

Following the Audience, Not the Target: RNIB's Journey to Supporter Engagement

22nd of May 2025

manifesto

How we redefined what success looks like and moved away from assumptions and transactional tactics to personalised solutions rooted in data and audience needs.

Sector trends

The pressure to do more
with less is growing.

80%

Of charities say they will
have to cut costs in 2025
due to government cuts.

Donor volumes are
dropping

50%

people donating to
charity is down to 50%.
From 57% in 2020 and
61% in 2016.

Charities are investing in
audience research

52%

of charities commissioned
audience research projects
last year but struggle to
implement this into
strategy.

Pressures of new technology
and AI adoption

1 in 20

Charity leaders feel well
prepared to manage AI
effectively or safely.

Data silos and data
measurements pressures

1 in 3

Struggle to unify customer
data across channels and
over a quarter cannot
confidently prove ROI.

Source: Nonprofit pulse report 2024, Enthuse Charity Pulse Report 2025, CAF online 2025, Civil society 2024, Localiq UK State of Digital Marketing Report 2025, CFA 2024, M&R Benchmark report 2025

The opportunity and target RNIB identified

The opportunity:

Only 5% of customers (support users) supported RNIB financially

The target:

Increase the 5% to 7% in year one

However the real opportunity was elsewhere...

The opportunity:

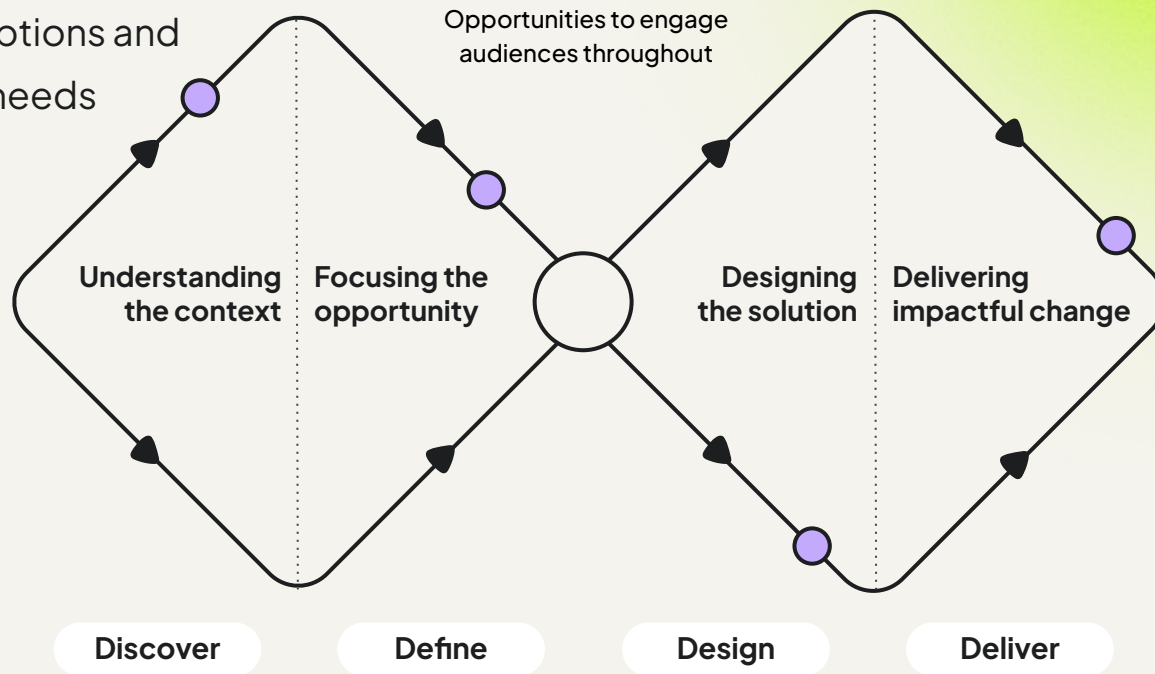
Uncovering what the audience needs are

The target:

Too early to define

Our approach

The Double Diamond - Moving away from assumptions and focusing on user needs

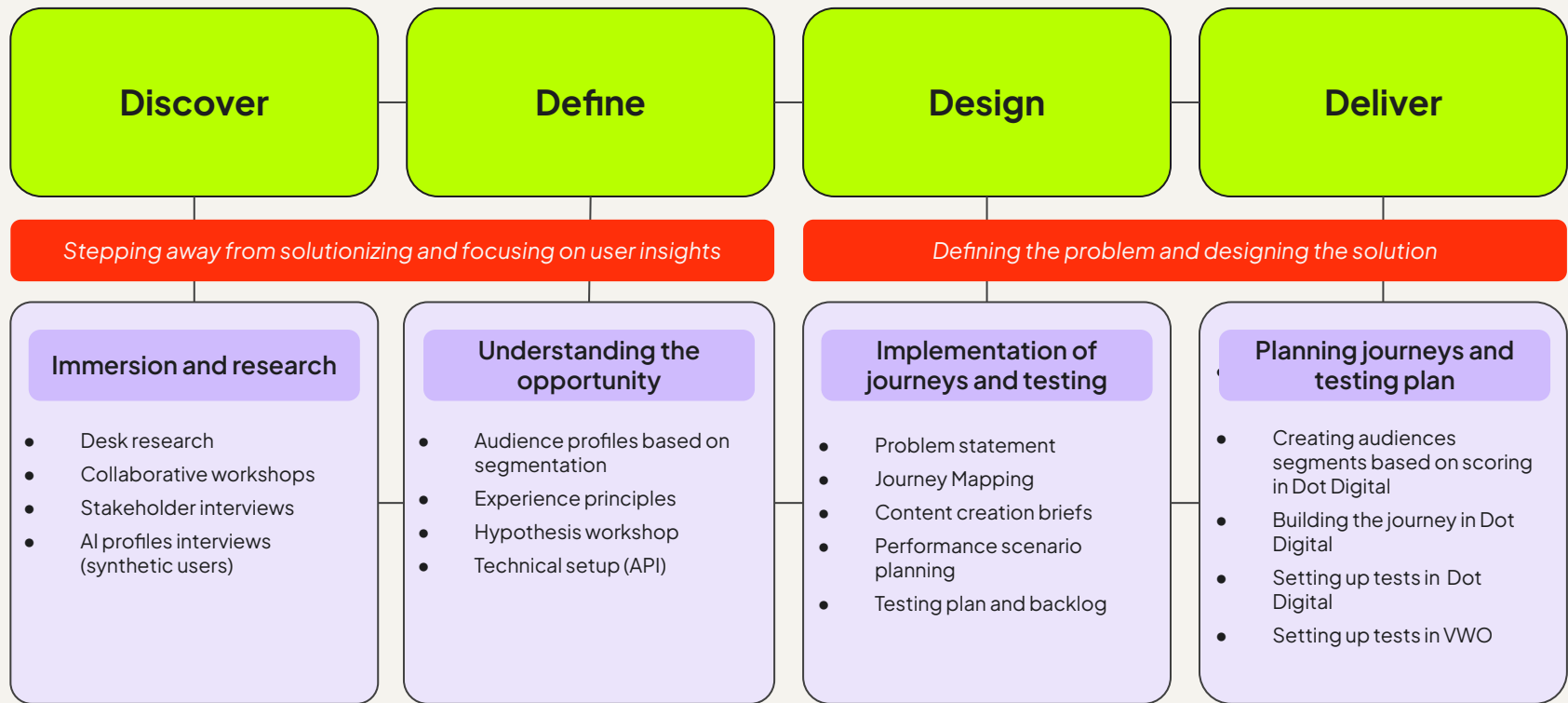


Why?

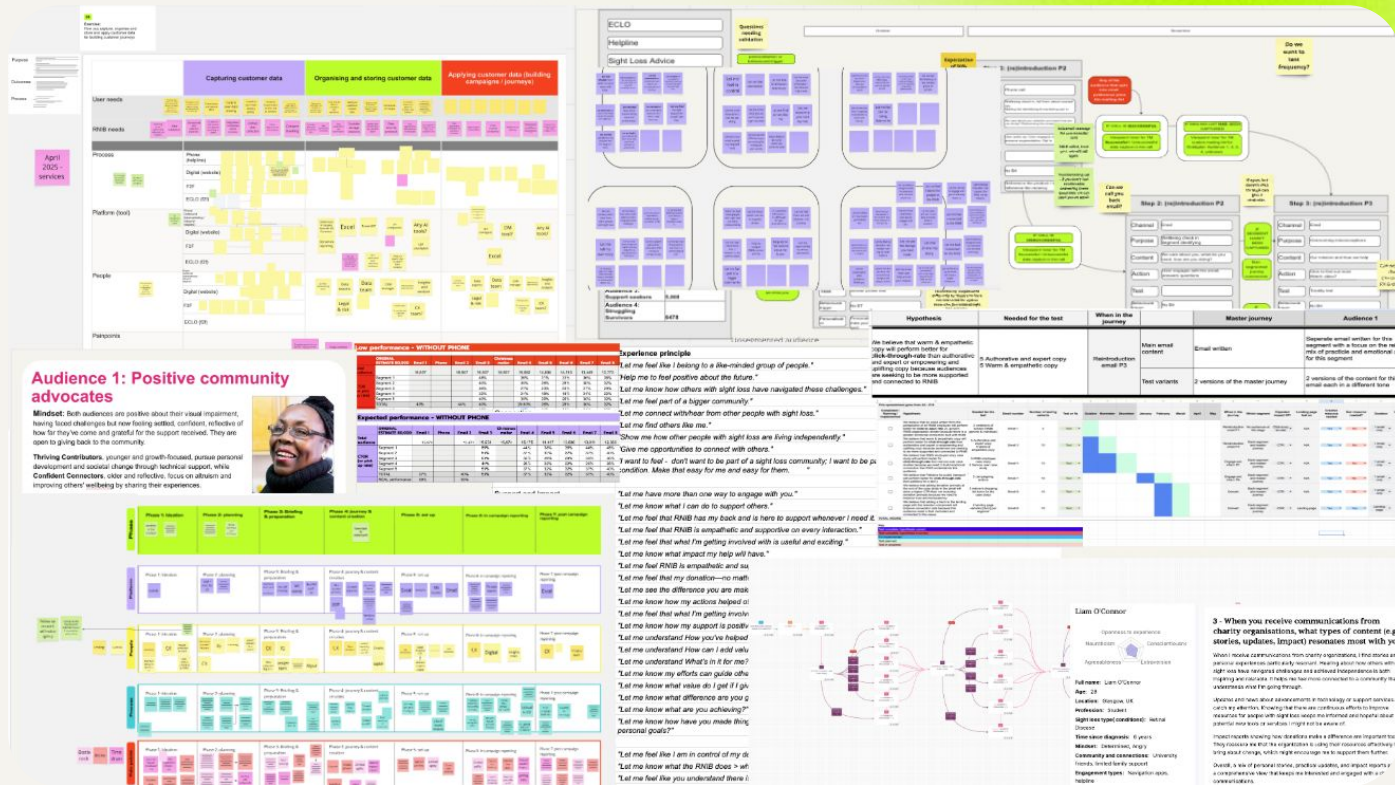
Design thinking offers structured process for innovation that allows teams to move away from trial and error to more intentional way of working.

1. Focusing on a 'real' problem and moving away from assumptions.
2. Lowering risk and cost, testing and iterating along the way, rather than devoting a lot of resource to a groundless solution.
3. No innovation will be successful unless the internal stakeholders buy-in. Involving them in the process, asking for their input and ideas and sharing progress is the surest way in.

How?

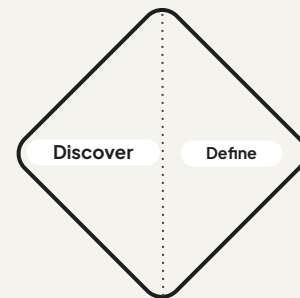


Reality



The Discovery & Defining our focus

The key at this stage is to avoid jumping into solutions and understanding what the 'real' problem is.

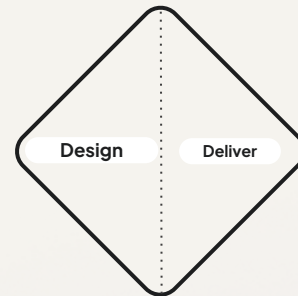


How might we re-engage our customers, and meet their varying needs and build a relationship with them, so at the right time they may choose to support us.

The solution development

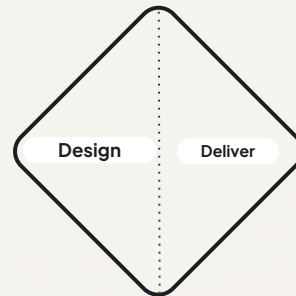
Personalised journey focused on needs and preferences of audience segments created on hypotheses rooted in insights and aiming to improve engagement and build trust over time.

NOT a journey primarily focused on generating financial gain from audience who is not ready to donate but we still needed to build this in and validate our hypothesis.



The table is a detailed fundraising journey map, organized into two main sections: 'Acquire community members' (top) and 'Engage community members' (bottom). Each section contains a grid of columns representing different stages or touchpoints, and rows representing various aspects of the journey. The columns are labeled with stage numbers and names, such as 'Stage 1: Awareness', 'Stage 2: Interest', 'Stage 3: Consideration', 'Stage 4: Intent', 'Stage 5: Action', 'Stage 6: Retention', 'Stage 7: Advocacy', and 'Stage 8: Conversion'. The rows are labeled with journey components: 'Journey map', 'Touchpoint', 'Engagement', 'Retention', and 'Conversion'. The cells within the grid contain text, icons, and diagrams illustrating the specific activities, goals, and metrics for each stage and component. The table is color-coded with various shades of blue, orange, and green to highlight different elements and flow.

The ways of working



And impact on our collaboration

The team was aligned and collaborative thanks to a clear objective guided by shared knowledge

The team continued to go back to the research and validate actions when friction occurred

The team made decisions based on audience insights and data and was able to articulate why

The results

The journey showed an immediate uplift in engagement, however the transactional metrics struggled.

+84%

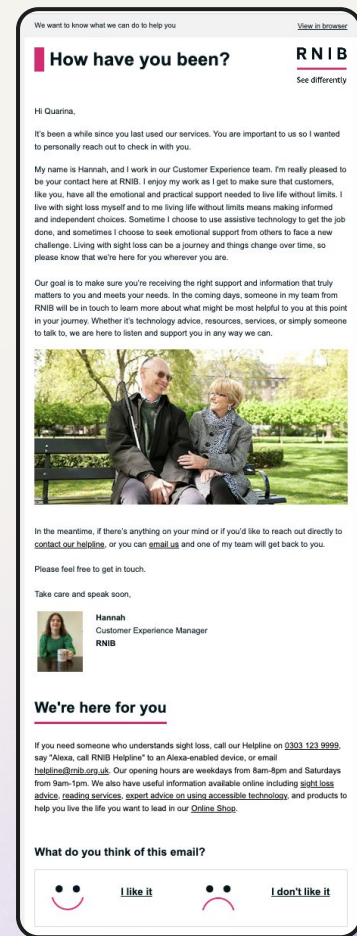
Higher engagement rate than
RNIB benchmark

+59%

unique open rate above
RNIB's benchmarks

-80%

Christmas regular gift
conversion rate, and avg. gift
24% lower than avg.



The impact

On the other hand, the internal shift in the mindset of the team and validating our hypotheses.

**Proved that
customers want to
be engaged**

**Proved that financial
ask needs longer**

**Uncovered potential
of existing tech**

**Identified ways of
working holding us
back**

"Is very supportive to receive an email out of the blue. Also a timely reminder of the range of services and support that RNIB provide if I would just get in touch. "

"The message felt personal and made me feel RNIB truly wants to help people with sight loss"

"Your email shows that you care, and lets me know that you will be in touch again soon to see if there is any support I need. This really means a lot, thank you"

What we've learnt beyond the impact

Shift from targets to needs

Moving from a target-focused approach to a needs-based mindset is critical. Validating project objectives with existing audience research and AI-generated insights allowed us to quickly focus on what really matters—user needs, not assumptions. This approach redefined success and shaped the right solution.

Understand your internal technology and its functionality

Empowering teams to own their technology and data builds confidence and encourages full use of the tools available. Providing direct access to data and insights, supported by open show-and-tells and shared dashboards, created transparency, built trust, and enabled faster, data-driven decisions.

Bring Stakeholders on the Journey

To make a strategy stick, you need to take everyone on the journey. Running collaborative workshops and involving senior stakeholders in the design process helped build buy-in, aligned decision-making with real audience insights, and get senior stakeholders on board with refined objectives.

Embed Design Thinking and trust the process

Resisting the urge to solutionise too early creates the space for truly user-centred solutions.

Starting with experience principles and 'how might we' statements helped us refine problems, build better solutions, and validate hypotheses through A/B testing throughout the journey iterating based on performance.

Q & A



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thank you