

White paper Design in context

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“Experts in Business Innovation & Performance”

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Geoff is an international director, Non-Executive Director and strategist, lecturing regularly on the principles of integrated strategy at worldwide forums and has over 25 years of experience in the business and management arena, an author of his first book 'Freedom after the Sharks' and recently 'Meaningful Conversations'.

A member and fellow of the Institute of Directors, associate of The Business Institute of Management. He holds a Masters degree in Business Administration. Having worked for corporate companies Citibank N.A, MICE International, Enigma Design, MMT Inc, Kaspersky Laboratory, Bartercard, and RG Group around the world, Geoff has vast international experience working with SME and International clients. International clients with which Geoff has worked include the British Government, HP, Compaq, BT, Powergen, Intel, ARM, Watsila Group, Atari, Barclays Bank, Societe Generale, Western Union, Chase and Volvo.

Geoff's areas of expertise lie in brand strategy, business communications, business integration, business development and improvement, capital raise activities, pre-IPO planning, capital raise transactions, M&A with full P&L responsibility, which ideally equips him to strengthen global companies, develop SME and international business, and marketing strategies.

I know change is a constant factor in business and you either embrace it strategically in which case you drive the transformation in the business in a controlled manner or it drives the business where it chooses – what outcome do you really want for your business?

I am a passionate and published thought leader on change, management and business. Constantly sharing interesting information, partaking or leading innovation round tables discussing management and people development, strategic growth and deployment – this includes how culture diversity in business can make you more profitable and the performance success from good leadership. I even managed to find the time to become an author with my second book "Meaningful Conversations."

Being an international commercial director, CMO, CEO, and non-executive director gives you broad experiences that relate when lecturing regularly on the principles of change, transformation strategy and finance at forums and conferences. Well-connected within industry with strong affiliate, partners and client relationships to extend reach and deliver insight and research from multi-faceted global viewpoints.

Working in a broad range of industries including software, technology and banking has given me a range of different experiences and perspectives of what can work, the importance of good people, process and how these can be applied and amplified to deliver results in different scenarios and paradigms.

Known for bringing in a fresh and sometimes challenging the status-quo, with a strategic approach delivering successful change management programmes that deliver results. For example I once started with a company carrying a loss of £15M, (\$26M), and responsible for executing a new plan for generating £60m of solution sales revenue across 12 countries in EMEA, which was achieved in month 13 with continued sales performance thereafter. It is not just about making a change – it is about making the transformation sustainable!

This White Paper presents a summary of the findings of an initiative created to discuss and assess the incremental value of design in various fields of business. In an attempt to measure ROI/ROO, an organised series of focused discussions were arranged. We involved leaders from a range of industries on the subject of design, which formulated this paper.

Design in context

The design business has long struggled with the dichotomy between the design industry and the commercial drivers. Many designers attempt to ignore that the design industry exists because of our clients, not despite them. In Britain, the design consultancy industry is worth £6 billion, and it represents £1.4 billion of exports.

London, in particular, is regarded as one of the design capitals of the world, and many designers are able to export their talents to regions in Europe and beyond where training is not as advanced, and where there is a shortage of good designers.

We should recognise that there is a wide variation in the perceived value of design, sector to sector. This variation is seen by our clients and also by alternative designers who work with them. Some regard their work as very commercial, while others consider that the quality of design is paramount, with commercial considerations in the background. The question to be answered is connected with the correlation between quality and commercial performance - are they the same, or are they mutually exclusive?

The Brand Approach The Methodology

One of the best ways to develop the brand experience is through defining the 'branded customer journey' as a series of elements that build up the branded message over time.

It gives the brand manager more control over the delivery of the brand experience and therefore increases the likelihood of its success. There are two layers to a successful journey: the progression through the experiential, and the emotional journey that customers should feel; bringing the “product experience to life”...

The four “P`s” of marketing

The perception in the marketing world is that there are four “Ps” related to marketing: Product, price, promotion and place. From a human and emotional element we should add: people. A product that involves service to customers is made or broken by the people who deliver that service. Research has shown that 84% of all purchasing decisions are based upon human emotion; this research should be considered in the physiological aspect of the branded customer journey.

Product

Good product design could have significant commercial benefits. It is considered important to distinguish between the effectiveness of design when applied to an already established product and the ability to design and create entirely new objects. There is, however, a close relationship between good product design and the commercial ideas or concept, an example of this could be the recent bidding war between Lockheed and Boeing for the Joint Strike Fighter aircraft to serve US and UK forces. The manufacturers were required to design their product to a specific brief: payload, speed, manoeuvrability were all given. It was the manufacturers' job to design an aircraft that could meet the criteria at the right price. An influential factor in the decision making process was never specified and clearly not addressed by one of the manufacturers. It was evident that the decision was partly influenced by one plane's inability to frighten the enemy – instead design was at its most superficial and fundamental.

Price

Designing to a price seems to be second nature to some, and anathema to others. Moreover, what value do we place on design? Certainly by the standards of others, the hourly rate for a designer is eclipsed by other professions. For example, the soon-to-be-built Wembley Stadium will attract design fees of £30 million. A large figure, yes, but the same project has a staggering £70million set against it for legal fees!

Promotion

Promotion can take several forms. Branding, advertising, print and new media all combine to create a background of awareness and perception that can penetrate deep into a company's financial fortunes. Branding, however, is always the starting point for several routes of discussion.

The now reversed decision of British Airways to use a variety of ethnic themes on its tail planes is very interesting; you can see the logic of featuring destinations of an airline as opposed to the country of origin. EasyJet, however, is cited as a brand identity that is totally appropriate to its target audience, following the Virgin World of corporate and customer branding.

Brands are built over a period of years, not months, and successful brands can survive problems, so cars of a prestige brand that tip over, or a major train company that seems incapable of running on time, fail to damage the strong brands behind the products. The I Mac computer is regarded as a "totally incredible" product. Well marketed, advertised and with a strong brand, it would appear to have all the ingredients for success. In reality, the Mac is limited in use mainly to graphic design studios. Outside this specialist industry the PC is king, despite its lack of elegance and less sophisticated operating system. It has assumed this position on the basis of better promotion and strength in numbers, despite its arguably inferior specification. The design and engineering world has a history of being rejected on this basis, hence broad gauge railways, Wankel Engines, Betamax video and minidisks have all struggled for recognition despite their apparent technical superiority over narrow gauge, conventional cylinders, VHS and CDs.

Place

Commercial architecture is one area of design where a direct correlation between design and profitability can be measured. And this is not limited to the retail market, where last Saturday's takings or tenant turnover could be directly measured. Even the effectiveness of office buildings can be influenced by their design. The Willis Faber building in Ipswich is an example of an office building that has brought more profit to its owners thanks to its designer (Foster Associates). Located on a traffic island the listed "black piano" as it is known locally has become an icon of seventies design. The environment it creates has attracted and retained high quality staff from London that would not have come to Ipswich otherwise. This has had a lasting effect on the fortunes of Willis Faber. Here, design has performed an important role as a recruitment and staff retention tool.

People

At the early days of Disneyland Paris, or Euro Disney as it was then known. This large-scale project involved all aspects of design. The operators took every step to ensure that product, price, promotion and place were right, although many argued that sunny Barcelona would have been preferable to an often cold and foggy suburb of Paris. What was overlooked was the inability to find local staff with any kind of understanding of service. The problem was solved by importing more service and customer focused staff from the USA, UK and elsewhere. It was people that solved the problem – arguably an intrinsic part of "product", but quite separate from the hardware: the rides and experiences that were installed to create the product.

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