



Barking Owl – Canva (June 2025)

Summary

The Barking Owl network meeting focused on discussing and sharing experiences with Canva, an online design tool. Charities can access Canva Premium free of charge.

Participants shared their experiences using basic and advanced Canva features, explored design principles, and discussed brand guidelines and template management. The group also addressed challenges related to folder sharing, access control, and stock image usage. We explored video editing tools and sharing successful strategies for increasing staff engagement in design projects.

‘Shadow’ feature to make images stand out

We started off by looking at some basic features of Canva such as the background remover and frames. We then looked at some more advanced tips for creating images that stand out.

Use the background remover tool to create an image of one person. Add a coloured background in your brand colours. Then, click the image and click Edit. Then, add a Shadow (under Effects). The image below uses the Outline Shadow in white. You can play around with colours to suit your brand.





Design principles and visual coherence

We talked about design principles, emphasising the importance of using space effectively, aligning elements, and ensuring visual coherence through consistent branding and colour palettes.

We talked creating templates to maintain a cohesive look and explained techniques for enhancing designs, such as layering elements and using effects like shadows and outlines. We discussed how to help colleagues use templates, and expressed some frustration at when templates are overwritten!

Canva brand guidelines

On Canva, you can save a set of brand guidelines, which can include things like a colour palette, standard fonts, logos and more. We're going to all go away and develop these!

We talked about using simple stock images (many of which are available free on Canva), and maintaining a consistent brand across different areas of work.

Project folders and managing access to the Canva account

The group discussed challenges with sharing and controlling access to project folders and templates, and we looked at how to set up private folders that can be shared with different people. We shared experiences of colleagues accidentally overwriting templates and misusing branding, leading to a discussion about ways to manage these issues, including using approval settings and limiting access to certain tools.

AI

We talked a bit about AI features in Canva, where participants shared their varying experiences with the tool's capabilities for design automation. We agreed to test out the features more and come back to them.

Stock images

The group discussed various sources and considerations for obtaining stock images. Some sources we discussed are:

Canva



Centre for Ageing Better: https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/age-positive-image-library-launched?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22190444285&gbraid=0AAAAADQc_k8FNRDz4K9UI0L78aWY27Tor&gclid=Cj0KCQjw4qHEBhCDARIsALYKFNPmr3npV88tJEE7WaV8T8NSptcG0TsbEXDgtbb5Cx0CwOLqTDfcAGMaAuNEEALw_wcB

iStock: <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/>

We discussed the challenges of using stock images, including GDPR compliance and the desire for authentic, real photos. We discussed the value of investing in a photographer for events and also noted the difficulty of capturing diverse and engaging images at many events.

Video editing tools

The group discussed various video editing tools, with Danielle and Peter sharing their experiences using Canva's improved video editing features. One member recommended Doodly as a tool for creating animated videos (more details below).

Lisa from TSL Kirklees shared their animated videos:

- Our animated videos made on Doodly
 - <https://youtu.be/WizFqb8Dz0I>
 - <https://youtu.be/cuvN8p21FXA>
- Doodly/Voomly subscription - <https://www.doodly.com/> (free trial and can pay for however many months you need)