Episode 8 - Jacqueline Ewers

**James Akers:** Welcome to the Digital Culture Podcast. A podcast for people working in the creative and cultural sector who want to know more about digital. I'm your host, James Akers.

Welcome to this episode of the Digital Culture Podcast. I'm James, one of the Tech Champions at the Digital Culture Network.

I'm a white man with brown hair, and today I'm wearing, it's like an aubergine jumper, I think. So, my guest from the southwest of England is the wonderful Jacqueline Ewers!

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Hello, I'm Jacqueline Ewers, Tech Champion for email marketing. I'm a white woman. Today I am wearing an orange top, which I like to think goes really well with, James' aubergine. And, I'm based in Bristol as, James said in the southwest. I've been with the team since May, 2022, which I can't believe three years gone so quickly.

And I'm based in the same city as Ollie Couling, Digital marketing and Strategy Tech Champion

**James Akers:** It's one of those great regions where we've got two Tech Champions in the same place,

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Two for the price of one!

**James Akers:** Two for the price of one. And the Southwest is a really strange region because you have quite a big concentration, don't you, in, in Bristol and Bath, the east of it. And then it goes I suppose like an appendix?

Maybe like a chili pepper? I don't know, but it goes all the way down to Devon and Cornwall right to Lands End, doesn't it?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah, so, I moved to Bristol from London, and, I hadn't appreciated that Bristol to Penzance is about 200 miles, but, Bristol to say Manchester is around 170 miles, Or you could get to, York. And for me, in my mind, the distances don't feel equitable.

They are, in terms of miles. But, people talk about Devon and Cornwall and how it just goes on and on. And on, and I dunno if that's the, just because of the transport links are not slower as they reach the tip towards Truro and Penzance.

**James Akers:** And I think for us at the Digital Culture Network, we wanna reach as many people across the country as possible. And there are cultural organizations all the way down there, which find it hard to come to physical events. I suppose that's one of the benefits of our service being online and digital, support, is that we can speak to those organizations no matter where they are, even if they're remote.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah. And also as do a lot of areas, they have that funny balance between, local, audiences and tourists. They get that influx often during summer, which gives them different kinds of challenges in terms of their customer base.

**James Akers:**You talk about customers there, a great way of communicating with them and building a relationship with them is your specialist area, isn't it?

**Jacqueline Ewers:**Yes!

**James Akers:** Before we started recording, you had a really good description of what email marketing is. You said it's a creative way for practitioners and cultural organizations to connect with their audiences through email, and the goal was to grow interest, boost attendance, strength, and relationships with audience through tailored and consistent communication.

I think that's a really good way of summarizing what email marketing is.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yes. So, you know I love it because it, works really well, and it is the best performing channel because it's targeted. If you're not talking to your customers through email, why not? It's not that it's the only method, but it's very cost effective.

You can develop that relationship, and it's managed, it's yours. You own it as an organization or as an individual. Whereas of course, there's, risks associated with other platforms. I suppose I'm directly comparing to social media, another way of reaching your audience.

The difficulty there is if things change and you don't want to be on that platform anymore, or you don't have the capacity, that data's not yours. With email, you own that data, it's your responsibility. But my favorite phrase, from Spider-Man films is with great power comes great responsibility.

I think also, I think it's that way around.

**James Akers:** Yeah, it does. And yeah, you are talking about customer records and we'll go on to the legalities and the policies around that later on.

We've talked before about how arts and cultural organizations can collect email contacts, and it's usually through signups or ticketing, event registrations and social media campaigns. Is that what you commonly see?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah. That's really interesting. The common way that a lot of venues and organizations and people that I talk to is that often, it's through ticketing, in the arts, that's a really common pipeline for data because people actually do a transaction with you and of course, why would you not want to speak to them?

In terms of retention and keeping the people that you have already engaged with, statistically across, all areas of business after a first purchase, you are about 30% likely to make a second purchase. After that, it rises of those people who've made that second purchase, a third purchase it rises to 49% of those.

 And then it goes up to 62% for the fourth purchase. So you can see you get some efficiencies there in terms of, talking to people who are really engaged with you and committed to you and driving revenue. So how do you get those people in the first place?

If you're lucky enough to have, events that are attracting ticketing, how do you make sure that you have permission to contact them? The standard model in the arts is explicit consent, which is, yes, I'd like to hear from you about news events, be the first to know about those things going forwards.

There's also something called the soft optin, which is another way of doing it, which is when somebody that has a transaction with you, you can, offer an opt out statement, which is, if you don't wish to hear from us by email, tick the box and then of course your contacts then grow more quickly because you get a bigger, number of people who probably, don't choose to opt out, but the quality of the data, the contact data, the relationships that you build are not quite so engaged, they're not quite so committed. So that explicit consent, you get really good people who actually actively want to hear from you.

You're pushing an open door, then, they're saying Yes, please tell me about your activities, your events, what you are up to. That's great, isn't it? That's a really nice relationship where people actually want to hear from you.

**James Akers:** Do you think organizations are a bit shy about asking for that? or the opposite of doing soft opt-in?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** I think it's about testing it if you can. One of the things is working out what percentage of your audience is saying yes I'd like to hear from you. There are other ways of doing it.

 There's signing up to the newsletter, and those are what we tend to call leads. People who, haven't yet necessarily made a purchase. They often come from sign up at your, on your website, that's one of the key touch points. for me. If you're so successful at getting them to your website, that's great. That's really positive, isn't it? You've done all the hard work. Just make sure you have permission to engage with them, to talk to them, to develop that relationship.

Don't let them escape if they don't book a ticket or don't register for your events or don't do the other calls to action that you want. At least get that permission to speak to them if they'd like to further develop knowledge of what you offer.

**James Akers:** And I see that all the time and it is something we all talk about as a team, about the marketing funnel, about the journey you're taking people on, is that yes, you might be doing loads of really engaging stuff on social media, building awareness of what you do, and then people will come and find you and come to your website. And then if they leave your website, in both those cases, they continue to be anonymous to you. You don't know who they are. But if you can capture some bit of data from them, if you can have a prompt for email, for sign it to a newsletter and give them clear reasons why you're gonna capture that, and then you can continue that dialogue and

 that conversation with them over time. Don't just stick a newsletter, sign up in the foot of your website, be more prominent.

And, don't be shy about asking for that.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** It feels very passive, doesn't it? If you've just put it in the footer, because that's not necessarily, actively trying to generate those leads. The fact that they're anonymous is really interesting, James, because, quite a few people that we speak to in different organizations, venues, depending on how they're set up, some of them are free collection, say galleries, museums, it's a free collection.

People coming in, going out, never having that chance to actually directly make contact with those people. Some of the, biggest organizations in the sector, so the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the National History Museum, are really promoting, their plan your visit. model where they actually invite people to in advance, book a ticket for a set time, because of that individual could walk in and out of your venue without your ever knowing.

But once you issue a ticket, suddenly they're real, aren't they? They become a profile and somebody you can ask questions to or make contact with further. Also the National Gallery, anecdotally have mentioned that it also drives donations and, they can do some cross-selling and upselling, around their exhibitions or through their shop, things like that.

So it's a really good opportunity to consider if you are currently not issuing tickets. I think it's a really good investment. I think it's interesting that they've chosen to do that and push it a little bit more.

**James Akers:** So, if you've gone through the stage of attracting these people, they've come to your website, they've signed up to your newsletter, what's the next step? Do you have any recommendations about what people should be doing with that data once they're in a system?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** My classic conversation with people who get in touch with the Digital Culture Network, we often have to go back to, okay, who do you want to talk to primarily, who do you want to target? So you can as you say in that first step, make sure that you're, offering something that's of interest to them and ultimately getting really clear, calls to action in your email.

I'm not convinced, although you can test it, that people want very long emails. There is also a problem with tracking those very long emails because, the Apple privacy policy MPP has meant that, if you've signed up to the Mail Privacy Policy,

the open rate is concealed from the email marketer. It just reports as opened. So you've got slightly inflated open rates and you don't really know whether people have genuinely opened it. This put more pressure on the click as a, metric that's reliable.

And I think this is good for email marketing because ultimately it creates that user experience, that journey from email through to the website, hopefully through to driving revenue,

consuming something. If you can get your calls to action, really focused on why they would want to click through onto your website. We know that video is quite a key driver. There's some other things for music where the artist is maybe less well known, sound clips, if they don't have video, is still better than, than nothing,

 because it's an interactive element. I really liked, that emphasis on trying to just engage people and connect with them. Recently the Watershed based in Bristol, which is the independent cinema, sent out an email, regarding, their current set of film trailers, and ask people to, rate them.

 Stars one to five and, a lovely bit of connection with people to engage them. Of course, ultimately they're hoping that people will watch those trailers and then book the film, but there's still interesting things you can do with interactivity that can encourage people to actually connect with you and find out more about what you are offering and get that cut through that you're looking for.

**James Akers:** Yeah, and you could directly communicate with them instead of competing with the rest of noise on social media and different channels,

**Jacqueline Ewers:** It is noisy in the inbox as well. That's why those long emails, there isn't much appetite for those.

Once you've actually got people to sign up or to register with you, automated or triggered emails are a really good way of connecting with people, right at the start and introducing who you are and what you are offering and, getting people thinking about that.

It's a bit like when you first meet somebody, and then if we are thinking about the analogy with relationships, you know, you first met them, you'd expect some sort of introduction and this is the getting to know period and it's, also classed as sometimes the honeymoon period because people are looking for information.

They've signed up to you, they're probably expecting something. Automated email, which is a triggered email by people signing up. it scores really highly, it scores the highest, generally on average, over 90%, open rates. So again, although the open rate is, not the most reliable metric, it is an indicator and it's because people are expecting to hear from you.

I've seen some really good, examples of, welcome emails. One of the ones that I particularly liked was, a series of emails, which, Greenpeace sent, one of them is gathering information on, okay we know you're interested in lots of issues because you've signed up to Greenpeace, but which ones are the most interesting to you?

They're not saying they'll only send you information about that, but they're getting to know you so that they can send you relevant content. And relevant content is really important to creating successful emails.

**James Akers:** So within an email marketing platform then, is that what segmentation is about? Using that data that you're collecting about the audiences to then choose what you're sending?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah, the trend for email marketing is massively towards personalization, hyper segmentation. And of course, if you've got the capacity for it and the number of people on your contact list, that's great, but you don't want to be creating so many segments that it actually makes your job really difficult to, find meaningful segments that are large enough.

You can't create necessarily 10 different variations of, a newsletter. In our conversations with, different people in the sector. We try to balance the importance of relevance with capacity to actually, get an email out. Because often the teams we talk to are quite overstretched.

That is one of the things that I love about working for the, DCN is that, across the board, I'd say the whole team understand that people are overworked, and they're looking for ways for them to create more impact.

So making sure that what they're focusing their energies and effort on is really, creating the outcomes that they need. Because otherwise, in marketing, I know from personal experience, the job is never feels as though you've done everything. You never feel as though you stop until every event is sold out.

How could that possibly be? So sadly there is that difficulty.

What I like about, the Greenpeace model was that they weren't boxing you into a corner.

You would only ever hear about plastic pollution and, or biodiversity. They were just saying, if you had to put these in order of priority, how would you rate these key issues? They're finding out more, because it's a fine balance between if you say, I want to hear about, does that mean, you can only talk to them about that.

I speak to people quite frequently around, the options around GDPR, General Data Protection Regulations and, PECR, Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations.

Just talking about the different options that they can useand which is the best choice and the best fit. A lot of people also need support developing their privacy policies.

And of course there's getting permission around, using email data to, create profiles within Meta and that process as well. So having that within your privacy policy, but got some good examples around that of wording that you can use if that's something people are interested in.

And, what happens if they've got different touch points with different statements, and, how does that then carry forwards? You need to be aware that the wording carries weight and I'm interested in is different from, I want to hear about, because then you get into that funny realm of GDPR, can we talk to them about X or Y 'cause that's a new area and they didn't tick it on the box.

Just being aware of those sensitivities.

Then there's business to business marketing, you don't actually need individual permission to contact them because it's the business world and they're classed as corporate subscribers.

There is a caveat to that, which is that, sole traders and partnerships are classed as individuals, but everybody else if their contact email is out there in the business world and they're a corporate subscriber, you don't have to get explicit consent before you make contact with them by email.

**James Akers:** Alright, so that's an email address, which is like James@theorganization.co.uk

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah. So we come under that, as Arts Council England employees, we are classed as corporate subscribers.

**James Akers:** Interesting. And you've done a webinar, haven't you, around, regulation about GDPR and PECR and how that affects email marketing and why it's important.

And if you wanna watch that, it's on demand on our website, so just go there and you can see it in our knowledge hub, and we'll put a link to that in our show notes.

So, Jacqueline, I'm sold. I want to implement email marketing. I wanna make it the best it can be. I'm gonna do everything and follow all your guides that we have on our knowledge hub, and I'm gonna speak to you and make it wonderful. If I want to grow the number of contacts in my email marketing database, what can people do to do that?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** I use the analogy of us being gardeners. So we are growing contacts, but we're also. Perhaps thinking about, okay, the bits of the garden that aren't prospering, the deadwood, which might be contacts who are either lapsed or inactive.

So just thinking about those people if you are using an email service provider, you are paying for those contacts to be on your list, but they're not engaging, they're not opening and they're not clicking on your emails. And that it can be over an extended period of time.

On average, a standard attrition rate is 20%. So if you imagine that 20% of your contacts may disengage through circumstances, life stages moving away from the area, whatever it is you need to be focusing on growth because those people are not productive for you, and also identifying them and deciding what to do with them. I often advise on what they call reactivation campaigns, bringing it back to life, but actually for people who have fundamentally disengaged, also managing that and archiving those records because, you don't wanna be paying for people who never open, never engage, with your emails.

So, yeah we are looking at growth. One of the things, James, that you know about is the leaky bucket syndrome, which is, so we're still in the garden.

The leaky bucket is where, you've got people say, coming to your website. And they are leaving without having left their permission to contact.

Some people, for example, set up online shops or even a physical shop, and they don't necessarily ask people whether they want to join their mailing list. But these are people who've, had a transaction with you. They know more about you, you've done the hard work, they're aware of you, they're interested in you, and they've even done that transactional thing.

Just make sure they don't escape without having asked them So plug that hole in your bucket so that your list is growing.

**James Akers:** It feeds into the, to that marketing funnel, doesn't it? we always talk about putting more at the top, and then if you forget about actually reviewing the data that you've got and looking after it, and then it's just wasted time, isn't it?

You've done all that effort to capture that bit of data, make the most of it, and segment it and, clean the data so it is engaged audiences.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah, removing those people who aren't engaging with you, 'cause of course that does have a direct impact on costs.

**James Akers:** so in your discussions that you're having across the sector, are you seeing any common themes that are cropping up?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** The automations because they work well and trying to find, okay, well, where could I apply automations that haven't got already. The welcome automation, because it's so successful, is used commonly, there's ticketing automations, that's transactional and that's often through ticketing systems. I've seen some, ones trialled with, removing contacts that have disengaged or lapsed and setting that up as an automation so that you don't have to periodically, look at your data and run a campaign, it's actually doing it over time. It depends on your size of organization and how much data, you have to be reviewing But that seems to work quite well.

The other trend might be; I wrote an article around environmental sustainability and, email marketing in conjunction with Andy Leitch's, article around website environmental sustainability, top 10 tips to create a sustainable policy for your website, and then top 10 tips for how email marketing could be more sustainable.

What was great about the tips for email marketing was that they tended to be all about best practice anyway. So there was nothing in there that wouldn't be best practice, more widely in terms of, reducing the people that you are contacting who aren't responding.

There's lots of nice things that, overlap with best practice generally.

**James Akers:** That combination of website and the environmental factors behind it all, and if it's aligning to your, objectives as an organization you might have, you might be keen to do and be more sustainable. And, you have an ecological objective that you're trying to reach.

Some people don't think about the digital tools that you're using and how they can be made more efficient or the change in what you can do to make them more sustainable in that way,

**Jacqueline Ewers:** What's interesting is that, in making, say for example, image is the right size for the right, channel, whether that's website or email marketing, It's got a environmental impact, but it's also got an audience engagement factor to it because the image load in the right time, they're the right, resolution for that format, so there's benefits that are wider than just the environmental sustainability that actually mean that your website doesn't load really slowly or your, email doesn't have problems with actually viewing the images that you've put on there.

So things like that, it is got, benefits beyond just achieving the sustainability. And of course you could say each individual email doesn't have a massive footprint, but it's just that collectively and we've got to be thinking across all activity, I think going forwards.

**James Akers:** I wonder, do I have many emails I sent on a daily basis?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** It is scary. it is really scary. No, you're right. so I think it's, 333.2 billion emails were sent and received worldwide daily in 2022. When I said the inbox was busy, I didn't quite mean that busy.

**James Akers:** It sounds like my unread emails in my account. So what platforms are out there then to do this kind of stuff?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** In terms of individuals and organizations that come into contact with me, we have quite a high rate of MailChimp users, around about 60%. And then the, remainder are a mix of Constant Contact DotDigital, Mailerlite. Ecosend is new to the, sector they put sustainability as a key priority in their offer. And all the ones I mentioned offer a charity discount.

**James Akers:** As a nonprofit there are so many discounted rates or free platforms for other things that, that are out there. So if you're not using them already, check out things like Canva has a non-profit free version, so you can have all the premium features for free.

So the asset creation that you might need for emails alongside the platforms themselves. There's lots of things that you might want to explore.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** One of the, key things is, sometimes people get in touch and they don't want to spend money on email marketing. And I do understand because budgets are so tight, but ultimately because it performs well and it is a really good way of speaking to your, customer base and creating retention.

 I do think that it's one of the costs that you can justify.

**James Akers:** Well it's, a gateway, isn't it? To understanding and communicate with the audiences. There's not many channels that are that efficient.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah.

**James Akers:** so do you have any top tips that everybody should think about? When it comes to email marketing?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** We talked about growth being so important 'cause of the 20% attrition rate. Are there some really quick wins to growing? For example, just moving your newsletter, sign up from the footer to your most popular, web pages, a very simple thing like that. And just see if it has any effect on your growth rate.

Are there other touch points? What about promoting it over social? Trying to get people to sign up from your social media activity or, are there other points? Are people registering for events, that sort of thing?

Is there a opportunity there? I always suggest trying to do a quick audit of all your touch points where you could be promoting signing up to your newsletter, just to make sure that you've really got that, leaky bucket situation under control. Something that's close to your heart, James, it would be evaluating results.

So one of the things is people so time poor, you have to set aside a period of time to just look at what's going on with your email marketing. How many people are engaging, what are they doing? What are they interested in? But ultimately, it does allow you to build on success.

So I think looking at, okay,what could you build on? What are the positives? And then which things are really bombing andcut those out. Just understanding what people are doing with your emails. I know we, really like UTMs Urchin Tracker modules.

**James Akers:** Yeah, Urchin Tracking Modules.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** it's just basically ways of, so they're URLs with some code, it sounds more sophisticated than it is, doesn't it?

would you say? There's ways to create them so that you can just track things through. And also the use of QR codes so that you can really be tracking all your marketing to see where it's coming from.

But that also includes email marketing. Finding out more detail about those journeys once people hit the website.

**James Akers:** We've got a resource on using campaign parameters, UTMs on our website, so check that out.

**James Akers:** Do you know what QR means?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** No!

**James Akers:** No, neither did I until about a few months ago.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Are you going to tell us?

**James Akers:** Yeah, I can tell you. Did you know that QR means Quick Response?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Ah, okay.

**James Akers:** There you go.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** And of course, I always think for accessibility, you should also put the web address as well, prominently, so that if people don't like using QR codes, you've got the alternative. But QR codes are just a great way of tracking it, aren't they? They, it does, like you say, it's a Quick Response.

It's really informative as a, marketeer.

And then my third tip would be, don't hang on to contacts. Sadly, when I worked in the arts, I didn't like to let go of people. But actually, I realize now that, if somebody really isn't engaging with your email or, in any shape or form no open rates over a sustained period, it probably is time to send them an email to say, oh, we've noticed, you've not been in touch.

We know inboxes get busy. do you want to stay? Do you want us to keep sending you emails or would you prefer, a break. And there's really nice ways to say that. I've got some really good examples. Hall for Cornwall sends one out, which is, it may be just Au Revoir, see you later sort of thing, which is really nice, you know, but we appreciate that at the moment, it's not useful to you and it's certainly not useful to, them as an organization 'cause they're paying for it.

**James Akers:** So before I wrap things up then, have you had any favourite support over the last six months?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** To be honest, I really enjoy speaking to people and finding out more and seeing how we can help and get them more impact. A recent case, comes to mind where people got in touch from Autograph, A BP. I really liked the fact that they'd got some support in looking at their statistics and initially they wanted to investigate individual fundraising, but weren't sure where to start and thought that they had to start from scratch.

Then they interrogated their data and found that they actually had pots of data where people were either giving donations already or had, had that potential because they were highly engaged. So it suddenly from interrogating their data, they found, oh, they actually, they have got some interesting stats in there that where they could build up profiles, understand, how they could put the case to people, find other people like those people, build a relationship, a giving relationship.

so I thought that was really interesting. But it is another key part of email marketing because, you know, we are talking to donors and, individual donors and keeping them engaged, is delivered often by email because it feels more personal.

**James Akers:** It sounds like a really, good project to be involved in and

 looking at all those stats there

**Jacqueline Ewers:** I love it when you can connect metrics with, the analysis with actual then action to create more impact. that's when it works best, isn't it?

**James Akers:** Yeah, that's what the use of data's all about, isn't it? Answering questions.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** That, just made me think of, the value of a testing strategy. So often people think of testing as, subject lines or look and feel of an email. Much more fundamental for me is testing, potential. So what if you targeted a particular segment of your audience with an individual fundraising ask, or what if you take another segment, they've interacted with your recently, they're high value, what could you get them to do next? How could you really use that data to further that relationship, to take them to the next stage of engagement or, driving revenue?

**James Akers:** Really interesting.

So for me, I've got three key takeaways from today's chat. firstly would be avoiding the leaky bucket. all that hard work, attracting people. And if you fall at the last hurdle of not actually collecting and getting permission to contact them, it's such a shame, isn't it?

**Jacqueline Ewers:** It feels like you've done the, all the hard work. Now, really capitalize on it, of getting somebody to come and find you and want to connect with you. At least give them the opportunity to do so.

**James Akers:** And secondly, I thought the stuff around email marketing being the channel where you can actually build a meaningful customer relationship with your audiences.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah, the creative and cultural sector is in a unique position for that, isn't it? Because it is often very emotional, if it isn't emotional, then I think it's probably not fulfilling its purpose. You have that ability to create very loyal audiences, people who feel genuinely connected with the art that you are creating.

Making sure that you actually respond to that in a way where they feel rewarded for that loyalty.

**James Akers:** and thirdly, something close to my heart obviously is doing the whole tracking things, testing it, and then tracking it again.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Yeah, testing strategies are quite difficult to develop. It's not about the subject line, it's can be more fundamental things about interrogating your, wealth of data, which bit has more potential, in terms of engagement and, to generate revenue and testing that.

 Or there might be some audience development that you want to do and testing. Okay, what's the opportunity there? So yeah, tracking, testing, tracking, testing. constant learning loop, isn't it? Yeah, it's a feedback loop, isn't it?

 **James Akers:** Thank you so much. That's such a brilliant chat. thank you to my wonderful guest, Jacqueline Ewers.

**Jacqueline Ewers:** Thanks James. It's been fun.

**James Akers:** If you would like to move your audiences from unknown to known to unlock the next step with them. If you wanna improve what you're doing, if you wanna see some really good examples of what email marketing could be, get in touch. 'cause Jacqueline is here for you. If you're in England, you can get one-to-one support from her for free.

And if you're not, check out our knowledge hub.