



Designing Demand | Case Study | RJR Solicitors

Long-established law firm makes a case for a new image

Background

RJR Solicitors has been operating for over 100 years, providing a wide range of legal services on the Isle of Wight. The 40-strong firm operates out of four offices on the island, with over 90% of its work coming from repeat business, referrals and word-of-mouth recommendation.

The challenge

Deregulation of the legal industry will present increasing competition, with banks, building societies – even organisations like Tesco – offering legal services directly to the public and the business community. These challenges are compounded at RJR by the fact that variations in the business models for each type of service the firm offers has resulted in different communication methods and brand development. In addition, it was felt that RJR was perceived as slightly stuffy!

The response

A rebranding exercise has been put into place to re-position RJR as a modern legal firm, emphasising the high quality of its friendly, personal service while alluding to its illustrious heritage. The new branding, which started with a revitalised visual identity, is designed to permeate the business model and strategy, helping RJR to successfully move into a new era.

The outcome

A new logo, new marketing materials and a revamped website are all designed to reflect the 21st century RJR which sets great store by the human aspect of its services. This will be followed by a makeover of the Ryde premises to complete the new image. The project is expected to enhance customer loyalty and attract significant additional clients.

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‘Legal advice with a human face’

On the plus side, a successful long-established business has a proven track record and a wealth of expertise in its favour. On the minus side, it may sometimes be perceived – often unfairly – as having one foot stuck in the past.

RJR Solicitors have been providing legal services on the Isle of Wight for over 100 years but have become increasingly aware of the need to fend off mounting competition from banks, building societies and other organisations like the AA and Tesco, as a result of deregulation of the legal industry

“These changes in the nature of delivery of legal services made us examine our own offering and the perception was that perhaps we had become a bit set in our ways,” said Virgil Philpott, Head of Business Development. “Our expertise is second to none and we have a very loyal client base. However, we are conscious of the need to attract new clients and we were falling down on the way we communicated our skills.”

Recognising the problems but unsure of the solution, Virgil attended a Designing Demand workshop. Developed by the Design Council, funded by SEEDA and delivered by Business Link, the programme helps companies to make strategic design decisions and set up and run design projects.

“I could immediately see the benefits of signing up to the programme,” said Virgil. “Subsequently all eight RJR partners took part in a Designing Demand Generate session with Design Associate Pradeep Sharma to discuss the way forward.”

One problem highlighted was that while RJR has the advantage of offering a wide range of services from probate and litigation to criminal and commercial, this can cause confusion in the communication and business development platforms required by the different business strands.

All agreed that a good brand strategy would help provide the synergy through which the solicitors could grow the business in their chosen practice areas.

With market research indicating that prospective clients, when comparing firms, take for granted the ability to provide legal services, the focus moved to highlighting the high quality and personal nature of RJR’s service.

Design consultants Franks & Franks were appointed to create a new visual identity and find an integrated philosophy for the firm to embrace. They replaced the dated logo with a crisp, modern design and produced new communications materials to incorporate the fresh brand image. Finally, to emphasise the approachable nature of the solicitors and the friendly, personal service on offer, they devised the strapline ‘legal advice with a human face’.

Impressed by the progress made so far, Pradeep Sharma said: “Agreeing and implementing such changes is always a challenge in a professional services firm with numerous partners. However, the company is clearly moving in the right direction and during the coming months the rebranding will be fully implemented. The new website will reflect the personality of the solicitors and confirm RJR as a friendly, modern firm with unrivalled expertise. This should not only reinforce loyalty among the existing customer base but also attract new clients who appreciate that unrivalled combination.”

Jackie Walker, regional programme manager at Business Link for Designing Demand in the South East, said: “RJR Solicitors has anticipated future challenges and cleverly utilised design to re-position itself in a competitive marketplace. However, this was not simply a straightforward visual makeover but also using the new branding as an organisational tool to progress the business model and company strategy.”



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