



Designing Demand | Case Study | Meon Springs

# Re-brand to hook corporate fishing and shooting away-days

## Background

This long-established family farming business diversified in 1985 to exploit the fishing potential of Hampshire's Meon Valley. Clay shooting was added to the offer in 2006. Other divisions of the business include an area for tree planting and dedication, as well as an extensive self-storage facility built three years ago.

## The challenge

The owners realised that they needed to take a more professional approach to the presentation of their marketing – to ensure it reflected the excellence of the product. A prime aim was to attract more interest from the quality corporate sector to their premium away-day offer. The marketing was also to be aimed at increasing business within all divisions of the company.

## The response

The first task was to re-design the brand identity and produce new literature. The next stage, currently under way, is a re-vamp of the website and a complete overhaul of the on-site shop, café and the entrance to the fishing lodge.

## The outcome

The presentation of the Meon Springs offers has been vastly improved and the owners are confident of significantly increasing business – and revenue! A welcome but unexpected side-effect of the re-branding has been a noticeable re-motivation of employees.

“ The programme offered a structured approach to our design challenge and took us down a professional route to achieving the solution... ”

### 'Presentation has been lifted to another level'

However great your product or service, if it isn't marketed effectively to your target audience, you can never hope to maximise sales.

This was the challenge for Meon Springs. The company was launched in 1985 by Nicholas Butler whose family own and farm the land which is situated in a beautiful valley in rural Hampshire. The business initially aimed to exploit the superb fishing potential of the Meon Valley although clay shooting was added last year to broaden the appeal. Other facilities include tree planting and dedication as well as a self-storage facility.

At the beginning of 2007 Nicholas and his sons Jamie and William, who had by now joined in the running of the business, decided that their marketing didn't do justice to what is acknowledged to be a first-class facility. With two lakes covering three acres of water, located in an area of spectacular downland countryside, the business provided a superior setting for fishing and clay shooting.

"We offer a superb service but felt that our marketing materials just didn't reflect the quality of Meon Springs," said Jamie Butler, the company's head of operations.

Having already used some Business Link services, including training courses, Jamie was all ears when his business adviser told him about Designing Demand, a programme developed by the Design Council, funded by SEEDA and delivered by Business Link.

Keen to learn more, he attended a free, one-day Designing Demand company workshop in January 2007 and realised that this could be the answer to Meon Springs' marketing challenge.

After signing up to the Designing Demand Generate programme, the owners of Meon Springs met James Duguid, the design associate who was to oversee the project.

"There is absolutely no doubt that design can add significant value to a business but to get maximum benefit from this programme the senior managers or directors must be forward-thinking and willing to invest their time," said James, one of a group of experienced designers recruited by the Design Council to mentor businesses on the Designing Demand programme.

"The Butlers threw themselves behind the programme with great enthusiasm as we undertook a root and branch review of the way in which the Meon Springs facilities were marketed. This exercise revealed the need to find a way of presenting a more cohesive total offer."

The next task for James was to help the directors find the right skills to achieve this clearly-identified goal. After a competitive pitch between the three consultants to whom James introduced them, Stephen Franks of Oxford-based Franks and Franks was commissioned to undertake the project.

This has resulted in a new brand identity and the production of two new brochures, one aimed at individuals and the other at the corporate sector. The website is also being re-designed and the on-site retail shop, café and fishing lodge entrance will all be completely re-furbished. As part of the re-design, Petersfield-based photographer Michael Fuchard has captured sensational images to complement the new look.

Six months into the programme, the verdict is unanimous.

"The programme offered a structured approach to our design challenge and took us down a professional route to achieving the solution," said Jamie. "The results have been amazing and a bonus has been the positive impact it's had on our staff who share our pride and delight in the new branding.

"The presentation has been lifted to a new level which now truly reflects the quality of our product and should appeal to our target market – the big companies looking for a first-class corporate event. In the short-term we would like to attract at least two corporate away-days every week of the year.

In financial terms the aim is to increase turnover for the leisure activities, currently just under £200,000, by a minimum of £105,000 by the end of 2008.

Jackie Walker, regional programme manager for Designing Demand at Business Link in the South East, is following the project with great interest.

She said: "It is very exciting to see an ambitious small rural leisure business grasping the opportunity to use world-class design to steal a march on its rivals and maximise its growth potential by attracting new corporate clients. Meon Springs has an outstanding offer and now, thanks to design input, the presentation of that offer truly reflects its excellence."



For more information about the Designing Demand programme contact [design@businesslinkse.co.uk](mailto:design@businesslinkse.co.uk) or visit [www.designingdemand.org.uk](http://www.designingdemand.org.uk)

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