



# a word before you begin

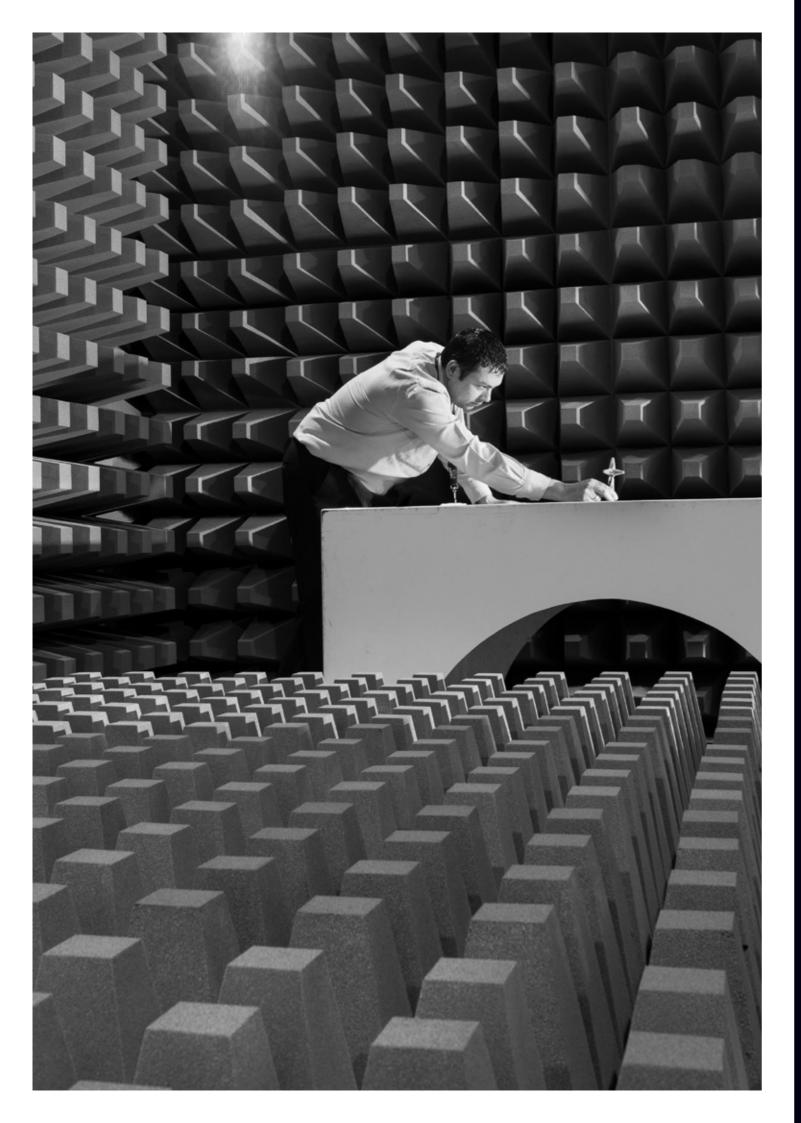
Here, in the Tantamount 2020 brochure, you'll find a combination of articles and artwork, which we hope you'll find both interesting and inspiring.

Most of the articles correspond directly to the areas in which Tantamount operates – communication design, brand development, digital experiences, content creation, video and motion graphics, and publishing – so we've accompanied these with some examples of our client work; many of these illustrations come from our third-sector clients, who we are particularly proud to work with. The final section of the brochure – afterthoughts – includes general musings on business.

This brochure is an opportunity to share some of our ideas and to showcase some of our expertise. We would love it to serve as the jumping off point for a conversation with you about your business communications strategy.

B&W photography: Tim Max Hetherington Edition: Gwyneth Box Layout: Fernando Ariel





# communication design

When you have information that needs to be communicated, it isn't just a question of putting a few words together with some aesthetically pleasing imagery: you need to combine text and visuals together effectively, and choose the best format and the best medium to get your point across to the people who need to know. Whatever you have to say, and whoever your audience is, we can help you deliver a compelling message.



With so many votes, opinion polls and studies in the news over the last year or more, the media has been full of all kinds of statistics, charts and graphs showing us survey results, trends and potential outcomes, and exploring various "what-if" scenarios.

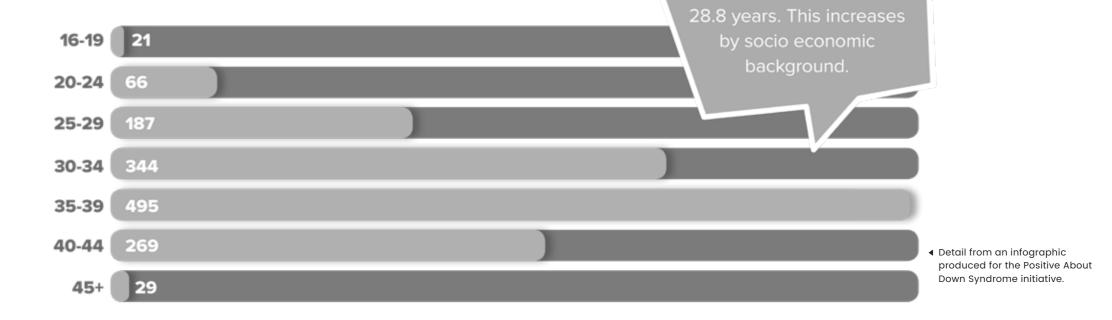
# ICS, damned Jics and graphical representations

We all know that statistics can be rolled out to demonstrate whatever perspective best suits the politicians' purposes, or to contradict their opponents; but we don't always realise how charts and graphics can also be designed to enlighten or to mislead. And, of course, that's not just the case with political information, but with business information, too.

So let's just look at three of the most common types of chart, how they can best be used, and some things to look out for to see whether we're being manipulated.

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communication design



# bar graphs

Perhaps the simplest type of chart is the classic bar graph, which features a series of rectangles or columns of varying lengths, each representing the value corresponding to the categories being compared. The length of each of the columns is proportionate to the value it represents.

These graphs are ideal for comparing any sort of numerical value, including group sizes, inventories, ratings and survey responses, and we often use this type of graph to present financial forecasts and outcomes.

The bars of this type of graph can be displayed horizontally or vertically, but the standard would be as vertical columns. A typical example of this use would be to show expenditure in different time periods, where the vertical (Y) axis shows expenditure, while the columns arranged along the horizontal (X) axis each represents a different time period.

The X axis would be labelled to show whether we're comparing months, quarters, years etc., while the Y axis would be scaled according to the type of figures we're showing – a unit representing a penny, a pound, a hundred pounds or a million, depending on what we're talking about.

The advantage of a simple bar graph is that, with one quick glance, audiences can see exactly how the various items size up against one another. Even so, there are a few things to watch out for.

# things to watch for

# Different scales

As we've seen, the X and Y axes are chosen according to the values we're looking at, so if there are two or more charts on the same page, they may not be showing the same scales: comparing monthly expenditure for one item with quarterly expenditure for another is like comparing apples and oranges, so it's important to check the labels on the axes to see precisely what information is on display.

# Incomplete data

If voter opinion is polled on four political parties, for example, and then only three of the four results are graphed, the resulting chart can be very misleading. By omitting the information about the top-scoring party, the one that has polled second can be shown to have a lead even if they are trailing the real leaders by a huge margin. Voters who are considering tactical voting may be persuaded to change their vote without realising that the information they have been given is incomplete.

# Y axis origin

If the values to be mapped are all very close – e.g. 104, 110 and 112 – the difference in height of the bars won't be very noticeable. In this case, the starting point of the Y axis may be moved so the differences can be highlighted. But if the Y axis is set to start at 100 rather than the standard zero, the figures we'll be looking at on the graph are actually 4,10 and 12. While the difference between the actual values is negligible, the graph shows hugely significant differences.

# line graphs

Line graphs are useful to illustrate trends in data over a period of time and the horizontal (X) axis often displays a timeline. The value – e.g. how many units are sold in each time period – is plotted against the Y axis, and the points connected, resulting in a single line from left to right showing the trend. If we do this for Dataset 1 and then repeat the process for Dataset 2 and produce a line in a different colour, we can compare the two.

The comparison can help determine whether sales of two products are interdependent; for example if sales for one decrease when sales for the other increase, it suggests that one may be a direct substitute for the other.

Again, it's easy to only tell half the story and the reader needs to think beyond the information presented on the graph.

# things to watch for

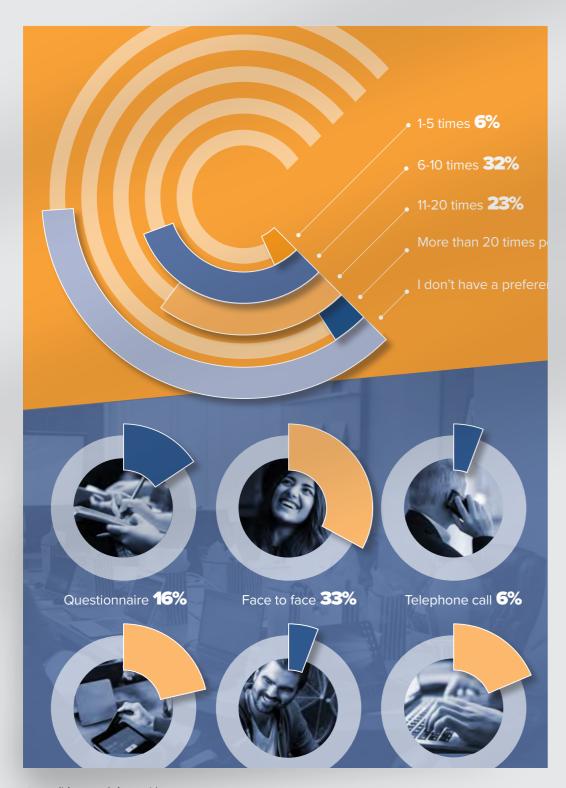
## **Omitted data**

Leaving out weather data on a chart that maps sales of umbrellas and bikinis might make you think that the more umbrellas are sold, the fewer bikinis will be wanted. While such an omission may be intentional, it may also be because the information is unavailable, or simply because nobody has realised that other factors should be considered.

# **Spurious correlations**

Perhaps the biggest drawback of correlations is assuming cause and effect. There are some marvellous examples of this on Tyler Vigen's Spurious Correlations website, including the fact that in the ten years to 2009, US spending on science, space and technology correlated almost exactly to the number of suicides by hanging, strangulation and suffocation.

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Detail from an infographic produced for Sands charity.

# pie charts and donuts

Both these charts consist of circles divided into segments, with the arc of each segment showing the proportional value of each data reading. They are the simplest and most efficient visual tool for comparing parts of a whole, such as the market share of the big corporations in a sector.

These charts are frequently used to report market-research question responses: e.g. when offered a choice of A, B or C, 30% chose A, 20% chose B and 50% chose C.

# things to watch for

# the sum of the parts

The segments need to add up to 100% – the full circle – so it may be necessary to add in a segment corresponding to "other", in order to deal with missed questions, spoiled answers etc.

Alternatively, if respondents are allowed to choose more than one answer, the sum of the segments will be more than 100%, so a different form of chart will need to be used for reporting the results.

# Drawing not to scale

Because we tend to understand visual data so much more quickly than text or figures, it's possible to manipulate a pie chart by using inaccurate drawings: if one block in the picture is bigger than another, very few people will look at the actual figures to check it's been drawn to scale.

# Inconsistent colours

If there are two or more charts on a page, comparing the answers given to different questions by men and women, for example, it is important to make consistent use of colours to show the men's answers and the women's answers. If the colours are swapped, it's easy for the reader to get confused. For most of us, visual information is much more quickly apprehended by the brain than text or figures, and proportions and relative sizes make more sense than decontextualised numbers. This means that imagery and graphics are a fundamental way of getting people's attention and displaying and communicating information about our businesses, about politics, and about the world we live in.

Clarity is a vital aspect of communication, but, particularly in the world of politics, it isn't always in the interests of the person producing the information. It's important, then, to take responsibility yourself and look more closely at what – and how – data is being presented in order to ensure that you are as well-informed as possible.

And when it comes to communicating information about your own business, it's a good idea to get the help of an expert to make sure the message is put across clearly and correctly.

**~~~** 

Bar graphs, line graphs, pies and donuts are just a few of the common chart types used. And we're so familiar with them that we don't always look more closely to see whether they are being used well or whether we are being lied to – whether that's unintentionally or with malice aforethought.

# cold porridge

While the phrase UX/UI occurs frequently in the world of design, it isn't always very helpful: many customers don't know what it means and don't understand why it matters.

# and cutlery

Essentially, the abbreviations refer to the user interface (UI) and the user experience (UX) of a website, the key difference being that UI is how the user sees the site and how they interact with it, while UX is how they feel about that interaction. In fact, the term UX is now often superseded by CX – customer experience – and goes beyond just website design to include all aspects of the user's interaction with a company, its services, and its products.

In case you're still having trouble seeing the difference, let's forget websites for a moment and think about food. Imagine a situation where you, the user, have food in a bowl and you are provided with a piece of cutlery that you can use to eat this food. That piece of cutlery is your interface (UI) with the food.

Think about the cutlery: is it a teaspoon, a dessert-spoon, a tablespoon? Is it wooden, metal or plastic? Or is it a knife, a fork, a single chopstick? Obviously, what type of cutlery it is, its size, and the material it's made from, is all going to make the process of eating the food more or less simple and a more or less enjoyable activity.

If we look at the bigger picture, though, the user experience (UX) encompasses the spoon, the bowl, the contents of the bowl, and the complete setting for the activity. All these elements will have an impact on how you, the user, feel.

If it's a bowl of ice cream, to be eaten with a normal-sized dessertspoon on a warm summer's day, a normal user is probably going to have a fairly positive experience. But what if it's a bowl of cold lumpy porridge served at midnight in the middle of winter and the cutlery provided is a toasting fork?

In the latter example, even if the fork is replaced by a spoon that's the perfect size, the lumpy porridge is never going to be very desirable. Even in the example with the ice cream, it's possible that the pre-design research by the UX team was inadequate and that the user is lactose intolerant. Alternatively, if the spoon is the most exquisitely hand-carved spoon imaginable, but is made of ice, it won't be very useful if the bowl contains hot soup.

It's important to remember that even a functionally perfect or beautiful interface won't make for a good user experience unless the user is being given what they want. So the best designed or most elegant website in the world is of no use if it isn't based on a sound discovery and exploration stage that establishes who is going to use it and what it's intended to achieve. And that's why UX and UI matter.



There are lots of different ways to break up a text: punctuation is used across all genres to signal pauses, paragraph breaks apply to prose in general, while chapter breaks are relevant only to longer texts; tree structuring and bullet point lists are reserved mostly for non-fiction, while line breaks and stanza breaks are tools specific to poetry.

The writer uses all of these elements as signals and clues for the reader about how he intends his text to be read. But once a text is complete, the writer passes it on to the typesetter, who has a different set of tools he can use that add space and silence and that can help or hinder the reader.

As readers, we tend not to be consciously aware of page design, although we occasionally recognise that there's something about a particular book, independent of how interesting or compelling the content is, that makes it more – or less – appealing than others.

With more people self-publishing, more and more books are being produced by non-experts, by writers who may have enough knowledge to produce a clear and legible manuscript using their word-processing software, but who don't have the training and skill of a professional layout artist or typesetter.

Most people involved in writing or publishing are aware of the phrase "white space" and realise that the visual impact of a text, whether on page or on screen, can have a huge effect on how the reader perceives the content. The problem is that white space isn't a particularly simple concept and a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.



Here we take a brief look at just a few of the different ways in which white space occurs.

# blank pages

In addition to the endpapers that separate the book cover from the pages that contain the body of a text, you will often find additional blank pages at the beginning or end of a printed book. Now that many books are printed digitally, this is less common, but framing the main bulk of the content with appropriate front and end matter is still important, as it gives the content room to breathe and helps to indicate that the book has been professionally produced.

Most novels start each new chapter on the page immediately following the previous chapter. (Occasionally, chapters even begin halfway down a page, although this isn't the norm.) For novels, where chapters tend to follow directly on, one after the other, this encourages the reader to continue without a break.

But what happens with an anthology or a collection of short stories? If every story begins on the righthand page, it helps the reader come to each of them under the same conditions, and each has the same weight and power at the start. This formatting choice means that there will be occasional blank pages, where the previous story ended on the odd-numbered (right-hand) page, but it adds a subliminal pause and gives the reader a moment to recoup and re-adjust before moving on.

Whether the chapters of a non-fiction book should run on or not, may well depend on how they are connected and whether the book is intended to be read sequentially, from beginning to end, or whether it is more a selection of independent essays.

# margins

The space around a text is vitally important. If the text begins or ends too close to the inner edge of the page, a cheaply produced book may quickly start to fall apart as the reader forces it wide open to be able to read the text close to the spine. On the other hand, margins that are too wide will leave the text floating in a sea of white.

As well as setting margins in accordance with the page size and font, the typesetter can choose from a range of techniques to anchor the text, including paragraph rules (horizontal lines) and footer and header detailing.

# kerning and tracking

Kerning refers to the space between specific pairs of characters, while tracking refers to the space between all the characters in a piece of text. Since typefaces are professionally designed to take into account the way the different letters work together, there are not many occasions when it is necessary to change either kerning or tracking. Sometimes, though, particularly in very small or very large font sizes, a slight adjustment can make the text easier to read.

Particularly with the larger font sizes used for headings and titles, an adjustment to kerning may be necessary to make a word hold together better. The problem is knowing just how much tweaking can be done without spoiling the effect the original typeface designer intended.

# inter-line spacing

The space between lines of a text – the leading – can also be adjusted to squeeze a text or to force it to occupy a larger space than it would do automatically. Again, there is skill involved in knowing just how much liberty can be taken with the default settings. It can be tempting to use changes to leading and tracking to prevent single words or lines running on to the next page (widows) or paragraphs beginning with a single line at the bottom of a page (orphans), but this is best left to a professional typesetter.

In addition to all the above, there's the problem of designing a text for a specific printed page and then converting it so it can be read on a screen: any tweaks you've made to the layout may affect the screen version. On many handheld devices, the reader can choose the font and font size they want. This means your tweaking may be irrelevant, or may suddenly be revealed by certain reader choices as an unexpected and unwanted break or an awkwardly displayed section of the

It's also important to remember that every adjustment to a text has a knock-on effect; the fact that you can tweak typographical elements, doesn't mean you should. If you change the margins in one place, you may cause problems elsewhere; if you manage to pull back a widow here, you may cause another later on. And if you keep on tweaking indiscriminately, making a slight alteration for every problem that arises, you risk destroying the coherence of the text as a whole.

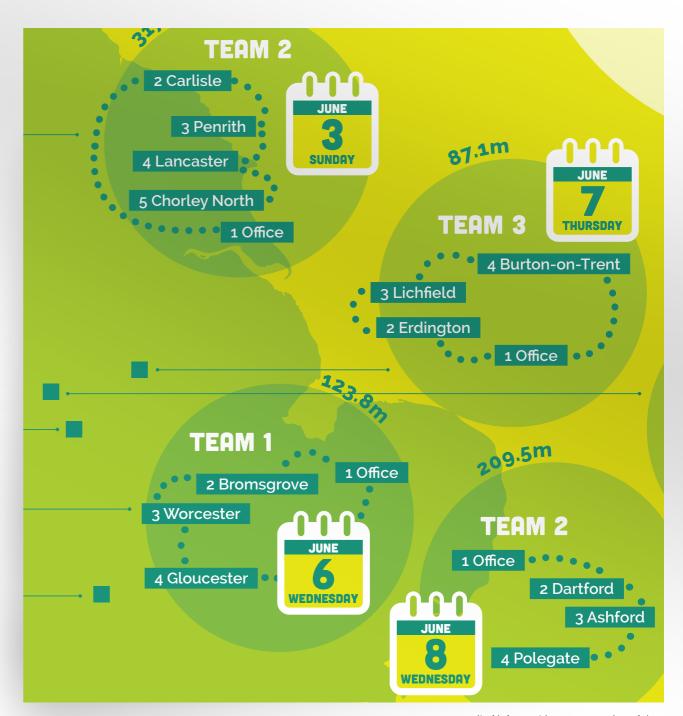
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▲ 2019 Impact report: cover and double-page spread showing highlights of TASC's work.

TASC, the Ambulance Staff Charity, is just one of the third-sector clients we have worked with. The recent impact report was an opportunity to showcase the work they do across England and Wales.



Detail of infographic representation of A Volunteers' Week national tour.

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# brand

Brand encompasses a whole range of elements including visual identity, tone of voice and style, company vision, values and ethos: it's what defines you to your clients. But brands evolve over time and need careful curation in order to remain a genuine business asset. Whether you are embarking on a new enterprise or working in an established business, if you share your business story and vision with us, we can help you share it effectively with the world.

These days, with so much marketing being focused online through social media, younger businesses are often unfamiliar with print advertising, resulting in a blurred understanding of the line between collateral and advert.

# 101 print advertising

To most people, car design is all about the curves

At BWI Group, we've spent 80 years perfecting the corners

From the first shock absorbers we produced back in 1927, to our latest third-generation MagneRide

active dampers, BWI Group has always focused on increasing the comfort, control and refinement of the world's best vehicles. Our portfolio of brake solutions includes fully-integrated braking systems. as well as individual components engineered to specific customer requirements. If you are considering running an advertising campaign in print, you should be clear about where the adverts are to be placed and what you want to achieve. Before you book an advert in the press, the publication should be able to provide you with relevant media stats such as demographics of the target audience, print run and readership (usually several times as many readers as copies printed).

For a magazine, you'll probably be offered a full-page ad, or maybe a half- or quarter-page, and you may be able to choose whether the ad will appear on an odd-numbered page (right-hand-side) or even. The position of the advert influences visibility and therefore cost, odd-numbered pages usually being more expensive; the outside back cover is prime real estate.

Despite superficial similarities, the design and copy used for a flyer may not work at all well if reproduced for an advert. Although advertising should follow general brand guidelines, adverts tend to be more conceptual, and more creative freedom may be expected.

Despite superficial similarities, the design and copy used for a flyer may not work at all well if reproduced for an advert in the print media. Although advertising should follow general brand guidelines, adverts tend to be more conceptual and more creative freedom may be expected.

While print collateral often focuses on a specific service, product or range of products, and can be used to inform, advertising – unless in the form of advertorial – usually aims to evoke an emotional response. In advertising, text is often kept to a minimum and, rather than offering a host of concrete facts and figures, images are used to create a mood or suggest an atmosphere.

Advertorials – a combination of advert and editorial – where a business pays to place an article in a publication alongside the actual journalistic content, may be seen as a form of content marketing. Here, it is the text that has priority, as information about the business or its products and services is written in the style of the publication.



One of a series of posters advertising events run by the Arnold Lodge Parents' Association.

Whatever form it takes, print advertising is a powerful tool for raising an organisation's profile and increasing general brand awareness, but it should not be confused with marketing collateral.

▲ 2019 advertisement redesign for BWI Group.

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# four reasons for brand decay

Your official business brand starts with a logo and hopefully - some guidelines about how to use it. But brand is far more than that: it's about using words, symbols and imagery in careful combination, and using them consistently. Moreover, brand isn't a single static concept: it grows and develops in tune with changes in the business. Brand is organic. And organic things evolve and decay if they aren't cared for.

Healthy businesses change over time and a healthy brand must keep pace with these changes. Over time, whether from inside or outside the organisation, there are changes and developments that result in a strong risk of the brand identity dispersing and weakening.

There are a number of reasons why brands decay; here we're going to look at just four of them: early-stage growth, business growth and evolution, use of boughtout expertise and non-expert in-house efforts.

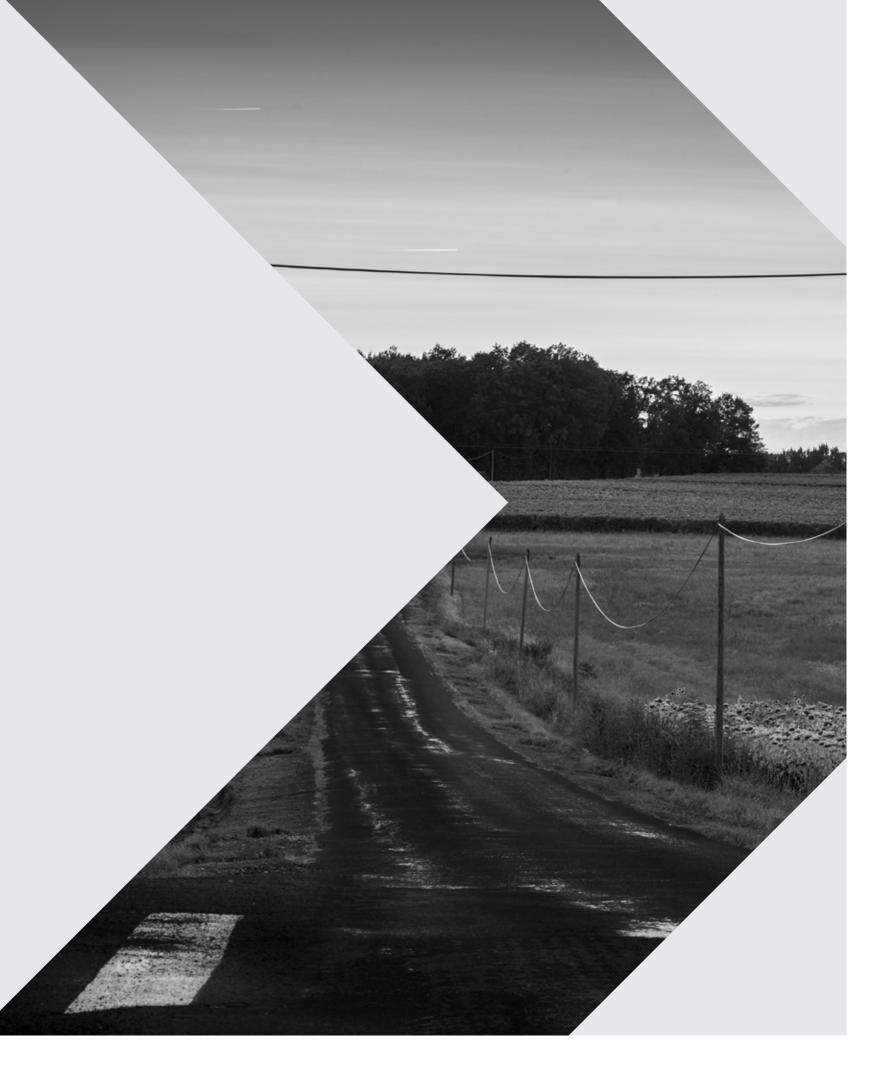
It isn't just start ups that change; more established organisations that are evolving may also experience brand decay.

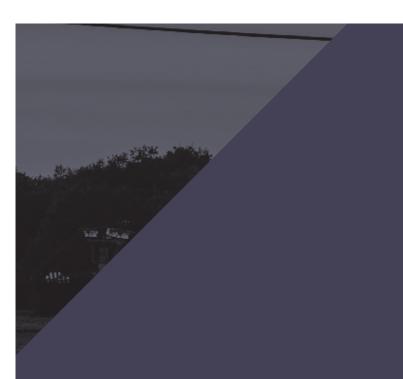
# early-stage growth

When a company starts out, it's a beautiful idea with huge potential. But small start-up businesses often don't have the money to spend on a full range of fancy collateral and professional branding, so they settle for an inexpensive logo and a website made by a friend using a free template and free images, which is a perfectly reasonable way to get a new business up and running and

But once the business is a little more established, the brand image isn't quite right anymore - not quite up to scratch. Sometimes, too, there's a change in emphasis early on, as the business adapts to clients' needs, and the original expectations and business offering shift.

This leads to an "ugly duckling" stage, where brand and reality are out of sync. The business has grown and matured, and the brand image doesn't reflect this: the original duckling-feather brand needs to transform into something more mature and professional.





# business growth & evolution

In bigger and more mature organisations, even when there's a clear strategic approach to growth, and when the central mission and vision remain constant, staff turnover, changes in products and services, and the need to keep up with evolving client needs means that a business can be rather different at year end from how it started out. Again, there may come a time when there is a mismatch between the current brand and what the business actually needs.

In addition, when a business is growing, it's tempting to avoid committing to employing more staff immediately. But relying on bought-out service providers can be detrimental to brand.

# use of bought-out expertise

There are a number of areas where bought-out expertise is very common, and where external suppliers are granted authority to communicate on behalf of an organisation. This can have a major effect on consistency of messaging, and brands are particularly vulnerable to bought-out content and expertise:

**Content** – newsletters, social media updates, blog posts, case studies... – is often produced in different places and by different people, including freelance bloggers and social media services. Often they are working for other organisations as well, and they may not be clear about your brand or meticulous about adhering to your guidelines.

**Collaborators**, associates and experts may be brought in for one-off projects or to expand your business offering. But, again, these people are often working non-exclusively or on a temporary basis and may have their own mission and values. Even if they are highly professional, it may be their own agenda and brand ID that they are championing rather than yours.

**Catering** and other specific services – events management, PR, financial services... – provided by external suppliers reflect back on your company. All external suppliers need to fully understand your brand values and work to maintain these.

All these different people are communicating on behalf of your organisation, and if you don't constantly micro-manage, it can be very hard to be certain that everything is kept on-brand.

It sounds as if keeping things in-house might help. But this isn't always a solution.

# non-expert in-house efforts

Limited budgets frequently lead to localised, in-house communications, where we get untrained and inexpert staff doing their best. Perhaps they are creating social media content or producing their own presentation slides; maybe each department produces its own leaflets independently, each person creates their own email signature and sets up their own out-of-office responders. It's important to recognise that goodwill is not the same as skill and, however good your staff intentions are, if there is no qualified central supervision, your brand will probably begin to fray at the edges.

# avoid brand decay through information and curation

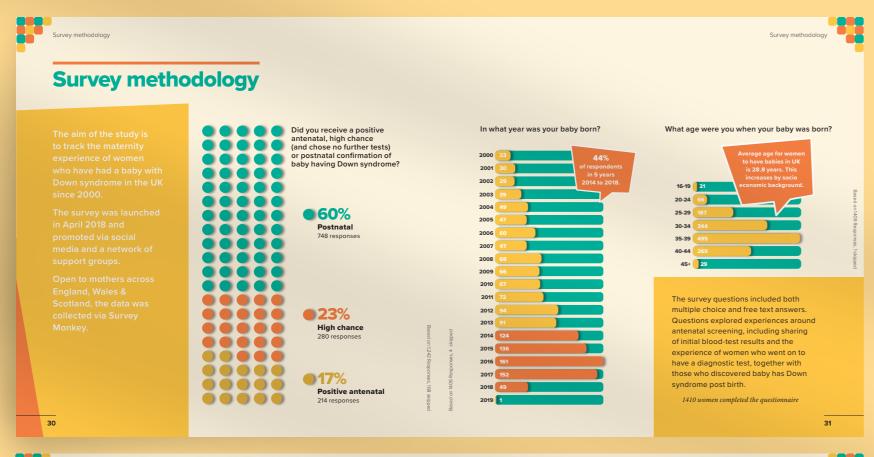
Each time your business communicates – every visual or verbal expression of your business, whether in print or digital format, from a business card to the sign in the foyer of your office building, from pay slips to glossy printed brochures, from email signatures to social media avatars, from the company website to blog posts – serves to define your corporate identity.

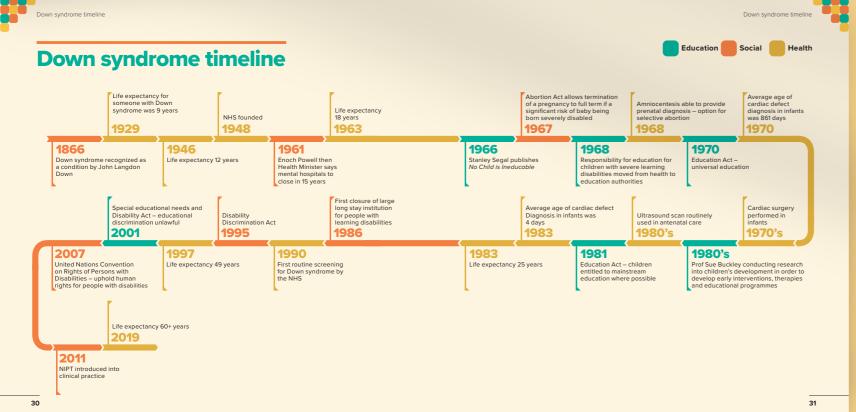
Each of these communications reveals something about the company's self-image and about its attitude, and each is an opportunity to strengthen – or weaken – the way others see your brand.

By making sure that everyone – in-house staff member or external collaborator – who produces any kind of content or communication for your business realises how vital your brand is, and is fully informed and equipped with the tools and understanding to convey the agreed message, you are creating a cost-effective system to establish, consolidate and promote your brand.

But the more people who are communicating on your behalf, the more disperse your message will become, which is why brand curation is vital, with regular reviews of messaging content and presentation. This will allow you to consolidate, re-group and move forward together.

Remember: businesses change and evolve; brand grows organically; decay is inherent to evolving organisms. Your brand needs care and attention if it is to continue to serve your business needs. •





▲ Use of brand colour palette and clear graphics makes it easy to read and understand the information in the Sharing the News brochure produced for the Positive About Down Syndrome initiative.

# when you're you're to the room

Although most of us would say we know what "brand" is, it remains difficult to define. David Ogilvy said it's "the intangible sum of a product's attributes," while Neumeier has described it as "a person's gut feeling about a product, service, or organization." The problem is that brand is about feelings and emotions, which are themselves complicated things.

Another definition that gets dusted down each time the topic arises, comes from Jeff Bezos, who says, "Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room." Although this definition is still quite nebulous, it's useful as it moves us in the direction of a looking at a business as a person and the brand as the description of that person.

We've all been in the position of having to describe an absent friend or colleague: the description can range from obvious physical attributes that will be clearly recognised by everyone, to verbal tics and non-visible personality traits, and possibly beyond that to habits and likes and dislikes that have been revealed over the course of a long acquaintance. In fact, the full description probably adds up to Ogilvy's "intangible sum of [...] attributes."

# connect and be recognised

Brand isn't about marketing and selling your product or service; it's the emotional perception of your business. Brand is about connecting with people and being recognised.

Obviously, logo and brand colours help with identification, in the same way that height, weight and hair and eye-colour are part of a person's description. But if you really want to help someone single out your friend from a group of physically similar people, you'll look beyond the superficially obvious to voice, physical movement, personality...

An established brand is a company persona that enables your clients to see you at a distance and recognise a friend they can trust.

# consistency builds brands

One of the keys to strong branding is consistency. People change their clothes, but they often have a recognisable underlying style, and their own physical attributes remain more or less constant. For a business, consistency conveys a certain outlook and attitude and it shows professionalism, purpose and stability. It instils confidence and eliminates confusion, enabling us to manage perceptions.

We've all got that colleague who always attends events even though he never responds to invitations; his name goes down on the list even if no one has heard back from him, as everyone knows he'll turn up. Customers know what to expect from a strong brand: they don't need to check the small print on the label to know that foods from a particular manufacturer will be vegetarian, or that a certain high-street retailer will give them a noquestions-asked refund.

# your brand persona

In the same way that you develop personas for each of your target markets, it's worth taking time to explore your own brand persona. Imagine your brand as a person, as a member of your organisation or team. Ask yourself:

Is your brand male or female?

How old is it?

How does it dress?

What does it look like?

What level of education does it have?

Is it a team player or a maverick?

Where would it choose to sit in a team meeting?

What are your brand's hobbies?

What are the causes that matter to it?

Who did it vote for?

How does your brand speak?

Is it ambitious or cautious?

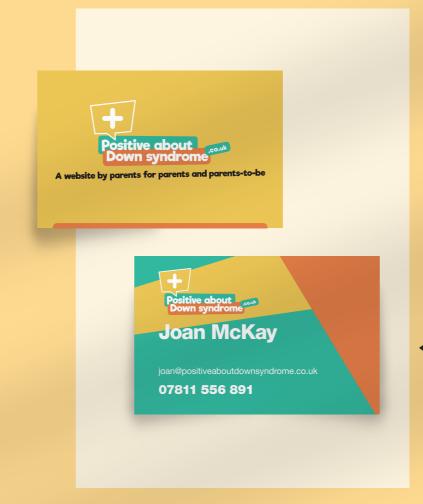
Quirky or strait-laced?

Consider which adjectives you – and your customers – use to describe your brand and interactions with it. How does your brand make you feel? How do you want people to feel when they come into contact with it?

# build on the foundation

Once you've defined your brand persona, don't lose sight of it. Remember that every time your brand communicates, it is an opportunity to strengthen and consolidate this persona and the way your brand is perceived by others.

Your aim is to make it easy for someone to talk about your brand when you aren't in the room and have everyone recognise it from the description. ■



The Positive About Down Syndrome (PADS) brief called for a clear, effective and accessible approach to telling personal stories that communicate the reality of Down syndrome to parents and parents-to-be.

Tantamount created an upbeat and eye-catching brand ID with gender-neutral colour palette.

 Business cards need to be clear and make an impact as they are often the very first touch point with a brand.

The Sharing the News brochure was an important publication for the PADS initiative and strong visual presentation was key to making the information accessible to a range of stakeholders.









We created the brand identity for Down Syndrome UK, a newly-created national charity, which sits behind a number of initiatives aimed at children, families and medical professionals affected by the condition.

# digital experiences

In the digital world, the borderlands between websites, apps, games and enhanced publications are blurry, and the ground shifts constantly. Good content is no longer enough: it needs to be clearly organised, supported by a logical information architecture, and completed by an efficient interface that enhances the user experience. We understand how to collate, structure and present your information so that it's accessible and understandable.

# isten up!

Audiobooks: time-saving, accessible, engaging? awkward, inconvenient, forgettable? Some people love them; some people hate them. However you feel about audiobooks. their use raises questions that can be considered from both a scientific and a philosophical perspective: is listening to a book the same as reading it? is the experience as valuable? as authentic?





Many adults who say they don't read blame lack of time. Now though, that position is harder to argue as – building on the 'subscription culture' created for music and screen by companies such as Spotify, HBO and Netflix – Amazon's Kindle Unlimited and the multilingual offering of Swedish giant Storytel are making things easy for audiobook consumers.

But although many of the latest news feeds and blogs are discussing audio books as if they were at the cutting-edge of innovation, listening to books is nothing new: as well as regular readings from the Bible for family and servants, our ancestors would sit together in the evenings while the patriarch read aloud improving literature or the next instalment of the latest serialised novel, and the mother or governess might read to the children in the schoolroom as part of their education. Even today, our earliest memories of books are usually those our parents read at bedtime or the teacher read to us at kindergarten story-time.

Íñigo García Ureta, Spanish author, editor and translator, reminds us of how we learned to love stories "not between the pages of a book, but between the sheets, listening to the voice of a father or a mother reading out loud." Perhaps that aural experience is why he goes on to say, "A book, any book, is no more than a voice that resonates with us" and sums up this fundamental essence of literature as sound when he tells us, "Pretending that ink is earlier or superior - to sound is like saying that the printed menu of a restaurant will satisfy our stomachs."

# talking books

One of the first audiobook initiatives dates back almost a century, to 1935, when the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) shipped the first Talking Books, recorded on specially developed shellac records in an effort to combat the boredom, depression, and social isolation suffered by those who had lost their sight in the First World War. In fact, the technological antecedents of audiobooks go back still further: in 1890, Alfred Tennyson recorded his poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" von a wax cylinder, with the help of Thomas Edison.

The RNIB continue to send out up to 10,000 books a day. No doubt their popularity is due in part to the skill of the readers: one big difference between reading and listening to a book is that the emotional responses produced by audiobooks are often more extreme due to the reader's voice, which includes inflections, pauses and emotional nuances, and makes the experience closer to a 'performance' of the book, akin to actors performing a theatrical work.

# the neurological experience

A number of investigations have been carried out that study what happens at a cerebral level during the two different ways of "reading". The general conclusion is that, whether we read or hear the words, the same neural networks are activated in the brain.

In support of this, the results of a study carried out in 2015, show that, "the convergence of the printand speech-processing networks emerges as an invariant and universal signature of literacy proficiency." It seems that, rather than being just a question of recognising symbols on a page, reading is so closely linked to speech that it depends on accessing the existing neural circuits that process meaningful spoken words. What's more, the results were the same for different languages: not just for those with written alphabets like ours, but for languages with logographic writing, such as Chinese or Hebrew.

Despite this, the fact that the same brain structures are activated doesn't mean that the experience is identical, as the brain processes the information in different ways. Whether we're considering spoken or written text, the brain decodes the words and "fills in the blanks" with information that does not appear explicitly, but it doesn't necessarily make the same connections. Bob Duke and Art Markman of the University of Texas discuss this in the Reading vs Listening podcast.

# memory

As we've said, audiobooks have fans, but also critics. One of the common arguments the latter fall back on, is that sound has very little power to hold our attention. This seems to be backed up by a study by Canadian psychologists who had a group of 36 people experience the same book in three different ways: some read silently, others read aloud, while the third group listened to the book being read by another person. In the subsequent comprehension test, the psychologists found that those who had only heard the text retained less information than the other two groups. It seems, too, that the act of reading aloud for ourselves requires us to engage different sensorial effort and is most effective at helping us retain information.

That said, remembering the skills of the storytellers of old, who learned to recite epic poems by heart, it's possible that memory and engagement are only a matter of training, and that those who practise and develop their listening skills can learn to experience a text they hear as completely as when reading.

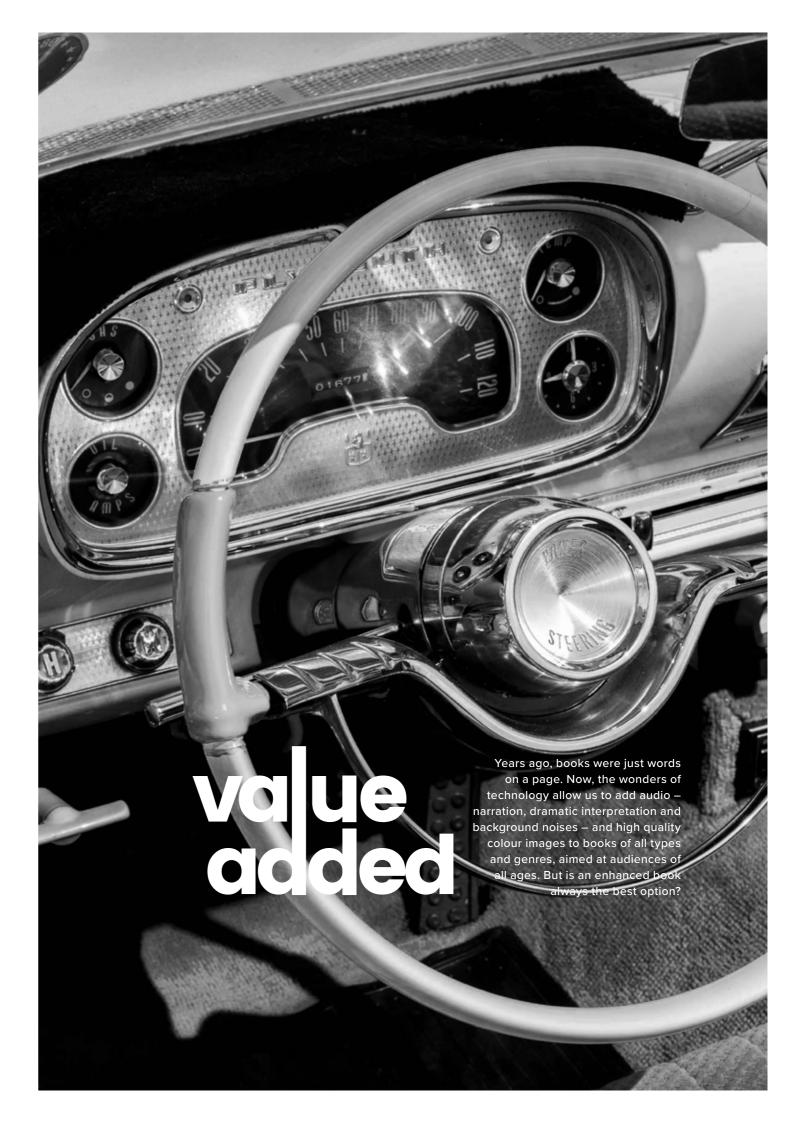
# social considerations

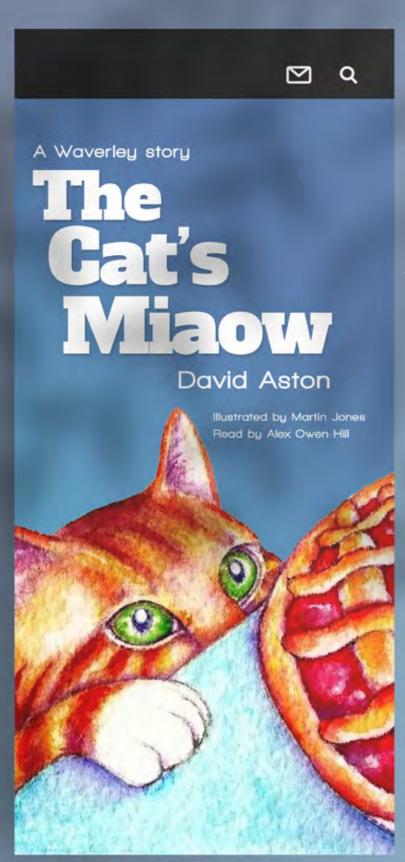
Even when we read in the presence of other people, silent reading is an individual act. The audiobook experience, on the other hand, offers us an opportunity to return to the "social bonding" aspects of our earliest encounters with the written word as read by our parents and teachers: simply adding speakers to the device we are listening on, turns reading into a shared event, an activity that others can experience with us.

In short, there is no simple answer to the question of whether a printed or audiobook is superior. Everyone has their own personal relationship and connection with each of the formats, and the value of this emotional link is non-quantifiable.

One final philosophical question remains: a study published in 2010, based on more than 70,000 cases from 27 different countries, showed that children who grow up in a house with many books have an enormous advantage: they perform better at school and they continue their studies for longer than those who grow up in houses without books. What will happen in the future, when there may be many books in the house, but, being mostly digital or audio, these books are intangible and unseen?

Listening to books is nothing new: our ancestors would sit together in the evenings while the patriarch read aloud improving literature or the next instalment of the latest serialised novel.





The Cat's Miaow, a multi-device enhanced book, spent several months at number 1 on the children's fiction list for KOBO USA. Digital technology tempts us to add bells and whistles to a book just for the sake of it. In certain cases, in-story games and activities can blur the clarity of the narrative for younger readers.

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In the past, the reader read black and white texts on a page and created voices inside his own head. Illustrations were reserved for children's picture books, textbooks or glossy coffee-table books – books where images served a specific purpose – so the reader visualised the characters, scenes and settings in their own imagination. Now audio and video are common elements of books of all sorts.

And it doesn't stop there: if we accept that the term "book" encompasses not only enhanced ebooks but book apps, too, we can include a whole range of in-book activities and games, animations and videos. These added extras can be embedded in the text or included as a separate special-features section. Once again, we are no longer limited by genre, and the books can be aimed at any readership. However, the fact that you can do something, doesn't always mean that you should.

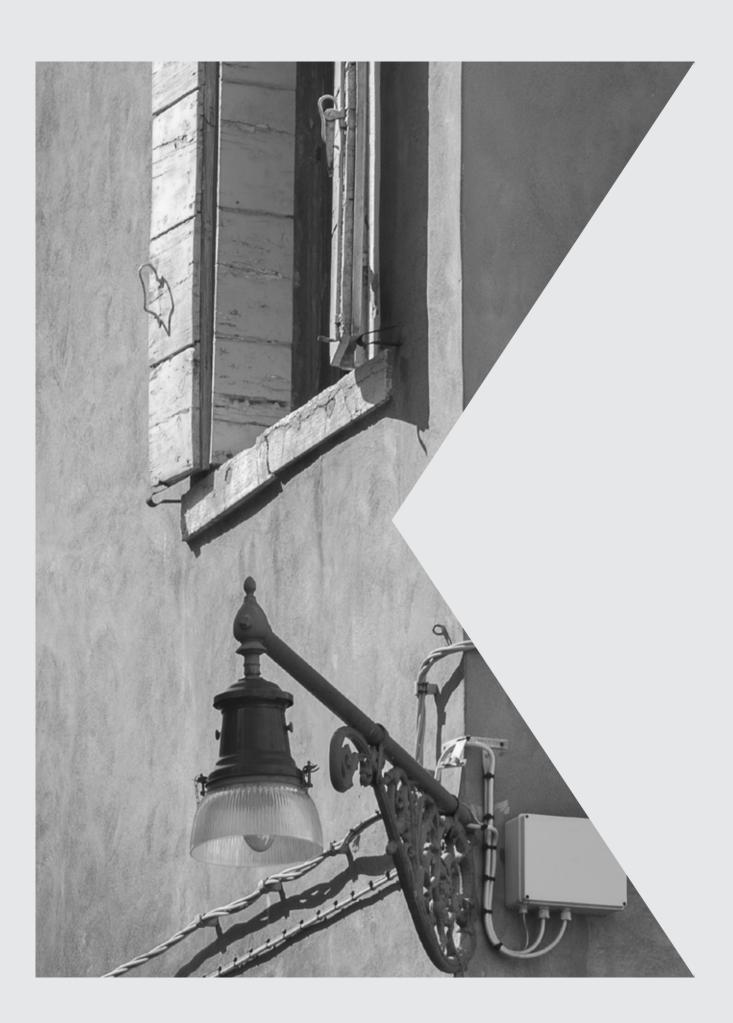
There's a temptation to add bells and whistles just for the sake of it, rather than wondering what actual benefit there is for the reader. If you include a game in the middle of a children's story, for example, does it serve any real purpose? Does it help the child's understanding, or does it become a distraction that interrupts the narrative thread? Good books help young children learn; their structure is frequently a subliminal lesson that depends on cause and effect, or on unfolding events leading to logical consequences and outcomes. A dramatic reading may help younger children follow the plot, but an in-story game or activity may blur the clarity of the narrative, meaning that the child doesn't find the lesson so easy to assimilate.

As we said, though, enhancements can be included in books for any readers. And older children and adults are more likely to know when they want to read straight on and when it's appropriate to dally, which means that there is a strong argument for looking at what extra features will add value to the sort of books that we referred to right at the start: traditional text-on-a-page books.

Many classics are printed with long text introductions that give cultural, geographical and historical background, and pages of footnotes that explain specific details; but imagine reading a historical novel where you can access images of the different types of carriage or the styles of frocks without losing your place and finally understand precisely why a day dress would be inappropriate for an evening event and how tricky it would be for a lady to step into a high-perch phaeton. In a fantasy epic, you could follow the hero's itinerary on an interactive pop-up map or check the floor plans as you read a murder-mystery.

There are other audio and video features that can add a dimension to the reading experience: hearing the poet read their own work may help explain why they chose those unexpected line and stanza breaks. Or you might have a video interview with an author, where they talk about how a specific book fits into a bigger picture of their work.

Chambers dictionary defines the word enhance as "to improve or increase the value, quality or intensity of something". It doesn't mean to make something unnecessarily complex and distracting. Perhaps we should be looking more closely at whether enhanced ebooks are living up to their name. ■



# medium medium maters

Newsletters, expert blog posts, social media updates, emails, technical specs, product descriptions, case studies... it sometimes seems as if all we do in business is produce content. But there's no point continuing to produce content if it doesn't reach the people we are trying to inform or advise and if they don't pay attention to it when it's delivered.

We've become accustomed to the idea that "content is king", but over 50 years ago, long before Bill Gates coined that slogan, Marshall McLuhan was telling us that "the medium is the message" and it remains a fact that the way you present information has an enormous effect on how it is received.

We all know that "a picture's worth a thousand words", but maybe you haven't stopped to think about why that is. When you see a picture, a large proportion of the message it conveys enters your brain immediately – even after just a quick glance, you can't "unsee" it. Words, on the other hand, have to be read, understood and processed, all of which takes time and effort on the part of the reader.

This means that charts and infographics are powerful ways to communicate, while, for verbal content, head-lines, soundbites and slogans are the most we can hope for our audience to grasp before we risk losing them.

All of these short-cuts to communication also become powerful ways to mislead, as people are quick to assume that they have understood: they seldom check on how accurately a chart depicts actual data or whether a catchy slogan truly reflects reality.

Of course, "medium" goes beyond text or imagery to encompass the platform: digital, print, video, audio... and includes real-time speech and face-to-face interaction. Even then, there is more to take into account: when we talk about a video, for example, we need to think about how and where that video is to be consumed: on a cinema screen with a captive audience? on the TV? on a desktop computer? on a handheld device with the viewer in lean-back mode and fully engaged, or while they are multi-tasking and inattentive?

Consider the difference between seeing the same film at the cinema or on TV: your engagement with the film has just isn't the same when you can pause it to answer the phone or make another cup of tea. Similarly, these days, TV series are seldom watched as a weekly event, but are often released with all episodes available en bloc to be consumed as an intense, full-on experience. Older series with their cliff-hanger breaks and catch-up scenes at the start of each episode can now seem frustratingly old hat, so the way that new programmes and series are plotted has changed.

At Tantamount, we deal with all types of words and imagery – content of all kinds – and we believe there is an ideal format and medium to present each piece of content to a particular audience. When it comes to business collateral, there are many, many options and it's important to consider the content and the audience and make sure the medium is appropriate for both.

This isn't a simple or superficial choice. If digital is the correct medium, for example, we need to consider whether the content is best communicated as video, text, infographic... Even then, there are still a host of delivery options: newsletter, personal email, downloadable PDF, web app...

Even in the techno-centric modern world, not everything needs to be sent out digitally: a physical printed brochure will cause a very different impression from a downloadable PDF. And, with the printed option, there are all the different physical formats and quality of papers and inks to be taken into consideration.

It's a fact that many printed flyers get binned before they are ever read. And many emails are deleted without being opened and without the attachments being downloaded. But, in general, a nicely produced physical brochure or book is more likely to be kept at least for a while, as we tend to respect the printed word. Then again, some people will see print collateral as an ecological outrage, so it's important to think about who your audience is and how they will react.

Nor is the dichotomy of print and digital the whole story: we still need to give serious thought to whether it might be better to make a phone call or have a face-to-face meeting with a client rather than relying on a piece of collateral to transmit our message. Perhaps a brief personal connection may be enough, and then you may choose to give a potential client the URL of a web page where they can find the information they need, or give them a leaflet so they can take it away and think things over in their own time.

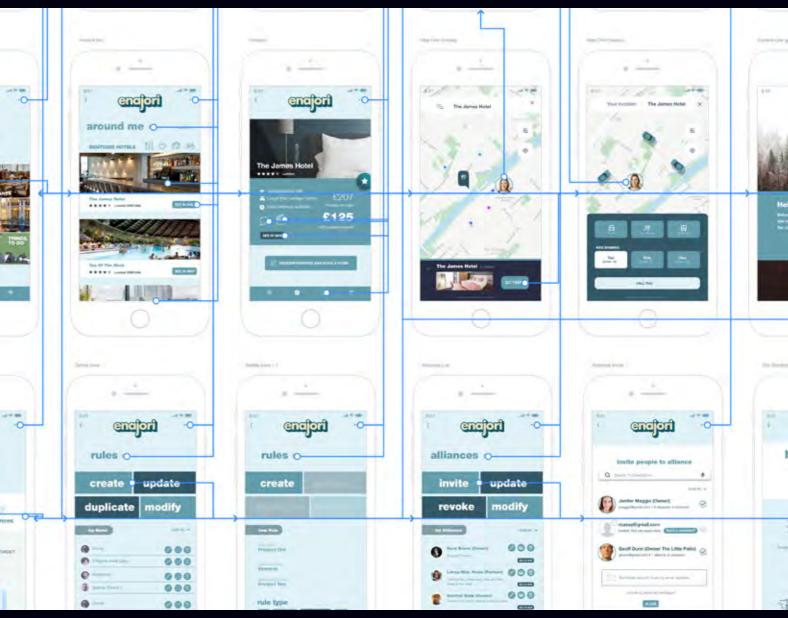
The point is that great content isn't enough to make your message stand out: it's got to be presented in the right format and delivered in a way that will engage with your audience. The ultimate goal is to communicate your business message effectively by finding the right words, the right visuals, the right format and the right medium.

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When you see a picture, a large proportion of the message enters your brain immediately. Words, on the other hand, need to be read, understood and processed, all of which takes time and effort on the part of the reader.

Businesses struggle to produce new, relevant, curated content that will keep them front-of-mind with their clients in the ever-changing world of social media.

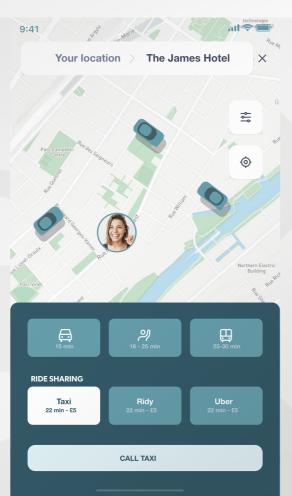
The Enajori app (beta launch in 2020), addresses this problem by creating community, harnessing authentic content produced by the clients themselves, and rewarding them for engaging with their favourite brands, whether these are local independents or larger organisations.



▲ Detail of screens from the UX/UI development phase of the Enajori app.

◆ The Enajoriapp profile page is clean, clear and uncluttered for ease-of-use.









▲ Detail from a stylescape produced during the Enajori brand development stage.

# content creation

The modern world is suffering from content overload, so if you want to stand out from your competitors, raise your profile and demonstrate your expertise, your business content needs to be exceptional. We specialise in high quality imagery, design, and copywriting, and we are experts in developing the visual and verbal aspects of a message in parallel, ensuring that the resulting content is impactful, coherent and effective.

What your business says is vitally important, but so, too, is how it says it. Not just the words that are chosen, but the tone of voice that is used to address your audience, whether that be the general public, clients, staff, or other stakeholders. And the tone that you use should help differentiate your brand and show that it is unique.

# raising the tone

When developing a voice for your brand, you need to look for something more than correct use of language - something deeper and more personal that communicates your business values and attitudes. If used consistently, over time, the tone of voice can help to define your business and make your messaging readily identi-

The aim of establishing a tone of voice for your brand is to differentiate your business from others - to make it clear who is speaking and who you're addressing. Word choice, grammar, sentence length and complexity and punctuation are all elements that affect the tone of your writing.

# speaker and audience

It's important to understand the persona and personality of your brand and how this relates to the stakeholders you are addressing. Think about how your mother speaks and how your colleagues or your mates down the pub speak; even if the message content is essentially the same - an invitation to Sunday lunch, for example - if the words were written down, or spoken tunelessly by a robot, you'd almost certainly know who it was who was speaking.

Consider the difference between a teacher explaining the homework to a student and that same student then explaining the same homework to her friend. Or compare a secondary school teacher setting homework for a class with a university lecturer setting a similar assignment. The words used will be different - essay, story, composition..., as well as the way the homework requirements are defined - number of pages, word count, time to be spent on the task...

# word choice

In the slogan "Naughty. But nice", written by Salman Rushdie to advertise the UK Milk Marketing Board's fresh cream cakes in the 1970s, there are a number of words - bad, wicked, sinful... - that could have been used instead of naughty. But not only does "naughty" have the advantage of alliterating with "nice", it also triggers associations with mischievous, cheerful, childish and trivial: the slogan is teasing in tone and suggests that, although giving in to the temptation of the cakes may be self-indulgent, it's not irredeemably evil.

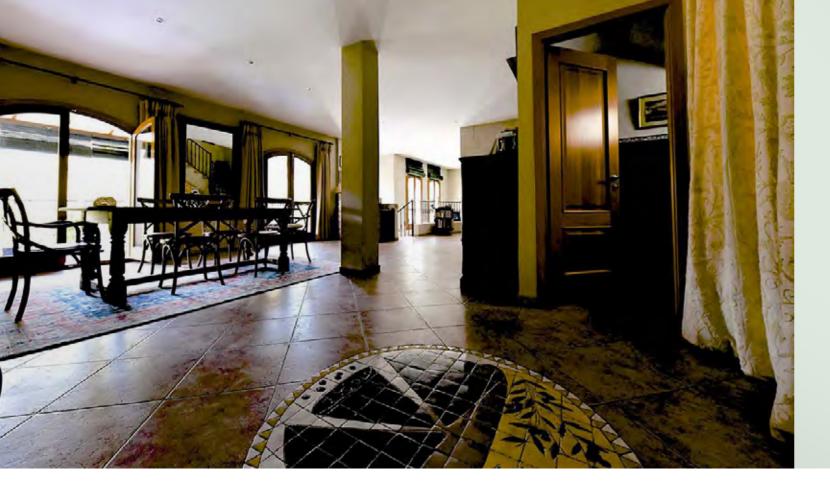
# latin or anglo-saxon?

English is a wonderful language with a vast vocabulary. Many words occur as pairs, having essentially the same meaning, but coming from different roots: the Anglo-Saxon language of Germanic settlers or the Latinate languages of the Roman Empire and the Normans. The former tend to be short and direct; the latter more sophisticated, as can be seen if we compare the Anglo-Saxon "dog" with the Latinate "canine."

Taken to an extreme, we can have parallel sentences such as "She caught a cold" and "she contracted acute viral nasopharyngitis" that carry the same factual message, but where the word choice provides clues about the speaker's status and situation and about their intended audience.

If your business goal is to create a luxury brand, it's quite possible that you'll be using more Latinate words than a similar business targeting a less sophisticated audience. Compare the more down-to-earth and homely language of family-oriented hospitality brands with the more exclusive tone of high-end destinations who want to appeal to higher-income or business travellers.

Depending on the sector, a choice of Latinate words may convey authority, class and prestige. But not all authority resides in posh speech, and there are fields in which a no-nonsense approach will win more appreciation: here it's vital to understand your audience and use appropriate language that will appeal and speak to them most directly and effectively.



# The Almàssera Vella

The Old Olive Press is located on the lip of a ravine on the edge of an ancient village in the Marina Baja mountains north of Alicante. The main house was for a hundred years or so an olive press serving three villages but it's now converted into a large village house with copious space – designed to accommodate residential creative courses in creative writing, painting, cookery, yoga and mountain walking.

▲ Detail of OOPS website.

# contractions

In speech, we usually use contractions: "you'd" rather than "you would", "he's" rather than "he is", "shouldn't" rather than "should not". But many of us were taught at school that this style of writing is informal and that written contractions are unacceptable. The problem is that if we are trying to write in a friendly and approachable tone, our readers may well feel alienated if we discard the colloquial contractions in favour of complete verb forms. So, unless you are deliberately trying to distance yourself from your reader, perhaps to consolidate your brand's authority and exclusivity, you'll probably want to use contractions at least some of the time.

# ownership

Another marketing creation from Rushdie - the word "irresistibubble" used in advertising the bubble-filled Aero chocolate bar - shows how a brand can become so closely associated with a word or phrase that they essentially own it. The "-bubble" ending was used in a number of instantly recognisable variations - "delectabubble", "adorabubble", "availabubblehere"...

One downside to a brand becoming closely linked with a particular word or phrase, is when it loses the initial positive impact that it had. This is what happened with Theresa May's "strong and stable" slogan, which devolved from its original meaning into an internet meme.

# self-identification

Often one of the most important things to consider when writing business texts is to decide how you are going to refer to your own brand and organisation. Should we use a plural form and say, for example, "At Tantamount we use this style" or "Tantamount use this style", or a singular form, "Tantamount uses this style"?

Do we refer to "our staff", "our personnel", "our team", the team" or "the Tantamount team"? And, having decided which group noun we'll use, does it take a singular or plural verb? "The team wants to know" or "The team want to know"? Both options are grammatically acceptable in British English, but consistency will help consolidate your brand voice.

Whatever the situation and relationship, your language choices should reflect your brand personality, your values and attitudes, and the way your clients can expect to relate to you. Over time, the tone of voice will become clearer and more established and each touch point with your client will become a brand experience.

# differentiation

In many industries, if you compare direct competitors, their messages and verbal communications are almost identical: often if it weren't for the brand colours on an IT services website, for example, you'd be hard pushed to know which company it belonged to. This is where tone of voice can help you differentiate your brand and target the specific audience you want to work with.

If you step away from the Gigabyte counts, cloud storage and download speeds to the way that the services are spoken about, the company can show its personality and values, and the audience will know whether to expect them to talk to you like a geek or in everyday language that non-techies will understand.

If you look at two food products in the supermarket, the ingredients list may be very similar, but, where one company focuses on the homely, local and traditional nature of their product, the other is all about the quality, exclusivity and purity of the individual ingredients. The actual products may taste almost identical, but the brand voice will appeal to different clients.

# why does it matter?

Using a consistent tone of voice in all your business communications will help to strengthen your brand, demonstrate your values, and consolidate the relationship you have with your clients.

By making the right language choices to suit this relationship, you will find your communications engage with and appeal to the sort of customers you want to work with:

Are you a mother speaking to her children? You'll want to use simple and clear phrasing, while sounding protective and nurturing.

Are you and the client two adult professionals of equal standing? Your tone can be confident, no nonsense and professional.

Are you the friend and confidant of your client? The words may be more intimate, direct and personal.

Are you an authoritative guide? You may choose Latinate words and avoid contractions to set and maintain a professional distance.

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# with CCCITE with



"Tone of voice" has begun to be a popular phrase in marketing circles, closely linked with brand and business storytelling. But before you go on to look at developing a specific tone of voice for a brand, you need to make sure that writing basics are taken care of.

The following recommendations apply to all business communications, not to a specific brand, message, audience or organisation. Once you've settled the basics of good writing, you can look ahead to developing a voice that will demonstrate the unique personality of your brand and differentiate your business from the competition.

# use correct grammar, punctuation...

This should really go without saying: making sure the details are right gives a professional impression and shows that you care about your business and how it is seen by the public – it's like combing your hair before meeting a client or making sure your socks match and your shirt is ironed.

This applies across all areas of messaging, whether printed or digital – emails, blog posts, social media, press releases, marketing literature... But perhaps it's most important for communications that can be considered semi-permanent, such as print collateral and corporate website texts; a social media post may disappear down the timeline fairly quickly, but your printed portfolio and your website home page is going to be around for a while.

Research has shown that websites with errors have a higher bounce rate, which in turn leads to a poorer ranking on Google, as the site is seen as untrustworthy; badly written press releases are less likely to be picked up by the press, too, and poorly spelled flyers are likely to be binned quickly. So, wherever your business uses written words, it pays to take care and make sure the basic grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

# make it accessible

For the last 40 years, the Plain English Campaign has been "campaigning against gobbledygook, jargon and misleading public information", and long before the Campaign was set up, Mark Twain said, "Don't use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do." If we want people to understand our business message – especially when the message is complex or when it deals with unfamiliar concepts – it's important to write clearly, choosing simple words and sentence structure, and using punctuation to aid comprehension.

# be engaging

Whether we are writing for staff, clients, other stakeholders or the general public, we want to engage with our audience, to write something that's relatable and relevant and that will involve the reader. The easiest way to do this is to be clear who your audience is for each communication and focus on that intended reader, looking at matters from their point of view. It can also help to use a direct, second-person address – the inclusive "you" in phrases such as "we help you..." rather than "we help our clients..." as this comes across as more immediate and focused on the reader.

# use active verbs

In the active voice, the subject of the verb – the person who is to carry out the action – is clearly identified, making the effect of the text on the reader sharper and more specific, whereas the passive voice leaves the agent implicit, which can be slightly vague.

Passives can't always be avoided, but taking a phrase such as "clients will be shown how to use our products" and turning it around to say "we'll show you how to use our products", will make the writing seem much friend-lier and more direct, without changing the meaning at all

# show don't tell

Following on from writing to involve our readers, is the age-old creative writers' rule of "show don't tell" – don't tell us your heroine is happy; show us how she smiles and sings to herself as she goes about her day.

For business communications this really boils down to focusing on benefits not features. Don't tell us how many buttons and functions the gadget has: show us how these functions will make our lives easier.

# keep things upbeat

Clearly it depends on the service or product but, except for a few celebrities famed for their grumpy-old-man style personalities, most brands don't aspire to negativity.

In an attempt to keep their writing chirpy and upbeat, many writers will deliberately rephrase statements to avoid negative words even when being critical. Using phrases like "the meal could have been tastier" or "the broadband connection isn't as fast as I'd wish" is less likely to offend than "the meal was bland" or "the broadband is too slow" because we hear the positive words "tasty" and "fast", which softens the criticism.



# Experience leads to understanding and expertise

firm Cees Houseasting = 8's pronounced "kisse" = and i fletnet worked in hospitality of my life. My coreer has taken mic accoss five. continents and shown me the whole range of foscinating and

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## Improving profitability through knowledge

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porticipate fully on a member of your soons bringing with me the

















◀ When we developed the personal brand for international hospitality sector expert Cees Houweling, it was important that all his communications reflect his influencer status. Starting with a comprehensive personal interview to establish tone, as well as gather material, we produced all content for the project in both English and Spanish.





# in case studies

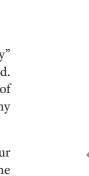
As well as visual design, Tantamount offer copywriting services, so clients sometimes ask us to "write some case studies" for them. The scare quotes are there because each client has a different idea about what constitutes a case study, why they want one, and what might be involved in producing one. Lots of business owners hear the phrase "case study" and eagerly decide that this is something they need. But our experience shows that often it's a question of leaping aboard a bandwagon, not quite knowing why they're travelling, nor where they're heading.

Case studies come in all shapes and sizes. Some of our clients want straight factual accounts: their client; the client's problem; their proposed solution; the outcome. Some want to tell the story themselves, others want their client's perspective: both may be a personal account of the business/customer relationship, but the handling and result can be very different. Some clients want to showcase a single high-profile project in great depth; others want a superficial treatment of a range of projects to compare and contrast.

Some businesses want case studies to send out with press packs; others want them to hang on the portfolio section of their website along with galleries of photos; others want to include them in the printed brochures they give to prospective clients, or as appendices to annual reports to be given to stakeholders.

And, of course, the clients – both our clients and our clients' clients – come from different sectors and business types. It soon becomes clear that the idea of a one-size-fits-all case-study model is a nonsense.

So, if the phrase case study has caught your attention and you think this is something you should have for your business, we suggest taking the following factors into consideration.



# purpose, audience & distribution

It's a good idea to start at the end and work back: how are you going to present the case study and who is your intended audience? Keeping these points in mind, you are more likely to find that, whatever the final result is, it's fit for purpose.

# selection of projects

Which projects should you choose for your case studies? Broadly speaking, they should be the most appealing and most effective stories, the most successful and impressive projects. But if you are putting together a series of studies, you should also think about the ones that work together to show a complete picture of what you do and how effectively you do it.



If you are compiling case studies from the point of view of your own business, you may not need any additional input from your clients. Even so, whether or not you have signed a non-disclosure agreement, it is courteous to ask your clients if they are happy for you to write about them and disclose details of their projects. Depending on the type of work you do, your clients may be delighted to benefit from the publicity, but there are times when they would rather remain anonymous, and failure to respect this can only damage your own business reputation.

# style and length

A case study can be anything from a few hundred words to 1,500, to several thousands. Style is usually very dependent on the use that is to be made of the study and target audience, but common formats are journalistic reports, storytelling, interviews etc. Different formats and voices are more or less appropriate for different sectors, and different projects lend themselves to different treatments. Even so, if you are writing more than one case study, you should try and maintain a level of consistency that holds them all together and reflects your brand.

# information gathering

Every business has its own expertise, so if you ask a PR specialist or marketing agency to write the case study for you, you will probably get a higher quality result than if you produce it in-house. You may think you know what needs to be included and may want to gather and collate the information yourself to save money, but bear in mind that if you are employing an expert, it's only fair to let them do what they are good at: you will need to confirm that your clients are willing to participate, but after that it may be preferable for the writer to deal with them directly.

Quotes attributable to the end-customer are always an effective technique for case studies and an experienced writer will ask the right questions to get the best quotes. You will end up with personalised and authentic stories if the writer interviews your clients, although you should be prepared for the associated costs, especially if face-to-face meetings are needed.

# presentation

It's not all about the words, of course. You can include photos or other graphics if the case studies are to appear in print, and motion graphics or live video and audio in digital versions; video testimonials from the end customer can be particularly powerful. Although these can be recorded with mobile devices, a certain level of quality is needed and some professional edition can make them much slicker and more impactful. Clearly, there are cost implications to all these different options.

So, the purpose, the content, the audience and the way the information is to be distributed will all influence the way you should approach your case studies: although "write me a case study" may sound like a simple request, there's a lot to be taken into consideration.



# **Our aims**

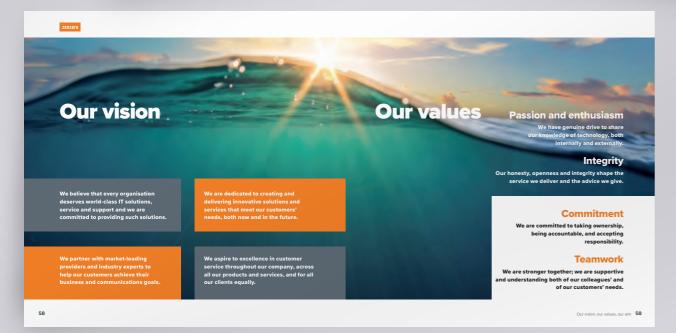
# A solid foundation to grow your business

Providing a single standard of excellence to all our customers, across all that we do.

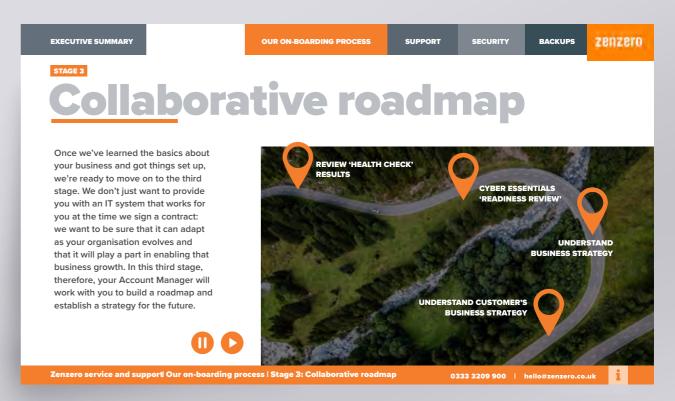
We use proven technologies to design IT solutions tailored to meet the needs of our individual clients and support their

Our customers come in all different shapes and sizes; they operate in a variety of different industries and sectors. We deliver sustainable IT solutions that not only address their current needs, but also have the capacity to grow and evolve in line with the growth and evolution of the individual capacity to grow useful with the capacity to grow useful with the individual capacity to grow useful with the capacity capacity capacity to grow useful with the capacity capacity capacity capacity capacity the capacity capacity capacity capacity the capacity capacity capacity the capacity capacity the capacity capacity the capacity capacity the individual organisations we work with.





With so many companies competing in the IT sector, in order to stand out from the crowd, it's vital to have a recognisable brand, to communicate clearly and effectively, and to demonstrate added value to clients. After getting to know Zenzero and the services they offer, we were able to provide jargon-free copywriting for web and print, including advertising, print collateral and downloadable lead-magnets. High quality, consistent design completes the package.



▲ An interactive multimedia tablet-based POS is a powerful marketing and customer-engagement tool.

◀ Producing a corporate brochure requires an investment in time and money to get the content right and the production quality at a level that reflects the image your organisation wants to portray. We recommended a perfect-bound 21cm square format for the Zenzero brochure, with UV gloss highlights.

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◆ Producing a corporate brochure requires an investment in time and money to get the content right and the production quality at a level that



Producing a corporate brochure requires an investment in time





# video and motion graphics

While modern tech gives everyone access to a camera, ephemeral one-use-only social media photos and videos are a world apart from bespoke photography and high-quality corporate videos. From full green-screen and motion graphics experiences, to talking-head case studies, to picture-in-picture glosses of technical screencasts, we can provide photographs and video that will be true, long-term, assets for your business.

# dynamic, MOVING engaging,

Online video is a powerful tool to attract website users and to engage their interest. In order for this to happen, though, the video must be of good quality, with a combination of elements, and must provide an informative and entertaining user experience at the same time.

Now that videos can be played almost anywhere and on almost any device (even in 2G connections), there are no longer the same limitations to use as there were in the past and video is one of the fastest growing website elements.

Well-made videos can offer an immersive experience, encouraging people to spend more time on a page, to lean back and enjoy more content. Whether it's full-screen, in modal (pop-up) windows, embedded from social networks or You-Tube... video content has become essential to the modern website.

# hero videos

On corporate websites, one of the most popular formats for video is full screen, in "hero" type headers. This is the kind of video we frequently see when we land on a website: it occupies the entire width of the screen and often has text overprinted as a slogan or call to action. Such videos may even include some type of navigation elements.

These video headers usually fall into one of a small number of types:

**Loop.** A single video played on repeat as a background, acting strictly as a visual element, without audio or other integration with the website beyond the visual.

**Montage.** A series of videos combined together and played in a loop as background. This is also a strictly visual element of the site.

**short film.** Here the video is a little more "cinematic", with sound, and some kind of structure or script, like the trailers used to promote movies.

**Interactive.** These are the type of videos that offer really engaging experiences. The viewer follows a story and performs actions or makes decisions by clicking (or tapping the screen) to continue towards the final outcome.

**Cinemagraph.** At first glance these look like a fixed image, but in fact there is some subtle movement of one or more elements. These are usually used as backgrounds, and frequently reflect a natural environment of some sort, such as a slight movement of the leaves of a tree.

# quality matters

Essentially, the rules for recording video are not so different from those of photography. If you take into account the basic principles of colour theory, typography, framing and contrast, it's possible to produce an acceptable video, even if it won't be professional standard. But while this kind of "home-made" video may work well for ephemeral uses such as blog posts and social media, it's vital to recognise the importance of using high-quality videos to represent your business.

As well as the quality of the captured images, framing and editing, high definition, good production, and clear rendering at high resolution all contribute to conveying a professional impression. In addition, a professional videographer may use multiple cameras and cut between views and perspectives, providing a far more engaging experience for the viewer.

Although a good video offers an excellent first impression on your website, the quality of the video itself is not the only thing to consider: there are other factors that must be taken into account.

# contrast between elements

Any text or graphic element superimposed on the video needs to be easy to read; this means it's essential to establish a clear contrast between these elements and the moving image. This can be tricky, given the movement of the image, but the problems can be overcome.

Choosing video clips with minimum variation between light and dark allows subtitles, for example, to be added either in dark or light text accordingly, while using a translucent colour overlay – perhaps just across a part of the screen – can provide effective contrast.

video and motion graphics

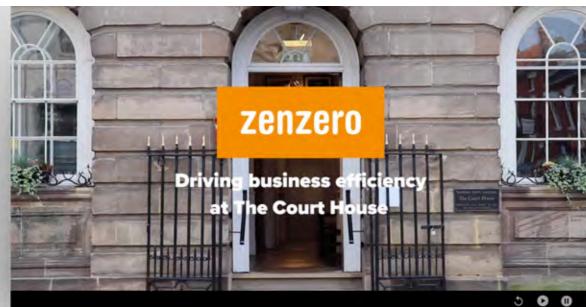
# variety

Although video is engaging, once seen it can soon lose its appeal and users will appreciate seeing something new when they visit your website. You can create contrast and interest by using multiple videos that play at different times.

# fixed and moving images

Users need to be able to see and read any text and find any call-to-action button easily, while they continue to watch the video. So, because video is in motion, other elements that share the user interface should be – and should appear to be – still. In general, you should choose a typeface without too much slope or implicit movement, and create simple buttons and elements that don't need much animation as this can distract from the video.

From scripting to filming to post-production, we work directly with our clients' clients to produce branded video testimonials.



# voice-over

If your video is an interview with someone, viewers will clearly expect to hear the actual voice of the person on screen. The result will be more natural if they are not trying to remember an exact script; for inexperienced or nervous interviewees, using cutaways between concepts can give them the chance to review the next point in the discourse. But if you are making an explainer video or a corporate video with a collage of clips of your offices, staff, client meetings etc., the chances are that a professional voice-over will add polish and make the finished video stand out from the crowd.

## sound

Automatic playback sound is intrusive and can be very annoying for some users. When it comes to video and sound, the golden rule has always been to turn off the sound until the user chooses to activate it.

There are many – too many – websites that risk using sound for their self-playing videos. Such sites run a huge risk of alienating users, although auto-play sound can be appropriate when it is an essential part of the content.

A recent Facebook report shows that an incredible 85% of users watch videos without sound. It is easy to infer that they see other videos in the same way, no matter what website they are on, so it's worth exploring the use of subtitles or on-screen captions if the visual message alone is not enough for your purposes.

Rewarding Experiencies

Reward your clients for purchases, recommendations, reviews, stories...

Screen detail from promotional **a** animated video for the Enajori app.

# interactive adventures

While the use of video has been growing steadily, the emerging trend is interactive storytelling: increasingly, websites are beginning to mix video and user controls to create a story. Combining video, animation and a lot of skill with Javascript and CSS, the result becomes a playful journey that involves and engages users, keeping them on your website much longer as they explore your content.

A great example of this is the gamified experience designed by Raptmedia "Will You Fit Into Deloitte", which takes us through several situations of etiquette and moral dilemmas in a fun and engaging way. In the end, not only will the user have a better understanding of what it takes to integrate into the Deloitte staff, but they will also have spent time exploring the company values and enjoying the experience, which in turn creates memory.

Well-made videos encourage people to spend more time and enjoy more content.

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# what about mobile filming?

If you don't have a budget for professional video and you want to try it for yourself using your mobile, these five simple points can make a huge difference

Hold your phone horizontally not vertically.

Keep the phone still. Grip it with both hands, as close to the body as possible, not at arm's length, where you are much more likely to shake. You can also use a table or wall to lean against for stability. Of course, the best solution is to buy a cheap tripod.

Mobiles have little exposure and dynamic range and don't respond well to filming in low light conditions, so film where there is lots of light to illuminate your subject; don't sit them in a dark room with their back to a window. Also remember that the darker it is, the steadier the camera needs to be.

If someone is speaking on the video, make sure there is as little external noise as possible. As with the tripod, a cheap lapel mike will make a huge difference to the results.

Don't forget to look at the framing and composition. Your subject doesn't need to be smack in the centre of the screen: check out the rule of thirds used by photographers.

A little editing, a good intro and outro, some background music and transitions, and your video will be fit to go. •



# two types<sub>of</sub> Viceo

With modern tech, every one of us, business and individual, has the potential to be a broadcaster. But there's a world of difference between spontaneous social media videos and the kind of video that is a genuine business asset.

It is estimated that by 2021, video will account for 82% of all consumer Internet traffic, so it's little wonder that most small business owners have been caught up in the recent trend and are producing video content for their brand.

But much of the content that is produced is spontaneous and ephemeral: it's recorded with a webcam or a smartphone and transmitted live or posted on social media without any edition, only to disappear down the timeline never to be seen again.

Naturally if content is only going to be seen during a short period of time, there is little point spending a lot of money or resources on its production. But if you intend to put a video on a landing page – which increases by 50% the chances of the page showing up on the first search-engine results page, as well as increasing conversions by over 80% – you might want to think about investing a little more time and effort.

More importantly, if the video is to be the focus of your main business website home page, or feature in the digital presentation of your annual accounts or online company brochure, it really should be viewed as a corporate asset.

Even if the people who appear in the video are not professional performers and lack "stage presence", professional filming and edition can raise the quality tremendously. Proper lighting and careful cuts and transitions can turn a potential embarrassment into a profile-raising asset.

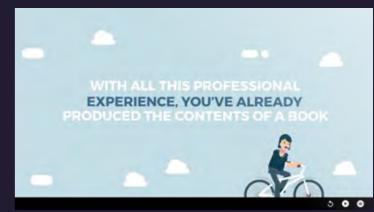
There's a world of possibilities, both of techniques and of applications, from green-screen filming and motion graphics, to talking-head case studies, to picture-in-picture of technical screencasts, to personal introductions for company documents, proposals and reports.

So, if you want to really take advantage of video in your business, although candid and spontaneous content is a wonderfully accessible medium for social media, it's worth considering how you could benefit from investing in more formal video production.









A sequence of screens from the Author Branding animated explainer video shows how short, on-screen phrases can be used to support a professional voice-over.

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# taking SIOCK

There is a lot of misunderstanding of what stock photography actually means and the phrase is often used with negative connotations; in fact, whether it's for digital or print design, both custom images and stock photography have roles to play.

Sometimes a client tells us they've heard that they shouldn't use stock photography on their collateral, so they'd like us to use their own images. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, experience tells us that we may be about to run into problems, whether with image size, style, composition, message or content.

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video and motion graphics

For some businesses, we would definitely recommend bespoke images for their collateral: visual artists, cake decorators and other creatives whose personal talent is their selling point; hotels and event centres who want to show off their unique facilities; companies with unique and original products, or products that bear their logo or branding. But when a picture is needed for the website of an accountancy practice or an HR company, or for the brochure of an SEO firm or an independent solicitor, its principal function may simply be as a design element to break up text or provide a visual balance to the page; it is often not there to provide actual information, but to evoke a mood or tone, to inspire confidence and show professionalism.

Custom photography certainly has its place, but however good phone camera pix can be when taken by skilled photographers, it's unlikely that a selfie is the best option for your LinkedIn profile, and a snapshot of your team posed awkwardly around a meeting table is probably not going to attract new clients to your business. A local photographer may be able to provide high quality headshots or images of your premises at affordable prices, but your staff may not be the best people to illustrate your company literature.

Not all of them are likely to be happy to appear in the photos, while those who are willing are not trained models and may not be able to create the appropriate impression. Even if they can, what will you do if they leave? Imagine how awkward it would be if they joined a competitor. However inexpensive a photo shoot is, you probably won't want to pay for another every time a member of staff moves on.

Even if you have had successful professional photos taken, unless you told the photographer in advance that the pictures were intended for print or for large format collateral, they may still not be suitable: if they are land-scape (horizontal) when the design calls for a portrait (vertical) image, it will have to be cropped; a full-page picture to be printed on glossy A4 paper will need to be a far higher resolution than one that was designed for use on the web; and the original of a photograph to be used on a roller banner or exhibition stand needs to be enormous if the pixels are not to be visible when it comes back from the printer.

In addition, any imperfections in the image will be more obvious when it is blown up and even if the camera's highest resolution setting was used, if you are going to zoom in and use only a part of the picture, it still may not work. These are times when stock images can be the answer.

It's important to be clear that a stock image is not the same as the little clip-art icons and motifs that come free with software packages; design studios have access to huge libraries of professional photographs, illustrations and other images all categorised and searchable by a range of criteria. These pictures are often royalty-free, which means that only one payment is needed and they can then be used without limitations on purpose, medium or length of use.

While some images are available to download completely free – not even requiring a one-off payment – these are likely to be lower quality and are certainly non-exclusive. Other stock images can cost anything from a few dollars up, depending on how they are to be used. Exclusivity is possible, but comes at a price.

Your designer knows what is needed, both in technical terms and as far as the image content is concerned, and will choose the best option available, taking into account factors such as size, format and composition, as well as the message and mood to be conveyed.

Both custom images and stock photography have roles to play in business collateral.

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Of course one of the objections to stock photography is that unless you pay the high figures associated with exclusivity, everyone else has access to the same images. And it's true that you do, occasionally, see the same image used in different projects. But this is where the designer's expertise comes into play: they don't often just download an image and plonk it into a design "as is". By cropping, re-shaping, silhouetting, using colour tools, and combining images and text skilfully, a designer manages to create original works from stock images.

So if you are talking to your designer about new collateral, don't dismiss the idea of stock photography out-of-hand: he almost certainly isn't trying to fob you off with low quality clip-art. And if you are planning a custom photo shoot, you may want to have the photographer talk directly to your designer beforehand, to make sure you get the most out of the session and end up with photos that will work for all your upcoming projects.

# publishing

Storytelling has become a vital part of business communications, while expert publications add credibility to many a professional CV. Having worked with large publishing houses and prestigious writing organisations, we're delighted to provide assisted publishing services – from manuscript support through to print, digital and audio book production – to creative and independent authors, as well as to the business community,

#### process and pitfalls

## writing a book

Elsewhere, we talk about how existing content may provide material for a book. But a book is not simply a compilation of social media posts or a collection of marketing texts, and there are a number of things to bear in mind when planning a book based on repurposed content.



Repurposed material combined with snippets collected from social media and business collateral may provide the bulk of the content needed for a book, and blog posts in particular can be a really useful source of reusable content. But what makes a book readable and useful is the way the content is organised; once gathered, the raw content will all need to be rationalised and structured, and a change of platform and format will probably make other changes necessary.

Although blogs usually have an overarching theme, they work more like magazines than books, with the posts comparable to a series of disconnected articles. At an extreme, posts may vary in length from as few as 100 words to several thousand, while, for a book, it makes sense for different sections to be more or less the same length. Blog posts may also vary somewhat in voice and style, and tend to be relatively informal, which may not be the most appropriate style for a professional published book.

For a non-fiction or technical reference book, a good place to start organising is with the Table of Contents, which provides an at-a-glance schema of the "shape" or structure of the book. You can then expand each section or chapter in turn, keeping the lengths more or less balanced.

But even when you have developed the full-length manuscript, it's important to realise that this is still only a first draft: it's only a beginning, not the end.

For a professional book, it will probably be necessary to work with an editor, who will be able to give objective feedback and help you write the very best book possible. But "editor" can mean various things, and it's important that both you and the expert you are working with are clear about where in the process you are and what kind of editing your manuscript needs: structural, copy editing, proofreading...

Even when the manuscript is complete, there is still work to be done, as professional design will add to the book's readability. The design of the interiors of a non-fiction book is a map that guides the reader. It isn't a simple street map, though: it's a full ordnance survey-style map, with a clearly defined legend that explains the terrain.

The designer will define styles for all the different text elements – text body, chapter and section headings, subtitles, lede paragraphs, pull quotes, tables, lists etc. – and make sure that they are all clear, consistent and coherent. In addition, there are page elements – running header, footer, page numbers etc. – that help orient and guide the reader.

The cover is another vital element of design, as it tempts the reader to pick up the book and discover what's inside. There may need to be different versions for digital and print covers, as the reader sees and experiences these differently.

Finally, a word of warning about re-using content. If you are using research, ideas, photos or other content from social media, you need to be aware of potential copyright issues: just because something is posted on the Internet, it does not mean it is in the public domain and available to be re-used. You should always try and find the owner of any information you reference – not least to verify its validity – and make it clear if you are citing someone else's work or ideas.

If you are using more than short quotations, or more than a small amount of someone else's work, particularly for a commercial purpose, such as a book you intend to sell, it may not be enough to attribute the quotes; you may need to contact the original author and ask for permission. After all, the last thing you want is to be accused of plagiarism when you are trying to raise your professional profile.  $\blacksquare$ 



# the DOWElof repurposing

Have you decided to step into the world of publishing and write a book? If facing the blank page can be frightening for experienced writers, it can be even worse for those who are new to publishing.

Before you forge ahead with writing a book, it's important to stop and ask yourself why you want to do so. That review of your motivations can reveal a lot of clues about the content you should focus on; but if you're still not 100% sure of your content, it's a good idea to think about what material you already have available that you can repurpose.

Most businesses and business professionals produce a lot of content. When looking for possible material, remember that modern books are not limited to print: digital publications can go beyond words and static images to include audio, video, animation and all kinds of images, including interactive infographics, timelines, exploded diagrams, pop-ups... The following are just some potential sources of material.

#### social media

The limited length of social media texts means they may not provide much content, but they can be very useful in providing topic headings or links to material that you want to refer to when writing.

#### newsletters

Even if newsletters are connected to topical events, there may still be content that can be extracted and re-used.

#### blog posts

Not all blog posts will be re-usable, so remember that "booking your blog" is not simply a question of downloading all the posts and reformatting.

#### talks & presentations

In the same way that a slide deck provides a structure for a talk, it can provide a structure for you to expand on in writing and provide the raw material either for a small book or a section of larger book.

#### collateral

If you have collateral that explains what your business does, it may well include material that can be repurposed.

#### case studies & portfolio items

These can be especially interesting as they may already take the form of stories, which makes them accessible and memorable.

#### testimonials

As with case studies, testimonials can provide valuable examples of real-life applications of your subject matter.

#### onboarding documents

If you provide prospective clients with documents explaining your approach and methodology, these will probably contain useful background material.

#### pitches & business plans

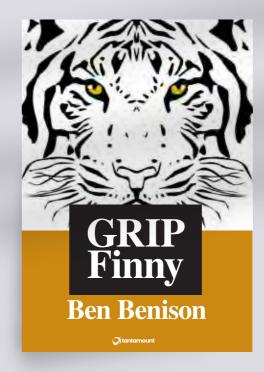
Even if the actual texts would need re-writing, these are well worth reviewing for raw material. There may also be additional background material and notes that were produced during the drafting process but omitted from the final document.

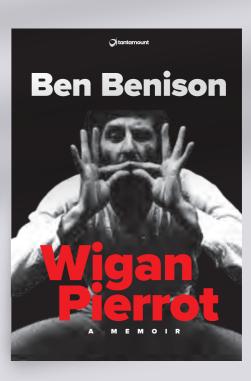
#### emails & notes for meetings

Explanatory notes that you produce for a single client can be adapted to be more generally relevant.

#### beyond content

Once you have reviewed and collected all the content you already have available, you may think you have the first draft of a manuscript. But it's vital to recognise that content, however good, is not the whole story: what makes content valuable is the way it is organised. Your job as an author is to put together good content in a way that the structure and organisation adds value and offers new insights: this is what will make your book stand out from the crowd.





▲ Skilled mime and performer extraordinaire Ben Benison is just one of the authors for whom we have provided a range of assisted publishing services from typesetting to cover design.



The organisation of information actually creates new information.

At first sight, with so much information available on the web, it might seem strange that there is still a need or demand for nonfiction books. But it's precisely the volume of content available that makes us appreciate it when we find what we're looking for filtered from the rest and presented in an easily accessible format.

Humans don't think in a purely linear fashion but we do - at least in English - have a linguistic tendency to see time flow from past to present to future. Most traditional narrative has a plot line that follows some kind of linear thread and even when the story jumps around in time with flashbacks, parallel viewpoints etc., the reader is used to starting at page one and reading through to the end. But nonfiction isn't usually a narrative, and digital content isn't stored in a linear fashion. Most of us have experienced the rabbit-hole of internet research: you start looking for something and then click on a link and then another link and eventually end up somewhere else entirely. Even when you find something relevant and interesting, it's not always clear whether it's fact or opinion, and often there's nothing to say how recently the content was produced, so you don't know whether the information still holds true. This is where good non-fiction books come into their own. A non-fiction book doesn't just provide information: it organises it and presents it to the reader in a planned and structured way, making the information that the reader is interested in available and accessible in an efficient manner. This organisation and presentation of the material is what makes the reader willing to pay, so writers need to work together with designers to see where digital functionalities can enhance the reader experience. Digital publishing in the form of ebooks and apps provides all sorts of tools that writers can use to make sure that, even if much of the material can be found elsewhere, their book is genuinely useful. Footnotes, glossaries, additional background and explanations, pop ups, inter-text connections, external links to other sources, sound files and demonstration videos... all of these functionalities can be exploited to make sure the reader finds what they need. Despite the traditional idea of a book starting on page one and going right through until the end, that's only the case for print. When it comes to publications that are to be read on smartphones and tablets, it's worth investigating how to strengthen the information structure through a well-designed interface and how to use the native functions of the device to add further value to the reader.



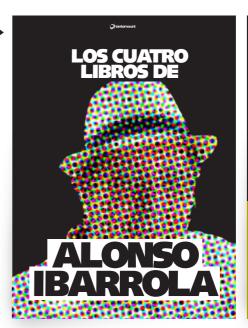
## so you want to write a book?

They say that everyone has a book in them. So, as an authority in your professional field, you may feel that the natural next step is to become an author. But before you face the blank page, it's worth taking a moment to ask yourself why you want to write a book.

Although publishing a non-fiction or reference book in your own business field is the most obvious choice to increase your authority, there are other possibilities. If you write poetry, fiction or children's stories, these are also perfectly valid genres and, depending on your reasons for publishing, may serve your purpose just as well. A well-written, successful novel may raise your profile as much as a non-fiction book would; a professionally produced poetry collection or illustrated children's book may catch the public's eye and generate just as much visibility, as well as making you stand out from the crowd. Be aware, though, that toilet humour or controversial topics such as politics can be a risky choice!

To increase your visibility and perceived status, you don't necessarily have to publish in your professional field. However, whatever type of book you publish, it is vital that it reflect the quality and professionalism that you want to show to potential clients.

The list of Tantamount publications includes both modern and classic titles in Enalish and Spanish.





Do you think having a book published will consolidate your authority and take you up a step on the ladder towards becoming an influencer?

very sure that your book is every bit as professional as you are: not only must the content be top quality, but so must the production, as a badly edited, cheaply produced book can do more reputational damage than good. It's worth noting that however correct your information is, simply regurgitating you to influencer status: unless new approach, or a new way of organising existing ideas, it's unlikely that your book will really stand out from the crowd.

Do you hope to sell lots of copies and enjoy a regular stream of passive income?

If this is the case, you need to be The actual figures show that this is unlikely to happen. Although there are some exceptions, even a successful traditionally-published book may not make the author more than a few thousand pounds. As for going it alone, average sales of self-published books are around 250 copies; once you factor in the costs of production - assuming known information won't propel you pay professionals to do it well - there may be no profit at all. Eiyou add value through new ideas, a ther way, if you are hoping to set up an income stream, it is vitally important to make sure your book is actually marketable and that there is a readership for it beyond your immediate circle of contacts.

Do you want your book to complement consultancy work or talks and presentations?

As a coach or consultant, you may find it useful to have a book that consolidates the ideas and techniques you teach your clients. If this is the case, the book may hardly exist in its own right, but simply add value to something specific that you already do. Rather than focusing on content that will appeal to a general market, it will probably be quite clear what is needed to supplement your faceto-face appearances. It's worth noting, though, that this will pretty much limit the sales and use of the book to your immediate audiFor the sensitive work carried out by Sands, the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity, it is essential to work within established branding guidelines to the highest levels of clarity and accuracy.

We were proud to use our design expertise to help the charity with the difficult task of communicating figures and statistics accessibly through infographics and collateral aimed at a range of stakeholders.



Pregnancy loss and the death of a baby: Guidelines for professionals

Many parents find it helpful to talk to other people who have been through similar experiences. They may prefer to access this support one-to-one or in a group. However, it is better to refer parents to specialist voluntary groups that have specially trained supporters, rather than to individual local bereaved parents. Staff should offer parents information about national and local organisations that offer support and how to contact them. They should have an up-to-date list prepared with this information and a member of staff should have the responsibility of ensuring that it is updated every six months. Some information about voluntary organisations that offer support and information for bereaved parents can be found in Appendix 2. It may sometimes be helpful for staff to offer to help parents make the first contact with a group.

No-one can explain the emotions of losing a child, the only people who understand are those who have had a similar experience. Your life is over. The nursery is empty. Your heart is broken and your inside feels empty. You go to the hospital to have a baby, your whole life is geared up for this little person and you come home with nothing but a few memories. Mother

It is important that voluntary support groups are seen as *complementing* professional support rather than replacing it and that staff do not automatically withdraw their support if parents develop local contacts. Staff should also consider the possible limitations of local support groups. For example, parents in minority communities or whose first language is not English, fathers, parents on a low income and single mothers may be less likely to contact support groups. In such cases, healthcare professionals may be able to help build bridges between parents and these groups or help to set up new groups where these parents may feel more comfortable.

CHAPTER 18

#### **Mental** he

Other relevant chapters

- 1: Providing holistic care
- 2: Providing inclusive care
- 3: Loss and grief
- 4: Communication
- Communication across and other barriers

▲ We provided editorial support and publishing design services for print and digital versions of the fourth edition of the charity's "Guidelines for Professionals", a valuable reference book used by medical professionals across the UK and beyond.



▲ Detail of a page of an interactive magazine produced for the Official College of Geologists, Spain.

#### afterthoughts

It's impossible to be in business for any length of time and not learn something about business itself. That's especially true when your work deals with brand, values and messaging – the very core of any business – and so allows you to get up close and personal with other companies and organisations.

This final section includes some general thoughts and musings from the world of business; I hope you find them interesting.





If you are passionate about your business, it's very tempting to talk about it at every possible opportunity as you want the world to know about it. Even when there are no speaking opportunity, you may write blog posts and social media updates about the company, about your latest projects, about your products and services... It's important to remember, though, that communication is not a monologue.

# listening?

Many of the articles here are about communicating brand values and business messages through words and images – about the things we say and write, the texts and visuals that businesses include on websites and in printed collateral: they focus on the active production of content.

There's another side to things, though: we all love to talk about ourselves, but sometimes it's important to let someone else have the floor. And if you want your business to communicate well, you need to listen to your clients and hear what they have to say.

When we go to networking events and everyone gets their "60 seconds", how often do we actually listen to what's being said? If we're honest, we'll admit that all too often we are more concerned with checking our own notes, thinking about how we're going to negotiate the room to get to where we're going to stand, and trying to remember what we're going to say when we get there.

Even when we do latch on to a phrase from someone else's pitch, it's usually just so we can give our own talk a quick twist and make it sound as if we were paying attention. Here, as in most situations, the tendency is to listen in order to respond, not in an attempt to understand.

#### active listening

Because of the way English speech is constructed, including the way the language uses rhythm and stress, even professional speakers tend not to enunciate each word clearly. This becomes apparent if you try to transcribe song lyrics or even a news piece from the BBC: the pronunciation and clarity of a word depends on the context and surrounding discourse and it's frequently impossible to distinguish each word separately.

This means that if we want to understand and grasp the complete message, we need to pay attention – to listen actively, not passively. Even when you are listening as part of an audience rather than participating in a private conversation, speaker and listener work together to construct meaning; and if you, the listener, don't play your part, the intended meaning may be lost or misunderstood

In addition, the spoken message isn't just about the words that are used, but also about the tone, the pitch, the pacing, etc. Sometimes, too, the most important information is what is left unsaid.



#### the importance of questions

So as well as supplementing the information we hear and filling in the blanks with our own knowledge of grammar and our understanding of the subject and the context, we may need to clarify by asking questions. And asking the right questions to get the information we need can be quite a skill. To begin with, it's important to recognise what information you are trying to ascertain and guide the other person to provide the answer you want or need.

Essentially, you can ask open questions, beginning with one of the question words – who, what, where, how, when, which – and allow the other person to answer exactly as they please. Or you can ask closed questions, starting with a phrase such as "Do you..." or Have you...", which limits the answer to "yes" or "no" and allows you to keep much closer control of the conversation.

Closed questions can be particularly useful if you don't understand a subject and want to make sure the conversation covers the information one step at a time. Used well, they can keep an expert reined in rather than letting them head off enthusiastically into technical or specialist areas beyond the comprehension of the listener. But, by their very nature, closed questions force the conversation along a certain route. By limiting the possible answers, you may miss out on interesting – and useful – information simply because you are unaware of it and so don't guide the conversation in that direction. If you want to learn what the speaker knows or how they feel about something, it's important to give them space to express themselves.

You have two ears and one mouth. Are you talking or are you listening? ■

When it comes to business communications, it's vital to remember that you are engaged in a dialogue: it isn't just about getting your message out there.

Communication is a two-way street and anyone who wants to run a successful business needs to be prepared to listen to their clients, their suppliers and other stakeholders. It's been said that the most interesting person in the room is the one who listens to you.



# it's not about you!

Some business owners think of their businesses as an extension of themselves: there's a personal anecdote behind the company name, the logo is in the owner's favourite colour, and the brand personality clearly reflects the attitudes, vision and values of the person behind the scenes.

This can be very effective for marketing purposes: this kind of brand will usually be unique and easily identifiable, and it's easy to remain faithful to a message that is so authentic. But, particularly with micro businesses, there's a danger of this approach being restrictive: it can be very hard to delegate when you identify so directly with your business; and if the owner is the face of the company, it's difficult to grow an organisation when every client expects to deal directly with the boss.

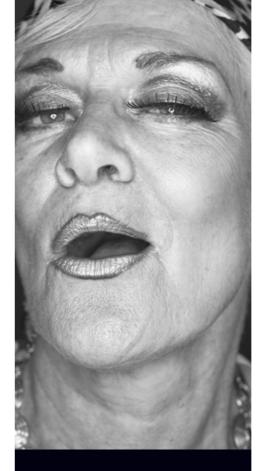
It's important to remember that your business is not all about you. To begin with, even if you intend to remain a one-man band for life, in order to work effectively, you'll almost certainly need to have support for administration, if not for other areas of your business. Beyond that, though, your business will be more successful if you focus on your clients rather on yourself.

When you're writing about the business, it's good to use an inclusive approach, addressing the audience directly as "you", rather than looking at everything from your own perspective and starting each sentence with "I" or "we".

Focusing on the client and taking their point of view will mean you stop getting excited about the multiple features and functions your new product has and start instead to look at the value this provides to the client. Marketing is all about demonstrating the benefits and showing the results the client can expect, not raving about buttons and gizmos, however impressed the guys on the shop floor are by

Think about how your product or service benefits your client and their real motivations for buying. It's long been said that no one really wants a drill: what they want is the hole; the companies that manufacture cosmetics actually sell hope; the publishers of glossy magazine are selling dreams not printed words and photos.

It's important that your company is genuine and relatable. But it's wise to remember that your business isn't an extension of yourself: instead of being owner-centric, it should be customer-centric; show, don't tell; and focus on benefits not features.



### findyour leVel

Elsewhere, we discuss company persona and personality and how you should aim to develop a brand that allows your clients to see you at a distance and recognise a friend they can trust. But it's important to remember that we can't be friends with everyone.

There are people who go out of their way not be disliked by anyone; they seem to have no actual beliefs of their own and adapt what they say to appeal to whoever they happen to be with at the time. Eventually, though, other people realise that they are inconsistent and shallow, and no one will trust them. At the end of the day, authenticity counts more than being a yes-man.

Most successful businesses don't try and cater to everyone's needs; they are successful because they focus on specific products and specific markets. In the same way, a brand has to accept that it doesn't need to appeal to everyone.

If we follow this through, it becomes apparent that a brand doesn't necessarily have to aspire to offer the finest quality to those with the deepest pockets, and we don't necessarily have to litter our marking copy with words like "premium", "excellence", "select" and "superior".

A large proportion of any market won't be able to afford top quality, but that doesn't mean they should just be ignored. If you can provide a product that works for them, and it makes business sense, there's nothing wrong with not being in the luxury goods market.

Bear in mind that "good value" is just as worthy an attribute as "elite". We can't all be A-listers; we need to find our niche.



I have a friend who refuses to attend any event that's advertised as a workshop; he says, "I know there won't be a workbench there; and you can bet no one will be using a lathe or a coping saw." Which – perhaps fortunately – is certainly true for the business workshops I've attended.

There are other friends and colleagues who go out of their way to avoid meetings as they think these are bound to be a waste of time: the expected antagonisms and finger-pointing; a repetition of irrelevant information; the usual platitude and buzz-word bingo games.

True, the dynamic of meetings has changed in recent years: it's now more common to have stand-up meetings, likely to last only five to 15 minutes, or walking meetings, which disrupt the traditional hierarchy of chair, minutes secretary and other participants. But there are still too many needless gatherings that start late as this person is just getting a coffee and these people haven't arrived yet, and end late as that person has gone into unnecessary detail and the other has gone off on a tangent.

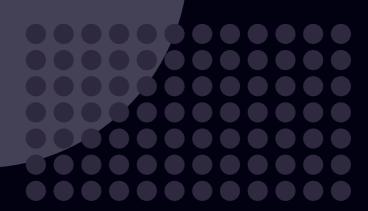
Even conference calls, which supposedly avoid some of the problems of face-to-face meetings, are frequently delayed by bad connections and interruptions.

On the other hand, "workshop" has become a bit of a buzz-word and is used to include even the lamest of round-table discussions in an attempt to galvanise enthusiasm and make a project look dynamic and upbeat. But calling a progress meeting a workshop doesn't mean that that's what it is, while advertising a one-to-one presentation as a workshop will give prospective attendees the wrong impression and leave them dissatisfied.

I think it's useful, then, to make the distinction between a meeting and a workshop; it's also useful to take time to consider which format is most appropriate for what you want to achieve.

The following summary is a work-in-progress; I hope it provides food for thought...

|              | Meeting                                 | Workshop                                                               |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purpose      | Share information & provide updates     | Solve problems                                                         |
|              | Report                                  | Develop plans                                                          |
|              | Raise awareness                         | Discovery                                                              |
|              |                                         | Creativity & innovation                                                |
| Scope        | General overview                        | Focus on single issue                                                  |
| Duration     | Timed in half-hours                     | Timed in half-days                                                     |
| Engagement   | Passive:                                | Active:                                                                |
|              | Listening                               | Brainstorming                                                          |
|              | Speaking                                | Discussion                                                             |
|              | Note-taking                             | Hands-on                                                               |
|              | Individual                              | Whole body                                                             |
|              |                                         | Collaborative                                                          |
| Organisation | Chair addresses attendees (one to many) | Break-out groups                                                       |
|              | Turn-taking                             | Group discussion                                                       |
|              | Centralised minute-taking               | (Optional) central feedback                                            |
|              |                                         | Sitting, standing or moving around                                     |
| Structure    | Formal                                  | Spontaneity encouraged                                                 |
|              | Agenda-led                              |                                                                        |
| Tools        | Notebooks (or equivalent)               | Whiteboards; post-it notes;<br>coloured markers; physical<br>materials |
| Preparation  | Little central preparation needed       | Centrally organised                                                    |
|              |                                         | Activities/ topics planned                                             |
|              |                                         | Materials provided ■                                                   |



## Experiences, not things

Have you noticed that people don't buy things anymore? We don't buy things, we buy experiences.

This is particularly true in the world of hospitality, where holidays are now sold as adventures, with local encounters and activities, and restaurants offer authentic cuisine in heritage-style settings. But it doesn't stop there.

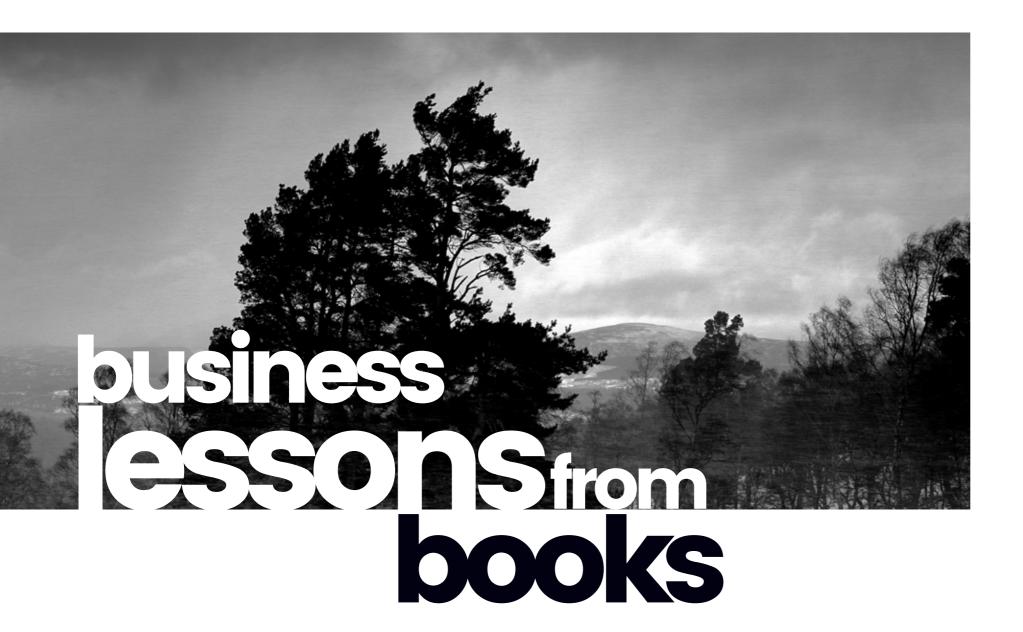
We no longer just buy clothes, we buy comfort, designer labels and style; we don't buy cars, we buy prestige, safety, technological wizardry and environmental responsibility; we don't buy food, we buy nutrition, health and well-being.

A television programme is incomplete without the behind-the-scenes making-of extras, the merchandise, the sequels, prequels and spin-offs. Shopping centres and high streets are no longer about the purchase of necessary items, but about the add-ons: the cafés and children's play areas, the pop-up shops and on-the-spot service kiosks, the bowling alleys and cinemas.

To keep up with this tendency, brands are competing to create and promote distinct, recognisable personalities that reflect their values, while providing the unique experience their target customers want to engage with. The aim is to inspire emotion and turn customers into fans, brand champions and advocates.

Alongside the growth of international names and the global reach and interaction of social media, we are seeing a rebirth in local collaborations, partnerships and networks that extend the offering of individual independent brands and create a sense of community.

At your next marketing strategy meeting, it's worth making time to think about your business offering and what you are doing – and what you can do – to create the kind of experience and community your customers can engage with again and again. ■



At Tantamount we have been working with the publishing industry – both authors and publishing houses – for decades; we've worked on a lot of books and we've heard a whole lot more talked about but never actually written. Although the idea of a book seems to be a very specific kind of project, we've seen that there's a big overlap between writing a book and any other business project, and the watchwords for success are pretty much the same.

Whatever the project, the first thing is to remember that you're a professional and act like a PRO: Plan, Repurpose, Organise.

- All projects work better with a plan, so don't rush in without knowing where you're going. In the case of writing a book, you need to know why you're writing and what you're going to do when you finish the manuscript. How are you going to publish? Who is going to read the book and how are you going to distribute it? What will success look like? Taking time at the start of any project to consider the reasons for doing it and the target outcome can save a lot of wasted time and money.

It's the age of reduce, reuse, recycle: don't re-invent the wheel; repurpose what you already have. For a book, this may be a question of plundering information from blog posts, presentations, reports... all the content that has slipped down the social media timeline or disappeared into the archives, never to be seen again. For other projects, too, you should look and see what skills and knowledge you already have in other areas and how these can be adapted and made relevant to the new endeavour.

There's very little new under the sun and, when a whole world of information is readily available on the internet, it may be hard to see what possible value you can add. This is where organisation comes into play. Curating and structuring content is a massive time-saver for your audience, and organisation can be the thing that makes your book unique. Elsewhere, too, it's your particular spin – the unique aspect of your service or product – that will make it stand out from the competition.

So, for books and other projects, planning, repurposing and organising are all essential for success. But, even knowing these basics, a lot of people fail with their book project and a lot of businesses fail with new endeavours. Writers fail to actually get the book written and businesses fail to get their new products launched, their new processes put in place and their new strategies implemented.

Often this is because they don't have the right A&E. No, they don't need an urgent trip to the hospital, but they need Accountability & Expertise. They need someone who will act as a sounding board and provide accountability, without which the project may simply never get done; and they also need someone who is an expert in the field to make sure that it's done right.

We can't be experts in everything. These days, there's enough information available that means we could probably all self-publish, create a website, paint our own house, repair the boiler and do a thousand and one other things that are not our actual field of expertise. But if we want to remain professionals, and not come across as amateurs, it's important to take the advice of people who are experts in the fields where we are novices.

So, if you're putting "write a book" on a list of goals, or if you're thinking of undertaking any other new project in an unfamiliar field, just remember:

Be a PRO: Plan; Repurpose; Organise.

And make sure you have the A&E support you need: Accountability and Expertise.

# The disation according to the indicator of the indicator

In the studio the other day, I watched a part of the design process for a new flyer. There were all different elements that needed to be combined – imagery, text, brand elements etc. – like different species of tree that grow together in symbiosis to make up a healthy forest or woodland.

The copy was written in the right tone for the organisation, and it had all been proof-read and laid out in accordance with the brand guidelines. The imagery

elements were on-brand, and the photos had been treated to make them consistent – in this case, cropped to circles and framed in brand colours. But when all the separate pieces were combined together and carefully arranged on an empty background, there still seemed to be something missing: it was somehow soulless and fragmentary. The elements weren't in conflict, but they weren't supporting each other and working together to create something bigger than the individual parts.

Then the designer tweaked the background. All it took was to flood the plain white space with a pale shade of one of the brand colours, and suddenly everything was held together, and a clear unified picture emerged.

I'm not a designer, and I know this was only an initial draft for a proposal, but watching the process got me thinking about how we often focus on the individual trees of our business – on the tasks and tactics that keep things going from day to day, not remembering the big picture that lies behind it all – the forest that's formed by the trees coming together.

There are definitely times that tactics need to be foregrounded; but as long as that is where we focus, there will never be complete coherence. It's bad enough when each element is vying for the spotlight, but if they end up pulling in different directions, real conflict may arise

In the same way that the flyer design was incomplete without a single unifying background that held them together, all our business tools and techniques, all our tasks and tactics, need to be viewed in relation to the underlying goals and strategy of our organisation. Only then will we leverage the synergies and access the full power of purpose and coherence.





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