

Navigating the Future of

Loyalty

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Thank You!

We would like to thank everyone who gave up their time to contribute to this report, through interviews, chats, coffees and emails. In particular we would like to thank:

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Foreword

When asked to define loyalty, **Sharon Pickford** from the *National Trust* didn't hesitate:

"There's no such thing as loyalty. It's all about core values."

And she's right. **Loyalty is dead. Long live loyalty.**

Loyalty, as we've known it, is evolving. Loyalty isn't passive. Today's audiences want connection, impact, and a role in something bigger. It's not about routine transactions or brand allegiance. People are drawn to relationships built on purpose and impact. They want to know that their contributions are part of a bigger picture, one that aligns with what matters to them.

Which is why, throughout this report, we've chosen to use the term **collaborator** rather than 'donor' or 'supporter'. This term reflects the active engagement people want to have with your mission and purpose and incorporates a broad church of audiences. For us, loyalty is as much about the individual donor as it is about your corporate relationships, grantees, volunteers, service users and teams. Loyalty isn't defined by a financial transaction. To these collaborators, loyalty is about relevance, purpose, and alignment with their beliefs.

In writing this report, we wanted to explore how loyalty is changing and how charities can nurture it as a dynamic, evolving relationship with collaborators at the heart of your mission.

As **Sharon** said,

"If your core values align with a particular passion or purpose, then you'll connect. Then they'll take action."

This edition is the mini version of Navigating the Future of Loyalty. If you'd like to read the full report (all 108 pages, including: all of the trends, case studies and the full 'so whats'), please [click here](#) or [contact Good Futures](#) to become a member.



Daisy O'Reilly-Weinstock
Senior Director of Big Bets

Background & Context:

Why Loyalty is Critical for Charities Today

The Charity Sector's Unique Challenge

Unlike most for-profit businesses, UK charities operate within a unique environment of societal constraints and expectations, economic pressures and legislation that make navigating the loyalty landscape even more challenging. We've explored this in much greater detail in the [Future of Charity report](#) so we won't retread this ground for loyalty, but do want to pull out a few of the most relevant challenges that are impacting the development of loyalty strategies in the current climate.

The Tightrope of In-Year Cash

Many of the charities we spoke to for this report are navigating the tightrope of the urgent need for in-year cash, against longer-term ambitions to stabilise and grow. With shrinking budgets and rising costs, some are battling internally against a desire for short-term acquisition tactics in a market where acquisition is becoming harder.

Yes, there are tried and tested methods of reaching known audiences, but getting cut through and brand recognition in an increasingly crowded market means that these short-term strategies may not deliver the same results they previously ensured. Higher costs, combined with rising expectations from audiences, mean that investing in loyalty is not just a wise financial decision but a necessity.

The Legacy Cliff

In the UK we expect £5.5 trillion of assets will be passed down between now and 2050, with over £1 trillion expected to change hands in the 2020s alone. But, are Boomers potentially the last generation of traditional legators? By **2050 Gen X will account for 40% of UK deaths**, but they are also **less likely to have made a will** than Boomers at the same age. Legacy income has shored up the finances of many UK charities, and some may be banking on it continuing to be a cash cow for the coming decades, but are we potentially in for a rude awakening if we don't start to engage younger generations as prospects now? (And by younger, I mean Millennials and Gen Z, not just Gen X!).

The Tech Infrastructure Gap

Personalisation and data-driven insights were brought up in every single interview as the holy grails for modern loyalty strategies, and to deliver this future almost every organisation we spoke to is investing in tech in one way, shape or form. We heard about: Transformation strategies, tech roadmaps, CRM rollouts, data architecture and AI integrations. Deploying effective and flexible CRM systems will be key as we look to meet rising supporter expectations for tailored and transparent engagement, but that doesn't mean you should wait until roll-out is complete before innovating on your loyalty plans.

"If you've got the right data and the right technology platform, you'll only be constrained by your own imagination."

Sharon Pickford, *National Trust*

Drivers of Change

Cost of Living Crisis & In-Year Cash Pressures

Whilst inflation is falling (down from the 41 year high of 11.1% in August, 2022, to 1.7% in September, 2024), the financial squeeze on households continues. As does the increased cost of service delivery for business and charities alike. Although the British public donated a record **£13.9bn to charity in 2023**, the number of people donating is **still decreasing**. Meanwhile, **9 in 10 charities are facing increased demand** at a time when a third of voluntary organisations have had to cut their workforce in order to survive.

Data, Data, Data

Although Google has gone back on their promise to **ban third-party cookies** entirely, the coming years will see increasing limitations being imposed on this type of data collection. So in this new privacy-focused landscape, how do you get the data you need for creating true connections? We're seeing a shift towards **zero-party data** strategies. But once you've got the data, how do you unlock it?

As **Richard Lee** from *Marie Curie* said,

"Building the infrastructure for better data and CRM systems is foundational. Without it, we can't execute on personalised engagement or track loyalty in a meaningful way."

Who Owns Impact?

Charities no longer own impact and with this the competition for impact-driven loyalty is heating up. **Rising consumer expectations** and **increasingly high ESG standards**, corporates are now stepping firmly into the social impact space, crowding a market once dominated by the third sector. As of 2023, consumers still **trust charities more than corporates** to deliver meaningful impact and innovation, but this trust may change as corporate impact initiatives become increasingly refined. In a world where every brand seems to have a purpose, maintaining trust and demonstrating unique value is more critical than ever.



Generational Shifts

Gen Z and Gen Alpha's early years awareness and engagement with global issues and debates, **enabled by technology**, continues to shape their values. Raised with unprecedented access to global news and social media, young audiences are deeply aware of big issues (from climate change, to social justice and inequality) and they're eager to get behind causes that reflect their beliefs. For these generations, loyalty is about mission and value alignment above all – and they're not afraid to switch to a different brand if they feel they're delivering more impact. They're drawn to organisations willing to take bold stands and communicate values that align with their own.

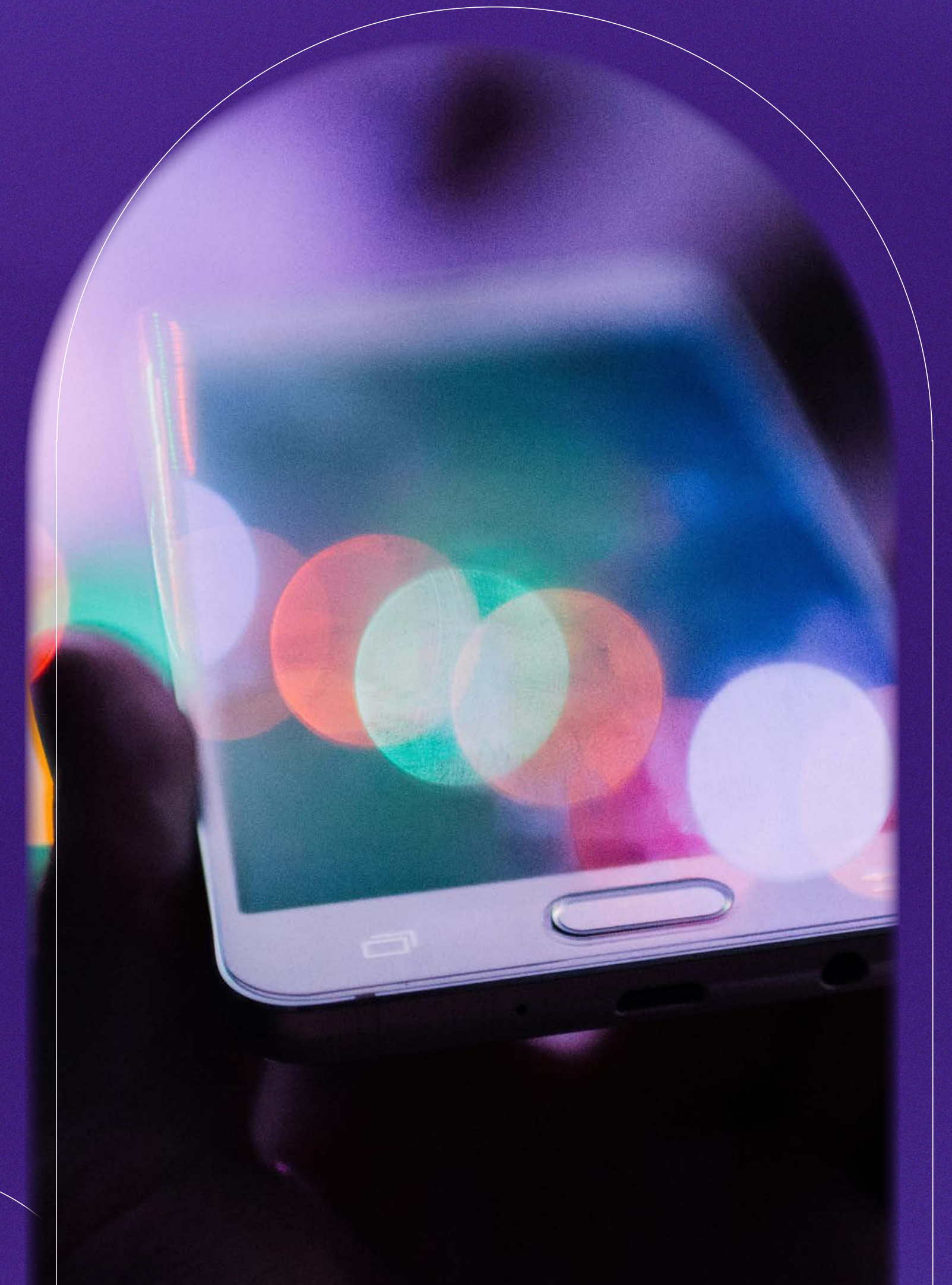
The Fragmented Internet

The internet is fragmenting. Audiences are moving away from **legacy social media platforms**, AI is **flooding search engines** and feeds with misinformation and AI slop, and people are increasingly retreating into echo chambers as the world becomes more polarised. Enter: the splinternet. Online audiences are gravitating towards niche networks that offer a stronger sense of belonging. So how do you find your audiences when they're retreating into niche spaces?

Polarisation

We're living in a polarised environment where politics have seeped into our everyday lives even more than before – it's not just who we vote for, but how we choose to represent ourselves, the media we consume, the products we buy, and even the friendships we form. This polarisation is acutely visible in the gap between different genders. **Young men are becoming more conservative**, while young women are becoming more liberal. This ideological gap concerns everything from gender identity, to immigration and racial justice. As this societal rift continues to grow, it will bring serious implications for social cohesion, tolerance, and engagement across the divide.

“Young men are becoming more conservative, while young women are becoming more liberal.”



Polycrisis & Fatigue

From the ongoing cost of living crisis; to the mounting consequences of climate change; and escalating global conflicts. Between the doom and gloom of our news feeds, people are exhausted. Younger generations, like Gen Z, have grown up being told they're the generation that's going to save the world from climate change, yet they're buckling under this immense pressure as rates of climate denial and disengagement are on the rise among this cohort. Meanwhile, there's a sharp decline in the population's appetite for news. To cut through the crisis fatigue and maintain engagement in difficult times, charities will need to focus on offering hope over despair.

The Dopamine Loop

Introducing the dopamine loop: the cycle where our brains reward brief bursts of distraction with dopamine and make us feel good – driving us to want to repeat the stimulus. It's a familiar model for addiction, only now applied to culture. The tech platforms that dominate our cultural experience today are engineered to lock users into this loop through scrolling and reeling interfaces that optimise for short, snappy bursts of content. Unfortunately, the more we rely on these stimuli, the less pleasure we derive from our dopamine hits. At some point, the constant churn of quick stimuli will lead to the complete absence of enjoyment in an experience that's supposed to be fun, also known as anhedonia.

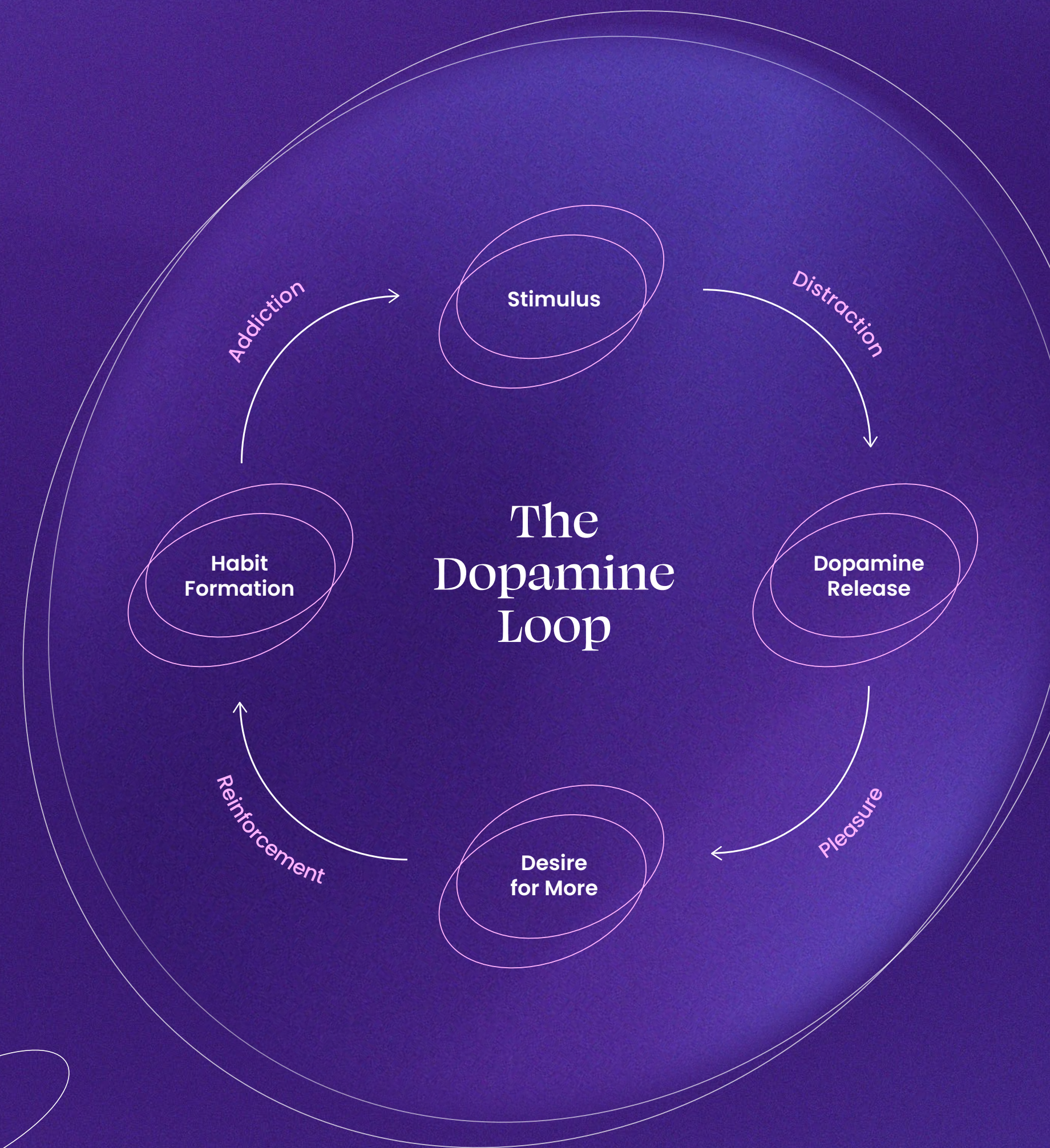


Diagram Source: [Honest Broker, The State of the Culture 2024](#)

The New Rules of Loyalty: *Moving Beyond Transactions*

Introduction

Gone are the days when loyalty could be bought with discounts or perks. In a time where hyper-fragmentation makes broad, one-size-fits-all messaging ineffective, loyalty is undergoing a radical transformation. As one interviewee put it, many charities are still relying on outdated approaches—“the vomit comet” of overwhelming, generic communications. But today’s collaborators are smarter, more selective, and craving something deeper.

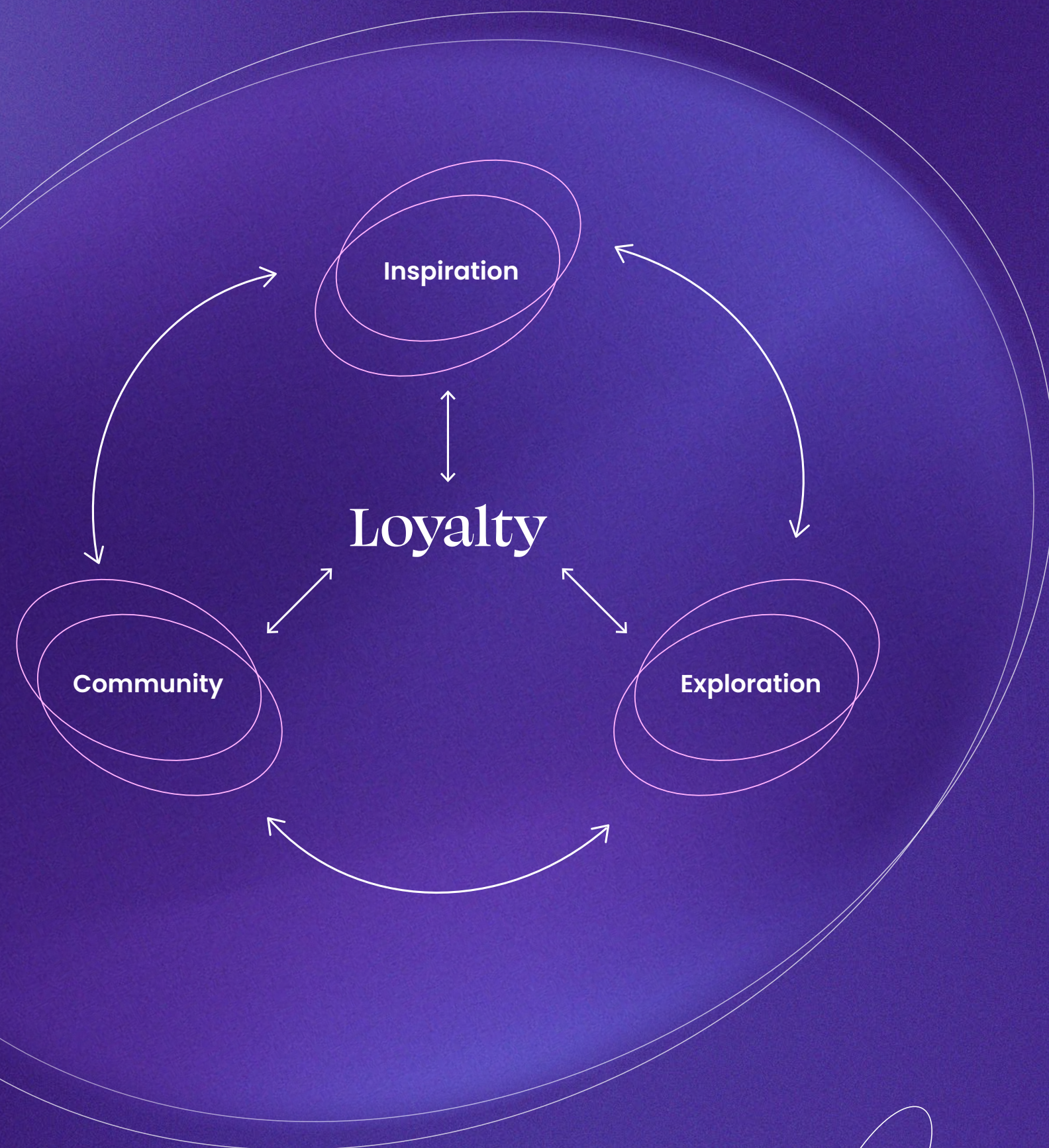
In this new landscape, loyalty isn’t about chasing numbers; it’s about forging meaningful, reciprocal relationships rooted in shared values. To stand out, organisations need to go beyond the transactional and invest in real, purpose-driven engagement. People are looking for more than just a cause to donate to—they want a brand that inspires them, reflects their community, and connects with their unique worldview.

This shift is ushering in a new set of ‘hygiene factors’ for loyalty. People expect charities to offer connections that resonate, to personalise interactions, and to create value beyond the ask. In this chapter, we explore these dynamics: from the shift toward a loyalty loop that thrives on ongoing engagement, to the power of hyper-personalisation, and why the future of loyalty is less about ‘more’ and all about ‘better.’

**“Today’s collaborators are smarter,
more selective, and craving
something deeper”**



Loyalty is a Loop, Not a Funnel



Our lives are not linear, so why would we ever expect our engagement with businesses, charities or services providers to follow a simple funnel? People don't move through a neat, linear path from awareness to consideration, conversion and then action, and then stay static at the bottom of trust. Let's face it: the loyalty funnel is finished. Instead, think of loyalty as a continuous loop, where

"Reinforcement, engagement, feedback, action"

Catherine Hart, *Target Ovarian Cancer*

happen cyclically, and where every interaction counts. This loop is omnidirectional, with activity flowing backwards, forwards and across as sentiments shift, passions ebb and values focus.

Loyalty Without Purchase

One interviewee described some charity engagement journeys like the worst version of dating, where your date asks you to marry them on the second date. The pinnacle of loyalty is not transaction and some of your most committed collaborators may never make a donation. For younger generations especially, brand loyalty could be as simple as loving a brand, even if they have no intent to purchase it.

In fact, **41% of Millennials** say spreading the word counts as brand loyalty. The loudest voices advocating for your cause and brand might never show up in your CRM – but that doesn't mean they're not worth tracking. So how do you serve those who love you but don't donate?

Hyper-Personalisation & Micro-Segmentation

The era of mass is over. Today's collaborators want to feel seen, heard, and understood. Technological advances, as well as the omnipresent algorithm, mean that highly tailored experiences are now a must-have. In fact, a whopping **73% of people** expect better personalisation thanks to technological advances.

Luckily, advances in AI mean that charities now have easier access to personalisation, at scale. AI allows you to sift through data in real-time, decode preferences, and craft content and experiences that feel personal and meaningful. This isn't just about boosting engagement, it's about building loyalty by making every interaction feel **intentional**.

Case Studies



Patientory Inc.

Patientory Inc. has launched a new decentralised app that empowers users to share their health data securely and earn rewards for participating in clinical research. The app consolidates data from electronic medical records and wearable devices to create a comprehensive picture of each user's health. Users can then choose to share their data for clinical trials or health studies, and in exchange, they receive personalised rewards directly through the app.

So What: This new type of data-driven engagement by giving users the power to share their data on their terms. Incentivise data-sharing, enhance loyalty, and drive valuable insights all at the same time. How are you rewarding the collaborators who share their insights, feedback, and stories?



Museumvereniging

In April 2023, during the Netherlands' Museum Week, Dutch museums waived the photo ID requirement for Museumkaart holders, encouraging them to share their annual passes with friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues. Typically, the Museumkaart offers personal, unlimited access to numerous museums throughout the Netherlands, but this temporary change allowed the program's 1.4 million members to introduce new visitors to the nation's rich artistic and cultural heritage, free of charge. This initiative aimed to expand the visitor base by using existing cardholders as ambassadors, inviting new audiences to explore the country's museums and galleries.

So What: Not only does the sharing initiative leverage existing collaborators to reach new audiences, it's an opportunity for the museums to identify their collaborators who may not regularly purchase from them. Who would support you if given the chance, and how are you identifying them?

Building Community and Fandom: Fostering Deep Emotional Connections

Introduction

“During the pandemic people were feeling helpless, and by contributing to our work, they were doing something useful, because what we could communicate to them was that, whilst the crews weren’t going out on as many shout outs, they were becoming hubs of help in every community. So our volunteers were delivering groceries to our very old supporters. We gave everybody a means by which to contact us if they needed help, and we put our whole community and engagement teams onto outreach. We gave the people a reason to believe.”

Jayne George, RNLI

In today’s loyalty landscape, community isn’t just important—it’s everything. But building a loyal community isn’t about reaching everyone. It’s about reaching the right people in ways that genuinely resonate. The future of loyalty lies in cultivating close, purpose-driven connections with those who share your mission at a fundamental level. Gone are the days when success was measured by how many you could reach; now, it’s about the depth of your connections and the strength of the bonds you create.

Audiences today are increasingly drawn to niche communities, shared values, and the sense of belonging that only a close-knit network can provide. People don’t just want to support a cause—they want to be part of something that feels personal, meaningful, and bigger than themselves.

Are you ready to activate your most passionate supporters and turn them into ambassadors for your mission? In the end, success in loyalty isn’t about amassing numbers; it’s about nurturing strong, reciprocal relationships with the people who are genuinely invested in your cause.



Fandom 2.0: The Power of Stans

From the crowds flocking to the Eras Tour, to fans scrambling to get their hands on Oasis tickets, fandom has been more prominent than ever over the past year. But this fandom isn't passive. The rise of parasocial relationships has seen fans looking for new ways to connect with their favourite artists both online and IRL. And armed with new tools, tech, and democratised power, these communities are forces to be reckoned with. In the past these fans mobilised to get a glimpse of their favourite artist as they landed at Heathrow, now they're mobilising to raise funds for BLM, or coming together to campaign on behalf of Kamala Harris to influence the outcome of the US election.

These audiences are looking for rich, layered engagement with collaborators, stacking these experiences to create scale. It's about passion-driven participation – deeper connections, richer experiences, and a sense of belonging. Your real influence isn't about the size of your following, but the depth of your connection.

IRL Connection

Faced with the digital dopamine loop, people are craving real, face-to-face connections more than ever. Endless scrolling and superficial online interactions have left many feeling isolated. Although we're technically more connected than we were a decade ago, many don't feel like it: audiences feel that the last decade has made people more lonely and less community-oriented. So much so that the World Health Organisation has declared loneliness a global public health concern.

Charities have the opportunity to drive loyalty by creating those powerful, in-person moments that online spaces can't replicate. While digital communities are valuable, there's something irreplaceable about meeting face-to-face. Events, IRL meet-ups, and community spaces can forge deeper bonds among collaborators by bringing them together around a shared cause. And it's not just about connecting your collaborators to each other; it's about allowing them to see, hear, and feel the tangible impact of their involvement.

Niche Nets

Legacy social media platforms that once promised to connect people across communities have devolved into white noise: they're a constant churn of ads, sponsored content, and superficial engagement. In short: **there's too much media, and not enough social**.

Enter: the 'splinternet'. People are flocking to niche, cosier digital spaces. These spaces offer a sense of safety, trust, and community that big socials just can't provide anymore, where web users can be themselves and escape from a constant stream of content overload.

But how well do you know the smaller platforms your audience is hiding in? Social listening, audience understanding, and adaptability are key to staying on top of shifting digital dynamics. If you want to thrive online, start thinking smaller, more personal, and more intentional.

Case Studies



Cleats

Cleats Club, co-founded and fronted by soccer star Harry Kane, is a new platform designed to connect athletes with fans in a more authentic, positive space. The app features areas like the “Players’ Lounge” for direct, unfiltered Q&A sessions and the “Terraces” for match-day discussions, and is purposefully designed without algorithmic control, and to keep spam out. The platform hopes to provide a nostalgia-driven, curated space where fans can connect meaningfully with their favourite athletes, outside of the over-saturated landscape of legacy socials.

So What: Cleats Club is helping athletes cultivate genuine and deeper relationships with their fans, by giving them a safe, community-focused space that allows for more positive direct interaction. Creating these exclusive, personalised engagement platforms (which could range from an app to a group chat) is a great way to strengthen your connections with collaborators.



LEGO Ideas Forum

LEGO’s *Ideas Forum* invites fans to submit and vote on product ideas, empowering community members with the title of “LEGO Fan Designer.” There’s a clear invitation for all of their fans to participate in product development. With this, LEGO is tapping into the enthusiasm of its community to create a reciprocal value flow (consumers get creative opportunities and the chance to have their ideas used; LEGO gets new ideas and a stronger community). Even better – LEGO doesn’t have to implement any of the submitted ideas. The request itself is a strong enough community-builder as is.

So What: Create avenues for collaborators to contribute their ideas to foster a sense of creative ownership in the mission. Actively engaging with audience input – whether that’s ideas, feedback, or criticism – shows that their voices are valued and strengthens buy-in.

Standing Out from the Crowd

Differentiating Your Cause in a Saturated Market

Introduction

In today's world of doom scrolling and endless digital noise, attention is an increasingly scarce resource. Attention spans are dwindling—people now focus on one screen for an **average of only 47 seconds**, down from over two minutes in 2004. We see the demand for quicker, more attention-grabbing media across culture: the average length of a shot in films is **decreasing rapidly**; and the mean length of top-performing pop songs has declined by **more than a minute between 1990 and 2020**. With endless distractions and competing messages, holding your audience's attention is harder than ever.

To stand out, you need to think beyond simply asking for support. What are you offering in return? Whether it's clarity of purpose and impact to drive meaningful engagement; taking a stand for your mission; compelling content and activations; or a genuine sense of belonging, charities need to provide value that resonates deeply to keep collaborators coming back. Attention is the price of admission for engagement – are you creating enough value to earn it, or is your voice getting lost in the noise?



"We've just gone through a major rebrand, to be more authentic and clear about what the RSPCA stands for in the modern world. We need to differentiate ourselves in a crowded space while staying true to our mission."

Tracey Pritchard, RSPCA

Clarity of Purpose

Clarity of purpose is everything. In an attention-scarce world, your collaborators need to know exactly what you stand for, why you stand for it, and what you're doing to make it happen. To stay engaged, they need to see your purpose in action. Without that crystal-clear purpose, why would anyone choose you over others in the same space?

And it's not just about your collaborators – clarity of purpose starts from within. They're the ones on the frontlines, communicating and demonstrating your values and impact every day. Focused purpose is there to empower employees and collaborators alike, creating a unified vision that drives deeper loyalty both externally and internally.

Gamification

Are you ready to level up your cause? The gaming industry is booming and gamified features are becoming ubiquitous across sectors and products. From leaderboards on your favourite exercise app to streaks and rewards for doing a daily language lesson. Tapping into this trend can transform engagement into something interactive, playful, and maybe even competitive. Gamifying the collaborator experience, through challenges, rewards, leaderboards, and more, can turn support from passive to active.

From turning citizen science into a game to creating interactive campaigns – make engagement fun and rewarding. Invite people to play, compete, and make a tangible impact.



Taking a Stand

Playing it safe just doesn't cut through anymore. In today's noisy, increasingly polarised world, audiences (especially younger ones) are looking for bold, unapologetic voices that align with their values and take a stand. A 2023 report by Enthuse found that **64% of under-45s** support charities campaigning on political issues. People want charities that aren't afraid to tackle difficult, uncomfortable truths.

Of course, taking a stand isn't without risks. Who are you willing to lose some now in order to build something stronger for the future? At the end of the day, pleasing everyone means inspiring no one. Middle-of-the-road messaging risks fading into the background. It's not about attracting the masses, it's about creating a community of engaged, values-driven collaborators who believe in your mission.

Case Studies



Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society's 'The Long Goodbye' campaign confronts the brutal impact of dementia head-on. The advert's tagline ("with dementia you don't just die once, you die again and again and again") captures the feeling of anticipatory grief felt by those affected by the condition and their loved ones. It represents the organisation's commitment to be there "again and again and again" throughout every part of the struggle. While the initial release drew complaints for being distressing, the Society has **re-launched it**, saying the charity "needed to be brave in showing just how devastating dementia is by telling stories like The Long Goodbye".

So What: Bold storytelling is sometimes necessary to convey the gravity of an issue. The approach shows the power of authenticity and showing the reality of a cause, even in the face of backlash. Stand up for your message and your mission.



RNLI

When the RNLI faced criticism from Nigel Farage accusing them of being a "taxi service for illegal immigration," the charity responded decisively, affirming its commitment to humanitarian work and international maritime law. In a powerful statement, the RNLI declared: "Our charity exists to save lives at sea. Our mission is to save everyone. Our lifesavers are compelled to go to those in need without judgement of how they came to be in the water. They have done so since the RNLI was founded in 1824 and this will always be our ethos." The unapologetic stance resonated with supporters, resulting in a **2000% spike in donations**.

So What: RNLI's approach underscores the power of standing firm in your beliefs and values. When your collaborators believe in your mission, facing criticism head-on can deepen loyalty and strengthen your community's commitment to your cause – as long as you're willing to stand by your purpose.

Measuring Loyalty and Impact: Beyond Short-Term KPIs

Introduction

“The sector talks a lot about lifetime value, but I’d love us to better measure the sentiment of our supporters. We need to understand how they feel about us, not just what they give.”

Liz Tait, GOSH

The intimacy economy is quietly emerging as the next evolution of the attention economy. The latter, measured in likes, clicks, and views, aimed to capture and sustain as much attention as possible. Instead, the intimacy economy, driven by a new privacy-focused era and a craving for more meaningful relationships, is measured in human connection. This means doing more and building more profound, more long-lasting relationships with your collaborators. Moving from transactional interactions to relational ones. The challenge here isn’t about how to reach the masses; it’s about finding the meaningful, intimate connections that are no longer a given. Human connection in the intimacy economy means understanding loyalty through new metrics of connection, trust, and shared values.



Ditching Short-Term ROIs

“Short-term ROI is one of the worst measures you can use—it impacts the next year and the year after. We’ve embedded a long-term view of our fundraising portfolio. Every decision we make today is looked at in the context of what it will mean in 10 years.”

Liz Tait, GOSH

One of the biggest things holding back investment in loyalty strategies is ROI, particularly when cash is tight, and the focus is on in-year returns. Charities increasingly recognise that the KPIs and OKRs we design to track and measure ROI need to be more sophisticated than simply looking at in-year returns. They must factor in softer engagement metrics, including social capital and emotional connection. However, this is still an evolving landscape in which shared data can help everyone grow. We’re big fans of About Loyalty’s approach to measuring the less tangible elements of charity loyalty.

New Metrics for Loyalty

Churn, click-through, lifetime, retention, repurchase, referral. To get the most out of your relationships, stop measuring loyalty through a purely financial lens and consider social capital. The real value is in something a little more challenging to quantify: the human connection. The loyalty metrics of the future account for advocacy, engagement, and emotional connection and capture those potential collaborators who might exist outside of your direct line of sight.

Collaborators who share your message, participate in events, or rally their networks add immense value – even if they never donate. We used to dismiss slacktivism, but those actions can be the first step into your ecosystem. These actions drive awareness, build community, and amplify your cause. Our metrics shouldn’t be purely transactional; they should be about

“The different ways people engage with us and continue to support.”

Joe Jenkins, The Children’s Society

If we invest in human connection over the long term, the ROI pay-off will be higher.



Measuring Impact Clearly and Often

“We’ve developed an impact measurement framework that tracks the progress of our assumptions and tells the story of the impact we’re making across direct work, systems change, policy work, and movement building.”

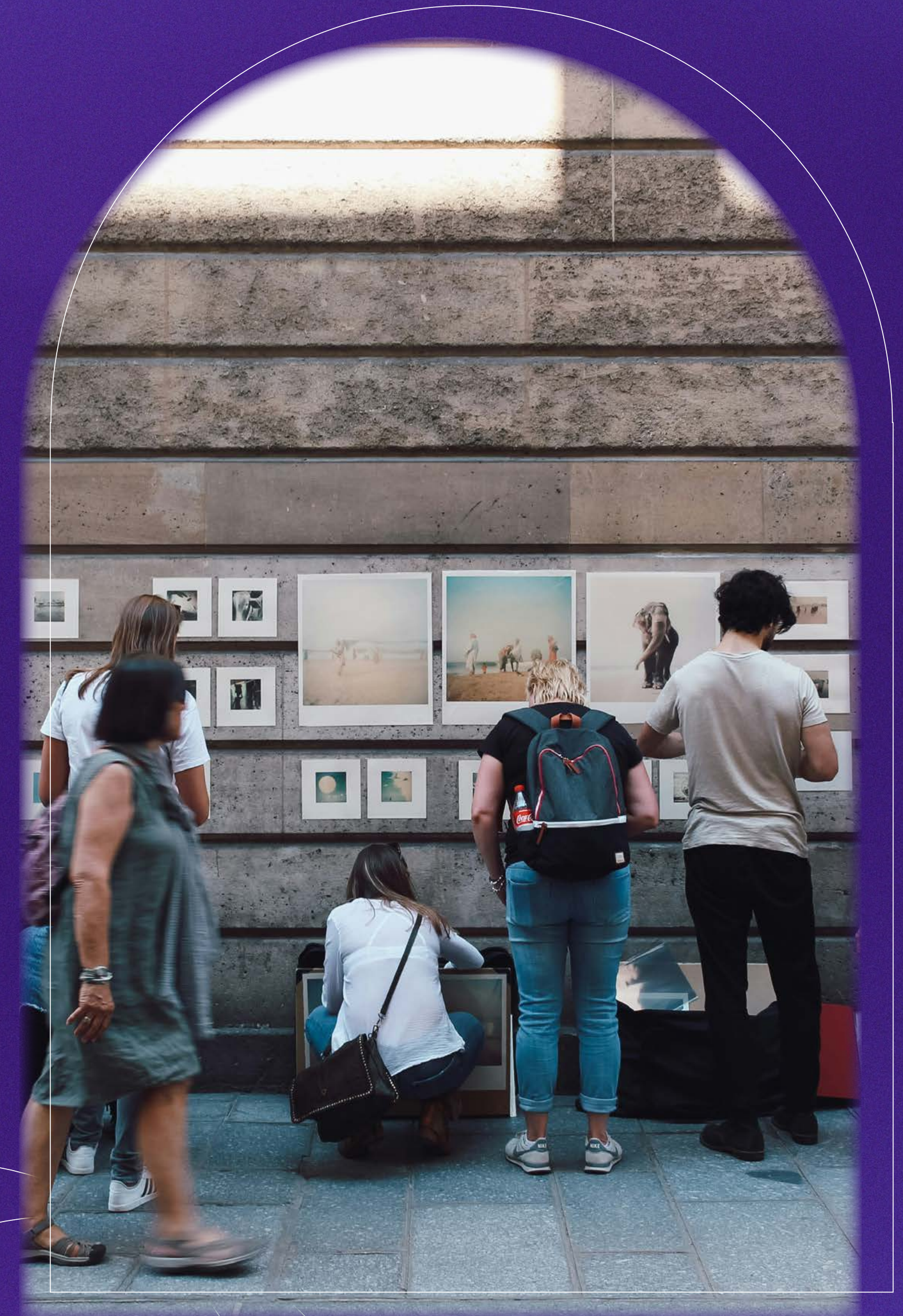
Joe Jenkins, *The Children’s Society*

Too often, impact is reduced to a basic equation – money in, money out. Metrics like pence in the pound or lists of activities completed fall short of measuring the real value charities bring. True impact goes beyond numbers, but charities aren’t measuring, explaining, or communicating impact in ways that capture the actual value of their work.

Some of this sits in the hands of how narratives are expressed, and some of it in the maturity and lack of consensus on measuring and tracking impact. It is vital to know which data to collect, how to analyse it, and where it fits within the broader ecosystem (of your charity, of your competitors, and of the sector at large). As a sector, we need to invest in creating a shared language and shared metrics for impact. Solving this challenge could be a game-changer in articulating impact – but it can’t be done in isolation.

While numbers are important, they’re just part of the story. It’s the narrative that truly resonates. Go beyond the stats and bring your impact to life through engaging meaningful storytelling. Authentic, emotional stories highlight the difference your work makes in the world, connecting collaborators to tangible outcomes.

**“While numbers are important,
they’re just part of the story.”**



Case Studies



About Loyalty

About Loyalty is a research-based consultancy for the third sector, helping charities to measure, understand, and grow their supporter loyalty and income. For their recent report about loyalty, they analysed data from 50.000 donors across 12 charities. The result? A focus on new *emotional* metrics for loyalty. They stripped out all transactional factors that influence retention (method of payment, type of support, donor activity, etc.), to find that the biggest drivers of loyalty are commitment, satisfaction, and trust.

So What: These alternative metrics for emotional connection can help charities understand what keeps donors engaged for the long haul. This means shifting away from purely transactional measures and fostering genuine emotional connections with collaborators instead.



CDCU Nigeria

Nigeria's Citizens Delivery Tracker App allows citizens to monitor and report on government deliverables in real time. The app outlines eight key priority areas, including infrastructure and economic growth, and lets citizens give direct feedback about the progress made against these deliverables.

So What: The Citizens Delivery Tracker focuses on measurable deliverables, tracked 24/7 by their stakeholders: the citizens who'll live with the outcomes. It's a great example of setting clear goals, sharing real-time updates, receiving honest feedback, and uplifting your audience's voice. There's an opportunity to build loyalty through transparency and accountability.

Surprise & Delight: Creating Moments of Connection

Introduction

The desire for joy, inspiration, and delight is becoming more intense in a time characterised by unease, polycrisis, and financial hardship. Crucially, this means that the desire for brands to pack an emotional punch across their touchpoints is heightened. A whopping **83% of people** are seeking out experiences that actively bring them joy, while **35% of consumers** say it's essential for brands to make them feel good. Tap into the dopamine economy and bring energy, inspiration, and excitement to every touchpoint with your collaborators.

Playfulness is a strategy that can make your mission more approachable, memorable, and impactful. How do you give your collaborators the moments of joy that keep them coming back?

"Loyalty for us is how do we retain our supporters at a level that is engaging, surprising, and delighting them? It's about meeting what they want, not just what we want."

Julie Roberts, Pancreatic Cancer UK



Brands with Benefits

Charities are essentially relationship ecosystems. This means it's not just about what your collaborators give; it's also about what they get in return. If the old model of brand loyalty centred on how the consumer served the brand through repeat donations, the future of loyalty is brand relationships that feel a little more reciprocal. So, how are you rewarding loyalty and keeping your collaborators engaged?

Creative, thoughtful rewards (think personalised thank-yous, exclusive content or events, and surprise gifts) can turn a one-time donor into a lifelong advocate. We must create the 'wow' moments that make collaborators feel valued.

Broadly, these benefits fall into **four categories**:

Reward

Discounts, free products and services, matching a donation, etc. The most common example is your typical 'buy 9, get the 10th free' coffee stamp card.

Recognition

Recognition for large contributions, anniversaries of a brand relationship, birthdays, etc. This could also mean offering rewards specifically to your most loyal collaborators.

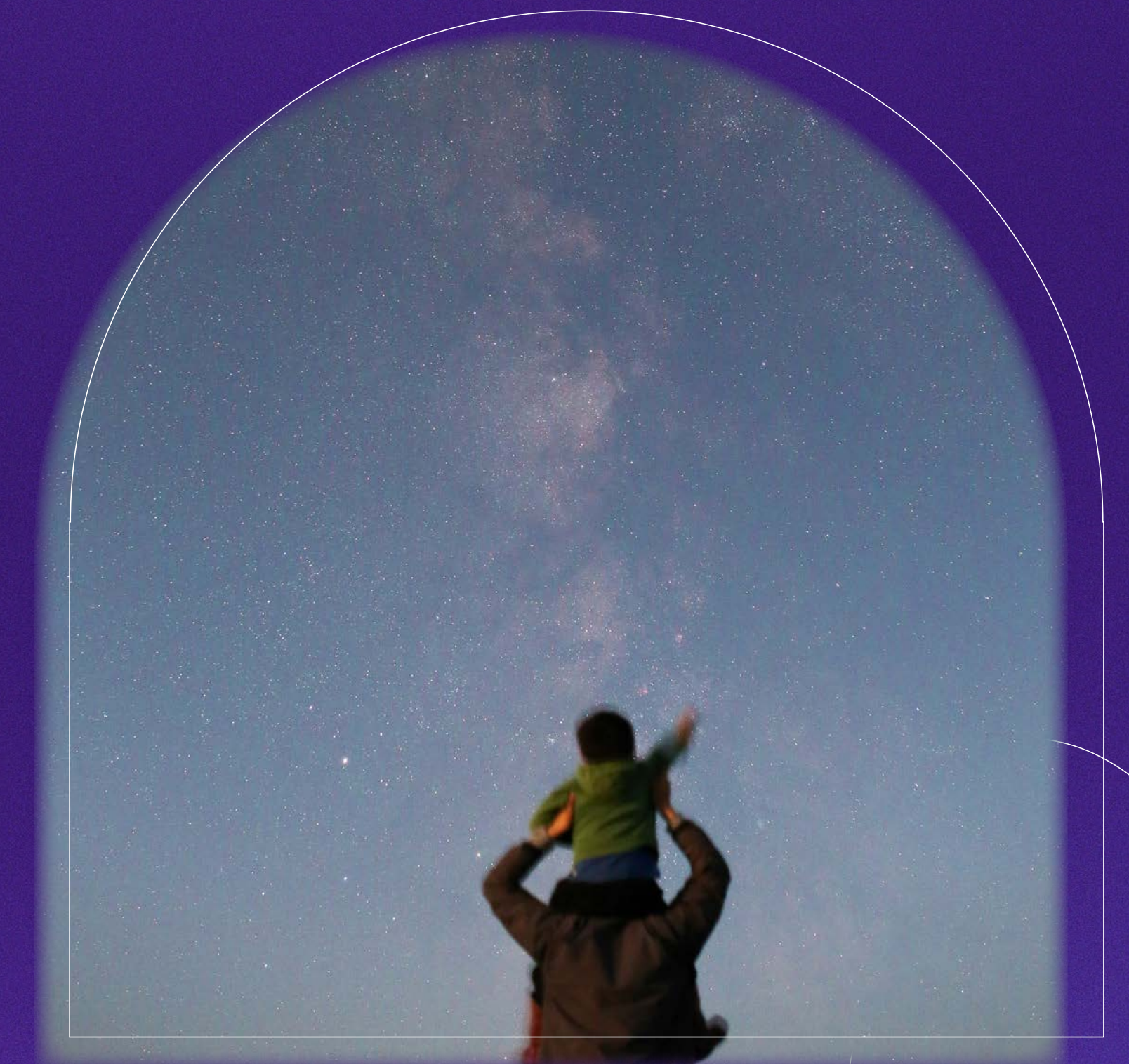
Connection

Connecting your collaborators around the cause or the values that underpin it. Essentially, offering collaborators value through community. We discuss this one more deeply in the **'Building Community and Fandom' section**.

Empowerment

Elevating your audience's voice by letting them have a say in brand decisions.

While perks are great, it's the last two – connection and empowerment – that will truly drive lasting loyalty in the coming years. Do the work to understand your audience's values, desires, and challenges, and what benefits you can bring to the table for them. How can you and your community support each other's missions, build authentic connections, and create a sense of belonging?



Positive Friction

After years of chasing seamless convenience, friction is making a comeback. With information and content constantly fed to us at lightning speed, ‘being in the know’ has lost its sense of exclusivity and meaning. Instead of having everything, everywhere, all at once, people are looking to brands and organisations to introduce intentional pauses and create moments that encourage reflection and intentional engagement.

There’s a benefit in making things less accessible – encouraging people to find joy in friction or building in moments of reflection. Meaningful experiences are those we put effort into, the ones that require a journey or dedication to earn.

Of course, this doesn’t mean we should introduce friction for the sake of it. Some spaces, like your point of donation, still benefit from having a seamless experience. Build in carefully calibrated friction to make your experiences more meaningful and profound.

Weird Marketing

Brands are ditching their polished facades for bold, outrageous online personas. From Duolingo’s owl dancing on office tables, to the RSPB’s delightfully unhinged ‘Bird of the Week’ series, these brands are throwing themselves into ‘weird’ strategies that speak directly to online audiences. They’re craving brands that feel real, unpredictable, and are willing to meet them where they are.

So why does this work?

Authenticity

People are tired of polished, perfect content. Traditional marketing, especially on social media, can stand out as insincere or out of touch. Unhinged socials tap into the trends, language and humour native to these platforms to seem more genuine.

Humour

People are looking for a laugh and a moment of levity. That doesn’t mean you can’t discuss a heavier subject matter – consider which platform is most appropriate for a more serious conversation, and know when to keep it light instead.

Engagement

The digital landscape is increasingly saturated, making it even harder to stand out. Edgy or ‘unhinged’ content can help brands cut through the noise and draw more engagement.

But with everyone going off-script, where’s the line between authentic and cliché? With more and more brands adopting this strategy, how do you ensure yours still stands out? It’s not about jumping on every meme but creating moments to slow people down with something truly unexpected and memorable.



Case Studies



Green Day

After celebrating 30 years of their album Dookie in conventional ways (playing it on tour, releasing a deluxe edition, etc.) Green Day is now releasing their iconic record in a way never meant to be heard – on obscure, low-quality formats. From a Game Boy cartridge to a speaking teddy bear to a toothbrush. Named ‘Dookie Demastered’, the press release explains: “Instead of smoothing out its edges and tweaking its dynamic ranges, this version of Dookie has been meticulously mangled to fit on formats with uncompromisingly low fidelity. [...] The listening experience is unparalleled, sacrificing not only sonic quality, but also convenience, and occasionally entire verses.”

So What: The release sacrifices convenience and clarity to intentionally challenge fans’ listening experience, a great example of positive friction. By making engagement harder, they’re inviting fans to reflect on their connection to the music and its typical formats, driving deeper and unique engagement.



RSPB

The RSPB’s ‘Bird of the Week’ series has taken off on TikTok after cleverly mixing humour, memes, and... birds? The truly unhinged end result is a riot and has struck just the right tone to land well with a digital-native audience. Each post uses topical meme culture to draw viewers in, hooking attention with unhinged comedy and then directing it to educational content about bird conservation. The account now has almost 190k followers and almost 6m likes.

So What: RSPB’s approach demonstrates the power of humour-driven content to educate and engage. Using light-hearted, unhinged content can attract broader audiences while embedding meaningful messages.

The Future of Loyalty: *From Supporters to Partners*

Introduction

“Loyalty won’t look the same in five years. The younger generation’s relationship with loyalty is disposable and immediate—they can be loyal one moment and detached the next.”

Catherine Hart, *Target Ovarian Cancer*

Future-proofing loyalty means embracing change, challenging outdated assumptions, and daring to disrupt the status quo. It’s about rethinking hierarchies, embracing new technologies, adapting to audience needs and expectations, and, when needed, even reinventing your organisation.

But creating lasting loyalty takes time, commitment, and thinking beyond annual targets. This means setting up sustainable, non-financial metrics that measure genuine engagement, retention, and the emotional connection collaborators feel toward your mission. It’s about moving away from in-year KPIs and adopting a long-term mindset that positions loyalty as a key driver of future success. When loyalty becomes part of your long-term strategy rather than a short-term goal, it builds a legacy that stands the test of time.

“You need a certain type of culture and staying power to do loyalty well. It’s not a short-term endeavour – it’s long-term, it’s a strategic choice that you have to get 100% behind with a major alignment from the top (CEO) to the bottom of the organisation.”

Jeremy Hayward, via [OgilvyOne](#)



Flexible Loyalty

Between the cost of living crisis pinching wallets and constant polycrisis hitting the headlines, expecting unwavering loyalty from collaborators just isn't realistic – no matter how much they may want to keep supporting you. People's circumstances change, and sometimes, they have to step back from supporting causes they care about. But that doesn't mean that they're gone forever.

Embrace the ebb and flow – create pathways for collaborators to easily re-engage when the time is right. In uncertain times, flexibility is everything, and loyalty doesn't have to be continuous to be meaningful. The days of 'set and forget' are fading fast. Instead, focus on creating adaptable, accessible ways for people to stay connected, no matter where they are in their journey.

“Create pathways for collaborators to easily re-engage when the time is right.”

Collaborative Fundraising

Post-pandemic, we're

“Seeing a shift towards more outcome-focused giving, where people care more about the impact than the brand itself,” **Laura Savory, Guy's & St Thomas' Charities,**

alongside an **increasing willingness** across the sector to pool resources and embrace collaboration. Charities in an ecosystem are coming together to prioritise outcome. What would a future look like where collaborators contribute to mission—and outcome-focused relationships rather than brand loyalty?

“In the future, I see loyalty becoming more about collaboration, not competition.”

Katy Baird, WWT

Designed to Be Deleted

Loyalty doesn't have to be a lifetime contract. Time-limited loyalty can be focused on specific outcomes and impact. But going one step further, What if your organisation doesn't need to be around forever? Not every mission is endless, and reaching an endpoint can be part of the journey. What could happen if you put a time-limit on your cause, and radically rethought your theory of change?



Mobilising the Mass

Your collaborators aren't just donors – they're partners in your mission. They're co-creators, investors, and advocates. Enter **type 2 growth**: doing more with what you already have instead of adding more to the pile. It's about unlocking the potential of your existing collaborators, turning them from passive backers into passionate stakeholders.

"It's about creating an active community rather than a transactional relationship. We need people to campaign with us, stand with us, and take action with us."

Joe Jenkins, *The Children's Society*

Loyalty now means being a part of something bigger—a dynamic relationship where donors feel like true stakeholders and every interaction adds value to both sides.

"For me, when I think about loyalty, it's about bringing a large community together, both in support of each other and to take mass action. We don't have that yet for dementia. Goodness me, we need it."

Emma Whitcombe, *Alzheimer's Research*

To Movement or Not To Movement

So, you want to build a movement? But the question is: is your cause truly a movement, or are you trying to force it to be one? Is your purpose income generation, brand awareness, or out of a genuine need for systemic change? If fundraising or awareness is driving the charge, a movement may not be the solution. People aren't going to get behind a movement that primarily serves your organisation's needs rather than a community's problem. People invest in movements because they genuinely believe in the cause, feel a genuine emotional connection to it, and believe that the movement is built on the same emotional connection that they feel towards your mission. To build a genuine movement, you need to create a true community and empower them to take systemic action.



Investing in the Long-Term

One of the most exciting things we heard in our interviews was the shift in some charities away from in-year KPIs to a longer-term outlook on the value of loyalty. This shift goes hand in hand with unlocking larger investments in tech, people, and data.

But unlocking these investments has required some fundamental changes inside organisations to give reassurance and tracking:

Embrace Non-Financial Pipeline Metrics

Loyalty isn't just about the numbers in your financial reports. Non-financial metrics, like engagement levels, retention rates, and how collaborators feel about your mission, provide a more complete picture of loyalty. These metrics help you see where loyalty efforts are working—and where they might need a tweak—allowing you to build relationships that aren't just about cash flow.

Think Long-Term with Loyalty Indicators

Building loyalty takes time, and not every effort will immediately pay off. Long-term indicators, like multi-year retention and volunteer engagement, help you focus on creating loyalty that lasts. When you commit to tracking these over time, you're setting the stage for stronger and more reliable relationships with each passing year.

Plan for Loyalty Over the Long Haul

If loyalty is going to be a priority, it needs to be part of a long-term plan. Moving away from annual pressures and placing loyalty within a bigger 8-, 10-, or 12-year outlook lets you focus on where you want to go rather than reacting to every twist and turn. This planning gives everyone a clearer picture of when investments will start paying off and help avoid panic over occasional slow years.

Position Loyalty as Part of Your Legacy

Loyalty investments aren't just about the present; they're about building something for future generations. By considering loyalty as part of your charity's legacy, you give people a more significant reason to care. Ask your team and trustees, "What are we building for those who come after us?" and let that big-picture thinking guide your loyalty strategy.

Make Loyalty Investments a Priority, Not an Option

Even when budgets are tight, investing in loyalty is critical to long-term success. It's not just a nice-to-have; it's essential. Case studies from other sectors show that the payoff from loyalty-building can be huge down the line, so it's worth making this a core part of your strategy rather than something that only happens when times are good.

Build a Collaborative Approach with Your Trustees

To secure the investment needed for loyalty strategies, it's vital to have trustees on board. Creating a collaborative approach with trustees, sharing responsibility and the big picture, helps keep everyone aligned. Showing both long-term impact and short-term progress can help trustees see the value of investing in loyalty as part of your organisation's vision for the future.



Case Studies



EpilepsieNL

In 2023, in honour of Brain Awareness Week, Dutch epilepsy charity gave its community a vote. First, through their ‘Vertel Het Ons’ (‘Tell Us’) campaign, they asked their collaborators and beneficiaries to suggest research questions about epilepsy, which were then distilled into 18 questions. They then opened the polls and let their community vote to prioritise these subjects, which would help inform the research focus for the charity over the coming years.

So What: One of the charity’s primary goals is to provide accurate and potentially life-saving information for people with epilepsy and their loved ones. They’re choosing to trust their beneficiaries to know what information would be most helpful and handing over the reins.



Lankelly Chase

In a groundbreaking shift, UK charitable foundation Lankelly Chase is dissolving its £130 million endowment to directly support grassroots, community-led organisations working on social justice. Citing traditional philanthropy’s roots in “colonial capitalism,” Lankelly Chase aims to relinquish control and redistribute wealth. The foundation’s approach emphasises transparency, accountability, and the empowerment of communities previously underserved by conventional funding models.

So What: Lankelly Chase’s decision challenges charities to rethink the structures of wealth and power in philanthropy. By radically redirecting resources, they pave the way for charities to adopt more inclusive and decolonised funding practices that prioritise community-led solutions.

But Really, So What?

1

Break Free from the Funnel. Embrace the Loyalty Loop

Forget the outdated idea of a linear journey. Loyalty today is a continuous loop—an ongoing, evolving relationship. Build strategies that allow collaborators to flow in and out, engaging in natural ways. Don't chase rigid paths; create a cycle of inspiration that keeps them returning.

2

Redefine What Loyalty Looks Like

Loyalty isn't just about money. It's about advocacy, community, and showing up. Start valuing every act of support, from spreading the word to building connections. The future of loyalty demands that you see the actual value of your champions, even if they never give a penny.

3

Take a Stand

Playing it safe doesn't win loyalty. Today's audiences want brands that live their values unapologetically. Go beyond feel-good messaging—take bold, authentic stands that resonate deeply. Make people feel something, even if it's uncomfortable. In today's landscape, loyalty belongs to the brave.

4

Commit to Loyalty for the Long Haul

Loyalty isn't a quick fix. It's a long-term play that requires patience, investment, and commitment. Move away from short-term results and focus on building a resilient base of supporters here for the long run. It's time to commit to loyalty, not just flirt with it.

5

Measure What Matters

Stop relying solely on numbers and financial metrics. True loyalty lives in sentiment, advocacy, and emotional connection. Start tracking the intangible qualities, showing how people **feel** about your mission. Emotional connection is the currency of tomorrow's loyalty.

6

Treat Supporters as Collaborators, Not Passive Donors

Your collaborators don't want just to support your mission; they want to shape it. Give them the chance to create, advocate, and act alongside you. When people feel part of the solution, loyalty transforms from transaction to partnership. Empower your community to co-create the future with you.

9

Embrace Positive Friction

Not everything should be instant. Build in moments that make people pause, reflect, and engage more deeply. Intentional friction can create powerful, memorable experiences that leave a lasting impact. Slowing things down is okay—some journeys are meant to be savoured.

8

Deliver Moments that Matter

Loyalty isn't a one-way street. Surprise your collaborators with thoughtful touches, exclusive perks, and memorable "wow" moments. Don't just say you value them—show it in ways that make them feel seen, appreciated, and motivated to stay connected.

7

Build Bridges for Re-Engagement

Life happens, and collaborators may need to step back. Just because you class them as lapsed, we doubt they see themselves that way! Don't let that be the end of the story. Create open, accessible pathways for people to rejoin when they're ready. Loyalty isn't a one-time gig—keep the door open and let them know they're always welcome.

10

Collaborate, Don't Compete

Big challenges demand collective action. Join forces with other organisations and focus on shared missions, not brand competition. By rallying collaborators around collective impact, you can create a loyalty ecosystem that's bigger, bolder, and far more powerful than any single brand.

11

Dare to Be Different

Polished, predictable content is forgettable. Dare to be bold, playful, and a bit unpredictable. Embrace the weird, the joyful and the authentic. When collaborators see your organisation's genuine, unfiltered side, they're more likely to feel a personal connection. Don't blend in—stand out.

14

Be Transparent and Build Trust in Data Use

Hyper-personalisation is powerful, but it requires trust. Be transparent about collecting and using data, ensuring collaborators understand the benefits and feel respected. Trust is non-negotiable—without it, loyalty has no foundation.

13

Make Post-Donation Count: Start the Real Journey After the Ask

The donation is just the beginning. Engage collaborators with thoughtful follow-ups that show gratitude, share progress, and deepen their connection to the mission. Post-donation touchpoints aren't an afterthought; they're vital to creating lasting loyalty.

12

Create Spaces for Belonging, Not Just Loyalty

True loyalty grows in communities where people feel they belong. Invest in digital and physical spaces where collaborators can connect, share, and support each other. Build belonging, and loyalty will follow.

15

Make Loyalty a Value-Driven Culture from the Inside Out

Loyalty begins within. When your team is deeply connected to the mission, it shows. Build a culture of loyalty across every level of your organisation so that authenticity radiates outward. Loyal collaborators are drawn to organisations that are unified in purpose.

16

Think of Loyalty as Your Legacy

Loyalty isn't about short-term gains; it's about building a legacy. Start thinking of loyalty as the foundation you're laying for the future, one that will stand the test of time. True loyalty leaves a mark that lasts.

19

Know Who You're Willing to Lose

Trying to please everyone dilutes your impact. Be clear about who your core collaborators are, and build loyalty with those who truly align with your mission. Loyalty is strongest when it's specific—standing for something, even if it means letting go of the rest.

18

Invest in Tech and Data for Personalised, Lasting Loyalty

Personalisation isn't a luxury—it's essential. Invest in the technology and data tools needed to create experiences that make collaborators feel recognised and valued. Build loyalty that adapts to each individual, fostering more profound, more personal connections.

17

Use Storytelling to Turn Impact into Inspiration

Data may prove your impact, but storytelling makes people feel it. Bring your mission to life with stories that connect emotionally, creating bonds that inspire lasting loyalty. Let collaborators see the human side of your work—numbers tell, but stories sell.

20

Collaborating on Impact

Impact is about more than metrics on a spreadsheet—it's about real, lasting change. Imagine if the sector came together to redefine how we measure, report, and talk about impact. By creating a shared language that captures social value—things like community strength, emotional connection, and long-term benefit—we can tell a story that resonates on a human level. Let's move beyond the financials and start measuring our actual currency: the social impact we create together.

Future-Proofing Loyalty

Want to explore the future of loyalty for your organisation?
Good Innovation are here to help.

How Future-Proofed is Your Loyalty?

Is your loyalty strategy built to last, or will it need an overhaul in five years? As audiences evolve, so must your approach to loyalty. Where does loyalty sit within your organisation? Is it valued by your Board and trustees as a strategic investment, or is it viewed solely through the lens of in-year cash flow? Do you have the metrics in place to navigate the highs and lows of fundraising, and are you truly ready to meet the expectations of modern collaborators?

To help answer these questions, we've developed a loyalty diagnostic tool designed to assess how future-proofed your loyalty strategy really is. Through a structured conversation using the themes in this report, we can evaluate your current approach, highlight strengths and gaps, and give you a score that shows where you stand—and where you can grow. Ready to see how your loyalty strategy measures up?

[Get in touch for a conversation.](#)

Social Currency Collaboration

We need a shared language and metrics for impact—one that goes beyond “money in, money out” or participants engaged, to capture the true, real-world impact of our work. It's time to move beyond broad terms like ‘purpose’ and ‘sustainability’ and communicate what our work achieves in concrete, meaningful terms.

Creating this framework could be transformative, making it easier for organisations to demonstrate value and develop more effective solutions. But this can't be done in isolation.

Good Innovation wants to help convene a collaboration of charities, academics, and industry experts to explore this topic. If you're interested in shaping the future of impact measurement and helping to build a common understanding of social value, we'd love to have you join us.

[Get in touch to find out more.](#)

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