Re-Mapping Your Visitor Journey Post Covid

Hi. I'm Rachel Mackay, from The Recovery Room, home of research and resources to support the museum and heritage sector during these pretty weird times.

If you haven't had a look at the resources yet, head to therecoveryroomblog.com/resources and let me know what you think.

In this video, I'm going to be talking about maps. Specifically, visitor journey maps. Or more specifically, re-mapping your visitor journey post-Covid.

Looking at your visitor experience from the point of view of the visitor is obviously a really important exercise, and I'm sure many of you have done it before. But it's important to keep doing it, especially now, when rules and restrictions are changing all the time, and having knock on impacts on the visitor offer. If you haven't done it, basically what I'm talking about is mapping out the touchpoints of your visitor offer, thinking about what you want your visitors to experience at these touchpoints, and then seeing where the gaps in service are. At the end of it, you'll have your visitor journey mapped out, you'll have some quick wins plus some long term goals. Even if it's something you do every day as an operator, sometimes it's really good to go through this exercise on paper with your team, either to make sure everyone is on the same page, or to help convince senior managers or trustees about the changes you need to make.

The first step is to think about the first time visitors encounter your museum or heritage site. It might be an advert on a train, an article in a newspaper, a photo on Instagram. That's the first stage of the visitor journey – the point where the idea of visiting your site forms in the visitors' brain.

Then, they go online to book their tickets and plan their visit. They make their journey to your site. Who is the first person they encounter? They might have their bag searched. There might be a member of FOH staff managing the queue outside. They might go to the café. They might go round a gallery. And use a lift. And the toilets. DefiAnd then go to the gift shop. And so on and so on. It doesn't matter if the experience isn't linear, most places aren't. Just map them in a way that makes sense, but bear in mind different people might have different types of journeys. More on that later.

Include everything, even the stuff you don't have control over. So if your site is located within another site or building, visitors might have to come in to you through the access control or maybe security of another site. It's easy to dismiss this element, because we don't have control over how good it is. But the key to visitor journey mapping is looking at everything from the visitors POV. It's still part of the visitor journey. It still impacts on their experience, and they might not necessarily know it's separate to you. So, rule one of visitor journey mapping is: care about everything.

So, now you have your touchpoint map. This might look really different to before. For example, when people see your advert on the train, how do people know it's not an old advert? Have you made clear it's reopened? Did you always have to book tickets, or is that a new measure that has been introduced because of Covid? Are you now collecting Test and Trace info? When they arrive, are they more or less likely to have to stand in a queue? Will they have to have their temperature checked on arrival, or wash their hands? Are all the galleries open? Is the café serving a full menu? This is where looking at the whole journey can really help understand why visitors might be confused

or frustrated when they are on site, because it's not just one little change here and another here, it's one thing after another, on a day that after all, is meant to be a fun day out.

So, to understand the impact further, build some audience profiles. Who are your visitors? Family groups? Older people? Tour groups? Maybe all of the above? Make as many profiles as you can – who are they, what do they like, what do they not like? Your marketing team might have done of this work for you, but if not, get creative. Give them names, if you want. Personalities. These are your visitors. And make sure you include people with all types of access requirements, because these will help you troubleshoot problems within the map. Also remember that barriers to access can be intellectual, cultural and educational, not just physical. Doing this exercise helps underline that access barriers are not something people bring with them. They are created by our organisations and it's up to us to solve them. In fact, a really good resource for making sure you are creating inclusive experiences when you reopen is the EMBED Reopening Recommendations Support Service, and the website for this is on the screen now. I would really recommend you take a look at that as part of this exercise.

https://embed.org.uk/covid-19-reopening

Take one of your visitor profiles, and take them through the touchpoints. Where do we find issues?

Maybe our elderly lady didn't know you had to pre-book. She doesn't have a computer. This tells us we might need to think about capacity for walk ups. Or, do we have a dedicated phone line that some visitors can call if they don't want to book online. You might have reduced your lift capacity, meaning it's more difficult for our wheelchair user to use. Maybe we need to think about signage encouraging everyone who can manage the stairs to do so. Maybe the family can't get the full service they are used to in the café? Does this mean that menu information needs to be more prominent on the website so they can plan ahead? These are just some examples. If you walk the whole journey in the shoes of your visitor profiles, you'll find lots more.

There are lots of restrictions we've put in place because of the current situation that sadly, aren't going anywhere soon. This process won't necessarily solve them, but going through it means you can pinpoint when certain information might be useful to give to people, and it also shows how important each and every element is in the visitor experience – because it's a cumulative process.

At the end of this exercise, you might just have a list of issues. But that's good, that's exactly what you want. Divide them up into stuff you can fix now, and stuff you are going to need to work on, and make those things that you actively measure your progress against going forward.

But the most important thing I've got out of this process when I've done it is you start thinking like a visitor again. Which actually can be really hard, I know whenever I go to a museum now, I take photos of tensa barriers and signage more than anything else, but by putting yourself in your visitors shoes, you begin to think about journey elements or touchpoints, not teams or departments, and that makes it a lot easier to come together as an organisation to make a difference. At the end of the day, customer service isn't just the job of the Visitor Services or FOH teams. It's the responsibility of everyone involved in the journey.

I hope this has been a useful video. If you want to start the visitor journey mapping process with your team, you'll find some templates and a transcript of this video at therecoveryroomblog.com.

As ever, these videos resources are all free all the time, but I am asking those who find them useful and can spare any cash at all to donate to CALM, the Campaign Against Living Miserably, because mental health is more important now than ever. You can find the donate button under this video.

Thanks for watching, and let me know what you think!