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Leading by design

The start of
something
special

Client

Grapevine

Designer

The Mad Agency

Project summary

Grapevine need to stand out in a fierce marketplace. To help achieve this, it turned to Leading by Design and was surprised by what it learnt.

The South West Design Programme has grown out of the Leading by Design programme. Building on the goodwill and reputation established under Leading by Design, we continue to work with funding provided by the South West Regional Development Agency, helping small and medium sized businesses in the South West realise their potential through high quality design advice.

Client summary

Grapevine is a mobile technology company, with its head office in Poole and a regional office in Bath. Set up in 1991, it provides cost-effective and reliable mobile communication solutions to both large and small organisations across the country.

The company exclusively uses Vodafone tariffs and acts on behalf of the network as its local business specialist. It aims to provide business users with a complete communication package for their needs – hence the company’s strap line: ‘Communication Integration’.

Grapevine has around 1,000 businesses on its database, together with a large number of local sole-traders and start-ups.

Designer summary

The Mad Agency is a Wimborne based advertising agency set up about five years ago by Richard Crossman (Managing Director), Tony Cook, (Studio Director), and Tim Dowland, (Creative Director).

The Mad Agency prides itself on honesty, integrity and delivering creative and innovative solutions. It’s an approach the agency strongly believes in, as Tim Dowland, Creative Director at the company, says:

“[a business relationship is] 80% people and personality and how well you get on with each other – business can be lost if you are not open and honest about ideas”.



And it’s an approach that’s served the company well: over the last five years it’s seen turnover double.

The company now has over a hundred clients on its books, from one-person businesses to multi-national organisations (including the RNLI, the Royal Navy, and the Early Learning Centre), and ten staff in its team.

Design process

To stay on top in a fierce marketplace, Grapevine needed to improve its corporate brand identity. This would individualise and separate the brand from its strong association with Vodafone, and help fend off tough competition from its competitors – major mobile communication players (the networks, chains), larger dealers, and small regional companies.

Leading by Design's Project Facilitator at Business Link Wessex matched Grapevine with The Mad Agency and another design agency.

Both companies were asked to give a presentation to Grapevine about how they would improve the company's brand image and marketing and roll it out across all of Grapevine's promotional channels: stationery, signage, templates for Power Point, recommend a friend cards, and new prospect brochures.

Grapevine wrote a very detailed and clear design brief for the agencies to work from. And the companies got started.

After seeing both sets of ideas, Grapevine awarded the re-branding project to The Mad Agency. The company liked the agency's ideas and approach, as well as the general ethos and informal way the company works.

The two businesses were left to work side-by-side on the project.

Following a series of internal team-driven creative workshops, The Mad Agency produced around fifteen different logos, from which Grapevine selected the most appropriate.

Outcome

Grapevine is very pleased with the work. It now has a new brand that retains its close link with Vodafone, but gives the company its own high profile identity to aid its longer-term growth and future business expansion.

Grapevine found The Mad Agency to be very flexible, friendly and honest. And Paul Lappage, Grapevine's Business Development Manager, commented on how good it was to get a proper design agency to work on its corporate identity at last.

Both companies are going to work together in the future. In fact, since the end of the Leading by Design project, they have worked together a total of seven times. What's more, The Mad Agency's mobile phone contracts are now all with Grapevine.

Although the measurable results of the re-branding may not be seen for a while, Grapevine is planning to be more proactive with its marketing strategies in 2006 to help maximise brand impact. It will also use the next 12 months to monitor and evaluate the change. And it is hoped that the results will show a clear effect on Grapevine's turnover and profitability.

As part of the Leading by Design scheme, Grapevine got a real insight into the design process and just how lengthy it could be. As Paul Lappage commented:

"...for business purchasers of a product you want it straight away... we have had to learn that good design, from inception to delivery, can take a long time".

The Leading by Design initiative was a useful learning experience for The Mad Agency too: it gave them an unprecedented opportunity to raise awareness about the benefits of design in the local small and medium-sized business (SMEs) sector. And also helped them gain a better understanding of what SMEs want from a design agency.

Key learning points

Small and medium-sized businesses work on limited budgets. Grapevine felt it was essential that designers and companies agree, upfront, how much the work will cost – so that there are no major surprises at the end of projects.

Both companies said that they would have liked the relationship with Business Link Wessex to continue beyond the initial introductory phase. And also that they would have benefited from ongoing mentoring and some further impact evaluation support.



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