



## ON ENGAGEMENT

*We have to be thoughtful with this approach — productive with peoples time; intelligent with the way we work with them; sensitive to feelings; and connected to purpose.*

We know that with any organisation, sector, or initiative, it is never just about doing the work — it's about getting others involved in what you are doing from the start.

Maybe you're trying to:

- engage new audiences
- re-engage with audiences you have had contact with but have lost connection to
- deepen engagement with a current audience
- connect with those hard to reach audiences
- create some form of participation that engages people in what you are trying to do.

We have seen too many projects fail because clients forgot to connect the work with key stakeholders. Or moments when the work fell flat - either because people didn't really recognise what was wanted from them or senior management couldn't see the value in it.

These patterns are why we at Plot create what we call an engagement strategy.

We use this as part of any design or other project. It is often the critical factor for success. There are many ways to make it happen, and it can come in many forms, for example:

- Scoping out key people

- Mapping stakeholders for better project understanding
- Showing teams how to do this mapping for themselves
- Conducting precise and thoughtful interviews
- Designing participatory methods and approaches
- Seeing different world views and helping people to communicate across them

For this work, we use a different set of materials than you would expect from a conventional design agency because we are explicitly working with people — their motivations; their agendas; their sense of self and status; their ambitions and goals.

Engagement is never about “getting buy-in” or manipulating people. This isn't intangible — its crucial practical and valuable, but so often goes missing in today's working situations.

Read on to find out more about how we have embedded techniques for engagement into the work.



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*User research and service design for a large metropolitan police force in order to increase community engagement*

We conducted user research across a London borough: identifying and connecting with key people in the community; creating relationships with them and with local police teams; then taking the research to youth and community centers; and finally small group and individual interviews.

Our challenge was to re-present community perspectives paying attention to fidelity, to ensure that they are represented well (a common issue in community development and ethnography). This material informed a series of new service design concepts.

*Creating a cohesive wayfinding system for Harvard Graduate School of Design - a global university design school*

Working with Over Under, our role was to rapidly gather perspectives and momentum with multiple key stakeholders in an authentic and visibly listening kind of way. We held an on-site, open studio charette to bring key stakeholders into the design process. As each person talked to us about their needs and perspectives, we captured this thinking, and as we started the work, they could come into the space and see how their contributions had been listened to and acted upon as a part of a larger design project.

*Connecting a design language across the organisation for Nokia*

We were brought in to help with an exploration of the design language at Nokia - a project that became known as their DNA - and the work was combined with an ongoing engagement strategy, to ensure that it engaged key individuals within the company over time. What started as a single piece of work became a team of people and an organisation-wide approach to managing their design language and design assets.

*Nokia PEx: A cross-silo workshop to bring in a prototyping culture*

We designed a workshop for taking teams of different disciplines across Nokia through a two-day prototyping process. The workshop introduced new ways of prototyping whilst giving the teams live briefs to work on in small groups. They formed new relationships, developed greater understanding of each other's way of seeing things, and language, and got to grips with new prototyping methods and in-house tools. We designed and facilitated the first one, and the client then took on the facilitation of this workshop and took it to 3 other global cities to bring it to a larger audience. Watch it here.

*IKEA proper Urban Neighbourhood work*

We got involved when a developer with a humane attitude towards property development wanted to understand how they can turn a new place into somewhere with soul, and attract interesting residents and industry. Our engagement skills helped identify the kinds of people they might be, and then we conducted user research to understand what kinds of neighbourhood would attract urban pioneers and settlers. The result maps out the kinds of qualities that they can design into the space, and build a great context for creative business.

*Running Labs and designing engagement formats for clients*

We have designed and run many different kinds of Labs: three years running the Innovation Labs for the BBC, Hyper Island Experience Design Lab. Longer term labs include Happy Lab, Strategy Lab, Digital City Lab and Future City Services Lab. They have a particular rhythm, focus and ability to get a lot of work done in a concentrated period of time.





*If you would like to talk to us about this work, or any challenges you have with engagement of different audiences or users, please contact us on 07966209615, or alternatively email [gill@plotlondon.net](mailto:gill@plotlondon.net)*



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