



CASE

**GRECHKA
MEDIA**

“**Reaching Out to Readers:
Improving Communication
to Encourage Audience
Support**”

STUDY

IN SHORT

Grechka researched reader behavior to develop a sustainable funding model in partnership with the Media Development Foundation, a Ukrainian organization specializing in media research. The research team collected and interpreted data on the behavioral patterns of different audience segments, which provided valuable insights that helped design more effective support campaigns and a long-term strategy to attract donor support.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Grechka is an independent, regional, online media outlet based in Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine. It was founded in 2008 and has focused on local governance, public spending, urban development, and human rights. Grechka's mission is to promote democracy by providing high-quality information. For this reason, this nonprofit organization prioritizes transparent communication while developing independent journalism that involves readers' support.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Grechka aimed to strengthen its long-term sustainability by better understanding who supports independent local journalism and why. The project focused on identifying potential donors' motivations to move away from generic fundraising messages and toward more transparent communication tailored to different audiences.



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Grechka conducted audience research through in-depth interviews and surveys to map reader behavior and donor profiles. Based on these insights, the newsroom segmented its audience into distinct groups and developed personalized communication formats that addressed trust, transparency, and ease of support.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The decision to focus on this project stemmed from the desire to understand Grechka's potential donors better, aiming to increase the sustainability of the editorial office's work. The research enabled Grechka to shift from generic communication to tailored strategies, which were necessary to assess who is willing to support independent media in the region. Crafting a communication format that accounts for people's emotional triggers, habits, and barriers to donating has been essential to increasing engagement and trust.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

By implementing the design-thinking principles, the team discovered that in-depth interviews and surveys were more effective in understanding the real needs of the audience than relying on their own assumptions. The project helped Grechka to identify three key issues: the level of trust, lack of convenient support tools, and insufficient visibility of the editorial team's influence. These factors have been addressed by developing several interaction formats according to the needs of each of the four categories of potential donors.

DID GRECHKA'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Before implementing the project, the team worked using generic communication strategies. The new approach focused on more transparent and personal communication, which was not limited to showing facts, but developed a communication strategy based on human stories. Additionally, the different approach to the audience changed the way internal communication between the team members worked. The editorial team developed a more rapid exchange of communication and decided to introduce the role of community manager to prepare campaigns that focus on explaining how and where Grechka's funding comes from and why it's important for people to donate.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID GRECHKA ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

There were four main challenges. The first concerned the low awareness of the need for the media. In this case, the solution was to provide a simple explanation of what the main job of the editorial team is and how it works, and then show concrete results. The second challenge concerned respondents' limited time, which was addressed by shortening the surveys and making more suitable interview formats. Also, skepticism about donations was a problem. The most efficient solution has been to publicize transparent cases that demonstrate the practical benefits of readers' support. Finally, dividing the audience into different groups with personalized communication helped the team to understand the emotional and subjective nature of the audience and the reasons why they decide to donate.

HOW WAS GRECHKA'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

The reactions of readers who participated in the study have been positive. Thanks to the decision to treat audience engagement as a two-way relationship, participants felt and appreciated that the team actively listened to them. In this way, people proved to be more willing to support Grechka, as they felt heard, seen, and valued.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID GRECHKA GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

Overall, the team realized that empathy is crucial for a successful communication strategy. By establishing a gradual and ongoing dialogue, the team has been able to earn the audience's trust and financial support. When requesting donations, a clear and transparent discussion of the impact donations have is more effective than a single campaign that only involves a general call to donate.

WHAT DOES GRECHKA PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Grechka will improve the regular donation model by collecting and analyzing feedback to adjust its strategy. To do that, the team will work on the integration of audience segments and insights from this research into the other aspects of their communication, fundraising, and product-development strategies tailored to resonate with specific supporter types. Additionally, Grechka aims to expand its work with local communities. The goal is to engage with readers who are not familiar with the media outlet by offering events, exclusive content, and direct interactions with Grechka team members.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD GRECHKA GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

It's essential not to assume what people might need, but to start working based on their actual necessities. Beyond data and quantitative research, there are motivations and emotional needs that must be acknowledged. The best way to communicate with your audience is to be clear and transparent about funding and its impact. It's essential not to be afraid to ask questions; people appreciate it when their opinions are taken into consideration. For this reason, the first step in building a strong connection with the audience is to work on emotional storytelling built on a reliable human language. Finally, solutions can change according to the audience, so it's better to work on test solutions in small steps before scaling up.
