

Art Fund's Digital Maturity Case Study

The Situation and Need

It was becoming apparent internally at Art Fund that the discrepancy between a very digitally focused sales and marketing operation versus a substantially less digitally-oriented approach to professional services, grant-giving and major donors was creating significant business inefficiencies and would be unsustainable in the long run. In particular, with the extensive crossover among Art Fund audiences, there was a clear opportunity to re-use and surface information more efficiently, using technology to distribute targeted content.

In addition, Art Fund was midway through a programme of upgrading back end systems supporting finance, grant-giving, and customer relationship management. As some departments engaged much more easily with the procurement and implementation of these technologies than others, it wanted to avoid further compounding the digital divide that already existed between business areas, as these systems were implemented and evolved.

Art Fund was also considering whether to widen its support for the UK museum and gallery sector to include more initiatives that have a strong digital component. It therefore wanted to feel confident about its own digital maturity before embarking on any such path.

Finally, there was a move within the organisation to undertake a wholesale website redesign and associated Web Content Management System (WCMS) technology refresh and it was felt robust means to evaluate the business case for this was lacking.

The Solution

It was important that digital not just be considered in the IT or marketing context, but across all aspects of Art Fund operations, such as print publishing, grant-giving and professional services. The mind-shift required was to expand thinking from just a technology roadmap to one that was more centred on customer-facing digital initiatives. There was a need to not only think of digital as the website, but as a suite of tools to deliver more effective marketing, communications, and publications to better fulfil Art Fund's mission.

Art Fund commissioned a specialised external consultant, Theresa Regli, who had developed a set of digital maturity models over the course of the last decade, to assist in evaluating the current state of digital maturity across the organisation.

Over a period of two days, the external consultant interviewed all Art Fund department heads and the director, asking questions to assess digital maturity in the following domains:

- Clarity of vision
- Business & technical team capacity
- Governance and programme management
- Metadata and taxonomy
- Analytics
- Document management
- Multi-channel distribution
- Creative operations & digital assets
- Customer relationship management
- Social media & campaign management
- Web & mobile management
- E-commerce
- Technical infrastructure
- Data & system security

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In 2016 alone we gave over £4.5m to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. We help museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and make additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. We are independently funded, with the core of our income provided by 123,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free or discounted entry to over 240 museums and galleries across the UK. Our support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year and a range of digital platforms, including our crowdfunding platform Art Happens.

In each domain, following interviews and an analysis of the current state, Art Fund was given a rating on a scale of one to five, based on very detailed maturity criteria for each level within each domain. The scores in each area were then totalled up to equal an overall maturity score.

Because the consultant had been conducting maturity assessments for over a decade, Art Fund was able to compare its digital maturity not only to similar organisations within the museum, education, and not-for-profit sectors, but also vis-à-vis large corporations in the consumer product goods, energy, retail, and manufacturing domains. By examining the gaps between the current state and the ideal state as described in the model, Art Fund was able to determine key priorities for advancing digital maturity.

The Action Plan: setting goals for improvement

Following the assessment, an action plan was developed and set in motion. Key initiatives following the assessment included:

1. Conducting a level-setting digital capabilities / possibilities education seminar for all Art Fund staff and several external partners working on current projects.
2. Developing 360 degree view archetypal personas to fully understand and target content in both digital and analogue domains, to enhance engagement across key customer group; professional, philanthropic and consumer audiences.
3. Building a content strategy around the personas, ensuring offline and online content complement each other and are very specifically targeted.
4. Creating a Digital Stewardship Committee to shepherd the plans, and ensure digital projects align with overall strategic objectives and are continuously governed.
5. Determining a “big five” set of focused projects on an annual basis, which support the key goals and minimise distractions.

“The digital maturity assessment allowed us to fully understand the digital gaps we faced as an organisation, but more importantly, it opened our eyes to many possibilities as we learned about the broader use of digital in different sectors. By fully engaging all employees to think about mature digital best practices, we have new ideas and plans to capitalise on our digital future and better fulfil the mission of Art Fund.”

Carolyn Young, Director of Marketing, Art Fund

The Benefits

For Art Fund, the digital maturity assessment imparted an eye-opening understanding as to where the organisation stood in relation to others in the sector and outside it, and how they should go about tackling some of the fundamental issues.

Previously, Art Fund's organisational and existing governance structures did not lend themselves to digital governance. Following the assessment, educational workshop, and formation of the Stewardship Committee, objectives have been better quantified and communicated to make digital progress less opaque. In the short term, the Digital Stewardship Committee empowered Art Fund to agree and follow through on key priorities.

As highlighted, prior to the digital maturity exercise, Art Fund as a whole did not have a shared awareness of all audiences and what defined them. This made it difficult to have an organisational overview of how audiences were being served. The organisation crystallised the target personas and trained everyone across Art Fund on three target persona needs and motivations to engage not only with Art Fund, but the museums and galleries it serves, including peer relationships between institutions i.e. curatorial staff. This achievement required the breaking down of organisational silos, there was a great deal of research and understanding on Art Fund audiences – museum professionals, art philanthropists and culture seekers – but it tended to be confined to separate teams.

Using the identified personas and its organisational strategic objectives, Art Fund is also completing a content strategy that ensures all content across all channels targets specific persona(s) and business objective(s). This content strategy is applied to content commissioning going forward, as well as facilitating a streamlining of existing content and a governance framework for content.

With regard to the original website redesign proposal, the digital maturity assessment clarified the need for personas, a content strategy and more quantified strategic objectives as tools to drive such a project.

It also resulted in Art Fund identifying a technology roadmap that prioritised a review of Art Fund's Digital Assessment Management (DAM) provision over its WCMS provision.

While many challenges remain, the prioritised list of initiatives and strategic objectives are clear. Ongoing management by the Digital Stewardship Committee and senior cross-organisational buy-in to digital leadership, digital skills-building amongst all staff, plus extensive data modeling and management, are all in continual need of attention and refinement. Without the digital maturity assessment (both process and results), a deeper understanding of the possibilities and future-looking, digitally-centric approach might never have been achieved.

Art Fund Personas

