

# Integration

## ONE THIRD IDENTITY

Your identity constitutes one third of your organisation's total effort towards the likely success or failure of your organisation's objectives. The other two are: your products and services and your marketing and distribution.

When you examine this definition it may seem to be fundamentally obvious. Yet it is too easily overlooked, and too valuable to ignore. Too many organisations, and especially their leaders, pay lip service to the role of identity.

*a creative mind  
is an open mind,  
and one more likely  
to turn a problem  
into a solution*

Even if they acknowledge or already benefit from the importance they give it, most fail to recognise the links between each third which combine to form the effective whole. They settle for far less: an uncoordinated, partly functioning, untuned and unstable situation.

Like a triple-engine aircraft your organisation may be able to fly on two or perhaps one of its three engines, but far less efficiently, and with a correspondingly higher cost in engine strain, maintenance and vibration. However, if each power source is tuned and synchronised to perform together in harmony, the craft can be considered to be in trim, and maximum performance and safety assured. Result: a pilot in control, and the bonus of a safer journey for all concerned.

The full benefits of a complete identity can only be achieved when each of these three sources shares the same objectives. They should all be contributing to and complementing the same ideals. They should certainly not be in conflict, or for that matter indifferent to one another.

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### EXPLORING YOUR STRATEGY

The big burning question for you is will your currently proposed strategy work? Will the formulations of your current strategy meetings succeed, or are they flawed before the outset by invisible forces? This is where viewing your strategy via the vantage point of your identity, and how this identity integrates with your objectives, can offer you an interrogation of strategy unachievable otherwise. Unlike those who view their identity as merely a decorative add-on, you are going to learn how to harness the true potential power of this resource and ensure that your identity works smarter and harder. You will understand

that it is vital to do this because if you delegate the creation and management of your identity to suppliers outside of your organisation, without the intention of fully integrating this with your commercial strategy, then you have in effect abdicated control over a large part of that strategy. This is inevitable on the basis that just your visual appearance alone in the eyes of your audience is the majority of the strategy they will perceive.

*a strategy is  
a remarkable  
prediction  
– it is a pledge  
of responsibility*

Notice that when investing in themselves or other companies, most organisations think first about commercial management, secondly about financial management and seldom about the way in which their target company frames its messages to multiple audiences.

This is despite the fact that most businesses fail due to issues of perception rather than product performance or their real ability to deliver. Therefore it should be no surprise that issues of identity, presentation and perception-building should be included in all strategy discussions from day one. The purpose of this chapter is to show how to structure your guiding thoughts on these issues and to explain the benefits of doing so.

A strategy is a remarkable prediction. It is a pledge of responsibility. It is a bridge of intent, usually against all who would conspire against you – vested interests within your organisation as well as the more obvious market competition without. In the act of predicting we push ourselves to forecast to the peak of our abilities. There is always a conflict: you need passion to drive forward, and cold objectivity to remain on course. To focus a winning strategy

the passionate and dispassionate must eventually agree. And, it is normal for all this to be conducted at breakneck speed.

Within your strategy team, great and poor ideas will compete. The powerful and weak will need to contribute and listen carefully to each other. Instinctive misgivings are often difficult to articulate, and the pressure to collectively and speedily agree is dangerous. If, as a team member, you doubt the promise, you have a duty to raise your voice, however untidy your thoughts. The questions are never easy. Perhaps the current debate is too limiting? Perhaps the perspective could be better angled, or the view moved closer or more distant? Perhaps these discussions exclude, through ignorance or assumption, other significant areas of concern that you are presently glazing over too readily? If in doubt, remind yourself to list the critical components necessary for the plan to succeed, and hunt for issues surrounding these essentials, especially the potential pitfalls that you might currently be – in fact, almost certainly are – taking for granted. Squarely face unfamiliar problems and obtain specialist knowledge where required.

You need to place the relevance and importance of your identity directly into the mix. The trouble is, not everyone in your team may agree. Managements may not see the need for, or feel comfortable about, including the advice of those they cannot readily understand (or audit) into the centre of 'their' strategy process. This is a sticking point for those who see identity as only a clever trick of superficiality, yet simultaneously expect to gain the hearts and minds of the entire organisation and marketplace. What they fail to see is that they want the whole but only negotiate a part. They may want the rewards of a successful identity, but because they cannot understand the audit trail, they may allow it to sink into being viewed only as a subjective and erratic process of chance. You wouldn't build a suspension bridge with the same mentality. Yet like all acts of engineering, identity has nuts and bolts too! If you want greater design certainty, then it is only a matter of deciding that you will identify the critical linkages, however obscure they may at first appear to be, and then construct accordingly. You do not need to be a visual whiz kid to achieve this. You just need clear objectives and an open and unbiased mind.

*your identity  
should be as  
well engineered  
as your product*

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### A NECESSARY DIVERSION

At this point you need to consider how best to maximise the creativity of your organisation and its creative suppliers. Creative agencies are only too familiar with contracts that begin in just such a manner, where they are employed too little or late in the process to mobilise and contribute their full talents. Often the mistrust is a fear of runaway budget and lack of validation to match the allocation of resources. Marketing, and in particular the creative contributors to the marketing process, is a distrusted area of operation because image-building and perceptions are less accountable than other business operations, and the unknown of this divide produces a climate where those above the process may try to curtail expenditure whilst all those working within correspondingly argue for greater and greater resources (arguably, but virtually always, not clearly enough justified). So when push comes to shove, it is commonplace for a creative agency to be numbed into accepting that the identity process (in all its aspects of design, advertising, packaging and other communications) be sheared away from the more underlying business fundamentals. Too often those larger all-pervading issues of product and distribution are locked away beyond the – threatening for some – reach of their creativity. Unfocused or unstructured creativity is a threat to those who are unable to understand it, and whether this is the fault of those judging its validity or those proposing it is seldom a clear-cut issue. Through such uncertainties and insecurities of management the strategy may meanwhile edge ahead but with these limitations of disorder and uncoordinated understanding.

Be clear that the development of a product and its margins of invention, customer interface, application, pricing, profit and distribution are all legitimate issues of identity. For example, price and product quality shape a customer's perception of pleasure and pain, and also contribute to the definition of market category and position. Identity can be created and applied to deliberately strengthen or weaken market differentiation in *all* areas of operation, not just a limited few. Identity gives you impregnated directional control. It's like a steering wheel on your dashboard. You may have one already, but this is the full four-wheel drive rally version: not only connected to the right wheels, but all of them, and with the intention of rocketing you with more speed than anyone else.

For this purpose there are three ‘key averages’ that you should remain mindful of. For your strategy to succeed you need to navigate just three summations of ‘product’, ‘identity’ and ‘distribution’.

In the midst of any strategy it is useful to exercise your mind about these three areas. They will tell you whether you are on the right path, as well as how far behind or ahead of the competition you are. They will also form the basis of your true differential: your competitive advantage as interpreted in this way. Through this differential you will also define your competitive values and, as a result, begin to realise more fully who you are and what you uniquely offer beyond any other market offering. If the strategy discussions you are involved in are at times confusing, or at least bewilderingly complicated in their viewpoints and conjecture, you need a quick and ready form of guidance to gauge this position and speedily find the gaps in the ongoing debate. Positives and negatives can quickly be noted, and the likelihood of success or failure rapidly estimated. To grasp the potential of this process you will need to think about what these three words represent in their widest interpretation.

### THREE KEY AVERAGES

*The first key average is your product.* Product is your body. Whether you are sitting down or standing, according to current science, you need one! Without product you do not exist on the ground, but only in the mind. The anticipation of future product stuck in R&D may buy you time, but eventually you will need to be seen, touched and evidenced as being alive. Product, real product, is tangibility. Ultimately, in the imaginations of your audience it is only the tangible, or the belief of tangible, that they will purchase or accept as reality. If your product is a service, and therefore not physical in the sense of, say, a dumper truck or pair of boots, it is wise to make up for any lack of physical or causal tangibility through deliberately coded presentations. In other words, weight what you show and tell with all the ‘weight’ of certainty and substance that you can muster. That might include using unequivocal colours, typeface designs, more coherent explanations and content messages. A convincing physical presence – evidence of cause and effect – however virtual, controversial or contrived, is a prerequisite of survival. Without tangible product, or the

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convincing illusion, others may not believe you now, and certainly will falter at some later date. You need product, and (what is more) it helps your progress if it is above average in comparison to your likely competition.

*The second key average is your identity.* If product (key average 1) is your body, then identity (key average 2) represents your mind. I think therefore I am. And if others are listening, watching or receiving, by whatever means, you might (though it is not wise to bank on it!) develop a meaningful presence.

*The third key average is your distribution.* The bad news is that a great body and mind are seldom enough. You need to get around more, or at least socialise in the right circles. You need distribution. The greater your effective distribution, the greater your effective audience. This includes distribution of sales as well as publicity. Both create territory – physical or emotional – and therefore the potential for demand. Distribution is more critical to sales than the identity, product, or that seamless combination of the two: the true brand. A bad product with a poor identity may still triumph, providing distribution is secure and you are safe on margins, technology, the waves of fashion, and the threat of market disruption. However, if distribution is your sole advantage you are vulnerable to a predator who may be able to find a way of making this

*above average  
in an average  
market wins*

redundant overnight, or else somehow turn your greatest strength into your greatest weakness. Current success might be fuelling complacency. After all, if it's always worked, the false assumption might be that this will continue indefinitely. A technology advance that challenges the current status of either product or distribution routes will disrupt and endanger your trading position. You may be smart enough to survive one disruption, but hit two together and you are history. Think of distribution in all its manifestations as the king of the moment. You might have a great product and identity, but if market distribution and supply channels refuse to play ball, you are doomed. The only way round this problem is to locate other feasible distribution channels, even if this means free distribution and intentional spillage to wholesalers (or even, shock horror, fraudsters if this provides an entry into an otherwise unavailable market!) Viral or more officially administered, distribution of product and identity is never an issue that should be taken for granted.

## WINNING AVERAGES

Why are these three components of product, identity and distribution referred to as ‘averages’? Because of comparison with your competition. Let us be crystal clear: your strategy is going to bring you into competition with others. This would hardly need saying, except the critical point is that your progress will be determined by a war of averages. That includes all individuals and organisations. Everyone has the threat of competition, including all non-commercial operations (who must compete with the justification of their existence), and it is notions of average (real and imaginary) that will determine the outcome of your objectives.

*The first truth of averages is that above average in an average market wins, whilst above average in an above-average market means money wins.* It might be worth contemplating that sentence again. It means that if you are presented with two alternative products, identical in terms of basic offering, status of identity and benefits of distribution, the choice goes to the one with the lower price. For example, the choice of accepting two credit cards in a marketplace awash with undifferentiated offerings goes to the one with the lowest APR. The only other consumer advantages (above averages) that can defend a higher price are identity (notably status) or distribution (above-average advertising, the card is accepted more widely than any other, or above-average exclusivity that profits a sector of the audience’s need for social standing).

Think about this: a contest between the above average in an above-average marketplace reduces all to the same average, and means that the spoils will go to those with the most money to burn, in other words those who can spend or lose more money and do so longer than anybody else. They can see the competition – you – off the face of the marketplace, should that be their wish.

In other words: before all other considerations of resource you require above average performance in *some or all* of the three key averages (product, identity and distribution), if you are to be able to gain entry into an existing market or market sector and, once there, survive.

Having a product, however exceptional, does not guarantee success. You may fail for other reasons of distribution, or identity, or both. Having a great identity may elevate an otherwise average product, but is it credible and have you the distribution guaranteed? Having distribution is a position of power as

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long as you can defend or remain attuned to fashion and technology changes that threaten to weaken your grip. In relationship to your current strategy, and the role your identity is playing, you now have a lot to think about. Yet the laws of this power play are simple to master, and ultimately always accurate.

*The second truth of averages is that if others cannot profit from you, they will destroy you.* Some people might think that sounds rather aggressive, but then so too, in that respect, is the natural order of the universe. Some might wish it wasn't so, but on entering the commercial world it is beneficial for your immediate team to realise this and thereafter continually remind themselves of it. It not only means that others may bully you, but under certain circumstances of profit or loss, they might just walk all over you.

If you are breaking away from the market's present expectations of product, identity and/or distribution then ensure your target audience not only agrees but also is prepared to travel with you. Will it profit them? For example, a new distribution medium needs to be profitable to your target audience, or they will destroy you if only through their absence. If you are not going to profit your intended customers with enough tangible advantage then urgently think again. Nothing else will get you past this point of market penetration for very long. Witness many an early dotcom.

Another factor to be aware of is when your identity is compromised or censored in the interests of obtaining the necessary level of distribution. This may be a market restricted by established brand channels. For example, a revolutionary home security device might get to market either through established electrical outlets, presided over by just a few brands, or else make a direct plea to end users via costly mass advertising. Depending on the size of your promotional resources you may need to offer greater levels of incentive to third parties than you may currently be imagining, in order to navigate the current market. If you do not have the budget to build distribution then you will need to feed off someone else who has it already. Obviously, this may mean further shavings off your profit margin. Less obviously it may mean a slice of your equity too. It depends on the partnerships likely to be necessary to rectify this one simple word: distribution.

Elsewhere, main distributors will not wish to upset their prior agreements with existing and therefore more immediately profitable rivals. Exclusive contracts will not be broken on mere promises of greater long-term profitability

– they have to be driven there through the fear or greed of a market whose demands and movements are threatening to disrupt their business. All these blockages and many more in the area of distribution tend to tax both ingenuity and budget. It is here that your identity needs to be attuned to the disruptive drivers that will ‘soften up’ the market ahead of you. Trojan horse or battering ram, your identity has a unique role to play in achieving your objectives, and in this respect it can afford no waste or superfluous confusions.

Then there are those strategy teams who believe that marketing their identity can solve all. In other words increase the distribution of the identity regardless of its lack of appropriate quality. However, distribution of awareness is no rival for physical distribution of product. Physical always eventually wins. Sustaining brand awareness relies on proof of product and distribution. Identity needs the reinforcement of a distributed product or service that profits its recipients. If without it, all is lost the moment the advertising budget breaks under the financial strain. However large the campaign spend, it will fail. Swashbuckling your audience into submission of awareness may please the ego of the unshrewd investor, and even convert into some early sales, but that is not the same as sustainable trading.

Of all the three key averages, it is lack of distribution that can inflict the gravest damage. Together with an ill-defined and confusing product it is the most commonly unattended area of concern. It is too easy to make errors of assumption on which product and identity so crucially rely. Furthermore, the way you engineer your product and the method and manner with which you distribute it speaks volumes about the ethos of the identity. Product, identity and distribution all help to define each other. All contribute to your overall perceived value and reputation. Issues of product and distribution are areas where identity can and should exert a tangible influence. The right identity can transform mundane product or distribution and turn stone into gold.

The permutations are many: great product can be blocked by poor distribution and/or identity; great distribution can persist despite poor product and identity; great distribution can be rendered irrelevant by them also; and

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great identity can, for a period, persist despite poor product and distribution. These few examples, and many more, represent complex issues, yet their inner truth is a simple interplay of these three key averages.

Guide your strategy by these and the promise and integrity of any strategy can be rapidly judged. Identity plays a key role in the outcome, potentially equal to and certainly integral to both product and distribution. Evaluate on the basis that to be exceptional in more than one key average is necessary. Exceptional in any two is also likely to be necessary if you are to achieve your objectives safely. But, ultimately, it is being above average in all three that will conquer all before you.

This is why you must integrate your identity into the wider mix of your operations, and by doing so you can now begin to navigate your progress and explore your strategy decisions as never before.

# Objectives

## HOW TO MOVE AHEAD

Here's the bad news: before you can embark on your identity and its creation or improvement you should first concentrate on your objectives. This is not what many people want to hear, for they are impatient to see or be inspired by some

*perhaps you  
need to fund  
a period of  
apparent  
inactivity*

visible evidence of who they are and where they are going – rather than the more trying process of first thinking about one's true objectives honestly and carefully. The temptation to rush can be overwhelming, maybe on the basis that any demonstrable action is more compelling than pausing to think or sitting down to discuss. Those tired of yet more meetings can be forgiven, except here the issues are so absolutely pivotal to everything else that follows, you simply do not have the choice to act in denial or rush ahead

with abandonment. This goal-setting need not be tiresome, but at the very least you will need to furnish your creatives with the general objectives of the organisation before they start to formulate their contribution.

Commercial objectives are relatively straightforward to establish, until one requires inspirational and emotive inputs. The more creative aspects of how best to achieve your objectives require time for reflection. Quality time. Topflight management know that to be immersed in an ongoing, pressing and busy work schedule blinds us to the wider and more unexpected opportunities that surely surround us. If only you had time to detach and consider more

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carefully, then perhaps just a minor shift in attitude, opinion or approach might produce spectacular revelations as how best to take the market by surprise and create a more profitable future.

Question one should be how significant a deviation from your present route or the route of the wider market category are you prepared to engage in? A more significant departure requires a thorough examination and rebuilding of all the values that surround your present situation. In particular, is a revolution of your current strategy appropriate or necessary for the perceived challenges ahead of you? Often it is the pretence of revolution that we are seeking, or 'revolution enough'. Maybe you require only the slightest of makeovers in order to tune up and extend the life of an existing identity? Or, just maybe you need (and can cope with) the shock of something completely different. So reflect on just how different you wish the future to be. What level of deviation (and possible disruption that goes with it) from your present path are you seeking, and are your team and audience also expected to tolerate?

In terms of creativity, identity offers you wider scope often than either product design or distribution, simply because issues of what you show, tell and do are so wide open to invention. Identity offers the potential for sheer surprise and an emotive power often unmatched, even by the product it promotes or works alongside. If this is the identity shock that you wish for, the greater the need to stop all current methodology. Wipe the briefing slate clean, and make certain that any outside agency you employ is not crippled by too prescriptive, or late, a brief. Have the confidence to engage them in the early forming of the strategy, and if you don't trust them enough for that, don't rest until you find a creative source that your circumstances demand. So, before you begin, you need to stop. Let the motors unwind and hear the silence of potential glide in.

## INTO THE UNKNOWN

We all tend to be trapped by what it is we think we know. Whereas thinking the unknown is more a process of stopping thought and following our feelings. This stopping to reflect and sense involves abandoning the responsibilities of the moment. Commitments make demands with or without concern for you. Maybe you need a clear day, week or even month – and you will need to feel

comfortable with funding that period of apparent inactivity. Maybe you need to make yourself the customer for a change, or give respect to yourself and the same standards of service you would offer your best client. Now is the time to invest in self; to find your destiny. If others see your withdrawal from 'normal' routine as negative, threatening or otherwise confusing, and it is not possible for whatever reason to explain or pacify, then so be it. Even the most assertive of us need to boost our assertiveness at times, and act in the face of fear: others' as well as our own. In a sense it is time for you to be a little selfish. Instead of reacting to the opinions of others, and others alone, it is time to grant yourself some space and mental latitude.

'Normal' routine, demands and reactionary behaviour are the enemies to this process. Habits are convenient, but should convenience drive your identity? Inconvenience offers you a detour or time to think differently. Habits abound because of the convenience they offer – the benefit of repeating and therefore not needing to question your actions as closely as you might otherwise. Habits need auditing. But they'll do anything to avoid it. They hide with tremendous skill. It is as though they have a brain of their own. Which is the root of the problem: they dissuade certain parts of yours from exercising enough.

Start by asking how many of your actions and thoughts about the current organisation are mechanical by nature, rather than freely challenging? To be systemised is often good; a worthy aim of management, but systems can also mask emerging problems. Be concerned when a system appears more important than the mission. You know the scenario: as a customer we experience the blunders and absurdities of organisational systems all too frequently; much as you might adore systems, refuse to trust them more than the value they were originally created for. The sell-by date of the average system is sooner than most managers presume.

Also, challenge the existing revenue streams in terms of their relative contributions, similarities and sustainability. Try to categorise these in a way that allows you to think about them more carefully than before. Do they reflect the true value you offer, the true interest and passion of what you feel your organisation does when operating at its best? What part of the audience are you

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more allied to, which part of the audience are you more in conflict with? Are the tangible points of your deliverables the correct ones? Look at the payment points. You can only be paid for the tangibles you present – the currently understood products and invoices. What if you could move these payment points? What would the effect be of thinking the impossible? What if you reduced or even eradicated what you charge for in one area and increased or introduced a charging structure in another? Obviously all these thoughts will impact on your overall business model and cash flow, but by allowing yourself to see things in a new light you may find the source of your current obstacles and a good deal of renewed enthusiasm for sorting out issues thwarting both your passion and profit. It is often useful to think about what you instinctively most want to *do* for your customers, irrespective of what you presently invoice and receive payment for. What part of your existing service is closer to your heart and the hearts of your audience – regardless of how small a fraction of your current service offering it may be, and whether it is currently a tangible you are even charging for.

## REALISING YOUR TRUE AIMS

As you do this you will uncover the objectives of your identity. As already stated, and important enough to repeat, you must invest enough time, even though the need for a new identity may seem an urgent affair and the added strain of allocating a proper period for the workmanship to be completed may frustrate you further. It can seem overwhelming, for all aspects of the task seem to queue up for attention at once. Above all it is about acknowledging that your identity must sincerely serve your aims. It must creatively add to the productivity of your otherwise commercial and financial strategy. The identity is not a flimsy add-on. It is every bit a part of the engineering and detailing of your overall objectives. It should be structurally sound, and anything less serving your needs is a waste of resources.

Aiming anywhere else can be dangerous. It is less likely that you will reach your commercial target. Even if you do, how can you know if the identity assisted this journey or prevented even greater success? It is absurd to start designing an identity in this way, yet this is exactly how many organisations

proceed: sleepwalking across the firing range, distracted, impatient and unaware of the role their identity is playing in their chances of success.

A vague sense of general creative direction, the wish to emulate the success of another, the blind pursuit of fame and fortune are all basic ingredients of ambition, and ingredients that do not set any clear objectives. Asking a design team to race away with no other information than this is folly. Yet both organisations and their designers being unable to prepare, beyond the courting of style minus substance, is a common phenomenon. Not my design team, you may be thinking... surely not on their fees... But how personally do you explore, and share, your vision in relation to your commercial and financial objectives? How often do you engage in abstract discussion with the one creative who improves you? What structure and values do you apply when designing the components of your identity; and apart from the mechanical specifications (such as your logo and its colour), what summarises and controls the essence of what you show, tell and do?

Style without a deeper-rooted objective is zero substance. There are an awful lot of applauded identities that, like paper ships slipping out of port, once on open seas blow or sink who knows where. This method of rudderless navigation means wasting costly resources, and begs the question: just how big is your budget? An even better question might be: how did you decide on the size of your marketing budget, and what verification of its effectiveness are you prepared to accept? It is not uncommon to find that audiences miss the point of the exercise as soon as the press relations withdraw; but so may your workforce, for what confidence do you offer them? Your identity may be worse than useless, more negative than not trying at all. And when you end up eventually revamping it, you might need to add the cost of the refit to the original mistake. It may surprise some, providing they could account for the effectiveness of their marketing spend, to discover their actions are actually counter-productive. In other words, a tighter, but more accurately aimed, budget might improve sales – doing less, spending less, can on occasion actually increase your market effectiveness.

You might like the colour. In terms of your proposed new visual identity the typeface may seem pleasing enough. A4 brochures with bland photography seem workable enough. Oh, and we'd better have smiling faces, use puns as much as possible, and a snappy 'strapline'. Now we're cooking...

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No you're not. Cooking a weak stew with no body or sustenance. A diet of such bland identities and their promotion litters the world around you. They leave the audience feeling non-committal, because that is what they are: directionless. All products are expected to have an identity of sorts, or else they are nameless commodities, but this is no excuse for simply slapping a name on a product and thinking you have achieved your mission.

If attempting a second design, without knowing the dynamics of the first, the difficulty of the process compounds. Repeatedly miss and then your willpower will vanish, and a successful outcome becomes more unlikely with each successive attempt. Likewise, a design team on their second or third pitch loses their own sense of vitality. Clients drunk on endless presentations increasingly lose sight of reality too, and, should the unexpected ideal solution appear during this late stage, its acceptance or recognition by jaded minds cannot be guaranteed. In desperation, or to save face (or budget), an inappropriate solution is likely to be adopted or the project abruptly terminated amidst confusion and denial. Either way, you have misconceived and wasted valuable resources. Such events happen more frequently than most investors are either made aware of or else will admit to.

You are searching for the one perfect identity. Quite simply, the solution that best serves your dream: your organisation's strategy. Even the most talented designers have only so many inspirational hours available to them when beginning a new project. This is the period when their inspiration rises to meet the challenge. Like you they only have so many hours in a day, so do you wish them to work steadily towards the best fitting solution, or just scatter their time half-heartedly on alternative ideas (all the while thinking each one must be different), in the hope that one idea may spark some 'emotion' in you and your team?

There are times when to work on the fifty-seven alternatives will be the most productive and sensible course of action, but only when the purpose and direction of doing so is clearly understood. Or else all is so much grapeshot – indiscriminating and heavy on resources.

Like true love, you'll know great identity when it hits you. Failure to feel this strongly means you are off the scent. You don't need to interview the world to find your true love. You have clues, shared values and recognisable traits. Concentrate and work with reason, and however insecure you may initially feel

about employing a designer, or creative team, involve them in this exploration. Be each other's psychiatrist if you must.

It is best never to ask creatives to 'pitch' without brief or fee. Even with payment never expect them to accept your brief without challenge. If the creative doesn't question your assessment of the situation (with verbal discussion or at least a defiant silence), think twice about employing them! You need to foster what should become an important relationship. Look for experts, but only those with the empathy and ability to inspire you. It sounds naive to some, but you must like them, and they you. You have a long and eventful trip to make – a shared set of objectives that should continue to evolve over time. You might as well enjoy the company.

#### THE OPPORTUNITIES OF CHANGE

A new identity is an agent of change. Effective identity divides and rules. An important role of an identity is to polarise the audience and act as a selection process for the classification of customer, supplier and prospective employee. In other words, it acts as a magnet, both attracting and repelling, however gently, through design.

It also ushers in the possibility and moral authority to investigate and change internal political issues of departments, organisational structure, job titles and descriptions, production methodology.

The benefits are clear, for in the process of reviewing your cobwebs, a well-considered identity promotes efficiency and economy, both of action and expenditure. It enables improved communications, internally and externally, by offering a reason to examine and challenge the ineffectual, inefficient or obsolete. Yet when starting an identity programme the opposite may seem true: it may seem like expenditure with no immediate, tangible reward. Do it right and the opposite is always true: because it strikes to the core of your entire marketing operations it produces and accelerates profit and, with continual review, continues to keep pace with your changing products and distribution issues, your



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organisation and marketplace. Some service department managers, such as those not yet acquainted with the front-end experience of higher management or sales, might miss the bigger picture, as well as the point that they are charged with the responsibility of investing their budgets – spending money to make money – rather than simply spending the resources they are given.

Other factors may also bar the productivity of a new identity. They include indifference or apathy within your team, age (too young to start, too old), market or geographical location (too close to see the opportunity, too far away to believe you can take advantage of it) and a shortage of self-knowledge and self-belief. Without forging some clear objectives you may unwittingly become a hostage to some or all of these issues, and fail to exploit the opportunities that are potentially yours as a result. That is why you need to proceed with caution before you can commence the actual design process.



# Leadership

## ABOVE THE PARAPET

Imagine you are an infant in a crowded classroom. You impulsively thrust your hand up into the air. If the teacher acknowledges this signal for attention, and invites your contribution, you must then continue past the initial plea for attention and communicate with confidence and clarity if you want to make the most of the opportunity. As well as ability, this takes nerve, both of which you may be fortunate enough to take for granted.

Courage plays a major part in the willingness to be identified and in one's effectiveness beyond the initial threshold of recognition. It means inviting reaction from all those who notice your signal. Personally, you may be able to brush these concerns away more readily than other members of your team, but the point remains that it takes courage to state your opinions and hold onto your values.

Your identity needs to be able to defend itself. Your fear of being challenged and the controversy you are prepared to engage in is largely within your control. You can avoid both by adopting a low profile. There may be good reason for modesty, but, whatever your preference, you appear to be able to choose accordingly – or can you? – for even the silent get labelled. And the silent really are the majority. Not all are prepared to believe in their values, opinions and ability to argue and defend themselves, even when it may be to their great advantage. Fear rules most people all too readily. Far easier for the timid or unconfident to dissolve their identity into the mass of the crowd, to follow a trend, any trend, and thoughtlessly imitate other individuals or organisations whose clothes they'd rather be seen to wear.