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Ahead of the pack

Marketing is all about ensuring that your calls, emails and messages get heard above the rest of the noise and a little time and passion spent on this part of your business can make you stand out from the crowd

Many advisers we speak to tell us that one of their biggest challenges is finding enough new clients of the right quality. When we start our consulting work with clients, one of the first things we ask to see is copies of the marketing materials they use. Very often, there is little of substance, maybe a small brochure typically written in a language that is very product rather than client or service-focused.

Successful marketing is about setting you and your business apart, standing out from the crowd and creating the wow factor in the minds of your target audience.

In today's fast-moving world, consumers are bombarded with emails, phone calls, information, offers and promotions from all sorts of directions. Consider this. Are you providing your clients with information (or access to it) at the same rate as they are getting it from everyone else? Remember also that the average adviser client is also seen as a client by seven other firms in the financial services sector (for example, bank, mortgage lender, credit card company, etc).

Against that backdrop, the challenge is how to ensure that it is your calls, emails and messages that get heard above all this other noise. That is marketing.

If you are going to take marketing seriously, it pays to get expert professional help.

Indeed, clients of ours who have sought external advice have often been delighted with the



It is not about attracting more clients, it is about attracting the right clients

results (see case study). Quantity does not work any more in our sector if you operate a face-to-face advice model. It is not about attracting more clients, it is about attracting the right clients, so you have to be absolutely targeted in your marketing activity.

There are a number of approaches you can take depending upon what you want to achieve and what you can afford.

Revolution

Essentially, this is a full rebrand, repositioning and relaunch. Such an approach is likely to include:

- Redesigning your company's identity
 - Company, competitor and market research
 - Preparation of a number of design concepts, developing these ideas to a finished form
 - Development of a tone of voice, copy writing
 - Developing your complete marketing toolkit, especially a knock-out presentation style
 - Design, build and launch of your website, including visuals and copy
 - Identity guidelines and templates
 - Creation of a marketing plan
- This might be appropriate in

the right circumstances but for most firms, simply adding some polish to what you already do can achieve fantastic results.

Evolution

This involves taking existing elements of your marketing and making them work harder and look better. This might include:

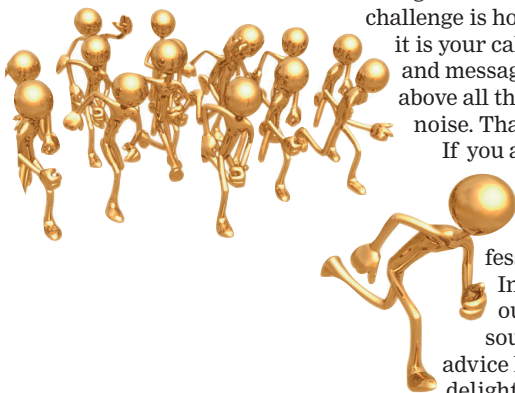
- Tweaking and refining of existing logo features
- Development of your "tone of voice"
- Redesign of your website, including copy and visuals
- Identity guidelines and templates to produce own marketing materials
- Creating your strapline, "elevator pitch" and company profile

The role of your website

If you take a look at the typical website of an adviser business, many are little more than an online brochure and focus far too much on the adviser and their business rather than the needs of the client.

Little wonder that the average "dwell time" on a adviser website is measured in seconds rather than minutes. Providing information, education and tools that clients can use or download (in return for leaving you some information about themselves) will encourage them to explore and hang around. The website should ideally allow both existing and potential clients to interact with you and possibly even buy things.

Needless to say, from a marketing standpoint, you need to make it easy for prospective clients to find you so search engine optimisation is crucial.



*** Search engines love content and the more it is refreshed the more they come back, as do people**

Here it pays to remember the four 'U's – URL, Unique, Useful and Updated.

Having a good URL or web address may seem obvious but it is important for naming and structuring pages and makes it easy for the search engine to extract key words.

Then it is the content that needs to be unique, useful and updated. Search engines love content and the more it is refreshed the more they come back, as do people.

It is always good to look outside our immediate sector for examples of best practice. Perhaps the best examples are found among the bigger organisations which have invested a huge amount of time and money in getting it right.

Take a look at:

- www.credit-suisse.com/uk/privatebanking/en. It talks about "you" the customer, your wealth and your peace of mind.
- www.cbonline.co.uk. Clydesdale Bank is immediately thought provoking and attracts another look. It is also easy to navigate and find what you want.

- www.firstdirect.com. At the time, First Direct was revolutionary as the only bank without a branch on the high street. It broke the mould. It is very straight talking and to the point. You gain an immediate sense of community and openness.

- www.waitrose.com – for immediate inspiration.

Each example has discovered and created its own personality and found its own unique way of standing out from the crowd.

Marketing needs to be seen as an investment rather than a cost. Not just an investment of money but the business-owner's time and passion and perhaps the realisation that not many can do it themselves.

Reinvention has that wow factor

Case study **Chesterford Wealth Management Group**

When Chesterford Wealth Management Group was ready to redefine its service proposition and set itself apart from the crowd, it turned to design and marketing specialist Inspire:

Chesterford managing director Patrick Gray wanted to achieve a number of things. First and foremost, he wanted to attract attention from a wider employer audience and to get them to think of him as a different kind of "can-do" employee benefits consultancy, one that was focused on treating people as individuals rather than a collection of employees. He also wanted to alert his clients and potential clients to the fast-approaching legislative pension milestones.

The first step was for Inspire to design a selection of concepts to demonstrate the different routes that Chesterford could

Chesterford gets a new identity as it encourages companies to turn employee benefits into a talking point rather than a tick in the box

take. These ranged from a simple evolution of the current logo to more radical ideas. Chesterford decided that a complete reinvention was needed. The name of the business was simplified and bright, go-getting colours were introduced.

The next step was to come up with a way of talking about individuals and the importance of certain numbers. For this, it was important to use real people and real case studies. This then lead to a very direct, straight-talking tone of voice: "Choice for your employees ... no hassle ... That's it. No extraordinary claims. We can't promise we'll be the cheapest but we'll make sure you get value for money." Now it was time to flow the new identity through the various communication media.

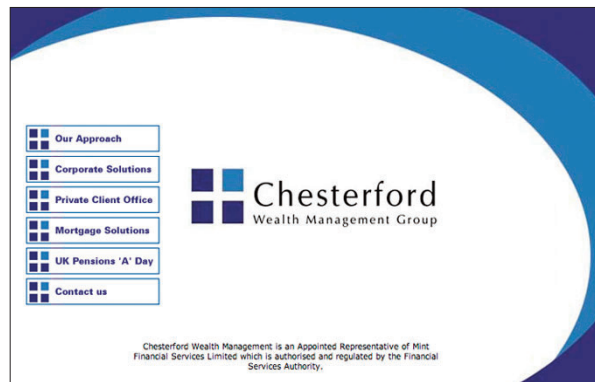
Chesterford's new website, Behind The Numbers, uses great photography and some key figures to lead the viewer into the site. It also looks at some case studies where Cheserford's creativity has worked.

It is early days yet but everyone associated with this reinvention of Chesterford feels that

wow factor. Not only has its new vibrant identity delivered some key sales support tools, it has encouraged an enthusiasm that really makes people want to get out there and spread the word. It has also received very positive feedback from current clients and associates.

Inspire: is a full service design and marketing consultancy that works closely with FP Advance and its clients. Email www.inspiredc.co.uk or carrie@inspiredc.co.uk. I can be contacted on 07905 702024 **Carrie Bendall, marketing strategist, inspire:**

Chesterford then...



Chesterford now ... a more creative, personable approach, with some important messages 'behind the numbers'

