

Small budget, big benefit from good design

BUSINESSES face different challenges every day, whether it is a downturn in the market, changes in consumer trends, or the task of achieving differentiation in a crowded market place.

However, what happens when forward thinking companies put design at the heart of their strategies to overcome these challenges?

The Design Business Association (DBA) has been running the Design Effectiveness Awards since 1989 to illustrate this.

We have the studies that irrefutably prove design can permeate all aspects of business, by improving profitability, creating new revenue streams, raising a company's profile, building brand recognition and empowering staff to deliver results.

Added value

The DBA champions design as an enhancement of business growth and there can be no surer evidence of the benefits of design for business than the case studies from the Design

Effectiveness Awards. It is the only design award scheme that uses commercial data as a key judging criteria, making it the most authoritative and prestigious design awards in the UK.

Without a doubt, design can add value to a business, it can be the ingredient that turns a company around.

It can also take a poorly perceived brand and turn it into a front-runner and, furthermore, design can deliver back into a business' bottom line.

Souper idea

Sadly, it is not all plain sailing to convince businesses to see design as a vital investment and not a cost, especially when it comes to small businesses who have limited budgets and tend to invest what they have into advertising rather than design.

However, when well-informed companies build business results into the design brief from the outset and unpick the impact from the rest of the marketing mix, the case for design as a critical link in the business process can be resounding. Nusa Kitchen are a small



chain of three fresh soup shops in London. They commissioned design agency Third Person to devise a point-of-sale campaign that would run across the winter to drive up soup sales.

The idea of 'wrapping up for winter' was translated into a heat-resistant cardboard sleeve (above) that fitted snugly over Nusa's existing waxed

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Design teams reap rich rewards for smart SMEs

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cartons, printed with photography of one of four fashionable knitwear patterns.

During the 12-week campaign this neat little design contributed to a 25 per cent increase in sales year-on-year and a 26 per cent increase in revenue.

Borderfields, a group of farmers from Northumberland, wanted to add value to their commodity products, grain and rapeseed.

They saw opportunities for a regionally branded niche cooking oil made from rapeseed oil.

Increased sales

NE6 Design was commissioned to generate a name, bottle shape (above, right) and label design for the locally-grown, cold-pressed culinary oil on a design budget of £15,000.

Oleifera, the Latin for oil-bearing seeds, was the name chosen, coupled with the supporting strapline Naturally



OIL SLICK: farmers and hotel profit from graphic design

Northumberland and a tall, elegant, off-the-shelf- bottle design. Oleifera soon reached sales of 60 cases a week, an increase of 145 per cent on the original projections and the company has been forced to relocate its production facility to meet demand.

The Hotel at Watergate Bay, an independent hotel in Cornwall, needed to re-position from bucket-and-spade holidays to differentiate itself and challenge people's perceptions of the Cornish holiday experience. They worked

with design consultancy, Absolute, who moved them away from a traditional brochure.

Instead, they created a magazine called Another Place (above, left), a tongue-in-cheek take on up-market lifestyle magazines, emphasising the experience of the hotel rather than the facilities.

It was a brave move by a small business but the impact has been dramatic with room rates rising by 24 per cent in the first year.

The number of employees has doubled and they received an award for Best Tourism

Experience from South-West Tourism. All three of these case studies went on to win DBA Design Effectiveness Awards and show that benefits of great design, and the accolades that go with it, aren't just for big companies with big budgets.

A modest budget invested in design can take you so much further than you think.

If you would like to know more about how to make design work for your business, contact the DBA on www.dba.org.uk