

Membership of the Design Business Association

dba

What is the DBA?

Founded in 1986 as the trade association for the UK design sector.

Set up by design agency owners to be an organisation owned **by** the members working **for** the members.

The three main aims are just as relevant today:

- To represent the interests of design businesses
- To help support the running of those businesses
- To help influence the environment in which they work

The DBA has two membership categories:

Agency membership

All disciplines, all sizes, all corners of the UK.

In-house design team membership

Design-led businesses who manage and/or commission design such as Diageo, Haleon, NatWest Group, Philips, LSEG, Carlsberg, Arup, Lixil and Transport for London.

We also have an accreditation service for consultants who can help you with your business. The **Experts Register** features individuals who are experts in areas such as new business and marketing, finance, law, HR, business growth, design management etc.

DBA Board Directors



Chief Executive
Deborah Dawton
DBA



Chairman
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Director
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Andy Sexton
2LK



Director
Stephanie Verschoor
NatWest



Director
Tim Duncan
TDC PR

What does DBA membership have to offer?

- Community
- Representation
- Championing Effective Design
- Celebrating Effective Design
- Team Development
- Business Support
- Mentoring
- Benchmarking
- Differentiation
- Resources

Community

Share experience with like-minded businesses and design leaders. DBA members vary in shape, size and design discipline from international corporate design teams such as Diageo, Reckitt and TfL, through world-leading design firms, to micro design studios the length and breadth of the UK, but there is an intimacy and willingness to share and learn from each other that sets our community apart. Learn from and support each other in our mission to champion effective design and effective design businesses.



“DBA membership has been **a lifeline for our young studio**, helping us make valuable connections with other members and overcome some growing pains. Through talks, training, and conversations, we've gained confidence and relief knowing we're not alone in our struggles. We can't believe we didn't get involved sooner!”

Poonam Saini, Co-founder, KISS Branding
(based in the Leeds with a team of 4-10 staff)

Community

Monthly DBA Members' Forum



Representation

Become a part of the voice for design and influence its future narrative. DBA members share their ideas, priorities and concerns with us which we use to inform advice and feedback into government. The DBA holds weekly conversations with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport empowering DBA members to influence the context in which your business is operating.



“Design needs a strong voice in the commercial world – to be perceived as a business necessity rather than a cosmetic option. **The DBA is the only organisation our profession has to represent us where it matters**, at the centre of industry and government.”

Callum Lumsden, Creative Director, Lumsden Design
(based in London with a team of 4-10 staff)

Championing effective design

Design is the yeast in the business mix. The more recognition at the highest levels, the more baked-in design becomes. The DBA supports our members in articulating the value of design, whether that be financial, behavioural, societal or environmental. The DBA helps you develop and embed the processes and ability to measure design's success.



“Being part of a globally recognised awards scheme like the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards adds credibility to our business and help us advocate for the value and impact of our work on our clients’ businesses.”

Celine Smith, Managing Director, BrandMe
(based in London with a team of 21-50 staff)

Celebrating effective design

Judged by industry leaders, experts and CEOs of FTSE 500 businesses, and based on rigorous business case studies proving the impact of your work, the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards are one of the highest accolades in the design industry and the most rewarding to win.



“After winning a DBA Design Effectiveness Award it is clear that we’re having much deeper, strategic conversations with potential clients – the credibility that the award bestows has been really helpful.”

Philip Koh, Co-Founder and Director of Strategy, Without®
(based in London with a team of 4-10 staff)

Professional development

DBA membership is for the whole company, so all your colleagues can benefit in developing professionally. All our training courses are live online sessions focused on business related subjects such as: Managing People, Project Management, Presentation Skills, Expert Client Relationship Management etc.



“The DBA has had a very positive impact both on me personally and on my agency as a whole. The DBA continue to innovate and be relevant – their training and development portal has made remote learning a dream.”

Owen Turner, MD, United by Design
(based in York with a team of 4-10 staff)

Business support

DBA membership is for the whole company, so all your colleagues can benefit in developing professionally. All our training courses are live online sessions focused on business related subjects such as: Managing People, Project Management, Presentation Skills, Expert Client Relationship Management etc.



“Our agency would be in a very different place if we hadn’t had access to the support that the DBA has given (training, advice, guidance, access to other agency owners’ views and experience).”

Sally Forsyth-Spark, Managing Director, Point 6
(based in London with a team of 20 staff)

Mentoring

The DBA Twenty/Twenty programme pairs rising industry leaders with established design pioneers for a 12-month one-to-one mentoring relationship. Since launching in 2011, more than 400 participants from over 250 DBA member businesses have participated. Designed specifically for individuals who want to take their thinking around business issues, their people and themselves to the next level.



“It is incredible how utterly brilliant and sector defining the Twenty/Twenty mentoring scheme really is. I’ve now been involved in three separate cohorts and I’ve been consistently blown away by the levels of trust, professionalism, honesty and integrity that underpin the process. This, in my opinion, is the DBA at its absolute best.”

Andy Sexton, Partner & Executive Creative Director, 2LK
(based in the South East with a team of 21-50 staff)

Benchmarking

The DBA Annual Survey report gives comparison data for agencies to allow you to compare your operational effectiveness with your peers. Available free and exclusively to DBA members, the detailed analysis in the report can help you grow your business' competitiveness, inform your strategic planning and budgets, and enable you to make key decisions about your business with greater confidence.



“The DBA’s **Annual Survey Report** is an **extraordinary resource** to have at my fingertips. It gives context on the performance of our business in terms of margins, utilisation rates and competitive salaries and benefits to name just a few examples.”

Jeannine Martin, Finance Director, Wardour
(based in London with a team of 20-30 staff)

Differentiation

In the UK there are somewhere in the region of 20,000 design agencies. What makes you any different?

Being a member of your trade associations shows that you care about the development of your business, your staff and how you manage your clients. You believe in the DBA Code of Conduct; you can use the DBA Member logo; you can use our templates and support to address requests to free pitch; and you are profiled in the DBA Directory of Members.



“The DBA has a unique perspective on the design sector – it knows it very well and plays a fundamental role in making our industry more effective and more competitive.”

Jonny Westcar, Founder, Phoenix Studio

(based in London with a team of 6 staff)

Resources

Access to opinion pieces, thought leadership, and guidance on a wide range of topics. From sustainability to diversity, from inspirational videos on leadership, to practical advice on appraising creative staff.

For those needing HR and legal support the DBA provides two helplines fast-tracking you to expert advice.

The DBA is a source of insight, support and inspiration.



“The DBA are exceptional. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard our leadership team talk so positively about the DBA regarding the level of consumable on-point intelligence at the right time.”

Alex Bane, Founder and Creative Partner, Taxi Studio
(based in Bristol with a team of 21-50 staff)

Membership fees

Membership terms are for a full year January to December. If joining mid-year, the fee is pro-rata until the end of the year, unless you are joining in September or later, in which case the term runs until the end of the following year. Fees can be paid annually in advance, or in direct debit instalments (monthly or quarterly).

2024 Membership Fees

Employees	Monthly fees (ex vat)	Annual fees (ex vat)
1 (single person business)	£41	£492
2-3	£80	£960
4-10	£121	£1,452
11-20	£184	£2,208
21-50	£268	£3,216
51-75	£362	£4,344
76-100	£480	£5,760
101+	£610	£7,320

Membership T&Cs

- Membership terms are for a full year January to December. If joining mid-year, the fee is pro-rata until the end of the year, unless you are joining in September or later, in which case the term runs until the end of the following year.
- Fees are payable in advance, although the amount can be spread through direct debit instalments at no extra cost.
- The DBA reserves the right to change subscription bands and fees at any time, giving members one month's notice. Changes will only come into effect at the time of renewal.
- Membership of the DBA is continuous. At the time of renewal membership automatically rolls over for a full year. Membership must be cancelled in writing at least one month before the end of a full term (ie. by 1st Dec). We will write to you two months before the end of your term to remind you of this.
- Membership cannot be cancelled mid-term. Outstanding direct debit payments must be paid until the end of your annual term.
- The DBA wishes to make clear that DBA membership is not tax deductible because as the DBA operates for the benefit of its members it does not generate a significant profit and so does not pay tax.

DBA Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a set of model recommended practices, which have been designed and developed to provide DBA design agency members with a series of behaviour guidelines and to improve the professionalism of the industry. DBA members use the code of conduct to reflect and influence the way they run their businesses and deal with clients.

1. The first responsibility of a member is to whoever commissions the design.
2. In discharging that responsibility, members are expected to act in a competent, honourable and efficient manner.
3. Whilst members may act as consultants or as traders, and may receive payment for services or goods in a variety of ways, providing there is no conflict with their client's interests, they should disclose to the client all sources of payment before commencing work and should ensure that these are included in any offer or proposal. Similarly, members must disclose to a client any financial involvement with suppliers or sub-contractors or similar third parties involved in the contract.

DBA Code of Conduct (cont)

4. A member company should not work simultaneously on competitive projects without informing the clients involved.
5. Members should not divulge to any other party information about a client, that is confidential or might be detrimental to his business. This confidentiality may by agreement be limited as to time. Similarly, members should not allow their staff to show work of a confidential nature to others, including potential employers, without prior written agreement.
6. Members should not give or receive substantial benefits which might cause an obligation to any party in a contract and therefore not best serve the interests of the design commissioner.
7. Members shouldn't take part in pitches that require unpaid work. The level of payment for pitches should relate to the time and effort involved.
8. Members may promote their services by all normal commercial means such as advertising or public relations activity, providing this is legal, decent, honest and truthful.
9. Members shall not knowingly copy the work of another company or practice.

Join in 5 steps

1. Complete the online [Membership Application Form](#)
2. Decide if you would prefer to pay annually in one lump sum, or in monthly or quarterly instalments. There is no additional charge for paying in instalments.
3. If you prefer to pay annually, we will issue you with an invoice.
4. If you prefer instalments, you will need to complete a [direct debit mandate](#) and let us know if you prefer monthly or quarterly payments. A link to the direct debit mandate will also be sent to you on completion of the application.
5. As soon as the payment method is confirmed we will set up your membership in our CRM system. You will receive confirmation that you and your team have access to the DBA resources.

Any Questions?

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