

# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS YEAR



# WE ARE A LEARNING ORGANISATION

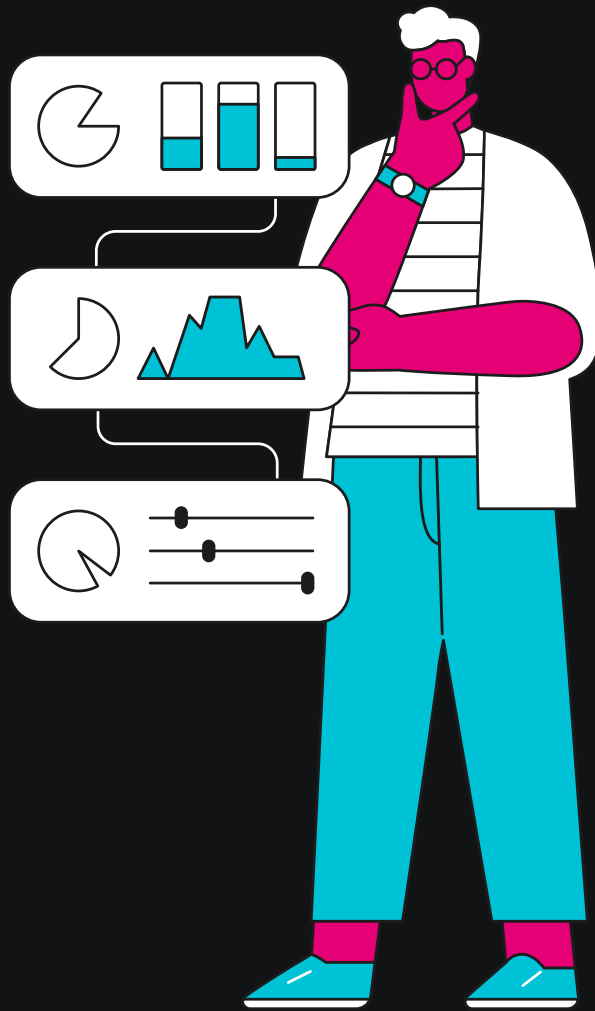


We create open and honest opportunities to build reflection into our everyday working practices. We don't pretend to know it all – we are not experts in everything we touch, and neither is everyone else.

But we strive to ensure that no learning is lost, and to set up an environment that enables us to grow from our successes, as well as from our failures and the challenges we encounter along the way.

**So, what did we learn in 2022?**

# WE ARE LEARNING TO BETTER IDENTIFY AND REDUCE ORGANISATIONAL RISKS



It is part of our core values to provide our team with a supportive environment to identify and chase their dreams. The upside of that is a happy and fulfilled team, but the downside means sometimes, we see valued members of our team leave to pursue their professional or personal journey.

We certainly saw that occurring this year, and perhaps we weren't as ready for it as we would have hoped. We have learned to better prepare for team changes by having more transparency about everybody's workloads, by sharing institutional relationships, and by bringing on a bit of extra capacity so our plates are not always so full. We have also learned about how to best communicate staff changes to partners and ensure it doesn't affect the quality of project delivery.

# WE ARE LEARNING THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND TO NAVIGATE STAFF TRANSITIONS AT OUR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



It's all about the people, we all know that. However, we have discovered that it's sometimes easy to forget this and to underestimate the power of personal relationships within the context of our partnerships.

This year we faced situations where our point of contact on a project left the organisation and we had to manage a complex transition. We also found an unexpected new challenge when we had to deliver a project where the contract holder was not the same as the team we ended up working with.

We realised that an individual within a client's organisation can have a huge impact on our delivery of a project, which led us to implement an internal process to map barriers and enablers linked to individual people so we can either mitigate or capitalise on them.

# WE ARE LEARNING TO BETTER MANAGE ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

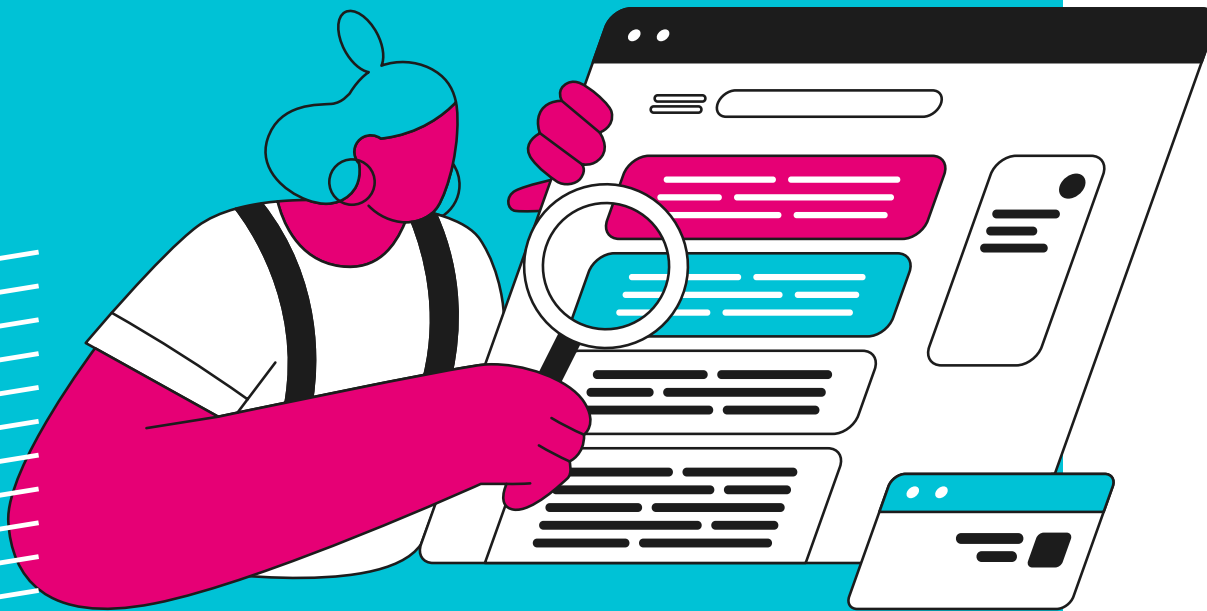


We are quick to dive into new projects – we are a curious bunch who love problem-solving and, after all, more projects mean more impact. Most of our team members work with a wide number of partners following complex timelines, and sometimes it can get too much.

We have struggled to figure out when to jump the gun and grow the team; we don't want to hire new people until the projects are live, but we struggle to balance closing new projects due to the high demands of the exciting work that is already on our table. The result? Important but non-urgent things sometimes end up on the back burner.

Slowly but surely, we are getting better at walking this line. By getting more rigorous with our project management processes we are freeing up headspace for other things, and providing transparency to the rest of the team about where things stand. We are also getting more confident about our business development abilities, and gaining a more nuanced understanding of how long it will take us to close new contracts, and therefore of when is the right time to grow the team.

# WE ARE LEARNING TO DIG UP POWERFUL BITS OF KNOWLEDGE AND TO TRUST OUR EXPERTISE

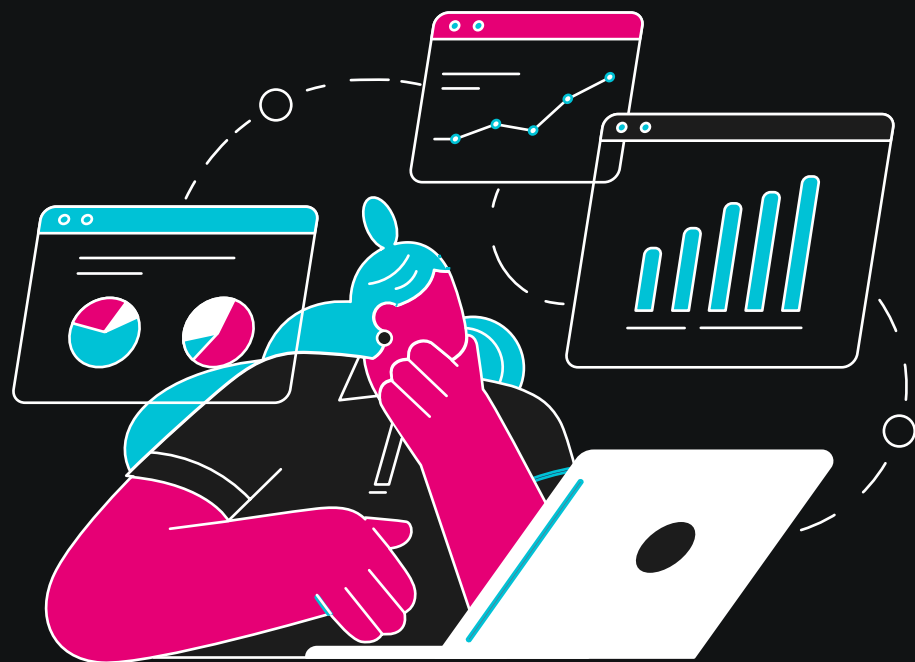


We have learned that we are sitting on a wealth of knowledge – on powerful impact stories behind our projects, on accurate insights about the needs of our clients and on brilliant know-how and expertise spread across our team members.

In the past, we weren't always aware of this. But this year we have started to realise that, when we take the time to sit back and reflect, and ask the right questions, we tend to come up with the right solutions.

So our commitment for 2023 is to be more intentional about creating space for reflection and for sharing among the team, to trust our gut more when making calls about project proposals and to celebrate the fact that the vast majority of our projects are delivered in perfect sync with our partners and achieve very ambitious results.

# WE ARE LEARNING TO BETTER IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CHALLENGES IN OUR PROJECTS AND TO MANAGE TIMELINE DELAYS



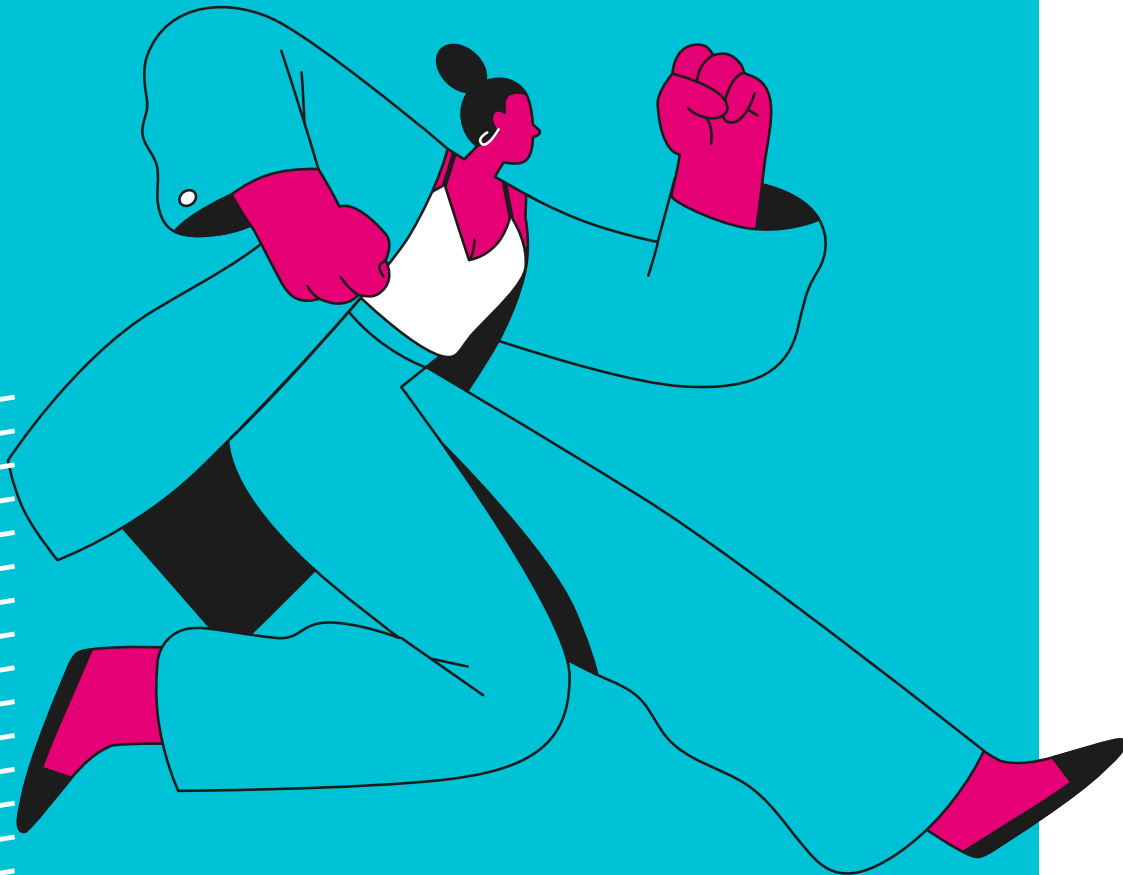
Tracking our time accurately and creating processes and space to look back on our project delivery has allowed us to identify patterns of bottlenecks.

We have realised that demands on our team and the teams of our partner organisations vary, and when demands are very high there is a risk of our colleagues not having enough time to keep on top of vital admin or to have space for thinking.

We have also discovered that new projects are inherently risky whilst we build relationships and get things moving.

It's a tough nut to crack, but we are also learning that we can mitigate these through careful planning and, most importantly, by establishing effective lines of communication among our team and with our partner organisations.

# WE ARE LEARNING TO STAY ON TOP OF OUR ADMIN

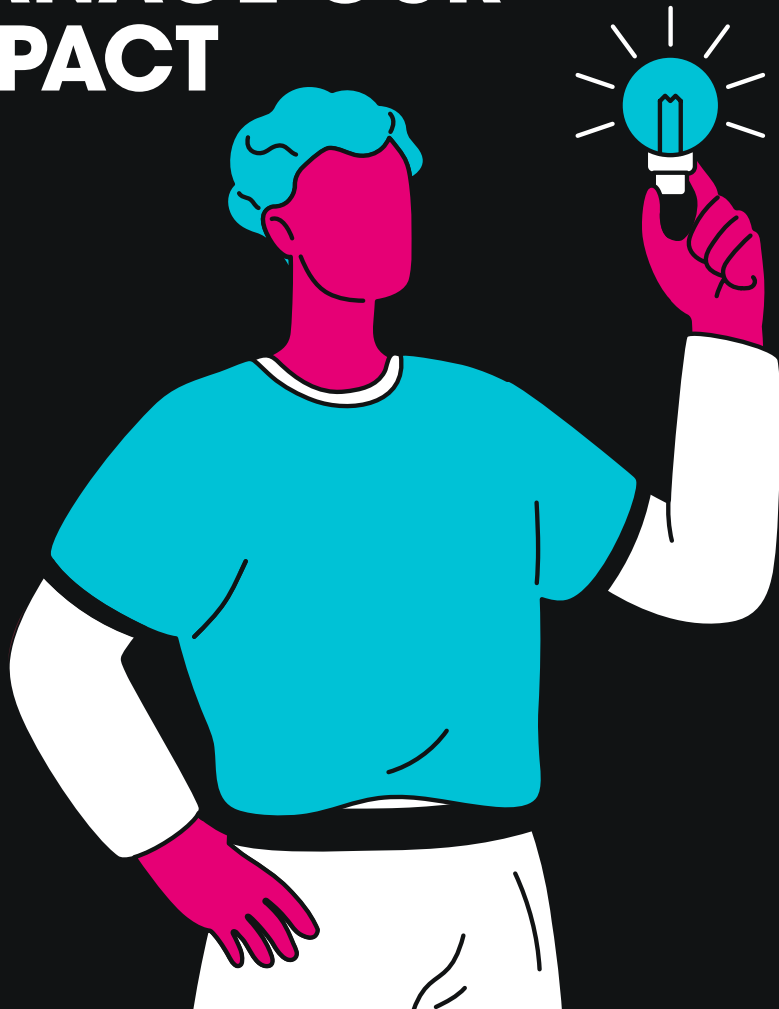


We are an outward-facing organisation that loves getting our teeth into a challenge. We put our partners first and, being honest, external work trumps internal work, which means that sometimes our admin goes awry, and some things are more difficult than they should be.

We are learning that having the right systems and processes in place to support colleagues to do their work is really important. That taking care of the internal stuff helps us excel in the external work. That is why we are currently working on a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to ensure that we have accurate and accessible information about our partners, and why we are also working on internal time accounting systems that will help us to allocate resources more effectively.



# WE ARE LEARNING TO MEASURE AND MANAGE OUR IMPACT



The last 12 months brought about a lot of changes in how we think about our impact. Since day 1, we have been a purpose-driven organisation. We exist to bring about social change that improves people's lives. There is no question about that.

But in the last year, we have gotten more rigorous in our thinking about how we measure our impact. We have realised that tracking the right indicators and asking good questions to our partners can help us get better at what we do, and be more strategic in our journey to deliver systemic change. We have put together a new Theory of Change and a set of impact indicators to guide us in our work. The next year will be all about putting our new framework to test and continuing to integrate impact and strategy.

# HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED SIMILAR CHALLENGES?



Getting people together and encouraging them to talk to one another is one of the things we are best at, and that also means we want to exchange and share our learning journey with others.

We would love to hear your thoughts on the challenges we have encountered this year. If you have faced similar hurdles and want to learn more about how we approached them, or if you have tips for us, please do get in touch through our website or social channels.

[thiscapacity.co.uk](https://thiscapacity.co.uk).

**We're ready for an exciting 2023, will you be joining us on our journey?**



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