

Chat Summary: Room 1 — Digital Fundraising Conference 2026

Hosted by Josh Leigh (Hynt)

Session 1: Digital Benchmarking Report — What You Need to Know — Sarah Crowhurst, Hynt

This session introduced the Hynt Index, a new benchmarking dataset for digital lead generation collected across the UK and Ireland. Discussion in the room covered how cost per lead can vary depending on where a form is hosted (e.g. on Meta vs. your own website), how lead quality differs across formats like quizzes and petitions, and what a realistic donation conversion rate looks like straight after someone submits a lead form — around 0.5–1% give immediately, which may sound modest but brings in new cash donors at a strong cost-per-acquisition. The recommended follow-up cadence: one email straight away, then a second a day or two later, while the momentum from that first action is still fresh.

Resources shared:

- The Hynt Index — an ongoing benchmarking initiative, with future editions planned covering other digital fundraising areas by cause and charity size.
 - A live benchmarking survey for charities to submit their own lead gen figures and receive sector comparisons in return.
 - Direct contact offered for charities wanting a deeper conversation on their own results: hello@hynt.studio.
-

Session 2: Building Digital Teams That Raise Millions — Carmen Barlow

This session focused on how digital fundraising teams are structured as charities mature — moving away from rigid "Fundraising / Digital / Digital Fundraising" hierarchies toward more decentralised models where digital sits closer to the teams it supports. A strong thread throughout was culture: hiring for a growth mindset, treating ongoing learning as core to the job rather than time taken away from it, and building genuine buy-in from finance and leadership rather than treating digital as a side function.

Session 3: What's Working in Digital Fundraising — 5 Things You Can Do Tomorrow — Jeff Boachie, Guy's and St Thomas'

A fast-paced, tactical session that was one of the most warmly received of the day. It covered practical, immediately actionable changes — including smart use of AI-generated summaries (being visible in these summaries is increasingly important for reach) and a reminder that automating and personalising the early stages of a supporter journey pays off, alongside ongoing testing to keep improving it.

Session 4: Using Digital Media & Paid Advertising to Power Smarter Fundraising — Morgan Hart (JustGiving) & Kris Tan (Platypus)

This session tackled two common challenges: creating enough fresh content when policies restrict AI-generated imagery, and reaching supporters digitally when you don't hold their contact details. On the creative side, the suggestion was to build flexible, reusable templates (adjusting colour, text, and subject over time) to avoid creative fatigue without a full reshoot each time, with tools like Canva making this accessible. On audience targeting, several routes were discussed for reaching people such as long-standing volunteers without email addresses — including layering interest-based targeting, using a dedicated landing page as a targeting signal, and uploading phone numbers so platforms can match against existing users. On moderation, the advice was consistent regardless of platform: clear community guidelines, keyword-based filtering, prioritising responses to positive engagement, and a clear internal policy on what gets a reply versus what simply gets removed.

Resources shared:

- Canva — highlighted as an accessible way to build flexible, templated creative.
-

Session 5: Stop Trying to Be Everywhere — Choosing the Right Social Channels for Fundraising — Athar Abidi

This session encouraged charities to be intentional about channel choice rather than spreading effort across every platform. It prompted a lively exchange of real-world experience among attendees — including mixed views on Bluesky (some charities have stepped back from it due to low engagement, others aren't investing there at all) and a shared reporting tool recommendation. A recurring reflection from the room: raw engagement numbers (views, likes) don't necessarily reflect real-world impact, and it's worth checking in regularly on whether content is translating into donations, website activity, or funding outcomes rather than just visibility.

Resources shared:

- A companion spreadsheet template for choosing and tracking the right social channels, included in the delegate bag.
 - Supermetrics — recommended by an attendee for social reporting, alongside Motion for paid ads reporting.
-

Session 6: How to Write a Digital Budget — Josh Leigh, Hynt

The final session offered a practical, downloadable framework for planning digital ad spend across the year, with attendees sharing their own experience of testing budgets over time rather than expecting immediate returns — including one example of sustaining a long-term email acquisition strategy at a very low cost per engagement. The session also surfaced a genuine challenge for smaller charities: balancing ad spend across multiple internal teams and causes competing for the same channel, and making the case internally for a larger marketing budget.

Resources shared:

- A free downloadable digital budget planning sheet (available in GBP and EUR), plus other digital giveaways.
- A UK fundraising benchmarks resource for comparing spend and results against the wider sector.
- A booking link for a 1:1 call with Hynt to talk through individual digital budgets.