



elmwood



*Category*  
1 Brand

*Sub Category*  
1.2 Design and implementation  
costs under £100,000

*Client*  
Perform

*Design Consultancy*  
Elmwood

*Date*  
May 2014

# BACK OF THE NET, ON TOP OF THE WEB

Football, soccer, futbol, calcio, futebol. Whatever you call it, it's the world's most popular sport. It's played in front gardens, back streets, car parks, country clubs, wasteland and roadsides. It's talked about by all ages, races, sexes and religions – a social currency that forms many a heated debate.

But despite attracting over 30 million monthly hits, Goal.com lacked any real credibility amongst supporters who preferred national sites such as Sky Sports and the BBC, or global sites such as FIFA or UEFA. The brand needed re-thinking, re-designing and re-energising to transform them from a football website into a respected digital football brand that could attract big advertising and sponsorship deals.



BEFORE

AFTER



In just twelve months Goal has smashed every target they set out to achieve before the rebrand, winning over the hearts and minds of supporters, increasing its fan base by 54% and generating a 1100% increase in sponsorship with major brand partners despite a 40% reduction in marketing and PR spend.

This iconic football brand has now developed lucrative partnerships with Sony, Samsung, Puma and Gatorade to name but a few. It attracts 1 billion views a month and is all set to post record results in 2014. Fans from all over the world now see the site as a credible and trusted source of information, with the world's top footballers such as David Beckham and Thierry Henri linking to their articles and reports.

**1 BILLION**  
VIEWS PER MONTH

**1100%**  
INCREASE IN SPONSORSHIP

Some of the highlights from the last year include:



**OVER 260 MILLION VISITS**  
MEANING MORE PEOPLE ARE USING GOAL MORE OFTEN

**INCREASE IN NET PROMOTER SCORE**  
FROM 7% TO 19%

**SIGNING 6 MARQUEE JOURNALISTS**  
TO THE GOAL TEAM

## THE BRIEF

In 2012 Perform Group asked us to reposition Goal.com – their consumer football site purchased in 2011. Whilst it had a large, global audience, the brand was failing to engage fans or attract major advertisers due to inconsistent content and a lack of brand presence. They needed a strong identity to make it more credible and help it compete against the likes of Sky Sports and ESPN.

## OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were identified as benchmarks for the success of the re-brand:

- 1 **Attract more fans around the world and encourage repeat visits**
- 2 **Increase fan engagement with Goal.com through social media**
- 3 **Attract new high-profile recruits to the journalist network**
- 4 **Increase revenue by attracting at least 3 major brand partners in 2014**

## DESCRIPTION

Goal.com was a football website with over 450 journalists worldwide, reporting to over 30 million unique users every month, in 15 languages, reaching fans in 200 countries. 70% of the readership were males under the age of 24.



Goal's global reach



## OVERVIEW OF MARKET

### CURRENT PERFORMANCE

After the Goal brand was bought by Perform in 2011 the website saw an increase of seven million hits, largely due to opening six new editions in different countries. Since that initial boost it had flatlined, and, despite opening another 10 new editions in 2012-13, both the number of visits and page views per unique user had gone into decline (by -10% and -6% respectively). In short, Goal was underperforming.

	Unique Users [% annual change]	Visits [% annual change]	Page Views [% annual change]	Pages/Unique [% annual change]	Visits/Unique [% annual change]	New Territories
April 2011	24,092,643	75,391,349	264,909,199	11.00	3.13	-
April 2012	31,019,012 (+29%)	120,800,842 (+60%)	444,296,122 (+68%)	14.32 (+30%)	3.89 (+24%)	+6
April 2013	34,239,531 (+10%)	120,488,507 (-0.3%)	461,782,794 (+4%)	13.49 (-6%)	3.52 (-10%)	+10

### CURRENT PERCEPTION

Goal.com suffered from poor reputation and credibility, especially in Europe. This was in part due to the dominance by more established competitors like BBC, L'Equipe and La Gazzetta, but also due to a lack of brand presence on the site. Advertising and promotions overwhelmed each page and distracted from the brand and the content, leading to a Net Promoter Score from fans of just 7% in August 2012.

NET PROMOTER  
SCORE OF ONLY

7%

“PEOPLE WHO POST LINKS TO GOAL  
GET SLAUGHTERED ON MY FORUM”

“IT SAYS EDITOR'S PICKS, BUT WHO IS THE EDITOR?  
WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THEM?”

London focus groups, July 2012

“IT DOESN'T HAVE A BRAND – WHAT DOES IT  
DO DIFFERENTLY FROM ANYONE ELSE?”

“IT LOOKS LIKE A FRUIT MACHINE.  
YOU CAN'T AVOID THE ADVERTS”

Manchester focus groups, July 2012

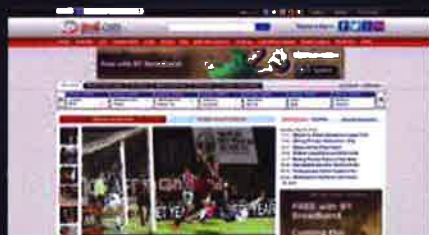
### FAN ENGAGEMENT

The lack of credibility could also be seen in social media. Whilst it had 3.5 million global fans on Facebook in July 2012, this was only 10% of the visitors the site was getting, suggesting that people were not publicly affiliating themselves with the brand.

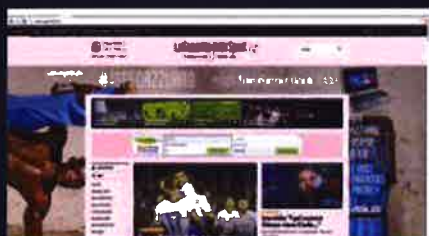
### SPONSORSHIP/ADVERTISING PARTNERS

Goal.com was failing to attract big brands to sponsor the site, who wanted to be associated with the most respected names in the business, especially in major tournament years. During Euro 2012 Goal.com only managed to secure a single sponsor, Hyundai.

**DURING  
EURO 2012  
GOAL.COM ONLY  
MANAGED TO  
SECURE A SINGLE  
KEY SPONSOR**



Goal



Gazzetta



BBC Sport



Football365

### COMPETITORS

Not only was Goal.com competing against local experts for national leagues, but global sites for international reporting. Our research showed us that fans gathered information from 2-3 trusted sources, plus social media, and many of these were digital versions of print (Gazzetta) or TV (BBC). Any pure digital portals tended to be national specialists (Football365) or global generalists (Yahoo). We needed to break onto people's roster of respected sites as global football specialists and both the brand and the quality of journalism were at the heart of this.

### TEAM

Goal was struggling to attract respected marquee journalists to the team, many of whom were often as famous as the brands they worked for. Our new brand needed to be something he could sell with confidence to attract new names, as well as unite the existing network of over 450 writers.

PROJECT LAUNCH DATE

**May 2013**

SIZE OF DESIGN BUDGET

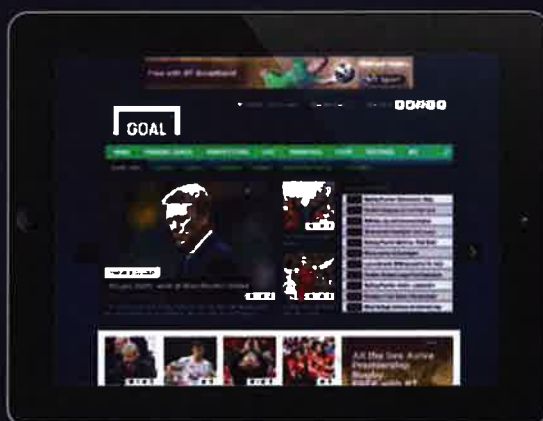
**£90k**

[including brand definition and strategic vision resulting in brand blueprint, brand identity, brand DNA and iconic assets toolkit, brand book, brand movie, website / social media style guide and brand guidelines]

## THE DEFINITIVE FOOTBALL SOURCE



Iconic Marque



New Website

## OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

After talking to hundreds of fans and journalists around the world it was clear that the new brand had to be two things: credible and simple. We began by identifying a distinctive proposition that was unique to Goal; something that would reinforce their status as a global digital football brand and package the service in a way that fans, sponsors and the extended Goal team could buy in to.

### A BIG BRAND IDEA

Our solution lay in a fundamental truth – with more reporters creating original content on the ground all over the world, they were the definitive football source. This blend of genuine passion for football and journalistic excellence went beyond a single country or league to bring fans all over the world closer to the action.

We needed to ensure that the new proposition's marque was equally clear and confident. A global icon that went beyond language and stood out across all digital platforms – from app icons to pitchside hoardings.

**OUR FIRST STEP WAS TO REMOVE THE '.COM' FROM THEIR NAME SO IT WAS NO LONGER SEEN AS PURELY A WEBSITE – GOAL WAS A DIGITAL PORTAL.**

### AN ICONIC MARQUE

Next we needed a distinctive symbol that could be understood in any culture; an instantly recognisable symbol of the game that had the same powerful connotations for everyone. Goalposts provided the perfect solution, and the 'registered' mark nestled in the top corner added an extra smile in the mind. The simplicity of the marque was its greatest strength: bold, confident and authoritative, with plenty of room to stand out. Goal was given a club-neutral palette, clean, straight-talking typography and a restricted but colourful 2D illustration style.



Applying the new brand consistently across different channels was key to any success.

**FANS AND POTENTIAL SPONSORS WERE PUT OFF BY THE PREVIOUS CLUTTERED LOOK, SO WE NEEDED TO DEVELOP A SET OF CLEAR GUIDELINES TO PROTECT THE BRAND WHEREVER IT APPEARED.**

#### STRONG ASSET MANAGEMENT

Layouts needed to be cleaned up, with rigid guides created to ensure Goal had as much impact as possible wherever it appeared - from desktops and mobiles to Smart TV and office interiors. This multi-platform brand toolkit allowed Goal's in-house design team to reproduce the new brand consistently across the world.

#### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Equally important was to get the large journalist network to buy into the new brand, so we produced mugs, lanyards and a brand book to explain the vision and values, with red cards to caution them if they were drifting off-brand. Alongside this we created a high-energy video to bring the new Goal brand to life, and make sure that

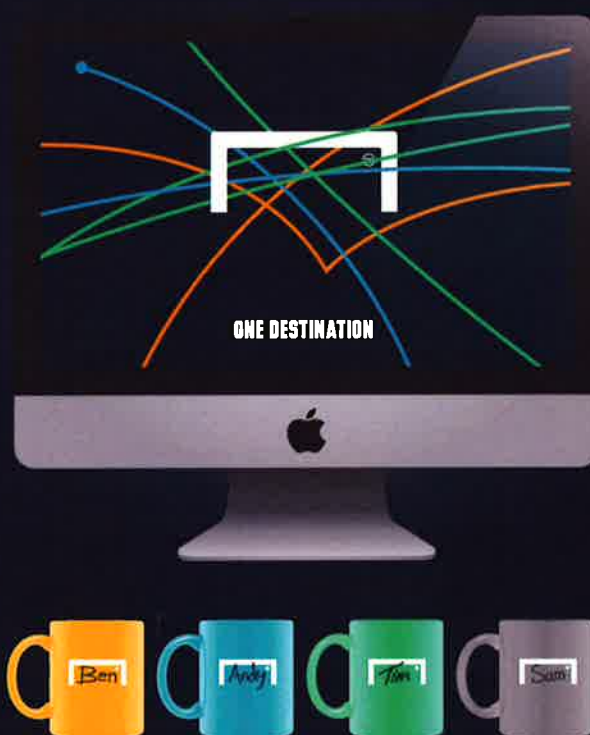
**WHEREVER THEY WERE, EVERY MEMBER OF THE GOAL TEAM FELT PART OF THIS NEW PHASE OF THE BUSINESS.**

Finally, we developed comprehensive brand guidelines that included visual and verbal brand guidance to ensure that the Goal editorial style remained

**CONSISTENTLY AUTHORITATIVE, INSIGHTFUL AND ENERGETIC ACROSS ALL ITS PLATFORMS.**



Applications of the new marque



Brand Book



## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Goal is a highly-focused digital portal with content being provided by 500 high-calibre journalists worldwide, reporting to 52.5m unique users every month, in 15 languages reaching fans in 200 countries.



Our four main objectives were:

### 1 Attract more fans around the world and encourage repeat visits

Since the rebrand in May 2013, Goal has surpassed all expectations, with the number of unique visitors rising to a record 52,574,902 in April 2014 – an increase of 54% on April 2013. Added to that, the number of visits more than doubled to 261,658,554 despite the decline in the previous year. And with the brand now working seamlessly across all devices, users are now visiting Goal on average five times a day, meaning the number of page views per month has hit 1 billion for the first time.

**1 BILLION VIEWS**  
**52.5 MILLION**  
**UNIQUE VISITORS**  
**117% INCREASE**  
**IN VISITORS**

### DECREASE IN EDITIONS -5 INCREASE IN FANS +18M

More people are visiting Goal, more often, something that is made all the more remarkable considering Goal made the decision to close the following sites China (112k unique users), Vietnam (425k unique users),

Iran (1.1 million unique users) and Peru (51k unique users). So whilst Goal closed the site to more than 1.5 million regular users, they still gained an extra 18 million.

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April 2014	52,574,902 (+54%)	261,658,554 (+117%)	1,060,839,972 (+130%)	20.18 (+50%)	4.98 (+41%)	-5

## 2 Increase fan engagement with Goal through social media

# 19%

NET  
PROMOTER  
SCORE  
INCREASE  
FROM 7%

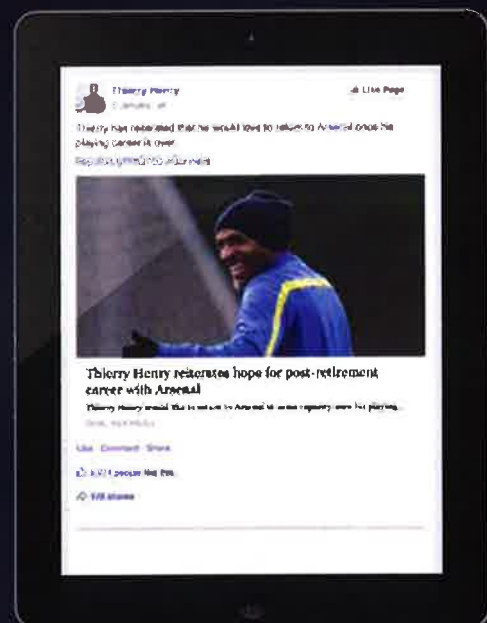
Part of our strategy was to make the brand more credible – something that our audience would be happy to be associated with and share with their peers and friends. Once again the results have exceeded expectations.

Firstly, the Net Promoter Score has risen from 7% in 2012 to 19% in April 2014 (based on a robust study of almost 8,000 respondents), a clear indication that fans are starting to take Goal more seriously. It's a respected and legitimate source of information.

This is given all the more credibility by referrals from high-profile names such as David Beckham and Thierry Henry sharing links to Goal articles on their own social media sites.

**OVERALL, REFERRALS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA ARE UP TO 12 MILLION**

and the number of fans is set to continue to grow.



High profile 'shares' on Social Media

On Facebook Goal has grown from 3.5 million fans in July 2012 to 15.8 million in April 2014. That's more than Sky Sports, Ole, and ESPN FC combined, and accounts for nearly a quarter of our total unique users – up from just 10% in 2012. Goal is far more respectable in the eyes of fans following the rebrand and fans are proud to pin the Goal colours to their wall.



This is even more impressive in a time where Facebook's organic reach is declining rapidly – from 12.05% of fan total in October 2013 to just 6.15% in Feb 2014 [Ad Age, March 2014]. Goal is well and truly bucking the trend, with an ability to reach just over 7%. Key European, Latin American and North American Goal Facebook editions are also seeing

**REACH RATES  
IN EXCESS OF  
100% OF THEIR  
FAN TOTAL.**



Facebook Homepage

Twitter Friendly



The new iconic brand is now perceived more coherently across all social media platforms. The new, mobile-friendly design has suited fans' lifestyle with more than 70% of all Goal page views now via mobile. Goal are giving fans what they want, where and when they want it.



### 3 Attract new high-profile recruits to the journalist network

The new, refined brand, united by shared values, principles and a global proposition has helped **establish a consistent editorial style**, improving the perception of Goal not just in the eyes of fans, but in the media as well.

In the last twelve months Goal has attracted a number of significant, 'marquee' signings from major competitors to strengthen the editorial network, and making Goal an even more respected platform.

Six of the highest profile names include:



Oct 2013 | **IVES GALARCEP**

**Goal USA Chief Editor**

Joined from freelance roles with ESPN and Fox Soccer



Dec 2013 | **FEDERICO CASOTTI**

**Goal Italy Chief Editor**

Joined from SportItalia – a broadcast journalist ex-Eurosport & ESPN



Dec 2013 | **JOHANN CROCHET**

**Goal France Chief Editor**

Joined from Eurosport



Jan 2014 | **CHRISTIAN NIER**

**Goal Germany Chief Editor**

Joined from MSN, where he was Head of Sport in Germany



Feb 2014 | **JAMES MARLEY**

**Global Managing Editor**

Joined from Sky and is ex-Trinity Mirror



Feb 2014 | **JON FISHER**

**Head of Global News**

Joined from Press Association, previously Foreign Sports Editor at PA Sport

Journalists and editors weren't the only ones who saw the credibility of the new brand – Lionel Messi was proud to pick up his Goal 50 award, although we can't confirm exactly where it sits on his mantelpiece.



Messi, Proud to accept his award

#### 4 Increase revenue by attracting at least 3 major brand partners in 2014

This was a key objective for Goal, and one that would ultimately define the success of the project from a commercial perspective. Having previously only secured one sponsor they desperately needed to attract at least three new ones to increase revenue.

In fact, after the rebrand Goal ended up with six major sponsors – including Sony, Puma and Samsung – who chose Goal as their exclusive web partner to promote the launch of the Samsung Galaxy 11 campaign.

Not only that, but those sponsors have generated an **1100% increase** in global partner revenue, which has contributed to Perform's Y.O.Y revenue growth of

**32% to £56.9m**

in Q1 of 2014. It will also have a significant impact on Q2 figures yet to be released.



**SAMSUNG**



**IN SUMMARY, THE GOAL BRAND HAS ACHIEVED RESULTS THAT WE WOULD NEVER HAVE DARED EXPECTED. ON THE EVE OF ANOTHER WORLD CUP THE BUSINESS IS LOOKING REJUVENATED AND READY FOR EVEN BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS TO COME.**

"The brand that Elmwood has created has been universally effective, not only across different global markets but also across platforms. It has allowed us to demonstrate our market leading position and credibility in the football world."

"With the new look and feel, rooted in our brand story, we can move forward with confidence to reach even more football fans at whichever corner of the globe they come to us from."

Andy Roberts (Marketing Director, Perform – Direct to Consumer)

**NEWS  
FLASH**

**GOAL HAS JUST LAUNCHED IN BOSNIA AND CROATIA, AND TRAFFIC FOR MAY/JUNE IS ABOUT TO SURPASS RECORDS WITH VIRTUALLY 100% GROWTH**

## OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

### MARKETING & PR

In the year since launch, marketing and PR spend has actually been reduced by 40% compared to the year before. This focussed on SEO, PPC, Social media and PR as major channels and many of the PR campaigns were the same before the brand relaunch, such as the Goal 50 awards, which lists the top 50 best players in the world. Barcelona's Lionel Messi was the winner, and was proud to pick up his award in person, having been unavailable on previous years. There has been no spend on ATL creative work.

Goal has launched in Tanzania in the last 12 months, adding approximately 650k unique users, but this is relatively small compared to the number of sites closed across China, Vietnam, Iran and Peru, to the loss of over 1.5million unique visitors.

### THE WORLD CUP EFFECT

The 2014 World Cup is probably the biggest influencing factor to be considered, but many partner brands began their campaigns long before the World Cup fever began, rather than specifically for the tournament. And whilst interest in football does undoubtedly go up during the World Cup, this tends to only start once the tournament has actually started – in this case on June 12th, after the results were compiled. Additional interest in international tournaments are more likely to benefit local generalists (such as the BBC) or global specialists (such as FIFA) from fans who are more familiar with those brands.



**MARKETING AND PR SPEND  
ACTUALLY REDUCED BY**

**40%**

Football is now considered a year-round sport, dominated by major annual club tournaments such as the Champions League. Sponsorship is 'always-on' and no longer purely governed by the international calendar. In addition to this there was no massive effect on visitors during the last international tournament in 2012. Unique visitors went up 3 million in the 2012-13 year, but that was also a year when ten new territories were opened.

### IMPACT OF THE BUYOUT

Goal was bought by Perform Group in 2011, under the guidance of CEOs Oli Slipper and Simon Denyer. They introduced a new team, including Managing Director Ben Warn and Marketing Director Andy Roberts, to work on a portfolio of consumer brands. They had been in place for between six months and a year before we began work on the project, and over two years before the new brand was launched.



## RESEARCH RESOURCES

1. Goal analytics
2. Adobe SiteCatalyst
3. Ad Age
4. Facebook

