Case Study – University of Oxford

"Surge Online went far above and beyond what was required in terms of input for this project"

James Slattery, University of Oxford

Home of Big Questions

OXPLORE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Background

James Slattery is head of Widening Access & Participation at the **University of Oxford**.

His department focuses on providing **educationally-focused** outreach opportunities for disadvantaged young people **across the UK**.

The department is **highly collaborative**, working with colleges and departments across the university whilst also maintaining and building **key partnerships** with external organisations.

Surge Online

http://surge.online

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Surge Online

Challenges:

- Be counter-cultural, departing from the normal image of the University of Oxford
- Appeal to a wide range of students, from 11 years' old (Year 7) upwards
- Allow for flexibility in the online build, to enable extra features to be added on as required

Surge Online say:

We started working with the **University of Oxford** in June-16 and the project went live, **right on schedule**, at the beginning of March-17.

The aim of this online project was to make the '**academic richness**' of the **University of Oxford** more accessible to a diverse group of students, both geographically (i.e. across a wider area than Oxfordshire) and culturally (i.e. beyond the traditional grammar and independent school systems).

James was clear that he wanted something '**counter cultural**', in order to attract and appeal to a **different audience**, and was sure that **Surge Online** could deliver this, given its extensive **experience** in the Educational Sector

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The University of Oxford say:

"Surge Online's unique approach allowed us to unlock the collaborative potential we were so keen to achieve"

When creating online services aimed at younger people, prior consultation is essential to ensure that the right messages and tone are achieved.

So, we set up numerous test groups over a 10-week period, and with **Surge Online's** help, ran a number of Q&A sessions with these groups. With the updated wireframes, we were also able to undertake live trials to obtain real-time **feedback** on the different **prototypes** as they were developed – this was **invaluable** to us.

"The Agile process was very helpful - it helped us to manage expectations about what was achievable"

We had worked with **Agile** before, but never to such a prescriptive basis. This project had very broad boundaries, so the **Agile process** really helped us to **focus**.

...the **Discovery phase**... allowed us to put the end user at the very centre of our product **development** process, and to address potential issues or problems at the very outset.

We're **delighted** - the product we've ended up with is so much more fully formed than what we had initially expected.

"There was a reassuring certainty about Surge Online's approach"

Surge Online proved to be excellent at managing **expectations** and moving resources around as required by the project. With its **experience**, it was able to provide impartial advice, anticipate problems, and even suggest third parties whom we might like to work with in the future... all in all, it was **hugely supportive**, having the overall **success** of the project always in mind.