

**On Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, Julie Driscoll, Chair of the product and technology group held a fireside chat with Chris Taylor COO of the Telegraph**



**Hear from a media giant outside of the exhibition industry on how they have and intend to stay relevant.** To watch the full recording click here: <https://youtu.be/S52NwNkthgk>

**Chris Taylor** has spent 16 years focused on digital technology in the media industry and 10 of those years as an executive. His experience spans newspapers, consumer magazines, business-to-business media, and pure digital products. He has led technology transformation, digital product innovation, operational services (including print production and distribution), and has variously owned digital product, newspaper, and B2B service P&Ls. He is currently Chief Operating Officer at Telegraph Media Group. Notable previous positions include Chief Operating Officer for News UK and Chief Information Officer for Emap. Chris studied at Edinburgh University and holds an MBA from Ashridge Business School.

He is 43, married with three boys and a little girl, he lives in Harpenden in Hertfordshire.

To frame this chat and as a brief to Chris Julie gave some context that pre-pandemic there is a view that the exhibition industry regarded technology and data as a tool to drive operational efficiency rather than innovation. During the last 12 months because of the pandemic exhibition organisers have pivoted and data and technology has driven innovation like never.

## **Q&A**

Below you can find some of the thoughts that Chris shared on the chat as a response to questions posed.

- **What is your approach to product development? Do you have a separate team focusing just on this? Is there an NPD cycle?**

Firstly, Chris made the point that any business needs to be sure what they are about. For example, the Telegraph is about creating and sharing brilliant content. They are not a software company. Their core business is journalism. They do however use technology to drive their product development. They have a specific team who focuses on this many of whom have deep knowledge of journalism and a digital product background. Their macro objective is to get to 1 million digital subscribers by 2023.

They use Design Sprints to scope out the viability of projects. **Check out the Design Sprint book here which was invented by Google**  
<https://www.thesprintbook.com/>

These sprints are very structured and focused so that you can form an opinion on whether and idea has got legs or not.

- **Do you often kill projects post the trial stage? How does that make you feel? How do you ensure your people are making the right data driven decisions rather than continuing to pursue vanity products?**

Chris pointed out that if you are using the Design Sprint process then it's rare you will need to kill projects

- **How do you uncover future trends? Is this a formalised process? How do you decide which trends will impact your customer base?**

Chris has created a multi-functional senior leadership team to be completely focused on the corporate macro goal of 1 million digital subscribers by 2023. Trends are assessed in two ways: consumer trends, technology trends. What is the art of the possible now with technology to deliver news content in various ways and give a better customer experience?

From a personal point of view Chris keeps up to date on trends through extensive reading and attending relevant conferences often in Silicon Valley. The real innovative thinking is done in the US. He keeps close to Google, Microsoft and Adobe and pays close attention to their latest thinking and developments.

- **How have you created a culture of innovation?**

Chris prefers the term innovative thinking. Everyone is encouraged to think and reflect and people within product and technology are given 2 days a year to upskill, investigate and study.

- **How do you balance data driven decision making and product development with the creative thinking and idea generation?**

It's important to balance the two. Data is now omnipresent in every company and it's important that the analysis of this data is on point. But all the answers do not lie in data. Organisations should not get data paralysis. Creative inspiration is incredibly important too.

- **How can we use Hyper personalisation within product development?**

Tailoring the experience around individuals is important. They have partnered with experts in AI to target individuals with personalised messaging. There is a suite of services out there that can drive optimisation and improve conversion rates.

- **Turnkey solutions versus the best tool for the job and integration?**

Chris is a buyer not a builder. He believes that companies who focus on technology solutions are the experts. Using a suite of providers and platforms that are carefully integrated to deliver to the