

NAKED NEWS

intelligent design /
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when did you first notice your marketing wasn't working?

Remember the 'good old days' when TV was black-and-white, with only three channels to choose from? When there was no pay TV, no DVD, no MP3? When we typed with typewriters and the most sophisticated electronic game on the market was the Atari? There was no internet, no email, no mobile phone – the fax machine was about as unbelievable a thing as we'd ever seen! It sounds like a scene from the 1950s, but that's what life was like just 25 years ago.

Yep, things were different then. As consumers, we had a much more limited choice of products and services available to us, and as marketers we had far fewer options when it came to promoting them. Today, 'the competition' has gone from being other businesses in the same Yellow Pages as you, to almost every business on earth. First-mover advantages can disappear overnight and true market niches are so wafer-thin that the only thing harder than finding one is servicing it profitably.

The way we used to market probably won't even get you on the playing field today. Then, it was all about awareness and promotion – about selling what you knew how to make well – now, it's all about finding something that the target market wants and delivering it in a way that no one else is doing it.

ever heard of a company called apple?

Apple is a fantastic example of a business delivering a product that is (generally speaking) a generic form of technology, but doing it in a way that creates phenomenal demand and loyalty. People love their Apple iPod in a way that they'll never love their Sony or Samsung. Why? Because before Apple, computers were all beige and MP3s were all black. With the help of some intelligent product and packaging design, Apple has transformed technology from being utilitarian to being desirable. And if you can achieve that with a small electronic piece of gadgetry, surely you can do it in your business, too.

Real and sustainable success is about having the courage to crack the mould. Most modern-day marketing departments are 'promotions departments', while the product development stuff is done behind closed doors by the bean counters. What could you achieve if you got the people closest to your customers back into the room and let them bring their polo-neck-wearing creative teams in with them? What if you stopped being hell-bent on trying to do what you've always done and started to focus on giving the market what it really wants?

What the folks at Apple have done so well is understand that technical expertise is not enough. It's about finding out what the market wants (even if they don't know it yet) and wrapping it in cut-through communications that leave no detail untouched. If you've ever bought and unpacked a new Apple anything, you'll know that feeling of straight away wanting to buy another one just so you can do it again. Every detail is perfect, clever, different, thoughtful: we call it intelligent design and it's about adding enormous value to a product, service or brand by ensuring that every aspect says something powerful and consistent about the organisation. The lesson? If you want to find a competitive advantage, bring your creative people in at the start of the process, rather than briefing them to try and sell what you've already got.

Closer to home, two of team scope's clients epitomise the success that comes from bringing intelligent design to the fore. Neither of these businesses is new, and fundamentally neither has changed its product offering – what they have done is work with us to make intelligent design a key component of their communications and product/service development strategy. It begins with a proven methodology and ends with outstanding results.

rt healthy returns

RT Health Fund is that rare textbook example of an organisation that placed its brand at the centre of its business and built outward. This 120-year-old health fund was on the brink of disaster when a new board of directors and CEO were brought in to try and save it. The first new management recruit wasn't an operations or finance manager, it was a marketing and design team. Working with this organisation from the very beginning, team scope has helped RT to understand and define the value in its brand, and to bring it to life in a tangible way through communications that speak to members and potential members with a consistent and powerful brand voice – from advertising and promotions, to member newsletters and annual reports, every touchpoint has been re-engineered to add value and deliver a better experience. Think you can't do anything different with basic business stationery? Ask us to show you the RT range.

When we first met RT, it had been struggling with a shrinking membership base, today it's happily going about the business of gobbling up market share from the big boys, and member growth has skyrocketed from just 2% in 2006 to more than 20% in 2009 – a rate of growth that smashes the industry average by several fold. Equally important for this organisation is retaining existing members and keeping them happy. The results speak for themselves: member retention has increased from 86% to 95% in the last three years, and satisfaction has increased from 77% to 79%. Sure, there's been a lot going on behind the scenes in terms of how RT runs its business, but an enormous contributor to its success has been its willingness to invest in design, which has enabled it to approach the market in an entirely new way.

branding with bite

The Ortho Practice is another example of how it's possible to create a customer experience that is fundamentally different to anything your competition has to offer. This orthodontic practice would have to be the funkiest around – fresh, clean, charismatic branding; sleek lines; contemporary furniture; and not a single dog-eared magazine in sight. The Ortho Practice wanted to create a space where patients could feel comfortable and relaxed – and not at all like they were at the dentist.

Working with team scope from the outset, The Ortho Practice has created a unique environment and customer experience, and achieved something miraculous in the process – a team that love their work and clients that love visiting them. People can't help but talk about The Ortho Practice, and when they do they receive a personalised thank you card from the practice manager... and on their birthday, a birthday card. The Ortho Practice is also heavily involved in promoting dental health through a unique schools program. Since 2006 they've managed to increase annual turnover by close to 33% and they're spending just 5% of turnover on marketing. They've been successful in growing their business in a very difficult economic climate and are enjoying strong growth through word of mouth, just by giving people something to talk about – the best and most effective form of marketing that anyone could hope for.

These two very different businesses have incorporated powerful, consistent – intelligent – design into the product/service development phase and delivered a new experience to their target markets – with impressive bottom-line results.

The upshot is simple. You can't apply yesterday's ideas if you want to stay in the game long enough to see tomorrow. Intelligent design is about identifying problems, asking good questions and finding better answers.



team scope are leaders in finding creative solutions to business problems. Our intelligent design methodology leads to practical, measurable bottom-line results. If you're ready to think differently about how you're doing business, let's talk.

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what's on your bedside table?

We love a good read and we know that most people who like getting Naked do too.

This issue we're reading ...

- Do good design
by David B. Berman
- Building Design Strategy: Using Design to Achieve Key Business Objectives
by Thomas Lockwood
- A Fine Line: How Design Strategies Are Shaping the Future of Business
by Hartmut Esslinger

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