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SPRING



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dba design business association



Just when I thought life couldn't get more exciting at the DBA, it has!

I read an article about an association's culture needing to be a balance of service and leadership. Ours has been very service-orientated. When I joined the DBA, the natural thing to do if we were to reconnect with the design industry was to ask you what you needed, supply it and supply it well. That strategy has largely been a success. Membership has grown from 173 consultancies to 385. The range of services provided has continued to grow year on year. We've become the steadying hand in the storm: facilitators, enablers and reporters. If asked, I would say we were here to service our members.

But what of leadership? Well, it was happening but unintentionally. We'd feature speakers and trainers who really were best-in-class, some of whom have had a profound impact on members' businesses. Earlier this year the DBA took a position of leadership on public sector procurement of design services by launching a set of recommendations into Government about how their knowledge, skills and processes could be developed to the benefit of both them and us. And our new members directory will see us take a lead in the way we fast-track buyers through to the best the UK has to offer in design and branding.

And so our focus needs to extend to what members are trying to accomplish and not just on who they are. The DBA needs to make way for a balance of service and leadership challenges and so the big consultation begins. What should the next five years look like for the DBA? What should membership of the DBA stand for? What are the issues we should be leading on?

Answers on a postcard, please!

Deborah Dawton
Chief executive, DBA



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DBA Design Effectiveness Awards 2010 – **enter now!**

The 2010 DBA Design Effectiveness Awards are now open for entry. If you haven't already done so, download your entry pack at www.dba.org.uk/awards, or contact Natalie for more information about how to get one of those coveted silver bullets into your trophy cabinet: natalie@dba.org.uk

Exclusive insurance for members – save



Bluefin have developed an innovative product which is exclusive to DBA members and provides peace of mind and value for money. Many members have already benefited from their expertise and carefully designed solutions.

In an ever-growing compensation culture, professional indemnity insurance covers you for liabilities that arise from professional advice or service your organisation provides. Bluefin's scheme provides bespoke wording and a competitive pricing structure, helping to protect your reputation and giving you the freedom to run your business with confidence. They promise to beat the price on any existing Hiscox policies and aim to beat policies from other providers. **Contact Charlotte at Bluefin on 020 7335 0717.**

“I am amazed at the savings we will make through the DBA insurance scheme – more than double our DBA membership fee! The service Bluefin provides is first class. We now have a policy tailored exactly to our needs.”

Sue Redgate, Finance Manager, Purple Circle



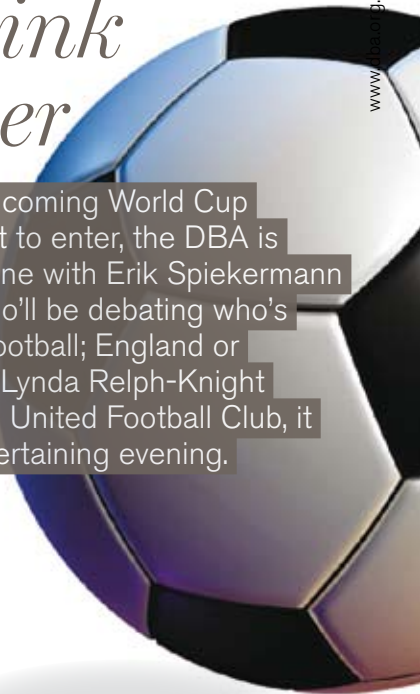
Further to his successful DBA event series, design industry expert Jonathan Kirk shares his top ten tips on How to Maximise New Business Through Your Website..

For a free copy, email john@dba.org.uk

*...they think
its all over*

In homage to the forthcoming World Cup madness we are about to enter, the DBA is running an event in June with Erik Spiekermann and Bill Walsgrove, who'll be debating who's better at design and football; England or Germany? Chaired by Lynda Relph-Knight and held at Newcastle United Football Club, it promises to be an entertaining evening.

To register your interest email harsha@dba.org.uk



20% OFF



Written by Paul Martin, Hampshire-based designer and Founding Creative Director of DBA



Clinic know their Onions

We are delighted to announce London-based creative agency Clinic as the winners of the DBA Inclusive Design Challenge 2010.

The DBA Inclusive Design Challenge is an annual design competition to create a mainstream product, service, environment or communication that can be enjoyed by people of all abilities and meet the needs of the widest market spectrum.

Now in its 10th year, the Challenge was launched by the Royal College of Art Helen Hamlyn Centre in collaboration with the Design Business Association (DBA) as a creative response to the poor levels of design of goods and services aimed at older and disabled people, a significant and growing market sector as the population ages.

This year's brief, entitled Active Ageing – Designing for our Future Selves, looked at the challenges of our growing ageing population remaining active and productive in later life.

Clinic created Sage & Onions, a not-for-profit communications initiative aimed at stimulating activity and community participation. It encourages people to trade their time and skills with each other – knitting tutorials for lightbulb changing, cooking lessons for dog walking. While the scheme would benefit people of all ages, there are great benefits for the elderly population, offering a sense of community and support.

Clinic's Jenny Theolin, who led the project team, said: "Working on this has really opened my eyes to the subject. We've worked incredibly hard over the past three to four months on this project so we are absolutely thrilled to win."

member the Paul Martin Design Company, 25 Years of Colouring In celebrates a quarter century of working in graphic design and being paid to do something you love

Cleverly divided into 10 'simple steps', this book guides and inspires designers at every stage of their career to be happy in their work. It demonstrates how, through wit and creativity, great design arrived at by designers who love what they do can bring a smile to the face of the end user.

The resulting book celebrates Paul's love of beautiful design and gives a glimpse into how he has managed to enjoy his 'day job' for the past 25 years, while losing none of the passion, personality or love of the 'arty bits' that made him want to do it in the first place.

A nice addition to the office bookcase. 25 Years of Colouring In, £25, DBA members can save 20% discount and free p&p – simply visit www.pmde.co.uk/dba

Book offer:

20% OFF



I Wish I Worked There! A Look Inside the Most Creative Spaces in Business by Kursty Groves, reveals the world's most inspiring places to work, going behind the scenes of 20 famous brands that place innovation at the heart of their culture.

Read case studies from firms including Innocent Drinks, Walt Disney Imagineering, Nike, Virgin and Google. *I Wish I Worked There!* provides an insight into what it is that makes a space really work, while business metrics and case studies evidence the birth of ideas, breakthroughs and successes.

DBA members can save 20% discount with free p&p – simply enter promo code VA705 when prompted at the checkout of www.wiley.com



Design Council Research

THE DESIGN COUNCIL HAS RELEASED THE RESULTS OF ITS COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE UK DESIGN INDUSTRY, COVERING MORE THAN 2,200 DESIGN BUSINESSES INCLUDING IN-HOUSE TEAMS, CONSULTANCIES AND FREELANCERS. THE FULL FINDINGS CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT WWW.DESIGNCOUNCIL.ORG.UK/INDUSTRYRESEARCH, BUT HERE ARE A FEW OF THE INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS:

- There are 232,000 designers in the UK, 29% more than in 2005, and earnings have increased by £3.4bn. The combined budget of in-house teams and fee income of freelancers and consultancies is £15bn.
- 29% of design businesses in every region or country of the UK have been in business for three years or less. 55% of design consultancies have an annual fee income of between £100,000 and £500,000.
- 61% of digital and multimedia design firms reported increased demand since 2005, followed by 41% of communications design businesses saying demand has increased.
- Only 4% of businesses work on a client retainer.
- 66% of designers do not take any action to protect their IP.

DESIGNER AVERAGE AGE → 38

87% OF DESIGN CONSULTANCIES EMPLOY LESS THAN 10 STAFF

Fewer businesses are recruiting. More than two thirds haven't recruited designers and 6% of consultancies have made redundancies over the past year; this was also true in 9% of in-house teams.

We would love to hear your comments on the findings. Email natalie@dba.org.uk

DBA business poll results May 2010

What best describes the health of your business going into 2010?

	MAY 09	AUG 09	DEC 09	APRIL 10
	%	%	%	%
Business is great and still growing	11	17	19	32
Not out of the woods yet; business definitely picked up	45	37	44	45
We hope to break even by our year-end	16	19	22	11
A bit concerned, we are still tightening our belts	20	20	8	13
Very concerned, forecast not looking good for business	9	7	7	0

Is bigger better, or do good things come in small packages?



Guy Douglass
Managing Director, FLB

“‘Small enough to care, big enough to cope’ is the trite phrase often seen in brushscript on the side of removal vans. It might be hackneyed, but it feels right for the design industry. Designers don’t like rules; businesses need rules to operate. So design businesses work best where the number of employees is low enough to allow for creative expression/ angst/individuality but big enough to allow for efficient systems and processes that enable great client management. In addition, there’s a critical mass beyond which a design business needs staff to service the staff, thereby increasing cost without increasing capacity. The truth is that good things probably come in medium-sized packages.”



Adam Travis
Creative Director, Cubic

“Being slightly bigger certainly would make us better. In fact, I would happily double in size from our ‘small package’ of five to a much more capable round 10. For us, being small means that we sometimes don’t deliver on time and have to rely on the goodwill of our clients. Also, a bigger team would help us to be more flexible in the way that we approach design problems... It’s nice to say ‘yes, we can’ knowing that you actually ‘can.’”



Neil Stanhope
Managing Director, Underscore

“Bigger is not always better. Being a smaller agency allows Underscore to really get to know the people in our community and it allows our clients to feel their business results are important to us. Offering an integrated service from a small base can also mean a quicker delivery for campaigns and so quicker client feedback. This builds greater confidence and trust, and makes a client feel more like a business partner – an increasingly common requirement in the post-recession marketplace.”



Jerry Hall
Group Director, The Design Group

“It depends. Consultancies such as tdg – in the top five per cent size-wise – have a diversified team to implement brand strategy across a wide commercial or geographic area and to deal with fluctuating levels of demand. However, I don’t see this size advantage continuing beyond 80 to 100 employees, where the tendency to form silos negates further benefit. This doesn’t mean smaller consultancies can’t work for larger clients; they may offer specialist expertise that doesn’t exist even in the global agencies.”



Tom Herman
Partner, Path

“The secret of a good business is a consistent, reliable and remarkable product or service. With the right people and systems in place, this can be delivered from a big organization but it is difficult. Likewise, if you are small and don’t think big enough you’ll never grow. In our industry the sweet spot seems to be between 15 and 30 people with £100,000 turnover per head.”

Tim Molloy

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT THE SCIENCE MUSEUM, LONDON, TIM MOLLOY IS AN INTERNATIONAL FIGURE IN EXHIBITION AND COMMUNICATION DESIGN. HE HAS HELD POSITIONS WITH MAJOR DESIGN COMPANIES, AS WELL AS RUN HIS OWN AWARD-WINNING PRACTICE, SIMPSON MOLLOY. HE TALKS TO US ABOUT HIS PASSIONS, FRUSTRATIONS AND ALMOST BECOMING A MONK...



DBA: What made you become a designer?

Genetics, to a degree. My father was a jobbing water-colourist, calligrapher and signwriter; my mother a fantastic observer and commentator on people's behaviour. So good eyes plus a teenage desire to change the world led to a glorious old-school foundation course in Manchester which sealed the deal.

DBA: Do you miss running your own consultancy?

Rarely. Maybe I miss that focused sense of personal achievement, but I was never very interested in or good at the business bit. I miss teaching more and now realise that the studio was as much a teaching workshop as a consultancy. I was as proud of the designers we grew as I was of the work we did.

DBA: What was your biggest challenge when you joined the Science Museum?

The same challenge I still face every day – ensuring that the creative process is considered as an intelligent, not a superficially instinctive activity. That and forever trying to maintain an atmosphere of constructive criticism.

DBA: Which pieces of design have you admired in the past 10 years?

Off the top of my head – Lumen Church Marylebone by Theis and Khan, Diller and Scofidio's autobiographical 'Scanning' exhibition Whitney Museum; 798 Art Space Beijing; Michael Johnson's 'Fruit and Veg' stamps; Hansen and Rubin's 'Listening Post' Installation, now at the Science Museum; Jean Paul Gaultier's 'Pain Couture' exhibition Fondation Cartier, Paris; Vince Frost's Zembra Magazine; Casson Mann's Churchill 'Lifeline' interactive table; Punch Drunk's 'It felt Like a Kiss' performance; Roger Hiorn's 'Seizure'; Zaha Hadid's Phaeno Science Centre; Jaume Plensa's Crown Fountains Millennium Park Chicago. Oh... and eating at the Wapping Project and opening *The Guardian* every day.

DBA: What changes would you like to see in the design industry?

To be honest I'm uncomfortable with some of the consequences of the 'creative industry' phrase. I squirm when marketers refer to 'the creative', get frustrated when karaoke processes lead to karaoke products and see red when tenders for creative input barely reference creative ability. None of this fits with how I practice my profession.

DBA: What's been your proudest achievement?

Three big ones, all at the Science Museum. Creating a framework within which Ben Kelly could carve out the remarkable 'Basement' public space in 1995; opening the Wellcome Wing in 2000: I think we achieved a rare synergy between content, interactive interpretation and architecture – a decade later finds us working on the next generation of galleries in this heroic space; two updated and reinvigorated galleries opening in June and a third in the autumn. Finally, working closely with Harry Pearce to create the Dana Centre – a sequence of performance spaces bound together by their own typographic language.

DBA: Who or what has been your single biggest influence?

Kurt Schwitters, the remarkable polymath, painter, sculptor, poet, typographer, performance and installation artist, who spent the last years of his life in the Lake District where I grew up. My father took the very young me to see his last sculpted environment, the Merzbarn – memories of this grotto-like space have stayed with me and even now Schwitters' spirit remains a major influence on how I view the world.

DBA: What did you want to be when you grew up? I spent a long time imagining being a Benedictine monk. It seemed a fulfilling, elegant, romantic life. But that all changed when I fell in teenage love with a rebellious girl from Liverpool Art School – I've never looked back.

DBA experts *answer your questions*

Q : We have been unsuccessful in our last three pitches – what might be going wrong?

A For me, the pitch process has three stages to it – pre-pitch, the pitch itself and post-pitch. During the pre-pitch stage you need to look at how you got an invite to the pitch itself: what information did the client already have that they based their decision on, and what did you know about them and their situation? In the unlikely event of a pitch brief being issued, how did you decide how to go about presenting? Assuming that these were credentials pitches, how did you structure your presentation to try to help the client understand that you were able to help them?

In the pitch itself, how much time did you spend talking about yourselves rather than talking about the client and their challenge? The running order for a pitch presentation is now more crucial than ever and this time should be spent reassuring the client that you understand what they need first, before telling them about who you are and what you do. Ideally, you will have selected some case studies that are directly or as near as possible relevant to their situation or at least their industry.

Post-pitch you will need to maintain some sort of contact to ensure that you are still in the client's memory. Any sort of follow-up at this point will help. Once the result is known ask for feedback; even if you have been successful, ask for it – it all helps. Have a pro forma developed so that you can record the answers to the same questions each time to help review where you might be able to tighten up a little.

Simon May is a DBA Expert and Management Consultant at Octane, who specialise in design management, design procurement, supply chain management and project engagement.

Q : The maze that is employment law gets ever more confusing, the latest idea being 'Fit Notes' – will it ever stop?

A No! The law governing relations with staff is extensive and complex. It is made up of national legislation, European regulations and UK regulatory controls, all of which are constantly being interpreted by the courts and tribunals who are also making judgments on the grounds of what is fair and reasonable. As for new statutory laws, April has been a very busy month with new 'Fit Notes' being perhaps the most publicised. But what are they?

- The first point to clear up is that an employee can still self-certify for the first seven calendar days of absence for statutory sick pay purposes.
- A doctor will still be able to certify that an individual is 'not fit for work'.
- A doctor will now be able to indicate that an individual may be fit for work but with some support.
- A doctor will now be able to indicate what an employer could do to help an employee back to work – such as phased return, altered hours, amended duties and/or work place adjustments.
- A doctor will be able to give information on how the employee's condition will affect the work they do and make suggestions as to how they may be able to return to work.
- Statutory sick pay can still be paid both where a doctor has certified an individual not fit for work and where the individual may be fit for work but the employer cannot make the necessary adjustments.

Anything new takes time to settle in but it is hoped that this new form of communication between a doctor and an employer will help employees back to work sooner than would otherwise be the case. Time will tell!

Darrel Stuart Smith is a DBA Expert and Partner at Humphries Kirk solicitors, the legal team supporting the DBA.

The DBA Experts Register is made up of experts covering all manner of specialisms, and they are all accredited by the DBA. They understand the design industry as well as their specialism so you can be assured that the help you get is the best available. If you have an issue you would like to discuss with a DBA Expert, give Adam a call on **020 7251 9229** or drop him a line at adam@dba.org.uk and he will put you in touch with a DBA-accredited expert who fits your needs.



The launch of Design and the Public Good in March was a landmark day in terms of the sheer number of designers that gathered inside Parliament and it created new momentum on which we now have to capitalise.

We have had positive responses and interesting feedback from many quarters on our ten recommendations. Some have introduced ideas that could feed into the development – for example, a more rigorous enforcement of IP and design rights in the procurement process. Others have suggested ways of moving

Conservative business policy is pro-SME and gives lip-service to the economic importance of supporting the new creative and media industries as part of the holy grail that is the 'knowledge economy'.

One hurdle in this drive is the 'creative industries' name tag, which lumps the design industries in with cultural and arts industries. In fact, they are an entirely different beast. In spite of the above-mentioned lip service, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) seems to have run out of steam on its own Creative Economy campaign, and

been minus a minister for the creative industries since Siôn Simon stepped down. The Shadow DCMS team are active but in reality design has a small share in their portfolio,

and the loudest discussions have recently been dominated by media policy. If they really are to become a principle powerhouse of the economy, it's time for a more nuanced understanding of what 'creative industries' means.

So, in light of these various challenges, and as a key priority, the Associate Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group (APDIG) will be establishing a standing Design Commission, as mooted by Barry Sheerman at the launch.

This new and much-needed body will mediate between the design industry, the Design Council and government, its task being to oversee all further work on the report's agenda: a refreshed manifesto for future interaction between the design industry and government. ■

the recommendations forward – a Parliament and Whitehall-targeted exhibition of good design examples generated within the public sector. Some of the DBA's own Effectiveness Award Winners could be prime material here. And the COI has recently done a bit of repositioning with a more flexible procurement offer.

In terms of engagement with government, the election has predictably had a slightly disrupting effect. MPs are distracted, and we will have to redouble efforts to communicate the report's goals to all parties after 6 May. In theory the ground is fertile for a take-up of these ideas. The new government will be casting about for some fresh thinking on how to solve the multiple challenges facing the public sector and society more broadly.

* PROCUREMENT INQUIRY UPDATE

It's good to be good

Sustainability. It's one of those terms up there with social media and recession-proofing. First it was a mystery, then it was trendy, but now it's an everyday part of the design process. Having a business attitude that addressed sustainability used to be an ethical and moral issue, but it's moved so far forward in the past five years that it has become a part of our everyday consciousness, and designers must give it consideration in every brief. For ideas people, far from sustainability being a bonus that you add to your client's requirements, it's now an expectation that all design should take the sustainable nature of the solution into account.

But jumping on the eco bandwagon doesn't just make you feel warm and fuzzy, it can make you and your client more profitable, generating more business and finding cost savings both internally and externally. Shaun Jones, Realisation Director at Blue Marlin, predicted last year that "the recession will hijack the green argument, turning it from a moral argument to an economic one".

The Design Museum's latest exhibition 'Sustainable Futures' is a showcase of a range of design projects that explore the most important issues associated with sustainability, raising the profile of sustainable design and encouraging visitors to look at their own consumption habits. It's being sponsored by Puma. Sustainable design is officially cool.

So, the whole of the design industry is aware of the need to embrace sustainability, but what approach are members taking to address the issue, both on behalf of clients and within their own businesses? We asked five members to give us their different takes on the subject.

Otto Marples, Managing Director at fst The Group, on positioning sustainability in the business, both internally and externally.

A deep change is taking place as a result of what is happening to our planet. In 2007, this led fst to set up its very own sustainability journey with its specialist division, B.sustainable.

We were able to start this venture as Lend Lease approached us to produce their annual sustainability report; we have now completed the third instalment of the update. The latest edition took a fresh approach and rather than the traditional printed route, we produced a series of podcasts to save on printing.

At this point several opportunities became apparent. First of all, we had a chance to genuinely contribute to reducing the human impact on the environment. We created our own sustainability update through which we set ourselves objectives and targets. This allowed us to measure our impact on the environment – and we have reduced this each year saving the planet and money.

Secondly, through a string of internal and external activities, we could raise awareness among our employees and the public. Wiser use of electricity, water and materials have all contributed to lowering our carbon footprint, as has promoting the use of public transport, bicycles and car sharing to get to work.

Finally, it simply presented fst with an extra business opportunity in so far as we could offer expert advice on how companies can lower their impact on the environment.

Overall, these three factors have deeply engrained sustainability into our minds and remain at the heart of our plans for the future.



Al Kennedy, Founder and Creative Director at Open Agency, on working smarter to achieve sustainability.

The way we live and work is changing rapidly, offering an enormous competitive advantage to companies who embrace the 'new tools' that enable agile, simplified information exchange and collaboration to distributed workforces, networks and customers.

It's not what you do but how you do it.

We believe in working 'smarter' toward a sustainable future – as an agency and for our clients.

- We are Open.
- We are built differently.
- We are digital.
- We work as a 'cloud'-based infrastructure using real-time systems – less paperwork.
- We develop on open-source technologies.
- We collaborate with distributed workforces and networks.
- We adopt 'clean' materials for all the design solutions or any production processes.
- We work in the environmental sector.
- We give back to the community.
- We support local.
- We run a 'bike to work' scheme.
- We are people powered.
- We are networked.
- We collaborate.
- We are innovative.
- We are agile.
- We are smart.
- We are what we share.
- We work in Bristol.
- We are social.
- We are good.

Good design is a quantifiable benefit, not a cost. Its value can be measured economically, socially and environmentally.

Guy Williams, Creative Director Structure, and Shaun Jones, Realisation Director Blue Marlin Brand Design, talk about the economic impact of sustainability from a packaging viewpoint.

No product or production process has a positive impact on the environment; all have a harmful effect at some level – every process, every product uses resources and leaves its own footprint. It is up to designers to help marketers and manufacturers minimise the environmental impact.

There's another side to being savvy about sustainability: it's a moral, economic and a populist issue, but it is also a creative one. The challenge is to produce aesthetically pleasing packaging that is environmentally sound, fulfils the fundamental job of protecting and presenting the product, drives consumer behaviour to purchase and repurchase and is innovative in itself. It's quite a list, but far from putting a straitjacket on creativity, being kinder to the environment is inspiring designers to push further and try harder.

Soon that commitment won't be optional as consumers become ever more demanding. The economic environment we now find ourselves in will affect the spending power of both manufacturers and consumers alike. Some of the savings generated through rationalisation of supply chain and materials reduction should be passed on to the consumer, which will help to reduce the perceived luxury tag attached to greener products that deters some consumers.

There are some barriers to implementing greener design, not least the time frame in which many packaging projects exist. By and large, it isn't possible to go green by next week. But with a little time, a realistic and informed idea of what is achievable and why it is important and – most importantly – a genuine commitment to change, creative design can make a vast difference. Green design is real design. And real design delivers results.

Danny Bluestone, Managing Director at Cyber-Duck, on how they've seen sustainability affect their clients.

Cyber-Duck, a leading digital agency, has repeatedly seen the issue of sustainability becoming central to digital design projects. Aside from creating the websites for Greenworks, which showcases renewable technologies, and Paper Round, the UK's leading specialist office recycling company, Cyber-Duck has witnessed sustainability become an integral part of seemingly unrelated businesses with the digital medium being used to promote more eco-friendly business models.

For instance, Cyber-Duck's client BoonSpace is a virtual gifting service that enables people to create and send extremely personal virtual gifts. People can include voice messages, video, text and photos to accompany a gift money transfer that can be redeemed by PayPal. Being able to personalise PayPal transfers in this way ensures that people on the other side of the world can receive gifts they really want without the carbon emissions involved in sending heavy packages across the globe.

And it isn't just ecological sustainability. The digital medium is now being applied to help small businesses survive in an increasingly globalised world where multinationals dominate. For instance, Cyber-Duck created an online wine portal for Vinifera Boutique, enabling boutique French vineyards that would otherwise not be able to reach the UK market to become available to UK consumers.

“Being kinder to the environment is inspiring designers to try harder”

“‘Being good’ looks good for your brand, but it can also do good to your bottom line”

Circle Managing Director Claire Livesey, speaking recently about the implications for fuel and convenience retailing.

Brands are increasingly being called to account both for their ethics and their carbon footprint, especially for fuel and convenience retailing; a global industry where – with a few notable exceptions – sustainable thinking has barely got off the ground.

The reason may well stem from the nature of the industry: fossil fuels are bad for the environment, therefore there's no point in trying to make a difference. But this blinkered view ignores rapid developments both in the economics of sustainability and in the global brand landscape. Put simply, 'being good' not only looks good for your brand, it can also do serious good to your bottom line.

Circle has been advising energy companies on integrating sustainability into their operations for many years, for example, developing solar-powered petrol stations or helping organisations to launch alternative fuels. This reflects a bigger initiative to market the consultancy more to the energy sector and to highlight the breadth of experience Circle has in this sector – from internal brand building to brand management for more than 20 energy companies in 12 different countries. A new energy-focused website supports these activities.

PROJECT

YOU

RALPH ARDILL, FOUNDER OF THE BRAND EXPERIENCE CONSULTANCY AND DBA EXPERT, LOOKS AT WHY YOUR DESIGN AGENCY SHOULD BE YOUR NEXT MOST IMPORTANT CLIENT IN THE POST-CRUNCH ERA



“We all played a part in encouraging this brand boom – as consumers and creatives”

It wasn't so long ago that the design-fuelled branding machine seemed unstoppable. But then the credit crunched, the rock crumbled and we began to realise that so much of what we believed to be brand reality was little more than bland rhetoric. Corporations exploited the power of branding and the creative industries to encourage us to pay for 'new and improved' promises – features and benefits that so often proved to be little more than creative smoke and mirrors.

This was all driven by an obsession to drive short-term shareholder value at the expense of delivering true and sustained value and improvement in the customer brand experience.

We all played a part in encouraging this brand boom, both as consumers and as the creative industries, but it was only a matter of time before we all got busted.

So it's no surprise that alongside the finance, property and retail industries the branding and creative industries are also facing some home truths about what we've been doing and how we can best survive and flourish in a post-crunch era.

Of course this doesn't mean the end for branding and design – far from it – but

it is likely to usher in an exciting new era of personal, collaborative, authentic and ultimately better branding where integrity, creativity, performance, accountability and sustainability will be key. An era that demands we take responsibility for the design of the total brand experience inside and out as opposed to a bit of tactical shop-window titillation now and again.

I also believe this will be as true for the development of successful design agency brands as it will for the client brands they work with.

In 2005 I set up The Brand Experience Consultancy to help brands explore the commercial, creative and communication possibilities of the experience economy.

Since then I've been working with clients to bring my own 'cocktail' of business consulting, brand strategy, experience design and change management to deliver brand-inspired, design-driven business improvement and transformation programmes across my four experiential business cornerstones of People, Product, Place and Promotion.

This exciting journey has seen me move far beyond the design of experiential communication towards the design of >

“All great design businesses have always been great agents of change”

» the experiential enterprise itself and given me the privilege of working with dozens of new creative collaborators.

Along the way several design businesses have asked if I could also help with their own agency transformations and what I'm finding is extremely encouraging.

Far from the cliché of the obsessive designer with little business acumen that we so often read about there's an increasing number of highly informed, ambitious and entrepreneurial creative businesses out there who are completely in touch with the right industry issues, insights and information and who have an intense desire to change, improve and grow their agency businesses.

From what I can see there's an awful lot of design businesses that have already had the away-days, bought the business books, been to the lectures and are awash with business growth tools, techniques and tips. But for whatever reason they have yet to reach their own tipping point for nailing “Where next?” and making real transformational change happen across their total agency experience.

But if there's one thing that unites all successful design businesses it is their unshakable dedication for making design projects happen right on brief, right on time and right on budget.

So my approach to working with creative agencies on the transformation of their own brands has been simple. Do what you do best and turn it into the singular most exciting creative project on your job-sheet.

Give it a name – ‘ProjectYou’, give it a

job number, budget, team, process, outputs, outcomes, measures and a very specific deadline. Make a total commitment to it, make it highly visible and involving throughout the agency and make it happen.

Write a great brief for ProjectYou. One that paints a compelling creative and commercial picture of where you're going and why, that inspires and challenges you in equal measure, that demands your team steps up to the plate.

Then harness all of the passion, energy, creativity and discipline that you would bring to bear for your most demanding client. Because that's what you've just become.

We all know it's crunch time and that the branding and design landscape is going to change beyond recognition. This is not a spectator sport and many will fall upon the sword of inertia or complacency, but our design industry will be all the better for it.

Because all great design businesses have always been great agents of change.

The time has now come to turn these natural talents inwards to drive your own agency transformation and – as Gandhi once said – “Be the change you want to be in the world.”

The most exciting brand you will ever build can be your own. The most compelling project case study you will ever tell can be your own. The next most important client in your agency *is* your agency. Don't let them down. Blow them away. Do what you do best and deliver your ProjectYou like you're future depends on it.

It almost certainly will. ■

FACTS

- The post-crunch branding and design landscape is changing.
- An era of more personal, collaborative, authentic and accountable brands emerging.
- This will be as true for agency brands as it will for client brands.
- Design agency brands need to innovate across the total agency experience.
- The next most important client in your agency is your agency.
- The next most important project is your own agency transformation.
- Design and deliver ProjectYou as you would for your most demanding client.
- Unleash your natural project passion, talent and abilities to make it happen.

Top of the POPS

CONSUMER SHOPPING HABITS HAVE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, SO WHEN WHITELEYS PLANNED THEIR INSPIRING NEW RETAIL CONCEPT FOR POP-UP STORES, THEY APPROACHED MACKEREL DESIGN TO CREATE AN ENGAGING, PUNCHY CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR FASHION-LED REVAMP. CATHERINE PITT, DIRECTOR AT MACKEREL DESIGN, TELLS US HOW THEY DREW ON HERITAGE AND VINTAGE CUES TO WORK WITH AN ULTRA MODERN PROJECT



Whiteleys in Bayswater has long been one of the capital's best places to be attired, but with fierce competition from the West End and surrounding areas, it needed to embrace change and evolve the brand.

Launched in March, Whiteleys' empty spaces have been restyled to develop the world's first floor of pop-up fashion boutiques, devised by Brian MacShane of Pop Store and Ellen Lewis, Head of Retail Marketing for Jones Lang LaSalle, Whiteleys Managing Agent. "The whole pop store concept gives consumers something that is exclusive and discovery-driven, as many of the products on sale tend to be limited edition or limited quantities. With rotating brands and/or store environments customers can experience and purchase something different with every visit," says Pitt.

Mackerel's objective was to support this creative vision with a campaign that was a direct call to action, to encourage consumers to visit regularly in case they miss out on something fantastic. The brief was to both engage sophisticated audiences with a



① Whiteleys' grandeur and heritage is a key differential from its competitors.

② The Mackerel campaign's style and tone aims to put the fun back into shopping as well as reflect the theatrical-inspired spaces.

③ Elements have been designed for all types of media and outlets

style and tone that puts the fun back into shopping, while celebrating Whiteleys heritage. "As you visit Whiteleys, you are struck by its grandeur and historical significance, which is a key differential from its retail competitors. We wanted to reflect the theatrical-inspired spaces and unexpected elements that come with the pop-stores, as well as representing the events and activities planned throughout the year."

Having researched the Westminster Archives, Mackerel discovered historical material such as

press cuttings, catalogues and photography dating from its opening in 1912. "A vintage image of the building takes centre stage with other key elements such as fresh graphic components and brand logos interacting with it. Our challenge has been to create a design that would represent Whiteleys broad offer of both high-street and pop-up fashion boutiques, as well as being adaptable for seasonal events."

The campaign will run throughout the year and is adapted for large-format window vinyls, centre dress, outdoor media, press and online content. ■

project focus

Bringing together a tribe of experts in their field resulted in the birth of Qubee, a new international brand for Augere Holdings. Augere was established by Sanjiv Ahuja (formerly CEO of Orange) with a vision to deliver 'broadband for all' by providing reliable broadband in emerging markets. They launched successfully in Bangladesh and Pakistan last year.

Augere engaged Sean Lewis of Brands Applied to work closely with them to develop an international brand. He brought in Mark Smith of Marksmith Design for his brand identity expertise, and Monica Taylor and Matt Seward of Kilo75 for their web expertise to collaborate on the project.

"It's not just about blending complementary expertise, it's also about blending the right personalities," says Lewis.

From day one this client and agency collaborative established a shared vision. Previously, local perceptions of the internet had been shaped by poor service, terrible connectivity and ageing infrastructure. Qubee's vision was to make broadband work with a magical branded experience. "This helped us make design and technical decisions every step of the way," adds Taylor.

As the new brand crystallised, Mike McNeillage and Nick Patchett were added to the collaborative to help deliver the brand through retail spaces.

By trusting, dividing and conquering, the



client agency team were faster, more efficient and informed. Getting the right experts in the room at the right time, sharing local knowledge and dynamic project management all helped to ensure the brand could be created and applied in the most effective way.

This collaborative mindset has continued beyond launch. The central team designed the brand in a way that invites local agencies and marketing teams to take part. They gave clear parameters and guidance, then let go to enable local marketing teams to breathe further life into the brand. "This is less about the creators of the brand hogging the limelight and more about genuinely facilitating successful branding at a local level," comments Smith.

For Qubee this means they have local ownership beyond the original creators, which is critical to the successful rollout of any international brand. ■

Connecting with other creatives



WHEN IT COMES TO COLLABORATION, IS IT REALLY A CASE OF THE MORE THE MERRIER? MONICA TAYLOR, CLIENT SERVICES DIRECTOR AT LEEDS-BASED CONSULTANCY KILO 75, TELLS US ABOUT WORKING WITH TWO OTHER TEAMS TO LAUNCH NEW BRAND, QUBEE

"Many of us will have endured very different experiences of collaboration. Sometimes it's amazing that collaborative projects get finished at all when the parties involved battle to protect their patch and struggle with hidden agendas and issues of trust. Successful collaboration requires a grown-up approach. Shared passions married to honest, direct and respectful dialogue helps a lot (obviously), but a tribal mentality is crucial. In the tribe all members are valued for their talents and are willing to support each other. Most importantly, everyone has a genuine desire to work together. If you want to make it work you can."



What does Paprika do, in a nutshell?

We provide one integrated contact management, job costing, project management and accounting system with web and iPhone functions for design agencies.

What can Paprika offer DBA Members?

Firstly, Paprika offers DBA members efficiency by providing a single integrated system that eliminates duplicated effort and wasted time. Secondly, it gives a clear picture of their businesses, not only in financial terms but also in terms of dates, deadlines and capacity. Thirdly, our forecasting and resource planning features give them a view of how their business is going to look in the future.

What makes Paprika specialists for the design industry?

We've been talking to and working with design studios since the early 1980s. We have more than 400 clients, half of whom are designers and half in related areas of architecture, PR and marketing. Every feature in Paprika has been developed to meet a specific need of one of our clients, so it truly is designed by designers.

What's the one piece of advice you would offer to all design consultancies about project management?

Make sure that you have a plan for delivering the project that is communicated and shared with everyone – including your client. Then track performance against the plan.

Who are the people behind the scenes at Paprika?

We have more than 50 staff worldwide developing and supporting Paprika. Our experts range from programmers and technical experts to accountants and business consultants who have worked either in or with the design industry for many years.

What's your favourite piece of design?

We love design that has function and like natural forms, so our favourite 'design' – if we are allowed something that has evolved rather than been designed – would be an egg, the simplest of forms determined by function.

What does the IOM do, in a nutshell?

The Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) promotes all aspects of materials science. It is the professional body for the international materials, minerals and mining community, providing information and library services, conferences, qualifications, publications and educational resources.

What can the IOM offer DBA Members?

DBA is a corporate member of the IOM3. DBA members have access to the Materials Information Service (MIS) helpline. The MIS provides information on the selection and use of materials and manufacturing processes.

What's the one piece of advice you would offer to all design consultancies about materials management?

Don't reinvent the wheel. Someone out there has already used the material. Talk to the MIS before you commit to a material or process.

What other organisations are linked to the IOM3?

The Institute works closely with the Materials Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) to promote materials science, bring together academia and industry, and to benefit the UK's economy as a result. The Institute partners with the Royal College of Art, Design Council, Institution of Engineering Designers and the Engineering Employers Federation (South) to deliver the activities of the KTN's design exchange. Its Materials Resource Centre is hosted by IOM3 in London.

Who are the people behind the scenes at IOM3?

The MIS consists of a team of nine materials scientists all specialising in different materials including metals, polymers, ceramics, glass and composites. They help companies, especially SMEs, to solve their materials problems.

What's your favourite piece of design?

Concorde. An elegant product, satisfying a customer need with a marriage of state-of-the-art technology, materials development and engineering design.



Dingdong

...delivering new business to your door

Now, more than ever, the focus on getting new business has never been stronger. The industry on the whole is busy but that doesn't mean that you should rest on your laurels and hope that your next piece of business is just around the corner. New business strategy should be a continuous process and those who have their finger on the pulse know that it takes work to get work. This summer we'll be sharing some simple techniques with you that will help to drive new business your way.

How to make your website deliver new business

New half-day workshop

Thursday 17 June, 9.30am to 1pm, London

Making sure your website is a proactive new business tool, not a passive brochure, should be a top priority for any design agency. But how can you turn your website into a powerful tool that offers maximum new business potential? And what are the simple, low-cost but effective changes you can put in place to achieve this?

Following on from our two sell-out breakfast events looking at how to leverage more new business mileage from your website, we are delighted to introduce a new half-day workshop that will drill right down into the subject. It will enable you to fully understand how best to go about planning, developing and implementing changes to your existing site to make it more effective.

Delivered by business advisor Jonathan Kirk, this workshop is for any design agency looking to make their existing site work harder, or for those who are thinking of developing a new site from scratch. The workshop will offer practical advice and guidance on ways of attracting more new business to your agency through your site and placing this in the context of your wider new business strategy. It is fundamentally based on what works in new business now and is low on 'tech-speak'.

Tickets: DBA members £199 / standard £239

Details: www.dba.org/training

Coming soon:

Apple iPhone Workshop

This June we are delighted to be hosting an exclusive iPhone workshop in conjunction with Apple to help you to utilize all that your iPhone has to offer. Join us at 8am on 22 June for breakfast at the Apple store in Regent Street, London, to benefit from an in-depth look at how your iPhone can help you to streamline your business needs and gain a better understanding of iPhone apps. Places at this workshop are limited so book your place now to avoid disappointment.

Tickets: DBA members free / standard £15+VAT

The Edge - Are you ready for the edge?

Following on from the success of last year's Edge event, we are busy working on this year's programme. It promises to be a thought-provoking, challenging and entertaining two days - be the first to hear what we're going to be up to on 13 and 14 October by pre-registering your interest at theedge@dba.org.uk

Member interview

Giles Redmayne, Business Director of London-based design consultancy Purpose, shares his thoughts on their DBA membership



Tell us a bit about Purpose

Purpose is an award-winning brand consultancy and graphic design agency based in central London. The recent acquisition of a 'sister' company has seen the business expand. We are currently recruiting for six positions, which will take us up to about 35 in total.

How long have you been DBA members?

More than 10 years. We were a small outfit consisting of about seven members of staff at the time.

What made you join?

Originally, to get involved with and have access to the annual report of charge-out rates, salary levels and the related breakdown of these figures. There is so much conflicting information on this vital subject and we felt this report represented the most accurate. We were aware of how much more the DBA could offer our business but felt that this alone was worth becoming members for.

What difference has membership made to your business?

Most of our client base believes that being a member of your industry body says something positive about your agency. In addition, I find myself having few wrangles with procurement departments and clients when I can demonstrate how we calculate the figures we charge and I have independently audited industry figures to support my case.

How important is it for you to be in a community with other design businesses?

As your business matures, you realise there is a greater need to represent and be involved with the industry. I believe our industry can make a real commercial difference to our clients and to the UK economy. To ensure what we offer is fully understood, we need to have an organisation to represent us in UK business arenas, government corridors and international markets. Being part of this community keeps you informed and able to comment on and influence the future.

Are there any DBA events or courses that have really stayed with you?

Our staff always return from training events better informed, focused and with a keen desire to put what they've learnt into action. We ask them to suggest their own training needs and more often than not they cite the DBA courses.

With events and talks there will always be a mixture of what is of real value to you and what falls a bit short, but all are worth attending. Sometimes they simply serve to confirm what you already knew and at other times they challenge your views.

What piece of advice would you offer to design businesses just starting out?

Firstly, a good design business should structure itself in much the same way as any other well-run business. Your product is fundamental but not enough on its own: you must ensure that the areas of financial control, commercial direction and business generation are never pushed to one side.

Secondly, remember that clients do care about the detail: the accuracy, efficiency and style in which you service them. It could be the difference between winning or losing a piece of business.

Any other comments on the DBA?

Membership of the DBA will add strength to your business but also to the industry. The DBA has changed out of all recognition in the past decade but there are still many challenges that need to be addressed. The more members of the DBA, the greater voice and strength we have overall.

To discuss your DBA membership, contact **John at john@dba.org or 020 7251 9229**

David C Baker is the principal of ReCourses, a US management consulting firm that works exclusively with small service providers in the communications industry www.recourses.com

10 mistakes

... that could be harming your business

1 ■ Relying on referrals

The problem with referrals for a growing firm is that a prospect's perception of you will not keep pace with reality. Some firms wait for work to drop in, others look for new clients. Even better, others look for clients they can do effective work for and make money in the process.

2 ■ Staying a generalist

Specialisation occurs in every area of life. We stay a generalist because we get bored easily – and because we don't have a marketing plan and thus feel compelled to cast the net wide. Firms that specialise generally thrive: it will make it easier to find business, to do effective work and to make more money.

3 ■ Feeding 'gorilla' clients

Our studies show that it's difficult to recover from the loss of any client that represents more than 35 per cent of your business. If you have a large client: have a marketing emergency folder; set aside four months of overhead; have a maintenance marketing plan in place for at least six months; and send job implementation out, retaining account service, project management and actual work oversight. You can borrow money, but you can't borrow marketing.

4 ■ Misunderstanding growth

Growth in employee count isn't about making more money – it's more about your role. If you embrace management, go for it. Otherwise, stay smaller and hands-on.

5 ■ Managing for significance

You learn to be important because you can do everything. You take on assignments with hopeless budgets and schedules to be valued. Soon you'll be looking for acceptance from clients instead of a strong direction.

6 ■ Thinking employees are entrepreneurs

You started your own firm because you hated structure. One day you realise, though, that the people who work for you aren't entrepreneurs. If they were, they'd start their own firms. Employees usually want more structure, reviews, etc. than you think they do.

7 ■ Reacting slowly to a downturn

In a downturn, it's tempting to hang on to the team until the tide turns. But as most of your overhead is compensation (45 per cent at an unburdened level), you can see why no principal ever said: "I wish I'd waited longer to do the lay-offs."

8 ■ Spending your way into prosperity

More than 80 per cent of those making lots of money have no fixed obligations (leases, loans or credit card balances) for depreciating assets. Is cash the best filter for depreciating assets? It may apply the brakes for companies that are growing too quickly. And the act of spending cash makes it less likely that you'll acquire more than you need.

9 ■ Ignoring project management issues

Having more than five employees per senior manager will feel big unless you have good systems. And the best systems have centralised responsibility for budget and schedule. Most firms are deadline-driven vs profit-driven and, as a result, they bill for only a portion of their time because it's not as important as meeting the deadlines.

10 ■ Counting on selling your firm

It doesn't usually happen. Often the likely buyer is someone in your firm with no money, who wants to use your money to buy you out. If you want to sell, institutionalize your firm. In the process, build a strong retirement fund, assuming you won't sell it. Then try anyway.

DBA Supporters



Materials and Design Exchange (MADE)

Within the Materials Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN), the Design Exchange brings together the communities of design and materials technology in order to stimulate innovation, promote the transfer of materials knowledge and improve the competitiveness of UK business. The Design Exchange is funded by the Technology Strategy Board and forges links between product designers and other sectors of the KTN concerned with composites, smart materials, technical textiles, metals and polymers, and the full range of modern materials.

www.iom3.org/MADE

Paprika Software

Paprika is a fully integrated job costing and accounting system. With straightforward data entry and reporting capabilities, Paprika allows you to handle projects with ease, from estimating to work scheduling and resource planning, time and expense recording, through to client billing. Paprika runs on both Mac and PC and is offered with a comprehensive installation, training and support service. With more than 25 years' experience of implementing integrated systems, we understand the issues faced by project-based organisations.

www.paprika-software.com

Bluefin

Bluefin are experts in providing carefully designed insurance solutions for commercial businesses and individuals. We employ about 3,000 staff in more than 100 offices across the UK and have the backing of AXA UK – one of the largest insurance and financial services companies in the world. This means we are able to provide a local service to our clients combined with the strength and stability of a national broker.

www.bluefingroup.co.uk

Lightbox Consulting

Lightbox Consulting specialises in advising design companies in business planning and financial management. Gary Baxter, who spent eight years as Finance Director of The Partners, has more than 25 years' experience and brings clarity, giving 'non-financial' owners confidence in their ability to take management decisions. Lightbox Consulting has also developed its own web-based software product for small design companies, enabling them to professionalise the financial aspects of project management. 'Lightbox' is up and running in an hour and affordable for even the smallest company.

www.lightboxontheweb.com

co.efficient

co.efficient is job management software designed for creative companies. The screens have been created by designers so the software is intuitive, simplifying job management and placing all job-related data in one place, allowing access from both Macs and PCs. co.efficient software has helped thousands of creatives over the past 10 years: we believe in enabling you to focus on the creative side of your business – the fun part!

www.coefficientsoftware.com

Calling all outstanding design consultancies.

Are you looking at any of
the following:

- Growing and marketing your business?
- Improving your team's performance?
- Improving the efficiency of your operation?
- Feeling truly part of the industry you work in?

If the answer is yes, then you could find that
DBA membership will free up your time and
allow you to do more of what you love.

Membership benefits address all of these areas, they are quick and easy to use and can make a real difference to your working day and the running of your business.

So, whether you're a current member looking to make more of your membership or if you're wondering whether membership would be right for you, stop wondering and drop us a line.

John@dba.org.uk
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www.dba.org.uk
