

For publication

Project title

Fair Trader branding

Category:

Design and implementation
costs under £100,000

Client company:

Fair Trader

Design consultancy:

WPA Pinfold

Date:

03.07.14

Rebranding a fairtrade cooperative

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Right:
The new brand mark

Below:
The new store front

“Thanks to WPA Pinfold’s work, the Fair Trader is now a successful growing business with design-led, high-quality products and a business model to take us into the future.”

Stephen Sheard, Chair, Fair Trader.



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“We now have a business that our members and consumers respect, and enjoy shopping in the new experience. We have zoned in our key values thanks to WPA Pinfold. We are no longer a worthy, hippy, happy, clappy outfit with an out-dated message.”

Stephen Sheard,
Chair, Fair trader

Executive summary

18 months after launching the Fair Traders Cooperative, the Society was facing closure. The organisation was making a loss and the business model was not working - the notes to accounts for that year say it all:

“...the company has reported an operating loss for the year. The directors consider that the outlook presents significant challenges in terms of sales volume and pricing as well as input costs. Whilst the directors have instituted measures to preserve cash, these circumstances create material uncertainties over future trading results and cashflows.

The directors have concluded that the combination of these circumstances represents a material uncertainty that casts significant doubt upon the company’s ability to continue as a going concern and that, therefore, the company may be unable to realise its assets and discharge its liabilities in the normal course of business.”
(Report and accounts 2012)

A completely new strategy and business model was required. Following a call to the Fair Traders Cooperative’s membership for assistance, WPA Pinfold volunteered to help plan a new brand strategy and carry out a rebrand.

A brand and strategic review was carried out and a strategy workshop was organised with all the cooperative’s stakeholders. The resultant proposition, positioning, brand positioning statement and big thought formed the basis for a total realignment of not only the brand, but also the whole operation and working practice.

The turnaround for the business has been dramatic – most important of which is that within 12 months there is no longer an annual deficit and the Fair Trader is back in profit. It has been saved from bankruptcy and there is now a healthy and optimistic future for the cooperative. This means that all the hard work and long hours put into setting up the cooperative has been rewarded, and deprived communities across the globe (that Fair Trader supports through its sales) will continue to prosper.

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Executive summary of results:

- / increase in turnover +24.6% (2012 loss £12,144. 2013 profit £442)
- / from loss to profit in 12 months
- / gross margin increase due to added perceived value delivered by rebrand +5%
- / increase in investor numbers (members of the Fair Trader Co-operative) +72%



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Below:

The ethical and sustainability
scoring system



MEMBER ASSESSED

Product Assessment

- Economic
- Environmental
- Social
- Traceability

Supply Chain Assessment

- Ethical
- Makes a difference
- Transparency

Visit www.fairtrader.coop
and explore the journey
this item has taken to
reach you; learn how
your purchase helps our
supplier community.

Outline of project brief

In 2009 a group of five founding directors came together to develop a business plan around the cooperative model based on selling fairly traded products.

The principle of working with both producers and artisans in cooperatives from the developing world and small, local producers and artisan makers was established. An assessment protocol was developed to rate the suppliers and their products for ethical, sustainable and transparent credentials.

In the teeth of the financial recession in 2010, 320 local and widespread members collectively invested £100K to set up a cooperative shop in a six room, blue plaque historic building in the Holme Valley in the Pennines of Yorkshire. The categories of items sold included:

- / gifts and stationery
- / clothing and fashion accessories
- / food and drinks.

After 18 months the business was failing when a “call to action” was sent out to the members. WPA Pinfold responded and offered a complete re-branding and design overhaul of the business and the premises – to help turn around the loss making cooperative venture and ensure it was both fit for market and future proof (able to prosper in the forthcoming years).

The cooperative’s directors recognised that the rescue required more than a new logo and cosmetic facelift of the premises. There was a need for solid and strategic foundations, based on the equity and provenance of the original founding vision – it required both a new brand and a forward looking strategy that would have real resonance with its audience.

If the enterprise was to proceed, it needed to be run on a commercial footing and have a clearly defined brand positioning.

Key deliverables of the brief:

- / strategic review of the Fair Traders Cooperative’s proposition and positioning – to deliver future growth
- / repositioning of Fair Traders brand to ensure it was fit for market
- / category realignment and benchmarking against market leaders
- / own label strategy and design templates
- / integration of ethical and sustainability scoring system with shop merchandising
- / creation of templates for marketing communications
- / review and refocus on communication channels to give best return on investment
- / increase outreach to cooperative communities and local schools
- / redesign of signage and uniforms
- / realignment of online strategy, design templates and CMS.

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Key objectives

The Fair Traders Cooperative brand was broke and needed fixing:

- / the name was confusing, too close to generic offers (both the Fair Trade mark and fair trade from the Co-operative Group)
- / the brand mark itself was weak and lacked equity – did not add value
- / the brand application lacked equity – design and typography was poor
- / marketing communications lacked integrity and were haphazard – media channels were not delivering return on investment
- / a unique ethical/sustainability scoring system was not effectively communicating
- / website was cumbersome, too complicated and tried to sell too many products (not cost effective or manageable)
- / overall the brand and positioning was not fit for purpose, did not add value and did not engage with the type of customer that would deliver profit.



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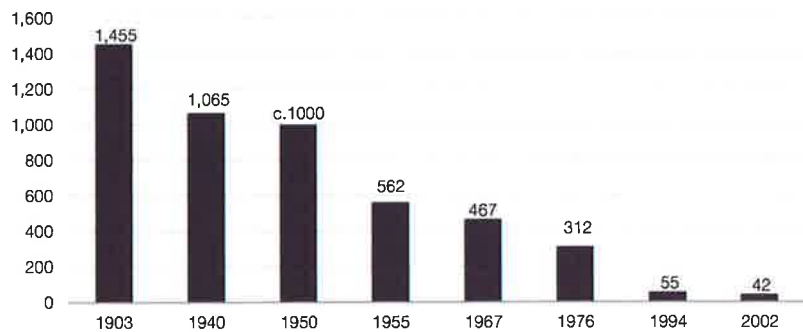
Overview of market

Like all retailers, the recession has had a negative impact on cooperatives, and the market for smaller social enterprise retailers is extremely challenging. Two major fairtrade cooperatives, the retailer Shared Earth and the online retailer Ethical Supermarket had gone into liquidation in 2011/2012.

For the wider cooperative movement there have been even more challenging times, as evidenced by the recent troubles of the Cooperative Group.

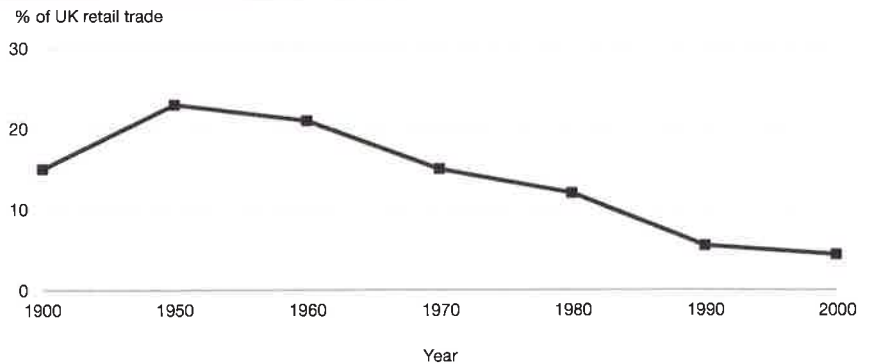
Performance statistics as follows:

Cooperative retail societies in the UK (1903 – 2002)



Source: John K. Walton the Post-War Decline of the British Retail Co-operative Movement (p 23) in Black and Robertson Consumerism and the Co-operative Movement in Modern British History, 2009

Cooperative societies' share of total UK retail trade 1900–2000 (%)



Source: Wilson, Webster & Vorberg-Rugh, Building Co-operation: A Business History of the Co-operative Group, 1863-2013 (Table B. 1, page 301)

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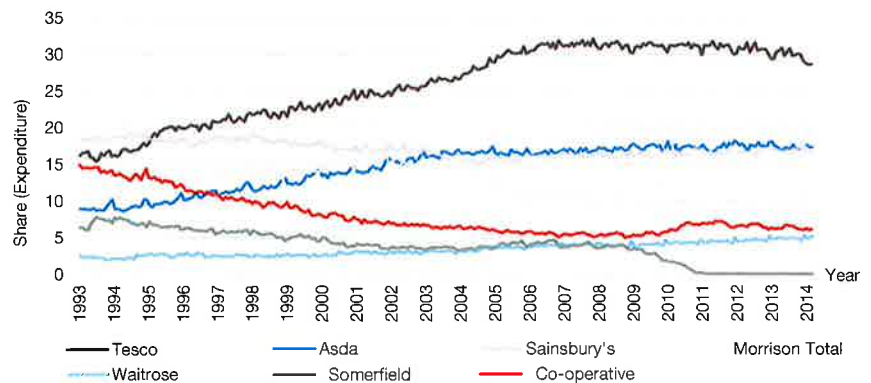
WPA Pinfold

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Overview of market cont.

Long term market share for UK food retailing



Source: Kantar Share of Till Grocers 2014

In addition, the Guardian states:

A hundred years ago there were over 1,400 retail co-operative societies in Britain. However, since then this amount has dramatically declined to around twenty – with the number about to shrink by another two. One reason for this is that co-operative mergers are on the rise. Eighty-eight members of the Penrith co-operative turned up in August at the local Methodist Church to agree (by 87 votes to 1) that their co-op would merge itself into the much bigger Scottish Midland (ScotMid) co-op. Penrith, set up in 1890, is one of the smallest of the ‘regionals’, with only around 17,000 members. Last year turnover was down by 9% and profits came in at just £162,000.

(Source: The Guardian, 14.11.13)

Key challenges

Moving the business from a ‘worthy’ but out-dated format to a modern, well-designed and meaningful brand for the future, which extols the values of fair trade and cooperative collaboration was challenging.

Project launch date

June 2012

Size of design budget

The work was largely pro bono with a nominal payment of £3,700.00 to cover expenses and basic costs.

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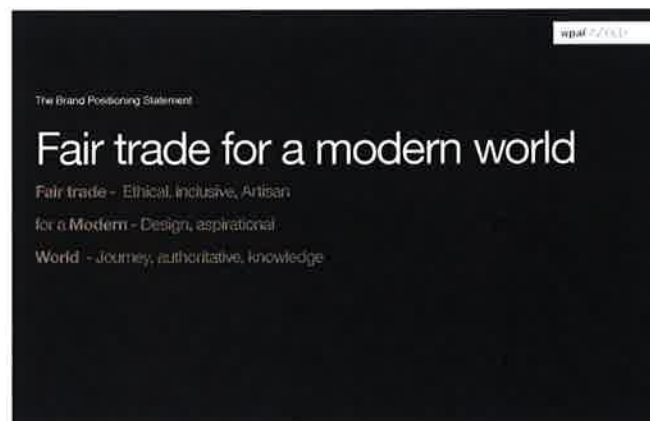
Outline of design solution

We got back to basics with the client and reviewed the core proposition and positioning for the brand. From here we devised key benchmarks and deliverables that would not only influence the brand strategy, but also the buying policy (well-designed products from both deprived communities across the world and local artisans). We also made strategic recommendations for brand strategy that influenced the operating model (including segmentation and classification of products and categorisation of products within the shop).

WPA Pinfold delivered:

- / renewed focus on core values, with a new better defined brand name (Fair Trader)
- / a completely new brand identity that is clean and contemporary (but not overly 'commercial')
- / better defined segmentation and categorisation of merchandise and incorporation of the sustainability scoring system that is unique to Fair Trader
- / clearer focus and benchmarking for the buying strategy
- / a new 'own brand' design strategy, to help the cooperative develop more profitable revenue streams
- / a brand activation plan that gives best return on investment
- / a more practical online presence – with a refocus on the core offer (previously the cooperative had tried to put the whole shop online).

Right
The Fair Trader brand
positioning statement



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Outline of design solution cont.

A brand workshop was carried out with the directors and key stakeholders. This enabled us to create a clearly defined brand positioning statement (around a journey of discovery whereby all the products stocked have a story and a clear ethical/sustainability score) and a redefinition of the name to make it more engaging with the target market.

A new contemporary brand was developed to deliver a stylish, contemporary and professional image (the concept was inspired by the stencil lettering found on imported wooden tea packing cases and sacks of coffee beans). This was supported by a practical and cost effective communications strategy and an 'own label' strategy (templates have been created for the client to follow these through).

The outdated products were named after quirky local (Holmfirth) street names, or ethnic community locations.

The website and social media strategy were reviewed and totally realigned – simplifying the overall design and focussing on the core offer, to make it more practical to manage. Again, templates were created and a CMS system introduced.

The roll out of the new brand made a significant statement and positioned the Fair Trader as a new and improved added value offer – thereby attracting lapsed customers and also appealing to a totally new category of customers.

Big thought

Journey of discovery

Using the vernacular of
import/export packing cases



Before

TheFairTradersCooperative

After

fair trader 

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Summary of results

- / Increase in turnover +24.6% (2012 loss £12,144. 2013 profit £442) and this is on an upward curve
- / From loss to profit in 12 months
- / Gross margin increase due to added perceived value delivered by rebrand +5%
- / Increase in investor numbers (members of the Fair Trader Cooperative) +72%
- / Clear and effective communication of sustainability/ethical scoring – a unique system of scoring developed by the client
- / Increase in support staff – 3 additional paid staff members have been enrolled (university graduates) since rebrand, attracted by the new image of the operation
- / Increase in communities supplying fair trade products – approx. growth of 35% on purchases from developing world cooperatives and small artisan makers. This is higher than sales growth because of growth in higher added value products rather than food and drink
- / Total 50% increase in outreach to schools between 2012 and 2013
- / Increase in staffing – from going out of business to new branding and design we turned the corner in 2013 and were able to attract two high calibre graduates with ethical credentials to move the business forward. Fair Trader were also able to attract four more new Board members who are prepared to support a “new look” business with a future.



12 months
From loss to profit in
12 months

+5.0%
Gross margin increase

+72%
Increase in investor
numbers

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Summary of results cont.

Customer feedback/comments:

"I believe in fair trade and co-operative principles but I have never seen such a beautiful shop with great products that I actually want to buy."

"Fair trade products are often worthy but not well designed or sold in a quality place like this."

"you talk about a journey of discovery in your brochure, this place is just like that."

A supplier comment:
"everything about the design and branding of your shop speaks quality."

Source: customer feedback 2013



+50%

Increase in outreach
to schools

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Other influencing factors

The Fair Traders Cooperative was in a dire financial position and had limited resources. The new brand strategy and planning set the framework for all aspects of the operation, including a re-invigorated buying policy. Everything emanated from the new brand and our strategic planning. There were no other influencing factors – there were no funds available.



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“As a member of the Fair Trader Cooperative and with the shop being just down the road from where I live, I couldn’t bear to see all the efforts of the founding team go to waste - or all those fair trade communities across the world being let down. What was needed was a bit of brand guidance and market focus - keeping it simple and doing well.

The staff and management at Fair Trader have been a joy to work with, they have embraced our strategy and taken up the new brand with enthusiasm and drive. It is gratifying to see such fantastic return on investment in such a short time and walking into the new revitalised shop is a joy.”

Myles Pinfold, Director WPA Pinfold

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Declaration

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