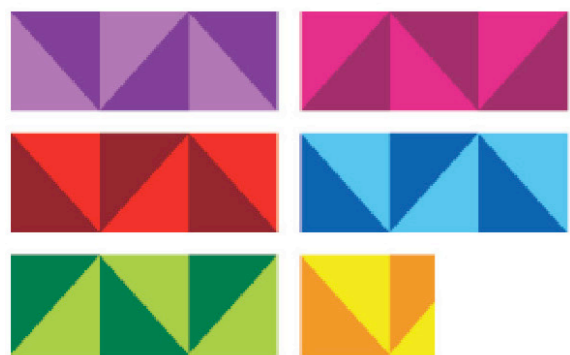


How to create your own innovation lab

Thinking & approaches from festivalslab

a work-in-progress guide written by



Edinburgh
Festivals
Innovation Lab

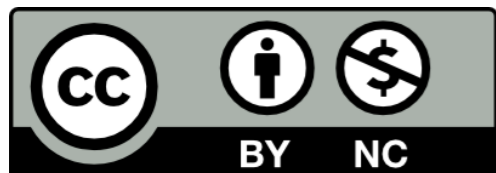
and written for

Amb:IT:ion
scotland

How to create your own innovation lab

This document is a summary of some of the thinking, principles & approaches that underpin the work done as part of the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab also known as festivalslab. festivalslab is a pioneering programme of work which explores how to use new thinking and new tools to make the Edinburgh festivals even better.

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What learning is best shared?

In the field of innovation, since new projects are by definition often very exciting and attractive, there can be a tendency to become fixated on the details of projects. And through our work which to date has includes projects like Culture Hack Scotland, the Festivals Listings API, Festival Design DNA and the Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge we have a number of such great high-profile projects.

Thinking and process (not projects)

But since not everyone is directly like the Edinburgh Festivals, the fine detail of these projects will only be directly replicable in a small number of other organisations. Therefore we feel it is much more important to share process thinking rather than project details (which can be found elsewhere).

So this guide contains eighteen statements in no particular order that sum up either a foundational principle of the festivalslab work or something important we have learnt along the way. Like any good innovation programme, we have both successes and failures and whether you're an individual practitioner, a small organisation or a national company we are sure that you will find something of use here.

How to use this guide

This document is intended not a step-by-step guidebook but as a manifesto, a home of inspiration for anyone interested in innovation in the cultural sector. So please use it in whatever way you find most useful. That might be by reading it all through at once, jumping all over the place, dipping back into it over time or just finding one or two statements that really resonate with where you are right now. Only you will know how to make the most of what we have shared here.

And remember, like festivalslab itself, this is a work in progress. So pls email lab@festivalsedinburgh.com to tell us how to make it better.

Thank you.

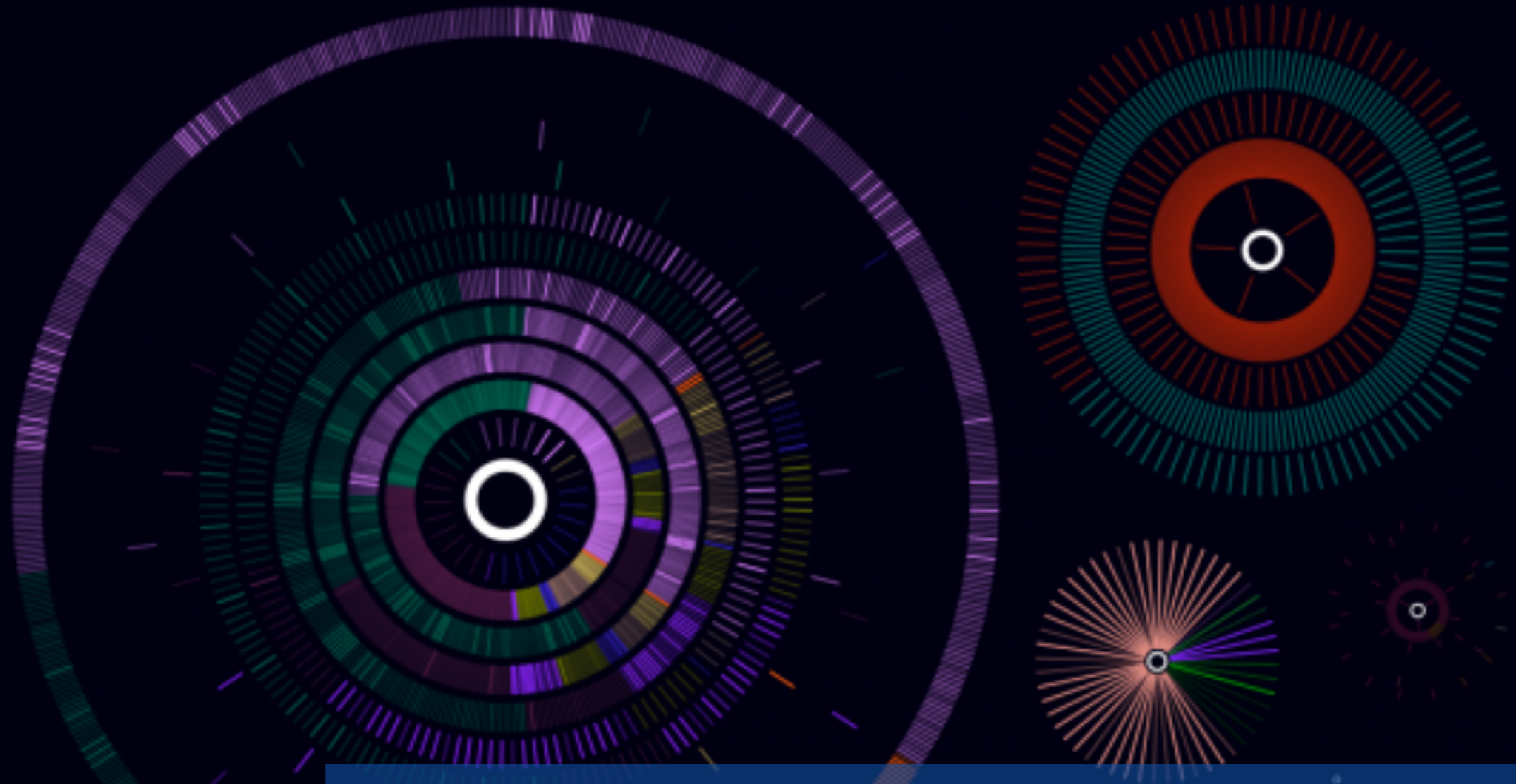
(v1.0 Dec 18th 2011)

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HELP ABOUT

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8 AUGUST



The www.festivalclock.com visualisation by Justin Quillinan and Stef Posavec was the most beautiful usage of the Festivals Listings API in 2011

1. Work with digital talent as creatives

Work with digital talent as creatives

Too often the only type of relationship that cultural organisations have with digital talent is transactional...ie we'll give you £5k and you'll give us a website. This is not collaboration, this is a service relationship. Events like Culture Hack Scotland show us the enormous potential of what can happen when cultural professionals and organisations meet digital talent and web developers in a way that is exploratory, experimental and equitable. If we can engage with technologists with the same attitudes and processes by which we engage with artists then we may find out that they are actually more similar than we first thought.

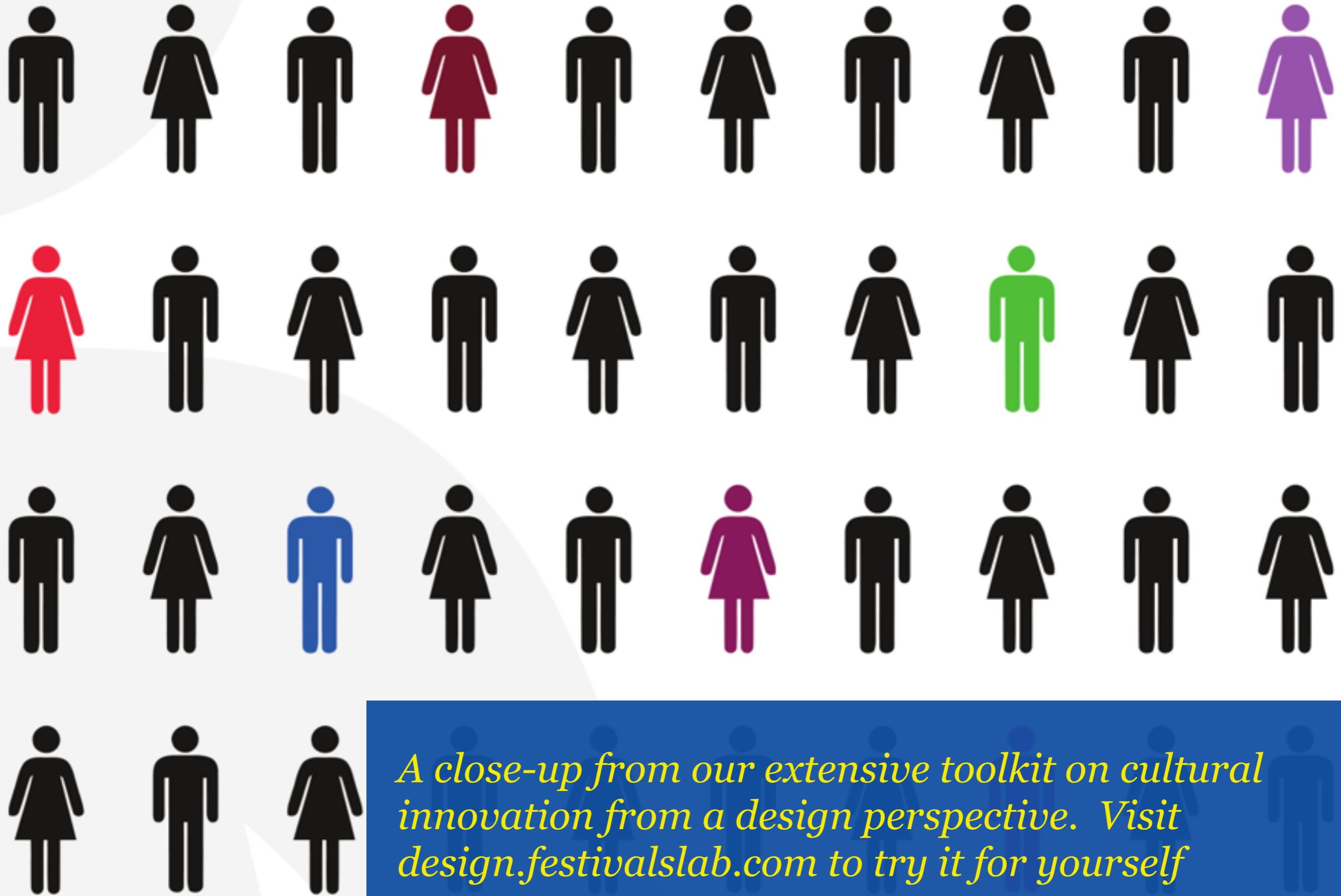
Simple action: find a web developer who loves your work, buy them a coffee, tell them what's on your mind and then listen to what they say

*2. Think like
a designer*

Think like a designer

As cultural organisations we often think we that what we want is the same as what people want... but believe it or not this is often not the case. As we look to find ways to improve the experiences we provide, it can be very powerful to start with the needs and behaviours of real people. Design thinking and established design approaches can be powerful ways to unlock opportunities for innovation and improvement, especially when they are people-centred.

Simple action: remember a service experience which you have found frustrating in a domain like banking and transport and think about why it didn't work. Do the same for a well-designed service experience



A close-up from our extensive toolkit on cultural innovation from a design perspective. Visit design.festivalslab.com to try it for yourself

*3. Make more of what
you've already got*

Make more of what you've already got

One way of defining innovation is taking your existing assets and discovering new ways to frame them in such a way that creates new value. In the cultural context, assets typically include things like brand, reputation, programme, archive, data, content, network, relationships, cash etc. The Edinburgh Festivals listings data API project does just that by taking programme data and making it openly available in a web developer-friendly format time thereby encouraging a new family of exciting apps and services.

Simple action: make a list of your assets and identify which of them could be given a new context so as to result in valuable projects.

*4. Consider both
need & opportunity*

Consider both need and opportunity

Innovation projects come in two types: those based on need (e.g. we need to attract a younger audience) or those based on opportunity (e.g. more and more people are using smart-phones). If the portfolio of our projects isn't balanced then there can be problems - too much opportunity-led work can lead to innovation that is shiny and sexy but not business-critical and too much needs-led work can lead to innovation that is functional and not progressive. And of course the magic happens when need and opportunity match.

Simple action: if you have a list of project ideas, identify which ideas are needs-led and which are opportunity-led



The mobile site of the Edinburgh Intl Book Festival started as a Culture Hack Scotland project and the code is available open source for anyone to use

5. Tell your story

Tell your story

Documents like this is just one of the ways that we share our stories and ideas. It of course shares our learning and is therefore a important way of increasing the impact of the investment made in our work. But as well as that it also allows us to make new connections, lets people tell us what we've got wrong and gives us direction on how to improve.

Therefore we have found that the storytelling we do via the blog and showcase at festivalslab.com is as important as the projects themselves.

Simple action: find a blog relevant to innovation in your context and post a comment that shares your own thinking and your experience



Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab

Social Stuff:



➤ BLOG ➤ ABOUT ➤ 101 ➤ SHOWCASE ➤ #CHS11 ➤ API ➤ IDEAS CHALLENGE ➤ DESIGN ➤ TALK TO US

ARTICLES SERVICE DESIGN THINKING

Dec 9, 2011 Rohan No Comments

Why service design is the next big thing in cultural innovation



festivalslab is a unique programme of work which identifies and develops ways to improve the world's festival city - for audiences, for artists, for partners and for the festival organisations themselves

lab@festivalsedinburgh.com
[@festivalslab](https://twitter.com/festivalslab)

HAVE YOU SEEN THE CLOCK YET?



Sharing our work & thinking via the festivalslab.com blog has been invaluable to connecting with people from around the world

Subscribe to new posts by email:

Comments & did

*6. Uncover your rules
and assumptions*

Uncover your rules and assumptions

Another way of defining innovation is the intentional breaking of rules that lead to new value. And the more deep-held the view, the more radical the innovation is. These can be rules about funding, the kind of work you produce, timelines of production, how you relate to technology, how you relate to audiences...whatever! The rules of a cultural organisation are very rarely explicit and so making them so can be a very powerful jump-off point for innovation

Simple action: write down five things from the basic rule set of how you and/or your organisation works and order them by how deeply held they are

7. Break them

Break them

With the Festivals Listing API project we took the rule that “we only publish listings via our websites, our print programmes” and systematically broke it in such a way to create a new way for web developers to engage with the festivals. Breaking rules is by definition difficult and so modelling out what what the costs and benefits of doing so is critical

Simple action: take a rule and do a thought-experiment where this is broken and imagine what that might be like and what the consequences (good and bad) of that might be. Do it for a deep rule and then for a light rule.

8. Steal what works

Steal what works

Innovation is not invention. Here at festivalslab we have borrowed tried and tested approaches from the domains of social and private sector innovation and just translated them into the cultural context. So while things like our API project, Culture Hack Scotland, our service design work and the Ideas Challenge are relatively radical in the cultural sector, they are not new ideas.

Simple action: think about what your favourite innovation is in the cultural sector and think about how the thinking behind it could be applied to your context. Do the same for a non-cultural example.

The inaugural Culture Hack Scotland in May 2011 was a 24 hour event that created 30 amazing projects thanks to the spirit of collaboration



9. Make it important

Make it important

If your innovation agenda isn't important enough to you and your team then it will be difficult to develop the requisite momentum to implement them and make the difference you want to make. Making innovation important and driving engagement is best done by three ways - curating projects that matter to your team, communicating why and what you're doing effectively and making innovation practice a valued and measured part of your day job.

Simple action: find out what innovation means to your individual team members and understand their ambitions and priorities

10. Be realistic

Innovation is hard and actual impacts don't always match ambition. Be realistic about what you can achieve within your resources and be wary of ascribing magical powers to digital technology.

Simple action: outline the basic outputs and outcomes you're aiming for and then read them back to someone else the following day and revise accordingly

11. Open up

The majority of festivalslab's work is what's called open innovation - making new pathways for other people to work with the festivals in such a way that leads to mutual benefit. This is based mainly on the realisation that significant innovation ambitions cannot be realised by oneself and that - if designed well - allowing the strengths of different project partners to work together will lead to the best results.

Simple action: write down the ways your organisation is closed and in which ways it is open

The Challenge

The Edinburgh Festivals are challenging you to share suggestions for how to make the festivals even more amazing.

What if:

You
Where in the world are you?

SUBMIT

SUBMISSIONS

Search...

Category All

Sort Most recent

RECENT FOLLOWERS



[VIEW ALL FOLLOWERS >](#)

VOTE
✓ 1
What if Edinburgh festival had a collecting box for Book Aid at every venue
0 comments | Submitted about 3 hours ago to General/Other by Ros W.

VOTE
✓ 1
What if you create a...
subscribe to that pro...
0 comments | Submitted 4 days ago

VOTE
✓ 1
What if you provided...
1 comment | Submitted 4 days ago to Apps & Technology by Ross G.

VOTE
What if there was a chance to meet and speak to the performers afterwards

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge sourced 300 ideas from the general public of how to improve the festival experience

Top 5 Ideas - as voted by

12. Define your limits

Define your limits

This is just sensible project planning. Running innovation projects in all parts of your work will overextend you and so it is prudent to set a conservative scope for innovation work and include more as it develops rather than starting with everything.

Simple action: list the different part of your business, identify which are in scope for innovation and then list them by practicality

*13. Find tools that
work for you*

Find tools that work for you

There are so many innovation methodologies, resources and tools out there which can help your thinking and practice. The ones that have been most influential to festivalslab have been those to do with open innovation and service design. And a specific tool we recommend is the visual business model canvas as explained in the book *Business Model Generation*.

Simple action: visit businessmodelgeneration.com and see if you find it relevant and interesting

*14. Make partnerships
make*

Make partnerships make

Every cultural organisation has a rich set of relationships and partnerships. Many of these however can be conversational and not result in tangible outputs. Innovation is about making and so it can be incredibly useful to move past conversations to understand project opportunities which can result in benefits for you and your partner. At festivalslab we're doing this with three target partner types: developer communities, universities and technology companies.

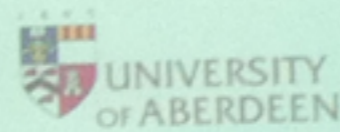
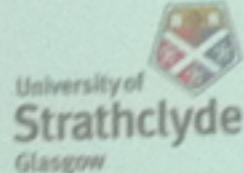
Simple action: identify your existing relationships which you'd like to convert from talking to making

sicsa*

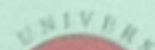
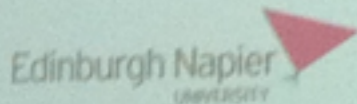


Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

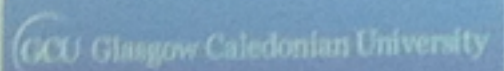
Smart Tourism



UNIVERSITY OF
GLASGOW



University of Edinburgh



Through the Smart Tourism project, we are able to collaborate six leading informatics and computer science academic departments across Scotland

15. Ungeek innovation

Ungeek innovation

Since so much of innovation is digital we can often confuse the two. And since digital and technology can be a barrier to many people, using too much technical language or curating too many technical projects can alienate people from an innovation agenda when it doesn't need to. That is why we at festivalslab do as much work on projects around design as we do on data. We call this ungeeking innovation since it would be a shame if cultural innovation were to become perceived as too technical and inaccessible when it needn't be at all.

Simple action: talk to someone completely non-technical about your innovation ambitions to test your language and ability to make a case

16.Start

Ideas are easy but implementation is not. Innovation is more about making than talking and so it is better to start prototyping the ideas that really speak to your context than going to more events for inspiration and yet more ideas.

Simple action: work out how to test or prototype an idea quickly and cheaply and just do it

17.Stop

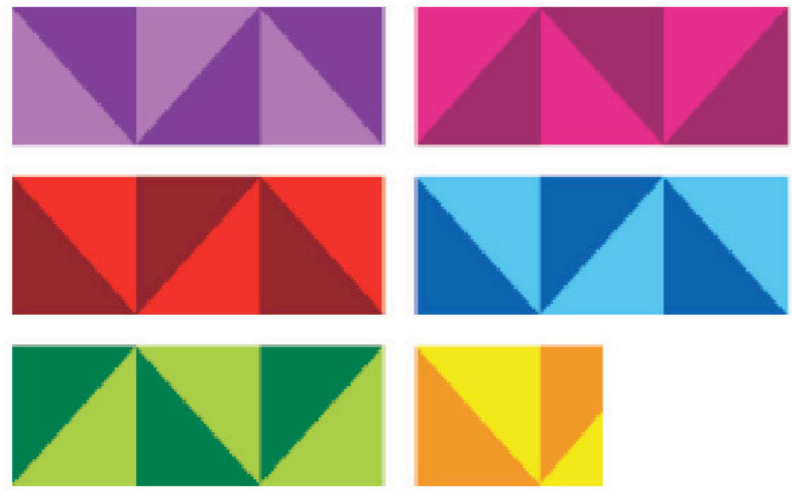
In an area like innovation where ideas are bountiful focussing on project completion projects can be challenging. When the projects have been chosen in which you will be investing time and energy and money, make sure they get done.

Simple action: for all projects articulate a clear end point and exit strategy

18. Don't stop

Innovation is an infinitive game and so part of the challenge of innovation work is ensuring that projects get successfully delivered while keeping an eye on future opportunities. Central to this is learning, learning about what worked and what didn't and using this intelligence as the fuel for future work.

Simple action: Don't stop.



Edinburgh
Festivals
Innovation Lab

About festivalslab

The Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab - festivalslab for short - is the innovation programme of Festivals Edinburgh - the strategic umbrella organisation for the twelve major Edinburgh festivals set up in 2007 to lead on their joint strategic direction and maintain their global competitive edge.

festivalslab is supported by Creative Scotland and you can find out more via:

festivalslab.com

[@festivalslab](#)

lab@festivalsedinburgh.com

Simple action: visit showcase.festivalslab.com to see our work