

Marketing

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**Design
Case
Studies**



John Morris
Managing director

Design Bridge is an international branding agency that blends creative passion, strategic insight and entrepreneurial spirit to create and develop brands for clients including Pernod Ricard, Samsung, KFC and Unilever.

Founded in 1986, with offices in Amsterdam, London and Singapore, Design Bridge is currently working in more than 40 countries worldwide.

John Morris is managing director of Design Bridge in London, the headquarters of the international branding agency. He has 15 years' experience of working for clients as varied as General Motors, Ericsson, Allied Domecq, Unilever and Cadbury Schweppes. Morris passionately believes that creativity channelled in the right way is the key to solving marketing – and therefore business – problems.

Does it sell?

Clever ideas alone cannot guarantee commercial success, but with some long-term thinking, the two can go hand in hand, writes John Morris

So you have a great idea. The client likes it, the agency team, obviously, loves it and so, you hope, will the consumer. But how do you know? How can you guarantee that what you have created – fantastic as it is – will not fall by the wayside, surpassed by the competition or overlooked in favour of another?

Brand development is not just about logo-slapping or isolated activities such as packaging design or advertising. Brand development is about creating an experience and using design to effectively communicate a consistent and coherent message through all available touchpoints.

It is about creating something with meaning, that disrupts, inspires and engages, transcending the choices available to the consumer and making its mark with the target audience – wherever they may be – because, in today's connected community, brands have to exist in a global marketplace.

To get there, of course, requires a lot of thinking – an agency that creates a successful brand draws upon a whole host of internal and external resources to find the right solution.

The first step is establishing a collaborative partnership with the client – understanding them, their business goals and, in turn, their brand proposition. You can't expect to be successful without this level of co-operation and understanding. After all, who knows the brand better than the brand owner?

By their very nature, brands are individuals. Without a personality – or big brand idea – they have nothing to differentiate them from the multitude of other offers available. Yet how do you ensure that the personality you are trying to communicate is relevant to the target audience and engages with their specific motivations or needs?

A problem that befalls many agencies is not questioning the project brief as given to them by a client. What is the challenge and what is the objective?

In many instances, the client brief simply targets an immediate business need rather than considering the longer-term implications of brand development. A confident agency does not shy away from questioning their client's objectives because commercial effectiveness – will it sell? – is paramount in their thinking.

Without 'pushing back', less strategically focused agencies will continue to perpetuate the supplier culture that permeates the design industry and contributes to many brands' long-term failure to reach their full potential.

To deliver clear strategic direction, the role of the brand strategist can never be underestimated when creating a targeted brand proposition.

Understanding the business, the market and the target consumer, the brand strategist acts as a bridge between the client brief and the creative

Demonstrating a positive return on your client's investment by aligning insightful strategic thinking with targeted creative output ensures their ROI justifies the agency expense. With the increasing influence of the purchasing department on agency/client relationships, ROI is likely to come into the equation sooner rather than later.

Agencies need to think about the commercial implications of their design solutions as standard criteria. The best agencies ensure creative brilliance and commercial success are never mutually exclusive. However, the work must do more than outperform sales targets; it should offer technical excellence that helps to reduce production overheads, more sustainable design solutions, increased market share and retailer listings – as all these factors and more contribute to measuring effectiveness.

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team, ensuring that the strategic direction for the brand, as outlined in the initial phases of the project, is translated into clear creative direction.

There's nothing worse, and potentially more costly, than having to revisit a brand time and time again because the thinking and the direction were not clarified at the outset. Good business is about offering clients value for money throughout the relationship.

Historically, design agencies worked on a project-by-project basis. However, as many agencies and clients have gained understanding of the long-term implications of branding and brand guardianship – as well as the short-term objectives – retained business is becoming increasingly commonplace.

As an agency, we define ourselves as creative entrepreneurs: creative because it's what drives our business, and entrepreneurs because everything we do is focused on commercial success for our clients, through ensuring that our brand solutions are on brand, on target and on time.

What we do combines creativity with reason, and the ability to evaluate and subsequently demonstrate the commercial impact of our work to both present and future clients adds immeasurable value to our offer.

So, the next time an agency challenges your brief, don't put it down to creative egos, but rather to a commitment to creating a meaningful, unique and commercially successful brand. ■



Case study Marqués de Valdeueza

Brand

The brief was to develop an identity for the Marqués de Valdeueza brand, under which to launch its single estate extra virgin olive oil, that communicated to consumers the brand values of heritage, authenticity and, most importantly, superior quality.

Inspiration

For more than 600 years, the Marqués de Valdeueza family has been producing some of the world's finest olive oils and wines in Spain. Inspiration provided by the family's heritage was balanced with contemporary styling to create the right brand experience for consumers.

Marqués de Valdeueza Bodega

Building on the successful launch of the olive oil, Design Bridge created a premium wine brand to extend the offer to consumers: Marqués de Valdeueza Wines. A further extension is under way with the creation of a branded visitor experience.

Merula Brand

Following the phenomenal success of the single estate olive oil, the agency created a second brand: Merula Extra Virgin Olive Oil, which truly reflects the positioning of this high-quality product, while standing out on-shelf.

Results

Sales figures for the Marqués de Valdeueza Extra Virgin Olive Oil (including the Merula brand) have been impressive: 500% growth year on year since launch (compared with an annual market growth of about 15%). The brands are now available in the US, UK, Russia, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain.

