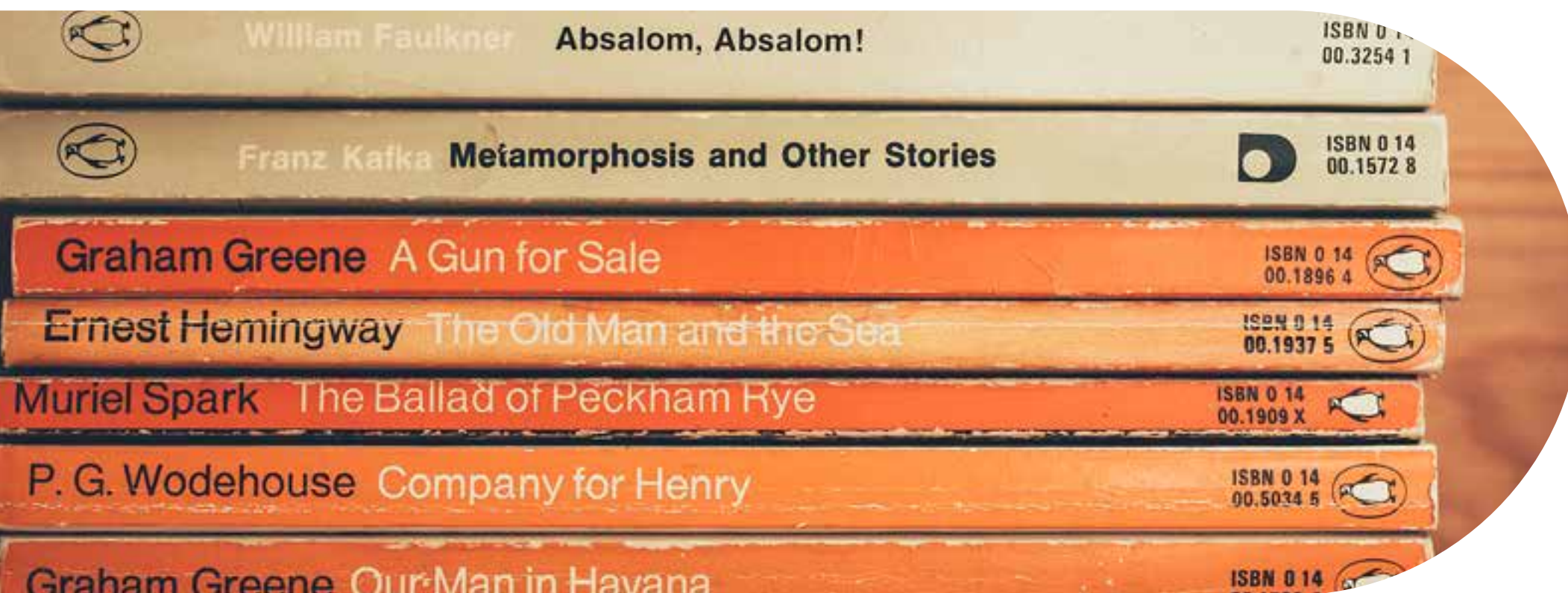
**Capitalising on these new platforms can be as easy as just maintaining brand presence in the right place.**

Online literature platform **Wattpad** is saving on its marketing budget by simply engaging with organic conversations happening in the book-nerd community. For example, if they see a user on a given platform (ie. TikTok or Goodreads) recommend a Wattpad story, they'll simply jump in on the conversation with their official account.

In their own words: "We're not focused on growth in advertising and paid media," their focus is on "preference, brand loyalty and getting into that conversation with [their] audiences."

**Innovative campaigns hosted on unexpected platforms can reach niche audiences who might not previously have heard your voice or message. In a way, this is an opportunity to go straight to the source.**

Fashion retailer Uniqlo saw it as an opportunity to engage directly with fashion-conscious social media users, by **campaigning through Reddit**. The platform is built on thousands of 'sub-threads' - each their own niche community.

Uniqlo's e-commerce manager used her personal Reddit account (verified as an official company representative) to answer questions, talk to consumers, and advertise product launches or meetups.

Ultimately, of the company's social media driven sales, 64% came directly from her interactions on Reddit.

# PERSONALISATION

# THE TELEGRAPH

**For some brands, direct engagement can be a barrier.**

When you can't go to the community, how do you bring them to you? For some, the key can be **personalisation**. Personalised messages can cut through and, in some cases, override '**compassion fatigue**'.

Netflix has shown us how to build a market not on the broad appeal of your product, but on the **micro-communities that use it**.

Netflix does this through identifying taste-clusters and personalising movie recommendations through an algorithm. The scale of this operation likely isn't possible for the vast majority of organisations, but there are some that are tailoring it for their own needs.

**More and more brands have been tinkering with the personalisation of the content subscribers and supporters see.**

Though this can be algorithmic, many do this by giving their subscribers different options for newsletter content.

For example, **The Telegraph** has combined both levers (algorithm plus personal preference e.g. Royals), which has led to higher-click through rates, page per view clicks, and time spent on site by readers coming from the newsletters.
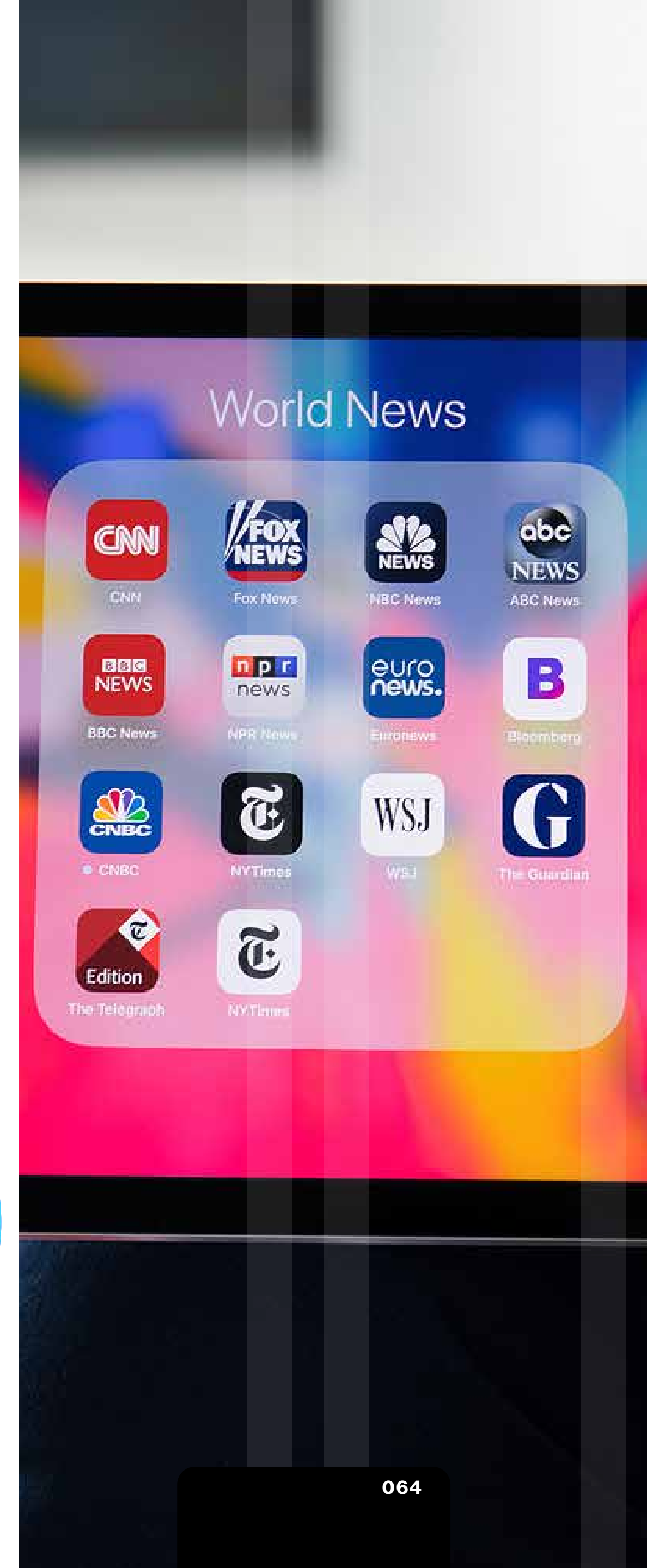
# NICHE
# COLLABORATION

# REPRESENTATION

**In some cases it might be double the niche, double the reach.**

The Full Steam Ahead collaboration between **Gucci x North Face x Francis Bourgeois** is a prime example of different niches working together to conquer more ground. The ad targets outdoorsy, active people (North Face's demographic), who still prioritise luxury (which is where Gucci comes in), using Francis Bourgeois' niche trainspotting

image as the central linchpin of the campaign.

Whilst North Face and Gucci may not be niche brands, Francis Bourgeois certainly does represent a niche demographic. The campaign succeeded in layering various communities to create a new innovative market, using their fans' enthusiasm for outside the box, authentic thinking.

**Niches are for everyone.**

This trend isn't just happening within Gen Z, everyone across all demographics experienced lockdowns and the stress of daily life together, and everyone is now looking for more authenticity. Thought TikTok was only for teenagers? **Think again**.

Whatever approach you take towards engaging niche communities, the important thing is to be representative of the demographics that engage with it. If you'd like to read more about the power of representation, see **our article from last week**.

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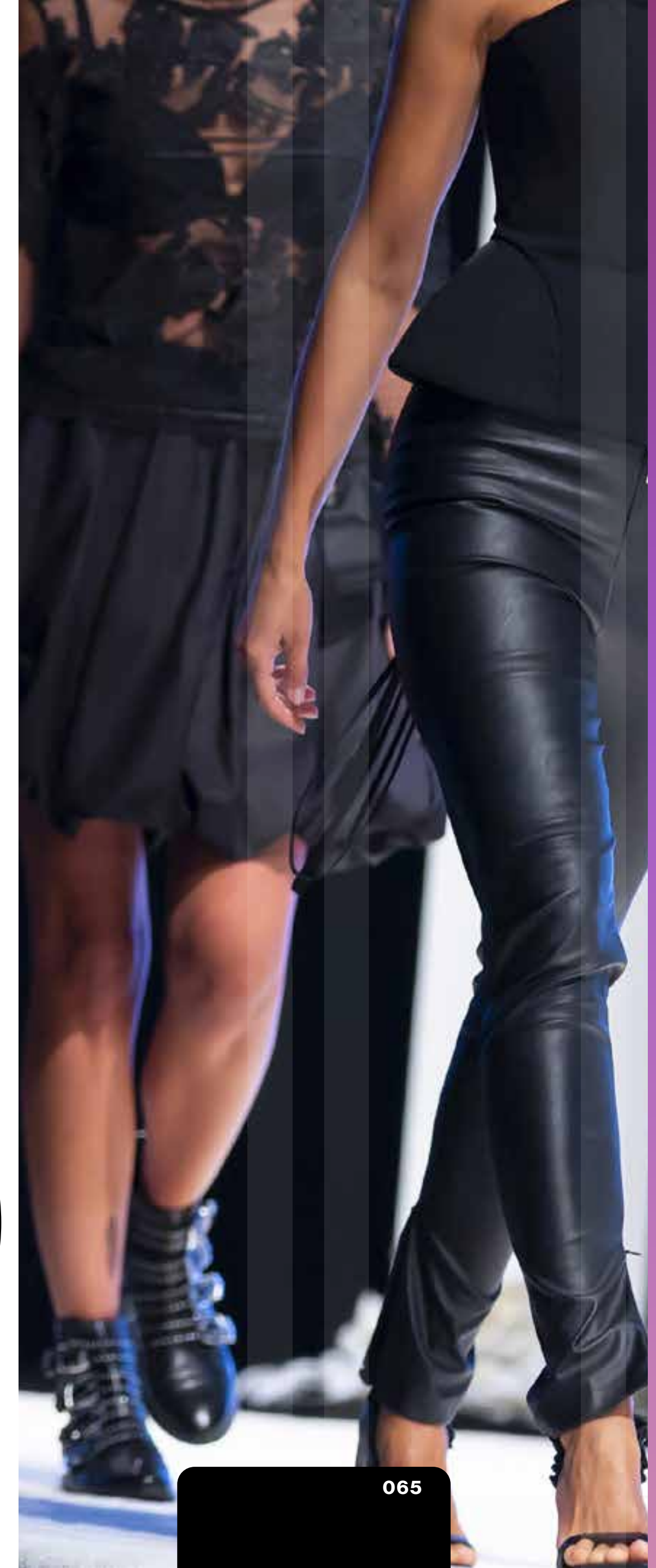
# SO
# WHAT?

### 1. EXPERIMENT –
### DIFFERENT
### STRATEGIES

What works for someone else may not work for you. Every cause, mission and organisation is unique. At the end of the day, there's many avenues into working with niche communities and most of them are relatively low-risk and low-cost.

Don't be afraid to try a lot of different things - be adaptable. What these strategies offer is an opportunity to create a deeper engagement with supporters by reflecting them in innovation and communications.

### 2. ENGAGE –
### BUILD LOYAL
### SUPPORTERS

Sell to the community, not the individual. Anyone can buy an audience of individuals, but the key is to tap into a community of loyal fans. With people increasingly craving connection, your efforts may go further when targeted at a niche.

It might be as simple as maintaining a presence on the right subReddit.

### 3. COLLABORATE –
### LOOK IN
### UNEXPECTED PLACES

Traditional brand collaborations are out, engaging with culturally influential micro-communities is in.

That's not to say that traditional partnerships can't still be efficient, but we're increasingly seeing the power of maintaining the direct line with communities through authentic collaborations. At a lower cost than your typical brand endorsement, trying something new can be worth it!

CASE
STUDY

# LIQUID DEATH

**CASE STUDY**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

## Liquid Death

Canned water company <u>Liquid Death</u> was recently valued at $700 million, making it the fastest growing non-alcoholic beverage brand in history.

→

**The edgy, heavy metal-inspired brand was invented when CEO Mike Cessario was at a concert and noticed bands drinking water out of energy drinks bottles.**

The reason being that the tours were sponsored by the drinks manufacturers, but the bands preferred to drink water on stage.

He set out to provide a cooler alternative for those of us that don't drink on a night out, but still want to fit in or simply have their own fun drink.

With that, he also wanted to take on the plastic industry - Liquid Death comes in cans, which is much easier to recycle, and has an environmental message at its core.

"So the idea was, all right, people don't drink enough water. How do we make a brand for more and different kinds of people who want to drink water more often? How do we make water fun?"

**Mike Cessario, CEO of Liquid Death**

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

**The bottled water industry is all about branding. Most water sold is just repurposed tap water, with very little opportunity for differentiation. Liquid Death has turned this market on its head and is reaping the rewards. So how exactly has the company done this?**

## 1.
### CREATING
### A NICHE

**Liquid Death has succeeded in creating its own niche in the market.**

It specifically targets people who don't drink alcohol, but still want to fit in. Even more niche, it's targeting specifically the skateboarding, rock-listening, environmentally conscious amongst these.

Many brands and organisations are afraid of targeting such a specific demographic and potentially alienating large swathes of the population, but Liquid Death's success has shown that their authenticity and commitment to their branding attracts plenty of people beyond its core market.

## 2.
### SERVING
### A PURPOSE

**The other main pillar of Liquid Death is its environmentally conscious approach.**

In part, they're a response to big corporations that continue to waste plastic (and fail to recycle the plastic they produce). The product comes in a can, which is much easier to recycle, and its website is covered with educational resources about the harm of the plastic industry. They also donate a portion of the profits from every can sold to numerous clean water and recycling charities.

In a world where people are increasingly conscious about social impact, and more willing to invest in brands that are making a change, Liquid Death is cashing in by making a real difference.

## 3.
### CREATIVE
### COMMUNICATION

**Liquid Death has succeeded in creating its own niche in the market.**

All of Liquid Death's advertising and communication is experimental and unexpected. Their first ever advertisement is a **comedic skit of someone getting waterboarded** with Liquid Death (yes, it went viral).

Its motto, "Murder your thirst", turns the typical vitality and health-related branding of bottled water on its head entirely. It's funny, irreverent, and clearly speaks to younger generations. In 2022 they partnered with the adult film industry to speak to a niche of their niche, creating a campaign series that focused on their environmental credentials (with a comedic twist). (Watch the **safe for work video here**).

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

## 4.
## OUTLANDISH
## MERCHANDISE

**Another thing that sets Liquid Death apart is its merchandise. Not many non-alcoholic beverage brands can claim to have merchandise drops as successful as they do. Last year, the brand made $3M off merchandise alone.**

Just like its communications, Liquid Death's merchandise is disruptive and outside-the-box. In 2021 they sold 100 skateboards with the blood of industry legend (and brand investor) Tony Hawk mixed into the paint. Priced at $500, they sold out in less than twenty minutes.

They've released vinyls called 'Greatest Hates,' where they partner with rock musicians to write songs based on the hate they get online. None of this merchandise is related to bottled water, or even its environmental message, but appeals to their niche market's other interests.

Not all income has to come from your central brand, product or fundraising streams - the benefit of targeting a niche community is that you can easily play into their other interests, which tend to be fairly uniform.

## 5.
## SMART
## PARTNERSHIPS

**Clearly, Liquid Death knows its niche demographic through and through.**

If their communication, merchandise, and aesthetic weren't enough, they double down on their engagement by choosing the right partnerships for their audience. Tony Hawk and their death metal collaborators are the obvious ones. But they recently announced a partnership with **Martha Stewart**, less obvious, who's become a meme in certain demographics for her time spent in prison and her friendship with Snoop Dogg. Similarly clever, they partnered with fictional character **The Deep**, from edgy TV-hit The Boys. Choosing these partnerships wisely, and going for niche instead of big name celebrities with broad marketing power, shows an understanding of micro-trends that continues to build loyalty amongst their fans.

## 6.
## EXCLUSIVE
## MEMBERSHIP

**Like many brands, Liquid Death has a membership programme.**

Unlike many brands, their Murder Head Death Club is NFT-based. Since the rise of NFTs, they've been selling 6666 tokens, in the form of severed heads, which get their owners numerous perks.

Perks include access to a private Discord community, events, merchandise drops, and for owners of multiple NFTs - their face could even be tattooed on Liquid Death's CEO.

Liquid Death succeeds in identifying another aligned niche (crypto-nerds), and taps into that whilst maintaining the irreverent communication style that has been working so well for them.

Thinking that NFTs aren't very environmentally friendly? Liquid Death is partnering with Pachama to offset the highest calculated carbon emissions by 110%. Even when they're marketing across niches, they're holding their core values in the highest regard.

CASE STUDY

# SO
# WHAT?

**Liquid Death has shown the value of unique thinking, and entirely disrupting the market in doing so.**
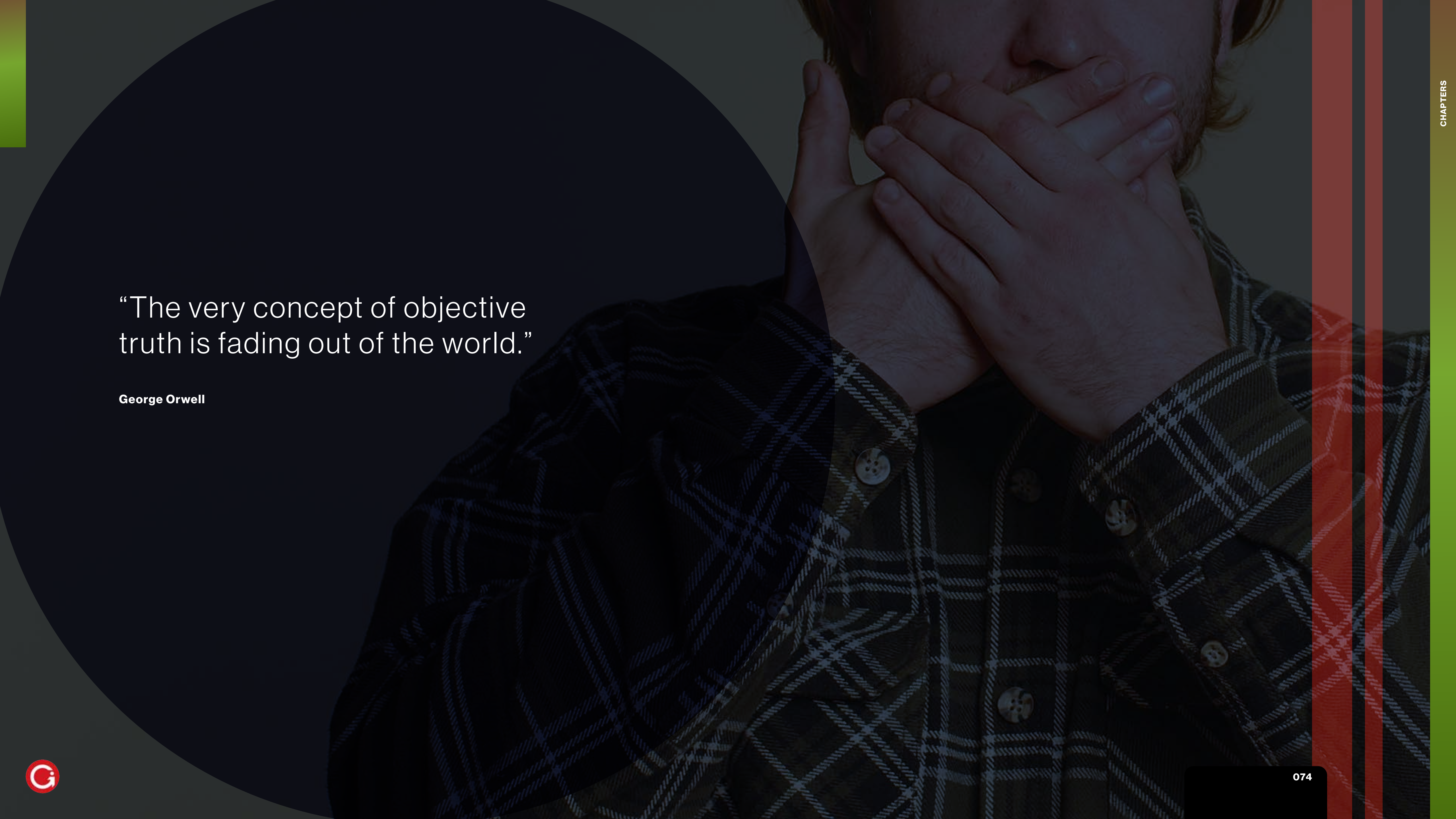
**Even so, not every organisation wants to or can be a disruptor.**

For those organisations, Liquid Death shows the power of creating a niche community of fans based around a meaningful product.

# WHO DO WE TRUST?

"The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world."

**George Orwell**

# WHAT
# **IS IT?**

Who do you trust, and how do you know you trust them? Who do you turn to for facts, information or advice? **Has this changed in the past decade?**

**Our models of trust are experiencing a radical shift, from traditional authorities to new voices, platforms and sources. Gone are the days of institutions like the government, Aunty Beeb, and our parents being our only source of information and 'fact'.**

 The internet has given almost all of us unprecedented access to unmoderated, real-time information, and with this wealth of knowledge at our fingertips, the way we're finding facts and

processing them has changed. How could they not? We've been given access to a constant livestream of facts and information, as well as everyone's opinion, 24/7. We're looking for more authenticity and connection in our interactions, **and those connections come with an expectation of trust**.

At the same time, we're living in the time of **Truth Decay**, where the fundamental concept of 'truth' is being challenged in a polarised society. Coming out of the pandemic, we're now seeing a **post-truth** and post-trust

world. **Less than 60% of people worldwide** still trust in mainstream institutions of government, media, business and NGOs to do what's right. There's growing disagreement about facts, blurred lines between opinion and fact, increasing influence of opinion over fact, and declining trust in previously respected sources of information.

Now, at a time when growing numbers of people (especially Gen Z) don't trust political institutions or mainstream media, the question arises: who do we trust?

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

This shift in how we think about information and influence impacts everything: from media, to government, to science, to health and social care.

**In the wake of the Olive Cooke scandals, trust in charities slumped to an all-time low. Whilst this measure is starting to recover, it's still not reached the historic highs seen before 2014.**

Even more worryingly, public trust is still coupled with an overwhelming scepticism from the British public about how charities spend their money and how they behave.

We need to rebuild public trust with the sector as a whole, and with individual organisations and causes. Trust is essential to the survival of the third sector.

# THE INTERNET
# **AND ACCESS TO NEWS**

→ News and current affairs have historically shaped our understanding of the world - Knowing what's going on is how we decide what's important, what's not, and what we believe in.

**Turn back the clock by fifty years, and our access to news was entirely different to the rolling 24/7 coverage we have today.**

Major mainstream news organisations operated mostly through daily newspapers and scheduled tv and radio bulletins, plus additional commentary programming and editorials. The idea that news could be accessible 24/7 only really came about thirty years ago.

Now, trust in mainstream media outlets is **collapsing to new lows**, and news is delivered round the clock, unfiltered and sometimes unedited, by both major media outlets and citizen journalists. We have Facebook, Twitter, TikTok

and all types of democratised, independent news outlets in our pockets at all times.

News is no longer limited to institutions or experts - we are all citizen journalists. For example, during the London Bridge attacks, videos of the events were available on Twitter long before they were reported on by mainstream media, advising people to steer clear of the area.

The positives: people were aware of the situation, could take action to protect themselves, and share updates on their whereabouts with loved ones. The negatives: misinformation, rumour and uncensored images circulating on social media meant that the confusion impacted the response of the emergency services.

With the Ukraine War (also dubbed the **first TikTok War**), people have turned to social media, where there's more in-depth, real-time information available about the reality of the war, especially as the conflict moves in and out of the news cycle. Great in some ways, but with **disinformation and propaganda running rampant** and a lack of fact-checking, filtering through can be difficult.

# POLARISATION
## AND ACCESS TO NEWS

→

Increased polarisation of our political landscape is, in turn, leading to demand for (and supply of) increasingly polarised news outlets. 'Neutral' reporting is becoming harder to find, with political biases of the media beginning to shine through as the stakes rise.

**From The Young Turks, a left-wing political commentary show in the US; to Byline (who spoke at the future of community safari), which prints news beyond what the papers say; and the Free Press, who are amplifying new voices, and more.**

We're looking for authentic connection even in the way we consume news. We're craving validation and recognition from our news outlets, and are hoping to see our own opinions reflected back at us.

Case in point: **the launch of GB News** in 2021. Within 10 weeks, GB News had the highest watch time of any UK news channel, almost a billion hits online, and reached millions of Brits (mostly living outside of London).

GB News is playing into the need for polarised opinions, and representing large parts of the UK population that felt previously unrepresented. People are looking for belonging, and in this case they're finding it in something that has previously been neutral ground.

# FACT
# AND INFORMATION

→

**Beyond news, the way we're getting our information and facts is also changing. Where previously the government or other bodies of authority were the first port of call for fact and information, the dawn of the internet quickly shifted that dial.**

For the last decade, Google has been our go-to when it comes to most types of information. Most of us can't imagine the internet existing without Google. However even the mighty Google is now being replaced. Gen Z are turning to **TikTok over Google** as their search engine of choice. And it's not just TikTok, **YouTube is quickly becoming the go-to** for long-form information.

Five years ago, we would've Googled "flu vaccine" and been directed to a government website with verified information about the jab, where to get it, and why it's important. Come Covid-19 and people were sidestepping government advice in favour of online communities on TikTok, Parler (right-wing social media), Discord (chat platform for streamers), and more, to ask these same questions (with massively dubious responses).

Though to be fair, when previous sources of trust (**like the President of the USA**) advocating bleach and untested drugs as methods to combat Covid, you can't blame the general public for being a little sceptical about the the facts and information they were being provided with by other previously reputable sources, like the NHS.

Instead of tuning in to hear Matt Hancock or Dr Fauci speak about the benefits of the COVID jab, they're listening to Becky on TikTok, who they've been following for months and trust because she feels like their older sister, tell them about her special lemon water that cures COVID.

And that is where one of the big problems with this changing trust lies. Information might be authentic, but there's no fact-checking, and in today's day and age anyone can be a social media personality. On TikTok, **one in five videos contain misinformation**, but strong bonds of trust are leading people to accept these as truth.

The other major problem is that algorithm-based information could lock users in an **echo chamber**. Only receiving information from these trusted sources within a community, who'll likely have the same views and opinions as the user, reinforces the user's own biases. And the more they interact with these videos, the more they'll be fed information with the same biases.

On YouTube, watching a video about what's in the COVID vaccine (a legitimate question) will quickly lead you to a video about graphene in the vaccine, which brings you to tracking chip-vaccine conspiracies, to Bill Gates made COVID in a lab - which locks you in the **rabbit hole**.

**Within twenty minutes**, the algorithm will start showing you 'Bill Clinton did 9/11', 'JFK's empty hearse', and 'PizzaGate'.

Without neutral media, it's difficult to break out of these echo chambers, but neutral media doesn't have the same trust connection.

**079**
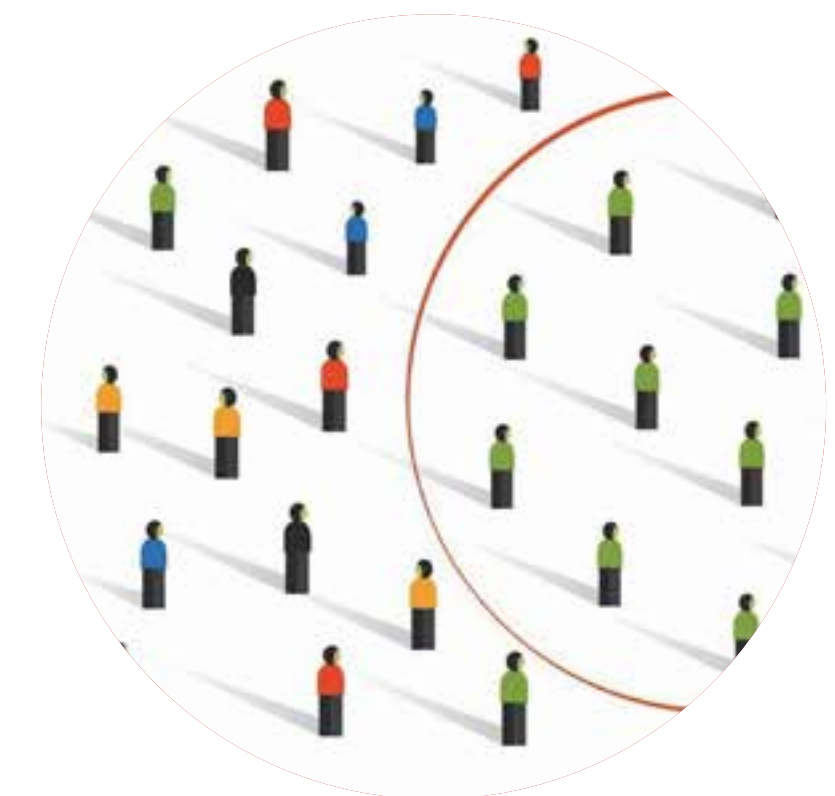
# PEER TO PEER
# **AND RECOMMENDATION**

→

Who we trust for recommendations is also changing. Again, we used to turn to Lonely Planet and TimeOut guidebooks, then started to Google "best restaurant in London," maybe scan TripAdvisor rankings briefly, and book a table. Now, people are listening to the recommendations from the influencers they follow, and the communities they belong to.

**In a time of searching for community, the text-based broad algorithmic information that Google serves up, even if it is reliable, doesn't carry the trust that accompanies information from members of your community.**

Recommendation is where social media thrives. Trust in online communities has become so strong that going onto, say, TikTok or YouTube to find the next product or service you should be paying for (or charity to donate to) is almost similar to asking a sibling or friend.

Standard outlets like Google can't have the same reach anymore, because their experience is so much less personalised and doesn't build community or trust in the same way. It doesn't matter if a product has a million five-star reviews on Google, identity outranks fact.
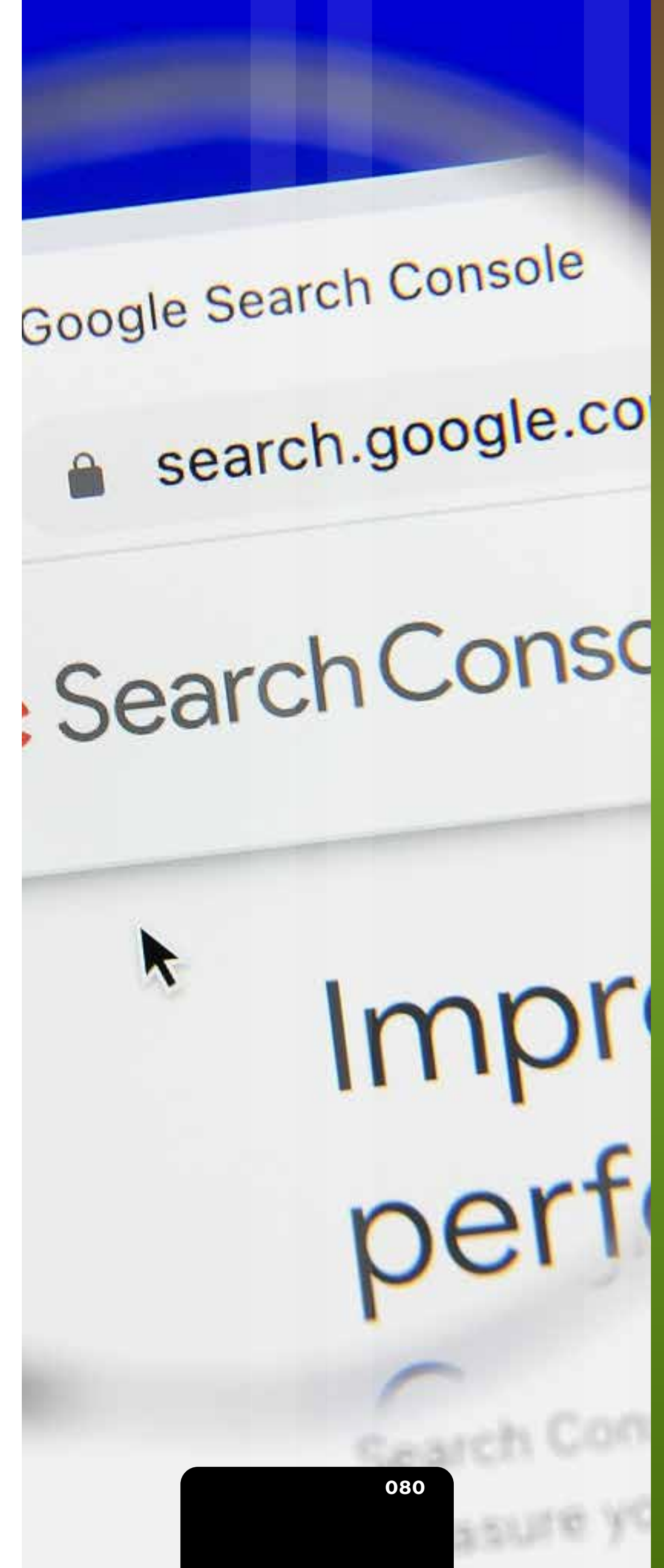
# SO
# **WHAT?**

When you're trying to get your message across and get people to care about a cause, the ways in which you're doing this need to change. At the end of the day, support follows trust, and trust is built in communities.

**1.** **CREATE –
BUILD A
COMMUNITY**

Communities build trust. Do you have your own community that will trust you're supporting your cause in the right way?

Can you tap into any existing communities and build a relationship with them?

For more about how to tap into niche communities, read last week's trend article here

**2.** **BRANCH OUT –
TRY DIFFERENT
PLATFORMS**

Trust doesn't live in the places we've come to recognise. Big chunks of audiences have moved away from cable TV and newspapers and are now living on more authentic, unmoderated platforms.

Can you build community in those places?

# SO
# **WHAT?**

### **3.** CHALLENGE –
### STAND YOUR
### GROUND

With misinformation rampant, there's a constant risk of your organisation getting caught up in this. Last year, we saw Nigel Farage twist the facts to accuse the RNLI of running a "migrant taxi service." The **RNLI hit back** saying they were "very proud" of their humanitarian work, and would continue to do their duties under international maritime law. In the words of their chief executive: "Our role in this is incredibly important: simply respond to a need to save lives." Accordingly, donations to the charity shot up by 3000% in response. If you've built up a community of trust, and your supporters believe in your work, standing your ground can be the most effective way to deal with misinformation. Trust in your community and their devotion to your values.

### **4.** INNOVATE –
### THINK
### CREATIVELY

How are you getting your information out there? How do you make sure it doesn't fall prey to misinformation campaigns, or lands in a place where there's no trust?

**St John's Ambulance recently partnered with Tesco** to print baby CPR information inside baby grows. Although they faced criticism about the steps being on the inside of the grows, think about how often parents are seeing this lifesaving information on a day-to-day basis.

Can you ingrain your message in a similar way? Think creatively about different information streams that are accessible to you.

### **5.** ENGAGE –
### KEY
### AUDIENCES

Think about how to become a trusted platform for the communities you're engaging. Is there a specific community you're helping?

**Versus Arthritis recently launched their venture arthr. com**, a website where they sell trusted products to help people living with arthritis. Their profits are reinvested back into developing better products.

If you've already got a community to tap into, can you build a platform that provides peer-reviewed products to ease a struggle? How are you engaging with different ways of trusted recommendations?

**CASE STUDY**

# THE NEW NEWSROOM

# WHAT IS IT?

## The New Newsroom

Traditional media moguls are chasing younger generations. This is the start of the new wave newsroom.

→

**Younger generations are increasingly going to social media for news, and turning away from the outlets we've become familiar with.**

Instead of the BBC and Sunday Times, they're now more likely to turn to Twitter and TikTok - for more on what's driving this shift, check out last week's article about **who we trust**.

With the number of **people paying for news subscriptions plateauing globally**, how do you draw in new audiences?

# NEW
# **PRODUCTS**

# NEW
# **PLATFORMS**

**Did you, like so many of us, play (and get slightly addicted to) Wordle in the past twelve months?**

If the answer is yes, **the New York Times' strategy is working**. Their plan is to grow subscriptions by boosting their games offering: luring people in with free games, and offering game-specific or full-editorial subscriptions so that they can access more popular ones.

So far, the plan seems to be working, with the newspaper reporting an unprecedented tens of millions of new users.

Ultimately, their goal is to draw in younger users by expanding their creative outlets, providing news through unexplored platforms, and expanding their non-news reliant subscriptions.

**Two years ago, the Washington Post started making headlines as one of the first traditional news platforms to adopt a TikTok strategy.**

Now, their TikTok account is **one of the WaPo's fastest growing platforms**, with 1.5M followers and 66.4M likes.

This push is part of a new initiative called **Next Generations**, which aims to draw in younger and more diverse audiences through new products, practices and partnerships, with a focus on image-based content.

What the WaPo does exceptionally well is cater to the different audiences and energies of different platforms: comedic skits on TikTok, serious image-based reporting on Instagram, social commentary on Twitter. They've got a **separate team building strategy and content for every platform**, which is allowing them to get their content and messaging across to entirely distinct audiences.

# NEW (CREATOR-LED) CONTENT

# NEW NEWS CYCLES

**ESPN's strategy, instead, is to launch a creator-based network to attract more Gen Z consumers.**

With a focus on peer-to-peer, authentic content, they're hoping to drive content creation by giving ten creators priority access to ESPN's premier sports properties and resources.

The plan is to build more meaningful relationships with their subscribers and tap into the "more niche sport fan communities that thrive on TikTok, Instagram etc."

Going niche is a crucial way of building an authentic brand and drawing in new audiences. If you'd like to learn more about how to do it, read our article about niche marketing here.

**Taking a completely different approach, some news media are changing their news cycle entirely.**

More and more 'alternative' news cycle-based media companies are popping up around us. Mostly, these are a response to 'news fatigue'.

Most of us will know the feeling: you pick up your phone in the morning and there's a dozen notifications filled with bad news looking back at you.

In today's permacrisis society, it feels like too much (bad) news, all the time. Organisations like **Tortoise Media** are reinventing the slow news cycle, by focussing on well-written, slowly digestible news instead. Others, like **Good Good Good**, focus on providing 'real' good news - positive updates only.

# SO WHAT?

With so many different ways of consuming news and media popping up around us, the strategies we used to rely on to get our information out there no longer work.

→

**Traditional media brands are seeking new ways to draw in younger generations, building on new interests, new creation methods, and new platforms to get new subscribers through the door.**

This adaptability is nothing new for media companies. We've already seen a transition from print media, to the nine o'clock news, to digital outlets - the switch to different platforms is simply part of the process.

The Washington Post **draws a comparison** to the introduction of crossword puzzles to newspapers. When they first came into fashion,

readers didn't understand their relevance, and they were often relegated to the 'ladies' sections of papers. Now, they're an industry staple, with even digital-only publications typically featuring a daily crossword section.

It's a seemingly lighthearted side project that essentially serves as a Trojan Horse for the integral journalistic mission and draws in

new readers.

Are we going to see the newsroom of the future turn into much more varied, co-creative spaces? And, as an organisation that relies on education and information in part, is there an opportunity for you to branch out into these different spheres to keep Gen Z and Millennial interest in your mission?

# HAVE A LITTLE FAITH

# WHAT
# IS IT?

→

Faith-based donations continue to be the biggest subsector of total giving. Specifically, religious organisations are raking in an average £1 out of every £5 donated in the UK.

**That's a significant margin compared to the runner up (sports and recreation-based giving, which comes in at about half the amount of total revenue as faith-based).**

Religious charities rake in donations from the faithful and non-believers alike, because **supporters trust their altruistic intentions** at a time when **trust in charities is notably low**.

**Yet its market share is dropping**. We're living in a time of growing secularism and growing distrust in public institutions (read more about who we trust now **here**), and faith-based charities are feeling the pinch as much as anyone else.

They're still deeply embedded in their target demographic of religious communities - but with these communities shrinking, what's the way forward for faith-based organisations?

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# TECHNOLOGY

**In the aftermath of the pandemic, congregation attendance is down.**

This, understandably, makes it much harder to connect with supporters across these communities. But **technology has been paving the way for faith-based organisations to connect with virtual congregations or religious communities that now live online**.

For one, digital congregations are here to stay, and they can mean people join multiple communities and give or support to a wider variety of organisations. On top of that, social media, Google Grants, and even just email lists are the way forward for connection with religious communities. They're also a great way to expand your mission beyond faith-based communities and connect with non-religious people looking to support your values and missions.

# COLLABORATION

**Collaboration is a noted strength of the faith-based charity group.**

There's higher shared values and goals (both between charity organisers and supporters), and frequent overlap on best practice.

The past years have already shown a trend of faith-based charities **leveraging these strengths to double their impact** - but as trust in faith-based organisations is shrinking, should we be considering more collaborations between faith-based and non-faith-based organisations?

After all, the charitable values that underpin religious charities aren't unique in the third sector. Expect to see more crossovers between **religious and non-religious organisations** (or even with corporates).

# COMMUNITY
# **OUTREACH**

# **LANGUAGE**

**Community outreach programmes are the booming subsector post-COVID.**

Throughout the theme Belonging & Inclusion, we've spent a lot of time talking about how the importance of community is on the rise - it's no surprise that this craving translates into the missions we want to support.

Luckily, community outreach programmes are something faith-based organisations are **historically great at** (and it's **one of the only programme types that is growing revenue within the religious charity subsector in recent years**).

Community is one of the things that people (both believers and non-believers alike) are going to be caring about the most in the coming year, especially as the recession hits fully. Think about the community outreach programmes you're currently running and how to maximise their impact - there's the potential to answer a real need for people throughout what will undoubtedly be a rough couple months up ahead, as well as expanding revenue streams.

**I'll keep this one short but sweet - if you don't want to be a victim of the (slowly but surely) shrinking market share of religious charities, avoid insider language!**

The values of faith-based organisations are often universal beyond the religion they're drawing these from; there's plenty of non-religious people who are waiting to find the right mission to throw their support behind that can be scared away by sector jargon.

# UNDERSTAND THE
## NEW RELIGIOUS CONSUMER

→

As the world is changing, religious demographics and consumers are also changing. How they're changing looks different across different regions and religions, but it's important to understand which direction your target demographic is shifting towards.

**For example, young Muslims are either more observant or just as observant as their parents for the majority, whereas most young Christians are turning towards post-Christianity (which is to say, less observant).**

For the new Muslim consumer, we expect to see the halal lifestyle become increasingly important (although what is considered halal is also changing), as well as a new push towards representation (Muslim consumers want the organisations they support to be more representative and inclusive), and increasing numbers of female Muslim breadwinners means we'll see a push for female-championing brands.

Wunderman Thompson recently released a deep-dive into the future Muslim consumer, which you can read **here**.

On the other hand, Christian consumers are reporting that they feel a **disconnect from their community**, and are likely to flock around organisations that can close this gap for them.

They're also craving a **future of sustainability and moderation**. Over the coming year, they're likely to focus their support on organisations that champion communities and environmental awareness.

# SO
# **WHAT?**

Whether you're a faith-based organisation or not, there are lessons to be learned from these trends. With community outreach and sustainability the hot topic amongst religious consumers across the board, the message is essentially as follows:

**If you are a faith-based organisation, an emphasis on community outreach programmes and sustainability will let you find common values amongst both believers and non-believers, and expand your supporter base across both groups.**

If you are not a faith-based organisation, an emphasis on community outreach programmes and sustainability will let you connect with the new religious consumer, and grow your faith-based revenue.

# SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT

"The way you get your ideas into people; you have to disrupt the imagination first before things come in."

**Jamie Kelsey Fry**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WHAT
# IS IT?

It feels like only yesterday that we were celebrating new civil freedoms. Yet, in the past 12 months we've seen the reversal of Roe v. Wade, an American "Don't Say Gay" bill reminiscent of Don't Ask Don't Tell, a UK crime bill that borders on authoritarian, and many more.

**Across the world, the rights of women, LGBTQ+ people, and racial and ethnic groups are slowly being rolled back.**

**If the 2010s were marked by celebrating civil liberties, are the 2020s going to be marked by mourning their loss?**

At the same time, we've seen people rise up and rally around causes as wide ranging as the murders of George Floyd and Sarah Everard, to a global anti-vaccine movement.

**Iran is making history** with an ongoing series of protests and civil unrest against the killing of Mahsa Amini. Whilst Just Stop Oil is performing a series of actions to draw attention to climate change (amidst serious controversy, I really enjoyed reading Kate Knibbs' take on this **here**).

In a time where self-expression and our way of life is under threat, how do we express our unhappiness or displeasure with the way things are? How do we express dissent, and make it meaningful?

At a time when the **war of woke** is in full swing, how do we get people to actually stop, listen and ultimately, take action for a cause?

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

Most of the freedoms we enjoy today come from dissent, counterculture, and protest. We're all familiar with the classic imagery of dissent: MLK addressing the hundreds of thousands of people packed into the National Mall, the first brick thrown at Stonewall, Sacheen Littlefeather declining the Oscar in place of Marlon Brando.

**When liberties become ingrained in our everyday lives, it's easy to forget that people fought for them in the past.**

Dissent is what drives social change. When working for an organisation that, at its simplest, is trying to do good, what is your role in calling out problems and creating change? Plenty of charitable organisations are built on exactly this principle (Greenpeace, Amnesty, etc).

And yet, charities speaking out for social justice is a surprisingly divisive issue. On one hand, many people believe that charities have a role in society to push for maximum good, because their origin story is literally based on generating social impact.

On top of that, more and more consumers **crave political involvement** from the brands they support, rewarding politically engaged brands with loyalty and money. On the other hand, we're seeing heavy backlash when charities do speak or act out, with ongoing debate about whether charities **should be allowed to lobby MPs**, or, in some cases, even do their job without it being politicised and criticised (**looking at you, Nigel Farage**).

It's a difficult line to tread, and a difficult problem to solve. Speaking out may not work for everyone. But for those of you who are trying to answer this question within your organisation, we're going to try and outline some of the new ways we're speaking out in today's world.

# CANCEL
# **CULTURE**

→

You would have had to be living under a rock for the last four years to avoid heading about '<u>cancel culture</u>' - the phenomenon of publicly calling people, groups, or organisations out for their behaviour or actions, with the goal of forcing an apology, a display of remorse or their cancellation from society.

**It's the most basic form of voicing dissent.**

Cancel culture came into mainstream focus alongside social justice movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, with early targets like Harvey Weinstein and Bill Cosby being swiftly dealt with. Calling people out, publicly shaming them, inciting public backlash - it's an effective way of harnessing dissent and making waves.

Now, as a concept, it feels almost inescapable. Cancel culture is everywhere. But over the past months, we've begun asking ourselves **if it is the most effective way** to make people take accountability. Artist ShayShay suggests we should be

**'calling in' instead of 'calling out'**. After all, calling someone out for being problematic puts them on the defensive, cements opinions and cuts off conversation. Instead, calling in means privately confronting someone and creating a safe space for productive conversation in order to educate someone. At the end of the day, we're all still learning.

On the flip side, sometimes it pays to call someone out publicly. Take the RNLI and Nigel Farage. When he learned that the RNLI was using their lifeboats to save migrants making the (often dangerous) channel journey, Farage very publicly put them on blast on both Twitter and GB News. In a situation like this, where politics are brought to your doorstep, it's much

harder to call in instead of call out. But the RNLI managed to find a middle ground by **responding very simply**, with a commitment to continue doing their job: to save people in distress at sea. In this case, staying out of explicit politics and doubling down on their commitment to keep doing their jobs is a form of dissent. And it worked, with record amounts of donations streaming in in support.

# MOVING FROM
# **PASSIVE TO DIRECT ACTION**

→ Showing support can involve anything from being a member to signing petitions to marching in the streets to breaking the law to make a point.

**Organisations rely on numbers and visibility, so sometimes being a member, showing support or affiliation, or signing a petition can be enough.**

The bigger the platform, the better. Even if the consequences of being more directly involved with an organisation are too serious for you to consider, you can help by getting the word out to other people who might be willing to take on these consequences.

More direct involvement can look like going on marches, actively campaigning, or performative actions. There's a million and one ways that organisations call for direct involvement and it's different for every cause.

It could be Just Stop Oil activists **throwing tomato soup at Van Gogh's sunflowers**, **Extinction Rebellion planting a pink boat in the middle of Oxford Circus**, or **Enough is Enough supporters burning their energy bills**. All of these actions come with different levels of effort and risk, and how involved we're willing to be is often dependent on the consequences we're willing or able to accept.

Following the **new UK Crime Bill**, which cracks down heavily on protesting rights, these consequences are becoming increasingly severe. There's also the social backlash to consider.

Take Just Stop Oil: most people agree with their baseline messaging (climate change = bad), but how many of those people have we seen criticising the organisation's recent actions?

With cancel culture in full force, and an increasing backlash against woke, taking drastic action is difficult to do without social consequences. But it's worth bearing in mind that most historical social movements that we cherish nowadays received the same backlash in their time.

# PUTTING LIFE
## **AND LIBERTY ON THE LINE**

→

Right now, in Iran, we're seeing unprecedented numbers of people putting their life and liberty on the line to push for significant social change.

**There are marches, riots, women burning hijabs in the streets, Iranian athletes competing with uncovered hair, and heavy clashes with police.**

When a social movement transcends organisations and movements, and speaks to whole populations, the stakes are raised beyond what we can imagine.

For many of us, from the relative comfort of UK society, it's difficult to imagine the depth and importance of dissent of this scale. We are unlikely to find ourselves dealing with anything similar in our near futures.

So as distanced observers, what is our role in watching this unfold? Are we all global citizens, and if we are, what is our role in taking action at a global scale? With Iran, we're seeing petitions, hashtags, donations. But what if we take something closer to home, like climate change? Eventually, it will impact us all, but right now it's primarily the global South that's suffering. So what is our role in speaking out against this?

As an organisation, do your supporters see themselves as global citizens? And if they do, what are you doing to support them in delivering impact across borders.

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# SO
# WHAT?

CHAPTERS

We're living in a time of social unrest. With a new 'once in a lifetime' event around the corner every month, civil freedoms being rolled back, repressed freedom of speech, political instability, soaring cost of living, and the threat of climate change hanging over us all, dissent is becoming more and more important every day.

**For an individual, engaging with dissent can take any of the many forms described above. For an organisation, it's sometimes harder to toe the line. So what are the important things to take away from this discussion?**

### 1. EXPERIMENT – FIND YOUR SWEET SPOT

Dissent is always going to have backlash. It's impossible to please everyone, and any kind of dissent has consequences. On the flip side, standing for equal quality of life is often at the heart of charitable organisations, and consumers are increasingly drawn to politically aware brands. So how do you toe the line? Experiment with different approaches and try to find your sweet spot.

### 2. COLLABORATE – DOUBLE THE IMPACT

Is there a social movement that closely aligns with your organisation's message? Consider collaborations as a form of supporting dissent.

### 3. FOCUS – SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE

Not all dissent needs to be extreme. Sometimes standing by your organisation, aim, and work is all it takes to get your message across.

# ID, PLEASE

"There's typically little difficulty in establishing who you are or getting access to crucial benefits [...]. But for the nearly one billion people around the world who have no form of legal identification, that's not the reality."

**Deepa Mahajan, James Manyika and Olivia White, McKinsey**

CLICK TO PLAY >>>

# WHAT
# IS IT?

CHAPTERS

→

In 1414, King Henry V of England issued the first ever passport. Known as the 'safe conduct' document, it was given to English travellers to prove their identity abroad and gain safe passage. This simple passport was just a piece of paper with the King's signature on it, but the basic premise of the document remains unchanged 600 years later.

**In 1803, Napoleon introduced internal ID cards for employees in his empire, making it easier for employers to trust and hire people. Economic growth boomed, other countries followed suit.**

**Cut to World War II** and the introduction of National Registration as a tool to record how many people were eligible for national service.

Since then, verified identity is entirely institutionalised and has become a cornerstone of modern life. We have driver's licences, passports, national insurance numbers, email addresses, and a hundred different tags of our personal unique information.

They're essential to the ecosystem of identity that we've created: we keep dangerous drivers off the roads, terrorists off our airlines, and children out of bars. But the way we map identity is changing. So, take a walk with me into the speculative future.

Ten years from now, you're in the security queue at the airport, on your way back from your holiday.

Except, instead of lining up to show your passport to a human being, you're waiting to scan the identity barcode you keep on your phone at the biometric gate. Your passport has been digitised, along with your vaccine records, travel history and visas. When you land, you order an Uber that you confirm by blinking twice at your front camera, and as you're on your way home, your Alexa independently starts prepping for your return. She

recognises your location tied to your device, and has access to the data from your Uber trip, so she starts turning on the heating when you're just the right distance away.

If you think about it, it's not that far off from now. Most of our phones have facial recognition or fingerprint software, banks ask us to confirm our biometrics by blinking twice in frame, and Google sends you a text message the second you log in from a device that isn't already linked to you.

In this age of digitalisation, it's logical that we're finding smarter and safer ways to store and prove our identity.

Not only is it convenient, our future proof of identity has the potential to decentralise information, standardise it across the board, and increase global access to the identity ecosystem.

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→ Consider the effort that goes into recruiting new team members, volunteers, and committee members. DBS checks. ID checks. Right to work checks. Banking checks. Criminal record checks.

**Say the word 'safeguarding' to any charity employee and they'll probably visibly shudder at the thought of the steps, stage gates and bureaucracy required to prove someone is who they say they are and fit for the role you are recruiting them for. Imagine truly digitising this process, making it fit for the 21st century?**

Then consider modern attempts at **voter suppression in the USA**. And it's not just the States. Globally, there's almost a **billion people who are without any proof of identity**, which is a massive contributor to poverty cycles and marginalisation.

Out of the remaining people, over half can't use whatever documents they have in the identification ecosystem. **In the UK, about 1 in 4 people don't have access to traditional ID**. Without a passport or equivalent proof, you can't register to vote, you often can't open a bank account, lease a flat, get a national insurance number, get a SIM card, enrol in school, etc.

New (digital) approaches to proof of identity could help lower the barriers to entry and provide a serious boost for inclusion and equality. They could speed up safeguarding, whilst making it more robust, giving charities access to wider pools of volunteers.

**The technology is already here**. We now need advocates and voices to push government and tech companies to implement it ethically and safely, for the benefit of all, and not just the few who can afford to access.

# BRIDGING THE PHYSICAL
# **AND DIGITAL**

→ The first phase we're likely to see is stronger links between our physical and digital identities. As we're spending more and more time online, having an online identity is becoming more important.

**In person, we have a collection of things that prove who we are, like a passport, national insurance number, birth certificate, bank card, or even house keys.**

Online, who we are is made up of a combination of email addresses, usernames, profiles and passwords, some of which are completely separate (how many of us have multiple gmail accounts, for work and personal use?).

Securing our digital identity is a lot harder than securing our physical one. In real life, keep a close eye on your passport, or block your bank card if you lose it. Online, there's just too many pathways to stealing someone else's information, especially as most of us are just beginning to understand the basics of the internet in the first place.

**Linking the physical and digital could cancel out this danger**. Using markers of physical identity to verify every online account would centralise our data and make it more secure to outsiders. Two-step verification is already a form of this, where we're tracking digital identity by using a signal from our physical identity (a unique phone number). In the coming years, we're likely to see this concept applied to a much larger number of accounts, and begin to see the centralisation of all this data.

One way it's already impacting business is by streamlining the hiring process. Right to Work checks are becoming easier to complete, as are DBS checks. Most of them are being carried out through Identity Document Validation Technology via a digital ID app, **with many finance and gaming institutions adopting this process already**. And the technology could be applied to much more. For example, the UK government has been **trying to pass legislation** about age verification on porn websites, but haven't been able to break ground. Could this technology pave the way?

# DIGITAL **PASSPORTS**

# PROOF OF **HUMANITY**

**In fact, within fifteen years from now you can probably say goodbye to your paper passport or driver's licence.**

With the technology that supports biometrics getting better every day, it's only a matter of time before we do away with physical documents entirely.

We're already seeing **contactless facial scanners at airports that allow pre-screened travellers through without the physical document**.

In all likelihood, within the next decade, we'll have unique identification records linked to our digital identity built on the blockchain.

**One of the really promising developments we're seeing comes in the form of Proof of Humanity, a concept launched by blockchain protocol Kleros and non-profit the Democracy Earth Foundation.**

It essentially looks like an online phonebook, where people can verify and add their citizenship, degrees, experience or skills. Once you sign up and verify your identity through a video and a recommendation from a current member, you get added to the secure and decentralised registry, and begin accruing its native cryptocurrency, UBI. The system could lead to a **number of benefits**, like fairer access to voting and fewer bots and misinformation accounts online.

The technology has the potential to deliver huge social impact, but is still held back by a **few key issues**. For example, people could submit multiple profiles by changing their facial hair or makeup, or vulnerable groups could be pushed out of the registry (similarly, on Reddit, hateful groups can get users banned by reporting fake offences en masse).

But most importantly, technology like this thrives through recognition. The more people use it, the more likely it is to become an officially recognised proof of identity, and the more people will be aware of and able to benefit from it.

# SOUL-BOUND
# TOKENS

# E-RESIDENCIES

**Similar to Proof of Humanity are Soul-Bound Tokens (SBTs).**

They're an idea floated by blockchain founder and crypto-currency-as-democracy posterboy, Vitalik Buterin, who wants to use them to make a decentralised society where people have a permanent record of their merits and skills stored in private blockchain wallets.

SBTs leverage the same principles as NFTs, but, unlike NFTs, you wouldn't be able to trade SBTs. Ownership is tied to physical identity; no one could steal or buy it from you.

In theory, SBTs would look like a verified, online CV. It could show a verified online version of your degree, or proof from your previous employers, or even writing samples and portfolios.

Similar to Proof of Humanity, SBTs have the potential to make proof of identity far more attainable for (hopefully) billions of people worldwide. On the other hand, it sounds a little bit like China's social credit system, which could punish citizens for unproductive behaviour. There's some thinking left to be done about how much control you have over your own data (can you burn an SBT, or omit a bad working experience?), but expect to see more about this in the coming years.

**Having multiple nationalities and passports is a luxury that most people are either born into or spend significant time and money on achieving.**

These passports let their holder have more mobility, more job opportunities, and more security. For a number of political reasons, this isn't likely to change any time soon. What will become more accessible, however, is the job opportunity aspect of dual nationality.

Ever since remote work has become normalised post-COVID, we're seeing the rise of **e-residency programmes**. E-residency is a way of applying for entirely digital, remote residency in a foreign country.

**Pioneered by Estonia**, which has a highly advanced digital infrastructure, entrepreneurs can set up a business abroad without setting a foot outside their own home. Every aspect of the process, including filing taxes, which is done through an app in under five minutes, is streamlined digitally. Right to work checks, residency permits, business filings; there's an app for that.

E-residency has made Estonia into a **unicorn-stable**. Not only are they able to import bright minds from abroad and profit from their work, they're allowing a new generation of remote workers to broaden their horizons. In the future, expect this type of technology to be used to allow migrants to start working whilst in the middle of their visa process, hire fully-remote staff from anywhere in the world, or inspire a new wave of startups.
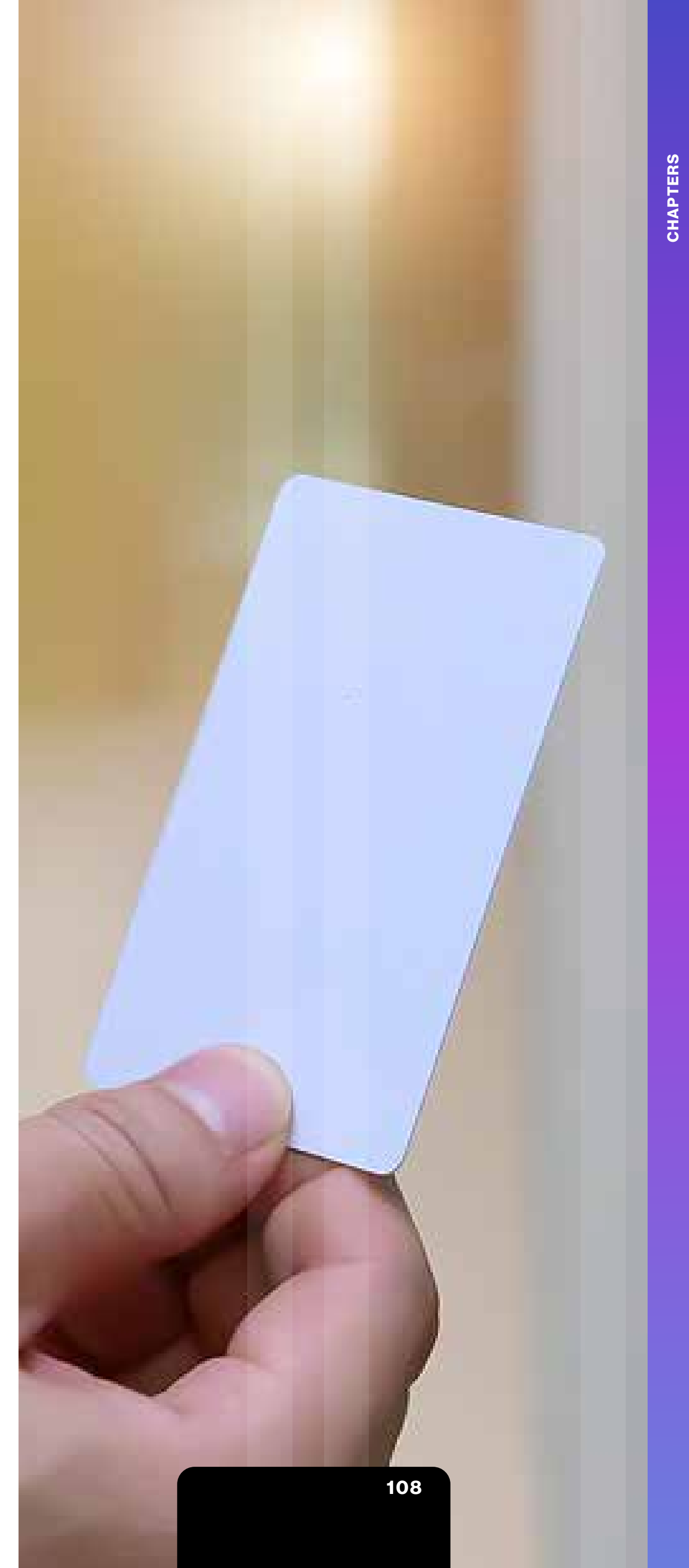
# REFUGEES AND
# **ASYLUM SEEKERS**

→ Estonia is actually using this infrastructure <u>in partnership with the UNHCR</u> to help transform humanitarian assistance and protection.

**Their technology makes it easier for displaced, stateless, and unhoused individuals to access secure digital identity.**

From asylum applications to job hunting to digital cash assistance, this new way of proving digital identity essentially allows refugees an easier route to asylum and income. It's also more dignified than a lot of assistance programmes we have right now. Instead of getting the bulk of their income from charity and donations, having a digital identity allows migrants to take ownership of their personal finances and overall lives.

Think about the implications that digital ID could have for integration and community-building of refugees. Think about how this same technology could be applied to people from underprivileged areas or people who are unhoused.

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# SO
# **WHAT?**

The way proof of identity is developing isn't just about streamlining an airport experience or a right to rent check.

**The technology has the potential to create fairer hiring practices and opportunities, give a political voice to people who historically haven't had one, and award refugees with more dignity and self-sovereignty. Whilst the technology exists, many of these ideas are still speculative. So what next?**

### 1. COLLABORATE – USE CASES

You're the experts in the needs of your beneficiaries. Now is the time to start collaborating with web3 ventures, tech companies and governments to ensure that all users are being considered, not just the vocal minority. How can we design in access for all?

### 2. REDESIGN – SAFEGUARDING

Whilst some of these use cases might still be speculative, change is rapid. Innovate on your safeguarding approaches and policies to both implement and existing and future-proof for next technologies.

### 3. INNOVATE – REFUGEE SUPPORT

The UK asylum and refugee system is broken, with people waiting years, not months, for the processing of their application. During this time they are unable to work, relying on government and charity support. Digital proofs of identity could radically change this and give people the freedom to work and support themselves, and governments the reassurance and safeguarding required.

# MECHANICS OF BELONGING

"If you can't bring everyone together, all the different viewpoints, all the different opinions - you're going to go nowhere at all."

**Jamie Kelsey Fry**

# WHAT
## IS IT?

→

So far, as part of the future of belonging & inclusion, we've talked a lot about <u>finding</u>, <u>building</u>, and <u>interacting</u> with community.

**What they're looking for, how this is being answered, and what inspiration you can take from how others are answering these needs.**

This week we're looking at the different mechanics you can apply to answer these needs, and breaking them down into their component parts.

There are potentially as many ways to create belonging as there are variations of sandwich filling. Some mechanics work for some organisations and not others.

Just like some people might love the idea of peanut butter and tomato sandwiches, whilst others may find that particular combination vomit-inducing. (BTW, don't knock it till you've tried it).

Selecting the right mechanic to build and reinforce belonging should come down to the needs and challenges you're trying to answer. Do you need a platform to both listen to and champion the voice of your supporters and beneficiaries, or simply to broadcast? Do people need to feel like they are part of, and

contributing to, a community? How much time, energy and support do you want to invest? How much control and autonomy are you willing to hand over to the community? Answers to each of these questions will give you a different approach to building belonging.

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

There is one massive force that is driving action and innovation in this space (and it was helpfully selected as the 2022 word of the year): **Permacrisis**, "an extended period of instability and insecurity."

**Populations are increasingly feeling that their elected governments are unrepresentative of their democratic vote, of their own lived experiences, and are unable to tackle the issues they find important. People want to speak up and they want their voices to be heard.**

Permacrisis, combined with shifts in models of trust and influence, are supercharging innovation, creating new tools, mechanics and business models to create belonging.

To keep things simple, we're focusing on mechanics of belonging that could deliver three different needs for your charity:

**1.** How can you better listen to your supporters and beneficiaries? How are you making sure their voices are heard and understood, and potentially de-platforming your own brand voice?

**2.** How could you generate income through belonging?

**3.** How can you use reward mechanics to build belonging?

**Listening to supporters**

Ralph Nichols, the so-called father of listening, once said: "*The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.*"

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# CITIZENS'
# **ASSEMBLY**

→

Dubbed by some as the "boardroom of the future," Citizens' Assembly is something we're already seeing more and more of in politics. Essentially, a Citizens' Assembly is a **representative** group of citizens selected at random to deliberate about certain issues and make recommendations for the future.

**Representative is the key word here: participants are chosen by lottery and should represent the gender, ethnic, economic, age, geographic makeup of a total population.**

After Ireland legalised abortion in 2018 **off the back of a Citizens' Assembly**, they've understandably boomed in popularity as a more equitable way of looking at policy decisions. Think of the Citizens' Assembly as a representative think tank or focus group.

So far, they're exclusively being used in politics, but as more and more people are looking to organisations and brands for political accountability, who is to say that they won't become commonplace in organisations as well? In fact, B Lab UK's **Boardroom 2030** initiative is already suggesting Citizens' Assemblies to organisations that want to explore new ways of decision-making. What better way to hear the voices of every demographic across your supporters? If you want to know more about the power-to-the-people thinking that props up Citizens' Assembly, watch Jamie Kelsey Fry talk about exactly that at our last assembly **here**.

# MEMBERSHIP
# **ORGANISATIONS**

→

Roughly 55 million people in the UK belong to some kind of membership organisation. That's most of the adult population.

**For a lot of people, this membership is in either retail or local organisations.**

But almost half of the top ten biggest membership organisations in the UK are charities (National Trust, English Heritage, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts). These organisations are nothing new, but they are growing in popularity. In the 1990s, the average Briton belonged to six membership organisations. **This number is now at over 17**.

When charity membership works it delivers a sweet spot between listening, support and reward. Members have influence through voting structures, they're supporting a cause or institution they're passionate about through

fees, and, frequently, they receive some kind of reward, incentive or access in return. However, woe betide any membership organisation that risks incurring the wrath of the membership. Just ask the Royal British Legion or the National Trust.

# DAOs
# (OR DECENTRALISED AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATIONS)

→

DAOs could be the membership model of the future. In the wake of the Olivia Cooke scandals, trust in charities slumped to an all-time low. Charitable giving is recovering slightly, but it hasn't caught up with the pre-2014 peak. Donors are spooked by cases of fraud and misspending - they want to know where their donations are going and that they're delivering on social impact. Are DAOs the way through this slump?

**DAOs have community and collective decision-making built in at the heart of the model. Being decentralised by design, they're collectively owned and managed by their members, without a central authority or accountability to external bodies. All decision-making runs on a bottom-up model based on member votes.**

They're more transparent, with all transactions logged on the public blockchain, so members can see exactly where what money is going. They're efficient, giving supporters a more empowering platform to be involved in. And they're accountable to their members and their members only.

The way DAOs are set up means that every member has skin in the game and a say in where the organisation is going. It allows a community of people to interact and make collective decisions, strengthening the utility of the community.

A good example of this in action is The Peace DAO, which is cutting down overhead costs and maximising impact in their work (humanitarian relief in Ukraine at the moment). All of their spending is directly sent towards on-the-ground impact. It's quite literally a community owned charity.

**Whilst you might not be sold on cryptocurrency, web3, or NFTs, consider the opportunity that decentralised blockchain technology offers for equal, non-hierarchical supporter participation**. It's essentially just the new technology that lets you unlock a membership structure.

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# PAYWALLS

# PAID
# VERIFICATION

**10 years ago paywalls were all the rage. From The Times to the Wall Street Journal, content creators were locking away their media behind paywalls.**

However the paywall tide may be turning. Publisher **Quartz is ditching the hard paywall** in favour of a softer 'metered access' model.

Whilst the Guardian, which has always remained free to access, employs the membership and support model (as well as helpfully reminding readers exactly how many articles they've accessed in the past year every time they log onto the site).

**The monetised model that is sweeping the media right now is paid verification.**

I'm sure all of us have seen Elon Musk's plan to make Twitter verification accessible to everyone willing to cough up **$8 per month** to get their hands on a blue check mark (although select government and corporate accounts will get a grey 'official' check mark). Elon says he's making verification accessible to the people, taking the power of the platform away from the institutions and lifting the voices of the community.

The problem (besides the obvious one - that paid verification defeats the point of verified accounts) is that there's very few benefits to actually being verified on Twitter.

The distinction that's been on everyone's mind recently is that, unlike other platforms, you can't monetise content on Twitter - no one makes a living off of Tweeting. In the words of Stephen King: "**They should be paying me**." In theory, letting individuals verify themselves **could** lift the voice of the people, but before anyone jumps at this model, think about how valuable verification actually is to your audience. Watch this space to potentially watch this model of belonging implode very quickly (and take its host platform down with it).
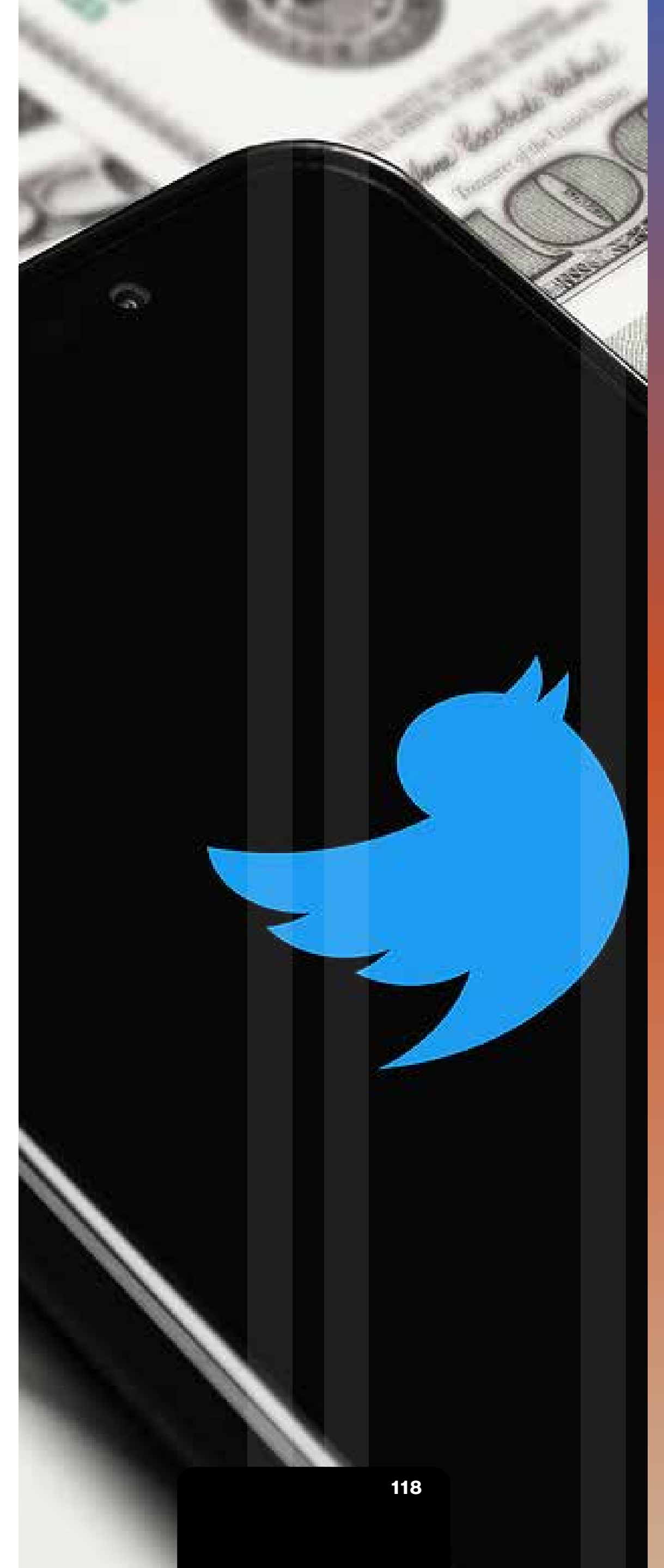
# NFT
# **MEMBERSHIP**

→

About a year ago, you couldn't get away from NFTs. Punks, Apes, OpenSea: they were everywhere. But the frenzy has died down recently, so you'd be forgiven for thinking that NFTs were just a fad. So why are we talking about them? Well, NFTs haven't gone anywhere, and sorry to say, they're unlikely to any time soon.

**Owning an NFT isn't just about investing, it's also about proving your social status, your belonging within certain exclusive communities. Access leads to ownership and ownership leads to access. Why not use NFT membership as a model of belonging for your community?**

Couple of things that make NFTs an interesting model:

**1.** 1000 True Fans Theory:

**1000 true fans theory** basically says that any creator or organisation can make it if they have a thousand true fans who are willing to pay £100/year for the privilege of being in the inner circle. Obviously, an organisation won't stay afloat off of £100k a year, but the theory is interesting regardless. NFTs are true fan technology. They're a way to invest in an organisation's success, to feel like a true member and supporter.

NFTs are better than newsletters or social media, they differentiate between commitment to the community.

**2.** Membership As An Asset:

More than that, NFTs turn memberships into **tradeable assets**. The investment isn't just an access fee, it can be traded with market value. Get in early, and your membership can appreciate in value. Need to get out, you can. Membership is gamified as an asset. We've already discussed the Liquid Death NFT membership club and why it works **here**, so let me point out a slightly different model for NFT membership. **Reddit's Collectible Avatars** are marketed not as NFTs but as limited edition profile picture digital art used to unlock features on the platform. To buy into the model, users don't need to own a blockchain wallet, but can go through Reddit's own wallet system (Vaults) that is fully integrated into the website.

**This doesn't mean you need to make an NFT fundraising product**. However what NFTs can offer is a new approach to membership structure. They sometimes get a bad rep, but they can be a great way to create belonging, exclusivity, and double down on a sense of community, as well as rewarding its most committed members.

**Rewarding belonging**

So we've covered how you can harness the power of your own community of supporters by listening to or monetising it, but how do you reward your community members? Unlike brands, where support is sometimes more obviously rewarded (discounts, early releases, limited edition articles), charity support is often viewed through the lens of karmic bonus points. Of course, many organisations do have some type of reward system in place, but let's consider two interesting rewards-based models of belonging we're seeing right now.

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# DROPS

# DRIP

**Drops are a surprise release of a limited number of products, tickets to events, or any other reward you can think of. They're used to drive a sense of scarcity and urgency within members of a community, which drives word-of-mouth, exclusivity, FOMO, and online communities. If you want access to the drop, you have   to be on top of the community.**

 A A couple of months ago, 3000 people showed up to queue in front of a seemingly unremarkable market stall on Shepherd's Bush Green. Anyone who wasn't in the know would have been confused by this surge of excitedly chattering people, nervously counting coppers in the palms of

their hands. The pound is crashing, inflation is soaring, the cost of living crisis is on everyone's minds. In the midst of all this, Corteiz, a niche streetwear brand, did a **99p drop in Shepherd's Bush Green**. They tweeted clues about the location, where they were selling their signature cargos for 99p each, as long as people brought exactly change. It's a great example of membership through hype and exclusivity, accessible and free soft brand power, rather than a paid membership programme.

Think about Choose Love's merchandise drops, that are shoppable in-store alongside products that go directly to refugees (and all profits of the merchandise go towards the charity as well). The brand releases

new collaborations with local artists, giving supporters access and information about the releases through social media and mailing lists. Want to know when the new Choose Pride collection is dropping or the annual Christmas shop in Carnaby Street is opening? **Follow them on Instagram**. It's a great way to use the drop model in a charity context.



**In contrast to drops, drip is a continuous stream of products, signals, content, incentives, rewards, tokens, points, interactions, and access. But don't think of this like constant micro-drops - it's a gamified system that steers communities towards collecting and accumulation.**

Let's call it the modern version of a loyalty card. Collect enough stamps (tokens, interactions, clicks, donations, whatever form it takes now) on your card, and get your free coffee (access and rewards). A drip-based strategy can bring together a community, breed collaboration and membership, and is driven bottom-up by activity within a community rather than top-down from an organisation or brand.

In real terms, drip could be anything from a product-trading website (think, for example, if your organisation supports people living with a certain disease or disability, can you operate a platform where they can trade useful products with each other?), to digital freebies (think tokenised memberships), to speed or quality of access (early access to merchandise, fundraising drives, in-person shops, or events).

# SO
# **WHAT?**

At the end of the day, supporters want to belong. That's why they're supporting and investing in the causes that they care about. We need to make sure they feel listened to, that they're affecting change, and that they feel like they belong in the community that your charity is creating.

### **1.** LISTEN – AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES

The people supporting your charity want to drive change. They're here because they believe in a cause, they care about it, and they want to help you do your work. But they have opinions and ideas about how to do this, and they want to feel like they're being heard.

So amplify their voices, poll your supporters, and include them in the decision-making process. Make sure it's clear they're being listened to. But be prepared to take action on their opinion.

### **2.** CREATE – MAKE A PLATFORM

And don't just listen passively, create a platform for your supporters' voices. Can they talk directly to the organisation? Can they talk to other supporters, brainstorm together and expand your social impact together?

### **3.** MONETISE – USE YOUR COMMUNITY

The financial contributions from supporters can be a big part of keeping the lights on. Which is a big part of continuing to deliver social impact. So monetise the community you create, and monetise their belonging. People will pay to feel like they're part of something, and moreover, to be seen to be a part of something.

### **4.** INNOVATE – TURN YOUR REWARDS SYSTEM UPSIDE DOWN

As a charity, it can be hard to reward your supporters beyond their "feel good feeling" behind a contribution. Is there any way you can reward your most loyal supporters beyond that? If what they're looking for is community, how are you rewarding them by letting them belong? Be creative with how you're thinking about this.

CASE
STUDY

# SHARING THE WIN

**CASE STUDY**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

→

## Sharing the Win
Dutch football club AFC Ajax has <u>melted down their 35th Eredivisie cup</u> after winning the league last season.



**They've turned the trophy into 42,000 silver star mementos, each weighing 3.45g, which they're distributing to all of their season ticket holders.**

# SO
# WHAT?

Football, like any sport, is <u>built on belonging</u>. The sport started as a church and factory-sponsored attempt to create community, and has come to bring together people across location, income, education, and more.



**Football became a commercial success because audiences feel a meaningful connection to teams; the sport means something to them. But this connection is changing.**

Clubs are turning into global brands or corporations that don't have much of a connection to their fans on the ground. On top of that, COVID-19 meant that for the better part of two years, clubs were playing in empty stadiums. The relationship between fans and teams is evolving - and this may not be the best news for
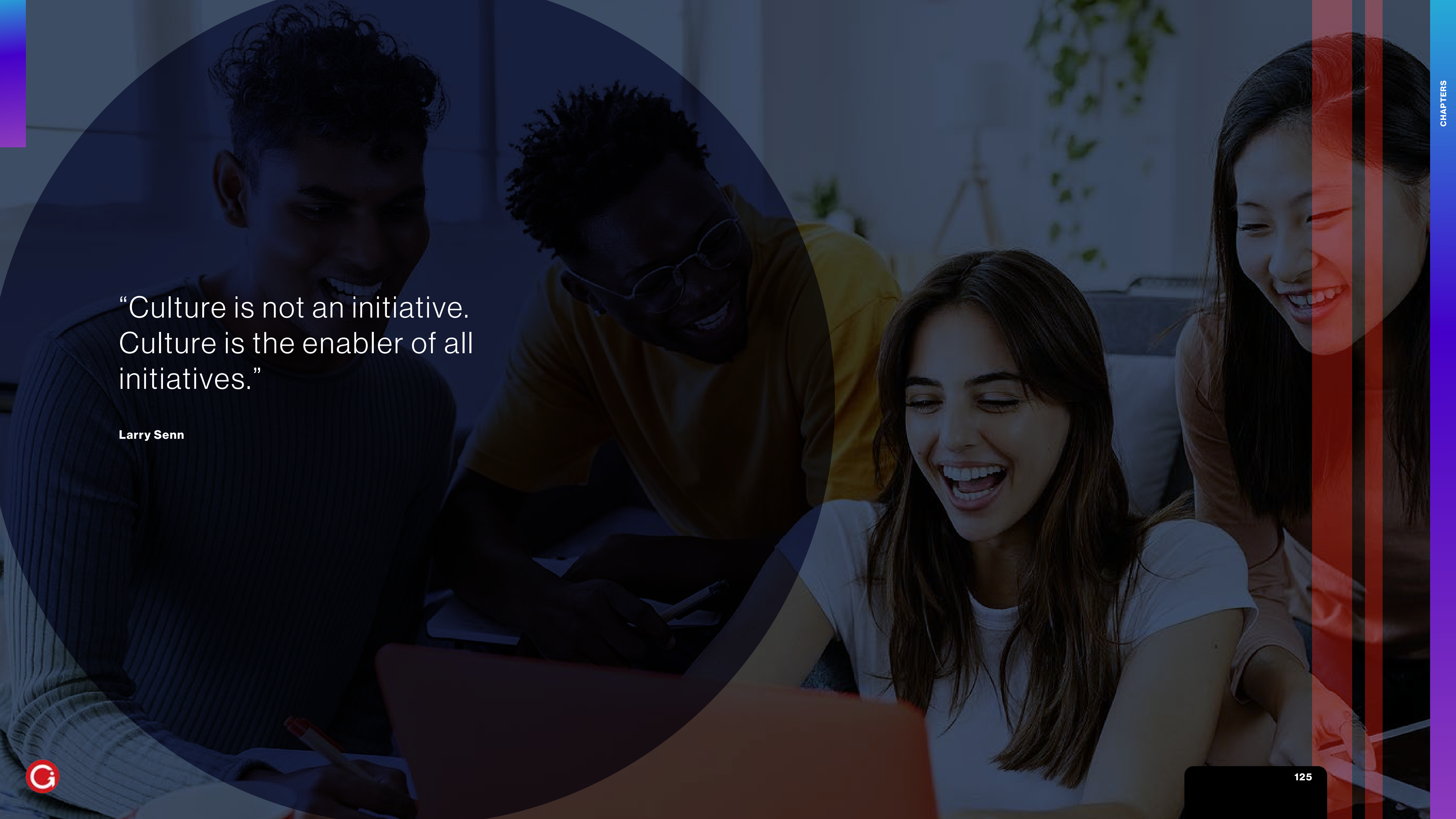
commercialised teams, who rely on fan commitment to sustain their financial success. By physically sharing a piece of their win with the fans, Ajax is literally sharing their journey with their community of fans. They've dubbed the star a "piece of Ajax," and have said they're "doing it for the fans." It's a lovely gesture that's sure to bring

the community together, establish Ajax as a team that cares, and build loyalty in their season ticket holders.

They're showing a return to what football is (or should be) all about, and highlighting the value of direct engagement with your community.

# BELONGING IN THE WORKPLACE

"Culture is not an initiative. Culture is the enabler of all initiatives."

**Larry Senn**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

→

We spend roughly ⅓ of our lives at work. Yet <u>40% of people</u> say that they feel isolated at work, and Covid lockdowns and enforced home working further

**At the same time, companies in the US spend almost $8bn a year on diversity and inclusion training, but they're missing the mark because they're neglecting our need to feel like we belong.**

We want to feel like we belong at work, feel supported, and feel like our company is helping our wellbeing.

But traditional inclusion programmes aren't working in the way they're supposed to.

Bias training often only **highlights differences** and makes them more salient, we're still figuring out **how to adapt to the post-COVID work environment**, and younger generations are **valuing different things** in their offices than before.

So when you're navigating hybrid working, whilst trying to onboard new starters, and managing intergenerational work culture clashes, all whilst continuing to deliver on income targets, feeling like you belong can sometimes be a tall order.

# WHY SHOULD
# I CARE?

→

Our working lives are a major contributor to our general feeling of wellbeing - being happy at work can make or break how we feel about our lives in general.

**And belonging at work is a key factor in our experience with an employer.**

When we feel we belong, we feel more connected to our organisation's values and mission, we're more engaged, we perform and produce better work, and we're overall happier.

Not only is creating a sense of belonging amongst your employees important for their own wellbeing, it drives **creativity**, **intelligence**, and **innovation** in the workplace.

So how do we: encourage diversity, make everyone, regardless of their identity, feel like they belong, and foster an inclusive work culture?

**Hiring practices**

Let's start at the beginning. From the moment a new hire walks through the door, how do you make sure they feel like they belong in your workplace? And how do you make sure your hiring practices are promoting belonging and inclusion?

Seek out people who aren't like yourself, expand across communities. Make a hiring plan, evaluate your progress. What's working, what isn't? Who can you bring in to help with that?

# QUOTAS

# DECODING
# LANGUAGE

**Quotas are a known way of promoting diversity - they quite literally demand it.**

Let's say your hiring plan exposed some skewed hiring data, and you're considering a quota. Upside: quotas have done a great job in improving diversity in a number of countries.

Downside: quotas aren't always intersectional, and they're only one step in a long way to go.

It's worth noting that the **American Supreme Court just condemned academic quotas**, which will likely trigger similar cases with workplace quotas soon. Will this rejection of quotas be contagious?

**Over the past decades, our vocabulary has been changing. As the world becomes more complex and nuanced, we're learning about the stigmas, associations, and underlying assumptions that our language can often carry.**

Most job descriptions (and performance reviews, promotion decisions, etc) are still heavily **gender-coded**. Are you looking for a dependable and enthusiastic people-person? Or an aggressive, decisive leadership-type? Think about who you're implicitly inviting to apply. Most of the time, we don't even realise we're doing it, but don't allow yourself to reinforce stereotypes.

Communications company **Textio** has developed software that will de-code your language. Open-source 'dictionary' **Diversity Style Guide** has put together a guide to help organisations navigate this complex world with more nuance. Researcher Kat Matfield has made the **Gender Decoder**: a free tool that tracks gendered words in job listings. But you don't necessarily need to invest in new software - sometimes a simple Google search or mindful reread can do the trick.

Even with the best of intentions, there can be an application gap. Women and BAME applicants are **20% less likely to apply to a job** than their white male counterparts if they don't fit every single one of the criteria.



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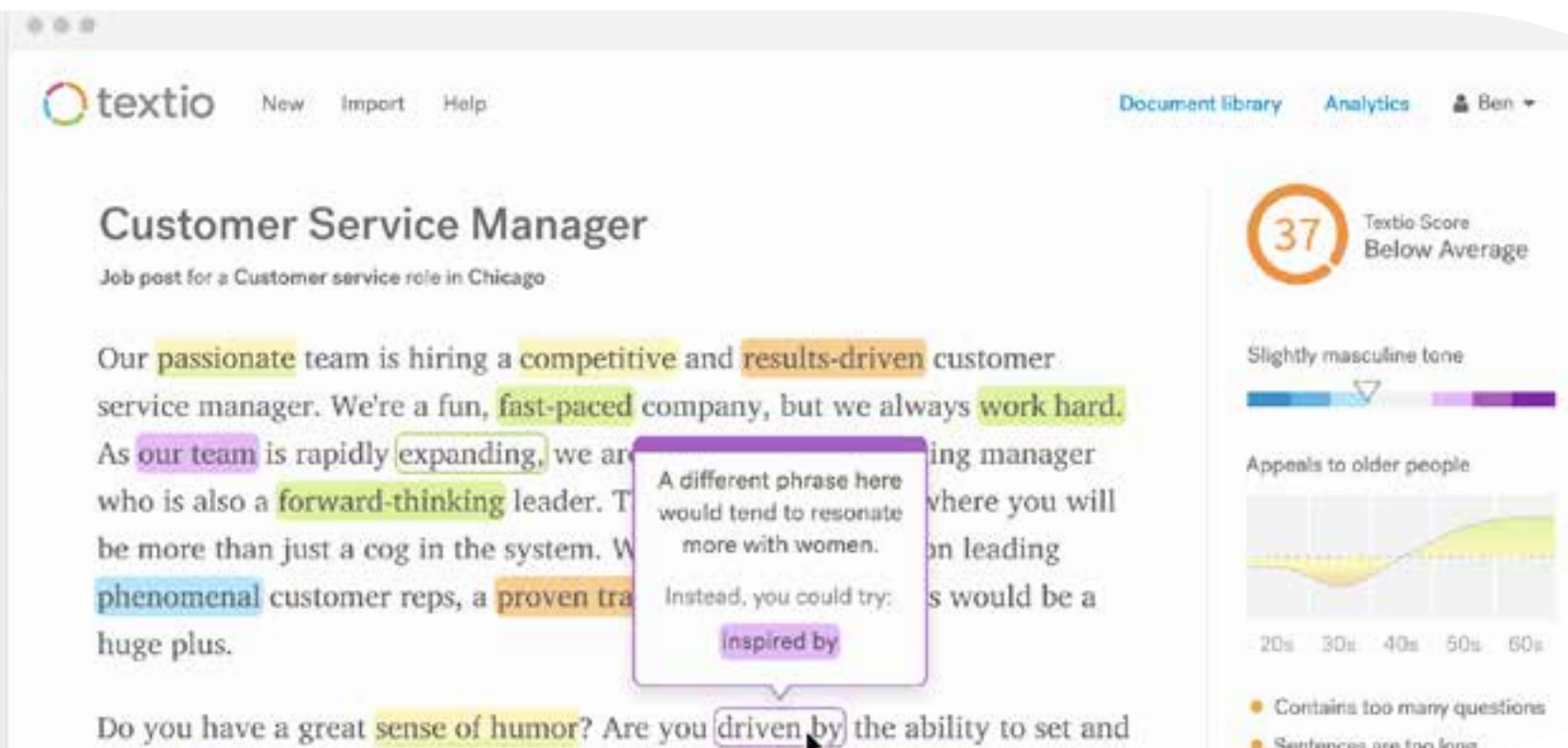
# INCLUSIVE
# **ONBOARDING**

→

So you've hired someone new. Your onboarding process is going to be their first real experience with the day-to-day of their new job. This is where your role in making them feel at home starts. There's a myriad of <u>different ways of doing onboarding</u>, and no two organisations are ever going to be the same, but here's a couple of things to be aware of:

**1.**

Highlight inclusion and belonging in your onboarding. Are there resources to access, contact people to talk to, programmes and steps in place if it goes wrong, training sessions to attend?

**2.**

Charities are jargon heavy, and vernacular can be unique not just to your organisation but also between teams. Help your new starter speak your language by giving them the resources they need.

**3.**

Celebrate the small wins. Your new hire is there because they believe in your vision and they want to make an impact.

Let them start contributing early on. On the flip side, giving a new team member too much to chew from the get go can make them feel like a fish out of water. It's a balancing act, but celebrating the small moments can help enormously.

**4.**

Does your new starter understand your organisation's vision and journey? Do you have a roadmap you can share with them? People can't feel like they belong if they don't understand where they are.

## CASE STUDY

# PIXAR

# CASE STUDY:
# **PIXAR**

→

## CULTURAL ETHOS: Honest and creative

**SUCCESS STATS:**

**15 Academy Awards, average box office of $600m per film**, and a **notably low turnover rate**.

**HIRING:**

They hire creative people, **based on potential instead of their current position or experience**. The idea is to hire people in their growth-phase, so that they can grow into the company culture.

**ONBOARDING:**

The onboarding process includes **talks by team leaders about the mistakes they've made and lessons they've learned**, to encourage employees to accept failure. The message: fail early, fail often. The effect: a psychological safe-space for failure.

**SHARED VISION:**

Pixar's structure is built so that people **contribute to the studio rather than just their own films**. Everyone is involved in all kinds of projects and films, to different degrees.

**CASE STUDY**

# CASE STUDY:
# **PIXAR**

## CULTURAL ETHOS: Honest and creative

### COMMUNICATION:

**All ideas are welcome**. Directors are given the same level of unfiltered candid feedback as anyone else; ideas are appreciated regardless of where they come from; and all ideas are shared to the entire workforce.

### HYBRID WORK:

You can't force creativity, so work the hours that feel comfortable for you. The office is a creativity hub, but when you don't need input or have scheduled collaboration sessions, **work where you work best**.

### COLLABORATION AND SOCIAL:

Pixar builds community over free agency. It's a no-hero culture, where creativity is a team sport. When a film does well, everyone is rewarded. They've got a **series of collaborative sessions** designed to bring different teams and levels of authority together.

These range from Dailies (morning meetings to review every team's work in progress), to Notes Days (all internal work is shut down for a day and all non-managers come together to work on each other's projects), to Braintrust Meetings (the whole company comes together to give candid written feedback).

### WELLBEING:

The company believes that good benefits can take away the everyday stresses for employees and **instead give them that space to think creatively**. This means a strong core benefits package (**private healthcare, mental health support, financial support**), as well as a few special perks. **They've got yoga and tai chi sessions in-office, as well as an ergonomics expert to make comfortable workplaces**. Also worth considering: **Personal Project Days**, where employees get two days a month to work on anything they want, which doesn't have to be directly related to whatever ongoing project they have.

# SHARED **VISION**

# EMPLOYEE **WELLBEING**

→

**One of the main reasons people feel** *like they belong at work is down to a shared vision***.**

As a charity, ideally you're hiring people that already feel a deep connection to the values and mission of the organisation. It speaks for itself that the people coming through the door already have a shared vision.

But sometimes, in the 9 to 5, the end goal can feel out of reach or disconnected.

How do we bring this shared vision to life every day? Think about allocating volunteering time for your employees, or bringing different teams and branches together on **cross-organisational projects** more often.

**Of course, we want our people to be happy.**

They're spending time and energy on supporting our organisations' values and missions, and we want them to feel happy doing so.

The COVID crisis drove workplaces towards a new focus on how employees are coping and feeling for the first time in a long time. **With more people burning out, and needing more support to get through the average working day**, companies had to shift their focus to better wellbeing and inclusion plans.

People that feel supported in their wellbeing are more likely to feel like they belong, and **less likely to get burnt out by the work they're doing**. But a true wellbeing culture at work is more than just the sum of wellbeing programmes. It's a culture driven by a holistic top-down model that actually values the person behind the work.

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# CASE STUDY

# GOOGLE

**CASE STUDY**

# CASE STUDY:
# **GOOGLE**

→ ## CULTURAL ETHOS: Flexible and Innovative

### SUCCESS STATS:

It's Google. It's famous for being one of the most coveted workplaces on Earth.

### HIRING:

Google's hiring ethos is to hire individuals with similar objectives (making information accessible to all). The interview process focuses on finding **fun, outspoken and collaborative people**.

### SHARED VISION:

**The core values are central to every aspect of Google's work**. They're baked into the employees from day dot.

### WELLBEING:

The Google offices are famous for **having literally all of the amenities** from pool tables to yoga sessions to free meals to on-the-clock video-game stations. But beyond making the workplace a fun place to be, they support their employees with a strong core benefits package, financial advice, strong parental support (including for adoption), gym memberships and more. Happy employees mean more productive employees.

**CASE STUDY**

# CASE STUDY:
# GOOGLE

→

## CULTURAL ETHOS: Flexible and Innovative

### COLLABORATION AND SOCIAL:

The offices are meant to be a fun place to encourage people to come in, so they can work more collaboratively. Google also realises you can't schedule innovation, so **meetings are often held in diner booths instead of conference rooms**, on the employee's own timelines.

### COMMUNICATION:

On the first day, **employees get access to almost all of Google's code**, with the idea being total transparency. The company has a flat hierarchical structure, with an **open communication and open-door policy**. There's Friday meetings to allow employees to ask the founders questions.

### HYBRID WORK:

Circling back to the idea that you can't schedule innovation, Google employees are trusted to make their own work hours, and decide **what percentage of their workday is dedicated to leisure and wellbeing**. Breaks are encouraged for mental health.

# COLLABORATION
# **AND SOCIAL BELONGING**

→

A big part of belonging means your team feels connected to the people they're seeing every day at work. And it's becoming increasingly important, with younger generations putting *more and more emphasis on being socially engaged* at the office.

**We used to have the infamous water cooler moments, where employees caught up about the latest episode of Game of Thrones.**

The pandemic almost entirely nixed this. But the water cooler was a way of **sparking innovation, productivity, and innovation**. Think about where your (metaphorical) water cooler moments are coming from now.

What about the **social rhythms of your office**? Consider anything from weekly quizzes, to online classes, cross-organisation training days, communal lunches, or coffee with the CEO.

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# OPEN LINES
# OF COMMUNICATION

**Open lines of communication are a great way of breaking down the divides between different levels of seniority and teams.**

It promotes employee wellbeing and shares values and goals across the organisation.

Introduce a mentor system, have regular team meetings about the goals and future of the organisation to keep everyone up to speed, or create a direct feedback system - revolutionise the classic suggestion box.

# HYBRID
# WORKING

**Hybrid working isn't going anywhere.**

Now that we know the world isn't going to burn down when we work remotely, a lot of people are taking advantage of the comforts of working from home and are reluctant to go back.

Last year, **McKinsey found that flexibility with working arrangements is now more important than salary as the way employees most want to be supported at work**.

# SO WHAT?

Belonging is a basic human need. And we need it at work as much as we do in our home, our families, and our social circles.

**The pandemic has massively shifted the way we see the office, and we need to adapt to this new culture. There's a million and one ways of doing this, so consider the ones that work for you and your organisation. If you'd like a more in-depth look at how other companies are doing this, check out our case studies on Patagonia and Airbnb.**

## 1. EXPERIMENT – DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAIL

You're the experts in the needs of your beneficiaries. Now is the time to start collaborating with web3 ventures, tech companies and governments to ensure that all users are being considered, not just the vocal minority. How can we design in access for all?

## 2. LISTEN – ASK FOR OPINIONS

The people who know best what they need are your employees themselves. Listen to their opinions and needs.

Make sure you're doing regular check-ins. And more importantly, make sure that you're not just for the sake of listening - act on the advice you get.

## 3. INCLUDE – MAKE BELONGING CENTRAL

A few wellbeing programmes cobbled together do not make a culture of wellbeing. Make sure that wellbeing is a top-down priority that influences all the decisions you make.

It should be baked into every aspect of your culture, not just the ones with 'wellbeing' in the title.

CASE
STUDY

# PATAGONIA

"At Patagonia, making a profit is not the goal because the Zen master would say profits happen 'when you do everything else right."

**Yvon Chouinard, Founder of Patagonia**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

## Patagonia
## Patagonia is built like an 'un-company.'



**When founder Yvon Chouinard set out to build his brand, his main mission was taking care of his employees, his customers, and more than anything, the planet.**

As I'm sure many of us have seen, Chouinard recently **gave away the billion dollar company**, setting it up in a trust and non-profit, so that 100% of the profits could go towards that last goal: saving the planet.

Patagonia has its social mission as its heart, and the key to their success as a business is in large part due to their success in hiring, maintaining, and motivating the right (mission-driven) people. So how do they do this?

# HIRING
# **PRACTICES**

# EMPLOYEE
# **WELLBEING**

**Patagonia's commitment to their mission starts at the hiring process.**

**They read their resumes bottom-up**, instead of top-down - they're interested in the hobbies, interests, and volunteer work.

At the end of the day, they want to know that their employees enjoy the outdoors, are connected to the brand's mission, and what they're already doing to support it.

It's a holistic approach that means they're hiring human beings, instead of their skills and experience.

They want their employees to see the company's social mission as a way of life, not just a job.

**So, they've gone through this hiring process where they're looking for people who eat, sleep, and breathe the environment and the outdoors. What next?**

Patagonia doesn't want their people to lose these qualities once they're in the building. So they offer benefits that let their employees be the people they hired.

A lot of these benefits then go towards supporting their employees' environmental passion. For example, if someone's been with the company for a year, **they can take up to two months paid leave to go volunteer** with an environmental organisation or project. They also pay bail for their employees (and their spouses) that

get arrested peacefully protesting for the environment (or recently, **for reproductive rights**). They recognise their employees are the types of people who care deeply and passionately about this mission, and they support them getting on with it outside of their 9 to 5.

But the signature benefit at Patagonia isn't about the environment at all - it's about the people we're saving the environment for.

Patagonia hopes to pass down a better environment to future generations than the one we have now, they care because they want their kids to have a better future. **So they have excellent childcare benefits**. They have three onsite childcare centres, pay for nannies on business trips, allow kids in meetings, and have bilingual programmes and certified teachers. And most importantly, they don't cut these benefits when they're going through difficult financial times. They prioritise wellbeing over profit.

# COLLABORATION AND **SOCIAL BELONGING**

# OPEN LINES **OF COMMUNICATION**

→

**No one can save the planet alone.**

Patagonia's culture thrives on teamwork and collaboration. They reward team players, not solo stars.

Our trend article this week mentions bringing back the water cooler moments in the office - Patagonia's office is one big water cooler moment.

**The whole office space is open**, with no private offices (not even for the founder, who shares a desk with everyone else and still pays for his own lunch at the cafeteria).

They want their employees to see the company's social mission as a way of life, not just a job.

**More than just sharing one big office with the founders and CEOs, Patagonia's entire corporate structure is framed as** **more of a network than a traditional pyramid.**

If something needs to get done, the CEO will speak directly to the people doing it, even if they're entry level.

They organise town-hall style meetings where the entire team can contribute (think of the Citizens' Assembly model we recently discussed here), and all decisions are made through consensus.

As Patagonia themselves put it: **the board picks the mountain, the players define how to conquer it**.

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**CASE STUDY**

# HYBRID
# **WORKING**

→ Even before the pandemic hit, Patagonia was already embracing flexible working practices.

**Their employee handbook is literally called "Let My People Go Surfing."**

On one hand, they want to support their employees with families, who's workdays might look slightly different to allow for picking the kids up from school or prepping dinner early (they care about future generations, remember?).

On the other hand, they also just understand that the people they hire are the type of people who'll want to set aside their work when the waves are good or the powder is down.

As long as the work gets done, they don't want to rob their employees of the exact qualities that make them such a good fit for the company.

**The bottom line**

Patagonia isn't doing any of this because they want to look good on paper, or win an award for coolest company, or because employee wellbeing is suddenly trendy. All of those things are just a side effect. They're implementing these programmes because they care about their employees, and they realise that their employees care about their mission. Supporting their wellbeing and their connection to the company's impact is only going to make them more driven and engaged.

And their strategy is working. Patagonia has grown to a billion dollar company **counting 3000 employees, with only a 4% turnover each year** - that's beyond minimal. For the jobs that do open up, they get approximately 9000 applications. Patagonia, like many charities, has their values and mission at the core of everything they do, and that is exactly where they thrive.

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CASE
STUDY

# AIRBNB

"The thing that will endure for 100 years, the way it has for most 100 year companies, is the culture. The culture is what creates the foundation for all future innovation. If you break the culture, you break the machine that creates your products."

**Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb**

# WHAT
# IS IT?

→

## Airbnb

### Airbnb is the organisation that everyone thinks of when they're thinking about examples of a successful office culture.

**In fact, they've branded themselves as the company obsessed with culture.**

Famously, CEO Brian Chesky sent an email to his entire staff early-on titled "**Don't Fuck Up The Culture**."

Airbnb's concept is all about belonging, their business idea is essentially about creating a travel model where anyone can belong anywhere.

It makes sense, then, that their values would reflect this sense of belonging and hospitality. So let's dive into how Airbnb creates belonging at the workplace.

# HIRING
# **PRACTICES**

# SHARED
# **VALUES**

# EMPLOYEE
# **WELLBEING**

→

**Airbnb's hiring ethos is heavily based on their core values.**

They're "obsessed" with company culture - so the people they hire need to fit the culture. As part of their hiring process, they've got **core values interviews** that are run by people outside of the job candidates are interviewing for, in order to filter out people that aren't a cultural fit. The idea is to prioritise the right people over scaling quickly.

When people do prove themselves to be a cultural fit, they're greeted with the **Human Tunnel ritual**

(sounds ominous, I know). After each World@ meeting (cross-company team meetings that happen once or twice a week), all the employees form a human tunnel through which new hires run and jump onto a beanbag. The idea is that when you're in, you're in. Doubling down on this, Airbnb also tries to **hire internally first for any position**, before turning its gaze outwards.

**The company mission is to create belonging anywhere in the world.**

It's logical that much of their values are about community, collaboration, and giving back.

In line with this thinking, they've got a volunteering programme in which employees have the opportunity to **volunteer four hours per month** by spending time with neighbourhood nonprofits.

**One of the reasons Airbnb does so well in employee retention and happiness metrics is that their employees feel supported in their wellbeing.**

The benefits aren't the most creative, but **they're effective**. Airbnb offers healthcare, therapy support, in-office food, as well as technical skills training. Unsurprisingly, they also offer their employees annual travel credit of $2k, to encourage everyone to experience being a guest (and so to understand what makes guests feel like they belong).

**Belong Anywhere**

airbnb

# COLLABORATION AND
# **SOCIAL BELONGING**

# OPEN LINES
# **OF COMMUNICATION**

→

**One of the ways Airbnb makes their employees feel like they belong is through strong social rhythms.**

They've got a **Ground Control Group**, a specialised team that looks after the workplace environment, internal communications, employee recognition, celebration and events, as well as the company internet that informs everyone of employee birthdays and anniversaries.

Their offices are also **designed to feel like home**. With an open space floor plan, employees can work from anywhere in an office, with different workspaces called 'the kitchen counter', 'the dining room table' and 'the living room'. Where better to feel comfortable than at home?

**Transparency is a core pillar of how Airbnb creates belonging.**

Essentially, they feel that for people to feel at home, they need to have all of the information available to them. Notes from executive meetings are shared company-wide, and the CEO sends weekly emails to all employees with whatever is on his mind. All of this is intended to open up a conversation across all levels of the organisation.

An interesting exercise they've got is the philosophy of "**elephants, dead fish, and vomit**". Elephants are the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about, dead fish are the thing that happened ages ago that no one can get over, and vomit is the word vomit that sometimes just needs to be vented about. Everyone across the company is encouraged to talk about the elephants, dead fish and vomit, in the hopes of creating a comfortable safe space to talk about whatever is on anyone's mind.

# HYBRID
# **WORKING**

→ Airbnb's remote working policy was <u>widely lauded for being flexible and adaptable</u> to the post-COVID environment.

**It comes down to the idea that employees can work from wherever they want, work remote as often as they want, live and work in any of Airbnb's locations, as long as they attend team meetings (that often happen for a week at a time).**

Of course, being a travel company, it's more flexible than most organisations will have the capacity for, but their bottom line can be taken away by anyone: be as flexible as possible, be transparent, and maintain regular whole-team gatherings.

**The bottom line**

<u>**Airbnb now earns billions in revenue, and have been lauded as Glassdoor's #1 place to work in the past**</u>. It all comes down to their culture of belonging. It's nothing crazy, they're not reinventing the wheel with extraordinary wellbeing programmes or benefits, but they're making sure they're consistent. A genuine sense of belonging is baked into every aspect of the company. The takeaway from Airbnb's success is simply a commitment to culture first.

# TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD: A MOVEMENT

# SO YOU WANT TO
## **BUILD A MOVEMENT?**

→

Movements are the hot charity topic right now. Maybe it's because they're an <u>effective way of creating a two-way relationship</u> and shared purpose with your supporters.

**Maybe it's because there's a lot to protest right now, from <u>cost of living crisis</u> to <u>climate catastrophe</u> to <u>discrimination</u>.**

Or maybe it's because of the recent success and prominence of environmental movements like Extinction Rebellion (hint: it's most likely all three).

On one hand we have the classic impact-focused, social movements, like Black Lives Matter. Whilst on the other hand there's a new wave of charities building movements into their core mission-infrastructure, like Parkinson's UK who hired a '**Movement Building Lead**'.

But before you decide to hop on the movement bandwagon, there are some key questions we recommend you consider, to decide whether a movement is really what you need and want.

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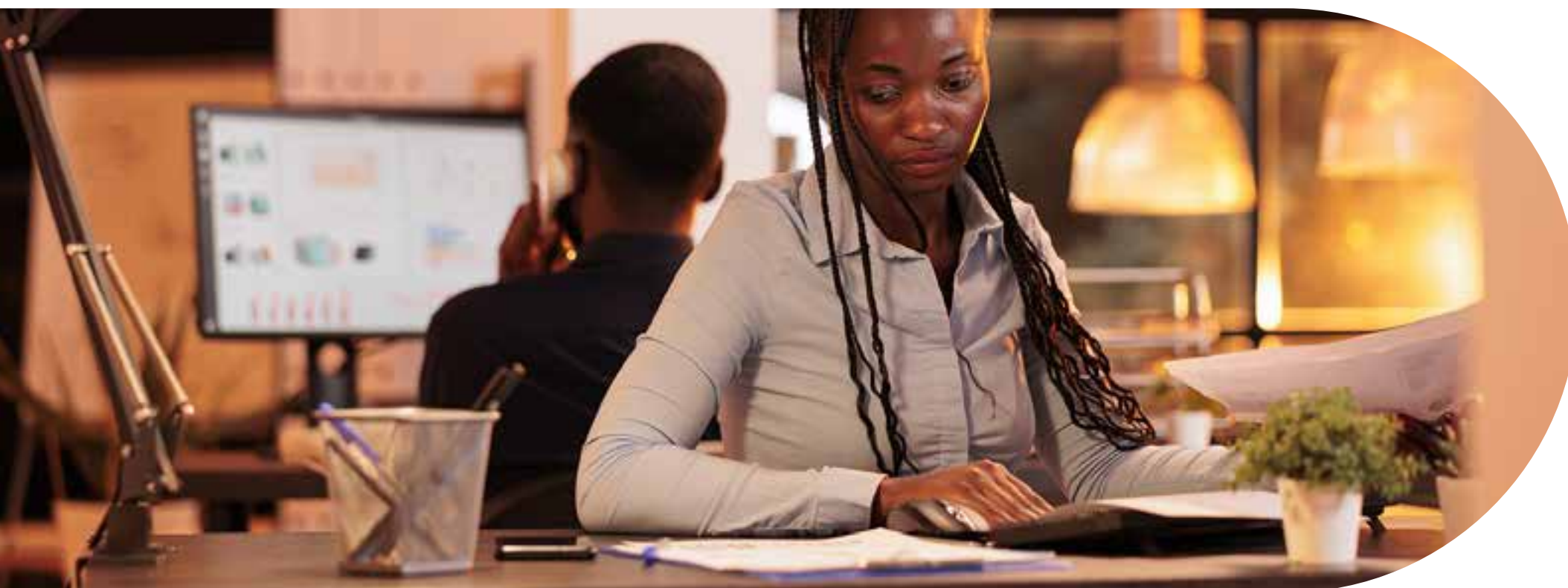
# WHAT IS
# A MOVEMENT?

→ To be clear: a movement is not a campaign, community or network.

**A movement can contain all of these, but in and of itself is larger than the sum of all of these combined.**

What sets movements apart is that the **power and agency within them belong to the people involved**, rather than the organisation driving them. It's traditionally a non-hierarchical group of individuals embracing a shared purpose, which can change over time as the context changes.

If this sounds a bit theoretically dense, consider these examples. Think of the **UK movement to end period poverty**, which was started by individual campaigners, but really got off the ground when it started inspiring people to share their personal stories.

Ultimately, it was driven by people campaigning, self-organising, and recruiting others to **their version of the cause**.

Then think of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. Yes, it was widespread. Yes, it required participants nominating/recruiting others. But, crucially, it did not drive people to self-organise and drive **their own version of the cause**. That is a (**very effective**) campaign, but not a movement.

# WHAT IS THE POINT
# **OF YOUR MOVEMENT?**

→

Why do you want to create a movement? First, you have to understand your own motivation in doing this - if you don't know why you're acting, why would anyone else know where you're coming from? And why would they buy into your movement if they don't understand it?

**So, is the purpose of creating your movement income generation, brand awareness, or because of a genuine need for social impact?**

Be clear on your motivation. If it's fundraising or awareness that are motivating you, then a movement probably isn't the right solution.

**Genuine movements are what get people involved**. They're not going to get behind a movement that only serves the needs of your organisation, instead of the problem it's trying to solve.

At the end of the day, being involved in a movement is inherently uncertain - they're constantly developing because of their nature. If we want people to invest in that uncertainty, we need them to **1)** genuinely believe the cause is worthy, **2)** feel a true emotional connection to the cause, **3)** believe that the movement is built on the same emotional connection that they feel to the purpose.

A good movement built for the wrong reasons isn't going to be what inspires people to drive the movement further, and is **much more likely to fall apart at the first hurdle**.

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# WHAT IS YOUR ORGANISATION'S
# **ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT?**

→

It's important that supporters of a movement take ownership of it and drive its ultimate direction. Sounds very anarchical.

**I'm sure some of you must be wondering what the role of your organisation could then be in driving a movement.**

Well, whilst a movement should give up ownership to its members, **it shouldn't be without organisation. What this organisation** looks like depends entirely on you and your vision.

The large majority of the social movements we're seeing in the media at the moment (Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil) are very focussed on power to the people. Ideally, the organiser creates a catalyst and platform, and supporters that buy into the purpose come together and take the actions that they want to take in support.

This level of ownership and emotional engagement **can be incredibly powerful**. We've all

seen the amount of people that rally behind these decentralised movements - think about the **amount of people** it took for XR to occupy so much of London in 2019. But it also has clear implications: it can get away from the organiser's vision very quickly. In fact, the point is that it does.

Charities driving social movements **usually want more control of the narrative** they're driving. I mean, what would the board say if your brand was suddenly associated with mass arrests? It can be a tough sell internally, even if it is effective.

So consider how much power you want to hand over when you're creating a movement. On the scale between simply giving your supporters the platform to having a heavy hand in steering a movement's actions, where do you want to lie?

In practical terms, whatever happens, you don't want your movement to go the wrong way, or fall apart under the weight of conflicting opinions. So consider the following:

**1.** Develop (and clearly communicate) a shared vision with all of your supporters.

**2.** Create a roadmap to achieving your purpose. Be as vague or as precise as you want to be.

**3.** Make hardline values and principles for how the movement should operate.

**4.** Define the exact role of your organisation. What tools, resources, and training (if any) are you providing?

**CASE STUDY**

# EXTINCTION REBELLION

# WHAT
# IS IT?

## Extinction Rebellion
### Extinction Rebellion is possibly one of the most famous (if not THE most famous) environmental movement right now.



**They were founded in 2018, on the principle of nonviolent protest.**

I won't dwell on their background, I'm sure everyone is familiar with their work. If you're not - we're talking about the people who put the big pink boat in the middle of Oxford Circus a few years ago.

# WHAT IS THE POINT
# OF THE MOVEMENT?

→ Clearly geared towards social impact.

### What is the organisation's role in the movement?

XR drives people to **self-organise entirely**. It's a decentralised organisation, made up of small, autonomous groups that co-exist in the larger Extinction Rebellion network.

Essentially, anyone who organises a nonviolent protest in pursuit of XR's main demands (and adheres to its principles) can say they're doing it in the name of XR.

A lot of work has gone into making XR largely decentralised. The bigger groups do organise large-scale protests for smaller groups to join, but mainly the organisation provides the platform, training, branding, and resources for smaller organisations to do as they please.

### Who is joining the movement, and what is their role?

In theory, everyone who wants to have a voice in XR can have a voice. **People power is at the heart of their philosophy**.

On the flip side, XR comes under fire for **alienating whole sections of society on a regular basis**, and not without reason.

Working class people (tube strikes disproportionately impact the working class); younger generations (lack of understanding of young people/don't listen to younger voices enough); BAME communities (disproportionate impact of mass arrests on BAME protestors).

It's worth thinking about how their decentralised structure shifts the responsibility for being inclusive to the local and regional sub-groups that make up the movement.

### What outcome DO they want?

XR has been very clear in their branding that they have three demands for the UK government: **Tell The Truth, Act Now, and Decide Together**.

The idea is to increase visibility for the demands and not to call off the movement until they've been achieved.

So far, their strategy has been to **scale up the movement by using their bigger campaigns as a launching pad** for recruitment and training sessions for new members to then create new sub-groups.

Not all movements need to be to the scale of Extinction Rebellion. They could be localised, driven by a nicher purpose, or an easier-to-achieve goal.

# WHO IS JOINING YOUR MOVEMENT,
## AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

→ You've got the framework of your movement, but who's joining you? It could be your members, campaigners, volunteers, funders, stakeholders, or supporters of any kind.

**Ideally, once they're involved, they draw in people from their own personal spheres and start a chain reaction.**

From here on out, **a common mistake** is telling your supporters how involved to be instead of letting them decide for themselves. It takes a level of agency away from the members, and adds a barrier to entry.

People are going to want to contribute because you've made it clear that acting is **necessary** to achieve this purpose.

You've provided a catalyst and sparked a response that should drive them towards their own action. It's all about genuine purpose. It doesn't work if you're demanding a certain level or type of engagement, or if your supporters aren't genuinely motivated.

Again, there's an infinite amount of different ways this could actually look.

How are you helping people self-organise (if you're letting them self-organise at all)?

Do you run a town hall model to hear their opinions?

Do you give them preset packs that let them organise their own version of your action?

Do you give everyone free reign to self-organise (as long as they hold themselves to your values/vision/ roadmap)?

# FINALLY,
# WHAT OUTCOME DO YOU WANT?

→ Most importantly - what's your end point? Ideally, you have a roadmap that clearly defines what you want to get out of your movement.

**Is it an ongoing goal (raising awareness for something, similar to WWF's Earth Hour), or a demand (Extinction Rebellion's three actionable demands for the UK government)?**

Think about the time frame this is achievable in. Also worth thinking about is whether or not you intend to scale the movement or let it reach an end when something is achieved.

CASE
STUDY

# CANCER RESEARCH UK & THE SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE MOVEMENT

# WHAT
# IS IT?

## Cancer Research UK & The Smoke-Free Workplace Movement

In 2002, a group of students from a Scottish High School petitioned the Scottish Parliament to ban smoking in public places.

**By 2004, the Scottish Parliament had done so.**

This snowballed into a much larger and much-wider spread social movement, driven in part by Cancer Research UK, to get smoking banned in public places in the entirety of the UK. This was achieved in 2006.

# WHAT IS THE POINT
# **OF THE MOVEMENT?**

→

## The movement was entirely purpose-driven and born organically from a shared vision among big swathes of society.

### WHAT IS THE ORGANISATION'S ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT?

At the time, Cancer Research UK was one of the main organisations campaigning for the ban.

Crucially, this is not an example of a movement created by Cancer Research UK - the movement itself came from a genuine need and shared purpose in addressing it.

What Cancer Research UK did do, **was provide a platform for their supporters to drive the movement further**. They created resources for their supporters to email and text MPs, sign petitions, and act collectively, as well as providing important information.

### WHO IS JOINING THE MOVEMENT, AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

The people joining the movement, specifically through Cancer Research UK, would have generally been their supporters. One of the reasons the charity was successful in organising a large number of people into collective action was because they were playing on a genuine shared vision - rather than recruiting and directing people, they were **creating the resources that people needed** in order to take meaningful action within the movement, without taking away the agency of the supporters.

### WHAT OUTCOME DO THEY WANT?

The target outcome of this movement is self-explanatory (it's literally in the name). The movement set out to achieve a smoking ban in all enclosed public spaces and workplaces.

There was no need to continue the movement beyond the achievement of this specific target.
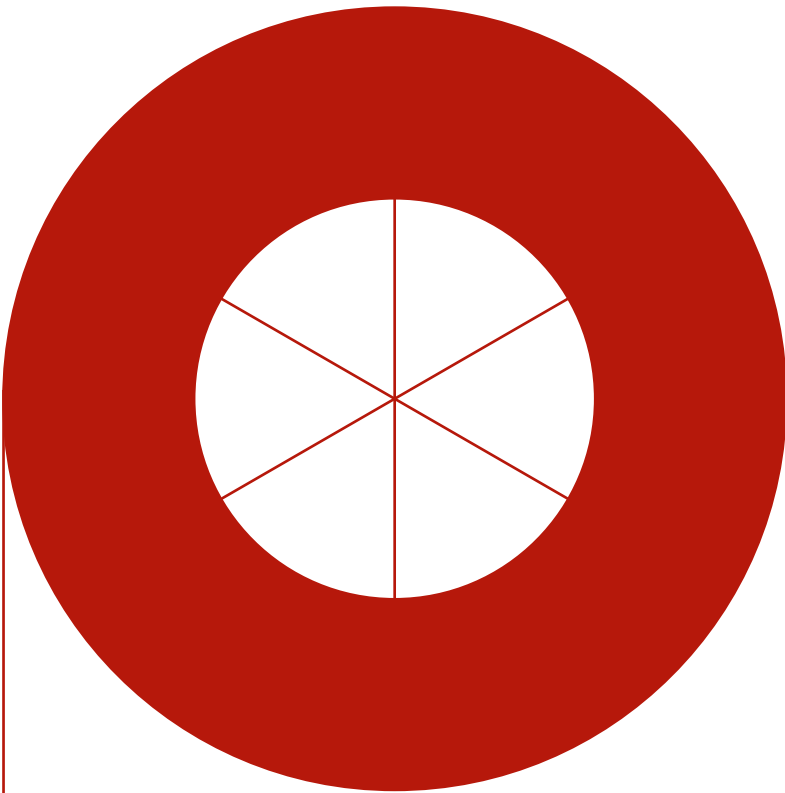
# BUT REALLY, SO WHAT?

# BUT REALLY,
# SO WHAT?

## DIVERSITY = INNOVATION

Diverse & inclusive teams are more innovative, creative and productive.

## NORMALISE EXPERIENCES

Identifying and speaking directly to a specific minority-experienced problem can normalise the struggles experienced by marginalised communities, and offer solutions.

## WHO IS IN YOUR WRITERS ROOM?

Invest in diversifying your own team. There's no authentic representation without authentic voices coming from within. If you're trying to tap into new audiences, making sure you've got the necessary input is what will allow you to create real impact instead of tokenistic/mis-representation.

## SLICE OF LIFE

Audiences are tired of seeing only the hardships of their identity represented and yearn for uplifting, 'normal' representation. In response, we're now seeing an increase in 'slice of life' representation.

## REPRESENTATION CAN CHANGE LIVES

Seeing yourself represented from a young age onwards is the best way to not only boost children's confidence and ambition, but also help unlearn stereotypes before they're ingrained.

# BUT REALLY,
# SO WHAT?

## REFRESH YOUR SEGMENTATION

The time of broad appeal is over. Subcultures are the new demographics. Niche communities offer the opportunity to look beyond demographic assumptions and stereotypes, to consider motivation, passion and interest. Niches aren't binary. Niches can and do intersect, inform and build.

## CONTINUING SHIFTS IN TRUST

In the wake of post-truth and pandemic misinformation, the balance of power in trust is still shifting. Peer to peer and community recommendation now hold as much, if not greater, sway as old institutional bodies. How and where are you engaging in the conversation? And how can you do this with an authentic voice?

## UNTAPPED AUDIENCES

Marginalised groups represent large parts of the market that are craving stories and products tailor-made for them. Identifying the right community and building a unique campaign could win you the loyalty of a whole new section of supporters. The key is building authentic representation with and for these groups now, before the market becomes oversaturated.

## LEVERAGE LOYALTY

Brands can buy an audience of individuals, but the key is to tap into a community of loyal fans and supporters. With people increasingly craving connection, your efforts may go further when targeted at a niche. It might be as simple as maintaining a presence on the right subReddit.

## NEW PLATFORMS

Big chunks of audiences have moved away from traditional TV and newspapers, and are now living on more authentic, unmoderated platforms. From Discord and Twitch, to Parler and Pineapple. Consider who you're trying to engage and where they might be having the conversation.

# BUT REALLY,
# SO WHAT?

## PERMACRISIS EXHAUSTION = LACK OF CONTROL

We've rolled from one 'once in a lifetime' event, to another. Civil freedoms being rolled back, repressed freedom of speech, political instability, soaring cost of living, and the threat of climate change hanging over us all. People are exhausted. Where can you give supporters actions or control to offset the rollercoaster of uncertainty?

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Dissent is always going to have backlash. It's impossible to please everyone, and any kind of dissent has consequences. On the flip side, standing for equal quality of life is often at the heart of charitable organisations, and consumers are increasingly drawn to politically aware brands. So how do you toe the line? Experiment with different approaches and try to find your sweet spot.

## PROOF OF IDENTITY NEEDS USE CASES

The technology exists, but needs use cases to ensure it's developed for the greatest good. Now is the time to start collaborating with web3 ventures, tech companies and governments to ensure that all users are being considered, not just the vocal minority.

## DEEP LISTENING

There's a difference between listening, and listening. Is your organisation really ready to hear what supporters have to say, and take action as a result? Or is it a performative exercise?

## ARE YOU REALLY BUILDING A MOVEMENT?

Movements are the hot charity topic right now, but is it really right for your org? If your priority success criteria are income or brand awareness then consider a campaign or product innovation. How much control are you willing to hand over, and are you clear on the objective / goal?

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once. But don't ever underestimate the importance you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own."

**Michelle Obama**

# CONTACT
## US

Want to discuss the implications of the shift and how you can use it as an opportunity to innovate? Need some help exploring the potential?

**We're here to help.**

Get in touch.

**GoodFutures@goodinnovation.co.uk**